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MIS Nisei Pioneers, May 1942–February 1943

Beginning in May 1942, Nisei graduates of the Fourth Army Intelligence School served in the early campaigns against Japanese forces from Alaska to Guadalcanal to Papua New Guinea. Until then, using Nisei as interpreters and translators against the Japanese was an untested concept. However, the initial results were so positive the War Department quickly increased the size of the school. Furthermore, the War Department decided to allow Nisei volunteers to serve in two all-Nisei combat units, the 100th Infantry Battalion and the 442d Regimental Combat Team (RCT), which saw action in Italy and France from 1943 to 1945.

On 1 May 1942, the Fourth Army Intelligence School held its first graduation ceremony at Crissy Field for forty Nisei enlisted men and two reserve officers who had completed the six-month course in Japanese. When the class began, their country was at peace. Now America was at war, and San Francisco was still blacked out as a precaution against air raids. The city's several thousand individuals of Japanese ancestry were waiting for the Western Defense Command to remove them to a temporary assembly area at the Tanforan racetrack.

The Nisei graduates did not know whether they would be sent to Tanforan or somewhere else. From December 1941 to May 1942, America had suffered a string of overseas disasters unprecedented in the nation's history. The Nisei's families faced an equally unprecedented series of disasters, culminating in their wholesale removal from the coast. What would be the fate of Nisei already in uniform? Would the Army place them in special camps or labor service units, or would they get a chance to prove themselves? If they turned their thoughts from their families

to the world situation, there was still little to reassure them. Several weeks before graduation, one of their fellow students, Masanori Minamoto, shipped out and had not been heard from since. Shortly after graduation, orders arrived for most of the class; they boarded transports for destinations unknown.

In the Philippines, even America's best-known soldier, General Douglas MacArthur, could not hold back the Japanese onslaught. His air forces had been destroyed on the ground. The American and Filipino defenders of Bataan had surrendered in April; those on Corregidor would soon follow. The British, French, and Dutch empires had folded like houses of cards. Japanese forces threatened India and Australia and pressed toward U.S. territories in the Aleutian and Hawaiian island chains. Lt. Col. James H. Doolittle and Army Air Corps fliers had just staged a daring raid on Japanese cities on 18 April. Japanese retaliation was expected at any moment somewhere in Hawaii, Alaska, or the West Coast.

In the weeks ahead, America would narrowly win its first victories in the Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway. In both cases, a handful of Navy intelligence specialists would use their ingenuity to help turn the tide. These intelligence victories were won with only a handful of Japanese linguists, none of them Japanese Americans.

American commanders were desperate for reliable information on the enemy's next moves. Where would he strike next? What forces would he bring to bear? The Fourth Army Intelligence School's graduates, men who could help answer those questions, would amount to more than half of all Japanese linguists in the Army and Navy. They were ready to go wherever the need was greatest.

During the last weeks before graduation, staff officers in the Far Eastern Branch of the Military Intelligence Division (MID) allocated the precious graduates. Lt. Col. Moses W. Pettigrew offered the Nisei to various interested headquarters. In April MID offered one Caucasian language officer and five Nisei enlisted men to the 37th Division preparing for deployment to the South Pacific. MID assured the division, "All enlisted men have been checked for loyalty, and all come from families having no close relatives in Japan, and it is believed that they will be found both useful and trustworthy."¹

MID was leery of promising too much, since it had barely three dozen graduates to dispatch. Of the fifty-eight Nisei selected for training, only forty completed the course. Caucasian students had fared even worse: Several dozen from the Regular Army, Officers' Reserve Corps, and National Guard came to Crissy Field claiming some knowledge of the language; but only two finished the course that spring. When the Western Defense Command ordered all Japanese removed from the West Coast, the school had to relocate. With ten graduates held back as enlisted instructors, only thirty Nisei remained available for field duty.

¹ Ltr, MID to Assistant Chief of Staff (ACS), G-2, 37th Div, 3 Apr 42, sub: Japanese Interrogators and Translators, MID 350.03, Trng Grp, Ofc of the Dir of Intel G-2, Record Group (RG) 165, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

Colonel Pettigrew and his Far Eastern Branch made tough choices based on their appreciation of the strategic situation in May 1942. No Nisei deployed to Hawaii, where the threat was greatest. Instead, they went to Alaska, Australia, and the South Pacific. Five Nisei went to the Alaska Defense Command. A Caucasian officer with eight Nisei went to Australia, where MacArthur was establishing General Headquarters (GHQ), Southwest Pacific Area. MID sent the rest to the South Pacific: an officer and three Nisei to Fiji with the 37th Infantry Division and six Nisei to New Caledonia. Their job was to help stop Japanese forces from cutting the tenuous lifeline from the United States to Australia and New Zealand.²

The shortage of Japanese-language specialists in the United States remained critical. *Life* magazine claimed in September 1942 that fewer than 100 Caucasians in America could speak or read Japanese. The author asserted: “One of the most troublesome war shortages faced by the U.S. since Pearl Harbor has been the acute lack of non-Japanese American citizens who understand the Japanese language. Various Government agencies have been combing the country for months trying to find men and women qualified to serve as interpreters, code-room assistants and censors. The results of this hunt have been depressing.” Counting individuals “with full command of the language,” the author reported that “the most optimistic estimates from Washington put the number at less than 100 persons.” This number obviously did not include Americans of Japanese ancestry.³ The outbreak of war precipitated a flood of popular literature about Japan that often stressed the difficulty of the language. “Our difficulties in [understanding the Japanese Army],” one such book declared, “are greatly increased by the inscrutable Jap language which, to all intents and purposes, denies us access to the Japanese military literature.”⁴

Intelligence in Hawaii: Pearl Harbor to Midway

After the Crissy Field graduation, none of the Nisei linguists deployed to the point of greatest danger—Hawaii. In fact, in May 1942 the Hawaiian Department was planning to send away most of its Nisei soldiers. Army and Navy intelligence officers in Hawaii had worked out a division of effort: The Navy would defend against further external attack, while the Army would counter any internal threat of espionage or sabotage. Naval intelligence thus would focus on the Japanese fleet, while Army intelligence would focus on the local Japanese population. Neither requested Nisei for language work.

² Unless otherwise indicated, assignment information is based on Military Intelligence Service Language School (MISLS), Disposition of Graduates, Trng Grp, Ofc of the Dir of Intel G-2, RG 165, NARA.

³ Francis S. Wickware, “The Japanese Language,” *Life* (7 September 1942): 58–65. See also the letters in response published in the 28 September issue.

⁴ Wickware, “Japanese Language”; Lt. Col. Paul W. Thompson et al., *How the Jap Army Fights* (Washington, D.C.: Infantry Journal Press, 1942).

Naval intelligence in Hawaii included a small signals intelligence capability, the Combat Intelligence Unit under Cmdr. Joseph J. Rochefort. Later renamed the Fleet Radio Unit, Pacific (FRUPAC), this unit was already working in the secret world of communications intelligence.⁵ Both Rochefort and Lt. Cmdr. Edwin T. Layton, the Pacific Fleet intelligence officer, had previously studied in Tokyo as language attachés. Rochefort already had several naval officers in FRUPAC who could read Japanese messages, though the volume of intercepted messages was still low. Rochefort sent individual language officers to accompany early aircraft-carrier raids against Japanese naval bases, beginning with the raid on Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands on 1 February 1942. The 14th Naval District intelligence officer had one trusted Nisei on staff, Hawaii-born Douglas T. Wada, who worked in counterintelligence; but the Navy did not use him for combat intelligence. Among naval intelligence personnel were five Caucasian language officers who had been withdrawn from Tokyo in November 1941. More language officers were in training on the mainland, but the first would not arrive in Hawaii until February 1943, fourteen months after the Pearl Harbor attack.⁶

Army leaders in Hawaii were more inclined to trust the Hawaii Japanese, especially the Nisei. This may have been due in part to their positive experiences with Nisei soldiers drafted in Hawaii since 1940. Even before that, in the 1920s and 1930s, many Nisei boys trained in the ROTC program at McKinley High School in Honolulu and many others earned reserve commissions through the ROTC at the University of Hawaii. The Hawaiian Department G-2 employed one Nisei, Gero Iwai, in counterintelligence. Immediately after the start of the war, Selective Service boards in Hawaii suspended inductions of Nisei. By that point the Hawaiian Department already had 2,000 Nisei in uniform. After the attack, local commanders deployed their soldiers, including the Nisei, to guard landing sites and critical public facilities. However, when sufficient reinforcements arrived from the mainland over the next few months, the Hawaiian Department shipped more than 1,400 Nisei soldiers to the mainland on 5 June 1942 to form the 100th

⁵ ACS for Intelligence, Commander in Chief, Pacific Ocean Area, Rpt of Intelligence Activities in the Pacific Ocean Areas, 15 Oct 45. Alan H. Bath, *Tracking the Axis Enemy: The Triumph of Anglo-American Naval Intelligence* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998); W. J. Holmes, *Double-Edged Secrets: U.S. Naval Intelligence Operations in the Pacific during World War II* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1979); Edwin T. Layton, *"And I Was There": Pearl Harbor and Midway—Breaking the Secrets* (New York: William Morrow, 1985); Ronald Lewin, *The American Magic: Codes, Ciphers and the Defeat of Japan* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1982); Frederick D. Parker, *A Priceless Advantage: U.S. Navy Communications Intelligence and the Battles of Coral Sea, Midway, and the Aleutians*, United States Cryptologic History, ser. IV, World War II (Fort Meade, Md.: National Security Agency, 1993), vol. 5; John Prados, *Combined Fleet Decoded: The Secret History of American Intelligence and the Japanese Navy in World War II* (New York: Random House, 1995), pp. 223–335; Edward Van Der Rhoer, *Deadly Magic: A Personal Account of Communications Intelligence in World War II in the Pacific* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978); John Winton, *Ultra in the Pacific: How Breaking Japanese Codes & Cyphers Affected Naval Operations against Japan, 1941–45* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1993).

