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Contents

October 2013



Features

32 The 4th Armored Fight for Singling

In its drive to reach the German frontier, one of the premiere tank units of the U.S. Army in World War II was halted just short of its goal by fierce resistance in a nondescript village in eastern Lorraine.

By **Arnold Blumberg**

38 The Last Battle Line

Up from the mud of Pearl Harbor, battleships of the U.S. Navy took revenge against the Japanese at Surigao Strait.

By **David H. Lippman**

50 Bravery in Embattled Bastogne

The soldiers of the U.S. 101st Airborne Division and a complement of other troops held the key crossroads town during the Battle of the Bulge.

By **Michael D. Hull**

56 Icy PBV Retrieval

U.S. Navy ground crewmen in Alaska braved ice-filled waters for a routine extraction.

By **Kevin M. Hymel**

58 Tactical Thunder

The deployment of the Ninth Air Force brought the concept of tactical air support into action for the Allies.

By **Sam McGowan**

Columns

06 Editorial

A ghost of the Battle of Britain rises from the English Channel.

08 Dispatches

Readers of *WWII History* offer their insights, comments, and criticisms.

10 Profiles

General Heinz Guderian led German armored formations and fell in and out of favor with Hitler.

16 Insight

Survivors of the 900-day siege of Leningrad tell their miraculous stories.

22 Top Secret

Allied intelligence efforts in Thailand influenced the course of World War II in the China-Burma-India Theater.

26 Ordnance

A fatal gun battle erupted when British sailors tried to take control of a French submarine after its homeland surrendered in 1940.

66 Books

Felix Sparks's journey through World War II serves as inspiring subject matter.

74 Simulation Gaming

Lighthearted writing and an absurd setup make *Bugs vs. Tanks!* worth short bursts of play.



Cover: A still from the German propaganda film, *Victory in the West*, shows a Panzer 38(t) in action during the assault on France in 1940. See story page 10 about blitzkrieg advocate Heinz Guderian. Photo: © SZ Photo / Scherl / The Image Works

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A ghost of the Battle of Britain rises from the English Channel.

THE SLENDER FUSELAGE OF THE DORNIER DO-17 ENGENDERED THE GERMAN bomber's distinctive nickname of the "flying pencil." In the summer of 1940, the Do-17 was an integral component of the Luftwaffe air armada that struck British military installations and cities in the vain effort to bring the island nation to its knees.

More than 2,100 variants of the Do-17 were produced during the 1930s and into World War II, and the aircraft became an icon of the epic Battle of Britain. For defense in the air, the Do-17 was armed with six 7.92mm machine guns, and despite its spare frame the plane carried a maximum bombload of more than 2,200 pounds. Early variants of the Do-17 faded from frontline combat units as the war progressed; however, the planes continued as trainers and in other roles. The Do-17 served with the air forces of former German allies and other European countries after the war, and the last known example was scrapped in Finland in 1952.

Last known, that is, until either 2008 or 2010, depending on which news service is read, when the mostly intact wreckage of a Do-17 shot down during the Battle of Britain was discovered underwater at Goodwin Sands off the shore of Kent in southeastern England. On June 10, 2013, nearly 73 years after it went down in action, a salvage operation led by the Royal Air Force Museum resulted in the remains of the Do-17 breaking the surface from its watery grave just 50 feet below.

According to *The Independent*, a British news source, the plan for the hulk of the Do-17 is to apply state-of-the-art conservation techniques to stabilize the corroded and waterlogged relic. The cost of the recovery effort alone approached \$1 million. But at what price history?

Already, the story of the plane is fascinating historians, who have pieced together some details of the mission during which the Do-17 was lost. *The Independent* reports that on the morning of August 26, 1940, nine Dornier bombers took off from their base at St. Trond, Belgium, their mission to raid the RAF fighter base at Manston, Kent. Their secondary purpose was to lure RAF fighter planes into the air so that German fighters could ambush and shoot them down.

The bombers were indeed intercepted by British fighters, and three of their number were lost, including the subject of the salvage operation. Records indicate that the recently recovered Do-17 was attacked by a Boulton Paul Defiant fighter based at Hornchurch east of London.

Crippled by the Defiant's machine-gun fire, the Do-17 hit the water, apparently in an attempted controlled landing, and flipped onto its back, eventually settling to the bottom. The pilot, 24-year-old Willi Effmert, and bomb aimer Hermann Ritzel, just 21 years old, were plucked from the water by the British and spent the remainder of the war in prison camps in Britain and Canada. Two crewmen, 27-year-old wireless operator Helmut Reinhardt and 28-year-old bomb aimer Heinz Huhn, were killed in action.

Such stories are fascinating, and in the days to come there are sure to be more. RAF Museum personnel are attempting to locate family members of Effmert and Ritzel—to date without success.

As for the business at hand, the conservation of the Do-17 is a daunting challenge. The aluminum airframe is quite fragile after prolonged exposure to saltwater, and contact with air contributes to its decomposition. A custom made chemical concoction is being applied to the plane as it is projected to sit in a specially constructed spraying tunnel for as long as two years.

Depending on the success of the conservation work, the hope is that the restored Do-17 will join the extensive exhibit of World War II aircraft on display at the RAF Museum in London. Ian Thirsk, the museum's head of collections, remarked, "This was the missing link in our collection."

Michael E. Haskeew

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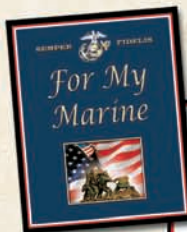
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Dispatches

Perilous Rescue

Dear Editor,
Kudos on Eric Niderost's "Perilous Rescue" (August 2013). He brought to life one of those small, forgotten stories from World War II. Rescue missions are sometimes just as harrowing as front-line combat and he captured all the fear, anxiety and heroism so common on a daily basis during the war. While I enjoy your articles on the larger picture of the war, I am fascinated by the stories that fall between the cracks of history. As an added note, I am familiar with most of the African American units that fought during the war, but was unaware of the 855th Engineer Aviation Battalion. Thank you for bringing them to light.

Rian Lambert
Platte City, Missouri

Bring Back the Photo Essay!

Dear Editor,
Last March I picked up a copy of *WWII History* in the airport before my flight. I was delighted to read a two-page photo essay entitled "Hard Charging Landings" by Kevin Hymel. I enjoyed that it was something I could read quickly, instead of a lengthy article that kept me in the store for too long. It reminded me of those photo essays in the *Time-Life* books on World War II I read in my younger years. I subscribed to the magazine because of it. Since then I have not seen any more photo essays. Was that a one-time shot or does the magazine regularly run photo essays? I'm just curious. I still read the magazine cover to cover when it comes in the mail.

Jolene Taylor
Los Angeles, California

Zippos in Vietnam

Dear Editor:
"Hell Fire on the Hornet's Nest" (Ordnance, April 2013 issue) on the flamethrower reminded me of our flame track section in the 4/23 Mech Infantry in Vietnam.

One night in late January 1968, Cu Chi, Headquarters of the 25th Infantry Division, the 4/23 Infantry Battalion had a ready response team if needed, a reaction force for the Cu Chi base.

Our reactionary force was notified and assembled near the "TOC" tent, ready for the order to deploy. They got the green light to go, but before they got to the main entrance they received the order to stop. The reason was a call received at our TOC: Do not send the reaction force out. They will be wiped out. This call came from an infantry leg commander on the other side of the enemy force.

This U.S. Infantry commander and his unit

fought the enemy force for three days and were still receiving fire from entrenched VC bunkered under buildings. Our flame unit responded, using these flame tracks. The enemy was defeated in a half hour.

Months later, our flame track section was on loan to support another infantry battalion while in a combat operation. The lieutenant in charge of the flame tracks was ordered to advance on a wooded target. This lieutenant, who was experienced and knowledgeable of the situation, advised the infantry battalion commander that it was too risky to advance as ordered, and did so three times. The commander insisted on the advance. Finally the lieutenant complied—he was KIA on the mission.

The flame track (aka the Zippo) was an elective weapon when properly employed. The experienced lieutenant knew his boundaries much better than the infantry leg commander, but did eventually follow his order to advance, at the cost of his life.

This Lieutenant Hamel was from Houston, Texas. He was a friend of mine, a fine man, and an outstanding soldier and leader.

Jack L. Daniels
DeRidder, Louisiana

Yamamoto

Dear Editor:
Michael Hull's interesting article (Early Fall, 2012) says Admiral Yamamoto only reluctantly agreed to war with the United States in October 1941 when Tojo became prime minister and war was going to happen anyway. Other sources (e.g., *At Dawn We Slept* by Gordon Prange), say Yamamoto actually committed himself to a Pearl Harbor attack much earlier: in December 1940. Despite holding the self-contradictory opinion that war with the United States was unwinnable, he spent most of 1941 directing its planning. One of the enigmatic aspects of the Pearl Harbor attack is that this defining course of action by Japan was forced into place simply by the persuasiveness of a single naval officer—Yamamoto.

John Pooler
Doraville, Georgia

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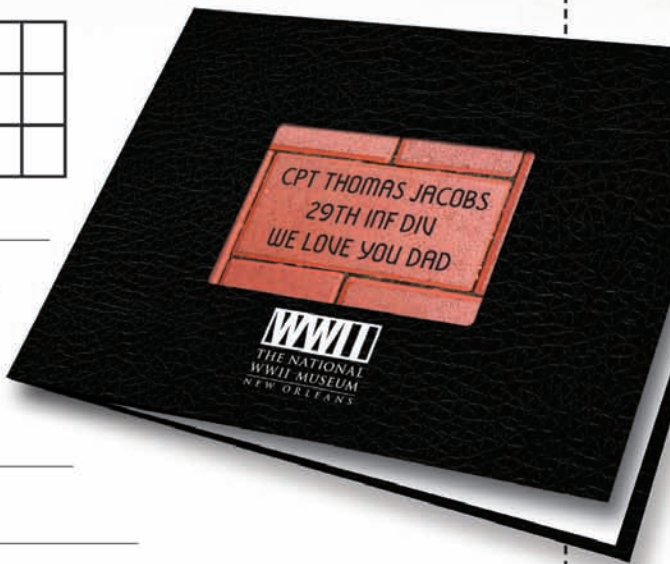
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Blitzkrieg Author

General Heinz Guderian led German armored formations and fell in and out of favor with Hitler.

HITLER WAS ENRAGED AS HE STALKED HIS WAY AROUND THE ROOM DURING THE waning months of World War II. Heinz Guderian, his acting chief of the general staff, was again speaking out, again opposing the Führer's plans for dealing with the Soviet Red Army, which was steadily approaching Berlin.

This man, whom Hitler had earlier promoted to inspector general of the armored troops, had advocated in early February 1945 that German troops be evacuated from the Balkans, Italy, Norway, and especially Courland along the Baltic to bolster the defense of the Fatherland in the wake of the failed Ardennes offensive in the West and dogged, determined Soviet advances in the East.

According to Guderian's account, Hitler raged, shaking his fists so close to Guderian's face that his assistant pulled the general backward by the bottom of his uniformed jacket to prevent him from being struck by the furious Führer. The result of the confrontation was not the withdrawal and reassignment of the much-needed troops but rather a limited attack on the Arnswalde area in the hope of defeating the Soviets north of the Warthe River and thus retaining Pomerania and the link with Guderian's native Prussia.

Matters heated up even more dramatically in a February 13, 1945, meeting at the Chancellery in Berlin. Guderian noted that intelligence showed the Soviets could increase their forces on the River Oder by some four divisions per day, necessitating the launch of an attack within two days. Heinrich Himmler, leader of the dreaded SS, who was charged with defending that area, argued against the attack, contending that additional fuel and ammunition would be needed beforehand.

Guderian, true to his early war nickname of "Hurrying Heinz," strongly advocated immediate action and insisted that General Walther Wenck be attached to

Himmler's army group staff. He contended the SS leader had "neither the requisite experience nor a sufficiently competent staff to control the attack singlehanded."

Signal



TOP: General Heinz Guderian (above), long touted as the father of the Blitzkrieg, watches a formation of armored troops advance across the Russian steppes during Operation Barbarossa in July 1941.

Hitler took offense at Guderian's comments, saying he would not permit him to state that Himmler was incapable of performing his military duties. The confrontation raged for two hours, with the Führer hurling accusations, his veins standing out on his temples and his eyes seemingly ready to pop out of his head.

All the while Guderian stood his ground, determined to let nothing destroy his equanimity. He simply repeated his "essential demands" over and over again with icy consistency.

This was a rare moment in the history of the Third Reich, a battle-proven general staring down his Führer and calmly stating his

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By Steven Wuzubia, Health Correspondent;

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During the Battle of France in the spring of 1940, Guderian leans out of his command vehicle to confer with General Adolf Kuntzen, commander of the 8th Panzer Division. Guderian became known as a superb tactician during the campaigns in Poland and France, putting his theories of armored warfare into practice.

needs to hold back powerful forces threatening the country's very existence. Guderian noted that a portrait of Otto von Bismarck, the Iron Chancellor, hung from the fireplace mantel with a glint of steel from his cuirassier's helmet catching his eye. A bronze bust of General Paul von Hindenburg, Germany's hero of World War I and former president of the country, stood at the other end of the room. Both seemed to be asking the gathering: "What are you doing to Germany?"

The arguing stopped suddenly, with Hitler approaching Himmler and stating that General Wenck would arrive at his headquarters that very night to take charge of the attack. Two days later, the army was ready. The attack began early the next day. The initial effort went forward well, but Wenck was badly injured in a car accident two days into the attack. In his absence the advance bogged down, and the initial momentum was never regained. The Red tide was overwhelming and, combined with Allied advances in the West, the Third Reich collapsed within a few months.

Guderian had been right in his argument, but this larger than life general was to pay for his audacity in standing up to Hitler. In a somewhat similar stormy March 28, 1945, Chancellery meeting, Guderian again stood his ground against Hitler and the "bobbing heads" of the Führer's inner circle. He was sent on a six-week medical leave, departing Berlin to be with his wife before eventually becoming a U.S. prisoner of war.

Guderian was one of a fortunate few. His

independence, proven battlefield brilliance, the absence of documented war crime activities, and his polished writing skills were to serve him well in the coming years. In 1937, he had published *Achtung Panzer!*, a groundbreaking primer on the use of armored formations in warfare. His *Panzer Leader*, a 500-page-plus memoir, was to later burnish his military accomplishments and solidify his role as one of the leading German military figures in World War II. The 1952 book quickly hit the bestseller lists and was reprinted in several languages.

But how much of that memoir was objective and how much was self-serving? Was Guderian truly the "Father of the Blitzkrieg," as one book publisher contended? Was he the "Panzer Pioneer" in the use of tanks in World War II, or merely one of several military men who foresaw and fostered the development of tank warfare?

Guderian was indeed fortunate at the end of the war. He managed to fall into Allied hands, and he avoided the taint of war crimes and the prolonged life and death drama of the Nuremberg Trials. The Americans resisted Soviet efforts to get their hands on him. Unlike many of his comrades, then, Guderian had the time, motivation, and inclination to write his memoirs. And he managed to complete his book well before more detailed and classified materials became available. That meant that historians found themselves heavily reliant on Guderian's work and his personal perspective when writing about the tank commander's exploits in World War II.

As more materials became available, later

writers began to take a more nuanced view of Guderian, questioning his role as the developer of tank warfare and as the panzer pioneer. The idea that Guderian was also involved in discussions to assassinate Hitler is also raised. Such activity would have made him a traitor in Nazi eyes.

Guderian was a complex, bright, self-confident, technological innovator. As a young officer in World War I, he took it upon himself to take a flight over the Ardennes in a frail biplane to get a better look at the enemy formations facing his troops. That experience and his personal knowledge of the terrain were to pay handsome dividends years later when his tanks swept through the area and helped pin the Allies against the French seacoast. He was an early adaptor of technology who saw the need to use radio communications to ensure the tight and coordinated movement of tanks across the battlefield. The innovative use of radio communications also enabled him to lead from near the front, where he could effectively see and "feel" the battle develop.

Guderian's appreciation of technology and his command of the English and French languages supported his advocacy of tanks and the use of vehicles to transport men and matériel on the battlefield. In the interwar years, he read the works of Britain's J.F.C. Fuller and B.H. Liddell Hart, as well as those of a young French officer named Charles DeGaulle.

Fuller was involved in planning the successful British tank attack at Cambrai in 1917, and he developed the first real armored warfare doctrine, *Plan 1919*. Fuller saw the tank as a truly decisive weapon that could force a breakthrough of enemy lines, offsetting the comparatively slow pace of advance by infantry. He foresaw that tanks with their armor, firepower, and mobility could withstand enemy firepower in approaching enemy defenses, overcome them, and rupture the front. Fuller also advocated deep penetration of enemy lines to sow confusion and panic, causing the collapse of the entire front. Surprise, concentration, and mobility were keys to the approach advocated by Fuller.

Liddell Hart also served in World War I and later used his writing skills to spread his view that future wars would be dominated by mechanization and airpower. He stressed striking at the weakest spot in the enemy's defenses with a strong, disruptive blow to knock the opponent off balance as armored units penetrated deep behind the lines well ahead of the rest of the army.

Ironically, it was the Germans and not the British who managed to develop these theories of armored warfare during the interwar years.

De Gaulle, for his part, was locked in the interwar French Army with its traditional ties to the horse. Nevertheless, de Gaulle and his tanks did perform well in counterattacks against Guderian's tanks in the German drive from Sedan, May 17-20, 1940.

Guderian had the drive and ambition, while Hitler provided the opportunity. He used his ability as a technological innovator to further his ideas and career, helped along by the German desire to rebuild the military and avoid the prolonged trench warfare endured in World War I. During much of the interwar years he was fortunate to work under Oswald Lutz, who took Guderian under his wing as Lutz rose to become the first commander of German panzer troops.

Interestingly, it was Lutz who suggested in late 1936 that Guderian write *Achtung Panzer!* It was an amalgamation of Guderian's war academy lectures and a review of the ideas of others. The panzers played a role in the March 1938 Anschluss with Austria, and shortly thereafter Guderian began to receive rare invitations to dine and attend the opera with Hitler.

Guderian's favor with the Führer helped him to get posted to command a second-line defensive infantry corps during the planning of the August 1939 invasion of Poland. Guderian pulled out all available political stops and managed at least to get himself reassigned to command an untried motorized corps rather than the XVI Corps that had brought him notoriety in Austria. His corps performed well, and on September 5, 1939, Guderian provided a battlefield tour to Hitler, Himmler, and a young infantry officer named Erwin Rommel, who later gained fame as the Desert Fox. All the while he stressed that armor would be the dominant weapon of modern war.

Guderian obviously was a quick learner and a self-confident innovator, and there is little doubt about his military prowess. He stepped forward to endorse General Erich von Manstein's plan to use tanks to penetrate the heavily forested Ardennes in a "sickle cut" to the English Channel, cutting off the bulk of the enemy forces in Belgium and Holland. That accomplished, Guderian then swung toward the Swiss border to trap more than 500,000 Frenchmen in a large envelopment that helped to bring the war in France to an abrupt end.

Guderian also showed his military prowess when Germany invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. His panzer group was in the central thrust toward Moscow, crossing three major rivers, capturing 300,000 Soviet soldiers in the Minsk pocket, and taking that city and Smolensk with another 300,000 Russian pris-

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oners along with 3,200 tanks and more than 3,000 guns. He had advanced some 400 miles into the Soviet Union and to within 175 miles of Moscow. In a controversial move, his panzers were then ordered some 200 miles south on August 21 to help take Kiev. That battle cost the Red Army another 660,000 men and an estimated 880 tanks and 3,700 guns.

Guderian's tankers retraced their steps and on September 30 resumed their attack toward Moscow. The panzers pushed forward and reached Orel on October 3, moving so quickly that the trams were still running as the Germans entered the city. Four days later the German pincers closed on the Bryansk pocket, netting more than 660,000 Soviet prisoners.

Poor weather, logistical challenges, and stiffening Soviet resistance halted the Germans before Moscow. Guderian's attempt to take Tula, a crucial city south of Moscow, failed, and on December 4 he shifted to the defensive just before the Soviets launched a counteroffensive using fresh Siberian forces backed with powerful T-34 medium tanks. Hitler was displeased with Guderian's unauthorized pull-back, and he sacked the general on December 26, 1941.

In many ways, the self-described panzer leader was fortunate to have been dismissed. His reputation was not tarnished by the Axis defeat in North Africa, the retreat from Moscow, or the disaster that befell the Sixth Army at Stalingrad. On February 28, 1943, Hitler named Guderian inspector general of armored troops to direct a reorganization of the panzer forces and speed up the production of much needed heavier tanks. It was his first field command in two years, and Guderian moved forward with his usual energy.

Guderian's irascibility, which had earned him the nickname of "Stormy Weather Heinz" in some circles, was to follow him to that new position. Although not directly involved in planning for the mid-1943 Citadel offensive and the resulting Battle of Kursk, Guderian did strongly argue against the use of the heavy Elephant and Nashorn tank destroyers and expressed concern about deploying the new Tiger and Panther tanks until reliability problems could be worked out.

He witnessed the action at Kursk, and his concerns about the Tiger and Panther tanks were proven correct. According to one report, of the 200 new Panthers that saw action at Kursk, 42 were destroyed but only 43 remained operational as the Germans withdrew. The others had suffered mechanical breakdowns or battle damage.

Guderian continued with his reorganization

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York



Adolf Hitler presents the Knight's Cross medal to Guderian and other officers in October 1939. Guderian fell out of favor with Hitler, in part due to his willingness to oppose the Führer on military issues.

plan, which resulted in the estimated production of some 1,848 Panther tanks in 1943 and another 1,468 by May 1944. Following the failed July 20, 1944, plot to assassinate Hitler, Guderian was named acting chief of the general staff. He became occupied with new matters in that post, such as the continued Soviet advances in the East, Allied pressure in the West, and Allied bombing that slowly strangled German production capacity as the war continued. The deteriorating conditions and his continuing clashes with Hitler led to Guderian's second dismissal on March 28, 1945.

Perhaps the most intriguing question in Guderian's background revolves around his possible knowledge of plans to assassinate Hitler. While his memoirs freely acknowledge some interaction with a few of the conspirators during his 1942-1943 period of unemployment, historian Russell Hart says Guderian "concluded the scheme lacked sufficient prospects of success to hazard his career and life." But Guderian did not denounce the men, and that alone would probably have been enough to warrant his execution according to Nazi justice.

Hart goes further, however, contending that there is "strong circumstantial evidence" indicating that Guderian was more involved in the conspiracy than he admits in his memoirs. In June 1944, for example, he recommended to Himmler that Colonel Claus Graf von Stauffenberg, the leader of the conspiracy, become the Army's chief of staff. That would have given Stauffenberg direct access to Hitler. Also, on July 19, 1944, Lt. Col. Karl-Henning von Barsewisch, Guderian's former Luftwaffe liai-

son officer, met with the general and informed him of an impending attempt on the Führer's life in a final effort to enlist Guderian's participation in the conspiracy, says Hart.

Guderian also failed to report that meeting, saying lamely in his memoirs that he decided the information was too incredible to take seriously. That defense, says Hart, "borders on the preposterous."

Hart also raises questions regarding Guderian's actions on July 20, the day of Stauffenberg's failed attempt on Hitler's life. He traveled from Berlin to his Diepenhof estate in West Prussia that day and spent the afternoon hunting roebuck alone on his estate at the time of the assassination attempt. It was late afternoon before a dispatch rider located Guderian, providing him with crucial time to see which way the plot had gone, contends Hart. When he learned via a radio report that the plot had failed, he set about further isolating himself from suspicion.

Guderian was able to do just that, and the next day a still bomb-dazed Hitler promoted the former panzer leader to acting chief of the general staff. Hitler also made Guderian a member of the "honor court" that screened and discharged members of the armed forces accused of involvement in the July 20 conspiracy. The accused were then subjected to special Gestapo torture, convicted by a people's court, and slowly strangled to death by piano wire.

Guderian's role in the honor court is troubling, especially if he indeed had advance knowledge of the plot. He voted to expel fellow officers from the military based solely on Gestapo interrogation and intelligence reports,

denying them opportunities to present a defense or call witnesses.

Also disturbing were Guderian's actions during his 1942-1943 period of inactivity when he was seeking property in conquered territory that he might claim for his own. He settled on a 2,500-acre estate of excellent farmland at Diepenhof and managed to have the Polish owners forcibly evicted. Hitler approved, seeing such gifts as a way of tying his military commanders to him. The estate was "the largest single bribe" Hitler ever gave to any of his field commanders, contends Hart. In addition, since August 1940, Guderian had already been receiving special tax-free monthly payments of 2,000 Reichsmarks, effectively doubling his gross salary.

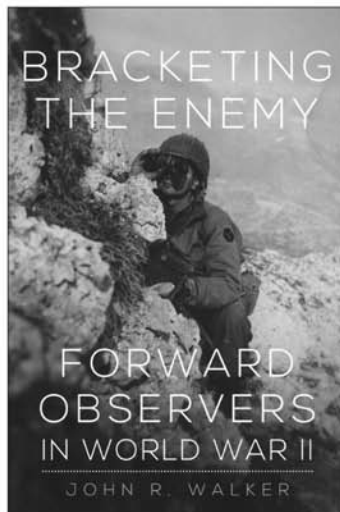
Guderian proved to be a very bright and very complex individual. He was a proven general who could and did make quick, difficult decisions. For the most part, his men loved him, his peers respected him, and his superiors often grated at his impertinence. One superior, Field Marshall Gunther von Kluge, was so enraged by Guderian that at one point he actually petitioned Hitler for permission to challenge the tank commander to a duel to settle matters, a request the Führer denied.

Guderian and most of the German military in the 1930s saw Hitler's rise to power as a wave they could ride in furthering their own careers while rebuilding the German military. With experience and instinct, he was prepared to strike when opportunities presented themselves, both on and off the battlefield. On the battlefield such acts can prove productive. In civilian life such acts can be seen as opportunistic, as in his ready acquisition of the large estate.

While he was a technological innovator, he was not the first or only advocate of tank warfare. Others came before him. Guderian's first book on tank warfare appeared before the war; however, he actually had to pull political strings to gain command of a mechanized corps for the invasion of Poland in 1939. Although not historically the first panzer leader, he did epitomize and demonstrate what tankers could accomplish when led by a determined, well-trained, and fearless commander.

Both the Soviets and the Western Allies were indeed fortunate that the talented Guderian proved so irascible to Hitler and the Nazis that his considerable energies and abilities were never fully harnessed and directed by the Third Reich. □

Phil Zimmer is a former newspaper reporter and a U.S. Army veteran. He has written on a number of World War II topics and resides in Jamestown, New York.



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Meanwhile in Leningrad

Survivors of the 900-day siege on the city tell their miraculous stories.

GEORGINA'S MOTHER SAT NEXT TO ME AT HER DINING ROOM TABLE. SHE AND her husband were veterans of the Great Patriotic War, and back in 1996 we all sat about the table on Victory Day and talked about the siege.

The old woman grasped my arm and talked in Russian while her husband listened. They both wore medals, one of his for “extreme bravery.” It was, of course, May 9, and everyone was in a jovial mood. The day was light and airy, and it reminded me of holiday dinners at home, or Fourth of July barbecues. It reminded me of any occasion where we celebrate, albeit with a certain twist. At home and in Europe we celebrate victories; on this day, citizens of St. Petersburg celebrate survival. There is a difference.

In Europe, of course, Victory Day is May 8, but because of the time difference and the surrender not being signed until nearly midnight in Germany, the defenders of Leningrad did not find out until the next day, May 9.

The small room was crowded. This was, for all intents and purposes, the apartment of two citizens of the Soviet Union, two comrades during the war whose daughter married a Soviet naval captain who manned a ship in the Arctic with the mission of seeking out American submarines. These were the people I was raised to fear and despise. We drank wine and ate a small dish of onions. Soup would be next, and salmon.

Communism had ended a few short years earlier. Georgina's mother kept hold of my arm and spoke slowly while her husband poured me more to drink. He was

a big man with a wide, tender smile. And she might have been my own grandmother, whose eldest son fought in the war.

“My job was in a munitions factory,” she told me. Everyone had a job. Lt. Gen. Markian Popov was the officer in charge of Leningrad during the siege, and at the beginning of the war he made a statement for the citizens of the city: “The moment has come to put your Bolshevik qualities to work, to get ready to defend Leningrad without wasting words. We have to see that nobody is just an onlooker and carry out in the least possible time the same kind of mobilization of the workers that was done in 1918 and 1919. The enemy is at the gate. It is a question of life and death.”

Everyone had a job to do.

The Soviet involvement in the Great Patriotic War, as they refer to World War II, actually began on June 22, 1941, when the German Army's three million troops invaded the Soviet Union, almost two years after World War II started for the rest of Europe with Hitler's invasion of Poland. Soviet Premier Josef Stalin had been a willing accomplice in that invasion with the Red Army invading Poland from the east. Stalin did not believe that Hitler would turn on the Soviet Union.

Following the Nazi invasion, Hitler had unintentional help in the Soviet Union since Stalin never really cared about casualties. Early in the war Stalin ordered the Red Army to remain firm as the Germans captured nearly six million prisoners of war, most of whom died in captivity. In fact, Stalin was so adamant that troops hold their positions that he ordered the execution of frontline commanders who retreated. By 1942, more than 77,000 Soviet citizens had been executed for supposed cowardice and treachery.

Two decrees were issued: Order 270 made it a criminal offense for any soldier to surrender and Order 227 declared that any commander retreating without permission would be tried before a military tribunal. These became known as the “Not a Step Backward” decrees.

The military overseers dug trenches behind the armies and filled them with sharpshooters. Later estimates put the total number of Soviet dead in World War II at 20 million, but the most accurate estimate in retrospect is about 32 million Soviet military and civilian deaths, roughly the present population of Canada.

In Leningrad, however, the vast

Soviet soldiers and civilians run for their lives along the Nevsky Prospekt, Leningrad's main boulevard, as German shells slam into the street and surrounding buildings. Bodies lie heaped together and unburied amid the destruction of war.



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Men bring a cart filled with bodies to the Volkovo Cemetery in Leningrad. The civilian population of the city suffered greatly as the Germans and Finns tried to starve Leningrad into submission.

majority of casualties were not soldiers, but women and children. One Victory Day I walked alone through town after the veterans' parade. I passed 14 Nevsky Prospect, where residents leave flowers beneath a sign in place since the war, which reads, "Citizens! During artillery shelling this side of the street is most dangerous!" At the Piskaryovskoye Cemetery, too, tens of thousands of mourners leave flowers on one of the 186 mounds of mass graves or at the monument of the Motherland, a statue of a woman lamenting those who died during what the rest of the world calls the "siege," but which Russians call "Blokada," the blockade.

The siege of Leningrad is political and military history, yet it is also personal. It is the story of the general making tough decisions, his frame a sliver of what it had been before the war; it is the story of the child living on a few grams of bread, his mother making sure he only takes small bites throughout the day for fear if he eats it all at once he will surely starve to death.

The siege is one of the chapters in books about 20th-century atrocities; yet it is also the conversation over beers in a corner pub, where most veterans still hold back their emotions against the questions of the curious. Some allow others to cross the line into their world, allow them to suffer the starvation through stories and tears because they know it might be the only way these great heroes, the defenders of Leningrad, will be remembered.

One woman at Palace Square spoke to me of her worst memory. She was 15 during the siege

when she had to pull a sleigh carrying the body of her sister, who had died of starvation. She made it to the graveyard and left her sister on the pile of bodies. Another there, Alexander, remembered how he would cut up a piece of bread once a day for his brothers. His parents had died of starvation some time earlier.

Nearly three million civilians, including nearly half a million children, refused to surrender despite having to deal with extreme hardships in the encircled city. Food and fuel would last only about two months after the siege began on September 8, 1941, and by winter there was no heating, no water, almost no electricity, and little sustenance. These citizens still had two more years of this to endure. Leningrad is roughly at the same latitude as Anchorage, Alaska. It gets cold.

During that first January and February, 200,000 people died of cold and starvation. Because disease was a problem, the bodies were carried to various locations in the city, most notably what became the Piskaryovskoye Cemetery. Even so, people continued to work in the deplorable conditions to keep the war industries operating. When they were not working or looking for food and water, they were carrying the dead, dragging bodies on children's sleighs or pulling them through the snow by their wrists to the cemetery.

One man said, "To take someone who has died to the cemetery is an affair of so much labor that it exhausts the last strength in the survivors. The living, having fulfilled their duty

to the dead, are themselves brought to the brink of death."

But the people of Leningrad would not surrender; they always heeded Popov's decree. Still, after the war, Stalin ordered the general's arrest for not communicating with Moscow often enough, and he was sent to a gulag.

I met a woman named Sophia in a graveyard on the north side of the city. She had been an adolescent during the reign of Czar Nicholas II and lost her husband and son during the siege. We sat on a bench, and she told me of her life, of her family, as if time had turned it into a hazy event she had heard someone tell about years earlier. Her hands were transparent, and she spoke of Leningrad as being a prisoner of war, with no rations and no electricity and little hope. The city became a concentration camp, its citizens condemned to death by Hitler.

