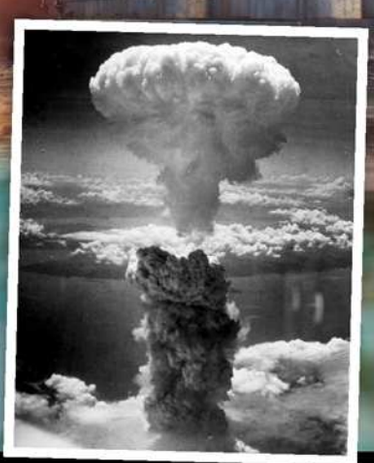
NEW

HISTORY of WAR

WAR in the PACIFIC

Explore the explosive battle for supremacy across land, sea & air







PEARL HARBOR ✪ MIDWAY ✪ GUADALCANAL ✪ OKINAWA ✪ HIROSHIMA

Digital Edition

FUTURE

FIRST EDITION

HISTORY OF WAR

WAR in the PACIFIC

Beginning in December 1941 with Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor and the British possessions of Malaya and the Philippines, the war in the Pacific played out across a vast area of Asia and the Pacific region. It would come to a devastating conclusion in August 1945 when the United States dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, leaving more than 120,000 people dead. Through expert features, stunning photography and in-depth battle maps, this book explores some of the Pacific Theatre's key battles and campaigns, from the decisive naval battle of Midway to one of the bloodiest battles of World War II – the Allied invasion of Okinawa. We'll also uncover the culture of sacrifice and nationhood behind Japan's kamikaze pilots, introduce some of the heroes of the conflict, and explore how the bomb that changed the world was born.

WAR in the PACIFIC

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Part of the
HISTORY of WAR
bookazine series

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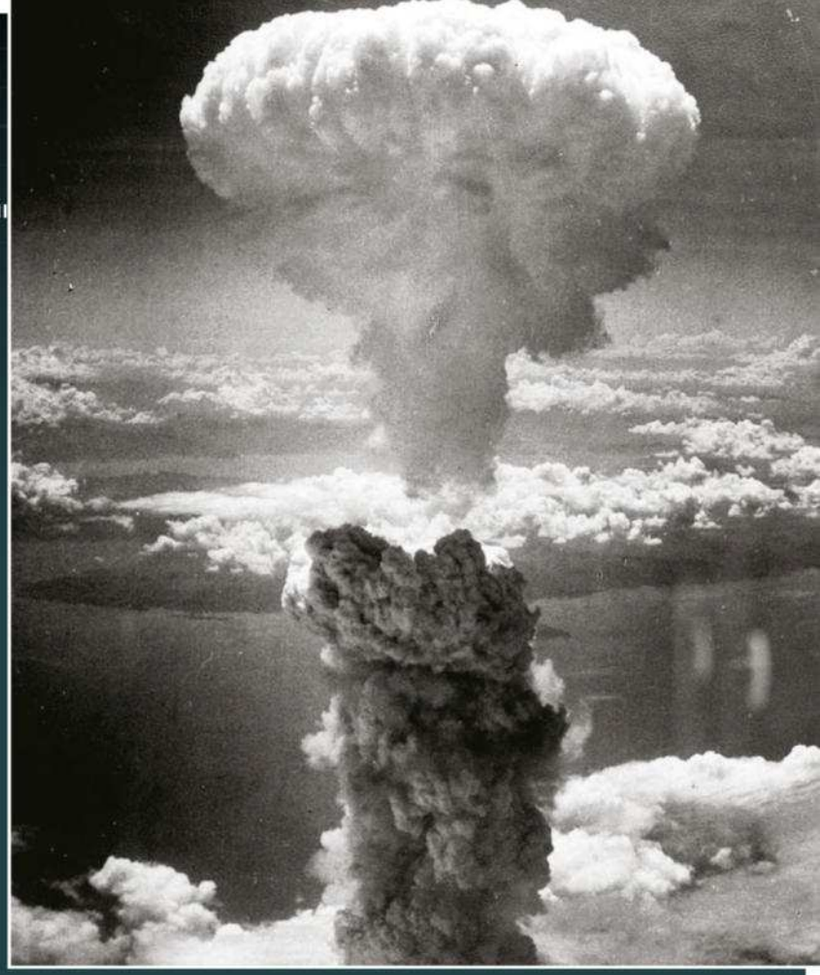
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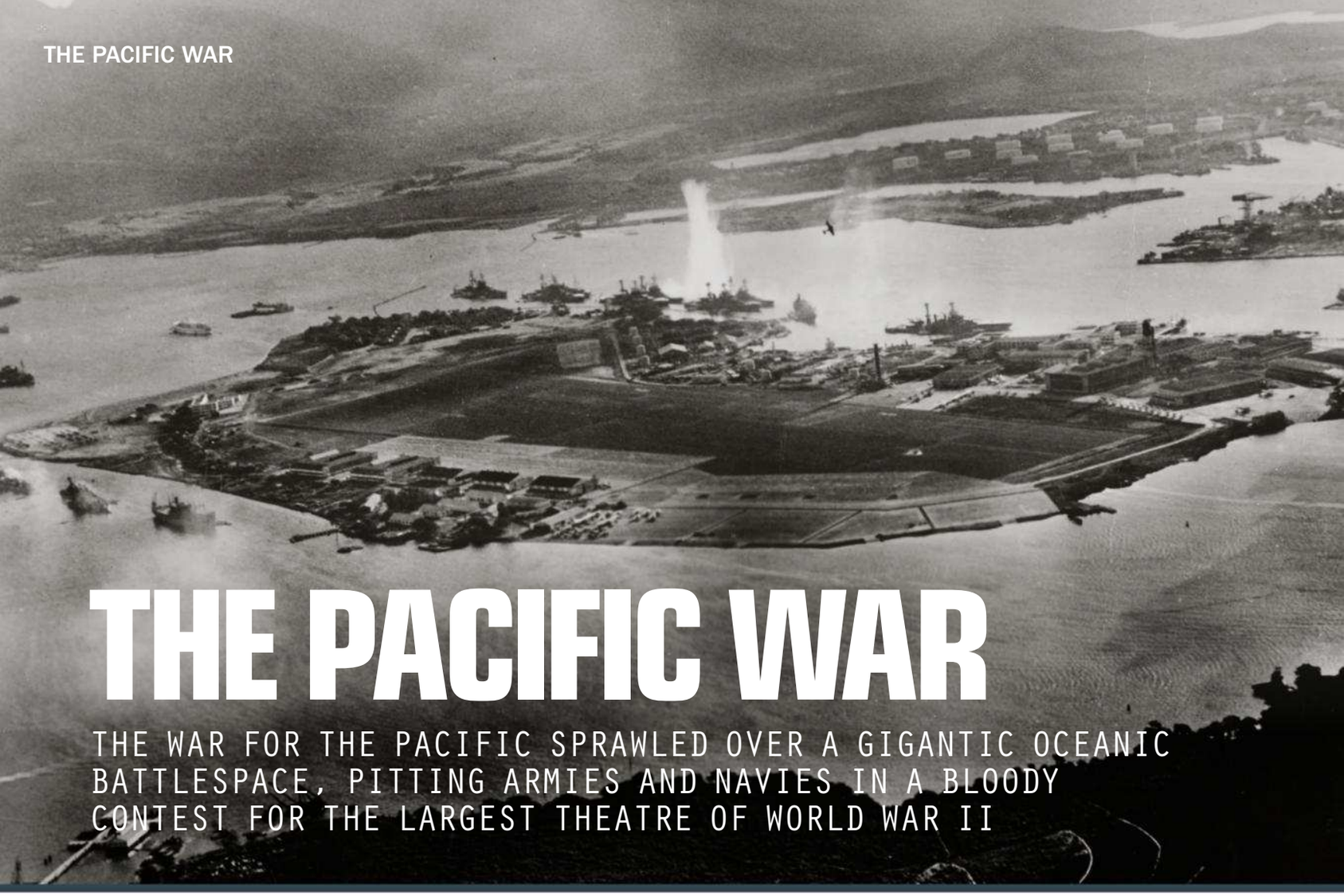
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THE PACIFIC WAR

THE WAR FOR THE PACIFIC SPRAWLED OVER A GIGANTIC OCEANIC BATTLESPACE, PITTING ARMIES AND NAVIES IN A BLOODY CONTEST FOR THE LARGEST THEATRE OF WORLD WAR II

SINO-JAPANESE WAR BEGINS

7 JULY 1937 – CHINA

Imperial Japan mounts an invasion of China, its giant neighbour, in July 1937. Though much of coastal China is captured, the Japanese Army becomes bogged down fighting inland. In 1941, the US, Britain and the Netherlands impose crippling embargoes on Japan that cut 90 per cent of its oil imports. The Japanese are thereby presented with the difficult choice of either giving up their plans for expansion in Asia or going to war. They choose war and begin planning for attacks on the United States and other Western powers. As for China, it will prove to be far more difficult to conquer than the Japanese anticipated and they will still be fighting in the country when the war ends in 1945.

PEARL HARBOR

7 DECEMBER 1941 –
PEARL HARBOR, OAHU, HAWAII

In late 1941, the US demands that Japan withdraw from China and Indochina. With damaging economic sanctions already in place, Japan seeks to land a knockout blow against the US Pacific Fleet based in Hawaii. Hundreds of warplanes strike at the moored US fleet early on the morning of 7 December. The Americans are caught by surprise as dive bombers and torpedo bombers attack the ships moored in port. Many vessels are either sunk or badly damaged. Luckily for the US, its three aircraft carriers are not in port when the attack comes. In conjunction with the attack on Pearl Harbor, Japan also launches invasions of Allied possessions including the Philippines, Guam and Wake Islands, the Dutch East Indies and Malaya.

BERLIN-ROME-TOKYO AXIS FORMS

Germany, Italy and Japan enter into an alliance by signing the Tripartite Pact.

27 SEPTEMBER 1940
BERLIN, GERMANY

BATTLE OF THE JAVA SEA

Allied navies are bested by the Imperial Japanese Navy and suffer heavy losses.

27 FEBRUARY 1942
JAVA SEA



BATTLE OF MIDWAY

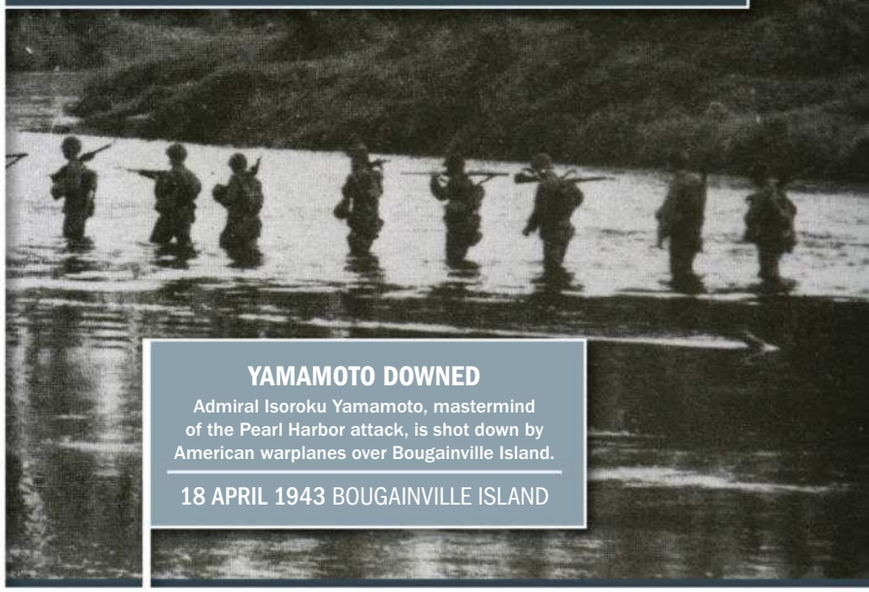
4-7 JUNE 1942 – OFF MIDWAY ISLAND

The Doolittle Raid on Tokyo on 18 April embarrasses the Japanese and they seek to close the gap in their defences. Their target is Midway Island in the central Pacific. On 4 June 1942, a Japanese fleet strikes at the American island with the intent to occupy it. The US has advanced knowledge of the attack and is well prepared. The Japanese are caught flat-footed while their planes are rearming and refuelling on the decks of their carriers. The Americans sink four Japanese aircraft carriers while losing USS Yorktown in a vicious air-sea battle that lasts until 7 June. Finally, the Japanese advance across the Pacific, which had scarcely slowed in the previous six months, is halted. From now on, Japan will be on the strategic defensive.

GUADALCANAL CAMPAIGN

7 AUGUST 1942 - 9 FEBRUARY 1943 – GUADALCANAL ISLAND, SOLOMON ISLANDS

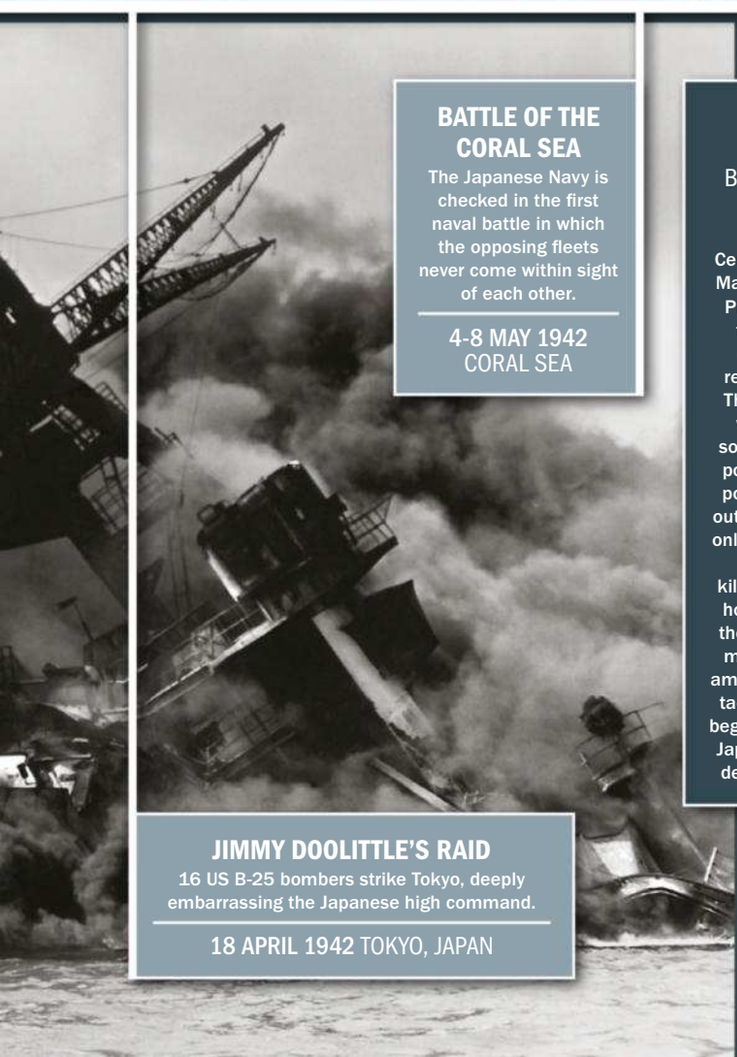
US troops make amphibious landings on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands and face ferocious opposition from the Japanese defenders. The major prize is Henderson Field, which the Americans have captured from the Japanese and are now defending. The seas around Guadalcanal become the scene of numerous battles like the Battle of Savo Island where the Americans and Australians are worsted. The US has the better of it in the Battle of the Eastern Solomons, where the Japanese lose a light carrier and a destroyer. At the Battle of Santa Cruz, the US loses the aircraft carrier Hornet, which had earlier taken part in the famed Doolittle air raid on Tokyo. The Imperial Japanese Navy is turned away for good in the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal fought that November. After a long and bitter struggle ashore, Japanese forces are evacuated in February 1943.



YAMAMOTO DOWNED

Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, mastermind of the Pearl Harbor attack, is shot down by American warplanes over Bougainville Island.

18 APRIL 1943 BOUGAINVILLE ISLAND



BATTLE OF THE CORAL SEA

The Japanese Navy is checked in the first naval battle in which the opposing fleets never come within sight of each other.

4-8 MAY 1942
CORAL SEA

JIMMY DOOLITTLE'S RAID

16 US B-25 bombers strike Tokyo, deeply embarrassing the Japanese high command.

18 APRIL 1942 TOKYO, JAPAN

BATTLE OF TARAWA

20-23 NOVEMBER 1943 –
BETIO ISLAND, TARAWA ATOLL, GILBERT ISLANDS

As part of the drive across the Central Pacific, the US Navy deposits Marines on Betio in the Tarawa Atoll. Planning is deficient and when the tide is misjudged, many landing craft get stuck on a submerged reef hundreds of yards from shore. The 4,700 Japanese defenders are well dug-in and fight fanatically; sometimes battleship shells are not powerful enough to knock out their positions and each has to be taken out individually by the Marines. While only 100 Japanese soldiers are taken prisoner, 1,000 US Marines are killed and 2,000 wounded in just 76 hours of combat. The difficulties of the battle teach the Marines to plan more carefully, expand their use of amphibious vehicles and change their tactics. American war planners now begin island hopping, bypassing some Japanese islands that will eventually deteriorate as their supplies dry up.



BATTLE OF IWO JIMA

19 FEBRUARY - 26 MARCH 1945 – IWO JIMA, VOLCANO ISLANDS

US Marines battle with Japanese defenders for the possession of the island. The Japanese have tunnelled deeply throughout and are little hurt by a three-day naval bombardment. The American flag is raised over Mount Suribachi on 23 February but fighting on the island continues until 26 March. Though Marine losses are high, with almost 7,000 killed and 19,000 wounded, Japan loses nearly all of its 21,000-man garrison. Despite this, Iwo Jima will provide refuge for thousands of crippled US bombers returning from missions over Japan, saving the lives of many thousands of airmen.

BATTLE OF THE PHILIPPINE SEA

19-20 JUNE 1944 – PHILIPPINE SEA, EAST OF THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

In the last of the big carrier battles of the Pacific War, the US Navy's Task Force 58 with seven fleet carriers and eight light carriers encounter the Japanese fleet of five fleet and four light carriers. On 19 June, the Japanese planes are intercepted by American fighters, which shoot down over 200 Japanese aircraft while losing only 23 of their own. Three Japanese carriers are sunk along with hundreds more warplanes. All told, some 600 Japanese aircraft are downed against only 123 US losses. American pilots nickname it the 'Great Marianas Turkey Shoot' on account of the yawning disparity.

BATTLE OF PELELIU

US troops seize this fortified island after a brutal fight where 2,300 are killed in action.

15 SEPTEMBER - 27 NOVEMBER 1944
PELELIU ISLAND, PALAU ISLANDS

US CAPTURE OF SAIPAN

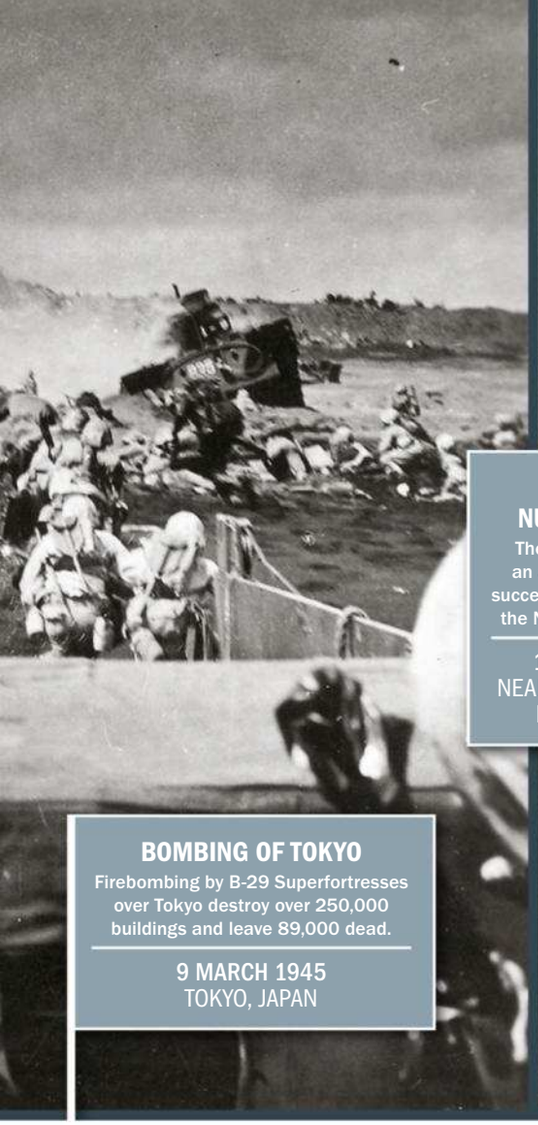
Together with Tinian, taken not long after, it will be a staging point for B-29 bomber raids on Japan.

15 JUNE - 9 JULY 1944
SAIPAN, MARIANA ISLANDS

BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF

23-26 OCTOBER 1944 – PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

US troops under General Douglas MacArthur go ashore to retake the Philippines from their Japanese occupiers and the Imperial Japanese Navy sorties to stop them in a series of battles that come to be known collectively as the Battle of Leyte Gulf. At the Battle of the Sibuyan Sea, the battleship Musashi is sunk by American warplanes. Off Samar, a covering force of small US escort carriers and a handful of destroyers, is surprised by a much more powerful Japanese squadron. The outgunned American ships resist so savagely that the Japanese retreat. At Surigao Strait, US battleships square off against their Japanese counterparts in the last battleship fight in history and two Japanese war wagons are sunk. The US Navy emerges triumphant in one of the largest naval battles in history.



TRINITY NUCLEAR TEST

The first-ever test of an atomic weapon is successfully conducted in the New Mexico desert.

16 JULY 1945
NEAR ALAMOGORDO, NEW MEXICO

BOMBING OF TOKYO

Firebombing by B-29 Superfortresses over Tokyo destroy over 250,000 buildings and leave 89,000 dead.

9 MARCH 1945
TOKYO, JAPAN

ATOMIC BOMBING OF HIROSHIMA

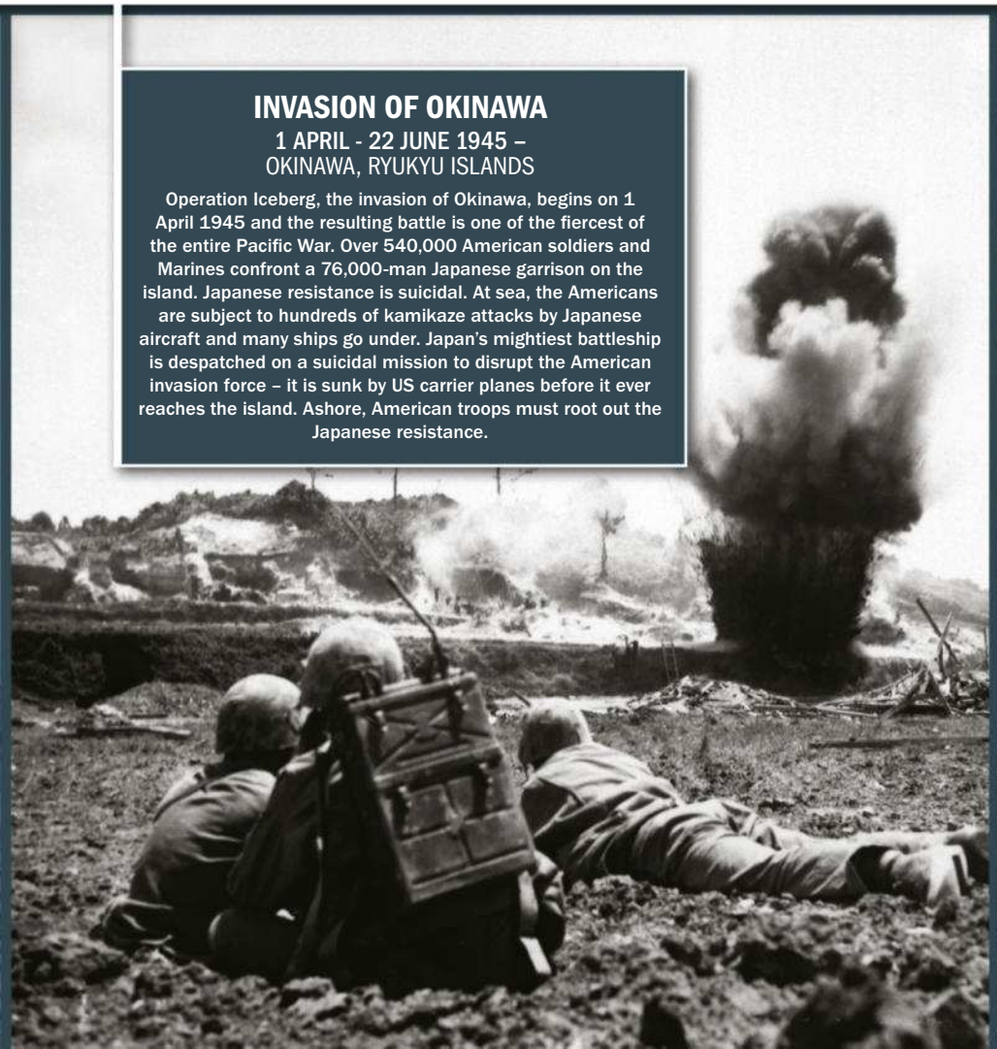
6 AUGUST 1945 –
HIROSHIMA, JAPAN

The fanatical resistance of the Japanese leaves US planners aghast when they contemplate an invasion of Japan's Home Islands. Most of Japan's cities have been levelled by American B-29s and Japan's fleet and merchant marine has been sunk but there is no sign that Japan is willing to make peace. US troops are set to invade southernmost Kyushu in Operation Olympic in November 1945. American strategists expect a bloodbath. There is, however, an alternative to a costly invasion – the atomic bomb. Developed and built in great secrecy and at great expense by scientists in the US, it splits atoms to unleash enormous power. An atomic bomb is dropped on the city of Hiroshima on 6 August 1945, leaving 78,000 dead. On 9 August, Nagasaki is destroyed with a second bomb. Japan surrenders unconditionally to Allied forces on the deck of the USS Missouri on 2 September.

INVASION OF OKINAWA

1 APRIL - 22 JUNE 1945 –
OKINAWA, RYUKYU ISLANDS

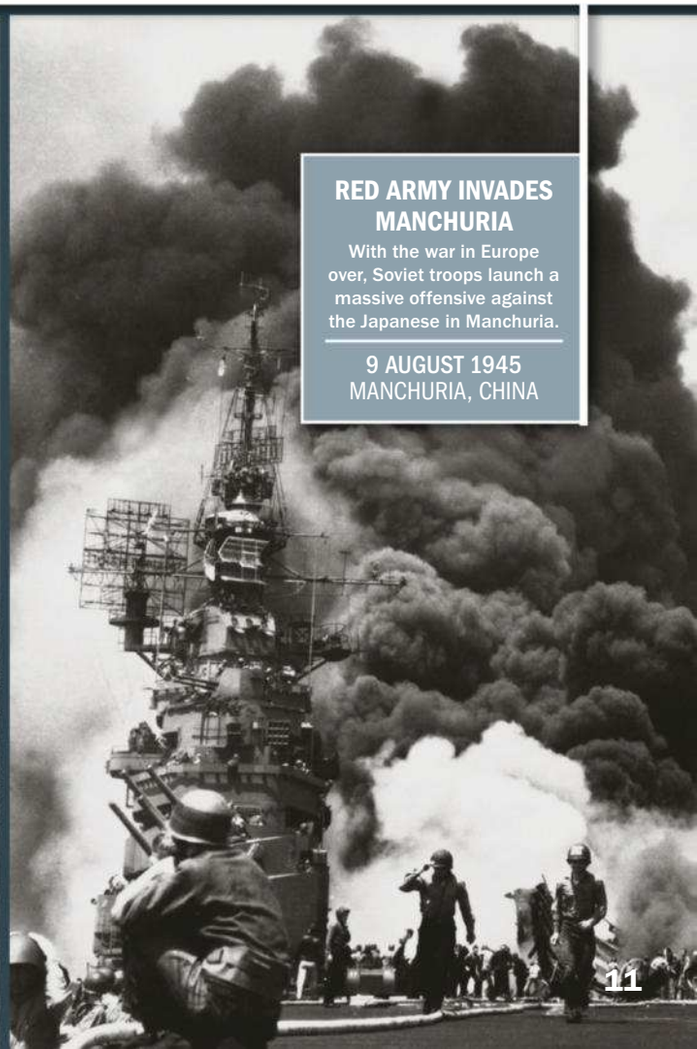
Operation Iceberg, the invasion of Okinawa, begins on 1 April 1945 and the resulting battle is one of the fiercest of the entire Pacific War. Over 540,000 American soldiers and Marines confront a 76,000-man Japanese garrison on the island. Japanese resistance is suicidal. At sea, the Americans are subject to hundreds of kamikaze attacks by Japanese aircraft and many ships go under. Japan's mightiest battleship is despatched on a suicidal mission to disrupt the American invasion force – it is sunk by US carrier planes before it ever reaches the island. Ashore, American troops must root out the Japanese resistance.



RED ARMY INVADES MANCHURIA

With the war in Europe over, Soviet troops launch a massive offensive against the Japanese in Manchuria.

9 AUGUST 1945
MANCHURIA, CHINA



JAPAN ATTACKS

JAPAN GOES ON THE OFFENSIVE AS THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC BEGINS

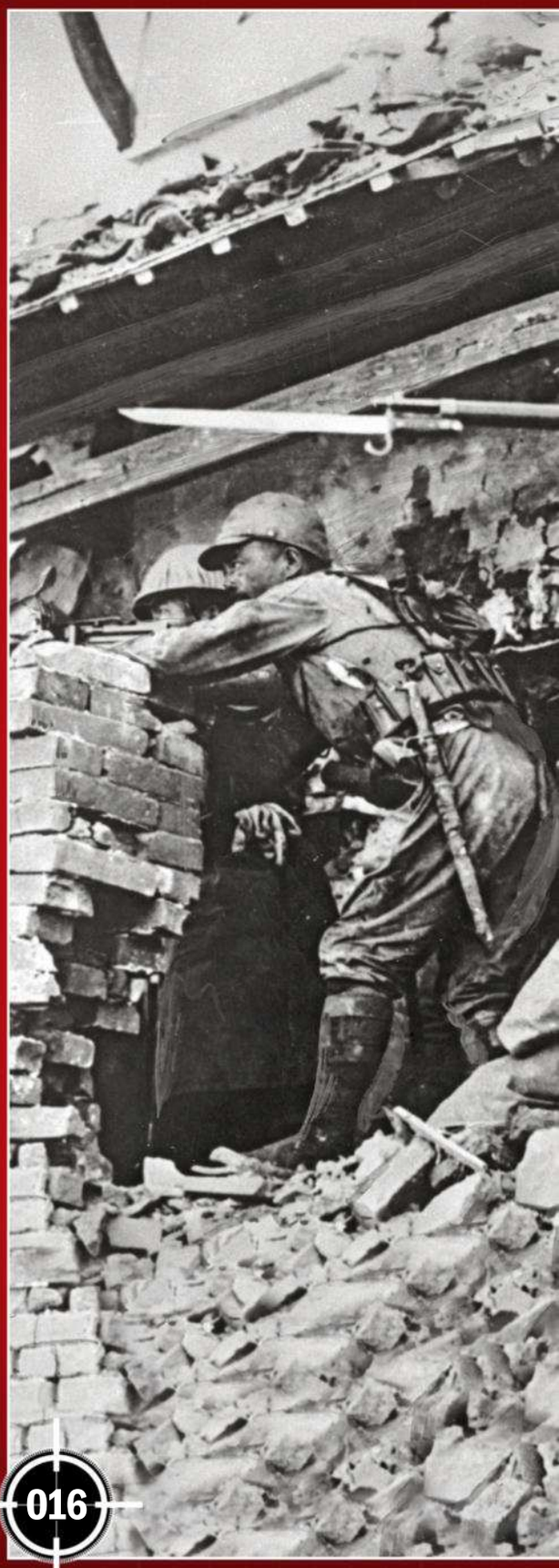
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Japanese Imperialism continues its March, culminating in the devastating attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941

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STATE OF PLAY: 1941

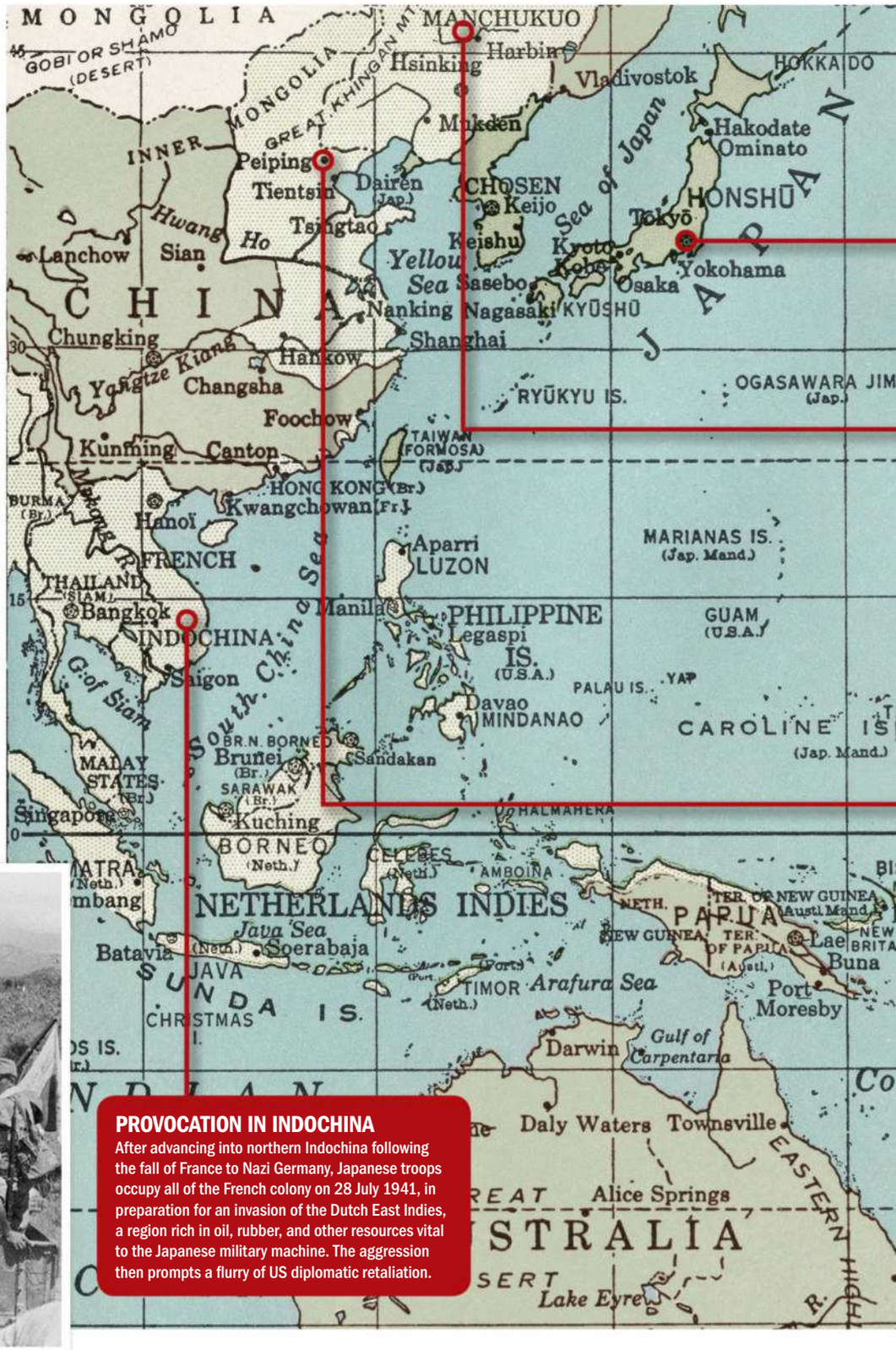
JAPANESE IMPERIALISM CONTINUES ITS MARCH, CULMINATING IN THE DEVASTATING ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the island nation of Japan undergoes a swift transformation from a feudal society to an industrialised military and economic power. Its burgeoning ambitions to achieve hegemony in Asia and the Pacific, fuelled in part by the need to obtain natural resources for its military machine and arable land to feed a growing population, place the country on a collision course with American and European interests in the Far East.

Sporadically at war with China since 1931, the Japanese Army controls the province of Manchuria and other Chinese lands. By 1941, France capitulates to Nazi Germany, and Japanese troops occupy French Indochina, placing them perilously close to the oil fields and other natural resources of the Dutch East Indies. President Franklin Roosevelt orders an embargo of oil, scrap iron, machinery, and other commodities to Japan and freezes Japanese assets in the United States. Along with the embargo comes an ultimatum from the United States to withdraw all of the Japanese troops from the Asian continent.

By the autumn of 1941, Japan stands at a political and military crossroads. Prime Minister Hideki Tojo, also a militarist general, leads the nation to war rather than acquiesce to American demands while losing honour and substantial territorial gains. In November, plans for a preemptive naval air strike against the US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor and other military installations in Hawaii, are set in motion, and Japanese planes attack without warning on 7 December, plunging the United States into World War II.





PROVOCATION IN INDOCHINA

After advancing into northern Indochina following the fall of France to Nazi Germany, Japanese troops occupy all of the French colony on 28 July 1941, in preparation for an invasion of the Dutch East Indies, a region rich in oil, rubber, and other resources vital to the Japanese military machine. The aggression then prompts a flurry of US diplomatic retaliation.

TOJO TAKES CHARGE

General Hideki Tojo, a war-mongering militarist, becomes Prime Minister of Japan on 17 October 1941. Tojo, nicknamed 'Razor', advocates an aggressive policy toward the United States, Great Britain and the Netherlands. He authorises the attack on the US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor and action against British and Dutch possessions in the Far East, initiating World War II in the Pacific.



JAPANESE PUPPET STATE

After its Kwantung Army stages the so-called Mukden Incident and seizes the province of Manchuria in northern China the previous year, the Japanese government establishes the puppet state of Manchukuo on 18 February 1932. Japanese forces use Manchukuo as a staging area for further incursions into China and colonised the region to exploit its natural resources.

CLASH AT MARCO POLO BRIDGE

After provoking a military incident at the Marco Polo Bridge a few kilometres south of the Chinese capital of Peiping, the Japanese widen the conflict on the Asian continent, and the Second Sino-Japanese War erupts on 7 July 1937. Japanese brutality characterises the conflict, which essentially is absorbed into the broader context of World War II.

TORA! TORA! TORA!

On 7 December 1941, Japanese naval aircraft, launched from six aircraft carriers northwest of Hawaii, attack the US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor and military installations on the island of Oahu. Two waves totalling 353 Japanese planes wreak havoc, killing 2,403 American service personnel and civilians. Japanese forces strike targets across the Pacific, including the Philippines and Malaya.

JAPAN 1937
A STATE OF WAR

INTOXICATED BY VISIONS OF IMPERIAL CONQUEST, JAPAN'S FANATICAL MILITARISTS LAUNCHED A GENOCIDAL CAMPAIGN TO SUBDUE CHINA AND PLUNDER ITS RESOURCES

Only a peculiar madness could inspire the aspiration to carve up East Asia. For Japan's generals and statesmen, however, this was imperative to create a world empire, even when it was unfeasible.

How far within a hostile country could an army of occupation travel before it became bogged down? How many soldiers, bullets, tanks, ships and planes would it take? What about the untold millions to be checked by a permanent garrison? And what of the risk of sanctions, of Western interference? None of these quibbles seems to have shaken the Imperial Japanese Army's resolve as it set about fulfilling an ancient dream, but where this dream originated is hard to discern. What historians now refer to as the Second Sino-Japanese War is commonly overshadowed by the events after 1941. Not even its excesses and brutality caused too much alarm among the Great Powers – not until modern times, at least.

DREAMS OF AN EMPIRE

There once was a dream among the fighting men of Japan, whose tireless martial vigour mired their nation in endless civil war. It was a dream of boundless empire acquired by merciless brute force. In the last decade of the 16th century, the warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi launched two campaigns to conquer the Korean peninsula. Once a foothold on the Asian mainland was established, his legions of Samurai and musketmen would then march on Peking and subsequently rule China.

Both endeavours were spectacular failures and Hideyoshi died soon after his last debacle. Japan closed its doors and outlawed its guns. Christian missionaries were expelled throughout the realm. Then, after 250 years of domestic peace and isolation, an American naval squadron would force Japan to accept free trade – a rude awakening for the complacent Tokugawa shogunate. By 1889, Japan had adopted a new constitution, modelled after Prussia's, and became a constitutional monarchy.

A modern army soon followed. Six years later, the embers of Hideyoshi's far-fetched dream were alight once more. The First Sino-Japanese War was a raw display of Japanese tenacity and firepower in the face of superior Chinese numbers. Humbled, the diplomats of the Qing Dynasty agreed to a humiliating peace deal in the Japanese city of Shimonoseki.

Not only did China lose the Korean peninsula for good – granted 'independence' under Japanese supervision – but the island of Formosa as well. Worse, resource-rich Manchuria was now within Japan's grasp. The only hindrance was the Imperial Russian Navy's presence in the Kwantung peninsula, a state of affairs brought about at the last minute as Japan imposed its terms on China.

A decade later it was Russia's turn to be at the receiving end of Japan's army and navy. In a series of spectacular battles from Port Arthur



Japanese soldiers fighting in a town in the province, near Nanking



to Tsushima, Japan's sheer fighting prowess during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 to 1905 established its credentials as a Great Power. It had become an exemplar for every nation suffering under the yoke of colonialism and rapacious European dominance.

Japan's latest triumph against a larger adversary featured another chilling side effect. After the war, like the decrepit Qing Dynasty with its increasingly tenuous hold over China, the Russian Empire's own seams would begin to unravel in a torturous decline that climaxed with the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.

Rather than bask in its new-found status as an ocean-going power, another problem faced the Japanese elite – a rigid alliance of landed families-turned-industrialists and the political status quo. The country had become too successful and was resource poor.

The gifts of the 20th century were too generous to the Empire of Japan. An archipelago of three main volcanic islands prone to earthquakes, with little arable land and no fossil fuel deposits, Japanese industriousness created a population boom that grew year on year. As an Asian power with a Prussian cast imposed by its constitution, a convivial and democratic outlook on national life never figured in political discourse.

Japan needed to be strong – if the world did not accommodate its needs, it would accommodate itself. The revolution that swept China in 1912 was a boon that allowed further Japanese gains into its main rival's economy. By this time, Japan had mastered planning its economic foundations of coal, railroads and factories. Korea was its offshore base for cheap labour. This was not enough though; Japan needed to be stronger, even unassailable. An opportunity lay beyond Korea, across the Yalu River, in glorious Manchuria.

AN INDUSTRIAL UTOPIA

Manchuria was an exciting, rugged and unforgiving place. Until the 20th century Western travellers were only able to describe it in the most basic terms – its geography and the weather. The region's ill-defined borders were the Yalu River and the Yellow Sea to the south, to the east and north were the Usuri and Amur rivers, the natural boundaries separating it from Russia where the steppes merged with the tundra and taiga, and to the west was Mongolia's grasslands.

At the end of the First Sino-Japanese War, Manchuria was coveted by Russia as the last piece of its Siberian domain. With the blessing of France and Germany, Russia was able to position herself as China's defender, seizing Port Arthur and keeping Manchuria out of Japan's clutches.

"JAPAN NEEDED TO BE STRONG – IF THE WORLD DID NOT ACCOMMODATE ITS NEEDS, IT WOULD ACCOMMODATE ITSELF"

In reality, Russia was just as eager to lay down railways and set up factories. Timber, minerals and vast tracts of arable land were for the taking. Harbin, China's northernmost city today, was founded by the Russians, who quickly turned it into a boomtown with its attendant recklessness and ostentation.

But Manchuria's forbidding mountains and steppes were home to the indomitable Jurchen tribes. During the 11th century these mounted nomads federated and subdued northern China long before Genghis Khan's hordes did the same. In the mid-17th century, their descendants repeated history. Organising themselves into an army, the Manchus toppled the Ming Dynasty and ruled China at its height as the Qings.

At the end of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, Manchuria was ripe for the taking. Japan could not take it, however, since this would provoke another conflict. The stratagem that suited its designs best was a cunning one. If

THE BATTLE OF SHANGHAI

When two massive armies clashed over the greatest city in Asia, the continent witnessed carnage on a scale that had never been seen before

Eager to secure their control over Manchuria, Japan's militarist clique planned to invade the mainland and force Chiang Kai-shek from power. The first domino to fall would be Shanghai.

The problem was the only Japanese forces stationed in Shanghai were a detachment of naval infantry, and sending more would arouse suspicion. There needed to be a reason for the arrival of Japanese troops. Taking their cue from the Mukden Incident and the outbreak of the Philippine-American War in 1899, it was decided that a single ambiguous crisis would launch the war.



Japanese soldiers in China in 1937

After Chinese sentries allegedly gunned down a lone Japanese officer in Shanghai, one clash led to another and by 13 August, thousands of Chinese and Japanese troops were already fighting within the city.

Lasting for three months, from 13 August to 19 November, the battle would be the most savage fought in the pre-World War II era and included a daring amphibious assault by the Japanese on the mouth of the Yangtze River.

The Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) and Navy would use all of their assets to quash the National Revolutionary Army defenders, who fought heroically despite high casualties. These qualities made battles like the struggle for Sihang Warehouse the stuff of legend.

In typical fashion, the well-equipped but poorly led Chinese lost up to 250,000 soldiers defending Shanghai and only succeeded in slowing down the IJA, who razed the capital Nanking a month later.

"THE BATTLE WOULD BE THE MOST SAVAGE FOUGHT IN THE PRE-WORLD WAR II ERA"

SUPPORT FOR CHINA

A conflict between two hegemonic Asian giants, the War's intensity inspired an outpouring of propaganda



UNITED CHINA RELIEF
Massive US aid to China did not begin until mid-1941, replacing the earlier generosity of the French, Germans and Soviets.



NAVY, ARMY, AIR FORCE
In this scene, Chiang Kai-shek looks on as his air force and navy arrive to thwart a Japanese armada.

EIGHTH ROUTE ARMY IN SHANXI
By 1937, the Republic of China already had a vast and modern army for defending itself thanks to foreign aid.

"MASSIVE US AID TO CHINA DID NOT BEGIN UNTIL MID-1941, REPLACING THE EARLIER GENEROSITY OF THE FRENCH, GERMANS AND SOVIETS"



NRA ANTI-JAPANESE WAR POSTER
In this undated poster, a hulking NRA infantryman clutching a gleaming bayonet overwhelms his child-like Japanese rival cowering beneath him.



modernisation had a single impetus, it was the cycle of accumulating and investing capital, and the Imperial state had perfected modernisation.

According to Louis Livingston Seaman, MD and veteran of the Spanish-American War and the Boxer Rebellion, Japan's arrival in mainland China bode well for the future. As explained in his book *From Tokio Through Manchuria*, published in 1905, the Japanese army and navy were models of efficiency.

Dr Seaman insisted their presence was needed to stop Russia. "It would indeed be a peril and terror to civilisation were these hardy peasants of Manchuria and the countless hordes of China transformed into minions of the White Czar," he wrote.

Nine years before World War I, long before the Treaty of Versailles and its limitations on the Imperial Japanese Navy's tonnage, Dr Seaman believed Japan acted as a regional balancer. He continued: "The main present hope of security against this lies in a complete victory of the patriots of the Land of the Rising Sun, which shall effectually stem the tide of Russian aggression for this generation at least, thus giving China one more chance to 'put her house in order'."

In the final chapter of *From Tokio Through Manchuria*, Dr Seaman was earnest in his best wishes for China, then the proverbial 'Sick Man of Asia'. "So long as England, Japan, and our own land (the United States) stand for the integrity of this great unwieldy empire, the machinations of her foes will assuredly be circumvented," he wrote.

Perhaps something that was beyond Dr Seaman's ability to foresee was just how sinister the Imperial Japanese Army's administration of Manchuria would become. In the ensuing decades, they turned it into a colony with its very own state-within-a-state, the Kwantung Army.

A less dramatic though insightful account of Manchuria's importance to Japan's progress comes from a book titled *The Economic History Of Manchuria*. Published in 1920, it was prepared by men from the Chosen Bank (pronounced choh-san), a financial institution based in Seoul, run by the Japanese.

The book's author was very frank about Chosen's activities in Manchuria, where it had more branches than in the whole Korean Peninsula. This was necessary because "Manchuria had ever been a tempting field for the bank but then the trade of Chosen with the country was anything but such to justify its financial policy."

Founded in Seoul in 1909, a Japanese Imperial decree in 1917 made Chosen Bank the sole provider of Japanese bank notes in Manchuria. Of course, such a captive market needed to be kept; by force if necessary.

FROM COLONIALS TO CONQUERORS

The Second Sino-Japanese War was actually just the bloodiest phase of a long struggle to capture the Chinese heartland. 30 years previously, the Empire of Japan already had its toehold in Manchuria. In the following years its control of the region grew exponentially, so



■ *As the Japanese invaded, civilians fled from cities such as Peking*

THE RISE OF HIDEKI TOJO

Taciturn, single-minded and a ruthless empire builder, Tojo was an oriental Spartan and the unwitting architect of Japan's humiliation

When Hideki Tojo became prime minister of Japan in 1941, Asia was at the mercy of an unremarkable man. Born in Iwate Prefecture to an army sergeant and the daughter of a Buddhist priest, Hideki was the eldest of three sons and groomed for a military career from an early age. As a result, his world view was framed by his martial upbringing. At 1.6 metres tall, with poor eyesight and a career that was mostly spent in staff positions, Tojo was a hard worker with simple tastes. Serving as military attaché to Germany during and after World War I left a deep impression on him and he was smitten by the idea of national industry subordinate to national will. These experiences led to his involvement with the One Evening Society and the Kodoha movement – each being secret militarist initiatives to prepare Japan for total war. Other than leading the Kempeitai intelligence service in Manchukuo and orchestrating the invasion of Inner Mongolia in 1937, Tojo had little combat experience. As minister of war and then prime minister, he had absolute faith in Japan's destiny as a Great Power and believed any means necessary should justify this end, like the attack on Pearl Harbor. He was executed for war crimes on 23 December 1948.

■ *As war minister, Tojo earned the nickname 'the Razor' for his ability to make extremely quick decisions*

much so that this mutation of Japan's borders, which now spread across East Asia, created the dangerous strains that paved the way for its eventual defeat in World War II. One of these strains was the ambiguous existence of the Kwantung Army.

Despite its ominous name, the Kwantung Army began as a small garrison tasked with protecting the Japanese-owned railroads that transported Manchurian produce to Korea. But as time went on, its size and role changed. With the benefit of hindsight and historical records, it appears the Kwantung Army's distance from Tokyo made its officers more autonomous, more daring, and reckless.

On 4 June 1928, Chinese warlord Zhang Zuolin was assassinated by a bomb in his railway car. This early attempt to subvert Manchuria was inconclusive, but three years later the Kwantung Army overran the area.

The following month, a bomb blast on the South Manchuria Railway led to further military action and the establishment of 'Manchukuo'. It was a daring endeavour to found an industrial colony in China's unforgiving frontier. The deposed Qing emperor Puyi was even rustled out of his post-Imperial life to serve as the nominal head of state.

What made these land grabs so frequent was China's weakness. The Republican Era that began with Sun Yat-sen's revolution in 1911 was a disappointment. By the 1920s the Kuomintang government only had nominal control of China and warlords ran fiefdoms that included whole provinces. So the Kwantung Army, with or without the approval of Tokyo's civilian leaders, took the initiative to expand its territory until it neared its deadliest rival: the Soviet Union.

All the years of subterfuge and belligerence in northeast China were minor acts in a grander drama. The Kwantung Army needed to be secure and impervious should the day come when the rival Red Army came crashing down the steppes, across the Amur River, and right into the intended breadbasket of Japan.

CHINA'S RESISTANCE

Doomed by its own incompetence, the Kuomintang military compensated with sheer numbers equipped with a vast selection of European arms

TRAINING

By 1928, Chiang Kai-shek had unified the crumbling Chinese state with the massive National Revolutionary Army at his disposal. Millions strong, an elite corps of 300,000 officers and soldiers trained by German advisors were ready for a showdown with Japan by 1937.

STRUCTURE

This depended wholly on foreign advisors. Some units were staffed and run like their European counterparts, while others were mired in anarchy. Other units didn't exist at all except on paper and in press releases. Sporadic warlord armies were quite cohesive, but small.

EQUIPMENT

Between poor administration and a modest industrial base, it was only possible to equip the army with locally made small arms. Planes, tanks, ships and artillery were imported from abroad. This over-reliance on foreign aid meant the army did not have a capacity to replace its losses.



■ *Chinese soldiers armed with ZB-26 guns*



■ *The National Revolutionary Army had its own small armoured corps using the French Renault FT-17 light tank*

EFFECTIVENESS

The most effective divisions of the Chinese army perished during the Second Battle for Shanghai in 1937. Others became bogged down suppressing the communists in the interior provinces. If the Chinese had one advantage, it was sheer manpower. The record of the Republic of China's armed forces is an ignominious one. Though successful in almost quashing the nascent communists, it was completely ineffective against the IJA. Even when Chinese generals were often very competent, their loyalties and motivations were highly questionable.

THE TWO SIDES PREPARE

What is often missed when assessing Japan's national character before Word War II is that the political and military leadership were often at odds. As the Kwantung Army and its officers went about the task of colonising Manchuria, the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy were making preparations for the next war.

Even when anachronistic concepts like 'Hakko ichiu', best described as a Japanese version of *Manifest Destiny* and *The White Man's Burden*, gained popularity in the 1930s, it took an unstable officer-class to intimidate and bully the government before Japan could fulfil its imperial goals.

The same year the Kwantung Army overran Manchuria on a flimsy pretext, a pseudo-putsch took place in Tokyo. From 1932 to 1936, there was a campaign by the military, the police and the Kempeitai to snuff out communists, subversive elements and politicians who disagreed with the ideals of Hakko ichiu.

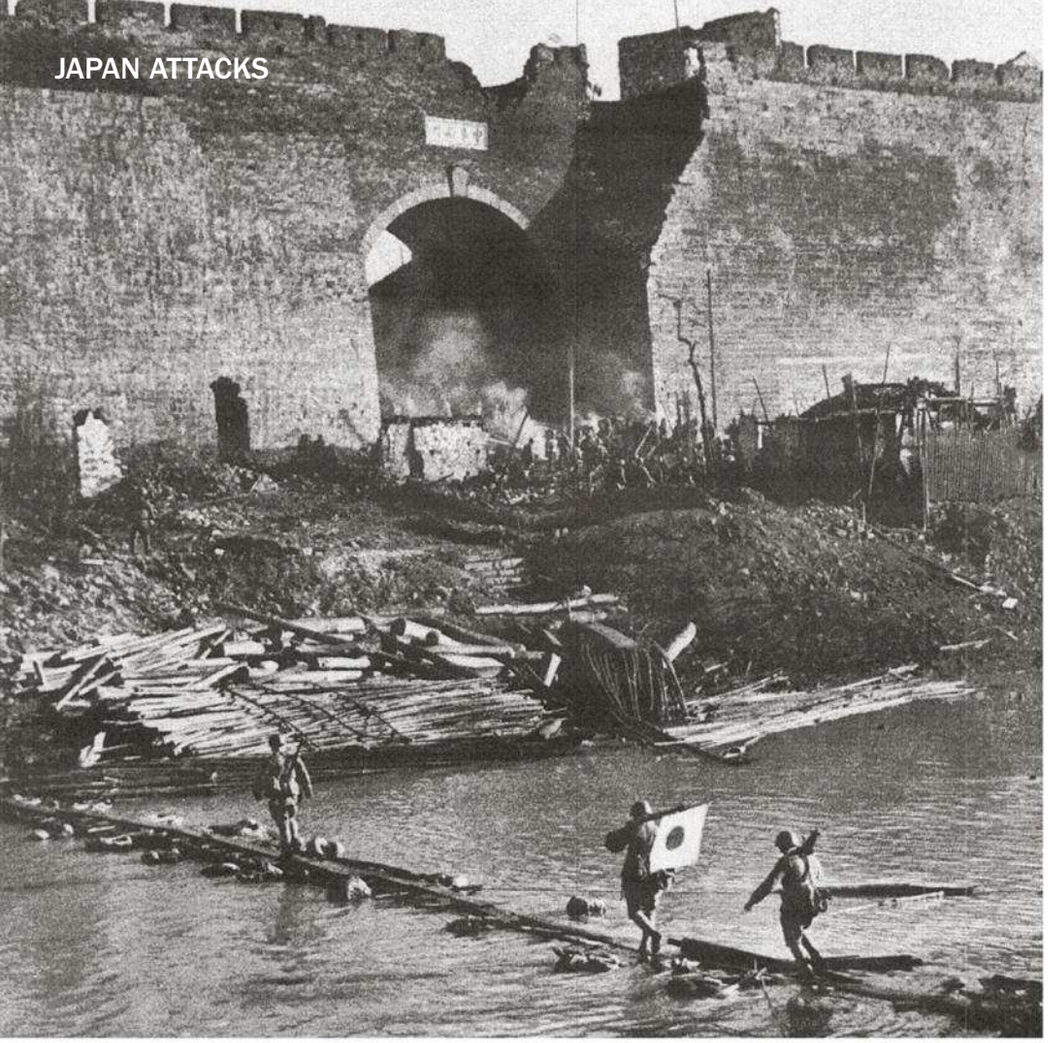
It was apparent a campaign was being waged by a deep state. It had no membership list or manifesto, but it had a name. The mysterious 'Kodoha' believed the first step towards realising an unassailable Japanese empire was seizing power by whatever means. In 1936, the Kodoha's clout meant that the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy (IJA) were readied for the greatest war in Asian history.

Preparations for this momentous struggle had been under way for years. When the US War Department commissioned studies on Japan's military, the results revealed an efficient fighting machine with a vast arsenal. The IJA's Air Service had thousands of trained pilots and aircraft. The navy was the best in the Eastern hemisphere.

The Japanese infantryman, airman and sailor were formed in the same mould. No matter the branch, training was exacting, harsh and literally painful. The Japanese soldier was often portrayed as a yellow-skinned and bow-legged malefactor – in reality, he was a young man who was punished, beaten and humiliated by his superiors on a regular basis.

But he had an excellent rifle in the 6.5mm Model 38, which was later replaced by the

"THE MYSTERIOUS 'KODOHA' BELIEVED THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS REALISING AN UNASSAILABLE JAPANESE EMPIRE WAS SEIZING POWER BY WHATEVER MEANS. IN 1936, THE KODOHA'S CLOUT MEANT THAT THE IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY AND NAVY WERE READIED FOR THE GREATEST WAR IN ASIAN HISTORY"





■ ***Above:*** *During the Battle of Shanghai, Japanese soldiers fire through holes in a brick wall*
■ ***Left:*** *Japanese soldiers cross the moat to enter the Gate of China, Nanking's southerly city wall*
■ ***Below:*** *A baby sits among the ruins of Shanghai*



more powerful 8mm Model 94, colloquially known as the 'Arisaka'. Japanese infantrymen also had a quaint muzzle-loaded 50mm grenade discharger for intermediate ranges as well as a semi-automatic 20mm anti-tank rifle. A lethal variety of machine guns and mortars were available to IJA companies, as well as light tanks and towed artillery. Simply put, Japan's military was ready for its next war.

By comparison, in 1937 the Kuomintang's National Revolutionary Army (NRA) was in questionable shape. Ever since Chiang Kai-shek assumed power in 1928 he had gone about setting China's house in order. At first he almost got rid of the communists under Mao Tse-tung, then he subdued the provincial warlords to assert the Kuomintang's authority.

Both efforts were a success, encouraging the European powers to make resources available for the NRA's modernisation. Western advisors had an important role in moulding the NRA into a professional military that ranked among the world's largest. Most prominent were an unspecified number of Germans, including Colonel General Hans von Seeckt, who fought the Russians in World War I's Eastern Front.

Von Seeckt and a succession of officers gave Chiang Kai-shek a well-trained and highly motivated corps of 300,000 men by 1936. Added to this were between 900,000 to one million auxiliaries. Thanks to foreign aid, the NRA had access to a modern, albeit limited, arsenal. Small arms like the 7.92mm Mauser 98K and the 8.5mm ZB-26 machine gun gave the NRA infantry top-of-the-line firepower.

Limited amounts of modern artillery and light tanks – French Renault FT-17s and Soviet T-26s – also reached the NRA. On the eve of war with Japan, the NRA was laying the groundwork for what would become the Republic of China Air Force. This time it was the Soviet Union that provided the hardware to the Chinese, approximately 500 propeller-driven light fighter aircraft and more than 300 bombers. The navy, on the other hand, possessed modern gunboats and cruisers.

"IT WAS CALLED 'SEISEN' AND IN ITS NAME HELL WAS BROUGHT TO MILLIONS OF INNOCENTS"

A STUMBLE INTO HELL

As it turned out, it took a bizarre string of events to set the NRA and the IJA against each other. Two incidents, one in Shanghai and the other in the former Imperial capital Beijing, would spiral out of control and start an epic battle involving millions.

