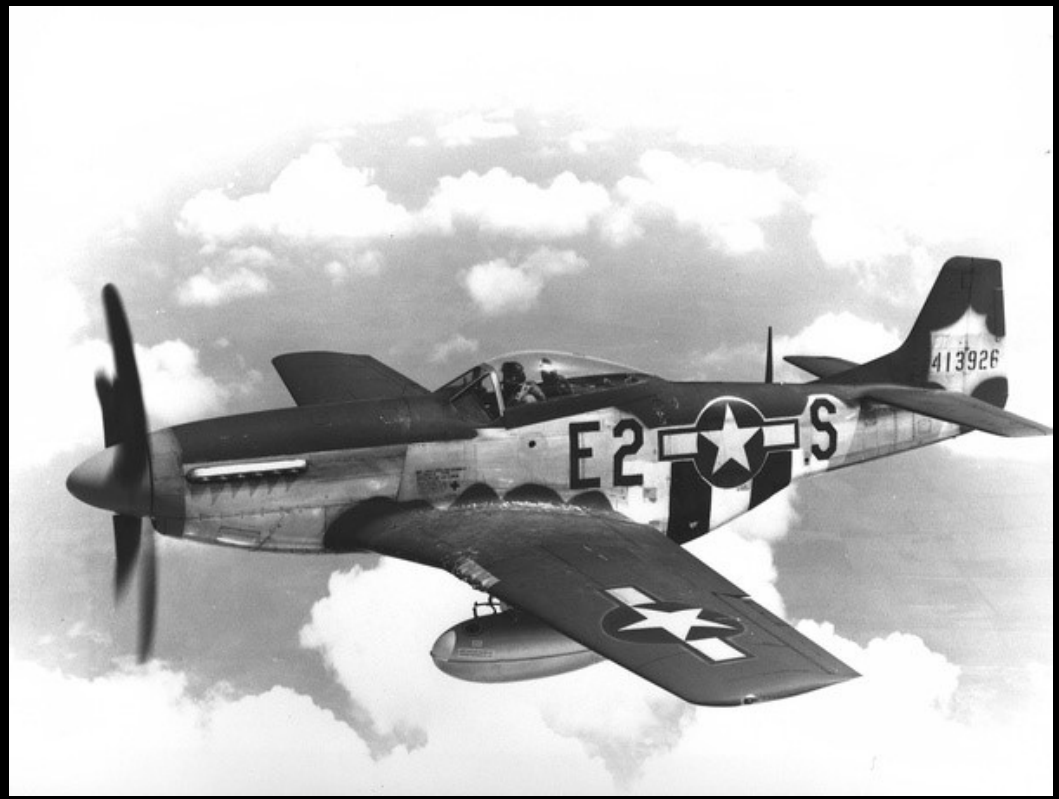
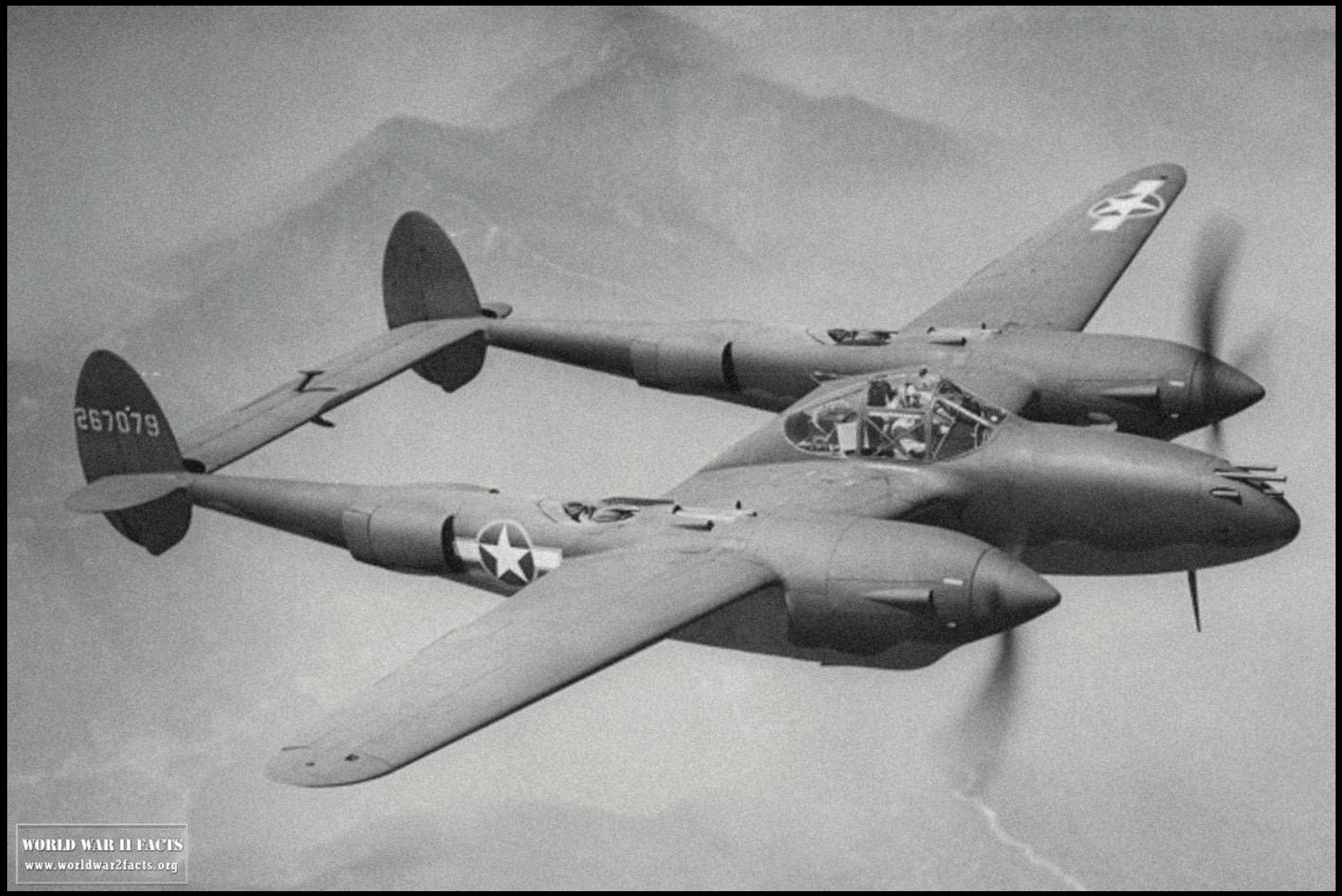
THE PACIFIC WAR


WR
F

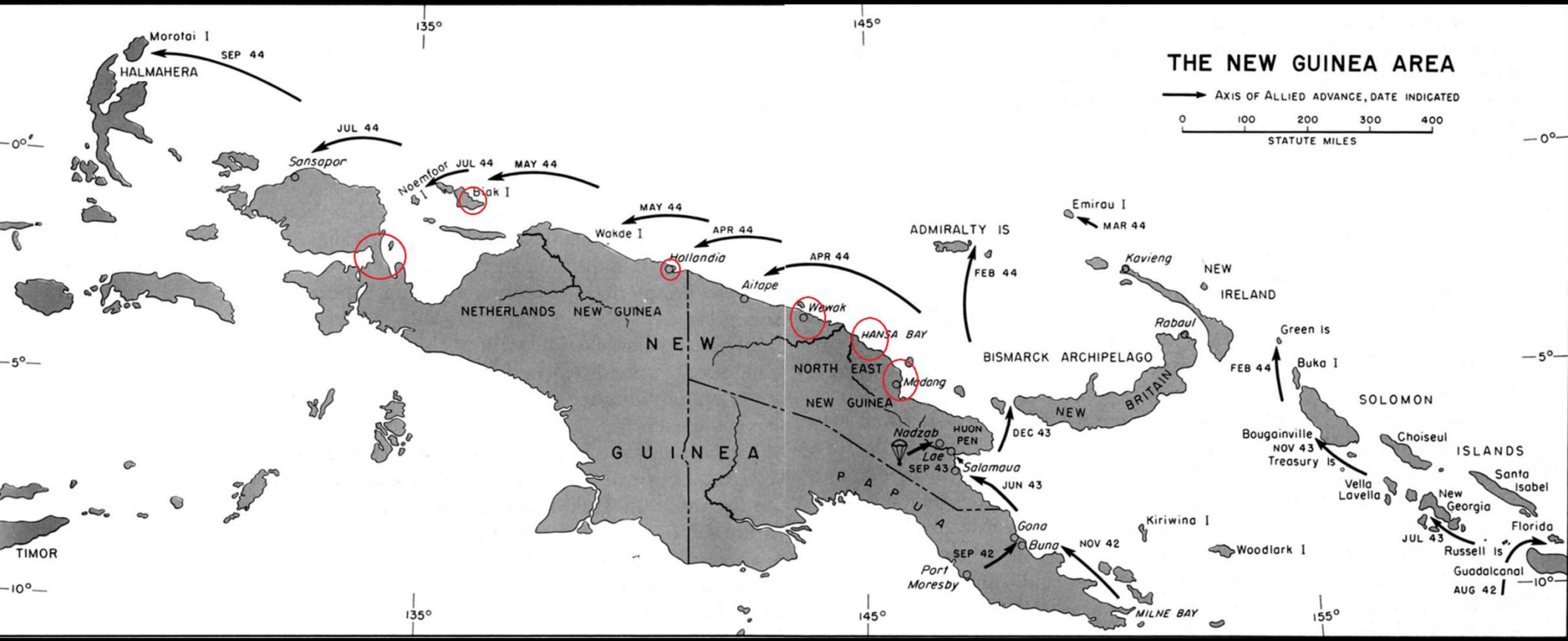

E2
S
413926


3
2
1


G92
G81


267079
WORLD WAR II FACTS
www.worldwar2facts.org

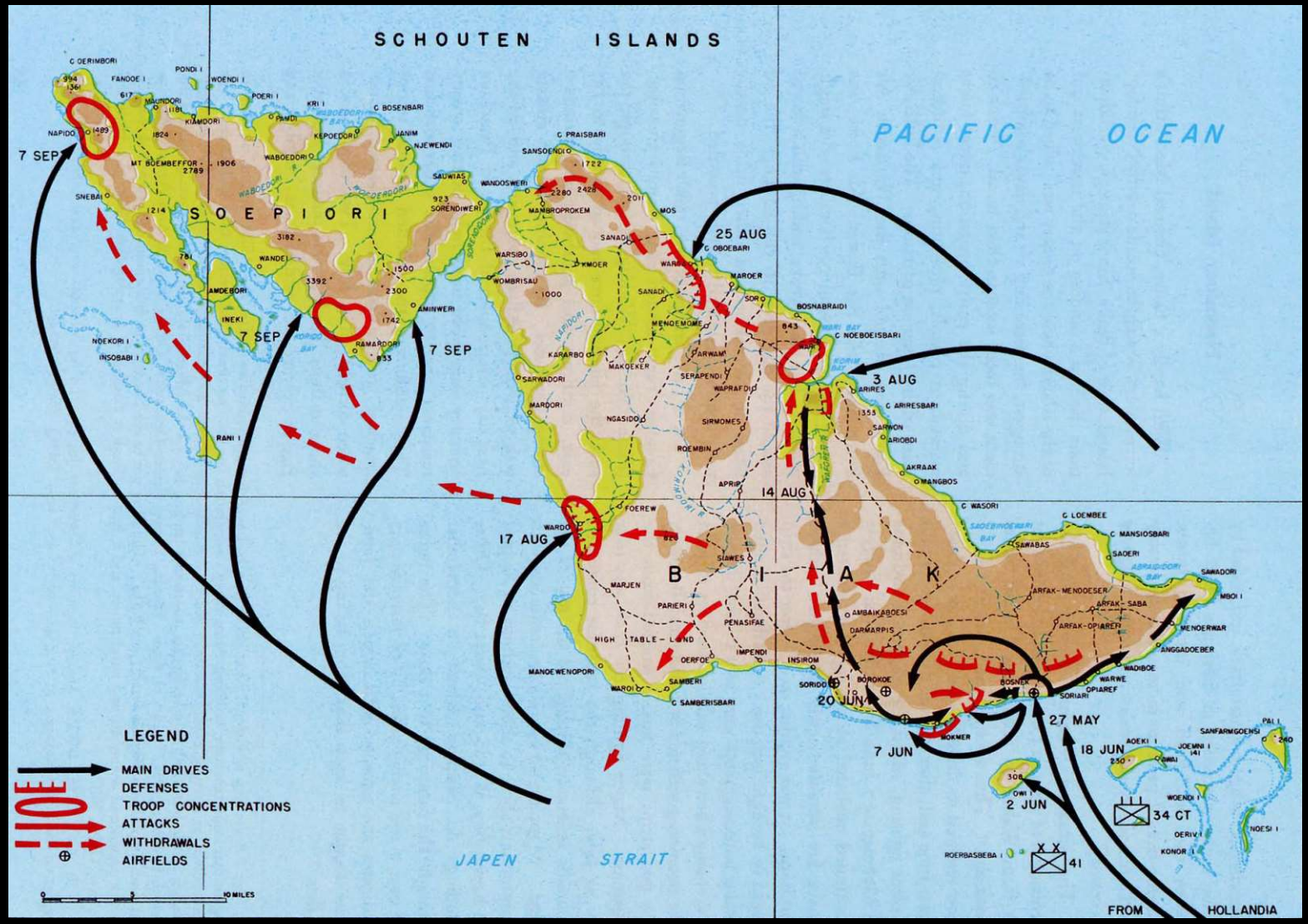
NEW GUINEA - 1944



By the middle of May, MacArthur had effective 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.

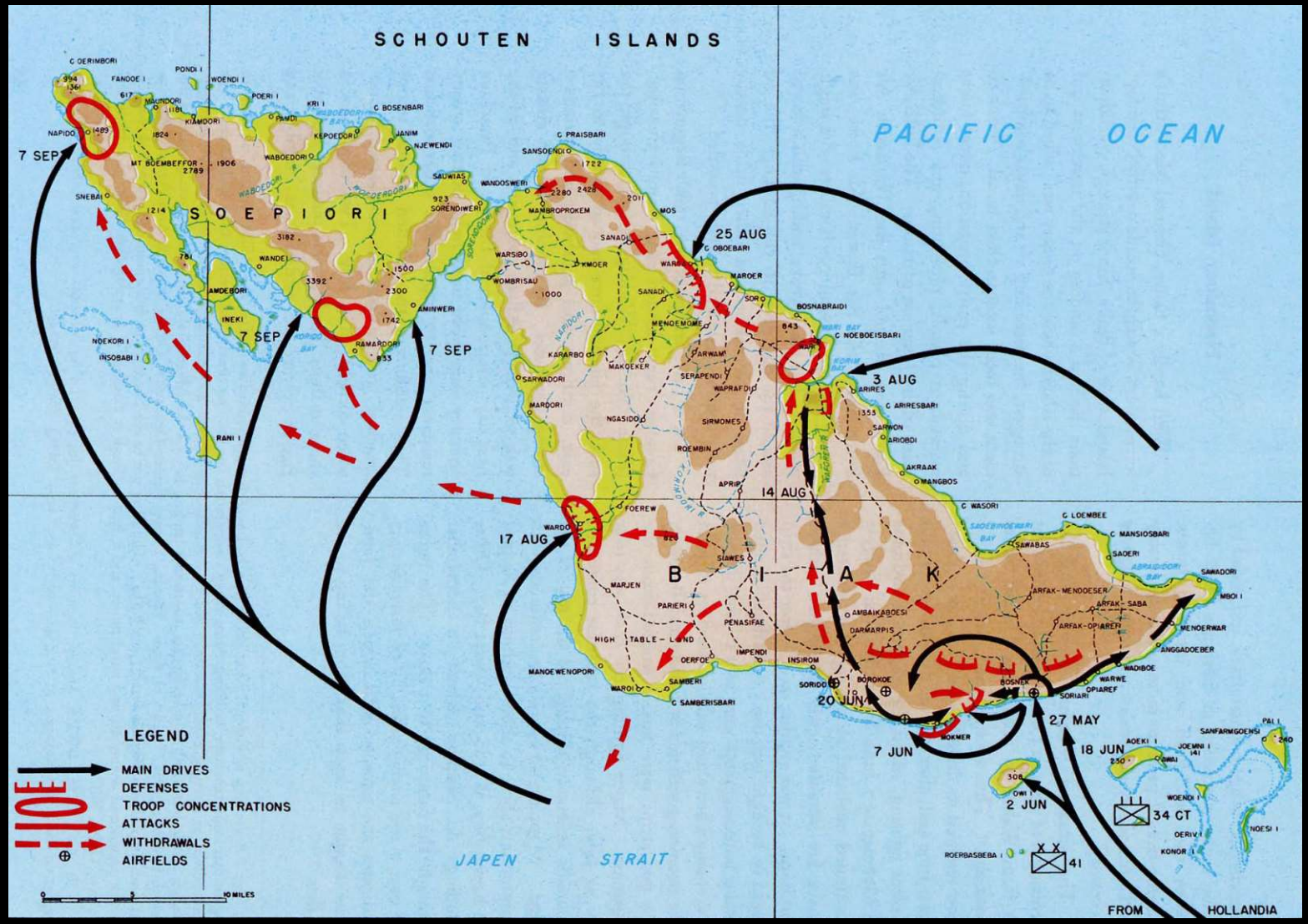
MacArthur's Luck Runs Out - Biak

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.

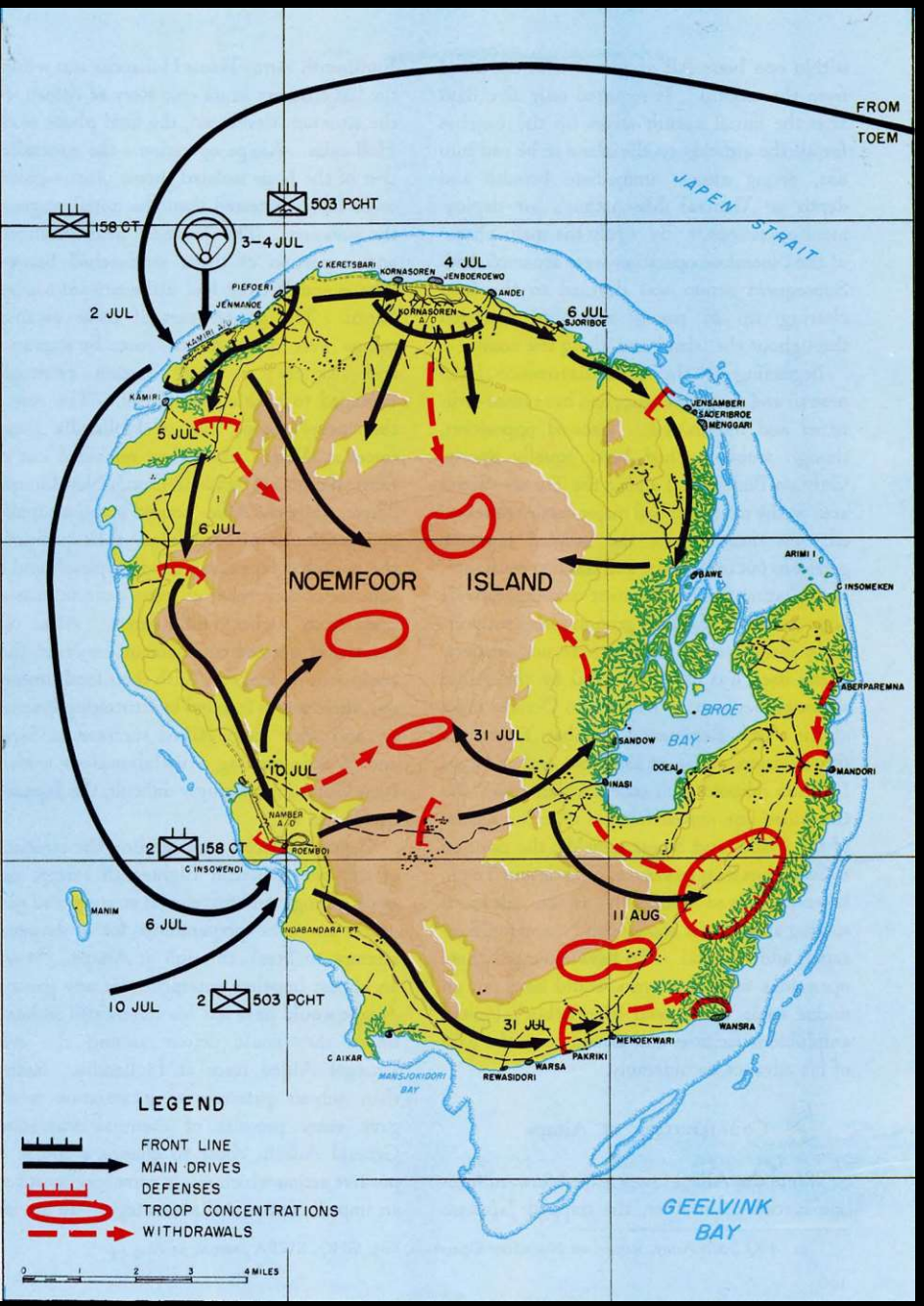
MacArthur's Luck Runs Out - Biak



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



Noemenfoor was a small island to the west of Biak between it and the New Guinea coast. The Japanese used it as a support base for their defense against the Americans on Biak.

If it was taken, the supplies would be cut. It took MacArthur's staff some weeks to make the connection and come up with a plan to cut the life line.

The plan called for a combined airborne and amphibious assault with rapid follow-up assault to drive the Japanese into a pocket.

The plan would be executed on July 3rd, 1944 and take four weeks to conclude. Biak would outlast its support base by less than a week.

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.

