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Cover: A U.S. Marine waits for his buddy to throw a hand grenade before advancing on Japanese troops during combat in the Pacific. See story page 36. Photo: Alamy

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Editorial

During the Second Happy Time, the destroyer USS *Roper* struck a blow against marauding U-boats.

BRITISH PRIME MINISTER WINSTON CHURCHILL ONCE ADMITTED THAT THE only issue to trouble him to the extent that he thought World War II might be lost was the uncertainty of the Battle of the Atlantic and the U-boat peril that threatened to starve the British Isles into submission.

While the U-boats did wreak havoc in the Atlantic sea lanes and elsewhere for a time, Allied countermeasures turned the tide. Nevertheless, during the First Happy Time, from July 1940 to late October of that year, U-boats managed to sink nearly 1.5 million tons of Allied shipping. Then, after the U.S. entered the war, the U-boats descended upon the East Coast of the United States from New England to Florida and the Gulf of Mexico. Codenamed Operation *Paukenschlag*, or Drumbeat, the Nazis initiated their Second Happy Time. From January to August 1942, U-boats sank 3.1 million tons of precious cargo—not all of it in U.S. waters—but enough to raise serious concerns.

The U.S. Navy had disregarded British warnings about dealing with U-boats, particularly eschewing the convoy system for an extended period and failing to mandate blackouts of major ports, thus allowing U-boat commanders to silhouette their targets against the gleaming lights of American cities. Lessons were learned the hard way, and the U-boat arm of the Kriegsmarine eventually suffered a greater percentage of casualties than any other in the German armed forces.

One significant U-boat death occurred 80 years ago this month, and it was the first U.S. Navy success against the menacing submarines during World War II. On the night of April 13, 1942, the World War I-vintage *Wickes*-class destroyer USS *Roper* was patrolling off the coast of North Carolina. Three days earlier, the Type VII submarine *U-85* had sunk the Norwegian freighter *Christen Knudsen*, its third kill during a career that had begun on April 10, 1941, a year earlier—almost to the day.

Just after midnight, *Roper* contacted the U-boat near Bodie Island Light while utilizing British Type 286 radar. The distance was 2,700 yards, and *U-85* was within visual range of the light. The commander decided to flee on the surface, but not before he ordered the stern tube to fire a single torpedo with a range of 700 yards towards the charging destroyer.

Roper dodged the torpedo, and when the range closed to 300 yards, *U-85* made a sharp turn to starboard, only to be caught in the destroyer's searchlight beam. While German sailors dashed to man their 88mm deck gun, *Roper* engaged with a fusillade of machine-gun fire. Seconds later, a 3-inch shell struck home. The U-boat crash-dived, but *Roper* laid a spread of 11 depth charges, finishing off its quarry.

During the hours of darkness that followed, no attempt was made to rescue German sailors from the water, as the destroyer skipper, Lieutenant Commander Hamilton Howe, was concerned with the possibility of attack from another U-boat. After daylight, a PBY Catalina flying boat and an airship joined in the search. Twenty-nine German bodies were recovered and later buried in the Hampton National Cemetery in Hampton, Virginia. Howe and Commander Stanley C. Norton, commander of Destroyer Division 54, both received the Navy Cross for the sinking.

Controversy later emerged. One U-boat veteran wrote more than half a century after the incident that Howe's decision to delay seeking survivors should be investigated. Some of the bodies recovered were reported to have been wearing civilian clothes and carrying U.S. currency and identification.

Regardless, the U-boat now lies in less than 100 feet of water, and its hatch is on display in the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum in Hatteras, North Carolina. The U.S. Navy had its first triumph over the menacing undersea marauders.

Recreational divers visit the resting place of *U-85* frequently, and the top-secret Enigma machine the U-boat carried was later brought to the surface. In 2003, the German government agreed to allow the Enigma to be displayed at the museum in Hatteras, and in 2015, the wreck site was listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places.

—Michael E. Haskew

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By David H. Lippman

Fork-tailed Devil

The Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighter gained a fearsome reputation in both the European and Pacific theaters.

TECHNICALLY AND VISIBLY, IT WAS UNIQUE AMONG WORLD WAR II FIGHTERS. The P-38 stood on tricycle landing gear, with its twin Allison engines in separate booms and the pilot sitting in his cockpit in a cupola between the booms. It was an ungainly appearance, compared with sleek British Spitfires and American P-51 Mustangs.

But the P-38 was one of the greatest fighter-bombers of the war, dominating the skies of the Pacific and Europe in many roles—top-cover fighter, bomber escort, tactical bomber, and most notably, the weapon that brought down Japan's greatest warrior.

In January 1937, the U.S. Army Air Corps sought proposals from aircraft manufacturers for a new interceptor that could attack "hostile aircraft at high altitude." It required a maximum speed of 360 mph at 20,000 feet and a maximum level speed of 290 mph at sea level. It needed to fly at full power for one hour at 20,000 feet, and have a six-minute rate of climb to that altitude. In addition, the fighter required a takeoff-and-landing distance of 2,200 feet while clearing a 50-foot obstacle at runway's end. The Air Corps also wanted an in-line engine, comparable with Britain's new Hawker Hurricane and the Luftwaffe's Messerschmidt Bf-109. All of this was deemed possible in the days before effective radar.

Among the companies that responded was Lockheed, based in Burbank. Starting with doodles and finishing at drafting tables, they developed a twin-engine design, realizing that the Air Corps' demands could not be achieved with a single-engine plane. But a pair of the new Allison V-1710-cubic-inch-capacity engines on a single wing-and-tail frame could generate the necessary 1,000 horsepower needed.

Eventually they came up with a winner. The pilot would sit in a centerline cupola between twin booms that ran from engines to tail, connected by the rudder. The design proved to be stable in flight and as a platform for its 20mm cannon and four .50-caliber machine guns, all nose-mounted. In its bomber role, it could lug

In this dramatic painting by artist Jack Fellows, Major Jay T. Robbins, flying a Lockheed P-38 Lightning of the 18th Fighter Squadron, shoots down a Japanese Kawasaki Ki-61 'Tony' Fighter over Dutch New Guinea. Robbins ended the war with 22 confirmed aerial victories.

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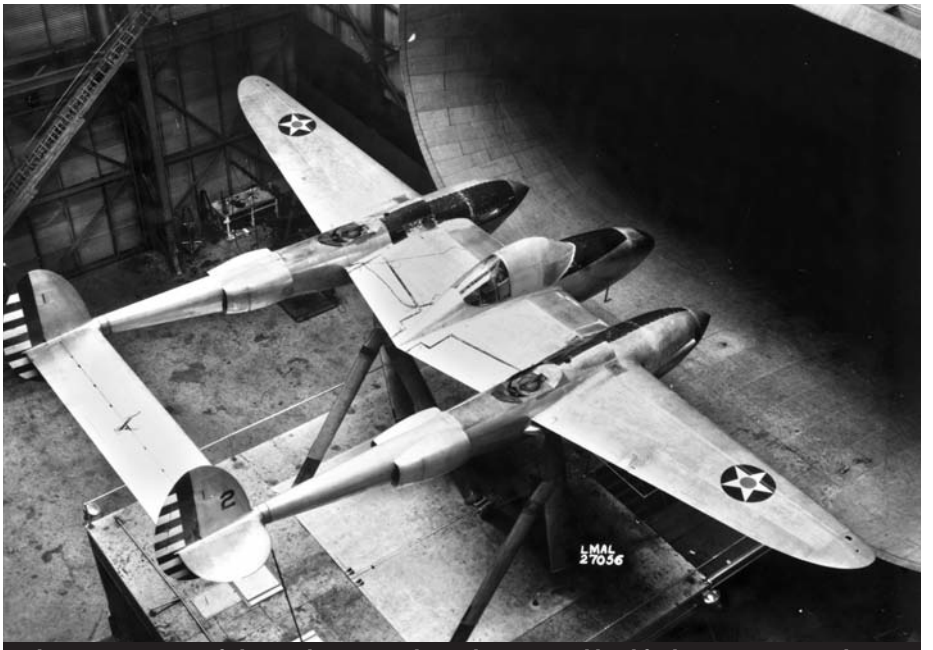


The prototype YP-38 fighter undergoes wind tunnel tests at Lockheed facilities. Engineers with Lockheed developed the twin-engine configuration for the P-38 Lightning to meet the specifications set out by the U.S. Army Air Corps in 1937.

one 2,000-pound bomb, two 1,100-pound bombs, two 500-pound bombs, or 10 half-inch (127mm) rockets.

In all, the P-38 as delivered in its varieties turned out to meet the Air Corps' standards — its top speed was 414 mph, top altitude was 25,000 feet, and it boasted an impressive range of 585 miles.

The P-38 had a wingspan of 52 feet, stood 9 feet, 10 inches tall, and was 37 feet, 10 inches long from nose to tail.

Ironically, its military career would start off with disaster. Air Corps Project Manager Lieutenant Ben S. Kelsey made tests flights with the prototype XP-38 over the California desert without mishap and then took off from Los Angeles on February 11, 1939, headed for Mitchel Field on Long Island, amid the usual publicity given to major distance flights. With two stops for fuel, he covered the 2,400 miles in seven hours. But as he landed at Mitchel Field, Kelsey came in too low. The plane crashed into a ditch and then a golf club, becoming a total wreck, but leaving Kelsey unscathed.

Despite this ending, the transcontinental flight had been a major success. It had displayed everything Lockheed promised for the fighter, and everyone there went back to their drafting tables to iron out the flaws for the next test version, the YP-38. The YP-38 flew up to advertised standards, with Air Corps brass calling it "a new kind of cat."

Washington then ordered 686 P-38s, whose name was to be the "Atlanta." However, some were to be exported to the British, who disliked naming a tough fighter after an American city. They proposed to call the new machine the "Lightning." The Americans agreed, and that was the name that stuck.

The early trial model P-38s still had trouble with the unusual tail unit, which was buffeted heavily in maneuvers. Lockheed designers went back to the drawing boards, adjusting the tail plane and changing the elevator mass balancing, and the first operational P-38Ds were delivered to the Air Corps in March 1941.

The P-38Ds were soon followed by P-38Es, which mounted a 37mm nose cannon instead of the 20mm and new electric and hydraulic systems. Lockheed also built 99 P-38Es as F-4 reconnaissance planes, which replaced the nose armament with a cluster of four cameras. These proved highly successful in all theaters, as did their successor, the F-5.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, P-38s were deployed overseas. F-4 versions were assigned to Australia to conduct snooper missions over Japanese positions in New Guinea. One F-4 was jumped by six Japanese Zeros. Unable to shoot back, the F-4 suffered heavy damage, and one engine was knocked out. The unfazed pilot yanked his surviving engine into a climb that pulled him away from the Japanese.

The first kill for any American plane in Europe took place on August 14, 1942, when Lieutenant Elza Shahan of the 27th Fighter Squadron was patrolling in his P-38 over the rugged volcanic terrain of Iceland. Shahan spotted a P-39 Airacobra flown by Lieutenant Joseph Shaffer of the 33rd Squadron, battling a four-engine Luftwaffe Focke-Wulf 200 Condor.

Shaffer fired cannon shells at the Condor, setting it aflame, but not shooting it down. Shahan, taking advantage of his P-38D's diving ability, swooped in and fired a long burst into the FW-200, and it exploded for a confirmed kill.

The invasion of French North Africa in November 1942, and the following Tunisian campaign called for the P-38's long range and resilience. P-38s were assigned to North Africa in great numbers, including to the legendary 94th Squadron, Eddie Rickenbacker's "Hat in the Ring" outfit of World War I.

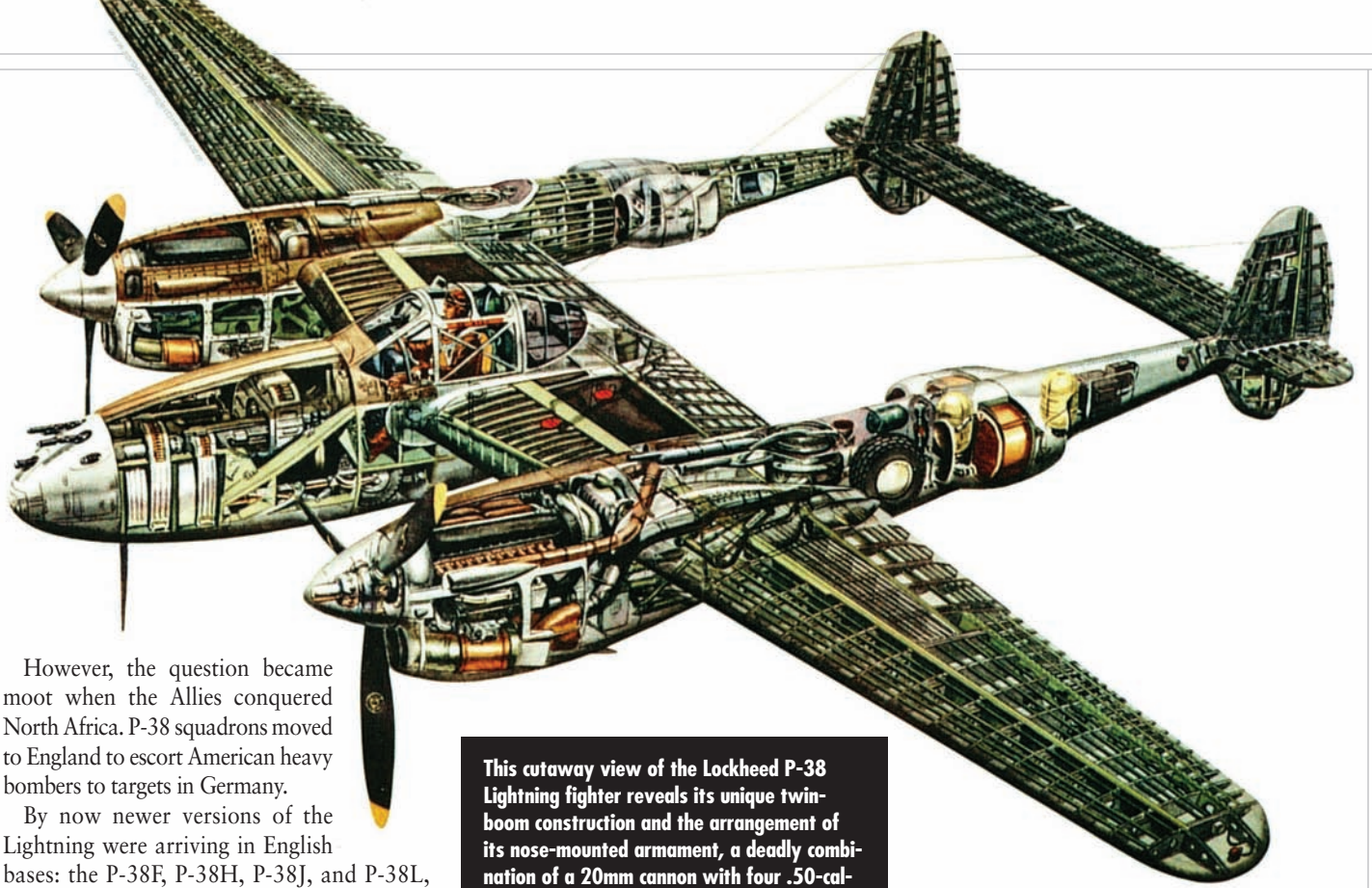
The P-38s got down to business on November 21 at Youks-les-Bains, a base where pilots and crews suffered from shortages of food and water. Two strafing attacks on German mechanized columns did plenty of damage, but six returning P-38s crashed in the dark.

P-38s flew interdiction and ground-attack missions against German and Italian forces with increasing success. Their performances impressed enemy and friend alike. Luftwaffe fighter ace Hans Pilcher (75 kills) wrote that when he tried to make a tail attack on a P-38, it "disappeared, leaving us with our mouths wide open."

When Lockheed's new P-38Fs and P-38Gs arrived in North Africa, they were assigned to a new role—blasting German cargo planes, motorized units, and convoys on the high seas. The new P-38G was well-equipped for this role: It had larger racks to accommodate bombs or fuel tanks, improved turbochargers, and a better oxygen system.

On January 21, 1943, two squadrons of P-38s hammered Axis road convoys, destroying 65 vehicles and killing hundreds of Axis soldiers. The Lightnings went down on the deck, and one pilot crashed into a telephone pole, cutting it in two. He managed to make it home safely. In late February, the Germans tried reinforcing Tunisia by air, and P-38s swooped in on hundreds of Junkers Ju-52 transports, sending the tri-motor planes crashing into the sea.

Despite these successes, the P-38s received sometimes-mixed reviews from German fighter aces. Colonel Johannes "Macki" Steinhoff, based in Sicily, met them in his Bf-109 and said his plane could fly faster than the Lightning, but a P-38 could turn tighter and get on his tail faster. But he regarded his squadron mates' reports that the P-38 had more powerful guns as exaggerations.



This cutaway view of the Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighter reveals its unique twin-boom construction and the arrangement of its nose-mounted armament, a deadly combination of a 20mm cannon with four .50-caliber machine guns. The P-38 was an excellent fighter bomber, capable of carrying a bomb load and rockets.

However, the question became moot when the Allies conquered North Africa. P-38 squadrons moved to England to escort American heavy bombers to targets in Germany.

By now newer versions of the Lightning were arriving in English bases: the P-38F, P-38H, P-38J, and P-38L, which had tail-warning radar. They were sorely needed. On October 14, 1943, the USAAF lost 60 B-17s in an ill-fated and unescorted raid over Schweinfurt, Germany. The next day, 55th Squadron of P-38s was declared operational. They flew an escort mission to Bremen on November 3 and lost seven planes. More trouble ensued after that. Miserable European weather put pilots in heavy coats and inflicted damage on engines. Cockpits were bitterly cold. Pilots could not use controls because of frostbitten hands and feet. Freezing temperatures affected the Allison engines and made them maintenance nightmares.

Worse, the theory behind the P-38 was not working. The intense cold made P-38Hs useless at high altitudes, but more than a match for Bf-109Gs—Germany's top model—below 18,000 feet. In the summer of 1944, the 55th Squadron converted to P-51s, improving both their kill rate and morale.

In January 1944, during the run-up to the Normandy invasion, the Ninth Air Force decided to assign its P-38s and P-47s to the fighter-bomber role so that they could take advantage of their range and bombload factors to blast German troops, convoys, airfields, and installations. General Jimmy Doolittle, who commanded the Ninth, used a P-38 as his personal plane on the correct theory that nobody would mistake it for a German aircraft.

But the Lightnings still found opportunities to smash the Luftwaffe in the sky, as 20th Group shot down 10 Luftwaffe fighters for the loss of two P-38s, a 376th Squadron pilot became an ace in one day on August 25, and in another single day P-38s accounted for 21 Luftwaffe fighters for the loss of one American.

In the Mediterranean, P-38s showed their value as Allied forces drove up the Italian "boot" from Sicily as both fighter escorts and fighter-bombers. On August 25, 1943, 140 P-38s hammered the Foggia airfield complex in Calabria, blasting open hangars, rail yards, trucks, and trains.

When the Allies advanced in Northwest Europe and Italy, the Luftwaffe was driven out of the sky, and P-38s operated as light bombers and reconnaissance aircraft, working in direct ground-support and interdiction roles, particularly during the Battle of the Bulge. They had done well against the Luftwaffe, but not as well as hoped. Their main achievement in Europe was in the bomber role, ripping open German trains and smashing Nazi troop convoys. Still, Luftwaffe pilots were said to have nicknamed Lockheed's creation the "Fork-tailed Devil."

It was in the Pacific that the P-38 would find its greatest successs

The Lightning began the Pacific War in August 1942 in the Aleutians, where pilots could take advantage of their long range to escort heavy bombers and attack the Japanese-seized islands, Kiska and Attu.

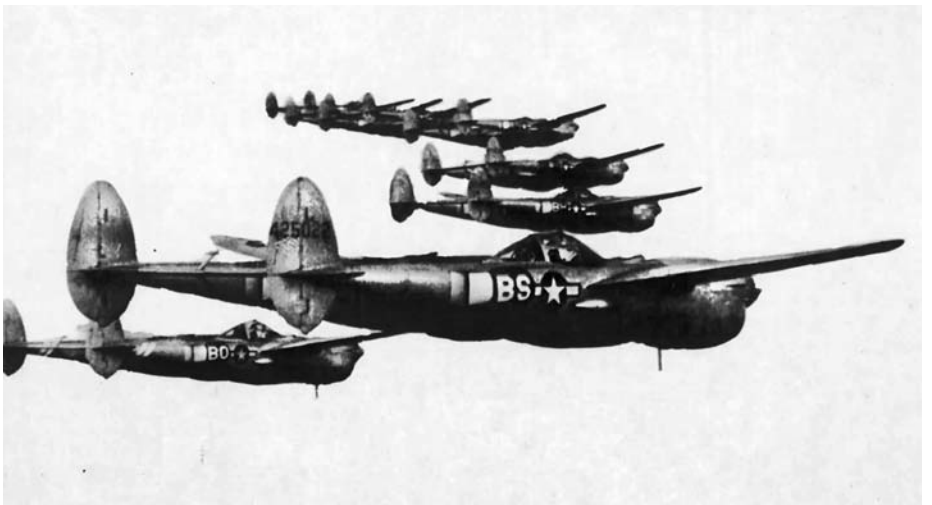
Later, P-38s arrived in the Solomon Islands. There the Lightning took on another legendary fighter—Japan's Mitsubishi Zero and its Army knock-off, the Kawasaki Oscar. The Pacific squadrons had some of the same problems that their European brethren endured. Maintenance was difficult because the plane had two engines instead of one, and the Solomons' tropical climate left everything damp. Twin engines doubled the chance that a hit could start a fire.

Despite these faults, the P-38 soon proved deadly. American pilot C.J. Jones had a simple endorsement for the Lightning: "With the P-38, you found a target and fired."

The advantage the P-38 had in altitude, climb rate, and firepower to the Zero and Oscar enabled the Lightnings to dominate the Guadalcanal skies from the day they arrived, November 14, 1942. The Guadalcanal P-38s got to work a few days later, escorting B-17 bombers to attack Japanese airfields and naval convoys that steamed down "The Slot" to reinforce Japanese forces on the island.

On December 27, 1942, 12 P-38s charged into 20 Japanese fighters and seven dive-bombers heading for Guadalcanal, shooting down nine fighters and two dive-bombers for

Both: National Archives



TOP: These P-38 fighters of the 383rd Fighter Squadron based in England are shown in flight in 1944. The versatile Lockheed design served in all theaters of World War II and in roles as a bomber escort, fighter bomber, and reconnaissance aircraft. ABOVE: These P-38 Lightning fighters of the 96th Fighter Squadron were a component of the Fifteenth Air Force based in Italy. Shown in flight during a 1944 mission, these Lightnings are examples of the 'L' variant, which included tail-warning radar.

the loss of one Lightning. On January 6, 1943, several formations of Curtiss P-40 Tomahawks and P-38s attacked a Japanese troop convoy that had heavy fighter cover. The Tomahawks accounted for 28 Japanese planes, while the P-38s bagged 13 more. Three of the latter kills went to a young lieutenant named Richard Ira Bong, who would become the top American ace of the war with 40 kills.

It was the beginning of the American P-38 "fighter sweep" across the Pacific, and the Lightning would lead the way, spearheaded by Bong and his wingman, friend, and rival, Tommy Lynch, who matched Bong kill for kill. Lynch amassed 20 kills before being shot down himself in March 1944.

On March 1, 1943, in the Bismarck Sea, a Japanese convoy appeared north of New Britain Island—eight transports and eight destroyers jammed with 6,900 troops and supplies for Lae on the north side of New Guinea. It came into P-38 range on the 2nd, and 24 heavy bombers with 16 P-38 escorts attacked.

The next day the Americans tried again, with 109 aircraft, including B-25 strafers, 13 Royal Australian Air Force Beaufighters, and P-38s taking off from Port Moresby in New Guinea amid perfect weather.

Under relentless bombing and strafing, the convoy and its aerial escorts were helpless. Lynch led two squadrons of P-38s—his 39th and the 9th—down on the deck to hit the air escort of Zeros. The 39th shot down 10 Zeroes for three losses.

The bomber force did even better. They sank all eight transports and four destroyers.

The P-38 was now the dominant fighter-bomber in the Pacific, with the two top American aces, Bong and Major Thomas C. McGuire, matching each other, kill for kill. Despite the rivalry, they were great friends who often flew together over New Guinea. By April 10, 1944, Bong was up to 25 kills. He gained two more on April 12, and claimed a third, which had crashed in shallow water near Hollandia. U.S. troops found the wreckage shortly after, and Bong was up to 28 kills, which made him the American ace of aces.

Two weeks later, Bong, with 40 kills, was shipped home as a test pilot and recruiting tool, ordered not to see any more combat. On August 7, 1945, he was killed flying the new Lockheed Shooting Star P-80 jet fighter near their Los Angeles plant.

McGuire met a harsh fate, too. On Christmas Day, 1944, he shot down three Japanese planes, to bring his score up to 34. The following day, he bagged four more, to make his total 38. But on January 7, 1945, McGuire tried to assist his wingman, who had a Zero on his tail, flown by Shoichi Sugita, a Japanese ace with 80 kills. Violating the rules he taught his pilots in the squadron's ready room, McGuire made a high-speed, low-altitude turn without dumping his 160-gallon wing tanks, spun in, and crashed, his P-38 exploding on contact.

There were many P-38 aces, and some survived when Washington realized their high kill numbers. Charlie McDonald shot down 27 Japanese planes, making him third-most in the Pacific and fifth overall. He survived the war, as did Gerry Johnson, with 22. He was killed on October 7, 1945, two months after Bong died, perishing the same way—testing a P-80. And George Welch, one of the very few fighter pilots who was able to get airborne at Pearl Harbor, moved up to P-38s and amassed 16 kills.

On April 14, 1943, Commander Edwin Layton, head of the U.S. Pacific Fleet's cryptographic unit, presented Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander-in-Chief Pacific, with a decoded message that revealed that Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, commander of the Combined Fleet of the Imperial Japanese Navy and architect of the Pearl Harbor attack, was going to fly an inspection trip by air from Rabaul, Japan's main base in New Britain, to the Shortland Islands on April 18. Yamamoto's flight would bring him within range of Major John Mitchell's 339th Fighter Squadron, based on Guadalcanal. They could intercept Yamamoto's two planes, shoot them

down, and hopefully take Japan's keenest nautical mind out of the war.

The assignment was given to Mitchell and the 339th Fighter Squadron, whose P-38s would have the range for the ambush.

Mitchell planned to take six P-38s under his own command to tackle the fighter cover, while Captain Thomas Lanphier led four P-38s to hit the bombers. They plotted a course that would have the Lightnings fly south from Guadalcanal, then northwest, then northeast, and ambush Yamamoto's planes as they were over Bougainville and preparing to land at the Shortlands airfield. Everybody would fly in on the deck and make use of the P-38's climbing speed and high firepower to bring down the enemy. Finally, strict radio silence would be observed.

Mitchell's planes took off early on April 18, followed by Lanphier's group, which consisted of his wingman, Rex Barber, Jim McLanahan, and Joe Moore. But as McLanahan's plane trundled down the fighter strip, it blew a tire in a loose spike in the matting and could not take off. Lanphier's team was down to three planes. Ten more P-38s followed as additional top cover. Everybody was airborne by 7:25 a.m.

Mitchell led the whole force in a gentle curve seaward, down on the deck, in formation. Then Moore had trouble—his engine sputtered as he switched from his main tanks to his drop tanks. He couldn't get fuel from them. Lanphier motioned him to turn back.

Down two planes, Mitchell ordered two planes from the 10-plane top-cover unit, flown by Lieutenants Besby Holmes and Frank Hine, to replace the missing pair in Lanphier's unit. They had never flown with Lanphier, but there was no alternative.

At 9:33, Lanphier and Mitchell saw Bougainville's jungles beneath them and Shortland Island just south of that, but no Yamamoto. Then Lieutenant Doug Canning broke radio silence in a low, steady voice to say, "Bogeys 11 o'clock. High."

The Americans came under antiaircraft fire from the ground but wasted no time. Lanphier and his three colleagues swooped on the bombers. "I felt my hands getting clammy on the control column," he said later. "What a time to get nervous, I thought!" Holmes was amazed at being able to shoot down Yamamoto. Mitchell barked at Lanphier, "All right, Tom. Go get him. He's your meat."

Incredibly, the Japanese had not seen the Americans—they were still flying along easily. Lanphier was nearly level with the bombers, and then he saw two Zeroes drop their own belly tanks and swoop toward him. As he and Barber closed in, Lanphier "wondered with stupid detachment if his bullets would start hitting me before I could get my guns up and into his face."

National Archives

This P-38 Lightning is equipped as a fighter-bomber, with its bomb load beneath each wing. The versatile aircraft was capable as a dog fighter and reconnaissance aircraft, as well.

Mitchell told Lanphier, "Leave the Zeros, Tom. Bore in on the bombers. Get the bombers. Damn it all, the bombers!"

Yamamoto's plane began diving toward the deck, seeking safety at 200 feet. P-38s had tremendous diving ability, and Lanphier's planes roared down on them. Barber opened fire at a Betty, making it a personal battle with the bomber's tail gun, which never fired. Barber kept stitching up the bomber, and part of its tail section and rudder flew off. The Betty did a quarter snap to its left, and both planes were now near the treetops. The bomber lost speed rapidly, and Barber shot past. He looked back to see black smoke rising from the jungle and knew he had a kill.

Barber also knew the Zeroes would be coming after him, so he "hunched under that armor plate" as three Zeroes chased him from his right. Barber began climbing while two P-38s from his top cover stormed down to save him.

Meanwhile, Lanphier saw a shadow moving across the treetops beneath him—it was the other Betty bomber. He dived on it to treetop level, throttled back, and found two Zeroes diving at him from his right. For a moment, it looked like three fighters and a bomber would collide. But Lanphier was determined to get a shot at the bomber and did so. The Betty's right engine and right wing began to burn. The right wing exploded, and the bomber plunged to the ground.

Lanphier turned into the Zeroes attacking him as they dived. They slowed down, and Lanphier escaped on the deck. Behind the P-38 pilots lay chaos, 20 Japanese dead, including Yamamoto, hit by a bullet in the back of his neck. It took a day to find his wrecked Betty, and his body was identified by the jeweled samurai sword he held. Everyone on Yamamoto's plane was killed. The other Betty had three survivors. In addition, three Zeroes were shot down.

The Americans lost only one plane and pilot, Hine, caught by a Zero. But for the next four decades, the pilots who flew the mission and their supporters would argue over who could actually claim the Yamamoto shootdown. The issue remains unresolved to this day. Lanphier and Barber fought over it until the former's death.

One thing they and all the other P-38 pilots of World War II agreed upon was the excellence of the airplane. It was a plane for two roles in two theaters: highly successful fighter-bomber in Europe, blasting rail and road traffic; and dominating fighter over the Pacific. P-38 pilots enjoyed its many benefits in and out of battle.