⁶ Holmes, *Double-Edged Secrets*, pp. 36–37, 57–58; Prados, *Combined Fleet Decoded*, pp. 287–88.

Infantry Battalion (Separate). The Nisei soldiers who remained in Hawaii worked in engineer and other noncombat units.

For more than a year after the Pearl Harbor attack, Army and Navy intelligence officers in Hawaii struggled to meet growing demands for Japanese-language work without using the thousands of Nisei citizens on the islands. When the Imperial Japanese Navy struck at Midway in June, FRUPAC played a critical role in the narrow victory with its brilliant cryptographers and a handful of Japanese linguists, none of them Nisei. During the battle, the U.S. Navy captured about thirty Japanese sailors and aviators whom Caucasian language officers interrogated.⁷ Shortly afterward the Navy organized the Intelligence Center Pacific Ocean Areas, which included some Caucasian Japanese linguists but no Nisei.

Intelligence in Alaska: Defending the Aleutian Islands

The Western Defense Command, which directly controlled the Fourth Army Intelligence School, was an active theater of war. In the spring of 1942 Lt. Gen. John L. DeWitt and his staff were planning two major operations: the removal of all Japanese Americans from the West Coast and the defense of Alaska. The Western Defense Command requested five Nisei for the Alaska Defense Command. On 12 May Sgt. Yoshio Hotta led four other Nisei to Anchorage; from there, they dispersed to other bases in Alaska and the Aleutians. In early June a Japanese naval task force approached the Aleutians, and on 3 and 4 June Japanese aircraft raided Dutch Harbor, killing forty-three American soldiers and sailors. At least one Nisei linguist, Henry Suyehiro, witnessed the attack but was unhurt. One week later U.S. Navy reconnaissance aircraft discovered that the Japanese had landed on the fog-bound islands of Attu and Kiska, much farther to the west along the Aleutian chain.

The five Nisei sat out the next few months in Alaska, where their major task was keeping warm. They had no prisoners to interrogate and few documents to translate, including those confiscated from the handful of Japanese settlers in the region. Throughout the autumn and winter the Nisei waited for an enemy who never came. A few weeks later the Americans located a Japanese Zero fighter plane that had crash-landed near Dutch Harbor and called on Sergeant Hotta to help investigate the wreckage.⁸ Meanwhile, the Western Defense Command removed all civilians of Japanese ancestry from Alaska, 230 in all, and about 900 Aleuts. American offensive operations had to wait until the following spring to drive the

⁷ Prados, *Combined Fleet Decoded*, pp. 328, 495; Holmes, *Double-Edged Secrets*, pp. 122–23.

⁸ Henry Suyehiro, in David W. Swift, Jr., ed., “First Class,” Unpubl Ms, 2000, copy in author’s files; Brian Garfield, *The Thousand Mile War: World War II in Alaska and the Aleutians* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969), pp. 41–42; James S. Russell, “A Zero Is Found Bottom Up in a Bog,” in *The Pacific War Remembered*, ed. John T. Mason (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1986), pp. 108–11; Jim Rearden, *Cracking the Zero Mystery* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Stackpole, 1990); John Toland, *The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1936–1945* (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 499.

Japanese from American soil. American reinforcements continued to pour into the region, including fifteen more Nisei enlisted graduates who arrived in December 1942 and January 1943 with three Caucasian language officers.

Intelligence in the South Pacific Area: The Guadalcanal Campaign

In the spring of 1942 the South Pacific was the point of greatest risk for the Allied cause, as the United States struggled to keep open the lines of communication with Australia and New Zealand. MID sent some of the first Nisei graduates to this region and to Australia. Naval intelligence officers were groping in the dark, hoping somehow to provide advance warning of the next Japanese attack. From aerial reconnaissance covering thousands of square miles of open ocean, they tracked the Imperial Japanese Navy. They gathered information about possible landing sites from travel literature and by interviewing former residents. They established a tenuous network of "coast watchers," Australian and New Zealand civilians who had worked in the region before the war. They relied on naval intelligence in Hawaii for radio intelligence. In May the Japanese landed forces on Tulagi and Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands and began constructing airfields. This was the advance the Allies had feared. American commanders began planning for a counteroffensive.

In April 1942 the Fourth Army Intelligence School sent the first Nisei, Masanori Minamoto, to the South Pacific. Minamoto, who had spent many years in Japan before the war, went to the 102d Infantry (BOBCAT Task Force) at Bora Bora. (*Map 2*) He found little in the way of any intelligence setup and little language work to do, with no prisoners to interrogate and no captured documents to translate. With no officer to give him assignments, he was detailed to drive a truck.⁹

After graduation, Sgt. Mac N. Nagata led five other Nisei to the South Pacific, departing San Francisco on 7 May. They joined the Americal Division at Noumea, New Caledonia, on 10 June. The colonial French port was rapidly becoming the hub of U.S. military operations in the region. In July the Commander, South Pacific (COMSOPAC), established his headquarters there. The sergeant who picked up the Nisei at the dock told them that the truck had to remain covered because their presence in New Caledonia had to remain secret. At first the Nisei had little to do except pull guard duty around division headquarters and watch the American movies each week. They translated occasional Japanese letters, magazines, and books confiscated from the handful of Japanese residents in the region. Their first prisoner was a downed Japanese pilot in June. That autumn Admiral William F. Halsey summoned two Nisei to interrogate six downed Japanese pilots. Their

⁹ Joseph D. Harrington, *Yankee Samurai: The Secret Role of Nisei in America's Pacific Victory* (Detroit: Pettigrew Enterprises, 1979), pp. 31, 70–71; *The Pacific War and Peace: Americans of Japanese Ancestry in Military Intelligence Service, 1941 to 1952* (San Francisco: Military Intelligence Service Association of Northern California/National Japanese American Historical Society, 1991), p. 17. Harrington mistakes K. K. Sakamoto for Minamoto; Tateshi Miyasaki recalls that Minamoto was on Tongatabu.

faces were badly burned, and only two could open their mouths enough to speak. The Nisei questioned the injured pilots but could find out only one or two of their names. Those who could talk would only whisper, "Kill me." Halsey was disappointed and unleashed his fury on the Nisei: "Goddamn you bastards; what in the goddamn hell did the government send you to school for?"¹⁰

The three Nisei assigned to the 37th Division had considerable trouble linking with their unit. The division was stationed at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, when the Nisei's orders arrived, so they took a train from San Francisco to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where a friendly military policeman gave them a ride to the post. When the Nisei arrived, the division had already left for the West Coast, so the Nisei were arrested for being absent without leave. The next day they convinced the authorities of their identities and took a train back to San Francisco, where they caught up with the division just in time to board the SS *President Coolidge*, departing on 25 May for the long, zigzag voyage to Fiji.¹¹

Capt. John A. Burden, one of the first two Caucasian graduates of the school, accompanied the three Nisei overseas. Having been born in Japan, Burden spoke excellent Japanese.¹² In Fiji, as in New Caledonia, the linguists found no prisoners to interrogate and no captured documents to translate. Burden became the division counterintelligence officer and used the Nisei and ten other soldiers to help monitor the main telephone switchboard. He also assigned the Nisei to monitor Japanese shortwave-radio news broadcasts.¹³

At this point, Army and Navy intelligence officers were desperate for any scraps of information about the enemy. In August two submarines carried a marine raiding party to Makin in the Central Pacific to uncover Japanese intentions. Among the raiders who lost their lives in the effort was their Japanese-language officer, Capt. Gerald P. Holtom, a marine who had been born in Japan. The raiders returned to Hawaii with large quantities of captured documents, which

¹⁰ Ltr, Roy Kawashiri to Joseph Harrington, 7 December 1977, Kawashiri File, Joseph D. Harrington Papers, National Japanese Historical Society (NJAHS), San Francisco, Calif.; Harrington, *Yankee Samurai*, pp. 31, 108–09; Ltr, Isao Kusuda to Joseph Harrington, [1977?], Harrington Papers; Shigeru Yamashita, Biography, Military Intelligence Service Club of Northern California (this and similar biographies hereafter cited as MISNorCal Bios). Jim Masaru Ariyasu, in Swift, "First Class," p. 12.

¹¹ Tateshi Miyasaki, MISNorCal Bio.

¹² Intervs, Joseph Harrington with John Burden, 11 Dec 77, Harrington Papers; Loni Ding, Eric Saul, and Shigeya Kihara with John Burden, 30 Sep 86, NJAHS; author with John Burden, 5 Dec 94. John Burden autobiography, Unpubl Ms, 1992, copy in author's files; Arnold T. Hiura, "MIS Profile: John Alfred Burden," *Hawaii Herald*, 2 Jul 93; Ted T. Tsukiyama, "Dr. Alfred J. [sic] Burden, Col.: MIS Pioneer," in Ted T. Tsukiyama et al., eds., *Secret Valor: M.I.S. Personnel, World War II Pacific Theater, Pre–Pearl Harbor to Sept. 8, 1951* (Honolulu: Military Intelligence Service Veterans Club of Hawaii, 1993), pp. 52–55; Lyn Crost, *Honor by Fire: Japanese Americans at War in Europe and the Pacific* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1994), pp. 47–53; John Burden Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, Stanford, Calif.