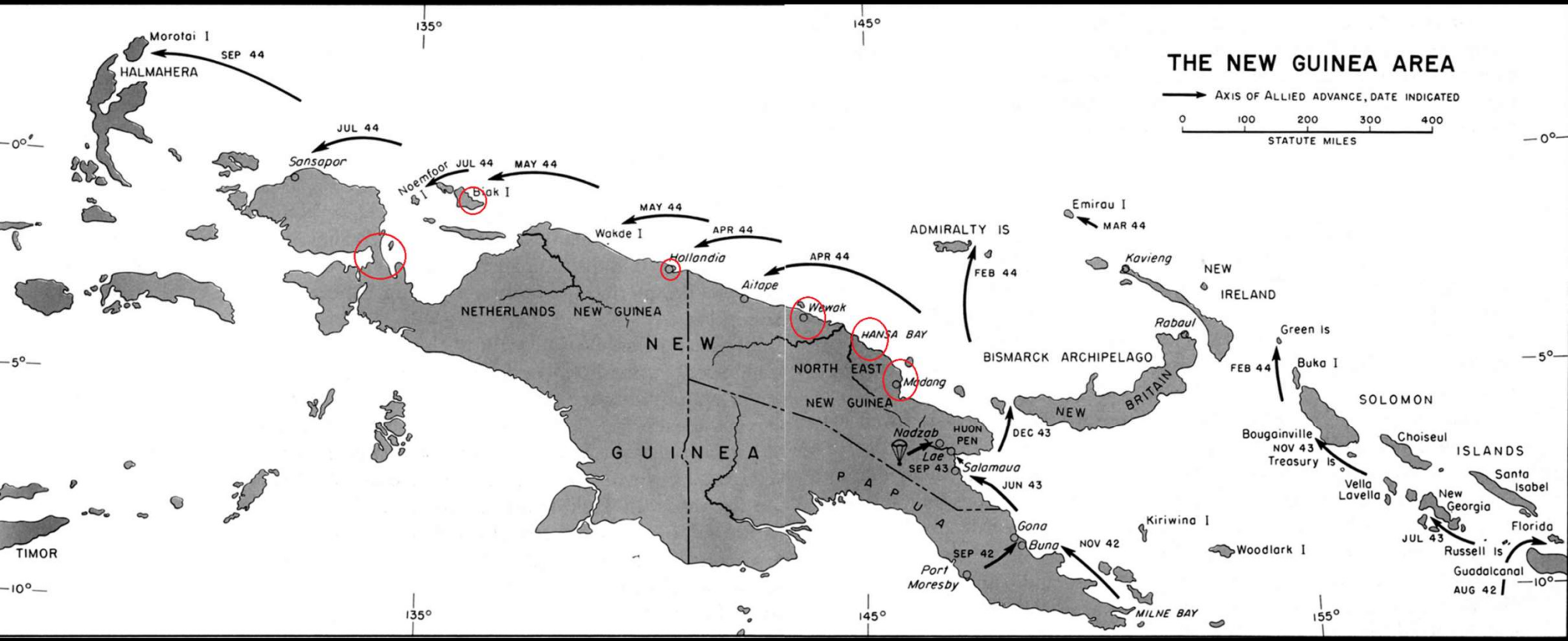
By the time it was secured, it was hundreds of miles in the rear of MacArthur's front and useless for its intended purposes.

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

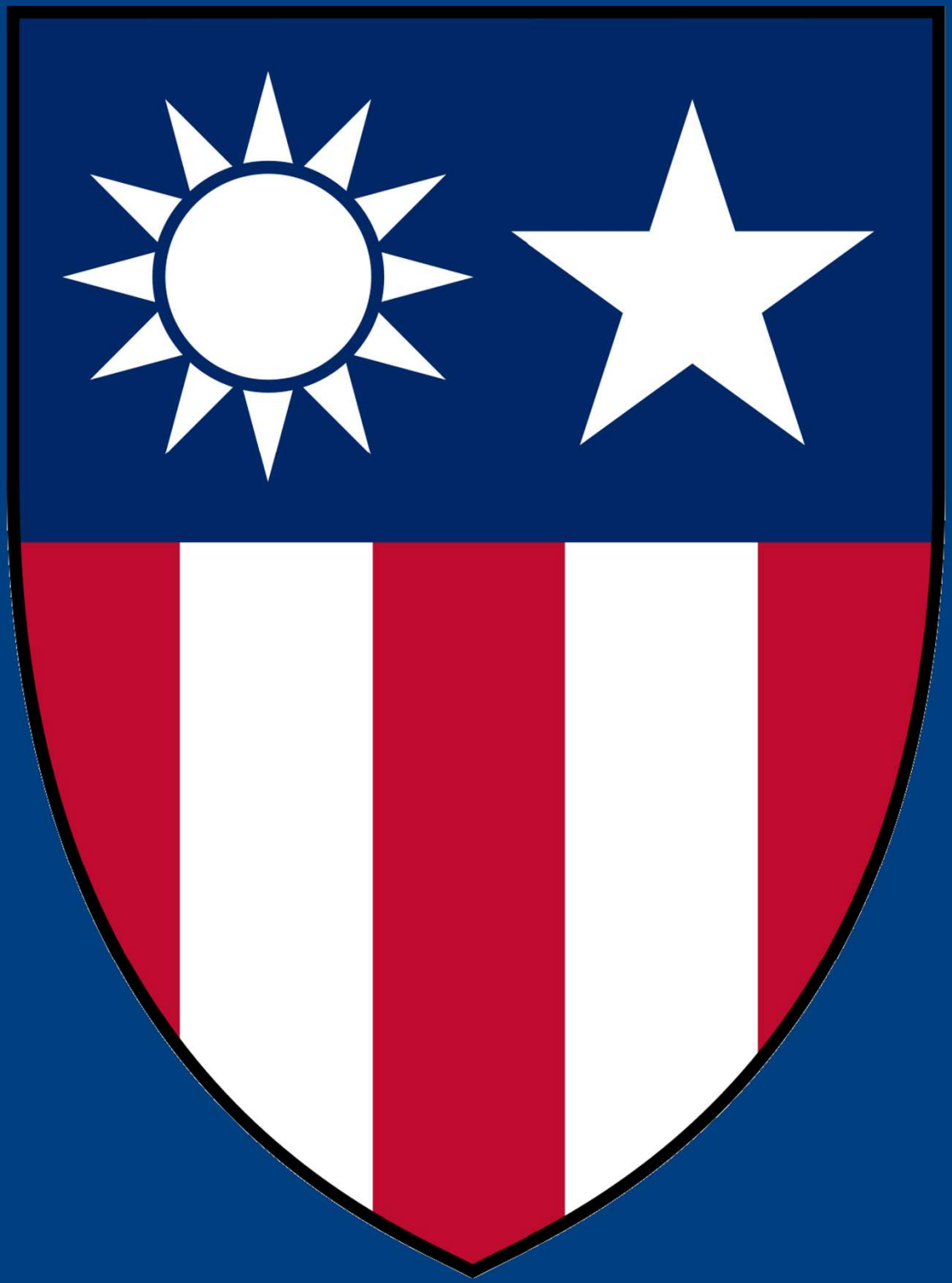
King had ordered Nimitz to present a plan for Formosa and argue for it over the Philippines. There was no plan. No one had asked for one.

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.



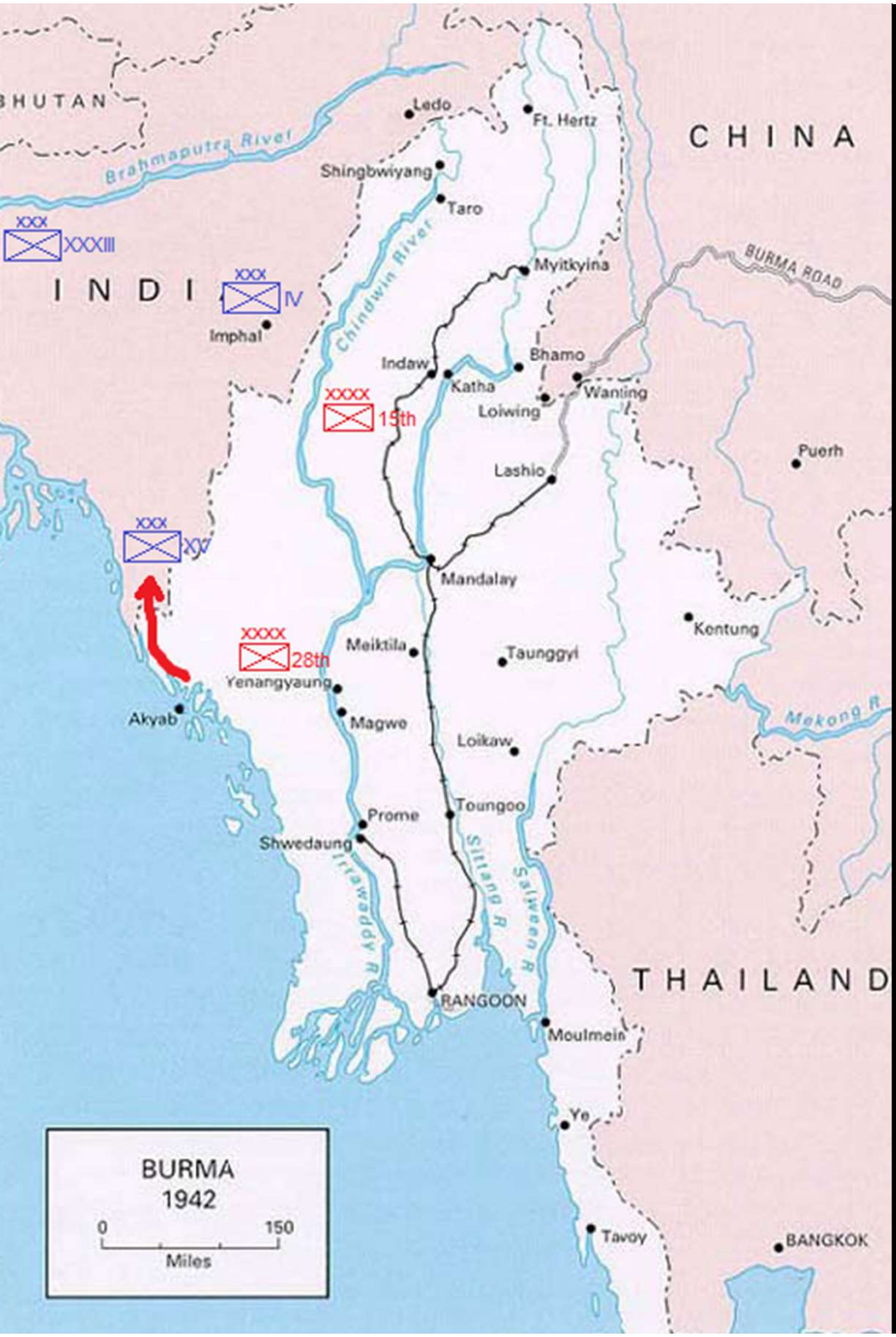
THE FORGOTTEN WORLD WAR:

THE CHINA – BURMA – INDIA THEATER IN WORLD WAR II

WEEK 6

“WHEN YOU GO HOME
TELL THEM OF US AND SAY
FOR YOUR TOMMORROW
WE GAVE OUR TODAY.”

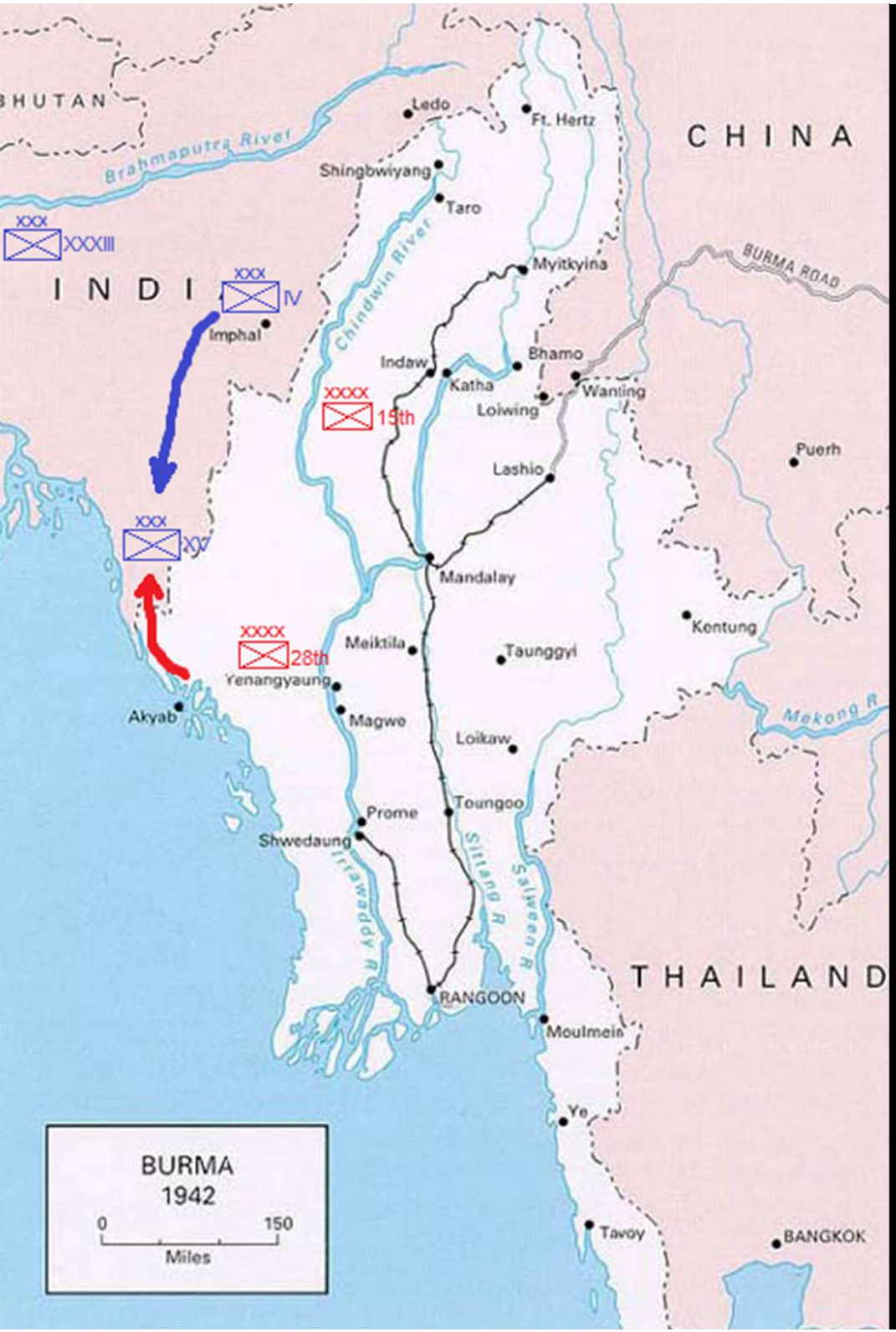
British War Memorial
Kohima
Manipur, India



The Japanese plan might well have worked in eastern China against Chiang's Chinese Armies. But eastern China was flat compared to India and the British (and Americans) were not the unpaid, untrained and unsupplied units that made up much of the Chinese Army.

The plan (Ha Go) sent the 55th Division (with some other units) against the British XVth Corps in the Arakan. The goal was to destroy the forward divisions at least and possibly break through into Bengal.

The objective was Chittadong, the main supply base in the south (about where the XVth icon is centered).



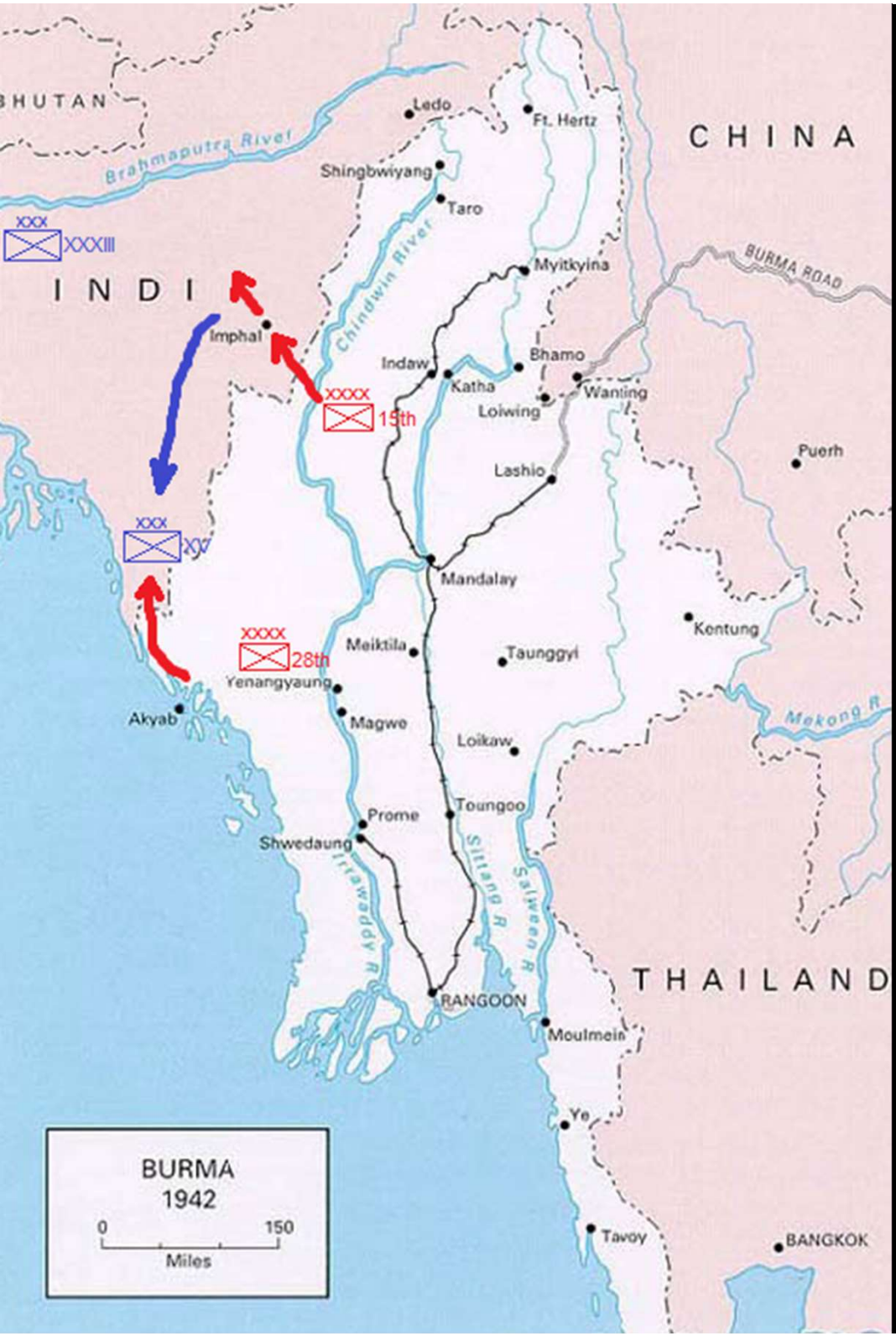
This would force the British to counter – using units if not divisions from IVth Corps in the north.

This was another failure of planning.

The Japanese presumed the allies would react as they would or at least as the Japanese thought the allies would.

While it is prudent to consider how an enemy could react, it is another thing when a plan comes to depend upon the enemy acting exactly as anticipated.

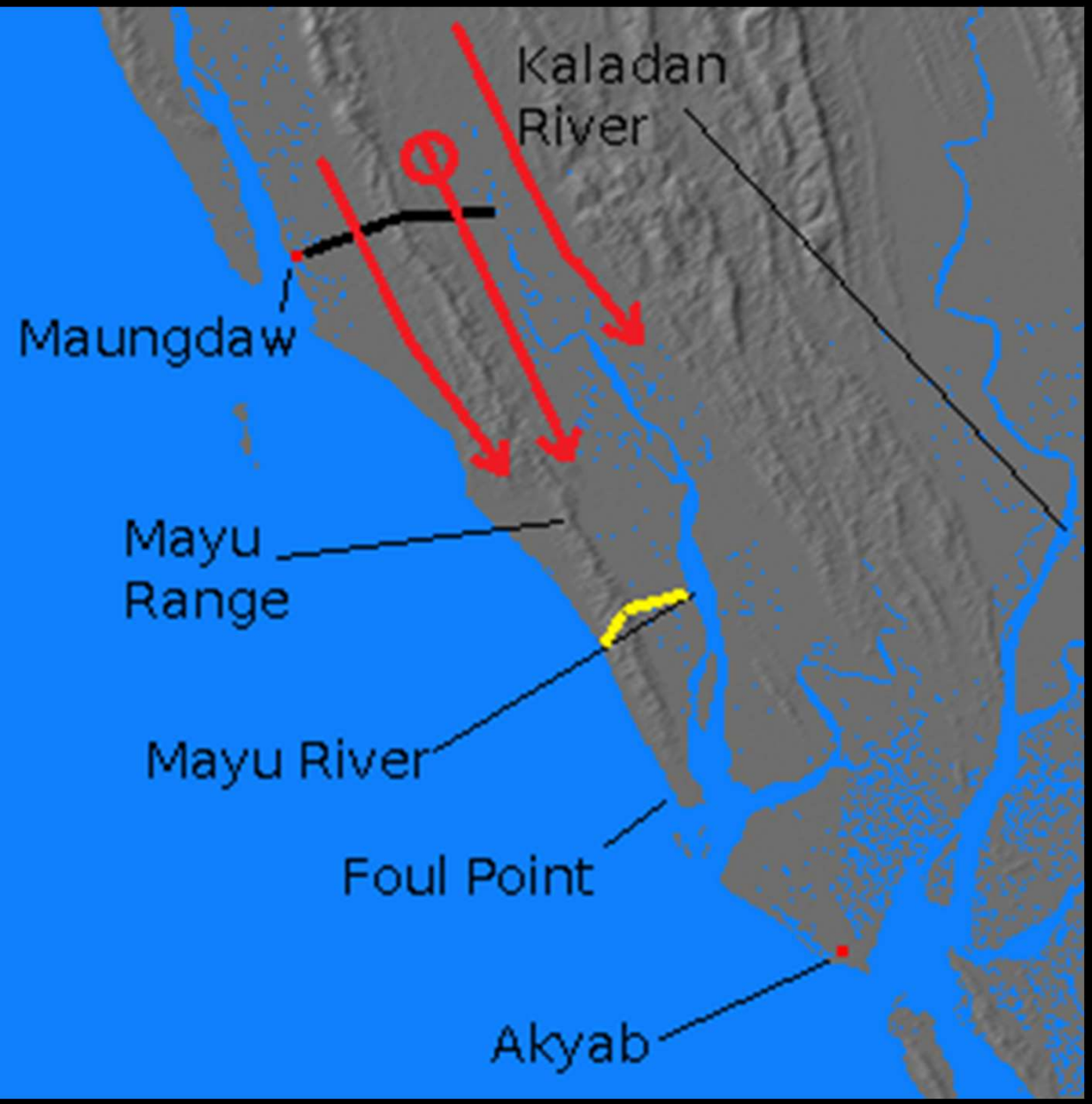
But the movement of IVth was expected which would open the door for the main effort.



Imphal was a major headquarters and supply base. The Japanese presumed the British would be too weak to hold having sent forces south to deal with the threat against XVth Corps. Since Imphal would be weak but well stocked, the Japanese could use those stocks to push on into the Assam Valley to the north.

Entering Assam would cut off the supplies to China as all the ATC bases for the airlift were located along the Brahmaputra River near Ledo.

