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WORLD WAR II THE WAR AGAINST JAPAN

In World War II, for the first time, the United States had to fight a war on two fronts. The central strategic principle governing allocation of resources to the two fronts provided for concentrating first on the defeat of the European Axis. The Americans liberally interpreted this principle, permitting an offensive war against Japan as well as against Germany in the years 1943–1945. The U.S. Fleet, expanding after its initial setback at Pearl Harbor, provided the main sinews for an offensive strategy in the Pacific. The Army devoted at least one-third of its resources to the Pacific war even at the height of war in Europe. In short, the United States proved capable, once its resources were fully mobilized, of successfully waging offensives on two fronts simultaneously, a development the Japanese had not anticipated when they launched their attack on Pearl Harbor.

Japan's Strategy

Japan entered World War II with limited aims and with every intention of fighting a limited war. Its principal objectives were to secure the resources of Southeast Asia and much of China and to establish a “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” under Japanese hegemony. In 1895 and in 1905 Japan had gained important objectives without completely defeating China or Russia, and in 1941 Japan sought to achieve its hegemony over East Asia in similar fashion.

The operational strategy the Japanese adopted to initiate the war, however, doomed their hopes of limiting the conflict. Japan believed it necessary to destroy or neutralize American striking power in the Pacific (the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor and the U.S. Far East Air Force in the Philippines) to secure its otherwise open strategic flank before moving southward and eastward to occupy Malaya, the Netherlands Indies, the Philippines, Wake Island, Guam, the Gilbert Islands, Thailand, and Burma. Once in control of these areas, the Japanese intended

to establish a defensive perimeter stretching from the Kurile Islands south through Wake, the Marianas, the Carolines, and the Marshalls and Gilberts to Rabaul on New Britain. From Rabaul the perimeter would extend westward to northwestern New Guinea to encompass the Indies, Malaya, Thailand, and Burma. Japan thought that the Allies would wear themselves out in fruitless frontal assaults against the perimeter and would ultimately settle for a negotiated peace that would leave Japan in possession of most of its conquests. (*See Map 6.*)

The Japanese were remarkably successful in the execution of their offensive plan and by early 1942 had established their intended perimeter. But they badly miscalculated the psychological effect of their surprise attack at Pearl Harbor that unified a divided people and aroused the United States to wage a total, not a limited war. As a result, despite the tremendous tactical victory at Pearl Harbor, Japan lost in the long run any chance of conducting the war on its own terms. The Allies, responding to their defeats, sought no negotiated settlement but immediately began to seek the means to strike back. In February and March 1942 small carrier task forces of the Pacific Fleet hit the Marshalls, Wake, and Marcus and bombers from Australia began to harass the Japanese base at Rabaul. In April Army bombers piloted by Col. James H. Doolittle, flying off a naval carrier, delivered a hit-and-run raid on Tokyo. Meanwhile, the United States began to develop and fortify a line of communications across the southern Pacific to Australia and to strengthen the defenses of the “down-under” continent itself. These new bases, along with Alaska, Hawaii, and India, also strengthened during the period, could become the launching points for future counteroffensives. Once the Allies became strong enough to threaten the Japanese defensive perimeter from several directions, the Japanese would lose the advantage of interior lines and with it the strategic initiative. Japan did not have and could not produce the means to defend and hold at all points.

Perceiving the danger, the Japanese in a second-phase offensive tried to sever the Allied lines of communications to Australia and to expand their perimeter in the Pacific. In the spring of 1942 they pushed southeast from Rabaul to Guadalcanal and Tulagi in the Solomons and seized Attu and Kiska in the Aleutians. But they failed in their main effort to take Midway Island, northwest of Hawaii; and in the naval battles of the Coral Sea and Midway in May and June, they lost four irreplaceable aircraft carriers and the bulk of their best naval pilots and planes. Midway was the turning point, for it redressed the naval balance in the Pacific and gave the Allies the strategic initiative. The Japanese, with the mobility of their carrier striking forces curtailed, had to abandon plans to cut the Allied South Pacific lifeline and turned instead to strengthening their defensive perimeter, planning to wage a protracted war of attrition in the hope of securing a negotiated end to the war.

Guadalcanal and Papua: The First Offensives

After Midway, the U.S. Joint Chiefs, responsible for direction of the war in the Pacific, almost naturally turned to the elimination of the threat to their line of communications in the south as the objective of the first offensive. In so doing they gave to American strategy in



Admiral Halsey

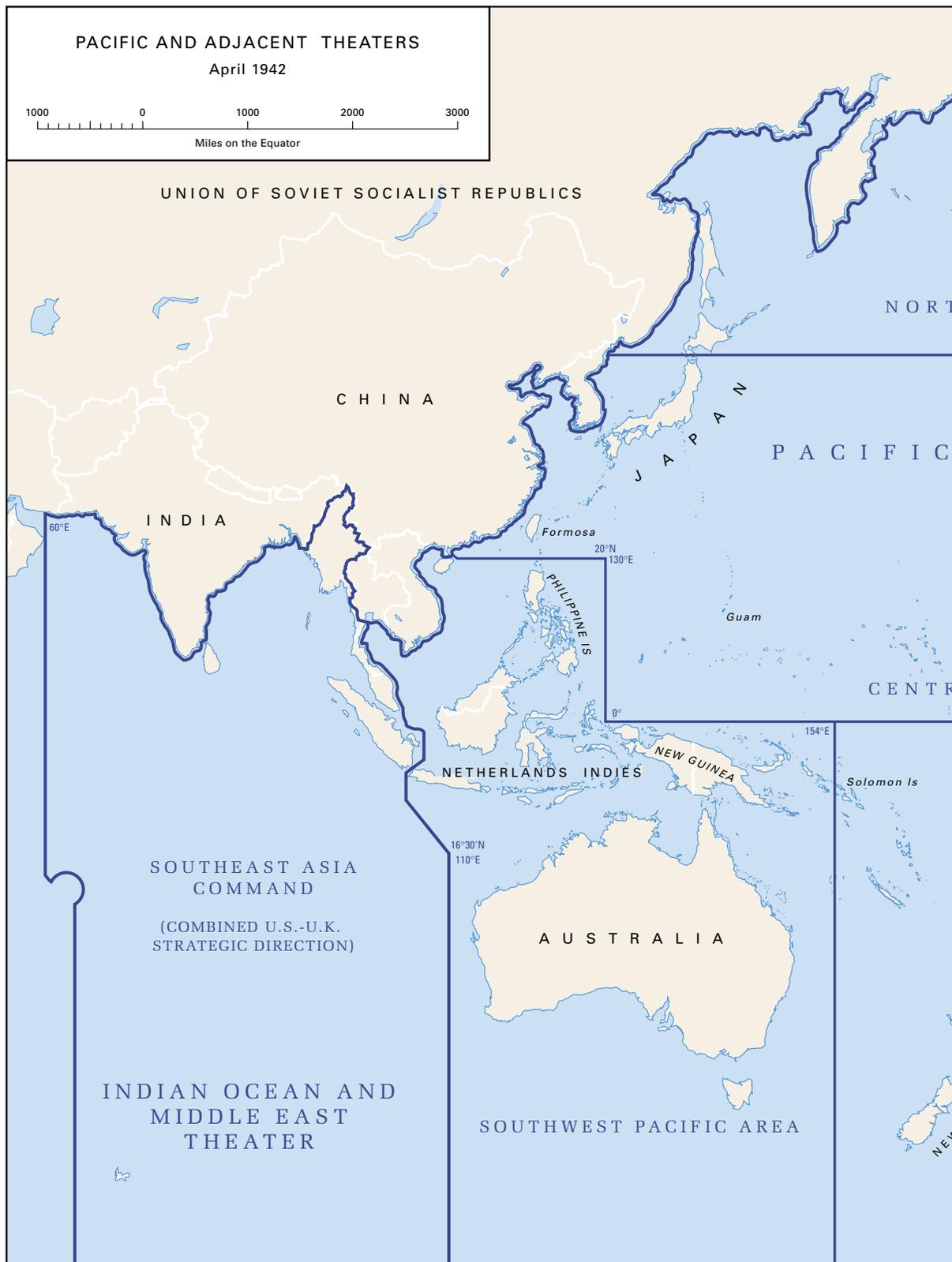


Admiral Nimitz

the Pacific a twist unanticipated in prewar planning, which had always presupposed that the main offensive in any war against Japan would be made directly across the Central Pacific from Hawaii toward the Philippines. The Joint Chiefs on July 2 directed Allied forces in the South and Southwest Pacific Areas to begin a series of operations aimed at the ultimate reduction of the Japanese stronghold at Rabaul on New Britain Island, thus establishing Allied control of the Bismarck Archipelago.

The campaign would consist of three stages, or tasks. In Task One, forces of the South Pacific Area (under Vice Adm. Robert L. Ghormley until November 1942 and thereafter under Admiral William F. Halsey) would seize base sites in the southern Solomons. Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, whose vast Pacific Ocean Areas command included the North, Central, and South Pacific Areas as subtheaters, would supervise this stage. In Task Two, South Pacific forces would advance up the ladder of the Solomons while Southwest Pacific forces under General Douglas MacArthur would move up the north coast of New Guinea as far as Lae and Salamaua. In Task Three, the forces of the two theaters would converge on Rabaul and clear the rest of the Bismarck Archipelago, outflanking the Japanese naval base at Truk in the Caroline Islands and opening up the route for an assault to retake the Philippines. Tasks Two and Three would be executed under the strategic direction of General MacArthur. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, reserving to themselves final control of the assignment of tasks, allocation of resources, and timing of operations, would in effect provide unified command over Nimitz and MacArthur.

