The Turn of the Tide, July 1942-February 1943: Shifting Strategic Initiative in the Pacific in World War II

DISSERTATION

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Abstract

Military historians and military professionals often refer to strategic initiative and most assume a common understanding of the term. Yet the term has not been carefully defined or closely studied. This dissertation aims to fill the void by crafting a definition for the concept and examining the role and influence of shifting strategic initiative in the Pacific War between mid 1942 and early 1943.

Strategic initiative grants the combatant possessing it greater influence over the course of the war and therefore provides the possessor with more options in waging the war. The underlying elements that influence possession of this initiative include resources, intelligence, strategic acumen, combat effectiveness, chance, and political will.

The study contains several descriptive chapters. The first examines the organization of the Japanese and the American high commands and their decision-making bodies. These organizations had many similarities, but significant differences as well. The Japanese army and navy did not create joint organizations in the same manner as the Americans, who created the Joint Chiefs of Staff organization based upon a British Imperial General Staff model. The two combatants also differed in their approach to intelligence organizations and emphasis. They both leveraged similar types of intelligence, but the Japanese created a system designed to gather tactical intelligence for battlefield success. The Americans and Allies created and grew more joint and combined organizations that helped better integrate their intelligence and improved their estimates.

The heart of the study examines the course of the war and shifting strategic initiative in the Pacific War during 1942 and 1943. The Japanese attacked and seized the strategic initiative in December 1941 with advantages in nearly all the underlying elements. Six months later the Americans won an important victory at the Battle of Midway, which altered the naval balance and allowed them to vie for the strategic initiative. Over the following eight months and through two symbiotic campaigns on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands and on Papua, New Guinea, the Allies gained the strategic initiative. The Allies did so predominantly through the exploitation of advantages in intelligence, strategic acumen, and combat effectiveness. The Americans and Allies thus took control of the war before they held the preponderance of resources with which they closed out the last two years of the war.

The genesis of this dissertation began with the author's thesis titled "'Who has the puck?': Strategic Initiative in Modern, Conventional War," completed for the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies in 2008. Significant portions of this study borrow from and incorporate portions of that thesis.

The views expressed in this dissertation are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the United States Air Force, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

Dedication

This document is dedicated to America's Gold Star Families.

Acknowledgments

I could never have completed this project without the guidance, understanding, and patience of a multitude of individuals. First I would like to give special thanks to my advisor and fellow airman, Prof. John Guilmartin. His insights and thought provoking discussions greatly enhanced my own understanding of the topic and he has guided this project with a steady hand throughout. I would also like to thank the other members of my dissertation committee. Profs. Peter Mansoor and Nicholas Breyfogle provided excellent and timely feedback throughout this process, and pushed me to expand my view and to consider alternative viewpoints. In addition, in a fortuitous turn of events, Prof. Mansoor conducted research at the National Archives II in College Park, Maryland while I too did my research. While there Prof. Mansoor took the opportunity to provide some archival mentorship at the expense of his own time to research. In similar fashion, Prof. Brian Linn, Texas A&M University, also took time out of his own research to assist me while at the National Archives. His recommendations for organizing one's research proved invaluable throughout this process.

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Fields of Study

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Pacific War raged from 7 December 1941 until Japanese Emperor Hirohito famously announced Japan's acceptance of the Allies' terms of the Potsdam Declaration on 15 August 1945, resulting in the surrender ceremony on the battleship *USS Missouri* in Tokyo Bay on 2 September 1945. It was a subset of a wider world war that most historians date to Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939. To the Western Allies and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, the Pacific represented a secondary theater of far less importance than the European continental contest. Geography contributed in part to the different character of the Pacific War, which included two broad theaters: a continental war in China and Southeastern Asia, and a maritime conflict throughout the expanse of the great Pacific Ocean and beyond. The present study focuses on this latter maritime conflict.

Sean M. Judge, "'Who has the Puck?': Strategic Initiative in Modern, Conventional War," (Air University, 2008). This dissertation had its origins in my School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS) thesis listed above, completed under the advisement of Dr. Harold R. Winton. A primary goal of this study is to apply the concepts developed in the SAASS thesis in a deeper, more focused analysis of the critical phase of the Pacific War from mid 1942 until early 1943. The original work analyzed strategic initiative more broadly but with less depth, using the case studies of the Soviet-German War of 1941-45 and the Pacific War 1941-45. The reader of both works will therefore recognize that my analytical/conceptual framework relies on many of the same terms. Much of the present chapter and "Chapter 2: Strategic Initiative" borrow heavily from and expand upon the theoretical discussion in the previously completed thesis. The reader will also recognize foundational elements taken from the thesis embedded in "Chapter 3: National Command Structures," "Chapter 4: Japanese Intelligence Organization in World War II," "Chapter 5: United States Intelligence Organization in the Pacific During World War II," and in "Chapter 6: 'East Wind, Rain'." Yet the influence of the original thesis, of course, pervades throughout the present work.

The ocean war ranged from the Aleutian Islands in the north to Darwin, Australia in the south, and from the Hawaiian Islands in the eastern Pacific to Ceylon in the Indian Ocean. The conflict manifested three phases. In the first phase, Japan seized the strategic initiative and ran rampant, rapidly achieving its initial expansionist aims of conquering the resource rich area south of Japan and establishing a defensive perimeter to protect those gains by mid 1942. The second phase differed demonstrably and represented a period of strategic equilibrium in which the Japanese vied to retain the strategic initiative while the Allies, led by the Americans but with important contributions from Australia and New Zealand, aimed to wrest that initiative. Finally, by early 1943 the Allies held the strategic initiative and retained it until the close of the war.

Conventional wisdom holds that Japan waged a hopeless war against foes with vastly superior resources and war-making capacity and was destined to be defeated. The present work does not aim to enter that historical debate directly, although the author maintains that the course of the war and its final outcome were by no means foreordained. The focus here is to more closely examine the course the war did take and why, through the lens of the concept of strategic initiative, as defined below. As such, the mid phase of the war is the obvious pivot point where the Allies seized the initiative and Japan lost it. The Allies did so without the preponderance of resources that would characterize the later stages of the war. Using advantages in other means, the Allies redirected the course of the war to better suit their objectives while Japan's influence over the course of future events diminished. The period thus demands closer examination.

Pacific War historiography illustrates the common recognition that the course of the war shifted in the period between mid 1942 and early 1943. Yet historians differ over the catalysts for the shift, the relative importance of the various campaigns during this period, and even in their terminology for the change, using terms such as "turning point," "strategic initiative," and/or "offensive" and "defensive." The present work aims to fill a gap by investigating the concept of strategic initiative in the context of the Pacific War, and clarifying the interrelationship of the dual campaigns in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands as the war raged in 1942 and 1943, a period of relative balance or strategic equilibrium. Indeed, the manner in which the combatants conducted those concurrent campaigns enabled the Allies to seize the strategic initiative before achieving the preponderance of resources evident in the final two years of the war. In order to do so, the Allies had to leverage other advantages, such as in military intelligence, and use better strategic judgment to employ the limited resources they had available. The Allies also had to fight effectively, although not perfectly, to overcome the experienced forces the Japanese fielded in the south Pacific. Additionally, as in every conflict, chance inserted unpredictable variables to which both sides had to adapt.

Possession of strategic initiative, briefly, implies greater influence over the course and conduct of the war. Although it does not grant total control, strategic initiative allows the possessor greater latitude to shape the war toward his ends. Chapter 2 discusses the concept in greater detail and defines strategic initiative in more specific terms, while also investigating some of the more dominant elements that contribute to the concept. Historians, strategists, and military professionals use the term strategic initiative

often and assume a common understanding, but none have explicitly defined the term or investigated its supporting elements.

The mid phase of the Pacific War is particularly suited to a close study of shifting strategic initiative because the Japanese and the Allies engaged in two simultaneous and grueling campaigns on eastern New Guinea and on Guadalcanal that changed the course of the war. The latter campaign receives the lion's share of historigraphical coverage and the majority of credit for the shift in the course of the Pacific War. Yet it was precisely the dual nature of these campaigns that allowed the Allies to seize the initiative. Far from being just a bloody side show, the war on Papua, New Guinea enticed the Japanese to divide their forces at a critical moment and thereby contributed to their defeat in both campaigns and to their loss of the strategic initiative. Following the Allied victories in both campaigns, Japanese expansion ceased and the Allies elected to exercise the strategic initiative gained through continued offensive action on New Guinea, New Britain, and up the Solomon Islands chain. Had Japan emerged the victor, the front would likely have moved south and east, threatening Australia directly and threatening the Allies lines of communications between Australia and Hawaii that passed through New Caledonia, Fiji, and Samoa. Indeed, the Japanese exercise of strategic initiative with their decision to push on New Guinea and the Solomons in the spring of 1942 ensured that prewar Japanese and Allied conceptions of the course of the war missed the mark. No one on either side had planned for large campaigns and attritional warfare in the southern Pacific, but instead envisioned a decisive naval battle in the central Pacific. Thus the two campaigns must be examined together and the influence of possession of

strategic initiative does much to explain why those campaigns began, why they evolved into desperate struggles, and why the outcome of those campaigns changed the course of the Pacific War writ large.

The study must address a number of important questions:

- *Strategic Initiative:* What is strategic initiative? What elements underlay strategic initiative and contribute to its possession or its shift?

- *Strategic Acumen:* What strategic decision making structures did the Japanese and the Allies employ? How did those structures contribute to or inhibit maintenance of the strategic initiative in the Pacific in the mid-phase of the Pacific war?

- *Intelligence Apparatuses:* What organizations did the combatants employ in the pursuit of intelligence? How effective were these intelligence organizations in the successful prosecution of the war?

- *Resources:* How did resources contribute to the outcomes of those campaigns and to who held strategic initiative? How effectively were available resources used?

- *Combat Effectiveness:* How important were combat effectiveness and operational/tactical methods? How did battle successes and failures, and their exploitation contribute to shifts in strategic initiative?

- *Chance:* What was the role of chance? Which side operated more effectively in the face of the unknown? Did this change over time?

- *Political Will:* How did the decisions and desires of political leaders influence possession and retention of strategic initiative in the Pacific war?

Historiography

The dominant campaigns in the Pacific between mid 1942 and early 1943 included General Douglas MacArthur's New Guinea campaign and the simultaneous efforts on Guadalcanal under U.S. Navy direction. Historiography has not neglected the period and strategy is a popular and perennial subject in military history and military science, but there remains room for investigation in both areas. Historians often study these campaigns in isolation, and only rarely look at the synergistic effects of the concurrent efforts. This results in a narrower view of the war than is necessary and it often devalues the contribution of the Papuan campaign on New Guinea.

The field of history has studied this critical period from a number of vantage points. Each branch of the U.S. armed forces has produced official histories that cover their operations and the war's course during this pivotal phase. Samuel Eliot Morison composed his fifteen volume set *History of U.S. Naval Operations in World War II,* covering the naval aspects of the war. Volumes IV through VIII cover the period in the Pacific from May 1942 through May 1944, with Volume V, *The Struggle for Guadalcanal, August 1942-Fenruary 1943,* and Volume VI, *Breaking the Bismarcks Barrier, 22 July 1942-1 May 1944,* specifically addressing the naval actions supporting eastern New Guinea and in the Solomon Islands. Morison also composed a single volume account of the U.S. Navy's participation in the entire war, *The Two Ocean War:*

A Short History of the United States Navy in the Second World War. In this latter work,

Morison devotes an entire fifty-one page chapter to Guadalcanal, but grants only

scattered references to New Guinea elsewhere. Naval combat actions in support of the

Papuan, New Guinea campaign did not approach the heavy activity around Guadalcanal,

which explains the disparity in a naval account of these campaigns, but the disparity

creates a false impression that the New Guinea campaign lacked importance. Morison

mentions Allied possession of strategic initiative only after continued fighting in the

central Solomons concluded in October 1943, and offers an implied definition: "they [the

Allies] would call the tunes, selecting when and where to fight."[1]

The U.S. Marine Corps also produced its own official history of World War II.

This five volume set is titled *History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II.*

The first two volumes, *Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal* and *Isolation of Rabaul,* address

this phase of the war. The Marine Corps also produce an official history titled *The*

Guadalcanal Campaign by John L. Zimmerman. In its conclusion, this account declares

the Guadalcanal campaign a turning point in the war and declares that the campaign also

gained the strategic initiative for the Allies, with no mention of any contributions from

the concurrent New Guinea operation.[2]

Not to be outdone, the U.S. Army has produced its own history of the war titled

U.S. Army in World War II, which is segmented into various topical sections. One such

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[1] Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Two-Ocean War: A Short History of the United States Navy in the Second World War* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963), 285.

[2] United States Marine Corps and John L. Zimmerman, *The Guadalcanal Campaign* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1949), 165.

section is *The War in the Pacific* series which includes two works that directly address the campaigns in question: *Guadalcanal: The First Offensive,* and *Victory in Papua.* In this latter book, the U.S. Army's own study of the New Guinea campaign, the army found value only in tactical lessons from the final battles, and declared, "On the strategic level, the victory in Papua had been a bitter anticlimax, partaking more of tragedy than triumph."[3] Once again, like the Marine Corps official history of the Guadalcanal campaign, the U.S. Army declared that Guadalcanal had wrested the initiative away from the Japanese.[4] This assessment is another example of how the contributions of the Papuan campaign fall by the wayside in the struggle for strategic initiative in these accounts.

The U.S. Air Force followed suit with its seven volume history titled *The Army Air Forces in World War II.* The first volume, *Plans and Early Operations,* and the fourth volume, *The Pacific: Guadalcanal to Saipan, August 1942 to July 1944,* are particularly relevant to the present study. The latter work occasionally mentions initiative in the Pacific War and briefly gives credit to both campaigns for its shift to the Allies.[5] Another valuable contribution is the work of General George C. Kenney, *General Kenney Reports: A Personal History of the Pacific War,* which recounts his

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[3] Samuel Milner, *Victory in Papua*, United States Army in World War II: The War in the Pacific (Washington, DC: Center of Military History United States Army, 2003), 377.

[4] John Miller, *Guadalcanal: The First Offensive*, United States Army in World War II: The War in the Pacific (Washington, DC: Center of Military History United States Army, 1989), 350.

[5] United States. USAF Historical Division., Wesley Frank Craven, and James Lea Cate, *The Pacific: Guadalcanal to Saipan, August 1942 to July 1944*, vol. Four, The Army Air Forces in World War II (Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 670.

experience as the commander of the air forces serving with General MacArthur in the Southwest Pacific theater during this critical phase of the war.

Another official U.S. Army history also covers the period under investigation and requires brief mention. *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942* by Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell mentions strategic initiative in four locations. The first three concern strategic initiative in the Pacific War, while the last mention focuses solely on the European Theater.[6] The third reference implies that Allied offensive power in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands contributed to the beginning of the shift in strategic initiative to the Allies in December 1942.[7] But like the other official histories, the book offers no definition of strategic initiative.

Beyond such official works, professional historians and biographers have examined this period and these campaigns from a variety of perspectives. Many of the full histories of the war provide diverse coverage of this period, these campaigns, and the concept of strategic initiative. Martin Gilbert, in *The Second World War,* makes several mentions of initiative and strategic initiative in the war, but examines the campaigns on Guadalcanal and New Guinea to only a limited degree. John Keegan, in his *The Second World War,* devotes eighteen of his 595 pages to the operations in the Solomon Islands, in New Guinea, and in the Allied isolation of Rabaul. Keegan's treatment of strategic initiative is implicit and often indirect. He maintains that the American victory in the battle of Midway placed the Japanese on the defensive, thereby changing the course of

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[6] Maurice Matloff and Edwin Marion Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942*, United States Army in World War II: The War Department (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Dept. of the Army, 1953), 167, 296, 350, 366.

[7] Ibid., 350.

the war, and his only direct mention of strategic initiative relates to Hitler's attempt to regain strategic initiative with the Ardennes offensive of 1944.[8] Similarly, Richard Overy's *Why the Allies Won* stresses the importance of the battle of Midway for the course of the Pacific War, and directly mentions Guadalcanal and New Guinea only one time each. Overy recognizes the importance of 1942-1944 as the period when the "initiative passed to the Allies, and Axis forces experienced their first serious reverses."[9] Like Gilbert and Keegan, Overy does not clarify what the concept of strategic initiative implies. All assume a common understanding.

American historians, in contrast to their British counterparts mentioned above, tend to examine events in the southern Pacific more closely. Given that these were predominantly American operations, although with important contributions from Australia and New Zealand, the difference is understandable. Gerhard Weinberg does not address the Guadalcanal or Papua, New Guinea campaigns at great length in his excellent study, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II,* but he does relate them to strategic initiative in the Pacific war. He writes the Japanese conduct of operations in the south Pacific "lost Japan not only tens of thousands of men, hundreds of airplanes along with experienced crews, and numerous warships, but above all it lost her the strategic initiative for the whole second half of 1942."[10] Williamson Murray and Allan Millett provide more extensive coverage of this phase of the Pacific War in *A War*

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[8] John Keegan, *The Second World War* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 15. His conclusions for the Battle of Midway appear on p. 278, and his mention of strategic initiative vis-à-vis Germany appears on p. 440.

[9] R. J. Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, 1st American ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 15.

[10] Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 345.

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to be Won: Fighting the Second World War. They also recognize the importance of the U.S. victory at Midway writing "the temporary material and psychological setback for the IJN offered the Allies an opportunity to take the strategic initiative."[11] Thus, for Murray and Millett, Midway did not grant the Allies strategic initiative in the war, but opened the door for them to vie for that initiative. Once again, the authors assume a common understanding of the notion of strategic initiative and never seek to clarify comprehension of the topic.

Other works that analyze the Pacific War in isolation from the greater global conflict typically address the southern Pacific campaigns of 1942 and 1943 in greater detail. John Costello's *The Pacific War 1941-1945* covers both the Guadalcanal and Papuan campaigns in more depth, with more emphasis on the former. Costello also recounts the follow on campaigns in New Guinea and up the Solomon Islands chain towards Rabaul. While not mentioning strategic initiative directly, Costello maintains that "The success in the three-day naval battles off Guadalcanal crowned a glorious fortnight of Allied victories that would make the first two weeks of November 1942 the turning point of World War II."[12] In *The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1936-1945,* John Toland effortlessly glides between the Allied and Japanese perspectives of the war. Like most other historians, Toland grants primacy to the struggle for Guadalcanal in comparison to MacArthur's efforts on New Guinea. He does not state his personal position on strategic initiative but uses the words of the war's

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[11] Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett, *A War to Be Won: Fighting the Second World War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 195.

[12] John Costello, *The Pacific War 1941-1945: The First Comprehensive One-Volume Account of the Causes and Conduct of World War II in the Pacific.* (New York: Quill, 1981), 374.

participants to reveal what each side thought to be significant turning points during the war. For many Americans, Midway represented a reversal of fortunes, while for President Roosevelt the succession of Allied successes across the globe in November 1942 seemed to be the turning point in the world war, while for many Japanese, like General Kiyotake Kawaguchi, the bitter defeat on Guadalcanal represented the decisive blow in the war.[13] Toland also relates the Allied debate about potentially seizing the initiative in the Pacific following the battle of Midway, which ultimately resulted in the strike against Japanese possessions on Guadalcanal and the surrounding area.[14]

Dan van der Vat discusses initiative and turning points in his book, *The Pacific Campaign: The U.S.-Japanese Naval War 1941-1945*. By his analysis, three turning points preceded a slow shift in initiative in the Pacific War, and holding the initiative implies offensive action. He reveals his understanding of initiative with his evaluation of Japanese forces at the beginning of the war: "But these forces never lost their main advantage so long as they were on the attack—the initiative on when and where to strike next, which always belongs to the well-organized aggressor."[15] Thus van der Vat explicitly ties initiative to offensive action, a common notion among historians and military professionals. He also notes a number of turning points during this phase of the war and even earlier. Van der Vat writes of the Battle of the Coral Sea, "There is thus a powerful case for arguing that the Coral Sea, not the much bigger and more dramatic

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[13] John Toland, *The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1936-1945* (New York: Random House, 2003 (1970)). For Midway see p. 341, for Roosevelt see p. 417, and for Kawaguchi see p. 431.

[14] Ibid., 348.

[15] Dan van der Vat, *The Pacific Campaign: World War II, the U.S.-Japanese Naval War, 1941-1945* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 121.

clash exactly four weeks later at Midway, was the real turning point of the Pacific Campaign."[16] Yet he later addresses the results of Midway: "From now on they [the Imperial Japanese Navy] and the Army were to be on the strategic defensive. The Pacific Campaign had undergone a mighty sea-change heralding a shift in the balance of power across the ocean. But this was nothing like as clear-cut to either side at the time."[17] Van der Vat also presents the American victory on Guadalcanal as another turning point.[18] He goes on to state that the Allies agreed at the Casablanca Conference in January 1943 "that the US should keep the initiative it was just winning at such huge cost in the Pacific and should also prepare for a full-blown counterattack on Japan as soon as Germany was defeated."[19]

Ronald Spector has also produced a study of the Pacific war titled *The Eagle Against the Sun: The American War with Japan*. Spector sees things differently than van der Vat in the situation following the battle of Midway. In Spector's judgment the Japanese leaders chose to transition to a defensive posture with the Japanese navy: "The Japanese still had sufficient forces after Midway to take the initiative for another try at the U.S. fleet. Instead they reverted to the defensive and allowed themselves to be drawn into a battle of attrition in the Solomons."[20] Spector also points out that historiography on Guadalcanal greatly exceeds that on the Papuan campaign, but he stresses the

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[16] Ibid., 177.

[17] Ibid., 195.

[18] Ibid., 254.

[19] Ibid., 256.

[20] Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle against the Sun: The American War with Japan* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 178.

significance of the psychological aspects of Allied moves in both of these campaigns because they removed the veneer of Japanese army invincibility.[21] He refers to Guadalcanal as a "defensive victory," in contrast to the succeeding land battles which were "offensive in nature."[22] Such a distinction implies that something of a turning point followed the battle.

A more recent but brief work examines Japanese calculations in World War II. *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War: Was Defeat Inevitable?* by James Wood seeks to overturn conventional wisdom that Japan was foreordained to defeat at the hands of the richer Western nations. Wood opens his book with the following: "The great irony off the Pacific War is that the virtually flawless execution of Japan's initial strategic plans resulted within less than a year not in victory but in a series of significant defeats that left the strategic initiative in the hands of the enemy."[23] He later writes, "The fact that this dramatic reversal took place even before the balance of power had tipped in favor of the Allies might appear to be evidence that Japan's entry into the war had indeed been a terrible mistake, a kind of teleological unfolding of a predetermined strategy….Not only could the outcome have been different, it was within the power of the Japanese to have made it different. Midway, New Guinea, and Guadalcanal were the wrong battles fought at the wrong places at the wrong times."[24] While he does not clarify his concept of

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[21] Ibid., 217-18.

[22] Ibid., 218.

[23] James B. Wood, *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War: Was Defeat Inevitable?* (New York: Roman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 7.

[24] Ibid., 19.

strategic initiative, he clearly feels the campaigns and battles mentioned above contributed decisively to Japan's loss of that initiative.

Other studies narrow their topics still further, focusing on one specific campaign, or one aspect of the war such as the course of the air war in the south Pacific. Richard Frank's seminal work on Guadalcanal, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle,* is one example. Frank acknowledges the relationship between the concurrent campaigns on New Guinea and on Guadalcanal, but necessarily limits his discussion to the latter in the interest of space.[25] He directly mentions strategic initiative on one occasion stating that following their Midway setback, "In the view of the Imperial Army, however, the strategic initiative still rested with Japan."[26] Later, Frank writes that the Japanese navy enjoyed the advantage of holding the "initiative" for the first seven months of the war, implying the landings at Guadalcanal and Tulagi in August, 1942 represent a discernable shift in initiative.[27] Yet this is the extent of his discussion of initiative in the wider Pacific War.

