# They Volunteered for Combat

CMG 02313

# WWII HISTORY

AUDIE MURPHY

## BRUTAL FIGHT in the Vosges

3RD FALLSCHIRMJÄGERS

## Outgunned and on the Run in Normandy

NORTH AFRICA

## Holding off ROMMEL

+ DAWN OF DESTRUCTION IN THE PACIFIC
JUNIOR SPURRIER, THE "ONE MAN ARMY,"
THE MARCH ON BAGHDAD, AND MORE!

SUMMER 2026

$12.99US $13.99CAN
6 2>
0 73917 02313 4

RETAILER: DISPLAY UNTIL SEPT. 6

WARFAREHISTORYNETWORK.com

WWII HISTORY • SUMMER 2026 Volume 25, No. 2

# NEW FROM OSPREY PUBLISHING

**Written by one of the world's leading experts on the Eastern Front, this captivating history explores the final battle for Berlin and the heart of Germany.**


Hardcover
U.S.$38
ISBN: 978-1-4728-6966-1

This sweeping saga takes us from the banks of the River Oder as the Red Army begins it relentless drive towards the still beating heart of the Third Reich: Berlin. Only the Seelow Heights stood between the Soviet forces and the capital. Over the course of three days in May 1945 almost one million Soviet troops would attack these final entrenched positions. Once these defences were breached it was guaranteed that a bitter street-by-street battle would take place in the city itself between a vengeful Red Army and desperate, fanatical Nazis until final capitulation. Using vivid first-hand accounts, Prit Buttar reveals the brutal combat that defined the final death throes of the Third Reich.

*Berlin: Endgame 1945* is the brilliant account of the ferocious climax to World War II and a chilling prologue to the Cold War.

OSPREY

**ORDER YOUR COPY ON OSPREYPUBLISHING.COM OR WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD.**

AMERICAN BATTLEFIELD TRUST ★ 250

*Presents, in collaboration with WideAwake Films:*

# AMERICA'S WARS

## Animated Battle Map and Documentary


Explore the globe-spanning events and military engagements that shaped America over the course of two centuries, from the beginning of the French and Indian War in 1754 to the end of World War II in 1945.

**Watch it now!**




**Join us and protect America's past by saving these endangered battlefields.** ***www.battlefields.org***

# WWII HISTORY
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

## FEATURES



## DEPARTMENTS





*WWII History* (ISSN 1539-5456) is published four times yearly (Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall) by Sovereign Media, P.O. Box 10003 McLean, VA 22102. (703) 964-0361. Periodical postage paid at McLean, VA, and additional mailing offices. *WWII History*, Volume 25, Number 2 © 2026 by Sovereign Media Company, Inc., all rights reserved. Copyrights to stories and illustrations are the property of their creators. The contents of this publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part without consent of the copyright owner. Subscription services, back issues, and information: (800) 219-1187 or write to WWII History Circulation, WWII History, P.O. Box 1644, Williamsport, PA 17703. Single copies: $12.99, plus $5 for postage. Yearly subscription in U.S.A.: $29.95; Canada and Overseas: $43.95 (U.S.). Editorial Office: email editorial director Carl Gnam at cgnam@sovmedia.com. Articles, proposals, and synopses should be sent as Word attachments; please include a brief description of your submission within the body of your email. Authors' guidelines are available upon request. WWII History assumes no responsibility for the loss or damage of unsolicited material. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to WWII History, P.O. Box 1644, Williamsport, PA 17703.


Cover: M-4 tank commander Sergeant Harvey Woodward, near Nancy, France, in November 1944. See story page 56. Photo: U.S. National Archives.

Owner-Operated
World War II Tours
Since 1997

ALPVENTURES

# WORLD WAR II TOURS

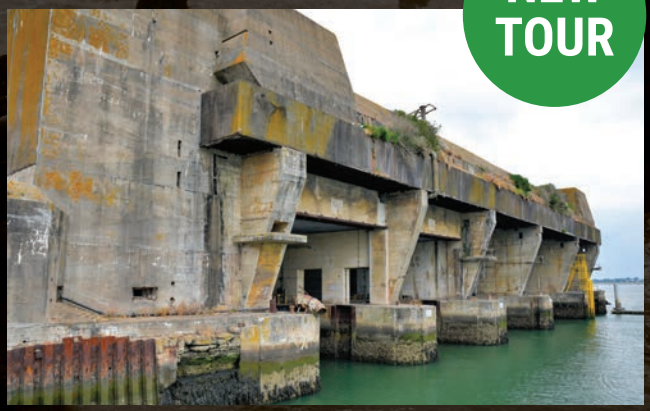
**Travel with America's most knowledgeable Tour Guides to the World War II Battlefields of Europe—and enjoy exceptional service, first-class hotels, and much more...**

## *SMALL GROUPS - MAXIMUM 25 GUESTS PER TOUR*

NEW TOUR

### INSIDE THE ATLANTIC WALL TOUR

**Forgotten Sites of Hitler's Atlantic Wall in France, Belgium, and Guernsey (Channel Islands) from September 7 - 20, 2026**



*Comfortable, Luxury Coaches*

*Wonderful 3-Course Dinners*

*Overnight in First-Class Hotels*

**Toll-Free: (888) 991-6718 worldwar2tours.com**

# SARCOINC.COM



## Military Bayonets & Fighting Knives

**BM59/AR70/90 Bayonet & Scabbard-original**
Referred to as the M4, it has a 6-3/8" blade & is very similar to the U.S. M7.
Exc. Condition
Scabbard like the M8A1
$84.95 #BAY399

**M1942 16" Garand Bayonet**
New mnfr. w/ U.S. marked M3 Scabbard with belt hooks. The most popular of the M1 Garand Bayonets. New, with WW2 markings & sharp!
$47.50 #BAY182

**M1943 10" Garand Bayonet**
From WW2 thru Korea, the 1943 bayonet was the most common of the Garand bayonets This version comes with the **M7** U.S. scabbard, blade with markings and very sharp ! New
$34.95 #BAY183

**New M7 10" Replacement Scabbard** for M1943 M-1 Garand Bayonets.
$22.95 #BAY175

**New M3 Replacement Scabbard** for the 1942 Garand Bayonets.
$19.95 #BAY176

**Original M1943 Bayonet**
10" blade with marking 'ENS EUS'. Sold with a new mnfr. **M7** scabbard.
$64.95 #BAY380

**Original M5A1 Bayonet,** USGI ,marked crossguard. Comes with K M8A1 Scabbard.Good condition
$45. #BAY189

**Original M5A1 Bayonets marked KM5A1 w/ K-M8A1 Scabbard.** 'Like New 'condition !
$59.95 #BAY020

**Original M1943 Bayonet**
10" blade with marking For 'Kongsberg' weapons factory in Norway. Very rare with @50K being made,but very few having made it into the market. Marking of Crown over 'K'. $225. #BAY239

**Turkish M5A1 Bayonet** w/Aluminum Grips. Good Condition.
$19.95 #BAY357

**Garand Bayonet Repair Kit for 1942 & 43 bayonets.** New parts including pair of grips.
#24.95 #BAY199

**K98 Yugoslavian Bayonet Grips,** new surplus
$8.95 #BAY164

**FN49 Bayonet Grips,** surplus good. condition.
$12.95 #BAY411

**VZ24 Bayonet Grips,** pair surplus like new.
$8.95 #VZ24005

**Springfield 1905 Bayonet**
1905 scabbard
1910 scabbard
**Springfield 1903 Rifles were fitted with the Model 1905 bayonet with its 16" long blade. Our new mnfr. bayonets come with slotted wood grips and period markings. 3 options to choose:**
**1905 Bayonet (no scabbard ) ...$49.95 #BAY342**
**1905 Bayonet w/ M1910 canvas bound scabbard with belt hooks. ..... $69.95 #BAY350**
**1905 Bayonet w/ 1905 leather bound scabbard with belt clasp .....$60. #BAY351**
1905 Replacement Scabbard , New $27.95 #BAY347
1910 Replacement Scabbard, New $ 29.95 #BAY266

**U.S. M4 Bayonet & Scabbard for the M1/M2 Carbine.**
420 stainless steel with 6-5/8" blade. Comes with M8A1 Scabbard. Hard leather disc handle. New
$49.95 #BAY354

**U.S. M1917 Bayonet & Scabbard**
New 1917 bayonet with wood grips and period markings. Finely manufactured with sharpened 8Cr14MoV steel . Comes with rugged green leather scabbard with hooks and period marking. Fits the P14, P17, Winchester 97 Trench Gun w/ ventillated trench handguard with lug. Best 1917 bayonet around! New for 2026
$89.95 #BAY364
Also available - replacement 1917 leather scabbard, new $22.95 #BAY278
Other USGI shotgun trench handguards fit the 1917 bayonet too !

**1941 Johsong Rifle Bayonet & Scabbard**
Rarely found, this Bayonet had a brief existence in WW2 and was a clever design. We have reproduced it exactly, including the leather scabbard. 7.5" blade. ..... $99. #BAY024

**U.S. M3 WW2 Fighting Knife** w/M6 Leather Scabbard New $39.95 #BAY438
420 steel
These new M3 knives had harder steel & are honed!

**U.S. M6 Bayonet & Scabbard**
The M6 bayonet fits the M14 & M1A rifles. Blade is 4140 steel & the bayonet and scabbard are produced using both original and new components. Honed blade with hardness of 60 hrc ! Comes with M8A1 Scabbard. $79.95 #BAY384

**U.S. M6 Scabbard** for M3 Fighting Knife and similar like the M4 Bayonet. w/markings.
$14.95 #BAY184

**Danish M8 Scabbard Body** Original 'Like New
$10. Ea. or 3 for $24.95
#BAY356

**U.S. M8A1 Scabbard** USGI Body with new canvas hanger assy. Fits M3,M4,M5, M6 & M7 bayonets & knives
$24.95 #BAY041

**U.S. M7 Bayonet & Scabbard For AR15 & M16 Rifles**
New made,and the 6-3/4" blade is sharp! Great Price!
$34.95 #BAY229

**Bolo knife comes w/ Scabbard**
**U.S. 1917 Bolo Knife & Scabbard**
New rendition of the venerable Bolo knife that was nearly indestructible.
$99.95 #BAY321

**USMC Fighting Knife**
Famous & Practical w 7 inch long blade and leather scabbard. Made w 3Cr13 Stainless Steel.
Honed Edge!
Standard Marine Knife of WW2 thru Vietnam
$39.95 #BAY390

**1918 Trench Knife Scabbard** sold separately $24.95 #BAY352

**U.S. 1918 Trench Knife-** the most ergonomic of the trench knives of WW1. Our knife is new made and marked w/ the 'Au Lion' cartouche of the French mnfr.
Brass 23 oz. heft of handle alone, and 6.5" blade make this a real mauling defense weapon.
$39. #BAY333

**M9 Fighting Knife & Bayonet w/ Scabbard**
Superior durability for tactical and serious hunter use. Blade is honed 420J2 steel w/sawtooth spine and can be used with scab., to cut wire . Handle is glass filled nylon #6.
Blade 7.8"
Sharpening stone on the back of the scabbard
$69.95 #BAY363
Hex nut takedown on pommel
Fits the M16 /AR15 Rifle

**M9 Bayonet & Scabbard (Economy)** 7-3/4" sawtooth blade. Great utility use knife and for camping. Fits the M16/AR15.
This is our economy model and provides lots of savings w/good quality. $49.95 #BAY369

**U.S. 1917 Trench Knife & Scabbard**
Triangular 9" blade
$54.95 #BAY400
Overall Length 14"
Comes with Leather Scabbard
New

# www.SARCOINC.com

Happy 250th Birthday United States Marine Corps

SARCO has a showroom in Easton ,Pa. Come Visit ! Located just a mile off Route 78 at exit #75. at '50 Hilton St. Hours Open M-Th 10am-5pm,Fri 10-7, Sat 10 till 5

WW2/Korea

## U.S. Field Gear

A. U.S. Garand Cartridge Belt - new in olive drab color $34.95 #GRD125

B. U.S. Springfield Cartridge Belt - new in olive drab color. $34.95 #SPF146

C. U.S. BAR Magazine Belt - new in olive drab color. Holds 12 magazines. $34.95 #BAR117

D. U.S. WW2 Pistol Belt-new in Khaki. New in khaki color $16.95 #MISC1003

E. U.S. WW2/Korea Pistol Belt - new in olive drab. $16.95 #MISC326

F. U.S. 1910 era Garrison Belt - original w/ two 1903 ammunition pouches in khaki color, Very good condition. $40. #MISC633

G. Ethiopian U.S. Style Pistol Belt w/ British buckle system as currently used in the Ethiopian Army. New issue. $14.95 #BELT-05

German WW2 Fliegerstahlhelm 'Flight Helmet' -Flak Protection for Bomber Crews

With Ear Cutouts for Head-Phones

**German 'Fliegerstahlhelm' for flak safety.** Modified M35 & M40 helmets were adopted for air service with cut outs for headphones & in order to provide some protection over the standard leather flight or crew cover. Rarely seen, most of these went down over the Russian Front where bomb missions were are constant requirement. Comes with a Luftwaffe water transfer decal if you desire to put it on the brow. Size large, New. **$72. #HLM039**

Model 1911 Pistol Double Mag Pouch, WW1 Style, khaki,new. $10.95 #C45473



Model 1911 WW2 Double Mag Pouch 2 colors available: Olive Drab #C45280-OD Khaki #C45280-KH $7.95 each


WW2 Tank Destroyer emblem reconstituted to represent the U.S. Army Stryker Brigade units. 3' x 5' double sided flag. New $29.95 #FLAG75

Unissued



French Adrian 1915 WW1 Helmet with badge, liner, chinstrap. Large size. New. $64.95 #HLM079

WW2 Flying Tigers 'Blood Chit' - Leather patch worn by pilots and crews of the volunteer AVG & US Army Air Corps in the China theater. New. $18.95 #MISC659 (Size 10"x8")

$7.50 ea. #MISC784

Brass with steel flap. U.S. Embossed

U.S. WW2 Paratrooper Cricket' Signal ..as used in the D-Day Invasion 1944.

U.S. WW2 'Over the Hump' leather patch worn on flight jackets for those brave people flying wartime routes over India, China, & Burma. New. $24.95 #MISC908 (Size 8" x 7")

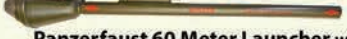
### WW2 German Panzerfaust Rocket Launchers



Anti tank weapons that struck fear in Allied vehicle crews. Literally the 'Tank Terror' weapon. Sold in 3 different models:

(New) **Panzerfaust Klein** Launcher with inert Rocket. Early model. $165. #MISC684

**Panzerfaust Gretchen** Launcher w/ inert Rocket. $180. #RL022



**Panzerfaust 60 Meter Launcher** with inert Rocket The most widely used model during the second half of the war. $180. #RL002

All are Non-Firing

German WW2 'Balkenkreuz' symbol Flag Cotton, with gommets and 3'x5' size $18.95 #FLAG21

**Panzerschreck Rocket Launcher of Germany** WW2. Accurate & deadly against allied tanks.

New made launcher and shield. (Rockets sold separately). Non Firing. $450. #RL008 ( Very Limited )



British D-Day Armband -New $14.95 #MISC990

**USMC Top Pack for the 1941 pack set up.** This can be used as a pack on its own. New. USMC marked. $39.95 #MISC1037

10 unfiltered cigarettes per pack.

Soon to be gone Forever!

Sold as Collectibles and not for consumption

Very Limited

Perfect for display, or militaria collections.

## WW2 Era Cigarettes


## Originals !


We have a small cache of original WW2 era Cigarette Packs that were uncovered in Belgium. Two popular brands used by U.S. & Allied troops in Europe during the war. These are unopened and in very good condition. Due to the age, these long expired packs are not for consumption , and sold strictly as 'collectibles'

PACK 1 - 'PLAYERS NAVY CUT $39.95 #MISC1059

PACK 2 - 'WILLS GOLDFLAKE' $45. #MISC1060

Note : MUST BE 21 OR OLDER TO ORDER

For 'Pipe Smokers', we have a small lot of WW2 era Tobacco Pouches as the GI carried. These are still supple and usable. $19.95 #MISC1089

.30-06 Caliber **Cloth Rifle Ammo Bandolier** - for M1 Garand ammo. Khaki color cotton with markings , 6 pockets for holding ammo, and shoulder strap. $6.95 ea., or 10-24 at $5.95 ea. #MISC1068

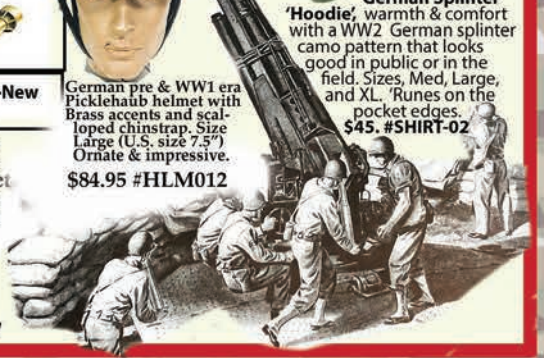
SARCOINC.COM

Excellent 'Fall' wear!

Hemmed waist & cuffs

**German Splinter 'Hoodie'**, warmth & comfort with a WW2 German splinter camo pattern that looks good in public or in the field. Sizes, Med, Large, and XL. 'Runes on the pocket edges. $45. #SHIRT-02

German pre & WW1 era Picklehaub helmet with Brass accents and scalloped chinstrap. Size Large (U.S. size 7.5") Ornate & impressive. $84.95 #HLM012



# More WW2 Field Gear

# www.SARCOINC.com

## Ph# 610.250.3960

# WW2 Panzer 'Tanker' Leather Jacket

Thompson Sub Machine Gun 5 cell , 30rd. mag pouch. New. $24.95 #TMP185

M3 Grease Gun Mag. Pouch for 30rd. mags. $18.95 #GG056 New

Thompson 3 cell magazine pouches Olive Drab $12.95 #TMP184G Khaki $12.95 #TMP184KH

12 Ga. Shotgun Pouch, holds 12 rounds. New $12.95 #MISC303

Thompson 5 cell pouch for the 20rd. magazines. Olive Drab $14.95 #TMP192 New

M1 Carbine Mag Pouches 1. Standard belt for holding 2 -15 rd. mags. $8. #CRB092

2. Pouch for 4- 30 rd. magazines Vietnam era ,new.. $9.95 #CRB090

A. M11A3 Rifle Grenade Original GI, inert $42.95 #AM125

B. M7 grenade launcher for the M1 Garand. new $74.95 #RL020

-Buy A & B together as a set for $109.95 #RL021

U.S. First Aid Pouch with Original Military Bandage- New made pouch as used in WW2 & Korean War with an original unissued bandage pack. Pouch offered in two colors: OLIVE Drab Pouch Set #MISC1056-OD KHAKI Pouch Set #MISC1056-KH $18.95 each

U.S. M1A1 Carbine (Non-Firing) Full Size replica with folding stock of the favorite carbine of WW2 paratroops ,NCOs & Officers. Comes with mag & sling. wood & metal replica $244.95 #REP11

M3 Grease Gun Full size with mag and folding stock. Non-Firing. All metal $159.95 #REP25



Model 1911 magazine pouch,OD $7.95 #C45280-OD

U.S. WW2 Medical Pouch used throughout the war to carry bandages, rolls, morphine, and other supplies. Makes a great side carry pouch and can be tied closed to reduce the size of the main pouch. New. $24. #MISC1035

Suspenders for carrying two bags is available too. $18. #MISC1080

U.S. MQ1 HAT

Worn from late WW2 thru the Korean War, these hats were a favorite for being able to be worn in multiple ways, including under the M1 helmet. Nice warm lining & comfort in cold weather. Available in OD or Khaki. U.S. Sizes: 7-1/4",7-1/2", 7-5/8, 7-3/4" $32. ea., #HAT24

Thompson SMG 50rd DRUM POUCH, new 2 colors available KHAKI #TMP093-T OLIVE #TMP093-G $19.95

GERMAN WW1 EIER GRENADE Small and powerful, this was the most widely used grenade by German troops in the trench. New, inert, metal reproduction. $34.95 #AM244

U.S. M1 Bazooka (non-firing) Full size replica of the U.S. WW2 Infantryman's Anti Tank Weapon

Steel with wood grips & stock. Rockets Available Separately

$345. #MISC502

(Also available as a 'parts set' for you to assemble. See part# MISC503-KIT $255.)

French Foreign Legion Dagger with Leather Scabbard- sharp & swift to handle. Features a stainless steel honed blade and brass handle. New

$60. #BAY402

(7.5" blade)

French Foreign Legion Paratroop Regiment Flag,- 2nd Regt. Famed for their actions in post war Indochina including operations at Dien Bien Phu. $30. #FLAG74

French Foreign Legion Mle-49 Bush Hat - Rugged khaki hat made famous by the Legion. Sizes 7-1/4", 7-1/2",7-5/8". $34.95 #HAT22

WW1 Imperial Russian Adrian Helmet. Large Size. New $77. #HLM112

MP40 Replica SMG (Non Firing) Full size life like metal replica with magazine and working trigger and cocking mechanism & folding buttstock. The iconic German weapon of WW2. $199.95 #REP02

WW1 French Trench Knife New Double edge honed blade, 6.5" long with overall length of 11.25". A common fighting knife of the French in WW1 and also WW2. Comes with steel scabbard. Ash wood handle and stainless steel blade. $45. #BAY406

Reversible Pattern

USMC 'Frog Skin' Camouflage Shelter Half w/ 3 Poles,5 Stakes, & Cord

$89.95 #TENT-05

U.S. M1943 Jungle Pack. Pacific theater 'Frog Camo' Rucksack Originals almost impossible to find. Heavy Duty! New.

$110. #Backpack-05

New Manufacture

Herringbone

Please visit our Web Site for loads of Militaria, Firearms, and Firearm Parts. We also carry a large line of Bayonets, Swords, Armor. & Historic Flags.

New Colt Model 1911 Hip Holster, Leather $35. #HOL106

New P38 soft shell holster $18.95 #HOL080-BLK

New WW2 Luger Hardshell Holster Brown. $24.95 #HOL219



S&W Military hip holster for the 'Victory' M10 revolver, U.S. embossed. Leather. $16.95 #HOL088

German WW2 Panzer Leader ' Jacket in fine black leather. Generally this jacket was a private purchase by officers and it became so popular that NCOs in the Tank Corps and U-Boat & Pilots also started to adopt this wear. Principally the leather was supple yet strong and gradually softened to a second skin. This is real 'tough guy' jacket and would be ideal for motor-clycle riders or casual wear.

Sizes available: Large and XL $150. #JKT 11 New

German WW2 U-Boat Jacket as used by 'Kreigsmarine' submariners and E Boat officers. Heavy duty black leather with anchor' buttons., short collar, & hip and breast pockets. Sizes: Lg. XL,2XL & 3XL New

$150 #JKT 09

U-Boat Jacket

German WW2 Luftwaffe Pilot Jacket in brown leather Elegant and utilitarian, this fine leather jacket looks great at work or play. Two zippered breast pockets, and two hip pockets. Sizes Lg,XL,2XL, & 3XL

German Luftwaffe Pilot's Jacket New

U.S. M65 Field Jacket w/ Liner New. Olive Drab color with 4 front pockets, cinching waist band, epaulletes, and zippered collar which conceals a hood with drawstring. A true multi season jacket loved by those in the military. This is the reason it has remained in service with the U.S. and Nato members for many decades and appeared in my colors & camouflage schemes. Sizes available: Med.,Large,XL,2XL & 3 XL.

U.S. M65 Field Jacket $69.95 #JKT 03

WW2 U.S. Navy Deck Jacket - w/ a warm pile lining on the inside ,two hip pockets, USN marking on left breast, and zipper/button combination for fastening the front. Sizes: Med., XL, & 2XL. Very Limited. Khaki

$85. #JKT04 New

U.S. N1 Deck Jacket

M35 Afrika Korps

M38 Paratroop Helmet

M35 Infantry

New manufactured WW2 German Steel Helmets - Standard M35 model and the Paratrooper M38 model... all in large size equal to 7-1/2" (U.S. Large) .

M35 GREEN Helmet $44.95 #HLM037

M35 TAN Helmet $44.95 #HLM058

M38 Paratroop green Helmet $54.95 #HLM018

Also back in stock - Luftschutz Helmet $65. #HLM024

## The Allies held off Rommel in a 'near-run thing' in the battle for North Africa.

When Rashid Ali seized power in Baghdad in 1941, his coup provided Nazi Germany with a key piece of its world strategy for victory. The Axis presence was already strong in the Middle East before Rashid Ali and the "Golden Square" group struck. Since the French surrender in June 1940, pro-German Vichy French garrisons had held what is now Syria and Lebanon. It would be from Vichy airfields that the German planes attacked the British in their epic march across the sands to retake Baghdad. (See our story this issue.)

The taking and keeping of Rashid Ali's Iraq in the Nazi fold could very likely have led to an Axis coup in neighboring Persia (today's Iran), because pro-German sympathizers were already there. As Somerset de Chair wrote, some four-thousand were just waiting for orders to arrive by telephone to act.

In Egypt, where the British guarded the strategic Suez Canal, things were not much better. The entire Egyptian Army was politically unreliable, riven by nationalist and anti-British sentiments. Some army officers, including the future president, Anwar Sadat, were imprisoned for their anti-British and pro-German sympathies, held because they believed the Germans would support their desire for independence from England.

Had Brigadier Kingstone failed in his march to Baghdad, the effects on the British position in the Middle East would have been disastrous. With his force mauled, there would have been nothing to prevent the Germans from transferring troops from Greece and Crete, which they overran in April and May 1941. The position of the Vichy French would have been immeasurably enhanced by the victory of "les Boches" over the British.

At the same time, news of a British loss would have sent shock waves through the precarious position of Great Britain in Palestine. The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, spiritual leader of Palestine's Muslims, had roused the Muslim population against the British, who ruled Palestine under a League of Nations mandate, over the issue of Jewish immigration into the region. In 1938, there had been serious rioting in Palestine and loss of life on both sides.

The Mufti, who had fled arrest at the hands of the British in 1937, was soon to move from Beirut to Berlin, where he would spend the war years as the honored guest of Adolf Hitler, urging the Arabs to support the Axis powers in the Middle East. By this time, the British 5th Division in Palestine was facing the prospect of trying to hold onto a mere enclave of Palestine on the Mediterranean coast, with only the Jewish troops of the Haganah, the militia of the Jewish settlers, to support them (the Jews still remembered how the British Balfour Declaration in 1917 had promised them an eventual homeland in Palestine).

Given the tinder-box conditions in Palestine, the defeat of the British in Iraq would have undoubtedly led to an Arab uprising that would have stretched the ability of the 5th Division and the Haganah to breaking point. With a major upheaval in Palestine, London would have had no choice but to send more troops from the already-depleted British forces in Egypt to try to restore order in Palestine.

Had this happened, there is no doubt that fresh from his victory at El Agheila, the Desert Fox would have struck again in North Africa. A successful breach of the British lines opposing him could have led to a pro-German mutiny in the Egyptian Army. This time, Rommel's panzer tanks could very well have broken through to the Suez Canal and the goal of the German strategy in the Middle East—victory!

**WWII History** Volume 25 • Number 2

WARFAREHISTORYNETWORK.com

CARL A. GNAM, JR.
Editorial Director, Founder

KEVIN SEABROOKE
Managing Editor

SAMANTHA DETULLEO
Art Director

KEVIN M. HYMEL
Research Director

CONTRIBUTORS:
Patrick J. Chaisson, Daniel R. Champagne, Michael D. Hull, Marc C. Jeter, David H. Lippman, Joseph Luster, Edward F. Murphy, John F. Murphy Jr., Kevin Seabrooke, Bill Warnock, John Wukovits

ADVERTISING OFFICE:
MARK HINTZ, Publisher
(703) 507-4976
mhintz@sovmedia.com

LINDA GALLIHER, Ad Coordinator
570-322-7848, ext. 160
lgalliher@sovmedia.com

BUSINESS OFFICE:
MARK HINTZ
Vice President & Publisher

KATHRYN KAISER
Subscription Customer Services
kathryn.kaiser@darwin.cx

PUBLISHERS SERVICE ASSOCIATES
Circulation Fulfillment

COMAG MARKETING GROUP
WORLDWIDE DISTRIBUTION

SOVEREIGN MEDIA COMPANY, INC.
Sovereign Media P.O. Box 10003
McLean, VA 22102

www.WarfareHistoryNetwork.com

SUBSCRIPTION CUSTOMER SERVICE AND BUSINESS OFFICE:

2406 Reach Road
Williamsport, PA 17701

(800) 219-1187

PRINTED IN THE USA.

★★★★

*"Cool, hip, stylish and very retro. Very pleased with this watch."*

— Ernie,
Los Angeles, CA

★★★★

*"One of my all time favorite Stauer timepieces!"*

— John,
Spring, TX


**Retro-style chronograph with precision accuracy**

**ONLY $99!**

# TIME FLIES

***The Co-Pilot Watch recalls an era of unforgettable aerial bravery for a most memorable price.***

Soaring over English skies in 1940, Royal Air Force pilots knew they were all that stood between the British people below and the impending Nazi invasion. Day after day, these brave men took their Hurricanes and Spitfires to the air, relying on nothing and no one but their instruments and each other, to engage the invaders, defend their countrymen, and change the course of history by handing Hitler his first defeat of World War II. "Never, in the field of human conflict, was so much owed by so many to so few," said Winston Churchill.

The ***Co-Pilot Men's Watch*** is inspired by what was accomplished in the Battle of Britain. We studied classic aviator timepieces to match the vintage design and then gave it a 1940s price. Our watchmakers updated the movement for the 21st century, making it even more accurate than the originals. It features markings to calculate velocity, and a stylish sepia-toned dial carrying three classic complications: 24-hour at 3 o'clock and chronograph 60-minute at 9 o'clock. A vintage-style distressed brown leather strap recalls the battle-worn bomber jackets of the 1940s.

**Satisfaction is 100% Guaranteed.** Take the ***Co-Pilot*** for a test flight and if it fails to impress, send it back within 30 days for a refund of your purchase price. But, we're confident this ace will accomplish its mission.

*"See a man with a functional chronograph watch on his wrist, and it communicates a spirit of precision."* — AskMen.com®

**Limited Reserves.** A watch of this caliber takes over six months to create. Don't miss this opportunity to honor the heroic pilots of World War II with a top performance timepiece. Call today!

## *TAKE 75% OFF INSTANTLY!*

***When you use your OFFER CODE***

**Co-Pilot Men's Watch** ~~$399~~†
Offer Code Price **$99** + S&P **Save $300**

*You must use the offer code to get our special price.*

**1-800-333-2045**

BBB ACCREDITED BUSINESS Rating of A+

CONSUMER AFFAIRS ACCREDITED

**Your Offer Code: CPW233-03**

Please use this code when you order to receive your discount.

**• Precision crystal movement • Stainless steel case, caseback & crown**
**• Chronograph minute dial • 24-hour dial • Water resistant to 3 ATM • Distressed leather brown band fits wrists 6 ¼" to 8¼"**

Stauer®

14091 Southcross Drive W., Dept. CPW233-03, Burnsville, Minnesota 55337 www.stauer.com

† *Special price only for customers using the offer code versus the price on Stauer.com without your offer code.*

Stauer... *Afford the Extraordinary.*®

# The tragic story of Medal of Honor hero Junior J. Spurrier, who became famous as World War II's "One-Man-Army."

The heavy staccato thumping of a Browning Automatic Rifle echoed throughout the small French village. "Who's doing all that firing?" demanded First Lieut. Burr Sutter, the S-3 of the 2d Battalion, 134th Infantry Regiment, 35th Infantry Division.

"It's Spurrier, sir," replied one of the enlisted men hunkered down in the battalion command post inside Achain. "He's a regular One-Man Army, that guy."

Sutter nodded grimly. The soldier was right. Spurrier loved to be in the thick of things, doing what he did best—killing Germans.

Earlier that brisk November 13, 1944, elements of the 2d Battalion had attacked Achain. For the past six days the 35th Infantry Division had led Lieut. Gen. George S. Patton's 3d Army on its drive up the Saar River Valley of Lorraine in northeastern France, headed toward Germany. Achain was just one more enemy-held town that needed to be cleared out. Second Battalion commander Maj. Frederick C. Roecker had been told Achain was lightly defended.

Companies F and G advanced toward Achain on a broad front; before them lay over 1,500 yards of open terrain. As the two companies closed to about 700 yards, the town's Nazi defenders unleashed a violent fusillade of rifle and automatic weapons fire. Company F sought refuge in a nearby orchard, where the heavy enemy fire soon pinned down its members. Company G moved to its right, intent on flanking the town along its east side. For

Both: National Archives

**TOP: Under heavy fire, soldiers from the 35th Infantry Division scramble up a bank during the grueling house-to-house combat in Sarreguemines, France, in late 1944. Among the ranks of the "Santa Fe" Division was the legendary Staff Sgt. Junior Spurrier (INSET) a soldier whose reputation for reckless bravery and solo charges often bordered on insubordination. His habit of clearing entire German strongpoints single-handedly earned him the Medal of Honor and the enduring nickname of a "One-Man Army."**


# STAND WHERE HISTORY HAPPENED

**Stephen Ambrose walked these battlefields with the men who fought on them.**

**For four decades, we have carried that legacy forward.**

**Stand where they stood. Feel the connection.**

AMERICAN OWNED
FAMILY OPERATED CO.

EXPLORE NOW AT **STEPHENAMBROSETOURS.COM**

**1.888.903.3329**

National Archives

**Cloaked in mist, infantrymen of the 35th "Santa Fe" Division advance toward a German village during a reconnaissance mission. In the closing months of 1944, these "probes" were essential for identifying hidden machine-gun nests and antitank positions before the main Allied forces advanced on the crumbling Nazi front.**

some reason, Staff Sergeant Junior J. Spurrier, a Company G squad leader, decided he would attack the town on his own from the west.

Alone, Spurrier worked his way across the open field. As he approached the orchard shielding Company F, Spurrier stumbled upon an enemy outpost. Before the Germans could respond Spurrier killed two and sent the others fleeing. From there he made his way into Achain. Much to his delight, he found the streets filled with Germans. Using his Browning Automatic Rifle, Spurrier cleared out several enemy strong points, killing several Germans and capturing six.

As Spurrier fought his way through the village from the west, Company G and the newly arrived Company E battled their way into the eastern edge of town. The companies set up command posts in adjacent buildings. A short distance behind them came Lieutenant Sutter and his operations crew. Once in the town Sutter set up a battalion CP and a prisoner of war enclosure. It was about that time he heard the firing of Spurrier's BAR.

While Companies E and G fought their way into Achain, Spurrier had taken up a position in a window on the second floor of the building that became Company E's command post. From there he unleashed magazine after magazine of heavy .30 caliber BAR rounds at nearby German positions. As Lieutenant Sutter watched, German rounds splattered the concrete around the window. A few minutes later Spurrier showed up at the battalion CP. He sauntered up to First Lieut. Abraham R. Berkson, the battalion S-2. "How many prisoners you got, sir?" Spurrier asked.

"Six," Berkson responded.

"Don't worry, lieutenant, we are going to have some more in a little while."

With that Spurrier climbed up on a table below a window at the rear of the building. He fired his BAR through the window into a building across the street until his weapon jammed. Spurrier swapped BARs with a Company E soldier then returned to his window. He fired that weapon until he used up all his ammunition. Then he scrounged up an M-1 and fired that at the neighboring building.

The next time either Sutter or Berkson saw Spurrier, he was dashing across the street carrying a German Panzerfaust anti-tank bazooka. A few minutes earlier, Company G's commander, First Lieut. John E. Davis, watched as an enemy sniper fired an automatic burst of fire at Spurrier. "That must have made him mad," Davis later said, "for he took up a Panzerfaust and fired it into the building, killing the sniper."

Without waiting to see the results of his handi-work, Spurrier took off, looking for more weapons. He found two more German Panzerfaust and fired those into his target. He then took an American bazooka and sent three rockets flying into the building.

Seconds later flames crackled from the building's windows. Soon, a coughing German captain, his lieutenant, and fourteen enlisted men staggered from the building, their hands in the air. Spurrier rounded them up and delivered them to Berkson. "Here you go, lieutenant," he told Berkson. Under questioning, the German captain proved to be the commander of the unit defending Achain.

Not content with his success, Spurrier set out again. Several nearby riflemen warned him about a sniper in a building just up from the one that had housed the German captain. Bounding from doorway to doorway, Spurrier stealthily made his way forward,

National Archives

**In the heart of the captured German city of Gelsenkirchen, Lt. Gen. William H. Simpson, commander of the Ninth Army, offers his congratulations to Staff Sgt. Junior Spurrier on March 9, 1945. The ceremony honored Spurrier with the nation's highest military award for his "One-Man Army" exploits in Achain—a rare moment of formal recognition for a soldier whose fierce, unorthodox fighting style had become a legend across the European Theater.**

ignoring the enemy rounds that splattered around him. When he was close enough to the sniper's lair, he pulled a grenade from his jacket pocket. He tossed it into an open window. Two more quickly followed. The three deadly missiles exploded in a continuous roar.

When the smoke cleared, two Germans stumbled out of the building. Spurrier took them back to Berkson. Mop-up troops later found the bodies of three dead enemy soldiers in this building.

For the rest of that afternoon, Spurrier roamed the village alone, taking prisoners and killing Germans. According to Lieutenant Berkson, Spurrier brought back at least twenty prisoners that day. Lieutenant Davis heard that Spurrier killed at least three more Germans that afternoon.

By late afternoon about two-thirds of Achain had been cleared. Major Roecker ordered outposts set up at the fringes of the town and put Spurrier in charge. Just after dark, as Spurrier inspected the outposts, he heard German voices inside a nearby barn. He crept up, ignited a pile of hay, and captured four more Germans as they fled the flames. After he turned these prisoners over to another man, Spurrier continued on his rounds.

Spurrier was just approaching another outpost when he saw a shadowy figure slinking along the ground toward the unaware sentry. Spurrier yelled a challenge. When the figure failed to answer, Spurrier shot and killed what proved to be another enemy soldier.

Though no one would ever know for sure, witnesses credited Staff Sergeant Spurrier with killing twenty-five German soldiers and capturing twenty. It was a phenomenal total, but the 2d Battalion did not escape unscathed. In all, the already weak battalion suffered 106 casualties, including every officer in Company F. Another fifty battalion members were evacuated due to exposure to the cold, wet weather. And, another German-held French town awaited them the next morning

When Major Roecker learned of Spurrier's actions that day, he realized that the plucky sergeant's performance merited formal recognition. So when Lieutenant Davis approached him a few days later and said, "Spurrier should have the Medal of Honor for what he did." Roecker readily agreed. Normally, he would have put Spurrier in for a Distinguished Service Cross, but he had already been recommended for the army's second highest award.

Two months earlier, on September 16, 1944, as the 134th Regiment neared Lay St. Christopher, outside of Nancy, a well-protected German strongpoint delayed the regiment's advance. After several infantry attacks stalled, armored reinforcements arrived. Oblivious to the blizzard of enemy small arms fire, Spurrier climbed aboard a tank destroyer and manned the vehicle's completely exposed .50 caliber machine gun. Urging the driver forward, Spurrier sent streams of heavy slugs into the enemy bunkers. Several times, when the Germans refused to surrender, Spurrier leapt from the TD and single-handedly assaulted the bunkers. He tossed grenades and fired his M-1 until the defenders either died or surrendered. In all, his adventure on that hillside resulted in over a dozen dead German soldiers and another twenty-two sent off to the prisoner's cage, plus a recommendation for the DSC.

