Patton Takes Command

CMG 02313

WWII HISTORY

SS PANZER ARMY

HITLER'S FINAL OFFENSIVE

Hell in the Hürtgen Forest

NAVAL AIR POWER

Epic Battle of Midway

+ DECODING GERMAN RADAR, LEND-LEASE, NISEI HERO JOE SAKATO, RIVER PLATE CRUISERS, TOUGH FIGHT FOR BIAK, AND MUCH MORE

DECEMBER 2021

$6.99US $7.99CAN

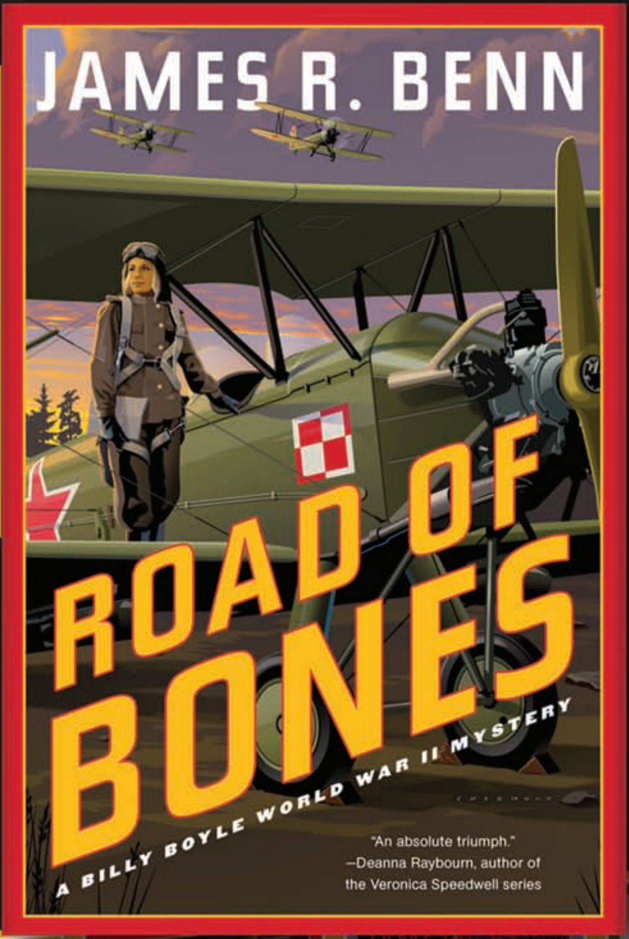
RETAILER: DISPLAY UNTIL NOV. 8

WARFAREHISTORYNETWORK.com

WWII HISTORY - DECEMBER 2021 Volume 20, No. 6

DISCOVER JAMES R. BENN'S
BILLY BOYLE WWII MYSTERIES

On sale September 7, 2021


JAMES R. BENN
ROAD OF BONES
A BILLY BOYLE WORLD WAR II MYSTERY
"An absolute triumph."
—Deanna Raybourn, author of the Veronica Speedwell series

"An absolute triumph . . . Benn brings WWII so vividly to life, you'll hear the whistle of shrapnel."

—DEANNA RAYBOURN,
New York Times bestselling author of the Veronica Speedwell series

"Enormously entertaining."

—ALEX KERSHAW,
New York Times bestselling author of *The Bedford Boys*

JAMES R. BENN
THE RED HORSE
A BILLY BOYLE WORLD WAR II MYSTERY
SAINT ALBANS Pauper Lunatic Asylum
"A high-stakes, dangerous race to find a killer."
—Tom Straw, New York Times bestselling author
A BLIND GOODBYE
THE REST IS SILENCE
THE DEVOURING
TERROR
SOHO CRIME

Now in paperback

Explore the complete series at
DiscoverMysteries.com

• AVAILABLE WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD •

WORLD WAR SUPPLY®

US HELMET STEEL POT WITH LINER

$49.99

US M1936 SUSPENDERS

$24.99

26 M1 GARAND 8RD ENBLOC CLIPS

$34.99

24/7 Order Line:
(616)682-6039

US M1 GARAND M1923 CARTRIDGE BELT KHAKI

$39.99

M1942 FIRST AID POUCH

$12.99

M1 GARAND CANVAS RIFLE SLING

$19.99

Contents

December 2021

Features

32 Patton From Gafsa to El Guettar
General George S. Patton, Jr., led the American II Corps though Tunisia and defeated the Germans in the first American victory since the debacle at Kasserine Pass.
By Kevin M. Hymel

40 Epic Stand at Midway
American forces inflicted a crushing defeat on the Japanese Imperial Navy and changed the course of World War II in the Pacific during the Battle of Midway.
By Michael E. Haskew

52 Hell in a Dark Wood
In the autumn of 1944, the U.S. First Army was chewed up in the Hürtgen Forest where it had to contend with well-executed counterattacks by the Germans.
By Raymond E. Bell

60 Crisis at Biak
MacArthur's costly victory paved the way for his return to the Philippines.
By Marc D. Bernstein

68 Desperate Offensive for Oil
The German military launched Operation Spring Awakening in 1945 to preserve access to oil fields in Hungary, but the Red Army responded decisively.
By Martin Dougherty

WWII HISTORY

Columns

06 Editorial
The ashes of former Japanese Prime Minister Tojo and six other war criminals were scattered at sea.

08 Ordnance
The survivors of the battle off the port of Montevideo stir the debate over the definition of the "cruiser."

14 Profile
Joe Sakato exhibited tremendous courage in action, his Distinguished Service Cross upgraded to the Medal of Honor half a century after World War II ended.

20 Insight
When the United States 'loaned' Great Britain 50 over-aged destroyers in exchange for bases, the British put them to good use.

26 Top Secret
A valorous Canadian air crew executed its duty during a fateful mission to decode the Luftwaffe's Lichtenstein radar.

76 Books
Indian and British troops fought a bloody, difficult war against the Japanese in Burma.

80 Simulation Gaming
The *Company of Heroes* series returns with a heaping plate of strategy centered on the Mediterranean Theatre.

Patton Takes Command
WWII HISTORY
SS PANZER ARMY
HITLER'S FINAL OFFENSIVE
Hell in the Hürtgen Forest
NAVAL AIR POWER
Epic Battle of Midway
DECEMBER 2021
DECODING GERMAN RADAR, LEND-LEASE, NISEI HERO JOE SAKATO, RIVER PLATE CRUISERS, TOUGH FIGHT FOR BIAK, AND MUCH MORE

Cover: A German Panther tank on the move in Hungary in January 1945.
See story page 68.
Photo: Alamy / SZ Photo

WWII History (ISSN 1539-5456) is published six times yearly in February, April, June, August, October, and December by Sovereign Media, 6731 Whittier Ave., Suite C-100, McLean, VA 22101. (703) 964-0361. Periodical postage paid at McLean, VA, and additional mailing offices. *WWII History,* Volume 20, Number 6 © 2021 by Sovereign Media Company, Inc., all rights reserved. Copyrights to stories and illustrations are the property of their creators. The contents of this publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part without consent of the copyright owner. ***Subscription services, back issues, and information:*** **(800) 219-1187** *or* write to ***WWII History*** **Circulation, WWII History, P.O. Box 1644, Williamsport, PA 17703.** Single copies: $6.99, plus $3 for postage. Yearly subscription in U.S.A.: $24.95; Canada and Overseas: $38.95 (U.S.). Editorial Office: Communication with the editorial staff is conducted electronically. Email Michael Haskew, Editor, at mhaskew3734@comcast.net. Articles, proposals, and synopses should be sent as Word attachments; please include a brief description of your submission within the body of your email. Authors' guidelines are available upon request. *WWII History* assumes no responsibility for the loss or damage of unsolicited material. **POSTMASTER: Send address changes to WWII History, P.O. Box 1644, Williamsport, PA 17703.**

A Powerful Symbol of Military Might!

A Newly Tooled Die Cast Honors the Truck That's Backed America's Troops

Measures a FULL 14½" Long!

Superior die cast with rotating gun assembly!

This rugged 1:16-scale die cast boasts a removable bench in the cargo bed.

High-mobility multi-purpose vehicle now in precise 1:16-scale die cast!

Symbolic of the military power and technological superiority of the U.S. Armed Forces, the high mobility multi-purpose wheeled vehicle has achieved iconic status around the world.

Not intended to be a combat vehicle, this muscular truck can easily navigate treacherous terrain and provide much-needed protection for forces on the ground.

All new die cast is loaded with precisely engineered details!

Now the **"1:16-Scale High Mobility Multi-Purpose Wheeled Vehicle"** honors this iconic workhorse with a die cast boasting **NEW TOOLING** and features that have made it one of the greatest tactical trucks in modern military history.

Engineered of heavyweight die cast, this sealed replica is precisely rendered down to every detail!

Presented by Hamilton; distributed by CS Toys and manufactured by Golden Wheel.

- **Roof-mounted turret**
- **Replica narrow taillights**
- **Adjustable side view mirrors**
- **Rear tow hooks and tow hitches**
- **Military-inspired matte paint finish**
- **Rolling rubber wheels; dual jerry cans**

HURRY! Quantities of this value-priced die cast are limited.

Send no money now. The **"1:16-Scale High Mobility Multi-Purpose Wheeled Vehicle"** is payable in three affordable payments of $39.99*; with only the first payment billed prior to shipment.

Your satisfaction is guaranteed!

Our *365-Day Guarantee* assures your total satisfaction or your money back. Don't delay. Let us hear from you today!

09-09678-001-BIH

FOLLOW US ON

Fastest way to order:
HamiltonCollection.com/MilitaryReplica

MAIL TO:
Presented by
The Hamilton Collection
A Division of ***The Bradford Exchange***
9204 Center For The Arts Drive, Niles, Illinois 60714-1300

SEND NO MONEY NOW!

☐ **YES!** Please reserve the **"1:16-Scale High Mobility Multi-Purpose Wheeled Vehicle"** for me as described in this announcement.

Name____________________
(Please print clearly.)
Address____________________
City__________ State____ Zip______
Email (Optional)____________________
Signature____________________

09-09678-001-E70101

***Add $21.99 total for shipping and service, and sales tax; see HamiltonCollection.com.** *All orders are subject to product availability and credit approval.* Allow 6 to 8 weeks after initial payment for shipment.

Editorial

The ashes of former Japanese Prime Minister Tojo and six other war criminals were scattered at sea.

ONE OF THE ENDURING QUESTIONS SURROUNDING POST-WORLD WAR II TOKYO war crimes trials has apparently, at long last, been answered.

In the early morning hours of December 23, 1948, former Japanese Prime Minister Hideki Tojo and six other convicted "Class A" war criminals were executed by hanging at Sugamo Prison in Tokyo. The bodies were cremated, but from there the story of the disposition of the ashes has been buried in the recesses of the National Archives in Washington, D.C. The circumstance has remained a mystery—particularly among the Japanese people—for more than 70 years.

Last spring, Hiraoki Takazawa, a professor at Tokyo's Nihan University, revealed that he had located documents that provide a detailed description of the hours that followed the executions and cremation. At the National Archives, Takazawa located documents revealing that the ashes were scattered from a U.S. Army aircraft roughly 30 miles off the coast of Japan and east of Yokohama. The reason for the cremation and covert scattering was ostensibly to prevent Tojo loyalists and radical, diehard nationalists from using an interment location as some sort of shrine.

The six other war criminals included Kenji Doihara, Koki Hirota, Seishiro Itagaki, Heitaro Kimura, Iwano Matsui, and Akira Muto, each of them responsible as a high-ranking military officer or civilian official for the notorious "Rape of Nanking" during the Second Sino-Japanese War or for atrocities committed in other areas of Southeast Asia and the Philippines against civilian populations or prisoners of war.

Among other documents Takazawa located a memorandum stamped "secret" that had been authored by U.S. Army Major Luther Frierson. It reads in part: "I certify that I received the remains, supervised cremation, and personally scattered the ashes of the following executed war criminals at sea from an Eighth Army liaison plane ..." Frierson wrote a more detailed account in early 1949, further noting, "We proceeded to a point approximately 30 miles (48 kilometers) over the Pacific Ocean east of Yokohama where I personally scattered the cremated remains over a wide area in accordance with letter GHQ, 13 August 1948."

The major certified that the corpses were fingerprinted for identification purposes, placed in caskets, and then loaded onto a 2 ½-ton truck at Sugamo. A heavily guarded motorcade left the prison minutes later, arriving at a U.S. Army military graves-registration platoon facility in Yokohama just after 1:30 AM.

The bodies arrived at the crematorium at 7:25 AM and were quickly placed into cremation ovens. The entire facility was heavily guarded. The ashes were deposited into separate urns, and extreme care was taken to remove the residue in its entirety. However, some ashes belonging to at least one of the condemned may have been surreptitiously scooped up and saved for the family.

Although there were reportedly no ashes to place at the sacred Shinto Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, where 2.5 million Japanese war dead are revered as sacred spirits, the seven executed war criminals were nevertheless honored with enshrinement in 1978. Since then, the Yasukuni Shrine has been a source of controversy, particularly regarding Japanese relations with China and South Korea, whose peoples suffered mightily at the hands of Japanese aggression.

When the Associated Press contacted Prime Minister Tojo's great grandson, Hidetoshi Tojo, the descendant remarked that he was pleased with the recent news. "If his remains were at least scattered in Japanese territorial waters ... I think he was still somewhat fortunate. I want to invite my friends to lay flowers to pay tribute to him...."

Takazawa speculated, "The entire operation was tense, with U.S. officials extremely careful about not leaving a single speck of ashes behind, apparently to prevent them from being stolen by admiring ultra-nationalists. I think the U.S. military was adamant about not letting the remains return to Japanese territory ... as an ultimate humiliation."

Regardless of the U.S. and Allied intent, the international tribunal had rendered its verdict. The sentence had been carried out. Humiliation? Perhaps. Retribution? Certainly.

—*Michael E. Haskew*

WWII HISTORY

Volume 20 ▪ Number 6

CARL A. GNAM, JR.
Editorial Director, Founder

MICHAEL E. HASKEW
Editor

MICHAEL FOWLER
Managing Editor

SAMANTHA DETULLEO
Art Director

KEVIN M. HYMEL
Research Director

CONTRIBUTORS:
Glenn Barnett, Patrick J. Chaisson, Martin Dougherty, Michael E. Haskew, David H. Lippman, Joseph Luster, Michael D. Hull, Kevin M. Hymel, Christopher Miskimon, Neil Taylor

ADVERTISING OFFICE:
BEN BOYLES
Advertising Manager
(570) 322-7848, ext. 110
bboyles@sovmedia.com

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

MARK HINTZ
Chief Executive Officer

ROBIN LEE
Bookkeeper

STEPHFANIE RUPP
Subscription Customer Service
stephfanie.rupp@psaemail.com
(570) 322-7848, ext. 140

COMAG MARKETING GROUP
WORLDWIDE DISTRIBUTION

SOVEREIGN MEDIA COMPANY, INC.
6731 Whittier Avenue, Suite C-100
McLean, VA 22101-4554

SUBSCRIPTION CUSTOMER SERVICE
AND BUSINESS OFFICE:
2406 Reach Road
Williamsport, PA 17701

(800) 219-1187

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

WARFAREHISTORYNETWORK
www.WarfareHistoryNetwork.com

A TIME OF FREEDOM

View the intricate workings through the exhibition back

There's never been a better time to celebrate the freedom we have in the United States. In honor of those who fought bravely to preserve our freedoms we proudly present the most patriotic coin that's ever existed in a classic timepiece that recalls a simpler era.

The dial features the obverse of a genuine Walking Liberty half-dollar — the American Eagle — that has been skillfully cut cross-sectionally. Minted from 1916 to 1947, and made of 90% silver, art historian Cornelius Vermeule called it "one of the greatest coins of the United States — if not the world." Every time you look at this timepiece you'll see our nation's bird with its wings spread wide with pride. Those wings represent the best of our nation, our open embrace of freedom, and our indomitable spirit.

The features on this timepiece are stunning, from the beautifully-etched, gold-covered stainless steel case and blue Breguet hands to an exhibition back revealing the genius and beauty of the 19-jewel movement. The heirloom quality of these timepieces is garnering top dollar, many selling for as much as $16,000. However, after decades in the luxury watch industry, we know how to make remarkable timepieces affordable.

"The best pocket watches are more than just timekeepers. They are living reminders of the fascinating tradition of horology and a long-standing signal of taste and class."
— Luxe Digital, 2021

100% Satisfaction Guaranteed. Try the ***Liberty Eagle Pocket Watch*** for 30 days. If for any reason you aren't happy, just send it back for a refund of the item price.

Limited Availability. This is an opportunity to own a piece of American history. Don't let time run out. Call today!

Liberty Eagle Pocket Watch ~~$399~~†

Offer Code Price **$199** + S&P **SAVE $200!**

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

1-800-333-2045

Your Offer Code: LBW170-01

Stauer®

14101 Southcross Drive W.,
Ste 155, Dept. LBW170-01,
Burnsville, Minnesota 55337
www.stauer.com

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

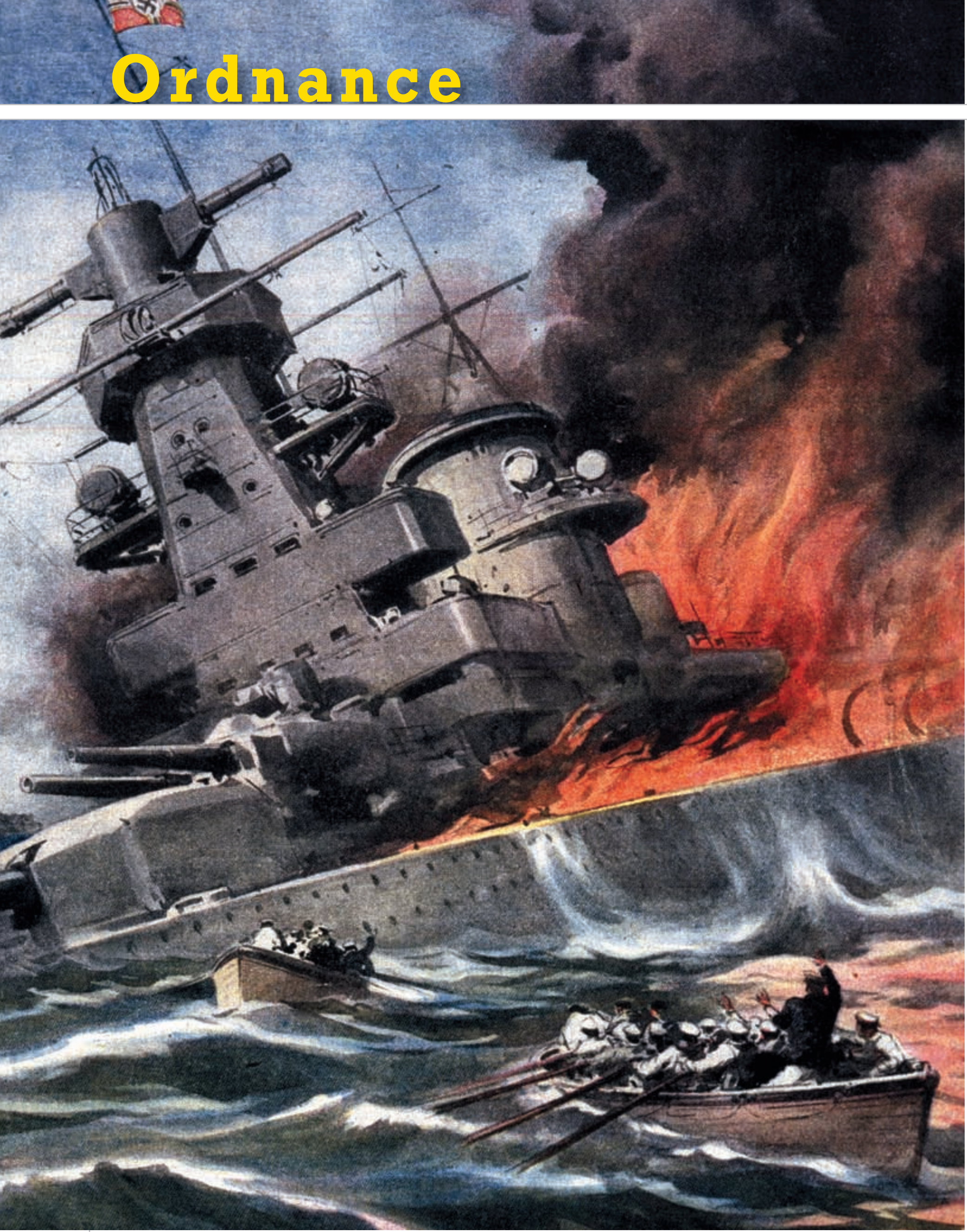
ACCREDITED BUSINESS
Rating of **A+**

*Heirloom in the making...
a piece of American history
showcased in a
classic pocket watch*

Stauer
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
E PLURIBUS UNUM
HALF DOLLAR
Mechanical
19 JEWELS

- 19-jewel manual; 14" gold-finished stainless steel chain • Obverse American Eagle side of Walking Liberty half dollar
- Stainless steel case, caseback & crown; gold-finish • 44mm case diameter; Water resistant to 3 ATM

Stauer... *Afford the Extraordinary.*®



Rivals of the River Plate

The survivors of the battle off the port of Montevideo stir the debate over the definition of the "cruiser."

By David H. Lippman

THE FOUR SHIPS THAT RACED INTO BATTLE ON DECEMBER 13, 1939, OFF THE mouth of the River Plate were, as historian and novelist Len Deighton tartly observed, "three different answers to the question that had plagued the world's navies for half a century: what should a cruiser be?"

The British cruisers *Ajax* and *Achilles* were light ships with 32-knot speeds and 6-inch guns. HMS *Exeter* hurled 8-inch broadsides, while the German "pocket battleship" *Graf Spee* traded speed (26 knots) for armament (11-inch guns).

The newest of the three was *Graf Spee*, scuttled by its crew at the mouth of the River Plate. Laid down in 1932, she had been commissioned in 1936, the youngest of the three sister pocket battleships. She displaced 16,020 tons at full load, had a draft of 24 feet, and could reach a top speed of 29.5 knots in a pinch. The size of a heavy cruiser, she gained the name "pocket battleship" for her six 11-inch guns, which gave her a punch equal to a battlecruiser like Kriegsmarine sisters *Scharnhorst* or *Gneisenau*. She also had eight 5.9-inch guns as secondary armament, six 3.7-inchers, eight 37mm and 10 20mm flak guns. She also had eight torpedo tubes astern.

In war, however, the other two pocket battleships, *Deutschland* and *Admiral Scheer*, were less impressive. *Deutschland* sank only three ships in her 1939 cruise in the North Atlantic before running home. She was renamed *Lützow* by a nervous Adolf Hitler, who feared the propaganda losses of a ship named *Deutschland* being sunk. Both ships were sunk in their slips by the RAF in 1945.

HMS *Exeter* also went to the bottom, but not without a fight. Weighing in at 8,390 tons, she was launched at Devonport on July 18, 1929, and spent most of her first 10 years showing the White Ensign around the world. Despite her snappy appearance, she had weaknesses. She carried only six 8-inch guns, in accordance with 1920s disarmament treaties, and could carry only 1,900 tons of fuel oil. That limited her range to 10,000 miles at 11-14 knots. Historian Dudley Pope's harsh assessment was that she had been built "so that she could be sold to a potential enemy."

Exeter returned home to England after the River Plate and was a dockyard case for most of 1940. During that time, she was given more magazine stowage and ready-use ammunition lockers. She also added elevation to her 8-inch guns and gained new 4-inch antiaircraft guns and pom-poms. Masts to hold radar equipment were installed, but radar was never fitted.

She was escorting a convoy to Rangoon when Pearl Harbor was attacked and was ordered to join the battleship *Prince of Wales* and battlecruiser *Repulse* in Singapore. By the time *Exeter* reached Singapore, both *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* had been sunk. She was sent back to Ceylon, escorting a convoy with

The German pocket battleship *Graf Spee* burns furiously off the mouth of the River Plate near the harbor of Montevideo, Uruguay. The order to scuttle the warship came in December 1939, after a running fight with three British Royal Navy cruisers.

BLANCHARD™
America's rare coin and precious metals firm

THE FED CAN PRINT MORE DOLLARS, BUT IT CAN NEVER PRINT MORE OF THESE

A safe harbor in the storm ahead

Inflation is pushing investors into alternative stores of value. Investors continue to turn to tangible assets like gold and silver to protect, preserve and grow their wealth in uncertain and turbulent times.

LIBERTY
IN GOD WE TRUST
1883
1924 $20
PCGS MS65
9177.65/12092166
1901 S $10
MS 64
245870-006
1901

Unprecedented times call for unprecedented measures. Own gold, like centuries of investors before you. Call or visit our site today!

Blanchard and Company, Inc. | www.blanchardgold.com | 888.663.2453

ABOVE: Crewmen crowd the deck of the cruiser HMNZS *Achilles,* which was damaged during the Battle of the River Plate in December 1939. Later in World War II, *Achilles* participated in operations in the Pacific and was sold to the Indian Navy after the war. BELOW: Scuttled by its crew, the pocket battleship *Graf Spee* lists heavily and settles during its death throes on December 17, 1939, off the mouth of the River Plate and the harbor of Montevideo, Uruguay. After a battle with three British cruisers, Captain Hans Langsdorff was convinced that an overwhelming Allied naval force awaited his return to sea from Montevideo and ordered his crew to sink their own ship.

survivors of the two ships. *Exeter* then sailed back to Singapore with reinforcements and down to Java to join "ABDA Float," the Australian-British-Dutch-American naval command trying to fend off Japanese conquest of the Dutch East Indies.

This polyglot force fought under Dutch Rear Admiral Karel Doorman, a man of great charm and determination, but had no time to train together or even work out tactics or a joint signal code. When a vast Japanese force steamed down to invade Java, Doorman hoisted "Follow me" from his flagship, the light cruiser *De Ruyter*, and sailed out on the afternoon of February 27, 1942, to attack the Japanese, trailed by elderly warships manned by exhausted crews. The night battle turned into a nightmare.

With the advantages of coordination, night-trained lookouts, and the superb Long Lance torpedo, the Japanese tore apart the Allied force. *Exeter* was first to be severely damaged—an 8-inch shell tore through her B boiler room, killing all 10 men and knocking out six of eight boilers. Wreathed in steam and smoke, she dropped speed to 10 knots and wobbled out of line, depriving Doorman of one of his two heavy cruisers. The Japanese charged, sinking three destroyers and the two Dutch cruisers, killing Doorman.

The next evening *Exeter* steamed out to head for Ceylon for full repairs, escorted by the American destroyer *Pope* and the British destroyer *Encounter*. To fool the enemy, *Exeter* was to sail east, then north, then double back west. *Exeter* Captain Victor Gordon didn't think he had a chance. He told his men there would be no air cover and that it was up to them and their escorts to survive.

The following morning at 7:50, March 1, 1942, the three ships spotted warships' masts. *Exeter* changed course to avoid them, but it was too late. The Japanese had intercepted *Exeter* with four heavy cruisers and two destroyers. *Exeter* cranked up her speed to 25 knots and the destroyers made smoke, but the Japanese were good shots. They immediately knocked out *Exeter's* fire-control system and battered her with shellfire and torpedoes.

At 11:20 AM, the Japanese blasted open *Exeter's* boiler room, and she dropped speed to four knots. *Exeter* was doomed. Gordon ordered "abandon ship" at 11:35 AM and opened the seacocks and flooding valves. While the crew pushed boats and rafts into the water, the Japanese continued their shelling. A Japanese destroyer fired a salvo of torpedoes into *Exeter's* starboard side, and the veteran cruiser rolled over—providing the Japanese with dramatic photographs—and sank at about 4 degrees 38 minutes South, 112 degrees 28 minutes East, leaving the crew to the horrors of Japanese captivity.

By comparison, *Ajax* and *Achilles* had "good" wars. HMS *Ajax* was launched by Vickers-Armstrong in Barrow in March 1934. She displaced just over 9,000 tons and had a top speed of 32 knots. A sturdy-looking ship, she had one massive, single-trunked funnel, which meant that her boiler rooms were interconnected and could be destroyed by a single shell.

After the River Plate battle, *Ajax* spent most of the war in the Mediterranean Fleet, seeing a great deal of action. At the Battle of Cape Matapan in late 1940, she helped sink three Italian heavy cruisers. During the German invasion of Crete, she intercepted a German-Italian convoy headed for the island and evacuated British troops from Heraklion. But the strain of constant Luftwaffe bombardment wore down the ship and crew. Sixty percent of her antiaircraft ammunition was fired off, and 30 of her 800 men suffered nervous breakdowns from the stress. Damaged by bombs, *Ajax* was pulled out for repairs, then helped bombard Vichy-

Because History Matters

56/58 mm-1/30 Scale

matte finish
Hand-Painted Pewter Figures
25099
Waffen SS Advancing with Panzerfaust
$44.00

25075 .... **$42.00**
German Infantry NCO with PPSH-41
25076 .... **$42.00**
German Grenadier In Parka with MP-44

25111 .... **$46.00**
German Grenadier Advancing with Grenade, 1943-45
25110 .... **$46.00**
German Grenadier Armed with Panzerfaust Wearing Zeltbahn, 1944-45

25063 .... **$46.00**
Waffen SS Advancing with MP-40

25119 .... **$46.00**
German Waffen SS in Italian Camo Standing Firing PPSH 41

25123 .... **$44.00**
Waffen SS Hauptscharführer Walking
25122 .... **$44.00**
Waffen SS Unterscharführer Walking

25051 .... **$165.00**
German Type 166 Schwimmwagen & Crew, 12th SS Division, Winter 1944-45

FREE *W.BRITAIN MINI BACKDROP OFFER*

Mention this ad and receive a FREE W.Britain Mini Backdrop of your choice with the purchase of any of our model figures in any of our ranges.

Complete your display with a beautiful **W.Britain Mini Backdrop**. Each Mini Backdrop is printed in full-color on 24pt. rigid card stock. The 8.5x5.5" backdrop comes with a separate, fold-out easel. You may choose whether or not to attach it to the back depending on your space and needs.

See these Mini Backdrops and more at: wbritain.com/product-store/backdrops

$9.50 EACH Figures not included

See our complete collection of 1/30 scale W.Britain, historical metal figures at:

Tel: U.S. 740-702-1803 • wbritain.com • Tel: U.K. (0)800 086 9123

WBSOVM WWII 08-09-21 ©2021 William Britain Model Figure Company. W.Britain, and are registered trademarks of the William Britain Model Figure Company, Chillicothe, OH

www.facebook.com/
WBritainToySoldiers

All: Naval History and Heritage Command

ABOVE: The heavy cruiser HMS *Exeter*, mounting 8-inch main batteries, lies at anchor in Balboa Harbor off San Diego, California, in 1934. *Exeter* was the largest of the three cruisers that faced *Graf Spee* during the Battle of the River Plate. RIGHT TOP: Smoke billows from the stricken heavy cruiser *Exeter* after an attack by Japanese forces in the Java Sea in March 1942. *Exeter* had sustained damage in earlier fighting and failed to reach safety in the harbor of Colombo, Ceylon. RIGHT BELOW: The light cruiser HMS *Ajax*, mounting 6-inch main batteries, is shown at full speed off the North African near the harbor of Tobruk, Libya, in November 1941. *Ajax* bombarded German coastal defenses off the Normandy beaches on D-Day and was scrapped in 1949.

controlled Syria in the British invasion of that French territory.

Ajax's last major appearance of the war came on D-Day in Normandy, when her 6-inch guns easily destroyed the German Longues Battery off Gold Beach, impressing everyone with her accuracy. However, *Ajax's* gunnery director had a competitive edge: the blind son of a French resistance worker had paced off the distances between the batteries and their control points, memorized the numbers, and these were radioed to England. When *Ajax* went into action, her gunnery officer had all the information he needed to send a 6-inch shell hurtling through the battery's embrasures and observation slits, killing the defenders and leaving the guns relatively intact.

That proved to be a postwar boon to the local inhabitants, who restored the guns and turned the Longues Battery into a museum. The guns themselves, among the few survivors of Hitler's Atlantic Wall, became standard features for travel editors needing photographs of the Normandy beaches. The guns *Ajax* silenced have appeared in *Time*, *Newsweek*, *National Geographic*, and many other magazine articles on D-Day's anniversaries.

HMS *Ajax*, however, didn't make any of the celebrations. She was scrapped in 1949.

HMNZS *Achilles* was launched on September 1, 1932, by Cammell Laird in Birkenhead and was assigned to what was then the New Zealand Squadron in March 1936. A sister of *Ajax*, she replaced the older HMS *Diomede*, whose crew transferred to *Achilles*. She sailed to New Zealand and took part in the search for Amelia Earhart in 1937.

After her encounter with *Graf Spee*, *Achilles* spent most of 1940 and 1941 in the Pacific escorting convoys and hunting for German merchant raiders—freighters and liners that had been converted into auxiliary cruisers to prey on British shipping in waters distant from the Fatherland. With concealed guns, torpedoes, and mines, these ships cut a jagged swath through Britain's ocean lifelines. *Achilles* pursued raiders named *Atlantis*, *Pinguin*, *Orion*, and *Komet* for two years to no avail.

These frustrating chases were ended in December 1941, when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and the Emperor Hirohito's men struck south, heading directly for Australia and New Zealand. *Achilles* spent part of 1942 escorting liners and merchant ships full of American troops headed for Australia and New Zealand, even Britain's massive new *Queen Elizabeth*.

She missed the battles of Coral Sea and Midway, but escorted convoys to support the invasion of Guadalcanal. She was placed under American command in December 1942, and operated with American cruisers in the Solomons.

On January 5, 1943, a Japanese bomber blasted *Achilles*' X turret, killing 11 Royal Marines and wounding 10 others. The bomb's trajectory just missed exploding the cruiser's magazine. Despite the destruction of her X turret, *Achilles* continued in action until March 22, 1943, when she reached England for repairs. She spent the next few months moored near the historic HMS *Victory*. Her X Turret was removed and replaced with flak guns.

But on June 22, while in dock, a gas explosion ripped through *Achilles*, killing 29 sailors at breakfast and injuring 60 more. *Achilles* was gravely damaged. With HMNZS *Leander* out of action from torpedo damage in the Solomons, New Zealand no longer had any cruisers in action.

So, *Achilles'* crew was sent to commission the light cruiser HMS *Gambia*, which was loaned to New Zealand, and *Leander's* crew was sent from America to Britain to put *Achilles* back in action with new tripod masts, new radar, and new antiaircraft guns. The cruiser left Portsmouth on June 2, 1944, slipping past gigantic armadas of ships heading for Normandy. When the Allies invaded France, *Achilles* was heading for Stromness for workup. She was ordered to the Mediterranean to support the invasion of Southern France, but by the time she reached Gibraltar the Germans were on the run. *Achilles* was ordered on to the 4th Cruiser Squadron of the British Eastern Fleet in Trincomalee, Ceylon.

Achilles sailed through the Mediterranean and reached Ceylon on September 13, joining a fleet that included British, Australian, French, Dutch, American, and even Italian ships. After a trip back to New Zealand to pick up a convoy of reinforcement, *Achilles* bombarded Japanese installations at Sabang and then joined Task Force 57, which was supporting the American invasion of Okinawa.

Achilles escorted carrier forces that attacked the Sakishima Group of islands off Formosa. After that, the whole force sailed to Okinawa, where *Achilles* and her cohorts came under kamikaze attack. When the island was secured, the British Pacific Fleet moved on to bombard Japan with battleship shells and carrier-based aircraft. *Achilles* provided antiaircraft cover and shelled Honshu.

After Japan's surrender she came home to New Zealand for good on March 17, 1946, released from the British Pacific Fleet, and did a victory lap around the nation, with open days for the public at every port she visited.

In 1948, *Achilles* was sold to the Indian Navy and renamed HMIS *Delhi*. When India became a republic in 1950, she became INS *Delhi*. As *Delhi*, the cruiser took part in the Spithead Coronation Review of Queen Elizabeth II, as India's representative ship, and served for a time as flagship of the Indian Navy.

When India took over Goa from the Portuguese, *Delhi* bombarded the port, her last action. In 1971, she was converted to a training cruiser.

On June 30, 1978, INS *Delhi's* commissioning pennant was hauled down, and the ancient cruiser was paid off for the last time, having outlived so many of her contemporaries and junior sisters.

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

MILITARY tour.com
HISTORICAL MILITARY PRODUCTS

GERMAN K98 MAUSER 8MM 5 ROUND STRIPPER CLIP

SS TOTENKOPF S.LB. HEYDRICH 9.11.41 H. HIMMLER HONOR RING LRG HEAD

GERMAN WWII NSDAP (NAZI PARTY) CAR PENNANT

STURMBANNFUHRER ARNOLD ERNST TOHT ID CARD ACCESS PASS FROM INDIANA JONES "RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK"

GERMAN WWII WAFFEN SS WOODEN HAND INK STAMP

WWII GERMAN LARGE CIGARETTE CARD FROM THE ADOLF HITLER SET, GROUP 63, CARD 136

GERMAN WW2 ALUMINUM SS EM/NCO BUCKLE AND BELT MARKED RZM 36/40 SS

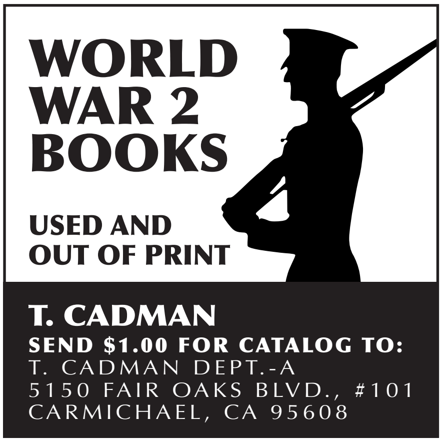
GERMAN WW2 PARATROOPER STEEL M38 HELMET AND LINER

GERMAN NAZI PARTY FLAG COTTON (3X5)

U.S. WWI BAR M1918 MAGAZINE BANDOLEER RIGHT SIDE

Over 2,500 items on-line supplying the WWII re-enactor and collector
www.militarytour.com
Email: dj@militarytour.com
Tel: 1-800-785-8644
We welcome new suppliers
MasterCard
VISA

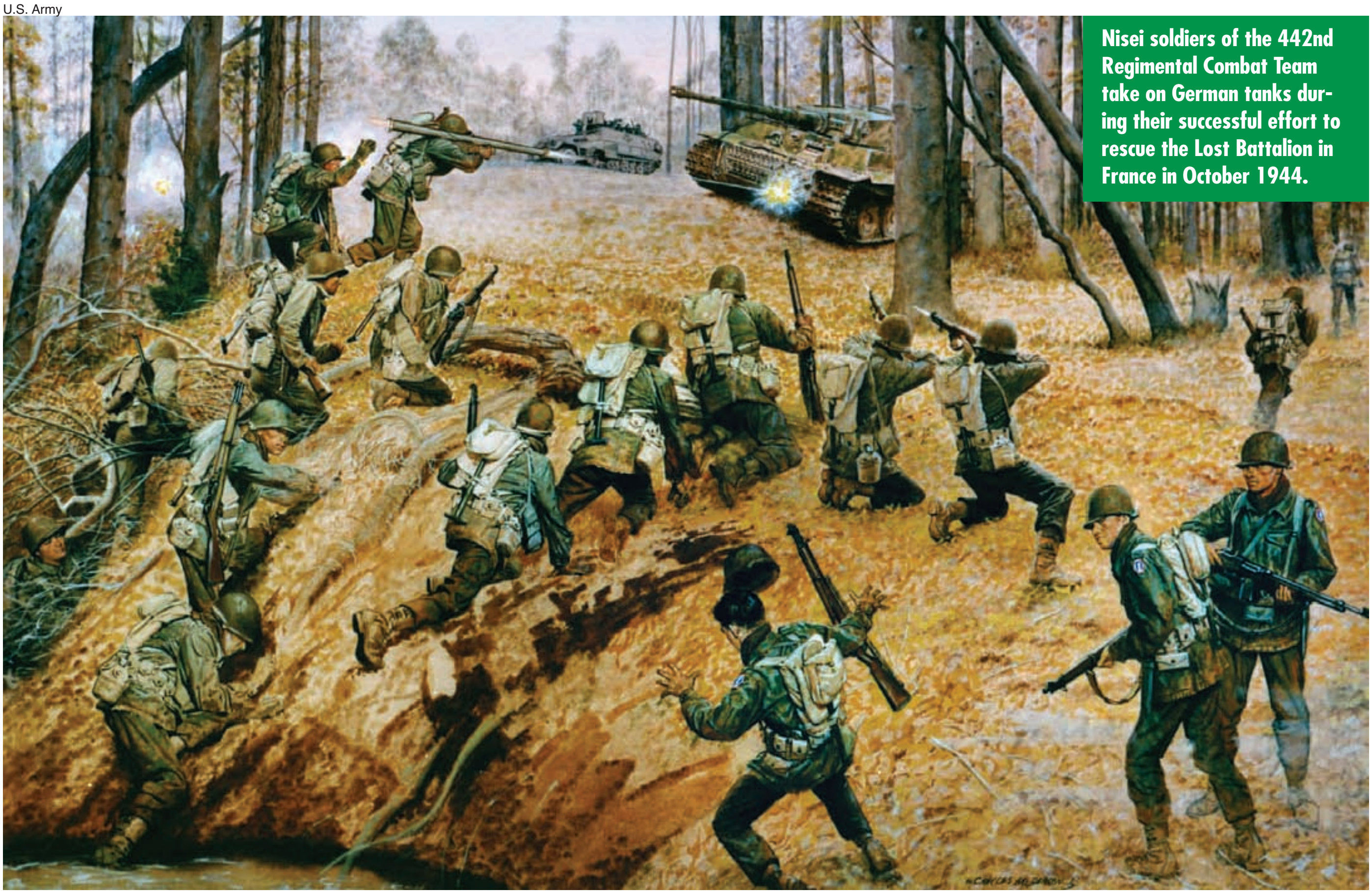
USS ★ KIDD
Open daily on the Mississippi River in Downtown Baton Rouge
www.usskidd.com • 225-342-1942 • info@usskidd.com


WORLD WAR 2 BOOKS
USED AND OUT OF PRINT
T. CADMAN
SEND $1.00 FOR CATALOG TO:
T. CADMAN DEPT.-A
5150 FAIR OAKS BLVD., #101
CARMICHAEL, CA 95608

Ron Wolin
Collector-Dealer ▪ Military Curios
BUY ▪ SELL ▪ TRADE
Specializing in
Original WWII American and Third Reich Military Souvenirs of all types.
437 Bartell Drive, Chesapeake, VA 23322
757-547-2764
www.ronwolin.com ▪ ronwolin@cox.net

By Michael D. Hull

U.S. Army



Nisei soldiers of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team take on German tanks during their successful effort to rescue the Lost Battalion in France in October 1944.

Hero of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team

Joe Sakato exhibited tremendous courage in action, his Distinguished Service Cross upgraded to the Medal of Honor half a century after World War II ended.

Private Joe Sakato

EARLY ON THE MORNING OF SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1944, a platoon of the U.S. 442nd Regimental Combat Team's 100th Infantry Battalion (Separate) waited on a hill for its first action in the rugged Vosges Mountains of eastern France.

The 1st and 2nd Platoons of E Company had already advanced about 200 yards toward their objective, the town of Bruyeres, and the 3rd Platoon was awaiting orders. As daylight began to filter through the cold mist, the young Japanese-American GIs—many of them recent replacements—were "all nervous and on edge." Artillery rumbled in the distance.

One of the bantam-sized Nisei soldiers decided to relieve the tension. Leaning against a tree next to another rifleman, he was the platoon's good-natured "tiny runt," Private George T. "Joe" Sakato. He jumped up, put two fingers under his nose, raised his right hand in a stiff salute, and shouted, "Sieg heil—in case we lose!" He thought his imitation of Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler would draw a few laughs, but the platoon leader was not amused.

The sound of artillery suddenly became louder, and Sakato shouted, "Incoming!" A blast blew him 10 feet through the air, and a shell fragment cut his wrist. But his buddy was dying from a neck wound. Sakato "hollered for the medics," who "gave him some plasma, but he died on the way down the hill."

The riflemen looked around anxiously for their lieutenant to issue orders, but he had disappeared. "He ran down the hill back to headquarters," Sakato recalled, "or so the captain said on the radio." Although shaken and "aching all over," Sakato then moved forward with his platoon on the first day of the Battle of Bruyeres.

Up and down the steep, forested ridges of the Vosges Mountains during the bitter campaign of September-November 1944, Sakato and his comrades adapted quickly to the rigors of combat and fought hard against stubborn German defenses. As it had at Cassino and Anzio, the battalion took heavy losses, and its reputation became legendary in the U.S. Army. Five-foot, four-inch Sakato, who was so puny that he had to run around the walls on obstacle courses

Now, THIS is a Knife!

*This 16" full tang stainless steel blade is not for the faint of heart —now **ONLY** $99!*

In the blockbuster film, when a strapping Australian crocodile hunter and a lovely American journalist were getting robbed at knife point by a couple of young thugs in New York, the tough Aussie pulls out his dagger and says "That's not a knife, THIS is a knife!" Of course, the thugs scattered and he continued on to win the reporter's heart.

Our Aussie friend would approve of our rendition of his "knife." Forged of high grade 420 surgical stainless steel, this knife is an impressive 16" from pommel to point. And, the blade is full tang, meaning it runs the entirety of the knife, even though part of it is under wraps in the natural bone and wood handle.

Secured in a tooled leather sheath, this is one impressive knife, with an equally impressive price.

This fusion of substance and style can garner a high price tag out in the marketplace. In fact, we found full tang, stainless steel blades with bone handles in excess of $2,000. Well, that won't cut it around here. We have mastered the hunt for the best deal, and in turn pass the spoils on to our customers.

But we don't stop there. While supplies last, we'll include a pair of $99, 8x21 power compact binoculars, *and* a genuine leather sheath **FREE** when you purchase the ***Down Under Bowie Knife***.

Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed. Feel the knife in your hands, wear it on your hip, inspect the impeccable craftsmanship. If you don't feel like we cut you a fair deal, send it back within 30 days for a complete refund of the item price.

Limited Reserves. A deal like this won't last long. We have only 1120 ***Down Under Bowie Knifes*** for this ad only. Don't let this beauty slip through your fingers at a price that won't drag you under. Call today!

BONUS! Call today and you'll also receive this genuine leather sheath!

