

THE PACIFIC WAR



“BREAKING THE BISMARCK BARRIER”

The key was not Rabaul but the Bismarck Straits between New Britain and New Guinea’s Huon Peninsula. Control of the strait controlled access to the Bismarck Sea, the rest of New Guinea and the shortest route to the Philippines.



The approved plan already called for MacArthur to take the strait and the Aussies had little difficulty on the New Guinea side as the Japanese were withdrawing to concentrate at Wewak.

But once he held the strait, MacArthur saw no reason to take the rest of New Britain rather he saw the door open to drive west towards the Japanese oil supply and the Philippines.

So he planned for a limited operation...



“BREAKING THE BISMARCK BARRIER”

西部ニューブリテン作戦概要圖 WESTERN NEW BRITAIN OPERATION

一九四三年十二月より四四年二月迄
DECEMBER 1943—FEBRUARY 1944



“BREAKING THE BISMARCK BARRIER”

MacArthur’s primary objective was to seize Cape Gloucester at the western end of New Britain which would give the Allies control of the Bismarck Straits and severely affect the ability of the Japanese in New Guinea to be supplied from Rabaul – that being their main source.

He had been “loaned” the 3rd Marine Division to take the Cape. The main effort was to be prefaced by an assault at Arawe on the south coast of New Britain.

He hoped to catch the Japanese off foot and unable to adequately respond to either attack. The “feint” would also cut their supply route to Rabaul.



“BREAKING THE BISMARCK BARRIER”

On December 15th, the 112th Regimental Combat Team of the 1st Cavalry Division landed at Arawe against light resistance. The sight had been chosen because nothing was there.

The same could not be said for Cape Gloucester where there was a regiment in place. The idea was that the Japanese would assume that Arawe was the main effort and send everything they could at it.

The plan worked.

Most of the troops in the Cape Gloucester area packed up and headed off to throw the American invasion back into the Solomon Sea.



“BREAKING THE BISMARCK BARRIER”

As usual, the Japanese underestimated the American force perhaps assuming the bulk of the U.S. forces were elsewhere in the Pacific as there were major operations either ongoing, recently concluded or about to begin.

They sent barely a thousand men against nearly five times their number and by the time they arrived in the area the 117th was dug in and had tanks and artillery in place.

The Japanese were thrown back.

Wisely, they waited for reinforcements to arrive from Rabaul and additional troops who were on the way from Cape Gloucester. Then the other shoe dropped.



“BREAKING THE BISMARCK BARRIER”

There was a Japanese airfield at Cape Gloucester, but it had been heavily bombed in advance. The 3rd Marine Division landed near the field on December 29th taking the Japanese by surprise.

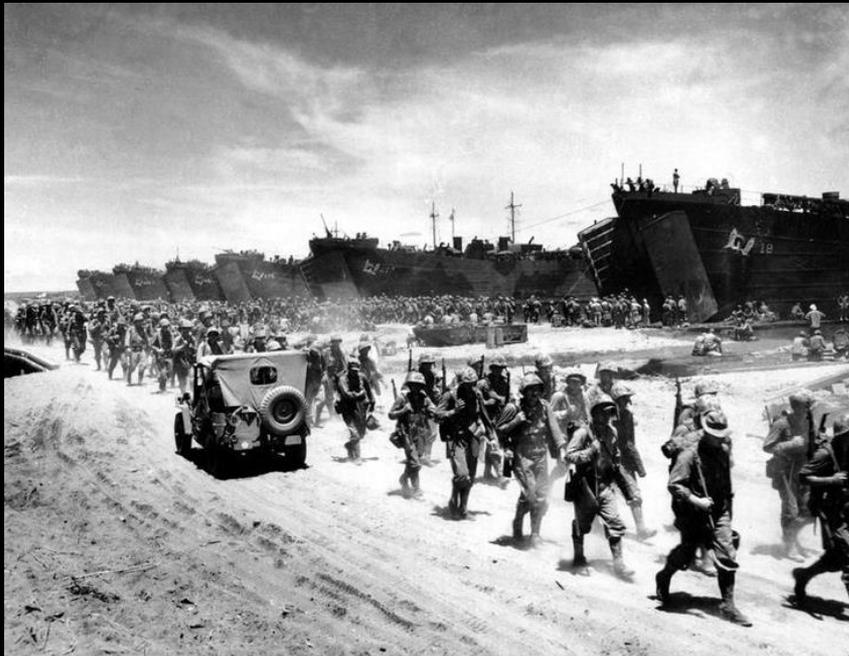
The bulk of the combat troops were either facing the 112th at Arawe or on their way there.



“BREAKING THE BISMARCK BARRIER”

The landings did not suffer the same problems as had plagued Halsey. They had hit a mostly undefended beach and at a time when most of the defenders were somewhere else.

They secured the Japanese airfield quickly and began to extend their beachhead before there was any significant resistance.



“BREAKING THE BISMARCK BARRIER”

For the Marines the terrain was unforgiving. Japanese were almost non-existent.

There had been too few Japanese in the area to begin with and the ability of Rabaul to send reinforcements was severely limited. At most the 25,000 Americans faced 5,000 Japanese and even then, only in small company sized units.



“BREAKING THE BISMARCK BARRIER”

For all intents and purposes, the operation was over almost after it began. But it officially ended in early April 1943 with about a quarter of New Britain in U.S. hands. The Americans suffered 428 KIA and 1,435 WIA. The Japanese lost 1,500. By the end of the war their force would lose close to 30,000 mostly to starvation.



THE CENTRAL PACIFIC



With the operations in the Aleutians over, ADM King was not about to let the South Pacific War have all the headlines. There was a war plan out there that called for an offensive across the central Pacific – which would be one that would not involve MacArthur.

King hated the man perhaps even more than he hated the Army.

The Navy had been reconstituted. By October, it had six carriers (including the repaired Enterprise), six light carriers and eleven escort carriers plus more battleships than the Japanese. And the Pacific Ocean Area had two Marine Divisions available and four army divisions.



King insisted they be put to work. Nimitz agreed.

THE CENTRAL PACIFIC

The Navy command structure was not what it had been.



VADM Kinkaid now commanded all naval forces assigned to MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Area. It was called 7th Fleet.

ADM Halsey commanded all naval forces in the South Pacific Area and was that Theater Commander. His fleet was called 3rd Fleet.

Nimitz had just named his Chief-of-Staff, VADM Spruance as commander of the naval forces in the Central Pacific. It was called 5th Fleet.

And because it had most all of the carriers and very little land it was also called "The Big, Blue Fleet."

THE CENTRAL PACIFIC



King had worked out an outline for the Central Pacific by June of '43 and had passed it on to Nimitz whose own staff fleshed out details.

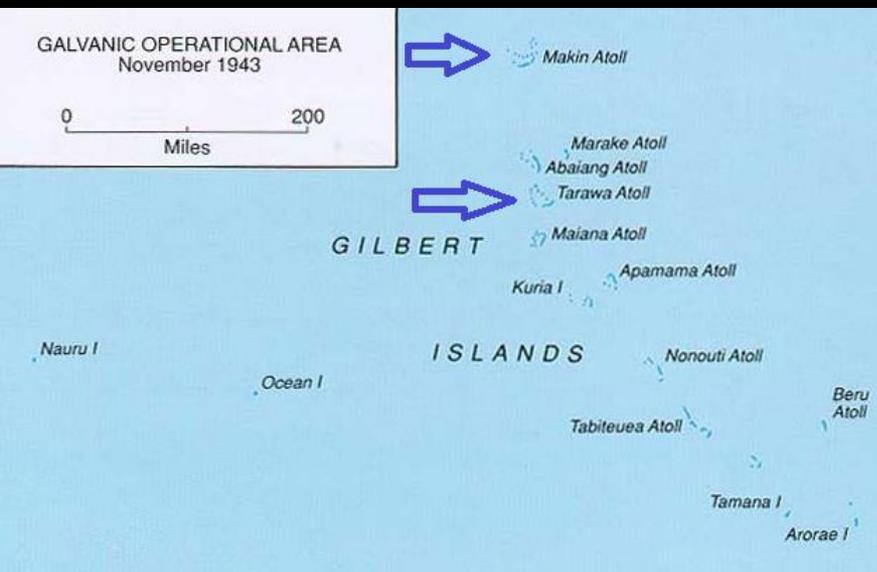
Spruance, Turner and LGEN Holland M. Smith, USMC, (who would command the landing force) were told to outline plans for amphibious operations in the Gilberts and Marshalls, target to be determined later.



While Washington had its target list, the Fifth Fleet soon had theirs. Their list and basic schedule was approved with one exception. D-Day for the first assault was to be November 20th, at least a month earlier than they had been counting upon.

The hurry up schedule would have consequences.

THE CENTRAL PACIFIC

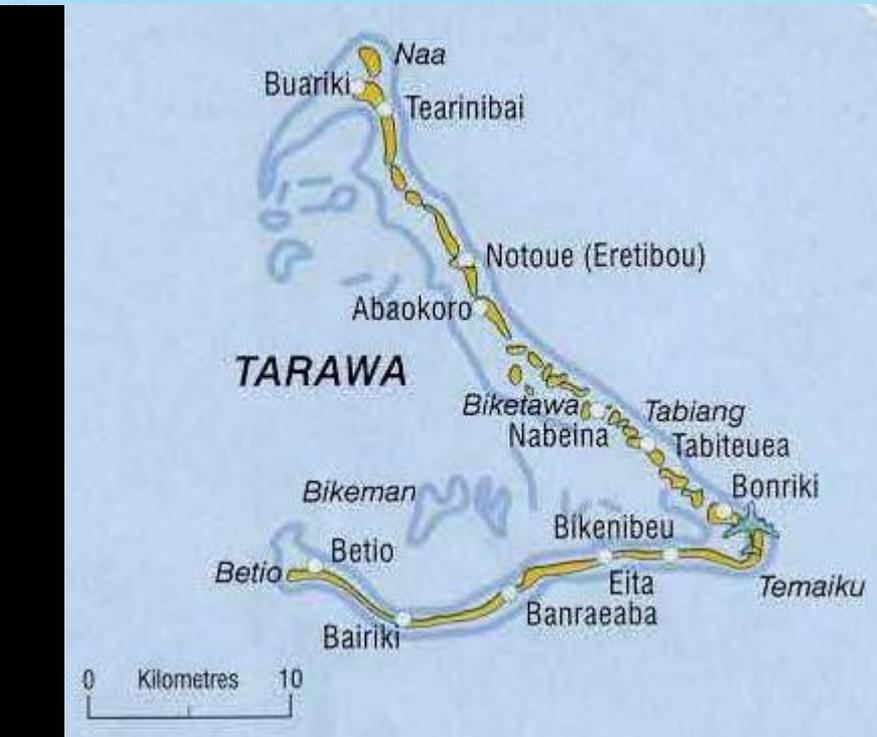


Operation Galvanic was to be the first assault aimed at taking the key Japanese positions on Makin Atoll and Tarawa Atoll in the Gilbert Islands.

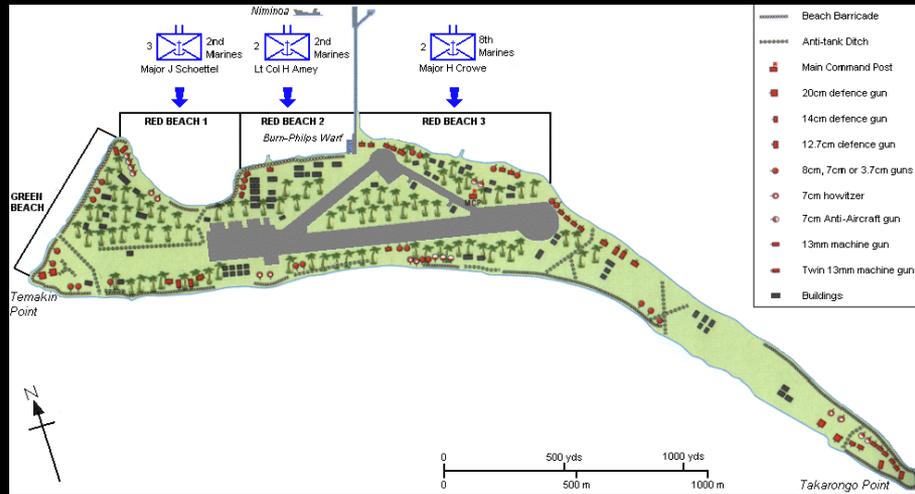
Makin had been raided by a Marine battalion from submarines in August of 1942. The raid, while achieving its objectives, was a fiasco. The raid convinced the Japanese it was too exposed and they had substantially reduced the forces there while reinforcing its airbase on Betio, Tarawa.

The assaults would be simultaneous with the 27th Infantry Division landing on Makin and the 2nd Marine Division on Betio – the Japanese airfield at Tarawa.

Spruance's big concern was the Japanese reaction as their fleet was at Truk in the Carolines – about four days away at most.



THE CENTRAL PACIFIC



Turner was concerned about Japanese reaction as well. He recommended that attention turned to the targets at the last minute and for as short a time as possible – no more than an a couple hours of aerial and naval bombardment before the troops landed at both atolls.

In the days preceding, the carriers would raid the Marshals, Gilberts and Rabaul to keep the Japanese guessing.

Three Marine Battalions (~ 3,000 men) would make the landing on Tarawa (if everything went as planned). The rest of the division would be in reserve.

There were many nagging problems – namely the lack of any good charts of the atoll and tide data...



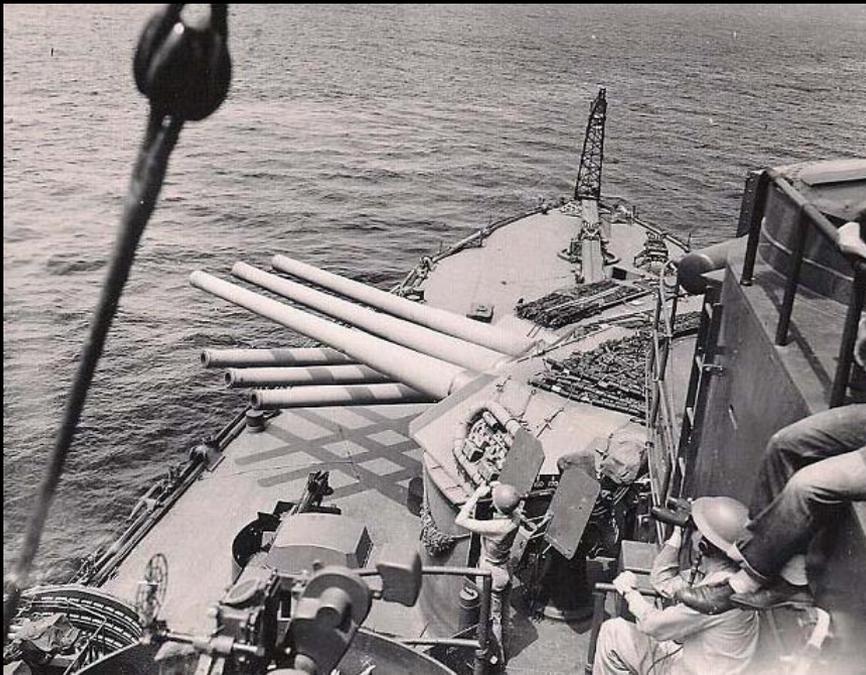
THE CENTRAL PACIFIC



At dawn on November 20th, the fleets arrived off the two islands.

The carrier planes bombed for over an hour and then the guns of the fleet opened fire. The bombardment lasted until fifteen minutes before the scheduled touchdown of the first wave.

They had not yet seen any of the detailed after action reports from the Bougainville landing. That bombardment had been a little longer and had not knocked out a single bunker on the beach.



But it was not just the bombardment that would cause problems. It was their poor charts, lack of accurate tide predictions and decision to use LCVP's in the first wave...

THE CENTRAL PACIFIC



There was a reef off Betio with only one small gap. The tide was so low that some of it was exposed and all of it but for the gap was impassible to LCVP landing craft. The Amtracs could get over the reef, but most of the troops were not on Amtracs.

The water was shallow enough to walk ashore – but it was over a half a mile slogging in the open.

And the Japanese machine gun emplacements on the water's edge had not been knocked out.

Hundreds of Marines were gunned down well before making it to the beach.

But not all of them...



THE CENTRAL PACIFIC



The first waves made it ashore after having suffered heavy casualties and were more often pinned down by the bunkers at the water's edge. They were most successful on beach Red 2. Red 1 was a bloody disaster. Red 3 had the fewer casualties but also the least penetration.

They would begin to move inland slowly once they had managed to organize themselves after the hell of the landing.

More waves were coming in and they needed to clear the beaches.

THE CENTRAL PACIFIC

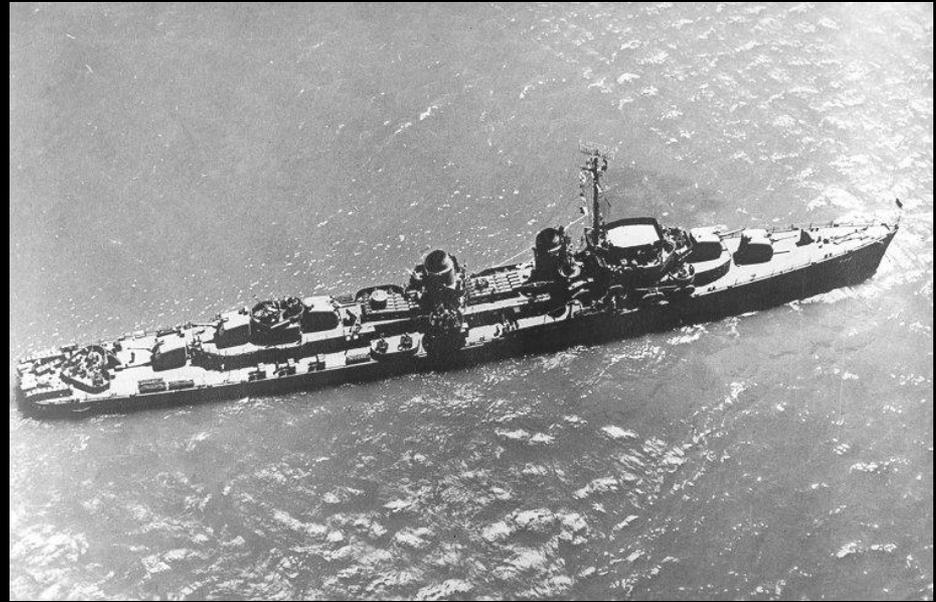


Some of the Navy LCVP coxswains would find the gap in the reef and be able to deliver supplies and heavy equipment and evacuate wounded, but the gap was a bottleneck and the Japanese gunners had it targeted.

The fighting would be among the most intense of the entire war in either theater.



THE CENTRAL PACIFIC



For hours it was almost a disaster with the Marines pinned down in most places at the water's edge. But unlike Guadalcanal there were no complaints about the Navy after the landing. Two destroyers, (USS Heermann and Sigsbee) both as close to the beach as they could be without getting stuck, poured fire into Japanese positions. Unlike the rest of the force, they had good communications with the Marines and shelled whatever was giving the Marines trouble. When there was not a fire mission from the Marines, they shelled inland with fragmentation rounds. In the early afternoon, a single salvo effectively destroyed the Japanese defenses. It caught the Japanese commander and his entire staff in the open and killed them all. Without coordination, the Japanese were unable to respond as they had and the Marines gained ground.