Since landing with his division in France on July 6, 1944, Spurrier had proved himself to be a superb combat soldier. He was that rare human being who thrived on the adrenaline rush of close quarters combat. Whatever the mission, Spurrier volunteered. He had joined the infantry to kill German soldiers and he was ruthless.

Unfortunately, Spurrier's conduct off the front line was another matter. He abhorred responsibility and wanted nothing to do with leading men. When not engaged in combat Spurrier focused his attention on finding alcohol and drinking it. He frequently went AWOL in search of souvenirs to sell to the rear echelon troops. He often abandoned the members of his squad to wander the front lines alone, searching for Germans to kill. If the infantry companies had not been so thinly manned, Spurrier probably would have been court-martialed, Lieut. Davis admitted. To Davis, Spurrier was a soldier-of-fortune, a small town rowdy who was barely controllable. And that was not far from the truth.

Born December 22, 1922, in Russell County, Virginia, James Ira Spurrier, Jr., grew up in the abject poverty of the Appalachian Mountains during the Great Depression. With a limited grade school education and few prospects for steady employ-

Both: National Archives

**ABOVE: Staff Sgt. Junior Spurrier (left) demonstrates the disassembling and cleaning of an infantry weapon in a promotional photo. RIGHT: Back in the States, Staff Sgt. Junior Spurrier (left) presents a 35th Division insignia pin to a smiling President Harry S. Truman. Looking on is Major General Butler B. Miltonberger, the former commander of the 134th Infantry Regiment. The meeting was a homecoming of sorts; Truman himself had served as a captain in the 35th Division during World War I, creating a storied bond between the Commander-in-Chief and the "One-Man Army."**

ment, Spurrier spent his time hanging around with similar disaffected young men. Together they caroused the backwoods towns and hamlets, drinking moonshine, chasing girls, and brawling. Soon after his mother died in the summer of 1940 Spurrier traveled to Norton, Virginia, the closest town with an army recruiter. He lied about his age, putting his birth date as September 22, 1922, so he would not need his father's signature. He also misread the enlistment forms, writing down "Junior" as his first name. Thus, he forever became Junior James Spurrier, Jr., to the U.S. Army.

Trained as a baker, Spurrier served with the 89th Infantry Regiment in Jamaica. In early 1944, when the 89th was recalled to the United States and disbanded, Spurrier was retrained as an infantryman and shipped off to the 35th Infantry Division in England. His nearly four years of service brought him a quick promotion to staff sergeant and command of a rifle squad.

Once the Medal of Honor recommendation was prepared and started its way up the chain-of-command, Spurrier was pulled out of the line for his own safety. Despite his antics, nearly every member of the 134th believed Spurrier had earned the august medal and wanted him alive to wear it. The award would validate the division's sacrifices across France. Spurrier was assigned to be the driver and runner for Major Roecker. That did not last long. As soon as he could, Spurrier snuck off to the front lines. He roamed the battlefield at will, engaging the Germans wherever he found them. He also uncovered caches of wine and gathered a lot of war booty.

On March 9, 1945, at his headquarters at Gelsenkirchen, Germany, Ninth Army Commander Lt. Gen. William H. Simpson draped the Medal of Honor ribbon around Spurrier's neck. The army then paraded Spurrier in front of newsmen from Germany to Paris. Though often drunk and frequently nearly out-of-control during the press tour, Spurrier's behavior was ignored. Instead, he was repeatedly touted as the "One Man Army," or as "Task Force Spurrier."

After Roecker moved up to regiment, Maj. Carlysle "Curly" McDannel took command of the 2d Battalion. "Spurrier was not my cup of tea," McDannel later admitted. "It was as if once he got that medal he thought he could do whatever he wanted and didn't have to answer to anyone." In his opinion Spurrier should have been court-martialed for his undisciplined ways. As the war neared its end McDannel nearly got his way.

In Germany, late in April 1945, as the 35th approached the Elbe River, Spurrier stole a command vehicle. Drunk and armed with a BAR, he holed up in a farmhouse, threatening anyone who neared the structure. Under the cover of darkness, McDannel approached the vehicle. As he attempted to disable the sedan, Spurrier lurched from the farmhouse. Brandishing his BAR, Spurrier threatened to kill McDannel if he did not move away from the vehicle.

Back at his headquarters McDannel prepared court-martial papers. Before they were finished the war ended. Among the first veterans to be sent home were living recipients of the Medal of Honor. In late May 1945 Spurrier left the 134th and headed back to the United States. On June 21, 1945 he was honorably discharged at Fort Meade, Maryland. On July 4, 1945, the town of Bluefield, West Virginia, held a major holiday and celebratory parade with Spurrier as the grand marshal. Floats, marching bands, and convertibles bearing dignitaries stretched for over one mile. In the lead vehicle sat a grinning, uncomfortable Spurrier. When the parade ended and Spurrier was formally introduced to the crowd he managed an awkward, "Hello, folks. Thanks a lot."

Local newspapers carried pictures of Spurrier reuniting with his family and showing off his medals to neighborhood children. Spurrier remained in the national limelight

for some time. In 1946 he was pictured with his former regimental commander, Butler B. Miltonburger, presenting a 35th Division pin to President Harry S. Truman, a World War I veteran of the division. Soon, however, the spotlight moved on and Spurrier set about making a living.

Newly married, he opened an automobile repair business in Bluefield. Unfortunately, he knew little about engines and the business struggled. Facing mounting financial pressure, Spurrier returned to the army. On July 16, 1947, he reenlisted. Spurrier was stationed at Fort Meade, Maryland, and Fort Knox, Kentucky, as an information specialist. Although he had enlisted for three years for unknown reasons Spurrier was honorably discharged at Fort Knox in June 1948.

Spurrier next found work as a heavy equipment operator and learned how to repair the newly popular television sets that were making their way into America's living rooms. Clearly suffering the effects of his extensive combat experience, he continued to abuse alcohol. With his marriage over and unable to hold a job, for the third time in his twenty-eight years Spurrier joined the army. On October 27, 1950, Spurrier reenlisted as a master sergeant with an assignment to a military police battalion at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Almost immediately, Spurrier's problems brought him trouble. In late November 1950 he stole a pistol and an automobile and unlawfully impersonated an agent of the Criminal Investigation Division. He was arrested, charged, and confined to Fort Bragg's brig. Seeking help from another 35th Division veteran, he wrote to President Truman on December 17, 1950, requesting a personal interview. A week later Truman's secretary wrote back and advised Spurrier that the president was not available.

Spurrier's general court-martial convened at Fort Bragg on January 15, 1951. In short order the court found him guilty on all charges. His sentence included a reduction in rank, two years of confinement, and a Bad Conduct Discharge. Incredibly, on March 8, 1951, the unexecuted portion of the sentence was suspended. Apparently wishing to wash their hands of the whole mess, Fort Bragg authorities placed Private Spurrier on orders to Korea and shipped him off to Fort Lawton, Washington.

Spurrier went AWOL from Fort Lawton on April 18, 1951, and was returned to military control at Fort Knox, Kentucky after several escapades. He received a general discharge under honorable conditions on November 17, 1951. Fortunately for him, the Bluefield police had dropped the charges against him so he was free.

After some time in Baltimore, Maryland, where he had family, he finally returned to Bluefield, West Virginia, married and in 1965 fathered a daughter. Life seemed to have improved for Spurrier until May 1969 when he was convicted on charges of obtaining money from a finance company under false pretenses. Sentenced to 1-to-5 years, Spurrier was released on Christmas Eve that year by a probationary pardon issued by Gov. Arch A. Moore.

Spurrier's brother Joe picked him up and took him to see his daughter in Limestone, Tennessee. The war hero honored his pledge and did not drink again. In the fall of 1971 Spurrier moved back to Baltimore. "I just didn't find anything down in Tennessee I wanted," he related. "I can make more money up here."

On June 1, 1971, Governor Moore granted Spurrier an executive discharge of the balance of his prison sentence. "I'd really like to thank the governor," Spurrier. "Things are really picking up." A few weeks earlier Spurrier had reconciled with his estranged wife and returned to her and their daughter. The family ran a small TV repair shop in Baltimore.

By the mid-1970s Spurrier was crippled with arthritis and unable to work. He moved with his daughter to Limestone to be near family members. In a 1980 interview he reflected on his life. "I don't regret having the medal. A man would have to be stupid not to want it. But I never tried to get one and there are times when I wished I didn't have it. Then people wouldn't be looking for so much from me."

Confined to a wheelchair for the remaining few years of his life, Spurrier died in Limestone on February 24, 1984. His headstone at Mountain Home National Cemetery, Johnson City, Tennessee, is the only testament to his World War II heroics, listing his Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service Cross, a Bronze Star, and two Purple Hearts. □

Standa Hájek, Special Hobby kit SH72251 "Digby Mk.I Bolo in Canadian Service" 1/72.

# How the obsolete Douglas B-18 Bolo found new life as the U-boat killer 'Digby' for the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Seaman Franz Machon was enjoying a smoke on deck when lookouts sounded the alarm. "Enemy aircraft!" they shouted before dropping down inside their vessel, a German Type IXC submarine named *U-512*. The skipper, *Kapitänleutnant* Wolfgang Schultze, ordered an emergency crash-dive while Machon moved to his battle station in the U-Boat's galley.

These desperate actions came too late to save *U-512*. The sub took at least two direct hits by air-dropped depth bombs that sent it down in an uncontrolled descent to rest on the ocean floor 137 feet beneath the waves. Deadly chlorine gas then filled its spaces, killing most of the 52 sailors on board. Machon, however, managed to don an "escape lung" and reach the surface. After 10 harrowing days spent floating on the Caribbean Sea, he was rescued by a passing American destroyer.

The sinking of *U-512*, which occurred October 2, 1942, marked the second successful attack on a German U-boat by United States Army Air Force (USAAF) aircrewmen flying outdated Douglas B-18 medium bombers. Slow, old, and lacking the defensive armament needed to ward off modern interceptors, many B-18s assumed a new role as aerial sub-hunters on patrol over the Atlantic, Pacific, and Caribbean coastlines from 1941 to 1943.


National Archives

**TOP: A Douglas B-18 Bolo—rechristened the Digby Mk.I in Canadian service—soars through the skies of World War II in this painting by Standa Hájek. Overshadowed by more famous heavy bombers, these rugged aircraft served as the backbone of the Royal Canadian Air Force's maritime reconnaissance and anti-submarine patrols. INSET: An unidentified serviceman stands before the looming nose of a Douglas B-18 Bolo. During the early, uncertain days of the Pacific War, these bombers were the thin line of defense protecting the Alaskan frontier.**

# Sacred Stone of the Southwest is on the Brink of Extinction

Centuries ago, Persians, Tibetans and Mayans considered turquoise a gemstone of the heavens, believing the striking blue stones were sacred pieces of sky. Today, the rarest and most valuable turquoise is found in the American Southwest— but the future of the blue beauty is unclear.

On a recent trip to Tucson, we spoke with fourth generation turquoise traders who explained that less than five percent of turquoise mined worldwide can be set into jewelry and only about twenty mines in the Southwest supply gem-quality turquoise. Once a thriving industry, many Southwest mines have run dry and are now closed.


We found a limited supply of turquoise from Arizona and purchased it for our ***Sedona Turquoise Collection.*** Inspired by the work of those ancient craftsmen and designed to showcase the exceptional blue stone, each stabilized vibrant cabochon features a unique, one-of-a-kind matrix surrounded in Bali metalwork. You could drop over $1,200 on a turquoise pendant, or you could secure 26 carats of genuine Arizona turquoise for **just $99**.

**Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed.** If you aren't completely happy with your purchase, send it back within 30 days for a complete refund of the item price.

The supply of Arizona turquoise is limited, don't miss your chance to own the Southwest's brilliant blue treasure. Call today!

***Jewelry Specifications:***

***• Arizona turquoise • Silver-finished settings***

**Sedona Turquoise Collection**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| A. Pendant (26 cts) | ~~$299~~* | $99 | +s&p ***Save $200*** |
| B. 18" Bali Naga woven sterling silver chain | | $149 | +s&p |
| C. 1½" Earrings (10 ctw) | ~~$299~~* | $99 | +s&p ***Save $200*** |
| **Complete Set**** | ~~$747~~* | **$249** | +s&p ***Save $498*** |

***Complete set includes pendant, chain and earrings.*

Call now and mention the offer code to receive your collection.

## 1-800-333-2045

**Offer Code SDT176-01**

You must use the offer code to get our special price.

**Special price only for customers using the offer code versus the price on Stauer.com without your offer code.*

ACCREDITED BUSINESS BBB **Rating of A+**

**Stauer**® 14091 Southcross Drive W., Dept. SDT176-01
Burnsville, Minnesota 55337 **www.stauer.com**


**A formation of Douglas B-18 Bolos from the 88th Reconnaissance Squadron cruises through peaceful skies in this pre-war photo. On December 7, 1941, crews from this squadron were ferrying a flight of unarmed B-17 Flying Fortresses from California to Hawaii, unwittingly arriving over Oahu in the midst of the Japanese surprise attack.**

National Archives

These elderly warplanes also served as transports, troop carriers, and test platforms for experimental weapons later used to great effect in combat.

Responding to a 1934 military requirement, engineers at the Douglas Aircraft Company in Santa Monica, California, began work on a new bomber that incorporated elements of the DC-2 airliner then entering production. Of all-metal construction, it was to hold a crew of five or six and carry one ton of bombs to a range of 1,020 miles (2,200 miles was desired). Top speed had to exceed 200 miles per hour (mph), with 250 mph preferred.

The DB-1 (for Douglas Bomber #1) first flew in April of 1935. That summer, Douglas' prototype went up against designs from Martin and Boeing in an Army Air Corps competition held at Wright Field, Ohio. The Martin 146, an upgraded version of the aging B-10 bomber, fell out early due to issues with its weight and performance. In October, Boeing's innovative four-engine Model 299 suffered a catastrophic accident that disqualified it from further testing. (The Model 299 went on to achieve aviation immortality as the B-17 Flying Fortress.)

Boeing's misfortune meant the Douglas DB-1, which the Air Corps designated XB-18, was destined for a major production contract. On January 17th 1936, the Army placed an order for 82 B-18s, later increased to 133. By February of 1937, newly-manufactured bombers were rolling off Douglas Aircraft's Santa Monica assembly lines for delivery to Army Air Corps squadrons located throughout the continental United States, Hawaii, the Panama Canal, Alaska, and the Philippine Islands.

Feedback from Air Corps personnel resulted in a number of modifications intended to boost performance and crew efficiency. Beginning with the 134th airframe in production, an improved "shark nose" replaced the cramped forward space occupied by the nose gunner and bombardier. More powerful engines were also fitted, causing the Army to name this variant the B-18A.

A production B-18A measured 57 feet 10 inches in length and 15 feet 2 inches tall, with a wingspan of 89 feet 6 inches. Weighing in at 16,321 lbs. empty, it listed a maximum take-off weight of 27,673 lbs. The bomber held a crew of six—pilot, co-pilot, navigator/bombardier, and three gunners.

Powered by two 1,000-horsepower Wright Cyclone R-1820-53 engines, the B-18A's service ceiling topped out at 23,900 feet. Top speed at 10,000 feet was 215 mph, with a cruising speed of 167 mph. The bomber's combat range exceeded 1,200 miles.

Within the B-18A's deep belly was a bomb bay able to hold 4,400 lbs. of ordnance. Defensive weapons included three Browning .30-caliber machine guns—one in the nose, another in the lower fuselage facing aft, and a third mounted in a retractable, manually-operated dorsal turret.

Douglas Aircraft Co. built 217 B-18As from June 1937 to mid-1938. The Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) purchased 20 more in 1939 under the name Digby Mk. I. Some older B-18s were brought up to the B-18A standard, while others underwent modifications for special use. At least three B-18s were converted into unarmed C-58 transport planes, while others took aloft bombardiers-in-training as these budding aviators learned to operate the newly-developed Norden bombsight.

One B-18 (some reports indicate it was the original DB-1 prototype) was fitted with a 75-mm cannon in an experimental ventral mount. Tests proved that high-caliber weapons could, in fact, be fired from a bomber while in flight; this eventually led to the development of a

North American B-25 Mitchell gunship armed with a 75-mm cannon.

Occasionally, B-18s served in the photo-reconnaissance role or as troop carriers. In 1940, 38 bombers took one day to move a battalion of 352 soldiers plus equipment from Hamilton Field (near San Francisco, California), to March Field outside Los Angeles. One day later, they brought everyone back. Also in 1940, the men of the U.S. Army's Parachute Test Platoon at Fort Benning, Georgia, made their first five qualifying jumps from B-18s.

Meanwhile, momentous events were transpiring throughout Europe and the Far East that would make the B-18 obsolete as a medium bomber. As German, Italian, and Japanese forces opened the global cataclysm that became World War II, U.S. military planners looked on with alarm. These officers quickly perceived that a significant technological gap existed between the Axis powers' advanced aircraft and those in the American arsenal. Underpowered, poorly-protected Douglas B-18s could never survive combat against such fighters as the Japanese Zero and German Me-109.

As the likelihood of American involvement in the war grew, the nation's defense industry needed time to construct faster, more powerful bombers like the Boeing B-17, Consolidated B-24, North American B-25, and Martin B-26. To deter foreign aggression as long as possible, air planners decided to base a large percentage of the USAAF's existing bomber fleet in forward locations. Of the 220 operational B-18s in service on December 7th 1941, 112 were stationed overseas.

When Japanese carrier-based planes appeared over Oahu, Hawaii, that morning, there were 33 B-18s parked on Hickam and Wheeler Fields. By day's end, enemy air attacks had reduced that number to 11 bombers still in commission. Nine more could be repaired, while 13 B-18s were either extensively damaged or totally destroyed. Surviving aircraft soldiered on for many months until they were eventually replaced by Boeing B-17s.

B-18s located in the Philippine Islands suffered a similar fate. A total of 18 Douglas bombers operated from Nichols, Neilson, and Clark Fields on the island of Luzon, as well as Del Monte Airfield in Mindanao. Surprise air attacks by Japanese warplanes destroyed all 10 B-18s stationed at Clark Field, while several more on Nichols Field were wrecked when enemy bombs demolished their hangar.

The five flyable B-18s left in the Philippines were pressed into service as armed transports, hauling badly-needed ammunition, repair parts, and high-priority passengers through hostile skies to beleaguered Allied forces. Finally, as defenses crumbled, the war-worn Douglas bombers undertook one last hazardous mission to Australia loaded to capacity with U.S. fighter pilots whose skill and experience would be needed in the long fight ahead.

Well before the U.S. declared war against Japan, the territory of Alaska was considered

Naval History and Heritage Command


National Archives

**ABOVE: A line of Douglas B-18 Bolos and support aircraft on the frost-covered tarmac of Ladd Army Airbase (now Fort Wainwright) in Fairbanks, Alaska. Serving as the military's premier cold-weather laboratory, Ladd Field subjected both men and machines to the brutal extremes of the Arctic. These rigorous performance tests were vital for uncovering how frozen hydraulic lines, thickened engine oil, and brittle metal would behave in the sub-zero temperatures. TOP: The skeletal remains of Hangar No. 11 at Hickam Field stand as a grim monument to the devastation of the attack on Pearl Harbor. While the more modern B-17s often capture the headlines, the Douglas B-18 Bolo fleet bore a staggering brunt of the surprise attack. Of the 33 Bolos stationed on Oahu that morning, 22 were damaged or destroyed on the ground, effectively crippling the Hawaiian Air Force's primary reconnaissance and bombardment strength in a single, fiery hour.**

both a strategic outpost and a logistical nightmare. Alaska-based mechanics dealt with a chronic shortage of repair parts as they struggled to keep six worn-out B-18s flying, while aircrewmen battled boredom and the forbidding Alaskan weather to fly out in search of a foe who never appeared. After more capable aircraft became available, the Douglas bombers were retired or put to use as transports.

Just as vital as Alaska to the United States defense strategy was the Panama Canal. Dozens of B-18s stationed at Albrook, David, and France Fields patrolled the Canal Zone's approaches, scrambling frequently in response to panicky (and false) reports of an approaching enemy fleet. Bombers operating along the U.S. Atlantic, Pacific, and Gulf coasts stood ready to help repel a much-feared but never-realized Axis invasion of North America throughout late December 1941 and well into the new year.

Although the B-18 first saw combat against Japan, this warplane would find its niche in a desperate battle for control of critical shipping lanes on the Atlantic and Caribbean sea frontiers. Its chief opponent: a fleet of dangerous and elusive German submarines that in 1942 was strangling the Allied war effort.

Not long after Hitler declared war on the United States, oceangoing U-boats began torpedoing a frightful number of unprotected merchantmen all along the Eastern Seaboard. Efforts to stop the slaughter were hampered by a wholly inadequate force of Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) aircraft and patrol vessels. Put simply, there did not exist enough warships and planes to escort convoys and attack undersea predators. Worse, those assets the U.S. Army and Navy did manage to send out on coastal patrol missions were largely unsuited for the highly-specialized task of finding and sinking submarines.

Fortunately for the Allies, several technological marvels began to appear in 1942. These devices, mostly developed in the United Kingdom but built in U.S. factories, now allowed ASW aircraft to detect surfaced submarines in all weather, then attack them using sophisticated munitions designed to detonate under a submerged U-boat and break its back.

Among these new systems were a radio altimeter (which reliably measured how high a plane was flying over the ocean) and a microwave air-to-surface radar transmitter called the SCR-517. A magnetic anomaly detector (MAD) mounted on some bombers would alert the crew if they flew over a large metal object like a submarine, while sonobuoys could "ping" a target with sound waves and broadcast its location. Mark XVII (325 lb.) and Mark XXIX (650 lb.) depth charges were set off by hydrostatic fuses adjustable to explode at a predetermined depth or on contact with the target.

Another intriguing air weapon featured a set of wing-mounted depth bomb racks that fired projectiles backwards in a prearranged pattern. These "retro-bombs" worked in concert with the plane's MAD receiver—when a U-boat's magnetic field was detected, the flight crew would immediately fire off a volley of

Steve Jurvetson / Wikimedia

**ABOVE: On the moonless night of February 25, 1941, the rugged terrain of Hawaii's Big Island became a survival theater for the crew of Douglas B-18 Bolo #36-446. After suffering a catastrophic engine failure during a routine night training mission from Hickam Field, the bomber plunged into the near-inaccessible, swampy heights west of the Waimanu Valley. Incredibly, the entire crew survived the impact with only minor injuries, enduring three harrowing days in the dense, windswept wilderness before being reached by rescue teams. BELOW: Caught in the tropical heat of the Summer of 1942, a Douglas B-18 Bolo rests on the apron at Aguadulce Army Airfield. Established the year before as a vital node in the defense of the Panama Canal, Aguadulce served as a jumping-off point for long-range anti-submarine patrols into the Pacific and Caribbean. Likely operated by the 29th or 74th Bombardment Squadrons, these aging Bolos served as the first line of defense for the "Big Ditch" until the arrival of the more formidable B-24 Liberators later in the war.**

National Archives

retro-bombs that then (theoretically) fell straight down on top of the enemy vessel.

The emerging ASW technology that enabled Allied airmen to effectively strike back at the submarine menace required a high-performance aircraft like the Consolidated B-24 Liberator to best fulfil its potential. Although Liberators stood in short supply, there were on hand plenty of Douglas B-18s. Deemed too vulnerable for combat operations overseas, these aging bombers were about to be repurposed as guardians of the nation's sea lanes.

In August 1942, workers at the San Antonio Air Depot began transforming some 122 USAAF B-18As into sub-hunters. First, they ripped out each plane's bombardier's compartment and replaced it with a bulbous radome containing an SCR-517 surface vessel detection radar set. Other upgrades included adding radio altimeters and navigation systems. As many as 77 aircraft also received a MAD boom mounted behind and below the tail assembly.

These modifications resulted in another nomenclature change. Now known as the B-18B, this patrol bomber began anti-submarine operations alongside B-18A variants during the autumn of 1942. About this time, the Douglas bomber received an informal nickname—"Bolo," after the large, curved knife.

Two ex-USAAF B-18B sub-hunters were transferred to the Forca Aerea Brasileria (Brazilian Air Force) in February of 1942. Brazilian aviators used these planes to fly a number of ASW missions in the Caribbean and South Atlantic regions until more capable North American B-25 and Lockheed Hudson patrol planes arrived as part of the Lend-Lease program.

The appearance of radar-equipped ASW aircraft over the Caribbean came not a minute too soon, as German U-boats had recently moved their hunting grounds into the target-rich waters off Central and South America. In response, the recently-created U.S. Sixth Air Force stationed patrol planes on airbases located all across the area. Douglas B-18s (and other types) operated from fields in the Panama Canal Zone, British Guiana, Puerto Rico, the Antilles, Trinidad, St. Lucia, Antigua, Cuba, the United States Virgin Islands, and Surinam (Dutch Guiana).

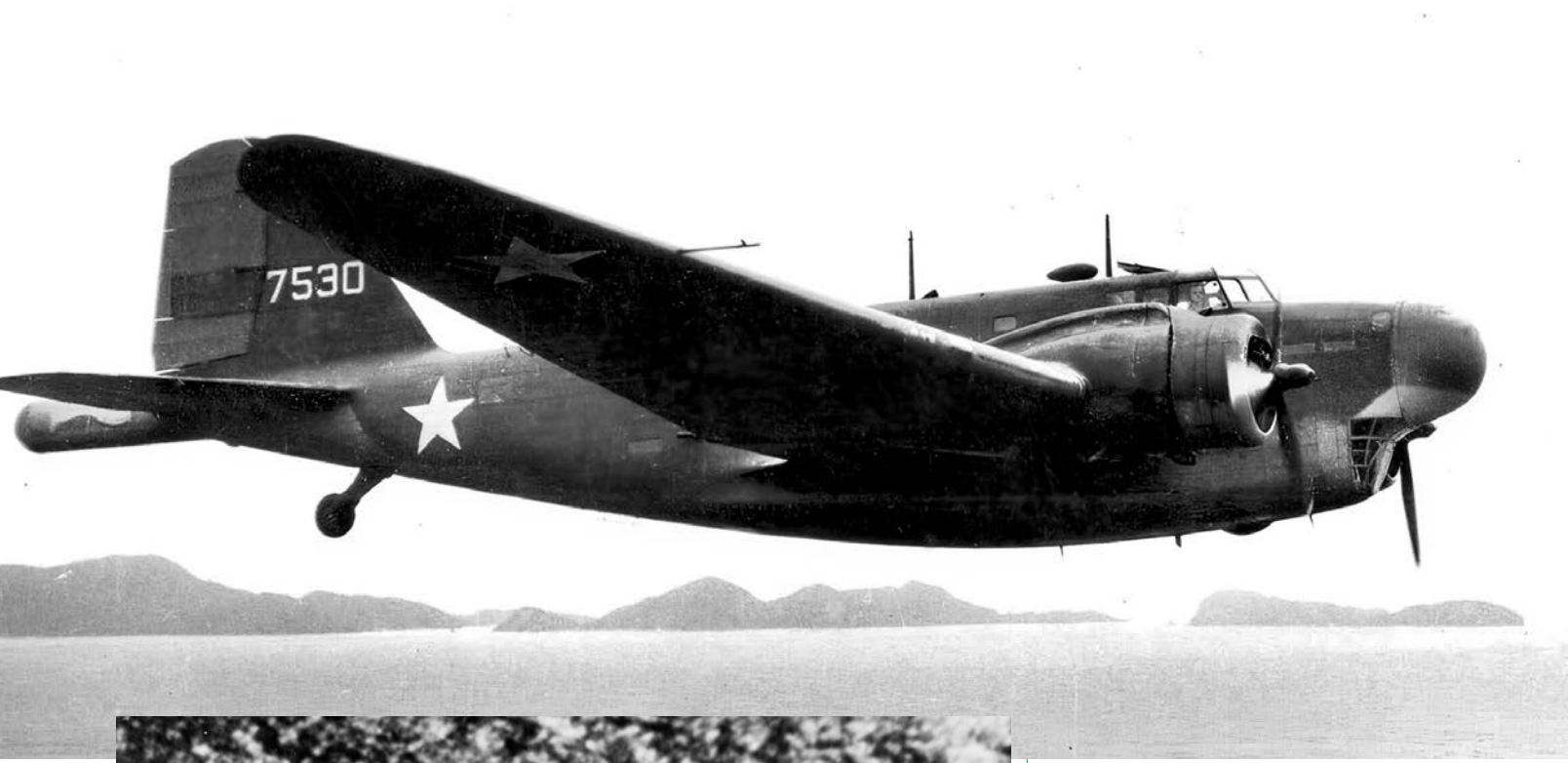
The earliest recorded encounter between a B-18 and a U-boat in the Caribbean took place on February 15, 1942. While refueling their Bolo at Aruba's airport, Lt. Col. Ivan Palmer and Lt. Ira Matthews of the 40th Bomb Group saw a surfaced German submarine brazenly sailing into the nearby harbor. Taking off, the airmen managed to release a brace of depth bombs over the rapidly-submerging *U-156* without effect.

B-18A pilot Capt. Perier A. Koenig of the 45th Bombardment Squadron had better luck on August 22nd when, flying out of France Field in Panama, he spotted a conning tower about 150 miles north of Colón, Panama. Koenig attacked with four Mk. XVII munitions that caused a large film of oil to spread out from the vessel's last known position. Five additional B-18s soon arrived overhead, using the oil slick as an aiming point for 20 more depth charges. After the war, German records confirmed that *U-654*, a Type VIIIC boat under Korvettenkapitän Hans-Joachim Hesse, went down that day with all 44 hands.

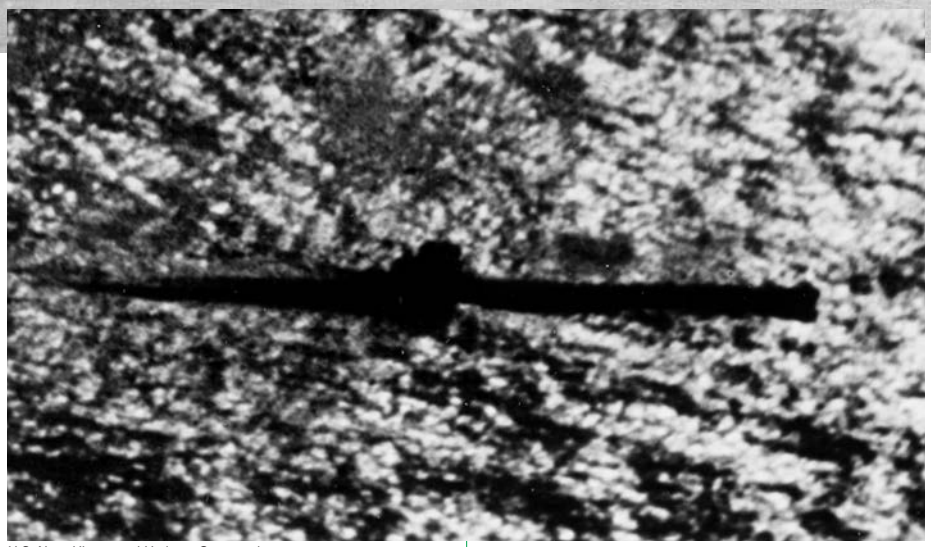
Bolo crews in the West Indies saw and attacked U-boats regularly as summer turned to autumn, but did not score another kill until October 2. That morning, a B-18B piloted by Capt. Howard Burhanna, Jr. (some accounts credit 1st Lt. Robert Lehti as the pilot-in-command) of the 99th Bombardment Squadron, operating out of Zandery Field in Surinam, got a radar return off *U-512* fifty miles north of Dutch Guiana's coast. Diving to an altitude of 50 feet, Burhanna straddled the unsuspecting submarine with four depth bombs and sent it to the bottom.

Circling *U-512*'s debris field, Burhanna's crew then saw a survivor in the water and dropped him a partially-inflated life raft. Matrosengefreiter (Senior Seaman) Franz Machon floated around for a week and a half until sailors aboard the destroyer U.S.S. *Ellis* (DD–154) spotted him and effected a rescue.

The next U-boat kill credited to a Douglas bomber took place 3,500 miles to the north of sunny Surinam. On October 30th 1942, an RCAF Digby of 10 (Bomber Reconnaissance) Squadron commanded by Flight Officer Daniel F. Raymes left its base at Gander, Newfoundland, on a routine patrol. Around 2000 hours, Raymes' crew spotted a surfaced U-boat 115 miles east of St. John and pressed




National Archives



U.S. Navy History and Heritage Command

**ABOVE: The most distinctive modification for the Douglas B-18B's submarine hunt was the MAD (Magnetic Anomaly Detector) tail boom. Some 122 were modified with this elongated boom housing a sensitive receiver to detect minute disturbances in the Earth's magnetic field caused by the steel hull of a submerged U-boat. LEFT: A rare view of a German Type VIIC submarine *U-615* running on the surface. Over the course of eight days running across the Caribbean Sea, the U-boat was hounded by a gauntlet of Allied aircraft, including the Douglas B-18 Bolos of the 99th Bombardment Squadron. Just one day after this photograph was taken, the "Grey Wolf" was finally sent to the bottom.**

in to prosecute the target. Blown apart by a salvo of four 450-lb. depth charges, the submarine—later identified as *U-520*, a Type IXC vessel skippered by Kapitänleutnant Volkmar Schwartzkopff—went down with 53 souls on board.

By mid-1943, as up-to-date ASW platforms became available, Sixth Air Force's worn-out B-18s were flying their last missions over the Caribbean Sea. Yet events would prove that these aging Bolos still possessed a sharp edge.

Before dawn on July 29, crewmen aboard 1st Lt. Thomas L. Merrill's 12th Bombardment Squadron B-18B flying out of Aruba established radar contact with an unknown surface vessel about 60 miles northwest of Curaçao. After dropping illumination flares, Merrill's men observed below them a fully-surfaced U-boat and commenced their attack.

This submarine—*U-615,* a Type VIIC boat with Kapitänleutnant Ralph Kapitzky in command, surprised the American airmen by shooting back at their B-18B instead of diving. Heavy anti-aircraft fire may have spoiled Merrill's aim—his depth charges went wide.

This attack initiated an epic eight-day battle between the wily Kapitzky and a pack of U.S. hunter-killers. Participating in the fight alongside USAAF B-18s were several U.S. Navy Martin PBM Mariner flying boats, Lockheed PV-2 Harpoon patrol planes, and even a Goodyear K-class airship (blimp) designated K-68. Although it sustained fatal damage from as many as 14 separate American air attacks, *U-615* gave as good as it got by shooting down one of its persecutors and crippling two more (including the K-68).

At 2115 hours on August 6, 1st Lt. Milton L. Wiederhold of the 10th Bombardment Squadron, piloting a B-18B nicknamed "Robust Man," finally ended Ralph Kapitzky's Caribbean rampage. Flying through intense AA fire, Wiederhold covered the surfaced *U-615* with a barrage of depth bombs that forced Kapitzky to scuttle his boat. Some 43 survivors were later rescued by U.S. destroyers.

Overshadowed by more modern designs, the B-18 served as a USAAF sub-hunter for barely 18 months. Canadian and Brazilian air commands also retired their war-weary Douglas bombers by late 1943. Afterwards, an occasional Bolo might be seen in use as a

"squadron hack" (utility plane) or, more commonly, just left abandoned on some tropical airbase.

An even more rarely-seen aircraft during the war years was the B-18's younger brother, a medium bomber known as the Douglas B-23 Dragon. Only 38 of them were manufactured, all in 1939 and 1940, and none flew operationally. While the B-23 outperformed its elderly sibling, this updated model fared poorly against the North American B-25s and Martin B-26s then entering service. The Dragon is chiefly recognized today as the first U.S. warplane to feature a tail gunner's position.

Ultimately, Douglas Aircraft Company's B-18 medium bomber failed in its primary wartime mission to deter Japanese aggression in the Pacific. Yet this aerial workhorse played a vital role in the battle against Hitler's submarine fleet. Four vessels sunk for untold thousands of hours spent fruitlessly patrolling the empty ocean may seem a poor return on investment, but one must also consider the B-18 Bolo's impact on U-boat commanders' freedom of movement.

Whenever a German sub crash-dived to escape the attention of a prowling B-18, it lost the ability to recharge its batteries, communicate with headquarters, or sneak up on a merchant convoy. After radar-equipped Bolos became operational in late 1942, even the cover of night or foul weather was denied to Unterseeboot skippers.

In no way was the Douglas B-18 an ideal submarine-hunter. The U.S. Army Air Forces knew this and still employed scores of them, quite successfully, all across the Caribbean region during a dangerous period in the war. Sometimes, quantity has a quality all its own. □

National Archives

**Graceful yet outclassed, a Douglas B-23 *Dragon* cruises in this rare flight study. Intended as a high-performance evolution of the B-18 Bolo, the *Dragon* featured a more aerodynamic fuselage, a powerful tail gunner's station, and the wings of the legendary DC-3. However, it arrived just as the faster B-25 Mitchell and the harder-hitting B-26 *Marauder* took center stage. With only 38 units produced, the B-23 was quickly relegated to coastal patrol and transport duties.**

National Archives

# General Douglas MacArthur and the controversial splitting of the military command in the Pacific Theater.

Analyzing war and its outcomes remains an important exercise—for tactical, political, humanitarian and a whole host of other reasons—though not all critics or analysts will agree on the ideas that emerge from such scholarship. For example, the question of whether or not the establishment of the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA) command during WWII was necessary or unnecessary militarily remains, some eight decades on, a contentious argument among historians of the Second World War.

At the heart of much of this criticism lies General Douglas MacArthur himself, as he remains one of the most polarizing figures in American military history—a five-star paradox who was simultaneously a "Chief of Chiefs" and, to his detractors, a master of self-aggrandizement. While his resume boasts a first-in-class West Point graduation and a record-breaking rise to Chief of Staff, modern critics often view his leadership in the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA) not as a strategic masterclass, but as an unnecessary drain on American lives and resources fueled by personal ego.

MacArthur's career remains a study in contradictions. While his early defense of the Philippines was marked by significant errors in judgement, he later became one of the most successful theater commanders of the war. Ultimately, his ability to execute complex operations, such as the 1944 New Guinea leapfrogging, is often weighed against his need for personal glory, making him a figure who, according to historian D. Clayton James, was often inseparable from his own vanity.

Prevalent conclusions question the SWPA theater's necessity and MacArthur's corresponding role, the associated return to the Philippines beginning in the fall of 1944, the loss of American lives directly attributable to the SWPA's establishment (and MacArthur's idiosyncrasies), and the role and contributions of the Americans' strategic bomber in the war with Japan. Furthermore, some commentators of the war present an apparent rhetorical question as to why the Japanese by the spring or

**During the 1945 liberation of the Philippines, the 25th Infantry Division faced stiff resistance in the mountains near Baguio. Here, a flame-throwing team works in tandem to shutter a Japanese pillbox during the height of the Luzon campaign.**


# When Two Hearts Join

Discover the enchanting allure of our Two Heart Necklace, where love's symphony unfolds in timeless elegance. Inspired by that moment, when it all clicks and you realize you have found the one…. and where two become one, this exquisite piece captures the essence of two hearts entwined in a dance of destiny. Crafted with precision and passion and encased in 14k gold, it embodies the essence of your enduring love, echoing the sentiments of Shakespeare's sonnets and the romances of Jane Austen. Our client's favorite, it is now priced at its lowest ever even as gold reaches a record high, awarding it a stellar 4.9-star rating in reviews making it the Gift of the Year. Embrace the magic of shared dreams and whispered promises with the Two Heart Necklace, a treasure to cherish for generations to come.