EXCLUSIVE
FREE
Stauer® 8x21 Compact Binoculars
-a $99 value-
with purchase of Down Under Knife

What Stauer Clients Are Saying About Our Knives

★★★★★
"This knife is beautiful!"
— J., La Crescent, MN

★★★★★
"The feel of this knife is unbelievable...this is an incredibly fine instrument."
— H., Arvada, CO

Down Under Bowie Knife ~~$249~~*

Offer Code Price Only **$99** + S&P **Save $150**

1-800-333-2045

Your Insider Offer Code: DUK220-01

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

BBB ACCREDITED BUSINESS **Rating of A+**

CONSUMER AFFAIRS ACCREDITED

Stauer® 14101 Southcross Drive W., Ste 155, Dept. DUK220-01
Burnsville, Minnesota 55337 www.stauer.com

**Discount is only for customers who use the offer code versus the listed original Stauer.com price.*

California residents please call 1-800-333-2045 regarding Proposition 65 regulations before purchasing this product.

• Etched stainless steel full tang blade ; 16" overall • Painted natural bone and wood handle • Brass hand guards, spacers & end cap • Includes genuine tooled leather sheath

Stauer... *Afford the Extraordinary.®*

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Manning a .30-caliber Browning machine gun, a Nisei soldier of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team wears a raincoat for protection against the harsh, wintry weather of November 1944 in the Vosges Mountains of France. RIGHT: A squad leader from F Company, 442nd Regimental Combat Team holds tightly to his rifle and scans a valley 200 yards away for German movement. This photo was taken in November 1944, and the troops of the 442nd were engaged in a bitter fight with the Germans in the mountainous Vosges region of France.

during basic training, was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, later upgraded to the Medal of Honor.

Born in 1921 in the town of Colton in California's San Bernardino County, where his family ran a butcher shop and fruit stand, George Sakato was known as "Joe" while he was growing up. Fascinated by aviation, he liked to visit a nearby airfield, where a World War I veteran took youngsters for rides in a rickety Curtiss JN-4D Jenny biplane. Young George paid for his flights by selling newspapers and delivering *The Saturday Evening Post* magazine. He yearned to become a pilot but was later turned down when he volunteered for the Army Air Forces.

He was working in a grocery store when he first heard about the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. The young man tried to enlist in the Army but was rejected because of his Japanese heritage, so he returned to the grocery store.

When President Franklin D. Roosevelt lifted induction restrictions, thousands of young Nisei men of the Hawaii National Guard signed up for federal service. Formed in Honolulu and activated in Oakland, California, in June 1942, the 100th Infantry Battalion—initially comprising 29 officers and 1,277 enlisted men—was trained at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin. The battalion's motto was "Remember Pearl Harbor."

Shipped to the Mediterranean theater in September 1943, the battalion fought with distinction at Salerno, Monte Cassino, and Anzio. The unit's performance, meanwhile, encouraged the Army to form another Nisei outfit, the 442nd RCT, made up of Hawaiians and mainland Japanese-Americans. Some of its volunteers were under five feet tall and weighed barely 100 pounds. Its shoulder insignia featured the liberty torch on a red-white-and-blue background, and its motto, chosen by craps players from Hawaii, was "Go for Broke" (shoot the works).

Almost as self-sufficient as a division, the 442nd RCT comprised an infantry regiment, field artillery battalion, medical detachment, and combat-engineer, antitank, cannon, and service companies. It was commanded by Colonel Charles W. Pence, a quiet, steady tactician and World War I veteran. The Nisei GIs grew to love him.

The 442nd RCT landed at Naples on May 28, 1944, and the 100th Battalion was integrated as its new first battalion. The 442nd went into action on June 26 and captured several key cities and towns, including Livorno and Pisa. The "little men of iron" melded into a topnotch fighting unit.

Although he still dreamed of going to a flying school, George Sakato, meanwhile, was drafted into the Army in March 1944 and sent to Fort Douglas, Utah. From there, he went to sprawling, swampy Fort Blanding, Florida, for basic training. After learning to fire the M-1 Garand rifle, he was sent to Camp Shelby for further training with 671 other 442nd RCT replacements."

After less than a month at Camp Shelby, Sakato and his comrades boarded an Italy-bound troopship with field packs, duffel bags, and rifles.

On September 18, 1944, the replacements reached Naples and joined the 442nd RCT. Eight days later, the Nisei troops filed aboard Navy transports. They had no idea where they were going, but when the ships turned eastward, they knew they were heading toward southern France, where Operation Dragoon had been launched on August 15.

After landing in Marseilles, the "Go for Broke" regiment—attached to Major Gen. John E. Dahlquist's 36th (Texas) Infantry Division—followed Highway 7 up the Rhone Valley, traveling by truck and rail to the Vosges Mountains, where the Allied armies planned to launch an offensive toward Strasbourg and across the River Rhine into Germany.

On October 14th, led by French scouts, the Nisei moved northeast to the thick Helledraye Forest, beginning a two-month ordeal of combat in chilling rain, fog, and snow. When their trucks broke down, they hiked through the mud. Accustomed to sub-tropical weather, the Hawaiians shivered. "Our coats were all wet and getting heavy," Sakato recalled. "We had our backpacks on and our rifles, slogging in the mud." Each of the diminutive soldiers was burdened with about 40 pounds of equipment and a 9.5-pound M-1 rifle.

On the morning of October 15, the 442nd RCT launched its attack on Bruyeres, a transportation and communications hub nestled in a valley. Aided by the 143rd Infantry Regiment, the Nisei troops led the assault because the Texas Division had been depleted by casualties, deserters, and stragglers, and, according to Dahlquist, was "very low in spirits and determination."

The 442nd RCT's 100th, 2nd, and 3rd Battalions soon ran into stiff opposition from well-entrenched German artillery, machine-gun nests, and powerful Mark V Panther tanks. The 100th Battalion suffered 39 casualties on the first day, and for Sakato, the advance on Bruyeres was a brutal introduction to warfare; the replacements quickly became combat veterans, and a number of them earned Distinguished Service Crosses for heroism.

Enemy resistance increased on the first day, but the GIs struggled on and made steady progress through cold winds, rain, and artillery barrages. They took 21 prisoners along with documents revealing enemy troop dispositions and learned to survive under deadly tree bursts in the dark forests by burrowing. "We cut down small trees," said Sakato, "made logs of them to put over our foxholes, then spread pine boughs over them, and threw sand and mud over everything." They then wrapped themselves in blankets and pup tents.

Pinned down by artillery salvos and fire from German tanks and infantry as they approached their objective, the Nisei soldiers swallowed their fears and stood their ground. As shells burst overhead and enemy infantry attacked his ridge, Sakato blazed away with his rifle "scared as hell … crying and praying at the same time." He recalled, "I tried to crawl back into my helmet, hoping I could get out of this hell hole."

Crawling, crouching, firing, digging in, and then starting all over again, yard by yard, the men of the 442nd RCT advanced barely two miles in three days before reaching Bruyeres on the cold, rainy morning of October 18. After more than six hours of fierce fighting, during which fortified houses and machine-gun nests were silenced, L Company of the 3rd Battalion pushed into the town and linked up with C Company of the 36th Division's 143rd Regiment, which had entered from the south. By nightfall, the town was in American hands.

Colonel Pence's tenacious soldiers pushed on. Near Belmont, the GIs were pinned down by German infantry and self-propelled guns. Crawling through bushes and ducking behind a fallen log, Sakato fired his Thompson submachine gun at enemy soldiers in the distance. To his astonishment, two Germans hidden on the other side of the log popped up and surrendered.

"I was stunned in terror," he reported. But he

WWII ERA COINS & CURRENCY

LAST SILVER COINS OF NAZI GERMANY
The infamous eagle and swastika are featured on these silver 2 and 5 Reichsmark coins of Nazi Germany. The 5 Reichsmark is the size of a half dollar, the 2 Reichsmarkis the size of a quarter. Both depict Paul von Hindenburg on the front. The coins were struck only 4 years, from 1936 to 1939.
GET BOTH SILVER COINS FOR only $39 • Or get 3 sets for ONLY $115

SCARCE NAZI 100 REICHSMARK NOTE
The 100 Reichsmark note was the first Nazi German note to depict a swastika. It was a considerable sum of money; over 2 months of a soldiers pay! It was issued from 1935 to 1945, though always dated 1935.
100 Reichsmark note ONLY $20 each
Or get 3 for ONLY $55

SILVER COIN OF FASCIST ITALY
King Victor Emmanuel III is depicted on the front of this silver 5 Lire coin of Fascist Italy. The Fascist Eagle and Fasces is on the back, subtly indicating the power behind the throne. The coin is about the size of a quarter and was struck for circulation for only 5 years, from 1926 to 1930.
ITALY SILVER 5 LIRE only $10 • Or get 3 for ONLY $29

"World's most interesting coin & banknote catalog" free on request. ALL ITEMS GUARANTEED GENUINE.
Please add $6 Shipping, Calif. residents add 8.75% sales tax. 3 week return privileges.
Checks, money orders, Visa, Mastercard, Discover, AMEX & Paypal accepted.
JOEL ANDERSON www.JoelsCoins.com
Interesting World Coins. Since 1970
Phone: (805) 489-8045 • e-mail: orders@joelscoins.com
P.O. Box 365-WWH, Grover Beach, CA 93483-0365
3 FREE NAZI STAMPS with offer code: WWH

PzG - Your Third Reich HQ!
Books • CDs • Videos • Flags • Pins
T-shirts • Posters • Daggers & more
SS Paratrooper Collapsible Anti Gravity Knife
DG7001 - Gold
DG7002 - Silver
Only $15 each +s/h
Third Reich Battle Flag
F04 - TR Battle Flag
*see them all online
Details: Polyester, 3'x5', reinforced edging, brass gromments, indoor / outdoor use.
Only $25 +s/h
*add $12 per order for shipping and handling.
PzG Inc. www.pzg.biz
P.O. Box 3972
Rapid City, SD 57709-3972
pzg@sprynet.com

NCHSINC.COM
eBay store: NCHS
24,000 Military Items
George Petersen
US Army 1964-67
Vietnam 1966
Direct Email:
gpete2000@aol.com
WE BUY ANY OLD MILITARY MATERIAL US AND FOREIGN
US, Vietnamese, German, Japanese, Russian, French, British and all other Foreign Countries
WW1, WW2, Korean War, Vietnam War, Cold War
Insignia, Patches, Medals, Badges, Wings, Hats, Uniforms, Flags, Gideons, and more.

National Archives

ABOVE: Slogging their way along a road in the Chambois sector of the Vosges Mountains in October 1944, soldiers of the Japanese-American 442nd Regimental Combat Team advance toward the front lines during their heroic effort to rescue the Lost Battalion of the 36th Infantry Division. RIGHT: Joe Sakato received the Medal of Honor for gallantry in France but asserted, "I'm no hero." He died in 2015 at the age of 94.

came to his senses and took charge of the pair. Sakato had captured the first of several machine-gun nests and earned the nickname of "Machine Gun Joe."

Besides emerging as one of the 442nd RCT's heroes, he gained a reputation as a master scrounger. He confiscated a P-38 pistol from one of his prisoners and had taken the Tommy gun from a wrecked Sherman tank to replace his M-1 rifle. Sakato believed that a submachine gun was a more effective weapon on the tangled Vosges ridges. He collected bandoliers of extra ammunition when he got the chance.

After a two-day breather, the Nisei battalions embarked on one of the most challenging operations of World War II and their most famous exploit. They were ordered to try and relieve the 1st Battalion of the Texas Division's 141st (Alamo) Regiment, isolated for a week on a hill nine miles inside enemy territory south of St.-Die. Surrounded by about 700 German troops, the "Lost Battalion" was in a desperate situation, with its men exhausted and low on ammunition, rations, and medical equipment. Relief efforts had failed, and supplies dropped by air fell into enemy hands.

The men of the 442nd RCT moved out in predawn darkness on Friday, October 27, 1944, advancing through dense underbrush beneath 60-foot pine trees as German artillery, mortar, and small-arms fire opened up. Brandishing their rifles, .30-caliber machine guns, bazookas, and Browning automatic rifles, the Nisei troops pushed steadily forward. They had five miles to go, and there was no turning back. While the regiment's 522nd Field Artillery Battalion zeroed in on enemy positions, the tenacious riflemen charged ahead with hand grenades and bayonets. They disabled tanks, threaded their way carefully through nine minefields, and took more prisoners.

The GIs struggled on, trying to find their way up and down the steep, forested ridges. They each grabbed the straps on the backpack of the man ahead in order to keep together in the dense brush. "If someone in front suddenly stopped," Sakato recalled, "there was a chain reaction all the way back." The Nisei troops lacked winter clothing, and many suffered from trench foot.

As the going got tougher and German resistance increased, losses mounted. One of the casualties was the admired Colonel Pence, who was wounded in the back and had to be evacuated. Lt. Col. Virgil R. Miller took command. But the weary soldiers never faltered, and still more Silver Stars and Distinguished Service Crosses were earned by many acts of gallantry.

In the midst of an enemy counterattack, one of Sakato's friends made the mistake of standing up and getting shot. "Mad as hell and crying," Machine Gun Joe jumped out of his foxhole, grabbed his P-38 handgun and Tommy gun, and charged toward the Germans, disregarding their fire. "I'm going to get the SOB who shot him or die trying," he told himself. He estimated that he took down "two or three guys," but in fact he killed a dozen enemy soldiers.

Sakato was ahead of his platoon and dangerously exposed to enemy fire, so the Germans zeroed in on him with grenades. The diminutive hero kept firing until he ran out of ammunition. Left with only his pistol, he calmly "fired carefully," killing three Germans and wounding another as they ran toward him from less than 10 yards away.

Sakato's heroic dash encouraged his platoon to reorganize and start attacking the enemy strongpoint. The fighting was close and savage. The Germans shot a medical corpsman who was tending a soldier who had been wounded in the leg. Sakato reported, "The bullet hit the side of his helmet and spun around inside, then dropped out." The medic's skull was creased, but "he was fine otherwise."

After his squad leader was killed, Sakato took charge and helped the platoon turn back an organized enemy assault and complete its mission. Besides killing a dozen Germans that day, he wounded two, personally captured four, and assisted the platoon in taking 34 prisoners.

U.S. Army

The Nisei soldiers struggled on through intense enemy mortar and small-arms fire as they neared the Lost Battalion's position on Monday, October 30. Machine Gun Joe hit the ground twice when mortar rounds exploded nearby, and a third blast just behind him hurled him six feet. Disoriented, he had to hurriedly dig a foxhole. He pulled his shovel from his backpack but could not raise his arm. There were holes in his pack and jacket, and blood was oozing down his back.

His tour of duty was about to end, but he would survive. He learned later that his life had been saved because he had stuffed his folded overcoat into his backpack. It had absorbed the shock of exploding shrapnel, which would have severed his spine.

Finally, after enduring great hardship and suffering 814 casualties, the 442nd RCT managed to break through to the Lost Battalion early that evening. Its surviving 211 men stumbled out of their foxholes in disbelief when they saw their rescuers, and many broke into tears. "The chills went up our spines when we saw the Nisei soldiers," reported Lieutenant Marty Higgins, the commander of A Company of the 141st Regiment. "Honestly, they looked like giants to us." The GIs shared K-rations and cigarettes, and the men of the 442nd RCT were dubbed "honorary Texans."

The regiment—exhausted and reduced to half strength—was relieved on November 9th and ordered south to the Maritime Alps.

Because of their heroism and esprit de corps in the Vosges Mountains, Sakato and three comrades were recommended for the Medal of Honor, but several months later the honors were downgraded a level to Distinguished Service Crosses. Machine Gun Joe, who had reached the rank of sergeant, spent several months recovering from his wounds at hospitals and rehabilitation centers in Birmingham, England, and San Diego, California.

With the end of the European war on May 8, 1945, praise was showered on the Nisei troops for their performance in seven major campaigns. The 100th/442nd casualty toll amounted to 9,486, and 19 Distinguished Service Cross awards were later upgraded to the Medal of Honor. The regiment was the most decorated unit in American military history.

After his discharge, meanwhile, Sakato married his sweetheart, Bess Saito, and drove a truck at night to supplement his disability pension. Sakato eventually passed a civil service examination and got a job with the U.S. Post Office. A postman for 30 years before retiring in 1980, he also found time to lecture at schools, civic groups, and the U.S. Military Academy about the 442nd RCT and the forcible 1942 "relocation" of Japanese-Americans.

The Nisei hero answered a telephone call from the Pentagon in the spring of 2000, inviting him to Washington to be awarded the Medal of Honor. On the White House South Lawn on June 21 that year, Sakato received the coveted pale blue ribbon from President Bill Clinton, who paid tribute to the "extraordinarily brave" Sakato and his comrades.

Approached by a *Washington Post* reporter, the humble Sakato said simply, "I'm no hero, but I wear it for the guys that didn't come back."

The Nisei hero died at the age of 94 on December 2, 2015.

The late Michael D. Hull, author of this and many other articles for WWII History, *resided in Enfield, Connecticut.*

RUSSIAN MEDALS & MILITARIA

www.CollectRussia.com

- ★ Imperial Russian and Soviet Decorations and Medals
- ★ Documented Award Groups
- ★ Uniforms and Field Gear
- ★ Historical Documents and Autographs
- ★ Reference Books
- ★ Military Badges and Insignia
- ★ World War II Reenactment Uniforms and Gear
- ★ Posters and Newsprint
- ★ Edged Weapons

Large assortment and the best prices.
All major credit cards accepted.

Atlantic Crossroads, Inc.
P.O. Box 144, Dept. WWII
Tenafly, NJ 07670
Phone: (201) 567-8717
Fax: (201) 567-6855

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
CollectRussia.com

E-mail:
Sales@CollectRussia.com

★ *SATISFACTION GUARANTEED* ★

EXPLORE THE DECKS OF THE LAST DESTROYER ESCORT AFLOAT IN AMERICA.
518-431-1943 USSSLATER.ORG
ALBANY - NEW YORK
USS SLATER
DESTROYER ESCORT HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Jessen's Relics military memorabilia

Specializing in Original Militaria from WWII

U.S. • German • Japanese
Badges • Medals • Flags
Cloth / Metal Insignia
Buckles • Edged Weapons
Documents • Uniforms
Head / Field Gear • Etc.

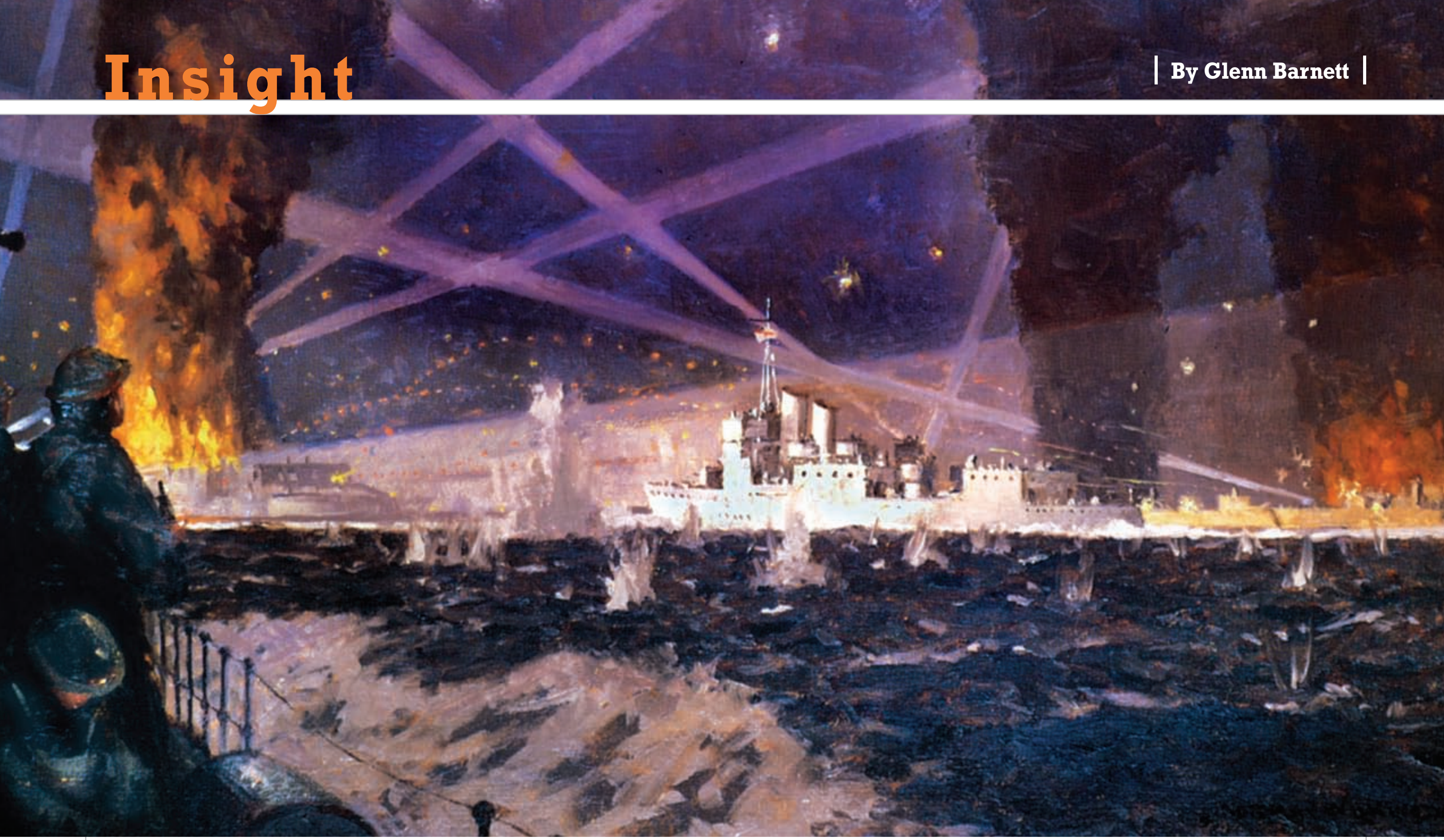
Jessen's Relics Inc.
Anthony H. Jessen
P.O. Box 1180
Harrison, TN 37341
Ph: 205-919-1069
email: ahjessen@mindspring.com

Website Only – No Catalog. Visit:
www.jessensrelics.com

REAL WAR PHOTOS

50,000+ ships, battles & military photos
Request a FREE catalog.
25% Veterans Discount!
P.O. Box 414, Somerset Ctr, MI 49282
734-327-9696 www.realwarphotos.com

By Glenn Barnett



Lend-Lease on the High Seas

When the United States 'loaned' Great Britain 50 over-aged destroyers in exchange for bases, the British put them to good use.

AT HIGH TIDE ON THE NIGHT OF MARCH 28, 1942, AN AMERICAN-BUILT BRITISH destroyer disguised as a German torpedo boat steamed boldly up the estuary of the Loire River in occupied France. Her target was the Normandie dry dock near the town of St. Nazaire.

Built for the French ocean liner *Normandie*, the dock was the only facility on the German-occupied Atlantic coast large enough to accommodate the Kriegsmarine battleship *Tirpitz*, sister of fabled *Bismarck*.

Tirpitz had only recently left her German base and sheltered in a Norwegian fiord. There was a very real fear at the British Admiralty that she would soon commerce raiding in the North Atlantic using St. Nazire as a base.

The British designed Operation Chariot to neutralize the French docking facilities, and for the rest of their lives the survivors of the raid would be known as "charioteers."

The American built "four piper" HMS *Campbeltown* was chosen to lead the raid to destroy the dock at St. Nazaire. She was stripped of three of her smoke stacks in order to resemble a German torpedo boat. Her innards were gutted to reduce weight, and her bow was packed with a nasty surprise. Three tons of high explosives, hidden beneath false bulkheads, were time-delayed to explode some six hours after her crew of commandos had abandoned her.

Flying the German naval ensign, *Campbeltown* and a flotilla of gunboats fooled the German shore batteries long enough to make a final run for St. Nazaire. Then all hell broke loose. The defensive batteries opened up, and under heavy and close-range fire the destroyer rammed the gates of the target dry dock and wedged fast. British commandos scuttled the ship on the spot. They evacuated their wounded under fire and went ashore to join other commandos who were engaged in destroying the dock's pumping house.

Five Victoria Crosses would be awarded for this night's work.

The next morning, when the British invaders had been repulsed, a German boarding party, surveying the damage, went aboard *Campbeltown* to determine how best to move her away from the damaged dock. At 11:20 in the morning, the time-delayed explosives blew up, destroying *Campbeltown*, killing over 350 Germans, and completely wrecking the dock's gate. The Germans would never attempt to repair it, and *Tirpitz* would spend the rest of her short life in Norway.

German shells churn the water off the docks at the French port of St. Nazaire on the night of March 28, 1942 as the old destroyer HMS *Campbeltown* makes a suicide run to disable the Normandie dry dock.

The raid at St. Nazaire high-

Make your home more comfortable than ever

Your upgrade from couch to first class has been approved.

Whether you want to sleep, read or watch TV the perfect sleep chair is . . . Just perfect

NOW
also available in
Genuine Italian Leather
and New Chestnut Color
(as pictured here)

> "To you, it's the perfect lift chair. To me, it's the best sleep chair I've ever had."
> — J. Fitzgerald, VA

Three Chairs in One
Sleep/Recline/Lift

ACCREDITED BUSINESS A+

You can't always lie down in bed and sleep. Heartburn, cardiac problems, hip or back aches – and dozens of other ailments and worries. Those are the nights you'd give anything for a comfortable chair to sleep in: one that reclines to exactly the right degree, raises your feet and legs just where you want them, supports your head and shoulders properly, and operates at the touch of a button.

Our **Perfect Sleep Chair®** does all that and more. More than a chair or recliner, it's designed to provide total comfort. **Choose your preferred heat and massage settings, for hours of soothing relaxation.** Reading or watching TV? Our chair's recline technology allows you to pause the chair in an infinite number of settings. And best of all, it features a powerful lift mechanism that tilts the entire chair forward, making it easy to stand. You'll love the other benefits, too. It helps with correct spinal alignment and promotes back pressure relief, to prevent back and muscle pain. The overstuffed, oversized biscuit style back and unique seat design will cradle you in comfort. Generously filled, wide armrests provide enhanced arm support when sitting or reclining. **It even has a battery backup in case of a power outage.**

White glove delivery included in shipping charge. Professionals will deliver the chair to the exact spot in your home where you want it, unpack it, inspect it, test it, position it, and even carry the packaging away! You get your choice of Genuine Italian Leather, stain and water repellent custom-manufactured DuraLux™ with the classic leather look or plush MicroLux™ microfiber in a variety of colors to fit any decor. **New Chestnut color only available in Genuine Italian Leather. Call now!**

REMOTE CONTROLLED
EASILY SHIFTS FROM FLAT TO A STAND-ASSIST POSITION

Footrest may vary by model

The Perfect Sleep Chair®

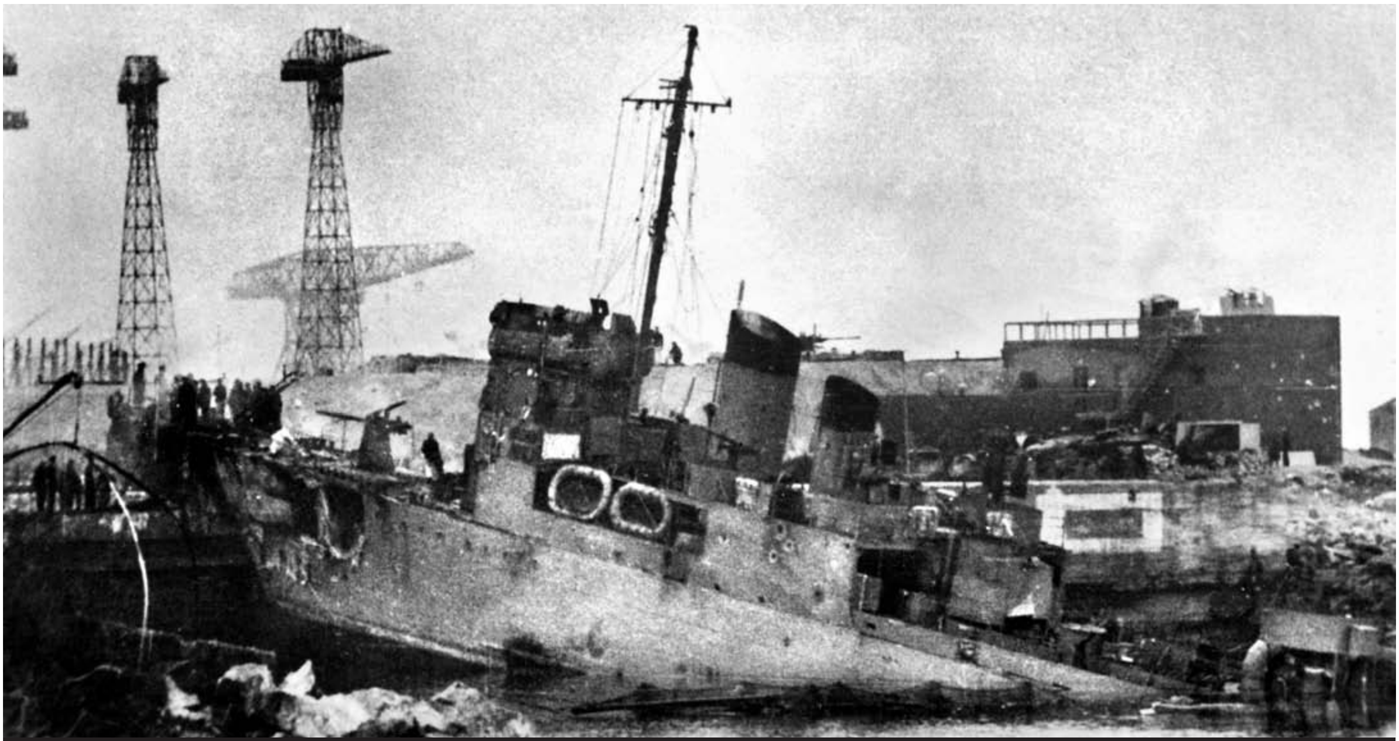
1-888-864-7438

Please mention code 115614 when ordering.

Genuine Italian Leather *classic beauty & durability*	Chestnut New			
Long Lasting DuraLux™ *stain & water repellent*	Mahogany (Burgundy)	Tan	Chocolate	Blue
MicroLux™ Microfiber *breathable & amazingly soft*	Burgundy	Cashmere	Chocolate	Indigo

Because each Perfect Sleep Chair is a made-to-order bedding product it cannot be returned, but if it arrives damaged or defective, at our option we will repair it or replace it. © 2021 *first*STREET for Boomers and Beyond, Inc.

46571



After the nocturnal raid, the destroyer HMS *Campbeltown* lies wedged into the Normandy dry dock at St. Nazaire. Hours after the fighting subsided, explosives aboard the old Lend-Lease destroyer detonated and severely damaged the surrounding facilities.

lighted the importance of the "Bases for Destroyers" deal worked out between President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the new British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in the summer of 1940. In exchange for long-term leases on British Commonwealth islands in the Caribbean, the United States turned over 50 World War I vintage destroyers, which the British desperately needed to replace their growing losses and to provide protection for the all-important North Atlantic convoys.

This limited exchange became the blueprint of the Lend-Lease program, which enabled the Arsenal of Democracy to share her wealth of production, both agricultural and manufactured, with her hard-pressed allies.

HMS *Campbeltown* had been built too late to fight in the last war. Launched in 1919 at the Bath Iron Works in Maine, she was commissioned as the USS *Buchanan* after Franklin Buchanan, the first superintendent of the United States Naval Academy. She had a flush deck, sloping toward her stern, and the distinctive four smoke stacks common to American destroyers at the time.

In the years following the war, there was not much for America's fleet of new destroyers to do. Some were sent to the Balkans to help with food distribution and refugee evacuation. Others were strung out between Newfoundland and the Azores in May 1919 to serve as beacons for the first transatlantic flight of U.S. Navy seaplanes.

As a result of the Washington Naval Treaty of 1921, *Buchanan* and dozens of other "four pipers" were taken out of commission the next year and given a rust-resistant paint job. Moored side by side in naval backwaters at San Diego and Philadelphia, the collection of over 120 destroyers became known as "Red Lead Row." Most of them would spend the next 17 years in suspension.

Red Lead Row would be called back to service abruptly in December 1939 in response to the beginning of hostilities in Europe. Naval planners were aware that the bulk of America's destroyer fleet was woefully outdated. Designers worked overtime to create the new *Fletcher*-class destroyers to replace them. But for the first years of the war, the "four pipers" would have to make do. They all needed to be modernized and refitted. Many were in such bad shape that they were just scraped.

Immediately after rejoining the service, they were sent to patrol the vast American coastline as well as the Caribbean and Central American waters as part of a "Neutrality Patrol." The patrol's primary mission was to protect the approaches to the Panama Canal. While the old destroyers were being brought out of retirement, the world stage was not dormant. Germany launched her *blitzkrieg* against the West that spring, overrunning France and the Low Countries. At sea, the Royal Navy had its hands full with the German *Kriegsmarine*.

Once Germany occupied Norway and France, the Royal Navy's problems were greatly compounded. U-boats and air attacks took a fierce toll on merchant ships and the destroyers that guarded them. By July 1940, the British had lost 28 destroyers to all causes, as well as a battleship, two aircraft carriers, and three cruisers. These losses were unsustainable.

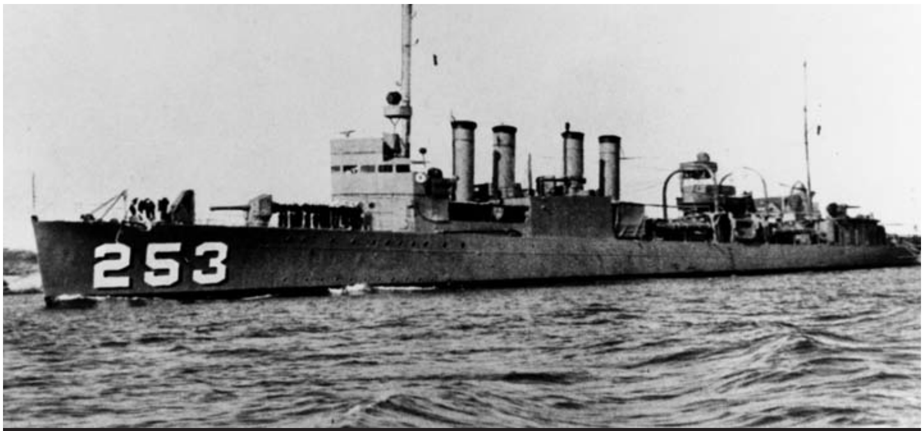
Churchill appealed personally to President Roosevelt for help.

The American president was uniquely qualified to understand the problems the British faced. He had been Assistant Secretary of the Navy from 1913-1920, at a time when Churchill was Lord of the Admiralty. It was on his watch that the "four pipers" were designed and built.

On September 3, 1940, the White House announced that the president had signed an executive order turning over the 50 destroyers to the British in exchange for leases of land in Antigua, British Guiana, Jamaica, St. Lucia, Bermuda, Trinidad, and Newfoundland. The leases were for 99 years and envisioned the construction and utilization of military bases.

So many of the four-stacker destroyers had been built and stored that the United States Navy was still able to retain 80 of them for its own use.

The 50 chosen destroyers steamed for Halifax, Nova Scotia, where their crews would train their new owners. American style equipment



The destroyer HMS *Stanley,* formerly the USS *McCalla,* amassed an impressive record while serving on convoy duty in the Atlantic, participating in the sinking of the German submarines U-*131* and U-*434. Stanley,* however, was later sunk by torpedoes fired from the U-*574.*

was removed and replaced with British gear. All of the ships were stricken from the U.S. Navy list and assigned new names.

The 50 new acquisitions were given names of towns in the British Isles that had similarly named towns in the United States. It was an effort to stress the common heritage and cause of the two countries. Collectively these old boats became known as the *Town*-class destroyers.

Only now did the British sailors begin to learn of the shortcomings of their new charges. The *Town*-class boats had a large turning circle, which made them difficult to steer, and there would be several accidents because of it. Their narrow sterns exposed their propellers to damage when docking. They also rode high in the water when their fuel was consumed. This made them pop like corks in high seas.

The American solution was to flood the fuel bunkers with seawater to maintain balance and an even keel. Before refueling, the oil-fouled seawater was pumped out, a practice that would shock modern day conservationists. The British were loath, however, to do anything that might threaten to contaminate their fuel oil.

The *Town*-class destroyers were also small. Weighing in between 1,000 and 1,200 tons, they were half the size of destroyers coming off the ways in 1940. Their standard complement was between 110 and 120 men. Their firepower was also diminutive. Each boat was fitted with four 4-inch guns. The only enemies that could be intimidated with these were U-boats and E-boats (the German version of the PT boat). Fortunately, that was all these destroyers ever had to face. Because of their odd size, the Royal Navy would think of them all as frigates.

The *Campbeltown* was one of the worst in terms of structural stability. Her bow needed replacing, she needed new propellers, and her electronics malfunctioned. Even after an overhaul in October 1941, she was in such poor condition that she was selected for the suicide mission against St. Nazaire.

Almost immediately upon delivery to the Royal Navy, the *Towns* became an international force. Eight of them were turned over straight away to the Canadians for escort and anti-submarine duties in their home waters. Another nine would go to the Soviet Navy for

German Paratrooper Gravity Knife $125.00 Ea

These excellent Paratrooper Knife reproductions are some of the best, with high quality details!

US M-2 Paratrooper Knife $35.00 Ea

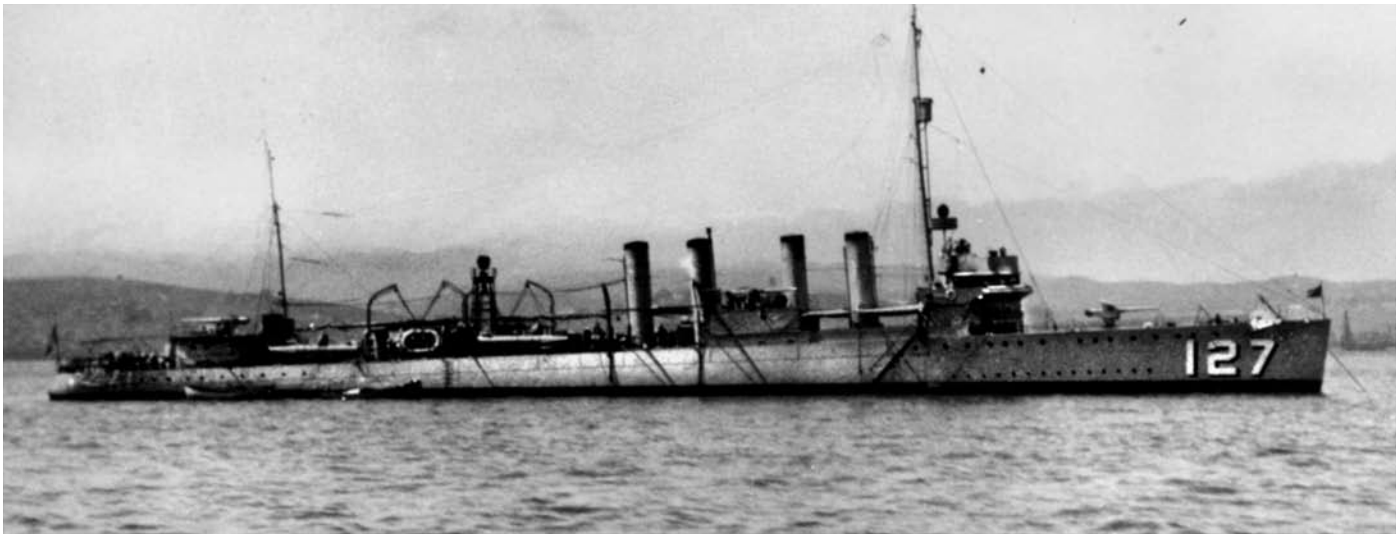
NEW!! German & British Military Service Watches $69.95 Ea

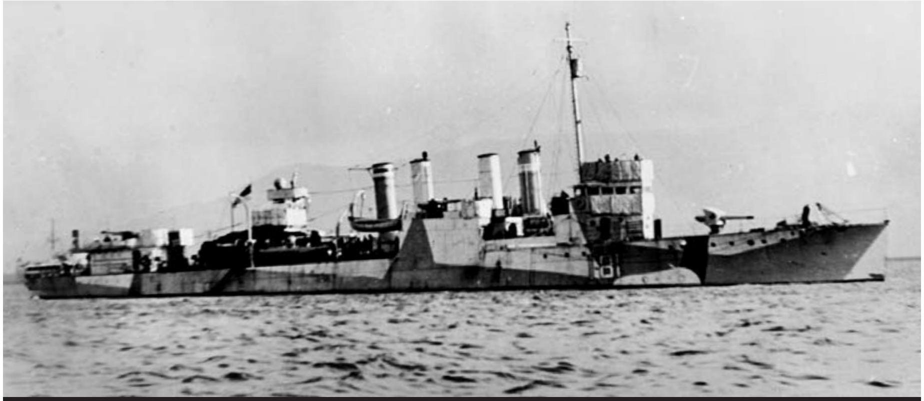
These great new watches are fine quality replicas of original WWII military watches, complete with large, luminous numbering and hour & minute hands for easy reading in low light conditions. With correct military markings on the faces and case backs, they feature stainless steel cases and quartz movements, making them sturdy, reliable time pieces for reenactors or everyday wear. Water resistant to rain and splashes, but not waterproof; furnished with special presentation boxes.

Reddick Militaria

Please add $9.95 for shipping for orders under $150 Dealer Inquiries Welcome Send $5 Today for our Full-Color Catalog #9!

P.O. Box 847 D-40 Pottsboro, TX 75076 1-800-786-6210 Orders@reddickmilitaria.com





TOP: Originally the destroyer USS *Twiggs,* HMS *Leamington* was later leased to the Soviet Navy and served until 1951. *Leamington* was the last of the Lend-Lease destroyers to be retired from active duty and one of few warships to serve under three flags. ABOVE: Formerly the USS *McCook,* the destroyer later known as HMS *St. Croix* served as a convoy escort in the Atlantic, sinking two German U-boats. However, *St. Croix* was later sunk by torpedoes fired from a U-boat.

protection of convoys in the North Sea. The Royal Norwegian Navy in exile would man five of them, while other crews would be composed of Dutch and Free French sailors. Some of these well-used ships would serve in the navies of four different nations.

For the most part, the *Towns* were used for convoy duty in the North Atlantic. They would be stationed in Canada, Iceland, and in Britain as part of the Western Approaches command. Some of them provided escort for Operation Torch and the invasion of North Africa, pushing into the Mediterranean. Their other primary function would be as minelayers.

In battles with the U-boats, the *Towns* actually came off second best. They are credited with sinking four U-boats while losing seven of their own to German torpedoes. These losses include the Russian boat *Dyatelni* (formerly HMS *Churchill*), which was torpedoed in the White Sea in January 1945 while protecting a Baltic convoy.

Several U-boats felt the sting of the *Towns'* depth charges. The "four pipers" must be credited with foiling countless attacks against Allied merchant shipping by keeping the U-boats at bay.

HMS *Broadway* (USS *Hunt*) participated in the capture of *U-110* and its priceless cache of German naval codebooks. Hundreds of Allied seaman owed their lives to the "four pipers" when, their own ships sunk, they were plucked from the frigid waters of the North Atlantic by the *Towns*.

One of the most successful of the destroyers in the anti-submarine role was HMS *Stanley* (USS *McCalla*). On December 17, 1941, while on convoy duty in the Mediterranean, *Stanley* and four other destroyers responded to the report of a U-boat sighting from the air. They managed to find and sink *U-131* while rescuing 55 German submariners.

The next day, *Stanley* and HMS *Blankney* sank *U-434*. Then her luck ran out. The following day *Stanley's* lookouts spotted *U-574* and gave chase. In the desperate fight, she was struck by a torpedo and blew up. Only 25 of her crew survived.

In September 1943, *St. Croix* was hit by three torpedoes and sunk. Hard action made it impossible to pick up her survivors until the next day. The crew of HMS *Itchen* pulled 81 of *St. Croix'* crew from the water. The following day, the *Itchen* was torpedoed and sunk. There were only two survivors of *Itchen* and one from *St. Croix*.

As the war progressed, newer and more capable destroyers became available in quantity, and the *Towns* were gradually replaced. Only in the Soviet navy did they remain on frontline duty until the Nazi surrender. After the war, all of them were scrapped. In a bizarre gesture of friendship, the Soviet navy actually returned their surviving four pipers to the Royal Navy in 1949. These were immediately broken up.

The last *Town*-class destroyer to be retired from active duty was HMS *Leamington* (USS *Twiggs*), another return from the Soviet navy. She still steamed under her own power until December 1951.

The desperate days of the early war called for desperate measures. The *Towns* were no match for modern destroyers, but they packed enough punch to help convoys get through at a time when every ton of supplies was vital to a flagging war effort in Britain.

The over-aged destroyers were a stopgap measure to be sure. Yet they were the right thing at the right time for the right reason.

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

Grab Your Piece of America's Silver Legacy

One Troy Ounce
FINE SILVER
999+
Made in U.S.A.

99.9% Fine Silver Bars

Actual size is 30.6 x 50.4 mm

Fill Your Vault with Morgan Silver Bars

Not only are these hefty bars one full Troy ounce of real, .999 precious silver, they're also beautiful, featuring the crisp image of a Morgan Silver Dollar struck onto the surface. That collectible image adds interest and makes these Silver Bars even more desirable. Minted in the U.S.A. from shimmering American silver, these one-ounce 99.9% fine silver bars are a great alternative to one-ounce silver coins or rounds. Plus, they offer great savings compared to other bullion options like one-ounce sovereign silver coins. Take advantage of our special offer for new customers only and save $5.00 off our regular prices.

Morgan Silver Dollars Are Among the Most Iconic Coins in U.S. History

What makes them iconic? The Morgan Silver Dollar is the legendary coin that built the Wild West. It exemplifies the American spirit like few other coins, and was created using silver mined from the famous Comstock Lode in Nevada. In fact, when travelers approached the mountains around the boomtown of Virginia City, Nevada in the 1850s, they were startled to see the hills shining in the sunlight like a mirror. A mirage caused by weary eyes? No, rather the effect came from tiny flecks of silver glinting in the sun.

