THE PACIFIC WAR

REAR AREAS

It was not as simple as it was in Europe.

Some places were always in the rear – Hawaii, Samoa, Fiji, New Caledonia, Australia and New Zealand.

Some saw the war come and pass through and then beyond: Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Kwajalein, and the Aleutians.

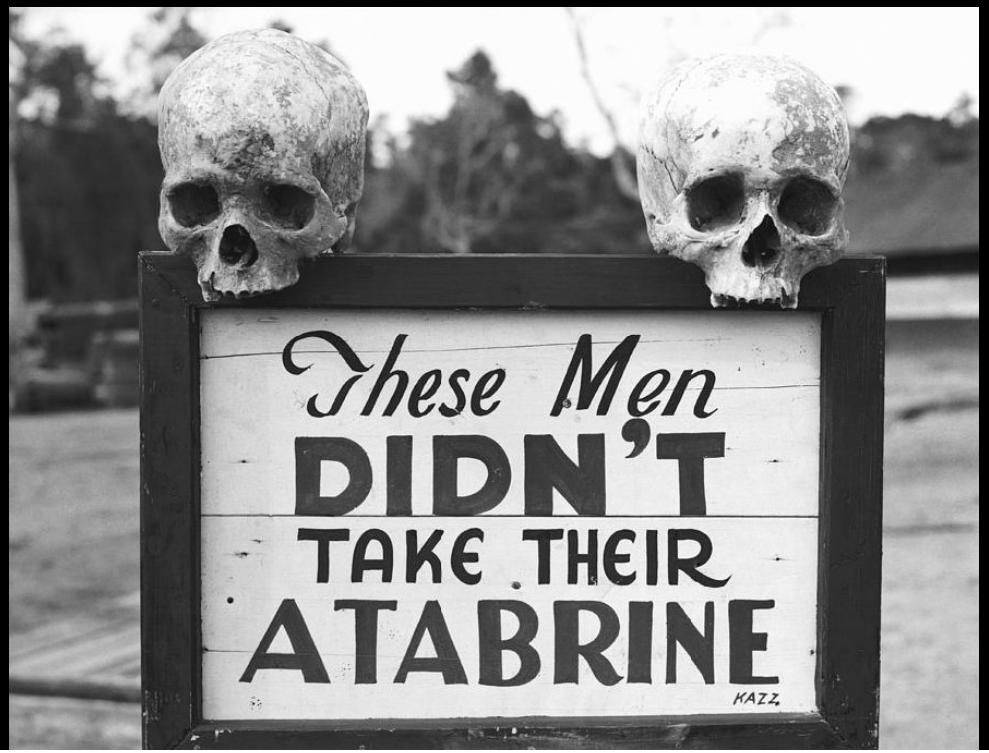
Others remained in combat but also became rear areas once the nearby Japanese were paralyzed by lack of supply: Bougainville, New Britain, New Guinea.

All became supply depots. Many – especially any with jungles – became training areas. And others became hospitals and recreation areas.

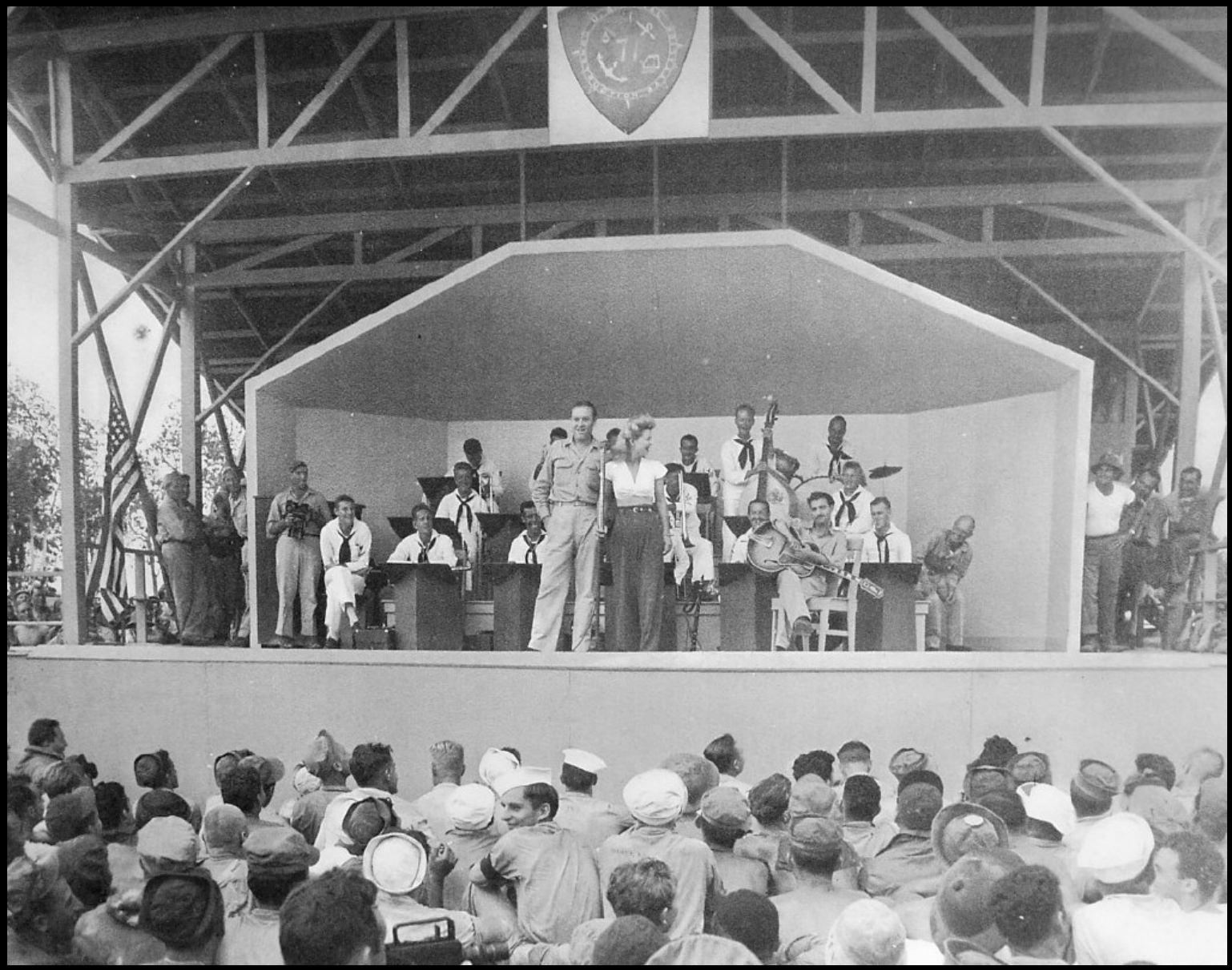
REAR AREAS

The arrival of nurses was usually a sign that a former battlefield was now a rear area.

However, that did not mean it was safe to drink the water or stop taking those pills that made you sick to keep you from getting really, really sick…



REAR AREAS



The arrival of this guy – center stage next to a woman – did not mean it was a rear area. Bob Hope would do his show even if they were shooting at the enemy a few yards away.

REAR AREAS

The availability of a Coke was not an indication that things were quiet.

Coke was available before beer. Moreover, in all theaters, Coca-Cola bottling plants were in the holds of the assault transports to be unloaded … at some point.

REAR AREAS

However, if one of these odd looking things showed up in the Pacific theater, you were in luck.

They were barges so they had to be towed and could not get away from the enemy so if they arrived, the enemy was nowhere around – in other words, you were in a rear area.

But more critically, while they performed several support roles, several of them were specifically configured for one mission only.

They made ice cream.

In large quantities.

For both the ships of the fleet and for the soldiers ashore.

REAR AREAS

HOWEVER:

Even if you were absolutely certain you were in a Rear Area, there was one thing – always ridiculed and often detested – that you could not avoid even if it was always there when the bullets were flying…

REAR AREAS

Even home on leave – and those who served in the Pacific were far more likely to get that than their European Theater counterparts – there was no escaping Spam. It was the only meat product that was never subjected to war rationing … and still far too common on ships and in GI rations.

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.

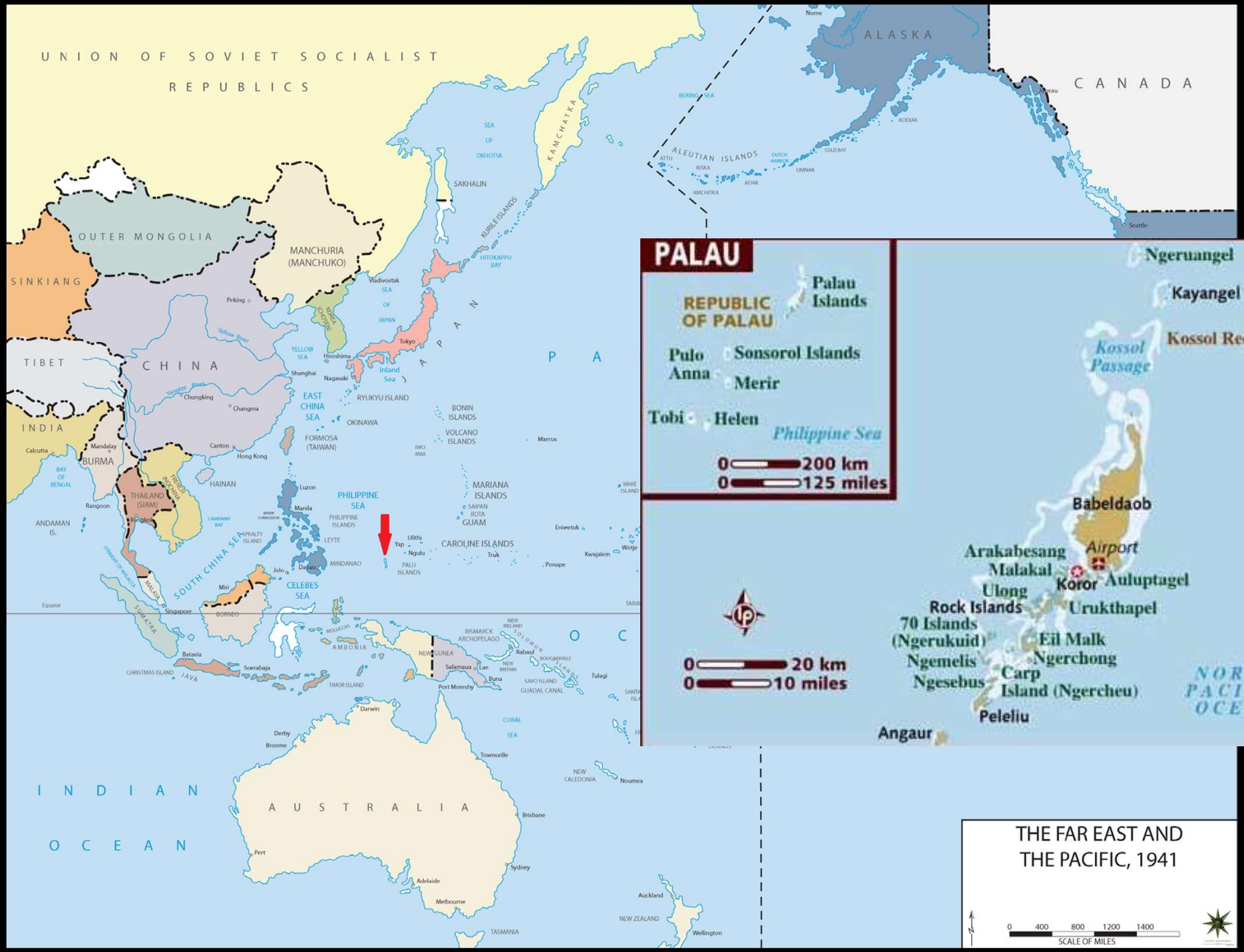
The Price of Being Stubborn: Peleliu

The Palaus had factored into the Navy's war plans for well over a decade and as late as the spring of 1944 was still considered a vital target.

By the time the Marianas had fallen in August only two senior officers still saw it as necessary. MacArthur had made it clear it was neither of value for his planned invasions nor a threat to them. Neither Halsey nor Spruance considered them necessary (but did see a nearby atoll as being worth an effort).

Only Nimitz and King felt this operation had any merit at all. Nimitz was Spruance and Halsey's superior and King would never support MacArthur. Why Nimitz did not listen is less known as this was a rare instance where he did not.

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.

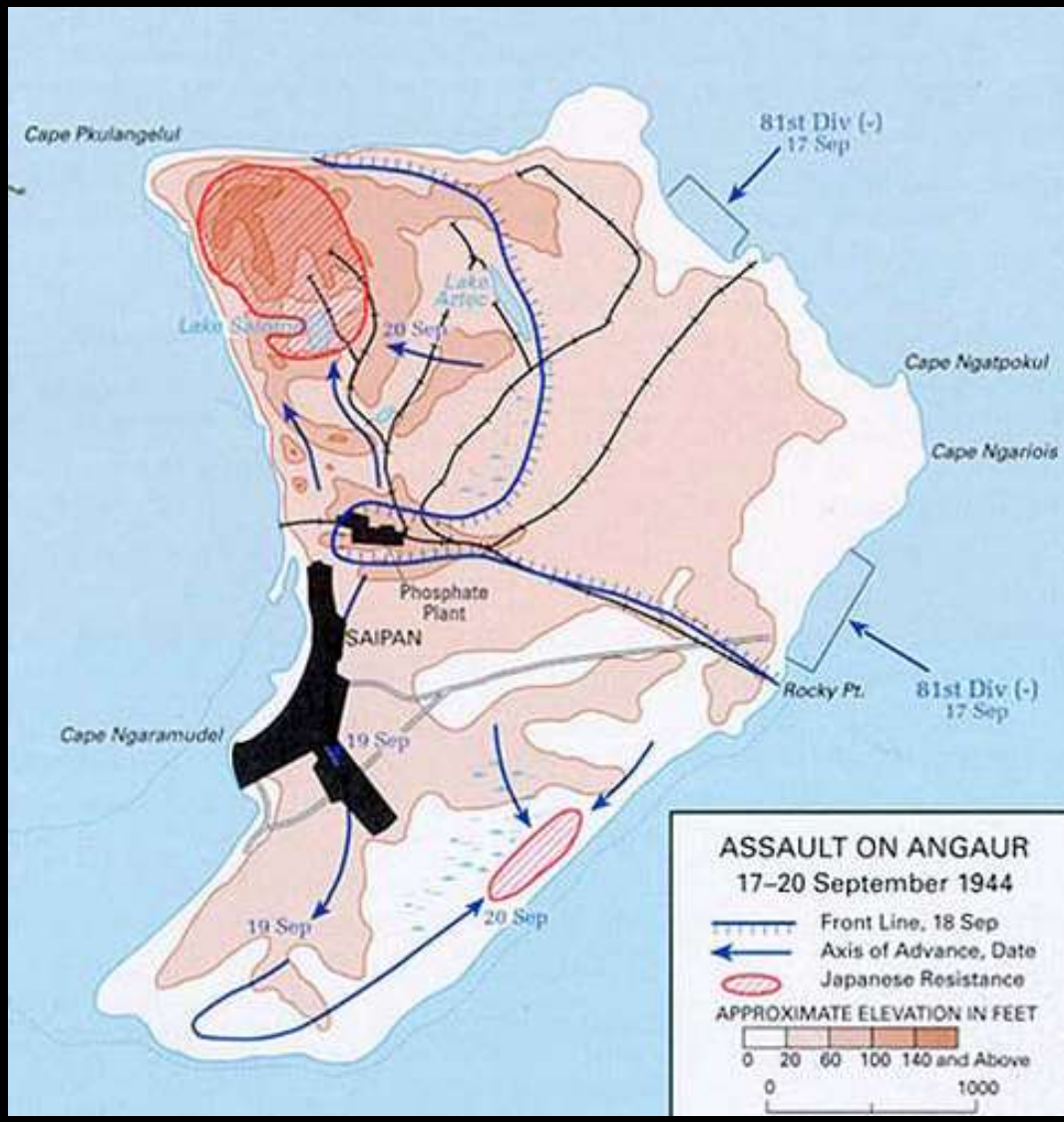
The Price of Being Stubborn: Peleliu

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

However, the entirety of the 81st Division was not necessary so the reserve Regiment was dispatched to invade Ulithi Atoll nearby. There were no Japanese on the atoll and this atoll would prove to be the only important gain of this campaign as it would be transformed into a huge supply base with a sheltered anchorage that could hold most of the entire fleet.

By early 1945, major ship repair facilities had been brought in and damaged ships were brought here until the end of the war for repairs that would either see them return to combat or at least repaired well enough to make it back to the U.S. for more repairs.

The above picture is of the carrier anchorage at Ulithi known as “Murderers Row.”

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.