A new study of the campaign in the southwest Pacific, focusing on MacArthur's efforts, has recently emerged. Bruce Gamble's *Fortress Rabaul: The Battle for the Southwest Pacific, January 1942—April 1943* hit the presses in 2010 and aims to fill a void in the historiographical coverage of MacArthur's air war. Gamble, like van der Vat, acknowledges the Allied desire to maintain the initiative in the Pacific during discussions

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[25] Richard B. Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 1st ed. (New York: Random House, 1990), x.

[26] Ibid., 43.

[27] Ibid., 84.

at the Casablanca Conference, but this is his only direct mention of initiative.[28] He then writes in his Epilogue, "And yet, by April of 1943, just sixteen months after the fighting began, the Japanese had lost all chance of winning the Pacific war."[29] It is of interest to note that Gamble selects the death of Admiral Isoruku Yamamoto, architect of the Pearl Harbor attack, at the hands of U.S. Army aviators staging out of Guadalcanal to punctuate his book.

Acclaimed historian Edward Drea has also provided some insight into strategic initiative in the Pacific war and in the Japanese perspective in his works, *MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War Against Japan, 1942-1945* and *Japan's Imperial Army: Its Rise and Fall, 1853-1945*. In the former, Drea narrows his analysis of strategic initiative to the campaign at hand and writes, "In January 1943 Japan still held preponderant air, naval, and ground strength in the Southwest Pacific and retained the strategic initiative in New Guinea."[30] He then later states, "Its [ULTRA radio intelligence intercepts] forewarnings had enabled [General] Kenney to destroy Number 81 Convoy in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea, after which the Japanese never recovered the strategic initiative."[31] Therefore, Drea dates the Japanese loss of strategic initiative in the southwest Pacific to March 1943. In the latter book, Drea reveals that it was not until the fall of Saipan in the Marianas Islands in 1944 that the diarist in the Japanese army's

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[28] Bruce Gamble, *Fortress Rabaul: The Battle for the Southwest Pacific, January 1942-April 1943* (Minnieapolis, MN: Zenith Press, 2010), 289.

[29] Ibid., 348.

[30] Edward J. Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War against Japan, 1942-1945*, Modern War Studies. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 63.

[31] Ibid., 93.

Imperial General Headquarters (IGHQ) conceded that Japan had lost the initiative in the Pacific war.[32]

A brief look at a few biographies of some of the leading personalities involved in the Pacific war is also in order. Neither of two biographies of Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, *Yamamoto: The Man Who Planned Pearl Harbor* by Edwin Hoyt and *The Reluctant Admiral: Yamamoto and the Imperial Japanese Navy* by Hiroyuki Agawa, writes in terms of strategic initiative. Hoyt's account describes Yamamoto's strategic thinking as considering both campaigns and their importance with respect to the Japanese stronghold at Rabaul, New Britain, while Agawa's tends to focus predominantly on his thoughts concerning the Guadalcanal struggle. Hoyt's biography on Japanese Prime Minister and Imperial Army General Hideki Tojo also does not address the Japanese reverses in the south in terms of strategic initiative. E.B. Potter's biography of Admiral Chester Nimitz, *Nimitz,* also makes no mention of the phrase strategic initiative with respect to the events in the south Pacific. Nor does Richard B. Frank's biography of General Douglas MacArthur, *MacArthur: A Biography,* discuss strategic initiative. D. Clayton James, in the second volume of his superb biography on MacArthur, *The Years of MacArthur: Volume II, 1941-1945,* does not discuss strategic initiative, but does refer to a "turning point" at the conclusion of the New Guinea and Guadalcanal campaigns.[33]

One additional work deserves mention. H.P. Willmott recently published *The War with Japan: The Period of Balance May 1942—October 1943.* Willmott also seems

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[32] Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army: Its Rise and Fall, 1853-1945*, Modern War Studies. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 239-40.

[33] D. Clayton James, *The Years of MacArthur: Volume II, 1941-1945* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), 170.

to equate initiative with offensive action stating Japanese strategy in 1942 as thus: "retention of the initiative and offensive operations represented the only means whereby the enemy's declared intention not to accept a negotiated settlement could be broken."[34] He likens the strategic initiative to a "gun lying in the street: it was there for either side to pick and use" following the battle of Midway.[35] Willmott eschews so-called "turning points" writing, "It is one of the unfortunate aspects of historiography that accounts must have decisive moments or phases or turning points, whereas in reality the latter more often than not represent the point when various factors of time and distance, thus far only in the making, manifest themselves on the battlefield for the first time."[36] He once again compares strategic initiative to a gun lying in the street following the loss of the of the aircraft carrier *USS Wasp* to a Japanese submarine in September 1942, leaving only one operating American aircraft carrier in the Pacific theater.[37] Willmott wraps up his study with the conclusion that, by November 1943, the advantages gained by earlier Japanese

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[34] H. P. Willmott, *The War with Japan: The Period of Balance, May 1942-October 1943*, Total War (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2002), 9.

[35] Ibid., 90.

[36] Ibid., 120. While Willmott's assertion is undoubtedly true in many cases, it borders on the concept of a teleological arc of history, with events being foreordained. It is often difficult to parse historical events and discern cause and effect, and all events are linked, in some fashion, with preceding and proceeding activities, thereby enhancing the challenge to the historian. Willmott relates this quote to the land battles on Guadalcanal in September 1942 and also to the Battle of Midway. This seems to favor the interpretation that Japan was doomed to defeat in World War II from the moment of the raid on Pearl Harbor. Many hold such a view, but history is not without examples of combatants possessed of inferior resources defeating presumably more powerful, well organized foes. How does one explain the Greek defeat of the Persian Empire in the fifth century BC? Surely this remarkable turn of events was not foreordained, though contributing factors for the Persian defeat can be traced to events preceding the decisive battles at Salamis and Marathon. Human calculations and actions, as well as chance, can and do shape events.

[37] Ibid., 121.

possession of the initiative had been spent and "From this time, what awaited Japan was the reckoning."[38]

This brief review of the historiography surrounding the campaigns in the south Pacific demonstrates historians' diverse approaches vis-à-vis the concept of strategic initiative. Few authors or even official military histories offer explication of the phrase. The works that do mention strategic initiative, or the more generic term initiative, assume a common understanding without providing a satisfactory definition or adequately framing the concept. The loose use of the unspecified term initiative may also cause confusion, applying as it may to individual actions, tactics, operations, and strategy. It is possible to exercise tactical or operational initiative, while lacking the strategic initiative. Many of the works do not even mention strategic initiative, but refer to "turning points." None examine any underlying elements of strategic initiative and most present the shift in strategic initiative as a brief bullet tied to the conclusion of the campaigns.   In so doing they miss an opportunity to analyze events through a different lens. Developing an explicit common baseline for the understanding of strategic initiative and the elements that influence it promises to reduce confusion and will help in the analysis of the Pacific War and war in general.

Chapter Outlines

Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical concept of strategic initiative and seeks to more accurately define strategic initiative in the military sense. It then discusses some of the underlying elements that contribute to the possession of strategic initiative, including

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[38] Ibid., 170.

resources, intelligence, strategic acumen, and combat effectiveness. It will also dissect the role of chance and of political will. The discussion closes with some brief historical examples of the exercise of strategic initiative and its shifts in war. The next three chapters describe the organizations both sides used for their strategic decision making and for their intelligence collection/analysis efforts. These include the Imperial General Headquarters (IGHQ) and the intelligence structures of the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) and Navy (IJN), and, for the Allies, the American Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and the intelligence structures at the JCS level down to the fielded commands in the southern Pacific. Chapters 5 through 8 examine the course of the war between December 1941 to May 1942 covering the Japanese period of conquest, the battle of Midway in June 1942, and then two chapters covering the campaigns in the south Pacific between July 1942 and February 1943.

Chapter 3 seeks to reveal the Japanese and Allied command structures. The chapter will describe how the national and international decision making structures functioned for the combatants during the war. The interaction and working relationships between the political leaders, the army, navy, and air force leadership will be investigated. It will also outline the chain of command from those national decision making bodies down to the units in the field waging the war in the south Pacific.

Chapters 4 and 5 describe the intelligence structures employed by the Japanese and the Allies, in turn. As with the preceding chapter, the examination will look at the structures at the national level as well as at the lower operational and tactical levels. The chapters will reveal the similarities and differences in the emphasis and practice of

gathering and exploiting knowledge of the enemy. While both sides often used common methods of collection and similar sources such as radio intelligence/decryption and aerial photo reconnaissance, their integration of intelligence between the services differed markedly. The Allies developed structures that fostered better cooperation among their land, sea, and air forces.

The heart of the study then transitions to the course of the Pacific War between December 1941 and February 1943 and the main theme of shifting strategic initiative. Each chapter recounts a segment of the war, providing a narrative background of events followed by an analysis of the period utilizing the supporting elements that underly possession of strategic initiative.

Chapter 6 entails a brief narrative of the first six months of the war, recounting the war of Japanese conquest. It reveals Japanese aims and reviews the seemingly irresistible tide of the Imperial forces' advance. The raid at Pearl Harbor as well as the invasions of the Philippines Islands, Malaya, and the Bismarck Archipelago will be recounted. The elements contributing to possession of strategic initiative will be analyzed.

Chapter 7 recounts the battle of Midway. It analyzes the significance of this battle and its influence on strategic initiative in the Pacific War. The impact of the Japanese defeat on the expectations and strategies of the combatants and contemporary assessments of the meaning of the battle will be discussed.

Chapters 8 and 9 focus on the period of strategic equilibrium in which the Allies vied to seize the strategic initiative from the Japanese, between mid 1942 until February

1943.[39] The chapters will analyze the course of the war through the lens of the

underlying elements of strategic initiative developed in the first chapter. The role of

resources, intelligence, strategic acumen, combat effectiveness, chance and political will

must be analyzed as the grueling campaigns on New Guinea and in the Solomon Islands

ebbed and flowed. The analyses will seek to find where the strategic initiative shifted

decidedly to the Allied side and why. They will further aim to see which, if any, of the

elements manifested greater influence on the course of the war and why. The

interrelationship and interaction of these elements may provide a greater and more

nuanced understanding of the course of the Pacific War. They help explain how and why

the combatants engaged in heavy attritional warfare in the southern Pacific when, prior to

the war, both strategies anticipated a decisive naval battle in the central Pacific to

determine the war's victor. The analysis provides a fresh look at the synergistic effects of

the dual, concurrent campaigns rather than crediting the turn of events in the Pacific

solely to the struggle for Guadalcanal and the Solomon Islands.

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[39] Matloff and Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942*. Both the Allies and the
Japanese considered the concept of strategic initiative in their calculations and assessments of the course of
the war, although, as now, no specific definition existed and most assumed a common understanding. On
pages167-68, Matloff quotes Prime Minister Winston Churchill writing to President Roosevelt in March
1942 about the "paramount importance of regaining the initiative against Japan" in the Pacific. On page
296, Matloff discusses American General George C. Marshall's concern that the invasion of North Africa
would not achieve results that justified "leaving the Japanese to hold the strategic initiative in the Pacific."
Clearly, the Allies aimed to recover the initiative from Japan when the opportunity presented. Edward
Drea demonstrates the Japanese also thought in terms of strategic initiative, revealing that the IGHQ war
diarist concluded that Japan had lost the initiative in June 1944 with the fall of the Marianas Islands (See
Note 32). The Japanese also referenced a shift in "strategical initiative" to the Americans during the
Guadalcanal campaign in their post war reconstruction of Japanese night fighting tactics and procedures
(see *National Archives and Records Administration: Record Group 550: Records of the U.S. Army, Pacific,
1945 - 1985*. Series: Organizational History Files, compiled 1959 - 1973, documenting the period 1931 –
1973, Box #3: Japanese Night Combat parts 1 & 2: "JAPANESE NIGHT COMBAT, Part 1 of 3 Parts:
PRINCIPLES OF NIGHT COMBAT" compiled in May 1955 by former officers of the IJA for the
Headquarters, United States Army Forces, Far East and Eighth United States Army, Military History
Section, Japanese Research Division, 167).

Any such study necessarily requires a look from the "other side"—from the Japanese perspective. Unfortunately, primary Japanese sources pertaining to the Pacific War remain limited, particularly for one not versed in the complexities of the Japanese language. The Japanese managed to destroy much of their documentation concerning the war once they realized their impending defeat in 1945, before Allied forces occupied the island nation. But all is not hopeless. The postwar interrogations of Japanese officers and leaders conducted under the direction of the United States Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS) remain a treasure trove of information. Indeed, many historians judge the Japanese participants in these interviews to be more forthcoming and forthright in their responses than were their German counterparts.[40] In addition, in the decades following the war the Japanese produced their own 102 volume history of the conflict, titled *Senshi Soshō.* Most of this collection is not available in English but portions are translated into English and are available in electronic format.[41] Finally, the series of postwar "Japanese Monographs" produced by Japanese officers for the U.S. Far East Command grant provide another source for the Japanese perspective.

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[40] "U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey (Pacific): Interrogations of Japanese Leaders and Responses to Questionnaires, 1945-1946," ed. United States Strategic Bombing Survey (Washington: National Archives Microfilm Publications, 1991). Hereafter USSBS Interrogations. No. 497: Lt General Shuichi MIYAZAKI, IJA; Subject: Effect of Allied air activity on Japanese planning of the Solomons, Rabaul and New Guinea operations and on Japan's ability to carry out those plans; planning and objectives of the Burma campaign; Date: 3 December 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 497-5. Lieutenant General Miyazaki represented many of the Japanese' attitudes when he stated, "There is no longer any secrecy about anything as far as we are concerned, so I will be glad to write everything I can remember on the matter," during his post war USSBS interrogation.

[41] The *Australian War Memorial Project* and its associated *Australia-Japan Research Project* have provided access to some such materials via the worldwide web and the following web address: http://ajrp.awm.gov.au/AJRP/AJRP2.nsf/Web-Pages/HomePage?OpenDocument. The current study has incorporated portions of the materials provided by this endeavor. Such incorporations are properly cited in the text.

Getting a closer look at these campaigns from the Allied perspective is less challenging. The official histories and several of the excellent campaign studies represent solid starting points, but several archival collections located in the United States offer the opportunity to get "behind the scenes" on the Allied side. Many pertinent U.S. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps records are readily available for examination at the U.S. National Archives II, located in College Park, Maryland. No less than seven record groups from the U.S. National Archives provided valuable information for this study. The Naval History and Heritage Command, Operational Archives Branch at the Washington Navy Yard offered additional naval resources, such as portions of Admiral Nimitz's handwritten diary, to supplement the naval records available at the National Archives. Many, if not most, of the supporting Air Force resources may be found at the Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. Finally, a number of resources are also available through electronic means, including portions of President Roosevelt's collections in the FDR Library and records of the numerous inter-Allied war conferences, available on CD-ROM.

Yet before these resources can be applied to an investigation of this critical period of the Pacific war, the concept of strategic initiative requires further elucidation. What is strategic initiative, what elements support it, and why is the concept so important?

Chapter 2: Strategic Initiative

Historian Eric Bergerud writes, "Generals often talk of the military 'initiative.'"[1] A perusal of most works of military history is likely to yield numerous references to initiative in many different contexts. Commanders at all levels, from the tactical, through the operational, to the strategic are expected to exercise initiative. Those who fail to do so often suffer defeat or miss fleeting opportunities and must endure the recriminations of historians. Accounts of seizing the tactical or operational initiative abound. But at the strategic level of war, initiative receives only transitory mention. As our brief review of the historiography of the Pacific War revealed, authors and military professionals often assume a common understanding of strategic initiative, including which combatant has it and why. There is, however, neither a clear definition of the concept, nor any significant analysis of the elements that contribute to it. What, after all, does the term strategic initiative convey?

Crafting useful definitions for abstract terms is always vexing, particularly in the realm of strategy and particularly if the concept of strategy is to be a foundational element of that definition. Historians and theorists have proffered a litany of different

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[1] Eric M. Bergerud, *Touched with Fire: The Land War in the South Pacific* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 213. See also "Field Manual 3-0: Operations," ed. Headquarters Department of the Army (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, June 2001), 4-15. FM 3-0 lists initiative as a "Tenet of Army Operations," but focuses on its operational and individual components.

definitions for strategy and the debate or, if one prefers, the conversation continues today. Prudent authors approach the subject with caution and mild trepidation. Indeed, the well-known American military historian and strategist, Edward Luttwak, crafted his 308 page work titled *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace* without presenting his accepted definition of strategy, discussed below, until his two and one half page "Appendix A" at the end of the book. Adding to the confusion, many authors, strategists, and current U.S. military thinking recognize different types and/or levels of strategy, although the dividing lines are often murky and obscure. Examples include, but are not limited to, the concepts of grand strategy, military strategy, diplomatic strategy, political strategy, economic strategy, and business strategy to name just a few possibilities.

Certainly warfare, such as the war in the Pacific, must involve a number of these levels or types of strategy. Starting at the top we have grand strategy. B.H. Liddell Hart couches grand strategy almost solely in terms of war when he writes, "For the role of grand strategy—higher strategy—is to co-ordinate and direct all the resources of a nation, or band of nations, towards the attainment of the political object of the war—the goal defined by fundamental policy."[1] His discussion of grand strategy goes further, stating it looks beyond the war to the "subsequent peace," and he touches upon financial, commercial, and diplomatic influences, but his concept is still dominated by war and military concerns.[2] Paul Kennedy credits Liddell Hart for breaking new ground and builds upon Liddell Hart's departure. Kennedy writes, "grand strategy needs to take into consideration a whole number of factors that are not usually covered in traditional

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[1] B.H. Liddell-Hart, *Strategy*, Second Revised ed. (New York: Meridian Books, 1991), 322.

[2] Ibid.

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military histories…."[3] Further, for Kennedy, "The crux of grand strategy lies therefore in *policy,* that is, in the capacity of the nation's leaders to bring together all of the elements, both military and nonmilitary, for the preservation and enhancement of the nation's long-term (that is, in wartime *and* peacetime) best interests."[4] The modern U.S. concept of grand strategy is encapsulated in the National Security Strategy: "A document approved by the President of the United States for developing, applying, and coordinating the instruments of national power to achieve objectives that contribute to national security."[5] Grand strategy, therefore, encompasses more than war, and war represents but one of many options.

Elements of grand strategy were at play throughout the war in the Pacific, even amongst erstwhile allies, as they are in all wars. The United States was engaged in a global war in which it recognized Nazi Germany in the European theater as the primary threat to American interests. But the United States, under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, also envisioned a postwar world devoid of the European empires of the past. Great Britain and France, however, fully expected a return to the status quo ante bellum and the recovery of their imperial dominions. Similarly, Stalin and the Soviet Union undoubtedly held opportunistic aims following the defeat of Japan; aims at odds with those of its Western allies. The present study will not explore this level of international interaction in great detail. The primary emphasis will remain on the military aspects of

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[3] Paul M. Kennedy, *Grand Strategies in War and Peace* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 4.

[4] Ibid., 5. Kennedy's italics.

[5] "Joint Publication 1-02: 12 April 2001 (as Amended through 30 September 2010): Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms," ed. Joint Chiefs of Staff (U.S. Department of Defense, 2010), 317.

the maritime struggle between the Japanese and the Allies, although certain elements of grand strategy must inevitably intercede in the conduct of the war.

Nevertheless, conceptualizing military strategy presents similar daunting challenges. Military professionals and historians comfortably discuss the various aspects of war, including tactical, operational, and strategic. But what differentiates these presupposed "levels" of war, which in many cases may actually overlap?[6]

Carl von Clausewitz, the preeminent Prussian war theorist, wrote "tactics teaches *the use of armed forces in the engagement.*"[7] Modern U.S. military terminology defines the tactical level of war as, "The level of war at which battles and engagements are planned and executed to achieve military objectives assigned to tactical units or task forces. Activities at this level focus on the ordered arrangement and maneuvers of combat elements in relation to each other and to the enemy to achieve combat objectives."[8] Tactics concerns the sharp end of combat, where the bullets fly, the bleeding occurs, and the din of battle dominates.

Moving up the theoretical chain we come next to the operational aspects of war. A more recent military concept than tactics or strategy, Clausewitz made no direct mention of the operational level of war. Current U.S. military terminology, however,

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[6] Outlining three "levels" of war including the tactical, operational, and strategic levels represents an artificial construct and one open to serious debate and discussion. The three often overlap, and can do so significantly. Capabilities in each of these aspects of war may also influence policy choices and development of a grand strategy. Nevertheless, the construct helps clarify much about each aspect, even if their presumed isolation appears overstated.

[7] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 128. Clausewitz's italics.

[8] "Joint Publication 1-02: 12 April 2001 (as Amended through 30 September 2010): Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms," 457.

calls the operational level of war, "The level of war at which campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted, and sustained to achieve strategic objectives within theaters or other operational areas. Activities at this level link tactics and strategy by establishing operational objectives needed to achieve the strategic objectives, sequencing events to achieve the operational objectives, initiating actions, and applying resources to bring about an sustain these events."[9] According to current U.S. military understanding, notable definitional differences with the tactics include the explicit mention of wider geographic areas and the implicit acknowledgement of longer duration with the inclusion of "sustained" and "sequenced" actions.

As previously noted, there is an ongoing historirgraphical discussion over the concept of strategy. We have briefly examined grand strategy, but what of military strategy? Clausewitz wrote that strategy was "*the use of engagements for the purposes of the war,*" a broad definition that would seem to include the modern concept of the operational level.[10] For Liddell Hart, strategy comprises "the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy."[11] The aforementioned Edward Luttwak accepts the judgment of General André Beaufre, classifying strategy as "the art of the dialectics of wills that use force to resolve their conflicts."[12] Modern strategist Colin Gray prefers "*the use that is made of force and the threat of force for the ends of policy,*" and Gray also subscribes to

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[9] Ibid., 340.

[10] Clausewitz, *On War*, 128. Clausewitz's italics.

[11] Liddell-Hart, *Strategy*, 321.

[12] Edward Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace*, Revised and Enlarged ed. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 269.

General Beaufre's interpretation.[13] This inclusion of the "dialectics of wills" is a significant

aspect of strategy, revealing the importance of the interaction of adversaries rather than

emphasizing the simple application of power. Military historians Williamson Murray and Mark

Grimsley would likely agree, writing, "strategy is a process, a constant adaptation to shifting

conditions and circumstances in a world where chance, uncertainty, and ambiguity dominate."[14]

Returning to modern U.S. military terminology, Joint Publication 1-02 defines the strategic level

of war as, "The level of war at which a nation, often as a member of a group of nations,

determines national or multinational (alliance or coalition) strategic security objectives and

guidance, and develops and uses national resources to achieve these objectives. Activities at this

level establish national and multinational military objectives; sequence initiatives; define limits

and assess risks for the use of military and other instruments of national power; develop global

plans or theater war plans to achieve those objectives; and provide military forces and other

capabilities in accordance with strategic plans."[15]

The inherent differences between the strategy and operations require further

illumination and clarification. Strategy encapsulates time, force, space, and

consequences on a higher order than operations, which are generally confined to a shorter

period, a smaller force, fewer participants, more limited geographic areas, and lower

stakes. Complexity increases exponentially in the transition from operations to strategy,

requiring internal tradeoffs and delicate judgment on the part of the strategist. Carl von

Clausewitz wrote, "…it is only in the highest realms of strategy that intellectual

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[13] Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 17-18. Gray's italics.

[14] Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox, and Alvin H. Bernstein, *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1.