Thousands of people were evacuated across Lake Ladoga via the famous frozen "Doroga Zhinzni," the "Road of Life." During warm weather, some were boated across, but in winter they were carried on trucks across the frozen lake under German fire. Heading north was pointless. The Finnish Army, allied with the Germans since the bitter Winter War with the Soviets in 1939-1940, held the line there.

Meanwhile, in Leningrad, workers took all the treasures from the Hermitage Museum and the Palaces of Peterhof and Pushkin and buried them in basements and beneath St. Isaac's Cathedral. Not everything made it out, including many paintings and the mysterious amber room of the Summer Palace. On Hitler's orders most of the palaces, such as Gachina, the Summer Palace in Pushkin, and other historic landmarks located outside the city's defensive perimeter, were looted and then destroyed, with many art collections being transported to Nazi Germany.

The Leningrad airport and many factories, schools, hospitals, transport facilities, and other buildings were destroyed by air raids and long-range artillery during the 30-month siege. Still, students continued their studies and some even graduated, celebrating between bombings.

Then, composer Dmitri Shostakovich wrote his Seventh Symphony, the Leningrad Symphony, and it was performed in this besieged city, bombs exploding in the background, but no one leaving the performance. To hear the symphony today in the cemetery while thousands of people walk about without talking is to understand how music can capture emotions more readily than words.

The Seventh played while my friend, Mike Kweder, and I walked about in the silence of the mourners, and we stopped at times to talk, to wonder. Mike asked if I thought the cemetery

would continue to be a destination on Victory Day, or any day, after the veterans were all gone; he wondered when the day would be taken for granted.

When I first came to St. Petersburg, the veterans numbered in the thousands. Now there are only a few thousand, and many of them are not well. Back in the early 1990s one could not wander more than a few feet without meeting a survivor of the siege. Today, we must look intently for the medals, or for old women on benches, holding flowers. Then we both saw a young couple walk by with their young son playing with a toy rifle, making mock shooting noises, and I hoped he did not point the plastic toward someone who had seen enough.

For the Soviets during the war, the future of their country and perhaps victory or defeat in World War II were in the balance. When the initial attack on Leningrad failed, Hitler ordered the siege to free up troops the Nazis needed elsewhere. Had the Germans taken Leningrad or destroyed it faster, they would have been able to sweep attack Moscow, the Soviet capital and their real goal, from behind.

The troops protecting the city were reliant upon its citizens to supply them with food and munitions—not an easy task for a city with virtually nothing.

“We simply had nothing to eat,” one woman told me on a bench in the village of Pushkin. I had been walking about the town and stopped to buy some doilies she made by hand. She also had a plate of poppy seed buns her granddaughter had baked. The siege, she said, was a time during which one gauged success by being alive or not.

“I thought about food at breakfast, I played with it at lunch, and I pretended to consume it at dinner,” she said. “This went on for me nearly from the start.” She took a bite of one of the poppy seed rolls and looked around for other people who might buy her knitting. “Really, we were hungry from the very start. People must know that.”

When the Nazis took Schliesselburg east of Leningrad, the city was officially surrounded, and within three years half of the city’s population would be dead. Despite the danger, factories continued to supply arms and ammunition. Old men, women, and children replaced workers who left for the battlefield.

“But here’s what mattered: the city tried to act like a city,” Georgina’s mother told me as she let go of my arm and ate cake, sipping tea and pausing to recall details. “A few dozen schools continued to educate, 20 movie and playhouses stayed open, the Grand Philharmonic played for at least a year.”

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Some survivors, however, tell of wartime KGB activities, or encounters with people who had such severe mental illness from disease and starvation that it had become unbearable. The accounts are sometimes spurious, but too many narratives contain too many parallel events to write them off as exaggerated. Several wrote of what became known as “blockade cannibalism,” including the story of a boy who was enticed to enter someone’s apartment to eat warm cereal only to discover a room of butchered corpses behind a door.

Radio broadcasts continued. The survivors of the siege declare that efforts to maintain morale were as significant as the troops on the front lines in saving the city.

A few years ago at Rasputin’s, a pub just outside the Nevsky Monastery, I met an elderly man. I immediately recognized him from earlier in the week at Trinity Cathedral, where we both lit candles at the tomb of Saint Alexander Nevsky, patron to soldiers and young men. I knew the man from his long gray hair and worn boots. I was drinking wine and waiting for soup when he asked me if he had seen me earlier in the week.

We talked, and I asked if he was a veteran. He smiled and said yes, and eventually he told me of his covert operations behind enemy lines, deep in the German-occupied sections of the



Leningrad is known to many as “the city of old women who survived the siege.” This woman pauses to remember lost family members and friends who perished during the siege that lasted nearly three years and caused tremendous suffering among the civilian population.

city. He was on food detail, he told me, pointing to his own meal. He and his comrades were in charge of transporting as much food as possible into the city. He had no reason to fabricate

the story, yet I had never heard of such maneuvers. We drank together, and I told him of Americans I had known who fought in the war.

I have met many Russians in pubs who love to fabricate stories of heroism, but this man was not among them. According to the curator at the Monument to the Heroic Defenders of Leningrad, for a few months in the summer of 1941 Soviet guerrilla detachments called “exterminator squads” set up camp behind enemy lines to assist regular troops and volunteers defending the city. They annoyed the Nazi commanders to no end.

One “guerrilla province” was formed in Nazi-controlled areas of Leningrad—something unheard of in much of military history—a vast area behind enemy lines under its own political and economic rule. Thirty-five thousand troops operated there, harassing the Nazis. They also managed to transport more than 500 tons of food to the city in March 1942. The old man showed me the medal he was awarded for “extreme bravery.”

I met another nearly 90-year-old man on the steps near the Motherland statue. A young girl of about eight reached up to hand him a flower, and he cried. I said how beautiful it was that parents still teach their children to respect him and his comrades 60 years or more later. He

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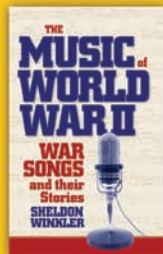
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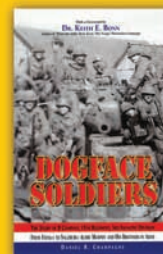
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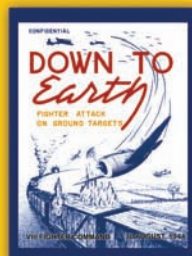
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smiled and added that what touched him was when he was a young man leaving for the front lines, a young girl had run to him and handed him a flower. This young girl reminded him of that moment.

"It happens every time a child gives me a flower," he said. He laid the flower at the foot of the statue. I asked what had gotten him through the worst of the days, when, truly, it seemed there was no hope of continuing. He stroked his beard.

"I shaved every day," he said. "No matter how weak we were, and no matter how long we might spend doing nothing but waking, resting, sleeping, and waking again, every day we were encouraged to shave, and did. It made me feel like I was ready for what was next."

Leningrad's Astoria Hotel did not resemble a hotel at all during the siege. It was a hospital with bodies in the hallways and on the stairs. The manager at the time, Anna Andreievna, spoke of how the ground was too frozen to bury the dead, so the bodies accumulated in the streets. But the survivors never lost faith in the Red Army, in the workers, in themselves, and in God.

"I used canes to walk to and from the hotel," Anna remembered. "I was so weak, dropping from 160 pounds to about 90. But the ones who stopped, died. Sometimes I would pass



An elderly veteran of the siege of Leningrad smiles faintly during a ceremony to remember the dead of the horrific 900-day siege. This soldier wears a number of decorations, including one for "extreme bravery" exhibited during the siege.

someone breathing heavily in the morning sitting on a step, and in the afternoon pass again and that person would be dead."

Leningrad's population of dogs, cats, horses,

rats, and crows disappeared as they became the main courses on many dinner tables. Nothing was off limits, and stories circulate about eating dirt, paper, and wood. One void with stories of the siege lies in the details left out or destroyed. Stalin censored much of the news of anything except heroism.

The people of Leningrad ate wood glue, the paste from the back of wallpaper, and boiled leather belts. People ate the buds on the low branches in spring; everyone who survived the siege can recall "pigweed." One woman used one of her dead children to feed the others.

For nearly three years, Leningrad was under attack night and day, and almost half its population, including 700,000 women and children, perished. The Germans left the city of Peter the Great, his "Window to the West," in ruins. Still, they could not defeat Leningrad.

The great siege and the sacrifice of the people who suffered and died will always be remembered—even as the number of survivors continues to dwindle. □

This is author Bob Kunzinger's first contribution to WWII History. He is a professor of humanities and resides in Virginia Beach, Virginia. His work has appeared in numerous publications and has been noted in Best American Essays.

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Siam Secrecy

Ally intelligence efforts in Thailand influenced the course of World War II in the China-Burma-India Theater.

THAILAND WAS PERHAPS THE LEAST KNOWN, THOUGH SURELY MORE SCENIC and exotic, covert battleground of World War II. For one American, it would be the adventure of a lifetime already filled with adventure, for another mental anguish in the dark. A British agent was almost killed by his briefcase. A rebel would find himself a royal stand-in, then a resister. In the end, the Japanese would be so oblivious to reality they were dancing just two days before their doom.

A revolution in 1932 had stripped the Thai monarchy of its absolute power, though the substitute would prove worse—a Fascist-leaning military strongman, Colonel Pribul Songgram. Becoming premier in 1940, Pribul styled himself “Leader,” scapegoated the Chinese minority the way Hitler did the Jews, and, determined to break Great Britain’s stranglehold on trade, ominously moved Thailand into the political orbit of Japan.

London was worried enough by the summer of 1941 to suggest a joint effort with Washington to wean Pribul from Tokyo. U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull by then believed that the effort would be hopeless. He believed that Thailand was already in the clutches of Japan.

Japanese control became official on the day Pearl Harbor was attacked, December 7, 1941. As 20,000 Japanese troops were landing uninvited on Thailand’s coast, the Japanese ambassador in Bangkok was dictating to Pribul and the Thai cabinet the terms of passage for Japanese troops to transit Thailand and attack the British in Burma, an alliance between Japan and Thailand, and declarations of war against Great Britain and the United States.

In Washington, the Thai minister had to make it official by handing notification to Hull. When that moment came, though, with tears in his eyes, he refused: “I am keeping the declaration in my pocket because I am convinced it does not reflect the will of the Thai people. With American help, I propose to prove it,” he declared.

The U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS, the forerunner of the modern Central Intelligence Agency) soon had more immediate concerns regarding Thailand than the country’s liberation, however. “Right now Siam is the biggest information blind spot in the Far East,” the agent being sent there, Colonel Nicol Smith, was briefed. “General Stilwell is fighting a tough campaign in Burma, and he wants to know how many Thais are under arms and whether they really want to fight for the Japs. The Army Air Forces want to know where the most important Jap installations are so

they can bomb them. General Chennault wants to know where prison camps are and whether some of his fliers downed over Siam can be rescued. The State Department wants to know to what extent the present government represents the will of the Thai people.”

Colonel Smith had been adventuring around the world since paddling the length of the Danube River in a canoe when only 17 years of age. He had been a captive of South Seas islanders before escaping, was shipwrecked, spent time among the inmates of the Devil’s Island prison colony (as a visitor), went up South America’s River of Death where a tribe adopted him, and traveled the length of the Burma Road. He was already well acquainted with the wilds of China and covert intelligence work, having just returned from a year inside Vichy France. With 21 American-educated Thais recruited by the Thai Minister to the United States, he set sail for Thailand from Baltimore via the Panama Canal on March 15, 1943.

While Smith spent the next year training in India with his Thais, then trekking with them across China, the postwar future of Thailand was developing into a bone of contention between the Allies. Washington regarded Thai-



ABOVE: Colonel Nicol Smith (right), the OSS agent designated to gather information in Thailand, a U.S. intelligence blind spot, walks with U.S. Navy Captain John Ford behind Japanese lines in Burma. **TOP:** OSS operatives in Thailand negotiate a jungle trail on horseback during a clandestine operation against the Japanese. Divided loyalties among the Thai people contributed to the hazardous nature of duty in the Southeast Asian nation.

How to Outsmart a Millionaire

Only the "Robin Hood of Watchmakers" can steal the spotlight from a luxury legend for under \$200!

I wasn't looking for trouble. I sat in a café, sipping my espresso and enjoying the quiet. Then it got noisy. Mr. Bigshot rolled up in a roaring high-performance Italian sports car, dropping attitude like his \$14,000 watch made it okay for him to be rude. That's when I decided to roll up my sleeves and teach him a lesson.

"Nice watch," I said, pointing to his and holding up mine. He nodded like we belonged to the same club. We did, but he literally paid 100 times more for his membership. Bigshot bragged about his five-figure purchase, a luxury heavyweight from the titan of high-priced timepieces. I told him that mine was the *Stauer Corso*, a 27-jewel automatic classic now available for only \$179. And just like that, the man was at a loss for words.

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land as a victim of Japanese aggression to be treated as a liberated country, while London had answered Thailand's declaration of war with one of its own in February 1942 and was making plain its intention to place Thailand under indefinite occupation.

The dispute extended further to the intelligence services. Britain's counterpart to the OSS, the Special Operations Executive (SOE), was planning to send its own Thais back into the country. Meanwhile, both agencies would find their Thai operations obstructed by the notorious head of Chinese intelligence, "the Chinese Himmler," General Tai Li.

When Smith finally reached the Indochina border, the promised assistance from Tai Li failed to materialize, and the first two Thais he sent into the country were killed by the Japanese. Finally, a Chinese Catholic priest, whom Smith promised \$1,000 to build a new church, agreed to lead a new quartet of agents during the monsoon season when they would be least expected.

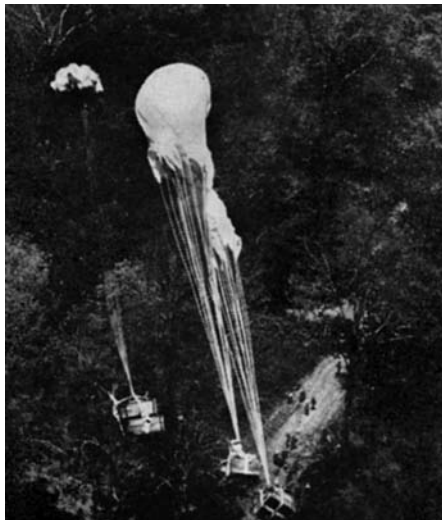
Almost three months passed anxiously for Smith, as the SOE's own Thais reached Bangkok first and he was warned that the OSS was about to cancel his mission. Then, finally, on October 5, 1944, came the first broadcast by the OSS Thais from inside Bangkok. Smith and some officers were dejectedly killing time with one more nightly card game when another officer rushed in to announce contact had finally been made.

"For a moment we were all too stunned to speak," Smith recalled in his postwar memoir *Into Siam: Underground Kingdom*. "Then, as if we were one, the entire group leaped from the table scattering cards and chips on the floor, and rushed for the radio shack.... The tap, tap, tap was sounded over and over again, little by little, groups took tangible shape on paper. Never had anything looked so good to me as did those ever-increasing letters of the alphabet."

The Thais were broadcasting from inside the national police headquarters, but they were not prisoners—the chief was a major figure in the resistance movement. As Smith was to later jubilantly write, "The two hundred and twenty thousand square miles of Thailand was no longer an information blackout. A lamp had been lighted in the capital of Siam, more than five hundred miles to the south, and we knew it would be shining ever brighter until the end of the war and the return of freedom...."

"Requests for information came thick and fast. Our intelligence became increasingly detailed."

Information was exchanged daily between Bangkok and the Free Thai legation and the



Covert OSS operations were often in the field for extended periods, and resupply became problematic. The issue was resolved partially with the airdrops of needed matériel into the dense jungle below. This photo shows supplies descending earthward along the Thai-Burmese border.

State Department in Washington.

"We were giving twenty-four-hour weather reports and designating more and more plane targets. We were able to inform General [Albert C.] Wedemeyer about Jap troop movements across Siam to Burma. We told the Air Force which side of the [Bangkok] airport the Thais were using, and which side the Japs. Every branch of the armed services and every Allied government agency pressed us for answers to vital questions. Replies came back from inside Jap-held Thailand with remarkable conciseness."

The Free Thais were followed by American and British agents parachuted in or landed on hidden airstrips in the jungle. The OSS was also active along Thailand's coast, dropping off and then picking up reconnaissance units by PT boat. "It was a river war like the movie *Apocalypse Now*," one boat captain remembered. "I think it was the most fun I had in my life."

Some agents found the secret service in Thailand less enjoyable. The first American radio operator in Bangkok, after two months of never leaving the darkened room he broadcasted from, suffered a complete mental breakdown and had to be evacuated to the coast. The head of the SOE mission, Colonel David Smiley, had the James Bond-like briefcase designed to burn documents inside in the event of capture suddenly explode in his hand, drenching him in flaming liquid. After a week of agony, covered in burns with no medical treatment available, he was flown out to recover and eventually return to Thailand.

Besides information, the OSS and SOE worked to organize resistance against the 50,000-strong Japanese occupation force. "There was a reception for every drop," one of the SOE Thais recalled. "Transport, food, shelter, and cover stories were provided.... As practically all the government official and the civilian population were with us there was no hide-and-seek with the Japanese counterespionage."

"Once established in our respective areas, all we had to do was state what we required: the categories of men for the different types of work and the number of recruits we required. The underground responded promptly. Guerrilla and subversive activities would have been well-nigh impossible had it not been for the organization inside Siam. Without local help we would not have lasted long."

Guerrilla bands totaling 10,000 members were founded. But the China-Burma-India Theater was the end of the line in Allied priority for supplies, and Thailand the end inside that line. Less than 200 tons of arms and ammunition for the resistance were eventually air-dropped or flown in.

The Americans continued to operate out of the police headquarters in Bangkok, the British, even more improbably, from the office of the commandant of the main internment camp for Western civilians. On July 13, 1945, it was finally Colonel Nicol Smith's turn to head to the capital to meet the leader of the resistance, codenamed Ruth, and inform him to refrain from a general uprising until the British offensive to liberate Malaya scheduled for November 1945 had commenced.

Smith flew from liberated Burma to a secret airstrip inside Thailand and from there in a Thai Air Force transport to Bangkok's main airfield. Upon landing he and his companion got a shock when Japanese ground crewmen pushed an aircraft of their own just five yards past them!

"Lloyd and I were flat on our stomachs, our faces so close together our noses touched," Smith recalled. "The sweat rolled off my forehead. I could feel drops pouring down my neck."

From there they were driven to the Royal Palace, of all places, to meet Ruth.

Ruth was no less than Pridi Phanomyong, regent for the absent boy-king Ananda Mahidol, who was at boarding school in Switzerland when the Japanese took over. Ironically, Pridi had been a leader in the revolution that reduced the monarchy to ceremonial status and was later fired by Premier Pribul from the post of minister of finance for opposing the Japanese

and politically sidelined, it appeared, in the regency.

Then, in July 1944, the Thai Parliament forced Pribul to resign. There was no reaction from the Japanese, and Pridi was in control of the government. "A double life is not an easy one," he told Smith. "By day I sit in my palace and pretend to busy myself with the affairs of His Majesty. In reality the entire time is taken up with problems of the underground—how we are going to get more guerrillas; how we are going to feed the ones we already have; how we can, without suspicion, replace governors from provinces where we are putting in American camps so that we may always have one of the men of the underground in the key position."

That life was about to get even harder. Passing Japanese aircraft had spotted secret landing strips, then ground searches uncovered hidden arms. Pridi denied knowledge but warned Smith to get out. "The Japanese may assassinate me," he said. "I'm afraid it's the beginning of the end."

As Smith was being driven out of town past the biggest hotel in Bangkok, he heard a raucous party going on inside. The driver said the Japanese were celebrating Tokyo's dismissal of the Potsdam Declaration.

"We couldn't resist pausing a few moments to watch," Smith would later write. "The music never stopped. As soon as one orchestra finished, the other began. Around and around the dance floor whirled the Japanese, celebrating the New Order in Southeast Asia—two days before the atomic bomb."

The bomb saved Pridi and Thailand. The Japanese were so demoralized that the SOE's David Smiley, recovered from his burns, was able to supervise the disarmament of 10,000 Japanese troops singlehanded.

Pressure from Washington forced the British to sign a peace treaty with Thailand that merely terminated hostilities, such as they had never been, with no occupation. Young King Ananda Mahidol returned, but was found dead at the age of 19 from a gunshot wound. The origin of the fatal shot was never satisfactorily explained. Pridi Phanomyong remained in power until overthrown in 1949 by Pribul Songgram, who would be ousted in turn in 1957.

Ironically, it would be the former Fascist Songgram who made Thailand the ally of the United States in the Korean and Vietnam conflicts. □

Author John W. Osborn, Jr., is a resident of Laguna Niguel, California. He has previously written for WWII History on numerous topics.



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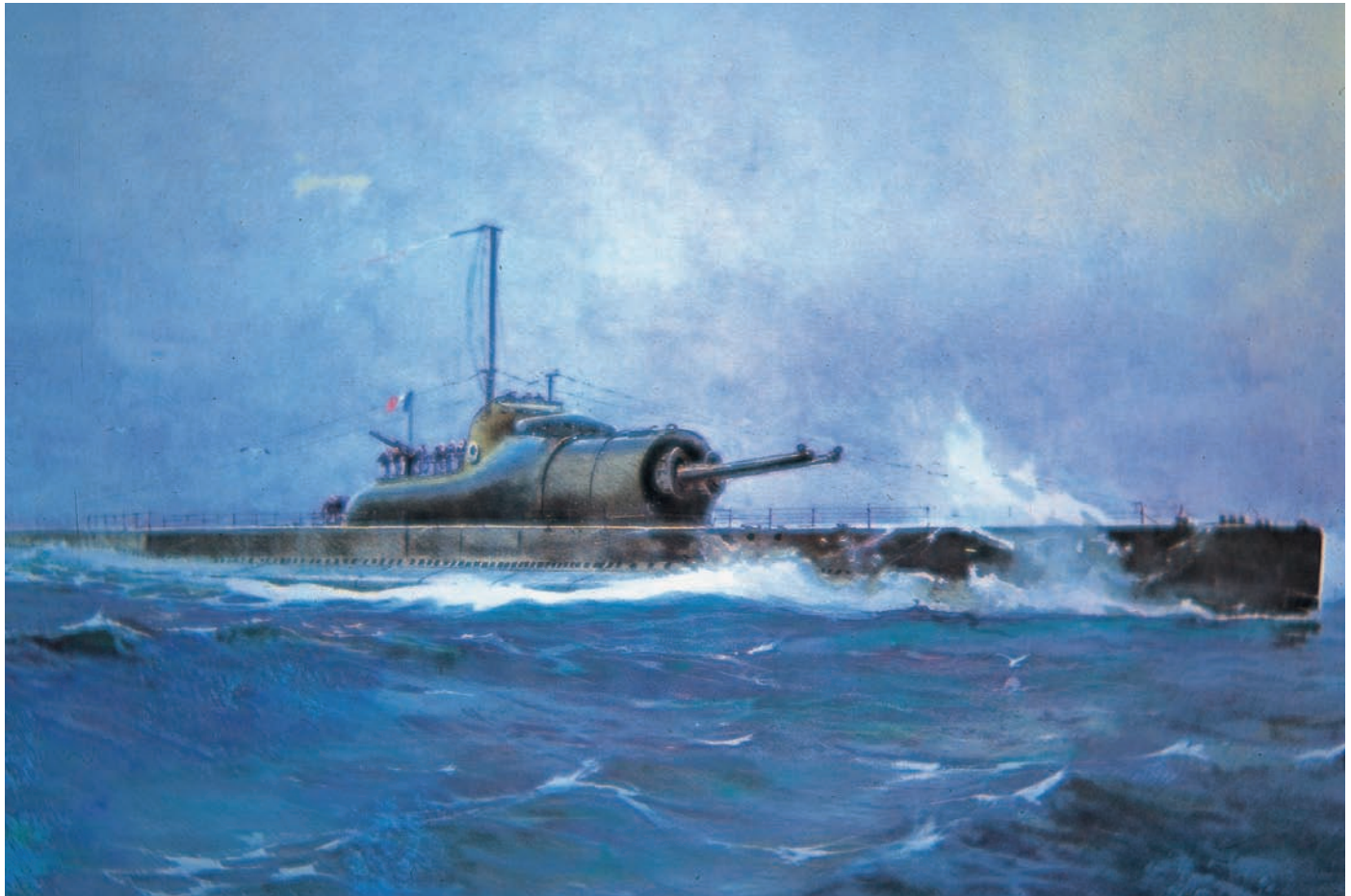
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Seizure of the *Surcouf*

A fatal gun battle erupted when British sailors tried to take control of a French submarine after its homeland surrendered in 1940.

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The ill-fated submarine was laid down in 1927 but not commissioned until 1934. *Surcouf* was intended as the lead boat of a series of large “cruiser” or “corsair” submarines, heavily armed to hunt enemy shipping. Besides her dozen torpedo tubes, *Surcouf* sported a pair of eight-inch cannon mounted in an oval-shaped turret at the front of the superstructure, just ahead of the conning tower. A small hangar supported a floatplane for scouting and spotting. A contemporary edition of *Jane’s Fighting Ships* listed her as 393.7 feet long and displacing

4,300 tons submerged. Her speed was 18 knots surfaced, 10 submerged.

Intended to be a shark-like leviathan among the world’s undersea fleets, *Surcouf* was instead a whale. Plagued by mechanical problems and poor seakeeping qualities, the vessel never lived up to its reputation. When the German invasion of France came, *Surcouf* was sitting dockside at Brest, a port city on the Breton Peninsula. As the advancing Germans drew near, the submarine was moved to England, hopefully to finish repairs there and make her battle worthy.

Unfortunately, her engines were inoperable. Three of the connecting rods in the two diesels were broken. Only the electric auxiliary motors were usable. As the sun set over the English Channel on June 18, 1940, *Surcouf* limped slowly toward Britain at only four knots, her best speed. In her disabled state she could not submerge. Never-

The mammoth French submarine *Surcouf* was conceived as the lead boat of a cruiser class of submarines. The largest submarine in the world at the time never fired a shot in anger but became the focus of violence during British efforts to prevent the French fleet from falling into German hands.

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In company with a British naval officer, crewmen of the *Surcouf* leave the submarine. Tragically, violence broke out aboard the submarine as some officers opposed its being transferred to British control.

theless, according to the ship's doctor, Bernard Le Nistour, "All of us hoped to continue the fight ... morale was high; the physical fitness of the crew excellent."

Just after dawn the next morning a Royal Air Force Short Sunderland flying boat spotted the submarine and exchanged recognition signals with it. Off Penzance at England's southwestern tip, *Surcouf* stopped while her engineers made some improvements allowing 10 knots the rest of the way to Plymouth and later Devonport. Along the way, English beachgoers waved at the submarine with her French flag. At Devonport, *Surcouf* tied up alongside the World War I-era French battleship *Paris*. Nearby were two more French submarines and a destroyer. Within a few days, French officials were surrendering to the triumphant Nazis in the same railroad car where the German surrender ending World War I had been received in November 1918.

A critical issue of France's surrender for the British government was the fate of the French fleet. The surface fleet of Germany's Kriegsmarine was too small to pose an existential threat to the United Kingdom, though its surface raiders and U-boats were a dire threat. If the surface units of the French fleet, including battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and a single aircraft carrier, were transferred to Germany, it would create an intolerable imbalance of forces. The victorious Germans made promises not to seize France's navy, but by then Hitler's guarantees were no longer believed.

It was more than Great Britain could risk.

Furious efforts were made to secure the French fleet by entreating its commanders to either continue the fight alongside Britain as part of the nascent Free French movement or incorporate their vessels into the Royal Navy. Alternatively, they could accept internment in the United States or a distant French possession such as Martinique in the Caribbean. Much of the Navy had already been moved to North Africa or sat in port in Vichy territory not yet occupied by the Nazis. As a last resort, the crews could scuttle their ships.

In the days immediately after the French surrender, tension began to grow as it was uncertain what France's sailors would do. Few of them opted to join the Free French, and most thought Great Britain would make terms with the Germans within weeks at most.

Britain, however, elected to continue the fight and took steps to neutralize its ally's warships. At Devonport, hundreds of French sailors could not help but notice the guns of the British battleship *Revenge* laid on their ships and submarines. At home, Vichy France's new leaders were determined those ships would not fall into British hands, though most were equally resolute they would not be turned over to the Germans either.

In the case of *Surcouf*, preparations were made to protect her from any British seizure attempt. Her torpedoes were already disarmed. The captain, Paul Martin, ordered all but one hatch locked down. The open hatch, nearest her bow, was guarded by two armed sailors at all times. A petty officer was tasked to watch

for approaching boats or frogmen. Since *Surcouf* was tied to *Paris*, no one could get on the ship that way without first boarding the battleship. This gave an added measure of security. If the British came to take his vessel, the sentries were to give warning by dashing through the open hatch into the submarine so it could be scuttled.

Finally, the order came from Vichy to destroy the submarine on Wednesday, July 3, 1940. Before dawn a radio message came in. The operator took it to the duty officer, Lieutenant Emile Crescent. He retrieved the codebook from the safe and began deciphering the transmission. When finished, he hurried to Captain Martin, calling out, "The English are coming." He was trying to provide the 140 crewmen with the time to sink their submarine. Little did he know, the Royal Navy had already enacted its own plan to take the French ships in Devonport and elsewhere. The British were not coming—they were there.

Intent on denying Germany any of France's ships, the British planned to seize all French naval vessels in British ports. Each ship was assigned a boarding party commensurate with its size. Officers carried revolvers, as did some sailors, who also hefted wooden clubs. Royal Marines and some sailors also toted bayoneted rifles, which might prove unwieldy below decks.

Various letters exhorting the French sailors to surrender were issued, and all personnel wore the British-pattern steel helmet, which would help with identification. The boarding party assigned to *Surcouf* numbered 60 men, half Marines and the rest crewmen from the British submarine *Thames*. They were to seize the submarine without bloodshed if possible. The group was commanded by Captain Denis Sprague, nicknamed "Lofty," of the *Thames*. His second was Lieutenant Patrick Griffiths, who had served as a liaison officer and visited *Surcouf* a few days before.

The British move began at 0430, just before dawn. Rather than cross to *Surcouf* from the neighboring *Paris*, Sprague led his men from the water side using a trio of motor launches. Another *Thames* officer, Lieutenant Francis Talbot, was first aboard the submarine. His boarders quickly followed and surprised one sentry, capturing him. The other guard thought more quickly and ran to the one open hatch, banging on the hull as he went. The hatch shut as soon as he disappeared through its opening. The English had not planned on all the hatches being shut and were now locked out.

Below, Lieutenant Crescent, the decoded message still clutched in his hand, saw the sen-

try come through the hatch. The man reported the boarding party above. Crescent told the man to sound action stations as he went to alert the other officers and rouse the *Surcouf's* lead electricians and torpedomen, ordering them to start destroying equipment.

Only a minute later, the Frenchmen rushed back to the bridge and ran into Captain Sprague and his armed sailors, who had gained entry. The observant Lieutenant Talbot had climbed *Surcouf's* conning tower and inspected its hatch. There, he noted the catches were designed to be opened from the outside by rescue divers in case of disaster, just like the hatches on British subs. The young Talbot would be "mentioned in despatches" for his quick thinking.

The boarding party quickly spread through the vessel and opened the rest of the hatches to allow their comrades in. Sprague asked all the French officers to gather in the wardroom, and they complied. The French enlisted sailors were less cooperative; some refused to move at all, and some had to be awakened. With all the officers in the wardroom, Sprague read them a letter claimed to be from French Admiral Coyal aboard *Paris*. The letter, apparently a fake, begged the Frenchmen to join the Free French.

Captain Martin did not believe the letter and asked to meet Coyal and hear the message in person. Sprague agreed to let him go even though he knew the letter was false. Martin placed a junior captain named Pichevin in command and departed.

This left the crew at an impasse, which the British seized upon to try and peacefully take the submarine. Lieutenant Talbot convinced the French sailors in the forward section of the boat to leave peacefully, including the men assigned to destroy equipment. Afterward, he went aft with Sprague to try and repeat his success. Some of the French sailors seemed inclined to cooperate. As a British midshipman climbed a ladder, he dropped his revolver, sending it clattering to the engine room deck. A French sailor grabbed the young Englishman by the seat of his pants and hauled him back down before calmly returning the handgun to its holster.