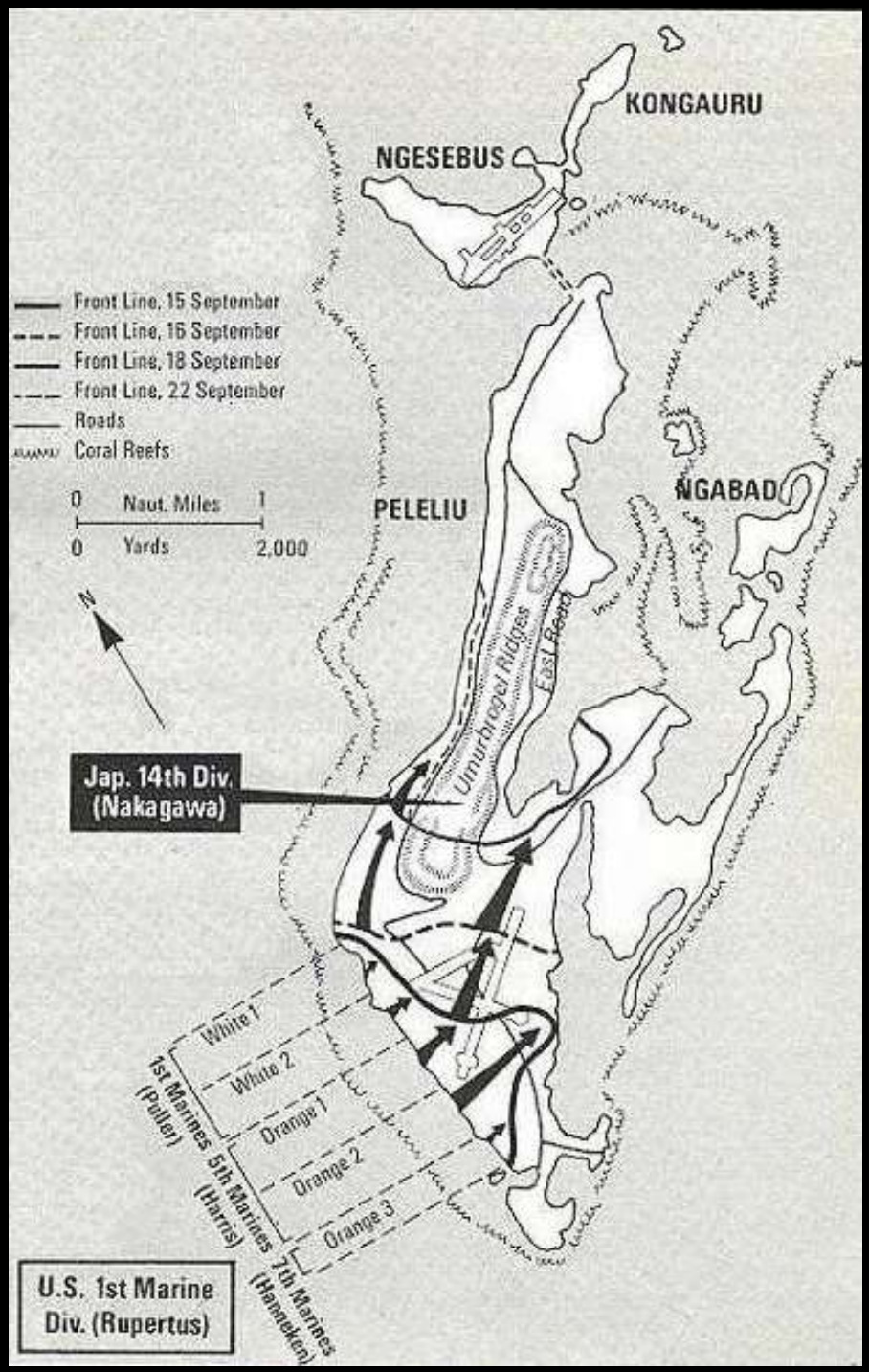
It was fast and low cost compared to Peleliu…

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.

THIRD FLEET

With the conclusion of the Marianas Campaign, command of the Pacific Fleet forces at sea in the Central Pacific passed from Raymond Spruance and his 5th Fleet staff to William Halsey and his 3rd Fleet. With a handful of exceptions, the ships, squadrons and men in that fleet were the same (the exceptions being a handful of ships scheduled for overhauls back in the U.S. and new ships that had just arrived.)

Halsey had been ashore since the end of May 1942. His command in the South Pacific had been a theater command from ashore, not command at sea. While a Carrier Battle (Santa Cruz in Oct. 1942) had occurred under his command, he was not with the Fleet. Considered the best Carrier Task Force Commander when the war broke out, he had not commanded a single carrier – much less a task force – in a battle with the Japanese Navy.

His first assignment was support of the invasion of Peleliu.

THIRD FLEET

However, that invasion did not require the full 15 aircraft carriers nor all 14 battleships at his disposal. While the Marines struggled ashore, the bulk of his fleet was conducting strikes against targets in the Philippines in preparation for the invasion scheduled for December.

His airmen found little – or at least far less than they had expected. Japanese airpower in the archipelago was far less than anticipated and the ultimate target for the initial landings – Leyte – was practically defenseless. As a result, the decision was made to move up MacArthur's invasion of Leyte by two months to October 1944.

Japanese intelligence was aware of this "new" Third Fleet and initially believed this meant the entire Fifth Fleet had been replaced.

THIRD FLEET

U.S. intelligence correctly concluded that Japan's airpower was massing somewhere else and would deploy to the Philippines once the Americans landed so they could then concentrate on that landing. While they had (correct) suspicions as to where, they were not certain so Halsey's fleet was tasked with finding and destroying that air power.

Third Fleet launched strikes against Japanese airbases in the Ryukyu Islands (Okinawa) south of Japan, Hong Kong and Cam Rhan Bay finding not much at all in the latter two. Its final target was the 30 airbases on Formosa.

For one of the few times in the war, Japanese Army and Navy air power was under a single commander who was confident his 1500+ combat planes could deal with the Americans especially as he now had access to a night attack force. (Much of which had been destroyed on Okinawa but he felt enough survived to be a real threat to the Americans.)

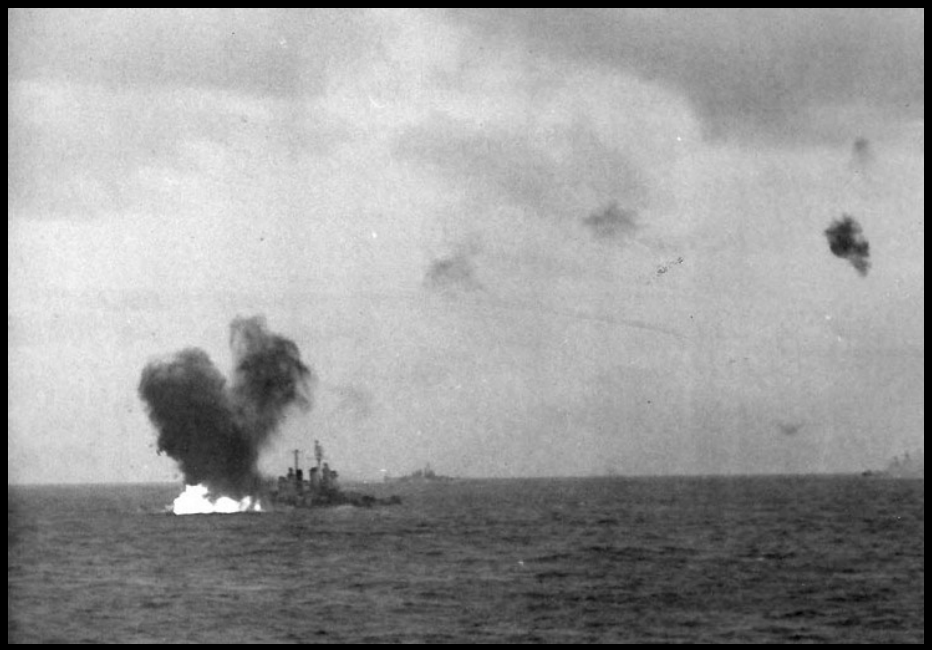
THIRD FLEET

Early on the first day of the raids, the Japanese commander was certain his plan was working as scores and more planes fell from the sky in flames. By late afternoon he had learned almost all of those planes had been his.

That night he sent in his night attacks armed with torpedoes. They managed a single hit on USS Houston which blew off its bow but did not sink it. The next night they hit another cruiser USS Canberra doing far greater damage but again not sinking it. Houston could limp away under its own power, Canberra could not and was taken under tow (both would escape and be repaired.)

The few surviving Japanese pilots claimed sinking 17 aircraft carriers, at least 11 battleships and over fifty other ships. (The U.S. fleet only had 15 carriers and 6 battleships, none had been hit.) They believed the small group escorting the two heavily damaged cruisers was all that was left.

“Bait Force” – Prelude to Leyte

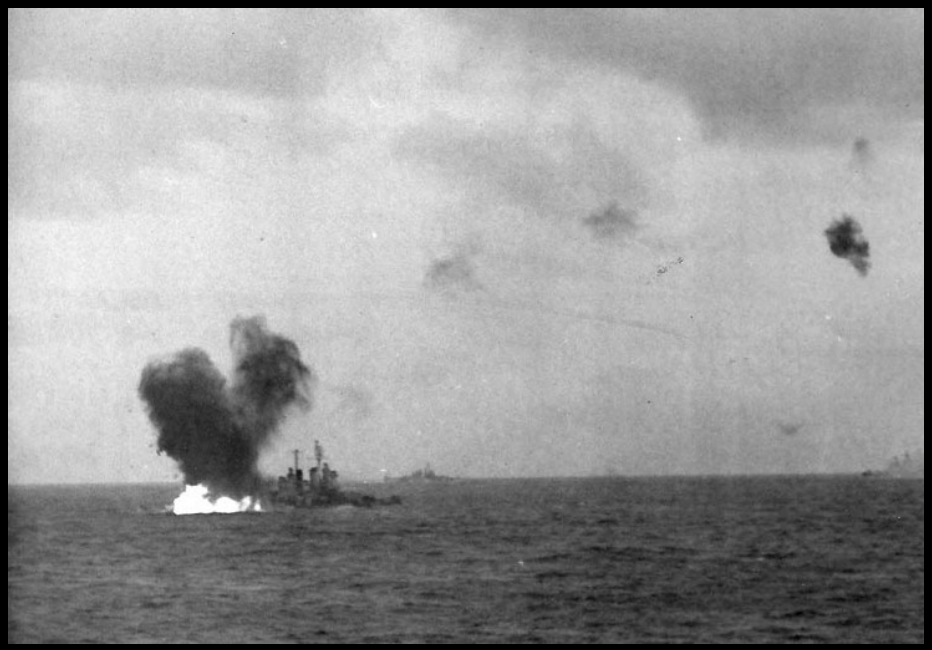


Halsey now planned to use those two cripples to draw the Japanese fleet into battle. He kept the bulk of his fleet out of sight over the horizon but still close enough to protect the cripples and attack any Japanese force.

The Japanese did take the bait, at first. But their reconnaissance spotted the intact Third Fleet and their fleet turned back.

Despite learning Halsey’s Fleet had survived intact, the Japanese newspapers had already reported a decisive Japanese victory and were predicting the Americans would now offer terms and no one tried to disabuse them of this.

“Bait Force” – Prelude to Leyte



The result was very different than what appeared in the Japanese press. Aside from the two damaged cruisers, the Americans had lost about 60 planes out of over a thousand. No other ships had suffered appreciable damage.

Of the more than combat 1500 planes in Formosa before Third Fleet had arrived, only about 150 remained airworthy, the rest having been shot down or damaged or destroyed on the ground.

The Japanese were learning (but had not yet accepted) that to get one plane to hit a ship, it needed to send about 100 and would lose at least 90.

The American combat air patrols and anti-air defenses by now amounted to the deadliest airspace in the world.

“I Shall Return” - Leyte

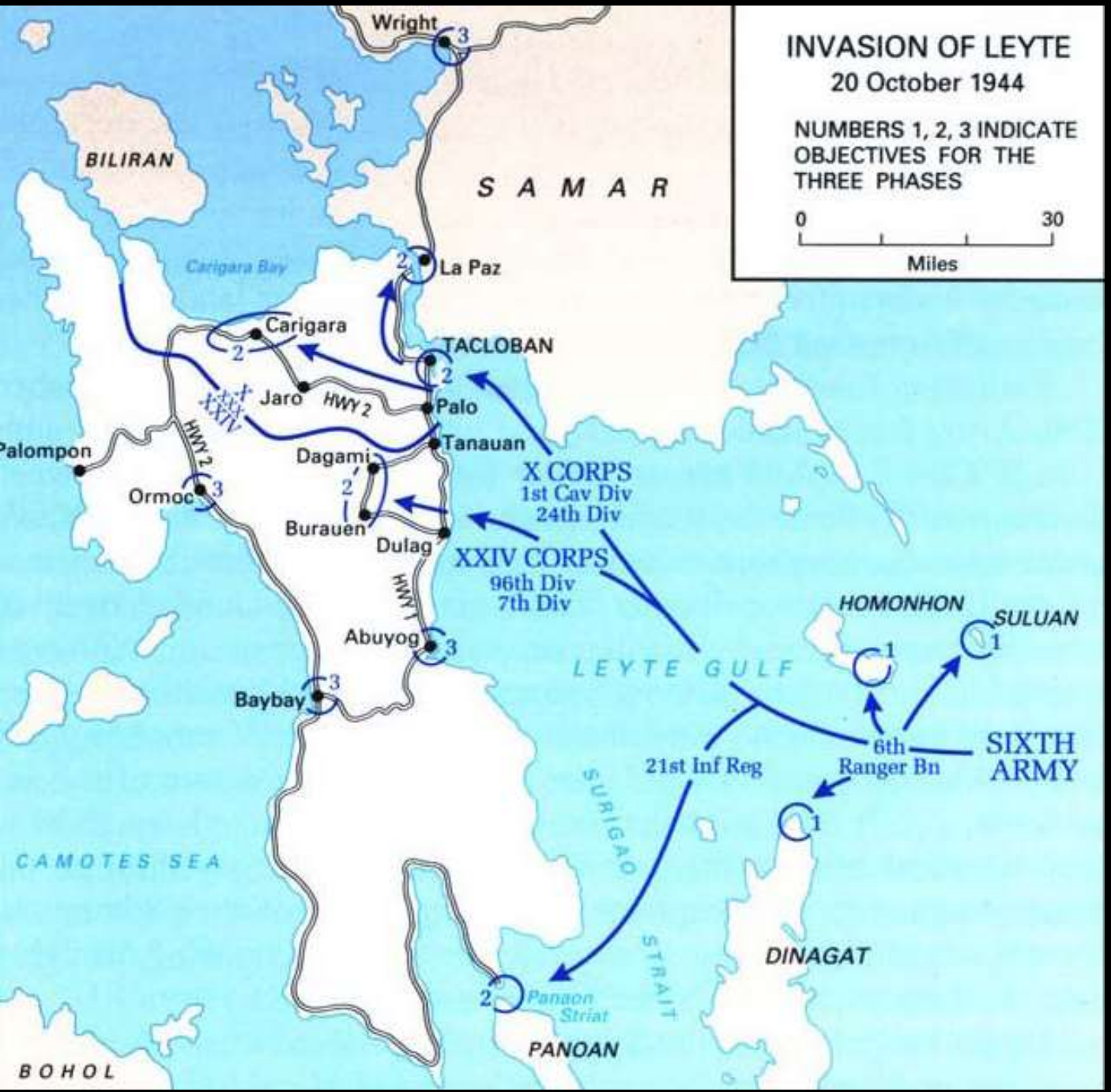
The Philippines had been the prime objective of the United States in the Pacific since 1942 (but for a moment’s insanity about Formosa).

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.

“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.

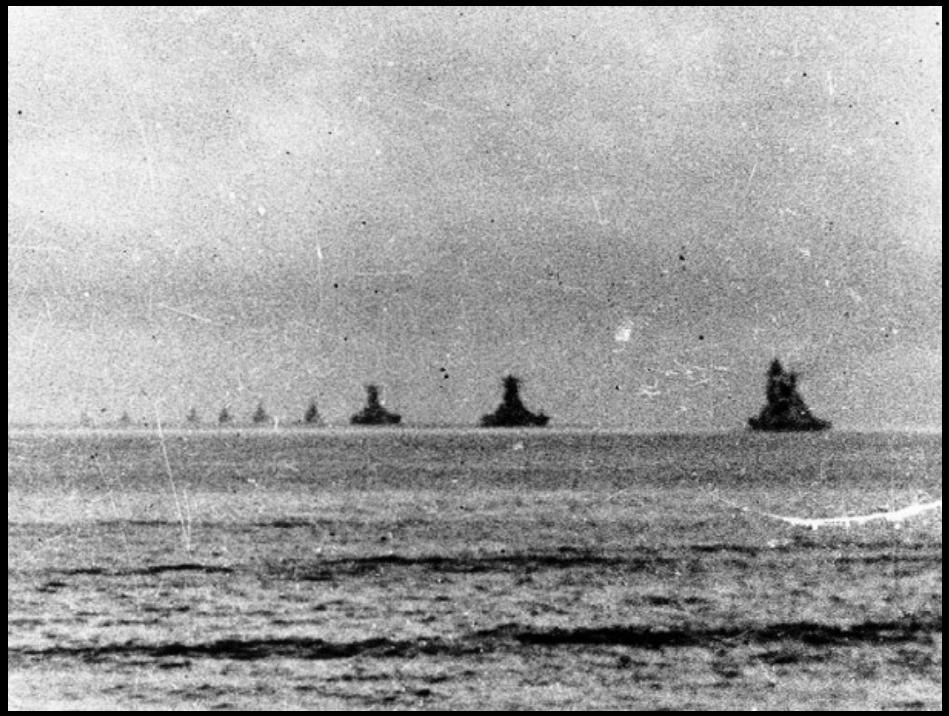
THIRD FLEET

With the Army ashore, Halsey detached two of his four carrier task groups to return to Ulithi Atoll to refuel and take a few days off. His operations had been constant and his men needed a break but one would argue needing a break and being able to take one were different things altogether.

The fact that the Japanese fleet had not yet shown up did not mean they would not show up.

The Americans were aware that at least some elements of the Japanese Fleet were on their way and had both submarines and air patrols looking for them but they were confident (for now) they had time to spare and rotate units through Ulithi and that they retained enough to handle the situation should the Japanese show up.

THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF



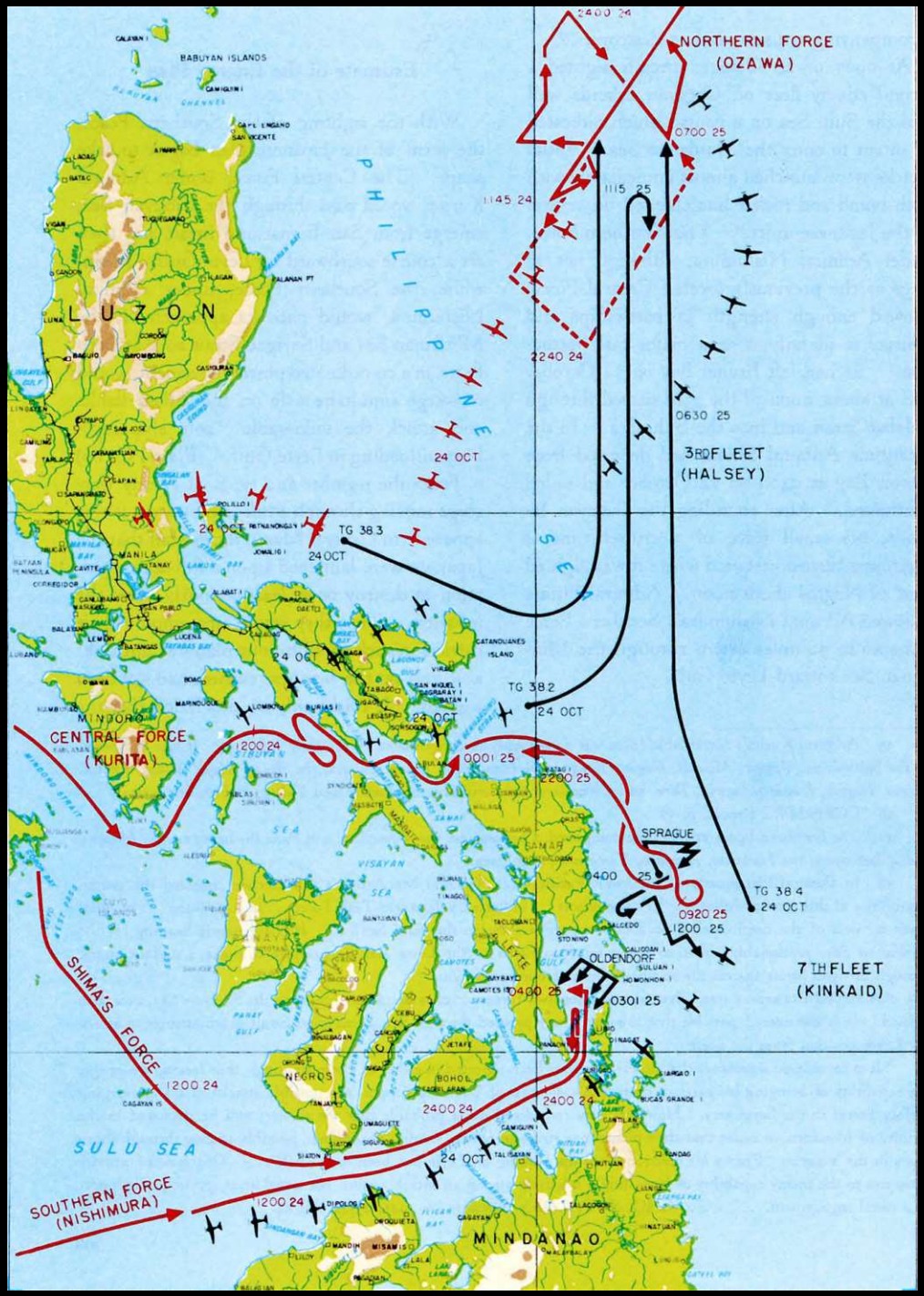
The Japanese fleet was now drawn out. It had a plan to deal with an American invasion of the Philippines and it counted on Halsey being Halsey. (And Halsey would not disappoint.)

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



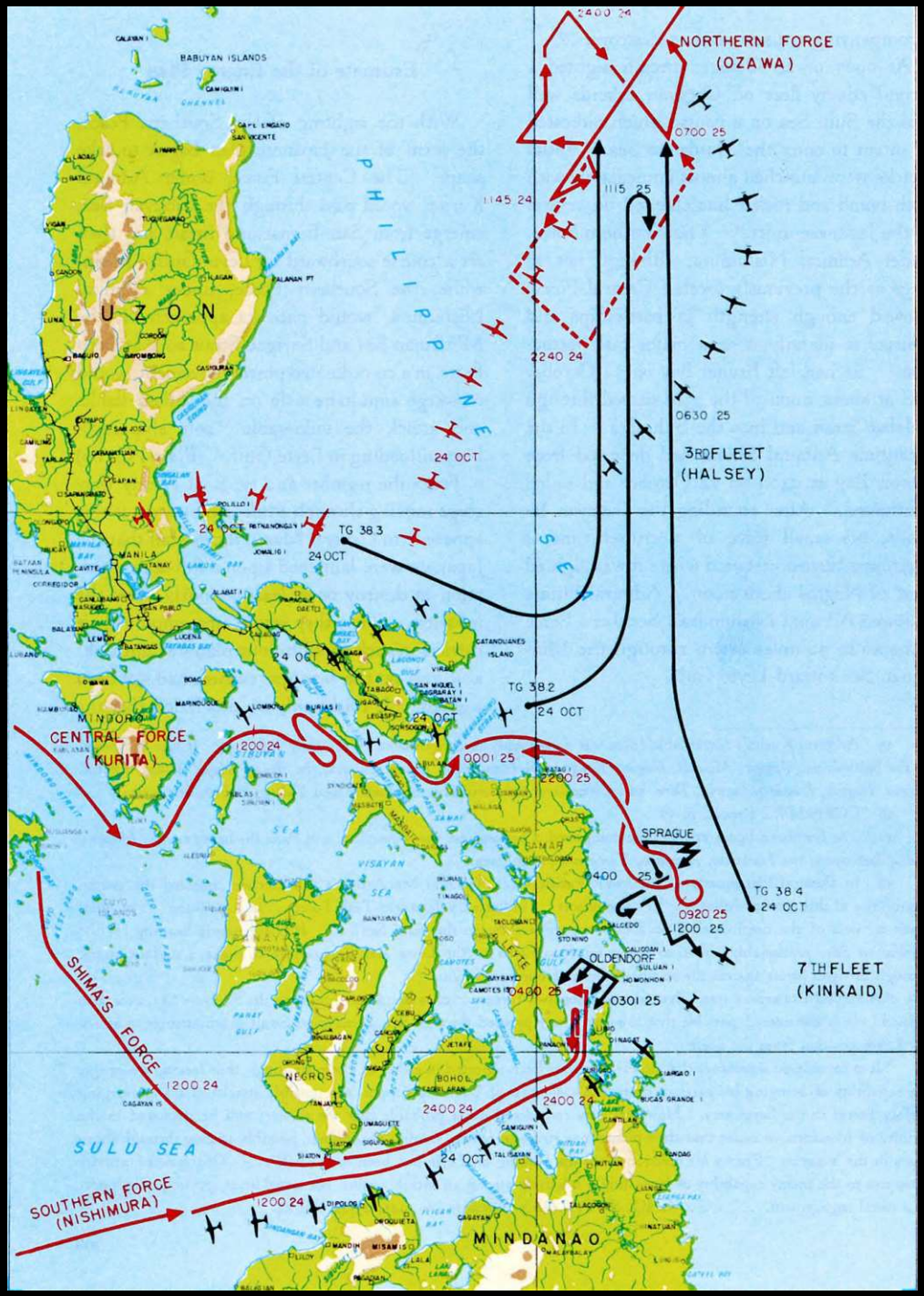
The "Center Force" consisted of 5 battleships, 10 heavy cruisers, 2 light cruisers and 15 destroyers including the battleships Yamato and Musashi – the two most powerful in the world.

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.

THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF

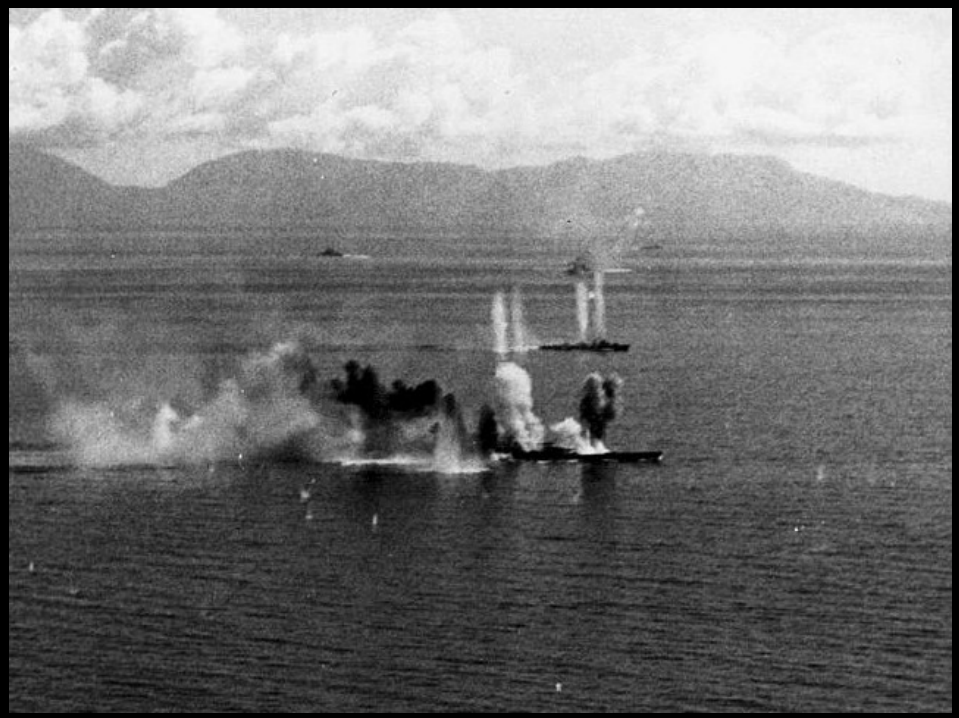


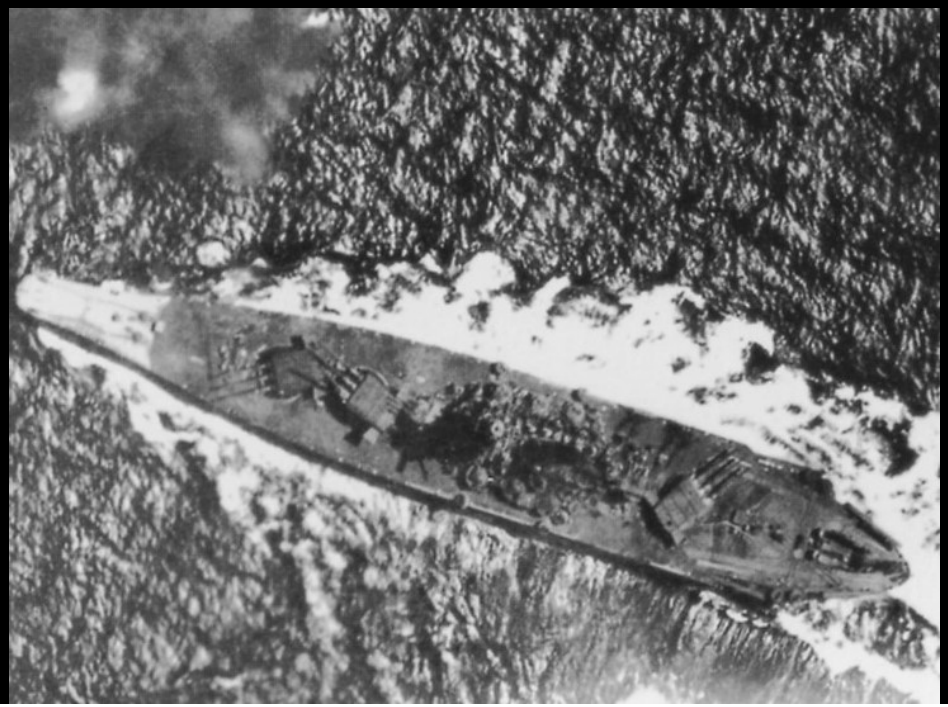
The Battle of Leyte Gulf was actually five interrelated engagements fought over two days none of which actually occurred in Leyte Gulf. Leyte Gulf was the Japanese objective.

The first was the Battle of Palawan Passage.

U.S. Submarines Dace and Darter detected the Center Force on October 23rd in the Palawan Passage west of Luzon. They radioed their sighting and then pursued. Just before dawn they attacked hitting three heavy cruisers and sinking two including the flagship.

THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF



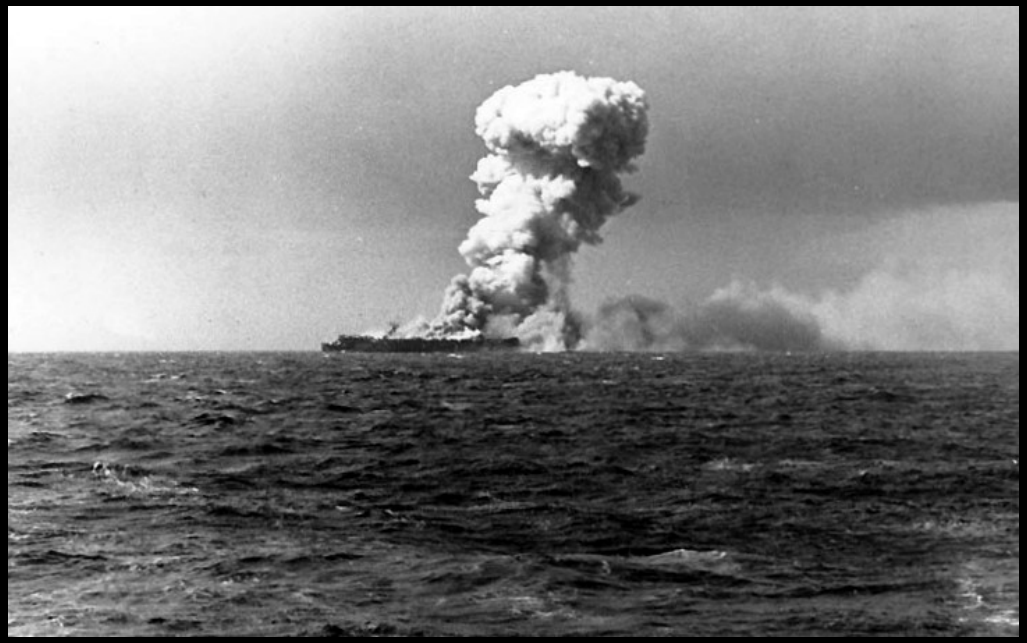


The second was the battle of Sibuyan Sea. TF-38 had already sent half its carriers west to Ulithi to refuel when the report of the submarines was received. Halsey recalled one of the two groups. The other group continued to Ulithi with 40% of Halsey's planes embarked.

The remainder launched attacks at the suspected fleet. The Musashi and a heavy cruiser were heavily damaged and the Musashi eventually sank.

Two other battleships (including Yamato) were slightly damaged. The Center Force turned around hoping to get out of range. It turned back near dusk hoping to make its run under cover of darkness.

THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF



As the airstrikes were underway against the Center Force, Japanese planes from Luzon found one of the U.S. carrier groups. This was a conventional attack but it proved very costly to the attacking Japanese who lost most of the strike.

One plane hit the light carrier USS Princeton crippling it and setting it on fire. Princeton had been preparing a strike and its flight deck and hanger were filled with fueled and armed aircraft.

Riddled by internal explosions, it would be abandoned and scuttled before the day was over.

Halsey now recalled his other task groups.

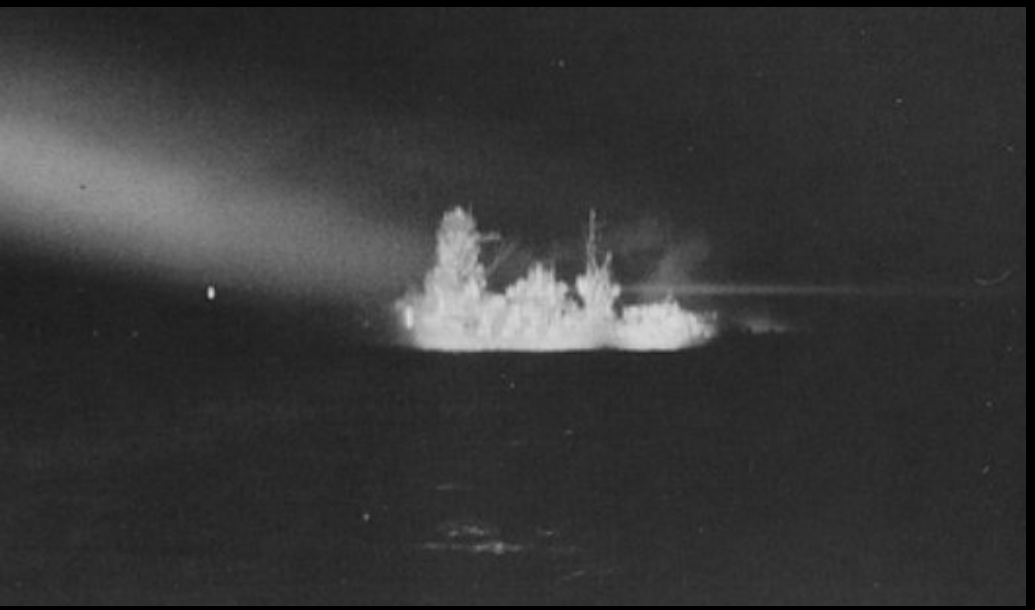
THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF

Meanwhile, scout planes from TF-38 found the Japanese carriers to the north. They were too far away to strike that day so Halsey recovered the strike and turned north in pursuit. He proposed a contingent Task Force 34 made up of his battleships to cover the San Bernardino Strait, but never heard it was needed.

THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF

The third battle took place before dawn on October 25th, 1944. It was called the Battle of Surigao Strait.

To the south, search plane from 7th Fleet discovered the Southern Force. RADM Oldendorf was sent to deal with it. He had six old battleships – five that had been at Pearl Harbor, four heavy cruisers, four light cruisers, 24 destroyers and 39 PT boats.



He set an ambush.

Destroyer Squadron 24 then showed up under Capt. Coward. They were not part of the force but had nothing better to do and asked if they could play too. They were assigned a position between the PT boats and the rest of the fleet.

