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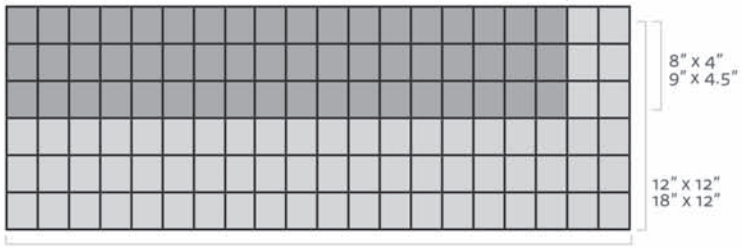

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Cover: A German infantryman takes cover during an advance, somewhere on the Eastern Front. See story beginning on page 56. Photo: SZ Photo / Alamy

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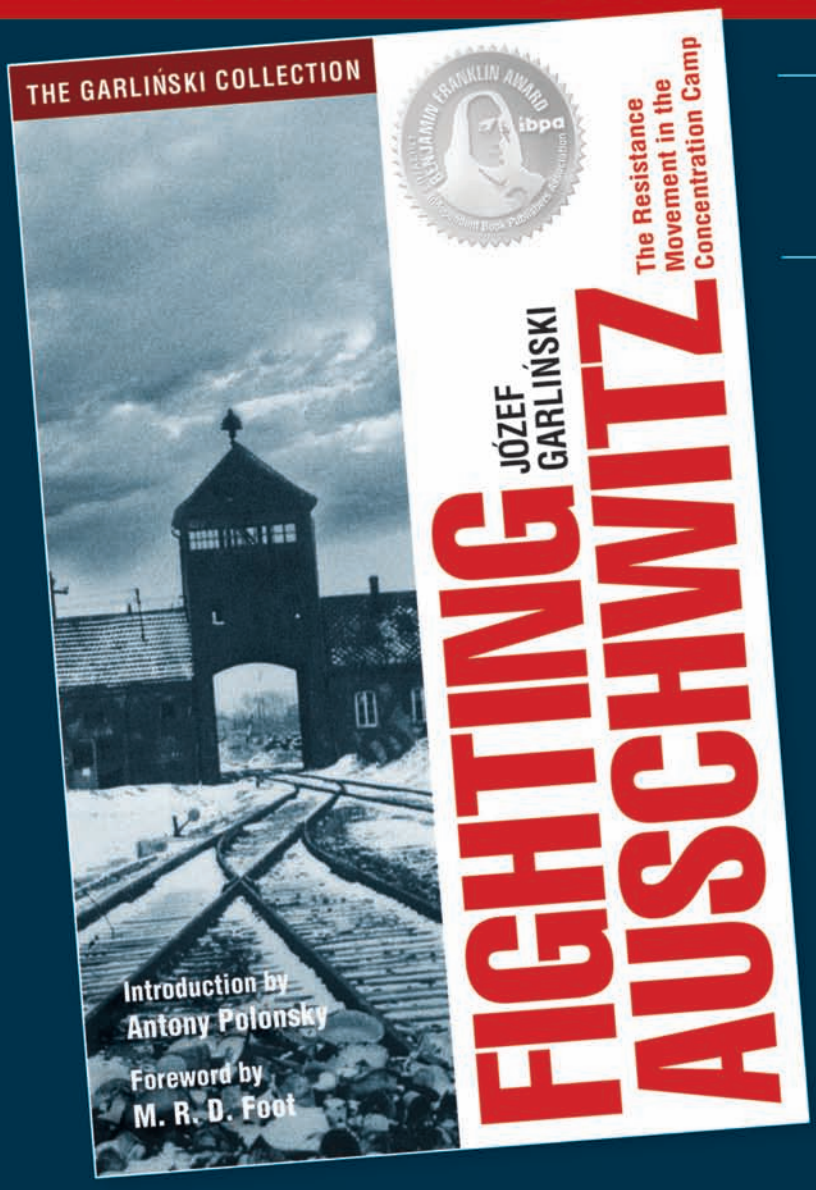

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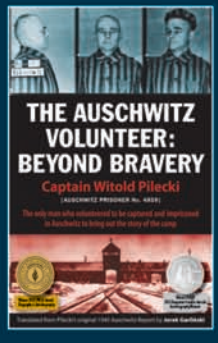

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Editorial

Adolf Hitler spent his last birthday in the dreary Führerbunker beneath embattled Berlin.

ON APRIL 20, 1945, ADOLF HITLER OBSERVED HIS 56TH BIRTHDAY. THERE WAS little to celebrate. The so-called "Thousand Year Reich" was in its death throes after only 12. The Führer was also on borrowed time, a mere shadow of his former robust and confident self. He trembled noticeably with the apparent onset of Parkinson's disease. His shoulders were slumped, and he walked with a pronounced shuffle. His eyes were sometimes glassy, and he drifted in and out of blind rage, delusional hysteria, and a catatonic dejection.

The Soviet Red Army, after pushing the German Wehrmacht westward across more than 1,600 kilometers of Eastern Europe, stood at the doorstep of the Nazi capital of Berlin, and the avengers of Nazi atrocities across their own country offered a birthday greeting to Hitler. Long-range artillery began raining shells on the black heart of the Third Reich, and a war correspondent following the advancing Soviet troops remembered the events of April 22, when the Red Army was close enough for field artillery to join in. The correspondent asked about the targets. The battery commander replied, "Center of Berlin, Spree [river] bridges, and the northern Stettin railway stations." Then came the order: "Open fire on the capital of Fascist Germany!"

Since January, Hitler and members of his inner circle had taken to the temporary safety of the subterranean Führerbunker, a sprawling, two-floor complex 50 feet beneath the garden of Berlin's Reich Chancellery amid a cluster of administrative buildings known as the Citadel. The leadership of Nazi Germany languished afterward in the Spartan existence of a few rooms and the ever-present, high-pitched whine of the ventilation system that seemed to permeate every corner of the concrete and steel refuge.

By April 20, Hitler had begun, it seemed, to resign himself to the inevitable. He declined to attempt escape from embattled Berlin and decided against taking up arms personally and leading the remnants of the capital's defenders against the Soviets, who were driving steadily through its streets. "I shall not fight personally," he told his minister of armaments and perhaps his only real friend, Albert Speer. "There is always the danger that I would just be wounded and fall into the hands of the Russians alive. I don't want my enemies to disgrace my body either. I've given orders that I be cremated. Fraülein Braun wants to depart this life with me."

The morbid existence within the Führerbunker dragged monotonously on as its occupants, including Braun, Hitler's companion for years who had decided to die with him, talked of the most efficient way to commit suicide, poison or pistol. Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels and his wife, Magda, a rabid Nazi, were there along with their six children. In a twisted display of loyalty, they determined that the young ones should be poisoned before they, too, took their own lives in devotion to the lost Nazi cause.

Neither Hitler nor Eva Braun was to live out the month of April. By the 28th, the Red Army was only a mile from the Reich Chancellery. On the 29th, Hitler married Braun in a ceremony during which a low-ranking Nazi official had been pulled from the front line and whisked to the Führerbunker to perform the rite after both attested to their Aryan ancestry. It was a macabre acknowledgment of Braun's unfailing loyalty.

On April 30, the Nazi Götterdämmerung, a Wagnerian "Twilight of the Gods," was at hand. Hitler bade farewell to his close associates, already having been betrayed by two old Nazi cronies—Luftwaffe Reichsmarshal Hermann Göring and Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler—one seeking to be Hitler's successor and the other conducting clandestine negotiations with the Allies, and retired to his quarters with Braun about 2 PM.

An hour later, a shot rang out. Hitler had taken his own life with a gunshot to the temple. Braun had taken cyanide poison and lay in a lifeless curl next to him on the sofa. The bodies were carried up the stairs and into the garden, doused with gasoline, and set ablaze. The end had come for Adolf Hitler, 75 years ago this month. The Nazi Reich outlived him only by a week.

—Michael E. Haskew

WWII HISTORY

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By Michael D. Hull

National Archives

The Last Days Of General Patton

After a tumultuous but successful command in World War II, the controversial commander died of injuries sustained in an auto accident.

FEARLESS, DEMANDING, AND INSPIRATIONAL, GENERAL GEORGE SMITH PATTON, JR., Was generally recognized as the U.S. Army's outstanding field commander by the end of World War II.

After only 13 months of combat command—less than a week in Casablanca, a month in Tunisia, 38 days in Sicily, and 318 days in Northwest Europe—he achieved fame and respect unparalleled in American military history.

He revitalized the under-performing U.S. II Corps after its rout at Kasserine Pass, boldly led the Seventh Army across Sicily—where the Americans came of age as a fighting force—launched his legendary Third Army on a series of spectacular armored thrusts to the German border, and, in one of the most remarkable movements in military history, turned his army northward to hit the southern edge of the enemy counteroffensive in the Ardennes in December 1944. He relieved besieged Bastogne and, with British help, disrupted the German advance toward strategic Antwerp. His recipe for victory was, "Hold them by the nose and kick them in the rear."

General George S. Patton, Jr., was one of the most famous American generals to emerge from World War II, and his death due to injuries from an automobile accident seemed somehow anticlimactic.

After crossing the Rhine at Mainz in March 1945, during which Patton paused to ceremoniously urinate in the river, the Third Army drove into the heart of Germany and ended the war in Czechoslovakia and Austria. Patton ended the war with the respect of allies and foes alike, as well as a fourth star, elevating him to the rank of full general in April 1945. His last post was as military governor of Bavaria.

His image had become widely known. Nicknamed "Old Blood and Guts," he wore highly polished boots, ivory-handled revolvers, and a stern expression as he strove flamboyantly to project the qualities of what he perceived as a successful general. The California-bred scion was a complex figure: profane, volatile, vain, and sometimes childish, yet also kindhearted, religious, and cultured. He was an incurable romantic, had wide-ranging interests, and wrote poetry.

Though a posturing fire-eater on the battlefield, he was also a meticulous planner. After taking part in General John J. Pershing's ill-fated punitive expedition into Mexico against Pancho Villa in 1916 and leading a tank brigade in the St.-Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne campaigns in September 1918, he spent the interwar years helping to create an effective American armored force.

Despite his feats and well-deserved renown, though, "Georgie" Patton became a lonely and frustrated man after the end of the European war. The death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt had distressed him deeply, and peacetime uncertainty, with the spread of communism threatening Europe, made him uneasy. Patton did not relish the daily routine of military occupation. As Colonel George Fisher, the Third Army chemical officer, observed, "Instead of killing Germans, what he knew best, Patton is asked to govern them, what he knows least. It won't work."

Furthermore, because of his well-publicized candor, which periodically raised official hackles, Patton ended up repeatedly in the doghouse. His career almost ended in the

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General Patton points to a distant objective while standing on the beach at Gela, Sicily, in 1943. His aide, Sergeant William Meeks, stands to the general's left.

summer of 1943, when he verbally abused and slapped two shell-shocked soldiers at field hospitals in Sicily, after which he tried tearfully to apologize to thousands of assembled troops. He again made headlines in April 1944 when he addressed a British-run service club for GIs in Knutsford, Cheshire, and said, "It is the evident destiny of the British and the Americans, and of course, the Russians, to rule the world." He spoke off the record, unaware that a reporter was present.

He was severely rebuked by his boss, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, for his failure "to control your tongue." If it happened again, Ike warned him, "I will relieve you instantly from command."

Now, in the summer of 1945, as close associates abandoned him, the outspoken warrior was bringing more troubles upon himself. He accused Jews of influencing everything, from the shape of the postwar peace to his problems as military governor of Bavaria, and ranted at the Russians. "Hell, we are going to have to fight them sooner or later," he told Eisenhower's deputy, General Joseph T. McNarney. "Why not do it now while our army is intact and we can have their hind end kicked back into Russia in three months?" The genial but long-suffering supreme commander, meanwhile, had run out of patience with his maverick friend and protégé.

The final straw for Ike came when Patton held a routine 15-minute press conference in the scenic spa town of Bad Tolz, south of Munich, on the morning of September 22, 1945, to defend his use of Nazi Party members in administrative jobs. "In supervising the functioning of the Bavarian government, which is my mission, the first thing that happened was that the outs accused the ins of being Nazis," he declared. "Now, more than half the German people were Nazis, and we would be in a hell of a fix if we removed all Nazi party members from office." He added, "The way I see it, this Nazi question is very much like a Democratic and Republican election fight. To get things done in Bavaria, after the complete disorganization and disruption of four years of war, we had to compromise with the Devil a little."

General George Patton, one of his ivory-handled pistols clearly visible at his waist, speaks with wounded soldiers of the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division somewhere in the Mediterranean theater in 1943.

This time, Patton had sealed his fate. When he learned of the comments, Ike, who had recently warned him to "stop mollycoddling the goddamn Nazis," was furious. A number of stateside newspapers, which Patton had denounced as "semitic," seized on the story. Some editorialized that Patton was unfit for occupation command and would have to go, while others demanded his immediate relief.

Eisenhower's chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, telephoned Patton and suggested that he call another press conference to "set the record straight." Patton complied, but he was less than contrite, and another tempest blew up in the newspapers. Ike fumed again, but after his legendary temper had cooled, he cabled Patton that he must have been incorrectly quoted, and invited him to "see me for an hour."

Tired, grim, and uncharacteristically subdued, the outspoken general reported to Eisenhower's spacious office at the I.G. Farben Building in Frankfurt on the afternoon of September 28. Patton knew that he was in for another tongue-lashing, but he believed that he could charm his boss and smooth things over. Ike wore his famous grin, but it was evident to Patton that his summons was deadly serious. He was told that his comments had embarrassed himself, Ike, and the Army.

Eisenhower told him, "The war's over and I don't want to hurt you, but I can't let you be making such ridiculous statements. I'm going to give you a new job." After Patton insisted that his remarks had been deliberately distorted in the press, Eisenhower delicately broached the main reason for the meeting: Patton was about to be relieved. Ike suggested that Patton take charge of the Fifteenth Army, a small headquarters organization set up to prepare a history of the European war. Shattered at being relieved from his beloved Third Army, Patton predictably recoiled at the idea of being "kicked upstairs" and given a "paper command," but he reluctantly accepted.

After the meeting, there was no customary

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ABOVE: In July 1945, General Patton attends a gathering of senior military officers and civilian dignitaries in the German capital of Berlin. Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson stands at right. BELOW: Eisenhower, Bradley, and Patton photographed before the German surrender. Eisenhower later relieved the outspoken Patton of command of Third Army after comments he made as the military governor of Bavaria.

dinner and camaraderie, and Patton rode Ike's train back to Bad Tolz. He was "very calm and very humble," said his aide, Major Van S. Merle-Smith. Shortly after the fateful meeting, Ike and Patton attended a football game in Frankfurt, during which the latter cloaked his bitterness. At dinner later, Patton told his aide, "I've obeyed orders and done my best, and now there's nothing left. I think that I'd like to resign from the Army so that I could go home and say what I have to say." But Merle-Smith talked him out of it.

Bedell Smith informed Patton on September 30 that he was being replaced as Third Army commander by Lt. Gen. Lucian K. Truscott, Jr., who had organized the first U.S. Ranger battalions in 1942 and distinguished himself in North Africa, Sicily, Italy, and Southern France. The two spit-and-polish cavalrymen spent two days together before the change of command. One of Patton's last official acts with the Third Army was to pin the Silver Star on Master Sergeant John L. Mims, his faithful Black driver since September 1940.

Patton was "terribly hurt for a few days" at losing the Third Army. In an October 5 letter to his devoted wife of 35 years, Beatrice, he wrote, "Like William Jennings Bryan, 'my head is bloody but unbowed.' All I regret is that I have again worried you."

The handover of the Third Army reins was conducted late on the dismal, rainy morning of October 7 in the spacious Bad Tolz gymnasium. It was an impressive, formal ceremony, with massed army and national flags, ruffles and flourishes, and four corps commanders present because Patton did not want "Ike or anyone else to get the idea that I am leaving here with my tail between my legs."

In a brief speech, he declared, "All good things must come to an end. The best thing that has ever happened to me thus far is the honor and privilege of having commanded the Third Army … Please accept my heartfelt congratulations on your valor and devotion to duty, and my fervent gratitude for your unwavering loyalty … Goodbye and God bless you."

The army band struck up "Auld Lang Syne," and Patton handed the Third Army colors to Truscott, who gave a brief and emotional speech. The two generals then left to the strains of the "Third Army March" and "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow," after which a lunch was served in Patton's honor. After listening to many tributes from corps and division commanders, he decided that he had had enough. He arose, squared his shoulders, and walked resolutely to his staff car. The Third Army train was waiting to take him to his new Fifteenth Army command in Bad Nauheim, 24 miles north of Frankfurt.

It was a heartbreaking day for Patton, but he was dignified and hid his inward fury. "Nothing in his dress or bearing reflected the torture of his soul," reported Colonel Fisher. Beatrice Patton would never get over what she considered the Army's betrayal of her husband. "He was crucified and thrown to the wolves," she said. "Not one voice was raised in his defense." She accused General Eisenhower of "cowardice toward the press."

With his affectionate bull terrier, Willie, at his heels, Patton made himself known to the staff at his new Fifteenth Army headquarters. The 100 apprehensive officers jumped to attention when the grim-faced warrior strode into the mess. One of the officers was young Lieutenant John S.D. Eisenhower, who later became a distinguished military historian. "There are occasions when I can truthfully say that I am not as much of a son of a bitch as I may think

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A soldier inspects the damage to the car General Patton was riding in when the accident that would prove fatal occurred. The damage to the front end of the vehicle was substantial.

I am," said Patton. "This is one of them." The relieved staff roared with delight.

Patton's generous nature shone through that evening when he told the staff, "I have been here and have studied your work today. I have been shocked by the excellence of your work." The officers were won over and devoted themselves to him as staunchly as had the Third Army staff. They worked hard.

While chafing in his new assignment and grumbling in his diary and his letters to Beatrice, Patton set out to enjoy himself. He smoked cigars, took long drives by himself, wrote a series of articles on leadership and tactics, and started work on his memoir, *War As I Knew It*. He was delighted when friends feted him at a lavish party in the Bad Nauheim hotel ballroom on November 11, his 60th birthday. He was back in the limelight, briefly.

Back in his office, he became increasingly tense and restless, pacing back and forth. He still seethed about his betrayal by Ike and the Army, thought long and hard about resigning, and fretted about the uncertain political climate in postwar Europe. "The whole damned world is going communist," he complained to Beatrice. "The last U.S. troops to leave Europe will be fighting a rearguard action … I really shudder for the future of our country."

Patton's low spirits were relieved when he was greeted by cheering crowds, decorations, banquets, and champagne in a number of cities. His stops included Rennes, Chartres, and Paris, where he lunched with General Charles de Gaulle and visited Notre Dame Cathedral, the tomb of his hero, Napoleon, and the Folies Bergère. He garnered 10 citizen-of-honor citations, plaques, and "a tremendous case of indigestion" during the tour. More honors were heaped upon him in Rheims, Metz, Verdun, Luxembourg, and Brussels, where he was awarded the Croix de Guerre and a named a Grand Officer of the Order of Leopold. He also caught a bad cold in the Belgian capital.

Patton's persistent melancholy abated a few days later in late November, when he journeyed to Scandinavia. Riding in a special train that had once been used by Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, he attended a cocktail party at the American embassy in Copenhagen and then continued to Stockholm, where he breakfasted with Count Folke Bernadotte, a prominent diplomat who had negotiated with the Nazis on behalf of the Allies, called on King Gustavus Adolphus V, and was warmly reunited with eight members of the Swedish modern pentathlon team, against which he had competed in pistol competitions at the 1912 Olympic Games.

In a letter to Beatrice on December 5, Patton announced that he would be home for a month's leave at Christmas. He told her that he would fly to England and depart from Southampton aboard the 45,000-ton battleship USS *New York* on December 14. It was the general's last letter to his wife.

Eisenhower had left Europe on November 11 to take over as Army chief of staff, and his successor was the dour, ruthless General McNarney, a skilled administrator and graduate of the famous West Point class of 1915. Patton had told Ike earlier that he did not care to serve under McNarney, "not because I had anything personal against him, but because I thought it unseemly for a man with my combat record to serve under a man who had never heard a gun go off." But Patton did so because he was a good soldier.

After attending a lunch hosted by Bedell Smith for the new chief of U.S. Army forces in Europe, Patton waxed indignant. "I have rarely seen assembled a greater bunch of sons of bitches," he wrote in his diary. "The whole luncheon party reminded me of a meeting of the Rotary Club in Hawaii where everyone slaps everyone else's back while looking for an appropriate place to thrust the knife. I admit I was guilty of this practice, although at the moment I have no appropriate weapon."

Patton also groused that, because he had been in and out of the doghouse, he had not received sufficient recognition for his war service. "I got nothing for Tunisia, nothing for Sicily, and nothing for the Bulge," he noted. "Brad (General Omar Bradley) and Courtney (General Courtney Hodges) were both decorated for their failures in that operation."

Patton's numerous decorations, in fact, included the Distinguished Service Cross with Oakleaf Cluster, the Distinguished Service Medal with two clusters, the Silver Star with cluster, the Legion of Merit, Knight of the British Empire, the French Legion of Honor, and the French Croix de Guerre.

As he lapsed deeper into a bitter mood, his chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Hobart R. "Hap" Gay, became increasingly concerned. The torment of his longtime friend and boss hurt him, so he cast around for some diversion that would cheer Patton up. A pheasant hunt might do the trick, he decided. On the evening of Saturday, December 8, Gay casually suggested that they would find "some good hunting" in a game-rich area west of the River Rhine city of Speyer, a few miles south of Mannheim. Patton brightened up and replied, "Yes, let's do it." They agreed to go on the following day, just before Patton's scheduled flight to England and homeward voyage on December 10.

Around 9 AM on the clear, cold morning of Sunday, Dec. 9, 1945, the two generals left Bad Nauheim in Patton's elegant 1938 Model 75 Cadillac limousine, driven by Pfc. Horace L.

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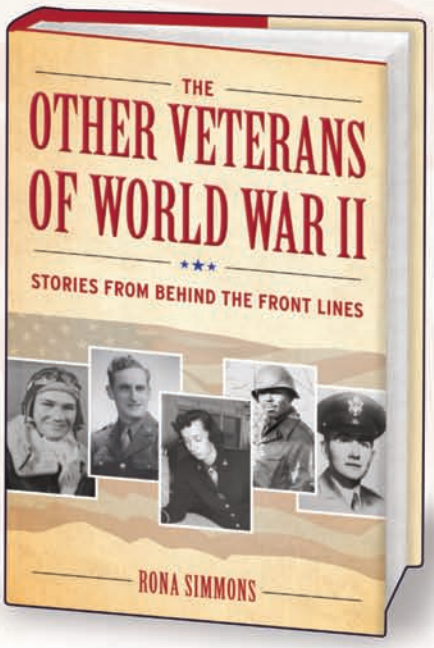

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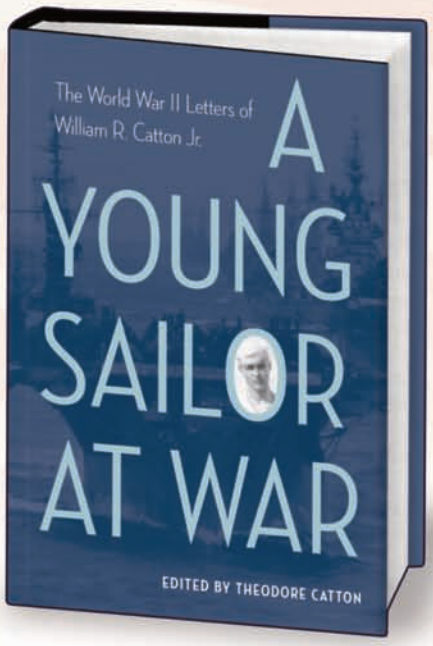

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Woodring. He had chauffeured Patton for four months following the departure of Sergeant Mims. The car was trailed by a jeep driven by Technical Sergeant Joe Spruce, which carried the generals' rifles and a hunting dog. The two vehicles rolled along the Kassel-Frankfurt-Mannheim autobahn and then made a detour near Bad Homburg to enable Patton to visit the ruins of a Roman fort in the nearby Taunus Mountains. He got his boots and socks soaked while tramping around in the snow.

The vehicles then headed along National Route 38 toward the northern outskirts of Mannheim, with Patton trying to dry himself out in the Cadillac. He had ordered the hunting dog transferred to the car because he was afraid that it would freeze to death in the jeep. Around 11 AM, the vehicles were flagged down at a military police checkpoint, and a young soldier demanded that the occupants identify themselves. Patton jumped out of his car, patted the shivering MP on the back, and told him, "You are a good soldier, son. I'll see to it that your CO is told what a fine MP you make."

In the northern Mannheim suburb of Kafertal, Woodring slowed the Cadillac down and then halted at a crossing while a train passed. When the gates were raised, the limousine crossed the tracks and sped up to about 30 miles an hour. Sergeant Spruce's jeep was now leading, because Woodring did not know the way to the hunting grounds.

At about 11:45 that morning, the hunting trip came to an abrupt and fateful end. An approaching, slow-moving two-and-half-ton truck driven by Technician 5 Robert L. Thompson, about to enter a nearby quartermaster depot, suddenly turned left in front of the Cadillac. He gave no signal, according to Sergeant Woodring and General Gay. Woodring slammed on the brakes and veered left, but the two vehicles collided. The front end of the limousine was crushed.

The two drivers and Gay suffered only cuts and bruises, but Patton was thrown forward awkwardly into the Cadillac's overhead ceiling light and steel-and-glass partition. His nose and neck were broken, most of his scalp was peeled from his head, and his spinal cord was damaged. He was bleeding profusely and unable to move, yet conscious.

The Army's 130th Station Hospital in Heidelberg, 25 miles away, was alerted by radio, and Patton was rushed there by ambulance. Carried in on a litter about an hour after the accident, he was given blood plasma, penicillin, and a tetanus shot. Showing some improvement at once, the stricken general opened his eyes and grumbled something. When a doctor asked what he wanted, he chuckled, "Relax, gentlemen, I'm in no condition to be a terror now." A few minutes later, he said, "Jesus Christ, what a way to start a leave." The hospital chaplain offered prayers, and Patton thanked him. Within two hours, 11 concerned generals were at the hospital, including his good friend and longtime cavalry comrade, Lt. Gen. Geoffrey Keyes.

National Archives

Pallbearers carry General Patton's casket to a waiting hearse. His aide, Sergeant William Meeks, is front left among this group.

Surgeons x-rayed Patton, sutured his scalp wound, gave him more plasma, and placed him in traction. His condition was grave, so telephone calls went out to Washington, and two British Army neurosurgeons were summoned to help assess his wounds. Also at the hospital were about 30 correspondents, many of whom had been covering the Nuremberg war trials.

When the U.S. surgeon general notified Beatrice Patton of her husband's accident, General Eisenhower made a C-54 Skymaster transport plane available to her. She was accompanied by Colonel R. Glen Spurling, an Army neurosurgeon. Because of severe storms all over Europe, it was a grueling journey, but Spurling said that Mrs. Patton's personality radiated "like a brilliant gem." After flying by way of Newfoundland, the Azores, and Marseilles, she arrived at the Heidelberg hospital on the afternoon of December 10.

Colonel Spurling hastened to Patton's bedside, where the general cheerfully apologized "for getting you out on this wild goose chase." Spurling agreed with the American and British doctors that nothing further could be done. An operation was out of the question, and all that Patton could hope for was semi-invalidism. He would never be able to ride a horse again. "Thank you, colonel, for being honest," he said gravely. "I'll try to be a good patient."

The feisty warrior was out of action, but far from forgotten. Newspapers and radio broadcasts were full of reports of his accident and condition, and letters, telegrams, and cards poured into the hospital from veterans' groups, mayors of French villages, a nun, and black GIs. Patton was particularly cheered when his nurse read him a get-well message from President Harry S. Truman, while a letter from Eisenhower read, "You are never out of my thoughts and ... my hopes are tied up in your speedy recovery."

Friends clamored to see Patton, and more than 50 British officers and soldiers inquired about his condition. Through the ordeal, Beatrice Patton was attentive, composed, and hopeful. She was "as plucky and courageous as five people," reported General Keyes.

As the days passed, Patton was out of danger and seemed to be improving, but the degree of recovery was unsettled. The doctors were initially optimistic but eventually held out little hope, and his improvement ceased by the end of the third day. His appetite lessened, he coughed a lot, and he grew weaker. Lingering bravely for 13 days, Patton was immobile and helpless but tried to be alert and jovial with visitors. Alone with his nurse, he was depressed.

The general took a sudden turn for the worse on the night of December 20, and the hospital announced on the following day that his condition was serious. Patton told his nurse several times that day that he was going to die. Beatrice spent most of the afternoon of December 21 reading to her husband, after which he dozed off and never woke up. He died at 5:55 PM of "pulmonary edema and congestive heart failure." Colonel Spurling reported, "Patton died as he had lived—bravely. Throughout his illness, there was never one word of complaint regarding a nurse or doctor or orderly. Each and every one was treated with the kindest consideration … He was a model patient."

Heidelberg became unusually quiet, all service clubs were closed, and flags were lowered to half-staff all over Germany. Beatrice discussed her husband's burial with Keyes and Spurling and decided on the sprawling American Cemetery at Hamm, a Luxembourg City suburb, where many Third Army fallen had been laid.

More cards, letters, and telegrams poured into Heidelberg—from politicians and statesmen, including Truman and British Prime Minister Clement Attlee; from soldiers who had

served with Patton; and from the French National Assembly. General Bradley cabled his condolences.

Patton's body lay in state in the mountaintop Villa Reiner overlooking Heidelberg on Saturday, December 22, and on the following cold, dismal afternoon, his coffin was sealed and escorted by a 15th Cavalry Regiment platoon and pallbearers in jeeps and scout cars to the city's Christ Church. Veiled in black, Mrs. Patton came accompanied by General Keyes and a tearful General Truscott.

Dozens of generals led by McNarney filed from the villa to the church, where two Army chaplains conducted a 22-minute Episcopalian service. Flowers surrounded the flag-draped coffin, and the rite was attended by delegations from Great Britain, France, Sweden, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Soviet Union, and the major U.S. commands in Europe. The chaplains recited Patton's two favorite psalms, the 63rd and 90th, and a 36-voice soldier's chorus sang the old Anglican hymn, "The Strife Is O'er."

While the bands of several divisions played following the end of the service, the general's coffin was loaded aboard a Third Army halftrack and solemnly escorted to the railway station a mile away, where two trains waited. Six thousand shivering GIs lined the streets.

At the station, a 1st Armored Division artillery battery fired a 17-gun salute before the coffin and thousands of flowers were loaded into the baggage car of the lead train. Accompanied by Generals Keyes, Gay, and Truscott, Beatrice Patton rode with the coffin while the rest of the mourners sat in the second train. The trains rolled out of Heidelberg at 4:30 PM on the lengthy journey to Luxembourg. Passing briefly through France, six halts were made so that Mrs. Patton could inspect honor guards and receive more wreaths. The trains arrived in Luxembourg City late on the rainy night of December 23.

The morning of Christmas Eve was rainy, windy, and dreary as Patton's coffin was loaded onto a halftrack for the half-hour procession to the cemetery. Master Sergeant William G. Meeks, the general's trusty, longtime Black driver, drove the vehicle. The road was lined for three miles by U.S., French, Belgian, and Luxembourgian troops.