The offensive began on August 7, 1942, when the 1st Marine Division landed on Guadalcanal and nearby islands in the southern Solomons. The Japanese, taking full advantage of interior lines from their bases at Rabaul and Truk, reacted vigorously. Six times, from August to the end of November, they challenged American naval superiority in the South Pacific in a series of sharp surface engagements. Air battles occurred almost daily for a month or more after the landings. The Japanese sent in strong ground reinforcements, gambling and ultimately losing substantial air and naval resources in the effort to hold



Map 6



Guadalcanal. The Americans had to reinforce heavily, deploying naval power, planes, soldiers, and marines in the battle at the expense of other theaters. Before the island was secured in November, another Marine division (the 2d), two Army divisions (the 25th and Americal), and one separate regiment, to mention only the major ground combat elements, had been thrown into the battle. The last act came in February 1943, when the 43d Division moved into the Russell Islands, thirty-five miles northwest of Guadalcanal. On Guadalcanal and in the Russells, American forces then began to construct major air and logistical bases for further advances.

A Japanese overland drive toward Port Moresby in New Guinea had meanwhile forced General MacArthur to begin an offensive of his own—the Papua Campaign. (*See Map 7.*) During the late summer the Japanese had pushed across the towering Owen Stanley Mountains toward Port Moresby from the Buna-Gona area on New Guinea's northeastern coast and by mid-September were only twenty miles from their objective. Australian ground forces drove the Japanese back to the north coast, where they strongly entrenched themselves around Buna and Gona. It took two Australian divisions, a U.S. Army division (the 32d), and another U.S. Army regiment almost four months of bitter fighting to dislodge the Japanese. Casualties were high and disease rampant; but as at Guadalcanal, the Allied forces learned much about jungle fighting, the importance of air power, and the need for thorough logistical preparation. They also discovered that the Japanese soldier, though a skillful, stubborn, and fanatic foe, could be defeated. The myth of Japanese invincibility was forever laid to rest in the jungles of Guadalcanal and Papua.

After Papua and Guadalcanal the tempo of operations in the South and Southwest Pacific Areas slowed while General MacArthur and Admiral Halsey gathered resources and prepared bases for the next phase. The Japanese in turn undertook to reinforce their main bases in New Guinea and the northern Solomons. In March 1943 they attempted to send a large convoy to Lae in New Guinea. Forewarned by signals intelligence, U.S. Army Air Force and Australian land-based aircraft repeatedly struck the slow-moving convoy. The four-day running air-sea fight became known as the Battle of the Bismarck Sea and cost the Japanese some 3,500 soldiers and sailors and much valuable shipping. During the following months Rabaul-based planes, reinforced by carrier planes flown in from the Carolines, sought unsuccessfully to knock out American air power in the southern Solomons.

BUNA-GONA

Japan's lodgment on the northeastern shore of New Guinea centered on its control of the outposts at Buna and Gona. To eliminate this threat, the Americans and Australians had to attack the Japanese frontally across the Owen Stanley Mountains and along the coast. Short of artillery ammunition and food, poorly trained and led, and suffering heavily from jungle diseases, the soldiers faltered; and the U.S. offensive soon sputtered to a halt. Only through dynamic leadership and persistent small-unit actions did the Allies take the two Japanese outposts, at a heavy cost. MacArthur determined there would be "No more Bunas!"

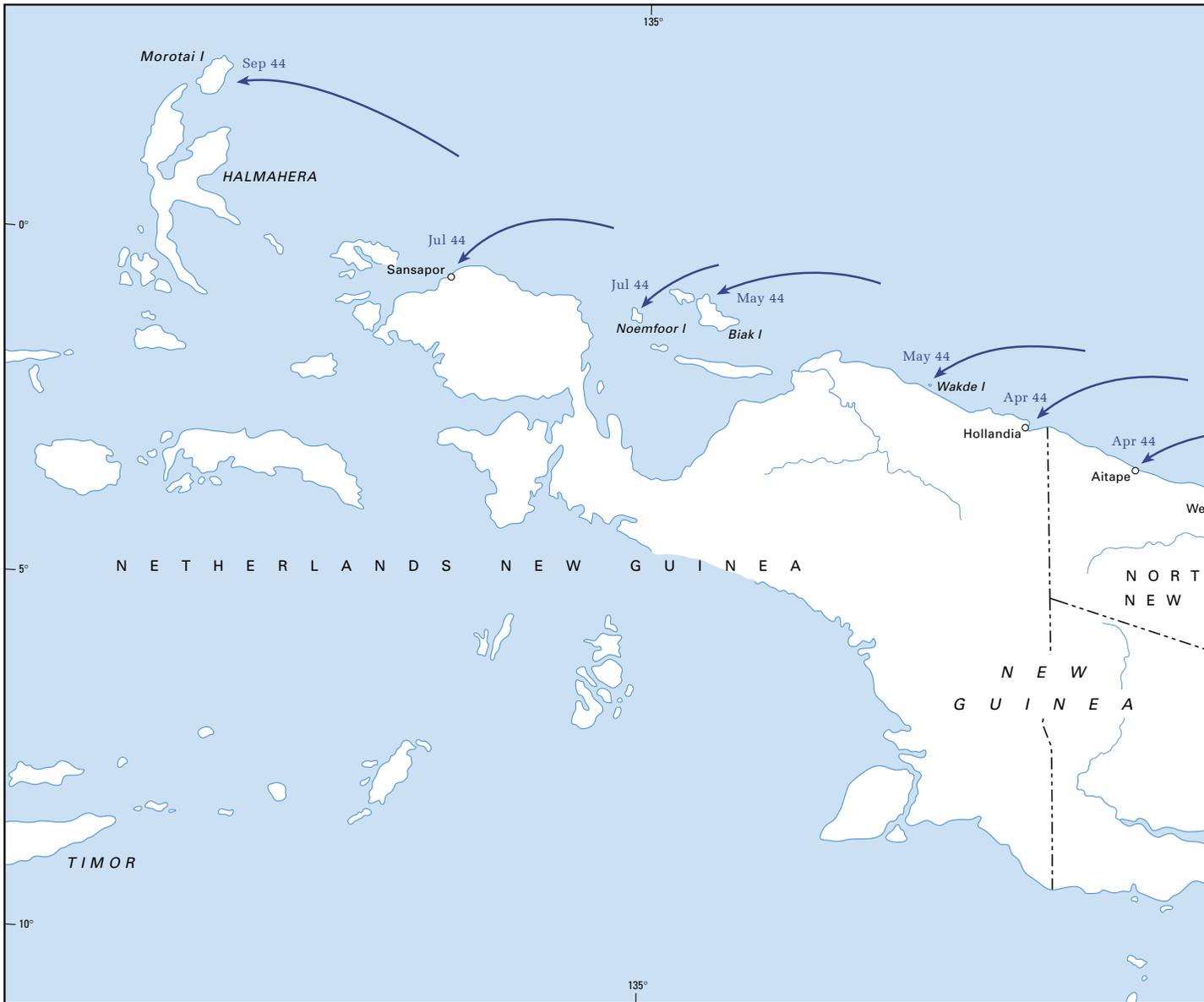
Search for a Strategy

Meanwhile, in the spring and summer of 1943, a strategy for the defeat of Japan began to take shape within Allied councils. The major Allied objective was control of the South China Sea and a foothold on the coast of China to sever Japanese lines of communications southward and to establish bases from which to subject Japan first to an intensive aerial bombardment and naval blockade and then, if necessary, an invasion. The first plans for this objective envisioned Allied drives from several different directions: by American forces across the Pacific (from the south and southwest toward the Philippines and from Hawaii across the Central Pacific) and by British and Chinese forces along a land line through Burma and China and a sea line from India via the Netherlands Indies, Singapore, and the Strait of Malacca into the South China Sea. Within the framework of this tentative long-range plan, the U.S. Joint Chiefs fitted their existing plans for completion of the campaign against Rabaul and a subsequent advance to the Philippines and developed a plan for the second drive across the Central Pacific. In 1942 and 1943 they also pressed the Chinese and British to get a drive under way in Burma to reopen the supply line to China in phase with their Pacific advances, offering extensive air and logistical support.

The North Pacific line running from Alaska through the Kuriles to the northernmost Japanese island of Hokkaido also beckoned in early 1943 as a possible additional avenue of approach to Japan. The