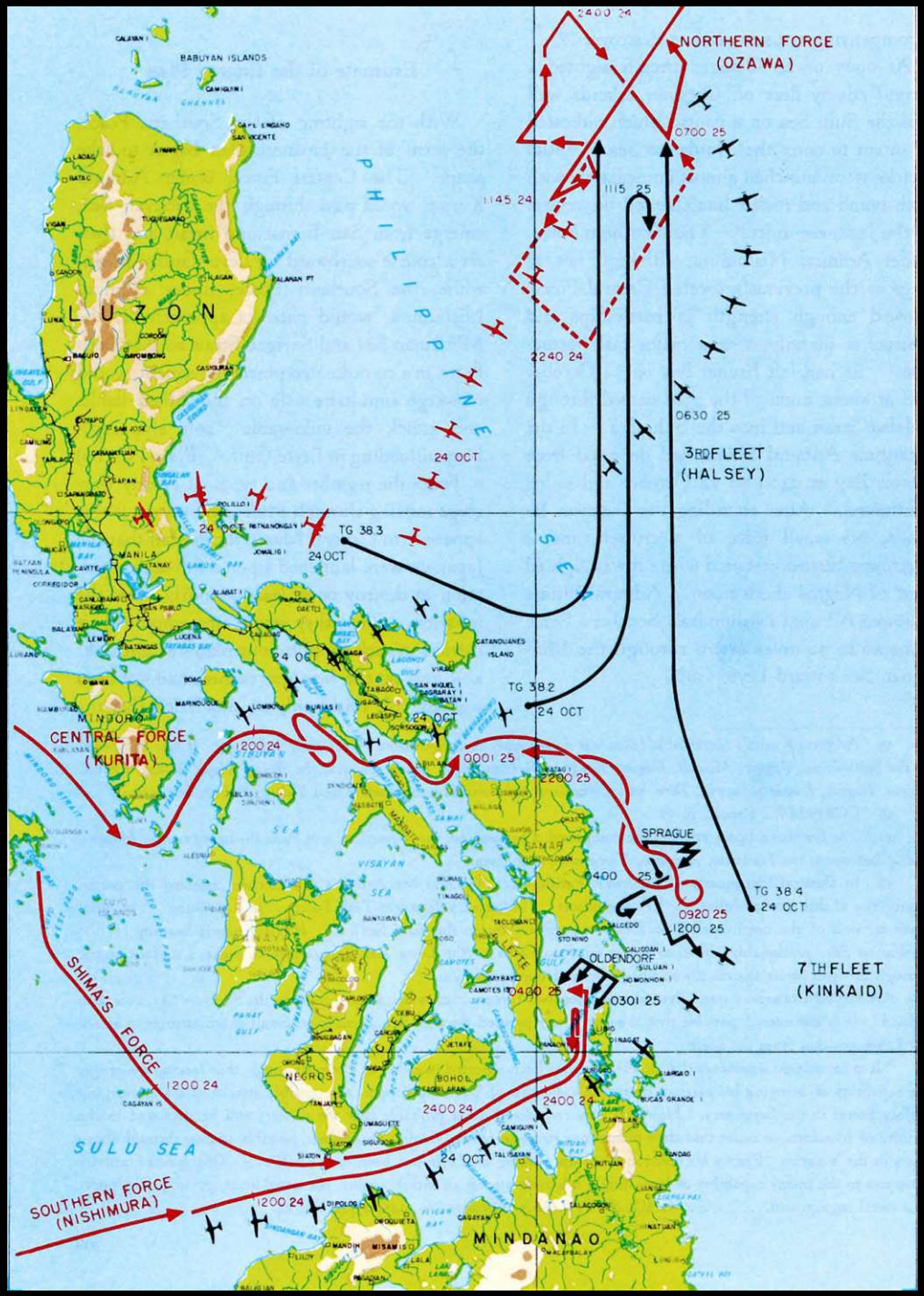
THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF

The PT Boats mission was to scout for the enemy. Once they detected the enemy, they were to report contact and then attack.

Oldendorf did not expect much out of the attack as while PT Boats had been useful at a variety of missions in the war, they had not been successful in engaging enemy warships. Their torpedoes were the only weapons that could do any real damage and those weapons were WWI surplus and were slow short ranged and the boats ability to aim was by making a good guess.

On this night rather than report contact they attacked. One boat then realized no one had reported contact and sped away to do so. Its report took 90 minutes to be received.

THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF



It is believed one PT Boat torpedo hit the Japanese battleship Fuso causing it to lose some speed but not taking it out of the coming fight.

Now Desron 24 attacked firing 40 torpedoes. The results were devastating. Fuso was sunk with the loss of most of its crew. Battleship Yamashiro was damaged and lost speed. All but one of the Japanese destroyers were sunk or heavily damaged.

Only two ships, the destroyer Shigure and heavy cruiser Mogami were unharmed. (Mogami would be sunk the next day by American aircraft.)

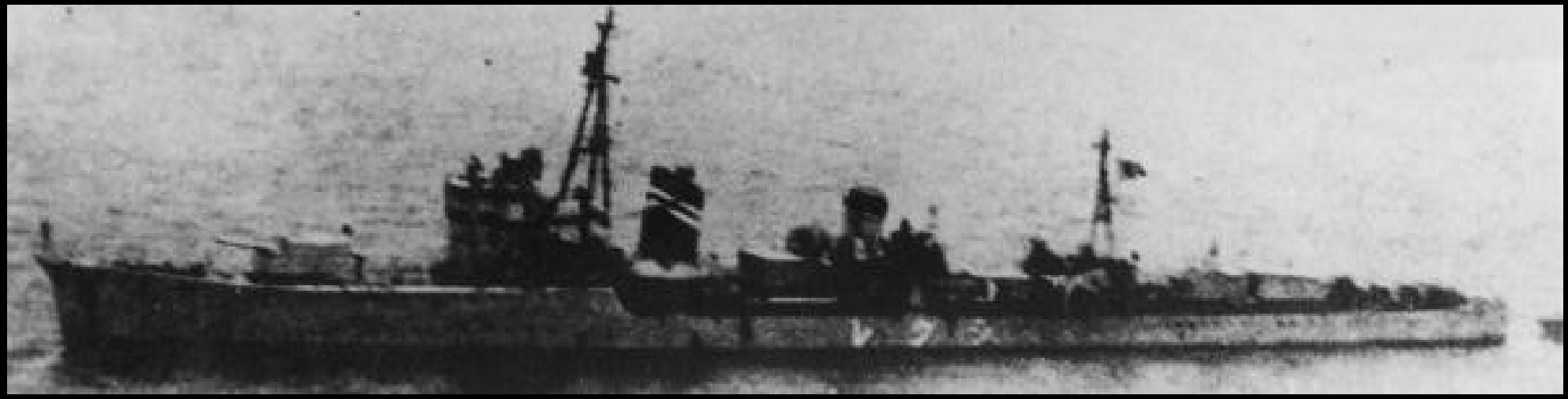
THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF

The American cruisers opened fire at under 10,000 yards. In fifteen minutes they fired well over 3000 rounds from their main guns. Three battleships soon joined them without orders (West Virginia, California and Tennessee). They had the newest radars and could clearly "see" the enemy. The other three had an older radar and could not. But they could detect the shell splashes and two of them (Maryland and Mississippi) joined in. Cease Fire was ordered when Oldendorf leaned that some shells were landing among some of his destroyers. Yamashiro would soon sink and Mogami was severely damaged. Only Shigure was unharmed…

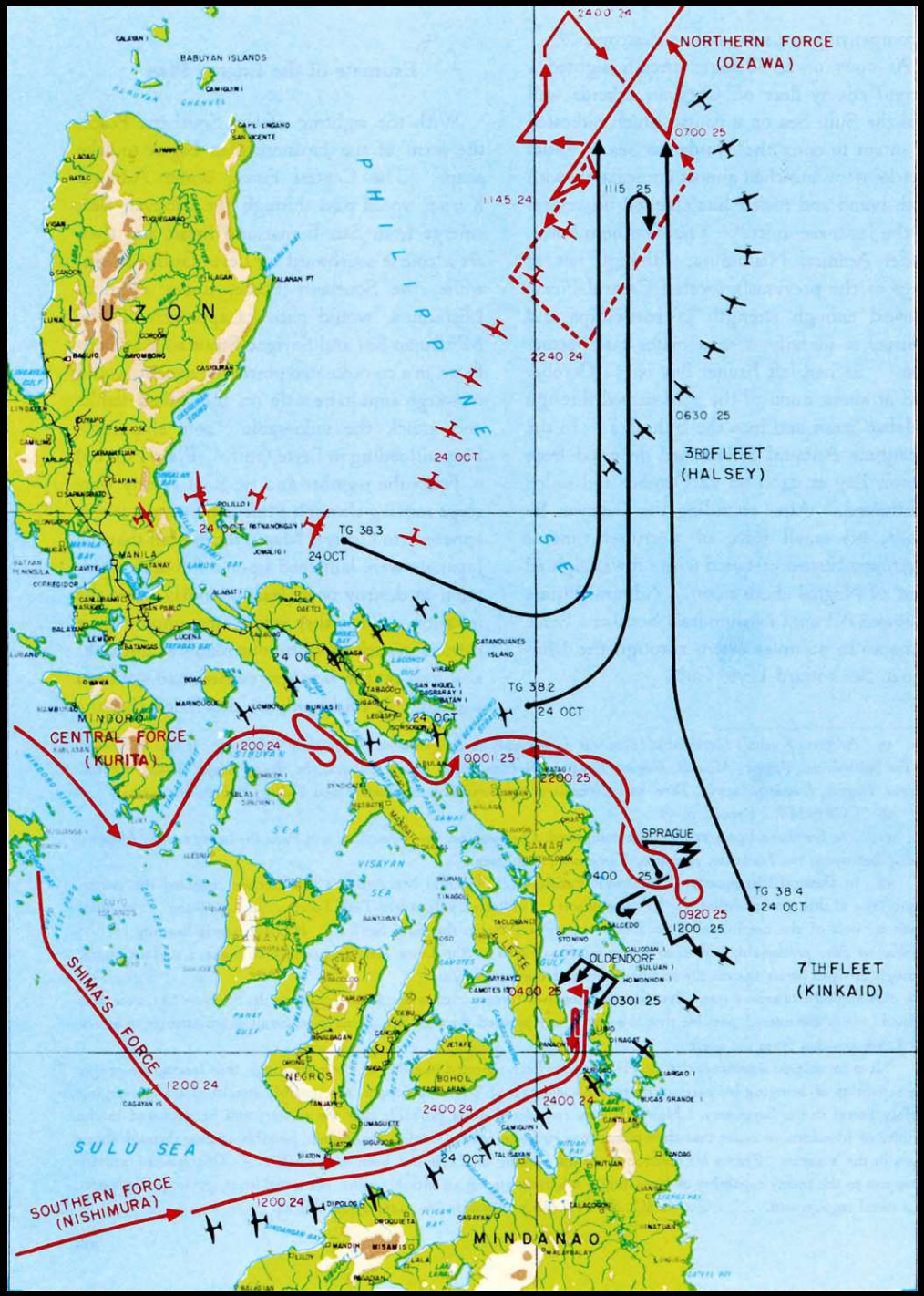
THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF

The Japanese considered the destroyer Shigure a lucky ship. It had been in several battles damaged only once (by a defective U.S. torpedo). Surigao Strait had been the third of four battles where it was the only survivor. (Its luck would run out in January 1945 when it was sunk by a submarine although most of its crew survived.)

The Americans would consider it unlucky. It was lucky only if you were on it, not if it was anywhere nearby. It would be considered what Western sailors called "a Jonah," protected by God while all around were condemned…



THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF



The fourth battle was joined not long after sunrise on the 25th. It was the most lopsided in terms of forces opposing each other with the most unlikely winner in history.

The Center Force had made it through the San Bernardino Strait into the Pacific unopposed by the non-existent Task Force 34 (battleships) and ran into one of three groups of escort carriers supporting the invasion.

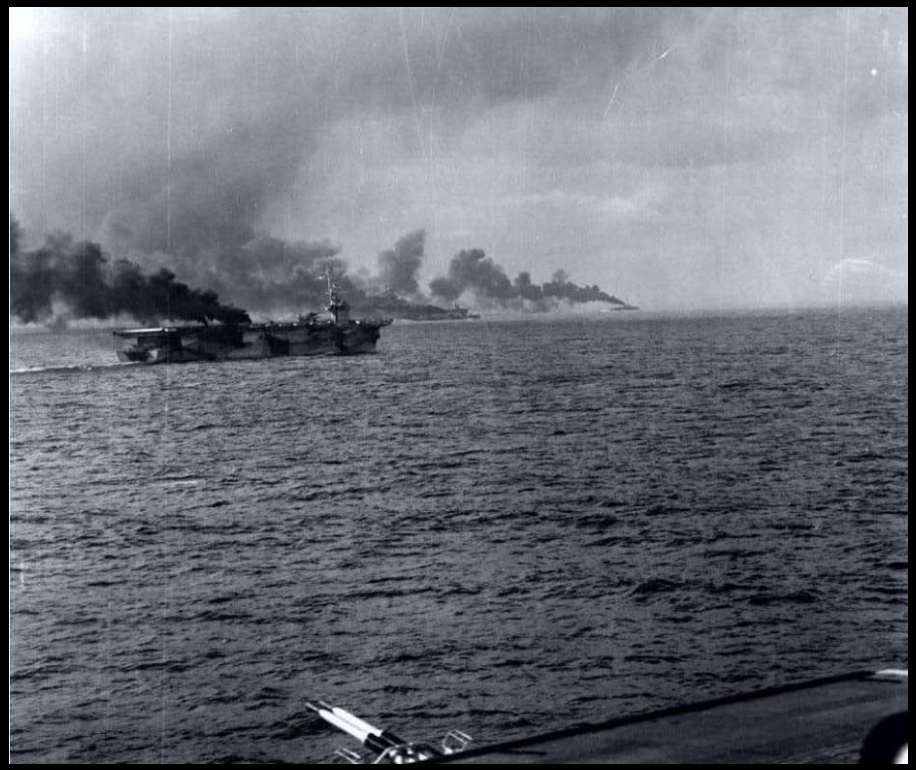
4 Japanese battleships, 7 heavy cruisers, 2 light cruisers and a dozen destroyer attacked 5 escort carriers, 3 destroyers and four destroyer escorts … and lost.

THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF

The American force had planes, but only with weapons meant for bombing troops on the ground or submarines (depth charges). None would seriously hinder a battleship or heavy cruiser.

The escorts had torpedoes, but had to get close to hit, under fire from heavy guns the whole run in. The carriers turned to run – at 20 knots – 8 knots slower than the slowest Japanese ship. The escorts attacked.

THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF

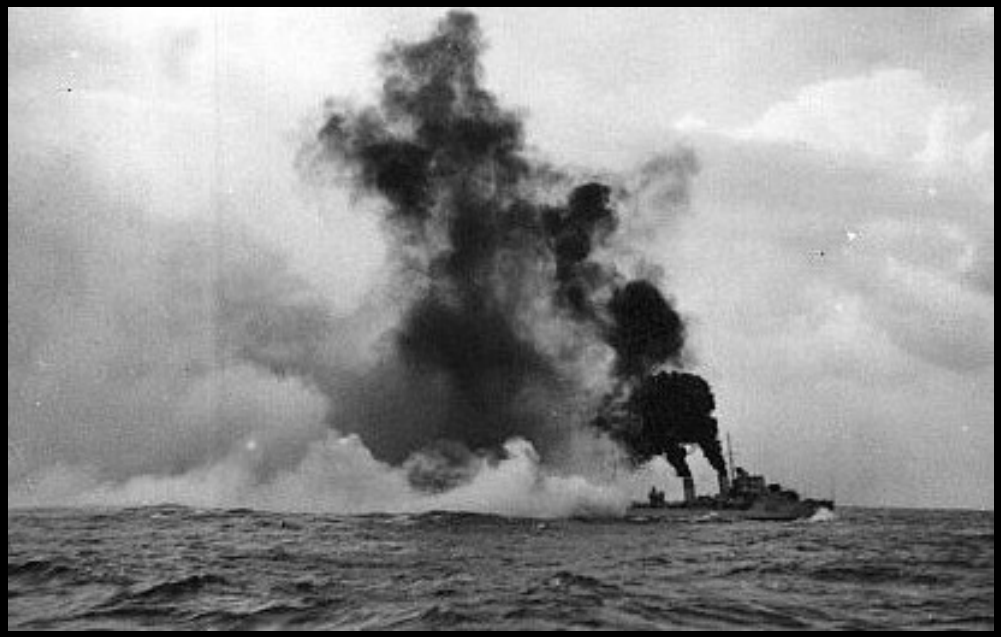


It should have been a slaughter.

But the ferocity of the escorts' attack crippled a heavy cruiser and forced Yamato to turn away to avoid a torpedo attack at a critical moment.

Even the escort carriers manage to damage a couple of heavy cruisers with their single, 5" guns.

THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF



The Japanese admiral mistook the ferocity of the American's desperate attempt to defend themselves as effectiveness and was convinced he had run into TF-38 with its large carriers and battleships.

He assumed he was heavily outnumbered and out gunned and ordered a general retreat. He was miles away by then, his ship having turned away to avoid a torpedo attack. The commanders in the thick of the action knew what they were up against … but followed orders.

Task Force 38 was too far away to help and the battleships never formed into Task Force 34.