In July 1937, units of the Kwantung Army seized Beijing's historic Marco Polo Bridge and in August a Japanese navy officer was killed by Chinese sentries in Shanghai. There continues to be speculation that NRA General Zhang Zhizhong orchestrated the incident to provoke a war at the behest of Stalin. Apparently, Zhang was a high-level Soviet agent.

The resulting three-month battle for Shanghai, from August 13 to November 19, was a futile one. In the span of 100 days, the NRA was almost eliminated but the IJA had received a rude awakening. The Chinese could put up a tremendous fight and rising Japanese casualties posed a threat to any invading force's momentum.

The Kuomintang and its military had the worst of it, however. The IJA might have been slowed in the city fighting, but the NRA's losses were in the hundreds of thousands. Gone were its best officers, half of the air corps, and most of its tanks and artillery. Meanwhile, the Kwantung Army in the north had seized Beijing and Inner Mongolia.

Chiang Kai-shek's options were all poor. With the national armed forces in disarray and the IJA on the march, on 1 December the Kuomintang abandoned its capital Nanjing, known to Europeans as 'Nanking', and relocated to Chongqing. The NRA general left behind to defend Nanking, Tang Shengzhi, had the manpower at his disposal but not the will or strategy to block the oncoming IJA. Nanking fell and its inhabitants were at the mercy of the IJA. What followed was a grim and baffling period that still echoes down the years to haunt Japan.

THE RAPE OF NANKING

From 13 December until the end of January the following year, foreign missionaries and members of the diplomatic community witnessed wanton arson and looting by Japanese soldiers in Nanking.

A week before, the retreating Kuomintang tried to destroy any structure of value, lest these be captured by the IJA. Now, entire

neighbourhoods were razed to the ground and civilians were rounded up.

Soon the killing began. What has astounded historians since is that the atrocities perpetrated in Nanking had no precedent and seemed to have little purpose other than to inflict cruelty on its citizens. The earliest testimonies on Nanking during the first two months of Japanese occupation come from two unlikely American conspirators, Reverend John Magee and George Fitch, the head of the local YMCA. Together they smuggled 16mm footage out of China. The footage captured Japanese atrocities in and around the International Safety Zone, where the foreigners vainly tried to save as many as they could.

It was brave but futile. Constantly harassed by the Japanese, Fitch and a small group of foreigners, including the heroic German ambassador John Rabe, bore witness to the IJA's revenge on Nanking. Fitch kept a journal of his experiences. Just four days after the IJA stormed the city, mass rapes were routinely perpetrated. "Over a hundred women that we knew of were taken away by soldiers," Fitch wrote. "Refugees were searched for money and anything they had on them was taken away, often to their last bit of bedding… It was a day of unspeakable horror…"

In 1937, a new concept began to circulate in Japanese newspapers and radio broadcasts. It was an attitude, a national mindset, which would justify a long war with an unyielding enemy. It was called 'Seisen' and in its name hell was brought to millions of innocents. But just what did the IJA accomplish in Nanking?

There was no strategy to the slaughter. Men young and old were rounded up on the assumption they were Chinese soldiers in disguise and either shot to death, machine gunned, or bayoneted. Accounts of mass immolation also trickled out from survivors.

Fitch recalls the story of a Chinese man he tried to save. "He was one of a gang of some hundred who had been tied together, then gasoline was thrown over them and set fire." Women were fair game. Japanese soldiers would break into homes, steal anything of value they could find, and then take turns raping them. Sometimes the women were killed, sometimes not. Eight days before Christmas Eve 1937, Fitch wrote: "A rough estimate at least would be a thousand women raped last night and during the day."

"One poor woman was raped 37 times," he added. "Another had her five-month-old infant deliberately smothered by the brute to stop its crying while he raped her." On 27 December, he wrote: "A car with an officer and two soldiers came to the university last night, raped three women in the premises and took away one with them." On 30 December there were "three cases of girls 12 or 13 years old either raped or abducted." Finally, on 11 January, Fitch's diary notes: "I have written this account in no spirit of vindictiveness. War is brutalising…"

There are no exact figures of civilian deaths in Nanking, or even deaths from the surrounding countryside – the Japanese burned every village in the capital's outskirts. The numbers that have endured are largely estimated statistics. Allowing for a bare minimum of 50,000 civilians killed would mean that the IJA murdered at least 1,200 men and women every day for six weeks. However, the number could easily be as large as 300,000, meaning the rate of murders by bayoneting, beatings, execution and decapitation takes on an unimaginable horror. What cannot be denied or cast in doubt was the scale of Japanese brutality. Aside from the 16mm film that Fitch smuggled in his overcoat to Shanghai and then to the US with the help of Magee, photographs survive of mutilated corpses, pyramids of severed heads, of women stripped bare and taken for trophies.

The IJA also looted Nanking, but the value of this wealth has been forgotten by history. In the face of this carnage, the mistaken bombing of the gunboat USS Panay that killed two Americans and an Italian journalist is understandably a footnote. For this incident the Japanese government apologised and paid reparations.

THE END OF THE BEGINNING

After the atrocities at Nanking, the war raged on, with China's generals always miscalculating and bungling their operations despite foreign aid and expertise. In August 1939, the IJA embarked on its last northern adventure. The goal was the same as before, to expand the boundaries of Manchukuo. But the consequences were dire.

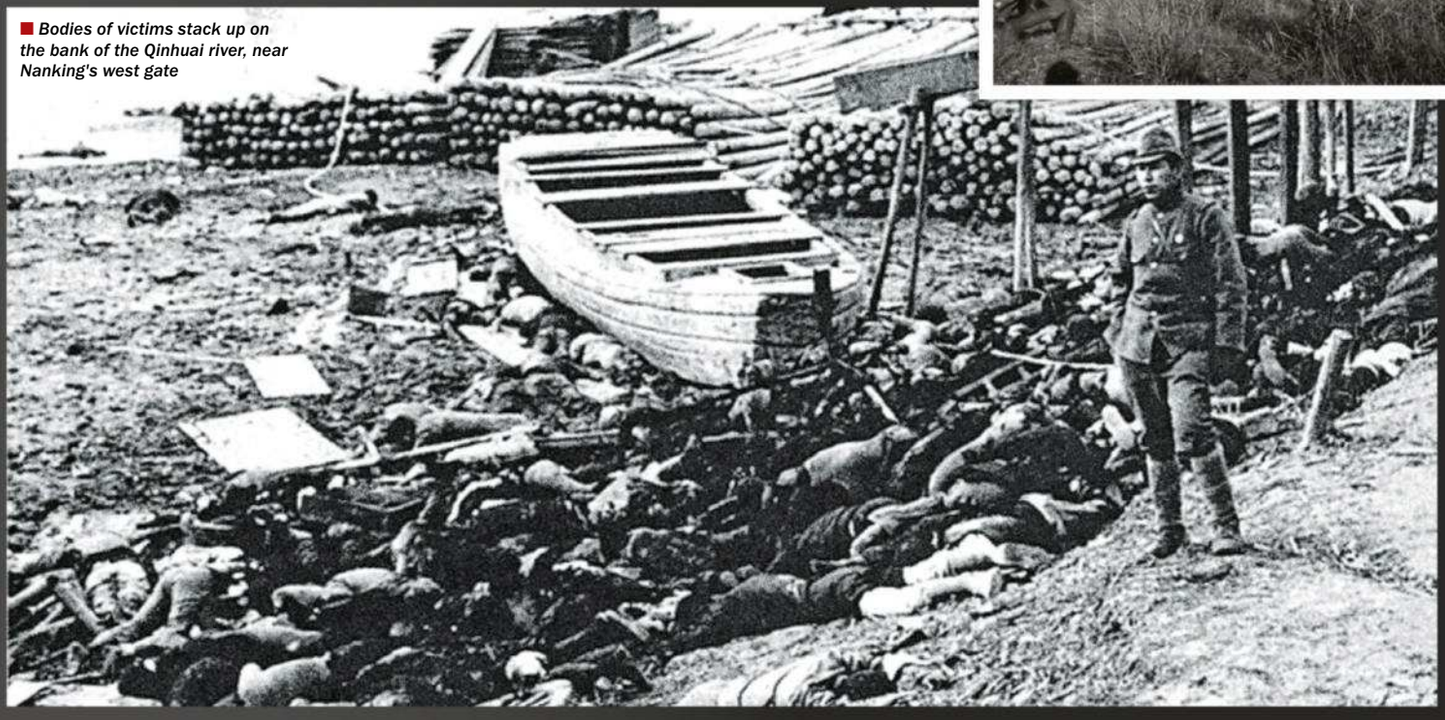
In a place the Soviets called Khalkhin Gol, whole IJA divisions were encircled and wiped out by a methodical combined arms operation that was led by a certain former cavalryman named Georgy Zhukov. The Japanese soldiers, tough as they were, found themselves outfought.

Simply put, the Soviets had better artillery, more tanks, and a lethal new doctrine that annihilated infantry formations. After the battles of Khalkhin Gol, also known as Nomonhan, the IJA had no stomach to fight the Soviets. Manchukuo and the Kwantung Army's fate was sealed on 9 August 1945 when two great pincers of the Red Army crushed the last hope of Imperial Japan.

However, 1937 remains the year when the curtains were first drawn wide open and the stage of the last century's most catastrophic period was set. What followed was a conflagration none of the belligerents could possibly have imagined.



Soviet forces at Khalkhin Gol



Bodies of victims stack up on the bank of the Qinhuai river, near Nanking's west gate



© Piotr Forkasiewicz

JAPAN'S FIRST STRIKE

IMPERIAL PLANNING AND PREPARATION FOR THE SURPRISE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR BEGAN MONTHS BEFORE THE SUNDAY MORNING AERIAL ASSAULT

Just before sunrise on Sunday 7 December 1941, six aircraft carriers of the Imperial Japanese Navy's First Air Fleet under the command of Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, turned into the wind, ready to launch a powerful striking force of 353 aircraft.

Nagumo's flagship, Akagi, and her consorts, Kaga, Soryu, Hiryu, Shokaku and Zuikaku, set in motion the marauding strike force that would plunge the Pacific into World War II. Its target was the US Navy's Pacific Fleet, which was anchored at Pearl Harbor on the island of Oahu in the territory of Hawaii. Other US Navy and Army installations on the island, Hickam Field, Wheeler Field, Bellows Field, Ewa Marine Corps Air Station, and the naval air stations at Kaneohe and on Ford Island in the heart of Pearl Harbor were to be hit as well.

The opening blow was intended to cripple the American military presence in the Pacific; allow the Japanese armed forces to seize and consolidate strategic gains throughout the region; and bring the United States government to the negotiating table where Japan would dictate favourable terms of an armistice. To that end, the Pearl Harbor raid was co-ordinated with attacks on the



"THE RISE OR FALL OF THE EMPIRE DEPENDS ON THIS BATTLE. EVERYONE WILL DO HIS DUTY TO THE UTMOST"

– ADMIRAL ISOROKU YAMAMOTO, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE COMBINED FLEET

"BOLSTERED BY THE BRITISH SUCCESS, THE STAFF OF THE COMBINED FLEET BEGAN WITH RENEWED PURPOSE IN JANUARY 1941, TO PLAN FOR JUST SUCH A BOLD STROKE"

Philippines, Wake Island, Midway Atoll and Malaya.

The gambit was all or nothing for Japan. Although senior Japanese commanders were confident of swift victory, at least some of them acknowledged that a prolonged war with the United States was a daunting prospect, considering the industrial might and resources at the disposal of their adversary. Years of rising militarism and imperialism in Japan had placed the island nation on a collision course with the United States, a preeminent power in the Pacific since the Spanish-American War. Japan's provocative military moves on the Asian mainland, particularly the occupation of the Chinese region of Manchuria and later of French Indochina, had brought the two nations to loggerheads. While negotiations were continuing, most observers on either side of the Pacific believed war was inevitable.

THE BRITISH INFLUENCE

At 9pm on the evening prior to the Pearl Harbor attack, Nagumo ordered all hands aboard the Akagi to attention. He solemnly read a message from Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, commander-in-chief of the Combined Fleet. "The rise or fall of the empire depends on this battle. Everyone will do his duty to the utmost."

Yamamoto meant the communication not only as an encouragement to the Japanese sailors and airmen, but also as homage to naval esprit de corps. During the decades preceding World War II, the Imperial Japanese Navy had embarked on a lengthy program of expansion, modernising and modelling itself on the finest naval tradition in the world – the British Royal Navy. The message from Yamamoto echoed one similarly flashed by Admiral Horatio Nelson, one of the greatest heroes in the history of the Royal Navy, prior to the epic battle of Trafalgar in 1805.

Japanese respect for the Royal Navy ran deep. Since the turn of the 20th century, some vessels of the imperial fleet had actually been constructed in British and French shipyards, while Japanese training, operational standards, uniforms and rank insignia were similar to those of the British.

Following the outbreak of war in Europe, the Royal Navy again served as a role model for the Japanese. On the night of 11 November 1940, Fairey Swordfish torpedo bombers of the Fleet Air Arm flew from the deck of the aircraft carrier HMS Illustrious in the Mediterranean Sea and attacked the Italian naval anchorage at Taranto. The 21 obsolescent British biplanes sank one Italian battleship and damaged two others.

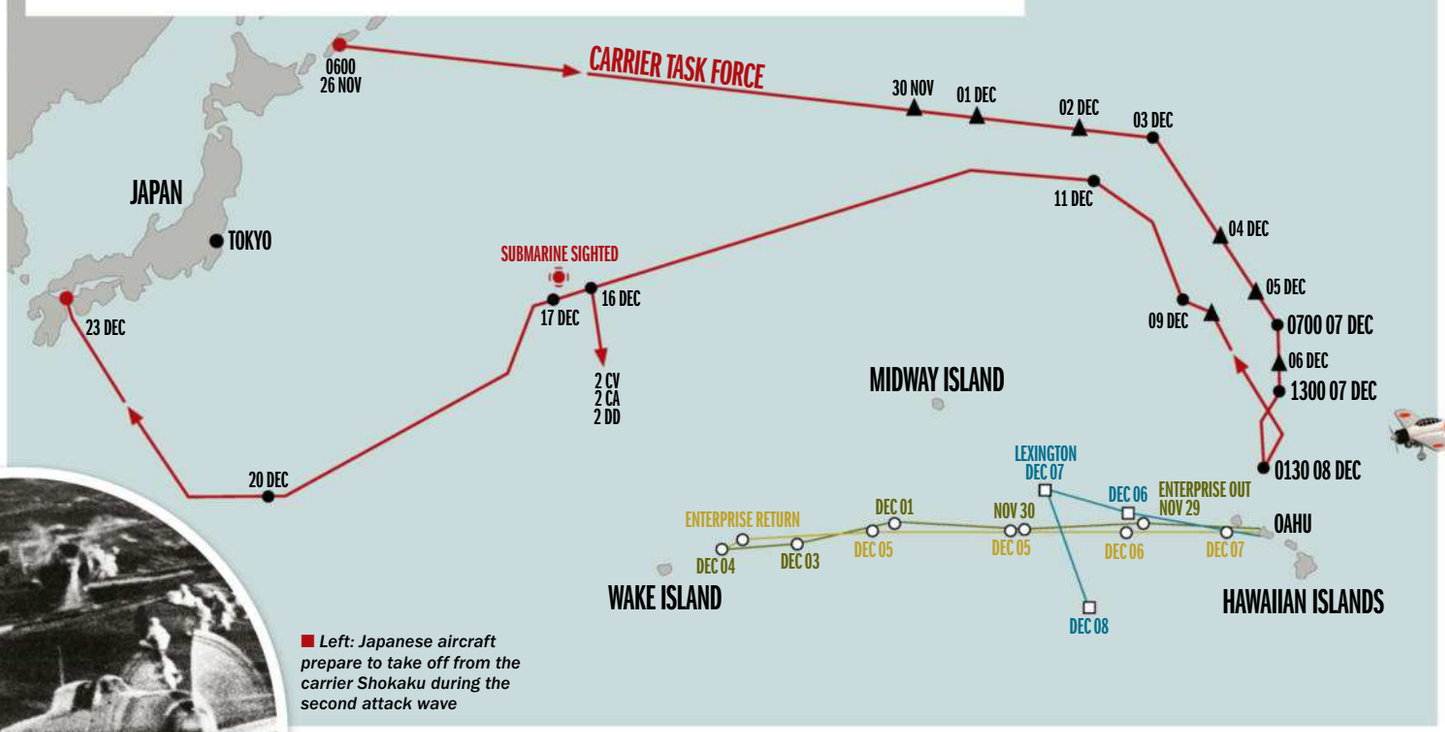
For the Japanese, the idea of a preemptive raid on Pearl Harbor had been discussed, tested during war games and shelved several



Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo led the First Air Fleet during the Pearl Harbor operation, but later lost his command

JAPANESE RAIDER ROUTE

The six Imperial Japanese Navy aircraft carriers and their escorting ships of the First Air Fleet departed the friendly waters of the Kurile Islands on 26 November 1941, sailing a northern route well away from standard merchant shipping lanes and maintaining strict radio silence. Rough seas and intermittent heavy rain cloaked the warships at times as they turned southeast towards a point 370 kilometres north of Oahu to launch the aerial strike force that devastated Pearl Harbor on 7 December.





Left: Japanese aircraft prepare to take off from the carrier Shokaku during the second attack wave

IMPERIAL WAR MACHINES

The Japanese armed forces employed the latest technology available during the opening phase of World War II in the Pacific

MITSUBISHI A6M ZERO FIGHTER

For a time, the Mitsubishi Zero reigned supreme as the finest carrier-based fighter aircraft in the Pacific. Developed in the 1930s, it was already reputed as a highly manoeuvrable, heavily armed and deadly opponent by the time of the Pearl Harbor attack. However, the Zero was also vulnerable. Its design sacrificed armour and self-sealing gasoline tanks to achieve remarkable performance.



ENGINE
Its two-row, 12-cylinder Nakajima Sakae radial engine provided the Zero a top speed of 534 kilometres per hour.

WEAPONS
The Mitsubishi Zero was armed with 7.7mm machine guns firing through the engine cowl and 20mm cannon in its wings.

NAVIGATION
For navigation, Japanese midget submariners depended heavily on instruments and a carefully deployed periscope extending from the small conning tower.

MIDGET SUBMARINE

Two-man Japanese midget submarines were developed to provide stealthy offensive capability. Amid cramped quarters, crewmen manoeuvred their craft, armed with a pair of torpedoes, into position to fire on enemy ships. At Pearl Harbor, all five midget submarines were lost. One was captured intact after it beached and its commander became the first prisoner of the Americans during World War II.

TORPEDOES
Japanese midget submarines carried a pair of lethal torpedoes that protruded from the tubes located in the small submersible's bow.

"AT PEARL HARBOR, ALL FIVE MIDGET SUBMARINES WERE LOST"

AIRCRAFT CARRIERS

At the time of Pearl Harbor, the modern aircraft carriers of the Imperial Japanese Navy included converted battlecruisers Akagi and Kaga, along with those built from the keel up, such as the smaller Soryu and Hiryu. The newest fleet carriers were the Shokaku and Zuikaku, both displacing more than 26,000 tons and carrying more than 80 combat aircraft.

MODIFICATIONS
Japanese aircraft carriers were often modified and upgraded during experimentation to enhance flight operations, including constructing or relocating their islands.

HANGAR DECKS
Japanese crewmen laboured on hangar decks to prepare planes for combat, moving them to flight decks for launch via elevator.

Illustrations: Alex Pang www.alexpangillustration.com

times during the years between the world wars. However, bolstered by the British success, the staff of the Combined Fleet began, in January 1941, to plan for just such a bold stroke. Lieutenant Commander Minoru Genda, one of the best known and most respected aviators in the Japanese armed forces, had observed American carriers operating in a unified, single strike force and attended war games in 1936, during which an offensive scenario against Pearl Harbor had ended in simulated disaster for the attacker. Still, Genda remained one of a relative few Japanese officers who believed it was possible for a carrier task force to successfully deliver a stunning blow against an enemy fleet at anchor.

As Japanese aircraft carrier strength reached sufficient levels to support a Pearl Harbor attack, Yamamoto instructed Admiral Takajiro Onishi, chief of staff of the Eleventh Air Fleet, to order Genda to evaluate the potential for success with, "…special attention to the feasibility of the operation, method of execution and the forces to be used." Yamamoto was reluctant to go to war with the US, however, he strongly believed that a substantial and successful first strike at the Pacific Fleet was the only option to bring such a conflict to a rapid and favourable conclusion for Japan.



The battleship USS Pennsylvania lies behind the battered destroyers, Cassin and Downes, in dry dock at Pearl Harbor

NAVAL AIR JUGGERNAUT

The Japanese Navy observed Western advances in naval aviation and welcomed envoys to consult and train its pilots

The British Royal Navy pioneered many aspects of the development of naval aviation in the early 20th century and Japanese naval observers also recognised its potential.

Intent on emulating the Royal Navy's successes, the Japanese received a British mission headed by Captain William Sempill in the autumn of 1921. Sempill led 29 air operations instructors charged with assisting the development of the Japanese naval aviation program. By 1922, the Japanese had also constructed the Hosho, the world's first aircraft carrier purpose-built, rather than converted from another ship type.

Sempill, who was later exposed as a spy for the Japanese, hoped to secure substantial sales of British arms to Japan in exchange for valuable expertise and advice. His team brought the blueprints of the most advanced British carrier designs, protocols involving elements such as pilot training; the launch and recovery of aircraft; refuelling and maintenance; and airborne operations. The British trained the young Japanese pilots in the latest Royal Navy aircraft, such as the Gloster Sparrowhawk fighter, along with torpedo bombers and dive bombers. They introduced torpedo tactics to the Imperial Navy as well.

Japanese engineers and designers experimented with their own ordnance and aircraft, several of which were patterned after British types, and perfected carrier operations and doctrine during the 1920s and 1930s.

Prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, Lieutenant Commander Takeshi Naito, a naval attaché in Berlin, travelled to the port of Taranto, Italy, where the British had executed a successful attack against the Italian Fleet at anchor in November 1940. With the assistance of the Italian Navy, Naito assessed the dynamics of the Taranto raid and advised the Pearl Harbor planners on modifications to existing tactics. Eventually, wooden stabilising fins were attached to Japanese aerial torpedoes, allowing them to run true in Pearl Harbor's shallow waters.



Dive bombers crowd a flight deck prior to Pearl Harbor

Below: Type 91 Kai 2 torpedoes on the flight deck of the Imperial Japanese Navy aircraft carrier, Akagi. The carrier is at Hitokappu Bay in the Kuriles just prior to departing for the attack on Pearl Harbor



"SEMPILL, WHO WAS LATER EXPOSED AS A SPY FOR THE JAPANESE, HOPED TO SECURE SUBSTANTIAL SALES OF BRITISH ARMS TO JAPAN"

Yamamoto's assertion that Pearl Harbor should be Japan's target actually reversed traditional thinking at the highest command levels within the Imperial Navy. Although the army had been active on the Asian continent, naval doctrine had previously assumed a defensive posture. In the autumn of 1940, Yamamoto's assertion became an ultimatum. He eventually threatened to resign if senior commanders within the Combined Fleet refused to support the proposal.

THE BLUEPRINTS FOR WAR

By the following August, the basic plan for the Pearl Harbor attack had been approved. The six aircraft carriers of the First Air Fleet were to be accompanied by an armada of two battleships, two heavy cruisers, a light cruiser, nine destroyers, three submarines and eight tankers – a total of 31 vessels – sailing from their rendezvous point at Hitokappu Bay in the Kurile Islands. The fleet was to sail on 26 November; take a northerly course, in order to avoid the busy Pacific trade routes and merchant shipping that plied the ocean; maintain strict radio silence; and launch its aircraft in two waves from a position 370 kilometres north of Oahu. The tentative date for the attack was designated as 7 December 1941. A cordon of fleet submarines was positioned around Oahu to provide early warning of American ship movements and attack any US Navy vessels that might be at sea near the harbour. Five midget submarines were to be launched from their mother submarines hours before the aerial attack, with the hope that they might infiltrate Pearl Harbor and launch torpedoes at anchored vessels of the Pacific Fleet.

Early in September, senior Japanese officers convened at the Naval War College in Tokyo and finalised the plans for the attack. One month later, senior pilots who would assume command of air groups were informed of the target against which they had been training so rigorously. They already had some idea of its nature, since the torpedo groups had worked to perfect their runs against capital ships anchored in shallow waters.

Combined Fleet Top Secret Operational Order No 1 was issued on 5 November, followed 48 hours later by Order No 2, authorising the fleet to weigh anchor at the end of the month and to execute the attack on Pearl Harbor.

When the fleet set sail, Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura and Special Envoy Saburo Kurusu were in Washington, DC, conducting last-ditch negotiations with Secretary of State Cordell Hull and President Franklin D Roosevelt. These negotiations were expected to fail, and when the impasse was reached, specific orders to launch the attack would be issued to Nagumo at sea.

At the same time, the envoys, oblivious to the details of the Pearl Harbor attack, were instructed to deliver a message to the US government, officially terminating the negotiations. The government in Tokyo considered this diplomatic step essentially a declaration of war, timed for a half hour before the Japanese aircraft appeared in the sky above Pearl Harbor.

"WHILE THE KATES HIT THE WARSHIPS ANCHORED IN PEARL HARBOR, 25 VALS WERE DESIGNATED TO BLAST THE PRIMARY AMERICAN FIGHTER BASE AT WHEELER FIELD"



The battleship USS Arizona belches black smoke as its superstructure buckles after a devastating explosion during the Pearl Harbor attack

A DAY OF INFAMY

Despite the success of the attack on Pearl Harbor, Admiral Yamamoto surmised that it was incomplete

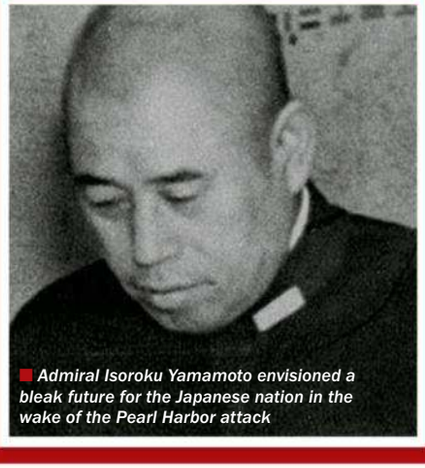
As soon as Lieutenant Commander Mitsuo Fuchida was back aboard the Akagi, the leader of the Pearl Harbor strike reported to Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo on the carrier's bridge. Fuchida is said to have begged his commander to launch another attack.

Nagumo declined. The risk was too great and so he ordered the First Air Fleet to retire. When news of the successful attack reached Tokyo, citizens took to the streets in celebration. The highest echelons of the military exuded optimism.

However, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, architect of the raid, brooded. The American carriers had not been destroyed. Retribution would soon come. He had once warned fellow officers, "If I am told to fight regardless of the consequences, I shall run wild for the first six months or a year but I have utterly no confidence for the second or third year."

Pearl Harbor had been a tremendous tactical victory. The US Pacific Fleet was crippled but Yamamoto's words proved prophetic. Machine shops, repair facilities and stockpiles of fuel and oil were untouched. The submarine base was operational. The Americans recovered rapidly and just six months after Pearl Harbor, four of the Japanese carriers that had executed the raid were sunk by American planes at the Battle of Midway.

"IF I AM TOLD TO FIGHT REGARDLESS OF THE CONSEQUENCES, I SHALL RUN WILD FOR THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OR A YEAR BUT I HAVE UTTERLY NO CONFIDENCE FOR THE SECOND OR THIRD YEAR"



Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto envisioned a bleak future for the Japanese nation in the wake of the Pearl Harbor attack



Above: A Japanese Mitsubishi Zero fighter roars off the flight deck of the aircraft carrier Akagi en route to Pearl Harbor



Photographed 10 days after it crashed during the Pearl Harbor attack, the Zero of Petty Officer Shigenori Nishikaichi lies derelict

Lieutenant Commander Mitsuo Fuchida, leader of the air groups of the First Air Fleet, was assigned the task of allocating aircraft to specific targets, organising the two waves of planes to co-ordinate their attacks and allotting fighter protection against any defending American planes that might make it into the sky. Fuchida assigned 185 aircraft to the first wave. It consisted of 49 Nakajima B5N 'Kate' bombers carrying armour-piercing bombs, 40 Kates with aerial torpedoes, 51 Aichi D3A 'Val' dive bombers with general purpose bombs and 45 superb Mitsubishi A6M Zero fighters to provide escort and strafe targets of opportunity.

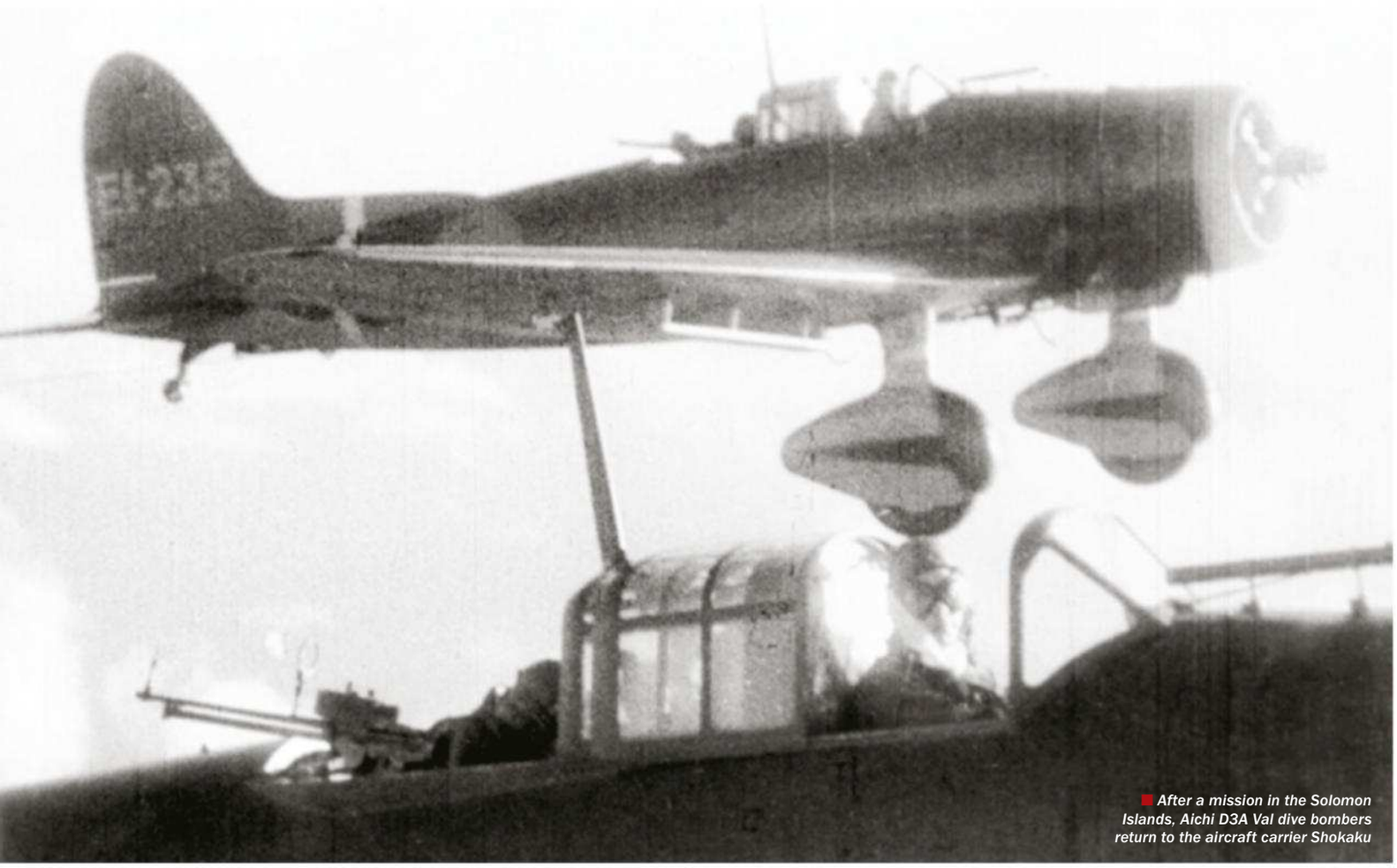
While the Kates hit the warships anchored in Pearl Harbor, 25 Vals were designated to blast the primary American fighter base at Wheeler Field. 17 Vals were assigned to destroy Ford Island's patrol plane and fighter base and nine were to strike American bombers based at Hickam Field. The second wave included 54 Kates armed with 550 and 125-pound bombs to demolish installations and crater runways at the airfields, 80 Vals with 550-pound bombs to renew the attacks on the warships in the harbour and 36 marauding Zeroes.

Fuchida received an intelligence message from a Japanese spy on Oahu the day before the attack was launched. It was tinged both with optimism that the element of surprise would be achieved and disappointment that the three American aircraft carriers, Enterprise, Lexington and Saratoga were not present at the anchorage. It read, "No balloons, no torpedo defence nets deployed around battleships in Pearl Harbor. All battleships are in. No indications from enemy radio activity that ocean patrol flights being made in Hawaiian area. Lexington left harbour yesterday. Enterprise also thought to be operating at sea."

The Saratoga was steaming into the harbour at San Diego, California when the Japanese attackers arrived above Pearl Harbor on 7 December. Although the aircraft carriers were absent, there was no turning back. The attack had to proceed as ordered and the Japanese rationalised that the remaining targets, particularly the US battleships, were high value enough to justify the risk being undertaken.

"TORA! TORA! TORA!"

As the sky was still dark over the deck of the Akagi, pitched in rough seas, a green lamp was waved in a circle and the first Zero fighter roared down the flight deck into the air. Within



After a mission in the Solomon Islands, Aichi D3A Val dive bombers return to the aircraft carrier Shokaku

"AS THE SKY WAS STILL DARK OVER THE DECK OF THE AKAGI, A GREEN LAMP WAS WAVED IN A CIRCLE AND THE FIRST ZERO FIGHTER ROARED DOWN THE FLIGHT DECK INTO THE AIR"

15 minutes, the entire first wave was airborne. At 7.40am, the north shore of Oahu came into view. Fuchida was exultant. He radioed "Tora! Tora! Tora!" to the anxious Nagumo, signifying that complete surprise had been achieved. For several hours, the attackers wrought devastation on their targets below.

Elsewhere in the Pacific, Japanese forces moved aggressively in concert with the Pearl Harbor attack, reaching for objectives that would minimise US interference with coming operations to seize the Dutch East Indies, secure vital resources such as oil and rubber for their war machine and extend their defensive perimeter further into the expanse of the great ocean.

As the attack got underway in Hawaii, word was flashed to Midway Atoll at 6.30am local time on 7 December. The Marine garrison went on high alert and by dusk, the Japanese had arrived. Two Imperial Navy destroyers, the Akebono and Ushio, were sighted as they prepared to shell the installations on Midway.

War came to the atoll at 9.35pm, as Japanese 13-centimetre shells crashed on Sand and Eastern Islands, the two spits of land that, within months, would become the epicentre of World War II in the Pacific. As the destroyers cruised back and forth, the Marine guns responded with seven and 13-centimetre rounds. Japanese shells set the large seaplane hangar ablaze. One enemy round scored a direct hit on the concrete structure that housed the Sand Island powerplant, smashing through an air intake and mortally wounding a young Marine officer, 1st Lieutenant George H Cannon, who refused to leave his post for medical treatment and later received a posthumous Medal of Honor.

The Midway battle lasted for about half an hour and Marine gunners claimed to have scored hits on at least one enemy destroyer, which was seen belching smoke and flame. When the Japanese finally withdrew, four Americans were dead and 10 wounded. 36 Japanese bombers hit Wake Island on the morning of 8 December (across the International Date Line), destroying a dozen Grumman F4F Wildcat fighters on the ground. Meanwhile, Japanese troops landed at Kota Bharu on the coast of Malaya while the Pearl Harbor attack force was in the air. Within hours of the strike against Pearl, Japanese bombers hit Clark Field and other installations in the Philippines, catching American planes on the ground again.

Shocked and bloodied, the United States was suddenly at war. For a time, Japanese domination of the Pacific was virtually uncontested, but just as Yamamoto feared, a protracted conflict, one that Japan could not win, emerged. Even as Allied forces turned the tide and fought their way inexorably to Tokyo Bay and victory in 1945, the spectre of Pearl Harbor haunted the Americans.

While conspiracy theories have surfaced in the three-quarters of a century since the 'Day of Infamy', these remain the topic of heated debate and conjecture. Some revisionist historians have reviewed all the proof they need to conclude that President Roosevelt and other high-ranking Allied civilian leaders and military officers – even British Prime Minister Winston Churchill – were aware that the attacks on Pearl Harbor and other locations were coming. However, the 'case' will probably never be closed.

On the tactical level, the Americans received several warnings of the Japanese air armada approaching Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 – an encounter with a midget submarine and a radar sighting at Opana above Kahuku Point on the north shore, for instance. An open question remains as to whether American commanders in Hawaii should have taken action to improve preparedness and should have been more responsive to the signs of imminent attack on that fateful Sunday morning.

KEY PLAYER: ISOROKU YAMAMOTO

MORE THAN ANY OTHER INDIVIDUAL, YAMAMOTO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR SHAPING THE PRE-EMPTIVE STRIKE ON PEARL HARBOR

Isoroku Yamamoto was born as Takano Isoroku on 4 April 1884 in Nagaoka, in the Niigata Prefecture on the west coast of Honshu. An above average student, Isoroku entered the Japanese Naval Academy in 1900 and, after graduating, went to sea during the Russo-Japanese War.

The following decade, his life began a steep upward trajectory when in 1913 he entered the Japanese Naval Staff College. Afterwards, Isoroku was adopted by the Yamamoto family, and subsequently changed his name to Isoroku Yamamoto. The adoption was a routine occurrence in Japanese culture by families that lacked a male heir.

Before the close of the decade, Yamamoto made the first of two extended visits to the United States. During his first tour from 1919 to 1921 he studied English at Harvard University. He then returned to his homeland to teach briefly at the Naval Staff College before returning to the United States for two years beginning in 1926. The highlight was a stint as Japan's naval attaché.

Yamamoto's time in America had a profound influence on him. While rubbing elbows with US naval officers, he was able to see what most interested them and how they spent their recreational time. He thought that they were rather frivolous as they seemed to spend an inordinate amount of time playing golf and bridge.

But what did impress the young commander was the industrial might of the United States. He realised from his visits that a protracted war with the United States would be difficult, if not impossible, for Japan to win.

When he returned to Japan, his career soared to new heights. He had the good fortune over the next ten years to land a string of assignments, each of which would bring greater responsibility and prestige. Throughout this climb up the naval ladder, Yamamoto would have a chance to apply his sharp and visionary intellect. He began in 1928 by commanding the largest aircraft carrier in the Imperial Japanese Navy's fleet, Akagi. He was promoted to rear admiral the following year and assigned to lead the division of the Naval Air Corps responsible for upgrading and fielding new weapons and equipment.

In the 1930s, he was catapulted into the stratosphere of naval command. He led the First Carrier Division in 1934. Upon receiving a promotion to vice admiral in 1936, he was assigned to serve as the vice minister of the Imperial Japanese Navy. Two years later, he was given command of the First Fleet. These assignments were invaluable on-the-job training. On 30 August 1939, he was appointed to serve as commander-in-chief of the Combined Fleet. The position was the highest command in the Imperial Japanese Navy.

Yamamoto was a realist. He opposed the invasion of northern China in 1937, the subsequent Tripartite Pact of 1940 and – at least at first – conflict with the US, largely because he believed it would be unwinnable. At the same time he was convinced that if it became necessary, Japan must take all of the steps necessary to ensure it would prevail. Indeed, once Japan had invaded Indochina, Yamamoto argued for war with the US, while realising that Japan's only chance of victory lay in a surprise attack.

When sent to attend the London Naval Conference in 1935, Yamamoto had extracted Japan from a series of treaties by which Great Britain and the US restricted how many large ships the Japanese Navy could build in relation to their rival navies. The restrictions, first imposed after World War I, had relegated Japan to a second-rate naval power. In the late 1930s, the old-school Japanese admirals of the Naval General Staff invested heavily in building and launching two of the largest and most heavily gunned battleships ever built, the Yamato and Musashi. These 65,000-ton behemoths dwarfed the 45,000-ton US Iowa-class battleships. In their minds, the admirals envisioned a decisive battle between the big ships of the rival fleets clashing in the western Pacific, perhaps near the Mariana Islands or Marshall Islands.

Yamamoto fought a war of words with the Imperial Navy's top admirals in the year preceding the Pearl Harbor attack in which he sought to persuade them to discard the so-called big ships doctrine in favour of a new strategy centred on aircraft carrier tactics and capabilities. Yamamoto



A dashing Captain Isoroku Yamamoto toured the United States twice in the 1920s, first studying at Harvard and later as naval attaché in Washington



■ *Admiral Yamamoto; many years earlier, he had served on the cruiser Nisshin during the Russo-Japanese war, where he lost two fingers on his left hand to Russian naval fire during the Battle of Tsushima*

argued in favour of the carrier doctrine. By using his sharp intellect, extensive experience and formidable connections, Yamamoto ultimately was able to get the empire's Naval General Staff to approve his plan for a pre-emptive strike on Pearl Harbor with a formidable armada of naval aircraft that included dive, torpedo and horizontal bombers, all protected by a large umbrella of fighter aircraft.

Yamamoto remained aboard his flagship in Japan's Inland Sea during the Pearl Harbor attack. From that location, he would issue a coded attack order, as well as final words of inspiration that were read to the fleet. As the mastermind behind the Pearl Harbor attack, Yamamoto exhibited to the world his tactical and strategic genius. The subsequent campaigns he directed did not go as well. In the attack on Midway Island in 1942, he sought to destroy US ships not caught at Pearl Harbor, including the US Navy's aircraft carriers. However, the Battle of Midway was lost, in large part because Yamamoto's plan, which had multiple objectives that stretched his military assets, was too complicated. After that, the Imperial Japanese Navy was on the defensive in 1943 in the Guadalcanal and Solomon Islands campaigns. Yamamoto committed his units piecemeal, never winning a decisive victory. Even so, convinced that they had to eliminate their most gifted adversary, US Navy officials used intelligence to discern his location in spring 1943. On 18 April, the Mitsubishi G4M bomber in which the admiral was being shuttled on an inspection tour of island bases in the Solomon Islands was shot down by a pack of US P-38 Lightning aircraft.

Yamamoto's body was recovered and cremated. He was given an elaborate state funeral on 5 June 1943. In recognition of his service and achievements, Yamamoto posthumously received the title of marshal. His ashes were divided, with half going to a public cemetery in Tokyo and the other half to his hometown of Nagaoka.

"THE WORST DISASTER IN BRITISH HISTORY"

THE FALL OF SINGAPORE

THE SUN BEGAN TO SET ON THE BRITISH EMPIRE IN 1942 WITH A HUMILIATING DEFEAT WHERE TENS OF THOUSANDS OF ALLIED SOLDIERS BECAME PRISONERS OF THE IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY. AMONG THEM WAS 21-YEAR-OLD BOB HUCKLESBY

SINGAPORE 8-15 FEBRUARY 1942

On 11 February 1942, American journalist Yates McDaniel wrote a final report to his newspaper from a formerly grand outpost in the Far East: "The sky over Singapore is black with the smoke of a dozen huge fires this morning as I write my last message from this once beautiful, prosperous and peaceful city. The roar and crash of cannonade and the bursting bombs that are shaking my typewriter and my hands, which are wet with perspiration, tell me that the war that started nine weeks ago, 645 kilometres away, is today in the outskirts of this shaken bastion of empire."

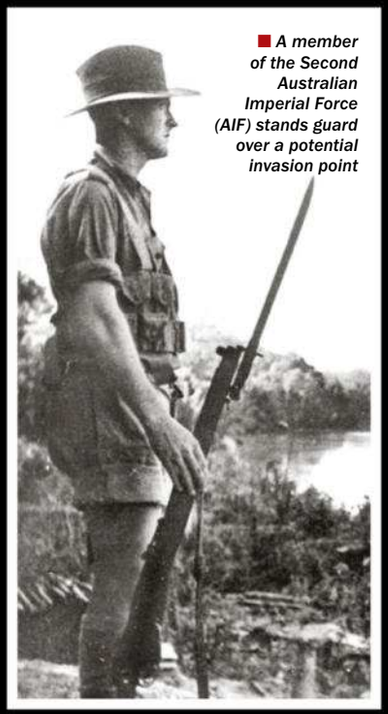
McDaniel would escape the carnage that overwhelmed Singapore, but for many others the devastating assault on this vital part of the British Empire meant death or years of captivity and trauma.

The fall of Singapore was a triumph for Japan and was almost certainly Britain's gravest setback in WWII. More than 80,000 Allied prisoners were captured in a mass surrender against a numerically inferior Japanese force. A shocked Winston Churchill described the humiliation as, "…the worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history."

The road that led to these momentous events was characterised by the formidable fighting ability and tactics of the Japanese, together with entrenched British complacency and incompetence. The end result would be a hammer blow to European imperialism and a brutality on the part of the Japanese that equalled the craven behaviour of their Nazi allies.

'THE GIBRALTAR OF THE EAST'

Located at the southern end of the Malay Peninsula, the island of Singapore had been a British Crown colony since 1867. It was considered a vital part of the British Empire and its major military base was thought to be impregnable. It was known as the 'Gibraltar of the East' or 'the key to the Pacific', and the British had spent 20 years building a highly expensive naval base. When it was completed in 1938, it had cost £60 million (£2 billion today) and was protected by 38-centimetre guns. However, the idea that Singapore was an 'island fortress' was false – only the south was heavily defended – but it was an illusion



A member of the Second Australian Imperial Force (AIF) stands guard over a potential invasion point



Japanese soldiers advancing through the Malayan Peninsula. The British did not expect the Japanese to attack through jungles and swamps



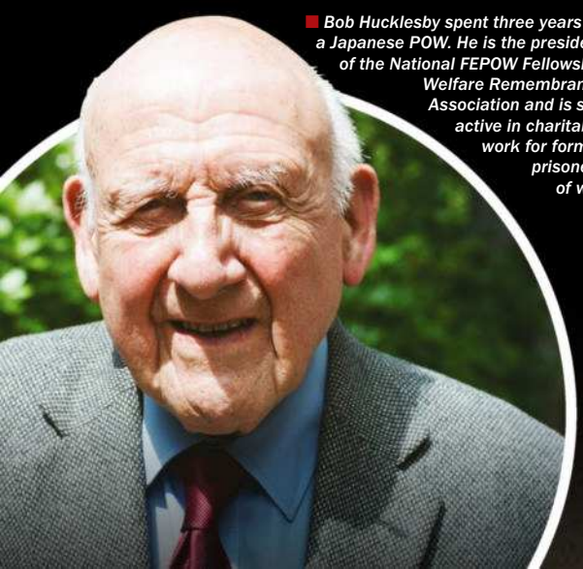
■ *British soldiers of the Suffolk Regiment are held at gunpoint by Japanese infantry. They would be taken away to years of brutal captivity*

"THE IDEA THAT SINGAPORE WAS AN 'ISLAND FORTRESS' WAS FALSE – ONLY THE SOUTH WAS HEAVILY DEFENDED – BUT IT WAS AN ILLUSION THAT EVERYONE BELIEVED"

that everyone believed. This included the Japanese, but they would soon make their own devastating claim.

Japan was subject to a crippling trade embargo from Western powers due to its military campaigns in China and was forced to look for alternative resources. Oil was particularly needed and the most accessible supply was in Borneo, which was then part of the Dutch East Indies. However, the fields could only be obtained through conquest and Singapore was directly in the way of Japanese plans to also take Malaya and the Philippines. They knew that the British and Americans both had powerful naval presences in the Pacific, so Japanese military planners devised a combined offensive against American forces in the Philippines and Pearl Harbor and the British bases at Hong Kong and Singapore.

On 7 December 1941, Pearl Harbor was attacked and Hong Kong and Singapore followed almost immediately afterwards. By 9 December, the Royal Air Force (RAF) had lost nearly all of its frontline aircraft when the Japanese attacked RAF airfields in Singapore. This effectively neutralised any aerial support for the army on the island before a major assault had even begun. Yet, worse was still to come the following day.



■ *Bob Hucklesby spent three years as a Japanese POW. He is the president of the National FEPOW Fellowship Welfare Remembrance Association and is still active in charitable work for former prisoners of war*

As a strategically important base, Singapore had a strong naval presence that was dominated by the new battleship HMS Prince of Wales and cruiser HMS Repulse. The two ships left Singapore to sail north up the Malay coast where the Japanese were landing their invasion force. However, on 10 December, they were both sunk by Japanese torpedo bombers. Their loss stunned Churchill, "In all the war I never received a more direct shock. There were no British or American capital ships in the Indian Ocean or the Pacific except American survivors of Pearl Harbor, who were hastening back to California. Over this vast expanse of waters, Japan was supreme and we were weak."

Churchill was right to be highly concerned, Hong Kong had fallen on 25 December with 10,000 prisoners taken. The only force now guarding Singapore and Malaya was the 85,000-90,000-strong army led by Lieutenant General Arthur Percival. The numerical strength of the British, Indian, Malayan, Australian and New Zealand troops should have been a comfort, but many of the soldiers had never seen combat and this contrasted sharply with the Japanese fighting performance.

BLITZKRIEG IN MALAYA

Although the British knew that Singapore was an obvious target for the Japanese, the high command was confident that any attack would be driven off.

British soldiers were also told that the Japanese were poor soldiers whose success against the Chinese troops was down to them being even worse at fighting. This was proved to be untrue after the fall of Hong Kong and the Japanese invasion of Malaya.

Under the command of Lieutenant General Tomoyuki Yamashita, the Japanese Army swept through the peninsula and any thoughts about a conventional war were soon shattered. The Japanese used speed, surprise and ferocity to ensure that the British never had time to regroup. At the Battle of Jitra between 11-13 December, the British were forced to retreat and left behind a huge stock of supplies, including 100 artillery pieces and machine guns as well as 300 trucks and armoured cars. The Japanese then swiftly continued advancing with most of the soldiers using bicycles as transport.

It was through this rapid march that the Allies became exposed to Japanese brutality. Soldiers were ordered to take no prisoners as they would slow up the advance and an official pamphlet stated: "When you encounter an enemy after landing, think of yourself as an avenger coming face to face at last with his father's murderer. Here is a man whose death will lighten your heart."

Captured Allied soldiers were killed, including some Australians who were shot then doused with petrol and set on fire. Many local civilians who assisted the Allies were tortured before being murdered. Such atrocities were shockingly unfamiliar to the Allies and the Japanese movements surprised the British. It had been confidently presumed that the Japanese would attack Singapore by sea, because the jungle and swamps of the Malay Peninsula would be too difficult to traverse. This complacency was silenced when the Japanese captured Malayan capital Kuala Lumpur on 11 January 1942. Ever since the invasion

force landed in Malaya, the British defence of Singapore had been attacked from behind and the Allied army withdrew across the causeway over the Johor Strait that separated Singapore from Malaya. The island would now play host to the final stand between the two empires.

ARRIVING INTO CHAOS

Sailing into this turbulent situation was a young British soldier called Bob Hucklesby. Born in 1921, Hucklesby was a sapper in the Royal Engineers and had served in the armed forces from the outset: "I was conscripted and joined the army in May 1939. When I was called up, I put my uniform on and went off with a kitbag. I didn't know what was going to happen. War broke out on 3 September and we were on a route march passing through part of Norwich. A lady came rushing out of her home and said, 'You're doing it for real now.'"

As a sapper, Hucklesby worked on a compressor truck and was also trained in explosives. For the first two years of the war, he served as part of the Home Forces in Britain but towards the end of 1941 he was preparing to go abroad to serve in the Middle East when his transport ship was diverted. "Everything was stencilled in to go to Basra and we were in khaki drill and pith helmets etc, which was not the sort of thing for the jungle. When Pearl Harbor was bombed, we were a few days out of Cape Town. The decision was then made to send the whole division to Bombay."

While he was in India, Hucklesby had to adjust to the hot climate: "The reason we went to Bombay was to acclimatise because we had been at sea for almost three months. We had a fortnight of acclimatisation in India and my field company was at Deolali (Doolally). It was a hot spot and I can understand where the phrase, 'Gone Doolally' came from. Then we took off and arrived at Singapore on 29 January 1942."

Before he arrived on the island, Hucklesby's knowledge of his Japanese opponents was minimal: "We knew very little. In my opinion, the British should have taken note of what had already happened in China. We heard a lot about that afterwards because I met up with people in the navy who had been on gunboats on the Yangtze River. They used to tell me that every morning they [saw] dead bodies floating down the river, so we ought to have known." Hucklesby consequently came in for a direct shock when he docked at Singapore on 29 January 1942: "When we arrived on the quayside there were civilians queuing to get off, so we realised that things were serious."

Two days after Hucklesby's arrival, Percival's entire force of British and Commonwealth troops had withdrawn across the 335-metre causeway over the Strait of Johore onto Singapore Island – the causeway was subsequently blown up to prevent the Japanese from crossing. Almost 100,000 Allied soldiers were now based on Singapore, compared to Yamashita's approaching army of 30,000. Between 8-9 February, 23,000 Japanese troops crossed the straits in landing craft.

Australians were among the first to see combat and their performance was highly mixed. Some simply dropped their rifles and ran, but others fought the Japanese to a standstill at a base near Johore Bahru. At the Kranji depot, the Australians incinerated many attackers by setting oil tanks alight and the Japanese Imperial Guard beheaded 200 wounded prisoners in a vengeful retaliation. At 4.30am on 9 February, an order to withdraw was accidentally given by the British high command, which proved to be a costly mistake as the main line of the Allied defence had now collapsed.



Black smoke rises from half a dozen oil and ammunition dumps in Singapore during the last days of the battle



"WHEN WE ARRIVED ON THE QUAYSIDE THERE WERE CIVILIANS QUEUING TO GET OFF, SO WE REALISED THAT THINGS WERE SERIOUS"

This rapidly deteriorating situation was disorientating for Hucklesby, who was forced to adjust quickly to his new circumstances, "It was a totally different environment to what we'd been used to. I remember being on guard in our tented camp that was in a rubber plantation. With the trees in line, whichever way you looked it made it difficult not to see a Japanese coming in from behind because we knew they were on the island."

Hucklesby was stationed on the coast and he put his engineering skills to work, "I used my compressor and cut two channels a good distance apart in a reinforced concrete jetty. I laid a charge down each channel and blew it up. It was far enough apart so that you could jump from one side to the other. It was meant to be a deterrent for the Japanese to use that concrete pier as a means of landing."

After preparations were complete, Hucklesby prepared to fight, "Not long after that, there were no particular duties for sappers in the Royal Engineers so we became infantry. My section was ranged along a monsoon drain opposite a playing field, because it was thought that the Japanese had broken through the first line and they would have an advantage if they came across this field. It was also used by a herd of cows too so that made it very difficult."

Although Hucklesby's section did not see combat, they came under direct attack by Japanese bombers: "We were in that situation for about three days and used to see the Japanese air force go over on a regular basis because there was nothing to stop them. There was no Allied air force at Singapore because it was vacated to Java, so the Japanese could drop bombs and do whatever they wanted. I recall seeing a Tamil or an Indian in his white robes walking around in a circle and then you'd see a bomb drop. These bombs would blow up people but thankfully, they missed us." Despite the bombardment, Hucklesby felt secure in his position: "We thought we were reasonably safe in this rather deep monsoon drain. It was comforting in a way."

A GROWING DISASTER

Hucklesby's situation was one that was being repeated thousands of times across





Japanese soldiers marching through Singapore after the surrender. Their campaign to defeat the British had been successful, but at an extremely brutal cost



General Yamashita (seated right, back) demands an unconditional surrender from General Percival (seated right, front). The confident pose of the Japanese belies the fact that they were outnumbered and low on ammunition

THE RABBIT VERSUS THE TIGER

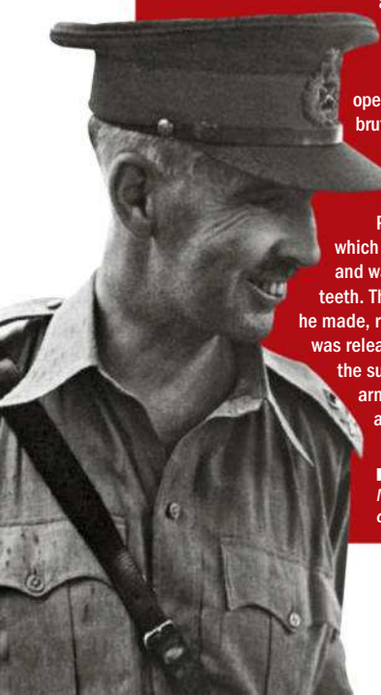
The opposing commanders at Singapore were both personally courageous but the battle was largely won on who possessed the most imagination and charisma

ARTHUR PERCIVAL (1887-1966)

Percival has gone down in history as a failure for surrendering at Singapore but he had known successes in his career prior to 1942, as well as controversies. He had joined the British Army as a private in 1914 and was commissioned within a month. By 1917, he was colonel in command of a frontline battalion. Percival was also highly decorated and was awarded a Military Cross, Distinguished Service Order and Croix de Guerre. He was described by his commanding officer as, "very brave and gallant."

Between 1920-22, Percival served in counter-insurgency operations in Ireland where his men earned a reputation of brutality towards the IRA. When war broke out again in 1939, he commanded 43rd Division and was evacuated from Dunkirk before being sent to command British forces in Malaya.

Although he had a distinguished combat record, Percival's experience was confined to Western Europe, which was unsuitable in the Far East. He was also uncharismatic and was nicknamed 'Rabbit' because of his prominent front teeth. These factors, combined with the serious tactical mistakes he made, reduced morale and aided defeat at Singapore. After he was released from Japanese captivity in 1945, Percival witnessed the surrender of Japan aboard USS Missouri but when he left the army, he was denied the knighthood that usually accompanied a retiring general.



Within months of his arrival in Malaya, Percival would oversee a huge capitulation to numerically inferior forces

VS

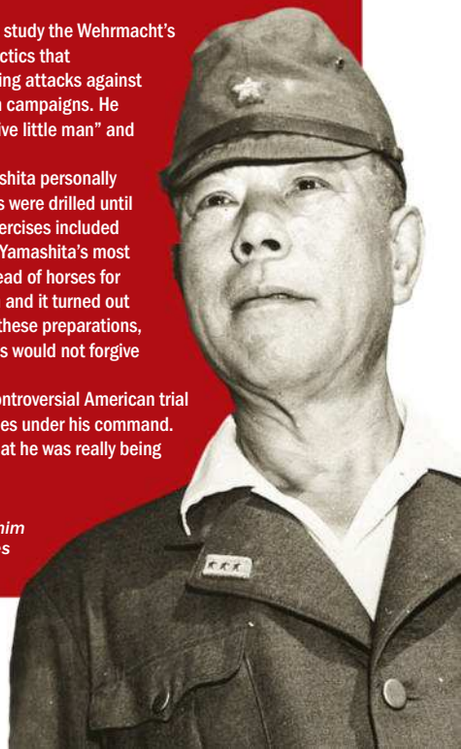
TOMOYUKI YAMASHITA (1885-1946)

Yamashita was nicknamed 'The Tiger' for his strict, aggressive reputation. Graduating as an army officer in 1905, he was a lieutenant general by 1937 and gained combat experience leading troops in China during the late 1930s.

Yamashita was sent to Germany in 1940 to study the Wehrmacht's methods and was impressed with blitzkrieg tactics that co-ordinated air, armour and infantry in lightning attacks against the enemy. He would later use them in his own campaigns. He considered Adolf Hitler to be "...an unimpressive little man" and thought he looked like a clerk.

To prepare for the invasion of Malaya, Yamashita personally trained his troops in jungle conditions. Soldiers were drilled until they knew their roles to perfection and their exercises included amphibious landings and bridge construction. Yamashita's most imaginative innovation was using bicycles instead of horses for transportation, as they were easier to maintain and it turned out to be a stroke of logistical genius. Because of these preparations, Singapore and Malaya rapidly fell and the Allies would not forgive Yamashita his success when the war ended.

In 1946, Yamashita was executed after a controversial American trial concerning Japanese atrocities in the Philippines under his command. Yamashita felt that the case was biased and that he was really being charged for losing the war.



Yamashita's success during WWII earned him a fearsome reputation and he was sometimes referred to as 'The Beast of Bataan'

the island. Not only was there no effective air defence, the British were paying the price for years of complacency and poor military planning. Shortly before the Japanese attack, the new British commander-in-chief of all forces in the Far East, General Archibald Wavell, inspected Singapore and found that there were no defences on the north shore. Wavell sent Churchill an urgent report and the prime minister later wrote of his surprise at the situation, "I must admit to being staggered by Wavell's telegram. The possibility of Singapore having no landward defences no more entered my mind than that of a battleship being launched without a bottom."