¹³ Harrington, *Yankee Samurai*, pp. 85–86; Miyasaki, MISNorCal Bio; Duval A. Edwards, *Spy Catchers of the U.S. Army in the War with Japan* (Gig Harbor, Wash.: Red Apple Publishing, 1994), pp. 59–60.

Caucasian language officers eagerly translated and studied. Capt. Ellis M. Zacharias, U.S. Navy, deputy director of Naval Intelligence, later called this “the first major haul as far as enemy documents were concerned.” The materials included “plans, charts and battle orders, including one top-secret map which revealed the exact air defenses of all Japanese Pacific islands, the strength of the air forces stationed on them, their radius, methods of alert, types of planes used—and above all, operational plans for any future emergency.”¹⁴

On 7 August the 1st Marine Division landed on Tulagi and Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. At the time the marines had only a handful of Japanese-speaking officers. A few officers and enlisted marines had taken a six-month course at San Diego, but they had no Nisei linguists. In any event, the marines took few prisoners on Guadalcanal and got little useful information from the ones they did.¹⁵ Their unwillingness to take prisoners was reinforced early in the battle, on 12 August, when the division intelligence officer, Lt. Col. Frank B. Goettge, led a patrol behind Japanese lines. The Japanese ambushed the patrol, and survivors told of watching Japanese soldiers execute the wounded marines they had left behind. The story was widely told among American military personnel, who believed that it proved Japanese treachery.¹⁶ This racial hatred soon spread to most Americans in the Pacific Theater.¹⁷ Goettge died in the ambush, as did a marine language officer, 1st Lt. Ralph Cory. Until a just few months before, Cory had worked in OP-20-G, Navy signals intelligence, in Washington and thus was familiar with recent American cryptologic successes. Only a desperate shortage of linguists might explain why the marines allowed such an important intelligence officer to accompany a high-risk combat patrol. His capture might have alerted the Japanese that the Americans were reading their highest level diplomatic messages.¹⁸

Back in New Caledonia, the six Nisei supported the marines from a distance. They translated documents captured at the front, but the information was often

¹⁴ Ellis M. Zacharias, *Secret Missions: The Story of an Intelligence Officer* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1946), p. 318.

¹⁵ Prados, *Combined Fleet Decoded*, pp. 377–78. In October 1942 a Navy language officer was assigned to a mobile radio intelligence unit at Henderson Field on Guadalcanal. The Navy may have used two Japanese-speaking Korean Americans to help with the language work on Guadalcanal. Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1989), p. 366.

¹⁶ For the impact of the Goettge incident, see George McMillan, *The Old Breed: A History of the First Marine Division in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Infantry Journal Press, 1949), pp. 52–56; William Manchester, *Goodbye, Darkness: A Memoir of the Pacific War* (New York: Dell, 1980), pp. 219–20; E. B. Sledge, *With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 33–34.

¹⁷ For racism during the Pacific War, see John W. Dower, *War without Mercy* (New York: Pantheon, 1986). For more recent interpretations, see Eric Bergerud, *Touched with Fire: The Land War in the South Pacific* (New York: Penguin, 1996), pp. 403–25; John A. Lynn, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2003), pp. 219–80; Peter Schrijvers, *The GI War against Japan: American Soldiers in Asia and the Pacific during World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), ch. 9.

¹⁸ Lewin, *American Magic*, p. 123.

long out of date. Nevertheless, their commanders valued the Nisei's work. MID directed the school to send out more graduates as early as possible. From September through November the school sent out six more Nisei and several more Caucasian officers. The Nisei translated documents, diaries, and letters. Most contained little of intelligence value, but some revealed a wealth of information. On Tulagi, the marines found a list of call signs and code names of all Imperial Japanese Navy ships and air bases. This was flown to Noumea, where the Nisei worked 24-hour shifts for several days to translate. Shigeru Yamashita, who had been born in California but had lived in Japan from age three to nineteen, considered the task a personal challenge: "Even though there were no officers bearing down on [the Nisei], they were determined to show their country that loyalty and honor were an integral part of the fabric they were made of and taking away their outer freedom didn't change that. They were acutely aware that the translation of this Japanese Navy book would be a significant triumph to their country and . . . to them as Japanese Americans as well."¹⁹

Some documents went immediately to Hawaii, where graduates from the Navy language school in Boulder, Colorado, translated them. Among the first of the Boulder graduates to arrive in Hawaii was Ens. Donald Keene, who noticed "a box filled with malodorous little books...and was informed that these were diaries taken from the bodies of dead Japanese soldiers and sailors. The odor was caused by the dried blood with which many of the diaries were stained." He related that he "gingerly selected a diary without any noticeable bloodstains, and began to read."²⁰

In October the Americal Division sent an infantry regiment to reinforce the marines on Guadalcanal. The rest of the division followed in November, but the six Nisei stayed behind at COMSOPAC headquarters.²¹ Meanwhile, in Fiji, Burden and his three Nisei continued to monitor the telephones and had no chance to help with the fight in Guadalcanal. At one point Takashi and Takeo Kubo interrogated a downed Japanese pilot; another time they interrogated a captured eighteen-year-old Japanese submariner.²² This might have been the fate of all the Nisei, far from the action and relegated to lower level duties. It seemed that the war was passing them by.

Even Burden was feeling left out. One evening while pulling telephone duty, he overheard a message from Guadalcanal highlighting the urgent need for a

¹⁹ Harrington, *Yankee Samurai*, p. 112; Yamashita, MISNorCal Bio; Kawashiri File, Harrington Papers; Ltr, Kusuda to Harrington, Harrington Papers; Ariyasu, in Swift, "First Class," p. 7. Shigeru Yamashita, in Swift, "First Class," p. 1. These may have been the materials recovered from the submarine I-1, sunk near Guadalcanal on 29 January 1943. See Richard B. Frank, *Guadalcanal* (New York: Random House, 1990), pp. 575-76 and note; Holmes, *Double-Edged Secrets*, pp. 124-25; Prados, *Combined Fleet Decoded*, pp. 400-402.

²⁰ Holmes, *Double-Edged Secrets*, pp. 123-24; Donald Keene, *On Familiar Terms: A Journey across Cultures* (New York: Kodansha, 1994), pp. 22-23.

²¹ Yamashita, MISNorCal Bio.

²² *Pacific War and Peace*, p. 32.

language officer. The next morning he went back to his room, packed his bag, and told his roommate he was going to Guadalcanal. But the call did not come. A few nights later he overheard a similar message, but still no orders came. One day in December Admiral Halsey visited the 37th Division headquarters. The division G-2 commented, "I understand you are looking for a Japanese language officer." Halsey replied, "They are driving me crazy for one, but I don't know where to find one." The G-2 introduced Burden to Halsey, who shook Burden's hand and told him to pack his bag and catch the next flight to New Caledonia. Burden arrived on Guadalcanal two days later.²³

On Guadalcanal, Burden found two marine officers and five enlisted men working as interrogators. Only one had any real proficiency in Japanese. The others had taken a short class in Japanese in San Diego but were ineffective with prisoners or documents. "They would talk nothing but Japanese among themselves and thought they were pretty good," Burden later recalled. When he first arrived he assigned some prisoners to them for interrogation. At the end of the day they turned in a sheet of paper for each prisoner with only the prisoner's name and rank. "You talked to them for over two hours!" he exclaimed. "Is that all you got out of them?" The marines just responded, "They didn't know much." Finally, one admitted the truth: "They talked so much and so fast we couldn't understand what they were saying." Burden sent the interrogators back to the marines.²⁴

The 25th Infantry Division joined the Americal Division to launch an offensive on 17 December. Burden noted reluctance on the part of many soldiers to take prisoners, just as the marines before them. Officers and enlisted men shared the attitude, as he later put it, that "the only good Jap is a dead Jap." Burden heard of one regimental commander who censured his men for bringing in prisoners, saying, "Don't bother to take prisoners, shoot the sons of bitches!"

Several times Burden heard from a front-line unit that had taken a prisoner; later he would learn that the prisoner had "died" en route to the rear. He was concerned for practical as well as ethical reasons. American soldiers appeared to have "no appreciation for the value of the information obtainable from prisoners or documents. . . . As a result documents were scattered and destroyed in the search for souvenirs." Burden frequently lectured commanders and units about the intelligence value of prisoners and documents and convinced the corps commander to offer a three-day pass and a serving of ice cream as rewards for bringing in live

²³ See sources on Burden cited above. Many years later Burden recalled that this meeting was with Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, not Admiral Halsey, and took place in October, not early December. Nimitz indeed visited Noumea in October, but Burden's after-action report clearly stated that Burden arrived on Guadalcanal in early December 1942, only a short time after his encounter with the senior naval officer. Nimitz apparently did not visit the South Pacific in late November or early December.

²⁴ This account of Burden's experiences on Guadalcanal from December 1942 until February 1943 is based primarily on John A. Burden, "The Work of the Language Section, Including a Summary of the Work Conducted on Guadalcanal and a Tentative Plan for the Future Conduct of Japanese Language Work in the South Pacific Area," 22 Jul 43, Folder 3, Burden Papers.



Captain Burden (center) makes a broadcast to urge Japanese soldiers to surrender.

prisoners. As the American offensive gathered momentum, over 200 prisoners had arrived at the stockade; Burden's small crew of marine interrogators began to work around the clock. Contrary to popular belief, they found the prisoners cooperative. Some would even obtain information from their fellow prisoners when they did not know the answer to a specific question.

Along with prisoners came a harvest of captured documents, an "astonishing . . . amount of information." Burden reported: "The Japanese seem to have a mania for putting things down on paper and hanging on to old documents. . . . disposition of troops, distribution of artillery units, casualties following engagements, hospital records, and numerous other points were found in large numbers."²⁵

²⁵ Ibid. The Burden Papers contain copies of several translations.