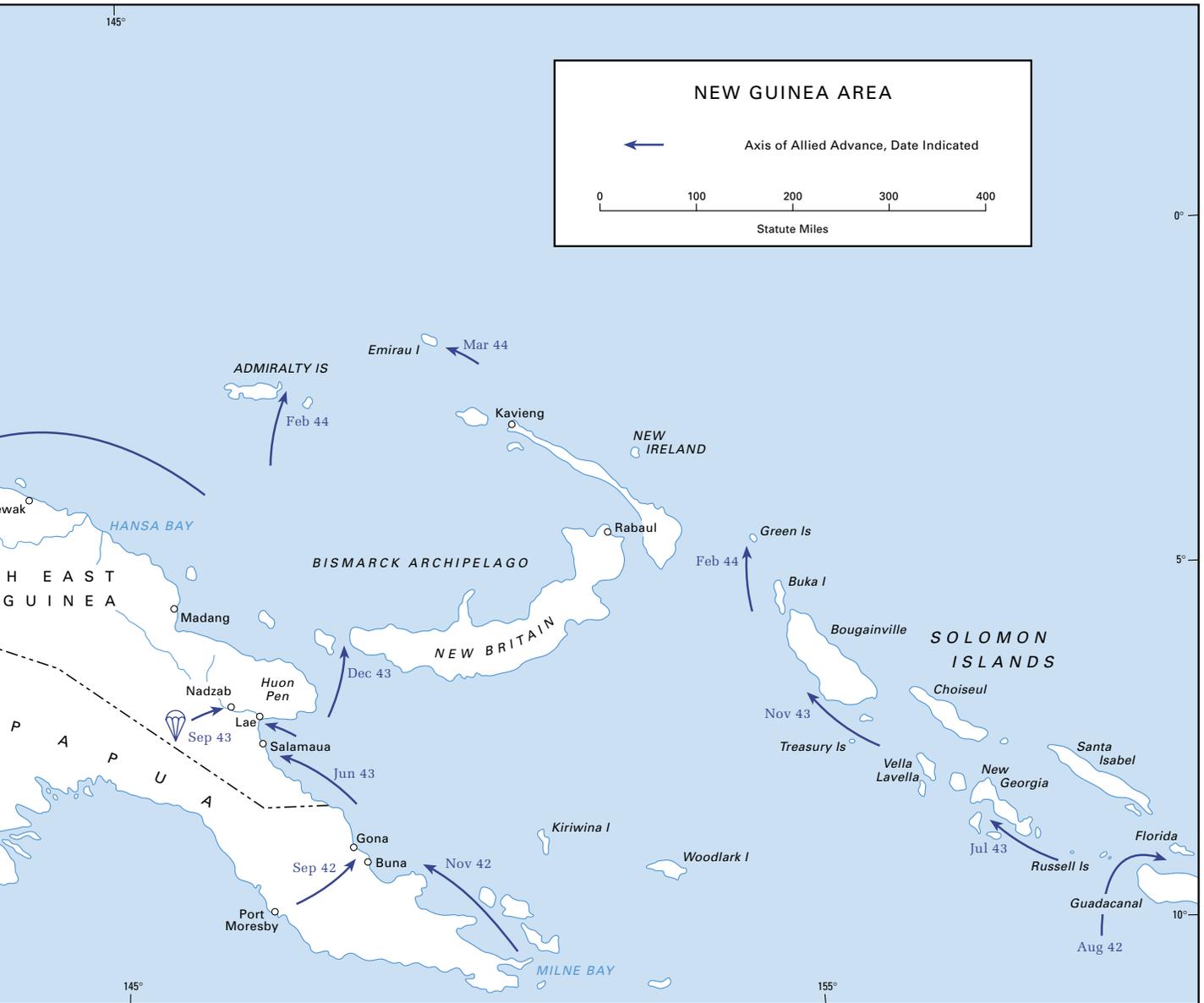


Kiska Raid, Edward Laning, 1943



Map 7

Joint Chiefs decided, however, that although the Japanese perimeter should be pushed back in this region, the foggy, cold North Pacific with its rock-bound and craggy islands was not a profitable area in which to undertake a major offensive. In May 1943 the U.S. 7th Division went ashore on Attu and, after three weeks of costly fighting through icy muck and over windswept ridges in a cold, almost constant fog, destroyed the 3,000-man Japanese garrison. In August a combined American-Canadian expedition landed on Kiska, some distance away, only to find that the Japanese had evacuated the island three weeks earlier. With the Japanese perimeter pushed back to the Kuriles, the Allied



advance stopped; further operations were limited to nuisance air raids against these Japanese-held islands. Ground forces used in the attacks on Attu and Kiska were redeployed to the Central Pacific, and some of the defensive forces deployed in Alaska were also freed for employment elsewhere.

Prospects of an advance through China to the coast faded rapidly in 1943. At the Casablanca Conference in January, the Combined Chiefs agreed on an ambitious operation, called ANAKIM, to be launched in the fall to retake Burma and reopen the supply line to China. ANAKIM was to include a British amphibious assault on Rangoon and an offensive



Armor in Alaska, *Edward Laning, 1943*

into central Burma, plus an American-sponsored Chinese offensive in the north involving convergence of forces operating from China and India. ANAKIM proved too ambitious; even limited offensives in Southeast Asia were postponed time and again for lack of adequate resources. By late 1943 the Americans had concluded that their Pacific forces would reach the China coast before either British or Chinese forces could come in through the back door. At the SEXTANT Conference in late November and early December 1943, the Combined Chiefs agreed that the main effort against Japan should be concentrated in the Pacific along two lines of advance, with operations in the North Pacific, China, and Southeast Asia to be assigned subsidiary roles.

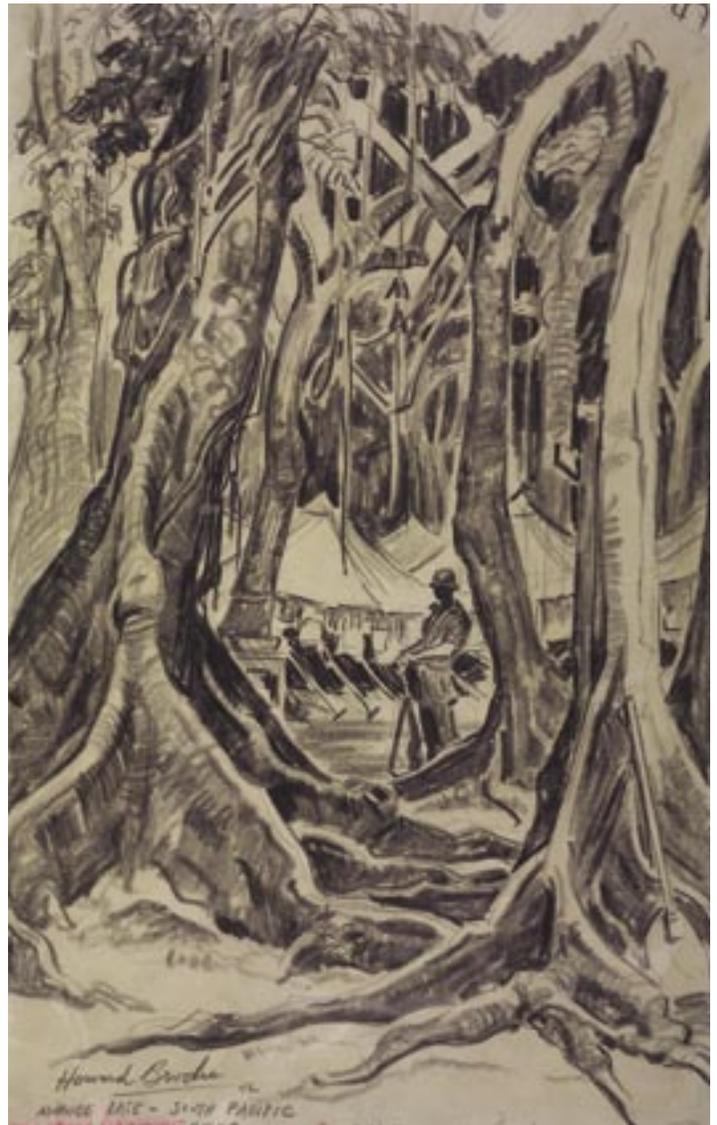
In this strategy the two lines of advance in the Pacific—one across the Central Pacific via the Gilberts, Marshalls, Marianas, Carolines, and Palaus toward the Philippines or Formosa (Taiwan) and the other in the Southwest Pacific via the north coast of New Guinea to the Vogelkop and then to the southern Philippines—were viewed as mutually supporting. (*See Map 8.*) Although the Joint Chiefs several times indicated a measure of preference for the Central Pacific as the area of main effort, they never established any real priority between the two lines, seeking instead to retain a flexibility that would permit striking blows along either line as opportunity offered. The Central Pacific route promised to force a naval showdown with the Japanese and, once the Marianas were secured, to provide bases from which the U.S. Army Air Forces' new B-29 bombers could strike the Japanese home islands. The Southwest

Pacific route was shorter, if existing bases were taken into consideration, and offered more opportunity to employ land-based air power to full advantage. The target area for both drives, in the strategy approved at SEXTANT, was to be the Luzon–Formosa–China coast area. Within this triangular area, the natural goal of the Southwest Pacific drive was the Philippines; but the goal of the Central Pacific drive could be either the Philippines or Formosa. As the drives along the two lines got under way in earnest in 1944, the choice between the two became the central strategic issue.

