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#REP39

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Sarco has a steel non-firing replica of the venerable Australian WW2 Sub Machinegun . First time on the market! The Owen SMG was a staple of the Pacific campaign and was considered for purchase by the U.S. Marines. This 'Kamabee Keep' reproduction replicates the novel approach of 'top feed' and 'off set' sights that proved itself with rapacious marksmanship in combat from WW2 through Vietnam. Coming in any moment. Again, very limited so check our website and get your email on the list to be notified upon their arrival!

M79 GRENADE LAUNCHER

$385.00 #REP42 (Inert)

Sarco has created a full size replica of the venerable M79 Grenade Launcher made famous in Vietnam and beyond. Combining newly made metal parts coupled with original USGI Stock furniture and accessories, this non firing display piece is like having the real thing! The Rear Sight flips up and locks, safety locks the trigger, and the Barrel Latch swings to allow the barrel to open. The M79 comes with Sling (color may vary), small arms M79 Pouch, and Combo Tool. Wood Stocks have been taken from original Vietnam era M79s that we had to deactivate in earlier decades and fortunately the rubber butt pads are in excellent condition. To comply with regulations, the front muzzle tip has a colored ring on the outside. Very Limited Production. Only about 3 dozen remain!.

Panzerfaust 30M Launcher & Rocket

Panzerfaust 'Gretchen' 30 Meter Launcher & Rocket Second model of the German WW2 Panzerfaust was referred to as the 'Gretchen' or 'Faustpatrone 1'. Essentially improving the earlier 'Klein' version by utilizing a larger tube and rocket with increased explosive penetration. All steel, this inert version is full size and comes with markings.

(Inert / Non-Firing) **$180.00 #RL022**

M24 German Stick Grenade

Standard Potato Masher grenade as used by German troops in WW2. Wood and metal construcion with individual components.

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Save $4.00 on a fragmentation sleeve when you purchase the sleeve with the M24 German stick grenade! Sleeve with Grenade (inert) **$34.90 #MISC791**

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Breaks down into separate components for display.

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37mm Russian Spade Mortar (Non-Firing)

When is a spade not just a spade? When it's a Mortar too! Sarco has the 'Kamabee Keep' rework of the coolest mortar design in the history of warfare. Innovative Russian designers took the concept of the standard 'Entrenching Tool' that every soldier wore on his belt, and elevated it to 'Heavy Weapon Status', by allowing it to dig trenches & also fire 37mm Mortar Rounds! Designed in the late 1930s and fielded against Finland in late 1939/40 in the Russo Finn War, and throughout WW2 along the Russian Front. Never been on the U.S. or World market! It can be attached to your belt using the canvas & leather carrier, be detached to operate as a small shovel, or used to lob rounds on the enemy. Transforms into a mortar in @15 seconds with practice. This is a new made replication of the original and is non-firing. Sarco Inc. carries this item exclusively and they are currently in stock. We also have the 'late war' style 15 round bandoleer used by troops to carry mortar ammunition including Mosin Nagant Rifle ammunition. To top it off, we have replica 37mm Mortar inert display rounds available too ! The only place to see this item in the entire world is in a Russian military museum. Truly this is a piece of ordnance lost to history!

The design concept was amazing and its impact could still be amazing in this day & age! Imagine a platoon of infantry Riflemen also each carrying 15 mortar shells and working as a fire and maneuver machine. Stalinist purges and a failure to develop better ammunition put this idea to sleep before its time!

37mm Spade Mortar Assembly.....$175.00 #MISC458
Belt Carrier for the Mortar.....$19.95 #MISC421
Chest Bandolier w/ Mosin Pouch.....$65.00 #MISC429
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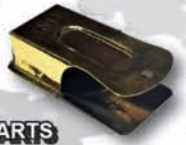

U.S. M1A1 Paratroop Carbine (Non-Firing)

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$249.95 #REP01

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Our Kepi is the NCO type with blue wool cover with red top and blue piping. An embroidered green bursting bomb is sewn into the front. Finished with brass chinstrap buttons and leather visor and chinstrap. We have included the DESERT COVER, which fits over the top, and the "Saharan" neck protector. Well-made. U.S. Sizes: 7-1/4", 7-3/8"

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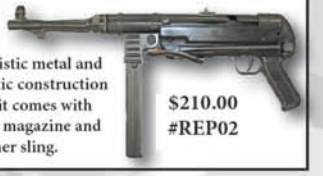
$210.00 #REP02



U.S. Military Vietnam Advisor's Bush Hat

Manufactured in the traditional labor intensive circular weave pattern for strength as used with the French Foreign Legion Bush Hat. Comes with a Saigon facsimile label of the period. Comes in O.D. green. U.S. Sizes: 7-1/4", 7-1/2", 7-5/8", 7-3/4", 7-7/8"

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$34.95 #HLM058

WW2 JAPANESE ARMY HELMET W/ NET

Steel helmet complete with suspension, chin strap. New made.

$54.95 #HLM038

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Cover: Captain J.F. Brady, 37th Tank Battalion, 4th Armored Division, photographed a few days after the fight at Rechicourt. See story page 32. Photo: National Archives

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Therefore, the Museum reserves the right to deny requests for inscriptions that might be considered offensive or inappropriate to those who sacrificed during the WWII era, or messages that do not align with the Museum's mission, which is to tell the story of the American experience in *the war that changed the world*—why it was fought, how it was won, and what it means today—so that all generations will understand the price of freedom and be inspired by what they learn.

WWII
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NEW ORLEANS

WWII HISTORY

Volume 20 ■ Number 3

Operation Hailstone devastated the Japanese anchorage at Truk.

DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE MASSIVE ANCHORAGE AT TRUK LAGOON IN THE Caroline Islands had become more untenable with each passing day as the American pincer executed its "Island Hopping" strategy in the autumn of 1943 and the following spring, the harbor remained a tempting target for U.S. Navy carrier aircraft in early 1944.

Twin offensive efforts, under General Douglas MacArthur in the Southwest Pacific and Admiral Chester Nimitz in the Central Pacific, had rendered the forward anchorage for the Imperial Japanese Navy at risk for a devastating attack. Although the Japanese had relocated heavy warships from Truk to safer locations, the harbor was still teeming with merchant ships and elements of the enemy fleet when Operation Hailstone was unleashed on February 17-18, 1944.

Three aircraft carrier task groups of Admiral Marc Mitscher's Task Force 58, under Admiral Raymond A. Spruance's Fifth Fleet command, put more than 550 combat planes into the air, which during the two-day action destroyed 250 Japanese planes and sank two enemy light cruisers, four destroyers, two submarine tenders, three patrol aircraft, 32 merchant ships, and many more. They killed approximately 4,500 Japanese soldiers, sailors, and airmen. In turn, the U.S. Navy lost 25 planes, a carrier, and a battleship damaged, with 40 killed in action.

Planes from the decks of the *Essex-class* aircraft carriers *Bunker Hill*, *Yorktown*, *Essex*, and *Intrepid* were joined by squadrons from the *Independence*-class light carriers *Cowpens*, *Belleau Wood*, *Monterey*, and *Cabot*, swarming the skies over Truk.

Operation Hailstone was a resounding success, and some felt it was at least a measure of payback for the devastating Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor three years earlier. In one of the most spectacular of these victories, Lieutenant James E. Bridges pressed home his attack on the Japanese transport *Aikoku Maru*—loaded with ammunition—and slammed home a torpedo. *Aikoku Maru* erupted like a volcano. Sadly, Bridges and his two crewmen from Torpedo Squadron VT-6, assigned to *Intrepid*, were caught in the tremendous explosion and killed when their plane went down.

American fighter pilots conducted coordinated sweeps above the islands ringing the anchorage and shot down more than 30 Japanese planes that rose to meet the September 17 morning raid. Another 40 Japanese fighters, mostly Mitsubishi A6M Zeros that once dominated the skies over the Pacific, were shot to pieces on the ground. Japanese installations on the surrounding islands were also hit with high-explosive and fragmentation bombs, which cratered runways and demolished warehouses, barracks, and equipment.

During the one-sided melee, Lieutenant Commander James D. Ramage led Bombing-10 from *Enterprise*, personally receiving credit for sinking the tanker *Hoyo Maru*. A near-miss from a dive bomber shook the destroyer *Fumikuzi* so badly that damage-control teams could not stop the flooding through ruptured bulkheads, and the warship sank the following day. The destroyer *Shigure* seemed to lead a charmed life, surviving the onslaught—until it was seriously damaged when a bomb hit her No. 2 turret, leaving 21 dead and 45 wounded.

Those Japanese ships that tried to escape the harbor for the open sea were met by U.S. submarines and surface ships. Admiral Spruance took personal command of Task Group 50.9, including the battleships *Iowa* and *New Jersey*; heavy cruisers *New Orleans* and *Minneapolis*; and four destroyers with combat-air-patrol cover from the *Cowpens*. The cruisers bombarded targets in the islands, and then the task group found the light cruiser *Katori*, auxiliary cruiser *Akagi Maru*, destroyers *Maikaze* and *Nowaki*, and the mindsweeper trawler *Shonan Maru No. 15*.

Katori was sunk by aircraft and the 16-inch guns of *Iowa*. *Akagi Maru* took three bombs and drifted helplessly. The American cruisers sank *Maizake*, and the destroyer *Burns* dispatched *Shonan Maru No. 15*.

Operation Hailstone was, in itself, an American triumph but only a harbinger of things to come. Before its surrender in Tokyo Bay in 1945, the Japanese Empire would suffer mightily from Allied retribution.

— Michael E. Haskew

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By Sam McGowan

United States Air Force

Wreaking Havoc

The Douglas A-20 Havoc light bomber changed the course of World War II in the Pacific and served in all theaters.

FEW AIRPLANES CAN CLAIM THE HONOR OF BEING CREDITED WITH CHANGING the course of World War II, but the Douglas A-20 Havoc twin-engine light bomber is one that can. No less a source than the official U.S. Air Force history *The Army Air Forces in World War II* credits the A-20 with turning the Papua, New Guinea, campaign around to the Allies' favor, thus changing the course of the war in the Southwest Pacific. By the time World War II ended, A-20s had fought in nearly every theater of the war and had worn the colors of many nations.

First flown in 1938, the Douglas Aircraft Company originally produced the light bomber as the DB-7, a twin-engine airplane that had been designed with export to France in mind. When the British purchased the DB-7 for the Royal Air Force, they gave it the designation "Boston" in keeping with the tradition of naming bombers after cities. The Boston was a fast and highly maneuverable airplane and well suited for the ground-attack role. The French used their DB-7s as level bombers, while the British decided to use them for low-level attack. The U.S. Army also selected the A-20 as its primary attack bomber.

Douglas A-20 Havoc bombers complete their runs against the headquarters of General Dietrich Krauss, commander of the German 352nd Infantry Division in France on June 7, 1944, the day after the Allied landings in Normandy.

Even though some segments of the Army Air Corps were emphasizing high-altitude "precision" bombing in the 1930s, ground attack was one of the service's major missions. The concept had originated in World War I and continued in the post-war Army. One officer in particular, Captain George C. Kenney, was heavily involved with ground attack during the years between the wars, and A-20s would be a key element in his strategy as commander of the Far East Air Forces.

As the United States geared up for war, the Army ordered 300 DB-7 airplanes for delivery in 1940. The U.S. designation was A-20; the airplane was also given the name "Havoc," a name that the British had adopted for a later version of their DB-7s. The Havoc featured a glass-enclosed nose for a bombardier but was also equipped with fixed forward-firing .30-

Scientist Confesses:

Global Warming a $22 Billion Lie!

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But I urge you to read every word.
How you will respond will be up to you.

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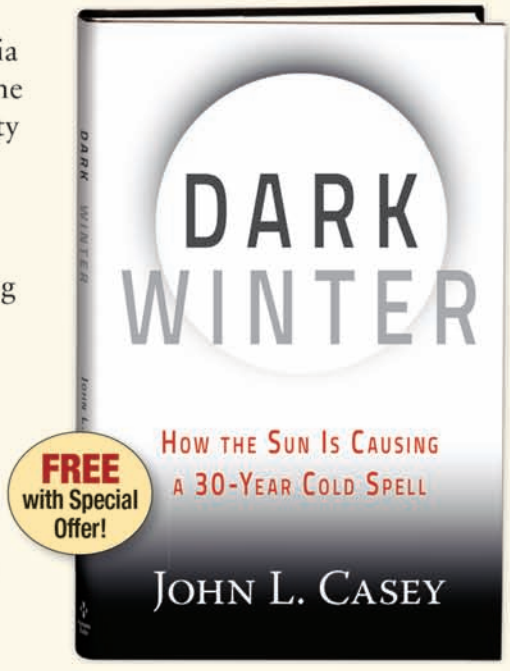
After reading what I want to share with you, you will never look at government officials in the same way again . . . you will never trust what you hear in the media again . . . in fact, you will become skeptical of any and all authority figures going forward.

Our editors were recently handed an alarming research document that contains damning evidence.

It reveals that a network of politicians, corporations, and scientists have conspired together to promote the fear of "global warming" . . . despite evidence clearly stating no such "global warming" exists.



This 164-page document proves once and for all, that "global warming" is a sham. A $22 billion-a-year sham perpetuated by a network of dirty government officials, greedy corporations, and bought-off scientific organizations.


Casey

The man who has revealed this data against "global warming" is a former White House adviser, and consultant to NASA. His name is John Casey.

And all of John's research has gone into his controversial, best-selling book ***Dark Winter*** including:

- **How the world is actually COOLING not getting warmer**
- **How the oceans are NOT actually warming**
- **The 33 crushing scientific pieces of evidence he reveals that make "global warming" an even greater farce.**
- **How humans are NOT causing "global warming"**
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This Douglas A-20 Havoc, painted in a British color scheme and being serviced at Langley Field, Virginia, in July 1942, may have been originally intended for the British but diverted to American use after the U.S. entry into World War il.

caliber machine guns. Other guns were installed in the rear cockpit and in a tunnel where the gunner could fire down and behind the airplane.

The 3rd Attack Group, the Army's premier ground-attack organization, transitioned to the new light bomber. The unit transferred to Savannah, Georgia, from San Antonio, Texas, in 1940 and immediately received A-20s. When the war broke out, the experienced officers were transferred out of the group to organize and train new units, leaving Lieutenant Bob Strickland as the group commander. All of the squadron commanders were lieutenants as well. After six weeks of waiting, the 3rd Attack Group was ordered overseas in early January 1942 and left by ship for Australia, where Strickland had been told new A-20s would be waiting. However, it wasn't until July that the group's airplanes started arriving.

Due to the delay in the delivery of A-20s to the 3rd Attack Group, the first American airmen to fly combat in the Havoc were men from the 15th Bomb Squadron, an A-20 outfit that was sent to England with the Eighth Air Force. When they got there, they were attached to an RAF squadron to gain experience. Originally, the men of the 15th were expecting to fly the night-fighter version of the A-20, a version the Army designated as the P-70. But the RAF wasn't using their Bostons as night fighters, so the 15th was reassigned to the attack role. The unit trained with RAF Bostons, and on July 4, 1942, six squadron crews joined six RAF Boston crews for a low-level attack on German airfields in Holland.

Not only was it the first American combat mission in Bostons, it was also the first mission flown by the Eighth Air Force. Only two of the American crews actually bombed their assigned targets, and two airplanes were shot down while another was badly damaged. One of the pilots, Captain Charles C. Kegelman, was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for attacking a flak tower in his damaged airplane after one propeller was shot away and his right wing was set on fire. The men of the 15th flew another mission on July 12, this time bombing from 8,500 feet and suffering no losses.

The promised A-20s for the 3rd Attack Group had finally arrived in Australia by early August. The 24 airplanes arrived without guns or bomb racks and were immediately united with the man who would make them into formidable weapons.

Captain Paul Irving Gunn, referred to by those who knew him as P.I. More commonly known to the young airmen of the Fifth Air Force as "Pappy," Gunn was a former U.S. Navy enlisted aviator and machinist's mate who was running a charter service in the Philippines when war broke out. On March 28, 1942, Gunn was officially relieved of his transport assignment and reassigned to the 3rd Attack Group. In addition to flying combat missions in a B-25, Gunn supervised the group's mechanics.

When the A-20s arrived in Australia, Gunn was assigned to check them out before they went into combat. He advised Colonel Davies that the airplanes looked good, but they needed some modifications before they went into combat. His main concern was their armament; the .30-caliber machine guns that were supposed to equip them were inadequate. There was a ready supply of .50-caliber machine guns in Australia that had been salvaged from wrecked fighters. Gunn proposed that the light bombers be converted into strafers, an idea he had thought up during the long, low-level transport missions he had flown in the Philippines in the early weeks of the war. When Gunn suggested that he be allowed to modify the A-20s, Davies went along with the idea.

Gunn and a team of mechanics installed a package of four .50-caliber machine guns in the nose of each airplane. Two more were mounted in pods on the sides of the fuselage, giving each six forward-firing heavy machine guns. Gunn was finishing up the project when the new Far East Air Forces commander, Lt. General George C. Kenney, arrived at Charter Towers to visit the 3rd Attack Group. The group had been

officially redesignated the 3rd Bombardment Group (Light), but the men preferred the old designation.

The new air boss in the Southwest Pacific was impressed with both the modification and with Gunn, and suggested another modification. In the years before the war, Kenney had been closely involved with the research-and-development branch of the Army Air Corps. In that capacity, he had come up with some developments of his own, including the parachute fragmentation bomb—a small, 27-pound bomb that was suspended under a parachute. A low-flying airplane could drop the bombs on troop concentrations or airfields and have enough time to escape the flying fragments.

Kenney had ordered a supply of these bombs be sent to Australia and by the time he got there, the bombs were in a warehouse on the docks. Gunn quickly recognized that the combined power of the .50-caliber guns and the exploding fragmentation bombs would make a very potent weapon. The parachute fragmentation bombs arrived at Charter Towers the next day.

Gunn completed the modifications of the first airplane a few days after Kenney's visit and took it on a demonstration flight with Davies as an observer. The concentrated firepower of the six .50-caliber guns literally ripped a swath through the trees in the wooded area they had chosen for the test. Gunn came around and dropped a string of para/frag bombs. The bombs floated lazily to the ground while the low-flying A-20 cleared the area; when they exploded, the fragments turned the trees into splinters. Davies and Gunn knew they had a winner with the modified A-20. Gunn suggested they do the same thing to the B-25s.

On July 12, 1942, Japanese troops landed on the north shore of the Lae Peninsula at Buna, and began advancing southward toward Port Moresby along the Kokoda Track through the rugged Owen-Stanley Mountains. On September 9, Japanese troops captured Ioribaiwa, a village just north of the city, and the Allies began preparing to defend Port Moresby itself. During the first two weeks of September 1942, the situation in the Pacific War was still very much in doubt, but all of that was about to change suddenly and drastically.

On the morning of September 12, the Japanese at Buna were suddenly introduced to a new kind of warfare when a formation of nine modified A-20s from the 8th Bomb Squadron came roaring over the treetops. Each airplane carried 40 of General Kenney's fragmentation bombs and six .50-caliber machine guns in the nose. Led by Captain Don Hall in *Kentucky Red*, the nine A-20c came in at treetop height, catching the startled Japanese completely by surprise.

United States Air Force

United States Air Force

TOP: A view of the bombardier position aboard the Douglas A-20 Havoc and gun blisters on the bomber's fuselage. Paul I. "Pappy" Gunn introduced numerous modifications to the A-20 that made the plane lethal against Japanese shipping in the South Pacific. ABOVE: Attacking the Japanese airfield at Lae, New Guinea, this Douglas A-20 Havoc bomber flies low over enemy aircraft parked in the open.

The first wave of three A-20s swooped low over the airfield, strafing the rows of bombers parked alongside the runway, then dropping their fragmentation bombs as they passed over the airfield. At first the Japanese fired back, but after the first four airplanes had made their attack, complete panic ensued on the ground, and the remaining five bombers didn't even encounter any small-arms fire. From then on, the Japanese were fighting a defensive war.

The overwhelming success of the September 12 attack led General Kenney to order that fighters under his command also be modified to carry the para/frag bombs and to commence low-altitude strafing attacks on Japanese ground forces. Within a month the Japanese supply lines from Buna had been cut and the air forces at Buna and Lae had been rendered inef-

Wikimedia

United States Air Force

TOP: The British named the Douglas A-20 'Boston.' In this photo Royal Air Force ground crewmen load bombs aboard a Boston prior to a mission. ABOVE: This Douglas A-20G variant is shown in flight. The A-20G was produced in greater numbers than any other type of the aircraft, which served in all theaters of World War II. A total of 2,850 A-20G bombers were built.

fective. The Japanese forces that had come to within a few miles of Port Moresby began retreating back up the rugged Kokoda Track toward Buna. The Japanese commander himself, General Horri, fell victim to the A-20s when he was among a group of Japanese who were dumped off of the Kumusi River Bridge when it was knocked down by the bombers.

As more and more A-20s were modified, the crews began training in other tactics. A mainstay of the Fifth Air Force Bomber Command was skip-bombing, a low-altitude attack method used against shipping. A low-flying bomber drops a bomb with a delayed-action fuse while approaching a ship at wave-top heights. The bomb skips across the water like a rock until it impacts the side of the vessel, then sinks below the surface and explodes. Skip-bombing had been developed before the war and had been used by B-17 and B-26 crews with some success. The modification of the A-20s allowed the pilots to strafe a vessel's decks during the run-in to the target, thus spoiling the aim of the ship's antiaircraft crews.

The Battle of the Bismarck Sea proved the effectiveness of skip-bombing. In late February 1943, Allied codebreakers discovered that a large convoy of troop ships had set sail from the Japanese stronghold at Rabaul on New Britain with reinforcements for Lae. The convoy was sighted by a Fifth Air Force B-24 on March 1 and was attacked by B-17s the following day; one transport was reported sunk.

The next morning the convoy was attacked again by B-17s and B-25s bombing from medium altitudes. These attacks caused the convoy to scatter, and lowering clouds gave the Japanese a false sense of security. They weren't prepared for the sight of a dozen each of B-25s and A-20s coming in at wave-top levels with guns blazing and bomb bays open. The B-25-equipped 90th Bomb Squadron, led the attack, but Captain Ed Chudoba of the 89th was right behind with his squadron of modified A-20s. The B-25s poured destruction onto the troop transports as they scored numerous hits with their bombs. Then the A-20s came in to wreak Havoc of their own, as Chudoba laid his bombs into the side of a large cargo ship.

Captain Glen Clark, the leader of the second element, put two bombs into the aft section of a destroyer, blowing a large hole in the stern that quickly filled with water. Other A-20 crews also scored direct hits on the transports and their escorts. The combined attack claimed five ships sunk and six others left burning. Naval historian Samuel Eliot Morrison referred to the attack as "the most devastating attack by aircraft on ships of the war." The A-20/B-25 combination hit the convoy again that afternoon.

The Battle of the Bismarck Sea is the high point of A-20 history, as well as for the B-25. Never before had land-based bombers proven so destructive against naval vessels. The battle was another turning point in the war in the Pacific as the attacks thwarted all Japanese hopes of reinforcing their troops in New Guinea. From that point on, no Japanese ship was safe on the seas of the Southwest Pacific, and the Allies were able to turn their attention toward offensive operations to drive the Japanese out of New Guinea and begin the long march northward toward the Philippines and, ultimately, Japan.

Light bomber squadrons in Europe never played the kind of decisive role that made the A-20 one of the most important weapons in the Fifth Air Force inventory, but they did make a significant contribution. After the July 1942 attacks, the 15th Bomb Squadron received their own A-20s and returned to training with the RAF light bomber groups. After attaining operational status, the squadron flew several medium-level bombing missions across the English Channel to attack targets in France and

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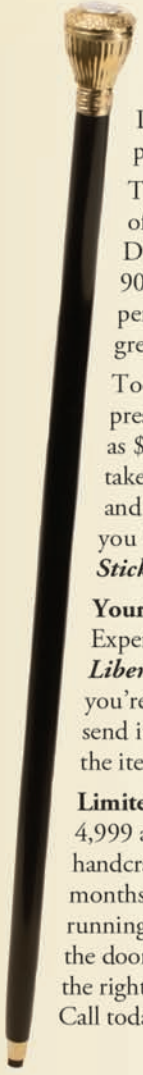

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Two Douglas A-20 Havoc bombers from the U.S. 312th Bombardment Group execute a hazardous mission against a Japanese seaplane base in the South Pacific. Moments earlier, the bomber at right was hit by antiaircraft fire, and this image was taken just before the stricken plane plunged into the water below.

the Low Countries. The squadron then joined the new Twelfth Air Force in North Africa after Operation Torch.

The light bomber mission in North Africa—and later in the Mediterranean and Europe—was directed primarily at support of ground operations. After a few weeks of combat operations in North Africa, the 15th was sent back to the United States and replaced by the 47th Bomb Group. The 47th Group A-20s operated with fighters in attacks on Axis tactical targets including tanks and troop concentrations, operating as part of the XII Support Command. The 47th Bomb Group was called on for operations against advancing German armored columns during the Battle of Kasserine Pass. Group crews flew 11 missions during the battle, earning a Distinguished Unit Citation.

Although the group had been trained for low-level operations in the United States, General James H. Doolittle, the Twelfth Air Force commander, was an opponent of low-level operations and ordered that the A-20 and B-26 groups under his command operate as light and medium bombers. Bombsights were installed in the airplanes, and enlisted men from within the group were trained as bombardiers to join the formerly two-man crews. In their new role, the 47th Group A-20s joined in attacks against docks, airfields, and railway targets. They continued to function in the light bomber role throughout the Italian campaign, attacking bridges, troop concentrations and airfields in advance of the ground units.

As the Allied build-up in the British Isles continued, A-20s returned to England to serve with the Ninth Air Force, which had moved there to support Allied ground forces during the Normandy Invasion. The 97th Combat Wing was made up of three groups of light bombers, the 409th, 410th and 416th Bombardment Groups (Light). The wing's A-20s entered combat prior to the Normandy landings as they attacked coastal installations and other targets along the French coast. On D-Day, the A-20s dropped below the clouds to bomb German positions behind the beaches. Once the troops were ashore, the light bombers provided air support for ground troops, bombing enemy troop concentrations, railroads, bridges, and other tactical targets. The A-20s played a major role assisting the Allies during their breakout from the invasion beaches in the summer of 1944. Ninth Air Force and Twelfth Air Force A-20s continued in their tactical role until the end of the war.

A-20s did yeoman service in the European war, but it was in the Pacific that they performed the daring low-level attacks that were appropriate to their name. The 3rd Bombardment Group was joined by the 312th and 417th Bombardment Groups as the Fifth Air Force moved north through New Guinea and then finally into the Philippines. After operating both A-20s and B-25s for several months, the 3rd Attack Group became an all A-20 outfit in early 1944 and was assigned the task of supporting ground troops landing on the beaches at Sadior and in the Admiralties.

Under Colonel John Henebry's leadership, the 3rd Attack Group became expert in the close air support role. The light and maneuverable A-20s with their heavy firepower were ideal for the kind of low-level flying required to attack enemy troop positions, machine-gun nests, tanks, and artillery emplacements in close proximity to friendly forces.

Skip-bombing was effective against larger ships. On April 5, 1945, a trio of A-20s flown by Colonel Dick Ellis, commander of the 3rd Attack Group, Lt. Col. Charlie Howe, and Major Ken Rosebush went on a long-range anti-shipping mission. Their instructions were to allow the B-25s to strike first, but they became separated from the Mitchells and, even though they should have aborted, struck a small three-ship convoy alone and sank the cargo ship and both of its destroyer escorts. Although Kenney was upset that Ellis had ignored orders and continued on instead of aborting after losing contact with the B-25s, he decorated all of the crews.

Bostons and Havocs also served with other nations, including France, the UK, Australia, and the Soviet Union. France was one of the first operators of the DB-7 Bostons. Free French Forces airmen also flew A-20s. Britain's Royal Air Force operated both Bostons and Havocs in its light bomber squadrons until mid-1944, when it switched to the DeHavilland Mosquito. The Soviet Union was the largest foreign customer for the Douglas light bomber. After initial deliveries by ship, most of their airplanes were flown overland by Ferrying Command crews to Alaska, where they were picked up by Russian pilots who flew them to the combat zones.

Although it has been almost neglected by the aviation media, the Douglas light bomber was a major contributor to the war effort. While few A-20s survived the war, the concept continued in the more heavily armed A-26 Invader. A few A-26s saw combat in the last weeks of the war, but its primary role was in the postwar military, continuing to serve in the Korean and Vietnam Wars. □

Sam McGowan is a retired pilot and Vietnam veteran. He is the author of numerous works on varied topics related to World War II and resides in Missouri City, Texas.

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Russian Deception—Lessons Hard Earned

> As World War II progressed, the Red Army became practiced in the art of confusing the Nazi enemy both strategically and tactically.

RUSSIAN DECEPTION, MISDIRECTION, AND MISINFORMATION, AS EVIDENCED in ecent years, can be very destructive. But it's nothing new—it's the result of hard-earned experience during World War II.

The German surprise attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 stunned the Red Army and the Russian leadership. As the Russians recovered and rebuilt, they recognized the need to develop the ability to deceive their enemy—a process that would take years and cost countless lives to achieve.

Early in the war Russian misdirection efforts were largely ineffective. Their main weaknesses were that they suffered from an inability to master radio-communications discipline and communications security, as well as to successfully maintain operational planning security. These poorly developed skills were to persist into the mid-war years.

The initial German offensive had nearly crushed the Russian forces, undermined the confidence of Red Army commanders, and tested their doctrine, bringing to the surface its faults and failures. In the first 18 months of the war, the Russians suffered disastrous defeats and near-catastrophic losses as they sought to halt the Germans. The fighting laid bare the true state of the Red Army. It was a large, cumbersome force led by a command made up of survivors from years of purges. While some of the senior commanders might have been competent, a handful even brilliant, many shared a profound inability to innovate or to think creatively. The German offensive had also caught the Red Army in the midst of both reorganization and a major reequipment program.

A column of German PzKpfw. III tanks advance on Moscow in November 1941. The Soviet Army began utilizing deception on a broad scale to conceal troop movements and mask its intentions during counteroffensive operations.

The first major Russian attempt to employ large-scale deception—in this case to cover preparations for offensive operations—took place before Moscow in November–December 1941. The Russians were assisted in part by the German High Command, as it maintained an overly optimistic outlook and underestimated the Russians' ability to raise and deploy fresh reserves. At the end of November, elements of three new Russian armies had been deployed before Moscow in preparation for a counteroffensive.

The measures associated with the winter counteroffensive were neither systematically planned nor part of a well-organized strategic effort of deception and misdirection. The surprise achieved at Moscow occurred more as a result of combat conditions rather than a conscious effort to implement a regrouping under the guise of

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strategic deception. Yet, the Russians demonstrated the ability to hide large troop deployments. Because of this, as well as poor German intelligence, the counteroffensive came as a complete surprise to the German High Command and Army Group Center.

During movement to assembly areas, Russian troops were required to observe strict light and camouflage discipline, and all movement occurred at night under absolute radio silence. The Russians also made every effort to camouflage supply dumps, rail lines, and roads used for deployment.

In early 1942, initiative returned to the Germans as they succeeded in deceiving the Russians regarding their strategic intentions, with near-disastrous consequences for the Russians along the southern front. By mid-1942, however, the Russians began to engage in their own deception and misdirection associated with their plans to conduct a strategic counterstroke against increasingly overextended Axis armies. Russian actions along the northern and center portions of the front during the summer and early fall served to distract German attention as they secretly transferred forces to the south.