Burden also used his language skill to encourage Japanese soldiers to surrender. The first, mass-produced, surrender leaflets used on Guadalcanal, prepared and printed in the United States, had little effect on Japanese soldiers. Burden made up his own leaflets on the spot to explain the hopelessness of their situation and to instruct them to approach American lines during certain hours, unarmed with their hands raised. One day, while Burden was looking through captured Japanese diaries, an entry caught his eye: "Went up to battalion headquarters to look at the surrender leaflets," the unknown Japanese soldier had written. "The handwriting was terrible!" Burden was amused to discover that his doctor's handwriting was no better in Japanese than English.²⁶

Psychological warfare remained an important tool of war. Early in 1943, when the 25th Infantry Division faced determined Japanese resistance in the Gifu strong point, the division commander, Maj. Gen. J. Lawton Collins, summoned Burden to his command post on 15 January. He told him: "You said the Japanese would surrender if we could reassure them they would not be killed. Here is your chance to prove that. You can have broadcast equipment and we will give them two days to come out." Burden set up a loudspeaker and began to broadcast, but heavy rain and thick foliage weakened its power.

By the end of the third day, only thirteen Japanese soldiers had responded. Burden begged for one more day, but Collins refused: "That's not the way we fight a war—they were given an ultimatum, and the shelling starts tomorrow." The next day Burden watched in horror as the American artillery blasted the Japanese position. Most of the prisoners taken over the next two weeks were deafened and shell-shocked. Burden recommended repeating the experiment and equipping language sections with portable public address systems.²⁷

Burden's experiences on Guadalcanal convinced him that doing translation and interrogation work far to the rear was not effective. He estimated that it took between three to six weeks for information to get back to Guadalcanal. Several times, he later wrote, "documents having important tactical information were overlooked and sent to Noumea, and the information from them was not received until after it had lost its value."²⁸ Burden pushed to bring his Nisei to Guadalcanal, where they would be more useful. He encountered great resistance based in large part on "a general distrust of all persons of Japanese extraction, . . . the result of the National hysteria which resulted following the attack on Pearl Harbor." When American soldiers first met the Nisei, they commonly thought they were Chinese

²⁶ Burden autobiography.

²⁷ Burden, "Work of the Language Section," pp. 12–13; Burden autobiography; Harrington, *Yankee Samurai*, p. 111; John Miller, jr., *Guadalcanal: The First Offensive* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army Historical Division, 1949), pp. 298–99. Burden was injured soon afterward in the crash of a liaison aircraft while disseminating leaflets. He was awarded the Silver Star for his service on Guadalcanal.

²⁸ Burden, "Work of the Language Section," p. 2.

Americans. “What small amount of prejudice that still exists,” he wrote, “is wiped out as soon as the individuals become acquainted with the Nisei.”²⁹

Burden finally appealed directly to the XIV Corps commander, Maj. Gen. Alexander M. Patch, who gave his permission to send the Nisei into the forward area. Burden arranged for the three Nisei languishing on Fiji with the 37th Infantry Division to fly to New Caledonia. A fellow officer told Burden he had seen a Nisei soldier driving a jeep on Tonga. Burden guessed that the soldier must be Masanori Minamoto, so he brought him up as well. In January 1943 a fresh team of ten Nisei straight from the school arrived in New Caledonia.

As the American offensive gained strength, the flow of prisoners and documents grew rapidly. Two Nisei flew on 15 January to join the 2d Marine Division on Guadalcanal, where they met a marine sergeant “struggling with a pile of Japanese documents.” As the Nisei began combing through the documents, one recalled, “the very first one that we worked on, a ‘Jackpot,’ was a thick bounded document (handwritten with brush), a ‘Japanese General Staff Operational Plan: and Directives for the Combined Japanese Forces in the South Pacific Area.’ . . . It was really a very ‘hot’ item.”³⁰ Burden brought forward four more Nisei, who joined the XIV Corps language section on Guadalcanal on 22 January.³¹ When the fighting ended in February 1943, the Americans held more than 300 prisoners and thousands of captured documents. Now that the fighting had ceased, Burden began to let his Nisei interrogate the prisoners. On 13 February another language officer arrived at XIV Corps with five more Nisei.³²

Just as the battle for Guadalcanal was ending, dozens more Nisei graduates arrived in the South Pacific. Lt. Col. Frederick P. Munson arrived in New Caledonia shortly before Christmas with six more Nisei under Sgt. Tetsuo Hayashida of California. Munson had been among the diplomatic personnel exchanged on the SS *Gripsholm*. He took charge of the combat intelligence center in Noumea. The Nisei were assigned to Headquarters, U.S. Army Forces, in the South Pacific Area.³³ In January 1943 twenty more Nisei arrived, all graduates of the December 1942 class at Camp Savage. Ten each went to the 37th and 43d Infantry Divisions. Meanwhile, Burden and his small team transferred to the 25th Infantry Division.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 14.

³⁰ Ltr, Joe J. Yoshiwara to Roy Uye-hata, 18 February 1993. His partner was Makoto Sakamoto. A few days later two more Nisei joined them. Harrington, *Yankee Samurai*, p. 132. Yoshiwara recalls flying to Guadalcanal on 15 January 1943, the date reflected on his award of the Bronze Star Medal. The cited document may have been “Japanese Army-Navy Central Agreement Concerning South Pacific Area Operations, with Supplement,” 4 Jan 43, in Louis Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years*, U.S. Army in World War II (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1962), app. G, pp. 624–26.

³¹ Burden, “Work of the Language Section,” and Burden autobiography; Harrington, *Yankee Samurai*, p. 89; Miyasaki, MISNorCal Bio; Yamashita, MISNorCal Bio. Roy Kawashiri says three Nisei eventually went to Guadalcanal, but he did not. Ltr, Kawashiri to Harrington, 7 December 1977.

³² Roy T. Uye-hata, MISNorCal Bio.

³³ Interv, Frederick P. Munson, 5 Mar 75, Frederick P. Munson Papers, Hoover Institution Archives; Tetsuo Hayashida, MISNorCal Bio.



G-2 Section, XIV Corps, February 1943. In front row, beginning fourth from left: Shigeru Yamashita, Terno Odow, Roy T. Uyehata, and Isao Kusuda.

The experiences of the MIS Nisei in the South Pacific replayed in other campaigns for the rest of the war. Commanders initially restricted the first to arrive from the combat zone. Only when their Caucasian language officer insisted could a few go forward to support the front-line units. Only then could they finally show the full range of their abilities.

By early 1943 enough Nisei were available for other tasks. Thirteenth Air Force began using interrogations of captured Japanese pilots to modify American aerial tactics.³⁴ Burden proudly wrote to the school that he was “glad to say that those who opposed the use of Nisei the most are now their most enthusiastic advocates.” At first General Patch, who had commanded the Americal Division and then the XIV Corps, strongly opposed using the Nisei. According to a later report, when the first group arrived at his command, he “remarked that he didn’t want any Japs” and only “begrudgingly tolerated them through a campaign.” By the end of the campaign “he thought so much of them that he used to go personally to the transports and welcome each group as they came off the gangplank.”³⁵

With the Nisei’s help, the Army learned some valuable language lessons from the Guadalcanal Campaign. Combat intelligence had to flow upward as forward

³⁴ Wesley F. Craven and James L. Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, 7 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950), 4: 215.

³⁵ “Nisei Linguists—Eyes and Ears of Allied Pacific Forces,” Trng Grp, Ofc of the Dir of Intel G-2, RG 165, NARA. This appears to be a draft of the MISLS press release of 22 October 1945. Japanese Evacuation Research Study (JERS), pt. 2, sec. 2, reel 20, frame 0037, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Patch’s remarks were toned down in the final version. Patch later commanded Seventh Army and expressed pride in the 442d RCT that served under him in 1944. Crost, *Honor by Fire*, pp. 53, 237.

units grappled with the enemy. Without front-line intelligence, units could only blunder into the enemy. Commanders needed intelligence specialists who could interrogate prisoners and translate documents quickly and accurately. The Nisei learned that it was better to sort through captured documents quickly, rather than translate every one. They became adept at scanning large numbers of documents and picking out significant information that they could quickly translate into idiomatic English and proper American military terminology.

The Army also learned that its prewar doctrine of questioning a prisoner through an interpreter was impractical. In theory, an interpreter could simply relay questions and answers between an intelligence officer and a prisoner. However, the regimental S-2 or division G-2 seldom had time to interrogate prisoners in person.

The Nisei learned to use their knowledge of Japanese culture and psychology to elicit information through indirect questioning. They discovered that compassionate treatment worked wonders. Their captives, expecting torture and death, were at first astonished, then grateful. Any recalcitrant prisoner needed only to hear that authorities would notify his family through the International Committee of the Red Cross that he had been captured alive. The implied disgrace could usually convince him to cooperate.³⁶

The Nisei also learned that American soldiers and marines needed constant reminders of the importance of bringing in prisoners and captured documents. Japanese soldiers, contrary to common belief, were worth more alive than dead.

Tactical psychological warfare had great potential. In most cases, Japanese soldiers would fight to the death rather than face capture. But when the situation was clearly hopeless and the message properly communicated, at least some would respond to surrender appeals.

When the fighting was over, Burden used captured documents and interrogation reports to compile a history of the campaign from the Japanese point of view. This gave American commanders unique insights into Japanese military psychology.³⁷

Most important of all, the Nisei had demonstrated that they could be trusted to work near the front lines. Commanders and intelligence officers came to rely on the intelligence that only the Nisei could provide, as close to the front as possible. Other Japanese linguists were too few or too unskilled to provide the quality and timeliness of combat intelligence that ground commanders desperately needed.