A rumour later circulated that the naval guns at Singapore could not be turned northwards but Hucklesby dispels that myth: "Those big guns only had armour-piercing shells, they didn't have any that would split. They could turn them around inland but they were no use because the shells were not good for that purpose. You can imagine how I feel when I think somebody should have realised that. I found this out years later and felt annoyed because it seemed to me that those who were there to advise hadn't really studied the situation."

It had initially been predicted that Singapore could hold out for at least three months. This would have been enough time for reinforcements to reach the island and make it too well defended for Yamashita to overcome. However, with the continual air bombardments, nerves were beginning to shred. Singapore City in particular was suffering higher civilian casualties than soldiers in the field and at the front Percival was becoming unnerved by the Japanese attack.

In reality, Yamashita's offensive was on the verge of faltering. The Japanese were outnumbered three to one and were chronically short of fuel and ammunition. Senior officers argued that a major offensive against the British would ultimately fail, but Yamashita ignored this advice and decided to take a huge gamble. He ordered his artillery to shell the British as though his gunners had an endless supply of ammunition.

Percival fell for the ruse. As an experienced WWI veteran, he thought that the renewed barrage was comparable to the artillery offensives of the Western Front. Like Yamashita, he was also short on ammunition and limited his own gunners to 20 rounds per day. To compound the situation, Percival had also deployed his troops across the entire width of the island, resulting in his men being spread too thinly to concentrate en masse against the enemy, with disastrous results. There was fierce fighting along the Choa Chu Kang and Bukit Timah roads as well as numerous battles, including hand-to-hand fighting at Pasir Panjang, but in each case, Allied troops were overwhelmed and driven back.

Despite this, the Japanese senior commanders were still urging Yamashita to reconsider his options. They continuously advised him to withdraw his forces to Malaya in order for them to resupply, ready to begin a fresh attack with more men and more ammunition. However, Yamashita literally stuck to his guns and gave the orders that the artillery barrage and advance against the Allies would continue. The last thing he wanted was to give the British a chance to recover, particularly when Churchill was unleashing his bulldog spirit.



When General Percival was released from captivity, he was placed directly behind Allied Supreme Commander Douglas MacArthur to witness the Japanese surrender aboard USS Missouri on 2 September 1945. Percival is the figure on the left behind MacArthur

AN EMPIRE DISHONOURED

The prime minister was aware of the deteriorating situation and sent a highly uncompromising cable to Wavell for fighting to

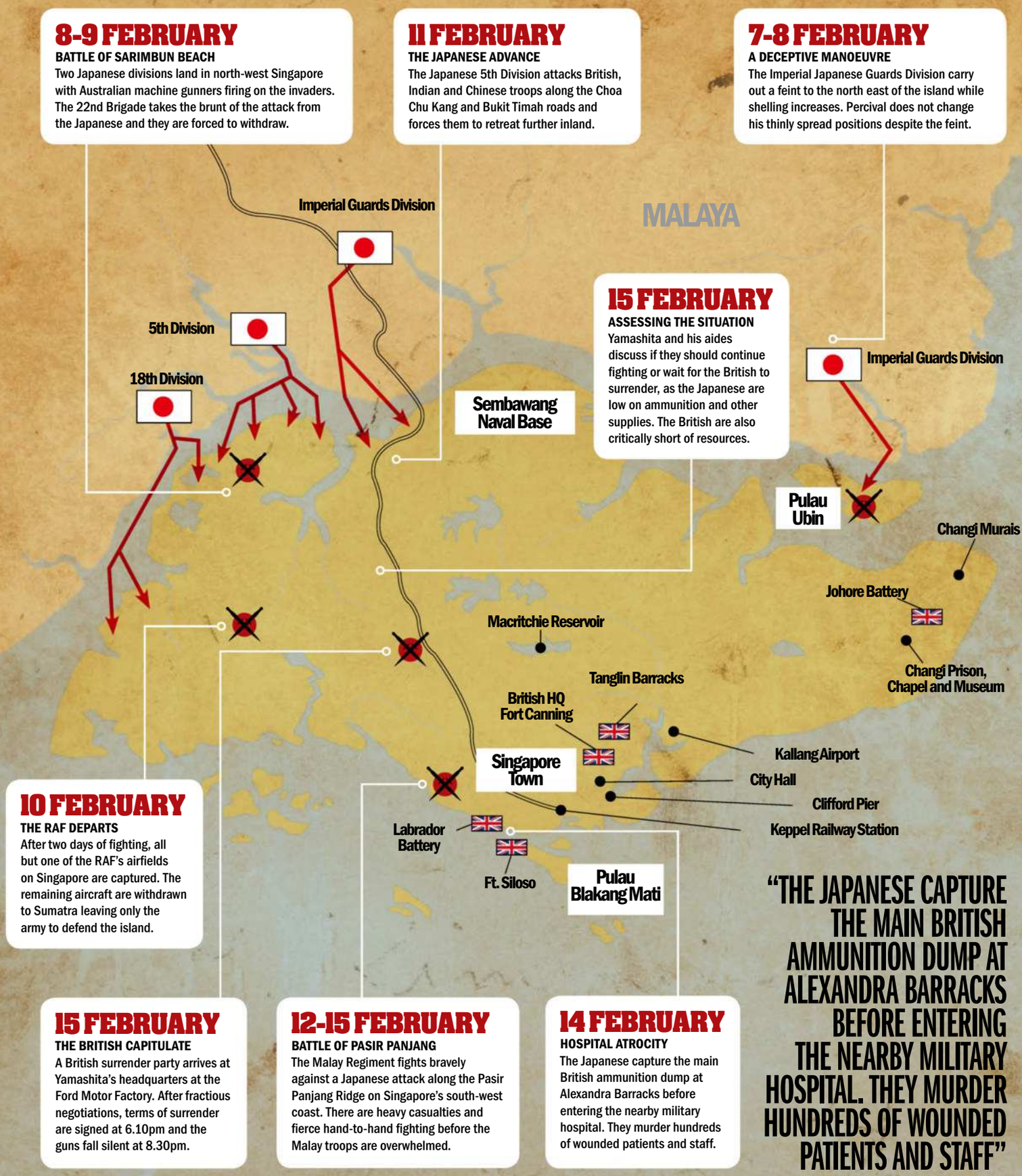
"THERE MUST BE NO THOUGHT OF SAVING THE TROOPS OR SPARING THE POPULATION. THE BATTLE MUST BE FOUGHT TO THE BITTER END AT ALL COSTS"



A mother grieves over the loss of her child who is lying dead beside her after a Japanese bombing raid. Tens of thousands of Singaporean civilians were killed

CONQUERING 'THE GIBRALTAR OF THE EAST'

The fall of Singapore was completed by incompetent British-led withdrawals and Japanese tactics that were both cunning and brutal



8-9 FEBRUARY

BATTLE OF SARIMBUN BEACH

Two Japanese divisions land in north-west Singapore with Australian machine gunners firing on the invaders. The 22nd Brigade takes the brunt of the attack from the Japanese and they are forced to withdraw.

11 FEBRUARY

THE JAPANESE ADVANCE

The Japanese 5th Division attacks British, Indian and Chinese troops along the Choa Chu Kang and Bukit Timah roads and forces them to retreat further inland.

7-8 FEBRUARY

A DECEPTIVE MANOEUVRE

The Imperial Japanese Guards Division carry out a feint to the north east of the island while shelling increases. Percival does not change his thinly spread positions despite the feint.

15 FEBRUARY

ASSESSING THE SITUATION

Yamashita and his aides discuss if they should continue fighting or wait for the British to surrender, as the Japanese are low on ammunition and other supplies. The British are also critically short of resources.

10 FEBRUARY

THE RAF DEPARTS

After two days of fighting, all but one of the RAF's airfields on Singapore are captured. The remaining aircraft are withdrawn to Sumatra leaving only the army to defend the island.

15 FEBRUARY

THE BRITISH CAPITULATE

A British surrender party arrives at Yamashita's headquarters at the Ford Motor Factory. After fractious negotiations, terms of surrender are signed at 6.10pm and the guns fall silent at 8.30pm.

12-15 FEBRUARY

BATTLE OF PASIR PANJANG

The Malay Regiment fights bravely against a Japanese attack along the Pasir Panjang Ridge on Singapore's south-west coast. There are heavy casualties and fierce hand-to-hand fighting before the Malay troops are overwhelmed.

14 FEBRUARY

HOSPITAL ATROCITY

The Japanese capture the main British ammunition dump at Alexandra Barracks before entering the nearby military hospital. They murder hundreds of wounded patients and staff.

"THE JAPANESE CAPTURE THE MAIN BRITISH AMMUNITION DUMP AT ALEXANDRA BARRACKS BEFORE ENTERING THE NEARBY MILITARY HOSPITAL. THEY MURDER HUNDREDS OF WOUNDED PATIENTS AND STAFF"

continue: “There must be no thought of saving the troops or sparing the population. The battle must be fought to the bitter end at all costs. Commanders and senior officers should die with their troops. The honour of the British Empire and of the British Army is at stake. I rely on you to show no mercy or weakness in any form. The whole reputation of our country and our race is involved. It is expected that every unit will be brought into close contact with the enemy and fight it out.”

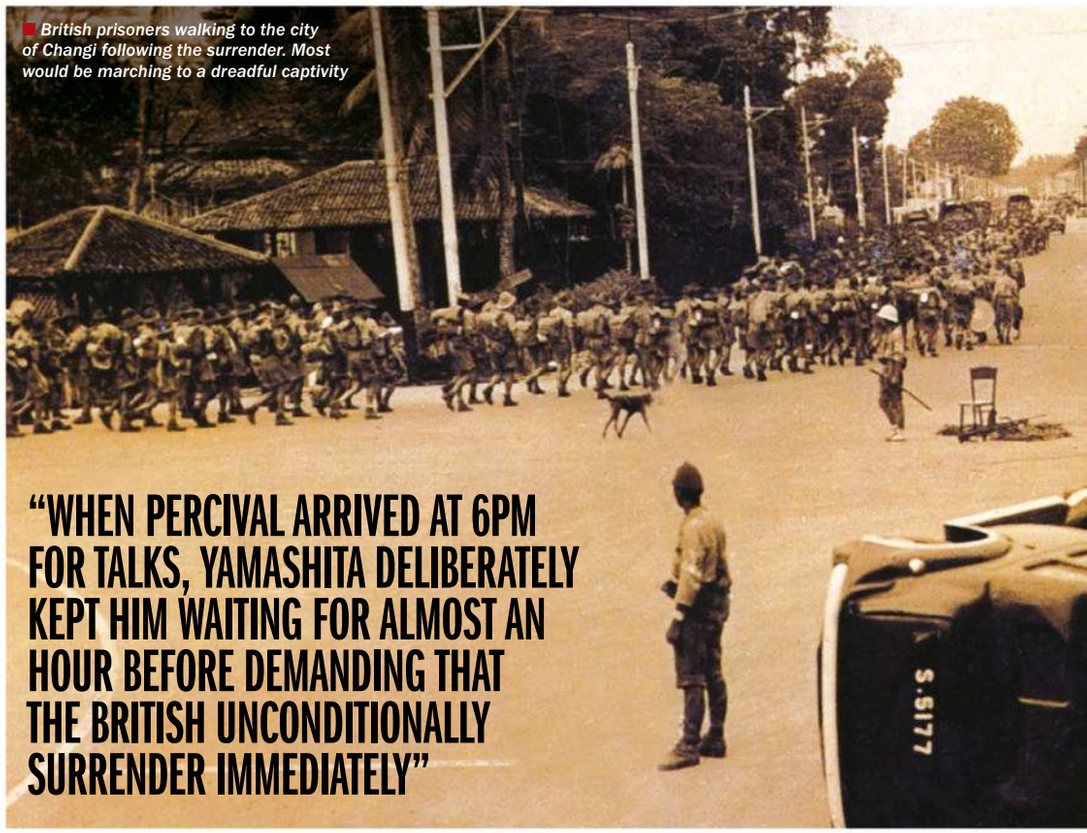
Despite the bloodthirsty rhetoric from Churchill, Wavell and Percival thought differently. The ferocious nature of the Japanese offensive was overwhelming on a practical level, the water supply had almost been destroyed and there was a high risk of an epidemic resulting from the many unburied dead in Singapore City. Wavell sent a message to Percival from Java on the morning of 15 February, urging him to continue fighting but he ended his communication saying, “When you are finally satisfied that this is no longer possible, I give you discretion to cease resistance. Before doing so, all arms, equipment and transport of value must, of course, be rendered useless.”

Percival agreed and sent three officers to the Japanese headquarters to arrange a ceasefire. Yamashita agreed but he initially suspected a British deception. As the Japanese were greatly outnumbered, he feared that the Allies were buying time or trying to organise a Dunkirk-style evacuation. Neither was acceptable to Yamashita as he could no longer afford another big offensive. In an attempt to force Percival’s hand, Yamashita invited him to surrender talks at the Ford Motor Company’s assembly plant. The location was deliberate as it was the largest building on the island and could easily accommodate the large number of Japanese reporters, photographers and newsreel cameramen that Yamashita had assembled to record the occasion.

When Percival arrived at 6pm for talks, Yamashita deliberately kept him waiting for almost an hour before demanding that the British unconditionally surrender immediately. Percival attempted to delay until the following day but Yamashita persisted and told his interpreter: “I want to hear nothing from him except yes or no.” Faced with no choice Percival accepted an unconditional surrender.

This was the defining moment of Yamashita’s career. He had been informed that Singapore could hold out for 18 months and would require five divisions to overwhelm the defences. Against the odds he had accomplished the island’s conquest in a campaign lasting 70 days and with only three divisions. For the Allies, and particularly the British, it was total humiliation, especially when Yamashita ordered the entire garrison to be paraded in front of his army and Japanese news photographers.

Away from the negotiations Hucklesby was still on alert when news reached him of the surrender: “After about four days we learned through a courier that the British had called it a day and capitulated. We got out of the trench, and when I took my boots off I discovered they were coloured white because I’d been in water for days. Then we made our way to a large house and I met up with others from the same



British prisoners walking to the city of Changi following the surrender. Most would be marching to a dreadful captivity

“WHEN PERCIVAL ARRIVED AT 6PM FOR TALKS, YAMASHITA DELIBERATELY KEPT HIM WAITING FOR ALMOST AN HOUR BEFORE DEMANDING THAT THE BRITISH UNCONDITIONALLY SURRENDER IMMEDIATELY”



General Arthur Percival (right end) marches towards the Japanese headquarters to surrender Singapore bearing the Union Flag and the white flag



field company that I was in. While I was there I thought, 'I'm not letting the Japanese use my compressor' so I got the tools out, took the head off one of the cylinders, removed the valves and threw them away so it couldn't be used. We hung about all day and then later on we were told where we had to line up on this road ready to march off to Changi."

A BLOODY AFTERMATH

The fight for Singapore had been a devastating encounter. The casualties of the battle itself were around 5,000 Allied and 4,485 Japanese dead and wounded. Nevertheless, worse was still to come. Japanese soldiers were already notorious for their brutality while on campaign and now they inflicted their wrath on Singapore's civilians.

The military police rounded up tens of thousands of Chinese men as well as diverse members of the professional classes. They were taken out of town, shot and dumped in mass graves, with estimates of the dead ranging wildly between 5,000-100,000. Yamashita later claimed that he was unaware of the atrocities but as he was nominally in charge of the island, it is virtually impossible that he was ignorant of the atrocities.

Away from this horror, the Japanese, with no sense of irony, renamed Singapore 'Shonan' (Light of the South) and their victory allowed them to consolidate their conquest of the Dutch East Indies and its oil. This gave Japan a vital lifeline for its conquests.

The conquest effectively neutralised the British as a serious threat in the Pacific for a number of years, but the loss of prestige was arguably more damaging. 80,000 soldiers were captured in a surrender that signalled a significant death knell to the British Empire. The sheer number of prisoners was a surprise both to the Japanese and even to British soldiers like Hucklesby: "It wasn't long after becoming a prisoner of war and being without food for three days that we realised it was not going to be as short a stay as we originally thought. The Japanese decided that they had to do something with the vast numbers of prisoners. They didn't expect that number and we also didn't expect that number to be there. We had no idea how many Allied troops there were on the island."

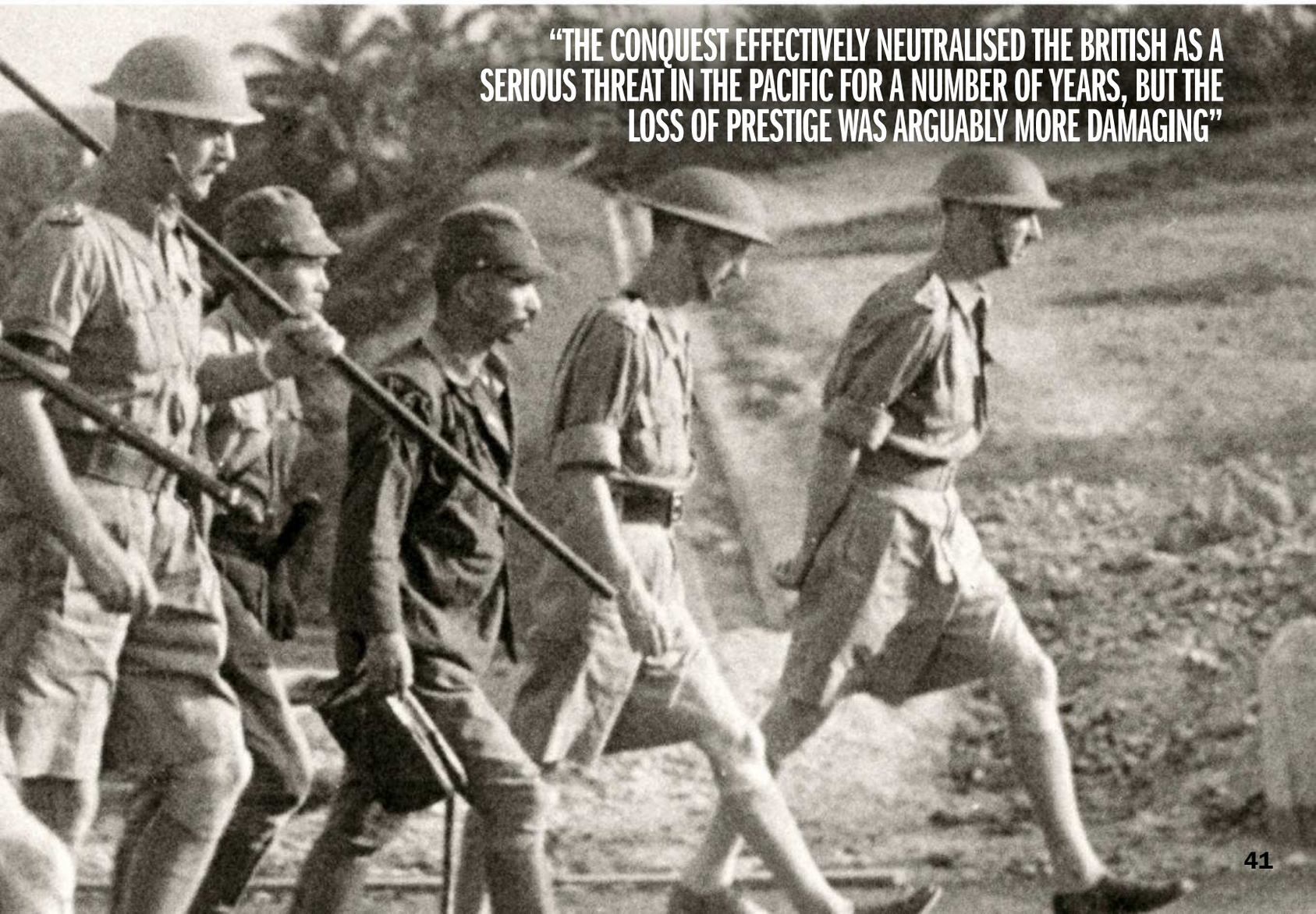
As one of the many thousands who were captured, Hucklesby felt that the British could have fought on, but reflects that it was an unfortunate situation. "I don't think surrender was inevitable, but the British and the Allies were at a disadvantage from day one," he reflects. "It seemed to me that it was only towards the end when the Japanese got onto the island. If there hadn't been a capitulation there would have been no drinking water for the thousands of natives who lived on the island. To me, giving up wasn't quite as definite because there were other reasons. Nevertheless, it was a hell of a blow."

Hucklesby believes that the blame for surrender lies solely with senior Allied commanders. "You've got to realise that Britain was involved in war on several fronts and Singapore and Hong Kong were a long way off. There was nothing that got in the way of the Japanese making it all the way down Malaya.

"They had a good foothold and in my opinion it was too sudden and too late for the Allies to have taken that on board correctly and, with good advice, find a way to deal with that particular war. It was a huge strategic error."

In the immediate aftermath of the surrender, Hucklesby was angry at the Allied high command: "At the time I was disgusted, I felt that they hadn't taken the Japanese seriously enough for long enough. To give you some idea, I didn't apply for my medals until around 1965 because I didn't really want to wear them."

Nevertheless, Hucklesby is remarkably generous towards the man most responsible for the fall of Singapore, with whom most historians have lumped the majority of the blame. "I never really blamed Percival because he was more of an administrator than a soldier and he should have been surrounded by the right advisors. He tried to compensate as much as he could because he got involved with Far East POWs when we got home. He didn't desert us and he could have done."



"THE CONQUEST EFFECTIVELY NEUTRALISED THE BRITISH AS A SERIOUS THREAT IN THE PACIFIC FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, BUT THE LOSS OF PRESTIGE WAS ARGUABLY MORE DAMAGING"



Allied POWs working on the Burma Railway. Despite being afflicted with multiple diseases, Bob Hucklesby was forced to work by the Japanese

HORROR IN CAPTIVITY

Bob Hucklesby joined thousands of other POWs in dreadful captivity and managed to survive the Burma Railway, Japanese brutality and terrible diseases

WWII has become synonymous with death and destruction on a scale never seen before or since. For most people, the sheer terror of the conflict is epitomised by the Holocaust and the mass implementation of industrial genocide. Nevertheless, the brutality of the war took many different forms across the world and the conduct of the Japanese in the Pacific equalled Germany and the Soviet Union for their appalling treatment of those who opposed them. It is estimated that between 3-14 million people may have been murdered by the Japanese military and government through massacres, human experimentation, starvation and forced labour.

Thousands of these victims were Allied prisoners of war, many of whom were part of the 80,000 men captured at Singapore. For three and half years, these soldiers faced unimaginable conditions: disease, violence, malnutrition and death were everyday facts of life. Bob Hucklesby was one of many who endured this nightmare and survived. His story is a sobering reminder that war can bring out the worst, but also the best, in humanity.

CAPTIVITY IN SINGAPORE

In the initial aftermath of the surrender at Singapore, Hucklesby quickly realised that he would have to make himself useful: "I was in the camp and was told that the Japanese were looking for working parties and carpenters because they had come across the Royal Engineers. I realised from the little I'd seen that the Asians cut wood by pulling saws and planes towards them instead of pushing. I immediately thought "We're all at square one here" so I volunteered as a carpenter. That took me down to Singapore where we built frames for warehouses for them to store their loot."

While he was en route, Hucklesby witnessed the reality of Japanese brutality: "On the way down, we marched down a street and there on six bamboo poles were the heads of Chinese people. They'd been slaughtered. Also, walking alongside me was a Japanese soldier and there was a yapping dog so he fixed his bayonet and charged it through the belly, so I knew we were in for a tough time. It was a shock."

Hucklesby spent the first six months of his captivity on the island and in all the years of his captivity he recalls that he only ever met a handful of Japanese soldiers who treated him with decency. Two of these men were stationed in Singapore. "One said in sign language that he sold hats in a shop and, in his own way, tried to tell me he was a Christian," Hucklesby remembers. "The other one was a young fellow who looked rather simple and he came back from a day off in Singapore and brought me some sweets. Other than those two, there was only one other soldier that I remember was reasonable."

"COMRADESHIP BETWEEN PRISONERS IS MORE INTENSE THAN ANYWHERE ELSE"

In an experience that was all too common for POWs, Hucklesby soon fell foul of the Japanese and experienced mistreatment inflicted almost at random. "While I was down, there was another soldier who didn't like the sight of me. He pulled me out, gave me a log and I had to stand there with this log above my head. I watched him all the time and, fortunately for me, it was near his lunchtime so when he went for his lunch, I immediately dropped the log and disappeared into another working party so that he couldn't find me. I was holding the log for about three quarters of an hour, which wasn't too long. It wasn't long enough for him to come back and have a go at me with his bayonet."

Hucklesby discovered that he had to develop new methods in order to survive: "It was important to get streetwise very early. You didn't stand still, you just kept walking or you always did an act and pretended to be doing something."

Although he could fend off Japanese violence to a certain extent, Hucklesby could not escape the disease that was rampaging through prisoner camps. "It was during this period that malnutrition started to catch up with me. It was helped by having terrible dysentery. I got to the stage where I couldn't read because people passed books around to each other in the hut and I was worried. I was told that what I needed was palm oil that contained Vitamin A. I still had a few Singapore dollars left so I got someone to go under the wire and get me some palm oil and that stopped it getting worse."

Despite the passage of more than 70 years, Hucklesby continues to suffer from the effects of his wartime illnesses, "I still can't read for very long, I couldn't read a book. I can read papers because the articles aren't that long." Dysentery was not the only disease he had to contend with, "Not only did I have dysentery, but in Thailand I had malaria every 10-12 weeks and then from the malnutrition I had wet and dry beriberi, pellagra, scabies and ringworm. You're looking at a very fortunate person."

THE BURMA RAILWAY

In early 1943, Hucklesby and thousands of other prisoners were taken from Singapore and transported to Thailand to work on the construction of the Thai-Burma Railway. This notorious track was the Japanese Army's logistical plan to transport soldiers and supplies from Bangkok to Burma. 61,000 POWs were forced to work on the line along with as many as 250,000 native workers. The railway was 421 kilometres long and was constructed in just over a year.

It is estimated that between 13,000-16,000 POWs died working on it. Between 90,000-100,000 natives also died and it was in this horrific situation that Hucklesby found himself, "I went up to Thailand and landed at the railhead that was at Ban Pong. From there we took off and walked through the jungle and stopped at two plots. One was to help another working party and then we carried on. I was on the camp at Canyu 3, which was the section of laying the base of the railway. There were three camps and mine was in the one that was highest up. It was here that the malaria and dysentery got me down."

Hucklesby was already a very sick man but he was still expected to work, "A working party included 120 men, 100 of who had to go out. The other 20 were either sick or worked in the camp preparing the food and keeping the place clean. It got to the stage where I couldn't really walk and I used to be carried out for three or four days. I would be sat next to a fire and it would be my job yo keep the fire going and to boil the water for people to drink."

During his captivity, Hucklesby began to lose his sense of time and focused on simply getting through each day. "Days and months don't mean a thing because you haven't got any way of registering it. You just know that next morning you've woken up."

BASICS OF LIFE

Bob Hucklesby's survival in Japanese prisoner of war camps owed much to two simple aluminium tins

The tins had originally belonged to Private L Wootton of the Sherwood Foresters. Wootton had died of cholera in another camp before they arrived in the hospital of the camp where Hucklesby was held. He was at least the third owner of the tins.

Hucklesby used the small tin for boiled water and the larger one for food. Meals were extremely basic. Rice was issued three times a day with an evening vegetable stew. Meat was eaten once a fortnight. The tins were Hucklesby's most valuable possessions from July 1943 until his liberation. He later donated them to the Sherwood Foresters Regimental Museum in Nottingham Castle.



These robust mess tins would have been issued to every British soldier and were hard wearing



A prisoner of war during the construction of the Thai-Burma Railway. Hucklesby's appearance would have been similar to this man upon his liberation in 1945

Despite his illnesses he also still had to keep one step ahead of the Japanese, "You had to be very streetwise and be on the move. Even if a Japanese soldier was 55-60 metres away, you still stopped and bowed because otherwise he'd come for you and either hit you with the butt of his rifle or with his foot. You realised that you had a different environment to adapt to. Those that didn't, suffered. They either wouldn't stop or they'd try and argue with the guards. A lot of those that didn't adapt didn't come home."

In the end, Hucklesby knew that the best way to survive mistreatment was to lay low, "Ultimately you could tell that they were soldiers and came from this brutal regime and that it was best to bide your time and leave things as they were."

Hucklesby is clear that his captors were seemingly motivated by violence, "It was part of their culture. Not only were the Japanese brutal but so were the Koreans. With this brutal regime, the emperor and the ordinary people didn't have a chance. After the war, the Japanese realised that they needed America to put them back on their feet and it would help if they became more Westernised."

Despite this appalling treatment, Hucklesby was able to survive thanks to his fellow prisoners, "Comradeship between prisoners is more intense than anywhere else. What you needed was three of you mucking in together. The Aussies called them 'muckers' and we called them 'mates'. You didn't need to be friends, you just needed to have that feeling that someone else is there to look after you. You needed three because it wasn't possible for one to always be there."

This arrangement had great practical benefits, "They would look after you when you had malaria, get you water, help you to drink and do other things for you. They would clean you up when you had dysentery and boil you water when you weren't well. The bonus was that they would share the food that you didn't eat. The intensity of that comradeship has lasted, it doesn't disappear."

Despite this mutual co-operation, it wasn't always enough to help prisoners survive because the Japanese deliberately withheld aid. The result was that POWs needlessly died, "It only needed the Japanese to say, 'We will provide a basic standard of first aid or medication' and a lot of this wouldn't have happened. They didn't even let the Red Cross provide it either. I shared two parcels in my time. One was for 17 of us and the other was for 11. If they could do it twice, there was no reason it couldn't have been done more often. I also heard that they did receive parcels but they used them for themselves. I don't think we got all of them and it makes me feel annoyed because a lot of my friends would still be here otherwise."

Hucklesby feels very lucky to have survived his experiences and has never forgotten his comrades, "Because I was so fortunate, one of the things I needed to do was to never forget those who were left behind and I've been involved with the Far East Prisoner of War Association since 1950."

LIBERATION AND RECOVERY

Throughout his ordeal, Hucklesby had no idea how the war was progressing, "I didn't know a thing. I didn't even know when it was over. The first thing we knew that the situation was changing was when I could hear an airplane in the distance in daylight. The noise got closer and closer and then I could see the markings on the plane and they were of the RAF. It flew over the camp and the airman in this Dakota opened the door and waved.

Hucklesby has always remembered that moment, "It was marvellous and I thought 'I've made it.' You can understand how fortunate I was just to live. The aircraft then turned around and waved again to tell us to clear the central roadway down the camp and they dropped provisions. It was something I shall never forget."

It transpired that Hucklesby's camp had been liberated days after the Japanese surrender, "That plane came over on 28 August 1945, which was 13 days after the end of the war but we didn't know. It only made sense to me later because within a day an officer and his driver came into the camp in a Jeep and I thought, 'How did he get as near as this?' but of course he would have already known that the war was over and he must have been waiting nearby."

During this euphoria, the POWs' tormentors made a discreet exit, "The Japanese just disappeared. We didn't see them anymore, which was sensible because I'm certain we would have taken revenge so long as it didn't hurt us."

Freedom came just in time for Hucklesby, who was still extremely ill: "About a fortnight before the camp liberation, I had washed myself in a pond that had been created out of water from monsoon period. That was silly of me because I got a bug or something in my ears and I couldn't open my jaw. The only thing I could do was eat my rice through my teeth."

"ALTHOUGH HE COULD FEND OFF JAPANESE VIOLENCE TO A CERTAIN EXTENT, HUCKLESBY COULD NOT ESCAPE THE DISEASE THAT WAS RAMPAGING THROUGH PRISONER CAMPS"

His condition was so bad that he was almost skeletal in appearance, "I weighed about seven and half stone, I was all ribs of course. I was in a very poor condition at the end. You could tell because I was one of the first to leave the camp when arrangements were made to transport us out."

Even now, his ordeal wasn't quite over, "I was taken to the railhead and put on a cattle truck and went on my way to Bangkok but I couldn't go all the way because the rail bridge across the river had been blown. I had two options, walk across on a plank or wait until there was a barge to take me across the river. I looked at that plank and the river and thought 'I'm not doing that.' So I waited. When I got on the barge, I was taken down to Bangkok and I think I spent about four days sleeping on the floor of a house while arrangements were made."

Hucklesby was flown to a Burmese hospital where he received proper medical attention for the first time in years and the effects of his captivity were very apparent, "At Rangoon there were people to meet us. I was in this hospital and it was jammed full. I remember that a nurse took my arm and guided me to a marquee, sat me down and made me a cup of tea with sugar in it. I couldn't drink it because I hadn't had sugar for three and a half years." He was also able to send a communication back to Britain, "Lady Mountbatten came round and we were told we could send a message home and so I was able to tell my parents I was alive."

After ten days, Hucklesby was transferred to a hospital ship for reassessment where his condition surprised medical staff, "The doctor said to me, 'Why is your skin that colour?' and I told him it was because I had had pellagra. None of them had seen it before so I stripped off and walked up and down these tables so they could all see what it was like."

From this point, Hucklesby's condition improved and he was able to recover in comfort in India, "I was sent to a hospital up in the hills where I was treated very well. I could eat what I wanted, when I wanted and I had medicine. I must have been there for about three weeks. I then had a bed on a hospital train – which was very nice because the bed was at window level – and was taken to Poona. It was wonderful because I could sit there and see the scenery."

While he was recovering at Poona, Hucklesby was informed that he was now well enough to fly home, "I said 'Have I got an option?' and they said yes. I said I didn't want people to see me as I was and I'd rather come home on a hospital ship from Bombay. I learned afterwards that it was an international order from the Red Cross that we should have those options." As a result, Hucklesby didn't return home until 19 November 1945 when he docked at Southampton, "When I saw those white cliffs at the Isle of Wight I said to myself, 'You're not leaving Britain again.' I realised that I was fortunate and ought to take advantage of that."

"HIS CONDITION WAS SO BAD THAT HE WAS ALMOST SKELETAL IN APPEARANCE"



Allied POWs shortly after their liberation near Yokohama, Japan, August 1945. Their gaunt appearances are testament to the malnourishment that was common in Japanese prisoner camps

REMEMBRANCE

Hucklesby has always been aware of how lucky he was to survive his captivity and it has informed his outlook ever since, "There have been two things that I've always considered since coming home. One of the things you mustn't do after being that fortunate is to not put yourself under pressure because it is not everything in life. The other thing is, that it's important if you want respect to give other people respect. In the back of my mind I'm always grateful."

As president of the National FEPOW (Far East Prisoner of War) Fellowship Welfare Remembrance Association Hucklesby took part in the commemorations for the 70th anniversary of VJ Day in 2015. At a service in London, he met Queen Elizabeth II and the monarch's presence was greatly appreciated, "She was very nice. We had a bit of a chat, I said 'Thank you ma'am for coming to our service' and she looked me straight in the face and said 'I wanted to come.' The queen and the Duke of Edinburgh had asked to be there. It wasn't an official event, the BBC and others hadn't responded beforehand so I was grateful to her. That made all the difference because the BBC got involved and the Royal British Legion made a better showing than they would have done had she not been there."

Today, Hucklesby is modest about how he would like people to remember the Far East prisoners of war, "Just give that person respect. I had to go to hospital recently and one of the staff realised I was a POW and came across to shake my hand. I don't want any more than that. It means a lot because it meant that someone else knew that there were prisoners of war and that so many didn't return. I'd like people to remember that they've got a stone in their memory thousands of miles away."

National FEPOW Fellowship Welfare Remembrance Association

NFFWRA IS THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION PROVIDING PRACTICAL HELP AND ASSISTANCE TO FORMER FEPOWS (FAR EAST PRISONERS OF WAR AND CIVILIAN INTERNEES) AND THEIR WIVES AND WIDOWS

The association can help with arranging home adaptations and mobility equipment for former FEPOWs and financial payments for hospitals, nursing homes and transportation for reunions. A number of events are held throughout the year with reunion events held biannually.

For more information on upcoming events visit www.nationalfepowfellowship.org.uk or contact enquiries@nationalfepowfellowship.org.uk

Images: Alamy, Getty, Thinkstock, TopFoto

**All information correct at the time of writing*

THE PACIFIC THEATRE

THE TIDE TURNS WITH DECISIVE ALLIED VICTORIES

048 STATE OF PLAY: 1942-43
Allied forces turn the tide with a number of key victories against the Japanese

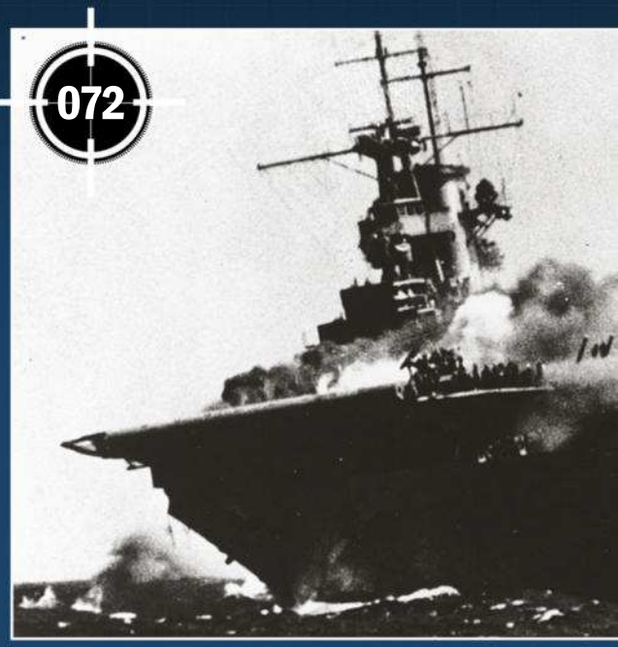
050 DUEL OF THE CARRIER GROUPS
A US task force sought to cripple or sink the Japanese carriers supporting the Port Moresby invasion in the Coral Sea

054 MIDWAY
Despite an overwhelming advantage in numbers, the Japanese offensive against Midway fails

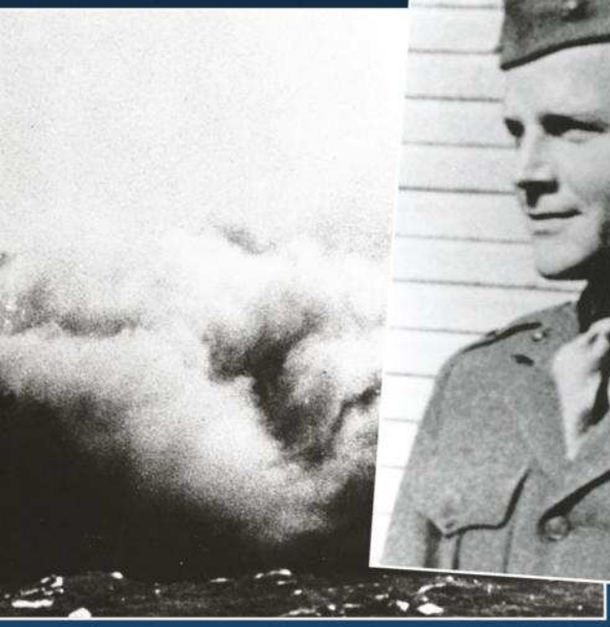
064 AUSTRALIA'S THIN GREEN LINE
In 1942 Australia stood on the brink of invasion. Its last line of defence: citizen soldiers willing to lay their lives on the line

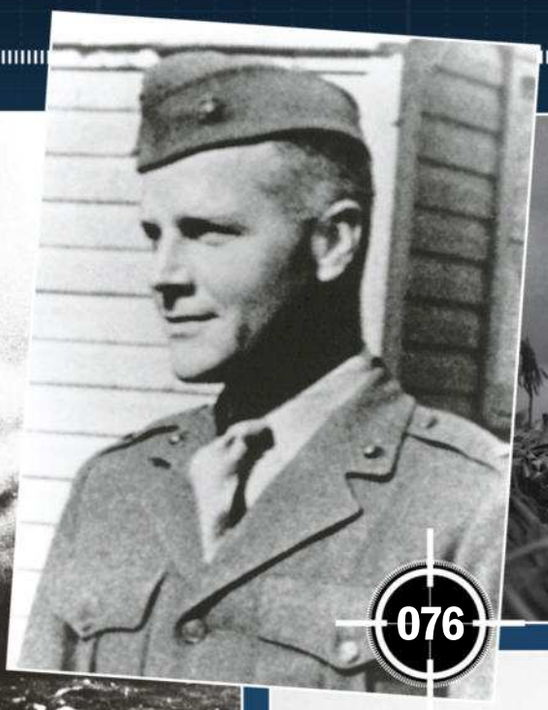
072 GAINING GROUND AT GUADALCANAL
Operation Watchtower, the first US land offensive in World War II, wrested the Pacific island of Guadalcanal from Japanese control

076 ALEXANDER BONNYMAN JR
Storming ashore at Tarawa, this First Lieutenant led his Marines across a pier swept by enemy fire to clear the way across the islet of Betio











048

076



050





054

STATE OF PLAY: 1942-43

ALLIED FORCES TURN THE TIDE WITH A NUMBER OF KEY VICTORIES AGAINST THE JAPANESE

For a time, it appeared that Japan would be victorious on land, sea and air wherever it chose to fight during World War II in the Pacific. In early 1942, the litany of Allied defeats was almost too terrible to contemplate.

In mid-February, after Hong Kong's surrender on Christmas Day 1941, the British bastion of Singapore fell. 80,000 Commonwealth soldiers marched into bitter captivity. In April, American and Filipino soldiers surrendered to the Japanese at Bataan in the Philippines and began the agonising trek on foot to Camp O'Donnell, more than 90 kilometres away. Many died or were murdered en route during the infamous Bataan Death March. By May, the last Allied resistance in the Philippines ended on the island of Corregidor. More than 100,000 US and Filipino troops were captured.

Japanese forces gained control of the Dutch East Indies, landed on the island of New Guinea, and threatened Australia, while their naval forces were victorious in the Indian Ocean and the Java Sea. American carrier-based aircraft mounted raids against enemy bases at Wake and Marcus Islands and targets in the Marshall Islands.

By mid-1942, a reversal of fortune occurred. Japanese plans were thwarted in the Coral Sea in May, and a resounding American victory at Midway followed a month later. American forces landed at Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands in August. In 1943, the US assumed the offensive with amphibious landings elsewhere in the Solomons and New Guinea. Marines assaulted Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands, and the slog across the Pacific gained momentum.



TURNED AWAY AT CORAL SEA

From 4-8 May, American naval forces fight the Japanese to a tactical draw in the Battle of the Coral Sea, while winning a strategic victory, compelling a Japanese invasion force meant for Port Moresby at the southeastern tip of New Guinea to retire. Coral Sea is the first naval battle in history during which opposing surface ships do not fire directly at one another.



REVENGE FOR PEARL HARBOR

On 18 April 1943, the Japanese Mitsubishi G4M 'Betty' bomber carrying Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, commander-in-chief of the Combined Fleet and architect of the attack on Pearl Harbor, is shot down over the island of Bougainville by American Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighter planes, and the admiral is killed. American cryptanalysts have broken Japanese codes, revealing the opportunity to undertake the mission.



TRIUMPH, TERROR AT TARAWA

On 20 November 1943, US Marines execute their first amphibious landing against a contested beach during the Battle of Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands. The islet of Betio is the epicentre of the bloody battle, and the Americans lose more than 1,000 dead while virtually annihilating a Japanese garrison of nearly 5,000 in 76 hours of brutal combat.

MIDWAY'S AMAZING MIRACLE

A complicated Japanese offensive to seize Midway Atoll in the Central Pacific, 2,100km from Hawaii, meets with disaster during the epic battle fought 4-7 June 1942. The Imperial Japanese Navy loses four aircraft carriers, Akagi, Kaga, Soryu and Hiryu, while the US loses one, the veteran Yorktown. The Battle of Midway is the turning point of World War II in the Pacific.

FOOTHOLD AT GUADALCANAL

The first American offensive land action of World War II in the Pacific begins as US Marines splash ashore on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands on 7 August 1942. Six months of horrific fighting follow on land, and a series of naval battles result in severe losses for both the US and Japan. In February 1943, the Japanese abandon the island.



DUEL OF THE CARRIER GROUPS

A US TASK FORCE SOUGHT TO CRIPPLE OR SINK THE JAPANESE CARRIERS SUPPORTING THE PORT MORESBY INVASION

WORDS **WILLIAM E WELSH**



The decks of the two American carriers in the middle of the Coral Sea buzzed with activity on the morning of 7 May 1942. The pilot of a scout plane radioed to the fleet that he had seen what he believed to be two Japanese carriers and two cruisers 362 kilometres northwest of Rear Admiral Frank Fletcher's Task Force 17. Jumping at the chance to surprise the Japanese, Fletcher made a bold decision – he would make an all-out aerial attack with the majority of the aircraft from both flattops. Dive bombers, torpedo bombers and fighters roared off the decks and set off to attack the Japanese carriers.

Fletcher's Task Force 17 – a carrier strike group that included the flattops Yorktown and Lexington with a total of 133 aircraft – was acting on orders from the US Pacific Command to cripple or destroy the enemy carriers involved in the Port Moresby amphibious invasion.

The Japanese invasion force, which consisted of several different groups, set sail for Port Moresby on 4 May. Hundreds of kilometres to the east, one of those groups, led by Japanese Vice Admiral Takeo Takagi, was steaming southeast into the Coral Sea after sailing through the Solomon Islands to get behind a US carrier strike group believed to be in the area. Takagi's strike force comprised the carriers Shokaku and Zuikaku with a total of 127 aircraft, two heavy cruisers and six destroyers. While the slow-moving transports of the invasion force hugged the coast of New Guinea, a covering group with the light carrier Shoho followed them on the seaward side to protect them from aerial attack by Allied aircraft.

Although both carrier fleets were within striking distance of each other on 6 May, they failed to locate each other. In fact, they unwittingly passed within 112 kilometres of each other that night. Both the Japanese and the American carrier forces were plagued throughout the battle by the inability of their scout pilots to accurately identify any enemy ships they spotted while on patrol. Erroneous reports by scout pilots on both sides resulted in the launch of full-scale strikes against what were reported to be enemy carriers but were actually other large surface ships.

In response to a report made by a scout pilot from the Shokaku at 7.22am on 7 May of an enemy flattop and cruiser 302 kilometres



The US aircraft carrier Lexington was crippled beyond repair by torpedoes and bombs from Japanese carrier-based aircraft

YORKTOWN BOMBS TULAGI HARBOUR

An aerial attack on a Japanese seaplane base alerted the Japanese that an American task force was lurking nearby

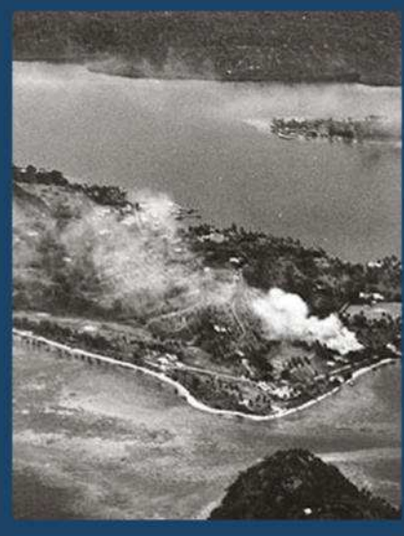
Before the Japanese invasion force sailed for Port Moresby, New Guinea, a portion of the force steamed into the Solomon Islands on 3 May and landed 400 naval commandos at Tulagi harbour on Florida Island. Their orders were to construct a seaplane base that would be used to improve reconnaissance of the eastern Solomon Islands and the Coral Sea shipping lanes.

Before the war, Tulagi had been the administrative capital of the British-Australian Solomon Islands and contained such recreational facilities as a cricket pitch and rugby and soccer fields. The landing was uncontested and the troops intended to set to work immediately building seaplane facilities.

At dawn on 4 May, Vice Admiral Frank Fletcher's Task Force 17, built around the carrier Yorktown, steamed to Tulagi to bomb and strafe the Japanese force. Douglas SBD Dauntless bombers dove from 6 kilometres on their targets, sinking a destroyer, two patrol boats and a transport. They also managed to bomb and strafe the Japanese shore party, too.

The results might have been better, but the American dive bomber pilots – who were still perfecting their technique in the early stages of the Pacific War – reported that their canopies and radar sights fogged up during their dives.

Although the Japanese had suspected before the Tulagi strike that American carriers might be in the area, they weren't sure. The attack by carrier-based aircraft left no doubt that at least one American flattop was close at hand. By attacking Tulagi, Fletcher significantly lessened his chances of surprising the Japanese in the following days.





A US dive bomber drops a 1,000-pound (450kg) bomb on the light carrier Shoho on 7 May 1942

south of his strike group, Takagi scrambled 78 aircraft. The scout pilot had actually spotted the oiler USS Neosho and its escort the destroyer USS Sims. Fletcher had instructed the vessels, which had recently refuelled the carriers, to wait in what he believed was a safe part of the Coral Sea 482 kilometres southeast of Task Force 17. 36 Aichi D3A dive bombers scored three hits on the Sims sinking it, and mortally wounded the oiler with seven hits that left it ablaze. It sank four days later.

When the pilot of an American SBD scout plane who had spotted the two carriers and two cruisers at 8.15am on 7 May returned to USS Yorktown, he revised his report. He had only seen two cruisers and two destroyers. It was too late for Fletcher to recall his 93 aircraft, so they remained aloft. Another scout plane reported two hours later spotting a new flotilla. It turned out to be a covering group that included the Shoho. Fletcher's carrier aircraft attacked the Shoho. The Americans scored 13 bomb hits and seven torpedo hits, which at 11.35am sank Shoho.

Both fleets put scout planes aloft again at dawn on 8 May. Takagi was confident from the previous day's events that he knew where the US carrier strike group was located, so he put aloft nearly all of his aircraft without waiting for a sighting from his scout planes. The Japanese strike group consisted of 33 dive bombers, 18 torpedo aircraft and 18 fighters.

"THE REMAINING TORPEDO BOMBER PILOTS MANAGED TO SEND NEARLY A DOZEN STEEL FISH THROUGH THE SHIMMERING WATERS TOWARDS THE LEXINGTON"

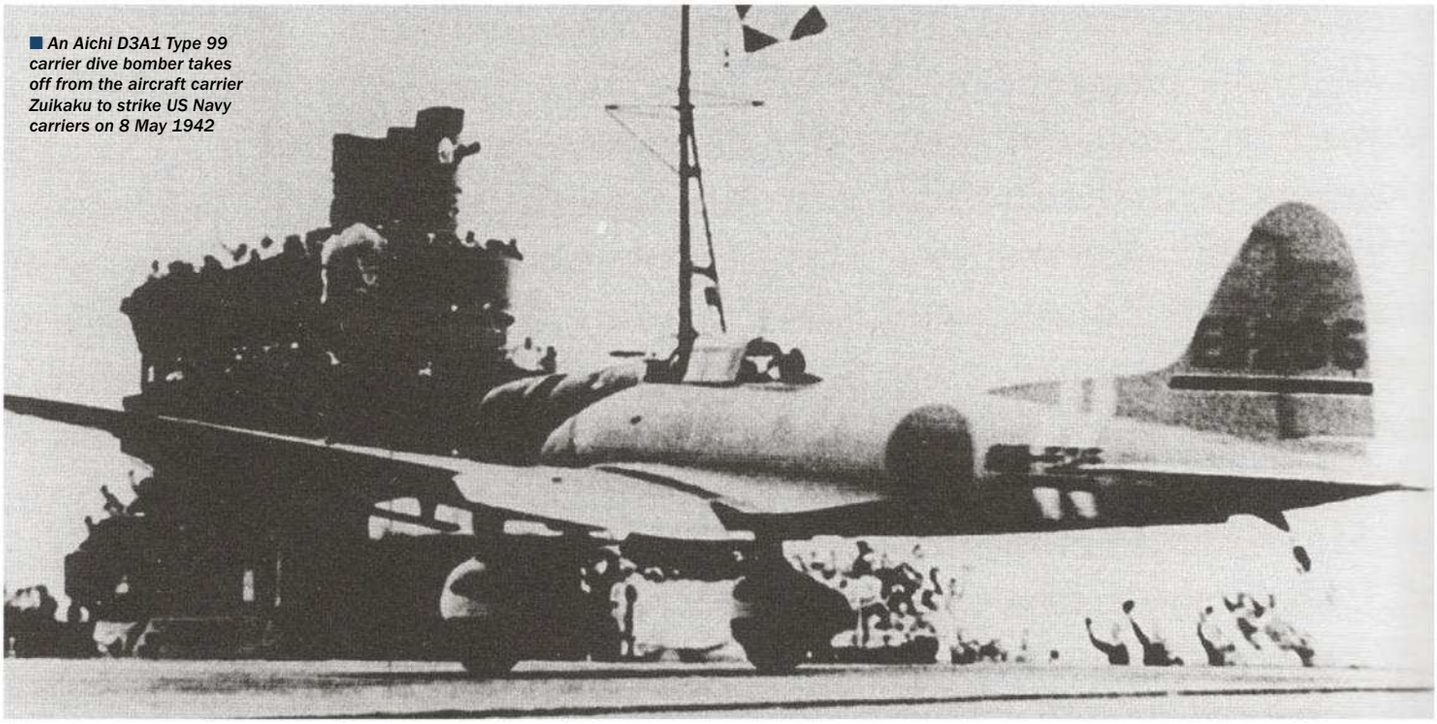
Takagi's confidence was high because the Japanese were cleverly steaming on a southeasterly course concealed by a 160-kilometre-long weather front with low-hanging clouds and rain squalls that made the carriers difficult for the American scout planes to spot. After the planes launched, the Shokaku launched fighters to circle above it as a defensive measure, while the Zuikaku steered into a squall to hide.

After nearly three hours in the air, the American scout planes found the Japanese strike group 281 kilometres to the east. Fletcher immediately ordered his attack aircraft into the air. The Lexington and Yorktown launched 43 and 39 aircraft respectively at 8.30am. After two hours aloft, the Yorktown air group began its attack on the Shokaku. The Americans had to fight their way through the Japanese fighters waiting for them over the vessel. Wildcats tangled with Zeros as Douglas TBD Devastators began low runs against the carrier. The SBD Dauntless dive bombers rolled over and dove on the carrier. However, the Yorktown's aircraft made a poor showing.

The torpedoes were wide of mark and the dive bombers scored only two hits. The bombs set off fires on the Shokaku's flight deck that the crew eventually extinguished. When the Lexington air group arrived, the expert Japanese fighter pilots splashed three Wildcats. The air group's only achievement was a single hit by a dive bomber. The attack killed 100 of the Shokaku's crew and hidden in the squall, the Zuikaku remained untouched.

Just before 10am, radar operators on the Lexington detected enemy aircraft headed toward the two carriers. The Lexington was sailing in front with the smaller Yorktown 19 kilometres behind it. The task force tried but was unable to get its remaining fighters aloft in time to blunt the aerial attack.

The Japanese aircraft came zooming out of the morning sun. Even though the Americans were able to splash four of the slow-moving Nakajima B5N torpedo bombers, the remaining torpedo bomber pilots managed to send nearly a dozen steel fish through the shimmering waters towards the Lexington. Two torpedoes struck the port side of the Lexington and Aichi



■ *An Aichi D3A1 Type 99 carrier dive bomber takes off from the aircraft carrier Zuikaku to strike US Navy carriers on 8 May 1942*

dive bombers swooped down on Lady Lex in quick succession.

The Yorktown fared better. Since she was significantly lighter than the Lexington, Captain Elliott Buckmaster was able to dodge the torpedoes. However, a dive bomber scored a hit with an 800-pound bomb near the flattop's conning island that bore down through three decks before exploding 24 metres below the flight deck. The explosion killed 66 sailors instantly and put damage control parties to work frantically trying to extinguish fires that raged on the lower decks.

No further attacks were launched because so many aircraft from the opposing strike groups were lost, damaged or missing. The Americans lost one large aircraft carrier, an oiler, a destroyer, 66 aircraft and 547 men. The Japanese lost a small carrier, 77 aircraft and 1,047 men. The Lexington could not be saved because internal explosions rendered it unsalvageable. After the ship was abandoned, a US destroyer sunk her with four torpedoes. The Yorktown limped back to Pearl Harbor where repair teams patched her up in time to participate in the Battle of Midway in early June. The battle was significant because it marked the first time that a naval clash was fought solely with carrier aircraft. Additionally, the ships of the opposing fleets never sighted each other nor did they fire on each other.

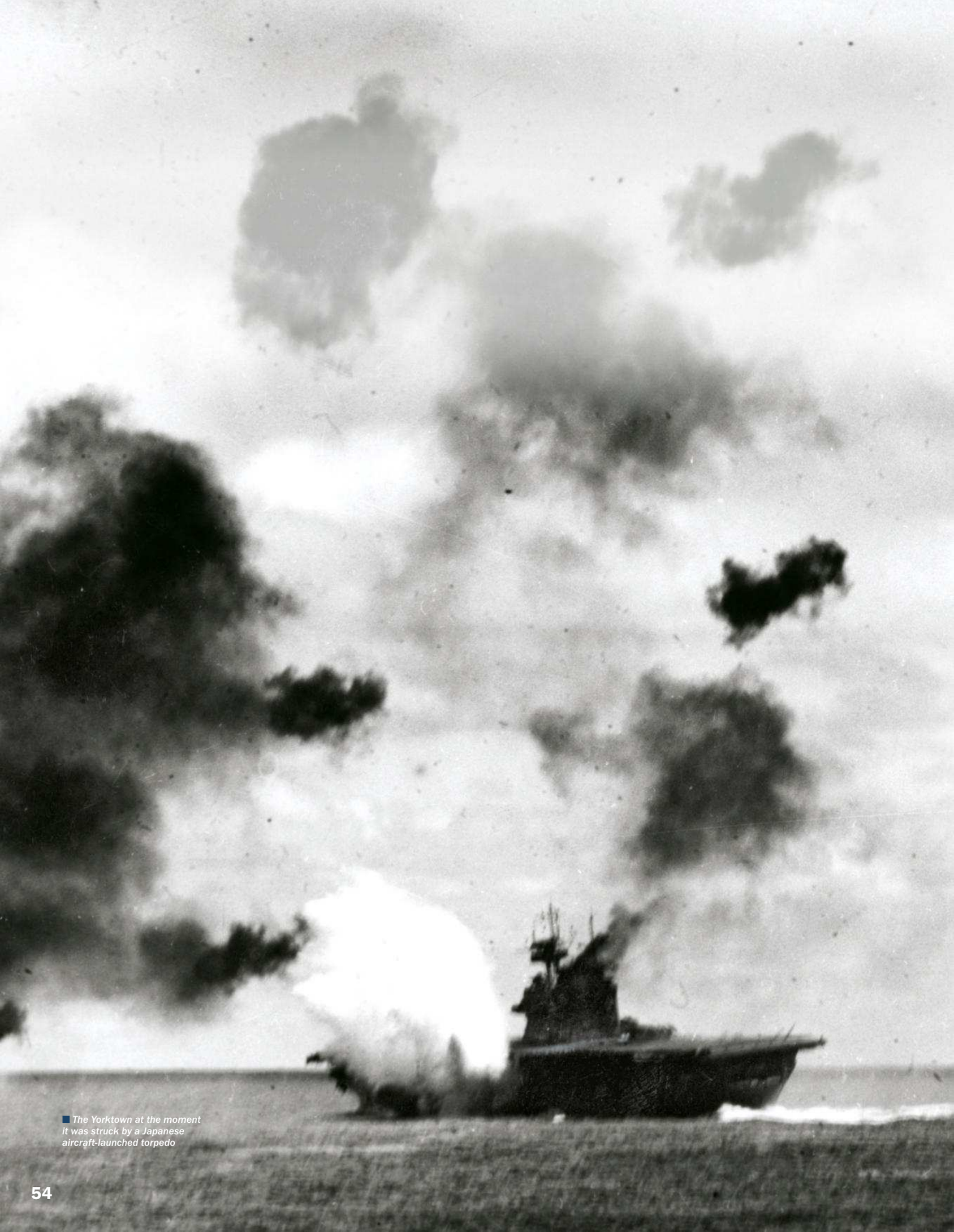
Although the Japanese Imperial Navy lost fewer ships than the Americans, they suffered greater losses in aircraft and air crews. The Shokaku was so badly damaged that it took many months to repair it. Despite the fact that the Zuikaku was undamaged, it had lost experienced aircrews. For these reasons, neither carrier participated in the Battle of Midway. While the battle was a tactical defeat, it was still a strategic victory for the United States because it compelled the Japanese to permanently scrap their amphibious invasion of Port Moresby.



■ *The crew of the US carrier Lexington abandons ship after a devastating strike by Japanese carrier-based aircraft on 8 May 1942*



■ *US carrier-based dive bombers inflicted heavy damage to the forward flight deck of the carrier Shokaku on 8 May 1942*



■ *The Yorktown at the moment it was struck by a Japanese aircraft-launched torpedo*

MIDWAY

DESPITE AN OVERWHELMING ADVANTAGE IN NUMBERS, THE JAPANESE OFFENSIVE AGAINST MIDWAY FAILED IN THE FACE OF SUPERIOR AMERICAN INTELLIGENCE GATHERING

WORDS **WILLIAM E WELSH**

CENTRAL PACIFIC OCEAN 4 JUNE 1942

Dauntless dive bombers from the US aircraft carrier Enterprise spotted the Japanese fleet north of Midway Atoll at 10.05am on 4 September 1942. They closed on it and queued up in a single line at 19,000 feet for their attack. The air group commander barked instructions for the 33 dive bombers to attack the heavy carriers Kaga and Akagi, but in the confusion of battle most of the aircraft went after the 38,200-ton Kaga. 15 minutes later, the metal birds swooped down on their prey.