The first Russian offensive to use deception operations occurred during the attack on the Rzhev-Vyazma salient west of Moscow in July and August 1942. General Georgy Zhukov, commander of the Western Front, decided to simulate a concentration of forces near Yukhnov. He created two deception-operation staffs and small deception units, deploying dummy tanks, guns, vehicles, field kitchens and fuel tanks. They simulated the unloading of troops from a railhead and the concentration of armor and motorized infantry as if preparing to attack Yukhnov. Radio communications created false traffic between the simulated armies and Front headquarters.

The deception had the effect of increasing Luftwaffe air strikes against railheads and false troops concentrations. The Wehrmacht also moved three panzer divisions and one motorized division to the Yukhnov area. Meanwhile, the real troop concentrations were conducted at night and in thick forests. Achieving some surprise, Zhukov's attack began on August 4, advancing 25 miles in two days.

In the fall of 1942, the Soviet High Command (Stavka) gathered its forces to launch a decisive attack against Army Group South along the Don and Volga rivers near Stalingrad. They drew on their experience from the previous 18 months to mask preparations and misdirect the Germans concerning the location of their coming offensive.

In a systematic undertaking, the Russians conducted a detailed examination of their experiences from the previous year. They created a mechanism to collect, process, and analyze information. The results focused on the need for concealment of regroupings and the concentrating of forces for offensive operations. Findings recommended that artillery preparations be masked by moving batteries by night into firing positions, registering a limited number of guns over a two-day period, conducting firing from temporary positions, and camouflaging outposts and artillery emplacements. It was also determined that it was best to launch an assault during darkness or during a snowstorm.

Commanders and their staffs tightened planning security through the strict use of small planning groups. They sought to hide the direction of a main attack by deception and choosing unlikely places to attack. They began to appreciate the benefits of concealing the timing of an attack even when unable to conceal their intent. But communications discipline was still poorly executed, and German air reconnaissance still provided important information about Russian operations.

By late 1942, the Russians had come to realize that deception and misdirection, applied at all levels of operations, were interdependent.

Secrecy was critical in hiding preparations for Operation Uranus—the cutting off and surrounding of German forces in Stalingrad. The November 1942 Russian counterattack at Stalingrad was the first instance of large-scale deception.

Proof of the success of the deception came when the chief of the German General Staff, General Kurt Zeitzler, claimed in early November, "The Russians no longer have any reserves worth mentioning and are not capable of launching a large-scale attack." Several small diversionary attacks were conducted to the north of Stalingrad to give the impression that Russia was unable to launch any substantial assault.

Strategic deception included increasing military activity before Moscow. In the area of planned attacks, elaborate disinformation was fed to the Germans. Defensive lines were built to deceive German reconnaissance. Civilians within 16 miles of the front were evacuated. Along the Voronezh Front, bridging equipment and boats were prepared to suggest an offensive there.

Stavka succeeded in moving a million men, 1,000 tanks, 14,000 guns, and 1,400 aircraft into position without alerting the Germans. Despite a correct assessment by German air reconnaissance of a major buildup of forces on the Don, the commander of the 6th Army, General Friedrich von Paulus, took no action.

Deception was also put into practice on a large-scale during operations around the Kursk salient in the summer of 1943. Soviet forces were moved into position at night and carefully concealed, as were extensive defenses, minefields, and as many as 200 antitank guns per mile of front line. Defenses were quickly built up using deception to conceal the movement of men and equipment. This was accompanied by feint attacks, false troop and logistics concentrations, radio deception, and false airfields. In mid-June the Germans estimated there to be 1,500 enemy tanks in the Kursk salient, when there were actually some 5,100, and an underestimated Red Army troop strength of a million.

After Kursk, with the initiative in the hands of the Red Army, deception became a key element in strategic planning. Operational deception improved in frequency and quality. Centralization of deception planning was established for all headquarters, with orders to prepare deception plans for every operation. Stavka determined the objectives of deception for multi-front operations, overseeing its planning and conduct. At army-level and below, commanders bore responsibility for carrying out their portion of operational deception plans and for developing similar plans within their subordinate units.

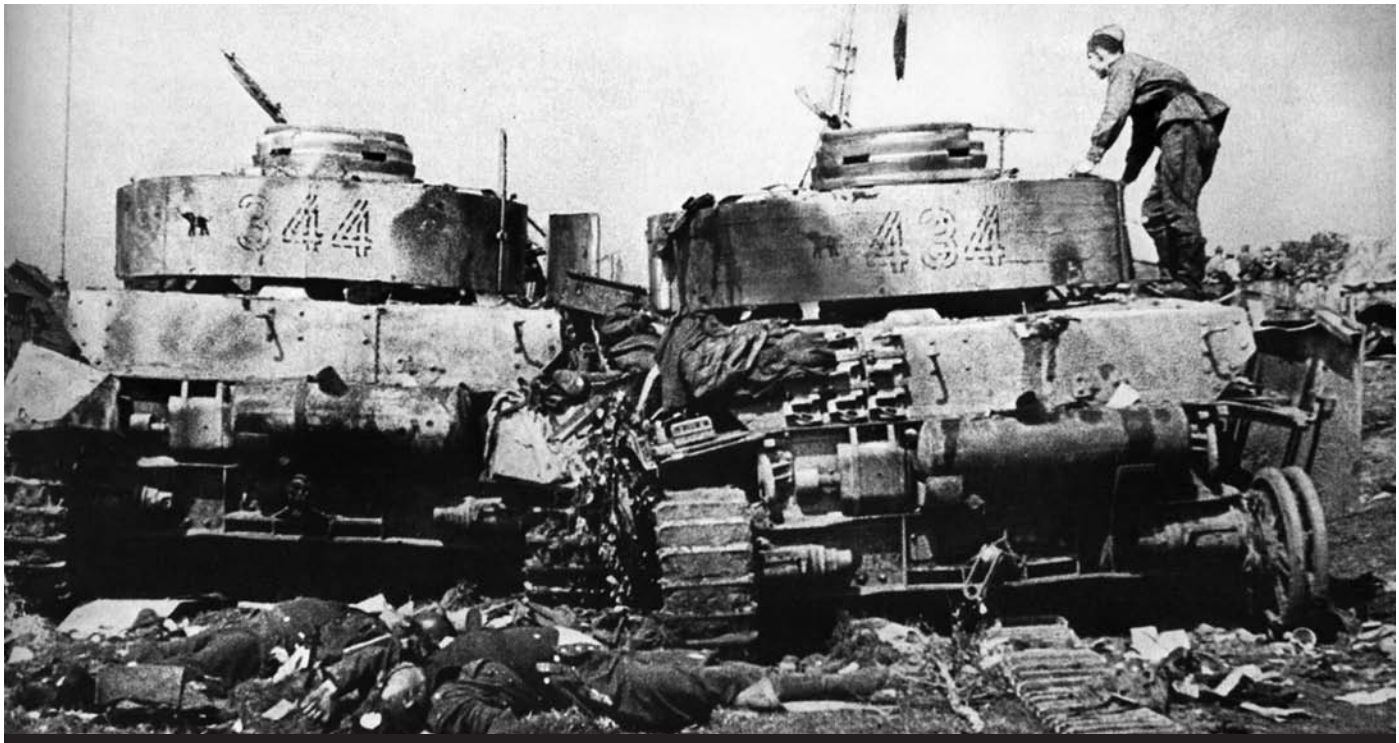
Red Army commanders shifted from random use of misinformation to a complex set of measures performed according to a carefully prepared set of plans; however, most of these measures were employed only during the period leading up to an offensive—they had not yet learned how to carry out deception during the execution of operations.

While German intelligence could still track and detect Russian units at the tactical level with accuracy, information on Russian rear-area operations and movements of large formations was not as good. The failure to locate these formations often prevented rapid German responses to imminent threats.

In 1943, while the Russians were able to conceal their operational intentions on numerous occasions, the Germans were still able to determine where their strategic priorities lay.

During 1944, the ability of the Russians to conduct strategic deception and misdirection continued to mature. That winter, Russian operations conditioned the Germans into expecting a drive through the Ukraine into Poland and Rumania. In the spring, the Red Army implemented an elaborate strategic deception plan to conceal a redeployment of forces and preparations for an attack into Belorussia—Operation Bagration.

National Archives



By the launch of Operation Bagration, the Red Army was employing deception on a grand scale. The Germans were actually duped into redeploying military assets, including artillery and tanks, on several occasions.

The Russian deception effort intended to convince the Germans that the blow would fall on Army Group North Ukraine. On the eve of the offensive, German intelligence identified 140 to 168 Russian divisions but only three tank corps opposite Army Group Center, when in fact there were eight tank and mechanized corps.

Operation Bagration applied deception on a grand scale. The key to the operation was to reinforce the German belief that the Red Army main effort would continue along a southern axis of advance. The Soviets planned to pin German reserves south of the Pripyat Marshes until the fighting along the center of the front had been decided.

The Germans greatly miscalculated the threat to Army Group Center. As a result, the German High Command redeployed a third of its artillery, half its tank destroyers, and 88 percent of its tanks from Army Group Center. The Germans had been forced to rely on limited intelligence gathered from radio intercepts and aerial reconnaissance.

Hitler's reckless optimism and determination to hold on to territory at all costs encouraged him to believe the picture suggested by the Russians. His advisors believed the Soviets were running out of men and materiel. Local German forces had determined the locations and approximate timing of Operation Bagration, but the high command failed to appreciate how strong the offensive would be, or its intentions.

The success of the offensive against Army Group Center exceeded Russian expectations. As German reserves moved to stabilize the situation, the 1st Ukrainian Front struck Army Group Northern Ukraine in coordination with the 1st Belorussian Front. As both Fronts reached the Vistula River, Russian forces struck in the Baltic States and in Rumania.

Russian successes were made possible by improved capabilities to shift large numbers of reserves secretly across the front and into forward areas. Operational-deception planning was more comprehensive and efficient in 1944 than it had been in 1943. During 1943, the Russians had occasionally moved armies secretly from one sector to another, but by 1944 such practices had become fairly common.

Increasingly limited maneuver space across a narrowing front altered Russian deception efforts in 1945. During the previous year, with the front extending from the North Cape to the Black Sea, the huge frontage offering the Russians opportunities to exploit deception in a variety of locales and circumstances. By December 1944, as the front ran from just the Baltic Sea to the Danube River, Russian opportunities to conceal their intentions diminished dramatically.

The success of deception operations in 1944 was, in part, also a product of deteriorating German intelligence capabilities. In August 1944, the German intelligence service for the Russian Front, Foreign Armies East, noted that human intelligence, signals intelligence, and air reconnaissance had decreased markedly. They attributed the intelligence decline to the Russians' increased use of radio silence, fast-moving operations that quickly decreased the value of intelligence from human sources, and a decrease in air-reconnaissance capability. As defeat followed defeat, German apprehension contributed to the intelligence confusion, the Germans treating every attack indicator with increased seriousness. This further conditioned them to make 'knee-jerk' reactions to Red Army misdirection and deception.

Since the Red Army possessed superior numbers and the Germans perceived that their opposition was overwhelming, the Russians could make feints and offensive prepa-rations in multiple areas to produce continual apprehension on the part of the Germans. The inability of German intelligence to differentiate between various threats generated multiple false predictions and an inability to determine precisely where and when a Russian offensive would occur.

As the war progressed the Russians found it virtually impossible to completely conceal an intended attack. But experience showed that it was not necessary to mask intent. Successful concealment of the scale, scope, location, or timing of an attack produced satisfactory

Continued on page 77

By Kevin M. Hymel

United States Army

A Black WAC in the U.S. Army

PFC Romay Johnson served her country both at home and overseas in Europe during World War II.

ALTHOUGH PRIVATE FIRST CLASS (PFC) ROMAY C. JOHNSON SERVED IN WAR-torn England and France during World War II, it was her tumultuous voyage across the Atlantic Ocean that she remembered most vividly.

"We didn't know if we were going to make it," explained Johnson.

Johnson and 737 other African American volunteers of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) had departed New York Harbor a few days earlier, on February 2, 1945, in the SS *Il de France*, a converted luxury liner, when a storm hit. The ship pitched and rocked in the heavy swells. Curious to see a storm at sea, Johnson left her sleeping area inside the ship and rushed outside. As waves crashed over the deck, she watched the ship's bow crest a wave and rise out of the water, then crash down as the stern rose up and the propellers chopped at the air. "I would watch to see if I could see the bottom of the ocean," she recalled.

LEFT: PFC Romay Johnson served in the 6888th but worried she and her unit would never reach England during the rough voyage across the Atlantic Ocean. TOP: Major Charity Adams (center) commanded the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, the only all-black, all-female Women's Army Corps unit to serve overseas during World War II. PFC Romay Johnson remembered her as a strict officer.

She could not believe the view before her. "I never thought of the ocean as a monster," she said. In the distance, she saw a ship so far away it looked like a helpless piece of paper on top of a wave one minute, and in a valley of water the next. Her worried friends inside called to her, "Johnnie where are you?" using her nickname. "We need you!"

Johnson wanted to remain on deck and watch the waves, but she eventually returned to her bunk area where she found distressed women screaming. They had to hold onto their bunks for balance and could not stand up or walk. Many succumbed to sea sickness. Yet Johnson, who as a child often succumbed to car sickness, felt immune. "Everyone got sick except me," she said. "I was just too excited." Despite the thrill, she never really got used to the waves. "They made your heart stop beating."

If the storm didn't unnerve her, a U-boat attack a few days later did. Although the ship sailed in a zig-zag pattern to make itself a poor target for German U-boats, one day it lurched to the side, throwing women in the upper

Men Over 40 Celebrate Breakthrough Pill

Doctor-developed natural formula supports prostate health, normal urinary frequency, and optimal male health

By S.A. Nickerson, Health Correspondent

Renowned holistic physician David Brownstein, M.D., knows most men feel embarrassed to talk about their prostate.

However, if you're a man over 40 or 50, your prostate is probably talking to you — and it's time to listen.

"With aging, your prostate gland can swell," warns Dr. Brownstein. "This pressure begins to affect urinary control, forcing you to look for a bathroom wherever you go. You may have difficulty sleeping because of multiple nightly bathroom trips."

Rogue Testosterone Starts Attacking Around Age 40

Once you hit middle age, your body begins to secrete the enzyme 5-alpha reductase. This causes your normal "manly" testosterone to turn into a rogue testosterone compound called DHT (dihydrotestosterone).

The build-up of DHT is a primary reason why prostate size increases as you age — and is associated with the unpleasant urinary symptoms that result.

What you need, says Dr. Brownstein, is something to block the 5-alpha-reductase enzyme so it can't do its dirty work and encourage higher levels of this rogue testosterone.

Collateral Damage

Inflammation, the second culprit contributing to prostate concerns, represents collateral damage. As your body's response to injury, inflammation leads to the release of chemicals that cause fluid to accumulate in and around your prostate.

So you also need a solution that promotes a healthy inflammatory response in your prostate's tissues.

Based on his two decades of research and treating patients, Dr. Brownstein formulated one of the top-selling prostate support formulas available on the market today. Since 2013, **PROSTATE REVIVE®** has been helping thousands of men across the country.

A Proprietary Blend of 15 Ingredients

PROSTATE REVIVE is truly a male health breakthrough, with 15 powerful, handpicked nutrients working together in a synergistic formula.

Ingredients such as saw palmetto, plant sterols with beta-sitosterol, pumpkin seed powder, and others help reduce the production of DHT.

Additional ingredients, including boswellia extract, pomegranate fruit extract, and pygeum, help promote proper inflammatory response.

Plus, nutrients such as selenium, zinc, and lycopene are essential for the health and function of your prostate.

The Simple Solution

With daily use, **PROSTATE REVIVE** makes it simple to support normal prostate health and function. With better control and fewer trips to the bathroom, you may even sleep better.

PROSTATE REVIVE® Users Speak Out*

Many users write to praise this prostate support formula.

"Had trouble urinating and it took forever. Had to get up 6 times a night. After using **PROSTATE REVIVE** for 2 weeks everything is good. I feel it is perfect. I have used other brands and not one of them worked like yours."
Kenneth F., California

"I'm so happy with **PROSTATE REVIVE**, there aren't enough words to describe it. Fantastic!" ***Manuel L., Tennessee***

"**PROSTATE REVIVE** keeps my bladder under control, so I don't feel the urgency to urinate anymore. I feel more alert and wake up restful, ready to go ahead with my day." ***Luis C., New York***

"I took it for 6 weeks and my PSA level went way down." ***Ramon G., Wisconsin***

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United States Army

Romay Johnson

TOP: Four members of the 6888th prepare to head out in a jeep. Johnson, who grew up driving her family car, drove vehicles at Camp Breckenridge, Kentucky, where she worked in the motor pool. RIGHT: PFC Johnson stands outside her Camp Breckenridge barracks where she served before heading to Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, for overseas training.

bunks to the floor. Johnson could hear things rolling around in the ship. "We were told that a torpedo had been fired and that's why we lurched," she said. "Those torpedoes went under the ship."

Finally, after 10 miserable days at sea, the *Il de France* pulled into harbor at Glasgow, Scotland. Greeting the women as they walked down the gangplank were their leaders, Major Charity Adams and Captain Abbie Noel Campbell. Lieutenant General John C.H. Lee, General Dwight D. Eisenhower's logistics chief, and Brigadier General Benjamin O. Davis, the highest-ranking African-American officer in the American Army, also showed up. More importantly, Red Cross women were there to serve them coffee and doughnuts. Pfc Johnson's sea adventure had ended. Her land adventure had just begun.

Romay Johnson, from King George County, Virginia, east of Fredericksburg, enlisted in the U.S. Army at the age of 24. The only daughter of six children, she grew up in the country, surrounded by animals, particularly horses, dogs, and cats. Her five brothers, who called her "Sweets," often excluded her from their play. "I was always by myself," she said.

After graduating high school, Johnson wanted to be a doctor but saw no opportunity in that field. "I found out there was a lot of prejudice," she said, "and they didn't want me around." Instead, she took a job operating an elevator in a hospital. Later, she worked for the Bureau of Engraving in Washington, D.C. Her job entailed placing paper on an inked mat that had been engraved for currency. She would then pick it up and wave it in the air while the ink dried. "I was making money," she mused.

But the job offered no respite from racial prejudice. One day, a white coworker from Texas who did not like working with black women threw water over the ladies' room stall Johnson was using (federal buildings did not segregate). "I was going to beat her up," Johnson emphasized, "but I never got the chance to."

Instead, on May 18, 1943, Johnson volunteered for the U.S. Army. "I quit to go with the boys," she explained. Her five brothers had already joined the war effort. Her oldest brother Tom served with the United Service Organization (USO) in Hawaii, while Augustus had joined the U.S. Army before the war in an anti-aircraft unit in the South Pacific. Johnson's younger brothers also served. Preston joined the U.S. Navy, while Purcell and Stansbury joined the U.S. Marine Corps. Purcell served in the Central Pacific, but Stansbury never shipped out.

Johnson was sent to Fort Des Moines, Iowa, for basic training. The fort had originally trained white female officers but opened a segregated section for black female officers. By the time Johnson arrived, it was training enlisted women as well. Graduates would be part of the Women's Army Corps (WAC). Most of the women, including Johnson, were scared when they arrived, not knowing what to do or what to expect. "We were all star gazing," she recalled. She was fitted for a uniform and issued all her essentials. Her days were filled with calisthenics, marching, and learning to be a soldier. "It all went smoothly," she said, "Everyone was new to everyone."

She found the people at the fort friendly, and, since she was surrounded by Black women, she did not have to worry about the kind of prejudice she experienced at her last job. "I don't think anyone felt cheated," she said about enlisting. "No one thought they were mistaken by joining."

Once she completed basic training, Johnson traveled to Camp Breckinridge, in Morganfield, Kentucky, where she was assigned to the motor pool. She learned about vehicles and how to change parts. "I had to be smart," she explained. Having driven her family's Vauxhall four-seater car back home in Virginia, she enjoyed driving officers around the post. "I liked to be outside and free," she said. Once she got used to the post, it was smooth sailing wherever she went. Like many soldiers, she picked up smoking and enjoyed cigarettes while driving or waiting for her passengers. "When I was at the wheel I was smoking," she said. "It was comforting for me."

She only got into one accident. While driving the post's provost marshal, a soldier driving another vehicle burst through a gate and broadsided her car on the driver's side. Johnson's head hit the window handle. "I got a lick on the side of my face." Fortunately, the provost marshal, sitting on the other side of the car, remained calm throughout. "I commanded my

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car very well," said Johnson.

In the motor pool, Johnson was put in charge of a jeep, two staff cars, a weapons carrier, and a truck she affectionately named "Cassandra."

"I called them mine because they were assigned to me." She spent her off hours reading, knitting and crocheting. "I never ventured out." One day, someone gave her a black-and-white dog, which she loved to play with. "No one else wanted it," she said. "I was a tomboy."

Having grown up in the hardscrabble South, Johnson did not drink Coca-Cola and didn't appreciate people asking her for money to buy their own. One day, a fellow WAC named Nancy bothered her for change for a Coke. "Johnnie, gimme a dime," she asked. Johnson refused. Nancy kept asking and Johnson kept refusing. Then, Nancy got angry. "Go on, Johnnie!" Nancy threatened her. "Go on!" and shoved Johnson into the corner of a post. Johnson broke into tears. "I cried," confessed Johnson. "I'm my momma's baby." Johnson went to retaliate against Nancy, but the other women in the barracks separated them.

One of the female officers entered and lectured the two women on their behavior. In another incident, while working, several women were very noisy, laughing loudly and playing in the workroom. The officers scolded them, but the women lied and blamed Johnson for the noise. Even though she strongly denied being a part of the noisy group, she was still reprimanded for defending herself because she would not stop talking. "I was so angry about that since it was not my personality," said Johnson. "That's how I lost my stripe."

When Johnson learned that the Army was looking for Black women willing to go overseas for a war-related assignment, she volunteered. "Some of us wanted to go," she recalled. She had to go through personality and character testing and training. Once she passed, she traveled to Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, for overseas training. After training, she and the unit took a train to New York City, where the women boarded the *Il de France* for the harrowing journey across the Atlantic.

When Johnson and the other Black WACs stepped onto Scottish soil, on February 12, 1945, they became the first all-Black, all-female WAC unit to serve overseas during World War II. Unaccustomed to African-American women in the war zone, the newspapers insultingly referred to them as "Tan WACs" and "Negresses." A series of busses took the women to their new home in Birmingham, England—the former King Edwards Boys School. Because of Birmingham's vital industrial and manufacturing centers, the German

National Archives

The women of the 6888th sort packages in Rouen, France.

Luftwaffe had bombed it during the "Birmingham Blitz" from 1940 through 1943.

To drive home the realities of war, the women were given a tour of the city. "You could see the damage," remembered Johnson. Their tour guides pointed out the places on the sides of the roads where dead bodies were stacked liked logs for pickup after the raids. "Those were the [body] parts they could find," she said. "It was amazing what they had to endure."

One month after their arrival, the women were organized into the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, tasked with catching up a backlog of mail, filling several warehouses, that had failed to reach soldiers in Europe for almost a year. The women were given only six months to clear the warehouses and process the mail. "We had to be on the ball," Johnson explained. "We sorted that mail for different companies. We had envelopes for this service company or that headquarters company and we would send it off in bunches."

The women went to work. Each of the battalion's four companies worked one of three eight-hour shifts, around the clock and through the weekends. Unlike other Black units, the 6888th had no white officers, making it unique in the European Theater of Operations.

It was tough work. The windows in the freezing warehouses had all been painted black, to camouflage them from the Luftwaffe. Most days in Birmingham there was no sun since British winters were mostly overcast, cold, and damp. "I was too cold all the time," said Johnson, even though she had been issued winter fatigues. "It was an icy cold that penetrated you." Johnson, who had suffered bouts of pneumonia growing up, found herself sick with bronchitis. "I would get hoarse and cough and I shivered all the time." She never got used to

the cold. Her only relief came around noon, if the sun came out to warm things.

Under Major Charity Adams, the battalion kept a disciplined schedule. "She was strict," said Johnson. "She had to be strict." Adams did not hesitate to address a soldier if she acted up or was not doing her job. "She fussed at me because I wasn't used to women and their particularities."

Johnson made three good friends while in Birmingham, although in 2020 she could not remember their full names: Mamie Lewis, Barbara, and another girl she remembers as "Butch." Mamie was a scrawny but lively four-foot-tall woman. "She was always asking me, 'Johnnie, whatcha doing?'" said Johnson. Barbara was fun, while Butch was a tall, skinny, fair-skinned woman who liked to see how other people lived. "She was just my speed," explained Johnson.

But Johnson did not get along with all the women in the unit. "Some did mischievous things," said Johnson. "They would tease each other and make noise." One day, when the women got too loud in the mail sorting room, an officer marched in and the women said, "Johnnie did it!" The officer looked at Johnson and told her to be quiet. "The women called me 'crybaby,' I wasn't used to rough women," said Johnson. "I was trying to keep them quiet." When she later complained to the officer, the woman told her she would get used to it.

For enjoyment, Johnson spent her free time visiting a local family that had a five-year-old son. They would invite her over for dinner and she would play with the boy. He showed her how to draw ducks and taught her how to dress figurines in muslin fabrics.

Although the war in Europe was winding down, world events could still shake the women. On April 12, 1945, the women of the 6888th were hit with the heartbreaking news that President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who had seen the United States through the Great Depression and darkest days of World War II, had died. "We knew he was sick," said Johnson, but we didn't want him to die." Two days later, on April 14, the unit held a special formation and a memorial prayer for the fallen president. "We were very sad."

The sadness of mid-April was replaced by sheer joy in May 1945, when the Germans surrendered to General Dwight D. Eisenhower at his headquarters in Reims, France. The war in Europe was over. "Everybody was pleased and excited," explained Johnson. "I thought about the number of people killed and those [people in Birmingham] left on the side of the road."

Soon after the surrender, the 6888th completed its mission. They had accomplished their

National Archives

A member of the 6888th checks the identification card of an American soldier outside the battalion headquarters gate in Rouen, France, on May 26, 1945. The women were housed in a former French barracks.

six-month assignment in only three months. The battalion had done it by maintaining an average output of between 60,000 and 70,000 letters and telegrams per day. More women had arrived to help process the mail, so that by the time they were done the unit numbered 848 WACs. Johnson and the rest of the 6888th proved that Black women would pitch in and help their country during a global crisis.

Even though the war in Europe was over, there were still two million Americans on the continent who needed their mail. The women were given a new job and new location. They were sent to France, this time to redirect mail for soldiers, not only those in Europe, but also those who had already returned home since VE Day, referred to as "SNAFU" G.I. mail.

When the women walked down the gangplank in Le Havre, France, on their way to Rouen, a battalion of African-American soldiers greeted them, sparking hundreds of reunions between brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, cousins, fiancés, and a father and daughter. Since Johnson's brothers were serving in the Pacific, she had no reunion. Once in Rouen, Johnson witnessed the effects of modern combat on an ancient city. "It was horrible," she said. "There was nothing but shell holes and only some trees standing."

The women were housed in the Saserne Tallandier, a former French barracks. They went to work again to break up the logjam of mail and packages. The experienced women again accomplished it in three months. With their task complete, the war over, and most Americans heading home, Johnson and the rest of the 6888th headed to Paris to await their turn to head home.

Johnson enjoyed Paris, with its cafes and museums. "I remember almost living in the museums," she said. "I could speak a little French." While sightseeing in Paris one day, Johnson saw General George S. Patton, Jr. The general's staff car, escorted by a pair of motorcycles, had stopped at an intersection. Someone

pointed the women out to Patton and explained who they were. "He greeted us," said Johnson.

Johnson took advantage of her time in Europe by visiting Switzerland for a few days with her friend Butch. She further took advantage of the opportunities the U.S. Army provided by taking courses in fashion design so she could go home with a skill.

Johnson returned by ship to New York harbor, where one of her brothers met her and drove her to her Aunt Lola's house in Harlem. "She was screaming that I was home," recalled Johnson, "and she asked all kinds of questions." Johnson found herself repeating stories to her aunt more than a dozen times. The reunion was not all happy. When Johnson went out to her brother's car, she found that someone had stolen her Army foot locker. "I had everything stolen from me!"

Johnson returned to her parents' home in Virginia, where she reunited with her brothers. They all came home safe, except for Purcell, who returned from Japan with chemical burns on his skin. "He had been a big hunk of a male," said Johnson, "but he would get very ill and his skin would peel off." For treatment, they covered his skin with mesh screens that Johnson thought looked like mosquito nets. "He suffered tremendously and we couldn't touch him."

Johnson took advantage of the GI Bill to attend the New York Fashion Institute, where she encountered some intolerance. "The pattern maker didn't like me," she said. "They never had people like us before in their classes." Later, she spoke with a Jewish man who owned his own shop, making jodhpurs (polo pants). They discussed pattern making, and he thought she would enjoy learning how to make patterns. He recommended she attend the Traphagen School of Fashion near Times Square. She took his advice and graduated in three years.

In 1953, she took a job at Glen of Michigan, a children's-clothing manufacturer in New York City. "I did the designing and pattern-making." She also traveled the country, buying fabrics and obtaining fashion ideas.

While working in New York, Johnson attended a party where she met a man named Jerry Davis, a carpenter for the New York subway system. They soon fell in love and, in 1957, married. "He taught me how to laugh," said Johnson. They remained married for 42 years, until Jerry passed away in 1999.

After 30 years with Glen of Michigan, Johnson went on to make suits for a Florida couple based in New York for another five years. While working, Johnson constantly sought to improve herself. In 1959, she gave up smoking. She earned a Master's degree in Education from New York University in the 1970s. She taught herself taxidermy, worked as a real estate agent, built furniture, and learned to paint things other than ducks. At age 78, she earned a second-degree black belt in taekwondo.

As a member of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, Johnson was a pioneer, helping to lay the path for future generations, making the Army the diverse reflection of America it is today. At age 101 in 2020 and retired in Montgomery, Alabama, Johnson looked back on her service in World War II with pride.

"I enjoyed my service," she said. "Everyone should have the experience to know what it was like to be in the military." But for all experiences in Europe during World War II, it was that Atlantic storm she remembers most. "I will never, never, forget that experience." □

Kevin Hymel is a historian for the U.S. Army. He is the author of Patton's Photographs: War As He Saw It. *He leads tours of General George S. Patton's European battlefields for Stephen Ambrose Historical Tours. He has written several articles on the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion.*

By Glenn Barnett

Wikimedia

Another Way to Bomb Germany

During Operation Outward, British balloons brought fire and power disruptions to Germany and occupied Europe.

AN OLD ENGLISH ADAGE STATES THAT "IT'S AN ILL WIND THAT BLOWS NO ONE ANY GOOD."

Such was the case when a gale pounded England on the night of September 17, 1940. Several barrage balloons, protecting against German bombers, broke loose and were carried by the tempest across the North Sea. When they came to earth in Sweden and occupied Denmark, their trailing metal ropes caused power outages as they fell across electrical lines. The outages interrupted rail service and traffic lights and even disabled a radio antenna.

The incident spawned a new weapon.

Official complaints from Sweden reached the British government and were included in a report to the War Cabinet. Reading of the damage caused by the balloons, Prime Minister Winston Churchill ordered a study to determine whether balloons could be used to cause destruction in Germany.

The Air Ministry distrusted the idea, believing that balloons would interfere with their own plans. The Navy, however, believed the idea held promise. The Admiralty carried out meteorological studies that quickly confirmed that from 16,000 to 25,000 feet, the prevailing winds blew from west to east, preventing the Germans from using balloons to retaliate against Britain. Germany did not have access to latex rubber to make its own balloons in any event. It was also determined that the winds were most reliable in winter, when electricity use in Germany would be at its highest, magnifying the damage.