A Special Way for You to Stock Up on Precious Silver

While no one can predict the future value of silver in an uncertain economy, many Americans are rushing to get their hands on as much silver as possible, putting it away for themselves and their loved ones. You'll enjoy owning these Silver Bars. They're tangible. They feel good when you hold them, You'll relish the design and thinking about all it represents. These Morgan Design One-Ounce Bars make appreciated gifts for birthdays, anniversaries and graduations, creating a legacy sure to be cherished for a lifetime.

Order More and SAVE

You can save $5.00 off our regular price when you buy now. There is a limit of 25 Bars per customer, which means with this special offer, you can save up to $125.

Hurry. Secure Yours Now!

Call right now to secure your .999 fine silver Morgan Design One-Ounce Silver Bars. You'll be glad you did.

One-Ounce Silver Morgan Design Bar

~~$49.95~~ ea.

Special offer - $44.95 ea. +s/h

SAVE $5 - $125

BUY MORE SAVE MORE!

Limit of 25 bars per customer

Free Morgan Silver Dollar with every order over $499
(A $59.95 value!)

FREE SHIPPING over $149!

Limited time only. Product total over $149 before taxes (if any). Standard domestic shipping only. Not valid on previous purchases.

For fastest service call today toll-free

1-888-201-7144

Offer Code MSB152-01
Please mention this code when you call.

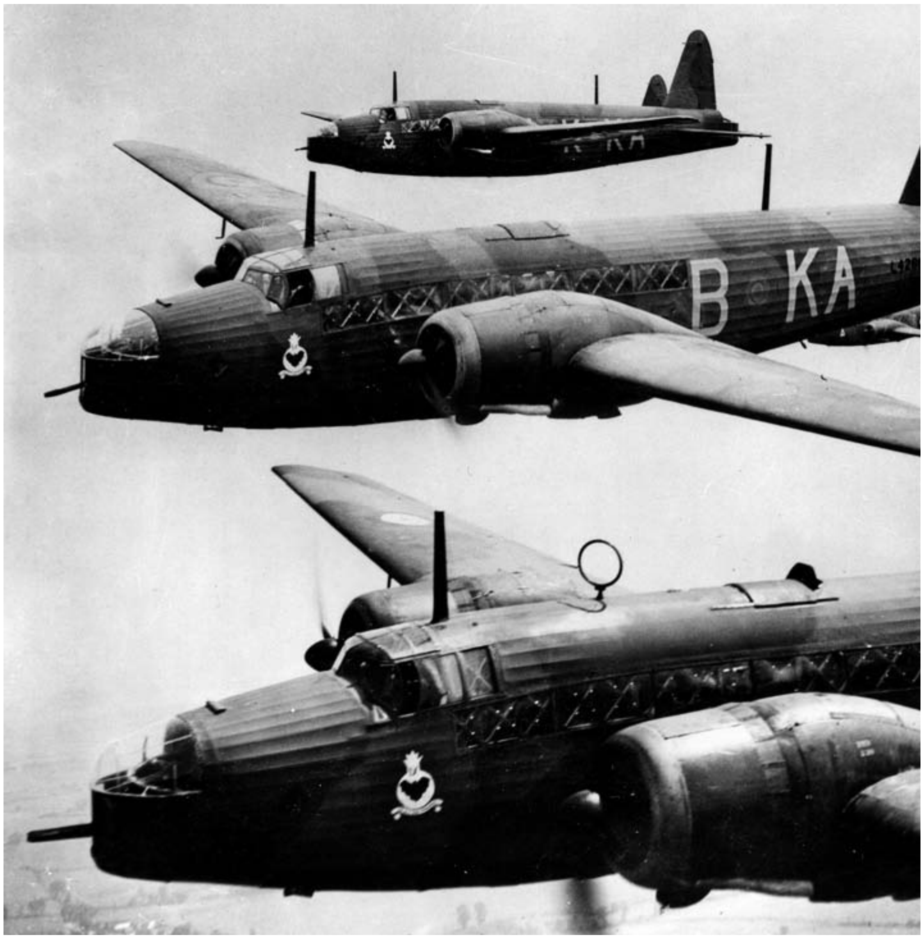
SPECIAL CALL-IN ONLY OFFER

GOVMINT.COM®

GovMint.com • 14101 Southcross Dr. W., Suite 175, Dept. MSB152-01, Burnsville, Minnesota 55337

GovMint.com® is a retail distributor of coin and currency issues and is not affiliated with the U.S. government. The collectible coin market is unregulated, highly speculative and involves risk. GovMint.com reserves the right to decline to consummate any sale, within its discretion, including due to pricing errors. Prices, facts, figures and populations deemed accurate as of the date of publication but may change significantly over time. All purchases are expressly conditioned upon your acceptance of GovMint.com's Terms and Conditions (www.govmint.com/terms-conditions or call 1-800-721-0320); to decline, return your purchase pursuant to GovMint.com's Return Policy. © 2021 GovMint.com. All rights reserved.

By Neil Taylor



Reading Nazi Radar

A valorous Canadian air crew executed its duty during a fateful mission to decode the Luftwaffe's Lichtenstein radar.

TO THE CREWS OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE BOMBER STREAM DRONING TOWARD Germany in the early morning hours of December 3, 1942, this mission seemed indistinguishable from the countless others that had preceded it.

A total of 112 aircraft—48 Handley Page Halifaxes, 27 Avro Lancasters, 22 Short Stirlings, and 15 Vickers Wellingtons—were headed for Frankfurt as part of Bomber Command's continuing effort to take the war to Germany. Since February 1942, Bomber Command, operating under the leadership of Air Chief Marshal Arthur Travers Harris, had been tasked by the British Air Ministry's Air Bombing Directive with the primary objective of focusing "attacks on the morale of the enemy civil population, and, in particular, of the industrial workers." Initially, this was to be achieved by destroying the cities in the industrial Ruhr valley as well as 14 other industrial cities scattered across the rest of Nazi Germany.

In the months since, Bomber Command had increased the scale and strength of its bombing campaign. As the bombing campaign intensified, so too did the loss rate among the participating British forces. Although the RAF had moved to nighttime area bombing due to the heavy losses suffered in daylight attacks on German targets, the German defense force—employing searchlights, ground-based radar, and night fighters—was still able to exact an increasingly heavy toll during the summer and fall of 1942. Clearly, Bomber Command could not sustain these high loss rates, and something had to be done to combat the German air-defense network.

In secret, scientists on both sides of the conflict were racing to create innovative systems that would revolutionize both aircraft detection and deception.

This technological race involved most of the world's major powers in a struggle to exploit the rapidly evolving scientific fields of electromagnetism, radio transmission, and radio detection. By the 1930s, eight countries—France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, the Soviet Union and the United States—were actively researching the use of radio echoes for aircraft and ship detection (the acronym RADAR—for Radio Acquired Detection and Ranging—was first used by the United States Navy in 1940).

Within the British Air Ministry many outlandish and ineffective schemes were examined, but one suggestion, advocating a "death ray" that could shoot down enemy aircraft, received considerable attention in the press. Anxious to put such a claim to rest, the Air Ministry offered £1,000 to the first person who could kill a sheep at 100 yards distance using such a

ABOVE: Sergeant W.W. Bigoray, radio operator aboard the harrowing flight to learn the properties of the Germans' airborne Lichtenstein radar, though wounded, continued to perform valiantly. TOP: Royal Air Force Vickers Wellington bombers on their way toward a target in Nazi-occupied Germany. When the Luftwaffe began equipping night fighters with airborne interception radar (AI), an aircrew of Canadian heroes embarked on a highly dangerous mission to unlock the system's secrets.

ROMAN GLADIATORS FROZEN IN TIME FOR OVER 1,600 YEARS

FOUND: 1,600-YEAR-OLD ROMAN GLADIATOR COINS

HOLD THE GLORY OF ROME IN THE PALM OF YOUR HAND

When your famous father appoints you Caesar at age 7, you're stepping into some very big sandals. But when that father is Emperor Constantine the Great, those sandals can be epic!

Constantius II, became Caesar at 7, and a Roman Emperor at age 20. Today, he is remembered for helping continue his father's work of bringing Christianity to the Roman Empire, as well as for his valiant leadership in battle.

But for many collectors, his strongest legacy is having created one of the most fascinating and unique bronze coins in the history of the Roman Empire: the "Gladiator's Paycheck".

THE GLADIATORS PAYCHECK

Roman bronze coins were the "silver dollars" of their day. They were the coins used for daily purchases, as well as for the payment of wages. Elite Roman Gladiators—paid to do battle before cheering crowds in the Colosseum—often received their monthly 'paycheck' in the form of Roman bronze coins.

But this particular Roman bronze has a gladiator pedigree like no other! Minted between 348 to 361 AD, the Emperor's portrait appears on one side of this coin. The other side depicts a literal clash of the gladiators. One warrior raises his spear menacingly at a second warrior on horseback. Frozen in bronze for over 1,600 years, the drama of this moment can still be felt when you hold the coin. Surrounding this dramatic scene is a Latin inscription—a phrase you would never expect in a million years!

HAPPY DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN

The Latin inscription surrounding the gladiators reads: "Happy Days are Here Again" (*Fel Temp Reparatio*). You see, at the time these coins were designed, the Emperor had just won several important military battles against the foes of Rome. At the same time, Romans were preparing to celebrate the 1100th anniversary of the founding of Rome. To mark these momentous occasions, this new motto was added and the joyful inscription makes complete sense.

A MIRACLE OF SURVIVAL FOR 1,600 YEARS

For more than sixteen centuries, these stunning coins have survived the rise and fall of empires, earthquakes, floods and two world wars. The relatively few Roman bronze coins that have survived to this day were often part of buried treasure hoards, hidden away centuries ago until rediscovered and brought to light.

These authentic Roman coins can be found in major museums around the world. But today, thanks to GovMint.com, you can find them a little closer to home: ***your*** home!

Claim your very own genuine Roman Gladiator Bronze Coin for less than $40 (*plus s/h*). Each coin is protected in a clear acrylic holder for preservation and display. A Certificate of Authenticity accompanies your coin.

Unfortunately, quantities are extremely limited. Less than 2,000 coins are currently available. Demand is certain to be overwhelming so call now for your best chance at obtaining this authentic piece of the Roman Empire.

Approximately 17-20 mm

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

We invite you to examine your coin in your home or office—with the confidence of our 30-day Satisfaction Guarantee.

RESERVE YOUR COIN TODAY!

These Roman Gladiator Bronze Coins are not available in stores. Call now to reserve yours. Orders will be accepted on a strict first-call, first-served basis. Sold-out orders will be promptly refunded.

Roman Gladiator Bronze $39.95 +s/h

FREE SHIPPING on 4 or More!

Limited time only. Product total over $149 before taxes (if any). Standard domestic shipping only. Not valid on previous purchases.

Call today toll-free for fastest service

1-800-558-6468

Offer Code RGB137-02

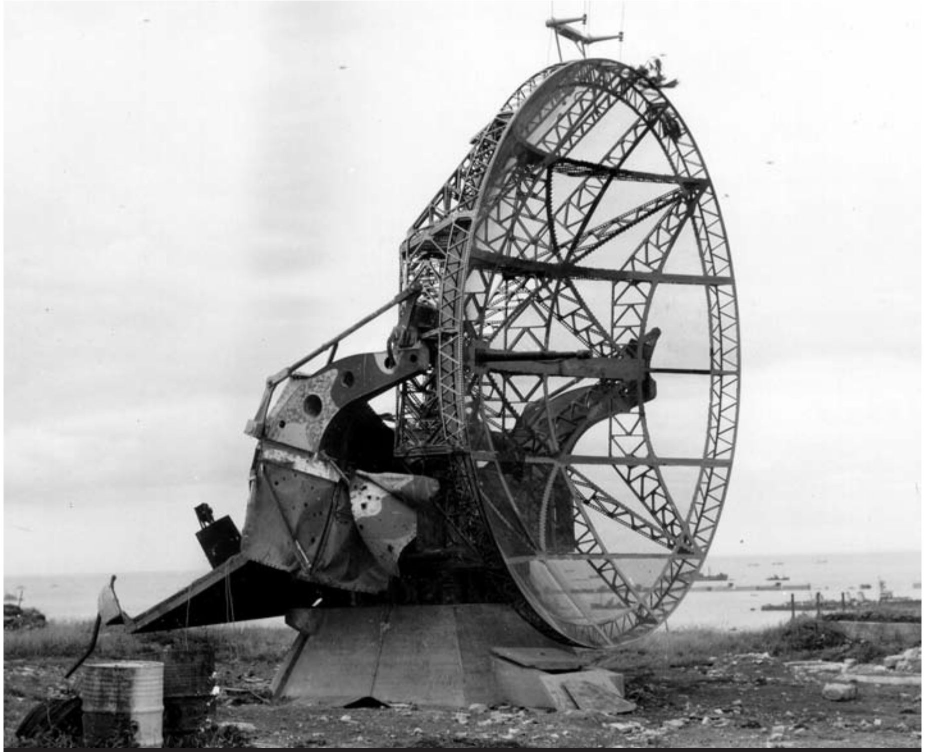
Please mention this code when you call.

GovMint.com • 14101 Southcross Dr. W., Suite 175, Dept. RGB137-02 • Burnsville, MN 55337

GovMint.com® is a retail distributor of coin and currency issues and is not affiliated with the U.S. government. The collectible coin market is unregulated, highly speculative and involves risk. GovMint.com reserves the right to decline to consummate any sale, within its discretion, including due to pricing errors. Prices, facts, figures and populations deemed accurate as of the date of publication but may change significantly over time. All purchases are expressly conditioned upon your acceptance of GovMint.com's Terms and Conditions (www.govmint.com/terms-conditions or call 1-800-721-0320); to decline, return your purchase pursuant to GovMint.com's Return Policy. © 2021 GovMint.com. All rights reserved.

GOVMINT.COM®

THE BEST SOURCE FOR COINS WORLDWIDE®



This destroyed German Wurzburg radar installation was photographed by an Allied soldier shortly after D-Day. Introduced in 1941, Wurzburg was capable of identifying a target with three-dimensional coordinates and was used in sighting heavy guns.

The British radar named Chain Home was the first operational network of its kind in the world and served as a vital early warning system during the Battle of Britain.

ray. There were no takers.

By June 1935, however, they had a workable radar system, and in May 1936 established the first operational radar station at Bawdsey Manor. Expansion followed; by 1937, the Chain Home (CH) system of radar stations could detect aircraft 100 miles away. The CH system, along with an extensive network of manned observer stations, was instrumental in ensuring Fighter Command forces were placed where they were most needed during the Battle of Britain.

Unfortunately, the ground-based CH system was nearly useless at night. British scientists recognized the need for miniaturized airborne-Interception (AI) radar systems carried inside individual aircraft that could detect the enemy at ranges of five miles and then vector the interceptor closer until reaching the point of visual contact.

It took until June 1940 to develop an effective AI radar unit, designated the Mk. IV. Once fitted into the heavily armed Bristol Beaufighter twin-engine night fighter, with its deadly 20mm cannon and .303-inch machine-gun combination, the potential of the AI Mk. IV was realized. The first AI-assisted Beaufighter kill took place on the night of November 19/20, 1940, when a plane from No. 604 Squadron RAF successfully brought down a Junkers Ju-88.

German scientists had not been idle while their British counterparts rushed to develop their range- and detection-finding equipment. Their first-generation radar system, named "Freya" after the Norse goddess of love and war, was completed in February 1936. It could detect approaching Allied aircraft at ranges of 60 miles. Still, a purpose-built airborne interception radar was required.

In early 1941, such an AI system was developed, code-named *Lichtenstein*. An array of antennas projected forward from the nose of a night fighter, connected to a cockpit indicator unit that displayed range, azimuth and elevation of the target relative to the interceptor.

A Dornier Do 217Z night fighter equipped with an experimental Lichtenstein AI radar set recorded Germany's first AI victory when it downed an RAF Wellington participating in a Bomber Command attack on Hamburg on the night of October 16, 1940.

Soon, several squadrons of Me-110s, Do-217s and Junkers Ju-88s were equipped with AI radar. Although the antennas caused significant drag on the aircraft, the radar system proved much more effective in vectoring German fighters onto British bombers than chasing searchlight beams.

As the loss rate of British bombers to night fighters rose steeply in 1942, British authorities suspected a new form of targeting system was being employed. Soon they detected a transmission pattern coming from moving objects.

Definitive evidence that these transmission patterns originated from German AI radar was required. This would necessitate the use of a British bomber, equipped with the appropriate receivers, as bait to prompt a German night-fighter attack. The task was assigned to No. 1474 Flight, an RAF unit flying nine Vickers Wellington twin-engine bombers equipped with signals-intelligence equipment.

No. 1474 Flight was involved in collecting data on enemy radar frequencies, signal strengths, pulse repetition frequencies, and types of scan equipment. Each Wellington carried a special receiver coupled to an oscilloscope continually monitored across a range of frequencies by a Special Duty Operator aboard each flight.

Planners decided to embed one of No. 1474 Flight's Wellingtons into a bomber stream headed for Germany. Indistinguishable from the dozens of other aircraft taking part in the raid, the Wellington would play the part of a straggler falling behind the main stream, presenting an irresistible target for a roaming night fighter. At least, that was the logic behind the operation. Whether or not the Wellington and its crew survived was secondary to the mission and a risk worth taking as long as it led to discovery of the appropriate radar frequency setting.

And that is how it came to be that on December 3, 1942, Flight Sergeant Edwin Amos "Ted" Paulton, of Windsor, Ontario, found himself, along with the other Canadian members of his crew and an English special electronics expert, lifting off at 0202 hours (2:02 AM) from the concrete runway at RAF Gransden Lodge in their "special duties" Wellington, DT-G. As the aircraft climbed into the night, the fens and low ridges of the Cambridgeshire countryside faded into darkness. After consulting his maps, navigator William Renton "Bill" Barry, a former printer from Russel, Manitoba, gave Paulton a heading that would insert their aircraft into the RAF bomber stream heading for Frankfurt, Germany.

By 0430 hours (4:30 AM), the Wellington had penetrated German air space and was within 50 miles of Frankfurt. Seated in front of his receiver mounted mid-fuselage, special operator Pilot Officer Harold Jordan, a former schoolmaster from Croyden, Surrey, monitored the wave patterns dancing across his scope. He had detected a signal pattern likely originating from a German night fighter. Jordan notified the crew of his suspicions, and Paulton commenced a shallow banked turn onto a north-northwesterly course, moving his aircraft obliquely away from the main bomber stream—simulating an aircraft experiencing difficulty and turning back toward Britain.

The electronic signals monitored by Jordan grew stronger, and again he warned the crew to expect a fighter attack. At the same time, he prepared a coded message noting the frequency (492 megahertz, or megacycles/second) of the strange signals. He passed the message up to the wireless operator, Sergeant William Walter "Bill" Bigoray, a farmhand and general laborer from Redwater, Alberta, who immediately began tapping out the message on his radio transmitter.

Electronic signals were now saturating Jordan's receiver. No sooner had he barked out a warning than a burst of cannon fire tore through the side of the fuselage, striking Jordan in the arm. Ignoring his wound, Jordan continued to man his post and prepared a new message for transmittal confirming that the frequency signaled was the right one.

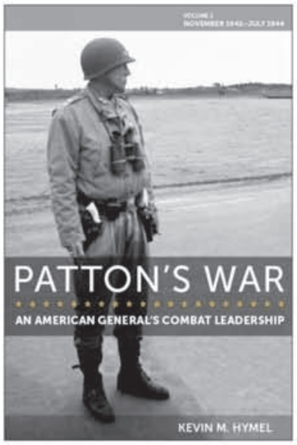
At the rear of the Wellington, Flight Sergeant Everett Thomas Vachon, a farm worker from Ayer's Cliff, Quebec, swung his turret with its twin .303-inch machine guns into action, keeping up a steady stream of fire at the enemy—a Ju-88 night fighter. Return fire from the Ju-88 on its second attack run slammed into the turret, wounding Vachon in the shoulder and knocking out the turret's power source. Farther up the fuselage, Jordan was struck in the jaw but continued to monitor his equipment.

Despite Paulton's violent evasive actions, the Ju-88 bore in for a third attack, this time head-on. Cannon shells pounded into the front turret, wounding Flight Sergeant Frederick Percy "Fred" Grant, a Brockville, Ontario, grocery clerk, in his right leg. Seeing his friend trapped and wounded, Bigoray left his wireless station to attend to Grant just as the Ju-88 commenced another attack run. At least one shell penetrated the nose of the Wellington and exploded, shrapnel striking both of Bigoray's legs. Badly wounded, Bigoray staggered back to his seat while the navigator, Flight Sergeant Bill Barry, worked to free Grant. Back in his compartment, Jordan was hit for a third time, sustaining a severe wound to his right eye.

Weak and nearly blind from his head wound, Jordan tried to stay at his post. Fearing he would pass out, Jordan convinced Barry to come to his station so Jordan could show the navigator how to operate the equipment, but his efforts were futile. Meanwhile, Vachon had vacated the shattered rear turret and was standing, his head peering out the dorsal-mounted Astro Dome, shouting out evasive maneuvers every time the night fighter swung in for another attack. This worked for a time, until he was struck in the hand. Barry then replaced him.

So far, Paulton's violent corkscrews had kept his airplane aloft, but he had drastically lost altitude, dropping from 14,000 feet down to about 500 feet above ground. They had survived 10 or 11 separate attacks from the Ju-88, and Paulton doubted they could weather another punishing attack. Then suddenly, the night fighter was gone, leaving the battered Wellington and its wounded crew alone in the darkness. Had it run out of ammunition? No one knew, but at least now they had a fighting chance of getting home.

The Wellington was little more than a flying wreck, but thanks to its sturdy geodesic construction it was still in one piece. The starboard throttle control had been shot away and the port throttle was jammed, leaving the engines roaring and shaking. The starboard aileron had disintegrated from cannon fire, the trim tabs no longer functioned, and all hydraulic pressure was gone, rendering the flaps useless. The pitot head had also been blown away, leaving Paulton with no airspeed indication. To keep the plane flying level, he resorted to turning the wheel over hard. Both turrets were out of action, and a large patch of fabric had torn away along the starboard side of the fuselage. Four crew members were



"With *Patton's War,* Kevin Hymel has established himself as one of the finest historians in the United States. His depth of research and keen observations about General George S. Patton, Jr., in this fascinating, well-paced book, breaks new ground in the study of the famous World War II battlefield commander."
—**Brian M. Sobel**, author of *The Fighting Pattons*

PATTON'S WAR
An American General's Combat Leadership, Volume I: November 1942–July 1944
Kevin M. Hymel
432 pp. • 52 illus.
$39.95

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI PRESS

once it was down.

Jordan helped Bigoray into his parachute gear and got him to the rear escape hatch when the wireless operator suddenly changed his mind. Remembering he had not clamped down the transmission key on his wireless set, Bigoray painfully dragged himself back to his station. He tapped out the message "ditching," then depressed and strapped the key down so anyone listening could fix their position.

His task completed, Bigoray worked his way back to the escape hatch and maneuvered himself into position, his feet dangling through the opening. Paulton brought the flaming aircraft around once more and began a run toward the coast. Barry calculated the drift and at precisely the right moment gave the signal to drop. Bigoray hesitated. Below, all he could see was water. Keeping his wits, he quickly pulled the ripcord as he fell, and to his crewmates' relief, he drifted ashore near Ramsgate, where rescuers immediately rushed him to hospital.

With Bigoray safely away and flames spreading through the aircraft, Paulton eased the nearly uncontrollable plane down into the waves 200 yards off Walmer Beach near Deal. The aircraft shuddered and groaned as it settled in the water but remained afloat.

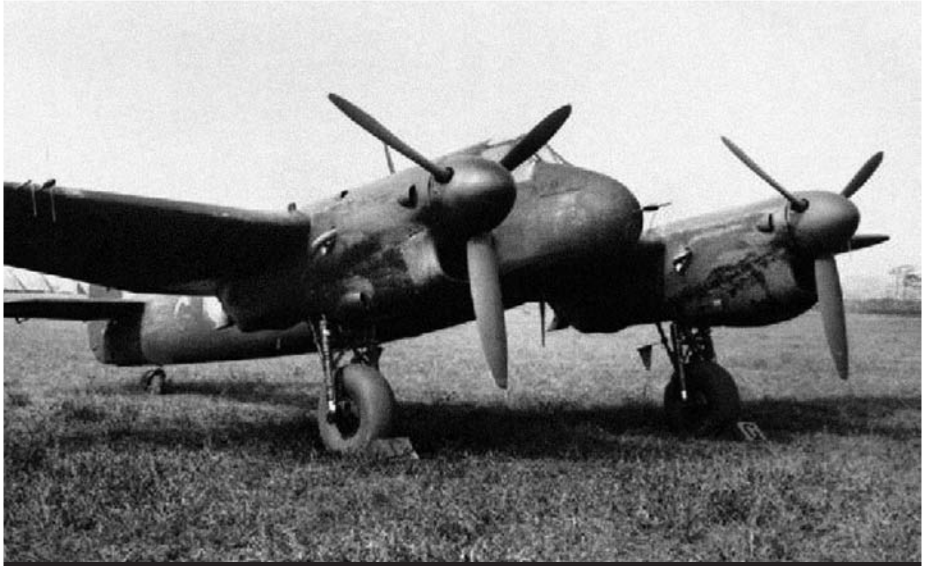
Vachon pulled the release mechanism for the dinghy, and the crew scrambled onto the wing of the Wellington. The dinghy inflated but, riddled with holes from the attack, was unseaworthy.

The crew abandoned the sinking dinghy and scrambled back onto the wing of their plane to await rescue. Fortunately, two local fishermen had observed their ditching. Cutting their lines, the men rowed over to the floating wreck, pulled alongside, and helped each of the five men into the boat. Carefully the men pulled away from the slowly sinking aircraft and worked their way to shore.

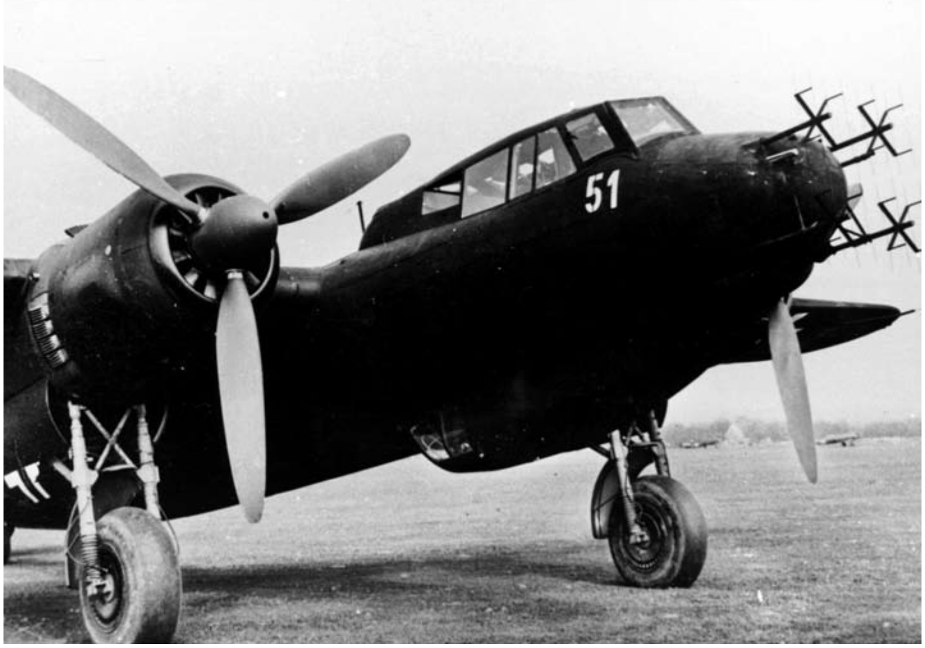
It had been a near-run thing, but Paulton and his crew had survived, although four of the six men had been wounded. Pilot Officer Jordan had sustained serious injury to his face and back and would lose the sight in his right eye; Sergeant Bigoray had been injured in both legs, the right leg quite severely; Flight Sergeant Vachon had sustained wounds in his shoulder and right hand; and Flight Sergeant Grant had been wounded in the leg.

Their message had gotten through, however, and with the frequency of the German night fighters' airborne interception radar confirmed, British scientists were now able to work on countermeasures, developing at least three of particular importance.

The first of these was window, or chaff—



ABOVE: This Bristol Beaufighter is equipped with the RAF Mark IV airborne interception (AI) radar. Mark IV AI radar was introduced in June 1940 and could identify potential targets aloft from 450 feet to 10,000 feet. BELOW: The Luftwaffe Do-217 night fighter pictured has been equipped with FuG 202 airborne interception (AI) radar. The distinctive antennae protruding from the aircraft's nose were components of the apparatus that allowed the night fighters to efficiently locate and attack bomber formations.



wounded, and Paulton himself had only narrowly escaped injury thanks to the armor plate behind his back. Despite all these problems, Paulton managed to gain altitude to 5,000 feet and nursed the battered Wellington back toward England.

At his wireless station, Bigoray continued to hammer out the coded message containing the frequency of the night fighter's airborne interception radar, but he received no acknowledgement from base. Undeterred, he remained at his post, and at 0645 hours (6:45 AM) the shattered Wellington, avoiding the searchlights seeking it out, crossed the French coast near Dunkirk.

At 0720 hours (7:20 AM), Paulton's Wellington reached the English coast. Initially planning to ditch the aircraft in the dark water, Paulton turned on the landing lights, but they failed to adequately illuminate the wave crests below. Instead, he decided to wait for daylight. While circling over the coastline, Paulton asked if anyone preferred to bail out instead of ditching. Sergeant Bigoray, his bleeding legs now stiff and painful, opted for jumping, as he feared he would not be able to crawl out of the aircraft strips of black paper with aluminum foil attached to one side—which had already been developed as an anti-radar countermeasure. Packaged into bundles, then dropped from Allied bombers, window swamped the German radar with false echoes. The British now knew that strips cut to a length of 30cm by 1.5cm (11.8” x .6”) were most effective for jamming purposes.

The second was Boozer, a passive receiver/detector tuned to the same frequency as Lichtenstein and installed in British bombers, which could detect approaching night fighters employing AI radar.

Third was Serrate, an Allied radar detection-and-homing device installed in night fighters. This device could detect and track Lichtenstein radar impulses, allowing Allied pilots to home in on their German counterparts.

The No. 141 Squadron RAF initiated use of Serrate on the night of June 14/15, 1943, when a Beaufighter VIfs equipped with the detector successfully downed a Messerschmitt 110 night fighter while escorting nearly 200 Lancasters on a bombing mission to Oberhausen, Germany. This started a string of German night-fighter losses that eventually forced the Luftwaffe to alter the frequencies used in their newest radars.

In recognition of their valiant actions during the attack, Paulton and Barry received back-dated commissions and were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Sergeants Bigoray, Vachon, and Grant received the Distinguished Flying Medal, and Special Operator Jordan was awarded the Distinguished Service Order.

William Bigoray was the only member of the crew not to survive the war. After recovering from his wounds, Bigoray returned to action, joining No. 7 Squadron RAF in January 1944. On April 28, 1944, while flying as a wireless operator/air gunner, his Lancaster was shot down over Reichenbach, Germany. All seven crew members were killed.

While the December 3, 1942, electronic eavesdropping mission could be regarded as near-suicidal in design, the six daring men of Wellington DT-G persevered against all odds. Through their selfless efforts, which represented but one small facet of the cat-and-mouse electronic warfare being waged over Europe, they ultimately rendered the night skies over Nazi Germany just a little safer for the thousands of airmen participating in the Allies’ strategic bombing offensive.

Author Neil Taylor has contributed to WWII History *on a variety of topics. He writes from his home in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.*

BEFORE THE PHOTO OF THE FLAG WAS TAKEN, THE MARINES FIRST HAD TO TAKE THE BEACHES

Iwo Jima - the costliest battle in the history of the United States Marine Corps

The landing on *Iwo Jima* occurred on February 19, 1945, the battle would last for over a month. The results were staggering and historic. Now, you can honor these warriors and own a piece of history. This laser engraved map of the Iwo Jima Landing Plan is the ONLY collectible with “sand” from all six USMC invasion beaches and the peak of Mt. Suribachi. This will be a treasured part of your WWII collection, and a definite heirloom for your family when you order yours today.

A portion of your purchase will be donated to the Iwo Jima Association of America (IJAA).

$119.99 + $10.00 shipping

Includes a Certificate of Authenticity

DAY OF DAYS PRODUCTIONS®
803-663-7854

ORDER ONLINE at
www.dayofdaysproductions.com
Or mail a money order for your plaque(s) + $10.00 shipping to:
Day of Days Productions®
PO Box 645 • Warrenville, SC 29851-0645

ALSO AVAILABLE ONLINE:
US Army Landings and Operations in World War II ETO
Final Overlord D-Day Invasion Plan
With sand from all invasion beaches

Get Your FREE World War II Digital e-Books

Warfare History Network, the official web portal of WWII HISTORY MAGAZINE, has created WWII e-Books and is making them available to you *free, with no strings attached.*

FIND OUT MORE AT:

www.WarfareHistoryNetwork.com

Kampfgruppe
Medals and Badges
High Quality German World War II Militaria
Steve Mezey
358 Speedvale Ave. E. Suite 26021
Guelph, ON, Canada N1E 6W1
Phone: (519) 823-8249 • Fax: (519) 823-8249
Email: info@kampfgruppemedals.com
www.kampfgruppemedals.com

SUBSCRIBE TO
WWII HISTORY

CALL 800-219-1187
OR ONLINE AT
www.WarfareHistoryNetwork.com

PATTON

FROM GAFSA TO EL GUETTAR

Lieutenant General George S. Patton, Jr., led the American II Corps though Tunisia and defeated the Germans in the first American victory since the debacle at Kasserine Pass.

Lieutenant General George S. Patton watches American tanks from his II Corps advance against Axis forces in Tunisia. He had taken command of the corps, defeated at Kasserine Pass, twelve days earlier and sent it into battle.

BY KEVIN M. HYMEL

Lieutenant General George S. Patton, Jr., looked forward to fighting German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, his North African nemesis. But it would not be Rommel who faced Patton on the battlefields of Tunisia in the spring of 1943.

Patton had started the war in Morocco with Operation Torch on November 8, 1942. As the commander of the Western Task Force, he had landed a force on the beaches on French Morocco and, after three days of fighting, accepted the surrender of the Vichy French. While Patton attended to administrative duties in Casablanca, the war continued in Algeria and Tunisia. It was there that German forces under General Jurgen von Arnim smashed into the American II Corps under Major General Lloyd Fredendall at Sidi Bou Zid on February 14, 1943. Rommel followed up von Arnim's attack two days later, driving the Americans back some 50 miles to Kasserine Pass. At least 300 Americans had been killed, 3,000 wounded, and nearly 3,000 were missing in action, not to mention the tons of lost equipment. The attack had badly shaken American confidence.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the overall Allied commander in North Africa, needed a new commander to take over II Corps. After offering the job to generals Ernest Harmon and Mark Clark, both of whom turned it down, Eisenhower sent for Patton, who arrived on March 5. Eisenhower simply explained II Corps' mission: help to squeeze the Germans between the British Eighth Army, approaching from the south, and the British First Army, attacking from the west. Patton's two objectives were to tie up as many German units as possible until British General Bernard Law Montgomery's Eighth Army pushed through Rommel's Mareth Line, and to capture the port town of Gafsa, which Montgomery could then use as a supply base.

The famous Field Marshal Rommel had departed North Africa on March 9, eight days before Patton attacked the German line. He had been promoted to commander of Army Group Africa, but the new position was merely a charade. In the previous weeks and months, he had clashed with his superiors and his Italian allies, his negative assessments of the situation having displeased Hitler. In addition, Rommel's heart, nerves, and rheumatism were dragging him down. That morning he boarded a plane and flew to Rome to assume his new command.

General von Arnim took command of all forces in Tunisia, now called Army Group Afrika. Rommel or no, there was still a German army fighting in North Africa. Neither Patton nor any of the Allies realized Rommel had left for good, and all of them believed that they were still fighting the Desert Fox. Nevertheless, Patton appreciated his new task. "I suppose it is an honor to be given all the tough nuts to crack," he boasted to his wife Beatrice. "I hope my teeth hold out."

With Montgomery's offensive stalled at Rommel's Mareth Line, Patton hoped his offensive in western Tunisia would draw off German reserves, creating a weakened force for Montgomery to overwhelm and continue his northern drive. If things went well, Patton might even drive to Gabès, splitting the enemy in two in the process.

AKG Images

ABOVE: German General Jurgen von Armin talks to troops in Tunisia, where he replaced General Erwin Rommel, Patton's nemesis. Von Arnim's force, as Army Group Afrika, consisted of all Axis forces in North Africa. BELOW: The crew of an M3 Lee medium tank, part of Major General Orlando Ward's 1st Armored Division, takes a break from combat. Patton worried that Ward's men were too timid, anathema to a tank commander.

National Archives

For the offensive, Patton planned to send Major General Terry Allen's 1st Infantry Division south from Feriana to attack and hold Gafsa, some 45 miles away. Once completed, Major General Orlando Ward's 1st Armored Division, supported by elements of Major General Manton Eddy's 9th Infantry Division, would head out of Kasserine Pass and attack southeast past Gafsa, driving some 25 miles east to Maknassy. Defending the passes to Patton's rear would be other elements of the 9th, as well as Major General Charles Ryder's 34th Infantry Division.

It was a simple plan, but Patton knew there was nothing simple about combat. The day before he got II Corps rolling, he assessed his divisions. Of the four, he considered only Allen's 1st Infantry ready for battle, Ward's 1st Armored too "timid," and Ryder's 34th Infantry too defensive-minded. He reserved judgment about Eddy's 9th Infantry, which had yet to experience any real fighting, still blessed with, in Patton's words, the "valor of ignorance." Patton considered Eddy, a World War I veteran, an excellent tactician but too cautious.

Patton wanted to start forward on March 15, but heavy rains forced him to delay until March 17. He fancied a whimsical idea to control the moving parts of the offensive: he wished he were triplets so he could command the two attacking divisions and the corps himself. He visited Allen on March 16 to make final preparations before the offensive. Allen's troops would be up against the Italian Centauro Division, which defended Gafsa, but Patton worried that the German 21st Panzer Division might join the fight.

When Patton noticed that one of Allen's infantry regiments lacked anti-tank support, he ordered Allen to remedy the situation. Allen tapped the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion, composed of 34 lightly-armored M3 half-tracks armed mostly with 37mm guns, with a few 75mm guns, as opposed to thicker-armored M10 tank destroyers, which ran on a tank chassis and sported a 76.2mm gun. It proved an important decision.

Later that day, Patton addressed his staff. "Gentleman, tomorrow we attack. If we are not victorious, let no one come back alive." Then he retired to his bedroom to pray. That evening, as the troops of II Corps moved to their assembly areas, Patton hosted Eisenhower and British General Harold Alexander, the commander of 18th Army Group, and their staffs at his Feriana headquarters for what he dubbed Operation WOP, a politically incorrect name, since the Americans were facing Italian troops. Tension hung in the air as the commanders worried that the Germans might strike first, before II Corps made its move. Alexander paced back and forth in front of Patton's fireplace, still concerned about the Americans' fighting prowess. "We might get in trouble," he stressed, if II Corps found itself in a pitched, indecisive battle.

At the designated hour, the troops started forward. Whenever Patton received a battlefield update, he would whisper it to Eisenhower, who listened intently with his hands behind his back, and then Alexander, who continued to pace. A large map on the wall depicted Allied and enemy positions, but the generals ignored it. Outside, soldiers shoveled sand through a window to set up a sand table map. Patton later wrote that he "radiated confidence," despite one genuine worry. "The only trouble I have is a cold-sore on my lip." That night, as Patton prepared for bed, he received reports that there was fighting north of Gafsa. "Well," he wrote, "the battle is on."

As the sun rose on March 17, Patton went out to observe the 1st Infantry Division enter Gasfa. When he saw no movement on the battlefield, he stormed up to Allen and asked, "What the hell is this? When are you going to move?" Allen surprised him with, "General, we are already on our first objective," adding that he had not been given permission to make a night attack. In fact, he had been told expressly not to launch a night attack.

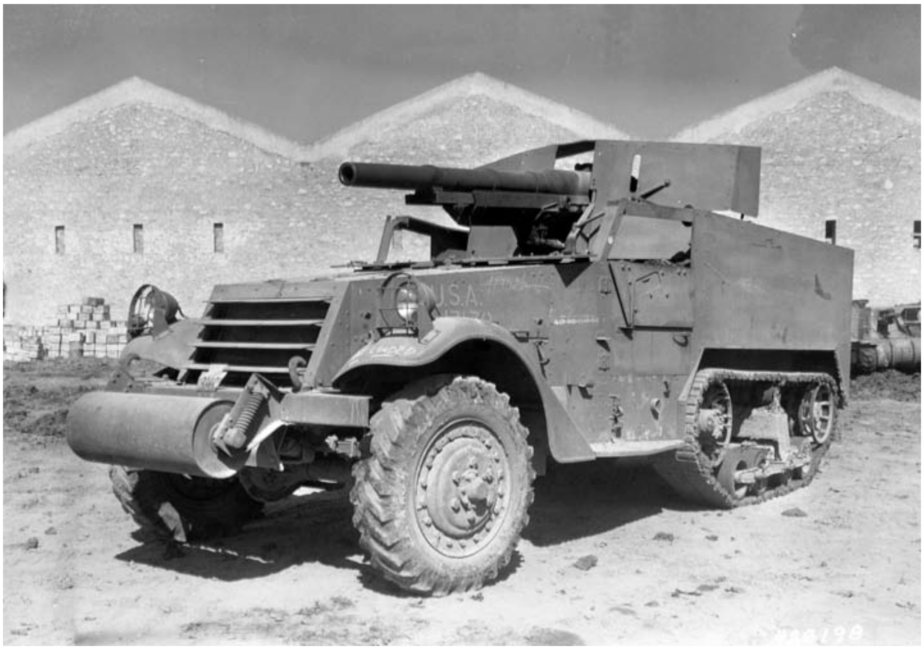
When Allen tried to explain his actions by mentioning Knute Rockne, the renowned Notre Dame football coach from the 1920s who popularized the forward pass, Patton asked, "What the hell does a Swede football coach have to do with night attacks?" Allen answered, "Why beat your brains out for a yard and a half when you can throw for 40 yards?" Allen's attack had been a forward pass for the infantry. Patton now knew he had a creative, aggressive commander in charge of the 1st Infantry Division.

Later in the day, Patton drove to the front, where he climbed a large rock outside Gafsa and uneasily surveyed the town, not convinced it was yet in American hands. He watched as artillery shells burst in the distance and American troops advanced. "Go down that track until you get blown up," he told his aide, Dick Jenson, "then come back and report." Jenson took off in his jeep with a bevy of curious reporters following. The town was deserted; the Italian Centauro Division, which had been defending the city, had pulled out, and the 21st Panzer Division never showed itself. It was a bloodless victory.

Patton climbed into the back of his command car. As he neared Gafsa, he ordered his driver to stop next to a reporter-filled jeep. He smiled, pointed at his command car and, wanting to defend his warrior image, explained, "I'm using that because the tank I usually move around in hasn't caught up with me yet." Then he looked through his binoculars at some soldiers walking up a hill toward the town. He handed the binoculars to a reporter. "That's the 16th Infantry [Regiment] going up that hill ahead. Looks as though they're going right into Gafsa."

When a reporter asked him how the battle was going, Patton told him, "Oh, fine, fine. But I'd feel happier if I knew where the Germans were. As long as I know where they are, I don't mind how hard they fight. But I'd like to know where they are." With that, he climbed back into his vehicle and sped into the city. That night, in a letter to his wife, Patton admitted his feelings about the advance. "When I started forward, I was really scared of an air attack but soon got used to it and stopped worrying."

Both: National Archives



ABOVE: Early in the war, the U.S. Army relied heavily on M3 halftracks armed with 75mm cannon as tank destroyers. The vehicles had virtually no armor and were vulnerable to both enemy cannon and machine-gun fire. BELOW: The Italian Centuro Division retreated from Gafsa instead of fighting the Americans on March 17, 1943, giving Patton his first victory, however hollow.

Patton had won his first victory as II Corps commander. More important, his attack had forced von Arnim to commit two-thirds of his mobile reserve to his western front on the eve of Montgomery's offensive. Both Eisenhower and Alexander visited Patton to tell him they were pleased with his progress, albeit against nothing. Eisenhower later informed Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall, "The officers and men of both divisions are in fine shape and eager to fight. Patton, assisted by Bradley, has done a splendid job in a very short time." Eisenhower was right; II Corps had come a long way since the Kasserine Pass debacle.

Despite Patton's success, he chaffed at remaining in his headquarters during a battle, even if it was the right thing to do. "When one is fighting Erwin [Rommel] one has to be near the radio." But his advance was about to slow. For the next two days it rained incessantly, bogging down everything in a sea of mud. Alexander ordered Patton to halt while Montgomery

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-554-0865-17A; Photo: Dr. Stocker

German soldiers fire a 150mm cannon in Tunisia. Long-range artillery salvos almost caught Patton in the open, forcing him, Major General Terry Allen, and a captain to pile into a foxhole.

pressed north. Patton had little choice. He still worried that Rommel would hit II Corps before he could continue his attack or before Montgomery assaulted the enemy's Mareth Line, scheduled for the next day. "I feel that if I strike first Erwin will have to parry."

Patton hated to pause and give the enemy time to regroup. With nothing else to do, he checked on the 1st Armored Division, visiting Brigadier General Paul Robinette, commanding Ward's Combat Command A. An English-speaking German prisoner was with Robinette when Patton found him. "The poor son-of-a-bitch must be up to some trickery," Patton told him.

Once Robinette updated him on the situation, Patton began laying scorn on the Germans, finally exploding with, "We will kick the bastards out of Africa!" As Patton left, Robinette told him it was an honor to have the corps commander visit. Patton slapped him on the back, saying, "By God, it will not be the last time you see me." Yet, Patton's mood changed when he wrote in his diary that night about Robinette: "He is defensive and lacks confidence." Patton next visited General Ward, who complained that his tanks could not advance in the rainy conditions. Patton told him to use his armored infantry and move their weapons in half-tracks.

Patton returned to his headquarters to find Alexander, who explained II Corps' follow-up objectives, telling him his 9th Infantry Division would be transferred to the British. Worse, as Montgomery pushed up from the south, Patton was to stay at Gafsa and Maknassy and let Montgomery pass in front of him, leaving the American forces out for the rest of the campaign and negating Patton's scheme to drive the Germans to the sea. "I kept my temper and agreed," Patton recorded in his diary. "I hope I will be back in Morocco on another job before we get pinched out."