Sprague returned to the bridge and saw Pichevin passing a note to a French sailor. The note told him to cut the power and wreck the ship in the ensuing darkness. The electrician excused himself to urinate, but a British petty officer followed him. When the Frenchman lunged for the switches, the British sailor knocked him unconscious with a mallet and quickly turned the lights back on. During the brief blackout, one French engineer, Yves Daniel, disappeared into his cabin from the



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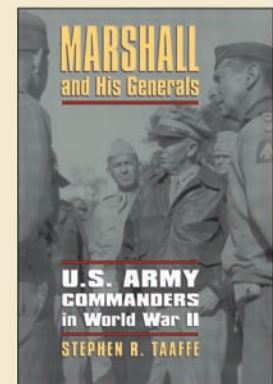
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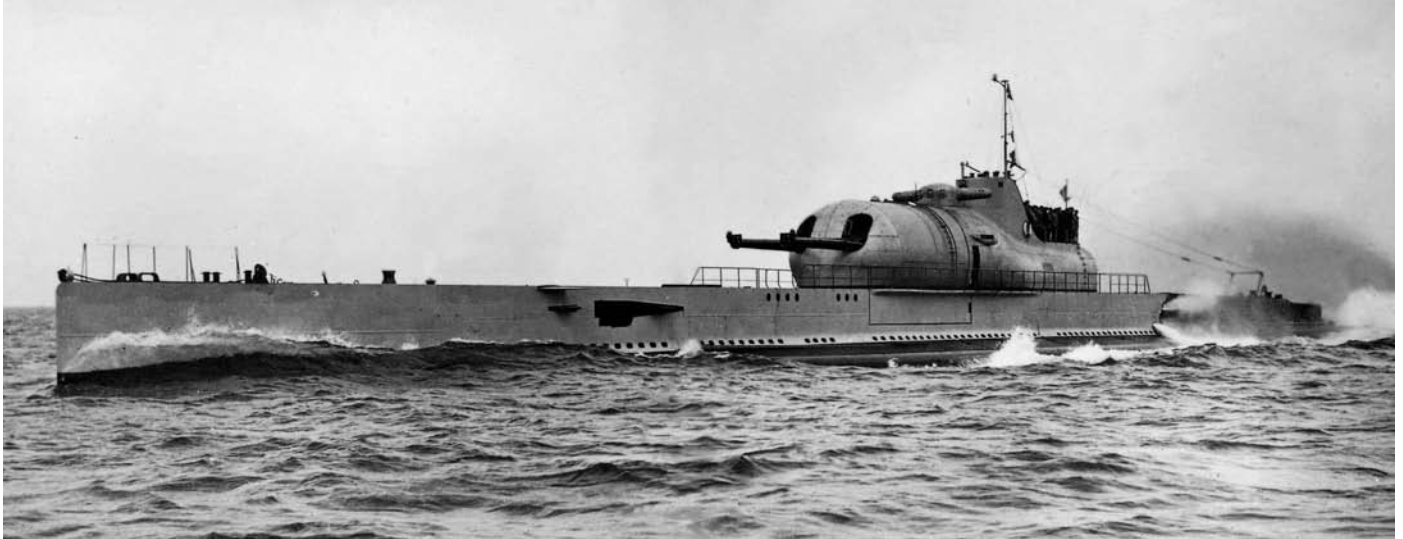


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wardroom and began tearing up his manuals. His cabin mate, Surgeon Le Nistour, stood guard outside. Sprague decided he had had enough and ordered all the officers off the submarine.

Pichevin flatly refused and immediately went to his own cabin. Several of his officers shielded him from view as he grabbed a pistol. Lieutenant Crescent boldly stated he would not leave until Captain Martin returned.

Sprague spoke French and, revolver in hand, told Crescent, "I have my orders. If you don't leave I'll kill you." British Lieutenant Griffiths and Able Seaman William Heath also drew their weapons. Crescent dared them to fire. Sprague called for assistance, and sailors under Lieutenant Talbot and Chief Petty Officer Herbert Mott appeared. Mott assigned Leading Seaman Albert Webb to cover the French officers with his Lee-Enfield rifle, a wicked looking 17-inch bayonet jutting from its muzzle. Standing next to Crescent were Pichevin and a French midshipman named Massicot. Behind stood Lieutenant Bouillaut, who commanded *Surcouf's* eight-inch battery. In his pocket was a loaded .32-caliber automatic pistol he carried for protection when on shore leave.

The momentary impasse was shattered when Sprague turned to Webb and told him to shoot Crescent. The French, particularly Bouillaut, suspected a bluff since Sprague had issued his orders to Webb in French. Still, the French lieutenant thought Sprague would not tolerate having this bluff called. Calmly, he drew the automatic from his pocket and opened fire. Sprague was hit in the neck, collarbone, and stomach. An artery severed, he fell against the door to the captain's cabin, firing one shot, a miss, as he fell. Lieutenant Griffiths was hit in the arm, hip, and liver. He collapsed upright against the ladder leading up to the bridge. Chief Petty Offi-

ABOVE: Photographed in 1940, the massive French submarine *Surcouf* presents an imposing figure at sea, but was plagued by mechanical troubles through her career. **BELOW:** *Surcouf* was refitted in Portsmouth, New Hampshire in 1941 and returned to service with Free French forces. The submarine sank in February 1942, following a collision with an American cargo vessel.



cer Mott was at the top of that ladder and returned fire. One of his bullets struck Bouillaut in the arm before continuing into his chest. Though bleeding badly, the French officer reloaded his pistol and looked around. The British men in the wardroom were all down. All the Frenchmen had drawn their weapons. Screams and the sound of a weapon hitting the deck came from an adjoining cabin.

In that cabin, Engineer Yves Daniel was busily destroying his manuals when Surgeon Le Nistour came back in and grabbed his pistol. Le Nistour told Daniel, "Things are getting hot." No sooner had he given this warning than Bouillaut opened fire in the wardroom. As the

deafening shots echoed through the submarine, Leading Seaman Webb burst into the cabin and lunged at the two French sailors with his bayonet. Behind him came Able Seaman Heath with a revolver. Le Nistour emptied his magazine into Webb. Seven of these bullets passed through Webb into Heath. As Webb fell, he fired his rifle, hitting Daniel in the shoulder before plunging his bayonet into the engineer. Both toppled to the deck. Heath was still on his feet, so Le Nistour, his pistol empty, punched the British sailor and took his revolver.

After this furious exchange of fire, a dread silence fell over the wardroom. The Frenchmen looked around at the butchery they had

wrought. Surgeon Le Nistour tended to Bouillaut's injuries, which were not serious. Crescent turned to Bouillaut and told him, "I believe you were very wrong to have done that." The injured man retorted that Crescent would be dead if he had not acted.

Now the officers of the *Surcouf* had to decide what to do. They held the wardroom but nothing else. The British would have to come and get them, but they could not hope to hold off a now enraged boarding party. Pichevin chose to surrender. Bouillaut alone wanted to fight on, but Pichevin mildly took the pistol from the gunnery officer's hand and laid it on the wardroom table. He called up to the bridge and told them it was over. Lieutenant Talbot told them to lay down their arms and come up the ladder to the bridge one at a time. Pichevin led the way.

Once on the bridge, the French officers again became difficult and refused to leave without orders from Captain Martin. Eventually, Lieutenant Crescent agreed to speak with Martin provided he could return afterward. Talbot consented. Crescent found Martin, who gave the order to leave the submarine. Only Le Nistour remained so he could bandage Bouillaut. Several British sailors asked the French surgeon to check on their own wounded officers, but Le Nistour made them wait while he worked on Bouillaut. Eventually, he pronounced Griffiths dead but saw some life yet in Sprague, who could barely speak.

Talbot became increasingly enraged as time passed without medical attention for his fellows. While the British plan included ambulances standing by, it had neglected to attach any medical personnel for immediate aid. It took 25 minutes to get a doctor to Sprague and 40 to attend Griffiths, who was actually still alive. In the meantime, Le Nistour gave him a morphine injection even though he was sure Griffiths would not live.

The French surgeon was just about to help with Sprague when Seaman Heath appeared. His seven injuries were miraculously only flesh wounds, and he told his shipmates Le Nistour had shot him. At first no one believed him, assuming the young man was in shock. When Talbot realized Heath was lucid, he had Le Nistour taken away, and a doctor from the *Paris* was brought in. Several nervous and angry British sailors held this doctor at gunpoint while he examined the mortally wounded Griffiths before British doctors arrived and he was hustled back to his own ship.

A French priest was summoned next and gave absolution to Daniel and Webb. Sprague and Griffiths were taken to Plymouth Naval Hospital in the same ambulance as Bouillaut.

The Frenchman recovered fully; Sprague died the next day, and Griffiths one day later.

The crew of *Surcouf* was sent to a camp set up on a racetrack in Liverpool. Before leaving, the crewmen were allowed back on their submarine to collect their personal belongings. Several of the French officers were missing items and accused the British of theft. Bouillaut later submitted a list of his "stolen" property since he had been recovering and unable to go to the submarine. Included on his claim was his .32-caliber automatic. Within days, he was transferred to a civilian hospital, coincidentally the same day the dead from the *Surcouf* gunfight were buried.

The only Frenchman killed, Yves Daniel, was buried at Weston Mill Cemetery in Plymouth. Bouillaut demanded to attend his shipmate's funeral, but since Bouillaut had pointlessly killed two British officers this was denied. The British slain were also buried there the same day, so perhaps the authorities merely sought to prevent the dead men's families from meeting the killer.

During his hospital stay Bouillaut wrote an account of the action aboard *Surcouf*, and copies were circulated among his fellow French internees in the hope at least one would make it back to France. In this account he admitted opening fire without orders and included Lieutenant Crescent's remark that Bouillaut should not have fired. It nearly doomed him. In mid-November both Bouillaut and Le Nistour were allowed aboard the French transport *Djenne* for the voyage home. When a confiscated copy of Bouillaut's account was read by British officials, several considered it essentially an admission he had murdered two British officers. They had the Frenchman removed from the ship and jailed to await prosecution.

Bouillaut quickly began a letter-writing campaign, claiming he had only done what any officer would under the circumstances. Eventually, the British decided that executing a French officer would only heighten the tension with Vichy France, increasing the risk of its navy being transferred to Germany. Bouillaut was released and sent home.

While Bouillaut met a more pleasant fate, *Surcouf* was not so lucky. Eventually taken over by Free French forces, the mammoth submarine sank after a nighttime collision with an American cargo ship in the Caribbean around February 18, 1942, though conspiracy theories of nefarious American action abound. □

Christopher Miskimon is a regular contributor to WWII History. He is an officer in the Colorado National Guard's 157th Regiment.




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AFTER FOUR MONTHS AND A 600-MILE ADVANCE FROM THE beaches of Normandy into Brittany and then through eastern France, the spearhead of Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr.'s U.S. Third Army, the 4th Armored Division, closed on the western boundary of the Third Reich. The final drive for the German frontier had begun on November 10, 1944, from the 4th Armored staging area east of the French city of Nancy.

For nearly a month, the unit, under Maj. Gen. John S. Wood, who was replaced by Maj. Gen. Hugh J. Gaffey on December 3, lumbered forward fighting over difficult terrain with little friendly air-ground support due to overcast skies and constant rain. American vehicles were confined to the few good roads in the region by soaked ground that transformed the area's pastures into bogs. As a result, the highway-bound American tanks suffered delays and casualties from German antitank guns, shoulder-fired panzerfausts, and mines.

On December 2, Maj. Gen. Manton Eddy, commander of XII Corps, Third Army, requested of General Patton that 4th Armored, gathered just east of the city of Sarre-Union, be pulled off the line for much needed rest and maintenance. Permission was granted by Army headquarters but not before the unit was ordered to make one last push for the German border a mere 20 miles away. The objectives of this last advance were the important rail center town of Rohrbach-les-Bitche and the village of Bining which controlled the southern approaches to Rohrbach-les-Bitche. Not initially taken into account when the move on Rohrbach-les-Bitche and Bining was planned was the small village of Singling, two miles west of the American objectives.

Singling, situated on a southwest-northeast ridge, was an agricultural settlement of 50 squat stone houses strung along a half mile of narrow road running from Achen, near the Sarre River, east to Rohrbach-les-Bitche and Germany. Around the

THE 4TH ARMORED Figh

IN ITS DRIVE TO REACH THE GERMAN FRONTIER, ONE OF THE PREMIERE TANK UNITS OF THE U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II WAS HALTED JUST SHORT OF ITS GOAL BY FIERCE RESISTANCE IN A NONDESCRIPT VILLAGE IN EASTERN LORRAINE.

church, brown stone school house, and market square were clustered concrete and stone houses painted white, red, yellow, blue, and pink with red tile roofs. Stables fronted the main street. Some of the farmhouses were almost fortress-like with three-foot reinforced concrete walls and gardens surrounded by more high, thick walls.

Concrete pillboxes stood at the eastern and western entrances to the village, on the hills and in the valley to the north, and on the ridgeline to the south. As part of the French Maginot Line, the area was a key position in that line's secondary system of forts and thus was well placed as a forward strongpoint against attacks coming from the southwest



aimed at Rohrbach-les-Bitche and Bining.

As the attacking U.S. troops soon learned, operations against the last two towns could not be separated from those against Singling. The main avenue running into the Rohrbach/Bining area from the south followed high ground along the west ridge of the valley, passing by a small series of knolls that could provide positions from which enemy antitank fire could be brought down on any attacking force.

One way to bypass the road was to follow the trace of an old Roman road along the

Shortly after the sharp fighting that occurred at Singling, M4 Sherman tanks of the American 4th Infantry Division halt near the town of Sainlex, Belgium.



t for Singling

BY ARNOLD BLUMBERG

reverse slope of the ridge west of the valley. However, the west side of the slope could be brought under direct fire from Singling, which, due to its location on the slightly higher ground and placement on the curve of the ridge, commanded this approach route for three miles to the south.

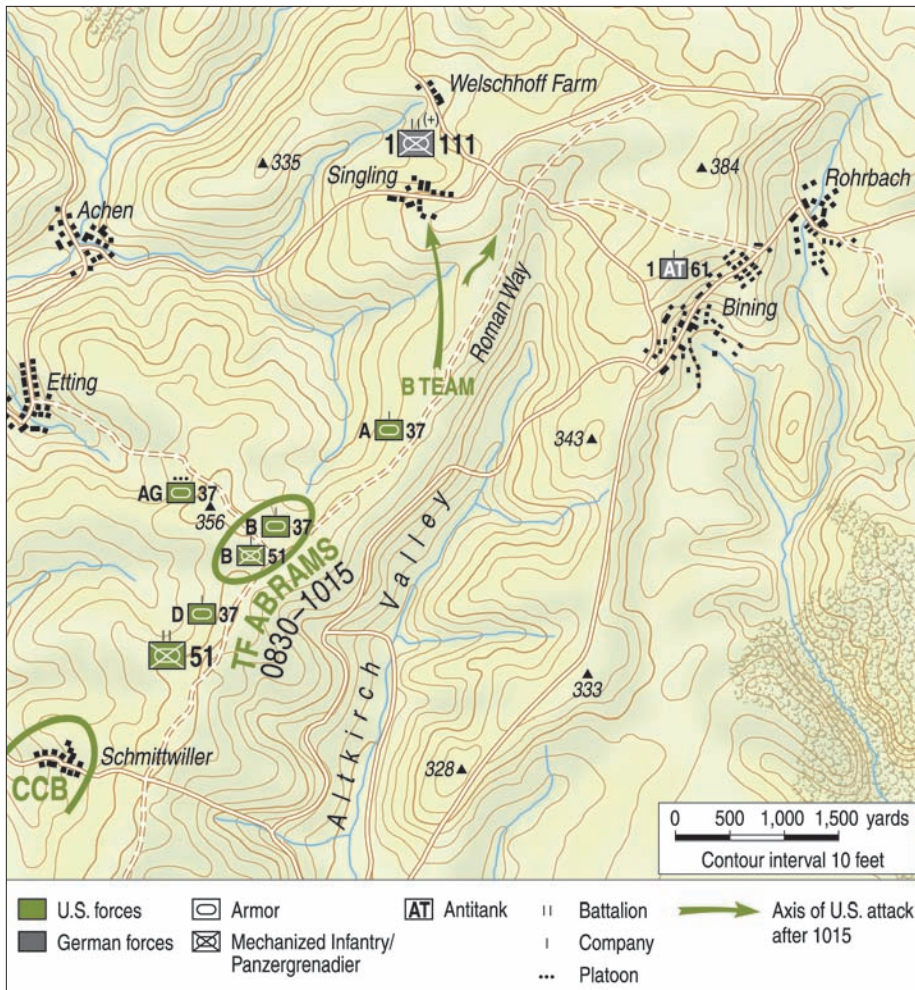
Neither route was, therefore, satisfactory since advancing troops would be under German observation before they were within attacking range, but the avenue to the west side of the ridge seemed to offer the best hope for

success. Yet, if it was to be used to go after Bining the Americans would first have to neutralize Singling, and that would be a problem because the hamlet was dominated by a ridge-line 1,200 yards to its north.

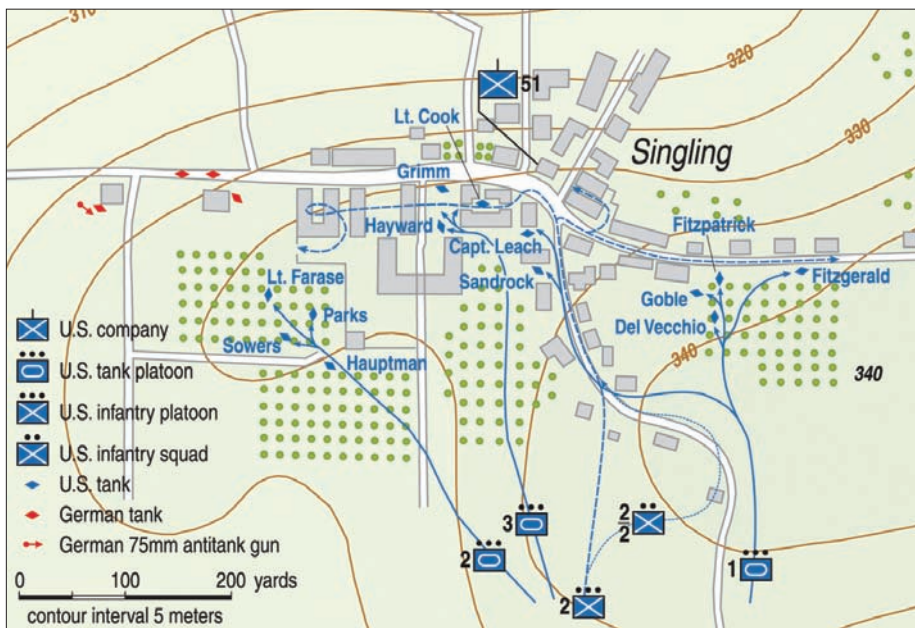
The extent of the obstacle Singling presented to 4th Armored's advance toward Rohrbach and Bining was driven home on December 5, 1944. That morning the commander of the 37th Tank Battalion, Combat Command A, 4th Armored Division, Lt. Col. Creighton W. Abrams, received his instructions for the day's

operation directly from division headquarters. The orders directed Abrams's unit, after Combat Commands A and B secured the high ground across the river south of Dehlingen (about six miles south of Rohrbach-les-Bitche), to "push through and continue northward with Rohrbach-les-Bitche as its objective."

As the colonel reviewed the mission, he wondered why his tankers would be going into combat without the usual infantry support. Up to that time the campaign in Lorraine saw the 4th Armored Division operate in



ABOVE: This view of the terrain around Singling reveals the hilly landscape with which the troops and tanks of both American and German units had to contend during the fighting in eastern Lorraine. The Americans ran into unexpectedly tough resistance as they neared the German frontier in early December 1944. **BELOW:** The streets of Singling became a battlefield as soldiers of the U.S. 4th Infantry Division were confronted by German infantry and tanks during their drive through the French province of Lorraine toward Germany.



Both Maps © 2013 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

small, flexible task forces, each consisting of one or more tank companies supported by at least one company of armored infantry. These combat teams were formed on an ad hoc basis to deal with enemy strongpoints, clear resistance in urban areas, give the tanks infantry guides to navigate safely in villages and towns, or hold ground against counterattacks. Advancing without foot support would make it difficult to take and hold ground and would leave vehicles vulnerable to enemy antitank weapons. Fully cognizant that sending a tank battalion out on its own against an opponent of unknown strength was far from normal divisional operating procedure, Abrams nevertheless made no complaint and readied his battalion for its new assignment.

Around noon on December 5, Abrams sent the 14 M4 Sherman medium tanks of C Company, 37th Tank Battalion northeast on the road to Bining. The M7 Priest self-propelled guns of Batteries B and C, 94th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, 4th Armored Division, sporting 105mm howitzers, provided direct fire support for the move, while Battery A of the 94th laid down a smoke screen to disrupt any enemy fire coming from Singling on the American left flank.

Soon after the U.S. tankers started to roll over the open fields toward Bining, accurate antitank and artillery salvos hit the armored column. The enemy missiles came from Singling and the high ground northeast of the village. In short order all of C Company's tanks were put out of commission by the rain of enemy projectiles or became stuck fast in thick mud. The tank crews abandoned their vehicles and raced back to friendly lines on foot. As the day ended, Abrams withdrew the balance of his command beyond the sight of the offending German guns and planned the resumption of his assignment the next day.

On the night of December 5, the 37th Tank Battalion leader received his orders for the next day. As expected, he was ordered to drive for Bining. Fortunately, this new attempt would be supported by the division's 51st Armored Infantry Battalion and two platoons from Company B, 704th Tank Destroyer Battalion with M18 Hellcat tank destroyers. With his acknowledgement of his new orders, Abrams requested support from at least six artillery battalions to smother Singling with such intense suppressive fire that the enemy could not interfere with the American move on Bining.

Early on December 6, the engines of the 37th Battalion tanks roared to life as Task Force Abrams's "B Team," the 14 Shermans of Company B, 37th Tank Battalion, including

five with the new 76mm high-velocity gun, and the 57 infantrymen of Company B, 51st Armored Infantry Battalion prepared to move out. Because of the muddy ground, the armored infantry's usual mode of transport, M3 Halftracks, could not keep up with the tanks. Consequently, the foot sloggers were ordered to mount up on the tanks for their ride into battle. As B Team assembled, the Shermans of Company A, 37th Tank Battalion took a position one mile ahead of the rest of the American force.

As the U.S. tanks prepared to go forward, the guns of the 94th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, in conjunction with those of the 704th tank destroyers, placed accurate high-explosive and smoke rounds on the Germans around Singling. The requested fire support from the six artillery battalions Abrams so very much wanted never materialized. After an hour attempting to suppress the fire coming from Singling, during which time the tanks of the 37th added their shells to the effort, Abrams suspended the effort to work out a new plan to get his move on Bining started.

Abrams determined that Singling had to be neutralized before any successful attack on Bining could be mounted. To that end, he directed B Team to swing west and take the town from the south. After Singling was secured, he would unleash the balance of his task force, Company D, 37th Tank Battalion, the 25th Armored Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, and the attached 1st Battalion, 328th Infantry Regiment, 26th Infantry Division, on Bining.

To break the continuing stalemate, Abrams ordered the commander of his Company B tanks, Captain James C. Leach, to drive straight for the southern edge of Singling with B Company's 2nd Tank Platoon, led by Lieutenant William F. Goble, on the left; 1st Tank Platoon, under Lieutenant James N. Farese, on the right; and the 3rd Tank Platoon, commanded by Lieutenant Robert M. Cook, held in reserve. While the armored infantry remained mounted on the vehicles of 1st and 3rd Platoons, the 2nd Tank Platoon went in without direct infantry support.

In support of B Team, A Company's tanks to their right provided covering fire on the road between Singling and Bining, while the tubes of the 94th Armored Field Artillery Battalion laid down a smoke screen between the American attackers and the heights north of Singling. The Hellcats tried to do their bit by providing direct fire on the town but were chased away by German artillery fire.

As the different tank detachments reached the southern outskirts of Singling, the 1st Pla-



ABOVE: A Sherman tank of the U.S. 4th Armored Division halts near troops that have stopped for a rest along a roadway near Sarreguemines, France. The village is located east of the fortress city of Metz and near crossings along the Saar River. **BELOW:** In this photo taken less than a week after the bitter fighting in Singling, positions occupied by American and German forces are seen looking to the northwest down the town's main street. German self-propelled guns were located at the far end of the street in order to command the whole length of the roadway. American tanks were positioned in the walled garden just behind the first house on the left.



Both: National Archives

toon veered to the right while 2nd Platoon swung to the left as the 3rd Platoon, accompanied by Leach's and the 94th Armored Field Artillery's forward artillery observer tanks, headed straight for the center of town. The company then advanced in a line 700 yards long, the entire length of Singling. As the southern boundary of Singling was reached, the attached forward artillery observer, Lieutenant Donald Guild, adjusted the friendly artillery fire

deeper into the village and then ordered it ceased completely as the Americans entered Singling.

Racing ahead, Farese's outfit drove onto a slight rise covered by an orchard, which allowed him to observe the road leading into the west end of Singling. It was an excellent position from which to enter the hamlet, and the Germans had it covered in anticipation of such a move with several Panther tanks, two

self-propelled guns, a towed 75mm antitank gun, and a machine-gun emplacement just short of the north side of the orchard. As Farese's command tank crested the high ground in the orchard it was shot to pieces and its young commander killed. After their lieutenant was killed, the remaining three tanks of 2nd Platoon stayed below the slope within the orchard until they were ordered a little later to go east to join 3rd Platoon near the center of town.

While 2nd Platoon was stopped cold to the west, 1st and 3rd Tank Platoons reached the hedge-lined southern part of Singling. There the accompanying infantry of Lieutenant Daniel Belden's Company B, 51st Armored Infantry Battalion dismounted from its tanks and pre-

lieutenant was able to message back to Captain Leach, who was following 3rd Platoon with his tanks, of the presence of the enemy. The Americans commenced firing volleys of submachine gun and rifle bullets at the gun, causing it to retreat down the street to the west, firing at the Americans as it reversed course.

As Leach and Cowgill exchanged fire with the Germans, Lieutenant Guild, the attached forward observer from the 94th Armored Field Artillery, went searching for an appropriate spot from which to direct artillery rounds into Singling. After capturing a lone German manning a machine-gun nest, Guild climbed the church steeple near the center of town. His hope of using it as a good vantage point was dashed when he was fired upon by the same

west road bisecting Singling, halting in an enclosed walled garden. Soon they were coincidentally joined by Cowgill's infantrymen, who had been working their way west clearing houses as they went. As the foot soldiers neared Cook's stationary tanks, they spotted two SP guns not more than 200 yards from the unsuspecting U.S. tank crews.

A short firefight between the German SP guns and the now warned American tankers erupted, followed by a cat and mouse game as both sides jockeyed for favorable firing positions between the buildings. Advised of Cook's situation, Leach got word to the remnants of Farese's platoon to move east and attack the Germans from behind. However, as soon as 2nd Platoon tanks nosed their way west they were struck by heavy antitank fire. What was left of 2nd Tank Platoon returned to its refuge in the orchard at the west end of town. Later in the day, after another of their tanks was hit by enemy fire, it was ordered to join the 3rd Tank Platoon in the center of Singling.

Cook traveled to Leach's command post, where he, Leach, Belden, and Guild discussed the best course of action. After dismissing the options of using an artillery barrage or mortar attack to drive the enemy armor away, Leach decided to send two bazooka teams to attack the Germans. Creeping into an attic overlooking their targets, the armored infantrymen fired away with mixed results. One of the bazookas malfunctioned and never got off a shot; the other fired five rounds and managed one hit, causing the German crew to abandon its vehicle. In response, a Panther tank placed two well-aimed shots into the American position, destroying the house and causing the miraculously unharmed GIs to run back to friendly lines.

Meanwhile, back in the town's center Price's armored infantry captured about 15 Germans holed up in a pillbox. Moments later the Americans were subjected to a vicious fusillade of German mortar and artillery rounds, which caused no losses to the infantry. After the artillery attack, a number of well-placed rounds from a Panther eliminated one U.S. tank and forced the rest of 2nd and 3rd Tank Platoons to seek shelter southwest of town, leaving Price's infantrymen to fend for themselves in the buildings they occupied.

While Cook tried to deal with the German armor and Price and 2nd and 3rd Tank Platoons huddled under enemy artillery fire in the town's center, at the east end of the village 2nd Platoon, 51st Armored Infantry Battalion, under Lieutenant Padgett, faced its own crisis. Ensnared in a well-fortified building on the east edge of town, Padgett saw a German

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This Sherman tank commanded by Sergeant Giles W. Hayward was hit twice by German shells during the fight at Singling. The second shell struck the Sherman in its right sprocket, blowing off the tread and crippling the tank.

pared to assault the building to the left (west), and right (east) of their debarkation point to secure the village. Lieutenant William P. Cowgill's 3rd Platoon, 51st Armored Infantry was to go west and head for the town square. Lieutenant Theodore R. Price and his 1st Platoon would maneuver to the east side of town, while Lieutenant Norman C. Padgett's 2nd Platoon would tackle the three buildings 3rd Platoon had been ordered to bypass.

As Cowgill and his troopers neared the town center they saw an enemy self-propelled gun trundling toward them from the west side. Ducking for cover in the nearby buildings, the

enemy SP gun with which Leach and Cowgill had been recently dueling. He quickly made his way out of the shattered church.

Leach decided not to follow the German gun with his tanks directly through the confined streets of Singling. Instead, he planned to have Cook's tankers flank the enemy gun by moving farther west and enter the town from the south. After briefing Cook on his mission, Leach set up his headquarters overlooking the town square.

Cook and three Shermans (no infantry was allotted to them) advanced through an orchard south of the village, then turned north through a line of houses into the main east-



Captain James H. Leach commanded the American tanks that ran into stiff opposition in the French town of Singling.

rocket launcher 800 yards away and seven enemy tanks sitting atop a ridge to the northeast. Steeling himself for a hard fight, he sent a courier to find his 2nd Squad, which had been detached earlier to clear some houses that Belden's main force had elected to bypass. To deal with the expected enemy tank assault, Padgett could call on Goble's four 1st Platoon Sherman tanks, which had taken station near Padgett's men when they initially occupied their fortress-like house.

Padgett was correct in his assumption that an enemy attack was imminent. Having pushed the Americans back from the west and center of Singling, the Germans decided to hit them from the east and northeast.

Notified of the concentration of enemy tanks, Lieutenant Goble detailed one of his vehicles, Sergeant Robert Fitzgerald's Sherman with the new high-velocity 76mm gun, to guard the eastern and northeastern approaches to Singling. While performing this vital duty, the sergeant destroyed a Panther he was able to ambush east of the town. Moving farther in that direction, he spotted another Panther, which retreated. A little later, after firing three armor-piercing rounds at his target, Fitzgerald was able to dispose of a second Panther.

No sooner was his latest victim set ablaze than Fitzgerald engaged a third Panther at a range of 800 yards. Two rounds screamed from the American 76mm cannon, hitting the enemy on its frontal armor and barely making a dent.

Fitzgerald wisely backed his tank out of the German line of sight. The sergeant left his mount to confer with Lieutenant Padgett and scout the landscape. His eyes instantly fixed on an enemy SP gun heading east, and the American got back in his tank and set up an ambush. However, the German gun never reappeared. As Fitzgerald waited in vain, other German armor blew apart Lieutenant Goble's tank.

Amid the chaos of battle in Singling, around noon Abrams was notified by Combat Command A's commander, Brig. Gen. Herbert L. Earnest, to turn over the village to the arriving Combat Command B and get ready to move on Bining and Rohrbach-les-Bitche. The force that would relieve Combat Command B was made up of elements from the 8th Tank and 10th Armored Infantry Battalions under the leadership of Major Albin F. Irzyk. Irzyk

National Archives



This photograph of the garden where American tanks occupied positions in Singling evidences the ferocity of the combat that took place there. The destroyed portion of the garden wall was taken down by a 105mm self-propelled howitzer commanded by Sergeant Robert G. Grimm. Troops under the command of 2nd Lt. William Cowgill fired bazookas from the attic of the house on the left through gaps in the roof tiles.

was surprised to learn that Task Force Abrams was even in the area, and after meeting Abrams in the southern part of town was told by the latter, even as gunfire continued to be heard, that all opposition had been silenced, the town secured.