Two methods of using of these devices were considered. The first use of the balloons would be to trail a thin steel wire. If the balloons could be made to skim the ground, there was a good chance they would pass over electric power lines. The steel wire—actually piano wire—could then short out the power in the vicinity, damaging Germany's power system and diverting manpower to guard it and repair the damage.

The second type of balloon payload would be incendiary bombs, which could ignite fires in the farmlands and forested regions of Germany. This, again, could divert German manpower to monitor these potential fires.

The weather balloons, when inflated, were eight feet in diameter (compared to the 30-foot diameter of the more famous Japanese fire balloons). Crude but effective mechanisms were used to keep the balloons above 16,000 and below 25,000 feet until the time they were calculated to reach Germany, based on the current speed of the wind. They were then made to descend by releasing hydrogen until they dropped their incendiary payload or, in case of the wire-carrying balloons, skimmed across the ground. There, a mineral-oil drip would lighten the load and maintain a neutral buoyancy, keeping the balloon in the air so that it could reach and short circuit power lines.

The wire balloons released a 700-foot length of lightweight, 1/16th inch hemp rope that in turn was tied to a 300-foot length of piano wire. Ideally, the wire would drag across the ground until it encountered power lines.

The fire-bomb balloons would carry small incendiary devices that could burn in rural areas. There were three types of these bombs, called beer, jelly, and socks. The "beer" bomb consisted of a cylindrical canister filled with eight half-pint glass bottles of white phosphorus, benzene, water, and a strip of rubber that formed a stopper. A slow-burning fuse, lit just before releasing the balloon, would tip the canister over, allowing the bottles to fall out when the balloon reached German skies. When the glass shattered, the phosphorus would ignite on con-

Royal Navy WRENS and other women in the British military were already involved with the barrage balloon program when Operation Outward was initiated.

Jackpot! Hoard of 1883-O Morgan Silver Dollars Found & Secured

138 Years Old (Just $0.72 Per Year!)

Mintage accounts for only 1.33% of all Morgan Silver Dollars Struck!

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- ✓ Minted in New Orleans
- ✓ 1883 date
- ✓ 138 years old
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- ✓ Certified collector Mint State-63 (MS63) condition by NGC/PCGS
- ✓ Sealed in protective holder
- ✓ 1883-O accounts for just 1.33% of all Morgans Struck

Actual size is 38.1 mm

The Morgan Silver Dollar is the most popular and iconic vintage U.S. coin. They were the Silver Dollars of the Wild West, going on countless untold adventures in dusty saddlebags across the nation. Finding a hoard of Morgans doesn't happen often—and when it does, it's a *big deal*. So when we came across a recent hoard of 710 Morgan Silver Dollars—all struck at the historic New Orleans Mint in 1883—it was like hitting the jackpot!

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In 1859, Nevada's Comstock Lode was discovered, and soon its rich silver ore made its way across the nation, including to the fabled New Orleans Mint, the only U.S. Mint branch to have served under the U.S. government, the State of Louisiana and the Confederacy. In 1883, some of that silver was struck into Morgan Silver Dollars, each featuring the mint's iconic "O" mint mark. Now you have the chance to add these historic, 90% pure U.S. silver coins to your collection!

Scarce 1883-O Date

The Morgan Silver Dollar was struck from 1878 to 1904, and again in 1921. In the 100 years since, most of these beautiful U.S. Silver Dollars have been worn out or melted down for their silver. It's estimated that as little as 15% of all Morgans struck exist today in any condition. Even fewer come from this particular mintage.

Here's the breakdown: in 1883, just 4.33% of the total Morgan series was struck. Less than a third of those coins came from New Orleans. In the end, the 1883-O Morgan Silver Dollar accounts for just 1.33% of the entire series—and that's *before* the mass meltings that have left so few coins for collectors to secure. And we can expect that even fewer of the survivors are of collector grade...

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Coins are graded on a 70-point scale, with a 70 representing perfection. Through hard work and diligence, the collector who first assembled this hoard managed to find 1883-O Morgans graded as quality Mint State-63 (MS63) condition by the world's two leading third-party grading services, Numismatic Guaranty Corporation (NGC) or Professional Coin Grading Service (PCGS)! Grading service varies. The condition of these coins are as though they were struck yesterday, despite circulating in commerce more than 135 years ago! And yet they have survived with a quality level of eye appeal that won't cost you an arm and a leg.

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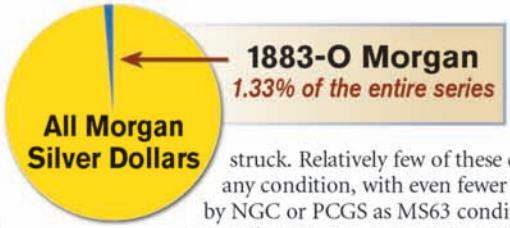

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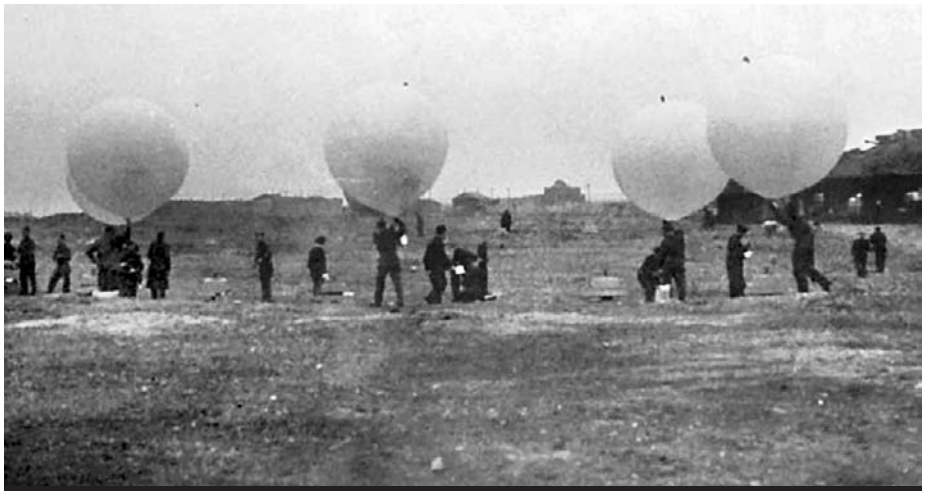

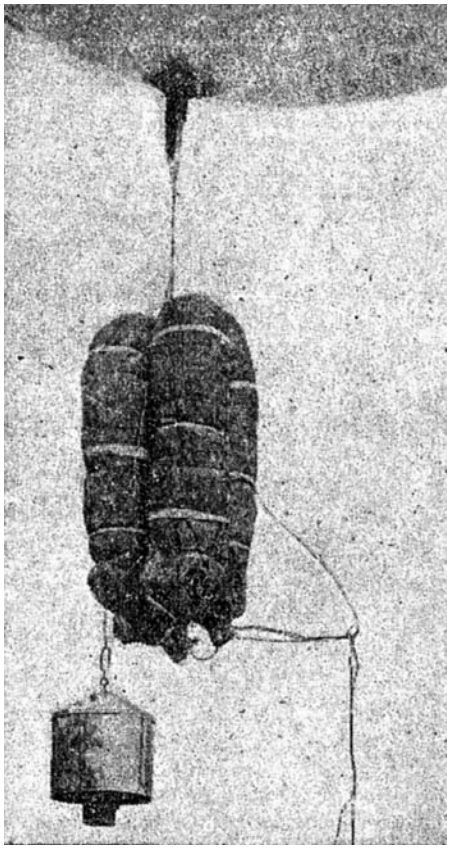

ABOVE: Near the coastline at Felixstowe, Suffolk, military personnel prepare to launch weather balloons carrying bombs. The prevailing winds were expected to take the lethal airborne packages over the Third Reich. RIGHT: This British balloon has been outfitted with incendiary material hanging below. The incendiaries were intended to start fires in forests and towns across Germany.

tact with the air and burn whatever it touched.

"Jelly" bombs consisted of four and a half liters of incendiary jelly in a petrol can. A slow fuse would ignite the jelly, and a fireball would burn everything within a 20-foot diameter.

"Socks" were tubular canvas bags of incendiary material resembling sausages, each weighing six pounds and soaked in paraffin. Three of these were attached to a balloon. Upon release, each sock would take on a "V" shape that, it was hoped, would snag on a tree. Fuses at either end of each sock would cause it to burn white-hot for up to 15 minutes. As it happened, the Royal Navy had about 10,000 of these socks left over from a cancelled program.

Having studied the possibilities, the British Chiefs of Staff approved Operation Outward, as it was officially known, in September 1941. The first balloon launches took place on March 20, 1942. The site for assembling the first balloon weapons was the naval facility at HMS Beehive, an on-shore facility near Felixstowe in Suffolk. The actual launches took place at the local Golf Club.

A crew of 230 men and women from the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRENS), the RAF Balloon Command (which grudgingly provided the hydrogen) and the Naval Meteorological Services were gathered for the purpose of preparing and launching the balloons. The WRENS were already active in RAF Balloon Command, assisting with the daily activities of the barrage balloons. Now 140 of them were assigned to the top-secret Operation Outward. They were housed in a vacated convalescent hospital, packed 16 women to a room utilizing bunk beds.

Tanks of hydrogen arrived at the golf course, where a crew of WRENS would fill the balloons with gas while getting covered by the annoying French chalk. They worked behind a triangular wind break made of canvas and wood.

To keep the balloons from rubbing against the canvas and creating static electricity—which could ignite the gas—the expanding balloons were sprayed with water while being inflated with hydrogen. Still, despite wearing protective gear such as a flash-proof jacket, a metal mesh hood, protective hand cream, and special gloves, several of the young women were burned when the hydrogen-filled balloons accidently burst. Others received "instant suntans." As a part of their training, the WRENS learned to fire the Lewis machine guns that surrounded the golf course for use as antiaircraft protection. Occasionally, a balloon would be released for their target practice.

The WRENS also liked to write rude messages on the balloons before they were inflated—"Balls to Hitler" or "Take this you bastards." Once inflated, the size of the messages became prominent. They also adopted as their theme songs popular tunes of the day, such as "I Don't Want to Set the World on Fire" by the Ink Spots.

Once filled with hydrogen gas, the balloons were transported to another part of the golf course, where they were mated with their payloads and released into the blustery sky toward the enemy. When released, the balloons and their cargoes rose quickly and grew in size until a built-in cord tightened to constrict the expansion of the balloons to keep them below 25,000 feet. At that altitude, the tightening of the cord would release some gas. The balloon would then start to descend. The slow-burning fuse would release the stopper in a container of mineral oil. The oil would slowly drip out so that the payload would lighten and slow the descent. The fuse would also release the fire bomb or wire.

When the balloons were first released, local civilians mistook them for German parachutes as if they were being invaded. It took a while to assure civilians that there was nothing to worry about while keeping the program secret.

The intelligence service listened closely to German radio traffic to learn the effect of these jerry-rigged devices. Underground sources in the occupied countries also reported what they witnessed. It wasn't long before the British learned of forest fires near Berlin and as far away as East Prussia and Hungary, as well as reported electrical outages. They also learned that the Luftwaffe had assigned as many as 250 fighter planes (in one case) to shoot the balloons out of the sky.

This was good news. It meant that the enemy was forced to dedicate precious fuel, aircraft, and pilots. These resources were diverted from offensive operations, and it cost the Germans far more to defend against the balloons than it cost the British to launch them.

In July, a second site was set up at a golf club near Dover, the closest approach to the conti-

nent. A third launch site was established at Waxham in Norwich. As the three crews became more efficient, up to 1,800 incendiary and wire-bearing balloons could be released in a day. All the while, the launches had to be coordinated with the RAF to be sure they were not in the air when a major bombing strike on the continent was taking place. By May 1944, the scope of operations was scaled back because of the increased Allied bombing over the continent. It was feared that the thousands of bombers and fighters might be endangered by the floating bombs. With D-Day near, balloon operations were curtailed drastically, and only a few launches occurred each day. By midsummer, all supplies of hydrogen gas were preempted by the RAF for use in barrage balloons around Normandy and elsewhere. Operation Outward used up the last of its hydrogen supplies in early September.

Altogether, during the life of Operation Outward 99,142 balloons were launched. About 10,000 more fire balloons went up than wire balloons, but both did their jobs. Perhaps Outward's greatest achievement occurred on July 12, 1942, when a wire balloon floated over a 110,000-volt power line near Leipzig. The trailing wire shorted a circuit breaker at the Böhlen power station, which ignited a fire and explosion that destroyed the power station and left a wide area without power.

There were a few accidents with the wind-driven bombs. One balloon got caught in an eddy and turned back over England, where its steel wire knocked out power for the town of Ipswich. Worse, on the night of September 19, 1944, one of the balloons, drifting over Sweden, caused two trains to crash. It was all the more tragic as September 4 was the last day the balloons were released.

Postwar analysis concluded that from the beginning of the operation until January 1943 (German records are spotty after that), there were 520 major disruptions to German high-voltage lines and more still in occupied territory.

Operation Outward was born in the desperation of the Blitz, when Britain stood alone. It was an inventive if crude way to strike back, and it worked. Far more damage would be caused by RAF and U.S. bombing, but at a time when Britain needed to subvert Nazi air superiority over the continent, the unpredictable balloons were just the thing. □

Author Glenn Barnett is a retired college instructor and aerospace engineer. He worked on the Apache helicopter, B-1B bomber, and Space Shuttle. He is a frequent contributor to WWII History.

American Armored Infantry stubbornly resisted days of German attacks near Rechicourt, France, leading to an award of the Medal of Honor.

Stubborn Defense at RECHICOURT

CHRISTOPHER MISKIMON

First Lieutenant James H. Fields, a 24-year-old from Houston, Texas, led the 1st Platoon of Company A, 10th Armored Infantry Battalion. The 10th fell under the 4th Armored Division in General George Patton's U.S. Third Army. For weeks in the late summer of 1944, Fields and his men chased retreating German troops across France toward the German border.

Now that border lay close by, and it seemed the Germans were not willing to flee across it just yet. The enemy still had some fight left in them; meanwhile, the American division had been forced to a halt due to fuel shortages. The Germans took advantage of the lull and counterattacked, hoping to prevent the advancing Americans from getting across the frontier into German territory. As the 4th Armored sought to stabilize its lines, refit for further action, and resume the attack, persistent German assaults continued.

On the night of September 26, 1944, Fields received orders to dig in as part of a new defensive line. He took his platoon to a gently sloping hill near the French town of Rechicourt. Moving at night always meant a risk of blundering into the enemy, but the move had to be completed. The battalion could afford no holes in its line; the Germans were expert at infiltration and would take advantage of any gap they found. First Platoon moved out cautiously through the night. Soon, Fields had his choice of position made for him. Ahead in the dark, voices could be heard, and they were speaking German. To press farther meant an unacceptable risk of a meeting engagement at night with an unpredictable outcome. The young lieutenant told his men to dig in where they were. The fight would come soon enough.

By late September 1944, a series of engagements around Arracourt finally ended in a stiff

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Private Kenneth Boyer, a tank gunner in the 37th Tank Battalion, sits atop his M4 Sherman northeast of Arracourt, France on September 26, 1944. The fighting around Rechicourt began that night.

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-301-1970-29; Photo: Hasse

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ABOVE: Exhausted soldiers of the 10th Armored Infantry battalion move out after the fighting at Arracourt in September 1944. TOP: German panzergrenadiers of the 111th Panzer Brigade relax and clean their weapons prior to going into action against American tanks and armored infantry at Arracourt, France, in September 1944.

defeat for the German Army. These actions were among the few large-scale tank battles in Western Europe during the last nine months of World War II. The Battle of Arracourt occurred due to American fuel shortages and a German miscalculation mixed with a healthy dose of desperation. In early September, Third Army ran out of gasoline. Its headlong pursuit of the defeated Germans retreating from Normandy came to a sudden stop. Allied logisticians were simply unable to keep it supplied with enough fuel to maintain the advance.

Available fuel and delivery vehicles were mainly diverted to British forces to the north under Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, in part due to the forthcoming Market Garden offensive in the Netherlands. While Third Army paused to gather the fuel needed to resume the offensive, the Germans decided to strike. Hitler wanted to conduct an "offensive from the move," a term that really meant counterattacking while retreating.

When the Third Army stopped, the Germans mistakenly assumed that the Americans were preparing for a major attack to pierce the German border. They were unaware of their enemy's fuel shortages; many German generals considered Patton the best Allied general and could not conceive the Allied high command would deny Patton needed supplies in favor of Montgomery.

Since they assumed the American pause was only to stockpile supplies for the next advance, the Germans decided to mount a spoiling attack against Third Army. This led to the Arracourt engagements and a major defeat for Germany. Despite new, powerful armored vehicles such as the PzKpfw. V Panther medium tank, German armored forces were no longer the juggernaut that had rampaged across France in 1940. While the Germans consolidated their shattered tank units, the Americans formed a defensive line until they could resume their offensive.

The terrain around Arracourt consisted of farmland, mostly flat but with some small hills dotting the area. Small towns and villages sat between the sprawling farms along with a few wooded areas. The American centered their defense on the hills, mainly a short line of them extending from Bezange past Rechicourt and ending at Hill 318. By late September, the weather turned rainy for days on end, with fog appearing most mornings. This turned the surrounding fields into small seas of mud—tough going for men and vehicles alike. Significantly, the poor weather also frequently prevented the Americans from receiving air support.

As the 4th Armored Division's Combat Commands A and B dug in east of Arracourt around the village of Juvelize on September 24-25, 1944, German units from the veteran 11th Panzer Division readied their attack. A month earlier, the 11th Panzer Division had fought in southern France as part of Army Group G when Operation Dragoon, the Allied landings, occurred on August 15, 1944. When Army Group G retreated north toward Germany, the division provided security, conducting a skillful rearguard action. Though they arrived too late to take part in the Arracourt fighting, the unit, now assigned to Fifth Panzer Army, was in place to continue the attack against the consolidating U.S. 4th Armored Division.

The 11th Panzer Division had lost almost all its tanks during the long retreat, but the unit's infantry had suffered relatively few losses, and it still had most of the halftracks and trucks for its four panzergrenadier (motorized infantry) battalions. The 11th Panzer also assumed operational control of the remnants of Panzer Brigade 113, a tank-and-infantry unit that had suffered heavily in the previous fighting around Arracourt.

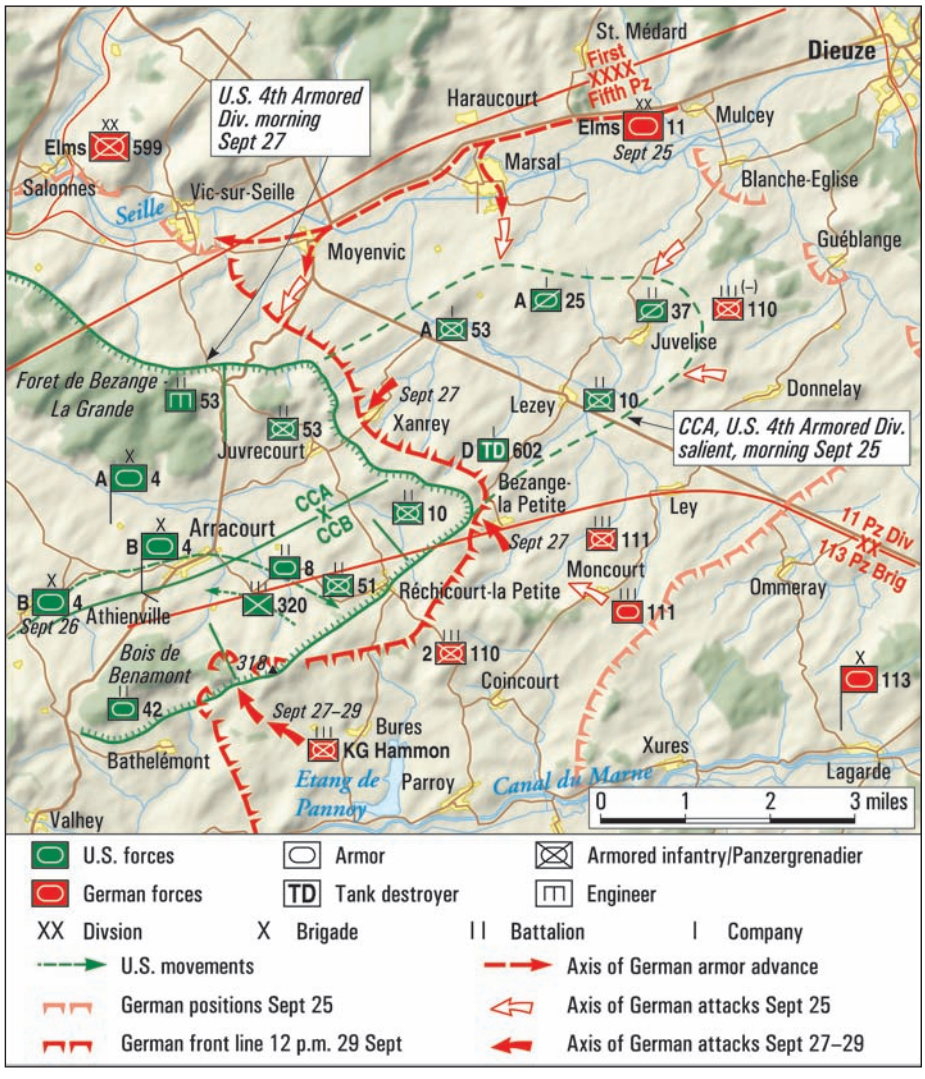
Fifth Panzer Army assigned the 11th Panzer Division the task of eliminating the American salient around Arracourt. The survivors of the 113th joined Panzergrenadier Regiments 110 and 111 in a wooded area southeast of the salient and a second area just north of it. During the morning of September 24, while the panzer division moved into place, the neighboring 559th Volksgrenadier Division attacked the 4th Armored's Combat Command B. The assault began with a heavy artillery bombardment at 8:30 AM, followed by two battalions of infantry supported by about 30 panzers.

Due to heavy cloud cover, the Americans used artillery to blunt the German attack. However, at 10:00 AM two squadrons of Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighter-bombers found a hole in the clouds and dove on the attacking Volksgrenadiers. Planes roared in as low as 15 feet above the ground and made skip-bombing attacks on the panzers. Afterward, they circled around to make strafing runs. After 15 minutes the surviving Germans retreated as the Americans gathered 194 prisoners. Total German losses amounted to an estimated 300 killed, 500 wounded, and 21 tanks lost. General Patton recommended a Medal of Honor for the pilot who led the strike.

German army-group command ordered renewed attacks for the 26th. German reconnaissance discovered an unoccupied crossroads town named Moyenvic, so that became the first objective. The Germans were unaware that American forces had abandoned the town the day before as part of a consolidation of their lines. Moyenvic fell so quickly and easily that the area commander, General Hasso von Manteuffel, ordered his troops to continue their advance. Attacks went in all along the salient, most of them no more than a battalion of infantry with a few tanks, but they were all repulsed.

Steady rain interfered with the Germans again on the 25th, hampering their attacks as the Americans attempted to pull back to their new lines. To facilitate the withdrawal, Colonel Bruce Clarke of Combat Command A staged an "Orson Welles Attack," a reference to the famous hoax *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast of 1938. His headquarters aired false radio transmissions, many of them uncoded, to convey the idea that a large American counterattack was about to occur. Several companies of tanks from the 37th Tank Battalion made intentionally noisy movements to reinforce the subterfuge. This allowed the Americans freedom to withdraw to their new lines, which were shorter and more easily defended.

For the 4th Armored Division, this meant creating a line around the town of Arracourt, site of their recent victory. Its perimeter formed a small salient in the German lines with the division's three armored infantry battalions—the 10th, 51st, and 53rd—pushed out several thousand yards from the town. To the northeast the 53rd dug in between an engineer unit on its left and the division's cavalry reconnaissance squadron on its right. Next to the cavalry the 10th formed a curving line that turned near the village of Bezange-la-Petite and ended at



After fuel shortages halted offensive operations temporarily, the American defenders at Rechicourt held their perimeter against repeated German counterattacks in the autumn of 1944.

Rechicourt-la-Petite to the southeast. The 51st took up the line on the 10th's right along the rise known as Hill 318.

The 8th and 35th Tank Battalions took up positions behind the infantry, ready to react to enemy movements. The 4th Armored's other tank battalion, the 37th under Lt. Col. Creighton Abrams, battered in earlier fighting, withdrew for rest and reconstitution. American armored divisions lacked enough infantry to form good defensive lines, so the Americans had to do their best, reinforced by the armor from the tank battalions. The original salient extended farther, but the GIs were pulled back over the course of September 24-25 to shorten their lines into a more defensible disposition. Even with the shortened lines, there were gaps that had to be monitored by frequent patrols.

On September 26, as 4th Armored attempted to finish reorganizing its units, a German column of halftracks, tanks, and armored cars appeared. With the GIs still not fully consolidated, forward observers used artillery to break up the attack. The German column fell back before it could even get organized, losing eight armored vehicles. The heaviest German assault came against the 10th Armored Infantry in the hills overlooking Bezange-la-Petite. Panzers with infantry support tried to

force the Americans from the hills, intending to occupy the high ground.

B Company's command post had to move after being hit by intense enemy artillery fire. German infantry tried to flank the American positions, but artillery pummeled them while U.S. tank destroyers struck at both panzers and enemy infantry alike. The rainy weather made it even harder for both sides. Still, fighting lasted the entire day, ending only after dusk when even the German artillery ceased firing. Panzergrenadiers kept trying to infiltrate the 10th's positions for the rest of the night.

Wednesday, September 27, dawned with clearer weather. The thick mud slowly started drying, and at 10:00 AM the panzergrenadiers began the day's action. The mud still proved a hindrance to vehicles, so their halftracks stayed behind. Manteuffel wanted the hills captured, since they overlooked German positions to the south. He ordered 11th Panzer's commander, Generalleutnant Wend von Wietersheim, to form another *kampfgruppe* (battle group) to join the attack. Wietersheim organized the remnants of Panzer Brigade 113 and the division's reconnaissance battalion into Kampfgruppe Hammon and deployed them against Hill 318, occupied by C Company, 51st Armored Infantry.

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ABOVE: U.S. armored infantrymen dismount from their halftrack to go into action. American troops rarely rode their vehicles into combat but did use their machine guns for support. TOP: A German halftrack from the 11th Panzer Division's reconnaissance battalion lies knocked out and stripped after the fighting in Lorraine, France in late 1944.

Supported by the 2nd Battalion of Panzergrenadier Regiment 110, Kampfgruppe Hammon infiltrated through a farm at the base of the hill and soon reached the summit. Artillery fire crashed down on the Americans. Combined with the bad weather and mounting exhaustion, the GIs' morale began to wane; the battalion reported 17 battle fatigue cases that day. Yet the Americans stayed in their foxholes and fought back, stopping the Germans. The crest of Hill 318 remained the focus of the fighting for the next few days. At 1:15 PM the Americans spotted a rare occurrence: a trio of German planes overhead. Appearances by Luftwaffe aircraft were quite rare by that time, but the GIs on Hill 318 did not hesitate to fire at them with every small arm they had. German attacks continued overnight, leading to short, sharp duels with hand grenades and machine guns.

Two thousand yards east, the 10th Armored Infantry had its own problems. Panzergrenadier Regiment 111 occupied Bezange-la-Petite below the American positions on Hill 265, overlooked by C Company. Farther west near Rechicourt, the enemy focused on A Company's position. The company was badly understrength; its 3rd Platoon had only 15 men left. It seemed 1st Platoon would suffer the same level of attrition when a large force of panzergrenadiers attacked. Machine-gun and artillery fire lashed the Americans, pinning down most of them in the foxholes their leader, 1st Lt. James Fields, had told them to dig the night before.

As the incoming fire flashed above his head, Fields told his platoon's medic to stay down. Despite this, when the medic heard a nearby GI call out for help, he got up and went. Within seconds bullets struck the medic, leaving him gravely wounded. The officer crawled from his slit trench to help the stricken medic, but he was dead. As Fields crawled back to his trench, a shell exploded nearby, raising a huge gout of muddy earth into the air. A fragment from that shell hit Fields in the side of his face. It tore through his teeth, gums and nasal passage, leaving him unable to speak. He could have easily and justifiably chosen to evacuate for treatment; no one would have blamed him. Instead, he stuffed gauze into this mouth to control the bleeding and stayed to lead his platoon. Fields used written notes and hand signals to give orders.

Soon afterward, a pair of German machine guns caught Fields' platoon in a crossfire. Once again, he got out of his slit trench and ran to a nearby .30-caliber machine gun, its crew killed

or wounded earlier in the battle. Taking up the 31-pound weapon, he held it at his hip and started firing bursts at each enemy machine gun. The weapon chattered as dozens of bullets flew at the Germans. Empty brass cartridge cases ejected from the weapon, piling at the young lieutenant's feet.

Firing from the hip is not generally the most accurate way to use a machine gun, but Fields wielded his with such precision that both German weapons were soon silenced. His men were so impressed by this display of bravery they joined him, even though it exposed them to more enemy fire. The GIs grabbed more machine guns and even a few bazookas and laid into the attacking Germans. This combined fire finally broke the panzergrenadiers, who fell back scattered in disarray.

With his position at least temporarily secure, Fields finally consented to be evacuated. Taken to the battalion command post, Fields refused to leave until he explained the disposition of his soldiers. Using paper and pencil, he sketched a diagram showing where his men were along with those enemy positions he could locate. Only then did he let the aid men take him for treatment. Lieutenant Wilson from C Company transferred to take his place.

Fields' bravery earned him a Medal of Honor, the first awarded to a soldier in Third Army. Patton later mentioned Fields in his autobiography, *War As I Knew It*, stating he did not want Fields returned to the front since he believed men awarded the Medal of Honor or Distinguished Service Cross would attempt to replicate their acts of bravery and get killed. With typical Patton style, the general added, "In order to produce a virile race, such men should be kept alive."

The battle continued after Fields' evacuation. A panzer rolled up to 1st Platoon's foxholes and fired round after round, trying to blast the Americans out of their defenses. The GIs responded with rifle and machine-gun fire, killing the tank's commander when he rose from his hatch. The hail of bullets also forced the rest of the German crew to close their own hatches and killed or wounded all the panzergrenadiers accompanying the enemy tank on its sortie.

With their infantry support lost, the German tankers retreated to a safer distance, found a defilade, and continued shelling the Americans. Nearby, a few U.S. tank destroyers sheltered with C Company, but heavy tank and artillery fire kept them pinned, and the crews refused to move to A Company's position and engage the panzer, which pummeled 1st Platoon until it was forced to withdraw to new positions closer to Rechicourt.

National Archives

A Third Army M4 Sherman engages German targets with its 75mm cannon west of Arracourt in late 1944.

The situation became so precarious the A Company commander, Captain Thomas J. McDonald, decided to contract his perimeter to make it more manageable. It proved a sensible decision. His company's original positions were under observation by German forward observers, who continually called down heavy artillery fire. The day's fighting also knocked out all the radios and field telephones, leaving McDonald unable to reach his battalion headquarters. Things were made worse by the loss of all their medics, leaving no one to properly tend the many wounded. In all, A Company lost almost half its strength in less than two days of fighting, starting the battle with 224 men and ending with 116.

The northern side of the American salient, manned by the 53rd Armored Infantry Battalion, fared better on September 27. They repelled a German night attack with little trouble, but at 10:00 AM the 1st Battalion of Panzergrenadier Regiment 110 attacked from behind the village of Xanrey, directly in front of A Company, 53rd. The Germans advanced steadily for about 1,800 yards but ran into an artillery barrage from six battalions of guns assigned to support Combat Command A. The intense bombardment stopped the panzergrenadiers cold; the infantrymen retreated in disorder back to Xanrey, covered by their supporting panzers.