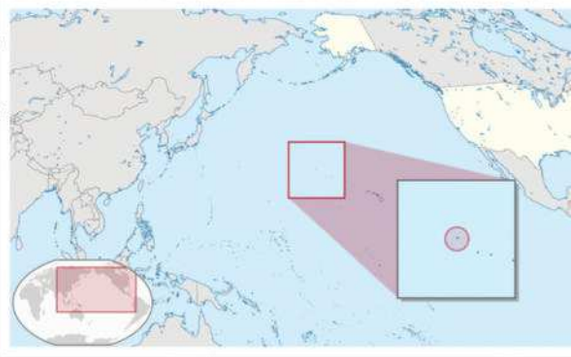
The flight deck of the mighty Kaga was packed with aircraft. Air crews were refuelling Zero fighters and making last-minute adjustments to fully armed bombers that were minutes away from launching against the US carrier strike force. “Dive bombers!” shouted a lookout on the Kaga as the Dauntless aircraft began releasing their 500-pound bombs at 2,500 feet. “I saw this glint in the sun – it looked like a beautiful silver waterfall – these were the dive bombers coming down,” said Lt Cdr John S ‘Jimmy’ Thach, a fighter pilot from the Yorktown who witnessed the attack.

The first bomb struck the Kaga starboard aft among the aircraft waiting to launch. The second and third exploded near the forward elevator, one of them penetrating to the hangar deck, where it set off secondary explosions among armed bombers waiting to be sent to the flight deck. The fourth bomb struck amidships on the port side. The survivors abandoned ship. At dusk, a pair of internal explosions rocked the great vessel, and she rolled over and sank.

Before the day was over, the Imperial Japanese Navy’s other three large carriers participating in the Battle of Midway suffered the same fate. The titanic battle for supremacy in the Pacific would only cost the US Navy one of its valuable carriers. In a single day, the Americans wrested the initiative in the Pacific theatre from the Japanese.

TWO OFFENSIVES

Following the initial clash between Japanese and United States aircraft carriers in the Coral Sea in May 1942, the Japanese sought to return to the offensive against the US. The Americans had landed a heavy psychological blow against the Japanese by the daring long-range bomber strike against Tokyo known as the Doolittle Raid in April 1942. The following month, Japanese and American aircraft carriers clashed for the first time in the Coral Sea. These two events spurred Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto to devise a comprehensive



OPPOSING FORCES

	VS	
LEADERS: Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, Vice Adm Chuichi Nagumo		**LEADER:** Admiral Chester Nimitz, Rear Adm Jack Fletcher, Rear Adm Raymond Spruance
CARRIER AIRCRAFT: 261		**CARRIER AIRCRAFT:** 233
LAND-BASED AIRCRAFT: 0		**LAND-BASED AIRCRAFT:** 115
HEAVY AIRCRAFT CARRIERS: 4		**HEAVY AIRCRAFT CARRIERS:** 3
WARSHIPS: 80		**WARSHIPS:** 20

“THE TITANIC BATTLE FOR SUPREMACY IN THE PACIFIC WOULD ONLY COST THE US NAVY ONE OF ITS VALUABLE CARRIERS”



Burning oil tanks hit by Japanese bombs on Sand Island in the Midway Atoll on 4 June

plan whereby the Japanese would retake the momentum from the Americans.

Yamamoto wanted to extend the Japanese empire's eastern perimeter into the Central Pacific to furnish a greater buffer for Japan's home islands. To do this, he drew up a plan for his Combined Fleet to capture Midway Atoll, an outlier of the Hawaiian Islands located 1,300 miles northwest of Pearl Harbor.

The objective of Yamamoto's offensive was to capture Midway in order to use its airstrip to project Japanese airpower deep into the Central Pacific Ocean. Yamamoto's grand plan called for a two-pronged offensive that would employ a vast array of surface warships, submarines, transports and support vessels.

Operation Aleutian Islands (Operation AI) was a feint designed to draw one of the US carriers to the northern Pacific. To execute the operation, Rear Admiral Kakuji Kakuta's Second Carrier Strike Force had 40 attack aircraft on the light carriers the Ryujo and Junyo. Kakuta was to send his carrier aircraft on 3 June to bomb Dutch Harbour, the principal port in the Aleutians, while Japanese amphibious forces landed on Attu and Kiska Islands at the tip of the Aleutian Chain.

The main attack, known as Operation Midway Island (Operation MI), would go forward the following day. Yamamoto planned to devote the bulk of the Combined Fleet's forces to the operation. Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, the hero of the attack on Pearl Harbor, would once again have the same four heavy carriers – Akagi, Kaga, Soryu and Hiryu – that he had used in the surprise attack six months earlier.

On 4 June, Nagumo was to take up a position 300 miles northeast of Midway and launch aircraft from his First Carrier Striking Force to pulverise Midway's defences in preparation for the amphibious landing. Nagumo's carrier force would have 261 aircraft as its offensive arm.

Other large forces would follow behind Nagumo's carrier group. Rear Admiral Raizo Tanaka's invasion force of 5,000 troops in a dozen transports would rendezvous off west of Midway with Vice Admiral Nobutake Kondo's Second Fleet, which would escort them to their objective. Bringing up the rear would be the First Fleet's Main Force under Yamamoto, which would deploy 300 miles west of Nagumo. Yamamoto would direct the various components of the operation from his flagship, the gigantic battleship Yamato.

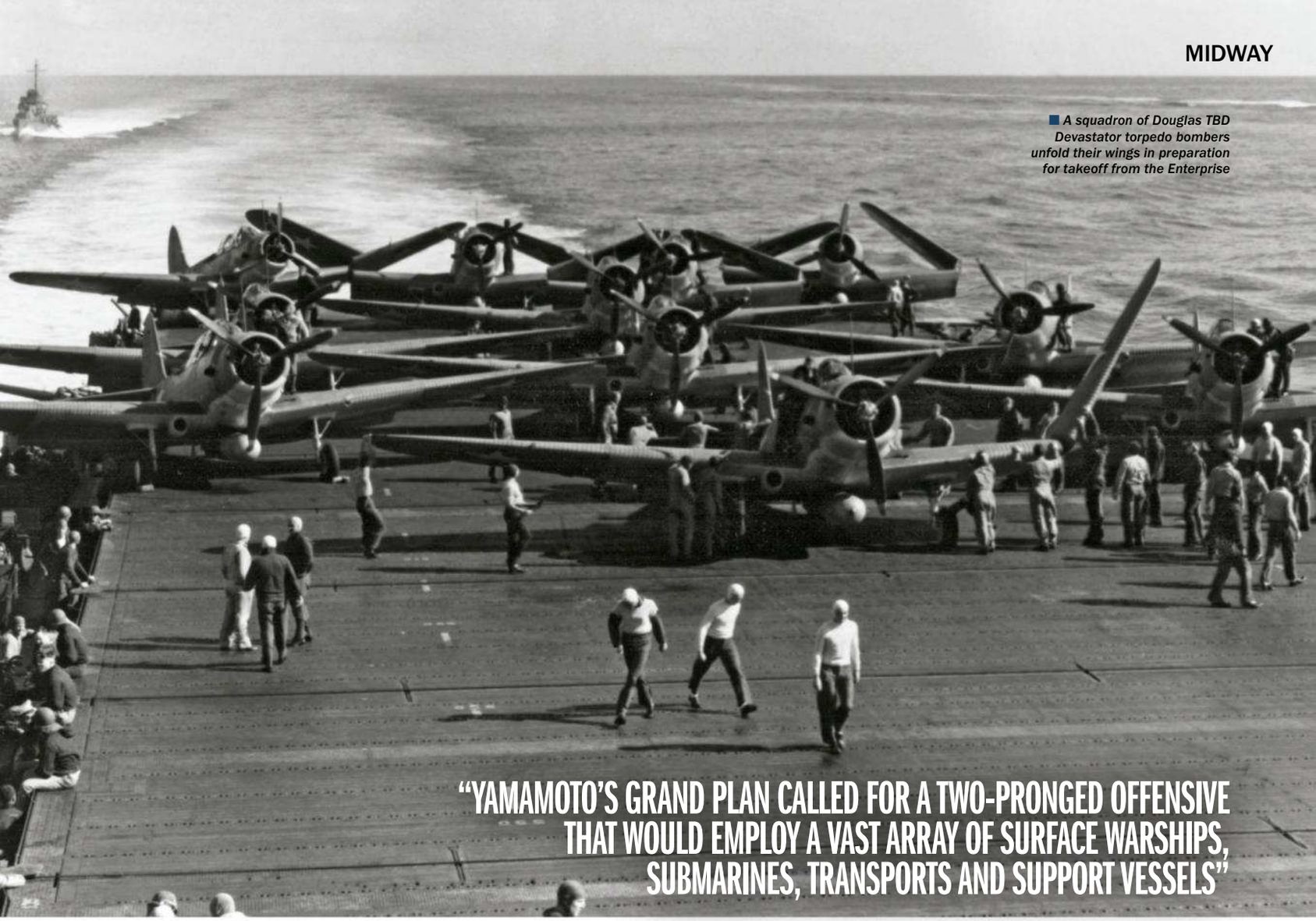


Chuichi Nagumo was one of the Imperial Japanese Navy's (IJN's) most seasoned officers and hero of the Pearl Harbor attack

THE UNSINKABLE CARRIER

Following the action in Coral Sea, US Pacific Fleet commander Admiral Chester Nimitz recalled Task Force 16, which was built around the carriers Hornet and Enterprise, to return to Pearl Harbor. Its veteran commander, Vice Admiral William Halsey, was seriously ill, and Nimitz replaced him with neophyte Rear Admiral Raymond Spruance.

Overall command of the two task forces went to Rear Admiral Frank Fletcher, commander of Task Force 17,



A squadron of Douglas TBD Devastator torpedo bombers unfold their wings in preparation for takeoff from the Enterprise

"YAMAMOTO'S GRAND PLAN CALLED FOR A TWO-PRONGED OFFENSIVE THAT WOULD EMPLOY A VAST ARRAY OF SURFACE WARSHIPS, SUBMARINES, TRANSPORTS AND SUPPORT VESSELS"



Japanese Zero fighter aircraft on the deck of the heavy aircraft carrier Akagi in early 1942

who had performed ably in the Coral Sea. The nucleus of Task Force 17 was the carrier Yorktown, which had sustained major damage in the same skirmish, and was in need of urgent repairs if she were to participate in Midway. She arrived in Pearl Harbor on 22 May to get patched up so that she could take part in the battle that was brewing. Meanwhile, Task Force 16 arrived in Pearl Harbor on 26 May for refuelling and resupply.

Altogether, the two US task forces had a total of 233 carrier aircraft, which included 112 dive bombers, 42 torpedo bombers and 79 fighters. In addition, the Americans possessed an assortment of 115 Navy and Marine aircraft, many of which were obsolete, on Midway Atoll.

US Navy Captain Cyril Simmard, the senior commander at Midway, had 3,650 troops of the Sixth Marine Defense Battalion and multiple anti-aircraft batteries with which to defend the Midway against the expected amphibious attack.

The air group that Simmard commanded at Midway would function as an "unsinkable aircraft carrier" that would help balance the Japanese advantage in carriers. Both Yamamoto and Nimitz knew that whoever won the battle in the sky would control the island when the battle was over.

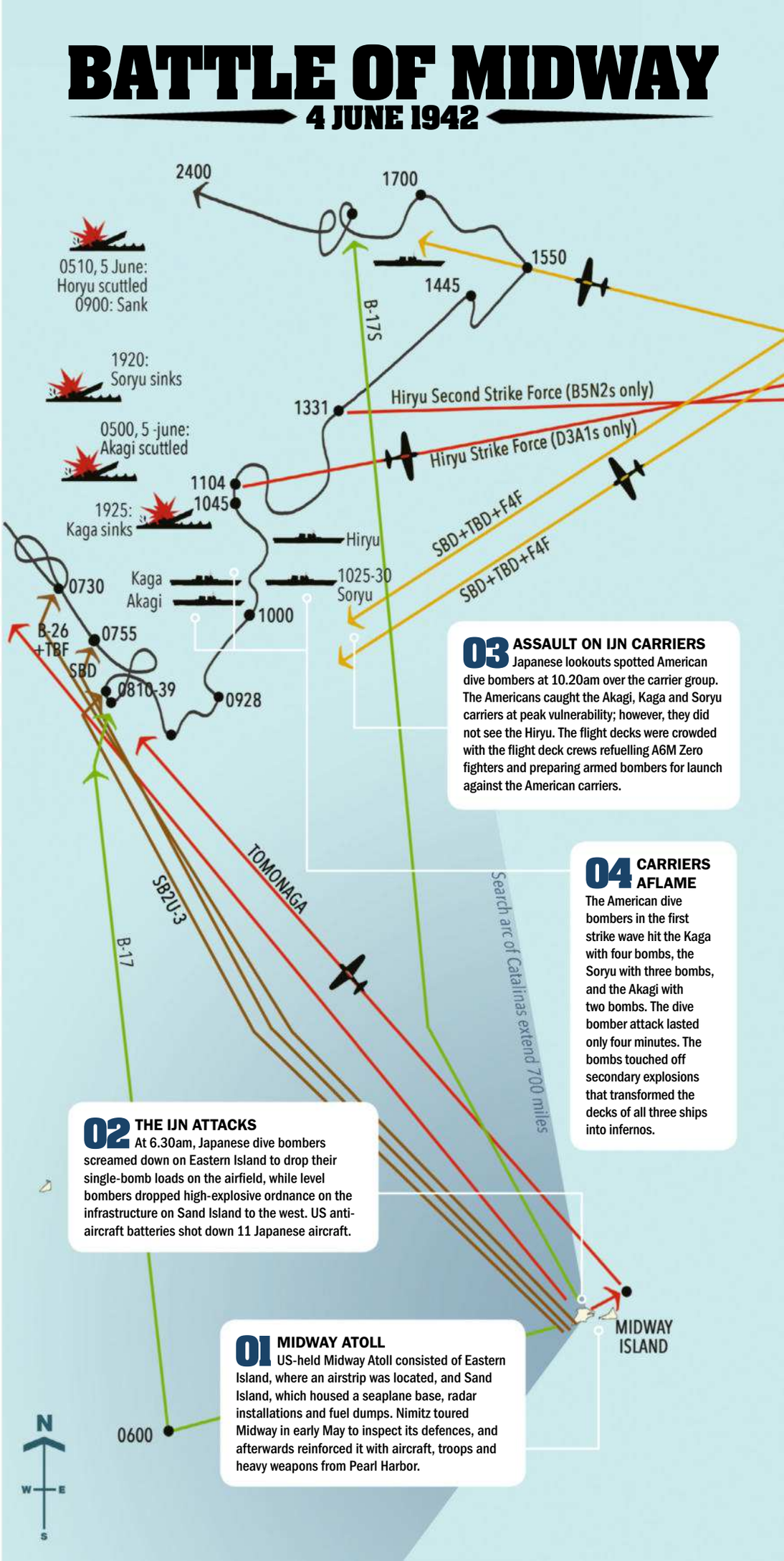
Yamamoto did not expect the US Pacific Fleet to be in a position to contest the invasion force. The Japanese mistakenly believed that both the Lexington and Yorktown had been destroyed in the Coral Sea. The Americans had indeed lost the Lexington at Coral Sea, but not the Yorktown. As for the other US carriers, *the* Enterprise, Hornet and Saratoga, the Japanese had no idea where they were in the Pacific. The Saratoga was unavailable for Midway because it was undergoing extensive repairs in Puget Sound following a Japanese submarine attack in January 1942.

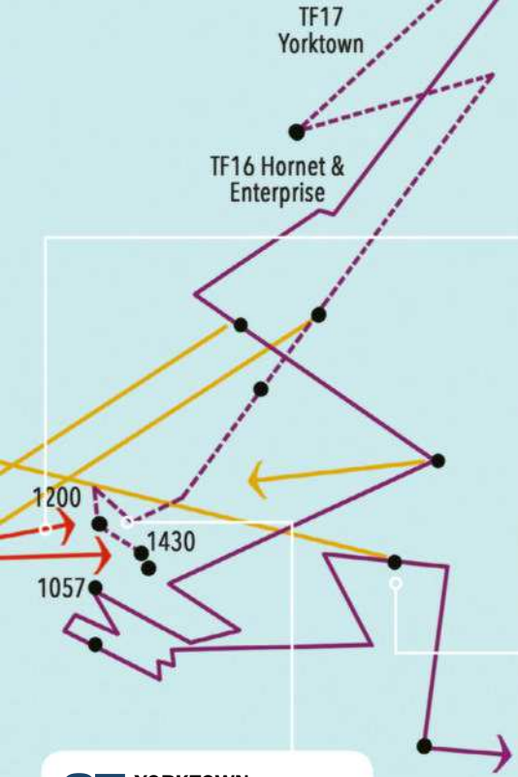
INTELLIGENCE FAILURE

Although the Imperial Japanese Navy had destroyed the American battleships in its Pearl Harbor attack on 7 December 1941, it had failed to catch any of the American carriers in the harbour. Yamamoto believed that the American aircraft carriers would sortie from Pearl Harbor once the invasion was in full swing. At that point, Nagumo and Yamamoto would team up against the weaker US Pacific Fleet and destroy it in a decisive battle that would compel the United States to sue for peace.

To monitor the movements of the US Pacific Fleet, Yamamoto ordered Vice Admiral Teruhisa Komatsu to deploy his fleet of ten submarines in an arc between Hawaii and Midway no later than 2 June to watch for the US aircraft carriers. The only way the Japanese would know how many they'd be up against at Midway was from Komatsu's submarines and from scout planes launched by Nagumo's fleet once it had arrived north of Midway.

Through back-breaking effort, the US combat intelligence unit at Pearl Harbor gleaned that the Aleutians strike was nothing more than a diversion, and that the real



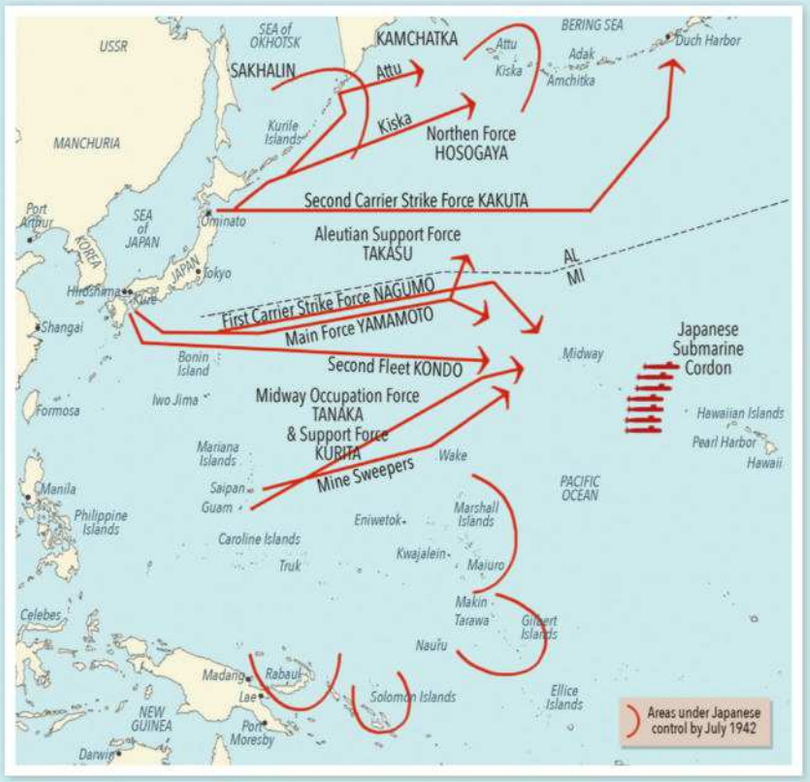


06 TORPEDO STRIKE
A second strike wave from the Hiryu composed of ten Japanese torpedo bombers, escorted by six Zeros, approached the Yorktown at approximately 5pm. Of the five bombers that managed to launch their torpedoes, two hit their already stricken carrier. The torpedoes slammed into the port side of the Yorktown, damaging her fuel tanks and boilers.

07 HIRYU IS CRIPPLED
A second strike wave composed of dive bombers from the Enterprise and Hornet hit the Hiryu with four bombs at 5pm. Two bombs landed amidships, and two bombs struck the fore deck. The bombs penetrated to the hangar deck, where they set off secondary explosions that ruptured the hull plates below the water line and caused flooding.

05 YORKTOWN ATTACKED
18 dive bombers escorted by six fighters from the Hiryu attacked the Yorktown at noon. Three bombs struck the deck of the carrier. One bomb struck the forward flight deck, another struck the aft flight deck and penetrated the funnel, and yet another hit the number one elevator on the aft deck.

08 YORKTOWN SINKS
Salvage crews worked tirelessly on the Yorktown, which was listing badly, in an effort to save her. But in the early afternoon of 6 June, Japanese submarine I-168 snuck up on the Yorktown and launched a spread of torpedoes. Two hit the Yorktown, causing her to sink on the following morning.



- Japanese Air Strikes A6M, B5N2, D3A1
- Midway Land Based Air Army B-26, Navy TBF, Marine Corps SBD, SB2U-3
- Midway Based Army B-17s
- US Navy Carrier Air Strikes SBD, TBD, F4F



■ *Despite the best efforts of its crew, the carrier Yorktown capsized and sunk on 7 June*

Map: Rocio Espin



■ *Survivors from Yorktown transfer between USS Portland (right) and USS Fulton (left)*



■ *This artwork was commissioned for the film* The Battle Of Midway *(1976), directed by Jack Smight*

objective was Midway. The intelligence data spurred Nimitz to put his two task forces into position northeast of Midway to ambush Nagumo's carrier strike force. Both US task forces included cruisers and destroyers with which to screen their carriers from attack by Japanese carrier aircraft and submarines.

During the last week of May, both sides sailed for the waters around Midway. Nagumo's carrier group departed from Japan on 27 May, and other elements followed over the next several days both from Japan and the Marianas Islands. Meanwhile, Task Force 16 sailed from Pearl Harbor on 28 May, and it was followed two days later by Task Force 17. Both task forces were in position 350 miles north of Midway before the Japanese submarines were in place between Oahu and Midway. The result was an intelligence failure for the Imperial Japanese Navy that would leave Nagumo's carrier group vulnerable to a first strike by the American carriers.

While Nagumo's carrier group moved into position north of Midway, Admiral Kakuta sent strike aircraft from his two light carriers on 3 June to bomb Dutch Harbour. Nimitz sent a task force to counter the Japanese thrust in that sector, but he did not send any of his prized carriers. The feint failed to draw off a US carrier.

The Japanese carriers began launching 108 aircraft to bomb Midway at 4.30am on 4 June. Lieutenant Joichi Tomonaga led a strike group that comprised 36 each of Mitsubishi A6M Zeroes, Aichi D3A1 dive bombers and Nakajima B5N bombers. The Americans used easy-to-pronounce names to report sightings of Japanese aircraft. Thus, 'Val' and 'Kate' were the names appropriated for the Aichi D3A1 dive bomber and the Nakajima B5N bomber. The Kate bombers could be configured either for torpedo missions or for level bombing from high altitude. The Vals carried one 550-pound bomb, and the Kates one 1,760-pound high-explosive bomb. For the first strike wave against Midway, the carriers Hiryu and Soryu launched their Kates, and the Akagi and Kaga unleashed their Vals.

Midway radar picked up the incoming hostile aircraft when they were 93 miles out. Air raid sirens wailed as the pilots of the Navy and Marine aircraft scrambled to get aloft in order to avoid near-certain destruction if the aircraft had remained on the ground. 25 minutes later, the airfield was empty. The motley group of US fighters and bombers flew north directly toward the incoming Japanese aircraft.

Sporadic dogfights between the incoming Japanese and outgoing American aircraft from Midway broke out 30 miles from the atoll. Japanese Zeros peeled off from the strike wave to engage the American aircraft, while the Japanese bombers continued on to Midway. Likewise, the US dive, torpedo and level bombers from Midway continued flying north in search of the Japanese carriers.

After his strike group had bombed Midway at 6.30am, Tomonaga radioed Nagumo that another strike was needed to ensure maximum damage to the airstrip and other infrastructure.

NAGUMO'S DILEMMA

Earlier that morning, at 5.52am, PBY Catalina pilot Lieutenant Howard Ady reported sighting two Japanese carriers and reported their bearing, course and speed. Upon hearing the report, Fletcher ordered Spruance to close with the Japanese carrier group and launch his bombers.



“NAGUMO BELIEVED IT WAS IMPERATIVE TO COMPLETELY DESTROY THE AIRSTRIP SO THAT ENEMY AIRCRAFT COULD NOT LAUNCH REPEATED SORTIES AGAINST HIS CARRIERS”

Admiral Chester Nimitz was highly successful in the Pacific theatre and masterminded the defeat of the IJN

Nagumo had only a fraction of the number of search planes looking for the Americans as they had looking for him. At dawn, five Japanese warships launched a total of seven search aircraft. In contrast, the Americans had 33 PBY Catalinas based at Midway, and they had been searching since 30 May for the approaching Japanese warships. This gave the Americans a big advantage in aerial reconnaissance, and enabled them to spot the Japanese carriers early. Early sightings had enabled the Americans to send Boeing B-17 Flying Fortresses against the Japanese warships, but they missed their targets.

While the first wave of Japanese aircraft was assaulting Midway Atoll, Nagumo’s air crews were arming a second wave of aircraft to strike the American carriers once they were located. In anticipation of a second strike wave against the American carriers, Nagumo had his air crews arming ‘Vals’ with armour-piercing bombs and ‘Kates’ with torpedoes, both highly effective against ships.

Upon receiving Tomonaga’s message calling for a second strike against Midway, Nagumo issued orders at 7.15am for the air crews to arm the Vals and Kates for a second strike against the atoll, rather than the unsighted carriers. Nagumo believed it was imperative to completely destroy the airstrip so that enemy aircraft could not launch repeated sorties against his carriers.

The Japanese air crews had to rush to arm the Vals on the hangar decks of the Hiryu and Soryu with high-explosives rather than armour-piercing bombs, and to take the torpedoes off the Kates on the Akagi and Kaga and replace them with high-explosive bombs. The crews needed to work at breakneck speed, because soon the carriers would have to recover the aircraft returning from Midway.

Nagumo received a report at 7.30am that dramatically altered the situation. The pilot of a Japanese floatplane from the cruiser Tone accompanying the First Carrier Fleet reported spotting warships of an enemy task force 240 miles northeast of Midway. 50 minutes later, he confirmed the presence of an enemy carrier in the task force.

The report from the Tone rattled Nagumo and his staff, as they had not expected the carriers of the US Pacific Fleet to be so close to Midway that early in the battle. After learning of the presence of an American task force, Nagumo issued orders at 7.45am for the air crews to leave the torpedoes on any Kates they had not yet reconfigured with high-explosive bombs.

At 7am, the first strike wave of 121 aircraft took off from the Hornet and Enterprise. Air Group Commander Stanhope Ring led the Hornet’s 60 aircraft, and Lieutenant Commander Wade McClusky led the Enterprise’s 61 aircraft. As the US bombers and fighters raced toward the Japanese carriers, the US land-based dive and torpedo bombers from Midway were approaching Nagumo’s carriers from the south.

Nagumo’s fleet had assumed a box formation, with the screening warships protecting the carriers inside the perimeter. Inside the box, the carriers zigzagged or sailed in wide circles to avoid being struck by enemy torpedoes. The strike aircraft from Midway

■ *The burning Japanese aircraft carrier Hiryu with its flight deck collapsed following an attack by American dive bombers*



■ *Midway Atoll contained an airfield essential to Japanese plans to expand into the Central Pacific*

"THE RESULT WAS CATASTROPHIC, WITH NEARLY ALL OF THE AIRCRAFT BEING SHOT DOWN WITHOUT REGISTERING A SINGLE TORPEDO HIT"

arrived in small groups over the course of a 90-minute period. However, they failed to register hits, and were either shot down or warded off.

Fletcher, who retained a large number of the Yorktown's aircraft for a follow-up attack, ordered the Yorktown to launch 35 aircraft to join the first strike wave at 8.30am. Shortly after the Yorktown launched her planes, the Japanese carriers began recovering Tomonaga's aircraft. He ordered his fleet to turn east-northeast in preparation for a strike against the American carriers. The US strike aircraft from Midway had completed their attacks by 9.30am. Nagumo and his subordinates knew that more attacks were coming, and they rushed to get the Vals and Kates ready for the strike against the American carriers.

Nagumo's course change confounded the dive bomber formations looking for the Japanese carriers. Both Ring and McClusky arrived at the position where they expected the enemy fleet to be only to find open ocean below them. Ring failed to locate the enemy and landed to refuel at Midway. However, McClusky turned north at 9.35am in the hope of finding the enemy before having to abort his strike and return to the Enterprise. The torpedo bomber squadrons from the three American carriers had no trouble finding the Japanese carriers, though, and they began making slow glide approaches against the carriers at 9.20am.

SUICIDE MISSION

Each Devastator carried a 12-foot-long, 1,200-pound torpedo. As many as 50 Zeros pounced on the attacking planes, eight miles from the carriers. In what turned out to be tantamount to a suicide mission, all but six of the obsolete Devastators were shot down by Zeros and anti-aircraft guns on the warships. The flak was so intense that many of the torpedo bombers never made it close enough to their targets to launch their deadly cargo.

The result was catastrophic, with nearly all of the aircraft being shot down without registering a single torpedo hit. Their sacrifice was not in vain though, because they tied up shipboard anti-aircraft batteries and Zeros that might have been used against the incoming Dauntless dive bombers. Additionally, the torpedo bombers delayed the takeoff of the second wave of Japanese strike aircraft against the US carriers.

As McClusky led his 33 aircraft, Leslie was guiding 17 dive bombers from the Yorktown toward the Japanese carriers. McClusky's aircraft formed up at 19,000 feet for attack, while Leslie's formed up at 14,500 feet. Leslie approached the carriers from the southeast and McClusky advanced from the southwest.

Although McClusky intended for his 33 dive bombers to split into two groups to attack the Akagi and Haga, all but three went for the Haga because of a communications mistake. Three of the pilots realised this error and diverted instead to the Akagi. As for Leslie,





The Japanese cruiser Mikuma burns after repeated bombing attacks launched from Enterprise and Hornet

he led his dive bombers in an attack on the Soryu. All three carriers suffered heavy damage from the US Navy dive bombers. Nagumo was forced to transfer his flag from the burning Akagi to the cruiser Nagara.

The Japanese were thirsting for revenge, and it fell to the aircraft crews of the Hiryu to inflict damage on the Americans. The Hiryu began launching its aircraft at approximately 11am. Fletcher ordered an additional 15 Grumman F4F Wildcats to launch to join the 12 fighters already conducting combat air patrol. Because the Yorktown's radar picked up the attackers as they were inbound, the flight deck crew was able to send parked aircraft to the hangar deck. Although the Yorktown's anti-aircraft guns and fighters downed 13 Vals, the Japanese dive-bomber attack was a success. Three bombs exploded on the flight deck of the Yorktown. The heavy damage compelled Fletcher to transfer his flag to the cruiser Astoria. Damage control crews succeeded in putting out the fires after which the flight deck crew was able to recover Leslie's dive bombers as they returned from their mission. In addition, they refuelled the Wildcats in anticipation of a second strike.

"AS THE SUN SET OVER THE FLAMING FLATTOPS THAT WERE ONCE THE PRIDE OF JAPAN, THE HORROR OF WHAT OCCURRED SPREAD THROUGH THE IMPERIAL JAPANESE NAVY"

When Rear Admiral Tamon Yamaguchi on the Hiryu learned from search aircraft after 1pm that three American carriers had attacked the carrier group, he ordered another strike. The Hiryu began launching torpedo bombers for a second strike against the American carriers at 1.30pm. Since the damage control crews on the Yorktown had put out the fires started by the first strike, the Japanese Kates attacking the Yorktown mistakenly believed they were attacking a second carrier.

FLAMING FLATTOPS

An American search plane finally located the Hiryu at mid-afternoon, and less than an hour afterwards, 30 dive bombers took off from the Hornet and Enterprise against Nagumo's last functioning carrier. They destroyed it with four bombs.

As the sun set over the flaming flattops that were once the pride of Japan, the horror of what occurred spread through the Imperial Japanese Navy. Huge explosions ripped through the Kaga and Soryu, sinking within minutes of each other. Both sides lost large numbers of aircraft. The Americans lost 179, while the Japanese lost all 261 of their carrier aircraft, as well as 71 fighters. Though the Japanese had other carriers, the four lost at Midway were the pride of the navy, and their absence was felt.

Four Japanese destroyers fired torpedoes at the Akagi at dawn on 5 June to sink her, and the Hiryu went down a few hours later. Yamamoto cancelled Operation MI that same afternoon. Nimitz had outfought Yamamoto; in so doing, he torpedoed Yamamoto's dream of destroying the US Pacific Fleet and of forcing the Americans to sue for peace.

Images: Alamy



■ *Australian soldier John Hannan, advances on a Japanese position armed with a Bren gun*

AUSTRALIA'S THIN GREEN LINE

IN 1942 AUSTRALIA STOOD ON THE BRINK OF INVASION BY THE JAPANESE. ITS LAST LINE OF DEFENCE: CITIZEN SOLDIERS WILLING TO LAY THEIR LIVES ON THE LINE IN THE HELLISH CONDITIONS OF THE KOKODA TRAIL

In Australian history, Kokoda ranks only behind Gallipoli in terms of cultural importance and its impact on the Anzac (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) myth. The name is invoked in much the same manner as the battle at Anzac Cove as a kind of short-hand for a uniquely Australian version of the fabled 'Blitz spirit', a signifier of Aussie mateship against extreme adversary.

Despite this, the name of the campaign remains a bone of contention. Historians still argue Kokoda Trail versus Kokoda Track; the former has gained the upper hand in modern usage, while the latter was more commonly used by the Diggers themselves and in battalion records. According to the Australian War Memorial, keepers of Australian military history, both are equally correct.

In the popular imagination, the campaign stopped a Japanese invasion of mainland Australia, but historians have since discovered that the Japanese had decided against any such attempt. They concluded that they could never realistically occupy a landmass of such immense size. In 1942, however, the threat of invasion was very real for the average Australian. Japanese submarine attacks in Sydney Harbour and air raids against Darwin only added to that fear. One Kokoda veteran later explained, "We were fighting for Australia, on Australian soil for the first time (Papua was an Australian protectorate at the time). It was important that we won because if we didn't win who knows what would have happened."

A MOUNTAINOUS TASK

The battles that formed the Kokoda Campaign ran from mid-July to mid-November 1942; four months of close combat with a fanatical enemy in some of the most inhospitable terrain in the world. The Trail was a series of native tracks that crossed the Owen Stanley Mountain Range in what is now Papua New Guinea, from Owen's Corner near the capital of Port Moresby through the hot, wet jungle to the villages of Uberi and Ioribaiwa, where the path begins to rise dramatically. This first section of the Trail ends in what soon became known to many young soldiers as the 'Golden Stairs' – 4,000 treacherously slippery steps that are cut into the mountainside.

From the 'Golden Stairs' the gruelling ascent continues to the village of Efogi, some 1,500 metres above sea level, and on to Myola, which would become an Australian forward base, at 2,000 metres in altitude. With each step, the temperature falls and the air becomes thinner. The Trail then peaks at what became known as Templeton's Crossing, some 2,500 metres above sea level, before beginning to finally descend across Eora Creek and through the tiny villages of Eora, Alola, Isurava, and Kokoda.

At the beginning of the Kokoda Campaign, there were only two under-strength Australian brigades stationed in Moresby; both comprised inexperienced and poorly equipped teenage militia of the Australian Military Force (AMF). 39 Battalion and the Papuan Infantry Battalion of the AMF had been eventually dispatched across the Owen Stanleys to counter the possibility

"IN THE POPULAR IMAGINATION, THE CAMPAIGN STOPPED A JAPANESE INVASION OF MAINLAND AUSTRALIA, BUT HISTORIANS HAVE SINCE DISCOVERED THAT THE JAPANESE HAD DECIDED AGAINST ANY SUCH ATTEMPT"



Although beautiful, the Kokoda Trail has some of the most inhospitable terrain on Earth

of a Japanese landing on the northeast coast. The Japanese beat them to it and landed their first troops around dusk on 21 July 1942 – they would be the first of an eventual landing force of more than 14,000.

The Japanese planned a two-pronged attack to capture Port Moresby – one across the Owen Stanleys to encircle the capital from the north, and the other as a direct amphibious assault against Moresby. The latter was aborted following the Battle for the Coral Sea, which broke up much of the invasion fleet. Instead, the Japanese relied upon advancing along the Kokoda Trail to Moresby.

It was while advancing along this route that the first battle of the campaign occurred, fittingly at the village of Kokoda itself. A small Australian force, from 39 Battalion of the AMF, had been airlifted to the village to conduct a reconnaissance toward Buna, the suspected site of the Japanese landings.

The Australian militia, led by Captain Sam Templeton, soon ran into the advancing Japanese forces of the South Seas Detachment and, severely outnumbered, carried out a number of harassing actions to impede the enemy advance. Templeton's men managed to ambush the first Japanese troops approaching the village at Oivi but the Australians were soon surrounded. Templeton himself set out to warn the main Australian force but was shot and killed crossing Eora Creek. This was soon to be the famous crossing, named in his honour.

Eventually, the surviving Diggers fell back to Kokoda, but the Japanese captured the village on 29 July. Just 79 men briefly recaptured Kokoda on 9 August, before being counterattacked and driven away by around

"THERE WERE CLUMPS OF JAPS HERE AND THERE AND HE JUST MOWED THEM DOWN. HE JUST WENT STRAIGHT INTO 'EM AS IF BULLETS DIDN'T MEAN A THING..."

1,500 Japanese, retreating to the village of Deniki and then Isurava, the next village down the Trail. It was here that the Australians were ordered to dig in and await reinforcement. The 39 Battalion soldiers were soon outnumbered by as many as ten to one, but Isurava was well placed with good fields of fire over the surrounding valley.

The first regular Australian Imperial Force (AIF) units to enter the campaign were sent to relieve these beleaguered militia soldiers, but the first two battalions were forced to stop short at Myola, after running out of rations. The men of 39 Battalion were just about holding on in Isurava, their uniforms and boots literally falling apart and in dire need of food and ammunition. Their commander described them as, "worn out by strenuous fighting and exhausting movement, and weakened by lack of food and sleep and shelter." Despite this, they fought on. A veteran remembered; "We had to stay there – fight till death. And that was a bit horrifying. I thought, 'Well I won't see my family again. I won't see Australia again.' But I was prepared, like the rest of us, to stay there and fight to the finish."

On 26 August, the Japanese attacked Isurava again, pushing the beleaguered defenders to their limits. AIF troops were beginning to arrive to the fight by this time, but so were Japanese reinforcements. The bitter fighting would continue for three days as the Australians were forced to again withdraw having suffered heavy casualties, principally from a well-positioned Japanese mountain gun.

It was on 29 August that one member of the AIF, Private Bruce Kingsbury, made a desperate charge at an enemy position. One of his mates saw what happened, "He came forward with this Bren (light machine gun) and he just mowed them down and he was an inspiration to everybody else around him. There were clumps of Japs here and there and he just mowed them down. He just went straight into 'em as if bullets didn't mean a thing… This Jap just appeared above the rock and fired one shot and vanished straight away. And I looked down and I saw Bruce and I grabbed him and took him up to Doc Duffy, to the RAP [Regimental Aid Post], but he was dead when he hit the ground". Kingsbury was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

After a second attack, during the night of 29 August, 39 Battalion and the reinforcements of the AIF slipped out of the village and withdrew to Eora Creek. Both the militia and AIF units had now suffered over 50 per cent casualties. At Templeton's Crossing, the starving men, described as 'gaunt scarecrows' by one medic, received their first hot meal in many weeks – a bully beef stew.

Relentless Japanese attacks, often supported by the mountain guns and mortars, saw the Australians forced to retreat even further south through their former base at



With vehicles being almost useless on the Trail, the Australians had to rely on airborne supplies or what they could carry themselves



TRAIL OF DEATH

Kokoda proved as much a resilient enemy as the Japanese. Each day the Australians had to fight another war: against the terrain itself

Papua offered some of the hardest territory over which to fight a war. The region's tropical climate had an average annual rainfall of over 250 centimetres. These monsoonal downpours meant that a creek could become a raging river within an hour. In the mountains, which form the 'spine' of the country and the site for the famous battles at Templeton's Crossing, it was both cold and wet. At lower altitudes it was simply hot and wet. The terrain of the Trail itself varied from treacherous ridge lines to valleys filled with Kunai grass and virtually impenetrable primary rainforest. It had a significant affect on the fighting. Visibility was very restricted meaning that most contacts with the enemy were at comparatively short range. Sub-machine guns and grenades were particularly favoured for this reason. Any advance was slowed to a snail's pace as the Trail rapidly turned to sometimes knee-deep mud. The soldiers themselves were constantly wet and could never properly wash and dry their clothing or boots, contributing to dysentery and other illnesses. They were also constantly plagued by malaria-carrying mosquitos. In short it was, as once famously described by a Digger, "a bastard of a place".

"VISIBILITY WAS VERY RESTRICTED MEANING THAT MOST CONTACTS WITH THE ENEMY WERE AT COMPARATIVELY SHORT RANGE. SUB-MACHINE GUNS AND GRENADES WERE PARTICULARLY FAVOURED FOR THIS REASON"



Papuan native porters evacuating a seriously wounded Australian soldier along the Kokoda Trail. Note the incline, mud and oppressive jungle

Illustration: Rebekka Hearl

Myola to the village of Efogi. Here they were reinforced by a fresh AIF battalion and the survivors of 39 Battalion were finally sent back to Moresby. Along the way, the Diggers continually harassed and slowed their enemy with ambushes and grim fighting withdrawals, making the Japanese pay for every inch of ground. The Japanese attacks continued and, despite reinforcement by two further battalions, the Diggers fell back to Ioribaiwa Ridge, less than 50 kilometres from Moresby itself.

FATE PLAYS ITS ROLE

While the Kokoda Campaign was being waged in Papua, the US Marines had conducted a massive amphibious landing at Guadalcanal. If the Americans were able to capture the airstrip, they would have a stepping stone against the chain of Japanese-held islands in the Pacific. For the Japanese, the advance against the Australians in Papua was taking too long against stiff resistance and commanders were nervous about over-committing to the capture of Moresby, especially while the US Marines fought back a major Japanese counter-attack on Guadalcanal. The enemy forces had finite resources (they had set out from Buna along the Trail with enough rations and water for only 12 days) and, with an already dangerously over-extended supply train, the decision was made to focus on defeating the Marine landings.

Late in September, the Japanese were forced to postpone their ambitions toward Port Moresby and instead were forced to conduct a withdrawal themselves, north along the Trail back to the village of Eora. As no Japanese term existed for 'retreat', the order instead called for an 'advance to the rear'. The delaying tactics employed by the Australians had paid off, slowing their enemy's advance until it was no longer a viable option. The Diggers had turned the tide – now they were the attackers.

Fresh AIF troops advanced back up the Trail, reaching Menari without contacting the enemy. On 12 October, the advancing Australians made contact with the retreating Japanese at the battle of Myola Ridge, eventually flanking three Japanese detachments arrayed across the Trail.

The Australian troops pushed forward steadily, sending out reconnaissance parties to scout out the Japanese defences. As one veteran described it: "I'll never forget the first time I was forward scout… You were very lucky to survive, so you had a certain time [working as a scout], then somebody else took over, see. And you couldn't do anything, you only walked up the track. You were the bloke they were going to shoot at. Then you'd know there were Japs there."

"A WEEK-LONG BATTLE ENSUED AT TEMPLETON'S CROSSING AND INTO EORA ITSELF. MORE THAN 50 DIGGERS WERE KILLED IN ACTION AND OVER 130 WERE WOUNDED DURING THIS TENACIOUS CLASH"



A Papuan orderly helps a wounded Australian soldier on Christmas Day, 1942



These shells were carried the entire length of the Trail by the Japanese

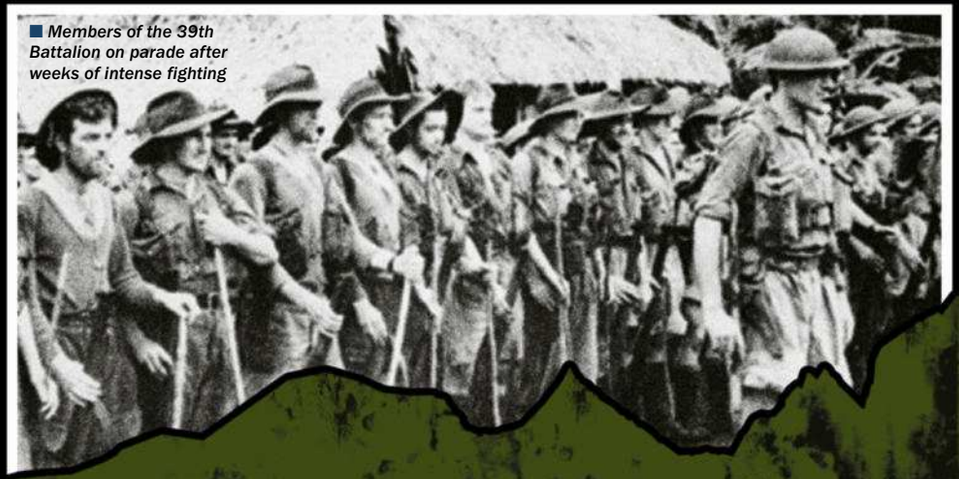
THE 'CHOCOS' GO TO WAR

A conscript army of Australian militia was dispatched to stop the Japanese advance – the famous 'Chocos' of the AMF

As a member of the Commonwealth, and the second nation to follow Great Britain in declaring war against Germany in 1939, Australia had dispatched the majority of its small volunteer army, known as the AIF or Australian Imperial Force, overseas in 1940-41.

While the AIF famously fought in Greece and North Africa, it was left largely to the conscripted militia, more officially known as the Australian Military Force (AMF), to defend the Australian territory and possessions. The AMF was at the time composed of some 130,000 conscripts, most with little to no military experience. Initially, these men were, by law, to be used strictly for the defence of Australia and could not be dispatched overseas like the AIF. In reaction to Japan's lightning fast advance through Papua and with a distinct lack of regular troops available, the first AMF were sent to defend what was, at the time, officially Australian soil. At best, these militia soldiers were given a month's worth of rudimentary training before they were sent to the jungles of Papua. The men averaged 18 years of age and were noticeably poorly equipped to face the Japanese. They were disparagingly called 'Chocos' by the regular AIF, arguing that the 'chocolate soldiers' of the AMF would melt in the sun (or in the heat of battle).

Others jokingly called them 'Koalas' after the famous native Australian marsupial – not to be exported or shot at! Remarkably, the term 'Choco' or 'Choc' remained within Australian military vernacular through Vietnam and is even in use today to denote Reserve soldiers.



Members of the 39th Battalion on parade after weeks of intense fighting



■ *Australian gunners pose beside a captured Japanese artillery piece*

The withdrawing Japanese 144 Regiment had been ordered to retreat to Eora Creek and construct defensive positions on the eastern slopes of the Track, south of Eora. These overlooked the natural barrier of the creek. The Japanese infantry were well supported by their own artillery, positioned to fire down the incline upon advancing Australian forces at a highly lethal angle.

Despite their well-sited positions and on-call artillery support, the Japanese defenders also faced a number of difficult challenges of their own. Their commander had been recently replaced as he was required to attend a promotion exam back in Japan, precisely when the now demoralised troops needed continuity and a steady hand. They were also perilously low on rations; Australian troops later reported that there was evidence that many of the Japanese soldiers had been subsisting on grass, tree bark and plant roots. Ammunition was also dwindling.

"DESPITE NOT CONTACTING A SINGLE ENEMY, THE AMERICAN UNIT TOOK AN ASTOUNDING 42 DAYS TO CROSS THE OWEN STANLEYS"

A week-long battle ensued at Templeton's Crossing and into Eora itself. More than 50 Diggers were killed in action and over 130 were wounded during this tenacious clash. With ammunition, rations and rested troops, the Australians eventually overcame but not without heavy losses. A platoon commander remembered being fired upon by the Japanese mountain guns: "I had to stay at one stage above Eora Creek and the gun was firing… Every time he fired it, he fired it down the track and it hit somebody… That was probably the biggest test of ordinary personal courage that I ever had to undergo. And I don't want to undergo it again."

The enemy were now in full retreat, pulling back and leaving Kokoda undefended. A Digger wrote that the capture of the village of Kokoda on 2 November, nonetheless, was a significant morale boost for the Australians: "It meant so much. The aerodrome was ours, and that meant we would get better tucker [food] and comforts would come in." Disturbingly, the Japanese left their badly wounded behind: "We gave them grenades and we gave them instructions: 'When the enemy comes, you must throw the first grenade at the enemy and kill yourselves with the second grenade.' And then we left them there and we crossed the river. This is one of my worst memories of the war," recalled one Japanese officer.

THE END OF THE BEGINNING?

The Diggers had won the battle of the Kokoda Track, but three months of further brutal combat awaited them as they fought the remnants of the South Seas Detachment. In November, the Diggers, accompanied by American Army units, reached Buna and Gona on the northeast coast, the site of the original Japanese landings. In fact, despite American General Douglas MacArthur's protestations,

the arrival of the first American unit in Papua forced him to belatedly recognise the resilience of the Australians and the AMF in particular. MacArthur had been a vocal critic of the Australians for much of the campaign.

An infantry battalion from the American 126th Regiment had arrived and were dispatched up a parallel trail known as the Kapa Kapa Trail. Despite not contacting a single enemy, the American unit took an astounding 42 days to cross the Owen Stanleys and the exhausted men – ridden with dysentery and malaria like the Australian forces – were classed as combat ineffective for a number of months afterward.

The Kokoda Campaign had been a war against the effects of disease and malnourishment as much as against the Imperial Japanese Army. A minimum of ten per cent of a unit's fighting strength was typically stricken with jungle diseases at any one time. Chief among these was dysentery caused by the appalling conditions and diet along with a lack of medical supplies to treat the condition.

Casualties from the fighting and from jungle disease and malnutrition on both sides were often evacuated by native porters. Papuans working for the Australians were known affectionately, in the admittedly racist language of the time, as the 'Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels'. The Australian Air Force was supposed to fly casualties out from Myola but refused to do so, arguing it placed their aircraft at too great a risk. Instead, the wounded were carried out by the Papuans. The Japanese forces treated the Papuan natives rather more brutally and as little more than slave labour – many died or were executed after they themselves fell ill through overwork.

Resupply was the other key factor affecting combat performance in the jungles of Papua. For the Australians, the closest resupply was anywhere up to 160 kilometres away in Moresby. Everything had to be carried in on the backs of Diggers, Papuan porters and pack animals or dropped from the air, a very unreliable procedure that saw many pallets disappear into the jungle. Food and ammunition were often scarce and both had to be conserved where possible. The author's own grandfather, then Lance Corporal Edward Farrelly, fought on the Track, and recalls routinely having less than two full magazines for his Thompson sub-machine gun. The Diggers, like soldiers in any war, were also often saddled with gear that wasn't fit for the unique environment they found themselves in.

For example, Farrelly recalls carrying a .55 Boys anti-tank rifle, only a trifling 16 kilograms (unloaded) in the sweltering scrub. It was useless due to the distinct lack of Japanese armour on the Track, something even a cursory examination of a map would have identified – it was hardly tank country. Apparently that particular Boys disappeared down a steep gully in an unfortunate 'accident'. Other weapons, like the Vickers medium machine gun that could have been decisive in the early battles on the Track, were inexplicably ordered to be left behind as they were thought to be too heavy to manoeuvre in the dense terrain.

The fighting was tough and often at close range with the Japanese typically preferring death rather than face capture and dishonour. An Australian veteran remembered the actions of one Japanese officer: "One of the [most] extraordinary sights I've ever seen, [was] when we encircled these Japs so we could capture the position and kill them all… A Japanese

"OTHER WEAPONS, LIKE THE VICKERS MEDIUM MACHINE GUN THAT COULD HAVE BEEN DECISIVE IN THE EARLY BATTLES ON THE TRACK, WERE INEXPLICABLY ORDERED TO BE LEFT BEHIND"



■ *Soldiers of the 7th Division use horses to drag a 25 pound gun into position over the Owen Stanley Ridge*

"THEY ARE BEAUTS AT GETTING UP THE COCONUT TREES AND SNIPING. THEY SEEM TO BE EVERYWHERE, AND I'LL BE BLOWED IF I CAN SEE THEM"

officer raced out with his sword, drawn sword, samurai sword, and one of our lieutenants grappled with him, and his weapon jammed.

"Just luck of the game, you know, it happens in every battle I suppose. And they grappled together and any rate, someone else came up, one of our chaps, and shot this Japanese who had so gallantly and bravely raced towards us waving his sword, you know, extraordinary sight, you wouldn't think you would see it in this 1942 war would you?"

In common with the later island-hopping campaigns in the Pacific, Kokoda was an exceptionally vicious operation in which no quarter was given by either side. Tales of Japanese atrocities only fuelled the 'shoot first, ask questions later' nature of the fight, where the taking of prisoners was an unusual occurrence. The Japanese also proved a skilful opponent, devising tactics to match the unique terrain. Another Digger wrote: "They are beauts at getting up the coconut trees and sniping. They seem to be everywhere, and I'll be blowed if I can see them. I don't know how they get up those trees. I can't climb them stripped, yet they can take a machine gun up one."

Despite this ferocious opposition, disease, the lack of food and water and the jungle itself, the Australians were triumphant. Kokoda became the first time the Japanese were soundly defeated and, it was felt at the time by a grateful nation, the end of the spectre of invasion. General Sir William Slim commented after the war: "It was the Australians… who broke the spell of Japanese invincibility on land and inflicted on that arrogant army its first defeat."

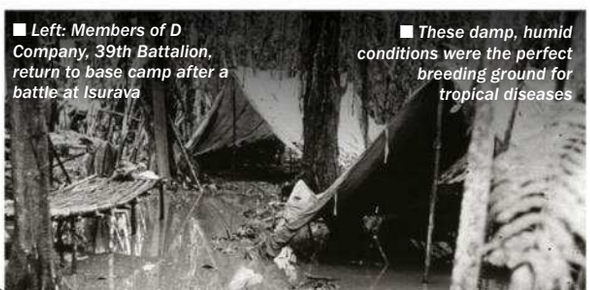
Japanese casualties are unknown but are believed to number in the thousands. Over 1,600 Australian servicemen were wounded in action on the Trail, and 625 made the ultimate sacrifice in combat. They lost many more to malaria, dysentery and dengue fever. The former CO of the famous 39th Battalion, the late Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Honner, summed up the feelings of many when he said: "They died so young. They missed so much. They gave up so much; their dreams; their loved ones; they laid down their lives so that their friends might live. Greater love hath no man than this."



■ *It is said that the native Papuans never left a wounded man behind, even in heavy combat*



■ *Left: Members of D Company, 39th Battalion, return to base camp after a battle at Isurava*



■ *These damp, humid conditions were the perfect breeding ground for tropical diseases*

UP CLOSE & PERSONAL

The small arms each side wielded in the jungle

JAPANESE ARMS

TYPE 38 RIFLE

CLIP CAPACITY: 5 **RATE OF FIRE:** 15 RPM

Compared to most Japanese small arms, the bolt action Type 38 was a decent service rifle. Its 6.5mm round produced less recoil and muzzle flash than the standard Australian .303.



TYPE 92 MEDIUM MACHINE GUN

CLIP CAPACITY: 30
RATE OF FIRE: 450 RPM

The Japanese medium machine gun, the Type 92 was an unusual design fed from 30 round stripper clips. Diggers nicknamed it the Woodpecker thanks to its slow and steady rate of fire.



AUSTRALIAN ARMS

BREN LIGHT MACHINE GUN

CLIP CAPACITY: 30
RATE OF FIRE: 500 RPM

The Bren light machine gun was accurate, comparatively light, and superbly reliable. The British design fired a .303 round (the same calibre as the Enfield rifle) from a top-mounted 30 round magazine.



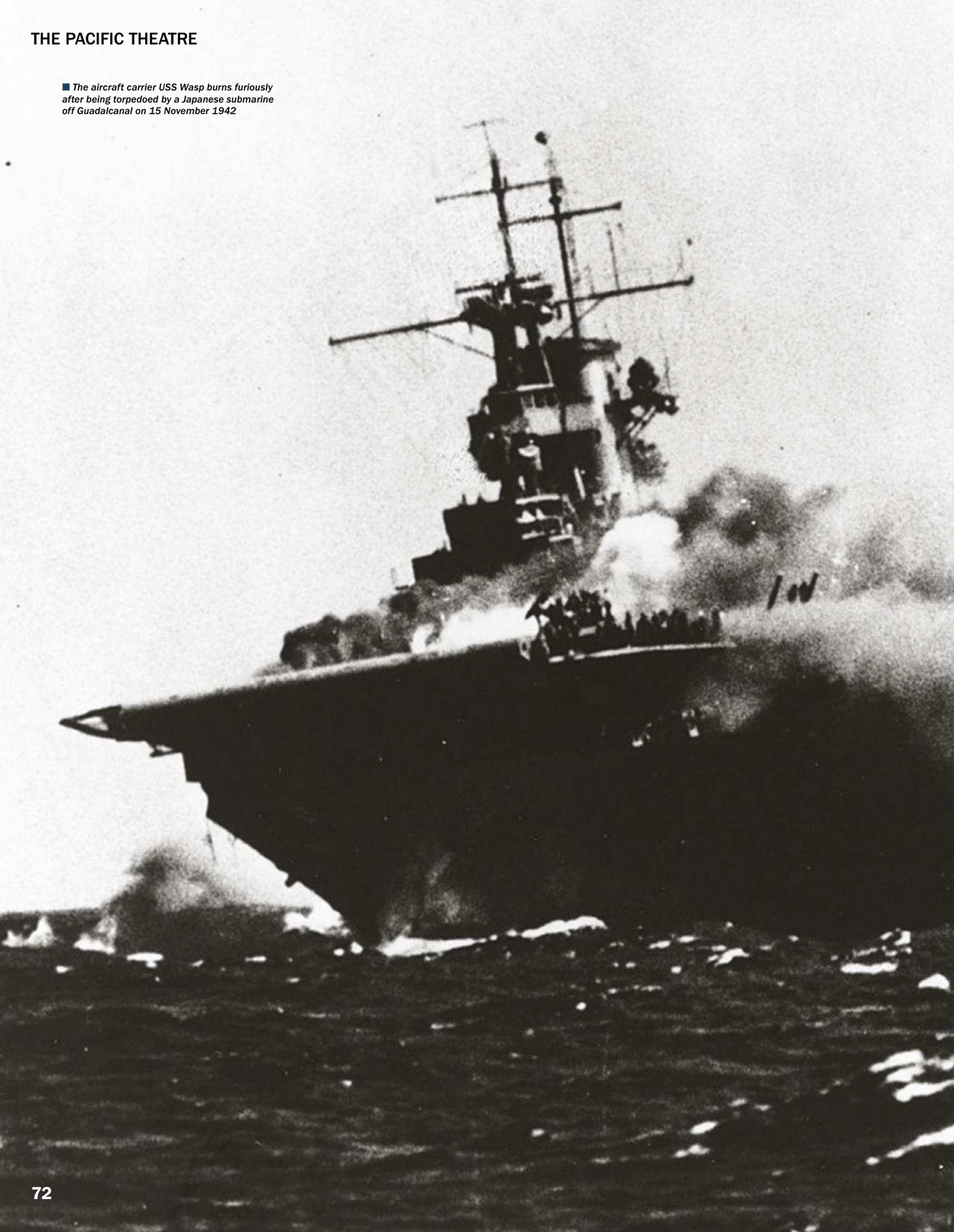
OWEN MACHINE CARBINE

CLIP CAPACITY: 33 **RATE OF FIRE:** 700 RPM

The Owen sub-machine gun was an Australian designed replacement for the American Thompson. It first saw action in the closing stages of the Kokoda campaign where its light weight was prized.



Images: Alamy, Getty, Rex Features



The aircraft carrier USS Wasp burns furiously after being torpedoed by a Japanese submarine off Guadalcanal on 15 November 1942



GAINING GROUND AT GUADALCANAL

OPERATION WATCHTOWER, THE FIRST US LAND OFFENSIVE IN WORLD WAR II, WRESTED THE PACIFIC ISLAND OF GUADALCANAL FROM JAPANESE CONTROL

By the summer of 1942, American and Allied forces in the Pacific Theatre of World War II were finally poised to assume the offensive. Operation Watchtower, the campaign to secure the southern Solomon Islands, was conceived to deter Japanese southward expansion that could threaten tenuous supply and communication lines stretching from the West Coast of the United States to remote Pacific bases, and finally to Australia.