THE CENTRAL PACIFIC



The fighting lasted a little over three days. Of the 3,636 Japanese soldiers who held the island only 17 survived. There had been 2,200 additional laborers, only 129 survived.

The Marines lost 1,009 KIA and 2,188 were wounded. This would be less than the casualties suffered at Omaha Beach but that was six months in the future.



THE CENTRAL PACIFIC



The Marines suffered more casualties in three days on Tarawa than in six months on Guadalcanal. Marine cameramen documented everything without filter. The President, horrified, directed that the unfiltered images be shown to the American people. He felt they had become complacent and to some extent he was correct.



THE CENTRAL PACIFIC



Tarawa is the fight that everyone remembers or at least has heard about.

But it was not the only fight in the Gilberts at the time.

At the same time the Marines struggled to get ashore at Tarawa, the 27th Infantry Division was also having to wade ashore at Makin Atoll.

The tide was out and while the reef was not the problem that it was at Tarawa, but the lagoon was too shallow for LCVPs in places in any event.

But the Japanese were not nearly as numerous or nearly as well prepared for an assault.



THE CENTRAL PACIFIC



The battle lasted longer – five days instead of three. The 27th Division suffered 66 KIA and 185 wounded.

They faced 400 soldiers and a similar number of laborers. 5 soldiers and 101 Korean laborers were captured.

But the total toll for the Americans was much higher. On November 24th, the day Makin was secured, a Japanese submarine torpedoed the escort carrier USS Liscome Bay hitting its magazine. The ship blew up. 272 men survived. 644 died including Doris Miller – an African American mess steward who had won the Navy Cross at Pearl Harbor aboard USS West Virginia.



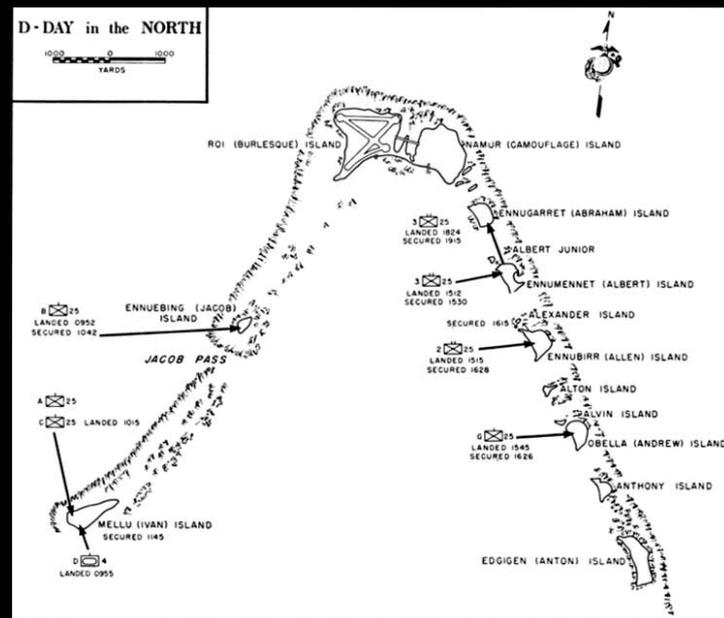
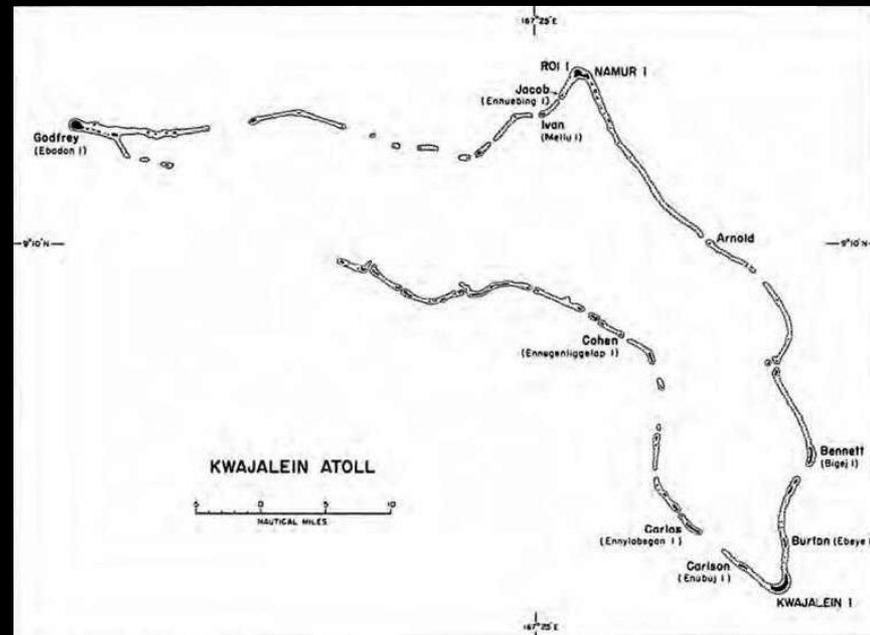
Neither Makin nor the Liscome Bay could compete with the news or imagery that came from Tarawa.

THE CENTRAL PACIFIC

The Fifth Fleet would be at it again soon, applying lessons learned the hard way in the Gilberts. The next objective was Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands. It was in a central position and aircraft could control the entire island group and suppress the Japanese on other islands.

The 4th Marine Division was to attack the Islands of Roi and Namur on the north of the atoll with the Army 7th Division (which had taken Attu) would take the Island of Kwajalein itself.

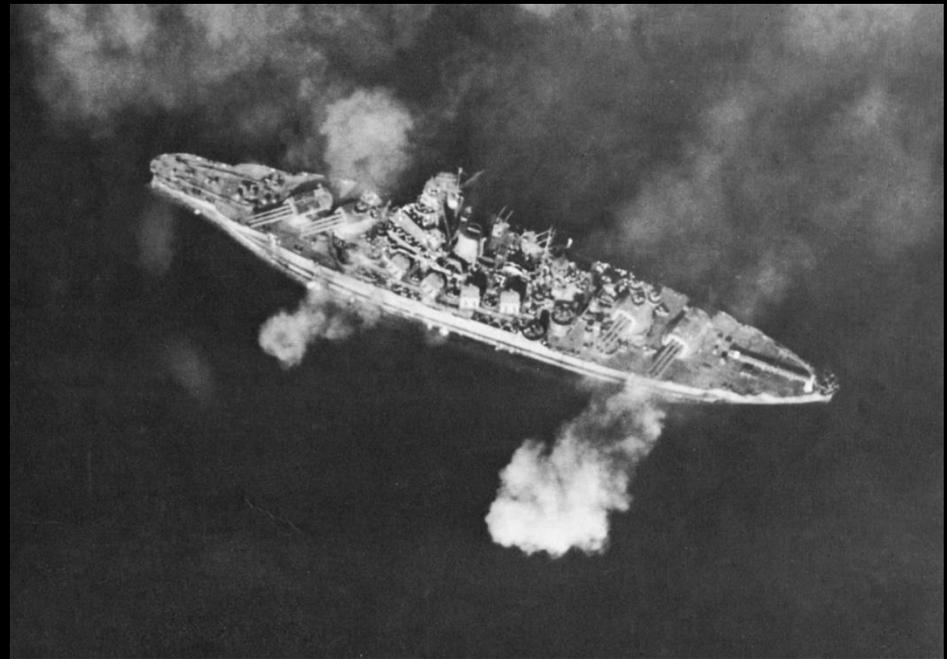
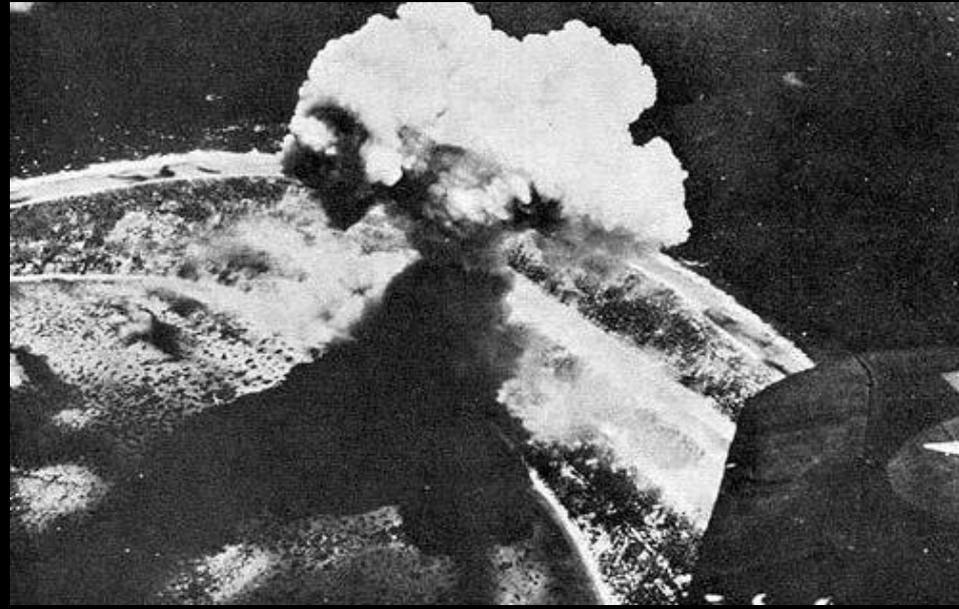
Holland M. Smith would again command the troops. Fortunately, while he held the 27th Infantry in contempt for its foot dragging on Makin Is., that did not extend to the Army as a whole – except he thought they were a little too methodical about things.



THE CENTRAL PACIFIC

This time they did not skip on the bombardment. B-24's had bombed the atoll many times since Dec 18th, 1944 and the fleet bombed and shelled the targets for over two days before the main assaults began.

The Japanese assumed their reefs provided protection. LVTs proved them wrong.



THE CENTRAL PACIFIC

The Marines began their landings Jan 31st, 1944. It was nothing like Tarawa. For one thing, the Japanese never thought the attack would come from the lagoon, so their heavy guns pointed out to sea.

Again, LVT's were the first wave. The landing craft came later but this time the tides and reef were not a problem.



THE CENTRAL PACIFIC

The 7th Infantry Division landed at the Island of Kwajalein at the same time as the Marines at Roi-Namur.

The Japanese proved just as unready for the attack.

Both divisions initially took small, unoccupied islands near the objective for their artillery.



THE CENTRAL PACIFIC

This time the bombardment had done its job. Most of the bunkers on the shore – similar to the ones on Tarawa, had not survived the air attacks and naval gunfire.

The biggest loss of life happened when an ammunition dump on Namur that had not been hit exploded killing several Marines.



THE CENTRAL PACIFIC

The fighting was over on both islands by February 3rd, 1944.

On Kwajalein Island, the 7th Infantry Division lost 144 KIA, 845 WIA. The Japanese lost 4,300 with 166 taken prisoner.

On Roi-Namur the 4th Marines suffered 206 KIA, 617 WIA and 181 MIA (in the explosion). The Japanese lost 3,500 with 87 taken prisoner.



THE CENTRAL PACIFIC



Two weeks later on Feb 17th the 4th Marines made another assault at Eniwetok Atoll to the east. The landing took the small garrison by surprise and the troops landed unopposed.

The plan called for a more deliberate attempt in April, but Spruance convinced that sooner was better and his Fleet was ready.

Of the three main islands on the Atoll, Eniwetok Island saw the heaviest fighting taking a little over two days to secure. The entire operation was over by the February 23rd.

The Marines suffered 390 KIA and 879 WIA. The Japanese lost 3,380 with 105 taken prisoner.



THE CENTRAL PACIFIC

The Japanese Fleet had not made a move to take on the Americans so Spruance went after them. While the Marines were landing on Eniwetok, the carriers and fast battleships of Task Force 58 were hundreds of miles away.

He had hoped to find the Combined Fleet, but it had left some days before for the Palau Islands. But it left its fleet train at the Truk lagoon and the Carriers caught them at anchor.

The raids began on February 16th and lasted through the next day. The Japanese lost three cruisers, 4 destroyers, 5 smaller warships and 34 merchant ships sunk.

270 Japanese aircraft were destroyed in the air or on the ground.



THE CENTRAL PACIFIC

Truk had been one of the best harbors in the Pacific capable of having literally hundreds of ships at anchor with facilities to support them. The raid made its use as an anchorage limited due to all the wrecks.

Truk was no longer a base for anything.



THE CENTRAL PACIFIC

After the war, the Japanese would admit that the loss of Truk as a result of Spruance's one impulsive act as a fleet commander was one of the two worst disasters they suffered that convinced them they could not win the war.



USA vs. JAPAN

It was possible for a hypothetical Japan to at least make a war of attrition costly enough that a negotiated settlement could be achieved.

But to do that, Japan had to inflict grossly disproportionate losses in most every encounter.

It had the forces where such was theoretically possible in early 1942.

By the end of 1942, it was far less possible.

By the end of 1943, it had become impossible.

Japan had suffered heavy losses at Wake Island and in the Philippines. In the Philippines they had inflicted greater losses than they had taken, but elsewhere they had not.

Their campaigns against the U.S. in the South Pacific resulted in their suffering losses far in excess of those they managed to inflict – often losing 3 to one or worse – often much worse.

USA vs. JAPAN

It has been suggested part of the reason was that Japan had not fought in World War I – not truly.

It had not learned that modern weapons made the frontal assault a recipe for failure.

It had not learned that in modern warfare the attack requires skill, not just nerve.

But it is not that simple.

Japan was also a victim of both its own culture and its recent militarist history and propaganda.

One does not question superiors. If the Emperor is naked, at most one says nothing about it.

If the plan is approved it must be executed as ordered. Individual initiative was not encouraged since to act in derogation of the approved plan is to show disrespect for the superiors who came up with the plan.

USA vs. JAPAN

Then there was the ideals of the militarists.

The Japanese were the Yamato race – children of the gods. All others were inferior.

A Japanese soldier was better than any ten of the enemy.

And superior Japanese elan would overcome any shortcomings.

(Interestingly, the average American thought the same thing – he and his buddies were better than ten times as many Japanese. And they proved almost correct.)

The Japanese did exceptionally well when things went according to plan and they did at first.

The Japanese stuck to the plan stubbornly, however, even when it unraveled.

And if it worked once before, it must always work (even if it only ever worked once before). Massed assaults worked in China (the Chinese retreated) therefore they must work against any enemy.

USA vs. JAPAN

They did and would learn lessons, but they would apply those lessons learned slowly – too slowly to make a difference.

One problem was the lesson learned often died with those who learned it.

And another was that they were too methodical in analyzing their mistakes especially if the admission caused anyone to lose face.

And in one context they did adapt fairly quickly. They usually did not defend the next island the same way they had defended and failed to hold the last.

In this last category, their improvements simply were not as fast or effective against the Americans as the Americans improvements were at defeating them the next time.

The U.S. rarely did anything the same way twice even if it worked. It could always be done better, faster, at less cost and with fewer casualties.

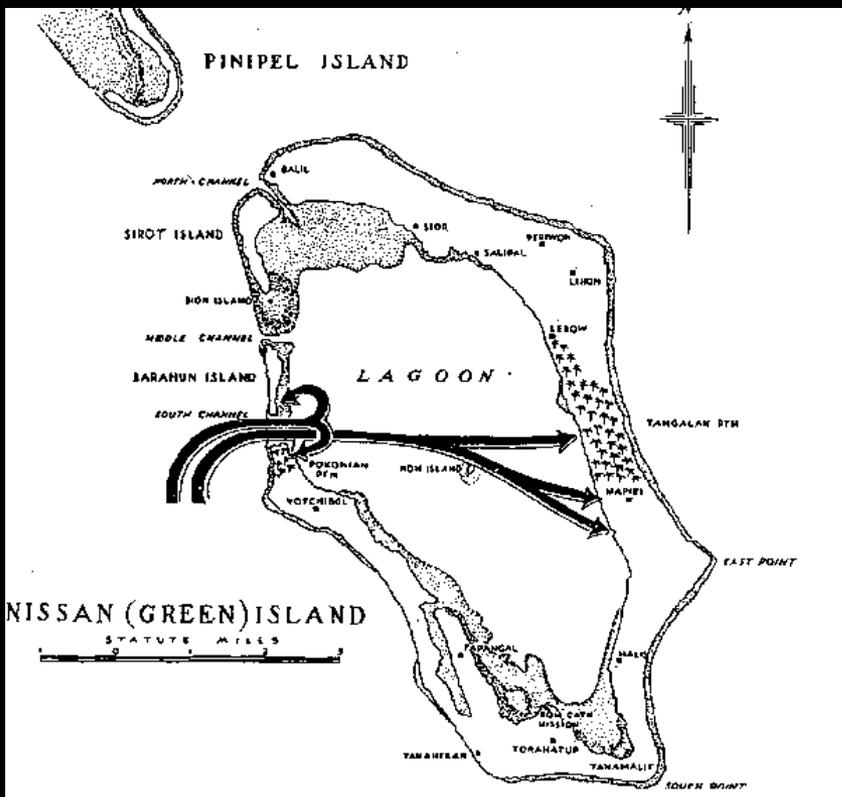
And by 1944 it was too late for any lessons to help Japan. America's industrial potential meant they could take whatever the Japanese had.

SOUTH PACIFIC – GREEN ISLAND



Green Island was actually a collection of islands located between Bougainville and New Ireland. It had been an objective in the earliest versions of Halsey's plans for Operation Cartwheel. Control of the island would block access to Rabaul from the East and the Solomon Sea.

SOUTH PACIFIC – GREEN ISLAND



Halsey sent in troops from the 3rd New Zealand Division on January 29th, 1944.

The force had air cover from his carriers, but only a small group of surface ships.

Halsey knew it was not defended.



Above: Map of Green Island.

Right: The assault craft enter the lagoon of Green Island on January 29th. There were only about 150 Japanese scattered on the island and the landing was unopposed.

SOUTH PACIFIC – GREEN ISLAND



It took three weeks before the island was declared secured most of it spent trying to find the few Japanese.

Even before the island was declared secured, the engineers were already hard at work turning the island into a base.

It would not be a base to support the fleet. Its lagoon was too small. But they built an airstrip and a base for PT Boats. Fighters and PBV “Black Cats” would use Green Island to enforce the blockade of Rabaul.



The Island would also become the main Post Office distribution point for the South Pacific where mail destined to individual ships, squadrons and units would be sorted for delivery.

Its first CO would one day be famous...

PRESIDENTS IN THE PACIFIC

The first commanding officer of the base at newly captured Green Island was LCDR Richard M. Nixon, USNR.

He did not make much of a name for himself as a naval officer. He never saw any action.

But he would become known to just about every American if not soon after the war as a member of the House Un-American Activities Committee, then certainly in 1952 as the Vice-Presidential nominee sharing the ticket with GEN Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Five future presidents served in the United States Navy in the Pacific War. Nixon's service was probably the least remarkable.



PRESIDENTS IN THE PACIFIC

LCDR Lyndon B. Johnson, USNR was commissioned a Lieutenant Commander in the Navy Reserve in 1940 while serving as a Member of the House of Representatives from Texas. He would volunteer for active service after voting to declare war on Japan, Germany and Italy.