But the best analysis comes from Japanese wartime navy air officer and postwar historian Masatake Okumiya, who described the P-38 Lightning simply as "an enemy of terrifying effectiveness."

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

By Frank Johnson

National Archives

SAS: Owning The Desert

The heroic covert operatives of the Special Air Service bedeviled the Axis during the war in North Africa.

SECOND LIEUTENANT DAVID A. STERLING OF THE SCOTS GUARDS WAS SERVING with Lt. Col. Robert E. "Lucky" Laycock's No. 8 (Guards) British Commando Battalion, based at Suez, Egypt, in 1941, when he got a novel idea.

Temporarily paralyzed from the waist down after an unauthorized parachute jump near Mersa Matruh, Stirling found himself confined for two months in the Alexandria Scottish Hospital. While recuperating, he thought about ways to make Commando hit-and-run raids against enemy bases and airfields more effective. Stirling reasoned that small teams of highly trained men could achieve better results than larger groups. Such teams could create confusion and chaos amongst the enemy and tie down offensive forces for defensive purposes.

The 25-year-old subaltern proposed in a penciled memorandum that four-man teams—with each member specializing in weapons, explosives, navigation, or signals—could venture into the Egyptian and Libyan deserts, with German and Italian supply lines, airfields, and ammunition and fuel dumps as their primary objectives.

On his release from the hospital in July 1941, the tall, handsome, aristocratic Stirling felt he should bring his plan to the attention of General Sir Claude Auchinleck, commander of the British Middle East Forces. Commanders-in-chief in the British Army were not customarily receptive to being buttonholed by junior officers, but Stirling decided nevertheless to ignore the usual channels. He feared that unimaginative, middle-ranking officers would stifle his concept. So, he made his way to the General Headquarters in Cairo, used his crutches as a ladder to scale the perimeter fence, eluded sentries, and by a "rare bit of good fortune" found himself hobbling into the office of Auchinleck's deputy, bearded Lt. Gen. Neil Ritchie.

Stirling apologized to the surprised Ritchie for his unconventional approach, and the latter read his memorandum and promised to discuss it with the C-in-C. For Auchinleck, new to the command and under pressure from Prime Minister Winston Churchill to mount an offensive, Stirling's plan was just what he was looking for. It was original and required few resources.

Three days later, Stirling returned to the headquarters, this time with a pass, and met the dignified General Auchinleck. The C-in-C promoted him to captain and gave him permission to recruit a force of six other officers and 60 enlisted men. Thus, in July 1941, the British Army's Special Air Service (SAS) was created. It would become one of the most elite and effective special forces of World War II and beyond.

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: Lieutenant Colonel David Stirling was the father of the Special Air Service. He was captured in 1943 and embarked on a new military adventure as an escape artist. TOP: SAS veterans of the Desert War photographed just after completing a three-month patrol. Their Jeeps are armed with machine guns and include Jerry cans containing fuel and water.

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The Italian airfield at Barce, Libya, is littered with wrecked aircraft and equipment after an SAS raid. The SAS severely hampered Axis logistics and offensive operations with deep penetration raids behind enemy lines.

Born in 1915, the son of Brig. Gen. Archibald Stirling of Keir, Stirlingshire, the maverick lieutenant had attended Ampleforth College in Yorkshire and Trinity College, Cambridge, from which he was sent down for gambling and drinking. His early ambition was to be a painter, and he was training for an attempt to climb Mount Everest when war broke out in 1939.

There were two particular officers Stirling wanted for his desert force and who promptly agreed to join. One was Australian Lieutenant Jock Lewes, a scholar, Oxford University rowing blue, and daring soldier who had carried out small raids on enemy desert outposts. The other, who would become Stirling's second-in-command, was a fellow maverick who was under close arrest for striking his commanding officer. He was Ulster-born Captain Robert "Paddy" Blair Mayne, a prewar international rugby player.

By August 1941, Stirling had established his little force in a three-tent camp at Kabrit, 100 miles south of Cairo in the Suez Canal Zone. The initial unit was known as L Detachment of the Special Air Service Brigade. The name was a deception to convince the enemy that the British had a complete airborne brigade in the field.

Recruited within less than a week from the remains of Laycock's Layforce, the volunteers were trained in special hit-and-run operations and survival. Stirling insisted on physical fitness, character, and a high standard of discipline equal to that of the Brigade of Guards. The training was rigorous, and anyone not up to scratch was immediately transferred to another unit. One of Stirling's recruits, H.R. Fitzroy Maclean, who rose to brigadier rank, reported, "For days and nights on end, we trudged interminably over the alternating soft sand and jagged rocks of the desert, weighed down by heavy loads of explosive, eating and drinking only what we could carry with us. In the intervals, we did weapon training, physical training, and training in demolitions and navigation."

Together, Stirling and Mayne shaped L Detachment into a tough unit ready for action, but equipment was sadly lacking. Captain Stirling, a self-described "cheeky laddie," decided that needed gear would have to be "borrowed." So, the detachment's first— and highly unofficial—mission was a night raid on a New Zealand Division camp a few miles down the road. Stirling's men loaded their only three-ton truck with anything useful that could be found and made off with.

L Detachment's first official combat foray—a parachute drop—was a dismal failure. Five teams were dropped by five obsolete Royal Air Force Bristol Bombay transport planes on the black night of November 16, 1941, to attack five forward German airfields near Gazala in support of General Auchinleck's Operation Crusader offensive. The operation was to precede Auchinleck's attempt to relieve the besieged British garrison at Tobruk. But Stirling's raiders were widely scattered by high winds and a sandstorm and lost their equipment containers. Only 22 men made it back to a rendezvous with the Long-Range Desert Group (LRDG), a roving, deep-penetration reconnaissance force that had been formed in July 1940.

Stirling, who was later promoted to major and then lieutenant colonel, was undeterred, but he abandoned the airborne concept in favor of overland operations in vehicles provided by the LRDG. The Special Air Service was back in business with its motto, "Who dares wins," and a winged dagger as its insignia. The members were issued white berets, but after drawing derisive wolf whistles from other servicemen, the headgear was changed to khaki forage caps and finally sand-colored berets. The first members of the SAS, who changed the nature of warfare, came to be known as "The Originals."

Bearded, disheveled, and wearing Arab headgear, Stirling's irregulars ranged thousands of miles behind the Italian and German lines in the North African desert from 1941 to 1943. They drove four-wheel-drive Chevrolet trucks, Bentley touring cars, and later Jeeps laden with Vickers or Browning machine guns, small arms, Lewis bombs, Jerry cans, and water condensers. The freebooters subsisted on a makeshift diet of rock-hard Army biscuits, corned beef, chocolate rations, marmalade, tea, dates, snails, onions, turnips, and whatever else they could find in oases and Arab villages. When their water cans ran dry, the SAS irregulars had to resort to brackish, wormy water from wells.

The SAS grew rapidly, and by late 1942 had expanded to almost 400 men. Its operations extended, and by the time that the Western Desert war ended, it had been officially designated a British Army regiment, the 1st SAS. It

included in its ranks some French paratroopers, Greeks, and even anti-fascist Germans. In 1943, a second regiment, the 2nd SAS, was raised under the command of Colonel Stirling's eldest brother, William. It served with the British First Army in Tunisia.

During their audacious expeditions across the endless dunes, wadis, and scrub-dotted wastes, the SAS patrols destroyed an estimated 400 Axis aircraft on the ground, severed Afrika Korps fuel-and-ammunition railway lines multiple times, blew up numerous supply and bomb dumps, and made almost 50 assaults against key German positions. It was a harsh existence for Stirling and his men, but theirs was an unrestricted war far removed from the Cairo top brass and stifling military regulations. They were on their own in the desert, and morale was high.

Nothing save panzers could stop the SAS and LRDG raiders, and they were contemptuous of the enemy they harassed and eluded again and again. Frank Harrison, the driver for Lt. Col. David Lloyd Owen, reported, "We drove through a huge German Army camp. The cooks were just getting up. Odd fellows walking about, going to the lavatories and having a wash. We just drove through them waving. They waved back. Why not? Five trucks driving through your camp, in the early morning, waving to you, why not wave back? Can't possibly be enemy, all that way behind German lines. Impossible."

Nevertheless, danger dogged the irregulars' tracks all the way as they tried to elude superior enemy forces and hide from reconnaissance planes persistently scouting them.

As Captain Malcolm J. Pleydell, the SAS medical officer, reported, "Although life was free and easy in the mess, discipline was required for exercises and operations. On the operations in which I was involved, our patrol would make long detours south of the battle line and then loop up north to within striking distance of an airfield or similar target. Camouflage had to be expert, so that when you hid up you couldn't be detected — even at close distance. Slow-flying enemy aircraft could follow our tracks to our hiding places, and they represented a real threat. It was a hit-and-run, hide-and-seek type of war."

Like the LRDG, the SAS irregulars became a painful thorn in the enemy side, and their leader was nicknamed the "Phantom Major" by Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, commander of the Afrika Korps. A reward of 100,000 Reichsmarks was put on Stirling's head. He was a colorful figure in the British Army; his bravery was well known, and he was viewed as a man of

Lieutenant Colonel Robert Blair 'Paddy' Mayne photographed near the town of Kabrit, Egypt, in 1942.

vision and action, another Lawrence of Arabia. Some fellow officers regarded him as slightly mad, but as General Bernard L. Montgomery astutely pointed out later, "In war there is a place for mad people." Stirling was soon promoted to lieutenant colonel.

His second-in-command, Mayne, was a boyish, hard-drinking former sportsman from Ireland whose exceptional leadership qualities were matched by great bravery, characterized at times as reckless and wild. Lieutenant George Jellicoe, who joined the SAS in 1942, described Mayne, who specialized in the destruction of grounded enemy aircraft, as "brave as 10 lions, a tactical genius." A legendary figure like Stirling, Paddy Mayne became one of the two most highly decorated British soldiers of World War II.

As part of Stirling's L Detachment, Mayne took part in a series of operations against enemy airfields and supply lines in the second half of 1941. He led a daring raid on an Italian airfield at Tamet in the Libyan desert that December, destroying 14 planes, damaging 10, and blowing up bomb and fuel dumps. Two weeks later, he went back and destroyed 27 more aircraft.

In only four months, the reputation of the SAS had grown, and Mayne's personal count of enemy planes destroyed had risen to more than 100. It was bold, deadly work. After a raid one night on the base at Fuka, Mayne reported that the enemy had "posted a sentry on nearly every bloody plane." He said, "I had to knife them before I could place the bombs." He and his small team destroyed 17 aircraft that night. On one particularly busy night, Mayne destroyed no less than 47 grounded enemy aircraft. On another occasion, he put a plane out of action with his bare hands.

The SAS destroyed more than 400 aircraft in just over a year, and Paddy Mayne's personal score was more than twice that of any Allied fighter ace in World War II.

The SAS attacks on German and Italian airfields proved essential to the success of early British offensives in the Western Desert. It was found to be more economical in terms of available resources to destroy enemy aircraft on the ground than in the air. German planes, particularly the Messerschmitt Me-109 fighters, were far superior to the British Desert Air Force's overworked Hawker Hurricanes and obsolete Gloster Gauntlet biplanes and Gladiators.

Operations by Stirling's SAS raiders continued with increasing tempo until the end of 1942, with the unit operating at one time from the Kufra oasis, 500 miles south of Tobruk. When the unit was expanded as the 1st SAS Regiment, Paddy Mayne took command of its A Squadron and was awarded the Distinguished Service Order in recognition of his "special services." His leadership qualities were about to be needed even more acutely.

On January 10, 1943, the legendary Stirling was captured when a special German unit ambushed his column in Tunisia. He managed to escape and join a group of Arabs, but they sold him to the Germans for 11 pounds of tea. The Phantom Major tried unsuccessfully to escape four times from a prison camp in Italy, and then spent the rest of the war at the impregnable Colditz Prison in Saxony, Germany.

Mayne, who had also become a British Army legend in the Western Desert, was promoted to lieutenant colonel and assumed command of the SAS Regiment until its reorganization into two units, the Special Raiding Squadron and the Special Boat Section. Then came the massive Allied invasion of Sicily, and the fighting Ulsterman was soon back in action.

In the early morning hours of Saturday, July 10, 1943, General Montgomery's British Eighth Army and Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr.'s, U.S. Seventh Army landed in southern Sicily. Paddy Mayne led the Special Raiding Squadron as it splashed ashore from a landing craft just south of Syracuse, on the southeastern coast. Mayne and his men scrambled up a cliff and destroyed the Italian gun battery at Capo Murro di Porco. They captured entire the 700-man garrison within minutes.

Fighting on through the night, the SRS men destroyed six heavy guns, killed 100 Italians,

Imperial War Museum

During an operation to assist Italian partisans, heavily armed men of No. 2 SAS Regiment carry components of Vickers machine guns and ammunition belts draped over their shoulders as they traverse a mountain path somewhere in the countryside of Italy.

and captured between 2,000 and 3,000 more. The operation was a complete success. Mayne was awarded his second DSO, and the citation said that his "courage, determination, and superb leadership … proved the key to success. He personally led his men from the landing craft in the face of heavy machine-gun fire. By this action he succeeded in forcing his way to ground where it was possible to form up …."

There was little respite for Mayne and his men. After marching to Syracuse and being relieved by the British 5th Infantry Division, the SRS squadron headed for the port of Augusta, defended by the crack Hermann Goring Panzer Division. Using only hand grenades and small arms, the SRS raiders attacked the garrison on July 12, and had taken the port by late that day.

When Sicily was secured and the fighting switched to the Italian mainland, Colonel Mayne's squadron was assigned the capture of Bagnara, north of the British Eighth Army positions around Reggio di Calabria. Landing in the early hours of September 12, 1943, the SRS unit ran into fierce resistance and was unable to clear the German defenders from the hills around the southern port. Mayne's men dug in and fought off counterattacks for two grueling days before being relieved. They were then withdrawn to Sicily for a well-earned rest.

The final action for the Special Raiding Squadron in the Mediterranean theater came on October 4, 1943, when it landed with crack Royal Marine Commandos at Termoli on the Italian Adriatic coast. The SRS advanced into the port, secured it, and was then subjected to a strong German counterattack. During the bloody action, 22 of Colonel Mayne's men were blown to pieces in the back of a truck. The battered unit hung on grimly for three days before managing to beat back the enemy, and Mayne was awarded a bar to his DSO.

While the 2nd SAS Regiment continued fighting in Italy until the war's end, Mayne and his squadron returned to England in March 1944 to prepare for the planned Allied invasion of Normandy. The SRS was expanded and reverted to its previous designation of 1st SAS Regiment, joining the newly-formed 2,500-man SAS Brigade. The brigade comprised two British SAS regiments, two Free French regiments, and a Free Belgian squadron.

The SAS experiment had proved a resounding success during its valiant service in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy. Brigadier Maclean observed, "Working on these lines, David (Stirling) achieved a series of successes which surpassed the wildest expectations of those who had originally supported his venture. No sooner had the enemy become aware of his presence in one part of the desert than he was attacking them somewhere else. Never has the element of surprise, the key to success in all irregular warfare, been more brilliantly exploited. Soon, the number of aircraft destroyed was well into three figures."

Many tributes were paid to the SAS founder, Mayne, and their men. Lt. Gen. Sir Miles C. Dempsey, the able, unassuming commander of the British Second Army, told Mayne, "In my military career and in my time I have commanded many units. I have never met a unit in which I had such confidence as I have in yours."

In the early months of 1944, the SAS men trained on the Scottish moorlands for their invasion role. They were to parachute behind German lines and establish a series of bases from which they could operate in strength. Then they were to harass the enemy, disrupt communications, gather intelligence for forward Allied units, and train and support French resistance fighters in sabotage. Blair was in command of the 1st SAS Regiment.

In the early hours of D-Day, June 6, 1944, SAS troops carried out diversionary parachute drops on the Cherbourg peninsula, west of the British, American, and Canadian landing beaches. Subsequently, until the liberation of Paris in August, Colonel Mayne and his comrades were engaged in a spoiling role from Abbeville as far south as Paris and the River Loire. Aboard jeeps mounted with pairs of twin Vickers K rapid-fire machine guns or .50-caliber Browning machine guns, the SAS irregulars raced through the countryside, shooting and blasting German units and installations at will.

With a touch of Celtic whimsy, Mayne had added two features to his Jeep—a public address system for "broadcasting rude words to the retreating Germans" and a phonograph on which he endlessly played Irish ballads.

The Germans reacted strongly to the irregulars' bold forays because their desert reputation had preceded them. Despite their firepower, the SAS jeeps proved vulnerable in skirmishes with enemy armored units, and the regiment suffered its heaviest losses of the war. Many irregulars were captured and executed by the Gestapo. For his "fine leadership, example, and utter disregard of danger" in the Normandy operations, Mayne was awarded his third DSO. He also received the French Legion d'Honneur and the Croix de Guerre.

In the waning weeks of the European war, Mayne's regiment took part with the Canadian 4th Armored Division in the final breakout through Germany, which ended at the Baltic Sea port of Kiel. At Oldenburg in northwestern Germany on April 9, 1945, as his regiment led

the Canadian armor through enemy lines, Paddy Mayne's actions in liberating a strongly-held village brought him a recommendation for the Victoria Cross, Britain's highest decoration.

When his forward squadron commander was killed, Colonel Mayne grabbed a Bren gun and, under fire and in full view of the enemy, dashed into several houses, killing and wounding the German defenders. Then he jumped into a jeep and cleared a path for the advancing British troops by shooting from the hip at the enemy. The big Ulsterman also rescued several wounded soldiers in the face of intense machine-gun fire. Then he calmly took charge of the situation, breaking "the crust of the enemy defenses in the whole of the sector." At the end of the war, Mayne saw service in Norway, where the SAS Brigade disarmed 300,000 German garrison troops.

The citation for his VC recommendation said, "His cool and determined action and his complete command of the situation, together with his unsurpassed gallantry, inspired all ranks." But the VC recommendation was turned down, perhaps through official disapproval of Mayne's well-known rebellious streak. Colonel Stirling called the decision "a monstrous injustice," and it was reported at the time that King George VI inquired why the VC had "so strangely eluded him."

After the war, Colonel Stirling left the Army to settle in East Africa and moved later to Hong Kong. He died in 1990 shortly after being knighted, and a statue of him was erected in his former home at Doune, Perthshire.

Shortly after the SAS was disbanded on October 1, 1945, Colonel Paddy Mayne was demobilized. He was just 30 years old. Like many returning World War II heroes, he was restless and unsuited for a sedentary civilian life. He found respite in taking his pet dog for spins in his red Riley sports car along the roads of scenic County Down. He died at the age of 40 in a traffic accident in Newtownards while returning home early on December 15, 1955.

Fifty years after his death, a campaign to have Paddy Mayne awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross gained momentum when more than 100 Members of Parliament supported early-day motions charging that he had been the victim of a "grave injustice." Ian Gibson, the Labor Party member for Norwich North, said, "We have had no satisfactory answers why he cannot be awarded the VC. It is small-mindedness."

Although the Special Air Service had been disbanded in 1945, postwar insurgencies—particularly the Communist uprising in Malaya—soon ensured its revival and modification for new kinds of warfare. The 21st SAS (Artists Rifles) Regiment, a Territorial Army (militia) outfit, was created, and a special jungle-warfare unit known as the Malayan Scouts was raised by the colorful Brigadier Michael "Mad Mike" Calvert, a veteran of both the SAS and Major Gen. Orde Wingate's famed Chindit columns in Burma.

The SAS became a potent force in the war on insurgencies and terrorism. After the Malayan Communists were subdued in one of the most successful campaigns of the 20th century, the highly-trained SAS irregulars served all over the world—in the Falklands War, the Persian Gulf campaigns, and such trouble spots as Borneo, Aden, Oman, Mogadishu, and Northern Ireland. An SAS team made headlines on May 5, 1980, when it rescued 25 hostages held by Arab gunmen at the Iranian Embassy in Prince's Gate, London. SAS units also took part in the 1991 Gulf War and later Middle East operations.

The SAS remains one of the British Army's—and the world's—elite units.

Author Frank Johnson has studied World War II history for many years and resides in the United Kingdom.

By Michael D. Hull

U.S. Air Force

Eaker and the Mighty Eighth

General Ira C. Eaker was an architect of the U.S. Army Air Forces and the legendary Eighth Air Force that pounded the Third Reich.

FORTY-EIGHT WRIGHT CYCLONE AERO ENGINES COUGHED INTO LIFE ON THE hardstands at windswept Polebrook Airfield in Northamptonshire, England, early on the afternoon of Monday, August 17, 1942.

Ground crews made final checks on the dozen Boeing B-17E Flying Fortress four-engine heavy bombers of Colonel Frank A. Armstrong Jr.'s 97th Bombardment Group of the U.S. Eighth Bomber Command, and the engines' roar grew to a thunderous crescendo. In the briefing hut, tension mounted as young pilots, navigators, bombardiers, and gunners listened to last-minute instructions. They were finally going into action.

The group had been activated on February 3, 1942, at MacDill Air Base in Tampa, Florida. It trained there and started its overseas movement on May 15; the first Fortress arrived in England on July 1.

Three days later, in celebration of Independence Day, a dozen Douglas A-20 medium bombers of the Eighth Air Force's 15th Bombardment Squadron took part in the first strike against Nazi-occupied Europe involving American bombers. Attached to No. 226 Squadron of the Royal Air Force and escorted by Supermarine Spitfire fighters, the A-20s hit German airfields in Holland.

Now, 18 Fortresses out of two dozen available were readied for the first all-American bomber raid on Europe. A target had been selected and the operational machinery set in motion. It would be the prelude to an American aerial offensive complementing the nightly campaign of RAF Bomber Command.

On August 5, 1942, Brig. Gen. Ira C. Eaker, the 47-year-old, Texas-born commander of the Eighth Bomber Command, and General Carl "Tooey" Spaatz, first commander of the Eighth Air Force, had gone to the London headquarters of Lt. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, newly appointed commander of the U.S. European Theater of Operations, and presented a plan for their first bombing mission. Ike, who had visited Polebrook, the first B-17 base in England that July, quickly approved the plan. But the unpredictable English weather intervened, and two planned missions were canceled.

Eaker, the advance man for the Eighth Air Force and commander of Eighth Bomber Command, had built his command from scratch. When he and half a dozen officers arrived in England early in February 1942, they had no aircraft and no equipment—not even office paper

ABOVE: General Ira C. Eaker was one of the foremost commanders of the U.S. Army Air Forces during World War II. He assumed command of Eighth Air Force in December 1942. TOP: These Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bombers, shown during a practice flight over England, flew the first combat mission over Europe during a bombing raid against Nazi-occupied Europe carried out by American aircraft.

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ABOVE: In January 1929, Captain Ira C. Eaker, accompanied by Lieutenant Pete Quesada, who would also reach senior command in the U.S. Army Air Forces during World War II along with three other airmen, flew a Fokker C-2 aircraft nicknamed 'Question Mark' for over 150 hours to test in-flight refueling procedures. RIGHT: Dashing young pilot Eaker sits in the cockpit of an aircraft in 1929.

Library of Congress

clips—beyond what the British Air Ministry supplied them. Now, though still woefully short of planes and crews, the Eighth Bomber Command was ready and eager. On August 14, General Spaatz received a brusque cable from General Arnold demanding to know why the B-17s were still idle. Finally, the 97th Bomb Group was alerted for a third time on the evening of August 16. The weather cleared, and held.

The target would be the railroad marshaling yards at Sotteville, near Rouen in northern France, 65 miles northwest of Paris. The objective was only 35 miles inland from the English Channel and well within the range of the RAF Spitfires assigned to escort the dozen B-17s. The group's six other Fortresses were to make a diversionary sweep along the French coast to lure German Luftwaffe fighters away from the Rouen area. Despite heroic prewar service in record-breaking endurance flights, Eaker had never been in action, so he announced that he would go along on the first B-17 mission.

After his operations conference on the morning of August 17, Eaker flew to Polebrook, where he told Colonel Armstrong and his men that he would be flying with them. The general was impressed by "the nonchalance of the crews" and their "evident enthusiasm."

Waiting at dispersal points on the Polebrook runways were camouflaged Flying Fortresses with colorful names painted on their noses: *Yankee Doodle*, *Peggy D.*, *Big Stuff*, *Baby Doll*, *Alabama Exterminator*, *Birmingham Blitzkrieg*, *Berlin Sleeper*…. After donning flying suits, Colonel Armstrong and the crews rode trucks out to the planes and hoisted themselves aboard. General Eaker, the former fighter pilot who had become a fully committed advocate of bombing strategy, clambered into the 414th Squadron's *Yankee Doodle* as an observer. In the pilot's seat was Armstrong, who would later become the model for the hard-bitten, resolute General Frank Savage in the best-selling novel and 1949 film classic *Twelve O'Clock High*. Armstrong's co-pilot for the August 17, 1942, mission was boyish Major Paul W. Tibbets, who would make history three years later at the controls of the Boeing B-29 Superfortress *Enola Gay* when it dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan.

General Eaker sat in the radio operator's compartment aboard *Yankee Doodle*, hoping and praying that the operation would succeed. The formation thundered across the English Channel.

All was going well as the American bombers neared their target. No enemy fighters had been seen, and only a few desultory bursts of antiaircraft fire had peppered two planes. Over the village of Sotteville, three miles north of Rouen, the bombardiers toggled their loads loose. Eaker scrambled to a side window to watch *Yankee Doodle*'s five 600-pound bombs go down in a string directly over the Sotteville rail yards. The Fortresses dropped a total of 18-and-a-half tons of bombs that afternoon, damaging a roundhouse, the marshaling yard, siding tracks, railroad cars, sheds, and a workshop.

Shortly after the bombers pulled away from the target area, three Luftwaffe Focke-Wulf 190 fighters swung up to harass them. The B-17 gunners drove them off. As Colonel Armstrong's force headed back to the English Channel, Eaker looked out the radio operator's window and counted the planes. All 12 were still in formation, with one lagging slightly and trailing smoke from its left outboard engine. Five squadrons of clipped-wing Spitfire Vs now joined the Fortresses.

General Eaker and Armstrong were elated. Their inexperienced crews had hit the target with no losses and only slight damage. The only casualties were a bombardier and navigator in the six-plane diversionary force. The pair suffered superficial cuts when a flock of pigeons shattered the nose of a B-17 heading back to the 97th Bomb Group's satellite airfield at Grafton Underwood in Northamptonshire. Meanwhile, Armstrong's formation crossed the English coast and steered for its home base. The August 17 raid was a promising start, front-paged in the London newspapers and lauded by the hard-pressed British.

In a report to General Spaatz, Eaker praised the Fortress and the first combat crews. "I think it is a great airplane" with "excellent defensive firepower," he said. "It is too early in our experiments in actual operations to say that it (the B-17) can definitely make deep penetrations without fighter escort and without excessive losses. I can definitely say, however, that it is my view that the German fighters are going to attack it very gingerly." The crews, he told Spaatz, were alert, though in need of more formation and gunnery training.

The American raids continued, with Eaker's crews gaining valuable experience and all planes returning safely to base. Nine missions were flown before a B-17 fell to German gunfire. Nevertheless, hardship and sacrifice awaited General Eaker and his crews as the Eighth Air Force sortied farther across Europe. Losses mounted, crews grew increasingly tired and dispirited, and morale was strained

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Ground crewmen check the B-17 Flying *Fortress Yankee Doodle* of the 97th Bomb Group, which participated in the first bombing raid of U.S. Eighth Air Force planes in World War II, targeting the railroad marshaling yards at Sotteville, near Rouen in northern France, on August 17, 1942. Eaker was aboard as an observer.

severely. At great cost, the American airmen were learning what the British and the Germans already knew.

Harris and other British air leaders counseled against unescorted daylight raids, and Prime Minister Winston Churchill tried to talk Eaker out of the strategy. The British did not interfere officially; it was thought advisable to let their allies learn from their own lessons.

Generals Spaatz and Eaker, supported by Arnold, adhered stoutly to the doctrine of daylight bombing. Eaker's bomber groups suffered heavy losses in unescorted daylight raids against Schweinfurt, Regensburg, and other targets, but the situation improved dramatically later in 1943 with the deployment of long-range North American P-51 Mustang fighter escorts.

General Eaker was awarded the Silver Star in 1942 for commanding and participating in raids, and the following year he received the Legion of Merit for his "exceptionally meritorious conduct."

Ira Clarence Eaker, the man who laid the groundwork for the American bombing offensive in Europe, was born in humble circumstances at Field Creek in Llano County, Texas, on April 13, 1896. His father was a tenant farmer. Young Ira attended the Southeastern State Teachers College in Durant, Oklahoma, and gained a bachelor of science degree in 1917. After America declared war on Imperial Germany in April that year, he joined the army in Oklahoma.

He went through the 1st Officers Training Camp and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Infantry Reserve on August 15, 1917. Three months later, he was transferred to the aviation section of the Signal Corps to undergo flying instruction at Austin and Kelly Field in Texas. He started flying in 1918, and became a fighter pilot. He was promoted to first lieutenant in October that year, and gained his pilot's wings in 1919.

After serving at Rockwell Field, California, and Fort Mills and Camp Stotsenburg in the Philippines, the ambitious Eaker, now a captain, commanded Mitchel Field in Long Island, New York, and studied law at Columbia University. He then went to Washington as executive assistant in the office of the chief of the U.S. Air Service and remained there until October 1926. While serving on the air staff, Eaker assisted in Colonel William "Billy" Mitchell's defense at his historic court-martial in December 1925.

Seconded from active duty in November 1926, Eaker went to South America as second-in-command of a Pan American Airways goodwill flight. He piloted one of the planes that covered 22,065 miles from December 21, 1926, to May 2, 1927, and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for "initiative, resourcefulness, tireless energy, sound judgment, and personal courage." On his return, he served as operations and line-maintenance officer at Bolling Field in Washington, D.C.

While there, Captain Eaker was detached for a special army flight that made aviation history on January 1-7, 1929. He was the chief pilot of a tri-motored Fokker C-2A monoplane named *Question Mark* which stayed aloft over Los Angeles, California, for 150 hours and 40 minutes, establishing a refueling endurance record. Refueled 43 times, the Fokker flew 11,000 miles in a circle over Los Angeles. Major Carl Spaatz was one of the pilots. For the feat, Eaker was awarded an oakleaf to his DFC.

A pioneer of in-flight refueling, Eaker made the first transcontinental flight—while being refueled in the air—in 1930, Promoted to major in 1935, Eaker had become one of the ablest and most respected officers in the Army Air Corps. Eaker again made aviation headlines in 1936 by making the first "blind" transcontinental flight from New York to Los Angeles. His plane was hooded over, and he was guided only by instruments. It was while at the AAC and Army schools that Major Eaker—known for his intellect as much as for his flying skill and courage—wrote the first of three much-praised books with General Arnold. These were *This Flying Game* (1936), *Winged Warfare* (1941), and *Army Flyer* (1942).