The next day, Patton's aide Captain Jenson wrote Mrs. Patton, updating her on her husband's well-being. His recent promotion to lieutenant general and new command had changed him, Jenson reported. "He is years younger in feeling and appearance … If he gets any more good news, we will have to sit on him to keep him down." But Patton was far from happy. His fear of seeing II Corps left behind while Montgomery pursued the Germans even made it into the II Corps Operation Report. "This plan apparently envisaged pinching out the II Corps after the capture of FONDOUK heights." Patton sent Bradley to Alexander to argue against the plan.

Alexander's staff told Bradley that the slight was not intentional, just that their logisticians calculated that II Corps could not be resupplied over the existing roads. Bradley then visited Eisenhower, who had no idea of Alexander's plans. Bradley recommended moving II Corps north to attack Bizerte, the last key city of the campaign. Eisenhower studied Bradley's recommendation on a map, then called Alexander, telling him he wanted to keep II Corps in the fight. He followed it up with a letter insisting that the unit should remain on the line "right up the bitter end of the campaign." Patton's plan worked; II Corps would remain on the battlefield with all of its units intact.

Meanwhile, Patton continued pushing east. On March 21, Ward's 1st Armored Division captured Sened Station, the halfway mark between Gafsa and Maknassy, while Allen's 1st Infantry Division pushed east from Gafsa. The forces they attacked were mostly Italian infantry supported by German reconnaissance and artillery. Patton visited Allen at a company command post set up in a farmhouse. There, the two generals, accompanied by a captain, watched a heavy artillery barrage, followed by Allen's infantrymen maneuvering deftly over rocky terrain and punching into the Italians.

After watching several hundred prisoners pour through the American lines (one of his aides called them "additional Roman ruins"), Patton, Allen, and the captain walked forward until they found a hill to perch on and watch the action close-up. Suddenly, a salvo of enemy artillery screeched in. The captain, Allen, and Patton all jumped into a foxhole on top of each other. "It's too damn hot," said Patton. "Lets' get the hell out of here." As Patton left, he noticed an enemy barrage explode right where he had been sitting.

Things were not going as well for the 1st Armored Division. Patton visited Sened Station, where he determined Ward was moving too slowly—a sin for the branch that was supposed to slash into the enemy. He ordered Ward to drive harder and move his command post closer to the action. When that did not work, he sent General Hugh Gaffey to prod him, again without result.

When Ward mentioned in a phone call to Patton that he had the good fortune of not losing any officers that day, Patton exploded. "Goddammit Ward, that's not fortunate. That's bad for the morale of the enlisted men. I want you to get more officers killed." When a stunned Ward asked Patton if he was serious, Patton shot back, "Yes, Goddammit, I'm serious. I want you to put some officers out as observers well up front and keep them there until a couple get killed."

The next day, March 22, Patton received word that the Germans and Italians were slugging it out with Montgomery along the Mareth Line. Obviously, he was not drawing enough enemy troops away from Montgomery. Alexander now wanted Patton to make an armored thrust through Maknassy and head for the sea between Sfax and Gabès. But Ward called to say he had captured Maknassy but failed to assault the enemy-occupied heights east of the town.

While Ward's lack of aggressiveness angered

Patton, he blamed himself. "If I had led First Armored Division we would have taken the heights." Patton ordered Ward to capture the heights immediately, since intelligence reported the German 10th Panzer Division was heading toward him. Ward obeyed the order but failed in the mission.

A furious Patton then called Allen to check on the 1st Infantry Division's progress. When Allen's intelligence officer told him they had not yet captured a hill named Djebel Berda to their right, Patton exploded, "Well goddamn it, get moving, and get there right away!" and hung up the phone. It took Allen's men most of the day to capture the objective, but they got it done.

National Archives

Patton braced for the attack on Ward. He went to bed that night fully clothed, ready to jump into action, but the attack on Maknassy never materialized. Instead, the 10th Panzer Division smashed into Allen's 1st Infantry Division at El Guettar. Allen reported the attack to Patton at 6:30 AM, and Patton immediately pushed infantry, artillery, and tank-destroyer battalions to him.

Allen ordered the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion, the unit he picked after Patton told him to bolster his anti-tank capability, forward to defend his artillery units. The lightly armored halftracks slugged it out with the German tanks until what was left of them were forced to pull back. The Germans cut through one regiment, captured two artillery batteries, and penetrated to within two miles of Allen's headquarters, but in the process they lost a host of tanks and infantry.

Allied air forces took more than an hour to reach the battlefield, but once they did they flew 340 sorties, hitting the German supply lines. The Germans attacked again five hours later, but this time the Americans intercepted the attack order, and the men of the Big Red One were ready. While the Americans sacrificed many of their anti-tank guns, trading space for time, the Germans sent in their infantry in front of their tanks, only to be cut down by American artillery airbursts. The Germans suffered more than 300 casualties. Allen's men knocked out 37 enemy tanks, with much of the tank killing done by the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion.

Patton worried about his lack of artillery pieces and shells. When two artillery battalions ran out of ammunition, the Germans overran them. An opportunity to smash a German tank unit had been lost when another U.S. artillery unit ran low and had to conserve ammunition. Patton rushed the 7th Field Artillery Battalion, then supporting the 1st Armored Division, to the battlefield. It arrived in the nick of time to turn back the Germans' morning assault. According

LEFT: Patton visited Terry Allen on the front lines at El Guettar, where Allen had driven back a German armored attack the day before. BELOW: Officers of the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion review a map near El Guettar on March 23, 1943. General Terry Allen added the battalion to his division at General George Patton's recommendation. The unit played a key role in the coming battle.

National Archives

An M3 halftrack tank destroyer is shown in action in the Tunisian desert. Despite their success at El Guettar, Patton questioned their effectiveness after heavy losses.

to Brigadier General Clift Andrus, the 1st Infantry Division's artillery commander who witnessed the 7th in action, its rounds hammered into the German unit until "the battalion broke from cover and started to run for another wadi in the rear. But none ever reached it."

As for ammunition, Brigadier General Reese Howell, the artillery commander for the 9th Infantry, trucked shells to the front from Tebessa, some 65 miles away, despite a lack of air cover. The shells, like the 7th Field Artillery, reached the front in the nick of time. Months after the campaign ended, Patton told Andrus, "You know, Andrus, you really made a God-damned horse's ass out of me? But you also taught me something." Patton then explained he had almost lost El Guettar because of his artillery ammunition shortage. Andrus explained about Howell's actions, and Patton, ever the student of war, had Andrus write up a report on artillery resupply ideas. According to Andrus, "We always had ammunition after that."

Patton spent part of the battle watching from an observation post. As the enemy lines thinned and wavered under American artillery and antitank fire, he shook his head. "They're murdering good infantry," he said to no one in particular. "What a helluva way to expend good infantry troops." He only called Allen once during the battle. When Allen complained about the lack of air support, Patton changed the subject and wondered, "I don't understand the loss of so many tank destroyers," not appreciating how vulnerable half-tracks were to tank fire. When Allen explained their contribution to the battle, Patton merely hung up.

Patton got one break from the tension. When he saw a soldier sporting a green beret walking down the street outside his headquarters, he asked Lieutenant Colonel William O. Darby, the head of the 1st Ranger Battalion, "What the hell is that?" Darby explained he was a British chaplain assigned to the Rangers "and about the only man I know who can get away with not wearing a helmet." Patton laughed uncontrollably at the situation.

Patton and Allen's fighting spirit filtered down to the soldiers in the trenches. A half-written letter by one of Allen's soldiers, penned during a lull in the battle, opened, "Well folks, we stopped the best they had." But El Guettar was a defensive battle, not the slashing, flanking pursuit of victory Patton sought. In other words, it was no Second Manassas. Patton had spent the battle working the phones from his corps headquarters, just like Eisenhower had ordered. That night, before going to bed, he penned in his diary, "I hate fighting from the rear."

While the Germans were unable to capture Djebel Berda, the hill Patton personally told Allen to capture, they did cut off the regiment defending it and kept their distance so the Americans could not knock out their tanks. When it was over, however, Allen's troops had held their ground and the Germans had retreated. It marked the first clear American victory against the Nazi war machine.

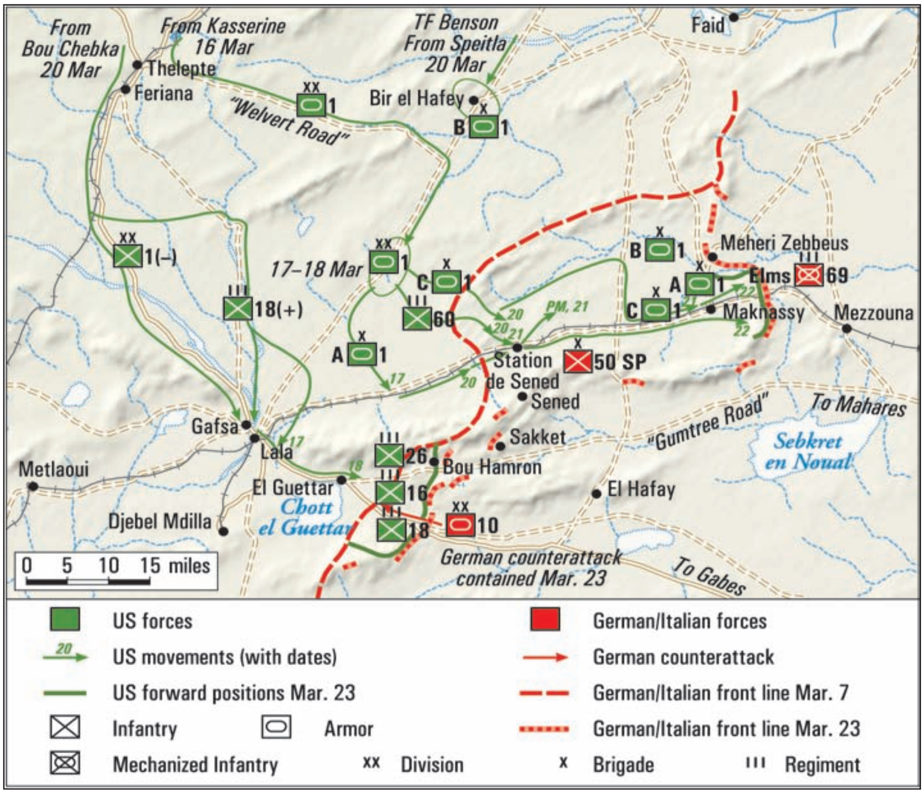
The next day, March 24, Patton visited the battlefield. On the way, his column passed a group of 1st Infantry Division soldiers, one of whom was not wearing leggings. Patton stopped his vehicle and ordered the man to put them on, despite the man's nasty leg sore. As he approached Allen's headquarters, a German shell exploded nearby, pelting his vehicle with metal shards. The Germans had retreated but were still firing at the Americans.

The shelling continued as Patton climbed a rocky hill to Allen's command post, using a silver-tipped cane to keep his balance. At the top, he dropped into a foxhole to discuss the situation with Allen and Brigadier General Teddy Roosevelt, Jr., namesake of his father, the 26th president and Allen's deputy commander, who explained the various phases of the battle. When Patton learned that Allen's men had sent a message to the Germans daring them to attack, he asked Allen, "When are you going to take this damned war seriously?"

Patton took in the battlefield's devastation:

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: An M3 Halftrack rolls past El Guettar before the battle. Terry Allen successfully defended the town while Patton provided him with desperately needed supplies and armor. BELOW: Patton's II Corps on the offensive. While Orlando Ward's 1st Armored Division found capturing Maknassy difficult, Terry Allen's 1st Infantry Division successfully defended El Guettar from the Germans, giving the Americans their first taste of victory in the Tunisian desert.


From Bou Chebka 20 Mar
From Kasserine 16 Mar
Thelepte
Feriana
"Welvert Road"
TF Benson From Speitla 20 Mar
Bir el Hafey
Faid
1
B 1
1(–)
17–18 Mar
18(+)
1
C 1
60
A 1
B 1
Meheri Zebbeus
A 1
Elms
69
C 1
Maknassy
Mezzouna
PM, 21
Station de Sened
Sened
50 SP
Sakket
"Gumtree Road"
To Mahares
Sebkret en Noual
Gafsa
Lala
Metlaoui
El Guettar
Chott el Guettar
26
16
18
Bou Hamron
10
El Hafay
Djebel Mdilla
German counterattack contained Mar. 23
To Gabes
0 5 10 15 miles
US forces
US movements (with dates)
US forward positions Mar. 23
Infantry
Armor
Mechanized Infantry
Division
German/Italian forces
German counterattack
German/Italian front line Mar. 7
German/Italian front line Mar. 23
Brigade
Regiment

Map © 2021 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

crippled enemy tanks, ruined American tank destroyers, and the corpses of the German infantrymen cut down by artillery fire. The tank-destroyer losses disappointed Patton. Only 10 of the 34 howitzer-armed M-3 half-tracks survived, while four of the 12 M-10 tank destroyers survived. Instead of exercising cover and concealment, the various tank- destroyer crews maneuvered, exposing their inferior armor protection and guaranteeing their destruction. The crews had little choice as they rushed to engage the enemy tanks. Although the Germans had lost 31 tanks, they managed to retrieve 16 of them that night. Their bravery in tank removal impressed Patton.

An enemy artillery round exploded nearby and everyone ducked. When Patton spied another soldier without leggings far below the hill, he dispatched a runner to order the soldier to put them on. His conference over, Patton climbed out of the foxhole and started down the hill amid the shelling. As he passed a private, the soldier told him, "Pretty heavy artillery barrage they're putting up." Patton answered, "That's not a real barrage. That's just some German gunners ranging their guns." Unimpressed, the private snapped back, "Well General, all I can say is if those Germans are just ranging, they are certainly ranging like hell." The two men laughed.

A group of soldiers brought in an Arab and a donkey. In the donkey's saddlebags were German Teller mines, which the man had planned to plant behind the Americans. Patton asked why the GIs hadn't just "buried" him. When the men explained that he was still alive, Patton replied, "Obviously, you can't bury him while he is alive, now do what I told you." Patton later called the Arabs "dirty bastards" to his wife Beatrice. The incident made him look forward to Sicily, where everyone would be considered the enemy.

While Patton oversaw the El Guettar battle, it was really Allen's victory. Patton gave Allen everything he could spare, but it was Allen who expertly positioned his men and weapons on the battlefield and fought aggressively. When the Germans closed in on his headquarters and a staff officer suggested Allen withdraw, he snapped back, "I will like hell pull out, and I'll shoot the first bastard that does." Patton considered Allen a fighter and gave him enough of a free hand to exchange blows with the enemy.

Patton never faced his nemesis, Rommel, but he had defeated the Germans in battle and restored faith in the American soldier that he could face the enemy and best him on the battlefield. Patton had turned the II Corps around, and, in the process, American fortunes in North Africa. One of Allen's officers later commented that after Patton took command of II Corps, "We knew he was there to win even if he had us killed doing it."

Frequent contributor Kevin M. Hymel is a contract historian for the U.S. Army. This article is an adaption from Mr. Hymel's latest book, Patton's War: An American General's Combat Leadership, Volume 1: November 1942 – July 1944, *published by University of Missouri Press. He also leads tours of Patton's European battlefields for Stephen Ambrose Historical Tours.*

Epic Stand at Midway

BY MICHAEL E. HASKEW

On May 2, 1942, the eve of the Battle of the Coral Sea, a Consolidated PBY-5A Catalina flying boat skimmed the water's surface and touched down in the lagoon of Midway Atoll, 1,137 miles west of Oahu. Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, had come to inspect the preparations for the defense of the atoll—and he had given little notice of his impending visit.

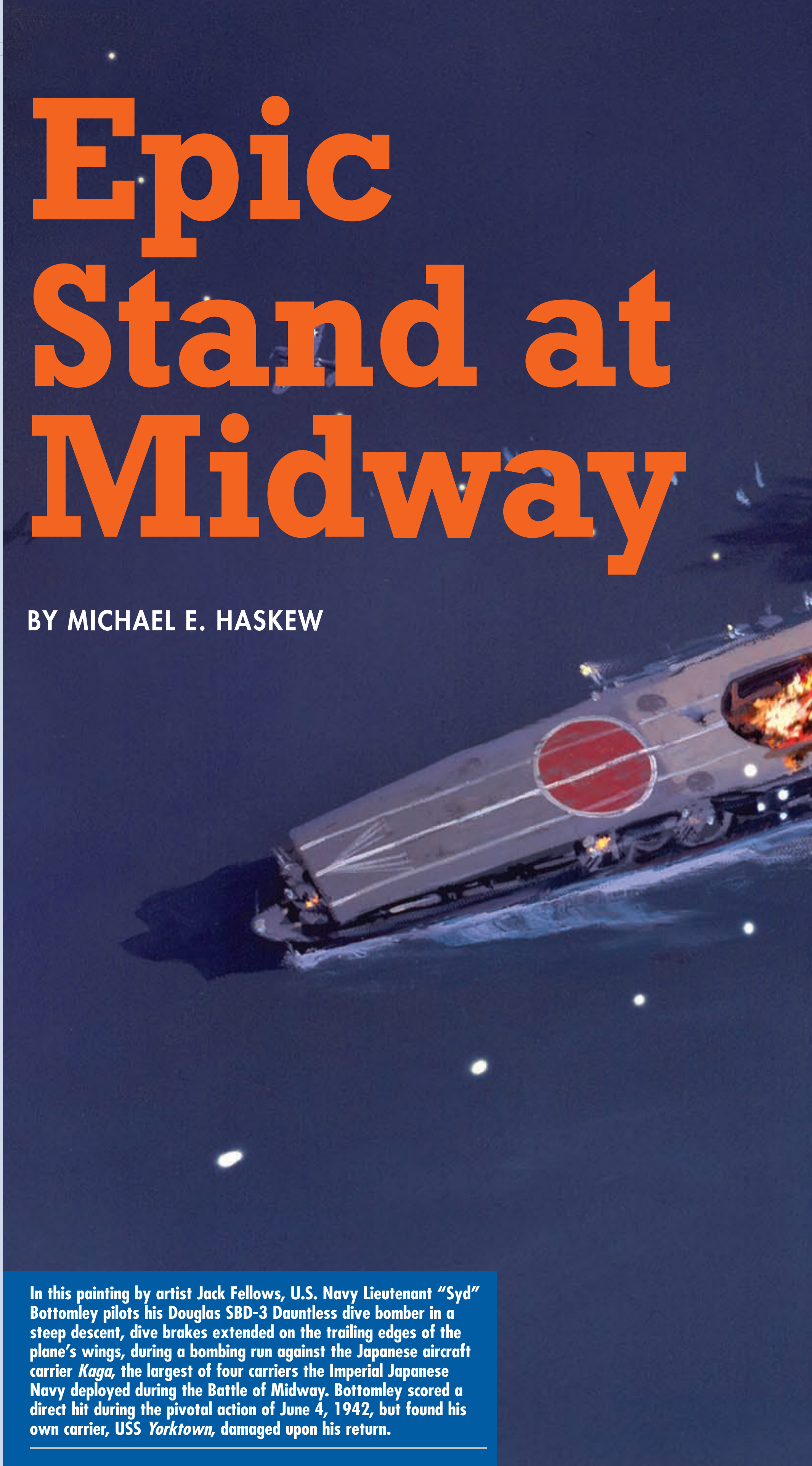
Preparations for the defense of Midway against a probable Japanese assault had been underway for about two years, and a sense of urgency prompted Nimitz to see the progress for himself. The admiral greeted U.S. Navy Commander Cyril Simard, overall commander at Midway, and Lt. Col. Harold D. Shannon, commander of the 6th Marine Defense Battalion and other assigned ground troops. Nimitz inspected the prepared defensive positions and the barbed wire that glinted in the sun, wreathing the beaches of the atoll's two islets, Sand and Eastern. He informed the officers that they could expect a Japanese attack at the end of the month and followed up with a pointed question. What else did the defenders of Midway need to repel a major enemy landing?

Shannon produced a list of the men and equipment. Nimitz looked him in the eye and asked a pointed question: "If I get you all these things you say you need, then can you hold Midway against a major amphibious assault?"

Shannon did not hesitate and replied, "Yes, sir!"

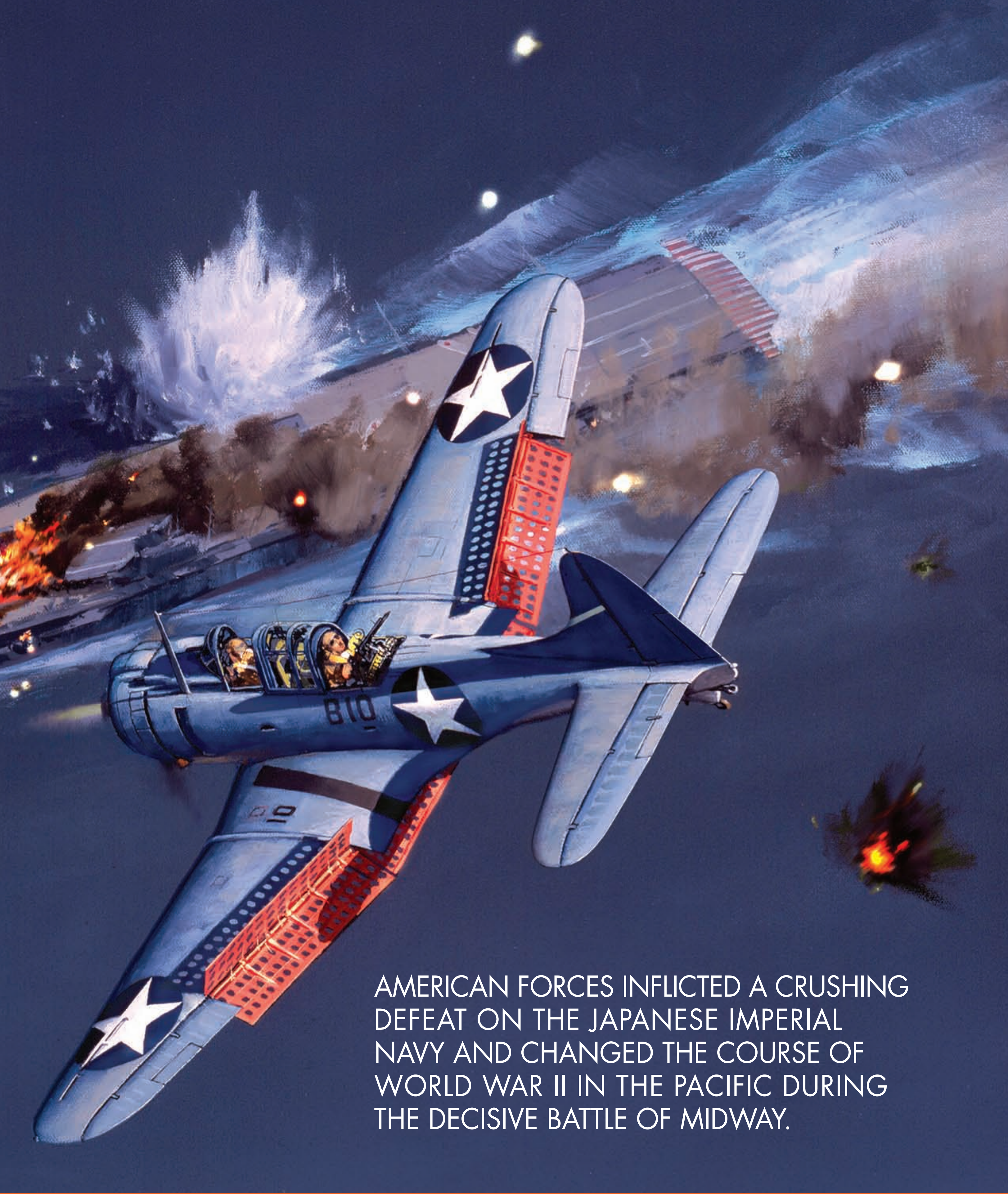
Maintaining control of Midway was the key to American victory in the Pacific. The fall of the Philippines was imminent, and after the Japanese had taken Wake Island and Guam, Midway became the westernmost American outpost in the Central Pacific. In 1938, a survey presented to the U.S. Congress and titled the Hepburn Report had identified Midway as second only to Pearl Harbor in importance to American security in the Pacific. The atoll stretches only about six miles across and consists of Sand and Eastern islets, a coral reef, and a shallow lagoon. A U.S. possession since 1867, it had been developed slowly through the years.

In 1903, the Commercial Pacific Cable Company established a station on Sand Island. Pan American Airways built a seaplane base there in 1935 to service its *China Clipper* flying boat. Still, Midway remained a remote, quiet speck in the immense Pacific; its most famous inhabitants were large, ungainly alba-



In this painting by artist Jack Fellows, U.S. Navy Lieutenant "Syd" Bottomley pilots his Douglas SBD-3 Dauntless dive bomber in a steep descent, dive brakes extended on the trailing edges of the plane's wings, during a bombing run against the Japanese aircraft carrier *Kaga,* the largest of four carriers the Imperial Japanese Navy deployed during the Battle of Midway. Bottomley scored a direct hit during the pivotal action of June 4, 1942, but found his own carrier, USS *Yorktown,* damaged upon his return.

Painting © Jack Fellows; www.jackfellows.com



AMERICAN FORCES INFLICTED A CRUSHING DEFEAT ON THE JAPANESE IMPERIAL NAVY AND CHANGED THE COURSE OF WORLD WAR II IN THE PACIFIC DURING THE DECISIVE BATTLE OF MIDWAY.

trosses, or gooney birds. By the late 1930s, the prospect of war with Japan changed all that.

On December 20, 1939, Admiral Harold Stark, Chief of Naval Operations, ordered the establishment of a Marine garrison on the atoll. Elements of the 3rd Defense Battalion were there initially, and then followed by the 1st Defense Battalion and the 6th Defense Battalion. Eventually the Midway contingent came to be formally known as the Midway Detachment, Fleet Marine Force. Construction of a naval air station was begun in the spring of 1940, and the project was completed in August 1941.

At 6:30 AM on December 7, 1941, news of the Pearl Harbor attack flashed from Oahu. The Midway garrison went on high alert. At dusk that evening, a lookout spotted a blinking light southwest of Sand Island. Two Japanese destroyers, the *Akebono* and *Ushio*, were maneuvering offshore.

At 9:35 PM, the first Japanese 5-inch shells fell. The Marines responded with 3-inch and 5-inch guns. Japanese shells set the large seaplane hangar afire. Another round scored a direct hit on an air intake on the concrete housing of the Sand Island powerplant. The blast wounded 1st Lieutenant George H. Cannon, who refused to be evacuated until communications were reestablished and the damage assessed. Cannon later died and received a posthumous Medal of Honor.

Midway gunners and subsequent reports suggested that the Marines had hit one of the destroyers, starting fires aboard the vessel, but the damage was never confirmed. The half-hour duel left two Marines dead and 10 wounded. Two sailors at the naval air station were also killed.

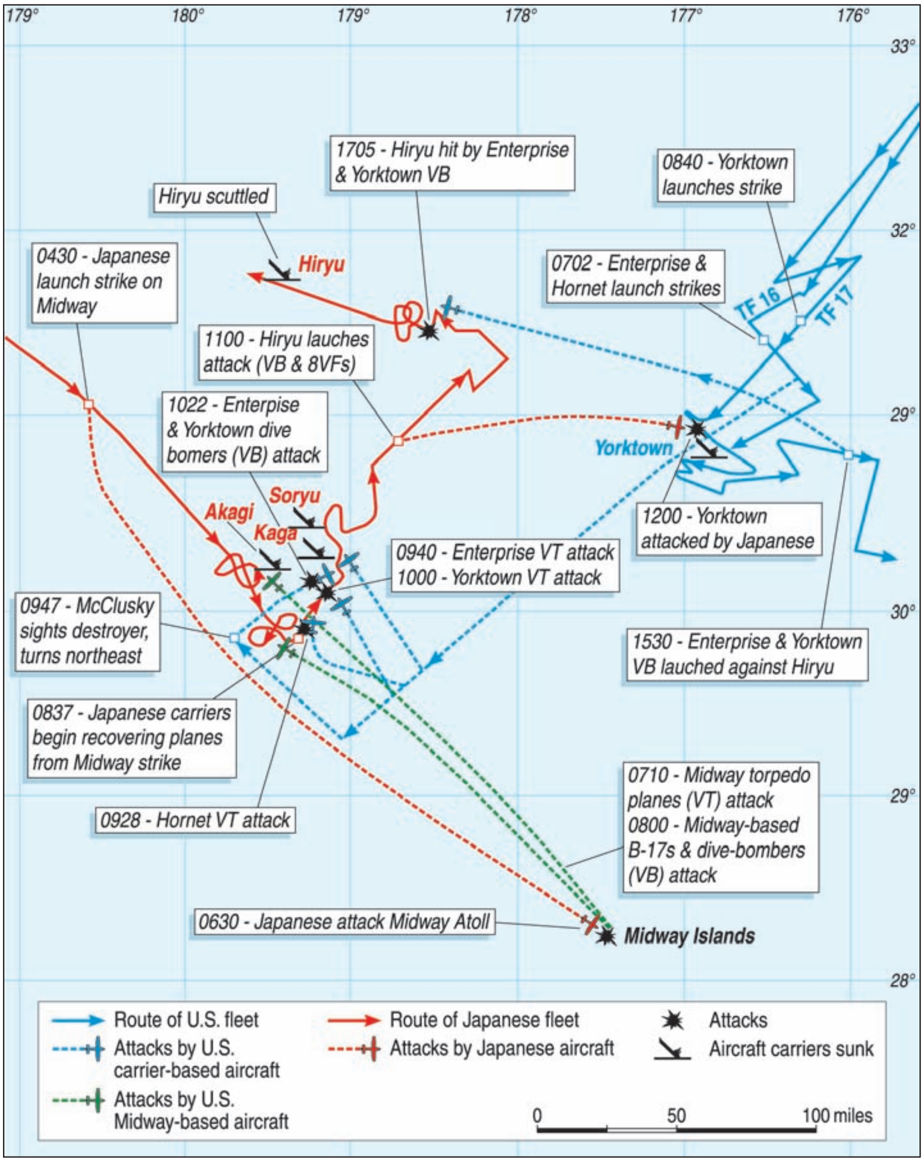
Within days of the first encounter with the Japanese, the garrison on Midway grew steadily. On December 17, 17 Vought SB2U Vindicator dive bombers of Marine Scout Bombing Squadron 231 (VMSB-231) arrived from Hawaii. The 5-inch seacoast guns of Batteries A and C, 4th Defense Battalion came ashore at mid-month along with additional 3-inch guns and old seven-inch weapons. Hours later, 14 obsolete F2A-3 Brewster Buffalo fighters, the vanguard of Marine Fighter Squadron 221 (VMF-221) originally intended to reinforce Wake Island, landed at Midway. On the day after Christmas, the seaplane tender USS *Tangier* brought the 5-inch guns of Battery B, 4th Defense Battalion to Midway along with 12 antiaircraft machine guns from the battalion's special weapons group.

Nimitz was true to his word, and within days of his visit three additional 3-inch antiaircraft batteries, a 37mm antiaircraft battery, and a 20mm antiaircraft battery of the 3rd Defense Battalion stationed at Pearl Harbor were assigned temporarily to Midway. In addition, a platoon of five light tanks and two rifle companies of the 2nd Marine Raider Battalion were sent to bolster Shannon's infantry command. The Midway air component, designated Marine Air Group 22 (MAG-22), under Lt. Col. Ira Kimes, was augmented with 16 Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bombers and seven new Grumman F4F Wildcat fighters.

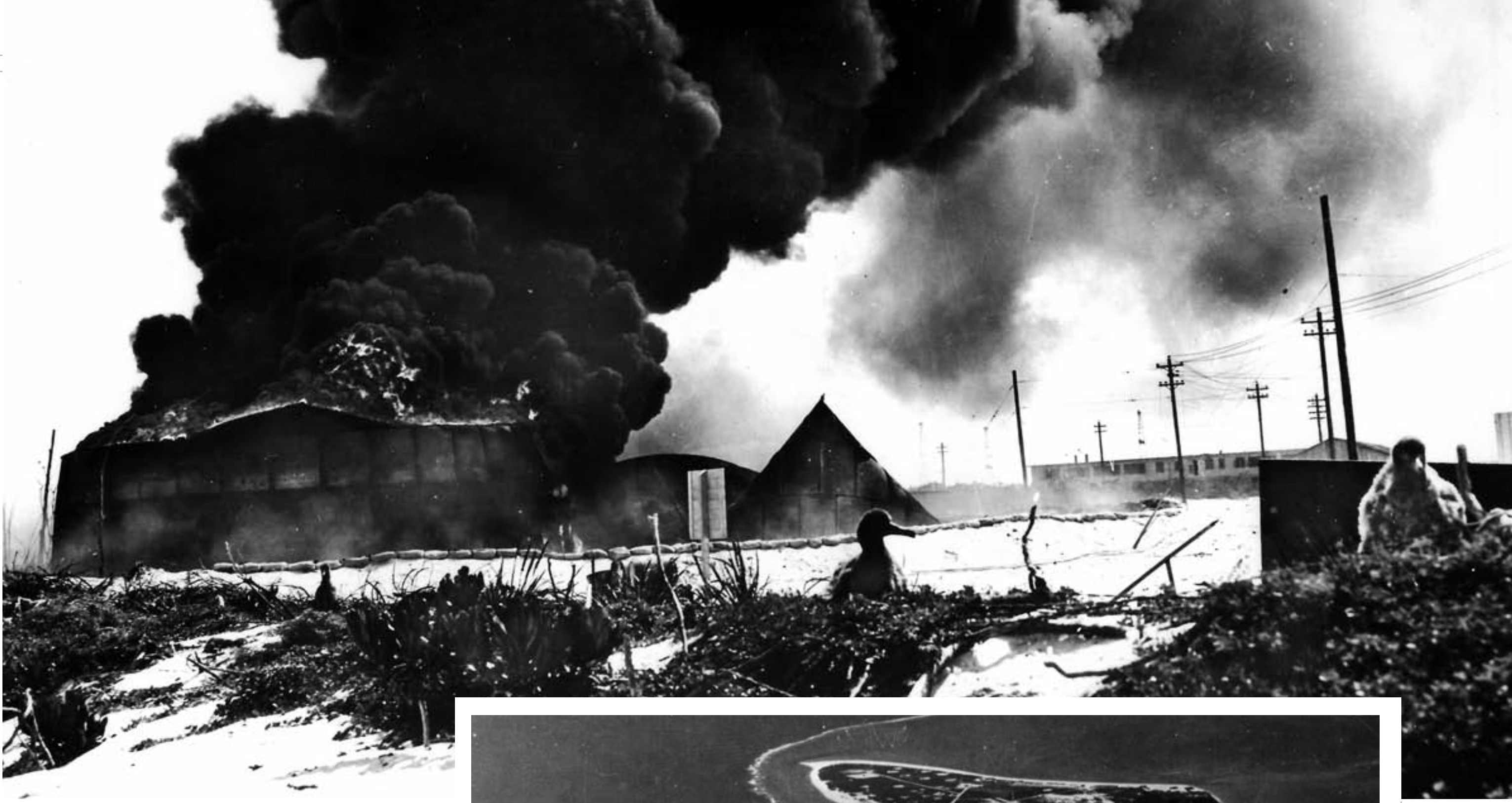
Meanwhile, Simard and Shannon were promoted to the ranks of captain and colonel respectively and were notified that the date for an expected Japanese invasion was revised to the first week of June, allowing a few more days of preparation.

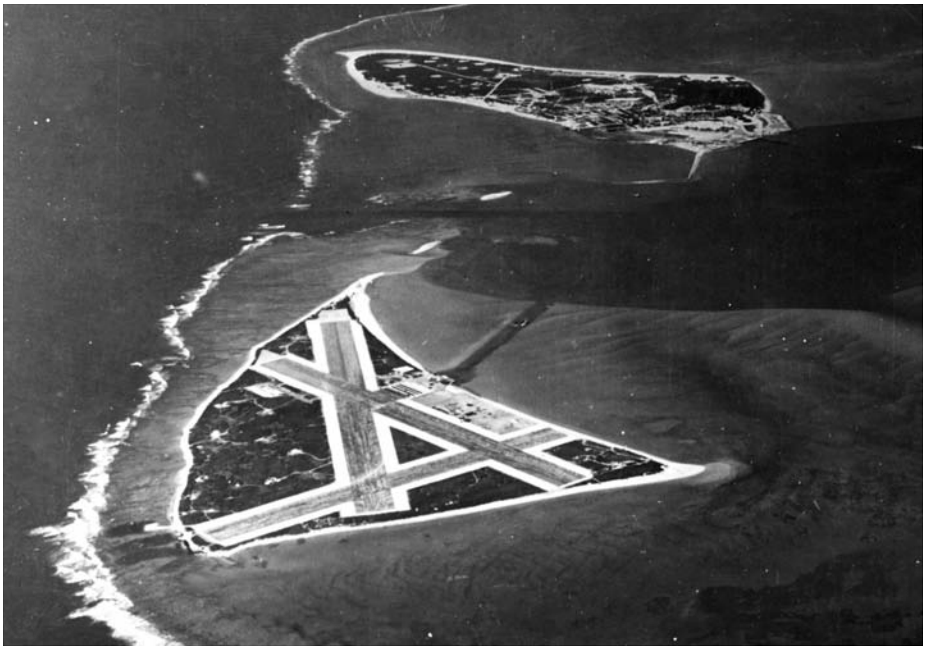
By then, Midway was defended by 3,652 men of the 6th Marine Defense Battalion supplemented by elements of the 3rd Marine Defense Battalion and the two companies of the 2nd Marine Raider Battalion. Its air group included six operational Wildcat and 21 Buffalo fighters of VMF-221 commanded by Major Floyd B. "Red" Parks, and the 18 Dauntlesses and 21 Vindicators of VMSB-241 (the squadron had split and been renamed) under Major Lofton R. Henderson. Lieutenant Colonel Walter Sweeney led a flight of 15 Army Air Corps four-engine Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bombers. Four Army Martin B-26 Marauder bombers modified to carry torpe-

Map © 2021 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN


179°
180°
179°
178°
177°
176°
33°
32°
29°
30°
29°
28°
1705 - Hiryu hit by Enterprise & Yorktown VB
0840 - Yorktown launches strike
Hiryu scuttled
Hiryu
0430 - Japanese launch strike on Midway
0702 - Enterprise & Hornet launch strikes
TF 16
TF 17
1100 - Hiryu lauches attack (VB & 8VFs)
1022 - Enterprise & Yorktown dive bombers (VB) attack
Yorktown
Soryu
Akagi
Kaga
1200 - Yorktown attacked by Japanese
0940 - Enterprise VT attack
1000 - Yorktown VT attack
0947 - McClusky sights destroyer, turns northeast
1530 - Enterprise & Yorktown VB lauched against Hiryu
0837 - Japanese carriers begin recovering planes from Midway strike
0928 - Hornet VT attack
0710 - Midway torpedo planes (VT) attack
0800 - Midway-based B-17s & dive-bombers (VB) attack
0630 - Japanese attack Midway Atoll
Midway Islands
Route of U.S. fleet
Attacks by U.S. carrier-based aircraft
Attacks by U.S. Midway-based aircraft
Route of Japanese fleet
Attacks by Japanese aircraft
Attacks
Aircraft carriers sunk
0
50
100 miles

The extent of the Japanese advance against Midway Atoll is visible as the curving dotted lines in this representation of the action during the Battle of Midway, the turning point in the carrier war in the Pacific. American naval forces won a great victory, sinking four Japanese aircraft carriers during the June 1942 engagement, and retained possession of the strategically vital atoll, just 1,200 miles from Hawaii.





ABOVE: In this November 1942 aerial photograph, Midway Atoll and its surrounding coral reef are visible. Eastern Island with its vital airstrip is shown in the foreground, while Sand Island is seen in the distance. TOP: Oil tanks on Sand Island, one of two spits of land that make up Midway Atoll, burn furiously on the morning of June 4, 1942, following an attack by Japanese carrier-based aircraft. A pair of albatrosses, nicknamed gooney birds, for which the atoll was well known prior to the battle, are seen in the foreground.

does, six brand new Grumman TBF Avenger torpedo bombers, and 29 long-range Consolidated PBY and PBY-5A Catalina patrol planes rounded out the hodgepodge of aircraft.

Just a week after Admiral Nimitz visited the atoll, Japanese territorial ambitions in the Pacific experienced their first major setback at the Battle of the Coral Sea. An invasion force sent to take Port Moresby at the southeastern tip of the island of New Guinea had turned back after American and Japanese aircraft clashed in the first naval battle in history in which the opposing surface ships never sighted one another.

The fleet carrier *Lexington* had been sunk and the carrier *Yorktown* seriously damaged. The Japanese light carrier *Shoho* was sunk, but more troubling to the Imperial Navy were the temporary loss of the 26,000-ton fleet carrier *Shokaku*, which had taken three bomb hits and would be out of action for several months, and her sister *Zuikaku*, which had sustained such heavy losses to her air group that the lack of available planes and trained pilots kept that carrier out of action temporarily.

Despite the disappointment at Coral Sea, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Japanese Navy's Combined Fleet, chose to maintain the initiative with the seizure of Midway. A Japanese victory was expected to achieve three key strategic objectives. The defensive perimeter of the empire would be expanded, improving security. The threat to Hawaii would intensify. The Americans would be compelled to fight for Midway, committing their precious carriers to the effort, and the battle would result in their destruction.

Considerable uncertainty existed among the Americans as to exactly where the next enemy blow would fall. The intelligence coup that gave Nimitz the valuable knowledge that the target was Midway came from a somewhat remarkable source. At Station Hypo on Oahu, Lieutenant Commander Joseph J. Rochefort ran the crew of cryptanalysts that had succeeded in cracking much of JN-25B, the Japanese Navy operations code. Although a change in the code had been approved, delays kept JN-25B in common use prior to Midway, and Rochefort's people were soon reading up to 85 percent of Japanese radio communication.

As the clock ticked toward a showdown at Midway, Nimitz had been in command of the U.S. Pacific Fleet for only five months. A Texan, he possessed the even temperament and quiet optimism that were critically needed at such a

All photos: Naval History and Heritage Command

An obsolete Vought SB2U-3 Vindicator dive bomber takes off from the airstrip on Eastern Island at Midway during a training flight a few days before the battle. This Vindicator was flown during the fighting of June 4, 1942, by 2nd Lt. James H. Marmande and disappeared approximately 10 miles from Midway.

desperate hour. He was also aggressive to the extent that he felt it was absolutely necessary to fight the Japanese as soon as conditions were reasonably favorable.

While the Japanese possessed a substantial quantitative edge in aircraft carriers, other warships, and planes, two factors weighed on Nimitz's decision to commit to a fight for Midway. The atoll was of such strategic value that it had to be defended, and Rochefort's intelligence triumph offered the element of surprise, a significant equalizer against a superior force.

The crippled *Yorktown* limped into Pearl Harbor after Coral Sea, and early estimates indicated that the damage would take weeks to repair. Nimitz had two operational carriers, *Enterprise* and *Hornet*. The availability of a third was critical to any hope of victory. He ordered work to begin immediately aboard *Yorktown* and ordered that the carrier be battleworthy within 72 hours. Workmen swarmed aboard and performed something of a miracle in accomplishing the task.

Nimitz ordered two task forces to rendezvous 325 miles northeast of Midway at a location appropriately named Point Luck. From there, they would hopefully maintain the element of surprise and attack the Japanese carriers while their planes were engaged in softening up Midway in preparation for the landing of 5,000 troops.

Task Force 16 included *Hornet* and *Enterprise*, five heavy cruisers, a single light cruiser, and nine destroyers under Admiral Raymond A. Spruance in his first carrier command since Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey was hospitalized with severe dermatitis. Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher's Task Force 17 included *Yorktown*, two cruisers, and six destroyers.

Yamamoto's tendency for complex planning was evident with the Midway operation. Offensive action would begin on June 3 with an air raid on the U.S. base at Dutch Harbor in the Aleutian Islands far to the north. The Americans would either rush northward to defend Alaskan territory or remain at Pearl Harbor. In either case, Yamamoto did not expect much opposition to the capture of Midway. He believed that two American carriers had been sunk at Coral Sea and that American air power had been substantially weakened.

Yamamoto believed Nimitz would be slow to respond, and when the American admiral did that it would be too late. Japanese Marines would already have occupied Midway. The naval forces involved in the Aleutian thrust would be positioned to intercept any move northward, while the warships covering the Midway landings could assert their overwhelming strength. Their aircraft would sink any American ships within range, while the big guns of their battleships and cruisers would finish off any survivors in a potential surface action.

Historian Samuel Eliot Morison commented on Yamamoto's Midway blueprint. "The vital defect in this sort of plan," he wrote, "is that it depends on the enemy's doing exactly what is expected. If he is smart enough to do something different—in this case to have fast carriers on the spot—the operation is thrown into confusion."

Nevertheless, Yamamoto's naval power was formidable. No fewer than eight carriers, 11 battleships, 20 cruisers, 60 destroyers, and 15 submarines, along with transports and other support vessels were involved.

The Japanese commander divided his forces into numerous major components, some of which were subdivided into smaller units with specific tasks. In the absence of *Shokaku* and *Zuikaku*, the heart of the fleet consisted of four of the six aircraft carriers of the Kido Butai, or Striking Force, that had attacked Pearl Harbor the previous December. Under the command of Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, these were the flagship *Akagi*, *Kaga*, *Soryu*, and *Hiryu*. The carriers were accompanied by two battleships, three cruisers, and 11 destroyers.

The Japanese Main Body included three new battleships, a light carrier, a cruiser, and eight destroyers. Yamamoto assumed overall command aboard the super battleship *Yamato*, displacing more than 68,000 tons with a main armament of massive 18.1-inch guns. The Guard Force, under Admiral Takasu Shiro, sailed with Yamamoto to take up station to support the Aleutian forces if necessary with four battleships, two cruisers, and 12 destroyers. The Midway Invasion Force, commanded by Admiral Nobutake Kondo, included a carrier, troop transports, and battleships and cruisers for fire support. The Northern Force, under Admiral Boshiro Hosogaya, included two carriers, three cruisers, and the troops that would occupy Attu and Kiska. A cordon of submarines, intended to detect the departure of any U.S. ships from Pearl Harbor, arrived too late to catch either American task force.