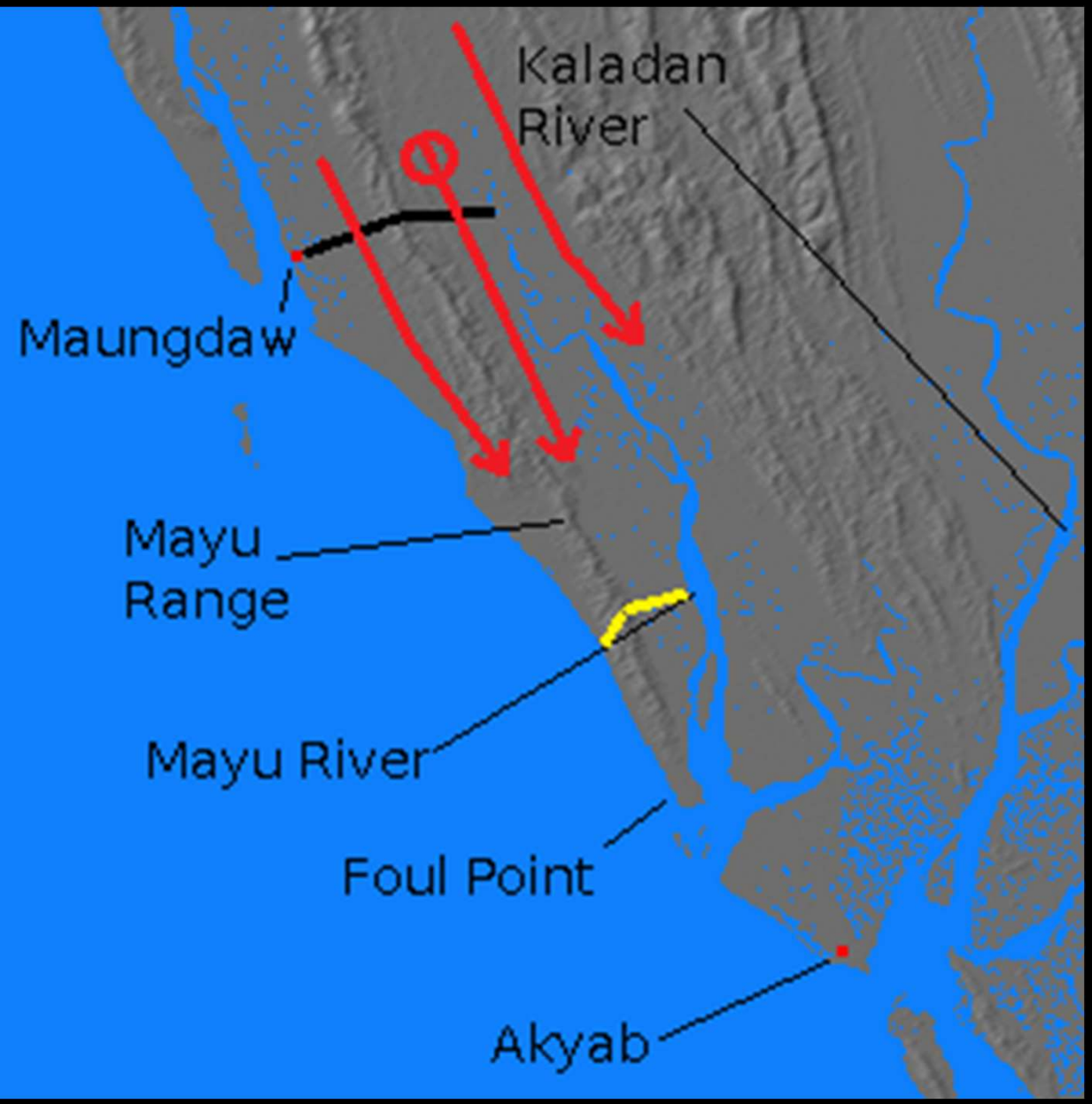
The main plan was U-Go and relied upon Ha-Go (Arakan) being somewhat successful. Ha-Go was a complete failure.



At the end of January, the British XVth Corps was preparing for a renewed assault on the Arakan. This time three divisions would be employed.

5th Indian would drive along the coast. 7th Indian would advance on the other side of the Mayu range and the British 81st (West African) would advance on the opposite bank of the Mayu river to cut the Japanese supply. There were two additional divisions in reserve.

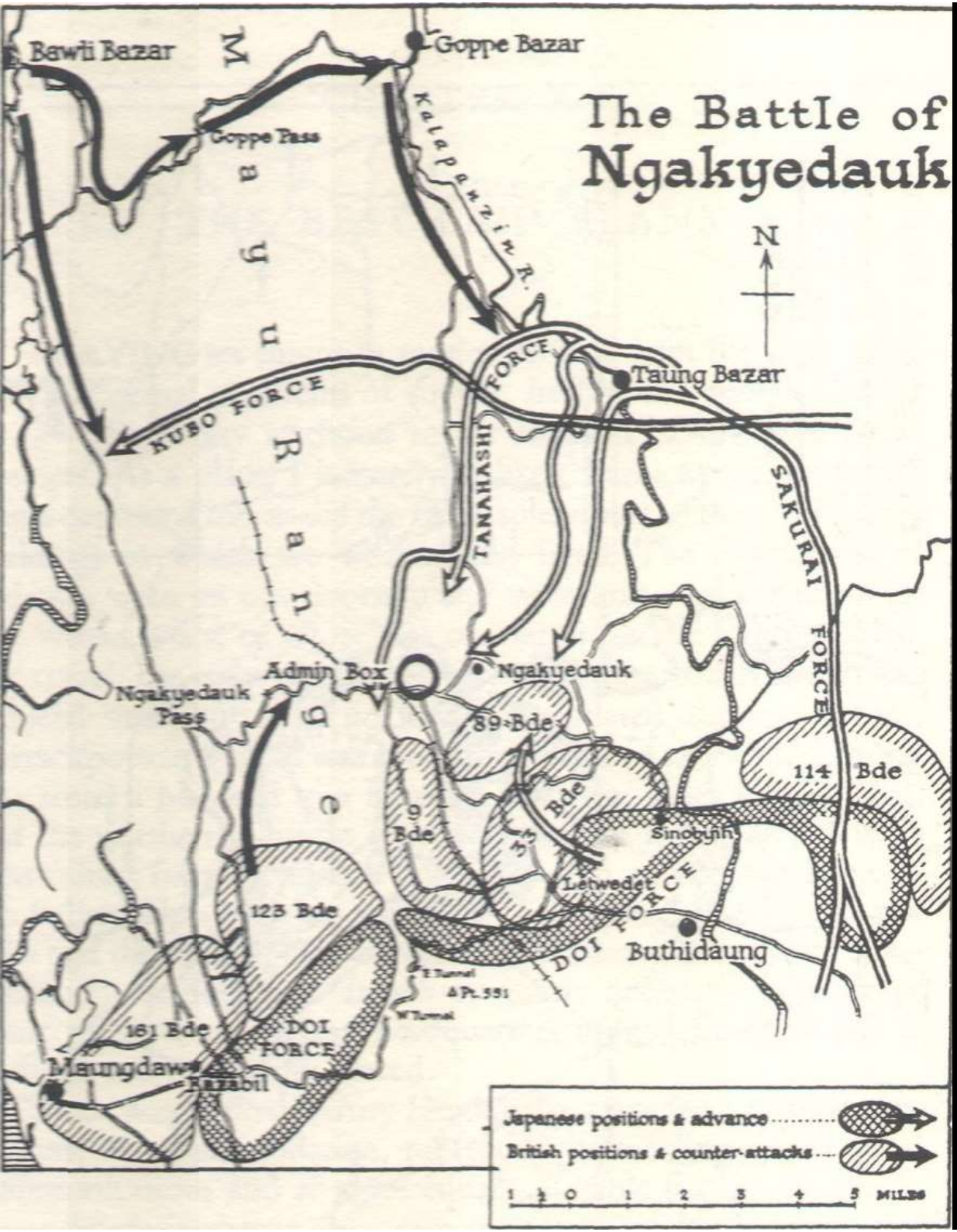
The first stage was establishing each division's forward supply dump – or as the British politely call it – The Admin Box.



The British in XVth Corps knew the Japanese were planning a major attack in the Arakan – which was why the 81st was involved. They did not know where or when.

The best guess would be after the 5th and 7th had broken through the forward defensive line – the abandoned rail line at Maungdaw.

That being said, the divisions were ordered that if attacked and cut off they were to establish a strong defensive perimeter and hold until relieved by the rest of the Corps. They would be supplied by air.



The Japanese 55th Division began its attack against the 7th Division on the east side of the Mayu Range sooner than expected. First contact was on February 5th and the Japanese took the 7th Division forward command post but not before it had been completely evacuated.

Delaying action allowed almost all the 7th Division artillery, most of its troops and two companies of tanks time to fall back upon their Admin Box – which was already fortified.

The Japanese took the high ground on the 6th after a hard fight (a delaying action). It was their true last success.

The Japanese launched what they thought would be their final assault on the 7th. It managed to break through a weak point in the perimeter and the Japanese seized the hospital.

Had they not wasted time killing the staff and patients they might have avoided extermination – but they wasted time and were mostly wiped out.

That was it. The 7th would stand fast and kill every Japanese it could.

Its tanks would be used to crush any breakthrough – literally.

The Japanese attacks would be day and night and the 7th looked forward to exacting more revenge.

The air resupply began immediately.

The Japanese Air Force had no real success shooting down resupply flights. They were met by the allied fighters and shot down. 65 Japanese planes were lost . Only two allied fighters were shot down. Moreover, to sustain operations they moved into bases in Burma giving the allied air forces targets. As the battle progressed, the Japanese were driven from the skies aside from the odd harassment raid.

At one point in the battle a supply officer asked a Sihk sergeant about supplies. The reply was his men could fight without water for three days and without food for a week or more. The sergeant was asked about ammunition. Ammo was nice but a good supply of bayonets was all they needed to keep killing Japanese.

A machine gun squad found the perfect killing zone. Beyond the perimeter was a ditch. The squad was on night patrol and in the ditch when they saw Japanese gathered further down. They killed most of a platoon. The next night in the same place they killed another platoon. It was after almost two companies had been wiped out before the Japanese accepted that maybe that was not a good place to assemble for an attack.

The 7th Division never truly was short of supplies. It suffered casualties but not as many as in the past – except for its mules. There were no trenches or foxholes for the mules.

The XVth Corps was organizing a relief force with troops from the 5th Division and the 26th Division – the latter led by a tank Brigade.

However, it was not the 7th Division that was desperate for relief but the Japanese 55th Division. They had only brought enough food for about six days and it ran out. Attacks went in without a shot being fired – the ammunition was reserved for snipers and machine guns.

The Indian Division had plenty to shoot back.

The relief forces broke through on February 23rd. The Japanese would continue to try until the 26th when it was made clear to the Division Commander that further attacks were impossible – there was almost nothing left of the attacking force.

A regiment had been left behind to hold the defensive positions. When the fighting stopped, the British would find over 5,000 Japanese dead in the immediate area and more would be found over time.

Of over 10,000 Japanese engaged, fewer than 1,000 would be fit for duty ever. The 7th suffered 3,500 casualties although many were illness.

That was Operation Ha-Go. Kaweba had planned to destroy the British forces in the Arakan and force them to send support from Imphal.

Not one soldier was sent from Imphal. Of the two XVth reserve divisions, only one saw any action.

The 7th Division had suffered losses but was still eager to fight.

Moreover, the results proved Slim's training had worked. Everyone fit to carry a rifle had fought at the Admin Box and the Japanese had been destroyed. Air resupply worked and the Japanese were easy to kill – and as the mop-up would show easy to hunt.

The Japanese had brought a battalion of troops from the Indian National Army. Most of the soldiers were Indian troops captured in 1942 in Malaya, at Singapore and in Burma. It was not engaged and most of the battalion left without orders. (The few who did not waited until the shooting stopped and promptly surrendered to the 7th Division. While they would not be trusted completely, they proved far more eager working for the Allies than they had for the Japanese.)

The British never read the Japanese script. Not one soldier transferred from the north to counter the Japanese in the south.

The Japanese 55th Division (less one regiment left behind to hold the defensive line but including other units from the 28th Army) had been destroyed. The 7th Indian Division had suffered casualties, but was still deemed to be combat effective if needed. Most of the Japanese losses were in the fight against the 7th Indian in their defensive position at the Admin Box. The relief force merely swept away what little truly remained.

And yet, the Japanese command would go forward with the main offensive to the north confident that they would succeed.

Why?

One reason was that the Japanese believed that however bad it had been for them it must have been worse for the British.

They could not believe the British casualties were a fraction of their own. But they could not know this either.

By 1944, the air war had changed. Newer and better allied aircraft were in theater and in larger numbers than the Japanese Air Force across the border.

Japan had relied upon air reconnaissance in the past to determine allied strength and positions. It was now only useful in sending their own pilots to their death.

The allies controlled the air over the India-Burma border.

B-24 bombers from both the American 10th Air Force and British 3rd Tactical Air Force were used to deny Burma to the Japanese not from some master plan so much as a need to bomb something – for there was not much.

Airfields were bombed all the time making it impossible for the Japanese to station any planes in Burma. Even if an air recon flight managed to get back to base that base was hundreds of miles away in Thailand.

The bombers also went after supply – anything that looked like it could help was bombed. Bridges, ports, rail yards, and any known supply bases were favorite targets.

Even older aircraft had new and more effective roles. The B-25 was a medium bomber that gained fame in April 1942 when a group of them flew off from an aircraft carrier and bombed Tokyo.

This pure bomber was being phased out in Burma. The newer version still had bombs but no bombardier. Instead it had up to 10 machine guns in the nose and a 75mm cannon – all firing forward.

Its new role was to hunt Japanese on the ground. It would fly low and strafe and bomb targets it could see or as directed by a ground controller. This plane could find the Japanese on the move. Supply had become a major problem – one they refused to admit.

Before the Japanese Army arrived, its intelligence service had been very effective. This was the case throughout Southeast Asia. The local populations were more than willing (in most cases) to collude with the Japanese as the Japanese were saying they would help get rid of the European colonial rule.

Then the Japanese arrived. Soon it was clear that the days of the British (or French or Dutch) were the "good ol' days." As bad as the Europeans were, the Japanese were far worse.

And they were cheap.

Within a year most of the best Japanese agents had turned double-agent for the British or the Americans. The allies paid better – and would help get them and their families out if possible.

By 1944, the Japanese were fed a daily dose of "Fake" intelligence from the Allies while their trusted agents told the allies everything.

And aside from a few officers that no superior was inclined to believe, the Japanese did not suspect their great intelligence wasn't.

In Burma, the misdeeds of the Japanese had further effects. Their predations turned the Kachins, Chins and Karens into eager Japanese hunters and sabotage was common.

The Burmese were less inclined to belligerency. But there are other ways to resist.

The Japanese Army relied upon “forage” to feed its troops. Basically, the troops were expected to “requisition” their food from the local population. In 1941, Burma was the leading exporter of rice. By 1944, the Japanese had to import all of their food.

The Burmese were not starving. Because the Japanese refused to pay, they just stopped growing any sort of surplus and learned that there are all sorts of ways to hide things in the jungle which the Japanese feared. The Army could move through if it had to. Patrols were less inclined to do so. All too often, the tigers, snakes or natives meant the patrol never came back.

And in the areas of the Japanese attacks of 1944 there was no forage at all. They had counted on seizing British supplies and when that did not happen as planned they starved.

But the real reason that the Japanese went forward despite obvious failure was cultural.

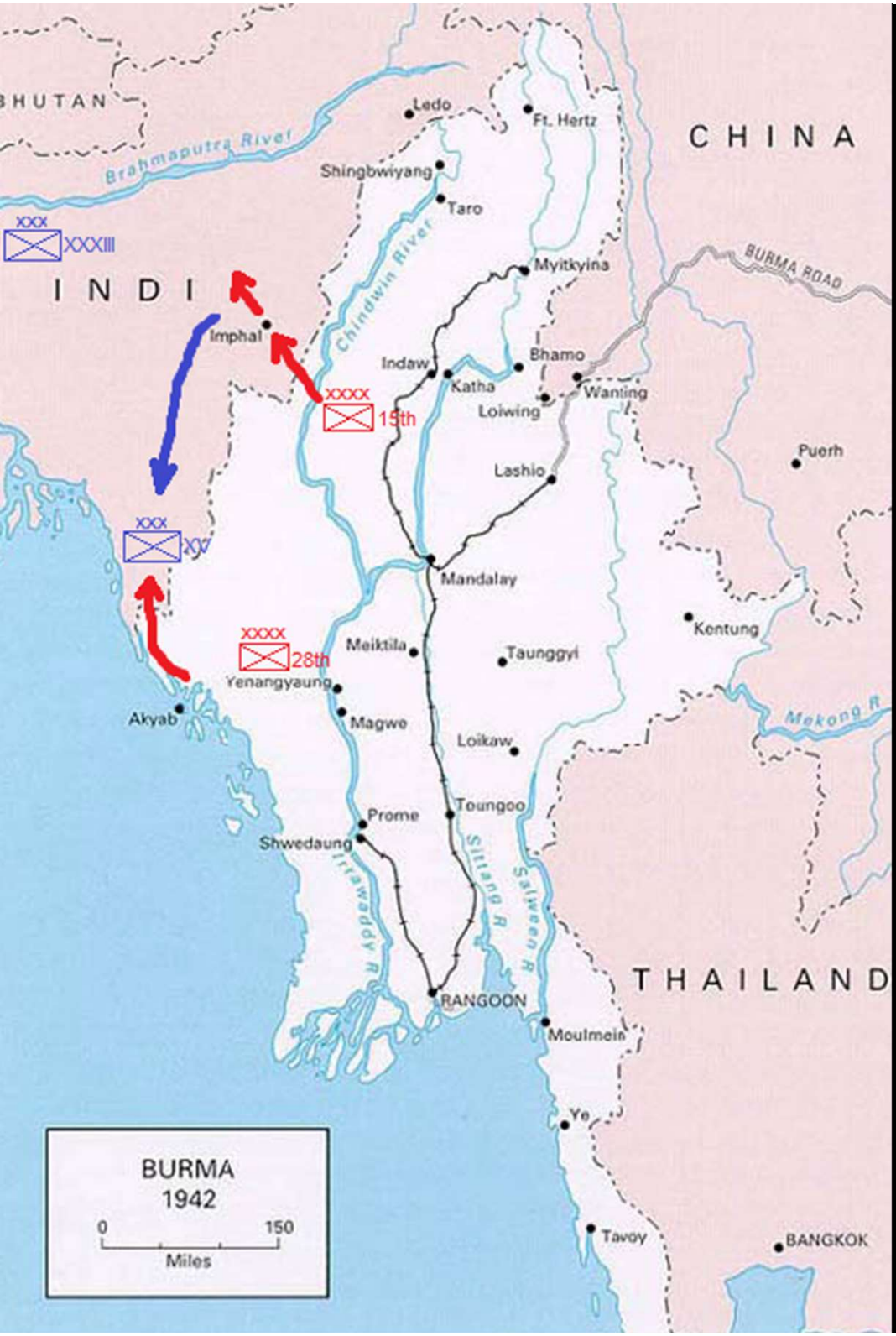
Both General Slim and General Stilwell held the Japanese soldier in high regard (Slim more so than Stilwell.) Neither thought the Japanese officer was of any use to any army. Stilwell had little respect for the Chinese officers for the most part but that little was far more than he had for the Japanese.

As a culture, the Japanese do not question authority (or did not.) It is even linguistic. In addition to grammatical cases the Japanese has “voices.” Grammar and words changed depending upon to whom one speaks. There is a voice to address superiors, peers and subordinates.

And voices within voices. In their language women are inferior but men still have to be deferential to rank so there are voices to deal with an inferior superior.

The deferential nature of the language makes it difficult for the native speaker to express criticism to a superior.

In practice, this meant that once the plan was approved by the Commanding General it was deemed to be perfect and beyond criticism.

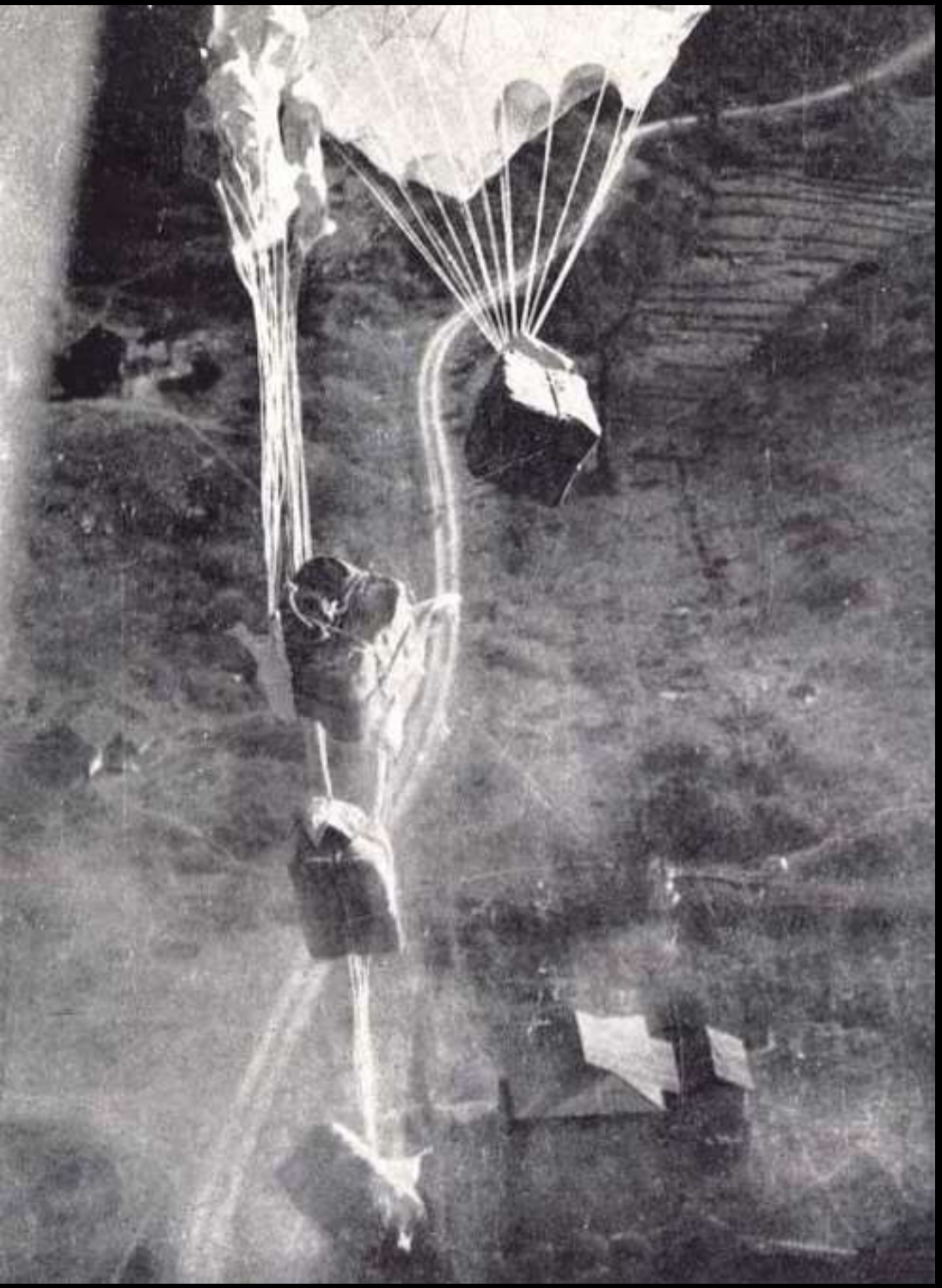


That commandment meant the Japanese never saw a plan as merely a starting point. The Allies only truly followed “the plan” while it continued to work. When it didn’t, they changed. The Japanese did not.