Let this necklace be your own love story, a testament to the beauty of companionship and the joy of finding your perfect match. Embrace the romance and elegance of a bygone era with our Two Heart Necklace, a treasure to cherish for a lifetime.

Falling in love costs nothing but the value is priceless. Showing your love with this two hearts set costs next to nothing and the feeling you will get when wearing it or giving it to your love will certainly be priceless.

**Two Hearts Collection**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A.** Bracelet (13 ⅔ ctw) | ~~$299~~ | $39* + S&P | *Save $260* |
| **B.** Necklace (2 ⅛ ctw) | ~~$199~~ | $39* + S&P | *Save $160* |
| **C.** Earrings (4 ¼ ctw) | ~~$229~~ | $39* + S&P | *Save $190* |
| Necklace, Bracelet & Earrings | ~~$727~~ | $79* + S&P | *Save $648* |

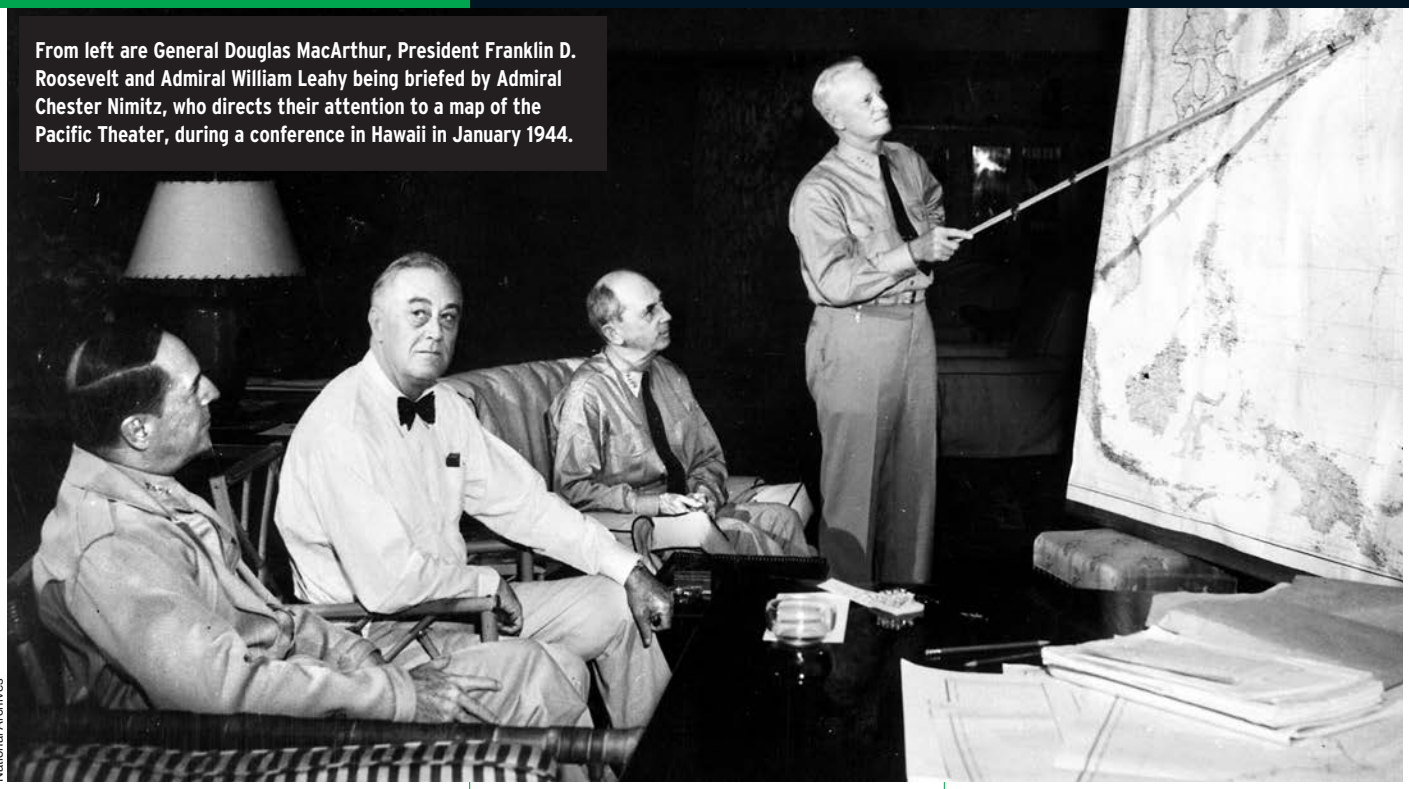
**Special price only for customers using the offer code.*

**1-800-333-2045**

**Your Insider Offer Code: THC277-01**

Stauer, 14091 Southcross Drive W., Dept. THC277-01, Burnsville, MN 55337 | www.stauer.com

Stauer | AFFORD THE EXTRAORDINARY®



From left are General Douglas MacArthur, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Admiral William Leahy being briefed by Admiral Chester Nimitz, who directs their attention to a map of the Pacific Theater, during a conference in Hawaii in January 1944.

National Archives

early summer of 1945 did not surrender when they could not win the war outright or achieve an acceptable, negotiated peace.

Many historians assert that the SWPA added no strategic value towards the Japanese defeat and existed only to placate General Douglas MacArthur's ego. Authors of this ilk compound this claim with the notion that Allied leadership at the Tehran (SEXTANT) Conferences (November 1943) established the SWPA operational theater and the strategic priority of German defeat over that of Japan at this time. In truth, the Americans and British identified Germany as the more prominent existential threat well before the fall of 1943. This strategic view among the Anglo-Americans first emanated during the ABC-1 meetings in January 1941. The correlating claim of MacArthur's overt pursuit of SWPA command is also questionable in the timing of the announcement and the general's active solicitation.

MacArthur believed it should be an Army officer and that he was the best flag officer for the supreme SWPA command billet position. The topographical realities of the SWPA made it obvious that it would be a theater decided by land campaigns with the Navy and Army Air Forces in complementary, if not support roles. MacArthur in 1941-42 was one of, if not the, most senior flag officer within the service of the U.S. armed forces. He also had considerable experience within the region in question and his performance within the opening hours, days, and weeks of the war notwithstanding, one of its ablest strategic leaders. There exists no context making objective sense for President Roosevelt not to have named MacArthur to this position.

No empirical evidence suggests that Roosevelt or Army Chief of Staff, George Marshall contemplated (on record), identifying another senior-level flag officer for the SWPA command billet. Historians' apparent common distaste for political influence, at least in the case of MacArthur, is odd given that political concerns are an inherent factor in all military and naval decisions, especially at the national, strategic level. One must also acknowledge that MacArthur's appointment in deference to specific American political and military goals, also represented the administration's desire to nurture Allied relationships. Australian Prime Minister John Curtin was a vociferous supporter of the general and conveyed such to American leadership. MacArthur's eventual position as SWPA Commander and the widespread rub with the mere existence of the SWPA in the first place, both during the war and in the subsequent years remains prevalent.

Disagreement with establishing and subsequent operations within the SWPA is attributable to three elements. First, full-scale operations within that region were unforeseen and therefore unplanned by pre-war American military planners. Second, critics conclude the SWPA's existence diluted the nation's overall war effort, especially Adm. Chester Nimitz's Central Pacific theater. Thirdly, many authors see MacArthur's personal behavior as never-endingly boorish. Much of the persistent postwar disagreement with the organization of the SWPA is attributable to the pre-war strategic theorems against war-time realities. The U.S. pre-war strategic plan for Japan was known officially as "War Plan Orange." A product of joint Army-Navy planners, the continued reference to this plan, especially concerning theater-level command, is by those sympathetic to the Navy's pre-conflict view of a hypothetical Pacific war. However, this plan did not account for Japanese offensives beyond the Philippine archipelago and the existential threat to New Zealand and Australia. Therefore, Japan's strategic prioritization of operations within the South Pacific and Southeast Asia rendered Orange useless, in a comprehensive fashion.

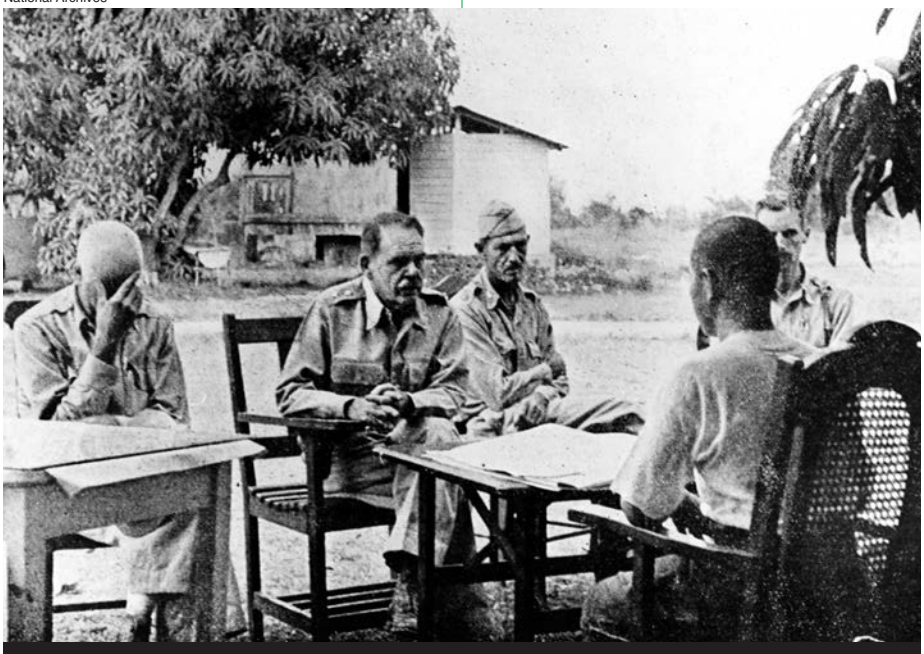
The American joint chiefs required of the Army the planning, preparation, and execution of enduring land operations. A role not inherent to the U.S. Marines Corps organi-

zational tables and tactical doctrine. The strategic realities of 1942-45 presented American leadership with the challenge of waging war across an immense theater that in a polite sense, challenged the unity of command principle. Critics continuously imply debatable reasons behind the hyphenation of the war with Japan and MacArthur's appointment. Certain observers view these contentious points as inextricably linked.

While such doubts existed during the war, Marshall, and Admiral Ernest J. King explicitly and for the record, repeatedly recommended the eventual command structure without Roosevelt's imposition. Tactical bifurcation itself represents a doctrinal principle often missed in post-war analysis. Maintaining tactical pressure across the breadth of Japan's line of expansion allowed the U.S. to retain the strategic initiative and eventually determine a primary effort as circumstances warranted and opportunities presented themselves.

American national and senior-level military and naval leadership encountered such a situation in the summer of 1944. A common and implied pejorative is that the

National Archives



**Major General Edward King is interrogated by Japanese officers after the surrender of American and Filipino forces in April 1942. MacArthur received multiple and continuing criticism for his handling of the planned withdrawal to the Bataan Peninsula—he had not adequately prepared the peninsula with stores of food, medicine and ammunition. His miscalculations in planning the retreat led to rapid unorganized movements and the loss of critical supplies. Critics, including some of his own troops, called him "Dugout Doug," because he rarely visited the front lines during intense fighting. Finally, even though he was ordered to do so by President Roosevelt, MacArthur retreated to Australia, leaving his army to surrender and suffer the Japanese war crime that would become known as the "Bataan Death March."**

National Archives

**General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Allied Commander, formalizes the end of the greatest conflict in human history. At a desk aboard the deck of the USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay, MacArthur signs the Japanese Instrument of Surrender, ushering in a new era for the Pacific and the world.**

Hawaiian meeting between Roosevelt, Nimitz, and MacArthur had political undertones. It was a political, publicity junket supporting Roosevelt's campaign for a fourth term. That in and of itself means little in the historiographical question of the Philippines versus Formosa from a strategic standpoint.

As noted in a contemporary article, MacArthur, and Nimitz each had the opportunity to present their respective recommended courses of action for defeating Japan. The president chose MacArthur and the axis of advance through the Philippines.

Historians and contemporaries sympathetic to Nimitz, the Navy's overall opinion of the proper manner of conducting the war, or simply out of personal dislike for MacArthur continue advancing the notion of a main advance across the central Pacific being unquestionably correct.

D. Clayton James, who wrote the best-selling three-volume *The Years of MacArthur*, astutely observes two strategic considerations concerning the Pacific War. Those opposing contemplations were not the Southwest versus Central thrusts, but military (including naval) and national or political strategic considerations driving American war planning. Readers and researchers will do well to understand the persistent and tangible political reality resulting from the Pearl Harbor raid and the Philippines invasion.

How Japan brought war to America made the resulting war not only one of geo-political strategic concerns but a deep-rooted emotional event for the American people. For Roosevelt to have demonstrated a slighting of vigorously answering Japan's underhanded attacks would have been political abdication and brought into question American citizens' wholehearted, enduring support for the entirety of the war effort. A concern that, at least for Marshall, remained throughout the war.

Considering the war's strategic realities, antagonists to the American command structure present two elements supporting their cause. First, again, is the supposition that the SWPA's existence pilfered valuable and finite resources and equipment better served in support of Nimitz's Central Pacific thrust. Such a conclusion supposes that the American Joint Chiefs would have directed to Nimitz those resources that found their way to the SWPA. Such conjecture fails to consider the full breadth of the logistical realities and concerns of the war. Identical interests existed in the European theater, and it is possible, if not likely, that had there been no

SWPA, much of those formations, munitions, equipment, and supplies the American chiefs would have utilized in North Africa, Italy, and eventually Western Europe.

Second, even if the observer can present a case in which Nimitz received all or a sizable portion of SWPA resources, they must also demonstrate how he (Nimitz) would or could have employed them.

All historians and students acknowledge the Central Pacific theater was operationally and tactically a naval theater based upon physical realities. However, increasing the volume of resources does not directly correlate to a shorter war or the appropriate, widescale application of those resources. MacArthur's SWPA organizational structure was for warfare on land masses significantly larger than anything Nimitz encountered until Okinawa. How would the latter have employed multiple U.S. Army divisions, including armored forces on the line of minuscule atolls and islands characteristic of the Central Pacific? Constricting this combat power into a narrow thrust would have played into Japan's strategic defensive design by allowing them to concentrate their available combat power directly opposite such an axis of advance instead of the entirety of their defensive perimeter. Thereby diminishing the depth of their combat power.

Historiography treats the Philippines' position within the U.S. strategic survey as solely MacArthur's personal vendetta or redemption project. It is accurate to point out the SWPA commander's ultimate strategic objective was the archipelago, but the idea that he alone held this view is faulty.

Roosevelt himself never dismissed out of hand the idea of returning to the Philippines and directly liberating the Filipino people through military operations and the defeat of occupying Japanese forces. Throughout the war, the president implied or explicitly conveyed the U.S. intention to break the shackles of Japanese occupation and oppression forcefully and directly. The road traveled to the destination of simultaneous axes of advance consisted of many curves and potholes.

James concludes that while such a command arrangement was not ideal when researchers objectively considered all elements, considering the war's eventual outcome, these mutually supporting theaters

provided a decisive American victory.

Another conclusion against MacArthur and the SWPA's mere existence concerns the loss of American lives due to theater operations. Authors have concluded without context or argument that the Americans would have avoided the over 47,000 American casualties, including 10,380 deaths had they not established the SWPA. There is no mechanism by which historians may confirm or dispel such a subjective conclusion. Even had there been no SWPA, the formations dedicated to said theater the American Joint Chiefs would have utilized elsewhere. Therefore, the Central Pacific or European theaters' casualty lists would have correspondingly increased. Meaning that some or many of those killed or wounded in the SWPA would have yet suffered the same fate in the Central Pacific area, France, or Italy. Attempting to quantify the Americans' unnecessary establishment of the SWPA based on these numbers is entirely self-serving for those presenting such conclusions and dismissive of the real contributions of those lost and all soldiers, airmen, sailors, and marines assigned to the SWPA theater of operations.

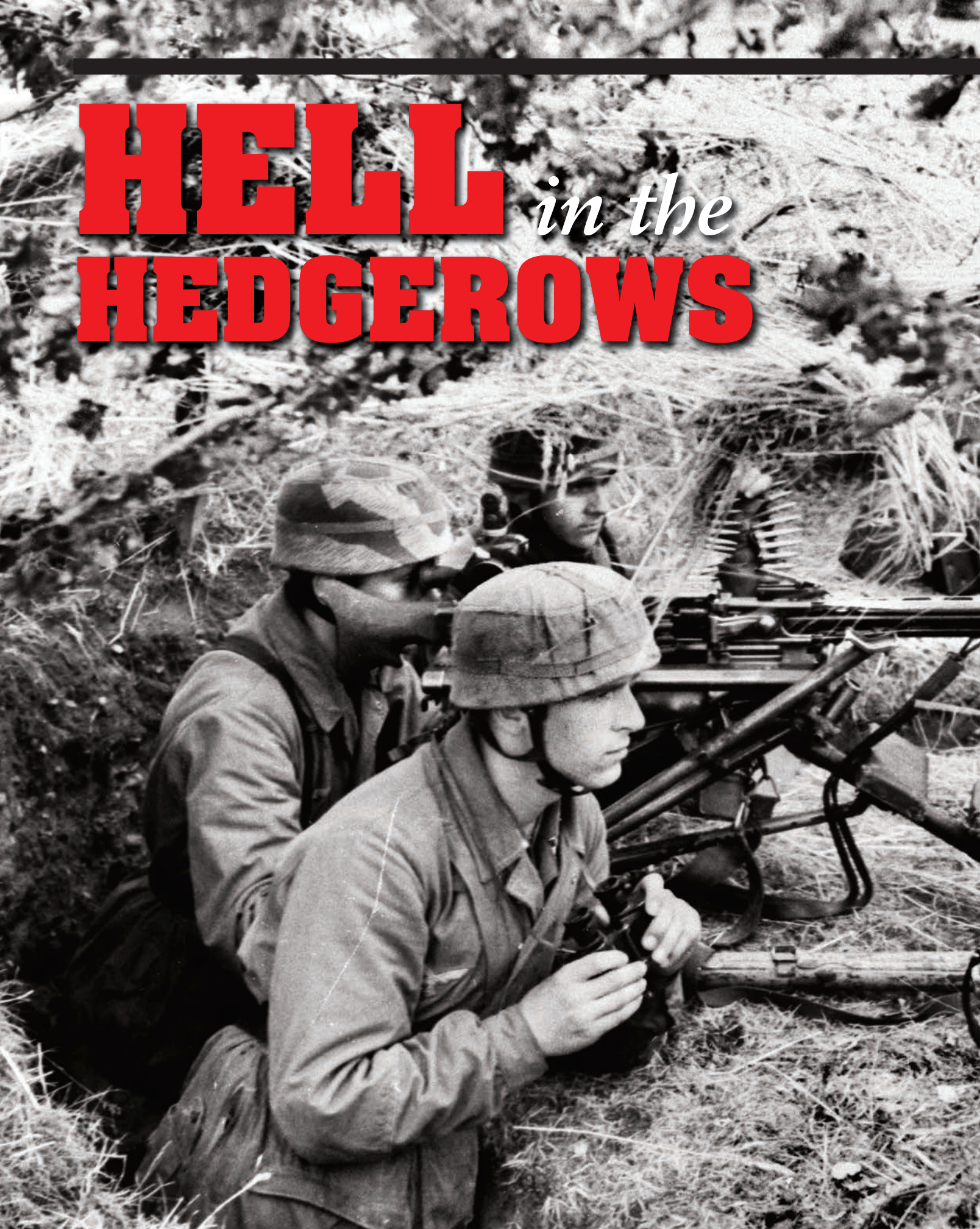
The next common historical fallacy is the correlation of the U.S. bombing campaign, its strategic contributions, and how such weapons systems further demonstrated the SWPA's redundant existence. The geographical realities of the Pacific War did elevate the tactical and strategic roles of airpower. However, post-war conclusions that bombers especially proved to be the decisive factor in attaining victory is hindsight. The operational objective for most of the SWPA and Central Pacific was to control airfields in a mutually supporting fashion. But during the war, this was to provide American (and Allied formations) with tactical air support in the eventual land operations on the Japanese home islands. Neither MacArthur nor Nimitz foresaw the war concluding as it eventually did. The Americans intended their bombing campaign of 1942-45 to support this strategic view by helping establish (shaping) conditions more conducive to potential American and Allied success in follow-on land operations. Therefore, to imply that the mere existence of the strategic bomber voided the need for the SWPA, after the fact, is a fallacy.

The final rebuttal point concerns some his-

torians' questions regarding Japan's war continuance despite situational realities by 1945. The simple answer is that the militarists throughout positions of power and influence had everything to lose in Japan's defeat and unconditional surrender. Japan's diminishing state, in every sense, and the atomic bombs' unspeakable destruction mattered little to this clique, and only exacerbated their desire to see Japan fight a protracted battle of Armageddon proportions among the home islands. An objective examination of the war's terminus through that lens offers a logical answer to a rhetorical question.

A plethora of historical narratives and articles poses a valid broad question concerning the Pacific War at the strategic level. The bifurcation of the American command structure in the war with Japan has valuable lessons and insight for military and civil strategic level leadership today and in the future. It also warrants noting that leaders should not religiously adhere to this principle regardless of each war's unique physical and therefore operational (and tactical) context. Doctrine is malleable by design and intention. At the strategic level, logistical and communication lines relating to distances and geographical (including weather) considerations in conjunction with political realities influence command and control structure. That is unavoidable. Analysts of the Pacific War continue to fail to incorporate the full array of factors and elements leading to the SWPA's establishment. Another common theme of Pacific War study is the hyperbolic conclusions of MacArthur due to his performance in the war's opening weeks and months and his personal foibles.

Though MacArthur did himself no favors with instances of personal and professional missteps, his record was impressive. His ego was large and he could be scathing in interactions with subordinates. But researchers must contemplate the full spectrum of his personality and consider that some of his bombast was not for show, but to elicit a response and action from staff, subordinate commanders, and at times his superiors in support of his troops. The researcher's positive or critical conclusion would acknowledge that he was human with all the failures common to all human beings but within the context of a world war and the burden of strategic level command. □


HELL in the HEDGEROWS

## Outnumbered, outgunned and on the run in Normandy's bocage country with German paratrooper Rudolf Jackl.

**BY BILL WARNOCK**

Rudolf Jackl dove headfirst from the aircraft door, stretching his arms toward the ship's port wing to keep from getting tangled in his parachute's shroud lines as he was slammed by turbulent air. He was one of 10 trainees leaping into the sky in rapid succession, surrendering themselves to gravity. For a few adrenaline-filled seconds, the world spun around him before he was wrenched upward by the opening of his canopy. It was exhilarating, that moment in the air, suspended from his harness as he descended onto the drop zone at the jump school. Forty-five seconds after diving from the plane, his feet hit the earth, and he rolled to absorb the impact.

As a skilled machine fitter, Jackl had never imagined becoming a paratrooper when he joined the Luftwaffe at 18 in April 1942. Upon completing basic training, he attended a technical school before deploying to Crete, where he worked in an aircraft repair workshop. Inspired by Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring's appeal to rear-echelon personnel in September 1943, Jackl volunteered for frontline service.

After delousing and medical examinations, he found himself in the barracks area of the *Fallschirmschule* (Airborne School) at Wittstock-Dosse, some 55 miles northwest

**German *Fallschirmjägers* (Paratroopers) in an entrenched machine-gun position await the advancing Allied forces in Normandy's le Bocage in the summer of 1944.**

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-587-2253-19; Photo: Toni Schneiders

National Archives / Bill Warnock

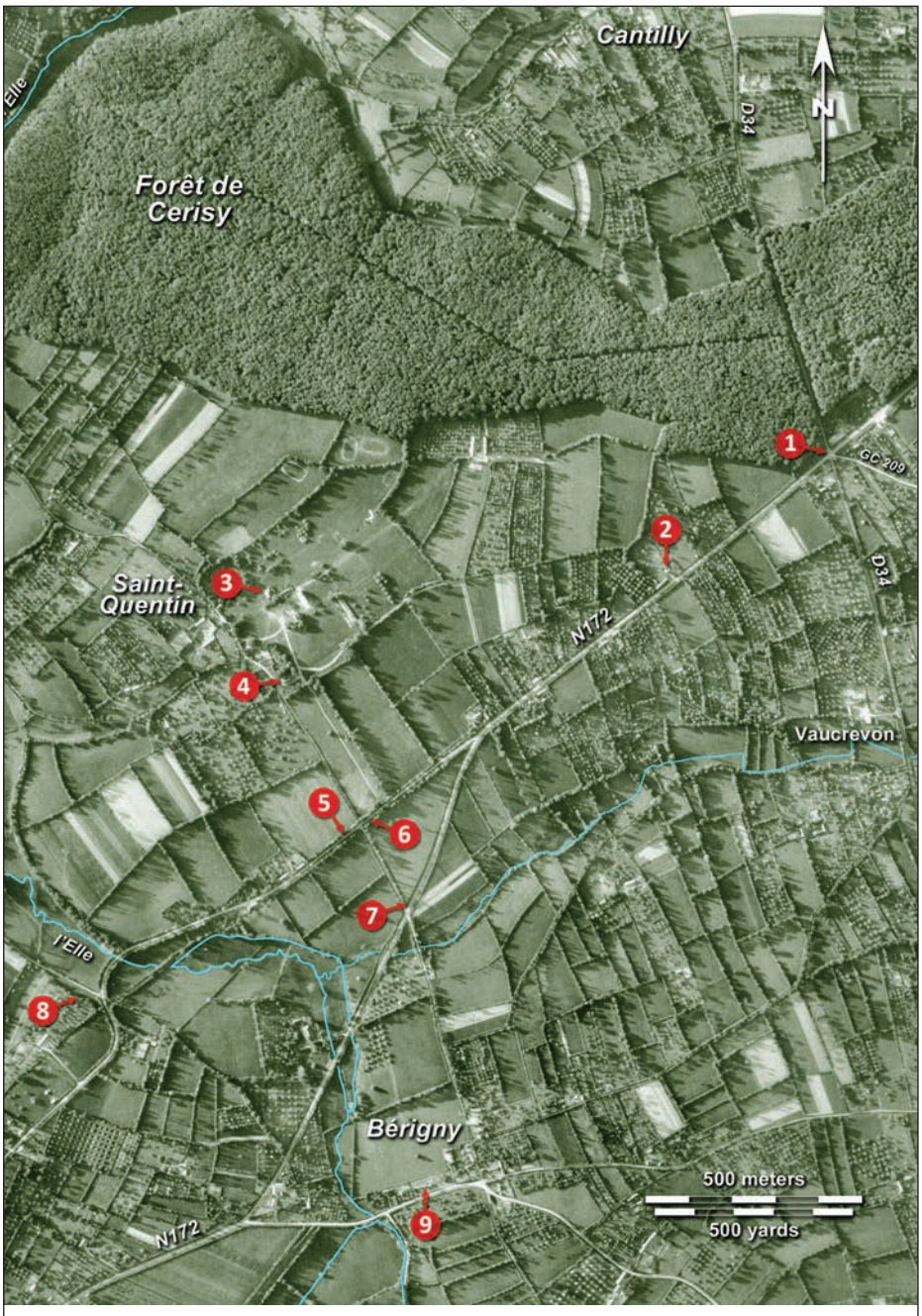
of Berlin, where he would begin a new chapter of his military career as a paratrooper. His parachute training took place in bitterly cold weather during January and February 1944. To graduate, he completed six jumps: four from a Junkers 52; one from the bomb bay of a Heinkel 111; and, finally, one from a Savoia-Marchetti SM 81, an Italian transport aircraft. He was now a *Fallschirmjäger* (literal translation, "parachute hunter"), earning the coveted Luftwaffe Paratrooper Badge featuring a diving eagle clutching a swastika within a wreath.

At the end of February, Jackl and his fellow graduates took a transport train through the scenic Brenner Pass into Italy. In Bolzano, the train halted for several hours before changing course toward France. The men disembarked east of Paris at Bar-le-Duc and occupied a former French Army barracks. The small city was pulsing with activity, as several Luftwaffe units provided cadre for the newly forming 3rd Fallschirmjäger-Division, commanded by Generalleutnant Richard Schimpf. Among them were officers and non-commissioned officers adorned with combat decorations, some of them veterans of the 1941 invasion of Crete.

Jackl was assigned the role of combat engineer. His training encompassed trench construction, laying minefields, assembling demolition charges, and building water crossings. Jackl served in the engineer platoon of the 3rd Bataillon of Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 8.

Now consisting of 40 men, the platoon relocated to Landernau, Brittany, in April 1944. Hitler considered the Brittany peninsula a potential landing site for Allied airborne troops, particularly the fields and ridges of Monts d'Arrée, which offered favorable drop zones.

The engineer platoon settled in Sizun for specialized training as assault engineers. They operated under the experienced leadership of Oberfeldwebel Fritz Heinemann, an *alter Hase* (old hare) and recipient of the German Cross in Gold. Their advanced training encompassed tactics for bunker busting, close combat with tanks, and the use of flamethrowers. During mock battles, the engineers repeatedly stormed and destroyed




**1** Malbrêche road junction
**2** la Haute Litée
**3** Château de Saint-Quentin-d'Elle
**4** Chapelle de Saint-Quentin-d'Elle
**5** Sd.Kfz.7 halftrack prime mover for Flak 88 (approximate location)
**6** Flak 88 in antitank role with adjacent foxholes for its German Army crew
**7** Rudolf Jackl's antitank team
**8** Approximate location where Jackl reported to an "older captain" on June 16
**9** Église Saint-Gildard (Bérigny church)

**ABOVE: This aerial image, captured by a P-38 pilot from the U.S. 30th Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron on the morning of June 2, 1944, shows the area near Saint-Lô where Rudolf Jackl and the *Kampfgruppe* (battle group) from the 3rd Fallschirmjäger-Division were assigned in an attempt to stop the Allies from advancing inland from the beaches of Normandy. OPPOSITE, TOP: German Fallschirmjäger in France armed and in jump gear. In 1942, 18-year-old Rudolf Jackl joined the Luftwaffe and was assigned to aircraft repair work. After hearing Hermann Göring's 1943 appeal for frontline volunteers, Jackl became a paratrooper in an engineer platoon.**

Unknown

Photo courtesy of the author

**Rudolf Jackl III, on the sun-drenched island of Crete in 1943, before he voluntarily went through airborne training and joined Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 8.**

fortified positions. Led by Hauptmann Josef Krammling, the 3rd Bataillon practiced battalion-sized assaults at Brasparts. Between these exercises, the platoon deployed to hunt down partisans in Locmélar and Brasparts.

Jackl received a reprieve from partisan hunting and the training regimen when his turn for leave arrived. He exchanged his 98k carbine for a P-08 Luger, a pistol being the only weapon permitted for personnel on furlough. As he passed through Cologne on his journey home, the city was a sad sight, battered and burned by Allied bombers. The aerial onslaught had also lengthened railroad journeys, forcing Jackl to spend six days in transit to and from Bavaria, reducing the precious time he could spend with his family.

When he returned to Brittany, rumors were spreading among the Fallschirmjägers that Allied forces would soon invade France. As Jackl recalled, "In English, we repeatedly practiced the sentence, 'I am a German paratrooper.' Alongside this, security measures were tightened, and we rehearsed various terms in English, which would prove useful when taking prisoners."

Invasion had indeed been imminent, albeit far from Brittany. On June 6, 1944, Allied armies crossed the English Channel and landed in Normandy.

Acting on urgent orders, the 3rd Fallschirmjäger-Division dispatched a motorized *Kampfgruppe* (battle group) to Normandy. Led by Major Friedrich Alpers, an attorney and staunch National Socialist, the Kampfgruppe included Jackl's battalion alongside Alpers's own, as well as the 1st Bataillon of Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 9, plus the 2nd Kompanie of Pionier-Bataillon 3, and a medical unit.

The division suffered from a shortage of transport vehicles, but Jackl and his comrades were fortunate enough to ride in trucks, traveling by night to evade the watchful eyes of Allied airmen who prowled the skies throughout the day. The vehicle convoy drove into the hills northeast of Saint-Lô, where Jackl arrived during the final hours of June 8.

Jackl's engineer platoon helped establish a blocking position alongside an 88-mm Flak gun deployed in an antitank role. This took place at a triangular road junction north of Bérigny, a position in echelon behind the rest of Kampfgruppe Alpers, approximately 700 meters to the east. Placed in charge of a three-man antitank team, Jackl and his subordinates stood vigilant against the looming threat of an American advance—a breakthrough might mean the fall of Saint Lô.

The ancient hedges and sunken lanes of Normandy became allies for the newly arrived Germans, who leveraged the terrain as force multiplier for their killing power. Established as far back as Roman times, these hedgerows fenced in cattle, marked property lines, and reduced soil erosion caused by winds off the English Channel. Each hedge consisted of an embankment three to five feet wide and up to nine feet tall

National Archives

Photo by Luftwaffe war correspondent Hermann Czirnich/Courtesy of the author

**ABOVE: In March 1944, Major Friedrich Alpers (right) transferred to the 3rd Parachute Division and was posted with the unit in Normandy after the D-Day invasion. Here he questions an American prisoner from the 2nd Infantry Division. *Feldwebel* (sergeant) Jupp Nüsser, who served under Alpers, recalled that the major "always showed respect and chivalry toward a defeated enemy." TOP: A U.S. Army field artillery unit pours a withering hail of fire on enemy positions in the Saint-Lô sector on July 18, 1944. Rudolf Jackl and his fellow paratroopers endured the artillery bombardment while dug into the hedgerows of the Normandy bocage.**

(sometimes higher) topped with a leafy mass of saplings, brambles, and mature trees. When viewed from above, *le bocage*, or hedgerow country, looked like an asymmetrical mosaic of pastures and apple orchards.

The Fallschirmjägers burrowed into the embankments within this green patchwork, carving out firing positions that allowed them to spray the meadows and orchards with death. Mortar crews situated themselves in sunken lanes nestled between hedgerows. The crew of the 88-mm Flak gun draped camouflaged netting over their weapon to help conceal it under trees along the shoulder of a road. Jackl's team used netting to hide daisy-chained antitank mines, which could be pulled across an adjacent road. Their arsenal also included 3-kg. and 3.5-kg. magnetic hollow-charge devices for destroying tanks. The Fallschirmjägers had yet to receive a single Panzerfaust, the handheld antitank weapon favored by German troops. These would not arrive until the following month.

After sunrise on June 9, American artillery liaison aircraft circled in the skies searching for targets. Jackl and the other engineers referred to these as *Krähen* or "crows." The flying artillery spotters struggled to identify the skillfully camouflaged German positions.

Soldiers from the First Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment—part of the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division—finally reached the area on June 10. These newcomers had only landed at Omaha Beach the previous day and had since hiked five miles inland, encountering disorganized German resistance from the crumbling 352nd Infanterie-Division. The Americans pressed south through the foreboding *Forêt de Cerisy* (Cerisy Forest), encountering small-arms fire on the far side at the Malbrêche crossroads. Despite the resistance, the Yanks secured the vital five-way intersection, suffering only two men killed and nine wounded that day. After nightfall, the First Battalion probed in the direction of Kampfgruppe Alpers.

Oberfeldwebel Heinemann, the engineer platoon leader, was greeted by a shocking sight as daylight broke on June 11—the 12-man left side of his platoon had vanished during the night. Had they been nabbed by an American patrol, or fallen prey to the

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-586-2209-06A; Photo: Hans Arppe

**Fallschirmjägers (paratroops) fortify defensive positions in the hedgerows of Normandy's bocage region in 1944. To withstand artillery rounds, they were ordered to shovel dirt over three layers of logs.**

French Resistance? Whatever the truth, Heinemann counted only 25 men remaining.

The Americans of the First Battalion, 38th Regiment launched an attack that morning, bolstered by artillerymen who rolled out a blanket of steel. The infantry advanced through hedgerows, cow pastures, and apple plantations before striking the main line of resistance established by Kampfgruppe Alpers. Meeting dogged resistance, the attack sputtered to a halt near a farmstead called "la Haute Litée," leaving the battalion with 11 men dead and 36 wounded—two of whom would later succumb to the injuries. The casualty list also included a pair of wounded soldiers captured by the Fallschirmjägers.

The day's battle also exacted a heavy toll on the German paratroopers, their ranks whittled down by the incessant artillery fire. And yet, Kampfgruppe Alpers clung to its position. Meanwhile, the engineer platoon remained intact, save for the men who had mysteriously disappeared.

Major Alpers and his men braced themselves for another First Battalion attack on June 12, but 2nd Division headquarters directed the battalion to withdraw to a reserve position. Unfortunately for the paratroopers, this change brought no reprieve.

Under cover of night, GIs from the Second Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, silently maneuvered through the shadowy Cerisy Forest, making their way to an assembly area at its edge. The Second Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, also moved to the area, taking up positions to the left of the Second Battalion, 23rd.

At precisely 06:00, after a 20-minute artillery barrage, the two battalions sprang into action. In the 23rd sector, fierce German mortar and machine-gun fire halted the Americans at the little community of Saint-Quentin, dominated by an 18th century château with horse stables built for fox hunting. Pinned down and unable to breach this well-fortified position, the attackers dug foxholes to escape the daunting fire. The 9th Infantry soldiers reached their objective and dug defensive positions despite heavy resistance.

On June 13, at 01:30, Kampfgruppe Alpers launched a nighttime counterattack, backed by Ju 88 twin-engine bombers. The Ju 88s inflicted no casualties, and, by 04:30, the counterattack had fizzled, largely due to American artillery fire.

Neither side gained territory that day or during the next two days. The Luftwaffe made a daytime appearance on June 15, when Focke-Wulf Fw 190s strafed the Second Battalion, 23rd, and shot down one of the hated crows, killing the two-man crew. On the ground, combat around Saint-Quentin amounted to sniping, shelling, and patrolling.

On June 16, the battle shifted in favor of the Americans when soldiers of Company E, 23rd, maneuvered around the left flank of Kampfgruppe Alpers and broke through to Bérigny.

When this drama began, Jackl was under the camouflage net covering the 88-mm Flak gun. The Oberwachtmeister (equivalent to a U.S. Army technical sergeant) in charge of the weapon had lent Jackl a pair of binoculars. He gazed through them toward the Cerisy Forest and later recalled what he observed: "It was unbelievable what tanks, vehicles, and weapons the enemy had there, all poised for action. We had nothing to

National Archives

**Soldiers of the 2nd U.S. Infantry Division aboard armor from the 741st Tank Battalion prepare to move on to Harscheid, Germany. The 741st was attached to the 2nd Division, and fought together against Rudolf Jackl's Fallschirmjäger unit in Normandy following D-Day.**

counter this formidable array."

Until that moment, Jackl's antitank team had seen no American armor, as the 2nd Division lacked such support. That changed on June 16, when the 741st Tank Battalion arrived, with its Company A joining the 23rd Infantry.

"Suddenly, we heard the dull woosh of incoming artillery rounds. Instinctively, we spread apart, everyone taking cover to escape the falling shells," Jackl described what happened later. "The enemy had likely discovered the heavy tractor, which served as the prime mover for the Flak gun, even though the big halftrack was covered by camouflage netting at its parking spot along the road just behind us. I heard the Oberwachtmeister shout an order: 'Tractor move out!' When its engine was roaring, I jumped onboard with several others"

The men climbed onto the moving tractor holding onto headlights or whatever they could as they fled the artillery impact zone. Luckily for Jackl and the tractor, the first few rounds fell short. Near the Elle River, the tractor slowed down and the men jumped off. The Flak crew and tractor then turned around and went to retrieve their 88-mm, not aware that it had been hit by artillery.