Eaker briefly led the 20th Pursuit Group at Hamilton Field, California, and was promoted to colonel. He got his first look at war in August-September 1941, when he was ordered to England as a special observer. Eaker returned home to serve briefly at Mitchel Field. Then he was promoted to brigadier general in January 1942 and designated as commanding general of the U.S. Bomber Command (later the Eighth Bomber Command). He was chosen by his friends, Generals Arnold and Spaatz.

Eaker went back to England that February, this time to study British bombing operations

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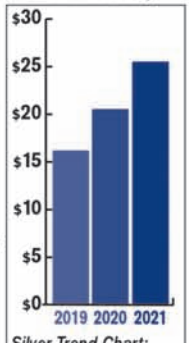
2) Which silver coins are right for me?



Silver Trend Chart: Price per ounce based on yearly averages.

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ABOVE: Boeing B-17 heavy bombers stream through the skies above Schweinfurt, Germany, during a bombing mission on August 17, 1943. The mission was one of many costly U.S. Eighth Air Force daylight raids on the Third Reich. LEFT: General Eaker (right) stands with British Marshal of the Royal Air Force Arthur Tedder. Eaker was disappointed when he was transferred from England to command of Allied Air Forces in the Mediterranean prior to D-Day.

and start organizing the complementary American effort. He soon established good relations with British war leaders, particularly Prime Minister Churchill and Air Chief Marshals Harris and Charles Portal.

General Eaker led the Eighth Bomber Command during its earliest, darkest months, agonizing over losses and frustrated by the slow arrival of replacement aircraft and crews. He retained command until December 1942, when he took over from General Spaatz as chief of the Eighth Air Force. Spaatz went to North Africa as the Allied air commander. Eaker was by now a major general (temporary).

Like Mitchell, Harris, and some other advocates of air power, Eaker believed incorrectly that the enemy could be defeated by a bombing campaign alone. He told British reporters in September 1942, "There are enough airdromes now built and building [*sic*] to accommodate all the Allied air forces needed for the destruction of Germany. I believe it is possible to destroy the enemy from the air. By destroying his aircraft factories, you can put an end to his air force. By destroying his munitions plants and communications, you can make it impossible for him to build submarines. There is nothing that can be destroyed by gunfire that cannot be destroyed by bombs."

By 1943, Eaker had done a herculean job of building the Eighth Air Force from scratch to a formidable force of 185,000 men and 4,000 airplanes. With the Americans bombing by day and RAF Bomber Command raiding nightly, the Allied aerial offensive was a round-the-clock operation, giving German cities and industry no respite.

But forces destined for the "Mighty Eighth" were diverted elsewhere, and Arnold became impatient with Eaker's results and progress. Effectiveness improved with time and much-needed resources, but in January 1944, Spaatz returned to England to head the U.S. Strategic

Air Forces in Europe, and Lt. Gen. James H. Doolittle went with him to replace Eaker as Eighth Air Force commander.

Eaker was promoted to lieutenant general and named to succeed Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder as commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces (the U.S. 12th and 15th Air Forces and the British Desert and Balkan Air Forces). It was a step up for him, but Eaker was disappointed, believing that he had been unjustly shuffled away from the primary arena of the war. Nevertheless, he stoically directed his air forces through the liberation of Rome, the invasion of southern France, the shuttle missions to Russia, and raids on southern Germany and the Ploesti oilfields in Romania.

Eaker spent the rest of the war in the Mediterranean theater. He was appointed deputy commander of the Army Air Forces and chief of the Air Staff in April 1945, and retired with the grade of major general on August 31, 1947. In June 1948, he was promoted to lieutenant general on the retired list.

After leaving the service, Eaker held several posts in the aerospace industry. He was a vice president of Hughes Tool Co. from 1947-57, a vice president and director of Douglas Aircraft Corp. from 1957-61, and chairman of Hughes Aircraft Co. from 1961. He was inducted into the Aviation Hall of Fame in Dayton, Ohio, in 1970. Eaker also found time to write a syndicated column that was carried in more than 180 newspapers and founded the *Strategic Review*, published by the U.S. Strategic Institute. In 1978, he was awarded a special Congressional Gold Medal in recognition of his contributions to aviation.

During a ceremony at the Defense Department on April 26, 1985, Eaker was promoted to full general by presidential direction and Senate consent. His fourth star was pinned on him by his wife, Ruth. General Charles A. Gabriel, the Air Force chief of staff, declared, "Few men can equal General Eaker's great stature as an air pioneer. We owe him our gratitude for his outstanding contributions to the Air Force and the nation."

An official Air Force statement read, "During a lifetime of service to his country, General Eaker has been an air-power pioneer, a proven combat commander, a successful postwar planner, and an articulate spokesman for a strong national defense."

The gallant aerial warrior died on August 6, 1987, and was buried with full honors at Arlington National Cemetery.

The late Michael D. Hull was a frequent contributor to WWII History *on a variety of military topics. He resided in Enfield, Connecticut.*

Flattening the

BY PATRICK J. CHAISSON

Corporal Thomas B. Tucker stood shivering in the bitterly cold night air as he looked down on a ribbon of water that separated his unit from the enemy's front-line positions. This was the Sauer River, a fast-flowing stream that Tucker—a combat engineer with the 5th Infantry Division—would soon attempt to row his assault boat across while under fire from German machine guns and nebelwerfer rocket artillery.

The Sauer River crossing, which took place in eastern Luxembourg on January 18, 1945, was the 15th such operation conducted by Corporal Tucker's outfit since it entered combat the previous July. Part of Lt. Gen. George Patton's Third U.S. Army, the 5th Infantry Division, nicknamed "Red Diamond" for its distinctive shoulder insignia, would eventually vault 25 rivers, including the mighty Rhine, before war's end. Patton even joked that its troops all had webbed feet from so much time spent in the water. Yet Tom Tucker and his fellow Red Diamond soldiers knew their reputation as river-crossing experts meant they would be chosen first for the most hazardous assignments.

This particular mission would require extraordinary courage and stamina from everyone involved. Those G.I.s preparing to leap the Sauer faced both a determined foe and some of the most brutal winter weather ever experienced by American fighting men. Their nighttime assault, conducted in subzero temperatures, thigh-deep snow, and biting winds, nevertheless had to be made. While few who were there understood its significance at the time, the Allies' final offensive against Hitler's Third Reich started on the Sauer River.

When Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt's panzers struck surprised U.S. forces in the Ardennes region of Belgium and Luxembourg on December 16, 1944, the 5th Infantry Division was fighting far to the south in Germany's Saar River valley. Four days later, as part of General Patton's audacious counterthrust into Rundstedt's southern flank, the unit abruptly pulled up stakes and moved into Luxembourg.

Conducted during a blinding snowstorm, this tactical motor march severely taxed the endurance of all those who participated in it. Then the Red Diamond's riflemen, half-frozen, poorly fed, and exhausted from their difficult journey, immediately launched an attack against overextended German forces. Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall marveled at their performance, later writing how "elements of the 5th Inf. Div. which were fighting in the Saar bridgehead on the morning of 20 December moved 69 miles, and were in contact with the enemy … by nightfall."

By December 29, the Red Diamond Division had fought its way to the Sauer River, a natural barrier separating Patton's Third U.S. Army from the German Seventh Army. Here, on a line of hills overlooking the river's south shore, its troops paused to rest, reorganize, and prepare for their next mission.

Led by Maj. Gen. S. LeRoy Irwin, the 5th Infantry Division consisted of some 14,600 fighting men. Its primary maneuver elements, the 2nd, 10th, and 11th Infantry Regiments, were all combat-tested but had recently suffered heavy losses while attempting to take the French fortress city of Metz. Despite an influx of replacements, most rifle companies remained well below their authorized strength.

Backing Irwin's infantrymen were four battalions of howitzers—the 19th, 46th, and 50th Field Artillery Battalions (FABs) (105mm towed), plus the 26th Field Artillery Battalion (155mm towed). Support commands included the

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Soldiers of the U.S. 5th Infantry Division, part of General George S. Patton's Third Army, march through the snowy streets of the town of Ettelbruck, Luxembourg, in January 1945. These soldiers were involved in the Allied counteroffensive that reduced the bulge formed by the German Ardennes Offensive. Some of these soldiers are wearing white sheets as camouflage.

Bulge

General George S. Patton's "Red Diamond" Division leaped the Sauer River in a bold, arduous assault in January 1945.

Bundesarchiv Bild 183-2005-0509-500; Photo: Langl

449th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion, 5th Medical Battalion, and 7th Engineer Combat Battalion (ECB). Smaller-sized ordnance, signal, cavalry, quartermaster, and military-police detachments completed the Red Diamond Division's organizational structure.

When the 5th Infantry Division moved north during the last days of December 1944, it picked up two armored units—the 737th Tank Battalion (TB) and 803rd Tank Destroyer (TD) Battalion—meant to replace other outfits left back at the Saar. It also received a transfer to Maj. Gen. Manton Eddy's XII Corps.

In mid-January 1945, XII Corps (one of three corps making up Third Army) held an L-shaped sector along the southern shoulder of the Ardennes front. Off on the right, orienting east along the Moselle River, the 2nd Cavalry Group and 87th "Golden Acorn" Infantry Division screened the Luxembourg-Germany border. The 4th "Ivy" Infantry Division, badly mauled by Rundstedt's forces in December, faced north to secure a critical position at the border town of Echternach. On XII Corps' left flank, the experienced but battle-weary 80th "Blue Ridge" Infantry Division tied in with other Third Army forces then fighting across western Luxembourg and Belgium. In the center, occupying strong positions over the narrow Sauer River, stood Maj. Gen. Irwin's Red Diamond Division.

The XII Corps remained in a largely defensive posture along this line from New Year's Day until January 18, 1945. Patton had other priorities. His focus was on reducing the "tip" of the Bulge many miles to the west. The XII Corps' orders were to build combat power, conduct aggressive patrolling, and prepare for continued offensive operations.

Meanwhile, those G.I.s dug in along the Sauer were fighting two cruel enemies—the German Army and the weather. At present, dealing with Luxembourg's unnaturally harsh winter took precedence over the human foe.

Meteorologists had not recorded conditions this severe in 100 years. Thermometers barely reached 32 degrees Fahrenheit during the day, and nighttime temperatures often plummeted to 10 degrees below zero. Frequent storms blanketed the region in up to two feet of snow, while overcast skies and an almost constant wind only compounded the misery.

Frontline soldiers did (and wore) whatever they could to stay warm. Private First Class Jack Davis, a medic in the 10th Infantry Regiment, remembered his uniform included "three pairs of woolen underwear, olive drab pants, shirt and sweater, and a driver's coat." Davis also had on thin gloves and two pairs of socks, one he kept dry under his clothes while wearing the other pair.

The elements took a heavy toll on soldiers' health. Cold-weather ailments—frostbite, trench foot, and the flu—left most rifle companies extremely undermanned, while aidmen were forced to manufacture improvised sleds using captured snow skis so they could evacuate the wounded.

Combat engineers, specially trained to build bridges and handle assault boats, were instead kept busy plowing and sanding roadways so ammunition, rations, and supplies could continue to reach the front. General Irwin considered his engineers as absolutely essential to any successful river crossing operation, but knew he did not possess enough of them. The 5th Infantry Division's 7th ECB lacked both the personnel and bridge-building equipment required to properly span the Sauer.

More engineers were needed. Fortunately, Maj. Gen. Eddy had assigned to his command the 1135th Engineer Combat Group (ECG), headed by Colonel Alfred Dodd Starbird. It became Starbird's task to coordinate all bridging activity in the XII Corps zone.

Available engineer assets included the Red Diamonds' own 7th ECB, the corps-level 133rd and 150th ECBs, and the smaller 509th Treadway Bridge Company. These units would ferry infantry across in wooden assault boats, emplace footbridges, and—depending on conditions—install either metal-framed Bailey or floating "treadway" bridges capable of accommodating armored vehicle traffic. Engineer service troops were also made available to take over certain non-combat duties in the rear area such as snow removal and road repair.

The XII Corps also planned to employ a variety of specialized combat support organizations

for this assignment. Companies C and D of the 91st Chemical Mortar Battalion (CMB) fired heavy 4.2-inch mortars capable of laying white phosphorous smoke on the objective, while the 81st Smoke Generator Company could blind enemy observers with smoke pots or fog oil. Military policemen kept traffic moving, medical personnel prepared for the expected influx of combat casualties, and members of a shadowy organization named the 3132nd Signal Service Company readied their "sound cars" for a highly-classified deception mission.

Altogether, Maj. Gen. Eddy gathered thousands of XII Corps soldiers to buttress the 5th Infantry Division's advance, along with smaller flanking attacks conducted by the adjacent 4th and 80th Divisions. Plans were finalized, recon patrols conducted, and bridging materials brought forward to the crossing sites. H-hour was set for 0300 hours [3:00 AM] on Thursday, January 18, 1945.

Watching all this activity from observation posts along the Sauer's northern bank were several thousand riflemen belonging to the 352nd Volksgrenadier Division (VGD). The 352nd VGD, commanded by Generalmajor Richard Bazing, had a critical assignment—hold the "Bulge" penetration's southern shoulder open so other German formations could withdraw to safety. Its three understrength infantry regiments, the 914th, 915th, and 916th grenadiers, would need to defend an impossibly long sector in rough terrain while enduring the same wintry conditions as did the foe.

General Bazing was additionally hampered by a shortage of ammunition for the hodgepodge of Italian, Russian, and German field pieces with which his 1352nd Artillery Regiment was equipped. Furthermore, most of these guns were horse-drawn and slow to maneuver in snow-covered terrain. More mobile were several batteries of trailer-mounted nebelwerfer rocket launchers, able to launch volleys of high-explosive projectiles and relocate before U.S. guns could respond.

The Germans did have plenty of landmines, though. Their deadly S-mine, or "Bouncing Betty," propelled itself three feet into the air when tripped, then sprayed a shower of shrapnel in all directions. The wooden "Schü" mine was immune to Allied mine detectors, while improvised booby traps were left anywhere an unwary G.I. might trigger them.

The terrain was well suited for defensive operations. The Sauer (or Sûre in French) River flowed generally eastward for 150 miles through France, Luxembourg, and Germany before emptying into the Moselle. Normally placid and shallow, the Sauer had been transformed by recent winter runoff into a roiling, ice-choked torrent. At the crossing sites, it measured 8-10 feet deep and from 100 to 120 feet across. Steep banks cut the southern edge.

A number of hill masses dominated the northern, German-held, side. Some prominences, like Goldknapp Hill, had a name on military maps, while other peaks such as Hill 383 were identified solely by their height in meters. The region was generally semi-mountainous in nature and heavily forested. A poor road network connected scattered farm communities with the more densely populated Sauer River valley.

Several riverside villages stood within the 5th Infantry Division's zone, the largest of which was the district capital, Diekirch. Smaller built-up areas included Ettelbruck, along the Red Diamond's western flank, and Bettendorf on its eastern boundary. The hamlets of Ingeldorf and Gilsdorf offered potential crossing sites partially shielded from direct observation.

General Irwin's infantrymen also needed to capture several hilltop strongpoints that dominated the valley. German artillery spotters had taken over a number of sturdy dwellings, including the Friedhof and Kippenhof farmsteads, that provided a clear view of the river. Ousting the foe from these ready-made stone fortresses would be no easy chore.

The 5th Infantry Division plan called for two regiments to cross the Sauer in a night attack, then continue their advance north to drive a 12-mile-deep wedge into the German lines. General Irwin believed this scheme, if properly executed, would help trap those enemy forces caught trying to retreat from the now collaps-

BELOW: In this distant view of the opposite bank of the Sauer River at Echternach, Luxembourg, American artillery shells land near German pillboxes and machine-gun nests in preparation for the 5th Infantry Division crossing, which took place on January 18, 1945. OPPOSITE: German infantrymen, their field-gray overcoats standing out against a snow-covered hillside, relocate during operations in Luxembourg in December 1944.

National Archives

ing Bulge. He further instructed, "Maximum use will be made of maneuver to bypass and pinch off fortified heights and towns," but understood the region's rugged terrain and deep snow would greatly restrict cross-country movement.

Irwin task-organized his command into three combat teams, each centered on an infantry regiment. The 2nd Combat Team (CT) consisted of the 2nd Infantry Regiment, as well as the 50th FAB, Company C of the 91st CMB, the 737th TB's Company A, and Company A of the 803rd TD Bn. Company C, 7th ECB, was to put across the first waves using footbridges and assault boats.

The 10th CT had at its core the 10th Infantry Regiment, supported by the 46th FAB, D/91 CMB, B/737 TB, and B/803 TD. Company B of the 7th ECB would get 10th CT's lead elements onto the far shore. In reserve was the 11th CT, which contained Maj. Gen. Irwin's remaining infantry regiment as well as the rest of his artillery and armor.

General Irwin divided his area of operations into two regimental zones. To the west, the 2nd CT would cross the Sauer via footbridge and assault boat near Ingeldorf, spreading out to seize Erpeldange, Goldknapp Hill, and Diekirch. The 10th CT was to jump the river four miles eastward at Gilsdorf, its objectives the village of Bettendorf and Hill 383, plus several other hill masses in the north. To preserve surprise, division artillery was prohibited from firing a preparatory bombardment.

Also working to mislead the foe was a top-secret sonic-deception unit. This outfit, the 3132nd Signal Service Company, employed powerful vehicle-mounted loudspeakers that replicated the sounds made by an approaching armored column. Operating under the 2nd Cavalry Group, these tricksters started broadcasting shortly after midnight on January 18 from positions along the Moselle River near Flaxweiler, Luxembourg—19 miles southeast of the actual crossing site. The ruse worked, as German gunners expended a significant amount of precious artillery ammunition against their phantom tanks.

Meanwhile, along the Sauer freezing temperatures and snow clouds combined to create an eerie, whitish fog that helped conceal the American combat engineers and riflemen then moving into position. At 0300 hours, the river crossing commenced.

In the 2nd CT's zone, Company C of the 7th ECB launched two footbridges, one on either side of Ingeldorf. The crossing east of town did not go well. Combat engineers twice attempted to put in a bridge, but both times were driven off by vigilant grenadiers. In response, infantrymen from the 2nd Battalion "marched down to the river with every gun firing and literally blasted the enemy from his far shore defenses," as described by the regimental historian. Then they boarded a flotilla of flimsy wooden boats and shoved off.

One of those G.I.s was Pfc. Michael C. Bilder of Company G. "Our boats had just left the riverbank," Bilder wrote, "when the Germans lit up the area with flares. The opposite bank cleared enough to reveal a full complement of

ABOVE: American combat engineers with the 5th Infantry Division erect a treadway bridge across the Sauer River. Smoke, intended to help protect the exposed engineers from enemy fire, billows after a shell has impacted the opposite bank. BELOW: An M4 Sherman tank of the 737th Tank Battalion has hit an icy patch and skidded off a road in Luxembourg while supporting the 5th Infantry Division's movement toward German positions.

Both: National Archives

Germans, dug in and well armed. Screams of pain, shouted orders, and noises of every kind filled the air as the enemy poured down fire on us during our journey across."

Other troops posted nearby began to shoot back, but their reckless fusillades terrified those men in the assault boats. "Crossing with German fire to our front and American fire from our rear was as frightening as all hell," Bilder recalled, later wondering how anyone could have survived that attack.

With their foe's attention focused on the eastern crossing, another group of combat engineers successfully emplaced a footbridge over the Sauer on Ingeldorf's west side. The 1st Battalion raced across it and headed north through thick snowdrifts toward the village of Erpeldange.

In the meantime, 2nd Battalion struggled to expand its tiny foothold on the north shore. Private Charles H. Schroder, a BAR gunner in Company F, had been wounded earlier that day but repeatedly refused medical attention. Continuing to fight despite several painful injuries, Schroeder dueled with enemy machine gunners posted on Goldknapp Hill who had caught his platoon out in the open. From a greatly exposed position, he laid down suppressive fire until a mortar shell struck and killed him.

On another part of the Goldknapp, T/5 Calvin J. Randolph observed three men go down with serious wounds. Unhesitatingly, Randolph, a medic, ran forward to evacuate them. He successfully carried two casualties off the field but fell to enemy bullets while aiding the third soldier.

Schroeder and Randolph were each posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for their valor on January 18, 1945.

Dug in on the German-held heights overlooking Diekirch, Private Ulrich Jonath of the 2nd Bn., 914th Grenadiers, witnessed it all. "Under cover of darkness and without artillery preparation," he wrote, "the Americans were crossing the Sauer in boats to begin the attack." Jonath observed their progress using his MG42 machine gun's optical sight. "Through the glass I saw numerous white-camouflaged figures ... In no time [we] were ordered to fire, and I shot at the rows of attacking Americans. The group to our left also fired like mad."

Jonath's account continued: "Shortly afterward, some of our mortars also fired across the Sauer. Screams were heard. There were many dead men on the slope."

After daybreak, German howitzers and nebelwerfers roared into action. Projectiles fused to detonate at treetop level plastered the bridgeheads despite all attempts to obscure them with chemical smoke. The 7th ECB's Corporal Tom

The American 5th Infantry Division crossed the Sauer River on January 18, 1945, against fierce German opposition. Numerous acts of individual bravery helped the American infantrymen gain a foothold and eventually expand their lodgment.

Tucker watched in horror as his friend Pfc. Leroy R. Thomas was struck and killed by shell fragments during one of these barrages.

In response, U.S. field artillery began pounding known and suspected German positions north of the river. Although all attempts to install a footbridge on Ingeldorf's eastern side had failed, infantrymen from 1st and 3rd Battalions, 2nd CT, were able to safely cross west of town. By noon, the Americans had enveloped Goldknapp Hill, isolated the villages of Ingeldorf and Erpeldange, and positioned themselves for an advance on Diekirch.

Four miles downstream, the 10th CT leaped the Sauer at Gilsdorf. First to go over was 3rd Battalion, which started off by "loading men into the assault boats at the top of the slope and shoving the boats downhill like toboggans," as an official Army historian related. Engineers also tied 150-foot lengths of rope to their watercraft so they could be safely pulled back across for the next wave.

Thanks to a thorough pre-mission reconnaissance, 3rd Battalion's crossing achieved total surprise. In the pre-dawn murk, American infantrymen moved surely and silently to occupy key terrain on high ground overlooking the village of Bettendorf. By 0600 hours they had reached the objective without a shot being fired.

One sergeant summed up their accomplishment thusly: "To sneak several hundred men across a river right in the teeth of prepared enemy positions, to infiltrate the men through enemy lines carrying heavy machine guns and other noisy equipment and to reach an objective hundreds of yards behind the enemy front line—to do all that isn't hard, it isn't clever, it isn't soldiering, it's just downright impossible. But we did it."

Distracted by 2nd CT's noisy bridgehead to the west, German forces reacted slowly to the Gilsdorf operation. Unteroffizier (Junior NCO) Wilhelm Stetter of 1st Battalion, 915th Grenadier Regiment, manned an observation post covering Bettendorf. Through his binoculars, Stetter saw "eight rubber boats at a bend in the Sauer" and concluded this was no small-scale raid but rather "a genuine attack".

Later that morning, Stetter observed "a long row of men" in camouflage snow suits nearing his position. "Pointing my assault rifle at the column," he recollected, "I pulled the trigger; my MP 44 rattled." Stetter and his fellow grenadiers fought a delaying action at Bettendorf all day, inflicting numerous casualties on the American forces, then surging forward all around them.

Back at the crossing sites, Colonel Starbird's troops began the task of constructing heavy-duty vehicle bridges. At 0400 hours, Lieutenant George Stejskal and six combat engineers from the 133rd ECB traversed the Sauer near Gilsdorf to lay guide cables for a treadway bridge. German MG42 crews hidden along the riverbank fired on them, wounding one G.I. and

scattering the rest. Stejskal led his men to cover, then went back with two volunteers to rescue the injured soldier and treat his wounds.

After some nearby riflemen silenced the enemy guns, Lieutenant Stejskal's team got back to work. Three and a half hours later, the first treadway bridge at Gilsdorf opened for business. It came at a cost, though—nine members of the 133rd ECB were wounded and three killed by hostile fire that morning.

On the Red Diamond's western flank, Company C of the 150th ECB erected an 80-foot Bailey Bridge over the Sauer at Ettelbruck. Tank destroyers from A/803 TD then dashed over it to assist the infantry. One 3rd Platoon crew earned mention in the battalion's after-action report when they poked the barrel of their M10's main gun through the window of a house in Erpeldange to flush out 27 German prisoners of war without firing a round.

This bridging effort succeeded brilliantly, according to the division's historian: "The Fifth's own 7th Engineer Battalion and the Third Army's [133rd Engineer Battalion,] 150th Engineer Battalion and 509th Treadway Bridge Company threw across one treadway bridge, two Class 40 Bailey bridges, two assault boat and two foot bridges in less than 18 hours, despite the intermittent artillery fire that fell along the river two hours after troops forced the crossing."

"By nightfall on the 18th," the division history continued, "the Second and Tenth Regiments had won a bridgehead across the Sauer that was 2,000 yards deep and covered an irregular 8,000 yard front." Ettelbruck, Erpeldange, Ingeldorf, Gilsdorf, and Bettendorf were all in U.S. hands, while the heavily defended village of Diekirch had been surrounded. The 5th Infantry Division historian went on to claim that "whole platoons of Germans were taken prisoner who claimed they never had a chance to fire a shot." Officially, 150 grenadiers went into prisoner-of-war cages that day.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: This self-propelled 155mm gun of the 737th Tank Battalion struggles through thick mud as it crosses the countryside in Luxembourg. Winter weather hindered the progress of the armor in support of the 5th Infantry Division advance of early 1945. OPPOSITE: Pressing forward across the wintry landscape in Luxembourg, these soldiers of the 10th Infantry Regiment, 5th Division, follow a tank that is visible in the distance. Once the 5th Division reached the German frontier, the unit crossed the Sauer again in early February 1945 to confront the fortifications of the Siegfried Line.

Yet the foe demonstrated he still had plenty of fight left in him. At dawn on January 19, marauding German riflemen struck Company A, 2nd Infantry, near the Friedhof Farm north of Erpeldange. Cut off by enemy infiltrators, company commander Captain Lennis Jones singlehandedly killed 11 of them with his pistol and carbine before leading a charge that finally repulsed the grenadiers' attack. This action earned Jones a Distinguished Service Cross.

Aided by field artillery, 4.2-inch mortars, and five M4 Sherman tanks from A/737 TB, infantrymen of the 2nd CT's 3rd Battalion finished clearing Diekirch by 1200 hours. There they found evidence of war crimes in the form of several recently executed civilians. At Bastendorf, members of the 2nd Battalion, 10th CT, discovered a number of dead American soldiers left piled up inside the village church. These unfortunates, all members of the 28th "Keystone" Infantry Division, had apparently been captured in the December offensive, then stripped of their shoes and shot in the back of the head.

The Red Diamond's combat teams continued pressing northward while maintaining constant contact with the 4th and 80th Infantry Divisions advancing on their flanks. It was slow going; hilly terrain, thick snow, and ferocious German resistance made each step a struggle. Land mines and booby traps also took their toll on those G.I.s unlucky enough to trip one. The 150th ECB's Bruce Reagan testified to this hazard when he recalled a respected lieutenant losing his foot to a *Schü* mine near Diekirch.

January 20 started as another day of cold rations, no air cover, swirling snow, and freezing cold. Private William H. Thomas, machine gunner with Co. M, 10th CT, was standing guard on a hillside near Tandel when he saw some 30 grenadiers moving into his field of view. The column advanced to within 25 yards of Thomas' position before its officer spotted him. Both men then spent several minutes in a bizarre pantomime debate, each madly gesturing for the other to surrender before Private Thomas—tiring of this game—fired into the German patrol and wiped it out.

Several miles to the west, another group of grenadiers allowed Co. F of the 2nd CT to get within 100 yards of their strongpoint on the Kippenhof Farm before opening up with well-sited automatic weapons. Grabbing his company radio, Staff Sergeant Clemens G. Noldau crawled forward over bare, exposed terrain to locate the enemy position and transmit a call for artillery support. Although German gunners killed Noldau, his sacrifice, which earned him the Distinguished Service Cross, led to Kippenhof's capture that afternoon.

By January 21, Generalmajor Bazing's division could no longer be considered combat capable. One by one his line of infantry strongpoints such as the ones at Friedhof and Kippenhof farms had been crushed by relentless American attacks, while the 352nd VGD's artillery was of little help, its howitzers and rocket artillery either obliterated by counter-battery fire or unable to shoot due to ammunition shortages.

Bazing's situation caused high command to rush forward reinforcements, as well as to has-

ten the withdrawal of all Wehrmacht forces still in Luxembourg. Those units needed to reach Vianden and the last bridge under German control that spanned the Our River before American forces wrecked or captured it. Unfortunately for them, the skies cleared just enough for low-flying spotter planes from the 5th Infantry Division's 46th FAB to discover their march columns. Following close behind were several squadrons of Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighter-bombers belonging to Patton's XIX Tactical Air Command (TAC).

Red Diamond Division G.I.s got to watch the Thunderbolts at work. "Those Krauts had hundreds of vehicles of all descriptions jammed on those roads bumper to bumper," one Pfc. remembered, "when that fog lifted and our planes came down on them." His account continued: "All day the air shook with the violence of our artillery barrages and the concussion of the aerial bombs." Ultimately, XIX TAC received credit for destroying or damaging 1,700 enemy vehicles that day.

On January 22, the fresh 11th CT relieved an exhausted 2nd CT in the western part of General Irwin's attack zone. This day also marked the division's first encounter with German armor—Co. B of the 737th TB tangled with three Mk IV panzers while supporting 10th CT's push on the Puhl farmstead.

A dangerous new threat was now entering the battlefield. This force, the Panzer Lehr Division, operated a number of Mk V Panther and Mk VI Tiger tanks deemed far superior in firepower and armor protection to the Americans' M4 Shermans. While far below its authorized strength due to battle losses and mechanical breakdowns, Panzer Lehr still represented an exceptionally formidable foe.

The Red Diamonds had a few tricks of their own, however. For the first time, division artillery was allowed to utilize proximity-fused projectiles that greatly enhanced the effectiveness of its coordinated "time-on-target" fire missions. And the 737th TB now fielded several M4A3E2 assault tanks, which they nicknamed "Jumbos." Outfitted with an extra inch and a half of armor welded to the turret and hull, these Jumbos could better withstand a hit from German high-velocity tank guns.

On January 22, the 11th CT's advance on Hoscheid quickly stalled due to unfavorable terrain. Unit historians claimed that "the steep grades, nature of the ground and deep snow proved to be a great obstacle, causing general fatigue among the foot elements and prohibiting movement of vehicles." A tenacious defense further complicated matters; it took two full days to capture this small village.

The 10th CT spent four days—January 24-28—battering itself against Putscheid, the last urban town in its operational area still held by German forces. Three times 1st Battalion went in with tank and TD support, only to see each attempt blunted by the aggressive, battle-wise Panzer Lehr. On January 28, after a massive bombardment that involved the entire 5th Division Artillery and most of XII Corps' big guns, 10th CT's riflemen finally seized what remained of Putscheid. That afternoon they easily defeated a local counterattack, concluding the Red Diamonds' 11-day winter campaign.

