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Contents

Features

28 Baptism for Pacific Paratroopers
The airborne drop at Nadzab, a first for the Allies in the Pacific, hastened the victory against the Japanese in New Guinea.
By Gene E. Salecker

34 Fascism's French Folly
Italian dictator Benito Mussolini declared war on France in June 1940.
By John W. Osborn, Jr.

42 Crucible of Caen
An Allied D-Day objective, the capture of the city required a full month of fighting.
By Michael D. Hull

52 Fighting Back in Papua New Guinea
Australian and American forces successfully stemmed the tide of Japanese victories in the Pacific War.
By Jon Diamond

62 Sacrifice Over Sicily
U.S. Navy floatplanes tangled with deadly German Messerschmitt fighters during Operation Husky.
By Patrick J. Chaisson

WWII HISTORY

Columns

06 Editorial
Redemption at Hill 609.

08 Profiles
Paratrooper Don Malarkey made a lasting impression on his fellow soldiers, historians, and television viewers.

14 Ordnance
The de Havilland Mosquito proved to be a versatile aircraft in multiple roles during World War II.

20 Top Secret
American flyers held captive in Switzerland often lived in ski resorts until they tried to escape.

68 Books
The Soviet Union employed thousands of women as snipers during World War II..

72 Simulation Gaming
Two war games take another swing with new additions and *World of Tanks* enters virtual reality.

Cover: An American soldier from the 32nd Division fires on the Japanese during the difficult Allied assault on Buna, New Guinea. See story page 52.

Photo: National Archives

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Editorial

Redemption at Hill 609

THE INEXPERIENCED U.S. ARMY MATURED RAPIDLY DURING THE FIGHTING IN North Africa. There was no other choice. Its British allies had been immersed in World War II since 1939 and gained a hardened edge. Its German adversaries were veteran troops of the vaunted Afrika Korps.

The Americans had landed on the African continent during Operation Torch on November 8, 1942. Three months later, their nose had been bloodied at Kasserine Pass. Adding insult to injury was the haughtiness of the British, who considered the Americans inferior and sometimes even referred to them as "Our Italians." Friction, finger pointing, and outright hostility were rife among the Allies by the spring of 1943, and the performance of the U.S. 34th Infantry Division during an advance against the pass at Fondouk compounded those issues. The 34th was commanded by Maj. Gen. Charles W. Ryder, while his immediate corps commander was British Lt. Gen. John Crocker.

Ryder protested Crocker's insistence that Fondouk should be taken by frontal assault but obeyed the direct order to launch the effort. The result was a bloody failure. Crocker blamed Ryder and American inferiority, ordering the 34th Division out of the line and to a rear area for further training. Ryder was enraged. The assertion was clear—a smirch on the reputation of the 34th Division and the U.S. Army as a whole. Ryder appealed to the American II Corps commander, Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr., and to II Corps deputy commander, Maj. Gen. Omar Bradley, a friend who graduated with Ryder in the famed West Point Class of 1915, the "Class the Stars Fell On," from which 59 members achieved general rank during their careers. The class also included Mediterranean Theater Commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Both Patton and Bradley howled their disapproval of Crocker's decision and appealed to British Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander, chief of Allied Middle East Command. "There was little indication that Ike cared," wrote Bradley, "so Patton and I undertook to avert what surely would have been the destruction of the division and the professional ruin of Doc Ryder, a valuable tactician."

Ryder was no coward. He had been seriously wounded during World War I and continued his career with a damaged heart. During the Great War he had received two Distinguished Service Crosses and a Silver Star for bravery, along with the Purple Heart for the wound. Bradley had skin in the game when he backed Ryder and the 34th Division during the subsequent drive to Bizerte in April 1943. Alexander agreed to give Bradley the division and allow the Americans to find redemption, shaking off the stigma of failure that often dogs an army that has been ill served or known little combat.

That redemption came at Hill 609 at the end of April. "Get me that hill," Bradley said bluntly. Named for its height in meters, Hill 609 was a rugged promontory that the Germans had festooned with artillery that regularly raked American troops trying to advance. The 34th Division was no different. A day of hard fighting resulted in limited gains. The fight dragged on, but the Americans were relentless. Finally, on April 30, supported by their own artillery and 17 Sherman tanks, Ryder's command claimed the summit of Hill 609. Subsequently, the 34th Division held its ground against German counterattacks for another full day.

"I was immensely pleased with this victory at Hill 609," wrote Bradley. "I was pleased, too, for Doc Ryder's 34th Division. As I had expected the victory restored self-confidence to the division, and no one ever again would question its courage. In fact, it went on to become one of the finest infantry outfits of World War II."

Seventy-five years ago, Maj. Gen. Charles W. Ryder and the 34th Infantry Division carried the honor of their unit, their army, and their country across an embattled stretch of Tunisian desert and up Hill 609—and won!

Michael E. Haskew

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By Kevin M. Hymel

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Easy Company's Malarkey

Paratrooper Don Malarkey made a lasting impression on his fellow soldiers, historians, and television viewers.

HIS COMRADES THOUGHT HIGHLY OF HIM AS A WARRIOR AND AS A MAN. STAFF Sergeant William "Wild Bill" Guarnere considered him his hero. Lieutenant Lynne "Buck" Compton thought him "a staunch patriot who truly understands the principles for which we fought." Major Richard "Dick" Winters called him "an outstanding soldier in combat" and "an esteemed friend."

The man they referred to was Staff Sergeant Don Malarkey, a paratrooper from Oregon who fought with Easy Company, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division across France, the Netherlands, and Belgium and into the heart of Germany. In a unit filled with nicknames—Skip, Shifty, One-Lung, and Gonorrhea—he was simply known as Malark. Don Malarkey passed away on September 30, 2017, in Salem, Oregon, at the age of 96.

From the hedgerows and villages of Normandy to the bridges and dikes of the Netherlands, from the frozen foxholes around Bastogne, Belgium, to Hitler's Eagle's Nest, Don Malarkey took everything the Germans could throw at him and survived World War II without serious injury, but the mental scars of seeing his buddies wounded and killed haunted him for the rest of his life. He became famous in Dr. Stephen Ambrose's 1992 book *Band of Brothers: E Company, 506th Regiment, 101st Airborne from Normandy to Hitler's Eagle's Nest,* and the 2001 HBO miniseries of the same name.

Little Donnie Malarkey grew up in Astoria, Oregon, the son of Leo and Helen, one of four children. He spent his youth playing marbles, swinging from trees, swimming in the Nehalem River, diving for crawfish, and hunting birds with a bow and arrow in cottonwood forests that smelled of blackberries. He was raised on stories of his two uncles who fought and died in World War I and who, he had been told, had never given up. At the age of 12, he made his first parachute jump, leaping off the roof of his parents' house clutching an umbrella. In high school he bussed tables at the Liberty Grill, blended flour at a mill to make money for college, and dated his sweetheart Bernice Franetovich.

He was attending the University of Oregon when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and left after his freshman year to work at a machine shop in Portland. Although the Marine Corps rejected him, the Army drafted him and he immediately volunteered for the paratroops. Sent to Toccoa, Georgia, he joined Captain Herbert Sobel's Easy Company. Sobel worked Malarkey and the rest of the company hard, leading them on runs up and down a local mountain named Currahee at all hours of the day and night. Malarkey grew to hate Sobel, wanting to tie him to a pine tree and "use him for slingshot practice," but by the end of the war he credited Sobel for keeping him and other Toccoa veterans alive.

It was at Toccoa that Malarkey met his soon-to-be best friend, Warren "Skip" Muck, from upstate New York. Both paratrooper hopefuls enjoyed a good laugh, good music, and talking about their girlfriends. Muck dated a girl named Faye Tanner, and her letters to him, as well as Bernice's to Malarkey, kept the men's spirits up during training. The two served together in Easy's mortar platoon and often ran up Currahee elbow to elbow. When Malarkey exhausted himself during the 506th's grueling 120-mile march from Toccoa to Atlanta, he had to crawl to the mess tent. Muck spotted him, took his

ABOVE: Don Malarkey served in Easy Company through the entire European Campaign. (Historic photo restored in color by Johnny Sirlande.) In 2005, Malarkey returned to Utah Beach on one of his many battlefield tours. TOP: Paratroopers from the 101st Airborne Division commandeer a German Kubelwagon in Carentan. Sergeant Don Malarkey witnessed the regimental chaplain giving last rites to the wounded in Carentan as enemy fire fell.

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ABOVE: One of the German artillery guns knocked out by Easy Company. Malarkey almost lost his life there trying to retrieve a German Luger pistol. RIGHT: Young recruits Warren "Skip" Muck, Joe Toye, and Don Malarkey at Camp MacKall, North Carolina. Malarkey quickly befriended Muck and later struggled with Muck's death.

mess kit, and filled it for him. Muck also stayed with him through the rest of the march, urging him on until they reached Atlanta.

After earning his jump wings at Fort Benning, Georgia, and completing further training in the United States and Great Britain, Malarkey parachuted into Normandy, France, to avenge his two uncles. As he headed to the rally point with a few other Easy men, he passed a group of German prisoners, one of whom had worked across the street from Malarkey's machine shop in Portland. The two exchanged a few words before Malarkey hurried off. "I'd only been at war for a few hours," he later wrote, "and already I was learning stuff I hadn't been taught in training. Namely, that the guy trying to kill you—and that you're trying to kill—could be somebody who once worked in an American defense plant, across the street from where you later worked. Strange thing, war."

Later that day Malarkey joined 15 other paratroopers from his battalion, led by Lieutenant Winters, in an assault on four German 105mm artillery pieces firing on Utah Beach, where soldiers of the 4th Infantry Division were making their way ashore. Malarkey led the assault until Winters stopped him—his rifle was out of ammunition. "[Winters] probably saved my life," recalled Malarkey. Once rearmed, Malarkey helped kill some of the German gunners with a hand grenade and capture another gun.

It was after his charge that Malarkey did something very human, and very stupid. He bolted from cover to retrieve a Luger pistol from a dead German. Despite Lieutenant Winters' shouts to stay put, Malarkey reached the dead German only to discover he had an artillery sighting device on him. Malarkey dashed back to cover as bullets kicked up dirt around his feet "like a late-spring hailstorm back in Oregon," he later recalled.

As Malarkey dove into the gun pit, his helmet fell off. He lay on his back panting while bullets smacked into the gun above him, dropping burning fragments onto his face. As he rolled over, he heard Sergeant Bill Guarnere call to him: "Malark, we'll time the bursts." Guarnere was in the trench about five feet from him. So Malarkey and Guarnere began counting the dead time between the enemy's machine-gun bursts.

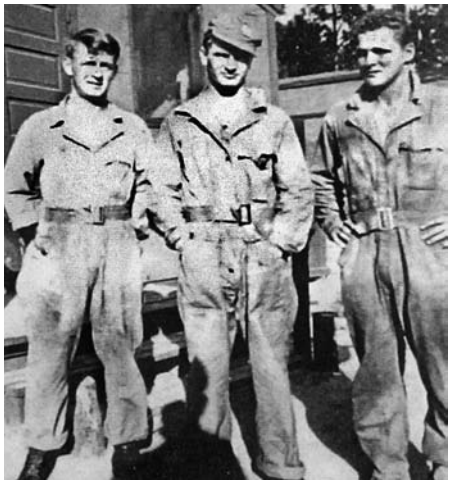
"Okay," called Guarnere, "next burst ends, get your ass over here." Silence, then Guarnere shouted, "Now!" Malarkey bolted and made it to cover. "Way to go," Guarnere congratulated him, "you stupid mick!"

As the paratroopers departed the battlefield, Malarkey covered the withdrawal by firing a 60mm mortar. When American tanks showed up, he joined the other men in clearing the field of Germans. Days later, he took part in the attack into Carentan, where he witnessed Chaplain Dan Maloney standing exposed in a street administering last rites to dying paratroopers. The next day, while defending Carentan from a German armored thrust, Malarkey received his first wound of the war when shrapnel from a mortar round tore through his right hand. He had it quickly bandaged and went on.

Once the fighting ended, however, Malarkey proved he still knew how to have a good time. When the division sailed back to Great Britain, he helped a fellow paratrooper smuggle a motorcycle onto their boat, and the two used it to barrel across the English countryside, Malarkey in the sidecar.

After almost two months in England, Malarkey parachuted into the Netherlands, where he helped capture the town of Son and the city of Eindhoven. The Germans, however, counterattacked outside the town of Nuenen, and Malarkey and a few of his buddies tore down a house door and used it as a stretcher to pull his wounded lieutenant, Buck Compton, to safety. Later, when a German attack on the main road north, called "Hell's Highway," split Easy Company in half, Malarkey found himself with Guarnere and a Dutch family in the basement of their house. When the Germans cut the

Michel DeTrez



highway again, Malarkey pulled burning British tankers out of their tank and dropped mortar shells on a German tank until it withdrew. Before departing Holland, he also took part in Operation Pegasus, the rescue of British paratroopers stuck on the north bank of the Lower Rhine River, and he captured a handful of patrolling Germans.

Malarkey got a reprieve from the war when the division was pulled off the line and moved to Mourmelon, France, where he won $5,000 shooting craps. The break proved short lived when three German armies attacked into Belgium and Luxembourg on December 16, 1944. The entire 101st was trucked to Bastogne, Belgium, before the Germans surrounded the town. As Malarkey made his way to the front, he grabbed a shovel off a knocked-out tank and used it to help the men in his platoon dig foxholes.

During the week-long siege of Bastogne, temperatures dropped and snow fell. Malarkey wrapped his legs in burlap sandbags and poured water over them, reasoning that the resulting ice would insulate his legs from the cold. He believed it worked. It was after the siege had been broken that Malarkey began to

feel the stress of combat. He lost a number of friends. Some killed, others wounded, and one, Buck Compton, overcome by battle fatigue. He saw Guarnere and Joe Toy each lose a leg in heavy shelling. It was then that Malarkey almost succumbed to shooting himself in the foot to get off the frozen battlefield. When Winters offered him a break to come off the front line, he refused, opting to stay with his men. He did not want to quit.

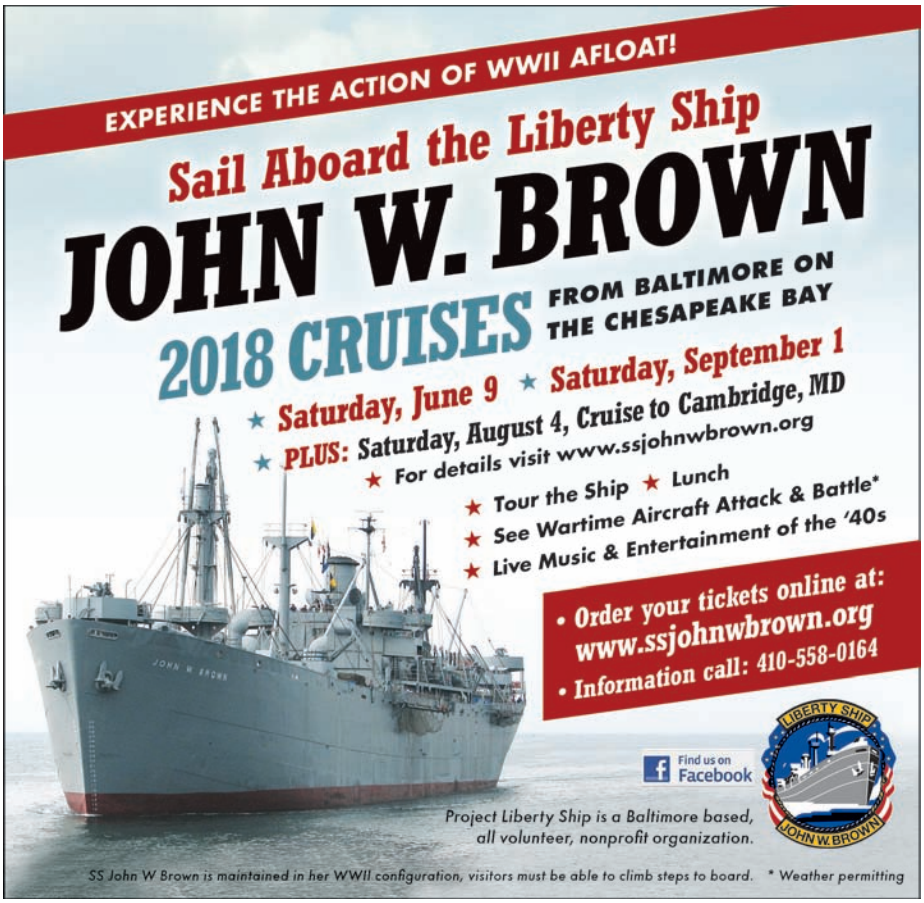
It was soon after that, on January 9, 1945, that the worst happened. After a heavy shelling, Doc Roe, one of the company medics, walked up to him in the snow and told him, "Malark, I'm sorry, but it's Skip. He's dead. Penkala too." Malarkey was too numb, too cold, and too tired to react. Winters again offered to pull Malarkey off the line, but again Malarkey refused. He buried the feelings about his friend. There was a battle to fight; he would mourn later. Almost a month after Muck's death, Malarkey wrote Faye, Muck's girlfriend, and told her how hard it was to go on fighting without "the Skipper." He promised to visit her after the war if he was ever in New York.

The fighting and killing went on. During the attack on the town of Foy, a mile north of Bastogne, two men were killed next to Malarkey, one a mortar man hit by machine-gun fire, the other a corporal, shot by a 16-year-old sniper in a barn window. Malarkey killed the sniper with his Thompson submachine gun, surviving the winter campaign while sustaining only a dent in his helmet from a strafing American Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighter aircraft.

Two Easy Company paratroopers patrol the dikes of Holland. Malarkey pulled British tankers out of a stricken tank and fended off a German tank with mortar rounds while defending "Hell's Highway."

In February, Easy Company moved to Hagenau, France, overlooking the Moder River. There, Malarkey again credited Winters with saving his life when Winters called off a river-crossing patrol, sparing the men the risk of injury and death with the end of the war in sight.

While in Germany as the war wound down, Malarkey woke up one night with fever and chills. He was sent to an Army hospital in Liege, France. By then he had served 177 days in combat, the most of any paratrooper in the company. He never quit, and he paid the Germans back for killing his two uncles. After Ger-



many surrendered, he rejoined the unit in Saalfelden, Austria, before returning home.

Malarkey's transport ship brought him to New York, where he connected with Bernice, who was singing with an all-girl orchestra. But he could not bring himself to visit Faye Tanner. He was about to board a train in Grand Central Station when it hit him. "It'd be funny if it weren't so sad," he later wrote. "I'd just survived World War II, but I couldn't go to my dead friend's fiancée like I'd promised her I would." He feared that he would fall in love with her if he met her face to face. He departed New York on a train for Portland, Oregon, leaving Bernice behind to pursue her singing career.

After a warm reception from his family and friends, Malarkey returned to school at the University of Oregon. Adjusting to peacetime was not easy. He would see and hear things that brought the war rushing back. Young students reminded him of the German sniper, cars backfiring made him duck for cover, nightmares of fighting in the Ardennes woke him, bathed in sweat and tangled in his blankets, and, of course, there were constant images of Doc Roe sitting next to him, informing him of Muck's death. He could barely look at a picture of the original Easy Company without tearing up.

His relationship with Bernice did not survive the peace, but one night he met and fell in love with a sorority girl named Irene Moor and married her on June 19, 1948. Together they raised four children. Through the years, Malarkey worked as the county commissioner of Clatsop County and sold cars and commercial real estate. And while his nightmares faded, they sometimes revisited him. He went into midwinter funks, thinking about all the friends he had lost. He related in his 2008 memoir, *Easy Company Soldier,* "December. January. Hate those months. Cold and dark. I still shiver because of the Bulge." He found refuge in alcohol until he found himself on a suicide drive up Mount Hood. Only an image of his wife stopped him.

In 1980, Malarkey attended his first Easy Company reunion. It had been some 35 years since he had gotten together with his former brothers-in-arms. It overwhelmed him, yet he considered the experience freeing. He wrote Dick Winters after the reunion: "There has hardly been an hour pass since I left France in November 1945 that I have not thought of you and the tremendous officers of the 101st Airborne.... It was without question the proudest and most cherished period of my life."

He finally connected with Fay Tanner in the 1990s. She had kept the letters he had sent her

National Archives

Paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division march out of Bastogne after successfully defending it from German attack. Don Malarkey lost numerous friends in the woods around Bastogne. "Skip" Muck's death haunted him for the rest of his life.

after Muck's death. They met at an Easy Company reunion at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. "I put my arm around her and we both broke down and cried," he later wrote. In 1991 and 2004, he visited Skip's grave in Hamm, Luxembourg. His first visit included Winters and Carwood Lipton, the company sergeant, and a group led by Stephen Ambrose, so he held back his emotions. On the second visit, however, he went to Muck's grave alone, reflected on their time together and gave in to the emotions he had suppressed for so long. "I cried 60 years' worth of tears."

The Stephen Ambrose book and the HBO miniseries *Band of Brothers* reminded Malarkey he and his fellow Easy Company veterans had fought the good fight. Oddly enough, he became good friends with Richard Speight, Jr., the actor who portrayed Skip Muck. But he did have some problems with the book and miniseries. He felt the Battles of Carentan and Eindhoven were exaggerated and that his company never saw any German concentration camps. He chafed that his character in the miniseries, played by actor Scott Grimes, portrayed him as from Eugene, Oregon, and that the German prisoner from Portland was killed on D-Day (Malarkey never saw him again and hoped that he survived the war and was living well). But both media highlighted his unit's exploits and offered him numerous opportunities to reunite and travel with his old friends.

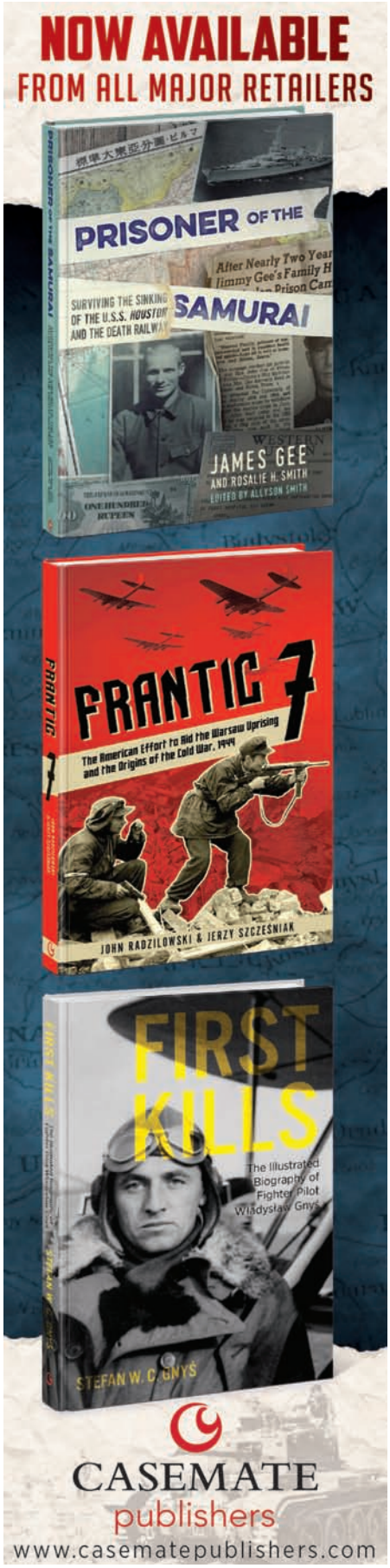
In the 10-part miniseries Malarkey spoke at the beginnings of Episodes 7 and 8 about the fight for Foy and the river crossing in Hagenau, respectively. In each, he struggled emotionally as he spoke of losing friends in combat. When he told about not being able to help wounded friends in an attack, he confessed, "I withstood it well, but I had a lot of trouble in later life because those events would come back and," he continued as his lower lip tightened, "you never forget them."

In the Hagenau episode, he related how Eugene Roe asked him if he wanted to see the foxhole where Muck had been killed. He commented, "I said 'no,' I wouldn't be able to stand that, so I didn't go look at him." In the follow-up documentary *We Stand Alone Together,* he spoke about treating Gaurnere and Toye after German artillery blasted off their legs. "I better not talk about it," he said. "I better not talk about it. Terrible."

In the end, Don Malarkey embodied the Shakespearean ideal of "band of brothers" from the play *Henry V.* He trained with young men like himself and developed friendships; he went into combat with them where he performed bravely and those bonds tightened. He suffered, watched his friends die or succumb to the rigors of battle, and he survived, escaping serious physical injury but carrying the mental scars of the friends he lost and the destruction he witnessed.

In his older years Don helped spread the word of his company's actions, teaching what men can do in the face of violent adversity. The Bard might have been talking about Malarkey's experience of combat when he wrote Henry V's speech to his soldiers: "And gentlemen in England now a-bed, shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here, and hold their manhoods cheap while any speaks that fought with us."

Kevin M. Hymel is a historian for the U.S. Air Force Medical Service and author of Patton's Photographs: War as He Saw It. *He is also a tour guide for Stephen Ambrose Historical Tours and leads tours to many of Easy Company's battlefields in Normandy and Belgium.*



By Michael D. Hull

Australian War Memorial

The RAF's Wooden Wonder

The de Havilland Mosquito proved to be a versatile aircraft in multiple roles during World War II.

OF THE MANY HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL FIGHTER PLANES AND BOMBERS IN THE Allied arsenal during World War II, none was more versatile or singular than the Royal Air Force's de Havilland Mosquito.

Constructed of spruce, birch, balsa, and plywood, the twin-engine, two-seater "Wooden Wonder" played a unique role in 1941-1945 as a bomber, U-boat hunter, night fighter, strafer, pathfinder, interceptor, and reconnaissance plane. It was the first true multi-role aircraft, with almost 50 variants built. Fast and deadly, Mosquitos flew in several theaters of operation, including Europe, the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, and the Far East.

Some aviation experts have rated the Mosquito as the outstanding British airplane of the war, ahead of the legendary Supermarine Spitfire, the workhorse Hawker Hurricane, and the formidable Avro Lancaster.

"The Mosquito helped transform the fortunes of the bomber offensive," said historian Max Hastings. "It was obvious that this was a real game-changer. In many ways, from the outset it became plain that the Mosquito was a much more remarkable aircraft than the Lancaster. Yes, the Lancaster is the aircraft that everybody identifies with Bomber Command, but in many ways, the Mosquito, although it has received much less attention, was a much more remarkable aircraft…. I think some of us would argue this is a more remarkable design achievement than the Spitfire."

Eric "Winkle" Brown, a wartime test pilot, agreed: "I'm often asked what type of aircraft saved Britain. My answer is that the Mosquito was particularly important because it wasn't just a fighter or a bomber. It was a night fighter, a reconnaissance aircraft, a ground-attack aircraft. It was a multipurpose aircraft."

The German Air Force had nothing equal to the Mosquito, except the Heinkel 219 Uhu (Owl) night fighter, which made its debut in June 1943. Encounters with the "Mossie" shook the morale of Luftwaffe aircrews, and they were permitted to claim two kills for each Mosquito they were able to shoot down. Reichsmarshal Hermann Göring, the boisterous, rotund Luftwaffe chief, admitted that the RAF fighter bomber made him "green and yellow with envy."

Like such famous warplanes as the Spitfire, Hurricane, B-17 Flying Fortress, P-40 Warhawk, and B-25 Mitchell, the concept of the Mosquito originated in peacetime. After taking over the reins of RAF Bomber Command in September 1937, sharp-eyed Air Chief Marshal Sir Edgar R. Ludlow-Hewitt strove tirelessly to upgrade preparedness as tensions mounted

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: This de Havilland Mosquito of No. 544 Squadron, Royal Air Force, based at Benson, Oxfordshire, is equipped with aerial cameras installed to facilitate high-altitude reconnaissance missions. LEFT: A de Havilland Mosquito bomber swoops low over the Nazi prison at Amiens, France, to bomb the structure and set free the prisoners held there. The versatile Mosquito was uniquely suited for such a swift attack.

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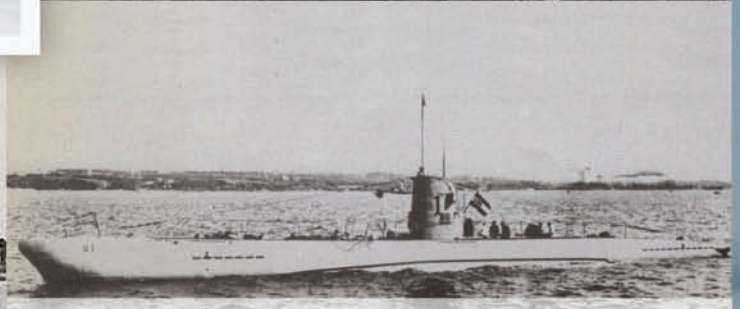
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Ground crewmen load bombs onto a Mosquito in Burma. Constructed largely of wood, the de Havilland Mosquito was a fast, maneuverable aircraft that excelled in multiple roles.

across Europe. In a March 1939 report he said that he had spent 18 months pressing unsuccessfully for what he called a "speed bomber." He believed there was an urgent need for such a plane to undertake photographic reconnaissance and harassment bombing.

As it happened, a similar plan had been proposed and acted upon by aviation pioneer Geoffrey de Havilland, a clergyman's son and cousin of Hollywood star Olivia de Havilland. At his aircraft factory near London, work was started on a wooden airplane that would carry no armaments and rely on its two Rolls-Royce Merlin engines for protection. Its speed would enable it to evade all other fighter planes. Design work began late in 1938 at Salisbury Hall, a few miles from the company headquarters in Hatfield, Hertfordshire. The idea of an all-wooden aircraft ran counter to modern design trends, however.

The Air Ministry wanted only conventional, heavily armed, all-metal aircraft. Unimpressed with de Havilland's plane, it regarded the proposal as wholly retrogressive and filed it in a "pending" tray. When war with Germany was declared on September 3, 1939, two days after the invasion of Poland, de Havilland saw no reason to modify his proposal, and, likewise, the ministry saw no reason to accept it.

But de Havilland found two powerful allies. One was Air Chief Marshal Sir Wilfred Freeman, "father" of the British heavy bomber force and member of the Air Council, and the other was Patrick Hennessy of Ford Motors, who had been brought in by Lord William Beaverbrook to help run aircraft production. Thanks to Freeman, de Havilland and his staff were instructed to commence designing a light bomber that could carry a 1,000-pound bomb load to a distance of 1,500 miles.

Work on "Freeman's Folly" began in late December 1939, and wood was used for its structure in order to conserve light alloy and other vital metals. Skilled and semiskilled carpenters, joiners, and cabinetmakers from furniture manufacturers around the country were recruited to build the planes.

The project was confirmed by an Air Ministry specification on March 1, 1940, resulting in an order for 50 aircraft. De Havilland's work was temporarily postponed, however, by the British defense crisis following the Dunkirk evacuation, the threat of a German invasion, and the RAF's desperate need for more in-production fighters and bombers. Eventually, after the Battle of Britain waned, the Mosquito program was reinstated.