General Patton was buried during a poignant, 25-minute ceremony at mid-morning while shivering generals, enlisted men, Luxembourgers, and correspondents watched. The focal figure was Beatrice Patton, grief-stricken but stoic. "Her eyes were red, but for the rest, she was the same good soldier her husband had been," reported Walter Cronkite for the *Washington Times-Herald*. The tearful Meeks bowed and handed her the flag, which had draped the coffin; then a 12-man squad fired a three-round volley of salutes, and a bugler sounded taps. A simple white cross was later placed over the grave.

"History has reached out and embraced General George Patton," said a *New York Times* editorial on December 22, 1945. "His place is secure. He will be ranked in the forefront of America's great military leaders." Of several memorial services arranged, the most impressive was conducted in the Washington Cathedral on January 20, 1946. Twelve hundred mourners, including former Secretary of War

Continued on page 82

Top: Wikimedia; Bottom: National Archives

ABOVE: General Patton was laid to rest under a simple headstone in the American Military Cemetery in Hamm, Luxembourg. BELOW: Not long after Patton's death, his dog Willie lies among the general's personal effects, waiting to travel to the United States without his master.

By Blaine Taylor

All images: Naval History and Heritage Command

The Allied Secret Weapon at Normandy

The artificial Mulberry harbors allowed supplies and reinforcements to come ashore directly on the beaches after the D-Day invasion.

ONE OF THE MAJOR AIMS OF THE GREAT ALLIED INVASION OF GERMAN-Occupied France on D-Day, June 6, 1944, was the securing of the port of Cherbourg on the Cotentin Peninsula in Normandy.

To that end, Allied supreme commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower committed three airborne divisions—the British 6th and the U.S. 82nd and 101st—to drop over Normandy in the predawn hours of June 6.

Cherbourg finally fell to the Allies on D+20, on June 27, but it had been severely demolished by the Germans before its surrender, thus rendering it useless to the invaders as a point of resupply for many weeks. Ike had foreseen this possibility, however, as he pointed out in his superior postwar memoir *Crusade in Europe*.

One of the most difficult problems that invariably accompanied planning for a tactical offensive involved measures for maintenance, supply, evacuation, and replacement. Before World War II, it had always been assumed that any major amphibious attack must gain permanent port facilities within a matter of days, or otherwise be abandoned. But the development of both practical and effective landing craft by the Allies, including LSTs, LCTs, DUKWs, and other waterborne craft, did much to lessen immediate dependence upon already established port facilities.

Indeed, the Allied development of many revolutionary types of equipment was one of the greatest factors in defeating the plans of the German General Staff, Eisenhower's major opponent throughout the war.

Still, the possession of equipment and gear that allowed for the landing of material on open beaches did not automatically eliminate the need for real ports, and this was especially true with Operation Overlord, the greatest amphibious invasion in military history.

A huge floating Phoenix unit, part of the artificial Mulberry harbors, under construction at Portsmouth, England.

The treacherous English Channel was subject to destructive storms at all times of year, with winter being by far the worst period. It had been that very body of water, indeed, that had

Men Over 40 Celebrate Breakthrough Pill

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By S.A. Nickerson, Health Correspondent

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

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

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

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

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

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stopped would-be invaders of England through the ages, including Napoleon, Kaiser Wilhelm II, and even Hitler himself.

Ike realized that the only certain method to assure supply and maintenance was with the capture of large port facilities. Since the nature of the Nazi coastal defenses ruled out the possibility of gaining adequate ports promptly, it was necessary to provide a means of sheltering beach supply from the effects of volatile storms such as those that had wrecked the Spanish Armada in 1588.

Eisenhower well knew that even after the expected Allied capture of Cherbourg, its port capacity and the lines of communication leading out of it could not meet all his needs.

The Allied response to this conundrum was a vast undertaking so unique as to be classed by many scoffers as completely fantastic: the construction of artificial harbors on the coast of Normandy.

The first time Eisenhower heard of this idea was when it was advanced by British Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten in the spring of 1942. At a conference attended by a number of service chiefs, he stated that if ports were not available, the Allies would simply have to construct them in pieces and tow them in. This was met by both hoots and jeers, but two years later, that is exactly what happened.

A Phoenix caisson is towed across the English Channel toward the beaches of Normandy. These components were towed at speeds of just three or four knots.

General Eisenhower noted that two general types of protected anchorages were designed. The first, a "gooseberry," was to consist only of a line of sunken ships placed stem to stern in such numbers as to provide a sheltered coastline in their lee upon which small ships and landing craft could continue to unload in any except the most violent weather.

The other type, a "mulberry," was in reality a complete and practical harbor. Two of these were designed and built in Great Britain to be towed in pieces to the coast of Normandy. The major construction unit in the mulberry was an

This view from the pier head of a Mulberry harbor shows the roadway to the invasion beach in Normandy. This vertically moving pier head maintained a fixed level above the changing surface of the sea.

enormous concrete ship, termed a "phoenix," boxlike in shape and so heavily built that when numbers of them were sunk end to end along a strip of coastline, they would most likely give solid protection against almost any wave action.

In addition, truly elaborate auxiliary equipment for unloading and all types of gear required in the operation of a modern port were also provided. The British and Americans were each to have one of the mulberry ports, while five gooseberries were also to be installed.

The Allies' prior experience fighting in the Mediterranean theater had demonstrated that each of their reinforced divisions in active operation consumed about 600-700 tons of supplies daily, so they would need to make maintenance arrangements for the arrival of these quantities. Also, Ike's staff in London would have to simultaneously build up reserves of troops, ammunition, and supplies on the beaches. This would permit the Allies to begin deep offensives within a reasonable time with the assurance that these could be sustained through an extended period of decisive action.

The offensive plan called for putting General Bernard Montgomery and his British Army safely ashore before the Norman city of Caen, while U.S. Army General Omar Bradley and the Americans disembarked at Omaha and Utah Beaches at the base of the Cherbourg Peninsula. Monty, whose army would then be the Allied force closest to Paris, would trick his old foe German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel into believing that the British were striving to break through the German defensive line and head for the not-so-distant French capital. In actual fact, Allied planners intended to use Monty as a decoy in order to divert the Germans to his front, leaving General Bradley as unengaged as possible while the Americans drove for the first real goal, Cherbourg at the northern end of the Cotentin Peninsula, which they hoped to take by D+17.

This aerial view depicts a Mulberry harbor completely deployed off the coast of Normandy and in full operation. The breakwater consisting of caissons and block ships is shown at bottom, while the row of pier heads forms a wharf at center, and the floating roadways run directly toward the beach. When fully assembled, a Mulberry harbor was roughly the same size as that of Dover, England.

Once Cherbourg fell, General Bradley was to drive south down the Cotentin Peninsula on D+22, punching a hole through the German lines near Avranches. He could then fend off Rommel while General George S. Patton and the U.S. Third Army rushed south through this gap and slashed toward Rommel's rear.

While the Anglo-American invasion forces penetrated inland, all the fighting equipment and supplies needed to seize their initial objectives would begin coming ashore, using the artificial mulberry harbors towed to Normandy by the Royal Navy from Selsey Bill in the United Kingdom. Heavy engineering materials needed to reestablish and refit captured ports; rebuild airfields; and repair railroads, bridges, and roads in rear areas would follow as the first phase of the invasion was successfully drawing to a close. One additional, but vitally important, part of the overall logistical plan allowed for the speedy removal of the expected wounded from the beaches and their prompt transfer to military hospitals in England.

On D+42, the Allies planned to tow from England the equipment for a harbor independent of the mulberries in the English Channel between Quiberon Bay on the Atlantic Ocean and the mulberry on the Normandy beaches, which would allow Ike to supply the various invasion armies for the long haul. This would continue until the ports of Cherbourg, Brest, L'Orient, and St. Nazaire were duly rebuilt, even though the Germans had badly sabotaged them before surrendering. It was hoped that after six weeks, these four French ports would be able to carry the load from there on. Until then, however, the mulberry would have to carry the load alone. If it couldn't, the invasion would simply fail.

At best, Operation Mulberry was expected to serve as a temporary entry port for supplies and men needed to keep the invasion moving forward. When the quartet of real French ports was back in service, resupply and reinforcement efforts would shift away from the mulberry harbors and Quiberon Bay. The Allied drive across France to the Siegfried Line could then begin, with all supply problems solved. Operation Mulberry, then, was just the first important rung of a ladder into France, with Quiberon Bay being the second, and the four French ports the third.

At Selsey Bill, Ike saw in person the mulberries, and their immense size astonished him. Nevertheless, he was confident they would work. Eisenhower began to fit the pieces he saw into the picture they were to make when floated to the far shore, two vast artificial harbors to unfold under enemy fire on Normandy's bare sands.

The tremendous English Channel tides were the very first obstacle to overcome. From high tide to low, the sea speedily dropped over 21 feet, a massive change in sea level. At low tide on the flat Norman beaches, the waterline pushed seaward a quarter of a mile twice daily. This moved the shoreline far out from the beach, with only wide stretches of bare sand where a ship might have floated just a few hours earlier.

Then there were the tidal currents that moved vast, surging quantities of seawater in and out the Channel every six hours, akin to so many rapid rivers running alternately west and east on the coast as the tides ebbed and flowed. These were all truly baffling currents of amazing strength, each enough to drive seamen frantic in handling vessels either onto or off the beach.

The shoreline itself—unprotected by any natural promontories or outlying islands—was fully exposed to the full sweep of the seas heading inward from the Channel. Vessels of all sizes in anything but fine weather would discover that unloading cargo on its unprotected, surf-pounded beaches was a nearly unsolvable problem.

Those were the main obstacles making the beaches untenable for any long-term cargo handling, even of light materials, not to mention heavy guns and tanks. The only answer was a protected seaport, either natural or contrived, such as the artificial harbors that Operation Mulberry provided.

Most important was the need for shelter from the open seas and their continuous surf. A massive breakwater was thus also needed, and on open coasts, this typically took years to build up from the sea floor. The Allies, however, built two such massive breakwaters, designed to be installed on the French sea floor for use in a matter of days.

The 100 artificial breakwaters that Allied engineers built were nicknamed "phoenixes." Each of the majestic, reinforced-concrete blocks was as heavy as a Liberty ship—displacing 6,000 tons—stood 60 feet high, ran 200 feet in length, and was 60 feet wide (tall as a six-storied building and a city block long). Despite its massive size, though, the segmentation of each phoenix into hollow, watertight compartments made it a buoyant, seagoing vessel. When the time came, they were floated up off the bottom of the sea on the English side of the Channel, towed a hundred miles across to Normandy, then sunk on the sea floor one mile off the beachhead. These would provide an enclosed, sheltered harbor for the invasion site.

Sunk end to end in two long strings off the French coast, they were to form two distinct breakwaters of two miles long, one for the American front, and the other for the British. This was 20,000 feet of breakwater combined, to be sunk a mile offshore in water 30 feet deep at low tide. Even at high tide, 10 feet of their top structure would be above the water's surface to break the waves, thus protecting the artificial harbor inside from the rough Channel waters. They'd also provide calm water in

We found our most important watch in a soldier's pocket

It's the summer of 1944 and a weathered U.S. sergeant is walking in Rome only days after the Allied Liberation. There is a joyous mood in the streets and this tough soldier wants to remember this day. He's only weeks away from returning home. He finds an interesting timepiece in a store just off the Via Veneto and he decides to splurge a little on this memento. He loved the way it felt in his hand, and the complex movement inside the case intrigued him. He really liked the hunter's back that opened to a secret compartment. He thought that he could squeeze a picture of his wife and new daughter in the case back. He wrote home that now he could count the hours until he returned to the States. This watch went on to survive some harrowing flights in a B-24 bomber and somehow made it back to the U.S. Besides the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star, my father cherished this watch because it was a reminder of the best part of the war for any soldier—the homecoming.

He nicknamed the watch *Ritorno* for homecoming, and the rare heirloom is now valued at $42,000 according to *The Complete Guide to Watches*. But to our family, it is just a reminder that nothing is more beautiful than the smile of a healthy returning GI.

The hunter's back

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In this painting by artist Dwight Shepler, a Landing Ship, Tank (LST) discharges cargo from both its upper and lower decks onto a T-shaped formation of floating pier heads.

their interiors for unloading cargo, either onto pier heads, or from small craft beached on the guarded sands. Operations could thus continue round-the-clock, undisturbed by surf or waves.

To maintain the necessary depth for ships inside, even at low tide, breakwater lines had to be lodged nearly a mile offshore to provide draft enough inside for berthing space along each inner phoenix wall. The estimated capacity at any given time was seven Liberty ships being unloaded. Countless smaller vessels would also take shelter within the mulberry harbors.

Something was also needed to break up meddlesome currents, so a short cross breakwater of more phoenixes was placed at the western end of each harbor, stretching from the inshore sands outward, and then perpendicular to the main breakwater, joined at its seaward end. This cross breakwater acted as a cork at one end of the harbor, throttling the dangerous shoreline rivers.

Then there was the pier head problem. To match the terrific supply tonnage to the limited number of vessels, there had to be a fast vessel turnaround on the far shore, meaning all unloading of tanks and heavy guns had to proceed off the bow ramps of the tank landing ships (LSTs).

Given the severe tide-level changes on the Normandy coast, normal pier heads built at the correct level to unload LSTs at high tide would at low tide tower so high above an LST's bows that ramps could not possibly reach up to the pier head. If they did, could any vehicle possibly mount so steep an incline? The answer was to provide an artificial pier head.

Operation Mulberry provided an answer: the Lobnitz pier head. This vertically moving pier head maintained a fixed level above the changing surface of the sea regardless of the tide to facilitate the unloading of LSTs. Lobnitz pier heads, which Allied engineers interspersed among the sunken phoenixes, had a factory-like appearance, with four square towers at each corner that looked like chimneys and tremendous steel legs that pierced through the pier head's hull, running down beneath the surface of the sea to anchor the structure to the ocean floor.

The movable pier head itself was controlled by intricate machinery inside its rectangular steel hull, rising and falling with the changing tides, maintaining its deck at a permanent height above the seas, but never immersed deeply enough to gain buoyancy for floating free. In addition, it always maintained enough weight to anchor the Lobnitz solidly.

Another important piece of the artificial harbor puzzle consisted of massive steel truss sections—"whales" in Normandy beachhead parlance—that floated on pontoons. Joined together into 3,000-foot lengths, they formed bridges on the surface of the water that ran seaward from a point just above the high water mark on the beach to connect with the Lobnitz pier heads well inside the protective breakwater area a half a mile out to sea.

Even when the water reached its lowest ebb at low tide, there still remained at each floating pier a high-enough water level to berth two LSTs. The vast tonnage, then, of tanks, self propelled guns, ammunition, supplies, and vehicles never ceased rolling ashore over those floating highway bridges from the Lobnitz pier heads—a vast stream of heavy, ocean-borne cargo that only the piers, cranes, and dock facilities of a major seaport would normally be able to handle.

For their part, the German General Staff fervently believed that no invasion could possibly be staged successfully at Normandy. They were patently wrong, as events later showed.

The U.S. Navy calculated that 100 sunken phoenixes at 6,000 tons displacement each would mean 600,000 tons of them nestled on the muddy ocean floor of Selsey Bill in the United Kingdom. When the time came for towing to enemy shores, would they actually work? Normally, such a thing would take two years to accomplish, while the Allies had but a few days to move them all.

In eight months, 20,000 British laborers built two million tons of steel and concrete into 600-odd sections towed by more than 100 tugs and assembled into two enormous floating ports. How successful were the mulberries in Normandy?

On D+10, an LST dropped its ramp onto the first completed pier runway of Mulberry A, and in two days, 24,412 tons of supplies and ammunition rolled ashore from the two mulberries. Then came the English Channel storm that Ike had feared all along. On D+13, gale-force winds with heavy surf pounded the Normandy coast, pushing landing craft against piers and tearing sections of them from their moorings, crashing them against each other. By D+16, Mulberry A was a mass of twisted wreckage, while Mulberry B was also damaged, though not fatally. Still, Allied supplies continued coming ashore.

When unloading began again on D+17, the British mulberry, using salvageable parts from Mulberry A, was back in operation, with the Americans landing16,400 tons on the open beaches.

On August 1, 1944, the Allied armies had enough strength ashore to finally break out from their Normandy beachhead and proceeded to liberate France and the rest of Nazi-occupied Western Europe—almost two months to the day after their initial landing. Thus, the mulberries, the Allies' secret weapons in Normandy, have been judged by historians as a great logistical success.

Blaine Taylor is a Vietnam veteran of the U.S. Army and the author of numerous articles and books relating to World War II-era history. He resides in Towson, Maryland.

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By Brent Douglas Dyck

Children for Hitler

The Nazi Lebensborn Program was conceived to provide A supply of Aryan children for the future of the Third Reich.

BY 1936, 18-YEAR-OLD HILDEGARD KOCH HAD REACHED A CROSSROADS IN HER young life as she finished her schooling. Her leader in the local Bund Deutscher Mädel (the League of German Girls), gave her some advice: "If you don't know what to do, why not give the Führer a child? What Germany needs more than anything is racially valuable stock." It was the first time that Koch had heard of the Lebensborn Program.

In 1933, the year Hitler and the Nazis came to power, the birth rate in Germany was 14.7 per 1,000 people. This was less than half what it had been at the turn of the century. Additionally, there were hundreds of thousands of abortions performed in Germany every year. These two practices alarmed the Nazi regime. The Nazis needed children if they were to accomplish the two goals of Nazi ideology: conquer territory in the East and establish Aryan supremacy over Europe. Healthy young boys were needed to grow up to be soldiers in the German Army. Healthy young girls were needed to grow up and give birth to the next generation of super soldiers.

Heinrich Himmler, the leader of the SS, founded the Lebensborn Program on December 12, 1935. Lebensborn means "the fountain of life." The program actually provided three services: it gave pregnant women, either married or unmarried, a place to give birth to their babies and receive the best medical care; a meeting place for men and women of true Aryan stock to create babies for Adolf Hitler; and a place to raise children who had Aryan features after they had been kidnapped from their parents from foreign countries.

Himmler explained the main purpose of the Lebensborn program in an undated letter to Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel. "Official statistics show that there are still some 600,000 abortions annually in Germany. I have been concerned for years about the fact that many abortions occur among those who can be counted as the best sections of German society. I do not believe that we can tolerate a situation where annually hundreds of thousands of valuable girls and women are lost as mothers of German stock because they have illicit abortions whose effect is often to render them sterile ... the aim of protecting German blood, however, has the highest priority.

"It is interesting to think that, if we could prevent this scourge of abortion, and therefore give the German nation annually more than 600,000 children who would not otherwise be born, this population policy measure alone would result in 18 to 20 years in 200 more regiments for the army. An extra 500,000 to 600,000 Germans each year would create a commensurate amount of wealth. The strength of our soldiers and workers would make a considerable contribution that would guarantee the maintenance and enhancement of Greater Germany.

"It was with these considerations in mind that I founded 'Lebensborn' as a registered association in 1936. 'Lebensborn' leads the campaign against abortion in a positive way. In the Lebensborn homes, which are scattered all over the nation, any German mother of good blood can await in serenity the hour when she commits her life to the nation."

The first Lebensborn home was opened in 1936 in Steinhöring, a tiny village outside Munich. Eventually, the Lebensborn program would establish more than 25 homes across Europe: 10 in Germany, nine in Norway, two in Austria, and one each in Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Holland, and Denmark. In order to be accepted into the Lebensborn program, women had to prove that they were pure Aryans going back for at least three generations on both sides of their family. Due to this, about 60 percent of applicants were turned away. The majority of the women

A German mother and her three children seem to be striking a pose as the ideal Nazi nuclear family, perhaps a product of the Lebensborn Program.

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ABOVE: During the 'baptism' of a Lebensborn baby in Nazi Germany, the mother holds the infant while the father is to the right. SS soldiers look on during the ceremony, which takes place before a Swastika emblazoned altar of sorts. RIGHT: The SS flag flies above a nurse who pushes baby carriages at a Lebensborn home in Germany.

accepted were unmarried, although married women were accepted as well, as long as they passed the racial purity test.

The homes were decorated with furnishings that were confiscated from the homes of Jews that had been sent to concentration camps. Sometimes, the women in the homes were encouraged to sing communal songs, watch Nazi propaganda films, or attend ideological lectures. This was all done with the aim, according to one historian, "to make the women into even better Nazis than they were when they arrived."

Children born on Himmler's birthday were given special gifts. At birth, they received a candlestick, and on every birthday, a gift of one mark was put into their savings account. One mother, Käthe Sayrl, took the time to write a letter to Himmler. She wrote, "Thank you for your good wishes on the birth of my third Lebensborn child. The candlestick for little Helga has arrived safely, also the six bottles of Vitaborn juice. Please express my gratitude … from me and my husband. I enclose a picture taken at Christmas of three contented little girls—Gisela (October 1940), Dietlind (May 1942), and Helga (October 1943) ... Everyone realizes what a marvelous thing I have done, because in the course of this war, people have come to understand that you can't offer anything more worthwhile than a whole brood of children … total war has only one response today—everything must be done for victory."

The Lebensborn program also acted as a sort of brothel that encouraged sex between SS men and suitable Aryan women, such as Hildegard Koch, to create "racially valuable" offspring. According to Himmler's physical therapist, Felix Kersten, Himmler told him in 1943, "I have made it known privately that any unmarried woman who is alone and longs for a child can turn to Lebensborn with perfect confidence. I would sponsor the child and provide for its education. I know this is a revolutionary step, because according to the existing middle-class code an unmarried woman has no right to yearn for a child…Yet she often cannot find the right man or cannot marry because of her work, though her wish for a child is compelling. I have therefore created the possibility for such women to have the child they crave. As you can imagine, we recommend only racially faultless men as 'conception assistants.'"

Possessing blond hair and blue eyes, the very features the SS was after, Koch was a perfect candidate for Lebensborn. She volunteered enthusiastically. As with other candidates, she was carefully screened through a series of medical tests and background checks. Any case of hereditary disease, mental illness, or any hint of Jewish ancestry would have disqualified her. Given the seal of approval, Koch was taken to a castle near Tegernsee in Bavaria. She later said, "There were about 40 girls all about my own age. No one knew anyone else's name, no one knew where we came from ... We had to sign an undertaking renouncing all claims to the children we would have there, as they would be needed by the state and would be taken to special houses and settlements" to be raised.

At the castle, she was introduced to many blond-haired, blue-eyed SS officers. The SS officers may already have been married, but this was irrelevant. They were given leave from the fighting at the front to go to Lebensborn homes and do their "duty" for the Fatherland. Koch explained what happened next to author Louis Hagen. "They were all very tall and strong with blue eyes and blond hair ... We were given about a week to pick the man we liked and we were told to see to it that his hair and eyes corresponded exactly to ours. We were not told the names of any of the men. When we had made our choice, we had to wait until the tenth day after the beginning of the last period, when we were again medically examined and given permission to receive the SS men in our rooms at night … He was a sweet boy, he had smashing looks. He slept with me for three evenings

Bundesarchiv Bild 146-1973-010-11; Photo: Unknown

in one week … As both the father of my child and I believed in the importance of what we were doing, we had no shame or inhibitions of any kind ... The other nights he had to do his duty with another girl."

Koch became pregnant and was moved to a maternity ward for the next nine months before giving birth to a healthy baby boy. She nursed the baby for two weeks, and then he was taken away and adopted by an SS family. Koch never saw her child or the boy's father again.

Guntram Weber was one of the children born through the Lebensborn program. Weber never knew who his father was when he was growing up in Germany. His mother only told him that his father was a lowly truck driver for the Luftwaffe, and he had never fired a gun during the war. She told him that his father died in Croatia when he drove over a landmine. When Guntram was a teenager, he was rummaging through an old box and came across a silver

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ABOVE: Young German women, inculcated with Nazi ideology and inducted as members of the League of German Girls, were encouraged to have babies who would one day serve the Third Reich. BELOW: Reichsfuhrer SS Heinrich Himmler, founder of the Lebensborn Program, talks with a young Ukrainian boy. Many children were essentially kidnapped from occupied countries and given to German parents.

cup. It was a baptism present with Guntram's name on one side. However, on the other side it was inscribed, "From your godfather, Heinrich Himmler."

Guntram would find out years later that his father was SS Maj. Gen. Ludolf von Alvensleben. Alvensleben had four children with his wife, but he also fathered another child, Guntram, as part of the Lebensborn program. Alvensleben had been responsible for conducting mass executions in Poland. After the war, he fled to South America, and he was sentenced to death in absentia by a Polish court in 1949. He died in Argentina in 1970.

Weber was horrified by the revelation. He said, "I had to struggle with the fact he was a murderer and that was incredibly difficult. I had to check my position vis-à-vis myself. Was there any murderous instinct in me too? It was harrowing."

It is believed that about 8,000 children were born in Germany, and another 12,000 were fathered in Norway as part of the Lebensborn Program. After the war, those children who had a Norwegian mother and a German father were subject to years of abuse. A leading psychiatrist recommended that the Lebensborn children should be locked up in mental institutions because they were "genetically bad" since they had German genes. Many of these children were physically and sexually abused in government homes. A priest recommended that these Lebensborn children be sterilized to prevent them from becoming Nazis and waging war in the future.

Harriet von Nickel, born in Norway in March 1942, suffered years of abuse after her mother agreed to have a child with a German officer as part of the Lebensborn program. Taken in by a foster family after the war, she was chained up with the dogs in the yard. When she was six years old, a man from her village threw her into a river. He wanted, he said, to "see if the witch would drown or float." When she was nine, drunken fishermen carved a swastika into her forehead with a nail.

"In the Norwegian population, there was a hatred directed at us children," explains Bjorn Lengfelder, a Norwegian Lebensborn child. "A small brother and sister, five years old, were placed in a pig sty for two nights and two days. Then in the kitchen, they were put in a tub and scrubbed down with acid until they had no skin left 'because we have to wash that Nazi smell off you.'"

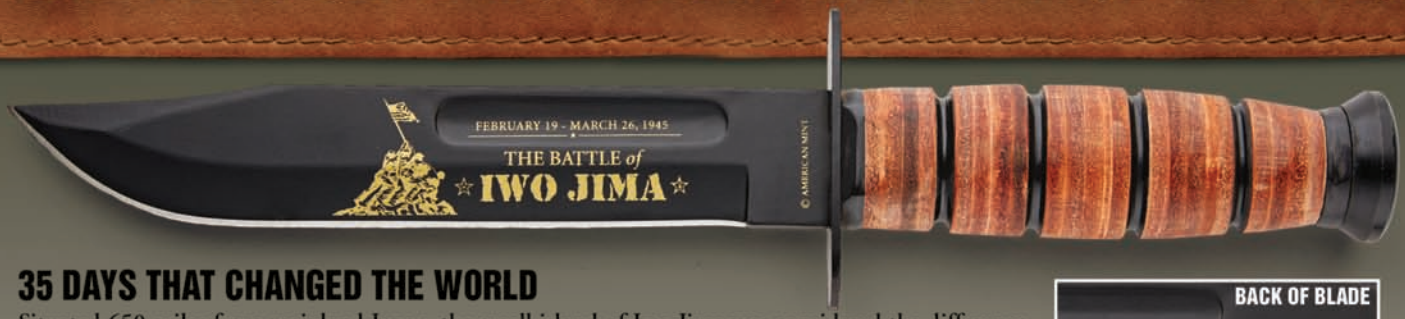
Lebensborn was also responsible for the kidnapping of children deemed "racially valuable" from occupied countries. After the Germans conquered Poland in September 1939, the Nazis noticed that there was a surprising number of blond, blue-eyed, fair-skinned children in that country. Himmler and his SS believed that these Polish children were actually Aryans who rightfully belonged in the Third Reich. In October 1943, Himmler said, "Obviously in such a mixture of peoples, there will always be some racially good types. Therefore, I think it is our duty to take their children with us, to remove them from their environment, if necessary, by robbing or stealing them."

The SS would visit all of the orphanages and schools in a city and round up all of the children. The children would then be sent to a medical center where they would be lined up, have their pictures taken, and then undergo inspection by SS doctors regarding 62 physical characteristics. These characteristics were not only the color of their hair and eyes, but also the width of their nose, thickness of their lips, their height, and their posture. Girls' hips were measured to see if they were good child-bearers. The children were then ranked into different racial categories. Those children who had the least Aryan characteristics were sent to the special children's camp at Lodz or to concentration camps.

Those children with the most Aryan characteristics were sent to Lebensborn homes, where they would be "Germanized." The goal was to

Continued on page 82

BATTLE OF IWO JIMA MILITARY KNIFE



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The climb up Suribachi was fought inch by inch. The Japanese fought from a fortified network of underground bunkers which made gunfire ineffective. The high ground had to be taken using flame throwers and grenades. Finally, on February 23, U.S. forces reached the summit. The raising of the American flag that day provided a lasting impression, inspiring not only the combatants, but also a war-weary nation.

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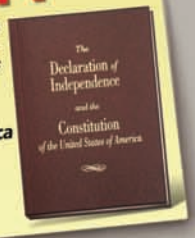

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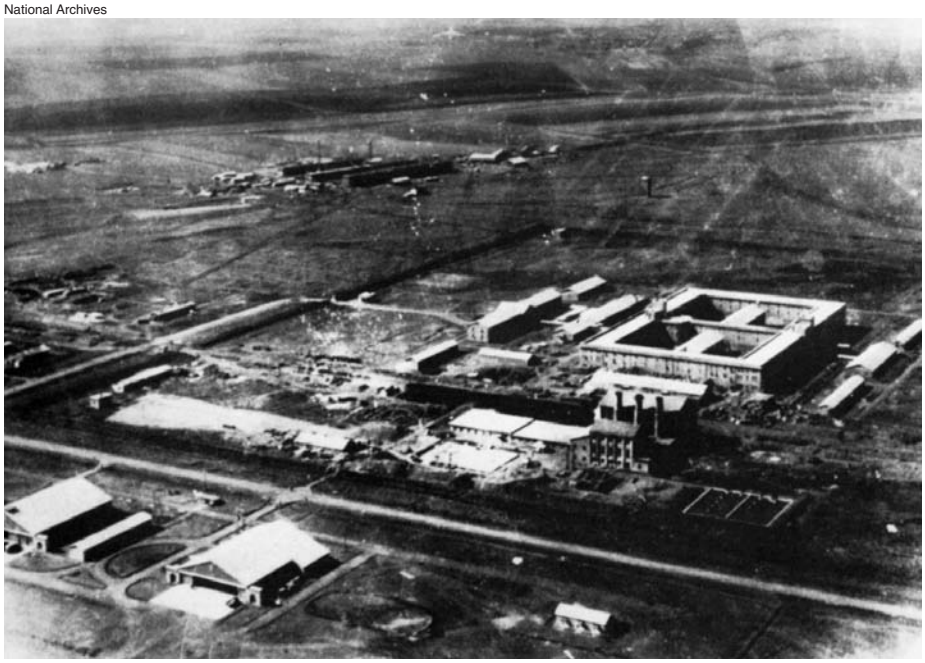

Secret Factories Of Death

Cloaked in secrecy, Japan's biological-warfare group experimented on humans and prepared for mass destruction.

CONFRONTED WITH WAR, SOME MEN SEEM CAPABLE OF ASSUMING ALMOST any evil. Such were the actions of General Shiro Ishii and the men of his Manchuko Unit 731, which developed means of biological warfare in the 1930s and '40s. Ishii was the prime mover in the unit which grew to more than 20,000 during World War II. He was born in the small agricultural village of Kamo in Chiba Prefecture on June 25, 1892. It soon became evident he was talented—and arrogant. Shiro easily overshadowed his three older brothers in their academic training by memorizing whole tomes of work overnight. With his booming voice and measuring a full six feet in height, Shiro was a man clearly destined for greater things.