This victory came at a high cost. General Patton himself acknowledged the sacrifice of every American soldier who served along the Sauer that January when he exclaimed, "How human beings could endure this continuous fighting in sub-zero temperatures is still beyond my comprehension!"

Yet there was little respite for those G.I.s who had just helped flatten the Bulge in Luxembourg. After taking five days to rest and reconstitute their ranks, the men of the Red Diamond moved on to an assembly area near Echternach. On February 7, they again leaped the Sauer River, only this time the 5th Infantry Division's axis of advance faced east toward the Siegfried Line.

No one knew it then, but the war in Europe would end with Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender in just 90 days.

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After completing a reconnaissance mission in the jungles of Guadalcanal, a group of U.S. Marines poses for a photographer while delivering a Japanese prisoner for interrogation. The Marine at right has taken a Japanese sword as a souvenir. Prisoners were rarely taken in the Pacific, as Japanese soldiers preferred suicide to captivity.

BARE-KNUCKLE BRAWL at Guadalcanal


National Archives

The U.S. Marine Corps came of age as a land fighting force during the difficult days on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands.

BY MICHAEL E. HASKEW

Even after their stunning defeat at Midway in early June 1942, senior commanders of the Imperial Japanese armed forces were resolute in their grand plan to extend their defensive perimeter in the Pacific.

Soon, Japanese attention turned away from the Central Pacific, toward the south. Major Allied bases in that region posed a threat to Japanese security and the continuing exploitation of the natural resources of the Dutch East Indies, which had been one of the nation's primary reasons for going to war.

From their bases in Australia and elsewhere in the South Pacific, the Americans and their allies threatened Japanese interests. Therefore, a decision to mount a land assault against Port Moresby from the landward side on New Guinea was coupled with a renewed effort to secure the expansive defensive perimeter that included the Solomon Islands chain, 10 degrees below the equator, due west of New Guinea, northeast of Australia and New Zealand, and northwest of American bases in the New Hebrides.

In January 1942, the Japanese seized and began fortifying the major harbor of Rabaul on the island of New Britain in the Bismarck archipelago. In conjunction with this security initiative, orders were given to build a seaplane base on the small island of Tulagi in the Solomons and an airstrip at Lunga Point on the island of Guadalcanal, 22 miles to the south across Sealark Channel. In the coming months, fighting would rage in the Solomons, and Sealark Channel would become "Ironbottom Sound" because of the number of ships sunk there.

Although their resounding triumph at Midway had evened the odds in the Pacific War and bought time for American forces to gain strength for the long, fighting road to Tokyo, the news that the Japanese were constructing facilities that could threaten communication and supply lines that were vital to their interests in the South Pacific prompted senior American commanders to act. If the Japanese were allowed to firmly establish airstrips in the Solomons, American bases would be within range of their bombers and fighters.

In the summer of 1942, Operation Watchtower, initially aimed at Tulagi but later expanded to include Guadalcanal and the islands of Gavutu and Tanambogo, was set in motion. True to their directive as first to fight, U.S. Marines were selected to undertake the first American ground offensive in the Pacific War. Vice Admiral Richard L. Ghormley commanded the South Pacific Area, while naval Task Force 61 was under the command of Vice Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher, the amphibious forces were led by Rear Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, and the 1st Marine Division, commanded by Major General Alexander A. Vandegrift, was slated to land at Guadalcanal and Tulagi.

The invasion force assembled near Fiji and set sail for the Solomons on July 31 after conducting a lackluster training exercise at Koro Island. August 7, 1942, was slated as the landing date.

Although inexperienced, since many of its combat infantrymen had only enlisted in the military after Pearl Harbor, the 1st Marine Division was a powerful fighting force of 19,000 troops. Two Marine regiments, the 5th under Colonel Leroy P. Hunt and the 1st under Colonel Clifton B. Cates, were to seize the airstrip. The 11th Marines, commanded by Colonel Pedro A. del Valle, and the 3rd Defense Battalion were to provide support and exploit early gains. The total strength assigned to Guadalcanal amounted to just over 11,000 men. Across Sealark Channel, the 1st Marine Division's assistant commander, Brigadier General William H. Rupertus, commanded roughly 2,400 Marines for the capture of Tulagi, Gavutu, and Tanambogo, including the 1st Raider Battalion under Lt. Col. Merritt A. "Red Mike" Edson, the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines under Lt. Col. Harold E. Rosecrans, and the 1st Parachute Battalion commanded by Major Harold E. Williams.

For the Marines, the Solomons Campaign would present a new kind of war. Six months of savage fighting loomed ahead, against the determined Japanese enemy, the fetid jungles of an almost-uninhabitable island, and the ravages of malaria and other tropical diseases. As the date for the landings approached, Vandegrift wrote to his wife, "Tomorrow morning at

All: Naval History and Heritage Command

ABOVE: Amphibious tractors churn toward the beach with supplies for the troops ashore. When the Marines hit the beach at Guadalcanal on August 7, 1942, they encountered virtually no Japanese resistance. RIGHT: Colonel Kimono Ichiki, left, commanded the 28th Infantry Regiment that was charged with ejecting the Marines from Guadalcanal. Lieutenant Colonel Merritt A. "Red Mike" Edson, right, led the Marine defense against the Japanese counterattack on Guadalcanal at Bloody Ridge.

dawn we land in our first major offensive of the war. Our plans have been made and God grant that our judgement has been sound ... whatever happens you'll know I did my best. Let us hope that best will be good enough."

When the 5th Marines stormed ashore on Guadalcanal at 9:09 a.m. on August 7, they were surprised to encounter virtually no resistance. Only about 2,500 Japanese troops and Korean laborers were present on the island, and they had melted into the jungle during the previous days' preinvasion bombing and the subsequent naval barrage. Quickly, the Marines crossed the Ilu River and established a beachhead 2,000 yards long and 600 yards deep. The following day, they advanced the last 1,000 yards and took the airstrip against little opposition.

Meanwhile, the early going at Tulagi was anything but easy. The defenders there were few in number, only about 350 troops of the 3rd Kure Special Naval Landing Force and about 540 support personnel of the Yokohama Air Group along with a handful of construction workers. However, they were well entrenched and motivated. Nearly 1,000 men of the Yokohama Air Group were on Gavutu and Tanambogo as well.

Tulagi was secured by the afternoon of August 8, but the Marines there endured heavy resistance, particularly as Edson's Raiders reached high ground overlooking the island's harbor. During the night of the 7th, the Japanese launched several counterattacks, and the next morning Marine reinforcements assisted in the reduction of troublesome enemy machine-gun and mortar positions. More than 150 Marines were killed or wounded in the action, while only three Japanese prisoners were taken. The rest of the defenders died fighting. Gavutu and Tanambogo were captured at a cost of 70 Marines killed and 87 wounded, while the Japanese suffered more than 500 dead.

The American landings in the Solomons took the Japanese high command by surprise, and in the days that followed the response to the offensive was piecemeal. Rather than the sledgehammer blow that they were capable of delivering against the Americans, the Japanese chose to commit only enough forces to deal with what they considered a minor threat. Their failure to recognize the scale of the Solomons thrust contributed mightily to their eventual defeat. By the evening of August 8, the Marines were ashore on Guadalcanal along with artillery and supporting weapons. They numbered more than five times the strength that the Japanese had estimated during the early hours of the operation.

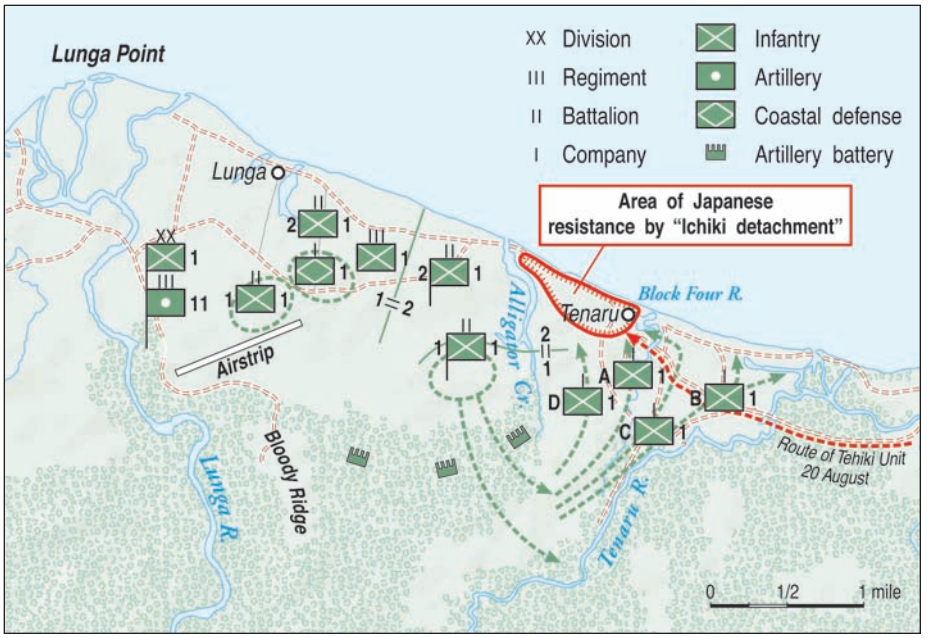
The initial Japanese response to the Guadalcanal landings included air attacks from Rabaul and naval retaliation. During the arduous campaign, several major engagements between warships of the U.S. Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy swirled around the embattled southern Solomons. During the first of these, on the night of August 8, a Japanese task force devastated Allied warships tasked with guarding the approaches to the beachhead. The U.S. cruisers *Quincy*, *Vincennes*, and *Astoria* were sunk along with the Australian cruiser *Canberra*.

The disastrous Battle of Savo Island compelled Admiral Fletcher to inform Ghormley that his aircraft carriers were vulnerable. Offshore air support for the Marines could not be sustained. It followed that Turner had to pull his amphibious and supply vessels out, as well. On August 9, the naval support began to withdraw, some of the transports with vital supplies still aboard. The Marines on Guadalcanal had only 17 days' rations available, and the headquarters element of the 2nd Marines was unable to get ashore on the island until the end of October.

Vandegrift and his subordinate commanders were flabbergasted, but the Marines proved resourceful. They scrounged abandoned Japanese food and materiel, conserved and rationed what they had, dug in along the Ilu toward nearby high ground, and got busy finishing the half-completed airstrip begun by the Japanese. They named the airstrip in honor of Major Lofton Henderson, who had lost his life leading Marine squadron VMSB-241 during the recent Midway battle.

Within a week of the Marine landings, Henderson Field was operational. Control of the airstrip meant that fighters and bombers could defend against Japanese air raids and possibly interdict the enemy delivery of supplies and reinforcements. It also meant that the Marines might expect some resupply of their own and that wounded could be evacuated. From the

Map © 2022 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



National Archives

ABOVE: M3 Stuart light tanks move forward on Guadalcanal. Mounting a 37mm main weapon and .30-caliber machine guns, the Stuarts inflicted heavy losses on the attacking Japanese at the Battle of the Tenaru River. TOP: Entrenched Marines mowed down Japanese attackers on Guadalcanal at the Battle of the Tenaru River. Maps of the area were mislabeled, and the action actually took place along the Ilu River, nicknamed Alligator Creek by the Marines.

senior officers on land and sea to the lowliest private, everyone knew that control of Henderson Field was the key to victory at Guadalcanal and in the Solomons.

When the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters in Tokyo began to stir in response to the Marine encroachment at Guadalcanal, the Seventeenth Army under Lieutenant General Haruyoshi Hyakutake, already engaged heavily in the fighting on New Guinea, was tasked with eliminating the American lodgment. Hyakutake ordered the 35th Infantry Brigade, under Major General Kiyotake Kawaguchi, to step into the breach. Kawaguchi selected an elite unit then based at Guam, the 28th Infantry Regiment under Colonel Kiyono Ichiki, to land on the island and wipe out the American Marines.

By August 18, six destroyers had delivered Ichiki and nearly 1,000 men to Guadalcanal. A Marine patrol got the drop on a Japanese reconnaissance party and brought back intelligence that confirmed what the Americans had known all along: A determined Japanese attack was coming soon. Colonel Cates ordered his defensive lines lengthened along the Ilu River, nicknamed Alligator Creek by the Marines, and incorrectly identified on Marine Corps maps as the Tenaru. The 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines defended a perimeter that stretched 2,700 yards from the coast at Lunga to the river.

Ichiki assembled his command and issued orders to hit the Marines between the Ilu and Lunga Point on the night of August 21. Once the Marine line was cracked, the Japanese infantry would split, seizing Henderson Field and reducing an enemy defensive position at Lunga Point. Ichiki was supremely confident as he sent his men into battle.

Private John L. Joseph of Company G, 2nd Battalion watched the river intently. He was startled to see the silhouette of a man appear to rise directly out of the water. As the enemy soldier crept closer to Joseph's foxhole, the Marine shot him in the face. Soon the entire Marine line was alerted, spitting fire at Ichiki's soldiers as they made for a sandbar in the midst of the river. About 2 a.m., a green flare lit the night with a sinister glow, illuminating a cluster of Japanese troops that were making their way forward.

Marine machine guns and Springfield Model 1903 rifles chattered and barked. Artillerymen packed their 37mm anti-tank guns with canister rounds, effectively turning the weapons into oversized shotguns. When the canister rounds exploded, they spewed lead balls in every direction, tearing great swaths through the Japanese infantry. Despite horrific casualties, Ichiki's men were relentless, and the colonel committed the balance of his forces to the fight. Several Marine positions were overrun, but the line held.

During the night, repeated Japanese thrusts were repulsed, and near dawn an effort to outflank the Marines was cut to ribbons by the concentrated fire of .30-caliber machine guns, rifles, and 75mm shells from the 3rd Battalion, 11th Marines artillery. The enemy force was pinned down, and as dawn broke Colonel Cates and his subordinates held a hasty war council.

"We aren't about to let those people lay up there all day," groused the division operations officer Colonel Gerald C. Thomas. Cates replied, "We've got to get them out today!"

Lieutenant Colonel Lenard B. Cresswell's 1st Battalion, 1st Marines crossed the Ilu upstream and then hit the enemy position from the north, rolling up the Japanese left flank. Joining in the assault was a platoon of five M3A1 Stuart light tanks under Lieutenant Leo Case of Company

ABOVE: Dead Japanese soldiers of the Ichiki Detachment lie where they fell in a coconut grove near the mouth of the Ilu River on Guadalcanal. BELOW: A dead Japanese soldier and a dead U.S. Marine (foreground) lie in close proximity, providing mute testimony to the close-quarter savagery of the combat on Guadalcanal. The Marine still clutches a fighting knife. OPPOSITE: Marines are seen following a circuitous path from the top of Edson's Ridge on Guadalcanal. The Marines defending the line against a desperate Japanese attack stood their ground, and accurate artillery support devastated the attackers.

Both: National Archives

B, 1st Tank Battalion. Lieutenant Nick Stevenson led Company C, one of four Marine companies engaged in the flanking maneuver, and chewed up a platoon of Japanese soldiers. The enemy force was squeezed into a tightening triangular perimeter, and the tanks ravaged the Japanese, grinding some of the hapless enemy soldiers beneath their treads and blasting others with 37mm shells and machine-gun fire.

Author Richard Tregaskis, whose book *Guadalcanal Diary* brought the story of the island battle home to millions of Americans, watched the tanks work through a stand of palm trees. "It was fascinating to see them bustling amongst the trees, pivoting, turning, spitting sheets of yellow flame …. We had not realized there were so many Japs in the grove. Group after group were flushed out and shot down by the tanks' canister shells."

When Cates became concerned that the tanks were too exposed, he ordered Case to pull back. The lieutenant's blood was up, and he responded tersely, "Leave us alone! We're too busy killing Japs!"

As the erroneously named Battle of the Tenaru River petered out, 800 Japanese soldiers were dead, while only 15 were taken prisoner. The Marines lost 34 killed and 75 wounded. Ichiki burned his regimental colors and shot himself.

During this period, the naval and air war off Guadalcanal intensified. The naval Battle of the Eastern Solomons was fought August 24-25, resulting in a tactical draw as the aircraft carrier USS *Enterprise* was damaged while the Japanese suffered damage to a light carrier and the loss of many planes and trained aircrews.

During this naval battle, the pivotal role that Henderson Field was to play in the campaign came sharply into focus. The Allied codename for Guadalcanal was "Cactus," and on August 20, the first planes of Marine Air Group 23 (MAG-23) landed on the embattled island. These were the 19 Grumman F4F Wildcat fighters of Marine Squadron VMF-223 and the 12 Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bombers of VMSB-232. At the end of the month, these planes were joined by two more squadrons, the fighters of VMF-224 and the bombers of VMSB-231. Along with Bell P-400 Airacobras of the Army's 67th Fighter Squadron, these intrepid pilots and their planes came to be known as the Cactus Air Force.

The struggle for superiority in the air above Guadalcanal became desperate, and the day after his arrival, Captain John L. Smith, commander of VMF-223, shot down a Japanese Zero. Marine pilots quickly became proficient aerial duelers, and their number of kills climbed steadily. Cactus Air Force planes downed 16 enemy aircraft during a raid on September 24. During that twisting and diving dogfight, Captain Marion E. Carl shot down three enemy planes. Carl was one of only a few land-based fighter pilots who had flown during the Battle of Midway and lived through the ordeal. He went on to finish the war as one of the Marine Corps' top-scoring aces, with 18½ victories.

During three days of aerial combat from August 29-31, Marine Wildcat pilots shot down 29 enemy planes. Nevertheless, Japanese raids seriously damaged Henderson Field and destroyed much-needed supplies of ammunition and aviation fuel. During the air melee on the 31st, four Wildcats were shot down.

The leading fighter ace of the early campaign in the Solomons was Marine Captain Joseph J. Foss of VMF-121, who received the Medal of Honor for his combat exploits. His citation read in part:

"For outstanding heroism and courage above and beyond the call of duty as executive officer of Marine Fighting Squadron 121, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, at Guadalcanal. Engaging in almost daily combat with the enemy from 9 October to 19 November 1942, Captain Foss personally shot down 23 Japanese planes and damaged others so severely that their destruc-

tion was extremely probable ...."

Foss was said to have damaged at least another 14 Japanese planes, and doubtless some of these were shot down. He ended the war with 26 confirmed kills. Four other Marine fighter pilots, Captain Jefferson J. DeBlanc of VMF-112, Major Robert E. Galer of VMF-224, and Captain Smith of VMF-223 received the Medal of Honor. Collectively, these four pilots destroyed 67 Japanese aircraft.

On the ground, General Vandegrift took the opportunity to consolidate his available infantry strength, transferring the Raider and Parachute battalions under Lt. Col. Edson and the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines to Guadalcanal from Tulagi. At the same time, the Japanese had deemed the continuing daylight runs of troops to Guadalcanal too hazardous due to the American air presence at Henderson Field. As an alternative, they undertook nocturnal supply-and-reinforcement missions down the narrow Solomons channel, nicknamed "The Slot," and delivered thousands of troops to the embattled island. Japanese cruisers and destroyers also shelled Henderson Field and other Marine positions nightly. The Marines dubbed the supply runs under cover of darkness the "Tokyo Express."

Early in their deployment, the Marines had fortified positions along high ground facing west toward the Matanikau River, and Vandegrift fully expected a renewed Japanese effort to capture Henderson Field. He knew that the enemy was growing stronger, and by early September Kawaguchi's 35th Infantry Brigade was on Guadalcanal in force.

Kawaguchi believed that the Marines had strengthened their flanks at the expense of the center of their line, and with 2,000 troops he intended to attack straight into the belly of the Marine defenses directly at Henderson Field. Although the success of Kawaguchi's plan depended on Vandegrift being preoccupied with his flanks, the Marine commander was convinced that Henderson Field was Kawaguchi's objective. He told Edson to place his Raiders and Parachute troops along a ridge that stretched within a mile of the vital airstrip.

Edson, who later remarked that he was "firmly convinced that we were in the path of the next Jap attack," ordered his men to dig in on the forward slopes, and by the evening of September 10, they were in place. Two days later, a Japanese patrol brushed the defensive perimeter, and the Marines knew that the big enemy push was only hours away.

At 9 p.m. on the 12th, the storm broke. Japanese soldiers rushed from the thick jungle foliage and assaulted Edson's left flank. They were repulsed but undeterred. Moments later a second charge hit the Marines' right flank. This time enemy troops got into some Marine foxholes, and the fighting was hand-to-hand before the attackers faded away. A third charge hit the tired Marines once again and failed. After five and one-half hours of combat, Edson radioed Vandegrift that the Marines would hold the line. No one, however, believed the fight was over.

Edson encouraged his troops and told them, "They were just testing. They'll be back." He added, "You men have done a great job, and I have just one more thing to ask of you. Hold out just one more night. I know we've been without sleep a long time. But we expect another attack from them tonight and they may come through here. I have every reason to believe that we will have reliefs here for all of us in the morning."

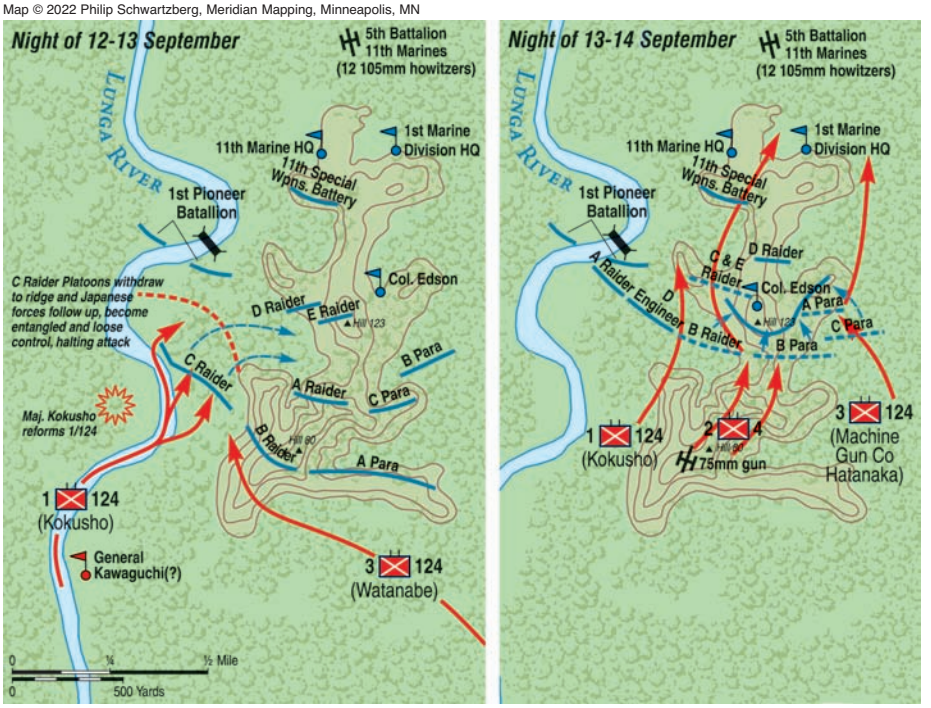
The following night, perhaps the most stirring defensive stand in the history of the Marine Corps took place along the high ground that has since been known as either "Bloody Ridge" or "Edson's Ridge" in honor of the gallant officer who seemed to be everywhere during the battle that saved Henderson Field, the American perimeter, and possibly the entire Allied initiative in the Pacific War.

Edson's men braced themselves, and the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines came up to reinforce the network of foxholes and machine-gun nests. The Japanese came on in waves, overlapping forward Marine positions and engaging in close-quarter combat. Captain William J. McKennan remembered, "The Japanese attack was almost constant, like a rain that subsides for a moment and then pours the harder .... When one wave was mowed down—and I mean mowed down—another followed it into death."

Three companies of Japanese infantry managed to skirt the Marine line and reached the edge of Henderson Field, but it was their high-water mark. A swift counterattack by Marine

Naval History and Heritage Command

Map © 2022 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



ABOVE: The Japanese launched attacks against U.S. Marine positions on Edson's Ridge for two consecutive nights and were repulsed in heavy fighting. For his leadership and courage during these desperate hours, Lieutenant Colonel Merritt A. "Red Mike" Edson received the Medal of Honor. BELOW: Behind their sand-bag reinforced foxhole, three U.S. Marines point their rifles in the direction of a suspected Japanese attack on Edson's Ridge.

National Archives

engineers threw them into retreat. Attacks lasted until approximately 4 a.m. on September 14, when two Japanese infantry companies struck the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines near the beach and were hurled back with great loss.

Throughout the savage fight for Bloody Ridge, Marine artillery was superb. "The 11th Marines' 105mm howitzers gave good account of themselves in the battle, with the heaviest concentration of artillery fire Guadalcanal had seen so far," recalled one veteran of the action, "dropping well-placed barrages into enemy positions just 200 yards from the dug-in Marines. When it was over, the Marines' 105 howitzers had fired 1,992 rounds into the enemy's ranks. The 75s alone had unloaded more than 1,000."

A forward-observation post was maintained on top of the ridge, and the range to Japanese targets closed at times to a mere 1,600 yards. "The way it fell," said one observer, "it looked as if the artillery lads were trying to burn out their barrels, so fast and furiously did the shells go over the Raiders. Out of this barrage grew an apocryphal story: a Jap officer is supposed to have asked later, upon his capture, to see the 'automatic artillery' we used that night."

More than 800 Japanese soldiers were killed and 600 wounded before the ferocious Marine defenders of Bloody Ridge broke the back of their repeated charges. The Marines lost 59 dead and nearly 200 wounded. Captain Kenneth Bailey of Company C, 1st Raider Battalion received the Medal of Honor for conspicuous bravery. Suffering from a serious head wound, the company commander rallied his men during 10 hours of on-again, off-again hand-to-hand fighting. Bailey survived the hellish night but was killed in action at the Matanikau River two weeks later. For his courage under fire and outstanding leadership, Edson also received the Medal of Honor.

Costly though it was, the victory at Bloody Ridge bolstered Marine morale and electrified the American public. The Marine Corps was fast earning its reputation as one of the world's premiere land-combat forces.

Vandegrift had no time to revel in the newly found fame. While scores of sick and wounded Marines were evacuated, reinforcements came ashore. By late September, the Marines on Guadalcanal were up to division strength, more than 19,000. However, the reinforcements did not reach the island without a price. On November 15, the aircraft carrier *Wasp* was sunk by a Japanese submarine, and the same torpedo spread damaged the battleship *North Carolina* and a destroyer.

As their casualties mounted and airstrikes from Henderson Field sank several transport craft loaded with combat troops, the Japanese realized that the outcome of the battle for Guadalcanal would be critical to the course of the war. At least two divisions of Japanese troops were detailed to the island for a decisive encounter.

Vandegrift expanded his defensive perimeter toward the Matanikau River in the direction of the Japanese landing beaches. The 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, under the command of Lt. Col. Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller and supported by the 5th Marines, now under Edson's leadership, conducted a reconnaissance in force near the heights of Mount Austen and beyond the Matanikau and encountered stiff resistance. It was apparent that any Marine move westward on Guadalcanal would be hotly contested.

Although he knew the fighting would be rough, Vandegrift maintained an offensive ini-

Naval History and Heritage Command

Occupying a former Japanese position, U.S. Marine artillerymen set up their field gun for action. Marine artillery fire was so effective on Guadalcanal that after one engagement a Japanese prisoner asked to see the "automatic" artillery that the Americans were using.

tiative and sent forward another strike at the Japanese along the Matanikau. This advance was undertaken by five infantry battalions, and the tip of the spear was the Whaling Group, a force of riflemen who were familiar with jungle fighting and highly trained as scouts and snipers, led by Lt. Col. William "Wild Bill" Whaling. Commanding his own men and the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines, Whaling plunged into the jungle to blaze the trail for the 1st and 2nd Battalions, 7th Marines, who would arc toward the coast, and Edson's 2nd and 3rd Battalions, 5th Marines, which would attack directly across the river mouth.

Japanese troops from the 4th Infantry Regiment had ventured across the Matanikau to establish artillery firing positions. They offered stiff resistance to the Marine advance, but a reinforcing Raider company hit their flank, and in the ensuing near-encirclement the Japanese were routed. As Whaling wheeled toward the coastline on October 9, Puller's 7th Marines caught a concentration of enemy troops in a ravine and decimated them with small-arms and mortar fire. Eventually, Whaling and Puller circled back toward Edson, and the combined Marine force cleared the mouth of the Matanikau. The action disrupted the Japanese timetable for their own offensive and cost them 700 dead and wounded against 65 Marines killed and 125 wounded.

General Hyakutake finally made landfall on Guadalcanal on October 7, just as the Whaling operation was getting started. Undeterred, he supervised the landing of more Japanese troops of the Sendai Division under Major General Masao Maruyama. The Japanese Navy offered support in a coordinated effort to bombard Henderson Field, continue reinforcement and resupply for the troops ashore, and draw the Cactus Air Force into battle, where Japanese planes would hopefully annihilate the Americans.

Four days after Hyukatake's arrival, a heavily escorted run of the Tokyo Express met U.S. Navy cruisers under Rear Admiral Norman Scott. Both sides suffered heavily during the nocturnal Battle of Cape Esperance, but the Japanese were able to land additional reinforcements. On October 13, the Japanese battleships *Kongo* and *Haruna* blasted Henderson Field, and the following day more than 4,500 Japanese troops were landed on Guadalcanal while Hyakutake prepared a major push against Henderson Field.

On October 13, just in time to endure the bombardment from the Japanese battleships, the Army's 164th Infantry Regiment of the 23rd Division, popularly known as the Americal Division, came ashore. The Army troops were a federalized National Guard outfit, and they brought with them one of the true war-winning weapons of the global conflict, the M-1 Garand rifle, a dependable semiautomatic weapon that was capable of a considerably higher sustained rate of fire than the bolt-action Springfield that the Marines used. Perhaps as fiery and pugnacious as the M-1, Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey took command of the Guadalcanal campaign, replacing Ghormley on October 18.

Hyakutake approved Maruyama's plan to move the bulk of nearly 7,000 Japanese troops along an arduous jungle trail and across two rivers, the Matanikau and the Lunga, to attack the Marine perimeter from the south near the site of Edson's heroic stand nearly six weeks earlier. The long march sapped the soldiers' strength, but the order to attack soon came anyway. On October 20, the Japanese probed near the mouth of the Matanikau as Murayama's force advanced.