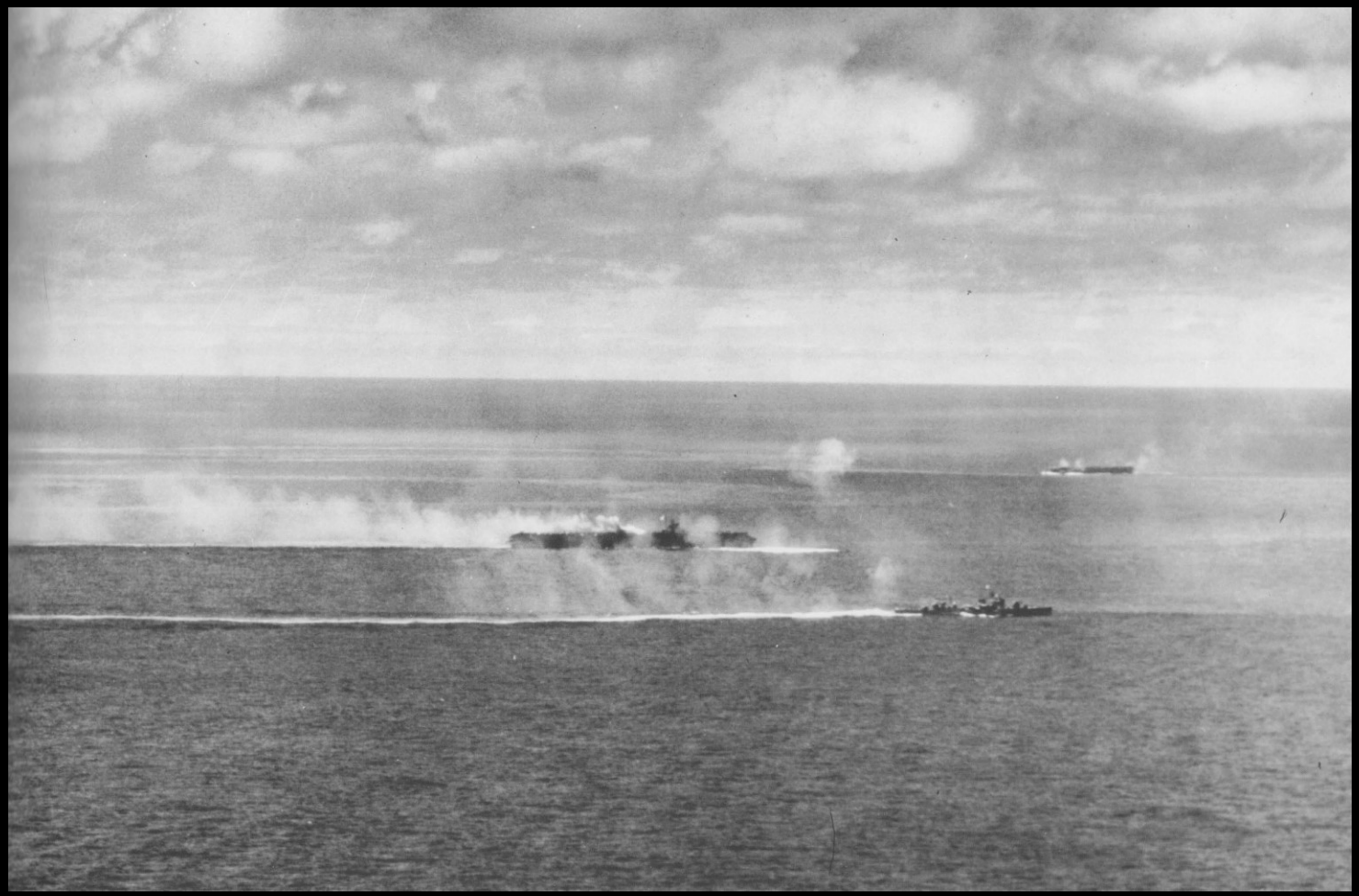
THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF

The Battle Off Samar would leave one CVE, 2 destroyers and a destroyer escort sunk. The Japanese would lose a heavy cruiser with another crippled (later sunk) and three cruisers damaged.

The savaged escort carrier group was not out of the woods.

Later that day, Japanese Kamikazes attacked hitting the escort carrier St. Lo. It later sank after a series of explosions. It was the first Kamikaze sinking…

THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF



While "Taffy" 3 was under attack by the Center Force, Halsey and Task Force 38 was far to the north attacking the decoy force of Japanese carriers.

It was after the first strike was on its way to the targets that he received the first messages of trouble to the south. Communications were hours behind "real time." ADM Kinkaid thought Halsey was close by. Halsey had sent a message otherwise but it was not received until well after the battle was joined.

THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF

A message would get through in a timely manner, but miss-decoded. It was from Nimitz and asked Halsey "Where is Task Force 34? The world wonders." The second part was padding meant to confuse code breakers, not a part of the message.

But the decoders aboard Halsey's ship thought it was part of the message and left it in.

Nimitz merely asked for clarification. It was not a rebuke.

The Ensign who encoded the message on Guam (Nimitz new headquarters) was swiftly reassigned.

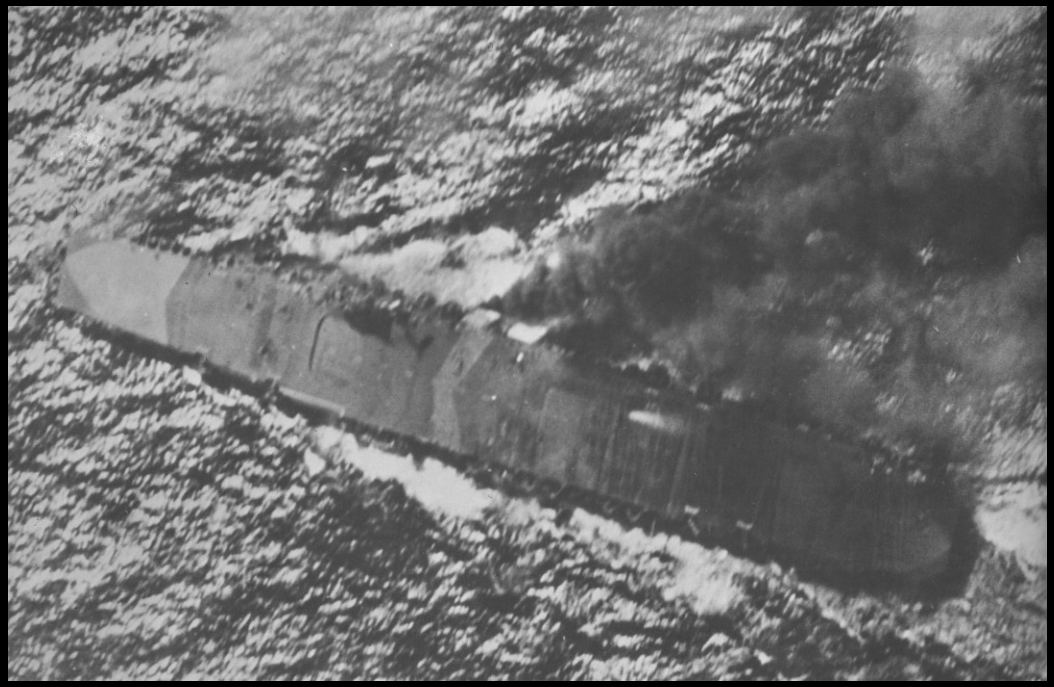
THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF

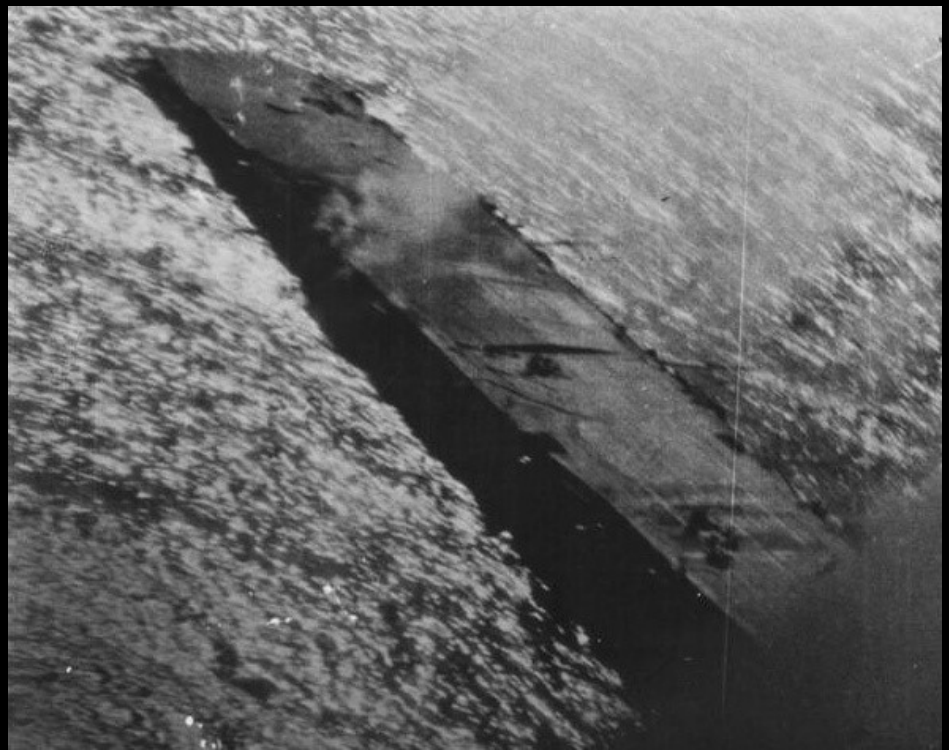
The Japanese Navy effectively ceased to exist after Oct 25th, 1944.

It had lost 4 carriers, 3 battleships, 9 heavy cruisers, a light cruiser and 11 destroyers with two battleships damaged and 4 heavy cruisers heavily damaged along with smaller ships as well as over 300 planes and 12,500 men.

The U.S. lost 1 light carrier, 2 escort carriers, two destroyers and a destroyer escort. 200 planes were lost. There were around 3,000 casualties.

THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF



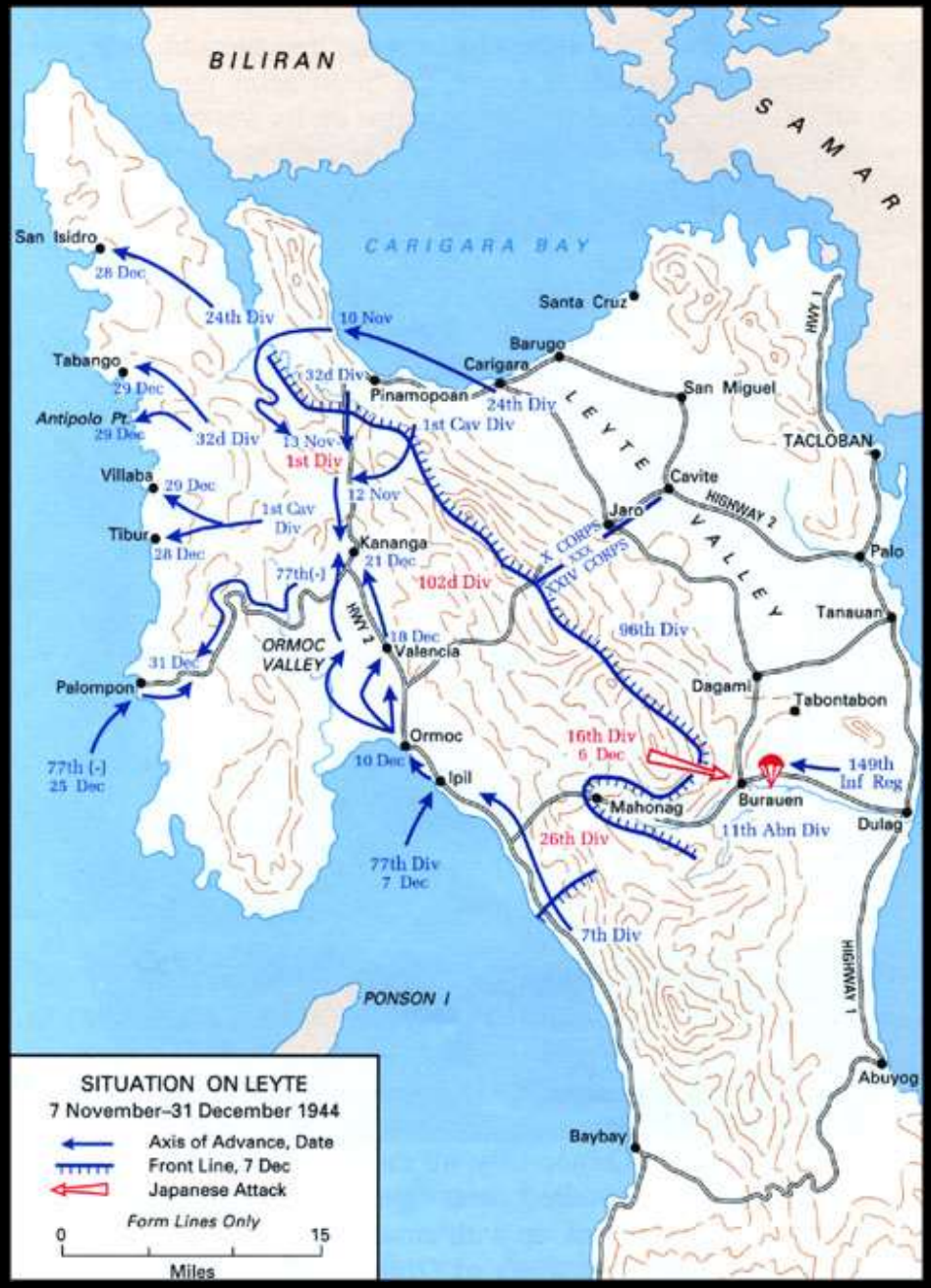


“I Shall Return” - Leyte

The battles at sea had not slowed the landings at all. The initial defenders had been overwhelmed and most of Leyte was under U.S. control by early November such that MacArthur’s Headquarters announced they were “merely” mopping up.

But the hardest fighting was yet to come. While the initial defense was indeed overwhelmed, the Japanese had heavily reinforced from elsewhere in the Philippines and now had five divisions concentrated in the northwest corner of the island controlling the highest and most difficult ground on the island.

“I Shall Return” - Leyte



It would take 5 U.S. divisions (the 7th Inf., 1st Cav., 11th Airborne, 77th Inf. And 32nd Inf., the latter being predominantly Illinois National Guard), three of which had been in reserve almost two months to “mop up” the remaining (newly arrived) Japanese who had more troops on the island when “mopping up” had been declared than when the Americans landed.

To American GI’s – who never liked the term “mopping up”, they now realized that when MacArthur used the term it meant the battle no longer interested him.

Leyte was secured on December 26th, 1944.

It was not a cheap victory. The U.S. lost 3,593 KIA and 11,991 WIA. The Japanese lost over 49,000 killed, which they could ill afford.

POST-SCRIPT – HALSEY'S TYPHOON

On December 15th, 1944, while trying to refuel before providing support for the ground forces, Task Force 38 blundered into a typhoon off of the Philippines.

There had been little warning.

POST-SCRIPT – HALSEY'S TYPHOON

3 destroyers sank with all hands.

Several ships were severely damaged.

Over 300 planes were damaged beyond repair.

809 lives were lost.

A court of Inquiry would find no one culpable for the decisions that were made.

Many recommendations were made. The Navy did not see it as an immediate priority. They would get around to implementing most of the recommendations eventually.

But not soon enough…

LUZON

For much of 1943 and all of 1944, American forces bypassed as many major Japanese strong points as possible, cut them off and left them to starve.

But in 1945, they now had to take and hold ground for both political and strategic reasons.

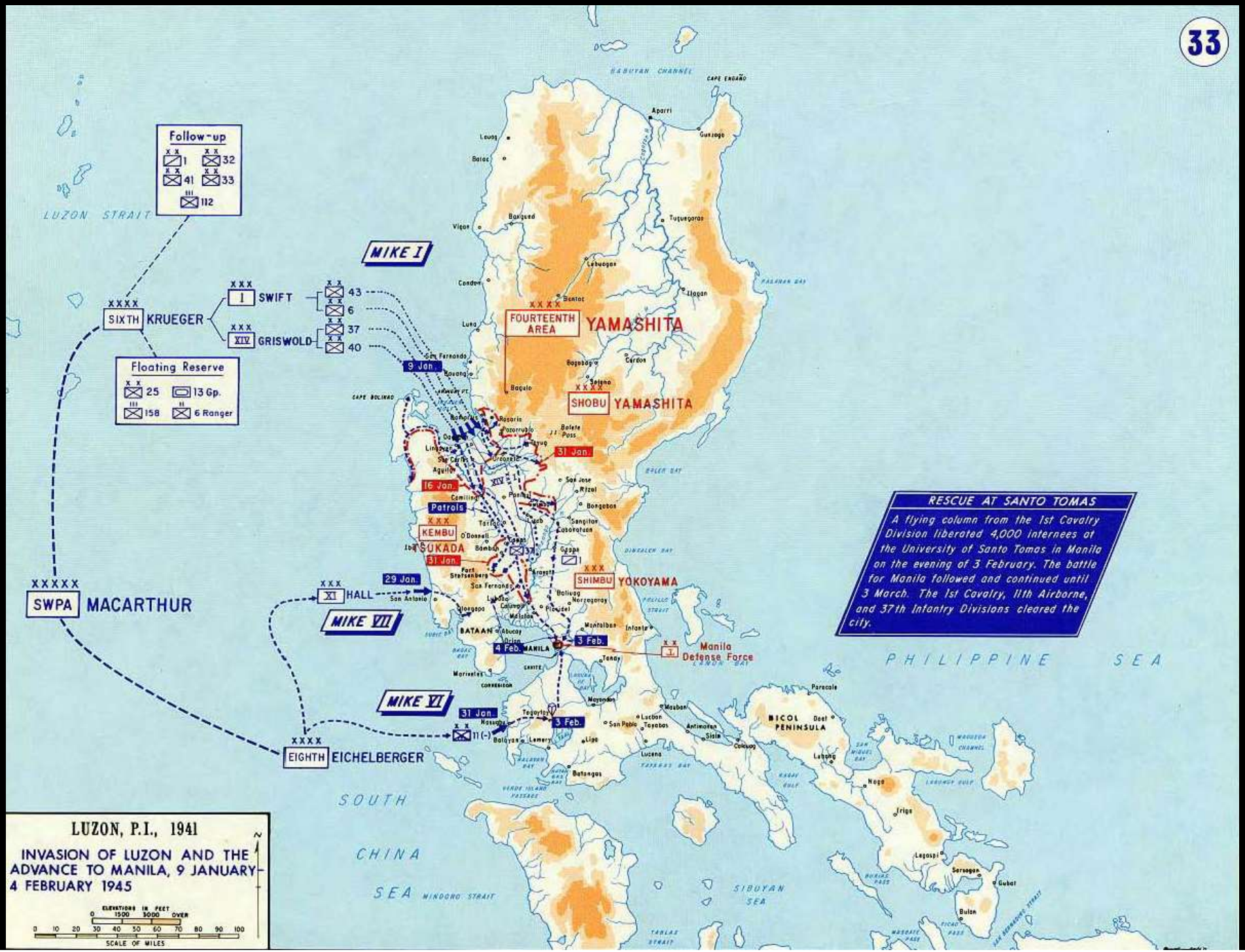
The Philippines was both political and strategic. It was pro-American in an at best indifferent part of the world and it was where the U.S. suffered its greatest defeat.