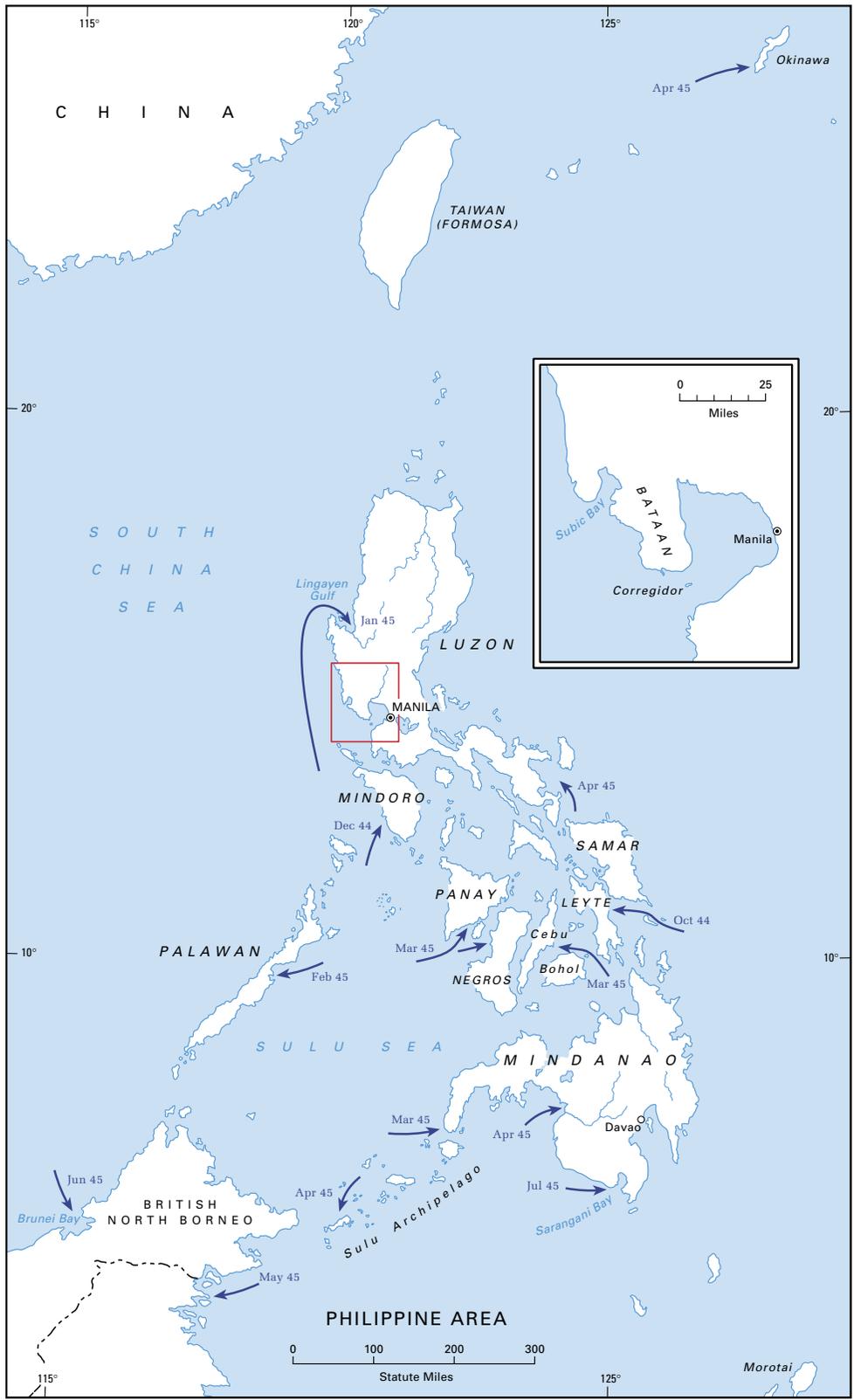
CARTWHEEL: The Encirclement of Rabaul

In June 1943 MacArthur and Halsey resumed their offensive to reduce the Japanese stronghold at Rabaul—a prerequisite to further advances along the Southwest Pacific axis toward the Philippines. The plan for the campaign provided for a carefully phased series of operations in each theater, each designed to secure a strategic position where air cover could be provided for further advances. The first of the series started in late June, when MacArthur landed American troops on the Woodlark and Kiriwina Islands off eastern New Guinea and at Nassau Bay on the New Guinea coast and Halsey's forces made their first landings on the New Georgia group in the central Solomons. From these beginnings, the operations proceeded up the ladder of the Solomons, along the coast of New Guinea, and across the straits to New Britain Island generally as scheduled, despite strong Japanese reaction.

In the Solomons, by early August Army forces under Halsey had secured New Georgia with its important Munda airfield; but the campaign was not completed until October, when U.S. and New Zealand troops occupied Vella Lavella, between New Georgia and Bougainville. At the end of October New Zealanders and U.S. marines landed on Treasury and Choiseul Islands to secure bases for the assault on Bougainville. That assault got under way on November 1, when the marines landed, soon followed by the Army's 37th Division. During each phase of the Solomons campaign, the Japanese sought unsuccessfully to contest Allied air and naval supremacy, to land reinforcements, and to launch strong counterattacks against Allied beachheads, losing in the effort both planes and combat ships they could ill afford to spare. Air and naval losses in the Solomons crippled the Japanese Fleet for months to come and diverted forces otherwise available to contest the successful Central Pacific drive that got under way in November. With the



At an Advanced South Pacific Base, *Howard Brodie, 1943*



Map 8

repulse of the Japanese counterattack on Bougainville, by the end of November security of the American beachhead on that island was assured, permitting the development of a major American air base. With the taking of Bougainville, the main part of the South Pacific Area's task in Operation CARTWHEEL was completed.

MacArthur's forces meanwhile continued their offensives, with Australian troops carrying most of the burden in New Guinea. In early September the U.S. Army's 503d Parachute Regiment, in the first airborne operation of the Pacific war, seized an airfield at Nadzab, inland from Lae and Salamaua. Amphibious assaults by Australian troops cleared Lae and Salamaua by mid-September. Elements of the U.S. 32d Division landed at the western end of the Huon peninsula in January 1944 in an attempt to trap a large Japanese force; but by the time Australian and American units had sealed the western exits to the peninsula, most of the Japanese had escaped northwest to Hansa Bay and Wewak.

In the meantime, MacArthur and Halsey had assembled the forces to launch a final offensive toward Rabaul; but the Joint Chiefs decided that the actual seizure of that objective would be too costly in terms of men, equipment, and time. They preferred to encircle Rabaul, neutralize it by air bombardment, and push on to seize an offensive base farther west, in the Admiralty Islands. A new series of operations toward these ends started in MacArthur's theater on December 15, 1943, when U.S. Army units landed on the south coast of western New Britain; on the twenty-sixth the 1st Marine Division landed on the north coast. In mid-February 1944 New Zealand troops of the South Pacific Area secured an air base site on Green Island, north of Rabaul. On the last day of the month MacArthur began landing the 1st Cavalry Division (an infantry unit retaining its former designation) on the Admiralties, closing the western and northwestern approaches to Rabaul. Marines under Halsey seized a final air base site on Emirau, north of Rabaul, on March 20; Marine and Army units under MacArthur secured additional positions in western and central New Britain from March to May 1944. The major Japanese base at Rabaul, with its 100,000-man garrison, was as effectively out of the war as if it had been destroyed. In the process of encircling Rabaul, the Allies had also left to wither on the vine another important Japanese base at Kavieng on New Ireland, north of Rabaul.

In the last phase of the campaign against Rabaul, a pattern developed that came to characterize much of the war in the Southwest and Central Pacific. The Allies, taking full advantage of intelligence gleaned from deciphering Japanese military and naval radio communications, would mount no frontal attacks against strongly entrenched Japanese forces if they could avoid it; they would not advance island by island across a vast ocean studded with myriad atolls and island groups. Rather, they would advance in great bounds, limited only by the range of land-based air cover or the availability of carrier-based air support. The Allies would deceive, surprise, and outflank the Japanese; they would bypass major strong points and leave them reduced to strategic and tactical impotence. The Japanese would be given no chance to recover from one strike before they would face another one from a different, often unexpected, direction.

The Central Pacific Drive Begins

In the South and Southwest Pacific, the necessity for relying primarily on support of land-based aircraft curtailed the length of the jumps to the operational radius of fighter planes. The Navy's limited supply of aircraft carriers could not be employed to best advantage in the restricted waters around New Guinea and the Solomons. By mid-1943, however, new larger and faster carriers of the *Essex* class (27,000 tons) and lighter carriers of the *Independence* class (11,000 tons) were joining the Pacific Fleet. Around these new carriers Admiral Nimitz built naval task forces tailored to each particular operation. The task forces consisted of a mix of carriers, destroyers, cruisers, battleships, submarines, minesweepers, and support craft. In the broad expanses of the Central Pacific, these air-carrier task forces could provide both air and naval support for far longer leaps forward, while the entire Pacific Fleet stood ready to confront the main Japanese Fleet at any time the Japanese chose to give battle.

The Central Pacific drive got under way on November 20, when Nimitz sent Army and Marine forces to the Gilbert Islands to seize bases from which to support subsequent jumps into the Marshalls. Troops

and supplies for the Gilberts loaded at Hawaii on newly developed assault shipping and sailed more than 2,000 miles to be set ashore by specially designed landing craft and amphibian vehicles. Makin, the Army objective, fell to the 27th Division after four days of hard fighting. Tarawa, where the 2d Marine Division went ashore, proved a bloody affair that provided a stiff test for American amphibious doctrine, techniques, and equipment. Naval gunfire vessels and carrier-based aircraft provided support during and after the assault.

The advance to the Gilberts disclosed that U.S. forces had not entirely mastered certain aspects of amphibious warfare, especially naval gunfire support, coordination of air support, and ship-to-shore communications. But the Americans learned valuable lessons that, added to the earlier experiences of the South and Southwest Pacific Areas, established a pattern of island warfare that represented one of the major tactical developments of the war. First, air and naval forces isolated an objective, softened its defenses, and isolated it from outside reinforcement; simultaneously, joint forces would attack



Howard Brodie for Yank Magazine, 1943



Soldiers use flamethrowers to smoke out the enemy on Kwajalein Island.

or feint toward other islands to deceive the Japanese. The approach of convoys carrying the ground assault forces to the main objective signaled the opening of final, intensive air and naval bombardment of the landing beaches. Whenever practicable, small forces occupied neighboring islands as sites for land-based artillery. Under cover of all these supporting fires, the landing forces moved from ship to shore in echelons, or waves, rocket-firing landing craft in the lead and amphibian tanks and tractors following to carry the assault troops directly onto the beaches and inland. Finally came landing craft with more infantry and with tanks, artillery, and supporting troops. Supplies followed rapidly as the assault forces secured and expanded the beachhead. Amphibious techniques were refined and modified to some extent after the Gilberts, but the lessons learned there made it unnecessary to effect any radical changes in amphibious doctrine throughout the rest of the war.

Preoccupied with the Solomons and New Guinea, the Japanese did not react strongly to the loss of the Gilberts; at the end of January 1944 Nimitz' Army and Marine forces moved into the eastern and central Marshalls to seize Majuro and Kwajalein. The strength employed in this operation proved so preponderant and Japanese defenses so weak that Nimitz was able to accelerate his next advance by two-and-a-half months and on February 17 landed Marine and Army units on Eniwetok Atoll in the western Marshalls. Concurrently, he conducted a long-awaited carrier strike against Truk in the central Carolines, considered Japan's key naval bastion in the Central Pacific. The raid revealed that the Japanese had virtually abandoned Truk as a naval base, obviating its capture. Nimitz then drew up plans to invade the Marianas in mid-June and move on to the western Carolines and Palaus in mid-September, again accelerating the pace of the advance.