Early in 1942, Japanese troops began constructing a seaplane base on the island of Tulagi and an airstrip at Lunga Point on Guadalcanal, 35 kilometres to the south across Sealark Channel. When these bases became operational, critical Allied installations would be within range of Japanese aircraft.

The only alternative for the Americans was to attack. Operation Watchtower, set for 7 August 1942, was designed to capture Guadalcanal, Tulagi, and the neighbouring islands of Tanambogo and Gavutu, and the task fell initially to the US 1st Marine Division, under General Alexander A Vandegrift. The division, 19,000 strong, was to receive logistical support from Task Force 61, under Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher, while amphibious forces under Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner put the fighting men ashore, 11,000 of them on Guadalcanal. Admiral Robert L Ghormley, commander of US forces in the South Pacific Area, was responsible for the overall effort.

When the Marines splashed ashore at Tulagi, Tanambogo and Gavutu, heavy fighting ensued, but the islands were secured within three days. At Guadalcanal, the Marines met virtually no resistance on the beaches. Surprisingly, they established a beachhead more than 1,800 metres long and 550 metres deep. On 8 August they secured the airfield.

It was the calm before the storm. During the next six months fighting raged on Guadalcanal, as well as the airspace and seas around the island. No fewer than seven naval battles, five of them nocturnal, took a heavy toll, earning Sealark Channel a new name – 'Iron Bottom Sound'. Fighting in fetid jungles and swamps, Marines and US Army troops captured Guadalcanal the following February. The cost was high with 1,600 killed and 4,200 wounded. Japanese losses were catastrophic with more than 24,000 dead.

As soon as the Americans had taken the airstrip, they renamed it Henderson Field in honour of a Marine pilot killed in the recent Battle of Midway. Navy construction battalions (Seabees) completed the airstrip, making it operational for US planes. Control of Henderson Field became the linchpin of victory at Guadalcanal. The landings had taken the Japanese by surprise. Rather than launching an overwhelming counterattack on land, their response ashore was piecemeal, although air attacks and naval sorties threatened to thwart Operation Watchtower.

On the night of 8 August a Japanese naval task force sank the US cruisers Astoria, Vincennes and Quincy, and the Australian cruiser Canberra in the Battle of Savo Island. Fletcher began withdrawing his fleet. Many ships still had their cargoes aboard, and the Marines were essentially marooned with only 17 days' rations. They scrounged food, conserved water and fought like lions.

A concerted Japanese effort to eject the Americans from Guadalcanal was not undertaken until mid-August, when the 28th Infantry Regiment, under Colonel Kiyonao Ichiki, made landfall. The impetuous Ichiki struck at American positions along the Ilu River, misidentified on Marine maps as the Tenaru, on the night of 21 August. The 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines absorbed the brunt of the assault, and American light tanks, artillery, machine-gun and rifle fire shredded clusters of enemy troops attempting to cross the river. After daylight, the Marines mopped up. 800 Japanese soldiers were dead, while 34 Marines were killed and 75 wounded. Distraught, Ichiki burned his regimental

standard and committed suicide. Henderson Field was safe, but only temporarily.

The Japanese continued to deliver supplies and reinforcements via nocturnal runs down New Georgia Sound, nicknamed 'The Slot', and these fast convoys were soon dubbed the 'Tokyo Express' by the Americans. Meanwhile, US fighters and bombers, dubbed the 'Cactus Air Force', engaged in dogfights with enemy planes, interdicted Japanese bombing missions and strafed targets of opportunity, including enemy troop transports caught during daylight hours. Marine Major Joseph J Foss led the fighter pilots, becoming an ace and shooting down 23 Japanese aircraft in October and November. Still, the American grip on Henderson Field remained tenuous, and the Japanese were full of fight.

Marine Raiders and airborne troops moved from Tulagi to Guadalcanal in September, joining the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines defending a line facing west to protect Henderson Field. An all-out Japanese effort to break through and take the airfield was launched after dark on 12 September. Lieutenant Colonel Merritt A 'Red Mike' Edson led a desperate Marine defence against multiple enemy charges. In some places, fighting was hand-to-hand. Marine artillery was on time and accurate, blasting the Japanese, whose attacking waves finally receded. Afterward, the area of sharpest fighting bore the name of 'Bloody Ridge' or 'Edson's Ridge' after the gallant commander. More than 800 Japanese troops died, and around 600 were wounded. Marine losses amounted to 59 killed and 200 wounded.

At sea, the struggle swirled. On 24-25 August the Battle of the Eastern Solomons was fought to a bloody draw with the aircraft carrier USS Enterprise damaged. In early October, the Japanese landed reinforcements despite American interference during the nocturnal Battle of Cape Esperance. In the Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands on 25-26 October the aircraft carrier Hornet was lost, while Enterprise was damaged once again, but two Japanese carriers were damaged and their aircrews suffered terrible losses. In mid-November, a Japanese reinforcement mission was stopped during the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal, but on the 15th the aircraft carrier USS Wasp was torpedoed and sunk by a Japanese submarine. At the end of the month, the Japanese won a tactical victory at the Battle of Tassafaronga but again failed to put troops and supplies ashore on the island.

Unable to establish complete control of the sea or air around Guadalcanal, Japanese senior commanders realised that their ability to contest the island was slipping away. They also understood that the fight had taken on a much



US 1st Marine Division storm the beaches of Guadalcanal on 7 August 1942



US control of the Henderson Field airstrip would prove vital to victory in Guadalcanal

7 AUGUST 1942
OPERATION WATCHTOWER UNDERWAY
1st Marine Division storm Guadalcanal against the Japanese opposition.

8 AUGUST 1942
DISASTER AT SAVO ISLAND
Japanese gunnery and torpedo tactics sink four Allied cruisers, prompting Admiral Fletcher to withdraw American naval forces off Guadalcanal.

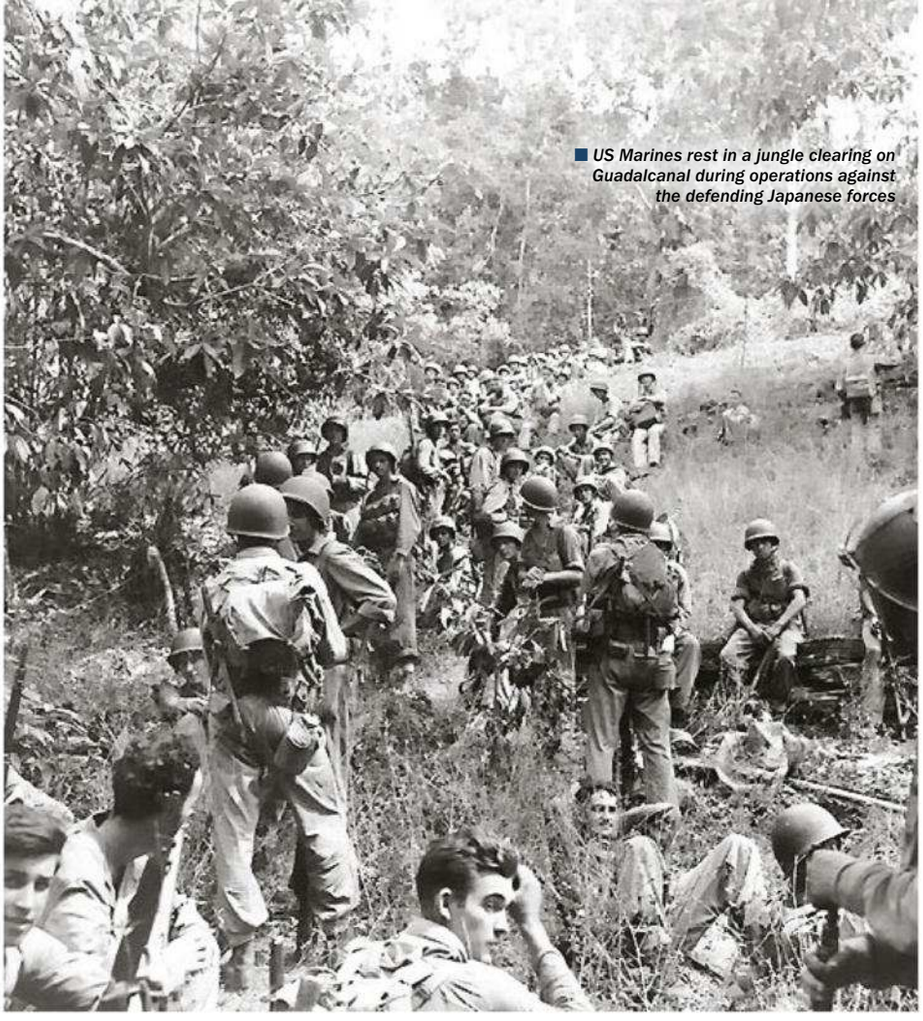
21 AUGUST 1942
ICHIKI DETACHMENT DECIMATED
Marines along the Tenaru (Ilu) River annihilate the Japanese 28th Infantry Regiment, under Colonel Kiyonao Ichiki, as they vainly attempt to cross the stream and capture vital Henderson Field.

24 AUGUST 1942
EASTERN SOLOMONS BATTLE
In the naval Battle of the Eastern Solomons, both sides suffer losses to air attacks.

12 SEPTEMBER 1942
BATTLE OF BLOODY RIDGE
Marines under Lieutenant Colonel Merritt A 'Red Mike' Edson defend Henderson Field on Guadalcanal.

24 SEPTEMBER 1942
AMERICAN FIGHTERS PROWL
The Cactus Air Force, based at Henderson Field, shoot down 16 enemy aircraft. Marine Captain Marion E Carl claims three.





■ *US Marines rest in a jungle clearing on Guadalcanal during operations against the defending Japanese forces*





■ *Bombed and strafed by American aircraft, a Japanese transport ship lies beached at Tassafaronga Point on Guadalcanal*

"ENEMY RESISTANCE BEGAN TO NOTICEABLY WANE BY THE END OF JANUARY, AND ON 9 FEBRUARY 1943, GUADALCANAL WAS DECLARED SECURE"

greater significance than they had originally assigned it. In one last gamble for victory, they committed two full divisions to battle.

General Harukichi Hyakutake arrived on the island in early October, and a week later the Marines received reinforcements from the 23rd (Americal) Division of the US Army. Admiral Robert L Ghormley was relieved on 18 October, replaced with Admiral William F 'Bull' Halsey, a tough-minded commander intent on winning. Hyakutake continued his troop buildup and then hurled thousands against the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, under Lieutenant Colonel Lewis B 'Chesty' Puller, reinforced by the 164th Infantry Regiment, Americal Division, along the Matanikau River on 24-25 October. The Americans were hard-pressed. One battalion endured three fanatical Japanese charges on the second day, but the offensive blew itself out, gaining nothing at a cost of 3,500 dead. American casualties amounted to 300 killed and wounded.

In November, the Americans began clearing pockets of Japanese resistance along the Matanikau while holding their line against repeated enemy attacks. In December, the 1st Marine Division was finally withdrawn after four months in combat. Army Lieutenant General Alexander M Patch relieved the heroic Vandegrift, and his new command of 50,000 troops included the 2nd Marine Division, and the Army's Americal and 25th Infantry Divisions. At the end of the month, Patch initiated a decisive push. Enemy resistance began to noticeably wane by the end of January, and on 9 February 1943, Guadalcanal was declared secure.

The Japanese had sustained mounting losses in their reinforcement efforts and finally concluded that the necessary pace would be unsustainable. Many soldiers were suffering from disease and malnutrition. In mid-December, Imperial General Headquarters had decided to abandon the island, finally evacuating about 11,000 ragged and emaciated soldiers.

The American victory at Guadalcanal was a turning point in the Pacific War. From that time until their surrender in Tokyo Bay three years later, the Japanese were obliged to fight on the defensive against American forces.

11-12 OCTOBER 1942
BATTLE OF CAPE ESPERANCE
Both sides lose a cruiser and a destroyer to naval gunfire.

18 OCTOBER 1942
HALSEY RELIEVES GHORMLEY
Admiral Ghormley, believed too pessimistic to continue in overall command of Operation Watchtower, is relieved by Admiral William F 'Bull' Halsey, who energises the campaign.

24-25 OCTOBER 1942
CHESTY PULLER'S STAND
Marine Lieutenant Colonel Lewis Puller exhorts his command, to stand firm against waves of attacking Japanese troops in a decisive engagement.

25-26 OCTOBER 1942
SANTA CRUZ ACTION
The aircraft carrier USS Hornet sinks, while Enterprise is damaged. Supporting a Guadalcanal land offensive, the Japanese fail to control the seas, losing veteran aircrews.

25 DECEMBER 1942
PULLING THE PLUG
Conceding that the battle for Guadalcanal is lost, senior Japanese officers gather at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo to finalise plans for troops withdrawal.

9 FEBRUARY 1943
FROM DOUBT TO VICTORY
Operation Watchtower concludes as the island of Guadalcanal is pronounced secure by American forces.



Heroes of the Medal of Honor

ALEXANDER BONNYMAN JR

STORMING ASHORE AT TARAWA, THIS FIRST LIEUTENANT LED HIS MARINES ACROSS A PIER SWEPT BY ENEMY FIRE TO CLEAR THE WAY ACROSS THE ISLET OF BETIO

The islet of Betio, shaped like a parrot, is the principal landmass of Tarawa atoll in the Gibert Islands of the Pacific. It is only three kilometres long, 730 metres across at its widest point, and its 291 acres encompass roughly half as much ground as New York's Central Park. In 1943, however, yard-for-yard, Betio was quite probably the most heavily defended territory on Earth.

When he arrived on the tiny islet that August, Rear Admiral Keiji Shibazaki was impressed with the stout defences constructed during the 18 months since the Japanese had seized Tarawa following US entry into World War II. Three days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Japanese troops and Korean labourers had occupied and begun fortifying the islet to strengthen the Imperial "absolute defence zone." Eventually, Betio was fairly bristled with concrete blockhouses, pillboxes, bunkers reinforced with coconut logs and tons of sand, and machine-gun nests. More than 40 artillery emplacements also studded the islet.

Shibasaki stood before the garrison of Betio, which had grown to more than 4,000 including 2,600 men of the elite 6th Yokosuka Special Naval Landing Force, waved his samurai sword in the air, and bellowed: "A million men cannot take Tarawa in a hundred years!"

Shibasaki, however, had not yet encountered the Leathernecks of the 2nd Marine Division, men like 1st Lieutenant Alexander 'Sandy' Bonnyman, executive officer, 2nd Battalion Shore Party, 8th Marines. For the Americans, Operation Galvanic, the assault on Tarawa, was the first offensive step of the Central Pacific Campaign, the island road to Tokyo that would cover thousands of kilometres of ocean and culminate with the Japanese surrender two years later. Tarawa had to be taken by storm. Men like Bonnyman made capturing the "impregnable" Betio possible – despite Shibasaki's boast – in a remarkable four days of hellish fighting.

The 2nd Marine Division hit the beaches at Tarawa on the morning of 20 November 1943. The landing zones – codenamed Red Beaches One, Two and Three – stretched across the breast and belly of the Betio parrot. A shortage of amphibious LVTs (Landing Vehicle, Tracked), popularly known as amtracs, meant that most of the Marines would ride towards the embattled shoreline in LCVPs (Landing Craft Vehicle, Personnel), or Higgins Boats. However, the LCVPs could not traverse the coral reef that ringed the 17-mile-long, nine-mile wide lagoon that fronted the chosen landing beaches.

Three waves of amtracs began churning toward the line of departure, 6,000 yards from the beaches, at 8.24am. These were followed by two waves of LCVPs. Pre-invasion naval and air bombardment were ineffective against the reinforced Japanese fortifications, and when the cascade of bombs and shells lifted, the defenders of Betio exited their underground safe spaces, manned their guns, and poured devastating fire into the oncoming Marines.

Japanese troops manning positions on the ocean side of Betio began rushing toward the lagoon side as reinforcements. When the amtracs were within 3,000 yards, the defenders' guns barked and stuttered. As the LCVPs started to hang up on the reef, fighting men were forced to exit their landing craft and wade hundreds of yards to shore under a torrent of enemy bullets and shells.

To the right, a deadly Japanese crossfire converged on an inlet at Red Beach One, cutting down Marines while mortars and artillery, pre-registered on the beaches, scored direct hits on amtracs that cleared the reef. To the Marines' left, a 500-yard-long pier jutted into the lagoon at the junction of Red Beaches Two and Three. Japanese machine guns and rifles chattered away at the Marines in this sector, as well as from the hulk of the half-sunken freighter Saida Maru, struck by American dive bombers early in the action.

All along the beaches, Marines were being chopped to pieces. Some sought cover along a five-foot seawall near the water's edge. Others tried to dig in. Numerous units lost their senior commanders in short order. West of the pier at Red Beach Two, Lieutenant Colonel Herbert R Amey tried to rally his beleaguered men, raising his Colt pistol and shouting, "Come on! These bastards can't stop us!" Immediately, he was riddled with machine-gun bullets. Lieutenant Colonel Walter Jordan, an officer of the 4th Marine Division who had come along as an observer, took command of the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marines and quickly learned that one company was pinned down while another had lost five of six officers.

By the end of the first day, the Marines managed to maintain a toehold on the beaches of Betio. The deepest penetrations at Red Two and Three were a mere 250 yards. A 600 yard-gap separated Marines on Red Beach One from a small enclave that had inadvertently landed at Green Beach along the parrot's beak, which was relatively undefended and perpendicular to the slaughter on the Red Beaches.

The only Marine battalion to land relatively intact on the morning of 20 November was Major Henry P Crowe's 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines, at Red Beach Three. They came ashore east of the pier where the destroyers Ringgold and Dashiell glided into the lagoon

"HE WAS A GOOD, LIKABLE GUY, BUT HE TOOK NO GUFF. HIS ATTITUDE WAS, 'YOU'VE GOT A JOB TO DO; YOU'D BETTER DO IT'"

Former Marine
Sergeant Leroy Kisling

■ *US Marine First Lieutenant Alexander Bonnyman received a posthumous Medal of Honor for valour during the 76-hour battle for the islet of Betio*

US Marine Corps



■ *Under fire from Japanese defenders, Leathernecks of the 2nd Marine Division leap over a log obstacle near the beach at Tarawa*



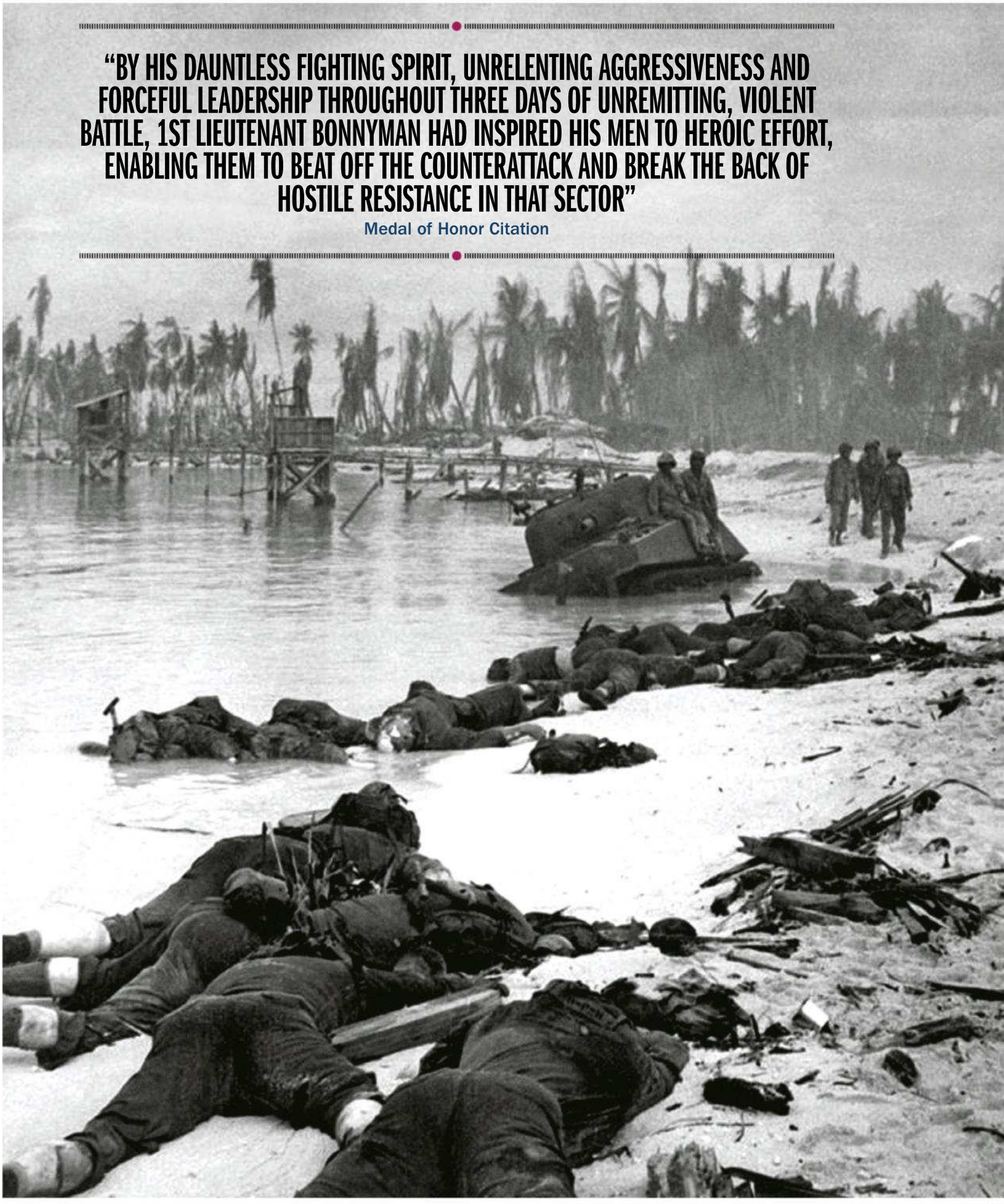
■ *Disabled by enemy fire, this Marine LVT lies astride the seawall at Red Beach One on the islet of Betio, Tarawa atoll*

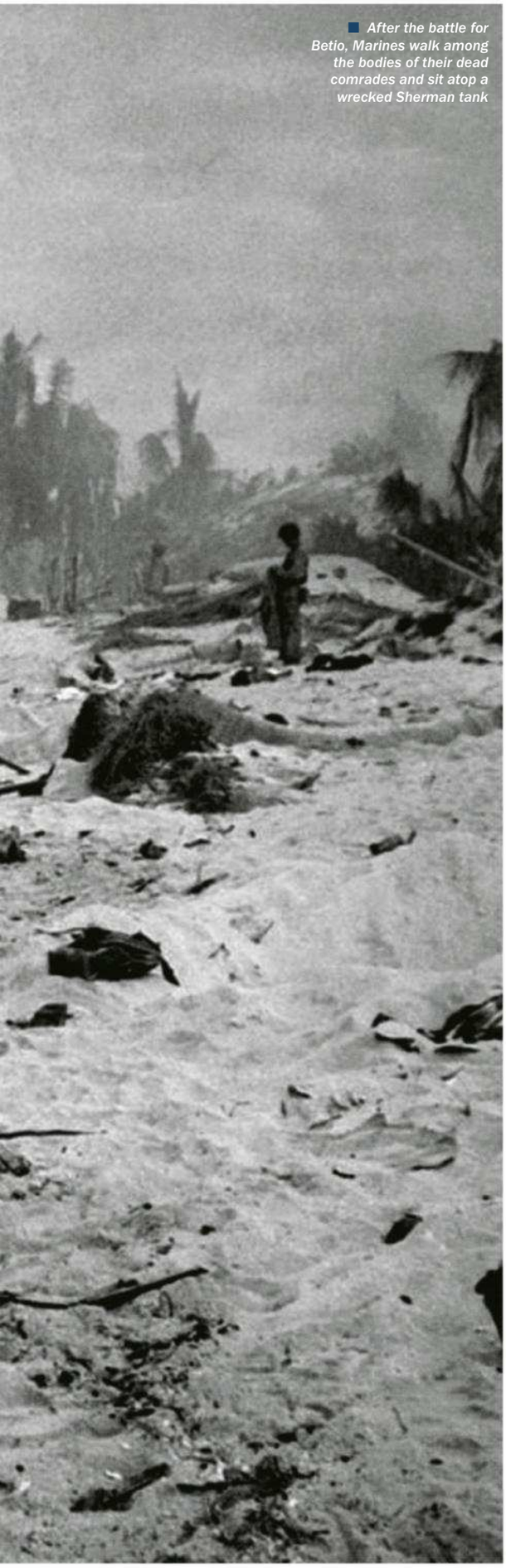


■ *Marine Lieutenant Alexander Bonnyman, possibly fourth from right, leads his men to the roof of a Japanese blockhouse on Betio*

"BY HIS DAUNTLESS FIGHTING SPIRIT, UNRELENTING AGGRESSIVENESS AND FORCEFUL LEADERSHIP THROUGHOUT THREE DAYS OF UNREMITTING, VIOLENT BATTLE, 1ST LIEUTENANT BONNYMAN HAD INSPIRED HIS MEN TO HEROIC EFFORT, ENABLING THEM TO BEAT OFF THE COUNTERATTACK AND BREAK THE BACK OF HOSTILE RESISTANCE IN THAT SECTOR"

Medal of Honor Citation





After the battle for Betio, Marines walk among the bodies of their dead comrades and sit atop a wrecked Sherman tank

and sprayed accurate fire support at enemy positions. Bonnyman realised that Japanese guns had pinned down a large number of Marines at the end of the pier and quickly assumed the initiative.

Bonnyman's posthumous Medal of Honor citation reads that he "…repeatedly defied the blasting fury of the enemy bombardment to organize and lead the besieged men over the long, open pier to the beach and then, voluntarily obtaining flamethrowers and demolitions, organized his pioneer shore party into assault demolitionists and directed the blowing of several hostile installations before the close of D-Day."

During the harrowing night that followed, the Marines on the vulnerable Red Beaches braced for a Japanese counterattack that never materialised. Approximately 5,000 Marines had landed on Betio, and 30 per cent of these were killed, wounded or missing. However, the Japanese had suffered mightily as well. Many of their officers had been killed, and their communications had been disrupted to such an extent that there was no hope of mounting a co-ordinated counterthrust.

Still, the early hours of the second day were as deadly as the first. Marine reinforcements were riddled by enemy small arms. The 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, last of the immediate reserves, took 350 casualties among its 800-man complement, due to murderous fire from the hulk of the Saida Maru and the relentless fusillade from Japanese emplacements ringing Red Beaches Two and Three. The Marines on the thin ribbon of shoreline faced an agonising choice: remain where they were and suffer, or attempt to silence the enemy guns. They got moving.

The Marines on Green Beach were reinforced. Working in tandem with the few tanks that made it ashore, they began a successful flank attack across the islet. Meanwhile, here and there, teams of Marines took on the enemy bunkers and blockhouses with hand grenades, explosive satchel charges and flamethrowers. Yard by yard, pillbox by pillbox, the Marines advanced from the Red Beaches across the airstrip in the middle of Betio. At about 4pm, Colonel Robert Shoup, commanding the 2nd Marine Regiment, was confident enough to radio to senior officers offshore: "Casualties: many. Percentage dead: unknown. Combat efficiency: we are winning."

Orders for the third day of fighting on Betio were straightforward. The gains on Green Beach were to be exploited while a Japanese salient between Red Beaches One and Two was to be eliminated, and the two battalions of the 8th Marines on Red Beach Three were to attack eastward. The triple threat of a coconut log bunker with multiple machine guns, a steel reinforced pillbox, and a large blockhouse that was supposedly Shibasaki's headquarters confronted Crowe's Marines on Red Beach Three. Around 9.30am, a Marine mortar round scored a direct hit on the ammunition compartment for the coconut log bunker, blowing the entire structure sky high. An M4 Sherman medium tank nicknamed Colorado fired a 75mm round that cracked open the pillbox. The enemy grip on Red Beach Three had begun to slip, but the blockhouse continued to belch deadly rifle and machine-gun fire.

Early morning on the third day a Japanese message, possibly sent by Shibasaki, had relayed the desperate situation to Tokyo. "Our weapons have been destroyed. From now on everyone is attempting a final charge. May Japan exist for 10,000 years." If he was alive and in the blockhouse, he had minutes to live.

The heavily fortified blockhouse was the highest point on Betio, and flank attacks had been thrown back with severe losses. Apparently, the only way to silence the structure was to gain its rooftop and drop grenades or explosive charges down the air vents to force the enemy out. Lieutenant Bonnyman led five engineers across 40 yards of open ground under covering fire. Bonnyman clawed his way up the sandy slope to the roof of the blockhouse as dozens of Japanese troops emerged to fight. The 33-year-old lieutenant opened up a flamethrower on several of them, emptied his M1 carbine into others, and then killed three more before he was shot down in a hail of enemy gunfire.

As the Japanese recoiled in disorder, Bonnyman's body tumbled down the slope. Inspired by his actions, the remaining engineers detonated explosives while enemy soldiers swarmed out of the blockhouse. Colorado took out 20 of them with a single canister round, and a bulldozer piled mounds of sand against firing slits that remained active.

The Marines on Red Beach Three had finally silenced their supreme tormenter. The blackened corpses of more than 200 Japanese troops were found inside the blockhouse, but Admiral Shibasaki's body was never positively identified. Bonnyman's citation continues: "Assailed by additional Japanese after he had gained his objective, he made a heroic stand on the edge of the structure, defending his strategic position with indomitable determination in the face of the desperate charge… before he fell, mortally wounded."

The courage of 1st Lieutenant Alexander Bonnyman broke the stalemate of death and destruction on Red Beach Three, while other acts of bravery helped turn the tide at Tarawa for good. After Betio was declared secure on 23 November, only 17 Japanese troops and 129 Korean labourers survived. A total of 1,056 Marines and US Navy personnel were killed and nearly 2,300 wounded. The Marines learned valuable lessons at Tarawa, including the need for plunging fire to affect results during preliminary shore bombardment, better communications, and more tracked landing vehicles. The Japanese learned that Marines, like Lieutenant Bonnyman, were willing to give their lives in combat – and that there were others like him.

The lieutenant was interred in a cemetery on Betio, but the exact location of the burial site was obscured. Bonnyman's 12-year-old daughter, Frances, accepted her father's posthumous Medal of Honor during a ceremony in 1947. It was one of four Medals of Honor awarded for heroism at Tarawa.

In the spring of 2015, more than 71 years later, the cemetery was rediscovered on Betio. On 27 September, the Marine hero was buried with military honours in Knoxville, Tennessee.

THE ALLIED OFFENSIVE

DESPITE FIERCE JAPANESE RESISTANCE, THE ALLIES TAKE CONTROL

082 STATE OF PLAY: 1944
The Allies go on the attack, taking advantage of overstretched and increasingly defensive Japanese forces

084 THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF
The US and Imperial Japanese navies squared off in a series of engagements that came to comprise one of history's largest naval battles

088 THE DIVINE WIND OF DEATH
Inside the culture of sacrifice and nationhood behind Japan's kamikaze pilots

096 IWO JIMA
After an arduous slog through the Pacific, US Marines mounted one final assault on Japanese forces in an attempt to unlock the mainland

104 JOHN BASILONE
The New Jersey champion boxer almost single-handedly repelled a Japanese onslaught

108 YAMATO: JAPAN'S DOOMED FLAGSHIP
This super battleship embarked on a desperate mission to halt American landings on Okinawa

114 EDWARD 'TED' KENNA
Private Kenna fired his Bren gun amid a hail of Japanese machine gun fire, taking out enemy gunners one by one and saving his comrades












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STATE OF PLAY: 1944

THE ALLIES GO ON THE ATTACK, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE OVERSTRETCHED AND INCREASINGLY DEFENSIVE JAPANESE

By 1944, Japan had been forced to fight a defensive war. Its expansive island defensive perimeter, stretching across thousands of kilometres of ocean, was under continuing attack. American industrial might, on a comprehensive war footing, had begun to produce weapons in staggering quantities and outstanding quality, which Japan could not hope to match. These included the Essex-class aircraft carrier and the superb Grumman F6F Hellcat and Vought F4U Corsair fighter planes that eclipsed the pre-eminence of the once apparently invincible Mitsubishi Zero.

The Allies pursued a two-pronged island hopping offensive strategy, bypassing some fortified Japanese islands and leaving them to wither under air attack and without resupply. In the South Pacific General Douglas MacArthur's command struck through New Guinea, the northern Solomons, and the Bismarck Archipelago toward the Philippines, while Admiral Chester Nimitz led the Central Pacific thrust to the Marianas.

From June to August, combined US Marine and Army operations seized the islands of Saipan, Guam and Tinian in the Marianas against fanatical Japanese resistance, including banzai suicide charges against American lines. Simultaneously, Japanese naval air power was obliterated during the Battle of the Philippine Sea. Airfields constructed on the islands brought Japan within range of American heavy bombers that laid waste to Japanese cities.

MacArthur reached the Philippines in October during landings on the island of Luzon while the US Navy defeated the Japanese in the great naval Battle of Leyte Gulf. American forces fought to liberate some areas in the Philippines until the end of the war.



IMPHAL AND KOHIMA

From March to August, Allied forces in the China Burma India Theatre turn back a Japanese invasion of India with decisive victories at Imphal and Kohima. Japanese ambitions to control the subcontinent result in heavy losses, and Commonwealth troops, supported by the Chinese and Americans, mount successful counterattacks that drive the enemy back hundreds of kilometres, reclaiming Burma and other territory lost in 1942.



I SHALL RETURN

On 20 October, General Douglas MacArthur, accompanied by Philippine President Sergio Osmeña, wades ashore on the island of Leyte and proclaims, "People of the Philippines: I have returned!" making good on his promise when he evacuated the embattled islands before they fell to the Japanese in 1942. The American Sixth Army is fighting its way inland at the time.

TURKEY SHOOT AT PHILIPPINE SEA

During the American landings on the islands of Saipan, Guam and Tinian in the Marianas, the US Fifth Fleet, under Admiral Raymond Spruance, fights the Japanese in the Battle of the Philippine Sea. In a major US victory, the Japanese lose more than 600 planes during the 'Great Marianas Turkey Shoot' along with three aircraft carriers. American losses are minimal.





GREAT SEA FIGHT AT LEYTE GULF

Leyte Gulf, the largest battle in naval history, swirls around the Philippines between 23 and 26 October, as US naval forces engage the enemy and protect landing beaches. Actually a series of separate engagements, Leyte Gulf is a major US victory although a close call occurs off Samar as the Third Fleet, under Admiral William 'Bull' Halsey, chases a Japanese decoy force toward Cape Engaño.

SAVAGE COMBAT AT PELELIU

As Allied troops under General Douglas MacArthur battle toward the Philippines, Japanese forces on the island of Peleliu are deemed a threat to the advance's flank. To neutralise the hazard, landings occur on 15 September. Expecting a rapid victory, the Americans face stubborn Japanese resistance, securing Peleliu on 27 November. More than 2,300 Americans die, and the operation's necessity is questioned.



THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF

THE US AND IMPERIAL JAPANESE NAVIES SQUARED OFF IN A SERIES OF ENGAGEMENTS THAT CAME TO COMPRISE ONE OF HISTORY'S LARGEST NAVAL BATTLES

LEYTE GULF 23-26 OCTOBER 1944

On 20 October 1944, after a heavy naval bombardment, Supreme Allied Commander, Southwest Pacific Area, General Douglas MacArthur commenced landing 200,000 US troops on the island of Leyte with the goal of liberating the Philippines from Japanese occupation. Offshore in Leyte Gulf lay Vice Admiral Thomas Kinkaid's US Seventh Fleet covering the amphibious invasion force and delivering the ammunition, food and medical supplies necessary to sustain the troops heading inland.

The days before the landings saw major American carrier-plane airstrikes on Formosa and the Ryukyu Islands, and hundreds of Japanese aircraft fell victim to American fliers. Coupled with the devastating losses from the Battle of the Philippine Sea that June, the Japanese Combined Fleet would be largely without air cover for the upcoming battle.

In response to the American landings at Leyte, the Japanese high command initiated its Sho-Go 1 plan with the intention of destroying the US invasion fleet. This could not be achieved by Japan's very limited air power, so a Japanese surface fleet would have to do. It would first be necessary for the US Third Fleet under Admiral William 'Bull' Halsey to be lured away from its position to the northeast of the Philippines so that it could not interfere with the Combined Fleet's attack on the US amphibious fleet in Leyte Gulf.

Sho-Go 1 was a complicated battle plan, in keeping with most Japanese naval operations of the war. It called for a 17-ship Northern Force departing from Japanese home waters under Vice-Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa and consisting of one fleet carrier and three light carriers, which were largely empty of airplanes, two battleships and 11 lesser warships to lure Halsey away. A powerful Centre Group under Vice-Admiral Takeo Kurita comprising five battleships, ten heavy cruisers, two light cruisers and 15 destroyers, sailing from Borneo, would traverse the middle of the Philippines through the San Bernardino Strait before making its way southward to the Leyte landing sites.

Lastly, the Southern Force, under Vice-Admiral Shoji Nishimura, consisting of two battleships, one heavy cruiser and four destroyers, would also sail from Borneo and be joined by another squadron from the Ryukyu Islands of two heavy cruisers, one light cruiser and seven destroyers under Vice-Admiral Kiyohide Shima. These groups, especially the Centre Group, which contained the 70,000-ton super battleships Yamato and Mushashi, were supposed to fall upon the US invasion fleet at Leyte Gulf on 25 October and wipe it out with their big guns.

Oddly, neither the US nor Japanese fleets had overall commanders for their forces for the battle. The result was that there were instances of miscommunications and misunderstandings that had serious impacts on the course of the battle.

The Americans struck first when, early in the morning of 23 October, a pair of submarines, USS Darter and USS Dace, intercepted Kurita's

OPPOSING FORCES



VS

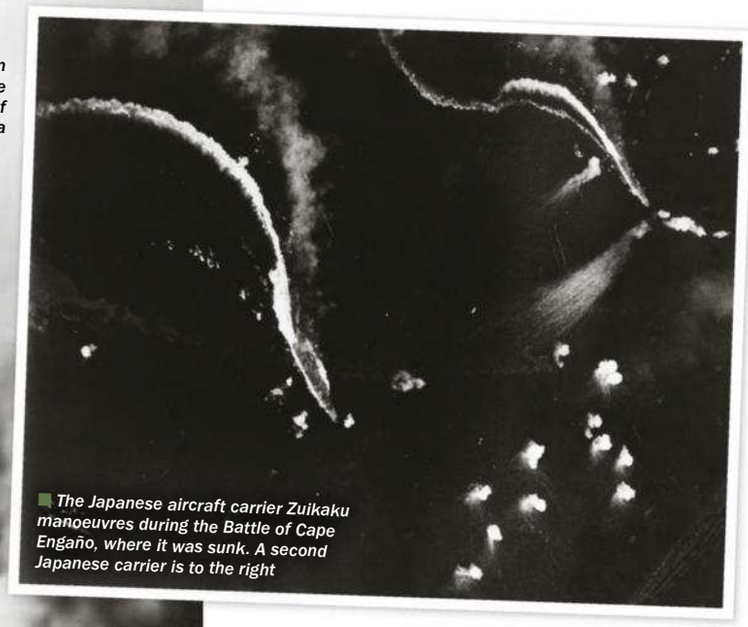


LEADERS: US Third Fleet Admiral William 'Bull' Halsey; US Seventh Fleet: Vice Admiral Thomas Kinkaid
CARRIERS: 8 fleet carriers, 8 light carriers, 18 escort carriers
BATTLESHIPS: 12
CRUISERS: 24
DESTROYERS: 166
AIRCRAFT: around 1,500

LEADERS: Centre Group: Vice-Admiral Takeo Kurita; Northern Force: Vice-Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa; Southern Force: Vice-Admiral Shoji Nishimura
CARRIERS: 1 fleet carrier, 3 light carriers
BATTLESHIPS: 9
CRUISERS: 20
DESTROYERS: 35
AIRCRAFT: around 300



■ *The light carrier USS Princeton was hit by a single Japanese bomb and sunk in the Battle of the Sibuyan Sea*



■ *The Japanese aircraft carrier Zuikaku manoeuvres during the Battle of Cape Engaño, where it was sunk. A second Japanese carrier is to the right*

"MOST OF THE AMERICAN'S ATTENTION WAS GIVEN TO THE SUPER BATTLESHIP MUSASHI, WHICH WAS SUNK AFTER BEING HIT WITH 17 BOMBS AND 19 TORPEDOES"

Centre Group off Palawan Island and torpedoed three Japanese cruisers, sinking two and badly damaging a third. Darter ran aground during the fight and the crew was rescued by Dace.

Kurita's position was now known to the Americans. Halsey's Third Fleet had its core striking power in fast carriers of Task Force 38 plus several battleships. TF 38 comprised three smaller task groups, each built around several aircraft carriers, while a fourth was away at the fleet anchorage at Ulithi Atoll, rearming and refuelling.

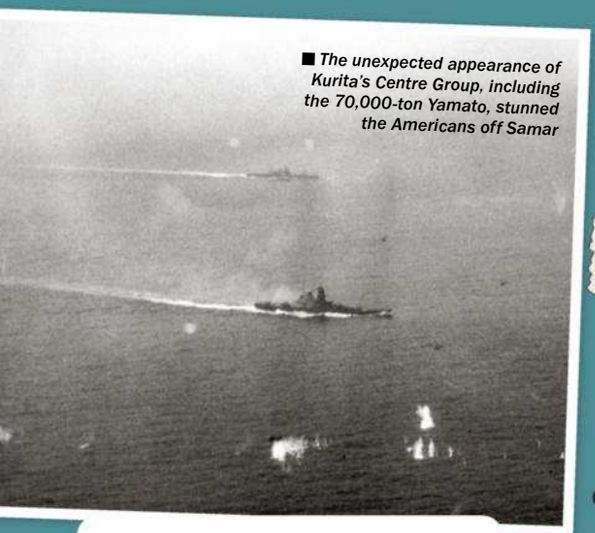
From his flagship, USS New Jersey, Halsey directed his three carrier task groups against Kurita's Centre Group. He also became aware of the approach of Nishimura's vanguard group of the Southern Force, and that it was ultimately headed for Leyte Gulf, through the Surigao Strait. He presumed that Kinkaid's Seventh Fleet had more than enough firepower to fend off Nishimura but he could not confer directly with Kinkaid. MacArthur, Kinkaid's superior, had forbidden any direct contact between the two fleets so messages took a long time. Halsey also recalled the fourth task group from its voyage to Ulithi.

On 24 October, in the Battle of the Sibuyan Sea, Halsey's carrier planes struck Kurita's Centre Group ships, which had no fighter protection at all. Most of the American's attention was given to the super battleship Musashi, which was sunk after being hit with 17 bombs and 19 torpedoes, as well as enduring 16 destructive near-misses. Kurita ordered a retreat away from the San Bernardino Strait.

American losses were minimal. However, Third Fleet's pilots provided overly rosy reports of their attacks when they returned to their carriers and Halsey, accepting them at face value, came to the conclusion that Kurita was no longer a major threat. When a report of Ozawa's Northern Force location came, he decided to take the whole of Task Force 38, comprising the carrier units of Third Fleet, plus all of his battleships, north to demolish it. He thought that Seventh Fleet had enough firepower left to defend itself and the invasion beaches but this was predicated on the belief that Kurita's Centre Group had been hurt much worse than it had been. Crucially, Kinkaid never

BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF

23-26 OCTOBER 1944



■ *The unexpected appearance of Kurita's Centre Group, including the 70,000-ton Yamato, stunned the Americans off Samar*

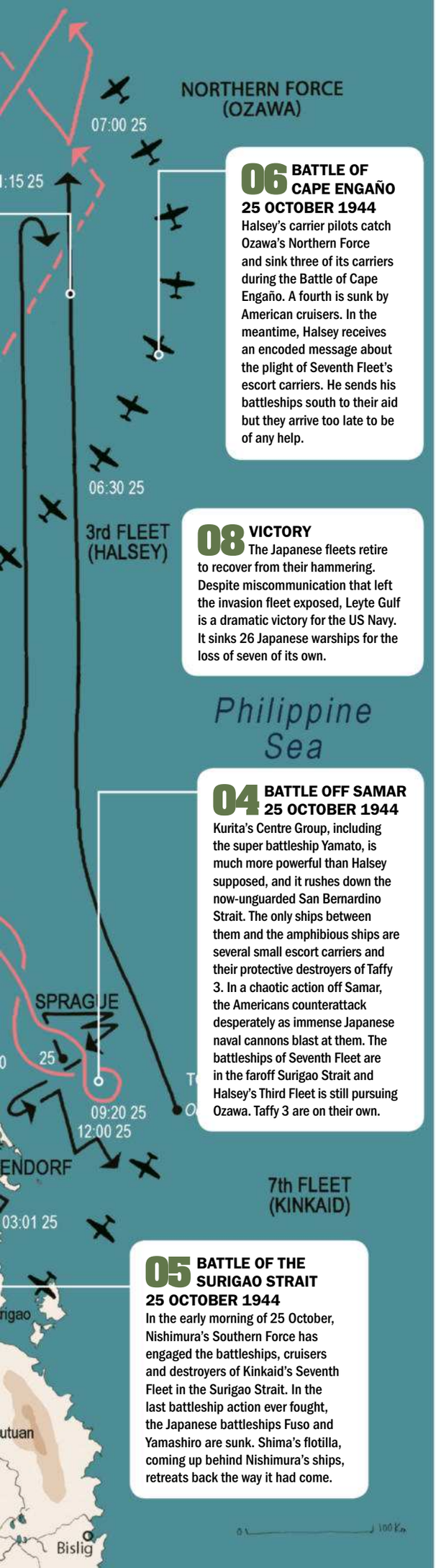
01 THE JAPANESE PLAN
Kurita's Centre Group makes for the San Bernardino Strait heading for Leyte Gulf while Nishimura takes his fleet to the Surigao Strait, destination Leyte Gulf, where the US amphibious fleet lies offshore supporting the invasion forces. Ozawa's Northern Force steams south, intent upon luring away Halsey's Third Fleet.

02 BATTLE OF THE SIBUYAN SEA 24 OCTOBER 1944
On 23 October, US submarines Darter and Dace launch torpedoes against the ships of Kurita's Centre Group, sinking two Japanese cruisers. They also notify Halsey of Kurita's position. The next day, carrier planes from Halsey's Third Fleet attack Kurita's ships, sinking the battleship Musashi. Halsey now mistakenly believes Kurita's fleet is a spent, impotent force.

03 NORTHERN FORCE DECOY 24 OCTOBER 1944
Word reaches Halsey of Ozawa's Northern Force and he decides to give chase, just as the Japanese hoped he would. Halsey takes all of his warships with him, leaving nothing behind to guard the San Bernardino Strait and the approaches to the invasion beaches in Leyte Gulf.

07 KURITA RETREATS 25 OCTOBER 1944
Shaken by the frenzied resistance of the American escort carriers and destroyers off Samar, and mistakenly thinking he is facing the main US fleet, Kurita breaks contact and his Centre Group retreats back up the San Bernardino Strait.

Babuyan Islands
Laoag
Luzon Strait
Tuguegarao
Baguio
Dagupan
San Jose
Tarlac
Cabanatuan
Angeles
San Fernando
Olongapo
Manila
Mariveles
San Pablo
Lucena
Batangas
Daet
Naga
Iriga
Legaspi
Mindoro
CENTRAL FORCE (KURITA)
South China Sea
Calamian Islands
Cuyo Islands
Sibuyan Sea
Visayan Sea
Roxas
Catbalogan
Samar
San Bernadino Strait
Tacloban
Ormoc
Leyte Gulf
Leyte
Cadiz
Iloilo
Bacolod
San Carlos
Negros
Cebu
Kabankalan
Tagbilaran
Dumaguete
Mindanao Sea
Puerto Princesa
Palowan
Sulu Sea
Cagayan
SHIMA'S FORCE
SOUTHERN FORCE (NISHIMURA)
Dipolog
Gingoog
Cagayan
Iligan
TG 38.3
TG 38.2
Oct 24
12:00 24
22:40 24
0:00 25
22:00 25
24:00 24



received clear notification that Halsey was taking his whole fleet away and continued to believe that some of it was guarding the San Bernardino Strait.

With the strongest elements of the US Navy now steaming north, Kurita turned his own fleet around and through the San Bernardino Strait. His Centre Group emerged in the early morning of 25 October to discover Seventh Fleet's Task Force 77.4 between it and the invasion fleet's transports. Task Force 77.4, under the command of Rear Admiral Thomas Sprague, was composed of three task units – Taffy 1, Taffy 2 and Taffy 3. Each was built around a clutch of escort carriers and some destroyers. Kinkaid's Seventh Fleet had been organised to provide air cover to the American troops ashore, not fight a major engagement against the Imperial Japanese Combined Fleet but that is what they had to do.

The outgunned and thoroughly surprised US Navy men of Taffy 3, under Rear Admiral Clifton Sprague, mounted a desperate defence, attacking the Japanese with their own carrier planes, dropping whatever bombs had been already loaded on them for close air support missions ashore and then strafing the enemy warships with the machine guns of their obsolescent Wildcat fighters. They were joined by their companion destroyers, which mounted near-suicidal attacks against the bigger Japanese ships. Taffy 1 and 2 were still far away but immediately sent help. For the time being, Taffy 3 was all alone.

The ferocity of the American response, with destroyers charging in to trade fire with tremendous Japanese battleships coupled with the fog of war, convinced Kurita that he was facing the whole of Third Fleet, not a mere invasion fleet covering force. After losing three cruisers, he ordered a retreat. American losses were heavy but the vulnerable invasion fleet had been spared annihilation.

In the meantime, Third Fleet was still chasing Ozawa's Northern Force and, unfortunately, the rest of the Seventh Fleet was too far away. That same day, in the early morning darkness of 25 October, Nishimura's Southern Force had come up the Surigao Strait with Shima's group forming a distant rearguard to be met by the bombardment ships of Seventh Fleet under Rear Admiral Jesse Oldendorf.

Oldendorf's fleet was centred on six old battleships that had been repaired and sent back to war. They'd been providing fire support for the invasion forces but now they duelled with the Japanese. Nishimura's vanguard was built around the battleships Yamashiro and Fuso. A torpedo attack by American destroyers badly damaged Fuso, which later exploded. Yamashiro was struck by torpedoes, too, and then had to contend with the eruption of fire from Oldendorf's battleships and cruisers. Aided by fire control radar, an avalanche of heavy shells plunged into Nishimura's ships. Yamashiro was sunk before dawn, and the heavy cruiser Mogami was lost later that day. Shima, far to the rear, seeing the catastrophe that had befallen Nishimura's force, turned his own rearguard flotilla around and headed back out of Surigao Strait. The fight was history's last between battleships.

Having sought out Ozawa and at last found him, Halsey's Third Fleet carrier planes conducted strikes against the Northern Force on 25 October. Lacking airpower, the Japanese were mauled by the US Navy fliers. In this, the Battle of Cape Engaño, three Japanese carriers were sunk and a fourth was heavily damaged.

In the midst of the battle, Halsey received an encoded message from his commander demanding to know where he was. The escort carriers and destroyers of Taffy 3 at this moment were being pulverised and Third Fleet's battleships, which should have been protecting the invasion armada, were nowhere to be found. With a wounded Northern Force ripe for destruction, Halsey was forced to turn his battleships round and head back south to help the embattled Seventh Fleet – but by the time they arrived, the fight was over.

It was an inglorious end for Halsey to the Battle of Leyte Gulf, which was a huge American victory. All told, 216 US Navy ships and two Australian warships crushed a fleet of 64 Japanese vessels. By the end of the skirmish, 26 Japanese ships had been destroyed and only seven American ones.



Wildcat fighters prepare to launch from USS Kitkun Bay during the Battle of Samar on 25 October 1944

Map: Rocio Espin



A kamikaze attack on carrier USS Belleau Wood off the coast of Luzon left a fire that killed 92 crewmen

The DIVINE WIND of DEATH

INSIDE THE CULTURE OF SACRIFICE AND NATIONHOOD BEHIND JAPAN'S KAMIKAZE PILOTS

They called it the Pacific War. Barely three years after the spectacular success at Pearl Harbor, the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) was on its last legs. From Midway to Palau, Japan suffered losses – carriers, cruisers, submarines, planes and men – that couldn't be replaced even with the utmost effort to maximise industrial production.

In the last quarter of 1944, any remaining hope for victory over the Allies was brutally quashed. On 12 October, US Army aircraft clashed with the Japanese planes stationed on Formosa, and more than 300 Japanese planes were lost, denying air cover for the garrisons in the Philippine Islands.

The latest intel revealed that a vast American armada was steaming towards Leyte Gulf unopposed. There weren't enough combat aircraft to block an amphibious landing, and it would take days before two flotillas that had been sent from Singapore and Japan arrived. Desperate times called for desperate measures.

On 17 October, the same day the US Sixth Army began its assault on Leyte, Vice Admiral Takijiro Onishi set foot in Luzon, the Philippines' main island. The brash air-power advocate who once lobbied for an all-carrier IJN fleet was taking command of the battered 1st Air Fleet based in Mabalacat Airfield.

A week later, on the morning of 25 October, Japanese A6M Zeros from the 201st Air Group came in low and fast over Leyte Gulf. The previous day's missions had been difficult and inconclusive, but now the sun was out and the American carriers were exposed just off Tacloban, Leyte's capital.

These were escort carriers – basically large hulls supporting broad wooden decks loaded with fighters. They were first used in the Atlantic to hunt U-boats; in the Pacific, they became indispensable for air cover during landings. Escort carriers were so prolific that US shipyards built more than 120 of them, and they were in production until the war's end.

The Zeros each carried a 500-pound bomb and pilots were determined to sink their targets even as the tracers from incoming AA guns menaced them. The squadron leader, Lieutenant Yukio Seki, was killed together with his men, their planes blown to fiery bits.

However, Lieutenant Seki was skilled enough to crash his plane on the USS St Lo's runway, his payload detonating below deck. It was a nightmare to behold: acrid black smoke engulfed the flattop as its crew abandoned ship. St Lo took 113 men with it to the bottom of the sea. Its sister carriers USS Santee, Kitkun Bay and Suwannee suffered hits too. This was a shocking new type of war.

"IF ONLY WE MIGHT FALL LIKE CHERRY BLOSSOMS IN THE SPRING – SO PURE AND RADIANT!"

– HAIKU OF AN UNKNOWN KAMIKAZE PILOT

TRAINING FOR THE TOKKO TAI

BY EARLY 1945, THOUSANDS OF YOUNG MEN WERE BEING RECRUITED AND 'VOLUNTEERED' FOR A CAMPAIGN OF UNRELENTING AERIAL SUICIDE ATTACKS

With the Philippine Islands lost, Japan's generals and admirals were worried about an impending American sprint across the Pacific toward the mainland. To thwart this possibility, they envisioned dedicated special attack squadrons of suicide aircraft called 'tokubetsu kôgeki tai' or 'Tokko Tai' for short.

Tokko Tai formally became a new branch of the Army and Navy Air Corps in March 1945, after US forces captured Iwo Jima. The concept of suicide flights really began with an experimental weapon, the Ohka, but officers like Vice Admiral Onishi showed how planes excelled at the same role. It was during the battle for Okinawa that US intelligence picked up a new term from Japanese propaganda broadcasts: kamikaze. It recalled the tempest that annihilated Kublai Khan's invasion of Japan in the 13th century.

Young men, with or without flying experience, were given the choice to volunteer for the Tokko Tai if they were already enlisted. Many others, usually undergraduates still in university, were drafted. On multiple occasions, officers who volunteered were denied simply because their skills would be put to better use training the would-be kamikazes. Tokko Tai pilots weren't brainwashed to venerate death, however. It was made perfectly clear their actions were a last resort. At its peak in the summer of 1945, Tokko Tai pilots were only given 30 hours of flight training in airfields outside the town of Chiran, in Kagoshima Prefecture.

If a mission was aborted, the Tokko Tai manual instructed that a pilot "should be jovial and without remorse" upon his return. Tokko Tai pilots flew with no special equipment or designation. Before flying, they scribbled a haiku, sipped from a cup of whiskey and tied a white hachimaki round their heads.

The excellent A6M Zero manufactured by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, along with many older planes, was used indiscriminately in the Philippines and Okinawa. The ideal kamikaze tactic was to skim the waves as they neared an American warship. The coup de grace was to climb and then dive towards the area between the bridge and the smokestacks. In their last seconds of consciousness, it was suggested that pilots scream "hissatsu!" (meaning 'certain kill') to hasten a doomed ship's destruction.

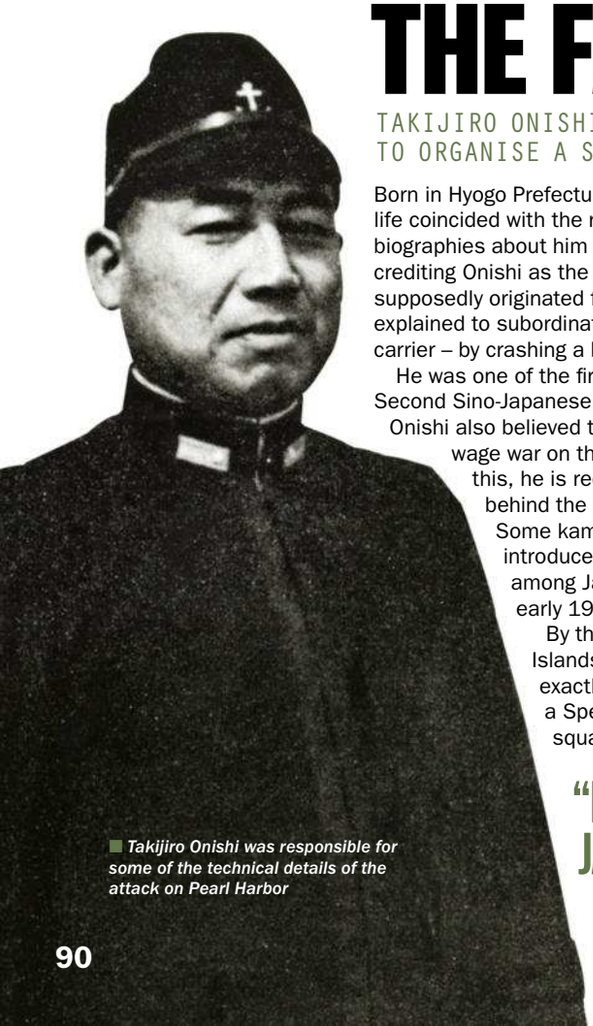


Members of 72nd Shinbu Squadron. They flew kamikaze attacks the next day

Sentimentality also mattered for Tokko Tai pilots. Their manual told them to remember their mothers as they died. Upon death, they were assured "all the cherry blossoms at Yasukuni shrine will smile brightly at you." In practice, many kamikazes were lost crashing into the water rather than their targets.

THE FATHER OF KAMIKAZE

TAKIJIRO ONISHI WAS A VETERAN PILOT CREDITED AS THE FIRST OFFICER TO ORGANISE A SUCCESSFUL SPECIAL ATTACK ON ALLIED FORCES



Takijiro Onishi was responsible for some of the technical details of the attack on Pearl Harbor

Born in Hyogo Prefecture on 6 June 1891, Takijiro Onishi's life coincided with the rise of Imperial Japan. Detailed biographies about him are very scarce and few go beyond crediting Onishi as the 'Father of Special Attack'. This supposedly originated from an unconventional tactic he explained to subordinates for crippling a US Navy aircraft carrier – by crashing a bomb-laden plane into it.

He was one of the first IJN fighter aces during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45). A staunch patriot, Onishi also believed that it was unsound for Japan to wage war on the United States of America. Despite this, he is recognised as one of the planners behind the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. Some kamikaze writers suggest Onishi was introduced to the concept of self-sacrifice among Japanese pilots in either 1943 or early 1944.

By the time he arrived in the Philippine Islands, Onishi had new orders – from exactly who is unknown – to organise a Special Attack operation using the squadrons of the 1st Air Fleet.

Like many of his peers, Onishi harboured serious doubts about the effectiveness of Special Attack tactics. It was particularly disturbing for an officer with his background, given his expert grasp of modern air combat.

Onishi kept his misgivings to himself. Like the rest of the IJN in 1944, he was gripped by a determination to do anything for the Japanese cause, more so with the Allies drawing near in ever greater numbers.

Onishi's personal conduct during the campaign to reconquer the Philippine Islands is unknown. But the Tokko Tai tactics he devised were still being carried out well into 1945 by IJN holdouts in the Philippines, with disappointing results. Back in Tokyo, Onishi knew, at least privately, that Special Attack tactics were squandering lives.

The architect of kamikaze met a terrible end. Hearing of the emperor's surrender message over the radio, the disheartened Onishi committed seppuku, or ritual suicide. But in a macabre twist, he was found a day later, on 16 August, writhing in agony. Having disembowelled himself with a knife, he was unable to slit his throat and refused a swift decapitation from a second. He lingered for hours before finally dying.