[15] "Joint Publication 1-02: 12 April 2001 (as Amended through 30 September 2010): Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms," 444.

complications and extreme diversity of factors and relationships occur."[16] Edward

Luttwak also emphasized the complexity of strategy, compounded by paradoxical logic,

when he wrote, "It is only in the realm of strategy, which encompasses *the conduct and*

consequences of human relations in the context of actual or possible armed conflict, that

we have learned to accept paradoxical propositions as valid."[17] This complexity means

good strategy is often making the least bad choice, or in Luttwak's words, "…mere

adequacy [in strategy] is enough to prevail."[18]

   A diversion to briefly examine the relationship between time and strategy is in

order. Time is a useful and often a limited commodity to the military professional. Many

a commander has suffered in the judgment of history for moving too slowly or letting

opportunities pass. American culture, particularly in the modern age, seems steeped in

the mantra of rapid, positive results. Many in the modern U.S. military study the theories

of strategist Colonel John R. Boyd, USAF (ret.). Boyd, a Korean War fighter pilot,

developed a model for enhanced performance in "complex, competitive, fast moving

situations" akin to aerial combat.[19] He based his model for such enhanced performance

on the "observation-orientation-decision-action time cycle or loop," known in military

circles as the OODA loop, with the aim of rapidly observing the situation, orienting

yourself for the evolving environment, deciding on a course of action, and then

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[16] Clausewitz, *On War*, 178.

[17] Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace*, 2. Luttwak's italics.

[18] Ibid., 258.

[19] John R. Boyd, "SAASS Course 600 Reader: A Discourse on Winning and Losing by John R. Boyd August 1987," ed. Air University School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS) (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, Academic Year 2007-2008). Abstract p. 1.

implementing that action more quickly than one's enemy.[20] By thus getting inside the enemy's OODA loop, one would "appear ambiguous (unpredictable)" and "thereby generate confusion and disorder among our adversaries."[21] The stress is therefore on rapid action and staying ahead of the foe to influence the course of the battle or war to one's own benefit—initiative is implicit. Boyd's OODA loop is often an excellent analytical tool at all levels of war, from tactical to operational and strategic, but it may not be the answer in every situation.

Strategy may not always be practiced as a fast moving situation. Some nations, societies, and cultures may be predisposed to or may consciously select strategic approaches with a longer view of time. The recently published *The Culture of Military Innovation* by Dima Adamsky discusses the influence of a state's strategic culture on military innovation in the context of the military technical revolution of the 1990s. Adamsky maintains that the Soviet Union's military culture lacked the fascination with technology prevalent in the United States, and that this cultural difference enabled the Soviets to conceive of the broader and more long-term implications of the American advances in military technology before the Americans did, and before the Soviets could field comparable equipment.[22] Such cultural differences could easily contribute to conceptual differences over the concept of time in the formulation of strategy. In addition, depending on the character of the conflict, a less intensive and slower rhythm

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[20] Ibid. "Patterns of Conflict" Section, Slide p. 5.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Dima Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation: The Impact of Cultural Factors on the Revolution in Military Affairs in Russia, the US, and Israel* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 131.

may supersede and trump a rapid, up-tempo based plan of action. Put in another way, is it possible and at times beneficial to get outside the competition's OODA loop? The ongoing war against transnational terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda may be one example. The United States and its Western allies must guard against overreaction in an attempt to stay ahead of every move conceived by their enemies. Such efforts to quickly counter every perceived or possible threat would prove exhaustive and eventually prohibitive. Might not Al Qaeda and its allies benefit from a situation in which the United States and its North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies attempted to wage a high-tempo campaign over the course of two or more decades, with the corresponding expenditure of blood and treasure? The West and the United States, despite the stereotype of impatience, settled on an enduring strategy during the Cold War to persevere in that ideological struggle of over forty years of confrontation. Rome, in the face of the Hannibalic threat, provides another example. After several disastrous defeats at the hand of the famous Carthaginian, Rome appointed Q. Fabius Maximus dictator. He changed the Roman strategy to one of caution, delay, and avoidance of battle and thereby wrested the rhythm away from the heretofore successful Hannibal. Q. Fabius Maximus' successors soon changed Roman strategy and sought battle once again, resulting in Hannibal's epic victory over the Roman legions at Cannae in 216 B.C. A patient and slow moving strategy may also impart a sense of ambiguity and confusion to a foe, meeting Boyd's ultimate objectives, so one cannot assume, as American military culture often does, that good strategy always requires rapid execution.

This discussion leaves some consolidation in order. Strategy is a complex process of competition between thinking opponents in a fluid and uncertain environment. Strategy involves using one's means in effective ways to achieve one's ends. It encapsulates a potentially infinite number of variables. A successful strategy achieves its aims, more successful strategies do so at lesser cost. Yet a successful strategy does not require perfection, merely better performance than one's foe or foes.

Framing Strategic Initiative

The importance of strategy makes a sure grasp of strategic initiative and its underlying precepts imperative. A country, alliance, or coalition containing the best tactical and operational commanders and methods carries no assurance of ultimate victory in war. In the words of Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray, "Mistakes in operations and tactics can be corrected, but political and strategic mistakes live forever."[23] The combatants still struggle over where, when, and why certain campaigns and battles are waged or not waged. Operational or tactical success in the wrong fight may or may not be beneficial to victory in the war. It is more advantageous to fight the correct battle adequately than the wrong battle brilliantly. The German army in World War II illustrates the point. The *Wehrmacht* was among the most potent tactical and operational forces in the Second World War, yet Germany eventually lost the strategic

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[23] Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray, "Lessons of War," *The National Interest* (Winter 1988/89).

initiative on all fronts and with it the entire war.[24] Understanding how to seize, hold, and retain strategic initiative is critical to the effective conduct of war.

Having explored several components of strategy, tactics, and operations, what is strategic initiative? Sporting analogies may help clarify some of the important aspects of initiative. In hockey, one potentially helpful indicator of initiative is to ask, "Who has the puck?" or in soccer, "Who has the ball?" The side controlling the puck or ball possesses the general ability to begin action.[25] The side with possession typically wields *greater,* though not total, influence over the tempo and style of play, the location of the main effort, and the likelihood of scoring a goal. One important and commonly misunderstood point is that this ability does not necessarily imply constant offensive action. It is possible for a team with the puck to play defensively, simply denying the other team the opportunity to score. Indeed, even possession of the puck or the ball does not necessarily guarantee possession of the initiative. The real crux of the issue is the ability to influence the tempo and style of play. Any sports aficionado may recall contests in which the course of the game favored one side over the other, where one team was forced to play the game in a manner less suited to its strengths and abilities but more favorable to those of its foe. Sports may indeed represent an imperfect analogy to war, but they do illustrate several fundamentals of the concept of initiative.

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[24] David J. Lonsdale, *The Nature of War in the Information Age: Clausewitzian Future*, Cass Series--Strategy and History; 9 (London; New York: F. Cass, 2004), 80.

[25] Sean Judge, ""Who Has the Puck?": Strategic Initiative in Modern, Conventional War " (Air University, 2008). The concept of strategic initiative extrapolated in this chapter recalls and builds upon previous work in my master's thesis completed under the advisement of Dr. Harold R. Winton for the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL. Indeed, it was Dr. Winton himself who conceived of the hockey analogy in one of our early discussions on the concept of strategic initiative. Much of the present chapter borrows from and expands upon the theoretical discussion in the previously published thesis.

The previous chapter's brief historical review demonstrated the passing and limited references to strategic initiative by military historians, but a review of current professional military thought reveals a continuing void there as well. One can find no definition of the term strategic initiative, yet once again there is an underlying assumption of a common understanding. *Joint Publication 5-0: Joint Operation Planning* refers to potential "forfeiture of strategic or operational initiative" while discussing operational pauses, but one can find no definition of strategic initiative in that work.[26] A review of the Department of Defense glossary of "Military and Associated Terms" confirms the omission.[27] Air Force doctrine mimics the pattern, using "strategic initiative" in a figure depicting the "Modern View of Conflict" but failing to define the term.[28] Army doctrine dutifully defines individual and operational initiative and focuses a good deal of attention on both, but it makes no mention of initiative in the strategic arena.[29] This author could find no mention of the concept in either Navy or Marine Corps doctrinal publications.

Having examined some of the differences between the operational and strategic levels of war and one can use this knowledge to further our understanding of strategic initiative in the military sense. The U.S. Army defines operational initiative as, "Setting

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[26] "Joint Publication 5-0, 26 December 2006: Joint Operation Planning," ed. JCS (U.S. Department of Defense, 2006), IV-32.

[27] "Joint Publication 1-02: 12 April 2001 (as Amended through 30 September 2010): Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms."

[28] "Air Force Doctrine Document 2-1, 22 January 2000: Air Warfare," ed. HQ AF DC/DR (U.S. Air Force, 2000), 6.

[29] "Field Manual 1-02, September 2004: Operational Terms and Graphics," ed. Headquarters U.S. Army (U.S. Department of the Army, 2004), 1-100.

or dictating the terms of action throughout the battle or operation."[30] Clearly, political, economic, and military actions affect strategic initiative so we must build upon this operational initiative foundation.

Drawing upon the similarities of these various formulations and keeping the focus on the military sphere, strategic initiative in war may be defined as *the ability to influence the course of the conflict by choosing to wage those battles, operations, and campaigns most suited to the accomplishment of one's own political ends, while avoiding those detrimental to the same.* Here, it is important to note that the side with strategic initiative either may choose, or be compelled, to cede operational and/or tactical initiative at times during the conflict. The concepts are not mutually dependent. Referring back to our sporting analogies, the side with possession of the ball or puck may, in actuality, only possess the operational initiative. In just a few examples, they may be playing from behind on the scoreboard, they may be pinned deeply on their own side of the pitch or rink, or time may be expiring. Offensive action and strategic initiative are not synonymous.

One further point of clarification deserves brief mention. It is possible at times for no combatant to hold a clear advantage or more influence in the course of the conflict. If those situations are also accompanied by comparable resources among the combatants, they may embody situations best described as strategic equilibrium. H.P. Willmott's aforementioned assessment that strategic initiative was like "a gun lying in the street" following the battle of Midway would represent such a case.

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[30] Ibid.

The strategic initiative concept is important on a number of levels. First, during the war in question, possession of strategic initiative carries with it several implications. The side in possession wields greater influence over the course of the conflict, thereby granting that side more flexibility and more options. This, in turn, implies more potential strategic choices, making the strategists' task more open-ended and complicated, and requiring better judgment to effectively exercise the initiative. The side without initiative may not have an easy task, but lacking the strategic initiative implies a more reactive stance with regard to the situation and, therefore, fewer options. Fewer choices simplifies strategic decision making and clarifies the possible courses of action available. Intuitively, it would seem that the side with possession of the strategic initiative at the close of the war likely would emerge victorious, but this assumption may not be the case. Analyzing strategic initiative in just this one case, and in the midpoint of the Pacific War rather than its termination, can neither validate nor disprove this assumption. This potential aspect of strategic initiative requires further investigation in an additional, comparative study.

A better understanding of strategic initiative is imperative for both the historian and the military professional alike. For the latter, understanding when one possesses the strategic initiative in a war helps one to recognize opportunities and realize increased freedom of action or inaction. Similarly, understanding some of the underlying elements that contribute to the possession and/or shifting of strategic initiative would enable one to better vie for that initiative and thereby gain greater influence and freedom of action over the course of the conflict to ensure the war progresses in a fashion beneficial to one's

own national interests. For the military historian, an understanding of the same for the wars of the past allows for a greater appreciation of causation for the twists and turns of those conflicts. It may help to reveal how and why historical actors behaved the way they did as well as how and why campaigns or battles led to their eventual outcomes.

Pacific War contemporaries on both sides, at a minimum, demonstrated awareness of strategic initiative. Allied leaders talked openly of initiative and strategic initiative in correspondence and at Allied conferences. Similarly, as Drea's note about Japan's IGHQ diarist and the Marianas campaign of 1944 reveals, the Japanese at times also thought in terms of strategic initiative. Yet, like modern historians, their understanding of the concept and their focus on it varied. Interestingly, the Japanese diarist did not note a shift in the strategic initiative just because Japan's forces had stopped advancing by 1943, but noted a shift instead after a critical defeat in the central Pacific. By early 1943, however, at the Casablanca Conference, the Allies indicated their appreciation of a shift in strategic initiative in the Pacific War. Thus an appreciation of strategic initiative helps to analyze the thought processes of some contemporary actors while also offering a new method of analysis for the historian.

Historical Examples of the Influence of Strategic Initiative

A brief look at some historical cases illustrates the point. The U.S. Civil War progressed from 1861 to 1865 with shifts in strategic initiative. The Federal army attempted to seize the strategic initiative early in the war, indeed hoped to crush the rebellion in its infancy, with a march on Richmond, Virginia. But the battle of First Bull

Run, known as First Manassas to the Confederates, in July 1861 stopped the Union plan and resulted in a period of strategic equilibrium. The overall Union strategy soon evolved into pursuit of two aims: the total exhaustion of the South's resources and the annihilation of its armies.[31] Following First Bull Run, the Federals utilized the strategic mobility afforded them by a superior navy to commence what is known as the Peninsula Campaign beginning in the spring of 1862 and threatened Richmond from the southeast. By dint of maneuver, the Union attempted to seize the initiative it had not gained in battle the year before. Nearly simultaneously, the Union won important victories in the western theater at Shiloh, Tennessee and in New Orleans. The Southerners, under General Robert E. Lee, soon responded with the bloody Seven Days Battles in June 1862, which relieved Richmond, drove Union General George McClellan back towards Washington, D.C., and maintained the strategic equilibrium.

The Confederate army, with an ensuing victory at Second Bull Run in August 1862 then attempted to gain the strategic initiative with an invasion of the North. Confederate General Robert E. Lee marched north in part out of a lack of alternatives, but also with the recognition that the North had been cowed by recent events, and with the hope of potentially turning Maryland to the Confederate cause and forcing Washington to sue for peace.[32] The Federal Army thwarted Lee's invasion at the bloody battle of Antietam in September 1862. The war remained in a state of strategic equilibrium despite Lee's bloody repulse of the Union attack at Fredericksburg in December 1862.

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[31] Murray, Knox, and Bernstein, *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War*, 236-37. Taken from Peter Maslowski's contribution, "Chapter 8: To the edge of greatness: The United States, 1783-1865.

[32] James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 534.

The Confederates once again attempted to seize the initiative following their victory in the battle at Chancellorsville in May 1863 and General Lee launched his second invasion of the North. Lee again acted in part out of operational concerns, hoping to feed his troops on northern crops, but he also saw an opportunity to spread political strife in the North, perhaps achieve foreign recognition for the Confederacy, and maybe force Washington into peace negotiations.[33] But the ensuing Confederate defeat at Gettysburg and the simultaneous Federal capture of Vicksburg in Mississippi delivered the strategic initiative into the hands of the Union. The Northern strategy of resource strangulation was taking hold with the United States establishing control over the Mississippi River via their victories at New Orleans and Vicksburg, and the North began to press for its second goal, the annihilation of Southern armies. The South would still enjoy some battlefield successes, such as at the battle of Chickamauga in Georgia or Cold Harbor in Virginia, but the Union maintained the strategic initiative by waging the war predominantly on its terms. In 1864, the Federals would exercise that initiative with the overland campaign in the east under General Ulysses S. Grant and the March to the Sea in the west and south under the command of General William T. Sherman. General Grant had decided the best way to achieve Northern objectives would be to spurn conventional military wisdom of massing ones forces, and instead to exert pressure on the South through simultaneous advances by different armies.[34] The Union maintained the initiative until the Confederate surrender in April 1865. Thus the possession of the

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[33] Ibid., 647.

[34] Murray, Knox, and Bernstein, *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War*, 238-39. Taken again from Maslowski's "Chapter 8" contribution.

strategic initiative and the decisions of how to exploit that initiative reveal much, even in a cursory examination, about the course and duration of the U.S. Civil War.

The Soviet-German War from June 1941 until May 1945 represents another interesting case study in strategic initiative.[35] Nazi Germany seized the strategic initiative in that war through its surprise invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, which enabled the Germans to wield greater influence in the opening stages of the conflict and wage their war of conquest along a broad front.[36] Historian R.H.S. Stolfi assessed the German capabilities in 1941 as "strength in men, skill in tactics and operations, and effecting surprise and concentration of effort by seizing the strategic initiative."[37] The Soviets made a crucial stand before Moscow at the end of 1941, but the Germans still retained the strategic initiative.[38] In 1942, the Germans exploited their continued possession of the initiative with a renewed offensive in the south of the Soviet Union aiming to strike a death blow at the Soviet economy and to destroy the Soviet

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[35] Judge, ""Who Has the Puck?": Strategic Initiative in Modern, Conventional War ". Once again, the synopsis of the Russo-German War of 1941-1945 presented here is extrapolated from the longer case study examined in my master's thesis for the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS).

[36] David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *The Battle of Kursk*, Modern War Studies (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 21.

[37] R. H. S. Stolfi, *Hitler's Panzers East: World War II Reinterpreted*, 1st ed. (Norman. OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), x.

[38] David M. Glantz, *The Role of Intelligence in Soviet Military Strategy in World War II* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1990), 9.

forces located in the south.[39] The Soviets countered at the famous battle of Stalingrad

and seized then held the initiative from early 1943 until the end of the war.[40]

Following Stalingrad, the Soviets held greater sway over the course of the war,

and waged the war by fighting those battles more suited to their goals of defeating

German military power and overthrowing Nazi Germany. This point is debated even by

the participants of the war, many of whom feel the Germans regained the strategic

initiative with Field Marshal Erich von Manstein's deft counterstroke that inflicted a

serious defeat on the Soviets before Kharkov in February 1943. But Manstein's

counterstroke was an indicator of operational initiative, not strategic. Manstein reacted to

post-Stalingrad Soviet maneuvers and took the opportunity to deal a sound counterstroke

that temporarily halted Soviet gains, but the Germans no longer directed the course of the

war. Those who hold a different view cite the large German attack on Kursk in July 1943

as an indication of continued German possession of the strategic initiative, but this

represents a case where offensive maneuver is not synonymous with strategic initiative.

It is well documented that Soviet leader Josef Stalin pressed his leading general, Marshal

Georgi Zhukov, to preempt the German attack with a large Soviet offensive. Yet Zhukov

elected to stand on the defensive, with Stalin's grudging approval, and receive the

German attack to grind down his foe and then follow it up with a counterstroke of his

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[39] Robert M. Citino, *Death of the Wehrmacht: The German Campaigns of 1942*, Modern War Studies (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 91-92.

[40] David M. Glantz, *Zhukov's Greatest Defeat: The Red Army's Epic Disaster in Operation Mars, 1942*, Modern War Studies (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 2. Glantz writes of Soviet operations in 1942, "Taken together, the twin strategic operations [Mars: an attack near Moscow, and Uranus: an attack around Stalingrad], significantly named for the gods, represented the Red Army's effort to regain the strategic initiative on the Eastern Front and to begin a long march to total victory over the German Wehrmacht and Nazi Germany."

own. He elected to temporarily cede the operational initiative to the Germans in order to fight the defensive battle of his choosing, thereby exercising strategic initiative in a defensive manner. Following the German defeat at Kursk, the Red Army used the strategic initiative to transition to offensive operations until the surrender of Germany in May 1945.

Once again, the understanding of strategic initiative helps clarify the course of the war and the decisions of the players involved. The Germans had seized the initiative in 1941 to wage a war of conquest against the Soviet Union on a broad front. Having failed to defeat the Soviets in 1941, Nazi Germany decided to exercise its continued possession of strategic initiative in 1942 through a narrower offensive in the south to cripple the Soviet economy and destroy a portion of the Red Army. After the Soviets wrested the strategic initiative from Germany at Stalingrad, they opted to first fight a large defensive battle at Kursk to wear down German strength and then begin the long march back to their 1941 borders and beyond. From early 1943 on, the Soviets determined where the main focus and main effort of the war would fall.

Supporting Elements of Strategic Initiative

Strategic initiative deals with the capacity to exert influence. One's influence derives from a number of different factors depending on the context of the situation in question. War, our context for strategic initiative, pits two or more thinking opponents against each other in an arena of deadly competition. Effectively analyzing strategic initiative requires determination of those elements that aid or hamper the combatants'

ability to seize, retain, dispute, or exploit it. Given the complexities of war, the number

of possible factors is potentially infinite, but several stand out as particularly salient:

resources, quality of intelligence, strategic acumen, tactical/operational methods (combat

effectiveness), chance, and political will.[41] The first four factors correspond to four

general determinants of military effectiveness: capacity, knowledge, wisdom, and

technique.[42] Though these elements relate to one another in many ways, they can be

sufficiently dis-aggregated to permit discrete analysis. These capabilities will be

compared and contrasted for each combatant in during the mid phase of the Pacific war.

Questions for the analysis will include the following: What was the relative significance

of each of the factors? How did they operate in concert with one another? How did they

combine to result in seizure, retention, loss, and exercise of initiative?

The resource element consists of the "capital" for waging war, or the tools

required to fight and to win. The analysis of resources considers manpower, materiel,

and technology. Quantity, however, is not the only consideration. Quality of both men

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[41] Mao Tse-Tung, *On the Protracted War*, 2d ed. (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1960). Though derived independently of Mao, the first four categories loosely correspond to those mentioned in his dissection of initiative and superiority. Resources (p. 88): war is a "contest in ability between the commanders of the opposing armies in their struggle for superiority and initiative on the basis of material conditions like military forces and financial resources." Intelligence (pp. 88-89): "Sun Wu Tzu's maxim 'know your enemy and know yourself, and you can fight a hundred battles without disaster,' is still a scientific truth....But whatever the war conditions and activities, it is possible to know the general aspects and the essential points." Strategic Acumen (p. 89): "It is possible for a commander to reduce errors and to give generally correct directions by various means of reconnaissance and intelligent inference and judgment. A generally correct direction will enable us to win more victories and transform our inferiority into superiority...." Operational and Tactical flexibility (p. 97): "Flexibility is a quality which enables a commander to adopt timely and appropriate measures after he has, on the basis of the objective situation, weighed the chances and appraised the conditions...in other words, flexibility is the quality that gives one skill in manoever."

[42] Dr. Harold Winton first conceived of this thematic connection and brought it to the author's attention. A brief conversation followed, but the value of this insightful observation was immediately apparent.

and equipment will be compared. Technological advantage could be a significant factor in the equation.

Effective intelligence implies matching one's perception of the total situation with reality. Quality of intelligence has two components. The first is collection and analysis, which encompasses the ability to discern the foe's entire war-making capacity at every level, to divine his intentions and capabilities, and to understand the environment in which one will operate. The second component is counterintelligence and security, which attempts to deny the enemy an accurate understanding of the situation. Both areas contribute to overall intelligence effectiveness, and both play an important role in strategic initiative.

Strategic acumen is a broad concept with many ingredients. Fundamentally, it represents the wisdom to shape plans that will work in an environment plagued by uncertainty, friction, and chance. Those endowed with such acumen recognize the correlation between the means they possess, the goals they hope to achieve, and the course of action required to achieve them. They also sense and act upon opportunities. Those gifted in strategic thought weigh the feasibility and payoffs of different courses of action against the risks they incur. Clausewitz hinted at this when he wrote, "A prince or general can best demonstrate his genius by managing a campaign exactly to suit his objectives and his resources, doing neither too much nor too little."[43] The first sub-component of strategic acumen is strategic planning. How effectively did the combatant match its objectives with its capabilities given the context of the existing situation? The Allied landings in North Africa in late 1942 are a good example of matching objectives

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[43] Clausewitz, *On War*, 177.

with capabilities. President Franklin Roosevelt, with the backing of the British, forced an

invasion that his own military chiefs of staff opposed in order to get American forces into

the fight against Germany quickly, even if they were capable of achieving only modest

military objectives.[44] But this decision also had important ramifications for force

availability in the Pacific theater. The second aspect of strategic acumen is the capacity

to achieve surprise. Surprise allows one to accomplish one's mission before the enemy

can react, or in Luttwak's words, "…within the limits of time and space of the surprise

actually achieved, the conduct of war becomes mere administration, as simple in its total

reality as each one of its elements seems to be simple in theory."[45] The Russian military

theorist Aleksandr Nezmanov described strategic surprise as an action "against which

there are no means whatsoever for sufficient counteraction in a short period of time," and,

"the initiative would be transferred to the enemy."[46] Surprise has a close relationship

with intelligence, but differs slightly in that the focus here is on the ability to conceive of

and to execute deception operations, which are frequently the handmaidens of surprise.