Acceleration of the Pacific Drive

General MacArthur had also pushed the Southwest Pacific Area's timetable forward. Having landed in the Admiralties a month ahead of his original schedule, he proposed to cancel operations against Hansa

JAPANESE IN THE MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE (MIS)

Despite the poor treatment of Japanese Americans after the attack on Pearl Harbor, many volunteered to serve their country in combat. Thousands also volunteered for potentially more dangerous duty. They enlisted as interpreters and translators in the MIS to serve in the Pacific interrogating Japanese prisoners of war and translating captured documents and intercepted transmissions. Had they been captured, there was little doubt of their fate. They volunteered nonetheless and served in the forward areas throughout the Pacific war and later in the occupation of Japan.

Bay and Wewak on the northeast coast of New Guinea in favor of a jump to Hollandia and Aitape on the north-central coast in April, two months earlier than previously planned. His operations took full advantage of a windfall of deciphered Japanese Army communications that revealed not only the enemy's dispositions along the New Guinea coast but his intentions as well. Armed with this awareness, MacArthur would then continue northwestward along the coast in a campaign to seize successive air base sites until he reached the Vogelkop at the eastern end of New Guinea. He would then proceed to Mindanao, southernmost of the Philippine Islands.

The Joint Chiefs, quickly seizing the fruits of their strategy of opportunism, on March 12 rearranged the schedule of major Pacific operations. They provided for the assault by MacArthur's forces on Hollandia and Aitape in April with the support of a carrier task force from the Pacific Fleet, to be followed by Nimitz' move into the Marianas in June and into the Palaus in September. While Nimitz was employing the major units of the Pacific Fleet in these ventures, MacArthur was to continue his advance along the New Guinea coast with the forces at his disposal. In November he was again to have the support of main units of the Pacific Fleet in an assault on Mindanao. Refusing still to make a positive choice of what was to follow, the Joint Chiefs directed MacArthur to plan for the invasion of Luzon and Nimitz to plan for the invasion of Formosa early in 1945.

The March 12 directive served as a blueprint for an accelerated drive in the Pacific in the spring and summer of 1944. On April 22 Army forces under MacArthur landed at weakly held Hollandia and Aitape far behind the main Japanese ground forces. At neither place was the issue ever in doubt, although during July the Japanese who had been bypassed at Wewak launched an abortive counterattack against the Aitape perimeter. Protected by land-based aircraft staging from Hollandia, MacArthur's Army units next jumped 125 miles northwest on May 17 to seize another lightly defended air base site at Wakde Island, landing first on the New Guinea mainland opposite the chief objective. A ground campaign of about a month and a half ensued against a Japanese division on the mainland; but, without waiting for the outcome of the fight, on May 27 other Army troops carried the advance northwestward another 180 miles to Biak Island.

At this point the wisdom of conducting twin drives across the Pacific became apparent. The Japanese Navy was preparing for a showdown

battle it expected to develop off the Marianas in June. MacArthur's move to Biak put land-based planes in position to keep under surveillance and harass the Japanese Fleet, which was assembling in Philippine waters before moving into the Central Pacific. Reckoning an American-controlled Biak an unacceptable threat to their flank, the Japanese risked major elements of their fleet to send strong reinforcements in an attempt to drive MacArthur's exposed forces from the island. They also deployed to bases within range of Biak about half their land-based air strength from the Marianas, Carolines, and Palaus—planes upon which their fleet would depend for support during the forthcoming battle off the Marianas.

Again alerted by signals intelligence, the U.S. Seventh Fleet parried two unsuccessful attempts to reinforce Biak, but the Japanese assembled for a third try enough naval strength to overwhelm local American naval units. Just as the formidable force was moving toward Biak, the Japanese learned that the U.S. Pacific Fleet was off the Marianas. They scrapped the Biak operation, hastily assembled their naval forces, and sailed northwestward for the engagement known as the Battle of the Philippine Sea. Having lost the chance to surprise the U.S. Navy, handicapped by belated deployment, and deprived of anticipated land-based air support, the Japanese suffered another shattering naval defeat. This defeat, which assured the success of the invasions of both Biak and the Marianas, illustrates well the interdependence of operations in the two Pacific areas. It also demonstrated again that the U.S. Pacific Fleet's carrier task forces were the decisive element in the Pacific war.

Army and Marine divisions under Nimitz landed on Saipan in the Marianas on June 15, 1944, to begin a bloody three-week battle for control of the island. Next, on July 21, Army and Marine units invaded Guam, 100 miles south of Saipan; three days later marines moved on



Cautiously Moving in on a Japanese Machine-Gun Position

to Tinian Island. An important turning point of the Pacific war, the American seizure of the Marianas brought the Japanese home islands within reach of the U.S. Army Air Forces' new B-29 long-range bombers, which in late November began to fly missions against the Japanese homeland.

At Biak, Japanese resistance delayed the capture of the best airfield sites until late June. On July 2 MacArthur's Army forces moved on to Noemfoor Island, ninety miles to the west, in a combined parachute-amphibious operation designed to broaden the base of the Southwest Pacific's air deployment. On July 30 the 6th Division continued on to the northwestern tip of New Guinea to secure another air base; and on September 15 MacArthur landed the reinforced 31st Division on Morotai Island, between New Guinea and Mindanao in the Philippines. On the same day Nimitz sent the 1st Marine Division ashore on Peleliu in the southern Palaus. On the seventeenth the 81st Division from Nimitz' command landed on Angaur, just south of Peleliu. A regimental combat team of the 81st Division secured Ulithi Atoll, midway between Peleliu and the Marianas, without opposition on September 23.

With these landings the approach to the Philippines was virtually completed. The occupation of Morotai proved easy, and the island provided airfields for the support of advances into the Philippines and Indies. The Pacific Fleet employed Ulithi as a forward anchorage. Hard fighting dragged on in the Palaus through November; but as the result of another acceleration in the pace of Pacific operations, these islands never played the role originally planned for them.

In twin drives, illustrating the principles of maneuver, objective, economy of force, surprise, and mass, the Allied forces of the Pacific had arrived in mid-September 1944 at the threshold of their strategic objective, the Luzon-Formosa-China coast triangle. In seven months MacArthur's forces had leapfrogged forward nearly 1,500 miles from the Admiralties to Morotai; in ten months Nimitz' forces had advanced over 4,500 miles from Hawaii to the Palaus. The time had now come to make a final choice of the main objective in the target area.

The Decision To Invade Luzon

During the summer of 1944, as the battles raged along both lines of advance, the strategic debate over the choice of Luzon versus Formosa also waxed hot. General MacArthur argued fervently that the proper course was to move through the Philippines to Luzon, cutting the Japanese lines of communications southward, establishing a base for bombardment and invasion of Japan, and fulfilling a solemn national obligation to liberate the Philippine people. Admiral Ernest J. King, Chief of Naval Operations, just as adamantly insisted that the war could be shortened by directing the Pacific advance from the Marianas and Palaus toward Formosa, the China coast, and Japan proper, seizing only the essential positions in the southern and central Philippines necessary to render air support for these advances.

The arguments for Formosa were cogent enough. Its strategic position made it a better island stepping stone to the China coast or the Japanese home islands, a position from which Japanese communica-

tions to the south could be cut more effectively than from Luzon, and a closer-in position from which to conduct strategic bombardment. But it also could prove a more difficult position to take, and Nimitz did not have in his theater sufficient Army supporting and service troops to sustain a land campaign on the island without reinforcement. It might be difficult, too, to mount an invasion of Formosa as long as Japanese air and surface forces could, from strong positions on Luzon, interfere with the Allied line of communications.

Another strategic consideration involved the real value of a foothold on the China coast. By the early fall of 1944, air base sites in east China from which the Allies had hoped to support Pacific operations and bomb Japan appeared irretrievably lost to the Japanese *Ichi-go* offensive. Technology also undercut the argument for air bases in China because the extended range of the giant B-29 bombers enabled them to attack Tokyo from newly constructed bases in the Marianas. The need to seize and develop a port on the China coast for logistics support of air operations thus lost much of its urgency, and the argument that Formosa was the best stepping stone to China became less compelling. Then, too, a successful invasion of either Luzon or Formosa required some concentration of forces from the two theaters. It was far easier to shift highly mobile naval resources in Nimitz' theater to the Philippines than it was to redeploy Army troops from the Southwest Pacific to support Nimitz' invasion of Formosa and the jump to the China coast with which he hoped to follow it.

At the time of the Morotai and Palaus landings, MacArthur's plans for invasion of the Philippines called for a preliminary assault in southern Mindanao on November 15, 1944, to secure air bases for the support of a larger attack at Leyte, in the east-central Philippines, on December 20. He would follow this with a large-scale assault on Lingayen Gulf in February 1945. Nimitz meanwhile planned to mount an invasion of Yap in the Carolines in October 1944 and then would prepare to launch his attack on Formosa as soon as the elements of the Pacific Fleet required for operations in the southern and central Philippines could return. Obviously, the Joint Chiefs had to choose between Luzon and Formosa, for the Pacific Fleet would need to support either operation.