With balding Captain Geoffrey de Havilland Jr., chief test pilot, at the controls, a Mosquito Mark I prototype made its maiden flight on November 25, 1940, at Hatfield. The plane flew like a pedigree, and, once minor problems were eliminated, factory testing proved that this would be an outstanding aircraft, exceeding the performance margins of its specification. Skeptical military and government officials were astounded when the plane was demonstrated for them.

The Mark I had a 54-foot wingspan, the maneuverability of a fighter, a cruising speed of 325 miles per hour, a maximum speed of 425 miles per hour, a service ceiling of 33,000 feet, and a range (with bomb load) of 1,650 miles. The officials were staggered to see the Mark I perform smooth climbing rolls on one engine, with the second engine "feathered" to prevent windmilling and cut drag to a minimum. Any lingering doubts about De Havilland's new plane were swept away.

Official Mosquito trials began at Boscombe Down on February 19, 1941, and three prototypes were built in secrecy at the De Havilland plant in Hertfordshire. Nine designers worked on the project, and priority production was started that July. The Mosquito entered production in less than two years after the design stage—a remarkable aviation achievement. The last of the prototypes to fly, on June 10, was a photo-reconnaissance version. The promised combination of high speed and altitude fitted the plane ideally for such a role.

An initial daylight reconnaissance sortie over the French ports of Brest, La Pallice, and Bordeaux was made by a lone Mosquito Mark I on September 20, 1941, and it confirmed the concept of high speed and initial lack of armament. The Mark I easily outpaced three Messerschmitt Me-109 fighters that attempted to intercept it.

The next Mosquito type brought into service was the Mark IV, which could carry four 500-pound bombs and was intended to replace the Bristol Blenheim, a much slower workhorse light bomber that had been operational for four years. Deliveries to the RAF's No. 2 Group began in November 1941, and the Mark IVs were assigned to No. 105 Squadron based at Swanton Morley in Norfolk. The next batch of planes was delivered to No. 139 Squadron at Marham, Norfolk.

The pioneering squadrons' pilots and ground crews spent the winter of 1941-1942 getting used to the Mosquitos and learning how best to deploy them in combat. The pilot and navigator sat side by side, working as a close-knit team, and the crews loved the new plane.

It was soon apparent that the Mosquito had an enormous capacity to absorb damage and that its structure was easy to repair. Mounted in a mid-position, the cantilever wing was a one-piece assembly, with plywood used for the spar webs and all skins. The fuselage consisted of a plywood-balsa-plywood sandwich and was constructed in two halves.

The leaders of No. 2 Group were eager to deploy their wooden wonders at the earliest opportunity, so operations got underway in late May 1942. Armed with bombs and cameras, four Mosquitos of No. 105 Squadron took off on May 31 to "harass and obtain photographic evidence" of the RAF's first 1,000-bomber raid on Cologne the previous night. The German air defenses were intense, but the Mosquitos had little difficulty avoiding Luft-

waffe fighters. This was the Mosquito bombers' first operational sortie.

The Mark IVs of No. 139 Squadron received their baptism of fire on June 25-26 when they made a low-level raid on the airfield at Stade near Wilhelmshaven. On July 1-2, 1942, the squadron bombed the submarine pens at Flensburg in the first mass low-level strike by Mosquitos. A series of high-level "siren raids" at night followed that month, as No. 105 and 139 Squadrons ranged far and wide across Germany. The aim was to deprive factory workers of sleep and to disrupt war production.

Roaming all over Nazi-occupied northern Europe, and even as far as Malta, the Mosquito squadrons continued to harass enemy bases, airfields, roads and rail lines, ports, and shipping with long-range "nuisance raids." Hit-and-run tactics were perfected, and the wooden wonders proved unsurpassed as low-level day and night raiders. On September 19, 1942, six of the planes made the first Mosquito daylight raid over Berlin.

Six days later, on September 25, four Mosquitos of No. 105 Squadron made the most daring mission yet attempted and the first such raid to be reported to the British public. After a lengthy flight northeastward across the North Sea, four Mosquitos flew at rooftop level to attack the Gestapo headquarters in Oslo. Their objective was to destroy Norwegian Resistance records being kept in the building, to disrupt a rally of Nazi sympathizers, and to give a demonstration of Allied air power.

National Archives

Sporting American markings, de Havilland Mosquito PR XVI of the 654th Bomb Squadron, 25th Bombardment Group sits near the runway at RAG Watton, England.

The headquarters was not damaged, but surrounding buildings were hit and four people killed. One of the bombs failed to explode in the Gestapo building, three others went through its far wall before detonating, and a Mosquito was shot down by Focke-Wulf FW-190 fighters, but the raid was later termed "highly successful." It panicked the Nazis and their Quisling allies. Many fled from the city, and their rally ended in chaos while Norwegian patriots cheered.

Involving a round trip of about 1,100 miles and an air time of four hours and 45 minutes, the Oslo raid was the first long-distance mission flown by Mosquitos. Armed with 20mm cannons, rockets, and machine guns as well as bombs, Mosquitos later attacked Gestapo headquarters buildings in The Hague and Copenhagen.

Reichsmarshal Göring boasted often that no enemy airplane could fly unscathed over Berlin, but he received a rude awakening on the morn-

ing of January 31, 1943, when No. 105 Squadron became the first full Mosquito unit to attack the German capital. The planes successfully scattered a parade that was to be addressed by the Luftwaffe chief. That afternoon, planes from No. 139 Squadron zoomed in at low level to disrupt a Berlin parade waiting to be brainwashed by Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels. The deadly and elusive Mosquitos were fast becoming an embarrassment to the Germans.

On one occasion, Mosquitos raided the Berlin radio station where Göring was about to broadcast a speech. He was delayed for an hour and was not amused. "The British, who can afford aluminum better than we can, knock together a beautiful wooden aircraft that every piano factory over there is building, and they give it a speed which they have now increased again," he declared angrily. "What do you make of that? There is nothing the British do not have. They have the geniuses, and we have the nincompoops."

The first Mosquito squadrons, Nos. 105 and 139, carried out their final large-scale daylight raid on May 27, 1943, and then took on more hazardous assignments. The following month they were transferred to RAF Bomber Command's No. 8 Pathfinder Group, led by hard-driving Air Commodore Donald C.T. Bennett. The Mosquitos led the way and marked targets for the main forces of Bomber Command's heavy Stirlings, Lancasters, and Halifaxes as they made punishing nightly raids on German cities and industrial centers.

Mosquitos were built in Australia and Canada, as well as Britain, and more squadrons were formed for a variety of day and night missions—low-level bombing and strafing, escort, shipping strikes, night fighting, and photo- and weather reconnaissance. The plane proved particularly successful as a light precision bomber and as a radar-equipped night fighter.

From early 1944 until VE-Day, the U.S. Eighth Air Force operated the second largest fleet of Mosquitos (more than 120) for reconnaissance duties. Many marks of Mosquitos flew under other Allied colors, including the red star of the Soviet Air Force.

Mark IV, IX, and XVI Mosquitos of the RAF and the Commonwealth air forces saw considerable service in the Middle East, while others were eventually deployed to the Far East after initial problems with the effects of tropical conditions on their wooden structure were overcome.

As the war progressed and the Allies began to gain the upper hand over the Axis powers, Mosquitos were in the forefront and performing a mounting variety of missions. While RAF Coastal Command Sea Mosquitos were going after U-boats in the Atlantic, other squadrons were photographing and harassing German shipping in the North Sea and around Norway; sinking enemy vessels in Bordeaux and other French ports; guiding and escorting RAF Lancasters on their nightly raids; dropping 4,000-pound "cookie" bombs on Germany; identifying enemy flying-bomb sites on the Baltic coast and elsewhere; and gathering vital photo-intelligence on German defenses and installations along the northern French coast before the 1944 Allied invasion.

State Library of Victoria

Flying off the coast of Australia, a pair of de Havilland Mosquitos make practice bombing runs during training exercises. The Mosquito served in all theaters of World War II and was admired by its Axis enemies.

Besides destroying important targets on the European continent, Mosquito fighter bombers scored hundreds of kills in aerial combat. And, like the 1942 raid on the Gestapo headquarters in Oslo, the wooden wonders continued to undertake daring precision assaults on specially assigned targets that garnered homefront headlines and cemented the Mosquito's reputation as a legendary airplane. The most spectacular of such raids was made on Friday, February 18, 1944.

British intelligence had learned that a number of important French Resistance workers were being held by the Nazis and facing execution at the prison in the historic city of Amiens, 72 miles north of Paris. The captives were needed by the Allies to implement sabotage plans once the scheduled Normandy landings had taken place, so it was decided to try and free them. Operation Jericho, a daylight precision raid, was hastily planned under the command of RAF Group Captain P.C. Pickard, a winner of the Distinguished Service Order with two bars and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Eighteen crews from British, New Zealand, and Australian Mosquito squadrons were hand picked for one of the boldest, most complex aerial operations of the war. They were to blast the prison walls in two places so that the prisoners could get out, destroy the wing where German guards were housed, and blow open the ends of the main building, but with as little force as possible in order not to harm the captives. Pickard told his crews, "It's a death-or-glory show, boys. If it succeeds, it will be one of the most worthwhile 'ops' of the war. If you never do anything else, you can still count this as the finest job you have ever done."

The weather on February 18 was vile, with rain, snow, and high winds, and any other operation would have been scrubbed. But the lives of more than a hundred Frenchmen, who might face firing squads at any moment, depended on the RAF. So a start had to be made.

Pickard and his Mosquitos took off, swept across the English Channel at low level, and blasted the prison on schedule. Out of 1,000 inmates, about 180 of whom were prisoners of the Nazis, 87 were killed but more than 250 escaped. They included Raymond Vivant, a key Resistance leader, and 12 of his comrades who were about to be executed. The raid was a spectacular success, although the gallant Pickard lost his life, and the Air Ministry hailed it as "one of the most memorable achievements of the Royal Air Force."

By day and night, there was little respite for the Mosquito squadrons in the last year of the war, and they distinguished themselves when the Germans launched more than 7,000 V-1 and V-2 rockets against London and southeastern England from June 1944 to March 1945. The flying bombs, nicknamed "doodlebugs," killed 8,041 people, injured 23,925, and destroyed 23,000 houses.

Along with antiaircraft batteries, Spitfires, Hawker Tempests, P-51 Mustangs, and Gloster Meteor jets, the Mosquitos played a key role in pursuing, intercepting, and downing the Nazi missiles. The Mosquito night fighters were particularly busy because the majority of rocket launchings took place after the fall of darkness. Two squadrons, Nos. 96 and 418, shot down 264 flying bombs, and Mosquitos caught and destroyed a total of 600 V-1 rockets.

Modified and equipped with bombs, rockets, and 57mm cannons, the wooden wonders also made many sorties against rocket bases in France and Holland, factories, roads, railways, and German shipping while continuing to scourge the Luftwaffe. By November 1944, Mosquito crews had shot down 659 enemy planes. They scored 600 victories over Germany alone. Much feared by the German Air Force, they turned Göring's night fighters from hunters

into the hunted.

While wreaking havoc on the Luftwaffe, Mosquito squadrons kept up the pressure on Gestapo installations at several continental locations, including France, Holland, and Denmark, to support the Resistance movements. They destroyed the Dutch central population registry in The Hague in April 1944, attacked the Gestapo headquarters there, and made two "surgical" raids—one with brilliant and one with mixed results—in Denmark.

On October 31, 1944, three squadrons of RAF Mosquito fighter bombers carried out a low-level attack on a line of terrace houses, forming part of the university in the historic seaport of Aarhus on the eastern coast. Picking out individual houses in the row, the planes burned up all of the Gestapo files and killed more than 150 German officers in a conference.

On March 21, 1945, a smaller force of 18 Mosquitos flew to Denmark on a more difficult mission. Zooming in at rooftop level, the raiders attacked the Shell Oil Co. offices in central Copenhagen, a six-floor block with prisoners on the top floor and Gestapo offices and files in the rest. Twenty-seven prisoners escaped, including two members of the Danish Freedom Council, but six were killed. More than a hundred Germans and collaborators were killed, but all of the senior staffers were away at a colleague's funeral.

One of the Mosquitos in the first wave flew in so low that it hit a tall pylon, swerved, and crashed into a school. Its bombs exploded. Several following planes bombed the school by mistake, killing 17 adults and 86 children. But Danish Resistance members were pleased on the whole with the raid. They welcomed back their freed comrades, looted some arms from the wrecked building, and confiscated a file cabinet containing "V-Manner" information on collaborators, the basis for postwar treason trials.

Mosquito squadrons continued their numerous "nuisance raids," pathfinding missions, reconnaissance sorties, and attacks on enemy U-boats and shipping until the European war reached a conclusion in the spring of 1945. Then they were called upon for new assignments—scattering leaflets over prisoner-of-war camps in Germany and guiding British and American heavy bombers dropping food bundles to the starving people of Nazi-occupied Holland.

A total of 7,781 Mosquitos were built—6,535 of them in Britain, 1,034 in Canada, and 212 in Australia. After the war, RAF Mosquitos flew against insurgents in Indonesia and Malaya and remained in operation until December 1955. They also were used by a number of postwar air forces, including those of France, Belgium, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Norway, Sweden, Israel, Yugoslavia, South Africa, Turkey, China, and Dominica. Ten of the versatile wooden wonders were even used in civil service, ferrying high-priority passengers and cargo between Britain and Sweden for British Overseas Airways Corporation.

In the postwar years, the Mosquito's unique wood-plywood-glue construction became its biggest weakness. While metal-framed aircraft endured, with many restored World War II types still flying, most Mosquitos simply rotted away in their hangars. After the last one crashed during an air show near Manchester, Lancashire, in 1996, killing both crewmen, there were no more airworthy Mosquitoes.

It was left to Jerry Yagen, an American aviation enthusiast, to remedy this situation. Over eight years and at great cost he meticulously restored a Mosquito. It was flown by Worcestershire-born Arthur Williams, a disabled former Royal Marine, who was the presenter of a British television documentary, *The Plane That Saved Britain,* which aired in the summer of 2013.

Author Michael D. Hull has written on many topics for WWII History. *He resides in Enfield, Connecticut.*

By Duane Schultz

National Archives

"What Are You Doing in My Country?"

American flyers held captive in Switzerland often lived in ski resorts until they tried to escape.

LIEUTENANT MARTIN ANDREWS WAS NOT SCHEDULED TO FLY THAT DAY. HE AND his Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bomber crew had survived 12 missions out of the required 25 and were due for a much needed week of rest and recuperation. But that was cancelled at the last minute, and Andrews and his crew faced their longest mission yet, to Stuttgart in southern Germany. It was Monday, September 6, 1943.

By the time Andrews and his crew left the target at Stuttgart, their instrument panel was shattered, one engine was out, another was trailing smoke, and the fuselage was riddled with holes. Andrews knew there was no way they could make it back to England. Their only hope was to try to reach the safe haven of neutral Switzerland. He realized they would be interned there, but at least they would be alive, not rotting away in some Nazi POW camp.

Andrews managed to land the damaged plane on a grassy field. Immediately the Americans were surrounded by Swiss troops armed with rifles. They took the American airmen to a barracks where a Swiss intelligence officer was waiting. "What are you doing in my country?" he asked. Andrews looked at him and smiled. "We're tourists."

Andrews and his bomber crew were one of five crews that landed safely in Switzerland that day. Of the 388 bombers that had set out from England that morning, 40 others did not return; their crews were either captured or killed. In total, 137 Allied four-engine bombers and nine fighter planes landed in Switzerland during World War II, and 1,704 airmen were interned, including some who bailed out over occupied France and were able to reach the Swiss border.

But not all the American aircrews that crossed the Swiss border survived. As many as 15 planes were shot down over Switzerland by Swiss pilots flying German-made Focke Wulf FW-190 fighters or by Swiss antiaircraft fire. Some 36 airmen were killed.

It is not known if these casualties were cases of mistaken identity or deliberate acts of revenge for the destruction and death that U.S. fliers had inadvertently caused in Switzerland. For example, on April 1, 1944, as a result of malfunctioning radar, intense cloud cover, and human navigational error, 38 Consolidated B-24 Liberator heavy bombers dropped 1,200 bombs on the Swiss city of Schaffhausen, 120 miles south of the intended target in Germany. Much of Schaffhausen's downtown district was destroyed; 40 civilians were killed and 270 injured.

In February 1945, there were 13 accidental American attacks on small Swiss towns that

National Archives

ABOVE: The B-17 *Chub* was shot down by Swiss fighter planes and flak, crashed in the neutral country and its crew interned. Americans who were interned were generally treated well.
TOP: The wreckage of the American Boeing B-17 bomber named *Raunchy* is removed from a lake in Switzerland, where it ditched during a mission to bomb Stuttgart, Germany, on September 6, 1943. The crew survived and were interned in Switzerland for the duration of the war.

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A collection of American aircraft interned in Switzerland during the war sits idle at an airfield somewhere in the neutral country.

caused 21 casualties. A month later, American planes dropped 12 tons of bombs on Basel and 20 tons on Zurich, leaving six dead and 50 wounded. Animosity grew on both sides. The American high command became convinced that the Swiss government was full of Nazi sympathizers. The president of Switzerland, Marcel Pilet-Golaz, publicly declared the American bombings to be errors but privately espoused the opposite view—that the attacks were "a deliberate retaliation for Switzerland's ties to Germany."

Despite the efforts of both parties to calm the situation, there were more incidents. Some were clearly unintended, but there were also times when Swiss fighter planes attacked American bombers that were trying to land in Swiss territory. Less than two weeks after the Schaffhausen bombing, fighter planes of the Swiss Air Force attacked an American B-17 even though the pilot had lowered his landing gear and fired off flares, internationally recognized signs of distress. Six of the American crew of 10 were killed.

Nevertheless, the Swiss government treated Americans who landed on their soil according to the terms of the 1907 Hague Convention, which dictated that all foreign troops had to be interned until the war was over. However, German airmen downed in Switzerland were quickly repatriated to Germany. Sweden, also a neutral country, repatriated the crews of the 140 American planes that landed there.

Like Martin Andrews' plane, almost all American bombers landing in Swiss fields were met by soldiers with rifles at the ready. On July 21, 1944, a badly damaged B-24 named *Ginny Gal* made a forced landing at a Swiss air base. The navigator, Lieutenant Strickland Holeton, reported that he saw eight or nine other Liberators that had landed ahead of them.

When he and his crew jumped out of the plane, they faced a line of armed soldiers. Holeton's first reaction was to get back in the plane, but one of the Swiss soldiers handed him a cigarette. "Is OK, is OK," he said. "Ich bin Swiss. You get flight pay!" referring with envy to how well the Americans fliers were paid. Holeton thought it was a promising beginning to their internment.

Jack McKinney, a B-17 co-pilot, recalled the "soldiers waiting for us to get out of the airplane. 'That's it' I thought. 'They're Germans. They sure look like it.' But then a little boy about 10 or 11 runs up and says 'Die Schweiz. Ist gut.' I gave the little fellow my helmet and goggles."

All the Americans went through the same procedures. They were interrogated by Swiss intelligence officers and asked for details of their last mission. Some airmen answered without hesitation, while others, like Andrews, refused to reveal anything beyond name, rank, and serial number. But whether or not they cooperated, they were not threatened, though Andrews said that he was warned by his interrogator, "I would advise you not to try to escape, lieutenant. Our soldiers are very good shots."

They were taken to temporary quarters in isolated mountain villages for periods ranging from three weeks to several months. Accounts of their confinement report that the men were allowed to attend church services, take long walks on the mountain trails, and to eat as many wild strawberries as they liked.

Andrews and his crew were sent first to a remote spot high in the Jura Mountains, where, as historian Robert Mrazek wrote, "Morale fell quickly. Some of the pilots shared Andy's sense of guilt at having flown out of the war.... Others began to realize they might have to languish in an internee camp for years." Decades after the war Andrews wrote, "My only solace is that I preserved the lives of the members of my crew."

In November 1943, Andrews' crew and others were sent by bus to a camp at Adelboden, which lifted everyone's morale the moment they saw it. A Bernese alpine resort, Adelboden accommodated the Americans in the seven-story Nevada Palace Hotel. The men had access to the skating rink, ski slopes, restaurants, and bars, and even a piano recital hall. The rooms had balconies offering magnificent views. The Americans were also free to walk back and forth to the neighboring villages.

There had not been any tourists in the Adelboden area since the beginning of the war, so the locals made a great effort to make the Americans (with their flight pay, which continued through their internment) feel welcome. However, the basic resources the Swiss could provide under wartime conditions were limited. Food and coal were tightly restricted because the borders were closed to imports, and food rationing was enforced throughout the country.

Pilot Charles Cassidy recalled years later, "The food was pretty basic: brown bread, home-grown vegetables, Swiss cheese, butter, but not too much meat, and ersatz coffee." But, he added, "The beer was good."

According to American historian Cathryn Prince, "The Nevada Palace, like other hotels across the country, was kept unheated. In the winter months, the water in the washbowls and toilets froze. The airmen often ate breakfast with gloved hands." It was not quite the paradise it had appeared to be.

The local residents, many of whom spoke English, were very friendly. The Americans found many of the young women to be attractive and available. "The boys always wanted to go walking and hold your hand," one 18-year-old said. Two Americans married Swiss women during their stay, and two more marriages took place after the war.

Private Norris King, a waist gunner on a B-17, wrote, "I remember at Christmas time [1944] the local children were invited to our hotel to see the movie, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. And I also remember loading a sled with gifts and taking it to a less fortunate family. I feel we were well accepted by the people of Adelboden."

"The Americans were entertaining," said a 12-year-old Swiss boy. "They always had

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money and lots of chewing gum. Most important for us, they had Jell-o!" Another Swiss, who was a child during the war, recalled that the Americans "were like angels from the sky."

As the number of internees mounted, the Swiss had to find more sites to accommodate them all. One was set up at Wengen, two hours away from Adelboden, and a larger one at the renowned resort of Davos. It was also decided to separate officers and enlisted men into separate camps, and the officers were assigned to Davos.

The main hotel in Davos, where most of the Americans were housed, was the Palace, where the desk clerk took pride in showing off two signatures in the hotel ledger from famous writers of the previous century, Robert Louis Stevenson and Arthur Conan Doyle.

Another distinguishing feature of the Palace is that it was across the street from the German consulate. Over the building's front door, facing the Americans every time they stepped out of the hotel, was a three-foot-tall eagle atop a swastika, the formal symbol of the Nazi party. The idea of being that close to the enemy was too hard for some internees to resist; on July 4, 1944, they managed to launch a bunch of firecrackers and homemade rockets at the building, then stole the Nazi emblems.

Both the Germans and the Swiss were outraged. It was illegal in Switzerland to insult foreign flags or emblems. Swiss soldiers surrounded the Palace Hotel, and the senior Swiss officer ordered all the Americans to gather in the dining room. He announced that they would be confined indoors and deprived of food until the German emblems were returned. They were given back, and the two American officers who had taken them, Lieutenants Oscar Sampson and John Garcia, were arrested and sent to a punitive camp. They escaped the following day and made their way back to England.

The Americans tried to keep busy playing cards and sports, having snowball fights, and learning how to ski, an adventure that resulted in several broken legs. They established classes taught by fellow internees. In the warmer months there was swimming and sunbathing. The bare skin they so casually displayed shocked some of the locals—and tantalized others.

Other than adhering to a nighttime curfew, there were no restrictions. "We had our freedom," Charles Cassidy said, "as long as we were present for bed check. Several times, to break the monotony, we hiked through the valley and over the pass to Klosters, about three kilometers from the Austrian border, to eat at a small café." They were even permitted to take tours of the countryside lasting several days.

Some admitted that though they were bored with their situation they were grateful to be safely out of the war. Others felt demoralized, guilty, and embarrassed that they were safe while their buddies were still flying dangerous missions over Germany, wounded or killed every day while they swam in the hotel pool or danced in the hotel ballroom.

They were determined to escape, despite warnings from their captors that if caught they would be sent to a prison camp rumored to be as harsh as the ones in Germany. The rumors were true, but many wanted to get out anyway, regardless of the consequences. A few men were able to leave without having to attempt to escape. In February 1944, Martin Andrews and six others were chosen by Allen Dulles, then head of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in Switzerland, to be repatriated in exchange for seven German airmen also being held in Switzerland.

Dulles had collected so much vital intelligence on the German war effort that he dared not risk sending it back to the United States by radio. His idea was to have the seven American airmen memorize the information and deliver it to Washington. Two weeks later they crossed the border into Germany and boarded a passenger train filled with German troops. Their route took them through Germany and occupied France to the border of Spain. And from there they flew to Washington.

When the captured American airmen first arrived in Switzerland they had been warned that anyone caught trying to escape would be considered a criminal under international law. And even if they succeeded in escaping from their Swiss internment site and reached American lines they would be court-martialed, returned to Switzerland, and jailed.

But that was not true, even though they had been given that warning by Brig. Gen. Barnwell Legge, the American military attaché in Bern, the Swiss capital. Lieutenant James Mahaffey recalled General Legge's "Welcome to Switzerland" speech to the new internees: "I'll never forget that pompous SOB Legge. Strutting around, dressed in his cavalry boots, swagger stick under his arm, telling us how lucky we were, how nice Switzerland was and ordering us to make no attempts to escape. Of course, this was contrary to our own Air Force orders to 'make every effort to return to your unit.'"

Despite the threats from General Legge and the rumors of rough treatment awaiting escapees, just over half the internees tried to get out. Of the 948 who attempted to escape, 184 were caught, leaving 764 who made it to freedom. In many cases, they were actively helped by Swiss citizens. Many other Swiss made no

effort to inform the authorities if they came across fleeing Americans.

Those caught were labeled "prisoners" rather than "internees" and were sent off to a penitentiary camp called Wauwilermoos, built in a swamp outside the city of Lucerne. It was one of three maximum security prisons in Switzerland for violent criminals; the inmates included Russians, Poles, Italians, French, Yugoslavs, British, and Germans. By the last months of the war, the camp also housed 376 Americans, escapees as well as those convicted of being drunk and disorderly or of violent behavior.

The men lived behind double rows of barbed wire with watchtowers and vicious guards armed with submachine guns and patrolling with dogs, which were sometimes set upon the men simply for the guards' amusement. The flimsy wooden barracks were not heated and had been built to house 20 men each, but as many as 90 were forced to live in each one. Beds were wooden planks or just a pile of straw on the floor. The latrines were open trenches lined with bricks, cleaned once a week by the inmates.

Sergeant Daniel Culler, a tail gunner on a B-24, wrote, "As I entered the barrack, the stench was mindboggling. One look at the inside and I knew this was a place designed to break prisoners down to nothing more than the lowest type of earthly creature. The Swiss treat their animals better than this."

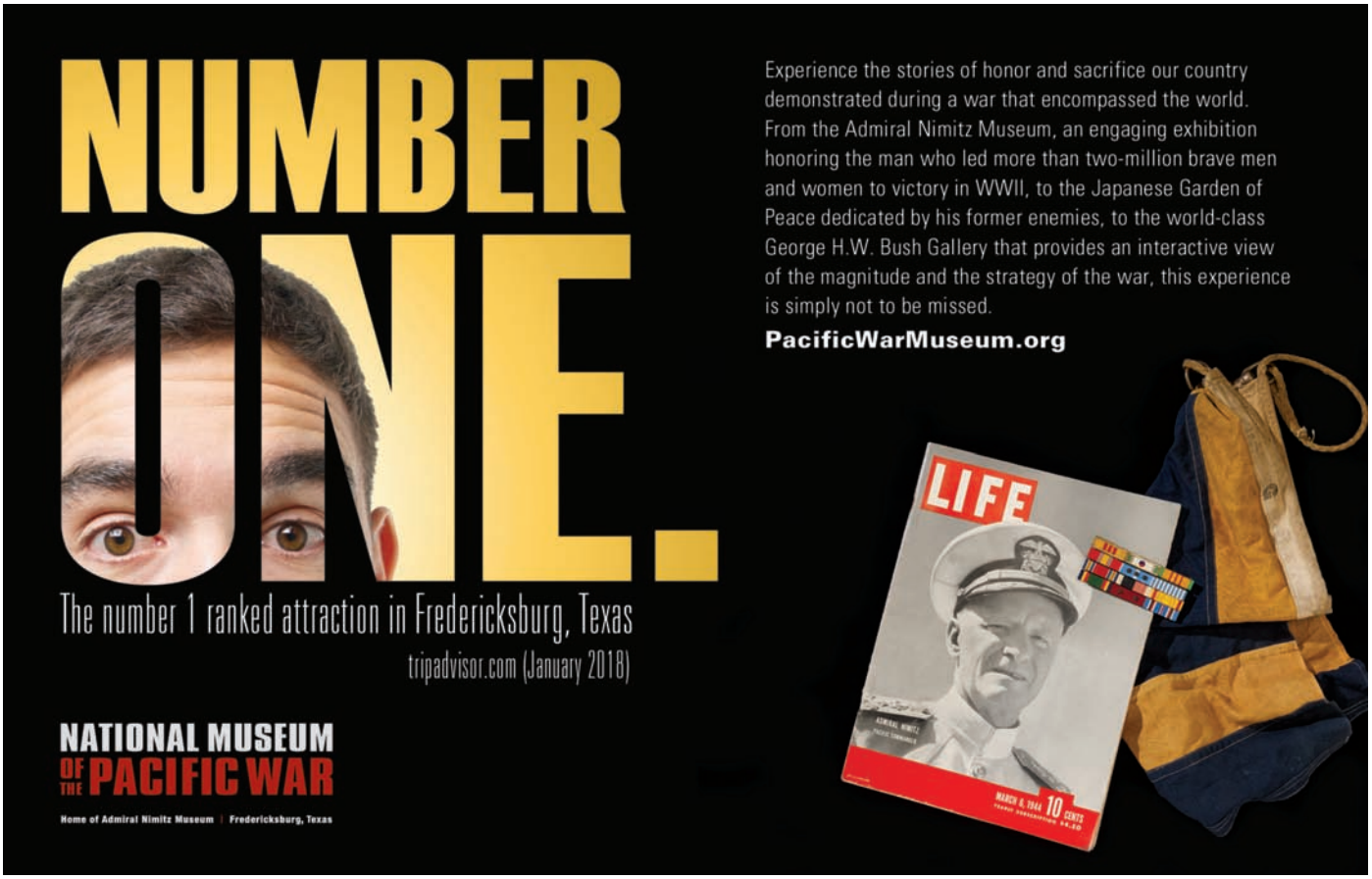
National Archives

Swiss guards walk sentry duty at the prison camp at Wauwilermoos. American internees who attempted to escape or caused trouble were often imprisoned there, and the living conditions were far from comfortable.

The men were given little medical care and barely sufficient food. "Our daily meals were cabbage soup," Lieutenant Larry Lawler said. "We got our protein from worms that were in the cabbage." The men lost as much as 40 pounds during their time in Wauwilermoos.