³⁶ Maj. Sherwood F. "Pappy" Moran, a marine language officer on Guadalcanal, had lived in Japan and spoke excellent Japanese. *Hit the Beach: Your Marine Corps in Action* (New York: Wm. H. Wise, 1948), p. 53. His interrogation methods were later taught at the Military Intelligence Training Center, Camp Ritchie, Maryland. Division Intelligence Section, HQ, 1st Marine Division, Suggestions for Japanese Interpreters Based on Work in the Field, 17 Jul 43, at <http://mysite.verizon.net/vze6kt7j/>, last accessed 12 Feb 06. See also Stephen Budiansky, "Truth Extraction," *Atlantic Monthly* (June 2005): 32-35. Ulrich Straus, *The Anguish of Surrender: Japanese POWs of World War II* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003).

³⁷ HQ, XIV Corps, Ofc of the ACS, G-2, "Enemy Operations on Guadalcanal (August 7, 1942 to February 9, 1943)," 24 Apr 43, Folder 2, Burden Papers. However, see Miller, *Guadalcanal*, comment in bibliographic note, p. 379.

These lessons circulated in various ways. From Guadalcanal, Burden wrote letters to the language school commandant, Col. Kai E. Rasmussen. The Medical Reserve doctor and the Regular Army officer had a deep mutual respect, perhaps because they were both outsiders. Burden, raised in Japan, had not set foot on American soil until he was sixteen, Rasmussen, born in Denmark, not until he was twenty. One went to medical school; the other joined the Army and won appointment to West Point. They shared a fluency in Japanese, an appreciation of the Nisei, and a commitment to defeat the common enemy. Burden prepared a report on the work of the XIV Corps language section in July 1943 and lectured to corps intelligence personnel. A few months later he returned to the language school to lecture on his experiences. Through these formal and informal channels, the work of the pioneering Nisei became known throughout the Army.³⁸

During the Guadalcanal Campaign, the Nisei's direct contributions remained limited and usually confined to the tactical level. Even then, they mostly helped regiment, division, and corps commanders to know what was happening to their immediate front. Higher level commanders in New Caledonia and Hawaii relied on other sources such as radio intercepts, coast watchers, and aerial reconnaissance to determine Japanese movements, strengths, and intentions. But even these sources could miss important stories. For example, in February 1943 the Japanese evacuated their remaining troops from Guadalcanal without detection.³⁹

After the fighting on Guadalcanal concluded, Burden visited Australia to see how Nisei were employed in the Southwest Pacific Area. He was impressed by what he saw at I Corps and General MacArthur's headquarters. MacArthur's headquarters had already established a single agency to control all language work in the theater. Burden recommended that linguists in both theaters combine into one super agency under the Southwest Pacific Command. But intertheater cooperation proved impossible at this stage. Nevertheless, in Australia, Burden witnessed a method of using the Nisei that contrasted sharply with their piecemeal employment in the South Pacific.⁴⁰

Intelligence in the Southwest Pacific Area: The Allied Translator and Interpreter Section

General MacArthur arrived in Australia in March 1942 to establish his new command, the Southwest Pacific Area. His chief intelligence officer, Brig. Gen. Charles A. Willoughby, began building a joint U.S.-Australian intelligence architecture that would support MacArthur's plans to halt the Japanese in New Guinea, drive them back, and eventually liberate the Philippines.⁴¹ In April the first such

³⁸ Burden, "Work of the Language Section," and lecture notes, Folder 3, Burden Papers.

³⁹ John Prados, "US Intelligence and the Japanese Evacuation of Guadalcanal, 1943," *Intelligence and National Security* 10 (April 1995): 294–305.

⁴⁰ Burden, "Work of the Language Section," pp. 15–21.

⁴¹ *A Brief History of the G-2 Section, GHQ, SWPA and Affiliated Units*, Intelligence Series (Tokyo: Far East Command, 1948).

organization, the Central Bureau, was formed in Brisbane to break into Japanese codes. Over the next few months Willoughby organized other intelligence organizations, including the Allied Geographical Section for terrain intelligence, an Order of Battle Section to collate information on enemy units, and the Allied Intelligence Bureau to support resistance movements behind Japanese lines. These theater intelligence agencies grew to surpass in size anything the Army or Navy had established in the South Pacific.

In the early months of the war the Allies had lost many experienced intelligence personnel with the fall of Hong Kong, Singapore, and the Netherlands East Indies. Nevertheless, they could draw upon considerable Australian intelligence experience against the Germans and Italians in North Africa. The Australians were certainly aware of the need for Japanese linguists. In 1940 the Royal Australian Army Censorship School in Melbourne began Japanese-language training under Capt. John V. Shelton, a White Russian and superb Japanese linguist who had graduated from Waseda University in Tokyo. In early 1941 Australia's Eastern Command established a small Japanese-language intelligence section in Sydney. The Royal Australian Navy could find only one language-qualified civil servant at the time. In Melbourne, in January 1942 the Royal Australian Air Force established a prisoner of war section and the Royal Australian Army headquarters established a translation center. The Australian Army linguists later moved up to Australian Advance Land Headquarters in Brisbane. In early September the Australians established the Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre at the Indooroopilly Racetrack in Brisbane.⁴²

On 19 June 1942, Capt. David W. Swift arrived in Brisbane with eight Nisei led by S.Sgt. Gary Tsuneo Kadani, a Kibei from California. Swift, Kadani, and the other Nisei were all Crissy Field graduates. Swift had jaundice from his yellow fever inoculation at the port of embarkation, so he was hospitalized immediately upon arrival. Kadani took charge of the team, which proceeded to Melbourne for assignment to the American counterintelligence officer, Col. Elliott R. Thorpe. They began counterintelligence training and studied Malay, the lingua franca of the Netherlands East Indies.⁴³

⁴² John Shelton, speech to Army Forces Far East Intelligence School, 1953, transcript in author's files. Shelton was born Ivan Shalfeieff, son of the last Imperial Russian military attaché in Tokyo and a Japanese mother. He changed his name upon arrival in Australia in 1940. George Kiyoshi [Yamashiro] Sankey, "Areya, Koreye [This and That]," p. 38, Unpubl autobiography, excerpted in *Hawaii Pacific Press* (1 Dec 94): 56; General Headquarters, Far East Command, *Operations of the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section, GHQ, SWPA*, Intelligence Series, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Far East Command, 1948), pp. 3–4, 59 (hereafter cited as ATIS History); Colin Funch, *Linguists in Uniform: The Japanese Experience* (Australia: Japanese Studies Centre, Monash University, 2003). Grant K. Goodman, *America's Japan: The First Year, 1945–1946* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), p. 52.

⁴³ David W. Swift, Sr., *Ninety Li a Day*, ed. David W. Swift, Jr., Social Life Monographs, vol. 69 (Taipei: Chinese Association for Folklore, 1975), pp. 273–76; Gary Tsuneo Kadani, in Swift, "First Class"; Harrington, *Yankee Samurai*, pp. 70, 73, 86; Funch, *Linguists in Uniform*, pp. 78–80.

Meanwhile, the Japanese continued their southward advance. On 26 August a Japanese naval landing force attacked the Australians and Americans guarding Milne Bay on the eastern tip of Papua. While repelling the attack, the Allies there captured their first Japanese documents, including a copy of the Japanese operations order. Although naval and air battles had been raging in the region for several months, only when the opposing ground forces made contact did the flow of captured documents and prisoners of war begin.⁴⁴

On 19 September General Willoughby replaced the Australian Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre in Brisbane with an American-led organization, the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section (ATIS), “to co-ordinate and expedite the translation of captured enemy documents and prompt collation and distribution of the results.”⁴⁵ Willoughby canvassed Australia for Japanese linguists: “There was nothing there, except a handful of scholarly Orientalists in Universities and some people with business experience in Japan.”⁴⁶ The Australians sent fourteen officers and three enlisted men. The Americans contributed Swift and the eight Nisei. Willoughby named the military attaché to Australia, Lt. Col. Karl F. Baldwin, as coordinator. A board of three language officers (the Australian Shelton, the American Swift, and Lt. Donald Bartlett, U.S. Navy Reserve) tested the language proficiency of the first Nisei on 3 September. Six passed, but two were rated “ineffective” for their poor English skills, a common problem for Kibei.⁴⁷

Baldwin organized ATIS into four units parallel to the major components of MacArthur’s command: all the Nisei were assigned to GHQ; other sections included Allied Naval Forces, Allied Land Forces, and Allied Air Forces. All were housed near the Indooroopilly Racetrack in Tighnabraich, a mansion suitable for barracks and office space. A few months later the Nisei enlisted men moved into tents at Camp Chelmer, across the Brisbane River. In the first month ATIS processed over 1,000 documents, translated and distributed 90 documents, and interrogated 7 prisoners.

On 6 October Col. Sidney F. Mashbir replaced Baldwin as the ATIS coordinator. Mashbir had begun his military intelligence career in 1916 and went to Tokyo as a language attaché before leaving active duty in 1923. He was recalled to active service after the outbreak of war; but, like many World War I veterans, he was too old for field service. After Mashbir spent eight months in Washington, the War Department G-2, Maj. Gen. George V. Strong, sent him to Australia to “head up

⁴⁴ ATIS History, p. 11.

⁴⁵ Memo, GHQ, South West Pacific Area (SWPA), sub: Directive Covering the Organization, Co-ordination and Operation of Allied Translator & Interpreter Section, 19 Sep 42, reproduced in ATIS History, app. 2.