The 8th Tank Battalion chief, relying on the assurances of the esteemed Abrams, sent one of his companies escorted by a few armored infantrymen through the southern part of Singling to take over the positions currently held by the 37th tankers. The first tank of Company B, 8th Tank Battalion to enter the town from

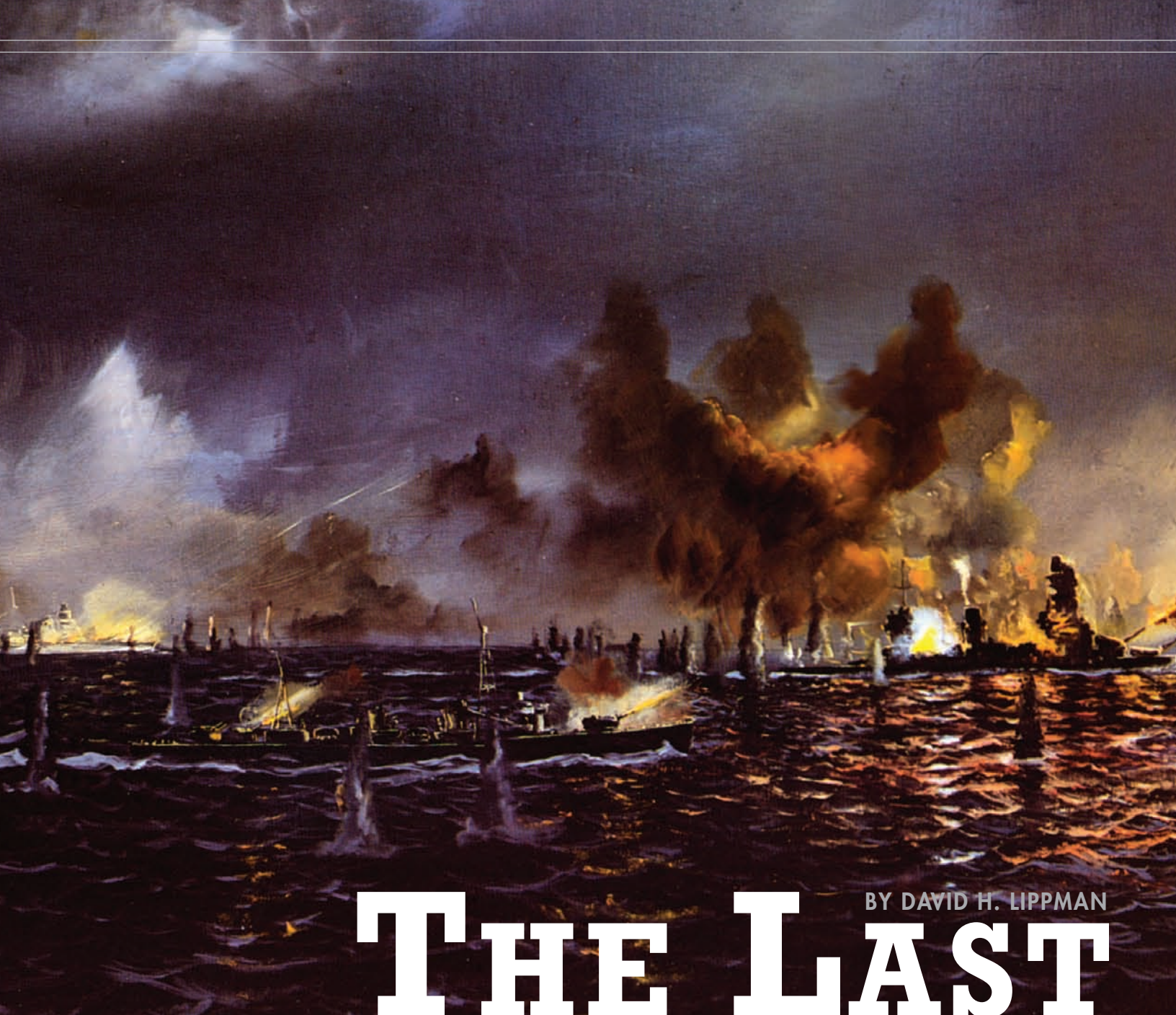
the southwest was knocked out by two rounds of German antitank fire. Clearly, Singling was not free of Germans as Abrams had declared.

As the afternoon wore on, Abrams was anxious to quit the town. He called Leach's command post to find out how the handover to Irzyk's boys was going and was told that the Americans had seen five German tanks moving around the west end of town and five more opposite the town's center. In addition, a heavy concentration of enemy artillery fire was falling on the village. With German activity still persistent in and around Singling, Irzyk suspended his move to relieve Abrams, something the 51st and 10th Armored Infantry Battalions were unaware of as the former withdrew from Singling and the latter took up defensive positions in the hamlet.

By nightfall B Team had pulled out of Sin-

gling, some 10th Armored Infantry soldiers occupied parts of the village, but no 8th Battalion tanks were in town to support them. Major Irzyk decided to evacuate all his men from the town that night. The following day his command moved up just short of the crest of the Singling ridge south of town but was ordered not to advance since the entire 4th Armored Division was to be taken out of the line and replaced by the U.S. 12th Armored Division. Singling was finally secured by the Americans of 12th Armored Division about

Continued on page 78



BY DAVID H. LIPPMAN

THE LAST

IN the distance, they could see the jagged flashes of lightning, an incoming squall in the dark. Just before the rain arrived, so did St. Elmo's Fire, and the gun barrels and radio antennas on the PT boats crackled with blue sparks and streamers of static electricity.

Then there was another lightning flash, and suddenly Lieutenant (j.g.) Terry Chambers, the executive officer of *PT-491* saw them—a column of seven Japanese warships advancing in the dark, headed for Surigao Strait and the waiting U.S. Seventh Fleet. It was the extremely early morning of October 25, 1944, and two

battleships and a heavy cruiser of the Imperial Japanese Navy were steaming toward what would become one of the most one-sided battles in naval history, and the last duel between battleships of the line.

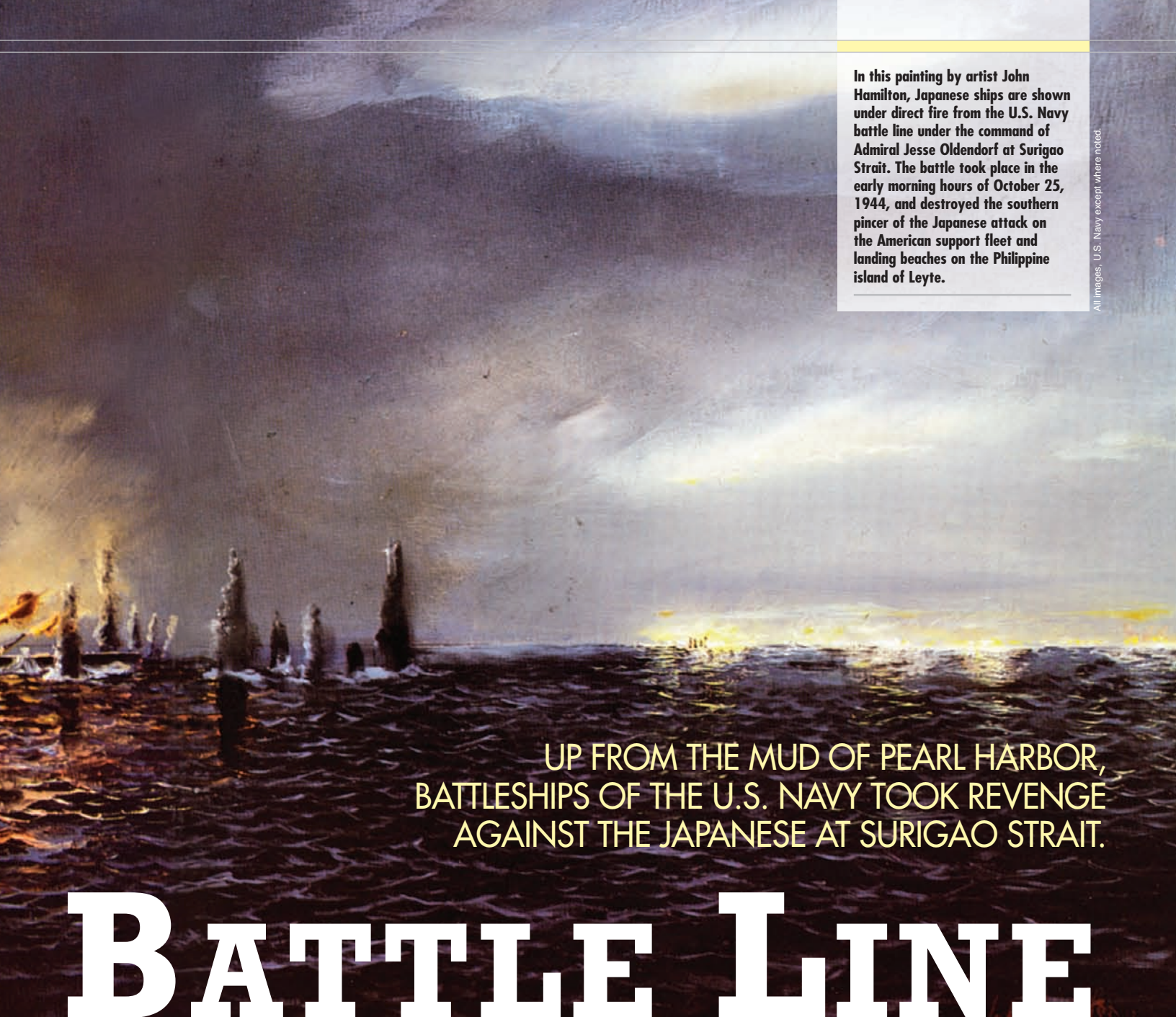
The Battle of Surigao Strait was a major portion of the titanic Battle of Leyte Gulf, the largest and last major naval battle ever fought, an epic engagement that saw the use of every type of naval warfare except the mine.

The Leyte Gulf battle began with the American decision on July 27, 1944, to target the Philippines instead of Formosa as their next invasion site. General Douglas MacArthur

would redeem his pledge to return to the Philippines. The initial objective was the invasion of the island of Leyte to secure air and sea bases for the next stages: seizing Mindoro and the climactic assault on the main island of Luzon.

Codenamed King II, the invasion of Leyte would involve two U.S. fleets, the 7th, under Vice Admiral Thomas Cassin Kinkaid, and the 3rd, under Vice Admiral William F. Halsey, Jr.

The 3rd Fleet was the offensive arm of the invasion, with nine fleet carriers, eight light carriers, and six fast battleships at its heart. The 7th Fleet was the amphibious force, with more than 100 transports and other vessels (includ-



In this painting by artist John Hamilton, Japanese ships are shown under direct fire from the U.S. Navy battle line under the command of Admiral Jesse Oldendorf at Surigao Strait. The battle took place in the early morning hours of October 25, 1944, and destroyed the southern pincer of the Japanese attack on the American support fleet and landing beaches on the Philippine island of Leyte.

All images, U.S. Navy except where noted.

UP FROM THE MUD OF PEARL HARBOR,
BATTLESHIPS OF THE U.S. NAVY TOOK REVENGE
AGAINST THE JAPANESE AT SURIGAO STRAIT.

BATTLE LINE

ing the British minelayer HMS *Ariadne*), protected by a swarm of cruisers, destroyers, and escort carriers for close air support, backed by six old battleships configured for shore bombardment, in a Fire Support Force, headed by Rear Admiral Jesse B. Oldendorf, flying his flag in the heavy cruiser USS *Louisville*. Among his ships were the Australian cruiser HMAS *Shropshire* and the destroyer HMAS *Arunta*. A-day for the invasion was to be October 20, 1944.

The invaders were not spotted by the Japanese until October 17, when the whole American armada appeared at the mouth of the Gulf of Leyte. When they did so, Admiral Soemu Toy-

oda, who headed the Imperial Japanese Navy, ordered their long-planned response, Victory Operation One, or Sho-1, into operation.

Sho-1 was one of four plans the Japanese had prepared in anticipation of America's next offensive move, and they all called for the same reaction: the bulk of the Imperial Japanese Navy steaming forth to attack and destroy the U.S. fleet, regardless of losses to themselves.

Sho-1 was like most Imperial Japanese Navy plans of World War II: a decoy force would lure the Americans in one direction, while the real punch would come from other directions in a complex series of coordinated movements. This

time, the decoy force was Japan's surviving aircraft carriers, under Vice Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa, steaming down from the home islands. With barely 100 planes between them, these carriers lacked offensive punch, but the Japanese believed the aggressive Halsey would race after them with his entire 3rd Fleet.

While Halsey was drawn off, the powerful battleships and heavy cruisers of the Imperial Navy, mostly based at Lingga Roads near Singapore and the Borneo fuel stocks, would strike east and ravage the 7th Fleet's amphibious forces while they lay in Leyte Gulf. The surface ships would pound the 7th Fleet to death with

torpedoes and shells, isolating the American invaders on shore. The combination of a trapped army in the Philippines and a smashed navy in the Pacific might at least buy Japan time, or even persuade America to make peace.

The battlewagons at Lingga were commanded by Vice Admiral Takeo Kurita and consisted of a powerful force. They were headed by two immense dreadnoughts, the *Yamato* and *Musashi*, sister ships that packed the heaviest armament ever loaded on a battleship, 18.1-inch guns. They were supported by five more dreadnoughts and a screen of cruisers and destroyers, all of which branched the legendary Type 95 Long Lance torpedo, one of the best in the world. The Imperial Japanese Navy may have been worn down by hard war, but it was still a powerful force with highly skilled sailors and officers well trained in night fighting.

Toyoda and Kurita planned a pincer attack on Leyte Gulf with their battleships. Kurita would take one force, with five battleships, including *Yamato* and *Musashi*, through the San Bernardino Strait to hit Leyte Gulf from the north. A second force, under Vice Admiral Shoji Nishimura, a veteran seadog, would

steam through the Surigao Strait and smash into Leyte Gulf from the south, the anvil to Kurita's hammer, just before dawn.

A Naval War College graduate of 1911, Nishimura had commanded destroyers in the invasion of the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies in 1941. His son, Teiji Nishimura, a naval aviator, had been killed in the former invasion. In 1942, Nishimura commanded cruisers in the grueling struggle for Guadalcanal, suffering some bad luck but displaying skillful planning and "lion-like fury" in battle.

On September 10, 1944, Nishimura was given command of Battleship Division 2, which consisted of the dreadnoughts *Fuso* and *Yamashiro* and their destroyer escorts. The two battlewagons, sister ships, dated back to 1911 and were known throughout the fleet for their tall pagoda masts—44 meters above the waterline—and for having sat out most of the war in home waters, mostly as training vessels. The emperor's brother had served on *Fuso* twice.

These battleships had never fired their guns in anger. They were the first battleships built with Japanese engines and guns, the most powerful dreadnoughts in the world at the time. But *Fuso* and *Yamashiro* were slow and outdated

by 1944's standards, armed with six 14-inch guns each. They were sister ships, but not twins, and regarded as the "ugliest ships in the Imperial Navy." Both had crews of about 1,600 officers and men. *Yamashiro* flew Nishimura's flag.

To support Nishimura's force would be four destroyers, *Michishio*, *Yamagumo*, *Asagumo*, and *Shigure*, and a veteran heavy cruiser, the *Mogami*.

Studying his war maps, Toyoda did not think that Nishimura had quite enough punch, so he added a second task force to the southern wing, under Vice Admiral Kiyohide Shima, swinging down from the Pescadore Islands off Formosa. The second striking force would consist of the heavy cruisers *Nachi* and *Ashigara*, both veteran ships; the light cruiser *Abukuma*, which had escorted Japan's carriers to Pearl Harbor; and four destroyers, *Shiranuhi*, *Kasumi*, *Ushio*, and *Akebono*.

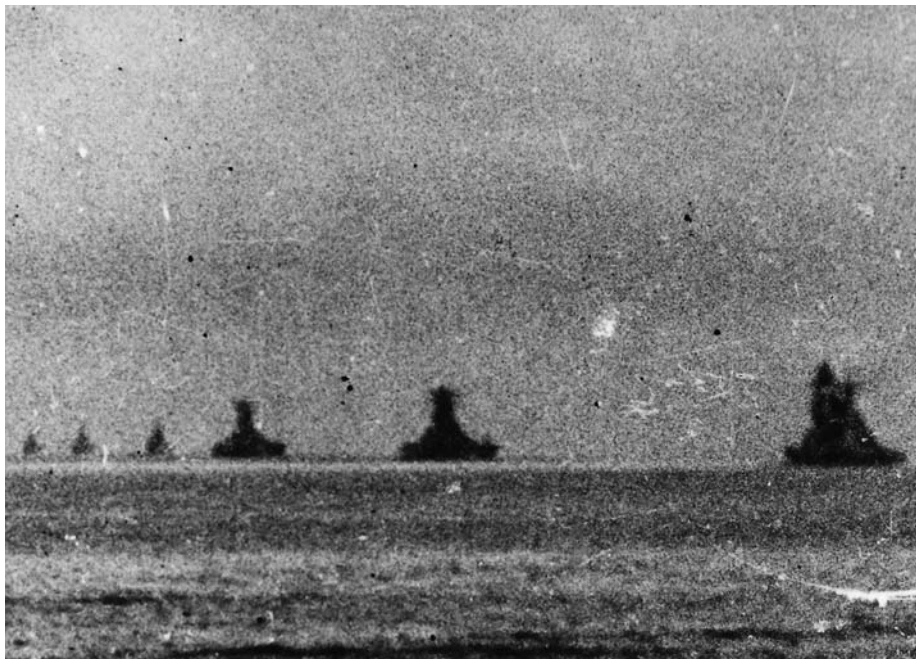
Unlike Nishimura, Shima was a desk sailor. Like Nishimura, Shima had graduated from the Naval War College in the class of 1911. He had served in a variety of shore posts, mostly in communications.

Neither force commander coordinated his movements with the other—nor were any orders given to do so. Neither commander was fully briefed about the other's operations. As far as historians could tell, Nishimura was to clear a path with his battleships so that the cruisers and destroyers behind could finish off the transports with torpedoes. Nishimura's group was to be called the Third Section, while Shima's group was the Second Striking Force.

With the Americans moving on Leyte, the Japanese launched their intricate counter-moves. Ozawa sortied from Japan, Shima from the Pescadores, and Kurita and Nishimura from Lingga Roads, headed for a refueling stop at Brunei.

On October 20, the Americans invaded Leyte with massive power. Landings began at 10 AM, and General MacArthur strode grimly ashore four hours later, making his famous "I have returned!" speech from the invasion beach amid a steady downpour.

The next day, Kurita summoned his senior officers to a conference on his flagship, the heavy cruiser *Atago*. Kurita explained his plans to the assembled admirals, including the decision to split off Nishimura's force to head for the Surigao Strait. If the complex ship movements worked, the two forces would slam into the American 7th Fleet just before dawn on October 25. The next morning, the Imperial Japanese Navy's battle line headed out for sea for the very last time, with Kurita and his five dreadnoughts steaming north to the Sibuyan Sea and the San Bernardino Strait.



ABOVE: The Japanese "Centre Force" leaves Brunei Bay, Borneo, on October 22, 1944, en route to the Philippines. **RIGHT:** Japanese Vice Admiral Shoji Nishimura (left) commanded one of the naval squadrons that were ravaged by a coordinated U.S. Navy attack in Surigao Strait. American Rear Admiral Jesse Oldendorf (right) commanded the U.S. Navy warships that inflicted heavy damage on two Japanese naval contingents in Surigao Strait.



At 3:30 PM, Nishimura's ships put to sea. Shima's ships were already en route. All through the afternoon and night, the two forces steamed along unimpeded into the Sulu Sea. Not so Kurita's force, which was spotted by two American submarines, which slapped torpedoes into three of Kurita's cruisers, sinking two—including his flagship *Atago*—and damaging the third. Kurita shifted his flag to the battleship *Yamato* and sailed on.

At 6 AM on the morning of October 24, the nearest carriers to Nishimura, the veteran USS *Enterprise* and the new USS *Franklin*, launched reconnaissance planes to fan out over the Sulu Sea, hunting for Japanese warships.

At 8:30 AM, an *Enterprise* search team under Lieutenant Raymond E. Moore spotted Nishimura's battleships and identified them correctly. A strike group of 12 bombers and 16 fighters headed for the dreadnoughts. For *Enterprise* Ensign Robert J. Barnes, seeing the massive battleships beneath him was "something you dream about as a dive-bomber pilot. The anti-aircraft fire was terrific."

On the Japanese ships, signal halyards and bugle calls summoned everyone to battle stations; the 14-inch guns loaded Type 3 anti-aircraft ammunition and opened fire. The barrage of shells shook *Asagumo*'s chief engineer, Tokichi Ishii, in his engine room. On *Fuso*, Yeoman 2nd Class Hideo Ogawa, in the powder magazine, considered that if the battleship were hit his end would be quick, as he was surrounded by main battery powder canisters.

The American planes swooped down on the Japanese warships, subjecting them to bombing, strafing, and rockets. On *Yamashiro*, 20 men died from strafing. A bomb scored a direct hit on *Fuso*, bouncing No. 1 turret on its barrette. It crashed through the deck and killed everyone in the secondary battery. Another bomb hit *Fuso*'s quarterdeck, setting two floatplanes ablaze and gutting the wardroom. Another bomb grazed the *Shigure*'s No. 1 turret.

Lieutenant Commander Fred Bakutis, skipper of *Enterprise*'s fighter squadron, was shot out of the sky during the battle and had to ditch. Luckily, the Japanese did not spot him, and he spent seven days in a life raft before he was spotted and picked up by the submarine USS *Hardhead*, dehydrated, hungry, blistered, but otherwise in good shape. He recovered to resume flying.

The American planes flew off, and damage control parties on the Japanese ships went to work. Both battlewagons suffered from burst seams and minor damage. Nishimura ordered his ships to proceed with their mission. He fired off *Mogami*'s scout planes to check on the



Hours before the nocturnal engagement in Surigao Strait, Japanese warships were attacked by aircraft from the carrier USS *Enterprise*. In this photo, a Japanese battleship, either *Yamashiro* or *Fuso*, takes evasive action as American bombs begin to fall. One hit was scored on *Fuso*, and the old battleship was later sunk by U.S. warships.

enemy. One of them reported four battleships, two cruisers, four destroyers, 15 aircraft carriers, 14 PT boats, and 80 transports in Leyte Gulf, a close approximation of the defense. At 4 PM, Nishimura blinkered his battle plan. *Mogami* and the four destroyers would steam ahead and mop up the enemy PT boats, then reassemble, and all ships would charge up Surigao Strait.

Meanwhile, the Americans, aware of Nishimura's advance, made their preparations. Rear Admiral Jesse C. Oldendorf was a burly Californian and a member of the Annapolis class of 1909. Known as "Oley" to his pals, he had commanded the heavy cruiser USS *Houston* before the war, which had carried President Franklin D. Roosevelt on his voyages. In 1942 and 1943, he was in charge of countermeasures in the Caribbean against U-boats and screening big transports on convoy duty. He took over the Pacific Fleet's gunfire support battleships in 1944, flying his flag on the heavy cruiser USS *Louisville*.

With short notice, Oldendorf planned his defenses with skill. He summoned his subordinate admirals aboard his flagship in the early evening to lay out his plans. He had several advantages: large numbers of ships, new fire-control radar, combat information centers to channel information flow in and orders out, and above all the narrow geography of Surigao Strait, which offered opportunities for ambushes. He set up a gauntlet for the Japanese. PT boats would be the opening screen, alerting Oldendorf to the enemy's location, size,

and movements. Then Oldendorf would harry them with destroyers armed with torpedoes. The Japanese would be worn down by the time they reached his battle line of six older battlewagons and 10 cruisers, which included Australia's HMAS *Shropshire*.

The crowded nature of Surigao Strait would enable Oldendorf to form a battle line "crossing the T" of the Japanese advance, the dream of every naval commander, which would hammer the Japanese ships.

Still, the U.S. Navy had not shown a good record in night naval engagements up to this point, losing battles or suffering heavy casualties in the Solomons. His destroyers lacked replacement torpedoes. The American battleships were not the Navy's first team of fast dreadnoughts, but older, slower vessels, built just after World War I. At least two lacked modern radar.

Most importantly, Oldendorf's ships' ammunition scales were for providing support fire for ground troops. They had been doing so for days. Some of the destroyers were down to 20 percent of their ammunition. The battleships were loaded with 77 percent bombardment shells for ground targets and 23 percent armor-piercing ordnance for enemy ships—and they had been on the bombardment line for days, shooting off 58 percent of all their ammunition. Oldendorf told his battleship men to hold fire until the Japanese had closed to 17,000 to 20,000 yards, use armor-piercing shells to rip open the enemy hulls, and high explosive ordnance thereafter.

Oldendorf took other precautions. Remembering that at Savo Island in 1942, Japanese shells blasted American cruisers' seaplanes to start fires, he ordered his ships to park their seaplanes in hangars and rely on PT boats, radar, and good communications to track the enemy. The destroyers and cruisers took up positions on the right and left wings of the battle line to minimize the risk of friendly fire. All afternoon, Oldendorf's ships took on additional ammunition.

Everybody in the American force was eager for battle. Five of the battleships in Oldendorf's line had been present at Pearl Harbor: *Mary-*

approval I will submit plan shortly." Oldendorf gave the aggressive Coward the green light 15 minutes later.

The Japanese were going in, too. Nishimura intended to hit the American transports at 4 AM. The night wore on, with Japanese lookouts peering into the dark as the two forces moved separately through the Mindanao Sea and toward the island of Leyte.

Waiting in the dark for Nishimura's split force were 39 PT boats in 13 groups of three, engines idling, ready to fire torpedoes and crash start their main engines to escape. There was no

chain of command, and Oldendorf got the messages an hour and a half after the Japanese were sighted.

Meanwhile, the terrier-like PT boats kept connected with the advancing Japanese force. Two PT boats fired torpedoes at Nishimura's ships but missed. Neither side scored hits, but the scrapping frayed Japanese nerves.

Nishimura was afraid that *Mogami* would mistake him for the enemy in the deteriorating visibility. Sure enough, at 1:05 AM, *Fuso* lookouts saw a suspicious silhouette off the port bow. Trained in recognizing enemy ships, but not to distinguish Japanese vessels, they reported the silhouette as American. The battleship hurled 6-inch shells in that direction and got an angry voice-radio message back, "Cease firing, cease firing! Friendly ships!" It was *Mogami*. Unfortunately, just as the message got transmitted, another 6-inch shell hit the cruiser, killing three sailors who were lying in sickbay, wounded in the morning's American air attack.

Nishimura ordered his ships to cease fire, and the entire Japanese formation regrouped and resumed heading north with the battleships in the lead and *Mogami* behind. Some distance behind them, Shima's cruisers followed, his intentions vague. Shima had no plan to cooperate with Nishimura, merely to follow along.

The American PT boats were still harrying the Japanese, though. Next up, *PT-134*, commanded by Lieutenant Edmund F. Wakelin, got to within 2,500 yards of Nishimura's ships before coming under Japanese searchlights and gunfire. Wakelin fired torpedoes at *Fuso*, but they passed harmlessly astern of the battleship. Three more PT boats popped out, and Nishimura had to do some fancy maneuvering to avoid the American fish.

PT-490 found itself a bare 400 yards from the Japanese ships and was hit by two shells. Other shells hit *PT-493*, damaging the engine, tearing a hole in the boat's bottom. *PT-491* moved in to evacuate the crew, and the wounded *PT-493* drifted free and sank after sunrise. American casualties on the fragile PT boats numbered three killed and 20 wounded.

At 2:11 AM, Nishimura ordered his ships into battle formation for the dash up the strait. As they did so, another group of PT boats sprinted in from the southeast, hurling six torpedoes at the Japanese. The torpedoes all missed. Nishimura's ships steamed on at 20 knots.

Now came Captain Coward's Desron 54. The sea was glassy and the temperature about 80 degrees Fahrenheit, and only the wind made by the tin cans' speed brought relief to the men topside. All hands were served coffee and sandwiches after midnight.



An American PT-boat demonstrates its speed in open water in 1943. PT-boats were the first American surface units to engage the Japanese ships moving through Surigao Strait toward the landing beaches at Leyte.

land, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, California, and Tennessee. Their crews were eager to avenge that humiliation. The sixth battleship was the veteran USS *Mississippi*. Some of the American cruisers were new warships, like *Denver*, *Columbia*, and *Cleveland*, while others trailed lengthy records of combat. *Portland* had been at Midway, *Minneapolis* at Guadalcanal, *Phoenix* had steamed boldly out of the carnage of Pearl Harbor, while *Boise* survived overwhelming Japanese power in the defeats in the Philippines and Dutch East Indies. The Australians aboard HMAS *Shropshire* had bitter memories of the fiasco at Savo Island, having served aboard and survived the sinking of HMAS *Canberra* before she could fire a shot.

Captain Jesse G. Coward, a Guadalcanal veteran commanding Destroyer Squadron (Desron) 54, a fresh addition to Oldendorf's force, signaled his boss: "In case of surface contact to the southward I plan to make an immediate torpedo attack and then retire to clear you. With your

wind, a flat sea, and visibility only about three miles. Aboard *Louisville*, Oldendorf could only see two ships in front of and behind him.

At 10:36 PM, Ensign Peter R. Gadd's *PT-131* spotted the Japanese force on its radar. Gadd throttled up and closed in to attack, joined by other PT boats. To their amazement, they saw the immense bulks of Nishimura's capital ships heading north. The PT boats headed in to loose torpedoes, and lookouts on *Shigure* spotted the American vessels. *Shigure* opened fire and illuminated with starshells.

Realizing they were attacking a force many times their power, the PT boats turned away, making smoke to obscure their exits. The battleships joined in with their secondary armament. One 6-inch shell struck a glancing blow right against the forward torpedo in its rack on *PT-130*, smashing the nose, splintering the deck. The shell knocked out the PT boat's radio and flew out of the bow without detonating.

The PT boats reported their contact up the

Moving in two flanking groups south through the strait, Coward's five destroyers plotted the Japanese approach with their radar. At 2:58 AM, *Shigure* illuminated Coward's eastern group with a searchlight, and Coward assigned targets as his tin cans cranked up to 30 knots for an attack. His plan was to use torpedoes only, so as not to give away his ships' positions with gun flashes. At 3 AM, the American destroyers loosed 27 torpedoes at a range of 11,500 yards at the Japanese.

As the torpedoes powered through the water, *Fuso* opened up with her 14-inch guns at a surface target for the first time in her life. Petty Officer Hideo Ogawa removed cordite charges from flash-proof storage canisters and loaded them onto the powder-cage elevator, and at 3:07 *Fuso* let loose at her targets. Japanese shells flew at the American destroyers. A minute later, two American torpedoes from *Melvin* slammed into *Fuso*'s starboard side with towering explosions and cascades of water. The dreadnought slowed down and began listing to starboard.

The starboard boiler rooms flooded rapidly. The dreadnought sheered out of line, her starboard side blazing. Incredibly, her skipper, Rear Admiral Masami Ban, did not radio a damage report—he may have been unable to do so or coping with too many crises at once—and her companions continued steaming north. *Mogami* slipped into the position *Fuso* vacated. Nishimura was unaware that he had

just lost 50 percent of his dreadnought strength and pressed on, radioing orders to an unresponsive *Fuso*.

Coward's destroyers charged in, illuminated by a Japanese parachute flare from one of *Yamashiro*'s floatplanes. As their torpedoes streaked off, Chief Petty Officer Virgil Rollins, manning McDermut's No. 2 torpedo mount, calmly remarked, "It is about time for something to happen."

At that instant, 3:20 AM, explosions and fireballs lit up the night. Two torpedoes crashed into *Yamagumo*'s port side, and the destroyer exploded immediately, the blast seen as far away as Oldendorf's battleships. The hits apparently cooked off *Yamagumo*'s torpedoes, and the destroyer sank rapidly.

The destruction was only beginning. At 3:22, a torpedo slammed into *Yamashiro*'s port side. At 3:25, *Asagumo* took a torpedo hit forward. A startling vibration shook up Chief Engineer Tokichi Ishii. He phoned the bridge to find out what was going on but got no answer. Seconds later, a runner from the bridge appeared bearing word from the skipper, Commander Kazuo Shibayama, to check on a torpedo hit to the port bow. At the same time, torpedoes smacked into *Asagumo*. She rapidly took on water, her bows shredded.

The Japanese now had only one battleship, one cruiser, and one destroyer ready to hit back, and as *Michishio* prepared to launch torpedoes, she suddenly heaved and shuddered violently,

slowing to a dead halt, the recipient of more American torpedoes from *McDermut* and *Monssen*. All power on the Japanese destroyer went out, and the machinery spaces began flooding rapidly.

For the American destroyers, it was a grand slam unmatched in nautical history: three Japanese destroyers and a battleship crippled by a single onslaught of torpedoes. Oldendorf's report on the attack was blunt and accurate: "Brilliantly conceived and well executed."

In the strait, Japanese warships blazed and began to founder. On *Yamashiro*'s flag bridge, Nishimura tried to make sense of the rapidly unfolding disaster. He reported by radio to his superiors: "Enemy DDs and torpedo boats are stationed at the northern entrance to Surigao Strait. Two of our DDs have received torpedo damage and are drifting. *Yamashiro* has been hit by one torpedo, but her battle integrity is not impaired."

Tokyo got the word. So did USS *Denver*, which picked up the message at 3 AM. It clearly indicated that Nishimura was losing control of the situation. He seemed to assume that *Fuso* was still following him. The surviving Japanese pressed on.

On *Fuso*'s bridge, Rear Admiral Ban took stock of disastrous damage control reports: "No. 1 powder and shell magazines filling with water ... the ship making only 10 knots ... her bow drooping into the water ... communications out." At 3:20, *Fuso* wobbled onto a westerly course.

Behind this scene of nautical destruction, Shima's force continued to steam north at maximum battle speed. On the flag bridge of *Nachi*, Shima listened uneasily to the tactical radio and Japanese voices announcing disaster. He peered out his windows into darkness and rain, wondering what was out there.