A 20-year-old American was repeatedly beaten and sexually assaulted by a gang of Russian prisoners, and the camp commandant refused to respond to his pleas for help. "Even death ... would have been more welcome than what I was about to face," the American later wrote.

As a result of the inadequate diet and poor sanitary conditions, the men became sick with dysentery, boils, and a variety of diseases that would not have been difficult to treat had decent medical care been made available.



The camp commandant was a sadistic, 47-year-old Swiss Nazi, Captain Andre-Henri Beguin. Lieutenant James Misuraca commented that Beguin was "a hater of Americans, a martinet who seemed quite pleased with our predicament." Beguin also frequently refused to distribute Red Cross parcels and mail to the Americans.

After the war, Beguin was court-martialed by the Swiss Army for fraud, adultery, and extorting money from his staff. He was given a 3 ½-year prison sentence. However, no one, including Swiss authorities, the American legation, or the International Red Cross, protested against his brutal treatment of prisoners during the war. A report by the International Red Cross declared, "There isn't any abuse here, but on the contrary strict control on the part of the commandant of the Camp."

All that was about to end as American troops who invaded the south of France neared the Swiss border. General Legge made preparations for the repatriation of the American internees. The first repatriation occurred February 17, 1945, when 473 Americans left Adelboden for their long journey home. The airmen may have been relieved, but not so the Swiss. "The day they left, the whole village cried," Margrit Thuller said. "Our friends were leaving us." Other groups departed over the next three months until, finally, on May 29, 1945, just 19 days after the German surrender, the last American airman detained in Switzerland was taken across the border. The war was finally over for the men whose planes had landed in Switzerland.

When they returned to the United States, however, they found a different kind of war, a battle to reclaim their honor and reputation, to win formal recognition as prisoners of war. Many of their fellow airmen, and many civilians as well, believed that those who landed their airplanes in a neutral country did so for only one reason—to sit out the war.

Colonel Archie Olds, an Eighth Air Force wing commander, remembered how angry he grew every time he saw planes heading toward Switzerland during a mission. "I sat in my cockpit and cussed those sons of bitches when I would see them leaving. I didn't really know whether they were crippled or not." Others thought that internees were slackers, just cowards living an easy life. Rumors spread on the American bases in England that some internees had even packed their bags with civilian clothes and liquor to take on their next mission so they could make the most of their so-called holiday in Switzerland.

Lieutenant Leroy Newby recalled decades later, "It was an inside joke among all of us that

if we ever got anywhere near Switzerland, we would feather an engine and wing it for the Promised Land. We had heard tales of downed fliers living in swank resort hotels, drinking fine wines, eating good food, and dating bad girls."

Those in high command grew concerned about the effects of the rumors on the morale of those flying combat missions. On July 29, 1944, General Carl A. "Tooey" Spaatz, commander of all the Air Forces in the European Theater, wrote, "We resent the implication that these men are cowards, are low in morale, or lack the will to fight. Such is a base slander against the most courageous group of fighting men in the war."

Two weeks later Allen Dulles wrote, "No case of any nature has come to the attention of myself or [General Legge] giving the least credence to the report that American airmen are attempting to evade any more combat by landing here. I believe this nothing but ill-willed propaganda inspired by Nazis."

Not long after the German surrender, General Spaatz sent several hundred technicians to inspect the planes that had come down in Switzerland. Their reports indicated that all but one or two were sufficiently damaged, disabled, or low enough on fuel to have been unable to return to England. But even that report did not dampen the rumors about those who had been interned in Switzerland. No mention was made of the men who tried to escape their confinement, and it was not until 1996 that the U.S. government officially recognized that Wauwilermoos had been a brutal prison camp.

U.S. Air Force

Staff Sergeant John Fox (right), held prisoner at the Wauwilermoos camp in Switzerland, receives the Prisoner of War Medal in 2014 from Air Force General Mark Welsh III.

Even then, Americans imprisoned at Wauwilermoos were not granted formal POW status, which meant that they could not receive medical and financial benefits or disability compensation for injuries or illnesses due those who had been certified as prisoners of war. It was not until nearly 70 years after World War II ended in Europe, on April 30, 2014, in a ceremony at the Pentagon, that the U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff, General Mark Welsh III, presented Prisoner of War Medals to eight survivors of Wauwilermoos (a ninth medal was presented to the son of a Wauwilermoos survivor).

These men were finally granted their POW status thanks to the 15-year effort of a history professor at West Point, Major Dwight Mears, whose grandfather (Lieutenant George Mears) had been a prisoner at Wauwilermoos.

One of the men honored that day, Alva Moss, who had bailed out of his flaming B-24 over Switzerland with both legs full of shrapnel, talked to a reporter after the ceremony. "This is a great time for us," he said. "Everyone was together again." Then he added—as though it was something he had been waiting for many years to say—"and there were no slackers."

Duane Schultz has written more than two dozen books and articles on military history. His most recent book is Patton's Last Gamble: The Hammelburg Raid *(Stackpole, March 2018). He can be reached at www.duaneschultz.com.*

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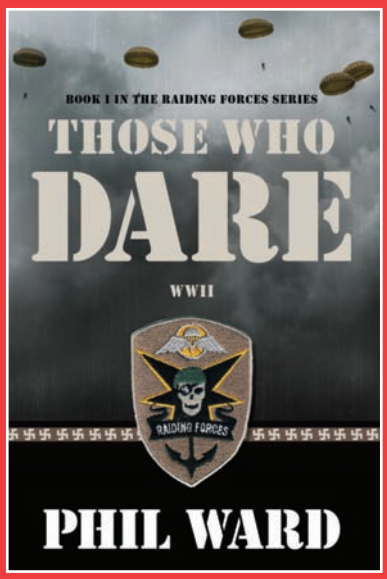

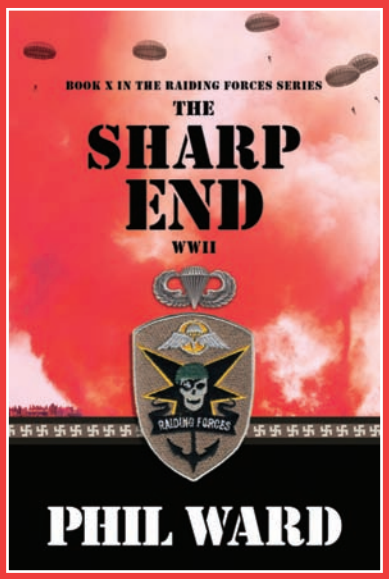

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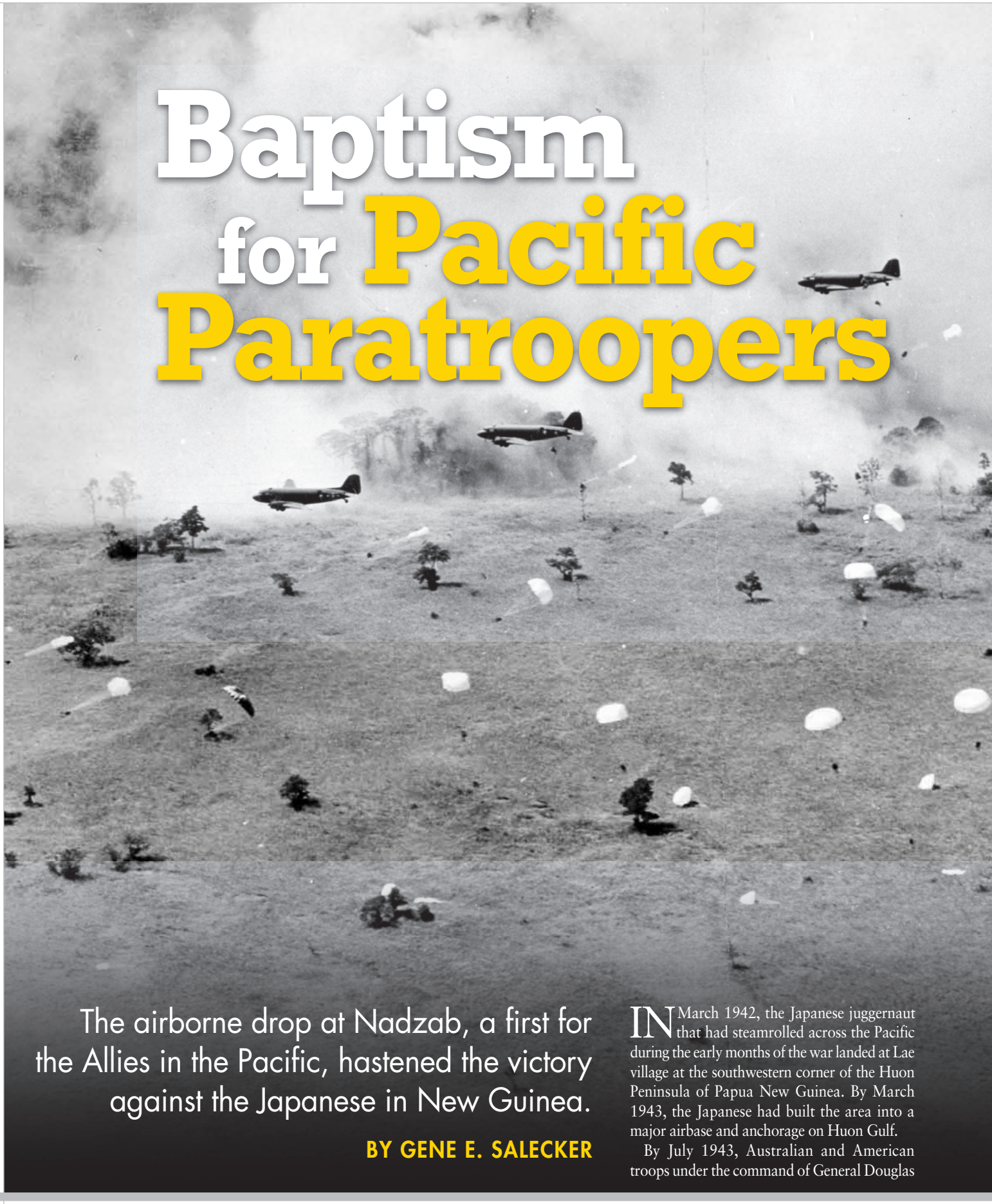

The airborne drop at Nadzab, a first for the Allies in the Pacific, hastened the victory against the Japanese in New Guinea.

BY GENE E. SALECKER

IN March 1942, the Japanese juggernaut that had steamrolled across the Pacific during the early months of the war landed at Lae village at the southwestern corner of the Huon Peninsula of Papua New Guinea. By March 1943, the Japanese had built the area into a major airbase and anchorage on Huon Gulf.

By July 1943, Australian and American troops under the command of General Douglas

American paratroopers of the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment descend from their Douglas C-47 transport aircraft toward the airstrip at Nadzab, New Guinea, on September 11, 1943. Another battalion is coming down in the distance behind the protective cover of a smokescreen.

MacArthur had stopped the Japanese advance toward Port Moresby on New Guinea's southern coast and had begun to overpower Japanese strongpoints along the island's northwestern coast. In late June, American troops had landed at Nassau Bay, 45 miles south of Lae, and after linking up with Australian troops that had been pushing the retreating Japanese westward through the jungle, turned northward toward the small village of Salamaua, about 20 miles south of Lae.

As the American and Australian troops closed in on Salamaua, the Japanese began shifting troops toward the threatened area. This was exactly what General MacArthur wanted. He was hoping to weaken the Japanese garrison at Lae and capture the Markham Valley, 17 miles west, and the Huon Peninsula to the east. Then the Allies would converge on Lae from opposite directions. Eventually, the date for the attack was set for September 4.

MacArthur planned to have a combined Australian and American force of approximately 16,400 men make an amphibious landing 20 miles east of Lae on the south coast of the Huon Peninsula and attack westward. The next day, the U.S. 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment

National Archives

(PIR), aided by the Australian 2/6th Field Artillery would drop on an abandoned civilian airstrip at Nadzab on the north bank of the Markham River about 17 miles northwest of Lae. Once the airfield was in American hands, the Australian 7th Division would be airlifted onto the captured airfield and attack eastward, becoming the second wing of a pincer movement on Lae.

The attack and seizure of the Markham Valley and the Huon Peninsula included a lot of firsts for the Pacific War. The jump by the 503rd PIR would be the first American combat parachute drop in the Pacific. This would be the first and only time in the Pacific that an entire regiment was dropped in one lift. The combination parachute drop, airlift, and amphibious assault would also be a first in the Pacific.

Australian War Memorial

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TOP: Jumping in support of American paratroopers of the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment, Australian troops of the 2/4th Field Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery, check their parachutes and gear before making their first combat jump. ABOVE: Parachutes billow as troopers exit from a transport plane somewhere over New Guinea. The drop executed at Nadzab by the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment was the first American operation of its kind in the Pacific. OPPOSITE: The skies above Nadzab became a beehive of activity as C-47 transport planes were accompanied on their mission by 146 Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighter planes. Some of the fighters flew close to the C-47s while others flew top cover at higher altitude. One of two groups of C-47s in this image approaches its drop zone from 15,000 feet.

In preparation for the airborne assault, the 503rd PIR, which had been rushed to Australia in November 1942 but had seen no action, was moved to an area 17 miles north of Port Moresby conveniently called 17 Mile. A large 3-D layout of the Nadzab area was constructed inside the tent of Colonel Kenneth H. Kinsler, commander of the paratroopers, and by September 3 all of the officers and troopers were familiar with the area of their drop zone.

Among the information passed along to every trooper was the fact that since Nadzab was an abandoned field, kunai grass, with thin, razor-sharp leaves, had reclaimed the area and might be about four feet high.

Colonel Kinsler wanted his 1st Battalion to jump directly on the airfield. The paratroopers would then link up with a detachment of Australian engineers and native laborers, which would arrive by boat via the Markham River and start the reclamation of the abandoned airstrip.

Kinsler's 2nd Battalion would be dropped to the north of the airstrip and attack any Japanese within Gabsonkek, a small native village north of the airfield. Finally, the 3rd Battalion would jump to the east of the airfield and move south to the bank of the Markham River.

Later on September 3, four officers and 27 men from the Australian 2/4th Field Artillery arrived at the paratrooper bivouac area. They brought with them two 25-pounder short Mk-1 artillery pieces, which they planned to dismantle and drop with them onto Nadzab. Unfortunately, none of the Australians had ever been given jump training, so they were all given a quick course in how to jump from a moving plane. At the end of the day, the artillerists went up and took their one and only practice jump.

The men of the 503rd PIR were awakened before 3 AM on September 5, 1943, and fed breakfast in the dark. They quickly gathered up their parachutes and equipment and were trucked to two different airdromes near Port Moresby. At 8:25, after loading aboard the 82 waiting Douglas C-47 transport planes of the 317th Troop Carrier Group, the aircraft began taking off from the two airdromes.

When all the planes were in the air and assembled, they climbed to 9,000 feet to get over the Owen Stanley Mountains. Once over, the planes dropped back down to 3,500 feet and reformed into three parallel battalion flights. Near 10 AM, the jumpmasters opened the doors from the port sides of the C-47s and called for the men to "stand up and hook up." In 15 minutes the paratroopers would be jumping on Nadzab field.

On one plane, carrying 15 paratroopers from

National Archives

"Hell, I didn't know where I was ... and frankly by then I didn't much give a damn where the bundle was. I was suffocating in the tall grass and was hoping to hell the Japs, if there were any, or somebody else, didn't strike a match."

Company C, 1st Battalion, a defective door blew from its hinges and got hung up on the outside of the plane. Fearing that the stuck door would "endanger the life of every man who would have tried to jump," the decision was made to abort the mission. Fifteen disappointed paratroopers sat back down as their plane returned to Port Moresby.

Identifying the Markham River, the C-47 pilots dropped down to about 500 feet. At such a low altitude the weather suddenly became hot and humid. The sudden drop in altitude, the high humidity, the bumpiness of the airplanes due to the humid air, and the high anxiety accompanying this first combat jump caused a number of paratroopers to become airsick and reach for the "honey buckets." On one flight, one man passed out and slid to the floor of the plane.

Preceding the C-47s, and rushing in at 9:59 AM were six squadrons of North American B-25 Mitchell bombers from Lt. Gen. George C. Kenney's Fifth Air Force, which strafed and bombed the jump areas and surrounding villages. At the Nadzab airstrip, six Douglas A-20 Havoc bombers dropped down low. Their bombs belched a thick column of smoke that suddenly obscured the jungle from the airstrip.

At 10:22 AM, Lt. Col. John J. Tolson, the commanding officer of the 3rd Battalion, became the first American paratrooper to make a combat parachute drop in the Pacific War. Tolson's battalion planes were on the far right side of the formation since his battalion had been given the assignment of securing the area east of the airstrip. However, because the lead pilots got confused and hesitated a few minutes before turning on the green "Go" light, about half of the 3rd Battalion paratroopers landed in the jungle just beyond the drop zone.

Private Hugh H. Reeves, Company G, 3rd Battalion, recalled, "I was in the sixth plane in our group, and when I went out the door I could see nothing but treetops. My chute opened, made one pendulum swing and I felt myself crashing through limbs. All I could do was fold my arms to cover my face, keep my feet together, point my toes down and say a quick prayer that I would not hit a large limb."

Within seconds hundreds of parachutes were blossoming above the three drop zones. In 4½ minutes 81 transports were empty. A total of 1,565 men were now floating toward the ground while up above, circling inside three individual Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bombers were General MacArthur, General Kenney, and Brig. Gen. Richard K. Sutherland, MacArthur's chief of staff.

At the same time, a group of Australian engineers and pioneers was watching from the ground. A week prior, the 2/6th Field Company, Royal Australian Engineers had set out with its heavy equipment on 12 collapsible boats down the wild Watut and Markham Rivers. Despite the hazards, on the morning of September 5, the engineers were on the south bank of the Markham River, opposite the Nadzab jump area, having lost only three boats and one man.

Meanwhile, the Australian 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion had been leading roughly 800 natives overland toward the airdrop site. Widening existing trails and cutting new ones, the Australians and natives forced their way 45 miles over mountains and through swamps and jungles to reach the south bank of the Markham River opposite Nadzab exactly on schedule. Once there, they linked up with the engineers of the 2/6th Field Company and waited as the American parachutes began to fill the New Guinea sky.

As the generals and the Australians watched,

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Australian troops of the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion cross the Markham River along with approximately 800 accompanying natives and engineers of the 2/6th Field Company.

the paratroopers began landing in the kunai grass, some of the tallest grass in the world. They had been told to expect grass "maybe two to four feet" high but landed in grass well over their heads.

Once down in the kunai grass the men could not see one another or find any of the dropped supply containers. Trooper Louis G. Aiken, Sr. (Company B), in the 1st Battalion drop zone, remembered as he drew closer to the tall grass that he was supposed to assemble his plane's cargo bundle. "[S]woosh into the Kunai Grass, up to and over my ass and I couldn't see nothing much less a door bundle," he wrote. "Hell, I didn't know where I was ... and frankly by then I didn't much give a damn where the bundle was. I was suffocating in the tall grass and was hoping to hell the Japs, if there were any, or somebody else, didn't strike a match."

Although the men had been dropped over their correct drop zones, the different battalions were having a hard time assembling. While searching for his assembly point, Trooper Aiken ran across a member of a machine-gun crew. "He had his portion of the gun," Aiken wrote, "and he wondered out loud what he was supposed to do if he encountered the enemy with only a .45 side arm and part of a light machine gun."

Slowly, the men began to gather in groups of three, four, or five and began cutting their way through the sharp-edged kunai grass, heading toward the surrounding jungle.

On the eastern side of the airstrip, near the boundary of the 1st and 3rd Battalion drop zones, elements of Company C (1st Battalion) and Company G (3rd Battalion) began shooting at one another through the tall kunai grass until battalion headquarters concluded that each company was firing on the other. Colonel Kinsler immediately ordered a cease fire, but not before two privates, both from Company G, were slightly wounded.

North of the airstrip, a handful of 2nd Battalion men began assembling along the edge of the jungle. They were supposed to move toward Gabsonkek, but nobody knew exactly where they were or where the village was. Finally, around 11:05 AM, the men started moving north and eventually found a collection of four or five native huts in a clearing. Too small to be Gabsonkek, the men cautiously moved forward and "captured" the abandoned huts.

Near 11:20 AM, an hour after the 503rd PIR was dropped on Nadzab, the four officers and 27 gunners of the Australian 2/4th Field Artillery Regiment and their two 25-pounder howitzers, which had been broken down and bundled in padded parachute containers, were dropped over the Nadzab airstrip.

As soon as the artillerists landed in the tall kunai grass they moved to find and assemble the two guns. Although it would take more than three hours, Sergeant Wally Murnane and his crew were the first to stumble upon all of the parts and get their howitzer back together again, thereby becoming the first airborne artillery in the Pacific.

After determining that there were no enemy troops in the area, the 1st Battalion paratroopers began to ready the airstrip for the Australian 7th Division, which was scheduled to arrive in less than 24 hours. At first the men began hacking at the tall kunai grass with machetes. Soon, however, the toughness of the grass combined with the oppressive heat and humidity sapped each soldier's strength. To quicken the job, the men set fire to the grass.

Unfortunately, nobody warned the gunners of the Australian 2/4th Field Artillery Regiment. The Australians were still in the middle of the kunai grass looking for their lost gun parts when the field was set on fire. Wrote Australian historian Arthur Burke, "The Americans, desiring to enlarge the airstrip quickly, chose to burn the kunai grass rather than cut it by hand. Fanned by the breeze, this was soon out of control and only the bushmanship of some of the gunners saved their position from being destroyed."

After a few hours of trying to assemble the 2nd Battalion of the 503rd PIR at the small collection of native huts, the officers decided to move toward the east and locate Gabsonkek, their objective. It was not until 3:30 PM that the tired troopers finally stumbled out of a coconut grove and into the completely abandoned village. By 5 PM, the last of the 2nd Battalion stragglers were dragging themselves into Gabsonkek.

A half hour earlier, after assembling a temporary pontoon bridge out of their nine inflatable boats, the Australian 2/6th Field Engineer Company along with the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion and their native helpers crossed the Markham River and linked up with the American paratroopers. Immediately the new arrivals took over the work of clearing and extending the Nadzab runway.

Three men had been killed and another 34 had been seriously injured in the jump, most sustaining ankle or leg injuries, and as night began to fall on the Nadzab area, the tired but triumphant paratroopers dug individual foxholes and hunkered down. In spite of their exhaustion, many remained wide awake, certain that the Japanese would take advantage of the darkness to infiltrate their positions.

Second Lieutenant Jerry Riseley, the adjutant of the 2nd Battalion, who was inside the battalion perimeter at Gobsonkek, recalled, "[The village] is on the edge of a coconut grove and every time a coconut would fall, someone would imagine it to be a personal attack on his foxhole and let go with a tommy gun, machine gun or anything he had."

Throughout the night, chaos reigned supreme inside the 2nd Battalion perimeter. At one point, Companies D and F got into a

grenade fight, tossing lethal bombs at one another. Fortunately, no one was seriously hurt. In spite of all the bullets and hand grenades, only one man was slightly wounded.

Inside the 1st Battalion area beside the airfield, the Australian engineers and pioneers, instructing the native levees, continued to work on the airstrip. By 8:30 AM on September 6, 1943, the airstrip was ready. The original landing strip had been 1,500 feet long and overgrown with 12-foot-high kunai grass. Working throughout the night, the Australians and natives had cleared the kunai grass and extended the runway out to 3,300 feet.

At 10 AM, the first C-47s began landing at Nadzab, bringing in two small bulldozers and 12 flamethrowers. In a further attempt to burn away the side brush from the newly extended runway, the 1st Battalion paratroopers and the Australian pioneers employed the flamethrowers. Once again, however, the flames got out of control and raged for two hours before burning themselves out.

For the next two weeks the 503rd PIR remained in the Nadzab/Lae area, earning its baptism of fire. On September 13, a patrol from the 1st Battalion attacked a fortified Japanese position. Sergeant Edward T. Wojewodzic earned a posthumous Distinguished Service Cross when he "led a daring frontal attack which routed the enemy from their position and saved his patrol from heavy casualties." Sergeant Wojewodzic became the first American paratrooper to die from enemy fire in the Pacific.

A few days later, the entire 3rd Battalion held a static position near Lae across one of the Japanese lines of retreat. Eventually the paratroopers killed approximately 40 Japanese soldiers at the cost of two wounded and four killed, including Staff Sergeant Allie B. Whittington, Company G, who was posthumously awarded a Distinguished Service Cross for saving his platoon from a surprise enemy attack.

Including their losses during the combat drop into Nadzab, the 503rd PIR lost 11 men killed and 45 wounded. Of the 10,000 Japanese soldiers in the area at the beginning of the campaign, more than 4,000 were either killed outright or died of wounds or disease. On September 16, the Australians captured Lae and sent out a force to relieve the 3rd Battalion. By nightfall on September 19, the entire 503rd PIR was back at its base camp near Port Moresby.

Without a doubt, the parachute drop at Nadzab helped hasten the fall of Lae and Salamaua. When the 503rd PIR seized the abandoned airstrip, the Japanese suddenly had a potent force at their own back door. Already facing foes in front of them at Salamaua and to the east of them at Lae, the parachute drop on Nadzab forced the Japanese to realize that they were surrounded.

After the war, a Japanese intelligence officer with the 51st Division stated, "We were retreating from the Salamaua area ... when Allied paratroopers landed at Nadzab, which was one place where we thought the enemy would never attack. The remaining elements of our 51st Division were virtually cut in half by this surprise pincer movement."

The amphibious and airborne moves against Lae had been a complete success. Wrote historian James P. Lowe, "It was a brilliant employment of all available sources of firepower and maneuver. The coordination of the feint against Salamaua, the amphibious assault east of Lae with the airborne drop at Nadzab were excellent examples of joint planning and operations."

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Engineers labor to make the airstrip at Nadzab operational. One C-47 transport has already landed while a second plane appears to be circling or preparing to make its approach to the field.

Without warning, from behind his desk in his miniature colosseum of an office in Rome's Palazzo Venezia, Benito Mussolini on the morning of May 26, 1940, pronounced those words that were to prove fateful for Italy, fatal for him: "I have sent Hitler a written statement, making it clear to him that I do not intend to stand idly by and that from June 5th I shall be in a position to declare war on France and England."

Mussolini had no reason to expect an argument from the officer his words were directed to, Pietro Badoglio—he was a shameless opportunist always able to convince himself he was acting in Italy's interest instead of his own. When Mussolini was marching on Rome in 1922, then chief of staff, Badoglio had offered to disperse the Blackshirts with five minutes of machine-gun fire. Yet after Mussolini shipped him to effective exile as ambassador to Brazil,

Fascism's FRENCH FOLLY

BY JOHN W. OSBORN, JR.

Alamy Images

Badoglio quicklyconvinced himself that Italy needed Mussolini's leadership and Mussolini needed his services. For his newly found devotion to the Duce he had been properly paid off; he served as chief of staff again, was elevated to the rank of marshal, commanded the invasion of Ethiopia, and was given a dukedom with appropriate villa and income.

However, Badoglio was also a survivor of Italy's worst military disasters, the Battles of Adowa and Caporetto. He could see looming before him the most catastrophic of all. "Your Excellency," he nervously started, "you know perfectly well that we are absolutely unprepared—you have received complete reports every week."

Badoglio was talking to a leader who paid so little attention to the rudiments of actually governing that he signed piles of documents without bothering to read them—ministries often getting conflicting orders as a result. As he tried to reveal the truth behind the propaganda that Mussolini always preferred, Badoglio grew increasingly agitated, then finally exploded: "THIS IS SUICIDE!"

As he had listened, Mussolini scowled, then his face reddened. He suddenly rose, strode around his desk with clenched fist, and thumped Badoglio's chest so hard the head-taller marshal almost toppled over. "You are not calm enough to judge the situation, marshal. I can tell you that everything will be over by September, and that I need only a few thousand dead to sit at the conference table as a belligerent."

Instead, Benito Mussolini was to find only defeat and death after international scorn and humiliation in one of the most forgotten campaigns of World War II, his 15-day war with France.

Mussolini's march to war had begun a year earlier with the signing of the Pact of Steel, the alliance with Hitler. He had already thrown around as much of his own weight as he was able in conquering Ethiopia, intervening in the Spanish Civil War, and occupying Albania. Now he saw his future at Hitler's side as an equal partner.

"Now Germany cannot take decisions that don't coincide with our interests," said the deluded Duce.

Much less sure was the Duce's minister entrusted with foreign relations, whose only qualification was a family connection to the dictator.

When he was appointed by Mussolini to be foreign minister in 1936 at age 33, Count Galeazzo Ciano brought to the job the thinnest of résumés—including minor diplomatic postings to South America and China—but the thickest of connections. His wife was Mussolini's daughter. Though he doubted the very

Italian soldiers in full combat gear march along a dirt road during maneuvers. One of them appears to be holding a bottle of wine or champagne, perhaps for a celebration following the trek. After Mussolini sent his army across the French frontier expecting a swift victory, he was disappointed with the results of the offensive.

basis of the policy he was charged with executing, Ciano was too ambitious, cynical, and corrupt to ever consider throwing away the power and perks—including women—that that happily came with the job over such an inconsequential matter as principle.

When not performing his diplomatic double-dealing or cavorting with the early *la dolce vita* crowd (including cocaine supplied by the American Mafioso Vito Genovese, then hiding from a murder charge back in New York), Ciano's only worthwhile activity was keeping a diary candidly describing the foibles and flaws of his father-in-law and everyone else except himself.