By April 1942, he was on the Southwest Pacific Area Staff as an Intelligence Officer although he was sufficiently Junior (and Navy) that it is doubtful he said a word to his boss GEN MacArthur.



PRESIDENTS IN THE PACIFIC

Johnson's service in the South Pacific and in the Navy was brief.

Sam Rayburn was the Speaker of the House of Representatives and made it clear to Johnson (and a few other Congressmen who had joined up) that their service to the war effort as a Congressman was far more critical than it was as an officer.

Johnson was back in Washington by 1943.

The remaining three future Presidents saw combat...



PRESIDENTS IN THE PACIFIC

LT Gerald R. Ford, USNR had played football at the University of Michigan and had been in the Naval ROTC.

As such, he knew a thing or two about ships and how to do things about ships the Navy way.

He served as Navigator aboard the light aircraft carrier USS Monterrey until the war ended.

The carrier would take part in two of the largest naval battles ever fought: The Battle of the Philippine Sea and the Battles of Leyte Gulf.

His ship would be attacked three times, but it was never damaged – at least not by the enemy.

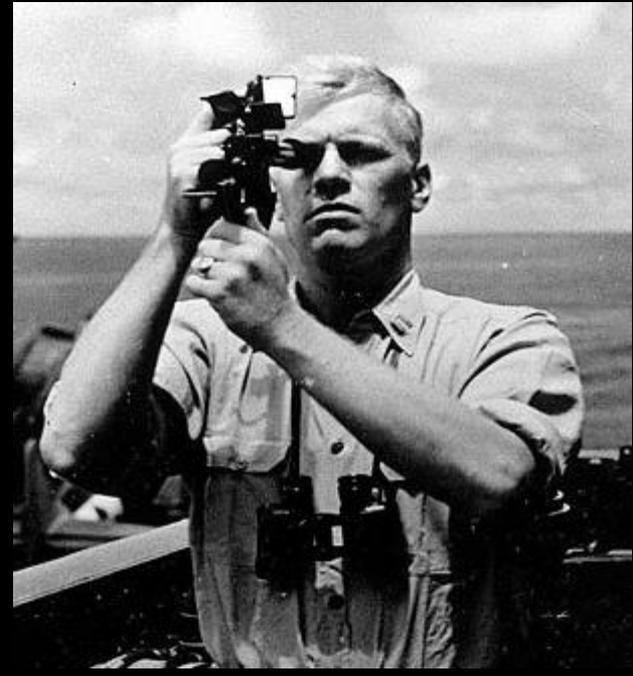


PRESIDENTS IN THE PACIFIC

The Monterrey was damaged in Typhoon Cobra (also known as “Halsey’s Typhoon) off the Philippines in December 1944.

The fleet had little warning of the approaching storm. Ships such as the Monterrey rolled 30 degrees and more (one light carrier hit 47 degrees on one roll, at which point it would be easier to walk on the walls than the deck). Planes broke loose in the hanger and caught fire.

Ford was ordered to check on the firefighting effort by his CO as communications were spotty. It was under control but he was nearly washed overboard returning to the bridge.



PRESIDENTS IN THE PACIFIC

LTJG George H.W. Bush joined the navy soon after Pearl Harbor with a deferment that delayed his training until after he finished his prep school in June. He needed the deferment given that he did not turn eighteen until June 12th, 1942.



He was sent to Pensacola as an aviation cadet – which meant he would be made an officer if he successfully completed pilot training. If he did not (and many did not) he would enter the navy as an enlisted air crewman. He successfully completed flight training on June 9th, 1943 and was commissioned an Ensign – the youngest in the Navy at age eighteen. He was trained as a torpedo pilot in the TBF Avenger and assigned to VT-51 then forming on the West Coast.

PRESIDENTS IN THE PACIFIC

His squadron was assigned to the light carrier USS San Jacinto. He would fly missions during the Battle of the Philippine Sea in June of 1944. In September, he would be shot down on a raid over the island of Chichijima. He was the only survivor of his crew.

Rescued by a submarine, he had to wait to return to his squadron which he did in Nov., missing the Battle of Leyte Gulf. He flew bombing missions over Luzon before his squadron rotated back to the States in Dec 1944. He spent the rest of the war training torpedo pilots.

He would be the most highly decorated of the Presidents who served in the Pacific war earning the Distinguished Flying Cross and three Air Medals.



PRESIDENTS IN THE PACIFIC

LT John F. Kennedy would be the most famous of the future presidents during the war.

That was largely because his father did everything possible to make sure his son was seen as a gallant war hero, not because the Navy held him out as one.

He served in PT boats in the South Pacific and is best remembered for a mission that was a total failure – though not through fault.

His boat was cut in half by a Japanese destroyer during the campaign on New Georgia and he managed to see most of his crew was ultimately rescued.

It made for a good story, but such stories were hardly exceptional.



PRESIDENTS IN THE PACIFIC

He was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal – which is not a medal for gallantry in action. He did rightfully earn the Purple Heart which most veterans said was either for forgetting to duck or – in the Army and Marine Corps – for being in the infantry.

The medal was well deserved. He did more than could be expected to save the crew of his boat. But the medal is for non-combat related heroism.

Meaning he was a hero during a war but not a war hero.

Didn't matter. His service was largely political to begin with (whether he meant it to be or not.) Only Nixon was more political in his motivations.



PRESIDENTS IN THE PACIFIC



The USS John F. Kennedy (CV-67) was renamed during construction following Kennedy's assassination. It was commissioned in 1968 and decommissioned in 2007. The second USS Kennedy (CVN-79) will be a new nuclear powered aircraft carrier. It was laid down in August 2015 and should join the fleet in 2025.

PRESIDENTS IN THE PACIFIC



The USS George Bush (CVN-77) is a Nimitz class nuclear powered aircraft carrier and the first carrier named for a living (ex) President. It was commissioned in 2009 and is stationed in Norfolk VA.

PRESIDENTS IN THE PACIFIC



The USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN-78) is the lead ship in a new class nuclear powered aircraft carriers. Its construction has been both well behind schedule and way over budget – something that was not a problem in WWII. It was commissioned in 2017.

PRESIDENTS IN THE PACIFIC



The USS Lyndon B. Johnson (DD-1002) will be the third and last of the Zumwalt class destroyers which have been way over budget – so much so that most of the class was cancelled. It is currently scheduled for commissioning in 2024.

PRESIDENTS IN THE PACIFIC



There has been and is no U.S. Navy ship named after Richard M. Nixon nor are there plans to name any after him.

THE ADMIRALTY ISLANDS



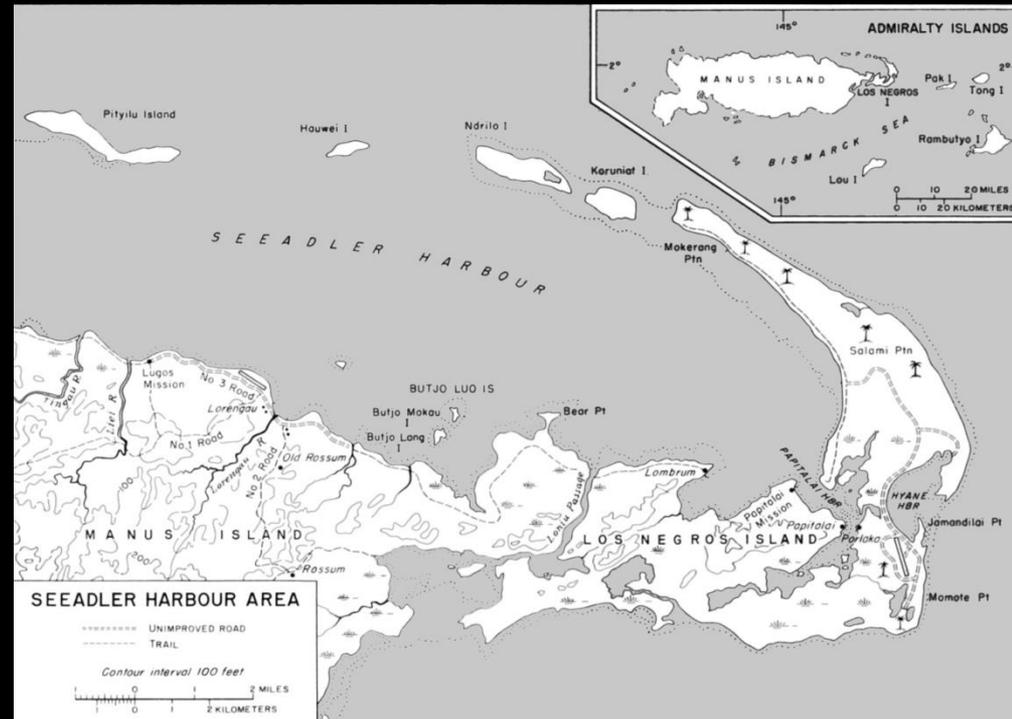
The Admiralty Islands had been part of MacArthur's and Washington's long range plans for over a year. It was a group of Islands connected by a large reef, geologically a forming atoll, that had a huge natural harbor that the Japanese barely used.

THE ADMIRALTY ISLANDS

Seeadler Harbor, a huge lagoon, was the objective. Such a natural harbor could hold and support hundreds of ships – an invasion fleet.

It was not scheduled for invasion until after Rabaul had been reduced. MacArthur decided to go as soon as he had secured a foothold on New Britain at Cape Gloucester.

The original outline either saw some smaller islands in the Bismarck Sea taken as fighter strips to support the assault on the Admiralty Islands or the use of carriers. MacArthur felt the former too time consuming and the later required too much coordination. He decided to go without fighter cover.



THE ADMIRALTY ISLANDS



And with only a Regimental Combat Team from the 1st Cavalry Division – one that had not been used on New Britain. MacArthur would describe it as a reconnaissance in force, one with little air support but one he would reinforce if the initial landings established a beachhead.

THE ADMIRALTY ISLANDS

All of his subordinate commanders objected and predicted a disaster.

Gen. Kenney objected because while his heavy bombers could reach the island (barely), he had no bases in operation in range for his close air support.

Gen. Krueger (who would be in area tactical command) thought the enemy was too powerful, that at least a full division and probably two were needed.

Washington objected as well for similar reasons and as it was outside of the schedule and would upset shipping schedules.



THE ADMIRALTY ISLANDS

MacArthur told Kenney it would work because the Japanese could not expect such a move.

He told Krueger (and MGEN Chase whose 1st Cavalry Division was the sole invading force) that if they succeeded, they would get a medal and MacArthur would release their name for publication in the press.

Needless to say, they were not impressed.

He told Washington as little as possible as his plan did not require shipping or supplies he did not already have on hand.

It was still a political move on his part.



THE ADMIRALTY ISLANDS

A brilliant success might convince Washington to shift some if not most of its effort against Japan from the Central Pacific to his Theater.

In this he had some support from the Navy. Halsey felt the Central Pacific was a strategic side-show and Spruance and Nimitz were less and less enamored at assaults against strong Japanese positions.

But MacArthur also knew this operation was a huge risk. His own intelligence could not decide if the Admiralties were practically abandoned or heavily garrisoned. It could be a disaster.

So, MacArthur was there personally.



THE ADMIRALTY ISLANDS

MacArthur knew there was a risk in part because his intelligence staffs could not agree as to the number of Japanese awaiting them.

He also knew because before the landings Gen. Krueger sent in the Alamo Scouts.

They were the closest thing to modern Special Forces in the war. Their missions were long range, long duration recon behind enemy lines – with occasional missions to blow things up thrown in.

They never numbered more than 200 men in total and operated in small teams of a dozen or less. They never failed in a mission. They lost one man in the entire war and on this occasion they said the island was “lousy with Japs.”



THE ADMIRALTY ISLANDS

The Japanese had learned lessons. The Americans preferred to land via a lagoon. They had at Tarawa, the Marshall Islands and Green Island.

Thus the place to face them was at Seeadler Harbor and not facing out to sea and most of their guns were moved accordingly.

MacArthur came by the sea side, not the harbor taking the Japanese defenders by surprise and facing the wrong way. The first wave went in “standing up”, barely any resistance at all.

MacArthur landed with the second wave and toured the front ... under fire and unconcerned.



THE ADMIRALTY ISLANDS

The Japanese outnumbered the initial force almost 2 to 1 but the terrain and confusion meant they committed units piecemeal and only after the U.S. artillery was ashore.

They were thrown back with heavy losses.

The terrain made the American's job harder as well (mostly mangrove swamp between the landing and the main Japanese positions). But the U.S. made several supporting landings from within the lagoon once the Japanese moved to counter the first landing.

By March 26th, the bulk of the Japanese defense had been wiped out.

The army lost 330 KIA, 1,190 WIA. The Japanese lost at least 3,380 KIA and 75 POW.



THE ADMIRALTY ISLANDS

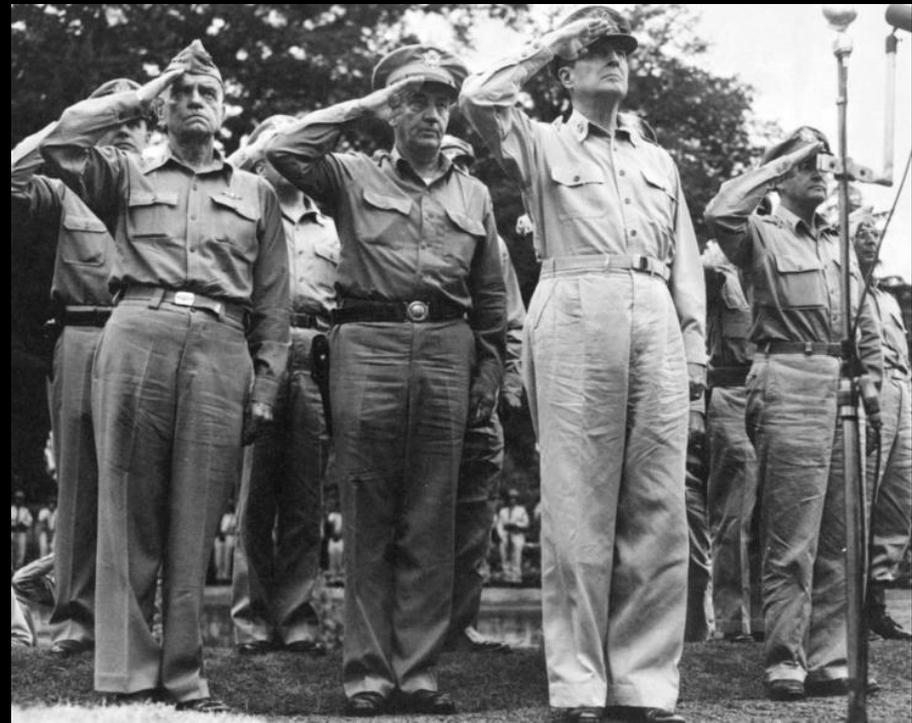
MacArthur could be as petty as he was brilliant.

The whole point of the operation was to secure Manus Island and Seeadler Harbor as a major base for follow on invasions – including ultimately the Philippines.

MacArthur wanted the Navy to build it but was not about to let one single Navy ship or plane not under his command use it.

The Navy, naturally, refused.

Halsey ultimately got MacArthur to see reason, but the tiff delayed the use of the base by weeks.



THE ADMIRALTY ISLANDS

The Port would be used. Bombers would support operations in New Guinea and as far off as the Philippines.

The Harbor would serve as an assembly point for some of the largest invasion fleets of the war and would also be the main repair base in the Western Pacific for damaged warships.



THE ADMIRALTY ISLANDS

NOV 10, 1944: SEEADLER HARBOR. The ammunition ship USS Mount Hood (AE-11) exploded. Over 430 men were killed or their remains were never found and 371 were injured. Nothing was left of the ship and 22 other ships and craft were damaged, destroyed or sunk. The cause was never determined.

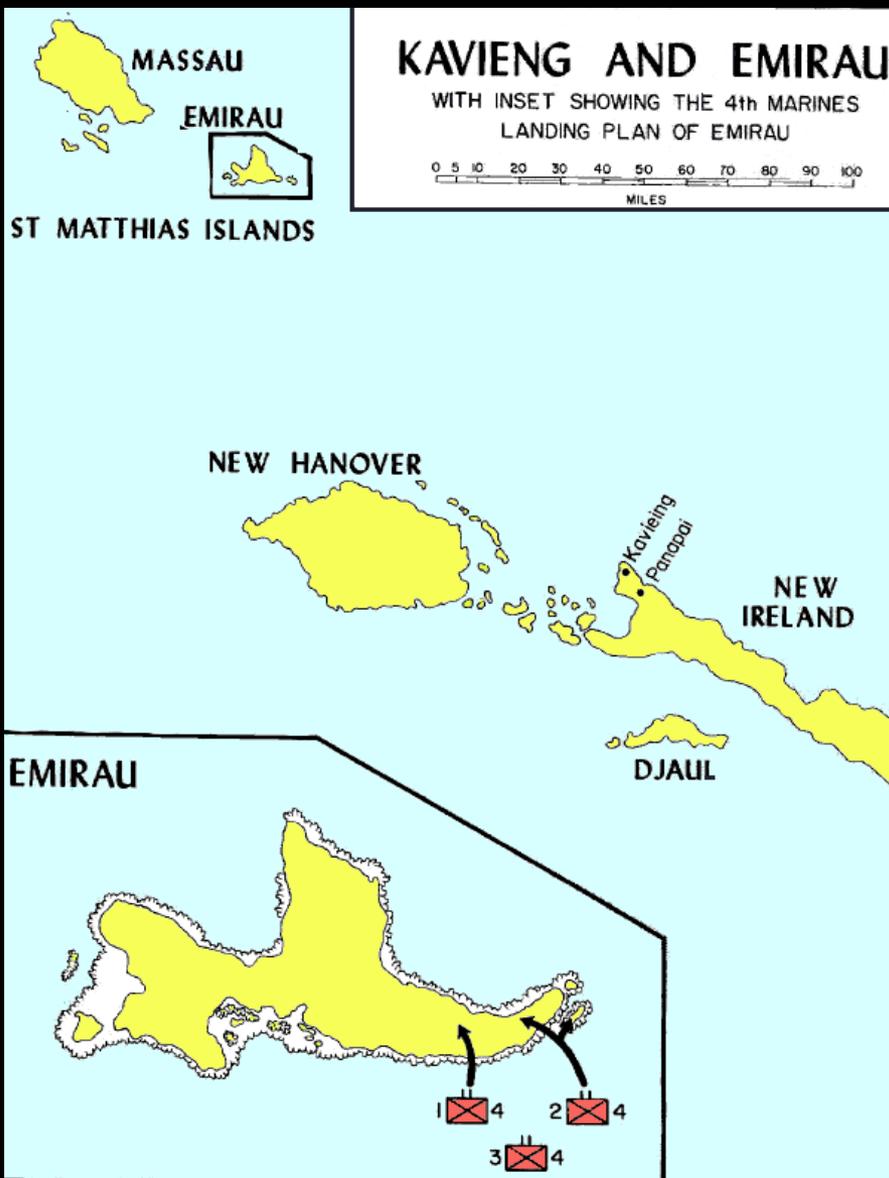


EMIRAU – THE Blockade of Kavieng



Washington wanted the last major Japanese port in the region taken by invasion: Kavieng. The Japanese had an estimated 30,000 troops in and around the harbor. Halsey and Nimitz wanted no part of such a plan. They wanted to isolate it like Rabaul and Truk and proposed taking undefended Emirau instead.