The GIs watched as their opponents took cover in the small village, and it occurred to them Xanrey made a good jumping off point for further enemy attacks—too good, in fact, to remain standing. The 35th Tank Battalion of Combat Command A formed a task force from several tank companies with two platoons of infantry for support. The GIs intended to "burn Xanrey to the ground."

The raid went in during the early afternoon. M4 Sherman medium tanks charged past the village and then turned right into it, firing as they went. They quickly overwhelmed the defenders and blasted the buildings with cannon fire. The tanks' coaxial and bow machine guns cut down German troops as they fled eastward from Xanrey. The infantry followed close behind and cleared the town while two platoons of tank destroyers covered them from the hills. The task force commander, Lt. Col. Oden, estimated 135 German troops lay dead in the village before the Americans withdrew to their starting point near the village of Juvrecourt behind the 53rd's foxholes. The 35th lost two tanks to mines during the attack.

The 11th Panzer plan for September 28 was simple and came straight from General Manteuffel. The Germans were to take the hills along the southern side of the salient and break through to Arracourt. The Americans had plans of their own, however, and a dawn counterattack by the 51st Armored Infantry retook the crest of Hill 318. Kampfgruppe Hammon retreated at first but launched its own counterstrike and retook the hilltop soon after, using the remains of some old World War I-era trenches as cover to move up. The GIs dug in on the reverse slope and fended off three more attacks throughout the morning, finally regaining the crest about noon.

The weather cleared as well, allowing American airpower to reappear over the battlefield. Squadrons of P-47s launched strikes on the German-held ground south of Hill 318, making 107 sorties. The German were using the village of Bures, some 1,500 yards south of the hill, as a staging area. The American fighter-bombers flattened the town with bombs and rockets, strafing any concentration of troops they saw. These air attacks badly disrupted German efforts to reinforce their men on Hill 318, who also suffered a lack of artillery support that day. The batteries had to move overnight to new positions, and the forward observers did not arrive until late on the 28th.

Late in the afternoon, the Germans launched yet another assault, but the American artillery blasted the attack well short of its goal. After dark a combined force of panzergrenadiers and panzers took the southern side of the hill, forcing the Americans over the crest onto the northern side of Hill 318, where they were promptly hit with a bombardment by newly placed German batteries. In response, 4th Armored Division massed four battalions of guns and pounded the entire southern slope of the hill, following with an attack by the 51st. The GIs occupied the south side of Hill 318 by midnight and held against scattered attempts to retake it the rest of the night.

The 10th Armored Infantry suffered several attacks by the Germans as well that day. One German sortie forced one of A Company's platoons to retreat, but this left the Germans vulnerable to artillery, which the Americans quickly called down, stopping their opponents cold. By now General Wietersheim could tell his men were on the brink of exhaustion and asked General Manteuffel to allow him to end the attacks and let his men rest. If not, Wietersheim feared the division would become ineffective.

Manteuffel, under pressure from the high command in Berlin to get results, refused. The day's remaining attacks against the 10th Armored Infantry failed due both to the troops' exhaustion and a lack of fire support. Most of 11th Panzer's artillery was out of range. Efforts to use the division's reconnaissance battalion and some of Kampfgruppe Hammon to reinforce these attacks bogged down for unknown reasons.

The Americans also suffered as more of their own tired troops succumbed to battle fatigue, mostly among the infantry on the front line. The combination of little sleep, no hot food, and bad weather took its toll. Despite these problems, the GIs held through the night as German patrols probed the line for weak spots. Help came from the 25th Cavalry, which sent their own patrols in front of the line to screen it from the Germans. The cavalrymen carried out reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance missions through the night. Meanwhile, the Germans also focused on bringing up reinforcements to help their battered units in the next day's attacks.

By early morning September 29, those reinforcements assembled near the ruins of Bures. They included a battalion of panzergrenadiers, the divisional reconnaissance battalion, a company of combat engineers, and all the remaining armor from two shattered panzer brigades.

National Archives

BELOW: A camouflaged German Pzkpfw. V Panther tank lies along a road outside Bures, France. After their defeat around Rechicourt, German troops retreated through Bures but were savaged by American air and artillery firepower. RIGHT: General George Patton decorates Lt. James Fields with the Medal of Honor for his bravery at Rechicourt, the first awarded to a member of Third Army in Europe.

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-301-1954-15; Photo: Kurth

The Germans managed to amass 20 Panther and 18 PzKpfw. IV tanks along with 11 Flakpanzer IV self-propelled antiaircraft guns in this sector, though it is unlikely all of them were operational. This force set out against Hill 318 before dawn. A thick fog settled over the area, limiting visibility to about 40 feet.

The men of the 51st Armored Infantry still sat atop the hill, listening to the sound of tank engines in the darkness. Not far behind them, the crews of the 8th Tank Battalion sat in their M-4s, struggling to stay dry and warm. Captain Eugene Bush of C Company said, "It sounded as if enemy armored vehicles were coming right into my area." Ahead of him the Germans attacked the 51st, pushing it steadily back during several hours of fighting. By 10:15, the GIs had been pushed 500 yards back, and the Germans controlled the crest of Hill 318.

The GIs suffered heavy casualties, and soon the 8th received orders to send two companies forward to support the infantry. The tanks had trouble coordinating movement in the fog and mud, so the Combat Command B commander, Brig. Gen. Holmes Dager, ordered them not to move over the crest until the fog lifted. This became a moot point for A Company, whose tanks were stopped by heavy German fire.

When the tank and infantry commanders noticed the fog was not dispersing, they realized the Germans were using smoke generators to thicken the haze. A forward outpost also reported the enemy was moving forward in strength. When the fog finally lifted at 11:00 AM, Captain Bush and C Company realized they were already on the crest. German mortar fire immediately started landing around them. In the open ground below the hill, Bush could see German tanks gathering for another attack. He requested air support.

Luckily, a tactical air liaison officer went with the tanks that morning. Trained in coordinating with pilots and directing air strikes, he called in squadrons of fighter-bombers to assist the beleaguered GIs. The first groups of planes to arrive had little effect. Diverted from a mission over the nearby city of Metz, the planes carried propaganda leaflets and had only their .50-caliber machine guns available. The next aircraft to arrive, from the 405th Fighter Group, carried rockets and bombs, which they used to critical effect, destroying several tanks before they could make their attack on Hill 318. The heavy bombing also forced a few German tanks out of some woods they were using for concealment. An American forward observer quickly called down artillery fire, destroying them.

Captain Bush watched the fighter-bombers do their work and later said, "The Air Corps really did the trick!" Still, he did not allow his tank crews to be mere spectators; C Company opened fire on the German armor at the base of Hill 318, adding to the mayhem. The company claimed six enemy tanks knocked out that day. The 51st estimated roughly 240 German dead littering Hill 318 and the fields below.

National Archives

A GI examines a knocked-out Sturmgeschutz III assault gun south of Rechicourt. Such vehicles often replaced the more effective tanks in the depleted German forces in late 1944.

General Wietersheim described the furious action at Hill 318, adding a lament about the situation. "In a few minutes 18 of our tanks and several armored personnel carriers were burning! Our own infantry retreated, strangely enough not pursued by the enemy…. As a result, any chance of winning our objective had been frustrated. We had suffered losses that could have been prevented if only we had been satisfied with the line already gained which was suitable for the defense."

To the east, renewed attacks against the 10th Armored Infantry focused on A and C Companies. After hours of fighting, the GIs fell back to the reverse slope of the hill but grimly held onto those positions until dusk. This combination of airpower and determination finally turned the tide. The German troops, exhausted, battered and demoralized, retreated in disarray. Some units simply fell apart. Many German soldiers began to fear the Americans would counterattack and trap them with their backs against the water of a canal to their rear.

Only four panzers remained operational, and the few surviving flakpanzers had no effect on the continuing air attacks. The German reconnaissance battalion commander, Major Karl Bode, had a nervous breakdown. A neighboring division had to set up a straggler line to gather all the fleeing panzergrenadiers, who were still being rounded up the next day. The report to General Manteuffel stated directly, "Hill triangle lost. Troops exhausted, need rest." Further attacks against the Americans at Arracourt were cancelled at 11:00 that night.

The Battle of Arracourt was a costly defeat for the Germans, using resources they could not spare. The attacks during the last week of September were a continuation of that wastage, throwing away irreplaceable men and armored vehicles in a desperate attempt to regain the initiative. Several German commanders had recently arrived from the Eastern Front and were unaware of the Americans' ability to mass airpower and artillery against enemy concentrations. They paid dearly for their experience.

The Americans, though suffering from combat exhaustion and a lack of fuel, used their advantages to maximum effect. Combined with the determination of the GIs in their foxholes, it proved decisive. □

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DUEL IN THE DESERT

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The desert sky lit up like a summer lightning storm on the night of December 31, 1941. The distant thunder of hundreds of guns rolled across the sandy, stony ground. The assault force of New Zealand tanks and South African infantry prepared to move forward through breaches in the barbed wire and minefields protecting Axis positions before the much-fought-over Libyan coastal town of Bardia. The final British push had begun.

The South Africans were untested but enthusiastic. They were led by a former South African police officer and attorney, Pierre de Villiers, a strong believer in the use of firepower over manpower. He had served in the Great War, and in 1928 he had been appointed a lieutenant colonel in the South African police, later succeeding to the post of commissioner. De Villiers volunteered for military service when World War II started, and eventually took command of the 2nd South African Infantry Division as a major general in October 1940. He oversaw training of the division, which incorporated a police battalion, and supervised the division's transfer to North Africa in 1941.

The British Eighth Army's second Libyan campaign, dubbed Operation Crusader, began on November 18, 1941. The XXX Corps, under Lt. Gen. Willoughby Norrie, launched the main attack with the mission of destroying Axis armored forces between the Libyan-Egyptian frontier and relieving the besieged British garrison at Tobruk. Meanwhile, the British XIII Corps, under Lt. Gen. Reade Godwin-Austen, comprising the 4th Indian Infantry Division, 2nd New Zealand Division, and 1st Army Tank Brigade, undertook a secondary attack to contain Axis forces in the Bardia-Sidi Omar-Halfaya Pass triangle, close to the border. In reserve was the 2nd South African Infantry Division.

North Africa had been fought over relentlessly by the British and Axis powers for more than a year. The fighting began in September 1940 when the Italian Tenth Army, under Marshal Rodolfo Graziani, invaded Egypt from its

As Operation Crusader erupted on the Egypt-Libya border, an eager but untested force of Commonwealth troops prepared for a renewed drive on the Axis-held stronghold at Bardia.

BY ALLYN VANNOY

bases in Libya. It was part of Italian dictator Benito Mussolini's vision of a new Roman empire—"That great reward for which Italy is waiting," as Il Duce put it. With Great Britain fighting for its life against relentless German Luftwaffe assaults on the home island, Mussolini hoped to grab Egypt, long a British protectorate, before the Nazis could complete their victory in western Europe. To share in the fruits of that victory, Mussolini needed his own battlefield triumph. "To be able to attend the peace conference as a belligerent," he explained to Marshal Pietro Bagdolio, chief of the Italian General Staff, "I need a few thousand dead."

He would soon get his wish. After Graziani chose to dig in at Sidi Barrani, 60 miles inside Egypt, rather than continue all the way to Alexandria as originally planned, the British mounted a spirited counterattack in December 1940. In two months' time the British, led by resourceful Lt. Gen. Richard O'Connor, smashed the Italian advance, capturing 130,000 prisoners and taking the major fortresses at Bardia and Tobruk. Adolf Hitler, alarmed and annoyed at Mussolini's ineffectual empire building, dispatched General Erwin Rommel to North Africa in February 1941. Rommel, en route to becoming a legend as "the Desert Fox," counterattacked the British in turn, driving them out of Libya, capturing

ABOVE: British Commonwealth soldiers take cover briefly during operations against the Axis stronghold of Bardia. Operation Crusader led to bitter fighting in Libya in 1942. OPPOSITE: German and Italian troops guard the entrance to Bardia, Libya. The North African stronghold would be fought over repeatedly during the war.

O'Connor in the process, and besieging Tobruk. That was the situation on the ground when General Sir Claude Auchinleck took over British forces in northern Africa in mid-1941 and prepared to launch—with Prime Minister Winston Churchill's enthusiastic support—Operation Crusader four months later.

While the armored elements of XXX Corps

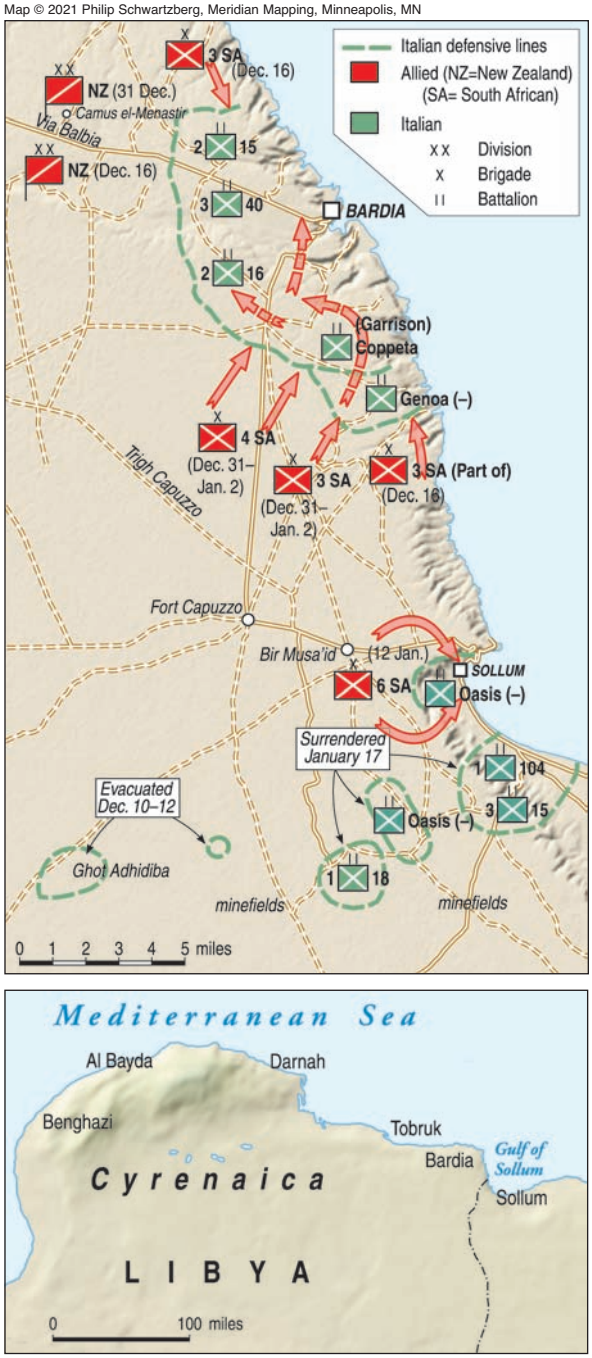
forced the German and Italian divisions back toward Cyrenaica and El Agheila on the Gulf of Sirte, Axis positions in the triangle held firm, threatening British supply and communication lines and effectively immobilizing one full division of Commonwealth troops. On November 23, the 5th New Zealand Brigade, advancing east from Fort Capuzzo toward Sollum, cut off Axis positions at Sidi Omar-Sollum-Halfaya Pass, effectively isolating Bardia. The next day, Axis-fortified positions on the southern anchor of their defensive line at Sidi Omar and Libyan Omar were attacked and reduced by elements of the 4th Indian Division. Axis forces at Sollum, Bardia, and Halfaya Pass continued to hold out.

The 1st New Zealand Division occupied the Fort Capuzzo area south of Bardia and northwest of Halfaya Pass, and moved additional detachments between Bardia and Sollum and to the west of Bardia. The division had contained the Axis forces at Bardia early in the campaign, but British headquarters decided that these troops were needed farther west to assist XXX Corps. The 2nd South African Division, which had been protecting the line of communication along the Egyptian coast, was ordered to relieve the 4th Indian and 1st New Zealand Divisions. The South African division was directed to contain and reduce Axis positions around Bardia.

Although classified as a motorized unit, the 2nd South African Division in reality had only enough transport to carry one of its three brigades at a time, and movement was therefore somewhat slow. However, the division managed to take over the Omars area on December 3. Leaving a small garrison there, it sent a two-battalion brigade forward on December 4 to occupy positions in the Bardia area, and another two-battalion brigade occupied the Fort Capuzzo area five days later.

A good-size portion of the division—one infantry brigade, one infantry battalion, and one regiment of field artillery—was still at the British railhead southwest of Sidi Barrani, at Bir el Thalatha in Egypt, awaiting transport. On December 9, the division occupying the area between Bardia and Capuzzo had available for action only two infantry brigades (less one battalion), one regiment of field artillery, and an attached New Zealand armored cavalry unit with a few armored cars and just four tanks.

No attempt was made to invest Bardia at the time, since the possibility of an Axis counterattack from the west was still a threat. Instead, six mobile combat teams were organized, each consisting of a platoon of three armored cars, a battery of field artillery with four 25-pounders, a platoon of four 2-pounder antitank guns, a company of motorized infantry, and a detachment of engineers.



TOP: British Commonwealth troops, approaching from the south, bore the brunt of the fighting at Bardia. ABOVE: A view of North Africa, where the British Eighth Army began its remarkable comeback in late 1941. OPPOSITE: Wrecked buildings on the shore of Bardia Harbor reflect the intensity of the fighting during Operation Crusader.

These teams were instructed to clear Axis troops from Gambut, about 40 miles due west of Bardia, all the way to the coast. Special attention was to be paid to the wadis (dry stream beds) running north to the sea. By December 15, they had accomplished their mission, destroying a total of 38 Axis tanks, 34 of which were found unprotected at an enemy repair depot. During this period, the South Africans continued to maintain armored-car patrols around the Bardia perimeter and between Bardia and Sollum. On December 15, the 1st Royal Durban Light Infantry Battalion and two companies of the division's machine-gun battalion moved up to Bardia from the Omars region and Fort Capuzzo.

The Libyan port of Bardia was well fortified, the Axis troops having had several months to establish defensive positions and reinforce strongpoints. The ground offered little or no cover for attackers, the perimeter defined by deep wadis. Axis positions were well concealed, dug in, and prepared for all-round defense. In addition to presenting a formidable perimeter, the defenses also featured some 90 strongpoints, cemented in and heavily wired. In many cases, these were strengthened by deep antitank ditches protected by large numbers of mines.

On December 16, the Rand Light Infantry Battalion carried out a reconnaissance-in-force on the Bardia perimeter, approaching along the coast from the north, with the Royal Durban Light Infantry from the south. During the reconnaissance, a third battalion was held in reserve on an escarpment to the west of the perimeter, and two machine-gun companies from the Cape Dutch Machine Gun Battalion supported the action with long-range fire. Both the north and south reconnaissance battalions reached the wire, blew gaps in the line, and penetrated a short distance into the perimeter. These penetrations were immediately met with considerable resistance by the Axis garrison, and the South Africans subsequently withdrew.

In preparation for operations against Bardia, the South African division was reinforced by an additional artillery battalion of 25-pounders and one of 6-inch guns on December 17. On the same day, the British forces captured commanding high ground about 1,500 yards west

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of the perimeter and held on despite numerous Axis counterattacks. The loss of the key position prevented the Axis troops from observing the attackers' activities to the west, north, and south. The position was of corresponding importance to the South Africans since it afforded a good observation vantage of a major portion of the Bardia defensive perimeter. The ground was now set for battle, but preparations for the assault were just getting under way.

Between December 17 and 31, the South Africans initiated an intense harassing effort while also gaining valuable intelligence. Constant shelling and machine-gun fire, uninterrupted night patrolling, and the blowing of gaps in the wire around the perimeter all served to confuse the enemy about the time and place of the planned assault. The New Zealand Cavalry Regiment added to the confusion by ostentatiously demonstrating within full view of the perimeter, with four tanks on the escarpment to the west and armored cars to the south and southwest. A portion of the 2nd South African Division troops continued to contain enemy forces in the area of Halfaya-Sollum while the remainder of the division prepared for the final assault on Bardia.

The division assets available for operations against Bardia included five infantry battalions, a reconnaissance battalion, two companies of the division's machine-gun battalion, a light antitank gun regiment equipped with 2-pounders, all available division artillery (11 batteries of 25-pounders), four batteries of medium artillery (three 6-inch guns and one 4.5-inch), and two battalions of the New Zealand Cavalry Regiment with 114 tanks (Mark III Valentines and Matildas). The tank force represented a substantial portion of the Eighth Army's operational armored assets at the time.

As the South Africans made final preparations to assault Bardia, Operation Crusader was drawing to a close. Heavy fighting back and forth across the Libyan desert between Tobruk and the Egyptian border had finally broken the German-Italian mobile forces. Rommel was making a fighting withdrawal to El Agheila, stubbornly maintaining lines of communication and avoiding being cut off and surrounded. Left in the wake of the British advance was not only the garrison at Bardia, but also pockets of Axis troops at Sollum and Halfaya Pass. These positions represented a thorn in the side of the British that had to be removed in order for the Eighth Army to secure its own lines of supply and continue advancing along the coast.

De Villiers's initial plan of attack at Bardia contemplated an assault down the coastal plain by his South Africans, following the Tobruk-Bardia road, cutting off the northern portion of the perimeter and continuing south. However, when he was promised two full battalions of infantry tanks instead of two companies, the increased armored strike force allowed him to change his plan to an attack from the south. The broad, flat escarpment leading into Bardia from the west presented the most favorable approach for tanks; it was the same ground the British had used during an attack in the previous year. Every effort was made to cause the defenders to expect just such an attack, and a large portion of the defenders' antitank guns were sited to cover this approach.

De Villers's new southward plan of attack was in the hands of subordinate commanders by December 24. Troops were then withdrawn from the line by individual companies and rehearsed in their roles to ensure absolute timing and coordination. The plan provided for three forces—one each to the north, west, and south—which were ordered to "hold, demonstrate, and contain" the enemy forces. The main attack was to be made by a reinforced brigade on the southern perimeter, jumping off at 0500 hours on December 31. In advance of the assault, an artillery bombardment was to be laid down by warships of the Royal Navy standing by offshore.

De Villiers's opposite was a 53-year-old Bavarian, Maj. Gen. Arthur Schmitt, another World War I veteran and a proven field ordnance commander. He had been given command of the 556th Rear Area Command, subordinate to Panzer Group Afrika. Because Rommel was short of senior German officers and did not trust the Italians to defend Bardia, Sollum, and Halfaya Pass, he chose Schmitt to command the eastern sector instead. Schmitt's command, designated Division Bardia, included 4,200 Italians from the Savona Division and 2,200 Germans,

mostly in administrative services. Although of limited mobility, the defenders were a formidable force, well-equipped in terms of guns and artillery. The Axis units included infantry, engineers, 86 pieces of artillery of various calibers, a detachment of 13 tanks, and service troops. German forces within the perimeter included the 106-man 10th Oasis Company, supported by six 75mm, three 37mm , and three 47mm guns; the 200th Pioneer Battalion; the 33rd Flak Troop with three 88mm dual-purpose guns; and the 5th Light Flak Troop with 16 20mm guns.

Italian forces included the III Battalion of the 40th Bologna Infantry Regiment and the II Battalion of the 15th Savona Infantry Regiment, each with about 600 men and four 65mm guns; elements of the II Battalion of the 16th Savona Infantry and the Coppeta Battalion; the 4th Genoa Cavalry Group with 870 men and 48 machine guns; a company of the 5th Light Tank Battalion with 13 light tanks; an antitank company with eight 47/32 guns; a heavy battery of four 105mm coastal guns; and assorted other support troops. Italian 20mm Breda guns were dug in on reverse slopes, with good fields of fire that could catch tanks and troops coming over the rise to their front. Although isolated from the rest of the army, typically excellent German planning ensured that supplies and water were plentiful and the morale of the Axis troops was good.

The South African plans called for the assault to be carried out in three phases. Phase 1 was to consist of an entry into enemy defenses at two points along the southern perimeter, with the attack coordinated by the commander of the South African 3rd Infantry Brigade. Phase 2 called for an advance on high ground along the southwestern perimeter. The final phase included mopping-up operations on any positions that had been bypassed or that continued to resist.

De Villiers firmly believed that firepower was the key to success in battle. He wanted no more personnel to be used than was absolutely necessary to take a position or secure an objective. To ensure communications and to prevent damaging phone lines, buried conduits were dug in staging areas through which tanks would have to travel, and wires were laid openly along routes where it was unlikely that tanks and Bren carriers would pass. Radio communication was also to be used extensively with packradio sets, similar to U.S. Army walkie-talkies, with a range of about two miles. Realizing that the best-planned communication systems could break down, de Villiers saw to it that a number of runners were also standing by.

Engineers were thoroughly trained to support the initial breakthrough. Ample carrying parties were to be provided from the infantry to bring forward engineer stores and explosives prior to the attack, while engineers prepared lanes through the Axis minefields along the perimeter. After the breakthrough, engineers in Bren carriers were to accompany the tanks in order to deal with any minefields they might encounter.

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-434-0908-11A; Photo: Ernst A. Zwilling

ABOVE: German soldiers man a Panzerjager I in the Libyan desert near Bardia. Mounting a 47mm anti-tank weapon atop the chassis of the Panzer I tank, the Panzerjager I was among several tank destroyer/assault gun vehicles developed by the Germans during World War II. OPPOSITE: Bayonet-wielding Australian troops rush through the ruined streets of Bardia in search of stray Axis soldiers.

The main assault force consisted of the 3rd Brigade commanded by Brig. Gen. C.E. Borain, and included three battalions—the 1st Imperial Light Horse, 1st Rand Light Infantry, and the Kaffarian Rifles. Support and containment was to be provided by three groups, codenamed Northforce, Kingforce, and Southforce. Northforce, commanded by Lt. Col. J. Butler-Porter, included the 1st Royal Durban Light Infantry, supported by the New Zealand Cavalry Regiment. Kingforce, under Lt. Col. W. Kingwell, included a company of infantry and two platoons of the 7th South African Armored Reconnaissance Battalion and one squadron of the New Zealand Cavalry Regiment. Southforce, under Maj. P.J. Jacobs, included the 7th South African Armored Recon, less one company and two platoons. In reserve was the 1st South African Police Battalion under Lt. Col. R.J. Palmer. Corps artillery attached included the 234th Battery of the 64th Medium Regiment Royal Artillery, 67th Medium Regiment Royal Artillery, 68th Medium Regiment Royal Artillery, and elements of the 41st Survey Regiment, Royal Artillery.

During the night of December 30-31, one tank battalion, accompanied by infantry and engineers, moved to the assembly areas, the tanks about 1,000 yards to the rear of the infantry. At H-hour minus 3 hours and 5 minutes, the engineers and two infantry battalions, the 1st RLI on the right and the 1st ILH on the left, began their movement forward to the line of departure—a road running 300 yards to the south of the perimeter wire and almost parallel to it.

On a given signal, designated infantry teams assisted in carrying forward bangalore torpedoes and engineer equipment. The troops arrived at their line of departure without incident. At H minus 135 minutes, artillery fire opened in conjunction with a heavy bombardment by the Royal Navy from the Gulf of Sollum. Between H minus 110 and H minus 70, the engineers blew a series of gaps in the defending wire. The infantry crossed the line of departure at H minus 90, then took up a position forming a salient about 400 yards inside the Axis perimeter.

In the rear of the newly established line and under cover of infantry and artillery fire, the engineers widened the five gaps they had opened in the wire, cleared lanes through minefields, and blew the sides of an antitank ditch to create paths for their armor. The tanks arrived at the ditch only seconds before the time

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fixed for launching the attack and, continuing through the wire and minefields, passed through the infantry.

The RLI Battalion followed the tank column on the right flank and encountered considerable resistance from a series of defensive positions in the southeastern section of the Phase 1 objective area. Leaving one company to clear out pockets of enemy resistance, it continued on to its objective. Mopping up was quickly accomplished, and the company rejoined the battalion by about 1000 hours. Meanwhile, the tanks with the right flank, moving behind an artillery, laid down smoke screen, changed direction according to plan, advanced to the northeast at the start of the assault, then made a hard left turn to the northwest as they continued their work of destroying enemy strongpoints and moving on.

The tanks with the left-flank column, having passed through the infantry, continued north, also behind smoke, on the right of the Sollum-Bardia road. A strong wind came up at this time, rendering the smoke screen less effective, with the result that the tank column took heavy losses from antitank fire in emplacements to the northwest. The tanks then swung around to the right and joined the right-flank tank column in cleaning out the area between the two attacking forces, while the ILH Battalion continued on toward its objective. The troops of the ILH Battalion did not receive much in the way of assistance from their tank detachment because the machines could not operate satisfactorily over the broken ground. In spite of this lack of tank support, the infantry reached its objective on schedule and immediately made contact with the RLI Battalion on the right.

Meanwhile, the Kaffarian Rifle Battalion, following the ILH Battalion on the left flank with the mission of establishing a flank position along the Sollum-Bardia road, received heavy fire from the northwest—the same area where the infantry tanks had come under fire. The battalion commander and the majority of the staff of the Kaffarian Battalion became casualties, and the battalion failed to make contact with the ILH Battalion in position to its front. The assault had reached a critical state. Despite its initial success, it was in some jeopardy of being broken.

Shortly after 1100 hours, de Villiers received word that companies of the Kaffarian Rifles were withdrawing to the wire. At about the same time, information was received that an enemy counterattack was forming to the northwest, in position to threaten his left-flank battalion. As a result, the infantry tanks were moved to the rear of the ILH Battalion to counter this new threat. The 1st SAP Battalion was also moved forward from division reserve to secure the flank in place of the Kaffarian Rifles, which was withdrawn for reorganization and placed in reserve.

Moving with deliberation, the Police Battalion succeeded in establishing a flanking position about 2,700 yards east of the Sollum-Bardia road, but could not reach the ILH Battalion to its front. By arrangement between the two battalion commanders, the Imperial Light Horse made contact with the SAP Battalion during the afternoon. The Axis counterattack from the northwest never materialized. The hard-fighting New Zealand tank battalion, with 50 tanks engaged during the first day of action, had 20 tanks lost or damaged, mostly in the left assault column. During the night, recovery operations managed to salvage three of the tanks.

The South Africans and New Zealanders had penetrated the German-Italian defenses at several points and pressed home their attack but had fallen short of securing their objectives. Despite the failure to reach its Phase 1 targets on December 31, de Villiers considered the situation favorable. Working feverishly through the night of December 31-January 1, his staff completed a revised plan for the second phase of the attack. The new plan called for a night attack to the northwest to be launched at 2200 hours by two brigades of infantry supported by tanks. The line of departure was to be the position already established by the 1st SAP and the ILH Battalions.

To carry out the plan, it was necessary to reorganize the attacking forces. In a daring move on the morning of January 1, the 1st RDLI Battalion, less one company, was withdrawn from the north front, moved around the Bardia perimeter, and put in the line between the 1st SAP and ILH Battalions. The Kaffarian Rifles was assigned to the left attacking brigade and moved into the line. Personnel of the Division Reconnaissance Battalion were dismounted and moved up to relieve the RLI Battalion on the right of the line, which in turn was placed in the line between the ILH and RDLI Battalions. After the rearranging, the units on

Continued on page 78

BY DAVID H. LIPPMAN

Major Julian A. Cook stood on the ninth floor of a power plant west of the Dutch city of Nijmegen and stared north across the 400 yards of the fast-moving Waal River at German defensive positions on the other side—the square turn-of-the-century Dutch Fort Hof van Holland, its machine-gun emplacements, 20mm guns, and dug-in troopers of the 10th SS Panzer Division.

Cook's 3rd Battalion of the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division's 504th Parachute Regiment had been ordered to send two companies across the Waal by assault boat to seize the Nijmegen rail and highway bridges that crossed the river east of the fort. A 27-year-old Vermont native, graduate of the West Point Class of 1940, and seasoned combat veteran, Cook thought, "Somebody has come up with a real nightmare."