"Unbeknownst to us, a third defensive line had been established to our rear," Jackl recalled. "On the western slope of the Elle River valley, machine gunners prepared a position with an impressive field of fire. Our group of six to eight men reported to the company commander in that area, an older Hauptmann. He wanted a briefing on the events that had unfolded to his front."

That evening, Jackl and his fellow engineers received instructions to pull back to the command post of Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 8. By this time, most of the 3rd Fallschirmjäger-Division had arrived—many making the journey from Brittany to Normandy on foot, commandeered bicycles, or horse-drawn carts. Their arrival enabled the division to reorganize and extend its frontline positions and to forge defensive lines in echelon.

In the weeks that followed, Heinemann's engineer platoon primarily focused on laying mines. The platoon took no part in defending against a major American attack launched by

## Fallschirmjäger Defensive Positions on Hill 192

The 3rd Fallschirmjäger-Division built three defensive lines arranged in echelon, the arrangement designed to absorb the impact of any American attack. In written directives to their troops, regimental and battalion commanders within the division stressed the importance of well-fortified positions.

One such "special order" dated July 17, 1944, came from Hauptmann Walter Münter, who commanded the 2nd Bataillon of Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 5 (on the right flank of Rudolf Jackl's battalion). Münter wrote the following to his company commanders:

"Heavy weapon and LMG [ Light Machine Gun] positions as well as all other weapons must be protected against mortar and light artillery fire, i.e., there must be at least three layers of logs with earth on top over every position. Positions of this kind protect the soldier sufficiently against artillery and mortar fire. They permit the continuous resistance to the enemy in spite of uninterrupted artillery and mortar fire. This point is to be impressed on the soldiers by their company and platoon commanders. If our soldiers overcome their fear of artillery fire, a breakthrough by the enemy, who has no high fighting spirit, is impossible.

"The completion of positions of this kind must be effected vigorously in spite of the fatigue of the troops. We want to save blood and human life. At my next inspection of positions, I shall hold responsible the company commanders for the construction of positions in which weapons can be placed and machine-gun crews can sleep."

Aside from the construction of fighting positions, Münter instructed his soldiers to erect multi-apron entanglements to thwart American infantrymen. Called *Flandernzäune*, these entanglements consisted of three wires strung parallel to the frontline. The foremost wire hung 30 centimeters above the ground, the middle wire was set between 1.5 meters and 1.7 meters high, and the third wire was only 15 centimeters above the ground. The entire obstacle was at least three meters in width, with an interval of no less than 1.5 meters between the wires.

Antipersonnel mines complimented the Flandernzäune. The *Schrapnellmine*—"Bouncing Betty" in GI jargon—was the preferred device. Usually at nighttime, the Fallschirmjägers meticulously laid S-mine fields, positioning them within established fields of fire. These lethal traps remained firmly under German observation and control, making their removal by U.S. combat engineers nearly impossible.

Hauptmann Münter offered strict words regarding camouflage, a matter of life and death in his mind: "I have brought it to your attention again and again that not enough emphasis is placed on camouflaging positions to counteract the air and artillery superiority of the enemy. I again order emphatically that camouflage must be completed to such a degree that positions cannot be recognized even at the shortest distance. One must be able to pass without noticing the positions unless shouted at. From now on in this connection, I shall punish the responsible commanders severely for negligence in camouflage; for it is merely a case of indigence and irresponsibility that costs lives and good men."

**From this orchard atop Hill 192, the Germans could see any advancing American forces and call artillery and mortar fire down upon them. Rudolf Jackl and his fellow members of the 3rd Fallschirmjäger-Division were part of the attempt to stop the Allies from advancing inland from the beaches at Normandy.**

the 2nd Division on July 11, 1944. The paratroopers of Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 9 faced the full force of this assault, valiantly defending Hill 192. Despite their bravery, they ultimately succumbed to the overwhelming pressure and lost the summit. The fierce battle for the hilltop left them depleted and unable to hold their sector. Relief came in the form of the 2nd Bataillon of Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 5 and the 3rd Bataillon of Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 8.

*Obergefreiter* (equivalent to PFC) Jackl and the other engineers now stood together with the 3rd Bataillon in forward positions near Saint-Pierre-de-Semilly. The frontline stretched along the N172 highway. Just across the road, American soldiers of the 38th Infantry Regiment readied themselves for another attack—one final push aimed at shattering the 3rd Fallschirmjäger-Division.

Jackl felt a pain twisting through him like a relentless vine on July 25 and made his way to an aid station located in an old stone farmhouse, where he found a doctor, probably Dr. Winfried Mönke, the battalion surgeon. The young Obergefreiter's groin was grotesquely swollen, a vivid bluish hue contrasted against the pallor of his skin. The doctor said that his lymph glands were infected and would require surgery, but it would be morning before an ambulance could haul him out. He trudged back to his soggy foxhole where he would bear the anguish a little longer, applying cold compresses to the infected area as instructed.

No ambulance arrived the next morning, only American artillery shells and a theater of riotous, skull-pounding detonations. This heralded the beginning of Operation Cobra, a widescale American offensive to break out from Normandy.

"Salvo upon salvo rained down around us into the wet, sodden earth," Jackl recalled. "Already there were dead as well as wounded who screamed for a medic, but nobody could help."

The shelling stopped and the sudden silence was filled with the distinctive sound of squeaking tracks and the rumble of tank engines.

"I pushed myself up, peering out of my foxhole through the tattered branches above,"

Jackl continued. "I watched them approach—multiple Shermans! They were the older models, characterized by their short barrels. The tanks rattled over the road, which formed the frontline, and penetrated to the south."

Some of the men from the regimental antitank company tried to engage the Shermans with an *Ofenrohr* (stove pipe), also known as the *Raketenpanzerbüchse* (rocket tank rifle), inspired by American bazookas captured in North Africa in 1943, but were quickly gunned down.

"Along with the tanks, American infantrymen advanced across the open ground in a widespread formation," Jackl said. "In response, our heavy machine guns opened fire. As the guns rattled away, bullets buzzed and hissed overhead with tracer rounds highlighting their paths. The entire heavy machine-gun platoon delivered relentless fire with devastating effect. Dozens of Americans fell, while many others dashed for cover. The tanks—with the infantry now missing—stopped and turned away."

The battle receded from Jackl's front, shifting to his right. Once again, armor from the 741st Tank Battalion faced stout opposition. As the German defenders scrambled to meet the attack, Jackl saw a lone Fallschirmjäger sprinting toward him.

"An unfamiliar comrade charged toward me, gripping a Panzerfaust. Despite lacking any prior training, he expressed a frantic desire to 'crack a Sherman.' I hurriedly explained the weapon's function, checked the ignition and propellant charge, and demonstrated a favorable firing position. However, in our haste, we left ourselves too exposed. Just as the Panzerfaust fired, an enemy shell struck nearby, sending steel fragments hurtling through the air. The Sherman crew had acted more quickly. I emerged unscathed, but my comrade lay mortally wounded. I leaned him against a hedgerow embankment, feeling the weight of helplessness as there was nothing more I could do for him."

Ignoring the pain from his groin, Jackl lay aside his carbine and moved toward the tanks that had broken through on the right with another Panzerfaust.

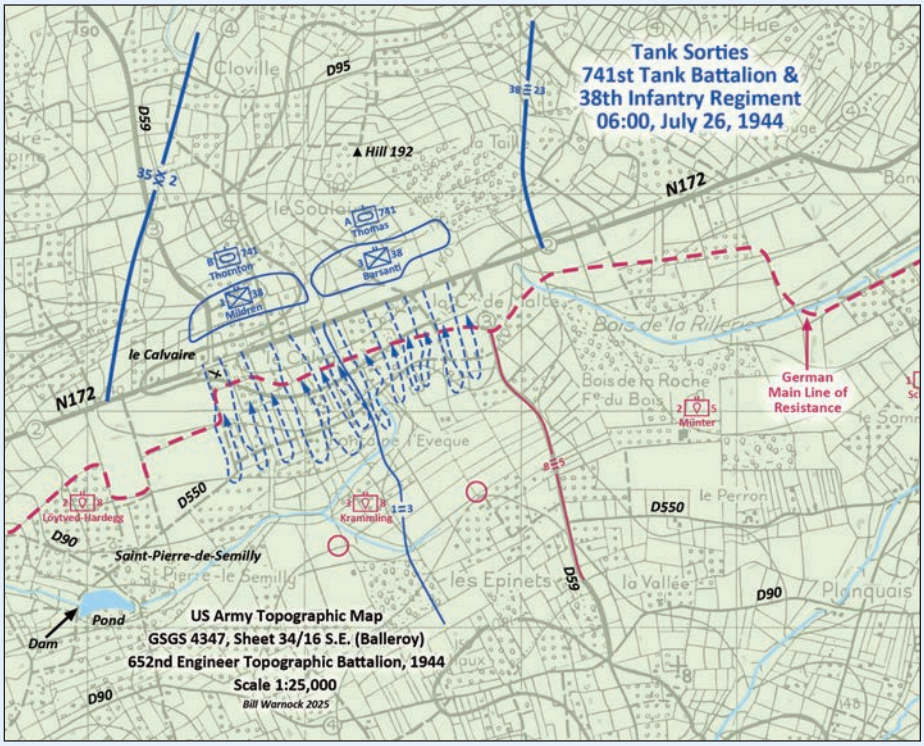
"The wing tank was my target," he later explained. "Caution was imperative; I knew that if I were detected, it would be the end—those tanks would make short work of tank hunters. I needed to close the distance to within forty meters and aim at something high, something like the tank's turret."

Jackly quickly "bent the sheet-metal strip upward, felt the click of the red button releasing

## TANK SORTIES

During the attack launched on July 26, 1944, as part of Operation Cobra, the 741st Tank Battalion and 2nd Infantry Division employed a new tactic known as a "sortie." It called for tanks to mass behind the departure line while infantry hunkered down in slit trenches several hundred yards farther back.

The artillery would deliver fire along the departure line and up to 500 yards into enemy territory, while the tanks sped forward and slashed through hedgerows, protected all the




while by artillery shells bursting in midair. For psychological effect, tank commanders had instructions to switch on their sirens while advancing.

When faced with the unyielding strength of a hedgerow, if the initial blow from the tank and its cutting device failed, the driver was left with no choice but to strike again and again. Upon sensing when the hedge was ready to give way, the driver would pull back just enough, then burst through at attack speed.

Every lead tank had a support tank for rear protection. Speed was the key to success and the best way to avoid enemy tank hunters. All firing was to occur on the move.

After penetrating the enemy's defenses, the new modus operandi called for the tanks to double back, join the waiting infantry, and advance together through the breach.

This map illustrates the 12 sorties executed by the 38th Infantry Regiment and the 741st Tank Battalion against Rudolf Jackl's battalion. However, on July 26, these were not the only sorties launched, as the 23rd Infantry Regiment and Company C of the 741st conducted sorties against Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 5. Regrettably, primary source documents regarding these could not be located at the U.S. National Archives, leaving the specific assault lanes shrouded in uncertainty."

National Archives

**American Sherman tanks use a hedgerow as cover in Normandy in the summer of 1944. After failing to take Hill 192 in June, the men of the 2nd Division trained with the 741st Tank Battalion to coordinate another attack on July 11. Assisted by a rolling artillery barrage, the attack was successful, though costly, with some 3,000 wounded and nearly 600 dead.**

as the weapon became armed," then jumped out from cover and fired. The rocket sailed over the tank's turret and exploded on a bank of earth.

"The cries of wounded Americans drove the Sherman around," Jackl said. "In a fan-shaped pattern, the tank launched several HE [high explosive] shells in my direction. Completely pooped out, I reached a foxhole, my groin aching terribly as I gasped for air and forced myself to be quiet."

Straggling Fallschirmjägers drifted in from the area where the Americans had broken through as Oberfeldwebel Heinemann gathered his men in the shelter of a stream valley in a steady drizzle.

"It was midday, and I quelled a great hunger with a heel of bread and a gulp from my canteen," Jackl said. "The last of our ammunition was divvied out and the remaining Panzerfäuste distributed. Once again, I found myself receiving one."

Jackl and his comrades positioned themselves in the dark confines of a sunken road, tension thick as they braced for the resumption of violence. Before them lay a cow pasture about 150-meters square. Just beyond this open area, tanks of the 741st sat poised for action.

"Amidst dense undergrowth, we peered out from the sunken lane toward the Shermans, which stood turret-to-turret behind the earthen embankment of a hedgerow, arranged as if on parade," Jackl said. "The lack of antitank guns weighed on our minds—could we stand our ground without them?"

It was still drizzling in the early evening as the American infantry began to push forward, their heavy machine-gun fire nearly cutting down the hedges on the embankment. The Shermans added HE projectiles with tracer rounds.

"In an instant, we were engulfed in a storm of dirt, branches, and flying foliage," Jackl said. "The machine-gun fire ceased, replaced by the howl of tank engines as the Shermans pushed through the embankment, followed by the infantry. We clung to our position, as our MG 42 gave reassuring bursts of fire."

The Americans sustained heavy casualties, before the Shermans stopped, rotated their turrets, and took out the MG 42 crew. Leaving the infantry behind, the Shermans drove full throttle toward the German lines.

"We didn't want to be overrun, only to escape," Jackl said. "As I dashed past the entrance to the cow pasture, I felt a pang of regret for leaving behind the second Panzerfaust. With great leaps, I vaulted onto the open plain. In my frantic race, I took the safety off my antitank weapon, only to find myself suddenly face-to-face with the flank tank. There was no time to aim; I simply fired from the hip. The warhead shot out, racing toward the Sherman that was charging straight at me"

Jackl missed the speeding tank and dove for cover, making his way back into the stream valley.

"It was evening, and the steady rain, which we so often cursed, became our ally," Jackl

Polish National Archives

**Fallschirmjägers, some with antitank weapons, inspect a knocked out U.S. Sherman tank in Normandy. In his time under fire in the hedgerow country, Rudolf Jackl fired several Panzerfausts at attacking Shermans but missed.**

said. "We huddled in an overgrown portion of a sunken lane at the stream's edge. We were utterly exhausted, totally drenched, and hungry. The Americans, oblivious to our presence, avoided the marshy stream valley and instead traversed the open plain."

Jackly recalled that his infected groin "burned like fire" as they listened to the sounds of battle receding. A volunteer scouted the area and found that the Fallschirmjägers were surrounded. By the time they had all trickled back, there were about a dozen of them huddled in the rain, knowing that as dawn approached, they would have to find a way out, as "staying any longer would risk capture or far worse." Their best chance lay down the stream toward Saint-Pierre-de-Semilly.

In total silence, they waded single file in the knee-deep stream and reached Saint-Pierre-de-Semilly where the dammed stream formed a pond.

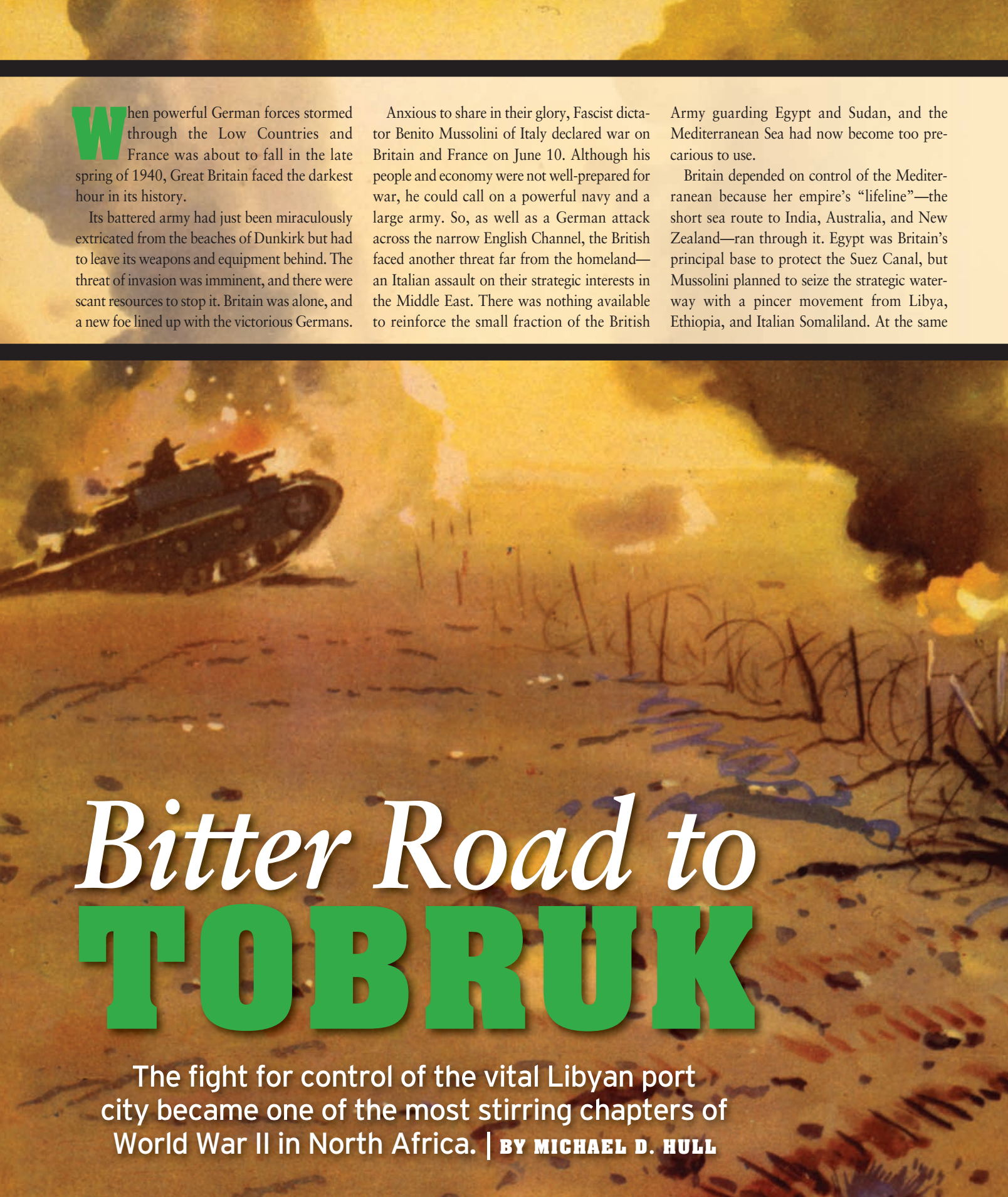
"The road leading south crossed over the dam," Jackl said. "Due to pain, I now walked with the support of my carbine. Oberfeldwebel Heinemann sent out a few men on reconnaissance, and we soon learned that Americans occupied the village. We disappeared in small groups, moving eastward and uphill. We spent the remainder of the night at the last remaining heavy machine-gun position."

On July 28, during a withdrawal operation, Heinemann set out to reconnoiter a new defensive position. His mission was irrevocably cut short when American forces captured him south of Saint-Pierre-de-Semilly.

Meanwhile, Jackl was evacuated to the rear, where he underwent surgery to treat his inflamed lymph glands. After receiving care at two hospitals in France, he returned to Germany and briefly served with replacement units before being assigned to Fallschirm-Sturmgeschütz-Brigade "Schmitz" on the Italian front, where he remained until the end of the war. Years later, he reconnected with Heinemann, and their friendship endured until Heinemann's death in 1999. Jackl died on March 10, 2017, at the age of 93. □

---

*This article is based on an outtake from the author's new book,* Dare All Dangers, *which chronicles the 741st Tank Battalion from D-Day to VE-Day. The author wishes to express his gratitude to the late Fallschirmjäger veterans, Fritz Roppelt (Stabs Zug, FJR 9) and Gerhard Salomon (FJR 9), for their contributions of reference materials. The main source for Jackl's story was Roppelt's book,* Der Vergangenheit auf der Spur: 3.Fallsch-Jg-Division 1943–1945, *published posthumously after Roppelt's death on May 17, 1993. Go to etohistory.com for more information about Dare All Dangers.*



# *Bitter Road to* TOBRUK

**The fight for control of the vital Libyan port city became one of the most stirring chapters of World War II in North Africa. | BY MICHAEL D. HULL**

When powerful German forces stormed through the Low Countries and France was about to fall in the late spring of 1940, Great Britain faced the darkest hour in its history.

Its battered army had just been miraculously extricated from the beaches of Dunkirk but had to leave its weapons and equipment behind. The threat of invasion was imminent, and there were scant resources to stop it. Britain was alone, and a new foe lined up with the victorious Germans.

Anxious to share in their glory, Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini of Italy declared war on Britain and France on June 10. Although his people and economy were not well-prepared for war, he could call on a powerful navy and a large army. So, as well as a German attack across the narrow English Channel, the British faced another threat far from the homeland—an Italian assault on their strategic interests in the Middle East. There was nothing available to reinforce the small fraction of the British Army guarding Egypt and Sudan, and the Mediterranean Sea had now become too precarious to use.

Britain depended on control of the Mediterranean because her empire's "lifeline"—the short sea route to India, Australia, and New Zealand—ran through it. Egypt was Britain's principal base to protect the Suez Canal, but Mussolini planned to seize the strategic waterway with a pincer movement from Libya, Ethiopia, and Italian Somaliland. At the same

time, he prepared to invade Greece and secure the northern shore of the Mediterranean. Despite the fear of a cross-Channel invasion, Prime Minister Winston Churchill wisely rushed Britain's sole remaining armored division to Egypt.

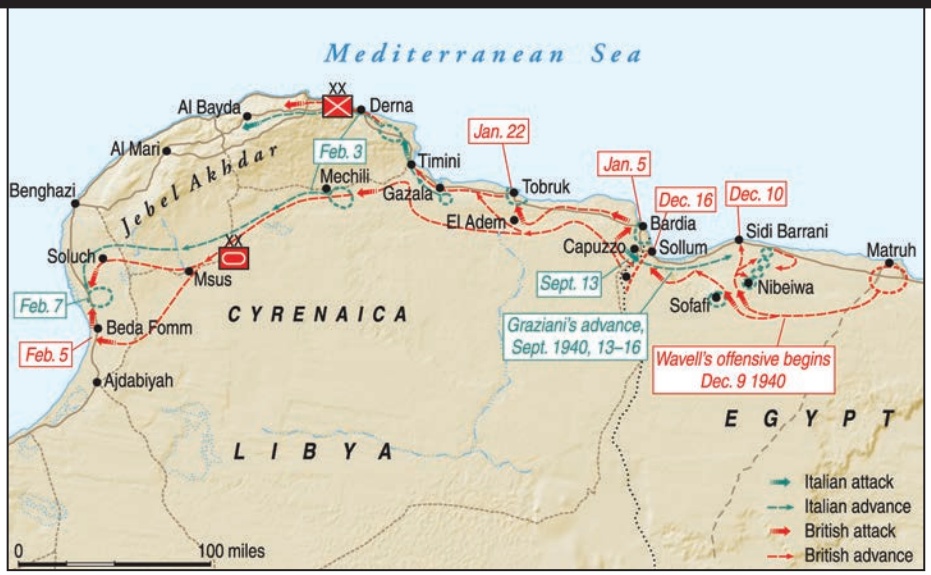
But General Sir Archibald Wavell, the gallant, scholarly British commander in the Middle East, had scant forces with which to confront the Italian threat. Besides the understrength 7th Armored Division, he had 36,000 troops in Egypt, 9,000 in Sudan, 5,500 in Kenya, 1,475 in British Somaliland, 27,500 in Palestine, 2,500 in Aden, and 800 in Cyprus. In East Africa, Italy's elegant, cultivated Duke of Aosta commanded about 110,000 men, while in Libya, Marshal Italo Balbo had 200,000 Italian and colonial troops and a sizable air force. When Aosta's plane was shot down by his own antiaircraft batteries, he was succeeded by the six-foot-tall, brutal Marshal Rodolfo "Lucky" Graziani. After sending bombers against the British bastion of Malta on June 11, 1940, Mussolini spent the summer planning operations against Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, and British Somaliland.

General Wavell, meanwhile, chose not to remain passive. A series of harassing raids were launched against Italian outposts in Libya by Lt. Col. John F.B. Combe's 11th Hussars, an armored-car regiment of the 4th Armored Brigade, and Major Gen. Sir Michael Creagh's 7th Armored Division, which was to gain fame as the "Desert Rats." A mobile column led by

**This illustration shows Britain's "desert workhorse," the Valentine Mk. III navigating the heat of North African combat in WWII. Though celebrated for its mechanical grit and reliability in the sand, the tank's 2-pounder gun eventually proved inadequate. Large numbers of "Valentines" were later shipped to the Soviet Union to bolster the Eastern Front.**

Bridgeman Images

Map © 2026 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN




**ABOVE: Under the command of Field Marshal Archibald Wavell, Operation Compass transformed a defensive stand into a stunning rout. With just two British divisions and an attached tank regiment, the force neutralized the Italian threat to Egypt, seizing the offensive to drive the enemy westward for hundreds of miles across the rugged Libyan coastline. BELOW: Heavily laden Australian infantry strike across open ground during the decisive assault on Bardia. The speed and ferocity of the push shattered Italian resistance, resulting in the capture of roughly 30,000 prisoners in a matter of hours—a staggering blow to the Italian presence in North Africa. OPPOSITE: Officers of the 11th Hussars—The original "Desert Rats" who were the eyes and ears of the famous 7th Armoured Division—seek out a sliver of shade beneath their Morris CS9 armored car during a long-range patrol in the Libyan desert. Captured in July 1940, This image from July 1940 underscores the grueling conditions faced by British reconnaissance units, for whom the sun was often as much an enemy as the opposing forces.**

Australian War Memorial

Brig. J.A. "Blood" Caunter captured the frontier stronghold of Fort Capuzzo but did not try to hold it permanently because the British wanted to keep mobile and induce the Italians to concentrate and provide targets. The raids cost the Italians 3,500 casualties, and the British just over 150.

Beginning a cautious offensive from Libya, Graziani led five divisions into Egypt on September 13, 1940. Moving at the rate of 12 miles a day, they went down the Halfaya Pass and advanced on a narrow front along the Mediterranean coast. Sparse British covering forces, including a Coldstream Guards platoon holding Sollum, the first town in British Egypt, fell back. After reaching Sidi Barrani, 50 miles inside Egypt on September 16, the Italians set up a series of widely separated, fortified camps over a 50-mile area. Wavell's forces—now two divisions strong—stood firm at Mersa Matruh, 75 miles to the east and 200 miles west of the Nile Delta. Both sides received reinforcements. Wavell gained three tank regiments, which had been rushed from England in three fast merchant ships on Churchill's initiative.

General Sir Henry "Jumbo" Wilson, the bulky, able tactical commander in Egypt, hastily drew up plans to attack the Italians, but operations were delayed when Wavell was ordered to occupy Crete and send part of his air force to counter an Italian thrust into Greece. The Italians sat in their chain of camps in Libya and Egypt for several weeks without attempting to move on, so Wavell decided to sally forth and strike at them. He planned a large-scale raid, codenamed Operation Compass, rather than a sustained offensive—a sharp punch to stun the Italians in Libya while he diverted part of his strength to push back their army in Sudan. Although there were no resources for a followup, Operation Compass—a daring assault against a force four times its size—was to have an astonishing effect.

After careful planning and raids on Italian airfields by Royal Air Force Wellington and Blenheim medium bombers, Wavell's thrust got underway on the cold night of December 7, 1940, as the Western Desert Force moved out from Mersa Matruh and headed westward across the desert. Comprising 31,000 men, 275 tanks, and 120 field guns of the 7th Armored Division, the 4th Indian Infantry Division, and the all-arms Selby Brigade, the force was commanded by bantam-sized, 51-year-old Lt. Gen. Richard N. O'Connor. A decorated veteran of the Western and Italian Fronts in World War I, he was to emerge as one of the most successful British generals of the 1939-45 conflict.

Spearheaded by 50 slow but heavily armored 26.5-ton Matilda tanks of the crack 7th Royal Tank Regiment, O'Connor's Highland and Indian infantry—some riding Bren gun carriers—slipped through a gap in the enemy's chain of camps on the night of December 8-9 and stormed the Nibeiwa camp from the rear. The garrison was taken by surprise, and 4,000 Italians were captured. The British suffered seven casualties.

The Matildas then led the way northward to swiftly seize the Italians' Tummar West and Tummar East camps, while the 7th Armored Division pushed westward to reach the coast road and get

astride the enemy's line of retreat at Buq Buq. The Desert Rats captured 14,000 retreating Italians and 88 guns. The British troops pushed on toward the Italian camps clustered around Sidi Barrani, which had been heavily shelled by Royal Navy ships. The enemy were now on the alert, and sandstorms hindered the advance, but O'Connor's force—supported now by truck-borne New Zealand infantry—seized the greater part of the Sidi Barrani position on December 10.

Some of Graziani's green-uniformed troops—such as a small rearguard at Sollum on the Egyptian-Libyan border—held firm and fought bravely, but the dispirited majority tossed away their weapons and equipment and waited patiently for their captors to hand them rations, water, and cigarettes. Then, long columns started trudging toward Cairo. At Sidi Barrani, the British took 38,000 prisoners, 73 tanks, and 237 guns. On December 16, Marshal Graziani abandoned Sollum and retreated with four divisions up the coast to take refuge in a fortress at Bardia on the coast road in northeastern Libya.

Confident that his well-entrenched 45,000 troops and 400 guns could hold out indefinitely, General Annibale "Electric Whiskers" Bergonzoli declared, "We are in Bardia, and here we stay." But General O'Connor had other ideas. Aided by RAF planes and shellfire from three Royal Navy battleships and seven destroyers, his force pressed westward as the Italians continued to surrender in droves. Great quantities of materiel fell into British hands. During a two-week pause, O'Connor's overextended force waited for reinforcements. The 4th Indian Division was ordered to Sudan, and Major Gen. I.G. Mackay's well-trained but unblooded 6th Australian Division was moved up 350 miles from the Nile Delta to join the assault on Bardia.

The attack began early on January 3, 1941, with the thunder of land and naval guns and 22 Matildas of the Royal Tank Regiment leading the way as "tin openers." Sappers cut barbed wire, lifted mines, rammed Bangalore torpedoes into pillbox slits, and slung bridges across an antitank ditch. Yelling war cries, the Australians surged forward on foot and in Bren-gun carriers as the Matildas lumbered through breaches in defense positions and fanned out. Some Italian positions fought bravely, while others surrendered quickly when they saw their tank and antitank rounds bouncing harmlessly off the Matildas' thick armor. General Mackay said that each Matilda was worth an infantry battalion to him.

As the tanks and Bren-gun carriers blasted their way through Bardia, thousands of dazed Italians crawled out of cellars and caves to surrender. General Bergonzoli took advantage of the fiery confusion to escape on foot westward to the coastal fortress of Tobruk. Resistance quickly collapsed in Bardia, and the British attackers rounded up 45,000 prisoners along with 129 tanks, 462 guns, and stockpiles of food, fuel, and water. The gallant Australians suffered 456 casualties.

Even before Bardia had fallen, General O'Connor ordered the 7th Armored Division to drive westward and isolate Tobruk before the Australians could mount an assault there. The only suitable deep-water harbor west of Alexandria, its capture was vital because the Western Desert Force was now operating at the extreme limits of logistical support. Tobruk was protected by a semicircle of sea defenses and a land perimeter of tripwire booby traps.

Backed by O'Connor's 16 remaining Matilda tanks, the Australian infantry assaulted Tobruk on January 21. Sandstorms hindered air support, and the Italian artillery fired resolutely, but the attackers broke the defenses and by nightfall

Wikimedia/public domain

Imperial War Museum

Imperial War Museum

**ABOVE: During the surrender on December 10, 1940, an Italian soldier carries his faithful companion on the long march into captivity. This weary group represents only a fraction of the staggering 130,000 Italian prisoners taken during the British offensive—a haul so vast it included 22 generals and an admiral, signaling the total collapse of the Italian 10th Army in North Africa. TOP: Outclassed and outgunned, the tanks of the elite 132nd Armored Division Ariete (The Ram) advance across the scorching North African sands. Despite the division's reputation for fierce fighting and tactical discipline, their Italian-made armor was significantly outmatched by British firepower and evolving mobile tactics, which left the Ariete crews fighting a desperate uphill battle from the start. OPPOSITE: Shrapnel and desert debris rain down on a British Matilda tank following a near miss from an Axis bomb. This chaotic scene from December 1940 captures the opening salvos of the British victory at Sidi Barrani—a triumph that ignited a grueling, three-year seesaw struggle for total supremacy in the North African theater.**

had occupied half of the Tobruk perimeter. That night, the defenders began blowing up their installations. Burning and wrecked, the fortress fell on the afternoon of January 22, yielding a bag of 30,000 prisoners, 87 tanks, 236 guns, 200 vehicles, and large quantities of materiel.

After many Australians were injured by mines and booby traps, Italians rushed to show British sappers where they were. The attackers suffered 400 casualties.

O'Connor's force continued its westward offensive through the rest of January and early February. Reinforced with speedy British medium Cruiser tanks, the battered Matildas, Bren-gun carriers, and armored cars pushed westward through sandstorms across the desert and along the coast road to isolate and overwhelm a series of Italian outposts, from Sidi Rezegh, Gazala, and Derna, all the way to Beda Fomm, El Agheila, and Benghazi on the western Libyan coast.

Boldly executed and reminiscent of General Edmund Allenby's breakthrough in Palestine in 1917, Operation Compass routed Graziani's army and crushed almost all Italian resistance in North Africa. In two months, the Western Desert Force had advanced 400 miles, destroyed 400 tanks, 1,292 artillery pieces, and bagged 130,000 prisoners. At the cost of 476 dead and 1,225 wounded, the WDF had routed an army five times its number, enabling General O'Connor to signal Wavell, "Fox killed in the open." Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden exulted to Churchill, "If I may debase a golden phrase, 'never has so much been surrendered by so many to so few.'"

Without delay, the Royal Navy began to clear the Tobruk harbor of wrecks and make it usable

Australian War Memorial

so that O'Connor would no longer have to wait for all his supplies to be brought overland from the Nile Delta.

For the British people, bombed almost daily by the Germans and tested by a series of defeats, General O'Connor provided a much-needed morale boost. A delighted Churchill said, "Victory sparkled in the Libyan Desert, and across the Atlantic the great republic drew ever nearer to her duty and our aid." But the euphoria was soon short-lived. The Germans planned to intervene in the Middle East, and a different kind of fox was about to arrive in North Africa.

After receiving a telegram from the prime minister on February 12, 1941, Wavell halted O'Connor's offensive at the frontier of Tripolitania so that troops could be redirected to the defense of Greece, which ended with another Dunkirk. A strategic opportunity was lost in not pushing on to Tripoli, and the British were about to be confronted by a formidable foe and lose their gains during two years of seesaw struggles in North Africa.

On February 6, a young German general was summoned to Berlin by Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler and told to lead a small mechanized force—the 5th Light and the 15th Panzer Divisions—to Tripoli. He was Erwin Rommel, who had ably commanded the 7th Panzer Division in the 1940 French campaign. His orders were to recapture Benghazi and Cyrenaica, the eastern region of Libya. He flew to Tripoli on February 12, followed two days later by the first units, the nucleus of his Afrika Korps.

Rommel had been ordered not to start an offensive until his forces were up to strength. The tank regiment of the 5th Light Division did not reach Tripoli until March 11, but the audacious, resourceful general who would come to be known as the "Desert Fox" was eager to take the initiative against the overextended and depleted British forces. His timing was right. The Desert Rats were resting and refitting in Egypt, the 6th Australian Division had been sent to Greece, and Wavell's replacement formations were inexperienced and short of equipment.

While waiting for more men, armor, and guns, Rommel rushed dummy tanks mounted on Volkswagen cars to the front in order to deceive the British about his strength. Disregarding higher orders to wait until the end of May, he decided to push on. He successfully occupied the El Agheila bottleneck and advanced on April 2 with 50 panzers followed by two new Italian divisions. The British fell back hastily in confusion as Rommel's mechanized columns rumbled northward and eastward.

The fast-moving Germans rolled along the coast road toward Barce and Derna after bursting into Benghazi, which the British evacuated on April 3. During the retreat, General O'Connor, who had been given a rest, was sent up to advise his untried successor, Lt. Gen. Philip Neame. But their unescorted staff car ran into the rear of a German spearhead group on the night of April 6, and both officers were captured by a motorcycle patrol.

One of Rommel's panzer columns captured inland fuel dumps and burst out onto the coastal plain at Gazala, and another column made a wide flanking movement to try and capture British units leaving Cyrenaica. Pushing on relentlessly eastward, Rommel's increasing forces seized Bardia on April 11 and Sollum four days later. The British were in full retreat.

But the strategic port of Tobruk was bypassed in the enemy advance. As long as it remained in British hands, Rommel's offensive was jeopardized. In a waterfront hotel there on April 8, General Wavell told a group of senior officers simply, "Tobruk must be held." It would not be easy, he warned. Rommel would make every effort to drive the defenders into the sea, and all reinforcements and supplies would have to be brought in by ship under fire from German planes. Pointing out on a map the few remaining British units scattered across 450 miles of arid, scrubby desert, Wavell told the officers dryly, "There is nothing between you and Cairo."

Rommel was aware of this. As he pushed eastward, the British stronghold of Tobruk posed a serious threat to his flank and rear, and its seizure became a seven-month obsession. The Desert Fox told one of his divisional commanders, "We must attack Tobruk with everything we have, before Tommy has time to dig in." But Tommy had already dug in.

After withdrawing from Derna to escape Rommel's net, the 9th Australian Division had moved into Tobruk to reinforce the British and Indian Army units there. The 23,000-man gar-

rison was braced behind two old Italian inner defense perimeters that embraced a 30-foot antitank ditch, 70 strongpoints, and a minefield crisscrossed with barbed wire. The 30-mile outer perimeter, called the Red Line, was studded with concrete dugouts manned by machine-gun and Bren-gun crews. Elsewhere in the 220-square-mile Tobruk enclave were Matilda tanks, 25-pounder field guns, and antiaircraft batteries.

The garrison commander was Major Gen. Leslie J. Morshead, leader of the 9th Division and a resolute disciplinarian known to his troops as "Ming the Merciless," after the villain in the popular *Flash Gordon* comic strips and serials. A former school teacher in Sydney, he was as tenacious as Rommel. "There'll be no Dunkirk here," he told his staff. "If we should have to get out, we shall fight our way out. There is to be no surrender and no retreat."

Rommel started a drive to isolate Tobruk on April 11 with reconnaissance probes against the perimeter by panzer and infantry units. They were beaten off by artillery. Next, he decided to launch an armored assault on the southern perimeter in the early hours of April 14, Easter Monday. Expecting a swift victory, he wrote to his wife, Lucie, early that day, "Dear Lu, today may well see the end of the Battle of Tobruk."

At 5:20 a.m., supported by artillery and screaming Stuka dive bombers, panzers clanked through a gap torn in the southern perimeter wire. Infantry followed. Australians huddling in the strongpoints let the tanks pass before loosing a murderous fire from the rear. Moving on until the leading battalion was two miles inside the perimeter, the panzers suddenly found themselves caught in a gauntlet of heavy fire, with British and Australian howitzers blasting both flanks at a range of 600 yards. Joining in the barrage were two-pounder antitank guns and captured Italian coastal guns.