EMIRAU – THE Blockade of Kavieng



A regiment from the 4th Marine Division attached to Halsey's Third Fleet landed on Emirau on March 20th 1944. Instead of Japanese bullets, they were met by islanders.

There were no Japanese on it or the neighboring islands.



EMIRAU – THE Blockade of Kavieng



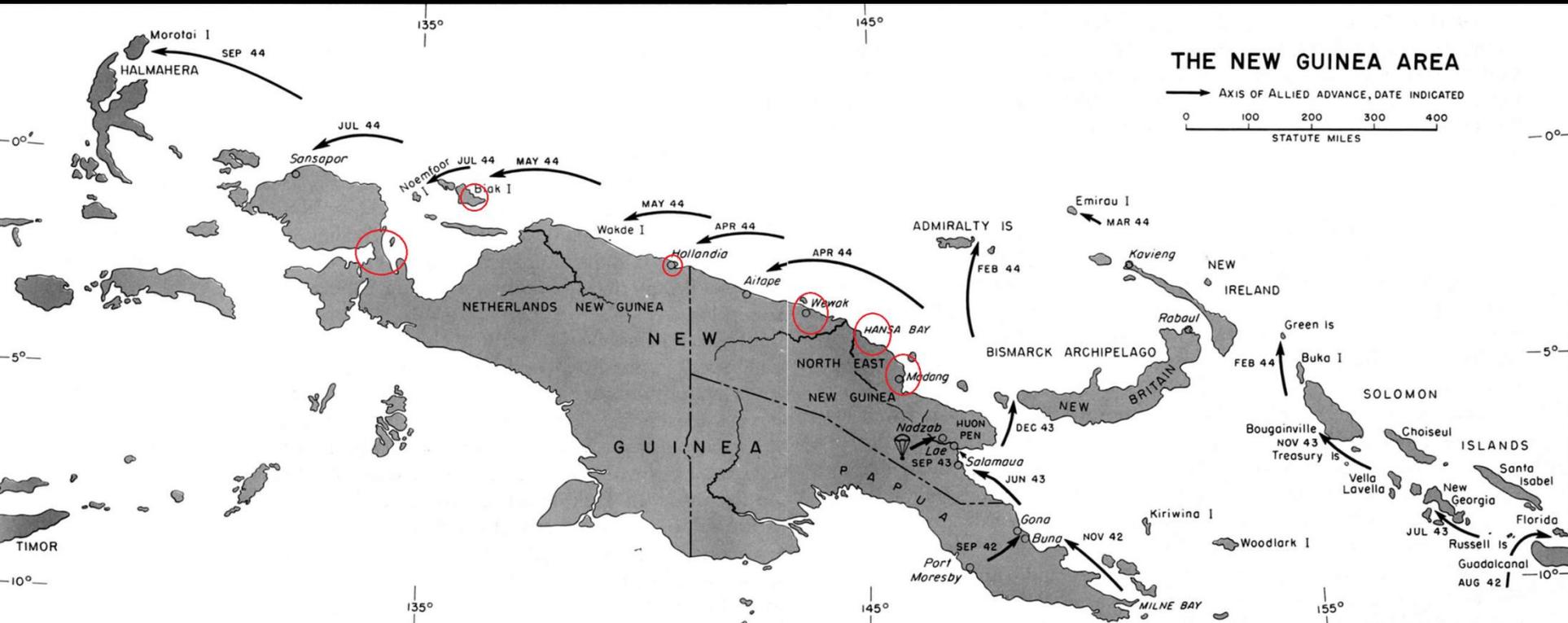
Above: Charles Lindburgh (with goggles) and some Marine aviators on Emirau, late 1944. Lindbergh had been sent home by GEN Krueger after a vicious dogfight over Luzon where he shot down 3 Japanese planes. He took his time getting back to the states stopping at Emirau and the Marianas.

Emirau quickly became an airbase for Marine fighters and “Black Cats” whose mission was to suppress Kavieng. Once the planes were flying, Kavieng was lost as a port to the Japanese.

It was the last active port east of the Philippines and Borneo and with its blockade, all supplies to the 150,000 or more Japanese remaining on New Guinea were cut off.

It was also Halsey’s last act as Command South Pacific Ocean Area. He was recalled to Hawaii to prepare to take over the “Big Blue Fleet” from Admiral Spruance once the next big Central Pacific operation had concluded.

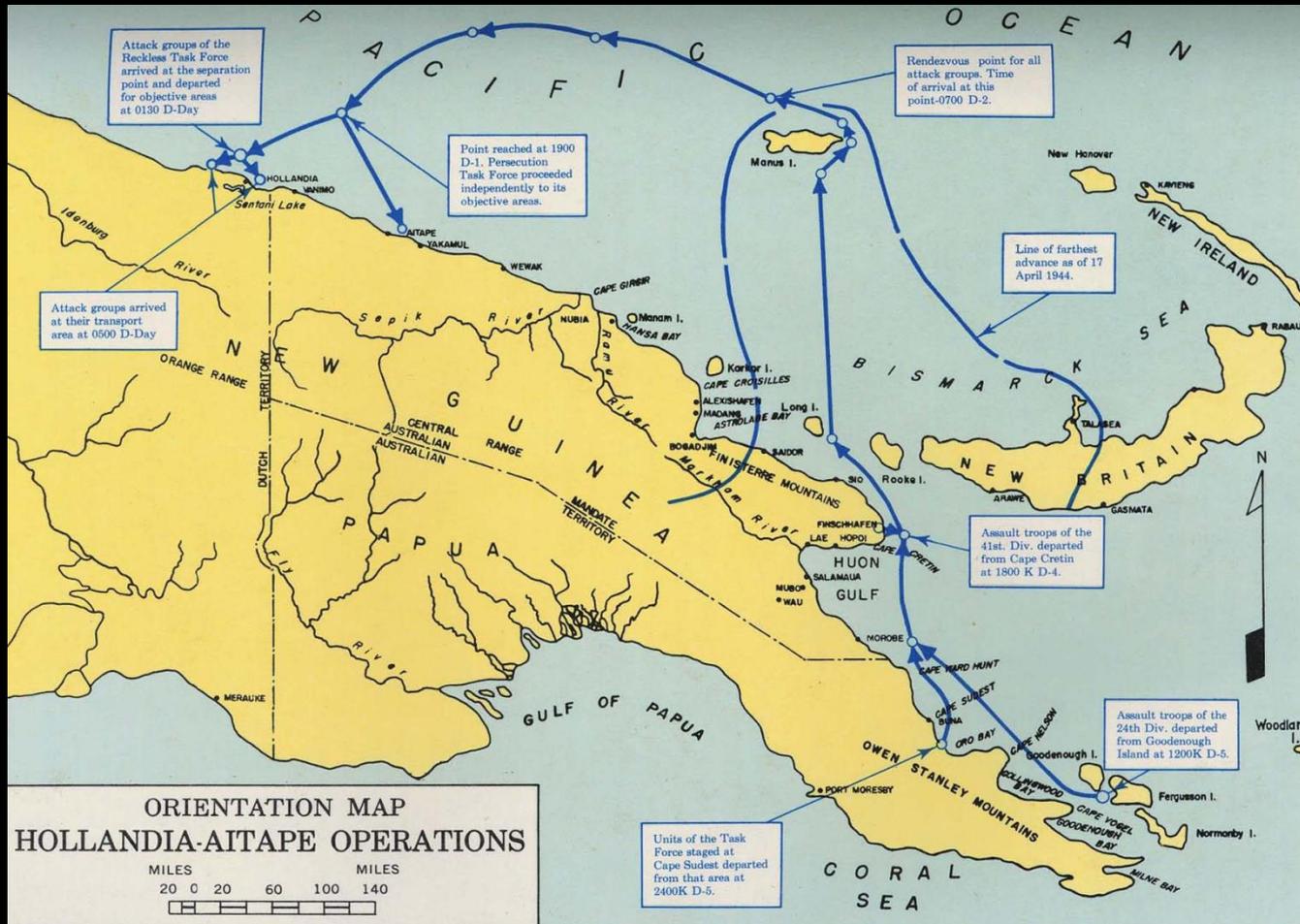
NEW GUINEA - 1944



The success in the Admiralties encouraged MacArthur and his staff to bolder moves, to advance beyond close air support range to objectives that were either not well defended or unoccupied but suitable for airfields.

There was also the fact that the largest concentration of Japanese was in the area from Madang to Wewak and numbered anywhere between 80,000 and a quarter million men and even 80,000 would cost time and lives best spent elsewhere.

NEW GUINEA - 1944



The first target was Hollandia – a former Dutch provincial capital and a Japanese base. It was not what it had been, most of its force having moved east to stop the Allied advance up the coast from Buna. But it was also 300 miles from the Admiralty Islands and nearly 500 from the front lines on the New Guinea coast.

HOLLANDIA



Hollandia was not the center of the Japanese combat power, but it was a major supply base and air base on the New Guinea coast. Stiff resistance was expected and MacArthur managed to convince the Navy to send a Carrier Task Force to support the landing in addition to his own growing fleet of escort carriers to suppress Japanese air power.

HOLLANDIA



On April 22, 1944, troops from the 41st and 42nd Infantry Divisions began landing on two separate beaches on either side of Hollandia. There were Japanese there and some fighting.

There were not, however, Japanese planes. LGEN Kenney's 5th Air Force had left the Navy without anything to shoot from the sky, but there were plenty of bad things crawling around on the ground.

The Japanese took to the hills and Hollandia was taken within three days, but weeks of skirmishing remained.

Meanwhile, the U.S. took advantage of the lack of serious threat.



HOLLANDIA



The heavy equipment needed to build a major base started coming ashore within two days of the initial landings.

The Japanese were a threat, but not enough to slow the construction of a major base.

It turned out intelligence had overestimated the Japanese forces at Hollandia, or failed to account for the effects of the increasing disruption of supplies and Kenney's bombers.

That and the Japanese had assumed the enemy would do as they would do and attack them where their army was, not hundreds of miles to the rear.



HOLLANDIA



Compared to other battlefields, most of the fighting would be known as “mopping up” pockets of resistance.



HOLLANDIA



It turned out intelligence had overestimated the Japanese forces at Hollandia, or failed to account for the effects of the increasing disruption of supplies and Kenney's bombers.

Every aircraft had been destroyed in the previous raids.



Still, there were an estimated 11,000 to 14,000 Japanese at Hollandia. But very few were trained combat troops and they were in hospital.

Most were support troops under different commands.

HOLLANDIA



The Americans lost 152 KIA and around 800 WIA.

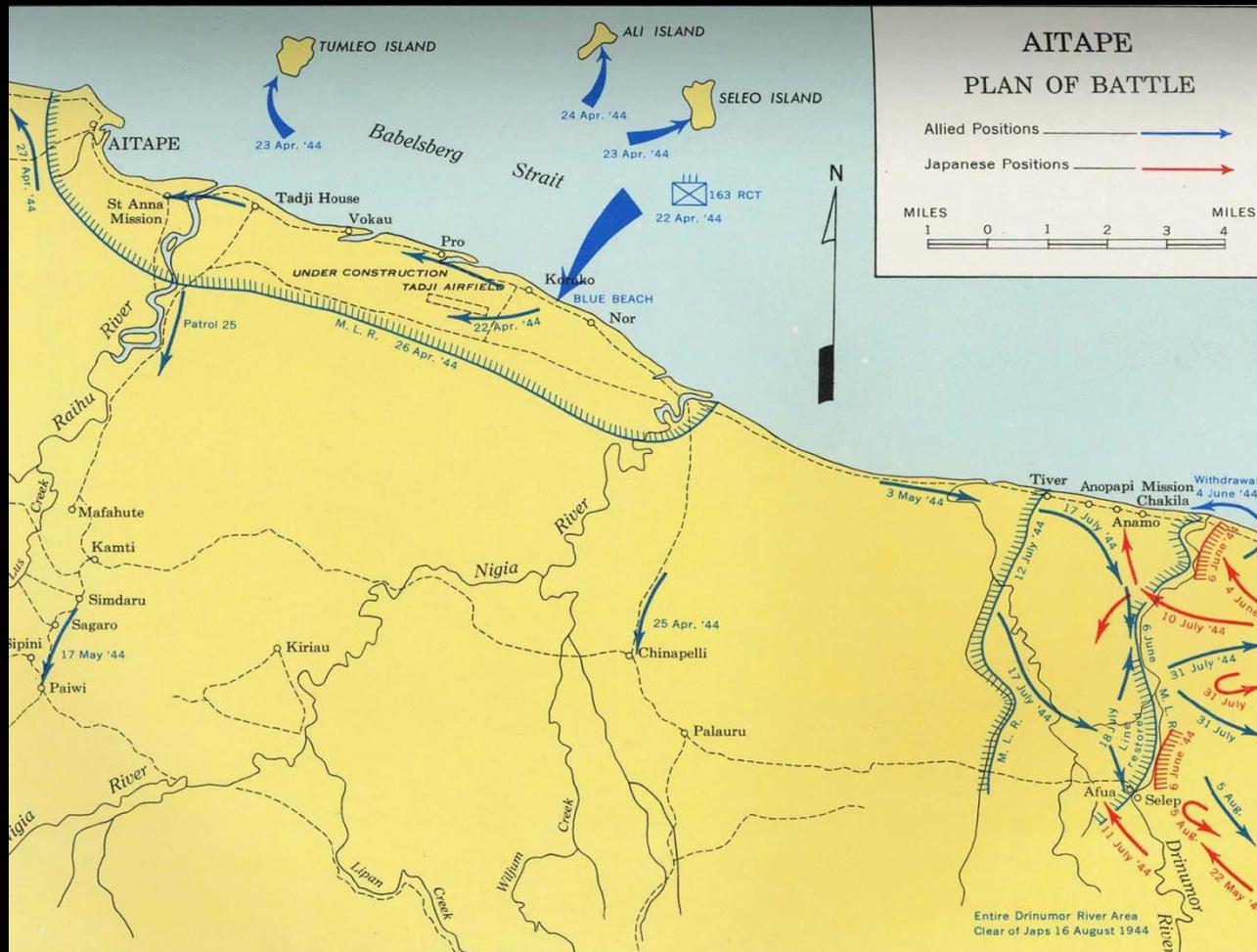
The Japanese lost 3,300 KIA and 600 POW's, the largest surrender of the war thus far.

Over 7,000 Japanese tried to retreat to the Japanese base at Wadke 400 miles to the west – and would not arrive until after MacArthur had taken it too. Even then, over 6,500 died in the jungles on the retreat.



Hollandia would be MacArthur's Headquarters until the invasion of Leyte in October and 8th Army Headquarters through the end of the war.

AITAPE - 1944



On the same day as the landings at Hollandia, a Regimental Combat Team landed at Aitape, over one hundred miles to the east and closer to the Japanese concentration at Wewak. This was to be a blocking force to keep the Japanese penned up.

AITAPE



Aitape was over a hundred miles east of Hollandia and over two hundred miles west of the main Japanese force at Wewak.

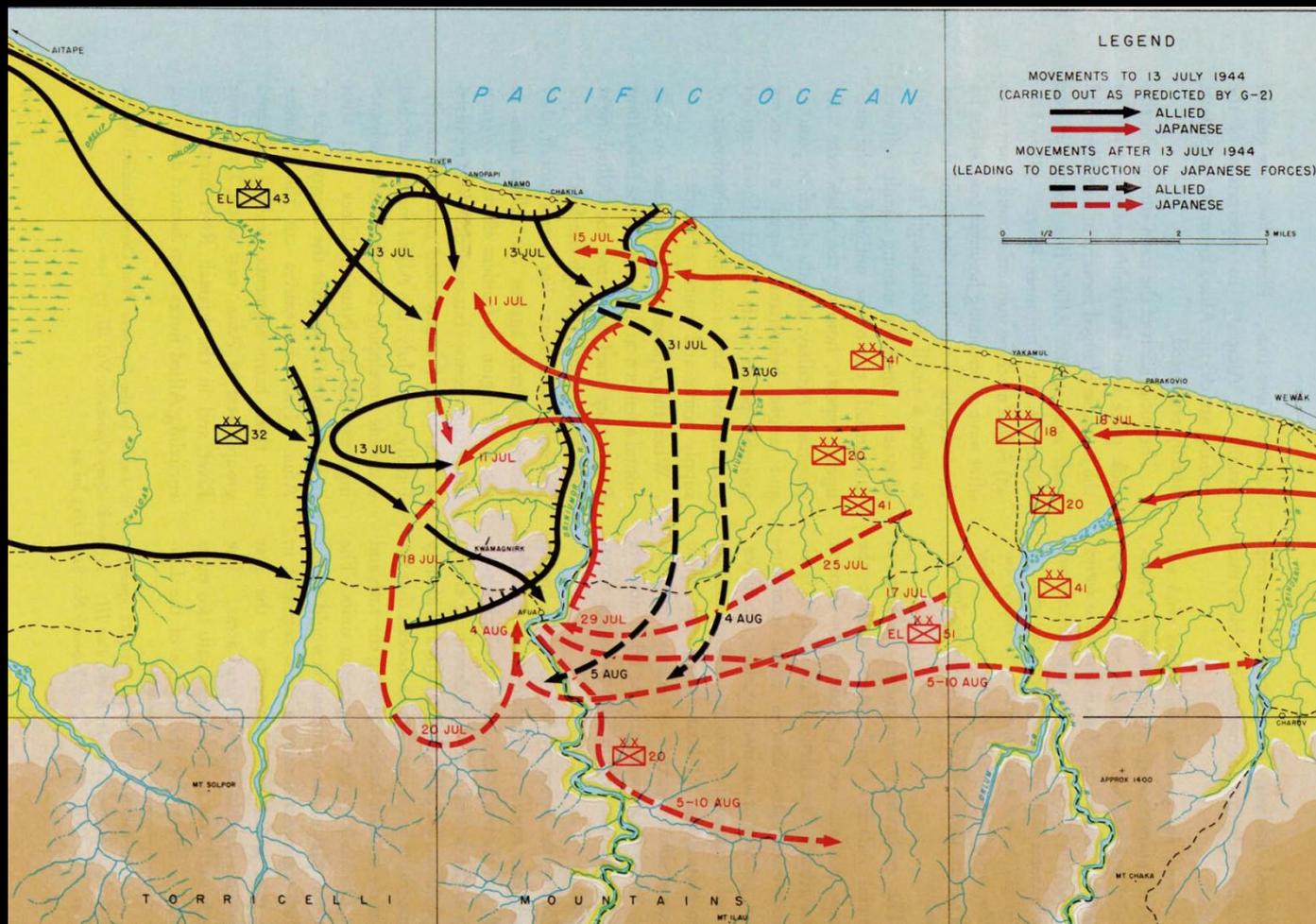
MacArthur expected next to nothing in the area and was not disappointed. His troops did not even have to contend with snipers.



What few Japanese there were, were taken by surprise and those that did not flee into the jungle were captured.

The landing was for the purpose of preventing any moves from the Wewak area and by June two divisions were near Aitape waiting.