Cook's incredible mission was intended to enable the British Guards Armoured Division to advance across the bridges and drive north to Arnhem to relieve the battered

THE 3RD BATTALION, 504TH PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENT MADE AN EPIC, HAZARDOUS CROSSING OF THE RIVER WAAL DURING OPERATION MARKET-GARDEN.

British 1st Airborne Division, which was clinging to precarious bridgeheads north of the Neder Rijn River, particularly at the Arnhem Bridge.

Possession of that would enable the British to drive west and silence the V-2 rocket sites in The Netherlands, and east into Germany to seize the Ruhr and its factories. Doing so would be the climax of Field Marshal Sir Bernard Law Montgomery's Operation Market-Garden, his most audacious plan and the largest airborne operation in history to that time—a 63-mile airborne carpet laid through German lines by more than three airborne divisions.

The problem was that three days since the September 17 opening airdrop and assault, Operation Market-Garden was going fearfully wrong. Monty's plan had depended on his paratroops and tankers gaining ground and achieving objectives with surprise against limited opposition. The two American and one British division had landed far from their objectives and found two SS panzer divisions holding them. Advancing British tanks were delayed when German engineers blew key bridges. Lt. Gen. Brian Horrocks' 30th Corps, leading the ground attack, battled up one main

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Dutch civilians gather on the edge of an 82nd Airborne Division drop zone near the town of Nijmegen as American paratroopers assemble and set of toward their Operation Market-Garden objectives. The Americans moved rapidly at first but ran into stiff opposition from troops of an SS panzer division and supporting enemy units guarding the road and rail bridges across the Waal River at Nijmegen.

Across the Wide River

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TOP: A British M4 Sherman medium tank of the 47th/7th Dragoon Guards passes the wreckage of a German PzKpfw. III tank along a dirt road on the edge of the Dutch village of Oosterhout. ABOVE: American soldiers glance at Dutch civilians who have emerged from their homes to observe nearby activity. The Dutch were overjoyed during the early stages of Operation Market-Garden, believing that their liberation from the Nazis was at hand.

road, called "Club Route" by his men and "Hell's Highway" by American paratroopers.

One major problem the Allied advance faced was the 1st Airborne Division's isolation at the top of the corridor. Cut off from 30 Corps and its support, they relied on supply airdrops that were not getting through because the Germans had overrun the drop zones—most of the supplies were landing in German hands. The Polish Parachute Brigade, expected to reinforce 1st Airborne, had been socked in by bad weather and fog in England, as had supply drops. Worse, paratroopers were not equipped to tackle the armored vehicles of the 9th SS Panzer Division.

At Nijmegen, the situation was different, but just as bad. The 82nd Airborne Division, under 37-year-old Brig. Gen. James "Jumping Jim" Gavin, the youngest division commander in the U.S. Army, was east of both Nijmegen and the heavily wooded Groesbeek Heights. His orders from British 1st Airborne Corps commander Lt. Gen. Frederick A. "Boy" Browning were to seize the heights first and then the highway and rail bridges at Nijmegen.

Once Gavin's two parachute regiments landing east of the heights were on the ground, they moved to take the heights and then move on into Nijmegen. There they found the 10th SS Panzer Division had beaten them into the city and entrenched around the bridges. Meanwhile, German troops emerged from the Reichswald, attacking Gavin's positions on the Groesbeek Heights. Ferocious fighting ensued, as Gavin's "fugitives from the law of averages" struggled to retain control of the heights and their supply drop zones.

The 82nd's isolation issues became moot on September 19, when the lead elements of the British Guards Armoured Division arrived after their delays, providing additional infantry and tanks for attacks in Nijmegen. But the fact remained that the Germans were holding both sides of a 400-yard-long highway bridge with some of the best-trained and equipped men in their inventory: the 10th SS Frundsberg Division, under SS Brigadefuehrer Heinz Harmel, who combined his battle-hardened men with the various training, antiaircraft, and garrison units in the city to create a formidable force with typical German flexibility. Harmel reported to SS Gruppenfuehrer Wilhelm Bittrich, commander of 2nd SS Panzer Corps, and above him, 1st Parachute Army Lt. Gen. Kurt Student. Over him was the commander of Army Group B, Field Marshal Walther Model, a stocky, coarse, monocled officer, whose headquarters at Arnhem had nearly been seized by British paratroopers on September 17.

Believing that the hodgepodge of reinforcements he was receiving would be able to launch a massive counterattack against the British and Americans, Model refused to blow the major road bridges on Club Route, intending to use them for the assault. These included the two structures at Nijmegen. Determined to eradicate the enemy assault, Model gave Student a terse order for the 20th: "Wipe out the Allied airborne force!"

Now Model's obstinacy backfired upon him. Battling Germans and a cracked spine suffered in his parachute jump, Gavin was determined to seize his two bridges. "If I did nothing but pour infantry and British armor into our end of the bridge," Gavin wrote later, "we could be fighting there for days and (1st Airborne) would be lost."

Gavin met with Horrocks and Browning on the 19th, and Browning—who had founded and commanded the 1st Airborne—firmly said, "The Nijmegen Bridge must be taken today. At the latest, tomorrow."

Gavin, Horrocks, and Browning discussed what to do, with Horrocks saying, "Jim, never try to fight an entire corps off of one road." All of his vehicles were snarled in bumper-to-bumper traffic for miles.

Nonetheless, Gavin presented his colleagues with a simple but audacious plan. The best way to take a bridge was from both ends at the same time. He would team up one of his best battal-

ions, Lt. Col. Benjamin Vandervoort's 2nd Battalion of the 505th Parachute Infantry, with the tanks of Lt. Col. J.N.R. Moore's 2nd Battalion of the Grenadier Guards and motorized infantry of Lt. Col. Edward Goulburn's 1st Grenadier Guards to drive north and onto the bridge. All three were veteran units. Vandervoort and his men had freed the first town in France to be liberated on D-Day, Ste. Mere-Eglise, while the Grenadier Guards had driven from Caen to Nijmegen.

These forces would make up the "holding attack" to pin down the German defenders in best American Fort Benning fashion, while the main assault would be launched by two companies of Cook's 3rd/504th, H and I, who would storm across the Waal River in assault boats, covered by smoke and steel from British and American artillery and tank fire by Lt. Col. Giles Vandeleur's 2nd Irish Guards. The 504th were no slouches, either. While missing D-Day, they had fought in Sicily and Italy.

Gavin wanted a pre-dawn assault on September 20. But now Horrocks' traffic jams let him down. Although the British general ordered his boats, further down in the column, brought forward immediately, they made slow progress at the hands of German shelling of Club Route. The assault crossing was delayed from pre-dawn, to 8 AM, then to 11 AM, and then to 1:30 PM.

Meanwhile, Vandervoort and the Grenadier Guards moved to seize the densely-populated city of Nijmegen, home to 100,000 people, most taking cover from shellfire, except for one: an elderly lady who emerged from her residence to tell the advancing Americans that she had been hiding a shot-down RAF flyer for months in her cellar.

After freeing the aviator, Vandervoort sent in his E and F Companies abreast with tanks, mortar, and artillery fire, against German strongpoints, anti-tank guns, and machine-gun nests. Vandervoort's men, formed into 13-man squads, battled 88mm anti-tank guns perfectly placed to fight off tanks and infantry, as well as about 500 fanatical SS grenadiers. American troops stormed into the top floors of buildings so they could direct machine-gun fire on German positions below. Other paratroopers hurled hand grenades through windows, kicked in doors, and cleared defended houses in room-to-room fighting.

Guards tanks added to the din and destruction with fire from their own 76mm guns and .30- and .50-caliber machine guns, spraying houses under attack.

Vandervoort was impressed by how his paratroopers and the Guardsmen worked so well together. Even so, the struggle was harsh. D Company's executive officer, Lt. Waverly Wray, who had always led by example and from the front since D-Day, did just that, taking a Bazooka team—including three officers—around the flank of some defending German tanks and through a rail yard; he was killed in the struggle. But his sacrifice enabled D Company, despite heavy casualties, to storm across the rail yard and attack dug-in German positions.

Meanwhile, Cook's two companies waited helplessly under cover for the boats to arrive. The attack had been postponed once again, to 3 PM. When Gavin briefed Cook on the plan, the angry major said, "Well, General, if you wanted men on the north bank of the river, it would have been very simple to have dropped them in the beginning." Cook, however, did not know that Gavin had considered that very possibility but was afraid of losing an entire infantry battalion if he had done so.

Now, as the 505th and the Guards struggled through Nijmegen, the 504th waited for the boats.

Cook's two companies prepared to cross the fast-flowing Waal at a point between Nijmegen's electrical power plant and the Nyma silk factory. They wondered when the boats would arrive, how many, and what they were made of.

Only the British knew it, but the boats were coming, the trucks carrying them avoiding German shelling, which blasted open one truck, cutting their numbers from 33 to 26.

SZ Photo

A German soldier sits at the wheel of a captured American Jeep while other troops ride atop several SdKfz. 250/1 armored cars. These heavily-armed troops rapidly regained the initiative after the early surprise of Allied airborne landings in the Netherlands and brought Operation Market-Garden to a halt.

Meanwhile, Cook's men peered through their binoculars or climbed the power plant to peruse the enemy before them. Staff Sgt. Robert Tallon, the battalion operations sergeant, rode the plant's elevator to the top and it became stuck. When he got it moving, he leaped off at the first available floor and jogged up to the roof. "I could pick out several camouflaged German emplacements," he said later. "It was an eerie feeling. I kept thinking over and over, 'This is suicide. This is just plain suicide.'"

The British tankers supporting the assault were worried, too, even though they didn't have to actually cross the river. Major Edward G. Tyler of the Irish Guards asked the 504th's C.O., cigar-chomping Colonel Reuben Tucker, if his men had ever practiced this type of operation before. "No," replied Tucker laconically. "They're getting on-the-job training."

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ABOVE: Citizens welcome armored vehicles of the British Guards Armoured Division in the Dutch town of Grave. These ground forces linked up with the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division and moved on to Eindhoven. OPPOSITE: British tanks of XXX Corps, under General Brian Horrocks, advancing along the narrow corridor toward the Waal River and the town of Nijmegen.

H and I Companies would lead the assault, H on the right, I on the left. I Company, under Captain T. Moffatt Burriss, would set up a left flank position. H Company would skirt around the German defenses and take the north end of the Nijmegen Bridge. The 2nd and 1st Battalions would follow to establish the rest of the bridgehead and take the less valuable rail bridge.

Now the British and American forces moved into position, even though the boats still hadn't arrived. The 82nd's 307th Engineer Regiment sent in detachments to row the boats.

The American paratroopers nervously awaited the boats while staring at the wide and fast-moving river, all deathly quiet. Captain Delbert Kuehl, the 504th's Protestant chaplain, insisted on crossing with the first wave. Other men showed their nervousness. Lieutenant Harry Busby took out a Camel cigarette, lit it with his valuable Zippo lighter, and tossed both the pack and cigarettes away, saying he would "have no need of them no more." He was right. An hour later he would be dead.

To relieve the tension, Cook told his men: "I'm going to stand in the prow of the boat like George Washington crossing the Delaware. Then I'll clench my fist, push it forward, and yell, 'Onward, men, onward!'"

Now, 15 minutes before H-Hour, the British trucks finally arrived. They were seven hours late. The paratroopers stormed the trucks to unload them.

The 2nd Irish Guards Sherman tanks lined up on the Waal's shore and started pasting the Germans with high explosives. British and Canadian rocket-equipped Hawker Typhoon dive bombers pounded German defenses. American artillery fire from the 376th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion and British guns from the 153rd Field Regiment added to the din and destruction.

Opening the trucks and unfolding the boats, the paratroopers were shocked. Lieutenant John Holabird recalled, "The boats were flat-bottom, with low canvas covered sides and bottoms. They looked pretty flimsy to me. But they were heavy; they had to be to carried by 16 men. We unloaded the boats off the trucks that brought them up and set them on the ground."

Each boat was 19 feet long with a flat, reinforced plywood bottom. The canvas sides measured 30 inches from floor to gunwales and were held in place by wooden pegs. The paratroopers took wooden staves attached to the plywood bottoms, swiveled them up, and secured the canvas sides to the staves. The flimsy appearance of these would-be assault craft stunned the paratroopers. Chaplain Kuehl asked the engineers how the boats were propelled. The answer was: canoe paddles. Loaded with helmets, rifles, grenades, and ammunition, the paratroopers lugged the boats down to the riverbank. Each one would carry 13 troopers. They had 20 minutes to prepare for the assault.

Captain Henry Baldwin Keep was called the "battalion millionaire" for being part of the Biddle banking and law family, but he was an 18-month combat veteran. He waited by his boat for the signal to go, watching dive bombers swoop down. The smoke screen didn't look very effective to him. "Suddenly a whistle was blown. It was H-Hour. Each boatload hoisted their boat onto their shoulders and staggered out across the flat top of the bank. Our job had begun," he recalled. Jammed in their boats, 520 paratroopers started paddling across the Waal.

At that moment, the machine-gun platoon of 2nd Battalion's HQ Company opened fire with their deadly .50-caliber Brownings, trying to keep the Germans' heads down. Major Cook led his men and their boats over the river's dike and into the drink. As soon as the boats hit the water and the men started paddling, the Germans realized what was going on and opened fire with every weapon they had. It was 100 yards from the top of the three-foot-high dike to the river's edge, which gave the Germans a rich shooting gallery, even before Cook's men were afloat.

British smoke shells were heavy and effective, but so were German guns, which had the enfilade advantage over the advancing American boats. The Germans began to find the range and brought down plunging mortar fire

Imperial War Museum

and high-velocity shells on Cook's boats.

The leader of this desperate assault, Major Cook, kept on rowing, praying out loud to maintain a stroke and cadence: "Hail Mary—full of Grace—Hail Mary—full of Grace," over and over again. Chaplain Kuehl said over and over again, "Lord, Thy Will be done." Captain Keep tried to remember his numbers from crewing days at Princeton, but wound up nervously counting: "7-6-7-7-7-8-9."

On shore, Horrocks, Browning, and Colonel J.O.E. Vandeleur—Giles's cousin—who commanded the Guards Armored Division's "Irish Group," watched in silence. "It was a horrible, horrible sight. Boats were literally blown out of the water. Huge geysers shot up as shells hit and small-arms fire from the northern bank made the river look like a seething cauldron," Vandeleur recalled. The tanks were at risk, too, out in the open, perfect targets for German antitank guns. "We were wide open," Irish Guards Major Edward Tyler recalled, "16 tanks silhouetted against the skyline."

A brisk wind ripped apart the 2nd Irish Guards' smoke screen, and the tankers were now running short of every type of ammunition. Giles Vandeleur remembered almost "trying to will the Americans to go faster. It was obvious that these young paratroopers were inexperienced in handling assault boats, which are not the easiest things to maneuver. They were zigzagging all over the water."

Despite their heavy weight in fire, the Allied attack caught the Germans flat-footed. The defenders were static troops cobbled together from Wehrmacht, SS, and Luftwaffe units—20mm antiaircraft guns and gunners, labor units, and garrison and training units. They had to rely on their existing, pre-built fortifications. Furthermore, German operational doctrine ruled that an assault river crossing required days, even weeks, of planning. The defenders were not prepared for how swiftly the Americans and British could improvise such a well-coordinated attack.

Now the 3rd/504th, despite heavy casualties, did what they set out to do. They neared the far shore and started leaping out of their boats onto dry ground to attack. Enraged paratroopers wasted no time hurling grenades at German machine-gun nests. One Landser (the German name for their troops) tried to throw one back but didn't know it was point-detonating. The grenade's explosion merely cleared a path for the advancing Americans.

Furious paratroopers stormed out of their boats, unslung their rifles, and charged up the north bank of the Waal, bayonets fixed. Sgt. George Leoleis of I Company led his men to attack a machine-gun nest at close range, knocking it out with hand grenades "and some trench knife handiwork." The surviving Germans fled, but Leoleis and his men chased them. Pfc. James Ward of Company H also struggled to get ashore, exhausted from the crossing, having done so with his rifle butt like everyone else in the boat. He shouted for other men to get off the beach and joined them.

Despite horrific losses and murderous fire, the Americans maintained their assault. They were temporarily devoid of unit organization; some were still shocked or even seasick from the river crossing, but all were superior to the equally disorganized defenders, which ranged from 15-year-old Hitler Youth to 60-year-old Volkssturm men. Lieutenant Megellas led his H Company troopers in a rough skirmish line, across 500 yards of flat, open terrain to reach their objective, a dike. The Germans raked it with small-arms fire. "Since there was no place to take cover, our only alternative was to charge in the face of this murderous fire and rout the enemy from their positions," he said later. Pfc. Walter Muszynki showed ample determination and courage by firing his .30-caliber light machine gun from the hip.

Across the Waal, British and American senior

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officers watched the heroism and horror through their binoculars and field glasses. Lt. Col. Vandeleur "saw one or two boats hit the beaches, followed by three or four others. The men got out and began moving across an open field. My God! What a courageous sight it was!"

On the north bank, medics struggled to care for wounded men. Their Red Cross armbands were little protection against distant German mortar fire. "The medics were the bravest men there, running around trying to help everybody," said Pfc. Herbert P. Keith, a wounded engineer. "I laid three hours before being picked up and taken to a first-aid station."

The paratroopers also paid tribute to the engineers who assembled, coxswained, and paddled the boats. "Most of us did get to the other side," said Pfc. Walter E. Hughes, "thanks to the efforts of some very brave engineers, who to me were the real heroes that day."

One of them was Staff Sgt. Warren G. Hayes, of Company C, 307th Airborne Engineers, who suffered a painful leg wound. Even so, he took command of the remaining infantrymen and got the boat to the north bank. There, he jumped out of the boat and pulled it ashore to save the wounded from drowning, all while under fire. That done, he organized a new crew to head back and pick up another boatload of troopers. He refused evacuation, making six round trips in all, and later received a Silver Star.

Only 13 of the 26 boats reached the north bank, but as soon as they did, the surviving engineers rowed back in those that could still float to pick up more men, bringing back the wounded. Technician 5th Grade Harry W. Nicholson of the 307th Engineers, badly wounded in the thigh, was so grateful to make it back to the south bank, he gave Private Ollie B. "Obie" Wickersham his trench knife with brass knuckles. Despite being hit in the hand by 20mm shrapnel, Wickersham made three round trips across the river that afternoon.

Even the Dutch Underground got involved. Pfc. Leonard Trimble was one of the wounded troopers brought back. He struggled to rise but slipped on the boat's plywood bottom. He saw three men rushing toward him through shrapnel. "There was never a more welcome sight in my life as these men approached me with their orange armbands, indicating they were Dutch Underground. They took me back to the nearest aid station," he said. Ambulances took the wounded Americans to Nijmegen army and civilian hospitals. The latter had dedicated nuns and girls working but lacked heat and electricity. Both were overwhelmed with wounded men—many died awaiting surgery.

On the north bank, 3rd Battalion was moving fast, deploying skirmishers against German guns 800 yards away, firing their Browning Automatic Rifles, machine guns, and rifles from the hip, and receiving support from Vandeleur's tank fire.

"Their constant overhead fire into the embankment where the Germans were ensconced was heavy and effective," said Captain Keep, the 3rd Battalion S-3. Lieutenant Edward Sims organized survivors of his Company H boat and another boat. A combined group of 18 men led a frontal assault on the dike, using rapid fire to overcome German weaponry. "Enemy fire was heavy," Sims said, "but the men with me did not falter. Their courage and determination was [sic] obvious."

On the left, Burriss's I Company stormed the 15-foot-high rail embankment, facing a harsh German machine-gun crossfire. Lt. Robert Blankenship saw one of them firing into I Company's left flank, so he moved across 100 yards of open ground, drawing the MG42's fire. He closed to within 50 yards and emptied his M-1 rifle's eight-round clip, killing the four-man crew. Then a German sniper five yards away shot at him. Blankenship lunged at the sniper with his fists and knocked him unconscious.

Lieutenant Burriss told his men to use their grenades in one mass attack, and they did, hurling them over the dike. "The earth underneath us trembled with the almost simultaneous explosions," he wrote later. "Then there was a moment of silence in front, followed by the screams of wounded Krauts. All along the line, other Germans stood up, ready to surrender.

"But it was too late. Our men, in frenzy over the wholesale slaughter of their buddies, con-

tinued to fire until every German on the dike lay dead or dying."

Under close-range pressure, the Germans got the point. Some began to flee their dugouts. Lt. Megellas was bandaging Sergeant Marvin Hirsch's arm when Sergeant William H. White of I Company yelled, "There go the SOBs—after them, men." Megellas approved the initiative, and White and his pals charged after the Germans.

"Our plan to reassemble at this point obviously went astray," Megellas wrote, "but I believe Sgt. White's ingenuity served to our advantage, since the enemy was not given an opportunity to regroup at alternative defensive positions." The men stormed a road, which was defended by the usual German combination of dugouts and machine guns. When the dike was overrun, Megellas assembled men to take the ancient square-shaped Fort Hof van Holland. Noting his losses on the way over, he thought, "It's payback time."

Megellas divided his force into two groups, one moving up the dike road while Megellas would follow just north of the road and meet him where the railroad and dike road intersected.

Simultaneously, Lieutenant Holabird and his engineers closed in on the railroad bridge, determined to prevent the Germans from sending it into the Waal River in a blast of explosives. They came up against two German pillboxes and attacked them from the sides, hurling grenades into their hatches to kill every one in them.

Major Cook and Captain Keep took 30 men across fields and ditches in squad rushes, racing for the Nijmegen road bridge.

The 504th had its bridgehead across the Waal, paying an enormous price for it. Now the paratroopers, American flag patches sewn on their sleeves, would finish their job, which would require neutralizing Fort Hof van Holland. Companies H and I now fought their way along the railroad embankment toward the rail bridge. Company I stormed toward the east side of the bridge, Company H the west side. The Germans hit back with the usual machine-gun fire, hitting D-Day veteran Pfc. John Rigapoulos of Company H's 2nd Platoon in the chest, killing him. His furious buddies charged the German positions and foxholes and opened fire on the fort.

The fort stood between the northern abutments of the rail and road bridges, and the Americans attacked. Lieutenant Edward W. Kennedy's 3rd Platoon of I Company moved along a ditch parallel to the railroad embankment within 20 yards of the trestle. There, Sergeant Theodore Finkbeiner peered over the top of the embankment and found himself face-to-face with a German soldier and his MP34 submachine-gun, the legendary, deadly, and highly-prized (if captured) "Schmeisser."

"I think he was surprised as I was," Finkbeiner said later. "I ducked, but the muzzle blast blew the little wool cap off my head. My two companions and I tossed some grenades over the embankment, and the German tossed some over at us. I heard what I assumed was a command, and several Germans charged us. We repulsed the charge, killing a couple and wounding another."

Another determined American was less lucky. Sergeant William Kero of the 307th Engineers rushed to the top of the embankment and sprayed the Germans with Thompson submachine-gun fire. Kero himself was cut down, earning a posthumous Distinguished Service Cross.

More American courage and determination were shown in the struggle to seize Fort Hof van Holland. Staff Sgts. James Allen and Leoleis rushed a house five yards from the railroad overpass and motioned for Pfcs. Muszynski and Ternosky to bring up their light machine gun. As they did, 30 Germans behind them opened fire, joined by a mobile 20mm flak gun. Their bullets killed Allen and wrecked the machine gun, but Muszynski broke out hand grenades, using them to knock out the flak gun and kill German troops, before he was also killed. The other two paratroopers withdrew. Muszynski was awarded a posthumous Distinguished Service Cross.

More Company H men turned up, supporting Finkbeiner, decimating Germans, and moving under the rail bridge's trestle approaches to the other side of the embankment. With that, Fort Hof van Holland was now surrounded by 3rd/504th men, determined to put the position and its 20mm guns and machine guns out of action. Megellas "directed all the fire we could mass at those targets, forcing the Germans to take cover," he said later.

As the Germans did so, Sergeant Leroy Richmond took off most of his equipment, swam across the fort's antique moat, climbed its earthen wall, and started waving his arms, pointing to the Germans inside. He signaled to Megellas and his crew to circle around to a drawbridge that was the only way into the fort. Then Richmond got shot.

"Sergeant Richmond must have been carrying a rabbit's foot," Megellas wrote later. "The bullet grazed his back, but did not seriously wound him. He started back down the incline, swam the moat, and rejoined us. From our position on the edge of the moat, we lobbed hand grenades over the parapet and inside the fort."

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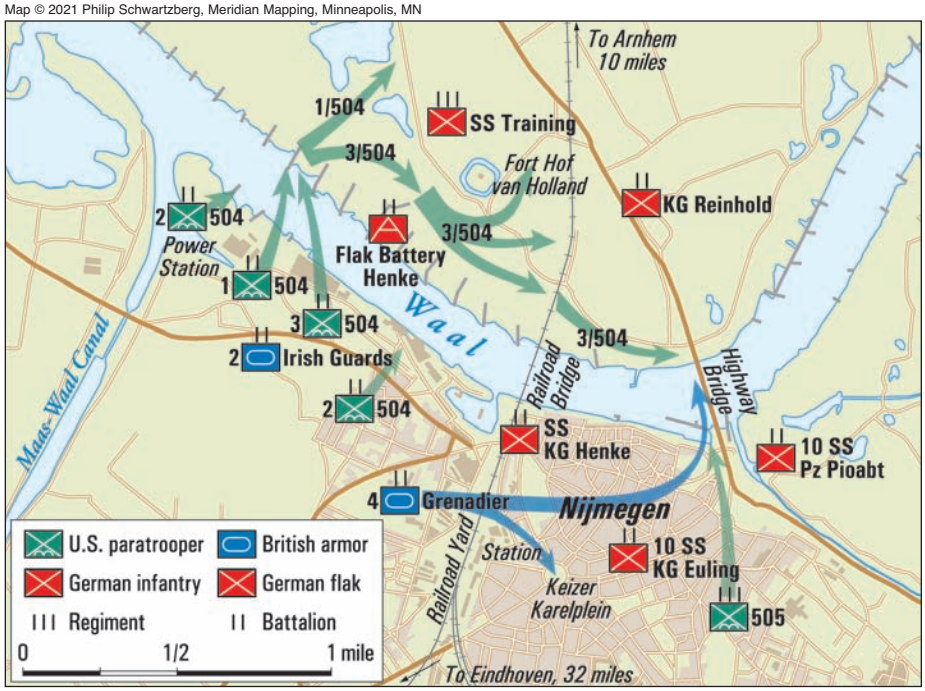

ABOVE: The bridges over the Waal River at Nijmegen were key objectives during the advance of XXX Corps toward the beleaguered British 1st Airborne Division at Arnhem. OPPOSITE: About a week before the epic crossing of the Waal River at Nijmegen, these American troops cross the Meuse River in Dutch rowboats. Civilians are watching the operation, which was quite different from the horrific fighting that took place at the Waal River bridges, where troopers of the 82nd Airborne Division took heavy casualties in capturing the road and rail spans.

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During the early stages of Operation Market-Garden, German paratroopers, or *Fallschirmjager*, are pictured manning defensive positions. The Fallschirmjager had a fierce reputation as highly trained combat troops, but many of them were killed or captured while fighting as infantry during Market-Garden.

Megellas and 11 of his men worked their way around the fort to the causeway on the south side. Then he, Pfc. Robert Hawn, and another trooper rushed across the causeway, reaching the archway. German troops shot back with rifles and hurled hand grenades. Undeterred, the Americans hurled Gammon grenades into the German positions, while Sergeant Robert Seymour called upon the Nazi garrison to surrender. He was wounded by a sniper for his trouble. To make matters worse, the 82nd's own artillery regiment, the 376th, started shelling the fort with its pack 75mm howitzers, subjecting Megellas' band to "friendly fire."

Megellas decided to move his men to a position north of the fort. "I didn't know how many Germans were inside the fort, but as long as they didn't constitute a threat to our forces still crossing the river or impede the attack on the bridges, I was not concerned. We could move out to help seize the bridges, our principal objective, and let the men of the 1st Battalion coming up behind us take care of them," he wrote.

Company H was storming down the west side of the embankment, Captain Carl Kappel's men battling flak and machine guns and exchanging grenades with the Germans. A group of Dutch civilians took shelter under the railway embankment. Some Americans found the shelter, thought it was a passageway, and heard German-sounding voices. They hurled Gammon grenades and wounded two Dutch women.

One of Kappel's squad leaders, Staff Sgt. James Allen, said to Kappel: "Well, our luck is still holding out." Kappel nodded.

With German defenses crumbling in the face of American determination, Captain Kappel and H Company converged on the rail bridge. Corporal John M. Fowler led the assault up a narrow flight of winding stairs, suffering wounds at the hands of German troops. But Fowler and his men refused to retreat—they killed and wounded several Germans, which impressed 12 to 14 others to surrender, the first POWs H Company had taken all day.

Captain Burriss led his I Company men toward the rail bridge. Pfc. Walter E. Hughes and his buddies were ordered to cut any wires they saw, as they were likely attached to explosives, most importantly those directly under the bridge's center point. If they went off, the bridge, the advancing British tanks, and the whole plan would sink into the River Waal.

But more American troops were arriving, braving mortar fire. Captain Fred Thomas led Company G of the 3rd/504th across a raised road under artillery fire. The Americans had to advance in a single line due to shell holes.

Now the 1st/504th came across the Waal. There were about 11 boats left, some full of bullet holes. The paratroopers stuffed handkerchiefs, wool caps, gloves, and uniform pieces into the holes, which kept them afloat. One boat crew used its entrenching tools as paddles. Sergeant Ross Carter joined his fellow troopers in singing "Song of the Volga Boatmen" as they paddled across.

More German fire rained down on the fragile boats, blasting them to pieces in the river. Only a few were left as Company C stormed a beach full of bloodied and dying paratroopers. Lieutenant Milton Baraff led some troopers in a wedge formation to cover the extreme left flank.

A and B Companies moved to reinforce the assault on the bridges and Fort Hof van Holland. Battalion Headquarters Private Nicholas Mansolillo found Tech. 4th Class John T. Mullen lying in a pool of blood. "You could see the steam rising from the warm blood," Mansolillo said later. They had been together since basic training at Fort Bragg.

Company A, in better shape than the previous assault force, move in on Fort Hof van Holland, with Captain Charles Duncan personally leading the 1st Platoon over the dike road, across the causeway, up the fort's grass slopes, and into the German gun positions. Private Peter Schneider called upon the Germans to surrender, and 18 men came out, hands held high. But other Germans outside the fort tried to reoccupy the position. Private Robert Washko set up his Browning Automatic Rifle to repel this assault but was killed. Even so, Duncan alertly sent his 2nd Platoon to hold the ground, and the fort was secure. Down to a few boats, the last troopers to go over were from Company B.

On the south side of the Waal, the 505th and the Grenadier Guards continued their inexorable pressure through the city. The Germans began abandoning their positions and fleeing across the rail bridge. Lieutenant Allen McClain, commanding 3rd Battalion's mortar company, watched the retreating Germans, saw more than 500 running across, and let them have it with his mortars, machine guns, and BARs, exacting a dreadful toll.

At 5 PM on the south bank, Major Tyler saw "someone waving (from the north end of the rail bridge). I had been concentrating so long on that railroad bridge that, for me, it was the only one in existence. I got on the wireless and radioed Battalion, 'They're on the bridge! They've got the bridge!'" The only problem was that Colonel Goulburn, commanding the Grenadier Guards whose tanks were to roll across, didn't know which bridge Tyler's excited message referred to.