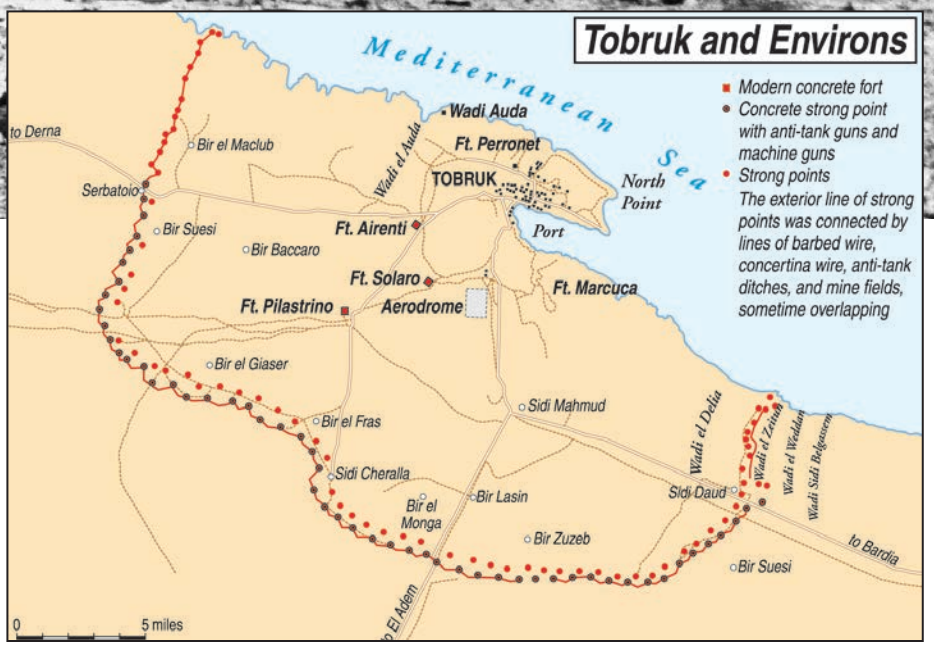
The panzers milled around in confusion. One hit sheared off the turret of a panzer, a staff car was blown to bits, and a German machine-gun battalion suffered 75 percent casualties. The Allied gunners destroyed 16 out of 38 panzers, and the rest were forced to withdraw from the trap. One enemy tank commander later described the action as a "witches' cauldron," and said, "We were lucky to escape alive." A furious Rommel stormed that his officers "lacked resolution."

Another assault on Tobruk was tried on April 16. Rommel took personal command and sent the Italian Ariete Armored Division and an Italian infantry division against the western perimeter. The Italian tanks took refuge in a wadi, and Rommel could not induce their commanders to attack. The infantry took the brunt of an Australian assault and swiftly surrendered. A whole company gave up to a British scout car crew, and a total of 800 Italians were bagged. The Ariete Division lost 90 percent of its tanks to breakdowns. Rommel called off the attack the following day. He still believed that Tobruk could be taken, but he was underestimating the spirit of its defenders.

Twenty-man patrols sneaked out from Tobruk when darkness fell to harass the enemy. An entire battalion of a crack Italian Bersaglieri rifle regiment was captured one night, and an Indian Army patrol returned on another night with two small sacks containing 32 human ears. The men guarding the perimeters stayed underground in daytime to escape the attention of German snipers, and they swept away footprints outside their camouflaged dugouts so that Luftwaffe air crews would not see the tracks.

Besides the Germans and Italians, the Tobruk defenders battled heat, dust, lice, flies, dysentery, and fleas. "The desert fleas are famous," reported a Royal Artillery battery sergeant, "and ours were obviously in the pay of the enemy. They marched up and down our twitching bodies until we thought we would go crazy." After the defenders had been dubbed "rats in a trap" by Nazi propaganda, they started calling themselves the "Rats of Tobruk." The name soon resounded in headlines throughout the British Empire.

Strafed and bombed regularly by the Luftwaffe, the soldiers stood firm in Tobruk. They slept and took shelter in stone houses, tunnels that had been dug by the Italians, and makeshift bunkers. Fresh




**ABOVE: A map of Australian Major General Leslie Morshead's masterful defensive strategy for the Tobruk perimeter. Morshead carved the 32-mile boundary into three distinct sectors, each manned by one of the three infantry brigades of his 9th Division. This formidable defensive zone reached a depth of 11 miles, creating a layered "fortress" that would famously defy Field Marshal Rommel for months. TOP: A diverse column of German vehicles crosses the blistering North African desert during the 1941 campaign. This snapshot of Rommel's Afrika Korps highlights the eclectic nature of desert warfare: from a captured British Universal Carrier on the far left to an Sd.Kfz. 251/3 armored half-track, a rugged VW Kübelwagen, nimble motorcycles with sidecars, and an Einheits-PKW staff car. In the desert, if it had wheels or tracks and still ran, someone would make use of it. The Universal Carrier or "Bren Gun Carrier" was often converted into a *Beutepanzer* ("booty tank") repainted with oversized *Balkenkreuz* ("German crosses") to help prevent them from being destroyed by their own antitank gunners.**

food was sparse, but vitamin tablets were issued. Water was rationed to six pints a day. Some drinking water was produced in stills made from old gasoline cans, but the taste was sulfurous. The troops subsisted mainly on the old British Army standby of bully beef, along with canned stew and fruit, and rocky army biscuits.

Morale remained high despite boredom and the dust that blew almost constantly through the town. When not manning their guns, the defenders staged variety shows in an improvised theater, gambled, and listened nightly to BBC news broadcasts and the famous chimes of Big Ben from London, and to Lale Andersen's haunting *Lili Marlene*. The German soldiers' favorite ballad became the unofficial anthem of all desert soldiers.

After receiving panzer reinforcements, General Rommel hastily planned a third attack on the stronghold, his heaviest yet. At 6:30 p.m. on April 30, 1941, Stukas and artillery pounded the Allied positions while tank and grenadier units rushed the southwestern corner of the Tobruk enclave. Although British intelligence had forewarned of the operation, the enemy managed to gain a toehold on the outer defense lines and push two miles inside the perimeter. But Rommel's losses were again heavy.

The invaders failed to eliminate several outposts manned by Australian troops, who fought, Rommel reported, "with remarkable tenacity." He noted, "Even their wounded went on defending themselves and stayed in the fight to their last breath." The action raged on through the night, and the Allied strongpoints were still firing the following morning. As they harassed the enemy from behind, British units retaliated with tank and 25-pounder salvoes. Dust storms hampered tactical coordination on both sides.

The seesaw struggle continued for three days until Rommel called off the operation on May 4. It had been his most costly attack, and the Afrika Korps had lost more than 1,000 men. His troops retained a two-mile-deep salient near Fort Pilastrino for the rest of the siege. Lt. Gen. Friedrich Paulus, who had been sent by the Army High Command to observe the campaign, was shocked by the casualties and reported that

National Archives

the German troops were "fighting in conditions that are inhuman and intolerable." He told Rommel that there was no chance of capturing the British stronghold.

The failure to seize Tobruk—the forward base Rommel sorely needed for a proposed thrust into Egypt—was the Wehrmacht's first major reverse of the war. The Desert Fox received orders from Berlin forbidding him to attack Tobruk again or from advancing further. He was told to hold his position and conserve his strength. The hard-driving general bitterly resented waging a defensive campaign.

Heartened by Rommel's unexpected setback, British troops pushed out from their defensive line in western Egypt and drove the Germans and Italians back toward the strategic Halfaya Pass near Sollum. The British and Commonwealth forces destroyed about 300 German tanks and inflicted 38,000 casualties (twice those of the Allies). They had been reinforced by the arrival of a fast convoy carrying almost 300 tanks, on the orders of Prime Minister Churchill.

In fierce fighting, the British cleared the enemy from "Hellfire Pass," but were then driven off themselves by panzers and the fire of deadly 88mm flak guns. Both sides suffered heavy losses. The Afrika Korps was able to recapture most of the territory gained by O'Connor the previous year, but Tobruk held out.

While Wavell's costly Operations Brevity and Battleaxe kept the Afrika Korps occupied during May and June 1941, the Tobruk garrison enjoyed a brief lull. But General Morshead faced problems. His brigades had lost 823 men killed, 2,214 wounded, and about 700 captured in the April fighting. Believing that the "Diggers" had done enough, the government in Canberra demanded that its remaining troops pull out and rejoin other Australian units in Egypt.

So, in daring night operations carried out under the noses of the enemy, most of the garrison was replaced by a total of 34,000 fresh British, Indian, South African, and Polish troops. Morshead's division was replaced by the newly-formed British 70th Infantry Division, and only one Australian battalion was left within the perimeter. Getting the Aussies out and their replacements in under the constant threat of air strikes and U-boat attacks involved a high risk for the hard-pressed Royal Navy, and Admiral Sir Andrew "ABC" Cunningham, commander of the Mediterranean Fleet, protested.

He rose to the challenge, nevertheless, and the operation was carried out on nine moonless nights between mid-August and late October. Along with the infantry, British ships ferried in an armored brigade and more than 60 tanks, most of them Matildas. The transports berthed in darkness between the rusting hulks of Italian vessels in the harbor, were swiftly unloaded and were on their way back to Alexandria or Mersa Matruh within the hour. Seven thousand wounded and 7,000 prisoners were taken out of Tobruk, now commanded by the gallant but inexperienced South African Major Gen. Hendrik B. Klopper.

After four months of relative calm, the Germans started increasing their attacks on the stronghold. This time, the defenders faced the scourge of 88mm flak guns. Originally used as an anti-aircraft gun, the versatile 88 proved devastating as an artillery and antitank weapon. "It could go through all our tanks like a knife through butter," reported one British soldier.

Tobruk was hammered by 100 Stukas at the beginning of September 1941, and panzer assaults

Imperial War Museum

National Archives

**ABOVE: A plume of dust and smoke rises as the German Luftwaffe launches yet another coordinated strike on the besieged port of Tobruk. The ultimate symbol of the German Blitzkrieg, the Junkers Ju 87 or "Stuka" (from *Sturzkampfflugzeug*) strafed and bombed the Allied perimeter repeatedly in an effort to shatter the garrison's resolve and clear a path for Rommel's ground assault. TOP: Four Australian soldiers take cover within the jagged confines of an anti-tank ditch, scanning for movement along the strategic El Adem road. Operating on the gritty outskirts of Tobruk, these patrols were the lifeblood of the garrison's defense—constantly monitoring the perimeter to ensure the "Desert Fox" could find no weakness in their lines. OPPOSITE: Afrika Korps artillerymen remain poised for the signal to unleash their heavy field gun on the defenders of Tobruk. The 1941 siege was a grueling stalemate where long-range bombardment was a daily reality for the Australian "Rats" entrenched below.**

were beaten off through October, the sixth month of the siege. On November 17, heavy rains lashed the Western Desert, turning the sands into a sea of mud as Lt. Gen. Sir Alan Cunningham's newly-formed British Eighth Army churned forward in Operation Crusader. The ambitious plan was aimed at luring Rommel's armor into battle and relieving Tobruk.

On the following day, Royal Tank Corps formations clashed in driving rain with panzer elements around Sidi Rezegh, 10 miles southeast of the Tobruk perimeter. Eventually, after bitter fighting with heavy losses on both sides, hardy New Zealand infantrymen with fixed bayonets linked up with Matildas from Tobruk that had battered through the German lines. With highland bagpipes skirling, relieving troops marched into Tobruk on December 10. On the following day, Churchill rose in the House of Commons and triumphantly announced, "The enemy, who has fought with the utmost stubbornness and enterprise, has paid the price of his valor, and it may well be that the second phase of the Battle of Libya will gather more easily the fruits of the first than has been our experience, so far." Through the rest of December 1941, the Afrika Korps withdrew westward, skillfully thwarting each British outflanking movement.

But the determined Rommel was far from being finished. After a five-month lull during which his German and Italian forces were further built up, he launched another offensive on May 26, 1942. Panzers and infantry regiments hit the Gazala Line, swung south around Bir Hacheim, valiantly defended by dynamic General Marie-Pierre Koenig's 1st Free French Brigade, and battled with British Guards Brigade and armored units in the "Cauldron," an area so called because of its relentless heat and the intensity of the action there.

After inflicting heavy losses in men and armor on the British, the Afrika Korps panzers clanked out of the Cauldron, swept northward, and headed for Tobruk. After bombings and fierce raids by Stukas in the early hours of June 20, 1942, Rommel's tanks and infantry blasted their way into the stronghold. They were through the main defense positions by the afternoon and reached the harbor by the evening. The British, Indian, and South African defenders had fought bravely, but, outgunned and

*Continued on page 98*

BY DAVID H. LIPPMAN

# African-American GIs volunteered for front-line duty in 1945 as the need for replacement troops forced integration.

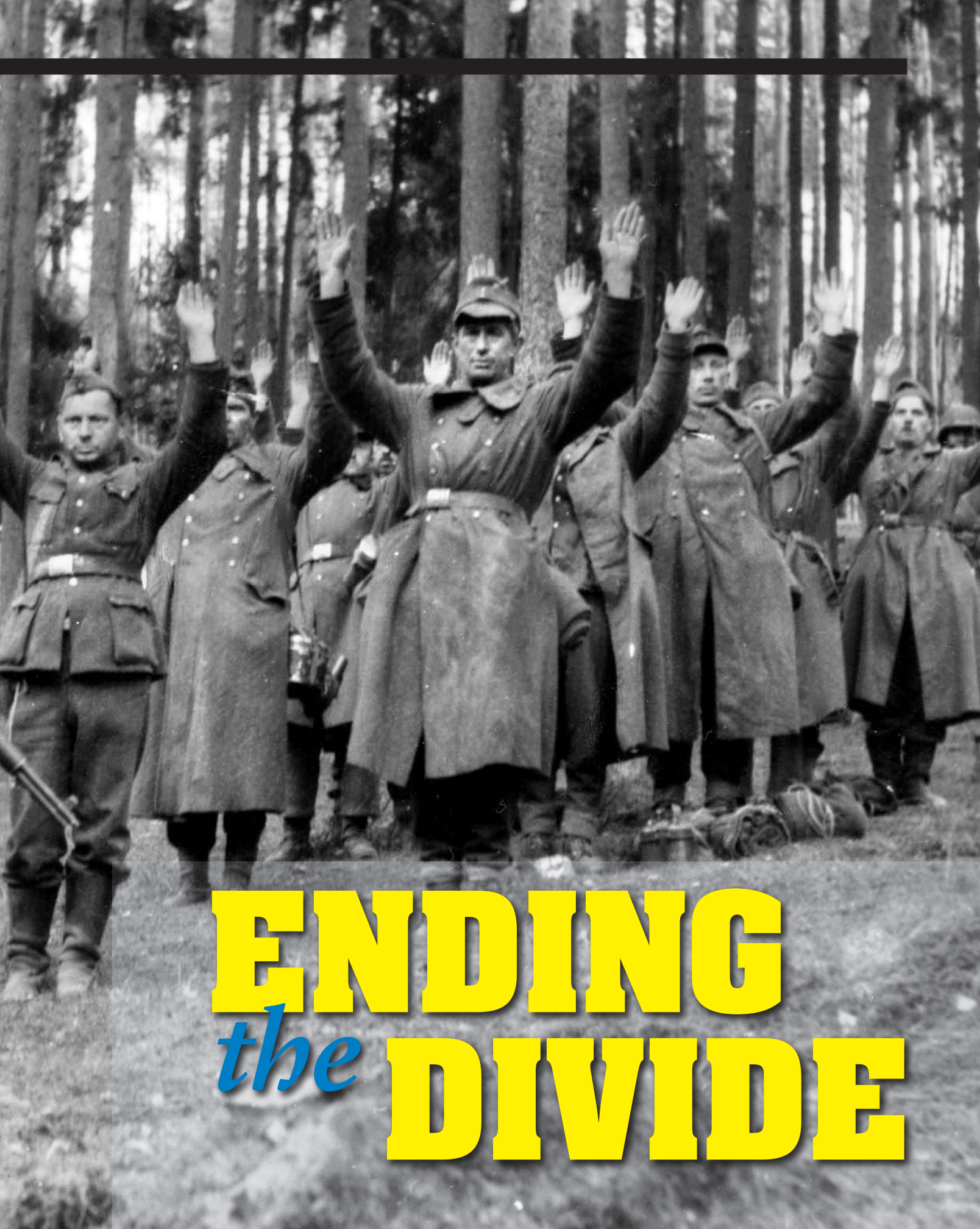
Three German armies surprised the Allies by breaking across the Our River and storming into the Ardennes on December 16, 1944. The Nazi objective was to drive across the woody and hilly terrain, cross the Meuse River, and seize the major port of Antwerp. Doing so would cut the Allies in two, and perhaps force Britain out of the war. Hitler expected the Allies would argue about the best way to contain the German offensive, originally codenamed *Herbstnebel* (Autumn Mist), but changed at the very last minute to *Wacht Am Rhein*.

As Hitler's panzers thundered across the roads, they faced a determined, but undersupplied American opposition. Factories back in the states had increased production, but more and more of it was going to the Pacific, to feed Gen. Douglas MacArthur's liberation of the Philippines. The U.S. Navy had just fought the greatest battle in history at Leyte Gulf and the Allied strategic bombing offensive needed ordnance and aircraft over two continents: Europe and Asia. Vast amounts of American arms went "Over the Hump" to keep China's Chiang Kai-Shek in the war. Even more went to the British, to be doled out to smaller Allied nations, including forces in exile, the Dutch, Czechs, Greeks, and Poles.

The Americans in Europe had to improvise to keep going. Antwerp's opening eased

**A 12th Armored Division GI stands guard over a group of surrendering Wehrmacht soldiers in April 1945. Manpower shortages forced the U.S. Army to retrain soldiers in service units—including African-Americans—as combat riflemen in 1945.**

National Archives



# ENDING *the* DIVIDE

a lot of sweat and provided gasoline. But it didn't provide ammunition. Lt. Gen. George S. Patton's 3rd Army re-opened an old French artillery factory, engineers worked with the tools, and had it producing 105mm and 155mm shells.

However, measures like these could not help address the biggest problem of manpower shortages. The 71st and 90th Divisions were headed for the Pacific where the casualty rate was appalling.

On December 8, 1944, a week before the Ardennes Offensive, the American high command estimated that there would be an overall deficiency of more than 23,000 riflemen by the end of the month—a serious shortage, exacerbated by the Germans attack.

The solution came from the imperious Lt. Gen. John C.H. ("Jesus Christ Himself") Lee—to release and train more than 20,000 infantry riflemen from his Communications Zone (Com Z) units, to serve up the line in platoons alongside existing outfits. But the fact that some of Com Z's proposed combat infantrymen were African-American would soon become a problem.

Black soldiers, both free and enslaved, had fought for the American colonies from as far back as Queen Anne's War (1702–1713) up to and including the Revolutionary War—where some fought for the British. Though the Continental Army was largely integrated, the first Black military regiment in U.S. history was the 1st Rhode Island Regiment (1778). During the Civil War, the 1st Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry was established in 1862, followed by the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment in 1863. Established by Congress in 1866, the African-American 9th and 10th Cavalry and 24th and 25th Infantry—the famed "Buffalo Soldiers"—saw combat action against Native Americans. These regiments also fought hard in the Spanish-American War and in General John J. Pershing's Punitive Expedition in Mexico in 1916. For leading African-American troops, Pershing gained the nickname, "Black Jack" Pershing.

Two African-American divisions went to France in 1918, and the 92nd Division was turned over to the French, along with its soon-to-be-legendary "Harlem Hellfighters," the 369th Infantry. In horizon bleu, they fought so well for the French, Pershing asked to get them back. The French refused. Interestingly, the 369th is now a transportation battalion, befitting a unit drawn from New York City's trucking and auto repair industries, but it maintains its traditions, and is still called the "Harlem Hellfighters."

After the Great War, most African-American troops went back to service units—pick-and-shovel engineer battalions, stevedore units, and transportation companies, driving supplies at top speed from the Normandy Beaches to the front lines along the legendary "Red Ball Express."

There were some African-American combat units, such as the 761st "Black Panthers" Tank Battalion under Patton and the 969th Artillery Battalion, which helped defend Bastogne. In Italy, there was the 92nd Infantry Division, which included the 442nd Infantry Regiment, mainly composed of second-generation American soldiers of Japanese ancestry (*Nisei*). The Army Air Force had the legendary Tuskegee Airmen. All served under white officers, including the 92nd, which also suffered from the incompetent Maj. Gen. Ned Almond, who would make things worse in Korea.

Now Lee made an astonishing proposal. 20,000 of his white men would be trained as infantry, along with would 3,000 of his Black men. Some of the Black troops would have to take demotions for the honor of serving in frontline units alongside white men.

Lee's proposal went up the chain of command to Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, who objected to it as being against War Department policy of maintaining segregation. Eisenhower directed modifications to Lee's plan. Soldiers would have the opportunity to volunteer without regard to color or race, but they would be "suitably incorporated" into their gaining units.

This plan disintegrated on December 26, at the height of the Battle of the Bulge, when

Both: National Archives

**ABOVE: Soldiers from Company E, 25th Infantry Regiment, 93rd Division, are on high alert as they reconnoiter Japanese territory on the Pacific island of Bougainville in the Solomons. Taken in May 1944, this photograph of the all-Black 93rd is among the first of African-American ground combat troops in the South Pacific. OPPOSITE: African-American GIs, like this burial detail recovering a victim of the Malmedy Massacre (December 17, 1944) in January 1945, were typically relegated to Black service units—pick-and-shovel engineer battalions, stevedore units, and transportation companies—during much of World War II.**

there was a desperate need for combat infantrymen, regardless of melanin content. Ike authorized Lee to put out the following message:

1. *The Supreme Commander desires to destroy the enemy forces and end hostilities in this theater without delay. Every available weapon at our disposal must be brought to bear upon the enemy. To this end the Commanding General, Com Z, is happy to offer to a limited number of colored troops who have had infantry training, the privilege of joining our veteran units at the front to deliver the knockout blow. The men selected are to be in the grades of Private First Class and Private. Non-commissioned officers may accept reduction in order to take advantage of this opportunity. The men selected are to be given a refresher course with emphasis on weapon training.*
2. *The Commanding General makes a special appeal to you. It is planned to assign you without regard to color or race to the units where assistance is most needed, and give you the opportunity of fighting shoulder to shoulder to bring about victory. Your comrades at the front are anxious to share the glory of victory with you. Your relatives and friends everywhere have been urging that you be granted this privilege. The Supreme Commander, your Commanding General, and other veteran officers who have served with you are confident that many of you will take advantage of this opportunity and carry on in keeping with the glorious record of our colored troops in our former wars.*
3. *This letter is to be read confidentially to the troops immediately upon its receipt and made available in Orderly Rooms. Every assistance must be promptly given qualified men to volunteer for this service.*

Within two days, the formal plan went out to commanders. Personnel with the highest qualifications would get first priority and no man with an Army General Classification Test score lower than Grade IV would be taken. The number of volunteers would be reported by January 3, 1945, so that quotas could be allocated to units. The men selected were to report to the 16th Reinforcement Depot at Compiegne not later than January 10, 1945.

The plan called for mixing white and Black troops, not on a quota, but as individuals fitted in where needed.

Even so, Ike's top generals were nervous about the move. His Chief of Staff, Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, wrote that assigning African-American troops "without regard to color or race to the units where assistance is most needed, and give you the opportunity of fighting shoulder to shoulder to bring about victory" was a clear invitation to embarrassment for the War Department. Failing to convince Lee that he should change his letter, he put the matter to Eisenhower, writing: "Although I am now somewhat out of touch with the War Department's Negro policy, I did, as you know, handle this during the time I was with General Marshall. Unless there has been a radical change, the sentence which I have marked in the attached circular letter will place the War Department in very grave difficulties. It is inevitable that this statement will get out, and equally inevitable that the result will be that every Negro organization, pressure group and newspaper will take the attitude that, while the War Department segregates colored troops into organizations of their own against the desires and

Both: National Archives

pleas of all the Negro race, the Army is perfectly willing to put them in the front lines mixed in units with white soldiers, and have them do battle when an emergency arises. Two years ago, I would have considered the marked statement the most dangerous thing that I had ever seen in regard to negro relations. I have talked with Lee about it, and he can't see this at all. He believes that it is right that colored and white soldiers should be mixed in the same company. With this belief I do not argue, but the War Department policy is different. Since I am convinced that this circular letter will have the most serious repercussions in the United States, I believe that it is our duty to draw the War Department's attention to the fact that this statement has been made, to give them warning as to what may happen and any facts which they may use to counter the pressure which will undoubtedly be placed on them. Further, I recommend most strongly that Communications Zone not be permitted to issue any general circulars relating to negro policy until I have had a chance to see them. This is because I know more about the War Department's and General Marshall's difficulties with the Negro question than any other man in this theater, including General B. O. Davis whom Lee consulted in the matter—and I say this with all due modesty."

"B.O. Davis" was Brigadier General Benjamin O. Davis, the highest-ranking African-American in the Army, and the advisor on their morale and welfare. Despite his high rank, Davis had trouble finding a coffee shop in Washington, D.C., that would serve him.

Ike and Lee came up with a new directive, which read:

1. *The Supreme Commander desires to destroy the enemy forces and end hostilities in this theater without delay. Every available weapon at our disposal must be brought to bear upon the enemy. To this end the Theater Commander has directed the Communications Zone Commander to make the greatest possible use of limited-service men within service units and to survey our entire organization in an effort to produce able bodied men for the front lines. This process of selection has been going on for some time but it is entirely possible that many men themselves, desiring to volunteer for front line service, may be able to point out methods in which they can be replaced in their present jobs. Consequently, Commanders of all grades will receive voluntary applications for transfer to the Infantry and forward them to higher authority with recommendations for appropriate type of replacement. This opportunity to volunteer will be extended to all soldiers without regard to color or race, but preference will normally be given to individuals who have had some basic training in Infantry. Normally, also, transfers will be limited to the grade of Private and Private First Class unless a noncommissioned officer requests a reduction.*

2. *In the event that the number of suitable Negro volunteers exceeds the replacement needs of Negro combat units, these men will be suitably incorporated in other organizations so that their service and their fighting spirit may be efficiently utilized.*
3. *This letter may be read confidentially to the troops and made available in Orderly Rooms. Every assistance must be promptly given qualified men who volunteer for this service.*

As it turned out, the African-American troops were not needed for the Battle of the Bulge because the Germans were on the run by the middle of January, despite heavy American casualties. But they would be needed as replacements for the continued offensive, and the plan went ahead. In February 1945, the U.S. 9th Army was enduring a struggle for the Roer River, and Patton's tanks were held up in the Saar. Both generals needed more men.

The U.S. Army's official history on the subject, "The Employment of Negro Troops," by Prof. and former Army Maj. Ulysses Lee, wrote that "4,562 Negro troops had volunteered, many of the noncommissioned officers among them taking reductions in rank to do so. The first 2,800 reported to the Ground Force Reinforcement Command in January and early February, after which the flow of volunteers was stopped. The service units from which these men came parallelled closely the distribution of Negroes by branch: 38 percent came from engineer units, 29 percent from quartermaster, 26 percent from transportation, 3 percent from signal, 2 percent from ordnance, and the remaining 2 percent from units of other branches. 63 percent had formerly had one of the six following military occupational specialties, in order of frequency: truck driver, duty soldier, longshoreman, basic, construction foreman, and cargo checker. Like other volunteers, they were somewhat younger than average—10 percent of the Negro riflemen were 30 years old or older as compared with 20 percent of white riflemen. They had somewhat better educational backgrounds and test scores than the average for Negro soldiers in the European theater but the differences between them and other Negro troops in these respects were not so great as the differences between them and the average white troops. Of the white riflemen in the ETO, 41 percent were high school graduates and 71 percent were in AGCT classes I, II, and III; of the Negro infantry reinforcements, 22 percent were high school graduates and 29 percent were in classes I, II, and III; of all Negroes in ETO, 18 percent were high school graduates and 17 percent were in Classes I, II, and III. The important difference between these soldiers and other Negro troops was, therefore, that they had volunteered on the basis of a call to duty under circumstances unusual to their former Army experience. Only their motivation and their method of employment set them off sharply from other Negro troops. Retraining was conducted at the 16th Reinforcement Depot at Compiegne, which had been retraining individuals as riflemen since November. The Negro trainees were organized into the 47th Reinforcement Battalion, 5th Retraining Regiment, under the command of Col. Alexander George. According to the depot staff, the Negro volunteers approached their work with a will. There were proportionately fewer absentees and fewer disciplinary problems among the Negro trainees than among the white soldiers being retrained as infantrymen."

**ABOVE: First Lieutenant Lawrence D. Spencer of the African-American 92nd Division, interviews a German prisoner in Italy in September 1944. The German was captured by patrol from the 92nd that had crossed the Arno River to probe the Gothic Line. OPPOSITE: On November 9, 1944, an M4 Sherman tank from the 761st Separate Tank Battalion crosses a Bailey Bridge in the village of Vic-Sur-Seille, France. The African-American tankers, better known as the "Black Panthers," landed at Normandy in October 1944 and endured 183 straight days in combat while liberating some 30 towns on their drive into Germany with Patton's Third Army. This was their second day of combat in a month where they would lose 22 men killed in action. Ultimately, the men of the battalion received 11 Silver Stars, 69 Bronze Stars and some 300 Purple Hearts, in addition to the Presidential Unit Citation in 1978.**

Overall responsibility for training the African-American men went to Gen. Ben Lear, who cut a colorful figure. Canadian-born, the bespectacled Lear had risen from enlisted man to earn general's stars. He competed in the 1912 Olympics in the equestrian events. He was most noted for the "Yoo Hoo" incident of July 6th, 1941. Lear was playing golf at a

country club in Memphis that day, in civilian clothes, when a convoy of 80 U.S. Army trucks carrying men of the 110th Quartermaster Regiment, 35th Infantry Division, rolled past. The troops in the passing trucks subjected a group of women in shorts to a series of whistles and "lewd and obscene" catcalls.

Lear had the convoy stopped, telling their officers that their men's conduct was unacceptable and that they had disgraced the Army. Lear's punishment was to make every one of the 350 men in the convoy march 15 miles of the 45-mile trip back to Camp Joseph T. Robinson, Arkansas, in three five-mile sections. Many men straggled and a number collapsed as the mercury neared 100. There was a storm of public criticism of Lear's actions from people who felt that the soldiers had been harshly and collectively punished when many had done nothing wrong. The commander of the 35th Division, Maj. Gen. Ralph E. Truman, was well-connected politically, his cousin being Senator Harry S. Truman, and some Congressmen called for Lear to be retired. However, in the eyes of the Army, the men's actions were not a case of sexual harassment, but of indiscipline, and no action was taken against Lear.

The derogatory nickname "Yoo-Hoo" stuck, but Lear did not. He was retired in 1943, but then brought back to the colors because of all the manpower shortages. His tough demeanor seemed to make him perfect to be Deputy Theater Commander and to oversee the training job.

Lee told Lear: "(Eisenhower) now desires that these colored riflemen reinforcements have their training completed as members of Infantry rifle platoons familiar with the Infantry rifle

National Archives

platoon weapons." These platoons would be made available to army commanders who would then provide platoon leaders, platoon sergeants, and, if necessary, squad leaders. "It is my feeling," General Lee said, "that we should afford the volunteers the full opportunity for Infantry riflemen service. Therefore, we should not assign them as Tank or Artillery reinforcements unless they express such preference. To do otherwise would be breaking faith, in my opinion."

The Replacement Command came up with enough men to create 45 to 47 training platoons, and Lear went straight to work. By March 1, as the Americans approached Germany's last barrier—the Rhine River—the training had graduated the first 2,253 men, organized into 37 platoons. Twenty-four went to Gen. Omar Bradley's 12th Army Group and the rest to Lt. Gen. Jacob Devers' 6th Army Group.

The official history reports: "A second group was distributed later, 12 platoons going to 12th Army Group and four to 6th Army Group. The divisions sent one platoon leader and one sergeant to meet each platoon at the 16th Depot. The possibility of receiving needed replacements, especially in early March when the spring offensive and the crossing of the Rhine were in the offing, was readily accepted by most divisions. Army group and army commanders were given discretion in the use of the platoons. They could be assigned to divisions as platoons or they could be assigned in larger groupings. They could later be grouped into units as large as a battalion if so desired."

**At the 47th Reinforcement Depot in Noyon, France, Lieutenant Colonel Nolan Troxell lectures on tactics of the infantry to a group of African-American GIs who have volunteered to leave service units for front-line combat.**

With the platoons distributed, they went to work. In the 12th Army Group, platoons were assigned to divisions in groups of three and the divisions, retaining them as platoons, usually assigned one to each regiment.

That done, each regiment, in turn, selected a company to which the units went as a fourth rifle platoon. In most divisions, the platoons were given additional training periods of varying lengths before commitment. In the divisions headed across the legendary Remagen Bridge, the platoons arrived just in time for immediate employment.

"Where arrival of the Negro platoons coincided with a period of heavy fighting, their welcome as fresh replacements was warmer than in units that were then engaged in training only. But divisional training periods were valuable both to the platoons and to the divisions' attitude toward accepting them," the Official History noted.

"They had had some sort of training before they joined us," Brig. Gen. Charles Lanham, the Assistant Division Commander of the 104th Infantry Division explained, "but we wanted to make sure they knew all the tricks of infantry fighting. We assigned our best combat leaders as instructors. I watched those lads train and if ever men were in dead earnest, they were."

In some cases, the platoons were given a very serious training on the division's achievements, the division patch, and personal welcomes by the division or assistant division commander.

The theory worked, as the Official History noted: "In most instances, the platoons quickly identified themselves with the more than three dozen battalions and companies to which they were distributed. They were employed just as any other platoon within their companies, a point frequently noted by their regiments. Some went to veteran regiments which, like those of the 1st and 9th Divisions, had fought in Europe and Africa. Others went to newer units like the 12th and 14th Armored Divisions, and the 69th, 78th, 99th, and 104th Infantry Divisions."

Those assigned to the 14th Armored would have a brief but shocking war as they would liberate subcamps of the notorious Dachau concentration camp.

Despite the negative predictions of the War Department and American racists, the integrated platoons fought well.

Illustrating this point, two African American volunteers in the 9th Infantry Division earned major decorations for gallantry in less than six weeks of combat. Pfc. Jack Thomas, in the fifth platoon of E Company, 60th Infantry Regiment, led his squad in an attack against a strongly defended German roadblock, supported by a tank. He lobbed two grenades, wounding several Germans, before picking up the bazooka dropped by a wounded soldier and immobilizing the tank. He then picked up a wounded comrade and carried him to safety amid intense enemy small arms fire. For this action, he earned the Distinguished Service Cross. Another fifth platoon member, Pfc. Edgar E. Zeno of G Company, 39th Infantry Regiment, was awarded the Silver Star after assaulting an enemy position in the face of heavy machine-gun fire, killing seven German soldiers and wounding three more.

Senior officers also paid tribute to their African-American soldiers. The Official History notes that "at the close of the first calendar month after the platoons joined their units, divisions had already formed their impressions of the Negro replacements. The 104th Division, whose platoons had joined while the division was defending the west

banks of the Rhine at Cologne, commented: 'Their combat record has been outstanding. They have without exception proven themselves to be good soldiers. Some are being recommended for the Bronze Star Medal.'"

Davis was pleased, too. When he stopped at 12th Army Group headquarters on his way to observe the platoons a month after they had joined their units, he found that Bradley was well satisfied with the reports of the performance and conduct of the Negro reinforcements. Gen. Courtney Hodges stated that his First Army's divisions had given excellent reports on their Negro platoons.

Determined to hear from the men at the front, Davis went down through corps and division to regiment and battalion and finally to a company—Company E of the 60th Regiment, 9th Infantry Division—he found similar reports of satisfaction.

At Company E, the company and platoon commanders and several enlisted men, including the white platoon sergeant, recounted their experiences with enthusiasm. All officers and men, from the regimental commander down, reported high morale and confirmed that the platoon was functioning as planned.

Officers and men in other divisions gave Davis similar reports of their satisfaction with the Negro reinforcements. One division commander, Maj. Gen. Edwin F. Parker of the 78th Division, whose African-American platoons, joining at the Remagen bridgehead, were the first such combat troops east of the Rhine, expressed the wish that he could obtain more of the African-American riflemen.

The 104th Division's G-1 noted that he gave Davis a very satisfactory report. He told the visiting general:

"Morale: Excellent. Manner of performance: Superior. Men are very eager to close with the enemy and to destroy him. Strict attention to duty, aggressiveness, common sense and judgment under fire has won the admiration of all the men in the company. The colored platoon after initial success continued to do excellent work. Observation discloses that these people observe all the rules of the book. When given a mission they accept it with enthusiasm, and even when losses to their platoon were inflicted the colored boys accepted these losses as part of war, and continued on their mission. The Company Commander, officers, and men of Company F all agree that the colored platoon has a caliber of men equal to any veteran platoon. Several decorations for bravery are in the process of being awarded to the members of colored platoons."

There were some failures. In Lt. Gen. Alexander "Sandy" Patch's 7th Army, the African-Americans were rushed to battle. That had problematic results, as the Official History noted:

"The 6th Army Group and 7th Army had not been included in the original discussions of the use of Negro riflemen. On the decision of General Patch, the 12 platoons assigned to Seventh Army were organized into provisional companies and sent to the 12th Armored Division, whose armored infantry battalions had relatively greater shortages than infantry division regiments. The platoons, barely trained as squads and platoons, had had no training as companies at all; the division felt that too little time was available to equip and train them before their first battle. However, the 12th soon found that the reinforcements made a 'good' impression."

Davis investigated and found that the 7th Army had not taken the time to train its African-American replacements. Once it did, the troops performed well.

One such unit, 7th Army Provisional Infantry Company No. 1, attached to the 56th Armored Infantry Battalion, had not been committed as a unit but detachments had been used. One of these, riding on a tank near Speyer, Germany, on March 23, 1945, ran into heavy bazooka and small arms fire. According to the Official History, "Sgt. Edward A. Carter, Jr., voluntarily dismounted and attempted to lead a three-man group across an open field. Within a short time, two of his men were killed and the third was seriously wounded. Carter continued toward the enemy emplacement alone. He was wounded five times and was finally forced to take cover.

Both: National Archives

**ABOVE: At the 47th Reinforcement Depot in February 1945, two volunteer privates who will soon be used at the front in combat units demonstrate the proper method of digging a foxhole for their veteran instructor. OPPOSITE: Known as the "Triple Nickles," the all-Black 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion did not see combat during World War II. In April 1945, they were posted to Oregon as "smoke jumpers" to fight fires started by Japanese Fu-Go incendiary "balloon bombs."**

When eight enemy riflemen attempted to capture him, Carter killed six of them and captured the remaining two. He then returned across the field, using his two prisoners as a shield, obtaining from them valuable information on the disposition of enemy troops."

One battalion commander wrote of his integrated unit, "To date, there has never appeared the slightest sign of race prejudice, or discrimination in this organization. White men and colored men are welded together with a deep friendship and respect born of combat and matured by a realization that such an association is not the impossibility that many of us have been led to believe. Segregation has never been attempted in this unit, and is, in my mind, the deciding factor as to the success or failure of the experiment. When men undergo the same privations, face the same dangers before an impartial enemy, there can be no segregation. My men eat, play, work, and sleep as a company of men, with no regard to color. An interesting sidelight is the fact that the company orientation NCO is colored, the pitcher on the softball team, composed of both races, is colored, and the bugler is colored."

Though the war wound down in April 1945, the fighting didn't, as the Americans faced determined SS men with nothing to lose but their lives, paratroopers skilled in last-ditch stands, and Hitler Youth raised on myths and legends, all armed with panzerfaust anti-tank rockets.