Though not always required for strategic acumen, effective deception and surprise may

yield extraordinary results. The Japanese torpedo boat attack on Port Arthur in February

1904, before an actual declaration of war, opened the Russo-Japanese War with a surprise

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[44] Eric Larrabee, *Commander in Chief: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, His Lieutenants, and Their War*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 133-39.

[45] Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace*, 4.

[46] Bryan I. Fugate and L. S. Dvoretskii, *Thunder on the Dnepr: Zhukov-Stalin and the Defeat of Hitler's Blitzkrieg* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1997), 20.

move akin to that at Pearl Harbor thirty-seven years later.[47] Operation Fortitude, the

Allied effort to mask the Normandy invasion in 1944, stands as an excellent example of

deception as it convinced the Germans the Allies aimed to strike further north instead, at

the Pas de Calais.[48] Once again, capabilities in these two components may vary widely

within one nation or coalition, and each has the potential to play a significant role in

determining strategic initiative.

The fourth factor for analyzing possession of strategic initiative is the comparison

of operational and tactical methods, or, more simply, combat effectiveness. Eric

Larrabee notes, "Strategy includes the working out of its consequences."[49] These

consequences include the sting of battle. Superior operational and tactical methods

reveal themselves in success on the battlefield, where the bullets fly. According to

historian Peter R. Mansoor, "combat effectiveness is the ability of a military organization

to achieve its assigned missions with the least expenditure of resources (both material and

human) in the shortest amount of time."[50] Mansoor also stresses the importance of

endurance, or "the ability of a military force to sustain its efforts over time."[51] Although

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[47] Geoffrey Parker, *The Cambridge History of Warfare*, Revised and Updated, 2009 ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 261.

[48] Thaddeus Holt, *The Deceivers: Allied Military Deception in the Second World War* (New York: Scribner, 2004), 568-69. Holt grants much coverage to Fortitude throughout his book. On two adjacent maps, these pages reveal where the Allied invasion force marshaled in England compared to the erroneous estimates developed by the Germans as a result of Fortitude's success.

[49] Larrabee, *Commander in Chief: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, His Lieutenants, and Their War*, 6.

[50] Peter R. Mansoor, *The GI Offensive in Europe: The Triumph of American Infantry Divisions, 1941-1945*, Modern War Studies (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 3.

[51] Ibid.

superior performance at the tactical and operational levels is not a guarantee of victory, these factors can contribute noticeably to strategic initiative.

A fifth consideration must be chance. Clausewitz noted "the *subjective nature* of war—the means by which war has to be fought—it will look more than ever like a gamble."[52] He also wrote, "No other human activity is so continuously or universally bound up with chance."[53] Chance can ruin the most meticulous and sound of plans or, on the contrary, salvage ill-conceived or poorly executed operations. In addition, the human reaction to chance looms large. In the words of historian John F. Guilmartin:

> …it's my perception and historical appreciation that some leaders and commanders are comfortable wading into a situation riddled with unknowns and fraught with chance because they perceive that the enemy is similarly at risk and because they are confident that they can see through the fog better than the enemy and make more timely and accurate decisions. To have that confidence, they've got to have a very solid handle on those elements of the tactical, operational or strategic equation that *are* knowable: the performance and capabilities of friendly and enemy equipment and forces, how the enemy has handled similar situations in the past, what they can anticipate from friendly forces, and so on.[54]

As such, chance may play an important role in possession of the strategic initiative.

Finally, the combatants must demonstrate the political will to want to possess the strategic initiative.[55] President Roosevelt knew he could not force the United States into the war with Japan or Germany, but instead had to leave the strategic initiative to the

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[52] Clausewitz, *On War*, 85. Clausewitz's italics.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Quoted from personal electronic mail correspondence concerning the topic of chance in war between Prof. Guilmartin and the author on 23 March 2010. Dr. Guilmartin notes that his observations on the tactical level represent personal observation and experience, while those on the operational and strategic level developed out of his historical study.

[55] Dr. Peter R. Mansoor, Colonel USA (ret.), first emphasized the importance of political will and the previously mentioned strategic equilibrium vis-à-vis strategic initiative during the author's Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination on 23 September 2010 and revisited these concepts in a follow up discussion with the author in early October 2010.

Axis powers until the American people became convinced that war was both inevitable and necessary. Japan's Pearl Harbor attack convinced them and the tightrope the Allies then walked in balancing the Pacific and European theaters of operations is a case in point. The Allies had to decide their level of effort in each theater and had to decide whether or not to seize opportunities or pass them by. Mussolini, as a member of the Axis, tried to take the strategic initiative with his ill-considered invasion of Greece, an operation that nearly led to Italy's defeat in the Mediterranean and eventually did lead to Germany taking over control of the war effort there. Leaders seize the strategic initiative at their peril; on the other hand, leaders may elect to avoid possession of the initiative or simply may not demonstrate the resolve to act and, therefore, may cede the strategic initiative, also not without risk.

The elements above will not, however, be considered in isolation. Each of these components is related to, and potentially influences, some or all of the others. The examination of the mid course of the Pacific War must consider how these factors related to one another to influence strategic initiative. Did one factor dominate the others? Did marginal advantages in multiple areas accumulate to deliver strategic initiative into the hands of one side or the other? Was superiority in one or more areas cancelled out by disadvantages in the other factors? Examining the war from various perspectives reveals the interplay among elements and between opponents.

The mid phase of the Pacific War from July 1942 through mid 1943 was a period of transition in which the strategic initiative shifted from Japanese possession to that of the Allies. But before we can examine this critical phase of the war we must understand

the strategic decision-making structures of the combatants and we must also gain a greater understanding of their intelligence apparatuses. The Japanese and the Allies entered the war with distinctly different approaches to strategic decision-making and those different approaches were to shape the choices they made and the strategies they pursued.

Chapter 3: National Command Structures

The belligerents approached and fought the war with significantly different command organizations. The differences were manifest at nearly every level, from coordination with their respective allies, to their own individual national command structures, and on down into the command structures for their fielded forces. Those divergences helped shape the strategies they employed, the decisions and compromises they reached, and their performance in combined and joint operations on the battlefield. Understanding the nuances of these disparate command organizations is therefore essential to any analysis of the course of the war in the Pacific in the critical phase from mid 1942 into early 1943.

The study of organizations, including their cultures, values, and behaviors, has crossed many academic disciplines from history to anthropology, business, and other fields. A full review of such literature is beyond the present study, but brief consideration of some aspects or organizational study is helpful. Political scientist Graham Allison, working with historian Philip Zelikow, examined organizational behavior during the Cuban Missile Crisis in their book *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis.* The authors recount some of the inherent foundations of organizations: governments create organizations to address particular tasks; those organizations often develop their own internal logic for approaching problems and

crafting solutions; organizations also often evolve their own unique culture, and the output generated by the organization typically stems from these factors of logic, culture, and assigned tasks.[1]   Thus, in just one example, when presented with the secret build up of Soviet missiles in Cuba, an airstrike to destroy the threat represented a natural solution to the problem for the U.S. Air Force. Such a solution matched the organization's capabilities, logic, and culture.

The implications are legion for strategic decision making organizations. Organizations that effectively integrate the governmental, diplomatic, and military leaders into a coordinated body will likely produce decisions and recommendations that differ from other bodies with less integration. A modern state requires many organizations to effectively manage the disparate tasks of governing, but coordinating all the associated agencies and bureaucracies to ensure a common direction of effort remains a daunting challenge that grows even more complicated with the introduction of allies during wartime. The Japanese and the Allies developed different structures for guiding their efforts during World War II. In general, the Allied decision-making structures integrated the different nationalities, services, and bureaucracies to a larger degree than did the Japanese structures.

The Japanese Command Organization

At the broadest level, coordination amongst allies was one of the more glaring differences between the Allied and Axis command structures during World War II. The

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[1] Graham T. Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1999), 143-60.

primary Axis nations, Germany, Italy, and Japan, evinced very little coordination between the European and Pacific theaters of operation. Aside from the maintenance of normal diplomatic contacts and missions between the European Axis nations and Japan, no coordinating structure developed to guide the combatants' actions and harmonize efforts in the east and west for a more synergistic approach to defeating the Allied powers. Germany and Italy ran the war as they saw fit in Europe and Africa, while Japan operated independently in the Pacific and in Asia.

Japanese National Command Structure

By the outbreak of war with the Western Allies in December 1941, the military, and in particular the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA), dominated the Japanese government. Japan's politically restive period of the early 1930s resulted in de facto veto power of the army over the cabinet. According to historian John Toland, if the army opposed the policies of a cabinet, the War Minister could resign and the army's refusal to appoint a replacement would scuttle the government and prevent a replacement until the appointment of a cabinet more amenable to the army's views.[2] Toland further wrote, "Their influence, however, went beyond the threat of resignation. Military monopoly had become a tradition and was rarely questioned."[3]

Similarly, the Imperial Japanese Army enjoyed greater influence within the Japanese structure than did its counterpart, the Imperial Japanese Navy. After the war,

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[2] Toland, *The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1936-1945*, 35.

[3] Ibid., 62.

investigators of the USSBS interrogated Prince and army General Naruhiko Higashi-

Kuni, who was tasked by Emperor Hirohito to form a new cabinet in August 1945 to

close out the war. The interrogators querried the prince about the dominance of the army

in comparison to the navy concerning control over Japanese industry during the war.

Prince Higashi-Kuni matter-of-factly responded through a translator: "He thinks, as a

layman again [concerning industry], that the reason was that the army was more powerful

than the navy internally."[4] Japanese reporter Masuo Kato agrees, declaring the decision

for war in 1941 an Imperial Army determination: "Japan's decision to attack the United

States, Great Britain, and the Netherlands on December 8, 1941 was essentially a now or

never decision, and it represented the Army's best judgment as to the precise time at

which the greatest opportunity for success might be expected."[5] Historian Harry Gailey

writes that by as early as 1937 naval leaders could not alter the actions of the army

dominated government.[6] This does not mean the navy was without influence, but it did

play second fiddle to the army in the governmental hierarchy.

In truth, even the senior levels of the army struggled to control policy. The 1937

Marco Polo Bridge incident in China demonstrated serious flaws in the Japanese

decision-making apparatus. Local Japanese army commanders in northern China, led by

Colonel Renya Mutaguchi, exacerbated tensions with the Chinese to the point of war,

with skirmishes soon escalating into multidivisional engagements, all without the

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[4] USSBS Interrogations: No. 426: Prince Higashi-Kuni; Subject: Japanese War Economy; Date: 14 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, p. 426-7.

[5] Masuo Kato, *The Lost War: A Japanese Reporter's inside Story* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1946), 40.

[6] Harry A. Gailey, *The War in the Pacific: From Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1995), 57.

blessing of either the War Ministry or the Army General Staff.[7] These incidents, spurred

by an aggressive colonel rather than by calculated strategic decisions of the high

command, resulted in an undeclared war on mainland Asia and led to the creation of the

Imperial General Headquarters (IGHQ) to wage the unintended war.[8] That such a low

level officer could lead a nation into a war of such consequence demonstrates serious

flaws in Japanese command and control of their forces and in their strategic decision-

making.

Emperor Hirohito, the Shōwa Emperor, presided over the entire Japanese

command structure. Despite his divine status in Japanese eyes, his influence over the

activities of his government was typically much more nuanced than absolute, although

his independent decision to end the war after the twin atomic strikes on Hiroshima and

Nagasaki in August 1945 indicates that he could wield decisive authority when he so

chose. Such occasions were the exception, not the rule. In theory all state decisions

required the Emperor's sanction, but traditionally the Emperor, as the embodiment of the

entire nation, remained above party politics and inter-service rivalries by simply

approving all policies agreed upon by the Cabinet and military leaders.[9] In short, he

simply rubber stamped their decisions. According to Japanese postwar assessments,

"The Emperor's non-responsibility clearly defined that the Emperor was not responsible

for the entire sovereignty of the nation. This not only applied to domestic and foreign

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[7] Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army: Its Rise and Fall, 1853-1945*, 191.

[8] Ibid., 191-92.

[9] Toland, *The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1936-1945*, 23.

affairs but also to the 'Supreme Command.' Highest responsibility of the 'Supreme Command' was to organize, supervise and represent in direct access to the throne the Army and Navy General Staffs."[10] Dan van der Vat characterized the position of Emperor Hirohito as more of a symbolic head of state and chief executive who did not interfere in daily policy, resulting in a situation whereby "those with real power could hide behind the façade of imperial rule whenever convenient, an excellent incentive for irresponsibility on all sides."[11]

Beneath him the Emperor had a myriad of organizations contributing to the determination of strategy and policy and the execution of the same. These organizations included the Supreme War Council, the Board of Marshals and Admirals, the Imperial Liaison Conference, the Cabinet, and the Imperial General Headquarters. Each had its own membership, structure, and expected contribution to the overall war effort.

The Supreme War Council (*Gunji Sangiin*) and the Board of Marshals and Admirals (*Gensuifu*) require only brief mention for the early and middle phases of the war. The U.S. War Department characterized the latter organization as only acting in advisory capacity to the Emperor.[12] Preeminent Japanese naval historians David Evans and Mark Peattie relate that the Board of Marshals and Admirals was "composed of senior generals and admirals who, by virtue of appointment to it, acquired the titles of

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[10] Military History Section Far East Command, Japanese Research Division, "Japanese Monograph No. 45: Imperial General Headquarters Army High Command Record, Mid 41- Aug 45," in *Japanese Monographs*, 2.

[11] van der Vat, *The Pacific Campaign: World War II, the U.S.-Japanese Naval War, 1941-1945*, 42-43.

[12] United States War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces* (Baton Rouge: Louisana State University Press, 1995), 10.

marshal and fleet admiral (these being, therefore, not strictly military ranks),” and this

group “acted as the highest organ of military advisers to the emperor.”[13] They did not

directly influence military strategy or operations.

The Naval Analysis Division of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey described the

Supreme War Council as “the chief advisory body in formulation of war policies” and

“composed of members of the Board of Field Marshals and Admirals, the War and Navy

Ministers, the Chiefs of Staff of the Army and Navy, and other high officers (including

former War and Navy ministers) appointed by the Emperor.”[14] Evans and Peattie state

the Supreme War Council was to advise the emperor “on technical military matters” and

to coordinate the “planning activities of the army and navy.”[15] Prince Higashi-Kuni, in

addition to his aforementioned credits, was also a former member of the Supreme War

Council and related in his interrogation that the War Minister and the Army Chief of

Staff placed little faith in that body and did not seek the council’s advice or opinions, but

merely relayed information on programs already enacted by the Imperial Japanese

Army.[16] Evans and Peattie buttress the Prince’s assessment, succinctly stating that

“Given the ongoing history of antagonism between the two services in Japan, the

Supreme War Council’s primary function was not eminently successful, but as a

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[13] David C. Evans and Mark R. Peattie, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887-1941* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1997), 29-31.

[14] Naval Analysis Division United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Campaigns of the Pacific War* (Washington, D.C. : U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey (Pacific) Naval Analysis Division, 1946), 2.

[15] Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887-1941*, 31.

[16] USSBS Interrogations: No. 426: Prince Higashi-Kuni, pp. 426-5 – 426-6.

distinguished sinecure for eminent officers, it offered and received prestige."[17] Thus, like

the Board of Marshals and Admirals, the Supreme War Council contributed little to the

strategic direction of the Japanese war effort.

The Japanese Cabinet constituted a more influential body in the government. It

consisted of the Prime Minister, the War and Navy Ministers, the Foreign Minister and

other dignitaries.[18] The Cabinet focused on the political and economic administration of

the country and the mobilization of resources for the prosecution of the war.[19] The

Imperial Japanese Army forced an important change of the Cabinet on the eve of war.

On October 15, 1941, the army exercised its prerogative and forced the dissolution of the

Cabinet under Prime Minister and Prince Fumimaro Konoye, resulting in the eventual

creation of the Cabinet under General Hideki Tojo three days later on 18 October. Tojo

also retained his previous office as War Minister while simultaneously executing the

duties of the Prime Minister.[20] His dual appointment represented another indication of

army dominance in Japanese politics. Even before Tojo had taken over the Cabinet, his

predecessor felt the strong influence of the military on his freedom of action as Prime

Minister: "However, I must admit as a Prime Minister, many of the policies were

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[17] Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887-1941*, 31.

[18] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, 1.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Kato, *The Lost War: A Japanese Reporter's inside Story*, 51-52.

influenced by the military and it was often necessary to work out certain compromises with respect to policy."[21]

The War and Navy Ministries held specific responsibilities within the Japanese government. Functions of the Ministry of War included administration, supply, and mobilization of the army and it served as a liaison between the army and the Japanese Diet.[22] The Japanese army Aviation Headquarters served under the War Ministry to provide administrative support to Japan's Army Air Force (JAAF) units, which served under the command of the Army General Staff in the field.[23] The Minister of War, as noted, was a member of the Cabinet and was directly responsible to the Emperor and was an active general in the army.[24] Similarly the Navy Ministry was "largely concerned with the administration of the navy: its finances, personnel, training, and logistics."[25] Navy Ministers were typically active flag officers in the navy and, while members of the Cabinet, were also directly responsible to the Emperor.[26] Once again, the military organizations of Japan stood outside of civilian purview.

The Imperial General Headquarters (IGHQ) represented the real locus of power for military strategy and operations during the war. IGHQ was not a standing body within the Japanese government, but under the Meiji Constitution was instituted during

[21] USSBS Interrogations: No. 373: Prince Fumimaro Konoye; Subject: Interrogation of Prince Konoye; Date: 9 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, p. 373-4.

[22] War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, 10.

[23] Ibid., 53.

[24] Ibid., 11.

[25] Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887-1941*, 27.

[26] Ibid., 25-27.

times of war. The Japanese government created the IGHQ that would orchestrate Japan's war effort throughout the war in November 1937 in response to the ongoing conflict in China.[27] The typical inter-service tensions affected the nature of the body: "The war ministry's military affairs bureau recommended a centralized policy mechanism to enable civilian and military cabinet ministers as well as the president of the Privy Council to coordinate the overall war effort. The general staff believed this would only encourage excessive civilian interference in the prerogative of supreme command, and the navy, fearful that the army might use the new headquarters to overrule civilian policy, would only endorse a headquarters to coordinate, not plan, joint operations."[28] Thus from the IGHQ's inception, inter-service squabbling and Japanese internal politics limited the ability of the high command to shape the operations and behaviors of the two armed forces into more cooperative and integrated campaigns. That is not to say the Japanese were incapable of effective joint operations, an assertion the opening months of the war certainly debunk. But the Japanese IGHQ structure certainly did not promote the most effective joint operations or joint strategy.

Edward Drea, noted expert on the Imperial Japanese Army, describes the IGHQ composition thusly:

> Imperial headquarters was divided into army and navy sections directed by the chiefs of the general staff for both services who were the emperor's highest advisers on operational matters. The respective staffs came from the directors and selected subordinates of the more important bureaus and departments of the war and navy ministries and the army and navy general staffs. Service leaders agreed beforehand on military policy before seeking the emperor's authorization at special imperial conferences held at IGHQ *(Daihon'ei gozen kaigi)* that included

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[27] Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army: Its Rise and Fall, 1853-1945*, 193.

[28] Ibid., 192.

the emperor and his senior military officials and dealt exclusively with military matters. Eight such sessions were held between November 1937 and May 1943.[29]

IGHQ membership, therefore, included the War and Navy Ministers, the Chiefs of the General and Naval Staffs, and specially selected staff members from the general staffs of each service.[30] When the army and navy reached accord on a policy or strategic direction they issued instructions based upon so-called "Central Agreements": "However, in cases of problems requiring joint action, Central Agreements arrived at by the two chiefs of staff were handled through the office of Imperial General Headquarters. It is important to emphasize that by far the major number of directives and orders issued by Imperial General Headquarters were not of the Central Agreement type. In fact, they were mostly individual Army Section or Navy Section actions covering their individual fields of responsibility to the throne."[31] Evans and Peattie sum up the glaring structural limitation writing, "The IGHQ had no overall chief of staff or any other holder of ultimate authority. It lacked even the concrete representation of unified command. Each of its two principal divisions conducted its business at separate sites….Thus when the two services reached an impasse, as occasionally happened, no individual or group could act as arbiter."[32] Such a limitation could not help but impact strategic choices and decisions. And, like the War and Navy Ministers, the Chiefs of the Army and Navy General Staffs

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[29] Ibid., 193.

[30] War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, 10.

[31] Far East Command, "Japanese Monograph No. 45: Imperial General Headquarters Army High Command Record, Mid 41- Aug 45," 2.

[32] Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887-1941*, 458.

could appeal directly to the Emperor without proceeding through channels with the Prime Minister or the Cabinet.[33]

The Japanese devised the Imperial Liaison Conference (*Dai Hon'ei-seifu renraku kaigi*) as the means to create some semblance of unity of effort at the national level. The Liaison Conference had no legal constitutional basis like the cabinet did, but it represented a structure of "mutual design and agreement between the government and the 'Supreme Command'."[34] In the postwar words of the Japanese, "Members of the Conference were jointly and individually responsible to see that decisions of the Conference were executed properly by the government and the 'Supreme Command'."[35] In laymen's terms, the Prime Minister relayed the agreements from the Conference to the Cabinet to carry out the government's commitments while the Chiefs of Staff followed through on their agreed responsibilities via the IGHQ. Drea relays the following, clarifying the Conference's membership and tying in many of the aforementioned organizations:

> A liaison conference composed of the two service chiefs of staff, the two service ministers, the prime and foreign ministers and other civilian officials (*Daihon'ei seifu renraku kaigi*) followed the IGHQ conference to coordinate military and civilian policy. The members of the liaison conference could also meet in the presence of the emperor to ratify their consensus on major national policies. These meetings were imperial conferences (*gozen kaigi*), fifteen of which were held between January 1938 and August 1945. Throughout the period, however, IGHQ was the military policy-making apparatus and senior operational headquarters.[36]

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[33] Far East Command, "Japanese Monograph No. 45: Imperial General Headquarters Army High Command Record, Mid 41- Aug 45," 3.

[34] Ibid., 7.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army: Its Rise and Fall, 1853-1945*, 193.

Further, "When held in front of the emperor (at the palace), decisions at the conference were considered to have automatic imperial approval, making them virtually irreversible."[37] Yet, once again, final courses of action remained dependent on consensus agreements among the Liaison Conference members, with no final arbiter to force a decision if required.

The highest levels of the Japanese command structure therefore demonstrated a number of key shortcomings that adversely influenced the nation's strategic decision-making. Beneath Emperor Hirohito a number of organizations existed, nominally, to assist in the strategic direction of the country, but in reality most had only limited influence (See Figure 1). The most important organizations for military strategy included the IGHQ and the Imperial Liaison Conferences. Additionally, numerous actors enjoyed the privilege of direct access to the throne, placing the military apparatus outside of governmental control. The War and Navy Ministers, as well as both Chiefs of the General Staffs, represent such cases. Given Hirohito's traditional reluctance to weigh in on political matters, these structures proved imperfect at conflict resolution among the various competing organizations. The desire for consensus agreements between the services' leaders shaped and limited strategic options and actions.[38]

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[37] Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887-1941*, 460.