What was out there was Panaon Island. His ships were steaming through rain and mist on the wrong course. At the last minute, lookouts saw mountains looming and heard waves crashing ashore and shouted warnings. Shima ordered his ships to a maximum port turn, and he evaded both navigational embarrassment and disaster. At 3:20, they faced disaster at enemy hands as torpedoes crashed out of the night and into the light cruiser *Abukuma*'s port side just forward of the bridge, ripping open the flimsy ship's hull. A thousand tons of water cascaded in.

Shima had just met the American PT boats that had not engaged Nishimura's ships, and they were eager to tear into the Japanese. *Abukuma* and her escorts fired back, but to no avail. It was clear *Abukuma* could not proceed,

The new cruiser USS *Columbia* fires its weapons during a night exercise in 1943. As the war continued, U.S. Navy gunners became more proficient in night engagements, particularly with the addition of fire control radar aboard many ships.



and the old cruiser pulled out of formation with 37 dead. The cruiser's escorts sprinted on in the night, leaving *Abukuma* behind to tend her wounds.

Up ahead, Nishimura's force continued north. The next set of picadors was Captain Kenmore McManes's Destroyer Squadron 24 (Desron 24), which included HMAS *Arunta*, her white ensigns snapping in the wind. Unlike seadogs of old, McManes fought this battle not from his flag bridge but in his combat information center hunched over a radar screen. McManes cranked his ships up to 25 knots, and at 3:23 AM, *Arunta* opened up with five torpedoes.

USS *Killen* launched her fish a minute later, all aimed at *Shigure* and *Yamashiro*. At 3:31, one of *Killen*'s torpedoes smacked into *Yamashiro*'s port side amidships. The battleship began to list

ing in from the hatch above him. Kato sent a messenger to the bridge to report his predicament. The messenger saluted, scrambled out of the listing turret, and was back moments later. He could not walk the deck. It was spouting steam, oil, and seawater.

Below Kato, Hideo Ogawa and his pals watched seawater trickle into their space. The turret captain ordered Ogawa and 10 of his buddies to evacuate upward. They climbed into the projectile room above, closing the steel hatch behind them to preserve watertight integrity. Once there, Ogawa and his shipmates kept climbing, joining 15 more men to evacuate through another steel door of the hoist. Then came orders from the bridge: all hands of No. 1 and No. 2 turrets were to assemble at the center starboard upper deck as reserves for

missed each other, but *Fuso*'s nightmare was coming to an end. Hideo Ogawa watched his ship's forecandle slide underwater. Crewmen struggled out of No. 1 turret onto the slanting foredeck, her gunhouse parting the seas with its shield. Yasuo Kato wiggled out of the turret and was struck by the fact that "complete silence prevailed on our ship."

Then the thin sound of gurgling water and the distant rumble of explosions were broken by the strident notes of a bugle blaring "Abandon Ship!" Kato and his buddies started jumping into the water. As they hit the Surigao Strait, they heard a grinding clatter. Everyone looked up and saw *Fuso*'s bridge tilt "at an angle of 45 degrees to the left and [make] a terrible noise ... it hit the water with a huge splash."

With her bow submerged, *Fuso* was listing heavily to starboard. Suddenly she corkscrewed to port and upended. Kato, who had scrambled over the starboard rail, had found himself standing on the hull's side and sliding along the blister. When *Fuso* spun to port he was flung into the sea on his back. He swam away.

Finally the old battleship rolled over and sank, spewing out unstable Borneo oil from her tanks, turning the sea into a gooney and deadly slime, trapping sailors. As the oil spread, it connected with flaming wreckage and started new fires. The hissing sound created by the fires reminded Ogawa of "roasting beans." Sailors caught in the goo were killed in the inferno.

Fuso had sunk within 15 minutes of being torpedoed, between 3:40 and 3:50 AM. She went to the bottom of Surigao Strait, taking most of her crew of 1,630 officers and men with her. Only a mere 10 members of the old battleship's crew would survive. As *Fuso* departed the scene, so did *Michishio*, at about 3:38 AM, sinking into the strait. Only four members of her crew survived.

Incredibly, Nishimura plowed on with the courage of a samurai, joined by *Shigure*, *Mogami*, and the bowless *Asagumo*. So did Shima's vessels, barely 40,000 yards behind Nishimura's.

Hounded by McManes's destroyers, Nishimura continued to steam north. The Japanese hurled shells at their tormentors, who used smokescreens with considerable effectiveness. On *Mogami*'s bridge, officers struggled to make sense of radar screens, trying to separate land masses from Japanese and American warships.

By now the opposing destroyers were in gun range, and *Hutchins* opened fire on *Asagumo*, hitting her and setting fire to the Japanese ship's torpedo tubes.

On *Louisville*, Oldendorf watched the



ABOVE: A casemate gun crew services its 5-inch weapon while a line of sailors passes ammunition forward. The 5-inch gun was the main armament of many American destroyers during World War II. OPPOSITE: The battleship USS *Pennsylvania* fires its guns during shore bombardment in the Pacific. *Pennsylvania* was present in drydock during the Pearl Harbor attack and sustained damage that was later repaired. Unable to acquire a radar lock, the battleship did not fire a shot during the Battle of Surigao Strait.

to port and cut speed to a perilously slow five knots. Determined damage control on the dreadnought patched the holes, and soon *Yamashiro* was back at a decent 18 knots.

South of the flagship, *Fuso* was in agony, still moving on a wobbly course, probably trying to beach on Kanihaan Island. But the ship was so far down at the bow, Chief Engineer Captain Eiichi Nakaya could not maintain navigability. In No. 1 turret, Yasuo Kato saw water flood-

damage control.

McManes and his tin cans of Desron 24 were still harrying Nishimura's battered ships. Radar screens were full of pips, from both friend and foe. While the Americans held the initiative, the Japanese fought back. *Asagumo* fired torpedoes at USS *Daly*, which sizzled just under the American's bow.

The sound and fury in this portion of the engagement signified nothing as both sides

flashes of explosions and the beams of searchlights, awaiting the moment he could cut loose. From listening to the radio chatter, he determined he was up against two battleships, not four. The Japanese were now 26,900 yards away from his dreadnoughts. *West Virginia* led the parade of battleships, followed by *Maryland*, flagship *Mississippi*, *Pennsylvania*, *Tennessee*, and *California*.

At 3:34 AM, Destroyer Squadron 56 (Desron 56) Captain Roland Smoot on USS *Newcomb* led the next U.S. charge against Nishimura's force, with nine destroyers maneuvering in three sections to corner the enemy. At 3:46, Captain Thomas Conley, commanding Smoot's second section, signaled his destroyers, "This has to be quick. Stand by your torpedoes." Smoot and Conley logically were worried that their tin cans would be at risk to both Japanese fire and American guns in this close-range encounter. Their attack would go in bare minutes before the American battleships would open fire.

The Japanese kept closing in ragged formation. On the American dreadnoughts, radar operators and communicators chanted off steadily decreasing ranges. At 3:50 AM, the range dropped to 15,600 yards. Oldendorf barked, "All right, give the order to open fire."

TBS (Talk Between Ships) radios and sound-powered phones repeated the admiral's order. On the battleships and cruisers—except *Louisville*, whose gunners cut loose before the order was given—buzzers sounded and gongs rang, and the battle line spewed forth massive shells with a titanic roar. *Louisville's* deck and bulkheads rattled from the opening salvo.

The light cruisers fired their 6-inch guns rapidly, the heavy cruisers their 8-inch guns more deliberately. At 3:53 AM, *West Virginia* opened fire on *Yamashiro*, 22,800 yards away, in full broadside. Her 16-inch guns, two gun turrets officered by men on their first sea voyage, exacted revenge for the Pearl Harbor humiliation by hitting *Yamashiro* on the first salvo. *Yamashiro's* forecastle spouted flame, and her 14-inch gun turrets erupted with answering shells.

Two minutes later, *California* opened up with the first of 63 rounds of 14-inch shells. At 3:56, *Tennessee* joined the din—three American battleships that had survived Pearl Harbor blasting a single Japanese dreadnought.

On *Mogami*, the American barrage shone in distant flashes like light rows of a switchboard turning on one after another in a dark room. The light show was followed by the whistle and hiss of incoming shells. Those shells that missed sent up huge walls of white water. Those shells that hit *Yamashiro* impacted near



her bridge, rocking the giant ship, starting fires, disabling the radar, but missing the compass and flag bridge.

Nishimura's "T" had been fully crossed, but it did not matter. The previous hits to his ship had flooded the magazines for his No. 5 and No. 6 turrets, knocking them out of action, and he was about to unmask his No. 3 and No. 4 turrets. All of *Mogami's* guns bore forward because of her wartime rebuildings, and *Shigure's* primary weapons were her torpedoes. Furthermore, head-on targets were tougher to hit.

Under fire, poorly informed as to his situation, Nishimura radioed for *Fuso* to open fire on the Americans, unaware that his second battleship was sunk. Nor was Nishimura aware of Shima's location behind him. The two Japanese forces would enter battle completely uncoordinated.

American shells rained down on *Yamashiro*. At 3:56, HMAS *Shropshire* finally had a firing solution and hurled 32 8-inch broadsides of eight guns at *Yamashiro*. At 3:59 AM, *Maryland* located *Yamashiro* on her radar and ripped loose with her main battery.

The American heavy guns thundered for only 18 minutes, but it was time enough to avenge the humiliations of Pearl Harbor and Savo Island, raining destruction on *Yamashiro*. A direct hit exploded the officer's wardroom, serving as a sickbay, killing medical lead Lieutenant Buntaro Kitamura and staff along with the wounded they were attending. Other heavy shells ripped open *Yamashiro's* armor and shredded her superstructure.

While *Yamashiro* absorbed the shelling, *Mogami*, and *Shigure* struggled to fight. *Mogami* turned to port to unmask starboard torpedo tubes under heavy enemy fire.

The Americans did not ignore the cruiser. McManes's destroyers spotted *Mogami*, illumi-

nated by *Yamashiro's* fires, bearing down on the onrushing *Hutchins*. The destroyers *Daly* and *Bache* opened fire on *Mogami*. On the cruiser, Captain Ryo Toma wondered if he was steaming toward Japanese or American ships in the confusion. To be sure, he flashed two large searchlights and a red Very star. The Americans answered his signals with a hail of shells.

Mogami took a hit on her mainmast, and the steel structure began to sag. Other shells blasted her two radio rooms and anti-aircraft mounts. Toma decided to make a wide loop away to try to launch torpedoes from his port side. But the fire and smoke drew a fusillade of 6-inch and 8-inch shells from Oldendorf's cruisers, which added to *Mogami's* pain with hits on No. 3 turret, knocking it out of action, and another on the deck near the starboard after engine room's air intake, which sent smoke into the engine room and forced the crew to evacuate.

On *Mogami's* bridge, Toma and his officers argued over what they should do, continue the attack or withdraw? Toma wanted to withdraw, but his officers believed they could still fight their way past the Americans. Toma yielded to their Bushido spirit. *Mogami* turned around and headed north at 4 AM.

At 4:02, two shells from *Portland* smashed *Mogami's* compass bridge, and a third tore into the air defense center, killing almost all hands at both positions, including Toma. Only four signalmen who happened to be on the signaling platform were left alive and standing. *Mogami* was steaming along out of control, nobody in command.

Chief Petty Officer 1st Class Shuichi Yamamoto, the chief signalman, took the reins. He ran onto the smashed bridge and found the steering mechanism power had failed. He contacted the armored wheelhouse two decks

below his feet on the sound-powered phone and called for manual steering and for someone to find the ranking senior officer.

Shuddering from repeated hits, *Mogami* swung out of line just as heavy shells slammed into the cruiser's forward No. 1 engine room, sending high-pressure steam spewing in all directions, killing trapped engineers. Flames spread to the No. 9 boiler room, and choking black smoke poured out. Boiler tenders shut down the furnace.

At 4:03, another shell knocked out all lights in the port after engine room. *Mogami* had lost

three engine rooms in as many minutes. The engineers in the port forward engine room ignored smoke and heat to provide *Mogami* with engine power. As the shaking cruiser rattled away, Lt. Cmdr. Giichiro Arai, the gunnery officer, was told he was in command. But with the ship's guns firing, he could not report to the bridge. Yamamoto would have to keep the conn.

Amid all this shellfire and destruction, the destroyer *Shigure* sailed on, straddled but not hit. There were so many near misses that the gyro compass was out. Her skipper, Comman-

der Shigeru Nishino, barked requests into his radio to the other ships to find out where they were or whom he should shoot at.

On his bridge, Nishino summed up the situation rationally—one destroyer against an armada. At 4:03 AM, he aborted his northward charge and started arcing a starboard reverse turn, heading south and out of the battle.

On *Yamashiro*, fires blazed from the dreadnought's pagoda mast, looking like ceremonial lanterns back in Sasebo. The fires burned so brightly that the Americans could make out *Yamashiro*'s 6-inch turrets standing out against the glare of the flames. An American shell destroyed No. 3 turret and its two 14-inch guns in a violent explosion. The ship's communications and two aft turrets were out. The only good news was that paymaster Ensign Yamauchi was standing guard over the emperor's portrait in the conning tower.

Incredibly, *Yamashiro* fought on. The battleship made a wide, slow turn to unmask her 14-inch guns and hurled a broadside at the six American dreadnoughts. Japanese gunners continued to load and train turrets amid intense heat, smoke, and fires. *Yamashiro* traded shots with HMAS *Shropshire* with her main battery while firing secondary armament at the pesky destroyers.

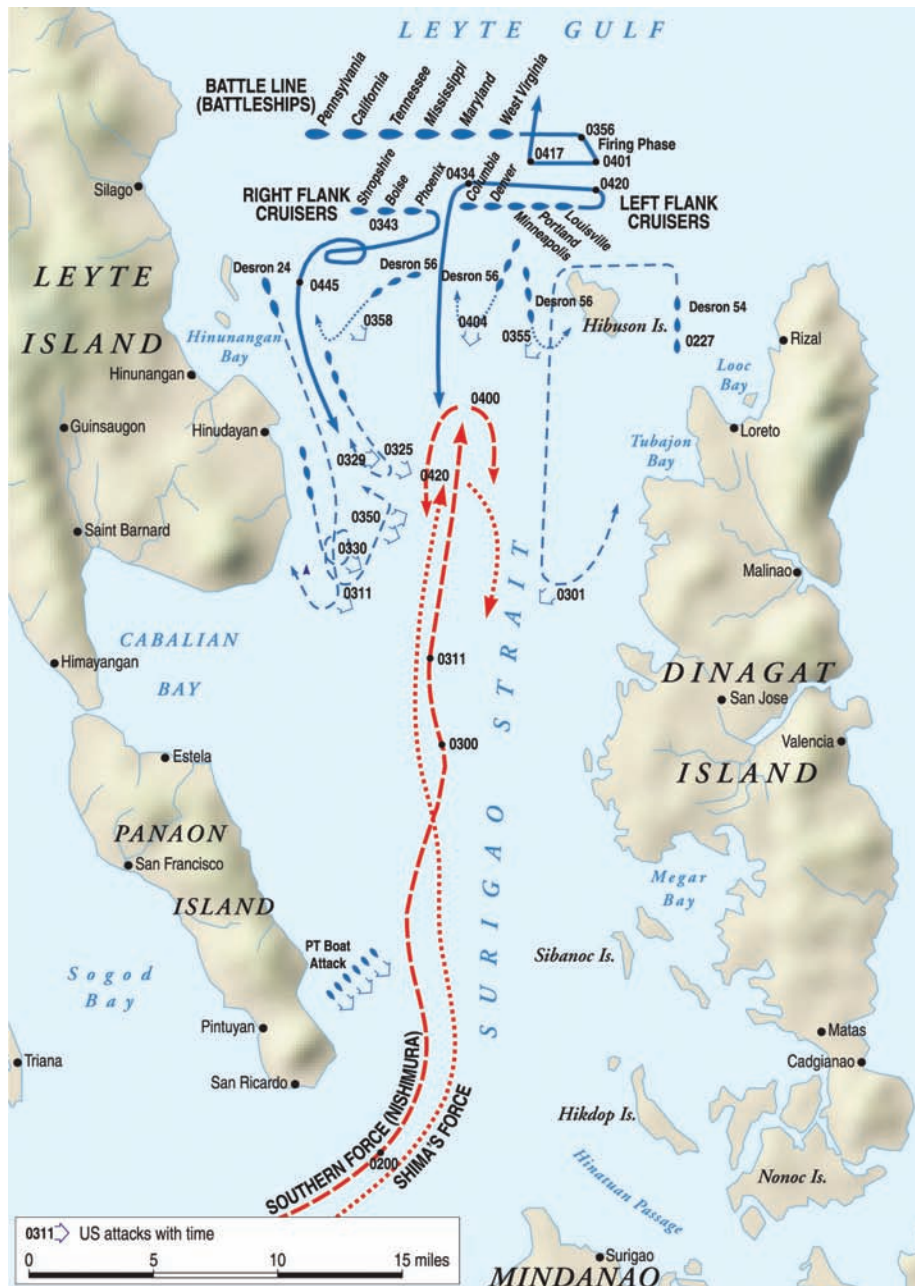
At 4:01 AM, the American battle line turned to starboard, and the dreadnoughts wheeled 150 degrees, heading back west across Surigao Strait. As the battleships turned, they were nearly parallel and steaming in the same direction as *Yamashiro*, broadside to broadside. Incredibly, as they made their turns, *Tennessee* and *California* started heading right at one another. *Tennessee* Captain John B. Heffernan fired off a series of orders and with deft ship handling avoided collision.

On *California*, Captain Henry P. Burnett realized what was happening and took his dreadnought out of line. The four battleships that had been shooting checked fire. *Mississippi* and *Pennsylvania*, unable to acquire radar locks, never fired a shot.

Meanwhile, Oldendorf's cruisers kept up the heat on *Yamashiro*. As they swapped salvos, Desron 56, under Captain Roland Smoot, raced in at top speed to launch torpedoes. At 4:04 AM, at a range of 6,200 yards, the American destroyers cut loose. The Japanese responded with a flurry of 6-inch shells. The Americans maneuvered to avoid the shells, which brought *Albert W. Grant* directly into *Denver*'s radar picture.

Denver mistook *Grant* for the Japanese *Shigure*, presumably racing in to fire torpedoes, and the American cruiser opened fire on *Grant*.

During the Battle of Surigao Strait, American Rear Admiral Jesse Oldendorf executed the classic naval maneuver of crossing his enemy's "T." The American battle line under Oldendorf was able to fire full broadsides at the Japanese, who could only reply initially with forward guns.



Map © 2013 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

Near misses scattered shrapnel. An American shell hit *Grant's* fantail, knocking out the No. 5 5-inch turret. More shells from both sides punched into the forward stack and the forward boiler room, the forward engine room, the No. 1 40mm gun, the scullery room, and the port motor whaleboat. The lights, telephones, radios, and radars were blown out.

Grant's skipper, Commander Terrell A. Nisewaner, reacted quickly. He fired off his five torpedoes at the enemy, then turned away. Simultaneously, Captain Smoot, in *Newcomb*, seeing the tragedy, shouted a TBS radio warning to Oldendorf, "You are firing on ComDesron 56! We are in the middle of the channel!"

Oldendorf got the message. At 4:09 AM, he grabbed the voice radio on *Louisville's* flag bridge and issued a blanket order, "All ships cease firing." The American ships checked fire, and *Newcomb* came alongside *Grant* to tow away her damaged sister.

Aboard *Grant* chaos reigned—her lifeboats were wrecked, engines gone, the ship dead in the water at 4:20 AM. She would have to be towed to safety. When the final tally was taken, it was determined that five Japanese and at least 11 American cruiser shells had impacted the destroyer. Six officers and 28 enlisted men lay dead. Ninety-four men were wounded.

The last shells and torpedoes flew at *Yamashiro*, scoring more hits. One of them—from the unlucky *Grant*—smashed the dreadnought's starboard side at about 4:09, near the starboard engine room. The dreadnought slowed down then cranked back up to 12 knots at 4:09 AM. On *Yamashiro's* flag bridge, Nishimura told his chief of staff to report to Kurita: "We proceed to Leyte for the main attack. We will proceed until totally annihilated. I have definitely accomplished my mission as pre-arranged. Please rest assured."

Now, with the firing ceased, Surigao Strait again reverted to blackness lit only by the raging fires on *Yamashiro*, *Mogami*, and *Grant*. The Japanese checked fire, too. Silence descended on the battlefield. Naval historian Samuel Eliot Morison wrote, "Admiral Nishimura and the officers and crew of *Yamashiro* must have regarded this cease-fire as God's gift to the Emperor."

Nishimura decided to meet Shima's force and regroup. The blazing battleship commenced a wide turn to port, heading southwest.

On the American ships, everybody stared down at the radar plots, separating out the various blips. As the Japanese dreadnought retreated, the Americans figured out which one was *Yamashiro*. For the last time in the history of warfare, a battleship fired its ordnance at

another such vessel, as the flagship *Mississippi* unleashed her first and only broadside of the night, doing so at *Yamashiro* at a range of 19,790 yards.

With the American battle line in some disorder and the Japanese apparently retreating, Oldendorf turned the pursuit over to his cruisers and destroyers, ordering them to resume fire at 4:19 AM. Before they could comply, the fattest pip on the American radar screens abruptly vanished. It seemed that *Yamashiro* had sunk, probably by capsizing, according to the later Naval War College report.

The War College was right. Four torpedoes

sels of Nishimura's force left afloat, and both were withdrawing. *Shigure* took an 8-inch shell in her fantail, and her skipper logged "decided to retire." The battered cruiser and destroyer headed south, and at 4:15 their lookouts were astonished to see a destroyer racing toward them at 30 knots. It was Shima's lead ship, the *Shiranuhi*. Behind her was Shima's flagship, *Nachi*, starting the next phase of the battle.

Shima's ships had gone through an interesting journey, passing by raging oil fires and wreckage belonging to Nishimura's shattered vessels, hearing and seeing gunfire to the north. They advanced through smoke screens. Oil fires



The battleship USS *Pennsylvania* is silhouetted against the darkened sky by the gun flashes of her cohorts on the American battle line at Surigao Strait.

hit *Yamashiro*, possibly from *Newcomb*, and the stricken battleship went dead in the water, keeling over to port. Fires amidships silhouetted the pagoda superstructure in a lurid glow as it heeled over like a collapsing sand castle.

On the bridge, the skipper, Rear Admiral Katsukiyo Shinoda, calmly passed the word to abandon ship. He and Nishimura remained on their bridges. Within two to five minutes, the blazing dreadnought keeled over and capsized.

Nishimura, his staff of 20 officers, Shinoda, and nearly all of *Yamashiro's* crew of 1,636 officers and men went to the bottom of Surigao Strait. While a large number of sailors survived the sinking, only two warrant officers and eight petty officers returned to Japan, the same number as from *Fuso*.

Shigure and *Mogami* were now the only ves-

blazed on the ocean. The ships passed by the badly damaged and helpless *Asagumo*. Then radar spotted two contacts dead ahead, at 4:15 AM. Figuring it was the enemy, Shima ordered, "All ships attack!"

Shima's four destroyers and two cruisers dashed forward, unmasked their torpedo batteries, and fired their Long Lance torpedoes, which had caused so much havoc in the grueling struggles for Guadalcanal. The torpedoes had eight miles to run.

As it happened, their target was Oldendorf's flagship *Louisville*. But the torpedoes missed. Shima and his men peered into the smoke and mist to observe results—and out of the smoke came *Mogami*, her No. 3 gun turret a ruin, barrels blackened, forecastle riddled with holes, flames smoldering from her flight deck aft.

With Chief Petty Officer Yamamoto still on the bridge, the blasted *Mogami* was retiring at last. Crewmen on *Nachi* howled banzais of encouragement as the two ships closed the range. On *Nachi*'s bridge, Captain Enpei Kanooka thought that he would pass *Mogami* a little too close, figuring that *Mogami* was dead in the water. But to everyone's amazement, *Mogami* was actually steaming along—just barely—and right for *Nachi*.

Kanooka shouted "Full reverse!" and right rudder to avoid *Nachi*'s sister. Too late. At 4:23, *Nachi*'s anchor deck converged with *Mogami*'s starboard at No. 1 turret, and the two ships collided with a sickening, jarring crunch. The col-

lision added more dents to *Mogami*'s battered hide, wrecked *Nachi*'s No. 2 antiaircraft mount, and ripped a 15-meter gash in *Nachi*'s port bow at the waterline. Flooding alarms went off, and the two cruisers pulled themselves apart.

On *Mogami*'s bridge, Yamamoto bawled through a megaphone, "This is *Mogami*! Captain and XO killed! Gunnery officer in charge. Steering destroyed. Steering by engine. Sorry!"

Shima and Kanooka, exasperated, accepted the blame. *Nachi* began crawling southward at five knots. *Mogami* struggled to get in line behind her two sisters. Everyone listened for explosions from the 16 torpedoes fired, but there was no sound.

While Shima's cruisers maneuvered in clumsy

waiting for us with open arms. Nishimura's force is almost totally destroyed. It is obvious that we will fall into a trap. We may die anytime. In any case, it is foolish to go ahead now." Shima got the point. Time to withdraw.

On *Louisville*, Oldendorf studied the smoke, oil fires, and silence through his binoculars and ordered a cautious pursuit of his beaten enemy. He had no idea if there were more enemy ships out there—intelligence suggested there might be as many as three battleships, five cruisers, and six to eight destroyers beyond the smoke—ready to ambush him with shells and Long Lance torpedoes. And his battle line was increasingly short on ammunition. At 4:37 AM, *Louisville*, *Portland*, *Minneapolis*, *Denver*, and

Columbia headed south.

At 4:41, Shima ordered his ships to follow behind *Nachi*. Hobbling along at 20 knots, they were retreating at a slow speed. On the battered *Mogami*, ammunition started cooking off, hampering repairs and endangering the crew. Arai ordered his men to jettison torpedoes to prevent them from exploding, but four of them exploded, adding to the smoldering fires. Incredibly, the engines kept turning, and Arai used hand steering to maneuver his ship.

The battle still sputtered on. As the Japanese ships retreated, they met up with the PT boats that had not expended their torpedoes earlier in the struggle. Lieutenant Carl T. Gleason's Section 11, consisting of three PT boats, attacked the destroyers *Shigure* and *Asagumo*. The Japanese fire was ragged and off target, but one American torpedo detonated prematurely. Another slithered out of its tube on *PT-326* and clattered to the deck, a defective "hot run." The blazing fish provided the Japanese with a target, and the Japanese hurled 5-inch shells at the PT boats. Shrapnel injured one man before the burning torpedo could be rolled overboard.

The Japanese ships continued to withdraw, now hooking up with the *Abukuma*, which had repaired its damage and was ready to attack. Shima declined the offer but was happy to add another escort to his damaged force.

By 5:20 AM, *Louisville* was eight miles west of Esconchada Point, where *Nachi* and *Mogami* had collided an hour earlier. Oldendorf studied the scene through his binoculars and told his column to turn right and prepare to shell the fleeing Japanese with full broadsides. The open fire gongs rang at 5:29, and the Americans hurled more shells at the *Mogami*, scoring several direct hits. Yet the cruiser survived this latest bombardment, cranking up to 14 knots.

Other American shells rained down from *Minneapolis* on *Asagumo*, starting a fire, holing her oil tanks. Barely able to make seven knots, the destroyer was on fire, spreading and menacing its torpedoes. At 6 AM, *Asagumo*'s skipper, Commander Kazuo Shibayama, ordered his men to abandon ship.

Worried about Japanese torpedoes, Oldendorf ceased fire at 5:39 AM and swung back north. Now the American destroyers began nosing into the wreckage in the growing dawn to pursue survivors of the two battleships and two destroyers sunk in Surigao Strait. Oldendorf ordered his ships, "Do not overload your ships with survivors. Search each man well to see that he does not have any weapons. Anyone offering resistance—shoot him. Proceed independently to pick up survivors."



ABOVE: The victim of multiple Japanese torpedo hits at Pearl Harbor, the battleship USS *West Virginia* was raised from the bottom of the harbor and repaired to fight again. In this photo, *West Virginia* is illuminated as her guns take a toll on the Japanese during the Battle of Surigao Strait three years after Pearl Harbor. **OPPOSITE:** A U.S. PT Boat picks up Japanese survivors, clinging to debris in the water in Surigao Strait. The Navy seaman were warned to carefully search each prisoner to be sure they had no weapons.

By now Shima's weary collection of ships was heading out of Surigao Strait into the Mindanao Sea, enduring further brushes with PT boats. First up was *PT-491*, which charged *Mogami*, firing torpedoes. *Mogami* hit back with 8-inch shells, and *PT-491* retreated.

Back in Surigao Strait, American destroyers slowly steamed into debris-strewn waters filled with Japanese survivors who refused American entreaties to surrender. Other ships pursued the crippled *Asagumo*, whose bows had been torn open. *PT-323* hurled a torpedo into the immobile tin can, throwing men on her weather decks into the water. Hearing word of this target, Oldendorf sent in the cruisers *Denver* and *Columbia* and six destroyers to polish off *Asagumo*.

Oldendorf was beginning to receive frantic messages from his bosses at 7th Fleet—Kurita's battleships had steamed through the unguarded San Bernardino Strait and were bearing down on the poorly defended escort carriers off Samar. The fox was among the chickens, and Oldendorf had to steam to the rescue, despite his shortages of ammunition. Nishimura had succeeded in one thing—drawing off Kinkaid's heavy warships to expend ammunition and energy against the attack from the south instead of Kurita's thrust from the north.

Meanwhile, Shima's retreating ships, heading home in the early morning, awaited the one certainty of the day—American air attack. Shima radioed for fighter cover but instead received an attack of nine Grumman TBF Avenger torpedo bombers and four Grumman F6F Hellcat fighters from the escort carrier USS *Santee* and two Avengers and six Hellcats from USS *Sangamon*, launched at 5:45 AM. They pounced on Shima's battered vessels and incorrectly reported them as two battleships. That happened often. Japanese heavy cruisers had massive superstructures and looked like battleships to airmen. The Americans swooped in to attack. Strafing killed nine and wounded 25 on *Shiranuhi*, and the luckless *Mogami* took yet another torpedo hit.

Ten Avengers and five Grumman FM-2 Wildcats from USS *Ommaney Bay*'s VC-75 came next, storming down on the smoking *Mogami*, scoring two more hits, starting fires, and bringing the ship to a halt. The destroyer *Akebono* sprayed hoses on the cruiser. Everyone but the antiaircraft crews fought the fires.

The American bombs smashed into the cruiser's oil tanks, setting them ablaze. Gun- nery officer and acting commander Arai ordered the three forward 8-inch magazines flooded to prevent an explosion. But the warped bulkheads meant that the valves for the

No. 1 gun room would not open. The cruiser was blazing and could sink at any moment.

In tears, Arai ordered his men to abandon ship at 10:30 AM. With her davits broken, *Mogami* could not use her cutter, so *Akebono* closed *Mogami*'s port quarter to take aboard the cruiser's crew.

At 9:33 AM, Shima faced his last attack of the day: 13 Curtiss SB2C Helldiver dive bombers, which strafed the Japanese ships, punching holes in the destroyer *Ushio*.

On *Mogami*, the exhausted crew mustered topside on weather decks to abandon ship after three hours of desperate fire fighting, shuffling aboard *Akebono*. At 12:56, *Akebono* fired a Long Lance into *Mogami*'s port side, and the cruiser began to sink, her demise hastened by an explosion in No. 1 magazine. At 1:07, as her crew stood by on *Akebono* watching and crying, *Mogami* slipped beneath the waves. All but 20 officers, 171 enlisted men, and one civilian of *Mogami*'s 850-man crew were saved by *Akebono*.

At 1:33, Shima got more bad news—a message from Kurita that the main force was canceling its planned attack on the Leyte anchorage and was retreating, having failed in its mission. Shima's reaction is unrecorded, but he continued his retreat.

Shigure headed for Brunei and ultimate safety in Japan. But when *Shigure* tied up at Sasebo on November 14, her skipper, Nishino, faced relief of command at the end of the month, accused of lack of aggressiveness in Surigao Strait.

The fallout continued. *Abukuma* was caught

a day later, on October 26, by U.S. Army Air Forces Consolidated B-24 Liberators of the 33rd Squadron, which hammered her. Japanese antiaircraft gunners knocked down three B-24s, but flames spread across *Abukuma*'s decks, igniting torpedoes. Her skipper, Captain Takuo Hanada, ordered the ship abandoned. He and 25 officers and 257 enlisted men of her 438-man crew survived.

What had happened was simple enough. Nishimura and Shima had steamed into a gauntlet of gunfire and had been defeated in one of the most one-sided naval actions in history. The Japanese could not count their dead, but they numbered in the thousands, including Nishimura. Two battleships, a heavy cruiser, and three destroyers were lost in the action, and the light cruiser *Abukuma* was lost shortly after. The Americans lost exactly 39 killed and 114 wounded, most of them on *Albert W. Grant* due to friendly fire, and a single PT boat.

More importantly, the southern portion of the Japanese plan to smash the American invasion fleet with a double pincer movement had failed completely. The northern pincer nearly defeated a much weaker American force off Samar, mostly due to Vice Admiral Halsey's controversial decision to leave the San Bernardino Strait unguarded. But Oldendorf's cool, meticulous planning and courageous men had crushed the southern pincer.