Its liberation meant something to Americans that names like New Guinea, Tarawa and even Guadalcanal had not.

The key to the Philippines was Luzon.

It was the largest and most populated island in the archipelago. It had natural harbors and airfields from which it would then be possible to sever Japan's supply lines permanently.

LUZON


33
Follow-up
1
32
41
33
112
LUZON STRAIT
SIXTH KRUEGER
I SWIFT
43
6
XIV GRISWOLD
37
40
Floating Reserve
25
13 Gp.
158
6 Ranger
MIKE I
9 Jan.
FOURTEENTH AREA YAMASHITA
SHOBU YAMASHITA
31 Jan.
16 Jan.
Patrols
KEMBU
SUKADA
31 Jan.
29 Jan.
XI HALL
SHIMBU YOKOYAMA
SWPA MACARTHUR
MIKE VII
BATAAN
4 Feb.
MANILA
3 Feb.
Manila Defense Force
MIKE VI
31 Jan.
3 Feb.
11 (-)
EIGHTH EICHELBERGER
BICOL PENINSULA
PHILIPPINE SEA
SOUTH CHINA SEA
SIBUYAN SEA
LUZON, P.I., 1941
INVASION OF LUZON AND THE ADVANCE TO MANILA, 9 JANUARY-4 FEBRUARY 1945
ELEVATIONS IN FEET
0 1500 3000 OVER
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
SCALE OF MILES
RESCUE AT SANTO TOMAS
A flying column from the 1st Cavalry Division liberated 4,000 internees at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila on the evening of 3 February. The battle for Manila followed and continued until 3 March. The 1st Cavalry, 11th Airborne, and 37th Infantry Divisions cleared the city.

LUZON

In December 1941, the main Japanese landing on Luzon was at Lingayen Gulf on the western coast from the South China Sea.

This was the logical place for a landing.

It had a wide, sheltered beach leading to a level plain between mountains to the north and south. The low ground led directly to Manila, the main city.

Even though it was predictable, MacArthur landed there. His opponent, LGEN Yamashita (who had taken Singapore in Feb 1942) chose not to fight at the beaches but to withdraw into the mountains.

LUZON

Perhaps the Japanese should have made some effort. The surf conditions were less than ideal and more than a few craft washed up on the beach. But the landing got ashore almost without firing a shot and rapidly pushed inland.

LUZON

The Japanese Army was fighting a rear-guard action, delaying but not making a serious effort to stop the U.S. advance. It was holding open roads around the left flank of the U.S. advance to allow its troops to move to the north and take up positions in the mountains.

The Americans moved cautiously. They were facing 275,000 Japanese.

LUZON - CABANATUAN

In late January, after three weeks of slowly moving forward, the U.S. had not suffered a major set back, but were still not yet at Manila.

U.S. intelligence received word from Filipino guerillas about U.S. POW's at a camp outside of the city of Cabanatuan, about thirty miles behind enemy lines.

By this time, U.S. intelligence had also received word from Filipinos and escaped POW's of at least one attempt by the Japanese to exterminate their prisoners at Palawan, an Island to the south of Luzon and west of Leyte.

General Krueger, (6th Army) decided to do something.

LUZON - CABANATUAN

The mission was simple in concept: get through the Japanese lines, move deep into their rear and attack a camp and rescue the prisoners.

All without the Japanese knowing until it was too late.

And then get back to the U.S. lines without the Japanese catching you.

It was given the LTC Mucci of the 6th Ranger Battalion with recon support from the Alamo Scouts. Mucci would then have his assault team leader CPT Robert Prince plan the actual assault and extraction.

They had two days to get ready before they had to go.

LUZON - CABANATUAN

The 6th Ranger Battalion had no connection whatsoever to COL Darby's Rangers of North Africa and Italy or the Rangers that took Point Du Hoc on D-Day in Normandy besides their name.

Not one man had ever served or trained with men from those units.

The Battalion had begun life as the 98th Field Artillery at Ft. Sill which was a mule drawn 75mm unit that was meant to go over rough terrain and bad ground.

It was sent to New Guinea, whereupon the U.S. Army Veterinarians decided the jungle was no place for mules and the mules never arrived … leaving the battalion without a job.

LUZON - CABANATUAN

LTC Mucci arrived in New Guinea as a supernumerary – meaning to do what the Army asked until some battalion commander got killed or relieved and then he'd get the job he wanted.

Except that wasn't happening.

Mucci was not a Ranger, but he had read about them – probably in Life Magazine.

He was a training expert, however.

He found the jobless 98th and got permission to turn them into super-infantry.

In any other army in the world this was not even thinkable. You can't turn artillerymen and muleteers into elite infantrymen. It's just not possible!

LUZON - CABANATUAN

Even in WWII they knew this was a seat-of-the-pants job.

A mission like this took weeks of preparation, planning and rehearsals, ideally with full scale mock-ups of the target or similar.

(In 1970, Army Special Forces did a similar mission at Son Tay outside of Hanoi to free U.S. P.O.W.'s. It took six months to plan, prepare and practice. It went in and would have been a stunning success – except the prisoners had been moved to the Hanoi Hilton in Hanoi a couple of weeks earlier).

The 6th Rangers were tasked to liberate Cabanatuan on Jan 28th, 1945. They had to complete the mission not later than February 1st.

They did not even know how many prisoners were in the camp or exactly where in the camp they were, nor how many Japanese were there.

LUZON - CABANATUAN

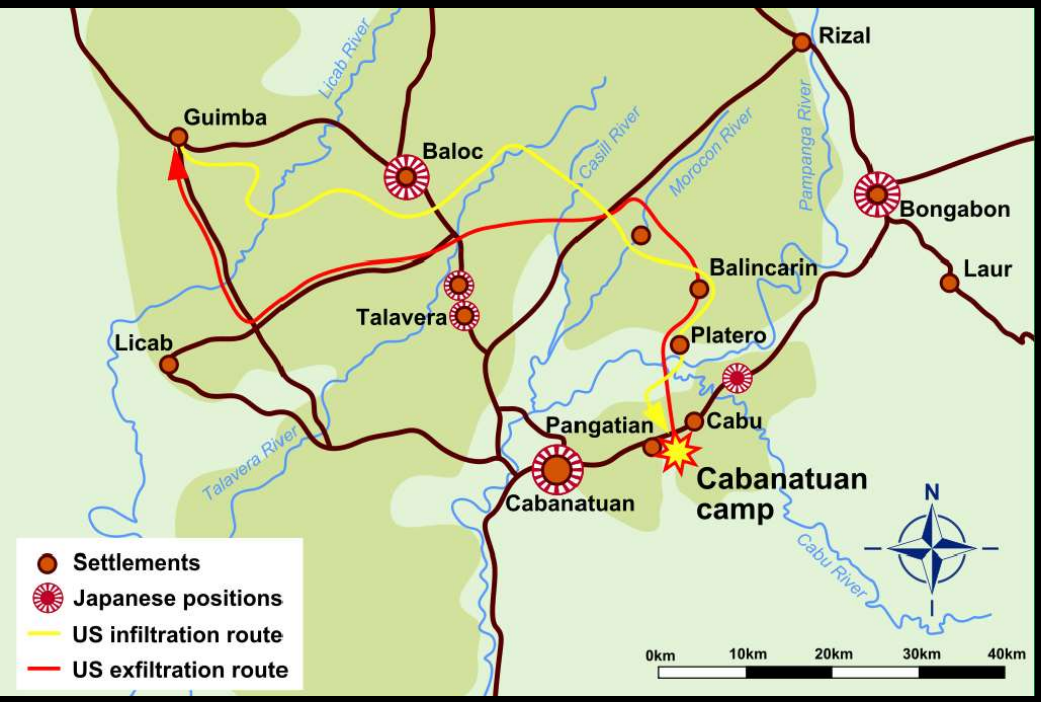
The force of 133 Rangers crossed into Japanese territory on January 30th.

It made it to a village a couple of miles from the target by the 31st, but needed a day to gather more information and organize the local guerrilla units – and get ox carts to transport the weaker POW's.

To get the village, the entire force had to cross the main road the Japanese Army was using as it retreated into the mountains.

The attack force had to crawl about a mile across an open field to get to their assault positions. Filipino guerrillas took positions to block Japanese counter attacks – and especially a tank battalion less than three miles away.

LUZON - CABANATUAN



The Rangers attacked taking the Japanese at the camp by surprise. It helped that the Japanese had not been stationed there – the guards had left days before.

The Filipinos slaughtered the tank battalion that tried to counter-attack, dropping several tanks into a river when they blew the bridge and mowing down Japanese infantry that tried to cross on foot.

Two Rangers were killed, both being hit by the same mortar round – an unlucky shot. Four others were wounded.

21 Filipinos were wounded.

2 POWs died – not of wounds but from the stress of it all.

LUZON - CABANATUAN

Japanese losses were greater than the entire attacking force plus prisoners. 522 prisoners were rescued. The attacking force numbered at most around 400 men. At least 800 and possibly more than 1,000 Japanese were killed in the raid. It was big news. Then the Marines raised the flag at Iwo Jima.

LUZON

The rescue did not end the war. The drive on Manila had not stopped so that the Ranger's could do their job. Quite the opposite as the Ranger's major concern was being targeted by their own artillery.

The Americans used tanks and artillery to great effect – Luzon being one of the few places in the Pacific where tanks were somewhat useful.

The Japanese could not counter either. Their aircraft had long since been destroyed by the Navy and Army Air Corps. Their tanks were the best the Americans met in this war – and were far inferior.

The American drive was, however, only as fast as its artillery could advance.

LUZON – Battle of Manila

The Japanese Army commander, GEN Yamashita had no intentions of defending Manila. It would be a death trap for his army so he ordered its evacuation.

He did not, however, command the Naval garrison troops nor did he have effective communications with his own troops south of the city.

The Japanese naval commander decided to defend the city to the last man and rounded up Army units coming up from the south to the defense.

The fight for the city was the most grueling and brutal urban combat American troops encountered during the Pacific War.

LUZON – Battle of Manila

No matter the age or technology, urban combat is always the most brutal form of warfare. It can and often does devour armies.

For MacArthur – who hated wasting lives, street to street fighting was not his idea of how to fight. But there was no alternative.

LUZON – Battle of Manila

The Japanese in Manila used civilians as human shields or slaughtered them for not fighting the Americans. For the U.S., Manila became part rescue mission and part extermination campaign – Filipinos were saved whenever possible. Japanese were not suffered to live.

LUZON – Battle of Manila

The fighting lasted a month. 1,010 Americans were KIA, 5,565 WIA.

About 100,000 Filipino civilians died in the fighting.

At least 16,665 Japanese were dead. Not one prisoner was taken. This was not because they would not surrender but because they were shot regardless.

LUZON – Corregidor

Even as the battle raged in Manila, other objectives were secured.

Manila was worthless without its huge, natural harbor. And the Japanese held Corregidor, which was just as effective a barrier as it had been in 1941 – 1942 when it was held against them. To truly open Manila, Corregidor had to fall again.

It was a fortress built to bar access to Manila Bay by ships. Its defenses were such that a sea borne assault would be costly. (It surrendered in '42 when it ran out of food.)

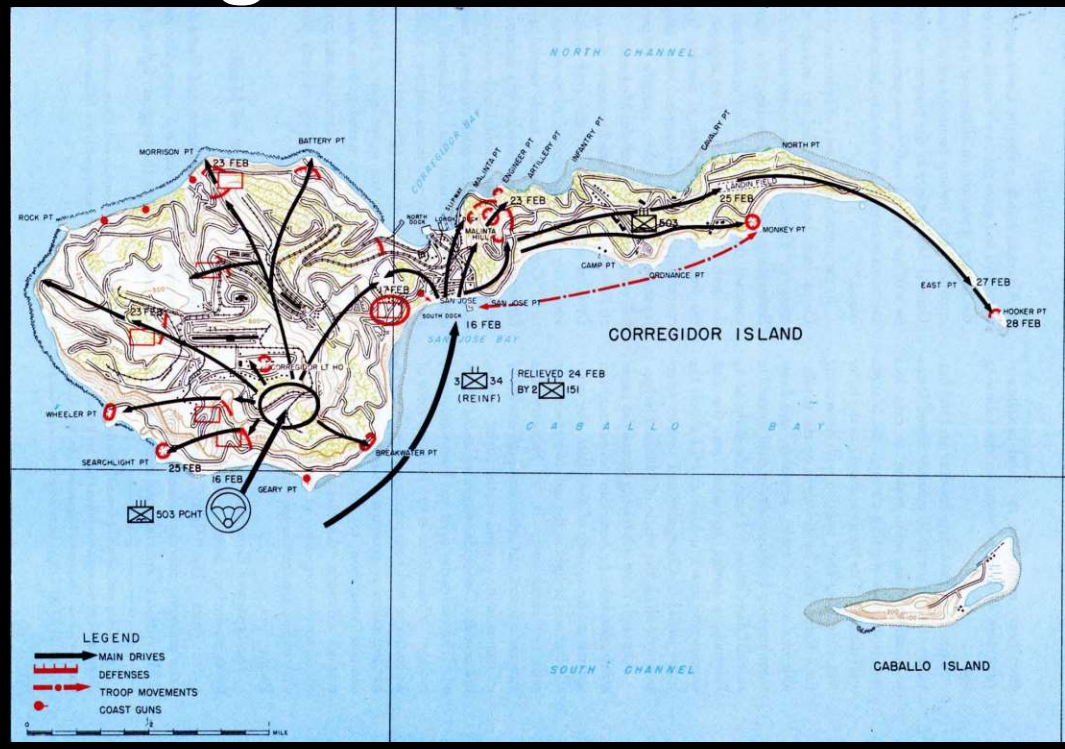
But it was designed before the war and was vulnerable to a new form of attack. On Feb 16, 1945 – the 11th Airborne division dropped in.

LUZON – Corregidor

Corregidor had 6,700 Japanese defenders. Some 7,000 paratroops dropped onto the island. The initial drop was the 503rd PIR which had been dropping in on the Japanese since 1943.

No paratroopers were lost in the drop onto the former Army barracks.

The fighting would be most intense on the 18th when over 500 Japanese tried to overwhelm the Americans in a single assault. Only 50 Americans were involved in the fighting. Most of the Japanese were killed. 14 U.S. soldiers were killed, 15 wounded.



LUZON – Corregidor

The fighting on the island was over by February 26th, 1945 and Manila Bay was officially opened to shipping in March once resistance in Manila had ended.

On March 3rd, MacArthur returned to the island by PT Boat – the same type of vessel that had taken him off the island three years earlier almost to the day.

The flag was raised over the island again.

207 Americans had died retaking "The Rock." 684 were wounded.

About 6,600 Japanese died. 69 were taken prisoner and another 20 showed up after the war ended.

LUZON

By the middle of March, Manila, Subic Bay, and the central plain which included Clark Air Base were all firmly in American hands. Luzon would soon become a major base for subsequent operations.

But the battle against the Japanese on the Island was far from over.

The Japanese Army would remain and fighting would continue until Japan's final surrender on August 15th, 1945.

In all, 10,380 Americans died on Luzon between January 9th and August 15th. 36,550 were wounded.

LUZON

205,535 Japanese died. 9,050 were taken prisoner before the war ended. About 61,000 surrendered – among those was GEN Yamashita.

GEN Yamashita was the only commander to enjoy even limited success against the Americans after the Philippines had first fallen in 1942. And yet he was opposed to the war and to the government that let it happen.

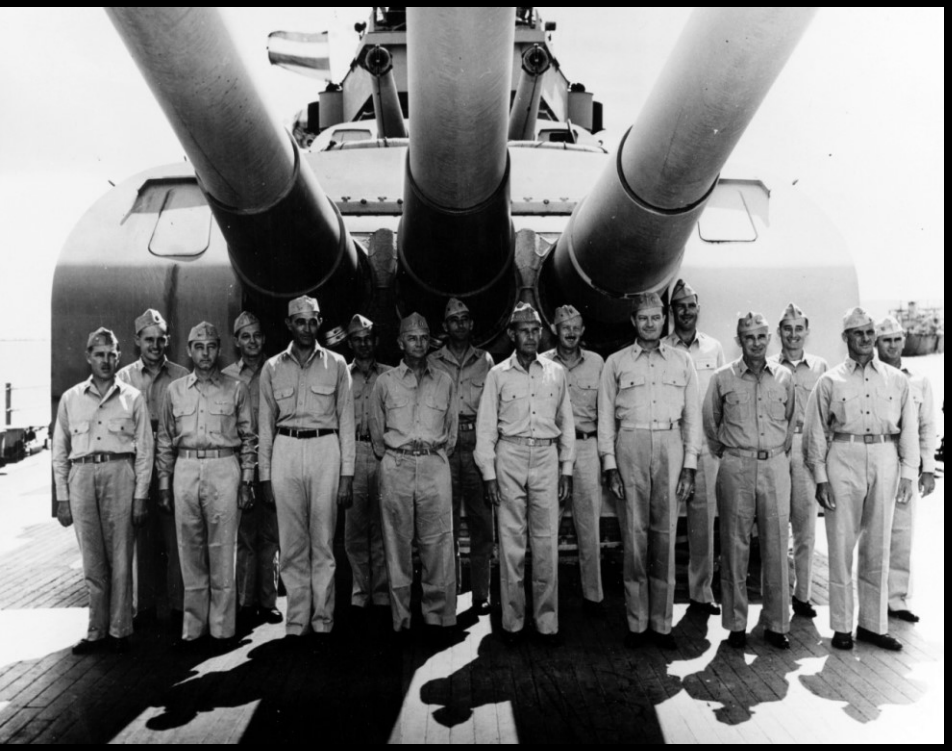
He would be tried as a war criminal – for the events in Manila which were outside of his command and communications.