After graduating from the Medical Department of Kyoto Imperial University in December 1920, the 28-year-old Ishii was looking to make a name for himself as a medical doctor in the Japanese Imperial Army. Within a month of graduating, he began his military training as a probational officer in the Third Regiment of the Imperial Guard Division. His probation would end within five months and on April 9, 1921, he received his commission as Surgeon-First Lieutenant with orders to the Imperial Guard Division.

Almost immediately, he showed more interest in the research side of medicine, which got him transferred to the First Army Hospital in Tokyo in August 1922. Ishii's skill at manipulating senior officers and his bullying and intimidating junior officers came easy to this brilliant and dynamic officer.

It was also at this time that he acquired a reputation as a playboy and a heavy drinker. His sexual interests were in young girls, not older than 15 or 16, whom he found in Tokyo's red light district. By the 1930s, not only did his visits to the Tokyo geisha houses become more common; they also became legendary for the money he spent. How he came by his money is unknown.

In 1924 Ishii's conduct came to the attention of his superior, who ordered him back to Kyoto Imperial University for advanced training. Ishii concentrated on bacteriology, serology, pathology, and preventive medicine. It was while he was doing this research, that he was sent to Japan's Sikoku Island to study a new disease that had developed in the Kagawa district. Over a short period, the disease reached epidemic proportions. It claimed thousands of lives before being recognized and isolated as the Japanese B encephalitis.

Ishii worked hard to locate and isolate this disease by working on a number of water filtration systems, and his subsequent discovery would have far-reaching impact on his later career. After returning to Kyoto in triumph, Ishii became more brazen and bold. He quickly attached himself to many of his professors, including the Kyoto University president himself, Araki Torasabuto. Soon Ishii married Torasabuto's daughter. He then was promoted to captain in 1924 and received his Doctorate in microbiology in 1927.

It was at this time that he began to raise a large family and fall into a routine expected of a rising professional officer. But this still didn't keep him from his nightly visits to the local bars and geisha houses. In addition, he identified increasingly with the goals and aspirations of the ultranationalist officers in the Japanese

Alamy

ABOVE: A pair of Japanese members of Unit 731 conduct an experiment on a helpless prisoner. LEFT: Dr. Shiro Ishii was in charge of operations within Unit 731. TOP LEFT: Japanese Unit 731 was charged with operating a biological-warfare facility Manchurian district of Pingfang .

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Chinese children are being subjected to trials intended to limit the spread of the plague. Many of the terrible experiments conducted by Unit 731 involved the spread of infectious disease.

Army. These junior and mid-level officers espoused anti-Western ideas while championing pro-National Socialist ones.

Employing his connections with this cadre of officers and his university connections, Ishii began a two-year tour of inspections and study overseas in 1928. To this day, it remains a mystery who his wealthy patrons were. But what is known is that upon his return to Japan in 1930, the Japanese High Command was much more amenable to biological warfare than in 1928.

Next Ishii lobbied the Army Medical College to establish a new department, the Department of Immunology, with himself as its chairman. His intention was to make this department the center for biological warfare research. His intense lobbying efforts finally paid off when his motion was approved by the Imperial Japanese Staff.

By August 1932, Ishii had built up enough clout to have himself and a friend posted to Manchuria for approximately a month in search of a site to conduct his human experiments. He found the perfect place in Bei-inho, a small, out-of-the-way village located about a hundred kilometers southeast of Harbin. Ishii had chosen his location well and, within a month's time, Unit 731 was up and running.

In 1936, Unit 731 was reorganized and expanded into the Epidemic Prevention Department of the Kwantung Army (the Ishii Unit). A smaller section (the Nakamatsu Unit) that was concerned with combating animal diseases was set up with the approval of the Kwantung Army at Xinjing. In 1938, a special military zone was declared at Pingfan, 25 kilometers southeast of Harbin, and the local residents were all evicted. Construction of a huge facility for the production of biological weapons began. On August 1, 1936, the Ishii Unit was renamed the Epidemic Prevention and Water Purification Department of the Kwantung Army (a description the very opposite of its real aims), although after 1941 it was more commonly referred to as Manchukuo [Manchuria] Unit 731. Unit 731 was composed of four sections: Research, Experiments, Anti-Epidemic, and Water Purification and Production.

After Unit 731 was established at Pingfan, many faculty members of the military medical schools were sent to Manchuria and became involved in experimenting on humans for the development of biological weapons. In fact, Ishii had started recruiting young, elite medical specialists from various Japanese universities a few years before the establishment of Unit 761. Branch units were set up in Peking, Nanking, Guangdong, and Singapore; these units conducted experiments on weapons developed by Unit 731 and made plans for waging biological warfare within those regions. At this time, newly promoted Colonel Ishii had three thousand staff in Unit 731 and as many as 20,000 staff under his command if all members from the branch units were counted. These figures remained relatively constant until the final year or so of the war, when casualties on the fighting front led to a reduction in all support units' strength.

Unit 731 developed various methods for dispersing biological weapons. One was to introduce toxins into the local water or food supply. Another was by a bomb specifically designed for dispersing pathogens from aircraft. In 1939, when Japanese and Russian forces clashed on the Mongolian-Manchurian border, Ishii's unit used aircraft to drop typhoid-fever pathogen into nearby rivers. Other attempts by aircraft were made in 1940 and 1941 by contaminating cotton and rice husks with the black plague at Changde and Ningbo, in central China. About a hundred people died as a result but to the Japanese, the casualties at both places were insufficient. They then developed a bomb that enabled a more efficient dispersal from greater heights. It wasn't widely used, however, because it was not perfected until close to the end of the war.

Unit 731 regarded fleas as the most useful vector for pathogens, especially the plague. It bred massive numbers of fleas and rats for producing the plague bacillus and tested whether fleas could survive being released from aircraft bombs. The unit also developed anthrax-bacillus bombs, which proved successful because the bacillus is heat resistant. Shrapnel from the bombs carrying the bacillus was highly efficient at infecting those hit by it. The anthrax bomb was tested many times on humans at Anta, 146 kilometers from Pingfan.

It is well known that Unit 731 used large numbers of Chinese for experiments. Many who rebelled against the Japanese occupation were arrested and sent to Pingfan where they became guinea pigs for Unit 731. There is also ample evidence that some Russian and American POWs were also used. The prisoners subjected to experiments were called "maruta" (literally "logs") by the Japanese. Every year, the dreaded Japanese Secret Service with the assistance of the Manchurian civilian police rounded up approximately six hundred maruta to send to Pingfan. When they were being experimented on, the maruta were transferred from the main prison to individual cells where they were infected with particular pathogens either by injections or by being given contaminated food or water. They would then be observed and their symptoms meticulously recorded. Blood and tissue samples were taken. After succumbing to the disease, the prisoners were usually dissected, and their bodies cremated within the compound.

Unit 731 also conducted frostbite experiments on the maruta. Frostbite was a severe problem for the Japanese forces in Manchuria, where the winters are extremely cold. Prisoners were tied up outdoors in temperatures as cold as -20 degrees Celsius and parts of their bodies were sprayed with salt water in order to induce frostbite. Their arms were then hit with hammers to determine how recovery from frostbite could best

be facilitated. In extreme cases, the prisoners' skin and muscles sloughed off in response to this treatment and the victims died immediately. As a result of the experiments, it was found that immersing frostbitten limbs in body-temperature water best facilitated recovery.

Medical scientists, on Ishii's orders, drained the blood from POW's bodies, replacing it with horse and monkey blood (in an effort to create "artificial" bloods). Japanese soldiers tied POWs to stakes and exploded germ bombs overhead, while timing their deaths with stopwatches.

Medical examiners also vivisected live, fully conscious POWs–chaining them to tables, cutting them open and pulling out their organs as whey writhed and screamed in unimaginable agony.

No abomination was indecent enough to halt the heightening fervor of experimentation. Prisoners-of-war and the surrounding population were deemed expendable by the Japanese who believed their loss wouldn't be missed. The use of human guinea pigs was widely known within Japan's medical community, but prompted no ethical outrage.

When the war ended in August 1945, Ishii made arrangements to flee to Japan and to appoint Dr. Ryoichi Naito as liaison to the United States. He subsequently delivered a 12-page, handwritten, chain-of-command accounting of Operation BOEKI KYUSUIBU (Water Purification Unit) that admitted some of its practices and led directly to Japanese Emperor Hirohito.

As Pingfan was being dismantled and destroyed (so large was the production plant in the heyday of Unit 731, it had the potential for creating sufficient bacteria to kill the world's population several times over), Ishii went into hiding with his specimens and research data.

Dr. Ryoichi Naito then contacted Lt. Col. Murray Sanders, a biological warfare specialist on the U.S. Scientific Intelligence Survey. Sanders recommended to Gen. Douglas MacArthur that, in exchange for their data, the Japanese researchers be granted full immunity from prosecution for war crimes.

Sanders wasn't the lone voice for support. Other U.S. scientists supported his recommendation without regard to moral qualms or ethics. Some even suggested lying so as to prevent this information from falling into the wrong hands.

Meanwhile, China and the Soviet Union hounded the United States with requests to interrogate Ishii for war crimes. But on May 6, 1947, MacArthur sent this top secret cable to the U.S. War Department: "Experiments on humans were known. Confirmed by Ishii. If guaranteed immunity from war crimes, he can describe program in detail."

Three months later, on August 1, a combined State, War, Navy, and Coordinating Committee for the Far East report stated: "The value to the U.S. of Japanese biological warfare data is of such importance to 'national security' as to far outweigh the value accruing for 'war crimes' prosecution."

To consummate the "deal," the United States paid the equivalent of 250,000 yen for the excavation of eight thousand slides of human tissues and 60 pages of reports that Ishii had buried in mountainsides and hidden in temples. Returning American POWs were ordered not to discuss their ordeal with anyone.

And what of Ishii? He was a welcome guest at Camp Detrick, Md., where he lectured U.S. scientists and military personnel on the results of his human experimentations. He died in Japan of throat cancer in 1956.

All told, Unit 731 killed 12,000 White Russians, Chinese, Manchurians, and Mongolians in gruesome experiments. Another 200,000 Chinese perished in germ warfare "field experiments," according to Sheldon Harris in *Death Factories*. □

Invasion of Southern France:

TO THE GATE OF MONTÉLIMAR

DURING OPERATION DRAGOON, THE ALLIED INVASION OF SOUTHERN FRANCE, U.S. TASK FORCE BUTLER RACED AGAINST TIME TO CUT OFF THE GERMAN NINETEENTH ARMY.

BY PATRICK J. CHAISSON

"THIS WAS WAR DELUXE," observed Brig. Gen. Frederic B. Butler as his command car entered the French village of Quincon during Operation Dragoon, the Allied invasion of Southern France in August 1944. Jubilant civilians filled the streets of Quincon, tossing flowers, fruit, and bottles of wine to the passing American G.I.s, who had just liberated them from two years of brutal German occupation.

While Butler certainly appreciated their emotional response, he wished these celebrating villagers would clear a path so his tanks and trucks could keep moving forward. A warm August sun had already grown low in the sky, and many miles still separated Butler from his objective for the night.

Things were going well for the general's Provisional Armored Group on this first day of its mission. The weather was excellent, roads adequate, and resistance—save for a few isolated German strongholds—minimal. By dusk, Butler's 3,000 men and 1,000 vehicles had dashed 45 miles behind enemy lines without suffering a single casualty.

Beginning on August 18, 1944, the soldiers of Task Force (TF) Butler made a bold attempt to cut off the retreating German Nineteenth Army in Southern France. These hard-driving combat troops overcame significant challenges of supply, organization, and communications throughout their four-day operation. But were they prepared to meet the dreaded German Mark V Panther tanks that awaited them at a crossroads town named Montélimar?

The idea of a fast-moving exploitation force first came to U.S. VI Corps commander Maj. Gen. Lucian K. Truscott in his Naples headquarters on August 1, 1944. Truscott was then making final preparations to land three American divisions along the French Riviera as part of Operation Anvil (later renamed Dragoon). Those outfits—the 3rd, 36th, and 45th Infantry Divisions—were all largely footmobile. To chase down and destroy a fleeing enemy, VI Corps would require motorized units.

One such formation was already scheduled to land as part of Anvil-Dragoon. This organization, a Free French armored combat command named CC Sudre, had been designated VI Corps' "floating reserve." For political reasons, though, Truscott could not touch it. The gravelly-voiced general feared that French commanders would demand CC Sudre be returned at any moment for their own operations, thus stripping VI Corps of its mechanized spearhead, yet nothing prevented Truscott, an ex-cavalryman, from creating a highly mobile force of his own.

Truscott "planned to constitute a provisional armored group from elements of the [VI] Corps," explained General Butler, then serving as assistant corps commander. "Turning toward me, he added 'And if there is such a force, I want you to command it.'"

American soldiers ride aboard an M8 gun carriage, a modified M5 Stuart light tank equipped with a 75mm howitzer, during the advance into Southern France following the landings of Operation Dragoon in August 1944.

National Archives

Butler, a 47-year-old career soldier, had just been handed an enormous responsibility. He first put these operations and logistics experts to work preparing what he later described as a "detailed map reconnaissance of routes, terrain appreciation, air-ground cooperation, Maquis (French Resistance) liaison, and most pressing of all, a communication plan."

The 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, VI Corps' "eyes and ears," was known as an aggressive, well-armed, and highly mobile combat team. It also possessed an especially robust radio network, onto which Butler superimposed his headquarters. The 117th consisted of three reconnaissance troops (A, B, and C), a self-propelled assault gun troop (E), and a company of light tanks (F). There was no Troop D. Significantly, Troop E had recently traded its M8 75mm assault guns for six new M7 105mm self-propelled howitzers. In command was Lt. Col. Charles J. Hodge.

Attached from the 36th Infantry Division (ID) was Lt. Col. Charles J. Denholm's 2nd Battalion, 143rd Infantry Regiment, its riflemen riding to battle in 2½-ton trucks. Providing armored support were 31 M4 Sherman medium tanks belonging to Lt. Col. Joseph G. Felber's 753rd Tank Battalion (minus Companies A and D), as well as 12 M10 gun motor carriages from Company C, 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion. The 59th Armored Field Artillery (AFA) Battalion, under Lt. Col. Joseph C. McCain, delivered indirect fire support with its 18 M7 howitzers, while Company F, 344th Engineer General Service Regiment, worked to maintain roads, bridges, and river crossing sites. Support units included Company C (Reinforced) 111th Medical Battalion, the 3426th Quartermaster Truck Company, and a detachment of mechanics from the 87th Ordnance Company.

The Provisional Armored Group's organizational structure closely resembled that of an American armored combat command, with one key difference. Unlike a combat command, TF Butler had assigned to it a full cavalry squadron. These reconnaissance troopers, equipped with jeeps and M8 armored cars, could rapidly scout the column's route of advance, secure its flanks, and keep enemy combatants occupied until infantry, armor, and artillery joined the fight. Just as importantly, their reliable FM transceivers were able to keep unit commanders continually updated on the tactical situation.

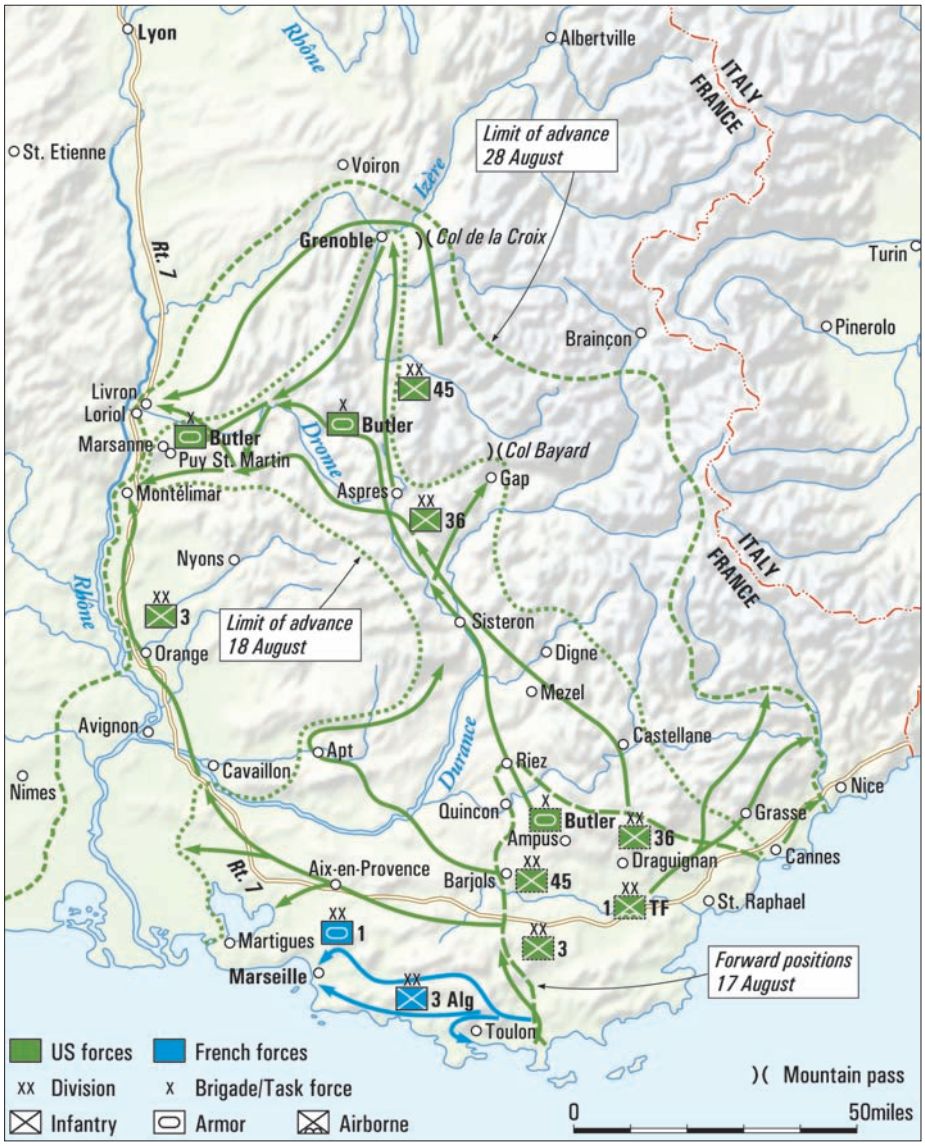
Still unsolved, however, was the issue of long-range communications. Task Force Butler would be operating hundreds of miles from Truscott's headquarters, well beyond the range of any radio in the 117th Cavalry's inventory. A large SCR-299 transmitter was needed, but VI Corps had none to spare. This shortfall later nearly doomed the operation at a most critical time.

The invasion of Southern France took place on August 15, 1944. Allied landing craft put ashore 66,000 soldiers and 6,500 tactical vehicles along a 30-mile stretch of the French Riviera between the cities of Toulon and Cannes. Another 9,000 paratroopers and glider troops were dropped 12 miles inland near the town of Le Muy.

The VI Corps had its beachhead firmly under control by nightfall with casualties numbering less than 500 men killed or wounded. Everyone who participated in the landings, from Maj. Gen. Truscott to the lowest-ranking foot soldier, remarked how easy it all seemed to be. Cartoonist Sergeant Bill Mauldin called Operation Dragoon "the best invasion I ever attended."

Mauldin's viewpoint was not shared by Nazi Germany's supreme leader. "August 15th," noted Adolf Hitler, "was the worst day of my life." Hitler had ample cause to lament. The Allied thrust into Southern France threatened to maroon nearly 300,000 of his soldiers now caught between General Dwight D. Eisenhower's rampaging armies in Normandy and the German frontier. Those troops had to be pulled back before enemy columns advancing from Normandy and the Riviera could close off their last routes of escape.

There was no time to lose. Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (or OKW, the German High Command) directed its forces stationed in Southern France to begin an immediate retreat.



Task Force Butler provided the fast-moving armor-and-infantry spearhead of Operation Dragoon, attempting to cut off large numbers of German troops during their retreat from Southern France.

Bundesarchiv Bild Bild 101I-721-0367-10; Photo: Adolph

From the vantage point of a German gun position near Marseille, the barrel of an 88mm weapon points toward the sea. German forces in Southern France were compelled to retreat quickly following the Allied landings during Operation Dragoon.

Units occupying the port cities of Marseilles and Toulon, however, were told to defend "to the last man." Other outfits could not comply as they had already been wiped out by the Allied invaders.

The man responsible for executing the hazardous withdrawal of the German forces that might actually escape was General Friedrich Wiese, commander of the Nineteenth Army. From his headquarters in Avignon on the Rhône River, Wiese issued orders to the six infantry divisions under his command that were not affected by Hitler's "last man" decree. Two of these divisions, the 148th and 157th, were to head east and seek safety astride the Franco-Italian border. The remaining four—the 189th, 198th, 338th, and 716th, all based west of the Rhône—were to concentrate near Avignon before moving north into Germany.

Wiese's most powerful formation, the 11th Panzer Division, was also available for orders. Led by battle-tested Lt. Gen. Wend von Wietersheim, the "Ghost Division" was then billeted near Toulouse, 200 miles from the Allied landings on the French Riviera. It had been placed there to rest and reconstitute after a three-year tour of duty on the Eastern Front. And while Wietersheim was forced to send most of his Mark IV medium tanks to Normandy earlier that summer, the 11th Panzer Division had in operation 57 Panther tanks mounting superb 75mm main guns and ready to fight alongside the division's veteran panzergrenadier, reconnaissance, and motorized artillery battalions by mid-August.

With invasion imminent, Wietersheim's command set out on August 13 to join the rest of the Nineteenth Army at Avignon. To avoid the attention of prowling Allied fighter-bombers, all movement took place after dark whenever possible. It took the Ghost Division six nights to complete this road march, and another two to ferry its Panthers across the Rhône.

Despite dropped bridges, a crippling fuel shortage, and frequent interference from roving bands of French Resistance fighters, the Nineteenth Army initiated its retreat just as OKW ordered. Additional directives further specified its route of march north along the valley of the Rhône. The 11th Panzer, along with riflemen from the 198th Division, would serve as a powerful rear guard, keeping Allied attackers at a respectful distance from General Wiese's main body.

OKW transmitted its comprehensive withdrawal plans for Nineteenth Army in a series of enciphered radio messages beginning on August 17. Wiese received them about the same time as did a team of British cryptanalysts at Bletchley Park in Buckinghamshire, England. Within hours, these technicians had decoded and sent forward to Southern France all this crucial intelligence. Allied ground commanders now knew every detail of what the foe was doing in response to their amphibious assault.

It was time for Maj. Gen. Truscott to launch the motorized exploitation force he had created for just such a contingency. He summoned Brig. Gen. Butler to his command post at mid-afternoon on the 17th. "You will proceed to Sisteron (a town on the Durance River 90 miles inland)," Truscott directed, "and from there, be prepared to continue north to seize Grenoble or to turn west and seize the high ground north of Montélimar." Lead elements of Task Force Butler would pass through the 36th Infantry Division's front lines at dawn.

Task Force Butler's briefing took place later that evening at an assembly area near Le Muy. It was presented in a standard format familiar to all who attended, even though they had never before worked with one another. General Butler began by outlining their mission. Staff officers then covered coordinating details: routes of movement, fire support priorities, resupply and maintenance matters. Butler closed the conference with a few parting thoughts on speed. He had told General Truscott his unit would reach Sisteron in three days—possibly two—and fully intended to keep that promise.

The region in which TF Butler was to operate measured approximately 6,645 square miles. Bounded in the south by the Mediterranean coast, by the French Maritime Alps to the east, and in the west by the Rhône River, the city of Grenoble marked its northern limit. This so-called "Grenoble Corridor" consisted chiefly of rolling terrain with forests and farmland largely intermixed. Several small to medium watercourses cut the landscape. Of these, the Durance River represented a major

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ABOVE: Resistance fighters of the Maquis walk alongside an M8 armored vehicle as a column of French forces proceeds through the streets of the city of Avignon. The Maquis provided great assistance to Task Force Butler during its operations in Southern France. OPPOSITE: The remnants of a German convoy caught in the open by Allied forces during Operation Dragoon smolder on the outskirts of the town of Montelimar. Over 400 vehicles were destroyed by artillery, mortars and small-arms fire.

impediment to travel if its bridges were down. Good, hard-surfaced roads connected a network of small hamlets and villages. Larger population centers included Digne, Draguignan, Gap, and Montélimar.

Special attention was given to the area around Montélimar. Here the broad Rhône River Valley, squeezed by steep cliffs north of town, narrowed into the Cruas Gorge—better known as the Gate of Montélimar. German military traffic passing through the 10-mile-long "gate" would have less room to maneuver and become far more vulnerable to Allied attacks. If VI Corps could beat the Germans to this chokepoint and somehow manage to block it, Nineteenth Army might well be destroyed in detail.

Butler's infantrymen, tankers, gunners, and cavalry troopers rolled out at 0500 hours on August 18, but managed to advance only a few miles before coming to a sudden stop. His lead echelon had encountered a massive roadblock erected by friendly soldiers. It took 30 minutes of furious effort to clear that barricade and continue the movement north.

Troop C, meanwhile, scouted the road network on TF Butler's right (eastern) flank. As 2nd Lt. Joseph L. Syms' 3rd Platoon approached a hamlet known as Aups, it took heavy fire from the mouth of a nearby grotto. While an attached M5A1 light tank returned fire, Syms' recon men dismounted to flank the enemy strongpoint. Sergeant Robert C. Lutz saw three German officers with a white flag approach his position. Their commander wished to give up, they said, but only to an American officer. Lieutenant Syms then came forward to accept the surrender of LXII Corps commander Lt. Gen. Ferdinand Neuling and his entire 400-man staff.

"We uncovered a lot of papers and maps showing the area and its defenses," Syms recalled. His troopers also seized "cognac, cameras, five civilian cars, Luger pistols, [and] tins of cigarettes." Neuling was taken to the town square in Draguignan, where Butler found him under guard and "seated on a park bench having a nice, quiet, dignified weep."

After ordering the despondent Neuling back to a VI Corps POW cage, Brig. Gen. Butler called for a situation update. Reports from the west indicated heavy fighting in the road hub of Barjols, where Troop A's 3rd Platoon was pinned down by enemy infantry and self-propelled guns. Outnumbered, the cavalrymen wisely withdrew to safer ground. A rifle battalion from the 45th Infantry Division relieved them later that day.

Meanwhile, Butler's main body began to pick up speed. Major Harold J. Samsel, the 117th Cavalry's operations officer, described their progress: "The French civilians were delirious with joy as town after town was liberated. Their genuine welcome and high enthusiasm was a sight to behold. Older people wept unashamedly with tears of joy. The younger men and women showered the American liberators with wine, melons, fruits, and other gifts."

Now making their presence known were the Maquis, resistance fighters belonging to the Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur (FFI). Lightly armed but courageous beyond measure, these irregulars time after time proved their worth as guides, ad-hoc infantry, and sources of intelligence. "Without the Maquis," General Butler reflected, "our mission would have been far more difficult, if indeed not possible."

The 59th AFA put aloft two Stinson L-5 spotter planes, flown by Lieutenants Robert R. Freeman and Edward J. Ingram, as aerial reconnaissance scouts to locate obstacles and enemy troop concentrations. Butler recalled how each pilot "would buzz a road and give his report to the advance echelon commander who then could sweep on if an 'all clear' was the report or act with swiftness where trouble existed."

Observation aircraft did discover one trouble spot south of Quincon, where the Verdon River bridge had been blown. As Butler's men watched in amazement, hundreds of Maquisards and local townspeople quickly gathered to construct a ford by placing flagstones flat across the river bed. The Americans continued on to reach their destination at Riez by 1800 hours.

While combat troops and their Maquis auxiliaries set up defensive positions, logistics personnel pushed forward with badly-needed fuel (task force vehicles consumed 15,000 gallons of gasoline per day). Having already advanced out of radio range with VI Corps headquarters, General Butler sent a courier bearing situation reports back by jeep. He also held a late-night meeting with his subordinate commanders and resistance leaders to issue coordinating instructions for the next day's advance.

French operatives reported a Wehrmacht battalion at Digne, on Butler's right flank. These soldiers represented a serious threat to the column's line of communications and supply, so at first light, Troop B, augmented by FFI fighters, light tanks, and M7 assault guns, headed out across mountainous terrain for a 15-mile ride to their objective.

At Mezel, a small commune eight miles outside of town, German snipers delayed the Allied advance for two hours. Dismounted American scouts eventually managed to enter Digne, but they hurriedly fell back under a flurry of small-arms and machine-gun fire. A second attack by the Maquis also failed. Digne's 650-man garrison capitulated only after reinforcements, a company each of medium tanks and motorized infantry, added their weight to a late-afternoon assault.

In the meantime, Butler's main body—pre-

ceded by Troop A and their "eyes in the sky"—struck out for Sisteron. By now, his tanks and trucks were advancing by bounds, dashing from cover to cover once fast-moving reconnaissance elements cleared the route. This saved both time and fuel, but it did not prevent two U.S. warplanes from inadvertently strafing the column, despite a display of yellow smoke meant as a recognition signal. Tragically, 13 men and three vehicles were lost in this friendly-fire incident.

Crossing the Durance River over a bomb-damaged bridge at La Brillane, Troop A reached its day's objective—Sisteron—by 1800 hours. Following closely behind was the rest of TF Butler, with the 753rd Tank Battalion's Lt. Col. Felber in tactical control. Those elements involved in the action at Digne came up later that night to rearm and refuel before joining the outpost line.

General Butler had achieved the first phase of his mission ahead of schedule and with minimal losses, yet many fresh concerns occupied his mind. He had run off his maps, and while civilian roadmaps might suffice for cavalry and armor, they were wholly unsatisfactory for precision artillery fire missions. Also, his truck drivers now faced a 125-mile drive to reach the nearest supply dumps.

Worst of all, General Butler still could not talk with higher headquarters. At dusk, a liaison aircraft from VI Corps landed, its pilot delivering a brusquely-worded message written by Maj. Gen. Truscott the night before demanding that he speed up. Recognizing his boss was operating with outdated information, he ignored the note. The communications situation improved when a long-range SCR-299 radio finally arrived at Sisteron later that evening. Skilled signalmen promptly installed it, and in no time the Provisional Armored Group was transmitting regular situation reports back to headquarters.

What Butler really needed, though, were orders from Truscott telling him to either keep driving north on Grenoble or turn west toward Montélimar. At 0500 hours on August 20, he sent his operations officer, Major Kermit R. Hansen, back in the corps liaison plane to get those orders, but the radio remained silent all day, and there was no sign of Hansen.

Now operating 100 miles behind enemy lines, the Provisional Armored Group was exposed to attack from any direction. After sunrise, General Butler redeployed his main force to more defensible ground near a crossroads town named Aspres. Acting on the counsel of Maquis advisors, he also sent two reinforced cavalry troops into a pair of key mountain passes. Troop C took the Col de la Croix Haute north of Aspres, while Troop A headed northeast toward Col Bayard. Before Troop A could occupy Bayard Pass, however, it would first have to clear the town of Gap. Ominously, the FFI said, Gap was held by 1,000 Germans, a threat that could not stand unchallenged.

Troop A, under Captain Thomas C. Piddlington, reached the edge of town at 1600 hours. Accompanying the recon men were about 100 maquisards and a light tank platoon, as well as two 105mm assault guns from Troop E. Also along was Troop E's commander, Captain Omer F. Brown, who the day before had glibly talked some enemy riflemen at Ampus into laying down their arms without needless bloodshed.

Displaying a flag of truce, Brown jeeped into Gap to parley with its garrison commander. He brazenly declared that Allied soldiers had the town completely surrounded, and that 60 Boe-

Meanwhile, the 13,000 residents of Gap celebrated their liberation in fine style. General Butler, who witnessed this jubilee himself, said the population **"literally had gone mad"** with joy. He could not share in their exuberance, however. The French resistance reported another 1,000 German soldiers advancing from Grenoble, 50 miles to the north.