On May 27, Navy Day for the Combined Fleet, Yamamoto's Main Body and the Kido Butai under Nagumo sailed from their anchorage at Hashirajima, in the Inland Sea south of the naval base at Kure and the city of Hiroshima. Commander Mitsuo Fuchida, the naval aviator who had led the attack on Pearl Harbor, was aboard *Akagi*. The most accomplished air leader in the Japanese Navy, Fuchida was in the carrier's sick bay with appendicitis for much of the encounter. Commander Minoru Genda, planner of the tactical element of the Pearl Harbor attack, was aboard *Akagi* but suffering from pneumonia. His contribution as the Midway battle developed was greatly diminished.

The four carriers of Nagumo's striking force mustered more than 240 Mitsubishi A6M Zero fighters, Aichi D3A1 Val dive bombers, and Nakajima B5N Kate torpedo bombers. Aboard the three American carriers was a roughly equivalent number of Wildcat fighters, Dauntless dive bombers, and Douglas TBD Devastator torpedo bombers.

At 3 AM on June 3, the pilots of the 22 Midway-based Catalinas detailed to fly reconnaissance missions in search of the approaching Japanese were roused from their bunks. Little more than an hour later, they were airborne. The pilots were assigned search areas of 700 miles, arcing from the atoll like the hands of a clock and covering thousands of square miles of ocean.

For several hours, nothing was visible but the expanse of an empty Pacific. Then, as the Catalinas reached the limits of their range that morning, Ensign Charles R. Eaton and his crew spotted several Japanese ships and radioed the first confirmed sighting of the enemy during the Battle of Midway: "Two Japanese cargo vessels sighted bearing 247 degrees, distance 470 miles. Fired upon by AA."

Minutes later, the PBY piloted by Ensign Jack Reid, already extending the outward leg of its search, was about to turn for home when three men almost simultaneously spotted the wakes and dim silhouettes of Japanese ships. Reid dashed off a somewhat cryptic message: "Sighted Main Body." This was quickly followed by "Bearing 262, distance 700."

Back at Midway, Captain Simard asked for ship types, course, and speed. Reid turned and trailed the Japanese. After an agonizing interval, Reid confirmed 11 ships, including a small aircraft carrier, a seaplane carrier, two battleships, cruisers, and destroyers. The ships below were the battleships and cruisers of the Midway Invasion Force under Admiral Kondo. Eaton had discovered the Minesweeper Group, also a part of the Invasion Force.

Until the exhilarating moment that the enemy was sighted, the Americans defending Midway had been in the dark as to what was unfolding around them. They were under no illusions that further reinforcements were coming. If Midway's radar detected an incoming Japanese air raid, the fighter pilots would rise to meet them. If an inva-

RIGHT: Following its attack against the Japanese aircraft carrier *Kaga* on June 4, a damaged Douglas SBD-3 Dauntless dive bomber rests on the flight deck of the carrier USS *Yorktown*. This dive bomber, one of several that landed with their fuel tanks nearly empty, belonged to Bombing Squadron 6 (VB-6) and was lost when the *Yorktown* was sunk later in the battle. BELOW: Douglas TBD Devastator torpedo bombers crowd the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS *Enterprise* in preparation for takeoff on the morning of June 4, during the battle. These aircraft of Torpedo Squadron 6 (VT-6) were launched moments later, with nine of the 14 Devastators lost during attacks against the Japanese fleet.

Two Japanese Nakajimma B5N "Kate" torpedo bombers fly past the aircraft carrier USS *Yorktown* after releasing torpedoes during an attack at mid-afternoon on June 4. These Kates had taken off from the deck of the carrier *Hiryu* earlier that day.

sion force appeared offshore, the ground troops would repel the enemy on the beaches. If an opportunity presented itself to strike a blow against the enemy ships, the bomber pilots would attack. For days, there had been nothing to do but work, watch, and wait.

Lieutenant Colonel Robert C. McGlashan, the operations officer of the 6th Defense Battalion at Midway, remembered the evening prior the arrival of Japanese planes above Midway. "Of course, there were a thousand things more that could have been done; but all the essential things had been done—and not a day to spare. As I turned in that night knowing that the Japs would arrive by morning, I felt that, come what may, we had done all we could."

Meanwhile, the Japanese had already struck the first blow of the battle as 14 bombers and three fighters attacked Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians in the early morning hours of June 3, destroying a barracks, fuel tank farm, and other installations and killing 25 Americans.

Suddenly, the waiting was over at Midway. Captain Simard and Colonel Shannon knew that within hours they would probably be under air attack—and after the enemy planes softened up Midway's defenses a Japanese amphibious assault would follow. The American air group swung into action. At approximately 12:30 PM, nine B-17s of the 431st Bombardment Squadron took off to attack the Japanese. About four hours later, the big bombers spotted the Japanese Transport Group, under Admiral Raizo Tanaka, dropped their 600-pound bombs from altitudes of 8,000 feet or more, and headed home. Reports of hits proved inaccurate. No casualties were sustained on either side, but the Japanese knew that they had been discovered.

At 1:30 AM on June 4, three of Midway's Catalinas armed with torpedoes attacked the Transport Group again. This time, one put a torpedo into the tanker *Akebono Maru*, killing or wounding 23 Japanese sailors.

Nagumo was still unaware that three American aircraft carriers were in the vicinity of Midway and had turned to the northwest, the most likely approach route of the Japanese carriers if they were intent on launching air strikes against Midway. He turned his own carriers into the wind and began doing just that. A successful raid would render the atoll's airstrip useless, eliminate the threat of further air attacks from Midway, and pummel its defenses in preparation for the amphibious landing.

As Sweeney's B-17s were taking off before dawn to renew their attacks on Tanaka, 108 Vals, Kates, and Zeros rose from the decks of the Japanese carriers under the command of Lieutenant Joichi Tomonaga, a veteran pilot from the *Hiryu* replacing Fuchida as strike leader. These aircraft carried high-explosive bombs, and Nagumo retained roughly half his aircraft armed with torpedoes to meet the threat of any American surface ships.

At 5:20 AM, Midway reconnaissance again hit paydirt as Lieutenant Howard F. Ady reported sighting a Japanese aircraft carrier and followed that with a report that enemy aircraft were approaching the atoll. Another search plane, piloted by Lieutenant (j.g.) William A. Chase, spotted the inbound Japanese raid at 5:45 and radioed in plain language, "Many planes heading Midway, bearing 320 degrees, distance 150."

The B-17s were redirected to attack the carriers rather than the landing force, and within minutes Midway's antiaircraft defenses were on the alert. Every aircraft, its pilot already in the cockpit and its engine running, was sent aloft. Midway radar picked up the Japanese 93 miles out.

Flying at 14,000 feet about 30 miles from Midway, the pilots of VMF-221 spotted a large number of Vals flying in V-formations with Zeros buzzing around them. Major Parks' fighters were divided into two groups. Flying a Buffalo, Parks led the first group of eight F2As and five Wildcats. The second group, under the command of Captain Kirk Armistead, consisted of 12 Buffalo fighters and a single Wildcat. Parks led his fighters directly into the Japanese formations, while Armistead's group flew slightly to the west, acting as a reserve.

Captain John F. Carey, flying a Wildcat, shouted "Tally-ho!" and screamed down on the enemy bombers followed by his wingmen, Captain Marion E. Carl and 2nd Lt. Clayton M. Canfield. Carl and several other pilots engaged in a swirling dogfight with the Zeros. The Americans were astounded by the agility of the enemy fighters. In his after-action report, one VMF-221 pilot remarked, "I saw two Brewsters trying to fight the Zeros. One was shot down, and the other was saved by ground fire covering his tail. Both looked like they were tied to a string while the Zeros made passes at them. I believe that our men with planes even half as good as the Zeros would have stopped the raid completely."

Carey and Canfield slashed through the Japanese bombers, but little is actually known of the results. The single firing pass was probably followed by a brief but desperate fight with the Zeros. Parks was shot down and killed. Only three pilots of his group survived. Within 10 minutes, Armistead's fighters were in the thick of the unequal struggle.

"At about 0620, I heard Captain Carey transmit 'Tally-ho' followed by 'Hawks at angels 14, supported by fighters.' I then started climbing and sighted the enemy at approximately 14,000 feet at a distance of five to seven miles out, and approximately two miles to my right," wrote Armistead, who survived the melee. "I immediately turned to a heading of about 70 degrees and continued to climb. I was endeavoring to get a position above and ahead of the enemy and come down out of the sun. However, I was unable to reach this point in time. I was at 17,000 feet when I started my attack. The target consisted of five divisions of from five to nine planes each, flying in division V's … I was followed in column by five F2A-3 fighters and one F4F-3 fighter, pilot unknown. I made a head-on approach from above at a steep angle and at very high speed on the fourth enemy division, which consisted of five planes. I saw my incendiary bullets travel from a point in front of the leader, up through his plane and back through the planes on the left wing of the V. I continued in my dive, and looking back, saw two or three of those planes falling in flames …

"After my pullout," Armistead continued, "I zoomed back to an altitude of 14,000 feet; at this time I noticed another group of the same type bombers following along in their path. I looked back over my shoulder and about 2,000 feet below and behind me I saw three fighters in column, climbing up toward me, which I assumed to be planes of my division. However, they climbed at a very high rate, and a very steep path. When the nearest plane was about 500 feet below and behind me I realized that it was a Japanese Zero fighter. I kicked over in a violent split S and received three 20mm shells, one in the right wing gun, one in the right wing root tank, and one in the top left side of the engine cowling. I also received about twenty 7.7mm rounds in the left aileron, which mangled the tab on the aileron and sawed off a portion of the aileron. I continued in a vertical dive at full throttle, corkscrewing to my left, due to the effect of the damaged aileron. At about 3,000 feet, I started to pull out and managed to hold the plane level at an altitude of 500 feet."

During the sharp aerial battle, 24 American fighters were either shot down or seriously damaged. The pilots of VMF-221 fought bravely but could not turn back the Japanese onslaught.

The Japanese aircraft flew relentlessly on, and at 6:30 AM, Colonel Shannon barked, "Open fire when targets are in range." One minute later, Sand and Eastern islands erupted.

Tomonaga led his planes into withering fire from Midway. Bombs destroyed the seaplane hangar, and the fuel dump 500 yards to the north was in flames. The freshwater processing facility was blasted, and two bombs destroyed the powerhouse on Eastern Island. Major William Benson, in charge of the 6th Defense Battalion's Eastern Island command post, was killed when a direct hit demolished the position. Twenty-four Americans were killed and 18 wounded.

However, the Japanese paid a substantial price as 11 attacking planes were either shot down or failed to return to their carriers and more than 40 were damaged, some beyond repair. The Marine antiaircraft fire had been so accurate that it disrupted the attempts to crater the airstrip. Only a couple of small holes had been made, and it remained functional. Tomonaga radioed that a second strike was necessary.

When the Japanese planes were gone, the Midway air controller sent a message: "Fighters land. Refuel by divisions, 5th Division first." The only response was a crackle of dead air. The message went out several times, and finally a general recall was broadcast. With "All fighters land and reservice," only 10 VMF-221 planes came in. Of these just two remained airworthy.

Ady's sighting of a lone Japanese carrier had fixed the enemy's location for Fletcher and Spruance while also alerting Midway of the Striking Force's presence. Lieutenant Colonel Kimes threw every available Midway-based aircraft at Nagumo's carriers. More than 50 planes without fighter escort mounted no fewer than five separate attacks against Nagumo's warships during a roughly 90-minute period from 7:05 AM to just after 8:30.

Sailors repair a sizable hole in the flight deck caused by an enemy bomb after the initial Japanese strike on the *Yorktown.* The bomb caused numerous casualties, while another temporarily caused the carrier to lose power. The deck was repaired, and flight operations resumed, but a second raid later in the day resulted in torpedo damage. As the battle neared its end, *Yorktown* was sunk after being torpedoed by a Japanese submarine.

Captain James F. Collins led the four Army Air Corps Marauders, which mounted attacks on the Japanese carriers almost simultaneously with the six Navy TBF Avengers under Lieutenant Langdon K. Fieberling. No hits were scored.

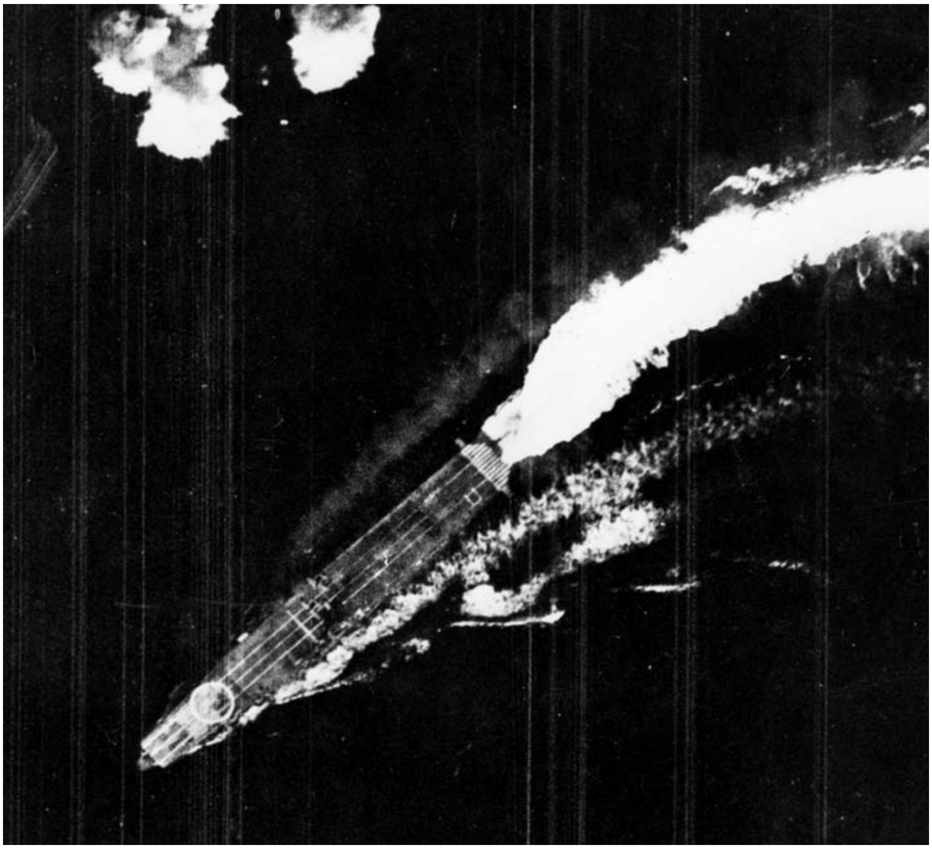
These were followed less than an hour later by the 16 Marine Corps Dauntless dive bombers of VMSB-241. At 7:55 AM, Major Henderson ordered, "Attack two enemy CV on port bow!" Most of the Dauntless pilots were inexperienced, and Henderson elected a glide bombing run rather than a steep dive-bombing attack. Zeros pounced on the squadron commander, whose plane was seen spiraling into the sea with one wing afire.

Captain Richard E. Fleming took command of the squadron, and the pilots pressed home their attacks with great courage. A pair of bombs bracketed the *Hiryu*, and three more exploded near the stern of the *Kaga*, cascading water and steel fragments across the fantail. However, no direct hits were achieved. Fleming was reported to have killed or wounded several Japanese sailors in a strafing run across the flight deck of the *Hiryu*, which was emblazoned with a large rising sun emblem. Half the Dauntlesses were lost during the raid, and of the eight that returned to Midway two were shot to pieces, unfit for further service.

A few minutes later, Lt. Col. Sweeney led his B-17s, diverted from their original target of Tanaka's transports, in a high-level attack from 20,000 feet. The bristling .50-caliber machine guns of the B-17s and their extreme altitude kept the Zeros at a distance, but the Japanese ships took no hits.

Around 8:20 AM, 11 lumbering VMSB-241 Vindicators led by Major Benjamin W. Norris found the Japanese carriers. Norris knew the Zeros were likely to slaughter his old dive bombers and observed that the Japanese escort ships were putting up a curtain of antiaircraft fire. He elected to attack the closest targets, the enemy battleships. Near misses rocked the *Haruna*, and one American bomb narrowly missed the fantail of the *Kirishima*, but not a single hit was scored.

At least 19 American planes were shot down during the raids by Midway's aircraft, while three Zeros were downed. However, the gallant attacks were not in vain. The Marine, Army, and Navy pilots had stretched the Japanese combat air patrol nearly to the limits of their endurance. More Zeros had to be launched, and those in the air needed to be rearmed and refueled. It was a difficult proposition, particularly considering the larger dilemma facing Nagumo.



The Japanese aircraft carrier *Hiryu* maneuvers violently to escape bombs dropped from high altitude by an American Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress heavy bomber. No hits were scored during this raid.

The Japanese commander worried that the surviving Midway-based aircraft continued to pose a threat. They had to be neutralized to capture the atoll. When he received Tomonaga's request for a second Midway strike at about 7:15 AM, he was convinced that Midway should be hit again. The Kates of the first Midway raid had been supplied by *Soryu* and *Hiryu*, while the dive bomber contingent had taken off from *Akagi* and *Kaga*. Nagumo ordered that the Kates aboard *Akagi* and *Kaga* have their torpedoes replaced with high explosive bombs. The Vals sitting on the hangar decks of *Soryu* and *Hiryu* had not yet been armed, and he ordered them equipped with high explosive bombs for land targets on Midway rather than armor piercing bombs suitable for attacks against enemy ships.

At this critical time, the failure of the Japanese to deploy sufficient numbers of reconnaissance aircraft came back to haunt Nagumo. The launching of some of the Japanese scout planes had also been delayed, and one of these, Number 4, had taken off late from the heavy cruiser *Tone*. As the plane reached the end of its 300-mile search radius, the pilot spotted the wakes of several ships. There was little doubt that these were American, and a message was dashed off to *Tone* and forwarded to *Akagi*: "Ten ships, apparently enemy, sighted. Bearing 010 degrees, distant 240 miles from Midway. Course 150 degrees, speed more than 20 knots. Time, 0728."

Fuchida remembered the absolute consternation that gripped the officers aboard *Akagi* when the news was received. "When it reached Admiral Nagumo and his staff on *Akagi's* bridge," he wrote, "it struck them like a bolt from the blue. Until this moment no one had anticipated that an enemy force could possibly appear so soon, much less suspected that enemy ships were already in the vicinity waiting to ambush us. Now the entire picture was changed."

At 8:20, Scout Number 4 transmitted a new warning: "Enemy force accompanied by what appears to be aircraft carrier bringing up the rear."

The rearming of the planes for the second Midway raid would take an hour to complete. At about the same time, Tomonaga's planes would be returning from the first Midway strike, low on fuel and some of them damaged. These planes would have to be recovered quickly. To complicate matters, the intermittent air attacks by Midway's planes had prevented deck crews from adequately preparing to launch or recover large numbers of aircraft since their immediate concern was keeping enough Zeros of the combat air patrol aloft to fend off the attackers.

According to Fuchida, when American ships had been sighted Nagumo quickly ordered the rearming of his attack planes switched again to torpedoes and armor piercing bombs to strike the enemy naval task force. While this rearming took place, he assessed that he could recover Tomonaga's planes as his thinly stretched com-

Smoke billows from the stricken aircraft carrier *Hiryu* shortly after sunrise on June 5, 1942. *Hiryu* had been heavily damaged during a raid by American dive bombers the previous day, and a portion of the carrier's forward elevator stands upright just forward of the island, where it had been blown after a tremendous explosion on the hangar deck below.

bat air patrol managed to deal with any sporadic American air attacks from Midway. Once the planes of the first Midway strike were recovered, he would turn northeast, racing at 30 knots to close with the enemy carrier. He estimated that 89 planes would be available for launch at approximately 10:30 AM. Time, though, was running out for Nagumo and the Striking Force.

On the evening of June 3, hours after Reid first sighted Japanese warships, Task Forces 16 and 17 had closed their distance from Midway to only 200 miles and maintained a course north of the atoll. Already alerted by Nimitz in far-off Hawaii that Reid's sighting was not the Japanese Main Body, Fletcher and Spruance still expected the Japanese carriers to approach Midway from the northwest. Radio operators aboard *Enterprise* picked up Ady's message identifying a Japanese carrier early on the morning of June 4. Moments later, another message from Chase confirmed the presence of at least one more carrier. Fletcher weighed his options.

Although Fletcher's role at Midway has been somewhat minimized given the scope of Spruance's triumph later on the morning of June 4, the senior admiral made a significant contribution to the American victory. At 4:30 AM, about an hour before Ady's contact was reported, the *Yorktown* had launched search planes to cover a 100-mile arc to the north.

At that time, Nagumo was steaming west of the American task forces, slightly more than 200 miles away and launching his first Midway air strike. Fletcher was decisive. He had to recover *Yorktown's* search planes, but time was critical. Surprise might still be achieved, but the Japanese were surely looking for the Americans. At 6:07 AM, just four minutes after receiving the latest report on the Japanese carriers, Fletcher ordered Spruance with *Enterprise* and *Hornet* to "proceed southwesterly and attack enemy carriers when definitely located. I will follow as soon as planes recovered."

Fletcher intentionally gave up tactical control of the battle to Spruance, setting the stage for Spruance to make the most momentous command decision of the carrier war in the Pacific. Spruance calculated that within three hours his carriers would be approximately 100 miles distant from Nagumo—but how long could he remain undetected by the Japanese?

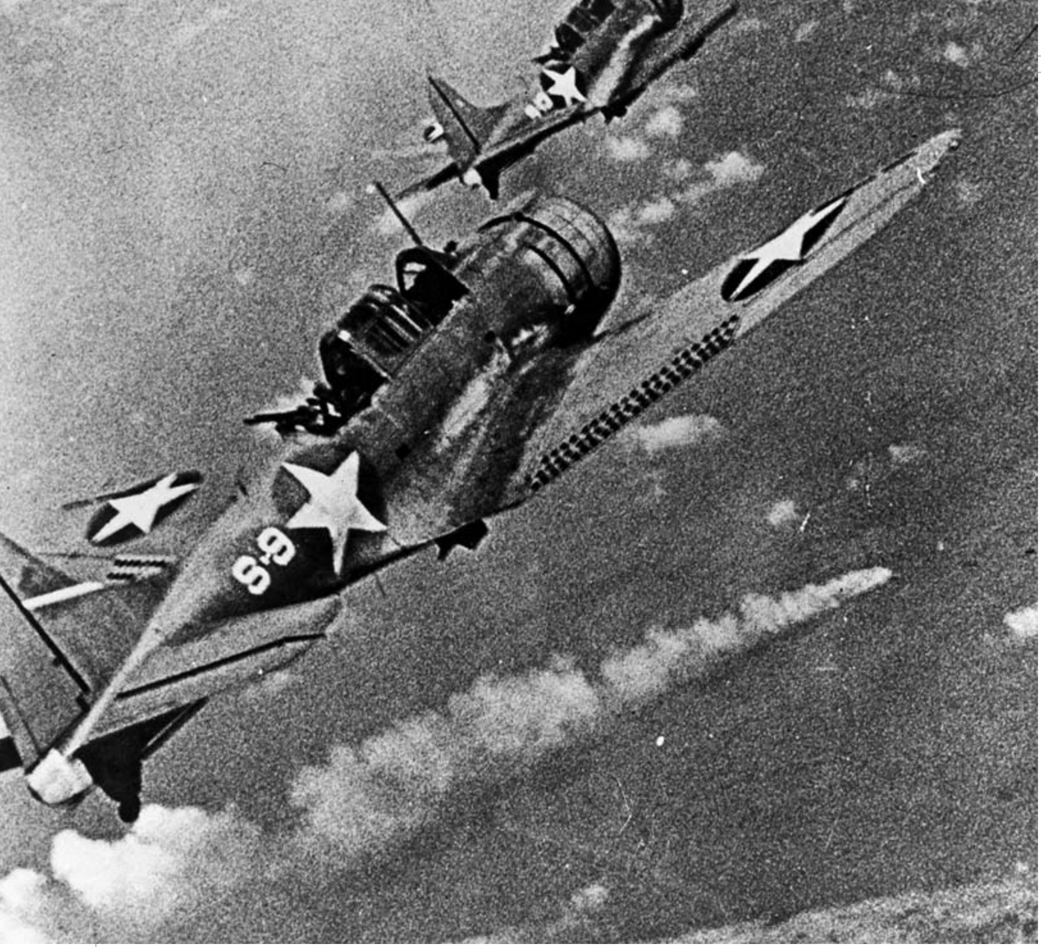
Aware that Japanese planes had already attacked Midway, Spruance decided to launch every available plane from *Enterprise* and *Hornet*. Launch time was 7:02 AM, and the distance of about 170 miles was the extreme limit of the range of the carrier planes.

It was risky, but Spruance knew that the Japanese carriers would be required to steam toward Midway for some time to recover their planes returning from Tomonaga's raid. If he made the right call, American planes could be positioned to attack the Japanese carriers while their decks were filled with aircraft.

Spruance became impatient due to delays and finally ordered the 37 *Enterprise* Dauntless dive bombers of Bombing 6 and Scouting 6 under Lieutenant Commander Clarence W. "Wade" McClusky to proceed without waiting for the torpedo bombers. The opportunity for a coordinated attack would be lost, but Spruance was also aware by 8:15 that *Enterprise* had picked up a Japanese scout plane's radio message. This was the alert from *Tone's* Number 4 plane that electrified Nagumo. By the time Nagumo was aware that at least one American carrier was present, *Enterprise* and *Hornet* were already launching their aircraft. When launch operations were completed, 67 dive bombers, 29 torpedo planes, and 20 fighters were in the air. Eighteen Wildcats remained on combat air patrol above Task Force 16.

Fletcher followed Spruance on a course of 240 degrees and held his planes aboard *Yorktown* for nearly two more hours, a wise decision should a second Japanese carrier group be spotted. By 8:40 AM, Fletcher had received no new reports of Japanese activity and turned *Yorktown* into the wind to launch 17 dive bombers, 12 torpedo planes, and six fighters.

The last Japanese plane returning from the Midway strike landed a few minutes after 9:00 AM, and Nagumo ordered his ships to execute the predetermined change of course to the northeast. The decks of the four Japanese car-



ABOVE: This enlarged frame from a color 16mm motion picture film became one of the most famous photographs of World War II in the Pacific. It depicts two Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bombers from the aircraft carrier USS *Hornet* bearing down on the stricken Japanese heavy cruiser *Mikuma* on the afternoon of June 6, 1942. *Mikuma,* already seriously damaged during earlier raids by dive bombers from the carriers *Hornet* and USS *Enterprise,* sank later in the day. OPPOSITE: The Japanese heavy cruiser *Mikuma,* a blackened hulk following air attacks by dive bombers from the aircraft carriers *Hornet* and *Enterprise,* is pictured on June 6, 1942, shortly before sinking during the final hours of the Battle of Midway. The roof of one of the cruiser's eight-inch gun turrets has been blown completely off, while the barrels of the main batteries point in odd directions. The emblem of the rising sun is emblazoned atop the forward gun turret, while the superstructure is a mass of twisted steel.

riers were beehives of activity, some planes being raised and lowered on elevators while others were armed and fuel lines stretched to fill empty tanks.

Nagumo's course change did pay one dividend. The 35 Dauntlesses and 10 Wildcats of *Hornet's* Bombing 8, Scouting 8, and Fighting 8 reached the anticipated point of interception and found nothing but empty ocean. Commander Stanhope Ring led the planes toward Midway in search of the enemy fleet but came up empty. The entire flight missed the battle, and several planes landed at Midway to refuel.

McClusky also flew toward the expected position of the Japanese carriers and found nothing. Low on fuel, the *Enterprise* air group commander chose to maintain course for another 35 miles. Rather than turning back toward Midway or his carrier, McClusky headed north at 9:35 AM. Twenty minutes later, he spotted the wake of a Japanese destroyer, the *Arashi*, just coming off a depth charge attack on the snooping submarine USS *Nautilus*. McClusky figured that the speeding destroyer was hurrying to catch up with Nagumo and followed it. At 10:02, he spotted the enemy carriers 35 miles to the northeast.

Within seconds, Lieutenant Commander Maxwell F. Leslie, leading *Yorktown's* Bombing 3, also made visual contact. McClusky and the *Enterprise* Dauntlesses were at 19,000 feet. Leslie's *Yorktown* dive bombers were at 14,500. In the distance, they saw the black puffs of antiaircraft fire and streaks of flame as burning planes fell from the sky. These were the telltale signs of the valiant but futile attacks carried out by the American torpedo squadrons.

Lieutenant Commander John C. Waldron led *Hornet's* Torpedo 8 in the first attack against Nagumo by U.S. carrier planes. At 9:20 AM, Waldron picked out the nearest Japanese carrier, *Soryu*, and began his run. During the next 20 minutes, all 15 Devastators of Torpedo 8 fell to Zeros. Ensign George Gay was the lone survivor among 30 naval aviators. Gay floated in the water until the following afternoon when he was picked up by a patrolling Catalina. The heroism of the men of Torpedo 8 has become legend.

Fourteen Devastators of Torpedo 6 from *Enterprise*, led by Lieutenant Commander Eugene E. Lindsey, pressed home attacks without fighter cover, and the Zeros slashed like wolves. In a flash, Lindsey's and nine other American planes were shot down. Four torpedo bombers survived, probably because the Japanese pilots were so busy with new reports of incoming American planes.

At 10:00 AM, Lieutenant Commander Lance E. Massey, leading Torpedo 3 from *Yorktown*, sighted the Japanese warships. Zeros jumped their six escorting Wildcats of Fighting 3, under Commander John S. Thach, and a wild dogfight ensued. Accounts of the battle differ as to Massey's intended target; however, it was most likely *Hiryu*, which presented the best angle for a torpedo run. Five torpedoes were launched at the carrier from starboard, but no hits were scored. Torpedo 3 lost 10 of its 12 Devastators.

Forty-one American torpedo planes had attacked Nagumo's carriers, and 35 were shot down. Of the 81 pilots and rear gunners that flew into action, 69 were killed. However, their valor was key to the drama yet to unfold. In their frantic maneuvering to avoid the attacks, the Japanese carriers had been unable to move their own aircraft to the flight decks for a strike at the American carriers or to relieve their combat air patrol. The Zeros still in the air had been heavily engaged and were critically low on fuel and ammunition. While chasing the slow Devastators they had been pulled down to the wavetops and could not regain altitude quickly enough to defend against the American dive bombers plummeting toward their carriers moments later.

Just before Massey's ill-fated torpedo attack on *Hiryu*, McClusky and the Dauntlesses of Scouting 6 and Bombing 6 pushed over into steep dives, descending like avenging angels toward *Kaga*. Although their intent had been to split the squadrons and attack *Kaga* and *Akagi* simultaneously, a mistake in communications sent all the dive bombers hurtling toward the same target. Lieutenant Richard "Dick" Best, commander of Bombing 6, realized the error and aborted his dive along with two other VB-6 Dauntlesses. The three diverted to *Akagi*. At the same time, Leslie's dive bombers from *Yorktown* approached *Soryu* from the northeast.

In just five minutes, the course of the war in the Pacific abruptly changed. Three Japanese aircraft carriers became flaming wreckage.

Fuchida remembered the flight deck of *Akagi* packed with aircraft, armed, fueled, and ready for takeoff to attack the American carriers. “The Air Officer flapped a white flag, and the first Zero fighter gathered speed and whizzed off the deck,” he wrote. “At that instant a lookout screamed: ‘Hell-divers!’ I looked up to see three black enemy planes plummeting toward our ship … The plump silhouettes of the American ‘Dauntless’ dive bombers quickly grew larger, and then a number of black objects suddenly floated eerily from their wings. Bombs! Down they came straight toward me!”

The first bomb was a near miss, its splash drenching everyone on the bridge. Best’s bomb then hit squarely on the amidships elevator and penetrated to the hangar deck. In their haste, crewmen had not secured the bombs that had been removed earlier. As these cooked off, *Akagi* was wracked by internal explosions. The third bomb was reported to have struck along the edge of the flight deck’s port side. Nagumo transferred his flag to the light cruiser *Nagara*. Fuchida broke both ankles, barely escaping with his life.

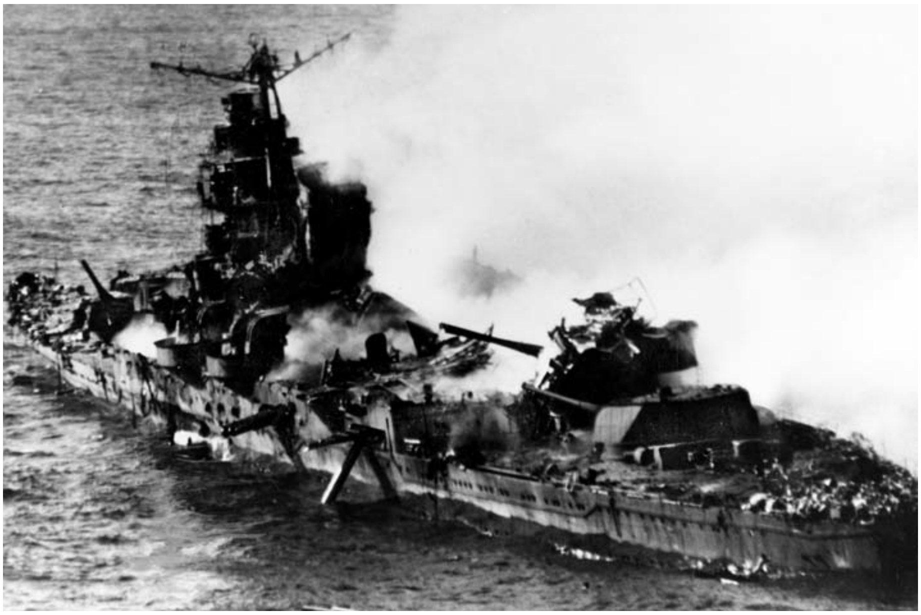
Akagi lost power and was finally abandoned at 5 PM. Yamamoto ordered destroyers to scuttle the demolished hulk the following morning. Remarkably, only 263 men were killed.

McClusky’s dive bombers screamed down on *Kaga* at a near 70-degree angle. Lieutenant Earl Gallaher dropped his 1,000-pound bomb on the starboard flight deck, immediately turning planes into flaming torches. Two more bombs hit near the forward elevator, igniting a gasoline truck that erupted, showering the bridge with flaming shrapnel and killing everyone present. A fourth bomb hit squarely amidships on the port side. Torpedoes from Japanese destroyers sent *Kaga’s* floating wreck to the bottom at 7:25 PM, and 811 men died.

When Leslie’s 17 planes attacked *Soryu*, only 13 of them still carried bombs. Electric arming switches had malfunctioned, and four bombs had fallen into the ocean. Leslie peppered the *Soryu’s* bridge with machine-gun bullets until his guns jammed. Lieutenant (j.g.) Paul “Lefty” Holmberg dropped his bomb from less than 3,000 feet and looked back at a hit amidships that exploded on the hangar deck, catapulting the forward elevator against the bridge. A second bomb smashed into the flight deck and blew a Zero into the sea as it was taking off. A third bomb struck near the aft elevator. Fires raged from bow to stern, and 20 minutes later the order was given to abandon ship. With 718 of her crew dead, *Soryu* drifted and finally plunged out of sight at 7:13 PM.

The American planes dodged Zeros and headed back toward their carriers; only *Hiryu* was left undamaged. By 10:58 AM, a retaliatory strike of 18 dive bombers and six fighters was in the air, heading toward *Yorktown*. Led by Lieutenant Michio Kobayashi, the Vals put three bombs into the carrier. The *Yorktown* slowed to six knots and belched smoke, but damage control parties performed magnificently. Four hours later, the carrier was making 19 knots.

At approximately 2:30 PM, however, Tomonaga, flying a damaged Kate and aware that a ruptured fuel tank sustained during his Midway attack meant that he could not make the return flight to *Hiryu*, led 10 torpedo bombers against *Yorktown*. Two hits on the port side knocked out the boilers again. Serious flooding caused the carrier to list.



While *Yorktown* was under torpedo attack, word was received from one of its scout planes that *Hiryu* had been spotted. By 3:30, Spruance had 25 dive bombers in the air and speeding to the northwest. A half hour later, *Hornet* launched another 16 Dauntlesses. *Yorktown* damage control had been so effective that surviving Japanese pilots of the second strike from *Hiryu* believed they had put a second American carrier out of action. Admiral Tamon Yamaguchi aboard *Hiryu* issued orders to prepare five Vals, five Kates, and 10 Zeros, all that remained of the Striking Force’s once mighty air armada, to attack what he believed was the only operational American carrier left.

McClusky had been wounded earlier in the day and could not take part in the mission against *Hiryu*. Command of the strike that included both *Enterprise* planes and refugees from the *Yorktown* fell to Gallaher. The dive bombers achieved surprise again and hit *Hiryu* with four bombs on the forward section of the flight deck, one of which blew the forward elevator out of its well. Penetrating to the hangar deck, bombs destroyed the handful of planes being readied for the next Japanese mission. A sheet of flame erupted and spread rapidly throughout the ship. *Hornet’s* planes and B-17s from Midway attacked other Japanese ships but scored no hits.

Yamaguchi ordered the crew to abandon the *Hiryu* at 4:30 PM and went down with with his ship. A torpedo from a Japanese destroyer failed to finish off the blackened hulk, which drifted until just after 9 the following morning before sinking with 383 dead sailors aboard.

Despite the news that *Akagi*, *Kaga*, *Soryu,* and *Hiryu* were on fire, Yamamoto tried to snatch an improbable victory from devastating defeat, possibly by bringing on a night surface engagement. The situation, however, was too chaotic, and Spruance refused to bite.

After *Yorktown* was hit, Fletcher again deferred to his junior admiral, and it was Spruance who decided to retire eastward for several hours on the night of June 4. Although his decision was criticized in some quarters, his reasoning was sound. The Japanese had suffered shattering losses, but their surface strength was greatly superior to his own, and Midway had to be protected. By 11:30 PM, the Japanese had made no contact with American surface ships. Yamamoto cancelled the Midway operation.

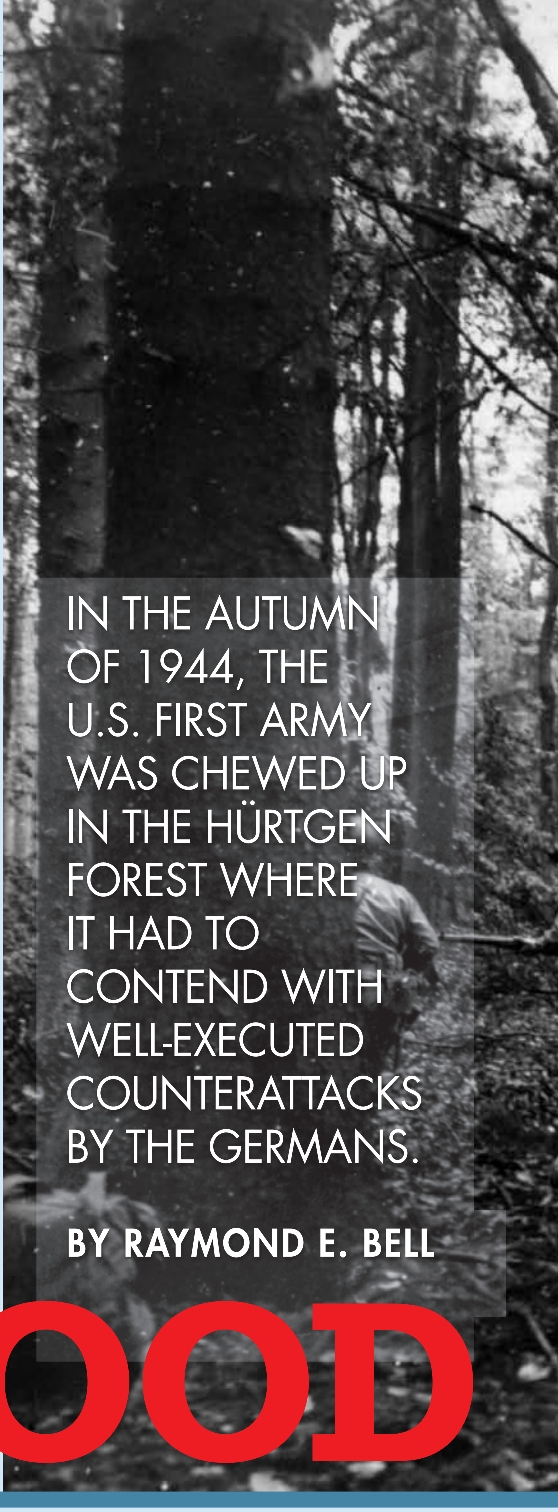
That night, a report of a burning Japanese carrier reached Midway, and Major Norris led a flight of Vindicators in the direction of the sighting. The planes took off in fading light at 7:00 PM. Norris had scheduled the departure’s

Continued on page 82

HELL IN A DARK WOOD

IN THE AUTUMN OF 1944, THE U.S. FIRST ARMY WAS CHEWED UP IN THE HÜRTGEN FOREST WHERE IT HAD TO CONTEND WITH WELL-EXECUTED COUNTERATTACKS BY THE GERMANS.

BY RAYMOND E. BELL



At the town of Schmidt in the Hürtgen Forest, it was hard to see through the thick mist and steady drizzle on the cold and damp morning of Saturday, November 4, 1944. Bomb craters filled with rainwater dotted the bleak landscape. The spongy ground sucked at soldiers' boots, and thick mud clung to their leggings and pants, adding to the misery of fighting in the woods in the rain with little sleep.

Suddenly, rounds from German howitzers whooshed downward and slammed into the ground, causing it to shake like an earthquake. For the next half hour, the Germans pummeled the town with their heavy artillery. When the big guns stopped, the American riflemen heard the clanking of tanks. The woods were soon alive with German infantry. The deadly krump of mortars and the chatter of machine guns filled the air.

GIs armed with bazookas tried in vain to stop PzKpfw.IV and PzKpfw.V Panther tanks. Their shells bounced harmlessly off the steel monsters. The tanks roamed at will through the town, hunting Americans in houses or in foxholes. "The tanks ... had smashed through the two forward company positions and broke them all to hell," said Captain Guy T. Piercey, commander of a weapons company. "The situation was bad."

Overwhelmed by the Germans' staggering firepower some of the GIs fled from their positions at 8:30 AM. Ninety minutes later, the rest of the 3rd Battalion, 112th Infantry Regiment quit Schmidt. They disappeared into the forest leaving their dead and wounded to the Germans.

The German counterattack at Schmidt was indicative of the setbacks Lt. Gen. Courtney H. Hodges' First Army experienced in the Hürtgen Forest from mid-September 1944 to early February 1945. The story of the battle begins just before the capture of Aachen, the first large city in Germany to fall to the Americans. Maj. Gen. Maurice Rose's 3rd Armored Division had advanced in September into the Stolberg corridor between Aachen and the Hürtgen Forest, putting the Allies within 20 miles of the Rhine River.

The division's right flank came to rest on the northwest rim of the forest. On September 13, the division made an incursion into the forest in the vicinity of the town of Roetgen. The crack armored division, however, was pointed to the east beyond the Siegfried Line, or the West Wall as the Germans called it, so it did not become embroiled in the forest. As the division advanced, it also took the small villages of Schmidthof, Rott, and Brandt peripherally located on the Hürtgen Forest's northwestern edge. As a result of the division's eastward

American riflemen of the 28th Infantry Division advance cautiously through the Hürtgen Forest. The Germans benefited substantially from the superb cover offered by the close-packed trees and tangled undergrowth. OPPOSITE: The German infantry had heavy firepower as shown by these camouflaged troops armed with assault rifles and panzerfausts.

attack, the incursion was a brief encounter with a dense evergreen forest that soon completely thwarted the troops of Hodges' First Army.

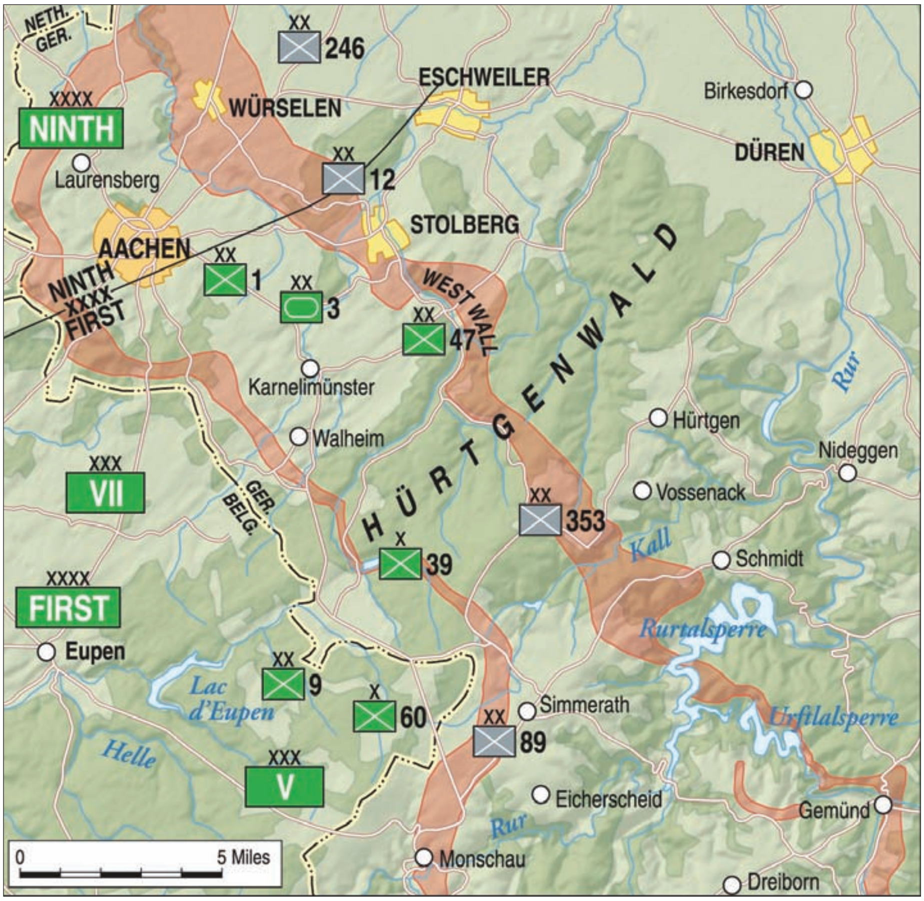
On its way to the Battle of Aachen, Maj. Gen. Clarence R. Huebner's vaunted 1st Infantry Division had encountered the German defenses on the northwestern fringes of the Hürtgen Forest. Division troops attacked Aachen from the south, which resulted in limited contact with the foreboding woods as they advanced north to encircle the city. Just like the 3rd Armored Division, it was to be saved the agony of the forest and its elaborate defenses, but it suffered nevertheless. The 1st Infantry Division, though, was not to see the last of the forest.