MacArthur commuted many death sentences. Yamashita was not one. He had … not failed when he stood against MacArthur.

IWO JIMA

As commander of the Third Fleet, Halsey had command of the Big Blue Fleet from September 1944 until January 1945 for the invasions of Peleliu, Leyte and Luzon.

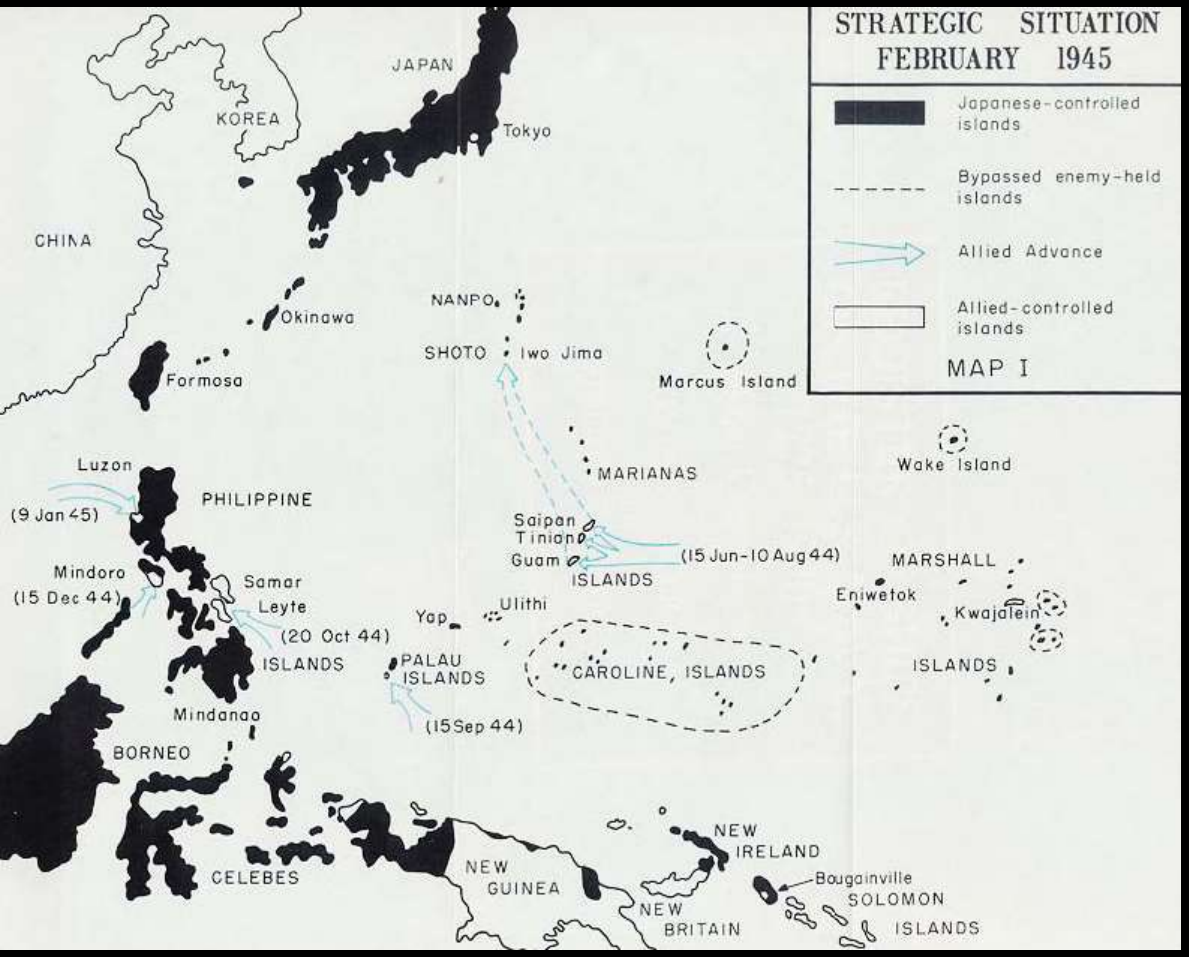
In late January, he turned over operational command of the Navy and Amphibious forces to ADM Spruance and the 5th Fleet staff for the next series of operations.



The first was one that Spruance was not convinced was necessary. The one that would follow he saw as vital but not decisive in and of itself. He had tried to get the first one dropped, but it was vital to someone with far more pull:

Once again, General Hap Arnold was about to make lives very difficult…

IWO JIMA



Losses in the initial bombing raids on Japan from the Marianas were worrying the Air Corps. They wanted a base that could be used as an emergency field for damaged bombers and for fighters to escort the bombers.

The ideal location was Iwo Jima, roughly half way between the Marianas and Japan. It had two airfields and a third under construction but few planes as those were bombed almost as fast as they arrived.

Arnold wanted Iwo Jima. Washington ordered it (as King seemed to agree with Arnold) and Spruance was assigned to take it.

IWO JIMA

Spruance agreed that if one believed bombing was important then Iwo became important.

The problem was he and most of the commanders in the Pacific had little use for strategic bombing. It might make sense against Germany, which was a continental power. But Japan was an island with few resources.

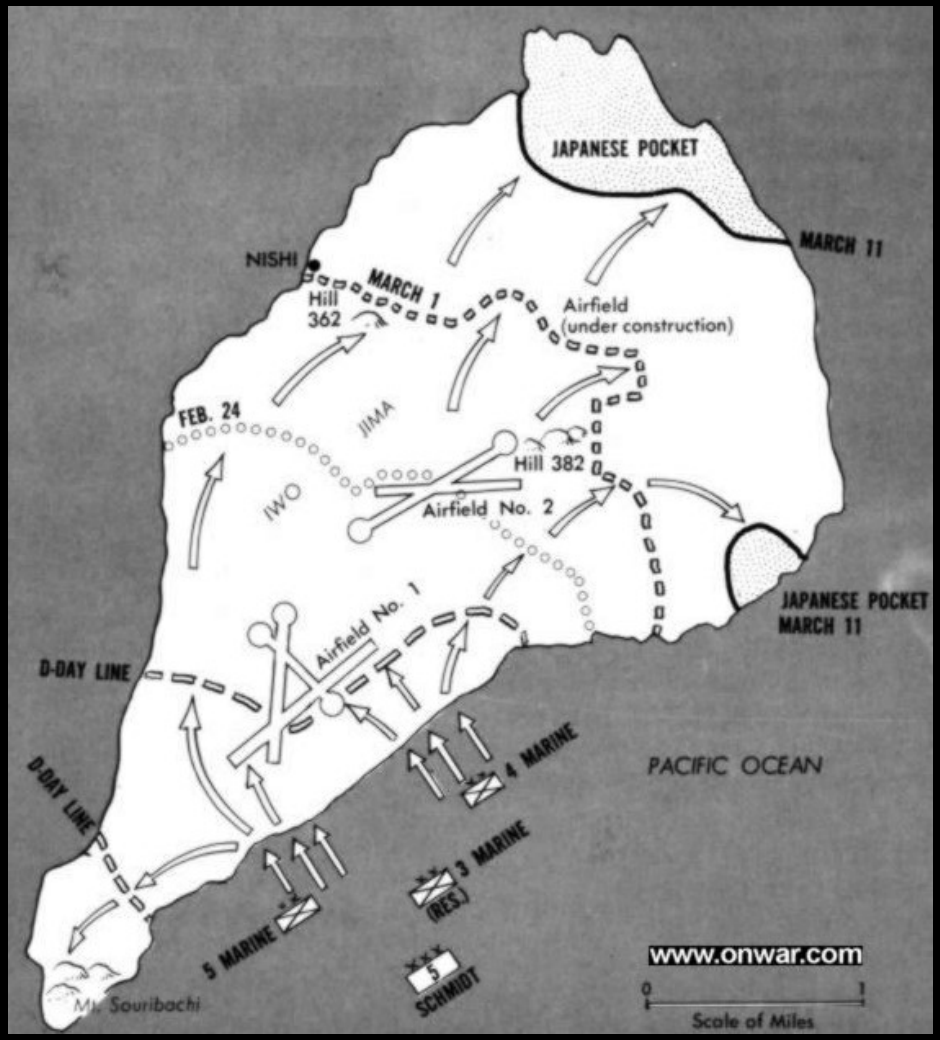
Sinking ships would break Japan more quickly than bombing cities. Moreover, sinking ships would starve Japan. Bombing cities only made a mess.

Japan could not feed its population. Cut off its access to China and Korea and its people would be lucky if they saw 500 calories a day – way below starvation levels. That would break them much more certainly than bombing their factories.

But Washington wanted Iwo so Spruance would take Iwo.

This time there were few illusions about it being easy. Three Marine Divisions would be used to take the small island, two in the assault (4th and 5th Marine Divisions) and one in reserve (3rd Marine division.)

IWO JIMA



Iwo would be bombed for weeks before the invasion by B-24's of the 13th Air Force on Saipan (not under LeMay, but Nimitz). It would be shelled for days, but not as long as the Marines wanted. The problem was the Marines wanted more shelling than the Navy had shells.

They still did not expect it to be easy.

IWO JIMA

The Japanese Commander, MGEN Kuribayashi, chose not to defend the beaches but relied upon concealed positions inland, hidden artillery and mortar positions preregistered on the beaches, machine gun bunkers, over 18 km of tunnels between the positions, and camouflaged fighting positions for his riflemen.

They would wait until the Marine had landed and the beaches were crammed with men, equipment and supplies before they opened fire.

It would begin the bloodiest fight of the war to date.

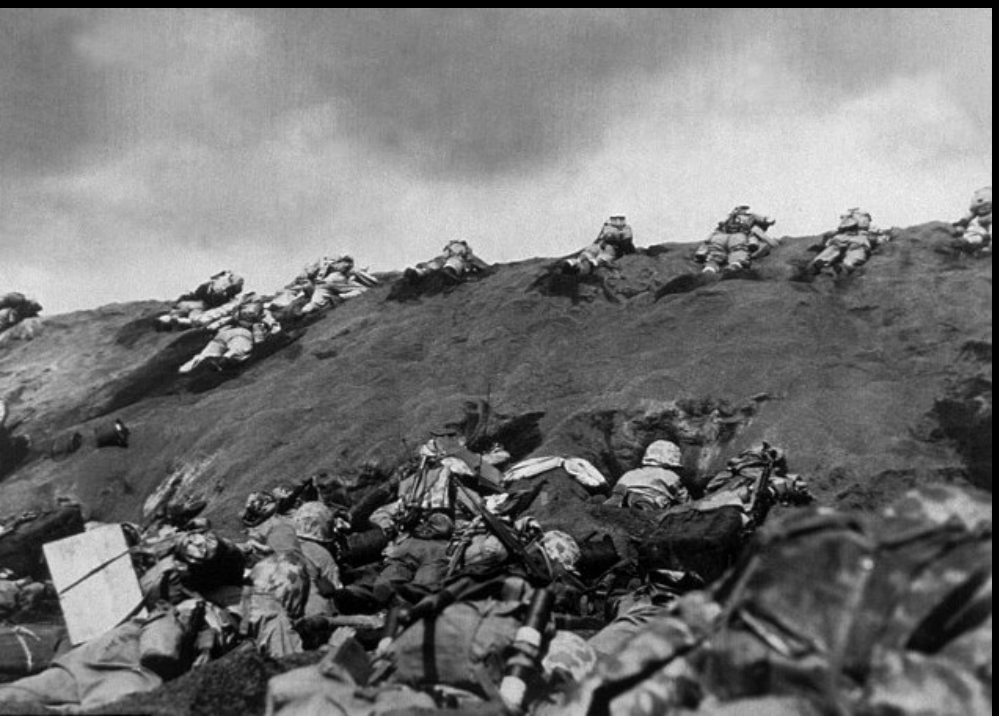
It began on February 19th, 1945.

IWO JIMA

The landings went well initially – for the first half an hour or so. The first wave made it ashore without coming under immediate fire. Some made it off the beach, although the sand made moving difficult.

Then the Japanese opened fire and it was a whole new ball game…

IWO JIMA



The Marines were pinned down but it was also in part due to the sand which meant that most of their equipment was stuck. The tracked vehicles could not get over the rise at the edge of the beach.

The island was volcanic and active – although not erupting. The sand was ground lava, course and loose and would not compact.

There had been vegetation, but it was gone – defoliated by weeks of bombardment.

The place stank of sulfur. Steam rose in places. Ground water was undrinkable…

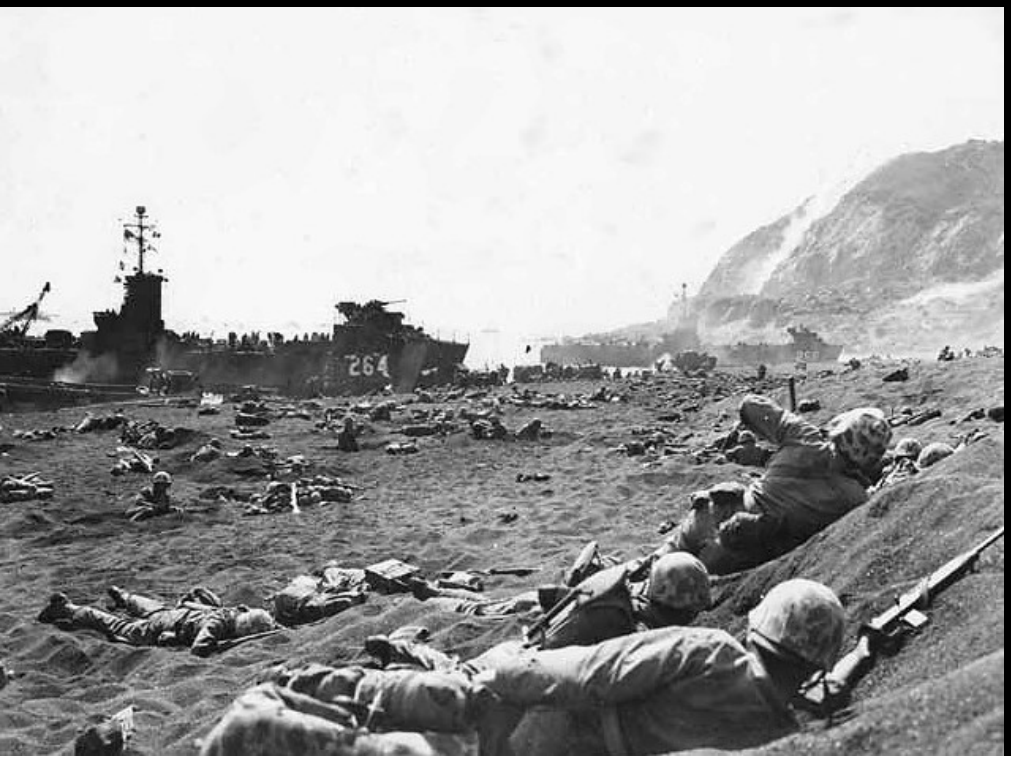
And they could not see the enemy, but clearly the enemy could see them.

IWO JIMA

Taking Mt. Surabachi was an immediate goal in the plans. It was the high ground and dominated the beaches. The Marines would drive across to the other shore – a short distance at the base of the mountain – cutting it off from the rest of the Japanese and then take the hill.

It went almost as quickly as planned.

And led to unfortunate expectations…



IWO JIMA

The flag was first raised atop Mt. Suribachi at around 10:20 AM, Feb 23. A Marine patrol was ordered to secure the summit and … well if possible maybe they could raise a small flag they were given.

They did and they did. For those who were there, that is the flag they all remember…

IWO JIMA

The world remembers the second flag raised about three hours later. It was raised because someone thought the first one was too small (and some else wanted the first one). Those who were there don't remember the second flag raising.

IWO JIMA

The flag raising was controversial in some ways from the beginning.

The photographer did not even know if he got the picture until weeks later. It was developed in Guam and immediately wired to the press – making the front page of most papers on Feb 25th.

The secretary of the Navy remarked the picture guaranteed a Marine Corps for the next 500 years.

But most Americans thought it meant the battle was over. There were more than a month of bloody fighting remaining on the day the picture was published.

And there was confusion over who was in the picture that lasted for years.

Then there's a separate group that believes it was staged.

It was not. It was just a good and lucky photographer.

But there are people who will believe anything if it suggests that the government is truly evil.

IWO JIMA

The Flag Raising did mean one thing: Mt. Suribachi was no longer a Japanese strong point. Men and equipment could now come ashore somewhat less at risk.

But beyond the beach it was still a bad place to be…

IWO JIMA

The Marines were entirely above ground and exposed with little cover.

The Japanese were in holes, caves and tunnels that were next to impossible to see at a distance.

The Marines rarely saw the Japanese. The reverse is probably not true, but few Japanese survived to bear witness.

IWO JIMA

The most effective weapon was one meant for dealing with bunkers – the flamethrower. If it did not burn the enemy out, the flames sucked the oxygen out of the caves and bunkers suffocating the enemy.

But to use the weapon, you had to get close to the enemy – and with enough covering fire to keep the enemy from shooting the gasoline tank on your back. It was a slow process.

IWO JIMA

The whole point had been to secure the island as an airstrip in part for damaged B-29's. The first B-29 landed before the battle was over on March 4, 1945. It was the first of about 2,251 such landings. However, it is not clear how many of these landings were truly necessary.

As for using it as a base: Before the battle was over LeMay had switched to night fire bombing raids. Only ten fighters ever flew a bomber escort mission from Iwo Jima.

IWO JIMA

The Island was declared “secured” on March 26th, 1945 after nearly six weeks and a month after the flag raising.

6,821 Marines were killed, 19,217 wounded.

The Japanese lost around 18,000 killed with 216 captured during the fighting.

Another 3,000 survived the battle hiding in their caves. Most eventually died or surrendered. The last surrendered in 1949.

The best anyone can say about Iwo Jima was it seemed like a good idea at the time.

Or, perhaps, it was not quite as pointless as Peleliu.

KAMIKAZE

The first deliberate suicide attacks occurred during the invasion of Leyte in October of 1944 with some success.