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ing B-17 Flying Fortress heavy bombers were even then en route to carpet-bomb it. The German officer remained unconvinced, so Brown returned to Troop A's command post determined to further persuade his foe with some high-explosive diplomacy.

The captain ordered his assault guns to fire a 40-round barrage targeting a large radio tower set up on a hilltop south of town. Their first salvo topped the antenna, which brought out a flurry of white surrender flags. Brown's bluff worked, and the Americans and the Maquis moved in to seize Gap by 1830 hours.

Once in town, Piddlington and the 130 men under his command discovered they had just captured 1,100 enemy troops. Many of these men were conscripted Poles, happy to be finally released from duty with the Wehrmacht. The G.I.s, anxious to continue on toward Col Bayard, simply deputized their Polish POWs as impromptu prison guards and sent the lot marching back to Aspres.

Meanwhile, the 13,000 residents of Gap celebrated their liberation in fine style. General Butler, who witnessed this jubilee himself, said the population "literally had gone mad" with joy. He could not share in their exuberance, however. The ever-reliable FFI reported another 1,000 German soldiers advancing from Grenoble, 50 miles to the north. Troop A would need help to halt them, so later that evening, a detachment of motorized infantry and medium tanks went forward to reinforce Bayard Pass.

Butler's task force found itself dispersed all across the Sisteron-Aspres-Gap region, deep in no-man's land and still without orders. Hard-driving supply personnel somehow managed to rush forward ammunition, rations, and especially fuel, but communications remained a problem. The big SCR-299 radio was working only intermittently, and Major Hansen had returned from VI Corps HQ empty handed.

Nevertheless, things were beginning to develop. That night, Butler encountered the 36th Division's assistant commander, Brig. Gen. Robert I. Stack, who told him a relief column was on its way to Sisteron. Truscott, now informed of the bigger picture by highly classified ULTRA intelligence intercepts, finally decided where to send his Provisional Armored Group.

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American infantrymen await orders along a street in the French town Puy St. Martin where heavy fighting destroyed German armor and pushed back retreating German infantry.

At 0400 hours the next morning, VI Corps operations officer Colonel Theodore J. Conway arrived at General Butler's command post with orders directing him to "move at first light 21 August with all possible speed to Montélimar. Block enemy routes of withdrawal up the Rhône valley in that vicinity. The 36th Division follows you." Furthermore, Truscott wanted his lead elements to arrive there before nightfall.

These instructions required American tanks, trucks, and howitzers to rapidly conduct a treacherous long-distance road march through hostile territory. "The route," Butler remembered, "lay over a formidable mountain range with a twisty road cut into the side of the cliffs. Movement off the road would have been impossible. Our path could have been blocked in any one of scores of places, but no enemy action developed, nor had demolitions been emplaced."

Troop B, under Captain John L. Wood, took the lead. By mid-afternoon, his men and vehicles had traveled nearly 90 miles to the outskirts of Montélimar. After dismounted scouts determined the town was too well defended for a hasty attack to succeed, Wood set up an outpost line and reported back to General Butler.

Next to deploy was Captain William E. Nugent's Troop C, which followed the Drôme River to its confluence with the Rhône north of Montélimar. Near the village of Livron, Nugent's troopers cut Route 7, the Nineteenth Army's main avenue of retreat. The 2nd Platoon attacked a German supply column trying to ford the Drôme, while 1st Platoon raced north on Route 7 to overtake another enemy convoy. Troop C's rampaging gun jeeps, light tanks, and armored cars destroyed at least 50 cargo trucks before a series of heavy counterattacks pushed them off the road at sunset.

As American combat forces approached the Rhône Valley, an abundance of lucrative targets greeted them. From three heavily-forested hilltops near Condillac, designated Hills 294, 300, and 430 for their elevation in meters, artillery spotters could cover a 15-mile stretch of highway overflowing with enemy foot soldiers and motor vehicles all fleeing the Allied advance. Butler's tanks, set up along the mountain pass at la Coucourde, were even shooting at German planes operating from a nearby airfield.

Truscott's "Cannae-like" exploitation maneuver had worked. Yet, as General Butler observed, "There is a vast difference between getting an advance guard of light, fast-moving armor into an enemy stronghold, and having a stranglehold on that enemy." Could his small, thinly-spread command hold on until help arrived?

On August 22, TF Butler established itself in a 225-square mile "battle square" bordered by the Rhône River on its west edge, the Drôme in the north, and to the south by a small westward-flowing watercourse called the Rouibon. Enemy forces held Montélimar in the square's southwestern corner, as well as two villages—Livron and Loriol—overlooking the mouth of the Drôme 15 miles northward. In between, all along the Gate of Montélimar, German and U.S. foot soldiers grappled for control of Hills 294, 300, and 430.

From those wooded heights, forward observers serving with Lt. Col. Joseph

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ABOVE: An American soldier looks at the body of a dead German soldier killed in action in Southern France and unceremoniously thrown into the back of a truck outside Loriol, north of Montélimar. RIGHT: Townspeople line the streets of Montélimar to jeer at German snipers who had been flushed out of hiding and taken prisoner.

McCain's 59th AFA saw before them "the dream of an artilleryman's lifetime." Hundreds of hapless horse-drawn wagons, bicycle troops, military motor transport, and commandeered French vehicles of every description clogged the roadways, easy targets for American 105mm howitzers. The 59th's Stinsons, now employed in their intended role as aerial artillery spotters, directed fire onto a pair of northbound trains caught moving along the east bank of Cruas Gorge. Both trains, each carrying huge railroad cannon, were knocked out in short order.

All this sustained shooting left artillery ammunition stocks at dangerously low levels: 25 rounds per gun in most cases. Supply trucks were already on their way back to the beach for more, but that journey now totaled 470 miles round-trip. McCain had to forbid his gunners from firing after dark, making them conserve their precious munitions for the most dangerous targets.

One such threat was already making its presence known in the Montélimar battle square. Well-armed reconnaissance scouts from Lt. Gen. Wietersheim's Ghost Division had on August 22 started to feel their way east along the Rouibon River. These soldiers, reinforced by five Panther tanks, tangled with Troop A near Cleon in mid-afternoon. Marauding Panthers quickly surrounded 3rd Platoon, forcing the men of Sergeant Mike Aun's section to abandon their armored cars and escape on foot. The Germans then turned north, heading directly for General Butler's headquarters at Marsanne.

Captain Piddlington, Troop A's commander, was at that moment on his way back from Col Bayard with a column of armor and truck-borne infantry in tow. Mountainous terrain hindered FM radio communications, so one of the indispensable Stinsons dropped Piddlington a note of warning. He promptly deployed his outfit into battle formation and counterattacked.

In what Butler described as a "movie finish," the two sides met in a fierce clash of arms near Puy St. Martin. "The German tanks which had crossed the Rouibon were destroyed," he wrote, "the infantry were driven back and … several fires burned merrily where our guns had found trucks and light vehicles."

Task Force Butler's first duel with the 11th Panzer had ended in a victory for the overextended Americans. There was more good news: at 2200 hours, the 2nd Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment entered the battle square. These riflemen were the first of many 36th Division's reinforcements to reach Montélimar. Two 155mm-equipped artillery battalions also came forward that night to provide additional long-range fire.

At 0900 hours on August 23, the commander of the 36th Division, Maj. Gen. John E. Dahlquist, arrived on the scene. This signified the end of General Butler's mission, although Dahlquist asked him to remain in charge for the time being. By 1500 hours, though, the 36th had taken control of combat operations. One of Dahlquist's first acts was to dissolve TF Butler and attach its units to his own command.

The fighting near Montélimar would go on for another six days. At no time during this week-long battle did U.S. forces ever completely cut Nineteenth Army's route of withdrawal. There were simply too many Germans and not enough Allied soldiers on the battlefield to fully accomplish Maj. Gen. Truscott's grand vision. The Cruas Gorge was also just beyond range of friendly fighter-bombers, while chronic shortages of artillery ammunition, fuel, and trucks to carry those supplies considerably hampered VI Corps' attempt to crush the retreating enemy.

Due in large part to the 11th Panzer's well-executed delaying action, the Nineteenth Army extricated nearly 138,000 troops from the Allied trap at Montélimar. It did, however, have to abandon huge stockpiles of materiel and ordnance. In addition, thousands of irreplaceable cargo trucks, tactical vehicles, and artillery pieces had been smashed while trying to pass through the Cruas Gorge. These losses greatly diminished the combat power of Gen. Wiese's army as it limped its way toward the German border.

In August 1944, a small but daring mounted command under Brig. Gen. Frederic Butler advanced 235 miles, captured 3,500 German prisoners, and liberated dozens of communities in Southern France during its four-day mission. Task Force Butler then won the race to Montélimar and contributed to the near-annihilation of an entire enemy field army. It is with good reason, then, that this epic gallop through Southern France has been characterized as "one of the most colorful and dashing ventures of the entire war."

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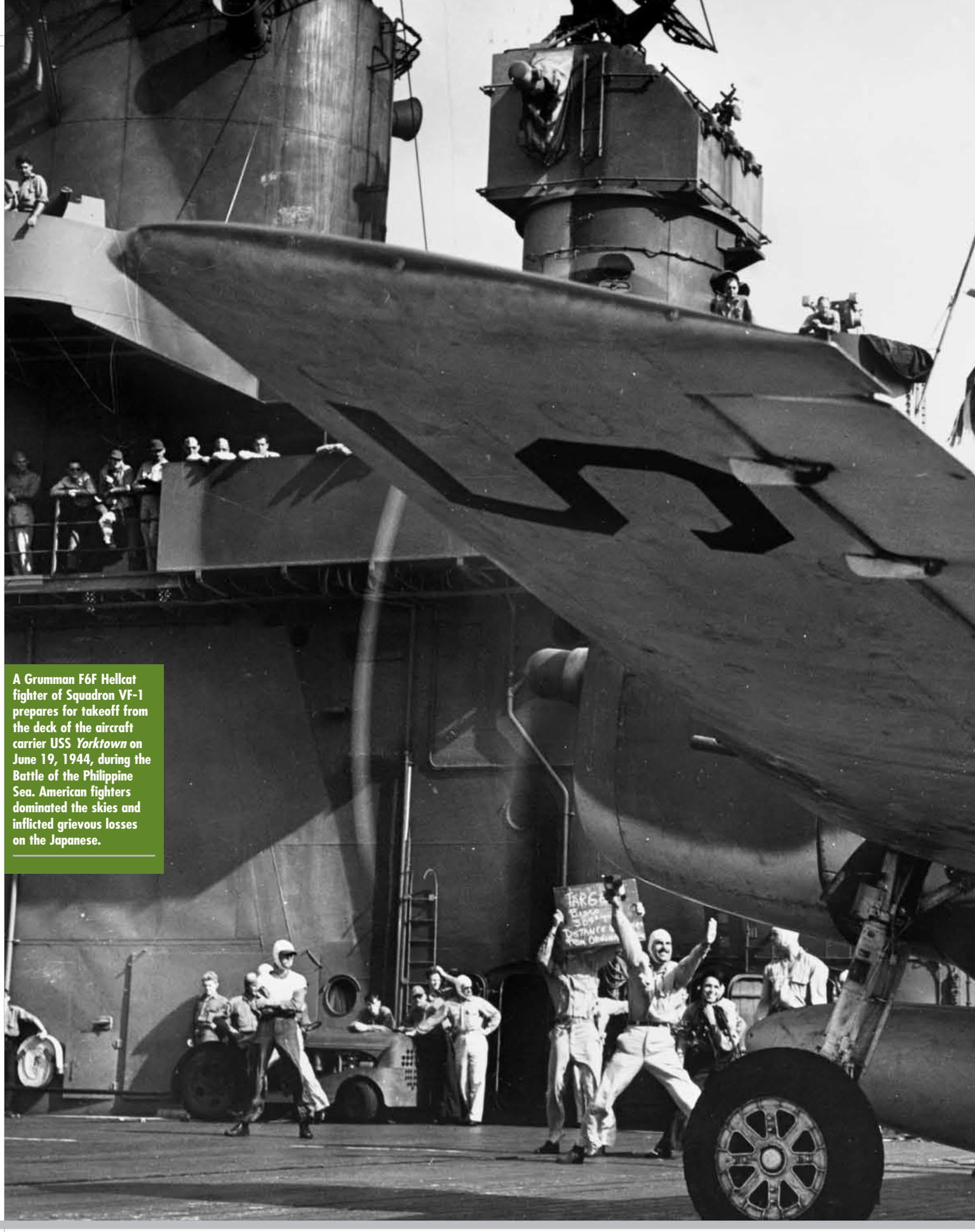

A Grumman F6F Hellcat fighter of Squadron VF-1 prepares for takeoff from the deck of the aircraft carrier USS *Yorktown* on June 19, 1944, during the Battle of the Philippine Sea. American fighters dominated the skies and inflicted grievous losses on the Japanese.

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The Setting Sun

The desperate Japanese gamble at the Battle of the Philippine Sea was doomed from the start as American carrier-based fighters decimated enemy air power during the Great Marianas Turkey Shoot.

BY DAVID H. LIPPMANN

Once again, the Japanese regarded an upcoming naval engagement as the "decisive battle," but it had been two years since her aircraft carriers and battleships had emerged from their Inland Sea lairs to menace the United States Navy. Many of the legendary aircraft carriers and highly-trained aviators that had struck the blows at Pearl Harbor and other early battles were in watery graves, and their replacements were new warships fresh off the production line and poorly trained crews and airmen. Most importantly, thanks to the increasingly effective American submarine campaign, Japan's economy and Navy were choking for lack of oil.

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The deck of the Japanese aircraft carrier *Shokaku* is crowded with aircraft in this 1942 image, during the period when Japanese naval air power was at its zenith. Among the planes in the photo are several Mitsubishi A6M2 Zero fighters.

None of this mattered to Admiral Soemu Toyoda, the commander-in-chief of the Combined Fleet. By June 1944, the Japanese outlook was looking increasingly bleak to its most senior officers. British troops had broken the sieges at Imphal and Kohima, the Chinese front was an unending quagmire, and now the Americans were aiming a steel fist at the Mariana Islands, the chief punch of which was 15 aircraft carriers, seven modern battleships, and three Marine divisions.

According to Japanese naval strategy as far back as the 1930s, the Marianas chain was where the decisive battle between the emperor's ships and the American fleet would take place; but those prewar plans, calling for battleships slugging it out in a fire-away-Flanagan shootout, had been erased by the dominance of the aircraft carrier and submarine. A new idea was needed, and Toyoda had one: commit the Imperial Navy's best ships, organized into the 1st Mobile Fleet under 57-year-old top airman Vice Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa, to a major fleet engagement, the *A-Go Plan*.

To solve their oil problem, the Japanese massed these ships at Borneo's Tawi Tawi anchorage, close to the Borneo oilfields. But Tawi Tawi was heavily surveilled by American submarines, which reported the Japanese fleet massing there. This assembly of Japanese ships alerted the U.S. Pacific Fleet but did not prevent Vice Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, commanding the U.S. Fifth Fleet, from heading for the first Mariana island to be invaded, Saipan, and treating it to heavy air and gun bombardment before sending the Marines ashore to invade the island on June 15.

The Japanese were already coming. On June 11, Ozawa took his ships to sea. It was a colorful force: the two most powerful battleships in the world, *Yamato* and *Musashi*, packing 18-inch guns; the fleet carriers *Shokaku* and *Zuikaku*, which had delivered the first blows at Pearl Harbor; the light carriers *Hiyo* and *Junyo*, which were converted liners; the light carriers *Chitose* and *Chiyoda*, converted from seaplane tenders; and the new carrier *Taiho*, which incorporated everything the Japanese had learned from the damage-control failures that had resulted in their carriers being sunk at Midway two years before.

On June 15, the submarine USS *Flying Fish* spotted them on the move and reported it. Spruance prepped for naval battle.

Unlike at Midway, Spruance would have vast advantages: 15 carriers to Ozawa's nine; seven battleships to Japan's five; 21 cruisers to Ozawa's 13, and 69 destroyers to Ozawa's 28. More importantly, the Americans had 891 planes on their carrier decks to Ozawa's 430. Ozawa had one other trump card, though: 400 land-based planes at islands including Iwo Jima and Saipan, which could tip the scales of the battle.

Despite its weaknesses in training, fuel, and equipment, Ozawa was going to sea with the most powerful force Japan would ever deploy on an ocean—50 percent larger than the force that had attacked Pearl Harbor—headed by *Taiho*, a well-constructed ship with an armored flight deck and anti-torpedo blister. Everyone believed victory was assured, from the pilots, who believed their aircraft would shatter the American fleet, to Admiral Matome Ugaki, commanding the battleships, who wrote in his diary, "Can it be that we'll fail to win with this mighty force? No! It can't be!"

The American naval aviators considered themselves, justifiably, a military elite. Their number included future president George H.W. Bush, then serving on the light carrier USS *San Jacinto*. They were rigorously trained for up to

two years in the United States by veteran combat aviators who shared their experiences, and they practiced carrier takeoffs and landings—one of the most difficult tasks a naval aviator faced—on two paddle-wheeled, coal-powered cruise liners that had been turned into immense training carriers. Few of them had seen actual battle; only the aviators of USS *Enterprise*, which had experienced three such engagements, had done so.

Despite their combat inexperience, they had massive advantages over the Japanese beyond mere numbers. The legendary Japanese Mitsubishi A6M Zero, once the terror of the skies, was now inferior to American F6F Hellcat fighters. The American TBM Avenger torpedo bomber was more than a match for the new Japanese Nakajima 6N Jill torpedo bomber, as well. The rugged and veteran SBD Dauntless dive bomber was superior to Japan's Yokusuka D4Y Judy.

As the Japanese advanced, they immediately ran into trouble. American submarines homed in on the 1st Mobile Fleet, and their torpedoes crippled two supply ships and sank a destroyer. The Japanese sent submarines ahead of the battle force to scout the Americans, and U.S. destroyers, intercepting their radio transmissions, sank 17 of them. The destroyer escort *England* alone sank six Japanese submarines in 13 days.

As Ozawa headed east, so did Spruance. While Marines struggled on Saipan's shores, Japanese and American reconnaissance planes flew across the ocean south of Iwo Jima, looking for each others' fleets.

During this long wait, Spruance paced the deck of his flagship, *Indianapolis*, pondering his situation. It seemed to him that Ozawa was merely probing, hoping to lure the Americans to a position west of Saipan so that they could do a flanking end-run around the carriers and hit the amphibious forces offshore. Spruance realized he could not shove off without leaving the Marines ashore in jeopardy, a lesson learned at Guadalcanal in 1942, when the early departure of U.S. transports and their unloaded supplies nearly doomed the invading Marines.

Spruance decided that he would use the strategy of Togo before Tsushima: of wait for the Japanese to attack him, relying on his technological advantages— radar, fighter direction, superior guns, and aircraft—as well as his superior numbers to defeat them. He told the commander of his carrier forces, Vice Admiral Marc "Pete" Mitscher, and the commander of his battle line, Vice Admiral Willis "Ching Chong China" Lee, that while they would be in command of their own groups, Spruance would hold them on a short leash. In the meantime, Spruance wanted both forces to continue to support the assault on Saipan and bomb Japanese airbases on Guam and Tinian.

The fleet would stay close to Saipan and let the Japanese come to them. Once they did, Spruance ordered, "Our air will first knock out enemy carriers, then will attack enemy battleships and cruisers. Battle line will destroy enemy fleet either by fleet action if the enemy elects to fight or by sinking slowed or crippled ships if the enemy retreats. Action against the retreating enemy must be pushed vigorously by all hands to ensure complete destruction of his fleet."

Mitscher was not happy. A carrier veteran, he was eager to strike first, as were most of his officers. Regarding Spruance as a battleship admiral out of his league, they urged Mitscher to dispute the decision.

On the other hand, Lee was ready: given the order "Form battle line," he did so with alacrity, but had a different worry. From his experience with leading battleships into action against the Japanese off Guadalcanal, he knew they were ferocious night fighters. Worse, some of his battleships and cruisers had fairly new crews and were still inexperienced in handling night actions. He signaled Mitscher: "Do not (repeat not) believe we should seek night engagement. Possible advantages in radar more than offset by difficulties of communications and lack of training in fleet tactics at night. Would press pursuit of damaged or fleeing enemy, however, at any time."

On the evening of June 18, American codebreakers deciphered a fresh message from Ozawa to his air bases in the Marianas, and direction finders located the 1st Mobile Fleet 355 miles west-southwest of Spruance's ships. Mitscher proposed to Spruance that they head

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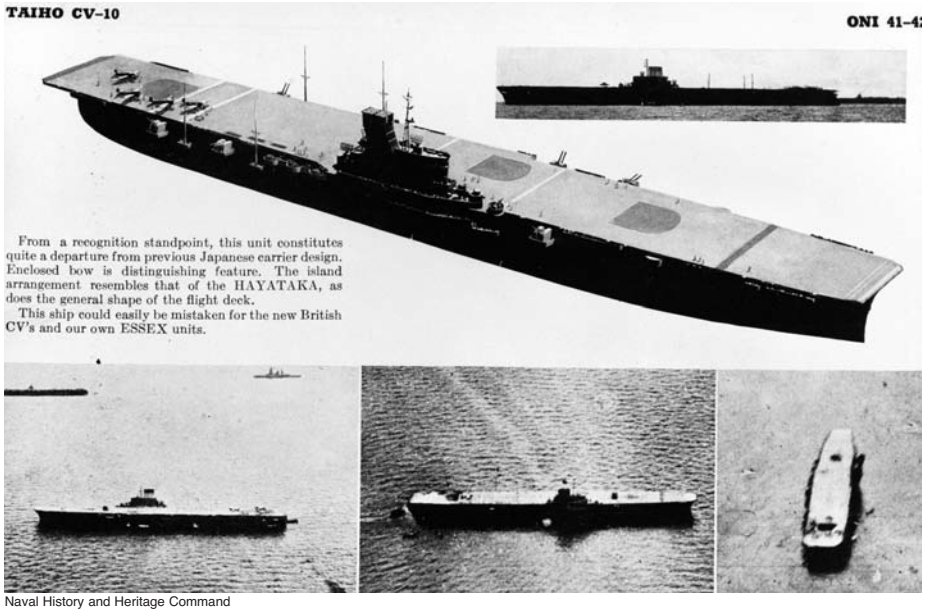
ABOVE: The Japanese super battleship *Yamato* is shown during sea trials in October 1941. The *Yamato*'s sister *Musashi* was sunk by American aircraft during the battle. BELOW: This American recognition document was distributed to naval personnel to assist in recognizing the new Japanese aircraft carrier *Taiho*.



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ABOVE: During early action in the battle, a Japanese bomb explodes close to the American aircraft carrier *Bunker Hill*. OPPOSITE: A Japanese bomb narrowly misses the U.S. aircraft carrier *Bunker Hill* on June 19.

west at 1:30 AM and put Task Force 58 in position to attack Ozawa at dawn. For an hour, Spruance pondered the situation with his staff. The situation was made confused by a report from the submarine *Stingray* that the Japanese were further south and east, which could have been the flanking force. Finally, Spruance signaled Mitscher: "Change proposed does not appear advisable ... end run by other carrier groups remains possibility and should not be overlooked."

On Mitscher's flagship, the carrier *Lexington*, Mitscher's staff exploded, demanding that he go over Spruance's head and have him relieved. A *Yorktown* officer diaried: "The Navy brass turned yellow: no fight, no guts … Spruance branded every man in TF-58 a coward tonight. I hope historians fry him in oil."

An utterly calm Spruance, however, went to bed after giving his orders. In Task Force 58's hangar decks, airmen stowed bombs and torpedoes, while readying fighters for the morning.

At 3 AM on June 19, boatswain's whistles, Marine bugle calls, gongs, buzzers, and 1MC (shipboard public-address system) announcements on the American ships ordered the crews to general quarters. Sailors dogged hatches to set "Condition Z," secured battle shutters over portholes, and donned Mae West life vests and tin hats as the sun rose to commence a day of east winds, mild seas, and clear skies, granting no cover from Japanese aircraft.

Sailing 158 miles west-southwest of Saipan, Task Force 58 was divided into three carrier forces and their escorts, with the battle line arrayed astern to shield the flight decks from surface attack from the west with their 16-inch guns or air attack with their 40mm and 20mm guns.

On the opposite side, Ozawa had to rely on his reconnaissance planes to spot the American fleet, which they did on the 18th, as they had longer range than American search planes. Moving up to attack, Ozawa put his light carriers, *Chitose*, *Chiyoda*, and *Zuiho* forward into the van group along with *Yamato* and *Musashi*, while keeping the six heavier carriers behind in the main group. This was standard Japanese tactics since Pearl Harbor, an intricate naval ballet that used a decoy force to lure in the main American air strength while a main force pulverized the American fleet.

By 4:15 AM on the 19th, Ozawa was ready to hurl more than 300 planes at the Americans, who still did not know Ozawa's position. Tactically, it was the opposite of the Battle of Midway, where the Americans had a small force compared to the Japanese but the Japanese did not know where they were. This time the Americans had an overwhelming force but did not know where the Japanese were. But there was one critical similarity: the American commander Raymond Spruance.

As the sun rose, the U.S. Fifth Fleet steamed eastward into the wind to enable carriers to launch planes, periodically zigzagging back to stay on top of Saipan. At 10:23 AM, Spruance suggested to Mitscher that if no enemy ships turned up, he could attack Japanese bases on Rota and Guam, as Ozawa was likely to send his planes there to rearm, refuel, and attack the Fifth Fleet.

Meanwhile, Mitscher launched his fighters on sweeps and combat air patrols over Guam and met land-based planes taking off to attack Task Force 58. American fighters accounted for 30 fighters and five bombers there.

At 4:45 AM, Ozawa began launching 30 search planes, and one of them picked out Mitscher's ships at 7:15 AM. Seven others were shot down by Mitscher's combat air patrol.

Nonetheless, Ozawa got moving. His first raid—*Raid One* to the Americans—launched at 8:30 AM from the van force, consisting of 45 Zeros configured as bombers, eight Jill torpedo planes, and 16 Zero fighters for cover. It numbered 69 planes in all.

At 10:05 am, the battleship *Alabama*'s radar registered the incoming strike at 125 miles west, 24,000 feet or higher. Ozawa's strike force had arrived right on time. All ships that had not done so went to general quarters. Among the sailors who raced to his station on *Alabama* was the gun captain of a 40mm antiaircraft gun named Robert Feller. In peacetime, he was one of the greatest pitchers in the history of Major League baseball. He could have stayed on shore, playing for Navy teams to boost morale, but he asked for and got sea duty to avoid an appearance of favoritism for star athletes.

Mitscher began launching his reserve fighter aircraft and summoned his fighters back from Guam with the signal, "Hey, Rube!" The message was the old circus cry for help. Fighter pilots leaped from the chairs in their ready rooms, gulped coffee, and ran onto their flight decks, jumping into the first available F6F Hellcat fighter. Without stopping to rendezvous, they headed west, vectored in by American fighter directors headed by Lieutenant Joe Eggert.

When the Japanese closed to 72 miles, they began to orbit as their group commanders had ordered, which took 15 minutes. Fighting 15 from *Essex* commanded by Commander Charles W. Brewer, was first in. Like many of his teammates, he yelled, "Tally Ho!" into his radio when he had a visual sighting of the enemy.

The Hellcats bounced the Japanese and broke apart their neat formation. Brewer pursued the formation leader and opened fire at 800 feet, exploding the Zero. He flew through the burning wreckage and shot up another Zeke, snapping off the enemy's wing. The Zero plunged, flaming, into the sea. Brewer hit another Zero with a no-deflection shot at 400 feet, and it too fell, burning, into the sea. At

that moment, Brewer saw a Zero diving on him. Brewer pulled his plane around, got into a hot fight with the Zero, finally got on his tail, and snapped short bursts on him. The Zero pilot tried some half-rolls, barrel rolls, and wingovers, but they were not enough. The plane caught fire and spiraled into the ocean, a four-for-four day for Brewer.

More fighters of squadron VF-25 from the carrier *Cowpens* swooped in, joined by planes from *Hornet*, *Princeton*, and *Cabot*, as well as *Monterrey*, whose assistant navigator was future president Gerald R. Ford. The American planes worked over the Japanese with brutal efficiency. In the perfect sky, planes spewed contrails behind them, and Ernest Snowden, the leader of *Lexington*'s fighter group, thought it was just like the commercial skywriting he had seen before the war.

Onboard *Lexington*, Lieutenant Alex Vraciu, a Chicago-born ace who at that point had 12 kills to his credit, hopped into an older F6F, and the plane's engine splattered oil into his windshield, obscuring his vision. To make matters worse, the radio circuits were jammed with idle chatter and instructions that should have been given in the ready rooms.

Vraciu peered through his oil-covered canopy and saw many hostile planes on an opposite course, thousands of feet below him, but lacked targets for the moment (his buddies were doing too good of a job).

Down below, Mitscher launched his torpedo and dive bombers to keep them away from the engagement. Now the survivors of Raid One's 69 planes approached the American battleships and carriers. Six had been lost at sea in the long overwater flights, others had gotten lost and flown to Guam, and most had been shot down in the dogfights.

The battleships were drawn up in a circle with *Indiana* acting as a formation guide in the center. Lee himself ran the operation from his usual flagship, *Washington*.

The surviving bombers headed for the battleship *South Dakota*, which had enjoyed a mixed record in the war. She had fought with great valor at Santa Cruz, the Second Naval Battle of Guadalcanal, and other battles, but crews of other warships regarded her as a seagoing menace to their own side, as she seemed to bring bad luck wherever she went. At the height of Second Guadalcanal, for example, she suffered an electrical power failure from overloaded circuits, which rendered her useless and a danger to the other American vessels. One of her lieutenants was young Sargent Shriver, who would marry Eunice Kennedy, John F. Kennedy's sister, and become first director of the Peace Corps in 1961.

Japanese planes swung down on *South Dakota* and her escorts, giving Seaman James J. Fahey on the light cruiser *Montpelier* his first up-close and personal look at an enemy air attack. He wrote in his diary, "Jap planes were falling all around us, and the sky was full of bursting shells. Big puffs of smoke could be seen everywhere … Bombs were falling very close to the ships, big sprays of water could be seen, and Jap planes splashing into the water."

American antiaircraft guns, including Bob Feller's 40mm mount on *Alabama*, chopped up the attackers. "For 13 hours, the Japanese threw every plane it could at our task force," Feller wrote later. "All of us on the *Alabama* fought them off. I was gun captain on a quad 40 with about 25 sailors throwing ammunition. We fired eight rounds a second and opened up at 5,000 yards. For all 13 hours, we stayed at our guns. We had our C rations to eat and we just stayed there and waited for whatever was going to happen. On the sky just above the sea horizon, I spotted dots, four of them. Could be anything, could be Hellcats. I blinked hard. These were twin-engine, high-tail. They were Betties. When they got close enough, we opened fire. The sky turned black from smoke and bright white from tracer fire. The smell of cordite overpowered the sea air. The Japanese sent bombers, and we sent up a wall of white-hot metal to meet them. I didn't feel fear or a moment's indecision. I kept my four guns blazing. Two of the Betties disintegrated, and the others ran."

Lieutenant (j.g.) Rollo Ross on *Washington* directed the battleship's antiaircraft batteries. "We usually expected air attacks from groups of planes coming at you from the same general direction, most out of the sun and low down on the horizon," he said later. "But the Turkey Shoot was different. They seemed to come in ones and twos from every direction. Our own fighters had given them such a rough time on the way in that the survivors were highly disorganized by the time they arrived over us. The attacks just seemed to go on and on without end. All the time, it seemed there was an aircraft in sight some place and one of the ships in the

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formation was firing at it. Our own planes kept clear of us pretty well, so that by and large, anyone who came within range was usually a Jap. I have no idea how many planes were shot down or how many times we fired. I was so busy that the whole thing just became a blur, but it was obvious who had the upper hand."