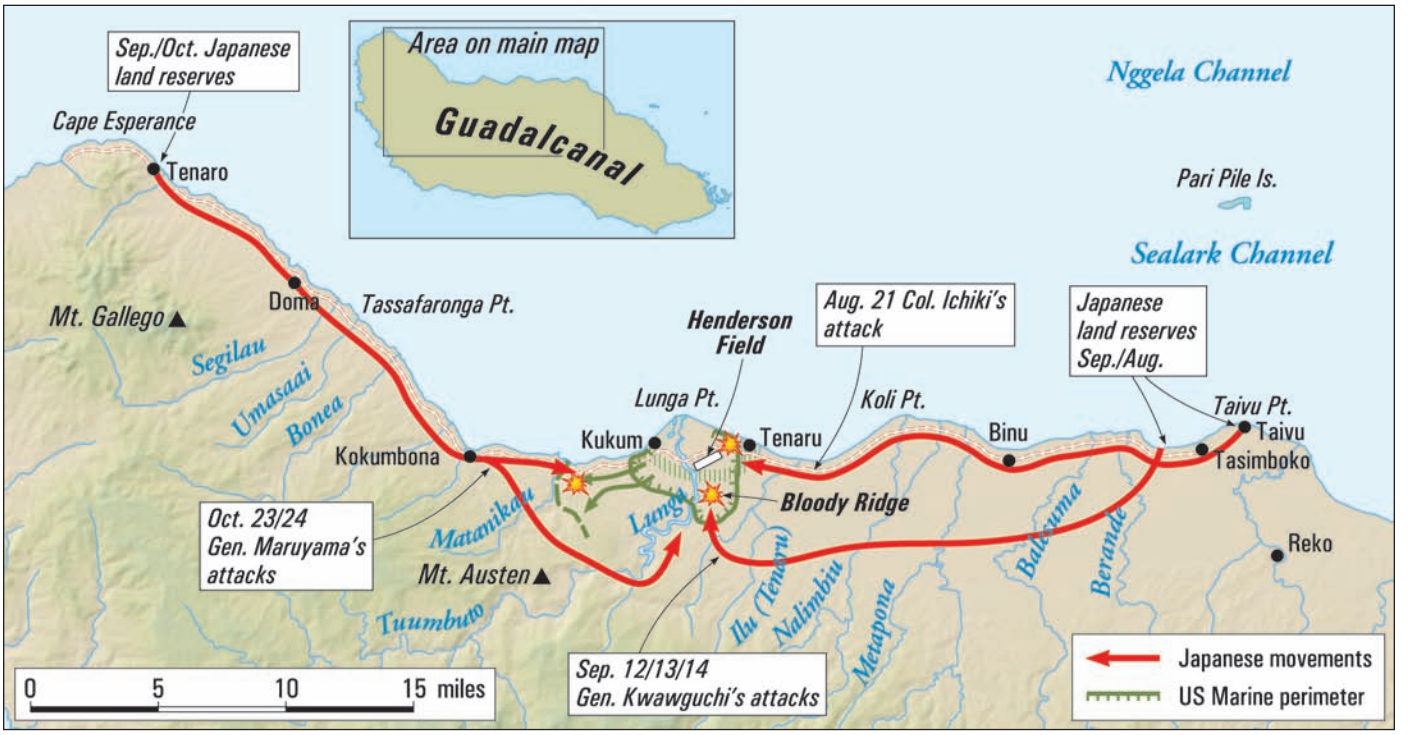
Three days later, nine Japanese tanks crossed the river. Immediately, the 37mm anti-tank weapons of Lt. Col. William N. McKelvy, Jr.'s, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines swung into action, destroying eight of them. A single tank got across the river, and an intrepid Marine blew one of its treads off. A halftrack rolled up and blasted the stationary target with its 75mm gun. Once again, accurate artillery fire riddled the Japanese troop concentrations.

As Maruyama crept closer to his jumping-off positions, the 7th Marines held 2,500 yards of frontage from Lunga to Edson's Ridge, where they met the untested 164th Regiment, under Lt. Col. Robert K. Hall, which held 6,600 yards of terrain eastward from the base of the high ground. The action near the seacoast prompted Vandegrift to shift the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines east to a 4,000-yard gap in the defensive perimeter. The redeployment was fortuitous, placing the battalion squarely in front of one designated axis of the Japanese advance.

After daylight on October 24, a Japanese officer was seen observing the Marine perimeter through binoculars. A short time later, scout snipers sent forward to reconnoiter reported smoke from fires rising roughly two miles south of Lt. Col. Puller's positions. Six battalions of the Sendai Division waited for darkness and then stepped off in the rain just before midnight, slipping around a reinforced Marine outpost that warned Puller that the enemy attack was underway.

In short order, Puller received another phone call. A company in the line reported that the Japanese were cutting through the barbed wire entanglements to its front. Puller called in the men from the outpost, 46 Marines of the 1st Battalion under Sergeant Ralph Briggs, telling them to move to the left and keep moving into the Marine line.

"Don't fail, and don't go in any other direction," Puller admonished. "I'll hold my fire as



This map shows the relative locations of significant fighting on Guadalcanal, including Edson's Ridge, the Matanikau River, and the Tenaru (Ilu) River. After six months of fighting, the Japanese evacuated the island, and the American victory at Guadalcanal was a turning point in the war in the Pacific.

long as I can."

Curiously, some of the Japanese junior officers began to stand up, offering targets for Marine rifles. Moments later, Puller passed the word to commence firing. The Marine perimeter lit up with a hail of bullets, and mortar shells whooshed from their tubes. One of the early heroes of the fight was Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone, a veteran of the Army who was familiar with the .30-caliber Browning machine gun and now as a Marine commanded two sections of the water-cooled weapons.

Basilone was a proficient killing machine during the nocturnal brawl, and enemy dead piled up in front of his position, obscuring his line of fire until the bodies were cleared during a lull in the fighting. When he was able, Basilone went to the rear for ammunition and parts to keep his machine guns firing. After the Japanese renewed their attacks, he was still fighting hours later, firing his pistol at the enemy. He received the Medal of Honor during a ceremony in Australia in May 1943 along with 2nd Lt. Mitchell Paige, who also commanded a machine-gun section during the battle.

Counterattacks eliminated a wedge the Japanese had driven into the line, but Puller was hard-pressed and called for artillery fire from the reliable and accurate guns of the 11th Marines.

He also sent for the 3rd Battalion, 164th Infantry Regiment. Puller met Hall and tersely informed him, "I don't know who's senior to who right now, and I don't give a damn. I'll be in command until daylight at least because I know what's going on here, and you don't."

Hall readily agreed, responding, "I understand you. Let's go."

The two officers walked Puller's perimeter, feeding the Army troops into positions with Marines. The inexperienced soldiers of the 164th would soon become battle-hardened beside the Marines. Repeated Japanese attacks rolled in, but the machine guns and 37mm guns of the 7th Marines Weapons Company sliced into their flanks.

As the sun rose, Japanese bombers attacked the Marine positions while their artillery pounded the defensive line and a pair of destroyers fired a few rounds before 5-inch Marine shore batteries drove them away. The muddy runway at Henderson Field dried out sufficiently for the Cactus Air Force to rise into the air, promptly shooting down 22 enemy planes for the loss of three of their own.

As daylight faded on October 25, Murayama sent his depleted troops forward again. This time, the results were predictable. The 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines under Lt. Col. Herman Hanneken withstood three charges from the remnants of the Sendai Division. The battalion executive officer, Major Odell M. Conoley, led a counterattack that patched a breach in the line.

Finally, Maruyama was spent. He had lost more than 3,500 men and gained nothing. Combined losses among the Marines and Army troops amounted to 300 killed and wounded. General Vandegrift commended the 3rd Battalion, 164th Infantry, saying his "division was proud to have serving with it another unit which had stood the test of battle."

Puller was less effusive. In his own way, he praised the Army troops, "They're almost as good as Marines."

While the combined Marine Corps and Army defense pushed the Japanese back from Henderson Field with heavy casualties, the struggle for naval supremacy continued. On October 26, U.S. and Japanese carrier forces clashed in the Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands. The carrier *Hornet* was sunk, and the *Enterprise* was badly damaged. Three Japanese carriers were damaged, and more than 100 of their planes were shot down. With the failure of Murayama's land offensive, the Japanese fleet pulled back as well.

Vandegrift seized the moment and marshaled reinforcements. With assurances of continuing support from the highest echelons of Marine Corps command and even the endorsement of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the American commitment to win at Guadalcanal was firm. In early November, Marine squadrons VMSB-132 and VMF-211 joined the Cactus Air Force at Henderson Field, and the aircraft of MAG 11 were relocated to Espiritu Santo, a base

closer to Guadalcanal. Another 4,000 troops came ashore with the commitment of the 8th Marine Regiment from New Caledonia and the artillery of the 1st Battalion, 10th Marines. In time, the remaining elements of the Americal Division, additional units of the 2nd Marine Division, and the Army's 25th Infantry Division would enter the battle.

In November, the Marines continued clearing Japanese resistance west of the Matanikau River and expanded their defensive perimeter. The Japanese were still full of fight and sent a regiment of the 38th Infantry Division to Guadalcanal to mount a two-pronged offensive against the American flanks. Both forays were beaten back with serious losses. At mid-month, one Japanese reinforcement effort was turned back during the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal, while a second succeeded in landing some troops. During four days of fighting, both sides took severe punishment. American planes sank seven Japanese troop transports, killing many enemy soldiers while Imperial Navy destroyers rescued 5,000 from the water.

Only about 3,000 additional Japanese soldiers reached the island during the lengthy naval battle, but including other recent Tokyo Express missions, up to 10,000 soldiers of the 38th Division managed to land. Even so, the cost was becoming too steep for the Japanese. The Tokyo Express had run its course, and this marginally successful operation marked the last large-scale Japanese reinforcement effort. By late November, it was apparent that ongoing resupply would tax their resources beyond capacity. Losses in ships and supplies could not readily be replaced. Starvation, disease, and the strengthening enemy relentlessly stalked the Japanese soldiers already ashore.

November proved to be the month of decision at Guadalcanal. The 1st Marine Division and attached units had held the line, sometimes just barely, and the Cactus Air Force had kept the Japanese at bay in the skies above the southern Solomons. In time, both were strengthened and began to assert supremacy. While the Japanese effort to wrest control of the island had begun the long, downward spiral toward failure, American losses could be replaced.

After four months of fighting on the fetid island, ravaged by disease, with more than 3,000 cases of malaria and dog-tired, the 1st Marine Division was withdrawn from Guadalcanal in early December. In its place came the 132nd Infantry, the last regiment of the Americal Division, followed by the 6th Marine Regiment, which joined the other three regiments of the 2nd Marine Division, the 2nd, 8th, and 10th, already on Guadalcanal, and the Army's 25th Infantry Division.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: These U.S. Marine Grumman F4F Wildcat fighter planes of the Cactus Air Force fought the Japanese for control of the skies over Guadalcanal. When air superiority was achieved, the fighters and bombers flying from Henderson Field provided vital support to American troops in action on the island. BELOW: During a combat patrol on Guadalcanal, U.S. Marines wade through a creek near the Tenaru River. The Marines fought the tenacious Japanese enemy on Guadalcanal, as well as the difficult jungle terrain.

Under extremely adverse conditions, Vandegrift had performed admirably. Army Major General Alexander M. Patch subsequently relieved him of command on Guadalcanal, and Vandegrift received both the Navy Cross and the Medal of Honor for his sterling service. Patch's command, 50,000 strong, was designated the XIV Corps.

A new fighter strip was built at Henderson Field, and the aircraft of the 1st and 2nd Marine Air Wings were rapidly strengthened while three new Army fighter squadrons and a bomber squadron arrived. American air power made any Japanese transit of The Slot during daylight hours virtually impossible.

In late December, Patch gave the order to mount the largest American offensive of the campaign to "attack and destroy the Japanese forces remaining on Guadalcanal." Combined Army and Marine advances isolated the Japanese troops dug in on Mount Austen and adjacent high ground that threatened any further movement westward. Japanese troops of the 38th Division and the remnants of the Sendai Division put up stiff resistance, but the Army's 27th and 35th Infantry Regiments drove west with the 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines advancing on their left flank. The 8th, 2nd, and 6th Marines were heavily engaged.

Captain Henry P. "Jim" Crowe of the 8th

Continued on page 74

Lieutenant Wessling did not believe that his two 75mm assault guns could effectively deal with the German panzers. He watched one of the tanks bring its gun to bear on his own while thinking, "Wessling, somebody is going to win this fight and it won't be you!"

In September 1944, while the U.S. Third Army's XII Corps was advancing across France toward the German frontier, the German High Command believed that there was an opportunity to strike a blow against American forces. The 5th Panzer Army intended to cut off the U.S. 4th Armored Division. Vigorous efforts were made to assemble the necessary forces—the LVIII Panzer Corps, XLVII Panzer Corps, 11th Panzer Division, 21st Panzer Division, 15th Panzergrenadier Division, and the 107th, 108th, 111th, 112th and 113th Panzer Brigades. Few of

Hard-fighting American 2nd (Mechanized) Cavalry Group blunted a German counterattack that threatened the right flank of Third Army in September 1944.

BY ALLYN VANNOY

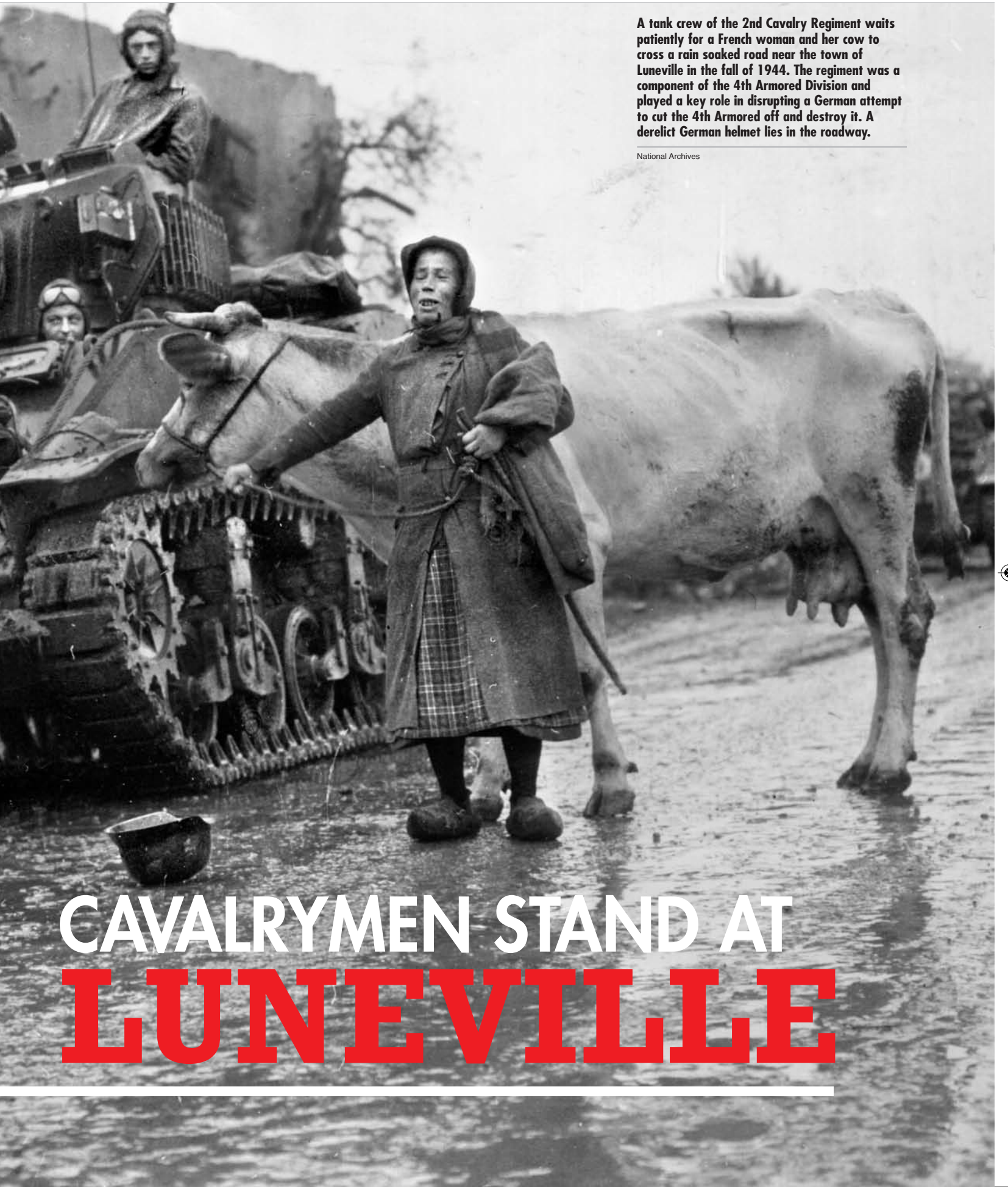
these units were at full strength; however, the panzer brigades boasted new PzKpfw. V Panther tanks, although their crews were not fully trained. The brigades also included the workhorse PzKpfw. IVs.

The LVIII Panzer Corps was to strike the 4th Armored Division from the north. At the same time, the XLVII Panzer Corps, with its 111th and 112th Panzer Brigades and 21st Panzer Division, was to strike from the south toward the city of Nancy, cutting off the XII Corps. In its path was the town of Luneville, located southeast of Nancy at the confluence of the Muerthe and Vezouze Rivers. To the east of Luneville were two large forests: the Foret de Parroy and the Foret de Mondom.

Though American intelligence identified German forces massing in the area they believed that any attack would be made against the nearby American Seventh Army.

The 2nd (Mechanized) Cavalry Group was assigned to protect the southern flank of the 4th Armored Division as it moved to envelop Nancy on September 11. The 2nd Cavalry Group consisted of the 2nd and 42nd Cavalry Squadrons, equipped with M8 armored cars mounting a 37mm gun and assault guns carrying a short-barreled 75mm howitzer.

A mechanized cavalry group was composed of four cavalry squadrons plus engineer and ar-tillery squadrons;



A tank crew of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment waits patiently for a French woman and her cow to cross a rain soaked road near the town of Luneville in the fall of 1944. The regiment was a component of the 4th Armored Division and played a key role in disrupting a German attempt to cut the 4th Armored off and destroy it. A derelict German helmet lies in the roadway.

National Archives

CAVALRYMEN STAND AT LUNEVILLE

Bundesarchiv Bild

In this photo taken near Luneville in 1944, German soldiers make use of American-built M8 Greyhound armored cars they have previously captured. The original owners of the armored cars were the troops of the U.S. 42nd Cavalry Squadron, and the Germans belong to Panzerbrigade 111.

each cavalry squadron included four troops—three troops equipped with armored cars and halftracks, each of three platoons, an assault gun troop, and a light tank company.

Combat Command Reserve (CCR) of the 4th Armored Division, under Colonel Wendell Blanchard, was operating in the vicinity of Luneville. CCR had M4 Sherman medium tanks with 75mm guns, M18 self-propelled tank destroyers with 76mm guns, M7 self-propelled 105mm howitzers, and halftracks mounting .50 caliber machine guns.

The 2nd Cavalry Group's commander, Colonel Charles H. Reed, was an outstanding armor officer—a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy. The commander of 42nd Squadron, Major James H. Pitman, was also a West Point graduate.

On the morning of September 15, troops of the 42nd Squadron were assigned to take Luneville. Approaching from the south, one platoon was to move in mounted, another to approach dismounted. But before the troopers had entered the town, German 88mm artillery, antitank guns, and small arms threw up a heavy volume of fire.

As the Americans moved in, Tech 4 Eugene Fehr, radio operator in one of the 42nd Squadron's armored cars, recalled, "Something gave the M8 a helluva jolt and my driver looked at me and yelled that he couldn't steer any more. We climbed out, saw that an 88 had blown off our right front wheel, and immediately dived into the ditch alongside the road. We were no more than on the ground when a second 88 drilled the car right through the middle. After that we did just what the rest of the dismounted men were doing—ran!"

Tech 5 Kyle Rootes, driver of his commanding officer's vehicle recalled, "Bug Eyes Spence, my machine gunner, got his hand smashed by an anti-tank shell ricocheting off his .50 caliber mount. He was real calm as he waited to be evacuated.…"

Unable to overcome the German resistance, the troopers pulled back.

Troop A, 42nd Squadron, on the right flank of 2nd Cavalry, advanced as far as Benamenil, east of Luneville, and cleared the Germans from an ammunition dump they had discovered. Engineers were directed to destroy the dump. Troop B followed Troop A into the Moncelles-Luneville area, southeast of Luneville, where they discovered another ammunition dump.

Captain Henry Ebrey, Troop B, directed a section of Lieutenant Lindoerfer's platoon to set up its guns across the river from Flin, 12 miles southeast of Luneville, below the town of Chenevieres, covering the road running southeast from the town of Baccarat.

It was here, about five miles from Baccarat, that a Frenchman reported to Lindoerfer that six German panzers were in Baccarat. The lieutenant placed little credence in the report given recent, similar, information that had proved less than accurate. When a POW, a German officer, claimed it was the concentration area for 160 Panther tanks unloading from rail transport at the town of St. Die 15 miles to the south, the 2nd Cavalry Group headquarters contacted XII Corps requesting tank destroyers and artillery support.

The 42nd Squadron was reinforced by elements of Colonel Blanchard's CCR. Blanchard had with him the 696th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, elements of the 489th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, the 35th Tank Battalion, the 10th Armored Infantry Battalion, and Headquarters and B Companies of the 704th Tank Destroyer Battalion. The next day, the 16th, this force launched a three pronged attack on Luneville. The Squadron's C Troop attacked from the west while B Troop attacked from the southeast and CCR attacked from the northwest. B Company, 704th TD Battalion covered CCR's left flank northwest of the town.

In this fight for Luneville, the 35th Tank Battalion was operating without its B and C Companies, which had been detached for service elsewhere. The battalion was positioned initially in the village of Deuxville, northwest of Luneville, then moved to occupy high ground northwest of the town. Though this 35th Tank force did not participate in the liberation of the town, it did repel a counterattack, destroying two halftracks and three antitank guns at a cost

of a Sherman tank, two men killed, and 15 wounded.

On the afternoon of September 16, the 42nd Squadron launched a coordinated attack on Luneville from the south, southeast, southwest, and east at 1:30 p.m. French sources provided intelligence that the Germans had moved six panzers to the town along with several antitank guns. Troops B and C carried the brunt of the assault, supported by assault guns and tanks. The Germans were driven back by heavy and accurate fire. By 4:10 p.m. a platoon of Troop B, entering Luneville from the east, had taken the railroad bridge in the town's center. Troop C advanced from the west against determined resistance. The Germans were eventually forced to withdraw to the woods to the north and hills to the northeast.

While most of B Troop, 42nd Squadron, was engaged in Luneville, Sergeant James Hart's section of 1st Platoon was sent west over the Muerthe River to set up an outpost on a road leading into Luneville. At one point, a column of German panzers and infantry advanced up the road. Sergeant Hart's men opened fired at close range, killing a number of Germans. The Germans then withdrew.

Once the Americans pushed the Germans out of Luneville, CCR assumed responsibility for the town. The Germans had lost 75 men killed and another 18 taken prisoner.

The following day, September 17th, the 2nd Cavalry Group assembled in the vicinity of the Foret de Mondon, east of Luneville, with its A Troop, 42nd Squadron, screening in the forest to the southeast and B Troop covering the southern approaches to Luneville.

The 42nd Squadron outposted the town. The 2nd Squadron, having rejoined the group, was pushing north and east. Troop B, 2nd Squadron, had taken Veho, a village about 10 miles east of Luneville, then fought its way another two-and-a-half miles into Leintry. During the day's engagements, the 2nd Squadron killed 72 Germans, took 70 prisoners, and destroyed 22 vehicles.

Also on September 17, the 35th Tank Battalion undertook the clearing of German forces from the vicinity of Jolivet, five miles northeast of Luneville, and the Foret de Parroy. One platoon of A Company attacked Jolivet and knocked out two antitank guns at a cost of one medium tank. Meanwhile, D Company conducted a sweep that accounted for one antitank gun and a halftrack. They also took 15 prisoners from Reconnaissance Battalion 115. German casualties in the sector included 75 killed. The Americans suffered two killed, 15 wounded, and a Sherman knocked out.

The Germans infiltrated a large number of troops back into Luneville so that by the night of the 17th their commanders believed that they had recaptured the town.

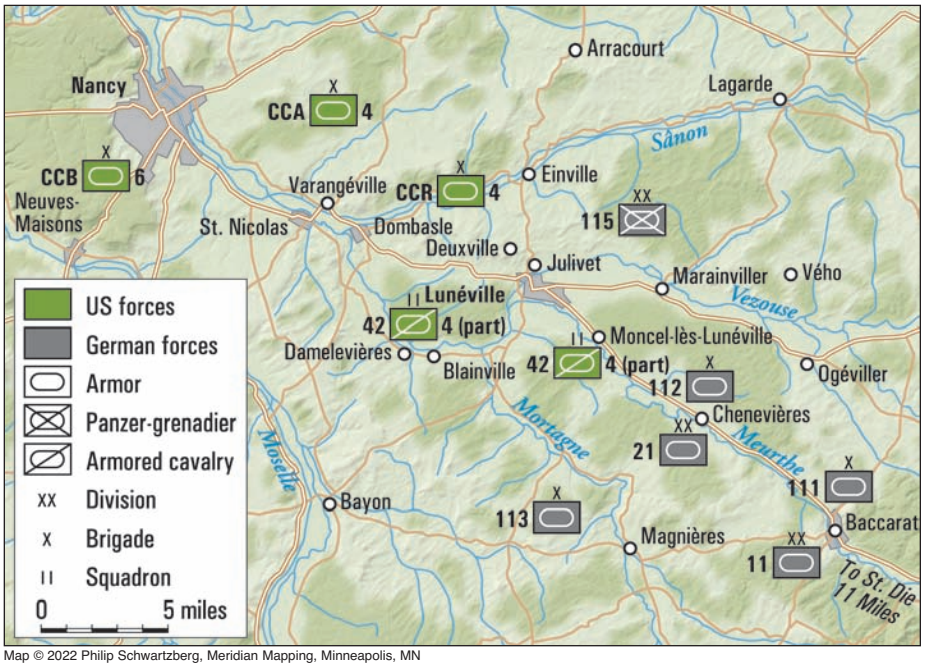
During the afternoon, Lieutenant A.L. Wessling of Troop E, 42nd Squadron, returned with his platoon to their bivouac area from a roadblock with a section of Lindoerfer's platoon on the road to Baccarat, about a mile from Chenevieres.

On the morning of September 18, the group received orders to prepare to move north to the flank of XII Corps. That same morning, Captain Welsh, E Troop's commanding officer, was called to Squadron Headquarters at 8:00 a.m. He then informed Wessling that six German panzers were coming up the road from Baccarat and that they were to prepare to meet them.

Wessling had moved his men into position about 900 yards from the roadway when he

National Archives

ABOVE: An American tank and halftrack sit motionless on a street in the French town of Luneville. The U.S. 2nd Cavalry Regiment fought a German advance to a standstill in the autumn of 1944, thwarting an attempt to cut off the U.S. 4th Armored Division, one of the premiere fighting units of General George S. Patton's Third Army. BELOW: The German offensive thrust toward the spearhead of General George Patton's Third Army and attacked the 4th Armored Division from north and south. However, intrepid soldiers of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment prevented the Germans from succeeding.



Map © 2022 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

noticed a horse-drawn farm wagon loaded with hay standing in the roadway to their front. Wessling was standing beside one of his unit's guns observing in the direction of Chenevieres as German armored cars came up the road heading for Luneville. At that moment Wessling felt that they had reached their position, well in advance of the approach of any enemy units, until a jeep came speeding up the road with the driver screaming, "Fire! Fire!"

Wessling took a quick look around but could not see anything to fire at. A moment later, a Frenchman appeared and began to lead the horse and wagon. The wagon was barely out of the way when it revealed three panzers. They had backed off the roadway into the ditch so that only their turrets were visible.

Wessling had two assault guns—not the type of weapon he felt could successfully deal with the panzers. He watched one of them bring its gun to bear. He ordered the assault gun captain to fire at a range of 1,000 yards. The gun captain replied, "But I've already told the gunner 800." Wessling told him to fire anyway. Just as the assault gun fired, Wessling saw the muzzle flash from the panzer and started to drop to the ground.

Wessling remembered, "As I got halfway down there was a blinding flash and a terrific explosion and I was knocked down … the first round had hit ten yards in front of me, just a little to the right of my gun, putting 14 holes of various sizes and shapes in me. I ran about 10 yards to the edge of the woods where Captain Welch was crouched down to have him tie my handkerchief around my right wrist, which had been punctured by a piece of shrapnel and was bleeding badly."

Wessling told his driver to move their halftrack, which had been backed into the woods, out of there while also ordering his assault guns to move to the other side of the road and fire from there. But before they could move, one had a track blown off. Wessling then ran about 100 yards through the woods to the road were Captain Welsh, Major Potts, and one other officer were standing. Wessling said to Welsh, "What do we do now?"

Welsh replied, "You're not going to do anything, you're going to the medics."

Along the way to an aid station, Wessling saw Troop C's vehicles lined along the road. Wessling later learned that the Troop had lost four of its six guns and three halftracks. Surprisingly, only two troopers were killed and one wounded.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: A tank crew takes a breather in the town of Luneville. The driver has just emerged from his hatch beneath the barrel of the 37mm main weapon. OPPOSITE: This M18 Hellcat tank destroyer of the U.S. 603rd Tank Destroyer Battalion has taken up a defensive position in the streets of Luneville on September 18, 1944. An infantryman has also positioned his .50-caliber machine gun toward the expected approach of the attacking Germans, while another soldier stands ready with his M-3 'Grease Gun,' a .45-caliber submachine gun.

A Troop, 42nd Squadron, was screening along the north, east, and southwest of Foret de Mondon. Their first contact with German panzers came in the area of Chenevieres, where a section of the 2nd Platoon, A Troop, under Sergeant Seth Taylor, was outposted. Early in the morning Sergeant Taylor flashed an urgent message that his position was being overrun by seven panzers and 100 infantrymen. His command felt that this was only a local counterattack, but then another call from Taylor raised the number of panzers moving past his position to 17.

Meanwhile, at Benamenil, the 1st Platoon under Lieutenant Mike Bayer reported 40 enemy tanks lined up on a hill firing down at their position.

Back at Sergeant Taylor's position they prepared an ambush with assault guns in position at the edge of the woods just south of Moncelles-Luneville. The Germans seemed to advance blindly but then traded shots and eventually disrupted the ambushing force. The American commanders now realized that this was not a local action, but a large-scale counterattack. The 42nd Squadron was directed to delay the German advance in order to permit the 2nd Cavalry Group and the 2nd Squadron, both in exposed positions too far forward near the Foret de Embermenil northeast of Luneville, to withdraw.

The 2nd Squadron captured a German captain, who disclosed that he had been placing road markers for the 11th Panzer Division, which was detraining at St. Die and was supposed to head for Chateau Salin, north of Luneville. That night, troopers at the 2nd Squadron's outposts heard the rumble of tanks and realized that an attack was imminent.

On the morning of September 18, the 111th Panzer Brigade was assembled in the vicinity of Baccarat, about 17 miles southeast of Luneville. The brigade had around 2,000 men and a battalion each of Panthers and PzKpfw. IVs, a reconnaissance battalion, and an engineer company. Also, the depleted but still potent 21st Panzer Division was just to the south. To the north, the 113th Panzer Brigade was to attack at 11:00 a.m. At around 6:00 a.m., the 111th Panzer Brigade began advancing toward Luneville.