[38] USSBS Interrogations: No. 392: Fleet Admiral Osami Nagano, IJN; Subject: Japanese Naval Plans; Date: 20 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 392-2. Admiral Nagano was the Chief of the Naval General Staff from April 1941-February 1944. He stated that when the Japanese decided to increase their defensive perimeter to the east and south in 1942, it was as a result of "complete agreement" between the army and navy: "Yes, in that respect, complete agreement. There had to be because the operations could not be undertaken without Army support." Had the army objected to and opposed the expansion, it is very unlikely that Emperor Hirohito would have overridden the decision and
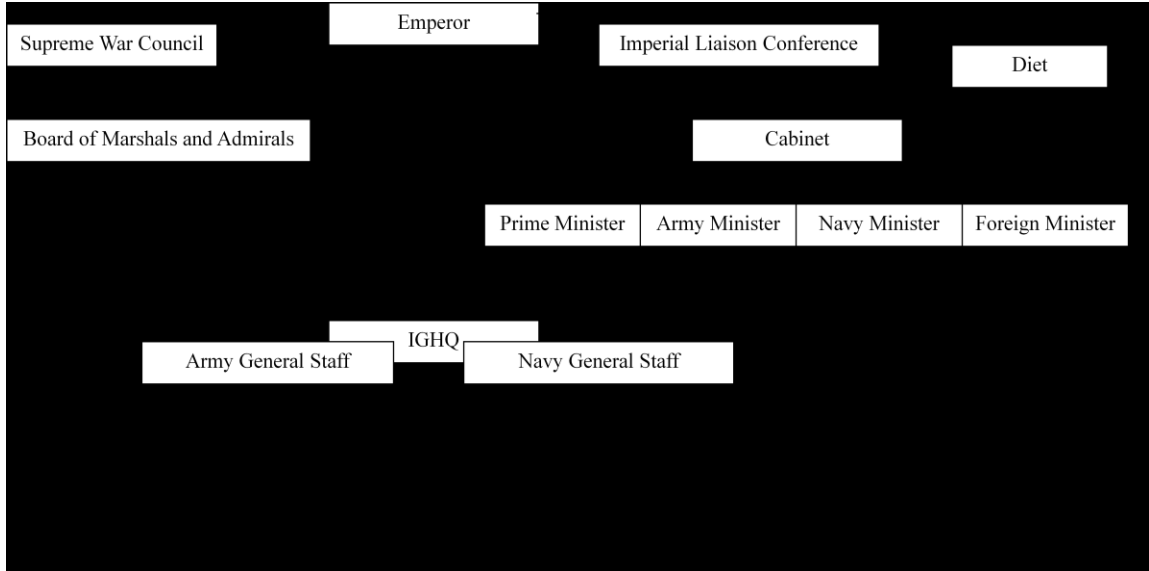
Figure 1: Japanese High Command Structure.

With the war in full swing in 1942, the command structure of Japan's fielded

forces in the South Pacific evolved to meet the requirements of the war. The structure of

these forces also influenced the course of the war and the possession of strategic

initiative. They require a quick review as well.

Japanese Field Commands in the South Pacific July 1942-November 1943

The Combined Fleet existed as a unique structure within the Imperial Japanese

Navy. In practice it was both an operational sea-going command and another strategic

headquarters. The Combined Fleet retained the lion's share of the Imperial Navy's

forced the continued expansion. Since the Emperor did not decide situations, and instead only granted his approval, the Japanese structure needed agreement before the plan reached Hirohito. Without consensus and compromise between the services, the operations in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands would likely not have transpired.

striking power in terms of aircraft carriers and capital ships, which would sortie in support of other fleets or launch independent operations as the war situation required. The well-known and revered Admiral Isoruku Yamamoto assumed the position of Commander-in-Chief (CIC) of the Combined Fleet prior to the outbreak of the war, placing ten battleships, ten aircraft carriers, eighteen heavy cruisers, twenty-four light cruisers, 111 destroyers, and sixty-four submarines at his disposal.[39] In theory, Yamamoto's position ranked subordinate to that of the IGHQ and the Navy Department.[40]

Reality was rather different than the command flow chart indicated. Yamamoto wielded great influence within the navy and, indeed, the nation, elevating his stature and, therefore, the influence of his office as CIC, Combined Fleet. This led to command difficulties for Japan. In the words of historians Jonathan Parshall and Anthony Tully:

> Assuming command of Combined Fleet in 1939, Yamamoto had imposed his stamp on it in a way that no commander had done since the days of the revered Admiral Tōgō. To his detractors, it must have seemed that Yamamoto was determined to make Combined Fleet his own personal fiefdom. His staff became a haven for unorthodox thinkers, including many of the airpower supporters within the Navy. This was a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it is undeniable that Yamamoto's advocacy had brought about a greater reliance on naval aviation within the fleet, which had subsequently served Japan well. On the other hand, Yamamoto and his staff saw themselves engaged in a perpetual struggle against the naval establishment.[41]

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[39] Walter J. Boyne, *Clash of Titans: World War II at Sea* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 128.

[40] Paul S. Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1941-1945* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1978), 6-7.

[41] Jonathan B. Parshall and Anthony P. Tully, *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2005), 24.

Yamamoto had threatened to resign during the run up to war if the Naval General Staff

rejected his proposed raid on Pearl Harbor, resulting in approval for the bold operation.[42]

The subsequent success of that attack further enhanced Yamamoto's standing and, with

the threat of resignation precedent, Yamamoto and the Combined Fleet began usurping

the strategic planning function of the Naval General Staff, pitting the former, based in

Hashirajima, against the latter, in Tokyo.[43]

This overlap foreshadows a chronic characteristic of many Japanese organizations

throughout World War II. The Japanese did not shy away from complexity, indeed they

embraced it. This dual nature of the naval command, the divided IGHQ, the numerous

bodies and individuals afforded direct access to the Emperor all manifest parallel and

overlapping bureaucracies.[44] The current U.S. military principles of war of "simplicity"

and "unity of command" did not permeate Japanese operations or organizations during

the war—with catastrophic effects on the Japanese war effort.[45]

Japan's commitment to the South Pacific grew as the war progressed into its

middle phase in the latter half of 1942 and early 1943. During the initial Japanese

advance in 1942, Japan planned for operations in the South Pacific (Southeast Pacific to

the Japanese command) and the conquest of Rabaul in order to protect the southern flank

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[42] Matome Ugaki et al., *Fading Victory: The Diary of Admiral Matome Ugaki, 1941-1945*, trans. Masataka Chihaya (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991), 13.

[43] Parshall and Tully, *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*, 24-25.

[44] The discerning reader will recognize some of the same characteristics in the upcoming discussion of the Japanese intelligence structures and even in fleet dispositions during combat operations.

[45] "Field Manual 3-0: Operations," 4-11 - 4-15. See "Principles of War": "Unity of Command" says for every objective, ensure unity of effort under one responsible commander. "Simplicity" states prepare clear, uncomplicated plans, and clear concise orders to ensure thorough understanding.

of its naval bastion at Truk.[46] The forces allotted for these operations included the three

Imperial Japanese Army infantry battalions that made up the South Seas Force for the

invasion of Rabaul in January 1942, and naval landing troops in conjunction with other

infantry companies for occupation of Lae and Salamaua, New Guinea and other positions

in the Solomon Islands chain.[47] These forces cooperated with the Imperial Japanese

Navy's South Seas Fleet, which included the 4th Fleet and the 11th Air Fleet.[48] By May

1942, the Japanese successfully completed these initial operations and began to prepare

for follow on maneuvers for the next phase of the war. The Japanese now planned to

expand their perimeter beyond that envisioned prior to the war, and would soon move

against Papua, New Guinea and the southern portion of the Solomon Islands chain.

As related in the *Senshi Sōsho,* the 102 volume history of the war compiled by the

War History Office of the Japanese Ministry of Defense in the decades after the end of

the war, Imperial General Headquarters reevaluated the situation in the Southeast Pacific

area in May 1942 and laid the foundations for the command organizations that would

soon come to the fore in the war in the Pacific:

> At that time, Imperial Headquarters had completed attacks on key areas in the
> southern region. Recognising that the main base for Allied counter-attacks would

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[46] *Japanese Army Operations in the South Pacific Area: New Britain and Papuan Campaigns, 1942-43*, trans. Steven Bullard, Translated Extracts Of : Bōeichō Bōei Kenshūjo Senshishitsu (Ed.), Senshi Sōsho: Minami Taiheiyō Rikugun Sakusen <1> Pōto Moresubi–Gashima Shoko Sakusen [War History Series: South Pacific Area Army Operations (Volume 1), Port Moresby–Guadalcanal First Campaigns] (Tokyo: Asagumo Shinbunsha, 1968): 1–230, 335–384, 514–532; and Bōeichō Bōei Kenshūjo Senshishitsu (Ed.), Senshi Sōsho: Minami Taiheiyō Rikugun Sakusen <2> Gadarukanaru–Buna Sakusen [War History Series: South Pacific Area Army Operations (Volume 2), Guadalcanal–Buna Campaigns] (Tokyo: Asagumo Shinbunsha, 1969): 196–218, 324–362, 577–601 (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 2007), 1. (Hereafter referred to as Senshi Sōsho, *Japanese Army Operations*). Accessed on 4 February 2010 from: http://ajrp.awm.gov.au/ajrp/ajrp2.nsf/WebI/JpnOperations/$file/JpnOpsText.pdf?OpenElement.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., iii.

be the Australian mainland, Imperial Headquarters planned a blockade operation to isolate Australia from the US. This would involve attacks on the islands of Samoa, Fiji, and New Caledonia, the main air and sea relay bases between Hawaii and the Australian mainland. The army formed the 17th Army (based on 12 infantry battalions), and the navy the 8th Fleet….[49]

Events at the Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942 and, more significantly, at the Battle of Midway in June 1942, soon caused the cancellation of the Samoa, Fiji, and New Caledonia operations. These cancellations, however, forced realignment in the mission of the 17th Army to cooperate with the navy in the seizure of Port Moresby and other key areas in eastern New Guinea.[50]

Later in the year, as fighting raged on Guadalcanal and in Papua, New Guinea, the Imperial Army discerned a need for further adjustment in its command structure. The IJA activated the command of the 8th Area Army on 26 November 1942 to focus on its South Pacific operations.[51] Nearly simultaneously, the IJA created the 18th Army under the 8th Area Army to focus on the New Guinea campaign and subordinated the 17th Army to the 8th Area Army to focus on the ongoing battle on Guadalcanal and in the Solomon Islands.[52] Beginning in September 1942 and thereafter, army aviation units began transferring into the south Pacific area to assist the IJN air units that had waged the battle to date. The influx of army aircraft began slowly in September 1942 with the arrival of a

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[49] Ibid., 1.

[50] Ibid., 93.

[51] Ibid., 182.

[52] Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War against Japan, 1942-1945*, 55.

reconnaissance squadron and accelerated in late 1942 with the arrival of the 12th Air

Brigade, a top army fighter unit.[53]

The course of the war also forced the Imperial Japanese Navy to make some

command adjustments. As already noted, in mid 1942 the navy created the 8th Fleet to

serve in the South Pacific area. Concerns over the growing areas of responsibility and

diverse missions of 4th Fleet led the navy to create the 8th Fleet and to shrink the 4th

Fleet's operational area. The 8th Fleet stood up its command on 14 July 1942 and shortly

thereafter headed for Rabaul. Thus the South Seas Fleet assumed responsibility for

campaigns in the southern Pacific with subordinate units that now included the 8th Fleet

and the 11th Air Fleet.[54]

Japan waged the war from late 1941 and into 1943 with these Imperial Army and

Navy command structures. It is important to note that, like the necessity for IGHQ to

come to "Central Agreements" for the conduct of the war, these commands had to come

to local agreements during the execution of operations in their areas. No overall local

commander could force unity of effort based upon his position. The respective army and

navy commanders of a given geographic area often received assignments from the high

command that delineated separate responsibilities within that area. In the south Pacific,

the campaign on New Guinea predominantly fell to the army, while the struggle for

Guadalcanal began as predominantly a navy show. Even when ordered to cooperate, the

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[53] *National Archives and Records Administration: Record Group 550: Records of the U.S. Army, Pacific, 1945 - 1985.* (Hereafter *NARA 550*). Series: Organizational History Files, compiled 1959 - 1973, documenting the period 1931 – 1973: Box #10: Japanese Monographs Nos. 31-35. *NARA 550:* Supreme Commander Allied Powers G-2 Section, Allied Translator and Interpreter Section, "Monograph #32 (Army): Southeast Pacific Area Aerial Opn Record," in *Japanese Monographs*, 2.

[54] Senshi Sōsho, *Japanese Army Operations*, 113-16.

Emperor

Supreme War Council

Imperial Liaison Conference

Board of Marshals and Admirals

Cabinet

Army Ministry

Navy Ministry

IGHQ

Army General Staff

Navy General Staff

Southern Army

CIC Combined Fleet

8th Area Army

South East Area Force

17th Army

18th Army

8th Fleet

11th Air Fleet

6th Div

6th Air Army

2nd Div	20th Div	8th Base Force	25th Air Flotilla
38th Div	41st Div	7th CSNLF	26th Air Flotilla
35th Inf Bde	50th Div	8th CSNLF	
65th Bde			
28th Inf Rgt			

Figure 2: Japanese Command Structure Late November 1942.

Sources: This represents an amalgamation of three separate command charts from three sources: War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces,* 10. Evans and Peattie: *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887-1941,* 459. Gordon L. Rottman, *Japanese Army in World War II: The South Pacific and New Guinea, 1942-43,* ed. Duncan Anderson, Vol. 14, Battle Orders (New York: Osprey Publishing, 2005), 8.

army and navy still at times struggled to coordinate joint operations and to effectively

plan for such operations. Without an overall commander to run operations in a given

area, Japanese two services often fell into the trap of mutual recriminations when

operations went awry. Both the Imperial Japanese Army and the Imperial Japanese Navy

expressed disappointment in the other during the struggle for Guadalcanal.[55] Instead of

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[55] Kato, *The Lost War: A Japanese Reporter's inside Story*, 107. Kato writes, "There is no doubt that a major portion of the responsibility for Japan's failure at Guadalcanal, Bougainville, the Gilbert Islands, and

cultivating effective teamwork, such arrangements did little to mitigate inter-service divisions.

The Japanese organizations in China and Manchukuo lie beyond the scope of this study but deserve brief mention. Japan's war on the Asian mainland differed substantially from that of the maritime conflict in the Pacific in that it remained primarily an army concern with limited naval participation. Admiral Nagano, former Chief of the Naval General Staff, stated that typically no naval forces were involved and, therefore, the navy usually had no part in plan preparation or operations on the continent.[56] This simplified the problem of unity of command because the normal army chain of command had control over its units and the JAAF remained subordinate to the army writ large. No coordination or agreement with the navy was required if naval forces were not participating, which was normally the case.

The United States' Command Organization

The lack of coordination among the Axis nations meant that Japan ran an independent war effort, free to make strategy as it wished. The Western Allies, the British dominions and their American cousins, represent a stark contrast in this regard. Although agreement often did not come easily, the two powers strove to coordinate their global strategies, one major aim of which was to keep the Soviet Union fighting in the war against Nazi Germany. The different visions of strategy amongst these Allies often

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later at all-important Saipan may be traced to the failure of the Army and Navy to set aside their differences when the future of the nation was at stake."

[56] USSBS Interrogations: No. 392: Fleet Admiral Osami Nagano, IJN; 392-2.

led to serious disagreement over resource allocation and forthcoming operations, and could result in unspoken animosity beneath the supposedly placid surface of Allied accord. Nevertheless, they did, in general, succeed in harmonizing their strategies as the war progressed. The key to that harmonization lay in the Combined Chiefs of Staff structure the Allies put in place upon the United States' entry into the war.

It is important to note, however, that this British and American cooperation did not start from scratch. The two nations had laid the foundations for the coalition well before the Japanese struck and brought the United States into the war in December 1941. The soon to be Allies sowed the seeds of the now well-known "Germany First" strategy when Anglo-American staff discussions began in January 1941, lasting until the end of March 1941, with the ABC-1 (American, British, Canadian) conference held in Washington, D.C.[57] Talks between the British and Americans continued at the Atlantic Conference held in August 1941 off the Newfoundland coast, where the topics included the moral basis for the war (the "Atlantic Charter") and British ideas on a peripheral strategy for the defeat of Germany and an invasion of French North Africa.[58] Once the United States entered the war in December 1941 the British and American Allies established the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) and the U.S. created its Joint Chiefs of Staff structure to better coordinate the global war effort. In accordance with

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[57] Grace P. Hayes, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in World War II: The War against Japan* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1982), 8-9. It is also important to note the Admiral Stark occupied the position of CNO at the time, while Admiral King, who was to hold the dual positions of CNO and Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Fleet, rose to those positions after the "Germany First" option was agreed Allied strategy.

[58] Mark A. Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy in World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 46.

their discussions at the ABC-1 conference earlier in the year, "the Combined Chiefs of Staff would be located in Washington, where the British Chiefs would be represented by a Joint Staff Mission."[59] The Allied ARCADIA Conference, held in Washington, D.C. from December 1941 into January 1942, decided upon the charter of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, which was to include a division of Combined Staff Planners.[60] While the Combined Chiefs of Staff remained in constant operation through the presence of the British Staff Mission in Washington, the Allies also held a series of larger conferences that also brought the President and the Prime Minister into direct contact. They held four such conferences between late 1941 and the middle of 1943: ARCADIA (Washington, D.C.) in December 1941 to January 1942; SYMBOL (Casablanca, Morocco) in January 1943; TRIDENT (Washington, D.C.) in May 1943; and QUADRANT (Quebec, Ontario) in August 1943.[61] Such conferences continued throughout the duration of the war. The British and Americans also met with Soviet leader Josef Stalin and other Allied leaders on occasion, such as at Cairo and Tehran in 1943 and Potsdam in 1945.

The short-lived American-British-Dutch-Australian Command (ABDACOM) represents the closest example of a combined command in the Pacific along the lines of those in the European theater. Under the Supreme Command of British General Sir

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[59] Louis Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years*, United States Army in World War II: The War in the Pacific (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Dept. of the Army, 1962), 226.

[60] Ibid., 227.

[61] Joint History Office, "World War II Inter-Allied Conferences-Declassified," (Washington, D.C.: Joint History Office, 2003). This is an electronic resource in the form of CDs/DVDs containing digitized copies of the Allies' conferences' records and minutes.
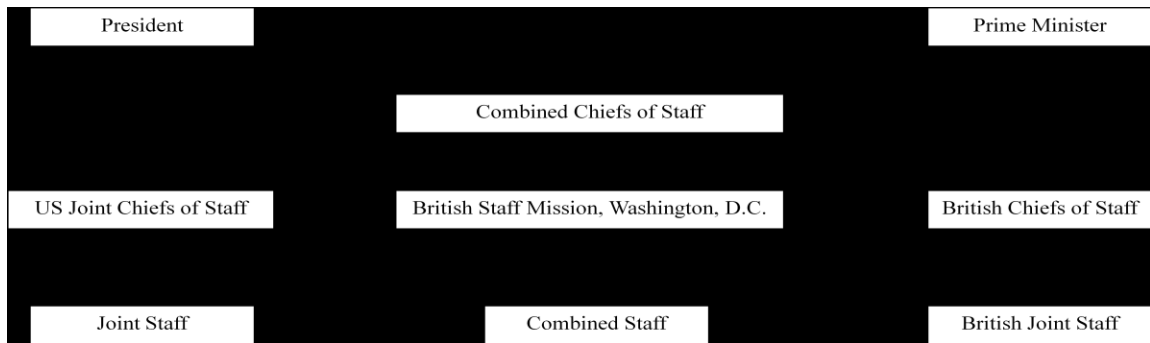
Figure 3: Combined Chiefs of Staff Structure Late 1942.

Sources: Louis Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years*, United States Army in World War II: The War in the Pacific (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Dept. of the Army, 1962), 232. Taken from a portion of "Chart 3-The Washington High Command and the Pacific Theaters, December 1942."

Archibald Wavell with subordinate commanders and forces from each nation represented in its title, ABDACOM attempted to stem the Japanese advance in the Far East in January and February 1942.[62] Destined to suffer a succession of defeats attributable in part to Allied unpreparedness, the command evaporated after six weeks, and by the end of March the Japanese controlled nearly all of the territory ABDACOM had been created to defend.[63] The eviction of the major European powers from the maritime geographic areas of the Pacific had important implications for the Allied command structure in that theater as the war progressed. To be sure, Australia and New Zealand wielded influence, but nothing comparable to that of Great Britain writ large. The United States assumed de facto and de jure leadership in the war against Japan in the Pacific, while China fought its own conflict against Japan on the Asian mainland, and Great Britain defended India and had primacy in the war against Japan in Southeast Asia.

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[62] Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years*, 168-69.

[63] Ibid., 179-80.

United States National Command Structure

Following the dissolution of ABDACOM in early 1942, decisions made at the Combined Chiefs of Staff level could still directly affect the war in the Pacific, but the main influence of the CCS occurred in resource allocation and the level of effort to be dedicated to the war against Japan. Historian Louis Morton did not exaggerate when he wrote, "For the Pacific, which was to become an area of U.S. responsibility" the evolving U.S. command structure "became in effect a supreme command."[64] Unlike in Europe, American leaders, not a combined command, directed the military strategy and operations conducted in the maritime environment of the Pacific theater. Allies such as Australia and New Zealand contributed forces, but the chain of command ran from Washington, D.C. to the unified geographic commands in the various areas of responsibility of the vast expanse that is the Pacific Ocean.

This placed the American president atop the hierarchy of command for the Pacific War. But unlike Emperor Hirohito, Franklin Delano Roosevelt had experience as an Assistant Secretary of the Navy and did not shrink from shaping, or if necessary forcing, strategic modifications on his military commanders. Historian Eric Larrabee writes of Roosevelt, "By principle and conscious choice he was an activist commander. While willing to leave the bulk of detail to the armed service chiefs, he had been taught by experience as the political administrator of a military department that generals and admirals, left to their own devices, do not always manifest the initiative and drive that

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[64] Ibid., 225.

civilian leadership can and should demand of them."[65] Further, although the U.S. Army

and U.S. Navy were equals within the United States governmental structure, Roosevelt's

close association with the Navy did color the President's proclivities:

> Perhaps it was an advantage for [General George] Marshall that Roosevelt did not
> take the same proprietary interest in the Army that he took in the Navy. It gave
> Marshall a freer hand, especially in the naming of senior commanders, and it did
> permit him one opportunity—after a discussion in which the Navy was being
> favored unrestrainedly—to answer Roosevelt in kind. "At least, Mr. President,"
> said Marshall, "stop speaking of the Army as 'they' and the Navy as 'us.'" This
> broke up the meeting. And Roosevelt permitted Marshall something he never
> allowed [Admiral] Ernie King, which was to shake apart the cumbersome
> machinery by which his service operated and replace it with a streamlined
> structure.[66]

Roosevelt thus remained a navy man at heart.

The U.S. Army was not the only structure in need of reform. The U.S. high

command at the commencement of hostilities needed modification of its own to

effectively manage the requirements of a world war. The U.S. began the war with the

Joint Army and Navy Board, or Joint Board, which the government had initially

established in 1903.[67] Following World War I, in July 1919 the government reorganized

the Joint Board to include the Chief of Staff of the Army, the Chief of Naval Operations

(CNO), the chief of the Operations Section of the General Staff, the Assistant CNO, and

the chiefs of the War Department and Navy War Plans Divisions.[68] This reorganization

also included the creation of the Joint Planning Committee for strategic contingency

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[65] Larrabee, *Commander in Chief: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, His Lieutenants, and Their War*, 2-3.

[66] Ibid., 142.