⁴⁶ Charles A. Willoughby, “The Language Problem in War,” in “Corregidor to the Yalu: MacArthur’s Intelligence Service: 1941–1951,” p. 190, Unpubl Ms, Box 3, Charles A. Willoughby Papers (copies from Gettysburg College), RG 23B, MacArthur Memorial, Library and Archives, Norfolk, Va.

⁴⁷ ATIS History; Sidney F. Mashbir, *I Was an American Spy* (New York: Vantage, 1953); Swift, *Ninety Li a Day*, pp. 273–93; Memo, ATIS, sub: Analysis of Linguistic Requirements, 27 Jun 44, author’s files.

the language work at GHQ.” When he arrived, ATIS “was a small—less than forty men—but polyglot unit, composed of Australian, Canadian and British army, air and navy men; Chinese, White Russians, East Indies Netherlanders and a handful of Americans. . . . We were a potpourri, not an organization.” He immediately reorganized ATIS into functional sections, including a translation section headed by Shelton and an examination section for interrogating prisoners of war. Swift remained the officer in charge of all Nisei personnel.⁴⁸

Three other American Nisei in Brisbane were assigned to other duties. One was Sgt. Arthur S. Komori, recruited by the Hawaiian Department before the war and sent to infiltrate the Japanese community in Manila. He had escaped Corregidor in April 1942 on one of the last flights. (His colleague, Sgt. Richard Sakakida, had remained behind and became a prisoner when the island fortress fell in May.) For several months after his arrival in Australia, Komori conducted routine counterintelligence tasks before being assigned to ATIS as the senior American non-commissioned officer from September until December 1942. He passed on the lessons he had learned fighting the Japanese in the Philippines.⁴⁹ Clarence Yamagata, an American Nisei who had been practicing law in Manila before the war, had left Corregidor on the same airplane as Komori. Yamagata joined the Central Bureau as a civilian employee and the only Nisei assigned to this code-breaking organization.⁵⁰ A third Nisei then in Australia, Yoshikazu Yamada, had been serving as an Army Air Corps medic at Del Monte Airfield in the southern Philippines. He had been studying chemistry at the University of Michigan when he was drafted in 1941 and assigned to the Philippines. In April 1942 he fell off a truck and injured his back. Evacuated to Australia, he spent two months recuperating in a U.S. Army hospital in Melbourne before being reassigned, first to the Japanese-language section in Allied Air Forces Headquarters, then to ATIS in September.⁵¹

These first few Japanese-language personnel, including the ten Nisei enlisted men from the school, began to work on the documents now starting to stream south from the battlefield. “Clotted with blood and body fat, they had been taken

⁴⁸ ATIS History, p. 2; Mashbir, *I Was an American Spy*, pp. 219–24; Interv, D. Clayton James with Mashbir, 1 Sep 71, RG 49, MacArthur Memorial.

⁴⁹ Memo, Komori to OIC [Officer in Charge], sub: The Philippine Theater of War, 1 Jul 42; Interv, Ann Bray with Arthur S. Komori, 1955; Interv, Joseph D. Harrington with Arthur S. Komori (notes), 10 Dec 77; all in Harrington Papers. Tsukiyama et al., *Secret Valor*, pp. 34–35. Komori told an interviewer in 1955 that during his first months in Australia he conducted counterintelligence investigations; Bray and Harrington later claimed that he was assigned as a vehicle driver. He may have done both.

⁵⁰ Clarence S. Yamagata, resume, 10 Feb 78, Harrington Papers; *The Quiet Heroes of the Southwest Pacific Theater: An Oral History of the Men and Women of CBB and FRUMEL* (Fort Meade, Md.: National Security Agency, 1996), p. 50. Yamagata was commissioned in the Signal Corps in July 1944.

⁵¹ Yoshikazu Yamada, MISNorCal Bio; Yoshikazu Yamada, “My Wartime Experiences,” in Tsukiyama et al., *Secret Valor*, pp. 84–85; Yoshikazu Yamada, “A Nisei in World War II,” reprinted in *John Aiso and the M.I.S.: Japanese-American Soldiers in the Military Intelligence Service, World War II*, ed. Tad Ichinokuchi (Los Angeles: Military Intelligence Service Club of Southern California, 1988), pp. 138–39.

in New Guinea and flown to Brisbane,” Mashbir recalled. “Australian Lt. Shelton read them aloud [while] our group made notes.” The first prisoners of war arrived in Brisbane on 30 September. Corporal Kadani interrogated the first as Mashbir listened via a hidden microphone. ATIS released its first spot report on 1 November. By 27 December Allied units fighting in New Guinea had sent back 1,100 Japanese documents. ATIS completed 293 pages of translation in November, 601 pages in December, and 581 pages in January 1943.⁵² Mashbir’s top priority was to support the Australian and American forces in contact with the enemy and to assist the language teams that were soon assigned to regiments, divisions, and corps. ATIS also produced reports. The first one, on military service in Japan, was dated 31 December 1942. In January and February 1943 ATIS issued research reports on topics such as Japanese aircraft recognition, task force organization, shell identification, and landing craft armor.⁵³

Other intelligence agencies were organized in Australia. In April 1942 Seventh Fleet, MacArthur’s naval command, established a combined U.S.-British-Australian radio intelligence center, later renamed Fleet Radio Unit, Melbourne, or FRU-MEL. In November 1942 Navy Capt. Arthur H. McCollum became the Seventh Fleet intelligence officer and established a combat intelligence center. McCollum, the son of a Baptist missionary, had been born in Japan. He was a former Japanese-language attaché and had served as head of the Far Eastern Section in the Office of Naval Intelligence from 1939 until 1942; there, he had helped establish the Navy’s Japanese-language training program for officers.⁵⁴

Nisei language teams were soon committed to forward units. In the autumn of 1942, the U.S. I Corps headquarters arrived in Australia under the command of Maj. Gen. Robert L. Eichelberger. A group of fourteen Nisei under M.Sgt. Arthur K. Ushiro arrived in November and was assigned to the corps under two Caucasian lieutenants. The Nisei were the top students from Camp Savage and had needed only ninety days of training.⁵⁵ Upon arrival in Australia, T3g. Phil Ishio recalled,

⁵² ATIS History, p. 11; Sidney F. Mashbir, “I Was an American Spy,” *Saturday Evening Post* (10 April 1948): 28; “Analysis of Linguistic Requirements,” Exhibit G. (Copies of early ATIS spot reports, nos. 1–194, can be found in RG 3, MacArthur Memorial.) ATIS History, p. 15; Harrington, *Yankee Samurai*, p. 109. ATIS Pub no. 6, “The Exploitation of Japanese Documents,” 14 Dec 44 (included in ATIS History at tab 5, documentary appendix), states the Allies captured 268 documents at Kokoda and 1,349 at Buna.

⁵³ ATIS reports can be found in the Gordon W. Prange Collection, University of Maryland; MacArthur Memorial; “P” File (Security-Class Intel Reference Publications), ACS (G–2), Intel, RG 165, NARA, and the Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. A nearly complete set is available on microfiche as *Wartime Translations of Seized Japanese Documents: Allied Translator and Interpreter Section Reports, 1942–1946* (Bethesda, Md.: Congressional Information Service, 1988). For a convenient listing of selected publications, see ATIS History, app. 9.

⁵⁴ “Reminiscences of Rear Admiral Arthur H. McCollum,” in *The Pacific War Remembered*, ed. John T. Mason (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1986), pp. 146–55; Prados, *Combined Fleet Decoded*, pp. 420–24; Edward J. Drea, *MacArthur’s Ultra: Codebreaking and the War against Japan, 1942–1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992), pp. 15–16.

⁵⁵ Interv. Sheryl Narahara with Tarao “Pat” Neishi, 1992, NJAHS; Harrington, *Yankee Samurai*, pp. 44–45, 100. Ushiro changed his surname to Castle during the war.

the corps G-2 “asked each of us individually whether we could read, speak, and write the Japanese language.” Ishio, who had been born and raised in Salt Lake City, Utah, had studied economics for three years at Waseda University in Tokyo. “It was all we could do to keep from laughing out loud,” he recalled. “After all, we were the special class, the elite at Camp Savage.” They were further discouraged when they were demoted by one grade. At that time, enlisted men assigned to a new command could have their ranks adjusted depending upon the table of organization. The I Corps reduced all the Nisei from technician, third grade, to technician, fourth grade, with a predictable impact on their morale.⁵⁶

Papua New Guinea, October 1942–February 1943

American ground combat units joined the fight for Papua New Guinea in October. Nisei enlisted men and Caucasian language officers were assigned to Headquarters, New Guinea Forces; I Corps; the Australian 7th Infantry Division; the U.S. 32d Division; and each American infantry regiment. At first, Allied tactical and operational intelligence was poor and radio intelligence was little help. Allied units frequently did not discover Japanese strong points until they stumbled upon them in the dense New Guinea jungle. When they succeeded in pinpointing Japanese locations, they frequently erred in their estimates of the enemy’s strength. Accurate and timely combat intelligence became precious and promised to save many Allied lives.⁵⁷

The Nisei “were never allowed forward of regimental command posts, for had they been captured they undoubtedly would have been tortured.” However, in the close-in jungle fighting, division and regimental command posts were often within range of Japanese gunners and snipers. Ishio went forward from I Corps headquarters to visit a Nisei assigned to an infantry regiment near Buna and was shocked at front-line conditions. “When I called out his name, he crawled out of a vine-covered hut, unshaven and in dirty fatigues. If I had not known that he was one of us, I would have taken him for a Japanese soldier.” Ishio himself had a “close shave” when a Japanese shell landed near his foxhole, collapsing the hole on top of him.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Stanley L. Falk and Warren M. Tsuneishi, eds., *MIS in the War against Japan* (Washington, D.C.: Japanese American Veterans Association, 1995), p. 27. See also Interv, author with Sunao Phil Ishio, 18 Apr 95; S. [Phil] Ishio, “The Nisei Contribution to the Allied Victory in the Pacific,” *American Intelligence Journal* (Spring/Summer 1995): 59–67. On enlisted promotion policies, see Ernest F. Fischer, Jr., *Guardians of the Republic: History of the Noncommissioned Officer Corps of the U.S. Army* (New York: Ballantine, 1994), ch. 14.