Part of the reason was too much success. The war against China seemed easy (despite the fact they were no closer to victory in early 1944 than in 1939.) And in the first six months of 1942 their plans had mostly gone as expected.

They expected their plans to work because they were Japanese and therefore their plans must be perfect.

They could not envision a different reality so they went forward .



The defense of the Admin Box, the second Chindit raid and Stilwell's drive on Myitkyina all were dependent upon air resupply and often by large scale air drops. If such drops could not have been possible, things would have been very different.

And they should not have been possible. Air drops require parachutes and the allied high command did not consider SEAC a priority.

The Combined Staff had enough trouble with the demands of the airborne planners in Europe (who wanted to prove airborne was the future.)

East Asia already had a priority on transport aircraft to fly supplies to China. That priority was already causing fits with ETO airborne operation planners because of a shortage of available transport planes to drop troops.

East Asia was not about to get any parachutes (aside from what was necessary for pilots and aircrew.)

General Slim wondered if they can't get them can they make them? His RAF colleagues were uncertain. In theory maybe, but in truth?

He asked his staff engineers. One of them knew a guy in Calcutta with a jute factory. India was the world's largest supplier of jute and made most of the products – burlap.

The Indian factory owner thought they were nuts but could make the chutes. They then tested them – on cargo. The chutes were not deemed as reliable as the silk or nylon chutes the aircrew had but they usually worked.

The CBI ordered as many as could be made. Air resupply was entirely an Indian operation thanks to the Jute Chute.

Parachutes (or how to deal with the lack thereof) is but one example of the problems the allies faced.

They were dead last for global supply. To wait until they had enough (by the standards in other theaters) meant waiting until next season or later.

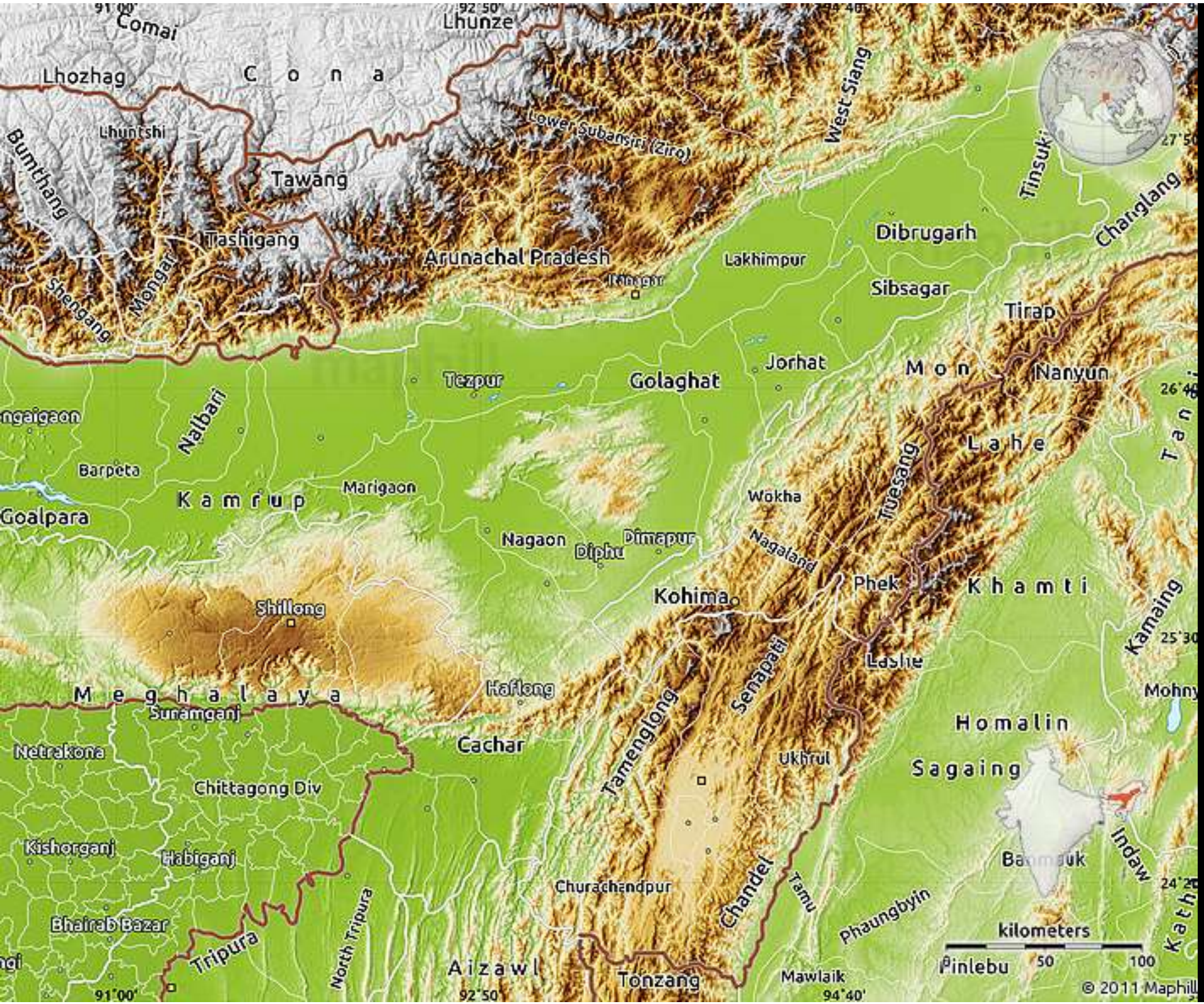
Even if they had supplies, getting them beyond the India border remained a major problem. The Ledo Road was the only all weather road over the mountains and it was too far north to support any major effort to drive the Japanese out.

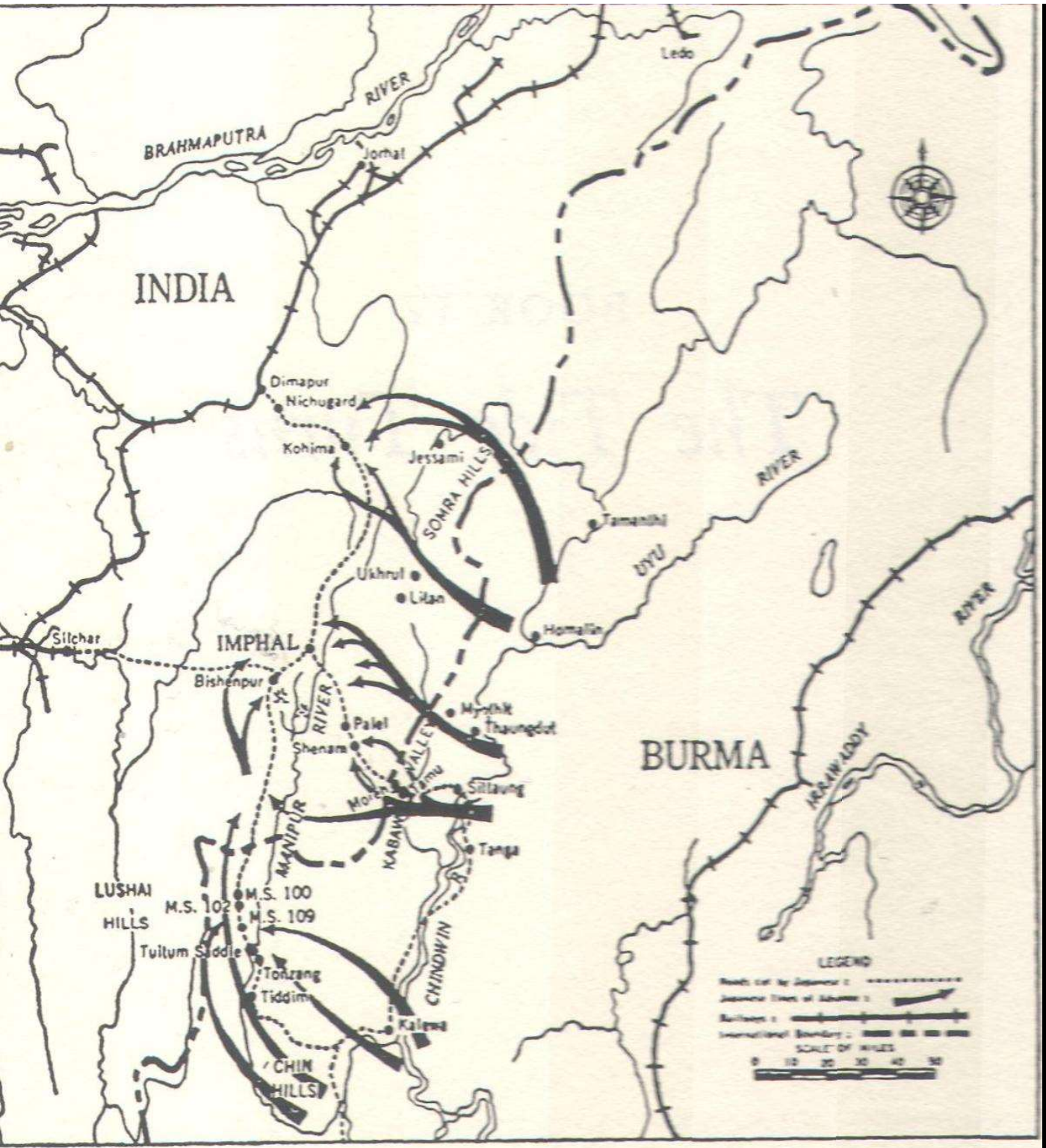
Further south there were no all weather roads and no bridges and some of the widest rivers in the world between the allies and central Burma.

Doing things the conventional way would take years.

The result mattered. The how did not and any idea would be considered and the idea that moved towards result more quickly would be adopted .

But most important, no idea was sacred and all were subject to change if a better way came along.


Comai
Lhunze
Lhozhag
C o n a
Lhuntshi
Bumthang
Tawang
Lower Subansiri (Ziro)
West Siang
Tinsukia
Changlang
Tashigang
Mongar
Shengang
Arunachal Pradesh
Dibrugarh
Lakhimpur
Sibsagar
Tirap
Jorhat
Tezpur
Golaghat
M o n
Nanyun
Nalbari
L a h e
Barpeta
Marigaon
K a m r u p
Goalpara
Wokha
Nagaon
Diphu
Dimapur
Nagaland
Phek
K h a m t i
Kohima
Shillong
Kamaing
Ledlie
M e g h a l a y a
Haflong
Mohnyin
Sunamganj
Homalin
Cachar
Tamenglong
Senapati
Ukhrul
Netrakona
Sagaing
Chittagong Div
Kishorganj
Habiganj
Indaw
Churachandpur
Chandel
Tamu
Phaungbyin
Bhairab Bazar
Tripura
North Tripura
kilometers
Pinlebu
50
100
Aizawl
Tonzang
Mawlaik
91°00'
92°50'
94°40'
© 2011 Maphill

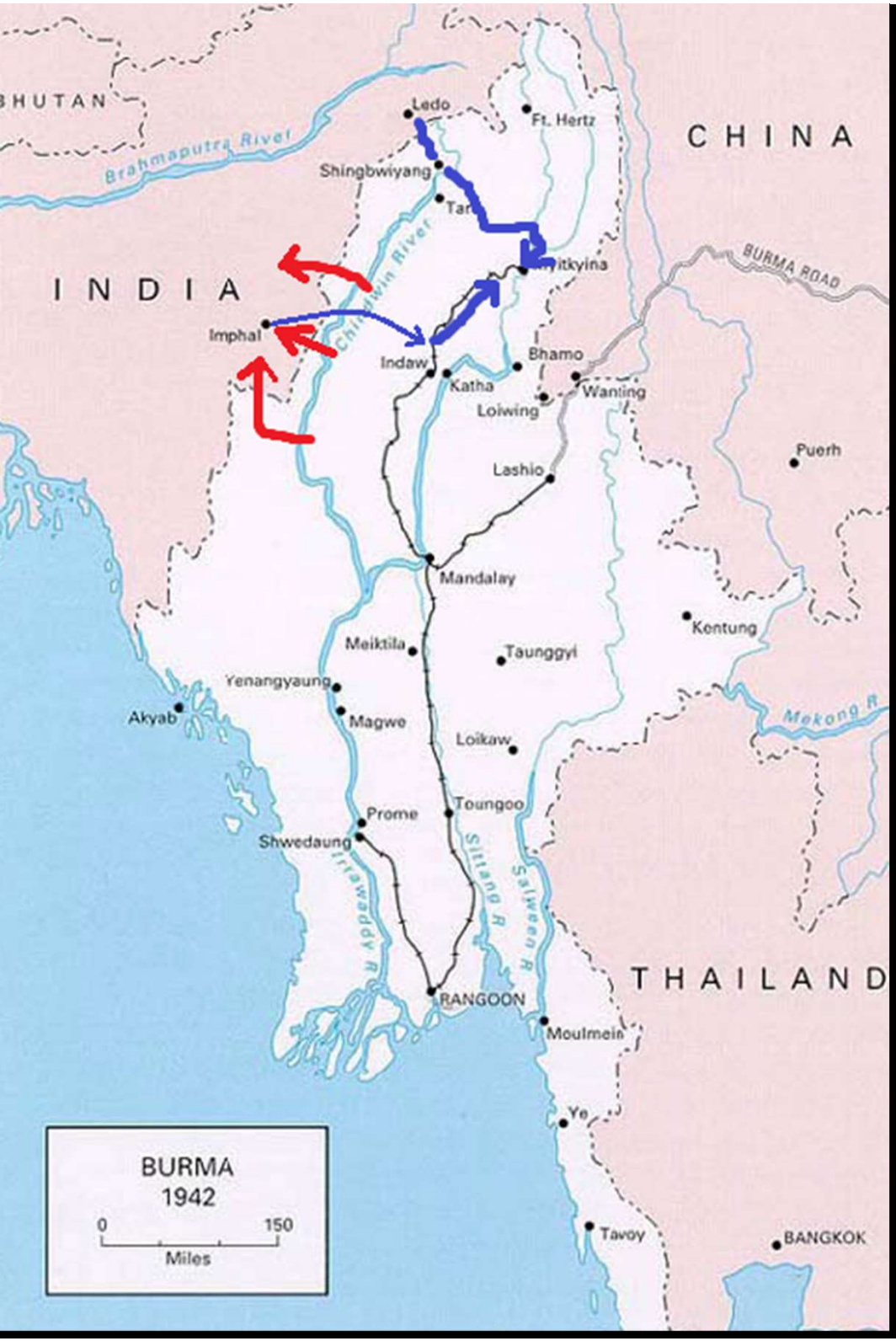


JAPANESE INVASION ROUTES, BURMA 1944

U-Go was supposed to be the knock-out punch delivered at Imphal against a British Army weakened by Ha-Go.

The British IVth Corps was at Imphal and the surrounding area and had not sent any forces south to counter Ha-Go (unlike what the Japanese expected.) Slim knew they were coming and XVth Corps had not needed support.

Slim believed the attack would begin around March 15th. He was wrong.

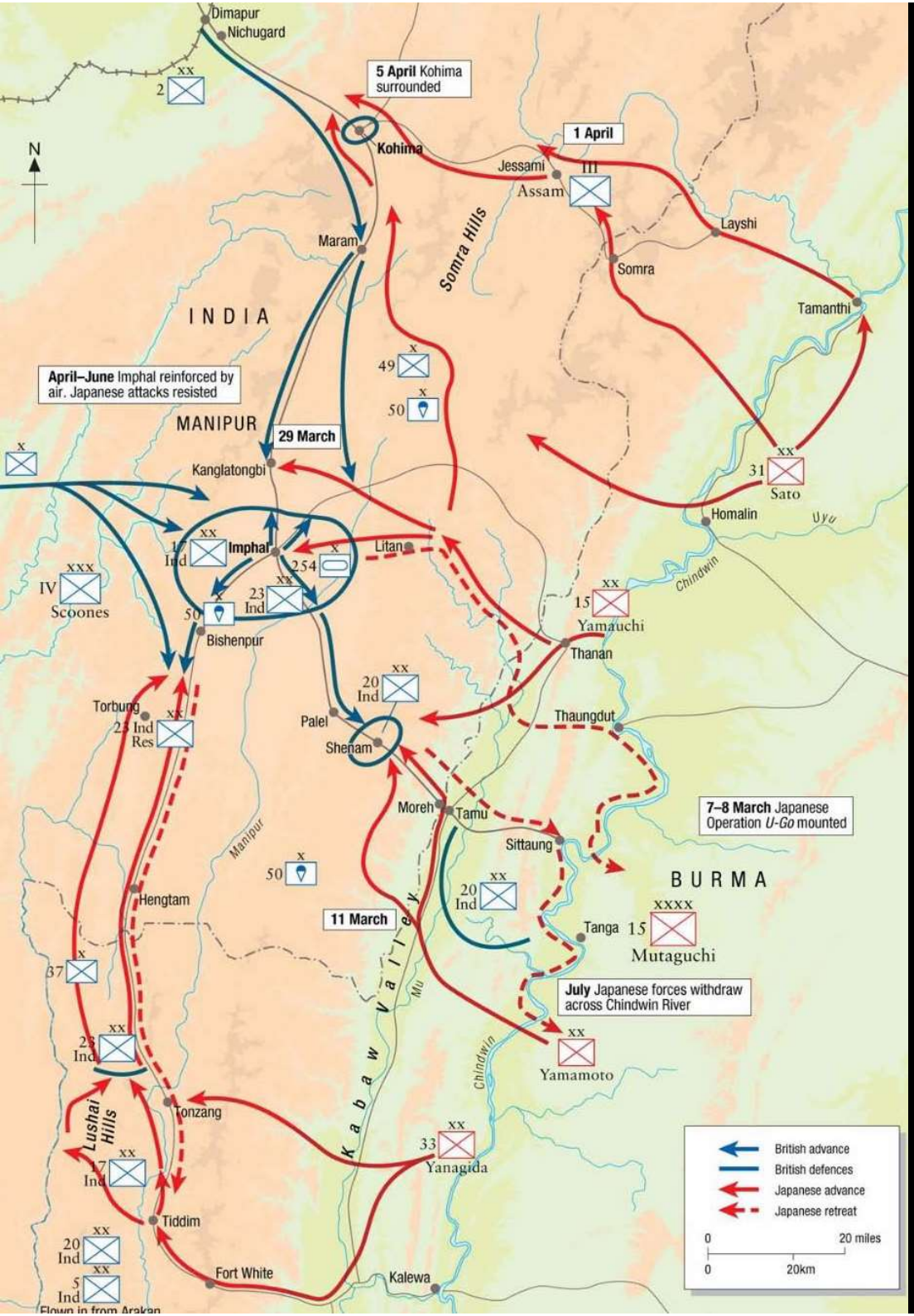


This map shows the activities in March through May of 1944.

The Allies have a major offensive underway heading east with the ultimate target at Myitkyina. Two divisions and four separate brigades are involved mostly supplied by air.

The Japanese launched three divisions heading west against Imphal (and with reinforcements more than four divisions in total manpower although the reinforcement will be piecemeal – no more than a regiment at any one time.)

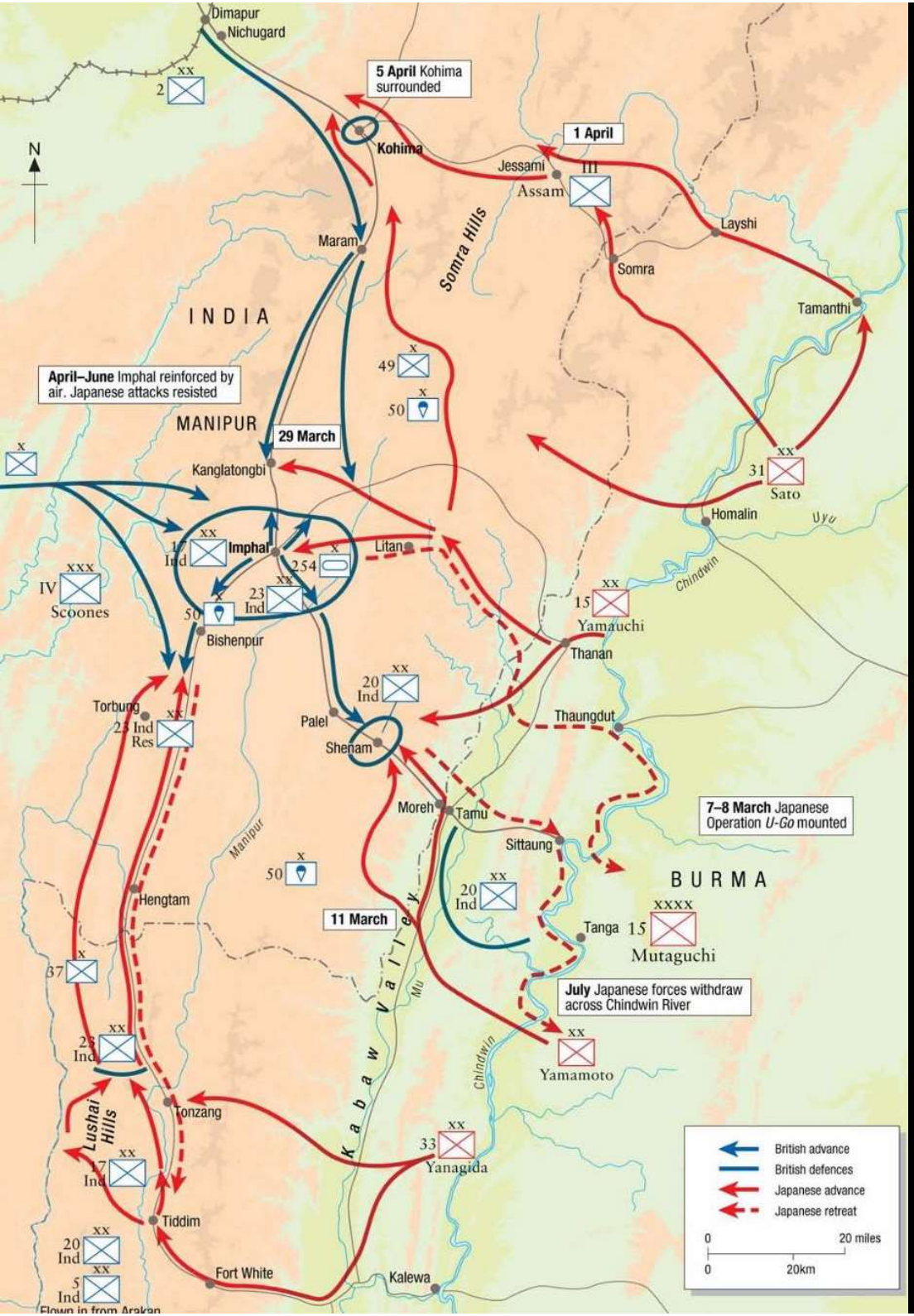
The three British Divisions in the area of Imphal (and soon to be four) will also be supplied entirely by air.