The assault had overcome 34 machine guns,

two 20mm guns, and an 88mm dual-purpose gun on the railroad bridge, all of which had devastated the boat crossing.

Now, Cook and his men had one more objective: the road bridge, which was much better equipped to handle the Grenadiers' tanks. That job was up to Goulburn's armor and Vandervoort's paratroopers, and the D-Day hero was leading, as usual, from the front and by example. The immediate barrier to the 2nd/505th's advance was a German 88mm gun near the bridge, which had been blasting open British tanks with regularity on the 19th, setting them ablaze. Lieutenant James E. Coyle, who led 3rd Platoon of Company E, was dug in close to the gun's position. Coyle led five men through backyards of buildings and around to the end of the block, surprising the German gun crew from behind with fire from their rifles, killing one. The remainder fled to a nearby trench, and Coyle's men treated them to more fire. The Germans abandoned the gun and retreated into a nearby park.

Company F had a more difficult time, facing well-trained and motivated men from 10th SS Panzer Division. Captain Robert Rosen, who had no combat experience prior to Holland, led his men in a premature assault, under heavy German fire, shouting "Follow me!"

By now, Vandervoort believed his battalion had suffered enough indignities, and as the clock read 4 PM, he and Adair ordered a decisive coordinated attack on the bridge, starting by taking Hunner Park once and for all.

Company F men took over houses that overlooked the park while Goulburn's tanks drove toward it. The Americans sputtered suppressive fire on the German defenders as British armor and E Company regrouped and attacked again. Wurst's assistant squad leader recalled, "Everybody went in with the idea that we were not going to pull back. If they take us back, they're going to have to carry us back."

The Germans held their fire until the Anglo-Americans were all exposed in the street and then opened up. Paratroopers fired from the hip as they ran forward, doing so at point-blank range: 25 to 150 yards. German snipers added to the destruction. Lieutenant Bill Savell, commanding E Company's 2nd Platoon, was shot through both arms. Vandervoort watched F Company's Lieutenant John Dodd get hit by a 20mm shell. As the lieutenant lay dying, his men charged the gun and obliterated its crew.

Vandervoort's men performed their duties with incredible courage and pain. As his men and Goulburn's tanks advanced, the Germans began retreating across the highway bridge, knowing that it was packed with explosives. To cover the withdrawal, their artillery and mortars on the north bank of the Waal loosed off at the Allied advance, particularly Goulburn's tanks.

"With those Shermans bearing down on them, the Germans aimed most of their fire at those tanks," Vandervoort said later. "Otherwise, most of the troopers would have been wiped out. Bullets bounced off Shermans like hailstones. Some were chipped, but none were holed. The Germans, stiffened by elements of the 9th SS Recon Battalion, kept firing full bore until overrun. Moving with the troopers, the tanks rolled over trenches and fired point-blank into air raid shelters. It was 'walking fire' with tanks—the effect was devastating. The air in Hunner Park turned blue with hand grenade, cannon, rifle, and gun smoke generated by hundreds of combatants."

SS Captain Karl-Heinz Euling and 60 men under his command were the only ones to make it across the bridge. Of the 600 other defenders, mostly SS grenadiers and paratroopers, both highly skilled in last-ditch stands, 60 were taken prisoner. The rest fell to Vandervoort's paratroopers and Goulburn's tanks.

Meanwhile, at the north end Cook's 504th men attacked German defenders, finding old

Both: National Archives

TOP: A British M4 Sherman medium tank lumbers past the bodies of two dead German soldiers, killed while defending the road bridge across the Waal River at Nijmegen. ABOVE: After difficult street fighting against battle-hardened SS troops in Nijmegen, American soldiers guard wounded German POWs.

men and Hitler Youth holding foxholes and trenches. Corporal Jack Bommer of the 504th's Headquarters Company "killed boys not over 15 and men over 65 in their foxholes in the crossing. It was such an operation, everything went so fast and hectic—it's hard to explain. Surrenders—I saw few of them … I did see old German men grab our M-1s and beg for mercy—they were shot point-blank," he recalled.

The German defenders were no longer in much of a mood to fight. From their prepared positions on the river's edge, they were willing to give battle, but once face-to-face with the ferocious American paratroopers, their MG42s and mortars silenced, the surviving Germans were eager to surrender.

German machine-gun fire from near the rail bridge pinned down Captain Burriss's advancing men, but Private Ralph N. Tison, Jr., replied with his own machine gun. The American onslaught forced the Germans to abandon an anti-tank gun positioned between the two bridges. A Gammon grenade disposed of another anti-tank gun and its five-man crew. Sergeant Leoleis and four other I Company men stormed a house, killing eight Germans.

National Archives, Netherlands

ABOVE: A Sherman tank and Bren Gun carrier of the Irish Guards sit poised for action in the Dutch village of Aalst, west of Nijmegen. Tanks of XXX Corps brought much-needed firepower and mobility to support the lightly armed troopers of the 82nd Airborne. OPPOSITE: In this photo taken September 21, 1944, tanks of the 2nd Welsh Guards roll across the River Waal at Nijmegen while two soldiers look on.

It was nearly 6 PM, and Burriss and his men were finally running up the north approach to the highway bridge. Burriss could hear gunfire at the southern end, but nothing at the north end. He sent some men to cut any wires, rightly believing they connected the explosives beneath the structure to its detonators. The first Americans to reach the north end of the bridge were Pfc. John W. Hall, Jr. and Pfc. Robert A. Hedberg, along with Private Norman J. Ryder.

Burriss led another group up the stairs to the bridge's sidewalk and saw a lone German, who surrendered. Burris thumbed him back and summoned more men to start across the bridge and cut wires. As they did, a German strapped high in the girders shot an enlisted man next to Burriss. The paratroopers killed the German. Two days later, the German's body was still hanging from the bridge structure.

With the north end secured, Captain Kappel organized a roadblock to defend it, amid German bodies that littered the highway. But even though the 3rd/504th had achieved its objective at high human cost, they had done so at another high cost—ammunition. Some paratroopers were down to their last clip. They needed relief, quickly.

It was coming. As the 3rd/504th claimed the bridge's north end, the 2nd/505th and the Grenadier Guards approached the bridge's south end. Major John Trotter and his exec, Captain Lord Peter Carrington—Britain's future Foreign Secretary—ordered Sergeant Peter Robinson to take his troop of four tanks into the assault, immediately. "You've got to get across at all costs," Trotter said. "Don't stop for anything."

Then Trotter shook Robinson's hand and said, "Don't worry; I know where you live and I'll let your wife know if anything happens to you."

"Well, you're bloody cheerful, aren't you, sir?" the Dunkirk veteran replied. He hopped into his tank, and the Shermans clattered in single file around the anti-tank barriers onto the structure. Robinson's gunner, Guardsman Leslie Johnson, opened up on the SS Grenadiers tied to the girders. "They were falling out like ninepins," he said later. German fire was heavy, but Robinson's tank seemed to live a charmed life. "I swear to this day that Jesus Christ rode on the front of our tank," Johnson said later.

Everybody from Browning to Robinson expected the bridge to be blown sky-high. A German 88mm gun opened fire on Robinson's tanks, its crew recognizing that one wrecked tank would in turn wreck the assault.

"The lead Sherman fired its cannon as fast as it could load and sprayed the road ahead with .30-caliber machine-gun. The 88 fired half a dozen—more or less—near-misses, ripping and screaming with an unforgettable sound—past the turret of the tank. In the gathering dusk they looked like great Roman candle balls of fire. Brightly glowing, 17-pounder cannon shots rocketed back along with flashing machine-gun tracers. Suddenly, the 88 went silent. One of the tanks' .30-caliber armor-piercing rounds had penetrated the soft metallic cap of the 88's recoil mechanism, causing the gun to jam. That improbably, long-odds happenstance of good marksmanship and good luck ended the shoot-out at the bridge," Vandervoort recalled.

From his command post northeast of the bridge in Lent, 10th SS Panzer Division CO Maj. Gen. Heinz Harmel watched the tanks and studied the explosives placed in the bridge's middle. He had been ordered not to blow the bridge, but he was not going to let it fall into Allied hands. As Robinson's tank reached the center of the bridge, he shouted to his engineer: "Get ready … let it blow!"

The engineer hit the plunger. Nothing happened.

Harmel yelled, "Again!" Still no response. Harmel figured that all the heavy artillery fire had shredded the initiation cable.

Harmel turned to his staff and said, "My God, they'll be here in two minutes. Tell Bittrich. They're over the Waal."

Robinson was forced to trade tanks with another one when his radio went out, but he kept advancing. Then he saw more troops in

National Archives

front of him, and his men opened fire, not recognizing their uniforms. But Robinson did. "Cease fire, those are our feathered friends," he told his men. Then he smiled and waved at the Yanks.

Burriss and his men were ready to run. They couldn't tell if the approaching tanks were German or British. He ordered his troops to get off the structure and over the embankment and ready their Gammon grenades. Then they saw the distinctive silhouettes of approaching Sherman tanks. Burriss and his men leaped up to greet them.

The tanks were joined by an infantry company of the 3rd Irish Guards. That enabled Major Cook to expand his tenuous bridgehead despite German artillery fire. Wounded men could now go back to hospitals across the bridge—there were only five boats left.

Among the wounded was Major Abdallah K. Zakby, the 1st/504th's executive officer, who had suffered a shell burst in his left leg and right hand. He found that the hospital's "receiving room was full of wounded men, much more terrible than mine. I was carried to the operating table. A young doctor, whom I had not seen since 1941, and whom I knew well at Fort Dix, New Jersey, operated on me. As luck would have it, the bone was not shattered—just seared—but all my flesh and ligaments in the middle of my left leg were burned. He put 17 drains around the leg," Zakby said later.

Why the explosives intended to blow the bridge didn't go off was a cause of contention. After the war, the Dutch honored an 18-year-old resistance fighter named Jan van Hoof for disabling them, on slim evidence. Gavin and Jones disagreed. SS General Hans Albin Rauter, who headed the Gestapo in The Netherlands, claimed that SS engineers had removed the charges from the bridge. Jones found that hard to believe. The likeliest cause was that British shellfire ripped up crucial wires and detonating mechanisms, which was why Jones was able to capture 80 pioneers—they were trying to repair the wires during the battle.

The bridge was in Allied hands, but German artillery rained down on both sides of it, and other German troops were still fighting in Nijmegen. In the gathering dark, short of fuel and ammunition, Adair was reluctant to make a night advance up the road to Arnhem, particularly up an elevated highway that would make his tanks exposed to German guns. He could bring up his infantry in support at daylight.

Adair's decision, backed by Horrocks, infuriated Tucker and Burriss, who felt deep brotherhood with the suffering British paratroopers at Arnhem. They didn't know it, but while Cook's men were seizing the Nijmegen bridge, Bittrich's tanks had finally cleared the last British defenders from the Arnhem bridge. Gavin was aware of his men's feelings, but he knew the difficulties that 30 Corps faced, particularly their supply difficulties.

An outraged Burriss yelled at Carrington over the Grenadiers' failure to advance. But that failure was not Carrington's fault—it was the fault of Adair, Horrocks, and ultimately Montgomery for failing to impose urgency on the advance.

Instead of attacking as dusk gathered over the north end of the Nijmegen bridge, the British troops "consolidated" and the Americans "dug in" against a German night assault. The British annoyed their American cousins of the 504th further by breaking out pots to heat up bully beef and brew tea. The sight upset the Americans, making the British appear not to care about their buddies at Arnhem. Actually, British troops regarded their tea and compo ration breaks as simply what they did between getting new orders. Neither the paratroopers nor the Guardsmen could know what was going on above them.

Continued on page 77

Lieutenant Commander Eddie C. Outlaw and his wingman, Lieutenant (j.g.) Donald 'Dagwood' Reeves, wing over Truk Lagoon during their destructive April 1944 fighter sweep. A Japanese fighter, shot down in flames, has just hit the water and exploded on impact. The pilots took their Grumman F6F Hellcat fighters into action without dropping their auxiliary fuel tanks, which are prominently visible in this painting by artist Jack Fellows.

Ten Minutes Over Truk

Eight Hellcat fighters from the carrier *Langley* shot down 21 Japanese Zeros during a short melee above the harbor in the Caroline Islands.

BY CHRIS MARKS

Lieutenant Hollis Hills had every reason to be puzzled. His guns had just raked the Japanese fighter ahead of him, the rounds striking home along the enemy's fuselage and wing roots. But the Japanese plane attempted no evasive maneuvers—no chandelles, wingovers, or rolls. It just kept going, and that was the puzzling part. Hills pulled up next to his quarry and looked over. The pilot's head had been practically shot off, his hands locked in a death grip on the controls. The Zeke began a gentle turn toward the sea. The morning of April 29, 1944, was a bad time to be one of the Emperor's pilots over Truk atoll.

Situated just above the equator in the Caroline Islands, Japan took possession of Truk's magnificent anchorage after World War I. As Japan's ambitions advanced outward across the Pacific, it became a vital base for her Combined Fleet. Little was known about the atoll, and the term "Gibraltar of the Pacific" came into use—often prefaced by "bastion" and "impregnable." Suspicions grew into fears.

But the American admirals commanding the Pacific Fleet were not governed by fear. Enabled by the tireless work of sailors, fighting Marines, and stateside shipyards, they stood ready to deliver a severe blow to Imperial Japan in early 1944.

Author's Collection

The Marine Fighter Squadron VF-32 patch was designed by Walt Disney Studios and worn with pride by the men of the unit.

When two American B-24 Liberators on a long-range reconnaissance mission over Truk were detected on February 4, Japanese Admiral Mineichi Koga realized he had a problem: American airpower was within striking distance of the Combined Fleet's forward base. The vastness of the Pacific no longer protected Truk. He ordered his capital ships out of harm's way, almost 1,200 miles west to the Palau area. They would never return.

At dawn on February 17, planes from Admiral Marc "Pete" Mitscher's Task Force 58 launched a relentless two-day assault on Truk named Operation Hailstone. Although the big targets were long gone, the Americans found plenty to shoot down, blow up, or sink. In the process they also created the finest wreck diving site in the world. No longer useful as a naval base, Truk wasn't worth a Marine invasion. But it could not be ignored.

In late April, Mitscher took another swipe at the once-fearsome atoll. Fresh from assisting General Douglas MacArthur's forces in New Guinea and headed for replenishment at Majuro, TF 58 made an immense detour to Truk. This time, one of the carriers at Mitscher's disposal was the USS *Langley*. During Hailstone her task group had been ordered to support the invasion of Eniwetok.

The *Langley* was a "light" carrier of the new *Independence* class (CVL)—an effort to quickly strengthen American carrier forces after early war losses. The naval architects slapped down a reduced carrier deck on the hull of a cruiser. *Langley*'s skipper was Captain Wallace M. "Gotch" Dillon, an

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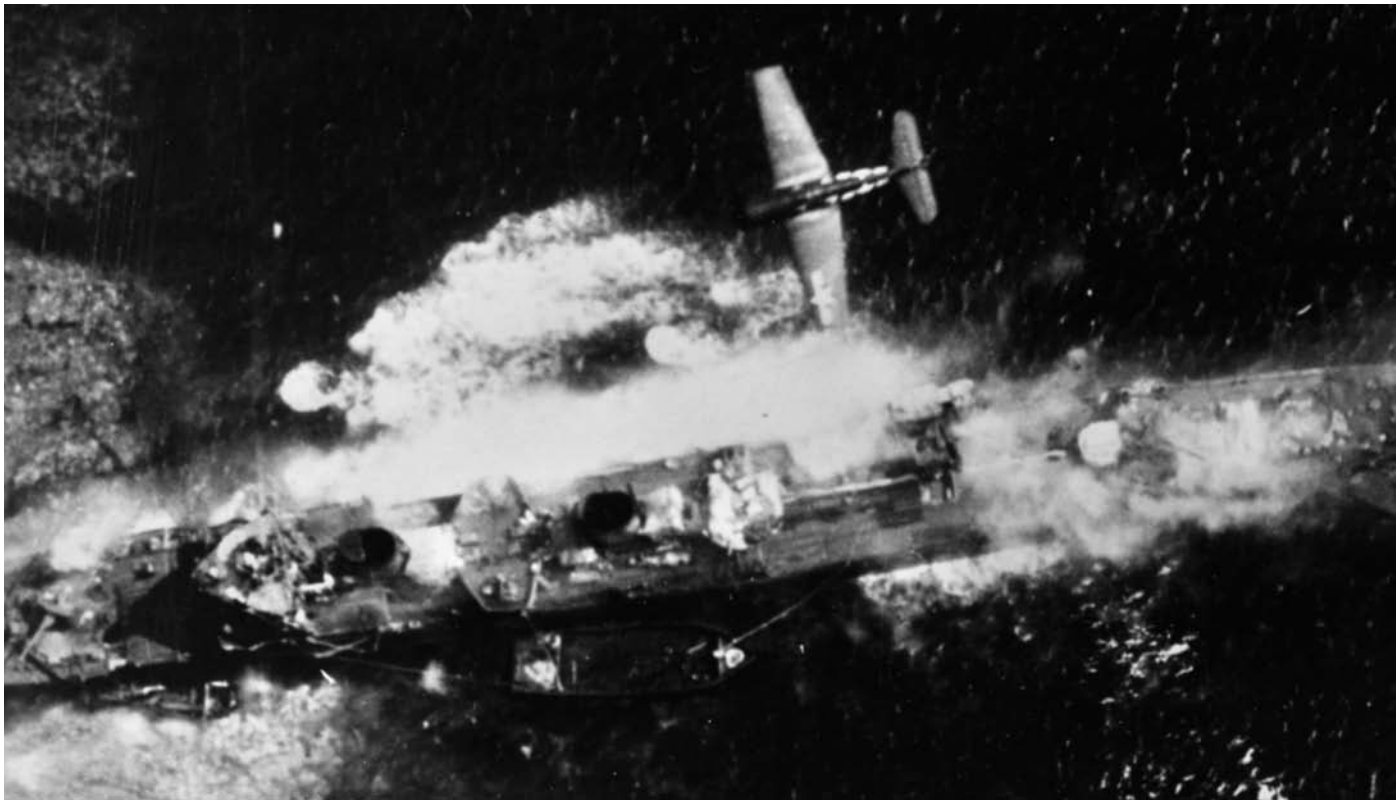

Outlaw fired his first volley into one of the planes, striking it along "the fuselage and wing roots. It burst into flames and dived downward." Not to be outdone, Reeves fired into the second plane. "It immediately smoked, flamed, and exploded."

Annapolis wrestler described in his 1918 yearbook as "a handy man to have around in a rough-house." An early naval aviator, he shared a bungalow on Coronado in the 30's with his good friend "Jocko" Clark. Dillon was a firm yet approachable officer, widely respected by his crew. He returned their respect.

Langley carried the aerial warriors of Carrier Air Group 32 into battle against Japan. Because of the reduced hangar and deck space, AG 32 consisted of just 23 Grumman F6F Hellcat fighters and 9 TBF/M Avenger torpedo bombers. But what the squadron lacked in numbers was more than offset by the aggressive spirit of her fighter section commander.

Fighting 32 was led by Lieutenant Commander Edward Cobb Outlaw of Goldsboro, North Carolina. His 1935 Annapolis yearbook defined "Eddie" as a "social lion" with "plenty of personality." After graduating near the bottom of his class—436 out of 442—he blossomed into a determined and widely respected naval aviator. The sailors in the *Langley*'s photo department knew him as "Shoutlaw"—they never managed to develop fighter-gun camera film fast enough to suit him.

Outlaw's wingman was a cheeky 23-year-old Lt. (j.g.) named Donald "Dagwood" Reeves from Pueblo, Colorado. Seeing a bit of his mischievous self in the young reservist, Outlaw took him under his wing. He credited Reeves with "considerable initiative" in a fitness report, noting that he "inspired his fellow pilots by his enthusiasm and excellent performance." Reeves was a popular character in the unit, especially after successfully asking the Walt Disney studio to design the squadron patch for VF 32.

Reflecting their commander's aggressive tone, the pilots of "Outlaw's Bandits" had sharp elbows, vigorous affections for nurses and strong drink, and low regard for apologies. They were fighter pilots. But above all else, the young men harbored a burning desire to be unleashed against the Japanese. On April 29, they got their chance.

In the pre-dawn darkness 90 miles south of Truk, Outlaw and Reeves took off from the *Langley* in a rainstorm. Next in line, leading the second section in Outlaw's division, was another 23-year-old Lieutenant (j.g.), Richard H. May from Seattle. A licensed pilot for six years, May had flown with VF 10 on *Enterprise* in his first Pacific tour. He loved the sound of the big Pratt and Whitney R-2800 Double Wasp engine, calling it "a most fortunate mating of engine to airframe." Having no interest in getting drenched and then shivering at altitude, May closed and locked his cockpit hatch—a violation of VF 32's launch procedures. He watched "the exhaust stack flames of Outlaw and Reeves disappear into the blackness" and then it was his turn. He was followed by his wingman, Ensign John A. Pond of Memphis, whose initials transmuted into a nickname he disliked.

The second *Langley* division was led by Lieutenant Hollis Hills of Pasadena. Determined to get into the war against Hitler, "Holly" enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1940 and shot down a German FW-190 over Dieppe, August 19, 1942. At 29, he was among the oldest pilots in the squadron. His wingman was

Lieutenant (j.g.) Lloyd McEachern of Wellsville, New York.

The last *Langley* section into the air was led by Lieutenant (j.g.) Harry McClaugherty of Narrows, Virginia. Owing to his solid build his natural nickname was "The Bear." It was stenciled across the Mae West life jacket he wore in flight. His wingman was Lieutenant (j.g.) Ralph Schulze of Waco, Texas.

"We rendezvoused over the ship about an hour before dawn and proceeded in to the target, climbing to an altitude of 10,000 feet," Outlaw said in an interview decades later. Fifty miles from the fleet he paused and waited for fighters from *Lexington* and *Enterprise* to join up for a coordinated sweep. Precious minutes passed, and Outlaw grew concerned. He desired to arrive over the atoll at daybreak, when they "would have just enough light to see the enemy through illuminated gun sights." Admiral Clark once wrote that "in the game of war an advantage unpressed may have tragic consequences." Eddie Outlaw wanted every advantage for himself and his men. He made the call, and the Hellcats resumed their northward course alone. Each man was surely apprehensive about what lay ahead. Fighting 32's after-action report picked up the story.

"Upon reaching the central section of the lagoon the planes orbited for about three minutes. There were no other US Naval VF planes in the area."

Lieutenant Hills spotted "a formation of planes some eight miles to the west at an altitude of about 6,000 feet flying eastward" toward the *Langley* fighters. Outlaw didn't hesitate, leading his men straight toward the unidentified group. "The planes were flying in fairly close 3-plane Vee formations, each in line astern," the report continued. "At just about the time the planes were identified as enemy, the Japanese pilots at the rear of their formation fired bursts of gun fire, including tracers, over the forward planes of the formation. Immediately, the Japs split up into several loose two plane sections, or individual one plane units."

"We initiated a high side pass with all eight planes," recalled Outlaw. The VF 32 planes began their attack from the Zekes' starboard beam at a distance of 2,000 yards with an altitude advantage of 2,000 feet. "On the first pass, we flamed eight Zeros."

Outlaw and Reeves tore into the Japanese fighters. They got behind a two-plane enemy section flying 100 feet apart. Outlaw fired his first volley into one of the planes, striking it along "the fuselage and wing roots. It burst into flames and dived downward." Not to be outdone, Reeves fired into the second plane. "It immediately smoked, flamed, and exploded."

A second two-plane section was soon encountered and "approached from the stern." Outlaw's "…long burst into the fuselage resulted in the Zeke exploding. It was necessary to fly through the debris and flames." Reeves launched his attack on the second plane from "…its starboard quarter. The bursts of fire hit along the starboard wing roots causing smoke, then fire, and in a brief time the plane exploded."

"In accordance with squadron doctrine," Outlaw related, "Hills took his division up to about 12,000 feet to provide high cover for my division as we continued to attack the enemy pilots. We continued to bore in on them two planes at a time while maintaining our division integrity and particularly maintaining our section integrity. Dagwood flew so close to me that I never lost sight of him out of the corner of my eye."

Richard May spotted an enemy plane "swinging in on the skipper's tail." He "went full deflec-

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TOP: Lieutenant Commander Eddie Outlaw waves to crewmen on the deck of the aircraft carrier USS *Langley* sometime after the April 1944 raid on Truk Lagoon. ABOVE: Moen Island, one of many spits of land that comprise Truk Atoll, is seen in this photograph taken at the end of April 1944 by a photo reconnaissance plane of Air Group 32. The Japanese airfield on Moen is visible as the white area along the water's edge. OPPOSITE: During the raid on Truk Lagoon nicknamed Operation Hailstone, February 16-17, 1944, a Grumman F6F-3 Hellcat fighter flies above the stricken Japanese destroyer *Tachikaze*. Although the Japanese realized that a raid on Truk was imminent and moved many of their larger warships to safety, American aircraft from Task Force 58 still found numerous targets and inflicted heavy losses on enemy ships and shore installations.

tion" and unleashed "four streams of tracers" on the Japanese pilot, hitting him on the left wing and gas tank. The plane "exploded in my face. Damn! I hated to fly through debris, which could disable my prop or control surfaces."

"For a short time after the attack started," read the VF 32 action report, "it appeared part of the enemy planes were going to form into some tactical formation. However, this impression was soon dispelled as the enemy did not seem inclined to attempt any organized tactical support of one another. After the VF 32 pilots made their first few runs, the enemy pilots displayed no air discipline or planned strategy, performing as a poorly or incompetently trained group without apparent leadership."

Outlaw's third victory required "a slight deflection shot. Flames were coming from the starboard wing root. The plane did not explode, but was seen burning all the way down" to the sea. Reeves's third kill was "first sighted at some distance and the attack was speedily pressed. It was necessary to use a full deflection shot with about a two second burst. The shots hit the engine area and cockpit. The plane burst into flames and dived downward."

May and Pond came upon a pair of Zekes. May bore down on the Japanese pilot "executing a Split S. A burst of fire caught the enemy plane in the starboard side of the engine and forward part of the fuselage causing it to burst into a mass of flames." Pond engaged the other Zeke, which had initiated a "climbing right turn. The attack was pressed from a short distance off the enemy's starboard quarter. A long burst into the cockpit and starboard wing area resulted in an explosion and disintegration of the Zeke."

May's next victim saw him coming and "immediately went into a fairly steep dive. The VF plane pushed over and soon closed the distance. The attack was made from nearly dead astern of the enemy plane. A long burst into the fuselage caused the Zeke to flame and go on down in a steep dive. It was noted that many plane parts were flying off."

Pond's second kill "made about a half roll, then straightened out again. It then made a sharp turn to the left enabling the VF 32 plane to attack from the enemy's port quarter. A good burst into the engine and forward fuselage area started the Zeke smoking and flames emitting from the bottom of the fuselage. The enemy then turned straight down and was last seen in a mass of flames and out of control."

May felt he was "in the middle of a hailstorm. Our danger of collision was almost as critical as being shot out of the sky. I lost track of time. Sweat was running into my eyes … my flight suit was soaked through … my neck ached from the constant twisting of my head to see all of the areas around us. My right arm ached from the hard effort of constantly manhandling the Hellcat in high-G turns."

From his position flying 'high cover,' Hollis Hills noticed "two Zekes making ready to press an attack on Lieutenant Commander Outlaw's plane from his stern. Rather than pursuing other enemy planes near [his] division at about the same altitude, Lieutenant Hills led his division in an attack on the two Zekes, which were ready to open fire on Lieutenant Commander Outlaw's plane. A long burst was fired at the one nearest the friendly plane, striking it in the engine and wing roots. This Zeke was last seen diving in a mass of flames." Hills struck the second Japanese plane with "two long bursts of fire. This plane stopped maneuvering and commenced to smoke from the section around the engine. Lieutenant (jg) McEachern then fired a burst into the Zeke and observed that it was descending in a mass of flames."

McEachern next saw a "…Zeke coming up from below. This VF 32 pilot turned the nose of his plane down enough to bring the enemy into his sights and fired a long burst into the engine and wing area. This Zeke was seen by others in the flight to be going down engulfed in smoke, out of control, and diving straight for the water at a low altitude. The gun camera film showed that this Zeke was struck heavy in the vital area around the engine and the cockpit."

The section of McClaugherty and Schulze joined the fray. After Hills and McEachern fired short bursts into a Zeke, the plane dropped down in front of Bear. His "attack was then made from about 15 degrees off the stern with a three second burst of fire. The Jap plane exploded and disintegrated." Schulze was making a climbing right turn when he spied a Zeke "making a climbing left turn and heading direct for [his] VF 32 plane. The attack against this

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A Grumman F6F Hellcat fighter belonging to Task Force 58 flies over the Pacific Ocean. The Hellcat, superior to the Japanese Mitsubishi A6 M Zero in numerous performance aspects, was a deadly weapon during VF-32's fighter action over Truk Lagoon in April 1944.

enemy plane was started as a head on run." When Schulze started firing "the Zeke turned more so that the final burst was fired at an angle of about 30 degrees from the Zeke's bow." McClaugherty saw the plane "going straight down to the water, leaving a great stream of smoke, with flames."

Outlaw's fourth Zeke was lashed with a "good burst" from 200 feet and "went down in a good mass of flames." His wingman's fourth victim "was flying at an altitude of about 500 feet. The approach was made from dead astern. After a burst of fire flames were seen coming from the area of the cockpit. The enemy plane immediately made a steep bank and dived into the water." Outlaw's fifth kill "was sighted flying at a height of about twenty feet above the water and jinking. Fire was opened at long range. The port wing dropped into the water and the plane sank immediately."

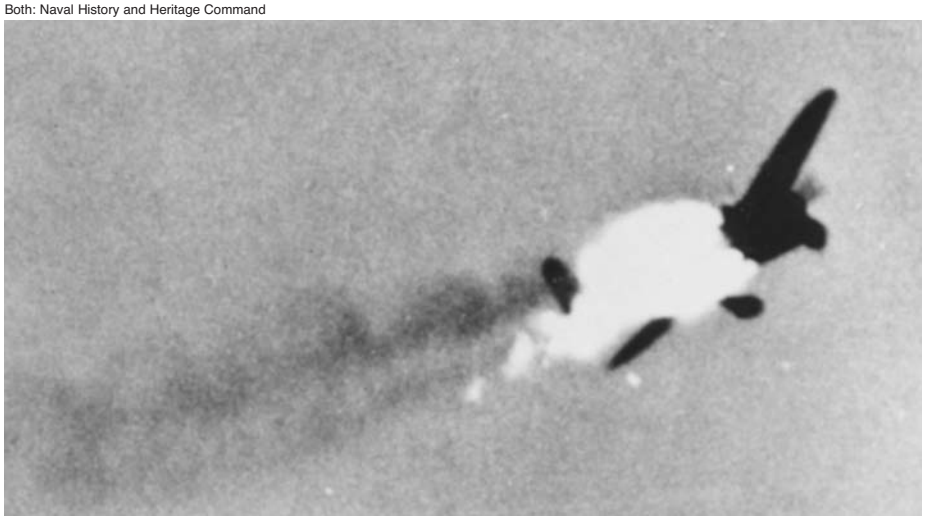
Decades later Outlaw made an addition to the story of his last victory that, for some reason, never made it into the action report: "At a fairly low altitude of 1,000 feet over the middle of Truk Lagoon, I ran out of gas in my belly tank. My heart came up into my throat, and I was scared to death that my engine might not catch again. However, with the rapid application of the fuel pump and shifting tanks, I was able to start the engine and pull out at an altitude of about 500 feet, Dagwood still being on my wing."