Article III of the Pact of Steel committed Italy to going to war on Germany's side. Ciano's Nazi counterpart, Joachim von Ribbentrop, with whom he was locked in a mutual loathing as strong as their leaders' regard for each other, assured him that there would be no war until

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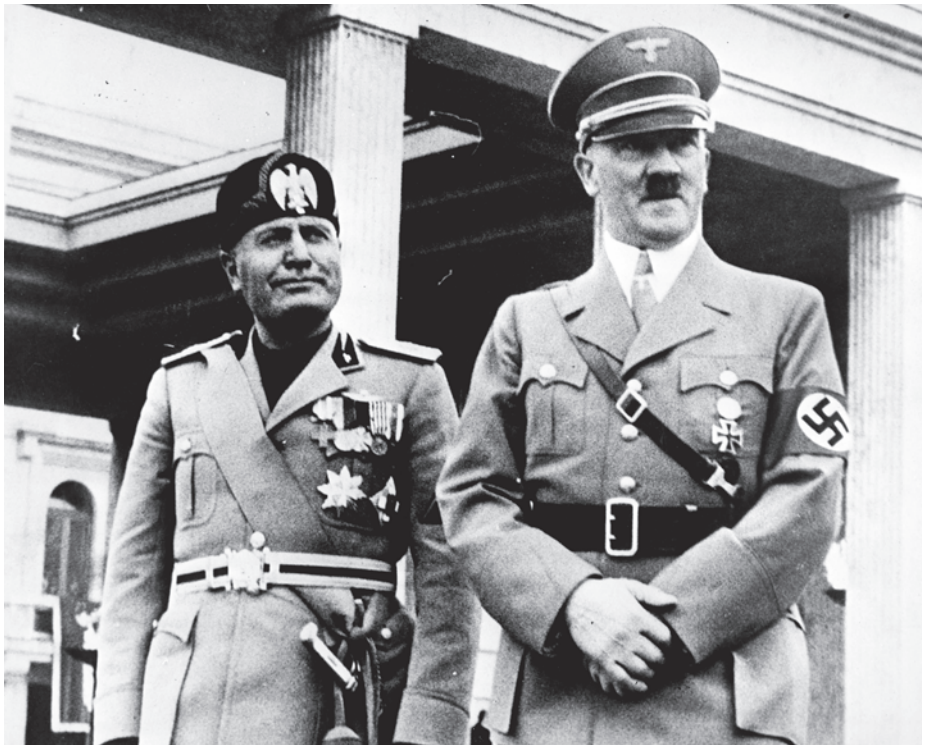

Managing to smile for the cameras, Mussolini (left) and Hitler greet the media following discussions in Munich in June 1940. The two Axis leaders reversed roles as the military situation in Europe developed, and Mussolini sought to assert his independence from the Germans with his assault on France.

1942. Yet the very next day Hitler secretly ordered preparations for the invasion of Poland.

"They have betrayed us and lied to us," Ciano stated. Under pressure by Ciano and the military, Mussolini reluctantly, humiliatingly, squirmed out of the alliance by sending Hitler an offer. "Whatever figure your department gives us, double it," Ciano directed for the immediate delivery of 17 million tons of war supplies. "I shall not need Italian military aid," Hitler, tersely, mercifully, answered.

Mussolini grudgingly proclaimed Italy a nonbelligerent. "He does not want to utter the word 'neutrality,'" Ciano noted but bitterly complained the policy was reducing Italy "to the level of a tenfold Switzerland." Returning from meeting Hitler at the Brenner Pass in March 1940, Mussolini told Ciano he would base his policy after an Italian Robin Hood, who persuaded his hangman to let him pick the tree. "Needless to say, he never found the tree. I shall reserve for myself the choice of the moment. I alone shall be the judge, and a great deal will depend on how the war goes."

It was soon going spectacularly well for Hitler. With the French on the brink of defeat and the British rushing for Dunkirk, Mussolini called in Ciano to say there was no time to lose and he would declare war in a month. "I did not answer," Ciano confided to his diary. "Unfortunately I can do nothing now to hold the Duce back. He has decided to act, and act he will." He left the protesting, for what it was worth, to the likes of Pietro Badoglio.

Mussolini waited two weeks to have his stormy session with Badoglio. Three days later, he formalized it by inaugurating the Commando Supremo, thus usurping the constitutional role of King Victor Emmanuel III and making himself commander in chief. "Rarely have I seen Mussolini so happy," Ciano reflected. "He has realized his dream: that of becoming the military leader of his country at war." His joy, though, was not shared by the military, which had the burden of turning his dream into reality.

With tragic understatement, one general commented, "Our situation was not brilliant." The army's standard rifle was 50 years old. Of 73 divisions, just 19 were at full strength, the next 20 were at 70 percent, the rest at 50 percent or less.

A subordinate suggested Badoglio resign in protest to make Mussolini face reality. As ever, the mealy-mouthed marshal, his moment of outrage now behind him, was quick to put career before country while convincing himself he was doing the opposite. "I believe there is really no more to be done. Besides, who knows? Perhaps Mussolini is right. Certainly the Germans are extremely strong, and they might be able to win a quick victory."

Appeals from President Franklin Roosevelt, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and French Premier Paul Reynaud to stay out of the war were brusquely brushed aside, but Mussolini dutifully delayed five days at Hitler's request. Finally, with no turning back, France's Ambassador André François-Ponchet was grimly facing Ciano in his office inside the Palazzo Venezia late in the afternoon of June 10, 1940.

"I expect you understand the reason for your being called?" Ciano, in air force uniform, he had led a bomber squadron in Ethiopia and just taken command of another, stiffly inquired.

"I am not too bright, but this time I have not misunderstood the situation."

Ciano read out the declaration of war. "It is a dagger thrust into a fallen man. Thank you all the same for using a velvet glove," François-Ponchet responded. "The Germans are hard masters. You, too, will learn this. Don't get killed," He warned, pointing to Ciano's uniform.

With the bombast he always mistook for eloquence, Mussolini bellowed the news of Italy's entrance into World War II from his beloved balcony.

Wikimedia

Marshal Galeazzo Ciano (left) and Marshal Pietro Badoglio were key players in Mussolini's ill-advised attack on France. Ciano, the Italian leader's son-in-law, participated in the air campaign, while Badoglio protested the offensive deployment of Italian ground forces.

"It was a pitiable spectacle," Badoglio said later. "Herded like sheep between the officials and riff-raff of the Fascist Party, the crowd had orders to applaud every word of the speech. But when it was over, the people dispersed of their own accord in complete silence."

Hardly less depressed was Galeazzo Ciano. "I am sad, very sad," he confided to his diary. "The adventure begins. May God help Italy!"

"What really distinguished, noble, and admirable people the Italians are to stab us in the back at this moment!" Premier Reynaud in Paris fumed to American Ambassador William Bullitt. Bullitt cabled Reynaud's words to Washington, where it was still early morning on June 10, and President Roosevelt decided to use them in his commencement speech that

evening at the University of Virginia.

Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles cautioned that those words could wreck relations with Rome, and Roosevelt relented. On the way, though, "the old red blood said, 'Use it,'" FDR recalled, and, with his anger and scorn plain to see, he flung those words that damned Benito Mussolini and Fascist Italy before the world: "On this tenth day of June, 1940, the hand that held the dagger has stuck it into the back of its neighbor."

Yet if Mussolini had been in a rush to go to war, he was in no hurry to actually fight it. "After many years' talk of fast offensive war, we are starting by standing fast on our frontiers, without a plan of operations, taking great care that we are not attacking," one Italian general complained.

Mussolini's unexpected inaction left even Hitler puzzled. "When the Duce told him he could not delay the announcement beyond June 11, he, Hitler, was convinced that Italy had prepared lightning moves against Corsica, Tunis, or Malta and that military secrecy prevented a delay," the German military attaché in Rome remembered. "It reminded the Führer of what happened in the Middle Ages, when cities exchanged messages and nothing happened."

In North Africa the French in Tunisia and Fascists in Libya chose not to wait, conducting air raids and assaults on border posts. After the British bombed Turin, Mussolini ordered a bombing campaign against southern France, and the Regia Aeronautica would fly 1,337 sorties and 75 raids, dropping 726 tons of bombs.

Ciano left his desk to get in on the action: "Very bad weather; dangerous flying.... Accurate aiming. French reaction is also active and accurate." In the end the Italians proved better at record keeping than at results, and little damage would be done.

The Italians did little better in air actions. Decades later Mussolini's son remembered, "The reports about 'flawless aeronautical equipment fully prepared to meet future challenges.'" In fact their most numerous plane, the Fiat CR.42 biplane, was an aerial antique.

Their most up-to-date fighters, and there were only 166 of them, the Fiat G.50 and Macchi 200, were still inferior to France's Dewoitine, Bloch, and Morane-Saulnier aircraft, and it showed in aerial kills. The Italians claimed 10 downed Blochs, but lost 24 aircraft, seven alone downed by Sub-Lieutenant Pierre La Golan. Among them was the air war's ranking casualty, the commanding officer of the 75th Squadrislia, Captain Luigi Filippi.

Events in France forced Mussolini to finally emerge from his inaction on June 15. With the British safely back across the English Channel and an appeal from Paris for an armistice expected at any moment, he again suddenly summoned Badoglio to order an attack along France's Alpine frontier and fabled Riveria playground in just three days.

Again Badoglio protested, saying he needed at least 25 days. Again, Mussolini heard him out in silence and overrode him: "You are entitled to advise me on military topics, but not on political topics. The decision to attack France is a political one, and I alone bear the responsibility for it. If we merely look on while France collapses, we shall have no right to demand our share of the booty. I must have Nice, Corsica, and Tunisia."

Again, it was Hitler who slowed him down. Two days later the French finally appealed for an armistice, and Mussolini found himself abruptly summoned to meet Hitler in Munich the next afternoon.

Mussolini and Ciano, back from his bombing, pulled out from Rome's Termini station at 9 that evening. Both felt anxiety rather than anticipation. "Mussolini dissatisfied," Ciano recorded in his ever-present diary. "This sudden peace disquiets him. During the trip we speak at length in order to clarify conditions under which the armistice is to be granted to the French.

"The Duce is an extremist. He would like to go as far as the total occupation of French territory and demand the surrender of the French fleet. But he is aware his opinion has only a consultative value.

"The war has been won by Hitler without any active military participation on the part of Italy and it is Hitler who will have the last word. This naturally disturbs and saddens Mussolini. His reflections on the Italian people and, above all, our armed forces are extremely bitter thus evening."

The session went worse than Mussolini and Ciano could have imagined. It started at 4, finished by 6:30, and consisted of just informing them of the decisions Hitler had already made.

Mussolini's own territorial demands, even just a seat at the armistice meeting, were brushed aside without discussion. "Mussolini is very much embarrassed," Ciano noted. "In truth the Duce fears that the hour of peace is growing near and sees fading once again that unattainable dream of his life: glory on the field of battle."

Mussolini was still determined to grab some while there was time by taking Nice. Rolling back into Rome at 6:15 the next night, he rushed straight to Palazzo Venezia and, despite reports that a freak, unseasonal, storm was burying the Alps in snow and plunging temperatures below zero, ordered an all-out attack for next morning, then headed to bed.

In the morning, to his fury, Mussolini found all that had been ordered were "small offensive operations immediately." Mussolini had Badoglio on the carpet quickly, and a shouting match erupted between them.

In the end, as always, the irresistible force met the moveable object. At 9:10 that night the final order to 450,000 troops went out. Badoglio let his hated rival, Italy's other marshal, Rodolfo Graziani, do the dishonors. He, at least, had no doubts: "When the guns start to go off, every-

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, NY

This photo was taken around June 25, 1940, and depicts Italian troops on the move into the high mountains along the border with France. These specially trained mountain troops reached their objective and held it after the armistice was concluded.

National Archives

thing will automatically fall into place."

Ciano had also absented himself with his jaded society cohorts. "I consider it rather inglorious to fall upon a defeated army and I find it morally dangerous also," a unique reflection for him. "Armistice is at the door, and if our army should not overcome resistance during the first assault, we would end our campaign with a howling failure."

Galeazzo Ciano had forecast the outcome of the war before it had started. For a quintet of soldiers the brief wintry war to follow was to be the first step to far more savage struggle in the snow. They would be lucky to survive.

Finally, at 3 AM, June 21, 1940, Benito Mussolini began his march for glory—or least his few thousand dead. "Colonel Balocco is convinced it is going to be easy," Eduardo Dutto, Cevi Battalion, First Alpino Regiment remembered years later. "Following is the regimental marching band."

But Mussolini's dreams were not those of the men tasked, or forced, to carry them out; nor did they have the confidence of Marshal Graziani or Colonel Balocco. "Some men cry, others curse," Dutto bitterly recalled of Mussolini's declaration of war. "We don't even ask the reason for the war that's about to start," Michelangelo Pattoglio, 18th Company, Dronero Battalion, was lucky to be able to recall years later. "We aren't interested in politics. No one wants to be a soldier."

A captain in another battalion in the First Alpino Regiment, Guiseppe Lamberti, was reluctant for a different reason. "Our military machine is incapable of meeting not only the most basic demands of war but the very demands to sustain life in the units," he angrily related. "The facts give the lie to the fictions. It's all a bluff."

The 1st Army in the south moved along the warm, scenic Mediterranean coast aiming for Nice and Marseilles, while in the north the 4th Army had the much harder time sloughing down the Little St. Bernard and other Alpine passes.

"The French patrols are few; they take a few shots, fall back. We walk on two meters of snow sinking halfway up our legs," remembered Pattoglio.

"Three days always in the snow," said Bartomelo Fruttero of the Dronero Battalion. "A struggle against the elements," Captain Lamberti called it. "Landslides, rockslides. The effectiveness of the French artillery puts us to the test, too."

Facing the Italians was the French Army of the Alps, 185,000 in number but not in strength—most of the men were rated "B" class. Their commanding general later ticked off World War II's least known battlefields, and the odds facing his troops. "We were outnumbered seven-to-one at Tarentaise, four-to-one in Mauriene, three-to-one in Brianconnaise, twelve-to-one in Quevras, nine-to-one in Tinee, seven-to-one in L'Aution and Sospel, and four-to-one in Menton."

But a young French lieutenant by the name of Bulle in the 7th Battalion, Chausseurs Alpins was not frightened by those odds. "My section will continue to prevent a passage through the Col 'Enclave," he defiantly vowed in a letter home. "We do not have many men but we shall hold on. As long as we have a single bullet left, no enemy soldier will break through the Col. Long live eternal France."

Ciano's worst fears were soon realized. "Today they [Italian troops] have not succeeded in advancing and have halted in front of the first French fortification which put up some opposition," he complained to his diary.

Coming down the Mont Cenis Pass, the Italians had found the fort of La Turra and instead of storming it passed what there would be of the war shelling it. The newest Italian artillery was still a decade old, and the remainder of their guns and shells had been obtained as reparations from the Austrians in World War I. Eventually, the 1,000 shells fired at La Turra either just pathetically puffed against the steel and concrete walls or bounced off.

A very different artillery duel was taking place between the French in their fort at Brianconnais and the Italians inside theirs at Chamberton, which were within sight of each other across the border. The Italians did better than they did against La Turra, sometimes chipping the walls, but the French with their 280mm guns needed just 101 shells to knock every Italian gun out of action.

During earlier months of uneasy peace, French and Italian patrols fraternized along the border, the French offering chocolate and cigarettes—and buying weapons. "For every rifle they paid 5,000 lire, for a submachine gun 10,000 lire, for a machine gun 20,000 lire,"

Pattoglio recalled. The easy going persisted in sectors of the front, luckily for Dutto. "In a defile the French fire from all sides. They didn't want to hit us. If they did, it would have been a massacre."

But some French were not so merciful. Lieutenant Bulle spotted a half dozen Italians protected by an icy overhang—or so they thought. Bulle had himself lowered by rope to surprise and mow down the Italians with a burst of submachine-gun fire, sending them tumbling over into the darkness.

By the end of the first day, the French were holding the Italians in the Bellcombe, Clapier, and Sollier passes while in the south the Italians' advances were only to the La Tulle Dam and village of Abries. Mussolini knew just who to blame. "A people who for sixteen centuries have been an anvil," he told Ciano, "cannot become a hammer within a few years."

As bad as Mussolini's morale was, the troops' was worse—with far more justification. "I have first degree frostbite in my feet," complained Giovanni Bosio of the Val Maira Battalion. "In my unit there are a lot of frostbite victims, not less than 20 percent." It turned out the soles of their new boots were just thick cardboard. "We sleep in a kind of fortification where water collects knee-deep," artilleryman Giovan Battista recollected.

"We have almost no ammunition," Dutto complained. The troops were, grimly, shorter of something else. "Three days we go without eating," lamented Bosio. "We're always hungry, provisions never arrive," Giovanni Raineri, 11th Battery, Fourth Alpino Artillery Regiment, echoed.

What did raise hope was news that the French had sued for an armistice. "So I put a clip into my machine gun and fire into the French valley below," Pattoglio remembered. "All the riflemen of the Eighteenth follow my lead and start firing.

"Straight down behind us, at the base of a sheer drop of 500 meters, is deployed an infantry support division. They call our positions from the infantry headquarters, then send up messengers. Our reply is still the same: 'Firing with joy because of the armistice.' So the infantry division starts firing too and keeps firing its 'shots of joy' for three hours."

But Pattoglio and the Italians found their celebration was premature. "Early in the afternoon," he recalled, "unexpectedly, there's a hail of French bombs overhead, high-caliber artillery shells. So we head for the mountains practically at a run to set up a new defense line.

"We stay two or three days on Gipiera Pass waiting for orders in the open. Snowing, farther down a sea of fog. Soaked to the bone. For shelter we dig deep holes in the snow. Frostbite."

With the air force grounded by weather and targets too small to pinpoint from the sky, the combat burden fell on the freezing, hungry infantry. "Our infantry had to advance in the open against well-protected troops through a field under French fire," one Italian general recollected.

One hapless lieutenant was unable to get the men under his command to fire on a French fort, and he was left futilely firing a machine gun at it by himself. The Arriesta Division needed three whole days to capture the Chennaillet redoubt on the Col de Mont Genevre—defended by just 19 French soldiers with no more than a pair of machine guns. The Pont St. Louis on the Gorniche road had even fewer holding it—a sub-lieutenant and nine enlisted men—yet it was still holding out when the war ended.

While in the north the Italians had moved barely two miles, in the south they had, such as it was, their farthest advance of five miles to the evacuated town of Menton, 15 miles northeast of Marseilles.

Ordered by Mussolini to "press home the attack regardless of losses," the Cosseria, Modena, and Livorni Divisions overwhelmed Menton's defenders by sheer weight of numbers and captured 60 percent of the town. But then the Italians came under a deluge of French fire from 772 guns of the 15th Corps blazing away from their position at Cap-Martin.

Then, the war, as much as it had been, abruptly ended, not on the glorious battlefield but inside a Roman villa veiled in secrecy.

The French negotiators of the humiliating armistice with Hitler flew straight to Rome to carry out the same odious chore with Mussolini. Instead of the staged spectacle they had to endure before the world at Compiegne, they were met without ceremony at the airport, to be driven by side streets to a villa blocks from the government ministries. "The meeting will take place almost secretly," commented Ciano. But French feelings were not being spared. Mussolini "is bitter because he wanted to reach the armistice after a victory."

The first session began that same evening at 7:30, lasting just 30 minutes, with Ciano and Badoglio presenting the terms. Mussolini's grand territorial ambitions had been reduced to all of the ruins of Menton and a dozen Alpine hamlets—all that the Italians had managed to occupy—along with a 30-mile demilitarized zone into France until that final, formal peace conference Mussolini had hoped to buy his seat of power with the sacrifice of a few thousand fellow countrymen's lives.

The final session started at 3:40 the next afternoon, Badoglio conducting it alone at his

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ABOVE: During fighting in the Western Alps in June 1940, Italian gun crewmen load a howitzer in preparation for an artillery barrage against opposing French forces. OPPOSITE: Soldiers of the Val Dora Battalion of the 5th Alpini Regiment engage French forces in the Col de la Pelouse during the Italian invasion of France in the summer of 1940.

After capturing the French alpine town of Menton, Italian soldiers gather for a photo amid the ruins of a building that has been pummeled into rubble during the fighting. Italian forces met stiff resistance, and their offensive against France failed to produce the dazzling results that resulted from the German invasion.

request, and was held up by the French refusing to hand over political refugees to Mussolini. A phone call from Badoglio to the Duce settled the issue, his sole concession, and the armistice was signed, to go into in effect in five hours, at 12:35 AM, June 25, 1940.

Instead of triumph, though, Ciano confessed trepidation to his diary. "At Constantinople," he recorded worriedly, "all the French merchant ships raised the English flag. The war is not yet over, rather it is beginning now. We are going to have so many surprises that we shall not wish for more."

Guiseppe Demaria from the Dronero Battalion got the news when he heard the French shouting, "Italians, Italians, peace, peace." He and his companions were finally able to make it inside the French fortifications—as invited guests.

"We had stale biscuits; the French had fresh biscuits," he would recall. "They shake our hands, keep shouting 'Peace, peace.' They gave me a container of fresh biscuits, and for me the war ends like that."

It ended on a grimmer note for Captain Lamberti. "The night of the armistice the last furious French salvos literally cleave in two the Alpino Levi, a short blond fellow in his early twenties. I still hear the fainter, ever more distant echo of his cry."

Mussolini finally arrived at the French front five days later. Seeing a French flag over what was supposed to be Italian territory now, he was told the defenders of La Turra were refusing to come out to surrender and be disarmed.

Mussolini pondered in silence a minute. Then he ordered that they be permitted to exit, rifles at their shoulders, tricolor at their head, and be saluted as they marched back to France.

But if Mussolini could show a moment's magnanimity he could also be delusional as well. "As I looked into their joyful, fatigued faces," he told Ciano about the troops, "I swore then that I would have a military we could be proud of once more, no matter what the cost in career officers!"

Still, Battista Pecolo suffered in the Dronero Battalion. "If we had to fight twenty days all or at least half of us would have given ourselves up," he said years later. "We had only one wish," said Pattoglio, "to go home."

"Everything seems finished; the war seems won," said Captain Lamberti. "But the reality is bitter. Our men can only rely on their youth and their daring in painful contrast to the frightful deficiencies and recklessness of our commanders, to the unbelievable inadequacy of our weapons and our vehicles."

The disillusionment ran to the very top. "[Party Secretary, Chief of Staff of Fascist Militia Achille] Starace , returning from the front, says that the attack on the Alps has proved the total lack of preparation in our Army, an absolute lack of offensive means, and complete lack of capacity in the higher officers," Ciano noted with concern to his diary. "If the war in Libya and Ethiopia is conducted in the same way, the future is going to hold many bitter disappointments for us."

There would be more than "disappointments." Ahead was dissolution of the empire in Ethiopia, defeat in Libya, debacle in Greece. Yet worse was to come—devastation in the subzero snowfields of slaughter in Russia, 95,000 dead or missing. Captain Guiseppe Lamberti, Giovanni Bosio, Guiseppe Demaria, Bartomelo Fruttero, and Sergeant (as he had become) Michelangelo Pattoglio were among the 60,000 marched off to Soviet captivity as far as central Asia—and among the barely 10,000 to come back in 1946.

Mussolini never got what he wanted out of the war, not even his "few thousand" dead. Officially, there were just 631 dead, though an equal number were missing, lost in the snow, or plunging like Lieutenant Bulle's targets into oblivion.

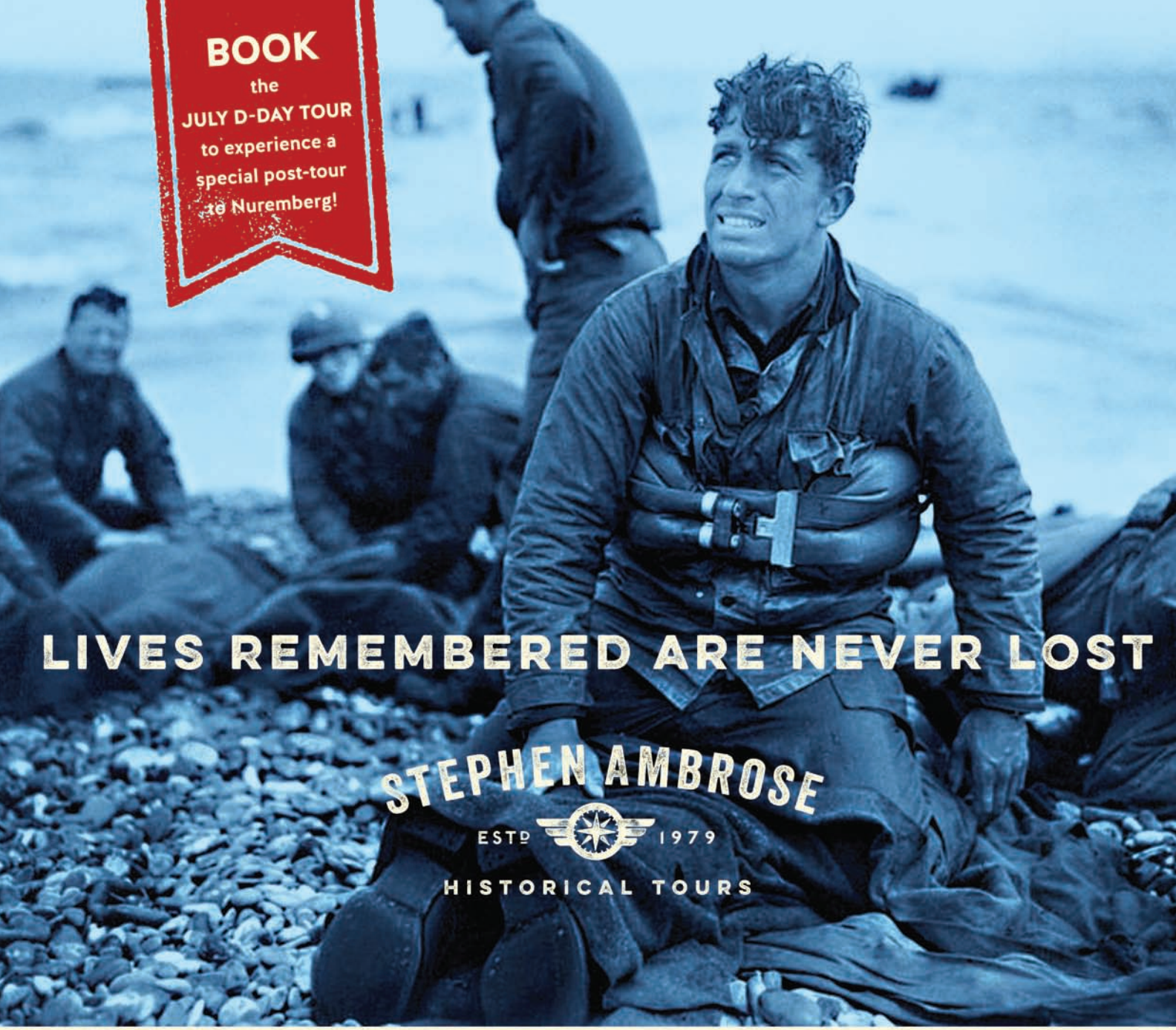
Another 2,631 Italians were wounded, 2,151 suffering frostbite. But for Mussolini undoubtedly the worst casualty figure was the humiliating 3,878 captured by just the handful of defenders at Chennaillet, some cut off and caught in the passes, most running from the shelling of Menton into French hands. For the French, casualties were 37 dead, 42 wounded, and 150 missing.

When those peace talks Mussolini expected to sit at finally took place, they were for Italy's unconditional surrender to the Allies in 1943. They were conducted by none other than Marshal Pietro Badoglio during his scant 45 days as Mussolini's successor. When the Germans started surrounding Rome in response, Badoglio's reaction was to flee into the night down the last open road out of town, convincing himself that is was not about abjectly running for his life: "Every personal consideration had to be set aside. What remained supreme were the interests only of the country."

Galeazzo Ciano learned, fatally, what "hard masters" the Germans were. He had unwittingly assisted in his father-in-law's downfall, voting for the party motion requesting King Victor Emmanuel III to assume his constitutional position as supreme commander of the armed forces from Mussolini—only for its use as the pretext to arrest Mussolini, abolish the Fascist regime, appoint Badoglio, and seek surrender. After the Germans rescued Mussolini and arrested Ciano, Hitler demanded Mussolini execute his son-in-law for treason.

The Fascist firing squad bungled the job, however, and a suffering Ciano had to be finished with a coup de grace. Ironically he had written in his diary that before he would ask Ribbentrop for any help, "I would rather put a bullet through my head."

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



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British soldiers of the 6th Royal Scots Fusiliers take cover behind an earthen mound along a sunken road in Normandy during Operation Epsom on June 26, 1944. The bocage country of Normandy was one challenge that the Allies faced, while tenacious German defenses such as those encountered around Caen slowed the Normandy campaign to a crawl.

CRUCIBLE OF

General Bernard L. Montgomery, commander of the British 21st Army Group, was delighted to learn by secret cipher on December 23, 1943, that he had been chosen to lead three Allied armies in history's greatest invasion, scheduled for the following May.

But he was appalled by the proposal for Operation Overlord drawn up by Lt. Gen. Frederick Morgan's COSSAC (Chief of Staff, Supreme Allied Command) team, which called for three assault divisions to land on a narrow front at Arromanches in Normandy, followed by three other corps leapfrogging through them. This, Montgomery suggested, would cause "the most appalling confusion." He viewed the invasion strength as too weak and the strategy wrong. The plan was "a dog's breakfast," sniffed the wiry, energetic victor of the Battle of El Alamein.

So, Monty swiftly formulated his own blueprint and summoned the Allied generals and planners to a series of briefings at his old school, St. Paul's in West London, early in January 1944. He stressed that simplicity was the cardinal element in modern war and said the primary objective of the invasion should be to seize the major port of Cherbourg atop the western Cotentin Peninsula, where the Germans were believed to be weakest. While the U.S. First Army undertook this task, the British and Canadian Armies—comprising the British Second Army—would engage the main enemy forces on the eastern flank.

The British role, Monty emphasized, was to "protect the eastern flank of First U.S. Army

CAEN

An Allied D-Day objective, the capture of the city required a full month of fighting.

BY MICHAEL D. HULL

while the latter is capturing Cherbourg" and to "offer a strong front against enemy movement towards the lodgment area from the east" while "First U.S. Army would break out southwards towards the Loire (River) and Quiberon Bay."

Listening to the new plan, General Omar N. Bradley, the homespun commander of the U.S. First Army, was delighted, especially when Montgomery said that the British and Canadians would strike out toward Caen—a medieval cathedral city on the River Orne, nine miles inland from the English Channel coast—and then "operate to the south." Caen, a key communications and transportation center, would thus be the "hinge" of the invasion, observed Bradley's chief planner. Monty's explicitness and simplicity were welcomed by Bradley, who had feared that because of "our existing resources" and "the strength of enemy forces in Northwest Europe," the original Overlord plan was simply "impractical."

Monty exuded confidence, as he had done on the eve of the climactic Battle of El Alamein, and brushed off the fears of many generals and planners that the invasion would fail. He promised success, and the chief American planner at COSSAC reported, "A wave of relief came over us. Monty's action was like a breath of fresh air." In a matter of hours, Montgomery had changed the Overlord plan from one in which almost no one believed to one in which all could place their faith.

The landings by the British, American, and Canadian Armies across five Normandy beaches early on Tuesday, June 6, 1944, proved costly yet successful. While men of Maj. Gen.

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J. Lawton Collins's U.S. VII and Maj. Gen. Leonard T. Gerow's U.S. V Corps went ashore at Utah and Omaha Beaches, respectively, on the western flank, Lt. Gen. Sir Miles Dempsey's British Second Army landed three infantry divisions and three armored brigades on Sword, Juno, and Gold Beaches. The British mission was to seize Caen and anchor the Allied eastern flank, and within 2½ hours 30,000 troops, 300 field guns, and 700 armored vehicles went ashore. Despite a perilous holdup on Omaha Beach, the Allied assault units carved out bridgeheads and began to move inland.