Why the Japanese attack failed was even easier to answer. The Japanese underestimated American power and resilience, as they had all

Continued on page 75



National Archives



Shivering and stamping their feet in the snow, three American soldiers warmed their hands over a small fire at an observation post. They were weary, dirty, and hungry, and a long way from home.

Three other GIs shuffled along to relieve them after a while, and one said, “Merry Christmas.” The first three looked up in surprise, and one of them replied slowly, “We thought tomorrow was Christmas.”

The soldiers were helping to guard the perimeter defense line around the town of Bastogne in

southeastern Belgium, not far from the Luxembourg border. They were surrounded by German forces, and there was not much Christmas cheer to go around that cold, snow-covered, fog-shrouded December more than 60 years ago.

Yet, although they did not know it at the time, those GIs of the 101st Airborne “Screaming Eagle” Division were writing a glorious chapter in the history of their army. The name of Bastogne would be stitched proudly on American battle flags alongside Valley Forge, Gettysburg, San Juan Hill, Chateau Thierry, the Marne,

Bataan, St. Lo, Remagen, and Pork Chop Hill.

Christmas 1944 found the Screaming Eagles, veterans of Normandy and Holland, and Combat Command B of the 10th Armored Division defending besieged Bastogne while the Battle of the Bulge—Adolf Hitler’s last desperate counter-offensive of World War II—swirled around them. It was the first major battle fought by American soldiers in winter, and the one in which they suffered the greatest number of casualties: 76,890 killed, wounded, and missing.

Bastogne, an upland town 43 miles south of



The soldiers of the U.S. 101st Airborne Division and a complement of other troops held the key crossroads town during the Battle of the Bulge.

Bravery in Embattled Bastogne

BY MICHAEL D. HULL

Liège in the Ardennes Forest region, was the junction of a railroad and seven highways lacing Belgium and Luxembourg. It lay on the center line of the German advance and was a vital strategic objective. Its 10,000 American defenders, outnumbered four to one, held firm. They groused because the enemy breakthrough had deprived them of anticipated furloughs in Paris, but they sang carols and put up makeshift Christmas trees as enemy artillery hammered away and bombs fell.

The first snow had fallen in the Ardennes For-



LEFT: This haunting image of a snow-covered Bastogne was painted by a U.S. Army artist about the time of the siege in December 1944. U.S. forces refused to evacuate the Belgian crossroads town and stood against repeated German attacks.

OPPOSITE: U.S. Army tanks and vehicles take cover in a Belgian town during the German winter offensive that precipitated the Battle of the Bulge. The Germans overran a number of hamlets in France, Belgium, and Luxembourg but were unable to reach the River Meuse and the strategically vital Belgian port city of Antwerp, which lay beyond.



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est on December 9. Before dawn on Saturday, December 16, 1944, German guns blasted a thinly-held 100-mile front of Lt. Gen. Omar N. Bradley's U.S. First Army. The "ghost front," so called because it had been the quiet sector of the Allied line, was manned by four U.S. infantry divisions—the green 99th and 106th, and the 4th and 28th, which were resting after being mauled in the recent Hürtgen Forest campaign. Three panzer armies—13 infantry divisions and seven panzer divisions—crashed through the American lines. Hitler's objective was to split the British-Canadian and American Armies, reach the River Meuse, and capture the strategic port of Antwerp in Belgium.

The German breakthrough caught everyone off balance, from the front-line GIs all the way up to General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the supreme Allied commander. Confusion and inertia gripped Eisenhower's headquarters for several critical hours, and some senior officers believed that the enemy thrust was merely a spoiling attack. But two of Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt's panzer divisions had cracked wide open Maj. Gen. Troy Middleton's VIII Corps, and panic was widespread in the field as the German columns thundered westward through Belgium. Allied communications were chaotic, and no one in the outposts or headquarters map rooms was sure of what was happening.

As the panzers and seasoned German infantry punched through the American lines, many GIs threw away their rifles and ran in terror. Large quantities of equipment, heavy

weapons, ammunition, and vehicles in good running order were abandoned. Roadsides in the Ardennes were littered with discarded trucks, jeeps, halftracks, and gun carriages. One advancing American tank column was forced to churn across mud and snow covered fields because the nearest available road was choked with fleeing soldiers.

In the Schnee Eifel sector, two regiments of the U.S. 106th Infantry Division, between 8,000 and 9,000 men, surrendered to two divisions of the German 66th Corps. The Army official history called it "the most serious reverse suffered by American arms during the operations of 1944-1945 in the European theater."

But other U.S. units, both seasoned and green, stood and fought valiantly as powerful German Panther and Tiger tanks, followed by infantry, loomed out of the fog and snow. In some locations, small pockets of American resistance, two or three GIs with a machine gun or bazooka and a minimum of rounds, defended a bridge or crossroads and helped to upset the enemy timetable for a few hours. Many Americans died, and their gallantry will never be known.

On a slope overlooking a strategic crossroads at the Belgian village of Lanzerath, a platoon of the untested U.S. 99th Infantry Division led by Lieutenant Lyle J. Bouck halted a column of panzers, paratroopers, and Waffen SS soldiers for 18 critical hours. The Americans fought until their machine guns and carbines burned up or ran out of ammunition. When the Germans at last overran their posi-

tion, the stubborn GIs were pulled bodily from their foxholes. Only two Americans were killed in the encounter, but many were badly wounded. The enemy toll was 509 casualties. "We never surrendered," Bouck reported proudly. "We were captured."

At another important road junction, St. Vith, troops of the 7th Armored Division under Brig. Gen. Bruce C. Clarke held firm for a week before withdrawing just as the last escape route was closing. And other U.S. units resisted gallantly at Berg, Butgenbach, Spa, Trois Ponts, Stoumont, Stavelot, Houffalize, and Elsenborn Ridge, where troops of Maj. Gen. Leonard Gerow's Fifth Corps resisted repeated attacks by four Nazi divisions.

Yet, despite the gallant delaying actions fought by U.S. troops at many locations in the Bulge, the Germans had penetrated to 60 miles west of Celles, Belgium, by December 19. At high tide, the enemy columns reached within a few miles of the strategic River Meuse, and, without knowing it, passed within a quarter-mile of the First Army's main supply depot at Spa, Belgium.

General Bradley was slow to grasp the gravity of the situation. "Pardon my French," he muttered in his Luxembourg war room, "but where in hell has this son of a bitch gotten all his strength?" Field intelligence and aerial reconnaissance reports of an ominous German buildup in the Schnee Eifel a few miles east of the Ardennes had been disregarded because the Allied high command believed the German Army no longer capable of a major offensive. Enemy security precautions for the counter-offensive had been watertight.

Even the usually astute General Bernard L. Montgomery, commander of the British 21st Army Group, had summarized on the very morning of December 16, "The enemy is at present fighting a defensive campaign on all fronts; his situation is such that he cannot stage major offensive operations."

It was not until the evening of December 17 that General Eisenhower took a more realistic view and ordered the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, the only two units readily available, to shore up the faltering American formations in the Bulge as a stopgap measure. The two divisions were still refitting and resting after their battering in the ill-fated Operation Market-Garden, the airborne invasion of Holland, that September. Meanwhile, Eisenhower ordered General Montgomery to take over command of U.S. forces on the northern flank of the Bulge. One of the first Allied commanders to realize the gravity of the German breakthrough, Monty ordered British Army units to

hasten to the strategic River Meuse and defend its crossings.

In France, trucks and semi-trailers of the Army Transportation Corps' famed Red Ball Express were swiftly marshaled, and the American paratroopers were rushed into action on December 17-18. The 82nd Airborne was trucked to the Werbomont area on the northern flank of the Bulge, while the 101st Airborne raced in a serpentine convoy for 300 miles from its rest area at Mourmelon-le-Grand near Reims, France, to Bastogne. The Screaming Eagles rolled into the Bastogne area to join Combat Command B of the 10th Armored Division none too soon. The Germans were closing in, and the strategic town was soon to be under siege.

The men of the 101st Airborne hastily dug in and set up a defense perimeter, led by Brig. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe, a peppery but genial artilleryman and 1918 graduate of West Point. Nicknamed "Old Crock" by his men, McAuliffe was the division artillery commander now serving as temporary divisional leader in the absence of handsome, scholarly Maj. Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, who was in Washington, D.C.

Bastogne was soon pressed by the 2nd Panzer, Panzer Lehr, and 26th Volksgrenadier Divisions led by General Heinrich von Luttwitz. The town was isolated on December 20, but the Screaming Eagles held firm stubbornly and the panzers were eventually forced to swing past them in their westward advance. The timetable of the enemy counteroffensive was being disrupted.

Although the Allies had aerial superiority, low clouds and fog hampered support operations. Shelled, mortared, and sporadically bombed, Bastogne was now surrounded. When an aerial observer asked a radio operator in the town what the situation was, the operator replied wryly, "Picture us as the hole in the doughnut." The outlook grew increasingly dismal for the besieged paratroopers as ammunition, rations, and medical supplies soon ran short. In makeshift first aid stations set up in cellars and churches, Belgian nurses, housewives, and priests tended to wounded soldiers as best they could, but when the blood plasma and medicine ran out, all they could offer to ease the soldiers' suffering was cognac.

Day after day, the hungry and weary GIs heard the drone of high flying Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress and Consolidated B-24 Liberator heavy bomber formations on their way to targets in Germany, but when they looked up for a glimpse of lower-flying C-47 transports bringing supplies, there were none.

At noon on December 22, two German officers were sent by General Luttwitz under a white flag to seek "the honorable surrender of the encircled town." In his basement command center on the northern edge of Bastogne, General McAuliffe faced a military and moral dilemma. He agonized over the fact that his men and Belgian civilians were being killed and wounded every day, but McAuliffe, a decorated veteran of Normandy, was not about to surrender.

McAuliffe's immediate reaction to the enemy demand was to scrawl the word "Nuts!" on a scrap of paper and hand it to a junior officer to turn over to the German emissaries. They said

they did not understand the word, and asked, "Is your commander's reply affirmative or negative?" McAuliffe's aide said, "My commander's reply is 'Nuts.' It means 'Go to hell.' You understand that, don't you?" Some observers in McAuliffe's command center at the time believed that he used more profane language, but, in any case, "Nuts!" went down in the history books as one of the most famous utterances of the war.

McAuliffe reported later, "They said they'd give me two hours to decide, and if we didn't [surrender], they would destroy the town and all the people in it."



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ABOVE: German Panther tanks roll along an unpaved road that has been hardened by freezing winter temperatures during the Battle of the Bulge. **BELOW:** Weary troopers of the 101st Airborne Division march in two columns along a road on the outskirts of the Belgian crossroads town. The heroism of the 101st and other American troops at Bastogne stemmed the German tide during the Battle of the Bulge. **OPPOSITE:** Much of the civilian population of Bastogne left the town with the approach of battle. Here, some of the townspeople, now refugees, seek safety. American troops have halted along the street, where no snow has fallen as of the date of this image.



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His snappy one-word reply lifted the spirits of the “Battered Bastards of the Bastion of Bastogne,” but a bleak Christmas was approaching for both them and the people of the town. Some of the American officers observed a singular mood of detachment from reality spreading through the ranks. As daylight faded on Christmas Eve, many GIs clambered out of their foxholes and mortar pits to shake hands with each other feelingly.

That evening, a tired, strained General McAuliffe radioed General Middleton at his Neufchateau headquarters. “The finest Christmas present the 101st could get,” said McAuliffe somberly, “would be a relief tomorrow.” Middleton replied just as grimly, “I know, boy,

I know.” McAuliffe also radioed the headquarters of Maj. Gen. Hugh J. Gaffey’s 4th Armored Division. “There is only one more shopping day before Christmas,” said McAuliffe.

For several days, Sherman tanks, tank destroyers, and halftracks of the 4th Armored Division had been struggling from the south to break through to Bastogne. After an urgent plea from Eisenhower for help in blunting the German counter-offensive, General George S. Patton, Jr., commander of the Third Army, had responded swiftly by directing three of his divisions in eastern France to make a 90-degree turn and highball north to the left flank of the Bulge that stretched from Echternach in Luxembourg to Bastogne. It was a logistical nightmare, but

one of the speediest and most brilliant maneuvers of the war. It astounded the Germans.

The 4th Armored had to march 151 miles from Fenetrage in French Lorraine to Vauxles-Rosieres in Belgium, and it covered the distance in an incredible 19 hours. However, a few miles southwest of Bastogne the division was held up by snow, fog, ice and cratered roads, and a blown bridge. The tankers, many of them suffering from frostbite, had to battle teller mines and the crack German 5th Parachute Division.

Meanwhile, in Bastogne on that moonlit bitterly cold Christmas Eve, the 3,500 civilians trapped in the besieged town tried to keep themselves warm in their cellars and church crypts for another night. Many of them huddled on the damp floors of the cellar in Abbé Jean-Baptiste Musty’s great seminary. Shivering and infested by lice, the men, women, and children lay on filthy mattresses. By flickering candlelight, the sisters of the seminary clinic circulated to comfort the old and young.

Headquarters personnel of the 101st Airborne Division gathered in the mess hall for their sundown meal, quieter and more thoughtful than usual. Roman Catholic soldiers spread the word that Mass would be celebrated at 7 PM, and when the time neared, 100 or more men entered a large room that had been converted into a chapel. Candles on the makeshift altar furnished light, and tapers burned in tin fixtures along the bare walls.

A young Army chaplain in vestments celebrated the Mass, assisted by enlisted men. The worshippers sang Christmas carols to the accompaniment of a little field organ. In a brief homily, the chaplain remarked on the sacrifices that were required in Bastogne that Christmas and called for trust in God. “Do not plan,” he counseled, “for God’s plan will prevail.”

Meanwhile, in the transept of the vaulted chapel in Abbé Musty’s seminary, officers and GIs sang carols while wounded men, lying on stretchers on the stone floors, listened, their eyes glistening. Bright moonlight filtered through broken stained glass windows, and snow sifted from cracks in the roof as voices chorused “O Little Town of Bethlehem.”

There was a pause, and then the soldiers began singing Silent Night. The wounded, covering the entire floor, joined in. This Mass was interrupted by a loud explosion in another part of the town, but then the singing of carols continued. There were other religious services that night in Bastogne as soldiers tried to drown out the rumble of artillery and mortar fire with thoughts of home more than 3,000 miles away. Men of the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment



ABOVE: German soldiers hurriedly go through equipment and war matériel left behind by American troops who have recently abandoned their camp. Hitler’s plan for the Ardennes Offensive included the use of captured American fuel; however, precious little American gasoline was found. **BELOW:** Their rifles slung over their shoulders, three men of the 101st Airborne Division walk down a rubble-strewn Bastogne street past the bodies of fellow soldiers killed by German bombing the previous night. This photograph was taken on Christmas Day, 1944, and the beleaguered defenders of the town were relieved the following day.



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gathered to pray in the 10th century chapel of the Rolle Chateau, their command post, while General McAuliffe joined the men of one of his field artillery battalions for a midnight Mass on the snowy outskirts of the town.

Meanwhile, Lt. Col. Harry W.O. Kinnard, the divisional operations officer, drafted a Christmas Day greeting to the troops from the commanding general. He wrote, "What's merry about all this? You ask. We're fighting—it's cold—we aren't home. All true, but ... we have stopped cold everything that has been thrown at us from the north, east, southwest.... We continue to hold Bastogne. By holding Bastogne, we assure the success of the Allied armies. We are giving our country and our loved ones at home a worthy Christmas present, and, being privileged to take part in this gallant feat of arms, are truly making for ourselves a Merry Christmas."

The relative quiet of that poignant Christmas Eve was shattered when German bombs crashed down on Bastogne, inflicting severe casualties. One bomb struck the medical aid station of Colonel William Roberts's Combat Command B of the 10th Armored Division, burying 20 patients in the debris. Among the dead was Nurse Renée Lemaître, the daughter

"A clear, cold Christmas, lovely weather for killing Germans, which seems a bit queer, seeing whose birthday it is."

—General George S. Patton, Jr.



ABOVE: Manning a lonely outpost along a road leading into Bastogne, soldiers of the U.S. 101st Airborne Division point their bazooka in the direction of an expected German attack. LEFT: On the day after Christmas, 1944, Douglas C-47 transport aircraft drop provisions to American troops occupying Bastogne.



of a hardware merchant, who was pinned beneath a fallen timber. She had been tending the wounded. It was the worst bombing the town had endured, and dozens of buildings burned. Army ambulances roared through the dark and shambled streets, and volunteers dug frantically for survivors in the rubble.

The Battle of Bastogne was nearing its climax, and the defenders knew that their time was running out if they did not soon receive relief or air-dropped supplies. A brief break in

the miserable weather on December 23 had enabled the dropping of some supplies in the Bulge, but it was not enough.

It was a troubled Christmas Eve in Bastogne. Around 2:30 AM, an all-out German artillery and mortar barrage fell upon the Americans' northwest perimeter, and 18 tanks and two infantry battalions burst through. The defenses were breached in two places, but the penetrations were contained by McAuliffe's skillfully deployed reserves. The 327th Glider Infantry Regiment was committed along its front, and tank destroyers and field guns opened up on the enemy. Every man who could carry a rifle was rounded up in the town and rushed to the defensive posts—company clerks, cooks, radiomen, engineers, walking wounded, and even chaplains. It was the closest call yet for the defenders of Bastogne, but the Germans were driven back.

Meanwhile, the lead elements of the 4th Armored Division were stalled five miles to the south because of heavy resistance, and General

Patton, the architect of the relief effort, was chafing at the delay. He had ordered Monsignor James H. O'Neill, the chief Third Army chaplain, to publish a prayer calling for good weather. "See if we can't get God to work on our side," said the profane yet religious Patton.

On Christmas morning, he got what he wanted. Patton rose and approved of what he saw, confiding in his diary: "A clear, cold Christmas, lovely weather for killing Germans, which seems a bit queer, seeing whose birthday it is."

Finally, at 3 PM on the following day, December 26, 1944, thunder filled the air over the Bastogne area as formations of C-47s began dropping much needed supplies. Cheering GIs watched the parachutes blossoming down and raced to retrieve the containers of ammunition, rations, and medicine. Spirits rose in Bastogne.

At the same time, south of the village of Assenois on the road to Bastogne, Lt. Col. Creighton W. Abrams, Jr., commander of the

Continued on page 78



ICY PBY RETRIEVAL

U.S. NAVY GROUND CREWMEN IN ALASKA BRAVED ICE-FILLED WATERS FOR A ROUTINE EXTRACTION.

BY KEVIN HYMEL

Difficult tasks were typical in the military during World War II. On a sunless December day in 1942, a Navy ground crew of Alaska's Kodiak Naval Operating Base waded into the icy water of Woman's Bay to retrieve a waterborne Consolidated PBY-5 Catalina flying boat. Clad in heavy dry suits, May West life jackets, and black-watch caps, they hauled two towlines toward the approaching plane. Onboard, the pilot cut the engines while the waist gunners popped out of their machine-gun blisters to watch the process, careful not to touch the freezing water.

Chest-deep in the ice-filled bay, the men turned

the plane around and attached a towline to the tail section. With the plane secure, they hooked double-wheeled landing gear beneath the tail section, preventing it from scraping bottom before the main wheels touched ground. Finally, the men steadied the plane by hooking a winch device to the left wing. Now the plane could be towed inland and the plane's crew could step foot on dry ground.

The whole process was over in minutes. It made no headlines, there was no glory, maybe just a hot cup of coffee for the cold men. It was just another day in the service for the U.S. Navy ground crew. They would repeat it the next time a float plane splashed into the harbor. ■



CLOCKWISE STARTING BELOW:
Naval ground crewmen stand ready to grapple onto the approaching PB4Y-5.

Waist-high and chest-high in the icy brine, the ground crew prepares to turn the PB4Y-5 to attach a tow line to its tail section. Both the pilot and airman look on.

As the airmen step out of their waist gun blisters, the ground crew attach a pulley system to the plane's left wing strut.

With the PB4Y-5 completely turned around and a towline attached, the ground crew attaches a double-wheel to the back of the plane to make extraction easier.

The ultimate wingman. One of the PB4Y-5's waist gunners patiently waits for his PB4Y-5 to reach ground so he can dismount.

The crewmen steady the PB4Y-5 as they advance a towline. One of the plane's airmen perches atop the right wing.



As the landing craft carrying the invading Allied ground forces of Operation Overlord motored toward the Normandy beaches on June 6, 1944, they were protected and supported by the largest aerial armada the world has ever seen. In spite of medium-level clouds, a covering umbrella of American and British fighters kept the skies clear of German fighters.

Squadrons of Douglas A-20 Havoc light bombers and fighter bombers came in low over the beaches to bomb and strafe German positions and gun emplacements on the shore. Large formations of Martin B-26 Marauder medium bombers dumped their bomb loads on German gun positions a few minutes before H-Hour. A stream of glider-towing transports passed over the ships that had brought the troops across the English Channel.

Earlier that morning those same transports delivered loads of American and British paratroopers onto the drop zones around the town of St.-Mere-Église. The American light and medium bombers, fighter bombers, and transports were all from Lt. Gen. Lewis H. Brereton's United States Ninth Air Force.


Along with the British Second Tactical Air Force, the Ninth Air Force was formed specifically to support the ground forces whose lot was to fight in Western Europe. The D-Day landings commenced the final and best-known period of Ninth Air Force's wartime service, but by June 6, 1944, it had been in combat almost two years and was in the second phase of its colorful history.

Furthermore, the Ninth Air Force of Normandy and Western Europe took an entirely different role than it played in 1942 and 1943, when it was a multifunction U.S. Army air force assigned to support British forces and conduct strategic bombing operations in the Middle East.

The creation of the unit that came to be known as the Ninth Air Force occurred in a somewhat roundabout manner, primarily as a result of Allied reactions to enemy activity in different parts of the globe. In early 1942, the Allied Combined Chiefs of Staff decided to consider the Far East and Middle East as interdependent areas of operation, with resources to be allocated according to the military situation at the time. The air routes that had been established from the United States and Europe to the Far East passed through the Middle East, so it was logical to consider the two areas together when it came to reinforcement in time of emergency.

Aircraft and combat units from either area of operation could be rushed to the other, considering that they were on opposite sides of the vast Asian continent. Consequently, when the Japanese gained the advantage in Burma and China in the wake of the Doolittle Raid on Tokyo, thus ruling out planned heavy bomber operations against Japan, the U.S. War Department decided to halt some of the combat units that had been destined for China in the Middle East to meet an emerging threat. The British Eighth Army was battling the Afrika Korps. The decision was prompted at least in part by German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's new offensive in Libya and western Egypt and the resulting threat to Cairo and Palestine.

The first American air unit to serve in the Middle East was a special project under the command of Colonel Harry Halverson known as the Halverson Project, HALPRO for short. HALPRO was made up of a squadron of Consolidated B-24D Liberator bombers whose original mission had been to serve as the nucleus of a heavy bomber force based in China to begin a strategic bombing campaign against the Japanese mainland. Another force under



THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE NINTH AIR FORCE BROUGHT THE CONCEPT OF TACTICAL AIR SUPPORT INTO ACTION FOR THE ALLIES.

By Sam McGowan

TACTICAL thunder



In this painting by artist Robert Taylor, a flight of razorback Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighter bombers heads back to base after sowing destruction at a targeted German airfield in Normandy during the summer of 1944. These planes of the Ninth Air Force earned a deadly reputation in Western Europe, striking fear into the Germans and, in many cases, causing them to limit troop and armor movements to nocturnal hours.

Robert Taylor - 53 -

the command of Colonel Caleb Haynes, known as AQUILA, had already arrived in India with a handful of Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bombers and Douglas C-47 Skytrain transports with the same purpose in mind.

These two forces were to combine and launch attacks on Japan. Before the heavy bombers arrived, President Franklin Roosevelt authorized a daring attack on Japan by Army B-25 Mitchell medium bombers launched from the aircraft carrier USS *Hornet*. Although news of the raid was seen as a means of raising American morale, it was a disaster for the Chinese as Japanese troops invaded all areas from which future air attacks against Japan could be launched, killing more than 250,000 Chinese civilians in the process. Japanese troops took control of the regions where the bomber bases were under construction, leaving the B-17s and B-24s without an Asian mission. The HALPRO force was halted in the Middle East and the AQUILA B-17s were ultimately ordered to Palestine as well.

The commander of the new Middle Eastern Air Force was Maj. Gen. Lewis H. Brereton, who came to the assignment in a manner even more roundabout than the creation of his new command. Brereton, who was one of the highest ranking officers in the Air Corps before the war, was in the Philippines on December 8, 1941, where he had just assumed command of

the Far East Air Forces. Two weeks later, President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill agreed to abandon the Philippines to their fate, and Brereton and his headquarters were ordered to Australia to organize an Allied air effort against the Japanese.

Brereton was only in Australia for a little over two months; in March 1942 he transferred to India to organize and take command of the Tenth Air Force, a new organization planned for operations in the China-Burma-India Theater. Brereton's stay in India was also short lived. In June he was ordered to Cairo to take command of American air operations in the Middle East. He was also ordered to take any available bombers and all of the transports in India with him. The B-17s of the 9th Bombardment Squadron, the former AQUILA project, were part of the move.

In 1941, after an inspection trip of British air forces in the region, Maj. Gen. George Brett recommended the long-range B-24 Liberator as the ideal heavy bomber for the Middle East, and deliveries of the four-engine bombers to the Royal Air Force soon commenced. By mid-1942, when the first American air units arrived, one squadron of Royal Air Force Liberators was operational in Palestine. When America entered the war, the British immediately requested the assignment of American heavy bombers to the Middle East, but the air staff

balked, reasoning that any bombers sent there would take away from the planned buildup of a heavy bomber force in Britain.

The changing military situation in Libya and Egypt led to a change of heart; the War Department decided to establish an air force in the Middle East with one heavy bomber group, two of medium bombers, and six pursuit groups. Brereton's new command was initially organized as the Middle Eastern Air Force, but plans were laid for it to become the Ninth Air Force once all of the necessary units had reached the theater.

As the situation in China deteriorated, ruining American plans for an air offensive against Japan from Chinese bases, Army Air Forces commander General Henry "Hap" Arnold obtained permission from President Roosevelt to halt the secret HALPRO force in the Middle East. Arnold planned to use the B-24s for a strike on the oil refinery complex at Ploesti, Romania, which was the largest single source of all German gasoline and oil supplies and one of the most important targets in the ETO.

The mission against Ploesti was flown on the night of June 12, 1942, with negligible results, but it did have the distinction of being the first American bombing mission of the war with strategic objectives. Ninth Air Force would be going back to Ploesti. After the first Ploesti mission, HALPRO remained at Lydda, Palestine, as the HAL Squadron for operations in support of the British Eighth Army against Rommel's Afrika Korps. Its B-24s and the 9th Bombardment Squadron's B-17s formed the nucleus of what would become the IX Bomber Command. On July 20, the two squadrons were organized into the 1st Provisional Group (Bombardment). The combined strength of the HAL and 9th Squadrons amounted to only 28 heavy bombers—19 B-24s and nine B-17s. Although the number of Liberators would increase, B-17 strength remained at less than a dozen airplanes.

The American bombers joined with RAF Liberators in attacks on Axis shipping in the Mediterranean and targets in North Africa and along the Mediterranean shore. Although the American and British Liberators struck targets as far west as Benghazi, Libya, the B-17s' limited range restricted them to missions no farther than Tobruk.

Reinforcements for the Middle Eastern Air Force came in late July, when the 344th Bombardment Squadron arrived as the advance element of the 98th Bombardment Group, which was on its way to Palestine from Florida. The 98th Group headquarters arrived by ship in mid-August along with personnel of the 57th Fighter Group, equipped with Curtiss P-40

WITHOUT THEIR OWN FIGHTER ESCORTS THE MIDDLE EASTERN AIR FORCE HEAVY BOMBERS WERE FORCED TO DEPEND ON THE RAF FOR ESCORT, OR TO GO IT ALONE, TO THEIR TARGETS.



A pair of Curtiss P-40 Warhawk fighters takes off from an airfield in Egypt to strafe Axis troop and supply columns in the North African desert. These aircraft are part of the U.S. Middle East Air Force, and the photo was taken in July 1942.

National Archives

Tomahawk fighters and the first American fighter group assigned to the Middle East.

Meanwhile, a group of medium bombers, B-25s of the 12th Bombardment Group, crossed the South Atlantic, then flew up through Central Africa to its new base in Egypt. Both the 12th Bombardment Group and the 57th Fighter Group went into training with the British before entering combat in North Africa.

The original comprehensive War Department plans for air strength in the Middle East were never reached, although heavy bomber strength would increase to twice that originally planned. Political maneuvering cost the Middle Eastern Air Forces some of its projected assets when newly promoted Brig. Gen. James H. Doolittle, who enjoyed star status in Washington because of his Tokyo Raid, put pressure on Arnold to let him have the 33rd Fighter Group for his new Twelfth Air Force.

The Twelfth Air Force was being formed to support the American landings at Casablanca, and it was siphoning off assets from other organizations. There was mixed reaction in Washington to the request as most of the air staff believed air superiority over the Western Desert would be beneficial to the overall success of the Allied campaign in North Africa. The War Department chose to leave the decision up to General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was to command the invasion force. Ike naturally wanted the group under his personal command, so the 33rd went to Twelfth.

As a replacement for the 33rd and in recognition of the need for P-40s in Egypt, the War Department elected to send the 79th Fighter Group to the Middle East. Although the group arrived in October and many of its pilots flew combat missions with other organizations, the 79th did not become operational as a combat unit until the spring of 1943.

Without their own fighter escorts—the 57th Group P-40s were working with the British Western Desert Air Force—the Middle Eastern Air Force heavy bombers were forced to depend on the RAF for escort, or to go it alone to their targets. Unlike Generals Ira Eaker and Carl Spaatz, who had gone to England to organize a daylight bombing campaign, Brereton was not hamstrung with the desire to prove American theories on daylight bombing, so his bombers operated at night as well as by day.

Losses among heavy bombers operating in

the Middle East were fairly light, especially in comparison to those starting to occur among the Eighth Air Force bombers on daylight missions over Western Europe. The heavy bombers were achieving considerable success as they struck targets all along the North African coast. Several ships were hit and some were sunk, and sticks of bombs fell on warehouses adjacent to the docks at Mediterranean ports. On the night of September 22, 1943, the B-24s hit an ammunition-laden ship at Benghazi and blew it up,



U.S. Air Force



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ABOVE: This Consolidated B-24 Liberator bomber nicknamed *Jerks Natural* participated in the epic August 1, 1943, American air raid on the oil refineries at Ploesti, Romania. **LEFT:** This Curtiss P-40 shown in flight is similar to those that were deployed with the U.S. Middle East Air Force during the fighting in North Africa. Pilots learned the skills needed for effective tactical air support while flying missions in support of General Bernard Montgomery's Eighth Army and the Allied forces that landed along the coast of West Africa during Operation Torch.

causing major damage to the harbor facilities. The brunt of the task was borne by the Liberators, since the Fortresses lacked the range to reach Benghazi from their bases in Palestine. The shorter range B-17s joined British Vickers Wellington bombers and American B-25s in strikes on Tobruk.

Before American ground forces landed at Casablanca in early November, the British Eighth Army met and defeated the Afrika Korps at El Alamein in the decisive battle of the North African campaign. Prior to the battle, the RAF had more than 1,000 aircraft of all types in North Africa. U.S. Army Air Forces strength stood at 56 P-40s, 46 B-25s, and 63 heavy bombers, of which 10 were the war-weary B-17s Brereton had brought with him from India. Allied air strength outnumbered that of the Axis considerably. The Luftwaffe was tied down on the Eastern Front, where things had not gone well for the Germans since the previous winter.

El Alamein was the first significant engagement for the U.S. fighters, and the P-40 pilots of the 57th Fighter Group made a good showing. They joined with RAF P-40s in fighter bomber attacks on German positions and engaged German and Italian planes in the air.

Throughout the summer of 1942, the formal organization of the Middle Eastern Air Forces was limited. In October the IX Bomber Command was staffed, although the command itself remained in an unofficial status. Colonel Patrick

Timberlake of Brereton's staff took issue with British claims to control of the American heavy bombers, asserting that it was a violation of an agreement worked out between General Arnold and key British leaders that called for "homogeneous American formations."

While Timberlake conceded that it might be appropriate for the U.S. fighter and medium bomber groups, of which there was one of each in the Middle East at the time, to operate under British control, American heavy bombers constituted four-fifths of the heavy bomber strength in the theater. As a result of Timberlake's memo, the British agreed to the establishment of an American bomber command in Cairo, then went so far as to turn over their own Liberator squadron to its control. Timberlake was placed in command of the new IX Bomber Command.