AITAPE - 1944



The fight would come three months later. The Japanese would send over 30,000 men from Wewak to retake Hollandia and run into the Americans at Aitape. Maybe 15,000 made it to the blocking forces east of Aitape. The rest fell victim to disease, heat, over work and lack of food.

AITAPE



There was heavy fighting at points along the American lines for about a week beginning July 11th. There was sporadic fighting for the next three weeks before the Japanese retreated having lost about 80% of their men who had made it to attack.

The Americans suffered 440 KIA, 2,560 WIA.

The Japanese lost between 8,000 and 10,000 during the four weeks of fighting and nearly that many on the march to and from the battle. The force at Wewak had exhausted its ability to fight .

It would spend the rest of the war just trying to avoid starvation.

WADKE-SARMI



Less than four weeks after the landings at Hollandia and Aitape, MacArthur's forces landed some 300 miles further to the east at Wadke-Sarmi which was the intended destination of the thousands of Japanese that escaped Hollandia.

Wadke – which was the main base off the coast – fell in about a week. The landings on the coast were mostly unopposed. The Japanese to the west tried to drive off the invaders and failed as spectacularly as they had at Aitape.

By the end of the fighting, the U.S. had lost 415 KIA, 1,500 WIA. The Japanese lost 3,870 KIA plus about another 11,000 who died of disease and malnutrition.

There were 51 POW's.

STRATEGIC SCHISM

MacArthur had always been convinced he was the best man for the job of defeating Japan.

Admiral King was convinced otherwise.

But by May, 1944, his naval commanders were beginning to side with MacArthur who believed that it was folly to attack a large Japanese garrison that could just as easily be bypassed, cut off and starved into strategic irrelevance.

Halsey had also reached that conclusion in the South Pacific.

Spruance had after Tarawa.

But Washington wanted the Marianas taken.



STRATEGIC SCHISM

The Mariana islands are a line from north to south like a barrier across the Central Pacific. However, only four islands were useful for any kind of a base and they were all in the south: Saipan, Tinian, Rota and Guam.

Japan had possession of all the islands except for Guam since 1914.

U.S. war plans had always envisioned an operation to neutralize the Japanese bases in the Marianas.

But now the Pacific commanders including Nimitz saw such an operation as unnecessary and potentially far too costly to seriously consider.

Except they were ordered to do so...



STRATEGIC SCHISM

Admiral Spruance was tasked with preparing the plan and would command the forces. He felt it would be costly given that there were about 50,000 Japanese in the Marianas and hundreds of planes.

Nimitz tried to convince Admiral King to bypass the islands and cut them off and focus the Navy effort in the South Pacific.

Which would mean under MacArthur which was absolutely unthinkable to ADM King. He pointed out that the Marianas were perfectly placed to ferry planes south.

Nimitz argued Halsey had taken away any place south of any use for such planes.



STRATEGIC SCHISM

George Marshall was leaning in favor of the Pacific commanders. King found an odd ally.

Gen “Hap” Arnold, Chief-of-Staff of the Army Air Corps wanted those islands. He wanted a real Air Force in the Pacific. The commanders of the Pacific Air Forces had little use nor regard for strategic bombing which was what an air force was for.

And the Marianas would make perfect bases for bombers.

MacArthur argued that if bombing was that important the bomber would be best employed from New Guinea against the oil fields in Borneo – Japan’s only major source.



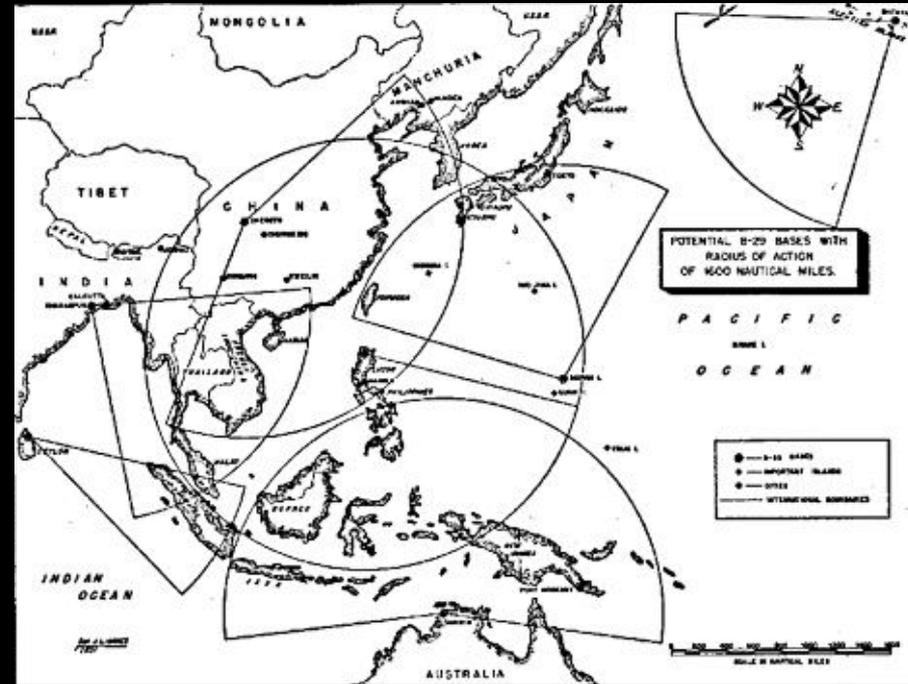
STRATEGIC SCHISM

Prior to mid-1944, strategic bombing was of little use in the Pacific. It was used to reduce the Japanese bases in the Aleutians, and Rabaul and Kavieng and for pre-invasion bombardment.

But not to attack Japan itself. None of the bombers could reach Japan from anywhere under U.S. control. But there was a new bomber coming into service that could hit Japan from the Marianas.

It was the B-29. The bomber had greater range and payload than the B-17 or the B-24 and could reach most of Japan's major cities from bases in the Marianas.

Arnold wanted bomber bases. King did not want MacArthur in charge. The Marianas would be invaded.



THE B-29

The B-29 would enter service almost two years after its first flight. It was plagued with problems largely on account of the fact that it incorporated new technology: pressurized cabins, radar navigation and targeting, remote controlled guns and so on.

Its engines also had an annoying habit of bursting into flames when starting.

They never figured that one out.



The program was the most expensive weapons program of the war. It was about one to one and a half billion dollars more expensive than the Manhattan Project.

	B-29	B-17	B-24
Range:	3,250 miles	2,000 miles	2,400 miles
Speed:	357 MPH	287 MPH	290 MPH
Alt:	32,000 ft.	35,600 ft.	28,000 ft.
Load:	20,000 lbs	4,500 lbs	5,000
Service	1944-1960	1938-1945	1941--1945
Built:	3,970	12,731	19,256

SAIPAN

The Invasion force was under the same commanders that had invaded Tarawa and the Marshall Islands. Spruance commanded the Fleet, LGEN Holland M. Smith, USMC the ground forces, VADM Richmond K. Turner the Amphibious forces and VADM Marc Mitscher the Carrier Task Forces.

The 2nd and 4th Marine Divisions would lead the landing. The 27th Infantry (of Makin Atoll) was in reserve. The 77th Infantry was available in Hawaii if needed.

The force had over 800 ships (not including landing craft) with 177,000 troops and had travelled more than twenty times the distance that the forces invading Normandy had to cover less than two weeks earlier. (The entire fleet was at sea when news of D-Day in France was broadcast.)

They would be met by 32,000 Japanese on Saipan.

It would prove to be the bloodiest battle of the Pacific war up to that time.

SAIPAN

The fleet arrived before the landings and over the course of a few days destroyed the Japanese air forces in the islands.

There were unsuccessful air attacks during the raids.

With the air power gone, the fleet moved in close to bombard. They intended to destroy all the beach defenses.

Except there were not any. The Japanese were dug in inland waiting.

The real air battle for the Marianas was yet to come...

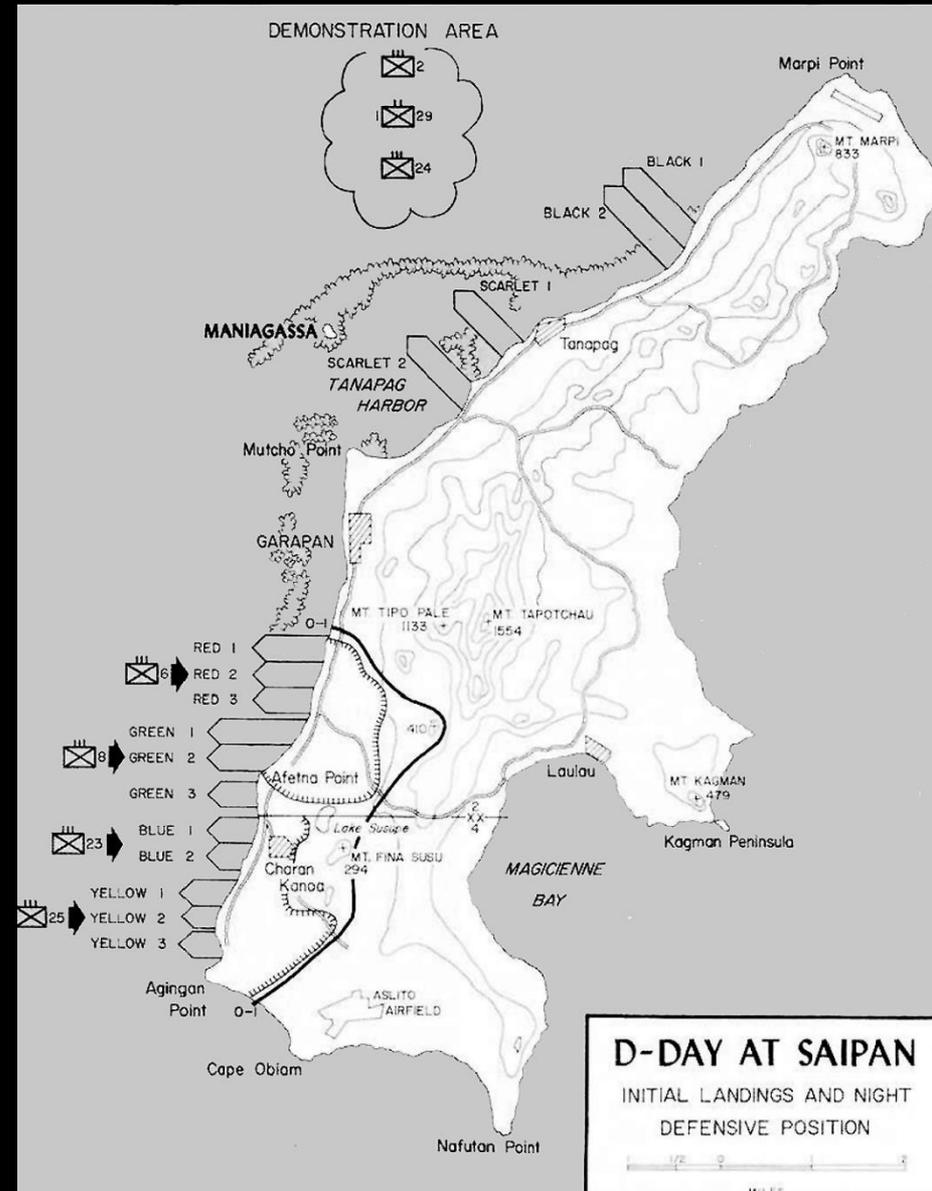


SAIPAN

The Japanese were trying to find a way to defeat an invasion. Fortifications at the beach had failed.

Now they hoped that inland defenses and mobile troops would succeed.

On June 15th, their examination had begun.



SAIPAN

The first wave landed on time and in the right places and into pre-registered artillery (already aimed) and machine gun fire from trenches re-occupied once the navy lifted its fire.

It was not the debacle that was Omaha beach several days earlier, or Salerno or Tarawa, but it was a hard fight to gain a beachhead.



SAIPAN

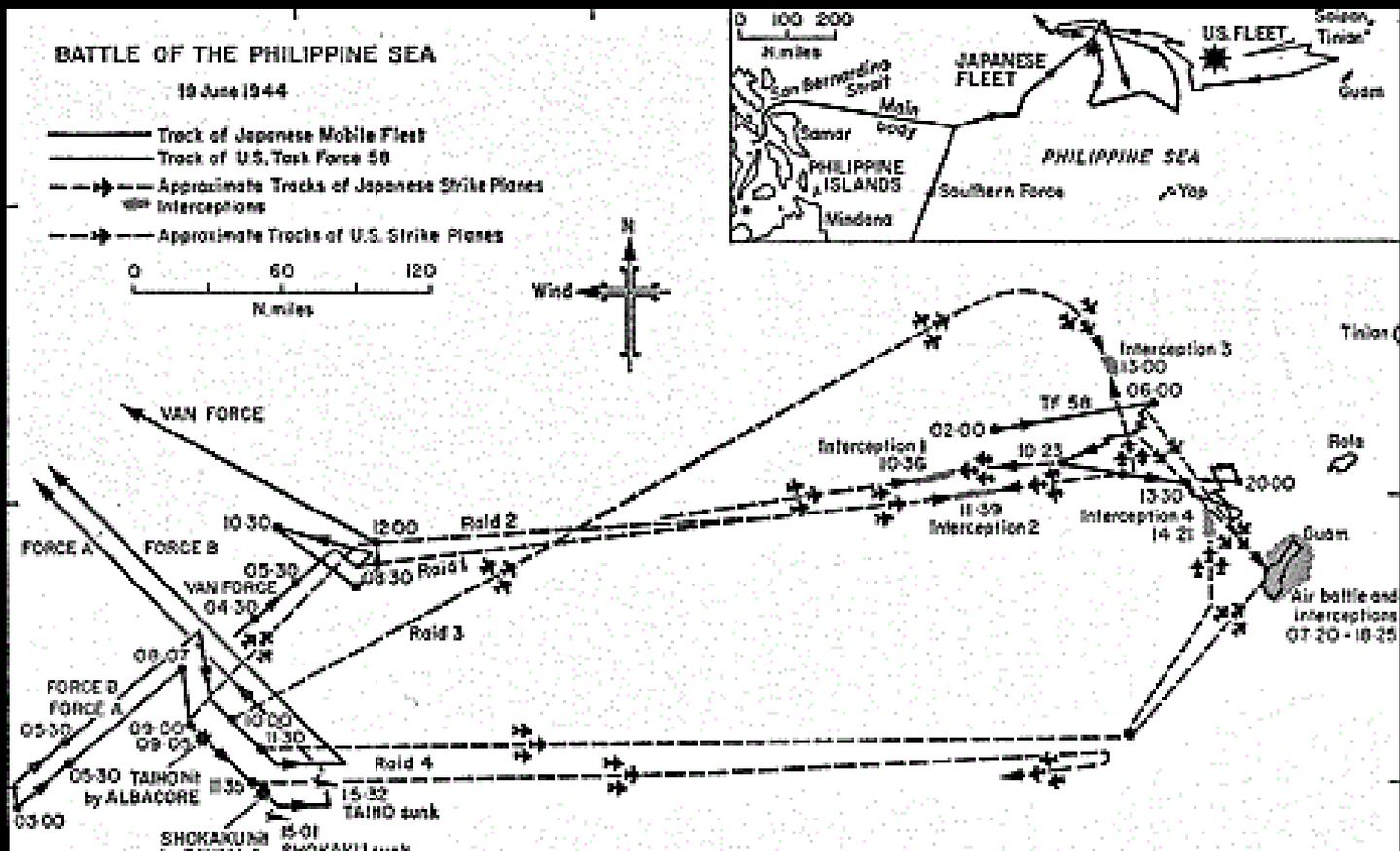
The Japanese commanders were not counting on holding the beach which was a good thing because they did not.

The first wave pushed past the beach defenses and subsequent waves came in standing up.

The Japanese plan was to hold until their fleet arrived with reinforcements and destroyed the fleet off shore...



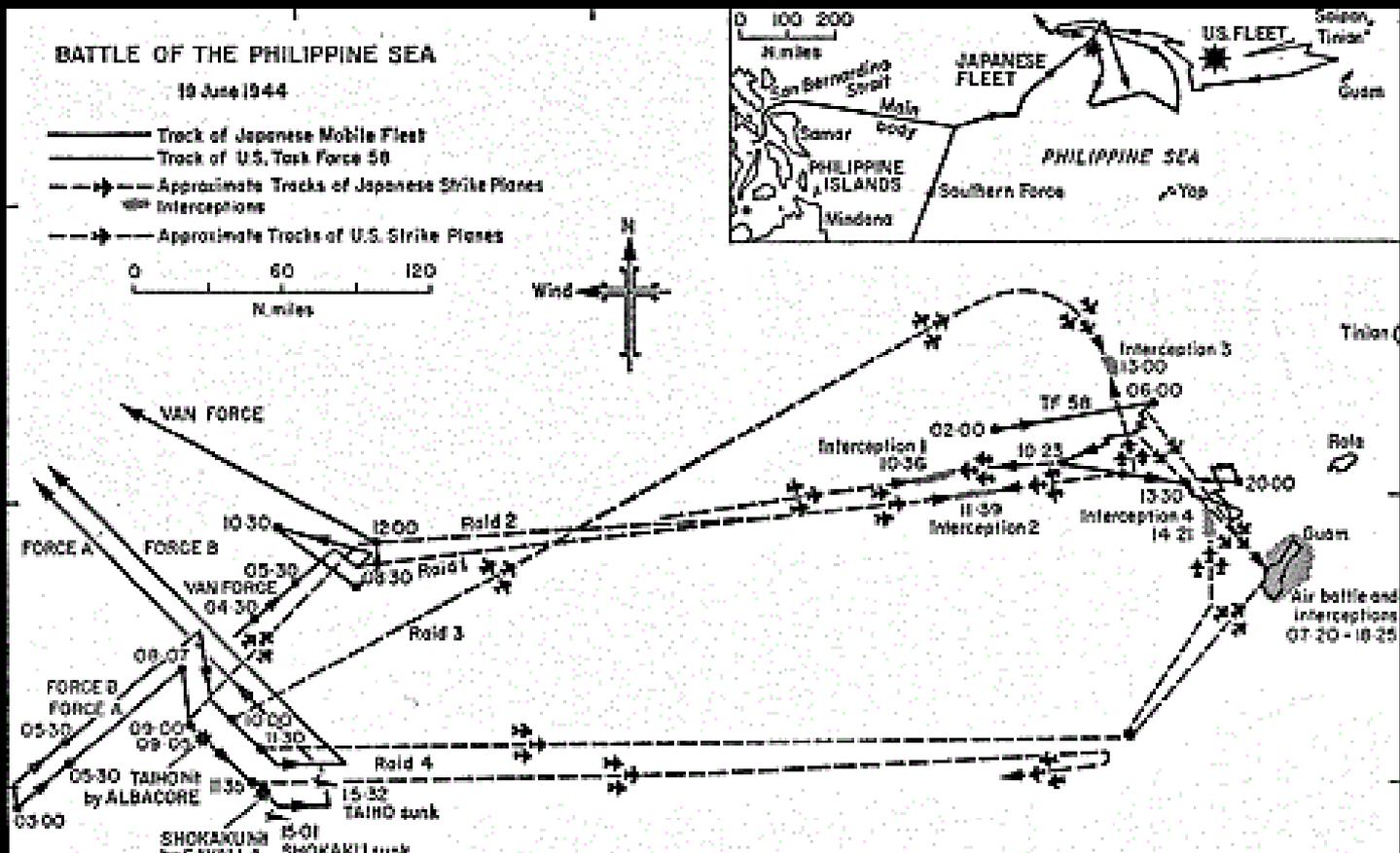
PHILIPPINE SEA



The Japanese fleet was coming for the first time since the Battle of Santa Cruz in October of 1942. Saipan was considered critical to the defense of the Japanese Empire and must be held.