[67] Russell Frank Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*, The Wars of the United States (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1973), 200.

[68] Ibid., 245.

planning.[69] Yet this organization could not match the British organization of the Imperial

General Staff and the numerous divisions within that structure.

Recognizing the limitations of the Joint Board and faced with inequality when

dealing with the Imperial General Staff during Combined Chiefs of Staff meetings, the

Americans moved to create their own version of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) based

upon the British model in February 1942.[70] Louis Morton writes, "And the organization

of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff that emerged during the months after the ARCADIA

Conference was shaped in large degree by the necessity for providing American

counterparts to the highly developed system of committees and secretariats under the

British Chiefs and the War Cabinet."[71] Nearly simultaneously, the Army and Navy did

some internal restructuring in March 1942 which enhanced the Army Chief of Staff's

influence, granted greater autonomy to the commander of the Army Air Forces, and

consolidated the offices of Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet and CNO under

Admiral Ernest J. King.[72] By July 1942 the composition of the JCS included General

George C. Marshall as the Army Chief of Staff, Army Air Force commander General

Henry H. "Hap" Arnold (still a subordinate to Marshall under the Army writ large),

Admiral King as the CNO and Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Fleet, and Admiral William D.

Leahy (who returned from Vichy France where he had served as the U.S. ambassador) as

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[69] Ibid.

[70] Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy in World War II*, 64.

[71] Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years*, 166.

[72] Ibid., 226.

coordinating link to the President with the title of Chief of Staff to the Commander-in-Chief.[73] It is important to note, as historian Mark Stoler points out, the JCS enhanced the power of the service chiefs largely at the expense of the influence of the Secretaries of War and the Navy.[74] While still very much subordinate to civilian control, the greatest form of that civilian control over the military emanated directly from the President himself rather than through political appointees within his administration. The inclusion of a semi-autonomous air force representative, albeit still subordinate to the Army Chief of Staff, on the JCS represents a significant difference in comparison to the Japanese high command, in which the respective air arms remained entirely subordinate to the IJA and IJN.

Several important organizations that soon developed under the JCS system deserve mention. The Joint Staff Planners (JPS) soon evolved out of the Joint Board's Joint Planning Committee. The Joint Staff Planners had army, navy, air force, and logistical representation and their work ranged "from global strategy to the allocation of minor items of supply and encompassing not only strategic but also operational, logistic, and administrative aspects."[75] This wide range of responsibilities soon spurred the development of important subcommittees. The Joint U.S. Strategic Committee (JUSSC), another organization with a Joint Board legacy, supported the JPS with strategic

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[73] Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy in World War II*, 65.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years*, 227-28.

estimates and plans to focus on broad strategy.[76] In November of 1942, the JCS created

the Joint Strategic Survey Committee (JSSC) designed to employ three flag rank or

general officers full time to consider basic strategy and the long term implications of

current events and decisions, and report their findings to directly to the Joint Chiefs, as

opposed to the JPS.[77]

These integrated and long-range joint planning and survey committees mark

another difference with the command structure on the other side of the Pacific. The

Japanese had no such integrated structures, with independent army and navy planning

cells on their respective general staffs reacting to the agreements made by their superiors

at the IGHQ level. While the American system still resulted in inter-service differences

and competition and the structure did not have a clear superior save the president, as a

general rule the American forces at least had a system that fostered closer cooperation

amongst the different branches than did Imperial Japan. This facilitated operations in the

field and bred a familiarity with each other's capabilities and limitations. Such

cooperation and understanding enabled more realistic and effective planning. The JCS

made strategic decisions based on the combined expertise of the army and the navy, and

when they deadlocked, President Roosevelt stepped in, in contrast to Emperor Hirohito

who rarely intervened.

Nevertheless, those inter-service differences did manifest themselves in the

divided command that marked the Allied fielded forces in the Pacific Theater. The

Americans created two major commands, one under naval direction and another under

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[76] Ibid., 228-29.

[77] Ibid., 229-30.

army direction, to prosecute the war against Japan. Both answered to the JCS in Washington, D.C. The development of this structure, which was to have serious ramifications throughout the course of the war, demands closer scrutiny.

Allied Field Commands in the South Pacific July 1942-November 1943

A number of factors contributed to the final organization of Allied field commands in the Pacific in 1942 including the size of the theater, input from Australia and New Zealand, and the inability of the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy to reconcile their competing claims on theater supremacy. The Allies recognized the need for new command adjustments in the spring of 1942 and considered a number of proposals. Australia and New Zealand aimed to create a command including their nations, New Guinea, Timor, and Amboina under the direction of a U.S. commander who would answer to the Combined Chiefs rather than just the U.S. Chiefs.[78] The CCS, however, recognized the Pacific was likely to come under U.S. purview and simply passed this request onto the U.S. JCS.[79] Admiral King, representing the U.S. Navy's view, rejected this proposal and favored a different division claiming New Zealand would be a strategically vital link in the line of communication from Hawaii to the southern allies, while Australia, New Guinea, and the Netherlands East Indies represented an entirely different strategic entity.[80] The U.S. Army and planners under General Dwight

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[78] Ibid., 245.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid.

Eisenhower accepted the idea of a divided command in the Pacific, but favored a demarcation closer to the Australians' and New Zealanders' proposal.[81] The JCS settled the differences between the proposals between 9 and 16 March 1942 with the general acceptance of the Navy's proposal with the modification that the Philippines Islands be included in the Australian, or Southwest Pacific Area.[82] On 30 March 1942, President Roosevelt recognized the towering personality of MacArthur demanded he have a prominent role in the Pacific and approved the proposal, establishing two Pacific commands with General Douglas MacArthur in charge of the Southwest Pacific Area and Admiral Chester Nimitz in charge of the Pacific Ocean Areas.[83] The JCS retained control over the entire theater and directed the operations in both area commands.[84]

This division of authority and command responsibility also included further geographic areas under the two commands. MacArthur's command consisted of Australia, the Philippine Archipelago, New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, the Bismarck Archipelago, and most of the Netherlands East Indies.[85] Nimitz's area encompassed the remainder of the Pacific and was divided into three subordinate areas: the North Pacific; the Central Pacific; and the South Pacific. The South Pacific would be commanded by an officer under Nimitz, while the first two areas remained under his direct control.[86]

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[81] Ibid., 246.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid., 249.

[84] Ibid., 250.

[85] Ibid., 249.

[86] Ibid.

MacArthur's command demanded a multinational organization, but he limited foreign influence within his structure. He assumed command of the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA) on 18 April 1942 and immediately established the Allied Land, Allied Air, and Allied Naval Force branches, as well as the U.S. Army Services of Supply branch later that July.[87] Upon his assumption of command, "MacArthur appointed an Australian, General Thomas A. Blamey, as his ground forces commander. [U.S] Lt. General George H. Brett became his air force commander and [U.S.] Vice Admiral Herbert F. Leary (soon replaced by Arthur S. Carpender) took charge of MacArthur's naval forces. Although [General] Marshall urged him to include Australian and Dutch officers in senior positions on his staff, MacArthur instead appointed an all-American senior staff…."[88] MacArthur waged war with this organization throughout 1942 and 1943.

The South Pacific Area under Admiral Nimitz represented a different case than SWPA, with the expectation of a predominantly American force composition. The Navy tapped Admiral Robert L. Ghormley as Nimitz's subordinate to be Commander, South Pacific Area (COMSOPAC), although he would not actually take command until mid 1942.[89] Rear Admiral John S. McCain served as Ghormley's air commander, and Ghormley's organization retained a distinctly naval flavor, with few Army staff officers and initially no separate ground force command, but with an amphibious command and a

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[87] Ibid., 253.

[88] Richard B. Frank, *MacArthur*, 1st ed., The Great Generals Series (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 56-58.

[89] Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years*, 256.

service command.[90] Later, in July 1942, with Admiral King's agreement, the Army

established a new command under Ghormley titled U.S. Army Forces in the South

Pacific Area with Major General Millard F. Harmon at its head.[91] This command

exercised no operational control, but General Marshall tasked Harmon with the

administration and training of U.S. Army forces in the South Pacific Area.[92] This was

not a ground force command along the lines of MacArthur's organization, but a means of

administratively supporting all the Army forces assigned to Ghormley, including air

units. Ghormley's headquarters retained operational control over employment of all the

assigned ground forces, including both Army and Marine Corps units.

A Brief Comparison of the Japanese and U.S. Command Structures

The investigation has already revealed some salient differences between the

Japanese and U.S. command organizations, but the topic deserves a brief recapitulation.

The Japanese IGHQ had no clear superior, save the Emperor, to break deadlocks or

resolve disagreements between the services. The traditional role of the Emperor

precluded his exercise of such influence, which resulted in the need for consensus among

the Imperial Army and Navy before any joint action could be undertaken. This was a

serious limitation with significant implications for strategic direction because both

services could doggedly persist in their parochialisms without fear of being overridden,

often resulting in patchwork planning that protected the individual interests of the

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[90] Ibid., 256-57.

[91] Ibid., 260.

[92] Ibid., 260-61.
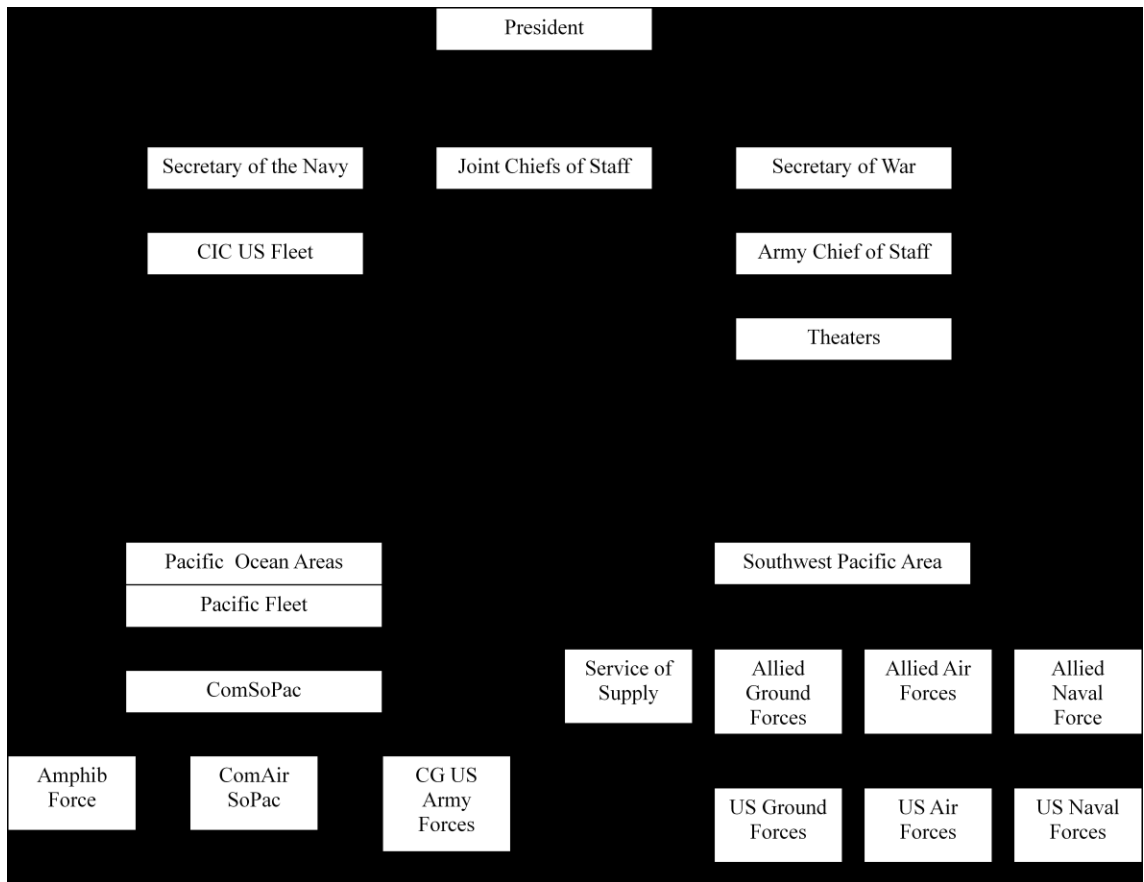
Figure 4: U.S. Pacific Command Structure Late 1942.

Sources: Louis Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years*, United States Army in World War II: The War in the Pacific (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Dept. of the Army, 1962), 232. Taken from a portion of "Chart 3-The Washington High Command and the Pacific Theaters, December 1942."

services at the expense of the greater good for Japan's war effort. On the U.S. side of the

ocean, the situation was different. The JCS was indeed much more of a joint body than

was the IGHQ, and it included joint planning and joint strategic survey bodies consisting

of representatives of both services and the semiautonomous Army Air Force. Like the

Japanese IGHQ, the JCS did not have one supreme officer to break deadlocks and guide

joint action should the services disagree, but unlike the Japanese Emperor, the American

President manifested few reservations about guiding strategy and policy and settling

disagreements among the services when necessary. If the U.S. Army and Navy could not

agree, Roosevelt would and did make decisions that resulted in action, as opposed to

possible stagnation for Japan in a similar situation. The Japanese services typically

avoided stagnation through imperfect compromises that aimed to meet the independent

objectives of both, rather than developing operations that focused on mutually supporting

objectives. The Japanese plan at Midway makes for a good example in which the

Japanese divided their forces trying to secure positions in the Aleutians to placate the

army while simultaneously bringing about a major sea battle at Midway, the objective of

the navy. The plan resulted in disaster for the navy. Finally, the inclusion of a semi-

independent Army Air Force chief among the U.S. Chiefs of Staff also represents a

marked difference with the Japanese IGHQ, allowing for greater consideration of the air

force perspective in matters of strategy on the Allied side; another example of greater

integration.

The nations' field commands demonstrate some similar differences. Once again,

the Japanese forces in the field took direction from their respective service staffs at the

IGHQ level and strove to fulfill their service's responsibilities locally. They did not

enjoy integrated or unified commands with one supreme commander for a given area. As

a consequence, the Japanese army and navy commanders had to broker agreements on a

local level just as their superiors had to do so at the national level. Meanwhile, the Allied

organizations in the Southwest Pacific Area and the South Pacific Area did have assigned

commanders to direct all the forces within those areas. Ghormley, under Nimitz, and

MacArthur established integrated commands that could potentially control assets from all

the services without requiring local agreements like their Japanese counterparts. There still existed an imperfect divided command for U.S. forces in the Pacific, between MacArthur's and Nimitz's areas, but the JCS and, if necessary the President, would mitigate disputes and resource competition.

Thus both sides had to contend with inter-service squabbling and disagreements, but each took a different approach. The de facto veto power the Japanese structure afforded their army and navy in strategic decisions required consensus, often resulting in compromised plans with divergent objectives and only limited inter-service coordination. The U.S., in the event of a deadlock, could appeal to a President who would decide the issue. The U.S. organizations were certainly not the perfect embodiment of joint action and harmony, but their design, from the international level, to the national level, and down to the field commands, facilitated and encouraged cooperation in a manner the Japanese structures did not. These command structures gave the United States and its allies in the Pacific greater strategic agility, especially when confronting rapid changes in the wartime situation such as occurred after the Battle of Midway in June 1942.

Chapter 4: Japanese Intelligence Organization In World War II

Given that the importance of intelligence, with its corresponding elements of collection/analysis and counterintelligence/security, is one of the crucial aspects of military effectiveness, intelligence organizations clearly played a role in driving strategic initiative and shifting the course and outcome of this critical stage of the Pacific War. Just how large a role, and in what way, is one of the larger issues this study must address. In a more direct sense, understanding imperial Japan's approach to and application of intelligence is a necessary precursor to evaluation of events in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands in 1942 and 1943.

Familiarity with the general organizations and approach to intelligence and counterintelligence in the Japanese army and navy and their associated air arms, from the General Staff level down to lower level tactical units, will help dissect the events of the mid-phase of the Pacific War. Factors such as radio interception and decryption, overseas military/naval attachés' intelligence gathering, use of technical intelligence, reconnaissance, and training of intelligence personnel represent important aspects of Japan's intelligence efforts in World War II played a crucial role in the ability of the Japanese military to determine enemy capabilities and intentions and thereby gain or retain the strategic initiative in combat.

Elements of Intelligence

Intelligence collection and analysis are the more intuitively obvious aspects of the concept of intelligence to the layman, yet they require more activity, focus, and forethought than meets the eye. What information does one collect? With what means? To what end? Further, information is nothing but data unless it is analyzed and examined in the context of the strategic, operational, and tactical environment. Collection does not occur in a vacuum, but depends on a multitude of sources, all of which intelligence analysts must interpret within their own areas of expertise. Common sources for collection during World War II included but were not limited to human intelligence (HUMINT), communications intelligence (COMINT), signals intelligence (SIGINT), open source intelligence (OSINT), and aerial reconnaissance. Current Department of Defense definitions provide a valuable clarification of the nature of these sources in the modern context. These definitions are a suitable point of departure for discussion of the same types of sources utilized by the combatants in the Pacific War. HUMINT, as the name implies, is "derived from information collected and provided by human sources."[1] The same Joint Publication defines COMINT as "technical information and intelligence derived from foreign communications by other than the intended recipients."[2] After such information is intercepted over the airwaves, code-breakers must be decrypt it for application. Related to COMINT, SIGINT incorporates "all communications intelligence, electronic intelligence, and foreign instrumentation signals intelligence,

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[1] "Joint Publication 1-02: 12 April 2001 (as Amended through 17 October 2007): Department of Defense Military and Associated Terms," ed. JCS (U.S. Department of Defense, 2007), 249.

[2] Ibid., 109.

however transmitted."[3] Detection of an enemy's radar emissions represents one example

of possible SIGINT. Open source intelligence utilizes information available in the public

domain, such as newspapers, magazines, radio broadcasts, and a multitude of other such

sources. Finally, reconnaissance is "a mission undertaken to obtain, by visual

observation or other detection methods, information about the activities and resources of

an enemy or adversary, or to secure data concerning the meteorological, hydrographic, or

geographic characteristics of a particular area."[4]

     All of these areas are crucial to a nation's intelligence picture, but collection alone

is not enough. Information without context or analysis amounts to little more than raw

data. Intelligence, therefore, is "the product resulting from the collection, processing,

integration, evaluation, analysis, and interpretation of available information concerning

foreign nations, hostile or potentially hostile forces or elements, or areas of actual or

potential operations."[5]

     The less intuitive, but no less important, elements of intelligence operations

include counterintelligence and security. The former consists of "information gathered

and activities conducted to protect against espionage, other intelligence activities,

sabotage, or assassinations conducted by or on behalf of foreign governments or elements

thereof, foreign organizations, or foreign persons…."[6] The latter represents, in the

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[3] "Joint Publication 1-02: 12 April 2001 (as Amended through 30 September 2010): Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms," 425-26.

[4] "Joint Publication 1-02: 12 April 2001 (as Amended through 17 October 2007): Department of Defense Military and Associated Terms," 457.

[5] Ibid., 269.

[6] Ibid., 130.

intelligence arena, "the condition that prevents unauthorized persons from having access to official information that is safeguarded in the interests of national security."[7] Taken together, these two aspects are the reverse sides of the intelligence coin whereby one combatant attempts to "blind" the other through a multitude of protective measures.

The Japanese Military and Naval Intelligence Organizations

Studying and understanding the Japanese approach to these challenges during World War II is a difficult task, with a number of factors conspiring to limit available sourcing. Both the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) and the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) destroyed the majority of their intelligence documents after the war.[8] Reference to the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey's (USSBS) interrogations of Japanese war leaders confirms the destruction. According to Commander Nobohiko Imai, IJN, the Ministry of Home Defense instituted systemized burning of tabulated naval intelligence in July 1945: "They have all been burned. In July, the Ministry of Home Defense knew the battlefield would be Japan, and burning was started. Not a single copy was left. The Chief of the 5th Section was very strict about burning."[9] Ken Kotani, in his recent study *Japanese Intelligence in World War II,* reveals Japanese intelligence officers also feared "victor's justice" after the war and took what they felt were necessary precautions to forestall it. Kotani writes, "As far as SIGINT is concerned, there was a rumor spread after the war

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[7] Ibid., 489.

[8] Ken Kotani, *Japanese Intelligence in World War II*, trans. Chiharu Kotani (New York: Osprey Publishing, 2009), 1.

[9] USSBS Interrogations: No. 236: Commander Nobohiko Imai, IJN; Subject: Japanese Naval and Operational Intelligence; Date: 3 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #8, 236-3.

that officers who engaged in SIGINT would be sentenced to life imprisonment. Due to

the rumor, intelligence officers destroyed most of their secret documents and have kept

silence since the war. Some ex-officers whom I interviewed are still afraid of the United

States conducting investigations into their SIGINT activities during the war."[10] Despite

these limitations, one can piece together many of the basic structures and organizations of

the Japanese intelligence efforts during the Second World War. Notwithstanding the

reservations mentioned above, it is worth noting that the testimony of Japanese officers

interrogated under the USSBS mission seems to display markedly more candor than did

the testimony of many of their German counterparts.[11]

Certain characteristics of the Japanese approach to intelligence shaped their

organizations and processes. According to Kotani, there was a distinct divide between

military and naval intelligence stemming from the mid-nineteenth century: "From the

establishment of the IJA and IJN in 1868, both branches of service had regulated their

own intelligence apparatus."[12] He postulates that Japan's fundamentally different

experience in World War I than the Western nations significantly impacted the

development of its intelligence structures. Japan never experienced the total war seen in

Europe and, therefore, never developed a total approach to intelligence.[13] This analysis,

however, is overstated. Germany did experience the total war phenomenon of World

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[10] Kotani, *Japanese Intelligence in World War II*, 163.

[11] David MacIsaac, *Strategic Bombing in World War Two: The Story of the United States Strategic Bombing Survey* (New York: Garland Pubinshing, Inc., 1976), 118. MacIsaac relates how the exceptional Japanese candor surprised and engendered suspicion in the Americans conducting the survey.

[12] Kotani, *Japanese Intelligence in World War II*, 6.

[13] Ibid., 8.

War I, yet German intelligence in World War II suffered numerous shortcomings.

Kotani's next point hits closer to the mark and explains some of the German intelligence

system's problems: "Fundamentally, Japanese intelligence had a tactical focus because it

was heavily influenced by the Prussian style of limited war used at the end of the 19th

century. In fact, Japanese tactical intelligence led to victories in the First Sino-Japanese

and the Russo-Japanese Wars, and the IJA and IJN thought that tactical intelligence could

compensate for their deficiencies on the battlefield."[14] The USSBS interrogation of Rear

Admiral Kaoru Takeuchi, IJN, long-serving intelligence Chief of the Fifth Section, Third

Department, Naval General Staff confirms many of Kotani's assertions stressing limited

cooperation between the IJA and the IJN, equating the Japanese concept of intelligence to

traditional espionage and spying rather than a comprehensive integration of sources, and

indicating that his intelligence section did not analyze its information but simply passed it

on to the operational planners on the Naval General Staff.[15] There were similar

shortcomings in the IJA's intelligence outlook. Lieutenant General Seizo Arisue, IJA,

Takeuchi's counterpart on the Army General Staff, lamented the IJA's view of

intelligence, colored by more recent experiences in China: "Though losses were high, we

were successful. There was a feeling on the part of the General Army officers that

intelligence was not necessary. The necessity was not felt, and then, when the war with

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[14] Ibid.

[15] USSBS Interrogations: No. 222: Rear Admiral Kaoru Takeuchi, IJN; Subject: Japanese Naval
Intelligence Organization; Date: 5 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #8, 222-1
– 222-9.

the U.S. began…we had no intelligence plans."[16] Simply put, Japan's intelligence system had not fully evolved to meet the needs of twentieth century warfare.