The Japanese offensive began on March 7th 1944 although aside from patrol contact, the main fight did not begin on that day. Stilwell's forces were mopping up at Walawbum – its first major objective. Wingate's Chindits were two days into their airlift into Broadway.

Slim would later admit he was caught mid-step. He had been preparing for an offensive of his own. Of the three divisions in IVth Corps, only one was at Imphal.

20th Indian was between Tamu and the Chindwin river – over 40 miles away over a bad path. 17th Indian was at Tiddum – almost 100 miles away by road.



None of the divisions were in a position to support any of the others. Slim had already given orders for those two divisions to pull back to the Imphal plain but it was not that easy.

The 20th Division had a steep muddy path to climb. The Imphal plain is about 2,500 ft. above sea level and Tamu is about 600 ft. The pass is at about 4,000 ft. and the road could not handle heavy vehicle traffic.

The 17th Division had a better road but it was much longer and they too had to climb (not as much, but still) and their road was known as the Chocolate Highway as it was often buried in mud slides.

Slim would admit the situation was potentially bad. He was beginning with two divisions at risk of being cut off. The 20th Division could build an airstrip where they were located but they could expect no help anytime soon. 17th Division had to move thirty miles up their road for there to be room for any kind of airstrip.

Within days, however, Slim became more confident – if not certain. The Japanese had barely made contact with the exposed 20th Division and had not cut it off. The 17th was in contact with the enemy but the enemy had yet to set up an effective road block.

Both Stilwell and Wingate offered to either call off their efforts or redirect them against the attacking Japanese. Slim told them to keep to their plans. Mountbatten had managed to divert almost a quarter of the ATC transport planes to support IVth Corps at Imphal – and in the area. XXXIIIrd Corps was already moving the British 2nd Division to Dimapur by rail (Dimapur was the closest railhead to Imphal – about 70 miles by road over a pass at almost 5,000 ft. (Dimapur is at under 500 feet.)

And Ha-Go was a bust and XVth Corps could postpone its operations if needed.

Slim wrote later he saw Imphal as a single battle – over an area about as large as Ireland (and not nearly as flat).

It was a series of engagements spread out over a huge area. Units could not support each other because of the distances involved. There was nothing like the dense front lines in Europe. To concentrate any unit enough to fight effectively meant there were wide gaps in any line and the Japanese usually found the gaps.

There were arguably three engagements that stand out. The first and most obvious was the defense of Imphal itself. Imphal had a large airfield capable of handling a large number of aircraft at any time. If the road to Dimapur was cut, the airfield was the only point of supply (and Slim expected the road would be cut at some point). Keeping his supply base was critical.

The fight for the Dimapur-Imphal Road was the most dramatic of the engagements. The main fight was at the mountain town of Kohima and it would be one of the bloodiest engagements of the war.

And the 17th Division's retreat on the long Tiddem road was the third. They would be cut off more than once – and it never seemed to matter.

The 20th Division was able to retreat mostly unmolested to Sheman which was also an ideal defensive position. They set up a road block and managed to repel two separate Japanese Brigades allowing the forces at Imphal to concentrate on the Japanese 15th Division.

The 17th Division fought a withdrawal bypassing Japanese road blocks by hooking around through the hills until the Japanese finally managed to set one that could not be easily bypassed.

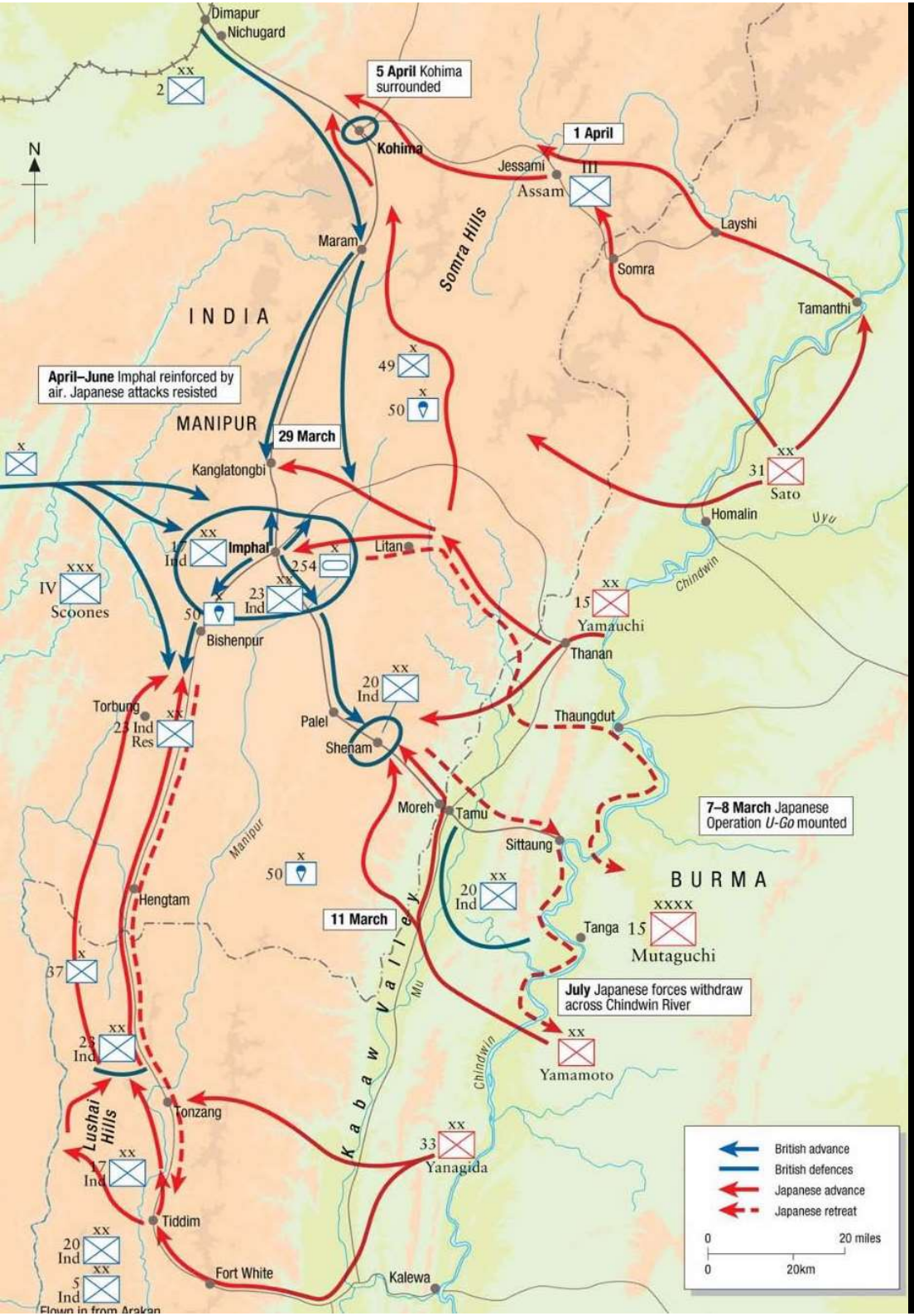
But the ground allowed for an airstrip so the 17th remained well supplied.

The Japanese were not.

The Air Force was able to supply all of the forces at Imphal and in the vicinity. Moreover, beginning in the last day of March, it began flying the 5th Indian Division from the Arakan to Imphal and later Dimapur. The first battalion entered the fight on April 3rd 1944.

The airlift only needed eleven days to bring in the entire division – plus all of its equipment and supplies.

Just about every combat plane in India flew air support missions against Japanese positions and supply lines – several squadrons based in Imphal itself and dependent upon air resupply themselves.



In China, Chiang and Chennault were furious. About a third of the ATC airlift was being diverted to support Imphal – more than they had been told.

No one in India or anywhere else cared.

At the end of March, a bitter battle was fought over a small village in the north. A significant portion of the Japanese 31st Division tried to dislodge the 50th Indian Parachute Brigade and would succeed, but lost critical orders.

Slim now knew the 31st under Sato was headed for Kohima. He had expected an attempt to cut the road but not there.

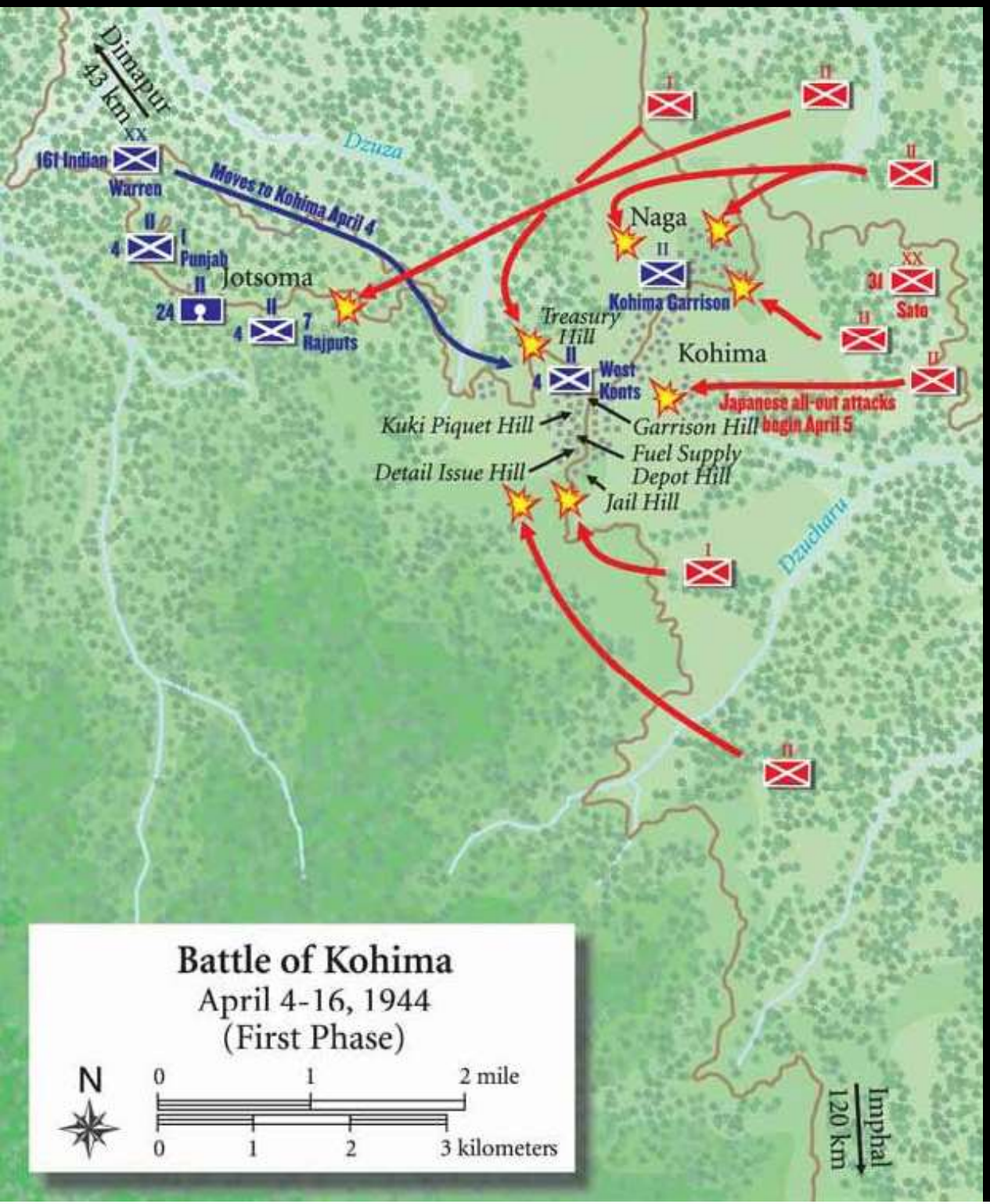
There were no combat troops at Kohima or anywhere nearby. To the extent Kohima was garrisoned it was by rear echelon troops only. There were about 800 or so – about a battalion in size but they were not a battalion. They were supply troops, traffic control, maintenance and similar.

Moreover, as poorly garrisoned as Kohima was Dimapur was worse off and unlike Kohima it was a major supply point. Nothing stood between the Japanese and Dimapur and the Assam Valley…

Except the Japanese. Sato had a low opinion of the plan and was not about to stick his neck out and driving on Dimapur would be sticking his neck out. His orders were to take Kohima and he decided to follow them to the letter. His entire division concentrated on the small town and its small "garrison." The siege began on April 4th. The garrison would soon be penned into to a position shaped like a triangle about two football field in length on each side.

And it had no water – the Japanese captured the supply.

The garrison was supplied by air drop from tree top level. Water and ammunition had top priority. The garrison fought and held its small pocket of ground for two weeks.



For several days, the British Commissioner's Tennis Court was no man's land. The British were dug in along one baseline, the Japanese on the other. They shot at each other across the court and lobbed hand granades at each other over the net.

The Japanese tried many times to take the far baseline and failed.

The 161st Indian Brigade of the 2nd British Division would lift the siege. They reached high, unoccupied ground and set up artillery and began shelling the Japanese. The Japanese could not fire back.

About half the original defenders of Kohima were killed and most others were wounded to varying degrees.

By then, the Japanese were dangerously low on supplies and especially shells for their own artillery. They tried to drive the 161st off the hill (without support from their own artillery) and were thrown back with heavy losses.

On April 16th, a battalion broke through the Japanese siege and a tenuous supply line existed to Dimapur. But the Japanese were well dug in and the infantry (real infantry by now) could not drive them out.

They brought up tanks. To get at the Japanese positions, the tanks had to use their own tow cables to winch themselves up 40% and greater grades. Nothing in any manual said it could be done. The tankers were told to get up there and they did – and blasted the Japanese from position after position.

Still, the Japanese proved tenacious in defense. (It was something they were very good at.)

But Sato was not about to fight to the death. The way to his rear was open which meant he could be resupplied and reinforced. But he knew there were no reinforcements and the supply situation was only going to get worse.

Sato had asked to withdraw a couple of weeks after the siege was lifted. His men were dangerously low on all supplies and nothing suggested that would change. He was told to keep fighting.

He did until he knew he would not get supplied. He then told Mutaguchi unless he was supplied by May 31st he would withdraw. He was told to keep fighting. On May 31st his division began its withdrawal.

The 31st Division withdrew – and kept withdrawing all the way to the Chindwin River. (Elements of the 15th division remained and died trying to hold the Dimapur – Imphal Road.)

Sato's 31st Division lost a little over half its strength in the campaign. Despite that, it was the only division engaged in the spring of 1944 that survived with more than a couple of battalions.

Sato was told to turn back. He refused. He was told he was relieved and threw his relief out of his headquarters. He was handed a short sword (used for seppuku) and told to do the honorable thing. He threw it in the face of the officer who offered it.

He was to be court martialed (and probably executed). But he was deemed mentally unfit to stand trial.

He survived the war.

Sato had not gone after Dimapur. Had he done so things might have been different.

But the end of the fight at Kohima in late April was not the end of the battle. It would take the British until early June to clear the road to Imphal and reopen it to supply. While Sato had decamped, the road was still blocked by the 15th Division.

But the 2nd Division and a tank brigade were making progress. Moreover the air resupply continued.

The 17th Division with help from the 23rd broke out of its own pocket while Kohima was besieged.

By late May, a staff officer from Singapore reported the situation to Tokyo.

Mutaguchi was reporting victory was at hand. The staff officer reported a disaster. Most of the Army was either dead or dying. There was no food, bad water and little ammunition and the British seemed stronger than ever.

As the staff officer spoke with no one above the rank of major, his report was ignored. That he could not find a headquarters with any officer over that rank still alive was not discussed. (The remaining Division HQs never let anyone know their position. Any indication led to a massive air and artillery attack.)

In early June the 15th Division was driven away from the Dimapur – Imphal road.

The monsoon had broken and now malaria was added to starvation as a Japanese killer.

Tokyo ordered more attacks so Mutaguchi did as well. By around June 20th, no one bothered to answer. What was left of the 15th Army had disintegrated.

An estimate ninety percent of the 15th and 33rd Divisions were never seen alive again. It was only when no one was left who was able and willing to follow his orders that Mutaguchi called off the offensive.

The Japanese losses exceeded the total number who started out. Kaweba sent battalions from the 28th Army to reinforce the effort at Imphal. They faired no better. The Japanese suffered and estimated 50,000 casualties most of whom were dead (the sick and wounded were killed by their own troops who were too few and too weak to carry them).

The total casualties for the British was around 17,500 (of which 4,046 were at Kohima) – most of whom were wounded and would return to fight.

After the battle was over the dead had to be buried and there were piles of Japanese dead – although not all of them were dead. A handful were alive waiting to kill whomever touched them.

Among the soldiers dealing with the dead Japanese was a ghurka unit of the 17th Indian Division. An officer noticed that the soldiers were using their Kukri knives to cut the throats of the Japanese bodies. He then noticed one of the dead Japanese was alive.

He called out to the Sergeant in charge of the detail: "Johnny! You shouldn't kill them."

"But Sahib," the ghurka sergeant replied, "we can't bury them alive!"

A British staff Brigadier (Senior Colonel) was at the Imphal airfield when a fight mechanic carrying a heavy part did not put it down to salute him. The Brigadier dragged the offender before his Wing Commander demanding the Wing Commander do something about the disrespect. "Why?" the Wing Commander asked. "I can't even get them to salute me!"

Comparison with other battles against Japan:

Battle	Dates	Allies	Japanese
Saipain	15 Jun – 9 Jul 44	71,000 3,400 KIA 10,400 WIA	32,000 24,000 KIA
Iwo Jima	19 Feb – 26 Mar 45	~60,000 6,821 KIA 19,217 WIA	21,000 18,275 KIA
Okinawa	1 Apr – 22 Jun 45	183,000 14,009 KIA 55,172 WIA	96,000 89,000 KIA
Imphal	8 Mar – 3 Jul 44	50,000+ (start) 3,500 KIA 14,000 WIA	43,000 (at start) 55,000 casualties >20,000 dead

In the 1944 campaign ending with the collapse of what was left of Tanaka's 18th Division at Myitkyina in August (after Tanaka killed himself), the 15th Army had been reduced less than a division (and they were scattered and mostly unorganized.)

The 18th, 15th and 33rd Divisions could barely muster a couple of fit battalions between them.

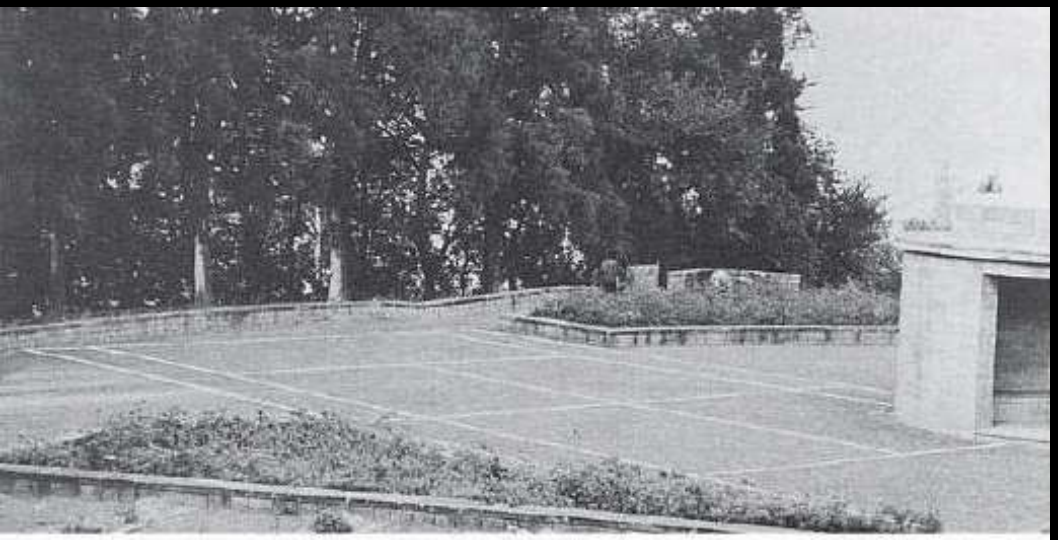
The 55th Division of the 28th Division (Ha-Go) lost more than two thirds of its strength.

There had been a regiment of the Indian National Army at Imphal. Many left without fighting. For most of the rest, every chance its soldiers had they surrendered. Those who did not get their chance while the Japanese were around did so when the Japanese left.

No one has played tennis on the Commissioner's court at Kohima again.

It was the scene of some of the bloodiest and most brutal close quarter fighting of the war.

It is now a war memorial.



10. Kohima. The tennis court which was the scene of prolonged hand-to-hand fighting and is now a cemetery with a Cross of Sacrifice.

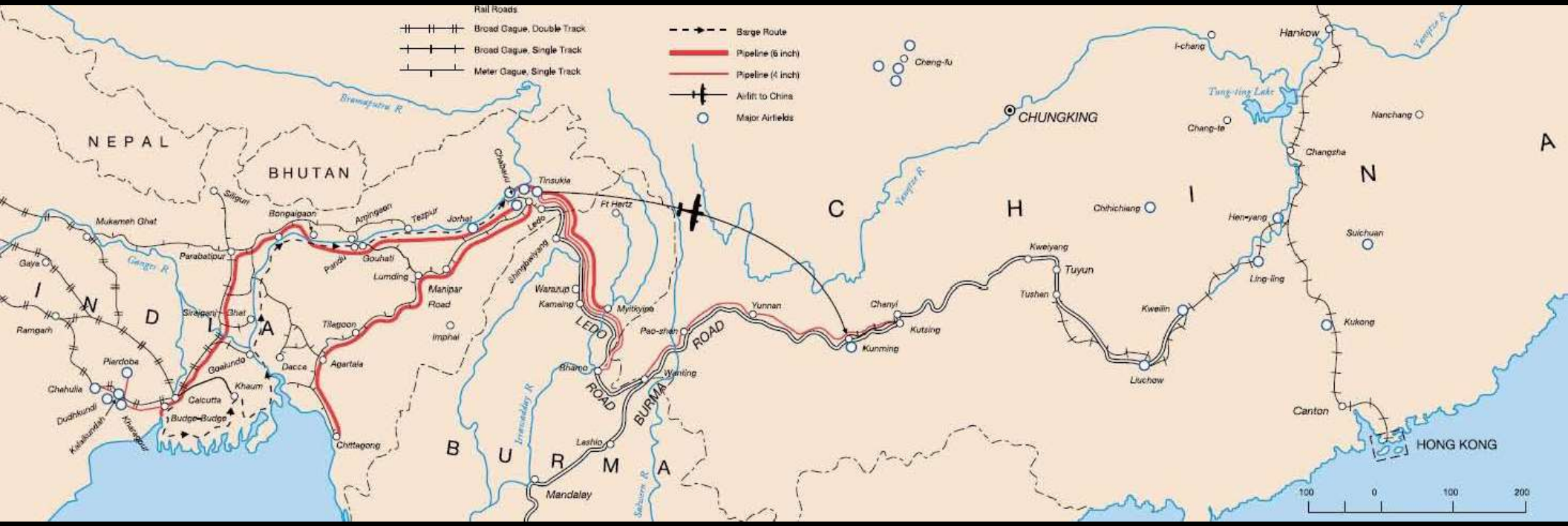
Naturally, the war did not end.