The success of the whole invasion depended on Lt. Gen. John T. Crocker's British I Corps fighting through to join paratroopers of the British 6th Airborne (Red Berets) Division, who had landed beyond the River Orne, and holding on at all costs against the 21st German Panzer Division around Caen and the 12th SS "Hitler Youth" Panzer Division between Evreux and Gace. The 50th Infantry Division and the 8th Armored Brigade of Lt. Gen. Gerard C. Bucknall's British XXX Corps went ashore on Gold Beach, the Canadian 3rd Infantry Division and the Canadian 2nd Armored Brigade landed at Juno Beach, and the British 3rd Infantry Division, the 27th Armored Brigade, and Royal Marine and Commando units went ashore at Sword Beach, near the mouth of the Orne. Landing farther west in the British sector were the 50th, 51st, and 7th Armored Divisions, all battle proven in North Africa.

Despite fierce opposition on the beaches, the British landings went exceptionally well, although it took the Canadian 3rd Division more than two hours to crush German defenders in the Juno Beach sector and open inland exits. By noon on that "longest day," the beachhead at Gold Beach had been extended to 2½ miles deep and three miles wide. But, as the British and Canadian forces began to move inland, the resistance intensified. The Germans were determined to drive the invaders back into the sea and viewed the British-Canadian bridgehead as the more threatening because of their low regard for the Americans as fighting men.

Swiftly deployed infantry and deadly 88mm flak guns of the 21st Panzer Division blocked the British 3rd Division, preventing it from linking up with the embattled Red Berets for eight critical hours. Behind spearheading Commandos and Royal Engineer bridging tanks, an increasing traffic jam of arriving troops and vehicles hampered the armored units trying to thrust toward Caen.

Advancing on the city from Sword Beach, a British infantry brigade was led by the 2nd Battalion of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry Regiment. It should have been supported by Firefly tanks (Shermans mounting long 17-pounder guns) of the Staffordshire Yeomanry, but they were trapped in a massive traffic jam on the beach. As they forged ahead, the gallant Shropshires were forced to take each German strongpoint as they came to it by orthodox fire and movement, and progress was painfully slow. The tanks caught up with the infantrymen in the afternoon, but then the column ran into the vanguard of the 21st Panzer Division. Its guns forced the Shropshires to go to ground three miles short of the outskirts of Caen.

However, the Mark IV panzers came under fire from the Staffordshires' Shermans, suffered heavy losses, and withdrew. By nightfall on D-Day, Caen remained firmly in German hands, but the Sword bridgehead perimeter was intact.

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Little was now going according to plan for the Allies, and Montgomery's advance was stalling as powerful German armored reserves—including the II Panzer Corps, rushed from the Eastern Front—converged on the Caen area. Marshaled there were six of the eight enemy panzer divisions in Normandy. Monty's forces repulsed many counterattacks, but gaining ground was increasingly difficult. It soon became evident that the road to Caen would be a bitter and costly one.

To the west, American operations also were not proceeding according to plan. The advance of General Collins's VII Corps from Utah Beach was checked, and it was slow going for General Gerow's V Corps as it pushed from Omaha Beach toward St.-Lo. Gerow's drive ground to a halt, and Collins was forced to abandon a direct assault on Cherbourg.

Doggedly, the British and Canadian forces struggled inland. Units of the British XXX Corps seized the coastal village of Arromanches, the chosen site for a much needed Mulberry harbor, and patrols of the 50th Division probed the outskirts of the ancient town of Bayeux, 15 miles northwest of Caen, as enemy troops were hastily evacuating. By nightfall on D-Day, the division's beachhead was six miles deep and six miles wide.

The Canadian infantry and armor from Juno Beach, meanwhile, pushed seven miles inland and captured the little town of Bernieres by dusk. Their heavy Churchill and medium Sherman tanks probed the main road between Bayeux and Caen. The British 50th and Canadian 3rd made more headway than any other Allied divisions on D-Day, and their foremost troops advanced to within three miles of the outskirts of Caen.

Planned and expected by Montgomery as a D-Day objective, the capture of Caen was to prove the most daunting challenge of his long career. Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler and his commanders believed that the outcome of the Normandy campaign depended on holding the city, so their best formations—including the powerful panzer corps and divisions and the 716th Infantry Division—were hastily deployed to mount defenses in depth on a relatively short front. The battle for Caen was to become a bloody crucible—the bitterest struggle of the Normandy campaign and the even-

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ABOVE: A Churchill tank of the 7th Royal Tank Regiment, 31st Tank Battalion tops a hill cautiously in support of the 8th Royal Scots Fusiliers during Operation Epsom on June 28, 1944. OPPOSITE: Picking their way through the village of St. Mauvieu-Norrey, British soldiers advance during Operation Epsom, one in a series of offensive operations launched by British General Bernard Montgomery to capture the Norman city of Caen.

tual undoing of Monty as Overlord's ground forces commander.

Straddling the N-13 coastal highway to Bayeux and guarding the approaches to the plains leading to Paris 140 miles eastward, Caen—along with its adjacent Carpiquet Airfield—was of great strategic value to both sides. This was the third time in history that the city was a military objective of the British. It was besieged and captured by King Edward VIII's bowmen and infantry in July 1346, taken again by the English in 1417, and held by them until 1450.

In June 1944, Caen—so near and yet so far to the British and Canadian soldiers—was part of Hitler's lengthy and formidable Atlantic Wall. The odds were in favor of the enemy. The city, as were many other primary Allied objectives in Normandy, lay amid the bocage countryside, a tangled patchwork of steep earth banks, thick hedges, sunken roads, stone walls, and ditches. The Overlord planners had failed to foresee such difficult terrain, ideal for defense and almost impossible for Allied armor to negotiate. In front of Caen, hundreds of panzers, 88mm guns, mortars, and machine-gun nests were dug down out of sight. Field by field and farmstead by farmstead, the area was a warren of interconnecting and carefully camouflaged defense posts.

Along the British-Canadian front on the morning of June 7, the problem was whether to drive all out for Caen with the British 3rd Division or to battle through to the Canadians and consolidate their joint bridgehead. General Crocker chose the second course before hurrying to aid the British paratroopers fighting against heavy odds to hold the vital eastern flank.

On that same morning, General Montgomery arrived off the invasion beaches in a Royal Navy destroyer and conferred with Generals Bradley and Dempsey. Not all of the initial objectives—especially Caen and the airfields to the southeast—had been taken, but a sector 24 miles long and four miles deep had been established along the British beaches, and the Americans were moving inland. Monty was in a jaunty mood. On the morning of June 8, his destroyer grounded on a sandbank, and he sprinted ashore.

Monty quickly set up his advance headquarters in the village of Creully, east of Bayeux, and was soon visited by King George VI and Prime Minister Winston Churchill. There were some farcical elements to Montgomery's arrival in Normandy. In Bayeux, he ordered a Russian major and well-known scrounger to find him a budgerigar and cage, and, through an aide, he whimsically prevailed upon a gracious Creully chatelaine to provide him with a chamber pot for his tactical caravan. Although well equipped and featuring portraits of Monty's nemeses, Field Marshals Erwin Rommel and Gerd von Rundstedt, on its walls, the caravan's toilet facilities were lacking. Then, Monty twice broke his false teeth on rock-hard Army biscuits.

While his British and Canadian armies began battering their way toward Caen, Allied battleships offshore and streams of bombers and fighter bombers kept the Germans under bombardment. Flexible and accurate Royal Artillery batteries zeroed in on threatening enemy moves. Meanwhile, the Allied strength increased steadily, with 20 divisions put ashore. With about 500,000 men now in Normandy, the Allies achieved a faster buildup than the enemy.

Nevertheless, the Allies, particularly Montgomery's armies, faced serious problems. Bad weather along the English Channel coast delayed the landing of followup divisions and ammunition, and the British Army was struggling with a critical manpower shortage after five years of war. Reserves were scarce. Some of the best divisions were exhausted after hard campaigns in North Africa and Italy, and morale was shaky. Monty was forced to husband the forces as best he could.

Relentless Allied air attacks prevented Field Marshal Rommel, the commander of Army Group B, from bringing in fresh divisions. Much of their heavy equipment was destroyed by bombing and strafing, and the legendary "Desert Fox" was forced to commit his panzers in handfuls to plug the German line. Several panzer thrusts toward the Allied bridgeheads

were blocked. The Allied forces held their lines, but the Germans fought just as stubbornly.

On the morning of June 9, in a field near the fishing village of Port-en-Bessin, Montgomery jabbed at a map spread over the hood of his Humber staff car and briefed Generals Dempsey and Bradley. He said he intended to encircle the panzer divisions dug in around Caen. The British 3rd Division, scheduled to capture the city on D-Day, was still four miles short. Caen was to be surrounded by the 51st Highland Division, the 4th Armored Brigade, the 7th Armored Division (the famed "Desert Rats"), and the British 1st Airborne Division. Meanwhile, the U.S. V Corps would thrust south and east to the Le Mans-Alençon area and beyond.

The Battle of Caen opened with a series of bloody engagements, and the Germans struck first, on June 10. Armored Battle Group Luck and a grenadier division attacked the 6th Airborne Division's River Orne bridgehead and gained some ground before being halted with disastrous losses. Infantry casualties on both sides were severe, and the fighting became bitter after men of the 51st Highland Division—drawn in to strengthen threatened points—learned that the Germans had been shooting prisoners.

Savage hand-to-hand fighting involving the Black Watch Regiment lasted almost nonstop for three days and nights. A heroic night attack by 160 British paratroopers at Breville established the hold on the Orne bridgehead. At the cost of 141 casualties, the Red Berets wiped out a German battalion. The Highlanders, meanwhile, collided head-on with the enemy battle group, and the attacks ground to a bloody halt.

Fierce encounters continued in the struggle for Caen. A western threat saw tanks of General Fritz Bayerlein's crack Panzer Lehr Division meet armor of the XXX Corps, while in the center sector Canadian infantrymen rode forward on tanks of their 6th Armored Regiment. The Canadians were in high spirits until they were suddenly ambushed by enemy grenadiers hidden in the cornfields. The infantrymen dropped off to give battle, and the tanks rolled on until they were blasted by German shellfire and waiting panzers and antitank guns. Fearful of being surrounded, the regimental commander withdrew his force to the Caen road.

The Canadians suffered heavily. In fields and orchards all along the line of their advance were crippled tanks billowing black smoke. The armored regiment had lost 37 tanks, and in the leading company alone the infantry had suffered almost 100 casualties. The Canadians bled at Caen, as they had at Dieppe and would later in the Reichswald.

Canadian infantry and tanks were hurried forward to dig in between Bray and Rots to block the 12th SS Panzer Division from reaching the Channel coast, and a force from the elite 46 Royal Marine Commando stormed into Rots and fought hand-to-hand with fanatical Hitler Youth stormtroopers of the Waffen SS. Casualties were high on both sides. Reports of the Germans executing prisoners were proven,

The setback at Villers-Bocage was blamed on sloppy tactics and a failure to reinforce the Desert Rats while the Germans were in trouble. "The whole handling of that battle was a disgrace," said General Dempsey.

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-738-0275-11A; Photo Arthur Grimm

that prisoners would not be taken. Many of the Allied soldiers, particularly the Canadians, now went into battle fighting mad.

But, on both sides, the troops were fought to a standstill; both the German offensive toward the coast and the British-Canadian drives to encircle Caen shuddered to a halt. The sunny battlefield was littered with wrecked tanks, and the rolling fields of ripening corn were strewn with the blackening corpses of Allied and enemy soldiers.

The only appreciable penetration by the British offensive was on the right flank where the 7th Armored and 50th (Northumbrian) Divisions, strengthened by some independent tank and infantry brigades, pushed from the west toward the strategic Villers-Bocage ridge. But their 40-ton Churchill, 30-ton Sherman, and light Cromwell tanks were blocked by the Panzer Lehr Division, armed with superior 45-ton Panther, 56-ton Tiger, and 67-ton Royal Tiger tanks. The high-velocity 75mm and 88mm panzer guns could penetrate Allied tanks, but the shells from the British and Canadian tank guns just bounced off the thick armor of the Tigers and Panthers. The Tigers outclassed anything the Allies could field against them.

In such unfavorable conditions, and without close infantry support, the Desert Rats were unable to make much headway. Fierce enemy counterattacks with armor were only beaten off after savage night fighting. The Northumbrian Division was engaged in heavy fighting on both flanks of the 7th Armored, with tanks and infantry of the Green Howards Regiment and the Dragoon Guards plunging through hedgerows and deep ditches toward Christot. Bitter close combat produced heavy casualties. Meanwhile, British and Canadian rocket-firing Hawker Typhoons ranged over the confused and bloody battlefield, blasting enemy positions.

Although the British and Canadian forces had failed to attain their immediate objectives, they were nevertheless fulfilling Montgomery's requirement to attract the mass of German armor against them. "By the evening of June 12," noted General Bradley, "we had celebrated our first week ashore without a single threatening counterattack on the American beachhead." While Maj. Gen. Clarence R. Huebner's 1st (Big Red One) Infantry Division reported "no real opposition" as it advanced steadily upon Caumont, 20 miles inland, Maj. Gen. Charles H. Gerhardt's U.S. 29th (Blue and Gray) Infantry Division, which had suffered 1,000 casualties in two days in the bocage, opened the road through Isigny and outflanked the enemy defenses there. When Montgomery ordered Bradley to exploit rapidly southward toward St.-Lo and Caumont, he was able to do so immediately. By the evening of June 11, the U.S. 2nd (Indianhead) Infantry Division and the Big Red One were 14 miles south of their beachhead and level with the British. The only fresh troops the Germans could muster to oppose the GIs were two battalions of cyclists and six assault guns.

The ease of the American advance persuaded Montgomery to shift his main attack on Caen farther westward, where a system of minor roads offered suitable terrain for a thrust to outflank the Panzer Lehr Division. The XXX Corps battled forward to a heavily defended line of village fortresses in the Tilly-Fontenay area, and the 7th Armored Division swept in from the west toward Evrecy and the high ground between the Orne and Odon Rivers. Leaving the Northumbrian infantry locked in battle with Panzer Lehr, the Desert Rats drove through the American sector and a gap in the enemy defenses to come in behind the panzers at the town of Villers-Bocage, southwest of Caen.

On the morning of June 13, Cromwell and Stuart light tanks, half-tracks, and Bren gun carriers of Lt. Col. Arthur Cranley's 4th County of London (Sharpshooters) Yeomanry advanced six miles behind the enemy lines and entered Villers-Bocage unopposed. Riding in the half-tracks were men of the Rifle Brigade. The closely packed column rumbled through the town while joyous citizens cheered and headed for Hill 213, dominating the national highway leading straight to Caen. The British vehicles rattled triumphantly toward the vital hilltop. But waiting behind the crest were four Tiger and two Mark IV tanks of the 501st SS Heavy Tank Battalion and a strong infantry force.

While the British soldiers were brewing tea, the Germans opened fire. The audacious panzer battalion commander, 25-year-old Lieutenant Michael Wittmann, led the assault by blasting the half-track leading the British column and leaving it blazing and blocking the road. His Tiger ground forward along the line of British vehicles, picking them off one by one, while the other panzers surged out to complete the annihilation of the Desert Rats' spearhead. The British tankers and infantrymen fought back desperately. A Rifle Brigade six-pounder gun hit three enemy tanks before being destroyed by a direct hit, but the Tommies did not have a

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ABOVE: Officers and soldiers of the 12 SS Panzer Division Hitler Jugend confer during a pause in the fighting around Caen. This photo was taken in the village of Saint-Germain-la-Blanche-Herbe in front of the town's famous Abbaye d'Ardennes. The ardent Nazis of the Hitler Jugend were known to have committed several war crimes in Normandy, executing Allied prisoners. OPPOSITE: Destroyed British vehicles litter the roadway in the Norman town of Villers-Bocage following the legendary attack by Captain Michael Wittmann and his command of Tiger tanks. The 6-pounder antitank gun in the center of this photo is probably responsible for damaging three German tanks, including Wittman's Tiger, before it was silenced during the engagement.

chance. The Cromwells were outgunned, and their shells bounced off the panzers' thick armor.

The British lost 25 tanks, 14 half-tracks, and 14 Bren gun carriers through the leadership of Wittmann, a panzer ace on the Eastern Front credited with 119 enemy tanks destroyed. Viscount Cranley and many of his men were captured. Wittmann's feat at Villers-Bocage bought time for the 2nd SS and 2nd Vienna Panzer Divisions to reach the area before the arrival of British reinforcements, which were delayed for two days because of rough seas in the English Channel.

The fighting raged on until dark in Villers-Bocage. Brigadier Robert "Loony" Hinde, commander of the British 22nd Armored Brigade, had vigorously organized the defense of the town, and when the panzers rumbled in they were confronted by infantrymen of the Queen's Regiment. Using antitank guns, PIAT rocket launchers, and sticky bombs at close quarters, the Tommies stalked the panzers and destroyed 11 of them. There was a bizarre episode during the action when men of the local fire brigade dashed out to try and extinguish the flames from blazing German tanks.

After the battle, and unable to exploit its daring penetration, the British decided to pull back the undergunned 7th Armored Division. The tankers and infantry had fought bravely against heavy odds, but Caen was still out of reach. The setback at Villers-Bocage was blamed on sloppy tactics and a failure to reinforce the Desert Rats while the Germans were in trouble. "The whole handling of that battle was a disgrace," said General Dempsey.

The enemy pressure did not let up. On June 14, panzers and grenadiers assaulted a 1,000-yard-by-700-yard defensive box into which the 7th Armored had formed itself. After fierce fighting, the Germans were blasted by the division's artillery firing point-blank over open sights. American medium guns around Caumont joined in, and the enemy withdrew. Eventually, covered by Allied artillery and a Royal Air Force night bombing attack, the division pulled back seven miles. Its new line extended from just west of Villers-Bocage to ground held by the U.S. 1st Division near Caumont.

This was the Desert Rats' first taste of defeat since El Alamein. Even though they had destroyed dozens of enemy tanks and killed many of their infantry, it was a bitter experience. They now had to await the arrival of an additional armored brigade, delayed in landing, before attacking again. Had the 150 tanks and an infantry brigade arrived on schedule, the right hook at Villers-Bocage may well have succeeded.

General Montgomery now decided to go on the defensive before Caen and to exert pressure around Caumont. He had ordered Bradley to hold the town firmly while Collins's corps cut off the Cotentin Peninsula and seized Cherbourg. "Caen is the key to Cherbourg," said Monty. His immediate objectives were Caen and Cherbourg and expanding the bridgehead's central sector to Caumont and Villers-Bocage. Supported by RAF Lancaster bombers, the U.S. V Corps had pushed through the Foret de Cerisy and penetrated the outskirts of Caumont, while the U.S. VII Corps had taken Carentan. Bradley now ordered his 14th Corps to attack toward St.-Lo.

As the British and Americans consolidated, Field Marshal Rundstedt appealed urgently for reinforcements. He had committed three additional panzer divisions and two infantry divisions to contest the British advance, which was his main danger. But he had been unable to concentrate his armor to breach the Allied bridgehead, and there was no question of retiring to a new line. "Every man shall fight and die where he stands," ordered Hitler

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: British soldiers of the Durham Light Infantry, 49th West Riding Division move cautiously forward past the charred hulk of a German PzKpfw. V Panther medium tank. The German tanks encountered around Caen were superior in armor protection and firepower to the M4 Sherman and other Allied armored vehicles. BELOW: Lieutenant Franz Ludwig stands before a Sturmgeschutz self-propelled assault gun while conferring with his officers. Ludwig's unit destroyed 16 British tanks during an engagement east of Caen that lasted only a few minutes. OPPOSITE: Near the town of Collombelles east of Caen, three German soldiers move across an open field toward a complex of factories and warehouses looming in the distance. These soldiers belong to Jager Regiment 32, which was incorporated into the 21st Panzer Division in July 1944.

Bundesarchiv Bild 1011-299-1821-09A; Photo: Scheck

from his bombproof bunker hundreds of miles away.

Montgomery had hardly switched his attack to Caumont before the 2nd Panzer Division pushed in that direction and a major battle erupted there. "So long as Rommel uses his strategic reserves to plug holes, that is good," the hopeful Monty reported to his superior, General Dwight D. Eisenhower. It was a fierce melee at close quarters in the bocage around Caumont, and the Germans were initially superior. The earth shook, and steel splinters rent the air as British and American artillery loosed a furious bombardment at the advancing enemy, and the panzer veterans of the Eastern Front had seen nothing like it.

Royal Artillery crews handled their manually loaded 25-pounder field guns with such rapidity and effect that the Germans believed they were power operated. As soon as the guns had ceased, RAF Typhoons swept out of the morning mist at treetop height and savaged enemy positions and vehicles. The smoldering battlefield was soon strewn with screaming wounded men and mutilated farm animals.

Despite its mauling, the hardened 2nd Panzer Division extricated itself and, with more dreadful losses, captured Launay and St. Germain d'Ectot on its right flank on June 17. On the left, the panzers reached le Quesnay but suffered heavily again when British tanks and infantry counterattacked. After desperate house-to-house fighting and a creeping Allied barrage, the Germans were pushed back.

The 2nd Panzers returned to the attack on June 18 and pushed through to Briquessard, but at a fearful cost. After having tasted heady victory in Poland, at the Maginot Line, at Boulogne, in Greece, and in the suburbs of Moscow, the German division was being decimated in Normandy. Although the British and Canadians had suffered greatly, they were achieving what Montgomery intended—the annihilation of the vaunted German armor. He reiterated that his general aim remained "to pull the Germans on to the British Second Army and fight them there so that the U.S. First Army can carry out its task easier."

Monty continued to mount attacks that were costly to his own and enemy troops, forcing Rommel to deploy his panzers as dug-down artillery. General Sepp Dietrich, the tough commander of the I SS Panzer Corps, griped, "I am being bled white and am getting nowhere." The bloody slogging match raged on, with the German armor held down at the expense of British and Canadian lives.

On the American front, progress was slow and steady. The GIs had entered Carentan after hard fighting and moved on Caumont. General Collins's corps advanced across the Cotentin Peninsula and pushed three divisions to the outskirts of Cherbourg. Short of ammunition and supplies, the vital port's garrison surrendered on June 26.

The weather added to Montgomery's troubles on June 19 when the worst June gale for half a century raged through the English Channel for three days and nights, driving 800 vessels ashore, wrecking the American Mulberry harbor, and severely damaging the British one off Arromanches. Supplies, especially ammunition, were gravely curtailed. Because the Americans now had only enough ammunition for three days, Bradley had to call off his planned breakout. This meant that the British and Canadians had to go on fighting the main enemy strength longer than planned. Three divisions Monty needed were unable to land, so he postponed his first big-scale offensive, planned for June 22.

Spearheaded by Lt. Gen. Sir Richard O'Connor's British VIII Corps and supported by heavy air, naval, and artillery support, Operation Epsom was launched on June 26. Epsom was an ambitious attempt to breach strong enemy defenses west of Caen, force the Orne and Odon Rivers, gain the high ground southwest of the city, and thereby envelop it. But bad luck dogged the operation. Poor weather precluded a planned air bombardment, and the neighboring XXX Corps failed to seize the flanking Rauray Ridge, which hindered the entire attack.

British infantry, including the 2nd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, the "Thin Red Line" of Balaclava fame, cut through German

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-721-0353-27A; Photo: Wolfgang Vennemann

defenses and established a bridgehead across the Odon River. The 11th Armored Division captured Hill 112 beyond, and by June 28 Montgomery had torn a five-mile gap in the enemy lines. But when German reserves counterattacked the narrow British corridor and the Odon bridgehead Monty abandoned Hill 112 and pulled back to a shorter and more defensible line.

Between June 29 and July 2, the XXX Corps repulsed strong attacks, but the newly arrived 2nd Panzer Corps hurled itself against the Odon bridgehead. Blasted by British artillery, the enemy tanks made little headway. Meanwhile, an attempt by the 11th Armored to break out into the open country south of the Odon failed, and the struggle became a bloody stalemate. Five days of bitter fighting had cost the XXX Corps 4,020 casualties, and Operation Epsom was called off. The offensive had failed, though the British did draw in and maul the last of the fresh armored units the Germans possessed.

Montgomery's next major bid to seize Caen was a multi-corps offensive launched on the evening of July 7, codenamed Operation Charnwood. First, the 16-inch guns of the venerable battleship HMS *Rodney* shelled key roads leading into Caen, and then 467 RAF Lancasters and Halifaxes dropped 2,560 tons of bombs on the northern outskirts of the city. The aerial assault caused much devastation, destroyed several Orne River bridges, and reduced the Germans' ability to resupply their forces in the northern part of the city. But, because the given bombing line was 6,000 yards ahead of the forward British positions as a safety margin, the high explosives fell three miles behind the main enemy fortifications.

At dawn the next morning, July 8, after an immense Royal Artillery barrage, men of the British 3rd and 59th and Canadian 3rd Infantry Divisions fought their way at great cost into the city. Supported by flail and flamethrowing Churchill and Sherman tanks of the 79th Armored Division and two Canadian armored brigades, the assault troops occupied the outskirts but failed to take the center. Despite the bombardments, the German panzers and grenadiers were ready and in strength when the infantry came in. Wreckage, craters, and rubble-clogged streets delayed the Allied troops.

Four weeks behind schedule, Caen—a virtual wasteland of smoking ruins where 2,000 civilians had died—was in British hands and isolated from the rest of the enemy positions in Normandy. But tenacious resistance by the panzer formations in the eastern half of the city denied Dempsey the routes he needed to push his weary Second Army across the defensible Orne River barrier and on to the Falaise Plain beyond.

Montgomery's next offensive was to be a feint southwest of Caen on the day before Bradley's long-awaited Operation Cobra in the St.-Lo-Falaise area. The American breakout was still delayed by bad weather, but Monty, unfazed, went ahead with Operation Goodwood to ensure that the Germans did not release panzers from the British eastern sector to block Cobra. His newest "colossal crack" was launched on July 18.

For three hours after dawn that day, the ground between Caen and Troarn to the east shuddered as 1,000 RAF Lancasters and Halifaxes dropped 6,000 tons of bombs on Panzer Group West positions along the River Orne from Colombelles to Manneville, and from Cagny to Emieville. Medium bombers of the U.S. Eighth and Ninth Air Forces followed—it was the heaviest air attack yet launched against ground troops. British artillery and naval gunfire also blasted the enemy lines. As the last of the medium bombers turned away at 7:45 that bright summer morning, Churchill, Cromwell, and Sherman tanks of Maj. Gen. George P.B. "Pip" Roberts's British 11th Armored Division started rolling southward through cornfields behind a rolling barrage. The 29th Armored Brigade advanced in column of regiments through devastated terrain where Tiger tanks were buried or upended and shocked German soldiers wandered half-crazed. One soldier described the battlefield as "a vision of hell."

But many panzers and antitank guns had survived the Allied bombardments, and Wehrmacht discipline soon took hold. Colonel Hans von Luck, a regimental commander of the 21st Panzer Division, arrived on the battlefield straight from leave in Paris and hastily coordinated a defense. Panzer, artillery, and even Luftwaffe antiaircraft guns engaged and slowed the advancing British armor, and by the time the 11th Armored had forced its way to the foot of the Bourguebus Ridge, a minimal objective, it was mid-afternoon. As the British tanks began to climb the ridge, they were blasted by 76mm and 88mm fire from the crest. The leading squadron of the Fife and Forfar Yeomanry was incinerated on the spot, and the 23rd Hussars, coming to its rescue, was hit as hard.

A total of 126 tanks of the 11th Armored, more than half its strength, lay crippled, while the Guards Armored Division had lost 60. The casualties amounted to 1,500. Meanwhile, enemy reinforcements flowed into the battle area. After Dempsey's army gained about three

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-493-3365-27A; Photo: Siedel

ABOVE: A PzKpfw. IV tank of Panzer Regiment 22 of the 21st Panzer Division crosses the rail line near the village of Sannerville on July 9, 1944. OPPOSITE: Cromwell tanks of the 2nd Welsh Guards, the armored reconnaissance regiment of the Guards Armoured Division, advance along a dirt road southeast of Caen on July 19, 1944. The Allied effort to capture Caen proved a frustrating endeavor; however, General Montgomery argued that it drained the combat efficiency of numerous German divisions and facilitated the American advance elsewhere in Normandy.

Imperial War Museum

miles along the road to Falaise, fierce enemy resistance in depth blocked further progress. When a thunderstorm broke on the afternoon of July 20, Montgomery called off the effort. The British had lost a total of 4,000 men and 500 tanks, more than a third of the armor they had in Normandy.

"The attack we put in on July 18 was not a very good operation of war tactically," admitted Dempsey, "but strategically it was a great success, even though we did get a bloody nose. I didn't mind about that. I was prepared to lose a couple of hundred tanks, so long as I didn't lose men." But Goodwood was generally viewed as a failure, and Monty had worn the patience of Churchill and Eisenhower thin. He had wrongly assumed that he could make a rapid penetration through and beyond Caen and had grossly underestimated the enemy.

Yet he insisted that his grand design retained its logic. His long-suffering British and Canadian Armies had fought the best Wehrmacht formations to exhaustion, pinning the panzers to the eastern battlefield and preventing a counterthrust or threat to the planned American offensive.

Despite the gallantry and sacrifice shown there, the Battle of Caen would not go down in history as one of the British Army's finest hours. But there were valid reasons for this, such as the superiority and resilience of the German armor and Monty's need to conserve his limited manpower. He had experienced the slaughter on the Western Front in World War I, and needlessly wasting lives was not one of his much publicized faults.

On July 25, after carpet bombing by Eighth Air Force B-17s accidentally killed 111 American troops and wounded another 490, Bradley's Operation Cobra got underway south of Carentan. His armor and infantry reached Avranches on July 30, opening the way into Brittany, and for the first time German resistance was actually broken. The enemy was unable to restore the situation. Patton's new Third Army, meanwhile, was able to start its spectacular drive eastward against minimal opposition.

The success of Cobra—made possible by the British-Canadian sacrifices around Caen—and the exhilarating days in late July and early August 1944 when the Normandy campaign became a German rout, were to Montgomery the vindication of the overall strategy he had employed since the June 6 invasion. By August 25, the entire River Seine area below Paris was in Allied hands after 80 days of fighting—10 fewer than he had predicted in his D-Day briefings.

Monty stated simplistically that the campaign had gone exactly "according to plan," but this was not true. It had, however, proceeded as he anticipated, with the Germans fiercely defending the direct route from Normandy to Paris, while the Americans wheeled to the south and east. By counterattacking at Mortain, Hitler had unexpectedly played into Montgomery's hands by allowing the Allies to trap the larger part of the German armies in the Falaise pocket.

Monty had won the greatest Allied land battle of the war, ahead of schedule, but the bloody, protracted struggle at Caen and the failure of several offensives there tarnished his reputation. Criticism of his over-careful advance planning and caution had been mounting at Eisenhower's headquarters, and Monty's cocksure personality did not help matters.