"HE WAS GRIPPED BY A DETERMINATION TO DO ANYTHING FOR THE JAPANESE CAUSE, MORE SO WITH THE ALLIES DRAWING NEAR"

CRACKING THE AIR LIKE THUNDER

FOR ALLIED WARSHIPS AND THEIR CREWS, THE LAST AND ONLY LINE OF DEFENCE FROM FANATICAL KAMIKAZES WAS GOOD OLD-FASHIONED FLACK

The Special Attack proved more ineffective the more it was used. Since the kamikazes were only used en masse in two campaigns – Leyte Gulf and Okinawa – a specific doctrine was never developed by the US Navy and Air Corps to counter them. Most kamikaze missions failed anyway, thanks to poorly maintained aircraft, shoddy training, and a far more lethal factor: US gunnery.

By 1945, US warships were equipped with incredible anti-air and anti-submarine weapons. The former included radar-assisted guns, AA gun batteries and rapid-fire cannons. Most effective were the twin 40mm Bofors mounted in nests on US Navy destroyers, carriers and transports. These ack-ack guns filled the air with flack at medium ranges.

If a lone kamikaze got too close, a 20mm Oerlikon or tandem .50-calibre machine guns would blow it to pieces. Just as vital was US Navy air cover for blowing up any incoming suicide planes.

By the time Okinawa was firmly under American control, it proved to be the costliest battle in the Pacific Theatre. A total of 2,363 kamikaze attacks between October 1944 and 21 June 1945 left more than 5,000 US and Allied dead.

Approximately 40 Allied ships of all types were sunk. An additional 368 were damaged. A little more than a month after Okinawa, atomic bombs levelled Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan surrendered on 15 August. The last kamikaze squadrons were disbanded and the once-doomed pilots lived on to demobilise for peacetime. Over 70 years since, the kamikazes' notoriety remains a potent symbol of Japanese fighting spirit during World War II.



The US Navy's four-barrel 1.1-inch or 28mm cannon was a crude close-in weapons system that spewed hot lead at 600 rpm



Below: The 40mm Bofors of Sweden was a European success before licensed production began in the United States in June 1941

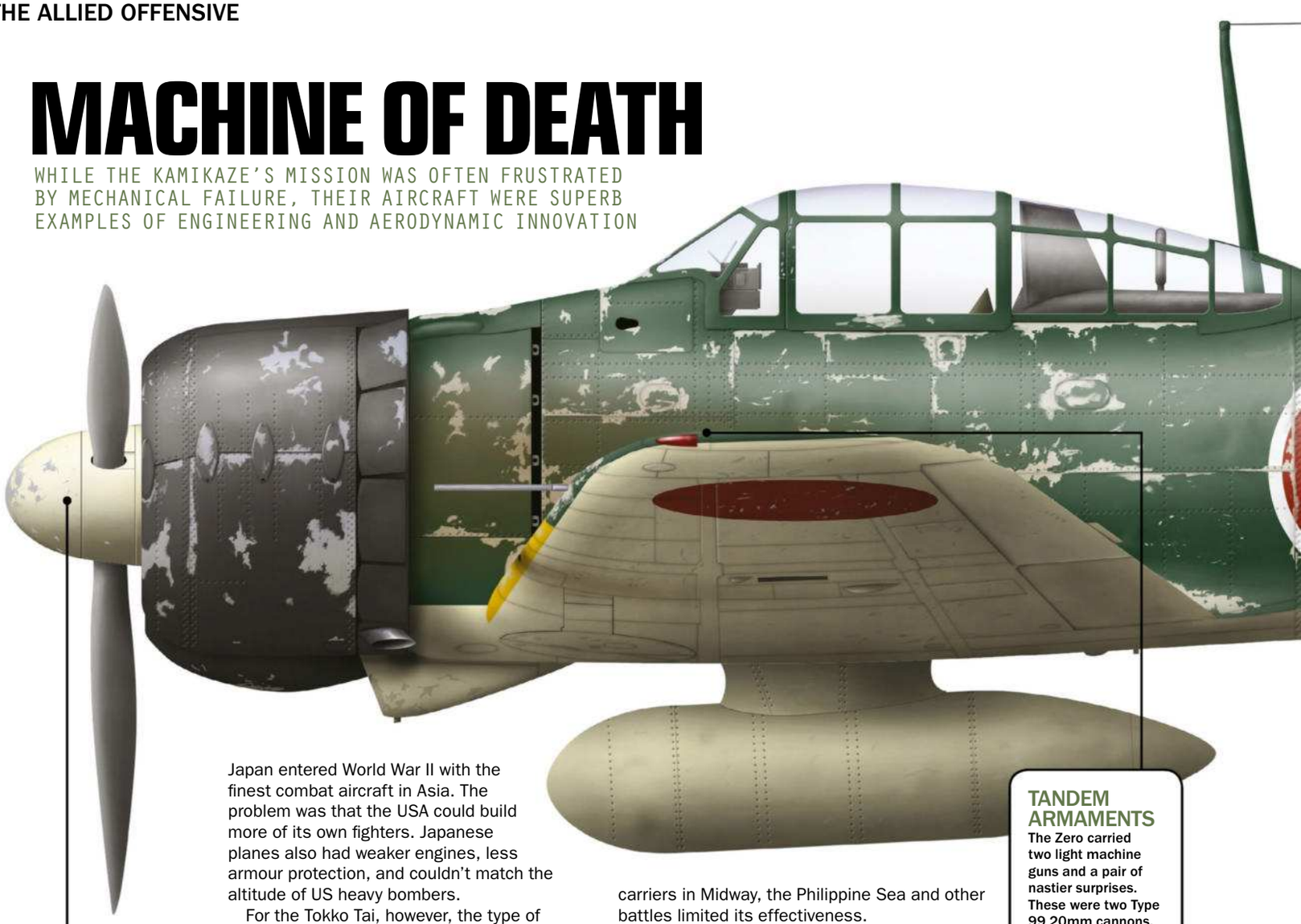
"IN BLOSSOM TODAY, THEN SCATTERED; LIFE IS SO LIKE A DELICATE FLOWER. HOW CAN ONE EXPECT THE FRAGRANCE TO LAST FOREVER?"

- ADMIRAL TAKIJIRO ONISHI

This image, moments before a kamikaze's impact, shows how Japanese pilots targeted aircraft carrier elevators at an impossible angle

MACHINE OF DEATH

WHILE THE KAMIKAZE'S MISSION WAS OFTEN FRUSTRATED BY MECHANICAL FAILURE, THEIR AIRCRAFT WERE SUPERB EXAMPLES OF ENGINEERING AND AERODYNAMIC INNOVATION



THE IMPERIAL CHAMPION

Entering production in 1940, the A6M Reisen or Zero became notorious in China for defeating any aircraft that flew against it. During the months after Pearl Harbor, it continued winning dogfights against many Allied planes it faced in the air.

Japan entered World War II with the finest combat aircraft in Asia. The problem was that the USA could build more of its own fighters. Japanese planes also had weaker engines, less armour protection, and couldn't match the altitude of US heavy bombers.

For the Tokko Tai, however, the type of aircraft wasn't always important. The plan, drawn up at Tachiarai Joint Service Flight School outside Chiran as well as in other nearby airfields, was to deploy as many Special Attack formations as possible.

In 1945, there was still enough A6M Zeros left for use in kamikaze missions. Hundreds of the older A5M fighters were co-opted for the missions as well. Designed by the inventor and engineer Jiro Horikoshi in the late 1930s, the Zero was a lightweight marvel with superb manoeuvrability and an excellent 14-cylinder 1,130 horsepower engine.

At the beginning of Japan's Pacific War, the Zero proved its superiority over American rivals like the F4F Wildcat. More than 10,000 Zeros would be built, but the gradual loss of IJN carriers in Midway, the Philippine Sea and other battles limited its effectiveness.

The advent of Tokko Tai tactics marked the Zero's undoing. With insufficient armour plating, countless numbers of them were blown to bits as they approached US warships. The IJN Air Corps officers used aircraft like ordnance and cared little for keeping their planes airworthy. This, along with diluted aviation fuel supplies, explains the high rate of failure among Special Attack missions.

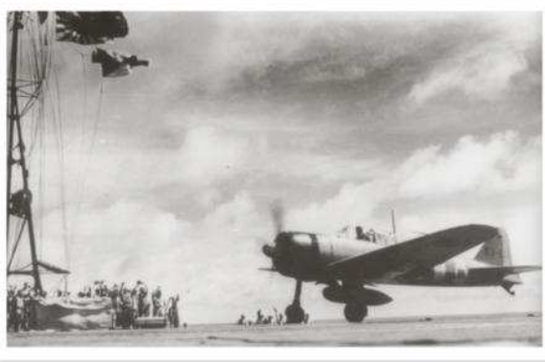
Once a Tokko Tai pilot was selected and trained, his plane was given enough fuel to reach the area of operations. A single 500-pound bomb was loaded along with ammunition for the twin 7.7mm machine guns and 20mm cannons. Barring a mid-air crash or an accident, the Tokko Tai pilot embraced his end as he flew to his target.

TANDEM ARMAMENTS

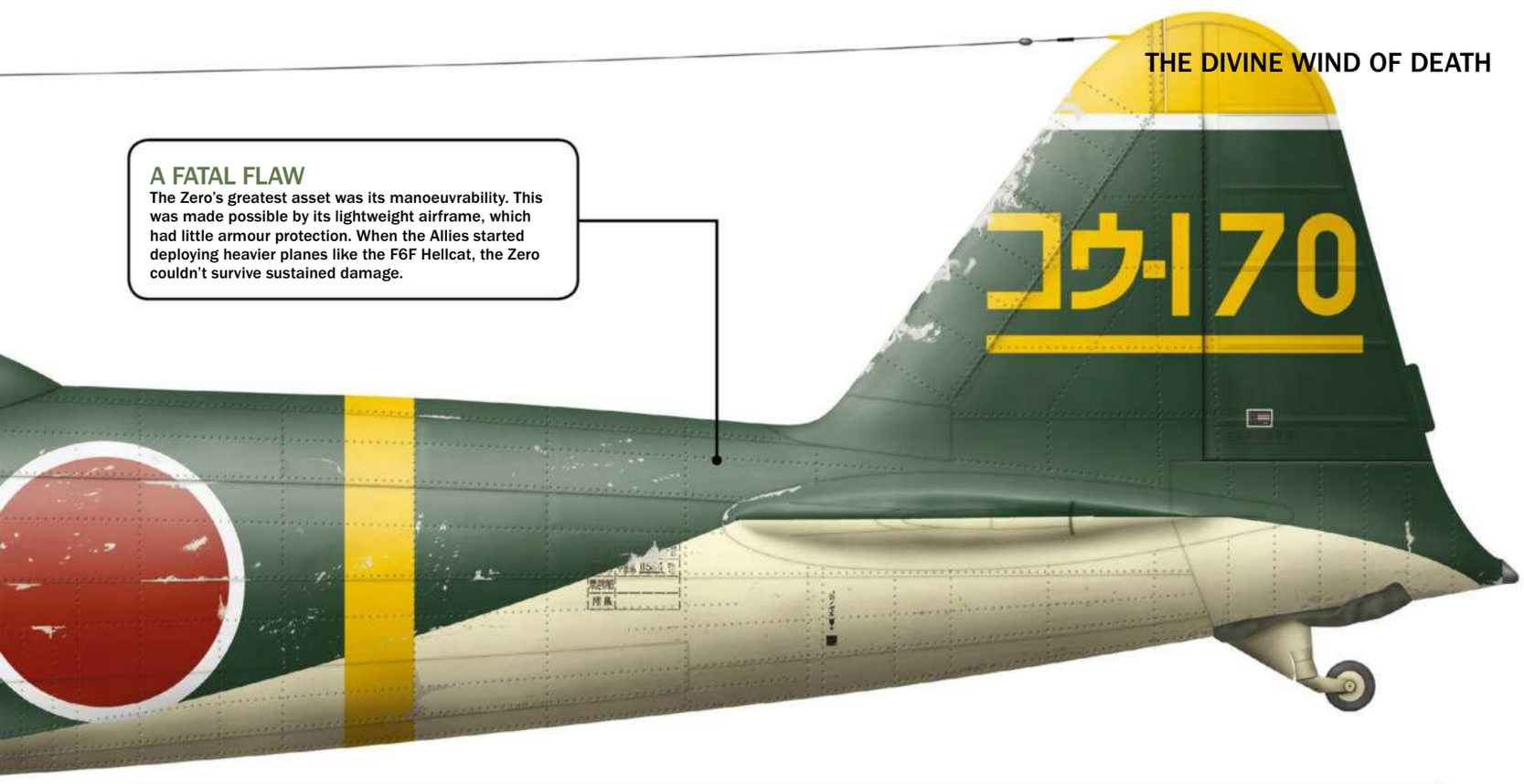
The Zero carried two light machine guns and a pair of nastier surprises. These were two Type 99 20mm cannons, one on each wing. Based on the Swiss Oerlikon, the Allied ships also used the same gun on incoming Zeros.







■ *Below left: Zeros prepare for takeoff to take part in the first wave of the attack on Pearl Harbor*
■ *Below centre: The one-man cockpit of an A6M5 Zero Model 52*
■ *Below: A Mitsubishi A6M2b Zero from the Zuikaku Aircraft Group during the attack on Pearl Harbor*



A FATAL FLAW

The Zero's greatest asset was its manoeuvrability. This was made possible by its lightweight airframe, which had little armour protection. When the Allies started deploying heavier planes like the F6F Hellcat, the Zero couldn't survive sustained damage.

A FINAL FLIGHT

MOST TOKKO TAI PILOTS WERE DETERMINED TO KILL THEMSELVES, BUT ON ONE OCCASION, FATE HAD OTHER PLANS FOR AN UNLUCKY FLIER

For thousands of American sailors and pilots, thwarting the incoming kamikaze was a living nightmare. Surviving the experience naturally inspired a curious regard for the Japanese who seemed so eager to vanquish them. Soon after the war's end, a story ran in *Yank*, the US Army's weekly news magazine, about the experiences of a genuine kamikaze pilot. Contrasting the often one-dimensional and racist depiction of Japanese servicemen, the profile of Norio Okamoto tackles its subject matter with a little humour.

Okamoto fit the profile for a Tokko Tai candidate. A 23-year-old flight instructor wanting to avenge a brother killed on Formosa, he volunteered with grim enthusiasm. Okamoto then revealed a rare courtesy extended to Tokko Tai pilots. Before their deployment, they were allowed to write a short letter home. He wrote to his parents for delivery after he died.

But he was soon disappointed by his treatment at the hands of the Tokko Tai officers. Not that he was abused or maligned, rather Okamoto was forced to endure lectures about the virtues of ancient samurai and sent off on "an old sea plane."

Okamoto crashed halfway to Okinawa due to engine failure and was stranded at sea with his navigator, who perished in the shark-infested waters. After hours afloat, he reached an island inhabited by suspicious natives deathly afraid of US air strikes. He was well fed and sat out the war until its end.

Interestingly, Okamoto didn't mind helping himself to boxes of American C-rations that floated ashore. He wasn't bitter towards his country's occupiers either. Okamoto aspired to become a trader of imported merchandise.

Numerous accounts of Tokko Tai pilots and their experiences have been published since 1945; just as many films and documentaries are released based on their memoirs. But not all recollections were as light-hearted as Norio Okamoto's.

For Warrant Officer Shoichi Ota, who carried out the doomed Ohka programme with its emphasis on a manned bomb, the stigma of being involved in Special Attack activities was too much to bear.

A rumour spread that he crashed a plane into the sea after Japan's surrender. It turned out that he changed his name during the Allied occupation of Japan and raised a family, putting his past behind him. He never spoke about his role during the war until he became unwell in his old age. Shortly before his death in 1995, he finally confessed to his son.



■ *Grim proof of Onishi's handiwork. Once Tokko Tai missions began in October 1944, any large Allied ship was fair game*

STATE SHINTO AND THE GOD EMPEROR

WHAT WERE THE UNDERLYING REASONS BEHIND JAPAN'S CULT OF SELF-SACRIFICE AND WHY DID SO MANY YOUNG MEN ACCEPT THEIR ROLE AS KAMIKAZES?

There are still many false assumptions surrounding the kamikaze of World War II. Most striking is the belief that it was embraced by the IJN as a credible strategy. For Tadanao Miki, an engineer tasked with building the Ohka flying bomb (dubbed the 'cherry blossom'), the idea was bizarre when first mentioned to him. What made its practice widespread, especially during the Okinawa campaign, was the profound sense of duty among Japanese servicemen and citizens. This is why personal appeals by the emperor together with rosy propaganda inspired so many volunteers. It was certainly ignoble death, but it was for a higher cause.

Japanese soldiers, being patriotic to the core, weren't obsessed with dying either. Death in battle was a last resort and many kamikazes who survived the war admitted a reluctance to squander their lives.

Although Japan's samurai heritage is often pointed out as an inspiration for suicidal actions in battle, it's quite ironic that the samurai ideal of 'bushido' in its classical sense wasn't immediately intertwined with the conduct of kamikaze pilots. When the Yasukuni shrine was erected in Tokyo in 1869, the final year of the Meiji Restoration that replaced the Tokugawa Shogunate, Japan slowly shed its feudal system and its values. Instead, Yasukuni represented Japan's newfound modernity and the emperor's place in it.

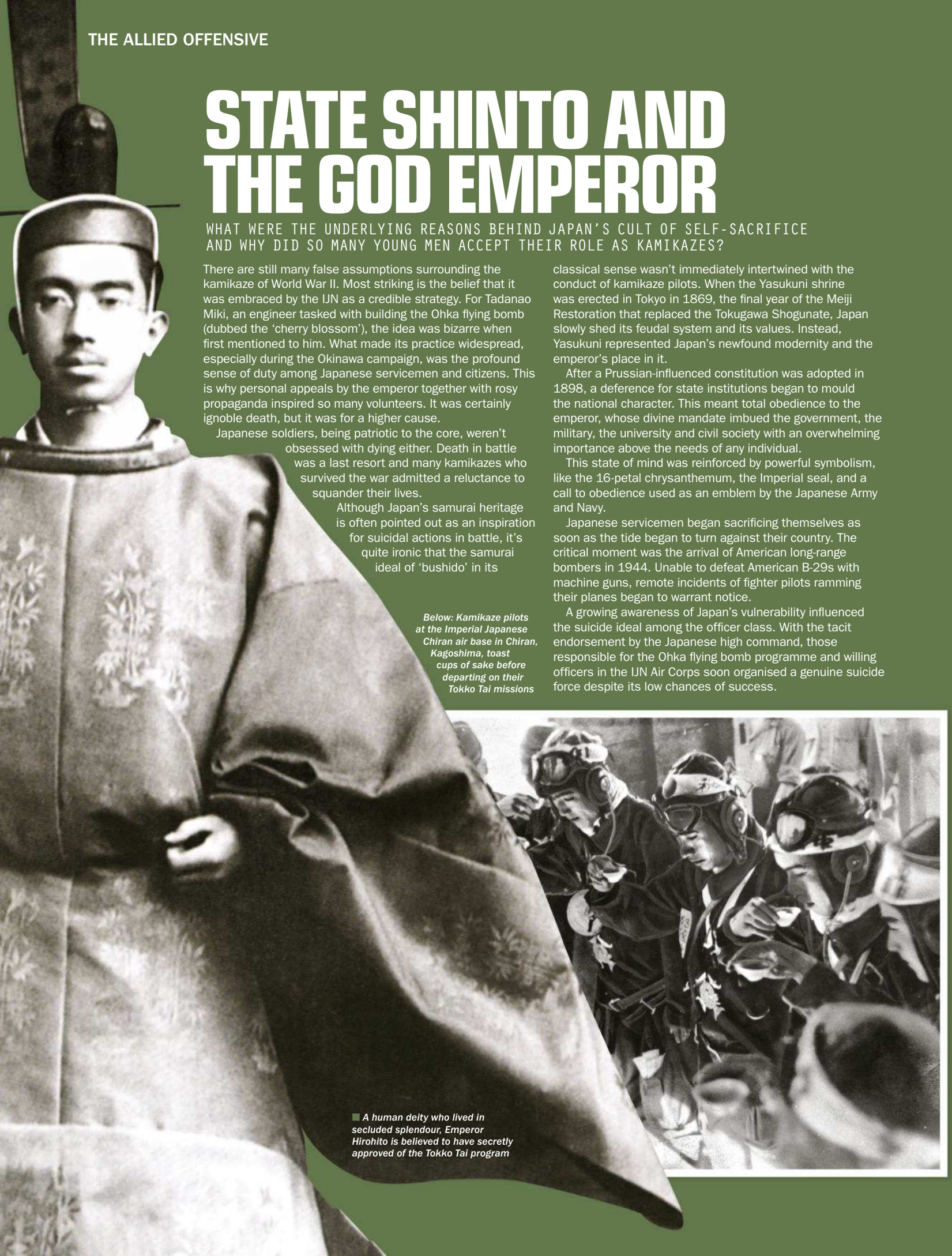
After a Prussian-influenced constitution was adopted in 1898, a deference for state institutions began to mould the national character. This meant total obedience to the emperor, whose divine mandate imbued the government, the military, the university and civil society with an overwhelming importance above the needs of any individual.

This state of mind was reinforced by powerful symbolism, like the 16-petal chrysanthemum, the Imperial seal, and a call to obedience used as an emblem by the Japanese Army and Navy.

Japanese servicemen began sacrificing themselves as soon as the tide began to turn against their country. The critical moment was the arrival of American long-range bombers in 1944. Unable to defeat American B-29s with machine guns, remote incidents of fighter pilots ramming their planes began to warrant notice.

A growing awareness of Japan's vulnerability influenced the suicide ideal among the officer class. With the tacit endorsement by the Japanese high command, those responsible for the Ohka flying bomb programme and willing officers in the IJN Air Corps soon organised a genuine suicide force despite its low chances of success.

Below: Kamikaze pilots at the Imperial Japanese Chiran air base in Chiran, Kagoshima, toast cups of sake before departing on their Tokko Tai missions



A human deity who lived in secluded splendour, Emperor Hirohito is believed to have secretly approved of the Tokko Tai program

THE CHERRY BLOSSOM TAKES FLIGHT

LIKE A CRUDE EXOCET, A RESOURCE-POOR JAPAN MANAGED TO BUILD A VIABLE ANTI-SHIP MISSILE. BUT COULD IT TURN THE TIDE?

As early as 1943, the Aeronautical Research Laboratory was tasked with developing a rocket-powered 'flying bomb'. In or before August 1944, Warrant Officer Shoichi Ota told a befuddled Lieutenant Commander Tadanao Miki that in lieu of a guidance system, his team should just install a cockpit on the MXY7 Ohka, the primitive cruise missile they referred to as cherry blossom.

The suggestion launched the Divine Thunder God Corps, the IJN's newest elite unit and the original Tokko Tais. The Thunder Gods were supposed to steer their missile, which was packed with 2,600 pounds of explosive, to a target after being dropped in mid-air by a 'mother ship' – a bomber.

There was precious little time to organise, train and equip the Thunder Gods for their deployment. The first batch of Ohkas were supposed to be deployed in the Philippine Islands in 1944 but their transport, the aircraft carrier Shinano, was sunk by an American submarine. The largest Thunder God mission involved a flight of 18 G4M medium bombers heading for Okinawa. The formation was intercepted by US warplanes and destroyed. Later in the Okinawa campaign, a single Ohka reportedly managed to target the destroyer USS Mannert L Abele and sink it.



Air crew relax in front of a Mitsubishi bomber loaded with an MXY-7 Ohka plane

The concept behind the Ohka might have been futuristic, but these cherry blossoms repeatedly failed their missions. When US forces seized production models of the Ohka on 1 April 1945, they re-christened it the Baka – Japanese for 'stupid'. Maybe because it was April Fool's Day, or perhaps the idea of a piloted bomb was too silly to comprehend.



The original MXY-7 Ohka was supposed to have rocket boosters on its wing tips, but production models shed this feature

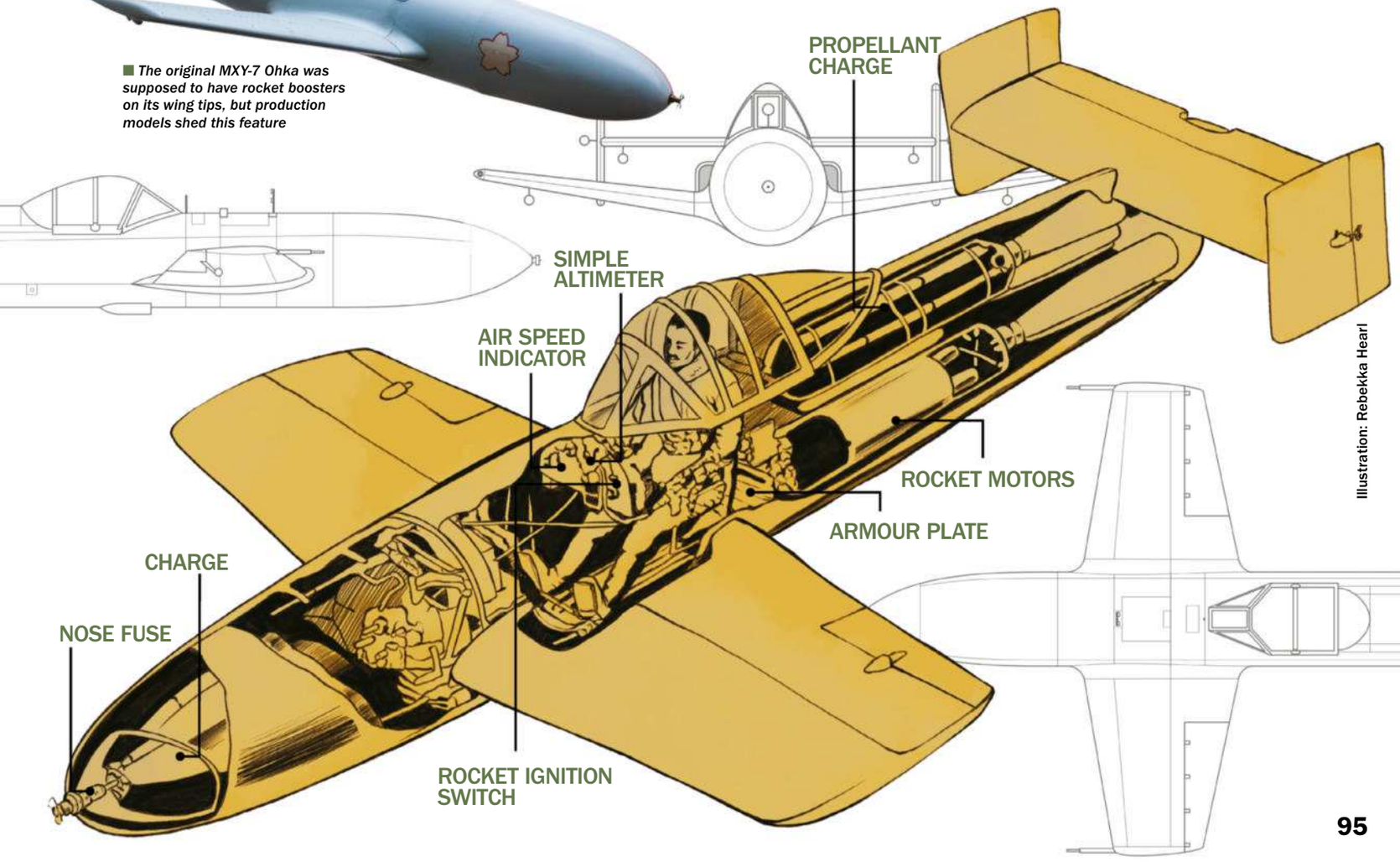
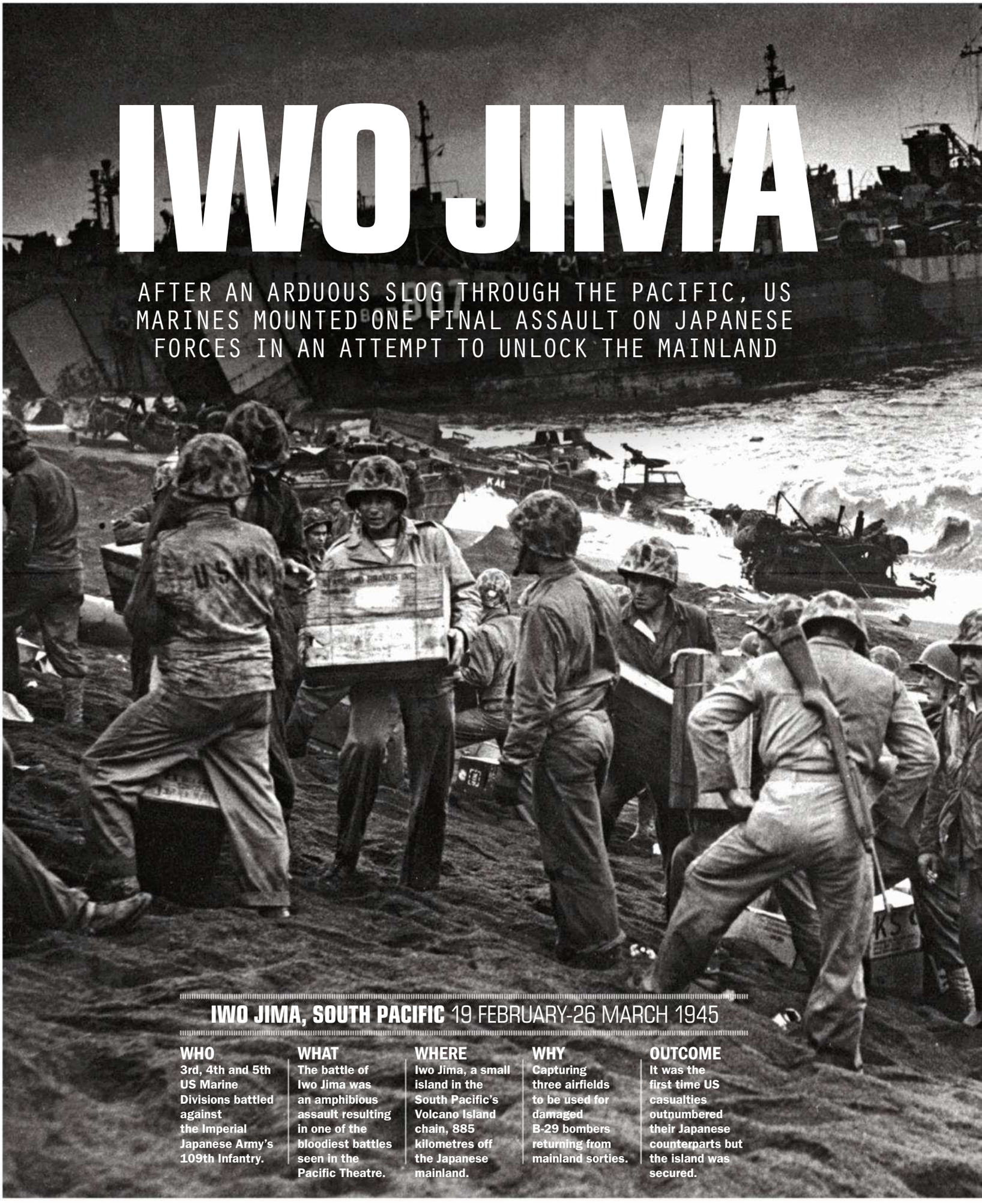


Illustration: Rebekka Hearl



IWO JIMA

AFTER AN ARDUOUS SLOG THROUGH THE PACIFIC, US MARINES MOUNTED ONE FINAL ASSAULT ON JAPANESE FORCES IN AN ATTEMPT TO UNLOCK THE MAINLAND

IWO JIMA, SOUTH PACIFIC 19 FEBRUARY-26 MARCH 1945

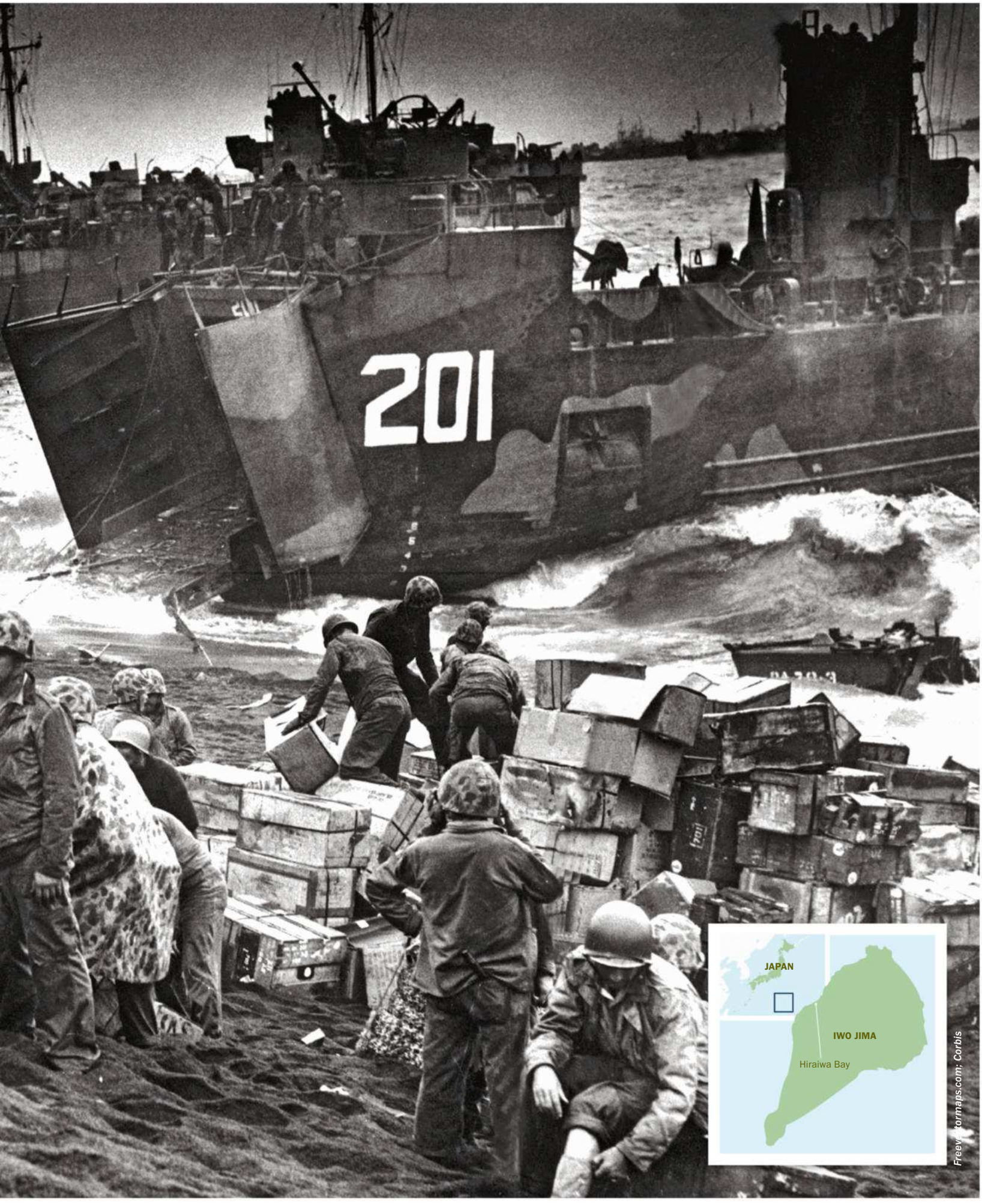
WHO
3rd, 4th and 5th US Marine Divisions battled against the Imperial Japanese Army's 109th Infantry.

WHAT
The battle of Iwo Jima was an amphibious assault resulting in one of the bloodiest battles seen in the Pacific Theatre.

WHERE
Iwo Jima, a small island in the South Pacific's Volcano Island chain, 885 kilometres off the Japanese mainland.

WHY
Capturing three airfields to be used for damaged B-29 bombers returning from mainland sorties.

OUTCOME
It was the first time US casualties outnumbered their Japanese counterparts but the island was secured.



Freevectormaps.com; Corbis

After the decisive naval victory at the Battle of Midway in June 1942 (the first significant triumph in the Pacific for the Allies since Japan instigated the war at Pearl Harbor in December 1941), the US Navy was afforded some time to rebuild during 1943. Ships were in need of repair and refitting, seamen and ground troops required rest, and armaments needed replenishing.

It was during this lull that Chief of Command for the US's Pacific Fleet, Admiral Chester W Nimitz, refocused the tactics employed against the Japanese in the Pacific. Rather than take on the enemy direct, a campaign of island-hopping was instigated. Imperial forces had become heavily entrenched on certain key islands, making them difficult and costly targets for the Allies to capture. Instead, Nimitz's plan was to skirt around this nuclei, taking the less fortified islands in the Pacific as the US advanced towards the Japanese home islands.

The war was taking its toll on the Japanese as the US gained the upper hand in both the sea and the air. To make matters worse, Japanese cyphers were easily decoded by US intelligence, who kept Allied forces one step ahead of their enemy at all times. It was this advantage that led to the death of Marshal Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto (Nimitz's opposite number) in April 1943.

After the Japanese defeat at Guadalcanal, Yamamoto decided to go on a moral-boosting inspection of the South Pacific. Word of the Japanese Commander in Chief's plans reached US Navy intelligence, leading President Franklin D Roosevelt to give the order: "Get Yamamoto". On the morning of 18 April 1943, the commander's plane was shot down by US forces, dealing an embarrassing blow to the Imperial Japanese Navy.

By April 1944, with momentum firmly on their side, US forces recaptured the Marshall Islands. Later the same year, it was the turn of the Mariana and Caroline Islands to fall into Allied hands, as plans for the invasion of Okinawa continued apace. The Japanese mainland was, metaphorically, in sight, with just one remaining target: Iwo Jima.

Located 1,200 kilometres south of Tokyo in the Volcanic Islands cluster, Iwo Jima was home to two Japanese airstrips (with a third under construction at the north end of the island). The US believed this small island, just 20 square kilometres in size, to be a strategic necessity for mainland attacks. If it could be captured, the island would be used as a base for escort fighters, as well as a landing patch for damaged B-29 bombers returning from the mainland.





The US Navy Sixth Fleet photographed during the Battle of Iwo Jima

The Japanese had also recognised the importance of Iwo Jima and, under the command of General Tadamichi Kuribayashi, began constructing numerous inland bunkers in the summer of 1944, a noted departure from the usual beach fortifications used by the Imperial Japanese forces. US aerial and submarine reconnaissance showed the supposed scale, with 642 pillboxes, blockhouses and other gun positions identified prior to the assault.

A summer-long barrage designed to incapacitate the staunch Japanese defences ensued. For 74 days straight, US bombers pummelled this tiny blot of volcanic rock, while in the 72 hours running up to the invasion, the US Navy peppered Iwo Jima with shells, shattering the peace of this once idyllic South Pacific island.

THE INVASION BEGINS

Codenamed 'Operation Detachment', the invasion proper began on 19 February 1945. The assault was tasked to the V Amphibious Marine Corps, led by General Holland 'Howlin' Mad' Smith, Commanding General for the expeditionary troops once ashore. H-Hour was set for 9am, with the initial wave of armoured amphibian tractors coming ashore at 9.02am followed, three minutes later, by the first troop-carrying vehicles.

Spilling down the ramps, the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions (led by Major General Clifton B Cates and Major General Keller E Rockey respectively) waded through the ankle-deep volcanic ash of Iwo Jima's southwestern shore unopposed. The pre-invasion bombardment appeared to have cleared the island. However, unknown to the US forces, Kuribayashi's 109th Infantry Division was holed up in a network of over 5,000 caves and 17 kilometres of tunnels around Iwo Jima, waiting for the landing force's shelling to cease before showing their resistance.

There were murmurs among the US troops that the Japanese forces had been wiped out as the beach remained eerily quiet – a marked departure from previous infantry battles in the Pacific where shorelines were staunchly defended. The landing plans tasked the 5th Division's 28th Regiment with taking Mount Suribachi, the 554-foot dormant volcano at the island's southern-most tip, by the end of D-Day. Likewise, the 4th Division was scheduled to take Airfield 1 the same day. In the calm of the initial landing, both plans seemed achievable yet, as the leading battalions crested the terrace at the end of the beach, General Kuribayashi gave the order to take up weapons.

The unmistakable chatter of machine gun fire from hidden Japanese emplacements cut down the initial waves of US troops, as artillery and mortar fire now began to pound the beaches. The soft volcanic soil, churned by the pre-invasion barrage, proved difficult to move through at pace, slowing the US advance. To make matters worse, fortifications on Mount Suribachi (protected by reinforced steel doors) rained down shells on the troops below.

Despite landing some 30,000 men, progress was slow and, by the time the US advance was called to a halt at 6pm, the Marine line fell well short of their D-Day targets. Still, Mount Suribachi's northeastern side had been surrounded by the 28th Regiment. The 5th's 27th Regiment had been able to push towards

"UNKNOWN TO THE US FORCES, KURIBAYASHI'S 109TH INFANTRY DIVISION WAS HOLED UP IN A NETWORK OF OVER 5,000 CAVES AND 17 KILOMETRES OF TUNNELS"



■ *Once the US Marines established a beachhead, the gradual grinding down of Japanese resistance began*

the northwestern coastline but had taken heavy casualties in doing so, while the 4th Division skirted around Airfield 1's southern perimeter, securing a line towards the quarry near East Boat Basin.

During previous battles, Japanese banzai charges had caused considerable chaos throughout the night and, expecting similar attacks, US forces remained vigilant during darkness. General Kuribayashi did not believe in the usefulness of such tactics, though, feeling the banzai charge was a needless loss of life. This allowed the 3rd Battalion, 13th Marines (the artillery support for the 28th Regiment) to launch mortar and 105mm Howitzer shell attacks on Mount Suribachi during the evening of 19 February in preparation of an ascent the next morning.

CAPTURING MOUNT SURIBACHI

Formulated by the 28th's leader, Colonel Harry B Liversedge, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions plunged forward at 8.30am on 20 February, with the 1st Battalion remaining in reserve. With regular gunfire proving useless against the Japanese emplacements, US troops turned to their trusty flamethrowers and grenades to flush defenders out of their foxholes. However, the Japanese (thanks to their comprehensive tunnel network) soon re-manned each supposedly clear pillbox. It would be a tactic that kept US forces fighting on all fronts across the island, keeping the Marines' progress to a minimum.

Just 200 yards of Mount Suribachi had been taken by 5pm on D+1. The following day, Liversedge's Marines attacked again after a 40-plane airstrike. With all three battalions heaving forward on one front, and with effective support from tanks and artillery, the 28th Regiment surged to the foot of the mountain. With the naval support covering the western side, the Marines had Suribachi surrounded by 22 February.

Finally, a day later, after reconnaissance from 2nd Battalion, a 40-man combat patrol was sent to the summit upon the orders of Lieutenant Colonel Chandler W Johnson. Under the command of First Lieutenant Harold G Schrier, they stormed the summit, raising a small US flag while under intense fire from the remaining Japanese troops. Later that day, a larger flag would be raised in order to boost the morale of Marines across the island.

While the 28th Marine Regiment was still on Suribachi, the 26th and 27th Regiments of the 5th Division had pushed to Iwo Jima's western coast with suicidal rapidity, beginning their journey to the island's north sector on 20 February. Meanwhile, the 4th Division's 23rd, 24th and 25th Regiments had secured 'Motoyama 1', the southern-most airfield. With the 5th Division surging the Marine line forward by around 1,000 yards, only the 23rd Regiment (fighting on the 4th Division's left flank) could keep advancing at a similar pace.

OPPOSING FORCES



US LEADER
General Holland Smith
US INFANTRY
1 Amphibious Corps (3 US Marine Divisions)
TANKS
c.150 M4A3 Sherman tanks (including 8 with the Mark 1 napalm flamethrower)
US GAME CHANGERS
The sheer number of men (around 70,000) thrown into battle over the course of the 36-day invasion.



General Holland Smith



JAPAN LEADER
General Tadamichi Kuribayashi
JAPAN INFANTRY
1 Imperial Infantry Division
TANKS
22 from Lieutenant Colonel Baron Takeichi Nishi's 26th Tank Regiment
JAPAN GAME CHANGERS
17km of tunnels, 642 pillboxes and 5,000 caves dotted around the island, along with the Japanese Infantry's tenacious defence.



General Tadamichi Kuribayashi

Compared with the southern half of Iwo Jima, the northern sector was extremely well fortified, thanks to the efforts of Kuribayashi's men during that summer of 1944. The US Marines were finding the rocky terrain tough to negotiate, with every cleared pillbox and fortification soon reoccupied by Japanese forces, who were putting up a staunch and bloody resistance. Any gain was seemingly met with renewed fire from the shellproof artillery emplacements and well-hidden tanks.

To aid the 4th Division's charge, General Cates called the 21st Regiment of the 3rd Division ashore on 21 February. However, with Japanese forces pinning down the 25th Regiment on the eastern shores, the beach was congested, forcing the 3rd Division's relief through the centre of the Marine Corps line in place of the 23rd Regiment. By the morning of the 22nd, frontline units were beginning to be relieved, with the fresh Marine forces able to grind out short territorial gains. Yet, Kuribayashi's men were alert to the fresh threat, pinning down units that were about to be replaced.

On D+4, V Marine Corps' Major General Harry Schmidt came ashore to survey the damage, ordering an attack the following morning. 24 February dawned with tanks thrusting through towards the second airfield, supported by the 21st Regiment. The 5th Division's tanks flanked Motoyama 2's western edge, while the 4th Division armour edged forward on the airstrip's east perimeter. Aided by a 76-minute naval bombardment, the US Marines were advancing once again.

INTO THE MEAT GRINDER

The same day, the remaining regiments of Major General Graves B Erskine's 3rd Division were committed to Iwo Jima. The veteran division was tasked with advancing through the supposedly flat centre line of the island, going head-on into Kuribayashi's main defensive line on 25 February. With flame-throwing tanks incinerating the enemy (and 50 per cent of the corps' artillery missions aiding the 3rd Division) three days of toil finally paid off on the evening of 27 February.

The Japanese line cracked, and the 9th Regiment found itself controlling two hills north of the second airfield, while the following day, the 21st Regiment stormed through the remnants of Motoyama village to seize two hills commanding over the unfinished airfield three. Elsewhere, the 5th Division had secured 'Hill 362A' after initial resistance from the Japanese proved deadly. 224 of the Division's Marines were killed or wounded on 1 March, but the hill's access to Nishi Ridge on the northwest edge of the island was too important to bypass.

While many hills had fallen with relative ease, Hill 382 on the eastern edge of the island was proving a more difficult proposition for the 4th Division. Honeycombed with Kuribayashi's tunnels, the hill's approach was guarded by hidden tanks, while the crest had been fortified into a huge artillery-proof bunker.

South of the hill was a series of ridges, topped by 'Turkey Knob', while further south of





01 Although the amphibious invasion will begin on Iwo Jima's southern beaches on 19 February 1945, the first US air strike against the island hits the black, volcanic soil on 15 June 1944, with US bombers based in Saipan flying hundreds of offensive sorties.

03 The northern half of the island sees much more Japanese fortification. Many of Baron Nishi's tanks have been buried up to the turret, providing camouflaged emplacements that decimate the 4th Division's progress and require General Erskine's 3rd Division to be brought on shore en masse on D+4.

04 After four days in 'the meat grinder', the Marines focus their efforts on Hill 382, north of the 'amphitheatre'. Naval guns, artillery and air strikes aid the 24th Regiment's attack but, despite gaining a footing on 'Turkey Knob', the US forces have to retreat under the cover of a smoke screen just before dark on 1 March.

05 Finding a 300-strong Japanese stronghold just a few hundred yards from the sea, the 4th Division delays an attack at 7am on 12 March to try and coax the Imperial forces to surrender. However, a problem with the generator-powered loudspeaker sees snipers pick off a number of Marines, provoking the US troops to fight back at 9am with grenades and flamethrowers.

06 With the fighting all but done, the 5th Division's 28th Regiment find themselves faced with a gorge full of caves and some 500 ill-organised Japanese infantry. Two prisoners of war are used to translate a surrender appeal but, despite returning alive, the US troops are forced to pick off Kuribayashi's remaining troops one-by-one.



“THE US MARINES WERE FINDING THE ROCKY TERRAIN TOUGH TO NEGOTIATE, WITH EVERY CLEARED PILLBOX AND FORTIFICATION SOON REOCCUPIED BY JAPANESE FORCES WHO WERE PUTTING UP A STAUNCH AND BLOODY RESISTANCE”

■ *The original US flag raised on the top of Mount Suribachi once it had been taken*

this massive rock was a natural bowl known as the 'Amphitheatre'. The fighting here was bloody, with 1 March the fourth day that the division's Marines had hurled themselves at the Japanese forces. Such was the relentlessness of this quadrant, it became known as the 'meat grinder'. It wasn't until 10 March that the Japanese defenders around 'Turkey Knob' were eliminated. Naval fire, carrier air strikes, heavy shelling and many Marine lives were needed before Hill 382 finally fell into US hands.

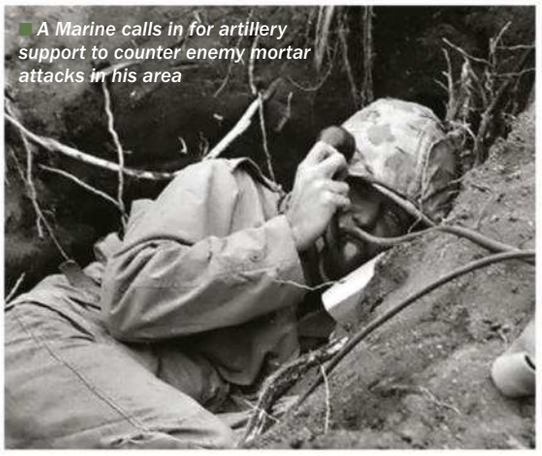
In this time, the 5th Division's 26th Regiment had succeeded in securing 'Hill 362B' on 3 March, before the 3rd Division readied itself for the assault on 'Hill 362C' four days later. Under cover of darkness (a departure from the usual US tactics in the Pacific), General Erskine's men advanced beyond the unsuspecting Japanese forces. It was a blow for General Kuribayashi, yet his men remained to resist strongly in their lasting areas of occupation.

Unfortunately for Imperial Japan, their attacks were becoming increasingly uncoordinated, allowing patrols from the 3rd Marine Division to reach the northern coast by 9 March. The following evening, there was only one final pocket of Japanese resistance left in the division's sector, although the tunnels underneath the ground gave many more fanatical infantry a hiding place.

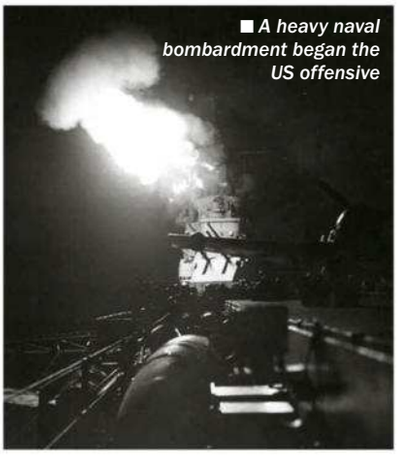
In the eastern sector, home of the 4th Division, Japanese troops launched a counterattack on 8 March. Under the cover of heavy artillery fire, the men attacked the Marine forces, worming their way through the 23rd and 24th Regiment's lines. Some attacked with the blood-curdling banzai cry, though many chose a stealthier approach, attempting to impersonate wounded US soldiers. Despite the counterattack's ingenuity, it was an ultimately hopeless effort that saw 650 Japanese killed by noon the following day. The end result was that, on 10 March, the Turkey Knob/Amphitheatre salient was completely destroyed as Marine forces pushed Kuribayashi's defences right back to the northern coast.



■ *US Amtracs became stuck in the churned up sand of Iwo Jima's beaches*



■ *A Marine calls in for artillery support to counter enemy mortar attacks in his area*



■ *A heavy naval bombardment began the US offensive*

CLEARING UP THE NORTH

For the remainder of Operation Detachment, each Marine division would be faced with isolated pockets of resistance dotted around Iwo Jima. The 3rd Division was tasked with the grim job of destroying a heavily fortified resistance southwest of Hill 362C (eventually achieved on 16 March), while the 4th Division focused on an enemy stronghold between East Boat Basin and Tachiiwa Point.

Across the island, 5th Division bore down on Japanese forces around Kitano Point, the last point of defence in the Iwo Jima campaign. Joined by two battalions of the 3rd Division's 21st Regiment, the final Marine drive began on 11 March with naval shelling and airstrikes. The US artillery again had little impact, though, making initial progress painstaking.

Despite being ravaged since the initial landing on 19 February, the 5th Division carved through 1,000 yards between 14-15 March, as many of the Japanese troops met a fiery end at the hands of the Marines' flame-throwing tanks.

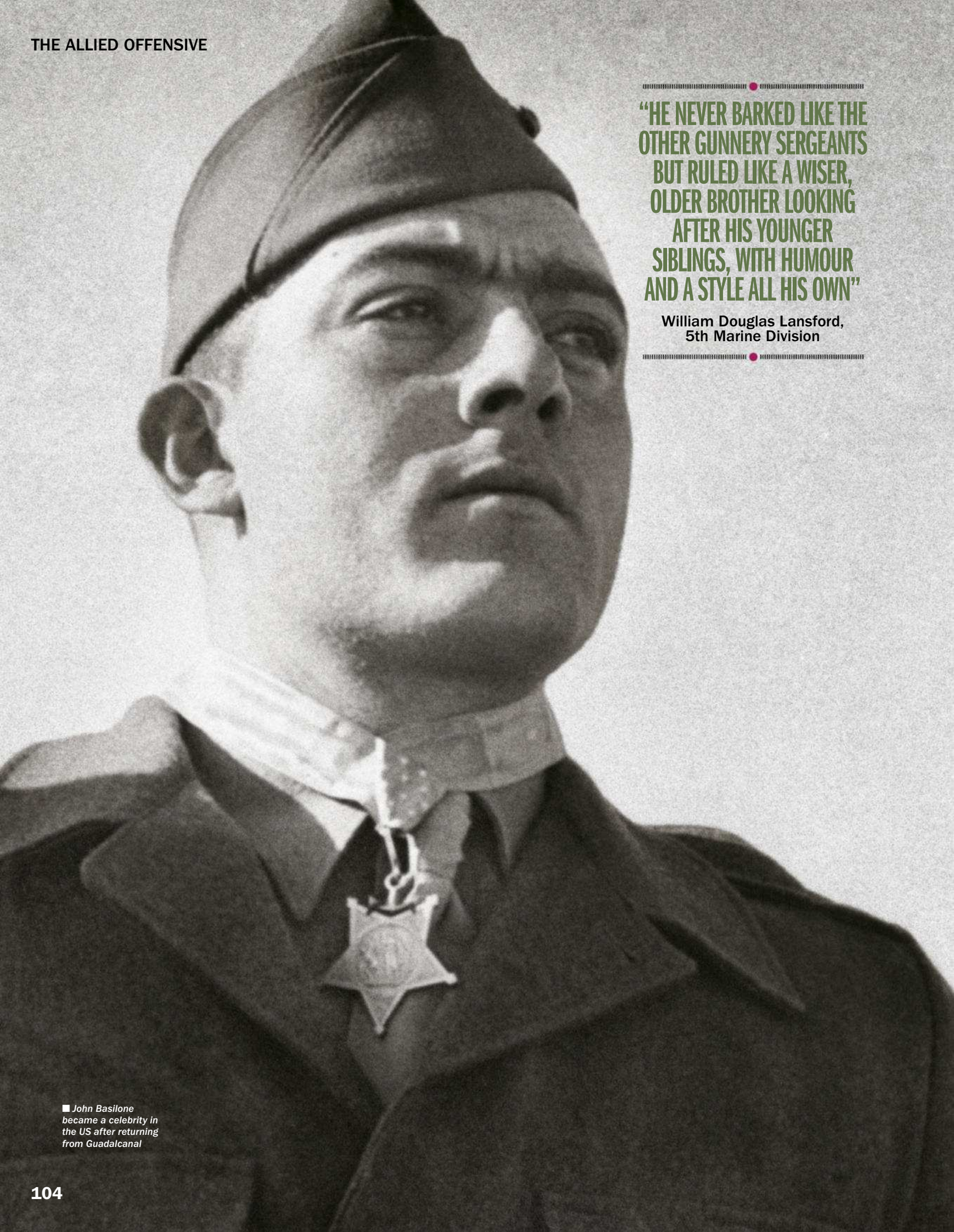
"OF THE 20,060 JAPANESE TROOPS ON THE ISLAND, ONLY 216 WERE EVER CAPTURED, WITH ROUGHLY 300 LEFT HIDING IN THE TUNNELS FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE WAR"

The following day, the 21st Regiment flanked the Japanese on the right, providing the US forces with two attack fronts to decimate the remaining Imperial forces.

By 25 March, organised enemy resistance was declared over. However, Kuribayashi's men had one final assault up their sleeve. In the vicinity of Motoyama 2, some 300 men assembled that evening. On the morning of the 26 March 1945, they stormed the US camp, killing sleeping Marines at will until a defensive line was formed by the Americans as dawn broke, sending the remaining Japanese into hiding. After 36 days, the Battle of Iwo Jima became a manhunt, with at least 223 Japanese soldiers hunted and killed. General Kuribayashi was rumoured to have been among those slain, bringing to an end a bloody conflict that saw more than 70,000 Marines deployed.

Of the 20,060 Japanese troops on the island, only 216 were ever captured, with roughly 300 left hiding in the tunnels for the remainder of the war. On the US side, 5,931 Marines were killed, with a further 17,372 injured – the only time in the Pacific Theatre that American casualties outnumbered those of the Japanese. General Holland Smith had "thrown human flesh against reinforced concrete" in taking Iwo Jima. Yet, in the ensuing aerial war against the Japanese mainland, over 2,200 heavy bombers made unscheduled landings on the island's airstrips, saving 24,761 US airmen from potential disaster.

Iwo Jima was a grim yet inspirational victory for the Americans that demoralised their enemy. Mainland Japan had never seemed closer to the United States. A final victory in the Pacific was in sight.



"HE NEVER BARKED LIKE THE OTHER GUNNERY SERGEANTS BUT RULED LIKE A WISER, OLDER BROTHER LOOKING AFTER HIS YOUNGER SIBLINGS, WITH HUMOUR AND A STYLE ALL HIS OWN"

William Douglas Lansford, 5th Marine Division

■ *John Basilone became a celebrity in the US after returning from Guadalcanal*



Heroes of the Medal of Honor

JOHN BASILONE

THE NEW JERSEY CHAMPION BOXER ALMOST SINGLE-HANDEDLY REPELLED A JAPANESE ONSLAUGHT AND BECAME A LEGEND OF THE US MARINES

John Basilone is considered a hero of the US Marine Corps, however there are few outside of the corps that now remember him. While he was alive, John was a national hero who was honoured with parades and had highways, landmarks and even a Destroyer warship named after him. He was the first marine to win a Medal of Honor during World War II and remains one of the most highly decorated marines of all time, also earning a Purple Heart and Navy Cross.

John was born into a big Italian family and grew up in Raritan, a small town in New Jersey. He was the sixth child of ten to Dora and Salvatore Basilone, who had emigrated to the United States from Naples in 1903. Aged 16, despite his mother's wishes, he dropped out of school and, always a keen sportsman, worked as a golf caddy for the local country club. However, this wasn't enough for him and in July 1934, aged 18, he enlisted in the US Army. He served for three years with Company D, 16th Infantry, including a long stretch based in the Philippines. However, during his time in the army he achieved little, except proving that he was a champion light-heavyweight boxer – undefeated in 19 bouts.

Still, Basilone looked on those formative years fondly for the rest of his life, earning himself the nickname 'Manila John' because he talked about his experiences in the Philippines so much. Discharged from the army as a private first class, he worked for a few months as a truck driver in Maryland but soon hankered to return to Manila once more. Believing that joining the Marines would get him there faster than re-enlisting in the army, Basilone joined The Few, The Proud in 1940. But when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor a year into Basilone's training, his plans to return the Philippines were scuppered.

Determined to stop the spread of the Japanese Empire, which was threatening the supply routes between the US and Australia, the Americans led the Allies' first offensive in the region. They landed on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands on 7 August 1942, surprising the Japanese so that they were able to seize an airstrip. However, the Japanese clung on tenaciously, with the so-called Tokyo Express, high-speed warships, delivering reinforcements every night to try and retake the island.

It was in the midst of one of these fierce counterattacks that Basilone entered Marine lore. Along with 4,157 others from the 7th Marine Regiment, Basilone formed part of an unbroken line of defence to keep the Japanese from reaching the Henderson Field airstrip. Known as the Lunga Perimeter, the Allies commanded a series of ridges that the Japanese would have to climb after traipsing through miles of dense jungle, muddy ravines and rivers. But this didn't deter them.