One African-American platoon, when faced with heavy automatic weapons fire from outlying buildings in a town which another platoon was already supposed to have taken, made a hasty estimate of the situation and, realizing that its only safety was in the buildings from which its men were receiving fire, broke into a run with all weapons firing, raced three hundred yards under "a hail of enemy fire," took the buildings and, in a matter of minutes, the entire town.

The battalion commander concluded, "I know I did not receive a superior representation of the colored race as the average AGCT was Class IV. I do know, however, that in courage, coolness, dependability and pride, they are on a par with any white troops I have ever had occasion to work with. In addition, they were, during combat, possessed with a fierce desire to meet with and kill the enemy, the equal of which I have never witnessed in white troops."

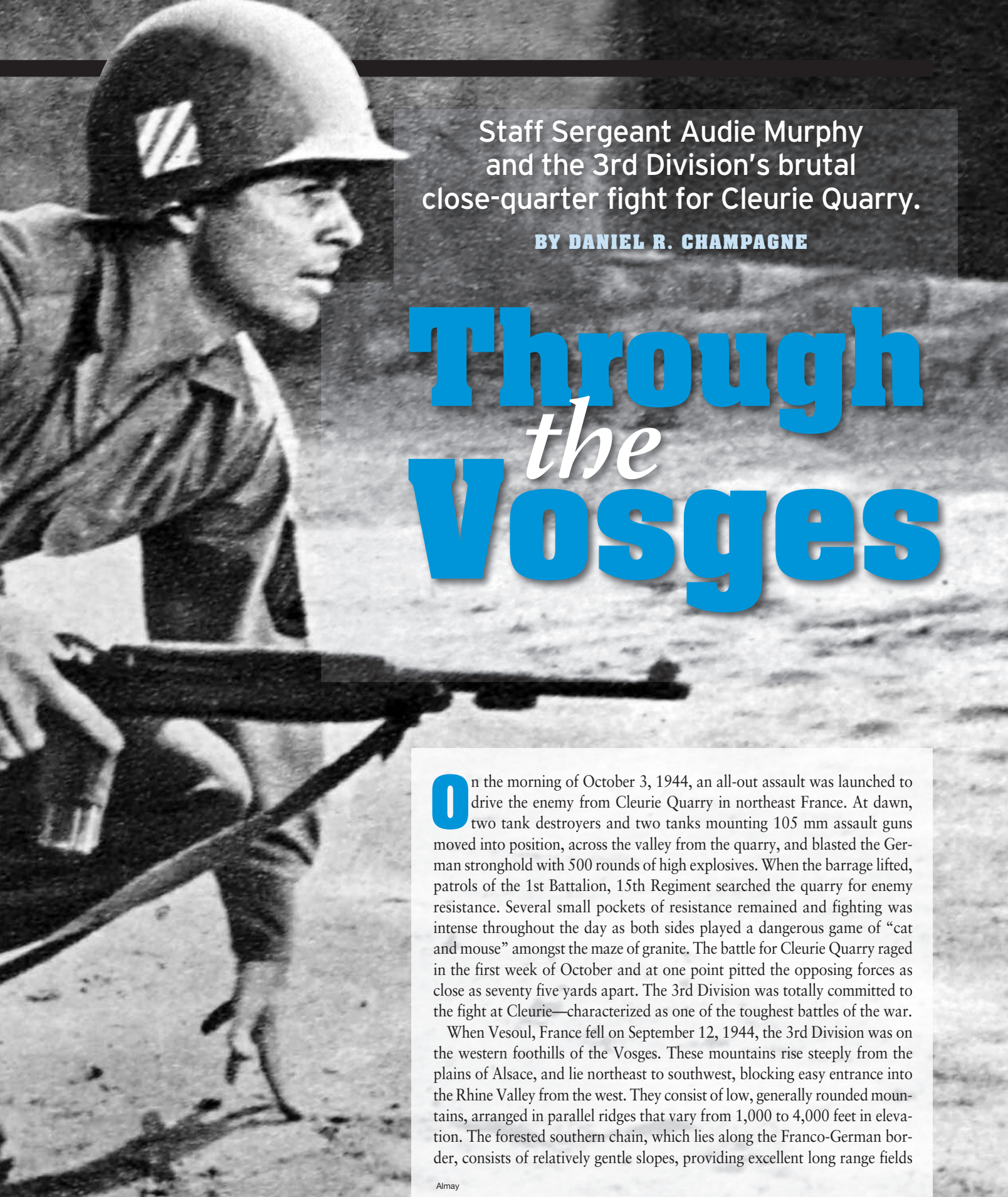
With V-E Day and troops coming home, so did the reports on the great success of the integrated Army. They went up the chain of command and ultimately to the new President, Harry S. Truman. We don't know specifically what he thought of the reports, but in 1947, he pushed for a Civil Rights Bill, which was defeated in the House and Senate by Republicans and Democrat—the so-called "Dixiecrats." Stymied, he turned to integrate one bastion of American society: ordering the Armed Forces desegregated by Executive Order, in his role as Commander-in-Chief.

To their credit, the Armed Forces put up very little resistance to Truman's order, but they had trouble obeying it. The Navy took several years to refit its ships to create integrated berthing spaces. The Air Force, only a year old, did it overnight. □

---

*Author David Lippman resides in New Jersey and writes frequently on a variety of topics for* WWII History *magazine.*

Staff Sergeant Audie Murphy races through the set of a war-torn village in a scene from the the 1955 autobiographical film, *To Hell and Back*, based on his 1949 memoirs of the same name. Murphy, the most decorated U.S. soldier of World War II earned 33 awards, decorations, and citations—including the Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Cross, two Silver Stars, Legion of Merit, two Bronze Star Medals (one with a "V" device), three Purple Hearts, a French Legion of Honour and a French Croix de Guerre with silver star—played himself in the film.



Staff Sergeant Audie Murphy and the 3rd Division's brutal close-quarter fight for Cleurie Quarry.

BY DANIEL R. CHAMPAGNE

# Through the Vosges

On the morning of October 3, 1944, an all-out assault was launched to drive the enemy from Cleurie Quarry in northeast France. At dawn, two tank destroyers and two tanks mounting 105 mm assault guns moved into position, across the valley from the quarry, and blasted the German stronghold with 500 rounds of high explosives. When the barrage lifted, patrols of the 1st Battalion, 15th Regiment searched the quarry for enemy resistance. Several small pockets of resistance remained and fighting was intense throughout the day as both sides played a dangerous game of "cat and mouse" amongst the maze of granite. The battle for Cleurie Quarry raged in the first week of October and at one point pitted the opposing forces as close as seventy five yards apart. The 3rd Division was totally committed to the fight at Cleurie—characterized as one of the toughest battles of the war.

When Vesoul, France fell on September 12, 1944, the 3rd Division was on the western foothills of the Vosges. These mountains rise steeply from the plains of Alsace, and lie northeast to southwest, blocking easy entrance into the Rhine Valley from the west. They consist of low, generally rounded mountains, arranged in parallel ridges that vary from 1,000 to 4,000 feet in elevation. The forested southern chain, which lies along the Franco-German border, consists of relatively gentle slopes, providing excellent long range fields

Almay

U.S. National Archives

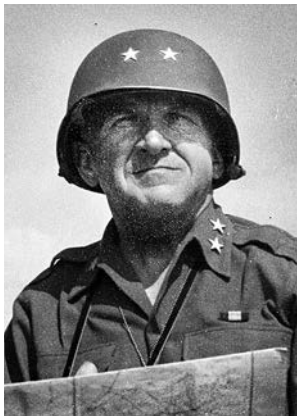
of observation and fire in all directions. Winters in the Vosges, especially in the higher elevations, are long and brutal, "with drastic and sudden changes in temperature." The Vosges, like the Italian Apennines from the previous year, were ideal for delaying, defensive operations, "the type of warfare in which the Germans were most proficient."

The 3rd Infantry Division, commanded by Major General John "Iron Mike" O'Daniel, was the only American division to fight the Axis forces on all European fronts: French Morocco, Sicily, Naples, Rome, Southern France, and Germany. The "Rock of the Marne" Division hailed from Ft. Lewis, Washington and consisted of the 7th, 15th and 30th Infantry Regiments. Although personnel of its "subordinate combat units" had been replaced prior to the invasion of Southern France, the 3rd Division's "command structure was highly experienced in combat, especially fighting in mountainous terrain."

At 0600 on September 27, the 15th Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division moved out of its positions near the town of Remiremont and attacked northeast along highway 417 toward the town of Cleurie. With the 3rd Battalion on the left, the 2nd Battalion on the

Photo courtesy of Tom Rocco

U.S. National Archives



U.S. National Archives

**ABOVE: From left, Sergeant Tom "Guy" Rocco; Major General John W. "Iron Mike" O'Daniel, commander U.S. 3rd Infantry Division; First Lieutenant Audie Leon Murphy, soon after his return from the War. TOP: Heavily burdened and drenched by a relentless late-September downpour, infantrymen of Company C, 1st Battalion, 7th Regiment of the 3rd Infantry Division trudge through the village of Rupt-sur-Moselle. After a lightning-fast, 400-mile advance from the Mediterranean beaches of Southern France, the "Rock of the Marne" Division found itself approaching the Vosges Mountains—a fortress of dense pines and granite peaks where the retreating German 19th Army intended to turn the autumn rains and steep terrain into a lethal bottleneck.**

right, and the 1st Battalion in reserve, the regiment advanced against scattered mortar and artillery fire. That evening, the Germans counter attacked, "taxing the 15th Regiment's strength to the utmost." Early the following day, the 15th Regiment continued the attack along Highway 417 against stiff enemy resistance. According to 3rd Division historian Don Taggart, "the fight for Cleurie was in the mold and by dawn on September 28 the entire effective strength of the 15th Regiment was committed."

On September 29, the 30th Regiment joined in the attack, moving into position along the 15th Regiment's left flank, while the 7th Regiment was ordered to protect the right flank by

Polish National Archives

U.S. National Archives

**ABOVE: In a hurried aid station near the village of Saint-Amé, a combat medic and doctor tend to an infantryman of the 15th Regiment, 3rd ID, whose helmet had been penetrated by high-velocity shrapnel. Designed to deflect glancing blows, the M1 "steel pot" was no match for direct hits from 105-mm or 88-mm shell fragments. Rapid treatment by regimental doctors near the front lines during the "Golden Hour" was the only reason many GIs survived. TOP: While Allied propaganda often focused on German Panzer divisions and motorized columns, the reality of the retreating 19th Army in late 1944 was far more primitive. Faced with crippling fuel shortages and the destruction of the French rail network by Allied air power, the German defense of the Vosges relied heavily on animal power to haul ammunition, rations, and winter gear up the steep, narrow trails where trucks could no longer climb.**

attacking German positions between the Moselle and Mosellette Rivers. Early the next morning, 1st Battalion, 30th Regiment encountered heavy machine gun, mortar, and small arms fire. B Company, under the command of 1st Lt. Lysle Standish, attempted to maneuver in order to flank the enemy positions but was met with stiff resistance, which brought the advance to a standstill.

The 3rd Division was "embroiled in heavy fighting," Taggart wrote. "Enemy counterattacks were characterized by a ferocity hitherto encountered only in Italy the previous winter. Increased artillery fire from 75s, 88s and 105s was evidence that the Germans had received reinforcements in this all important arm of service." The stage was now set for the battle of Cleurie Quarry—one of the greatest battles fought in the Vosges Campaign.

The quarry at Cleurie was a "thorn in the 3rd Division's side" and had to be taken at all costs. The giant rock configuration controlled the Remiremont—Le Tholy-Gerardmer road, the main route of advance through the Vosges Mountains. Tactically, the quarry resembled a miniature Mt. Cassino. Located high atop a rocky wooded, almost perpendicular slope, the quarry was the "anchor point of the enemy main line defending the important St. Ame hill mass." The quarry controlled the entire region—a distance of some 20 miles. The only approaches to it were up the steep, almost cliff like sides of the mountain. The steep cliffs on the north and south sides of the quarry were covered with numerous machine guns. The east and west entrances were blocked by "huge stonewall roadblocks." To complicate matters, the quarry was "honeycombed with passageways and tunnels," protecting the defenders from mortar and artillery fire. B Company, 15th Regiment SSG Audie Murphy wrote: "Every approach was covered by machine guns set up for crossfire. Enemy cannon and mortars have the slopes zeroed in. And a large detachment of sharp shooters with telescopic sights on their rifles have been added for extra insurance." In addition, employing American artillery would prove to be a challenge because as troops closed in on the quarry, tree bursts would often rain down on the infantry.

The German defenders had been ordered to fight to the death in defense of this most important position. Pfc. Clarence Goekler, who had joined Murphy's B Company in

U.S. National Archives

**ABOVE: Men of the 7th Regiment, 3rd ID, utilize a narrow stone alleyway to screen their advance from German observers. By late 1944, the fight for the Vosges Mountains had descended into a series of sharp, claustrophobic battles for small French villages nestled in the valleys. Survival depended on staying off the main roads—where German snipers and MG-42 machine guns zeroed in on every intersection. OPPOSITE: "Hip-pocket artillery" like this 3rd Infantry Division mortar squad was the decisive factor during the grueling assault on the quarry at Cleurie. They saturated the enemy positions with high explosives, stripping away the mountain cover and pinning the German defenders in their bunkers.**

Remiremont, vividly recalled his first day on the front lines: "I started off as an ammo bearer and I can remember it was my first day of combat. My sergeant was killed right in front of me. I had to jump up and furnish the ammo for the machine gun and a sniper got him. As soon as the medic got there, the sniper killed him too. It happened four feet in front of me."

The 15th Regiment was eventually sent in to take the quarry by the only means possible—a direct assault. On the evening of September 29, forward elements of the 1st Battalion, reached the outskirts of the town where it was met with heavy German resistance. B Company, one of the first units hit, recovered and pushed the attack over rain soaked earth. Capt. Paul G. Harris, B Company commander, led his weary men as they groped their way toward the top of the "Great Rock." Under the cover of a heavy artillery barrage, the enemy felt their way through the thick night fog like "blind men" and approached to within 50 yards. Blazing away with machine pistols, the determined enemy hit B Company's right flank at midnight and pressed the attack for five hours.

Murphy summed up the struggle: "The German command, knowing the importance of the position, had ordered it to be held as long as one man could pull a trigger. We had received counter orders to take it. Several times we tried to drive head on up the slope but were driven back with heavy losses by a hellish storm of enemy fire." Although the battered right flank of B Company had been forced to pull back, the bulk of the company was still holding firm. For the next four days, B Company remained dug in, attacking and resisting several enemy counterattacks.

During this phase, combat patrols probed the area for soft spots in the German defenses. A wooded hill between B Company and the enemy was the target for many of these patrols. According to Murphy, the company command post was located in a house at the base of a small knoll, concealed from the big German guns in the quarry area. Midway between the command post hill and the enemy held hill was a second knoll. This hill and the approaches to it constituted "no-man's land," a target for patrols on both sides." Murphy continued: "In the darkness, units of the enemy slip down the slope to establish forward positions. Often less than a hundred yards separate us from their lines. We hear them talking back and forth and their bloody excursions into our own positions are nightly occurrences."

In his combat diary, PFC Vert Enis recorded a similar incident, confirming the potential danger of no-man's land: "I was looking through a pair of field glasses and spotted some Krauts in a roll of hedge running vertical up the hill. I told Captain Harris about it and he set up a light machine gun, then told the machine gun crew to watch the hedge. I stayed and directed fire. One Kraut stepped out and shook his blanket and then went back in the hedge. The next time we saw that Kraut he was crawling on his hands and knees. I pointed him out again and the gunner made one long burst; that was it, all is kaput."

On October 1, Captain Paul Harris briefed his platoon leaders on the operations for the following day. Just as the mist was settling, a group of Germans slipped through the lines and hit the B Company command post with automatic weapons fire. "Streams of white tracer bullets crisscrossed the area, striking violently against the house walls. I grabbed a

carbine and a full case of grenades," Murphy recalled. "The light of the gasoline lantern was put out and we dove through the door." Murphy, partially veiled by the mist, crawled along the ground and closed in on the Germans. Once he reached the crest of the knoll, he met up with one of the outpost guards. Tossing the grenades as fast as they could pull the pins, Murphy and the guard killed and wounded several of the enemy. Surprised and demoralized by the attacking force, the German patrol fell back.

Robert Miller, a non-commissioned officer in Company B, wrote: "Murphy grabbed a case of hand grenades and fought off that attack practically by himself. The next morning, we found German helmets, blood, and equipment they left when they withdrew. He added: "Murph did a marvelous job all by himself."

Meanwhile, the 30th Regiment continued an unrelenting pressure toward the northeast. The 1st and 3rd Battalions resumed their attack on October 1, while the 2nd Battalion patrolled into the valley, "encountering and charting minefields." Despite enemy artillery concentrations and counterattacks, the 30th Regiment continued to advance. From October 1-8, the three battalions of the 30th Regiment continued unrelenting pressure toward the northeast.

By daybreak on October 2, a virtual stalemate existed in the 15th Regiment sector. In some places, the front lines were barely seventy five yards apart. The fighting resembled jungle warfare, with "thick nests of enemy snipers and infiltrating German parties." At the mouth of the quarry, the enemy was covering the blocked entrances with deadly machine gun fire from positions in the brush and rock piles.

B Company had been fighting at the quarry for two days trying without much success to crack the stubborn German defenses. 1st Battalion, 15th Regiment commander Lt. Col. Michael Paulick wanted to see with his own eyes what was blocking the advance. Paulick was a twenty nine year old "square chinned son of a Hungarian immigrant." A graduate of West Point, he worked as a coal miner in Pennsylvania before the war. By the time the war ended, Paulick had earned every award for valor except the Medal of Honor. Accompanied by his executive officer Lt. Col. Keith Ware, Captain Harris, and four enlisted men, Paulick led a reconnaissance patrol to probe the enemy positions. Paulick's objective was to arrive at an "observation point located above a shear drop of about fifty feet into Cleurie Quarry."

Much to Murphy's disappointment, he wasn't asked to join the patrol. Nevertheless, he had been studying the situation for two days and warned Paulick and his men to "stay off the hill" directly above the front lines." He believed that the wood covered cliff at the north end of the quarry was loaded with snipers and machine gun nests, "arranged to provide interlocking fire over the whole immediate area." Unbeknownst to

U.S. National Archives

Paulick, Murphy picked up his carbine and several grenades before following the patrol up the hill. Murphy recalled his audacious decision: "I figured those gentlemen are going to run into some trouble. So, I tagged, about twenty five yards to their rear, to watch the stampede."

Fellow B Company member Albert Pyle remembered Murphy's extraordinary instincts: "Murphy grew up practically living outdoors. Growing up in a rural area, gave him an eye for terrain features. He hunted as a young boy and knew the likely places for a rabbit or a quail to hide. For example, he knew that a squirrel was more likely to climb a hickory tree rather than a sycamore tree. Being raised under those conditions gave him the foresight that other people just didn't have." Pyle went on: "He was the type of person who always watched for terrain features like trees, ditches, or breaches—places where a German might be hiding or a machine gun might be placed. He was an exceptional combat soldier."

As Paulick's patrol advanced toward a wooded area—approximately 50 yards from the observation point—a machine gun suddenly opened up, raking the area with deadly fire. The patrol immediately hit the ground and scrambled for cover in a nearby ditch. Apparently, Paulick and his men had passed the German outpost guard undetected but were now pinned down by machine gun fire a few yards away.

Once he determined the origin of the machine gun fire, Murphy quickly made his way to the German position, which was located behind an enormous boulder. Not expecting a trailing element, the Germans were not aware of Murphy's presence until he warned the besieged patrol to stay down until help came. Lt. Col. Paulick recalled years later: "I heard a familiar voice over the noise of battle. One by one he called every man in the patrol, waiting for an answer. It was Audie. I realized then that he must have some sort of plan in mind and our position had something to do with it."

Grasping the carbine in my left hand and a grenade in my right, Murphy wrote, "I stepped suddenly from behind the rock. The Germans spotted me instantly. The gunner spun the tip of his weapon toward me but the barrel caught a limb and the burst whizzed to my right." Murphy took advantage of this fatal mistake. After tossing the grenade into the enemy position, he opened fire with his carbine, shooting two Germans through the stomach. He then quickly hurled two more grenades into the position before the dust finally settled.

Of the eight men in the German position, four had been killed, and three had been wounded. The eighth soldier was cut down by Murphy's carbine, as he was trying to escape. The patrol was pinned down at a distance of about thirty yards and would have been decimated had it not been for Murphy's "immediate grasp of the situation, his precise thinking, and his uncanny coolness in action." In a 1964 interview, Kieth Ware, then a brigadier general, said: "Audie Murphy was without a doubt the finest soldier I have ever known in my entire military career." For his heroic action at Cleurie Quarry, Murphy was awarded the Silver Star.

U.S. National Archives

U.S. National Archives

**ABOVE: In Vagney, the crossroads of several key mountain passes, men of the 7th Regiment cross the remains of a bridge on foot as engineers work nearby under fire to install Bailey Bridges to allow M4 Sherman tanks to cross. By the second week of October, the 3rd ID had successfully cracked the German "Winter Line" near Cleurie, but the geography of the Vosges continued to fight back—with the help of the the German 19th Army, which blew all bridges over the swift mountain streams to slow the superior U.S. motorized transport. OPPOSITE: A strategic bottleneck in the Battle of the Vosges, the rugged terrain became as much of an enemy as the entrenched German positions—forcing infantry into close-quarters maneuvering, often without armored support. Here men of the 15th Regiment, 3rd ID, pick their way through the jagged remains of the Cleurie Quarry on October 6, 1944, as the "Rock of the Marne" continued its grueling push toward the Rhine.**

The following day, October 3, two tanks mounted with 105mm assault guns were moved into position across the valley from the quarry. From this position, the tanks pumped 500 rounds of high explosives into the quarry tunnels. At the same time, 1st Battalion, 15th Regiment fired mortars in a "terrific concentration." When the mortar fire ceased, all three rifle companies of the 1st Battalion spread out to probe the quarry for pockets of enemy resistance. Opposition still remained, however, and stiff fighting continued throughout the day. B Company patrols were hit by enemy machine gun fire immediately in front of the quarry, and from the slope a German sniper shot and killed two men from the heavy weapons platoon. German prisoners would later reveal that an elite company of sharpshooters with telescopic rifles had been ordered to hold the position. One squad of marksmen was attached to each rifle platoon of the 601st Schnelle Battalion—the German unit charged with defense of the quarry.

Mindful that the sniper posed an immediate threat to his men, Murphy asked Capt. Harris for permission to personally stalk, locate and kill the enemy sharpshooter. He was granted permission on the condition that he took three men with him. For this dangerous assignment, Murphy selected three of his most experienced men—T/S Daniel R. Finnegan, Pfc. Dominick Trepasso, and Sgt. Tom "Guy" Rocco.

"As we slowly advanced up the knoll of the hill," recalled Rocco, "Murphy suddenly jumped behind a big rock and dropped to his knees. After firing twice, Murph shouted, 'Krauts take off.' Well, you didn't have to say that twice to me, so the three of us scampered back down the hill as fast as our legs could carry us. When I looked back, I noticed that Murph wasn't coming so I went back up the hill to check it out. Finnegan and Trepasso followed because they didn't want to leave me alone. Soon, the three of us rejoined Murph behind a big boulder. We were so concerned about each other."

Rocco continued: "After sizing up the situation, Murphy sent Finnegan back down the hill for more men. From behind the boulder, the remaining three of us made our own little artillery barrage, tossing hand grenades in the area where the Jerry patrol had been spotted. When Finnegan returned with more men, we formed a skirmish line and slowly sprayed the area with small arms fire. After advancing about thirty yards, Murph called me over and pointed to a spot in the brush, 'still warm Roc.' I looked with my own eyes and saw the biggest Kraut I had ever seen. Blood was coming from his mouth and from between his eyes, where two holes remained from Murph's bullets. By the look of the rifle,

*Continued on page 98*

# DAWN OF DESTRUCTION

BY JOHN WUKOVITS


*In Morning Thunder* by artist Robert Taylor, Japanese aircraft streak past the stricken battleship USS *West Virginia*, which has settled to the bottom of Pearl Harbor—upright thanks to counter-flooding. Rescue craft come alongside to spray water on burning oil and to rescue survivors. Hit by multiple torpedoes, the *West Virginia* was moored outboard of the battleship *Tennessee* on Battleship *Row*, shielding the *Tennessee* from the deadly projectiles.

**The Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor crippled U.S. Naval strength in the Pacific and plunged America into war.**

The seaplane tender USS *Tangier* floated at its moorings that peaceful day at Pearl Harbor. Little disrupted the serenity of the beautiful Sunday morning. An occasional bird flew above as a gentle breeze caressed the ship. Nearby, the battleship *Utah* and the light cruisers *Raleigh* and *Detroit* lined the shore in quiet splendor, while across the way, on the other side of Ford Island, the mighty vessels of Battleship Row rested in splendid majesty. It looked like December 7, 1941, would be another calm weekend in Pearl Harbor.

Lieutenant (j.g.) Richard L. Fruin had just gone out on the deck of the *Tangier* when he spotted a group of aircraft heading toward Ford Island. That was not unusual for Pearl Harbor, except these aircraft approached from the wrong direction. One

week earlier, superiors had chastised a Navy pilot for flying in an unauthorized area, so Fruin assumed that some young aviator was in for a rough meeting with his commander when he landed. That thought was interrupted as the planes passed overhead—not American after all, their red circles clearly visible—dropped a string of bombs on Ford Island as Fruin rushed to his battle station.

The *Tangier*'s skipper, Commander Clifton A.F. Sprague, bolted from his quarters and dashed to the bridge where he shouted "Quarters! Quarters!" and "Goddamnit, hurry!"into the speaker system.

On the battleship *Nevada* on the eastern end of Ford Island, the ship's band had just begun "The Star-Spangled Banner" when the planes swooped down. At first the band members thought it was a drill, but that changed as explosions and bullets filled the air. The band bravely played on through the attack's opening moments to finish the tune, then raced for their battle stations.

National Archives

Lieutenant Fruin and the band on the *Nevada* had just witnessed the opening moments of their nation's active involvement in World War II. The Japanese, with whom the U.S. had been at political odds for years, mainly over supremacy in the Pacific, had unfurled a surprise aerial assault deep into the heart of American power in the Pacific—directly against its vast naval base at Pearl

National Archives

**ABOVE: Aboard an aircraft carrier en route to Pearl Harbor, Japanese airmen share a laugh while listening to a broadcast from a Honolulu radio station. Once airborne, the Japanese pilots also used Hawaiian radio broadcasts to assist in navigation. LEFT: Admiral Husband E. Kimmel (at right) confers with his operations officer, Captain Walter DeLany, on December 2.**

Harbor on the island of Oahu in Hawaii. Within a few hours, much of America's military arsenal, and its first line of defense, rested on Pearl Harbor's bottom. Soon smoke, fire, and death would engulf the ships and sailors and spin the United States into a war that President Roosevelt had been certain would one day occur. The "day of infamy" was about to begin.

Events early in the morning of December 7 indicated that something was brewing. At 6:40 a.m., the destroyer USS *Ward* spotted the conning tower of a midget submarine headed toward the harbor. The ship opened fire and sank the submarine. "Attacked, fired on, depth-bombed, and sunk, submarine operating in defensive sea area," the destroyer's commander radioed headquarters. Unfortunately, Adm. Husband E. Kimmel, the commander-in-chief of the Pacific Fleet, did not receive the news until after Japanese aircraft had already begun their attack.

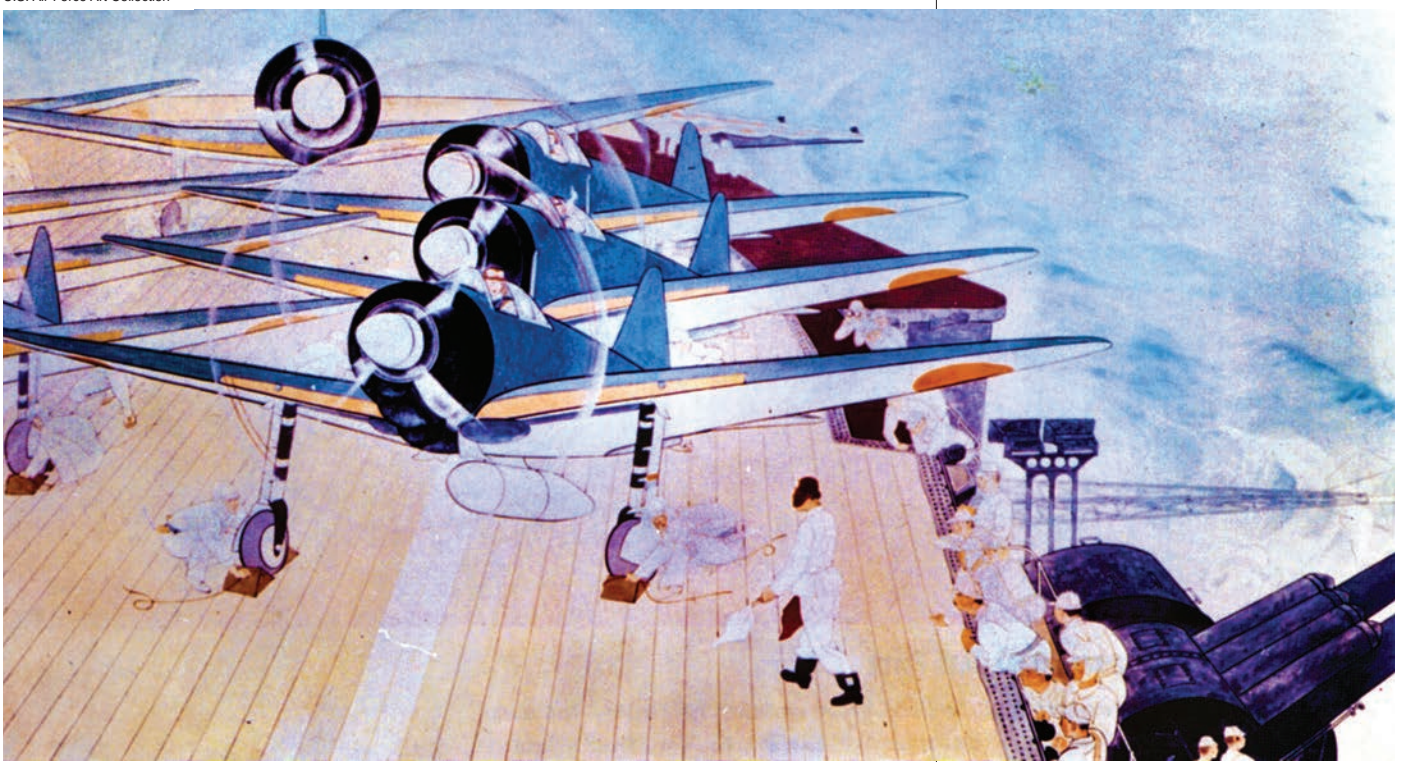
Less than half an hour later, Private George Elliott picked up a huge flight of incoming aircraft on his radar station near Kahuku Point in northern Oahu. At first he thought his radar equipment was broken, as no flight was expected, but he soon realized it wasn't. Elliott informed the Army information center of the large group of planes, but was told they were either aircraft flying in from returning American aircraft carriers or an expected group of B-17 bombers from California.

What Elliott saw was the first of two waves of Japanese aircraft to strike Pearl Harbor.

It was a group of 182 aircraft—level bombers, torpedo bombers, dive bombers, and fighters—that had lifted off the Japanese carriers and veered toward their target, led by Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) Captain Mitsuo Fuchida.

"Just before dawn, all planes on the flight decks of our carriers began launching one by one," recalled IJN Lt. Cmdr. Sadao Chigusa as he watched from the destroyer *Akigumo*. "All our crew waved to the planes as they were flying past our upper deck, giving them our prayers." The aircraft were all assigned targets. Some were to attack the shipping inside Pearl Harbor with special focus on the battleships and aircraft carriers, while others veered toward

U.S. Air Force Art Collection



**ABOVE: Japanese artist Arai Shori created this image of carrier aircraft, engines roaring, as they await the signal to launch. Six aircraft carriers were the heart of the naval strike force which attacked Pearl Harbor and other military installations on the island of Oahu on Sunday, December 7, 1941. RIGHT: Mitsuo Fuchida, commander of the aerial assault on Pearl Harbor. He later became a Christian minister and U.S. citizen.**

U.S. airfields at Ewa, Hickam Field, Wheeler Field, and Kaneohe, all within miles of Pearl Harbor. Some 400 aircraft sat on those airfields, parked wingtip to wingtip in an effort to better safeguard them from sabotage.

The planes passed over Oahu's northern tip, veering right to fly down the island's west coast before entering their final approach runs to the harbor. The sight that unfolded amazed Fuchida. Instead of antiaircraft fire and intercepting American fighters, they were greeted by a peaceful calm. Ninety-four ships floated leisurely at their moorings, including seven immense battleships along Battleship Row. Lt. Cmdr. Shigeru Itaya, commander of the Japanese fighters, gazed in stunned surprise at the battleships that were "strung out and anchored two ships side by side in an orderly manner."

"I had seen all German warships assembled in Kiel harbor," Fuchida said. "I have also seen the French battleships in Brest. And finally, I have seen our own warships assembled for review before the Emperor, but I have never seen ships, even in the deepest peace, anchored at a distance less than 500 to 1,000 yards from each other." The sight of the monstrous battleships berthed side by side was "hard to comprehend," Fuchida added.

Not one sign of opposition arose. At 7:49 a.m., Fuchida sent the coded message to headquarters, "Tora, tora, tora," which meant that complete surprise had been achieved, and ordered his aircraft to the attack.

Fuchida's torpedo planes peeled off, dropping low to skim the water's surface, as they launched their torpedoes at the stationary ships dead ahead. Each was fitted with specially designed wooden fins to prevent them from plunging into the harbor's mud and within moments the harbor was transformed into a blazing cauldron as every ship on Battleship Row absorbed hits.

Fuchida had to control his excitement, but the sight of "waterspouts rising alongside the battleships, followed by more and more waterspouts" almost overwhelmed the veteran officer. Here he was, over Oahu, staring at a dream scenario unfolding before his eyes.

At first, American military personnel doubted what they saw. It could only be a drill. Woody Derby was sitting in his bunk in the battleship *Nevada* when general quarters was sounded. "And you know the thoughts that went through people's heads. What in the world is going on now? Why are

they doing a drill on Sunday morning? And they said it in a different manner. They got a little hot-tempered."

Hot-tempered could not begin to describe the emotions felt by Roy Vitousek, Jimmy Duncan, and Cornelia Fort. The three civilian pilots had been flying over Oahu when the Japanese aircraft suddenly appeared. They quickly turned their planes into steep dives and headed toward the ground as Japanese bullets filled the air about them. The three safely landed, bewildered over being the initial targets of Japan's assault.

By then, only moments into the attack, the control tower at Ford Island Naval Air Station transmitted the message that electrified the world. "AIR RAID PEARL HARBOR. THIS IS NOT A DRILL." Not only did the soldiers and sailors now know that war had arrived, but so did an entire nation.

Battleship Row was soon engulfed in fire and death. On the *West Virginia*, Ensign Roland Brooks, the officer of the deck, thought the explosions he heard came from an accident on a nearby ship. As a precaution, he ordered rescue parties to prepare to leave. This proved fortunate for his ship, as Brooks's order sent crew members scurrying to stations before Japanese bombs and torpedoes struck. When six torpedoes ripped into the *West Virginia*'s port side at 8 a.m., causing an immediate list as tons of water gushed through the ship's torn side, men were ready to counter the list and prevent the ship from capsizing.

Captain Mervyn S. Bennion ordered Lieutenant C.V. Ricketts below to organize the counter-flooding. Ricketts made his way through smoke-filled passageways, then supervised men as they opened the starboard seacocks and allowed water inside to counterbalance the water gushing in through the torpedo holes. The battleship slowly settled into the harbor's mud.

The crew of the *West Virginia* tried to mount a response to the swarms of enemy aircraft. A torpedo explosion hurled Louis Lagesse against the bulkhead and knocked him unconscious. His crew mates nearby thought he was dead and moved him to the starboard side and stacked him up with the dead bodies.

National Archives

On the battleship *Arizona*, Norman Lancaster battled back as Japanese aviators took aim with their torpedoes and bombs. "At first the planes would come in and dispose of their bombs and their torpedoes, and then they'd circle and come back and strafe us." Shipmate Stuart Hedley dove under a gun to avoid the shrapnel and bullets and found a lieutenant already there, firing back with his .45 automatic pistol.

An enormous eruption rocked nearby ships and sent shock waves throughout the harbor as more bombs hit the *Arizona*. Above, even Fuchida felt the reverberations. "We were about to begin our second bombing run when there was a colossal explosion in Battleship Row. A huge column of dark red smoke rose to 3,300 feet," recalled the Japanese commander. "The shock wave was felt even in my plane several miles away from the harbor."

Across the harbor, Mechanic First Class Francis T. Bean witnessed the hit that demolished the *Arizona*. He watched as "a spurt of flame came out of the guns in No. 2 turret, followed by an explosion of the forward magazines. The foremast leaned forward, and the whole forward part of the ship was enveloped in flame and smoke and continued to burn fiercely." More than 1,100 men perished in the explosions aboard the *Arizona*, and the battleship's sunken hulk rests on the bottom of Pearl Harbor to this day, a memorial to the tremendous loss of life sustained aboard the ship on December 7, 1941.

Aboard the *Oklahoma*, James Bounds reeled in disbelief at the sight of his ship being hit

and others rapidly sinking. "The only thing they taught me going through training was that you could not sink a battleship." However, three torpedoes slammed into the *Oklahoma*'s side almost simultaneously, fatally wounding the giant.

Commander Jesse L. Kenworthy, Jr., rushed about the stricken ship, gathering men in an attempt to mount a response to the Japanese. "As I reached the upper deck, I felt a very heavy shock and heard a loud explosion and the ship immediately began to list to port. Oil and water descended on the deck and by the time I had reached the boat deck, the shock of two more explosions on the port side was felt. As I attempted to get to the conning tower over decks slippery with oil and water, I felt the shock of another very heavy explosion on the port side."

His efforts, however gallant, could not stop the inexorable stream of water from gushing inside. The ship quickly rolled over and trapped 400 men in the holds.

Sailors aboard other vessels or on land stared at the *Oklahoma* as she turned over and settled to the bottom. The image of the once-mighty battleship, now lying helplessly mangled in the mud, hit with a ferocious impact. "I felt like somebody kicked me in the stomach," said Ivan Harris. "You don't kill a battleship. They're impregnable, tough. But there was one over on its side."

What Harris could not see was the agony unfolding inside the *Oklahoma*. Members of the crew, some hopelessly wounded and dying, battled the waters to avoid drowning. Many stuffed clothes and blankets into the ship's venting system to halt the water's flow. The struggle seemed hopeless, however, for as soon as they plugged one leak, another gushed open. As the waters rose, the men began to frantically beat on the bulkheads in hopes of drawing help.

Other ships endured similar agonies. The *California*, the final battleship to be hit, took two torpedoes into her side directly below the bridge. Counter-flooding prevented her from capsizing, but the vessel, like the *West Virginia*, settled to the harbor's bottom. The *Maryland* and the *Tennessee* survived their hits, but took months to repair before rejoining the fleet. The *Nevada* got underway and started steaming down the harbor in an attempt to reach the open sea.