General Slim had wanted to fight the Japanese on ground of his choosing and show his men they were better soldiers. In this he was successful but he had not gained a yard of ground.

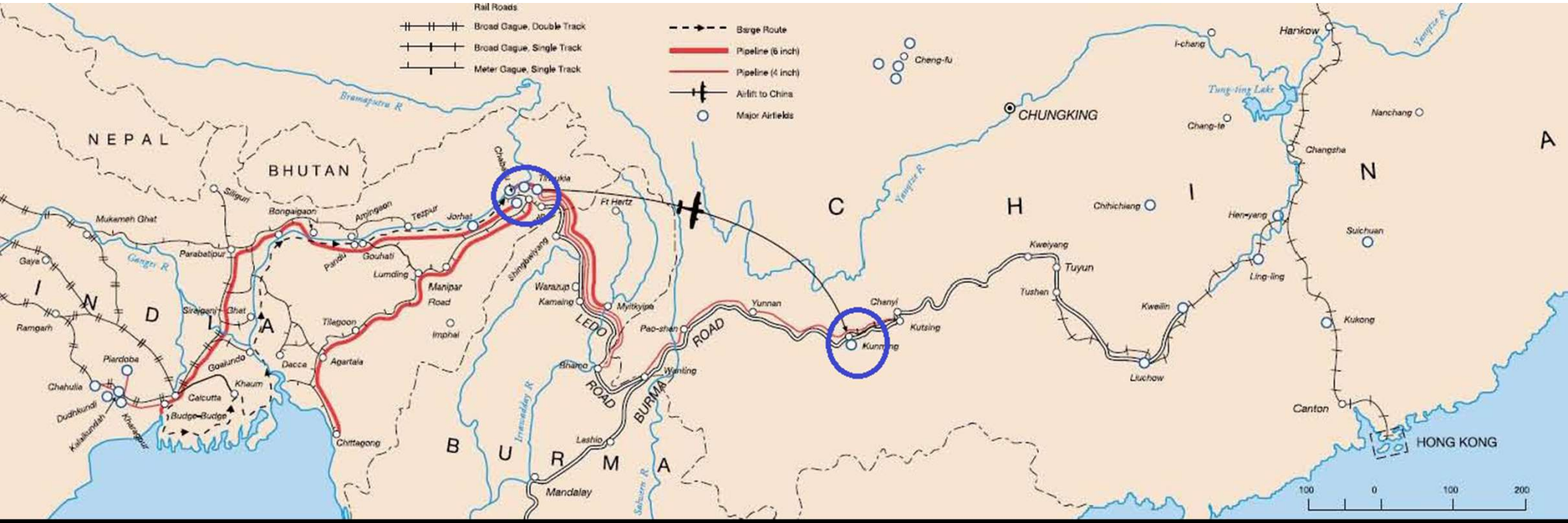
And while Burma was a disaster for the Japanese, on the other side of the mountains they were achieving their greatest success since 1938 and that certainly was a factor in what motivated the Japanese generals in Burma when things began to fall apart and why Tokyo seemed blind and deaf to what was happening in that theater.

While 1944 proved that Slim knew what he was doing it would also prove that Chennault did not. And the result would be the end of any dreams Roosevelt had about his China or any confidence he and others had in Chiang Kai-shek.

The situation in China combined with the success of MacArthur and Nimitz against the Japanese in the Pacific meant that Washington would bet on the winning hand at it was not on the mainland of Asia…

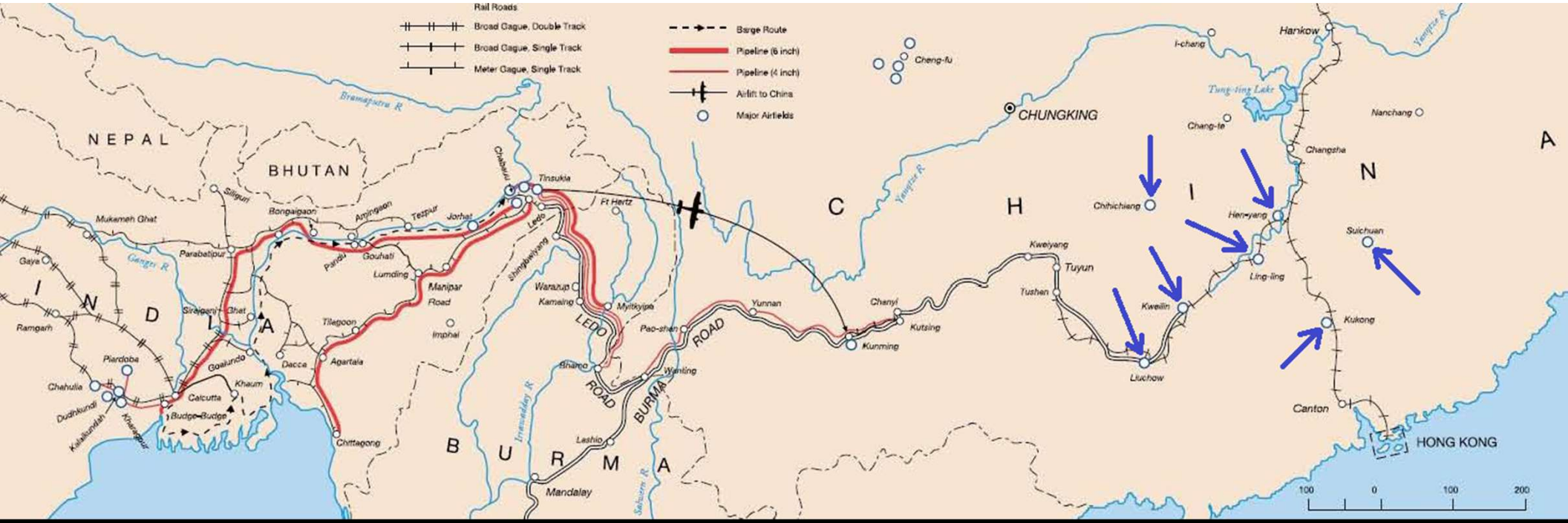


Above is a map showing basic supply lines to China. It is not a snapshot in time. The pipeline would not be completed until early 1945 by which time the situation had changed dramatically.



In early 1944, the airbases were the only links in the supply chain. As noted, the primary air supply route was from bases in the Assam Valley in India to Kunming. Supplies were brought to Assam by railroad and disbursed from Kunming by road, railroad and air.

There were two “customers” in China both of whom demanded priority. One was the Chinese Nationalists.



The other was Chennault's 14th Air Force. Its air bases were more than 300 miles east of Kunming in an area held by the Chinese.

Chennault continued to argue the war could be won entirely by air and continued to demand more planes and supplies. He had planes and pilots (although never as much as he wanted and he refused to believe anyone had mission that needed planes more than his did.)

Supplies were another matter. He had a small number of transport planes but was almost as dependent upon the ATC transports over the hump as the Chinese were and he was equally vocal about the need for more.

The 14th Air Force was growing and it was having an impact on the war in China but it was not reliable. Supply was the reason. Planes sat idle for want of fuel and munitions for weeks.

It was estimated that the cost of delivering one gallon of aviation fuel to one of Chennault's planes was $1,000.00 in 1944 dollars.

The 14th Air Force was always short of supplies. And as it grew, the problem grew with it. Chennault was almost as demanding as Chiang – but at least he used what he received.

When it had the fuel and weapons, the 14th flew and it did well under the circumstances. Its fighters had achieved air superiority within range of their bases – ending Japanese air supremacy.

Its bombers attacked Japanese supply. It bombed ports at Shanghai, Hong Kong and other places. It bombed manufacturing and oil refineries on Formosa.

It attacked railroads, Japanese shipping and any suspected supply dumps and may well have allowed the stalemate on the ground to last longer than it had.

But the 14th Air Force could not reach Japan.

The new B-29 bomber could reach Japan from bases in unoccupied China. It had roughly twice the range with double the payload of Chennault's B-24's and he wanted them.

He and many other Air Force commanders wanted them and none would get them.

The B-29's were all under the 20th Air Force and it was commanded by Gen. "Hap" Arnold who was based in Washington and was also Chief of Staff of the Army Air Force.

Every other American Air Force was subordinate to the theater commanders. Hap Arnold was senior to all of them. He answered to the President, not the Theater Commanders.

Arnold believed the B-29's primary role was strategic bombing and was well aware that other Air Force commanders were tasked to support other missions.

Those missions took priority over any other.

The 20th Air Force would fly missions in support of theater commanders but only when it chose to do so and not because it could be ordered to do so.

It chose to do so to train bomber crews and squadrons and only on occasion because of military necessity.

The XXth Bomber Command was the first of two under the 20th Air Force and was to be based in India.

The lead units (ground personnel) arrived in India in December 1943 to organize and build bases.

The lead squadron of the 58th Bombardment Wing arrived in India in April of 1944 and flew its first mission from India against Bangkok, Thailand on June 5, 1944.

But the goal was to bomb Japan which could not be done from India.

At this point, China was still viewed as the stepping stone to Japan in U.S. Strategic Planning as it had been since the war began. But operating from China would prove difficult.

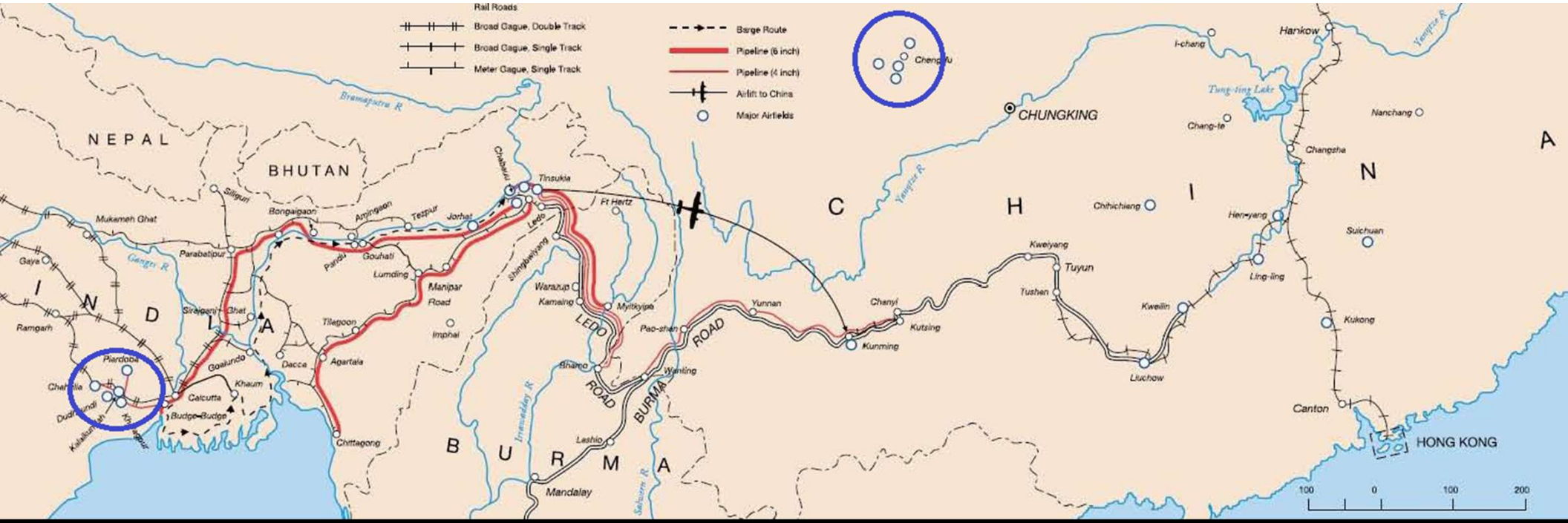
Some thousands of laborers built four airfields in India but they had no modern equipment. Five forward airfields would be built in China for the B-29's using nothing but hand tools and 350,000 laborers.

The Chinese fields lacked any "amenities." There were no hangers or maintenance shops, no storage for fuel or bombs.

The men spent their time in China in tents. (India was more "normal.")

However, the China bases were not for permanent use. The bombers only were there because they were in range of Japan.


B–29 Range, 1,600 nautical miles
B–29 Bases
U.S.S.R.
Khabarovsk
MONGOLIA
MANCHUKUO (Manchuria) (Japan)
Kuril Islands
Vladivostok
Sea of Japan
JAPAN
SINKIANG
Peking
KOREA (Japan)
Tokyo
Osaka
East China Sea
CHINA
PACIFIC OCEAN
Shanghai
Chengtu
Wuhan
Hangzhou
TIBET
NEPAL
Fuzhou
Okinawa
Ryukyu Islands (Japan)
INDIA
Formosa (Japan)
Iwo Jima
Marcus Is. (Jap.)
Canton
Kharagpur
Hong Kong (British)
BURMA
Hanoi
FRENCH INDOCHINA
Philippine Sea
Luzon
Bay of Bengal
SIAM
South China Sea
Manila
PHILIPPINES
Marianas Is.
Saipan
Guam (U.S.)
Enewitok
Andaman Sea
Yap Is.
Caroline Islands
Palau Is.
Mindanao
Truk
Peleiu
BRUNEI (Br.)
NORTH BORNEO (Br.)
MALAYA (British)
SARAWAK (Br.)
Singapore
INDIAN OCEAN
Sumatra
Borneo
Celebes
Bismarck Archipelago
Holandia
New Guinea
NORTHEAST NEW GUINEA (Aust.)
Rabaul
Solomon Islands
DUTCH EAST INDIES
Java
PAPUA (Aust.)
Timor
Arafura Sea
Port Moresby
Darwin



The B-29's of XXth Bomber Command would be based in India at bases west of Calcutta. That was where their crews were quartered and the planes maintained. The forward bases were around Chengdu, China west of Chongqing. Aside from the crude airfield and some tents there was nothing there.

Arnold did not want to rely upon the ATC or anyone else to supply his bombers. (He was all too aware of the difficulties that 14th Air Force faced.) And he would not divert transport planes from other missions. But to bomb Japan, his planes had to refuel in China.

The answer seemed simple. The B-29's could easily carry 20,000 lbs of supplies from India to the forward bases in China, drop it off, and return to India on a single load of fuel.

The XXth Bomber Command would be its own ferry service shuttling everything it needed for a mission against Japan from India to China.

In China it would load up for the actual mission and set out to bomb Japan. They would refuel in China before returning to India.

The reality was different. The bombers had to unload everything in China including the bombs. The bombs would be left in the open as the plane returned to India for more stuff.

The bombs were delivered first as they were less likely to explode when left outside.

Fortunately the bases were mostly protected from Japanese air attack.

Unfortunately “mostly” was not always.

The real risk of the operation was refueling. The bombers delivered fuel for both the mission and the return flight to India after the mission in drums but there were no pumps.

The fuel was transferred to jerry cans and the bombers would be refueled one can at a time by a bucket brigade of Chinese laborers.

The entire supply operation took up to a week to ferry the supplies to China and load up for a mission. (Refueling took a day at least and they would refuel twice.) After the mission and return to India, the planes needed maintenance – and that was without taking into account battle damage.

At best the XXth Bomber Command could mount a mission against Japan about once every two weeks.

The first raid on Japan was on June 15 1944 on a steel factory.

The results were far less than hoped. The B-29 was not yet as reliable as older models and a higher number had to turn back for mechanical reasons. Those that made it to the target missed.

They flew high enough to enter the jet stream which ruined accuracy. Bombs dropped when their instruments showed them they were on target missed often by a mile or more.

Efforts were made to improve accuracy but not before the commander of the XXth Bomber Command was replaced by a known trouble shooter.

Curtis Lemay took over in August. His work with the 8th Air Force in Europe had restored it after the disasters of 1943 and improved its performance.

He would not be successful in the CBI. Nothing seemed to work and despite his efforts the bombers never managed to hit close to their targets in Japan more than about 5% of the time. (They were far more accurate against targets in Southeast Asia – where they did not encounter the jet stream.)

His one successful raid was at the request of Chennault. It was a low altitude fire bombing – the first in the war on Japan.

The target was not in Japan but Hankow China, a major Japanese supply point. The reason was the war had changed and Chennault was learning first hand his planes could not defend his bases against ground attack.

For the XXth, the war changed as well. China was now a strategic backwater and with the capture of the Marianas in the Pacific, the 20th Air Force had better bases closer to Japan than in India and China.

The last mission from India was flown against Rangoon on March 22nd, 1945.

By the end of 1944, the war against Japan had changed and it had changed in part because of American successes in the Pacific and in part because of Japanese successes in China. China was no longer seen as a stepping stone to anywhere.

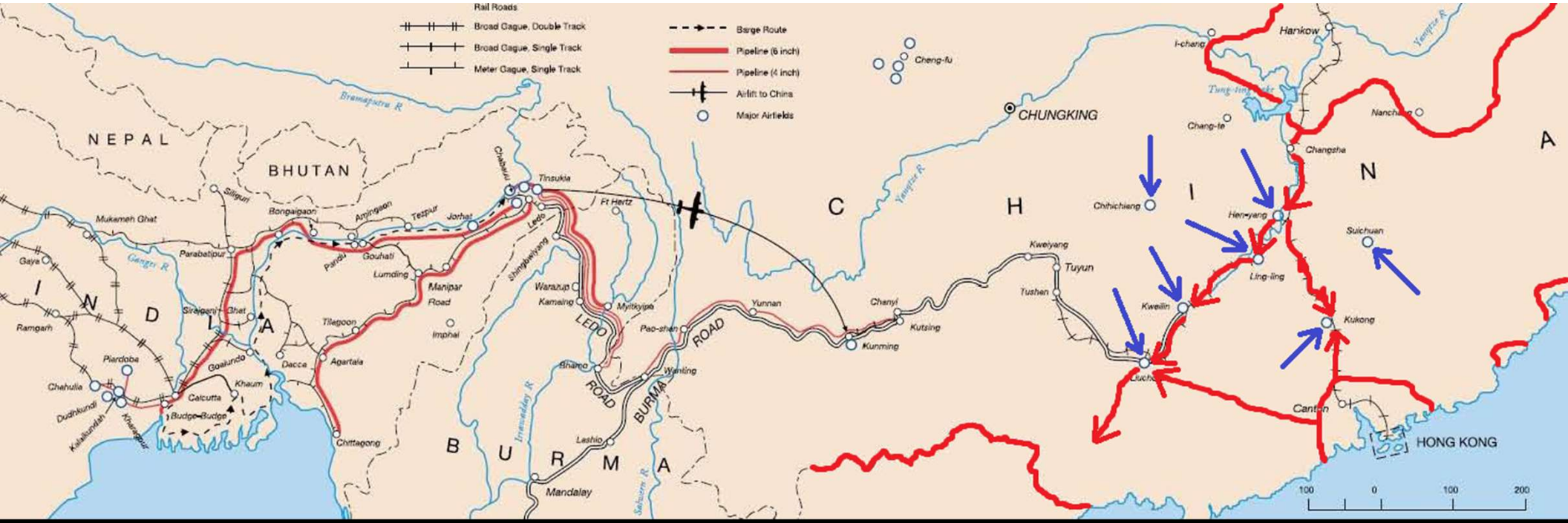
What happened was Stilwell was proven correct. He had said that sooner or later the Japanese would attack to take 14th Air Force out of the war and the Chinese Army would not protect the bases and that is what would happen.

While Kaweba and Mutaguchi planned the disasters in India, the Japanese Army planned to knock out the American Air bases in China. Their plans were drawn up months before the first B-29's arrived in India and the attack began two months before the first B-29 raid against Japan.

The attack was aimed at taking the 14th Air Force bases that were the most immediate threat to their supply lines.

While there was a subsidiary plan to the north aimed at seizing rich farmlands, the main effort would be to the south.

The Japanese would start by attacking Changsha – a city that had defeated them twice before in 1939 and 1942 – with heavy losses. But it was necessary to secure the railroad for their own supplies as they advanced against the main objectives.



The main advance would be along the railroad from Changsha to Liuchou. It was no coincidence that Chennault's main bomber bases were along the line of advance as the railroad ultimately connected with Kunming and the supplies coming over the hump.

The Chinese Army numbered 300 divisions and 4,000,000 men – on paper. In reality it might have been half as large. Only Chiang's favorites or those under American advisors were anywhere near strength. The rest reported it so – and received pay for all of those reported present for duty.

The officers pocketed the pay in excess of the amount due to the soldiers actually present for pay-day.

Chiang's favorites were in the north guarding against his real enemy – the Chinese Communists. The American supported units were far to the west near the China – Burma border along the Burma road. The units standing between Chennault's bases and the Japanese were grossly undermanned, poorly equipped and even under-aged. There were "soldiers" as young as ten.

The Army defending Changsha against the third attack was at less than half strength. They had one rifle or machine gun for every 30 soldiers actually present and about ten rounds for each.

The defenders exercised discretion. When the Japanese attack came on, they ran for their lives.

Changsha fell quickly after the attack began on May 27th, 1944 (less than a month before the end of the Imphal battle.) In this case the Japanese had learned from their past failures and out flanked the Chinese defenses.

The Chinese retreated in confusion. Little effort was made to establish a new defensive line for some weeks.

Chennault now learned that air power had limitations. He could not truly stop the Japanese advance and rarely slow it more than its own supply limitations (fuel was always a problem for the Japanese).

Chiang suddenly woke up to the fact that the Japanese actually might be a threat…

An American advised Army was moved to try and stop the Japanese at Kweilin only for another Japanese attack from Hong Kong cut its supply line at Luichou. The defending force was quickly surrounded and had to cut its way out with heavy losses.

Despite mechanization, the Japanese drive was slow.

The only objectives of any real value were Chennault's bases. Chiang ordered his army to stand and fight and they refused to do so – as they saw nothing worth the effort. Only the American trained and supplied units made an effort.