Imperial Japanese Army Intelligence Organization July 1942-November 1943

Intelligence duties on the Imperial Japanese Army General Staff fell under the auspices of the 2d Division, whose chief between August 1942 and March 1945 was the aforementioned Lieutenant General Arisue.[17] Elements of the 2d Division included: 5th Section covering Russia and Europe (but excluding Britain); 6th Section covering America, South America, Britain, and India; 7th Section covering China and Manchuria; and the 18th Section responsible for SIGINT decryption.[18] Manning was often less than robust. The General Headquarters was reorganized in March 1942 to add the 6th Section, but prior to that reorganization five officers in the 5th Section were responsible for covering all the areas that both the 5th and 6th Sections covered under the new arrangement.[19] By the end of the war, the 6th Section had grown to 29 officers and five or six non-commissioned officers.[20] In the lead up to war, the 18th Section boasted a staff

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[16] USSBS Interrogations: No. 238: Lieutenant General Seizo Arisue, IJA; Subject: Organization and Operation of Japanese Army Intelligence Activities; Date: 1 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #2, 238-6 – 238-7.

[17] Ibid., 238-4.

[18] Ibid., 238-2.

[19] USSBS Interrogations: No. 364: Lieutenant Colonel Kokuzo Oya, IJA; Subject: Intelligence Organization in Imperial Headquarters; Date: 31 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 364-2.

[20] Ibid.

of 135 in 1936.[21] The General Headquarters ordered yet another reorganization in July

1943 with important ramifications for SIGINT. The creation of the *Chuo Tokushu Jo-ho*

Bu, or Central Special Intelligence Section (CSIS), signified an increased emphasis on

decrypting US cipher traffic, and consisted of a staff of 301 that would eventually grow

to more than 1,000 in 1945.[22] By means of comparison, the British decryption efforts at

Bletchley Park in May 1943 employed more than 5,000 people, including a naval section

of 1,000 members.[23]

Intelligence functions also existed in the subordinate echelons of command, but

the emphasis steadily diminished. IJA Colonel Kazugi Sugita served as a staff officer in

the Eighth Area Army in the south Pacific in 1942 and then returned to the Imperial

General Staff to eventually head the 6th Section of the 2d Division.[24] Sugita described the

intelligence organization of a *Komen Gun* (Area Army), estimated as the equivalent of an

American or British Army as being one officer assigned to the G-1 department of the

Area Army staff, which was headed by a Colonel.[25] The G-1 department at this level also

employed two officers for operations and one for personnel, while the G-2 department

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[21] Kotani, *Japanese Intelligence in World War II*, 14.

[22] Ibid., 16-17.

[23] Martin Gilbert, *The Second World War: A Complete History*, Revised ed. (New York: H. Holt, 1991), 429.

[24] USSBS Interrogations: No. 402: Colonel Kazuji SUGITA, IJA; Subject: Intelligence Organization and Procedure, Japanese Army; Date: 21 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 402-1 – 402-3.

[25] War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, 16.

Chief of the Army General Staff

Deputy Chief of the Army General Staff

Central Special Intelligence Section (SIGINT, est. July 1943)

2nd Division (Intelligence)

Lt Gen Arisue

5th Section

(Russia)

6th Section

(America, South America, England, India)

7th Section

(China, Manchuria)
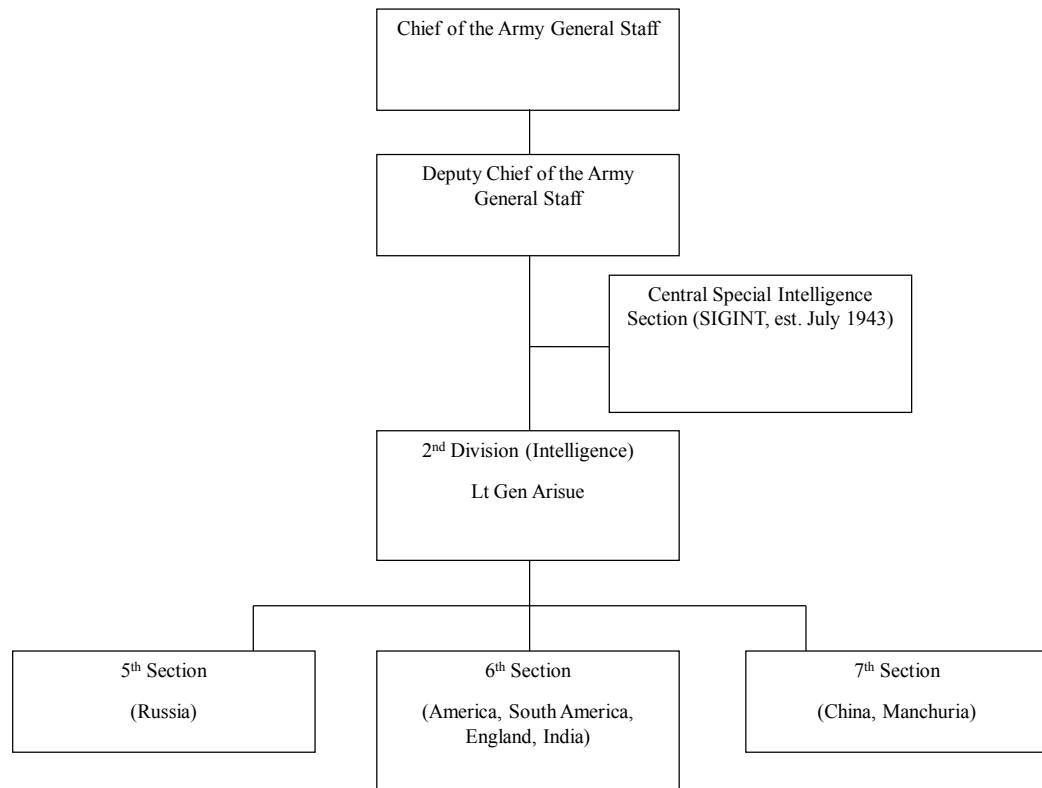
Figure 5: Intelligence Organization of IJA GHQ Late 1942-1943.

utilized three officers to coordinate supply, transportation, and communications.[26]

It is important to note that area army commanders had a great deal of command latitude

and often exercised decided independence from the IGHQ in many areas including

intelligence.[27] Some area armies established additional intelligence sections within a

structure known as *Tokumu Kikan* (Special Service Organization), which also monitored

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[26] USSBS Interrogations: No. 402, 402-3.

[27] USSBS Interrogations: No. 364, 364-2. See also Interrogation No. 398: Lieutenant Colonel J. Yamazaki, IJA; Subject: Intelligence Duties of TOKUMU KIKAN (Special Service Organization); Date: 15 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #7, 398-4.

and assisted in governing the local civil population and procuring local food supplies for the army.[28] The *Tokumu Kikan* of the Kwantung Army tracked Soviet movements, strength, and intentions concerning Manchuria through border observation, interrogation of Russian spies, espionage, communications interception, and analysis of captured materials and news reports.[29] Once again, this organization was independent of headquarters in Tokyo, although IGHQ did monitor its weekly and monthly reports and some IGHQ requests for information were forwarded to the organization from the Kwantung Army.[30] There were no *Tokumu Kikan* units assigned to Rabaul under the Eighth Area Army.[31] Nor did the Eighth Area Army immediately establish its own special unit for communications intelligence, although that army did some limited monitoring of Allied transmissions.[32] Only later in the late summer of 1943, when the Army General Staff ordered an expansion of interception and decryption efforts against the United States, did the Eighth Area Army organize a Special Intelligence Detachment, with a staff of 300 and an advanced intercept stations at Wewak and Ambon in the New Guinea area.[33]

The next level of command included the individual *Gun,* or Army, which was roughly the equivalent to a U.S. army corps with a headquarters and a variable number of

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[28] Ibid. Interrogation No. 398, 398-1 – 398-4.

[29] USSBS Interrogations: No. 372: Lieutenant Colonel Isamu Asai, IJA; Subject: Operation and Organization of TOKUMU KIKAN in MANCHURIA; Date: 15 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #3, 372-1.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid. Interrogation No. 402, 402-6.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War against Japan, 1942-1945*, 82.

divisions and troops.[34] At this level, according to Sugita, all the functions of the G-1 and G-2 departments were typically combined into a solitary section, while the staff at the individual division, or *Shidan,* level below the Army consisted of a chief, an operations officer, an intelligence officer, and a supply officer.[35] Sugita went on to elaborate: "This was the set up at the beginning of the war. Later, when Staff Officers became scarce sections were consolidated. In the 17th Army at Guadalcanal there were 3 junior officers in intelligence. In 8th Army Headquarters at RABAUL there were 5 or 6. This was finally increased to 10 at my request."[36]

At the beginning of the war there were no provisions for intelligence officers below the division level, such as in regiments' or battalions' structures, and in some divisions the intelligence post went unmanned. However, by the end of the war many regiments and some battalions did have intelligence officers or non-commissioned officers assigned.[37] Yet intelligence functions were not always full time duties for these officers. Lt. General Arisue stated, "Down to the army echelon we have been having the full time intelligence officer. The single army is the smallest unit that has a full time intelligence officer. Anything below the army divisions have men on part time duty. Recently, with the lack of men, we have found even in the army the intelligence officer carries other duties…."[38]

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[34] War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, 16.

[35] USSBS Interrogations: No. 402, 402-3.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid., 402-4.

[38] USSBS Interrogations: No. 238, 238-5.

IJA SIGINT and Codebreaking

The Japanese army did have experience in codebreaking: "the origin of the IJA's codebreaking activities was the establishment of a study group that met at the branch office of the Signals Traffic Department of the Foreign Ministry in 1921, a meeting held jointly by the IJA, the Foreign Ministry, and the Ministry of Communications," but not – pointedly – the IJN.[39] The IJA focused predominantly on the threat from the Soviet Union, and in 1923 worked closely with Captain Jan Kowalewski of the Polish Army to learn from Polish successes in breaking Soviet codes during their 1919-1920 war with Russia.[40] Following this liaison, the Japanese codebreaking unit was placed in the 7th Section of the 3rd Department (Communications) on the Army General Staff, representing the "birth of the Army General Staff's official codebreaking apparatus."[41] In July 1930, the IJA assigned the breaking of foreign ciphers to the 5th Section of 2nd Division, which eventually became the 18th Section in 1936.[42] The 1931 publication of *The American Black Chamber,* an exposé on U.S. efforts in cryptanalysis in World War I and the post war period written by the father of American cryptanalysis, Herbert O. Yardley, revealed U.S. successes against Japanese and others' codes, and greatly upset the Japanese.[43] Later, as already discussed, followed the creation of the Central Special Intelligence Section, which increased emphasis on decrypting American codes and ciphers.

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[39] Kotani, *Japanese Intelligence in World War II*, 12.

[40] Ibid., 13.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., 14.

[43] David Kahn, *The Reader of Gentlemen's Mail: Herbert O. Yardley and the Birth of American Codebreaking* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 130-31.

These decryption efforts often bore fruit for the Japanese. In 1934, the military police, as if out of a scene from a James Bond thriller, managed to photograph the U.S. codebook for the so-called Brown Code from the consulate in Kobe, enabling the IJA to break that diplomatic code shortly thereafter.[44] The IJA also enjoyed some success breaking the more complicated U.S. diplomatic strip ciphers, which required much more laborious scientific decoding rather than simply photographing the codes.[45] This success against the strip ciphers combined with that against the U.S. Gray Code and other Department of State codes, leads Kotani to conclude, "The best British and German codebreaking apparatus at that time had not cracked the Strip Ciphers, so Japanese codebreaking ability must have been considerable."[46] The Japanese also scored significant successes, through the efforts of their Kwantung Army, against the Chinese codes of the Kuomintang (KMT) and leveraged their knowledge to "divine the intentions of the United States and Britain during the Pacific War."[47] Yet these successes did not necessarily parlay into success against the Western Allies' *military* codes, which used a different system of encryption.

IJA Communications Security

Countering enemy codebreaking requires communications security. Here too, overall Japanese army performance was mixed with respect to protecting its own

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[44] Kotani, *Japanese Intelligence in World War II*, 14.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid., 15.

[47] Ibid., 19-20.

communications, but generally effective in the opening stages of the war. Kotani claims the IJA focused much of its communications intelligence efforts on decryption, somewhat to the detriment of its own security. Only after Pearl Harbor did the IJA regard the creation of its own codes as a necessity because they strongly believed in the security of their infinitely random numbered cipher system.[48] Serious reforms in cipher traffic safety measures only came in late 1943 with the establishment of the Cipher Security Committee by the IJA in conjunction with the IJN and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[49] Kotani's assertion warrants more scrutiny given the findings of Edward Drea. Drea, in his influential study *MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War against Japan, 1942-1945*, finds more effective U.S. Army codebreaking of Japanese army codes almost precisely at the time Kotani claims Japanese cipher reforms. According to Drea, the corresponding improvements in U.S. intelligence helped shorten the war through successful operations such as Hollandia in 1944 and contributed to the decision to drop the atomic bombs rather than face the growing Japanese defenses.[50]

Nevertheless, it seems apparent that many of the IJA's assumptions about their cipher system were not wide of the mark, and their security at the beginning of the war, ironically before Kotani's aforementioned reforms, was effective. Drea notes, "No intelligence was gained from decryptions of Japanese army communications from December 7, 1941, to June 1943. Even after mid-1943, routine Japanese army changes to the key register quickly frustrated further American exploitation of that initial ephemeral

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[48] Ibid., 16.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War against Japan, 1942-1945*, xii-xiii.

advantage."[51] The Imperial Japanese Army used a manual encipherment system. Every

word had an associated code number, the code was enciphered via a key that changed

daily, and the system included false additions to throw off enemy codebreakers.[52]

Another factor that enhanced Japanese army communications security was the Japanese

language itself. According to Drea, "The prevalence of homonyms in Japanese could

bedevil the erstwhile translator. For instance, '*kaisen*' might mean 'decisive

engagement,' 'sea battle,' 'opening of hostilities,' 'ghost ship,' 'barge,' 'rotation,'

'reelection,' or 'itch.'"[53] Drea confirms Kotani's claim that the IJA felt its

communications, protected by such a cipher and compounded by their language, were

unbreakable.[54] For much of the period covered in this study, they were correct.

Open Source Intelligence

Many of Japan's military attachés stationed abroad placed a premium on using

open source intelligence garnered in the local area of their station. The *Domei* press

agency also collaborated with the Japanese government and provided intelligence from

the world news service. During the war, Masao Tsuda, chief of the *Domei's* Argentine

branch used analysis of newspapers and journals to provide intelligence to his

government.[55] Lt. Colonel Oya related, "At the beginning of the War, the principal

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[51] Ibid., 7.

[52] Ibid., 1.

[53] Ibid., 7.

[54] Ibid., 8.

[55] Kotani, *Japanese Intelligence in World War II*, 56.

sources were newspapers and military attachés. The information concerned matters such as the number of divisions activated, organizations in the UNITED STATES, training camp locations, National Guard activity, overall strength, etc. Most of this came from announcements of U.S. Government. After the War started, we had a great deal of trouble getting this information."[56] Kotani claims that, excepting SIGINT, "most of the information collected against the United States was based on such open sources."[57] Thus OSINT formed a major part of the Japanese intelligence picture.

IJA Human Intelligence/Prisoner of War Interrogation

Human intelligence played a small role in the IJA's efforts against the United States. Military attachés at embassies and consulates conducted most of the IJA's HUMINT and focused on three main areas: in Manchuria against the Soviet Union, in China, and in the "Southern Area" against the British and French.[58] The IJA's consistent focus on continental Asia and Manchuria in particular meant that it felt HUMINT against the United States was a task more suited to the Foreign Ministry and the IJN.[59] Lt. General Arisue reported the results of espionage activities against the United States as nil because the IJA's lack of preparation for a war against the United States meant it did not cultivate the proper contacts and did not place the appropriate personnel in useful

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[56] USSBS Interrogations: No. 364, 364-2.

[57] Kotani, *Japanese Intelligence in World War II*, 56.

[58] Ibid., 26.

[59] Ibid., 56.

locations before hostilities commenced.[60] The Japanese army around Rabaul received

limited information from Allied prisoners of war and received varying levels of support

and information on Allied movements from the natives in the Solomon Islands and on

New Britain.[61] Interestingly, Lt General Arisue placed little value on information

garnered from prisoners of war, stating, "I discount prisoners of war as a source of

information….the information gained from prisoners of war did not help us very

much."[62] When asked if there was an attempt to interrogate all prisoners of war, Arisue

relayed, "No, there was no calculated attempt to question all prisoners of war. In field

manuals, certain elementary and very basic instructions were given such as asking the

PW how his supplies were, but on the whole it was completely up to local units in various

theaters. Sometimes the Kempei [Military Police] would have a hand in the questioning,

but there were no instructions from Imperial Headquarters as to how certain information

was to be obtained."[63]

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[60] USSBS Interrogations: No. 238, 238-4.

[61] USSBS Interrogations: No. 402, 402-6.

[62] USSBS Interrogations: No. 238, 238-10. Reasons for the Japanese neglect of information from prisoners of war remain unclear and require further investigation. One speculative cause may be military cultural differences with the Western Allies. The Japanese looked upon surrender and capture as a disgrace and members of the Japanese military did not expect to fall into enemy hands, particularly their officers. If they mirror imaged their foes, they likely expected to capture few prisoners, and certainly fewer still of any higher rank with potentially valuable information.

[63] Ibid.

After-Action Reports and Captured Materials

In contrast to his views on information from prisoners of war, Arisue regarded

information garnered from the battlefront as more valuable, with guarded caution

regarding air combat:

> Most accurate of all were the reports from the front lines, the direct reports of
> actual conditions. They were considered to be reliable and accurate during and
> after the conflict. As for the air losses, though, the one defect was the habit of
> reporting enemy losses as high and own losses as low always. The reason for this
> was that several reports would come in from Japanese flyers with regard to one
> enemy plane, and (2) the lack of reports on damage to planes. The major losses
> were given but considerable damages were not reported. We could estimate from
> this side the actual conditions by checking the large orders for parts and spares
> that came in. This was merely an estimated figure we had to rely on. It was a
> very unfortunate way of doing things. This was a definite defect.[64]

Those frontline reports traveled through the chain of command on their way to IGHQ:

"The report of a loss to a small unit would come first to the unit commander who would

give it to the intelligence representative who would send it back up his lines. Then it

comes finally back to General Headquarters where we assemble all reports and get a

picture of the whole situation. General Headquarters doesn't have a direct connection

with the intelligence man in a small unit. The reports are gathered progressively into

larger and larger units on the way up and finally reach General Headquarters."[65] Lt.

Colonel Oya also discussed information gathered from units in the field, noting the

Japanese identified Allied units and tactics, but during the latter stages of the war, when

the U.S. was advancing, they captured only a few pieces of equipment for study.[66] The

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[64] Ibid., 238-5.

[65] Ibid.

[66] USSBS Interrogations: No. 364, 364-3.

clear value the IJA IGHQ placed on these frontline reports may reflect the Japanese tendency to favor tactical information to enhance battlefield success over a more comprehensive approach to intelligence gathering and analysis. Simply put, the Japanese focused more on intelligence of immediate value and intelligence related directly to combat at the front than they did on intelligence that garnered them a more broad understanding of the Allies' employment of forces and overall capabilities.

Captured documents were another potential source of information for the Japanese, but they were another source that Arisue believed provided little valuable information: "There were not captured documents that were really worthwhile. In the Philippines, Lingayen, we were very successful in getting a few minor articles like diarys (*sic*) and various scraps of paper from the dead but in regard to really, official documents, we got none that were worthwhile at all."[67] Arisue was astute enough, however, to attribute some of the poor results regarding captured materials to the Japanese intelligence organization when he addressed a question about the process for the forwarding of captured materials to IGHQ:

> It was left to the decision of theater commanders. Things that they deemed worthwhile to sned (*sic*) up here were sent. Because of the general lack of development of the intelligence service – they could have secured many more documents but actually very few got into our hands. When the war was going well, I think that perhaps we secured quite a few, but after the allies began their offensive, we secured nothing that was worth while. It was because of the general point of view towards intelligence, the lack of appreciation of it. It resulted in few captured documents. A manual called "Jungle Battle Lessons" from Australian sources was found in the early days of the war in Buna and that helped us greatly in anticipating the lessons you had learned.[68]

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[67] USSBS Interrogations: No. 238, 238-10.

[68] Ibid., 238-11.

It is noteworthy that, once again, Arisue, reflecting the historical Prussian influence on the IJA, chose as his prime example of a valuable captured document one that emphasized the tactical aspects of war and the battlefield.

Photo Reconnaissance

Lt. General Arisue stated that the IGHQ utilized some aerial photography, although the work was directed in the field with only "certain sets" of pictures, which he did not specify, being forwarded to Tokyo.[69] Lt. Colonel Oya, when asked about the importance of photo interpretation at General Headquarters, stated photo interpretation was done at Air Headquarters and forwarded to *Daihon'ei* (IGHQ).[70] Colonel Sugita discussed the IJA's use of aerial photography in the Rabaul area, stating, "Only the Navy had planes in the area until 1943. After that we took photos mainly for mapping purposes since we had no maps of the SOLOMONS or EASTERN NEW GUINEA….Some pictures were taken of ground units but they were not satisfactory."[71] Sugita also informed his interrogators that the officers at headquarters who interpreted the aerial photographs had no special training, so that they did not effectively interpret infantry positions on the ground.[72] Lt. Colonel Oya reported, "Some photo work is done at Army level, but most is done by Air Units. None was done at Division level. Cooperation

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[69] Ibid., 238-11.

[70] USSBS Interrogations: No. 364, 364-3.

[71] USSBS Interrogations: No. 402, 402-5.

[72] Ibid.

between Air and Ground Units was good."[73] Major Akito Saeki who commanded a

squadron of Japanese bombers at Wewak, New Guinea from May to December 1943,

provided some insights on the Japanese use of photo reconnaissance in the Rabaul area:

"A reconnaissance squadron attached to the Air Division took most of the pictures. On

the few daylight missions flown in NEW GUINEA, the bombers also took

photographs."[74] Saeki also believed that photo interpretation was done by regular

squadron officers, not specially trained photo interpreters.[75] Colonel Minoru Miyashi,

IJA, Japanese Army Air Force (JAAF) veteran of the Singapore and Palambang

operations in the beginning of the war reported, a slightly different finding. According to

Miyashi, the *Hikōsentai*, or Air Regiment, consisting of three or four *Hikō Chūtai* (Air

Companies) of nine aircraft each,[76] had two trained photo interpreters assigned, and all

aviators were given some photo interpreter training.[77] Taken together, these differing

accounts depict the IJA's use of aerial reconnaissance and photography as somewhat

haphazard.

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[73] USSBS Interrogations: No. 364, 364-3.

[74] USSBS Interrogations: No. 412: Major Akito Saeki, IJA; Subject: Squadron (Army) Intelligence Procedure; Date: 16 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #3, 412-2.

[75] Ibid., 412-2.

[76] War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, 54.

[77] USSBS Interrogations: No. 270: Colonel Minoru Miyashi, JAAF; Subject: Japanese Army Air Intelligence Organization and Operations; Date: 6 and 7 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #8, 270-6.