A bitter dispute over strategy and command—part of the "broad front versus narrow front" controversy—erupted in late August between Montgomery and Ike. Monty was genuinely fond of the affable American general, a proven staff officer and inspired coalition leader who had no combat experience. But, like Lord Alanbrooke, chief of the Imperial General Staff, and many of Ike's fellow officers, Monty lamented his lack of strategic skills.

Eisenhower assumed command of the Allied ground forces on September 1, 1944, and Monty reverted to command of the 21st Army Group alone. Ike denied that this was a demotion and said, "Montgomery is one of the great soldiers of this or any other war." Churchill sought to placate Monty by promoting him to field marshal in recognition of his Normandy leadership.

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Australian War Memorial

During an advance against Japanese troops along the Kokoda Trail in September 1942, a wary Australian soldier, carrying a Bren gun, picks his way through tall grass.

AUSTRALIAN AND AMERICAN FORCES SUCCESSFULLY STEMMED THE TIDE OF JAPANESE VICTORIES IN THE PACIFIC WAR.

FIGHTING BACK in Papua New Guinea

BY JON DIAMOND

After the carrier attack by the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, Japanese forces conducted offensive operations across an incredibly broad front of 7,000 miles from Singapore to Midway Island. The success of Admiral Chuichi Nagumo's aerial assault on the anchorage of the United States Navy's Pacific Fleet that fateful morning assured the Japanese complete naval supremacy in the Pacific Ocean.

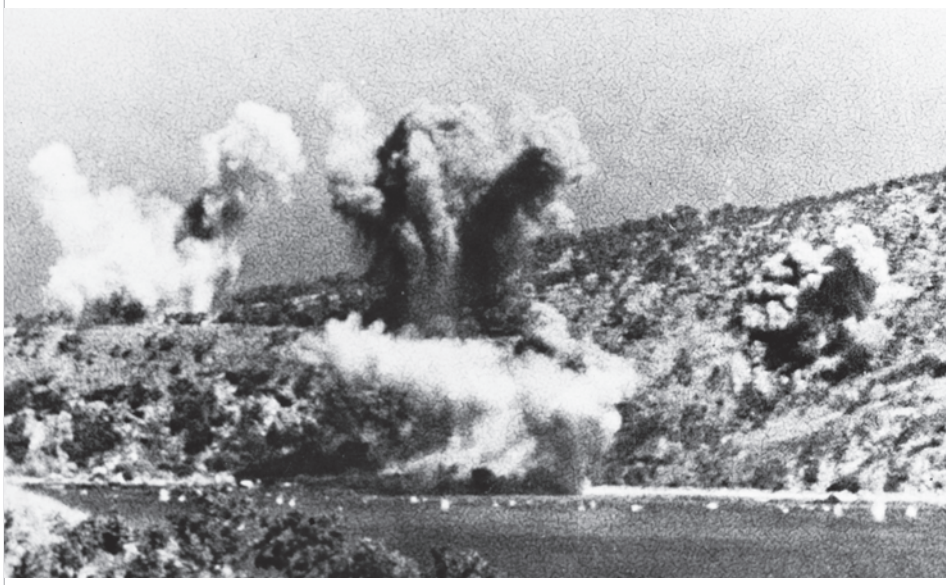
During early war-planning sessions in Tokyo, Malaya and Singapore were targets for the Imperial Japanese Army's (IJA) major thrusts while additional supporting operations were mounted to seize the Philippines, Guam, Hong Kong, and parts of British Borneo in the Western Pacific. Guam was occupied easily by December 8, 1941, and Wake Island fell on December 23 after a spirited fight from its U.S. Marine Defense Battalion.

The Japanese high command had planned that once Malaya and Singapore were captured these British bastions would serve as a springboard to seize southern Sumatra and launch an invasion of the Netherlands East Indies with its vast resources to supply Japan and its war effort, which had been occurring on the Asian mainland for almost a decade. Adding to the Japanese hegemony over the Pacific Ocean was the sinking in the South China Sea of the battleship HMS *Prince of Wales* and battlecruiser HMS *Repulse*, dispatched by Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill to serve as a deterrent to Japanese expansion, on December 10, 1941, by land-based Mitsubishi G4M Betty and G3M Nell medium horizontal and torpedo bombers.

Malaya and Singapore fell to a numerically inferior Japanese 25th Army, commanded by Lt. Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita, on February 15, 1942 after only 70 days of resistance to

the Japanese juggernaut down the Malay Peninsula and across the Straits of Johore to Singapore Island.

Australia had sent two brigades of its 8th Division to Malaya. This 15,000-man contingent, after considerable fighting toward the end of the campaign, was forced to surrender in mid-February with the rest of Singapore's garrison. The three remaining battalions of the Australian Imperial Force's (AIF) 8th Division were sent to reinforce the Dutch at Amboina and Timor in the Netherlands East Indies, as well as Rabaul on the northern tip of New Britain in the Bismarck Archipelago, which was administered by Australia.



National Archives

ABOVE: Explosions from Japanese bombs erupt in clouds of dust and debris during an air raid against American and Australian positions at Milne Bay on New Guinea. OPPOSITE: After fierce fighting has subsided around Milne Bay, Australian soldiers march past the debris left behind by days of combat, including the two hulks of Japanese Type 95 Ha-Go light tanks.

Before the fall of Singapore, Japanese units started their conquest of the Netherlands East Indies despite the fact that the local Dutch government had more than 100,000 men available. Unfortunately, this large force was spread out piecemeal across the major islands of the Indonesian archipelago. The American-British-Dutch-Australian (ABDA) forces were quickly routed on the ground and in the skies and dispatched in the Battle of the Java Sea. Tarakan Island fell on January 10, 1942, followed by the capture of Borneo and Sumatra. Java ended its resistance on March 8. After the loss of the Netherlands East Indies, American General George Brett, who had been British General Archibald Wavell's chief American deputy in the ABDA command, was appointed commander of all U.S. forces in Australia until General Douglas MacArthur arrived at the behest of President Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister John Curtin of Australia. At this juncture, most of this force was composed of air units that landed in Australia after fleeing the Philippines and East Indies.

Also, prior to the collapse of Malaya, the first Japanese air attack against Rabaul occurred on January 21, 1942, with more than 100 Japanese fighters and bombers attacking the main Australian air base in the Bismarck Archipelago, northeast of New Guinea. Eight of 10 RAAF Wirraway fighters, which were basically American AT-6 (Texan) trainers, and three Lockheed Hudson bombers were destroyed. On the night of January 22, Maj. Gen. Tomitaro Horii's 5,300-strong South Seas Detachment steamed into Rabaul Harbor. The 1,400 Australian defenders put up a brave fight but eventually withdrew. As the Japanese overran the northern part of New Britain in the ensuing days, most of the Australians were brutally massacred or died as prisoners.

The RAAF chief at Rabaul evacuated the remainder of his air detachment, two surviving Wirraways and one Lockheed Hudson, back to Australia. Now all that separated Australia from the Japanese offensive were a few Australian troops in the Bulolo Valley near Wau, southeast of Salamaua on the Huon Gulf in northeast New Guinea, and the small garrison at Port Moresby on the southern coast of Papua. After seizing Rabaul, the Japanese became interested in occupying both of these areas. Japanese staging moves to take Papua began on March 8-11, 1942, when IJA and Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) elements landed at Salamaua, Lae, and Finschhafen on the Huon Gulf. From April 1-20, Special Naval Landing Force (SNLF) troops landed at Fafak, Babo, Sorong, Manokwari, Momi, Nabire, Seroi, Sarmi, and Hollandia along the north coast of New Guinea.

New Guinea is the second largest island in the world, located immediately north of the Australian continent. It is 1,500 miles long, and Australia's military planners regarded it as a buffer against Japanese invasion of its Northern Territories. The southeastern part of New Guinea, Papua, which occupies one-third of the total area, was administered by Australia. Papua's interior is inhospitable. The Owen Stanley Mountains dominate the topography, and the area is replete with jungles and swamps.

Although New Guinea possessed no cities or towns with the exception of the smaller ones at Port Moresby, Milne Bay, Lae, and Finschhafen, Papua had numerous small villages inhabited by roughly 100,000 native Melanesians of differing tribal origin. The main town was Port Moresby on the south coast with a population of 3,000 before the war. The name Papua emanates from a Dutch word meaning "fuzzy," a reference to the bushy hair of the Melanesian populace. In the almost 400 years of Portuguese, Dutch, British, German, and Australian colonial involvement on New Guinea, all that existed were a few coconut plantations, trading posts, and small Christian missions, such as at the villages of Buna and Gona on the northeastern coast. Away from Port Moresby, only native paths connected the northern and southern Papuan coasts. The most famous was the Kokoda Trail, named after a village on that mountainous, muddy track. Much of the Kokoda Trail spanned high hills that rose into the clouds cordoned by forests thick with undergrowth. Torrential tropical rains fell so extensively that they filled the ravines and gullies with fast-flowing streams that impeded infantry movement.

The village of Kokoda lay in a valley 1,200 feet above sea level on the northern foothills of the Owen Stanley Range. In addition to having a Papuan Administration post and a rubber plantation, Kokoda also had a small airfield that was a main objective in the Japanese advance from Papua's northern coast. Toward the end of July 1942, Lt. Gen. Harukichi Hyakutake, the IJA 17th Army commander, had landed some 13,500 troops at Buna and Gona and forced the Australians, mainly militia, back beyond Kokoda to a ridge position at Deniki. The fighting was mostly guerrilla-style with firefights and ambushes in both wet jungle and tall Kunai grasslands. There was no possi-

bility of taking any vehicle along the track since it was only a few feet wide and could only be traversed through its ridges, valley, jungles, and streams by foot-slogging marches through calf-high mud.

Rabaul would become the headquarters for the Japanese 8th Area Army and would also have five airfields and a harbor that could serve as an anchorage for a large part of the IJN. Across the Arafura Sea from Papua lay the arid Northern Territories of the Australian continent. After their amazing string of lightning successes, the Japanese were presented with a military decision borne from their rapid conquests; namely, should there be a further expansion into the South Pacific to cut the long supply lines from the United States to Australia and New Zealand? However, the IJA decided to move southward in mid-January, first to New Britain with Rabaul's seizure and from there to occupy key positions in Papua, notably the town of Port Moresby on the southern coast. By so doing, the Japanese high command left the South Pacific supply routes open to Australia and New Zealand, an omission it would later regret. Eventually, the Japanese decided that the establishment of further bases at New Caledonia, Fiji, the Solomon Islands, and Samoa would isolate Australia and allow better defense of the southern rim of the Pacific.

Darwin, an administrative seat in the Northwest Territories of Australia, was now under direct threat from the advancing Japanese. Darwin was also a terminus for European air routes to Australia and a major seaport in the north. The Australian government, with most of its army in the Middle East, could only spare modest reinforcements for Darwin's garrison of 14,000 men and a couple of Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) squadrons stationed there. At the time of the Pearl Harbor attack, 121,000 Australian soldiers were serving overseas, leaving only 37,000 to defend Australia. The RAAF had suffered grievously in Malaya and Singapore, losing 165 planes, thus leaving only 175 for Australia's defense. Aside from Consolidated PBY Catalina patrol bombers and 53 Lockheed Hudson bombers, the majority of planes of the RAAF were Wirraways. The Japanese bombed Darwin on February 19, 1942, for the first time from aircraft carriers and from the Kendari base in the Celebes.

The Japanese were establishing bases along the northern coast of northeastern New Guinea and Papua. They had for the time being abandoned any idea of invading Australia directly, partially due to their major troop commitment to China and Manchuria, and instead planned to isolate the Northern Territories, including Darwin and its harbor, by occupying Port Moresby.

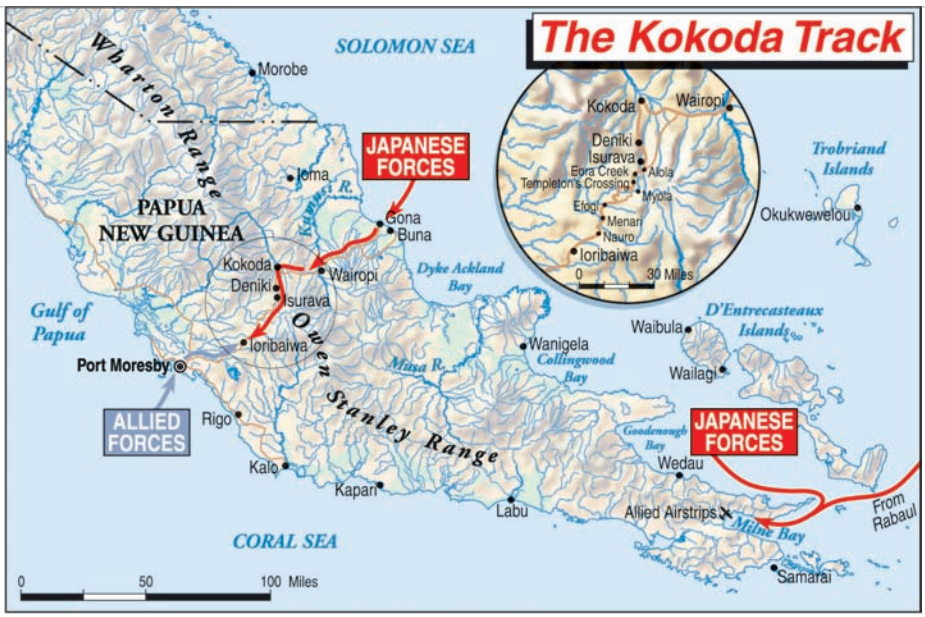
Thus, the town of Port Moresby became Japan's prime strategic objective in the spring of 1942. Initially, rather than taking Port Moresby by an overland route, the IJN was to capture it in an amphibious operation, which was mitigated by a U.S. carrier task force at the Battle of the Coral Sea on May 4-8, 1942. Despite the loss of the aircraft carrier USS *Lexington* and damage to the carrier USS *Yorktown,* the U.S. Navy compelled the Japanese invasion force to retreat after losing a carrier and having another one damaged. Additionally, many experienced IJN pilots died in the sea battle, the first fought solely by carrier-based planes.

The surrender of Singapore, with a large contingent of the Australian 8th Division, upset Australia's prewar defense planning. Prime Minister John Curtin wanted his divisions in the Middle East to return home for the defense of Australia. Two brigades of the 6th Division were temporarily transferred to Ceylon, while the division's remaining brigade and the 7th Division would be returned to Australia with its leading elements arriving in mid-March 1942. With the 9th Division remaining in the Middle East, Curtin was mollified with the green American 32nd and 41st Infantry Divisions being hastily deployed to Australia's defense. The 41st Division arrived in Australia in April 1942 and the 32nd in May.

In early March 1942, Port Moresby had only the 30th Infantry Brigade, a field artillery regiment, and coastal and antiaircraft units, totaling between 6,000 and 7,000 men, for defense.

GEORGE A. VASEY LAMBASTED MACARTHUR'S HEADQUARTERS IN BRISBANE AS BEING "LIKE A BLOODY BAROMETER IN A CYCLONE-UP AND DOWN EVERY TWO MINUTES."

Australian War Memorial



ABOVE: The Kokoda Trail was an unforgiving jungle track that stretched across the forbidding Owen Stanley Mountains in New Guinea. It was the primary route of advance and retreat as Allied and Japanese troops vied for control of the island. BELOW: During his first visit to the Kokoda Trail, American General Douglas MacArthur, theater commander, confers with Sir Thomas Blamey, commander of Allied Land Forces in New Guinea, and Maj. Gen. G.S. Allen, who led the Australian Imperial Forces.

Australian War Memorial

On February 21, President Franklin Roosevelt cabled General Douglas MacArthur on Corregidor and ordered him to leave the besieged island in the Philippines and proceed to Australia. He arrived at Batchelor Field, south of Darwin, on March 17.

Neither the Allies nor the Japanese were prepared for a major war in the South Pacific, which was not only remote but also disease ridden and ubiquitously wet. The Australians, many of whom had experience in the North African desert, Greece, Crete, and Syria, had not had any training for the upland jungle they found in several parts of Papua. In order for the combatants to advance in New Guinea, they would need to be able to construct improvised bridges and roads. Because of the extensive coastline of the northern Papuan coast near Buna, troops of the American 32nd Division sailed there on a motley collection of coastal craft and wooden schooners.

As an Allied land forces commander, Prime Minister Curtin selected General Sir Thomas Blamey. MacArthur and his staff derided Blamey, although he had served gallantly in World War I. After as stint as police chief in Melbourne, he served in North Africa and the Levant. Maj. Gen. and Deputy Chief of the Australian General Staff George A. Vasey lambasted MacArthur's headquarters in Brisbane as being "like a bloody barometer in a cyclone-up and down every two minutes."

Lieutenant General Sydney F. Rowell was the commander of New Guinea Force comprising the crack Australian 7th Division, veterans of the Middle East, two of its brigades going to Port Moresby while its third, the 18th, was dispatched to Milne Bay. After displeasing MacArthur, primarily due to the continued withdrawal of his Australian forces on the Kokoda Trail, Blamey was forced to relieve Rowell of his command of New Guinea Force.

After the Battle of Midway in June 1942, Lt. Gen. Harukichi Hyakutake's 17th Army was ordered to gather its divisions in the Philippines, Java, and Rabaul and prepare for the attack on Port Moresby. The Japanese decided to bypass New Caledonia, Fiji, and Samoa and to make a two-pronged approach on Port Moresby; one route would be along the coast from Milne Bay, which would be taken in an assault from the sea, while the other route would be overland from Buna and Gona along the rugged Kokoda Trail.

Milne Bay and Buna were coveted as future bases by both the Japanese and the Allied war planners in the Southwest Pacific. The Japanese beat the Allies to Buna and Gona; however, the Allies were more fortunate at Milne Bay, on the southeast end of Papua, getting there first in July 1942 with the Australian Militia 7th Brigade and a force of U.S. engineers to occupy the northern and western coastline, establish defensive positions, and begin constructing an airfieldto accommodate two RAAF Kittyhawk fighter squadrons and a few Hudson reconnaissance bombers. The airfield was completed by August 1942.

The airstrip had been constructed by the 43rd U.S. Engineer Regiment and 24th Field Company of the Australian Militia. Second and third airstrips were being cleared of coconut trees and defensive positions prepared. Milne Bay was 20 miles long from east to west. On the western shore of the bay was a large coconut plantation, Gili Gili, surrounded heavily wooded hills. A track that winding the entire way around the bay was usually muddy and closed in by nearby mangrove swamps on both the seaward and northern sides.

The Japanese conducted an amphibious offensive in late August 1942, using the IJN's 8th Fleet and a landing force to seize Milne Bay's airfields and base to support the ongoing overland Port Moresby assault and concurrent Guadalcanal operation. The Japanese force that attacked Milne Bay had lost some of its offensive strength when one of its regiments was transferred to Guadalcanal. The 2,000-man Hayashi Force (1st Landing Force), launched from New Ireland, landed on the bay's northern shore on the night of August 25 against a strong Allied defense. The Japanese were under the faulty impression that there were only two or three companies of Australian infantry to defend the airfield. A second landing force with a naval labor corps arrived at Milne Bay on the morning of August 26. At Milne Bay, the Japanese owned the sea since the U.S. and Royal Australian Navies were heavily engaged off Guadalcanal. However, ashore there were two Australian infantry brigades at Milne Bay comprised of the veteran 18th Brigade under Brigadier George F. Wooten, who led the same three battalions (2/9th, 2/10th, 2/12th) of his brigade in Libya, and the Australian Militia's 7th Brigade, under Brigadier Field, comprising Queenslanders of the 9th, 25th, and 61st battalions. The whole of Milne Force, as the collective brigades had been named, was controlled by Maj. Gen. Cyril Clowes and numbered about 4,500 infantry. In addition, there was a 25-pounder battery of the 2/5th Field Regiment. Clowes was a regular soldier who had served as an artilleryman and led the Anzac Corps artillery in Greece in 1940. Without naval forces, coastal guns, or searchlights,

Clowes awaited the Japanese landings after he had received reports of transports moving along the eastern Papuan coast.

The initial Japanese landing was made against the Australian 61st (Militia) Battalion, 7th Infantry Brigade, spread out in company strength at Ahioma at the eastern end of Milne Bay, early on August 26. As more Japanese troops landed, the Australians withdrew along the northern shore's track, faster when they saw an enemy tank crawling along. The Japanese had landed some light and medium tanks, and the Australian defenders lacked effective antitank weaponry. The RAAF Kittyhawk and Hudson pilots attacked the enemy landing points and destroyed stores and fuel supplies on the beaches as well as stranding seven Japanese landing barges that had to be beached on nearby Goodenough Island. The transport *Nankai Maru* was sunk with several hundred Japanese infantrymen aboard. A Hudson's bomb hit forced a Japanese destroyer to return to its base. The Japanese used their patented tactics of encirclement and night assaults in an attempt to confuse and divide the Australians. The 2/10th Battalion of the veteran Australian 18th Infantry Brigade moved up to help the beleaguered 61st Battalion and took the brunt of the ensuing Japanese advance westward to the KB Mission on August 27. The Queensland militia battalions, in their initial combat, had shown the North African combat-hardened formations that they, too, could fight like veterans. As the Japanese advanced on the track along the northern coast of Milne Bay, Clowes sensed the danger but held onto his reserve battalions, maintaining a narrow base perimeter with the rear clear in case he needed to move back into the hills to the north of the bay and the airfields. However, the 25th (Militia) Battalion, 7th Infantry Brigade moved up along the northern coast road to Rabi with an antitank gun, some sticky bombs, and Molotov cocktails on the night of the August 27.

On the 28th, the Australian defenses were forming near the cleared but unused Number 3 airstrip, northeast of Gili Gili, the target for a prolonged three-day series of Japanese frontal assaults that had been massing in the surrounding jungles. During the night of August 3, Clowes sent 2/12th Battalion of the 18th Infantry Brigade to support the 61st Battalion already positioned on Strip Number 3. This day marked Clowes' start of a counteroffensive, which was characterized by a steady series of skirmishes that forced the Japanese to yield territory as they retreated to the east.

On September 5, the 2/9th Battalion, 18th Infantry Brigade attacked behind an artillery

Native porters carry gear and ascend the Golden Stairs of the famed Kokoda Trail along with an Australian soldier.

Australian War Memorial

barrage supported by RAAF Kittyhawk strafing sorties and pushed the Japanese back until they were forced to give up their main supply base. Clowes was anticipating another Japanese landing on the night of September 6, since Japanese destroyers once again entered Milne Bay; however, their mission was to pick up the surviving infantrymen after their defeated amphibious assault, not to land reinforcements. On the morning of September 7, a cruiser and two corvettes extracted about 600 soldiers, the last of the invasion force. Previously, 350 Japanese were left stranded on Goodenough Island, another 300 drowned when their transport was sunk, and 700 died in the fighting along Milne Bay's northern shore track.

At the conclusion of the fighting at Milne Bay, with the Japanese evacuating under naval cover on September 6th, General William Slim of Indian Army fame wrote of the Milne Bay defenders, "It was Australian soldiers who first broke the spell of the invincibility of the Japanese Army." It pleased the Australian General Staff, despite MacArthur's condescension, that their militia was able to stand up to several determined Japanese attacks.

After the repulse of the amphibious assault on Port Moresby at the Battle of the Coral Sea, an overland campaign was launched on July 21 when Japanese cruisers, destroyers, and transports landed infantry and engineers of the Yokoyama Advance Force at Buna and Gona on Papua's north coast.

With an airfield at Buna, the Japanese thought that they could go overland to seize Port Moresby. After the Japanese occupied Buna, they next pushed down the Kokoda Trail, over the Owen Stanley Mountains, toward Port Moresby. The trail was a 145-mile mud path that crossed some of the most inhospitable terrain in the world.

Thus began the brutal confrontation for the Kokoda Trail, lasting well into October 1942, which committed the remainder of the Japanese 144th Infantry Regiment, the South Seas Detachment HQ (Horii Detachment, 4,400 troops, which had captured Rabaul), elements of the 41st Infantry Regiment (2,100 troops) under Colonel Yazawa Kiyomi, two artillery regiments, and service troops added to the reconnaissance force, led by engineer officer Colonel Yokoyama, that had landed there in late July. General Horii had a well-balanced total fighting force of about 10,000 troops built around a nucleus of the 144th and 41st Infantry Regiments, battle-hardened veterans of campaigns in China, the Philippines, and Malaya.

The Allies had wanted Australian troops with the American I Corps, the 32nd and 41st Divisions under Lt. Gen. Robert Eichelberger, to secure the crest of the Owen Stanley Range from Kokoda northwest to Wau and then advance all the way to the Buna-Gona area. However, with the Japanese coming south down the Kokoda Trail from Buna in force, the Australian 39th Militia Battalion, led by Brigadier Porter, was hurriedly sent to block the advance from Papua's northern coast to Kokoda Village. However, they were too few in number to hold the Japanese back, and the enemy was gaining ground in its drive against the Australian militia.

Yokoyama's engineer group met the Australian militiamen and quickly drove them off with their superior infantry tactics. The understrength 39th Battalion sent out small patrols, set up ambushes, and functioned as skirmishers. Despite a large number of casualties, the Japanese inexorably pushed southward, forcing the Australians back. By the end of July, after only seven days of fighting, Kokoda Village and its airfield were in Japanese hands. Japanese 17th Army headquarters ordered Horii to attack along the old native trail with his larger force. Kokoda Village became a Japanese supply base as more troops were in transit from Rabaul for the overland attack.

The Australian efforts to delay the Japanese were intensified when the 53rd Battalion, under Lt. Col. Honner, moved up to assist the 39th Battalion, a spent force after three weeks of combat. By August 16, the 21st Brigade, 7th Division, under Maj. Gen. Arthur "Tubby" Allen, who

Australian War Memorial

ABOVE: Mired in mud up to their ankles, Australian soldiers slog toward Buna along the Kokoda Trail in this photo from November 1942. BELOW: A wounded Australian soldier is painfully transported toward an aid station on New Guinea by native porters. Friendly natives who knew the jungle and were willing to assist the Allies played a key role in the eventual victory.

National Archives

had commanded a brigade in North Africa, Greece, and the Levant, arrived on the Kokoda Trail with its 2/14th Battalion starting the ascent up the "Golden Stairs" from Uberi. The Golden Stairs consisted of steps varying from 10 to 18 inches in height with the front edge of the step being a small log held in place by stakes. The Australian militiamen and regulars often carried sticks to support their weight as they ascended this exhausting trail. Native Papuan bearers provided much needed assistance transporting supplies and carrying wounded back down the trail toward Port Moresby.

On August 26, the Japanese launched a general offensive to take Port Moresby. The Australian Militia 39th and 53rd Battalions stood between them and Isurava and Alola. As the 21st Brigade, 7th Division came into the line, the Japanese attacks stiffened, and the fighting became more continuous. Machine-gun nests, sniping, and booby traps became the tactics of choice. The weight of the Japanese offensive continued, and the Australians fell back roughly 15 miles to Efogi. On September 1, General Horii's offensive received an additional 1,000 fresh reinforcements that had landed on the Papuan northern coast, which he intended to send to his 144th Infantry Regiment. Horii now had roughly a force of two complete infantry brigades along with service troops and engineers and two mountain guns.

As the Japanese engaged the seasoned 21st Brigade, now including the 2/16th Battalion, their casualties began to mount. Malnutrition, infected leg sores, and tropical diseases were culling the Japanese ranks. Yet, the Australians were forced to retreat, and the Japanese were driven by their officers to keep up pressure on their flanks. The Japanese were positioned along the ridge at Ioribaiwa, and the Australian infantry on the Imita Ridge across the valley from the enemy. Each side stood firm.

Although Horii had 5,000 troops attacking the Australians, Japanese lines of communication had been steadily lengthening from both Buna and Gona, while the Australian communication lines was becoming shorter as they retreated toward Port Moresby. The Ioribaiwa-Imita area was only a few hours' march, under 10 miles, from Port Moresby, leading Allen and Rowell to believe that at this point, with better communications, they could stop the Japanese movement.

This final defensive position would also become the starting line for the Australian counteroffensive to retake Kokoda Village and continue to Buna and Gona. The fresh Australian 25th Brigade, in its new jungle green kit, arrived at the Ioribaiwa-Imita area, raising the spirits of the Australian defenders, although the Japanese could now vaguely see distant Port Moresby from their positions. At the end of August, however, General Horii was ordered by Imperial General Headquarters to assume defensive positions on the Kokoda Trail as soon as he crossed the main Owen Stanley Range. As the defeat at Milne Bay and setbacks on Guadalcanal registered in the minds of the Imperial General Headquarters, Horii was further instructed to move back to Papua's northern coast, although the Japanese general was planning to leave a strong rearguard position at Ioribaiwa. By September 19, the Japanese had lost about 1,000 dead and 1,500 wounded. Australian casualties were 314 killed and 367 wounded.

However, after Rowell was sacked by MacArthur for tardiness in defeating the Japanese and replaced by Lt. Gen. Edmund Herring, the Australian counteroffensive (largely devised by Rowell) from the Imita Ridge began on September 26, forcing the Japanese to start their withdrawal up the Kokoda Trail to Buna and Gona. It was the Australian redoubt at Imita Ridge that had stopped Horii's advance; the Australians had two "short" 25-pounder field artillery pieces specifically designed for the jungle, which they had dragged up the Golden Stairs. However, it was the orders of the Imperial General Staff that made Horii retreat.

The 25th Brigade led the way north from Imita Ridge back to Kokoda Village. On October 12, Brigadier Kenneth Eather's three battalions of the 25th Brigade attacked the Japanese at Templeton's Crossing on the northern side of the main ridge of the Owen Stanley Mountains, successfully dislodging them after five days of stubborn resistance. Brigadier John Lloyd's 16th Brigade (2/1st, 2/2nd, 2/3rd) entered the fray at Eora Creek, the valley below the climb to the Kokoda plateau, where the Japanese held them up for about a week until a flank attack by the 2/3rd ended enemy resistance.

From Eora Creek the Australians fought uphill against a series Japanese positions beyond which were strong main defenses with a long perimeter. These held until the end of October. MacArthur's hectoring from the rear headquarters showed a complete ignorance of the battlefield conditions and the Australian generals' distaste for running up a huge butcher's bill. MacArthur wanted Kokoda recaptured as quickly as possible so that the force could be built up by airlifting men and supplies to its airfield for the future assault on Buna and Gona. No one commented whether MacArthur was aware that it had taken the

National Archives

Japanese soldiers pause to gather drinking water, at times a scarce commodity, along the Kokoda Trail. Many Japanese soldiers also starved to death during the protracted fighting in New Guinea.

Japanese 51 days to advance from Kokoda to Ioribaiwa, but the Australians had required only 35 days to recapture the same ground from an enemy that had acquired much more jungle fieldcraft and tactical use of the terrain and was suicidal in defense of its positions.