43
U. S. S. R.
LAKE BAIKAL
Irkutsk
TRANS-SIBERIAN R.R.
Amur R.
Khabarovsk
Sergiopol
OUTER MONGOLIA
CARAVAN AND MOTOR ROUTE
Nomonhan
Tsitsihar
MANCHURIA (MANCHUKUO)
Harbin
Vladivostok
Hsinking
Urumchi
GOBI DESERT
CHAHAR
JEHOL
SUIYAN
Mukden
SINKIANG
INNER MONGOLIA
Ansi
Paotow
Kalgan
Peking
Yalu R.
LIAOTUNG PENINSULA
Port Arthur
Tientsin
GREAT WALL
KOREA (CHOSEN)
15 April and 31 December 1944
SHANTUNG PENINSULA
Tsinan
Tsingtao
STRAIT
JAPAN
HONSHU
Lanchow
Taierhchwang
Haichow
Chengchow
Yellow River
15 April
Suchow
TSUSHIMA
KYUSHU
TIBET
CHINA
Sian
Pukow
Nanking
April and May
Shanghai
Ankang
Laohokow
31 Dec
Hankow
LAKE TAI
Hangchow
NEPAL
Chengtu
Yangtze River
Ichang
Chungking
27 May
LAKE POYANG
TUNGTING LAKE
Changteh
Chihkiang
Changsha
Nanchang
Wenchow
BHUTAN
Sadiya
Ledo
15 April
8 Sep
OKINAWA
Ganges River
Kweiyang
Liuchow
Yungyang
Sui-chuan
Foochow
INDIA
ASSAM
Recaptured in 1944
Ledo Road
Burma
Tushan
3 Dec
6 June - 8 Aug
Ramgarh
Brahmaputra R.
Kunming
10 Nov
Non-hsiung
Amoy
Hungshui R.
Lashio
31 Dec
24 Nov
Liuchow
Swatow
FORMOSA (TAIWAN)
Calcutta
10 Dec
Nanning
Canton
PESCADORE ISLANDS
Mandalay
Hong Kong
BURMA
FRENCH INDO CHINA
Hanoi
Haiphong
Pakhoi
Kwangchowan
SOUTH CHINA SEA
BAY OF BENGAL
Akyab
HAINAN
Irrawaddy R.
Salween R.
Mekong R.
THAILAND
Rangoon
Moulmein
SPRATLY ISLAND
500 MI.
PHILIPPINE ISLANDS
= Airfield
Note: Most railroads in Manchuria and Korea not shown.
CHINA, 1941
OPERATION ICHIGO, APRIL – DECEMBER 1944 AND SITUATION 31 DECEMBER
0 100 200 300 400 500
SCALE OF MILES
A
B
C
D
E

At Kweilin, the American trained and supplied units stood and held for three months, most of the time cut off from effective supply. But while the stand showed what the Chinese could do (as some would argue) the Japanese offensive spelled the end of any notion regarding China's value as a base of operations against Japan. China as a significant theater had been overtaken by events even when some still thought the Japanese might be stopped.

By the time Kweilin fell the Americans had taken the Marianas in the Pacific and most of New Guinea. MacArthur had the go-ahead to invade the Philippines. The Japanese Army now stood between the coast and the Chinese.

China no longer mattered.

Except it was an army-in-being and in that regard it did. So long as China could fight, Japan could not redeploy and while Chiang seemed less than willing, by now the Americans knew he was not the only game in town.

The Chinese Communist Army numbered a real 3,000,000 men and they were fighting the Japanese with some success.

By the middle of 1944, the OSS, State Department and War Department were looking for an alternative to Chiang. They all took a close look at the Chinese Communist Army. What they found was an army that could fight and was fighting – something that could not be said of the Nationalists except where they were under U.S. direction.

Curtis Lemay had emergency fields and weather stations in Communist controlled territory and considered moving his Chinese basing there but the logistics would be even worse than those in southern China.

All who looked thought the Communists were a better bet.

In June as China faltered against the Japanese, Stilwell and Chennault were called to discuss the situation with the President.

Chennault was off the opinion that all he needed were more planes and Chiang more supplies. Chiang could be trusted.

Stilwell, Marshall and Arnold disagreed. Chiang refused to use what he had. Roosevelt had sent polite and weakly worded rebukes on the few times he chose to “chastise” Chiang. Stilwell wanted to demand an American take over and that all future shipments of Lend Lease be conditioned upon their use against the Japanese. He also recommended working with the Communists.

Stilwell saw the Communists as politically more acceptable. He had no use for their politics but the US was allied with the Soviet Union against Fascist Germany and in his opinion Chiang and the Koumingtang were Fascists (just not very good ones.) He felt there should be far more stick than carrot.

Unfortunately when asked by the President for his advice, Stilwell said little. He had a long history of not blowing his own horn before superiors and now it became a strategic error.

Not long after his return, Stilwell's staff was asked to draw up plans and recommendations for the removal of Chiang. Specifically he (and the U.S. Ambassador Glauss) were asked for their opinion if an American backed coup d'etat would improve the situation. The order came from the State and War Departments – whether Roosevelt knew is not known.

Their opinion was it could only make things worse. As bad as Chiang was, no one was better or at least there was no one who could replace Chiang without a civil war.

Meanwhile, Chiang was again refusing to support the American efforts in Burma and take advise on how to deal with the Japanese offensive in China.

The Americans had trained five armies in China and expected they would be made available to help clear the Burma Road of the Japanese. Chiang made it clear they would not be allowed to do so.

Unless he was in overall command and had full control over all supplies sent to the Far East and an equal voice on global supply allocation.

The Americans had asked about the Communists. Chiang refused to consider any cooperation.

Chiang was told if he did not do as asked he would lose the war. He had made a deal and he now had to pull his weight. This was put to him very politely, very deferentially and in a way where he could refuse or ignore the "request."

The directions were now that Chiang place all Chinese troops under American command – including the communists.

Chiang ignored the suggestion and again demanded complete control over the theater and all of Lend Lease.

Roosevelt finally had enough and signed a reply drafted by George Marshall without reading it. (He had read all the others and toned them down substantially.)

The letter was sent by courier and Stilwell directed to read it to Chiang personally. No one else could translate it.

(Chiang spoke no English.)

Stilwell was thrilled. Now things were going to happen!

There were some who saw the letter before Stilwell met Chiang. Ambassador Glauss felt it was about time. Gen. Hurley – sent by Roosevelt to smooth things over – and T.V. Soong (no longer sweeping graves) insisted the wording be more conciliatory. Chiang would be humiliated if it were not.

Stilwell read it as written – and translated directly. The Americans demanded Stilwell take command of all Chinese forces – or at least those willing (and the Communists already said they were). Chiang would do as he was told when he was told or the entire supply situation would be reconsidered.

Chiang said nothing.

Stilwell was thrilled.

I've waited long for vengeance
At last I've had my chance,
I've looked the Peanut in the eye
And kicked him in the pants.

The old harpoon was ready
With aim and timing true,
I sank it to the handle
And stung him through and through,

The little bastard shivered,
And lost his power of speech,
His face turned green and quivered
And he struggled not to screech.

For all my weary battle,
For all my hours of woe
At last I've had my innings
And laid the Peanut low.

I know I've still to suffer
And run a weary race
But Oh! The blessed pleasure!
I've wrecked the Peanut's face!

(Joe Stilwell, Sep 27, 1944)

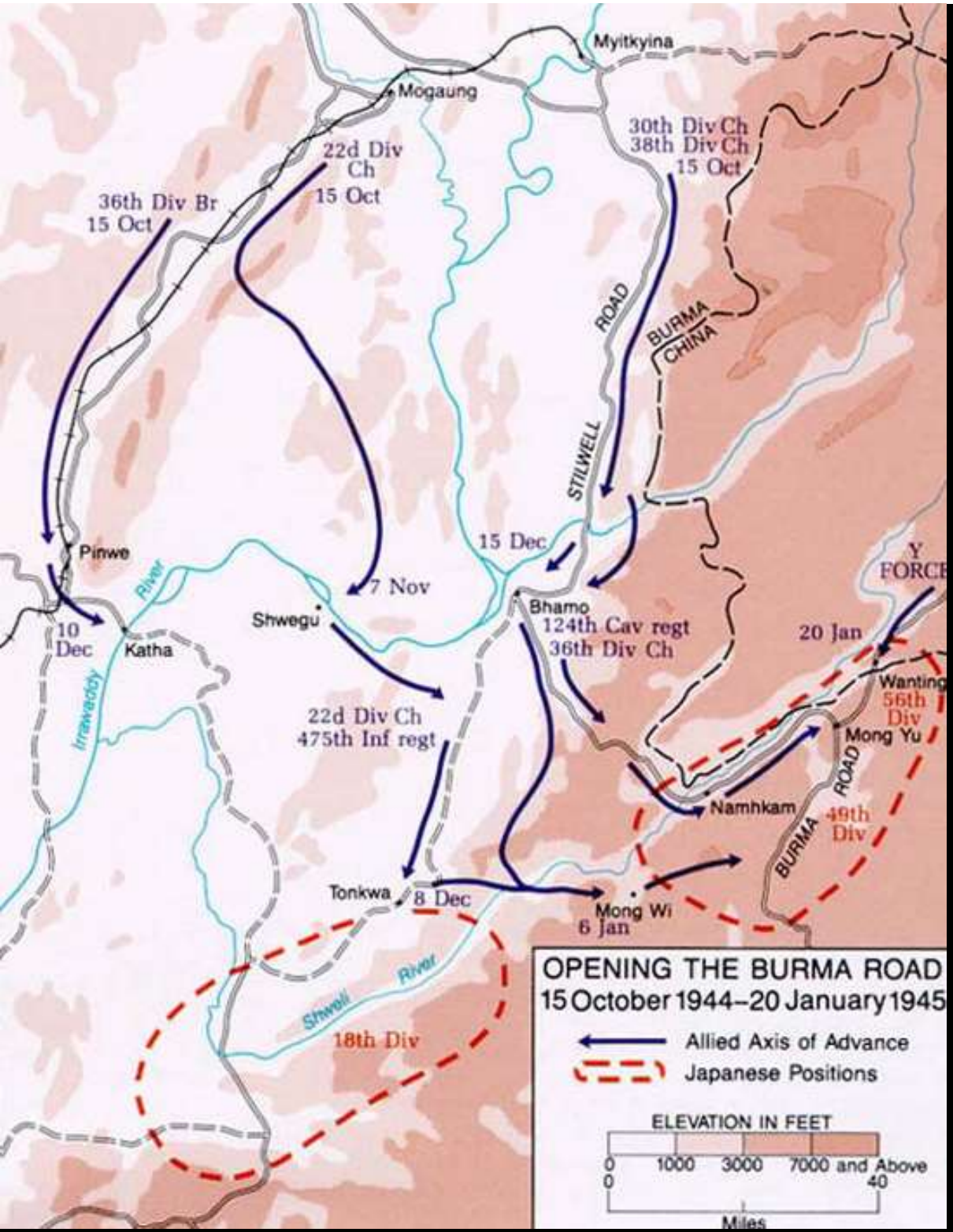
Stilwell was recalled three weeks later. He was replaced in China by General Wedermeyer, who was given no authority to deal. Ambassador Glauss resigned. He was replaced by Harry Hopkins friend Gen. Hurley – and like Hopkins believed Stiwell was the problem. He found out otherwise.

Claire Chennault was relieved for the loss of his bases. China was no longer truly relevant in war strategy.

Lt. Gen. Daniel Sultan took over command of U.S. forces in India and all Chinese forces under U.S. Command. He had been Stilwell's Chief of Staff since 1942 and as Stilwell preferred being in the field, Sultan ran the shop (and Stilwell had no complaints.)

He now commanded the 1st Chinese Army in Burma and two new American Regiments. They were in the area around Myitkyna. In addition, Chiang saw his bluff called.

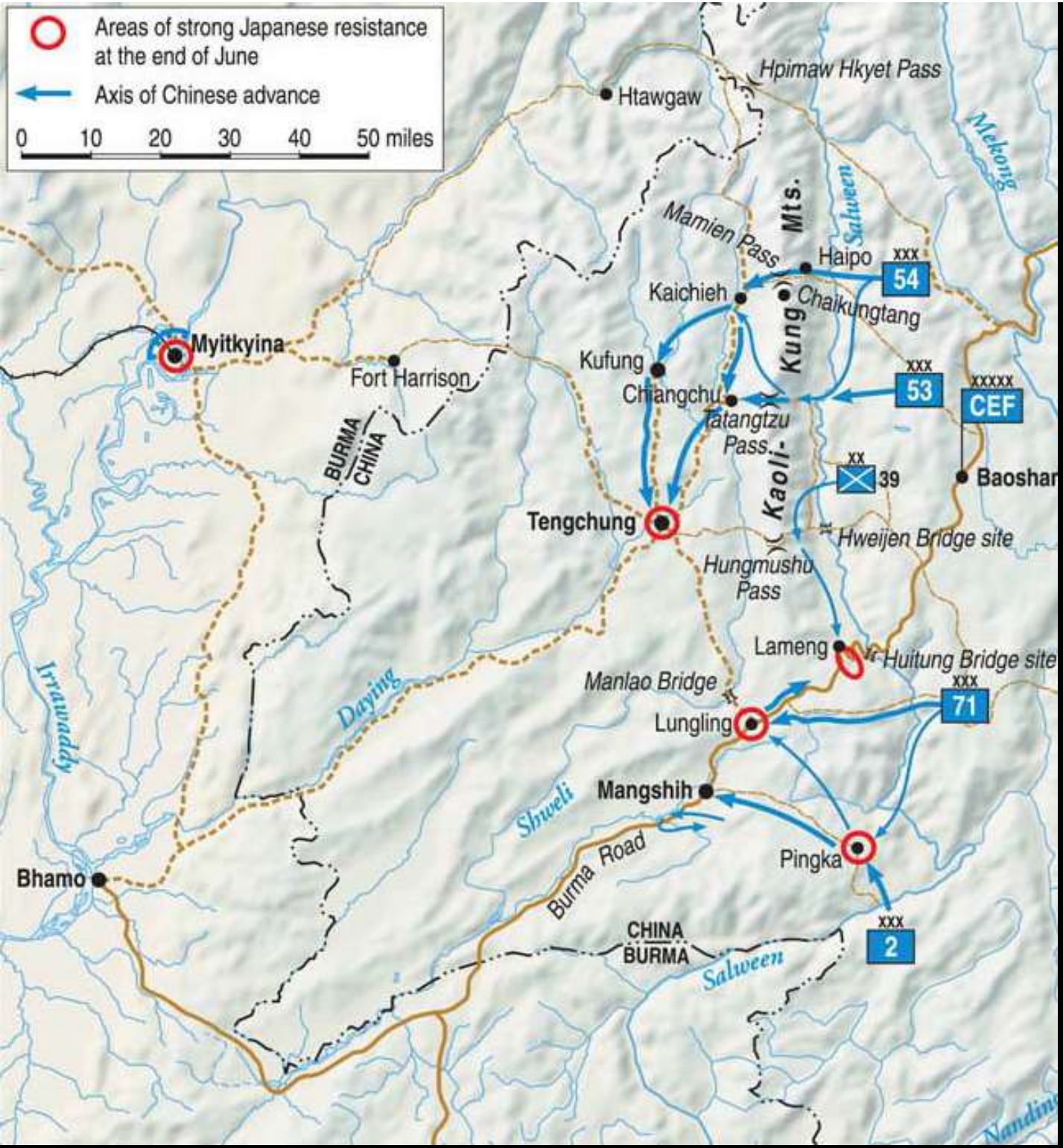
The Chinese Expeditionary Force – which Chiang had refused to see used – now fell under Gen. Sultan's direct command. The only limitation was the force could not be used south of Mandalay – but it was more than Stilwell had managed to obtain.



Stilwell had planned to clear the remainder of the Burma Road once Myitkyina fell. He had been delayed both by politics and by the loss of the Marauders and Chindits.

He had just started when he was recalled. Sultan continued without a pause.

The plan was to clear what remained of the Japanese 18th Division and then drive up the Burma Road to meet the Chinese coming the other way destroying the Japanese 56th Division in the process.



The Chinese lauched across the Salween River taking the Japanese by surprise.

The crossings occurred at places the Japanese believed could not be crossed and the Japanese were unprepared. They were besieged at several points.

Unfortunately, two of those points blocked the Burma road.

The Chinese force from China fought well against the Japanese and the two Chinese forces met in early January. A couple of weeks more were necessary to clear off the remaining Japanese from the area around the road.

On January 25th, 1945 the road was declared open.

The first official convoy left Ledo India that day under General Pick.

There were critical supplies for China – specifically heavy equipment needed to support the 14th Air Force. (The Air Force lost its forward bases – not any of its planes or pilots.)

But it was as much a parade as it was a convoy.

It took the convoy two weeks to make the drive to Kunming. Some of the delay was for PR ceremonies. Some was to allow the Chinese to clear the last of the Japanese from the right of way.

Chiang was present when the convoy reached Kunming and named the new rode the Stilwell Road.

The road would never equal the airlift operation in tonnage delivered per month so the planes kept flying. By the time it was completed the road was no longer truly necessary.

But it had been built.


GO EASY ON
THE CURVES

OUTLIER – 20th AIR FORCE

GEN Arnold fired the first commander of his B-29 force following a disappointing and costly first raid on Japan on June 15th 1944.

He sent a veteran of the 8th Air Force to take over – 33 year old newly promoted Major General Curtis LeMay.

LeMay was a graduate of Ohio State and Army ROTC. In 1939, he was a First Lieutenant although he was also considered one of the best pilot/navigators in the Air Corps.

With the 8th Air Force, COL LeMay flew the lead plane on the raid on Regensburg Germany on August 17th, 1943 – part of the costliest mission of the war.

OUTLIER – 20th AIR FORCE

20th Air Force would ultimately be composed of XX and XXI Bomber Commands. Each was further subdivided into Bomb Wings each with three to four Bomb Squadrons plus support units.

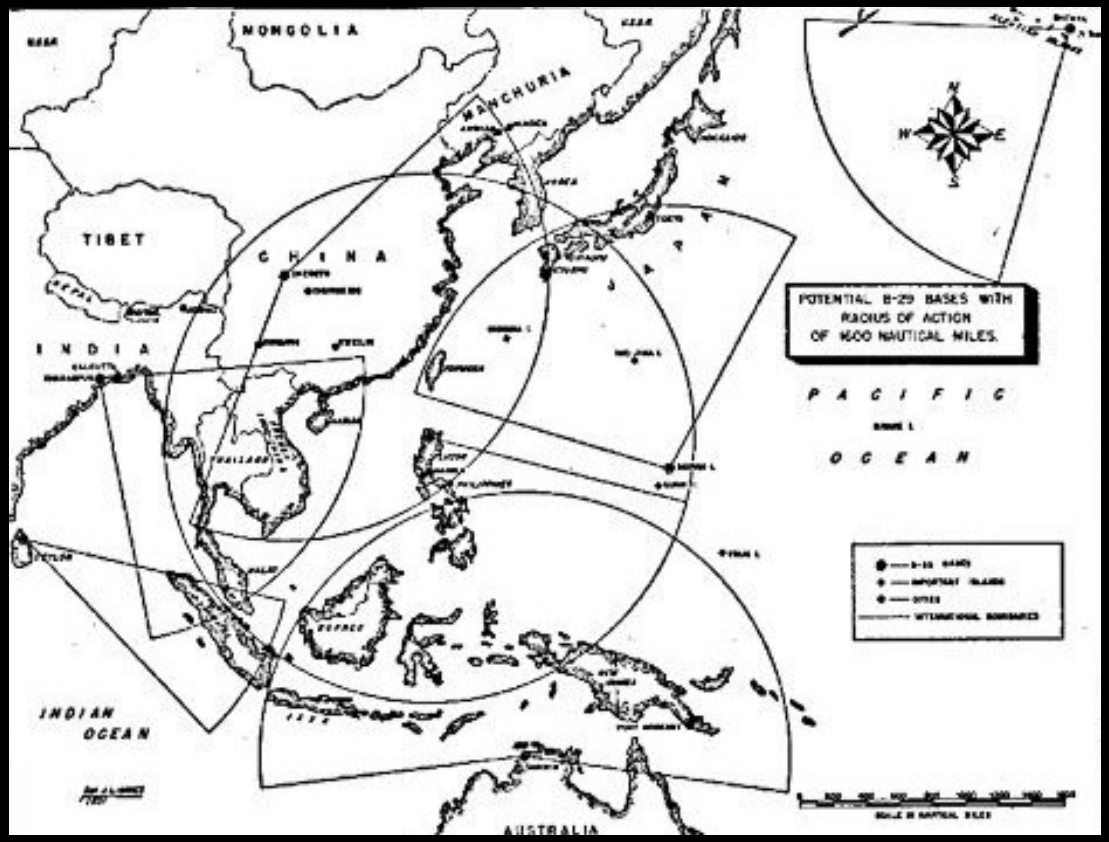
These units would be equipped with the new B-29 bombers. XX Bomber Command was based in India with forward bases in China. In April 1944, the first units arrived in the Far East.

GEN "Hap" Arnold, Air Corps Chief of Staff was in direct command of the 20th Air Force. This meant unlike all the other numbered Air Forces in the Pacific Theater, 20th Air Force was not subordinate to any of the Pacific commanders.

OUTLIER – 20th AIR FORCE

The purpose of the 20th Air Force was strategic bombing – attacking industry. It did not support any of the ongoing campaigns.

The missions out of the CBI proved mostly useless. While performance had improved under LeMay's leadership, the raids did little material damage at high cost (30 planes shot down, 95 lost in accidents). The bases also could only hit the southern most Japanese island of Kyushu and most of the industrial targets remained out of range.



OUTLIER – 20th AIR FORCE

Which was why GEN Arnold had wanted the Mariana Islands. Construction of bomber bases began on Saipan even before the fighting ended.

XXI Bomber Command in the Marianas flew its first raids on Japan on Nov. 24th, 1944. It was a fiasco. Less than a third of the bombers found the target. It did cause damage, but not what had been hoped.