In the combat information centers of the American ships, sailors and officers fought the battle in windowless compartments, scrutinizing radar screens and listening to reports from fighter pilots, antiaircraft gunners, and lookouts over headsets. Sailors tracked incoming raiders on glass boards, using red grease pencils to follow Japanese "bogeys" and white pencils for American aircraft. They could tell the difference by the "identification-friend-or-foe" gear the U.S. planes carried. Every time a radar operator sang out a new bearing, the trackers changed the data. As the Japanese closed in, there were fewer planes on the scopes, and increasingly cheery calls from the American fighter pilots above.

Not all the news was good, though.

One of the Japanese planes maintained *South Dakota*'s history of bad luck by hurling a 551-pound bomb on her forward superstructure, which blew a large hole in the ship, damaging wiring and piping, as well as the captain's and admiral's quarters, while knocking out a 40mm antiaircraft gun, killing 27 crewmen and wounding 24 others. *South Dakota* gunners claimed they sent their attacker spiraling into the sea, but gunners on *Alabama* claimed the Japanese plane got away, which set up more bad blood between "Sodak" sailors and their shipmates.

Lieutenant (j.g.) Frederick R. Steiglitz, flying an F6F from *Cowpens*, reported over radio that he had shot down a plane and signaled visually that he had downed another, but never returned to "Mighty Moo" to confirm the score. With engine damage, he had to splash into the drink. He was seen climbing into his life raft but was never recovered.

Despite these losses, the few Japanese that broke through the defenses overall did little damage. One dropped a bomb that landed a few feet from the heavy cruiser *Minneapolis*' starboard side. The shock of the explosion ruptured some gas, oil, and water lines, sparking a fire.

Ultimately, none got near the carriers, and at 10:57 AM, Eggert reported that the radar screens were clear. Raid One's survivors assembled to return home. There were only eight fighters, 13 fighter-bombers, and six torpedo bombers—27 planes left of 69 attackers. The Americans had suffered the 27 dead on *South Dakota* and four pilots lost.

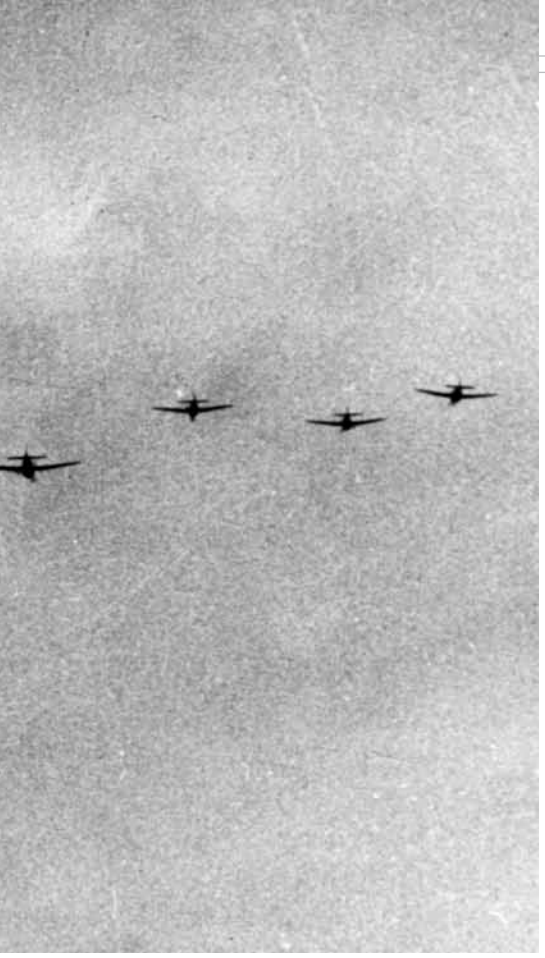
Mitscher, aware that this could not be the main raid, ordered his fighters to recover, rearm, and refuel. Crewmen in blue plane-handler vests patched holes in F6Fs while aviators sipped coffee and were debriefed by their superiors.

Meanwhile, the torpedo and dive bombers still orbited to the east, gulping fuel, seeking orders. Mitscher eventually ordered *Enterprise*'s torpedo bombers to locate the Japanese fleet, after which the rest of the airmen would follow, once contact was established, but this would have to wait. Ten minutes after Eggert's screens were cleared, Raid Two arrived.

Ozawa's Raid Two had begun launching shortly after 8 AM. The attack force, consisting of 35 dive bombers, 27 torpedo bombers, and 48 fighters, immediately ran into trouble. As the planes roared over Admiral Takeo Kurita's van force, his jumpy antiaircraft gunners opened fire, shooting down two planes and damaging eight, forcing them to turn back.

The Japanese formation was highly ragged, reflecting the declining quality of their airmen. The planes flew at varying cruising speeds, drifting into smaller groups, planes losing contact with their leaders.

In his Aichi D3A Val dive bomber, Lt. Cdr. Zenji Abe, a veteran of Pearl Harbor and Midway—a rare breed, indeed—flew on, mentally and physically exhausted. "I was suffering from



a very unusual physical condition caused by prolonged fatigue," he said later, "and felt I was in a plane being flown by somebody else." As his plane droned on, he saw fewer planes in his ragged formation. He assumed those missing had either turned back or "dived into the sea from mental confusion."

Abe and his fellow airmen reached the American fleet at 10:27 and were greeted by a dozen Hellcats from *Essex* led by Commander David McCampbell, a sharp Alabama-born pilot with movie star looks. Even before McCampbell and his men charged into the Japanese attack force, though, the Japanese fleet was already facing disaster.

As *Taiho* launched her planes, one of the pilots, Warrant Officer Sakio Komatsu, noticed something odd in the ocean below him: an incoming torpedo wake headed straight for his carrier. With dexterity, coolness, and bushido valor, he banked hard and dived in its path, slamming into the fish and sacrificing his life to save *Taiho* from the torpedo. It was heroic, but it was not enough. Five more torpedoes raced for the carrier.

The source of this attack was one of America's humblest and most powerful weapons: the 1,525-ton, Gato-class submarine *Albacore*, under Commander Jim Blanchard. One of the submarines on picket duty, she had been ordered on June 18 to head 100 miles south at full speed to intercept the Japanese fleet. At 7 AM, *Albacore* was spotted on the surface by a Japanese plane, and Blanchard promptly went into a dive, assuming that the Japanese fleet was nearby.

He was right. At 7:50 AM, *Albacore* sighted ships to the west, and Blanchard ordered "Battle stations submerged!" With red lights on to make it easier to read dials and sonar scopes, Blanchard peered through his periscope and saw a submariner's dream, a carrier headed east, at 70 degrees port, seven miles away. "Left full rudder! All ahead flank!" he ordered.

Albacore raced for an intercept position, but Blanchard realized the carrier would outrun him. He did a 360-spin with the periscope and suddenly ordered, "Right full rudder! Another flattop! This one's coming right down the groove! All we have to do is wait for him!"

Albacore headed straight on a new course for *Taiho*. Blanchard raised his periscope again and said, "Looks good! All clear around! Nobody close aboard! Make ready all tubes!" With *Albacore* deep inside the Japanese formation, it was time to attack.

Blanchard had 10 seconds to figure out what to do. "Up periscope! Continuous bearing!" he yelled. "I'm going to stay right on him!" When *Albacore* was at the firing point, Blanchard shouted, "Fire one!" In short order, *Albacore* launched six torpedoes, streaking straight for *Taiho*.

Blanchard then spun his periscope and yelled, "Take her down! Take her down fast! All ahead full!"

Komatsu dived on the first one, ending that torpedo's run and his life. As *Albacore* sprinted into deep waters, the five remaining torpedoes charged in. Four missed astern, but one scored a hit near *Taiho*'s aviation fuel tanks.

The hit set off an explosion that provided Blanchard and his crew with knowledge that they had done some damage after all, but now two Japanese destroyers charged in, hurling depth charges in rapid sequence. Blanchard whipped out his stopwatch, while keeping an eye on the depth gauge. The deeper *Albacore* got, the better her chance of surviving the Japanese counterattack.

Six depths charges went off near *Albacore*, shaking the submarine, shattering light bulbs, flinging men to the deck. The destroyer turned around on her run and began another attack. American submarine skipper and historian Ed Beach would note, "Many German submarines in similar circumstances simply surfaced and gave up the fight, but not United States submariners, and not Jim Blanchard."

Albacore, deeply submerged at maximum depth, crept along, seeking an opening. The break came sooner than expected; by noon, Blanchard and his submarine were well away from their target.

Up above, *Taiho* was facing the chore and challenge of a lone torpedo hit that seemed to have done little more than create a geyser of water, smoke, and debris. *Taiho* slowed one knot, the forward elevator was jammed in the "up" position, and no fires were reported to damage control central. *Taiho* sailed on. Nobody seemed to be aware that the hit had ruptured gasoline and oil lines—carriers usually smelled of gasoline and oil. Up on his flag bridge, Ozawa himself was confident that his new flagship's design could handle any hit from an American submarine.

Naval History and Heritage Command

ABOVE: Japanese Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa (left) led the Imperial Navy in its disastrous offensive against American landings in the Marianas, while U.S. Admiral Marc Mitscher (right), photographed during the battle, handled American carrier operations under Admiral Raymond A. Spruance. BELOW: Commander David McCampbell sits in the cockpit of his Grumman F6F fighter plane. McCampbell became the highest-scoring U.S. Navy ace of World War II. OPPOSITE: An impressive flight of 23 Grumman F6F Hellcat fighter planes launched by aircraft carriers of U.S. Task Force 58 assembles to ward off attacks against American ships during the battle.

Naval History and Heritage Command

Meanwhile, Raid Two plunged on toward Mitscher's carriers. At 11:07 AM, Eggert vectored in McCampbell's *Essex* Hellcats from above the battleships, and they dived from 25,000 feet into the oncoming Japanese, spotting nearly 100 Zero and Judy attack planes 45 miles from the task force. McCampbell wasted no time. He took his planes into a fast attack pass from the side to scatter the enemy. His .50-caliber machine guns immediately incinerated a Judy bomber—many Japanese planes lacked self-sealing fuel tanks—and he flew through the formation to the other side. There, he jockeyed for position on another Judy and sent it smoking, claiming a "probable kill."

Now he spotted the formation leader and his two wingmen. This time, he hit the leader's wingman from 7 o'clock high, and exploded that plane. McCampbell swung in on the left of the leading Judy, firing bullets into it until it "burned furiously and spiraled downward out of control." McCampbell saw that his guns were suffering stoppages, so he pulled out to recharge them, then returned to the battle.

By now, the Japanese formation had been shredded by American planes, but the survivors were showing bushido determination. McCampbell saw another formation leader and attacked, but only the starboard guns fired, and McCampbell was thrown into a wild skid. The Judy plunged into a fast dive, but McCampbell stayed on its tail, firing short bursts with his working guns. The Judy pulled up and slammed into the sea.

With his guns jammed and useless, but with five kills and one probable in this single battle, McCampbell headed for *Essex*. He was now an ace and would finish the war with 34 aerial victories, the Navy's top killer, appearing on the covers of magazines, his name gracing a Burke-class destroyer 70 years later.

Meanwhile, *Essex*'s VF-15 fighter squadron shredded the Japanese but took some pain in return. Ensign J.W. Power was wounded by the Zero he destroyed. Ensign C.W. Plant found 150 holes in his plane when he landed on *Essex*.

Fortunately, help was coming for the *Essex* fighters, as the rest of the carrier planes charged in, led by Vraciu, whose muck-covered windshield had been cleaned in the lull. He shot down a Judy from about 200 feet away, then saw two more dead ahead. Vraciu maneuvered his F6F behind the two planes and opened fire. The right-hand Judy's rear-gunner shot back, but Vraciu had six machine guns in his wings. It was too much for that Judy. It belched a puff of smoke, which turned into a stream of black smoke, and the dive bomber crashed into the sea, its gunner still firing.

Vraciu wasted no time. He fired short bursts into the other Judy, and it fell out of control and into the ocean. Three kills in three minutes, and Vraciu was not done. He saw a fourth Judy pull out of formation, and from astern Vraciu fired a long burst. The Judy erupted in flames and plummeted out of the sky.

Vraciu saw three Judys approaching their pushover points for dive bombing, and he crept up on the rear Judy. When he came in range, he squeezed the trigger, and the .50-caliber bullets disintegrated the target.

Now Vraciu headed for the leading plane of the trio and fired on it. The Judy vanished in a bright explosion, apparently caused by its bomb cooking off. "I had seen planes blow up before but never like this! I yanked the stick up sharply to avoid the scattered pieces and flying hot stuff, then radioed, 'Splash number six!'" he said later.

Vraciu looked around and saw no enemy planes nearby, so he headed back to *Lexington* for fuel and ammo. As he taxied up the deck, Vraciu looked up at the flag bridge, where Mitscher himself was looking down at him. Vraciu climbed out of his cockpit, grinning, and held up six fingers for his kills, accomplished with a mere 360 rounds of ammunition. After the plane was parked, a group of well-wishers, headed by Mitscher himself, greeted the aviator, and the admiral asked for a photograph for his own file. Vraciu now had 18 kills, and gained one more the next day. The steely pilot and genial shipmate would survive the war to receive a Navy Cross for his valor. As for the photo, the war correspondent who took it did not keep it to himself. It made American newspapers as a symbol of victory.

Lexington's aviators claimed four Jills, nine Judys, two Kates, and seven Zeros without loss. *Bunker Hill*'s VF-8 fighters were less impressive, with only four Zeros and a Judy, but *Bataan*'s VF-50 punched out five Zeros, four Judys, and a Jill. One American observed that the action had reminded him of an old fashioned turkey shoot back home. The aerial aspect of the unfolding Battle of the Philippine Sea then came to be known as the "Great Marianas Turkey Shoot."

Meanwhile, Zenji Abe, the canny Pearl Harbor veteran, kept on course as Japanese planes exploded or crashed about him, arriving over the American fleet at 13,000 feet. Even though his wingmen were gone and Hellcats were behind and above him, Abe lowered his nose for a proper dive-bombing attack on *Wasp*. The bomb missed but detonated near the ship, injuring two men and doing light damage. Abe pulled out and miraculously survived American flak and fighters, the only Japanese pilot to drop a bomb on an American carrier that day and return home safely.

Two more Judy dive bombers headed for *Wasp* and swung around her stern. The carrier's lookouts thought they were "friendly" until both planes went into their bomb runs. All of the car-

rier's antiaircraft guns opened fire, but one plane was able to drop its bomb, which landed just off *Wasp*'s port beam, spreading shrapnel which killed one man and wounded several others. *Wasp* gunners took their revenge with a stream of fire that sent the Judy smoking into the sea, 12,000 yards ahead of the carrier.

Four Japanese torpedo planes made runs on *Enterprise* and *Princeton*. Flak took them down. A lieutenant on one carrier's bridge wrote, "On at least one occasion, so many Japanese planes were being shot down—great balls of fire, which, in spite of intense sunlight showed brilliantly red against the sky, or long plummets of black smoke plunging into the sea—that it was impossible to make an accurate count of them. For minutes on end, there were beautiful vapor streams forming criss-crossing white arcs against the azure sky as planes dived and climbed."

VF-1 from *Yorktown*, under Commander "Smoke" Strean, tore into the Japanese with energy, diving from 24,000 feet, leading 10 Hellcats. In a furious and confused battle, they sent Zeros smashing into the water, accounting for 34 fighters and three bombers in the day. Lieutenant R.H. Shireman, Jr., led his division down from 20,000 feet into a giant dogfight 10,000 feet below. He battered a Zero in a stern run, then zoomed past it, but the Zero was in an inverted spin and splashed into the sea. Lieutenant (j.g.) G.W. Staehli saw a Judy diving at 5,000 feet. He shot at its cowling. The Japanese plane rolled over on its back, finished.

Incredibly, some Japanese bombers besides Abe were able to penetrate the American defenses, ganging up on the destroyer *Stockham*, the picket ship. For 20 minutes, Japanese planes swooped in on her from every direction, but incredibly they scored no hits, as most of them were shot down by American flak and fighters.

Lieutenant William Lamb of *Princeton*'s VF-27 found himself amid 12 Jill bombers over *Stockham* with only one of his six guns working. He simply stayed out of their range of fire and called in additional American fighters. As they appeared, he plowed into the Jills and shot down three of them with his one gun.

Now the veterans of *Enterprise*'s VF-10, the "Grim Reapers," finally got a chance to add to their carrier's long and illustrious record in the defense of *Stockham*. Two *Enterprise* pilots, Lieutenant Donald Gordon and Lt. (j.g.) Richard W. Mason, caught a Judy pushing over into its dive on a battleship and charged in, setting it on fire.

Lieutenant Marion O. Marks and Ensign Charles D. Farmer saw two Jills setting up torpedo runs against the battleships. Marks shot up one Jill, preventing it from launching its torpedo, but not splashing it. Farmer, however, fired two long bursts from astern, and the Jill suffered a violent explosion.

The battleships endured a lot of attention, but little damage. Once again torpedo bombers attacked *South Dakota*, but Bob Feller and his shipmates on *Alabama* drove them off. A Judy took advantage of this distraction to attack *Alabama* but missed. *Indiana* shot down five enemy planes. One torpedo launched at *Indiana* exploded only 50 yards from her. Another Jill flew toward *Indiana* at 12:14 PM but lacked a torpedo. The Jill slammed into *Indiana*'s starboard side, bounced off the waterline, and immediately sank, doing very little damage. Another Jill fired a torpedo at the battleship *Iowa*, but missed.

On the nearby heavy cruiser *San Francisco*, the ship's automatic weapons officer took a superficial wound on a finger, probably from friendly fire. To encourage his gun crews, he yelled, "The bastards have drawn blood, shoot them down!"

Now, the surviving Japanese planes were past the battleships and nearing the carriers. A Judy and three Jills attacked *Enterprise* and the light carrier *Princeton*. The Judy attacked *Enterprise* in a shallow dive, but the carrier and her numerous escorts opened fire. The Judy could not drop her bomb, instead wobbling off and crashing. A Jill tried to torpedo *Princeton* but was shot down by the ship's guns. The carrier and her screen took care of the second Jill, and the third dropped its torpedo toward *Enterprise* just before the carrier's five-inch gun took out its right wing. The Jill slammed vertically into the sea 300 yards off *Princeton*, and the torpedo missed.

At 12:03 PM, *Bunker Hill* lookouts spotted two Judys jumping out of a cloud four miles away at 12,000 feet. The ship's guns treated the incoming dive bombers to a wall of shells as the planes hurtled toward the smaller *Cabot*. A direct hit tore a Judy in half, with the front end landing off the *Bunker Hill*'s starboard bow and its tail off the stern. The other plane dropped its bomb close aboard the carrier's elevator, shaking *Bunker Hill*, knocking out the port elevator, setting off fires in two ready rooms, rupturing fuel tanks and vents, killing two and wounding 27 men. But the ship's damage control crews got straight to work, and the carrier stayed in the battle.

By 12:15 PM, the American radars were clear of Japanese planes, and the survivors—including Zenji Abe—shuffled into formation to head

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ABOVE: U.S. Navy Lieutenant Alex Vraciu holds up six fingers signifying the number of Japanese aircraft that fell to his guns during an eight-minute span on a single mission. OPPOSITE: American naval personnel watch the action as white contrails criss-cross the skies while American fighters engage attacking Japanese aircraft.

Naval History and Heritage Command

In the gathering darkness of early evening, a U.S. Navy Grumman F6F Hellcat fighter comes in for a landing aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Cowpens*.

home. There were not many left. Of the 128 planes Ozawa had hurled at the Americans, only 31 (16 Zeroes, 11 Judys, and four Jills) returned. All across the ocean near the American fleet, fires blazed and oil slicks poisoned the water, the wrecks of Japanese aircraft and their hopes for victory.

Worse was to come for Ozawa. His carriers steamed along, awaiting results. Nobody seemed too concerned aboard *Taiho* about the damage from *Albacore*'s hit. She cracked along at 26 knots while poorly-trained damage-control crews tried to repair ruptured fuel and oil lines or pump overboard fuel in damaged tanks. A lot of the unrefined Borneo crude did not make it into the Pacific but sloshed around the carrier's hangar deck. At this point, as Ed Beach would write caustically later, one of *Taiho*'s ill-trained damage control officers made a decision that "qualified (him) for the United States Navy Cross," by starting all blowers and fans and opening all ventilation lines and bulkhead doors to reduce the concentration of fuel vapors and clear the atmosphere.

While this damage control battle raged, another American submarine turned up amid Ozawa's force to wreak additional havoc, the brand-new *Cavalla*, under veteran submariner Commander Herman Kossler in his first command. His sub had been patrolling between Guam and Mindanao when it was given orders to head for the sound of the guns on June 14. After coping with a storm that day and making a failed attack on a convoy the following day, Kossler contacted Ozawa's ships on the 18th at 8:30 PM, but the Japanese ships detected *Cavalla*, and he had to spend the evening evading them.

At 10:39 AM, *Cavalla* reached the point he had been ordered to assume, and sure enough, he saw four planes circling in the distance through his periscope, then masts, and then screws on the sonar. Beyond that was a carrier. "The picture was too good to be true!" he later wrote.

Shokaku was steaming at 25 knots, making a large bow wave. Peering through his periscope, Kossler saw that *Shokaku*'s forward flight deck was crowded with planes. With his executive officer and torpedo officer, Kossler identified his target and set up the shot: angle on the bow, starboard 40, all tubes ready.

Kossler took one more look through the periscope and saw that the enemy destroyer was suddenly headed right for *Cavalla*, 100 yards off. Kossler wasted no time, firing five torpedoes at *Shokaku*, then diving down before launching the sixth.

The torpedo streaks attracted the veteran Japanese destroyer *Urakaze*, which sprinted in. "Rig for depth charge!" Kossler shouted. But before a single depth charge fell, the crew heard the solid sound of three violent metal-crushing explosions against *Shokaku*'s hull—direct hits on the carrier.

Cavalla dived to 150 feet with hard left rudder. As it did, the first four of 106 *Urakaze* depth charges exploded near the submarine. For three hours, Kossler's boat absorbed a pounding.

As *Cavalla* was brand-new, she had not proven herself depth-charge-proof and suffered a number of leaks. Sea water poured into the motor-room bilge at high speed. Then came a hissing sound above the galley, and *Cavalla* began to sink deeper. Kossler ordered main induction drains opened to test them, and sea water spurted out of them, forcing Kossler to run his sub up angle in order to maintain her depth.

After three hours, *Urakaze* gave up, and *Cavalla* headed off, still able to fight.

Above, however, chaos reigned. *Shokaku* actually took four torpedo hits at 12:20 PM, and the carrier slowed and fell out of formation as fire and explosions tore her apart. The veteran crew did its best at damage control, but could not contain fire and fumes from leaking gas and oil tanks, and her bow settled into the ocean. Seawater poured through her open forward elevator. Just after 3 PM, the fires cooked off a magazine, which in turn exploded the Borneo crude oil, ripping *Shokaku* apart. She sank, taking with her 1,263 officers and men out of 2,000 crew, and nine aircraft.

Nearby, *Cavalla*'s crew heard and felt the massive explosions and breaking-up sounds as *Shokaku* sank. Kossler radioed to his boss in Hawaii, Vice Admiral Charles Lockwood: "Believe that baby sank." Lockwood radioed back: "Beautiful work, *Cavalla*. One carrier down, eight more to go."

For the feat, *Cavalla* would receive a Presidential Unit Citation, survive the war, and ultimately be turned into a museum in Texas in 1971.

Lockwood's point, though, was quite correct: there were eight more Japanese carriers to go on June 19, 1944. Despite suffering horrendous losses so far—one carrier sunk, one gravely damaged, hundreds of planes lost—Ozawa was not done yet. Worse still, while Spruance had absorbed these two blows and was ready to endure more, he had not unleashed his powerful offensive arm against Ozawa.

The Battle of the Philippine Sea was becoming a bloody struggle, and more rounds awaited. The "decisive battle" was, indeed, quite undecided.

Author David Lippman resides in New Jersey and writes frequently on a variety of topics for WWII History. *The is the first of a two-part article on the Battle of the Philippine Sea. Part two will appear in the June issue.*

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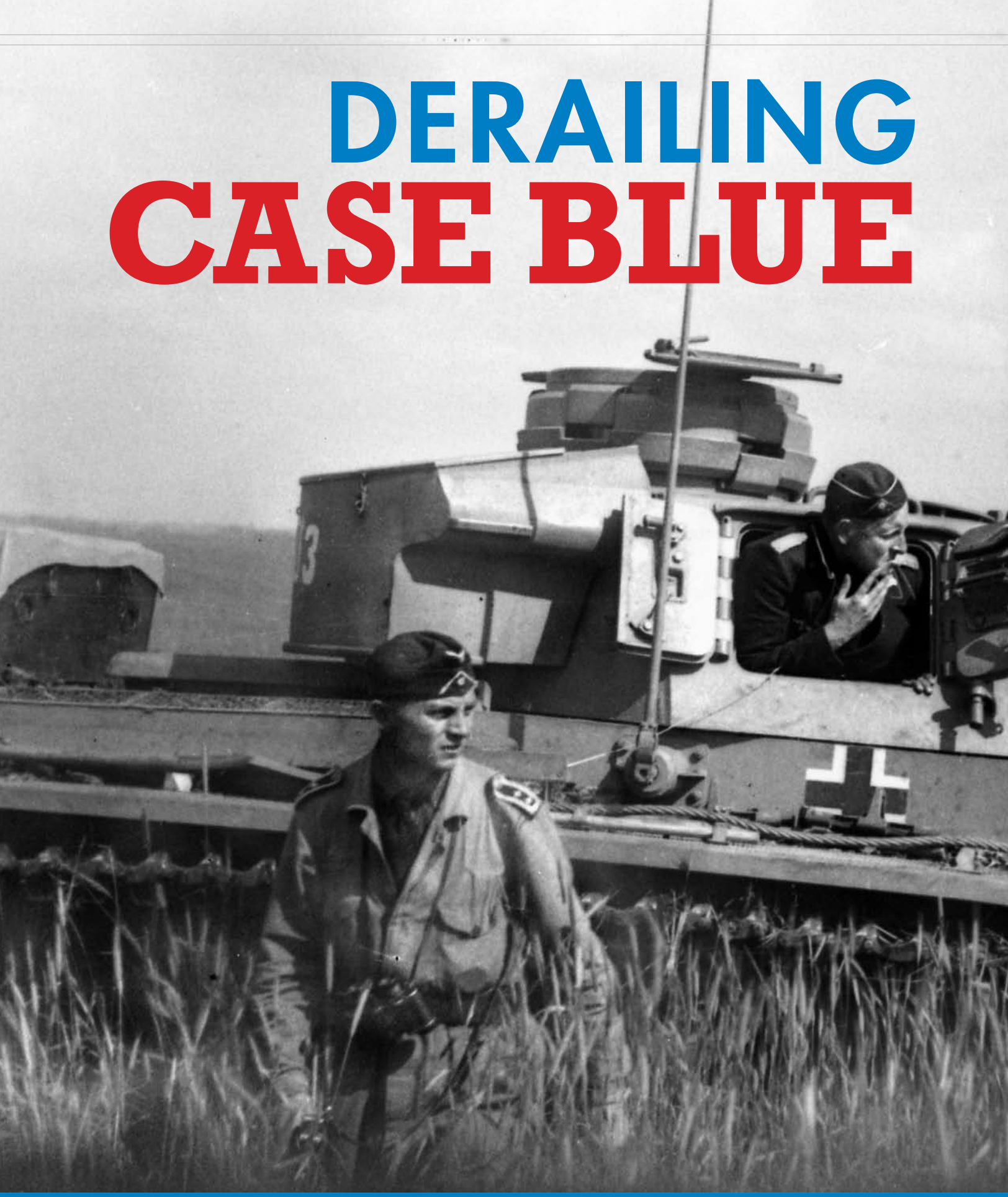
DERAILING CASE BLUE



STIFF SOVIET RESISTANCE THWARTED HITLER'S PLAN IN THE SOUTH ALONG THE EASTERN FRONT IN THE SUMMER OF 1942.

BY PAT McTAGGART

A German tanker stands on the Russian steppe near Voronezh after emerging from the turret of his PzKpfw. III tank. In the summer of 1942, Hitler mounted an armored thrust to the south along the Eastern Front, and it led to ruin.

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-216-0415-20; Photo: Koch

After the brutal defensive fighting during the winter of 1941-1942, Adolf Hitler was ready for another round with the Russians. This time, his armies would strike south with the twin goals of conquering the Caucasus and its rich oil fields and taking the city of Stalingrad. As far back as July 1940, when the planning for the invasion of the Soviet Union began, those two objectives had been part of the overall plan.

The unexpected Soviet resistance in late 1941 put a hold on those plans, but they were still on Hitler's mind even after his failure to take Moscow and Leningrad earlier in the year. The Germans needed oil, and the Caucasus would provide it. He also knew that controlling Stalingrad would mean the loss of a major industrial city and would also cut traffic on the southern portion of the Volga River.

It would be a massive operation, code-named Fall Blau (Case Blue), that involved two panzer armies, three infantry armies, and the 2nd Hungarian Army. The plan was to advance on a broad front stretching from the Sea of Azov to Kursk. In his Führer Directive 41 promulgated on April 12, 1942, Hitler laid out his goals for the southern part of the Soviet Union: "All available forces will be concentrated on the main operations in the southern sector, with the aim of destroying the enemy before the Don [River], in order to secure the Caucasian oil fields and the passes through the Caucasus Mountains themselves."

Hitler also detailed how this was to be accomplished. "The purpose is, as already stated, to occupy the Caucasus Front by decisively attacking and destroying the Russian forces stationed in the Voronezh area to the south, west or north of the Don … individual breaches of the front should take the form of close pincer movements. We must avoid closing the pincers too late, thus giving the enemy the possibility of avoiding destruction."

In general, Hitler planned to take the city of Voronezh with a combined panzer-infantry assault and destroy Soviet forces there, giving him a bridgehead on the eastern bank of the Voronezh River, a tributary of the Don. The Führer Directive continued: "Armored and motorized formations are to continue the attack south from Voronezh, with their left flank on the Don River in support of a second breakthrough to take place from the general area east of Kharkov. Here too, the objective is not simply to break the Russian front, but in cooperation with the motorized forces thrusting down the Don, to destroy the enemy armies."

It sounded simple. Voronezh would be taken quickly, and with that accomplished, the armored and mechanized forces would form the anvil behind the Soviet forces defending the approaches to the Volga River and Stalingrad. The German forces attacking from the east would be the hammer, and the Soviet armies caught between the two would be eliminated, depriving the Russians of vital troops needed to defend Stalingrad and the Caucasus.

The force tasked with taking Voronezh was Army Group von Weichs under the command of General Maximilian Freiherr von Weichs an dem Glon, who was also the commander of the 2nd German Army. The 2nd Army consisted of General Erwin Vierow's LV Army Corps (45th, 95th, and 299th Infantry Divisions, and the 1st SS Brigade). Army Group von Weichs' armored fist was General Hermann Hoth's 4th Panzer Army.

National Archives

Hoth had three corps: General Erich Straube's XIII (82nd and 385th Infantry and 11th Panzer Divisions), General Willibald Freiherr von Langermann und Erlankamp's XXIV Panzer (377th Infantry, 9th Panzer, and 3rd Motorized Divisions), and General Werner Kempf's XLVIII Panzer (24th Panzer and the Gross Deutschland, or Motorized Division).