"Torpedo planes swooped in from almost over my head and started toward Battleship Row," recalled Chief Petty Officer Leonard J. Fox of the scene that unfolded as he watched from the light cruiser *Helena*. "First the *Oklahoma* ... then it was the *West Virginia* taking blows in her innards.... Now, as I looked on unbelievingly, the *California* erupted ... and now it is the *Arizona*.... Men were swimming

National Archives

**TOP LEFT: The Japanese caption to this photograph read, "Alas, the spectacle of the American battleship fleet in its dying gasp." ABOVE: A Japanese Aichi D3A "Val" releases a bomb in the attack to put the U.S. Fleet out of action as a force in the Pacific Ocean.**

for their lives in the fire-covered waters of Pearl Harbor."

In the vast confusion, one ship reacted with amazing alacrity and efficiency. Commander Sprague had been a stickler for preparing his men for combat, and when war arrived they responded gallantly. The *Tangier*'s crew was at battle stations in moments, and the gunners returned fire on the Japanese before any other ship did that morning. "Everyone knew his job and went where he was supposed to," stated one sailor.

While Sprague's gun crews filled the sky with antiaircraft fire, three Japanese torpedo planes approached from the north and released their torpedoes at the *Utah*, moored directly behind the *Tangier*. Two torpedoes smashed into the aging battleship and created such a ferocious explosion that ladles and other hanging equipment in the *Tangier*'s galley snapped through the air and cooks were knocked off balance. The badly hammered *Utah* sank in just eight minutes. Although other Japanese aircraft completed runs against the *Raleigh* and *Detroit*, sinking the *Raleigh* by the stern, the *Tangier* escaped notice in this initial flurry.

Luck and Sprague's repeated prewar drills shielded the crew of the *Tangier*, but the men received sustenance from another source—their commander. He gave few orders, but instead trusted his men to do what they had to do. He quietly watched from the bridge as they executed their duties, confident they would draw inspiration by his absolute faith in their abilities. "Sprague was always cool," said ship's radio operator Leonard Barnes. "At Pearl Harbor, he acted like he'd thought everything out. Sprague knew just what to do, like he was born to command during a crisis."

Sprague remained on the open bridge of his ship rather than seeking the safety of his protected bridge one deck below because he wanted the crew to see that he shared the same dangers as they did. His crew faced death for the first time, and he wanted to remain in plain sight to lend moral support at a time when it was most needed. "All those men on the main deck and above it, at one time or another as they fought," Ensign John J. Hughes said, "could see Sprague calmly standing there throughout the battle. That impressed us officers and encouraged the men."

Other components of Fuchida's first wave struck nearby airfields and storage facilities. Two groups of Japanese dive bombers destroyed three squadrons of flying boats at Kaneohe Bay; the Army lost almost all of its aircraft stored at Hickam Field and other airstrips; only two of the 12 Wildcat fighters stationed at the Marine Corps base at Ewa survived. As these attacks occurred, Japanese fighters demolished barracks and hangars. The American aircraft, aligned wingtip to wingtip, were systematically destroyed by the Japanese. At Ford Island Naval Air Station, only one American aircraft managed to lift off the runway.

This left precious little area in which 12 Boeing B-17 bombers, the ones due in from the mainland that trackers confused for the Japanese, could land. The hearty pilots braved fire from both the Japanese fighters that buzzed by and from nervous American antiaircraft gunners and riflemen on the ground. Despite the hazards, all 12 somehow landed at crater-filled Hickam Field.

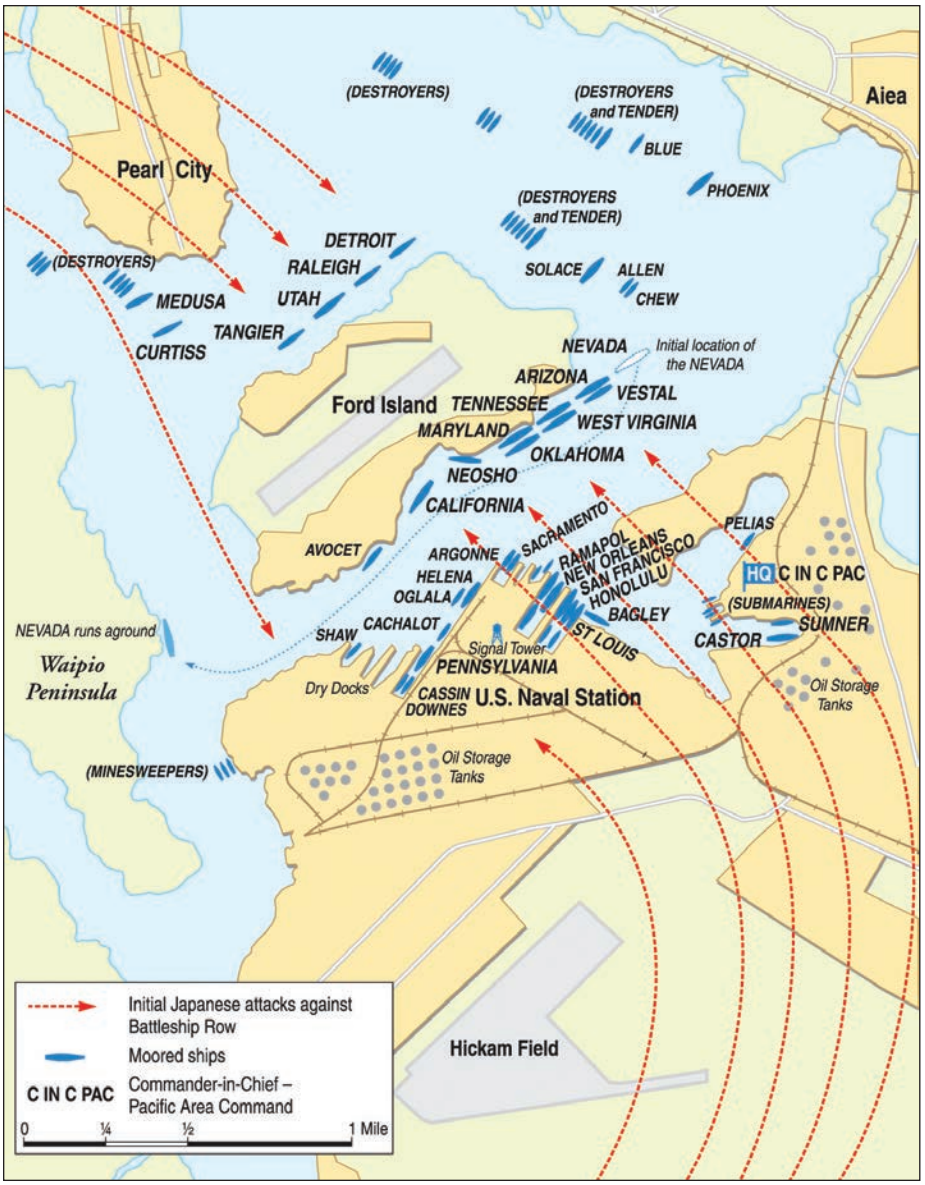
In Washington, D.C., initial disbelief turned to anger. When first informed of the attack, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox said incredulously, "My God! This can't be true. This must mean the Philippines." With confirmation arriving and additional reports of damage, however, Knox and Roosevelt turned to the business at hand. Roosevelt ordered his secretary of state, Cordell Hull, to go ahead and see the two visiting Japanese diplomats that had been scheduled to meet with him, but to say nothing of the events at Pearl Harbor.

When Ambassador Kichisaburo Nomura and Envoy Saburo Kurusu walked into Hull's

Naval History & Heritage Command

**ABOVE: A Japanese bomb explodes near the bridge of the USS *Tangier*, a former cargo ship converted to a seaplane tender, moored behind the USS *Utah* at Ford Island on the morning of December 7, 1941. The *Utah* was likely the target, though the aging ship had become an antiaircraft gunnery training platform—which the Japanese knew and had ordered its pilots to ignore. Possibly due to glare and inexperience, six planes launched torpedoes at the *Utah*, but only two found their mark. Thanks to the rigorous training of Commander Clifton A.F. Sprague, the *Tangier* was the first to return fire that morning. OPPOSITE: The first wave of dive-bombers and torpedo bombers hit Pearl Harbor from the northwest while horizontal bombers attacked from the southeast.**

Map © 2026 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN




office, they quickly noticed an icy atmosphere. Hull hardly took the courtesy to look at his guests, pretended to read the message they handed to him (codebreakers had already delivered to him the message's contents), then said with barely controlled anger, "In all my 50 years of public service, I have never seen such a document that was more crowded with infamous falsehoods and distortions." Hull quickly dismissed the perplexed diplomats.

Less than one hour after the first wave smashed Pearl Harbor, Yamamoto's second wave of 80 dive bombers, 54 level bombers, and 36 fighters swooped down to complete the devastation started by the first wave. By now American sailors and soldiers had manned their guns, but few American aircraft were able to join the fray. Most had been destroyed by the first Japanese wave. In some places, sailors grabbed World War I vintage rifles, strung bandoliers of ammunition across their shoulders, and headed out to battle the Japanese. "All ships in the harbor are setting up a terrific antiaircraft barrage," scribbled Radioman 1st Class R.A. West in notes taken at his station on the bridge of the *Tangier*. American gunners managed to shoot down six fighters and 14 dive bombers.

The second wave targeted the ships missed in the first assault. A bomb hit the battleship *Pennsylvania* in drydock, while others demolished the destroyers *Cassin* and *Downes* and sliced the bow off the destroyer *Shaw*. Aboard the *Nevada*, officers and crew hurriedly prepared to move away from the ship's berth near the blazing *Arizona* and down the channel to elude the bombs and torpedoes. Sailors draped their bodies over exposed shells and powder to shield it from the waves of heat that glowed from the *Arizona*. As they inched carefully down the channel, Japanese pilots took aim and smashed the *Nevada* with multiple bomb hits and numerous near misses. To prevent the damaged ship from sinking and blocking the harbor entrance, the captain veered the *Nevada* toward Hospital Point and beached the ship away from the entrance.

Trapped inside the *Oklahoma*, desperate men continued to beat on the bulkheads as workmen furiously cut through metal to reach them before the air supply expired. "We got to the point where you could hear each other breathing," said James Bounds. "You didn't want to talk any more than you had to because that air was getting low. It's like being in a big, black, damp, dark hole—I guess like somebody in a coffin."

As the air supply ebbed, the men started to lose hope. Finally, after 36 hours, rescue workers cut through to the bulkhead and pulled Bounds and the other men from their watery tomb. Only 30 of the 400 men were rescued from *Oklahoma*'s bowels.

Louis Lagesse, who had earlier been placed with the dead, experienced a resurrection. When a man picked him up to carry what he assumed was a dead sailor to a boat for transfer to a burial ceremony, the man noticed one of Lagesse's eyelashes move slightly. Instead of the burial service, the man transported Lagesse to a hospital ship and treatment.

In rapid succession, five dive bombers took aim at Clifton Sprague's *Tangier*. Geysers erupted off the ship's bow and bomb fragments shattered windows on the protected bridge, but not one bomb touched the seaplane tender. Some of the enemy pilots failed to press their attack vigorously enough and dropped their bombs too early, while Sprague's gunners blunted the assault by putting up a dense shield of fire that caused Japanese aviators to swerve away. Sprague later claimed that the Japanese pilots, "and

National Archives

**ABOVE: The USS *Shaw* explodes in a fierce and roiling fireball, the USS *Nevada* nearby. OPPOSITE: The Japanese caught most of the American planes on the ground and made short work of turning them into twisted hulks.**

some came damn close," failed to remain long enough on their diving approach because "the volume of our fire was so great they couldn't complete their dive."

As the second wave departed, Fuchida circled above and surveyed the damage. He was stunned at the amount of destruction his fliers had inflicted on the enemy. "I counted four battleships definitely sunk and three severely damaged, and extensive damage had also been inflicted upon other types of ships. The seaplane base at Ford Island was all in flames, as were the airfields, especially Wheeler Field."

In the two waves, the Japanese destroyed 188 aircraft and damaged 159. They sank or damaged 18 ships, including eight battleships, and they killed 2,403 American sailors and soldiers and wounded 1,178. This was accomplished at the cost of 29 Japanese aircraft and pilots lost, as well as one large and five midget submarines destroyed. Hawaii's defenses were so wide open that one soldier claimed the Japanese could have stormed the islands in canoes.

Smoke billowed 300 feet skyward from the burning Battleship Row as eruptions continued to break the stillness. The bodies of dead and dying sailors floated all around while men in small craft scoured the harbor, stopping to pull sailors from the water. One injured sailor begged his rescuers not to touch him, as the skin hung in ribbons from his arms, but the men defied his wishes in order to save him.

Fortunately for the United States, the Japanese missed some precious commodities. When Fuchida landed, he strongly urged that another strike hit the undamaged American oil and repair facilities, but Admiral Nagumo would have none of it. He believed that the missing American aircraft carriers lurked in the vicinity, and he was not about to tempt fate by lingering too long within range of enemy land-based aircraft. He ordered the force to head back to Japan.

Had Nagumo listened to Fuchida, he could possibly have delivered such a damaging blow that the United States might have needed months to recover. Without fuel or the ability to repair ships, the United States most likely would have pulled its Pacific fleet back to home waters. Caution overruled Fuchida, but a little more daring on Nagumo's part would have all but completed the job his two waves had started.

Yamamoto had hoped to catch the valuable American aircraft carriers at anchor, but all three had been out on missions. The *Saratoga* steamed off California, while the *Lexington* and *Enterprise* delivered aircraft to Wake Island and Midway. Had the Japanese destroyed even two of these three, they would have solidified their hold in the Pacific to such an extent that Roosevelt might have seriously considered negotiating a truce.

One Allied leader who found optimism in the attack was British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. When he first learned of the assault, like many others, he reacted with stunned surprise. "Mr. President, what's all this about Japan?" he asked in his first call to the American leader. Roosevelt confirmed that the fighting had begun. "They have attacked Pearl Harbor," he told Churchill. "We are all in the same boat now."

Churchill detested the destruction and death wrought by the Japanese, but now, at least, he had the most powerful nation in the world actively on his side. For two years he had battled, at times alone, the mighty legions of Adolf Hitler, but now he could count on America's people and factories to help him finish the task.

At 8:40 p.m., in Washington, D.C., Cabinet members entered Roosevelt's study to be briefed about the day's events. Most had been out of town on business and had been quickly

called back to Washington by White House operators, so they knew little of the details. When Labor Secretary Frances Perkins arrived, she noticed that the president's typical warm greeting had been replaced with a perfunctory hello.

Roosevelt started by labeling the meeting the most serious Cabinet session since Abraham Lincoln assembled his advisers in the dark early days of the Civil War. In a subdued voice Roosevelt explained that the nation had absorbed serious losses and that the Navy had suffered the worst defeat in its history.

"His pride in the Navy was so terrific," Perkins wrote later, "that he was having actual physical difficulty in getting out the words that put him on record as knowing that the Navy was caught unawares, that bombs dropped on ships that were not in fighting shape and not prepared to move, but were just tied up. I remember that he said twice to [Secretary of the Navy Frank] Knox, 'Find out, for God's sake, why those ships were tied up in rows.'"

Perkins later added, "It was obvious to me that Roosevelt was having a dreadful time just accepting the idea that the Navy could be caught unawares."

People in all corners of the nation wondered what had happened as the day unfolded. Their faith in the ability of their military to keep them out of harm's way had been badly shaken, so much so that one of the most respected publications in the country, *Time* magazine, bluntly wrote that "The U.S. Navy was caught with its pants down. Within one tragic hour—before the war had really begun—the U.S. appeared to have suffered greater naval losses than in the whole of World War I." A nationally syndicated journalist wrote that people believed the United States would not hit the Japanese because they could not hit back.

Fear and uncertainty created fertile ground for rumors that made an already nervous citizenry more susceptible to panic. Reports circulated that a group of Japanese aircraft had flown over San Jose, California. In Hawaii, residents made plans to leave for the mainland because they feared that an inevitable Japanese invasion could not be repelled by the weakened military. Politicians urged the president to consider the West Coast indefensible and to pull back the military to fortified positions in the Rocky Mountains. Roosevelt's son, Elliott, even called him from Texas to explain that he had heard the Japanese were about to launch an attack from Mexico against Texas or California.

As night fell on Washington, D.C., on December 7, groups of citizens collected outside the White House fence. A hushed crowd silently stared at the presidential mansion, then started singing, "God Bless America."

After his Cabinet and congressional leaders departed, Roosevelt kept an appointment with renowned newsman Edward R. Murrow, whose radio broadcasts from London had moved the world. The two shared beer and sandwiches while the president discussed the last 24 hours. Finally, he erupted in an angry tone that American aircraft had been destroyed "on the ground, by God, on the ground!"

Roosevelt quickly set aside his anguish. He knew that, as the nation's leader, he could not ask his people for optimism and calm in dire circumstances if he did not exude those same qualities. Roosevelt's vigorous leadership abilities shone the next day when he traveled to Capitol Hill and asked Congress for a declaration of war. Congress overwhelmingly passed the resolution.

Eight congressional and military boards concluded that Pacific Fleet Commander Admiral Husband E. Kimmel and Army commandant Lt. Gen. Walter C. Short had been negligent in their duties. The two were quickly relieved of their posts.

Yamamoto had not counted on the impact of the surprise attack on the American people. Debate between isolationists and interventionists disappeared, and men and women rallied to the cry, "Remember Pearl Harbor." The smoldering wreckage at Pearl Harbor united the nation in a way that could not have been achieved in any other manner.

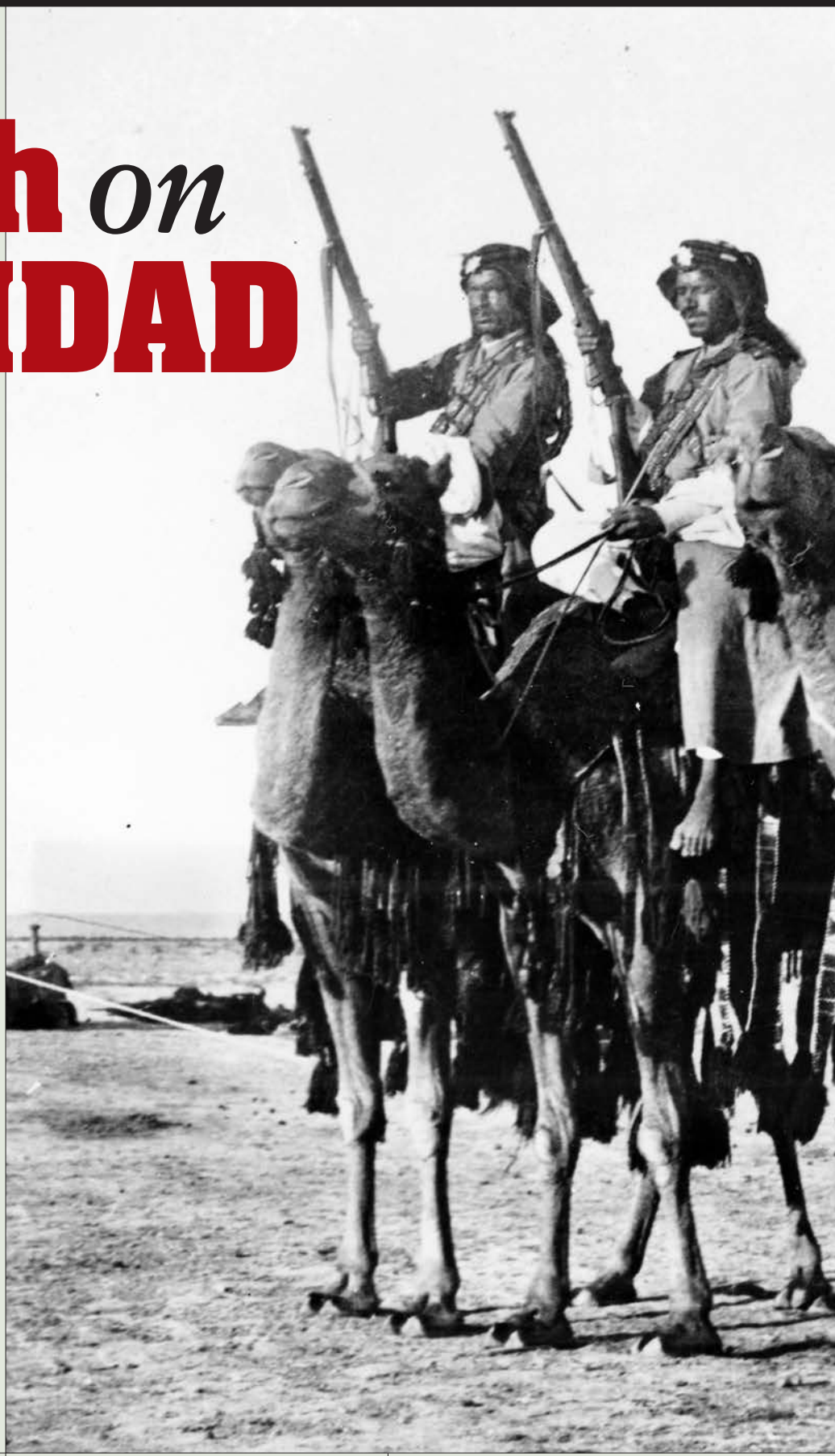
The United States faced an almost insurmountable task, though. Japan had removed the only instrument that could have stopped her aggression, the United States Navy, and she prepared to deliver more knockout blows to Allied forces throughout the Pacific. The remaining question was whether the United States could hold on long enough for her military and industrial machines to start producing the weapons of war in massive numbers.

In the weeks following Pearl Harbor, the Japanese won a string of military victories. However, Yamamoto's initial prediction was proven accurate. Almost six months to the day after the attack, the U.S. Navy decisively defeated the Japanese at the Battle of Midway and changed the course of the Pacific War. □

# *The* March *on* BAGHDAD

## A coup d'état opened the Middle East oil fields to the Nazis. Seizing them would be a tremendous prize.

**BY JOHN F. MURPHY, JR.**



Events in the Middle East exploded into a crisis for Great Britain in the spring of 1941, beginning with their first defeat in North Africa at the hands of Lt.-Gen. Erwin Rommel—the legendary "Desert Fox" in the making—at El Agheila, Libya, on March 24. By April 12, Rommel and his fearsome Afrika Korps had driven the hard-pressed Tommies back to the very gates of Egypt itself, threatening the vital Suez Canal. In a lightning three-week campaign that same month, the German Twelfth Army overran Greece and forced a wholesale evacuation of British forces to the island of Crete—only to be ejected once again by a German airborne invasion.

But the biggest blow of all came when Iraq's pro-British government was toppled in a coup d'état in March by the pro-German Rashid Ali al-Gailani. The Iraqi Prime Minister, Nuri al-Said, had to flee for his life and the British Ambassador, Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, was held hostage in the embassy. Rashid Ali made "threats to the Ambassador about cutting the throats of the British if any bombs were dropped on Baghdad," recalled British officer

**Fighting a war in the Middle East in the 1940s demanded a mixture of the traditional and the new. Here, warriors display their best rifles as well as their age-old means of transportation, the camel.**

Library of Congress

National Archives

Somerset de Chair, who would play an important role in the drama to come.

The Iraq putsch was a devastating blow to England in the Middle East, especially coupled with the Desert Fox's spectacular victories in North Africa, because Iraq shared an importance, second only to that of Egypt, for the survival of British power in the entire region. For whoever controlled Iraq sat astride the crucial overland route between Egypt and India, the jewel in England's Imperial Crown. Just as vital, whoever controlled Baghdad, the *Arabian Nights* capital of Rag, could sever the vital oil pipelines that flowed across the deserts to the Mediterranean and from Iran to the Iraqi Persian Gulf port of Basra, from which fat-bellied tankers carried the precious fuel that was now the very life's blood of England and her Empire.

Rommel, whose Panzers depended on fuel, realized the value of the vast oil reservoir of the Middle East. "In 1939," he wrote, "Persia and Iraq together provided in all some 15 million tons of mineral oil, compared with Romania's 6.5 million tons." Romania was the site of the famed German-controlled oil fields of Ploesti, the target of heavy Allied bombing during the war.

Ever since World War I overthrew the power of the Ottoman Turks, having a friendly government sitting in Baghdad had been a cornerstone of British policy. The League of Nations had given Iraq, like Palestine, to England as a mandate—almost a colony, but technically under League of Nations' supervision. When the famed T.E. Lawrence helped Winston Churchill broker the British settlement of the Middle East, Emir Feisal, Lawrence's leader in the famed Arab Revolt, was installed in Baghdad as king. To ensure Feisal's rule (and protect Britain's interest), the British patrolled the vast Iraqi desert and its Bedouin tribes with Royal Air Force (RAF) planes from above and Rolls-Royce armored cars on the desert floor.

But Rashid Ali al-Gailani's March 1941 coup, led by the secret "Golden Square" society, had toppled this careful settlement. For Rommel, the possibility of a pro-Axis ruler in oil-rich Iraq was a dream come true. With sufficient support from Hitler (which, good for the Western Allies, never materialized, owing in no small part to the Führer's preoccupation with the coming attack on the Soviet Union), Rommel saw the Afrika Korps striking through the Middle East to seize the oil fields and then, with plenty of fuel for his Panzers, be poised to strike, if needed, the underbelly of Russia.

In his crisp, soldierly prose, Rommel spelled out his campaign plans in a note to himself to be used for post-war memoirs: "We could have defeated and destroyed the British Field Army, and

National Archives

**ABOVE: Baghdad at the time of the German-leaning coup. Soldiers are seen riding through the streets in open trucks. OPPOSITE, ABOVE: Iraqi troops in Baghdad await developments during the shifting fortunes of war in the Middle East. OPPOSITE, BELOW: Hitler welcoming Rashid Ali to Germany.**

that would have opened the road to the Suez Canal.... With the entire Mediterranean coastline in our hands, supplies could have been shipped to North Africa unmolested. It would then have been possible to thrust forward into Persia [present-day Iran] and Iraq in order to cut off the Russians from Basra [which became a main source of supply for Russia once Hitler invaded], take possession of the oil fields and create a base for an attack on southern Russia." In short, Rommel's conquest of the Middle East oil fields "would thus have created the conditions for victory in the Russian plains."

But the Germans had done more than merely dream of Middle East conquest. The groundwork for the plot had been very carefully laid. German secret agents, spies for the famed Abwehr of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, had carefully infiltrated Iraq, under the very noses of the British, fomenting discontent and building support for their candidate for power, Rashid Ali. Already a base was in readiness next door in Persia, where a sizable German—and pro-Nazi—colony already existed.

Somerset de Chair has left an ominous picture of what was going on inside neighboring Persia. "We soon noticed how the stream of German armaments to Persia, by way of Turkey, had been increasing in recent months.... We examined closely the set-up of the German Fifth Column in Persia, where 4,000 Germans in commercial occupations were organized under Gauleiters [Nazi Party leaders] and could be mobilized on the telephone. At the most recent maneuvers the Persian Army had displayed ninety tanks; and we could not rule out the possibility that Germany was going to 'borrow' these from Persia to reinforce the Iraqis."

Already the German Army had formed two special units trained and ready to assist the Iraqis, the 287th and 288th Brandenburg companies [the 288th was commanded by Colonel Menton, an old friend of Rommel's from the Great War]. The danger was obvious, and growing worse. It was clear that something had to be done about Rashid Ali in Baghdad. It was in this grave hour that one of the most exciting, and least-known, campaigns of World War II was launched—the story of Kingcol and the British march on Baghdad.

Facing an Afrika Korps bent on the conquest of the Land of the Pharaohs, the British daringly assembled a strike force for the advance on Baghdad. Commanded by Brig. Gen. Joe Kingstone, whom de Chair said some considered "the best fighting Brigadier in the British Army," the British force assembling for this *Arabian Nights*' adventure was called King Column, or "Kingcol" for short, taking part of its name from part of its leader's name. A more colorful army had not been gathered together in the Middle East since Lawrence of Arabia, mounted on his fleet racing camels, had marshaled the wild Bedouin to do battle with the Turks.

Massing for the searing 750-mile trek across the desert sands from Palestine were soldiers from some of the oldest regiments in the British Army—baptized under fire with the great Duke of Marlborough—standing beside warriors of

some of the most picturesque units mustered to guard the frontiers of Britain's far-flung empire, now led by Marlborough's descendant, Winston Churchill. De Chair described this colorful and barbaric cavalcade: "We were a motley crowd. His Majesty's Life Guards and Royal Horse Guards jostled along in their army trucks beside the Bedouin of the Arab Legion—Glubb's Desert Patrol, swathed in garish robes, who raced about in light trucks armed with Lewis guns," like the commandos of David Stirling's Long Range Desert Group fighting against Rommel farther west.

Of all the array led by the capable Kingstone, none was more exotic than the Arab Legion, nor more legendary than Sir John Bagot Glubb, known as *Glubb Pasha* [pasha is an old Turkish title loosely meaning "commander" or "leader"]. Second only to Lawrence in the dramatic history of the British Empire in the Middle East, by this time Glubb Pasha was the warrior sheikh of the Arab Legion. He had taken over command of the Legion in 1939 from F.G. Peake, who had formed the desert corps. During World War I, Peake had first been in the Egyptian Camel Corps, and then had been sent to serve under T.E. Lawrence in the Arab Revolt. After the war, Peake entered the service of Feisal's brother Abdullah, who ruled as Emir, and later as King, of the Arab state of Transjordan, now part of the Kingdom of Jordan. The Arab Legion was formed to control the Bedouin tribes in his new domain, and to defend it from outsiders.

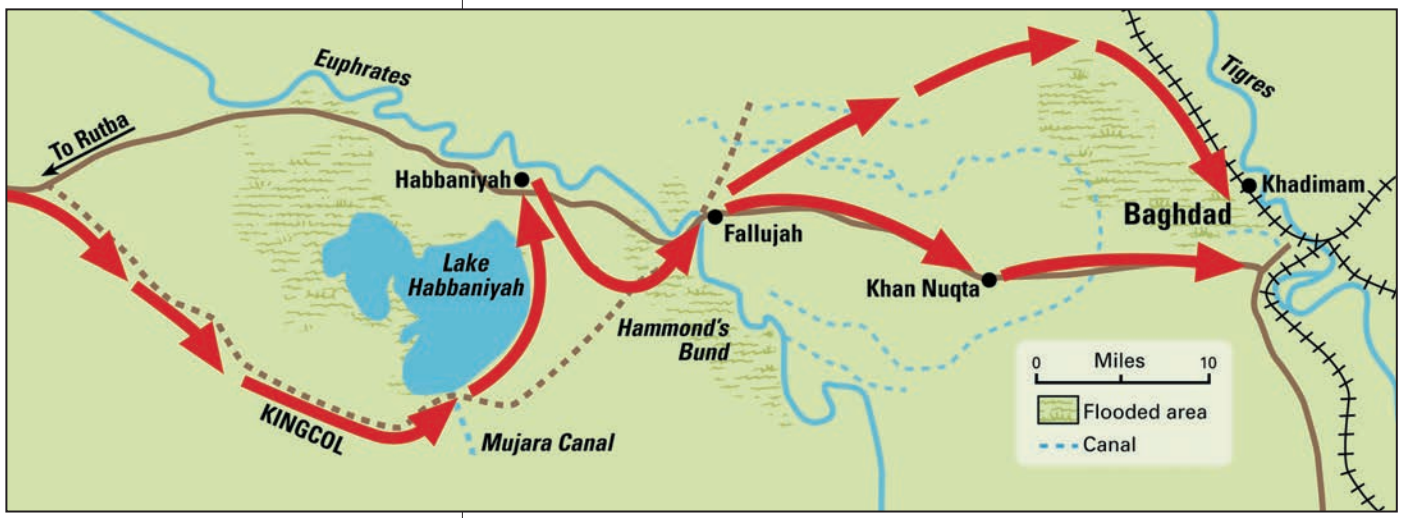
Under the leadership of Peake, and later Glubb, the Arab Legion soon gained such a bold reputation that Arabs from all over the region flocked to join. In *O Jerusalem!*, their account of the 1948 birth of Israel, Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre said of Glubb that, "Yet of all the long line of British Arabists that had followed the master [Lawrence] east, he was indisputably the greatest. No Westerner alive had mastered the intricacies of the Bedouin dialect as completely as Glubb. He could hear a Bedouin's history in the inflections of his accent and read his character in the folds of his kafriyeh [headdress]. He knew Bedouin lore, their customs, their tribal structure, the complex web of unwritten law governing their lives."

On May 2, 1941 the Kingcol, burdened with the knowledge of British defeats all through the Middle East, and like a medieval army from the Crusades, began its advance. Out in front were the hawk-eyed Bedouin of Glubb's Arab Legion scouting for signs of the mutinous Iraqi forces. Kingcol caught up with the Legion at the desert watering-hole of Rutbah, whose 10,000-gallon water tank made it a vital spot for the British to hold in the water-parched sands.

Already the British had fought—and won—the first battle of the war for the possession of this oasis. Fawzi Qawukji, the leader of the Iraqi fighters, had defended Rutbah on May 9 with machine guns and 100 members of Iraq's Desert Police, like the Arab Legion armed and trained by the British. (Fifty years later, Saddam Hussein's Iraqi army would also turn its Western arms and armor against the same Western Powers that had armed it.) The next day, as Glubb reported to Brigadier Kingstone, Qawukji "fought an action with RAF armored cars, as a result of which he retired east in evening and contact has not been reestablished." The Bedouin tribes, however, did not join with the Iraqis in the fight, for their loyalty to Glubb Pasha, "Abu Hunaik" to the tribesmen, proved too strong. Qawukji, however, was an old enemy of the British who had won the Iron Cross second class while fighting against them in the Turkish Army during WWI.

As Kingcol rested for two days at Rutbah before the next leg of their desert trek, de Chair, the intelligence officer of the expedition [he had held the same job against Rommel], received the disturbing news that "seven unidentified aircraft had passed over Aley, near Beirut, heading for Iraq." "Another 17 were reported to be refueling at Mezze," recalled de Chair. "We knew they were Germans. Was this the advance guard of the 22d Airborne Division which I knew to be ready for action? Was it going to be sent through [Vichy French] Syria to assist the Iraqis, to whom lavish promises of German assistance were hourly made by Axis propaganda?" Worse yet, "one of our pilots on reconnaissance over Mosul [in northern Iraq's oil fields] had been fired at by an Me 110." Had the Wehnnacht already joined the battle on the side of 40,000 hostile Iraqi soldiers?

If this were so, things would be even worse for another British force than it would be for de Chair and Kingcol. Entrenched at the airport at Habbaniya on the Euphrates River west of Baghdad was a detachment of the RAF, with its planes and armored cars, 1,500 troops of Assyrian levies under British command, and a battalion of the British King's Own Royal Regiment (KORR). They had already driven off an Iraqi attack with bombing runs at sand-dune level, but the British




National Archives

**ABOVE: An armored car, vital to the British force crossing the desert. In the background is a Royal Air Force biplane. OPPOSITE: The British march on Baghdad suffered several stops and fights along the way, some of which were against floods and swamps.**

force at Habbaniya would be in serious peril if the German 22nd Airborne entered the fight—their airfield would be a prime objective. Also endangered would be another British force, Indian troops, who were currently blockaded at the port of Basra.

More than ever, Kingcol had to move fast to get to Baghdad before the Germans. De Chair recalled in his eyewitness account, *The Golden Carpet*, "the real advance now lay ahead of us. We were faced with the waterless stretch of desert, about 200 miles to the shores of Lake Habbaniya, which was fed from the Euphrates. But Ramadi at the north-west corner of the lake was held by one, or possibly two, brigades of the Iraqi army [two as it turned out] and was also surrounded by natural floods." A long culvert on the road between Ramadi and Habbaniya had already been blown up by Iraqi engineers to block the relief of the besieged British by Kingcol. Now, the troops at Habbaniya were hurriedly building "an alternative trestle bridge" over the flood waters so Kingcol could come to their rescue.

But, as de Chair noted ominously, "If this trestle bridge were bombed by the Germans before we got across, we would not be able to relieve the Air Force garrison at all." Accordingly, Kingcol lost no time in heading out into the desert in a race against the Germans. Still keeping to the ancient traditions of the British Army, the Life Guards and the Royal Horse Guards, "the Household Cavalry, should lead off, with a truck load of Glubb's Girls [as the British called the Arab Legion because of its long Bedouin robes] to guide them." So Kingcol moved out, "gathering speed in clouds of dust on a mysterious course to the northwards, drawn on by the incalculable will-o'-the-wisp Bedouin who were their guides."

Along tracks charted by the first British who explored the desert on the backs of camels, the men of Kingcol moved through the shimmering heat. De Chair plotted their course, although with the rough route laid out by those intrepid camel-riders as guides, he was not sure he was headed where he should. "I was going to Baghdad, but I prayed to my several gods at stated intervals to take me there by the right route." Soon, though, de Chair's fears of the column "streaming into Rutbah again over a wide front, as sunset closed a long and exhausting march," were overtaken by a tragedy of a far graver kind. While ascending a rise in the ground, he looked back at Kingcol, snaking 20 or 30 miles out behind him like some long armored dragon, and then "suddenly I saw, with surprised eyes, two black tulips of smoke blossom far down the line, and, while the bomb bursts still hovered in the air, I saw the bright white-hot flash of anti-aircraft fire stream upwards across them. We had been discovered at last."

The bombs from the unidentified planes—Iraqi, or German, the British could not be sure—had found their target. "A truck of the Essex Regiment had been hit, and some men were killed." If the bombing raid were just the prelude to a major airplane attack, Kingcol would be desperately exposed on the flat desert. The column was forced to dig shelter trenches every time it halted for fear of an air raid striking from the cloudless desert sky, "all this in weather which made it impossible to touch metal where the thermometer reached 118 degrees. In the sun the metal seemed to have become incandescent. Men handled it with rags, grimed handkerchiefs, anything they could lay hold of."

Suddenly, at this worst possible time, a series of disasters began to rain down on the troops. Brigadier Kingstone issued orders "to start the head of the column on a compass bearing that should bring it to the Wadi Abu Farouk [a "wadi" is a dried-out river bed], where it would turn west until it struck the flood race south of

National Archives

Fotocollectie Van de Poll

**ABOVE: Lieutenant-General Sir John Bagot Glubb joined the Arab Legion in 1930, becoming commander in 1939. Under his leadership, the unit was considered the best-trained force in the Arab world. TOP: Americans at their embassy in Baghdad, which sheltered British civilians, prepare to repel Iraqis should the need arise.**

Lake Habbaniya at Mujara," closer still to Baghdad. But when the column reached a point about 14 miles west of Ramadi, from where it would have been within striking distance of Baghdad, everything seemed to go wrong. First, perhaps feeling the effects of the incinerating heat, de Chair and the other leaders of Kingcol, like Major May of the Essex Regiment, were unsure of which path to follow by their compass, a critical factor when an error of only a few degrees might put the force miles off its route.

Then, finally deciding on a compass heading to set them on the best path to Wadi Abu Farouk, the column turned off into the desert—only to find that the dunes would not support the heavy trucks. Dispersed out of fear of an air raid, soon "the great supply monsters were everywhere floundering in soft sand," noted de Chair. Those which had driven up the crisp ridges were now bedded down to the axles, while their crews labored in the desperate heat to dig them out." At the same time, thirst began for the first time to become a serious problem for the already-suffering men of Kingcol.