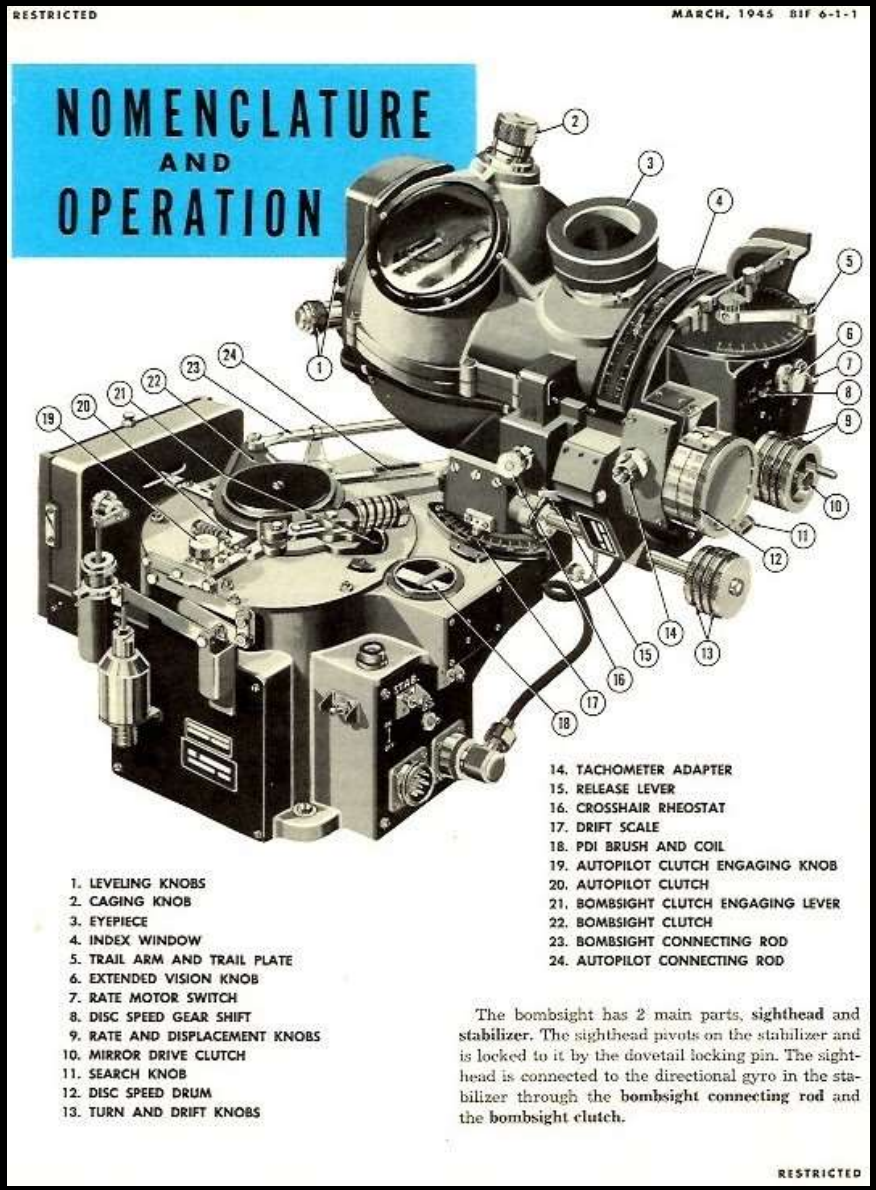
OUTLIER – 20th AIR FORCE

For well over a decade, the Army Air Forces had advocated daylight precision bombing as a war winning weapon. It was not until the late 1930's that they had a long range heavy bomber (the B-17) but they had the Norden Bombsight which they said could drop a bomb in a pickle barrel from 20,000 feet.

(The Germans had the plans from the mid-1930's and thought it was both too expensive and mostly useless).

With this bombsight, bombers could maximize damage to factories and key infrastructure while minimizing if not eliminating collateral damage (civilian casualties).

The bombsight was the best in the world but that was not saying much. Under ideal conditions (which were rare) it could achieve a CEP of 300 yards (80% of bombs landing within 300 yards of the aimpoint.)



RESTRICTED MARCH, 1945 BIF 6-1-1

NOMENCLATURE AND OPERATION

1. LEVELING KNOBS
2. CAGING KNOB
3. EYEPIECE
4. INDEX WINDOW
5. TRAIL ARM AND TRAIL PLATE
6. EXTENDED VISION KNOB
7. RATE MOTOR SWITCH
8. DISC SPEED GEAR SHIFT
9. RATE AND DISPLACEMENT KNOBS
10. MIRROR DRIVE CLUTCH
11. SEARCH KNOB
12. DISC SPEED DRUM
13. TURN AND DRIFT KNOBS
14. TACHOMETER ADAPTER
15. RELEASE LEVER
16. CROSSHAIR RHEOSTAT
17. DRIFT SCALE
18. PDI BRUSH AND COIL
19. AUTOPILOT CLUTCH ENGAGING KNOB
20. AUTOPILOT CLUTCH
21. BOMBSIGHT CLUTCH ENGAGING LEVER
22. BOMBSIGHT CLUTCH
23. BOMBSIGHT CONNECTING ROD
24. AUTOPILOT CONNECTING ROD

The bombsight has 2 main parts, **sighthead** and **stabilizer**. The sighthead pivots on the stabilizer and is locked to it by the dovetail locking pin. The sighthead is connected to the directional gyro in the stabilizer through the **bombsight connecting rod** and the **bombsight clutch**.

RESTRICTED

OUTLIER – 20th AIR FORCE

Arnold decide to experiment with incendiary raids rather than high altitude precision bombing. XXI Bomber Command's general protested as this was not how they did business.

After some additional less than acceptable missions, Arnold fired him and sent LeMay to take over the bombing campaign against Japan.

The poor results brought the entire notion of Strategic Bombing into question as well as whether the expense of the B-29 (more expensive the Manhattan Project) was worth the effort at all.

OUTLIER – 20th AIR FORCE

But while the plane had problems, what was truly a problem was weather. The planes often got separated passing through Pacific storm fronts. The targets were often clouded over. And for the first time, they had to contend with the jet stream which made accurate bombing impossible even if everything else worked perfectly.

OUTLIER – 20th AIR FORCE

LeMay decided to throw out the rule book. Raids would be at night (when weather was better) and at low altitude.

Another reason for change was that Japanese industry was not concentrated in factories like in Germany. Only final assembly occurred at a factory. Most of the components were made in neighborhood shops.

OUTLIER – 20th AIR FORCE

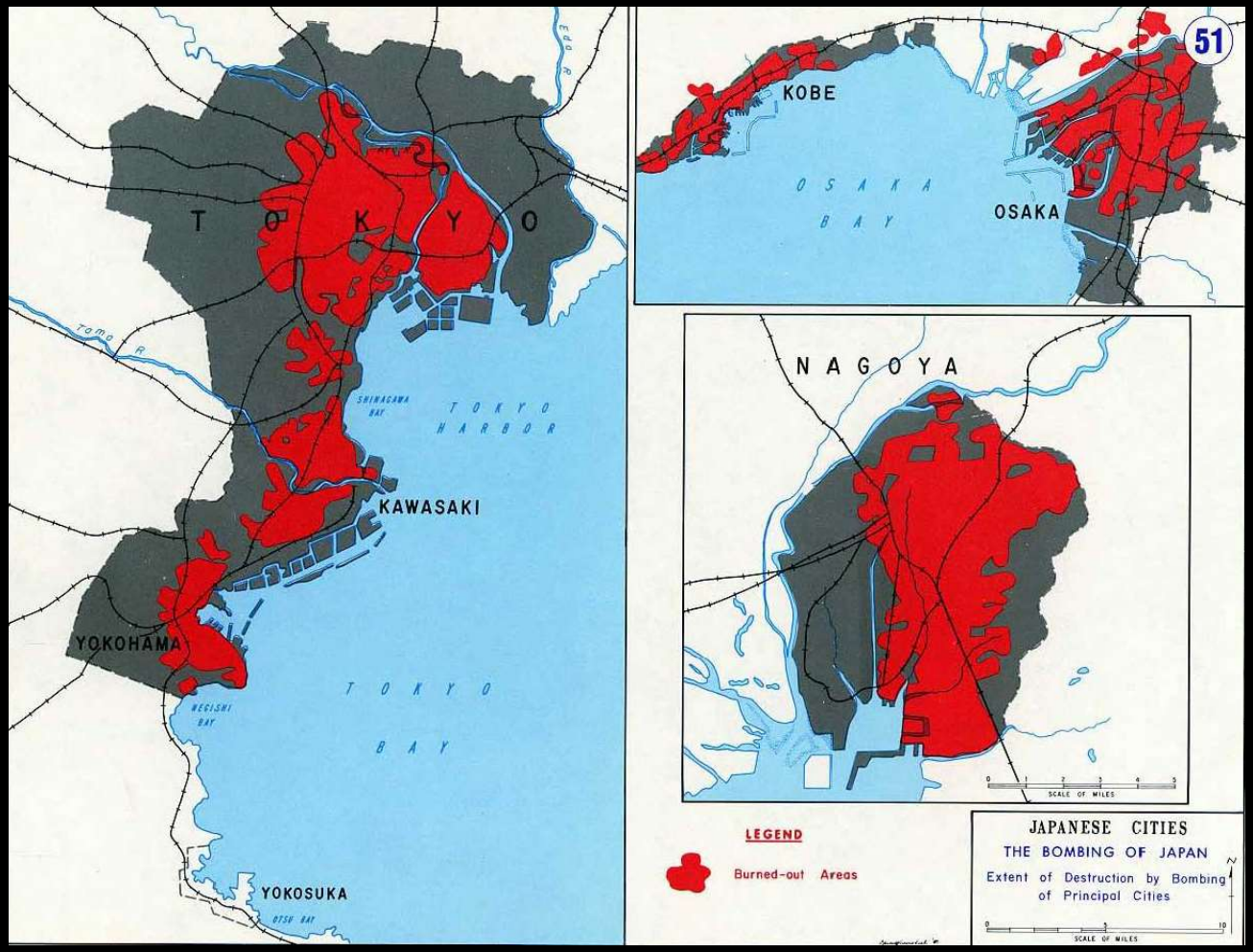
On March 9th, 1945, LeMay went after the neighborhood shops. Intelligence could not tell anyone where they were so they decided to destroy everything. 279 planes attacked Tokyo at night at low altitude. It was the deadliest and most destructive air strike in history to this day. 80,000 – 100,000 were killed, 50,000 seriously injured, over 1,000,000 were made homeless. 10 square miles of Tokyo ceased to exist – along with all the factories and neighborhood shops.

OUTLIER – 20th AIR FORCE

LeMay had not asked for specific permission to fire bomb Tokyo. Incendiaries had been used – targeted on factories. Widespread area bombing was being discussed but not yet authorized.

Such tactics were a dramatic departure from 20 years of American planning and doctrine as well as long held diplomatic position.

The bombing was believed a massive success and other cities soon followed, although not quite to the same degree.



Above: maps of Tokyo, Kawasaki, Yokohama, Kobe, Osaka and Nagoya – all targets of area fire bombing in March and April 1945. The red areas were totally destroyed. Some cities were specifically not to be touched: Hiroshima, Kokura, Kyoto, Nagasaki and Niigata.

The Price of Being Stubborn: Peleliu

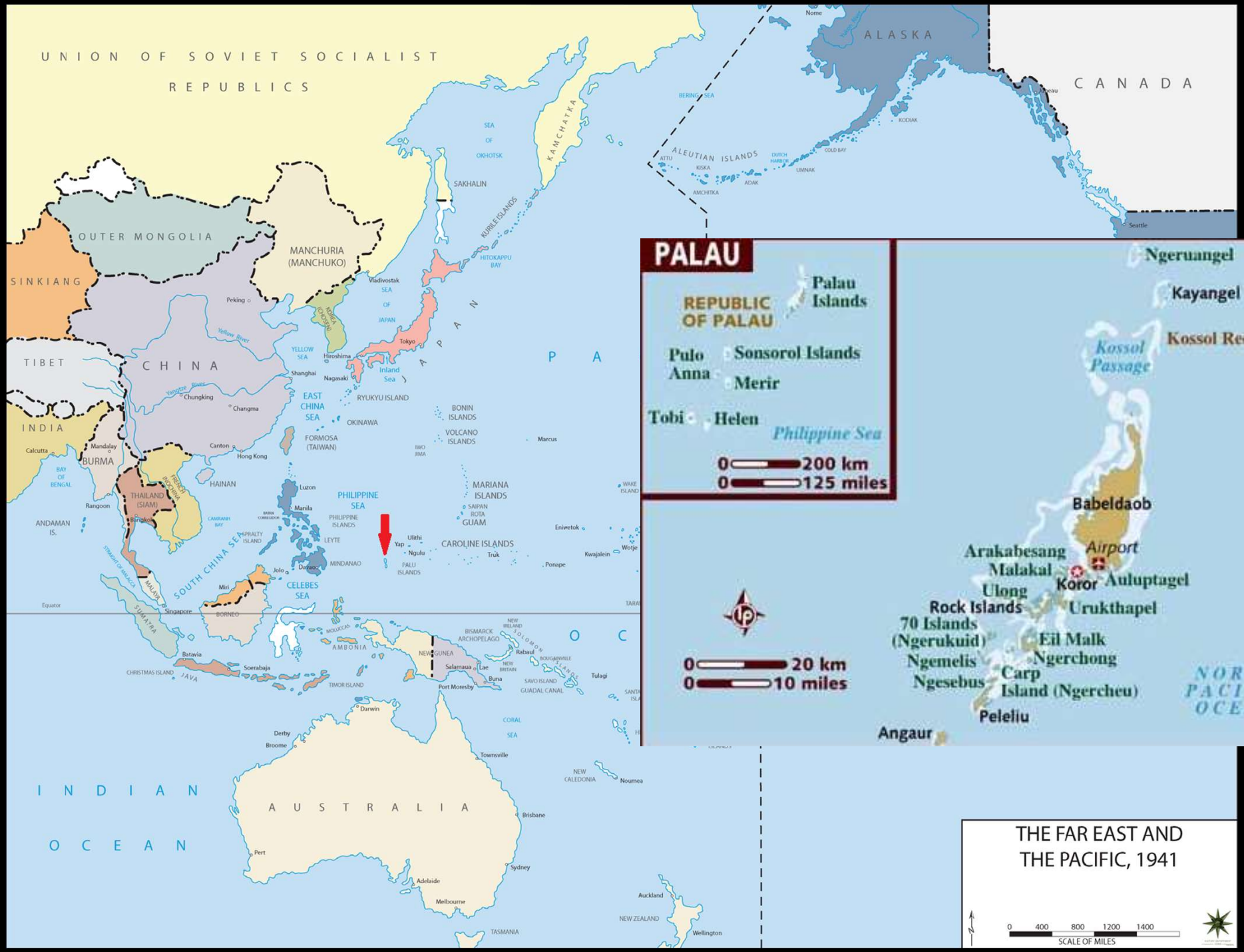
The second part of Operation Forager was to seize islands to support the drive on the Philippines. This included Ulithi Atoll, Yap and the Palau Islands and specifically Angaur and Peleliu.

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.

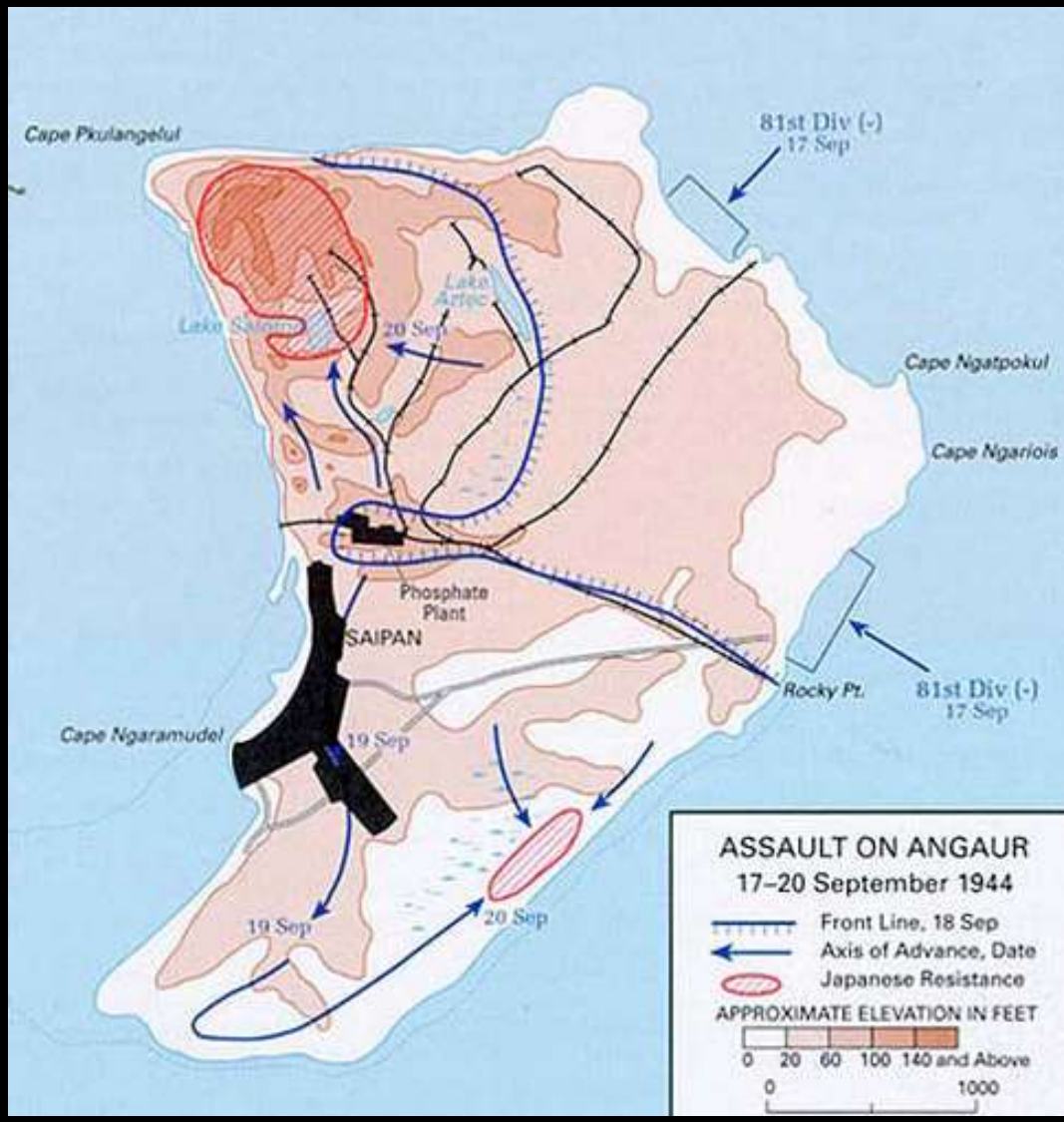
The Price of Being Stubborn: Peleliu

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.

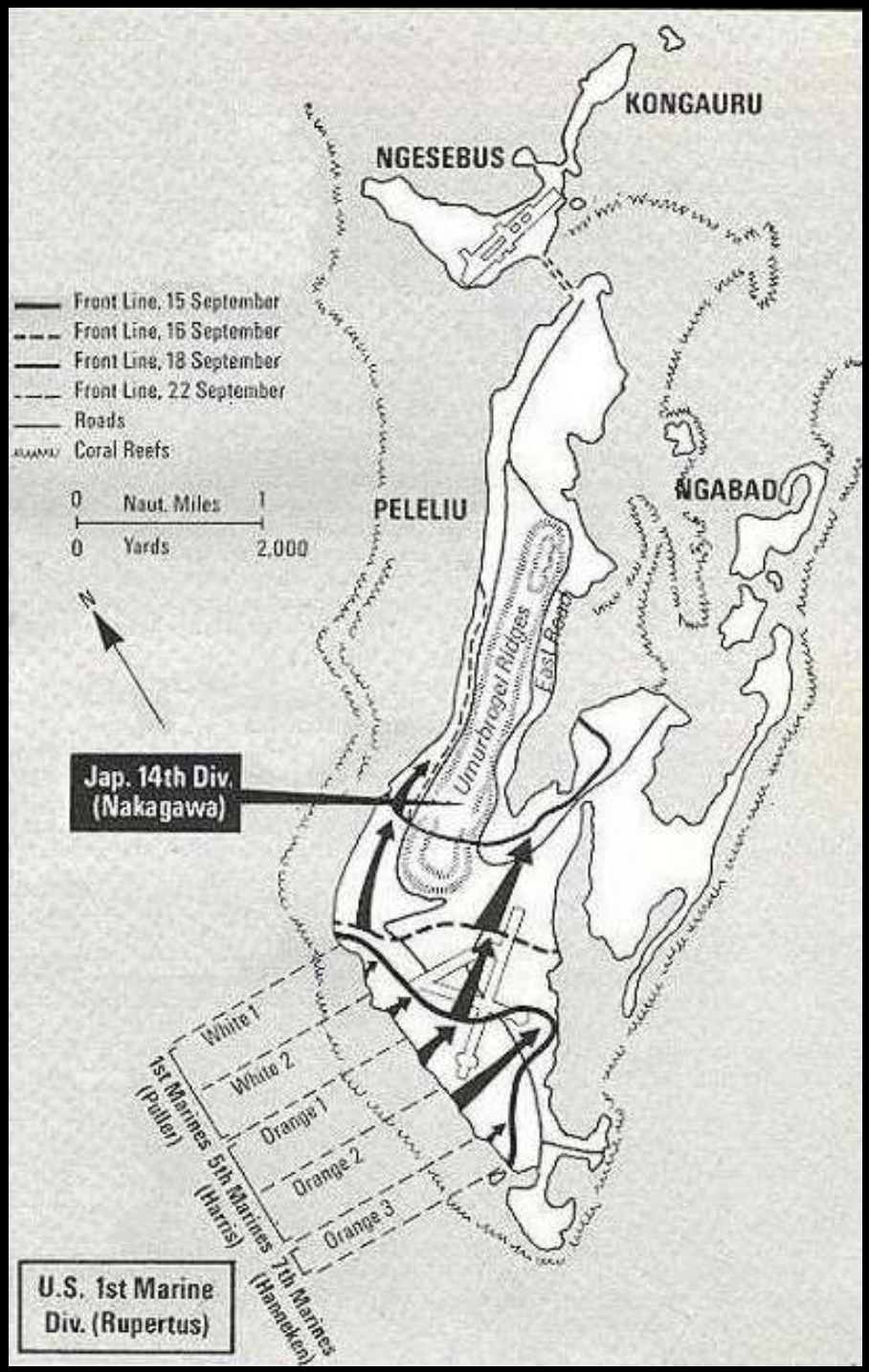
It was fast and low cost compared to Peleliu…

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 ran into stiff resistance despite most of the Japanese being nowhere nearby.



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.

The Price of Being Stubborn: Peleliu

When they landed on September 15th, the 1st Marine Division was considered by many as the best light infantry division in any military at the time.

Col. Chesty Puller's 1st Regiment suffered over 30% casualties in the first 48 hours and was pulled out over MGEN Rupertus objections after a week having lost about 70% of its men. The last regiment was pulled out after about a month (again over Rupertus' objection) having lost over 60%. For all intents and purposes, 1st Marine Division had ceased to exist as an effective unit until well after the war ended.

The 81st Division, which had offered to send a regiment to help after the first week (there being not enough room on Angaur), had been refused until Rupertus and his division were beyond salvation. They finished the job (although it was not any easier but their casualties were nowhere near as severe.)

As for the Japanese? They were not so much on Peleliu as they were in it – underground and immune from bombs and naval gunfire.

The last defenders surrendered when their water ran out – in 1947. They were well fed but had no ammunition. There were over 100 of them.