There were two striking characteristics about the forest battle. The first was the nature of the woods and the German defenses inside the woods. The second was the complete inability of Hodges and First Army Headquarters to appreciate the challenges of fighting in such an environment. First Army troops would have a horrific experience in the front line in the woods, while the headquarters staff remained in comfort, removed from the intense fighting and great suffering.

The Hürtgen Forest is actually three woods: Wenau, Hürtgen, and Rotgen. The dark evergreen forest lies on the border of Belgium and Germany and astride the West Wall. It occupies a 50-square-mile, triangle-shaped area bounded by the towns of Aachen, Duren, and Monschau. Two ridges are angled southwest to northeast through the forest toward the Roer River. The village of Hürtgen is located on the northern ridge, while the town of Schmidt is

Both: National Archives

Map © 2021 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



The Battle of the Hürtgen Forest was fought in a 50-square-mile, triangle-shaped area bounded by the towns of Aachen, Duren, and Monschau. The dense woods negated the advantages the Americans enjoyed in mobility, firepower, and technology when fighting in open terrain.

situated on the southern ridge. Between them the Kall River flows through a forbidding gorge. The ridges were bare of trees, which made them good places for artillery and for monitoring enemy movements at lower elevations. The dense woods would negate the advantages the Americans enjoyed in mobility, firepower, and technology when fighting in open terrain.

At the outset of the prolonged battle, the dense forest canopy immediately caused orientation problems for the Americans. The U.S. combat units entering the forest had few maps of the woods; those they did have were in German and were difficult to interpret. From an aerial point of view, it was confusing to orient those existing maps with the ground configuration. This had an adverse effect not only on the provision of close air support but also on field artillery attempting to respond to requests for fire support. The absence of distinguishable land forms in the Hürtgen Forest made it nearly impossible for spotter aircraft to orient themselves and effectively direct fire for artillery units. Bringing effective fire to bear was at times a hit-and-miss affair as the U.S. artillery had to shoot blind.

The Hürtgen Forest was not unlike other forests in Germany. As the land has been intensely cultivated over many centuries, so have its forests. The Germans responsible for managing the forest's resources over the years did so in a way that would result in a maximum yield from its fir trees. Before machines were developed to remove the logs, horses performed that function. The trails, therefore, were at best covered with grass but more likely were simply soil. When the logs were dragged along the trails when the ground was hard, little damage was done to the trail surface. But in rainy spells the trails became muddy, and wheeled transport frequently got bogged down, particularly when extensive use was made of the trails. After sustained rain, the trails resembled creeks.

The true test was whether a quarter-ton truck could negotiate a trail that had turned to mud. If the trail in an inclement state could not support a quarter-ton truck, then the trail failed the test as a viable means of travel. The Hürtgen Forest, except for a few hard surface roads, failed the test and contributed significantly to logistics and communications failures. The Germans found that by felling one or two trees they could easily block a trail, and they made good use of this tactic to slow U.S. forces.

Trails were not only easy to block, but the maps often failed to show where they led. Sometimes the trails did not even show up on the map. It was easy to get lost following what appeared to be a trail leading in a desired direction but which had no specific definition when it came to leading to a military objective. The resulting confusion was compounded by the Germans' expert use of the trails to form fields of fire for direct-fire weapons, such as the dreaded 88mm antitank artillery. American troops often could not effectively call for artillery fire using trails for orientation because of the disparate directions the trails frequently took. The best targets were villages and towns located in cleared areas.

The closely bunched trees in the Hürtgen Forest served the German defenders well. Air bursts from German mortars and artillery sent shards of wood spiking into the forest floor or into the heads and bodies of American soldiers. For this reason, American soldiers attempting to advance under such bombardment conditions were vulnerable to indirect enemy fire. While the American artillery and mortars could have the same effect on the Germans, the German defenders usually were protected by well-constructed field fortifications or concrete bunkers.

The trees also worked their misery on unprotected soldiers in tandem with the weather. A large amount of rainfall, especially during the autumn and winter action, meant that water hung in the overhead foliage only to drip constantly on soldiers without overhead cover, whether moving through the forest or in their open foxholes. American soldiers found themselves confined to waterlogged holes, which led to immersion foot, or trench foot. Casualties among soldiers who could not keep their feet dry were extremely high and the cause for much consternation among upper echelon command.

The Hürtgen Forest had other characteristics associated with the weather that affected combat operations. Dense fog and mist in the autumn and winter tended to hang in the valleys and among the trees. This hindered direct observation and posed a danger not only to patrols but also to any movement as it often proved difficult for a soldier to see more than a few feet. It was easy to get lost and disoriented walking a short distance or to accidentally stumble into an enemy patrol. Since the Germans had a better knowledge of the woods, they had a decisive advantage over the Americans when it came to moving through the forest.

In spite of the poor quality of some of the

German infantry units at this stage of the war, the Germans nevertheless managed to exploit the full defensive potential of the Hürtgen Forest. They could tell from the ring of an axe being used to cut down a tree, and by the direction of the sound of the axe, just how to bring fire to bear on the GI wielding the axe. The Americans learned the hard way that when they wanted to cut down a tree to build a protected fighting position it was best to use a hand saw. American vehicles operating in the woods telegraphed their movement by their distinctive sounds. The Germans had fewer vehicles, and they used their horses effectively in the dense woods to move artillery.

The Hürtgen Forest stood at the northern end of the 390-mile West Wall. The forest was thoroughly integrated into the Germans' fortification system. Even without fortifications the forest posed serious threats, but the combination proved to be a major obstacle to American forces.

The German defense of the Hürtgen Forest made use of many different techniques that stymied the American advance and compounded the effects of the forest's natural features. The trails not only served as deadly fields of fire but also were heavily mined and booby trapped. The Americans had a difficult time overcoming the mines. The Germans placed thousands of personnel mines in about every conceivable place. They could be closely grouped and stacked one or more on top of each other. When an American soldier went to remove a mine, he had to be sure it was not booby trapped or that there was not another mine set to explode when the weight of the top mine was removed. It soon became standard operating procedure to blow up mines in place rather than try to remove them.

The Germans covered forest trails and paths with weapons fire from well-concealed fighting positions. They had a special knack for camouflage. It was not unusual for an American soldier to be standing right beside a German field fortification and not be aware of it. The German positions not only were well located to provide flanking fire, but also they provided excellent overhead protection against American artillery fire.

Because the Hürtgen Forest was part of the West Wall, there was an abundance of permanent fighting positions located throughout the forest. The Germans built elaborate concrete bunkers that were often two or three stories deep into the ground. They were perfectly camouflaged with leaves and pine needles and blended seamlessly into the surrounding landscape in a way that made them almost invisible to the American troops. They had to be reduced by infantry and engineer troops using explosive charges and small arms fire. Once captured, a bunker or concrete position had to be secured against recapture by the Germans.

German tactics took full advantage of the features of the terrain and weather while making optimum use of their defensive expertise. The Germans registered with mortars and artillery the roadblocks they had established to slow down the Americans. When the Americans fired their artillery, the Germans would fire their own behind the Americans to make the Americans think that their own artillery rounds were landing short.

German soldiers cut American telephone lines and effectively monitored the largely undisciplined American radio transmissions, which allowed them to eavesdrop on American tactical operations and activities.

If the terrain and German tactics and fortifications were not formidable enough, Hodges

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Heavy autumn rains turned forest roads into rivers of mud, making it nearly impossible for wheeled vehicles to get traction. BELOW: American soldiers man a .30-caliber machine gun. The fighting took its toll on U.S. forces, requiring units to be pulled out of line to refit and fresh units inserted into the battle in their place.

and his chief of staff, Maj. Gen. William B. Kean, proved themselves to be insufferable throughout the Battle of the Hürtgen Forest. Hodges, who had an abrasive personality, held the record for relieving the most corps and division commanders in Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley's 12th Army Group. He canned 10 of 13 generals. He was quick to condemn others' shortcomings, but he took umbrage if someone insinuated that he might have contributed to the failure of one of his units. During the protracted battle he was often sick, leaving much of the combat direction to Kean.

Kean proved to be the key figure in the chain of command and ran the staff in such a way as to brook no opposition to command decisions. The rest of the staff operated as if it knew the answers to all challenges and projected a negative attitude to First Army units, which manifested itself in a blind stubbornness and ultimately resulted in heavy casualties. The First Army staff was the least effective of Bradley's three armies.

Hodges' First Army had three corps, but only two fought in the Hürtgen Forest. One was Maj. Gen. J. Lawton Collins' VII Corps, and the other was Maj. Gen. Leonard Gerow's V Corps.

Collins' VII Corps comprised the 4th Cavalry Group, 1st Infantry Division, 9th Infantry Division, and the 3rd Armored Division. Gerow's V Corps was composed of the 102nd Cavalry Group, 4th Infantry Division, 28th Infantry Division, and the 5th Armored Division. Collins' VII corps would spearhead the attack into the Hürtgen, and Gerow's V Corps would advance to the south to cover Collins' right flank.

Three factors in particular would contribute to the agonizingly slow progress that Hodges' First Army would make through the Hürtgen Forest. The first factor was the dense nature of the woods, which slowed the American advance to a crawl. The second factor was the Germans' stubborn defense. The third factor was First Army's command shortcomings and the adverse effect these problems had on frontline combat units.

The initial, relatively brief encounters in the dark forest experienced by the U.S. 3rd Armored Division and the U.S. 1st Infantry Division were also experienced during Maj. Gen. Louis A. Craig's 9th Infantry Division's penetration of the West Wall on September 13. Craig's division would be the first of several to experience the Hürtgen Forest's death grip.

The 1st Battalion of the division's 39th Infantry Regiment crossed the German border from Belgium almost unopposed into the town of Lammersdorf on September 14. Lammersdorf was situated just outside the southeast corner of the Hürtgen Forest abreast of the West Wall fortifications. Hardly had the U.S. infantrymen advanced beyond the town when the German 98th Infantry Division sprang into action. German gunners inside pillboxes poured heavy fire into the advancing Americans, pinning them down.

This marked the beginning of the battle. The battle began with tedious small unit combat against a determined but understrength enemy. By September 18, the Americans had managed to carve only a 1^1/2-mile-wide path through the German fortifications at the forest's edge. Frequent rain and thick cloud cover limited the number of close air support missions that U.S. ground attack aircraft could fly.

The quality of the German forces the 9th Infantry Division faced offered the Americans some degree of solace, though. Colonel Karl Roesler's 89th Infantry Division, which by that time was composed of only two grenadier regiments, was badly depleted in manpower. Created in January 1944 with conscripts from the Replacement Army, the division had suffered heavy losses in Normandy. By September, one of its two remaining regiments was almost nonexistent as a result of attrition, and the other had only 350 men. Roesler had scraped together his artillerymen, engineers, and service troops and put them on the front line. The German high command had reinforced his division with a battalion of reservists, three battalions of Luftwaffe ground protection troops, and a battalion of 450 Russians pressed into German service.

Deployed to the north on Roesler's right flank across the German LXXIV Corps boundary was the German 9th Panzer Division. The panzer division also was badly understrength. It had 2,500 grenadiers, 200 machine guns, and 13 Panther tanks. The Germans' best hope lay in the anticipated arrival from the Eastern Front of Colonel Gerhard Engel's 12th Infantry Division. The division had 14,800 men organized into three infantry regiments, each of which had two battalions. It also had 12 batteries of artillery.

National Archives

The lead elements of the 12th Infantry Division began arriving in the northern part of the Hürtgen Forest on September 16. Engel's troops initially engaged elements of Rose's U.S. 3rd Armored Division and the 47th Infantry Regiment.

The arrival of Engel's troops compelled Maj. Gen. J. Lawton Collins, the American VII Corps commander, to direct Huebner's 1st Infantry Division, Rose's 3rd Armored Division, and Craig's 9th Infantry Division to consolidate their positions by shortening their lines. Collins then ordered the 9th Infantry Division, after a brief pause, to begin clearing the Hürtgen Forest to remove the threat the Germans there posed to his right flank.

The Schwammenauel and Urft dams, known as the Roer dams, were becoming increasingly important objectives to Hodges' First Army. The Roer dams had only belatedly been gaining recognition as justification for a continued advance. Bradley, Hodges, and Collins agreed that the Americans needed to seize the dams to prevent the possibility of the Germans releasing the water and flooding the Roer Valley. If that occurred, millions of gallons of water would keep the river at flood stage for weeks, inundating the entire valley. The Roer River at flood stage might delay the passage of American forces for several weeks. When Collins ordered the 9th Infantry Division into the forest in September, the need to capture the dams had not been considered a critical intermediate objective in First Army's advance to the Rhine River.

To accomplish the forest-clearing mission, arrayed north to south in the Hürtgen Forest were the 9th Infantry Division's 47th, 60th, and 39th Infantry Regiments. Beginning on September 19, the division sought to capture the key crossroads town of Schmidt on the eastern edge of the forest near the dams.

Schmidt, which was located just over a mile west of the dams, lay behind the West Wall in open terrain. Its seizure was essential to the capture of the dams. At that point, the progress of the U.S. infantry began to be measured in yards rather than miles.

American close air support was limited. Fog and mist at ground level obscured observation even if the skies above were clear. These conditions precluded effective support. Within the forest, tanks and tank destroyers had difficulty maneuvering and bringing their guns to bear. By the close of September, the 60th Infantry Regiment had bludgeoned its way aimlessly through a morass, almost reaching the Germeter–Hürtgen–Kleinau Road in the forest. The 39th Infantry Regiment had reached the Lammersdorf–Germeter Road on the 60th Infantry Regiment's south flank. But the Germans still held Schmidt.

National Archives

ABOVE: GIs clear and inspect a German machine-gun nest in the Hürtgen Forest after a firefight. Felled trees and evergreen branches augmented the strength of the position. OPPOSITE: An American reconnaissance team takes cover as it goes into action against a German machine-gun nest concealed in the forest. A mortar team at left shells the German position.

By October 6, the 9th Infantry Division held a nine-mile front. Before the division could capture Schmidt, it had to take other villages. The 39th Infantry on the left and the 60th on the right received orders to capture the villages of Germeter and Vossenack, cross the Kall River valley, and advance through the hamlet of Kommerscheidt to Schmidt. A narrow, twisting path known as the Kall Trail led south from Vossenack through the woods to the Kall gorge. Beyond the gorge lay Kommerscheidt and Schmidt practically adjacent to each other.

It was a tall order given the fierce German resistance. General Hans Schmidt's 5,000-strong 275th Infantry Division opposed the two American regiments. Although his division was not at full strength, its troops nevertheless had constructed log bunkers, foxholes, and roadblocks. They also had laid mines, strung barbed wire, and established interlocking fields of fire.

On October 6, the two U.S. regiments attacked. They immediately ran into tenacious resistance. Although advance elements pushed through the pillboxes of the West Wall, progress was extremely slow. U.S. tanks and tank destroyers arrived two days later to assist the infantry. The armor's extra weight resulted in a limited penetration of the West Wall.

The 1,200-strong German battle group known as Regiment Wegelein, which was named after its commander, Colonel Wolfgang Wegelein, began moving south toward the Hürtgen on October 11 to assist the 275th Division. The following morning, Wegelein's men, who were well armed with submachine guns, machine guns, and mortars, attacked the northern flank of the 39th Infantry Regiment at the village of Wittscheidt. The Americans held onto the village, but the counterattack forced them to halt short of Schmidt and consolidate their positions.

Over the course of the next two weeks, the tired, disillusioned, and bedraggled U.S. soldiers were forced to withstand ever worsening weather, constant enemy patrols, and withering artillery fire. On October 25, the 9th Infantry Division, except for the 47th Infantry Regiment, was allowed to pull out of the front line for rest and rehabilitation.

In less than four weeks, the 9th Infantry Division had suffered 4,500 casualties. Moving up to replace the 9th Infantry Division was Maj. Gen. Norman D. "Dutch" Cota's 28th Infantry Division. It was known alternately as the Keystone Division or Bloody Bucket Division. Hodges and his staff remained firmly convinced that the best route to the Roer dams was through Schmidt. Hodges ordered Dutch Cota to send all three of his regiments against the Germans. He reinforced Cota with three engineer combat battalions, a battalion of towed tank destroyers, and a chemical mortar battalion.

As October drew to a close, the Germans began earnestly preparing for "Wacht am Rhein," the German codename for the Ardennes counteroffensive. The preparations involved the withdrawal and reconstitution of forces, some of which were elite panzer formations, that had been deployed near the Hürtgen Forest. Because of this, the fighting against the Americans fell to third-class German infantry divisions.

The experience of Dutch Cota's troops is summarized in the division's combat chronicle. "The 28th smashed into the Hürtgen Forest [on] 2 November 1944, and in the savage seesaw battle which followed, Vossenack and Schmidt changed hands several times." Cota deployed the 109th Infantry Regiment on the left, the 112th Infantry Regiment in the center, and the 110th Infantry Regiment on the right.

The regiments advanced in unison on November 2. Lt. Col. Carl Peterson's 112th Infantry Regiment in the center initially had the most success. Backed by M4 Sherman tanks, the GIs managed to fight their way into Vossenack. German grenadiers armed with panzerfausts knocked out five Shermans, but at least the Americans had something to show for the destroyed tanks. The following day, two battalions of the 112th crossed the Kall River. The 3rd Battalion, 112th Regiment fought its way through Kommerscheidt and entered Schmidt. The Americans caught the German garrison in Schmidt by surprise. By nightfall the town was squarely in the hands of three American rifle companies and a weapons platoon. Exhausted from the previous days' march, they decided not to send out any patrols that night.

But the Germans launched a vicious counterattack. The advancing enemy wiped out the 3rd Battalion. The Germans also retook Kommerscheidt before the counterattack ground to a halt.

By the end of the first week in November, only Vossenack was still in American hands. After the fighting on the Kall Trail ended, the regiment held only the western slope of the gorge. Cota's 28th Infantry Division had suffered the same heavy casualties that the 9th Infantry Division had suffered.

As the 28th Infantry Division was pulled out of line for rehabilitation on November 16, First Army prepared to make another major push to reach the Roer River. By then three U.S. infantry divisions were in the Hürtgen Forest. They were deployed north to south as follows: 1st, 4th, and 8th. The primary responsibility for clearing the forest at that point fell to Maj. Gen. Raymond O. Barton's 4th Infantry Division. Barton had orders to clear the Germans from the forest and then proceed northeast to the Roer River at Dueren.

Combat Command R (CCR) of the 5th Armored Division moved up to assist Barton's division in capturing the village of Hürtgen, which lay north of Vossenack. Schmidt's grenadiers braced for the attack of a fresh American division. Barton was promised air support. Despite inclement weather at Allied bomber bases in France and England, the bombers conducted bombing runs against the German positions in the Hürtgen in mid-November. Unfortunately, the bombs had minimal effect on the German fortifications. The Americans also unleashed the fire of nearly 700 artillery pieces against the German positions.

The 4th Infantry Division soon became yet another victim of the forest. Its 12th Infantry Regiment suffered heavy casualties in nine days of bitter fighting. Despite the heavy casualties incurred, the regiment seized control of key roads in the forest on November 16 that allowed CCR's tanks and tank destroyers to launch a major assault against German forces in the village of Hürtgen. But the Germans mauled the 12th Infantry Regiment, which by November 21 had suffered 1,600 casualties. Adjacent U.S. infantry regiments had no better luck in the forest as they struggled to clear the stubborn German resistance.

National Archives

ABOVE: Medics of the 4th Infantry Division tend to a wounded GI. Evacuating the wounded was a difficult undertaking because they often had to be carried long distances to aid stations. OPPOSITE: Artist Ogden Pleissner captures the bleakness of the forest in which artillery shelling shattered trees, showering soldiers with deadly splinters. Five American infantry divisions were committed to the protracted battle before it was over.

"As early as mid-September, the 9th Division had demonstrated that to send widely separated columns through an obstacle was to invite disaster," states the U.S. Army's official history. "Yet on a second occasion in October the 9th Division had tried the same thing and in early November the 28th Division had followed suit. Now the 4th Division was to pursue the same pattern."

In a number of actions in the eastern sector of the forest both the 8th and 22nd Infantry Regiments of the 4th Infantry Division struggled forward having to confront not only inclement weather and stiff German resistance, but also supply difficulties. By December 2, the regiments were on the verge of finally breaking out of the forest when they halted. But in doing so, they had suffered enormous losses.

To the north, Huebner's 1st Infantry Division, after severe fighting in the northwest portion of the forest, initially made enough progress to give higher headquarters some encouragement, but the intractable weather combined with stubborn German resistance kept the division from advancing out of the forest to drive to the Roer River.

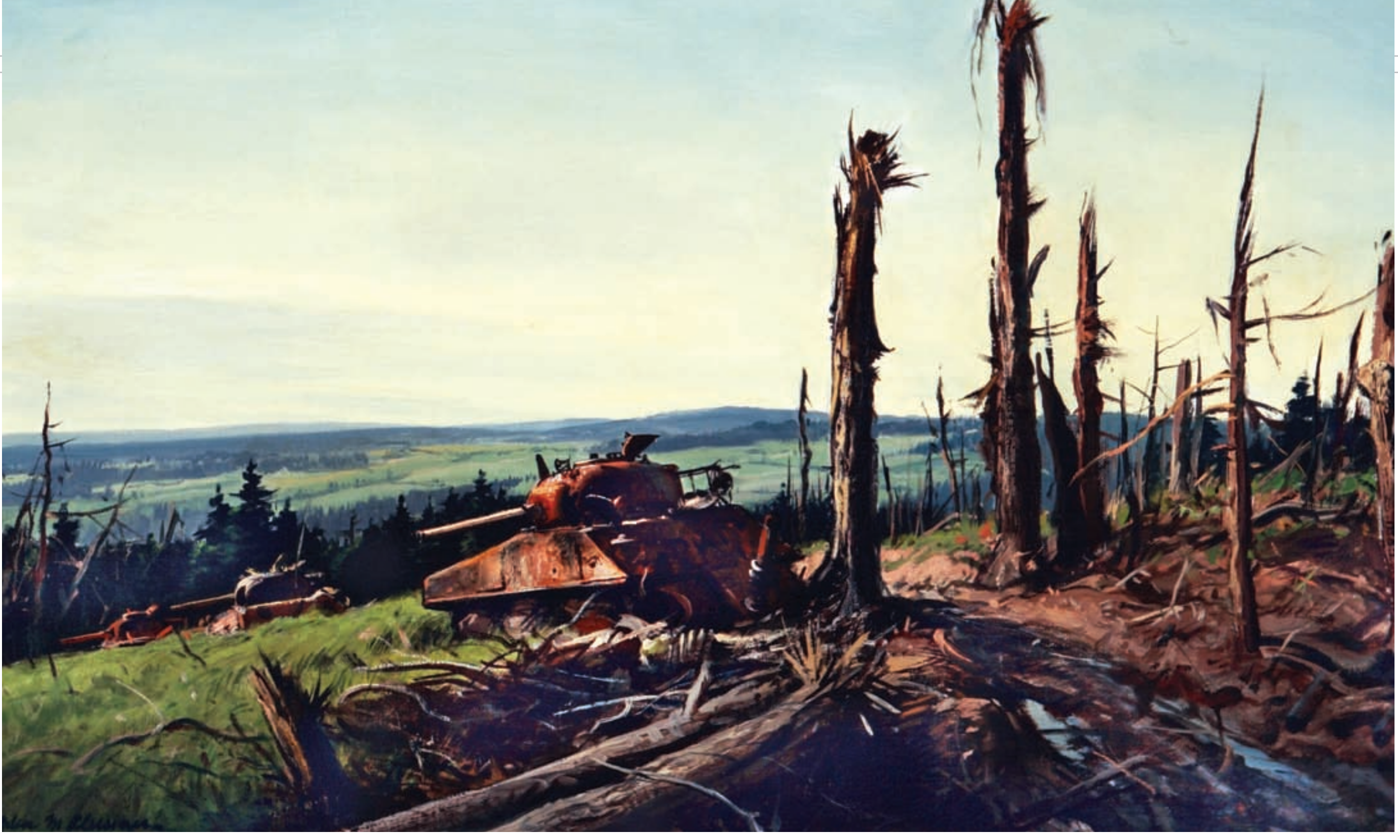
One of the 1st Infantry Division's key objectives was the village of Heistern. With the assistance of artillery and tank fire, a battalion of the division's 18th Infantry Regiment succeeded in getting into the village the night of November 21. That night Colonel Josef Kimbacher, commander of the 104th Regiment of the 47th Volksgrenadier Division, led his troops in a counterattack. The Americans repulsed the attack and took 120 prisoners including Kimbacher.

Vicious fighting continued as both sides fought to control key terrain. The Germans launched an attack to retake Hill 203, and once they captured it they fought tenaciously to hold it because it afforded excellent observation over the surrounding terrain. The U.S. 18th Infantry Regiment drove the Germans from Hill 203 on November 24.

Meanwhile, the 8th Infantry Division, which was assigned to V Corps, with the 5th Armored Division's CCR in support, engaged the Germans. The 121st Infantry Regiment engaged four understrength battalions of the 275th Infantry Division in the mud, fog, and rain for control of the villages of Hürtgen, Kleinau, Brandenberg, and Bergstein.

By December 9, American M4 Sherman tanks had swept through the villages. The attached 2nd Ranger Battalion advanced from Bergstein and captured the excellent observation site of Hill 400.5, more familiarly known as Castle Hill. But the Germans immediately counterattacked and retook it. The 2nd Ranger Battalion suffered 25 percent casualties. Overall, the late November and early December push resulted in more than 1,200 U.S. casualties.

A hiatus occurred at that point as both sides concentrated on the Ardennes campaign. During that time, the 83rd Infantry Division relieved the battered 4th Infantry Division; however, the 1st and 8th Infantry Divisions remained in place. In two months of sustained



U.S. Army Art Collection

fighting in the Hürtgen Forest, five U.S. infantry divisions (along with a ranger battalion and an armored combat command) had suffered severe casualties. Losses amounted to approximately 5,000 men per division. The main objective of the battle, the Roer dams, would remain in German hands until February 1945.

Even at the outset of the Battle of the Bulge, Hodges remained fixated on capturing the Roer dams. He even launched yet another push to capture them. But when it was realized that the German counteroffensive in the Ardennes threatened the entire Western Front, Bradley compelled Hodges to switch to a defensive position. From mid-December to January 31, 1945, the action in the Hürtgen Forest was limited to local patrolling.

On February 5, Maj. Gen. James M. Gavin's 82nd Airborne Division and the 78th Infantry Division launched an attack from the western edge of the Hürtgen Forest to capture the Urft and Schwammenauel Dams on the Roer River. The paratroopers were shocked at what they saw as they took up their position on the Kall Trail to protect engineers clearing mines. "Immobile tanks and trucks and the bodies of dead American soldiers were everywhere," said Lieutenant John Cobb of the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment. "The snow and cold had preserved the dead and they looked so life like it gave one a very eerie feeling."

Gavin established his command post in the Hürtgen Forest and saw firsthand the nightmarish conditions through which the Americans had suffered 33,000 casualties. "All along the sides of the trail there were many, many dead bodies, cadavers that had just emerged from the winter snow," wrote Gavin. "Their gangrenous, broken, and torn bodies were rigid and grotesque, some of them with arms skyward, seemingly in supplication." Such was the harvest of death in the Hürtgen Forest.

With orders to capture Kommerscheidt and Schmidt, the 82nd Airborne fought its way down the trail, across open terrain to Kommerscheidt, and continued on to Schmidt. The next step was to seize the two dams and prevent the Germans from flooding the area below the dams. The capture of the dams came several months too late, though, in some respects. "Had we secured them early in November [1944] and pushed across the Roer, the enemy would never have dared counterattack us in the Ardennes," wrote Bradley.

The belated task of capturing the Schwammenauel Dam was to be undertaken by troops from the 309th Infantry Regiment of the 78th Infantry Division. They approached the dam from the south while the 82nd Airborne Division put pressure on the enemy from its positions at Schmidt. Under German artillery and mortar fire on the night of February 9, American engineers and riflemen clambered atop the 170-foot-high dam to find it intact with no explosives attached. The Germans, however, had used another method to thwart the Americans. The American engineers soon discovered that the gate house, power room, and discharge valves controlling the flow of water from the dam had been thoroughly smashed. An immense of amount of water was already rushing downstream. Furthermore, the Germans had dynamited an outlet valve on the smaller upstream Urft Dam, which released additional water into the basin of the Schwammenauel reservoir. The Battle of the Hürtgen was over, but by flooding the Roer River the Germans delayed the Americans from crossing it for two weeks.

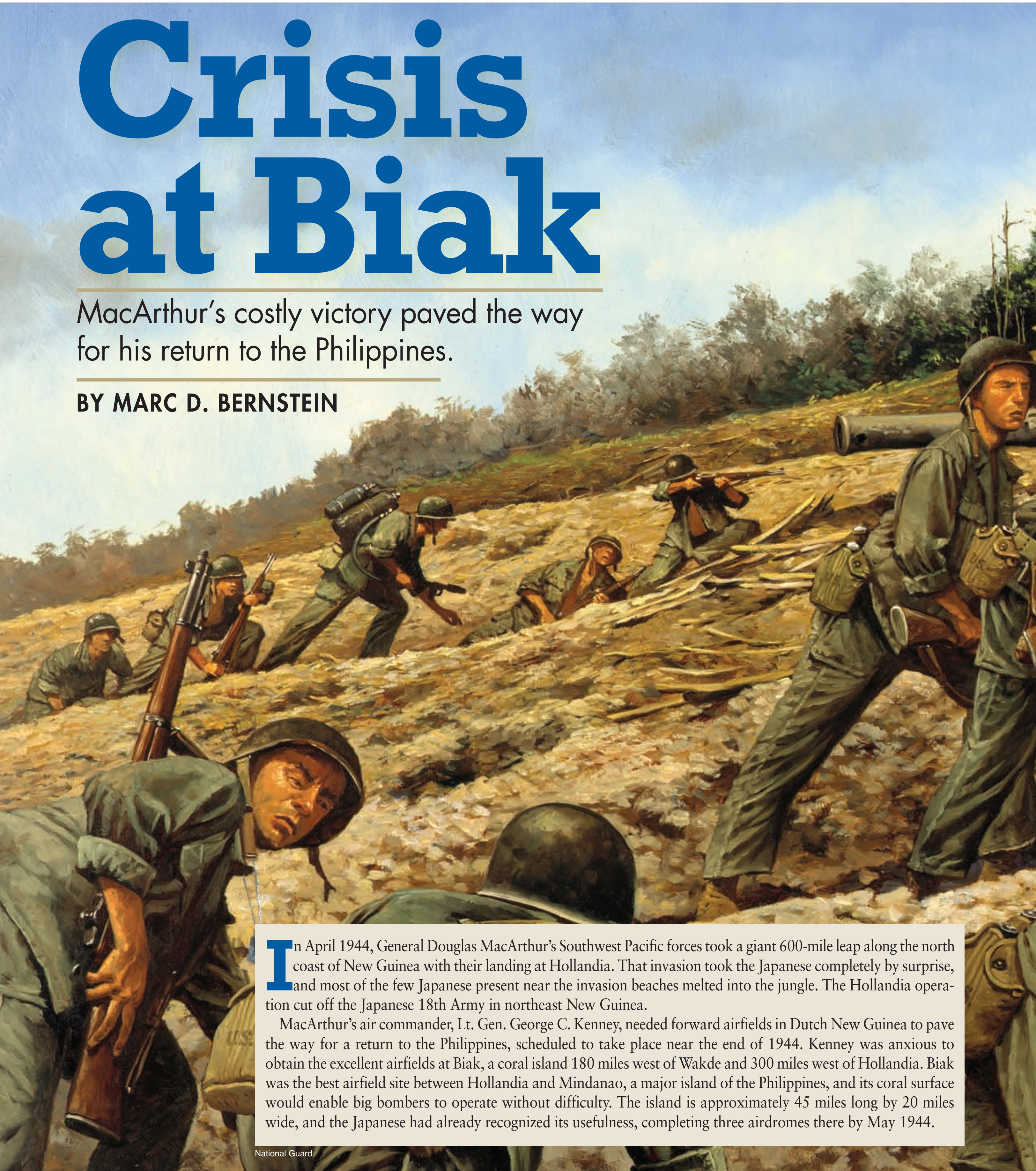
The Hürtgen Forest debacle was a costly one for the Americans in more ways than just failing to accomplish a timely capture of the two dams. From the beginning, the vague objectives assigned to the American divisions committed to the Hürtgen Forest resulted in heavy casualties not only in personnel but also in weapons and equipment. More than 8,000 First Army men suffered from combat exhaustion, and another 23,000 men were killed, wounded, missing, or captured. Multiple factors, including inclement weather, rough terrain, and enemy counterattacks, together with a corrosive command environment, combined to take a heavy toll on the American forces involved.

"In retrospect, it was a battle that should not have been fought," wrote Gavin. The battle for the Hürtgen Forest stands as one of the major mistakes of the war in Europe. On the whole, the Battle of the Hürtgen Forest produced heavy casualties for very little strategic benefit. □

Crisis at Biak

MacArthur's costly victory paved the way for his return to the Philippines.

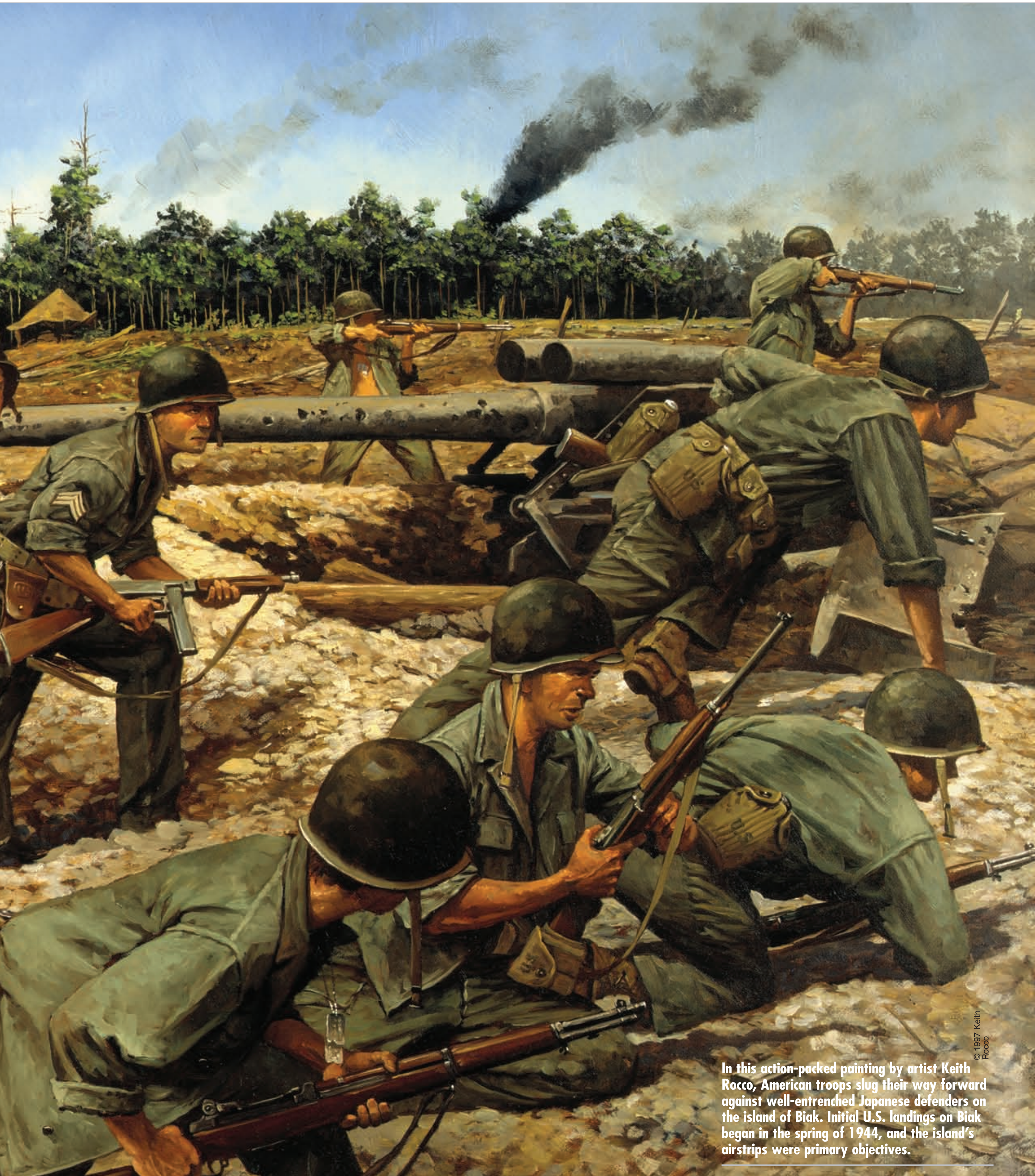
BY MARC D. BERNSTEIN



National Guard

In April 1944, General Douglas MacArthur's Southwest Pacific forces took a giant 600-mile leap along the north coast of New Guinea with their landing at Hollandia. That invasion took the Japanese completely by surprise, and most of the few Japanese present near the invasion beaches melted into the jungle. The Hollandia operation cut off the Japanese 18th Army in northeast New Guinea.

MacArthur's air commander, Lt. Gen. George C. Kenney, needed forward airfields in Dutch New Guinea to pave the way for a return to the Philippines, scheduled to take place near the end of 1944. Kenney was anxious to obtain the excellent airfields at Biak, a coral island 180 miles west of Wakde and 300 miles west of Hollandia. Biak was the best airfield site between Hollandia and Mindanao, a major island of the Philippines, and its coral surface would enable big bombers to operate without difficulty. The island is approximately 45 miles long by 20 miles wide, and the Japanese had already recognized its usefulness, completing three airdromes there by May 1944.



© 1997 Keith Rocco

In this action-packed painting by artist Keith Rocco, American troops slug their way forward against well-entrenched Japanese defenders on the island of Biak. Initial U.S. landings on Biak began in the spring of 1944, and the island's airstrips were primary objectives.

All photos: National Archives

ABOVE: Under covering fire from guns on a Landing Craft, Infantry (right), American infantrymen head for shore on a makeshift wharf, May 27, 1944. Some of the toughest fighting in the Pacific awaited them. RIGHT: Men of the 41st Infantry Division move inland on Biak, May 28, 1944. The American commander briefly considered using captured poison gas to flush the enemy out of their caves.

On April 28, B-24s of the 43rd and 90th Heavy Bombardment Groups, flying from Nadzab in eastern New Guinea, struck Mokmer airdrome on Biak in the first big daylight raid designed to soften up the island's defenses. This was followed by additional raids against the island by both the V and XIII Bomber Commands during May. These raids hit gun emplacements, supply concentrations, and airdromes, and Japanese aerial opposition over Biak, though fierce at first, faded away entirely after the first week of May.

The job of seizing Biak was given to the Hurricane Task Force, commanded by Maj. Gen. Horace H. Fuller. This task force initially would consist of the U.S. 162nd and 186th Regimental Combat Teams, with the 163rd RCT in reserve. These fighting units belonged to Fuller's 41st Infantry Division, which had never before fought as a full division, but rather as individual combat teams, as exemplified by the 163rd's capture of Wakde. Biak would be a test of Fuller's ability to coordinate operations of a large number of troops—the Hurricane Task Force totaled about 28,000 men, including service-and-support units not integral to the 41st Division. Z-day was to be May 27, 1944.

As task-force commander, Fuller reported directly to Lt. Gen. Walter Krueger, commander of the U.S. Sixth Army and Alamo Force, who in turn answered directly to MacArthur. Lieutenant General Robert L. Eichelberger, commanding the U.S. I Corps, remained at Hollandia and had no initial responsibility for Biak. MacArthur had pledged to support Admiral Chester W. Nimitz's Central Pacific forces' invasion of the Marianas from Biak's airfields. Nimitz's landing on Saipan was scheduled for June 15. This meant Fuller would be under intense pressure from Krueger and, indirectly, MacArthur, to complete the capture of Biak's airdromes as soon as possible. Inexplicably, however, Fuller failed to inform his regimental commanders of the need for speed.

All of the airdromes were located on Biak's south coast, so on paper the operation did not look particularly difficult. Krueger selected a landing site near the town of Bosnek, east of the airdromes. It appeared that Fuller's men could push along the coast road to seize the first field, Mokmer drome, without great trouble, thereby allowing engineers time to regrade and improve the field sufficiently to handle the B-24s needed to support Nimitz. But little was known about the true state of Japanese defenses on the island, since pre-invasion reconnaissance had been scanty. Fuller was unaware that he would be walking into a trap.

To the Japanese Imperial Navy, Biak was crucial. Its airdromes were needed to provide support for the Imperial Navy's grand design, Operation A-GO. That plan envisioned the Imperial Navy luring the U.S. Pacific Fleet into a decisive confrontation within range of Japanese land-based airpower. On May 11, Vice Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa, commanding the First Mobile Fleet at Tawitawi in the Philippines, was alerted for the imminent launch of A-GO.

The Imperial Army, on the other hand, had decided by May 1944 that Biak would be defended only as an outpost, no longer a part of its primary defense line in Dutch New Guinea. This meant that Biak would be held as long as possible, but sacrificed if necessary as part of a grand delaying action aimed at preventing MacArthur's return to the Philippines. Defending the island was the Army's Biak Detachment, under the command of Colonel Naoyuki Kuzume, plus naval troops. The Biak Detachment was built around the 222nd Regiment of the 36th Division, a crack unit with combat experience in China. By May 27, there were 12,350 Japanese personnel on Biak. But MacArthur's G-2 (inteligence officer), Brig. Gen. Charles A. Willoughby, estimated there were only 5,625. Willoughby assessed that Hurricane Task Force would encounter "stubborn, but not serious, enemy resistance" on Biak.

Unknown to Willoughby, Fuller, or Krueger, the defenders of Biak anticipated an Allied landing, and Kuzume had by late May erected a formidable defensive network on the island. As the 41st Division history recounts, Hurricane Task Force's principal area of operations would be "bounded by an almost unbroken ridge of … narrow, terraced coral reef, which in places rises to 330 feet on the ocean side and 160 feet on the landward side. The reef is cov-

ered with tall rain forests and frequently is made up of parallel ridges which serve as additional obstacles in terrain already quite difficult." Within this favorable topography, Kuzume established extensive cave networks that would provide more than adequate means of subjecting any American push down the coast road to a withering fire. If the Americans somehow reached Mokmer airdrome, Kuzume could render it unusable by directing heavy fire onto that as well, from positions located in caves just above the drome.

Fuller's landing force left Humboldt Bay (Hollandia) on May 25. Fuller hoped at least for tactical surprise, and to some extent he got it, even though Japanese reconnaissance aircraft sighted Rear Adm. William Fletcher's invasion fleet 24 hours before the actual landing.

The morning of May 27 broke bright and sunny as the first wave of Fuller's troops headed toward shore at 7:15, preceded and accompanied by a massive Allied air and naval bombardment. Three American light cruisers, *Phoenix*, *Boise*, and *Nashville*, fired a total of a thousand 6-inch rounds into the airdrome sector, while destroyers pounded the landing beaches near Bosnek. Fifteen LCIs (Landing Craft, Infantry) and 25 DUKWs (amphibious trucks) transported the first four waves of infantry. These vehicles had to negotiate a substantial offshore reef, and the pre-invasion bombardment left a pall of smoke over the beaches that obscured the selected landing points.

At 7:30, the 2nd Battalion, 186th Infantry was the first unit to hit the shore. It was supposed to land near Bosnek but, because of the current and bad visibility, the entire battalion landed in a mangrove swamp near Mandon, two miles west. The battalion nevertheless moved inland until it reached the coast road. It was soon joined by the 3rd Battalion of the 186th, and the two battalions reached their respective initial objectives by noon without difficulty. The 162nd Regiment, meanwhile, which had been assigned the task of taking Mokmer airdrome, landed to the east of the 186th and had to pass through its positions in order to take the lead down the coast road. At first, opposition was light, and by midmorning Hurricane Task Force's supporting artillery and Fuller's task-force headquarters were both ashore and in position at Bosnek.

The Japanese first offered organized resistance at the Parai Defile, about four miles west of Bosnek. From a vertical coral and limestone cliff, a small number of Japanese defenders were able to hold up the American advance for several hours, until tanks and naval gunfire succeeded in driving them out of their excellent defensive positions. By nightfall on Z-day, the 162nd's 3rd Battalion had established itself midway between Parai and Mokmer Village, well on the way to its objective of Mokmer airdrome. The 2nd Battalion held positions around Parai jetty, just to the east. The 186th RCT had expanded its beachhead around Bosnek and was probing the rough terrain north of the town, meeting limited resistance.

On the afternoon of Z-day, the first Japanese fighter aircraft appeared over the Bosnek beachhead. P-47s of the U.S. 342nd Fighter Squadron intercepted the raiders, shooting down five while losing one of their own. Between May 27 and June 3, the Japanese mounted 10 air raids against the beachhead but achieved negligible results. The Imperial Navy's air arm was slightly more successful operating against the ships offshore, strafing the LSTs (Landing Ships, Tank) unimpeded for over an hour on June 2 and badly damaging the U.S. destroyer *Kalk* on June 12. Contrasting with the limited air reaction, however, was the seaborne threat posed by the Imperial Navy.

On May 29, Imperial General Headquarters had approved the Combined Fleet's Biak reinforcement plan, code-named Operation KON. As part of that plan, the combined fFleet intended to "seek an opportunity for Operation [A-GO] by carrying out this operation and inducing the enemy task force to come out." The Japanese were now looking to fight their decisive naval battle off western New Guinea. The date for delivering reinforcements to Biak was June 3.

ABOVE: In one of the few tank-vs.-tank encounters during the Pacific War, a Japanese light tank smolders after being knocked out by an American Sherman tank. Although the Japanese tanks only mounted 37mm guns, they could still inflict serious casualties on troops in the open. OPPOSITE: A Sherman tank crests a ridge as members of Company A, 186th Infantry Regiment move forward in two columns behind it.

On May 31, Krueger's Sixth Army Intelligence Section stated flatly: "Enemy naval intervention at this stage of the [Biak] operations is *impossible*." But this assessment proved fundamentally incorrect. Willoughby knew from ULTRA intercepts that the Japanese were at least planning to move the Imperial Army's 2nd Amphibious Brigade from Davao in the Philippines to Biak.