About 7:00 a.m., the lead element, consisting of seven Panthers and supporting infantry, struck the forward outposts of A Troop. The German commanders mistakenly believed that Luneville was being held by units of the 15th Panzergrenadier Division, so the presence of American cavalrymen on the outskirts of the town came as an unwelcome surprise.

During the morning, the 3rd Platoon of F Troop, 42nd Squadron, went into position covering a road along which German forces were reported to be moving.

Tech 4 Frank Geronimo detailed the action: "We didn't know much about the situation as there had been no time for orientation. From what we could gather we were pickled in, as patrols reported enemy near our positions on all sides. Luneville was reported to be open, but the road leading to it was well covered by enemy

fire. The 1st and 2nd Platoons were called out to cover other avenues of approach along which the enemy would surely come… We were told that the 42nd had to hold at all costs!

"Soon after we were settled in position we heard the rumble of vehicles approaching us from the rear. It was Group Headquarters, 2nd Squadron and A Troop of the 42nd in a column of twos heading for Luneville, and wasting no time. The enemy opened up on us in earnest, with artillery, mortar, and antitank fire. The men in the column would leave their vehicles when a flock of shells came whistling in, then jump up and chase their vehicles down the road after the shells had landed.

"We pulled back over the bridge into the edge of the woods in order to escape some of the intense fire that was being directed at us. We heard, over our radios, that E Troop had lost three assault guns, which were in another section of the woods with the 3rd Platoon of F Troop. They had set a trap for the Tiger tanks (likely Panthers or PzKpfw. IVs), but the trap backfired as our light guns didn't seem to damage the enemy armor. From the woods to our rear came the crews of the tanks of the 3rd Platoon (all its tanks having been lost), three assault guns that were still running, and the survivors of the crews of the guns that were knocked out. With them came some armored cars and bantams [jeeps] loaded with recon men who had lost their vehicles. The four [light] tanks of the 3rd Platoon, that had been with the assault guns, were completely bogged down during the action and could not be retrieved. The headquarters tank that had gone along, dismounted its crew and was attempting to hook onto one of the stuck tanks when their gunner had his leg sheared off by the first round fired at them. The second round broke the track of the headquarters tank. The tank commander picked up the gunner and ran over a hundred yards to put him in a bantam.

"Soon the 2nd Platoon appeared with more reconnaissance men and Captain Potts, who took over when word reached us that our Squadron commander had been killed and our Group commander wounded.

"We heard that CCR of the 4th Armored had moved into Luneville and that we were beginning to receive their artillery support. Captain Potts began to issue orders. He told us we had to make a break for it, two vehicles at a time, to Luneville, which was our only route of escape even though it was well covered by enemy fire.

"The vehicles started to leave with the dismounted men, who had lost theirs, clinging to the sides. Two bantams left first and a minute or two later two armored cars. Two tanks and two assault guns followed at short intervals. As the first vehicles hit the main road everyone grew tense as we watched them speed away toward safety. The tenth or eleventh vehicle to leave began to receive fire from enemy machines gun positions on both sides of the road on the far side of the bridge. The bridge, which we had to cross to get on the main road, was a high arched affair over the railroad and a beautiful target for the enemy tanks in position in Marainviller. Our vehicle was the seventh from the last to leave. With us there was another tank, a couple of bantams and armored cars. The two tanks proceeded [sic] the armored cars and bantams in order to pin down the enemy machine guns along the way.

"As we hit the main road a round of AT just missed the lead tank. The dash into Luneville seemed to be made at a slow crawl, as we all sat in our vehicles with cold spots between our shoulder blades waiting for the next round to hit. Our driver had the gas pedal to the floor and although the speedometer registered 40 we still urged him on. When we skidded around the turn into Luneville we saw a TD with its 76

Smith fired 13 rounds of his 37mm at the panzer, but they only bounced off. The panzer was swinging its main gun to engage the armored car when a lucky shot killed the panzer commander.

pointed square at us, and Sherman tanks had their gun barrels poked through every crevice and nook between buildings. They were a sight for sore eyes. As enemy artillery was falling heavily in Luneville we continued right on through and bivouacked near the 4th Armored's supporting artillery batteries."

When the German columns first started rolling toward Luneville, B Troop, 42nd Squadron, sent Sergeant Hart with his section of the 1st Platoon to secure the bridge over the Meurthe River. Sergeant Hart occupied the high ground west of the river near the bridge and placed his weapons at the edge of a wood so that they were trained on the bridge and the approaches from the east. Moments later, a German armored column came up the main road from the south heading toward Luneville, passing Hart's position.

The Germans were advancing in multiple columns, passing through the woods behind Hart's section. His guns opened fire on groups of panzergrenadiers who came into view just 100 feet away in the woods around his position. Hart's men managed to kill several, but the Germans paid little attention except to fire a few return shots as they continued their headlong rush toward Luneville. However, a panzer suddenly appeared on a lane which led directly to Hart's armored car. Gunner Tech 5 Eugene Smith frantically cranked the turret of the armored car through 180 degrees to lay the main gun on the threat. Smith fired 13 rounds of his 37mm at the panzer, but they only bounced off. The panzer was swinging its main gun to engage the armored car when a lucky shot killed the panzer commander. The panzer then backed away down the lane.

Hart's section found itself cut off from the rest of the squadron, so they stayed in the woods and waited for nightfall, later making contact with the 106th Cavalry Group to the west.

The 11th Panzer Division had moved from southern France to participate in smashing the Nancy salient. Lieutenant Graf von Hoyos's panzer company was the flank guard of the division, with six new Panthers moving up on the night of September 16, through Rambervillers and Baccarat to Ogerviller. They gunned their engines in an effort to make the Americans think there were panzers all along their front.

On the 17th, 11th Panzer approached Luneville, concentrating their forces. Accompanying them were elements of the 2nd Panzer Division, the Panzer Lehr Division, and the 16th Panzer Division. To the south was the 21st Panzer Division and the 102nd Panzer Brigade, while the 15th Panzergrenadier Division was north in the Foret de Parroy.

At dawn on September 18, von Hoyos's panzer company was sent to Marainviller, on the main road east of Luneville. They held up outside the town until late afternoon as the area was pounded by American artillery fire. Toward dusk the fire slackened, and they moved on toward Luneville. There they encountered heavy fighting in progress involving A Troop of the 2nd along with CCR tanks and tank-destroyers. Von Hoyos lost two of his tanks as they met 12 Shermans. He was ordered to withdraw the next day due to fighting through Foret de Madon, to their rear.

The outnumbered U.S. cavalrymen fought a brief delaying action before retiring. Their delaying action, however, gave Colonel Reed time to send forward C Troop, the six assault guns of E Troop under Captain Welsh, and F Troop's 3rd Platoon with its M5 light tanks with orders to set up an ambush on the road leading to Luneville.

Led by Colonel Reed and Major Pitman, the cavalrymen successfully sprang their ambush on the advancing German panzer infantry force at 8:00 a.m. At a range of 500 yards, E Troop's six assault guns opened fire. "Although many direct hits were obtained, they just bounced right off," recalled 1st Lt. Charles E. Harris. While the American light armored vehicles were engaging the German panzers, the rest of C Troop was fighting dismounted against the accompanying German infantry.

When Group Headquarters reached Luneville, the command vehicles were assembled around the town square. As Colonel Reed stood on top of a tank directing operations, Major Pitman drove up and reported the current situation to the colonel. But the Germans had the square zeroed in, and within a few minutes artillery rounds began to land. Colonel Reed was knocked off the tank, severely wounded. Major Pitman was struck and died immediately. Eleven were killed or wounded in the artillery attack. The group executive officer took command.

The fighting between the cavalrymen and the Germans was fierce. The American assault guns knocked out one Panther. In return, the Germans knocked out three assault guns, an armored car, and two jeeps. Several cavalrymen were killed.

The German panzers were able to break through the American line at around 11:00 a.m. and press on toward Luneville. The surviving American vehicles and infantry escaped into nearby woods.

Meanwhile, F Troop's 1st Platoon was defending a bridge and a crossroads leading into Luneville. Tech 4 Geronimo, in one of the tanks tasked with covering the bridge, recalled: "We were receiving frequent and accurate artillery fire as the enemy already had the road zeroed in." The Group Headquarters, 2nd Cavalry Squadron, and part of A Troop, 42nd Squadron, used this bridge to escape into Luneville ahead of the advancing Germans. Afterward, Geronimo and the tanks defending the bridge also pulled back into Luneville.

After the Germans broke through the cavalry screen, the fighting split into two engagements: a battle in the woods between the 2nd Cavalry and German infantry and a German attack on Luneville, which was held by elements of CCR, 4th Armored Division.

By late afternoon, the 42nd Cavalry Squadron was nearly surrounded but holding its positions. The situation was tenuous. "We didn't know to what extent the enemy had advanced and the route we had planned to use for escape was cut off," recalled 1st Lt. Harris. Fortunately, an American artillery spotter plane located an undefended trail. Using this trail, the cavalrymen attempted to escape encirclement. They met up with the cavalrymen of A Troop, who had been forced out of their positions further east. Together, this force located another undefended trail out of the forest and used it to get to Highway 4 some four miles east of Luneville. Here they joined up with two platoons of B Troop and continued to Luneville.

The next obstacle was a railroad bridge the Germans had covered by artillery and small arms. The cavalrymen called down artillery fire and then rushed their vehicles, two or three at a time, over the bridge and into Luneville, where they joined elements of the 4th Armored Division and the remainder of the 2nd Cavalry Group.

Having broken through the cavalry screen in the morning, the German Panthers, reinforced by elements of the 15th Panzergrenadier Division, pressed on to Luneville. The initial assault forced elements of 4th Armored's CCR from the southeastern part of the town back into its center and northern part. In addition, the 113th Panzer Brigade was now heading toward Luneville from the east in the vicinity of the Vezouse River.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: A group of American soldiers enjoys a spirited game of poker in a building in Luneville that was once occupied by German troops. The poster on the wall, meant to inspire the German troops, reads: 'Three virtues are the soldier's greatest fame: bravery, perseverance, and manhood.' OPPOSITE: This photo was taken a week after the fighting in and around Luneville ended in the fall of 1944. A long line of American M4 Sherman medium tanks has halted temporarily during the Third Army advance through France toward the German frontier.

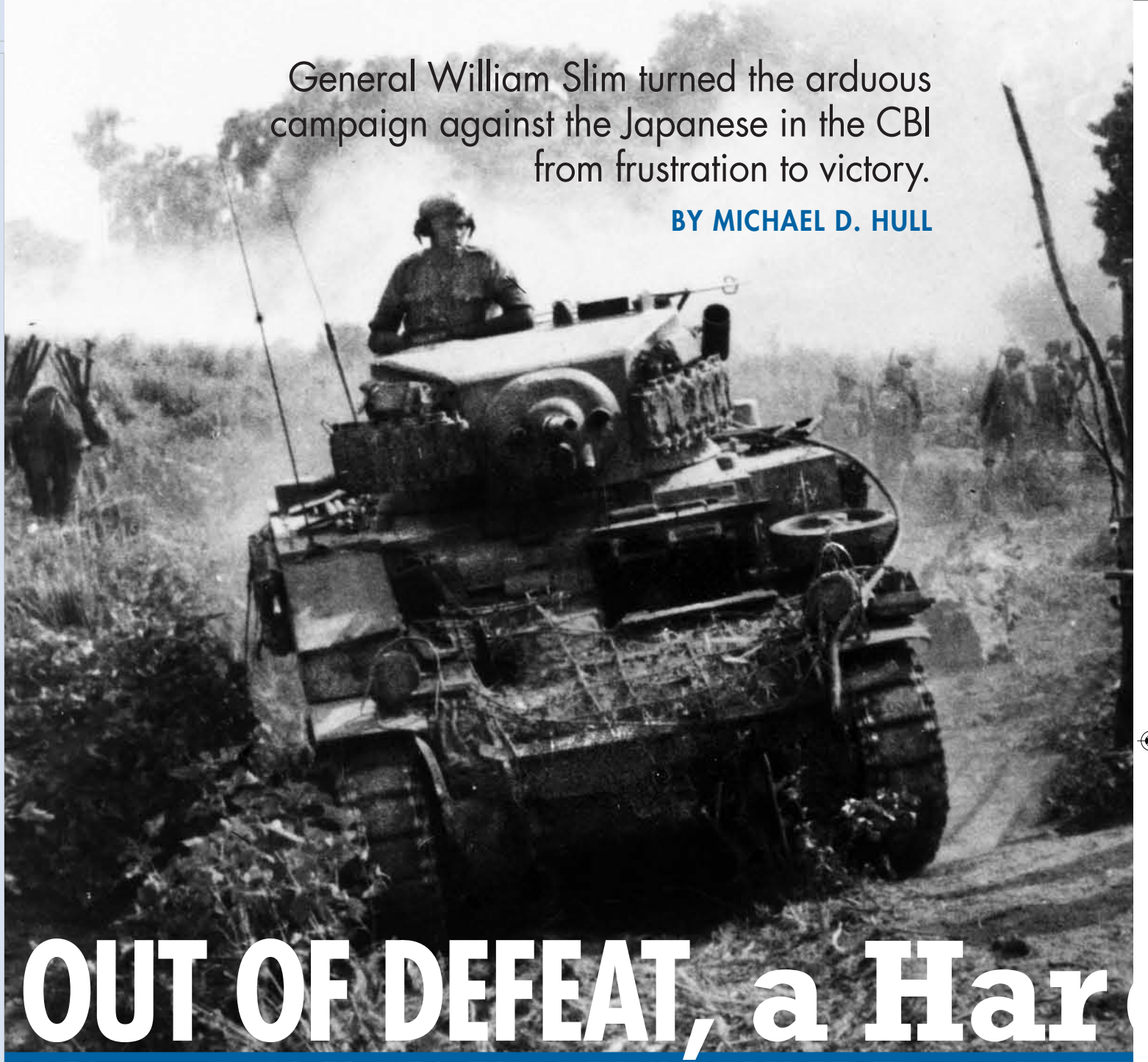
The American commanders reacted quickly. During midmorning, A Company, 35th Tank Battalion, moved into blocking positions northwest of Luneville.

The rest of the battalion took up blocking positions northeast of Deuxville. Forced to withdraw, the 2nd Squadron joined up with CCR in the eastern part of Luneville. B Company, 704th Tank Destroyer Battalion, sent its 3rd Platoon into Luneville and its 1st Platoon to reinforce positions of the 10th Armored Infantry Battalion north of the town. CCA, 4th Armored Division, was ordered to dispatch a task force to reinforce CCR, and the 6th Armored Division's CCB was ordered from the area east of Nancy to Luneville as well. Further support was ordered from the 183rd Field Artillery Group's 273rd and 738th Field Artillery Battalions, the latter equipped with 8-inch howitzers.

CCA, 4th Armored Division, immediately began forming a task force to help repel the German panzers. Task Force Hunter consisted of A Company, 37th Tank Battalion, B Company of the 53rd Armored Infantry Battalion, C Battery of the 94th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, and 1st Platoon, E Company of the 704th Tank Destroyer Battalion. TF Hunter started out for Luneville at 1:00 p.m. and assembled northwest of the town three hours later.

The arrival of TF Hunter enabled CCR to retake the lost section of Luneville. Aided by one of its forward observers located in a house in Luneville, C Battery of the 94th Armored Field Artillery Battalion fired on German positions. Infantrymen of the 53rd Armored Infantry Battalion and tanks of the 35th Tank Battalion conducted a series of attacks. A Company, 37th Tank Battalion, acted as a mobile reserve.

Continued on page 74



General William Slim turned the arduous campaign against the Japanese in the CBI from frustration to victory.

BY MICHAEL D. HULL

OUT OF DEFEAT, a Har

One ominous day in mid-May 1942, Lt. Gen. William J. Slim stood on the Imphal Plain, high in the Assam hills of northeastern India, and watched columns of tattered, malaria-ridden British, Indian, and Burmese soldiers straggle across the frontier from Burma.

They were the remnants of his 1st Burma Corps (Burcorps), ending a 900-mile retreat ahead of pursuing Japanese troops and a monsoon. The two-division, 42,000-strong corps had lost 13,000 men killed, wounded, and missing, and it had only 28 field guns left out of 150, and 80 trucks and jeeps out of several hundred. It was one of the longest and most disastrous withdrawals in the history of British arms.

The burly, bulldog-jawed "Bill" Slim anguished over the pitiable condition of his men. Gaunt and exhausted, they nevertheless carried their arms and kept their ranks. "They might look like scarecrows," the general observed proudly, "but they looked like soldiers, too." He had skillfully extricated them from near disaster in the steaming jungles of Lower Burma. Slim was familiar with defeat and had no illusions about the wily, tenacious enemy who had captured most of the country.

"We, the Allies, had been outmaneuvered, outfought, and out-generaled," he said. Yet he was sure that, with special training and renewed spirit, his troops could eventually prevail in the most forbidding theater of operations in World War II.

"To our men, British or Indian, the jungle was a strange, fearsome place," said Slim. "Moving and fighting in it was a nightmare. We were too ready to classify jungle as 'impenetrable'.... To the Japanese, it was the welcome means of concealed maneuver and surprise ... We used troops whose training and equipment, as far as they had been completed, were for the open desert.... The Japanese reaped the

d-Won Triumph

deserved reward for their foresight and thorough preparation; we paid the penalty for our lack of both."

As commander of the newly formed British 14th "Forgotten" Army, Slim was to march back and, after two years of bitter fighting, liberate Burma and inflict on the Japanese their greatest land defeat of the war. Trusted by his men and admired by allies, Slim emerged as one of the great British commanders of the 1939-45 war. Yet he was denied the credit he deserved.

On his return to England in 1945, the modest, understated campaigner met a lukewarm reception. Field Marshals Harold Alexander and Bernard L. Montgomery were the men of the hour. When books appeared about Lord Louis Mountbatten, Maj. Gen. Orde C. Wingate and his Chindits, General Joseph W. Stilwell, and other luminaries of the campaigns in Southeast Asia, Slim was accorded only footnotes.

And it was the same story when the documentary film *Burma Victory* was released in November 1945. Directed by Roy Boulting, whose *Desert Victory* (1943) was hailed as the finest documentary of the war, the first 50 minutes of *Burma Victory* focused on Mountbatten, Wingate, Stilwell, and General Sir Oliver Leese, while Slim made a brief appearance in the film's last 10 minutes. Veterans of the 14th Army who watched it were puzzled and appalled. They knew that their commander was responsible for the real-life Burma victory.

A ranker from modest origins, Slim was different from Prime Minister Winston Churchill's

Traversing the rugged terrain of the interior of Burma, tanks of the 19th Indian "Dagger" Division roll down a dirt path while infantrymen pause to glance at the armored vehicles. General William Slim, commander of the British 14th Army, led his forces from the brink of total defeat to victory over the Japanese in the China-Burma-India Theater.

Alamy

favored generals, such as Alexander, Wingate, Alan Brooke, and Claude Auchinleck. He had not attended public schools, was not a scion of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy, and could not trace his unimpressive family name back into the annals of the Norman conquest, as could Montgomery and Archibald Wavell. After the Singapore surrender and many other early defeats at the hands of the Japanese, Churchill had a low opinion of his captains in the Far East, and it took him some time to realize Slim's worth.

Born in Bristol, Somerset, on Thursday, August 6, 1891, William Joseph Slim was the son of a middle-class Birmingham wholesale ironmonger. A bright, sturdy lad, he gained a scholarship at the local grammar school and joined its cadet corps. His first job in 1909 was as an uncertified teacher at elementary schools in the Birmingham slums, followed by a post as junior clerk in a metal-tubing firm. He read popular military histories and considered an army career.

Sandhurst and a commission were out of his reach, so in 1912 he enrolled in the Officer Training Corps at Birmingham University, a Territorial Army unit. On August 22, 1914, shortly after the outbreak of World War I, Bill Slim was gazetted a second lieutenant in the 9th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. He had escaped from the dreary routine of office work, and, like his former OTC comrades, greeted the war with enthusiasm. But most of them would not survive it.

The regiment was posted to Mesopotamia and then took part in the ill-starred Dardanelles campaign the following year. Bill Slim's baptism of fire came during the bitter struggle at Gallipoli and Cape Helles, where fierce Turkish resistance pinned down British and Australian troops on the beaches. He marked himself as an outstanding junior officer and proved his courage by leading headlong bayonet charges against the well-entrenched enemy during 18 days of intense fighting in July-August 1915. He was severely wounded on August 8 and was evacuated to England.

The wounds should have crippled him for life, but he overcame them with his physical and moral stamina during almost a year of recuperation. Gazetted a temporary captain in September 1916, Slim transferred to the West India Regiment, a regular unit, and was posted to Mesopotamia early the following year. He distinguished himself in the British advance guard, which captured Baghdad and skir-

Imperial War Museum

General William Slim, architect of the 14th Army victory in Burma, inflicted the greatest land defeat on the Japanese in all of World War II. Nevertheless, Slim, pictured in 1945, was one of the unsung heroes of the war, his skill and command presence largely overshadowed by others in the upper echelons of the British Army.

mished north of the city, and was awarded the Military Cross. He was wounded again on March 29, 1917, declared "medically unfit for duty," and evacuated to India.

But the tough Slim recovered and became a staff officer, impressing his superiors. Then, despite War Office objections, he transferred to the Indian Army with the rank of captain in February 1919. He joined the 1st Battalion of the 6th Gurkha Rifles in March 1920 and served as

adjutant. On January 1, 1926, he married Aileen Robertson, the daughter of a Church of Scotland minister, who became his devoted "soldier's wife who followed the drum."

After studying at the Staff College in Quetta for two years, Slim served on the staff at Indian Army Headquarters in 1929-33. He also wrote pulp fiction, using the pen name Anthony Mills and explained that "the prime motive was cash." He instructed at the Staff College in Camberley, Surrey, in 1934-36, attended the Imperial Defense College, and was gazetted a lieutenant colonel commanding the 2nd Battalion of the 7th Gurkha Regiment in May 1938. He soldiered with the Gurkhas on the North-West Frontier and integrated himself into the Indian Army. In 1939, after serving as commandant of the Senior Officers School at Belgaum, Slim was promoted to brigadier and posted to command the 10th Indian Brigade, part of the 5th Indian Division, at Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh.

In August 1940, after 11 months' basic training, the brigade was ordered to the Sudan, where British and colonial units under Wavell and General William Platt were mustering to liberate Ethiopia and Eritrea from superior Italian forces. Slim's brigade launched the first British offensive of the war late in 1940, but things went badly wrong because of inexperienced assault troops, obsolete tanks and planes, and poor planning and coordination, for which Slim blamed himself. The campaign could have ruined his career, yet he survived, and the Italians were eventually crushed in East Africa.

In mid-January 1941, meanwhile, Slim was wounded a third time—by a strafing Italian plane in Eritrea. Evacuated to India, he helped prepare contingency plans to prevent Iraq from defecting to the Axis Powers. When Iraqi pro-Nazi forces attacked the British base at Basra on May 2, 1941, an expeditionary force was dispatched, with Slim soon promoted to acting major general and leading the 10th Indian Division.

He gained valuable experience in his 10 months with the division. He learned how to move a division rapidly through mountainous country while launching successful assaults against a Vichy French garrison and other objectives in eastern Syria and occupying strategic areas of Iran before advancing Russian troops could reach them.

By the spring of 1942, the 10th Division was back in Iraq. Slim's abilities had been noticed at high levels, and Wavell, now the British commander in India, proposed him as chief of staff, although he had wanted to stay in the Middle East. "The desert suits the

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: During their rapid advance in the CBI in 1942, Japanese troops and tanks cross a rickety bridge somewhere in Burma. The Japanese capture of Rangoon, the Burmese capital, marked the nadir of Allied fortunes in the CBI. BELOW: Battle-hardened and disciplined Japanese soldiers charge from the cover of a trench line as a machine-gun crew prepares to fire in support of their attack in Burma. General Slim, who assumed command of the Burma Corps on March 11, 1942, recognized the simple fact that the Allies had been outfought and outgeneraled by the Japanese. MAP: Allied forces were driven out of Burma in the spring of 1942 but reorganized and mounted successful offensive actions that recovered the initiative and compelled the Japanese to surrender.

British, and so does fighting in it," said Slim. "You can see your man."

Auchinleck, now the Middle East commander, opposed Wavell's suggestion, saying that Slim lacked "the reputation, personality, and experience which would give the Indian Army full confidence." But former Gurkha officers in embattled Burma urged their newly arrived chief, Alexander, to pressure Whitehall into appointing Slim as Burma Corps commander. Alexander complied, and on March 11, 1942, Slim—promoted to acting lieutenant general—flew into Magwe on the River Irrawaddy.

Within hours of his arrival, Slim talked to as many officers and men as he could and devised a plan for a Burcorps counterattack. His vigor and vision acted like a tonic on the corps, and the operation was launched. But the campaign was doomed from the start. The corps staggered from defeat to defeat as Slim received contradictory orders from Alexander's headquarters and was denied clear directives. Time and again, Slim saw his careful plans for counterattacks rendered impotent. On March 30, he was ordered to launch an offensive down the Irrawaddy Valley to relieve pressure on Stilwell's Chinese troops under attack at Toungoo in the Sittang Valley.

But Slim the realist knew that his corps was not up to the task. He predicted that the attack would end in failure, and it did. Still, as late as April 20, Slim planned a masterstroke offensive by his corps and a Chinese division down the Irrawaddy to halt the advancing Japanese. But the Chinese withdrew before the operation could be launched. Slim's corps was forced to retreat, and on April 25 Alexander ordered it to pull back to India.

Ironically, Alexander was extolled by the BBC as "a bold and resourceful commander," but the prickly "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell knew better. He said that because of his skillful handling of the two-month retreat "good old Slim" was the real hero.

By May 1942, a pattern had emerged which was to dog Bill Slim until the end of the Burma campaign. While his officers and men revered him, others who had not met him, including Churchill and Alexander, formed a low opinion of him. Credit was taken by others for his achievements, and blame was leveled at him for many of the Army's setbacks. He angrily refuted criticism of his Burcorps troops.

Japanese troops cross a river in Burma via an unsteady bridge. The Japanese were well trained in jungle fighting and withstood the privations of harsh conditions during their advance in Burma.

After Slim's convalescence and the disbandment of Burcorps, Wavell gave him command of the 15th Indian Corps, which was responsible for the seaward defenses of Calcutta. In September 1942, Wavell ordered his Eastern Army to advance into the Arakan region in west-central Burma and recapture Akyab from the Japanese. The offensive—the first of three attempts to secure the Arakan—proceeded smoothly until enemy resistance stiffened in January 1943.

Slim was sent in with his 15th Corps, but the British were repeatedly outmaneuvered, and the campaign degenerated into a grim struggle to rescue outflanked brigades and scattered battalions. Slim successfully extricated trapped units, transforming potential disaster into orderly defeat, yet he was unfairly blamed by Lt. Gen. Noel Irwin, the India-Burma border commander, and threatened with relief.

But it was Irwin who was sacked. Slim survived again, and his position improved when Irwin was replaced by the able, handsome General Sir George Giffard. The two men were similar in temperament and outlook.

Giffard became commander of the 11th Army Group, and Mountbatten took the helm of the new Southeast Asia Command. Lord Louis stressed offensive action and said that in the future fighting would continue during the monsoon season. Many veterans balked at the idea, but Slim did not. His support won him promotion to command of the newly formed British 14th Army in October 1943. It was a daunting challenge for the man who once remarked, "I must have been the most defeated general in our history."

Comprising eventually 500,000 British, Indian, Gurkha, and East and West African troops, the 14th Army was deployed on a 700-mile front from the Chinese frontier to the Bay of Bengal. Along the Indo-Burmese border, it faced a wide belt of jungle-clad, precipitous hills—disease infested, unmapped in places, trackless during the monsoon rains, and, for half of the year, having the world's worst climate. Morale and motivation were shaky in the 14th Army, and it ranked lowest on the Allied priority list for supplies and manpower.

But Bill Slim rose to the challenge and, aided by Mountbatten, spent several months building his new army's battle strength and morale. With his motto, "God helps those who help themselves," the general set up realistic training programs, with units sent into the jungle for weeks at a time. As Australian and American troops had learned respectively in New Guinea and the Pacific, Slim convinced his men that the

Imperial War Museum

A British Bren gun covers the advance of a patrol through tall grass and thick undergrowth during the actions at Kohima and Imphal the spring of 1944. By then, the tide had turned in favor of the Allies in the CBI.

Japanese were not supermen and could be defeated. He spent long hours talking informally with as many soldiers as he could, whether in English, Urdu, or Gurkhali, about their rations, mail service, and beer. Mentally robust and down to earth, Slim projected fighting spirit and good cheer. Responding with affection and admiration, the men started referring to him as "Uncle Bill."

His philosophy was clear and direct. "The ultimate intention must be an offensive one," he declared. "The main idea on which the plan was based must be simple. That idea must be held in view throughout, and everything must give way to it. The plan must have an element of surprise."

Slim trained his army steadily and carefully. In initial limited attacks, he deployed brigades against single Japanese companies to ensure success and build confidence. Then patrols were dispatched ever farther into enemy-controlled areas. By late 1943, things were looking up, and the Allied troops in the Far East were feeling far better about themselves than they had six months earlier. Sickness rates had fallen because of Slim's insistence on adequate medical supplies and rations.

His overall achievement was remarkable. He had taken charge of beaten, demoralized troops and, with virtually no support and scant resources from Britain, turned them into an army that on both the tactical and operational levels reached a standard that only the best of German units equaled.

The Allies were on the offensive that autumn. Three divisions of Slim's former 15th Corps advanced into the Arakan, Stilwell's Sino-American force pushed in the northeast to seize the city of Myitkyina and eventually link up with the strategic Burma Road, and long-range penetration raids by Wingate's famed Chindit columns were continuing to wreak havoc behind the Japanese lines.

By the end of that year, the Japanese high command was aware that an Allied counteroffensive was in the works, so, in January 1944, orders were issued to General Renya Mutaguchi's 15th Army for a preemptive attack against Kohima, Imphal, and Tiddim to destroy the 14th Army's logistical bases and close the single all-weather road linking Burma with India. The enemy would thus secure their hold on Burma.

As a diversionary move, the enemy launched an offensive in the Arakan on February 4. This was brought to a halt in the furious "Battle of the Admin. Box," where tall, audacious Maj. Gen. Frank W. Messervy's British and Indian troops—supported by tanks and airborne supplies—fought desperately at close quarters to gain a defensive victory. The Japanese lost 5,335 men, and the British 3,506. The action was the first major British success in the Burma campaign.

Three of Mutaguchi's divisions opened the main enemy offensive on March 8, with Slim defending a 300-mile front in the central sector. He had decided to make his main stand on the Imphal plain on ground of his own choosing. But his forces were stretched thin, with barely 3,000 men available at Imphal, so he called in the 5th and 4th Indian Divisions.