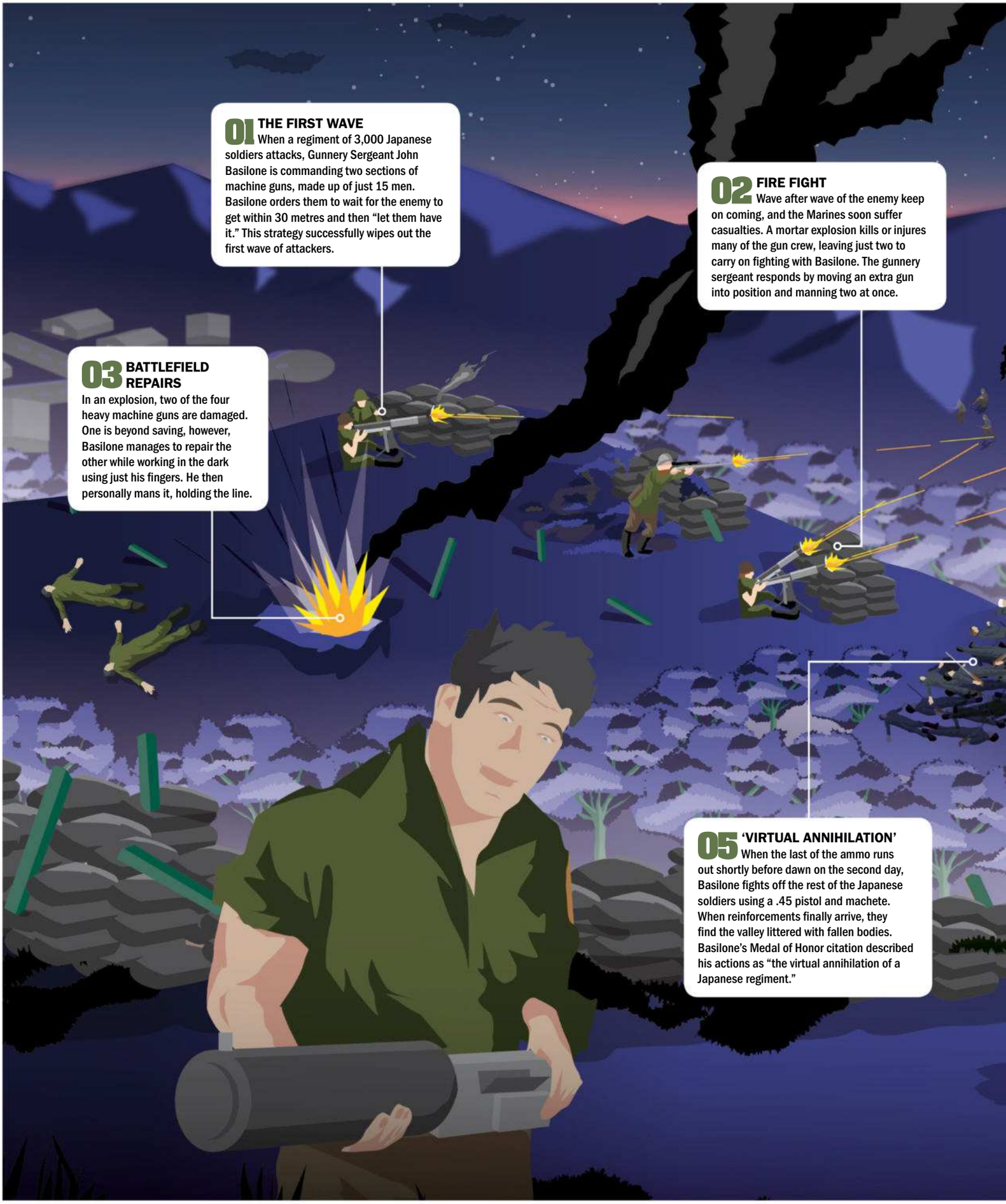
After already being beaten back at the Battles of the Tenaru and Edson's Ridge, the Japanese tried a new tactic. On 12 October 1942, engineers broke a 24-kilometre trail through the jungle to the Lunga Perimeter. Between 16-18 October, the notorious 2nd Infantry Division of the Imperial Japanese Army began its march up this path; each soldier carried one artillery shell plus his pack and rifle. While the trail took several days longer than anticipated, forcing the troops onto half rations to compensate, when they finally attacked on the evening of 23 October, they still caught US troops unaware.

Caught on the back foot, Allied forces were hastily rearranged to compensate, leaving Basilone and the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, left to hold the entire 2,300 metres of the perimeter east of the Lunga River. On the night of 24 October, just after 9.30pm, a regiment of approximately 3,000 2nd Division Japanese soldiers descended on Basilone and the two gun crews of 15 men that he commanded. Basilone ordered them to allow the enemy to get within 30 metres and then "let them have it." This strategy successfully wiped out the first wave of attackers.

However, fighting in the dark and in the midst of heavy rain, the US forces were hammered



Marines cross the Matanikau River in Guadalcanal, 1942



01 THE FIRST WAVE
When a regiment of 3,000 Japanese soldiers attacks, Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone is commanding two sections of machine guns, made up of just 15 men. Basilone orders them to wait for the enemy to get within 30 metres and then "let them have it." This strategy successfully wipes out the first wave of attackers.

02 FIRE FIGHT
Wave after wave of the enemy keep on coming, and the Marines soon suffer casualties. A mortar explosion kills or injures many of the gun crew, leaving just two to carry on fighting with Basilone. The gunnery sergeant responds by moving an extra gun into position and manning two at once.

03 BATTLEFIELD REPAIRS
In an explosion, two of the four heavy machine guns are damaged. One is beyond saving, however, Basilone manages to repair the other while working in the dark using just his fingers. He then personally mans it, holding the line.

05 'VIRTUAL ANNIHILATION'
When the last of the ammo runs out shortly before dawn on the second day, Basilone fights off the rest of the Japanese soldiers using a .45 pistol and machete. When reinforcements finally arrive, they find the valley littered with fallen bodies. Basilone's Medal of Honor citation described his actions as "the virtual annihilation of a Japanese regiment."

Ed Crooks



04 RUNNING FOR AMMO
Engaged in a 48-hour fire fight, ammo eventually runs desperately low. Basilone knows there is an ammunition dump just 90 metres away, but it is behind enemy lines. Basilone runs and crawls through the jungle, dodging bullets, and manages to carry six heavy cartridge belts back to his remaining men. He later repeats this act, reaching an ammo dump that is 550 metres away.

"HE CAME FROM NOTHING AND TO GREATNESS. I THINK THAT'S WHAT WE ALL HONOUR: THE GUY THAT DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING, THAT MADE IT. HE JUST RAN OFF AND BECAME A WORLD HERO. THE WHOLE COUNTRY HONOURED HIM"

Clinton Watters, 5th Marine Division

with grenades, mortars and machine gun shells. A mortar explosion killed or injured many of the gun crew, so only Basilone and two others were left to hold the line. Basilone responded by positioning a second machine gun and firing both at the enemy at once. They kept up the fight for 48 hours.

Inevitably, in such a long shoot out, the machine gun ammunition began to run low. However, the supply line had been breached and Japanese troops stood between Basilone and the ammunition dump. Certain that the position would fall if the gun teams were not resupplied, Basilone made his way down the trail alone, fighting his way 90 metres to the dump. After returning with several belts of ammunition, he set out for the unmanned gun pits to his right, knowing that the heavy weapons were essential to defending the ridge.

However, when he got to the gun positions, he found the two unoccupied machine guns were jammed. Working in the darkness with only his fingers to guide him, he managed to fix one of the guns. He then used it to rain down heavy fire on the Japanese forces that were still coming. At several points, the Marines were forced to push back the mounting pile of bodies to maintain a clear field of fire.

As the battle raged on, facing eight separate waves of attack, Basilone was forced to make several more trips for the desperately needed ammunition. In the end, its believed Basilone's platoon fired more than 25,000 rounds. However, facing such vast numbers, few of the gunners survived. By the time reinforcements arrived, only Basilone and one other gunner held the ridge, with Basilone fighting with just a machete and .45 pistol. However, by this time, the Japanese troops were annihilated; the bodies of fallen soldiers filling the valley below. The rest of the 2nd Division's attack was also pushed back, marking a turning point for the Allies, in which the Japanese eventually forfeited Guadalcanal that November.

In the light of the new day, Basilone was a war hero. Decorated with a Medal of Honor in Melbourne, Australia, he was also shipped home to attend ticker tape parades and encourage Americans to 'back the attack' and buy war bonds. Met by a cheering crowd of 15,000 when he returned to his home town, appearing in cinema newsreels alongside celebrities and travelling the country making speeches, many soldiers could have been happy to enjoy their well-earned new fame and fortune. But in the words of Richard Greer, who had also been in the 7th Marines alongside Basilone: "He was a Marine, not a salesman."

Though the military top brass wanted to keep him Stateside, Basilone turned down commission after commission, trying to convince them to return him to the Pacific. Eventually, they relented, and in December 1943 he was stationed at Camp Pendleton, California, to prepare for war. It was at Pendleton that he met his future wife, Lena Mae Riggi, who was a sergeant in the Marine Corps Women's Reserve. They married the following July, but still Basilone requested to return to the fight. In February 1945, he saw action again, as a machine gun section leader during the critical invasion of Iwo Jima. This time the situation was reversed to Basilone's battle on the Lunga Perimeter; Japanese forces were secure in fortified block houses firing at the Marines, who were pinned down on the beaches. Basilone once again showed tremendous courage, creeping up on the blockhouses before attacking them with grenades, single-handedly destroying a garrison. He also helped free a stranded tank trapped on an enemy minefield, but was killed by Japanese mortar shrapnel after guiding the vehicle over the hazardous terrain to safety. For his efforts, Basilone was posthumously awarded the Marine Corps' second-highest decoration for valour, the Navy Cross.



■ *In his hometown, Basilone is commemorated as the 'hero of Guadalcanal'*

Images: Alamy, Corbis

YAM

JAPAN'S DOOMED FLAGSHIP

IN 1945 THIS SUPER BATTLESHIP EMBARKED ON A DESPERATE MISSION TO HALT THE AMERICAN LANDINGS ON OKINAWA



A grey leviathan looms in the midday light. The battleship's great guns are silent but exude a palpable aura of menace. It drives southwards over the waves of the East China Sea at 20 knots towards its final destination, Okinawa, where an armada of American ships lies offshore overseeing the invasion of the island. Yamato, the pride of the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN), is a 70,000-ton super battleship, the first of her class and flagship of the Combined Fleet. It is far superior to any other warship afloat.

Yamato is under orders to ravage the American ships off Okinawa with her gigantic 47-centimetre (18.1-inch) guns, beach herself and fight to the death in the same spirit as the kamikaze pilots who at that moment exact a frightful toll on the US Navy's warships. Okinawa is an island in the Ryukyu chain, and the last stepping stone for the US forces before the Japanese Archipelago lying 560 kilometres away. It is here that the battleship is expected to live up to her name, Yamato – a word that embodies the essence of the Japanese nation and people.

However, the flagship will never reach its destination. It is just past noon, 7 April 1945, and Yamato is still 400 kilometres to the northwest of Okinawa. US Navy warplanes have found her. They are circling, visible through gaps in the clouds – midnight-blue angels of death casting judgement over the battleship and her nine escorts. On Yamato's bridge stands a young assistant radar officer, Ensign Mitsuru Yoshida. He is 22 years old and had been a law student at Tokyo Imperial University just two years before, when he was called to serve his emperor. Unlike almost all of his fellows aboard Yamato, he will survive the calamity that is about to befall the vessel. After the war, he will write a eulogy for the doomed ship and her crew.

Operation Heaven Number One, or Ten-ichigo in Japanese, has little chance of success. The mission has been conceived as a means of restoring a measure of honour to the Combined Fleet, which has been shamed by its inaction around Okinawa compared to the kamikaze attacks of Japan's death-seeking pilots. "But where is the navy?" Emperor Hirohito asked Admiral Koshiro Oikawa, his most senior naval adviser, at a 29 March meeting concerning the fighting. "Are there no more ships? No surface forces?" Oikawa was mortified by the implication that the navy, most of whose ships now lie at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean, was not doing enough. So on 6 April Yamato sailed from Kure Harbour to die at Okinawa, covered in glory for the good of the navy. "The fate of

YAMATO

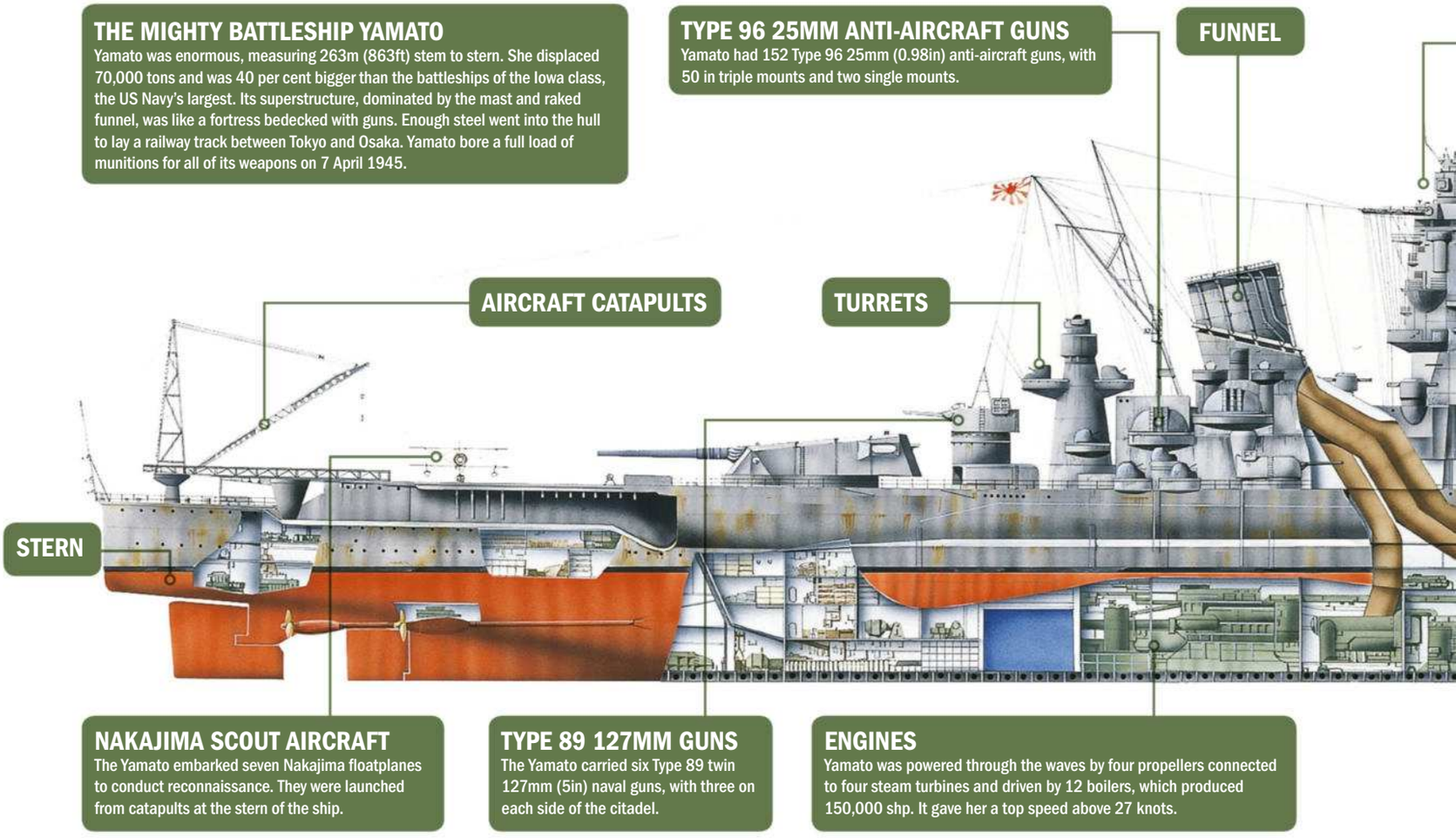
■ *The Japanese super battleship Yamato undergoing sea trials in late 1941*



■ *Yamato's senior officers prior to the start of Operation Ten-ichigo*



■ *Yamato in dock fitting out, September 1941*



the navy rests on this one action," her crewmen were portentously told as they departed.

Despite her awesome power, Yamato has seen little combat, having engaged the Americans briefly during the Battle of Leyte Gulf in October 1944. The ship has been outmoded since the start of the Pacific War. The strike on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 proved that aircraft carriers, not battleships, were now the arbiters of war at sea. A mere two days later, the Japanese confirmed the vulnerability of surface warships to aircraft when their planes struck and sank the Royal Navy's HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse. Surface ships, however powerful, were extremely vulnerable to air attack unless themselves protected by fighters, and so for much of the war Yamato has been kept sheltered in home waters, awaiting a decisive battle with American battleships that will never come.

The Surface Special Attack Force is under the overall command of Vice Admiral Seiichi Ito, who uses Yamato as his flagship, while the ship herself is under the direction of Captain Kosaku Ariga. Ito is aghast at what he considers the purposeless waste of his ships and the lives of his men, but he keeps such thoughts from them. Yet the crewmen of Yamato are under no illusion that Ten-ichigo can end in anything besides her destruction. It is a suicide mission. They have been ordered, preposterously, that if they manage to survive long enough to reach the island, they are to arm themselves and go ashore to continue the fight. Many sailors, aware of what is to come, have written their last letters home to their loved ones.

Awaiting Yamato and the ships of the Second Destroyer Squadron that accompanies it on this death ride is the US Fifth Fleet, riding high at the peak of its wartime might. The Yamato crewmen know they have been spotted by an American submarine, but they are deeply upset that the Americans have radioed their position to the rest of the fleet without even encoding the message, as if they are not taking the great battleship seriously enough.

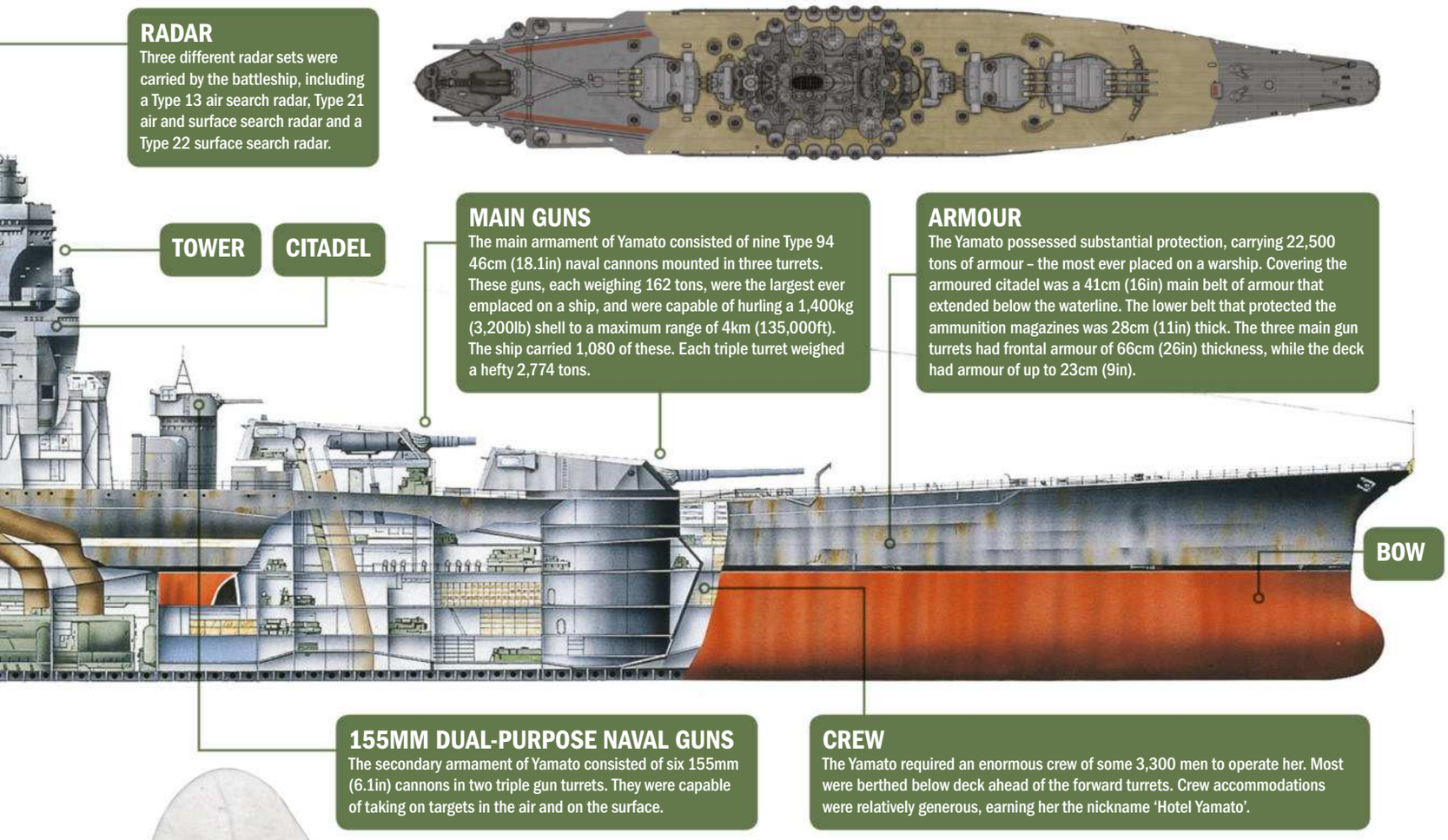
On Yamato, rice balls and black tea are served to the crew, who sing patriotic songs and shout "Banzai!", the traditional Japanese battle cry. Ariga, a popular captain, allows some of his younger officers to affectionately pat his bald pate. There is a limit to the levity, however. In contemplation of the swarm of American aircraft that is sure to assail them, one sailor asks morbidly but with true prescience, "Which country showed the world what airplanes could do by sinking Prince of Wales?"

"ITO IS AGHAST AT WHAT HE CONSIDERS THE PURPOSELESS WASTE OF HIS SHIPS AND THE LIVES OF HIS MEN, BUT HE KEEPS SUCH THOUGHTS FROM THEM"

Ensign Yoshida finds that one of his fellows, Ensign Sakei Katono, is reading Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, while Yoshida buries himself in a biography of Baruch Spinoza. He also sees that another ensign, Kunio Nakatani, is weeping into his pillow. The assistant communications officer aboard Yamato is a Japanese-American from California who was studying in Japan and had the misfortune to find himself stranded there when the war began. He has received, at long last – just before Yamato sailed on her final voyage – a letter from his mother in America, that reaches him via neutral Switzerland. He will never see her again.

A reconnaissance plane operating off the aircraft carrier USS Essex spies the flotilla at 8.15am on 7 April. Over the following four hours, the Americans doggedly track Yamato and the other ships of the flotilla. Admiral Raymond Spruance, commanding officer of the Fifth Fleet at Okinawa, at first decides to keep his carrier fighters close by to provide cover against the swarming kamikazes and instead sends a powerful squadron of battleships to confront the onrushing Japanese ships. Yamato, it seems, will finally get to fulfill her purpose and duel valiantly with her American peers.

Then Spruance cancels his order. Vice Admiral Marc Mitscher, the commander of the carrier aircraft of Task Force 58, convinces him that his planes will be better dealing with the immense Japanese warship. At 10am 280 planes from no fewer than ten aircraft carriers launch themselves into the leaden Pacific sky,



RADAR
Three different radar sets were carried by the battleship, including a Type 13 air search radar, Type 21 air and surface search radar and a Type 22 surface search radar.

MAIN GUNS
The main armament of Yamato consisted of nine Type 94 46cm (18.1in) naval cannons mounted in three turrets. These guns, each weighing 162 tons, were the largest ever emplaced on a ship, and were capable of hurling a 1,400kg (3,200lb) shell to a maximum range of 4km (135,000ft). The ship carried 1,080 of these. Each triple turret weighed a hefty 2,774 tons.

ARMOUR
The Yamato possessed substantial protection, carrying 22,500 tons of armour – the most ever placed on a warship. Covering the armoured citadel was a 41cm (16in) main belt of armour that extended below the waterline. The lower belt that protected the ammunition magazines was 28cm (11in) thick. The three main gun turrets had frontal armour of 66cm (26in) thickness, while the deck had armour of up to 23cm (9in).

TOWER

CITADEL

BOW

155MM DUAL-PURPOSE NAVAL GUNS
The secondary armament of Yamato consisted of six 155mm (6.1in) cannons in two triple gun turrets. They were capable of taking on targets in the air and on the surface.

CREW
The Yamato required an enormous crew of some 3,300 men to operate her. Most were berthed below deck ahead of the forward turrets. Crew accommodations were relatively generous, earning her the nickname 'Hotel Yamato'.

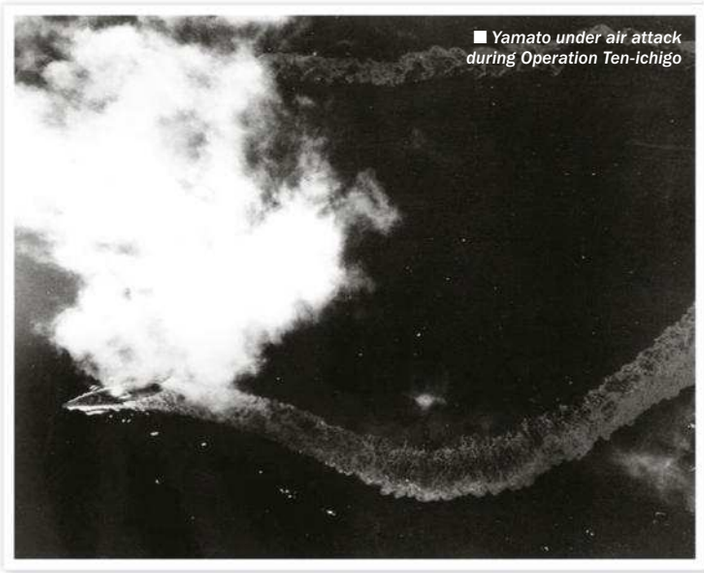
"AT 10AM 280 PLANES FROM NO FEWER THAN TEN AIRCRAFT CARRIERS LAUNCH THEMSELVES INTO THE LEADEN PACIFIC SKY, DESTINED FOR A BLOODY RENDEZVOUS WITH YAMATO"

■ *Curtiss Helldivers fly over an American aircraft carrier in 1945. Carriers had surpassed battleships as the dominant force on the oceans by WWII*

"YAMATO'S EXECUTIVE OFFICER, REAR ADMIRAL NOBII MORISHITA, CAN'T HELP BUT ADMIRE THE PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE OF THE ATTACKERS. 'BEAUTIFULLY DONE, ISN'T IT?' HE SAYS"



■ *The Yamato receiving direct hits from US planes during the attack on 7 April 1945*



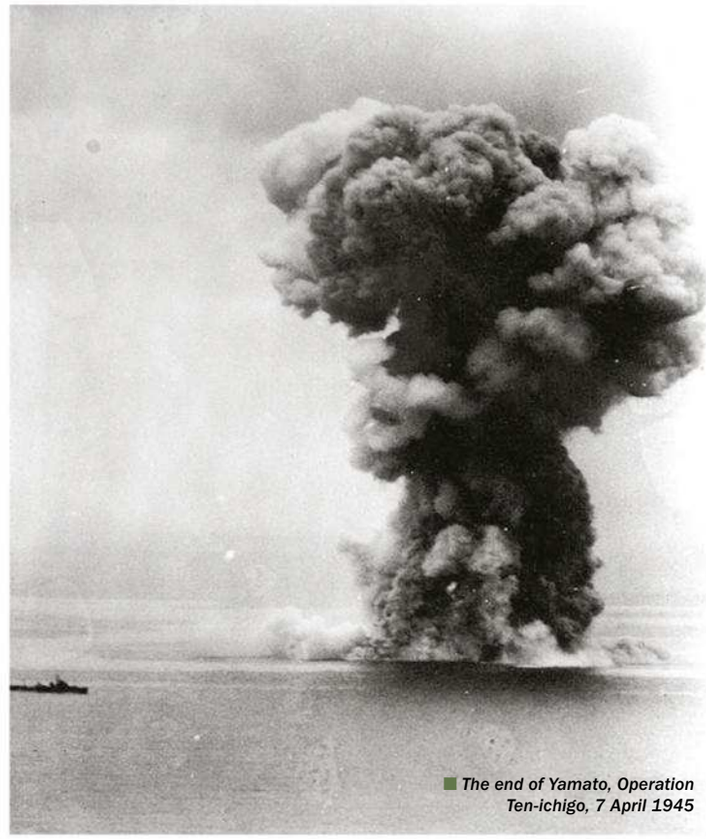
■ *Yamato under air attack during Operation Ten-ichigo*



■ *Curtiss Helldivers go on the attack*



■ *Yamato attacked by American carrier planes*



■ *The end of Yamato, Operation Ten-ichigo, 7 April 1945*

destined for a fateful rendezvous with the approaching Yamato.

At 12pm Admiral Ito sits on the bridge of Yamato and smiles. He says cheerfully, "We got through the morning all right, didn't we?" The battleship's good fortune will not last long. Just 20 minutes later Yamato's air search radar detects the approaching American aircraft. The Japanese ships are bereft of fighter cover. Their only defences will be the anti-aircraft guns aboard. Then the attacks begin – the first wave of many in a sea of fire and smoke.

Yamato's anti-aircraft batteries and those of her escorts open up in defence. The ferocious fire sent skyward – a prismatic, tracer-lit torrent of searing metal – does the Japanese ships little good. The Americans manoeuvre their machines with great skill. Yoshida grimly observes that their highly trained pilots fly in a straight course only long enough to drop their bombs or torpedoes, then hurriedly zigzag away. The sheer number of aircraft also works in the Americans' favour, as the Japanese gun crews find themselves overwhelmed with a multiplicity of fast-moving targets.

In all, 364 American carrier aircraft pounce on Yamato and the ships in her escort. The light cruiser Yahagi, the lead ship of the Second Destroyer Squadron, goes down after being struck by seven torpedoes and 12 bombs, while US aircraft also hammer the destroyers. It is Yamato, however, that receives the greatest attention from the American fliers. They concentrate their torpedo strikes on the port side of the ship to cause her to list quickly.

Wave after wave of Avenger torpedo bombers and Helldiver dive bombers, protected by Corsair and Hellcat fighters, surge over Yamato. Yamato's executive officer, Rear Admiral Nobii Morishita, can't help but admire the

"THE FEROCIOUS FIRE SENT SKYWARD – A PRISMATIC, TRACER-LIT TORRENT OF SEARING METAL – DOES THE JAPANESE SHIPS LITTLE GOOD"

professional competence of the attackers. "Beautifully done, isn't it?" he says. She is hit by one torpedo after another. Between 11 and 13 strike her, together with no fewer than eight bombs. There are many more near-misses, and she lists worryingly to port. She takes on thousands of gallons of seawater to counter the listing, but to little avail. The waves crash over her port side. At 2.10pm a bomb strikes her rudder, damaging it and knocking out all power in the ship. She can no longer manoeuvre. Yoshida spies a thin, human-sized length of flesh dangling from a rangefinder. Her crew has been equally savaged.

Another wave of enemy planes bears down on Yamato. "Don't lose heart," Captain Ariga keeps urging the surviving men on the bridge. But there is no hope for Ten-ichigo. Admiral Ito's flotilla has been shredded by American airpower to no purpose, just as he had expected. Like Yahagi, most of the destroyers have been smashed. He calls off the operation and commands his remaining ships to return home after picking up survivors of disabled ships. After giving this order, he goes to his cabin and closes the door behind him. He will never emerge. Captain Ariga calls his crew to Yamato's deck as water floods the stricken vessel and orders them to abandon ship. He will not be leaving with them. Ariga binds himself to a binnacle so that he will go down with his ship. "Long live the emperor!" he cries.

Yamato's severe list is now reaching an astonishing 90 degrees to port. As she continues to roll, the giant shells she stows for her main guns slip and slide in their magazines, their fuses striking bulkheads and overheads. They begin to detonate. By 2.23pm Yamato is completely upside down and begins to sink. The greatest of these blasts consumes her, sending up a mushroom cloud of fiery smoke that can be seen all the way back in Japan.

Ensign Yoshida is indescribably lucky. The plunging Yamato was about to pull him under in its whirlpool when this final explosion propels him back to the surface. He will live. The remains of the battered Yamato finally sink in 883 metres of water. Yoshida, who will become a bank executive after the war, is plucked from the oil-choked water by the destroyer Fuyutsuki. He writes his *Requiem for Battleship Yamato* years later, calling Ten-ichigo "An operation that will live in naval annals for its recklessness and stupidity."

The Japanese navy loses seven ships in Ten-ichigo, including Yamato, along with 4,250 sailors. Only three destroyers escape the carnage. The US Navy's losses are much lighter – a mere ten warplanes and 12 airmen. When Emperor Hirohito learns of the failure of the operation and the loss of Yamato, he raises his hand to his head and sways. "Gone?" he says in shocked disbelief. "She's gone?"

The Okinawa invasion will not be stopped. It continues until late June, when the last Japanese resistance is crushed. Of the 3,300 crewmen of Yamato, just 269 survive. Her dead are the among the first casualties in the Okinawa campaign. They are not the last.

Images: Alamy, Getty



Heroes of the Victoria Cross

EDWARD 'TED' KENNA

IN FULL VIEW OF AN ENEMY GUN EMPLACEMENT, PRIVATE KENNA FIRED HIS BREN GUN AMID A HAIL OF JAPANESE MACHINE GUN FIRE, CALMLY TAKING OUT ENEMY GUNNERS ONE BY ONE AND SAVING HIS COMRADES

Edward 'Ted' Kenna learned to shoot by hunting rabbits in Hamilton in rural Victoria, Australia, during the Great Depression. His father had worked on the railways and as Kenna later recalled, "their wages wasn't so hot", and so anything extra (both in terms of pelts and meat on the table for the family of nine) helped. His skills would stand him in great stead when it came to his experiences in World War II. 15 May 1945 saw him advancing on the northwestern slopes of the Wirui Mission Station overlooking the Wewak airstrip in northern New Guinea.

Kenna's division was involved in the Aitape-Wewak Campaign, one of the final operations of the Pacific Theatre, fought from November 1944 until the end of the war. Indeed, it was on the Wewak airstrip that the Japanese General Hatazo Adachi surrendered to Australian forces on 13 September 1945.

The Japanese had occupied Aitape in northern New Guinea during their advance south in 1942. In April 1944 the US Army retook parts of the area (centred on the Wewak airstrip) to secure their flank and act as a base for the upcoming Philippines campaign. Fighting was limited despite there being 30-35,000 Japanese troops from the 18th Army in the area. Responsibility for the defence of the region was passed to the Australians and from October 1944 elements of the Sixth Battalion began arriving. They immediately took on the task of recapturing the entire region. General Adachi withdrew his forces to concentrate them in the area around the Torricelli Mountains and Wewak.



***Below:** Australian troops stand proudly in front of the national flag, Ted Kenna pictured second from the left. Aussie troops played a vital role in the Pacific Theatre*

Multiple Australian columns made their way through the difficult terrain in a southeasterly direction inland, taking each village and town. The important and well-defended area of Maprik was all but cleared by 22 April by the 17th Brigade, although sporadic fighting continued into May.

The coastal campaign against Wewak proceeded at the same time as the Maprik campaign. On 1 May, the 19th Brigade took over the advance from the 16th that, by then, had been in a forward position for three months and had seen 15 weeks of continuous action.

It was estimated that there were between 500 and 1,000 Japanese at Wewak – by far the greatest concentration of enemy forces in the area. The town fell on 11 May and the Japanese withdrew southwards over the Prince Alexander Mountains, leaving strong defensive positions behind them on each successive knoll and ridge. Each position could fire on the previous position and needed to be taken out individually.

Soon the only area not secured by the Australians was the rugged



Edward Kenna was known as both 'Ted', and 'Ned' to his mates. Hunting rabbits during the Great Depression made him a crack shot, a skill that would come to the fore on 15 May 1945

"WE DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THAT BUNKER AT ALL UNTIL IT OPENED UP AND THEN THAT'S WHEN I GOT ME GOOD SHIRT RUINED I MIGHT ADD"

terrain to the south overlooking the Wewak airstrip, and it was against those positions that Eighth Platoon, A Company 2/4th Infantry Battalion, 19th Infantry Brigade advanced. Heavy machine gun positions and artillery could fire down on to the airfield and surrounding area and needed to be taken out. The most dominant of these positions was the 90-metre-high (300-foot) kunai grass-covered hill of Wirui Mission Station, known as Mission Hill. To begin with, A Company had the assistance of a tank from C Squadron of the 2/4th Armoured Regiment but, as Kenna later recalled, "It cut out more or less… stranded up on the hill there, and we had to go forward on our own."

The men had to proceed on foot through the tall kunai grass. The terrain was rugged and there was no artillery or mortar support for the infantry assault. The actions of that day saw some of the fiercest fighting in New Guinea during the war.

The eastern slopes and the top of the hill were taken by nightfall on 14 May, but the Japanese fought back from bunkers on the northwestern slopes. Kenna's platoon was ordered forward to deal with a machine gun post so that the company could continue.

Kenna's support section and one other section were to pin down the enemy position while the remainder of the platoon outflanked it. Kenna's citation stated, "When the attacking sections came into view of the enemy they were immediately engaged at very close range by heavy automatic fire from a position not previously disclosed." Both sections started taking casualties. The citation continued, "Private Kenna endeavoured to put his Bren gun into a position where he could engage the bunker but was unable to do so because of the nature of the ground. On his own initiative and without orders, Private Kenna immediately stood up and in full view of the enemy less than 50 yards [46 metres] away and engaged the bunker, firing his Bren gun from the hip."

Kenna's version (related in 2000, aged 80) reads slightly differently, although it does give a sense of his no-nonsense approach to combat: "Anyhow this machine gun opened up… and that's when I got up. I couldn't see down below, I got up and opened fire, three shots and was a bit lucky there and a couple got in the road of a couple of bullets. But then… when I was doing that, the second bunker opened up on me and that's when I put that out of action too, with a bit of luck … I couldn't get at it properly with the Bren so I called for a rifle, which one of the boys [Private Rau] threw up to me from the grass, and I happened to get a hit there so I was all right."

In a later television interview, Kenna said he couldn't explain why he had



■ ***Inset, right:*** *The landing of Farida Force at Dove Bay on 11 May 1945. This ad hoc unit of 623 men, mainly commandos, would cut the Wewak road and prevent Japanese forces from escaping southeast. These actions took place at the same time as Kenna's at Wirui Mission Station. Farida Force was then placed under the command of the 19th Infantry Brigade (which included Kenna's unit)*

■ *In 1944 this US attack focused on the air strip in Wewak as part of an effort to destroy the Japanese air power in the region*



■ *An Australian light machine gun team in action near Wewak in June 1945, just weeks after Kenna's action. Like the soldier pictured here, Kenna was also armed with the Bren light machine gun*



"THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE SUCCESS OF THE COMPANY ATTACK WOULD HAVE BEEN SERIOUSLY ENDANGERED AND MANY CASUALTIES SUSTAINED BUT FOR PRIVATE KENNA'S MAGNIFICENT COURAGE AND COMPLETE DISREGARD FOR HIS OWN SAFETY"

done what he did. "The opportunity came to shoot and I shot, that's all." When pressed as to why he did it, he replied, "I couldn't answer that and I never tell a lie." He called himself a 'sticky-beak' – always wanting to know what was going on – and he couldn't see what was going on lying down, so he stood up to take a look. He also said, "It's just one of those things that you do, I suppose. It's hard to say. I think anyone would have done the same thing in the same position because, well it's no good laying down there and doing nothing. You had to do something, and I don't think the Nips [Japanese] would have brought tea or dinner for me."

The Victoria Cross citation goes on to speak of Kenna's "magnificent bravery in the face of concentrated fire", that the bunker was captured without further loss and the company action was successfully concluded. Large amounts of munitions and equipment were captured and the successful taking of Wirui Mission gave the Australians complete control of the Wewak coastal plain.

Kenna's modesty and no-nonsense approach can be seen in his words. He had enrolled in the Citizen Military Force in the 1930s and then the Australian army in 1940. He said that he wasn't one of the brave ones who rushed off to war and only wanted to go and fight when he actually had to. He thought that the greatest battle a soldier had to perform was actually waiting to go to war. Kenna was assigned to the 23/31st Battalion and served in Victoria and Darwin, Australia.

In June 1943 he was sent to Queensland, training at the Jungle Warfare School in Canungara. Kenna recalled, "We learnt the way to treat a jungle and the way the jungle treats those that is kind to them somehow. It might only be walking from here to there, but you've got to move with certain care or certain respect, I'll put it that way, and that's how it is." Kenna's battalion was then disbanded and its men sent to other units. Kenna was allocated to the 2/4 Battalion, Second AIF, and in October 1944 he sailed for New Guinea.

It is odd that a crack shot with a rifle was given charge of his support section's Bren gun – he felled successive enemies with a single shot at Wirui Station. But Kenna appreciated his Bren, even if he saw its limitations: "The Bren is more of a gun that you put on automatic and give them hell like that… the perfect shot, with a Bren, you couldn't do it."

Kenna's interviews make it clear that he was a character (what the Australians would call a Larrikin: a mischievous person, uncultivated and rowdy but good hearted) who often spoke out of turn to his superiors. "A lot of times that I've spoken to a higher up, like say a captain or lieut [lieutenant] or something like that and told him in certain terms that what he was doing wouldn't win the war at all, but when I look back at it now, everything I done and everything I was going to do and failed like they told me, and I went against it to my own stupid mind." On at least one occasion he was deprived of a promotion to lance corporal, which was probably given to him after his action at Wirui



■ *Australian artillery engages the enemy in Wewak in 1945*



■ *Australian infantry of the 2/11 Battalion resting on the banks of the Danmap River in New Guinea before assaulting Japanese positions near Matapau in early January 1945*

■ *Inset, right: A Matilda tank supporting Australian infantry on the coast at Wewak*

Station, but he lost it less than three weeks later.

Kenna makes some interesting observations regarding not being in the 'big' war or the major campaigns that usually fill history books. The campaigns around Wewak were characterised as 'small-scale patrolling with small-scale company attacks'. The forces against which the Australians advanced were seldom more than a few hundred and in some actions only a handful. Kenna, however, maintained that "war could be a little patrol. One men, two men, three men on patrol and you get shot, well that war is the biggest war he's ever been in – only a handful of men… and if you call them big, in my book the small little patrol could be the biggest war of the lot… It's one life as far as they're concerned and that's the big war. That's my idea of war… There's no such thing as big war. It's a one-man job and that's it."

For all that the Aitape-Wewak campaign may seem like a minor one today, two Victoria Crosses were earned by members of the Australian forces during the fighting there, which puts the heroics they performed into perspective. Lieutenant Albert Chowne was awarded a posthumous VC on 25 March at Dagua during the advance on Wewak. Australians were awarded 20 Victoria Crosses during World War II, two coming in the Wewak campaign and two others (Reg Rattey and Frank Partridge) during the 1945 Bouganville campaign, also in New Guinea.

The apparently disproportionate number of awards for these minor late war campaigns reveals, as Kenna contended, that war was a one-man job and that the Australians who fought in those campaigns did so as heroically as any other serviceman.

Some three weeks after his actions at Wirui Station, Kenna was wounded in the mouth and evacuated to a military hospital back in Australia. It was there that he met his future wife, Marjorie, who helped to nurse him. But while in hospital he also overheard the doctors talking about his serious wounds and giving him only a 40 per cent chance of survival. Kenna's response was typical: "Pigs. I'm the other way, don't you worry."

After spending more than a year in hospital, he eventually pulled through and began the road to recovery. Bizarrely, he almost missed the phone call to advise him of his Victoria Cross, because he was in the shower. His immediate reply on being told he was to receive the honour was, "Oh that's a strange thing, you know, at this time of day."

"DESPITE THE INTENSE MACHINE GUN FIRE, HE SEIZED THE RIFLE AND, WITH AMAZING COOLNESS, KILLED THE GUNNER WITH HIS FIRST ROUND"

Images: Alamy, Getty

FIGHT TO THE DEATH

THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC COMES TO A DEVASTATING END

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The war in the Pacific reaches its bitter, bloody climax as the Americans unleash hell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki

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US bombing raids on the capital of Imperial Japan led to the deaths of over 80,000 people

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The war in the Pacific came to an end amidst apocalyptic bombing raids and saw the dawn of the nuclear age





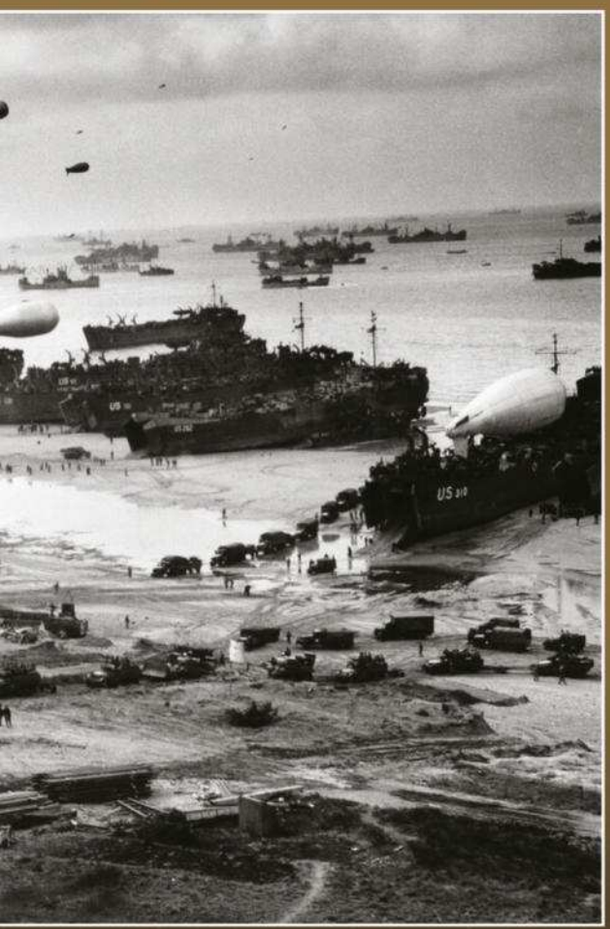




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STATE OF PLAY: 1945

THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC REACHES ITS BITTER, BLOODY CLIMAX AS THE AMERICANS UNLEASH HELL

The island road to Tokyo and Allied victory in World War II in the Pacific were in sight by 1945; however, war planners were under no illusions. The already bloody campaign across the vast ocean promised even greater casualties before its end. An invasion of Japan itself was a daunting prospect as well.

On 19 February, US Marines stormed ashore on Iwo Jima in the Volcano Islands, around 1,200 kilometres from Tokyo. The ensuing battle for the island, itself only 20 square kilometres, lasted 36 agonising days. The defenders fought to the death and were instructed to kill ten Americans each before then sacrificing themselves for the emperor. In the Philippines, the capital of Manila was liberated by American troops in March after a month of bloody fighting. Japanese troops defending the city committed numerous atrocities against the civilian population as discipline disintegrated.

Marines and Army troops landed on Okinawa, just 545 kilometres from the Home Islands, on 1 April, and though resistance was light at first the Japanese had fortified the southern portion of the island and conducted a resolute defence that consumed thousands of lives during 82 days of combat. At the same time, the US Navy remained on station, braving an onslaught of kamikaze suicide attacks from enemy aircraft.

Meanwhile, at Alamogordo, New Mexico, the first successful test detonation of a nuclear weapon occurred on 16 July. Weeks later, atomic bombs devastated the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On 2 September, Japan formally surrendered during ceremonies in Tokyo Bay.





DOOMSDAY COMES TO JAPAN

On 6 and 9 August, Boeing B-29 Superfortress bombers based in the Marianas drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, devastating the Japanese cities and inflicting thousands of casualties. Although a militarist faction attempts to block the broadcast, within days Emperor Hirohito addresses his people. They hear the "voice of the crane" for the first time, informing them of the nation's surrender.



SURRENDER IN TOKYO BAY

On 2 September, representatives of the Allied nations gather in Tokyo Bay as representatives of the Japanese government board the battleship USS Missouri and sign the instrument of surrender, formally ending World War II in the Pacific. To pay tribute to the armed forces equally, Army General Douglas MacArthur presides, while the ceremonies take place aboard a US Navy warship.



THE SUMMIT OF SURIBACHI

With Japanese soldiers ensconced in caves and a labyrinth of honeycombed tunnels and bunkers, US Marines secure the island of Iwo Jima on 26 March at a cost of 6,800 killed in action. A Marine patrol ascends 170-metre Mount Suribachi, raising the US flag on the summit. The moment is captured in one of the most iconic photographs of World War II.



Bluffer's Guide
THE FIREBOMBING OF TOKYO

TOKYO, JAPAN 9-10 MARCH 1945

TIMELINE

18 APRIL 1942



Three years before Operation Meetinghouse, the Doolittle Raid is another bombing mission on Tokyo that is sanctioned in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor.

24-25 FEBRUARY 1945



The port of Tokyo and some areas of the city are bombarded with around three square kilometres of the city and 28,000 buildings levelled as a result.

4 MARCH 1945



The Japanese capital once again comes under attack as 159 B-29s release a barrage of white phosphorous and napalm.

9-10 MARCH 1945



A reported payload of 1,655 incendiaries is dropped on Tokyo. A huge firestorm breaks out and by the end of the war, 51 per cent of the city is destroyed.



WHAT WAS IT?

The firebombing of Tokyo was a US bombing raid on the capital of Imperial Japan. The devastation caused by the bombardment was the deadliest of the whole of World War II with at least 80,000 people perishing. The aircraft tasked with the mission was the Boeing B-29 Superfortress and 279 were unleashed during the night of 9 March and the early hours of 10 March. The attack runs were flown at a low altitude under the cover of darkness to increase both accuracy and potency.

Many of the city's houses were wooden so the explosions caused a raging inferno that leapt from house to house. After the three-hour barrage had long finished, strong winds fanned the flames causing people to be either burnt alive or suffocate in the smoke. The crews of the bombers could smell the stench of burning flesh from their position more than 1,500 metres above the ground as 44 square kilometres of the city was ravaged. Just a few months later, another B-29, Enola Gay, would take to the skies with an atomic cargo destined for Hiroshima.

WHY DID IT HAPPEN?

The US Airforce had only recently developed the capacity to strike Japanese cities on the island of Honshu. This was down to the introduction of the B-29, a formidable long-range bomber that was capable of reaching Japanese cities from US airfields in the Mariana Islands in the North Pacific Ocean.

The firebombing of Tokyo, codenamed Operation Meetinghouse, was a critically important turning point in the war in the Pacific. Its undertaking, like the atomic bombs that would follow it, was motivated by the Allied desire to bring Imperial Japan to its knees as swiftly as possible through huge shock attacks. On a windy, dry night in March, it was the perfect opportunity to start the fire. With Tokyo and the Japanese military hierarchy, not to mention the civilian population, reeling from the attack, the land occupation of the Axis power could begin, with five months of fighting left before V-J Day.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?



Curtis LeMay

1906-1990

Major General LeMay planned the raid and is reported to have said, "Killing Japanese didn't bother me very much at that time. It was getting the war over that bothered me."



General of the Army and Air Force Henry Harley Arnold

1886-1950

Concerned that the Pacific Campaign was stalling, 'Hap' Arnold encouraged the introduction of incendiary bombing on Japanese targets.



Emperor Hirohito

1901-1989

The emperor of Japan was more of a figurehead during the war than an active commander but he still made sure to walk through the rubble after the attack.

2 APRIL 1945



Bomber Command turns its attention to factories as the Nakajima aircraft factory faces the fury of more than 100 B-29s.

3 APRIL - 10 AUGUST



For four months, Tokyo sustains numerous raids with industrial areas, military targets, urban centres and the Imperial Palace all targeted.

©Alamy



OPPOSING FORCES

LEADER: Major General Simon Bolivar Buckner Jr	VS	**LEADER:** Lieutenant General Mitsuru Ushijima
INFANTRY: 180,000		**INFANTRY: 110,000**
ARTILLERY: 2,000		**ARTILLERY: 1,700**
TANKS: 350		**TANKS: 27**
AIRCRAFT: 3,500		**AIRCRAFT: 5,000**
SHIPS: 1,300		**SHIPS: 20**



A US Marine charges through Japanese machine gun fire on Okinawa

FIRESTORM AT OKINAWA

THE LAST CAMPAIGN OF WORLD WAR II IN THE PACIFIC REQUIRED AN ARDUOUS 82 DAYS FOR THE ALLIES TO CLAIM VICTORY

OKINAWA, RYUKYU ISLANDS 1 APRIL – 22 JUNE 1945

It was a curious coincidence – Operation Iceberg, the Allied invasion of Okinawa, was scheduled for 1 April 1945, both Easter Sunday and April Fool's Day. Short of an invasion of Japan itself, the island in the Ryukyu archipelago was the last objective of the Allied campaign across the Pacific Ocean during World War II. Only 547 kilometres from the Japanese Home Islands, Okinawa would provide the sternest test of the war for the Marine III Amphibious Corps and the US Army's XXIV Corps, comprising the Tenth Army under Lieutenant General Simon Bolivar Buckner, a veteran army officer and the son of a Confederate general from the American Civil War.

The invasion date was designated Love-Day (L-Day) to avoid confusion with the 1944 D-Day landings in France. Actually, the Allied build-up was larger than that of D-Day. The US and British Royal Navies brought 1,300 warships and support vessels along with 750,000 tons of supplies to the waters off Okinawa.

Buckner's Tenth Army included more than 180,000 troops. Marine Major General Roy S Geiger led the III Amphibious Corps, including three divisions – the veteran 1st Marine Division, nicknamed the Old Breed, the 6th, and the 2nd in reserve. Major General John R Hodge commanded the XXIV Army Corps, including four infantry divisions – the 7th, 77th, 96th and reserve 27th.

The recent carnage at Iwo Jima remained fresh in American minds and a bloodbath was also expected at Okinawa. During the week before L-Day, navy guns fired 13,000 shells and carrier-based aircraft flew 3,095 missions. The L-Day landings were to hit the Hagushi beaches on Okinawa's southwestern shore. After the anticipated fight to gain a foothold, the Americans intended to advance eastward across the Ishikawa Peninsula, seizing Yontan and Kadena airfields. Splitting the island in two, they would swing north and south, fighting their way to opposite shores, completing the conquest of Okinawa. Another worrisome aspect of Operation Iceberg was the kamikaze threat to the host of Fifth Fleet ships obliged to remain offshore. Japanese suicide planes were expected to assault these rich targets with unprecedented vigour.

82 days of fighting on Okinawa and the nearby cluster of small islands also seized yielded an immense harvest of destruction.

"THE RECENT CARNAGE AT IWO JIMA REMAINED FRESH IN AMERICAN MINDS AND A BLOODBATH WAS ALSO EXPECTED"



Marines of 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines manoeuvre at Wana Ridge. One fires his Thompson submachine gun; the other carries a Browning Automatic Rifle

By the time the island was declared secure on 22 June 1945, American deaths totalled 7,374, while 31,807 were wounded and 239 were missing. The navy suffered 4,907 casualties, 120 ships were damaged and 29 had been sunk. Marines and soldiers earned 23 Medals of Honor, many of them posthumous.

The Japanese garrison, under Lieutenant General Mitsuru Ushijima, commander of the 32nd Army, fielded over 100,000 troops – only 11,000 prisoners surrendered. A total of 2,373 Kamikaze pilots died and thousands of sailors perished in the Imperial Japanese Navy's last substantial offensive action of the war. Many died when the super battleship Yamato sank under a fusillade of bombs and aerial torpedoes. An estimated 150,000 Okinawan civilians lost their lives.

Under a canopy of aircraft and naval bombardment, the invasion rolled forward on the morning of 1 April, landing craft engines stirring white wakes extending 12 kilometres across. Virtually no resistance was encountered. By the end of L-Day, 60,000 American troops occupied a beachhead 4,600 metres deep and 14,000 metres wide. 28 men were killed, 104 wounded, and 27 missing.

Ushijima watched the awe-inspiring sight from his command post at Shuri Castle, the ancient abode of the kings who once ruled the Ryukyus, as the Americans put 16,000 troops ashore in an hour. A firm advocate of defence in depth, he conceded the beachhead and airfields to draw the Americans inland, where he would defend the island to the last man. His forces included the 9th, 24th and 62nd Divisions. Independent brigades and artillery, engineer and naval troops were also attached. For the death struggle, the Japanese constructed three defensive lines across southern Okinawa.

Early progress was swift. In four days, American troops took territory they thought would require three weeks of combat. Both airfields were captured on the first day. By 3 April, the 1st Marine Division crossed the Ishikawa Isthmus, captured the Katchin Peninsula and cut Okinawa in half. The airfields were quickly operational. Marine Air Groups 31 and 33 flew in from aircraft carriers and an Army Air Force fighter wing also arrived.

"GRABBING A THIRD RIFLE AND A CLUTCH OF GRENADES, HANSEN CHARGED FORWARD AGAIN, KILLING EIGHT ENEMY SOLDIERS AND SMASHING A MORTAR POSITION"

Soon enough, the Marines found stubborn resistance. Five battalions of the 4th and 29th Marines attacked 365-metre Mount Yae-Take and 2,000 enemy troops under Colonel Takesiko Udo. The Marines were stonewalled by enemy machine guns and mortars. The 14-inch guns of the battleship USS Tennessee barked, and Corsairs of Marine Fighter Squadron 322 (VMF-322) bombed and strafed. The Udo Force was slaughtered while the Marines took 964 casualties clearing the area.

The 7th and 96th Divisions hit the first defensive line on 19 April. The 27th Division was soon committed. Minimal gains could not be held and the attack faltered, meaning that Sherman tanks got separated from supporting infantry while advancing near Kakazu and enemy guns knocked out 22 of the 30 that were sent forward. On 23 April, Admiral Chester W Nimitz, commander in chief of the Pacific, arrived on Okinawa and voiced his concerns for the Fifth Fleet as kamikaze attacks intensified. Hammering Buckner to energise the offensive, Nimitz snarled that if Buckner was not up to the task, "We'll get someone here to move it… I'm losing a ship and a half each day out here."

Nimitz was blunt for a reason – Japanese Operation Ten-Go was unleashing 4,500 kamikazes against the Fifth Fleet, filling the skies with ten mass sorties nicknamed Kikusui, or Floating Chrysanthemums, each including 350 or more aircraft. The sailors of the Fifth Fleet endured, earning the nickname of 'the fleet that came to stay'. Two kamikazes ripped into the aircraft carrier USS Bunker Hill on 11 May, its 58th day on station.

American fighter pilots shot down scores of kamikazes. On 22 April, three Marine Corsairs of VMF-323 flamed 16 in 20 minutes. Nevertheless, some suicide planes got through. The stand of the Fifth Fleet (redesignated Third Fleet when Admiral William F 'Bull' Halsey relieved Admiral Raymond A Spruance on 27 May) wrote a stirring chapter in US naval history.

After three weeks of fighting, Ushijima pulled surviving defenders out of the first line, cloaked under steady rain and thick fog. In early May, the Tenth Army was poised to assault the second, or Shuri Line, four divisions abreast across a 8,200-metre front. On 2 May, the 1st Marine Division assaulted the Awacha Pocket. The 5th Marines advanced through a downpour but ran into enemy fire from concealed positions. It took a week to clear Awacha.

22-year-old Private Dale M Hansen of the 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines, lost his rifle as it was shattered by an enemy bullet during his single-handed destruction of a Japanese pillbox on 7 May. He picked up another weapon and ran up an adjacent ridge but six Japanese soldiers blocked his path. Hansen shot four – but then his rifle jammed. The two survivors pounced. Hansen swung the rifle's butt and



Torpedo bombers and fighters of the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm occupy the flight deck of the carrier HMS Implacable



The Japanese sometimes pressed teenagers and young boys into service. Here, an American soldier attempts to communicate with two of them

slipped away. Grabbing a third rifle and a clutch of grenades, Hansen charged forward again, killing eight enemy soldiers and smashing a mortar position. More Marines followed, claiming the ridgeline. Hansen was killed by a sniper four days later. On 30 May 1946, his parents accepted his posthumous Medal of Honor.

The 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, reached the top of Dakeshi Ridge twice on 11 May but was forced to retire. A day later, three Sherman tanks, two mounting flamethrowers, charged ahead of the riflemen spitting flame and machine-gun bullets and claimed the high ground. The Marines atop Dakeshi Ridge looked southward towards the rocky jumble of Wana Draw and nearby Wana Ridge. The 1st Marine Division flung itself against the outcroppings, cliffs and caves. Progress was measured in yards. Through 19 days of horror, Marine casualties averaged 200 for every 100-yard advance.

Marine and army tanks fired 5,000 75mm shells and 175,000 rounds of .30-calibre ammunition on 16 May alone. The 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines lost a dozen officers in four days. The 7th Marines took 700 casualties at Dakeshi Ridge and 500 more in five days at Wana Draw.

500 replacements reached the 1st Marines, which relieved the 7th Marines, and renewed the attacks on Wana Draw, 365 metres wide at its mouth but narrowing southward towards Shuri Ridge, funnelling Marines into interlocking fields of fire. By 20 May, the 5th Marines had taken Hill 55 west of Wana Draw but at the end of the month, the 1st Marine Division was bogged down one ridgeline short of Shuri.