They hoped to surprise the Americans and attack from long range using bases in the Marianas to rearm, refuel and attack again – a tactic called shuttle bombing.

PHILIPPINE SEA



The Japanese Navy also counted on land based aviation. Both the land based planes and their bases were already wrecked but the word never got to the Fleet – as the commanders were loath to admit they had been beaten before the battle even had begun.

The Japanese launched massive raids against the Americans on June 19th.

PHILIPPINE SEA

The Japanese plan was to catch the American fleet between its navy and naval aviation from the west and its land-based aviation from the Marianas. There was one glaring problem with this: the Americans knew the plan.

The plan had been devised by Admiral Koga (who replaced Yamamoto after his death) in late 1943. In early 1944, Admiral Koga and key staff members flew to the Philippines to brief others on the plan ... and their plane crashed in a storm in the Philippines with no survivors. But the plan survived the crash and was picked up by U.S. led Filipino guerrillas and sent to Hawaii by submarine.

The Americans had therefore made it a point to destroy the land-based aviation slated for the plan before it began and cripple the bases.

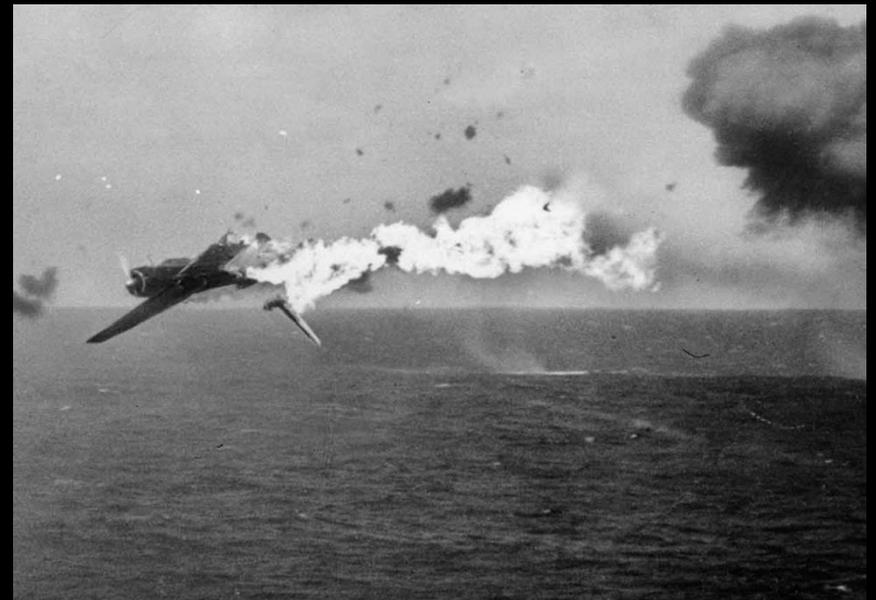
The land-based commanders never bothered to tell the Navy that they had no planes and their bases were useless so the Navy assumed everything was in order when they set sail to deal with the problem...

PHILIPPINE SEA

The Japanese had 5 carriers and 4 light carriers and launched over 300 planes. Many fell for the decoy force of fast battleships and cruisers which were guarded by fighters.

A few were not fooled and found the carriers.

It would not matter. Not a single U.S. carrier was damaged and only USS South Dakota was slightly damaged.



PHILIPPINE SEA

It was a disaster for the Japanese. The Americans would call it “The Great Marianas Turkey Shoot.” The Japanese fleet launched 284 planes from its carriers. At least 194 were shot down against 20 American fighters.

Coupled with what little support there was from the land-based aviation, 350 Japanese planes were lost.

The Japanese still had 150 planes left and planned another strike.

But by the time their raids were returning they had lost two carriers to U.S. submarines. The Shokaku had exploded with a loss of most of its crew and the brand new Taiho was a burning wreck.



PHILIPPINE SEA

The Japanese planned to attack again on June 21st. On the afternoon of the 20th, the American found them and sent a strike of 230 planes.

It overwhelmed their defenses.

The aircraft carrier Hiyo was sunk and the carriers Zuikaku, Junyo and Chiyoda were damaged. Only Chitose, Ryuho and Zuiho could still launch a strike but both had already lost most of their planes and pilots.

The Japanese could only withdraw and in doing so they doomed their Army on Saipan and throughout the Marianas.



PHILIPPINE SEA

The American air strike arrived over the Japanese Fleet at sunset. Most of the U.S. aircraft losses were planes had to ditch at night or crashed on landing. 100 planes were lost returning from the strike although most of the aircrew were saved by search planes the next morning.



Japan

5 CV 3 sunk, 2 damaged
4 CVL 1 damaged
231 F 106 DB 96 TB
433 planes lost
5 BB 1 damaged
11 CA 4 damaged
2 CL
27 DD
6 AO 2 sunk
2,987 KIA

U.S.

7 CV
8 CVL
476 F 233 DB 194 TB
123 planes lost
6 BB 1 damaged
8 CA
13 CL
58 DD
109 KIA (50 on South Dakota)

PHILIPPINE SEA

Spruance would be criticized after the battle for not being more aggressive.

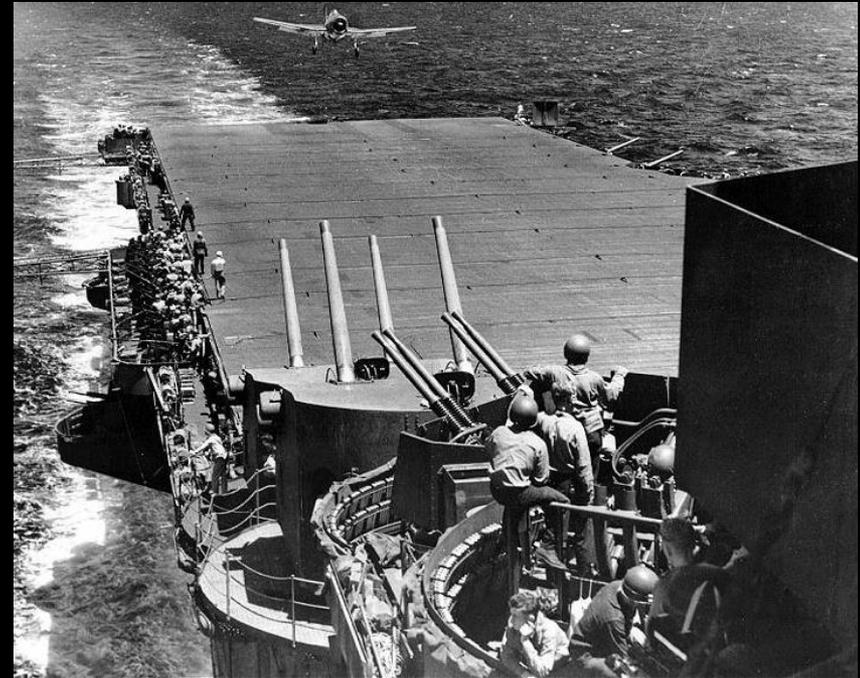
His orders were to protect the invasion fleet, which he did.

The winds meant he had to turn away from the Japanese to launch or recover aircraft.

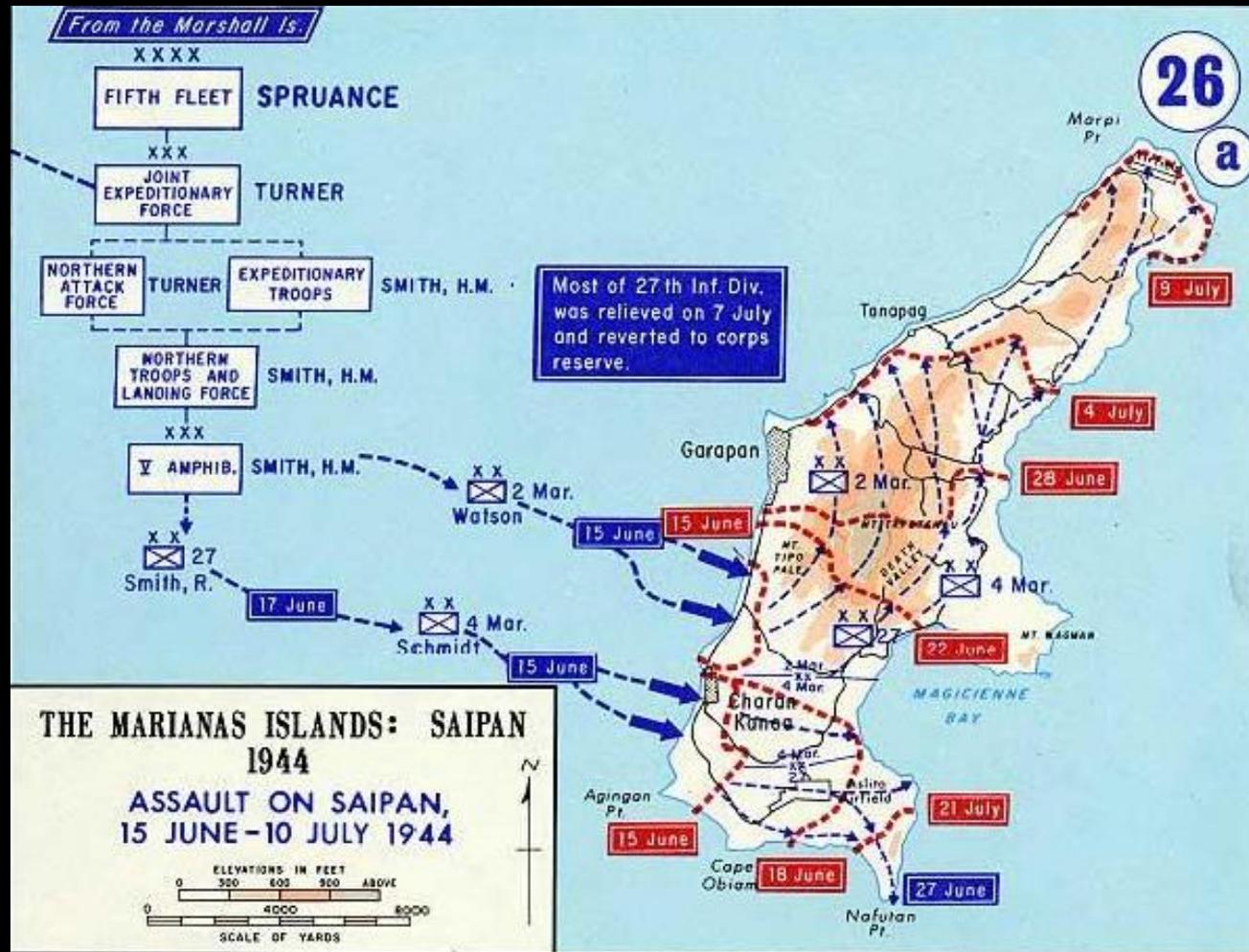
And the Japanese were at extreme range from his carriers.

They said he should have charged in and had he done so he might have bagged the lot.

Such a overwhelming victory is almost impossible. But he effectively destroyed the Japanese carrier fleet. It had less than 100 qualified carrier pilots left. Unfortunately, the U.S. did not know this.



SAIPAN



The Saipan battle was supposed to last a week at most. Almost immediately, H.M. Smith committed his reserves including the 27th Infantry Division. But Smith's plan may have assumed flat ground and Saipan was anything but that. The mountains proved a major problem.

SAIPAN

The battle would see the first urban combat in the Pacific in the ruins of the town of Garapan which took days to clear. The 27th Infantry would get hung up trying to attack across a gorge that was not on any map.

Smith fired the division commander because he was behind schedule, not believing his maps were wrong.



SAIPAN

It was also the first battle in the Pacific War fought where there was a significant civilian population. The civilians were islanders and Japanese settlers.

Thousands would die in the fighting, many by suicide jumping off cliffs at the northern tip of the island convinced the Americans would do worse if they lived. The Americans proved them wrong ... but for many it was too late.



SAIPAN



The Battle of Saipan lasted over a month – four weeks longer than planned and required troops meant for the later invasions of Tinian and Guam which had to be delayed weeks until Saipan was secure and another division could be shipped into the theater.

SAIPAN



The Americans suffered 3,426 KIA and 10,364 WIA.

SAIPAN

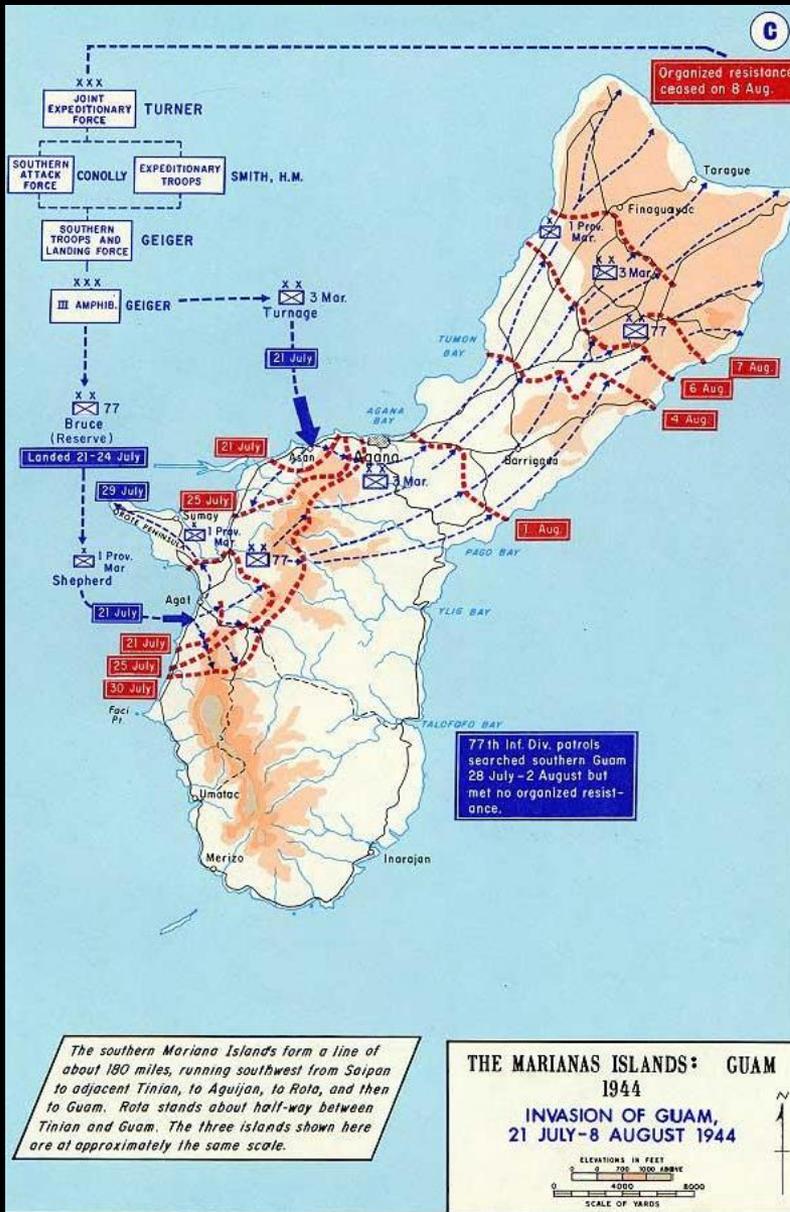
Of the estimated 32,000 Japanese troops on Saipan, only 921 survived and were taken prisoner.

And estimated 5,000 killed themselves including VADM Chuichi Nagumo who had commanded the carrier force at the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Approximately 22,000 civilians died. An unknown number (in the thousands) by suicide or by their own families or soldiers.

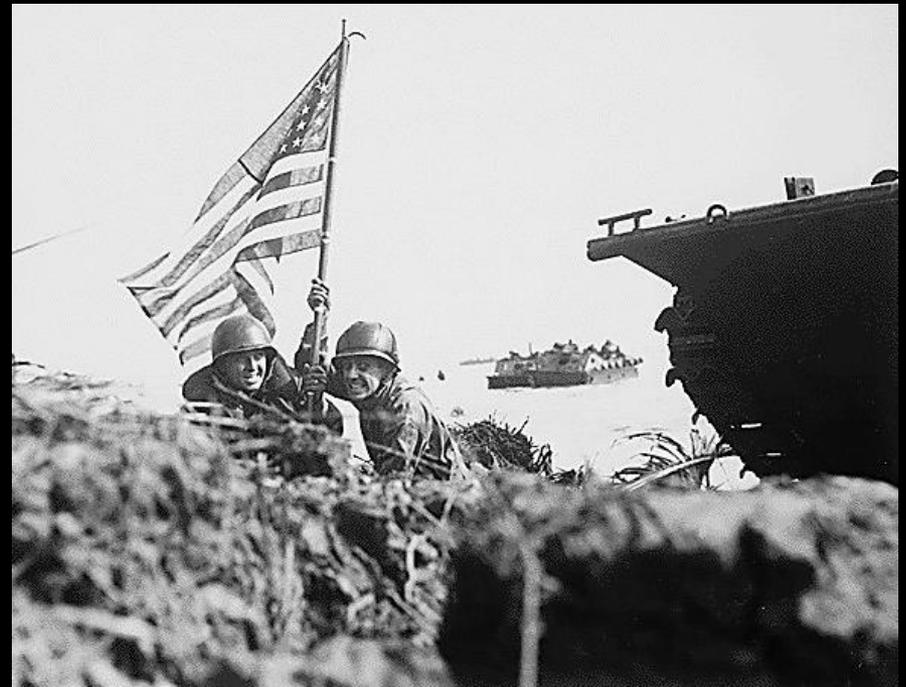


GUAM



The 3rd Marine Division and 77th Infantry landed on Guam on July 21st a couple of weeks later than originally planned. They had been held in reserve just in case they were needed on Saipan.

Here the Japanese decided to again try and stop them at the beaches rather than wait for them inland. (It obviously had not worked on Saipan).



GUAM



The landing met heavy fire and heavy casualties but was successful. The fighting on Guam would prove just as difficult and almost as costly as Saipan.

But this time there were no illusions. The Americans ground it out.



GUAM



Guam was declared secured after 18 days of fighting. 3,000 Americans were KIA, 7,122 WIA. The Japanese would lose 18,227 KIA with 1,250 POW's

Unless one includes a handful who held out, the last into the 1960's.



TINIAN

The force from Saipan was supposed to then attack Tinian. The invasion dates was weeks late due to the unexpected difficulties on Saipan such that it almost coincided with the landings on Guam.

The Japanese expected the invasion to come on the southern beaches which were long and wide. A force appeared off those beaches and lowered landing craft but did not put ashore.

Meanwhile, a regiment from the 4th Marine Division in landing craft sailed direct from the south coast of Saipan to a narrow, undefended beach on the north side of the Island.