During the coming operation, some of these divisions would be transferred back and forth between corps as needed. Other divisions would be added to the attack as it continued.

General Gustav Jany's 2nd Hungarian Army, consisting of two corps, was also under von Weichs' command. As a reserve force, von Weichs could count on four infantry divisions. General Wolfram von Richthofen (a cousin of the Red Baron of World War I fame) would provide air support with his VIII Air Corps.

Facing von Weichs was Lt. Gen. Filipp Ivanovich Golikov's Briansk Front. Golikov had an impressive force under his command consisting of three infantry armies and one tank army with 19 rifle divisions, seven rifle brigades, six mechanized brigades, and 30 tank brigades. Air support for the front would be under the control of Maj. Gen. Konstantin Nikolaevich Smirnov's 2nd Air Army.

In conjunction with the planning of Case Blue, the Germans began an intelligence operation designed to keep Soviet eyes off the southern area of the front. The German offensive in 1941 had come dangerously close to taking its objective of Moscow, and the 2nd and 3rd Panzer Armies of Army Group Center were in almost the exact same positions they had occupied since mid-November. A German salient at Rzhev pointed like a dagger toward Moscow, and the Russians knew it would make a perfect jump-off point for another try at the Soviet capital.

Fall Kreml (Case Kremlin) was set up to play on Stalin's fears about another assault on Moscow. A top-secret directive from Army Group Center sent out on May 29 stated, "The OHK [Oberkommando des Heeres, or German Army High Command] has ordered the earliest possible resumption of the attack on Moscow."

Reconnaissance flights in the Moscow area were increased, and sealed maps of the Moscow sector were sent to the army group with orders that they would remain sealed until June 10. When they were opened, corps and divisional staffs began planning for the offensive, unaware that the entire operation was a ruse. Russian spies reported all this activity to Stavka (the Soviet high command), which began making plans to meet the attack that was expected to begin on August 1.

Stalin believed that the Germans, even after the losses they had taken in 1941, could possibly launch two simultaneous operations, one aimed at Moscow and the other directed at the Caucasus. Soviet reports state that he was more concerned about the one directed at Moscow and considered the other extremely unlikely. As late as June 26, Stalin still believed that Case Blue was mostly nonsense. In a telephone call to Golikov, he said that it "was something concocted by intelligence people."

He must have had some doubts about his own convictions, however, as he ordered Golikov to plan an attack in the Orel area as a preemptive move, just in case the Germans were planning a southern offensive. The Soviet general was still fine-tuning his attack when the Germans struck.

The generals in Berlin were confident that Army Group von Weichs would accomplish its goals quickly and with little difficulty. Golikov's forward troops defended an area crisscrossed by the Sosna River and its tributaries, as well as by ravines known as balkas. German planning had taken that into account, and if bridges were blown or fords were too heavily defended, engineers stationed just behind the front could be rushed forward to repair or build new bridges over which the advance could continue.

Dawn came early during the summer in southern Russia. The soldiers in forward Soviet positions noticed a thin mist rising from the ravines and hollows as the sky began to lighten at 2 AM on June 28. Behind that mist, German reconnaissance units were already on the move, headed for the Russian line.

Suddenly, the western sky lit up as army, corps, and divisional artillery opened fire on Soviet positions. Shells whined over the heads of the attacking Germans, smashing enemy trenches and strongpoints before continuing eastward in a rolling barrage. Close behind the barrage, elements of von Richtofen's VIII Air Corps rained down bombs on specific fortified strongpoints before heading east to strafe and bomb targets of opportunity and identified supply dumps and communications hubs.

The results were devastating. As the men of Brig. Gen. Walter Hörnlein's Gross Deutschland Division advanced toward their first objective, the supposedly strongly fortified village of Dubrovka, they found nothing but carnage. The divisional history reported, "Dubrovka itself has been flattened—wreckage and ruins—not a house was left standing, not a fence, only smoking timbers and smoldering rubble."

The men moved on. A key objective was the capture of bridges crossing the Tim River. Infantrymen of Lt. Col. Ludwig Kohlhaas's 3rd

Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, Gross Deutschland Division sliced through the battered Soviet defenses and reached the narrow river by 6 AM. Although the road bridge crossing the river had been destroyed, a rail bridge still stood. Men of Kohlhaas's 11th Company speedily crossed the bridge and drove defending Russians on the eastern bank out of their positions.

At the height of its success, the 11th was mistakenly attacked by the Luftwaffe, causing several casualties. Kohlhaas was wounded in the attack and had to turn command of the battalion over to a subordinate. He was awarded the Knight's Cross on November 22 for his actions, just nine days before he was killed in combat.

It was the same all along von Weichs' front. The speedy advance of the German forward units captured several crossings that were needed for the armored onslaught that would soon follow. The engineers that followed in the wake of the first wave strengthened bridges to support the panzers and built crossing points across the numerous balkas in the area.

As news of the successes of the forward elements reached higher headquarters, Hoth prepared to launch his armored fist. Von Langermann's XXIV Panzer Corps had approximately 350 tanks, while Kempf's XLVIII Panzer Corps had about 325. Together, the two corps were to strike the boundary of Lt. Gen. Mikhail Artemevich Pasegov's 40th Army and Maj. Gen. Nikolai Pavlovich Pukhov's 13th Army.

The forward positions of Pasegov's army were defended by five infantry divisions (45th, 62nd, 121st, 160th, and 212th), with the 6th Rifle Division and three rifle brigades farther to the rear. His armor included the 14th and 170th Tank Brigades with a total of about 70 tanks and Maj. Gen. Mikhail Ivanovich Pavelkin's 16th Tank Corps with about 180 tanks.

Pukhov had four rifle divisions (15th, 132nd, 143rd, and 148th) at the front and the 307th Rifle Division and a rifle brigade in reserve. The 13th Army's armored force consisted of the 129th Tank Brigade with some 40 tanks and Maj. Gen. Mikhail Efimovich Katukov's 1st Tank Corps, which was also the front reserve, containing about 170 tanks.

At 10 AM, the order came: "Panzer Marsch." Von Langermann and Kempf rolled forward toward the crossings that had been built or captured. The Russians facing them were in disarray for the most part. Having been pummeled by artillery and bombed and strafed by the Luftwaffe, many defensive positions had simply disappeared. Communications lines had been severed, leaving higher headquarters out of contact with subordinate units, and even company commanders had a hard time communicating with their sub-units.

"We were confident of victory," wrote Colonel Maximilian Reichsfreiherr von Edelsheim, commander of the 24th Panzer's 26th Rifle Regiment. In a 1986 letter to the author, he described the scene: "My unit followed close behind the panzers of the 24th Panzer Regiment. Great clouds of dust arose as we pushed forward. To our left and right, similar clouds were raised by other panzer or mechanized units. It seemed like nothing could stop us. We were to find out differently later on, but this day was ours."

Kempf's two divisions headed at full speed toward the Tim River, where they slammed into Colonel Mikhail Borisovich Anashkin's 160th Rifle Division and the neighboring 212th Rifle Division, which were stationed along the western bank north and south of the city of Tim. Not yet recovered from the morning barrage, the Russian defenders were easily overcome, and the panzers continued to race to the southwest.

North of Kempf, von Langermann's corps also had great success. Brig. Gen. Hermann Balck's

Map © 2020 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

ABOVE: The German Army on the Eastern Front opened Case Blue when the weather improved to allow mechanized campaigning. Hitler instructed his generals to swiftly move south toward the oil fields of the Caucasus. OPPOSITE: The offensive opened with a devastating German barrage against Red Army positions, while forward troops seized bridges and roads to facilitate the advance. Engineers followed to strengthen structures that had been damaged by the artillery fire.

Lieutenant Georg Köhler was in von Edelsheim's 3rd Company. Ten years before his death in 2006, he wrote to the author concerning the advance: "My men were in a fine mood. Our morale was high. The engineers and other forward elements of the division had done their work well, and we had few problems in crossing the ravines and streams in front of us. As we advanced, we could see clouds of dust rising on our left. It was the bulk of the Gross Deutschland Division moving forward."

Kempf's two divisions headed at full speed toward the Tim River, where they slammed into Colonel Mikhail Borisovich Anashkin's 160th Rifle Division and the neighboring 212th Rifle Division, which were stationed along the western bank north and south of the city of Tim. Not yet recovered from the morning barrage, the Russian defenders were easily overcome, and the panzers continued to race to the southwest.

North of Kempf, von Langermann's corps also had great success. Brig. Gen. Hermann Balck's 11th Panzer Division, after crossing the Tim, smashed into Colonel Afanasii Nikitovich Slyshkin's 15th Rifle Division, shattering its defenses and sending survivors fleeing toward the rear. To Balck's right, Maj. Gen. Petr Maksimovich Zykov's 121st Rifle Division met the same fate at the hands of Brig. Gen. Johannes Baessler's 9th Panzer Division. The first day had lived up to expectations: the panzers were

headed to Voronezh, and it seemed that the great envelopment intended to destroy Russian forces west of the Don would proceed as scheduled.

Parsegov reported by radio to Briansk Front headquarters. He told Golikov that the 40th Army had sustained "significant losses," but, he reported, the army was still capable of combat. He also asked for tank reinforcements to counter the German panzers.

Golikov relayed the request to Stavka. In response, Maj. Gen. Pavelkin's 16th Tank Corps (107th, 109th, and 164th Tank Brigades) and Maj. Gen. Nikolai Vladimirovich Feklenko's 17th Tank Corps (66th, 67th, and 174th Tank Brigades and the 31st Mechanized Brigade) were ordered forward to the Kshen River. The 115th and 116th Tank Brigades were also pulled from the Briansk Front reserve and sent forward to bolster Parsegov's forces.

In addition to those forces, Stavka ordered the Southern Front's 4th Tank Corps (45th, 47th, and 102nd Tank Brigades and 4th Mechanized Brigade), commanded by Lt. Gen. Vasilii Aleksandrovich Mishulin, and Maj. Gen. Vasilii Mikhailovich Badanov's 24th Tank Corps (54th and 130th Tank Brigades, 24th Mechanized Brigade, and 4th Guards) north to the Stary Oskol area. When they arrived at their destination, they were to prepare for a counterattack against an expected German attempt to capture the river crossing points near the town.

During the early hours of June 29, it began to rain. It soon turned into a downpour with lightning illuminating the steppe. Throughout the morning, Hoth's panzers and motorized troops struggled to advance on dirt roads and paths that had suddenly turned to mud. Wachtmeister Siegfried Freyer was in 4th Battalion, Panzer Regiment 24. "We could get little traction for the panzers, because the mud clung to our tracks," he remembered. "The panzer would slide this way and that way, and it was hard to keep any kind of formation. The engines were also overworked as we tried to move forward in that slime."

At around 11 AM, the rain stopped and the sun came out, its fiery heat quickly drying the sodden ground. By 1 PM, Hoth's troops were moving forward again at full speed. With Junkers Ju-87 Stuka dive bombers swarming overhead and German artillery blasting Soviet defenses, the 11th Panzer reached the banks of the Kshen River about 10 kilometers west of Volavo. Farther north, German infantry was pushing the Russians back toward Livny.

Upon reaching the Kshen, the 11th Panzer ran into Pavelkin's 16th Tank Corps, which was arriving piecemeal in the area. Since the Soviets did not yet have a force strong enough to counter the Germans, they retreated to await reinforcements. South of Balck, the 9th Panzer was probing 40th Army defenses situated on the eastern bank of the Kshen.

Kempf's XLVIII Panzer Corps was also making good progress. The Gross Deutschland and 24th Panzer crossed the Kshen and established bridgeheads about 40 kilometers south of the 11th Panzer, with the Gross Deutschland advancing 47 kilometers for the day.

To the Gross Deutschland's right, Brig. Gen. Bruno Hauenschild had pushed elements of his 24th Panzer across the Kshen bridgehead and hit Maj. Gen. Mikhail Danilovich Grishin's 6th Rifle Division, which was scattered after a short, sharp fight. As night fell, an advance unit of the division entered the village of Bykovo.

A cluster of trucks was near one of the houses, and upon entering the building, the Germans found maps and documents relating to the Soviet defenses. The Germans had just missed capturing the headquarters staff of the 40th Army. Although the staff had escaped, the material left behind was an intelligence boon. Furthermore, Pasegov had lost command and control over his army, which would be of great help to the Germans in the coming days.

While German forces were battering the 40th Army, General Jany was having a more difficult time as the 2nd Hungarian Army tried to push its way through the Soviet defenses south of the town of Tim. Colonel Vasilii Pavlovich Sokolov's 45th Rifle Division resisted all attempts by the Hungarians to breach its line.

"Tank after tank exploded under our shells," Wachmeister Freyer recalled. "To us it seemed suicidal, but the Ivans still came. It was almost like practice on the firing range as we destroyed the enemy armor."

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-216-0412-16; Photo: Klintzsch

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-216-0412-07; Photo: Klintzsch

ABOVE: A Soviet tank, destroyed in a futile attempt to stem the Nazi tide during the early days of Case Blue, billows smoke on the Russian steppe. OPPOSITE: German troops, some riding motorcycles, advance across a makeshift bridge on the route to Voronezh during late June 1942. The tank seen in the photo is the lightly-armed PzKpfw. II, actually obsolete by the time Case Blue was launched.

On Sokolov's flanks, the 212th and 62nd Rifle Divisions also held their own. Soviet resistance also increased on Parsegov's right flank as Maj. Gen. Nikolai Pavlovich Pukhov's 13th Army, reinforced by Katukov's 1st Tank Corps, occupied positions on von Langermann's left flank.

Late on the 29th, the 1st and 16th Tank Corps launched an attack on the 11th Panzer Division. Although supported by infantry, the attack was poorly coordinated, and the 11th easily repulsed it. The failure showed that the Russians still had quite a way to go when it came to using combined forces and armor en masse.

Undeterred, Stalin directed Golikov to plan another armored attack for the next day. The operation was to use the 1st, 4th, 16th, 17th, and 24th Tank Corps in an effort to halt the German advance and restore a proper defensive line. Soviet forces would have an approximate 2-to-1 advantage in tanks over their German opponents for the attack. Instead of a decisive action, however, it turned into another debacle during the next few days.

Katukov's 1st Tank Corps hit Balck's 11th Panzer once again, and once again the assault was plagued by poor command and control between the corps' subordinate brigades. The same could be said for Pavelkin's 16th Tank Corps, which attacked the lead elements of Balck's division. Ultimately, Pavelkin's surviving tanks were forced to retreat across the Olym River, where they tried to regroup with the remnants of Katukov's corps.

The 4th and 17th Tank Corps went up against the Gross Deutschland and 24th Panzer Divisions. Mishulin's 4th Tank Corps met the 14th Panzer 10 kilometers south of Gorshechnoye, about 62 kilometers southwest of Voronezh. With his corps strung out, Mishulin had only two of his four brigades at his immediate disposal. They were easily defeated by Hauenschild's panzers.

"Tank after tank exploded under our shells," Wachmeister Freyer recalled. "To us it seemed suicidal, but the Ivans still came. It was almost like practice on the firing range as we destroyed the enemy armor."

To make things worse, Badanov's 24th Tank Corps was nowhere to be found on the field of battle. His forces were still assembling at Stary Oskol, about 12 kilometers southwest of Gorshechnoye. Although he must have heard the sounds of battle, he did not have sufficient forces in the area to commit them to the fight.

Meanwhile, Feklenko proved to be an utter failure. He could have joined the battle if he had attacked from Kastornoye, about 16 kilometers away. Instead, he moved his units to and fro, effectively scattering his brigades. With communication between himself and his brigades disintegrating, the 17th proved easy pickings for German combat groups. The 17th was decimated, losing more than three-quarters of its 179 tanks. Feklenko was relieved of his command on July 1.

While the armored battle in the north ran its course, General Paulus launched his 6th Army's assault against Marshal Semen Konstantinovich Timoshenko's Southwest Front. This was the southern pincer of the opening phase of Case Blue. Although the attack had to be postponed a day because of heavy rain, Paulus's troops made good progress in most places on June 30. Swinging his corps to the northeast, he was well on his way to link up with von Weichs' forces. When the connection was made, it would effectively surround Soviet forces south of Voronezh and deprive the Russians of much needed troops to defend the eastern bank of the Don.

The combination of the defeat of Golikov's tank corps and the opening of Paulus's offensive convinced Stavka to order Parsegov's 40th Army and two of Timoshenko's armies, the 21st (Maj. Gen. Alexi Ilyich Danilov) and the 28th (Lt. Gen. Dmitrii Ivanovich Riabyshev) to retreat from their perilous positions to a new defensive line along the Olym and Oskol Rivers. Beginning at dawn on July 2, the Soviet armies attempted to pull back under a hail of German artillery fire. The VIII Air Corps, now commanded by Maj. Gen. Martin Fiebig, added to the chaotic retreat as it strafed and bombed the Russian columns.

The Germans kept up their pursuit. At Gorshechnoye, the Gross Deutschland captured the village after a fight that left 51 Soviet tanks destroyed. On Hörnlein's right flank, the 24th Panzer also kept up the pressure. It seemed that the first phase of Case Blue would be a success.

Stavka's hope of establishing its new defensive line was shattered as German troops crossed the Oskol River. It was now evident that the paramount Soviet objective should be to get as many troops as possible across the Don River.

While things seemed to be going well for the Germans in von Weichs' southern sector, Pushkov's 13th Army was putting up a tougher fight north of Voronezh. Golikov now had his headquarters inside the city, and he was determined to hold it. To bolster Pushkov's defenses, he had Colonel Sarkis Sogomanovich Martirosian's 340th Rifle Division, the 1st Guards Rifle Division, two tank brigades, and Colonel Ivan Fedorovich Lunev's 8th Cavalry Corps (21st and 112th Cavalry Divisions) move forward to reinforce him.

Stalin was also determined to hold Voronezh. With his armies south of the city crumbling, the city's rail hub and the railway lines east of the city running to the southeast became increasingly important. If a new line could be formed behind the Don or the Voronezh Rivers, those tracks would be vital in moving supplies and troops to endangered areas in the south.

On July 3, the situation south of Voronezh continued to deteriorate for the Soviets. The 40th Army was now in total disarray. Hoth ordered Kempf to release Maj. Gen. Sigfrid Henrici's 16th Motorized Division from his corps reserve and send it racing toward Stary

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-216-0414-09; Photo: Carl

Oskol, where it linked up with the advance elements of the 6th Army. Although the 40th Army was now encircled, there were still gaps in the German lines due to the panzer divisions' involvement in the fighting around Voronezh, and many Red Army soldiers were still able to continue their retreat to the Don.

The 28th and 21st Armies were also reeling under combined German armor and infantry attacks. Novy Oskol fell on the evening of July 3, and an attempt to form a new defensive line was only partially successful. During the past few days, the 21st and 40th Armies had lost more than half their fighting strength, and the 28th was not in much better shape.

On the map, it looked like the Russians were facing a tremendous disaster. With two armies effectively destroyed and another barely hanging on, an immense gap was opening between the Briansk and Southwest Fronts. As a remedy Stalin ordered two reserve armies to move forward. The 5th Reserve (Lt. Gen. Vasilii Ivanovich Kuznetsov) and the 7th (Maj. Gen. Vladimir Iakolevich Kolpakchi), each with six rifle divisions, were sent to the front to prevent Paulus from exploiting the gap.

Furthermore, Moscow ordered Lt. Gen. Maksim Antonovich Antoniuk's 3rd Reserve Army (six rifle divisions) to take up positions along the Don River north of Voronezh and Maj. Gen. Fedor Mikhailovich Kharitonov's 6th Reserve Army (seven rifle divisions) to river positions south of the city.

Things were still going well for Paulus south of Voronezh, but the units advancing toward Voronezh started to notice a turn in enemy tactics. North of Krassyana Polyana, about 90 kilometers southwest of the city, the 1st Infantry Regiment of the Gross Deutschland set out to take an objective known as Hill 204. Advance elements of the regiment found manned field positions that spewed out deadly fire as reconnaissance forces pushed ahead. The Germans were somewhat taken aback after the past few days of pursuit. Ivan was finally standing and fighting.

The regiment commander, Colonel Otto Kohler, deployed his 2nd Battalion and then ordered his men to attack. The marshy area in front of the hill made it extremely difficult for armored vehicles to operate, so it was up to the infantry to take the hill in a frontal assault. German artillery was met by Soviet artillery as the men moved forward at 8 PM.

It was a bloody fight. The Soviets manned strongly fortified bunkers and positions that had to be taken in hand-to-hand combat. Flamethrowers were called forward to burn out the Russians, who refused to retreat a step. As men shot each other at close range or hacked away at each other with knives and entrenching tools, it seemed that the battalion might fail to take its objective.

With the issue in doubt, 1st Lt. Fritz Schulz, a company commander in the battalion, took matters into his own hands. Commandeering some assault guns, he led them and his company through the marshy area and around a stream. Attacking the Russians from the unexpected direction, Schulz was in their positions before they could fully react. With the Soviet fire divided, the rest of the battalion was able to take the hill after a costly fight during which Schulz was severely wounded.

The 24th Panzer and troops of the other divisions facing Voronezh were also finding an enemy that refused to retreat until threatened by annihilation. With most of the 40th, 21st, and 28th Armies still retreating toward the Don crossing, these suicidal rearguard actions were vital to their survival. As they noticed the Russians slipping away, it became even more vital that Hoth's armor push south along the Don to form a line behind them.

The situation was apparent in Berlin. If the Soviet units west of the Don were not destroyed, the first phase of Case Blue would be a failure. Although he was pleased with the advance of the 6th Army, Hitler saw the danger of Hoth's panzer divisions getting bogged down in the fight for the approaches to Voronezh. He now concluded that his original plan to take Voronezh by a lightning armored thrust might not be best for the overall operation.

Making a quick flight to von Bock's headquarters, Hitler and his field marshal held a brief meeting. According to historian Paul Carell, Hitler told von Bock, "I no longer insist upon the capture of the city. I also no longer consider

it necessary, and I leave it up to you to move Hoth's armored forces south immediately."

Hitler's comment was a remarkable one for the usually decisive Führer. He did not directly order von Bock to forget about taking Voronezh. Instead, his vague statement left things hanging in the air. Taking the city was supposed to be one of his major objectives, but now it seemed to be of secondary importance. Still, the possession of Voronezh would free up all of Hoth's 4th Panzer Army to swing south in force. The more von Bock thought about his options, the more he wavered.

The situation in the Voronezh sector at the end of July 3 seemed to favor the Germans, even with the increasing Soviet resistance. Straube's XIII Army Corps had advanced almost halfway between the Oskol and Don Rivers in the north, while in the center, von Langermann's XXIV Panzer Corps had advanced east of Kastornoye. On von Langermann's right flank, Kempf's XLVIII Panzer Crops was also halfway between the Oskol and the Don.

As von Bock vacillated, the 4th Panzer Army and 2nd Army continued with their original orders on July 4. The arrival of Soviet reinforcements along Army Group von Weichs' northern flank forced some changes to the original plan. With Straube's XIII Army Corps reporting increased resistance and local counterattacks, von Langermann was ordered to shift his advance toward the northeast to strengthen the infantry. The shift left Kempf to carry on the drive to Voronezh from the west.

Lead elements of the Gross Deutschland reached the village of Devitsa, named for the river it sat next to. Soviet engineers had already blown the bridge that crossed the river, and the advance was halted while a new bridge was hastily constructed. The Gross Deutschland was now only nine kilometers from the Don.

While the bridge was being constructed, the rain stopped and the sun came out. Early in the afternoon, the lead elements of Infantry Regiment 2, Gross Deutschland crossed the Devitsa and continued westward on the drying roads. With the rest of the division following, the spearhead had the Don in sight by mid-afternoon.

Reconnaissance units reported that the enemy was moving troops across the river to the east bank with several ferries. The regimental commander, Colonel Eugen Garski, immediately issued a series of orders to his units. Since the steep approaches to the ferry crossings were unsuitable for building a bridge, he had the crossings brought under artillery fire as soon as the guns could be positioned.

Maps showed that a railroad bridge was located north of the crossings. Garski sent two companies to capture it while the rest of the regiment assembled. As they approached the bridge, the Germans realized that the Russians were unaware of their presence. They noticed that reinforced defensive positions had been erected on the eastern bank, and that a primitive armored train sat on the railway tracks.

An attempt to take the bridge by surprise ran into trouble when Soviet sentries finally noticed the dust raised by the hastily advancing Germans. Mortar and artillery fire began to fall among the Germans, and the armored train soon joined in. Although the train was soon set ablaze by German artillery, the heavy fire prevented the capture of the bridge. Meanwhile, the burning train had also set the bridge on fire, turning it into an inferno that would make it useless.

While the Gross Deutschland was engaged with the Soviets, von Hauenschild was having better luck. About 20 kilometers south of Gorski's men, the 24th was able to establish bridgeheads across the Don south of the village of Ustye. These were soon reinforced, allowing the troops on the eastern bank to beat off several disorganized Soviet attacks.

Faced with the threat from the south, Golikov sought to strengthen Voronezh's defenses. With his front stretched out along the Don, there were few forces readily available. The 13th Army was still holding out north of the city, but it could spare no men. Parsegov had been relieved on July 3, and his replacement, Lt. Gen. Markian Mikhailovich Popov, was in the process of trying to redeploy the 40th Army south of the city. He too had no troops to spare. West of Voronezh, defending the area between the Don and Voronezh Rivers, were the 53rd and 75th Fortified Regions.

A fortified region was planned for defense. It consisted of obstacles and strongpoints that would provide mutual assistance to one another. Troops belonging to fortified regions were largely immobile and were expected to defend their positions to the last man.

In the city proper, there were several undermanned NKVD units that were armed with only light weapons. The city's defenses also included elements of the 3rd Air Defense Division, which contributed antiaircraft weapons that could also be used for ground fire.

The defenses directly north of the city were occupied by Colonel Ivan Illich Ulitin's 232nd Rifle Division. Colonel Aleksandr Nikolaevich Afanasov's Siberian 309th Rifle Division was still arriving by rail. As elements of the division detrained, they were immediately sent to occupy positions south of the city.

With the 24th Panzer assembled for an advance to its south, the Gross Deutschland finally encountered some luck. Foiled in the attempt to take the railroad bridge, Hörnlein spread his division out to search for a new crossing. At 7 PM, elements of Köhler's 1st Infantry Regiment reached the village of Semiluki, about nine kilometers west of Voronezh. To the Germans' surprise, they found a lightly guarded road bridge intact.

National Archives

ABOVE: Red Army soldiers intent on defending the city of Voronezh peer cautiously around the corner of a building in anticipation of encountering the German invaders. At first the German advance during Case Blue made good progress against the Russian defenders. OPPOSITE: This Soviet armored train has been stopped in its tracks by German fire during the Wehrmacht advance. The summer of 1942 was one of renewed optimism for some German generals; however, the situation soon deteriorated amid stiffening Soviet resistance.

The commander of the 7th Company, 1st Lt. Carl-Ludwig Blumenthal, gathered his men and set up a plan of attack. Under the covering fire of a heavy machine-gun section, Blumenthal led his men forward, scattering the Russians on the western side of the bridge while coming under fire from bunkers on the opposite bank.

The river was fairly shallow where the bridge lay, and a Sergeant Hempel jumped into the water. Although up to his neck, Hempel made it across the 75 meters that separated the east and west banks, removing demolition charges with his bare hands. Although the bridge had been damaged, the Germans were able to force a crossing by the end of the day and establish a bridgehead that would be reinforced by troops crossing in inflatable boats.

Considerable time was spent during the night with the crossing and assembly of troops from Kempf's panzer corps for a concentrated attack saving themselves without the fear of a massive encirclement.

As the 24th Panzer and Gross Deutschland prepared to continue their assault on July 5, Stavka ordered Golikov to prepare an armored counterattack northwest of Voronezh. Maj. Gen. Aleksandr Ilyich Liziukov's 5th Tank Army would spearhead the assault.

The 5th Tank Army was spread out, and it took most of July 5 to reach its designated assembly area. German fighters and bombers roamed the sky, with the Red Air Force noticeably absent. With constant harassment from the air, movement was extremely difficult for Soviet armor. Furthermore, Golikov was unable to keep in constant contact with Liziukov's headquarters, which further hampered the operation.

Meanwhile, Kempf's panzer corps was finally advancing toward Voronezh. Overcoming stiffening resistance from recently arrived infantry

National Archives

on Voronezh. Hoth, it seems, was hesitant about committing armored forces to the attack without the absolute certainty that it would succeed. He did not know how weakly defended his objective actually was, so instead of taking Voronezh with the forces at hand, he wasted precious time with the buildup.

While the assault on Voronezh was taking more time than had been contemplated, Paulus's 6th Army was still advancing eastward. His troops were making good progress, but the Russians had the advantage of trading land for time as they pulled back toward the Don. The armored forces of the 4th Panzer Army tied down around Voronezh made the retreat easier by allowing the Soviets on the Southwest Front to concentrate on units, the Germans found themselves fighting in the western outskirts of the city by the end of the day. In Berlin, the Army general staff was getting increasingly nervous about the XLVIII Panzer Corps tied down at Voronezh.

In his diary, Halder wrote, "The Don has been reached on a wide front west and south of Voronezh, but any attempt now to rush fortified Voronezh might result in total dissipation of the attacking power of the 24th Panzer Division and the Gross Deutschland Division…. To me, the situation looks this way: Hoth had the mission to strike for Voronezh but didn't relish the idea, and so approached the operation with reluctance…. Von Bock has become completely dependent on Hoth's initiative and has oriented the offensive toward Voronezh to a greater degree than he could answer for."

July 6 saw several developments in the Voronezh area. The 24th Panzer moved into the western section of the city proper and found itself engaged in house-to-house fighting. Narrow streets hampered the panzers' mobility, and the division's motorized infantry were put in the lead, slowly overcoming Soviet defenses.

On the left and right flanks of the 24th, the Gross Deutschland and 16th Motorized Division also found themselves heavily engaged. Gross Deutschland's forward elements, consisting of two rifle companies riding atop assault guns, reached the city's railroad station before being forced back by a Russian counterattack. Units of Brig. Gen. Helmuth Schlömer's 3rd Motorized Division, which had been transferred from von Langermann's panzer corps, eventually relieved the exhausted division and continued the drive. By the end of the day, the Germans had established a large bridgehead in the eastern half of the city.

To the north, Liziukov was still getting his armor ready for the counterattack on the 24th Panzer Corps. Despite his assembly and communications problems, he ordered Maj. Gen. Pavel Alekseevich Rotmistrov, commander of the 7th Tank Corps, to attack Balck's 11th Panzer at 6 AM. Using his 67th and 87th Tank Brigades, which had massed north of the village of Bolshaya Polyana, Rotmistrov struck a German battle group composed of about 50 panzers in the area around the village of Krasnaya Polyana, about 55 kilometers northwest of Voronezh.

The two Soviet brigades consisted of 96 T-34 medium tanks armed with 76.2mm main guns and a scattering of T-60 light tanks, which carried 20mm cannons. Most of the German panzers were Panzer IIIs mounting 50mm guns, which had great difficulty penetrating the T-34's frontal armor.

Rotmistrov's attack caught the Germans off guard, and the panzers began a hasty retreat to the south. Crossing the shallow Kobylia Snova River some four kilometers south of Krasnaya Polyana, the Germans slowed their retreat, stopping to fire before pulling back again. The Russians kept close to the Germans, resulting in the negation of most Luftwaffe support (in the dust and confusion of battle, the German pilots had a difficult time distinguishing friend from foe).