⁵⁷ Radio intelligence from Central Bureau contributed little to the Papua Campaign from September 1942 to January 1943, according to Drea, *MacArthur’s Ultra*, pp. 48–60.

⁵⁸ G-2 Rpt, ann. 2, Report of the Commanding General, Buna Forces, on the Buna Campaign, Dec. 1, 1942–Jan. 25, 1943, p. 58; “Nisei Officer [Phil Ishio] Lauds U.S. Army Spirit,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, Apr 45, reprinted in War Relocation Authority, *Nisei in the War against Japan* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, 1945); Falk and Tsuneishi, *MIS in the War against Japan*, pp.



S. Phil Ishio and Arthur K. Ushiro (second and third from left) interrogate a Japanese prisoner in Papua New Guinea, early 1943.

After crossing the imposing Owen Stanley mountain range, the U.S. 32d and Australian 7th Infantry Divisions launched a slogging offensive against Japanese positions around Buna-Gona in mid-November. The fighting was bitter and exhausting, and many soldiers fell victim to disease in the malarial swamps. On 15 December T3g. James M. Tsumura became the first Nisei linguist to receive the Combat Infantryman Badge.⁵⁹

In December ATIS sent two Nisei to join two Australian language officers already assigned to the Australian 7th Division. At first the Australians took few prisoners. When the Nisei offered three bottles of Coca Cola for each prisoner, more began to arrive. One day the Australians intercepted a Japanese messenger; from the papers he was carrying the Nisei discovered that the Japanese were planning to raid a battery of the Royal Australian Field Artillery. The battery got the

28–29; “Japanese with U.S. Army [Fred Nishitsuji] in [New] Guinea Has Bodyguard,” United Press International, 25 Nov 42, in *Seattle Times*, 21 Dec 42.

⁵⁹ ATIS History, app. 2; Harrington, *Yankee Samurai*, p. 101.

alert just in time to repel the attack. This incident persuaded the Australians of the Nisei's value.⁶⁰

A few weeks later another Nisei with the Australians learned from another captured Japanese messenger that 200 Japanese soldiers had withdrawn from a pocket to the Australian front the previous night. The division attacked through the area and cleared the roadblock within six hours of the interrogation. Two days later another wounded prisoner disclosed to a Nisei the existence of a previously unknown strong point. "He gave a detailed disposition of enemy troops and automatic weapons covering the approaches along the Soputa Track, the exact position of the enemy headquarters within the perimeter, and the enemy strength as well as the exact locations of all land mines planted on the track." The Nisei passed on this information, and the division adjusted its plan of attack. At dawn, just hours after receiving the fresh intelligence, Australian and American units captured the position with minimal losses.⁶¹

The U.S. 163d Infantry with three Nisei joined the Australian 7th Infantry Division in early January 1943.⁶² Lt. George E. Aurell, who had been raised in Japan and had served as American vice consul in Yokohama, led a team of three other Nisei to I Corps headquarters in Port Moresby on 14 November. They soon moved to the Buna-Gona area, closer to the action. At first the Nisei saw few captured documents and even fewer prisoners, many of whom turned out to be not Japanese soldiers at all, but rather Korean laborers. Ishio went through the first batch of documents, including many diaries, and "listed all of the military units mentioned in them along with pertinent intelligence information on each." He recalled that "the order of battle officer was very excited by what I had compiled, saying that mine was the first report on any order of battle data that he had seen."⁶³

As in the South Pacific, the ATIS language personnel in Brisbane were frustrated by the delays in bringing prisoners and documents back from the combat zone hundreds of air miles away. On 31 December Colonel Mashbir requested permission to establish an advance echelon to provide translation and interrogations closer to the front lines. Four weeks later he sent six officers and three Nisei to Headquarters, New Guinea Force. They arrived in Port Moresby on 28 January and completed their first translation and interrogation reports on 13 February.⁶⁴ By this time Allied forces had crushed Japanese resistance at Buna-Gona.

The Nisei had proven their value to tactical commanders. Eichelberger's G-2 praised them: "Throughout the campaign these American Japanese soldiers were

⁶⁰ ATIS History, p. 44; Willoughby, "Language Problem in War," p. 193; Harrington, *Yankee Samurai*, p. 110.

⁶¹ ATIS History, p. 45; Willoughby, "Language Problem in War," pp. 193-94.

⁶² Interv, Narahara with Neishi, 1992.

⁶³ Falk and Tsuneishi, *MIS in the War against Japan*, pp. 28-29; Harrington, *Yankee Samurai*, pp. 110, 182; "Aurell, George," in G. J. A. O'Toole, ed., *The Encyclopedia of American Intelligence and Espionage* (New York: Facts on File, 1988). The two Aurell brothers, George and Paul, both served as language officers in the Southwest Pacific.

⁶⁴ ATIS History, p. 24.

completely loyal, cheerful and competent. Their work, without exception, was excellent.”⁶⁵ Eichelberger himself had become an avid reader of translations of captured Japanese diaries, which gave him a better sense of his opponents than any other sort of intelligence report.⁶⁶

At the conclusion of this first clash of armies in the Southwest Pacific, General Willoughby asked the Military Intelligence Division to send him as many Nisei linguists as possible. MacArthur’s chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Richard K. Sutherland, concurred in Willoughby’s request. “He was slightly amused when I asked for a thousand to clean the barrel,” Willoughby later wrote; “however, we had no reason ever to regret this decision.” MID replied that it could provide a thousand Nisei “of high-school and university caliber,” since “other services would not touch them in quantities without time-consuming security screening.”⁶⁷

War Department Decision To Form a Nisei Combat Unit

As the first Nisei linguists went into action against the Japanese in the summer and autumn of 1942, in Washington, leaders were making decisions that would have lasting consequences for all Japanese Americans, including whether to allow Nisei to serve in combat units. Brig. Gen. John Weckerling later wrote that “the impetus behind the organization of the two Nisei combat units [100th Infantry Battalion and 442d RCT] stemmed from the interpreter and translator problem.”⁶⁸

In the spring of 1942 Colonel Pettigrew in the Military Intelligence Division first suggested organizing a Nisei combat unit. According to Weckerling, Pettigrew “pursued his plans determinedly” through the rest of that year.⁶⁹ Milton

⁶⁵ G-2 Rpt, Buna Forces, p. 58.

⁶⁶ For example, see Robert L. Eichelberger, *Our Jungle Road to Tokyo* (New York: Viking, 1950), pp. 53–56; Jay Luvaas, ed., *Dear Miss Em: General Eichelberger’s War in the Pacific, 1942–1945* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1972), pp. 108–19.

⁶⁷ Willoughby, “Language Problem in War,” p. 190. Willoughby sent his request to the MID in March 1943. The War Department Operations Division set the SWPA requirement at about 400 Nisei. Memo, OPD, 2 Jul 43, sub: Future Requirements for Japanese Speaking Personnel, 350.03, Trng Grp, Ofc of the Dir of Intel G-2, RG 165, NARA.

⁶⁸ John Weckerling, “Japanese Americans Play Vital Role in United States Intelligence Service in World War II” (1946), first printed in *Hokubei Mainichi*, 27 Oct–5 Nov 71, reprinted as a pamphlet.

⁶⁹ Stuart Portner, “The Japanese-American Combat Team,” *Military Affairs* (Fall 1943): 158–62; Masayo Umezawa Duus, *Unlikely Liberators: The Men of the 100th and 442nd* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), pp. 50–58; Bill Hosokawa, *Nisei: The Quiet Americans* (New York: William Morrow, 1969), pp. 359–69; Mike Masaoka, *They Call Me Moses Masaoka: An American Saga* (New York: William Morrow, 1987), pp. 105–38; Thomas D. Murphy, *Ambassadors in Arms* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1954), pp. 104–12; *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), pp. 185–91; Ted T. Tsukiyama, “The Origins of the 442nd,” in *Go For Broke, 1943–1993* (Honolulu: n.p., 1993), pp. 11–15. Key documents are collected in Roger Daniels, ed., *American Concentration Camps: A Documentary History of the Relocation and Incarceration of Japanese Americans, 1941–1945*, 9 vols. (New York: Garland, 1989), vol. 9. Weckerling, “Japanese Americans Play Vital Role.”