The situation, especially the lack of water, became so alarming that Kingstone was forced to consider abandoning the entire mission. At a council of war, the brigadier told de Chair and the other officers that "we have enough supplies of water to stay here one more day. After that we go on or go back." Then he addressed Glubb, "I shall want your dusky maidens to help us find an alternative route." The next morning, three Arab Legion reconnaissance parties raced off in search of a better track to follow, and de Chair was sent off to find water, thirst becoming a more crucial problem with every hour the sun stood overhead.

As de Chair realized, he and his searchers might run into Bedouin, who would also be seeking water for themselves and their herds. Their interpreter, a man named Reading, suggested, just in case, that they should pretend to be Iraqi soldiers should any herdsmen discover them. Reading proved correct, and for good reason, because these Bedouin were enemies of the British. Encountering one, and asking if she had seen any British soldiers, an old woman answered no. "But," she added fiercely, "I know what to do if I do," and proceeded to produce an enormous knife. "After which," de Chair concluded, "we thought it about time to return to our own encampment." Fortunately, however, they succeeded in finding water at a place called Abu Jir. At the same time, Brigadier Kingstone, guided by the unerring Glubb, had found another line of march for the men, and had even reached Habbaniya unmolested by the rebels.

Kingcol was fortunate to have received its new march directions when it did for, once again, death struck from the air. "Just as the tail of the column had been moving off from the camp, four black fighters had roared across the desert drilling the lorries [trucks] on the ground with bullets and cannon fire," de Chair wrote. Had the planes, which de Chair was sure were German, struck earlier, "they would have found us the day before, immobilized in the soft sand," and

radioed bombers to fly in to massacre the trapped soldiers below.

Fortune, however, was now with the British, as they doggedly continued their march. The column reached Mujara, and from there went on to relieve the force holding Habbaniya, the Habforce, just like a relieving column in British India in the days of Gunga Din. Yet, as de Chair wrote, "the odds still seemed heavily against us. But we had been fortunate so far. And as the signpost on the aerodrome reminded us, Baghdad was now only fifty-five miles distant."

During a council at Habbaniya, the fateful plans were made for the final advance on Baghdad. Now, however, it was made terribly clear that the British would be fighting not one enemy, but two, because the German Luftwaffe openly entered the fight on the side of Rashid Ali's Iraqis. Before Kingcol departed Habbaniya, "three light-green Heinkel bombers [came] flying over, the black cross clearly distinguishable through our binoculars." No sooner had the German bombers dropped their deadly payload on the RAF hangers than four Messerschmitt fighters strafed the camp. How much longer would it be before the Fallschirmjägers [paratroopers] of the 22nd Airborne Division joined the combat too?

Before long, the first battle for the recapture of Baghdad erupted at Fallujah. In a dawn attack, the Iraqis took the British by surprise in a determined assault with some small tanks. House-to-house fighting flared with the King's Own Royal Regiment and the Christian Assyrians in the British force, mortal foes of the Muslim Iraqis. Kingstone himself rushed into Fallujah to take over, for the Iraqis were gaining the upper hand, supported by townspeople sniping at the British from rooftops. Finally, with the Assyrians "tearing open the tanks with their hands," and reinforcements called up from the column, the Iraqi attack melted away.

National Archives

**Royal Air Force bombers fly over Jerusalem in the summer of 1941 in hopes of discouraging Arabs from becoming pro-German.**

Fallujah now became the base for the last push on Baghdad. Kingstone organized two columns to fight their way through any Iraqi—or German—opposition: the Northern Column comprised "most of the Household Cavalry, four 25-pounders, Glubb's Desert Patrol, and the rest of the RAF armored cars;" the Southern Column comprised "one Squadron of the Household Cavalry, the two companies of the Essex Regiment, the independent anti-tank troop, three RAF armored cars and the Field Ambulance Section." The main firepower rested in the 25-pounder guns. The Northern Column under Andrew Ferguson "was to be ferried across the Euphrates and reach Baghdad from the north after a wide detour around the Aqar Quf floods. The Southern Column of 750 men under Joe Kingstone was to advance directly upon Baghdad down the road from Fallujah." The mighty 25-pounder artillery, ranked among the best field guns in the world, would serve as Kingcol's battering ram.

The greatest obstacle for the British columns now was not the Iraqi Army, however, but a natural roadblock called Hammond's Bund, a swampy gap in the vital causeway that was the main attack route into the capital. Immediately troopers were drafted to fill in the Bund. They worked around the clock, but as they filled in from the sides the middle channel only cut deeper.

Finally, working under de Chair, the Madras Sappers and Miners, the elite engineering corps of the Indian Army, devised another way. They used a large iron barge as a ferry. Recalled de Chair: "The sappers [laid] a pair of heavy ten-foot iron ramps from the end of the bund on to the end of the pontoon, in order to provide a pair of movable tracks for the vehicles to be run on to the ferry. A similar pair of steel ramps would be lifted on to the ferry from the bund when it reached the farther side." The operation seemed simple enough except for the fact that it had to be done under cover of night, with only the light of torches to guide the men. Once the sun came up, the Messerschmitts would be hunting their prey and the vehicles would have

Imperial War Museum

to scatter into the desert for safety.

The bridging action went forward like clockwork and, by dawn, the caravan of the attacking force had passed over the Bund like the Hebrews crossing the Red Sea. Now it was time to confront the Iraqis, who had used the time Kingcol had spent spanning Hammond's Bund to fortify the village of Khan Nuqta, 25 miles away. But faced with the British and the devastating power of the 25-pounders, the Iraqis surrendered. De Chair, along with the Southern Column arrived to see "our troopers were darting about among the network of ditches with bayonets on their rifles, stirring up Iraqi soldiers who quickly came out to surrender."

It was here, with the Iraqis in disarray, that de Chair was able to use his intelligence background. In their haste to surrender, the Iraqi communications officers had forgotten to cut the telephone link to Baghdad, and now he and the British were able to listen in on all the plans the Iraqis made to defend the city. More than that, de Chair was able to play a deception game that threw the Iraqi defenders into a panic. Using the interpreter Reading, de Chair was able to convince the enemy that the British had a huge force of tanks, when there was not one with the entire Kingcol. De Chair reported that the excited defenders were completely taken in by the ruse. A patrol sent out to investigate from the 3rd Iraqi Division actually reported to Baghdad that "the British had at least fifty tanks, of which fifteen were already across the floods"!

Ultimately, an Iraqi technician discovered that the British were listening in on their conversations, and cut the line to Khan Nuqta, but not before, de Chair wrote, "the captured telephone had given me a complete X-ray of the forces ahead of us, besides enabling me to launch a wholly imaginary but very powerful tank attack of my own." With the seizure of Khan Nuqta, "the first phase of the battle for Baghdad had been won."

But while de Chair's column was moving on to Baghdad, Glubb's force was being held up by stiffening Iraqi resistance at the holy city of Kadhimayn, where the Iraqis, all devout Muslims, had thrown up entrenchments. Moreover, Glubb's column, the Northern Column, was deprived of the impact of bombarding the enemy at Kadhimayn for fear of alienating the overwhelmingly Muslim population of Iraq. Here, the battle for Baghdad was at the stage where things could have taken a decidedly bad turn for the British forces, for the Arab Legion were all Muslim, too.

But their loyalty to their regiment and to Glubb proved a stronger tie, and they fought the Iraqis for the city with a fierceness born of a pride in themselves and in their unit. As Glubb wrote later, "they were quite certain that, even if we beat the Iraqis, they were on the losing side and that the Germans would soon arrive. But in spite of this they not only fought on our side (the only Arabs who stood by us), but they were themselves continually pressing for more active operations, and making suggestions for new ways of attacking the enemy."

While the Northern Column met determined opposition at the holy city, de Chair's column was facing a hardened enemy as well. All of a sudden it seemed that the conquest of Baghdad was not going to be the easy exercise everybody in Kingcol had thought it would. Had the Iraqis received word that the Germans were on the way?

In Baghdad's outskirts fighting centered around the Palace of Roses. "C" Squadron of the Household Cavalry dismounted from their trucks to begin the final rush on foot, across open ground commanded by enemy weapons. De Chair recalled, "Machine-gun fire was opening up on us now, all along the belt of trees which screened the Palace of Roses, and the Blues [Royal Horse Guards] and the Life Guards were getting well down" into the dikes to shelter from the machine guns. Heavy artillery fire now joined in the bombardment of the Southern Column, and an even worse danger entered the picture: friendly fire, for the Southern Force was now within range of the 25-pounders of the Northern force.

But with the Northern Column still tied down before Kadhimayn, and the Indian Army units at Basra barely moving, the main assault on Baghdad rested on the shoulders of the men of the Southern Column. "So we were left alone, to seize victory if we could—and Baghdad was very near," de Chair wrote.

It began to seem that taking the city would be a costly operation because, as de Chair wrote, that night the "Iraqi guns on the Tigris seemed to be opening up into a furious barrage. It might presage a counter-attack in the dark." Then, at "a quarter past midnight," de Chair heard an officer giving a message to Kingstone: "Two delegates from the Iraq Army will appear on the Iron Bridge at two o'clock in the morning. Will we send two officers to meet them to discuss terms of the armistice?" Quickly, de Chair volunteered to go with fellow officer Ian Spence, and one from the Household Cavalry, Rupert Hardy, as well as an adventurous British diplomat, Gerald de Gaury.

Not knowing if they were heading into an ambush, de Chair and the other members of the truce party drove in the dark to an antitank ditch near the Iron Bridge leading into Baghdad. "There we were to erect our white flag. The Iraqi delegates were to show their headlights on the Iron Bridge and if we could see these, we were to respond by switching on our own." As de Chair described their tense ride, "we were now moving forward, without escort, into No Man's Land, where the fighting had been going on all afternoon.… There was no moon up and the darkness closing in on either side of the road brushed past the windows of our cars."

When de Chair arrived at the antitank ditch for the rendezvous with the Iraqis, nobody was there. Spence and de Gaury moved out along the ditch, but they were stopped by barbed wire. Fearing trouble, de Chair went back to Kingstone for instructions. The brigadier told him "the Iraqi delegates are now expected at four o'clock." De Chair and the others were to wait for daybreak and then return to Kingcol. De Chair returned with Kingstone's orders and they waited alone for the Iraqis to come, not knowing if a machine gun might open up on them any minute from the darkness. Then, "suddenly from the right, following unexpectedly the course of the anti-tank ditch itself, came two cars rapidly, with headlights blazing. It was exactly four o'clock." The Iraqis had finally come.

With Maj. Gen. George Clark, Kingstone's senior commander, taking over the negotiations, work for an armistice began. Glubb Pasha came down from Kadhimayn to be a part of the victory for which he had fought so hard. De Chair was taken to Baghdad with Spence and de Gaury, guided by an Iraqi officer named Daghestani, to make contact with the Iraqi government and Ambassador Cornwallis. Rashid Ali, it was learned, had fled the country and the rebel's military leader, Fawzi Qawukji, had taken refuge with the Vichy French across the border in Syria. The pro-British Regent Abdul Blah was on his way to take power. Terms for an armistice were rapidly concluded. All POWs were to be released on both sides, and any Germans or Italians in Iraq were to be interned. Most important, the Iraqis were to "facilitate in every way the task of British forces in the war against Germany and Italy." Baghdad lay open to Kingcol. The Iraqi gateway to the oil fields of the Middle East had been barred forever to Rommel and his Afrika Korps.

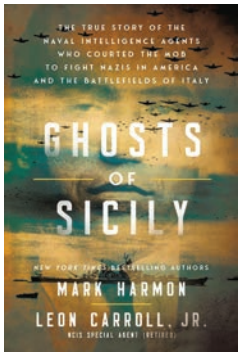
After the agreement was signed, de Chair took the flag of truce and cut it in three pieces. "Taking from my map case a thick black lead pencil I wrote in bold writing on the corner of each third of the flag, 'part of the flag of truce with which the emissaries from Baghdad were received at 0400 hours May 31st, 1941, to surrender the city and accept terms of armistice.'" De Chair gave one piece to Kingstone, another to Spence and kept the third for himself. □

Imperial War Museum

**ABOVE: During the course of armistice negotiations, the crew of a British armored car awaits instructions on the outskirts of Baghdad. OPPOSITE: Armed with Enfield rifles, British troops view Baghdad from across the Tigris River in June 1941, shortly after the Allied victory in the Anglo-Iraqi War.**


A Coast Guard–manned LCVP approaches the beachead in Sicily during Operation Husky in July 1943. Four members of the Office of Naval Intelligence fluent in Italian landed in the first wave wearing civilian clothes under their uniforms. Their mission was to make contact with local fisherman—referred by mobsters back in New York—in order to render the ports of Gela and Licata safe from booby-traps and mines.

# How the 'Sicilian Connection' made NYC safer and helped the Allies begin their conquest of Fascism in Europe.




Kapitänleutnant Reinhard Hardegen watches through his periscope as the shape of an oil tanker moves dimly past Long Island's Montauk Point, both the ship and the lighthouse are under blackout orders now that America is in the war.

Operation Drumbeat, the audacious German plan to disrupt the shipping of supplies to beleaguered England has already begun. Hardegen's *U-123* was the first of five U-boats to arrive on the U.S. East Coast and he has, in fact, already taken the British freighter *Cyclops* in Canadian waters on his way here.

On the morning of January 14, 1942, the 9,577-ton *Norness*, carrying 12 tons of Admiralty-grade fuel oil, has set a course for Halifax, Nova Scotia, where it is scheduled to join a convoy bound for Liverpool. Hardegen gives the order to fire a G7e torpedo that finds its mark. Then a second, and a third. The *Norness* will not make its rendezvous.

Hardegan sinks the British tanker *Coimbra* on January 15 and within hours, the other U-boats arrive. Over the next four days, they sink five more Allied merchant ships.

Though the news is alarming, the small group of men meeting in a nondescript office building in downtown Manhattan are resolute, logical. "American Federation of Little Businesses" is lettered on the door, but the room is home to the Third Naval District's ONI District Intelligence Office (DIO).

Tony Marsloe is meeting his new boss, Cmdr. Charles R. Haffenden, for the first time. Asked for his opinion on the sinkings and sabotage, Marsloe asserts that the waterfronts have to be secured. He can see that's the answer Haffenden is looking for realizes why he has been recruited—he speaks fluent Italian and he was a key figure in Manhattan district attorney Thomas Dewey's crusade against organized crime in the city.

Starting with Socks Lanza's union at the Fulton Fish Market, the network of the clandestine "Operation Underword" spreads throughout the five boroughs and New Jersey, catching in its net big fish and small—from the bosses on the wharfs, all the way to the top at the Clinton Correctional prison near the Canadian border, Charles "Lucky" Luciano, himself. The majority of the career criminals are surprisingly patriotic and eager to help— the Nazis are bad for their business, too.

Before long, plans are in place for Tony and three other agents to land on Sicily with the first wave, secure the ports, and make contact with Sicilians who have friends and relatives in New York and might be willing to help the Allies overthrow the Nazis.

In ***Ghosts of Sicily: The True Story of the Naval Intelligence Agents Who Courted the Mob to Fight Nazis in America and the Battlefields of Italy*** (Mark Harmon and Leon Carroll, Harper Select, New York, NY, 304 pp., April 14, 2026 $29.99 HC), Harmon and Carroll have given faces and feelings to men the public was never supposed to know about, the "ghosts" behind the scenes making the world safer.

Actor Mark Harmon, who starred as Leroy Jethro Gibbs on *NCIS* for 18 seasons, has teamed up with Leon Carroll for an exciting series of books, beginning with *Ghosts of Honolulu* (2023) and *Ghosts of Panama* (2024), highlighting the cases of the wartime predecessor of the NCIS.

---

***Berlin: Endgame 1945*** (Prit Buttar, Osprey Publishing, New York, NY, 448 pp., 8-page b/w plate section, May 5, 2026 $38 HC)

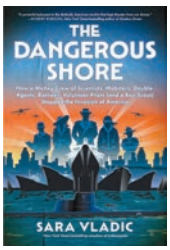

With nearly a million Soviet soldiers taking on the entrenched Germans outside of Berlin, there was little doubt about the outcome in May 1945. There would be a bloody, street-by-street battle, but the Third Reich was over.

Using first-hand accounts of the action, Buttar recreates the brutal clash between a Red Army thirsting for vengeance and the desperate, fanatical Nazis clinging to a last shred of hope. Even as they fell, a new war—the Cold War—was already beginning.

An expert on the Eastern Front, Buttar's previous books include a critically acclaimed two-volume series on the siege of *Leningrad: To Besiege a City* and *Hero City*, also published by Osprey.

---

***The Dangerous Shore: How a Motley Crew of Scientists, Mobsters, Double Agents, Retirees, Volunteer Pilots (and a Boy Scout) Stopped the Invasion of America*** (Sara Vladic, William Morrow, New York, NY, 624 pp., March 10, 2026 $42 HC)




While the fighting raged in Europe and the Pacific during WWII, those on the homefront had to deal with all manner of threats—both imagined and real, maintaining constant vigilance in the hunt for spies and saboteurs, both homegrown and those landed on America's shores by German submarines.

Obsessed with the USS *Indianapolis* disaster since the age of 13, Vladic would go on to become an award winning documentary filmmaker and a leading expert on the subject. She met and interviewed 108 of the ship's survivors, and in 2016 she released an award-winning documentary film on the disaster, *USS Indianapolis: The Legacy*. Her 600-page book on the subject, *Indianapolis: The True Story of the Worst Sea Disaster in U.S. Naval History and the Fifty-Year Fight to Exonerate an Innocent Man*, was co-written with Lynn Vincent and published in 2018.

---

***Bloody Skies: XV Fighter Command Against All Odds*** (Thomas McKelvey Cleaver, Osprey Publishing, New York, NY, 320 pp., 8 pp. b/w photos, March 10, 2026 $32 HC)


Though the "Mighty Eighth" based in England earned the most headlines, the U.S.A.A.F.'s Fifteenth based in Italy played no less important—and every bit as dangerous—a role in bombing targets in Nazi Germany, France and Eastern Europe.

One of their most important missions was protecting the bombers during the campaign against the Romanian oil fields. Fly along with such famous units as the 332nd FG, the Tuskegee Airmen, also known as the "Red Tails," the 325th FG "Checkertail Clan," and the "Fork-Tailed Devils" of the 82nd FG, who flew the twin fuselage P-38 *Lightning*.

---

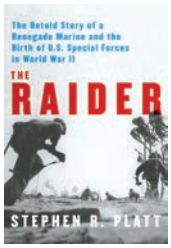
***Safe Passage: The Untold Story of Diplomatic Intrigue, Betrayal, and the Exchange of American and Japanese Civilians by Sea During World War II*** (Evelyn Iritani, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, NY, 480 pp., March 10, 2026 $33 HC)


Long and difficult, beset by bureaucracy, xenophobia and suspicion, the process of trading Allied civilians who had become trapped in Axis countries with the outbreak of world war for Axis civilians who had likewise become trapped in the United States was an exhausting process for American diplomat James Hugh Keeley Jr., who was charged with making it all happen.

Iritani (along with co-author Nancy Cleeland) won a 2004 Pulitzer Prize for the *Los Angeles Times* series, "The Walmart Effect," investigating how the company's push for lower prices impacted labor practices and international trade.

---

***The Raider: The Untold Story of a Renegade Marine and the Birth of U.S. Special Forces in World War II*** (Stephen R. Platt, Knopf, New York, NY, 544 pp. May 13, 2025 $35 HC)




The enigmatic Colonel Evans Fordyce Carlson, a "racially progressive, bleeding-heart communist sympathizer," returned to China in 1937 for almost two years to observe the Chinese Communist Party's 8th Route Army, led by Mao Tse-Tung, and spent nearly a year with guerrillas behind Japanese lines. What he learned there would change the tactics and attitude of what would become America's special operations forces.

In 1941 Carlson was named commander of the 2nd Marine Raider Battalion (Carlson's Raiders) and in 1942 led a surprise attack on Makin Island in the Gilberts (August) and a month-long raid beyond Japanese lines on Guadalcanal (November).

# Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

## FOXHOLE AIRBORNE EXPANDS TO THE SKIES WHILE OVER THE TOP TURNS THE CLOCK BACK FURTHER IN EXPLOSIVE WAYS

### FOXHOLE AIRBORNE

**PUBLISHER** SIEGE CAMP • **GENRE** STRATEGY • **SYSTEM** PC
**AVAILABLE** NOW

For those just joining us in the 'hole, the elevator pitch is war on a massively-multiplayer scale, with players zooming in close to control individual soldiers that each have their own crucial role to play in battle. In the case of *Foxhole Airborne*, that battle now covers land, air, and sea as players coordinate to tackle aviation logistics, paratroopers, piloting and more in an expanded and updated world.

Even knowing how *Foxhole* works at this point doesn't make its conceit any less ambitious. *Airborne* continues to make sure every soldier on the field and in the skies is an actual player, taking out fighters, bombers, recon planes and other essential aircraft in the hopes of turning the tides of a persistent war. The goal is seamless integration, which can most clearly be seen in the form of aircraft carrier deployment and the introduction of paratroopers. Players can now go behind enemy lines in new ways, further blurring the lines of functionality and strategy within these roles.

In addition to upgraded visuals, the expansion brings a ton of new units to battle, from all the included aircraft, each with their own in-depth damage systems, to airfields and all the ground crew operations necessary to keep them running. There's also an expanded map and newcomers to the game's fleet of ships, including the mine boat, light freighter, and seven new combat boats.

Last time we covered *Foxhole*, we mentioned the players involved in the game's logistics crews going on strike. We'll have to wait and see if any similar concerns arise in *Airborne*, but it all serves to show just how realistic this type of immersive MMO warfare can get. When it gets to the point that players feel like their work isn't appreciated, sure, adjustments may need to be made, but it also speaks to the fact that Siege Camp has something special on their hands here. If you haven't tried *Foxhole* yet, *Airborne* seems like a solid entry point, especially for those who fancy flying the not-so-friendly skies.

### OVER THE TOP: WWI

**PUBLISHER** GG PUBLISHING • **GENRE** STRATEGY • **SYSTEM** PC
**AVAILABLE** NOW

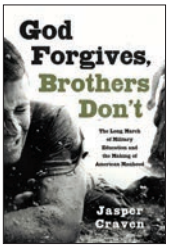
Dialing things back a moment from WWII, let's enter the trenches of WWI with the help of a recently-launched contender known as Over the Top: WWI. As the title implies, action and destruction are at the forefront of Over the Top, which boasts 200-player battles and fully-destructible battlefields, among other notable features.

With options to jump into the roles of German, British, or French soldiers, the 100-versus-100 player action comes hot on the heels of a beta test and a handful of community playtests. 12 maps are available at launch, each aiming to recreate aspects of WWI's Western Front. More have been promised as post-launch additions, and the team at Flying Squirrel Entertainment put a lot of work into carrying the same level of care and detail over to the game's vehicles, uniforms, and artillery.

Some of this attention to detail can be attributed to the fact that the devs are self-professed historical reenactors. As a result, they take a great deal of pride in faithfully recreating the WWI experience, from the classes available to players to the aforementioned battlefield destruction. Players can dig trenches and blow holes in the landscape, and details like the time of day, season, and the effects of dynamic weather all have roles to play in how the battle takes shape.

At the time of this writing, which is just ahead of launch, there's no means of trying *Over the Top: WWI* out for ourselves outside of an invite-only playtest. Hopefully the game's full release lives up to its potential, because there's always room for a more fast-paced and suitably "over the top" spin on battlefield actions. ■

*God Forgives, Brothers Don't: The Long March of Military Education and the Making of American Manhood* (Jasper Craven, Atria/One Signal Publishers, New York, NY, 352 pp., May 19, 2026 $29 HC)




Craven first delved into this topic with an investigative article featured in the May/June 2022 issue of *Mother Jones* with the headline, "Hazing, Fighting, Sexual Assaults: How Valley Forge Military Academy Devolved Into 'Lord of the Flies.'" Last year the the Valley Forge Military Academy (7th-12th grade) announced it would close following graduation in May 2026.

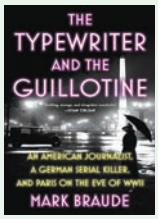
Blending military history and investigative journalism, this new book examines a long-established system that, far from fading away, is going stronger than ever. Craven found "a sprawling, well-funded network featuring dozens of military schools, like Valley Forge and West Point, plus thousands of ROTC programs in public colleges and high schools that allowed the Pentagon to wield outsized power on education."

A freelance reporter covering the military and veterans' issues, Craven has written for *The New York Times*, *Harper's Magazine*, and *Politico magazine*, among others.

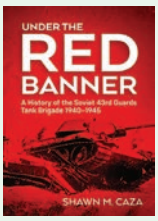
*Moonlight Crusaders; Special Duties Pilots over Occupied Europe* (Paul Smiddy, Osprey Publishing, New York, NY, 384 pp., 8-page b&w plate section, May 5, 2026 $30 HC)


A pilot since the age of 16, later trained by the RAF, the author has assembled a dashing narrative of the Royal Air Force's Special Duties pilots, who performed clandestine operations such as inserting or extracting agents, dropping supplies, and flying secret missions into occupied Europe, often using aircraft like the Westland Lysander—noted for its Short Take-Off and Landing (STOLT) capabilities. Pilots from the 161 Squadron flew these unarmed planes in all weather, avoiding German night-fighters and antiaircraft flak. Their missions provided transport infrastructure to support growing resistance movements in Occupied Europe. □

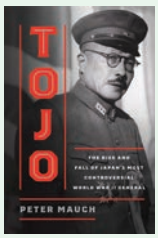
# New and Noteworthy




***The Typewriter and the Guillotine: An American Journalist, a German Serial Killer, and Paris on the Eve of WWII*** (Mark Braude, Grand Central Publishing/Hachette Book Group, New York, NY, 432 pp., January 20, 2026 $32.50 HC) American Janet Flanner began writing a "Letter from Paris" for *The New Yorker*. She stayed on to cover the rise in fascism and became involved in the case of a serial killer stalking Paris.



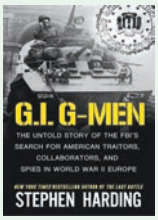

***Under the Red Banner: A History of the Soviet 43rd Guards Tank Brigade 1940-1945*** (Shawn M Caza, Helion & Company, Warwick, UK, 464 pp., 3 b/w illustrations, 12+ b/w photos, 108+ b/w maps, 5 figures, 21 tables, 22+ graphs, May 31, 2026 $89.95 HC) Traces in enourmous detail the daily actions of a Soviet tank unit throughout World War II.



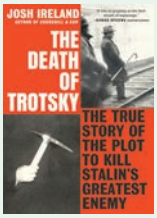

***Tojo: The Rise and Fall of Japan's Most Controversial World War II General*** (Peter Mauch, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 512 pp., 27 photos, 3 illus., 3 maps, March 3, 2026 $32.95 HC) The complicated rise and fall of Japan's most controversial military statesman.


***Into the Firestorm: The Allied Heroes Who Flew World War II's Most Daring Missions*** (Scott McGaugh, Osprey Publishing, New York, NY, 304 pp., 8-page b/w photo section, June 2, 2026 $32 HC) Uses after-action reports, letters, and diaries to chronicle the experience the "sitting ducks," who were expected to fly low, straight, and arrive "on time and on target."

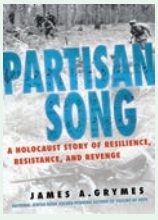

***The Bitter End: The Final Battles on the Eastern Front in World War II*** (Antonio J. Muñoz, Stackpole Books/dist. Simon & Schuster, New York, NY, 288 pp., illustrations, maps and photographs, March 3, 2026 $34.95 HC) The collapse of the Eastern Front and the final year of fighting between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in World War II.




***G.I. G-Men: The Untold Story of the FBI's Search for American Traitors, Collaborators, and Spies in World War II Europe*** (Stephen Harding, Citadel/dist. by PenguinRandomHouse, New York, NY, 416 pp., Feb. 24, 2026 $29 HC) Agents from the FBI's "European Operation" infiltrated underground networks, interrogated key suspects, and exposed spies and traitors within the Allied ranks.




***The Death of Trotsky: The True Story of the Plot to Kill Stalin's Greatest Enemy*** (Josh Ireland, Penguin Group-Dutton, New York, NY, 384pp., Feb. 24, 2026 $35 HC) Stalin sought to kill his rival Leon Trotsky, a key figure in the Bolshevik Revolution, for more than a decade. In1940, Soviet agent Ramón Mercader used an ice axe to murder Trotsky in his home in Mexico City.




***Partisan Song: A Holocaust Story of Resilience, Resistance, and Revenge*** (James A. Grymes, Citadel/Kensington Publishing Corp., New York, NY, 352 pp., Jan. 27, 2026 $29 HC) The previously untold story of "Uncle Misha's Jewish Group," who were credited with more than 150 acts of sabotage against strategic targets in Ukraine.


***Sonderkommando Elbe: The Luftwaffe's Kamikaze Force*** (Walter S. Zapotoczny Jr., Fonthill Media, Charleston, SC, 224 pp., 41 mono illustrations, March 30, 2026 $34.95 HC) On April 7, 1945, 180 stripped-down Bf 109s took to the sky with orders to ram Allied bombers.Unlike Japanese kamikaze, Elbe pilots were meant to parachute to safety after the collision.


***World War II Day by Day, September 1 to September 6, 1939*** (David H. Lippman, 305 pp., 2025 $4.99 Kindle e-book) Chronicles the daily events from Poland to New Zealand and everything in between, that led to the world's largest conflict—with perspectives from the Allied leaders down to pilots, sailors and soldiers.

## TOBRUK

*Continued from page 55*

outnumbered three to one, were overwhelmed.

The garrison surrendered on June 21, though not all of Klopper's troops obeyed the order to cease fighting. The 2nd Battalion of the 7th Gurkha Rifles broke through the perimeter, and it took an Italian corps several weeks to round up the tough little Nepalese warriors, some of whom reached Sollum. One enterprising sergeant scrounged Arab garments and a camel and trudged 400 miles back to Egypt to rejoin the Eighth Army. A truck convoy carrying about 400 British troops, half of them Coldstream Guards, skirted Italian defense lines and German supply columns and managed to reach the Eighth Army.

The last unit to lay down its arms in Tobruk was the 2nd Battalion of the Cameron Highlanders, which fought on for 24 hours before it became obvious that there had been a general capitulation. While some of his men tried to escape on foot, Lt. Col. Colin Duncan, the commanding officer, marched his battalion into captivity with heads high and bagpipers playing the regimental march. Angered by the display of swagger, a German major tried to order the Highlanders off the road, and Duncan felled him with his fist.

Rommel's troops took 33,000 prisoners, mountains of rations and other stores, and 500,000 gallons of much-needed fuel to replenish his scanty reserves. The triumphant Desert Fox, who had succeeded in removing a troubling thorn from his side, told a group of captured British officers, "Gentlemen, you have fought like lions and been led by donkeys."

After the Allied troops had been herded into a temporary prisoner-of-war cage in Derna, Rommel allowed General Klopper to address his fellow captives through a loudspeaker. Heckled and booed, he had to withdraw without delivering his message. "Everyone believed he had sold out to the enemy," reported Gunner W.A. Lewis of the Royal Artillery. After the war, the hapless Klopper faced a court of inquiry but was exonerated.

Coming four months after the disastrous surrender of Singapore, the fall of Tobruk dismayed the hard-pressed British and their far-flung colonial allies. Visiting Washington to confer with President Franklin D. Roosevelt about plans for Operation Bolero, the buildup for the Allied invasion of France, Churchill took the news badly on June 21. Burdened by a series of defeats since 1940, he said, "I did not attempt to hide from the president the shock I received. It was a bitter moment. Defeat is one thing; disgrace is another." He confessed privately that he was the most miserable Englishman in America since Burgoyne had surrendered at Saratoga.

Roosevelt asked, "What can we do to help?" Churchill responded, "Give us as many Sherman tanks as you can spare, and ship them to the Middle East as quickly as possible." FDR called in General George C. Marshall, Army chief of staff, to explain the prime minister's plight. Three hundred brand-new M4 Sherman medium tanks and 100 self-propelled 105mm artillery pieces were promptly loaded aboard six fast ships and sent to the Suez Canal. When one of the freighters was torpedoed off Bermuda, FDR and Marshall dispatched another vessel with 70 tanks. The weapons reached Egypt in September, just in time to be used when the revitalized Eighth Army launched its next major offensive.

Returning to the House of Commons, Churchill said of the surrender of Tobruk, "Not only were its military effects grievous, but it had affected the reputation of the British armies." He faced a vote of no confidence but survived it 475 to 25 votes.

Rommel held onto Tobruk, which changed hands three times during the desert campaigns. But his fortunes waned when the Eighth Army, now led by the able, peppery General Bernard Montgomery, started pushing back on the night of October 23, 1942, in the Second Battle of El Alamein, the first major turning point of the war. With the Afrika Korps in full retreat, British and Commonwealth armor and infantry reached the Egyptian border on November 11, and retook Tobruk on the 13th.

The 242-day siege of Tobruk was dramatized effectively in a 20th Century-Fox film, *The Desert Rats*. Released in 1953 and directed by Robert Wise, it starred Richard Burton, James Mason, Robert Newton, and Chips Rafferty. □

*The late Michael D. Hull wrote on a variety of topics for* WWII History. *He resided in Enfield, Connecticut.*

## VOSGES

*Continued from page 73*

we knew Murph had killed the sniper. The gun was a new make with a large telescopic sight, so large that it seemed impossible to miss a target with it.

One year later, in a letter to Rocco, Murphy reminisced about that day at Cleurie Quarry: "I often think about those little patrols we used to take together. Also, how old Finnegan used to cuss and say he was crazy for going but he always went. I still have the snipers rifle we got that day by the quarry. I have been offered a couple of hundred dollars for it but naturally I wouldn't sell it."

Contact with the enemy, in and around the quarry, continued throughout the day and night of October 4. While the 3rd Battalion, 15th Regiment executed a flanking movement around the mountain stronghold, the 1st Battalion drove directly on the quarry. Three battalions of artillery were brought up to the front to support the infantry, while tanks and the 10th Engineer Battalion blasted away the enemy stonewall roadblocks west of the quarry.

The next morning, the 1st Battalion moved up to knock out the remaining German positions, as mortar fire opened up on the mountain and quarry. "Under a creeping barrage," wrote Murphy, "we scrambled up the hill, bypassed the quarry proper and went over the crest." Combat patrols from all three companies of the 1st Battalion overran and destroyed the remaining enemy positions. After a grueling six day battle, the quarry had finally fallen.

That afternoon, the 3rd Division advanced along Highway 417 northeast toward Le Tholy, with the 15th Regiment in the center, the 30th Regiment on the left, and the 7th Regiment on the right. The "Marne Men" had been in combat since August 15 without a rest. The struggle for the quarry was over but the Germans, although bloodied, were still determined to stop the allied advance at all cost. □

*Retired history teacher Daniel R. Champagne is the author of* Dogface Soldiers: The Story of B Company, 15th Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division. *He lives in Salem, New Hampshire.*

# Sail Aboard the Liberty Ship JOHN W. BROWN


## 2026 CRUISES ON THE CHESAPEAKE BAY:

**September 12, 2026**
**★ Check our website for dates ★**
**www.ssjohnwbrown.org**

On a cruise you can tour museum spaces, crew quarters, bridge & much more. Visit the engine room to view the **140-ton triple-expansion steam engine** as it powers the ship though the water. For more information, check our website.

*Project Liberty Ship is a Baltimore based, all volunteer, nonprofit organization. SS JOHN W BROWN is maintained in her WWII configuration, visitors must be able to climb steps to board.*

For more information about the cruises we are planning, check our website:

**www.ssjohnwbrown.org**

★ ★ ★

Or call the reservation service:

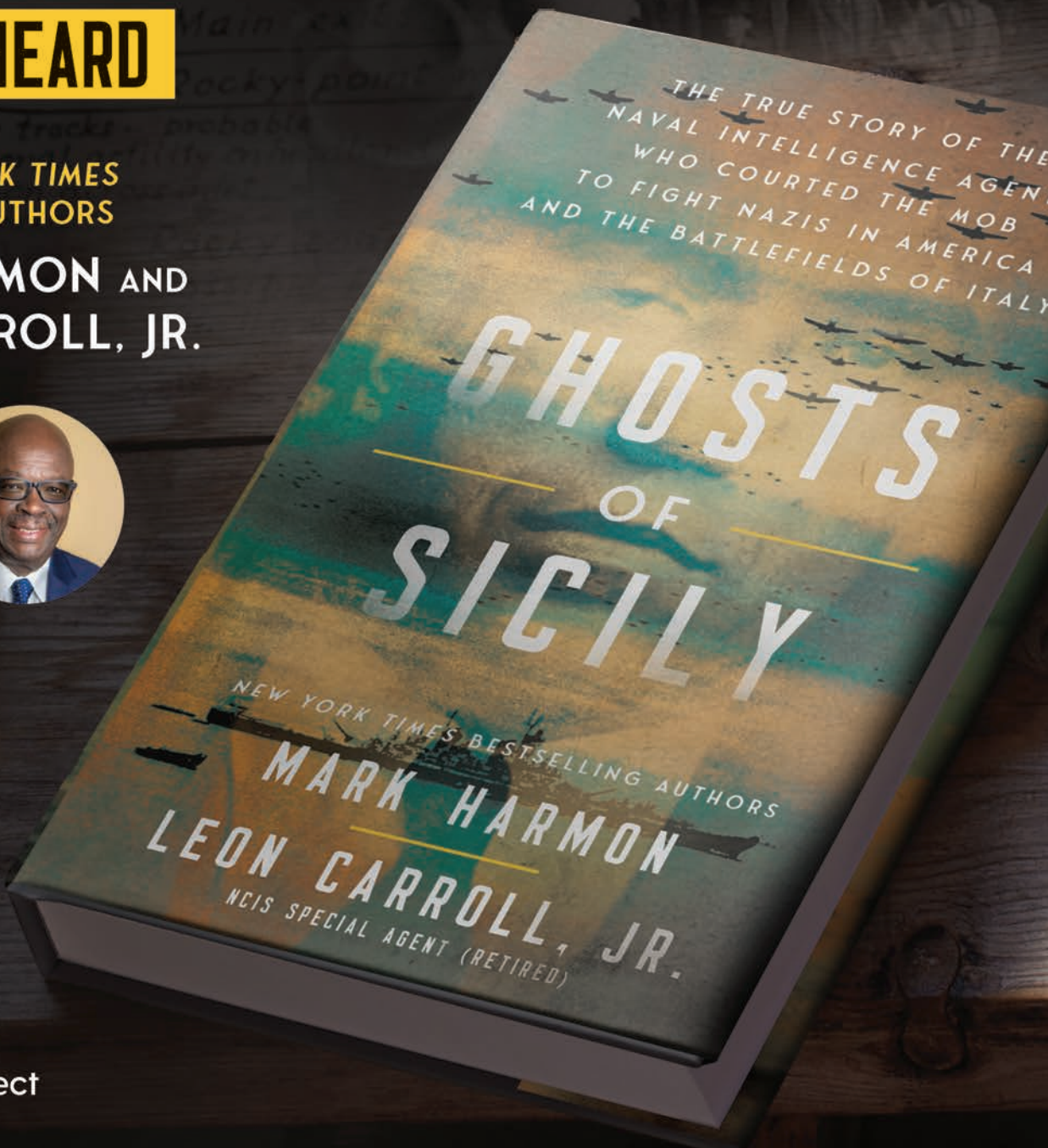
**410-558-0164**

# ESPIONAGE, THE MOB, AND THE U.S. NAVY:

## A WWII STORY YOU'VE NEVER HEARD

FROM *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHORS

**MARK HARMON AND LEON CARROLL, JR.**




Harper Select