The course of events went far to dictate the final choice. In mid-September Admiral Halsey's carrier task forces providing strategic support for the Morotai and Palaus operations struck the central and southern Philippines. Halsey found Japanese air strength unexpectedly weak and uncovered few signs of significant ground or naval activity. Although signals intelligence revealed strong Japanese forces in the Philippines, on the basis of Halsey's reports MacArthur and Nimitz proposed to the Joint Chiefs a move directly to Leyte in October, bypassing Mindanao. Nimitz agreed to divert to the Leyte invasion the three-division corps then mounting out of Hawaii for the assault against Yap. The Joint Chiefs quickly approved the new plan, and the decision to invade Leyte two months ahead of schedule gave MacArthur's arguments to move on to Luzon almost irresistible force. MacArthur now reported that he could undertake the invasion of Luzon in December 1944, whereas all the planners' estimates indicated that resources for an invasion of Formosa—particularly service troops and shipping—could not be readied before February 1945. Nimitz proposed to shift the Central Pacific

attack northward against Iwo Jima in the Bonins in January and then against Okinawa and other islands in the Ryukyus early in March. On October 3 Admiral King, bowing to the inevitable, accepted the new plans. The Joint Chiefs issued directives to MacArthur for the invasion of Luzon on December 20 and to Nimitz for the invasion of Iwo Jima and Okinawa early in 1945.

Pacific strategy had been cast into a nearly final mold. In the end, the China coast objective disappeared entirely from planning boards. Final plans for the defeat of Japan envisaged a gradual tightening of the ring by blockade and bombardment from the Marianas, Philippines, and Ryukyus with an invasion of the home islands to be mounted from these bases.

The Philippines Campaign

The main assault at Leyte took place on October 20, 1944, as four Army divisions landed abreast in the largest amphibious operation yet conducted in the Pacific. Vice Adm. Thomas C. Kinkaid, MacArthur's naval subordinate, controlled the amphibious phases, including naval gunfire support and close air support by planes based on escort carriers. Ground forces were under Lt. Gen. Walter Krueger, commanding the U.S. Sixth Army; land-based air forces of the Southwest Pacific Area in general support were commanded by Lt. Gen. George C. Kenney. MacArthur himself exercised unified command over the air, ground, and naval commanders. The fast carrier task forces of the Pacific Fleet, providing strategic support, operated under the control of Admiral Halsey, who reported to Nimitz, not MacArthur. There was no provision for unified naval command, and Halsey's orders were such that he could



MacArthur wades ashore during initial landings at Leyte, October 1944.

make his principal mission the destruction of the Japanese Fleet rather than the support of MacArthur's entry into the Philippines.

The Japanese had originally planned to make their stand in the Philippines on Luzon, but the invasion of Leyte moved them to reconsider. The *Fourteenth Area Army Headquarters* wanted to fight on Luzon, but the *Southern Army* decided that the entire Philippine archipelago would be strategically lost if the U.S. Army secured a foothold in the central islands. The *Southern Army* therefore ordered the *Fourteenth Army* to send ground reinforcements to Leyte. Concurrently the *Imperial General Headquarters* in Tokyo launched the *SHO* (Victory) operation as it increased land-based air strength in the Philippines in the hope of destroying Allied shipping in Leyte Gulf and maintaining local air superiority and dispatched Japan's remaining naval strength to Leyte Gulf to destroy Kinkaid's invasion fleet and to block Allied access to the Philippines. The ensuing air-naval Battle of Leyte Gulf was the most critical moment of the campaign and proved one of the most decisive actions of the Pacific war.

Admiral Halsey, without consulting MacArthur or Kinkaid, pulled the bulk of his carrier forces northward to intercept some Japanese aircraft carriers, a decoy fleet stripped of its aircraft to draw U.S. naval power from the fragile beachhead and leave Leyte Gulf open to other converging Japanese Fleet units. Kinkaid's old battleships annihilated one Japanese fleet approaching Leyte from the south, but only gallant, desperate action by American destroyers and escort carriers turned back the Japanese battleships steaming undetected into the gulf from the north. The small, lightly armed U.S. ships suffered heavy losses to ensure the safety of the landing forces. It had been a close call, clearly demonstrating the dangers of divided command. In the end, however, the combined operations of Kinkaid's and Halsey's forces virtually eliminated the Japanese Navy as a factor in the Pacific war.

With the Leyte beaches secure, U.S. Army units proceeded to destroy the Japanese ground forces. Miserable weather on Leyte's east coast bogged down the pace of operations, made supply difficult, delayed airfield construction, curtailed air support, and permitted the Japanese to continue to ship reinforcements to the western port of the island. The reinforcement program came to a sudden halt early in December, when the 77th Division executed an amphibious envelopment on Leyte's west coast; by late December the Sixth Army had secured the most important sections of the island, those required for air and logistical bases. Japanese troops in the mountains of northwestern Leyte continued organized resistance well into the spring of 1945, occupying the energies of large portions of Lt. Gen. Robert L. Eichelberger's newly formed Eighth Army.

While the fight on Leyte continued, MacArthur's forces moved on to Luzon only slightly behind schedule. The first step of the Luzon Campaign was the seizure of an air base in southwestern Mindoro, 150 miles south of Manila, on December 15; two Army regiments accomplished the task with ease. The invasion of Luzon itself started on January 9, 1945, when four Army divisions landed along the shores of the Lingayen Gulf. Command arrangements were similar to those at Leyte, and again fast carrier task forces under Halsey operated in general support and not under MacArthur's control. Within three days, five Army

The combined operations of Kinkaid's and Halsey's forces virtually eliminated the Japanese Navy as a factor in the Pacific war.

divisions, a separate regimental combat team, two artillery groups, an armored group, and supporting service units were ashore and had begun a drive down the Central Plains of Luzon toward Manila. The Japanese were incapable of naval intervention at Lingayen Gulf, and their most significant reaction was to throw a new weapon, kamikaze (suicide planes) against Kinkaid's naval forces for four days.

General Tomoyuki Yamashita, commanding Japanese forces in the Philippines, did not intend to defend the Central Plains–Manila Bay region, the strategic prize of Luzon. Knowing he would receive no reinforcements and believing the issue in the Philippines had been decided at Leyte, he sought only to pin down major elements of MacArthur's forces in the hope of delaying Allied progress toward Japan. For this purpose he moved the bulk of his troops into mountain strongholds, where they could conduct a protracted, bloody defensive campaign. But Japanese naval forces on Luzon, only nominally under Yamashita, decided to ignore this concept in favor of defending Manila and Manila Bay to the death. Thus, when U.S. Army units reached Manila on February 3, it took them a month of bitter building-to-building fighting to root out the Japanese at the cost of over 1,000 U.S. and over 16,000 Japanese dead and 100,000 civilian casualties. Meanwhile, operations to clear Manila Bay had begun with a minor amphibious landing at the southern tip of Bataan on February 15. The next day a combined parachute-amphibious assault, involving two Army regiments, initiated a battle to seize Corregidor Island. Other forces cleared additional islands in Manila Bay and secured the south shore. By mid-March the bay was open for Allied shipping, but the Allies would have to do an immense salvage and repair job before they could fully exploit Manila's excellent port facilities.

The reinforced 38th Division had landed meanwhile near Subic Bay and had cut across the base of the Bataan peninsula to prevent the Japanese from holing up on Bataan as had MacArthur's forces three years earlier. The 11th Airborne Division undertook both amphibious and parachute landings in southern Luzon to start clearing that region, and the 158th Regimental Combat Team made an amphibious assault in southeastern Luzon to secure the Bicol peninsula. Turning against Yamashita's mountain strongholds, MacArthur continued to pour reinforcements onto Luzon, and the land campaign there ultimately evolved

THE LIBERATION OF MANILA

The month-long fight for Manila was one of few battles waged in a major city in the Pacific Theater. The Japanese naval garrison organized a defense of the city in direct defiance of the Japanese Army commander's orders to evacuate. Because the Americans were eager to preserve the city's water and power supplies, they avoided air strikes and artillery fires, except against known enemy positions. Mounting casualties and intense fighting eventually resulted in these restrictions' being lifted. By February 24 the 37th Infantry Division entered the ancient fortress of Intramuros, triggering the breakdown of the entire Japanese defensive effort. On March 3 the Commanding General of the XIV Corps reported that all resistance had ceased. Most of Manila had been left in ruins.

“WE REMAINED”

In March 1942, under presidential order, General MacArthur escaped from the besieged Philippines to Australia, where he vowed, “I shall return.” Two months later U.S. conventional resistance ended in surrender. But some Filipinos and Americans disobeyed orders, fled into the jungle, and, aided by friendly natives, formed guerrilla bands. From Australia, the Allies sent in supplies and agents by submarine. Thus, when MacArthur returned to the Philippines in late 1944 he found a movement able to help with intelligence, elimination of bypassed units, and even conventional attacks. In northern Luzon, guerrilla patches bore their motto, “We Remained.”

into the largest of the Pacific war. Altogether MacArthur committed to Luzon 10 divisions, 2 regiments of another division, and 3 separate regimental combat teams. Filipino guerrillas, many of whom had been formed under defiant U.S. officers and men escaping surrender in 1942, also played a large role. One guerrilla unit came to substitute for a regularly constituted division, and other guerrilla forces of battalion and regiment size supplemented the efforts of the U.S. Army units. Moreover, the loyal and willing Filipino population immeasurably eased the problems of supply, construction, and civil administration. In one instance, the surprise raid to liberate the American POW camp at Cabanatuan by U.S. Army Rangers and Alamo Scouts, the support of Filipino guerrillas was critical to achieving victory and saving hundreds of American lives.

Except for a strong pocket in the mountains of north central Luzon, organized Japanese resistance ended by late June 1945. The rugged terrain in the north, along with rainy weather, prevented Krueger’s Sixth Army from applying its full strength to the reduction of this pocket. Eichelberger’s Eighth Army took over responsibility for operations on Luzon at the end of June and continued the pressure against Yamashita’s force in the last-stand redoubt, but the Japanese held out there until the end of the war.