Then the retired rear admiral made a further admission. "In the excitement of battle I made a serious error, in that our doctrine called for me to drop my auxiliary gas tank, which was a signal for each pilot to drop his, prior to entering a dogfight. In the excitement I forgot to do this. Consequently, we fought the entire thing with all of our belly tanks still attached to our planes, and we returned home that way, without ever receiving a single bullet hole in one of our aircraft." Actually, Richard May sustained a seven-inch hole in his port wing. That was it.

Outlaw, Reeves, May, and Hills accounted for 15 of the 21 Japanese pilots who lost their lives against VF 32 that morning. All eight of the Hellcats returned to the carrier. As close as anyone could remember the fight lasted less than 10 minutes.

"When Outlaw landed back on *Langley* he held up five fingers," a news article stated a few weeks later. "The carrier's skipper, standing on the bridge, nodded with pleasure, thinking the eight planes had shot down a total of five Japs. Then, as the other planes landed and held up four, three, two and one fingers, he got so excited he couldn't talk for a few minutes. The pilots claim he did a jig on the bridge, but the skipper insists he maintained his dignity."

Both: Naval History and Heritage Command



TOP: A Japanese Nakajima B6N 'Jill' bomber bursts into flames above Truk Atoll during a follow-up fighter sweep on April 30, 1944. ABOVE: USS *Langley*'s VF-32 fighter pilots hold up their fingers to indicate victories after their aerial combat over Truk. Hollis Hills stands third from left, Lieutenant Commander Eddie Outlaw stands third from right, while his wingman, Lieutenant (j.g.) Donald 'Dagwood' Reeves is fourth from right.

"This successful operation," Outlaw wrote in his after-action report, "can be attributed largely to the fact that the VF 32 planes at all times maintained a close and proper tactical organization. The divisions and various sections worked in complete harmony. It is felt that the results of these eight planes, in their encounter with the enemy who had a great numerical superiority, merits distinction." Seventy-six years later, that distinction is well worth remembering.

Eddie Outlaw became an "ace in a day" over Truk and served as Captain of the aircraft carrier USS *Intrepid* in 1959. He retired in 1969, and today his grandson bears his name.

Commander Richard H. May ended the war with seven kills and wrote an account of his service titled *Hell Above*. Commander Hollis Hills died in 2009 at the age of 94. The last of his several wives said he loved women, smooth scotch, and fast cars.

Dagwood Reeves started a strafing run next to Eddie Outlaw over Saipan's Tanapag Harbor on June 11, 1944. He was never seen again. □

Contributor Chris Marks writes from his home in Amana, Iowa.

"NO other two races have left such a mark on the world" as the Jews and the Greeks, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill once wrote.

"Both have shown a capacity for survival, in spite of unending perils and sufferings from external oppressors, matched by their own ceaseless feuds, quarrels, and convulsions," Churchill observed. "The passage of several thousand years sees no change in their characteristics and no diminution of their trials and their vitality.

"They have survived in spite of all the world could do against them, and all they could do against themselves, and each of them from angles so different has left us the inheritance of its genius and wisdom.

"No two cities have counted more with mankind than Athens and Jerusalem.

"Their messages in religion, philosophy, and art have been the guiding lights of modern faith and culture. Centuries of foreign rule and indescribable, endless, oppression leave them still living, active, communities and forces in the modern world.

"Personally I have always been on the side of both, and believed in their invincible power to survive internal strife and the world tides threatening their extinction."

Churchill's commitment to the Greek people was to be fully revealed in the dark December days of 1944 in Athens as the furnace of World War II was beginning to cool into the colder global conflict to come.

Greece's slow descent to its December of despair began in 1935, when the Greek military overthrew the country's first republic since ancient times after a mere 12-year existence, then recalled from exile probably the most hopeless mismatching of king with country. "It would be hard to find two worse advertisements for hereditary monarchy than George of Greece and Peter of Yugoslavia," Churchill's wartime Private Secretary John Colville would wearily say.

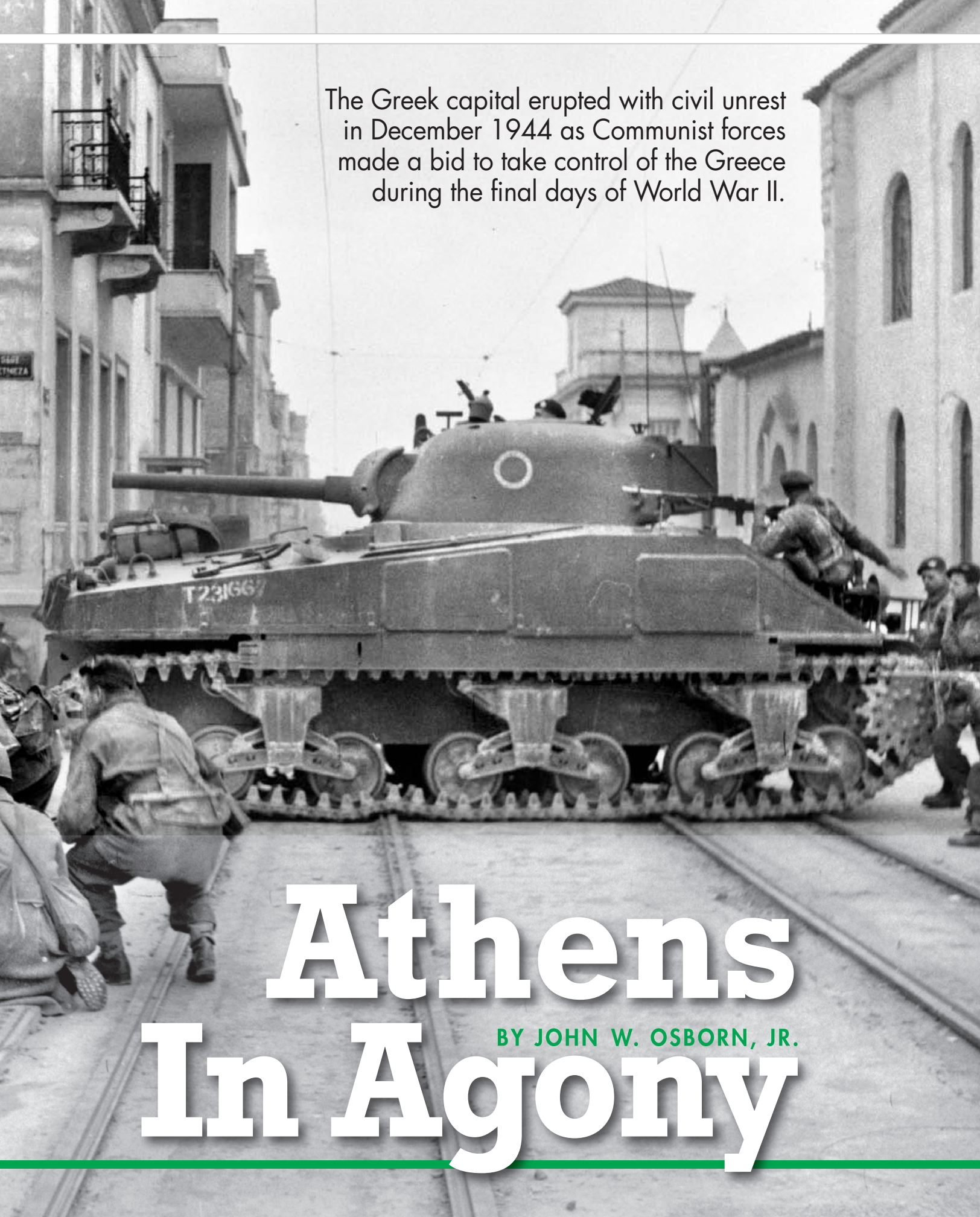
In the cradle of democracy a year later, King George II dissolved the Greek parliament and became a puppet behind a Fascist-style dictatorship with a secret police modeled after the Gestapo. However, personality alienated the king from those supposed to be his people just as surely as politics did. Greeks are among the most individualistic, idiosyncratic nationalities on Earth, and King George was of completely foreign heritage, of all things Danish. After over a decade in exile, he struggled to speak what was supposed to be his native tongue. He seemed just as foreign in his manners, completely isolated and indifferent behind the country's military masters.

The descent to December accelerated when, in October 1940, for no more apparent reason than just to prove to Hitler he could have his own wartime walkover, Italian Dictator Benito Mussolini sent his armed forces on an ill-advised invasion of Greece. But the Greeks shocked Mussolini and the world, inflicting embarrassing defeats on the invaders. Hitler intervened to save his Axis partner from further embarrassment. However, the British, in Churchill's own ill-conceived action, sent troops to aid the Greeks.

Greek units would fight alongside the British in the Middle East, but George II proved as sorry a symbol in exile for the second time

Its turret facing to the rear and its 75mm gun ready to fire, an M4 Sherman medium tank of the 5th (Scots) Parachute Battalion supports British soldiers of the 2nd Parachute Brigade during fighting in the streets of Athens against Communist ELAS militia on December 18, 1944. Two Greek soldiers, one wearing a German helmet, assist the British troops in the operation.

Imperial War Museum



The Greek capital erupted with civil unrest in December 1944 as Communist forces made a bid to take control of the Greece during the final days of World War II.

Athens In Agony

BY JOHN W. OSBORN, JR.

as he had been during his earlier banishment in the 1920s. While in Egypt, he once greeted a visiting delegation of resistance leaders in white tennis togs, racket in hand, straight from the court.

While Greeks were enduring one of the war's most obscure but horrific occupations, British missions of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) parachuted into Greece to work with the Resistance, including paralyzing the railroad network that helped to deliver supplies to General Erwin Rommel in North Africa for six weeks. But the British would find a different sort of conflict, particularly as it became clear in Greece that there was more than one "Resistance."

"Political quarrels hampered guerrilla warfare, and we soon found ourselves in a complicated and disagreeable situation," Churchill was, with understatement, to write. In customary Greek quarrelsomeness, there were two main Resistance groups, the National Democratic Army (E.D.E.S. in its incomprehensible Greek initials), for restoring the Republic, and the E.A.M. (National Liberation Front), a more broad-based coalition with its military arm, the E.L.A.S. (Peoples' Liberation Army).

While relations with E.D.E.S. were cordial and cooperative, the British found E.A.M-E.L.A.S. different, and ominously so. A British officer working with its military leader would say, "I had no doubt that after one of our all-day drinking sessions in the most friendly atmosphere, he would have literally flayed me alive if it suited his purpose."

An E.A.M. leader once curiously commented, "We have all been outlaws for years." The pronouncement raised suspicions, and the skill which E.A.M. demonstrated in safely bringing a British officer into and out of Athens showed that the organization was very practiced in clandestine conduct.

Investigation by the British finally found the truth behind the facade of the E.A.M.-E.L.A.S. coalition. It was secretly controlled by the Greek Communist Party, banned and driven underground by the prewar regime. Although the British were willing to work with Tito's Partisans in Yugoslavia, the potential threat of a post-war Communist Greece to British interests in the Mediterranean, especially the Suez Canal, put the Greek situation in a decidedly different category.

Added to the mixture of E.D.E.S. and E.A.M. was the Greek government-in-exile, holdovers and royalists, all claiming stakes in the future of post-war Greece. "All had thought that the Allies would probably win the war, and the struggle among them for political power began in earnest to the advantage of the common foe," Churchill would complain. The first signs that a troubling winter of 1944 was brewing in Athens emerged in October 1943, open warfare broke out between E.D.E.S. and E.L.A.S., each blaming the other. Then, in April 1944, mutinies in support of E.A.M. erupted in units of the exiled Greek army and navy in Egypt.

SOE officers in Greece brokered a truce while British troops and loyal Greek sailors suppressed the mutinies, with 50 Greek casualties and a British officer, Major R.J. Copeland, killed. A new Greek government was formed with a longtime opponent of the King, Georges Papandreou, as prime minister. Major Copeland, Churchill would say, "certainly did not die in vain," but he would not be the last British soldier to lose his life in the impending war for control of Greece.

As World War II ebbed, E.L.A.S. grew to almost 50,000, E.D.E.S. little more than 10,000. In September 1944, the Germans finally began evacuating Greece. E.L.A.S. fought alongside E.D.E.S., harassing the Nazis on their way out, and E.A.M. joined Papendreou's government. Churchill, however, was not convinced. "Obviously," he warned, "they are seeking nothing but the Communization of Greece, without allowing the people to decide in any manner understood by democracy."

The first contentious decision would concern the fate of King George II.

The one issue E.A.M., E.D.E.S., and Papendreou agreed on was a plebiscite on the return to the throne. The King, not surprisingly, resisted. "We had no intention of interfering with the solemn right of the Greek people to choose between a monarchy and a republic," Churchill wrote, but he unaccountably balked

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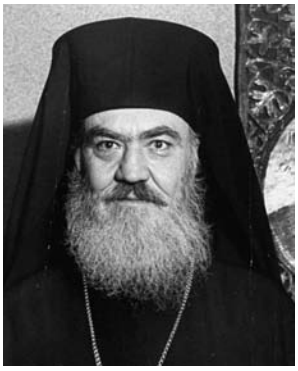

TOP: Well-armed ELAS fighters leave the mountains of Greece as the Germans pull out of the country in September 1944. ABOVE: King George II (left) had already been exiled before the Communist ELAS disturbance in the winter of 1944, while British General Ronald Scobie (center) arrived in Athens with British reinforcements as trouble began brewing in early October, and Archbishop Damaskinos Papandreou (right) participated in negotiations with the opposing sides and briefly served as prime minister of Greece.

Wikimedia

In this 1941 photograph, a flight of Luftwaffe twin-engine Dornier Do-17 bombers flies above the Acropolis in Athens, Greece. The German armed forces were dispatched to Greece initially to salvage a deteriorating situation caused by the ill-advised Fascist Italian invasion of the country.

at the consensus candidates of the Greeks, Foreign Secretary Sir Anthony Eden, Ambassador Reginald Leepers, and Churchill's special envoy to the Mediterranean Harold Macmillan for Regent, the Orthodox Archbishop of Athens, Damaskinos.

"W. has the knife into the Archbishop and is convinced that he is both a quisling and a communist," Eden remarked. In fact, the archbishop was a hero to all Greeks for his staunch stand against the Germans, holding public prayers at sites of massacres, hiding 10,000 Jews in monasteries, and forcing an end to deportations for slave labor in Germany with his protests.

Once the Germans were out, the British moved in 4,000 mostly administrative and technical personnel under Lieutenant General Ronald Scobie, entering Athens on October 2, 1944. The Papendreou government arrived three days later. King George departed for London, and E.L.A.S. ordered its units in Athens to place themselves under British command. Nevertheless, Churchill wrote Eden, "I fully expect a clash with E.A.M., and we must not shrink from it," but the clash would come more quickly and calamitously than the prime minister even expected.

Tensions in Athens rose swiftly as an extremist secret right-wing group assassinated E.A.M. members and supporters while the British kept on the hated police of the collaborationist regime to preserve order, formed security battalions of other collaborationists, and moved in Greek troops and two brigades of the 4th Indian Division from the front in Italy. Finally, on November 26, Scobie ordered E.L.A.S. to disarm itself and demobilize.

It refused unless the police, security battalions, and Greek troops did so as well. On December 2, E.A.M. quit the government and called a general strike, which shut down city services and commercial life. The next day thousands of members and supporters took to the streets to protest.

A mob attempted to storm Papendreou's apartment but was beaten back by police while he cringed inside; another confrontation would be more disastrous and deadly.

A mass gathering faced police in Constitution Square in Athens as shots rang out from an unknown source. Panicking police fired, killing 28 demonstrators and wounding scores more. Crowds swelled to 60,000 as agitators dipped rags in the dead demonstrators' blood, waving them like banners to incite the angry Athenians. Scobie immediately ordered E.L.A.S. to evacuate the city, but instead by nightfall the city was in all-out rebellion.

By the following day E.L.A.S. had rushed in reinforcements estimated at 20,000, and soon after they had taken all but three of the police stations, those inside shot, hung from lampposts or telephone poles, even dismembered alive with meat cleavers. E.L.A.S. fighters cut the road between Athens and its harbor at Piraeus. "The mob violence by which the Communists sought to conquer the city and present themselves to the world as the Government demanded by the Greek people could only be met by firearms," Churchill reflected. "There was no time for the cabinet to be called," and on his own the prime minister issued his most incendiary instruction of the war.

Churchill and Eden were working until 2 AM on December 5. Finally, Churchill let Eden go to bed. An hour later he started working on his scorcher to Scobie: "You are responsible for maintaining order in Athens and for neutralizing or destroying all E.A.M E.L.A.S. bands approaching the city ... Do not hesitate to fire on any Greek armed male in Athens who assails the British authority or Greek authority with which we are working … Do not hesitate to act as if you were [in] a conquered city where a local rebellion is in progress ... We have to hold and dominate Athens. It would be a great thing for you to succeed in this without bloodshed if possible, but also with bloodshed if necessary."

John Colville sent it out at 4:50 AM; Churchill would later offer the jaw-dropping explanation for the message that it was inspired from his dealings with the Irish!

The British in Athens were soon in combat with a resistance movement, E.L.A.S., armed with stockpiles of weapons and ammunition deliberately left behind by the Germans. The E.L.A.S. fighters sniped from rooftops and tossed down homemade fragmentation bombs made from pairs of dynamite sticks in a tin can

packed with scrap metal. They contemptuously called the makeshift bombs "Scobie Preserves." They ambushed from alleyways, sent tramcars packed with explosives crashing into British positions, and would attempt to thunderously take the struggle below the streets.

Some 80 percent of the E.L.A.S. fighters were in plain clothes, and the British soon had to extend Churchill's order "to fire at any armed Greek male" to females as well, many of them girls the British had fraternized with during the weeks before.

"Corpses lay on top of the other like carcasses in an abattoir, " a British officer would remember, "awaiting a lull in the surrounding battle so that they could be quickly buried in parks and fields. Fire engines tore through the streets and the sky was crimson from the reflections from burning buildings."

Caught in the chaos was the civilian population, after the German occupation which had ended with 30,000 dying of starvation. "Everywhere there was fear and suffering," the British officer recalled. "There was not only no food, no water, no light and no warmth, there was no safety or security anywhere."

Alamy

Civil unrest in Athens led to a demonstration near the Greek Parliament building on December 3, 1944. When violence erupted, 28 protesters of the Communist EAM lay dead in the street, while others were wounded. The incident was a harbinger of the death and destruction to come.

Nor was there for the British, as a typical day's report from Scobie to Churchill related: "Increased activities on the part of the rebels and widespread sniping limited progress during the day ... By mid-day the total of rebel prisoners under military guards was 35 officers, 524 other ranks. These figures did not include those held by the police, as it is difficult to obtain accurate figures from them. Some progress was made by the 23rd Brigade in house-to-house clearing throughout the afternoon. A further section in the center of the city was cleared by the Parachute Brigade. Marine reinforcements had to be landed from H.M.S. *Orion* to deal with serious sniping of Navy House, Piraeus, by rebels who infiltrated into the area south of Port Leontos. In the face of strong opposition our troops were forced to withdraw in one area."

The fighting sparked outrage in Britain and the United States, where it was seen as the British for old imperial purposes crushing democratic resistance to an unpopular King. Churchill quickly crushed criticism in Parliament with his angriest address of the war saying, "Democracy is no harlot to be picked up in the street by a man with a tommy gun. He demanded and overwhelming won a vote of confidence, 279 to 30.

On December 11, Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander, Allied Commander-in-Chief for the Mediterranean, flew into Athens to see how serious situation was and found out literally on the spot.

"Not a happy welcome!" he would relate. "When I asked for a motor car I was told I would need an armored car ... In due time two armored cars arrived to take us the six or seven miles to Athens. We bought a lot of bullets on the journey—we could hear them hitting the outside of our armored car—but we were not stopped."

At Scobie's headquarters Alexander learned and reported to Churchill's dismay, "British forces are in fact beleaguered in the heart of the city." They were hemmed into a zone only two miles long and a few blocks wide. There was only ammunition left for three days, food for six. Alexander diverted two brigades and a tank regiment headed for Italy to Athens and transferred a quartet of RAF squadrons from the Italian front. Soon, Spitfires were strafing and rocketing while tanks rumbled and roared to add to the cacophony of chaos into which Athens had descended.

"Is there now any danger of a mass surrender of British troops?" Churchill was soon nervously asking of Alexander. The British managed to reopen the road to Piraeus though the supply convoys into the city had to run a gauntlet of fire. The British gave their own moniker to the mayhem, though it was longer, the Mad Mile, but an air base was captured by E.L.A.S. with 250 RAF personnel taken prisoner. Greek troops were cut off in the suburbs, and in the mountains to the northwest, E.L.A.S. had driven E.D.E.S. out, 7,000 members and supporters evacuated by the Royal Navy in a miniature Mediterranean Dunkirk.

"It will be possible to clear the Athens-Piraeus area," Alexander reported, and on December 20 the British launched an all-out counterattack to accomplish just that, creating a Hellenic Stalingrad. As it was raging on, Churchill was spending a rare quiet Christmas Eve with his family at Chequers, the official Prime Minister's country residence. He came to a sudden decision, phoning his physician, Lord Charles Moran, to inform him of it.

"I'm off to G." Moran recorded the conversation in his diary.

"When?"

"Oh, tonight."

Moran, whose responsibility it was to accompany the septuagenarian statesman on his wartime travels immediately rushed for Chequers, wondering on the way why they were headed to Gibraltar.

He found out on arriving, "G. is Greece."

"I felt sure I ought to fly to Athens," Churchill explained of his dramatic decision later, "to see the situation on the spot, and especially make the acquaintance of the Archbishop, around whom so much was turning."

Colville recalled, "A chaotic evening ensued." He made arrangements, informed King George VI, the Cabinet, and the Chiefs of Staff. Shortly after midnight he, Churchill, Eden, Moran, Churchill's naval aide, and a pair of pretty secretaries were taking off for Athens. They landed outside the city at a heavily guarded base at noon to be met by Macmillan and Leepers. Aboard the aircraft they all talked for hours, finally deciding to convene a conference of all the Greek parties including E.L.A.S. for the following day, to be presided over by Archbishop Damaskinos.

In armored cars the group rode down to Piraeus to board the cruiser HMS *Ajax* and

Imperial War Museum

TOP: A British M4 Sherman tank sits in an intersection while soldiers remain vigilant against Communist snipers. A second British tank, covering another road crossing, is visible in the distance. ABOVE: British Prime Minister Winston Churchill (center right) engages in negotiations with Archbishop Damaskinos Papadreou in December 1944. The talks are being conducted by candlelight due to a power outage that resulted from the heavy fighting in Athens.

wait to finally meet Damaskinos. When the captain warned that he might have to fire in support of troops in the city, Churchill responded, "Pray, Captain, I come here as a cooing dove of peace, bearing a sprig of mistletoe in my beak—but far be it for me to stand in the way of military necessity."

The crew was making Christmas merry in their own way with a costume party when the Archbishop, over six feet tall, his hat making him look seven, great beard, and still the physique of the champion wrestler of his youth, arrived. The crew, unaware of what was going on or who he was, took him for a Greek Santa Claus and proceeded to cheerily clap and dance around him.

"The Archbishop thought this motley gang was a premeditated insult, and might have departed for shore but for the timely arrival of the captain who, after some embarrassment, explained matters satisfactorily," Churchill recalled. "Meanwhile I waited, wondering what had happened. But all ended happily."

Not entirely for John Colville. The Archbishop brought his own Christmas cheer, a potent Greek brew Colville struggled to get down without choking. Churchill had evidently been finally filled in on the Archbishop's record and his forthright condemnation of E.L.A.S. He won Churchill over immediately. "We are now in the topsy-turvy position of the Prime Minister feeling strongly pro Damaskinos," a recovered Colville said.

Preparing to leave in the next afternoon for Athens, Churchill, renowned for writing "action this day" on his memorandums, was prepared to be really ready for this one with more than just paper, carrying a pistol as he was preparing to board an armored car and asking Colville if he was armed. He said he wasn't but then came back with the driver's tommy gun.

"What is *he* going to do?" Churchill asked.

"He will be busy driving," Colville replied.

"But there will be no trouble unless we are stopped, and what is he going to do?" the prime minister asked.

"Jock had no reply," Churchill wrote. "A black mark! We rumbled along the road to the Embassy without trouble." There they picked up Alexander, Leepers, and Damaskinos, then drove on to the 6 PM conference at the old Greek Foreign Ministry, where the setting at the conference table was as bleak as the situation, lit lamps, blankets all around for lack of electricity and heating.

"From outside came the muffled din of battle as we waited for E.L.A.S. to appear," Leepers wrote. No truce had been declared, and the fighting continued.

After a half-hour, a trio of delegates, "shabby desperados" to Colville, but to Churchill "presentable figures in British battle dress" arrived claiming they had been held up at checkpoints. It came out later that E.L.A.S. had been planting a ton of explosives in the sewers beneath British headquarters at the Hotel Grand-Bretagne thinking the conference would be held there and had canceled the blast at just the last moment. Churchill spoke briefly, "We have begun the work, see that you finish it!" and abruptly exited.

The following morning back on *Ajax* Churchill stunned everyone, announcing he wanted to go back into Athens to observe the fighting. "I would like to go to some forward observation post and see the problem for myself. It helps me to see things."

In his early days of his political career, Churchill had been ridiculed for going, in top hot and Saville row best, to view a gun battle between policemen and anarchists. Just the previous June, King George had tactfully talked him out of closely observing the D-Day operations. Now, Alexander simply laid down the law.

With that, Alexander said to Moran, "Have you been to the Acropolis, Charles? You haven't? Oh, we must remedy that."

Continued on page 77

By Christopher Miskimon

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-277-0843-14; Photo: Jacob

The Demise of Army Group South

Nazi Germany's Army Group South faced bitter defeat on the Eastern Front throughout 1944.

WILLI FEY SERVED IN A TIGER TANK CREW ON THE EASTERN FRONT. DURING March 1944, a massive Soviet offensive struck the area his unit, the Waffen SS Division Das Reich, defended. The fighting became so desperate even the vaunted Tigers, generally used to blunt enemy armored assaults, had to be used to shore up the lines against enemy infantry attacks.

In the predawn darkness, Fey's unit busily prepared for an attack of its own when the Russian attack began. Snow and ice covered the ground around the village the Germans occupied; a nearby Panzer IV skidded along the frozen road near Fey's Tiger. As the Germans struggled to get their tanks lined up, Soviet artillery crashed down, the crack of explosions mixing with the hiss of shrapnel flying past.

Quickly, the veteran German tankers moved their vehicles out of the village, still forming up for what they thought would be their own attack movement. They advanced, but the Soviet artillery kept pace, moving with them, continuously falling on the panzers even as they moved. Fey heard the explosions outside his Tiger and listened as clumps of frozen earth and pieces of shrapnel struck the armor of his tank. As the sun slowly rose in the east, visibility became better. Suddenly Fey could see the attack his unit was making was futile. The lead tanks were already engaged, and the German infantry ahead abandoned their outposts and fighting positions, fleeing for their lives. Thousands of Soviet infantry lay in full view, charging toward the German line. Flares flew overhead as machine guns chattered thousands of bullets at the oncoming Red Army.

New orders came, sending three of the Tigers to a nearby railway station. The tank crews steered their panzers away from the rubble of the station, fearful of close combat against Soviet troops. As they moved into firing position, Fey saw thousands more enemy soldiers, coming in waves and interspersed with cannon and antitank guns drawn by teams of horses. The Tigers finally got into place and let loose with their machine guns, firing belt after belt of cartridges, tearing open new ammunition boxes to refill the empty weapons. The Soviets wore brown overcoats; Fey watched as rows of brown fell to the ground, either hit or taking cover from the murderous fire of the panzers. The gunners joined in, sending 88mm shells crashing into the enemy ranks. With each round, a cloud of dirt and snow flew into the air and more Soviets tumbled to the ground. To Fey's dismay, it seemed every dead Russian was replaced by one or more living ones ready to continue the fight. Fey recalled the sound of the tank's ventilator softly whirring, struggling to clear the air inside the vehicle of the choking fumes from the cannon and machine guns.

Time lost meaning as the rain of bullets striking the Tiger's hull mixed with the sounds of more firing as the Soviets tried to use the ruined train station to get close. The three German tank crews supported each other to keep the enemy at bay. Eventually, the flood of Red Army troops slowed, then stopped, but the panzer men knew it was only a temporary reprieve. Another attack was inevitable. Willi Fey's shocking experience would be repeated across the Eastern Front during 1944. It is just one account in *The Reckoning: The Defeat of Army Group South, 1944* (Pritt Buttar, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2020, 496 pp., maps, pho-

Two German Panzer VI Tigers sit outside a Russian village in the Winter of 1944. Tiger crewman Willi Fey's experiences on the Eastern Front are described in a new book by Pritt Buttar.

Gripping World War II History

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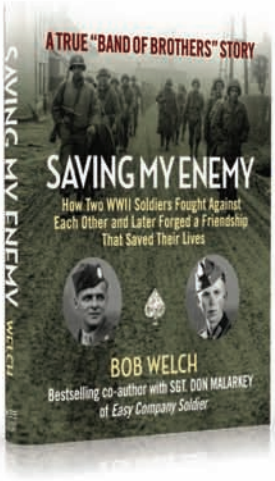

SAVING MY ENEMY

Don Malarkey is best known as one of the members of the famous "Band of Brothers" in World War II. Yet few know how guilt nearly killed him. And it wasn't until he connected with Fritz Engelbert, who lived in lifelong shame for having been a pawn of Hitler, that they both were able to forgive each other, put the past to rest, and find peace.

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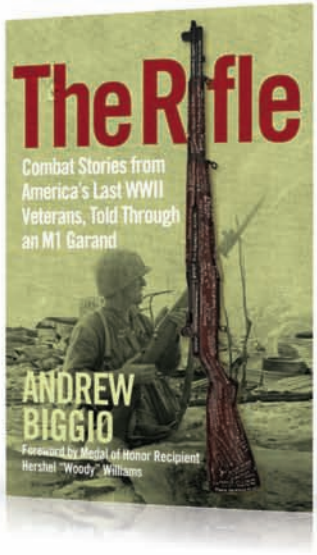
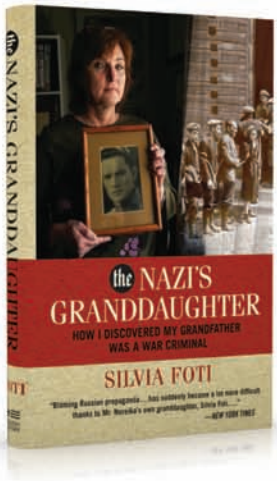
Marine veteran Andrew Biggio put an M1 rifle in the hands of dozens of WWII veterans. Their eyes lit up, and immediately their stories began to flow—some for the first time. Incredible must-read war stories from World War II.





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A deathbed promise led Siliva Foti to write her grandfather's celebrated life story. But when she started digging into his life, she learned he wasn't a war hero at all, but a war criminal—and responsible for sending thousands of Jews to death camps. Follow Foti's story of startling discovery and determination to shed light on Lithuania's role in the Holocaust.

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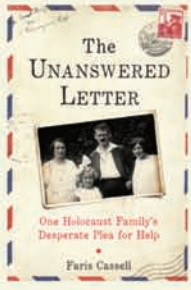

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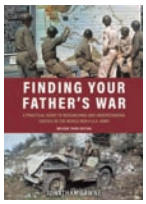
tographs, notes, bibliography, index, $35.00, hardcover).

This new work dives into the tragedy and horror of the Eastern Front as German Army Group South is decimated during 1944. The author is an established authority on the war in Eastern Europe, with numerous books to his credit. The book is meticulously researched, making the author's assertions well supported, even when they go against prevailing attitudes about the war. Many of the Eastern Front's stories have become near legends, mixing truth, lies and propaganda. The narrative strives, and succeeds, in bringing clarity to the reader. The book contains good maps and many interesting photographs that graphically reveal the grim nature of the fighting. The writing is clear and straightforward, allowing the reader to easily follow the events described. Germany's defeat became clear and inevitable in 1944. This new work shows how the Soviet Union contributed to that growing certainty.