It was not the first time a Japanese pilot crashed into a U.S. ship – or tried to. During Halsey's raid on Kwajalein in February 1942, a bomber tried and failed to do so after it was shot up and too damaged to survive.

And a couple of U.S. pilots had plunged into Japanese ships when their planes were too damaged to avoid crashing.

But until Leyte, no one had taken off on a mission with the specific intent of crashing their planes into an enemy ship. And even at Leyte it was considered a one-time emergency measure.

KAMIKAZE

In those first attacks, the Japanese did manage to sink the Escort Carrier St. Lo and damage some other ships including the Light Carrier Belleau Wood and the Fleet Carrier Franklin (right).

The success had more to do with the surprise of the tactic than the overall effectiveness of the idea.

But the Japanese saw it as a possible game changer and it became policy. They were the Special Attack Corps.

KAMIKAZE

There was resistance to the idea in the Japanese Navy and Army so it would not materialize as a tactic for some months. But Air Staff was asked to look into it.

They studied air attacks on the U.S. Fleet in recent engagements (Philippine Sea and Leyte Gulf.) In the conventional attacks the Japanese had lost well over 90% of the planes and pilots sent out on the mission and scored a single bomb hit (on Oct 24th against TF 38 which ultimately sunk the light carrier USS Princeton.)

The desperate Kamikaze attack on Oct 25th had seen the loss of well over 90% of the planes and pilots – all of those who were not forced to return due to mechanical issues or could not find a target, hit three ships sinking an escort carrier. Fewer than 30 planes were involved in that strike compared to over 100 in the conventional attack the day before and yet far more damage had been inflicted.

The conclusion reached by the study was that if Japan was going to lose the planes and pilots regardless, it was more efficient to lose them in an attack that promised both more hits and more damage per hit. It was perfectly logical and absolutely inhumane.

KAMIKAZE

The opening round in October had been flown by veteran pilots.

The Special Attack Corps were mostly men who were barely able to take off without killing themselves. But they were now the great hope.

In the 13th Century, Japan stood at the brink of being conquered by the Mongols of Kublai Kahn. The Mongols had landed and crushed the Japanese sent to defend the islands.

Then a typhoon destroyed the Mongol Fleet. They tried again and again a Typhoon destroyed their fleet. It was the Kamikaze, the divine wind that protected Japan from its enemies.

In 1945, the wind could barely fly its planes.

KAMIKAZE

Tactically, the Kamikaze was an anti-ship cruise missile – and not even a particularly effective one. If it hit it was rather impressive. But its success rate was less than that of the pilotless guided weapons of the 1960's – much less the current generation.

As a psychological weapon, however, it was far more effective – for both sides. For the Japanese it gave them a measure of hope (despite how useless the weapon was).

For the Americans, there is something unnerving about someone willing to do that. It ended any pretense at playing by rules. The rule became kill them before they killed us.

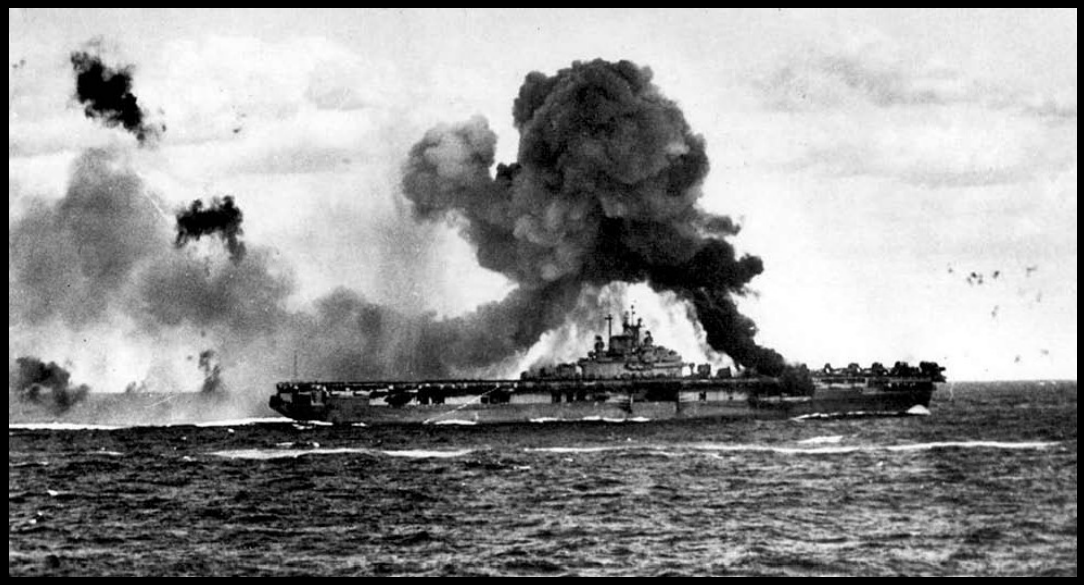
KAMIKAZE

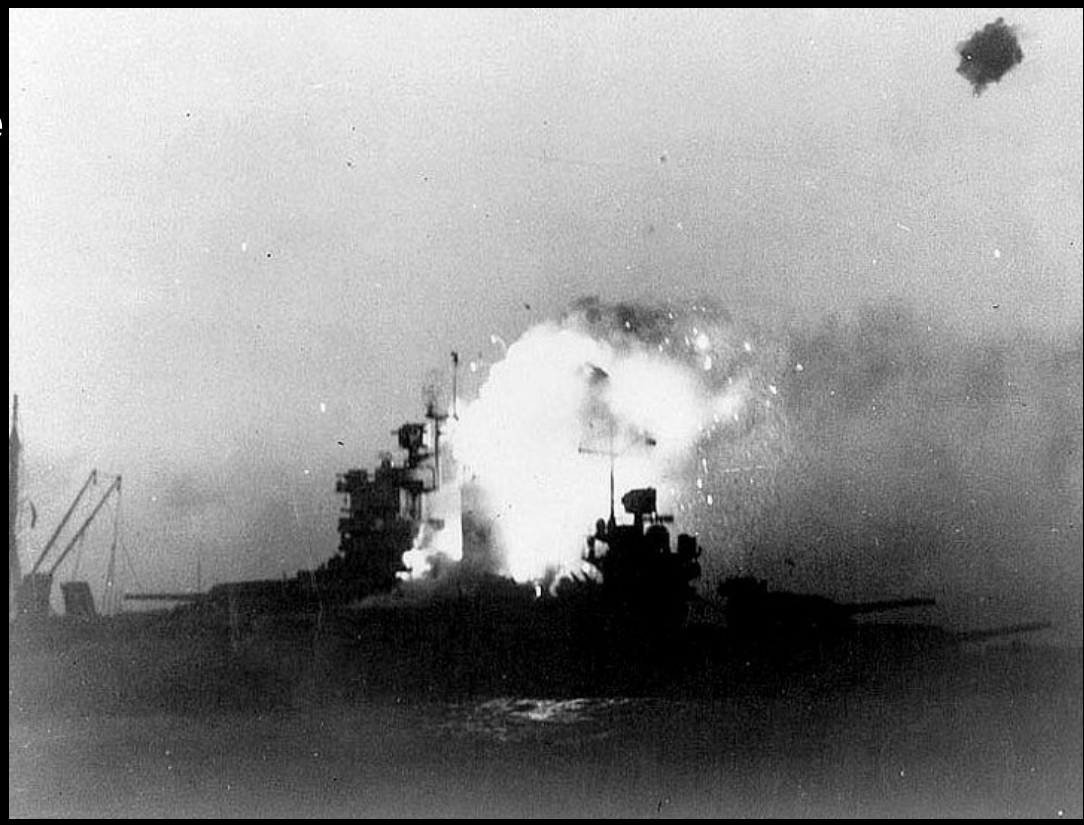
Over 4,000 special attack sorties were launched against the U.S fleet from October 25th, 1944 until the end of the war. Several missions were aborts, the pilots returning usually with mechanical problems.

3,912 never returned. They managed to hit 415 ships. They only managed to sink 47. Of those, three were escort carriers, fourteen were destroyers, one was an oiler, six were cargo ships and five were LST's. The rest were smaller vessels.

About 4,900 sailors were killed with about the same number wounded.

It had no meaningful effect on fleet operations.



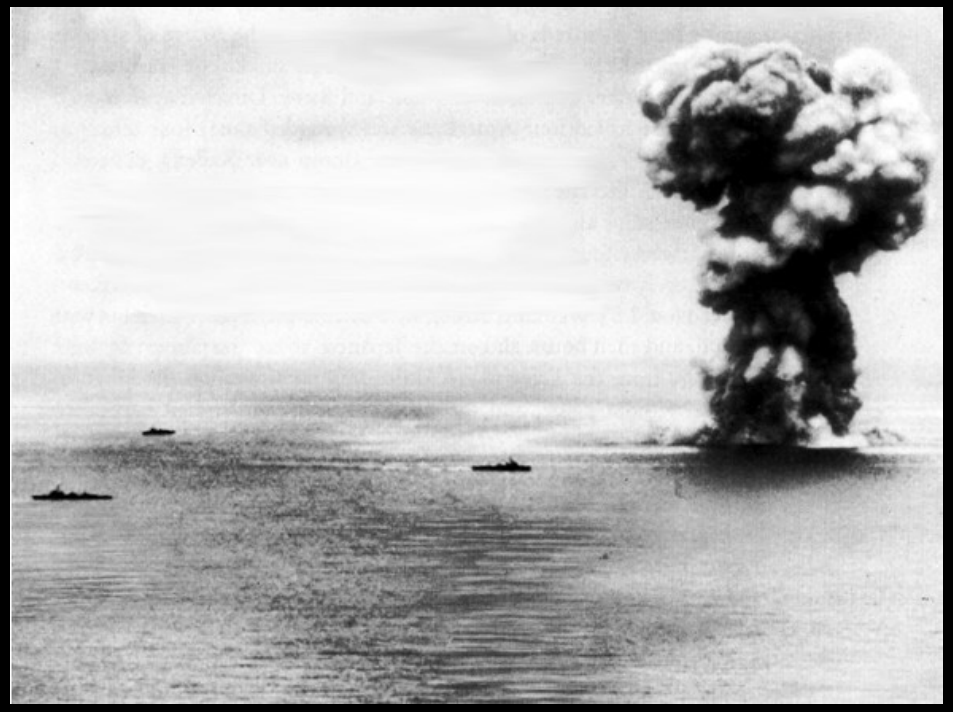


KAMIKAZE

The Japanese became obsessed with their special weapons. They never came close to working as advertised but that did not stop the Japanese from dropping everything to make more of them.

Even the surface navy got in on the act. On April 6, the battleship Yamato, a light cruiser and 8 destroyers left Japan to destroy the invasion of Okinawa. They had all the bunker fuel the Japanese navy had left in their tanks. Enough for a one-way mission.

Yamato, the cruiser and four destroyers were sunk by the aircraft of Task Force 38.



KAMIKAZE

Afterwards, when he asked about the Navy's further plans to defend against the Americans the Emperor was told Japan no longer had a Navy.

It was the first time he had been told the full extent of the Navy's losses since Midway.

It would cause a rift between the Japanese government and the Emperor. More critically, the Army and Navy lost the trust of the Emperor they were sworn to serve. The effect would not be immediate, but the Emperor would stop listening to his military.

KAMIKAZE?

Somewhat ironically, the most devastating attack on the U.S. Fleet after Japan started its Kamikaze campaign was not a Kamikaze attack at all. Spruance's 5th Fleet was conducting strikes against Japanese airfields on Kyushu, southernmost of the Japanese home islands with the intent on eliminating the Kamikaze risk. On March 19th, 1945 the Japanese launched a conventional airstrike against the fleet. Aside from those planes that aborted due to mechanical issues, all the planes were shot down but not before one bomber dropped two bombs on the USS Franklin.

Franklin was preparing to launch a large airstrike when it was hit while its flight deck and hangers held fueled and armed aircraft. The ship was set ablaze by fuel and a series of explosions as its own weapons detonated. Over 700 men were killed.

But by the next day the ship was not only still afloat but now retiring under its own power. It was a wreck and would never serve again but it would make it back to New York. The end of the war made its complete repair unnecessary.

THE BIG SIX

On April 7th, 1945, the day after Yamato sank, the ineffective Prime Minister Koiso resigned and his cabinet fell.

Admiral Suzuki took his place. He had retired from the Navy in 1929 and had been on the Emperor's Privy Council. He survived an assassination attempt during the disastrous coups attempt of 1936. He was opposed to the Army's militant faction.

He was opposed to the war in China and the war against the United States. By 1945, he had come to loath the Army for its positions on just about everything.

He took over the government with the goal of ending the war while there was still a Japan left to end it.

THE BIG SIX

Prime Minister: Kantaro Suzuki (ADM, Ret.)
War Minister: Gen. Korechika Anami
Navy Minister: Adm. Mitsumasa Yonai
Army Chief of Staff: Gen. Yoshijoro Umezu
Navy Chief of Staff: Adm. Soemu Toyoda
Foreign Minister: Shigenori Togo






THE BIG SIX

With the formation of the Suzuki government, Japan was now ruled by what was known as "The Big Six." They were the Prime Minister (a retired Navy Admiral), the Foreign Minister (who was the only one who never served in the military), the Army Minister (a general), the Navy Minister (an admiral and former Prime Minister), the Army Chief of Staff and the Navy Chief of Staff.

All decision had to be unanimous.

The Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Navy Minister wanted to end the war even if it meant conceding defeat but for now hoped for a negotiated settlement.

The remaining three wanted to fight on believing the Americans would blink first.

The Emperor sided with the "peace faction" but for now chose not to intervene or impose his will.

Thus, for now the war raged on while the men who could end it remained deadlocked.

THE BIG SIX

“In both the United States and Japan, it is often argued that Japan was virtually a defeated nation in August 1945 and thus the atomic bombings were not necessary. This argument confuses “defeat” with “surrender”:

“defeat” is a military fait accompli, whereas

“surrender” is the formal acceptance of defeat by the nations’ leaders – an act of decision-making.

“After the loss of Saipan in early July 1944 brought Japan within range of B-29 bombers, its defeat had become certain, and Japan’s leaders knew this. But because its governmental machinery was, to a large extent, controlled by the military and hampered by a cumbersome system that required unanimity of views for any decision, Japanese leaders had failed to translate defeat into surrender.”

Sadao Asada, Japanese historian.

HARDTHRASHER'S RULES OF STRATEGIC BOMBING (PARAPRHASED):

"Hardthrasher is the title of a British Youtube history presenter who began posting videos during COVID to pass the time in lock down. He has an upper class accent but is snarky, sarcastic and a bit foul mouthed but entertaining and well researched.

HARDTHRASHER'S RULES OF STRATEGIC BOMBING (PARAPRHASED):

RULE 1: You must be able to fly.

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Aside from the obvious where we can assume you have airplanes and can fly them – meaning you have fuel as well – this means you need to have airplanes that:

- **Have enough range to reach a desired target.**
- **Can carry bombs.**
- **Can carry enough bombs and big enough bombs to do meaningful damage if they hit.**

(For most of the war in the Pacific, until mid-1944 at the earliest, the U.S. did not have a plane that could reach Japan from anywhere they controlled. In the ETO, the largest non-incendiary bomb the U.S. used was 1000 lb. and most were half that. The smallest RAF equivalent was 2000 lb. and they used 12,000 lb. bombs and even bigger ones.)

HARDTHRASHER'S RULES OF STRATEGIC BOMBING (PARAPRHASED):

RULE 1: You must be able to fly.

RULE 2: You must be able to navigate.

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RULE 2: You must be able to navigate.

The RAF did not train or assign navigators to their bombers until early 1942. Before then, they relied on their compass and hoped for the best and looked out the window if they could. They decided maybe a navigator was a good idea when they learned that as often as not they hit the wrong city or the wrong country (Switzerland on one occasion) or missed altogether.

The U.S. had navigators on all large, long ranged aircraft since before the war. That does not mean they never made mistakes or even that mistakes were rare. In fact, if it was cloudy mistakes were practically certain.

HARDTHRASHER'S RULES OF STRATEGIC BOMBING (PARAPRHASED):

RULE 1: You must be able to fly.

RULE 2: You must be able to navigate.

RULE 3: You must be able to find the target.

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This depended on being able to see the target which was a problem if there were clouds or if it was nighttime. Even then, a factory was really small from 25,000 feet.

The British tried some form of precision bombing early in the war and decided it was not worth the effort to find a target smaller than a city (and even then cities look very similar from high altitude.)

The Americans trusted in their Norden Bombsight which was marginally better than relying on reading omens.

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RULE 3A: You must be able to hit the target.

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The RAF decided that it was easier to hit a city. Even then, it was only easier than trying to hit a specific part of the city.

The Americans relied on their Norden Bombsight which worked under ideal conditions, conditions that did not exist if there were clouds or any enemy fighters or anti-aircraft guns shooting at them … or there was a jet stream which the U.S. had not known existed at all…

HARDTHRASHER'S RULES OF STRATEGIC BOMBING (PARAPRHASED):

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RULE 2: You must be able to navigate.

RULE 3: You must be able to find the target.

RULE 3A: You must be able to hit the target.

RULE 4: You must have air superiority.

In the ETO, the British realized this by 1942 but had no means to achieve it so figured if the Germans could not see them all would be well and began bombing exclusively at night. Then the Germans put radars on some of their fighters. The Americans assumed it was an unnecessary luxury – until they lost over half of their 8th Air Force in the fall of 1943.

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In Burma, the British achieved this by late 1942, saw that it was a good thing and kept at it.

In the Pacific, the Americans achieved this in the Solomons by the end of 1942 and from then on planned their ground campaigns based on their ability to attain air superiority.

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RULEL 4: You must have air superiority.

RULE 5: You must know why hitting that target matters.

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RULE 5: You must know why hitting that target matters.

Arguably no one truly got this last bit. Some targets mattered but they were bombed more by fortuitous accident than design. For the Americans, the targets they wanted to bomb were pointless and the ones that hurt the enemy the most were bombed under protest or because for some reason they could not bomb the useless target they wanted to bomb.