While the Sixth Army was destroying Japanese forces on Luzon, Eighth Army ultimately employed five divisions, portions of a sixth division, a separate regimental combat team, and strong guerrilla units in its campaign to reconquer the southern Philippines. This effort began when a regimental combat team of the 41st Division landed on Palawan Island on February 28, 1945. Here, engineers built an air base from which to help cut Japan’s line of communications to the south and to support later advances in the southern Philippines and the Indies. On March 10 another regimental combat team of the 41st, later reinforced, landed near Zamboanga in southwestern Mindanao; and soon thereafter Army units began moving southwest toward Borneo along the Sulu Archipelago. In rapid succession Eighth Army units then landed on Panay, Cebu, northwestern Negros, Bohol, central Mindanao, south-eastern Negros, northern Mindanao, and finally at Sarangani Bay in southern Mindanao, once intended as the first point of reentry into the Philippines. At some locales, bitter fighting raged for a time; but the issue was never in doubt and organized Japanese resistance in the

southern Philippines had largely collapsed by the end of May. Mopping up continued to the end of the war, with reorganized and reequipped guerrilla forces bearing much of the burden.

The last offensives in the Southwest Pacific Area started on May 1, when an Australian brigade went ashore on Tarakan Island, Borneo. Carried to the beaches by landing craft manned by U.S. Army engineers, the Australians had air support from fields on Morotai and in the southern Philippines. On June 10 an Australian division landed at Brunei Bay, Borneo. Another Australian division went ashore at Balikpapan on July 1 in the final amphibious assault of the war.

Iwo Jima and Okinawa

Slow base development at Leyte had forced MacArthur to delay the Luzon invasion from December to January. Nimitz in turn had to postpone his target dates for the Iwo Jima and Okinawa operations, primarily because the bulk of the naval resources in the Pacific—fast carrier task forces, escort carrier groups, assault shipping, naval gunfire support vessels, and amphibious assault craft—had to shift between the two theaters for major operations. The alteration of schedules again illustrated the interdependence of the Southwest and Central Pacific Areas.

The Iwo Jima assault finally took place on February 19, 1945, with the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions supported by minor Army elements making the landings. The 3d Marine Division reinforced the assault, and an Army regiment ultimately took over as island garrison. The marines had to overcome fanatic resistance from firmly entrenched Japanese who held what was probably the strongest defensive system the American forces encountered during the Pacific war, and it took a month of bloody fighting to secure the island. In early March a few crippled B-29s made emergency landings on Iwo; by the end of the month an airfield was fully operational for fighter planes. Later, engineers constructed a heavy bomber field and another fighter base on the island.

The invasion of the Ryukyus began on March 26, when the 77th Division landed on the Kerama Islands, fifteen miles west of Okinawa, to secure a forward naval base, a task traditionally assigned to marines. On April 1 the 7th and 86th Divisions and the 2d and 6th Marine Divisions executed the assault on the main objective, Okinawa. Two more Army divisions and a Marine infantry regiment later reinforced it. Another amphibious assault took place on April 16, when the 77th Division seized Ie Shima, four miles west of Okinawa; the final landing in the Ryukyus came on June 26, when a small force of marines went ashore on Kume Island, fifty miles west of Okinawa. Ground forces at Okinawa were first under the U.S. Tenth Army, Lt. Gen. Simon B. Buckner commanding. When General Buckner was killed in action on June 18, Marine Lt. Gen. Roy S. Geiger took over until General Joseph W. Stilwell, formerly U.S. commander in China and Burma, assumed command on the twenty-third.

The Japanese made no attempt to defend the Okinawa beaches but instead fell back to prepared cave and tunnel defenses on inland hills. Bitterly defending every inch of ground, the Japanese continued organized resistance until late June. Meanwhile, Japanese suicide planes had inflicted extensive damage on Nimitz' naval forces, sink-

LT. GEN. SIMON BOLIVAR BUCKNER, JR. (1886–1945)

Son of a famous Confederate general, Buckner was commissioned in the Infantry when he graduated from West Point in 1908. In May–June 1943 Buckner oversaw the recapture of the Aleutian Islands of Kiska and Attu from the Japanese. In 1945 General Buckner was given command of the Tenth U.S. Army and with it the mission of securing the strategic island of Okinawa. Leading from the front, Buckner repeatedly exposed himself to danger as he toured the front lines to gain a firsthand assessment of the tactical situation. While visiting a forward observation post four days before the campaign concluded, Buckner was mortally wounded by direct fire from a Japanese 47-mm. antitank gun. He was the most senior American officer to lose his life in the Pacific Theater of Operations.



General Buckner

ing 34 ships and damaging another 268 in an unsuccessful attempt to drive Allied naval power from the western Pacific. Skillful small-unit tactics, combined with great concentrations of naval, air, and artillery bombardment, turned the tide of the ground battle on Okinawa itself. Especially noteworthy was the close gunfire support the Navy provided the ground forces and the close air support Army, Navy, and Marine aircraft furnished.

The capture of Okinawa and other positions in the Ryukyus gave the Allies both air and naval bases within easy striking distance of Japan. By early May fighter planes from Okinawa had begun flights over Japan; as rapidly as fields became available, bombers, including units from the Southwest Pacific Area, came forward to mount attacks to prepare for the invasion of the home islands. The forward anchorages in the Ryukyus permitted the Pacific Fleet to stay in almost continuous action against Japanese targets. The Ryukyus campaign had brought Allied forces in the Pacific to Japan's doorstep.

The American Effort in China, Burma, and India

While American forces in the Pacific under the unified direction of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff made spectacular advances, the Allied effort in Southeast Asia bogged down in a mire of conflicting national purposes. The hopes Americans held in the early stages of the war that Chinese manpower and bases would play a vitally important role in the defeat of Japan were doomed to disappointment. Americans sought to achieve great aims on the Asiatic mainland at small cost, looking to the British in India and the Chinese, with their vast reservoirs of manpower,

to carry the main burden of ground conflict. Neither proved capable of exerting the effort the Americans expected of them.

Early in 1942 the United States had sent General Stilwell to the Far East to command American forces in China, Burma, and India and to serve as Chief of Staff and principal adviser to Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of Nationalist China and Allied commander of the China Theater. Stilwell's stated mission was "to assist in improving the efficiency of the Chinese Army." The Japanese conquest of Burma, cutting the last overland supply route to China, frustrated Stilwell's designs, for it left a long and difficult airlift from Assam to Kunming over the high peaks of the Himalayas as the only remaining avenue for the flow of supplies. The Americans assumed responsibility for the airlift, but its development was slow, hampered by a scarcity of transport planes, airfields, and trained pilots. Not until late in 1943 did it reach a monthly capacity of 10,000 tons, and in the intervening months few supplies reached China. The economy of the country continually tottered on the brink of collapse; and the Chinese Army, although it was a massive force on paper, remained ill organized, ill equipped, poorly led, and generally incapable of offensive action.

Stilwell thought that the only solution was to retake Burma and reopen the land supply line to China, and this became the position of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. To achieve the goal, Stilwell undertook the training and equipping of a Chinese force in India that eventually consisted of three divisions and sought to concentrate a much larger force in Yunnan Province in China and to give it offensive capability. With these two Chinese forces he hoped to form a junction in north Burma, thus reestablishing land communications between China and India. Stilwell's scheme became part of the larger plan, ANAKIM, which the Combined Chiefs of Staff had approved at the Casablanca Conference. Neither the British nor the Chinese, however, had any real enthusiasm for ANAKIM, and in retrospect it seems clear that its execution in 1943 was beyond the capabilities of forces in the theater. Moreover, Chiang was quite dilatory in concentrating a force in Yunnan, and the British were more interested in southern Burma. Maj. Gen. Claire L. Chennault, commanding the small American air force in China, urged that the supplies flowing by air over the Himalayas (the "Hump") should be used to support an air effort in China, rather than to supply Chinese ground forces. Chennault promised amazing results at small cost, and his proposals attracted President Franklin D. Roosevelt as well as the British and the Chinese.

STILWELL IN CHINA

Having served for thirteen years in China between the World Wars as a language officer and military attaché, Joseph W. Stilwell (1883–1946) seemed a natural as the American Chief of Staff to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. But his caustic demeanor eventually led to his recall from China at Chiang's request. His 140-mile trek by train, truck, jeep, and on foot away from Japanese forces and into India was typical of his leadership style—he led from the front. His acerbic wit, candor, and identification with the common infantryman led to his well-deserved nickname, Vinegar Joe.

THE BURMA ROAD

In early 1942 the Japanese closed the Burma Road, 700 miles of dirt highway representing China's last overland link to the outside world. While transports flew supplies through the Himalayas to China and forces under General Stilwell cleared northern Burma, American engineers built a new route from India through rugged jungle terrain to connect with the old road. In February 1945 the first convoy passed the linkup on the renamed Stilwell Road, covering 928 miles from Ledo to Kunming, China.



General Stilwell (seated, left) confers with Maj. Gen. Liao Yau Siang, who commanded one of the divisions pushing back the Japanese in northern Burma.

As an upshot, at the TRIDENT Conference in May 1943, the amphibious operation against Rangoon was canceled and a new plan for operations emerged that stressed Chennault's air operations and provided for a lesser ground offensive in central and northern Burma. Under this concept a new road would be built from Ledo in Assam Province, India, to join with the trace of the old Burma Road inside China. The Americans assumed responsibility for building the Ledo Road in the rear of Chinese forces advancing from India into Burma.

Logistical difficulties in India again delayed the opening of any land offensive and kept the airlift well below target figures. Until the supply line north from Calcutta to the British and Chinese fronts could be improved—this took well over a year—both air and ground operations against the Japanese in Burma were handicapped. In October 1943 Chinese troops under Stilwell did start to clear northern Burma, and in the spring of 1944 a U.S. Army unit of regiment size, nicknamed Merrill's Marauders, spearheaded new offensives to secure the trace for the overland road. But Myitkyina, the key point in the Japanese defenses in north Burma, did not fall until August 2; by that time the effort in Burma had been relegated to a subsidiary role.