In the early hours of April 5, a regiment of Maj. Gen. Sato Kotoku's Japanese 31st Division fell upon Kohima, the small Assam town 80 miles north of Imphal. Colonel Hugh Richards's garrison fought hard to hold its shrinking perimeter until a British-Indian relief force could break through, but the situation became more desperate when the main enemy assault began. The fighting was ferocious, and the rival lines were drawn so close that the British and Japanese were dug in on opposite

Imperial War Museum

sides of the district commissioner's tennis court.

But, in some of the war's bitterest action, the worst Japanese attacks were repulsed on May 4-7. Elements of Lt. Gen. Sir Montague Stopford's 33rd Corps arrived on May 11, and the tide turned against the enemy. Against orders and in a bid to save his division from "a meaningless annihilation," Sato withdrew with 6,000 losses.

In and around Imphal, meanwhile, the main battle raged from April 5 as Lt. Gen. Sir Geoffrey Scoones's 4th Corps doggedly resisted the uncoordinated but fanatical assaults of two Japanese divisions. Though cut off from land support, the defenders were aided by the unprecedented airdropping of 6,000 tons of supplies. The siege was raised on June 22 when advance units of the 2nd and 5th Indian Divisions linked up on the Imphal-Kohima Road.

Japanese cohesion snapped. Starving and having lost most of its transport and guns, Mutaguchi's 15th Army pulled back to the River Chindwin in disorder. Five of his divisions had been virtually destroyed, with 53,000 men dead. The British-Indian toll was 17,000. Imphal was a disaster for the Japanese and a turning point for the Allies in the Burma war. Morale soared in the 14th Army, and Bill Slim, who had shown himself as a brilliant defensive general, received belated recognition. He was made a Knight Commander of the Bath on December 15, 1944.

Slim kept up the pressure on his enemy. The 14th Army had pursued the remnants of the Japanese 15th Army back across the Chindwin by September, and by December 3, three crossings had been forced. Slim planned a major offensive for early 1945, and the aim was nothing less than the destruction of all Japanese forces by thrusting into central Burma without delay and driving them southward. Although he had long been hampered by conflicting British and American objectives, Slim decided to give his foe no rest during the impending monsoon. With Mountbatten's support, he overrode the misgivings of General Leese, new commander of the Southeast Asia Allied Land Forces, and campaigned on "in the wet."

While Slim had a cool relationship with his eccentric and difficult subordinate, Wingate, and questioned the ultimate worth of his long-range raids, Slim was able to work closely and effectively with his American associates, such as Stilwell; Brig. Gen. Frank D. Merrill, whose legendary 5307th Composite Unit (the famed "Merrill's Marauders") distinguished itself at Myitkyina; and Colonel Philip G. Cochran, colorful commander of the 1st Air Commando Group, which gallantly supported 14th Army operations with supply drops.

Slim recognized Stilwell as "a tough, hard-bitten, plain fighting general," but one who lacked strategic skills and "reached for the hammer to crack a walnut." He regarded Merrill as a "fine, courageous leader who inspired confidence."

The last major offensive of the Burma campaign was launched on Sunday, January 14, 1945. The Allied aim was to defeat the main Japanese forces in central Burma, protect the new Ledo Road link with China to the north, and facilitate the reconquest of the rest of Burma. Slim's Anglo-Indian forces moved swiftly and with deadly purpose against three enemy armies commanded by General Hyotaro Kimura.

While the British 33rd Corps headed for Mandalay, concentrating Japanese attention there, the 4th Corps moved stealthily down the Kabaw and Gangaw Valleys, crossed the Irrawaddy on February 13, and seized the vital strategic-communications center of Meiktila on March 4. Enemy links with strategic Rangoon were cut. This was the masterstroke of the Burma campaign because it led directly to the disintegration of the northern Japanese front. Mandalay was captured on March 21 after a bitter struggle.

On April 1, Maj. Gen. Sir Francis W. Fest-

ing's crack British 36th Infantry Division arrived from the north to back up Slim's Anglo-Indians. The enemy fought tenaciously, but their counterattacks were too little and too late. Their defenses in central Burma were shattered, and the remnants of their divisions retreated in confusion along the Irrawaddy.

Supported by 15th Corps amphibious landings along the Arakan coast, Slim's 33rd and 4th Corps made a lightning advance to reach Rangoon before an imminent monsoon hampered progress. The mission was accomplished on May 2, 1945, with the Japanese having lost a total of 350,000 men. This effectively concluded the Burma fighting. It was a decisive victory for Slim and arguably the most brilliant British ground campaign of World War II.

Slim was as proud of his men as they were devoted to him. "Armies do not win wars by means of a few bodies of super-soldiers, but by the average quality of their standard units," he observed. "Any well-trained infantry battalion should be able to do what a commando can do; in the 14th Army they could and did."

Anxious to convince the Japanese that they had been beaten in the field, Slim disregarded General Douglas MacArthur's wishes and refused to allow surrendering officers to keep their swords. General Kimura's sword eventually ended up on Slim's mantelpiece, "where I always intended that one day it should be."

Having already proved himself to be an inspired trainer and skilled defensive general, the Mandalay-Meiktila operation now placed the 14th Army's Uncle Bill in the same league as Heinz Guderian, Erich von Manstein, George S. Patton, Jr., and Brian G. Horrocks as an outstanding offensive commander, as well.

On May 7, General Leese flew to Slim's headquarters at Meiktila with the astounding news that he was to be relieved as 14th Army commander and take over the newly formed 12th Army for amphibious "mopping up" operations in Malaya. Slim refused, while a storm of protest swept through the 14th Army ranks at the treatment of their chief. Officers threatened to resign.

After Leese was dismissed, Slim succeeded him as commander of the Allied Land Forces in Southeast Asia on July 1. Promoted to full general that August, he commented wryly, "By good fortune in the game of military snakes and ladders, I found myself a general." Slim returned to England after seven years' absence, spent "a hectic but happy month" with his devoted wife, and met Prime Minister Churchill for the first time. The man who had once quipped, "I cannot believe that a man with a name like Slim can be much good," was finally able to acknowledge his stature. "He has a hell of a face," the prime minister observed.

Slim had become one of "Churchill's generals," but he did not succumb to his leader's influence. After they had lunched in London in the summer of 1945, Churchill held forth expansively on his chances in the forthcoming general election, and Slim commented, "Well, prime minister, I know one thing. My army won't be voting for you." Churchill held no grudge, though he was ousted at the polls.

The Burma hero was active after the war. He headed the Imperial Defense College in 1946, was awarded the Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire and served as deputy chairman of the nationalized British Railways in 1947. The following year, over the protests of his predecessor, he replaced Field Marshal Montgomery as Chief of the Imperial General Staff. Slim was promoted to field marshal in January 1949.

He was sworn in as governor-general of Australia in May 1953, and published his memoirs, *Defeat into Victory*, in 1956. It was a publishing sensation, and the first edition of 20,000 copies sold out in a few days. Accepted as the classic account of the 1942-45 Burma campaign, the book was hailed for its honesty and literacy. Brig. Gen. S.L.A. Marshall, the noted U.S. Army historian, wrote that "its sweep and elegance will spoil the subject for the historians who will try later." Historian Mark M. Boatner III called it "one of the war's finest memoirs," while *Time* magazine said, "One of the war's few great captains … a soldier who can reconstruct battles as brilliantly as he fought them."

Slim was created a Knight of the Garter in 1959 and served in Australia until 1960, when he was elevated to the peerage as Viscount Slim of Burma. He then served as constable and governor of Windsor Castle in 1963, and died in London on December 14, 1970, at the age of 79.

Slim had secured a proud niche in the long history of the British Army, and tributes poured in on his passing. General Messervy recalled, "There was no brass hat about him," while Major Gen. Sir John G. Smyth, who led the 19th and 17th Indian Divisions, believed, "He combined the best qualities of Monty and Alex." Lord Mountbatten went even further and said that Slim was "the finest general the Second World War produced."

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: Sikh troops engage the Japanese in the vicinity of Fort Dufferin near Mandalay in early 1945. The fort covered an area of a square mile, with ramparts that were 30 feet tall and a 70-yard-wide moat. The Japanese finally capitulated after 12 days of fighting. OPPOSITE: Swiftly pressing their advantage, British soldiers rush past the body of a dead Japanese soldier during the advance on Meiktila in the spring of 1945. The capture of Meiktila, a vital communications center, severed links between Japanese troops and Rangoon.

The late Michael D. Hull was a frequent contributor to WWII History. *He wrote for many years from his home in Enfield, Connecticut.*

Gray Wolves and the Ides of March

A tremendous U-boat success against two Allied convoys in early 1943 gave way to major setbacks only weeks later as Allied anti-submarine capabilities improved.

BY KELLY BELL

Adolf Hitler and his military commanders were feeling a new and unsettling emotion early in 1943—desperation. A year earlier, they had seemed on top of the world as their forces ruled a region that surpassed Rome at its greatest.

The Third Reich had commanded an empire sprawling from the Russian steppes to the Atlantic to North Africa and seemed ascendant on all fronts. Over the past year, it had become a different world as Nazi armies were sent reeling in Russia and Africa, and Allied bombers were reducing the Fatherland's cities from the air. Still, the German soldier remained an implacable enemy. He would soon strike back in a theater in which his country was not known for supremacy: the sea. A foretaste of this backlash came in February.

Lieutenant Commander Siegfried von Forstner was a fourth-generation member of his noble Prussian family to make the military his life's work. Over a 36-hour stretch from February 7-9, he repeatedly prowled his submarine *U-402* close enough to Allied convoy SC118 to snipe seven cargo ships from the fleet despite numerous mechanical problems with his U-boat and regardless of Royal Air Force (RAF) B-24 Liberator bombers searching frantically and vainly for him. Forstner maintained his solitary, devastating assault in spite of the humiliated escort's best efforts, breaking off only when he ran out of torpedoes. As *U-402* limped back to occupied France, the Royal Navy ruefully pondered the implications of the actions of this lone, ailing submarine. There were many "what ifs" to consider.

Forstner's colleagues in the Kriegmarine's U-boat arm were not about to let their handsome comrade monopolize the limelight. Germany's submarine skippers were a notoriously competitive fraternity, and as each of them took to the cold North Atlantic in the opening weeks of 1943, they were infused with a determination not to be outdone and to strike a blow desperately needed by the reeling Fatherland.

U-boat paladin Admiral Karl Donitz called his cryptographic section *B-Dienst*, and in February and March he kept it busy deciphering the deluge of transmissions intercepted from the Allies' proliferating convoy program. The most significant data concerned two convoys, designated SC122 and HX229, that were departing New York the second week

AKG Images

In this dramatic 1943 painting by German war artist Richard Schreiber titled *After the Convoy Attack,* a German U-boat slips away from the burning hulk of its latest victim in the Atlantic shipping lanes. U-boats nearly brought Britain to its knees during World War II, but improvements in Allied anti-submarine technology led to the eventual defeat of the Nazis in the Battle of the Atlantic.

National Archives

in March. Totaling more than 100 ships, these flotillas were transporting everything from Spam to locomotives. Many of the vessels were, in fact, overloaded and would sink quickly if holed. When he got the news, Donitz quickly commenced laying battle plans.

Fortunately for the Allies, B-Dienst never learned of a third convoy, HX229A, that left New York immediately after the first two. Taking a northerly route to avoid mid-ocean congestion, it churned safely above the congregating submarines. Still, the submersibles would soon find plenty of targets.

Beginning on March 12, Donitz personally assembled history's biggest-ever submarine fleet to be deployed for a specific combat action. Three "Wolf Packs" composed of 38 U-boats positioned themselves in the North Atlantic in anticipation of the coming merchantmen. Farthest to the west, the first flotilla, nicknamed *Raubgraf* (Robber Baron,) lined up northwest to southeast south of Greenland. To the east *Sturmer* (Daredevil) and *Dranger* (Harrier) formed a north-south row. When they arrived, the convoys would steam into an L-shaped formation that would curl around and encircle them. The Allies, meanwhile, had inadvertently been making Donitz's job easier.

The significance of *U-402's* depredations was lost on the Allied Combined Chiefs of Staff, who had imprudently withdrawn all Consolidated B-24 Liberator four-engine bombers from anti-submarine duty, adding them to the fleets carrying out the burgeoning strategic-bombing campaign over continental Europe. Flying from the American east coast and from the British Isles, the B-24 was the only plane in the Allied arsenal with sufficient range to provide continuous cover for the convoys; Britain-based bombers would take over when those flying from the States did have to turn back. The departure of the ungainly looking but versatile "Flying Boxcars" opened a 200-mile-wide mid-ocean gap in which cargo carriers were out of range of air cover. The submariners would take full advantage. Yet as the battle loomed, the hunters almost lost their quarry's scent.

SC122 avoided Raubgraf by passing farther south than the Germans had anticipated. At first, HX229 also steamed under the southernmost boats, but late on the stormy night of March 15, *U-91* managed to sight a destroyer. Followed by three other subs, it took off in pursuit. Comprising newer ships, HX229 was faster than SC122. Despite being unaware they were being followed, the merchant seamen outdistanced the quartet of wolves. By this time, though, the convoys were nearing the air-cover gap, and easternmost Dranger had received wireless warning of the approaching targets.

Although the Germans knew their prey were in the general vicinity, no cargo carriers were in sight, and there was no way of knowing whether they might change direction. The hunters got the break they needed during the predawn of the 16th. *U-653* had been deployed for this action while she and her crew were en route home from a lengthy patrol and had not had time for servicing, rearming, provisioning and refueling. She had just one torpedo remaining and was slowed by a broken-down engine. Realizing his sub was in no state to participate in the coming battle, her skipper had detached from the pack and was slowly steaming eastward on the surface. Quartermaster Heinz Theen was on bridge watch when he saw something suspicious.

"I saw a light directly ahead for only about two seconds," he later recalled. "I think it was a sailor on the deck of a steamer lighting a cigarette. I sent a message to the captain, and by the time he had come up on the bridge we could see ships all around us."

Slowed by having just one operable engine, *U-635* had been overtaken by fast-moving HX229. After counting 37 freighters, three destroyers, and two corvettes, the submariners realized they and their ailing boat were in a perilous position and fortunate to have not already been spotted. They crash-dived, killed their

engine, and listened silently and fearfully as the fleet passed over them.

"We could hear quite clearly the noises of the different engines," Theen said. "The diesels with fast revs, and the turbines of the escorts making singing noises."

It took two hours for the convoy to pass. As soon as the engine noises faded, the U-boat resurfaced and broadcast a coded message to the other wolves, informing them of the fleet's position, heading, and speed.

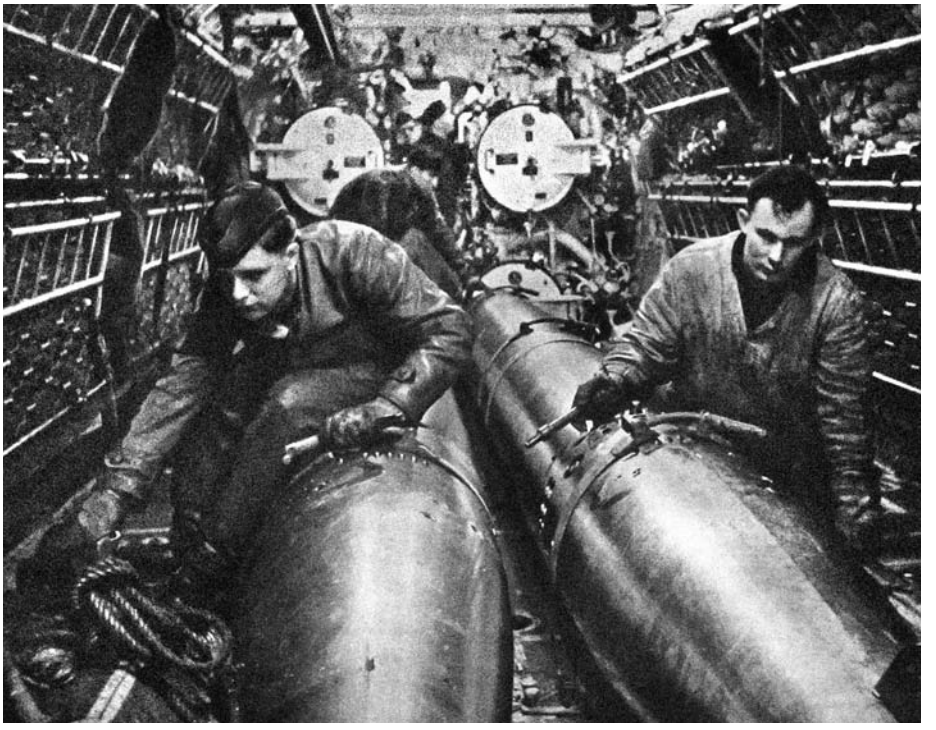
When the news reached him, Donitz personally coordinated the battle from his new headquarters in Berlin's bomb-damaged Hotel am Steinplatz. Raubgraf swapped ends and took off after HX229 from behind while Sturmer and Dranger spread out and bore down from dead ahead, trapping the ships in a three-pronged pincer. By dusk on March 16, 1943, the hapless supply flotilla was surrounded.

To make the situation worse for the convoys, the weather had cleared, and the moon was nearly full. The Germans looked out over a vista of highly visible targets. Just two escorts, a full six miles apart, guarded the convoy's lengthy flank. Like *U-653*, *U-603* had already been at sea for a protracted period when Donitz deployed her for this action. Her skipper, Lt. Commander Hans-Joachim Beertelsman, had just four torpedoes remaining when he steered his boat through the gaping hole between escorts. Three of his torpedoes were Feldapparat (coiled spring) missiles that could be programmed to jet in a straight line for a specific distance and then commence weaving in hairpin loops until either they hit something or their electric engines ran out of power. Issuing a radio warning to his sister subs to stay clear of the vicinity into which he was preparing to shoot, he fired his twisting torpedoes. All three missed, so Watch Officer Rudolf Baltz climbed onto the conning tower and verbally directed the firing of his boat's last conventional shot. It hit the freighter *Elin K* amidships, sending her under with 7,500 tons of precious manganese and wheat. By some miracle none of her crew were lost, but for the rest of the convoy the havoc was just getting started.

Minutes later, Lt. Commander Helmut Manseck in *U-758* picked off two supply vessels just seconds apart, and as more U-boats penetrated the convoy's perimeter, explosions began to banish the darkness throughout the sprawling marine battlefield. Just before daybreak, the *Irene du Pont* went down after taking two hits. She was the 10th ship sunk or crippled before dawn. The Germans were still closing in on all sides, and this was not the only battle going on.

About 120 miles northeast of bleeding HX229, convoy SC122 was under fire as a lone wolf attacked. Her crew had nicknamed *U-338* the "Wild Donkey." They were completely new to this game and having a great time learning. The sub was fresh out of the shipyard, and her crew were fresh out of training. Her skipper, Captain Manfred Kinzel, had started the war as a Luftwaffe pilot, only recently switching to the navy. His men were as inexperienced as he, on their first voyage and without one old salt among them. Eager for the thrill of their first combat, they had been steaming full speed to join the assault on HX229 when they blundered into SC122.

Alamy



ABOVE: The cramped quarters aboard Nazi U-boats are visible in this image of crewmen working feverishly in the torpedo room aboard one of the German submarines. The sailors are handling torpedoes for use in the tubes, which are visible at the rear. OPPOSITE: In this photo taken by a crewman aboard a German U-boat on the water's surface, a torpedo strikes home amidships, dooming an Allied merchant ship to a watery grave.

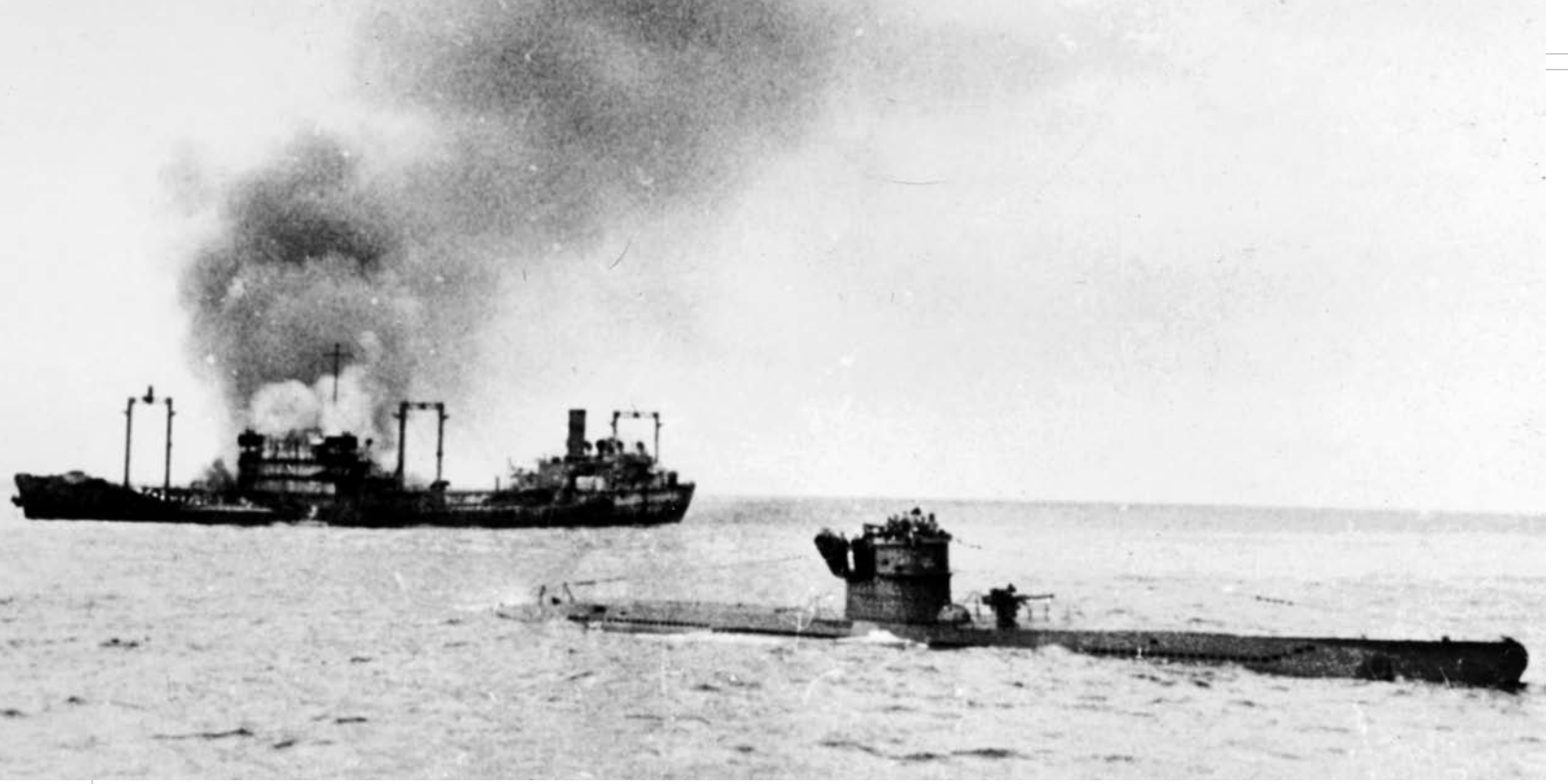
Like its counterpart, this convoy was poorly guarded, with only two destroyers, five corvettes, and a frigate as escorts.

Kinzel had a great idea. Noting his targets' slow speed, he devised a tactic a seasoned skipper would likely have considered too risky. Cutting in front of and turning onto the same heading as his quarry, he slowed to a snail's pace and allowed the leading escorts to overtake him. Never dreaming the Germans would attempt anything so foolhardy, the warships' crews were not watching for it and passed blithely on either side of the U-boat. By 2 a.m., *U-338* was just one mile in front of the freighters and turned to face them.

The previous day's storms had damaged the connection between the conning tower's sighting glass and the torpedo calculator, making a standard attack impossible. The youthful submariners improvised.

"We had to make the attack partly by eye, and had to aim the torpedoes by turning the boat onto each target," Watch Officer Lieutenant Herbert Zeissler later explained. "We fired the first two at the right-hand ship we could see. We then had to turn to port to aim the second pair at the lead ship of the second column."

Firing twice at each target, the Germans sank both even though one torpedo missed, but this one ripped open and sank the ship behind the first one hit. Crewmen on several freighters fired flares to illuminate the U-boat and opened fire on her with antiaircraft machine guns. Slewing to starboard, Kinzel fired an aft shot blindly into the convoy and dove to safety. This last missile, after a full six minutes, lucked into and sank a merchantman at the very back of the fleet. It had taken Wild Donkey and her cast of fearless rookies less than 10 minutes to chalk up their first four kills. They celebrated with a raucous breakfast of sausages, strawberries, and ice cream. They could not hear the screams of 40 Dutch and British seamen drowning in



Naval History and Heritage Command

This startling photo depicts the German submarine *U-442* on the surface of the Atlantic Ocean in January 1943, just after torpedoing the Allied tanker at left. U-boat captains preferred to launch their attacks on the surface if possible, and in this case the encounter occurred in broad daylight.

the freezing swells above them. Even then, SC122's bloodletting was not over.

By 9 a.m., the convoy was approaching the end of the air-cover gap 900 miles west of Greenland, and a single plane arrived to fly ant-submarine patrol as Kinzel resumed hunting. By noon the aircraft had to depart to refuel, not returning for two hours. *U-338* prowled back into the flotilla from its port side and fired three shots at a Panamanian freighter. One round hit dead center, literally tearing it in two. Two escorts managed to get a fix on the raider's position and set out after her, but the jubilant Germans crash-dived to almost 700 feet. Kinzel may not have been aware that his boat was not designed for such depth, but he did know the Allies' depth charges could not be set to explode deeper than 550 feet, and he was seeking safety in the deep. In any case, Wild Donkey was brand-new. This was her first voyage, and her welds, bolts, and fittings were fresh and snug. She easily held up under the water pressure of the Atlantic depths while the novices inside her delightedly counted 27 muffled blasts far above them.

That afternoon HX229 also steamed out of the air gap, but there were still too few planes to cover so many ships, and *U-384* sank two more. By the evening of the 18th, however, a new Allied technological innovation would make itself felt.

By this point, there were sufficient air patrols to threaten the wolf packs, but when a rain squall blew in, the skipper of *U-384* figured this dirty weather would protect him as he surfaced in hopes of spying more targets. What he and the other submariners were unaware of was that their enemy's aircraft had just been equipped with new radar sets that the subs' Metox radar detectors could not give warning of in time. This new radar could sniff out surfaced submarines from 12 miles away and was unaffected by weather. A Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress equipped with this new device attacked *U-384* out of the clouds, dropping four depth charges that blew the U-boat to bits. Even then, the battle was not over.

With the convoys nearing their destination, the proliferating air-and-sea escorts made further U-boat attacks too risky, but the crew of the freighter *Mathew Luckenbach* played right into the wolves' fangs. The previous night had been a very long one for *Luckenbach*'s crew as they watched their sister ships go down one after another. Losing their collective nerve, they held a spontaneous, predawn pow-wow and decided the convoy was too conspicuous to predatory eyes. They voted to abandon it and strike out on their own. Stoking their boilers, they pulled away from HX229. By full daylight they were alone and vulnerable.

Like Kinzel, Lt. Commander Herbert Uhlig was in his first battle, but unlike his colleague he had found no targets in this sprawling fight that now appeared to be over. Having received news of *U-384's* fate, he was running his own *U-587* barely submerged when the *Luckenbach* suddenly appeared in his periscope at a range of 4,000 yards. The ship was bigger than she looked to his inexperienced eye, resulting in his miscalculating the range to be just 1,800 yards. Firing three torpedoes, he eagerly timed their runs. He was disheartened when his estimated time of impact passed uneventfully, but almost two minutes later he and his crew were startled by booming reports as two of the fish lucked into the hapless merchantman. *Luckenbach* did not sink, but drifted aimlessly while belching smoke. A U.S. Coast Guard cutter responded to her wireless call and rescued her 68 unwise crewmen.

Uhlig waited until dark, when the escort ships and patrol planes departed, and then moved in on what he assumed would be his first kill. It did not happen.

"Only moments before my command to fire she was hit by the torpedo of another boat and sank quickly," he later groused.

And even now, the battle was not quite over.

Wild Donkey's joyful youngsters were hanging up five victory pennants as they steamed into the Bay of Biscay. An RAF Halifax bomber, using its new radar, detected the sub and drew a bead on her. With insufficient time or depth to dive to safety, the submariners manned their 88mm deck gun and shot their assailant from

the sky. One man, the New Zealander flight engineer, managed to bail out. Kinzel plucked him from the drink and presented him as a soggy, live victory pennant.

Back in Berlin, a delighted Donitz pronounced Wild Donkey's adventure as "the greatest success ever achieved in a convoy battle." Along with her sister subs, she had been part of Nazi Germany's greatest-ever naval victory. These U-boats had destroyed 141,000 tons of sorely needed shipping during their four-day, 600-mile rampage. The Allies were taken totally aback, not only by Donitz's unanticipated ability to read their mail, but also by the prolonged period during which he was able to maintain his U-boats in the combat zone. The Germans had recently introduced submarine Type XIVA, another bitter surprise. Designed for resupply rather than battle, each of these "Milk Cows" could carry 432 tons of fuel so that attack subs could replenish their tanks at sea rather than having to return to port. Deploying two Milk Cows along with his wolves, Donitz ensured the U-boats could savage the convoys far longer than the Allies had thought possible.

Twenty-two merchantmen had gone down during the mid-Atantic March massacre. Had the Kriegsmarine been able to maintain this rate of attrition, it would have outstripped even the combined industrial capacity of America and England to construct cargo carriers. Nobody challenged a Royal Navy representative when he said, "The Germans never came so near to disrupting communication between the New World and the Old as in the first 20 days of March." Yet the mass sinking would be an isolated incident.

The United States geared more and more of its massive industrial strength to the war effort. Multitudes of B-24 Liberators were rolling off the assembly lines. Soon, there would be enough both to bomb Germany and fly cover for convoys. With the patrol planes equipped with the new radar sets, it was becoming unsafe for U-boats to stay on the surface long enough to locate targets. Also, Donitz was not the only one reading other peoples' mail.

As 1943 wore on, Axis submariners had increasing difficulty locating convoys even as colossal volumes of war materiel flowed into Britain and Soviet Russia. Donitz knew the merchantmen were there, but his sea wolves could not find them. At first, he suspected high-level treason and had all his senior officers investigated, but these inspections revealed nothing but a few illicit French mistresses. No one appeared to be passing information to the Allies.

The Brits called their new system "Huff-Duff." By installing sets both on land and shipboard, operatives were intercepting U-boat wireless transmissions at multiple, widely separated locations and using triangulation to locate wolf packs.

His Majesty's decoders at the Bletchley Park cryptographic facility outside London had for some time been capturing radio signals and warning convoys away from danger spots. Still, the crafty U-boat chieftain sometimes outwitted his enemies.