The rest of the division and the 2nd Marines followed in behind.



TINIAN



The Japanese were caught completely out of position and scrambled to do anything.

Their efforts failed.

The fight lasted only a week.

It helped the Marines that this island was mostly flat and open sugarcane fields.



TINIAN

The U.S. lost 326 KIA and 1,593 WIA.

Of the Japanese force of 5,542, only 252 survived to be taken prisoner.



FALLOUT

Any illusions that the Japanese had that they could win the war died in the Marianas.

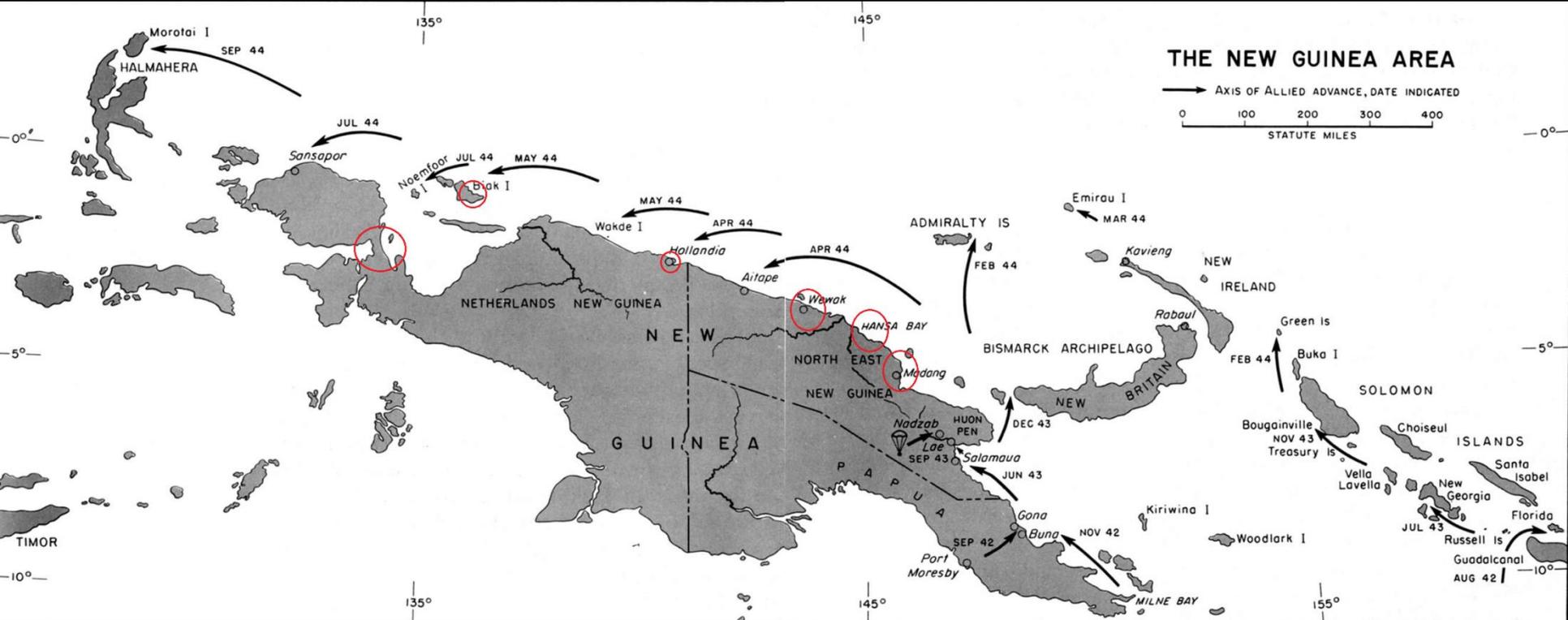
Tojo had been under increasing pressure from with the Army about the war since the Battle of Midway. On July 18th, 1944 he was forced to resign all his offices and positions and leave the government and the Army.

He was replaced by Kuniaki Koiso, a retired Army general. He had few supporters, not even the Emperor but no one else would take the job. He was effectively a figurehead. The Military did not report to him and neither did his civilian ministers.

The Army wanted to continue the war, after all most of it was in China and they had not suffered such huge losses (nor had they gained much of anything).

The Navy was resigned to the fact that the war could not be won but since the new government could not end it, it went on.

NEW GUINEA - 1944



By the middle of May, MacArthur had effectively isolated the Japanese 18th Army and gained control over most of New Guinea. Only the westernmost portion remained.

His plan was to take Biak, a large Island off the coast. Air bases could then be built to suppress the remaining Japanese positions. The operation was expected to be no more (and no less) difficult than the ones since the start of the year.

MacArthur's Luck Runs Out - Biak



MacArthur's luck had run out for now. A veteran would describe Biak and a malarial, typhus infested cesspool of hell. The terrain where he landed his force on May 27th was the worst any Americans faced in the Pacific. Where it was flat it was a bog. Otherwise it was limestone cliffs cut with caves, each a bunker.

MacArthur's Luck Runs Out - Biak



The terrain was such that a relatively small force could pin a much larger force to the beachhead so long as it had supplies.

Unlike the past operations, MacArthur's usual methods did not cut the flow of supplies and men to Biak. Troops from the mainland and supplies from Southeast Asia came in on small boats on the West side of the island at night, out of range of Kenney's air cover.



The invasion became a stalemate almost immediately and unless the supplies could be stopped, there was no telling how long the operation could take or at what cost.

MacArthur's Luck Runs Out - Biak



Amphibious hooks eventually allowed his force to break out of the worst ground, but the rest of the island was only comparatively better.

The supplies needed to be cut.

MacArthur's Luck Runs Out - Biak



The air force dropped the airborne right where they expected – something that never happened in Europe.

The Amphibious troops were landing nearby even as paratroopers were still leaving their aircraft. The Japanese defenses were overwhelmed.



MacArthur's Luck Runs Out - Biak



The last pocket of resistance on Noemfoor fell at the end of August. But the island had been lost since the end of July and was no longer of any real use to the Japanese.

The battle had cost the allies only 66 KIA and 343 WIA.

Japan lost 1,714 KIA and 186 POW's

And they lost Biak.

And by then they had lost all of New Guinea.



MacArthur's Luck Runs Out - Biak



Biak was invaded to provide bases to support the continued advance to the Philippines. It made sense on paper.

The tactics – let the Americans land and then pound them would be seen again in some of the bloodiest battles of the war.

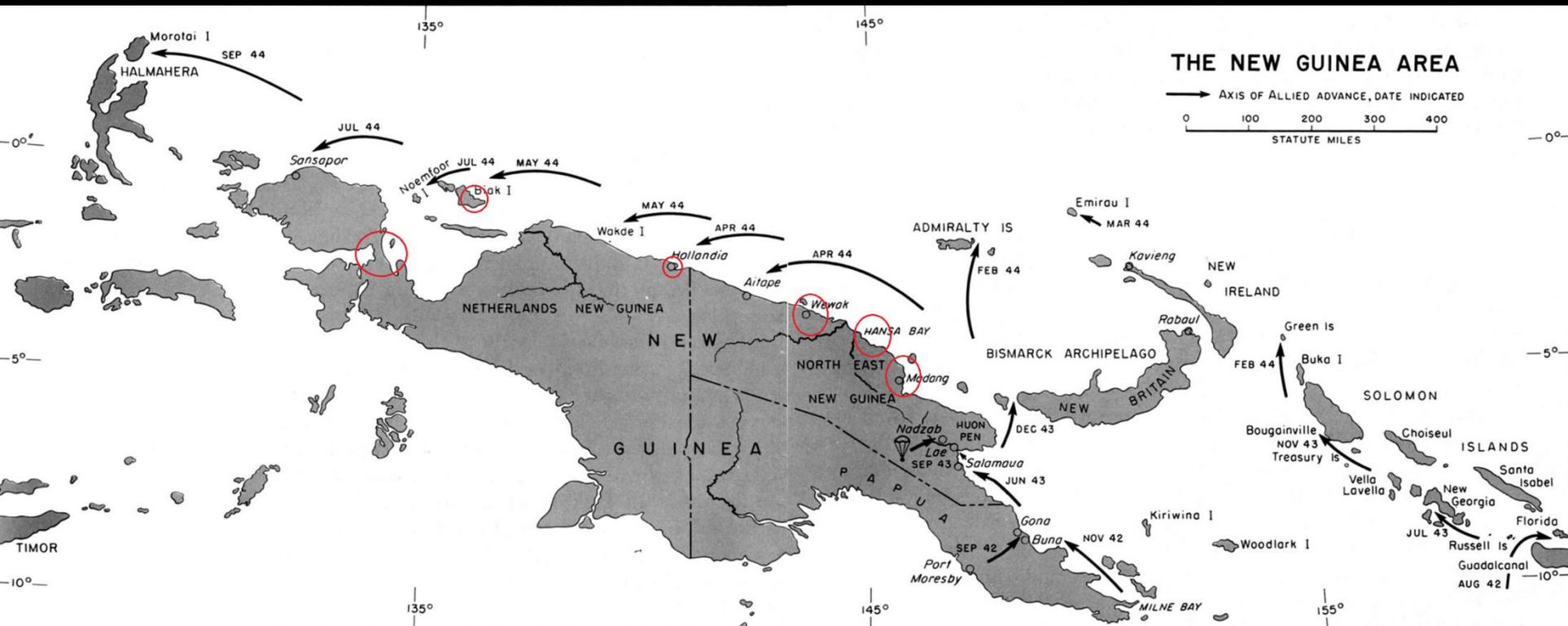
By the time it was secured, it was hundreds of miles in the rear of MacArthur's front and useless for its intended purposes.

It was supposed to take two to three weeks.

It took three months and had cost the Allies 474 KIA, 2,428 WIA and 3,500 typhus cases.

The Japanese lost 6,100 KIA and 450 taken prisoner.

NEW GUINEA - 1944



Even with the situation on Biak and Noemfoor unresolved, MacArthur did not stop his drive west.

At the end of July his forces landed and Sansapor, New Guinea. The landing was unopposed but the Japanese would try to do something. The Americans there would block any supplies or reinforcements from reaching any Japanese left on New Guinea. The battle would be brief. The Japanese would not arrive for weeks.

NEW GUINEA – 1944



And it was over in days. The U.S. lost 14 KIA and 44 wounded. Japan lost 385 KIA and 215 WIA. And New Guinea. And over 200,000 troops were now cut off completely in the Solomons, Bismarcks and on New Guinea.

STRATEGIC SCHISM

Plans were already in progress in Washington to support an invasion of the Philippines. The basic plan was to land on the southern island of Mindanao in October of 1944, Leyte in December and Luzon in February of 1945.

Both MacArthur and Nimitz's staffs were working out the relevant details.

But an invasion of the Philippines would surely be MacArthur's show.

ADM King and "Hap" Arnold had a better idea – Formosa.

Arnold wanted it for bases for his bombers which could then hit most of Japan and support his bombing campaign against the Japanese in China. King just wanted anything that did not include MacArthur.

Tired of the bickering, Roosevelt decided to go to Hawaii and get the opinions of his theater commanders. ADM Leahy was allowed to attend. ADM King was not.

The meeting was planned for the 26th and 27th of July in Hawaii. MacArthur had to attend personally. He saw it as nothing more than a photo op for the President following his fourth nomination.

STRATEGIC SCHISM

King had ordered Nimitz to present a plan for Formosa and argue for it over the Philippines. There was no plan. No one had asked for one.

And Nimitz and his staff saw no reason to prepare one. Formosa was not worth the effort and would not speed up the war but it would probably be a bloodbath.

His presentation was lukewarm and uninspired. MacArthur had been blindsided that Formosa was even under consideration. He had not prepared, but gave a detailed plan for the Philippines and impassioned justification.

Nimitz did not dispute any of his points.

Formosa was forgotten. The Philippines would be the next major objective.



The Price of Being Stubborn: Peleliu

The second part of Operation Forager was to seize islands to support the drive on the Philippines. This included Ulithi Atoll, Yap and the Palau Islands and specifically Angaur and Peleliu.

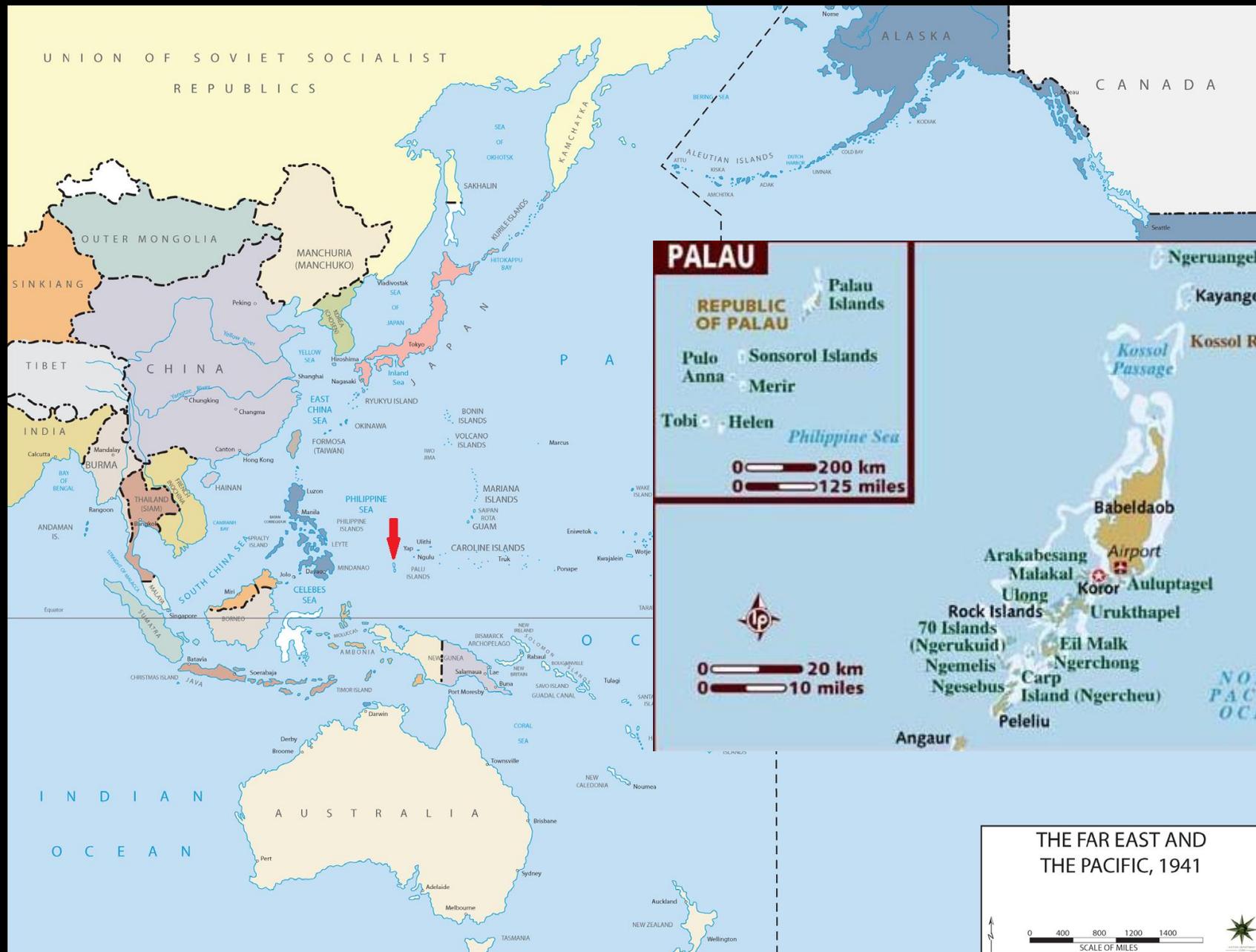
No one in the Pacific Fleet was thrilled with Yap. It was heavily garrisoned and useless as a major base even if no one was there. They managed to get it dropped.

In early September, Task Force 38 raided the Palaus and Philippines. They discovered that Leyte was practically undefended and recommended immediate invasion.

It would not be immediate, but it would be two months ahead of the schedule discussed in Hawaii.



The Price of Being Stubborn: Peleliu



The Price of Being Stubborn: Peleliu

But first they needed the support bases in the Palau Islands – or so they thought.

The plan called for the invasion of the two southern Islands: Angaur and Peleliu.

The main island would be bypassed (Halsey had managed that concession from Washington).

Peleliu would be invaded on September 15th by the 1st Marine Division. Angaur would follow on the 17th with troops from the 81st Infantry Division. The entire operation was expected to take two weeks at the most.

It would not go according to plan at all.



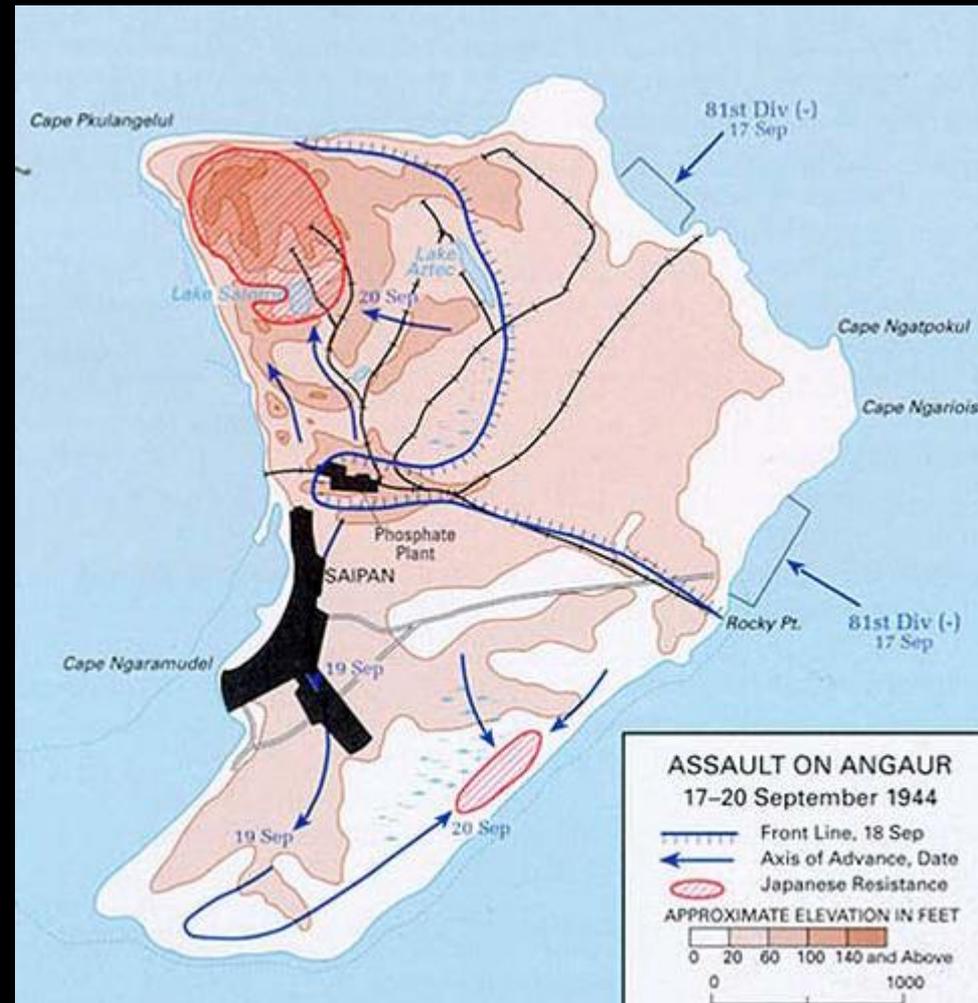
The Price of Being Stubborn: Peleliu

Angaur looked to be the easier of the two and it was – relatively.