The battle continued throughout the day, ending only as darkness fell. If the initial two attacking Soviet brigades had been reinforced, the Russian attack might have had serious consequences for the German forces around Voronezh. However, Maj. Gen. Aleksei

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ABOVE: German soldiers take a break after the fall of Voronezh, a city their offensive has thoroughly destroyed. These men have gathered beside a PzKpfw. III tank, a workhorse of the Wehrmacht armored forces during the early years of World War II. OPPOSITE: A Soviet soldier armed with an automatic weapon prepares to meet the German enemy during the defense of Voronezh.

Fedorovich Popov's 11th Tank Corps, equipped with more than 180 tanks, was still detraining as the fighting died down, and Colonel Andrei Grigorovich Kravchenko's 2nd Tank Corps, also with more than 180 tanks, was hours from its designated assembly area.

As the sun rose on July 7, Liziukov ordered Rotmistrov to continue his attack, promising reinforcements. However, only a battalion of the 12th Motorized Regiment and the 59th Tank Battalion (50 tanks) were available to join the fight. As the Soviets pressed their attack, Baessler's 9th Panzer Division arrived on the scene with about 120 tanks, mostly Panzer IIIs. Baessler's timely arrival stopped Rotmistrov along the Kobylia Snova for the time being.

In Voronezh, Kempf's corps worked at rooting out the Russian pockets of resistance remaining in the city. By nightfall, the city had been all but cleared, but the German troops were exhausted and in need of rest. Infantry units were moving up to relieve the mechanized forces within Voronezh, but for the moment Kempf's men would still be on the front line to defend against any Soviet attempts to retake the city.

Stalin's decision to fight for the city had been costly. Maj. Gen. Ivan Danilovich Cherniakhovskii's 18th Tank Corps, which was committed to the battle piecemeal as it arrived, was particularly bloodied in the savage street fighting, having lost the 189th and 181st Tank Brigades with 116 tanks.

The Briansk Front was now almost split in half, and Stavka realized that it was much too unwieldy for one commander. Therefore, on the night of the 7th, Stalin ordered the front to be split in two. Golikov would command the new Voronezh Front, which was charged with defending the area west of the Don north and south of the city itself. Lt. Gen. Nikandr Evlampievich Chibisov would temporarily command the revamped Briansk Front, which would defend the area northwest of the city.

On July 8, Rotmistrov finally had his combined forces in place for an all-out attack on von Langermann's corps. The remaining units of the 11th Tank Corps were now in place, as were the tank brigades of the 2nd Tank Corps. With a numerically superior enemy facing them, the Germans were once again forced to conduct a fighting withdrawal.

The Soviets pressed their attack, forcing the Germans back some six kilometers. When the panzers reached the Sukhaia River in the vicinity of Malaya Pokrovka, they dug in and called for Luftwaffe support. With a static defensive line that could be clearly marked, Stukas and low-level fighters shot up several of the advancing Soviet tanks while German artillery added its deadly thunder to the battle. The swampy terrain in the area also hindered the Russian advance and tactical movement.

For the next few days, Liziukov threw his forces against von Langermann's corps. Some minor penetrations were made, but they were quickly stopped by aggressive German counterattacks. With the arrival of Colonel Otto Butze's 340th Infantry Division, the 11th Panzer was gradually taken out of the line to be used as a mobile "fire brigade." By July 15, the front northwest of Voronezh had stabilized with both sides thoroughly worn out from more than a week of heavy fighting. As more infantry came into the line, both sides worked at establishing strong positions to counter any enemy attack.

In Voronezh itself, Kempf's corps, which was now being replaced by arriving infantry divisions, was still warding off Soviet counterattacks in some areas. Together with the 57th and 168th Infantry Divisions from General Hans von Obstfelder's XXIX Army Corps, Kempf's troops stopped a concerted attack by Lt. Gen. Antionuk's 60th Army (the former 3rd Reserve Army).

After Antionuk's failure to break the German line, the fighting at Voronezh also died down for a time. Although the Germans had managed to secure a bridgehead across the Don and Voronezh Rivers, the strong Soviet defenses facing them prevented any further eastward movement in the area. The 24th and Gross Deutschland finally came off the line, but their surviving panzers were badly in need of repair, and there was also a shortage of fuel, which made immediate deployment to the south impossible.

Stalin's decision to hold the Voronezh sector effectively unhinged an important part of the opening phase of Case Blue. Although poorly coordinated, the Soviet armored attacks northwest of the city forced the 9th and 11th Panzer Divisions to remain in place to prevent an enemy breakthrough. The street fighting and von Bock's hesitation, coupled with Hitler's vague orders to von Bock on July 3, kept the proposed armored gallop along the Don from happening.

There would be no grand encirclement to trap the Soviet forces west of the Don. Even though Paulus's 6th Army was still advancing in its drive toward Stalingrad, the Don crossings in the southeast would remain open for the retreating Russians.

Although battered, those divisions would receive reinforcements to flesh out their ranks and would be used in and around Stalingrad to thwart the German attempt to totally dominate the city. Together with new divisions that were being sent to the area, the divisions saved from the German trap would be part of the Soviet force that would sound the death knell of the 6th Army in the coming year.

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THE 474TH FIGHTER GROUP BLAZED A TRAIL ACROSS THE SKIES OF EUROPE, PROVIDING TACTICAL AIR SUPPORT DURING THE LAST YEAR OF THE WAR.

Lightnings ON THE DECK

BY PATRICK J. CHAISSON

Second Lieutenant William Capron first saw the attacking Messerschmitts as black dots descending rapidly to ambush his squadron of American fighter-bombers. After getting radioed instructions to "jettison bombs and bend throttles," he test-fired the guns on his Lockheed P-38J Lightning and readied himself for battle.

It was Capron's first combat mission.

"They were coming straight for us," he recalled later. "My first reaction was an instant disappearance of the saliva from my mouth … My pulse was pounding." Suddenly unable to breathe properly, Capron switched his oxygen regulator to full.

Chaos erupted as the two sides merged in a "furball" of wildly maneuvering aircraft. Bill Capron hung on his element leader's wing as that pilot, Captain James Austin, flamed an Me-109. Just then, another group of enemy fighters—Focke-Wulf 190s—joined the fight. Two of them expertly peeled Capron away from his wingman and riddled the rookie's P-38.

Forced to abandon the mortally wounded Lightning, Lieutenant Capron released his canopy and shoulder straps. Unable to stand up due to the fierce slipstream, he faced backwards and knelt on his seat cushion. Capron described what happened next: "I pulled with my arms and pushed with my feet and popped out of the cockpit like a cork."

Pulling his ripcord at 3,000 feet, Capron then saw that the pair of victorious German interceptors had not yet finished with him. They were now banking around to strafe the defenseless aviator in his parachute. Even as he frantically kicked his legs and jerked the risers to spoil their aim, both FW-190s roared in with guns blazing. Bill watched in horror as a stream of tracers reached toward him.

This encounter, which occurred over the village of Cambronne-les-Clermont, France, on Friday, August 25, 1944, was an especially costly one for the 474th Fighter Group (FG) of the U.S. Army Air Forces (USAAF). Of 24 P-38s aloft that afternoon, 11 were shot down by Luftwaffe fighters. Survivors remembered it as "Black Friday."

The Americans nonetheless gave as good as they got, claiming 21 of the estimated 74 aircraft arrayed against them. While four Lightning pilots were killed in action, seven others managed to bail out. Five of these men, including Bill Capron, successfully evaded capture thanks to helpful French civilians. Following his close call with the Focke-Wulfs, Capron hid out in the village of Fouquenies for nine days until British tanks liberated him.

Most squadrons in the Ninth Air Force's fighter command operated the sturdy Republic P-47 Thunderbolt, which performed magnificently as a ground-attack platform. Less well-known, however, are the exploits of P-38 Lightning pilots in the close air support role over Europe. Day after day, they struck targets on the ground and in the sky using twin-engined war-

Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighters of the 9th Air Force return to their base after completing a tactical air-support mission against German forces impeding the progress of American troops on the Western Front. The 474th Fighter Group emblem, depicting a jaunty wolf, is inset above.

National Archives

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Commanders of two U.S. Army Air Forces fighter groups flying the versatile Lockheed P-38 fighter, Colonel Clinton Wasem of the 474th (left) and Colonel Howard Nichols of the 370th (right), confer with General Hoyt Vandenberg (center), commander of the U.S. Ninth Air Force, during operations on the European continent.

planes despised by higher headquarters but worth their weight in gold to the men who flew them into battle.

The 474th FG, comprising the 428th, 429th, and 430th Fighter Squadrons (FS), was activated on August 1, 1943, at the Grand Central Air Terminal in Glendale, California. Lieutenant Colonel (soon promoted to colonel) Clinton Wasem of Ohio became the unit's first commanding officer.

A fighter group headquarters' function was to command and control the squadrons underneath it. As such, the 474th had no aircraft of its own. Whenever Wasem or his deputy commander, Lt. Col. Henry Darling, chose to fly, they would borrow a P-38 from one of their subordinate fighter squadrons.

With 25 Lightning fighter-bombers and 316 personnel authorized, each of the three squadrons under Colonel Wasem's command was a robust organization. Its air echelon consisted of an operations section (responsible for planning missions) as well as several support departments: engineering (maintenance), armament (guns), ordnance (bombs), communications, photo, fuels, parachute, tech supply (aviation repair parts), air weather, and intelligence. A chemical warfare team was eventually added to handle "blaze bombs"—drop tanks filled with napalm and fused to explode on contact.

A number of experienced NCOs coordinated all these maintenance activities, each one a line chief responsible for one P-38. The line chief and his crew "mothered" their aircraft, ensuring it was fully ready for action. This devotion led to many long hours spent on the flight line.

Additionally, the squadron's ground echelon included headquarters, administration, mess, motor pool, and supply departments, plus a medical detachment. Able to sustain itself for long periods of time in austere conditions, Wasem's unit could move its base of operations on short notice in order to keep up with advancing ground troops.

The 474th's pilots trained relentlessly throughout their stay in Southern California. Supervised by combat-tested flight leaders like the 428th's Major Earl Hedlund, a veteran of the Aleutians campaign, these newly assigned aviators began the hazardous process of transforming themselves into mission-ready warriors.

Some never made it. One of several fatal accidents to plague the outfit occurred on November 19, 1943, when the 429th's Lieutenant James Ware crashed into a mountain while on a local training mission. He would be among the first of many losses felt by 474th FG airmen during the coming months.

The unit finally received orders for overseas movement in February 1944. First, a continent-crossing train ride took Colonel Wasem's men to Camp Myles Standish, a staging area near Boston. They then set sail for the United Kingdom aboard S.S. *Uruguay* and the troopship USAT *Excelsior*. Their 12-day voyage across the Atlantic passed routinely despite rough seas, poor food, and crowded conditions aboard ship.

By March 13, the outfit was settled into its new home, Royal Air Force (RAF) Station 454 in Warmwell, Dorset. Located just five miles from the English Channel, Warmwell boasted a sod runway and base facilities deemed adequate for the freshly arrived Yanks' requirements. It also sat 77 air miles from Normandy, a region soon to become familiar to everyone in the organization.

Now part of Ninth Air Force's IX Fighter Command, the 474th was one of three Lightning-equipped groups dedicated to tactical operations. The others were the 367th and 370th FGs. Unlike Eighth Air Force fighter units, which primarily escorted Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress and Consolidated B-24 Liberator bombers on long-range raids deep inside German-occupied territory, the Ninth Air Force's mission focused on supporting Allied ground forces. During the spring of 1944, this meant attacking troop concentrations, transportation hubs, and enemy airfields all across France.

A sense of urgency permeated Colonel Wasem's command as it worked to reach operational readiness. Not long after their arrival in Warmwell, the 474th's flying squadrons began receiving a full complement of P-38J fighter-bombers. These planes, however, were mostly hand-me-downs from the Eighth Air Force, which was replacing all its Lightnings with single-engine aircraft.

First flown in 1939, Lockheed's P-38 Lightning possessed many innovative design features. Its twin booms housed the tail assembly, engines, and turbo-superchargers, while a central nacelle—Lockheed called it a gondola—accommodated the pilot and armament. Tricycle-style landing gear afforded excellent visibility during taxi, take-off, and landing.

Weighing 12,780 pounds empty, the J model measured 37 feet, 10 inches in length with a height of 12 feet, 10 inches. Its wingspan stretched to 52 feet. Two Allison V-1710-89 inline engines each generated 1,425 horsepower, propelling the P-38J to a maximum airspeed of 414 miles per hour at 25,000 feet. Cruising speed was listed as 290 miles per hour, while the Lightning's combat radius exceeded 1,300 miles. It could climb to a service ceiling of 44,000 feet.

Contained within the Lockheed's gondola were four Browning .50-caliber machine guns with 500 rounds apiece and a single Hispano-Suiza 20mm automatic cannon armed with 150 rounds. Each Lightning could also carry a bombload of up to 4,000 pounds hung on two underwing hard points. Disposable drop tanks were often fitted in lieu of bombs to extend the plane's range.

In 1942, earlier models of the P-38 became the first American interceptors to fly from

British bases. The type performed poorly as a high-altitude escort over Europe, exhibiting a rash of reliability problems with its powerplant and superchargers. Eighth Air Force commanders also complained about the Lightning's inadequate cabin heat, as well as a lethal tendency for its flight controls to lock up whenever put into a steep dive.

The P-38J, which reached Eighth Air Force squadrons in late 1943, corrected deficiencies with cockpit heat and instrument layout, thus making the pilot's job more manageable. Reliability issues with its Allison engine and turbosupercharger were traced to poorly-refined British fuel, while special flaps fitted to the lower wing eliminated the control-locking effects during power dives.

By then, though, the decision had been made to transfer all of Eighth Air Force's Lightnings to the tactically oriented Ninth Air Force. It proved to be a good fit. Flying at low level, the 474th FG's airmen rarely worried about freezing cockpits or malfunctioning turbo-superchargers. They soon came to appreciate their mount's versatility, ruggedness, and especially that second Allison, which flyers called an "insurance policy," so often responsible for bringing them home even after enemy fire knocked out an engine.

On April 25, 1944, Colonel Wasem led the 474th FG on its first operational mission. That morning, 48 Lockheeds from all three squadrons conducted an uneventful fighter sweep over France. Another patrol departing later in the day likewise returned without incident.

For the next six weeks, Wasem's men escorted Eighth and Ninth Air Force bomber formations while settling into the daily routine of generating two 16-ship sorties per squadron per day, weather permitting. They also honed their skills in the deadly art of dive bombing, learning to keep a sharp lookout for Luftwaffe fighters above and antiaircraft fire below.

These lessons came at great cost. Over the French town of Mézières on May 7, the group was busy shepherding a flock of Martin B-26 Marauders when it was jumped by 15 FW-190s belonging to II Staffel (Group), Jagdgeschwader (Fighter Wing) 2. Lieutenants Jack Holton, Buford Thacker, and Milton Merkle all were shot down, making them the unit's first combat losses. Holton was taken prisoner, and Thacker managed to evade capture and escaped through Spain, while Merkle lost his life to German guns.

Meanwhile, 2nd Lt. Herman Lane plastered an unwary Focke-Wulf with 20mm and .50-caliber fire. No one saw the FW-190 crash, so Lane received credit for a "probable"—but it was good enough to open the 474th's scorebook.

As May turned to June, the signs of impending invasion became unmistakable. First, the officer's club at Warmwell was turned into a top-secret briefing room complete with military police guards on all entrances. The group and squadron commanders were then taken off the flight schedule, because they were "bigoted" (i.e., briefed on the D-Day plan). They could not risk being shot down, captured, and tortured by Nazi intelligence agents.

Lastly, on June 4, line chiefs began painting what they termed "zebra stripes" on the booms and wings of all P-38s. Intended as a recognition aid, these black and white bands were applied to every aircraft likely to encounter friendly forces. Invasion planners also directed the eas-

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: P-38 Lightning fighters of the 428th Fighter Squadron sit tightly grouped at an airfield prior to deployment. These aircraft have not been emblazoned with their D-Day recognition stripes, so this photo was probably taken during the weeks leading up to the June 6, 1944, Normandy invasion at RAF Warmwell airfield in England. BELOW: An efficient ground crew overhauls an engine and other components of a 474th Fighter Group P-38 that has flown many combat hours. The hard work of the ground crews kept the 474th P-38s flying.

National Archives / Fold3

ily identifiable Lightnings to fly low over Allied convoys as a measure intended to prevent nervous shipboard gunners from firing on their own air escorts.

Pilots gathered in their new war room on June 5 to hear Group Operations Officer Major Vernon "Bill" Bowman brief the plan. "Gentlemen," he began, "there's no sense in keeping this a secret any longer. D-Day will be tomorrow, and tonight we're going to patrol the Channel as cover for the landing craft going across."

The invasion was finally at hand. "An outward show of calm prevailed," wrote the 430th FS historian, "but inwardly everyone seethed with excitement." At dusk, 48 Lightnings headed out to screen a designated sector 4,000 feet above the enormous naval armada. Completing their shift at 2300 hours, the 474th's airmen returned home brimming with stories of a sea covered in warships.

National Archives

ABOVE: In these two frames from the gun camera of an Allied fighter plane, a German fighter pilot and his aircraft meet a fiery end in aerial combat. The 474th Fighter Group amassed an impressive combat record in Europe. OPPOSITE: First Lieutenant James F. 'Jim' Byers of the 430th Fighter Squadron completes a strafing run against a locomotive pulling freight cars laden with supplies intended for German troops somewhere in France.

In the meantime, ground personnel witnessed another spectacle. "The sky was filled with planes of all descriptions," recounted the 429th FS history, "all winging their way toward France." Later, a Douglas C-47 Skytrain approached the field with one pilot dead in his seat and gas tanks nearly empty. The big transport straggled to join several other battle-damaged aircraft forced to land at Warmwell. Unit medics rushed to treat the wounded, including two American paratroopers struck by ground fire before they could jump.

June 6 was spent hitting tactical targets in support of Allied invasion troops. Tragedy struck the 430th FS when its well-liked commanding officer, Major Leon Temple, was lost to flak near Carentan along with another pilot, 2nd Lt. Robert Belford. Neither man survived.

While Captain Ralph Embrey stepped up to take temporary command of the 430th, replacement aircraft and pilots began making their way to Warmwell. One new pilot, 2nd Lt. Robert Milliken, reported to the 429th FS along with four confident, even cocky, comrades fresh from flight school. By war's end, two of the five had died in action, while another returned badly burned from an emergency bail-out. Those who survived, according to Milliken, "became hardened to the losses." Death, he observed, was just part of the game.

The relentless nature of their business took its toll on flyers' morale. Worn out by the stress of flying twice-daily sorties into the teeth of deadly enemy fire, airmen began to require occasional rest breaks. Replacements helped shoulder the load. By July, each squadron had on hand at least 41 rated aviators available to man its 25 P-38s.

On the bright-blue morning of July 18, a total of 48 aircraft from the 474th were over France on what they called an "armed reconnaissance"—an especially hazardous operation flown at low level by bomb-carrying Lightnings seeking targets of opportunity such as trains, truck convoys, and supply dumps. Suddenly, 25 long-nosed FW-190s dove out of the sun to ambush them.

The German fighters first targeted a flight of 428th FS P-38s lined up to strike railroad bridges at Merey. These pilots—led by Major Earl Hedlund—quickly abandoned their bomb runs and jettisoned all external stores. Turning into the foe, Hedlund's men prepared to defend themselves.

Help soon arrived. Stacked several thousand feet above the 428th were 32 Lockheeds belonging to the 429th and 430th Fighter Squadrons. Excellent visibility that day enabled those flyers to observe and report the Focke-Wulfs as they attacked, buying their comrades several precious seconds with which to react. Furthermore, the high squadrons were in perfect position to bounce their foe.

"Dogfights raged all over the sky above the little town of Merey, on eastward toward Evreux, north toward the Seine," recorded the 428th's official history. "Within a matter of minutes, there were 190s—and P-38s too—exploding on the ground, and more of the Nazi fighters were pouring smoke on their way to the deck. Wherever one looked, there were P-38s on 190s' tails."

Earl Hedlund had an especially harrowing experience. After claiming one Focke-Wulf damaged and another probably destroyed, Hedlund's Lightning took hits from an Me-109 that had belatedly joined the fight. The unit history recounts what happened next: "His airplane's cockpit full of smoke, broken glass, and leaking coolant, his radio shot to pieces two inches from where he sat, a wing almost torn off and an engine gone, the 428th's commanding officer streaked unconscious toward the deck."

"Somehow, at 1,500 feet," the narrative concluded, "he came to and pulled the P-38 out of its plunge." Hedlund, who had turned 28 two days previously, managed to coax his crippled mount back to Warmwell.

In return for three Americans downed, one from each squadron, the 474th claimed 12 Luftwaffe fighters destroyed. In reality, the Germans admitted losing seven FW-190s from I/JG 26 and III/JG 54, along with an unknown number of Me-109s belonging to III/JG 26.

This savage melee helped cement the 474th's reputation as a "hot outfit." Pilots began wearing silk scarves in their squadron colors (red for the 428th, blue for the 429th, and yellow for the 430th). Also that summer, each flying unit received a radio callsign that was soon adopted as its unofficial nickname. The 428th became known as "Geyser," the 429th "Retail," and the 430th "Backdoor."

On August 1, the 474th FG was assigned to the 70th Fighter Wing, a large operational command charged with providing tactical air support to the First U.S. Army. As those ground forces began their breakout from the Normandy beachhead, Colonel Wasem's organization received orders to pack up and move closer to the front. Its destination: France.

Forming advance, main, and rear echelons,

National Archives

474th personnel crossed the English Channel both by air and by landing craft. Within 12 days, the outfit had closed on its new home, a former apple orchard near Neuilly, about five miles southwest of Omaha Beach.

Conditions on the field, officially known as Strip A-11, were a far cry from those enjoyed at Warmwell. Until support personnel arrived with pyramidal tents and cooking stoves, everyone slept under a shelter-half and ate K rations. Arguments raged over which was worse, the choking dust or ferocious bees. A-11's roughly-finished 5,000-foot runway was covered in prefabricated bituminous surfacing, known as "Hessian Mat," and before planes could take off or land, ground crews had to run off any cows that might have wandered onto the airstrip.

On several occasions, Luftwaffe night intruders bombed the 474th FG's base. No one was hurt, but this unaccustomed proximity to the front lines took some getting used to. So too did the steel helmets and sidearms that everyone was now required to wear.

While at Neuilly, the unit received its first "droopsnoot." This was a P-38J with all guns removed and a bombardier's station fitted in their place. Equipped with a Plexiglas nose, Norden bombsight, and K-24 strike camera, the droopsnoot was designed to lead large formations of Lightnings on precision medium-altitude bombing missions. It rarely worked as advertised, however, as few airmen could synchronize their bomb release well enough to ensure a tight pattern on the target. Dive bombing remained the 474th's preferred method of attack.

The group demonstrated its proficiency with 500- and 1,000-pound demolition bombs on August 23, the day Allied forces entered Paris. This was also the day that two of Colonel Wasem's squadrons caught a large convoy of German cargo vehicles that was attempting to escape across the Seine River near Elbeuf.

First in at 1230 hours was the 428th FS. With Wasem leading, 12 Lockheeds fell upon a "wealth of targets" massed along the riverbank. Despite heavy 20mm and 40mm flak, the "Geyser Gang" destroyed 31 trucks and 2 tanks in their first sortie of the day.

A half-hour behind "Geyser" came 12 more P-38s of the "Retail Gang" (429th FS) led by Bill Bowman. This flight struck hard as well, wrecking an estimated 50 motor transports and setting fire to a large supply dump. Intense antiaircraft fire, though, forced Bowman to bail out near Bernienville. It was eventually learned that the veteran operations officer had been taken captive.

After ground personnel quickly refueled and rearmed their Lightnings, the "Geyser" and "Retail" Squadrons went out again later that afternoon. Discovering "500 to 600 vehicles lined up almost bumper-to-bumper…over one pontoon bridge," both outfits swarmed the area. Shortly after 1630 hours, Earl Hedlund led his 428th through what the unit diary called "a solid wall of flak" to attack the bridge. Two pilots, 2nd Lt. Gene Hetzel and Flight Officer Jack Greaves, abandoned their fatally stricken P-38s to end up as prisoners of war.

The 429th FS, diverted from another mission to finish off that pontoon bridge, went in sometime after 1900 hours. Diving from 6,000 feet, flight leader Captain James Cobb released two 500-pound bombs that demolished the floating span. Withering ground fire then "put a gaping hole in the elevator and stabilizer" of Cobb's Lightning, according to the Retail Gang history, further blowing off "the lower half of his left rudder." The 22-year-old West Pointer managed to get his Lockheed home, an impressive feat of airmanship that earned him the Distinguished Service Cross.

Cobb's DSC was not the only recognition bestowed on the 474th for its work that day. In a general order dated June 14, 1945, the entire outfit received a Distinguished Unit Citation for "outstanding performance of duty in a joint air-ground attack upon retreating enemy forces." The citation further credited Colonel Wasem's command with destroying or damaging 151 motor vehicles, two bridges, a pair of barges, and a supply dump.

The 430th "Backdoor Gang," assigned to support the French 2nd Armored Division, did not participate in this mission. Nevertheless, unit members had their own set of adventures with which to remember August 23. Informed prematurely that French patriots had seized Paris, 13 P-38s took off in late afternoon to witness the city's "liberation." Leading out was the squadron's droopsnoot, with a photographer from Life Magazine in the bombardier's compartment. They had just spotted the Eifel Tower when, according to their historian, "CA-CHUNG!!! All hell broke loose from 88mm

National Archives / Fold3

After experiencing a flat tire on landing, this P-38 Lightning fighter of the 429th Fighter Squadron has nosed over. Note the damage to the propellers as American personnel inspect the wreckage.

heavy flak ringing the outskirts of the city."

"That," noted one participant, "ended the sight-seeing trip."

Nazi Germany remained a determined adversary despite the surrender of Paris, which finally occurred on August 25. That same day—"Black Friday"—Colonel Wasem's men discovered to their horror that the Luftwaffe was still ready to fight for control of France's skies.

Ironically enough, it all started as an attempt to catch those Messerschmitts and Focke-Wulfs on the ground. Group Headquarters assigned "Geyser" and "Retail" Squadrons the task of bombing enemy-held airfields near Herpy, Tergnier, and Chambry. The "Backdoor" Gang remained on detached duty supporting French armor. Not one of the 24 Lightnings flying that afternoon got anywhere near its target.

Somehow forewarned of American air activity, the foe put up over 100 Me-109s and FW-190s in a massive fighter sweep over central France. Some of these machines intercepted another P-38 group, the 367th, near Laon in a low-level encounter that resulted in the loss of 16 Luftwaffe and eight USAAF aircraft.

Meanwhile, over 30 Me-109s of III/JG 76—accompanied by 10 FW-190s belonging to I/JG 26—surprised the 474th FG at 11,000 feet above Cambronne-les-Clermont. Within five minutes, their ranks were swelled by 32 additional FW-190s from II/JG 26. Led by Captains Egon Albrecht and Emil "Bully" Lang, the Germans outnumbered their adversaries almost three to one.

Caught out of position by a superior force of enemy warplanes, the 428th FS suffered heavily. Of 12 Lightnings on the mission, only four returned to Neuilly. Captain Austin, as well as Lieutenants Spiker, Jarvis, Capron, Stone, Zierlein, Packard, and Koch, were listed as missing. The surviving "Geyser" men, however, claimed to have destroyed eight fighters in retaliation for their squadron's grievous losses.

As high squadron, the 429th had a few priceless seconds in which to jettison bombs and maneuver against the foe. After flaming one Messerschmitt at altitude, Lieutenant Lenton Kirkland followed its wingman down to treetop level: "I kept him on the deck until I got within 100 yards," the Georgian wrote, "firing from dead astern. I shot his engine out…and watched him go into the ground."

For the loss of pilots Holcomb, Patterson, and Leahy, the "Retail Gang" claimed 13 planes killed, one probably destroyed, and 13 more damaged that afternoon. Actual German casualties totaled 16—including Captain Albrecht, found dead in his parachute harness.

The shock of "Black Friday" would not wear off for some time. Nevertheless, there were missions to be flown and orders obeyed. On August 28, the 474th FG was again directed to move its base to another freshly constructed airstrip near St. Marceau, France. Known as Advanced Landing Ground A-43, the outfit's new field sat about 100 miles southwest of its current station.

By September 2, Colonel Wasem's air echelon—built back up after the disastrous events of August 25—was flying operational sorties from St. Marceau. The 474th's stay there was a short one, though, as HQ relocated it 70 miles east to Strip A-72 at Peronne just 10 days later. The Allied armies' incredibly swift rate of advance across France necessitated these frequent moves.

Peronne was a former Luftwaffe base. For the first time since Warmwell, unit personnel enjoyed such luxuries as hot showers and covered maintenance facilities. From here, the squadrons all supported Operation Market-Garden, a gigantic Allied air and ground assault on the Netherlands. Flying over Eindhoven on September 17th, Wasem's men bombed and strafed antiaircraft positions that threatened the 101st Airborne Division's drop zones.

Despite the Group's focus on ground attack, a friendly race for acedom developed between two 429th FS airmen, Bob "Swat" Milliken and Lenton "Kirk" Kirkland. Milliken got his first kill, an FW-190, on July 7. By mid-October, he had upped his total to four. Not to be outdone, Kirkland claimed two Me-109s on "Black Friday," another plane on October 21, and two more on December 18. Tragically, the organization's first ace perished after his aircraft was shot down on Christmas Eve, 1944. "Kirk's" loss deeply affected "Swat" Milliken, who in the meantime had become an ace himself by flaming a Messerschmitt over Germany on December 21.

In early October, the 474th FG moved yet again, to Strip A-78, near Florennes, Belgium. Here, they would endure one of the coldest European winters on record while occupying a crowded, bleak airdrome that had been thoroughly wrecked by retreating Luftwaffe personnel.

Low clouds, fog, and frequent rain often kept the squadrons grounded. On Saturday, December 16, the typically miserable conditions at Florennes were accompanied by a disturbing new sound: the unusually loud rumble of distant artillery. Group HQ said this gunfire signified a major enemy counteroffensive boiling out of the Ardennes. So rapid was the foe's attack that German ground troops were at one point rumored to be just 12 miles from Florennes. Pilots prepared to evacuate their P-38s, while ground personnel considered how they would defend the base against Nazi panzers while armed only with pistols and carbines.

Fortunately, those reports proved false, and the 474th stayed put. As weather conditions improved, its Lightnings roared skyward to strike vehicle convoys, trains, and troops in the open all across Belgium, Luxembourg, and Germany. The group's efforts were later recognized

by award of the Belgian Fourragère to all unit members.

The war began to wind down. In February 1945, Colonel Wasem went home for a well-deserved rest—the 428th's Lt. Col. Hedlund took over as group commander. Other changes included a Ninth Air Force decision to convert all of its P-38-equipped outfits to cheaper, less maintenance-intensive single-engine machines. The 367th FG exchanged its Lightnings for P-47 Thunderbolts in February, while by March, the 370th FG was re-equipped with North American P-51 Mustangs.

The 474th FG continued to operate its trusty Lockheeds, most of which by now were natural-metal finished L-models. Sporting uprated V-1710-111 engines, increased fuel capacity, and underwing rocket racks, the organization's new Lightnings showed themselves to be incredibly capable air combat platforms. Covering First Army's drive on the Rhine River, aviators kept busy flying up to three missions per day against ground targets as well as the occasional Luftwaffe warplane foolish enough to go up against them.