Meanwhile, to the west, the 6th Marine Division crossed the Asa River on 10 May, advancing 900 metres in 36 hours. By 12 May, it had drawn up around a nondescript hill rising precipitously 70 metres. The riflemen nicknamed it Sugar Loaf.

Sugar Loaf was flanked by two more small hills dubbed Half Moon and Horseshoe. The Marines did not initially realise that the complex was the western command nexus of the Shuri Line. 2,000 Japanese soldiers defended Sugar Loaf and another 3,000 held Half Moon and Horseshoe.

The battle for the Sugar Loaf-Half Moon-Horseshoe triad extended for ten harrowing days. Captain Owen G Stebbins of Company G, 2nd Battalion, 22nd Marines, led his command towards Sugar Loaf. In seconds, two platoons were pinned under a torrent of enemy fire. Stebbins and executive officer Lieutenant Dale W Bair kept the third platoon moving. 28 of the 40 men were quickly killed or wounded.

Stebbins was hit in both of his legs. Bair was shot in the left arm but still he persevered, gathering 25 Marines and charging to Sugar Loaf's crest although he was ultimately unable to hold it. Five attempts had come up short. Just 75 of the original 200 Marines in Company G were unscathed.

After dark on 14 May, the 29th Marines reinforced the 22nd Marines. 44 men were marooned on Sugar Loaf's slope with at least 100 bodies lying around them. Major Henry A Courtney Jr, executive officer of the 2nd Battalion, 22nd Marines, decided that his men could not remain where they were but withdrawal would invite a hostile response. He reasoned that the best option was to attack so he roused Marines of Companies F and G and asked for volunteers. Courtney led all 44 Marines again to Sugar Loaf's crest. They held until after dark, when 15 survivors scrambled down. Courtney, however, died when a mortar fragment slashed his neck. He received a posthumous Medal of Honor.

Corporal James L Day's seven-man squad from Company F, 2nd Battalion, 22nd Marines, had followed Courtney up Sugar Loaf. Quickly, five men were shot. Day and Private Dale Bertoli were alone on the western slope. For four days and three nights the pair peppered rifle bullets and tossed grenades at the Japanese – Day was wounded and Bertoli was killed later. In 1984, Major General James L Day would return to Okinawa and take command of its Marine garrison. The 22nd Marines had lost 400 casualties, nearly half its number, in three days.

On 17 May, Company E, 2nd Battalion, 29th Marines, charged Sugar Loaf four times, losing 160 men but holding the hill for several hours before withdrawing at dusk. On 18 May, Company D, 2nd Battalion, 29th Marines, under Captain Howard L Mabie, assaulted Sugar Loaf while suppressing fire, keeping Japanese heads down on Half Moon and Horseshoe. Mabie's Marines skirted both flanks, negotiated minefields and emptied their weapons into clusters of Japanese soldiers emerging from bunkers on the reverse slope. Company D's grip on Sugar Loaf held.

The 4th Marines relieved the 29th and by 20 May, its 3rd Battalion controlled most of Horseshoe, while the 2nd Battalion held most of Half Moon. The 6th Marine Division had lost nearly 2,700 casualties fighting for Sugar Loaf.

While the Marines battled in the west, the 96th Division took Conical Hill and the 7th Division were able to secure Yonabaru. Ushijima's flanks were vulnerable and his positions at Shuri Ridge and Shuri Castle were untenable. He finally withdrew to the final line across the Kiyamu Peninsula under a cloak of steady rain and fog.

Foul weather slowed the American advance – nevertheless, 6th Marine Division tanks probed the village of Naha on 28 May. The next morning, Company A, 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, managed to reach the crest of Shuri Ridge without firing a shot, crossing into the 77th Division zone to occupy the much-coveted Shuri Castle.

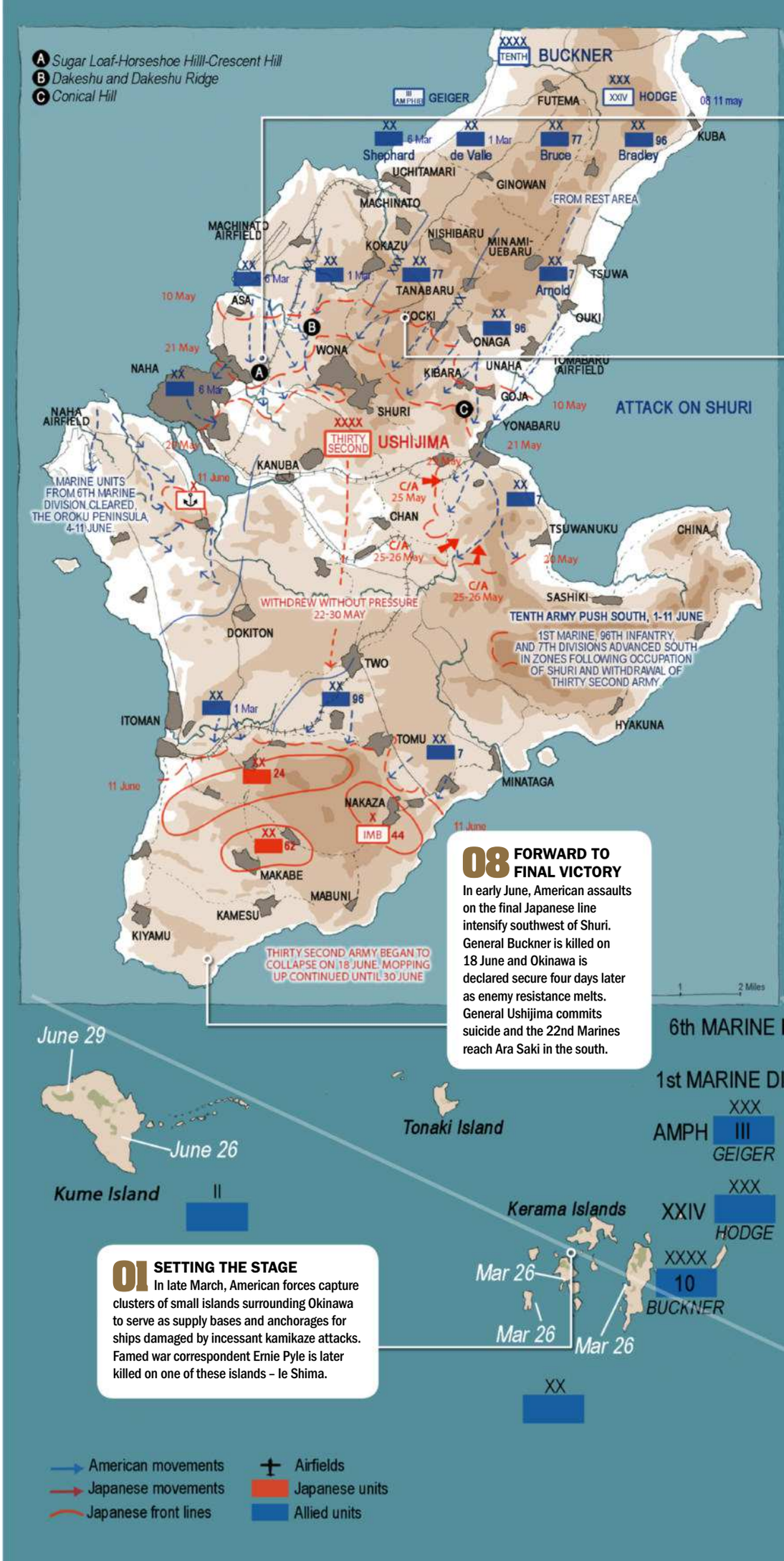
Ushijima's six-kilometre front then stretched across Kunishi Ridge in the west to Hill 89, the site of his last command post, and to Hill 95. Meanwhile, the 6th Marine Division secured the Oroku Peninsula and Naha Airfield in a joint land and amphibious craft assault, decimating 5,000 Japanese defenders under the command of Rear Admiral Minoru Ota.

The 7th Division's 32nd Regiment captured Hill 95 on 12 June, while the 17th Regiment took the eastern end of the Yuza Dake escarpment, unhinging Ushijima's right flank. The 96th Division claimed the rest of Yuza Dake the next day and the 1st Marine Division concurrently began its assault on the western anchor of the Japanese line. With Colonel Edward Snedeker's 7th Marines in the lead, initial assaults on Kunishi Ridge on 11 June were repulsed. Snedeker ordered a night attack and two Marine companies reached the crest near sunrise, mowing down surprised Japanese troops who were cooking breakfast and preparing for the day.

The Japanese mounted some heavy counterattacks. Three attempts to reinforce the Marines atop Kunishi Ridge were thwarted but the 1st, 5th and 7th Marines slowly made gains. In five days, the last heavily defended ridgeline on Okinawa was finally subdued. On 18 June, the 7th Marines finally trudged rearward to be relieved by the 8th Marines, 2nd Marine Division.

General Buckner climbed Mezado Ridge to observe the 8th's deployment. Five Japanese artillery shells crashed down, spraying rock and shrapnel – a splinter the size of a dime struck Buckner in the chest. One of the highest-ranking American officers killed in action in World War II, he died in ten minutes. General Roy Geiger handled the Tenth Army for five days until Army General Joseph Stilwell arrived to take over the command.

Geiger declared Okinawa secure on 22 June, while elements of the 7th Division took Hill 89, and the 77th Division captured Hill 85. That same day, as 7th Division troops neared the entrance to his headquarters in a cave on Hill 89, General Ushijima committed ritual suicide along with Rear Admiral Ota. The 6th Marine Division turned south from the Oroku Peninsula, occupying Ara Saki, Okinawa's southernmost point. Company G, 2nd Battalion, 22nd Marines, raised the Stars and Stripes. The great battle of Okinawa, the climax of the Pacific land campaign, was over. Until that time, suffering on such a scale had seemed impossible.



OKINAWA
1 APRIL - 22 JUNE 1945

06 SAVAGERY AT SUGAR LOAF
In late May, American forces finally capture the Sugar Loaf-Half Moon-Horseshoe complex of mutually supporting hills, significant progress against the Shuri Line. After losing nearly 3,000 men, the Americans compel the Japanese to abandon strong positions at Shuri Ridge and Shuri Castle.

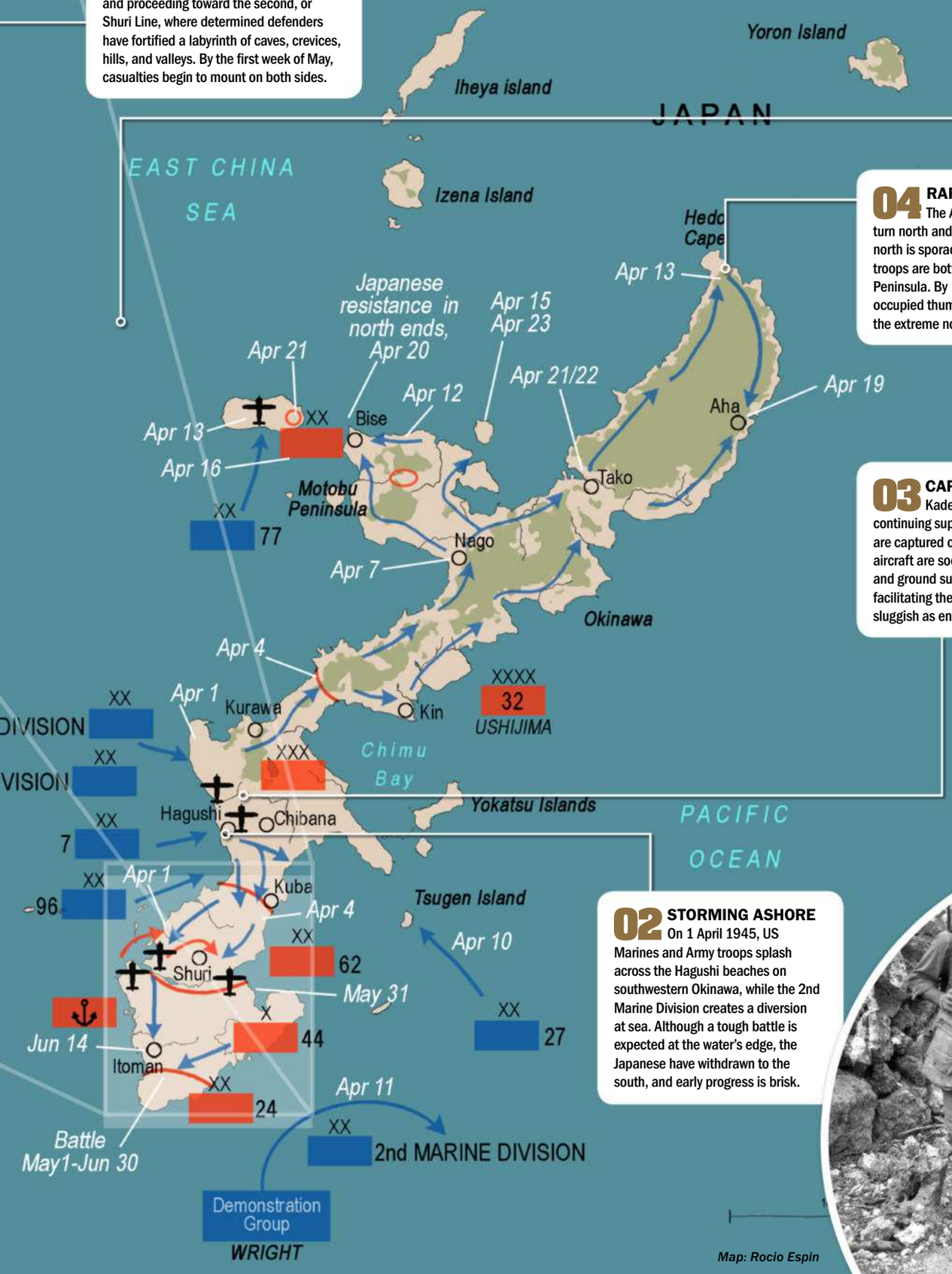
05 FIRST LINE BREACHED
For three weeks, the Americans batter the first of three Japanese defensive lines, finally forcing an enemy withdrawal and proceeding toward the second, or Shuri Line, where determined defenders have fortified a labyrinth of caves, crevices, hills, and valleys. By the first week of May, casualties begin to mount on both sides.

07 KAMIKAZE RAIN OF STEEL
For weeks, the US Navy's Fifth Fleet and British warships are subjected to Operation Ten-Go, an onslaught of Japanese suicide planes that ravages Allied ships, including picket line destroyers and aircraft carriers. More than 300 ships are damaged before Ten-Go blows itself out. The fleet remains on station.

04 RAPID RUN NORTHWARD
The Americans bisect Okinawa and then turn north and south. Japanese resistance in the north is sporadic and sacrificial, and many enemy troops are bottled up and annihilated in the Motobu Peninsula. By 13 April, the 22nd Marines have occupied thumb-shaped Hedo Misaki Peninsula at the extreme northern tip of the island.

03 CAPTURING KEY AIRFIELDS
Kadena and Yontan airfields, keys to continuing support of the American ground offensive, are captured on the first day. Marine, navy and army aircraft are soon flying combat air patrol, interdiction, and ground support missions from these airfields, facilitating the advance, which nevertheless grows sluggish as enemy resistance intensifies.

02 STORMING ASHORE
On 1 April 1945, US Marines and Army troops splash across the Hagushi beaches on southwestern Okinawa, while the 2nd Marine Division creates a diversion at sea. Although a tough battle is expected at the water's edge, the Japanese have withdrawn to the south, and early progress is brisk.



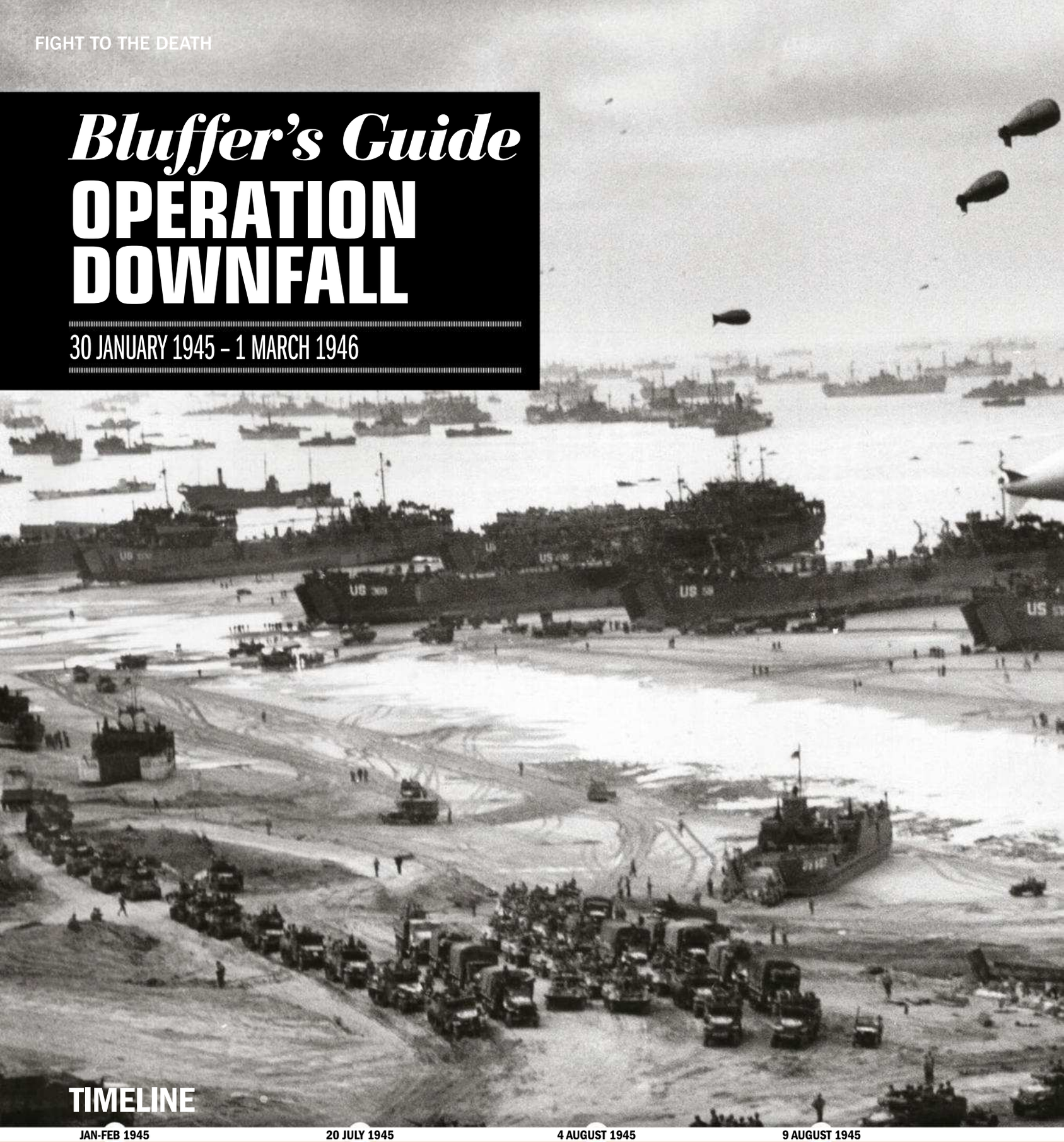
Map: Rocio Espin



A Marine glances briefly at the body of a dead Japanese soldier as he passes with comrades through a shattered Okinawan village

Bluffer's Guide
OPERATION DOWNFALL

30 JANUARY 1945 – 1 MARCH 1946



TIMELINE

JAN-FEB 1945



Franklin D Roosevelt and Winston Churchill meet at the Malta Conference and agree on the invasion of Japan under the codename Operation Downfall.

20 JULY 1945



A B-29 bomber fails to bomb Tokyo's imperial palace with a highly explosive non-nuclear pumpkin bomb created by the Manhattan Project.

4 AUGUST 1945



Douglas MacArthur declares that a mighty invasion force is being forged as the planned Allied invasion of Japan steps up a gear.

9 AUGUST 1945



The Soviet Union declares war on Japan and then begins their invasion of Manchuria just an hour later.



WHAT WAS IT?

Operation Downfall would have been the largest amphibious invasion in history. A dual assault on the Japanese islands of Honshu and Kyushu, it was intended to be a finishing blow that would bring the last remaining Axis power to its knees. Downfall was split into two separate operations, Olympic and Coronet. The former was planned to begin on what was known as 'X-Day'. A task force of more than 400 vessels including aircraft carriers, battleships and destroyers would escort 1.5 million soldiers, many of whom had been drafted in from the European theatre of the war, who were tasked with establishing strong defensive beachheads before moving further inland. Coronet would follow on 'Y-Day', with 25 divisions landing on beaches before advancing northwards to the strategically vital Kanto Plain, where half of all Japanese war industry and a quarter of the population was situated, and finally, Tokyo. This large-scale invasion was planned to be the final drive towards a Japanese surrender but it was shelved before it could even begin.

WHY DIDN'T IT HAPPEN?

A number of reasons led to Downfall being left on the planning table. The Allies had now been fighting through Southeast Asia for the best part of three years, and were battle-weary but still determined to put an end to the war as quickly and efficiently as possible. The beaches chosen for the invasion would have been tricky to traverse and the Japanese lay in wait within the terrain in a system of well-protected underground bunker networks, constructed under the codename Operation Ketsugo to provide hardened resistance. The complexity of Downfall and the cost of resources were also big issues and it was predicted that if it had gone ahead, the operation could have resulted in up to a million casualties. With these concerns too big to ignore, President Harry Truman deployed his trump card – something that would knock Japan out of the war – two atomic bombs.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?



Douglas MacArthur
1880-1964
Douglas MacArthur was a veteran of the Pacific War and one of the key figures in Operation Downfall's planning.



George C Marshall
1880-1959
As chief of staff, Marshall provided the military with the supplies and manpower it needed in the war against Japan.



Chester Nimitz
1885-1966
Nimitz had been in charge of the Pacific Fleet since Pearl Harbor and pioneered the US's island-hopping strategy.

1 NOV 1945



This would have been the scheduled start date of Operation Olympic; three months after the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

1 MARCH 1946



Almost six months after the war actually ended, this would have been the date that Operation Coronet would have been enacted had the invasion gone through.

BIRTH OF THE BOMB

THE DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF THE ATOMIC BOMB AGAINST JAPAN DURING WORLD WAR II CHANGED THE COURSE OF HUMAN HISTORY



They called it 'the gadget', but it was much more than the simple nickname implied. It was literally earthshaking. And when it was successfully deployed, the world had entered the Atomic Age.

The men who sought to develop the atomic bomb were perhaps the greatest assemblage of scientists, theoretical physicists, and mathematicians, many of them Nobel laureates, ever to collaborate, and in the midst of World War II they came together with a sense of urgency to complete the task. The idea of an atomic bomb had been around since the early 20th century, and in 1904 British scientists had concluded that such a weapon was possible with the release of radioactive energy.

Hungarian physicist Leo Szilard was convinced that the production of a sustainable nuclear chain reaction could produce immense destructive power. By late 1939, the world was at war. Britain and France battled Nazi Germany, and as Hitler's war machine engulfed Europe many of the continent's most eminent scientists had fled Germany and Nazi-occupied countries, either to avoid persecution for their Jewish faith or due to their opposition to the Nazi regime. Among these eminent scientists was Albert Einstein, a Jew who left Germany in 1933 and emigrated to the United States.

Szilard believed that German scientists were pursuing the development of an atomic bomb and with fellow physicists Eugene Wigner and Edward Teller called on Einstein, convincing him to join them in a letter to President Franklin D Roosevelt, warning of the unthinkable Nazi threat and urging the US government to take action to develop its own atomic bomb. The letter reached Roosevelt in October 1939, convincing him to create a Uranium Committee, initially to fund the research of Italian physicist Enrico Fermi, a refugee from the fascist regime of Benito Mussolini.

Fermi assembled a team of outstanding researchers at the University of Chicago intent on conducting the world's first nuclear chain reaction before the Germans did. On 2 December 1942, working within a modified squash court, Fermi's group succeeded. The event gave momentum to the Allied effort to develop the bomb. American scientists had visited Britain in 1941 and been impressed with nuclear research conducted there, and quickly the US government authorised the Manhattan Project, one of the costliest and most extensive initiatives undertaken during World War II. By June 1944, it employed 129,000 workers.

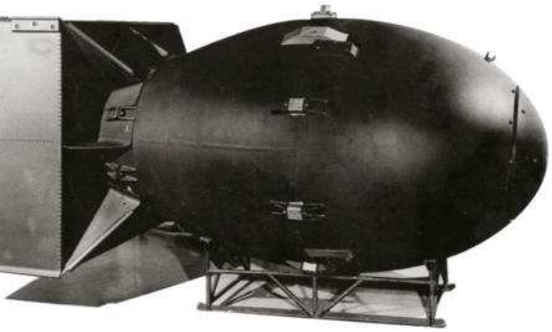
However, in the beginning the task of organising the endeavour seemed monumental. Research was being conducted all over the United States, and for efficiency alone it had to be concentrated. In September 1942, responsibility for the Manhattan Project was handed to the War Department, and Lieutenant Colonel Leslie R Groves was placed in command. Groves was highly driven and inspirational but lacked tact and at times did not relish his leading role in working with those he called a "collection of crackpots".

Major facilities were located at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, where the enrichment of uranium, the element most likely to produce a nuclear reaction, was to occur. At Hanford, Washington, an expansive production complex was built to produce plutonium. Early research had focused on the stable uranium isotope U-235;

"SZILARD AND OTHER LEADING PHYSICISTS SIGNED A LETTER TO PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D ROOSEVELT, WARNING OF THE UNTHINKABLE NAZI THREAT AND URGING THE US GOVERNMENT TO TAKE ACTION TO DEVELOP ITS OWN ATOMIC BOMB"



The mushroom cloud of the atomic bomb detonation on 9 August 1945, billows above the city of Nagasaki



■ *A mock-up of Fat Man, the implosion bomb that devastated Nagasaki, is shown in this rather sterile image*

"AFTER BEING SWORN IN, TRUMAN WAS FULLY BRIEFED ON THE PROGRESS TOWARD THE ATOMIC BOMB, AND THE DECISION WHETHER TO USE THE WEAPON FELL SQUARELY IN HIS LAP"

however, the rate of refining enough U-235 to build a bomb was agonisingly slow. While the enrichment process generated little U-235, an abundance of another isotope, stable U-238, which could not sustain a chain reaction, was also produced. The prospect of producing the radioactive element plutonium from U-238 seemed more expedient even though plutonium was unstable, bringing into question its use in an atomic weapon. Groves, who eventually rose to the rank of major general, chose to pursue both paths simultaneously and set a 36-month timetable for the successful development of an atomic bomb.

Concurrently, Groves gambled. He chose J Robert Oppenheimer, a theoretical physicist from the University of California, Berkeley, to lead the Manhattan Project's scientific team and immediately took criticism. Oppenheimer was not a Nobel Prize recipient. His work was in the realm of theory rather than practical, hands-on research. Further complicating the situation was the fact that the FBI considered his leaning to the political left a security risk and would not grant Oppenheimer clearance. Groves defied the FBI, pulled some strings, and put Oppenheimer in charge. As the head of the bomb team, he worked with such luminaries as Teller, Wigner, Fermi and renowned Danish physicist Niels Bohr. Groves also directed the construction of a laboratory facility to accommodate the researchers, providing work spaces and living quarters. The site chosen was at Los Alamos in the desert of New Mexico a short distance from the city of Santa Fe. The location was a closely guarded secret, and its only mailing address was Post Office Box #1663, Santa Fe. During the course of World War II, Los Alamos became home for scores of scientists and thousands of workers and support staff.

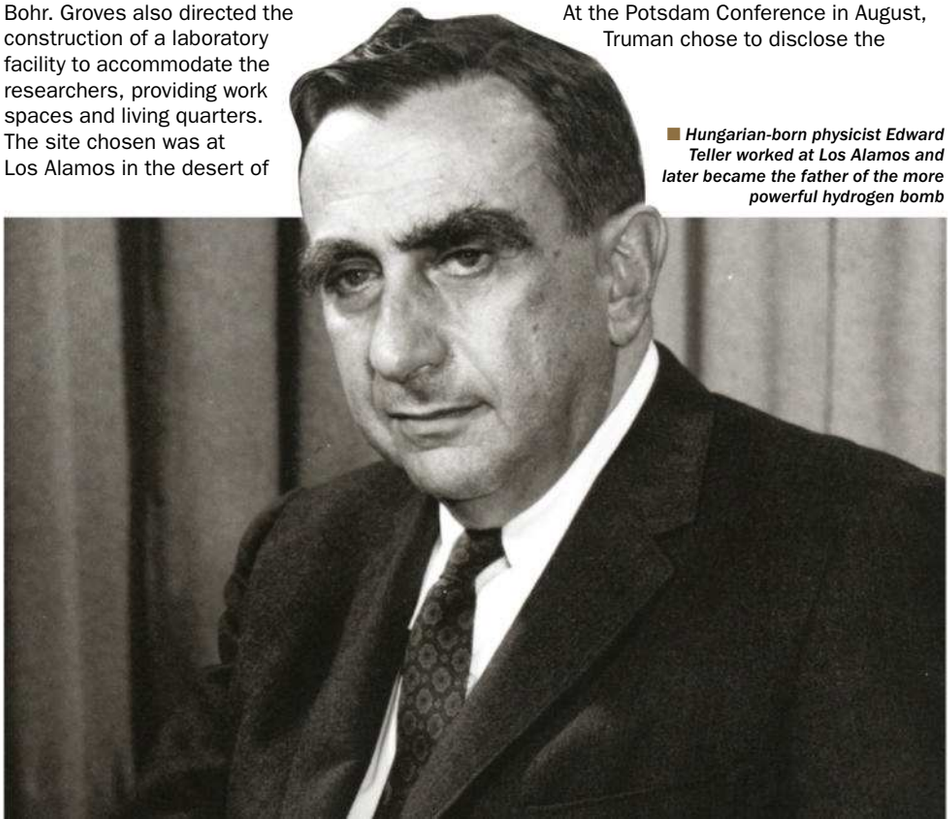
Fermi's success with a sustained chain reaction achieved through nuclear fission had proven that it was possible to develop a nuclear weapon. The task of the Manhattan Project scientists became the methodology to maintain the nuclear material in a stable form until the weapon reached the predetermined point of detonation. The scientists eventually resolved the issue with two options. The first, or gun-type bomb, involved two separate masses of nuclear substance, one of them being fired into the other to achieve a detonation. The second required the placement of plutonium between two quantities of conventional explosives. The ignition of the conventional charges would cause the plutonium to collapse and then expand, generating a massive detonation. This was referred to as an 'implosion type' bomb.

The Manhattan Project was so secretive that President Roosevelt chose not to inform Vice President John Nance Garner, of its existence. When Roosevelt was elected to an unprecedented fourth term in office in November 1944, he again chose not to divulge any information on the Manhattan Project to his new vice president, Harry Truman, who only learned of its existence after Roosevelt died of a cerebral haemorrhage on 12 April 1945. After being sworn in as president, Truman was fully briefed on the progress toward the atomic bomb on 24 April 1945, and the decision whether to use the weapon against Japan fell squarely in his lap.

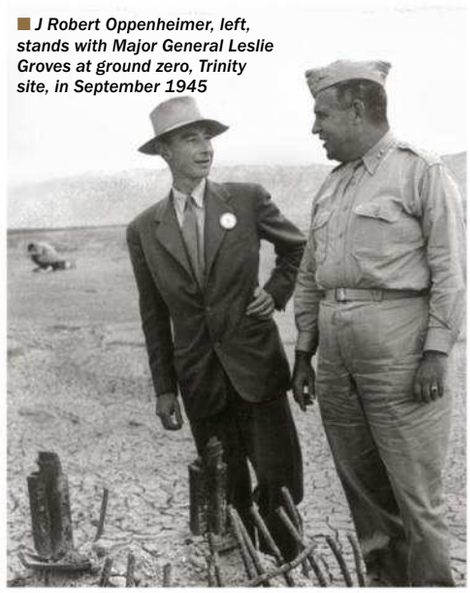
At the Potsdam Conference in August, Truman chose to disclose the existence of the atomic bomb to Soviet leader Joseph Stalin. "On July 24, I casually mentioned to Stalin that we had a new weapon of unusual destructive force," Truman wrote in his 1955 book *1945: Year of Decisions*. "The Russian premier showed no special interest. All he said was he was glad to hear it and hoped we would make good 'use of it against the Japanese'." Evidence indicates that Stalin already had some idea that the United States was close to achieving a viable nuclear weapon.

Eight days before his disclosure to Stalin, President Truman had been informed of the successful test detonation of the world's first atomic bomb, codenamed Trinity. On 16 July 1945, senior military officers, distinguished guests, and many of the scientists who had laboured for more than two years gathered at Alamogordo in the Jornada del Muerto Desert of New Mexico, 56 kilometres from the town of Socorro. Jornada del Muerto, incidentally, translates loosely from the historical Spanish as 'journey of the dead man'.

The dignitaries were herded into reinforced concrete and steel bunkers 9,100 metres away from the place where the bomb was suspended from the top of a 30-metre steel tower. At 5.29am, the detonation was triggered. A brilliant glow lit the sky in a radius of 32 kilometres. An enormous fireball erupted, and smoke billowed to an altitude of 3,000 metres. The light from the explosion was visible more than 160 kilometres away, and in the town of Gallup, New Mexico, 380 kilometres distant, windows were shattered. Eventually, the ensuing radioactive cloud towered to 12,500 metres above the desert floor. When Oppenheimer witnessed the awesome sight, he murmured a verse from the Bhagavad Gita, the holy scripture of the Hindu faith. "Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds."



■ *Hungarian-born physicist Edward Teller worked at Los Alamos and later became the father of the more powerful hydrogen bomb*



■ *J Robert Oppenheimer, left, stands with Major General Leslie Groves at ground zero, Trinity site, in September 1945*



The detonation of the atomic bomb at the Trinity site in New Mexico emits a red-orange glow on 16 July 1945



Female workers at the Y-12 uranium enrichment facility in Tennessee



The sprawling K-25 plant in Oak Ridge, Tennessee



Physicist, 1935 Nobel Prize recipient, and leader of the British mission to Los Alamos, James Chadwick, left, confers with General Leslie Groves

On 31 July 1945, President Truman gave Secretary of War Henry L Stimson a handwritten note that was authorising the use of the atomic bomb against Japan no sooner than 2 August.

General Groves was also responsible for the delivery of the atomic bomb, and on 17 December 1944, the 509th Bombardment Group (Composite) was formed at Wendover Field in Utah, to train for the sole purpose of dropping the new weapon on any chosen location. Colonel Paul W Tibbets, a 29-year-old veteran pilot who had earlier participated in the first American bombing raid against Nazi-occupied Europe, assumed command, and the aviators trained without specific knowledge of their highly classified mission. Although the British Avro Lancaster heavy bomber had already carried conventional bombs that were similar in size to the nuclear devices, the Americans wanted an American plane for the purpose, and the Boeing B-29 Superfortress was chosen and modified to accommodate the atomic bomb.

Four Japanese cities, Kokura, Kyoto, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, had sustained little damage from earlier American air raids. These were initially chosen as potential targets for the first of two potential missions. Kyoto was subsequently removed from the list because it was home to several sacred religious shrines, and the decision was made to drop the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, a manufacturing centre of around 350,000 people. Hiroshima was selected as a location by the American government because of a significant military installation in the city, the presence of a T-shaped bridge that would present a good target for a B-29 bombardier, and the fact that there were no major Allied prisoner-of-war camps known to be in the area.

During the days leading up to the Hiroshima mission, American planes dropped thousands of leaflets warning the residents to evacuate the city.

On the morning of 6 August 1945, Tibbets revved the four engines of his B-29, named Enola Gay after his mother, as it sat on the runway on the island of Tinian in the Marianas, 2,530 kilometres from the target. Enola Gay then roared down the airstrip, straining with the burden of its nuclear payload, and powered into the morning sky. The atomic bomb aboard was nicknamed Little Boy, a gun type weapon.

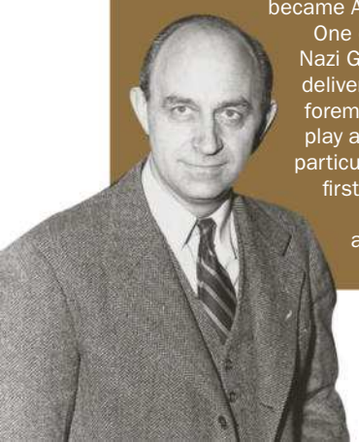
At 8.15am local time, Enola Gay's bomb bay opened, and the bombardier released Little Boy, which plummeted earthward and detonated at 580 metres above Shima Hospital in the centre of Hiroshima. In a blinding flash, the bomb delivered a nuclear payload equal to 12,500 tons of TNT.

THE FERMI FAMILY FLEES

Anti-Jewish laws in Fascist Italy compelled Enrico Fermi and his family to emigrate to America

When the Italian fascist government of Benito Mussolini began enacting a series of laws intended to persecute, intimidate and control virtually every aspect of the lives of Italian Jews, one of those caught in the clutches was Laura Capon Fermi, wife of noted physicist Enrico Fermi.

Born in Italy on 29 September 1901, Fermi had already emerged on the world stage as both a theoretical and experimental physicist. He came to prominence during the 1920s and received the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1938 for proving that newly discovered radioactive elements could be produced through neutron irradiation and the revelations related to nuclear reactions precipitated by slow neutrons. In the same year that he received the Nobel Prize, Fermi was forced to make a life-changing and history-altering decision. The family had to get out of Italy and travelled to Stockholm, Sweden, in December 1938, to receive the Nobel Prize just as the Italian government was implementing the odious new racial laws. When the ceremonies concluded, they did not return to Italy. Instead, they sailed to New York City, arriving on 2 January 1939. They applied for permanent residency and became American citizens.



One of the unintended consequences of the racial laws enacted in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy against Jews and other ethnicities was to deliver into the hands of the United States the services of several of the foremost living scientists in the study of nuclear energy. Fermi went on to play a critical role at Los Alamos in the development of the atomic bomb, particularly as his team at the University of Chicago unleashed the world's first sustained nuclear chain reaction in December 1942.

Described as the father of both the atomic bomb and the nuclear age, Fermi died of stomach cancer in Chicago at the age of 53 on 28 November 1954.

Instantly, a white mushroom cloud rose above the stricken city. Scarcely a second elapsed before ten square kilometres of Hiroshima were levelled and 80,000 people were killed, vaporised where they stood or consumed in the searing heat that reached 300,000 degrees Celsius. Some left their shadows on the pavements as the detonation created a sort of macabre photographic process. Sometime later, radioactive black rain began pelting down on the scene of utter destruction.

Aboard Enola Gay, the Americans were awed. Initial cheers gave way to an eerie silence. Co-pilot Captain Robert A Lewis exclaimed, "My God, what have we done?" Postwar casualty estimates in Hiroshima topped 140,000, many of the dead having suffered from radiation poisoning after the blast.

Three days later, on 9 August, Major Charles W Sweeney piloted another B-29, Bock's Car, carrying the implosion bomb nicknamed Fat Man, and flying from Tinian at 3.47am. The primary target, Kokura, was obscured by clouds, and the alternate target, Nagasaki, an industrial centre and producer of munitions for the Japanese military, suffered severe damage. At 11.02am, after a 43-second freefall, Fat Man exploded at an altitude of 500 metres, three kilometres from its intended detonation point. Still, the result was horrifying as roughly 40,000 people perished in smoke, fire and heat. Another 40,000 died from radiation sickness in the aftermath.

Within days of the bombing of Nagasaki, Japan had surrendered to the United States. Theory, conjecture, protest and sorrow have followed in the wake of the atomic bomb and the atrocities caused by it. A nuclear arms race and an era of uncertainty have haunted mankind ever since. But ultimately, the gadget had served its purpose.

OPPENHEIMER AND OPINION

Dogged by accusations of communist leanings, J Robert Oppenheimer remained equal to the Los Alamos task

J Robert Oppenheimer's wife and brother-in-law were members of the Communist Party at one time or another. However, the leader of the scientific team that developed the atomic bomb may never have officially joined himself. Like many other socially aware individuals during the 1930s, he did offer financial support to liberal endeavours. He also hosted fundraising events for Republican forces in the Spanish Civil War.

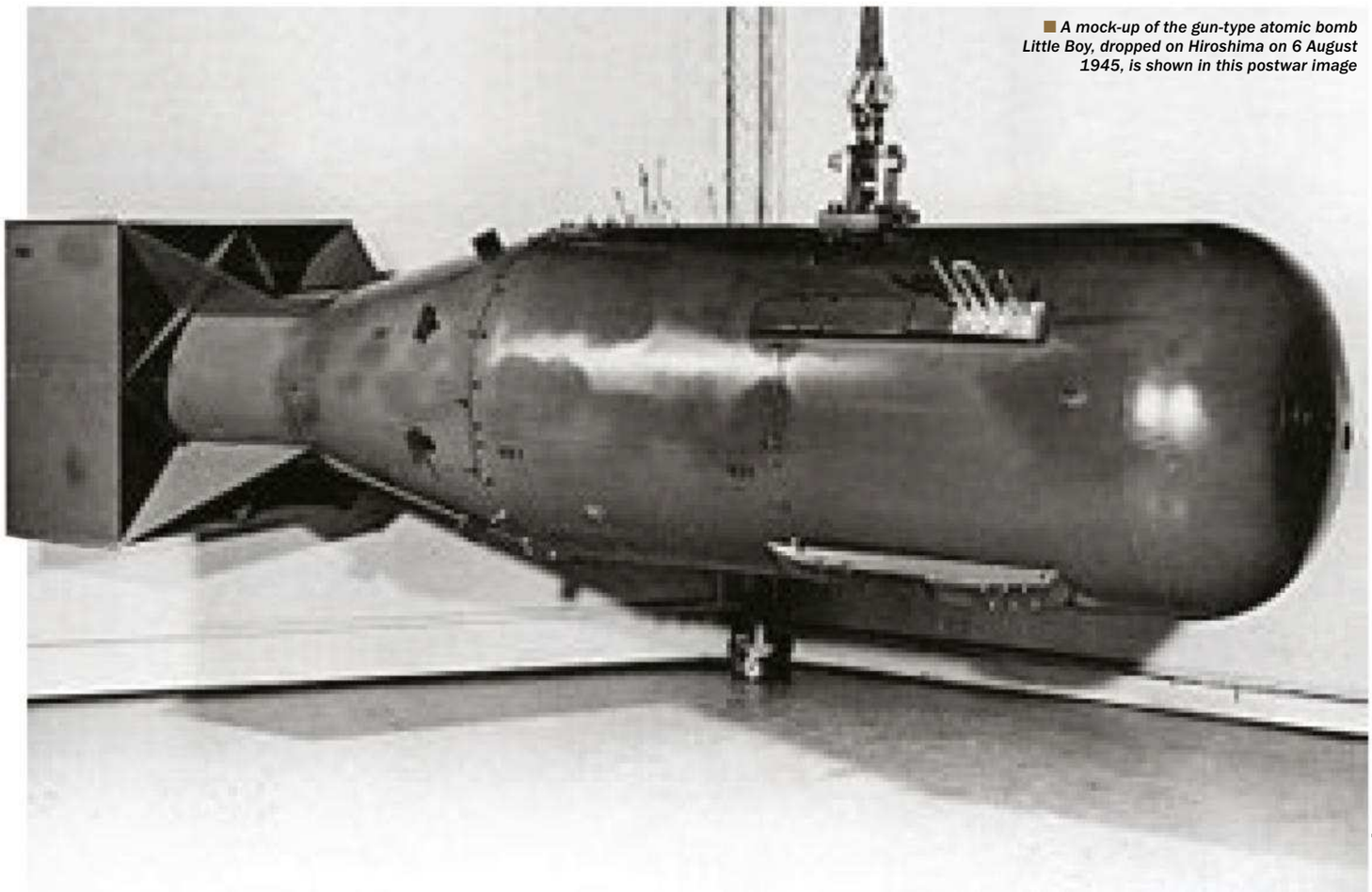
Oppenheimer soon came under the watchful eye of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and was labelled a left-wing sympathiser. In 1936, he was romantically involved with Jean Tatlock, a Stanford University medical student who wrote for a communist party affiliated newspaper, The Western Worker. He continued his affair with her after his marriage to Kathryn Peuning Harrison in November 1940, and when he completed a personal security questionnaire for the Manhattan Project in 1942, he wrote that he had been associated with "…just about every Communist Front organisation on the West Coast".

Years later Oppenheimer claimed he did not remember writing the answer, denied the remark, and also noted that it was merely a "half-jocular overstatement".

During the 1950s, Oppenheimer suffered repercussions for his left-wing political stance. He served as chairman of the General Advisory Committee of the Atomic Energy Commission; however, his opinions rankled powerful politicians, and his security clearance was revoked in 1954 following a highly publicised hearing. Although he continued to teach, write and lecture, his political influence waned. In 1963, President John F Kennedy brought Oppenheimer back into a positive perspective, designating him to receive the prestigious Enrico Fermi Award in acknowledgment of his scientific achievements. After Kennedy's assassination, President Lyndon B Johnson presented the award.



A heavy smoker, Oppenheimer was diagnosed with throat cancer in 1965 and died at his New Jersey home on 18 February 1967, at the age of 62.



A mock-up of the gun-type atomic bomb Little Boy, dropped on Hiroshima on 6 August 1945, is shown in this postwar image

END OF EMPIRE

THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC CAME TO AN END AMIDST APOCALYPTIC BOMBING RAIDS AND SAW THE DAWN OF THE NUCLEAR AGE

By August 1945, Imperial Japan stood on the brink of annihilation. American bombers roamed at will over the country, dropping incendiary bombs in massive fire raids that burned its cities to the ground and killed hundreds of thousands of civilians. On the night of 9-10 March, Tokyo itself had been levelled in an attack that had left 100,000 dead. At sea, the Japanese merchant marine had been sunk by US submarines. Imports of food and fuel were next to impossible to bring to the Home Islands. American aircraft carriers ventured unchallenged into Japanese waters, carrying out raids against scarcely defended targets. Even the terrifying and devastating kamikazes, the suicide aircraft flown by doomed pilots, had failed to stem the US advance.

In the Potsdam Declaration of 26 July 1945, the United States, Great Britain and China had called upon Japan to surrender unconditionally. Further, they insisted that Japan was to evacuate all of its overseas territories, disband its military forces, and relinquish its ability to wage aggressive war. The future status of the emperor was left really vague, though the Japanese people were promised the right to choose their own government.

Japanese leadership showed no sign that it was willing to agree to these conditions. When Prime Minister Kantaro Suzuki dismissed the Declaration, the Truman administration saw this as a rejection of the Potsdam peace offer. The war continued, but despite their many military successes, American planners were loath to undertake an invasion of Japan. They had witnessed with horror the recent bloodbaths at Iwo Jima and Okinawa, in which the stranded Japanese garrisons had fought to the death, and foresaw much worse if American forces invaded the Home Islands.

US planners considered alternatives. Some favoured blockade and bombardment of Japan. The US Navy would continue to strangle Japan's maritime lifeline while the heavy B-29 bombers of Major General Curtis LeMay's US Twentieth Air Force, flying out of bases on the islands of Saipan, Tinian and Guam, pulverised it from the air. Eventually, the Japanese would be starved into submission.

But would that be enough? Even if the Home Islands could be overcome, control of Japan did not guarantee that Japanese forces elsewhere, in China and Southeast Asia, would also give up. The US might face an interminable series of struggles against enemy troops willing to fight to the death. The prospect of Japan fighting on had caused American leaders to ensure that the Soviet Union would enter the war against it after the defeat of Nazi Germany. At the Yalta Conference in February 1945, the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin had agreed to go to invade the Japanese-occupied Manchuria within a few months of the end of World War II in Europe.

In the meanwhile, planning for an outright invasion of the Japanese Home Islands, Operation Downfall, continued despite American reluctance. By the spring of 1945, the first part of Downfall, Operation Olympic, the landing to be staged on the southern island of Kyushu, had been set for 1 November 1945. General Douglas MacArthur, legendary hero of the Pacific War, was to oversee this massive amphibious operation. If Olympic failed to secure a Japanese surrender, it was to be followed by Operation Coronet, the invasion of the main Japanese island of Honshu, not far distant from Tokyo, on 1 March 1946.

US war planners anticipated ghastly casualties. Though American invasion forces would enjoy overwhelming material advantages and air superiority, Japanese resistance was expected to be suicidally ferocious. The Americans had experienced such fanaticism first-hand at Okinawa, and the fighting in the Home Islands was expected to be of the same intensity, but on a vastly larger scale. The Japanese garrison there had died fighting, almost to a man. At sea, kamikaze suicide pilots had taken a frightening toll off Okinawa, sinking arouonund 50 warships and damaging 100 others so badly that they had to be withdrawn from service for repair. The seas around Japan promised to see the kamikazes unleashed in even greater numbers. In addition to the Japanese Army, it was presumed that the Japanese civilian population too was going to join in the defence of their nation.

Operation Olympic alone was estimated to see over a quarter of a million Americans killed and wounded, and that was before the invasion of Honshu had been undertaken with Coronet. To complete the conquest of the whole of Japan might cost the Americans 400,000-800,000 deaths and around 1.6 million casualties.

Then there was the atomic bomb. The Manhattan Project had developed, at enormous cost in money, some $2 billion, a working device that had been successfully tested that July near Alamogordo, New Mexico. By early August 1945, the bombs were in the Pacific, ready to be used.

In hindsight, the appeal of the atomic bombs to American leaders is obvious. Here were weapons that could potentially end the war at a stroke and obviate the need for a hideously bloody invasion of Japan. Though US leadership was never unanimous in agreeing in the need to use the bombs, on 2 August President Harry S Truman approved their use because Japan had





The Japanese battleship Haruna was sunk by carrier plane attacks on 28 July 1945

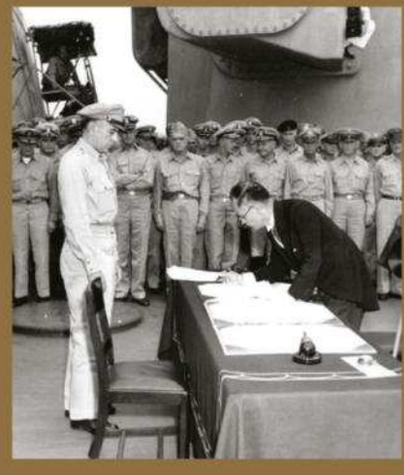
SURRENDER ON THE MISSOURI

World War II came to an end in Tokyo Bay on the deck of the battleship USS Missouri

It was just before 9.00am on the morning of 2 September 1945, and the representatives of Imperial Japan had come aboard the massive battleship, USS Missouri, anchored in Tokyo Bay, to formally sign the surrender documents and bring the war to an end. US General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, presided over the ceremony. With him were representatives of nine other Allied nations. At his side stood US Lieutenant General Jonathan Wainwright, who had been captured at the fall of the Philippines in early 1942 and had suffered for years in captivity. Also with him was Lieutenant General Sir Arthur Percival, the British commander defeated in Malaya and at Singapore. He too had endured years of captivity as a prisoner of war of Imperial Japan.

MacArthur opened the ceremony. “We are gathered here”, he began, “to conclude a solemn agreement by which peace may be restored”. He next invited the Japanese representatives to come forward and sign the Instrument of Surrender. The first to sign for Japan was Foreign Affairs Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu, who even wore a top hat for the occasion. He was then followed by Chief of the Imperial Army General Staff, General Yoshijiro Umezu.

MacArthur signed on behalf of the Allied powers as a group. US Navy Admiral Chester Nimitz signed on behalf of the United States. They were followed by the individual representatives of each of the other Allied nations. Above, at 9.25am, there came a thunderous noise as 400 B-29 bombers and 1,500 carrier planes soared majestically through the sky in celebration. “Let us pray”, MacArthur said in concluding the ceremony, “that peace be now restored to the world and that God will preserve it always. These proceedings are closed.”





Accused Japanese war criminals go on trial at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East

refused to agree to the terms of the Potsdam Declaration. At this time, the Japanese government was still dominated by those who refused to consider unconditional surrender, despite crushing US military superiority.

The first atomic bomb was dropped on the city of Hiroshima on 6 August. In explosive power, the single bomb was equivalent to about 20,000 tons of TNT, and left tens of thousands dead and tens of thousands more wounded. A second atomic bomb was dropped on the city of Nagasaki on 9 August. Coupled with the Soviet invasion of Manchuria on 9 August, the naval blockade, and the nonstop conventional bombing raids, Japan stood on the brink of an abyss.

Despite the destruction caused by the bombs and the collapse of the position in Manchuria, many Japanese military leaders still refused to countenance any thought of surrender. Some feared coups by their own junior officers if they dared to support peace. On 10 August, the Japanese government accepted the Potsdam Declaration with an important condition: Emperor Hirohito, considered divine by his subjects, was to retain his position as sovereign ruler of Japan. The Americans countered with a diplomatic note insisting that Hirohito and Japan's government be "subject to the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers" and that the future form of government of Japan would be determined by the "freely expressed will of the Japanese people".

"JAPAN FORMALLY SURRENDERED ON 2 SEPTEMBER 1945 ON THE DECK OF THE US BATTLESHIP MISSOURI, BRINGING TO A CLOSE THE BLOODIEST WAR IN HUMAN HISTORY"

This note still left the emperor's status unclear, and for some diehards, was therefore utterly unacceptable. In an attempt to force the Japanese government's hand, American bombers began dropping leaflets written in Japanese informing the people that their government had agreed, at least in part, to the Potsdam Declaration. The man whose opinion mattered most, however, was Emperor Hirohito himself, and he favoured accepting the American peace offer. On 12 August, he held a conference with 13 princes of the imperial family and secured their support. He believed the Americans, he told them, when they said that the Japanese would be able to select their own government.

The next day there were meetings with senior government and military officials, but their discussions were stalemated between those who wanted an immediate end to the war and those who wished to fight on. Hirohito convened another meeting, on 14 August, at which he made it plain that Japan could not keep fighting. It was evident to those present that, with the advent of the atomic bombs, there was no chance at all that Japan might fight a successful battle on its own soil. The war was lost. The emperor also expressed confidence

that the Allies would not destroy Japan's national identity. Some of those present cried openly. An Imperial Rescript was composed accepting surrender.

There were still some who would not accept even the emperor's own decision. Over the night of 14-15 August, a coup led by a pair of junior military officers was mounted, in which the Imperial Palace was to be seized, the emperor's person secured, and a new government established so as to thwart the surrender. The emperor by this time had already recorded his Imperial Rescript concerning the submission, and the coup plotters thought to prevent this recording from ever being aired. This dangerous but ultimately quixotic mission was soon squelched and the plotters committed suicide.

At noon the next day, 15 August, radios around Japan broadcast his speech announcing Japan's surrender. For many Japanese, this was the first time they had ever heard the emperor's voice. "The war situation," he said in the Imperial Rescript, had "developed not necessarily to Japan's advantage" and the enemy, had made use of "a new most cruel bomb". Japan, he informed his subjects, was accepting the Potsdam Declaration. This was being done to avoid the "ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation" as well as the "total extinction of human civilisation", he declared.

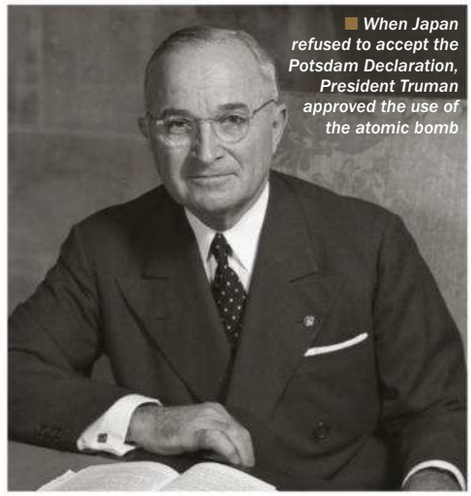
In response to this broadcast, the United States stopped all further military operations against the Japanese. There were a number of suicides soon after by Japanese leaders who were unwilling to live in this new world of defeat and disgrace, but they were ultimately unable to block the capitulation.



Emperor Hirohito played the crucial role in compelling Japan to surrender. After the war, US General Douglas MacArthur presided over the occupation of that country

Though the Americans never stated outright that Hirohito would keep his throne, the emperor was to be kept in place. It came down to a matter of pragmatism. The Japanese military in the Home Islands numbered around 3.5 million, and there were about as many still serving elsewhere. Not all of them would be certain to accept a surrender without a fight, and that might mean more American dead. Also, pacifying Japan by force would potentially wreck the already severely damaged country further, and that would entail a much more costly and lengthy period of reconstruction after the end of tensions.

Japan formally surrendered on 2 September 1945 on the deck of the US battleship Missouri, bringing to a close the bloodiest war in human history. Its military forces at home and abroad were disarmed by the victorious Allies. Japan was shorn of its empire, and occupied by American troops under the commander of General Douglas MacArthur. War crime trials of 28 military and civilian leaders were subsequently held in Tokyo, and several were executed. The peace in general, however, was not vindictive, and Japan was set on the road to becoming a tranquil and economically prosperous democracy following these events. Japan would in time be brought into an alliance with its erstwhile enemy, the United States, and it eventually became an important pillar of the security establishment of the Pacific during the long decades of the Cold War with the Soviet Union that followed the end of World War II.



When Japan refused to accept the Potsdam Declaration, President Truman approved the use of the atomic bomb



Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers General Douglas MacArthur presides over the surrender of Imperial Japan

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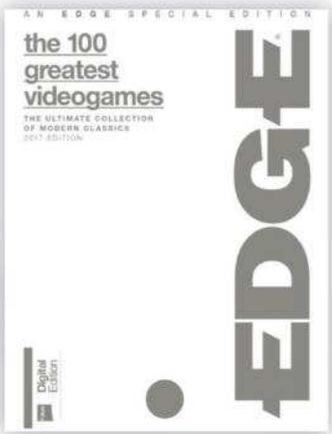
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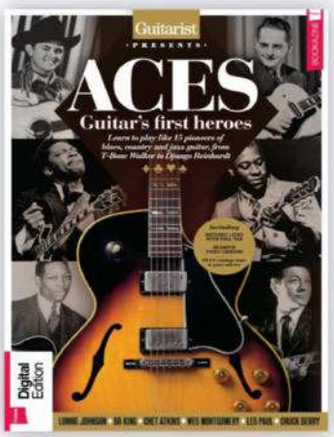


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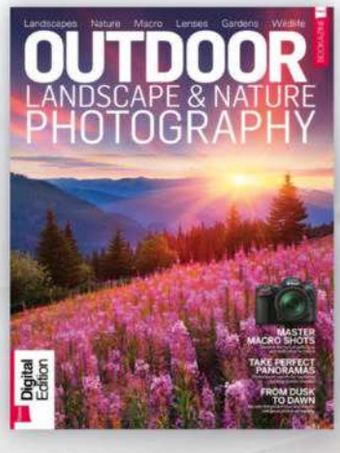




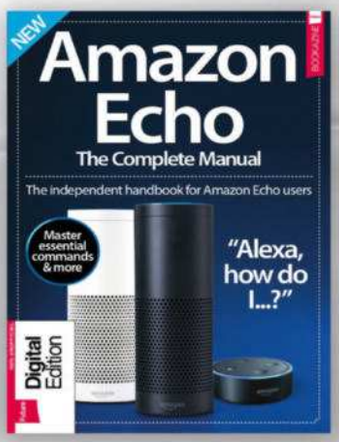


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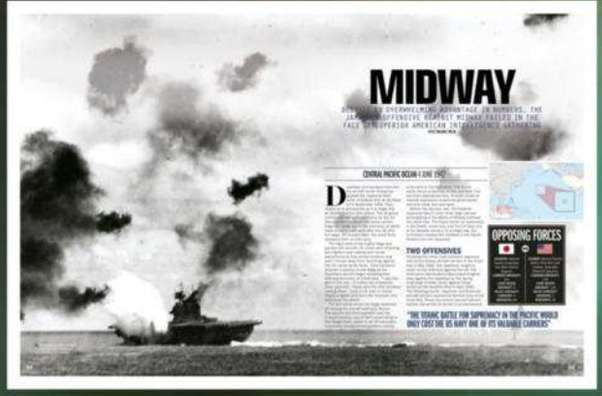
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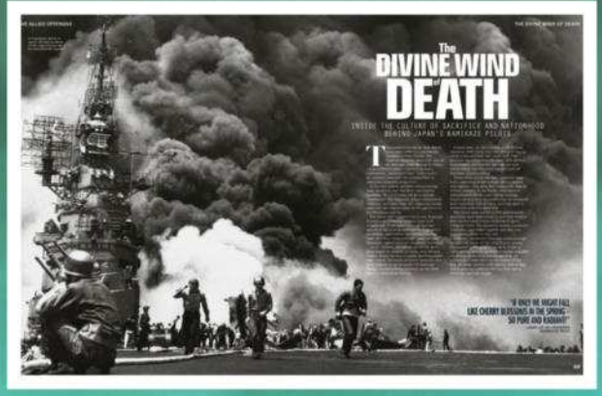
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