In January 1942, Donitz had discarded the Hydra cipher, replacing it with a new device called Triton, drying up the flow of information to the Royal Navy and resulting in the decimation of several convoys. A year later, he correctly suspected the Allies had broken the Triton code, so on March 8, 1943, he threw it out and implemented the sophisticated Enigma machine. Enigma used four coding cylinders rather than the previous device's three. This quadrupled the possible rotor sequences. Using new electronic calculators (the ancestors of digital computers), British codebreakers took just

Naval History and Heritage Command

ABOVE: As World War II progressed, Allied anti-submarine defenses improved steadily, inflicting heavy losses on German U-boats in the Atlantic. In this photo, a submarine believed to be *U-402* is shown under intense air attack in October 1943. BELOW: Consolidated B-24 Liberator bombers, modified to hunt Nazi U-boats and in service with Royal Air Force Coastal Command, sit ready to take off for anti-submarine patrols.

National Archives

Naval History and Heritage Command

A large Allied convoy, the lifeline to the British Isles, stretches into the distance in preparation for the perilous passage across the Atlantic Ocean from North America to Britain. This photo was taken off the coast of Newfoundland, and encounters with marauding Nazi U-boats were expected along the way.

10 days to unravel the new cipher, but this was too late to save SC122 and HX229.

Less high-tech innovations were also making themselves felt. Soon after the March battle, convoy escort ships began carrying the new Hedgehog anti-submarine armament. Firing two dozen 32-pound bombs up to 250 yards in front of a warship, this weapon gave escorts a much wider field of attack than that provided by depth charges. Hedgehog explosives did not use depth settings, exploding only when they struck something solid such as a submarine or the sea floor. This made it possible to immediately reestablish sonar contact after missed shots, negating the old submariner trick of hiding in the field of bubbles produced when depth charges exploded.

Other developments were airborne. The March mayhem had impressed upon the Western Allies the importance of anti-submarine air cover. By May, the number of Liberators assigned to protect the convoys had grown from 20 to 70, and every plane was fitted with extra fuel tanks that enabled the B-24s to remain in the air up to 16 hours. Warship escorts were also evolving. The U.S. and Royal navies began installing improvised flight decks on some of their larger freighters and oilers. By teaming these hybrids with destroyers and sub chasers the Allies produced a new breed of task force: the convoy support group.

Should undersea raiders be detected or reported even at extreme range, these five- or six-ship flotillas could either converge on nearby submarines or leave their convoys in the care of aircraft and standard destroyers and strike out independently after subs, returning as soon as the threat was chased off or eliminated. These fast-moving groups could also race to any part of a convoy that was attacked.

Each support group also carried some of the Royal Air Force's elderly Fairey Swordfish torpedo planes. These obsolete biplanes crippled battleship *Bismarck* in the spring of 1941 and repeatedly proved their worth as sub killers. Carrying newly developed acoustic torpedoes that homed in on U-boat engine noises, they became a submariner's nightmare.

All these additions to the Allied arsenal demonstrated their devastating effectiveness in a battle that began on May 4, 1943. Convoy ONS5 was headed west, empty after delivering its load, when it blundered into 30 U-boats that were maintaining radio silence. A storm had scattered the cargo carriers, and several escort vessels had been forced to depart for Newfoundland for refueling.

Charging into the fleet, the raiders quickly sank nine ships, but as they regrouped for a second attack, a dense fog rolled in, hiding their targets. At this point, additional escort warships—armed with the innovative 10-centimeter radar sets—arrived. The March mauling was still a painfully fresh memory as the destroyers charged straight into the wolf pack, sinking two boats by ramming and another two with depth charges.

The U-boats backed off but remained close until the weather cleared. Still, they could not find an opening in the aggressive escort fleet's perimeter. On the 6th, a second, Liberator-accompanied escort force arrived from Newfoundland and sank three more U-boats. The shaken survivors broke off and retired.

This setback held ominous implications for the Third Reich. March's smashing naval victory was fleeting and gave way to a reckoning in the Atlantic only weeks later.

The exploits of Dranger, Raubgraf and Sturmer represented the zenith of success for Nazi Germany's naval forces. There would be no more great victories for the Kriegsmarine, and its U-boat arm would suffer the highest percentage of casualties of any branch of the Wehrmacht. Like their Fuhrer, thes gray wolves of the Atlantic were doomed.

Author Kelly Bell has been researching and writing on topics related to World War II for decades. He resides in Tyler, Texas.

Scientist Confesses:

Global Warming a $22 Billion Lie!

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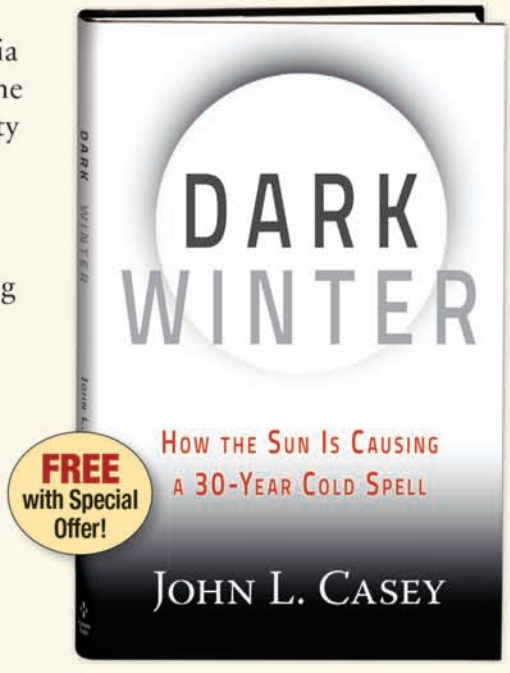
It reveals that a network of politicians, corporations, and scientists have conspired together to promote the fear of "global warming" . . . despite evidence clearly stating no such "global warming" exists.



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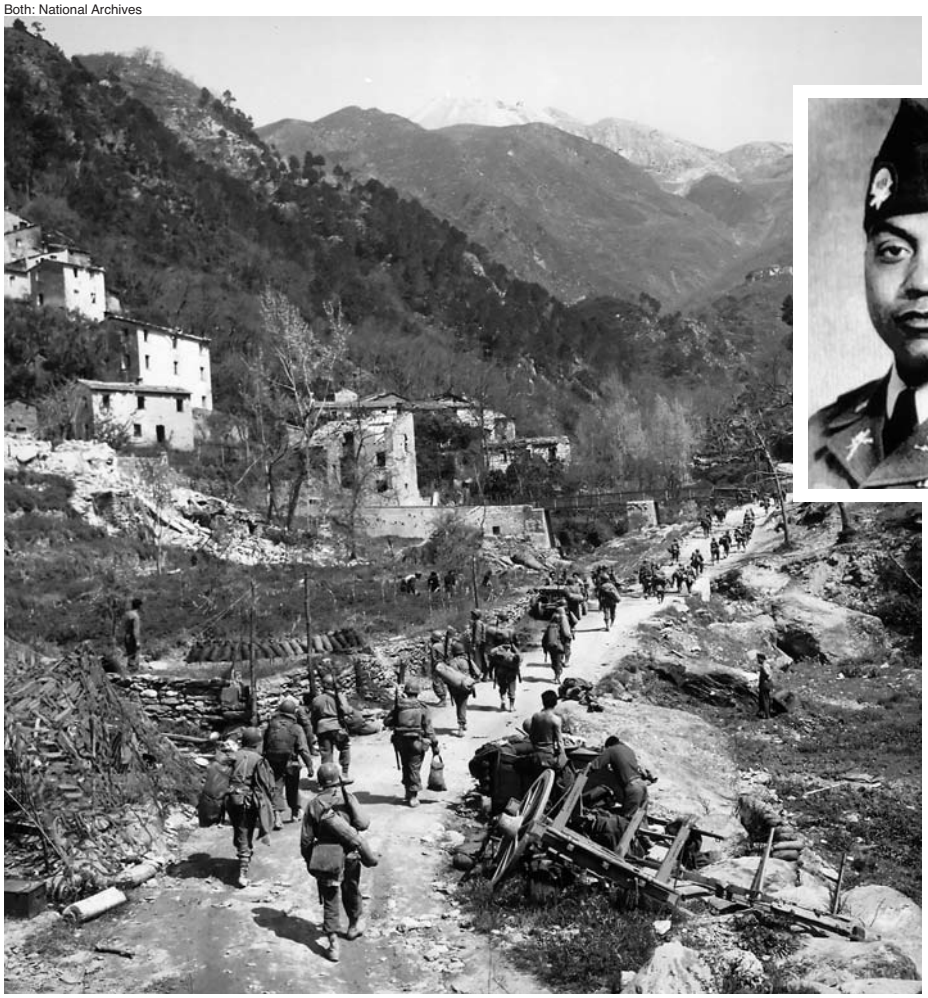
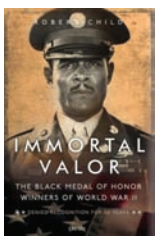


Belated Medals of Honor Righted Injustices

African American GIs earned seven Medals of Honor during World War II but did not get them until 1997.

THE SQUAT, GRAY BRICK CASTLE AGHINOLFI SAT ON HIGH GROUND OVERlooking a coastal road on Italy's west coast. On April 5, 1945, German soldiers occupied the old Italian fortress. They sat squarely in the path of the advancing United States Army. In the hour before dawn, Lieutenant Vernon Baker led his men, the Weapons Platoon of C Company, 370th Infantry, up the slope before the castle. He had 25 men under his command, and they went up so smoothly they soon got ahead of the rest of the company. The platoon stopped at a spot about 250 yards from the structure so Baker could find a good spot to set up a .50-caliber machine gun. Friendly artillery fell nearby, masking the sound of the GIs' movement.



Spotting some movement in the brush, Baker made out the silhouette of a German helmet. Taking aim in the early dawn light, he shot down two enemy soldiers. His men soon eliminated a machine-gun nest and emplaced their own weapon near it. The artillery also served to mask the sound of the Americans' rifles, allowing them to surprise the enemy. As Baker looked around, the observant young lieutenant spotted a pair of cylindrical objects poking out of a slit on the side of a hill. He realized they were a pair of binoculars sticking out of an enemy observation post. The young officer moved up to the slit, stuck the barrel of his M-1 rifle through it, and emptied the eight-round clip into the two occupants, killing them both.

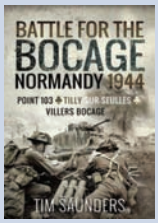
Advancing, the platoon stumbled on another machine-gun nest, its two-man crew enjoying breakfast, unaware of the nearby Americans. As soon as they saw the Americans, they scrambled for their gun, but Baker shot them both. Nearing the castle, the terrain became more difficult; only a narrow path through a draw allowed access, but it had to be well defended. Sure enough, a German appeared as Baker conferred with his company commander, Captain John Runyon. The German threw a grenade, which landed only five feet away. Runyon dove away while Baker shot the enemy soldier as he tried to run away. Luckily, the grenade proved to be a dud.

The next few minutes went by in a blur for the young officer. He went down the draw alone, blowing open the entry to a concealed fighting position with a hand grenade and shooting a German who came out. Baker threw a grenade inside, waited for the explosion, and went in, shooting two more Germans inside. When he came back out of the draw, German mortar and machine-gun fire tore into the platoon, killing or wounding about two-thirds of them within minutes. Runyon expected more men to arrive, but when they did not, he ordered a withdrawal in two groups. Baker stayed with the second to provide covering fire as the walking wounded fell back. He covered the second group, consisting of the more seriously wounded, by using

American soldiers of the 92nd Infantry Division move into the town of Moninoso, Italy, in April 1945. The 92nd was one of several Black outfits of the U.S. Army that served in the Italian campaign during World War II. INSET: Lieutenant Vernon Baker received his Medal of Honor decades after the end of World War II.

New and Noteworthy

Saipan 1944: The Most Decisive Battle of the Pacific War (John Greehan and Alexander Nicoll, Frontline Books, 2021, $22.95, softcover) The invasion of the Japanese-held island of Saipan paved the way for B-29 bomber attacks against the Japanese homeland. This photobook reveals the bitter struggle for Saipan in mid-1944.

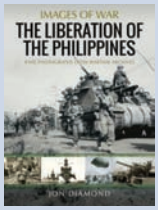


Battle for the Bocage Normandy 1944 (Tim Saunders, Pen and Sword Books, 2021, $42.95, hardcover) This book chronicles the battles for Point 103, Tilly-Sur-Suelles, and Villers-Bocage during the summer of 1944. German panzer divisions struggled against British units brought to Europe from the Mediterranean.

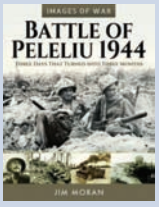
German Tank Destroyers (Pierre Tiquet, Casemate Books, 2021, $39.95, hardcover) Germany used several obsolete tank chassis and modified current designs to field a wide variety of self-propelled tank destroyers. This book uses a combination of illustrations and veteran accounts to show how they were used in combat.

The Finnish-Soviet Winter War 1939-40: Stalin's Hollow Victory (David Murphy, Osprey Books, 2021, $24.00, softcover) The Finns put up stiff resistance to the Soviet invasion, inflicting heavy casualties. Eventually, however, the weight of Soviet numbers swamped the Finns, forcing their capitulation.

Stalin's Armour 1941-1945: Soviet Tanks at War (Anthony Tucker-Jones, Pen and Sword Books, 2021, $34.95, hardcover) At the beginning of the war, the Soviets lost thousands of tanks despite a vast numerical superiority. By the end, they were able to launch massed, coordinated armored attacks.



The Liberation of the Philippines (Jon Diamond, Pen and Sword Books, 2021, $28.95, softcover) This photobook contains hundreds of images of the campaign to liberate the Philippine Islands from Imperial Japan. Descriptive text accompanies each photograph.



Battle of Peleliu 1944: Three Days that Turned into Three Months (Jim Moran, Frontline Books, 2021, $24.95, softcover) The Americans expected to capture Peleliu in three days. This photobook's imagery helps explain why it took so much longer.

Holland 1940: The Luftwaffe's First Setback in the West (Ryan K. Knoppen, Osprey Books, 2021, $24.00, softcover) The Luftwaffe's strategy against Holland was supposed to bring victory in a day. Instead, they had to resort to five days of terror bombing to force a surrender.

hand grenades to destroy two more machine-gun nests they had not noticed earlier.

Baker's actions were deserving of a Medal of Honor. Instead, because he was black, nine months later he received a Distinguished Service Cross. It took over 50 years to correct that failure. Luckily, Baker was still alive when, in 1997, he went to the White House and received his medal alongside the descendants of six other recipients whose awards came too late. The stories of all seven men are retold in ***Immortal Valor: The Black Medal of Honor Winners of World War II, Denied Recognition for 50 Years*** (Robert Child, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2022, 288 pages, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $35.00, hardcover).

In 1993, the Army commissioned a panel to investigate instances where black soldiers may have deserved a Medal of Honor but did not receive the award. They reported back with seven names: Vernon Baker, Charles L. Thomas, Willy James Jr., Edward Allen Carter Jr., George Watson, Ruben Rivers, and John Fox. This book tells the story of each man, including how he entered the service, where he trained, his deployment into the combat theater, and the act that earned him his delayed award. The author deftly relays each man's tale with a clear, detailed narrative and background information on the battle in which they performed their act of valor. The book is a fitting tribute to its subjects and brings to light information that should have been published long ago.

German Tanks in Normandy 1944: The Panzer, Sturmgeschutz and Panzerjager Forces that Faced the D-Day Invasion (Steven J. Zaloga, Osprey Books, Oxford, UK, 2021, 48 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, $19.00, softcover)

When the Allies invaded Normandy, the Germans had a substantial number of armored vehicles available to oppose them. However, few of the vaunted Tiger and Panther models were available, meaning most of the fighting occurred using a mix of older tanks, assault guns, and tank destroyers, some of which were obsolete. Most German units suffered from personnel and equipment shortages, and Allied air power harried them at every opportunity. Despite these limitations, they exacted a fearful toll on U.S. and British forces using the advantage of fighting on the defense and their extensive experience of war. Nevertheless, in the end, the Germans lost, beginning the long retreat to Germany and eventual defeat.

The author is an acknowledged expert on World War II armored combat, piercing the myths and falsehoods to reveal tank warfare as it occurred. This work carries his expertise forward in a concise, well-illustrated edition. The Germans and their capabilities are often overly mythologized, but this book is refreshingly honest about them, both good and bad. For example, the author explains how tank ace Michael Wittman's skill led him to great victories, but his overconfidence subsequently brought about his demise. There are several original drawings and artwork, which is normal for this publisher's work.

Battleship Commander: The Life of Vice Admiral Willis A. Lee Jr. (Paul Stillwell, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2021, 376 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $37.95, hardcover)

Willis Augustus Lee served in the United States Navy for nearly four decades. Medal of Honor winner George Street, who served under Lee on a cruiser before the war, said Lee was "bright as new money." Lee's skills both at operations and administration earned him great praise during

Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

RELIC'S LATEST SHOWS PROMISE IN PRE-ALPHA TRIALS, AND MEN OF WAR PREPARES TO RETURN TO THE BATTLEFIELD THIS YEAR

COMPANY OF HEROES 3

PUBLISHER SEGA • **GENRE** STRATEGY
SYSTEM PC • **AVAILABLE** 2022

One of the most anticipated World War II titles of 2022 is *Company of Heroes 3*, which is currently on the way from SEGA and developer Relic. While it still has the year as its release window at the time of this writing, some lucky players got a chance to check out another pre-alpha trial build of its multiplayer near the end of 2021. The results showed plenty of promise for the upcoming strategy title, including a taste of Skirmish mode, cooperative play against AI opponents, and good old fashioned competitive multiplayer.

Company of Heroes 3 is shaping up to be a really ambitious entry in the series. Relic has done a lot of work to ensure that the legacy it has established thus far with previous entries—namely the finely tuned tactical gameplay that made it famous in the first place—hasn't been messed with too much this time around. With that in mind, the blueprint for what makes the *Company of Heroes* series work so well has been built upon with new gameplay features, with the Dynamic Campaign Map chief among them. The dynamic nature of the in-game map ensures that no two playthroughs are the same, ramping up the replayability for even the most dedicated of strategists.

There's also a new theater at the center of it all: The Mediterranean. This setting takes players through areas ranging from coastal vistas to the deserts of North Africa and Italian mountain passes, complete with the types of strategic necessities that go along with each. Depending on the map on which your battle is taking place, you'll need to take things like verticality and other variables that impact the line of sight for all of the player and enemy units into account. Desert locations call for unique maneuvers of their own, so incorporating the appropriate level of reconnaissance into your tactics is essential.

A key takeaway from pre-alpha impressions is the sheer level of detail at play during each mission. The environments are teeming with visual flourishes that bring each location to life, while still keeping them readable enough that the world as a whole doesn't get in the way of the important action going on across the landscape. Relic's Essence Engine is being put to clever work here overall, and a lot of those realistic details can also be blown to smithereens to place a satisfying exclamation mark at the end of each skirmish.

The number of units making their way through the environments are at an all-time high in *Company of Heroes 3*, and they're even more diverse thanks to the new army customization mechanics. While the going will almost always be tough, you can even the odds a tad by, for instance, calling in new elite squads like the Gurkhas from the Commonwealth, the American-Canadian Special Service Forces, and more. There are also new units making first-time appearances in this entry, including the Nashorn, the Chaffee Light Tank, and the Weasel, which has the advantage of being incredibly light.

All we really need to do now is know exactly when to expect the full game to be available. Perhaps by the time this issue is in your hands, we'll have a better idea, but for now you can see if any further open tests become available and look for *Company of Heroes 3* to light up PCs sometime this year.

MEN OF WAR II

PUBLISHER 1C ENTERTAINMENT
GENRE STRATEGY • **SYSTEM** PC
AVAILABLE 2022

World War II real-time strategy series *Men of War* first kicked off in 2007, courtesy of the folks at Best Way Studio, which is known for releases like *Soldiers: Heroes of World War II*, as well as the expansions that followed the original *Men of War*. Now we're finally getting a proper sequel in the form of *Men of War II*, which is coming to PC via Steam in 2022.

Much like *Company of Heroes 3*, that's about as specific as this particular release date gets. We at least know some of what we can look forward to, though, including a split campaign that tells two stories: One that has the Allies fighting on the western front and another that has the Red Army challenging the Third Reich on the eastern front. The Allied and Soviet campaigns are told through cinematic sequences and the type of intense, on-the-ground action that Best Way established the first time around.

Best Way also developed a knack for nailing historical accuracy in *Men of War*, and that appears to be a key aspect of the sequel, as well. Everything from the locations to the units and character roster—adding up to three sides, 45 battalions, and more than 300 vehicles—is depicted with realistic models and renderings that keep it all as faithful as possible. Considering the fact that we're moving from 2007 to 2021 as far as releases go, it should come as no surprise that the visuals have improved exponentially along with the increase in content, as well.

Beyond the window dressing, the success of *Men of War II* is ultimately going to come down to how well it plays and how its updated AI works in the context of full-scale battles. It seems there's as much depth as one would expect here, with the Direct Control feature allowing players to get granular with it and zoom in to manage any single unit on the field at any time. Pull back for the bigger strategic picture, or dive further into the nitty gritty of it all and change, upgrade, and repair your individual pieces of equipment in real time as the action happens around you.

Once you've cut your teeth on the campaign, you can look forward to some meaty multiplayer action, either in player-versus-player combat or in cooperative play against the game's AI. This is where *Men of War II* is hopefully going to have some real legs, so perhaps we'll see you on the battlefield once we know exactly when 1C Entertainment plans to push it out in its final form this year. □

the war. He had command of Battleship Division Six aboard the USS *Washington* during the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal. Lee's leadership led to an American victory and the Japanese loss of the battleship *Kirishima*. This victory proved instrumental in turning the tide against Japan in the Solomon Islands. He was said to know more about radar than the radar's operators. Later the Navy appointed him Commander, Battleships, Pacific Fleet, giving him authority over the fleet's fast battleships. Near war's end he received new orders transferring him to the Atlantic to oversee research on how to combat the kamikaze threat. The war ended a few months later, however, and Lee died of a heart attack 10 days after Japan surrendered.

Admiral Lee deserves to be more widely known than he is today, and this book is a fitting tribute to his naval career. The author takes us from Lee's humble beginnings in Natlee, Kentucky, to his tragic death aboard a navy small boat transporting him to his office on Great Diamond Island near Portland, Maine. Between these two events lies the tale of a professional sailor who did his job well and deserves recognition for his skilled service.

Prevail Until the Bitter End: Germans in the Waning Years of World War II (Alexandra Lohse, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 2021, 196 pp., photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $29.95, hardcover)

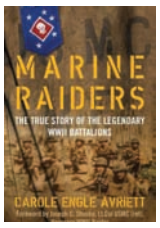
A German lieutenant named Metzenthien had a lot to say about his fellow Germans as he sat in his POW's cell near Toulon, France. The invading Allies captured the young officer on August 15, 1944, and he reflected on what he had seen while fighting in Russia and France and his travels in between. He thought many of the Germans on occupation duty in France treated the country as "one vast restaurant." He could not blame the French for hating their Nazi overlords. Poland seemed full of officials more intent on personal plunder than the welfare of the Reich. However, he had only good things to say about the Germans on the home front, enduring bombing raids and living in tents after their homes were destroyed. He thought the war would go on for many more years due to their stoic resilience. Metzenthien expressed gratitude to Hitler for making Germany great again, though he did not think it mattered whether Hitler was the actual man doing it or what kind of government he created. Germany's rebirth was all that mattered.

This new book provides answers to why the German people lasted as long as they did in World War II and examines the challenges for a totalitarian state at war. Often attributed to a slavish devotion to Hitler, the author reveals how and why Germans endured bombing and battlefield setbacks. The book also delves into the stresses of a nation at war and where some of the stress lines appeared. The author does an excellent job pulling the numerous factors together into a coherent history.

Dirty Eddie's War: Based on the World War II Diary of Harry "Dirty Eddie" March, Jr., Pacific Fighter Ace (Lee Cook, University of North Texas Press, Denton, TX, 2021, 352 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $29.95, hardcover)

Harry March, nicknamed "Dirty Eddie" by his fellow pilots, served in four fighter squadrons during the war. Initially he flew from aircraft carriers covering the landing at Guadalcanal in August 1942. Later, he went ashore on that embattled island to fly with the famous "Cactus Air Force" from Henderson Field. He returned to combat at Bougainville, including missions over the Japanese base at Rabaul. March flew with "Fighting Seventeen," the famous Vought F4U Corsair squadron noted for its daring exploits in combat. He ignored standing orders against keeping a diary, addressing his entries to his wife Elsa.

March's diary reveals the thrill and strain of aerial combat while presenting the reader with the pilot's own thoughts about the greater war surrounding him. The text shows him angry, happy, stressed, and at times longing to get back home. The author deftly mixes March's diary entries with narratives about the war, giving context about where the young pilot was and how he fit into the war effort. The result is a fascinating look at the Pacific War through the eyes of a participant. The book also contains good maps and several interesting photographs from March's collection and official sources.



Marine Raiders: The True Story of the Legendary WWII Battalions (Carol Engle Avriett, Regnery Publishing, Washington, DC, 2021, 270 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, $29.99, hardcover)

As America entered World War II in the Pacific theater after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Marine Corps sought to form an elite fighting force from their already above-average ranks. This group became the Raiders, incorporating the toughest, most skilled, and most motivated men in the Corps. Led by unconventional thinkers like Evans Carlson and the quiet-but-intense "Red Mike" Edson, the Raiders entered combat in places with soon-to-be-famous names, such as Makin Island and Guadalcanal. They conducted the "Long Patrol" on Guadalcanal, sowing chaos behind enemy lines and contributing to the defeat of the Japanese there. Eventually, however, the needs of the war effort and internal discomfort about elite units led to the Raiders' disbandment and incorporation into the new 4th Marine Division.

The Raiders are among the lesser known of America's early Special Forces organizations, but books such as this new title are shedding light on their exploits. The book has an easy, flowing narrative that pulls the words of Raider veterans into the author's own clear prose. Overall, the work does credit to the Raider legacy, giving the reader a detailed summary of the unit's contribution to victory in the Pacific.

Asian Armageddon 1944 - 1945: War in the Far East (Peter Harmsen, Casemate Books, Havertown, PA, 2021, 237 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $34.95, hardcover)

During the last 20 months of World War II, the Allies essentially beat the Japanese Empire into submission. A series of far-ranging operations eliminated Japan's ability to wage meaningful war. At sea, the United States Navy crippled their opponent's naval power while it simultaneously destroyed Japan's merchant fleet in history's only successful submarine campaign. While the Americans conducted amphibious invasions of Japanese-held islands, the United Kingdom held and then pushed back the Japanese in Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, though they seldom receive credit for it in the West, Chinese forces kept large members of Japanese troops pinned on the Asian mainland. Once the Soviets entered the war and two atomic bombs fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the war finally ended.

The author is a renowned journalist, with two decades of experience in Asia. This third book in his trilogy on the Pacific War concludes the series by effectively showing how wide-ranging the war truly was, involving more than just the Americans and Japanese. The book also covers the actions of various allies and the war's effects on civilian populations. The maps are well done, and the photograph insert contains many iconic and dramatic images. □

Guadalcanal

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Marines, who later distinguished himself during the fight for Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands, exhorted his men with, "You'll never get a Purple Heart hiding in a foxhole! Follow me!"

Components of the Americal Division and the 2nd Marine Division were formed into the CAM Division (Combined Army Marine), and progress was steady as the 25th Infantry Division joined in the fight and American forces converged on Cape Esperance from two directions. By late January, resistance was waning and disorganized. The ground gained sometimes exceeded 2,000 yards per day.

The reason for the more rapid advance was not clear at first. Patch had been warned of increasing Japanese movement of men and ships and initially believed that the enemy intended to renew its offensive effort. Actually, by the middle of December the Japanese had grudgingly acknowledged that Guadalcanal should be conceded to the Americans. About 11,000 Japanese soldiers, many of them emaciated and thoroughly weakened by starvation and disease, were withdrawn from the island during the first week of February 1943.

On the 9th, American forces converging from the east and west linked up at Cape Esperance. The fight for Guadalcanal was over.

The victory had been at a terrible cost, and the Marines had borne the brunt of the casualties. Nearly 1,600 U.S. personnel had died, and more than 1,150 were Marines. Of the 4,709 wounded, 2,799 were Marines. The Marine pilots of the Cactus Air Force suffered 147 dead and 127 wounded.

In turn, the Japanese lost 25,000 men killed and wounded, many of them from elite formations that would never again take the field as cohesive units.

Guadalcanal was the crossroads to victory for the United States in the Pacific War, and the Marine Corps blazed the trail. Many bloody days of fighting remained, but the Americans were now firmly on the offensive in the Pacific.

Among the high-ranking Japanese officers who understood the gravity of the defeat, Kawaguchi of the 35th Infantry Brigade concluded, "Guadalcanal is no longer merely a name of an island in Japanese military history. It is the name of the graveyard of the Japanese Army."

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Lunesville

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The 738th Field Artillery Battalion's howitzers went into position just two miles west of Luneville. The battalion commander, Colonel William Garrison, and the executive officer, Major Horace Frierson, went forward to a hill that provided a vantage point from which they were able to observe retreating American vehicles and German antitank guns firing at them. Garrison ordered his howitzers to fire on the German guns at a range of 1,500 yards. Their shells quickly neutralized the antitank guns.

In the midst of the fighting, German communications broke down. The 111th Panzer Brigade and elements of the 15th Panzergrenadier Division had fought their way into the southern part of Luneville. Mistakenly assuming that the Americans had been driven out, LVIII Panzer Corps Headquarters ordered the 113th Panzer Brigade to disengage and head north.

By nightfall, the strength of the German attack on Luneville had been significantly reduced. Pressed by American reinforcements, the Germans gave up their earlier gains. After nightfall, the 111th Panzer Brigade was ordered to retire from Luneville and reform at Parroy, 11 miles northeast.

Around 8:00 p.m., elements of the 10th Armored Infantry Battalion and 42nd Cavalry Squadron entered Luneville from the south and discovered that the Germans were gone. Outposts were setup and defenses established by CCR and TF Hunter.

By nightfall, the Americans had amassed a considerable force in and around Luneville. Detachments of the 10th Armored Infantry Battalion held the high ground northeast of the town. Most of the 35th Tank Battalion was in and around the town along with a company of the 53rd Armored Infantry Battalion from TF Hunter. On the high ground between Luneville and Deuxville were D Company, 35th Tank Battalion, and elements of the 704th Tank Destroyer Battalion and 10th Armored Infantry Battalion.

The Germans abandoned efforts to capture the town. Luneville cost them 13 panzers, 16 large caliber guns, and 232 other vehicles, as well as 1,070 men killed or captured.

The actions of the outnumbered cavalrymen delayed the German counterattack sufficiently to enable American armored forces to respond to a threat that could have outflanked the XII Corps and rolled up the right of Third Army.

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

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