After the unit moved to a field near Strassfeld, Germany, pilots began studying their recognition manuals in case of an unexpected meeting with the Red Air Force. That encounter finally took place over Oppelhaun in mid-April, when flight leader Lieutenant Robert Freeman observed 10 bogies circling below him at 1,000 feet. Identifying them as Lavochkin LaGG-3 fighters, Freeman left the little fighters unharmed to report first contact between the Ninth Air Force and its Soviet allies.

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ABOVE: Photographed with his crew chief, fighter pilot Lieutenant Bob 'Swat' Millikin sits in the cockpit of his Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighter. Millikin was an outstanding pilot and one of the 429th Squadron fliers who became an ace in the skies over Europe.
BELOW: As a P-38 Lightning fighter of the 474th Fighter Group lands at a forward base in Belgium, the air tower on wheels in the foreground, with a ground crewman manning the post, is indicative of the mobile aspect of the Ninth Air Force. Tactical air support provided a critical element in the sustained advance of Allied ground forces into Germany.

The 474th's final claim to history came literally minutes before hostilities in Europe ended. At 2005 hours on May 8, 2nd Lt. Kenneth Swift of the "Retail" Gang shot down a Siebel Si 204 transport—the last German aircraft to be destroyed by American pilots in World War II. It was Swift's sole kill, but closed out an impressive record of achievement by one of the USAAF's premier fighter organizations.

From April 25, 1944, to May 8, 1945, the 474th Fighter Group flew 12,954 sorties while dropping 3,920 tons of bombs and firing 241,897 rounds of .50-caliber and 36,656 rounds of 20mm ammunition. Its airmen were credited with destroying 113 warplanes in the air and another 90 on the ground. The outfit also smashed 4,681 enemy armored vehicles, trucks, tanks, railroad cars, and gun emplacements, further damaging an additional 5,681 pieces of equipment.

Measured against this record of success were 80 474th FG pilots recorded as killed or missing in action. Taken together with two ground crewmen who died in accidents overseas, the group paid a heavy cost for its many accomplishments.

Yet the sight of their distinctive twin-tailed Lightnings overhead gladdened the hearts of Allied foot soldiers, who counted on tactical aircraft like the Ninth Air Force's P-38 Lightnings to demolish dangerous ground targets and marauding Luftwaffe fighters. These versatile fighter-bombers played a vital yet unsung role in winning final victory over Hitler's Germany.

Frequent contributor Patrick J. Chaisson is a writer and historian from Scotia, New York.

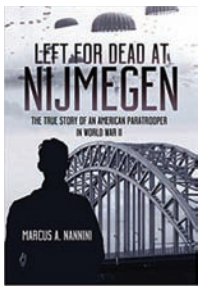
National Archives

By Christopher Miskimon

U.S. Paratrooper Left for Dead at Nijmegen

A paratrooper drops into combat during Operation Market-Garden and soon becomes a prisoner of the Germans.

AS GENE METCALFE FLOATED DOWN TOWARD THE EARTH IN HIS PARACHUTE, the first thing he saw below him was a German soldier walking down a path with girl on his arm. As he watched, the German pushed the woman into a nearby ditch and took off running. Another German in a farmhouse was shooting at a nearby American sergeant, also still descending in his parachute. The sergeant's parachute was oscillating, swinging him back and forth. The German and the sergeant were alternately shooting at each other, the German ducking back into the farmhouse between shots.



As Gene still floated downward, the American sergeant hit the ground. Moving quickly, he got out of his parachute and took off in a sprint, charging toward the farmhouse where the German had taken refuge. Reaching it, he pulled the pin on a grenade and tossed it through a window. Following the explosion, the sergeant rushed into the house to finish the enemy inside. Gene, still in the air, could not tell his comrade he saw the German flee out a back door and run into a nearby forest. Afterward, Gene realized there were German antiaircraft batteries and several machine-gun nests surrounding each battery. These gun emplacements sat at the opposite end of the field Gene was landing in.

Finally, Gene came down, luckily in a spot out of the Germans' line of fire. As he gathered in his parachute, he cut several panels out; he might need them to stay warm later. As he finished, other paratroopers formed around him to make a patrol. More paratroopers moved out to destroy the German guns. Gene stayed with 18 men in the patrol. Together they set out across the meadow toward a tree line. Beyond lay the road toward the Dutch town of Nijmegen.

Later that night, the patrol moved toward the city, walking down a sunken road with Gene in the lead. He felt almost claustrophobic with the berms on each side of him. An intersection lay ahead. As he neared it, Gene realized it would be a good spot for an enemy ambush. He stopped, and the next man in line, a lieutenant named Weaver, almost bumped into him. Before he could answer, they heard something, a sound that the berms and sunken road had masked until then. It was a motor, the sound steadily grow-

American airborne troops assemble along a treeline in Holland during Operation Market Garden. A curious Dutch boy looks on (right), ignoring the danger of a possible German attack.

Karen James
Is a noted journalist who specializes in relationships, romance, and sex

Ask The Expert Love, Marriage, and **Aging Well!**

Men in Italy Don't Need Viagra. Now We Know Why...

A Secret Any Man Can Use!

This month I got a letter from a reader in Texas about a "little secret" that has renewed her love life with her husband!

"My husband shocked me with more energy and passion than he's had in years. He took me in the bedroom like we were newlyweds and gave me a night I'll never forget!"

Tina writes: Dear Karen,

For years my husband and I had a wonderful love life, but when he reached his 50s, he really slowed down and lost some of his old spark, especially in the bedroom. For the past few years, it's felt like we were roommates, not husband and wife..

Well, last month he came home from a business trip in Europe and shocked me with more energy and passion than he's had in years. He took me in the bedroom like we were newlyweds and gave me a night I'll never forget. It was just incredible, and our love life has been like that ever since. So here we are, closer and more intimate than ever... in our 50's!

On his trip, he stayed next to an older, but very energetic Italian couple. Every day he'd see them out riding bikes or playing tennis. If that wasn't enough, the were just as "energetic" at night. Let's just say the hotel walls were paper thin...

Envious, one morning at breakfast he asked how they stayed so "active.". Instead of being embarrassed that they'd been found out, they were positively glowing and happy to share their "secret." The man pulled out a small pack from his leather satchel, gave it to my husband and said "these tablets come from a small town up north and are made from naturally pure extracts, packed with densely rich sexual nutrients. They will give you back all the vigor and passion you had as a young man." Then he laughed and said, "You will become an Italian Stallion – like me!"

Karen, my husband is back to the man I fell in love with. He's full energy, beaming with confidence, and his desire for me is through the roof – I love it! But now the pack is almost empty and we both desperately want more. Do you know about these European tablets and can we get them in the States?

Sincerely,

Tina D., Fort Worth, TX

Tina, you're in luck, I do know about them. Ever wonder why older men from Italy and all over Europe are famous for staying energized, passionate, and sexually active well into their 80's? For years, these men have relied on a unique blossom seed extract to enhance their energy and libido.

Milled on the fertile northern plains, and sold under the brand name Provarin, these pure plant extracts have a legendary reputation throughout Europe. As Giovanni from Milan put it, "It's like bedroom rocket fuel – especially for us older guy!"

All-natural and safe to take, Provarin is a well-kept secret for those in the know. An old-school, family business, they still harvest product by hand and don't do any advertising. Long-time customers and word of mouth ensures their limited stock is sold out every year.

As far as finding it in the States, I know of just one importer – Biotigen Naturals. When I reached out for this article, a spokesman told me if any of my readers call and mention this article, they'll get a substantial one-time discount on a pack of Provarin – plus 30 bonus tablets FREE!

Wow, so there you go, Tina - and the rest of you readers! Just give them a call today. The number is **1-800-506-4531**

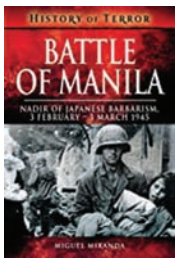
Aren't you glad you asked?

Karen

ing louder. A tank was approaching, and it could not be an Allied one; there were none nearby. As they watched, a German Tiger tank lumbered into the intersection and stopped in the middle of the road, only 100 yards away. Gene had listened to stories about Tiger tanks from the Normandy veterans in his unit. Now one of these enormous metal beasts was sitting right in front of him.

Gene was soon in combat, and an exploding shell launched him through the air. A buddy got to him but thought his injuries so severe Gene would be dead in minutes. The patrol left Gene behind, the only member not to return. The wounded paratrooper survived, however. When he awoke, he was a prisoner of the Germans, the beginning of an ordeal that lasted eight months. Gene's personal story is revealed in ***Left for Dead at Nijmegen: The True Story of an American Paratrooper in World War II*** (Marcus A. Nannini, Casemate Publishing, Havertown, PA, 2019, 229 pp., maps, photographs, $32.95, hardcover).

The story of Gene Metcalfe is well-told in this new work. A combination of battle story and POW tribulation, the book is clearly written and engaging. It paints a vivid picture of the subject's experiences, from his decision to quit school and join the Army to his struggle for survival in a prisoner-of-war camp. The book is well illustrated, including photographs of the featured people, and there are a number of sketches made in the POW camps themselves that show aspects of life in that hellish existence. There are many books about the American airborne in Market Garden; Gene's story is unique and significant.



Battle of Manila: Nadir of Japanese Barbarism, 3 February - 3 March 1945 (Miguel Miranda, Pen and Sword Books, South Yorkshire, UK, 2019, 128 pp., maps, photographs, index, $22.95, softcover)

By early 1945, the Philippine city of Manila was in its fourth year of Japanese occupation. That control was nearly over as the U.S. Army returned to the islands and stood poised to retake the city. Liberating Manila became increasingly important as the Americans realized the threat posed to the thousands of Filipino citizens and foreign prisoners held in internment camps in the city.

Those in the camps were at risk of execution by their captors as the Japanese were inexorably pushed back. Meanwhile, Japanese death squads slaughtered Filipino civilians for

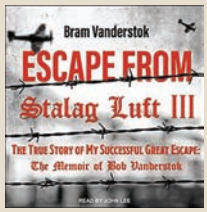
New and Noteworthy

German Flak Defences vs Allied Heavy Bombers: 1942-45 (Donald Nijboer, Osprey Publishing, 2019, $22.00, softcover) This is one of the few books to discuss the effectiveness of German antiaircraft defenses in the bombing campaigns. It reveals them to have been more useful than is often thought.

The Battle of Okinawa: The Pacific War's Last Invasion (Jon Diamond, Pen and Sword Books, 2019, $28.95, softcover) This latest volume in the long-running Images of War series contains over a hundred photos of the bitter struggle for Okinawa. Text and maps accompany the imagery.

Messerschmitt BF 109: The Latter Years (Chris Goss, Frontline Books, 2019, $22.95, softcover) This new book in the Air War Archive series exhibits rare photographs of the Messerschmitt BF-109 from the Eastern Front and the end of the war. It also includes pictures of captured aircraft and those in foreign service.

Scholars of Mayhem: My Father's Secret War in Nazi-Occupied France (Daniel C. Guiet and Timothy K. Smith, Penguin Press, 2019, $28.00, hardcover) Jean Guiet was a member of the secretive British Special Operations Executive. This is the story of his missions behind enemy lines in France.



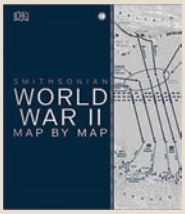
Escape from Stalag Luft III: The True Story of my Successful Escape (Bram Vanderstok, Greenhill Books, 2019, 34.95, hardcover) The author escaped from a German POW camp on March 24, 1944. This memoir lays out his experiences, which were used as a basis for the movie *The Great Escape*.

1931: Debt, Crisis, and the Rise of Hitler (Tobias Straumann, Oxford University Press, 2019, $24.95, hardcover) The German financial collapse of 1931 was decisive in the rise of the Nazis. This book reveals how Hitler benefitted from the calamity.

The Dawn of Carrier Strike and the World of Lieutenant W. P. Lucy DSO RN (David Hobbs, Seaforth Publishing, 2019, $70.00, hardcover) This book studies the rise of carrier aviation in the Royal Navy largely through the records and photographs of William Lucy. Lucy later became Britain's first air ace of World War II.

Secret Wartime Britain: Hidden Places That Helped Win the Second World War (Colin Philpott, Pen and Sword Books, 2019, $42.95, hardcover) England was dotted with secret locations dedicated to the war effort. This work documents many of them, often still largely unknown to the public.

Hitler (Peter Longerich, Oxford University Press, 2019, $39.95, hardcover) The author is an acclaimed German historian. In this new book he presents a provocative view of Hitler and his crimes.



Smithsonian World War II: Map by Map (Various authors, Penguin Random House, 2019, $40.00, hardcover) Containing over 100 detailed maps, this new work graphically lays out the course of the war. Numerous photographs accompany the maps, and this book is suitable for younger readers.

various reasons, or perhaps no reason at all. Even those civilians not deliberately targeted were trapped between two warring armies, one of which was determined to fight to the death. Tragically, retaking Manila from Imperial Japan left the city in ruins, filled with the bodies of soldiers and civilians alike.

This concise volume is packed with the details of the Battle of Manila, told from multiple points of view. It is extensively researched and well illustrated, including good maps. More than a simple retelling of the battle, the author delves into the atrocities committed by the Japanese both before and during the fighting. Attention is also given to the aftermath of the battle and its effects on subsequent Filipino life and history.

Retribution: The Soviet Reconquest of Western Ukraine 1943 - 1944 (Prit Buttar, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2019, 480 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $35.00, hardcover)

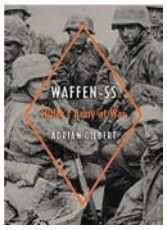
The Battle of Kursk unalterably shifted the initiative on the Eastern Front from Nazi Germany to the Soviet Union. After that critical battle ended in German defeat, their forces were depleted and in a desperate situation. The subsequent Soviet offensive was a nearly constant series of battles conducted by the increasingly sophisticated Soviet Army, which now boasted a force of six million troops. The Germans were pushed inexorably back to the Dnieper River, while the Wehrmacht forces on the Kuban Peninsula south of Rostov were pushed back into the Crimea. By the end of 1943 the front lines were pushed hundreds of miles to the west, with the Red Army poised for further advances. Both sides suffered horribly in the fighting, but despite sustaining heavier numerical losses, the Soviets could make good with new production. Meanwhile, the Germans were losing irreplaceable soldiers and were beginning to run out of supplies and raw materials.

The author is an established expert on the Eastern Front during both world wars, with numerous prior works covering the two conflicts. This new book continues his established pattern of in-depth research and a readable, well-organized narrative. Firsthand accounts of frontline soldiers on both sides are mixed with analysis of high-level decision-making and technological progression to provide a balanced, all-around view of this phase of history's largest conflict.

Arnhem 1944: The Human Tragedy of the Bridge Too Far (Dilip Sarkar, Frontline Books, S. Yorkshire UK, 2018, 362 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, $42.95, hardcover)

The battle for the Arnhem bridges in September 1944 was full of the small tragedies and acts of courage that populate warfare. Private Frank Willingham died trying to save civilians. Sergeant George Thomas died manning a 17-pounder anti-tank gun, having just fired on an enemy position when his gun received a direct hit. Glider pilot Sergeant James Sharrock might have died in some woods during a patrol, but to this day no one knows his fate for sure. Polish paratrooper Czeslaw Gajewnik drowned while trying to swim a river to escape the enemy at Oosterbeek. His body was found on the banks of the Rhine next to a Canadian sapper named Harold Magnusson. Major Frank Tate led a group of British paratroopers out of their position in Arnhem during an attempted breakout. German troop infiltrations were all around, and no one knew for certain where they all were. As Tate's group passed a row of burning buildings, a burst of machine-gun fire snapped through them, and Tate was killed instantly.

All these stories and more are told in great detail in this new book. The author takes an unconventional approach and focuses on the individual stories of soldiers and civilians who died at Arnhem. Each of 18 chapters tells the story of one or two Allied soldiers or local civilians who perished, with an added chapter on the German losses during the fighting. The book is an interesting look at the cost of Operation Market Garden, centered on its final goal of the Arnhem bridges.



Waffen-SS: Hitler's Army at War (Adrian Gilbert, Da Capo Press, Boston, MA, 2019, 512 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, $32.50, hardcover)

The Waffen SS was the military wing of the Nazi Party. It was a major portion of the larger SS organization, which also administered the concentration camps and oversaw intelligence and economic activity. Its members were known for their esprit de corps, bloody determination, and tough-minded fervor in support of Hitler's regime.

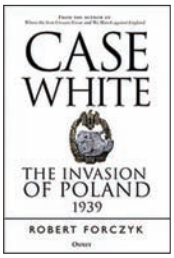
The Waffen SS was also known for its record of battlefield success, a record irretrievably darkened by regular massacres and executions of both enemy soldiers and civilians. It was originally formed as a bodyguard for Hitler himself but later expanded into a major arm of the state through the efforts of Reichsfuhrer SS Heinrich Himmler. Throughout its short life, almost 900,000 men passed through its ranks, with a substantial number of them being Non-Germans, recruited from across Europe to fight the scourge of Communism. In the end, any military excellence they possessed was overshadowed by their infamy and service to an evil regime.

This is the first definitive one-volume history written on the Waffen SS in over 50 years. It chronicles their training, battles, and campaigns in great detail. High-ranking leaders are covered, along with the experiences of troops on the battlefield. The author also takes a fresh look at the importance of the non-German members of the Waffen SS, revealing how they were recruited, why they were needed, and comparing their effectiveness to that of their German counterparts.

Forgotten Bastards of the Eastern Front: American Airmen behind Soviet Lines and the Collapse of the Grand Alliance (Serhii Plokhy, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 2019, 362 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $29.95, hardcover)

At the Tehran Conference in November 1943, American officials proposed a new combined operation to the Soviets. They wanted to open a second air front by establishing American bomber bases in Soviet territory, enabling American aircraft to strike more targets. The Americans pointed out it would aid the hard-pressed Red Army, something Soviet Premier Josef Stalin frequently asked for. The Soviet leader was initially reluctant, remembering the presence of foreign troops on Russian soil during the Revolution only two decades earlier. In early 1944, though, Stalin agreed, and soon American Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bombers were flying from Italy to Poltava in the Ukraine. While the assigned missions were being carried out, though, problems arose that reflected the chasm between East and West. Soviet agents watched the Americans' every move, even preventing them from having relationships with Soviet women. Eventually, the operation failed after a German air raid proved the ineffectiveness of Soviet air defenses.

It is increasingly difficult to find topics on World War II that are relatively unknown, but the author has succeeded here with a history of American flyers in the Ukraine. The author's depth of research is impressive and ranges from high-level discussions between state leaders to the experiences of aircrew and base personnel and their interactions with their local Soviet counterparts. This new volume is a positive addition to the body of work on the air war in Europe.



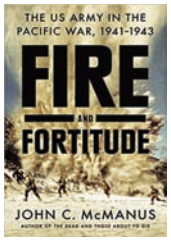
Case White: The Invasion of Poland 1939 (Robert Forczyk, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2019, 416 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, $30.00, hardcover)

Case White was the translation of the German name for the invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939. Many histories portray it as a milk run for the German military, pitting their mechanized might against a force still employing horse cavalry and badly equipped for modern warfare. However, the truth reveals a different story. The German Army's own equipment was largely horse-drawn, and they had small numbers of horse cavalry in their ranks, as well. Only a fraction of their army was fully mechanized. The tales of Polish horsemen charging German tanks are untrue, and while Poland possessed few tanks, those they had matched the bulk of German armor of the time. The Poles also had more anti-tank and antiaircraft guns than is commonly believed. While the Germans were ultimately victorious alongside their momentary Soviet allies, they took heavier casualties than expected and learned some hard lessons about employing their new Wehrmacht.

The author is a well-established writer on World War II, with several books to his credit. This new volume is like his previous work: detailed, well-researched and clearly written. He exposes many myths of the Polish campaign, revealing the realities of the war's first European campaign. The book also covers the escape of thousands of Polish troops who went on to fight elsewhere and the brutality inflicted on Poland by the later occupation.

Fire and Fortitude: The US Army in the Pacific War, 1941-1943 (John C. McManus, Dutton/Caliber, New York, NY, 2019, 640 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $34.00, hardcover)

At the height of the Pacific War, there were



about 250,000 Marines serving in the theater. By contrast, there were 1.8 million soldiers in the Pacific by war's end. Army troops were at Pearl Harbor, fought for months to the bitter conclusion in the Philippines, and were murdered in the Bataan Death March. The U.S. Army went to Australia when that nation seemed in danger of invasion before joining the Marine Corps in the deadly, hellish slog of taking one island after another away from Imperial Japan. Army troops went ashore at Makin Island in the Gilbert chain and continued across the South and Central Pacific. The Army's advance took time, as America started the war an unprepared, regional power and had to evolve into the military giant it became in just a few years. Along with the nation, the Army learned and grew, becoming an instrument that stood fully alongside the other services as they fought Japan first to a standstill and then into retreat.

The Pacific is generally seen as a Navy and Marine Corps war, with the massive contribution of the Army minimized or simply neglected. This new book delves into the personalities and actions of the major leaders, along with the brutality of the actual fighting and what it portended for the future. The author also writes about how the Army's work with various allies affected the war and later postwar events, particularly in China and Southeast Asia. This is a sweeping, interesting account of an army at war.

The Hidden Nazi: The Untold Story of America's Deal with the Devil (Dean Reuter with Colm Lowery and Keith Chester, Regnery History, Washington, D.C., 2019, 396 pp., photographs, notes, bibliography, $29.99, hardcover)

There were many questions surrounding the fate of SS General Hans Kammler. During World War II, Kammler was responsible for the construction of concentration camps and slave labor sites. Among his many crimes, he personally changed the design of the Auschwitz camp to increase crowding. This ensured the prisoners' increased suffering from epidemic disease. Albert Speer, the Third Reich's Armaments Minister, referred to Kammler as Heinrich Himmler's "most brutal and most ruthless henchman." One of the

Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

THE STEALTH THRILLS OF SNIPER ELITE V2 RETURN IN REMASTERED FORM AND REFIGHT: THE LAST WARSHIP AIMS FOR WARSHIP GLORY

SNIPER ELITE V2 REMASTERED

PUBLISHER REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS • **GENRE** SHOOTER• **SYSTEM** PS4, XBOX ONE, PC • **AVAILABLE** NOW

Even with all the improvements made in a series over the years, sometimes it's a breath of fresh air to go back to the earlier roots. That's what Rebellion Developments has given everyone a chance to do with *Sniper Elite V2 Remastered,* which, with the exception of some visual polish, is pretty much the exact same game many of us played back in 2012. If that sounds like a good time to you, then you probably already have a copy. For everyone else, it's going to depend on how easily you can jump backwards in a series that has made some major improvements in recent years.

For those new to the *Sniper Elite* series, it's all about the thrill of stealth combined with the payoff of absurdly brutal long-distance takedowns. As Lieutenant Karl Fairburne, players are tasked with eliminating dangerous Nazi targets in the final

days of World War II. These assassinations culminate in the aforementioned payoff: the X-Ray Kill Cam that shows how the shot goes down in slow motion. Seeing the damage you've done in x-ray vision is always entertaining, and it's almost too over the top to really be considered gruesome. It's the stealth sniper game equivalent of a *Mortal Kombat* finishing move.

This is all going to be pretty straightforward for anyone who hasn't long since moved past V2 and on to improved followups like the third and fourth entries. Those games did a great job of both enhancing the artificial intelligence of enemies and crafting a more attractive overall visual design. *Sniper Elite V2* is fun, but its environments are drab and its enemies are as dumb as rocks. On the other hand, there's a special sort of charm to the smaller levels that makes for a more easily digestible experience.

If you played *Sniper Elite V2* the first time around and went on to have fun with later games in the series, there's little reason to go back unless

you had specific missions or moments you loved. The best thing *Sniper Elite V2 Remastered* has to offer is a more refined and touched-up way to snipe your way through the last days of war for the first time. Give *V2* a shot and then prepare to be wowed as you move on to the sprawling locales of *Sniper Elite III* and *Sniper Elite 4.*

REFIGHT: THE LAST WARSHIP

PUBLISHER FANTIAN • **GENRE** STRATEGY **SYSTEM** PC, PS4 (Soon) • **AVAILABLE** NOW

Refight: The Last Warship is a free-to-play strategy game from Chinese developer Fantian, and it originally launched on PC via Steam Early Access back in May 2019. That wasn't the last stop for this intense survival sim, though, because a PlayStation 4 port was recently revealed at the ChinaJoy 2019 event. At a glance *Refight* looks more or less like another take on the hugely successful *World of Warships* and its contemporaries, but it has some potential to break out on its own once it makes its way out of Early Access and onto PS4 and Steam proper.

Survival is the name of the game, especially considering the limited resources players begin with in each battle. Materials appear randomly, but it's going to take some serious searching to obtain the right supplies and further strengthen your battleship for the fights to come. Toss in harsh environmental elements like rain, fog, and blizzards, as well as the constant creeping threat of the enemies that surround you, and you have an imposing environment that adds tension to the otherwise standard battle royale style combat.

There are additional strategies to master beyond choosing the right warships for the mission at hand and knowing which weapons will take down certain enemies most effectively. Players also have to consider the ability to capture nearby islands to improve their odds in battle, especially since they serve as such an enticing vantage point for added protection and relief from the oncoming volleys of enemy torpedoes.

If you're wondering what you can expect out of the Early Access version of this game, there are a few limitations to keep in mind. The scope hasn't fully been ironed out at this point, but right now players can choose from three warships and begin navigation of the sea through a handful of different channels. Some of the warship defense components that can be collected along the way include ammunition and supplies, as well as an engine, naval weaponry, and more. Thirty players can go up against one another either as single players or as a team, with 15-on-15 action supported. Developer Fantian promises to expand upon these and other features by the time *Refight*'s full version is available.

At the time of this writing, *Refight: The Last Warship* has a ton of rough edges that need to be worked out. Once it leaves Early Access and debuts on consoles and PC as a full-fledged warship rumbler, we'll be sure to check in to see if it's worth your time. For now, participation is only really recommended to those who want to provide feedback, or simply to see what else waits in the waters beyond the heavy hitters like *World of Warships*. It is free, though, so the only resource you'll be risking is time. □

commandants of Auschwitz even stated Kammler "demanded too much work from a man." The SS general was reported to have committed suicide at the end of the war, though there was no proof of his death.

The authors of this book used government documents unseen since the 1940s to reveal that Kammler was alive and in American custody for months after his supposed suicide. He was never put on trial for his crimes and never reentered the public eye. This interesting investigative story delves into why Kammler was kept alive and unpunished despite his guilt. The book contains an extended cast of characters from Nazi Germany as it recounts Kammler's actions both during and after the war and the various people he interacted with as he did his devil's work.

Spitfire! The Full Story of a Unique Battle of Britain Fighter Squadron (Dilip Sakkara MBE, Air World Books, Philadelphia, PA, 2019, 484 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, $59.95, hardcover)

"I found myself alone and surrounded by Me-109s, so decided attack was the best form of defence: the usual fight ensued during which I definitely hit at least five of them, but only two were definitely shot down, both in flames." These words from Wing Commander George Unwin are at the same time humble and reserved while speaking to the aggressiveness and esprit de corps of the British fighter pilot during the Battle of Britain. In particular, the RAF's No. 19 Squadron fought its portion of the war with dedication and courage, through alternating periods of boredom, terror, and action.

This book covers the men of No. 19 Squadron in great detail, treating them as a "Band of Brothers" within the Royal Air Force, exemplary of that service's activity during the war. The book is full of personal vignettes of both pilots and aircrew, revealing their daily lives both in and out of combat. The author has had an interest in the unit for decades through its commander, Squadron Leader Brian Lane. He wrote a prior book on the unit, but this work takes advantage of the extensive information he has collected since that original work, making this new book both a second edition and a new work of it own. The book is well illustrated, with many personal and technical photographs to round out the in-depth text. A set of appendices provides added useful data. □

Profiles

Continued from page 17

Henry L. Stimson, one of Patton's longtime benefactors, and General Eisenhower, attended.

Patton soon became a folk hero in the tradition of Daniel Boone, Buffalo Bill, and Sergeant Alvin C. York. Published in 1947, his memoir was a bestseller, and buildings, streets, squares, and parks were named for him in both Europe and the United States. He was remembered with numerous plaques and busts, a museum at Fort Knox, Kentucky, a stained-glass window at the Anglican Church of Our Savior in San Gabriel, California, and a bronze statue facing the library at the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, New York.

While Patton was feared and respected by his men, he was not loved in the way that American Generals James M. Gavin and William O. Darby, or British Generals William Slim and Brian Horrocks, were loved. Many a GI groused, "Old Blood and Guts? Sure, our blood and his guts." In North Africa, Sicily, and Europe, though, Patton proved to be a master at instilling discipline and fighting spirit in green citizen soldiers. Every veteran of the Third Army was proud to say that he served under him.

As a tactician, Patton sometimes proved first-rate and sometimes average, but his use of weapons and air support was probably unequaled. "He knew the value of combined arms," said U.S. Army historian Hugh Cole, "and he had a cavalryman's eye for ground." He was an outstanding trainer and tactical innovator. When war came, he was one of the few American commanders prepared to fight the Germans. "Patton," wrote British biographer Hubert Essame, "was unquestionably the outstanding exponent of armored warfare produced by the Allies in the Second World War."

The image that Patton rehearsed and fostered was that of a fierce swashbuckler who relished war. "He liked to fight. He'd rather fight than eat," observed General Paul Harkins. Yet he was affected often by death and suffering and was not a warmonger. Major General Isaac D. White, who commanded the 2nd Armored ("Hell on Wheels") Division early in 1945, said, "He loved the opportunity that war presented to use the skill, the leadership, and the courage his profession required, as a surgeon loves his profession, but not disease, illness, and injury."

Author Michael D. Hull passed away several months ago. He had written extensively for WWII History *for many years and resided in Enfield, Connecticut.*

Insight

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was to erase all traces of the child's Polish heritage. They would learn the German language, and their birth certificates would be falsified. They would now have a German name instead of a Polish one, and they would have a German place of birth. Once they were suitably "Germanized," they would be available for adoption by a suitable SS family. The SS families, as well, were purposely kept in the dark and made to believe that they had adopted an orphaned Aryan child.

Ingrid von Oelhafen was a 15-year-old girl who was walking down the street in Hamburg after the war when she came across a Red Cross poster. The poster was captioned, "WHO KNOWS OUR PARENTS AND OUR ORIGINS?" When she looked at the poster, she became astonished. One of the pictures was a baby photo of herself. Later in life, she went through an old chest of her mother's and found a receipt from a Lebensborn home made out to the von Oelhafens to adopt a two-year-old girl. Her real name was Erika Matko, and she had been taken away from her parents in Cilli, Yugoslavia, in August 1942, when she was only nine months old because she was deemed racially valuable.

She was sent to the Lebensborn home in Kohren-Sahlis, where she stayed for almost two years. She learned to speak German from the nurses there before the von Oelhafen family adopted her. In an unusual twist, the SS gave the Matko family a replacement baby girl, whom they also named Erika. Where this girl came from is a mystery.

It is believed that approximately 200,000 children were stolen over the course of the war by the Nazis in Poland, Yugoslavia, Ukraine, Hungary, and Romania. After the war was over, a team headed by Dr. Roman Hrabar worked with the United Nations to try to reconnect these Lebensborn children with their rightful parents. It is estimated that only a small fraction of these stolen children were ever reunited with their biological parents.

In many instances, the paperwork was lost and they could not be traced. In other cases, either the German families or the children themselves refused to believe the truth. It is estimated that there are now hundreds of thousands of descendants of these children who were stolen by the Nazis during World War II.

Brent Douglas Dyck is a history teacher in Bradford, Ontario and a frequent contributor to WWII History.

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