On November 8, 1942, Lt. Gen. Frank Andrews took command of the U.S. Army Air Forces Middle East. The senior U.S. Army officer in the area, Andrews was an Air Corps offi-



Smoke billows from the Aershot rail center 30 miles north of the Belgian capital of Brussels as three Douglas A-20 Hovoc light bombers from the Ninth Air Force speed away from the scene of destruction. The raid was conducted on May 7, 1944, a month before the D-Day landings in Normandy.

cer who had his own ideas on organization of air forces, ideas that were becoming widely accepted in the overseas commands. Four days after assuming command of the theater, Andrews issued a general order establishing the Ninth United States Army Air Force with Brereton in command. On the same day, Brereton activated IX Headquarters Squadron and IX Service Command. Although it was already functioning in an unofficial status, IX Bomber Command was formally established two weeks later, on November 27.

With American troops ashore at Casablanca, the British Eighth Army began advancing westward into Libya. The IX Bomber Command moved its bases to the Nile Delta from Palestine and established forward bases just west of

Tobruk. On November 1, the 1st Provisional Group was reformed to become the 376th Bombardment Group, giving IX Bomber Command two full groups of B-24s. The remnants of the HALPRO force were reinforced and replaced by new personnel with new airplanes coming in from the United States. A single squadron of B-17s remained in the command, but their slower speed and limited range prevented them from operating effectively with the Liberators.

After the Casablanca landings, two B-17 groups left the Eighth Air Force in England and moved to North Africa to join Doolittle's Twelfth Air Force. In December the 93rd Bombardment Group, one of two B-24 groups in the Eighth Air Force, was deployed under temporary duty orders to North Africa with

three of its four squadrons to supplement XII Bomber Command. The 93rd flew a couple of missions out of Algiers, then moved to western Egypt to join IX Bomber Command, where its B-24Ds would be operating with identical types.

With the arrival of the 93rd, IX Bomber Command had control of three heavy bomber groups, a formidable force, and was able to begin mounting formations of considerable size. In return for the 93rd, the 9th Bombardment Squadron and its B-17s departed Egypt for North Africa and Twelfth Air Force, leaving the IX Bomber Command as an all B-24 force since the B-25s of the 12th Bombardment Group were still operating under British control.

Throughout December and most of January, IX Bomber Command concentrated its efforts on German targets in Tunisia. On January 2, the 12th Bombardment Group's B-25s, which had previously operated under British control, joined the B-24s in an attack on Crete. It was the first mission for the medium bombers as part of IX Bomber Command. An untimely dust storm wreaked havoc with the Mitchells—only 12 of a planned 36 were able to take off and one of those turned back without reaching the target. Eleven Mitchells bombed their target, but two were lost on the return flight. Most of the others failed to make it back to their home base because of excessive fuel consumption and had to put down on other fields.

By January two additional fighter groups had arrived in the theater, the promised 79th and the 324th. Like the 57th that preceded them, the new groups were equipped with P-40s. Ninth Air Force also had received its own troop carrier group, the 316th, which was originally intended to go to a project in the Caucasus. The fighters continued to operate with the British, while the troop carrier transports went to work hauling supplies for the fighter and bomber squadrons and supporting the British ground forces. Air evacuation of casualties was a major mission of the troop carriers.

After the capture of Tripoli, IX Bomber Command turned its attention toward targets in Europe, specifically Naples, Messina, and Palermo. The three cities were important links in the Axis supply chain to Tunisia. The B-24s were still based in the Nile Delta but staged out of a forward base at Gambut near Tobruk, where the bombers were refueled before departing for the long missions to Sicily and Italy. In late January the B-24 groups left the Nile Delta and moved the 300 miles to Gambut-Main. The 93rd Bomb Group returned to England and the Eighth Air Force, but it would soon be back.

With the Allied victory in Tunisia, the Ninth

Air Force turned toward the reduction of enemy defenses and transportation centers in preparation for the upcoming invasion of Sicily. Liberators of the IX Bomber Command joined with Twelfth Air Force B-17s in attacks on targets in Italy and airfields and other complexes in Sicily. Some of the 12th Bombardment Group's B-25s were attached to Twelfth Air Force to support the invasion.

In preparation for the landings, IX Bomber Command was reinforced with three Eighth Air Force B-24 groups: the veteran 93rd, which had served with IX Bomber Command in the winter, along with the 44th and 389th Groups. At the time, the three groups constituted all of VIII Bomber Command's Liberator strength. The new groups joined the 98th and 376th at bases in the vicinity of Benghazi, Libya, and participated in raids on targets in support of the upcoming invasion of Sicily. On July 19, IX Bomber Command's B-24s, supplemented by the Eighth Air Force groups, joined Twelfth Air Force B-17s in an attack on railroad marshaling yards around Rome.

The arrival of the additional B-24s from England had a dual purpose. Not only were they there to increase heavy bomber strength in the Mediterranean for the Sicily campaign, their presence was prompted to a large degree by the most ambitious plan of the war—a low-level attack on the Ploesti oil fields, the same target that led to the assignment of the HALPRO force to the Middle East.

On August 1, 1943, five B-24 groups departed Benghazi and set out across the Mediterranean for Ploesti. The B-24s came in over the refineries at treetop level in the face of intense enemy fire. In spite of heavy casualties, most crews managed to put their bombs into the refinery complex, although some of the groups struck targets other than the ones they had been assigned. A navigational error on the part of the lead formation caused some of the B-24s to fail to bomb their intended targets, and most of one group failed to bomb the refineries at all, causing the mission to be less of a success than planned. Less than two weeks later, the combined force of Liberators struck the aircraft factories at Wiener Neustadt, Austria.

Once Allied troops were ashore in Sicily and Italy, the Army Air Forces began a massive reorganization in preparation for the invasion of Normandy. At the Casablanca Conference in early 1943, the Allied leaders agreed to conduct a "combined bomber offensive" against Germany from British and Italian bases. The Eighth Air Force in England would be the northern arm of the American strategic bomber force,

and plans were made for the creation of a second force that would attack targets in Germany from the south.

A new headquarters derived from Headquarters, Eighth Air Force, the U.S. Strategic Air Forces, was planned to control heavy bomber operations against Germany. The success of RAF, Ninth, and Twelfth Air Force fighter bombers and light and medium bombers in support of ground forces led to the decision to also establish tactical air forces dedicated to ground support. The result was the decision to transfer Ninth Air Force to England, where it would become the American tactical air force responsible for supporting the Normandy land-

ings and subsequent ground operations in Western Europe. The RAF established a counterpart as II Tactical Air Force. In preparation for the move, the Ninth's fighter and medium bomber groups transferred to Twelfth Air Force, which had been given the same mission in the Mediterranean, and IX Bomber Command's two B-24 groups joined the B-17s from the Twelfth Air Force to form the newly established Fifteenth Air Force.

The idea for a separate tactical air force in England had been developed as early as May 1943, with initial plans for it to emanate from the VIII Support Command. The unit started appearing in planning papers as the Eighth Tac-



LEFT: A Luftwaffe pilot hits the silk as his burning plane tumbles out of control. This still image from the gun camera footage filmed by the fighter bomber of Major James Dalglish vividly illustrates the capability of Ninth Air Force planes to perform multiple combat roles. Dalglish scored this aerial victory over Belgium during the Battle of the Bulge in late 1944. **BELOW:** Ground crewmen "bomb up" and droop snoot a Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighter bomber in preparation for a raid on enemy installations in occupied France. This version of the famed Lightning is called a droop snoot because of its glass-enclosed nose and the addition of a bombardier during missions.





ABOVE: A Douglas C-47 transport aircraft of the 9th Troop Carrier Command drops vital supplies to beleaguered troops holding Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge. This photo was taken on December 23, 1944, at the height of the German effort to capture Bastogne. **RIGHT:** American soldiers near the town of Madrath, Germany, climb aboard and pose for a photo atop a German self-propelled assault gun that has fallen victim to fighter bombers of the Ninth Air Force.



tical Air Force, but plans were soon made to form an air force-level unit entirely separate from and equal to the Eighth Air Force.

On July 31, General Arnold offered command of the new unit to General Brereton since plans were already under way for Ninth Air Force assets in the Middle East and North Africa to be rolled into the Twelfth Air Force and for the heavy bombers to go to the new Fifteenth. Having served in three theaters and several major campaigns, Brereton was the most widely experienced general officer in the U.S. Army. He arrived in England on September 10, where he conferred with Lt. Gen. Ira Eaker, who at the time was the senior U.S. officer in England, then departed for the United States for a meeting with Arnold and a short leave.

Brereton was back in England by mid-October. During the various discussions, the Army Air Forces staff had decided that only the Ninth Air Force headquarters and the headquarters of the IX Bomber, Fighter and Service commands would go to England. Eighth Air Force would provide Ninth with its initial combat and service units, but the bulk of the new tac-

tical air force would come with units arriving from the United States.

On October 15, four medium bomber and two troop carrier groups transferred from the Eighth to the Ninth Air Force to become its first operational units in England. The 322nd, 323rd, 386th, and 387th Bombardment Groups were equipped with Martin B-26 medium bombers, while the troop carrier groups flew Douglas C-47s. The first fighter group to join the new Ninth Air Force was the 354th, a unit whose arrival in England was a milestone in the air war since it was equipped with North American P-51B Mustangs at a time when U.S. fighter squadrons in Europe were equipped with Lockheed P-38 Lightnings and Republic P-47 Thunderbolts.

Several VIII Fighter Command pilots, including Lt. Col. Don Blakeslee, were temporarily assigned to the 354th to train the newly arrived pilots for combat. They were so impressed with the P-51 that they mounted a campaign to have all future P-51 groups assigned to VIII Fighter Command. Their campaign was successful, and by mid-1944 most of the Eighth's fighter

groups were equipping with Mustangs, and the P-47s they had been flying were going to groups assigned to Ninth. Although initial plans called for several P-51 groups with the Ninth, only two Mustang-equipped fighter groups and a reconnaissance group were actually assigned to the Ninth Air Force. All of the other fighter groups flew P-47s, except for three groups that were equipped with P-38s.

The diversion of the P-51s to VIII Fighter Command came about because of military politics, which seemed to be prevalent in the European Theater. In late 1943, General Carl Spaatz returned to England, and in early January he took command of the U.S. Strategic Air Forces, Europe, the new command that had been created to oversee U.S. Army heavy bomber operations against Germany. As the senior Army Air Forces officer in Europe, Spaatz lost no time exerting the power of his new rank and position. He sought to exercise control over all U.S. air units in England, especially Ninth Air Force.

During the planning for the new tactical air force, Brereton and Army Air Forces planners had visualized it as an independent command apart from the strategic bomber forces since its mission was the dedicated support of the ground war. When he got wind of the plan, Spaatz became incensed. As the senior air officer in Europe, he did not wish to have another Army Air Forces command operating on what he considered to be his private turf. In a preemptive move, he wrote a strong letter to Brereton making it clear that he was going to control the Ninth Air Force and, furthermore, that he would be the link in the chain of command between the Ninth Air Force and Headquarters, U.S. Army Air Forces in Washington.

Brereton and his staff were already inclined to believe that Spaatz was discriminating against them in favor of the Eighth Air Force. Spaatz outranked Brereton, both in military rank and command authority, so the Ninth Air Force commander was in no position to dispute the senior commander's authority. Several senior officers in Washington felt that it was a mistake for a strategic bombing organization to have control of an air force that was charged with supporting ground forces, but in the end Arnold went along with Spaatz. This arrangement was problematic, but as the D-Day landings approached Supreme Allied Commander Dwight Eisenhower temporarily solved the problem by placing all of the air units under his direct command. Eisenhower issued an order that all air operations—including heavy bombers—would be in support of the ground forces until the Normandy beachhead had been established.

Throughout the winter months of 1943-

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1944, the Ninth Air Force was augmented. The four B-26 groups of IX Bomber Command were beefed up with the addition of four more medium bomber groups of B-26s and three light bombardment groups equipped with Douglas A-20s. One of the missions of the Ninth Air Force would be to provide troop carrier support for airborne and ground forces, and the building up of IX Troop Carrier Command was a priority. The training and equipping of troop carrier groups in the United States had reached the saturation point, and it was not until a few weeks before D-Day that Troop Carrier Command reached its planned strength of 14 groups, including some 2,700 gliders. Future events revealed that this was not enough, as the demands for troop carrier aircraft by the advancing ground and air units exceeded availability.

The buildup of fighter forces went more smoothly. By May, the Ninth Air Force had received 18 fighter groups with some 1,500 aircraft assigned, including reconnaissance and night fighter squadrons. Fighter strength was divided into two tactical commands with the

bulk of the fighters assigned to the IX Tactical Air Command (TAC), while two wings with a total of seven groups were assigned to a second command designated as the XIX TAC. The XIX TAC was dedicated to the support of General George Patton's Third Army.

For the first several months of Ninth Air Force operations out of England, its fighters and bombers functioned essentially under the control of the Eighth Air Force. The first IX Bomber Command mission was to Evreux-Fauville Airfield, a Luftwaffe base some 50 miles west of Paris. Spaatz hoped that the medium bombers would divert German fighters away from B-17 and B-24 formations on their way to Germany, but the Luftwaffe left the B-26s alone and continued to hit the heavies. Ninth fighters were assigned to escort missions, a task that took them away from training for the vitally important mission of providing close air support for the ground forces once they were ashore in Normandy.

The first Ninth Air Force fighter mission was flown on December 1, 1943, when a 28-plane formation of P-51s flew a sweep over north-

eastern France. Four days later the 354th Fighter Group flew its first escort mission as it accompanied bombers to Amiens. On December 13, the new P-51s joined with P-38s from the Eighth's 55th Fighter Group escorting B-17s on a 490-mile mission to Kiel, the longest escort mission to date.

The IX Bomber Command's B-26s focused on V-weapon sites in February, and on the 8th they flew their first double mission day. As the heavy bombers went into Germany during Big Week on February 24 and 25, the B-26s struck German airfields in Holland and V-weapon sites in France. Attacks on buzz bomb launch sites continued into March, but during the middle of the month the B-26s switched to German transportation targets in preparation for the upcoming invasion.

In mid-March the IX Fighter Command began fighter bomber attacks on targets on the Continent. This was the mission for which the IX and XIX Fighter Commands had been established, and on May 20, the Ninth Air Force started referring to its groups as fighter bomber groups and squadrons instead of simply fighter groups. Fighter bombers struck railroad marshaling yards, V-weapon launch sites, airfields, railroads, bridges, and essentially any target that would reduce the Germans' ability to reinforce their units in the vicinity of the Normandy beaches. When the possibility was presented, the fighter bombers fought the Luftwaffe in the air.

The Ninth Air Force was charged with the major responsibility for covering the beaches on D-Day. While British Spitfires were assigned to provide low cover, five groups of P-47s were to maintain high cover. P-38s would operate over the ships. Two groups of IX Fighter Command P-38s were joined by four from VIII Fighter Command for the task. Two other P-38 groups and four P-47 groups were assigned to strike gun batteries just before the troops hit the beach. The 11 A-20 and B-26 groups bombed German heavy gun batteries on the beaches, then hit bunkers behind Utah Beach.

From June 6 forward, the air war became a Ninth Air Force and II Tactical Air Force show. Although the Eighth and Fifteenth Air Forces and RAF Bomber Command continued their strategic bombing campaign against German cities and industrial targets, the primary mission of the air forces was now to support the troops on the ground.

And support they did. So much so that General Patton came to think of the fighter bombers of the XIX Tactical Air Command as the protection for his flanks. Patton con-

Continued on page 76

WITHOUT THE NINTH AIR FORCE AND ITS COUNTERPART, THE BRITISH SECOND TACTICAL AIR FORCE, THE ALLIES MAY WELL HAVE LOST THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE.



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After their airfield has been cleared of snow to allow planes to take off, officers of the U.S. Ninth Air Force check the .50-caliber wing-mounted machine guns of a Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighter bomber prior to a mission against enemy targets in Germany on February 6, 1945.



Tragedy and Triumph

Felix Sparks's journey through World War II serves as inspiring subject matter.

ON JANUARY 21, 1945, LT. COL. FELIX SPARKS LOOKED OUT OVER THE ROUGH, hilly terrain of the Vosges Mountains near Reipertswiller, France. Snow was falling, obscuring the shattered trees and shell craters, slowly covering the empty clips from M1 rifles strewn among thousands of spent brass cartridge cases. For the past four days, despite his best efforts, his battalion had been destroyed in these very hills. Six hundred of his men lay dead or wounded or were marching off to POW camps in Germany.

Sparks's command, the 3rd Battalion, 157th Infantry Regiment, had enjoyed initial success in its advance just days earlier. Unfortunately, its success was not matched by the battalions on its flanks, causing the unit to become dangerously exposed and alone. Its opponents, the experienced 6th SS Mountain Division, seized the opportunity, and quickly the Americans were encircled. They fought bitterly until their ammunition was gone and the radio batteries

drained from calls for artillery support.

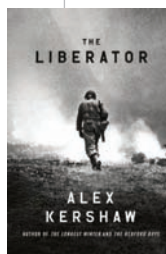
Sparks was outside the encirclement with the battalion staff and tried desper-

ately to relieve the trapped GIs, personally leading rescue attempts. During one he crossed an open field to drag some of his wounded men to safety in full view of an SS machine-gun crew. He did it with no hope of survival, but the German troops were so impressed by such an act of selfless bravery they refused to kill him. In the end, it was all for naught; Sparks's men could not break out and were forced to surrender. Years later, Sparks would lament, "My most tortured memory is of the Battle of Reipertswiller. It is still difficult for me to believe that it happened."

Life in a World War II infantry regiment was an existence of horror and bravery, loss and comradeship, sacrifice and hardship. For those who led such units, the heavy psychological burden of command weighed upon them with each order given and each consequence of those decisions. Both officers and enlisted men suffered in their own ways even as they often performed acts of astounding courage. This duality is well captured in Alex Kershaw's latest book, *The Liberator: One World War II Soldier's 500-day Odyssey from the Beaches of Sicily to the Gates of Dachau* (Crown Publishing, New York, 2012, 433 pp., maps, photographs, notes, index, \$28.00, hardcover).

The 157th Infantry was part of the 45th Infantry Division, the Thunderbirds. This division spent 511 days in combat during World War II, more than any other division. Originally a National Guard division formed by units from Oklahoma, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico, the 45th was in the heart of the fighting in Europe from July 1943 until war's end. The original men, long-serving National Guardsmen who gave the unit a distinctive western flavor heavily accented by Native Americans, gradually disappeared as the crucible of combat ground them away. Only a handful remained through the war, a lucky few who were rewarded by watching their friends die or suffer wounds, to be succeeded by replacements from across America.

As they fought their way across Sicily to Italy, then on to Southern France and into the heart of the Third Reich, Felix Sparks went with them, leading them each step of the way. Sparks entered the regiment as a new second lieutenant in 1941. By 1945, he was a 27-year-old lieutenant colonel who had survived Salerno, Anzio, Reipertswiller, and a thousand other places only to arrive at the gates of the Dachau concentration camp outside Munich. There, he and his



A soldier of the 157th Infantry advances into Aschaffenburg, Germany, moments before being hit by a sniper, March 1945.

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PHOENIX, ARIZONA —

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As a mortician, Michael Baumann, a Jew pretending to be Aryan, devised a highly unorthodox surgical procedure that converted Jews to Aryans. This helped more than 400 Jews escape from Vienna to Switzerland. With five other Jews pretending to be Aryan, an elaborate escape and spy network was created. While most of the operations were successful there were some failures. Some died so that others could live. Carefully researched, the story blends fiction with factual history incorporating actual events and people. The novel creates a realistic portrayal of Jewish life and death before and during the Nazi takeover of Austria.

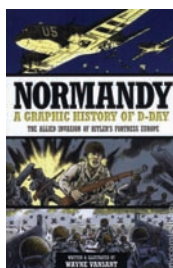
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men confronted the full horror of the Nazi regime. The 45th Division newspaper would later proclaim, "Dachau Gives Answer to Why We Fought." On April 29, 1945, Sparks and his men received a firsthand lesson, made only worse by an inquisitive reporter named Marguerite Higgins and a confrontation with a brigadier general from another division that would eventually lead to an encounter with General George S. Patton himself.

Kershaw goes on to describe how Sparks went on to a long career as a lawyer after the war. Remaining in the Colorado National Guard, he retired as a brigadier general. He was instrumental in organizing his old unit's first reunions. Even so, with all this success, memories of the war never quite went away, and the author deftly reveals war's lingering effects. The story of the 157th Infantry is expertly intertwined with that of Felix Sparks, a shared story that exemplifies the ability of soldiers to triumph under the brutal conditions of one of humanity's worst moments.



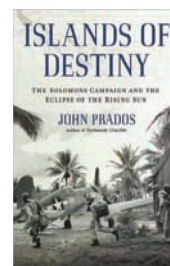
Many adults reading this magazine will recall the multitude of World War II comic books available to them as children. Titles such as *Fightin' Army*, *GI Combat*, *Sgt. Rock*, even the more arcane *Weird War Tales* regaled the young reader with stories of the war. The stories were generally fictional, set in the larger backdrop of the various theaters where American troops served. These comics entertained for decades-long runs but sadly are no more, leaving a young reader with no way to share these memories with their own families short of frequent trips to the comic book store.

Now there is a new way for adults and youths to read about history's most famous battles. Zenith Press has released a new line of graphic novels (overgrown comic books to the old-fashioned) that tell factual, not fictional, war stories. Their newest release is *Normandy: A Graphic History of D-Day* (Written/Illustrated by Wayne Vasant, Zenith Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2012, 103 pp., paperbound, \$19.99). With its broad coverage of June 6, 1944, the book is an excellent way to introduce a young reader to the real stories of sacrifice, leadership, and heroism that made up the Normandy Campaign.

Beginning with the buildup to D-Day and carrying through to the liberation of Paris, the author tells his tale through a series of vignettes highlighting the notable events of the campaign.

Chapters tell the stories of Omaha Beach, SS tank commander Michael Wittmann's Tiger rampage, hedgerow combat, and Operation Cobra, to name a few. These chapters are designed to inspire curiosity and encourage further study. The illustrations are accurate without becoming overly graphic or bloody. Both the art and writing are clear and easy to understand. A fifth- or sixth-grader should have little trouble following the narrative; anything they do not understand only provides a chance for an impromptu history lesson. Middle schoolers are perhaps the perfect audience for this book.

If one is looking for a way to spread the love of military history to a younger loved one, this series is a good start.



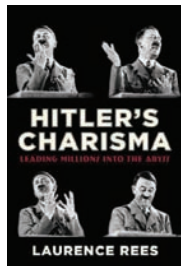
The conflict in the Pacific was a war of incredible complexity. It encompassed an area from China to the West Coast of the United States, from Australia to the Aleutian Islands. Land, sea, and air forces had to be coordinated over these vast distances and deployed in decisive situations at just the right time. That the combatants were able to do this successfully is a minor miracle. *Islands of Destiny: The Solomons Campaign and the Eclipse of the Rising Sun* (John Prados, NAL Caliber, New York, 2012, 388 pp., index, photographs, maps, \$26.95, hardcover) takes one campaign of that enormous struggle and shows how the disparate forces involved fought together in a mutually supporting effort in search of victory.

The Solomons Campaign was fought across an island chain that was remote, mostly undeveloped, and in a location critical to each side's war aims. Japanese control gave them the ability to interdict the link between the United States, Australia, and New Zealand and to threaten both of the latter with eventual attack. The Allies had to prevent this at any cost, and in mid-1942 they took steps to do so.

As the Japanese began building an airstrip on the island of Guadalcanal, the United States landed Marines to seize it. Successfully landing a force there required naval support. Navies could not act freely without air support overhead. Likewise, the Japanese response needed the same assets. Thus began a long struggle for control of the area, a battle that involved Marines and soldiers on the ground, sailors at sea, and pilots and aircrews in the skies above.

The struggle only ended after more than a

year of hand-to-hand jungle combat, dogfights in the air, torpedo and bombing runs, battle-ship duels, and tense torpedo attacks by swift destroyers. Prados begins with the immediate aftermath of the Japanese defeat during the Battle of Midway and continues to the isolation of Rabaul and the fighting around New Georgia. Along the way he weaves a narrative that ties together the many separate elements involved in this pivotal campaign.



Adolf Hitler has rightly earned his place as one of history's great villains. Volumes have been written about him in attempts to answer the many questions that arise from his reign as the leader of Nazi Germany. One such question, at once fascinating and controversial, is simply how this man swayed millions of people to follow him into one of humanity's darkest episodes. Historian and documentary filmmaker Laurence Rees adds his own assessment to this body of knowledge in *Hitler's Charisma: Leading Millions into the Abyss* (Pantheon Books, New York, 2012, 354 pp., index, photographs, maps, notes, \$30.00, Hardcover).

The book begins with a quote of Hitler's: "My whole life can be summed up as this ceaseless effort of mine to persuade other people." He was a complex character, full at once of flaws and abilities, dark ambitions paired with an inability to relate to normal people. Rees explores how Hitler was able to capitalize on the fears of the German people in their time of troubles in the late 1920s and early 1930s, how he could connect to their basic and basest needs. But there is more to Hitler than this. He also used fear, murder, torture, and coercion to get what he wanted. Not all who joined his ranks saw this charisma; some thought little of him but felt he was Germany's best chance for a great rebirth. Others simply went along with the Nazis.

Also covered is Hitler's ability to sway youth, something the Nazi apparatus put much effort into in the belief this would create lasting generations of dedicated followers. In essence, he created a nation ready to follow him anywhere. This confidence in their destiny and faith in their Führer led to horrible ruin, but it was also due to Hitler's charisma that a nation was willing to go with him into infamy.

World War II finally proved the supremacy of modern mechanized warfare using the vast



potential of the internal combustion engine to move and fight as never before. Naysayers who longed for the glorious days of cavalry were finally silenced as the futility of animal versus machine was decisively proven for all to see.

That is, for the most part. Despite the rise of vast formations of trucks and tanks and the steadily increasing capacities of aircraft, there were still a few places vehicles simply could not go. Further, there were jobs that machines were unable to perform. On occasion, the required machinery simply was not available. When that happened, humans resorted to their animals to do the lifting, scouting, and even fighting. The American military's use of animals is documented in *Loyal Forces: The American Animals of World War II* (Toni M. Kiser and Lindsey F. Barnes, National World War II Museum and Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 2013, 124 pp., illustrations, \$35.00, hardcover).

This photo essay shows the myriad ways in which animals were used by the military for working purposes and kept by soldiers as pets, providing a release from the stresses of service.

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The first animals taken in by the military were used as security for factories and other critical installations in the United States. Fear of sabotage ran high in the months after Pearl Harbor, and dogs were inducted into the services since guard dogs were already an accepted way of increasing physical security.

Before long, dogs were assigned other roles such as scouting, message bearing, pulling sleds, and even a stint at mine detecting, which ulti-

mately proved a failure largely due to the training methods and attitudes of the Army, which failed to properly prepare the dogs for that role. Once in combat, many dogs performed heroically; a few, such as Chips, a dog with the 3rd Infantry Division who attacked and captured an Italian machine gun nest singlehandedly, even engaged the enemy.

Further chapters of the book cover other animals, including mules, horses, and carrier

pigeons. Use of the mule in Italy and Burma is well documented. They were vital for carrying supplies in rugged, undeveloped terrain where even a jeep could not go. Often they evacuated casualties and the bodies of the fallen. True to their name, pack mules also toted the 75mm pack howitzer artillery piece on occasion, disassembled into six loads, one per mule.

Lesser known are the horses that took part in the last American cavalry charge, a desperate action against the Japanese in the Philippines

New and Noteworthy



Kharkov 1942: The Wehrmacht Strikes Back (Robert Forczyk, Osprey, softcover, 96 pp., \$21.95). This book chronicles one of the Red Army's worst defeats of World War II. This prelude to Stalingrad pitted German and Soviet forces, both preparing for an offensive, against each other.



Between Giants: The Battle for the Baltics in World War II (Prit Buttar, Osprey, hardcover, 488 pp., \$29.95). The German-Soviet struggle in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia is described. The focus is on how the three Baltic states suffered during the brutal fighting on the Eastern Front. The Courland Pocket receives particular scrutiny.



Frozen in Time: An Epic Story of Survival and a Modern Quest for Lost Heroes of World War II (Mitchell Zuckoff, Harper, hardcover, 418 pp., \$28.99). This is the story of the Herculean effort to save three aircrews lost in Greenland. This book chronicles the massive search and rescue missions undertaken for downed cargo and bomber aircraft ferrying to Britain.

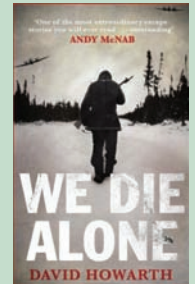


Reign of Terror: The Budapest Memoirs of Valdemar Langlet 1944-1945 (Valdemar Langlet, translated by Graham Long, Skyhorse Publishing, New York, 2012, 187 pp., photographs, index, \$24.95, hardcover). This is the story of a Swedish university professor and amateur diplomat who worked to save Hungary's Jews from deportation to death camps late in World War II. He did so without official help, producing fake documents and meeting with officials.

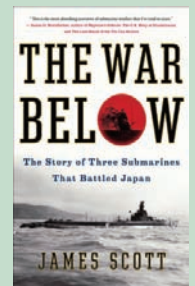


Code Name Pauline (Pearl Witherington Cornioley, Chicago Review Press, Chicago, 2013, 162 pp., appendix, index, \$19.95, softcover). Aimed at a young adult audience, this is a memoir of Pearl Witherington, a woman who joined the British covert Special Operations Executive and served in France as both an agent and Maquis leader.

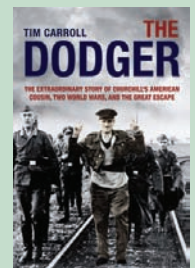
We Die Alone: A WWII Epic of Escape and Endurance (David Howarth, Lyons Press, Guildford, CT, 2007, 232 pp., appendices, \$16.95, softcover). Norwegian Commando Jan Baalsrud was the only survivor of a Nazi ambush. He led his pursuers through an arctic wilderness and, against all odds, escaped and survived with the help of local Norwegians.



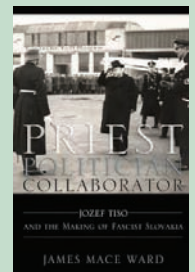
The War Below: The Story of Three Submarines That Battled Japan (James Scott, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2013, 448 pp., Notes, Index, \$28.00, hardcover). The submarine war in the Pacific was every bit as harrowing as the Battle of the Atlantic. Here the author picks three of the top American submarines of the war and reveals the experiences of their crews in the ultimately successful undersea war against Japan.



The Dodger: The Extraordinary Story of Churchill's American Cousin, Two World Wars, and the Great Escape (Tim Carroll, Lyons Press, Guildford, CT, 2013, 318 pp., Illustrations, Notes, Index, \$26.95, hardcover). John Bigelow Dodge, cousin by marriage to Winston Churchill, served in both world wars. During World War II, he was captured but repeatedly escaped, including one flight from Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

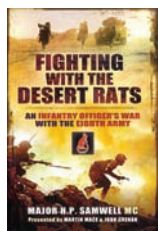


Priest, Politician, Collaborator: Josef Tizo and the Making of Fascist Slovakia (James Mace Ward, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 2013, 362 pp., Illustrations, Notes, Index, \$39.95, hardcover). This is a biography of Josef Tizo, a Catholic priest and Slovak nationalist whose desire to protect his nation led him into collaboration with the Nazis. As the war progressed he became a player in the Holocaust. □



in January 1942. The U.S. 26th Cavalry, many of its soldiers actually Filipinos, attacked a Japanese force that ambushed them at the village of Morong. While a success, the overall outcome in the Philippines was defeat. The animals who had charged the Japanese were themselves butchered by the starving Americans for their meat.

The final chapters are reserved for pictures of the various pets and mascots GIs adopted around the world, collected from a number of archives and private donors. These photographs put a more human face on those who served America in its great time of need. Each chapter contains brief descriptions of the animals' uses and training along with examples of famous animals and their deeds.

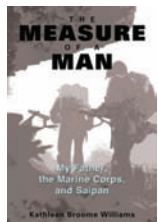


The memoirs of World War II veterans are beyond counting at this point, but relatively few were written as diaries during the war and later published. *Fighting With the Desert Rats* (Major H.P. Samwell, presented by Martin Mace and

John Grehan, Pen and Sword Publishing, Barnsley, UK, 2012, 214 pp., photographs, index, \$39.95, hardcover) is one such, originally published after the author's death in January 1945 and now reprinted in the original type.

Samwell joined the 7th Battalion Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders in 1938 as a second lieutenant. This was a Territorial (Reserve) unit and was activated in mid-1939 as war approached. In June 1942, the battalion embarked for Egypt as part of the 51st (Highland) Division attached to the Eighth Army. Seeing action at the Second Battle of El Alamein, Samwell was recognized for his bravery in leading his company after its commander was killed and he was wounded himself.

From there through the battle for Sicily, Samwell recounts the experiences of his unit as frontline soldiers, mixing descriptions of desperate close combat with hard-won breaks from the front. Like most at his level, Samwell could find the confusing orders of higher headquarters frustrating, and his description of fatigue duty at the docks in Tripoli will sound true to veterans of any army even today.