After the SEXTANT Conference in late 1943, in fact, the American staff no longer regarded as probable that the overland route to China could be opened in time to permit Chinese forces to drive to the coast by the time American forces advancing across the Pacific arrived. While the Americans insisted on continuing the effort to open the Ledo Road, they now gave first priority to an air effort in China in support of the Pacific campaigns. The Army Air Forces in May 1944 started to deploy the first of its B-29 groups to airfields in eastern China to commence bombing of strategic targets in Korea, Manchuria, and Japan. At the same time Chennault's 14th Air Force was directed to stockpile supplies for missions in support of Pacific forces as they neared the China coast. Again these projects proved to be more than could be supported over the Hump, particularly since transports also had to supply the ground

effort of both British and Chinese forces. Then the Japanese reacted strongly to the increased air effort and launched a ground offensive that overran most of the existing fields and proposed air base sites in eastern China. Both air and ground resources inside China had to be diverted to oppose the Japanese advance. The B-29s were removed to India in January 1945 and two months later were sent to Saipan, where the major strategic bombing offensive against Japan was by that time being mounted. The air effort in China without the protection of an efficient Chinese Army fulfilled few of the goals proclaimed for it.

To meet the crisis in China, President Roosevelt urged Chiang to place his U.S.-supported armies under the command of General Stilwell; Chiang eventually refused and asked for Stilwell's recall, which the President honored. In September 1944 Maj. Gen. Albert C. Wedemeyer replaced Stilwell as Chief of Staff to Chiang and commander of American forces in the China Theater; a separate theater in India and Burma was created with Lt. Gen. Dan I. Sultan as its commanding general. The command issue was dropped, and the American strategy in China became simply trying to realize at least something from previous investments without additional commitments.

Ironically enough, it was in this phase, after the Pacific advances had outrun those in Southeast Asia, that objects of the 1942 strategy were realized, in large part because the Japanese, having failed in their 1944 offensive against India and hard pressed everywhere, could no longer adequately support their forces in Burma and China. British and Chinese forces advanced rapidly into Burma in the fall of 1944; and, on January 27, 1945, the junction between Chinese forces advancing from India and Yunnan finally took place, securing the trace of the Ledo Road. To the south, the British completed the conquest of central Burma and entered Rangoon overland from the north early in May. The land route to China was thus finally secured on all sides, but the Americans had already decided that they would develop the Ledo Road only as a one-way highway, though they did expand the airlift to the point where in July 1945 it carried 74,000 tons of supplies into China.

With increased American supply support, Wedemeyer was able to make more progress in equipping and training the Chinese Army. Under his tutelage the Chinese were able to halt the Japanese advance at Chihchiang in April 1945. As the Japanese began to withdraw to prepare a citadel defense of their home islands, Wedemeyer and the Chinese laid plans to seize a port on the Chinese coast. The war came to an end before this operation even started and before the training and equipping of a Chinese Army was anywhere near complete. Chiang's forces commenced the reoccupation of their homeland still, for the most part, ill equipped, ill organized, and poorly led.

The Japanese Surrender

During the summer of 1945 Allied forces in the Pacific had stepped up the pace of their air and naval attacks against Japan. In June and July carrier-based planes of the U.S. Pacific Fleet and U.S. Army Air Forces planes from the Marianas, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa struck the Japanese home islands continuously. During July Pacific Fleet surface units bombarded Japan's east coast, and in the same month a British carrier task

force joined the attack. Planes from the Philippines hit Japanese shipping in the South China Sea and extended their strikes as far as Formosa and other targets along the South China coast. American submarines redoubled their efforts to sweep Japanese shipping from the sea and sever the shipping lanes from Japan to the Indies and Southeast Asia. Throughout the war, in fact, submarines had preyed on Japanese merchant and combat vessels, playing a major role in isolating Japan from its conquests and thereby drastically reducing Japan's ability to wage war.

After Germany's surrender in May the United States embarked upon a huge logistical effort to redeploy to the Pacific more than a million troops from Europe, the United States, and other inactive theaters. The aim was to complete the redeployment in time to launch an invasion of Japan on November 1, and the task had to be undertaken in the face of competing shipping demands for demobilization of long-service troops, British redeployment, and civil relief in Europe. By the time the war ended, some 150,000 men had moved from Europe directly to the Pacific; but a larger transfer from the United States across the Pacific had scarcely begun. In the Pacific, MacArthur and Nimitz had been sparing no effort to expand ports and ready bases to receive the expected influx and to mount invasion forces. The two commanders were also completing plans for the invasion of Japan. In the last stage of the war, as all forces converged on Japan, the area unified commands gave way to an arrangement that made MacArthur commander of all Army forces in the Pacific and Nimitz commander of all Navy forces.

By midsummer of 1945 most responsible leaders in Japan realized that the end was near. In June those favoring a negotiated settlement had come out in the open, and Japan had already dispatched peace feelers through the Soviet Union, a country it feared might also be about to enter the war in spite of a nonaggression treaty between the two nations. As early as the Tehran Conference in late 1943 Stalin had promised to enter the war against Japan, and all agreed at Yalta in February 1945 that the USSR would do so three months after the defeat of Germany. At the Potsdam Conference in July, the Soviet Union reaffirmed its agreement to declare war on Japan. The United States and Britain with China issued the famed



Allied prisoners of war at a camp near Yokohama cheer for their rescuers.

Potsdam Declaration calling upon Japan to surrender promptly; about the same time President Harry S. Truman decided to employ the newly tested atomic bomb against Japan in the event of continued Japanese resistance.

Despite the changing climate of opinion in Japan, the still-powerful Japanese military blocked negotiations by insisting on fighting a decisive battle of defense of the empire's home shores. Thus the Japanese government announced its intention to ignore the terms of the Potsdam Declaration. Accordingly, on August 6 a lone American B-29 from the Marianas dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. On the ninth the Soviet Union came into the war and attacked Japanese forces in Manchuria and another B-29 dropped an atomic bomb on Nagasaki. The next day Japan sued for peace. With the signing of surrender terms aboard the USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay on September 2, the bitter global war came to an end.

Retrospect

In winning the Pacific war the Allies had found it unnecessary to press home their attacks and destroy the Japanese military forces except



MacArthur Reviews Battle, Gary Sheadan, 1944

for the Japanese Fleet. By the end of the war Japan's Navy had virtually ceased to exist, Japanese industry had been so hammered by air bombardment that Japan's ability to wage war was seriously reduced, and U.S. submarine and air actions had cut off sources of raw material. At the time of the surrender Japan still had 2 million men under arms in the homeland and was capable of conducting a tenacious ground defense; about 5,000 Japanese aircraft were also operational. Nevertheless, the Japanese could not have continued the war into the spring of 1946. The Japanese Army had concentrated its forces along the designated U.S. invasion beaches expecting to bloody the invaders in hopes of securing better terms. The fact that an invasion was not necessary doubtless spared many American and Japanese lives.

The great arbiter of the Pacific war had been the American industrial power that had produced a mighty war machine. Out of this production had come the Pacific Fleet, a potent force that could overcome the vast reaches of the Pacific upon which the Japanese had depended so heavily as a defensive advantage. The decisive combat element of the fleet was the fast carrier task force, which carried the war deep into Japanese territory and supported advances far beyond the range of land-based aircraft. Land-based air power also played a decisive part. When carriers were not available to support offensives, land-based aviation measured the distance of each forward move. Land-based aviation proved important as well in providing close support for ground operations, while aerial supply operations and troop movements contributed greatly to the success of the Allied campaigns.

Both naval and air forces depended on shore installations, and the war in the Pacific demonstrated that even in a predominantly naval/air theater, ground combat forces are an essential part of the offensive team. The Japanese had also been depended on far-flung bases, so that much of the Allied effort during the war had gone into the seizure or neutralization of Japan's air and naval strongholds. Thus, the Pacific war was in large measure a struggle for bases. However, the U.S. Pacific Fleet, in one of the greatest logistical developments of the war, went far in the direction of carrying its own bases with it by organizing fleet trains of support vessels that could maintain the fleet at sea over extended periods, minimizing some of its basing requirements.

Another important facet of the Pacific war, the development and employment of amphibious assault techniques, repeatedly demonstrated the need for unified command. Air, ground, and naval teamwork, supremely important in the struggle against Japan, occasionally broke down; but the success of the Allied campaigns illustrates that all three elements achieved that cooperation to a large degree. Strategic air bombardment in the Pacific, designed to cripple Japan's industrial capacity, did not get under way until much of 1945 had passed. The damage inflicted on Japanese cities, especially by incendiary aerial bombardment, was enormous. The effect, as in the case of the bomber offensive against Germany, remains contentious; though the bombardment began to bring home to the Japanese people that the war was lost. The atomic bombings were the capstone of that effort. The submarine played a vital role in reducing Japan's capabilities by taking a huge toll of Japanese shipping and by helping to cut Japan off from the resources of Southeast Asia.

In the final analysis Japan lost because the country did not have the means to fight a total war against the combination of industrial, air, naval, and human resources represented by the United States and its Allies. Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, commander of the Japanese Fleet at the outbreak of the war, put his finger on the fatal weakness of the Japanese concept of the war: "It is not enough that we should take Guam and the Philippines, or even Hawaii and San Francisco. We should have to march into Washington and sign the treaty in the White House." This the Japanese could never do; because they could not, they had to lose the war.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did Japan go to war? How did she plan to win?
2. How successful was Army and Navy cooperation in the Pacific? In the Central Pacific? In the Southwest Pacific?
3. Why was the United States so deeply involved in operations in Burma? Was this the best use of resources?
4. Would it have made more strategic sense to bypass the Philippines and strike Formosa directly before moving against Okinawa? Why or why not?
5. Was the Allied dual-thrust strategy the best one to use in the Pacific war? Why or why not?
6. Should the United States have resorted to using the atomic bomb to force Japan's surrender? What about the second atomic bomb? Justify your answers.

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