Finding Your Father's War: A Practical Guide to Researching and Understanding Service in the World War II U.S. Army (Jonathan Gawne, Casemate Publishing, Havertown, PA, 2020, 396 pp., photographs, appendices, bibliography, $29.95, softcover)



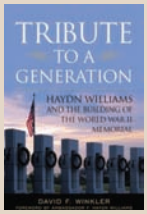
Many army veterans of World War II came home from their service and never spoke of what they had experienced. Some were simply eager to get on with their lives, while others wanted to forget the horrors of war. Now, almost all the war's veterans are gone, and often their families are left without enough information to form a good idea of their ancestor's time in the army. Most people today are unfamiliar with military service, and the army itself changes over time.

This book is a guide for genealogists, family members and historians seeking to learn more about the myriad details of army service during the war. It breaks down units, ranks, military occupational specialties, campaign and service ribbons, and many other minute facets of a soldier's existence. There is also extensive background information on the war's progress, providing context to the daily life of the soldier and larger war in which they struggled. This is particularly valuable as most soldiers, particularly the enlisted ranks, usually knew little about larger operational and strategic aims and knew only what they were told at the time. The author also gives tips on how to interpret military documents, such as orders and service records. The book is liberally illustrated and contains extensive appendices and a useful bibliography.

From the Realm of a Dying Sun: Volume II: The IV. SS-Panzerkorps in the Budapest Relief Efforts, December 1944 – February 1945 (Douglas E. Nash Sr., Casemate Publishers, Havertown, PA, 2020, 534 pp., maps, pho-

New and Noteworthy

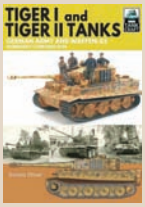
In the Hell of the Eastern Front: The Fate of a Young Soldier During the Fighting in Russia in WW2 (Arno Sauer, Frontline Books, 2020, $32.95, hardcover) The author served the German army from 1942 to 1945. This memoir covers his time fighting on the Eastern Front, including his capture and repatriation to Germany.



Tribute to A Generation: Haydn Williams and the Building of the World War II Memorial (David F. Winkler, Naval Institute Press, 2020, $34.95, hardcover) The World War II memorial in Washington, D.C., might not exist without the efforts of Haydn Williams. This book reveals the efforts made to create America's tribute to its veterans of history's greatest conflict.

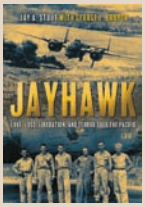
The Second World War Illustrated: The First Year (Jack Holroyd, Pen and Sword Books, 2020, $32.95, softcover) This is the first in a series featuring photographs from each year of the war. This initial volume covers the period to September 1940.

Hell in the Central Pacific: The Palau Islands 1944 (Jon Diamond, Pen and Sword Books, 2020, $24.95, softcover) The latest book in the Images of War series, this edition includes hundreds of photographs of U.S. Army and Marine troops in action.



Tiger I and II Tanks: German Army and Waffen SS, Normandy Campaign 1944 (Dennis Oliver, Pen and Sword Books, 2020, 22.95, softcover) Aimed at military modelers, this book covers the history of the Tiger tank units, along with tips for making scale models of the vehicles.

P-40E Warhawk vs A6M2 Zero-Sen: East Indies and Darwin 1942 (Peter Ingman, Osprey Publishing, 2020, $22.00, softcover) In early 1942, the air war in the Pacific theater pitted these two aircraft and their pilots against each other. This book covers the technical and tactical details of the planes and their encounters.



Jayhawk: Love, Loss, Liberation and Terror over the Pacific (Jay Stout, Casemate Publishing, 2020, $34.95, hardcover) George Cooper flew B-25 bombers in the Pacific War. This memoir recounts his experiences and missions in such places as Rabaul and Wewak.

The Nazi's Granddaughter: How I discovered my Grandfather was a War Criminal (Silvia Foti, Regnery history, 2020, $26.99. hardcover) Many considered Lithuanian Jonas Nereika a war hero, and his granddaughter set out to write a book about him. Her research led to her discovery he was instead a war criminal who took part in the persecution of the Jews during the war

Helping Stop Hitler's Luftwaffe: The Memoirs of a Pilot involved in the Development of Radar interception, Vital in the Battle of Britain (Air Marshal Sir Arthur MacDonald, Air World, 2020, $34.95, hardcover) Arthur MacDonald flew test missions to help the Royal Air Force perfect the techniques of fighter interception used in the Battle of Britain.

tographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, $$37.95, hardcover)

On Christmas Eve, 1944, the 35,000 soldiers of the IV. SS-Panzerkorps prepared to celebrate the holiday as best they could, given they were in the fifth year of a world war that was going badly for them. Composed of two SS Panzer divisions, the Totenkopf and Wiking, the corps encamped near the relatively quiet Vistula front, resting after five months of combat. However, that evening the corps commander received a telephone call with new orders. The next day, Christmas, his entire command would board trains and move to Hungary. The German forces in Budapest were surrounded and under siege from the advancing Soviets. The corps' new mission was to relieve their trapped comrades. There would be three attempts to break through the enemy lines and into the city; the IV. SS-Panzerkorps would take part in all of them, bringing them to within a few kilometers of Budapest before the final effort was cancelled.

This is the second book of a planned trilogy on the IV. SS-Panzerkorps, a storied unit within the Waffen-SS. As with the author's prior works, this work is meticulously researched and footnoted, backing every major detail with its factual source. There are good photographs and excellent maps, well placed to accompany the relevant text.

Rain of Steel: Mitscher's Task Force 58, Ugaki's War Gods, and the Kamikaze Thunder off Okinawa (Stephen L. Moore, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis MD, 2020, 426 pp., maps, photographs, appendix, notes bibliography, index, $39.95, hardcover)

In 1945, the U.S. Navy's Task Force 58 was the most powerful naval force on the planet. Under Admiral Marc Mitscher's command, the force of carriers, battleships and escorts accrued an impressive string of successes in raids on Japanese-held islands and in battles at sea. In Japan, Admiral Matome Ugaki had no fleet to oppose Mitscher. What he did have were the remnants of Japan's aircraft and some hastily trained, inexperienced pilots. He also had a handful of rocket-powered "Ohka" gliders, towed behind a bomber and released to attack enemy ships. The Japanese command assigned Ugaki the task of using these assets as kamikazes to make suicide attacks on the

Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

The Eastern Front gets the spotlight in a new isometric real-time strategy outing from Destructive Creations.

WAR MONGRELS

PUBLISHER DESTRUCTIVE CREATIONS, ALL IN! GAMES SA • **GENRE** STRATEGY • **SYSTEM** PC • **AVAILABLE** 2021

If you've been seeking out a World War II game that focuses primarily on the Eastern Front of the war, look no further than the latest from Destructive Creations. This year will mark the release of War Mongrels, an isometric real-time strategy game that aims to focus on an aspect of the war that the team feels has been receiving less attention in the gaming world. Specifically, War Mongrels wants to ride that line between inspiring stories of courage and the evidence war provides of the "darkest parts of the human character," resulting in a campaign derived from a mix of history and original storytelling inspired by these historic events.

The story in question centers on a pair of Wehrmacht soldiers who start out fueled by propaganda. Before long, they find their new purpose in fighting back against the expanding Nazi forces that got them into their regrettable situation in the first place, opening their eyes to the horrors of war in the process and eventually meeting other like-minded soldiers that have their own unique skills to bring to the team. In the context of a real-time strategy game, these varied attributes provide a chance to mix up tactics and choose what works best for each situation, from those who specialize in sneaking and distraction to others who are more action-oriented guerrilla fighters.

The characters of War Mongrels don't just grow in terms of realizing their purpose, but they also evolve in the way they carry out their own acts of war along the way. While they started out simply hoping to get away from the war entirely, they eventually strive to prevent the unnecessary deaths of innocents who tend to get caught in the crossfire. The team at Destructive Creations promises an appropriately grim storyline, from the overall subject matter to details such as the bodies that remain in the trenches long after each skirmish has ended.

Even if the names aren't attributed to real soldiers who served in the war, there are plenty of true stories highlighting the history behind it all. It's not just about the events, dates, locations, weapons, and units scattered about the game; players will also find in-game historical articles and other artifacts of the time, keeping even the most intense of showdowns grounded in real circumstances. Moves like these are a great way to keep games in the genre from coming off as purely sensational or exploitative. War Mongrels doesn't want its players to forget that its events all have a basis in reality, they're just shown through a narrative lens unique to this particular outing.

At the time of this writing the date for War Mongrels is still listed as just "2021," but that may change once this issue is in your hands. Let's hope it does so sooner rather than later, because sandwiching lush and detailed visuals between the terms "isometric" and "real-time RTS" is a great way to keep our interest piqued.

MARTHA IS DEAD

PUBLISHER WIRED PRODUCTIONS • **GENRE** ADVENTURE • **SYSTEM** PC, PS4, PS5, Xbox One, Xbox Series X|S • **AVAILABLE** 2021

We've covered a ton of war games in these pages over the years, but this is definitely the first time we've written about one with a title like Martha is Dead. True to its blunt name, the upcoming game from developer LKA and publisher Wired Productions is one of the more unique World War II offerings out there, bucking the tendency to fall into one traditional wargaming category or the other and instead falling in the self-described realm of "first-person psychological thriller." We should expect no less from the developers of the similarly psychological The Town of Light game, which raised everyone's awareness of LKA when it came out in 2016.

Right from the moment you set eyes on it, Martha is Dead establishes a dreamlike aesthetic that blends history with equal parts psychological distress and superstition, all against the backdrop of Tuscany in 1944. As the conflict between the Axis and Allied powers intensifies even further, a woman's body has been found at the side of a lake in Tuscany. That's where the title of the game comes into play, and it's up to Martha's twin sister to deal with the trauma of loss and the fallout of Martha's death as war rages across the land.

The results are, as is to be expected from a developer like LKA, anything but ordinary. Martha is Dead explores loss in the intensely dark context of this historical period. The first-person adventure elements put Unreal Engine 4 to work to create an immersive and, at times, horrifying environment. More than your average war game that focuses on the larger conflict, Martha is Dead looks to offer a different type of maturity to its proceedings, and we're looking forward to seeing how it turns out when it launches on PC, PS4, PS5, Xbox One, and Xbox Series X|S systems at some point in 2021. □

Allied navies and make the cost of victory too high for them to bear. "We have been pressed into a corner," Ugaki wrote in early 1945, "and the rise and fall of the empire is now at stake." The American sailors and pilots would meet their determined and suicidal Japanese counterparts in the waters around the island of Okinawa.

This account of the naval battle off Okinawa is told through the viewpoints of both admirals, as well as the pilots who flew for them. The book is thorough in its retelling of the events leading up to the Okinawa fighting and the backgrounds of the personalities used to build the narrative.

Living in the Shadow of a Hell Ship: The Survival Story of U.S. Marine George Burlage, a WWII Prisoner of War of the Japanese (Edited by Georgianne Burlage, University of North Texas Press, Denton, TX, 2020, 256 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, $29.95, hardcover)

More than 85,000 U.S. troops surrendered at Corregidor in May 1942. Marine George Burlage was one of them. He began his ordeal at the Cabanatuan camp, where 50 men died every day. Trying to survive, he got a transfer to the island of Palawan, where prisoners labored to build an airfield. After two years building airfields at various places, the Japanese placed George aboard a freighter and sent him to Japan, a 38-day voyage in what George later called a "Hell Ship." Assigned to the Mitsubishi company, he worked as a miner in northern Japan, conducting tiny acts of sabotage when he could. When liberated in September 1945, he weighed half what he had before the war, but he survived despite the torture and starvation inflicted upon him.

George worked as a journalist after the war and wrote about his experiences. After he passed away in 2008, his daughter Georgianne, a teacher, discovered his writings, edited them with added historical material to provide context, and published this memoir. It is a gripping firsthand account of the horrible life and treatment of a prisoner of war under Imperial Japan.

American Guided Missiles of World War II (Steven J. Zaloga, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2020, 48 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, $19.00, softcover)

On December 27, 1944, the United States took another step toward the precision-guided weapons so common today. A group of B-24J bombers approached the Japanese-held bridge over the Sittang River, part of the Rangoon–Mandalay railway line. So far, this bridge had remained intact despite repeated attacks against it. This day, the B-24s used a new weapon: the VB-1 "Azon," using a new radio-control assembly on the weapon's tail. As the 1,000-pound bombs coasted toward their target, the bomber maintained a straight course as the bombardier guided the weapon using a remote-control system. A trail of colored smoke followed each VB-1; the tailfin had a flare inserted into the assembly to help the bombardier track the weapon and make corrections. Though not all the new guided weapons hit the bridge, nine did, dropping one entire span and damaging another. More such attacks followed this impressive result, and by March 1945, a total of 482 Azons had dropped 23 bridges in the China-Burma-India theater, seriously damaging Japanese logistics capabilities. The Air Corps estimated the VB-1 was 10 times more effective than standard bombs against bridges.

Nazi Germany's rockets, missiles and guided bombs are the most famous of World War II, but the United States built and deployed a number of its own. This new work provides a brief but thorough introduction to these weapons and how they were employed in the European, Mediterranean and Pacific theaters. The book is well-illustrated with several original pieces of artwork and has the author's usual eye for useful detail. bat.

Letters from the Few: Unique Memories from the Battle of Britain (Dilip Sarkar MBE, Air World Press, South Yorkshire, UK, 2020, 307 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, $42.95, hardcover)

On February 3, 1940, a German Heinkel He-111 bomber took off from Schleswig to hunt British shipping. British radar picked up the plane just after 9 AM and scrambled a trio of Hurricane fighters to intercept. Leading the British flight was Flight Lieutenant Peter Townsend, who years later became involved in a marriage scandal with the royal family's Princess Margaret. The three planes spread out in a search formation, line abreast, looking for the enemy plane, which they believed about to attack a merchant ship. Suddenly, Townsend spotted the He-111,

just below some clouds. The three Hurricanes raced for their target. Townsend waited until the bomber filled his sights and then opened fire. That burst of fire killed the German plane's observer, Peter Leushake, and mortally wounded the flight engineer, Johann Meyer. The tail gunner, Karl Missy, returned fire but was also wounded. The He-111 crash-landed near the town of Whitby, the first German plane to go down over England since 1918. Townsend visited Missy the next day and took him cigarettes.

The author collected the experiences of 26 Allied pilots who served during the Battle of Britain and combined them into this new work. Each chapter covers a different person using their own letters and statements to relay their part of the battle. The book is well-illustrated with a readable narrative.

Mussolini's Defeat at Hill 731 March 1941: How the Greeks Halted Italy's Albanian Offensive (John Carr, Pen and Sword Books, South Yorkshire, UK, 2020, 219 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, $34.95, hardcover)

Italy invaded Albania in March 1941; Italian dictator Benito Mussolini wanted a victory to impress his German allies, who'd so far proved the senior partner in the Axis. Hill 731 was the hardest-fought battle of that conflict. It dominated two parallel valleys the Italians needed to take for further operations. The Greek 1st Division defended the hill with two other divisions on its flanks. The Italians began their attack with a heavy artillery barrage, which lowered the hill's height by five meters. Afterward the Italian Eighth Corps assaulted the hill in a battle lasting 17 days, in which they were bloodily repulsed time and again by the Greek defenders. The battle proved a debacle for the Italians and likely delayed the Axis invasion of the Soviet Union due to the need for the Germans to eliminate the Greek threat to their southern flank.

The Battle of Hill 731 ranks with some of the most famous stands in military history, but few know about it today, as the failed Italian invasion of Greece and Albania has become a mere footnote in the annals of World War II. This book repairs that oversight with a beautifully written account of the bravery and sacrifice of the Greek army as well as that of the Italians set against it. The book has good maps and an excellent narrative of the action.

The Death of Hitler's War Machine (Samuel W. Mitcham Jr., Regnery History, Washington, D.C., 2021, 320 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, bibliography, $29.99, hardcover)

The Third Reich ended in fire, a slow-burning conflagration that left Germany in ashes. The last five months of World War II were little but a useless waste of lives; Germany should have surrendered and ended the carnage, but it did not. Hitler, whose hold on the nation was firmer than his hold on reality, refused to concede an inch of ground. This meant the Wehrmacht was slowly ground into destruction both east and west, everywhere from the Ardennes to Budapest.

The author uses a large number of German sources to reveal how the war ended from their perspective. He vividly describes how the Nazi high command juggled its waning resources to stave off defeat on two fronts. Maps, photographs, and tables accompany the text to explain these futile efforts to the reader.

Tiger Battalion 507 (Edited by Helmut Schneider, Greenhill Books, South Yorkshire, UK, 2020, 274 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, $32.95, hardcover)

Germany's Tiger tank forces were mostly organized into heavy tank battalions. Often, they were formed as Corps-level assets and were attached to divisions as needed to augment their combat power for specific operations. The 507th came into existence in October 1943 and served through the rest of the war until it ceased to exist in April 1945 with the end of the fighting. It went to the Eastern Front in March 1944, deploying straight from the railroad cars that had transported it to the battlefield at Tarnopol. What was left of the battalion went to Paderborn to refit with the new King Tiger in February 1945, but that effort was interrupted by the arrival of the U.S. Army. The available troops took part in the last defense of that town before surrendering.

Veterans of the unit put together this account of their battalion, edited by one of their members. It uses their memories, unit diaries and official records to create the narrative. Many contributed their personal photographs to accompany the official ones, bringing vivid life to the work. The book is full of interesting anecdotes highlighting the battalion's combat experience. □

Top Secret

Continued from page 19

results. There was, in fact, an advantage in not deceiving the enemy regarding one's overall intent, as an expectant enemy tended to have an active imagination. Thus, German intelligence was more receptive to false indicators, particularly when intelligence collection was unable to discriminate or was inept. A partially warned enemy was more easily deceived.

Timing of an offensive was the most difficult element to mask, but it was determined that timing need not be masked perfectly to achieve its desired end. The enemy only need be deceived to the point that it was impossible for him to make necessary redeployments to thwart the attack. If deception worked regarding scale and location, even a small timing miscalculation by the enemy could spell disaster, especially for a force struck in the midst of redeploying. The Russians became satisfied if they were able to deceive the Germans regarding the timing of an attack by just a few days.

One of the weaknesses of Russian deception planning was a lack of knowledge about what the Germans knew concerning Russian deception techniques. While routine methods would probably achieve success against a new and unsuspecting enemy, they could spell disaster when used against an experienced foe. The Russians learned this on numerous occasions early in the war when rigid practices yielded predictable patterns, which the Germans then capitalized on.

Attempts at reconnaissance deception designed to deceive the Germans as to the location of a main attack actually tipped them off to where the attack would occur. The use of radio silence was also recognized as an indicator of a pending offensive. From 1943 on, Russian directives urged commanders to use imaginative, innovative, and flexible techniques — unusual for what was considered such an inflexible organization as the Red Army.

It was vitally important that deception and misdirection measures capitalize on enemy perceptions, self-delusions, or misconceptions. This required subtlety in high-level planning and innovation along with skill in low-level implementation, making it possible to catch the Germans off balance. But the Russians proved they could learn and adapt, perfecting their techniques to a fine art. These became keys to their survival, and eventually their ability to win. □

Author Allyn Vannoy has written extensively on a variety of topics related to World War II. He resides in Hillsboro, Oregon.

Athens In Agony

Continued from page 69

Moran and Alexander set off in just a touring car with only a pair of parachute officers for guards.

They found British soldiers stationed at the Acropolis. "It's a lovely spot, sir," one told Alexander. "We have got all of Athens in our line of fire."

Alexander suggested walking back down. Along the way he spotted another temple. "I don't think you ought to go there," he was warned. "A man was killed there this morning. There are some snipers over there."

A legend in the British Army for his courage, Alexander dismissed the danger, "Oh, nonsense. If we go that way it's quite safe."

"Our guard made one more attempt a little further on to dissuade Alex, but to no purpose," Moran wrote in his diary. "We loitered in the temple for some time." Moran didn't say whether he had enjoyed this little Athens adventure.

The Greeks in the meantime had been conferring in their usual way: "bitter and animated" according to Churchill. A government minister and E.L.A.S. representative traded choice Greek curses, in the end held back from coming to blows. They grew up in the same village. But, finally, at 5:30 that evening Damaskinos reported to Churchill the parties had agreed to a plebiscite on King George II with himself as regent and a new government, but he would refuse to readmit E.A.M.

"It scotched the legend that the British were trying to force the King on the people," Leepers would conclude. "For that reason Mr. Churchill's visit to Athens was abundantly justified."

Back in London Churchill kept King George II up until 4:30 AM, when he capitulated. In the meantime, the British and Greek forces had captured the E.L.A.S. headquarters in Athens on December 29, and their last stronghold, Mount Parnassus, on New Year's Eve. Damaskinos and a new prime Minister took office on January 3, 1945, and a cease-fire with E.L.A.S. was signed 12 days later.

"Thus ended," Churchill wrote, "the six weeks' struggle for Athens, and, as it ultimately proved, for the freedom of Greece from Communist subjugation." The United States had been notably neutral, but Josef Stalin's silence had been more interesting, as Soviet interests might be well served with Greece under communist rule.

Stalin had conceded to Churchill that Greece was within the British sphere of influence. A Soviet military mission to E.L.A.S. six months earlier had reported unfavorably on its prospects for success. Besides, the Communist Party in Greece had never been under Stalin's direct control. The revolt had been sudden and launched without his approval. He apparently saw no value in providing tangible support.

In what became known as the Dekemvriana (December Events), British losses were 237 killed and 1,800 wounded. The Greeks never officially announced a death toll, but estimates run 1,200 Greek Army personnel killed, 2,000 E.L.A.S. dead, and 3,000 lost.

An E.L.A.S. leader proclaimed the communists lost "Because we did not kill enough people. Revolutions succeed when rivers redden with blood." E.L.A.S. grimly made sure the mountains did, slaughtering villagers along the fighters' route of retreat, forcing others at gunpoint out among the peaks to starve or freeze, and up to 15,000 more died.

Civil war would break out a year later, ending in 1949 with the final defeat of E.L.A.S. and another 100,000 deaths. However, in it the seeds of yet another Greek tragedy were being planted. In order to defeat the Communists, Fascist-leaning officers of the pre-war dictatorship and even the collaborationist regime were allowed into the Army. Two decades later these men would return Greece to military misrule.

When the plebiscite was held in 1946, King George II was returned to the throne, but without enthusiasm. Greeks evidently saw him as the price for continued British support. He died, widely unmourned, only a year later. His successors would prove just as incapable of kingship, and the Greek monarchy would end again, for good, with his nephew fleeing after the notorious Colonels' Coup of 1967.

In 1951, Churchill concluded, "I would consider that, taken by and large, my policy was vindicated by events; and that is true not only of the period of the war, but up to the present time of writing."

Though the revolt had been unsanctioned and then unsupported by Stalin, the battle for Athens in December 1944 came to be seen as the first battle of the undeclared Cold War.

In 1947, London informed Washington that it could no longer afford to support Greece in its civil war, and President Harry S. Truman appeared before Congress to enunciate the doctrine that came to bear his name, committing the United States to support countries opposing Communist aggression and subversion. The long road soon led to Korea and later to Vietnam. □

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

Bardia

Continued from page 45

the line, from left to right, included the 4th Brigade with the 1st South African Police, Kaffarian Rifles, and 1st Royal Durban Light Infantry. Next in line was the 3rd Brigade with the 1st Rand Light Infantry, 1st Imperial Light Horse, and Reconnaissance Battalion. The division was preparing to commit all of its available infantry in a final push.

During the afternoon, prior to launching the assault, a sandstorm blew up that threatened to impede the operation. Bren guns and submachine guns became clogged with sand and were put out of action. Even bolt-action rifles had considerable difficulty. The only weapons other than bayonets and grenades remaining in working condition were the Vickers machine guns, although visibility was so reduced as to make them nearly ineffective. Despite the storm, the South Africans were determined to execute their plans. The Phase 2 attack jumped off in the darkness as scheduled at 2200 hours. The nighttime assault apparently caught the Axis troops off balance, and the 3rd Brigade had little difficulty reaching its objective quickly. The 1st RDLI Battalion, on the right of the 4th Brigade, encountered stronger defensive fire, but drove forward and achieved its objective as well.

While other units were achieving their objectives, the Kaffarian Rifle and 1st SAP Battalions became pinned down by fire from a well-defended Axis position called "the Triangle." Assistance by armor was impossible; the New Zealand tankers could not get into the area because of mines and an antitank ditch. Although the two battalions eventually took the position, they had not reached their objectives by daylight, and a gap began to develop between the Kaffarian Rifles and the 1st RDLI Battalion on its right. De Villiers ordered his tank commander to send a tank company back to close the gap and assist the two battalions in moving forward, but before this could be accomplished, the Bardia garrison suddenly surrendered. (It was later reported that the Axis forces had lost their last well and did not have sufficient forces to retake it.)

After the surrender, Schmitt somewhat ungenerously complained that he would have held out longer if his Italian allies had performed better. The Italian government was highly offended, but Rommel recommended Schmitt for the Iron Cross. In Rommel's view, Schmitt's stand at Bardia had bought him crucial time to consolidate and withdraw his main forces from the deadly British pincers.

The 2nd South African Division reported casualties of 160 killed and 250 wounded, but later information indicated that these numbers were low. The New Zealand tank unit's casualties included three officers killed, along with 20 enlisted men killed and wounded. Of some 114 tanks engaged, 30 were destroyed and another 24 were damaged. The scales were more than balanced by the capture of Bardia and the liberation of some 1,150 Commonwealth prisoners, including 650 New Zealanders. The British also reported the capture of more than 8,000 prisoners, of whom approximately 1,800 were Germans.

Several factors contributed to the success of Allied operations at Bardia. Even though it was their first action, the South African troops were carefully and thoroughly rehearsed with their combat engineers and New Zealand tank units. Artillery barrages were well coordinated and effective use was made of smoke during Phase 1 of the attack. Command flexibility was demonstrated by the key decision to make a night attack during Phase 2. In addition, de Villiers's directions were quickly transmitted to the troops through a well-planned and smoothly functioning communication system. Despite some setbacks, the South African commanders were able to adjust their plans quickly and continue the assault, allowing the Axis forces little opportunity to recover. Bardia was an example of a sound tactical plan carried out by well-organized and well-prepared troops, even if they were not yet combat veterans.

With Bardia eliminated, other isolated German-Italian strongholds on the Libya-Egypt frontier soon fell to Commonwealth forces. Sollum surrendered to the South Africans on January 12 after a small but fierce engagement. Another 5,000 Axis defenders, surrounded in fortified positions at Halfaya Pass, held out against terrific artillery and aerial bombardment with relatively few casualties, before giving in to starvation and thirst on January 17.

Having taken these key positions, the Eighth Army's communication and supply lines were cleared from Tobruk to the railhead at Bir el Thalatha, and the next phase of the desert war moved forward to positions west of Tobruk. Six months later, on June 21, 1942, two complete infantry brigades of the 2nd South African Division, as well as most of its supporting units, would be captured at Tobruk when the fortress fell to the advancing Afrika Korps after the Battle of Gazala. By then, the seesaw war for North Africa had entered another cycle, and the second Battle of Bardia was just a dim memory, lost in the never-ending swirl of dust and sand in the unforgiving Libyan desert. □

Nijmegen

Continued from page 57

And Cook's men had not seen how the Grenadiers had also just fought with the 505th, an extremely harsh battle to reach and cross the bridge in the first place, an action that was a masterpiece of two different units from two different countries combining arms and proficiency to defeat a powerful entrenched enemy. Had it gained more attention from postwar historians, the Grenadier Guards and 2nd/505th's action would be seen for what it was—a model of Allied cooperation at its absolute best. But nobody would notice, except those who had fought there.

What would be remembered, and deservedly so, was the courage and valor of the 504th in its boat crossing of the Waal. American paratroopers who had never made an assault river crossing had done so on one day's notice and triumphed over a powerful enemy. The assault would go down deservedly into American military lore. The 3rd/504th could only console themselves with the ironic name they gave their river assault: the "Waal Regatta." Corporal Jack Bommer called it "the most vivid show of courage, patriotism, and love for one's way of life I have ever seen."

Next morning, when the Guards resumed the offensive, the Germans had moved in a battle group of tanks, and they stopped the British cold along the elevated highway. The British would have to evacuate the 2,163 survivors of the 10,000-man 1st Airborne Division, abandon the offensive, and consolidate the ground, having taken a 60-mile salient.

That was no comfort in the American casualties: Company C of the 307th Airborne Engineers lost eight killed and 26 wounded; 3rd/504th lost 28 killed, one missing in action, and 78 wounded; 2nd/505th suffered as well. Company F lost 17 killed and 23 wounded in the two-day attack on the bridges. Company E lost nine killed and 25 wounded. German casualties were harder to figure: dead Nazis lay all over Hunner Park, and 267 were counted on the road bridge.

But for everyone who survived this St. Crispin's Day on the Waal, there was a tribute offered by Browning himself, a Guards officer of World War I experience, given spontaneously to Horrocks as the 3rd/504th made its river crossing and assault: "I have never seen a more gallant action." □

Author David Lippman hails from New Jersey. He contributes frequently to WWII History *on a variety of topics.*

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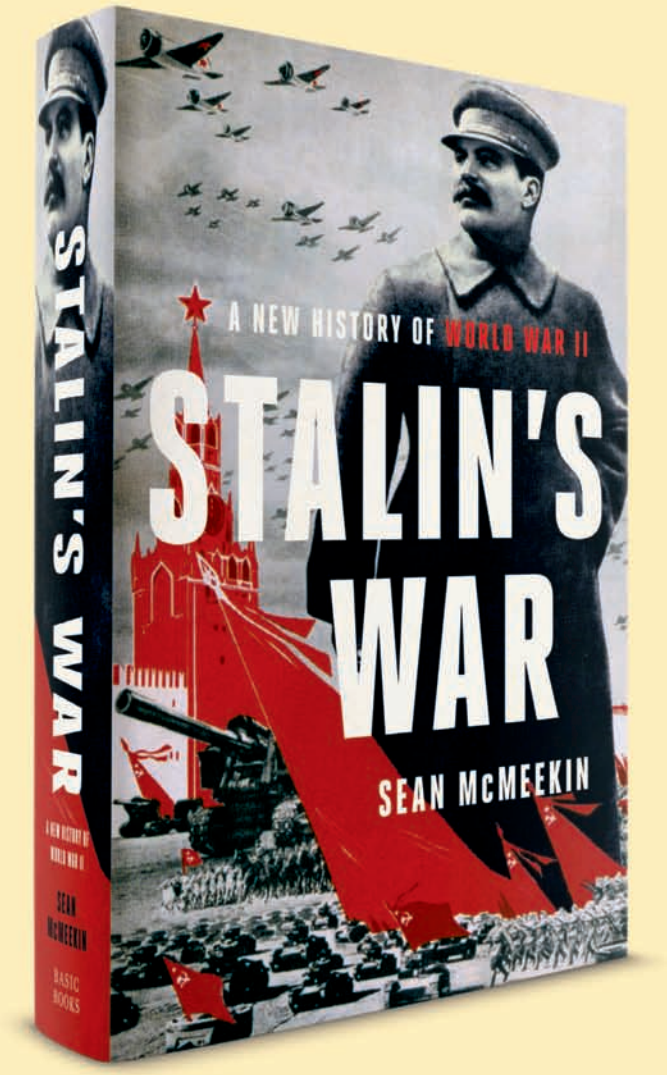

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