ULTRA allowed U.S. Navy patrol aircraft operating from Wakde to anticipate the movements of the KON force, and the Japanese knew they had been discovered well before reaching Biak. Accordingly, Admiral Soemu Toyoda, commander-in-chief of the Combined Fleet, suspended the operation on June 3. But he reactivated KON the next evening. Opposing the renewed effort would be a small Allied force under Rear Adm. V.A. Crutchley, Royal Navy.

While the respective navies prepared to do battle, the situation on land was deteriorating rapidly for Fuller's Hurricane Task Force. On May 28, the 162nd Regiment advanced as far as Mokmer Village but was subjected to heavy mortar and machine-gun fire from the cliffs above. The Japanese launched a counterattack that pushed through to the coast, cutting off Lt. Col. Archie Roosevelt's 3rd Battalion and pinning down the 2nd farther east. The Japanese fire was devastating. Colonel Roosevelt (one of Teddy's sons) desperately reported by radio: "They're plastering hell out of us. One of my three tanks was knocked out by a lucky hit. The other two are out of gas. Send me ammunition, blood plasma, morphine and water. It's urgent!"

LVTs of the 2nd Engineer Special Brigade succeeded in getting supplies to Roosevelt and evacuating his wounded. The 3rd Battalion was forced to withdraw along the beach, but could do so only when a combination of air, naval, and ground artillery finally silenced a substantial number of Japanese weapons that had kept the Americans stymied most of the day. Fuller was so distressed over these developments that he radioed Krueger on the afternoon of May 28, requesting that he be reinforced immediately with the 163rd Regimental Combat Team and an additional engineer battalion. In the first two days of fighting on Biak, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 162nd had already suffered casualties of 12 percent of their engaged troops.

The next day Kuzume launched three independent counterattacks against the 162nd using nine tanks in support of the infantry. This was the first time MacArthur's troops had encountered Japanese armor after two years of fighting in New Guinea. But the Japanese tanks were no match for the American Shermans, which knocked them out with the support of naval gunfire and aerial bombardment. The Japanese did succeed in cutting off some forward American troops, but a determined counterattack by two companies of the 162nd dislodged the Japanese, and by the end of the day the 162nd alone had killed 400 more enemy troops.

Fuller had by then learned, however, that he could not expect to seize Mokmer airdrome by simply pushing down the coast road. He also needed to occupy the high ground to the north, which would require sending a force over the ridges at a point well east of the fortified Japanese positions near Mokmer. In preparation for launching such a concerted effort, the entire 162nd Regiment pulled back toward Mandon, covered by a platoon of tank destroyers. Fuller awaited the arrival of the 163rd RCT before resuming the attack.

On June 1, the 163rd arrived at Biak and assumed the defense of the Bosnek beachhead, freeing the 186th Regiment to advance over the ridges north of the town. On June 2 the 186th turned westward, moving across the inland plateau with the objective of coming in behind the Japanese overlooking Mokmer airdrome. Lack of water proved to be a problem, with the 186th's troops "limited to three canteens per man for the four-day advance in stifling heat." All supplies to the 186th's units advancing inland had to be hand-carried over the ridges with considerable difficulty. Owing to the terrain and heat, the regiment made slow progress, though enemy resistance was light.

Krueger had sent observers from his staff to Biak as soon as Fuller ran into trouble. These observers noted a variety of deficiencies, most importantly the fact that American reconnaissance was so poor the troops did not know exactly where the Japanese were located. Additionally, "so few members of the task force staff had visited the front lines that General Fuller could not possibly have obtained complete and accurate information concerning the fighting." In early June, Krueger considered relieving

Fuller and replacing him with Eichelberger, but deferred that decision for nearly two weeks.

Meanwhile, on June 2, a company of the 163rd had seized Owi Island, two miles off the south shore of Biak, to be utilized as an alternative to Biak. Engineers began work at Owi on June 7, and the first planes landed there on June 17. But Owi soldiers suffered an outbreak of scrub typhus, which soon spread to Biak and caused serious illness in a large number of Hurricane Task Force troops.

As the 186th Regiment, plus the 2nd Battalion of the 162nd, made its laborious drive westward across Biak's inland plateau, the rest of the 162nd began another advance down the coast road toward the airdromes. Fuller was now using regiments in the way he initially had envisioned using battalions. Once again, the 162nd's progress was blocked by strong Japanese resistance at the Parai Defile, where the cliffs come within 50 yards of the coastline. On June 3, Roosevelt's 3rd Battalion of the 162nd was forced to withdraw again on account of intense enemy fire, and all efforts over the next three days to force an advance through the defile failed. Finally, on June 7, the engineers, using amphibious craft, carried elements of the 3rd Battalion around to Parai jetty. The Parai Defile was not cleared of Japanese until June 12.

The 186th had been able to advance 3,500 yards on June 3 against only occasional sniper fire, but owing to thick growth that reached 12 feet high the troops' visibility was limited to about 10 yards. The 186th spent several days reconnoitering the trails leading over the ridges toward Mokmer airdrome. Fuller was by this time under ever-greater pressure from Krueger to capture Mokmer drome as soon as possible. He ordered Colonel Oliver P. Newman, commanding the 186th, to send his troops directly over the ridges and onto the airfield from the north, despite the fact that this move would expose Newman's men to enfilading fire from the Japanese, who still held positions along the ridges overlooking Mokmer airdrome.

"We are going to catch hell," Newman remarked, as he objected to Fuller's order and was supported in his objection by Fuller's Assistant Division Commander, Brig. Gen. Jens Doe. Fuller overruled the objections, and the 186th crossed the ridges and occupied the airfield on June 7. Indeed, Kuzume's men poured heavy automatic fire down on the unfortunate Americans for four hours before counterbattery fire finally silenced many of the Japanese guns. They were determined to recapture the airdrome and probed the American positions after dark, even utilizing trained dogs.

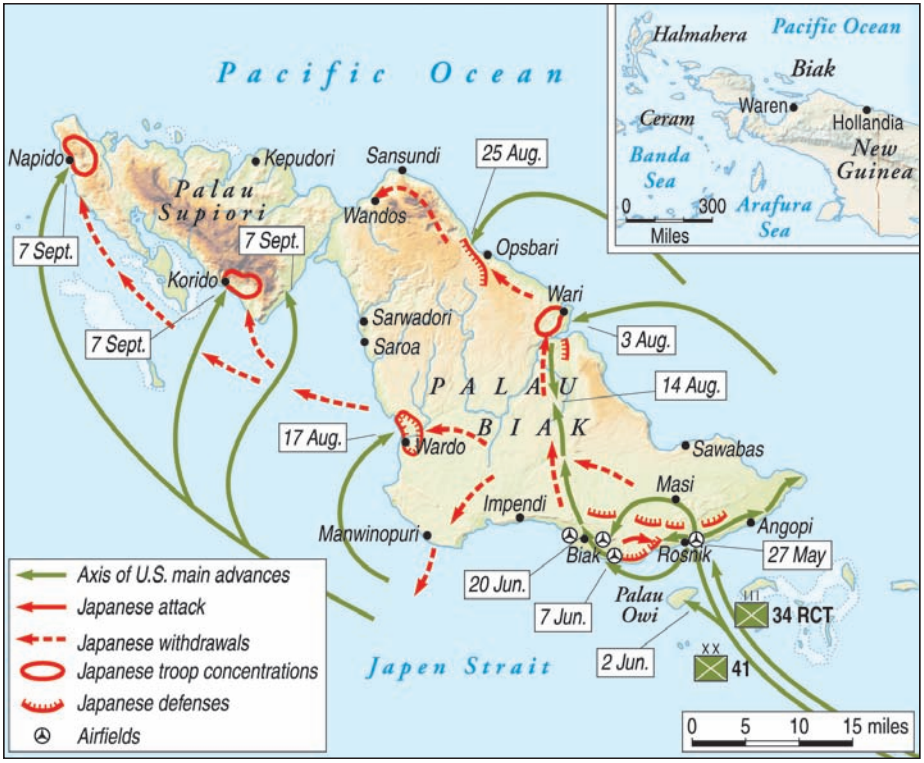
By this time, Kuzume's defenses were split into three widely separated strongholds. North of Bosnek he had his headquarters plus one battalion of the 222nd Regiment. The East Cave sector between that position and Mokmer was held by elements of two battalions and service units. In the very strongly held West Cave sector (also known as The Sumps), Kuzume had most of one battalion plus airfield construction units, other service troops, and naval troops.

At Mokmer airdrome Kuzume's hand was forced on June 9 by Lt. Gen. Takazo Numata, chief of staff of 2nd Area Army, who was trapped on Biak during an inspection visit May 27 and was therefore the ranking Japanese officer on the island. Despite generally leaving operational matters to Kuzume, Numata insisted on using all available units to retake the airfield, and assumed personal command of the troops in the West Cave sector.

Shortly before dawn on June 9, the 2nd Battalion of the 222nd attacked and eventually fought halfway across the airstrip before being stopped by American fire. A company of naval troops succeeded in infiltrating completely across the airstrip, reaching the coast in the American rear, but could not maintain this position and had to withdraw west of the airfield. The Japanese continued to pummel Newman's troops with heavy fire from the heights, but Numata's major counterattack to retake Mokmer airdrome failed. Numata himself left the West Cave position on the evening of June 10 to return to 2nd Area Army Headquarters at Menado in the Celebes, leaving Kuzume in charge once again.

While the 186th suffered its ordeal at the airdrome, the 162nd continued its operations to reduce enemy positions in the Parai Defile. By June 10, a linkage was established between the 186th's position at the airdrome and the 162nd's units to the east. U.S. Army construction engineers arrived at Mokmer drome on the night of June 9 to improve the runway, but found themselves under constant fire from above, and on June 14 they suspended all work on the airstrip until combat conditions allowed a resumption of activity on June 20.

Map © 2021 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



ABOVE: By attacking at numerous beachheads around Biak from May 27 to July 25, 1944, when Biak was declared secure, U.S. forces finally overcame defenders holed up in a labyrinth of caves. OPPOSITE: After retreating from a barrage of Japanese hand grenades, American combat engineers return to the mouth of a fortified Japanese cave on Biak. Often the engineers used satchel charges to seal the entrances to the many caves on the island, trapping the enemy occupants inside.

At sea, the Japanese continued to threaten Admiral Crutchley's small Biak covering force until June 13. Crutchley had only three cruisers and 14 destroyers at his disposal and could expect no reinforcement. But the second attempt at executing KON, under the direction of Rear Adm. Naomasa Sakonju, ran into difficulty on June 8 when his barge-towing destroyers were spotted off the Vogelkop Peninsula of Dutch New Guinea by 10 B-25s of the U.S. 17th Reconnaissance Squadron. In the encounter, three B-25s were shot down and the remainder badly damaged, but the destroyer *Harusame* was sunk and three more Japanese destroyers were damaged. Nevertheless, the reinforcement convoy continued toward Biak. Crutchley was alerted and moved to intercept the Japanese on the night of June 8. He later described the engagement:

"The destroyers were moving out and the cruisers about to deploy when the range of the enemy from my flagship was 21,500 yards and I had every hope of bringing a simultaneous blow to bear. From that moment, the enemy turned and fled at 32 knots and all that could be done was a stern chase by the two most advanced divisions of our destroyers. It was a bitter disappointment."

A small number of Japanese troops managed to land at Korim Bay on the east coast of Biak. Most of the troops in the convoy, however, returned with the destroyers to their base at Sorong on the Vogelkop Peninsula. A third attempt at KON was quickly planned but two days later was canceled, and the Imperial Navy's Biak reinforcement attempts ended forever when its attention was diverted to events in the Central Pacific.

Kuzume, however, did receive a trickle of Army reinforcements into Biak, beginning the first week of June. These troops arrived by barge and small craft from Vogelkop and Noemfoor Island. Kuzume made good use of them, but their numbers were too small to affect the battle's eventual outcome. The most he could hope to achieve was delay, not defeat, of the Hurricane Task Force. In this he was successful.

Fuller was increasingly feeling the pressure. He came up with a plan to sweep the Japanese from their ridge positions above Mokmer airdrome while simultaneously moving on the two airdromes west of Mokmer. Unfortunately, this plan was too ambitious to complete during the second week of June.

Subsequently, MacArthur fired off a radio message to Krueger on June 14: "The situation at Biak is unsatisfactory." That finally forced Krueger to take decisive action, and he summoned Robert Eichelberger from Hollandia to take charge of the Hurricane Task Force. Krueger envisioned that Eichelberger would now hold the top command at Biak but that Fuller would continue to serve as 41st Division commander. Fuller, however, had had enough, and demanded immediate relief from all his responsibilities and transfer out of MacArthur's theater. He vowed never to serve under Krueger in any capacity again, upset over Krueger's aggressive questioning of his intentions during nearly three weeks of operations on Biak. MacArthur granted Fuller's request, and the relieved Hurricane Task Force commander ended the war as deputy chief of staff in Admiral Mountbatten's South East Asia Command.

Eichelberger arrived at Biak the morning of June 15, "in a foul mood. He was irked at Krueger for sending him to such a tough command on such short notice." As Eichelberger began to sort out the situation, he realized that a short suspension of offensive operations was necessary to locate the enemy's positions with accuracy. He undertook a dangerous personal reconnaissance of the front lines and "ordered a day of rest and reorganization [June 18] so everybody could find out what they were doing. I then placed one battalion on the Japanese left rear, and two battalions to cut across their rear from the right. This attack took place on Monday [June 19] and it broke their backs."

Most of the 186th Regiment attacked the West Cave position from the northwest, while one of its battalions attacked from the east and the 162nd engaged in a holding attack in front of the caves. The arrival on Biak of the 34th Infantry Regimental Combat Team from the U.S. 24th Division on June 18 also enabled

Eichelberger to execute Fuller's plan of seizing Borokoe and Sorido airdromes west of Mokmer. Eichelberger's operations' officers repeatedly flew over the Japanese positions at low altitude in unarmed observation planes to locate the enemy's cave entrances. The caves proved too deep for the effective use of flamethrowers, so Eichelberger's men placed dynamite charges in them to kill the occupants with concussion.

The West Cave position had become the linchpin of Biak's defenses, especially since Kuzume had by now moved his headquarters there from the Bosnek sector. With the end near, Kuzume burned the 222nd Regiment's colors in a ceremony in the caves on the night of June 21. He was later killed in action. Rations and water were exhausted, so the West Caves were finally abandoned on June 22. Five days later, American troops entered the cave complex and "discovered a chamber of horrors full of decomposed and fried bodies or their various components, and even a butcher shop for cannibalistic purposes."

With the reduction of the Japanese cave positions above Mokmer airdrome, the airstrip finally became usable, and P-40s and B-24s began operating from Mokmer on June 22. The 34th RCT took Borokoe and Sorido airdromes without difficulty. But all of this was too late for MacArthur to meet his obligation to Nimitz of supporting the Marianas operation from fields on Biak. Fortunately, such support didn't prove necessary.

On June 25, Eichelberger notified Krueger that his mission on Biak was accomplished. The plan successfully executed by Eichelberger didn't differ greatly from Fuller's, but Eichelberger's forceful combat leadership and solution for the operational difficulties on the island proved decisive. Fuller was a worn-out commander and needed to be replaced.

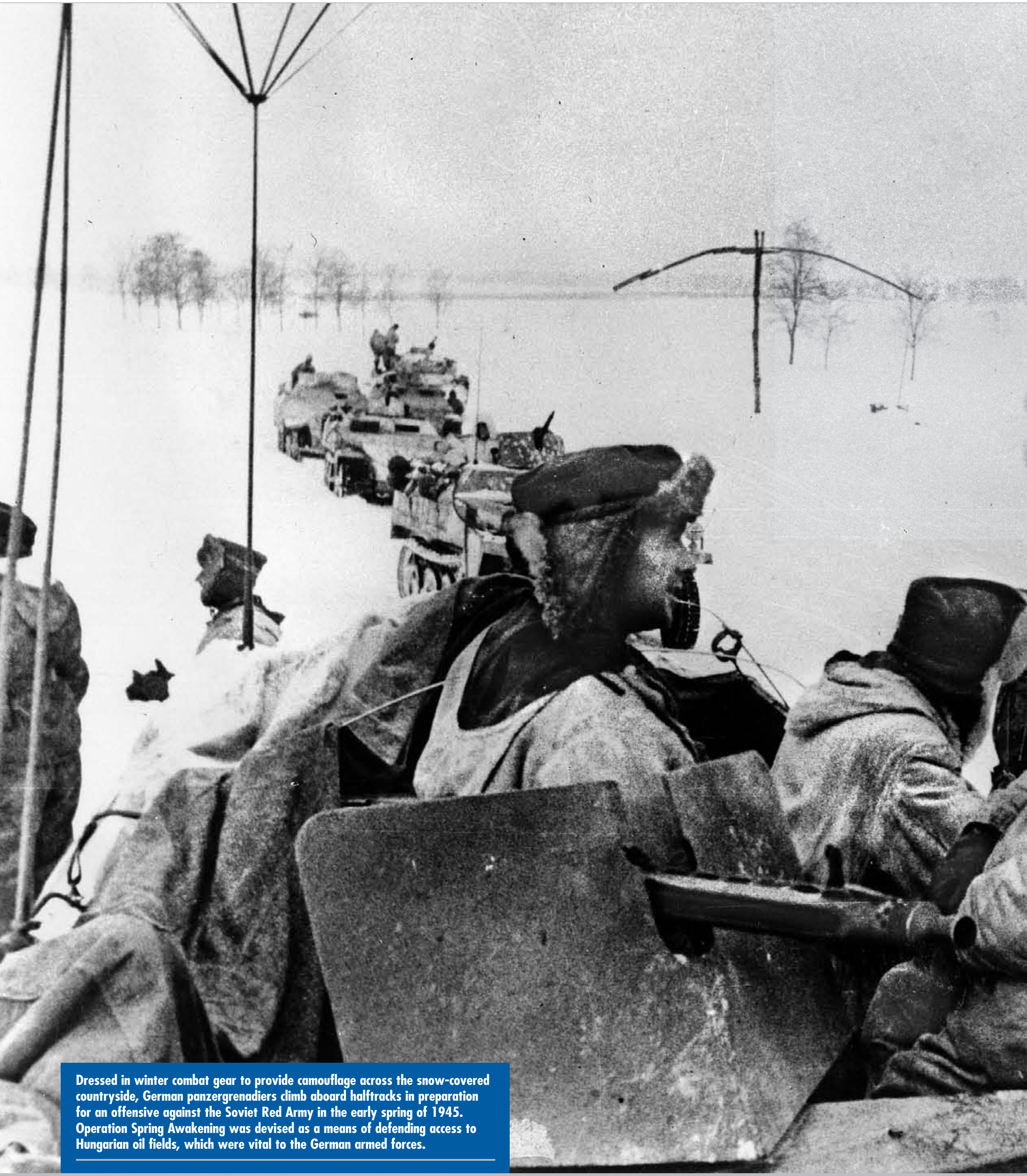
Resistance in the East Cave sector and in the Ibdi Pocket between Bosnek and Mokmer continued for some time after the fall of the West Caves, but by the beginning of July the battle had entered the mopping-up stage.

Looking back, Biak ranks as the most frustrating operation undertaken by MacArthur's troops during the last two and a half years of the war. Eichelberger was called upon to correct a confused situation, much as he had been at Buna in 1942–1943, and he succeeded admirably. But after the easy success of Hollandia in April, the fierceness of Japanese resistance at Biak came as something of a shock to MacArthur's troops.

Krueger officially declared the Biak operation terminated on August 20, though patrolling on Biak and neighboring Soepiori Island continued thereafter. American casualties through August 1944 totaled 530 killed, 2,570 wounded, and 54 missing. More than 6,000 additional American troops became casualties from scrub typhus and other diseases. As of the end of August, 4,970 Japanese had been killed and 319 captured.

In the end, Biak was a victory for the Americans. But the battle there proved an ominous portent. It foretold the kind of cave-based devastating defensive tactics the Japanese would use at Peleliu and Iwo Jima. Moreover, MacArthur's forces could expect their return to the Philippines to be opposed with a similar, grim determination.

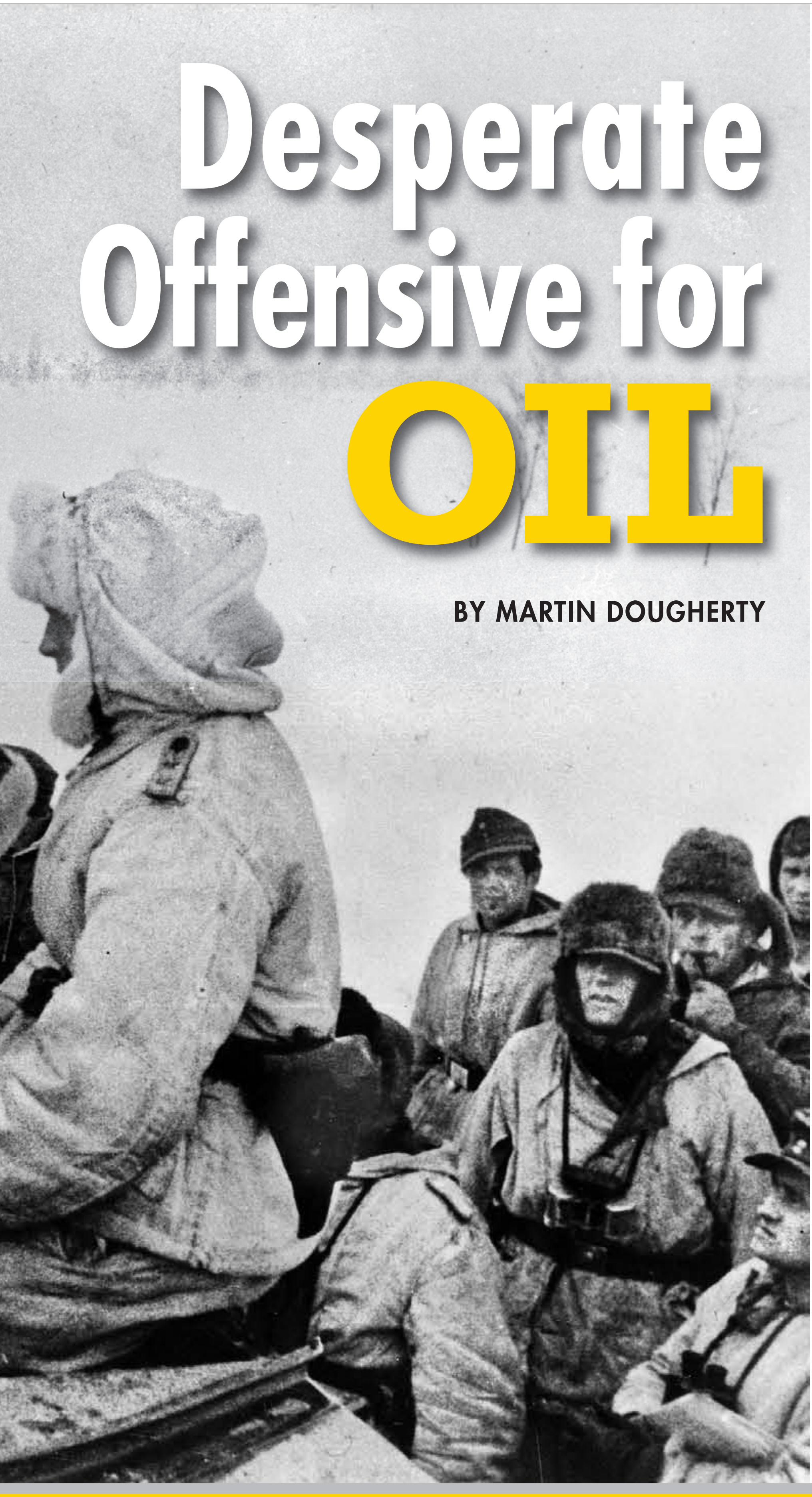
Marc D. Bernstein is the author of Hurricane at Biak: MacArthur Against the Japanese, May-August 1944. *He has written for a variety of military history periodicals concerning World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.*



Dressed in winter combat gear to provide camouflage across the snow-covered countryside, German panzergrenadiers climb aboard halftracks in preparation for an offensive against the Soviet Red Army in the early spring of 1945. Operation Spring Awakening was devised as a means of defending access to Hungarian oil fields, which were vital to the German armed forces.

Desperate Offensive for OIL

BY MARTIN DOUGHERTY



The German military launched Operation Spring Awakening in 1945 to preserve access to oil fields in Hungary, but the Red Army responded decisively.

The winter of 1944-45 saw Nazi Germany in a grim position. The Allies were well established in Europe and advancing quickly. Their main obstacle was logistics; to maintain the offensive, huge quantities of troops and supplies had to be brought up. This required control of deep-water ports as close to the front as possible. The capture of Antwerp, Belgium, gave the Allies what they needed, though it was not until November 1944 that it became operational. With supplies flowing in every day, Axis commanders could only wait for the inevitable large-scale assault. It would come when the Allies were ready and would fall where they chose.

The German defenses of the Siegfried Line, established in the 1930s, were theoretically formidable but were designed with 1930s weapons and tactics in mind. Equipment had been removed for use elsewhere, and parts of the fortifications were in disrepair. An urgent project, beginning in August 1944, was undertaken to reactivate the defenses, but it was clear the "Westwall" was not the impenetrable obstacle Hitler had hoped it would be. He had triumphantly declared himself the greatest fortress builder of all time upon the completion of the Siegfried Line, but now it was manned with semi-invalids such as the "stomach" and "leg" battalions.

With passive defense certain to bring eventual defeat, the only option was to take the offensive. The Axis plan was over-ambitious, but while a more limited offensive might bring about a local victory, it could not alter the strategic balance. Thus, the Nazi offensive in the Ardennes region would be an all-or-nothing affair. If German forces could smash through the lightly held Ardennes and advance as far as Antwerp, Allied logistics would be thrown into chaos.

Exactly what the Axis leadership thought would be achieved is open to debate. So long as the war was not completely lost, there might be a chance for a negotiated peace, a falling-out between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union, or the deployment of some new weapon that could alter the course of the war. Perhaps strategic thinking came down to nothing more than the choice between accepting defeat and trying to win—no matter how slim the chances. Those who argued for a more limited offensive were brushed aside. Antwerp must be taken; any lesser outcome was meaningless in the long run.

The offensive was launched on December 16, 1944. It had the advantage of surprise, but few others. Short of fuel, the armoured spearhead would have to capture sufficient supplies to continue. Air support and even reconnaissance were extremely limited. Despite significant successes, the advance eventually stalled, and attempts to get it moving again were unsuccessful.

Having failed to achieve their strategic objective in the West, the Axis forces withdrew. Some went into defensive positions along the Siegfried Line while the best formations were sent east in response to a new Soviet offensive.

The Ardennes Offensive was a disaster for the German forces. Large numbers of tanks and armoured vehicles were lost, many of them abandoned after running out of fuel. There would be no further large-scale Axis operations in the West, but fuel was the motivation for their final offensive of the war—Operation Spring Awakening.

The situation in the East was equally disastrous. The Red Army made rapid gains throughout the summer of 1944, destroying some Axis formations and forcing others into a hasty retreat to avoid encirclement. A successful offensive in Romania during August 1944 inflicted further losses on Axis forces and triggered Romania's defection to the Allies. This deprived Germany of its main source of oil. All that remained was located in southern Hungary, and its loss would leave only the operational synthetic-oil production sites, which were high-priority targets for Allied air attacks.

National Archives

The Hungarian capital of Budapest fell to the Red Army on January 12, 1945, and increased the vulnerability of oil fields that were vital to the German war effort. In this photo, Soviet soldiers advance cautiously on the outskirts of Budapest as black smoke from a recent explosion billows near their position.

The Soviet offensives made huge gains but ultimately ground to a halt. Logistics, as always, was a factor, and there may also have been political considerations. It is probable that the Soviets chose to slow down their advance when they received word of the Warsaw Uprising. If so, this was a cynical gambit which granted the German occupation forces time to put down the uprising before the Red Army drove them out. Rather than arriving at a self-liberated national capital the Soviets took possession of occupied territory, with grave implications for the future of Poland.

After the advances of the summer, the Red Army had paused to regroup and build up for a renewed offensive in the winter. This may have been a factor in the German decision to launch the Ardennes Offensive. Operating on interior lines of communication, it might be possible to lunge against one threat then the other, buying time for the transfer of forces with victories in the field.

The Soviet offensive opened on January 12, 1945, a little earlier than originally planned. The extent of the German commitment in the Ardennes offered a window of opportunity that Soviet commanders were keen to exploit. The operation was highly successful, with some Axis formations effectively destroyed and others forced into precipitate retreat. By the end of the month, the Red Army had reached the River Oder with no significant resistance between its lead elements and the Nazi capital of Berlin.

A halt to reorganize was again necessary, and with significant German forces active in Pomerania, the northern flank of the Red Army advance was exposed. Further movement was not possible for nearly two months, giving Axis forces a chance to transfer reserves for the coming Battle of Berlin. This was one reason for the termination of the Ardennes Offensive—the only available troops had to be first pulled out of action on the Western front.

Despite the obvious threat to Berlin and strong arguments for a concentration of forces to counter it, access to fuel was the more pressing strategic concern. Plans to defend the capital were put into practice, focusing on a defensive line at the Seelow Heights, and measures undertaken to flood low-lying areas.

It was logical that the best mobile and armored forces should be sent to assist in this defense, but instead they were deployed elsewhere. An attack on the Hungarian oilfields would spell the end of the German war effort, whether or not Berlin was captured. Thus, Operation Spring Awakening was conceived: a bold counteroffensive to protect the vital oil supplies.

In addition to the large gains made in the north, Soviet forces pushed toward Hungary in late 1944. By December, the Red Army had reached the River Danube, which presented a significant obstacle. A German counterattack prevented an immediate crossing, buying time to set up defensive lines from Budapest to Lake Balaton. These were collectively known as the Margarethe Positions.

The Soviet 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian Fronts were tasked with taking Budapest. (A Front in Soviet parlance was the equivalent of a German Army Group.) This force succeeded in estab-

A column of Waffen SS soldiers slogs through snow during the Operation Spring Awakening advance in Hungary. The German offensive was hampered by snow, rain, and deep mud, which bogged down tanks and other vehicles, requiring foot soldiers to undertake much of the fighting with limited mechanized support.

lishing a bridgehead across the Danube at Gran and besieged Budapest, which fell on February 12, 1945. This opened the way for an offensive toward Vienna and the Hungarian oil-producing region around Nagykanizsa. German senior commanders hoped that Spring Awakening would prevent this by destroying the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian Fronts while liberating Budapest in the process.

The area chosen for Operation Spring Awakening was the responsibility of Army Group South, under the command of General Otto Wohler. Army Group South had previously been designated Army Group South Ukraine, changing designation in September 1944. Wohler took command in December 1944, gaining control over a mix of German and Hungarian army units. Many of these had suffered heavy casualties in the previous fighting, and the force as a whole was not up to the requirements of the coming offensive.

The lead role in the Spring Awakening counteroffensive was given to 6th Panzer Army, under the command of Oberstgruppenfurher Joseph "Sepp" Dietrich. Originally created as a regular army formation, 6th Panzer Army was composed largely of SS units, but even these contained a great many regular army personnel. The force as a whole was finally transferred to the Waffen SS at the beginning of April 1945, but is generally recorded as being an SS formation due to the presence of major Waffen SS units and an SS commanding officer.

Sixth Panzer Army was pulled out of the Western theater and hurriedly refitted with a target finish date of January 30. It was not possible to bring the depleted formations back up to full strength in the time available, but every effort was made. Tanks and armored vehicles were delivered as they came off the production lines—echoing the desperate defense of Soviet cities earlier in the war—and were available in sufficient numbers to bring the panzer units more or less up to strength.

Personnel were scraped together from wherever they could be found—rear-echelon formations, wounded who had recovered sufficiently, and drafts "borrowed" from the navy and air force. Integrating these with the elite veterans of the existing force should have taken considerable time, but time was not available. The result was a force that looked formidable but might have serious flaws.

The move to the jumping-off points for Operation Spring Awakening was covered by a comprehensive deception operation that played to the Allies' expectations. Some elements of the army, including heavy tanks, were initially moved in the direction of the defenses along the Oder. All units were given cover names, identifying them as formations unlikely to be associated with a major offensive. To prevent the deception being revealed, identifying marks were removed or covered.

The redeployment, though rapid, would take time, so preliminary operations were launched with local forces. These were intended to remove obstacles and lay the foundations for the coming offensive. In particular, it was necessary to counter the threat to Vienna and gain control of Budapest. To this end, the offensive would take the form of a two-pronged attack toward Budapest, cutting off Soviet forces in a repeat of the successful "kesselschlacht," or battle of encirclement, of earlier campaigns.

The preliminary offensive thrusts were launched on January 18, 1945, and were initially successful. In the northern sector, rapid advances were made against relatively light opposition. This offensive reached a point about 10 kilometers from Budapest before being halted. In the southern sector, similar gains were made, and large Soviet forces were threatened with encirclement. The high point of the operation was January 26, after which Soviet counterattacks retook the lost ground.

On February 13, another offensive was mounted, this time aimed at eliminating the threat to Vienna. The I Panzer Corps was in position in time to participate in the attack, which was highly successful. Over the course of eight days the offensive cleared the threat and inflicted heavy casualties. This ensured the safety of Vienna, which was both politically and industrially important, but it revealed to the Soviets the presence of I Panzer Corps.

Allied intelligence services worked hard to keep track of major formations, and the implications of moving an elite force to Hungary were unlikely to be missed. Thus, the Soviets had some warning that a major offensive was likely and also now knew that the corps was not positioned to defend Berlin. A better approach would have been to keep I Panzer Corps out of this operation, concealing wider intentions and providing additional time for training.

Operation Spring Awakening was to be a pincer attack. The primary force, forming the northern arm of the pincer, was 6th Panzer Army supported by III Panzer Corps. This was part of 6th Army, which was under the command of General der Panzertruppe Hermann Balck and thus sometimes designated Armeegruppe Balck. The remainder of Balck's force was positioned to secure the flank of the operation and provide reinforcements. The southern arm of the pincer was to be 2nd Panzer Army, which despite its name contained only a small proportion of armored units.

Second Panzer Army was not well suited to the task before it, as the majority of armored vehicles available to its formations were assault guns. These had proven effective in the right circumstances and were much easier to produce than tanks, but they were limited on the offensive or in fluid combat. Success or failure very much rested with 6th Panzer Army.

At this time the 6th Panzer Army was organized as two corps. The I SS Panzer Corps contained 1st SS Panzer Division Leibstandarte and 12th SS Panzer Division Hitlerjugend; II SS Panzer Corps contained 2nd SS Panzer Division Das Reich and 9th SS Panzer Division Hohenstaufen. It was to be reinforced by I Cavalry Corps, containing the 3rd and 4th Cavalry Divisions. While described as cavalry, these were essentially mounted infantry units.

Various experiments during the war with mounted troops had produced mixed results, but on the Eastern front they had proven surprisingly effective. The cavalry formations were repeatedly reorganized and redefined, and sometimes misused by commanders who did not understand their particular style of warfare. Nevertheless, they made a valuable contribution to the defensive fighting in 1944 and participated in the attempt to relieve Budapest in the early weeks of 1945.

The two cavalry divisions had been defined as brigades until recently. Each comprised two regiments with some supporting troops. Both were redefined as divisions without receiving any significant reinforcement, largely to place their commanders on an equal level to infantry and armored officers. Thus, 6th Panzer Army nominally had six divisions, but two of these were more properly mounted infantry brigades.

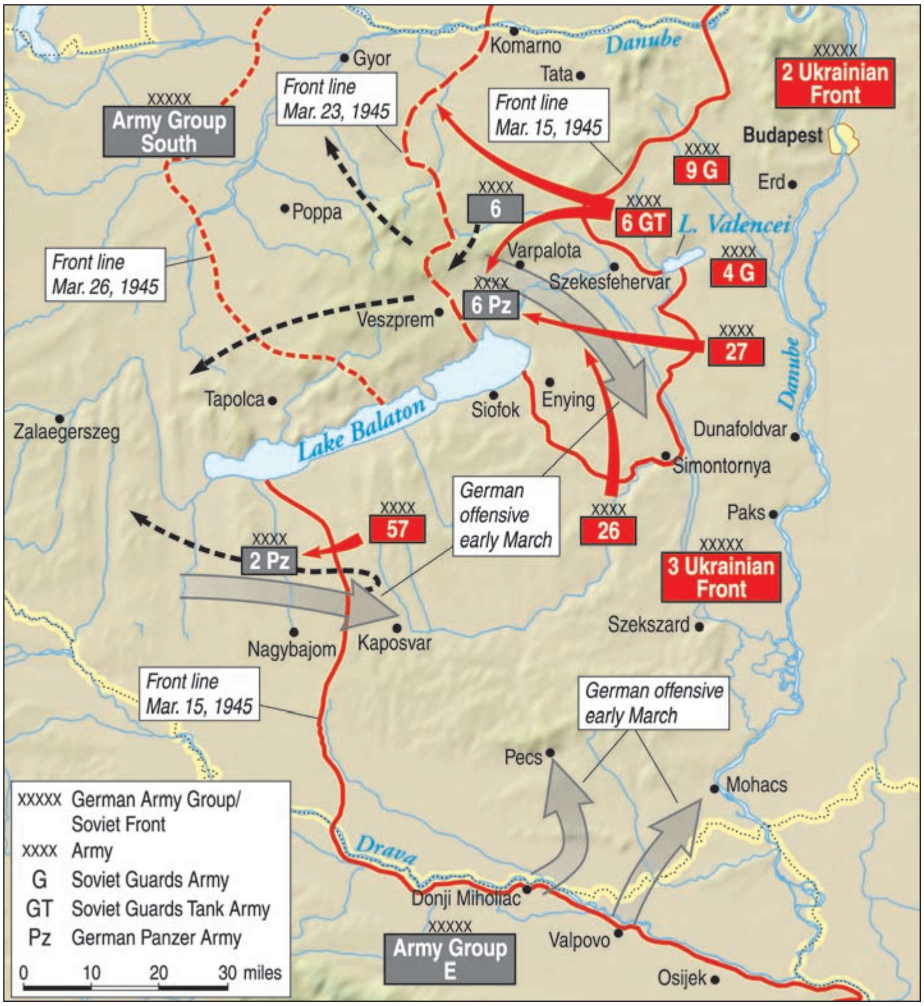
The I Panzer Corps was to launch the opening movement of the offensive toward Dunafoldfar from a point near Lake Balaton, with II Panzer Corps on its left and the cavalry to the right. The 23rd Panzer Division, under Generalleutnant Joseph von Radowitz, stood in reserve. Meanwhile, III Panzer Corps was to drive toward Lake Valence. Its flank was to be secured by IV Panzer Corps, which was badly depleted from the earlier operations in the region.

In addition to the main pincer movement, an advance by Army Group E was to push across the River Drau from the south. Army Group E was not an armored formation, instead containing a mix of mountain troops and 11th Luftwaffe Field Division. The only armored unit was the heavily depleted 1st Panzer Division, which had suffered severe casualties acting as a response force in one crisis after another.

The Soviet commanders were aware that an offensive was being prepared and could predict its likely goals. They were planning their own offensive for mid-March with the intent of capturing Vienna. Four armies were allocated to this endeavor under the command of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian Fronts. Planning and preparations for the offensive went ahead, but a significant proportion of the available forces was reallocated to opposing the coming Axis attack.

It was apparent that the main German thrust was to be around the northern side of Lake Bal-

Map © 2021 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN


Komarno
Danube
Tata
XXXXX
2 Ukrainian Front
Gyor
Front line Mar. 23, 1945
Front line Mar. 15, 1945
XXXXX
Army Group South
Budapest
XXXX
9 G
Erd
XXXX
6
XXXX
6 GT
L. Valencei
Poppa
Varpalota
XXXX
4 G
Front line Mar. 26, 1945
XXXX
6 Pz
Szekesfehervar
Veszprem
XXXX
27
Danube
Tapolca
Siofok
Enying
Zalaegerszeg
Lake Balaton
Dunafoldvar
Simontornya
German offensive early March
XXXX
57
XXXX
26
Paks
XXXX
2 Pz
XXXXX
3 Ukrainian Front
Szekszard
Nagybajom
Kaposvar
Front line Mar. 15, 1945
German offensive early March
Pecs
Mohacs
XXXXX German Army Group/ Soviet Front
XXXX Army
G Soviet Guards Army
GT Soviet Guards Tank Army
Pz German Panzer Army
0 10 20 30 miles
Drava
Donji Miholjac
XXXXX
Army Group E
Valpovo
Osijek

The German plan for Operation Spring Awakening envisioned an offensive that would annihilate two Soviet fronts, or army groups, and possibly recapture the Hungarian capital of Budapest.

National Archives

Manning a 75mm anti-tank gun, soldiers of the Waffen SS lie in ambush as they await advancing Soviet tanks and armored vehicles.

aton and would therefore be opposed by the 3rd Ukrainian Front. This highly experienced formation had participated in offensives from the Ukraine to Romania and the Balkans and had resisted the German drive on Budapest in January. Under the command of Marshal Fyodor Tolbukhin, the Front was assigned three of the four available armies. Two were assigned the task of halting the German offensive, with one more in reserve.

The remainder of the available forces were assigned to the 2nd Ukrainian Front under the command of Marshal Rodion Malinovsky. If necessary, Malinovsky's force could act as a final reserve to stop a thrust that somehow broke through the main defense line and the reserve army, but in the meantime, preparations for the Vienna offensive continued.

Facing the initial thrust were some seven infantry divisions, well-equipped with anti-tank guns and entrenched behind minefields. These were backed by a mobile reserve of tanks and self-propelled artillery. Although effective in mobile warfare, a large proportion of Tolbukhin's armored forces were placed in defensive dispositions. Each armored brigade was to be the primary defense for a sector, with tanks and self-propelled artillery dug in to act as pillboxes. The Front's motorized infantry component was broken down into battalions and assigned to support the armored brigades. The overall pattern was of combined-arms strongpoints capable of supporting one another, creating a defensive zone up to 30 kilometers deep in places.

Tank destroyers were positioned behind the front lines of strongpoints, but were also assigned advanced positions for use when necessary. Thus, as an armored attack developed, the tank destroyers advanced to their previously prepared positions and then fell back as the enemy closed. This played to the strengths of the tank destroyers without exposing them to fluid, close-range action, where turreted vehicles had the advantage.

These dispositions created a killing ground, which was made even more lethal by the creation of ambushes. Using decoys to attract the attention of enemy tank commanders, armored forces were concealed in positions from which they could attack the enemy's flank or even rear. Although German reconnaissance for the offensive was generally good, these ambush forces were largely undetected at the beginning of the attack.

The initial attack was to be made over open country with a few ridges. It was expected that the ground would be frozen solid, but an early thaw was already creating dangerously muddy conditions. A request to postpone the operation until the ground had dried out was rejected, so 6th Panzer Army was forced to slog through mud and wet ground from the very start. Even reaching the assembly points was difficult, with some formations still out of position when the order to commence was given.

Despite protests from the commanders on the spot, Operation Spring Awakening launched on March 6, 1945. Sources disagree on exactly when, or even if, any given formation began its attack, but some events seem clear. The initial advance was preceded by an artillery barrage lasting 30 minutes, beginning at 4 AM. Movement was made even more difficult by overnight snow and partial freezing of the ground of insufficient depth to permit easy movement.

Writing post-war, Sepp Dietrich describes how the mud trapped large numbers of vehicles, stating that he saw as many as 15 Tiger II heavy tanks sunk up to their turrets. Under these conditions vehicular movement was possible only along a few roads. Everywhere else the burden of the offensive fell upon the infantry.

The I SS Panzer Corps did make some progress but was able to advance less than 5 kilometers. The II Panzer Corps made no progress and might not have been in a position to attack at all on the first day. The Cavalry Corps put in an attack but was driven back by counterthrusts. The most promising result was an advance by III Panzer Corps, which threatened the Soviet flank. This prompted Marshal Tolbukhin to move reserves into the already-formidable defensive line.

The I SS Panzer Corps continued to push forward on the 7th, so that the Soviet 68th Guards Division was forced to withdraw. The 68th Guards fell back to defensive positions already occupied by its supporting formations and remained combat-ready.

The II SS Panzer Corps was able to begin its attack but made only a little progress on the second day of the offensive. Tanks that ventured off the few roads became stuck in deep mud, forcing their associated panzergrenadiers to advance without armoured support. Going was slow even on foot, and there was never any prospect of making much progress against the strong Soviet positions.

On March 8, the I SS Panzer Corps continued to push into the Soviet defences, but II SS Panzer Corps was still bogged down—literally and figuratively. Minor successes were scored by the panzergrenadier component, chewing their way laboriously into the enemy-defended zones, but for the offensive to succeed the Corps as a whole had to make rapid advances.

In an effort to get II SS Panzer Corps moving, the 23rd Panzer Division was ordered out of reserve and sent to join I Panzer Corps. Its mission was to exploit the gains made by I SS Corps in order to get into position to attack Soviet forces impeding II SS Panzer Corps. Meanwhile, I SS Panzer Corps continued to make gains on March 9th, with elements breaking through local positions in a series of forward lurches. Each one was halted when the next Soviet line was encountered. Tank destroyers played a notable part in these containments, forming a backstop each time behind which the retreating defenders could rally.

The Cavalry Corps was also successful on March 9. Unable to make a breakthrough on its own, it moved up through a gap in the enemy line created by I SS Panzer Corps. This permitted an exploitation more normally associated with armored forces. One division attacked enemy positions at Enying, while the other cut the road from there to Mezökomarom.

National Archives

Waffen SS soldiers warily advance through thick underbrush across the Hungarian countryside during Operation Spring Awakening. Poor weather conditions left much of the fighting to German ground troops.

Although gains were finally being made, the offensive was increasingly dislocated. The inability of II SS Panzer Corps to keep up with the central force meant that the flank of the offensive was exposed to a counterattack. Some protection was afforded by the difficult conditions and the choice of avenues of attack. Notably, the River Sarviz and its associated waterways delayed Soviet forces getting into position for a counterattack, but this delay was temporary.

Despite a difficult start, the offensive had achieved enough to threaten the entire Soviet position. A rapid advance into their rear was a real possibility, while penetration of the defended zone created command-and-control problems. Marshal Tolbukhin's solution was to reorganize his command, transferring control of units to commanders on either side of the breach. This permitted more coherent action against the intrusion and might forestall a collapse if further disruption followed.