The outcome of the fighting on the Kokoda Trail was largely determined by logistics and terrain, in addition to the determination of the Australian Army and militia battalions. The Japanese supply system was stretched to its limits, and the enemy offensive had resulted in 80 percent of its manpower killed, wounded, or disabled by disease. General Horii, under orders, withdrew up the Kokoda Trail to reinforce his defensive positions and garrisons at Buna and Gona, the scenes of horrific jungle fighting that would last into January 1943. This was a strategic retreat for the Japanese because of an increasing need to divert reinforcements elsewhere. From the end of September, the IJA was ordered to redirect its efforts to reclaim Guadalcanal from the American 1st Marine Division, which had landed there and at Tulagi on August 7, 1942.

By the end of 1942, the Australian defenders of southeastern Papua had foiled the Japanese attempt to seize Port Moresby by an overland route. After the recapture of Kokoda Village, Allied planners prepared for their next offensive, which would become a three-month bloody onslaught to recover the vital bases and airfields of Buna, an administration center, and Gona an old mission. Buna consisted of an Australian government station called Buna Mission, a small settlement 500 yards away called Buna Village, and an airstrip. Allied headquarters envisioned a general advance to commence on November 16, 1942, with the Australian 7th Division and the U.S. 32nd Division against the Buna-Gona beachhead. The dividing line between the Australian and U.S. troops was to be the Girua River.

As the crisis on the Kokoda Trail passed, General Blamey demanded that the Allied offensive be an Australian operation. Having initially been overwhelmed by the Japanese just weeks before, he reasoned it was the right place for the "Diggers" to win back their fighting reputation. The Australians, with the Americans advancing along the northern New Guinea coast, would expend much blood to take control of both Buna and Gona. By late 1942, the Australian 7th Division, under Maj. Gen. George Vasey, had reached the northern end of the Kokoda Trail. Their arrival had been anticipated by Blamey, who had flown in the 2/10th Battalion, 18th Infantry Brigade from Milne Bay to Wanigela, a village southeast of Buna. There they established a base and began to reconnoiter the Japanese-held areas on Papua's northern coast.

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ABOVE: Dead Japanese soldiers lie in a neglected heap after the final Allied push to victory at Gona, New Guinea. This photo was taken in December 1942. OPPOSITE: Moving against Japanese defenses during the final assault at Buna, New Guinea, an Australian soldier stays close to the cover of a light tank that is leading the way toward the enemy.

Lieutenant General Hatazo Adachi, commander of the Japanese 18th Army, with his headquarters at Rabaul, had about 18,000 troops available for Kokoda-Buna-Gona operations including IJA formations, Imperial Japanese Marine units, engineers, and service troops that had either just landed or survived the retreat up the Kokoda Trail, which had claimed the life of General Horii and his staff, who were drowned trying to escape when their rafts capsized going downstream on the fast-flowing Kumusi River to Lae.

The Japanese garrisons consisted of 2,500 men around Buna; 5,000 men on the northern part of the Kokoda Trail leading into Sanananda Point on the coast a few miles northwest of Buna; about 800 men around Gona, 15 miles to the northwest of Buna (including some highly valued jungle fighters from Formosa); and roughly 900 troops at the mouth of the Kumusi River, 10 miles farther along the coast from Gona. At Sanananda and on the road leading to it, the Japanese commanders placed the bulk of their combat effectives together with some engineers and naval construction troops and two mountain gun batteries. Except at Sanananda Point, the Japanese front was never more than a half a mile from the coast, but the perimeter was covered by the most hellish terrain and extraordinarily fanatical and well-armed defenders. Swamps and dense jungle channeled the Allied attackers down a handful of trails, where a Japanese machine gun in a reinforced pillbox could hold off a battalion.

Blamey's plan for clearing the Japanese was to advance through Kokoda Village with two brigades of the Australian 7th Division and from south of Buna with regiments of the U.S. 32nd Infantry Division. These forces were pressing Japanese defenses near Buna by late November, but the Americans suffered heavy losses, nearly 2,000 men out of their force of 5,000, and had to be reinforced by another of the regiments stationed at Port Moresby.

An Australian report after the capture of Gona recalled just how well the Japanese engineers had prepared the defenses along the eleven-mile front from Gona in the west to Cape Endaiadere east of Buna Mission and Giropa Point. Hundreds of coconut log bunkers were constructed, some reinforced with iron plates, others with iron rails and oil drums filled with sand. In areas that were too wet for trenches and dugouts, bunkers were built seven to eight feet above the surface and then concealed with earth, tree fronds, and other vegetation. The bunkers, which contained from three to five machine guns, provided interlocking fields of fire. The bunkers were protected by infantry in open rifle pits to the front, sides, and rear. Also, the emplacements had screened loopholes to fend off thrown hand grenades. Some infantry were concealed in foxholes in the ground, under trees, or even in hollowed out logs, while others simply waited in the jungle, where they were heavily camouflaged. Snipers in the tall coconut trees or in concealed positions were a menace.

The Australian advance also moved slowly. The 16th Brigade had lost half its number through battle casualties and sickness and by the end of November was suffering from fatigue, malnutrition, and a shortage of supplies. In early December, General Vasey diverted his reserve brigade to Gona to relieve the exhausted 16th Brigade, which had lost 85 percent of its original complement and could no longer function in an offensive role. The eastern and southern parts of the front were bogged down by mid-December, although the Australians were progressing on the western flank around Gona. Here, the Australian 25th Brigade had pushed the Japanese into swamps and then, exhausted by heavy fighting, the brigade was relieved by the fresh 21st Brigade under Brigadier I.N. Dougherty. This move tipped the balance around Gona to the Australians, who entered the town on December 9,

while the battle raged around Buna.

To relieve the stalemate around Buna, the main front, Blamey brought in his remaining 18th Brigade battalions from Milne Bay along with a squadron of M3 Australian-crewed U.S. light tanks, since the Allied attackers at Buna had extremely limited artillery. Only the short 25-pounder and a couple of 105mm howitzers with limited ammunition were available to penetrate the reinforced Japanese bunkers there. Due to the dense vegetation, it was difficult to effectively spot where their rounds were landing. The U.S. 105mm howitzer was a great bunker buster; however, the absence of shipping and the terrain necessitated using mortars. The M3 light tanks, although armed with a 37mm turret gun and .30-caliber machine guns, could still only move properly on relatively cleared, firm ground. All the tanks were knocked out in the first four days, although the Australian infantry was through the Japanese front in two places on Buna's eastern sector.

Further tank reinforcements arrived, and the hardcore Japanese resistance east of Buna was broken at the expense of just over 50 percent of the 18th Brigade as battle casualties. In late December the Americans, under Lt. Gen. Eichelberger, took Buna, linking up with the Australians on January 2, 1943, and leaving the Allied force available to concentrate on Sanananda Point between Buna and Gona.

The hard fighting in the early stages had so exhausted the Australian units that progress on this part of the front was impossible until the depleted ranks of the 18th Brigade had been freed from around Buna and the U.S. 163rd Regiment, 41st Division was brought forward. There were literally no other intact Australian infantry formations in Papua.

Consequently, Vasey had to wait until the end of December before he could move across to the Sanananda Trail and drive toward the coast with the 163rd Regiment and 18th Brigade, the latter reinforced by 1,000 fresh men. The Allied attack began on January 12, 1943, and made slow progress, gradually bearing down on Sanananda with a two-pronged thrust, one from the northeast along the coast, and the other from the track to the southeast. The Japanese tried on several occasions to reinforce Sanananda, but most convoys were strongly attacked by Allied aircraft, and only a few hundred men were landed.

Imperial General Headquarters in Tokyo decided in early January that Papua would have to be abandoned, and on the 13th the Japanese at Sanananda began to collect their forces at suitable embarkation points along the coast. By January 22, the battle for the Buna-Gona-Sanananda beachhead was over. Japanese losses at Sanananda were at least 1,600 dead with many more missing. At Sanananda, 1,400 Australians and 800 Americans were killed or wounded. For the entire Papuan campaign the cost was staggering for both sides. The Allies had a total of 8,546 killed or wounded, of whom 5,700 were Australian. The Japanese had committed approximately 18,000 men to the campaign, of whom 6,200 were lost after the withdrawal from the Owen Stanley Range. Between November 19, 1942, and January 22, 1943, at least 8,000 more Japanese were killed or wounded. Malaria produced 27,000 medical casualties among all combatants, largely because of the shortage of quinine, which was produced mainly in Japanese-held Indonesia.

The Australian 7th and American 32nd Infantry Divisions were severely mauled. Australian militia battalions had suffered grievously. The American 41st Infantry Division was exhausted as well. Both American infantry divisions would require six to 12 months of reinforcement and refitting to prepare for the next series of battles, while the Australians would defend against further Japanese incursions into the Markham River Valley to the west.

After the disastrous Philippine campaign of early 1942, General MacArthur needed a victory in Papua so the American leaders would regain confidence in his military prowess. The U.S. Army learned a lot from the Papuan campaign of 1942-1943, but at a high cost. It was clear that in the summer of 1942, U.S. Army units were insufficiently trained in contrast to the Australians, many of whom had served in the Middle East.

After the victory in Papua in January 1943, MacArthur decreed that there would be "no more Bunas!" According to the Australian official history, "The primaeval swamps, the dank and silent bush, the heavy loss of life, the fixity of purpose of the Japanese, for most of whom death could be the only ending, all combined to make the struggle so appalling that most of the hardened soldiers who were to emerge from it would remember it unwillingly as their most exacting experience of the whole war ... a ghastly nightmare."

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Jon Diamond is a frequent contributor to WWII History. *His most recent book,* Stilwell and the Chindits: The Allied Campaign for North Burma 1943-44, *was released by Pen & Sword in November 2014.*

A THOUSAND QUESTIONS flashed through Lieutenant Cy Lewis's mind as he spotted the pair of German Messerschmitt Me-109 fighters banking in to attack him. What's my airspeed, altitude, direction? Is Healy awake back there in the gunner's seat? How can I maneuver this crate around to give him a clear shot?

Lewis then spied the light cruiser USS *Boise* 6,000 feet below him and about six miles out to sea. Shoving the nose of his Curtiss SOC "Seagull" scout-observation aircraft down into a steep power dive, the naval aviator made a run for *Boise*'s protective antiaircraft umbrella.

His aging biplane was no match for its German pursuers. Heavily armed, highly agile, and 200 miles per hour faster than their quarry, both Me-109s poured fire into Lewis's Seagull. Two 20mm explosive shells punctured the SOC's lower left wing, sending hot shrapnel into its fuselage but luckily missing the crew. Return fire from Radioman Healy's puny .30-caliber machine gun ceased after a few bursts when that weapon jammed.

Cy Lewis knew he and Healy would never reach their ship. Still, he had to let someone on the *Boise* know what was going on. "Two Messerschmitts on my tail," he shouted into his radio. "Prepare to pick me up!"

Yet somehow the rugged Seagull, by now flying nearly upside down, got underneath the cover of *Boise*'s guns. Looking behind him, Lewis saw the enemy interceptors withdraw. A moment before, he was sure he would be shot down; now the cocky airman got back on the radio to amend his earlier report.

"Belay that," he joked. "They've gone back for reinforcements."

Ordered to return with his damaged floatplane, Lieutenant Lewis had one last question on his mind. "What happened to our air force, whose job it was to keep these Messerschmitts off our backs?"

Aboard the attack transport USS *Monrovia,* Vice Admiral H. Kent Hewitt was wondering the same thing. Hewitt commanded the Western Task Force, fully one half of Operation Husky, the Allied invasion of Sicily. During the early morning hours of Saturday, July 10, 1943, his 601 warships and landing craft began putting ashore some 90,000 soldiers belonging to the U.S. Seventh Army. It was part of the largest, most complex amphibious landing yet attempted in World War II.

From the start Axis aircraft flying from bases in Sicily and on the Italian mainland did their best to disrupt Hewitt's plans. Even before sunup on D-day, Luftwaffe bombers began prowling the coastline in search of ships to attack. At 0458 hours they claimed their first victim when two bombs from a Junkers Ju-88 bomber struck and sank the destroyer USS *Maddox*. With the dawn came a new, dangerous threat, Me-109 fighter planes intent on menacing the invasion beaches.

Hewitt had no friendly air cover with which to counter these raiders. The U.S. Atlantic Fleet had reassigned all aircraft carriers previously available in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations to other missions elsewhere. Instead, U.S. Army Air Forces (USAAF) fighters were supposed to be guarding the invasion fleet. But due to a series of misunderstandings and communications foul-ups, the Curtiss P-40 Warhawks and Lockheed P-38 Lightnings of Lt. Gen. Carl "Tooey" Spaatz's Northwest African Air Force had left the fleet almost totally unprotected throughout Husky's critical early hours.

An amphibious landing was most vulnerable at its beginning, during which lightly equipped assault troops still struggled to secure the beach. Without their own armor and artillery in place on shore, Army commanders relied on the U.S. Navy to ward off enemy counterthrusts from the air, sea, and ground. Off the American beaches at Sicily, naval gunfire support came in the form of five light cruisers, several dozen destroyers, and a British warship. These vessels could bombard a wide array of hostile targets, providing their guns were directed properly—"spotted" in Navy jargon.

There were two ways to spot naval gunfire during an invasion. Shore fire control parties, specially trained sailors and officers, normally accompanied the first waves of assault troops. Utilizing powerful radios, these teams transmit-

INSET ABOVE: German fighters took their toll on U.S. Navy Seagull floatplanes whose pilots heroically gave battle in the skies over Sicily in 1943. This German Messerschmitt Me-109 fighter was built in Spain after World War II and is still flying. INSET RIGHT: The Curtiss SOC-3 Seagull observation floatplane was a rugged aircraft armed with a rear-facing .30-caliber machine gun. The Seagull was nearing obsolescence with the outbreak of World War II and had little hope of prevailing against the modern German fighter planes it faced over Sicily. BACKGROUND: Aircraft catapulted from Allied light cruisers fly over the warships off the coast of Italy. These planes then headed toward German heavy guns, the target of their mission.

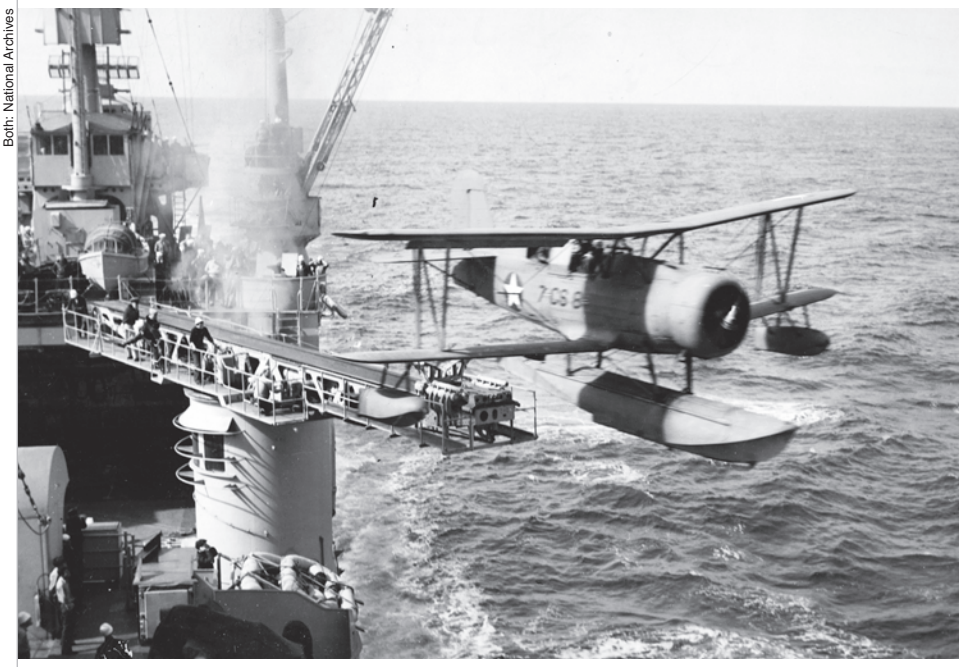
All: National Archives

U.S. Navy floatplanes tangled with deadly GermanMesserschmitt fighters during Operation Husky.

SACRIFICE OVER SICILY

BY PATRICK J. CHAISSON

Both: National Archives



ABOVE: A Curtiss SOC-3 Seagull careens from the catapult aboard the heavy cruiser USS *New Orleans* in 1943. The Seagull was replaced by the Vought OS2U Kingfisher as the war progressed. RIGHT: During the Allied landings off the coast of Gela, Sicily, both Admiral H. Kent Hewitt, left, and General George S. Patton, Jr., right, were frustrated by the lack of U.S. Air Force fighter protection.

ted plotting data to supporting warships and called in corrections as necessary.

The other spotting technique was by air. Each of the five cruisers in Admiral Hewitt's Western Task Force operated a small flotilla of scout-observation aircraft. While capable of performing a variety of tasks, it was as aerial spotters that these floatplanes would prove their worth over Sicily. Naval aviators repeatedly detected armored counterattacks moving against the landings in time to direct lethal volleys of naval shellfire against their distant foe.

They carried out these hazardous duties in unarmored, slow-flying aircraft that proved to be sitting ducks against modern interceptors. One after another, Navy floatplanes fell victim to the guns of Luftwaffe Messerschmitts that terrible morning. Yet Admiral Hewitt and his cruiser captains had no choice but to keep sending their spotters up. Lieutenant Lewis's last report to the *Boise* before he was attacked told of another massive German tank column advancing on the beaches.

Most of the scout-observation aircraft operating over Sicily on July 10, 1943, were Curtiss-designed SOC and SON Seagulls. Designed in 1933, this single-engine biplane first entered Navy service two years later. Curtiss built 261 of them at its Buffalo, New York, plant under the designations SOC-1, -2, and -3. Another 44 Seagulls, identical to the SOC-3, were manufactured as SON-1s by the Naval Aircraft Factory of Philadelphia. Production ceased in 1938.

Crewed by a pilot and radioman/gunner, the Seagull could carry two 100-pound bombs or a pair of 250-pound depth charges under its lower wings. Defensive armament included one fixed forward-firing .30-caliber machine gun, with another .30-caliber weapon on a flexible mount in the rear cockpit.

To launch their spotter planes while at sea, U.S. light cruisers all came equipped with two catapults positioned on the fantail. During flight operations, a 23-pound explosive charge shot each SOC off the catapult rail at 80 miles per hour. Recovery was by way of a web "sled" or "mat" trailed astern, onto which the aircraft water taxied after landing. It then hooked into the sled, cut power, and was brought alongside its mothership. Finally, a crane hoisted the floatplane back on board.

By the time of America's entry into World War II, the Curtiss SOC was getting a bit long in the tooth. It had already been replaced on most of the Navy's battleships and heavy cruisers by a newer, faster monoplane known as the Vought OS2U Kingfisher. Curtiss's elderly twin-wing remained aboard light cruisers only due to a general shortage of scout-observation aircraft as well as a unique feature of its design. Unlike the Kingfisher, a Seagull's wings could be folded for storage inside the aircraft hangar found belowdecks on Brooklyn-class vessels. This enabled one ship to carry four SOCs versus two OS2Us, an important consideration during wartime.

These floatplanes performed ably in battle as sub hunters, reconnaissance scouts, and spotter aircraft. By 1943, they had earned a solid reputation for versatility and trustworthiness. Still to be seen, though, was how well they would fare against modern antiaircraft defenses such as those known to be emplaced on Sicily. And then there was the matter of the Messerschmitts.

Allied intelligence estimated enemy frontline fighter strength in Sicily and southern Italy to total approximately 250 aircraft. While this number included some Italian planes of lesser quality, the majority—205 airframes—were Me-109 interceptors flown by combat-tested German pilots. Invasion commanders could not permit these deadly predators to operate unimpeded over the landing beaches.

The Allies were actively targeting their Luftwaffe adversaries, albeit in a complicated, uncoordinated manner that often plagues coalition warfare. Three separate air commands, all containing both British and U.S. flying squadrons, shared the task of eliminating this Axis air threat. Separated by enormous distances, conflicting national priorities, and differing measures of success, each organization operated more or less on its own. It was a command arrangement seemingly predestined to fail.

From Tunisia, USAAF Lt. Gen. Carl Spaatz commanded the Northwest African Air Forces, while 1,300 miles away Royal Air Force (RAF) Air Chief Sholto Douglas headed Middle East Command from his headquarters in Cairo. Another organization, the Malta Air Force, operated independently under the control of RAF Air Vice Marshal Keith Park and primarily conducted air defense for that strategic island outpost.

The officer responsible for synchronizing the energies of these widely scattered outfits was RAF Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder. But Tedder, along with the air units under his command, was busy in the spring of 1943 fighting an aggressive and capable foe over the Mediter-

ranean littoral region. RAF and USAAF flyers knew it was far easier to destroy Axis fighters on the ground than in the sky and thus devoted significant effort to smashing enemy airfields. Likewise, bombing Italian railyards and bridges was a more productive use of Allied warplanes than striking a dug-in, dispersed, and camouflaged ground unit on the front lines.

Therefore, when time came to issue the Husky air plan, Tedder's officers essentially put into words what their flying squadrons had been doing for months: gaining air superiority through nonstop attacks on Axis airdromes while reducing their opponent's ability to supply or reinforce his armies by targeting key transportation choke points. The goal of Allied air power during the Sicily campaign, according to MAC's plan, was to "seal off the beachhead."

This meant the Mediterranean Air Command would fly deep, influencing the battle far behind enemy lines. It was a doctrine well understood by Tedder and his airmen, but one not communicated clearly to the Mediterranean Theater commander, U.S. Army General Dwight D. Eisenhower. Naval and ground force officers also failed to fully comprehend the air plan, which was written hastily and in a vague, noncommittal fashion.

Both Admiral Hewitt and Lt. Gen. George S. Patton Jr., commanding the U.S. Seventh Army, demanded fighter cover for the Husky landings, which Tedder's headquarters just as adamantly refused to guarantee. Patton complained of his powerlessness over the Air Staff during a shipboard conference: "You can get your Navy planes to do anything you want," he told Hewitt, "but we can't get the Air Force to do a @#%? thing!"

Confusion reigned. As the Western Task Force action report later stated, "Naval and Military Commanders sailed for the assault with almost no knowledge of what the Air Force would do in the initial assault or thereafter." This lack of communication later brought chaos to the skies over Sicily.

Operation Husky, set for the first hours of July 10, 1943, was an enormous undertaking. Two Allied armies, 130,000 men, would land before sunup along 105 miles of Sicily's eastern and southern coastline. In the east, two British and one Canadian division were to seize lodgments on the Gulf of Noto. Three and a half American divisions would go in to the west, their initial objective the port city of Gela. Airborne drops were scheduled to precede each assault landing.

In terms of men, machines, and naval vessels involved, Husky was the most ambitious amphibious operation of the war thus far. Nearly 2,600 Allied ships of all types assembled to support the invasion. Sailing toward Sicily were PT-boats and cruisers, attack transports and submarines, hospital ships and destroyers. Also on hand was a vast array of landing craft, from plywood-hulled Higgins boats to cavernous Landing Ships, Tank (LSTs), under orders to deliver the assault troops onto 29 distinct beachheads.

Vice Admiral Hewitt divided the U.S. Navy's area of operations into three zones codenamed Dime, Joss, and Cent. The Dime Attack Force, Hewitt's main effort, was to put ashore the U.S. Army's 1st Infantry Division near the key port city of Gela. In the westernmost Joss zone, Combat Command A of the 2nd Armored Division and the 3rd Infantry Division would land in the vicinity of Licata. And in the east, the 45th Infantry Division was set to go in along the Cent beaches at Scoglitti.

Each attack force had assigned to it a naval gunfire support group, responsible for shelling coastal fortifications, troop concentrations, and approaching enemy reinforcements. The Dime fire support group included light cruisers *Savannah* and *Boise,* plus three destroyers. Covering the Joss landings were cruisers USS *Brooklyn* and USS *Birmingham,* as well as nine destroyers. In the Cent zone, gunfire support was provided by the light cruiser USS *Philadelphia* along with seven U.S. Navy destroyers and HMS *Abercrombie,* a British monitor purpose built for shore bombardment work.

For the Husky landings, U.S. naval commanders had available 18 cruiser-based aircraft: 16 Curtiss SOC Seagulls and two Vought OS2U Kingfishers. It was never intended that these low-performance, poorly armed spotter planes should operate unescorted in hostile skies. Nevertheless, they represented the only friendly air power that most American servicemen would see on D-day at Sicily.

As dawn approached, *Boise* and *Savannah* of Dime Force maintained an oval-shaped course within their fire support area, about six miles out to sea. While most of those aboard had already experienced at least one amphibious operation, tensions nevertheless ran high. Orders to commence bombardment of preassigned shore targets, which came around 0351 hours, helped relieve some stress but could not mask the fear of enemy air attack. At 0513, just before sunup, lookouts reported hearing the drone of approaching German bombers. *Savannah* opened up on one intruder, identified as a Junkers Ju-88, with her 20mm and 40mm cannons a few minutes later.

It was an ominous sign. Already Luftwaffe aircraft had begun attacking the fleet, and there was still no sign of Allied fighter cover. Yet Patton's troops on the beach needed spotter planes aloft to direct naval gunfire, so at 0530 hours both cruisers went to flight quarters. Their first SOC Seagull and OS2U Kingfisher patrols

National Archives

The ammunition ship SS *Robert Rowan* erupts in a spectacular explosion after being hit by a bomb from Luftwaffe Ju-88 bombers during the American landing operations off the coast of Gela, Sicily. The Germans were largely unopposed in the air during the landings.

launched shortly after 0600.

A U.S. Navy Seagull flown by *Savannah*'s senior aviator, Lieutenant Charles A. Anderson, vaulted into the air at 0605 hours. Anderson was accompanied by Chief Radioman Edward J. True in the gunner's seat. Sixty seconds later, another SOC manned by Lieutenant (j.g.) George J. Pinto and Aviation Radioman Robert H. Maples followed them up into the murk.

Within minutes, Anderson was dead in his cockpit—killed by an Me-109 over the coast of Gela. Chief True, using a set of emergency flight controls in the rear compartment, somehow managed to bring their sturdy Seagull down for a crash landing. Pinto tried to land alongside the crippled SOC to render aid but succeeded only in wrecking his plane as well. A whaleboat from the destroyer USS *Ludlow* later pulled all three surviving airmen and Anderson's body out of the water.

Savannah's crew swiftly readied her last two Seagulls for action. At 0827 hours they thundered off her fantail, pilots desperate to put eyes on a column of enemy armored vehicles reportedly nearing the beachhead. Lieutenants John G. Osborne and John J. Frazier observed the tanks but were themselves seen by another pair of German pilots. Frazier's bullet-riddled plane made it back, but Osborne and his gunner, Joseph L. Schradle, went down under the guns of a rampaging Me-109. Both men survived, however, to be rescued by the attack transport USS *Barnett*.

The invasion was only a few hours old and already every one of *Savannah*'s spotter planes had been knocked out of the fight. Two mechanized columns, one Italian and the other an armor-heavy task force belonging to Panzer Division Hermann Göring, were fast approaching American infantry at Gela. Responsibility for directing Dime Force's guns against these fearsome threats now fell solely on the men who crewed *Boise*'s four observation aircraft.

At 0606 hours Lieutenant Cyril G. Lewis—senior aviator aboard the *Boise*—catapulted skyward in that warship's lone Kingfisher. Aviation Radioman William R. DeArmond rode along in the gunner's seat. Sticking closely to their wing was a Seagull flown by Lieutenant (j.g.) William T. Harding and Radioman Thomas W. Healy. Cy Lewis's engine kept giving him trouble, though, even stalling out completely at one point. The cool-headed airman got it restarted and continued calling out target data to gunners offshore.

Flying amid intermittent enemy antiaircraft fire, Lewis and Harding banked east over the town of Niscemi where at around 0900 hours they detected dust trails moving down the road toward Gela. This was Mobile Group E, some 32 captured French tanks and wheeled vehicles of the Italian Livorno Division. As these armored leviathans neared U.S. Army roadblocks sited along a road junction at Piano Lupo, barrages of six-inch shells from *Boise* and *Savannah* suddenly began erupting around them. Several Italian vehicles were wrecked instantly, while the remainder halted in confusion—easy pickings for the 1st Infantry Division's antitank guns and bazooka rockets.

Lewis and Harding could not witness the destruction of Mobile Group E, however, as they were chased out to sea by another flight of Messerschmitts. Trading his balky Kingfisher for the *Boise*'s last serviceable SOC, Cy Lewis then launched again at 1222 hours to find the Hermann Göring Division. Radioman Healy, in the gunner's seat, accompanied Lewis on this flight.

The floatplane crew soon observed dozens of German Mark III and Mark IV tanks, accompanied by infantry, approaching Piano Lupo. This was the western prong of a powerful counterattack that, if left unchecked, might drive Patton's Seventh Army into the sea. Quickly, the airmen radioed in map coordinates and target descriptions to waiting warships. Salvo after salvo of high-explosive death then rained down on the Germans, delivered by cruisers and destroyers of the Dime support group.

It was while directing this fire that Lieutenant Lewis was shot up and forced to flee by two Me-109G fighters of Jagdgeschwader 53, operating from a forward airstrip near Gerbini. All day the Germans had been ferrying Messerschmitts to Sicily from bases on the Italian mainland and Sardinia with little interference from Allied air forces. And flights of green-tan camouflaged "Gustavs" continued to scream at low levels across southern Sicily, popping up to slaughter the lumbering American floatplanes.

In the westernmost Joss zone, *Birmingham* was entering battle for the first time. Her two

"We rode herd on them," Coughlin recalled, "very much the same as in handling cattle." Shafer fired short bursts to corral "strays" until his gun malfunctioned, then aimed the weapon at stragglers while rapidly firing his .45-caliber pistol.

National Archives

scout-observation planes, a Seagull and a Kingfisher, catapulted skyward at 0425 hours. *Birmingham*'s SOC, piloted by Lieutenant Robert D. Cox, was recovered three hours later after it was damaged by U.S. antiaircraft shells. Trigger-happy Navy gunners also contributed to the tragic death of Aviation Ordnanceman Mackey M. Prutlipac, who fell from the rear seat of Ensign Joseph H. McGuinness's OS2U while it attempted to evade this so-called friendly fire.

The *Brooklyn*'s aviators now had to take over all spotting duties for Joss Force. Operating over Licata after an early morning launch were two Seagulls flown by Lieutenant Delwine A. Liane and Lieutenant (j.g.) Charles C. Aikens. In the predawn gloaming, Laine and Aikins used rivers and the Mediterranean coast as reference points until the sun rose high enough for them to distinguish landmarks. They directed accurate gunfire from *Brooklyn, Birmingham,* and a number of destroyers until ordered to return at 0917 hours.

Throughout the day both cruisers steamed up and down the beach while firing rapidly against Italian machine-gun nests, antiaircraft batteries, and artillery positions. The *Brooklyn*'s other two SOCs, flown by Lieutenant (j.g.) David F. Weaver and Ensign Morris G. Pickard, launched at 1217 hours in response to orders directing them to investigate suspected enemy vehicle activity west of the beachhead. Repeated requests for fighter escort went unfulfilled, forcing the pair of Seagulls to head deep into Axis territory very much on their own.