Marine Major Roger Broome died from wounds received on the island of Saipan on January 18, 1945, some six months after the fighting there ended. His daughter Kathleen never had the

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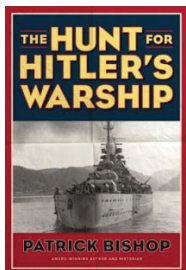
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chance to know her father, but in time she grew to become a professor of history and author. *The Measure of a Man: My Father, the Marine Corps, and Saipan* (Kathleen Broome Williams, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2013, 184 pp., photographs, maps, notes, bibliography, index, \$34.95, softcover) is her effort to know and understand a father whose own sacrifice took him from her many decades ago.

Using her experience as a historian, the author weaves together multiple sources to create a picture of Major Broome's world. Her father's letters home, interviews, and writings of other Saipan veterans are combined with the official records of the battle to showcase what it was like for the men who went ashore on that small Pacific island in 1944. The work focuses on the personal experiences of Kathleen and her family as America headed toward war and her reservist father was called to active duty. How the family dealt with the absence of a loved one at war is well detailed. Her father's letters are widely quoted and paint a vivid picture of what he was experiencing—within the censor's limits and the boundaries of what he was willing to reveal about war to those who worried for him.

Hit by rifle fire in the thigh, Major Broome was evacuated to Hawaii and then to the continental United States. Along the way infection set in, and the leg was amputated. Later, a kidney had to be removed. Through it all Broome maintained a positive attitude, but the medical knowledge of the day was insufficient to the task of saving him. However, his memory was saved by a daughter who cared enough to gather and tell the tale of a man she never really knew but loved nevertheless.



The threat posed by the German battleship *Tirpitz* had an effect far greater than the ship's actual service. It was a ship the Nazis could ill afford to lose. The loss of prestige and combat power the small *Kriegsmarine* would suffer with her loss was bad enough, but the threat the great ship posed by her very existence drew vital British resources away from other efforts. Britain's shipping was its lifeline, and the Royal Navy and Air Force had no real choice but to make every effort to destroy *Tirpitz* and end the threat.

The Hunt for Hitler's Warship (Patrick Bishop, Regnery History, Washington, D.C., 2013, 426 pp., photographs, drawings, maps,

notes, index, 27.95, hardcover) sums up the effort to destroy *Tirpitz*, an effort that took years and some 36 separate operations from the sea and air. After a short period in Germany's Baltic Fleet, the battleship went into the Atlantic to be based in Norway. She would serve the rest of her existence either in the frigid North Atlantic or the fjords of Norway's coast, hiding from fevered British exertions to find her.

Those exertions were indeed extensive. The British commando raid on St. Nazaire, France, used an old destroyer as a huge bomb to destroy the dock there, the only one large enough to hold *Tirpitz* if she broke out to the Atlantic as her sister *Bismarck* had. Attacks on the ship herself began with aircraft, but when that proved ineffective, midget submarines were sent in September 1943. These heavily damaged *Tirpitz*, requiring lengthy repairs that lasted into April 1944.

Once it seemed the ship would sail again, more air attacks went in, causing further damage and necessitating more repair work. British intelligence, using Enigma decrypts and other sources, planned new attacks each time the Nazi behemoth appeared about to sail. Finally, Royal Air Force Avro Lancaster bombers dropped heavy "Tallboy" bombs on *Tirpitz*, now trapped in a fjord because of critical fuel shortages. Struck twice, the battleship capsized, ending the peril to Allied convoys. The author's detailed work provides a fascinating read for naval history buffs.



The war on the Eastern Front was a grinding struggle of massive armies moving over fronts hundreds of miles wide. By autumn 1944, the Soviet juggernaut had pushed its way past its own borders into Hungary, where it sought to complete an offensive that would drive the hated Nazis completely out of the Balkans. Hungary had been a German ally until then, providing troops and fuel for Hitler's war machine. The country had endured German occupation since an attempt to withdraw from the war failed in March 1944.

The story of a part of this five-month battle is detailed in *Take Budapest! The Struggle for Hungary, Autumn 1944* (Kamen Nevenkin, Spellmount, Stroud, UK, 2012, 288 pp., photographs, maps, appendices, notes, index, \$24.95, softcover). The massive Soviet offensive began in October 1944 with a coup de

main attempt to seize the Hungarian capital of Budapest. From there the fighting became an attritional struggle as both sides brutally smashed at each other. The massive casualties suffered could be borne by the Soviets, who had long since resolved to accept them in exchange for victory. The Nazis could not do so, and their losses combined with Hitler's refusal to give ground willingly drew in reinforcements better used elsewhere, leaving the approaches to Berlin more vulnerable to the eventual Soviet offensive there.

This book's strength is largely in the use of soldiers' memoirs and a vast collection of data in its appendices. Unit strength, numbers of tanks available, and myriad other details are laid out in the nine appendices, which cover 65 pages, around a quarter of the book. This will be of great interest to readers who want an in-depth synopsis of the composition of units on both sides. One appendix even recounts the war crimes committed by each army. It is extensive coverage that is deserved for a large battle.



Osprey Publishing continues to publish entries in its Duel series, analyzing the fights between two famous weapons and their users, detailing strengths, weaknesses, and actual combat performance.

Fw200 Condor vs. Atlantic Convoy 1941-43 (Robert Forczyk, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2013, 80 pp., photographs, illustrations, maps, index, \$17.95, softcover) chronicles one of the lesser known fights—that of the Luftwaffe's bombers against the British convoy defense system. Usually taking a back seat to the submarine war, this smaller part of the fight was nevertheless full of innovative tactics, equipment, and desperate efforts by pilots and sailors alike.

In the early years of the war, air coverage for convoys was practically nonexistent. What anti-aircraft weapons were available were mostly reserved for major warships, and aircraft carriers could not be spared for escort duty. This gave the Luftwaffe a chance to inflict damage with little fear of loss in return. As the war progressed, however, new ideas such as catapult-launched fighters for merchant ships and the cheaper escort carrier plugged the gap the Fw200s enjoyed, effectively putting an end to their depredations. They had provided a small but useful adjunct to the U-boat but were swept away by growing Allied power. □

FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF WWII HISTORY MAGAZINE



D-DAY

Through A Soldier's Eyes...

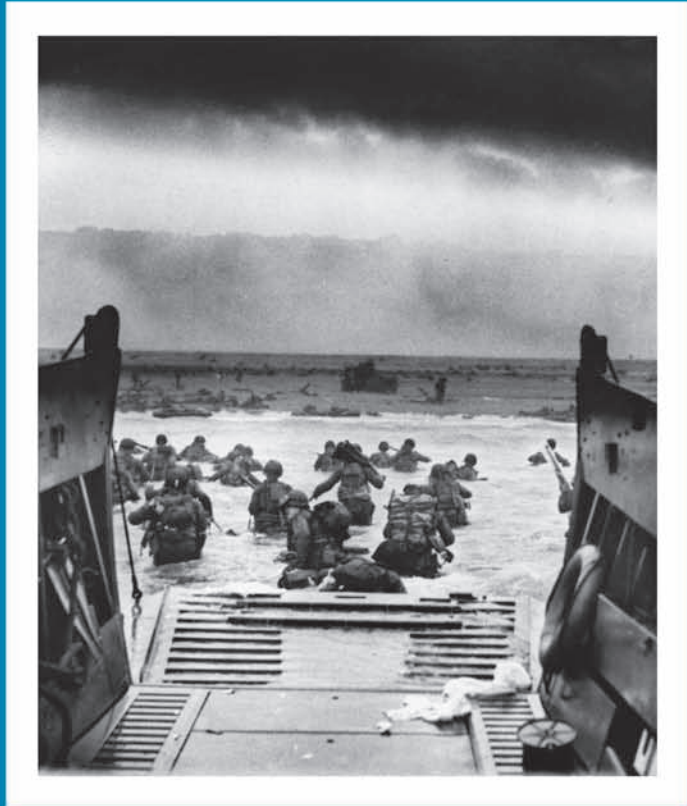
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The storm was violent, the waves were huge and the noise was deafening for the soldiers in the landing craft on D-Day, June 6, 1944. As they neared the beach, the door dropped open... and this photo lets you see exactly what they saw, and feel what they felt: treacherous breakers, withering machine gun fire, a long beach, huge cliffs, and near-certain death.

None hesitated. These brave unselfish men jumped into the cold Atlantic waters. Two thirds of them died soon after, so that we could live in freedom.

This historic photograph shows American soldiers from Company E, 16th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division exiting their LCPV landing craft under heavy German machine gun fire on Omaha Beach. The photo was taken by Coast Guard Chief Photographer's Mate Robert F. Sergeant.

Company E landed on Easy Red Beach at 0645 in the face of murderous fire. Those few who survived kept wading right into everything the enemy had and took their objective, which provided the only exit from the beach that the entire Fifth Corps had for two days. Company "E," perhaps by strength of will and courage alone, helped keep the entire landing force from being thrown back into the sea. For a month afterwards, those who survived remained almost in a daze.



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Lighthearted writing and an absurd setup make *Bugs vs. Tanks!* worth short bursts of play.

BUGS VS. TANKS!

It's not often you get a chance to play a World War II-related game on Nintendo's portable 3DS platform. Then again, *Bugs vs. Tanks!* is far from your average scenario, as the name should imply, and its availability is all thanks to Japanese game company Level-5's consistently interesting *Guild* initiative.

While it's true that consistency may not apply to the quality of every game released, the mere existence of the *Guild* project is something worth celebrating, especially the fact that the games managed to make their way to the West. For those unfamiliar, Level-5 kicked things off with *Guild01*, which hit Nintendo's eShop in Japan last year with four downloadable games. The gist of it is that some of the industry's top talent gets a chance to build smaller games and unleash their creativity on Nintendo's portable. Some of the featured creators in the first round included Suda51 (*Lollipop Chainsaw*, *Shadows of the Damned*, *No More Heroes*) with the shooter *Liberation Maiden*, Yoot Saito (*Seaman*, *Odama*) with the manic luggage-sorting *Aero Porter*, and Yasumi Matsuno (*Vagrant Story*, *Final Fantasy XII*) with the tabletop-RPG-inspired *Crimson Shroud*.

Naturally, *Guild02* followed in 2013, and the West has already gotten all three of the very disparate entries. Sandwiched in between Kazuya Asano and Takemaru Abiko's *The Starship Damrey* and Kaz Ayabe's nostalgic *Attack of the Friday Monsters!* is an oddball alternate history action game called *Bugs vs. Tanks!* One could probably guess precisely what the game is all about just by looking at the name, but what makes it even more special is that it comes from Keiji Inafune, former Capcom producer behind legends like *Mega Man*. The end result is a slightly uneven tank-and-bug-battling game that manages to rise above a few of its more drab features thanks to some lighthearted writing and a truly absurd setup.

Bugs vs. Tanks! offers up a mix of strategy and action, as a WWII panzer division finds itself minimized *Honey, I Shrank the Kids* style. Now ordinary ants, bees, and other bugs and obstacles pose just as large a threat as the war itself, and the group must find a way to survive in this savage new world.

Said means of survival pretty much boils down to blasting the hell out of some bugs, but it isn't going to be easy. *Bugs vs. Tanks!* provides a few options to customize the experience to the player's liking, thankfully, because missions can get unforgiving pretty quickly. Combat generally consists of rolling your tank through the dirt, pivoting your turret, and firing away either automatically or manually. Auto-fire puts the control in the computer's hand and makes it a little easier to concentrate on maneuvering, but it's also wildly unsatisfying to have the AI pull the trigger every time an enemy is in range. I think most players will want to switch to manual early on like I did, but it definitely makes things more difficult as you progress toward more involved missions.


The word "strategy" has been thrown around, but ultimately this is an action game. Sure, there are some tactics involved in choosing the tank most suited to your style—different types and paint jobs are



unlocked upon discovering abandoned units in the field—and it helps to know which shell type to use in certain scenarios, but success here is mostly going to depend on how good you are at commandeering the often unwieldy vehicles.

Bugs vs. Tanks! is also not a very pretty game. That's forgivable given its bite-sized budget nature, but staring at the same drab, muddy backgrounds can get a little old. Humor spices things up, though, and makes up for other more lacking aspects. There's something completely ridiculous about the gung-ho attitude of the panzer troops as they shout orders in broken English: "Panza forwaaaaard!" Some of the dialogue can be pretty funny at times, too, and it's nice in general to see a Syfy Channel original movie plot like this not taking itself seriously in the least.

The end result isn't close to being the most enjoyable of the *Guild* games released thus far, but there's some charm to be found for sure. The missions in *Bugs vs. Tanks!* are well suited for quick bursts of portable gaming, and that's precisely how it should be played. It would be easy to burn out on pretty much every aspect of this average tank action game, but in small chunks it provides just enough fun and challenge to make it worth checking out.



PUBLISHER
Level-5

DEVELOPER
Concept

SYSTEM(S)
Nintendo 3DS

AVAILABLE
Now



WORLD OF WARPLANES

Less than a month prior to the time of this writing, the open beta for *World of Warplanes* officially kicked off. The end of limited access allowed anyone to download the client and test the online multiplayer dogfighting action out



PUBLISHER
wargaming.net

DEVELOPER
wargaming.net

SYSTEM(S)
PC

AVAILABLE
Now (open beta)

for free, delivering plenty of feedback to the developers to make sure everything is in tip-top shape before *Warplanes*' full launch later this year.

World of Warplanes' 15-on-15 player vs. player action busts out planes from the United States, Soviet Union, Germany, and Japan, in periods ranging from the 1930s through the 1950s.

With so many new folks hopping aboard the open beta, including those transferring from the closed beta, there have naturally been some nagging issues to speak of here and there, but there's already a ton of promise in *Warplanes*' addictive aerial action.

Since the launch of the open beta, wargaming.net has been releasing "Flight School" videos with the aim of schooling folks on the finer points of becoming an ace pilot. Those just jumping on can find a wealth of info to improve their game, especially when it comes to choosing the class—attack, light, heavy, or carrier—of plane suitable for their particular style of play. Light fighters, for instance, are great for those who value speed and maneuverability over everything else, while Attack fighters boast stronger armor and weapons but truly excel at strafing ground targets.

It's pretty similar to finding that sweet spot in wargaming's major hit, *World of Tanks*, which should also be available on Xbox 360 by the time this issue hits the stands. On top of all this excitement, wargaming.net is celebrating its 15th anniversary, so hopefully those of you who fancy their work got a chance to join the fun in August when the developer offered up a bunch of in-game goodies as party favors. □

battle line

Continued from page 49

through the war, and overestimated their own resolve. Bushido code was not enough against American technology and determination. Japanese gunnery and torpedo efficiency was far below the glorious standards of 1942. Even Japanese seamanship, as evidenced by the collision of *Nachi* and *Mogami*, was faulty. Nishimura and Shima did not coordinate their forces—they did not even seem to know where their own ships were. Probably the single most intelligent Japanese decision in the entire battle was Shima's—to withdraw.

The surviving Japanese blamed their late boss, Nishimura. Hiroshi Tanaka of *Yamashiro* described survivors as saying that Nishimura's strategy was that of a warrant officer, not an admiral.

Still, it was difficult to see what else Nishimura could have done. His orders were clear and specific—steam into Surigao Strait, punch through the American defenses, and savage the American transports. He had tried to do so with every ship at his command and fiber of his being, paying the price with his own life. The very cause was hopeless, but Nishimura and his sailors did their best to carry out their orders with full and hopeless valor.

It was also the end for a style of warfare that dated back to 1655, when Britain's Duke of York defeated the Dutch Admiral Obdam in the Battle of Lowestoft ... the battle line. It had translated from the age of sail to that of steam.

Now the battle line had been rendered obsolete by the development of air power, the brawling night surface actions of Guadalcanal, and the unsporting but deadly submarine. The even more deadly power of guided missiles and atomic weaponry were yet to come.

Such thoughts probably did not occur to the victorious American sailors as the sun rose over the smoking wreckage, fuming muzzles, and oil fires in Surigao Strait. Aboard *Louisville*, Oldendorf assessed the desperate messages from Samar and ordered his officers to start plotting courses and formations to support the endangered escort carriers.

On the American battleships, the young sailors marveled that despite a night of sound and fury their battleships had suffered nothing. They were all alive to greet the new day. The loudspeakers blared, "Now hear this. Secure from general quarters. Set torpedo defense watch." □

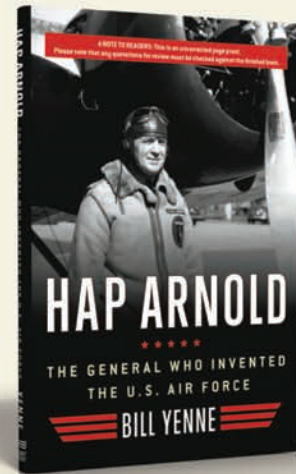
David Lippman is a frequent contributor to WWII History. He also maintains a website dedicated to the daily events of World War II.

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thunder

Continued from page 65

sidered the XIX TAC and Brig. Gen. O.P. Weyland, its commander, as part of Third Army and came to depend heavily on the fighter bombers as he planned the daring attacks for which he is famous.

After August 8, 1944, the Ninth Air Force operated under a new commander. Brereton was shifted to command of the newly created First Allied Airborne Army, an appropriate assignment since he had been in charge of Billy Mitchell's planning for paratroopers in World War I and had been involved with American paratroops before the war. Brereton's replacement as Ninth Air Force commander was Lt. Gen. Hoyt P. Vandenberg, who would command the Ninth until after VE-Day.

Ninth Air Force P-47s assumed a major role in Normandy after the Allied ground forces finally broke out of the hedgerows that kept them bottled up. Armed with rockets, bombs, and napalm in addition to their eight .50-caliber machine guns, the P-47 pilots would descend to just above the treetops to attack anything that moved on the narrow French roads and farm lanes. German officers would later attribute their failure to defeat the Allied landings to the awesome power of the deadly fighter bombers.

Shortly after the Normandy beachhead was secured, Maj. Gen. Elwood "Pete" Quesada's IX Tactical Air Command moved across the English Channel to new airfields that had been scraped out of French soil just inland from the beaches. The forward airfields brought the fighter bombers to within a few miles of their targets—the troops and vehicles of the German Seventh Army.

The Germans gave the fighter bombers a name of their own. They called them "Jabos," the German name for fighter bomber. American P-47s and British Hawker Typhoons were credited with the destruction of thousands of German tanks and other vehicles. They were so feared that the Germans took to making their movements at night, when the fighter bombers were prevented from detecting them in darkness.

The IX Troop Carrier Command also assumed a heretofore unprecedented role as it supported the advancing armies once they broke out of the beachhead. Troop Carrier Command transports braved intense enemy fire to drop their troops just behind the beaches on D-Day, then brought in supplies and reinforcements. When Patton's Third Army began rolling across France, Troop Car-

rier transports brought in the fuel that kept them moving as they advanced well beyond their ground lines of supply. Air transportation of supplies for ground forces became so important that when the availability of C-47s became a problem B-24s were detached from Eighth Air Force and assigned to the IX Troop Carrier Command for missions carrying cargo—particularly gasoline—into France.

Some planes, conducting "trucking missions," landed on recently captured Luftwaffe airfields with loads of fuel for Patton's tanks and trucks. Liberators were loaded with ammunition and supplies for airdrop to ground units, especially during Operation Market-Garden, when B-24s airdropped supplies to American and British paratroops in Holland and took significant losses in the process.

The main disadvantage of a dependency on air support is the weather, and when the European winter settled in on Belgium and the Ardennes Forest in late 1944, the Germans took full advantage of it to launch the most effective counterattack since the Allied breakout from the beachhead. Low clouds, fog, and snow covered the region, preventing Ninth Air Force fighter bombers from flying. Even worse, the miserable conditions ruled out aerial resupply, which almost doomed the 101st Airborne Division at Bastogne, surrounded by German forces and cut off from all land supply routes.

Fortunately, the weather cleared before the paratroopers ran completely out of food and ammunition, and the IX Troop Carrier Command came to the rescue. Improving weather allowed IX and XIX Tactical Air Command fighter bombers to take to the skies to attack the German forces, most of whom had found themselves stranded when they ran out of fuel for their vehicles. Without the Ninth Air Force and its counterpart, the British Second Tactical Air Force, the Allies may well have lost the Battle of the Bulge.

One of the greatest ironies of World War II is that the Eighth Air Force immediately became obsolete with the Allied victory in Europe, but the kind of warfare introduced by the Ninth Air Force was the wave of the future. Nearly all of the B-17s and B-24s that survived the war had been turned to scrap metal within a few years, but the fighter bomber concept has survived through the Jet Age. High performance jet fighter bombers have become the most powerful weapons of modern warfare. □

Author Sam McGowan is a licensed pilot and a resident of Missouri City, Texas. He has written numerous articles for WWII History.

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Israeli Settlements: Are They a Threat to Middle East Peace?

Despite recent reports of possible peace talks, the Palestinians still insist that Israel stop building in Jerusalem and parts of the West Bank as a precondition to negotiations. But who "owns" the West Bank? And are settlements really the problem?

What are the facts?

While many in the media refer to the West Bank as "Palestinian territories," Palestinians in fact have never actually possessed or controlled this land. Beginning 3,000 years ago these territories between the Jordan River and Jerusalem were a part of the Jewish kingdom known as Judea and Samaria. Jews have lived on these lands continuously until the current day. For several hundred years, through the 19th century, Judea and Samaria were part of the Ottoman Empire, where both Arabs and Jews lived. In 1922, these lands became part of the British Mandate, designated for partition into Jewish and Arab nations. The Arabs rejected this partition, but in 1949, following Israel's declaration of independence, Jordan seized and occupied Judea and Samaria, which included such Jewish communities as Hebron and the Jewish quarter in eastern Jerusalem. All Arab residents of these lands were declared citizens of Jordan.

Finally, in 1967, when Israel was attacked by Jordan, Egypt and Syria, Israel defeated these invading Arab armies and again took control of Judea and Samaria, then also called the West Bank. After the 1967 war, the United Nations decreed that unspecified parts of these captured territories would be granted to the Arab Palestinians as part of a negotiated peace. Indeed, Israel has demonstrated numerous times its willingness to give up land for peace—for example, the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt, and Gaza to the Palestinians. But so far, the Palestinians have refused to accept a peaceful settlement with Israel on ownership and borders of Judea and Samaria.

Do Jews have a right to settle in Judea and Samaria? Since 1967, Israel has reclaimed all of Jerusalem as its capital, and, as Israel's population has grown, its citizens have built new communities—settlements—in the eastern part of the city and on Israel's eastern front. Currently some 534,000 Israeli citizens live east of the 1948 armistice lines, in Judea and Samaria. The area on which these settlements are located constitute a mere three percent of the West Bank.

While critics have cited Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention to declare the settlements illegal, this argument is based on a false reading. First, Article 49 prohibits "Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the Occupying Power or that of any other country."

In short, the settlements are not the issue. The only path to a resolution to all these disagreements will be reached when the Palestinians finally agree to sit down with Israel and forge realistic compromises for achieving their own autonomous state, as well as peace and security for Israel.

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Gerardo Joffe, President

However, no Israelis are being transferred to the settlements—all are moving to them voluntarily. Also, the areas of the settlements are neither under the legitimate sovereignty of any state, nor on private Arab land. Most importantly, they have never displaced any legitimate Arab inhabitants. What's more, any instances of illegal Israeli homes in the West Bank have been disallowed by the Israeli High Court and dismantled.

Second, no Palestinian Arabs are being deported from their places of residence to any other place. Third, the Geneva Convention applies to actions by a signatory "carried out on the territory of another." However, the West Bank is not

"The only way to determine the final borders of Israel and those of a future Palestine is through peaceful negotiations."

the territory of a signatory power—since the Palestinians have never had a state—but rather is an unallocated part of the British Mandate.

If Arabs can live in Israel, why can Jews not live in a future Palestinian state? Every effort by Israel and the United States to bring the Palestinians to peace negotiations has been met with refusal by the Palestinians, who demand as a precondition that 1) Israel give up all rights to Judea and Samaria, including the settlements, and 2) that all Jewish settlement building cease. Given that the Arabs lost the war in 1967 and that Palestinians have never possessed Judea and Samaria (the West Bank), these preconditions seem overreaching and unreasonable.

Indeed, the Palestinians insist that their proposed new country be entirely free of Jewish residents, even as 1.5 million Palestinian Arabs are permitted to live as fully enfranchised citizens in Israel. What's more, the Palestinians insist that five million descendants of Arab refugees from Israel's war of independence be permitted to settle in the Jewish state. In short, they are demanding both a new Palestinian state with no Jews and the right of Arabs to take over Israel demographically.

The only solution to the settlement issue: Negotiations. The entire territories of the West Bank are disputed. They cannot legitimately be said to belong to the Palestinians or to Israel. Clearly, the only way to determine the final borders of Israel and those of a future Palestine is through peaceful negotiations. Likewise, the disposition of Israeli settlements and Israel's Jewish character will be resolved by mutual agreement.

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bravery

Continued from page 55

37th Tank Battalion, 4th Armored Division, stood on a hill watching the supply parachutes fall on Bastogne. After radioing for permission to push forward, he clambered into the turret of his Sherman tank, clamped a cigar between his teeth, and told his tankers, "We're going in to those people now. Let 'er roll!"

Supported by artillery salvos and with all guns firing, the battalion's Shermans, half-tracks, and tank destroyers rumbled forward. They blasted their way through Assenois and reached the outer southern perimeter of Bastogne shortly before 5 PM. The last 16 miles into Bastogne were the toughest that a unit of the 4th Armored Division had ever fought.

There would be fierce fighting for several days, but the eight-day ordeal was over for General McAuliffe's stubborn Screaming Eagles and the heroic townspeople of Bastogne. In recognition of his inspired leadership, McAuliffe was personally awarded the Distinguished Service Cross by General Patton. The 101st Airborne Division received a Presidential Unit Citation.

The Allies had faced disaster at the start of the Battle of the Bulge, but the stout American defense, harsh weather, and a critical shortage of fuel had ground the German columns to a halt. The enemy had paid the price for Hitler's last folly. "The backbone of the western front was broken," as Field Marshal von Rundstedt said. By January 31, 1945, the Americans, with British help, had straightened the Bulge, though the Allied advance into Germany had been delayed by six costly weeks.

In the Bulge, the Germans underrated the tenacity, logistical capability, and courage of the GIs. "When all is said and done," observed General Montgomery, "I shall always feel that Rundstedt was really beaten by the good fighting qualities of the American soldier."

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill rose in the House of Commons on January 18, 1945, and said, "The United States troops have done almost all the fighting and have suffered almost all the losses. We must not forget that it is to American homes that the telegrams of personal losses and anxiety have been going during the past month.... Care must be taken not to claim for the British Army an undue share of what is undoubtedly the greatest American battle of the war, and will, I believe, be regarded as an ever-famous American victory." □

Author Michael D. Hull resides in Enfield, Connecticut, and is a frequent contributor to WWII History.

singling

Continued from page 37

December 10, 1944, after a brief 45-minute assault; Bining and Rohrbach-les-Bitche passed under U.S. control that same day.

The fight at Singling on December 6, 1944, cost the Americans six killed (all tank crewmen) and 16 wounded. Five Sherman tanks were knocked out on the 6th in addition to the 14 destroyed or disabled on the 5th. About 60 Germans were taken prisoner, and two confirmed Panther tank kills were recorded. While the inconclusive fighting raged at Singling, the rest of Task Force Abrams, spearheaded by the M5 Stuart light tanks of Company D, 37th Tank Battalion and helped by the German preoccupation with the defense of Singling, managed to penetrate into Bining.

While the action on December 6, 1944, represented 4th Armored Division's high water mark in its drive toward the German fortified border area known as the West Wall or Siegfried Line, the engagement revealed some glaring deficiencies in the unit's combat performance. These resulted from the fact that the operation to go for Bining and Rohrbach-les-Bitche was a last-minute affair that should have been deferred until 4th Armored was relieved by the 12th Armored Division. Once decided upon, the attack could only be based upon a hastily improvised plan that did not take Singling into account and thus denied the attackers a reasonable chance of success.

Due to the hurried plan to take Singling, 4th Armored Division did not have time to do a number of basic things that might have assured success. First, there was no time allotted to make needed aerial reconnaissance over the Singling-Bining-Rohrbach-les-Bitche area to determine the lay of the land and learn the enemy's location and strength. As a result, follow-on air strikes were not ordered to soften up the targets.

Second, no time was allowed for Task Force Abrams to conduct ground scouting toward its objectives before the American advance began on either the 5th or 6th of December. This deprived the attackers of any knowledge of the ground conditions and strength, location, or type of opposition they would encounter at Singling.

Third, a breakdown in interdivision communications prevented not only the needed initial artillery support Lt. Col. Abrams called for, but also jeopardized the speedy and safe relief of the 51st Armored Infantry by the newly arrived 10th Armored Infantry, and subsequently the support and withdrawal from the village of the 10th infantrymen by

the 8th Tank Battalion.

The question remains as to why so many of the routine tactical requirements that the division's units always employed before and during combat were missing at Singling. The answer may be due to the state of confusion at the top level of divisional command in the first days of December 1944.

Trouble between Manton Eddy and his subordinate, John S. Wood, commander of 4th Armored Division, had been brewing since mid-November 1944, when the former complained that the latter was not driving hard enough during the opening stages of Third Army's winter campaign. The situation between the two generals worsened on December 2, when in an insubordinate manner Wood defended the performance of his men to his superior, Eddy. This was just the most recent time Wood had shown disrespect for Eddy's authority. After Eddy again complained to General Patton about Wood's conduct, the commander of the 4th Armored Division was relieved the next day.

"Tiger Jack" Wood was loved and respected by the officers and men of the 4th Armored, and this emotional attachment with his troops strengthened the performance of the whole unit. He was known as a proficient and dynamic tank commander. As a result, his relief and replacement by Maj. Gen. Hugh J. Gaffey stunned the division, angered and discouraged many unit leaders, and for a while threw its command structure into confusion. This confusion at division level eliminated Combat Command A's control of the battle for Singling, bypassing it and giving direct orders to Abrams. One result of this was that Abrams's requested artillery support was not pushed by Combat Command A since it felt it could not authorize the support since it appeared division was calling the shots.

The unsteady hand exhibited by division because of the change of commanders also contributed to the lack of support Abrams might have received during the battle from units such as Major Irzyk's. Irzyk did not know Task Force Abrams was in his vicinity and was never notified by division that help was needed at Singling. The confusion at division headquarters after Wood's ouster prevented it from properly monitoring the progress of the battle, which might have diminished Abrams's rather poor management of the operation.

The guiding hand of Wood was sorely needed and missed during the fight at Singling. □

Military historian Arnold Blumberg lives and writes from his home in Baltimore, Maryland.

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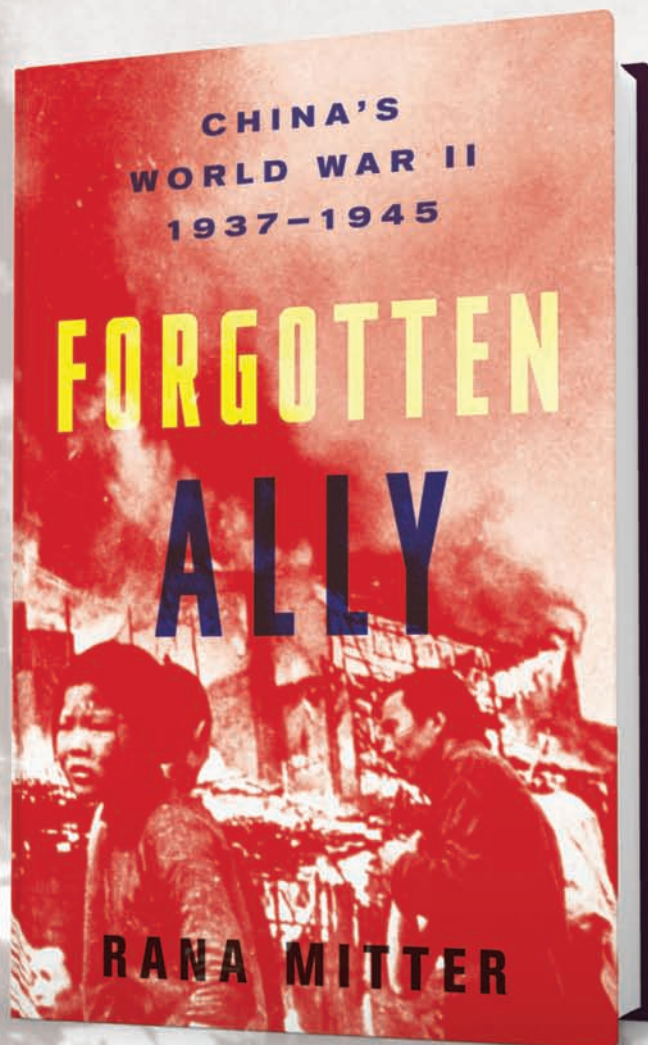
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Rana Mitter is a professor of modern Chinese history at the University of Oxford and the author of several books, including *A Bitter Revolution*. He is a regular contributor to British television and radio.

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