Correctly identifying I SS Panzer Corps and its supporting cavalry as the main threat, Tolbukhin reinforced Twenty-Sixth Army with armored and anti-tank units. He requested permission to use the reserve armies, but was denied. Indeed, new orders arrived to launch a counteroffensive using these forces directed against the rear of 6th Panzer Army. The 3rd Ukrainian Front would lead this offensive with assistance from 2nd Ukrainian Front. This presupposed the Axis offensive could be halted, but while the situation was precarious, the Soviet forces still had deep defenses and a well-laid battle plan.

Despite the difficulties it faced, I SS Panzer Corps continued to advance throughout the day on the 10th. The 23rd Panzer Division launched an attack on Saregres. This was partially successful, in that it permitted the 1st SS Panzer Division Leibstandarte to force a crossing of the Sio canal. However, Saregres was not taken, and the division was unable to cross the canal to assist II SS Panzer Corps. The I Cavalry Corps also created a bridgehead on the Sio on March 10.

This left II SS Panzer Corps some 25 kilometers behind, still struggling to make any gains. This was not for lack of effort, but the Soviets had planned their defenses well. Attempts to flank impenetrable positions sent advancing forces into preselected ambush zones, where self-propelled artillery and anti-tank guns inflicted heavy losses.

The deadlock was broken on March 11 by the 2nd SS Panzer Division Das Reich, which put in a well-coordinated attack near Sarkeresztur. The II SS Panzer Corps was able to advance at last, while I SS Panzer Corps was still pushing ahead and spent that day clearing opposition from its flanks and securing the launch points for its attack against Simontorya.

The attack went in the following day, resulting in vicious urban combat that lasted until nightfall. By then, most of the town was secure. Meanwhile, I Cavalry Corps continued to make gains. The campaign so far had been an infantry matter for the most part, with armored troops struggling to even make contact with the enemy. The Cavalry Corps combined the usual capabilities of infantry with mounted mobility, proving surprisingly effective in the difficult conditions.

On March 12, the II SS Panzer Corps managed to gain control of Aba, which had been more or less cut off by the Corps' successes the previous day. Soviet counterattacks began to develop in this sector but were initially driven off. The Corps moved to a defensive posture as pressure mounted. Despite requests for permission to pull back, the Corps was ordered to hold its ground. An attempt by the 23rd Panzer Division to cross the Sio canal and provide support proved unsuccessful, leaving II SS Panzer Corps in an increasingly dangerous position.

The I SS Panzer Corps had managed to establish a bridgehead across the Sio, which was repeatedly attacked on March 12 and 13. The Corps was targeted by most of the available Soviet air support while trying to beat off infantry and armored assaults. Despite the pressure, some elements of the corps were able to push out the bridgehead slightly.

However, the Soviet counteroffensive was getting underway. Concentration for their operation was largely completed by the 12th, and on the 14th the temperature rose. Drying ground facilitated more rapid movement and the deployment of larger armored forces.

The Soviet countermove was detected on March 13, but its extent was greatly underestimated. On the 14th, German commanders realized they were not seeing minor reinforcements but a major offensive getting underway. The objective was obvious—these forces intended to cut off 6th Panzer Army and annihilate it. Permission to withdraw was initially refused, forcing Dietrich to plead his case to Berlin.

Rather than admit the operation had failed, General Wohler, commanding Army Group South, proposed an alteration to the plan. The I and II SS Panzer Corps would attack eastward in concert, leaving the 23rd Panzer Division and I Cavalry Corps on the defensive in the current positions. These would be reinforced by Hungarian troops. This would require disengagement and regrouping, which was estimated to take four days. The plan was approved, but Berlin stipulated only three days to complete preparations.

Large-scale Soviet counterattacks developed on March 16, while the panzer formations were trying to disengage and regroup. Despite the misgivings of local commanders and recommendations from no lesser a personage than General Heinz Guderian, the panzer corps were ordered to continue preparations for their offensive rather than attacking the flank of the Soviet movements. Hitler refused to consider any changes to the plan, but eventually the commanders of Army Group South began to see it was not feasible. Orders arrived to prepare for an attack northward into the Soviet flank, and Wohler began requesting permission to use his force in a more practicable manner. This was eventually and reluctantly granted.

National Archives

Soviet Red Army soldiers, many of them outfitted with equipment and weapons obtained from the United States via the Lend-Lease program, move toward the front lines.

The 6th Army, which had been tasked with securing and supporting the operation, was unable to resist the Soviet attacks. As its supports were driven back, 6th Panzer Army risked encirclement and might have been annihilated but for the stubborn defense of the 2nd SS Panzer Division Das Reich, which held open a corridor to allow the force to escape, falling back to try to set up new defensive positions. By the 19th, all the territory gained had been retaken by the Soviets.

The 6th Panzer Army retired toward Vienna, maintaining good order despite heavy air attacks and pressure from Soviet ground forces. Troops of the panzer divisions noted that their Hungarian allies were less than enthusiastic about continuing the struggle and at times compromised the retreat by fleeing from their positions on the flanks. Other Hungarian units continued to fight well, however.

Despite the fact that the SS Panzer Corps had been given an impossible task, the Fuhrer was characteristically ungrateful. Sources differ on whether he issued an order for SS soldiers to remove their cuff titles as a sign of their disgrace

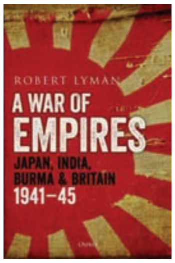
Continued on page 82

By Christopher Miskimon

A U.S.-made Grant tank blasts a Japanese position during the Battle of the Admin Box, fought February 4 - 24, 1944

Savage Combat in a Faraway Jungle

Indian and British troops fought a bloody, difficult war against the Japanese in Burma.



IN FEBRUARY 1944, THE JAPANESE ATTACKED THE COMMONWEALTH'S 7TH INDIAN Division near Sinzweya, Burma. The division divided its troops into several defensive "boxes" to blunt the enemy attack. The Japanese enjoyed some initial success, enough for newspaper and radio announcers in Japan to announce great victories and the destruction of an entire British army. These excited reports proved premature, however.

One of the defensive strongpoints bore the moniker of "Admin Box," for it contained the division's administrative troops and organizations. Over the first days of the Japanese offensive, Allied stragglers made their way to the Admin Box before the Japanese arrived and attacked it directly. Since it was far to the rear of the front lines, the position was vulnerable, surrounded by jungle-covered hills and under direct observation by the enemy. Despite this, it was vital to X Corps defenses as it contained enough supplies, particularly fuel, to keep the Japanese offensive going for some time. Until 9th Brigade, an infantry formation, arrived to reinforce it, the Admin Box contained mostly logistics and support personnel, who now took up rifles and submachine guns and dug in. They had no barbed wire or mines, but they dug deep trenches and improvised where they could.

Since the Japanese excelled at infiltration tactics, most of the Box's subunits formed their own small perimeters, able to defend in any direction. The first Japanese attack on February 6 was beaten back by the accurate rifle fire of a company of mule drivers; the animals were much used in this theater, where good roads were rare. For the first week, the Japanese attacks came during the day, a flurry of rifle fire, hand grenades arcing through the air, and bayonet charges. The Indian and British troops fought back with the same weapons and repeatedly turned their opponents back. Afterward all the attacks went in at night. One successful Japanese infiltration reached a medical unit, where all but three men were slaughtered.

Despite this success, the men in the Admin Box held against everything thrown at them. When the Japanese did succeed at taking a position, a rapid counterattack supported by Grant tanks firing their 75mm cannon and machine guns forced a retreat. Although the night became a time of dread for the defenders, over time their morale actually rose. They began to see the repeated Japanese failures to overrun them as a sign the enemy was not an invincible superman, but a human being who could and was suffering defeat at their hands. At the other boxes, morale further rose when L5 Sentinel light planes, flown by American pilots, landed to carry out the wounded for treatment. This was not possible at the Admin Box, however, where the wounded had to bear their injuries as well as they could. At night, it proved difficult to hear Japanese soldiers approaching due to the ever-present jungle noises of animals and insects. When the Japanese did attack, they often broke into loud screams during the final rush at the Indian positions. Many of these attacks ended only at the point of a knife or bayonet.

The dogged defense took its toll on the attackers. Within a week, the British commander, General William Slim, knew he would win. Aircraft dropped supplies on the boxes using crude parachutes, keeping the troops fed, armed, and supplied. The Japanese surrounding the boxes

Our mission is to help you Retire Better

You've put in your time.
Now it's your home's turn.

To date, **more than a million homeowners have used a reverse mortgage** to help improve their finances in their golden years.

They've used it to:

- ✓ **Eliminate monthly mortgage payments** (borrowers are still responsible for paying homeowners insurance, property taxes and maintaining the home)
- ✓ **Create an emergency fund**
- ✓ **Pay off large bills and cover medical costs**

> **"As a veteran of the U.S. Army National Guard, I'm proud to represent a company like AAG that's committed to improving the quality of life of older veterans."***

Tom Selleck
Actor and AAG Paid Spokesperson

Call **(800) 791-2130** today for your free, no obligation reverse mortgage guide.

AAG™
Retire Better

*https://militaryfamilies.com/money/aag-guides-veterans-through-home-equity-solutions/

The borrower could be subject to foreclosures for reasons including failure to maintain the property, and to pay taxes and insurance.

NMLS# 9392 (www,nmlsconsumeraccess.org). American Advisors Group (AAG) is headquartered at 18200 Von Karman Ave, Suite 300, Irvine, CA 92612. Licensed in 49 states. Please go to www.aag.com/legal-information for full state license information. Advertisement is not intended for OR residents.

EQUAL HOUSING LENDER

BBB ACCREDITED BUSINESS A+

were soon surrounded themselves as other Indian units encircled them and cut off the Japanese supply routes. No amount of martial spirit could help the underfed, unsupplied Japanese soldiers achieve victory. They fought on until killed in battle or starved to death in the battle-torn jungle. On February 24, a Grant tank of the 5th Indian Division rolled into the Admin Box and reached the 7th Division headquarters, breaking the siege and the myth of Japanese invincibility.

The war up to that point was hard fought and mostly favored the Japanese. It took years of preparation, training, and stockpiling to get the Indian Army on a footing to take on the Japanese, and it succeeded. The history of this portion of the war is well told in ***A War of Empires: Japan, India, Burma, and Britain 1941 – 45*** (Robert Lyman, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2021, 560 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, $35.00, hardcover).

This clear, in-depth account of the struggle between Japan, India, and Great Britain in Burma relates one of the most critical yet little known campaigns of the war. It is a large story, and the author succeeds in bringing together its disparate details into a coherent narrative with clear conclusions and supporting information. The book's descriptions of persons, locations, and actions are vivid and engaging throughout its pages.

USMC M4A2 SHERMAN
VS
JAPANESE TYPE 95 HA-GO
The Central Pacific 1943–44

USMC M4A2 Sherman versus Japanese Type 95 Ha-Go: The Central Pacific 1943-44 (Romain Cansiere with Ed Gilbert, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2021, 80 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, $22.00, softcover)

American and Japanese tank crews were badly mismatched during the Pacific War. The United Sates used its industrial might to produce the Sherman, a medium tank design which served in Marine Corps tank units in 1943-44. Imperial Japan lacked the resources to produce improved tank types, so its troops had to use the outdated Type 95, a 1930s design woefully obsolete by mid-war. Its armor proved so thin the Sherman could easily destroy a Type 95 with a single 75mm high-explosive round without the need to resort to armor-piercing ammunition. Nevertheless, the Japanese used what they had across the Pacific, and there were tank engagements at Tarawa, Eniwetok, Saipan, Tinian, Guam, and Peleliu.

Osprey's Duel series compares the training, equipment, and tactics of opposing troops along with the design, development, and use of their weapons. This latest volume delves into American and Japanese tanks and their crews. The book is compact and yet full of useful information, giving the reader a thorough introduction to the subject. There are many illustrations, including original artwork, a hallmark of the publisher's works. The text goes into detail about the tanks and their crews, and the authors give background details on the strategic situation to help place the tactical engagements described in the proper conttext.

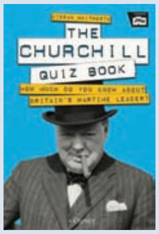
New and Noteworthy

COMBAT
Hungarian Soldier
VERSUS
Soviet Soldier

Combat: Hungarian Soldier Versus Soviet Soldier: Eastern Front 1941 (Peter Mujzer, Osprey Publishing, 2021, $22.00, softcover) Hungary entered the war against the Soviet Union at the end of June 1941. This detailed work compares the two armies' equipment, tactics, and performance.

Ju 87 STUKA
VS
ROYAL NAVY CARRIERS
Mediterranean

Ju 87 Stuka Versus Royal Navy Carriers: Mediterranean (Robert Forsyth, Osprey Publishing, 2021, $22.00, softcover) Squadrons of Stuka dive bombers flew against British aircraft carriers in repeated attempts to sink them during 1941-42. The book reveals the tactics each side used and the results of their efforts.



The Churchill Quiz Book: How Much Do You Know About Britain's Wartime Leader (Kieran Whitworth, Osprey Publishing, 2021, $15.00, softcover) Winston Churchill was a colorful character as well as one of the United Kingdom's most important leaders. This book compiles extensive facts and trivia about him.

PHILLIP PAROTTI
SPLINTER
ON THE
TIDE

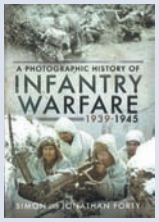
Splinter on the Tide (Phillip Parotti, Casemate Publishers, 2021, $22.95, softcover) This work is from the publisher's new series of military fiction. This volume tells the story of a young naval officer commanding a submarine chaser on convoy duty.

PANTHER
MEDIUM TANK

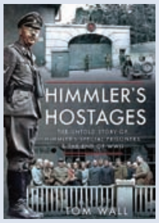
Panther Medium Tank: IV SS Panzerkorps Eastern Front, 1944 (Dennis Oliver, Pen and Sword Books, 2021, $24.95, softcover) The Panther tank units which saw service with IV SS Panzerkorps are the focus of this guide to model building and painting.

IMAGES OF WAR
THE WARSAW
UPRISINGS 1943–1944
IAN BAXTER

The Warsaw Uprisings 1943-1944 (Ian Baxter, Pen and Sword Books, 2021, $26.95, softcover) Part of the Images of War series, this photobook contains over 100 photographs of the fighting in Warsaw between the Nazi invaders and the Polish citizenry.



A Photographic History of Infantry Warfare 1939-45 (Simon and Jonathan Forty, Pen and Sword Books, 2021, $34.95, hardcover) Each chapter of this book looks at a different facet of infantry combat during the war. It is illustrated with photographs of all the combatant armies.



Himmler's Hostages: The Untold Story of Himmler's Special Prisoners and the End of WWII (Tom Wall, Pen and Sword Books, 2021, $42.95, hardcover) Himmler used both prisoners of war and concentration camp inmates as bargaining chips for negotiating an end to the war. This book relates their experiences.

BRITAIN'S
AIRBORNE
FORCES
OF WWII
UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT

Britain's Airborne Forces of WWII: Uniforms and Equipment (Mark MacGreehan, Frontline Books, 2021, $49.95, hardcover) This new work displays the variety of weapons, equipment, and uniforms worn by British paratroopers, using full color images and wartime photographs.

U.S. AIRCRAFT
CARRIERS 1939–45

U.S. Aircraft Carriers 1939-45 (Ingo Bauernfeind, Casemate Books, 2021, $49.95, hardcover) The author covers each class of American aircraft carrier and the service of the individual ships. Extra chapters detail the aircraft they carried and how the ships were laid out internally.

Men Over 40 Celebrate Breakthrough Pill

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

By S.A. Nickerson, Health Correspondent

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

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

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

Rogue Testosterone Starts Attacking Around Age 40

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

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

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

Collateral Damage

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

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

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

A Proprietary Blend of 15 Ingredients

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

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

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

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

The Simple Solution

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

Prostate Revive
Advanced Beta Sitosterol Complex with Pomegranate
Medix Select
Dietary Supplement
60 Veggie Capsules

PROSTATE REVIVE® Users Speak Out*

Many users write to praise this prostate support formula.

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

Kenneth F., California

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

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

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

RISK-FREE Trial of PROSTATE REVIVE

DR. BROWNSTEIN

Medix Select, one of the nation's premier nutraceutical companies, is sure you'll love **PROSTATE REVIVE**. That's why they're offering you a risk-free trial supply at **NO COST — that's a $39.95 value!** Just cover a small shipping fee of $4.95, that's all.

You'll also receive Dr. Brownstein's detailed special report **"A Doctor's Guide to a Healthy Prostate"** as a **FREE** bonus gift (a $20 value).

Toll Free: (800) 849-5069

Online: ProstateRevive.com/WW2

Trial offer requires enrollment in SmartShip program. See website for details. These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease. Testimonials are from actual customers who have used our products. *Testimonials reflect their experience but may not be representative of all those who will use our product.

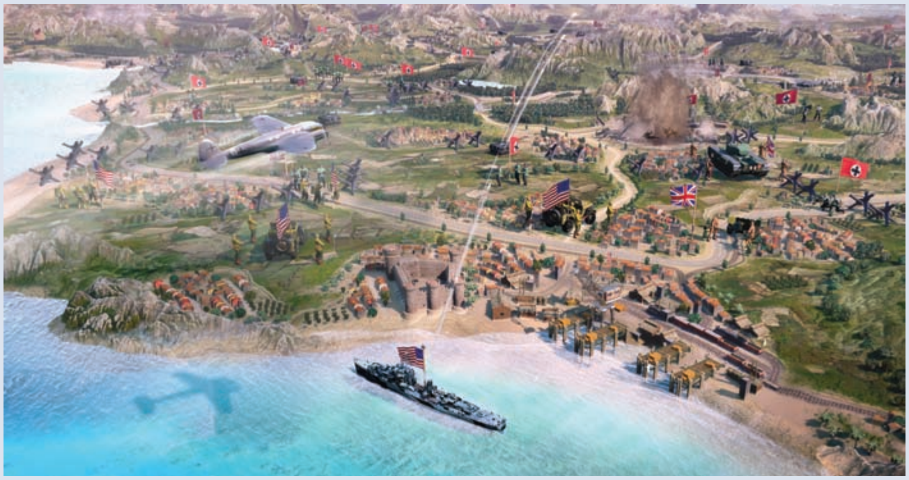
Simulation Gaming BY JOSEPH LUSTER

THE *COMPANY OF HEROES* SERIES RETURNS WITH A HEAPING PLATE OF STRATEGY CENTERED IN THE MEDITTERANEAN THEATRE

COMPANY OF HEROES 3

PUBLISHER SEGA • **GENRE** STRATEGY
SYSTEM PC • **AVAILABLE** LATE 2022

The *Company of Heroes* series is, amazingly enough, already celebrating its 15th anniversary this year. The first entry in developer Relic Entertainment's strategy-minded saga launched on PC and OSX back in 2006, giving players control of two factions in the Second World War. After the ambitious massively multiplayer *Company of Heroes Online* was released in open beta in 2010 and summarily cancelled in 2011, a proper sequel followed in 2013 in the form of *Company of Heroes 2*. Now there's finally more on the horizon, with *Company of Heroes 3* officially slated to bring Relic's signature strategy back to PC sometime in 2022.



The second *Company of Heroes* game added the USSR's Red Army as a new faction, kicking off an expansive campaign throughout the Eastern Front that spanned everything from Operation Barbarossa to the Battle of Berlin. Rather than tread the familiar ground from the first two games, *Company of Heroes 3* is looking to expand even further, primarily with a campaign centered on the Mediterranean Theatre of Operations. Maps will cover Italy and some parts of the North African campaign, and there's most certainly more up Relic's sleeve when it comes to recreating key World War II conflicts.

Considering the fact that—by the time it comes out, at least—it will have been the better part of a decade since the last entry, one would expect a bunch of refinements in the strategy at the core of *Company of Heroes*. It sounds like Relic is on top of that aspect, as they plan to build upon the series' award-winning tactical gameplay by adding new gameplay features to the combat mechanics fans know and love. Flanking, breaching, and taking advantage of elevation are all on the table for those looking to get the drop on their enemies, and a new Dynamic Campaign Map will up the number of strategic choices at your disposal.

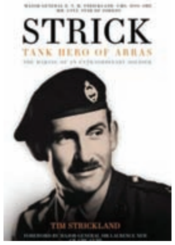
There are also promising features on the way even for those who aren't as keen on real-time strategy as others. Full Tactical Pause is an option that lets you pump the brakes during battle and carefully plan your next move. Control the pacing of each conflict during the single-player campaign, queue up each play in advance, and roll through with more confidence in each decision. Those who dig the turn-based style may want to check this option out when *Company of Heroes* launches, but you'll still need to adapt to a faster pace when playing against real opponents.

The Mediterranean theatre doesn't just offer another, less-frequently explored perspective of the war; it provides *Company of Heroes 3* with some stunning vistas for its explosive missions. From the deserts of North Africa to gorgeous coastal locations and mountain passes of Italy, there's a lot of diversity on display, which also means there are plenty of new options to consider when it comes to environmental tactics. In some cases, verticality will play a major role, while other locales will leave your units wide open by design if you don't tread carefully and take every movement into account.

Company of Heroes 3 boasts the largest number of launch factions to date, and the unit breakdown within each faction seems to be fairly comprehensive. Some of the units making their debut in the third entry are the incredibly light Weasel, the armor-piercing Nashorn, and the Chaffee Light Tank, among others. There are also plenty of classic units that have been revamped for a more modern and in-depth WWII experience, and the soldiers themselves range from your average combatants to specialist elite squads like the American-Canadian Special Service Forces, the Gurkhas from the Commonwealth, and more.

It's all coming together in Relic's own Essence Engine, so this should be the most detailed and impressive looking entry yet. That comes as no surprise considering the gap between entries, but it's mostly just going to be exciting to see how the series has evolved visually along with its advances in gameplay. Particle effects and smooth unit animations aren't necessarily going to be at the top of every strategy player's wish list, but the artificial intelligence has also been given a boost, making for realistic squad reactions to all the mayhem occurring on the battlefield.

At the time of this writing, Relic Entertainment had provided access to the game at a pre-alpha preview stage, and those who signed up could also dig into design documents, as well as art drops and discussions with the developers, among other insightful items. The last few years have been spent co-developing the game with community members, so fans of the series have already had a hand in the way it's been shaped. If *Company of Heroes 3* can deliver on its many promises, we definitely have something to look forward to in 2022. □



Strick: Tank Hero of Arras, The Making of an Extraordinary Soldier (Tim Strickland, Casemate Books, Havertown, PA, 2021, 490 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $39.95, hardcover)

Arras seemed like a ghost town to Sergeant Eugene Strickland of the 4th Royal Tank Regiment. An air attack by German Stuka dive-bombers ended in destruction, the dust from bomb explosions slowly settling over the streets and ruined buildings. The town's railway station sat nearby; no civilians could be seen. "Strick" stood in the hatch of a British Matilda I tank, a slow, clattering beast armed with a Vickers machine gun that kept jamming that day. Moving on through the town at the vehicle's maximum speed of seven miles per hour, they soon spotted some Germans on the outskirts, firing toward some trees. Strick gave them a burst from his Vickers, and the enemy troops ran down a side street into a barn. Telling his driver to get closer, the British sergeant put another burst through the barn door. After a moment, 80 Germans came out and surrendered. They formed into ranks and marched back down the road with the Matilda straining along behind.

This incident proved only one of Strickland's surprising wartime adventures. He held a commission in the prewar Indian Army but resigned in the 1930s. Enlisting in the British Army, he received another commission soon after the fighting in France and spent the rest of the war as an armor officer in Tunisia and Italy. This biography is written by Strick's son, who painstakingly gathered his father's papers and other records to create a detailed and interesting account of his wartime experiences. The book has excellent maps and several personal photographs.

NO MOON AS WITNESS
MISSIONS OF THE SOE AND OSS IN WORLD WAR II
JAMES STEJSKAL

No Moon as Witness: Missions of the SOE and OSS in World War II (James Stejskal, Casemate Publishing, Havertown, PA, 2021, 186 pp., photographs, glossary, bibliography, index, $29.95, hardcover)

The British Special Operations Executive and the American Office of Strategic Services worked together during World War II to conduct some of the most daring and successful unconventional warfare missions in history. Agents conducted extensive training before sneaking into mainland Europe to begin operations against the Third Reich. Sometimes they worked alone; often they operated in small teams or cells, cooperating with local resistance fighters to achieve their objectives. These agents carried out missions such as the assassination of SS officer Reinhard Heydrich and the destruction of the heavy-water plant at Vemork, Norway, ending the Nazi atomic bomb program. The OSS and SOE paved the way for the D-Day landings and fought the Germans across France. Many agents paid with their lives for these achievements; some faced capture and torture.

The author presents an overall view of these special-forces organizations in this new book. Chapters are devoted to their origins, the selection and training of agents, their operations and postwar evolution into the modern intelligence agencies. The book is well written with good details on the agents, their specialized equipment, and a selection of their missions.

AIR WAR ON THE EASTERN FRONT
MIKE GUARDIA

Air War on the Eastern Front (Mike Guardia, Casemate Publishing, Havertown, PA, 2021, 128 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, $24.95, softcover)

When the Nazis crossed the border of the Soviet Union in June 1941, their Luftwaffe smashed into a Soviet air force still reeling from Stalin's purges of the 1930s. While the Soviets proved able to launch 6,000 sorties against the Germans on the first day of combat, by day's end thousands of their planes lay destroyed on the ground or knocked from the sky. As the campaign ground onward, however, the Red Air Force's flyers slowly recovered from their initial losses and began gaining experience and developing the tactics needed to take the fight to the invaders. As their pilots and planners improved, Soviet factories won the war of production, turning out more planes than even the skilled Germans could hope to defeat. By 1944, the Soviets had air superiority across the entire Eastern Front, supporting the now-inexorable advance of their ground forces.

This new book is part of Casemate Illustrated, a new series comparable to the compact yet informative books successfully published by Osprey for decades. The book is equally illuminating, providing details on both combatants' air forces, aircraft, and operational experiences. As noted in the series title, the book is extensively illustrated, using a mix of color and black-and-white photographs along with color line drawings of various aircraft. The text is well written and includes numerous small details that enrich the narrative.

PACIFIC ADVERSARIES
VOLUME FOUR
MICHAEL JOHN CLARINGBOULD

Pacific Adversaries Volume Four: Imperial Japanese Navy versus the Allies, the Solomons 1943-1944 (Michael John Claringbould, Avonmore Books, Kent Town, Australia, 2021, 108 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, $39.95, softcover)

By the end of 1942, the fighting on and around Guadalcanal wound down with a Japanese defeat. No longer able to take the offensive in the region, Imperial Japan nonetheless waged a bitter and largely successful defensive campaign in the Solomons. The Japanese doggedly maintained air superiority around their main base at Rabaul throughout 1943, until units withdrew to fight elsewhere in 1944. Afterward, only a small force remained in the area, quickly overwhelmed by the growing strength of the Allies.

This new work includes chapters on different aerial engagements by both sides during the period 1943-44. The author went to great lengths to study existing documents and participant statements, allowing him to match the records for each action. This creates an accurate account for the reader as the author often solves the discrepancies common in official statements. The book is also beautifully illustrated, with a mixture of period photographs, color, line drawings of aircraft, and a few new pieces of artwork. The drawings include the specific squadron and aircraft markings of the participants.

THE NETHERLANDS EAST INDIES CAMPAIGN 1941–42
Japan's Quest for Oil

The Netherlands East Indies Campaign 1941-42: Japan's Quest for Oil (Marc Lohnstein, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2021, 96 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index $24.00, softcover)

Japan began the Pacific War in large part as a search for the natural resources it needed to remain an independent world power. Chief among these required assets were oil and rubber, vital needs for an industrial economy and a powerful, modern military. For Japan, the closest place to get those commodities was the Netherlands East Indies, now Indonesia. Thus, these islands ranked among the first attacked by the Japanese. In a quick combined-arms campaign, Imperial forces landed on several islands and rapidly made gains. The Dutch defended stubbornly with the limited assets they possessed, supported by a few military forces from Great Britain, Australia, and the United States. Given the paucity of Allied resources in the region, the Japanese victory was practically assured, though not cheap in terms of troops and time.

This latest volume in Osprey's Campaign series delves into the fighting in the Netherlands East Indies with detailed looks at each side's troops, weapons, plans, and conduct. The book covers the fighting up to late March 1942, when the last Allied units surrendered. Excellent maps accompany the clear, readable text, with numerous photographs and original artwork bringing the narrative to life. Many Western works on the Pacific War give minimal attention to the fighting on these islands; this book bring the readers a detailed understanding of one of the main objectives of Japan's campaign.

Theirs the Strife: The Forgotten battles of British Second Army and Armeegruppe Blumentritt, April 1945 (John Russell, Helion Books, South Yorkshire, UK, 2021, 502 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, bibliography, index, $49.95, hardcover)

The final month of the war proved a maelstrom for the British soldiers of the VIII and XII Corps as they struggled to cross the Weser and Aller Rivers. It was obvious to all that the war would soon be over, but these British troops ran into a German division formed from former naval personnel augmented with a battalion of Hitler Youth. Though this was the first battle for most of the men in the German unit, they fought tenaciously despite their inexperience. The British had been fighting for months and most of them were exhausted, but they pressed on and overcame their opponents, revealing their own courage and resilience. These operations were composed of hundreds of small-unit actions by tankers, infantry, paratroopers, and commandos.

The author invested years researching the actions so well described in this book, touring the battlefields until so knowledgeable he could give tours to British soldiers, imparting to them the lessons and history of the fighting. Many firsthand accounts appear in the narrative, breathing life into each chapter, each advance by the soldiers depicted in its pages. Over 100 good maps and figures provide orientation and perspective. Many of the photographs come from participants. The volume gives a welcome expansion to the limited knowledge of this time and place in the war. □

Midway

Continued from page 51

timing to minimize the threat of the deadly Zero fighters he had seen in action earlier. No contact with the enemy was made, and the weather worsened on the return flight. Norris' plane was lost. He and rear gunner Pfc. Arthur Whittington were missing and presumed dead.

On the morning of June 5, Spruance and Task Force 16 waited out some bad weather and turned northwest to search for a possible fifth Japanese carrier. Several air strikes during the day produced no results.

Meanwhile, the Japanese heavy cruisers *Mogami* and *Mikuma* had been ordered to bombard Midway's airstrip. A subsequent message then advised them to retire. During their turn, an American submarine was sighted. *Mogami* knifed into *Mikuma*, heavily damaging *Mogami's* bow and slowing the cruiser to 12 knots. *Mikuma* stayed close to her sister. An American air strike that day produced no hits. However, the following morning dive bombers from *Hornet* hit *Mogami* with two bombs. *Enterprise* Dauntlesses plastered *Mikuma* with five bombs. *Mogami* took another bomb during an afternoon attack but survived. *Mikuma* sank that night, losing 700 crewmen.

By the evening of June 6, the U.S. Navy's victorious task forces had withdrawn from the battle area. Yamamoto was steaming back to Japan, contemplating his apology to Emperor Hirohito and willing to accept sole responsibility for the disastrous defeat.

The American victory at Midway was decisive. The Japanese occupied the Aleutian islands of Attu and Kiska on June 7. However, they had lost the soul of their fighting force and the offensive initiative in the Pacific. Four aircraft carriers had been destroyed along with 248 aircraft. Nearly 3,100 sailors and naval aviators, the elite of the Kido Butai, had been killed.

The Americans had lost the *Yorktown* and the destroyer *Hammann*, both torpedoed by the Japanese submarine *I-168* on June 6, although the battered carrier remained afloat until the following day. They had also lost 144 planes and 362 dead.

Their mission, though, was accomplished. Midway was secure, and the battle that proved to be the turning point of World War II in the Pacific had been decisively won.

Michael E. Haskew is the editor of WWII History Magazine. *He has been writing and editing on military topics for more than 30 years and is the author of numerous books and articles. He resides in Chattanooga, Tennessee.*

Hungary

Continued from page 75

or simply planned to issue one, but in the end the gesture was meaningless. Insignia had already been removed as part of the deception operations covering preparations for the offensive.

The remnants of 6th SS Panzer Army took part in the defense of Vienna in April 1945, and afterward, the force—or what remained of it—moved northwest and continued to resist as best it could. With the exception of some attached Hungarian forces, 6th Panzer Army surrendered to American troops at the end of the war.

In addition to the successful use of mounted troops, Operation Spring Awakening was unusual in that it was led by armored units that could make little use of their armor. The inability of the tank units to advance led to relatively low losses, though the panzergrenadiers suffered accordingly. In addition, the German Army maintained an effective recovery-and-repair capability and was able to return damaged or stuck tanks to operational condition as the offensive went on. As a result, the German armored forces were in relatively good condition at the end of the operation, though they suffered heavy losses thereafter.

The achievements of the infantry component are also notable, since these units had recently received replacements who did not have infantry training and experience. A mix of veteran panzergrenadiers and out-of-place sailors and Luftwaffe personnel bore the brunt of the operations and the difficult retreat afterward, though by that time conditions were such that the panzers were back in action.

Operation Spring Awakening can be viewed as another example of Nazi delusion, and the refusal of Hitler to accept defeat certainly played a part. However, there was a real strategic necessity to the counteroffensive that went beyond ego or denial. The willingness of the Nazi high command to commit its best remaining forces in Hungary rather than using them to stave off the fall of Berlin a little longer is indicative of just how critical this operation was seen to be.

Operation Spring Awakening was impossibly over-optimistic, but it offered just the slightest chance to avoid defeat. In that, it was the best option available at the time.

Martin J Dougherty is a freelance author who has published numerous books on history, conflict and mythology. He lives in north-east England, and is the current President of the British Federation for Historical Swordplay.

code: WW2LTSUM21

U.S. FIELD GEAR

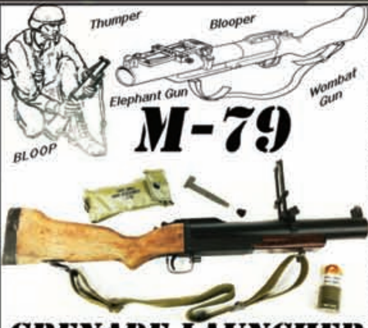
50 Hilton St Easton PA 18042
610-250-3960
info@sarcoinc.com

SARCO, INC.

THIS IS JUST A TASTE !!
GO TO WWW.SARCOINC.COM TO SEE MORE !!

U.S. FLAG

In Heavy Duty Cotton with Embroidered Stars 3x5 foot & will outlast most nylon flags.
$34.95 #FLAG55



M-79 GRENADE LAUNCHER

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

$385.00 #REP42

WWII M1 GARAND RIFLE LEATHER

Scabbard Perfect repro

$59.95
#GRD137

M1 CARBINE POUCH

w/two 15rd Magazines Combo (& free orig U.S. G.I. rubber dust cover)
$28.95 #CRB192

U.S. M1936 PISTOL BELT

New made, canvas WW2 style pistol belt with three tiers of grommets and in a size that adjusts out to 45 inches. U.S. marked
$16.95 #MISC326

M1/M2 CARBINE BANANA CLIP POUCH

Holds Four 30 Round Mags. Slides on to belt.
New $9.95 #CRB090

SARCOINC.com

5-CELL THOMPSON POUCH

Holds five 20rd mags $14.95
#TMP192

WW2 U.S. ARMY CANVAS LEGGINGS

Available in large sizes, 3R & 4R. New
$29.95 #MISC803

1911 GENERAL OFFICERS BELT SET

WW2 era senior field grade offcer set of leather belt w/U.S. embossed brass buckle, double mag pouch, pistol lanyard, and Model 1911 hip holster
$58.00 #HOL060

MODEL 1911A1 PISTOL (NON-FIRING, DISPLAY PISTOL)

One of our most popular display pistols representing over 100 years of design superiority! $122.35 #REP12

M1 / M2 CARBINE STOCK MAG POUCH

Repro, New. Holds two 15rd mag & slides onto the wood stock $9.45 #CRB134

50 RD DRUM POUCH FOR THOMPSON®

(Repro) Holds 50rd drum mag
$19.95 #TMP093

U.S. DOUBLE MAG POUCH FOR COLT

1911 GI Mag marked .45 ACP #1005-00-8694
MFR8R320......... $10.95, 3 for $29.95 #RPM155
1911 .45.................. $4.95, 3 for $11.95 #C45094
Two 1911 .45 mags w/pouch..... $13.95 #C45213
Four 1911 .45 mags w/2 pouches $20.95, 2/$39.95 #C45310

THOMPSON 3 POCKET MAG

Pouch Holds three 30rd mags
$12.95
#TMP184G

U.S. 1912 OFFICERS BELT SET

Rugged brown leather belt w/brass U.S. buckle, double mag ammo pouch, 1912 Cavalry holster for the M1911 pistol and similar sized pistols, & pistol lanyard. Specify Right or Left hand. $59.00 #HOL059

THOMPSON 1928 DISPLAY GUN

Comes with steel 50rd display drum

$249.95
#REP01
(NON-FIRING)

WWII PATTERN M1 GARAND CARRYING CASE

Heavy, OD canvas. *U.S. marked*
$14.95 ea, 3 for $42.95
#GRD115
USMC marked $14.95
#GRD347

THOMPSON 5-CELL POUCH

Holds five 30rd Thompson mags. Marked USMC
$24.95 #TMP185

(NON-FIRING)

THOMPSON 1928 DISPLAY GUN

Includes sling & 20 rd.stick mag
$242.95 #REP13

All prices & availability are subject to change. See our website for most current info.

www.SARCOINC.com

1936 MUSETTE BAG

WW2 with over the shoulder strap too. New with WW2 markings. Regularly $24.00...
ONE MONTH SALE !!
$22.00 each
#MISC486

M3 GREASE GUN MAG

Pouch, 3-Cell $16.95 #GG056

U.S. PINEAPPLE GRENADE

(inert) $16.50 #AM026

REVOLVER HALF MOON CLIP AMMO POUCH

3 pocket set that hangs on belt.
$14.95 #C45383

WW2 U.S. M1928 HAVERSACK / BACKPACK

New made, khaki canvas 'haversack' as worn by the U.S. Soldiers of WW2. Comes with shoulder straps and U.S. embossed flap. ~~$49.95~~
$44.95 #MISC912

M31 INERT ROCKET

Full size steel & aluminum rifle grenade. Inert, new. Very Limited. $59.95 #MISC875

DOUBLE GRENADE POUCH

U.S. WW2 Held to the cartridge belt using belt hooks on the back
$12.95 #MISC478

U.S. WWII PARATROOPER SIGNAL CRICKET

Brass. Puts out a clicking sound. U.S. embossed
$7.50 #MISC284

M6A3 HIGH EXPLOSIVE ROCKETS

for the M1, M1A1 & M9 Bazookas (Inert) New
$39.95 #MISC447

WW2 US. MARINE CORPS ' FROG SKIN ' CAMOUFLAGE

as used in WW2, Korea, Indochina, Bay of Pigs Invastion, & The Vietnam War. Still an effective profile disbursing pattern loved by Warrior & Hunter alike. First time available to the public for most of these items! See our website for sizing and details, or call us!

42" LONG USMC CAMO GUN BAG

Perfect for M1 carbines and similar sized rifles. Available in green or khaki camo.
Green camo **$25.00 #MISC953**
Khaki camo **$25.00 #MISC954**

FRENCH STYLE MLE BUSH HAT

Worn by SEALs UDT, & MAC-SOG during the 1960s in Vietnam. Available in 4 sizes in green or khaki Frog Skin camo. **$39.95 #HAT11**

See website for sizes & camo selection

USMC 'FROG/DUCK HUNTER' PATTERN SHORTS

Cotton Herringbone pattern, rugged, front & rear pockets, 2 cargo pockets & a cell phone pocket. Available in Green camo and Khaki camo.

Khaki Camo
#MISC898-KH CAMO
Green Camo
#MISC898-GR CAMO

Small, Medium, Large, XL, 2XL
$34.95 each

M-16 MAG POUCHES

in green or Khaki camo holds 3-30rd mags and space for 2 grenades. Works well with lots of similar sized mags too. **$18.95**
M16 pouch/green camo **#MISC948-GR**
M16 pouch/khaki camo **#MISC948-KH**

USMC WW2 Helmet Cover

$19.95
#MISC497

P44 USMC CAMO CAP

Available in sizes MED, LG & XL in either Frog Skin Green camo or Khaki Camo.
P44 Green Camo Cap
#HAT13-GRN
P44 Khaki Camo Cap
#HAT13-KH
$19.00 each

THOMPSON 3-CELL, 30RD MAG POUCH

Available in Green or Khaki Camo
#TMP199-GRN (green camo) **$18.00**
#TMP199-KH (khaki camo) **$18.00**

M1 CARBINE STOCK POUCH

In Green Camo
#CRB213-GR
In Khaki Camo
#CRB213-KH
$11.95 each

FROG SKIN BERET

Chosen by Seals, UDT, MAC-SOG etc during the 1960s Viet operations. 3 sizes available. Comes with leather sweat band. (Worn by over 8 units of French Foreign Legion in Indochina, too) **$24.00**

7-1/4" Medium - **#HAT17-7 ¼**
7-1/2" Large - **#HAT17-7 ½**
7-5/8" XL - **#HAT17-7 5/8**

1911 DOUBLE MAG POUCH

in green or khaki camo
$10.95 each

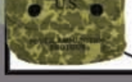
1911 Pouch green camo **#C45439-GR**
1911 Pouch khaki camo **#C45439-KH**

M1 CARBINE 3-CELL POUCH

for 30rd magazines as used by some units in the French Foreign Legion and ARVN troops under CIA direction.
$15.95
#CRB215-GC

FROG CAMO AMMO BAG

11"x5.5"x4" w/ shoulder strap and belt loop. Great for belted & clip ammo.
$22.95 #MISC964

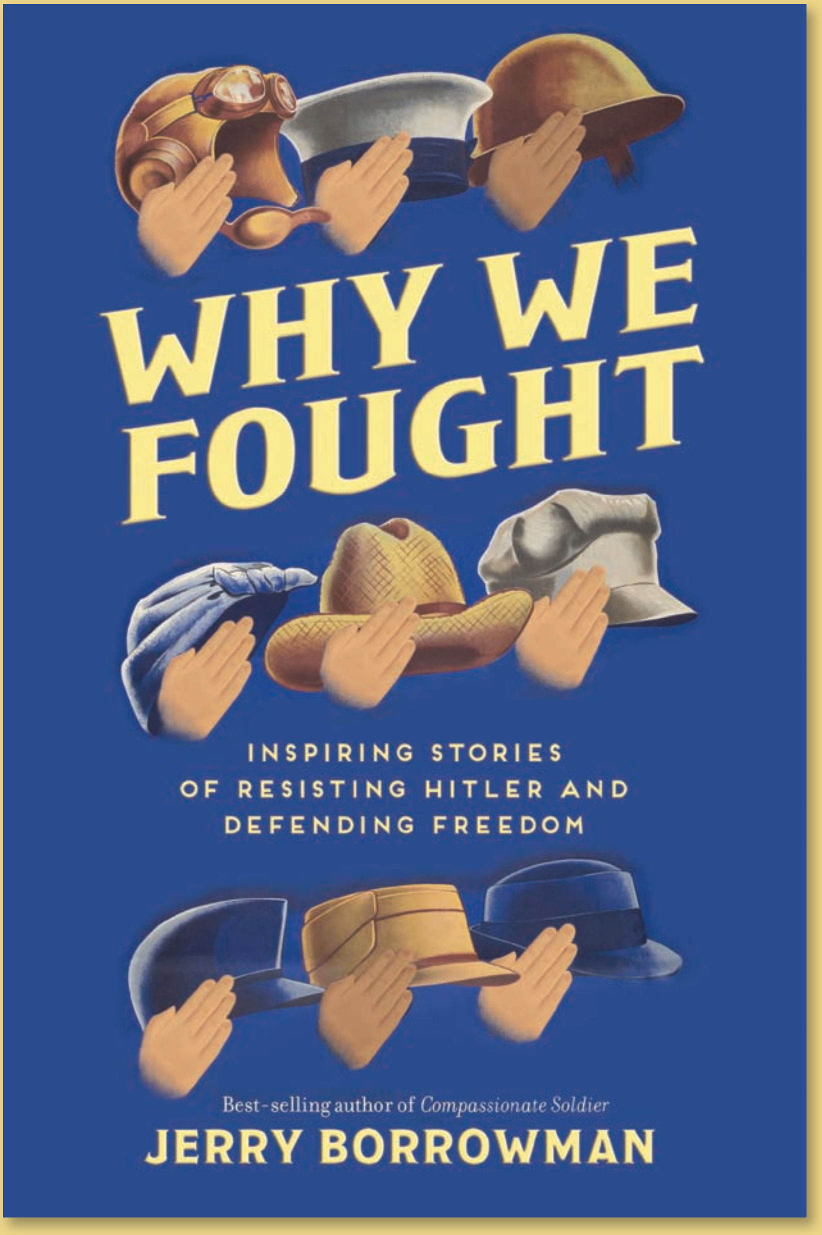


12 GAGE SHOTGUN POUCH

Holds 12rds of 12 Ga ammo.
$14.95 #MISC943-GR

HEROES OF WORLD WAR II

Gripping, little-known WW II stories, mostly of ordinary men and women, non-combatants, who fought the Nazis without regard to their own safety because they understood what was at stake and felt they could not live with themselves if they didn't join in the fight. In a panoramic and compelling account, author Jerry Borrowman shares seven largely untold stories of people who undertook extraordinary efforts at enormous personal risk to defeat the Third Reich.

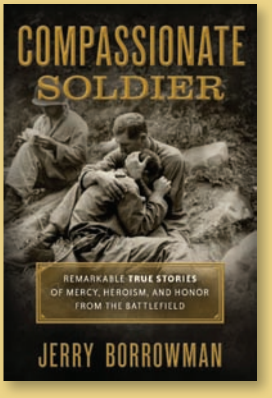

WHY WE FOUGHT

INSPIRING STORIES OF RESISTING HITLER AND DEFENDING FREEDOM

Best-selling author of *Compassionate Soldier*

JERRY BORROWMAN

ALSO BY JERRY BORROWMAN...


COMPASSIONATE SOLDIER

REMARKABLE TRUE STORIES OF MERCY, HEROISM, AND HONOR FROM THE BATTLEFIELD

JERRY BORROWMAN

JERRY BORROWMAN

INVISIBLE

EXTRAORDINARY WARTIME STORIES OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

HEROES OF WORLD WAR II

AVAILABLE WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD.

amazon BARNES&NOBLE Walmart BAM! BOOKS-A-MILLION INDIEBOUND

SHADOW MOUNTAIN