The landings went without a hitch and within four days most of the island was secured. Halsey and his ground commander thought it was about over so the reserve regiment was sent to take Ulithi Atoll – which it did on the 24th. Ulithi was unoccupied.

But the celebration was premature. Most of the Japanese were now dug in in two pockets of prepared defenses.

It would take the 81st Division about a month to blast and burn them out.



The Price of Being Stubborn: Peleliu

The fighting on Anguar would last until October 22nd, finishing two days after the invasion of the Philippines the still un-built base was supposed to support. (Ulithi was doing the job.)

260 Americans died and 1,354 were wounded. 1,350 Japanese were killed and 50 taken prisoner.

It was fast and low cost compared to Peleliu...

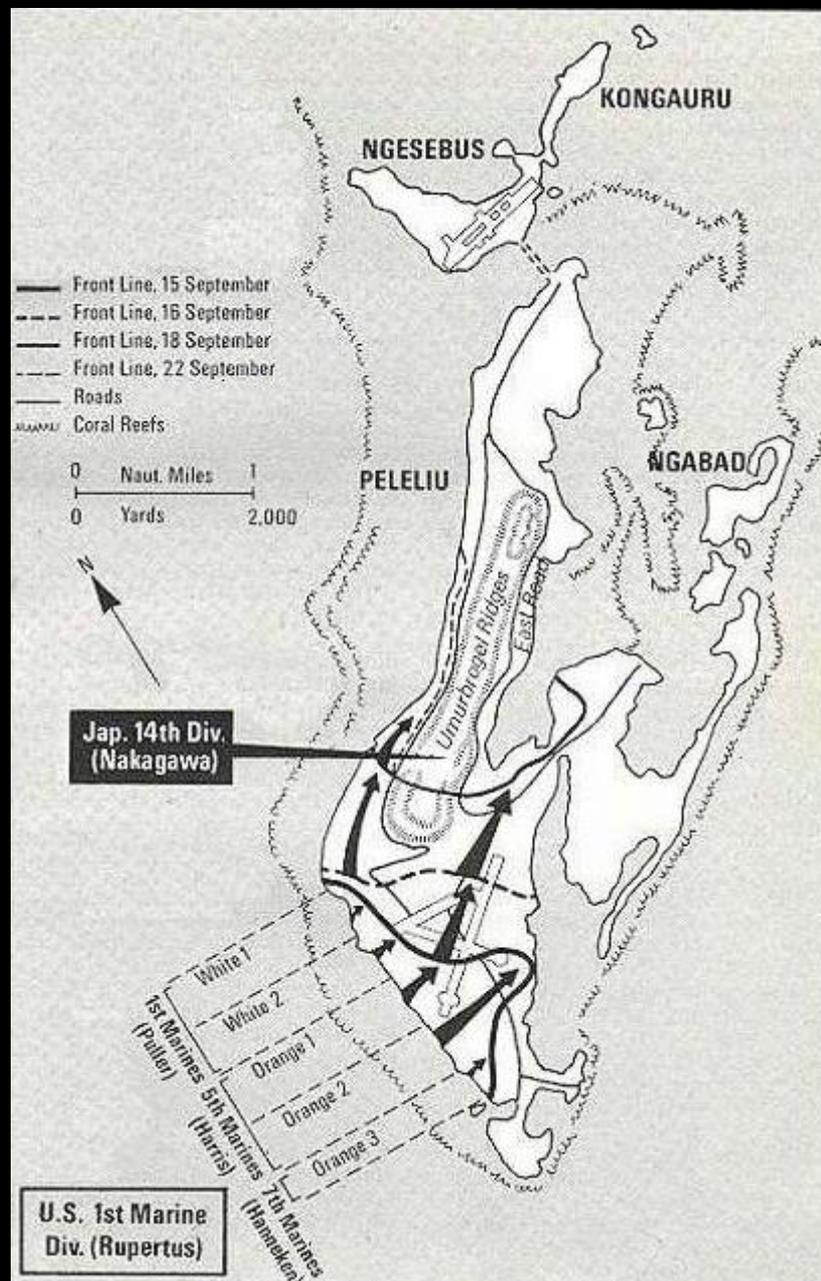


The Price of Being Stubborn: Peleliu

The Battle of Peleliu proved to be the most pointless battle of the Pacific War.

The change in the schedule for Leyte meant it no longer mattered. But it was part of a plan that ADM King insisted must be carried out.

The landings went well initially and then ran into stiff resistance.



The Price of Being Stubborn: Peleliu

The Island was either open ground or limestone outcrops, the latter being honeycombed with caves, each a heavily armed, well supplied fortification.

The marines were in the open. The Japanese rarely ever seen.

They had to find the caves and blast or burn them out.



The Price of Being Stubborn: Peleliu

Peleliu was supposed to support Leyte.

When the Americans landed at Leyte on October 20th, the fighting on Peleliu had been constant for over a month and had more than a month to go. When the fighting ended on Peleliu on Nov. 27th, the fighting on Leyte was confined to the northwest corner. The rest was already a major base.



The Price of Being Stubborn: Peleliu

2,336 Americans were killed on Peleliu and 8,540 wounded – less than on either Guam or Saipan.

10,695 Japanese were killed. Only 19 were taken prisoner.

But it had all been for nothing as the entire strategic purpose for the island ceased to exist once the Americans landed at Leyte.



“I Shall Return” - Leyte



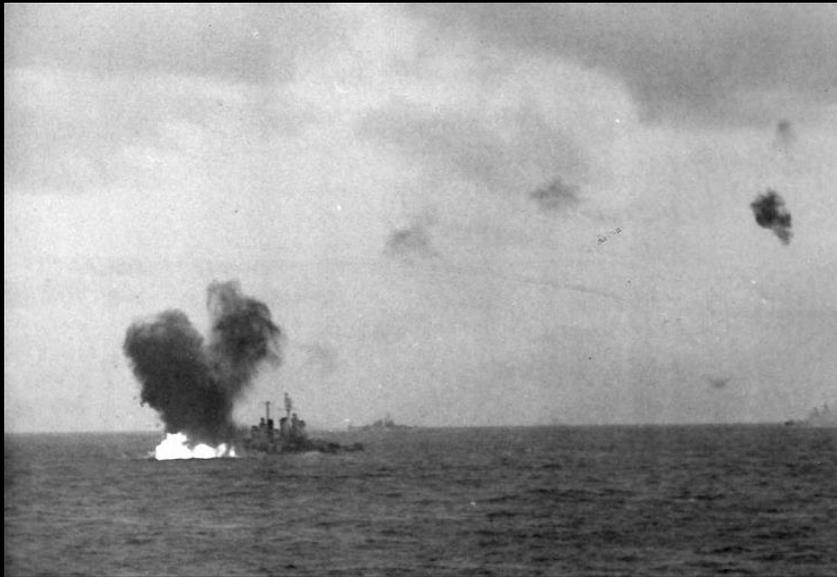
The Philippines had been the prime objective of the United States in the Pacific since 1942 (but for a moment's insanity about Formosa).

It also would not be easy. Over 200,000 Japanese were stationed on its many Islands. But the population was pro-American for the most part and there was an active and somewhat effective guerrilla war in progress.

(Mindanao would be mostly in the hands of the guerrillas by the time U.S. forces arrived in early 1945).

Leyte was centrally located enough that it could be used as a base to support operations throughout the archipelago.

“Bait Force” – Prelude to Leyte



Halsey’s initial orders were to keep the Japanese attention away from Leyte. He proceeded to raid the Ryukyu Islands (Okinawa), Formosa, Hong Kong, Haiphong and Cam Rhan Bay. He hoped to either find or draw out the Japanese fleet.

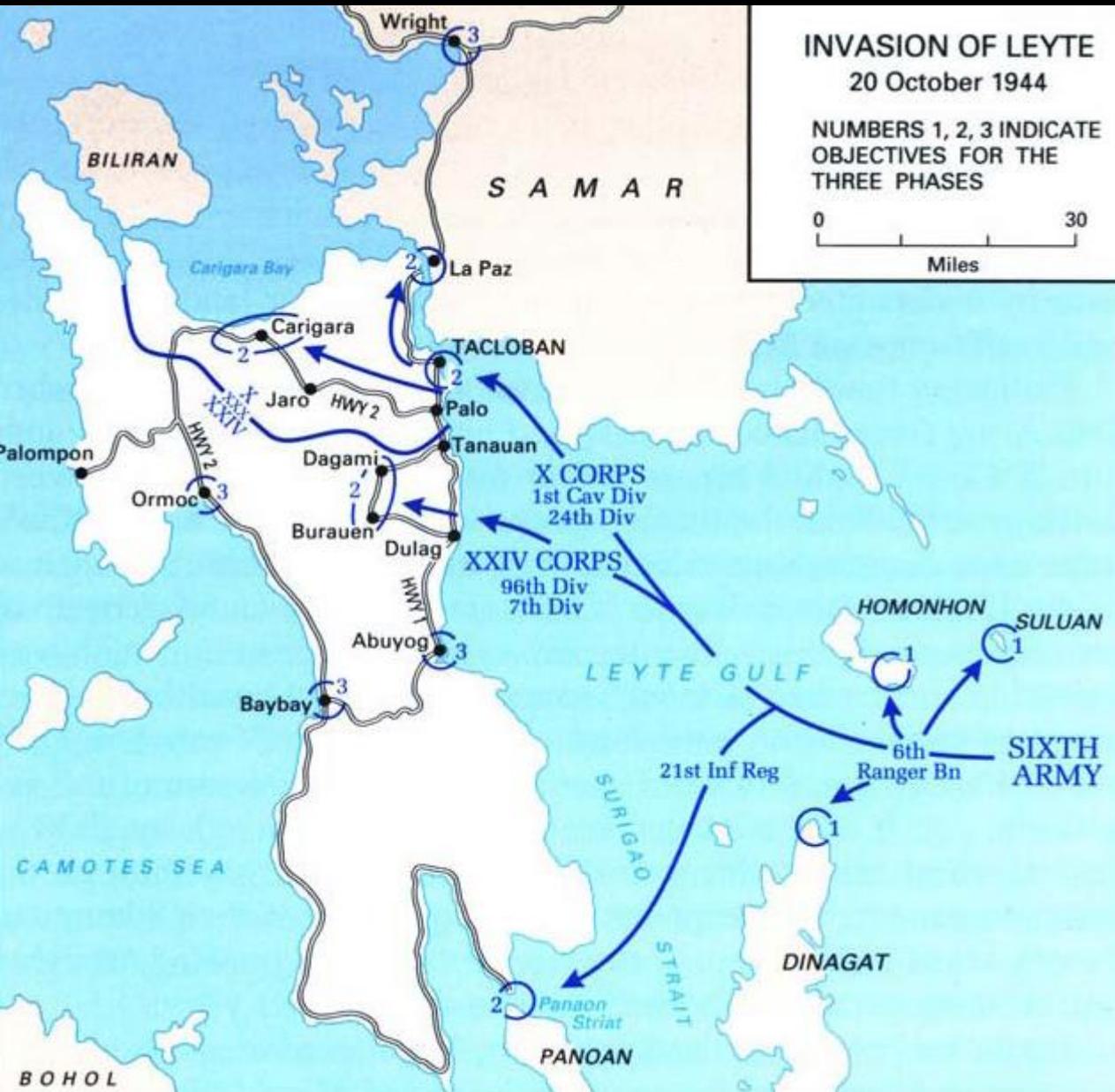


On Oct 16, off Formosa two of his cruisers were crippled by air attacks. He tried to use them to draw out the Japanese fleet. His “Bait Force” was to make its way to Ulithi with TF-38 over the horizon to pounce on any attempt to attack it.

A force from Japan did sortie but turned back when it was told TF-38 was heading for it.

Bait Force arrived in Ulithi. TF-38 assumed station off Samar.

“I Shall Return” - Leyte



The initial landings would seize islands that threatened the approaches to Leyte Gulf.

Afterwards, 7th Fleet under ADM Kinkaid would land its forces on Leyte – four divisions in two corps of the 6th Army under General Krueger.

3rd Fleet – many the Carriers of Task Force 38, would be off the larger island of Samar to provide support – and engage the Japanese Navy should they show up.

“I Shall Return” - Leyte



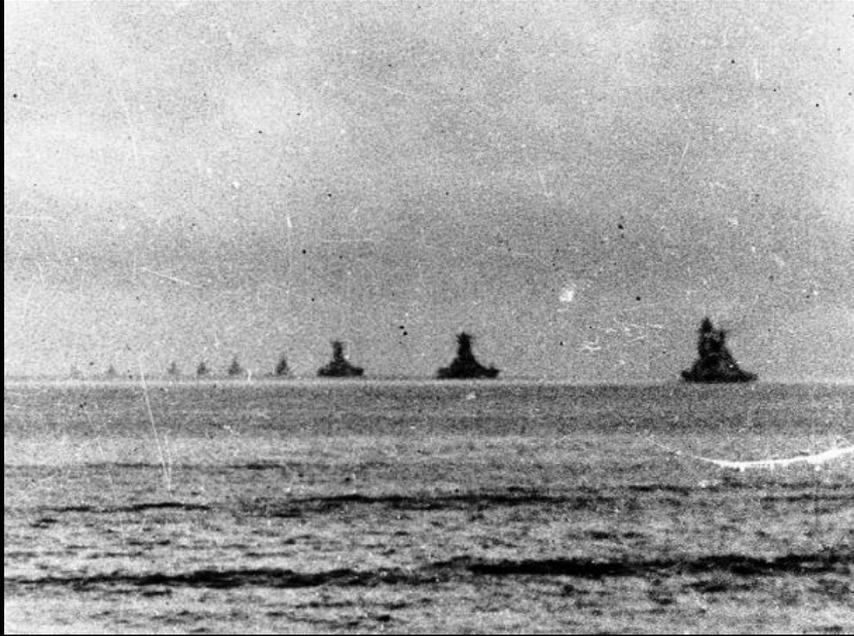
The initial landings on Leyte took the Japanese by surprise and overwhelmed the defenders.

MacArthur would land that day and make a broadcast announcing his return.

The Japanese would recover from the initial shock and begin reinforcing Leyte with troops from the nearby islands and Luzon.



THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF



The Japanese fleet was now drawn out. It had a plan to deal with an American invasion of the Philippines and it counted on Halsey being Halsey.

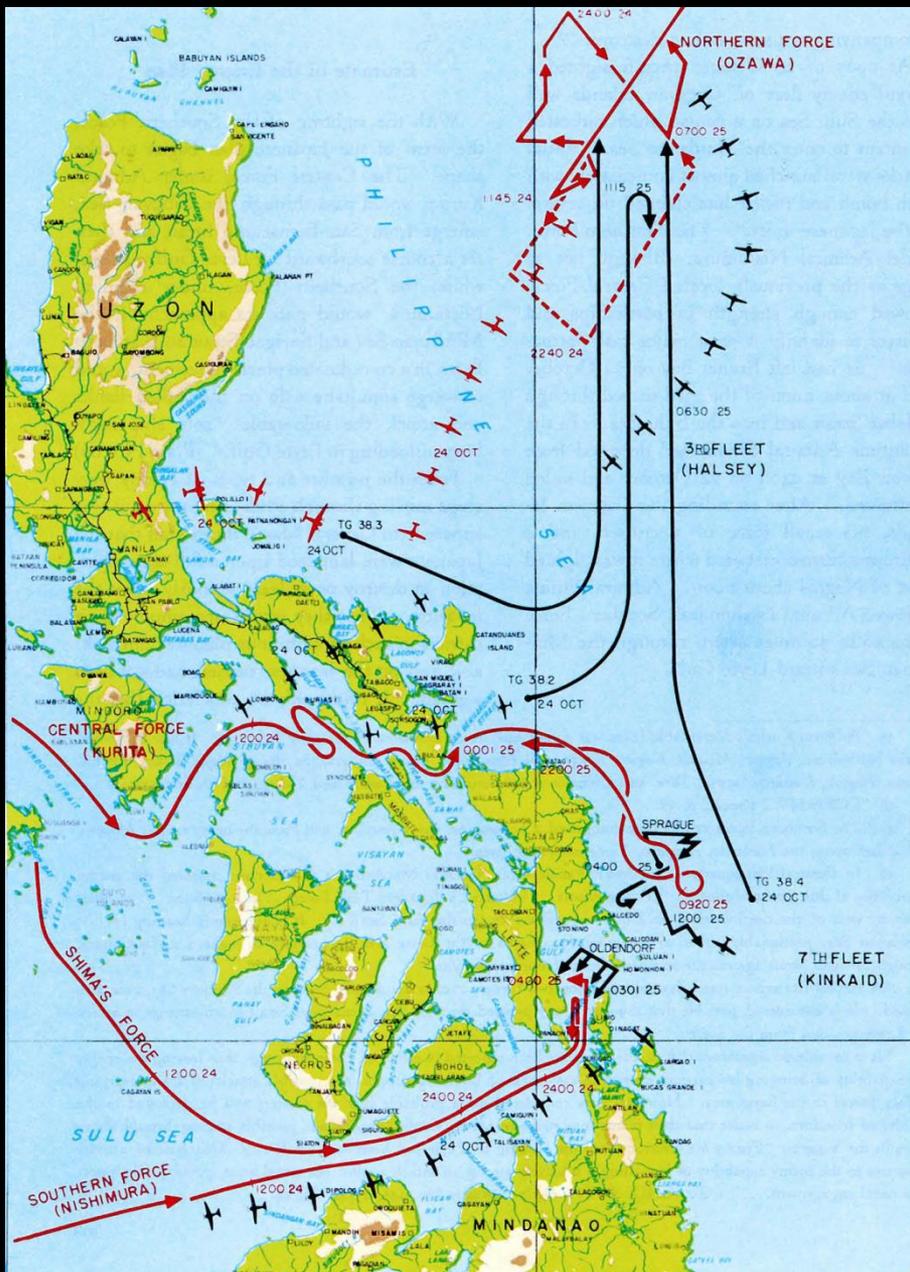
The plan called for two surface forces to attack the landing from the north and the south at the same time. A force with four aircraft carriers would draw off Halsey and Task Force 38 leaving the beachhead without air cover.



The carrier force was a decoy. It did not have enough pilots to man the planes for a single carrier.

The Americans knew they were coming but did not know Japan had no planes for its carriers.

THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF



The “Center Force” consisted of 5 battleships, 10 heavy cruisers, 2 light cruisers and 15 destroyers including the battleships Yamato and Musashi – the two most powerful in the world.

The Southern Force had 2 battleships, 3 heavy cruisers, a light cruiser and seven destroyers.

These two forces were to attempt to attack the landing at Leyte from the north and south.

The Northern Force had 1 fleet aircraft carrier, 3 light carriers, 2 battleships, 3 light cruisers and 8 destroyers. Its job was to draw off the American carriers so that the Center Force could slip through unmolested.