Brooklyn's spotter planes completed this sacrifice play without incident, and—finding nothing of interest to report—recovered uneventfully at 1717 hours. Their mother ship had expended 1,152 six-inch rounds on July 10, working with *Birmingham* and Joss Force's destroyers to provide invasion troops with "very effective fire," in the words of the 3rd Infantry Division commander.

Off to the east, air crews flying from *Philadelphia* over the Cent zone had their hands full. In addition to spotting for their own cruiser, the *Philly*'s aviators also needed to support the monitor *Abercrombie,* which had no aircraft of its own. Accordingly, between 0601 and 0643 hours, *Philadelphia* launched all four of her SOC floatplanes to help cover the U.S. 45th Infantry Division's landings.

The Seagull crews went straight to work, identifying a gun emplacement near Scoglitti that was making trouble for Allied transport vessels. *Philadelphia* unleashed a broadside at 0630 hours, pulverizing this coastal battery. Both *Philadelphia* and *Abercrombie* continued to engage targets all day as directed by shore parties and *Philly*'s spotter planes. They also helped guard the fleet against a growing number of Axis aircraft.

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ABOVE: An aerial view from a Curtiss Seagull reveals the accuracy of shells fired from the cruiser USS *Philadelphia* during the Sicily landings. The target of *Philadelphia*'s shells is an enemy railway battery located on a jetty at Port Empedocle. OPPOSITE: In support of operations on land, the light cruiser USS *Birmingham* fires a salvo from its 6-inch guns off the coast of Agrigento, Sicily, during Operation Husky.

Lieutenant Commander Richard D. Stephenson, the *Philadelphia*'s senior aviator, fell victim to some of these marauders while observing for the *Abercrombie*. At 1315 two Messerschmitts jumped his SOC, sending it down in flames over the Gulf of Gela. Neither Stephenson nor his gunner, Aviation Radioman Douglas W. Pierson, survived the crash.

Another *Philadelphia* Seagull participated in what might have been the oddest incident of the Sicily campaign. Lieutenant (j.g.) Paul E. Coughlin and his gunner, Aviation Radioman Richard Shafer, were flying over Ponte della Camerina when they observed enemy troops moving around on a hillside below. Receiving permission to engage, Coughlin and Shafer swept down to attack with 100-pound bombs and .30-caliber machine guns.

After making three firing passes, they noticed a flurry of white flags waving from the Italians' position. Orbiting low overhead, Lieutenant Coughlin pondered what to do next. Then he began waving his new captives on toward a group of approaching GIs. A few rounds from Shafer's .30-caliber rousted those reluctant to surrender.

"We rode herd on them," Coughlin recalled, "very much the same as in handling cattle." Shafer fired short bursts to corral "strays" until his gun malfunctioned, then aimed the weapon at stragglers while rapidly firing his .45-caliber pistol. "This demonstrated good thinking on the part of the radioman," Coughlin concluded in his official report.

Coughlin and Shafer rounded up at least 100 prisoners before a brace of Me-109s pounced, forcing them to dive underneath the protection of *Philadelphia*'s guns. This strange occurrence marked the end of an eventful day for the floatplanes supporting Cent Force; by dusk RAF Supermarine Spitfires flying from Malta arrived to furnish long overdue air cover.

These Spitfires showed up too late to save the U.S. Navy's cruiser-based observation aircraft. Four naval aviators perished in aerial combat over Sicily on July 10, 1943, while four SOCs had been destroyed. Another six floatplanes were in need of extensive repair, and ships' captains now refused to launch their spotters without friendly fighters overhead. Again, Admiral Hewitt and his staff asked, "What happened to our Air Force?"

For their part, USAAF commanders complained (with some justification) that Navy antiaircraft gunners fired indiscriminately at everything flying overhead, forcing Allied warplanes to stay well above the fleet. Much later, Army

Continued on page 74

By Christopher Miskimon

One of the top snipers of World War II, Lyudmila Pavlichenko had 309 confirmed kills, including 36 enemy snipers.

Dealers of Death

The Soviet Union employed thousands of women as snipers during World War II.

LYUDMILA PAVLICHENKO HAD NOT MOVED FOR MORE THAN 24 HOURS. SHE WAS a small, stout 25-year-old woman able to crawl on her belly for hours at a time. Lyudmila could go without food for days if necessary, could do any number of things an uninformed observer would never think her capable of performing. It all really was absolutely necessary; the young Pavlichenko was defending her Rodina, her country, from the scourge of Nazism. She was a sniper in the service of the Soviet Union.

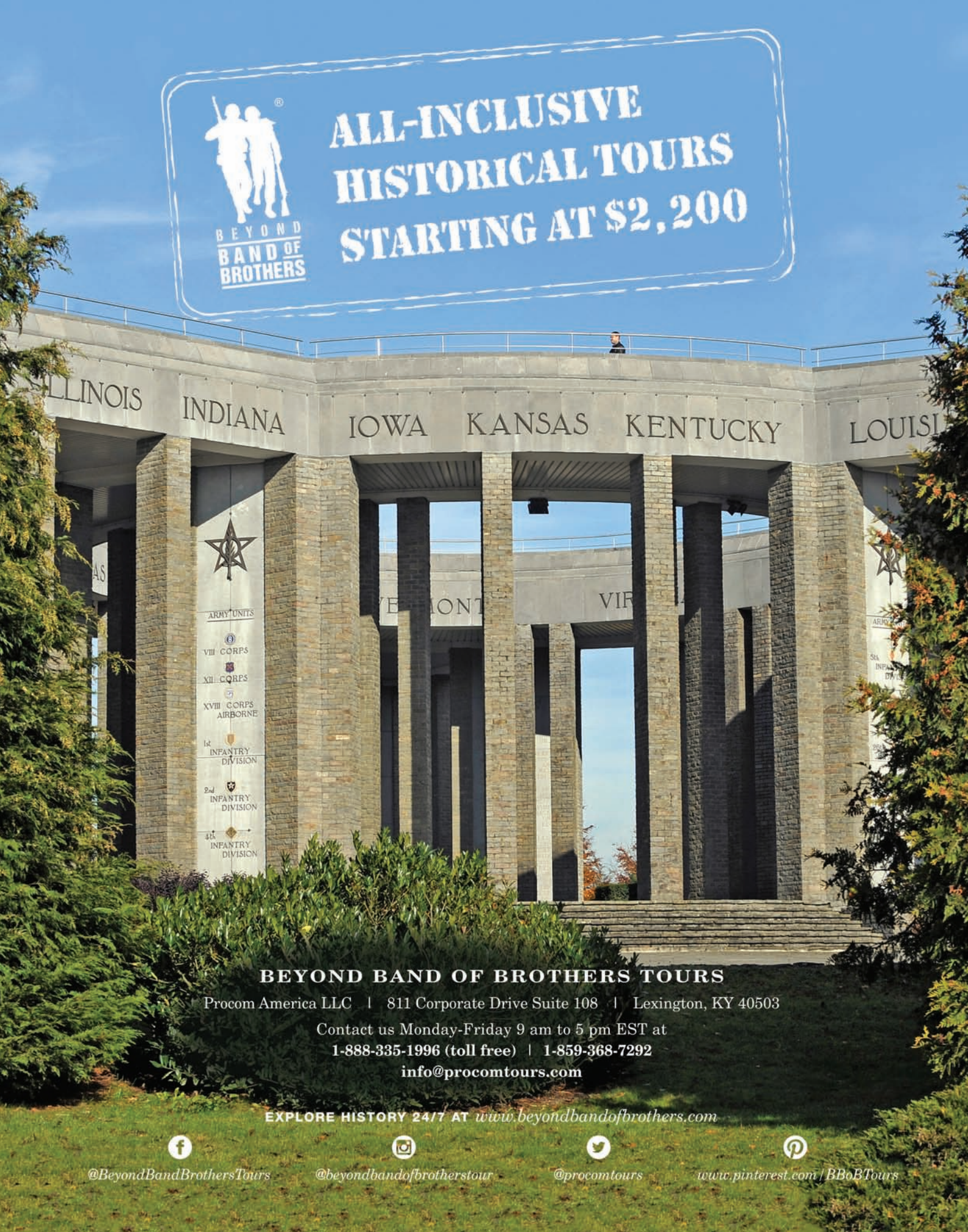
Before the war Lyudmila was a history student with a great love of her subject, but she also spent much time at the shooting range and piloting gliders as part of the Soviet youth sports program. She was one year short of her degree when the war began, but she immediately volunteered for service. Recognizing her skill with a rifle, the Red Army sent her to its sniper school to learn the art of long-range marksmanship.

Moving forward to mid-1942, Lyudmila was lying still in the darkness outside the city of Sevastopol. A German sniper was nearby, and she was stalking him. She had lain still since the previous day; the enemy soldier was cautious and skilled. Taking him would require patience, but Lyudmila possessed patience in abundance. Dawn came, and with the rising sun opportunity arose as well. The German revealed his position. Lyudmila squeezed the trigger on her Mosin-Nagant rifle; the weapon's report was sharp, and its stock slammed against her shoulder, a sensation to which she was accustomed. The German fell, dead from her bullet. The Soviet sniper could move now, and she made her way to her dead enemy, taking his rifle and his logbook. The book revealed he had been a sniper since the Battle of Dunkirk in 1940; he had killed more than 500 in his own time. Soon after, she was herself wounded, receiving a concussion. It was not the first time.

In August 1942, Lyudmila was sent to the United States as part of a Soviet delegation. Crowds of citizens and hordes of reporters swarmed her, eager to see the young woman who had killed 309 Germans. She quickly learned to respond to their questions with skill and attitude, laughing off their attempts to find out what sort of makeup she wore or what color underwear she preferred. Instead she made exhortations to step up the war effort and defeat the Nazis. She was even an overnight guest of Eleanor Roosevelt at the White House. It was a long way from Sevastopol.

Lyudmila's journey around the world was unusual for any Soviet citizen, even a sniper. Most of the Red Army's female snipers spent the war enduring hardship and combat. Life in the Soviet Union was harsh in the best of times; during the war it became brutal for many. In line with the communist ethic of equality between the sexes, many women served in the military in various combat roles. Their snipers are among the most famous; many are aware women were employed in that role, but few know any of the details of their service. That lack of understanding is rectified in ***Avenging Angels: Young Women of the Soviet Union's WWII Sniper Corps*** (Lyuba Vinogradova, translated by Arch Tait, MacLehose Press, New York, 2017, 299 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $26.99, hardcover).

The women of the Soviet sniper corps were given a few short months of training and sent to the front. Many died before they could acquire the skills they needed to survive. Those who did live became deadly experts in the ending of human life, many of them killing hundreds of enemy soldiers. They proved themselves the equal of their male counterparts, who fought alongside them, sometimes harassed them, but often admired them. Like the men, they returned home after the war to the daunting task of rebuilding their shattered nation and their broken lives.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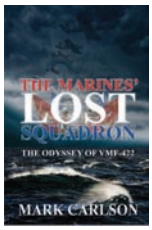
The author is a Russian scholar who has also written about female Soviet pilots and worked with renowned English writer Antony Beevor in his studies of the Eastern Front. Her skills as a researcher and writer show through in this work's excellent detail and thorough storytelling. The translation work is equally impressive, showing none of the small errors common to such efforts and bringing across the emotion of the work. The descriptions of both combat and daily life combine with the stories of the female sniper to create a vivid and revealing book.



The Marines' Lost Squadron—The Odyssey of VMF-422 (Mark Carlson, Sunbury Press, Mechanicsburg, PA, 2017, 400 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, $19.95, softcover)

The early afternoon of January 25, 1944, was calm and sunny, a good day for flying over the Pacific Ocean. The men of Marine Fighter Squadron 422, the "Flying Buccaneers" were mostly new to flying; only three had combat experience while the rest were fresh from training. The squadron had taken off from Tarawa just a few hours earlier and was headed 800 miles southeast to the Funafuti Atoll with a refueling stop at Nanumea. The weather report predicted clear weather for flying, but tragically it was a day out of date. As the pilots flew on, they saw gray clouds ahead. It was a typhoon, 50,000 feet high and 100 miles wide. They thought it was only a rain squall and flew into it. Six pilots were lost, and 17 more rode out the storm in tiny rafts. For them, World War II stopped while they fought personal wars for survival.

This was the worst noncombat loss of a Marine fighter squadron in the entire war and became known as the "Flintlock Disaster." For many years it was all but forgotten, superseded by wartime events. The author spent four years researching this disaster, assembling hundreds of pages of official documents and personal letters. The narrative flows easily, drawing the reader into this story of survival and hardship. It also contains numerous photographs, both official and personal from the participants.

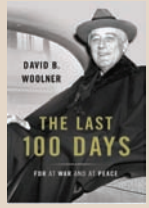
Beachhead Assault: The Story of the Royal Naval Commandos in World War II (David Lee, Frontline Books, South Yorkshire, UK, 2017, 270 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, bibliography, index, $24.95, softcover)

Able Seaman Ken Oakley, a member of F Commando, Royal Marines, manned an assault boat as it was lowered into the Mediterranean Sea off the Italian island of Sicily. A wave hit the tiny craft and swept away his unit's mortar; then the boat hit the water and they were off toward shore. Ken hoped they would get to shore without being spotted, but when they were a mile out a flare lit the night. Soon machine-gun fire snapped overhead, and they replied with their Bren guns. Suddenly the boat hit the bottom and down went the door. Ken rushed past a panicked Marine lying on the deck and waded the 50 yards to shore. His sec-

New and Noteworthy

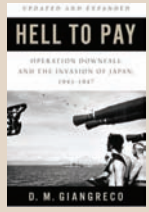
Three in Thirteen: The Story of a Mosquito Fighter Ace (Roger Dunsford, Casemate Publishers, 2017, $32.95, hardcover) Joe Singleton was a pilot in the Mosquito, a capable night fighter. This memoir of his service includes shooting down three planes in 13 minutes.

Flying Against Fate: Superstition and Allied Aircrews in World War II (S.P. Mackenzie, University of Kansas Press, 2017, $29.95, hardcover) Allied aircrews suffered a high casualty rate. This study looks at the talismans, rituals, and superstitions they used to deal with the stresses of combat.



The Last 100 Days: FDR at War and at Peace (David B. Woolner, Basic Books, 2017, $32.00, hardcover) Roosevelt's last days in office were full of momentous occasions. As the war wound down, however, so did the president.

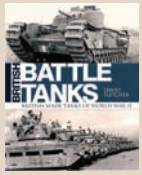
A Crime in the Family: A World War II Secret Buried in Silence—And My Search for the Truth (Sacha Batthyany, Da Capo Press, 2017, $28.00, hardcover) The author's aunt, a German countess, took part in a massacre of Jews in the last days of the war. This is his investigation into the event and its consequences.



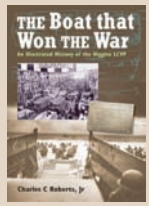
Hell to Pay: Operation Downfall and the Invasion of Japan, 1945-1947 (D.M. Giangreco, Naval Institute Press, 2017, $35.00, hardcover) A veritable hell awaited both the American invaders and Japanese defenders if this invasion had occurred. The author has gathered thousands of sources to create a vision of what the operation might have been.

Night Duel Over Germany: Bomber Command's Battle Over the Reich During WWII (Peter Jacobs, Pen and Sword Books, 2017, $39.95, hardcover) The RAF's Bomber Command fought for almost six years against Nazi Germany. This chronicle lays out the history of that immense struggle.

Stalag Luft III: An Official History of the "Great Escape" POW Camp (Frontline Books, 2017, $34.95, hardcover) The British War Office prepared an account of this infamous camp at the end of the war. Its findings are reprinted here along with photographs, diagrams, and charts.



British Battle Tanks: British-Made Tanks of World War II (David Fletcher, Osprey Publishing, 2017, $30.00, hardcover) This is a thorough examination of the myriad tank designs Great Britain produced during the war. It is superbly illustrated and includes variants and support vehicles.

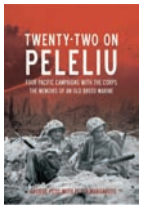


The Boat That Won the War: An Illustrated History of the Higgins LCVP (Charles Roberts, Jr., Seaforth Publishing, 2017, $29.95, hardcover) The Higgins boat is credited as one of the most important innovations of the war. This analysis is full of period illustrations and construction drawings.

Operation Barbarossa 1941: Hitler Against Stalin (Christer Bergstrom, Casemate Publishing, 2017, $49.95, hardcover) Barbarossa was the largest land operation of the war. This coffee table book reveals the breadth and depth of the campaign.

tion began setting up beacons to direct the following waves toward the right landing areas. Afterward he set off with another to find the beachmaster so they could coordinate their efforts with him. The man was nowhere to be found at the moment, so they started back. Suddenly sniper fire rang out, and they were forced to take cover. It was the beginning of what would prove a long day.

The Royal Marines were charged with readying and clearing the beaches during amphibious assaults. This book shows how they carried out their duties, usually under fire. It is full of first-hand accounts and anecdotes that provide the perspective of the men in their own words. This includes their training and combat experiences.



Twenty-Two on Peleliu: Four Pacific Campaigns with the Corps, the Memoirs of an Old Breed Marine (George Peto with Peter Margaritis, Casemate Publishers, Havertown, PA, 2017, 368 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, $32.95, hardcover)

Young George Peto was a restless youth. He left home in Ohio after a fight with his alcoholic father; eventually he enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1941. After boot camp, he wound up in the 1st Marines, entering combat at Finschhaven in New Guinea before going on to Cape Gloucester. Working as a forward observer, he next went ashore at Peleliu, where the regiment fought for a week before being relieved due to the enormous casualties it sustained. After a six-month reprieve, Peto landed on Okinawa where the Japanese did not oppose the initial landings but instead allowed the Americans to get inland before engaging them heavily. As casualties mounted over the following months, he put his skills as a forward observer to good use, calling in artillery strikes and working with spotter planes to rain ruin upon the stubbornly defending Japanese. After the war Peto went back home and built a life, staying active in veteran's groups and teaching schoolchildren about his experiences.

This autobiography is a fascinating, down-to-earth look at an average working-class American's experience in mankind's greatest conflict. The author's engaging prose keeps the reader's interest whether describing combat or the mundane occurrences of camp life. This work rivals the more famous books from Marines such as Eugene Sledge and Robert Leckie in quality and readability.

Hermann Goering: From Secret Luftwaffe to Hossbach War Conference 1935-37, the Per-

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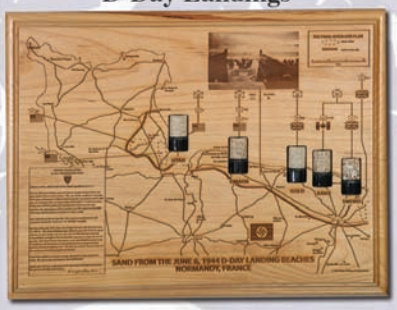

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Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

TWO WAR GAMES TAKE ANOTHER SWING WITH NEW ADDITIONS AND WORLD OF TANKS ENTERS VIRTUAL REALITY.

SUDDEN STRIKE 4: ROAD TO DUNKIRK

PUBLISHER KALYPSO MEDIA DIGITAL • **GENRE** STRATEGY • **PLATFORM** PC, MAC, LINUX, PS4 • **AVAILABLE** NOW

It's been a good year or so for one of the most famous military operations in World War II history. *The Battle of Dunkirk* received a lot of fresh exposure in the Christopher Nolan-directed *Dunkirk,* which was recently nominated for Best Picture and Best Director Oscars, among other accolades. While we don't know if it won those awards at the time of this writing, we've had plenty of time to dig into a very appropriate expansion for Kite Games' strategy title *Sudden Strike 4.*

As you may have guessed, *Sudden Strike 4: Road to Dunkirk* does precisely what its title implies. The team at Kite Games took the basis of *Sudden Strike 4* and spun it off to explore the battles that built up to the historic rescue mission. The results are two new mini-campaigns comprised of four single-player missions, split into both Allied and German campaigns. As tends to be the case with these multi-perspective strategy games, this gives players the unique opportunity to explore specific content from two separate points of view.

Those who play through the Allied campaign will take part in launching a harrowing British counteroffensive during the Battle of Ypres-Comines. Once that aspect of the campaign has been successfully executed, it's time to leap right into Operation Dynamo and attempt to evacuate as many soldiers as possible in the process. The German side of these events is a pure seek-and-capture strategy. The Battle of Lille has you breaking through stalwart French defenses with the ultimate goal of capturing Dunkirk before moving on to take down a British battleship.

Road to Dunkirk is a compact but worthwhile addition to the base game of *Sudden Strike 4,* which you'll want to make sure you have before attempting to download the DLC. Of course, it comes with all the pluses and minuses of said base game, so if you're playing this on consoles and didn't enjoy the control scheme the first time around, you won't find relief here. The same goes for the user interface and other divisive aspects of *Sudden Strike 4,* all of which are present and accounted for in *Road to Dunkirk.*

Beyond the new campaigns, the DLC adds in two new Allied doctrine commanders—including British Expeditionary Force division commander Harold Alexander and French war hero Charles de Gaulle—and more than 10 new units. If you enjoyed the full game and are still hungry for more demanding real-time strategy action, *Sudden Strike 4: Road to Dunkirk* is worth a little more of your time.

WAR THUNDER

PUBLISHER GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT • **GENRE** MULITPLAYER ACTION • **PLATFORM** PS4, XBOX ONE, PC, LINUX, iOS, ANDROID • **AVAILABLE** NOW

It's been a while since we checked in with another massively-multiplayer online war action game, *War Thunder.* The timing is just right, too, because there's plenty of new content to dig into thanks to a recent major update. Dubbed "La Résistance," Update 1.75 introduced a bunch of new vehicles, locations, and updated mechanics, starting with the addition of French ground forces. These vehicles include the likes of the ARL-44, Lorraine 40t, GMC CCKW 353, and AMX-30 mod 1972.

As you may have noticed, these don't exactly hail from the same era. For those unfamiliar with *War Thunder,* it places an emphasis on World War II, but it also blends air, land, and sea combat with vehicles spanning from the Spanish Civil War to the Cold War period. This emphasis on cross-generational machinery means players have access to over 800 playable units in total, so there's plenty to experiment with here.

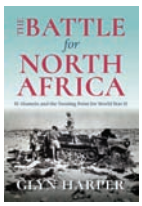
Beyond the new ground vehicles, "La Résistance" brings in new aircraft for a variety of regions, as well as location and mission updates and tweaks to the interface. There's also the scouting feature, which lets players scout the environment in Arcade mode to display enemy markers to the rest of your teammates for 30-second periods. It won't be quite so easy in Realistic mode, where you'll still need to bust out your binoculars or sniper scopes to initiate the reconnaissance display. Scout vehicles also have their own unique modifications, including Airstrikes and improved optical sights.

If you haven't given *War Thunder* a shot, there have been many improvements made since its initial launch. On top of the new content, the team at Gaijin Entertainment is constantly squashing bugs, so feel free to dive in for an enhanced experience that will hopefully continue to get better over time. □

sonal Photograph Albums of Hermann Goering (Blaine Taylor, Casemate Publishing, Havertown, PA, 2017, 272 pp., photographs, bibliography, $40.00, hardcover)

Hermann Goering was a busy man in the mid-1930s. In March 1935, his beloved air force, the Luftwaffe, was unveiled to a shocked world. The following month he married his second wife, Emmy Sonneman, in an enormous ceremony. A year later his Luftwaffe assisted in the reoccupation of the Rhineland while the Western powers stood idly by. As the number two man in the Nazi hierarchy, Goering was involved in almost every aspect of government during the period. He headed the Four Year Plan for the economy at the end of 1936 and in January 1937 made a state visit to Italy to build the alliance with the Fascist country. That November he hosted an enormous hunting exhibition in Berlin before attending the infamous Hossbach Conference, where Hitler secretly announced his intent to go to war with the Soviet Union by 1943 to create the German empire he craved.

All these events were captured in images, the personal photographs of Goering in the lead-up to World War II. This volume collects almost 300 of them, showing the Third Reich at work and leisure. Many of the photos are in the grandiose style of the Nazis, replete with flags, soldiers, and weapons. Others are surprisingly mundane, the sort of snapshots anyone might have, showing that the road to hell was not all monuments and somber ceremonies. The author also collects a number of writings about Göring from the period to accompany the imagery, providing added detail.



The Battle for North Africa: El Alamein and the Turning Point for World War II (Glyn Harper, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2017, 264 pp., maps, notes, bibliography, $29.00, hardcover)

Lieutenant General Bernard Montgomery went to bed early on the night of October 23, 1942. He wanted to be fresh for the attack the next morning, so he could make good decisions and appear solid to his troops. He advised the commander of XXX Corps, Sir Oliver Leese, to do the same. Leese thought it good advice but ignored it so he could watch the opening barrage at 9:40. Despite his statements, Montgomery did the same, recording the moment in his diary: "… a wonderful sight, similar to a Great War 1914/18 attack. It was still night and very quiet.

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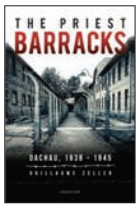
Suddenly the whole front burst into fire, it was beautifully timed and the effect was terrific, many large fires broke out in enemy gun areas."

It was the beginning of one of World War II's turning point battles. The Axis advance across North Africa was definitively stopped when the Allies went on the offensive at the point where they had held Rommel's forces months earlier. This new study of the battle investigates the challenges of coalition warfare, the critical role of intelligence, and the developing use of combined arms warfare in British operations. It clearly lays out the reasons for the Allied victory.



The Priest Barracks: Dachau 1938-1945 (Guillaume Zeller, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA, 2017, 274 pp., maps, appendices, bibliography, index, $16.95, softcover)

Millions of human beings suffered during the Holocaust, persecuted for who they were or what they stood for. The Nazis imprisoned any who resisted their advance in camps where death seemed the only release. At the infamous Dachau concentration camp, three buildings in the prisoner barracks were occupied solely by Catholic priests, 2,579 of them. More than a third of these men would die of disease and abuse. This is a story of both the great suffering these priests endured and the tremendous sacrifices they made for each other during their captivity. Upon arrival at Dachau they were summarily stripped of their vestments and religious accoutrements and even their clothing, leaving them naked. They were shaved, forced to shower in freezing water, and given ill-fitting clothes to wear and wooden shoes that fell off if the wearer did not curl his toes constantly. This was just an introduction to what they would experience. Yet, through it all, they maintained their faith in God and each other.

The persecution of Catholic priests as part of the Holocaust is known, but relatively few works have concentrated on their hellish time in the camps. This new work helps correct that imbalance by focusing on the Dachau camp and the thousands of priests held there. It is thoroughly researched and full of small, individual tales of courage and perseverance that keep the reader turning the page.

The British Pacific Fleet: The Royal Navy's Most Powerful Strike Force (David Hobbs, Seaforth Publishing, South Yorkshire, UK, 2017, 462 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, $28.95, softcover)

Great Britain had no fleet in the Pacific Ocean in August 1944. The nation was nearing exhaustion after five years of war on multiple fronts, but Britain was not done yet. Within six months it assembled a naval force so powerful it could confidently launch air strikes against Japanese territory. Six months after that, with the war coming to its bitter end, the British Pacific Fleet was the most powerful combat force the Royal Navy had ever amassed, capable of fighting alongside its American cousins with equal skill and ability. The fleet bore its share against the kamikazes and launched daring attacks on the Japanese mainland.

The story of this fighting force has never received the attention it truly deserves; this new volume redresses that imbalance. The author is a former Royal Navy officer and was also curator of the Fleet Air Arm Museum; his expertise on the British carrier force is clear and useful in this work since carriers were the centerpiece of the Pacific Fleet. He also effectively uses reports written by U.S. Navy liaison officers to show how the two nations worked together in pursuit of their common goals. A number of detailed appendices add to the impressive scope of the book.

Shot Down and On the Run: True Stories of RAF and Commonwealth Aircrews of World War II (Air Commodore Graham Pitchfork, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2017, 258 pp., photographs, appendix, bibliography, index, $15.00, softcover)

The Allied air campaigns over Europe, Asia, and the Middle East inflicted terrible casualties in both men and machines. Many of the aircrews died with their planes, and the survivors faced extreme hardship if captured. For those who managed to avoid capture, escape was a supreme challenge. They were often injured and experienced deprivation as they tried to elude the German military. Along the way they would receive acts of kindness and assistance from local citizens in occupied nations, who took great risks to help the downed airmen on their long journey to freedom.

This new book includes not only stories of the aircrews but goes into detail about the escape tools and techniques the flyers used, as well as the vast intelligence and resistance networks that supported them as they tried to return. The book is divided into sections, each covering a theater of the war. The escape tales are engaging and informative, revealing to the reader the ingenuity and skill the aircrews used to attain their freedom. □

Sicily

Continued from page 67

Air Forces records revealed that four squadrons of P-40 Warhawk pursuits assigned to cover the invasion had been at the last minute redirected to bomber escort duty. No explanation for this change of mission was ever made.

In Husky's aftermath, senior naval officials were quick to condemn the lack of air cover over American beachheads. In his action report of the campaign, Hewitt wrote, "Close support by aircraft in amphibious operations, as understood by the Navy, did not exist in this theater of operations." Later in his report, Hewitt stated that "use of present type cruiser planes for spotting, when opposed by enemy fighter aircraft, is either impracticable or excessively costly."

Captain L. Hewlett Thebaud, skipper of the *Boise,* agreed. While condemning the "unwisdom" of employing cruiser-based aircraft "wholly without fighter protection," he lauded those scout-observation crewmen who faced the Messerschmitts over Sicily. "This ship's planes," Thebaud proclaimed, "were flown by pilots of great skill, courage, and determination."

Nearly everyone who went up in an unarmored, slow-flying Seagull or Kingfisher that day received a Distinguished Flying Cross for his heroism under fire. Many of these aircrewmen also spotted targets at Salerno in September. This time, campaign planners made sure several Royal Navy escort carriers were present to ensure friendly fighters dominated the skies overhead. Unsurprisingly, not one Allied floatplane was shot down during the Salerno invasion.

Nevertheless, for spotting duty over Normandy and Southern France in the summer of 1944, it was decided that cruiser-based aviators in Europe should operate aircraft better able to survive an encounter with high-performance enemy fighters. What these pilots felt upon leaving behind their trusty SOCs and OS2Us has been lost to history, but one can easily imagine their reactions upon learning they would be flying Spitfires or North American P-51 Mustangs for the Overlord and Anvil-Dragoon landings.

Along with Vought's OS2U Kingfisher, the Curtiss SOC Seagull fought on throughout World War II. The introduction of helicopters—cheaper, more versatile, and easier to operate—signaled the end of catapult-launched floatplanes in U.S. Navy service. The last Seagull was retired in 1948.

Patrick J. Chaisson is a retired U.S. Army officer and historian who writes from his home in Scotia, New York.

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