S. Eisenhower, the director of the War Relocation Authority from March to June 1942, took a broader approach and urged the War Department to reverse its decision and allow American-born Nisei to be eligible for Selective Service. On 18 May he wrote to Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy to plead the Nisei's case. McCloy forwarded his letter to Milton's older brother, Maj. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, then serving in the War Department Operations Division. "I have felt for some time," McCloy added, "that it might be well to use our American citizen Japanese soldiers in an area where they could be employed against the Germans. I believe that we could count on these soldiers to give a good account of themselves against the Germans."⁷⁰

In July the War Department General Staff formed a committee to consider the question. Col. Rufus S. Bratton and Colonel Pettigrew of the Far Eastern Branch recommended that the Army form a division of Japanese-American soldiers, and Pettigrew boldly asked for the honor of commanding the unit. "I have consistently believed and advocated that the overwhelming majority of the Nisei are unquestionably loyal," he wrote, "and that they would make the finest type of combat soldiers." The Western Defense Command and other army major commands were less enthusiastic than Bratton and Pettigrew. General DeWitt had already ordered the removal of all Nisei soldiers from his command and was removing over 110,000 persons of Japanese ancestry into camps. In September the committee concluded that the War Department should not use Nisei soldiers because of a "universal distrust" of them. The only exception would be for the intelligence work they were already doing.⁷¹

The Far Eastern Branch lobbied to overturn the board's recommendation with the help of overseas commands, the War Relocation Authority, and the Office of War Information. Supportive letters arrived from Alaska and the South Pacific, "the only two places in which [the Nisei] have had a chance to engage in action against the Japanese," Pettigrew pointed out. "While it may be argued that these recommendations are only straws, this Division believes that they are extremely important indications as to what may be expected of the entire group in question."⁷² From the South Pacific came a radiogram: "Prisoners of war are being interrogated [and] many captured documents are being translated. . . . interpreters

⁷⁰ Memo, McCloy to Eisenhower, 20 May 42, Folder: D. D. Eisenhower, Box WD1, ser. 8; War Department (WD), John J. McCloy Papers, Amherst College Archives, Amherst, Mass.

⁷¹ "The Military Utilization of United States Citizens of Japanese Ancestry," 14 Sep 42 (291.2), WD G-1 Decimal Files, RG 165, NARA. Ltr, Pettigrew to McCloy, sub: Key Personnel, Nisei Division, 17 Nov 42, ASW 020 ASW 014.311 W.D.C.: Segregation—Japs, Ofc of the Asst Sec of War, RG 107, NARA. Pettigrew was not selected to command the 442d RCT but remained in the Military Intelligence Division for the duration. John Weckerling may have been considered for command, but he remained the G-2 of Western Defense Command until after Attu and Kiska, when he transferred to the MID and was promoted to brigadier general.

⁷² Memo, Pettigrew for WD Gen Staff, G-2, sub: Documents Dealing with Americans of Japanese Ancestry (hereafter referred to as Nisei), 10 Oct 42, Ofc of the Dir of Intel G-2, RG 165, NARA.

from the intelligence school are performing valuable services.”⁷³ The coordinator of the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section in Australia wrote to ask MID to send more Nisei.⁷⁴ The Hawaiian Department G-2, Col. Kendall J. Fielder, “came to Washington and spent several weeks helping to convince high officials in the War Department that a change of policy was important and badly wanted by many Hawaiians of Japanese lineage.”⁷⁵ The director of the Office of War Information, Elmer Davis, appealed directly to President Franklin D. Roosevelt to allow Nisei enlistments. Milton Eisenhower’s successor at the War Relocation Authority, Dillon Myer, continued to push for Nisei enlistments.⁷⁶

In October 1942 the naval district intelligence officer for Southern California, Comdr. Kenneth D. Ringle, published an article in *Harper’s Monthly* defending the Nisei against charges of disloyalty.⁷⁷ In November the Japanese American Citizens League appealed to the War Department to allow Nisei to serve and to reinstate their eligibility for Selective Service. The organization’s national secretary, Mike Masaoka, affirmed: “I have come to the inescapable conclusion that this matter of Selective Service is the cornerstone of our future in this country. . . . When the war is won, and we attempt to find our way back into normal society, one question which we cannot avoid will be, ‘Say, Buddy, what did you do in the war?’ If we cannot answer that we, with them, fought for the victory which is ours, our chance for success and acceptance will be small.”⁷⁸

The War Department already had several long-serving segregated units for African Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Filipinos and established several more during 1942. The Office of War Information saw propaganda value in having combat units of different nationalities. Thus during 1942 the War Department organized the 1st Filipino Infantry in California and battalion-size units of Norwegians, Austrians, and Greeks. In November 1942 Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson complained to Roosevelt about this pressure for special units, rather than integrating ethnic groups into the ranks, citing the need for “encouraging Americanization in the Army.” Roosevelt agreed that “formation of such Battalions should be

⁷³ Memo, MID (908) to MISLS, sub: Paraphrased Extract from Radiogram, 25 Aug 42, “R (Confidential) Reference,” Box 86, Class Ref Sub Files, 1940–1947, Ofc of the Asst Sec of War, RG 107, NARA.

⁷⁴ Memo, Colonel Pettigrew to Captain Zacharias, 18 Nov 42, Far Eastern Br, Security-Class Gen Corresp, 1926–1946, Ofc of the Dir of Intel G-2, RG 165, NARA.

⁷⁵ Dillon S. Myer, *Uprooted Americans: The Japanese Americans and the War Relocation Authority during World War II* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1971), p. 146. Fielder played an important role in gaining War Department acceptance for the Nisei. After the war, he assisted in the first scholarly study of Nisei soldiers in World War II. Murphy, *Ambassadors in Arms*, acknowledgments, pp. 51, 105.

⁷⁶ Murphy, *Ambassadors in Arms*, pp. 105–06.

⁷⁷ [K. D. Ringle], “The Japanese in America,” *Harper’s Monthly* (October 1942): 489–97; Jacobus tenBroek et al., *Prejudice, War, and the Constitution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), pp. 298–99.

⁷⁸ Bill Hosokawa, *JACL in Quest of Justice: The History of the Japanese American Citizens League* (New York: William Morrow, 1982), p. 199; Masaoka, *They Call Me Moses Masaoka*, pp. 120–21.

strictly limited to cases where political advantages are to be gained,” but refused to stop the practice, saying, “I must be the one to determine political advantages if any.”⁷⁹

At the end of November War Department leaders decided to form a Nisei regimental combat team, and the White House concurred.⁸⁰ With the November elections past and a new front opened in North Africa, the Roosevelt administration could afford to be less concerned about anti-Japanese hysteria in California. The public announcement came in late January 1943, and the White House released a widely publicized endorsement: “No loyal citizen of the United States should be denied the democratic right to exercise the responsibilities of his citizenship, regardless of his ancestry. The principle on which this country was founded and by which it has always been governed is that Americanism is a matter of the heart and mind; Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry.”⁸¹

The first Nisei volunteers for the 442d RCT reported to Camp Shelby, Mississippi, for training in April 1943. The Nisei pioneers who began fighting in the Pacific almost one year earlier could take some credit for convincing the War Department to form this unit. The first graduates from Crissy Field convinced their Caucasian officers of their loyalty and effectiveness. “They were the test case,” language school officials would announce at the war’s end.⁸²

The MIS Nisei and their Caucasian officers in turn convinced War Department leaders, the Office of War Information, the War Relocation Authority, and finally President Roosevelt, of the value of allowing Nisei to serve their country. They were fighting alongside American and Australian soldiers and marines, using their language skills to provide combat intelligence to front-line commanders. On Guadalcanal and New Guinea, they faced harsh battlefield conditions to lift the veil of ignorance that had plagued Allied commanders in the early months of the war. They exposed themselves to snipers, booby traps, artillery and mortar fire, and air attacks to help overcome fierce Japanese resistance. They had proven their loyalty, if anyone had lingering doubts.

The initial campaigns proved that the available numbers of Caucasian Japanese-speakers could not handle the volume of language work once ground units made contact, and it simply took too long to train new linguists to an adequate

⁷⁹ Memo, Franklin D. Roosevelt for Henry L. Stimson, 17 Nov 42, WD Folder 2–42, Roosevelt Library, in frame 82, reel 3, Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. For correspondence about ethnic units, see Marshall File, ser. 8, McCloy Papers.

⁸⁰ On 20 November 1942, The Adjutant General instructed all Army commands to report all Nisei soldiers by name. Boxes 280–82, Ofc of the Dir of Intel G–2, RG 165, NARA. For an interpretation that stresses propaganda value, see T. Fujitani, “The Reischauer Memo: Mr. Moto, Hirohito, and Japanese American Soldiers,” *Critical Asian Studies* 33, no. 3 (2001): 379–402.

⁸¹ See entry for 1 February 1943 in *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 13 vols., comp. Samuel I. Rosenman (New York: Random House, 1938–1950); Greg Robinson, *By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 163–76.

⁸² WD Press Release, 22 Oct 45.

level of proficiency. In contrast, many of these early Nisei were Kibei, having spent several years living in and attending school in Japan. Their knowledge of the Japanese language, as well as the culture and people, was priceless. Once Allied soldiers saw the value of capturing prisoners, they brought them in by the hundreds. These prisoners, treated with compassion, willingly gave their Nisei interrogators an astonishing amount of useful information. Captured documents proved even more valuable. The Nisei used these documents to re-create the workings of the Japanese armed forces in a way no other form of intelligence could. In the Southwest Pacific, a new organization had been invented, the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section, which could support the forces in contact and simultaneously support the theater commander with flexible and timely language and analytical support.

In April 1943 Captain Burden wrote from Guadalcanal to Camp Savage asking for a surgeon's position with the 442d RCT and urging that the unit be sent to the Pacific: "I just wish that they would bring them out this way and give them a chance to really clear the name of the Nisei. They would do it. However they will do plenty good work on the other side [in Europe] I'm sure." The commandant forwarded the letter to MID, which sent it on to Assistant Secretary of War McCloy.⁸³ In 1944 the 442d RCT deployed to the Mediterranean, not the Pacific, and fought there with distinction. Little did the Nisei in that unit realize that their opportunity to serve came from the little-heralded achievements of the first MIS Nisei in fighting against the Japanese in the Pacific.

⁸³ Memo, Asst Sec of War to Chief, Far Eastern Unit, MIS, 19 May 43, Trng Grp, Ofc of the Dir of Intel G-2, RG 165, NARA.