IJA Intelligence Personnel Selection and Training

Japanese officers did not yearn to serve in the intelligence service given the lack of emphasis and stature afforded it by the IJA. General Masakazu Kawabe, IJA, the commanding general of Air General Headquarters at the end of the war, stated intelligence officers were often second rate and untrained men because the army placed much greater emphasis on attack and operations, much like the German army.[78] When pressed by his American interrogators about the need for better men in intelligence, Kawabe responded, "Yes, but the whole attitude towards intelligence would have to change. Operations had no confidence in intelligence and until that was changed there would be little use in assigning good men."[79] One wonders how the intelligence service could ever change this attitude if it was to be perennially staffed by inferior officers. Lt. General Arisue confirmed Kawabe's assessment in his interrogation with this straight forward evaluation: "I think it is fair to say, by and large, the dregs were thrown into the intelligence service," and he goes on to say that the intelligence section was often left out of the decision loop in which the operations section reigned supreme.[80]

Making matters even worse, those supposed "dregs" received very little in the form of formal intelligence training. In theory, all Japanese army officers received intelligence training at the Japanese War College, but that "training" left much to be desired. Major Hideo Anno, who served on the General Staff and lectured on occasion at

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[78]USSBS Interrogations: No. 343: General Masakazu Kawabe , IJA; Subject: Intelligence Operations at Air General Headquarters (KOKU SOGUN SHIRIEBU); Date: 13 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #8, 343-3.

[79] Ibid.

[80] USSBS Interrogations: No. 238, 238-7.

the War College said, "There formerly was specialized intelligence training but this was dropped in recent years; some years before the war. I don't know the details of the course. In recent years, any intelligence training was a part of general courses. No emphasis was placed on the intelligence end."[81] Major Anno himself received what he considered very general instruction in communications intelligence concerning radio intercepts and radio security in his War College tour in 1937, and he described some minimum training in preparation of enemy order of battle information.[82] By the end of the war, intelligence training at the War College appears to have deteriorated even further. The Japanese army reduced the War College tenure from three years to six months, with an emphasis on tactics and military history and at most ten hours of intelligence instruction.[83] At this time, the college did not provide any instruction on enemy order of battle deduction, little in the way of prisoner of war handling and use of captured documents, and had dropped its previous week long instruction on reading aerial photographs as map substitutes.[84] Assuming an impending invasion of the Home Islands, the IJA refocused its abbreviated War College instructions on the basics.

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[81]USSBS Interrogations: No. 449: Major Hideo Anno, IJA; Subject: Intelligence Instruction in the Army War College; Date: 26 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 449-2.

[82] Ibid.

[83] USSBS Interrogations: No. 604: Colonel Takeo Shimizu, IJA; Subject: Instruction Relating to Intelligence at the War College; Date: 27 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #6, 604-2.

[84] Ibid., 604-2 – 604-3.

Counterintelligence: The War Ministry and the *Kempeitai*

The Japanese War Ministry served as the "administrative, supply, and mobilization agency of the Army."[85] While the War Ministry stood apart from the IJA General Staff, it had its own set of intelligence responsibilities that differed somewhat from the IJA proper. Kotani writes, "the War Ministry also had an Investigation Department under the direct control of the War Minister, which also conducted counter-intelligence activities covertly. Furthermore, the Interior Ministry possessed the *Tokko,* whose mission was to crack down on thought crimes that were in violation of the Maintenance of Public Order Law."[86] The War Ministry needed its own intelligence organization because, "they had to control the IJA and its troops, which sometimes ran out of control in China and Manchuria. They did not believe the intelligence data of the IJA and tried to collect foreign information by themselves."[87] As the first passage above implies, the unit monitored foreigners in Japan *and* domestic politics and politicians, it monitored foreign diplomatic communications and facilities, it intercepted foreign mail with the assistance of the central post office, and it often rifled through foreigners' baggage when they traveled via rail.[88]

Another aspect of the War Ministry's counterintelligence and intelligence responsibilities involved the *Kempeitai,* technically translated as Military Police (MP). That term is too limiting for the functions of the *Kempeitai,* which were referred to "by

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[85] War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, 10.

[86] Kotani, *Japanese Intelligence in World War II*, 58.

[87] Ibid., 65.

[88] Ibid., 67.

the Japanese as the gendarmerie," but "had powers nearly as broad as the Nazi Gestapo."[89] Report 97 of the USSBS, titled *Japanese Military and Naval Intelligence,* describes the role of the *Kempeitai:* "Although in the field it worked with the Army, it was under the jurisdiction of the War Ministry and controlled both administrative and judicial police and, as a military organization, was divided into administrative and judicial sections. It had wide powers, vested with the right to exercise Japan's authority over military personnel and the general public alike."[90] Kotani describes the activities of the *Kempeitai* as, "The Military Police's techniques for intelligence gathering included: 1) spies and agents; 2) direct observation; 3) acquisition of documents; 4) inspection of mail; 5) interrogation of POWs; 6) detection of radio transmissions; 7) interviews; 8) tailing. This being said, the Military Police did not make much effort to analyze data and the raw information was often simply reported to their superiors."[91] Lt. Colonel Yamamura, IJA, Officer in Charge of the Students at the *Kempeitai* school, described the field duties of the *Kempeitai* as including MP duties, discipline, security, and to "Examine civilians in line with counter-intelligence. They don't attempt to get operational intelligence, not being a fighting unit."[92] He went further, stating, "KEMPEI didn't collect intelligence, their work was counter-intelligence. When prisoners of war were captured KEMPEI held them for questioning as to Name, Rank, and Serial Number,

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[89] "Japanese Military and Naval Intelligence," ed. United States Strategic Bombing Survey. Japanese Military and and G-2 Naval Intelligence Division. Japanese Intelligence Section (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1946), 43.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Kotani, *Japanese Intelligence in World War II*, 60.

[92] USSBS Interrogations: No. 607: Lt. Colonel Yamamura and 2nd Lieutenant Ogata, IJA; Subject: KEMPEI TAI; Date: 17 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 607-3 – 607-4.

protected them from civilians and turned them over to Area Command for

interrogation."[93] Yamamura succinctly stated there were no connections between the

Kempeitai and Lt. General Arisue's intelligence organization other than some liaison

contact.[94] As noted earlier, there were no *Tokumu Kikan* units assigned to the Eighth

Area Army in the Rabaul area, so those duties fell to *Kempei* units associated with that

army.[95] Colonel Sugita confirmed the presence and role of the *Kempeitai* when he stated

100 *Kempeitai* men were at Rabaul. When asked if they collected combat intelligence,

Sugita replied, "No. They obtained information about natives, whether they were

friendly or not. They were in uniform. A small unit was attached to 17th Army but not to

units below that."[96]

   Kempeitai recruits attended the Nakano School located in Tokyo. Lt. Colonel

Nozaki, IJA, an instructor at the school stated recruits "were chosen for their physique,

character, and mentality," and, "There was a time when most KEMPEI were volunteers

but this turned out to produce men who wanted desk jobs rather than real army service.

In recent years, both volunteers and assigned men were taken for a 6-8 month course for

officers, and an 8-12 month course for enlisted men. At the end of the war there were

about 50 officers and 400-500 enlisted men; organized in three companies at the

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[93] Ibid., 607-3.

[94] Ibid.

[95] "Japanese Military and Naval Intelligence," 43.

[96] USSBS Interrogations: No. 402, 402-5.

NAKANO School."[97] When queried about the courses taught at the school, Nozaki

replied, "Two general duties (1) Military Police (2) Civilian police in the forward areas

and in Japan. Other topics would include law, thought control techniques, general

indoctrination, general police methods, etc."[98]

Intelligence in the Japanese Army Air Force (JAAF)

Like the War Ministry, Japanese Army Aviation had some of its own intelligence

procedures and characteristics. The unique Japanese command structure placed the Army

Chief of Staff below the Emperor in a lateral position vis-à-vis the War Minister, with the

Air Headquarters (*Koku Hombu*) placed under the War Ministry, while the fielded air

armies served beneath the respective area armies for their geographic region.[99] The

USSBS report on Japanese military and naval intelligence states, "most of the

intelligence work for both ground and air forces was the responsibility of the 2nd

Division of the General Staff, but the air force was primarily responsible for two matters;

air order of battle and air technical intelligence."[100] In addition, any military aviator will

relate the importance of intelligence briefings prior to mission execution and debriefings

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[97] USSBS Interrogations: No. 452: Lt. Colonel Tatsuo Nozaki, IJA; Subject: Intelligence Instruction at the KEMPEITAI School at NAKANO Ku, TOKYO; Date: 26 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #3, 452-2.

[98] Ibid.

[99] War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, 53.

[100] United States Strategic Bombing Survey., *Japanese Military and Naval Intelligence Division. Japanese Intelligence Section, G-2. Dates of Survey: 1 November 1945 through 1 February 1946*, Its [Reports. Pacific War, 97] (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1946), 15.

following mission completion directly to the effectiveness of employment of airpower.

Thus intelligence support in lower level air units must also be examined.

The USSBS report on Japanese military and naval intelligence was correct with its assertion that the Air Headquarters predominantly dealt with technical intelligence, which involves the study of the scientific and technical aspects of foreign military systems, including their capabilities and limitations.[101] Interrogators asked Colonel Miyashi what kind of information reached Air Headquarters from lower echelons, to which he replied:

> Intelligence from foreign diplomatic sources was sent over from Army General Headquarters; other information came from various units directly. All this was evaluated and reports sent out to lower echelons about every ten days. Most of the information disseminated in this fashion by the Army air Headquarters (Koku Hombu) was pretty much technical – new developments, that sort of thing – but not operational information. That was sent out by the Air General Army (Koku Sogun).[102]

The Japanese set up the *Koku Sogun,* or Air General Headquarters, mentioned by Miyashi, as a tactical air command in 1945, meaning that organization played no role in the New Guinea or Solomon Islands campaign.[103] Members of the USSBS interrogation team questioned Lt. Colonel T. Ashihara, IJA, who worked in the technical intelligence section of the *Koku Hombu* from July 1944 to the end of the war and concurrently acted as Chief of the Operational Intelligence section of the *Koku Sogun* from April 1945 to war termination. The summary of Ashihara's interview reveals, once again, manning

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[101] "Joint Publication 1-02: 12 April 2001 (as Amended through 30 September 2010): Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms," 411.

[102] USSBS Interrogations: No. 270, 270-6.

[103] "Japanese Military and Naval Intelligence," 9.
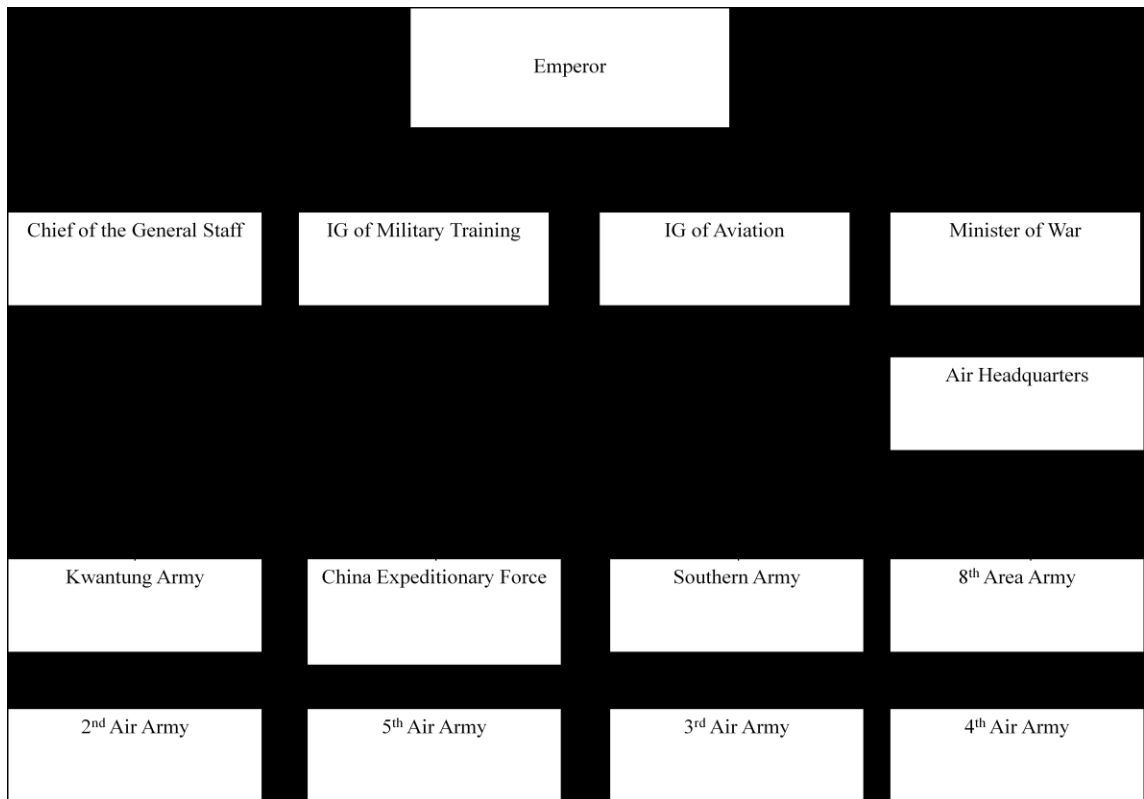
Figure 6: Air Headquarters and Air Army Organization Prior to 1945 Reorganization.

issues in high-level Japanese intelligence offices as both of his sections depended on a

single group of five to eight officers, three petty officers, one civilian and ten clerks.[104]

Ashihara confirmed the sources of information mentioned by Miyashi, and reported the

Technical Intelligence Section made reports to its research laboratory at Tachikawa "and

occasionally from there to civilian aircraft research laboratories."[105] Major Hiroshi Toga,

JAAF, revealed that *Koku Hombu* reports, which at times included information from

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[104] USSBS Interrogations: No. 362: Lieutenant Colonel T. Ashihara, IJA; Subject: Organization and Operation of Japanese Army Air Force; Date: November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #3, 362-2.

[105] Ibid.

Germany, assisted with intelligence training and with knowledge of British and American aircraft performance and capabilities.[106]

The *Kokugun,* or air armies which approximated a U.S. numbered air force, resided immediately below the Air Headquarters in the JAAF hierarchical chain of command. These air armies each had clearly defined geographic areas of responsibility and each functioned as an administrative headquarters for the tactical air units associated with the corresponding area army.[107] According to the USSBS report on Japanese military and naval intelligence, "The duties of the air army were almost entirely administrative and its staff was small. Its principal intelligence function was the consolidation of reports from lower units and transmission of these to the General Staff through channels. It also served as a channel through which information from the General Staff passed to lower units."[108]

The *Hikoshidan* (Air Division) constituted the next echelon of command and represented the largest tactical organization of the JAAF.[109] This unit executed operational and administrative control over the subordinate tactical units in its command.[110] The air division staff consisted of three sections including operations,

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[106] Ibid. Interrogation No. 284: Major Hiroshi Toga, IJA; Subject: INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION AND PROCEDURE IN JAPANESE ARMY AIR DIVISION (HIKOSHIDAN); Date: 7 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #8, 284-2.

[107] War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, 53-54.

[108] "Japanese Military and Naval Intelligence," 16.

[109] War Department: *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, 54.

[110] Ibid.

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intelligence, and administration.[111] A lieutenant colonel or major usually headed the

intelligence section, with a staff of three to six officers and a number of enlisted men, and

the JAAF assigned any trained photo interpreters available in the theater to this

organization.[112] Among other duties, the section produced enemy order of battle

estimates and forwarded their estimates of enemy intentions to Tokyo headquarters and to

subordinate commands every ten days.[113] Colonel Miyashi described his experience as

operations officer in the 3rd Air Division from 1940-1942, including operations against

Singapore and Palambang when his USSBS interrogators questioned him about

information received from lower echelon units:

> The two things we depended on most were the situation reports and the strength
> reports. The main thing the situation reports covered were, generally, strength,
> immediate conditions, changes in the situation, enemy losses. Strength reports
> were by and large our own strength – how many of our own planes were
> operational; how many men. This came from the lower units direct to my
> headquarters by dispatch. It came from the Sentai, jumping one echelon usually,
> so Shiden got the information as soon as the Dan. Photos were the exceptional
> thing which came from the Sentai to the Shidan without going to the Dan at all;
> somebody from the Dan would come up to look at the photos. These photos were
> developed at the Sentai and sent up by air crop *(sic)* or by car.[114]

The intelligence roles of the *Hikodan* (Air Brigade), and *Hikōsentai,* mentioned by

Colonel Miyashi, as well as the *Hikō Chūtai* will be discussed below.

The air brigade followed the air division in the chain of command, and typically

two or more such brigades served in a division, each containing three or four air

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[111] "Japanese Military and Naval Intelligence," 16.

[112] Ibid., 17.

[113] Ibid.

[114] USSBS Interrogations: No. 270, 270-3.

regiments.[115] Lt. Colonel Matsumura claimed, based on his experience with the 3rd

Hikodan in Java in 1943, the Air Brigade had no official slot for an intelligence officer on

its table of organization, though usually an officer was assigned said duties, which

included relaying information up and down the JAAF chain.[116] He described his duties in

the 3rd *Hikodan* stating, "I was a major at that time. I had a captain below me who was

largely used in an intelligence capacity. Both of us doubled in operations and

intelligence. There was no provision in the table of organization for an intelligence

officer. The commanding officer of the HIKODAN had one staff officer – I was it."[117]

Next in line came the *Hikōsentai* characterized as the basic operational unit in the

JAAF.[118] According to the USSBS report on military intelligence, the air regiment staff "

was small, seldom consisting of more than 5 or 6 officers in all. No intelligence officer

was called for by the tables of organization at the beginning of the war, but there is some

evidence that after the reorganization of the air forces in April 1945 an intelligence

officer was assigned to the air regiments defending the Homeland."[119] Units typically

assigned an officer to complete light intelligence duties which often consisted simply of

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[115] War Department: *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, 54.

[116] USSBS Interrogations: No. 307: Lieutenant Colonel Shizuma Matsumura, IJA; Subject: Japanese Army Air Intelligence at HIKOSENTAI, HIKODAN, and HIKOSHIDAN level; Date: 8 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #8, 307-4 – 307-5.

[117] Ibid.

[118] War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, 54.

[119] "Japanese Military and Naval Intelligence," 17.

compiling reports from the lower units and forwarding them up the chain and sending

reports from headquarters down the chain.[120]

The *Hikō Chūtai* represents the final JAAF organization considered. This

organization typically consisted of nine to twelve aircraft and closely resembled an

American squadron.[121] The USSBS report on Japanese military intelligence summarizes

the intelligence operations in these units at the cutting edge of combat:

> Although no special intelligence officer was assigned at squadron level,
> intelligence duties were performed by an officer, often a flyer, designated by the
> squadron commander. He kept the files, looked after reproduction, received
> reports from pilots and air crews who had anything to report and saw to it that
> studies of enemy tactics, plane recognition and equipment performance were
> available to pilots. This officer generally did no briefing as this was usually done
> by the squadron commander. No systematic interrogation of pilots and air crews
> was attempted following a mission but any man who had something to report was
> expected to do so, either to the commander or to the officer performing
> intelligence duties. Mission reports issued by squadrons were usually quite
> complete. Report forms were prescribed at either air regiment or air division level
> and called for such data as time of takeoff and landing, gasoline, bombs, and
> ammunition carried and expended, time of attack, results of attack, unusual
> sightings, opposition encountered, damage to planes, enemy planes destroyed or
> damaged, etc. This written report was made for each plane as soon as possible
> after the mission. Very brief operations reports were made by dispatch
> immediately after each mission.[122]

Many of these practices remain familiar to the modern U.S. military aviator.

JAAF Aerial Reconnaissance

Aerial reconnaissance also had an impact on the effectiveness of the Japanese

Army Air Force. The USSBS report on Japanese intelligence includes the IJN's aerial

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[120] Ibid.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Ibid.

reconnaissance in its assessment when it states the following, "By our standards it would seem that the air reconnaissance of the Japanese left much to be desired. Especially did this become true as our attacks were pressed against them all along the line. It was not because of a lack of realization of the value of such reconnaissance."[123] Specifically addressing aerial photography, the report later states:

> Judged by American standards, the Japanese use of aerial photography as a source of intelligence was still in its infancy at the end of the war. Japanese Army and Navy Officers did not consider photography to be useful operationally beyond the immediate tactical phase, and apparently no effort was made to utilize photographs in planning or anticipating new offensives. The few officers who did realize the possibilities of photographic intelligence met with only small successes in their efforts to convince doubting superiors.[124]

This despite the fact that at the beginning of the war the JAAF had the very capable Mitsubishi Ki-46 "Dinah" reconnaissance aircraft and later in the war the IJN fielded the capable Nakajima C6N "Myrt" carrier-based reconnaissance aircraft.[125] Yet the JAAF did have specific squadrons assigned to the reconnaissance mission, though not specifically photo reconnaissance.[126]

 As already noted, Colonel Miyashi claimed the IJA gave all pilots some limited photo interpretation training. Major Toga backed up Miyashi's claim, but stated the pilots' photo interpretation training was limited and not a full course of instruction on the

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[123] Ibid., 33.

[124] Ibid., 34. The American approaches to Photo Intelligence will be analyzed in the next chapter, "Chapter 5: United States Intelligence Organization in the Pacific During World War II."

[125] Ibid.

[126] USSBS Interrogations: No. 270, 270-3. With "Japanese Military and Naval Intelligence," 119. From "Exhibit D: Special Report – Japanese Photographic Intelligence."

procedures.[127] Beyond this, photo interpretation training was meager. The IJA trained a total of 18 officers in two groups, with the first trained in August and September 1940 and the second group trained in June 1945.[128] Thirty additional officers trained as something akin to photographic technicians.[129] The first class focused its training efforts on studying air installations and air defenses, but the second class broadened it studies to include airfield, aircraft, and shipping recognition.[130]

Tactical units felt this dearth of trained photo interpreters. Lt. Colonel Matsumura stated there were no trained photo interpreters in the units beneath the *Hikoshidan* level, which is understandable given the very limited pool of qualified individuals.[131] As previously noted, Major Saeki believed photo interpretation at the reconnaissance squadrons in New Guinea was accomplished by ordinary pilots who had no special training in such interpretation.

Lack of emphasis by the JAAF along with poor camera quality, below that acceptable to the United States, limited the effectiveness of Japanese photo intelligence during the war.[132] The USSBS special report on Japanese photographic intelligence summarized as follows:

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[127] USSBS Interrogations: No. 284, 284-2.

[128] "Japanese Military and Naval Intelligence," 119. From "Exhibit D: Special Report – Japanese Photographic Intelligence."

[129] Ibid. From "Exhibit D: Special Report – Japanese Photographic Intelligence."

[130] Ibid. From "Exhibit D: Special Report – Japanese Photographic Intelligence."

[131] USSBS Interrogations: No. 307, 307-3.

[132] "Japanese Military and Naval Intelligence," 120. "Exhibit D: Special Report – Japanese Photographic Intelligence."

As was the experience of Navy interpreters at Guadalcanal and Java, Army photo intelligence officers had their work limited throughout most of the war in reporting on airfield progress, AA defenses, and general development activity at Allied bases for strictly air group purposes. Little target work was done, and reports often consisted merely of mosaics annotated by the interpreter and sent to the appropriate air group section. In the opinion of Major Shimada, there was no work done by the Japanese Army prior to the loss of Saipan that could really be called photographic intelligence.[133]

A closer look at the IJN's approach to aerial reconnaissance and photo intelligence will occur in due course.

As noted earlier, the IJA and IJN employed distinct intelligence operations and procedures. Having examined the former, the latter must now be addressed in similar fashion.

Imperial Japanese Naval Intelligence Organization July 1942-November 1943

The most immediate and significant difference between the IJN and the IJA was the focus of their efforts. While the IJA anticipated hostilities against the Soviet Union and prepared accordingly, the IJN prepared to fight the United States. Kotani recounts, "From 1909, the IJN intelligence apparatus targeted its information-gathering efforts on the United States. Yet the Intelligence Department remained in peacetime mode until the outbreak of the Pacific War, and the 5th Section of the 3rd Department in the Navy General Staff, which specialized in intelligence against the United States, consisted of

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[133] Ibid., 120-21. "Exhibit D: Special Report – Japanese Photographic Intelligence."
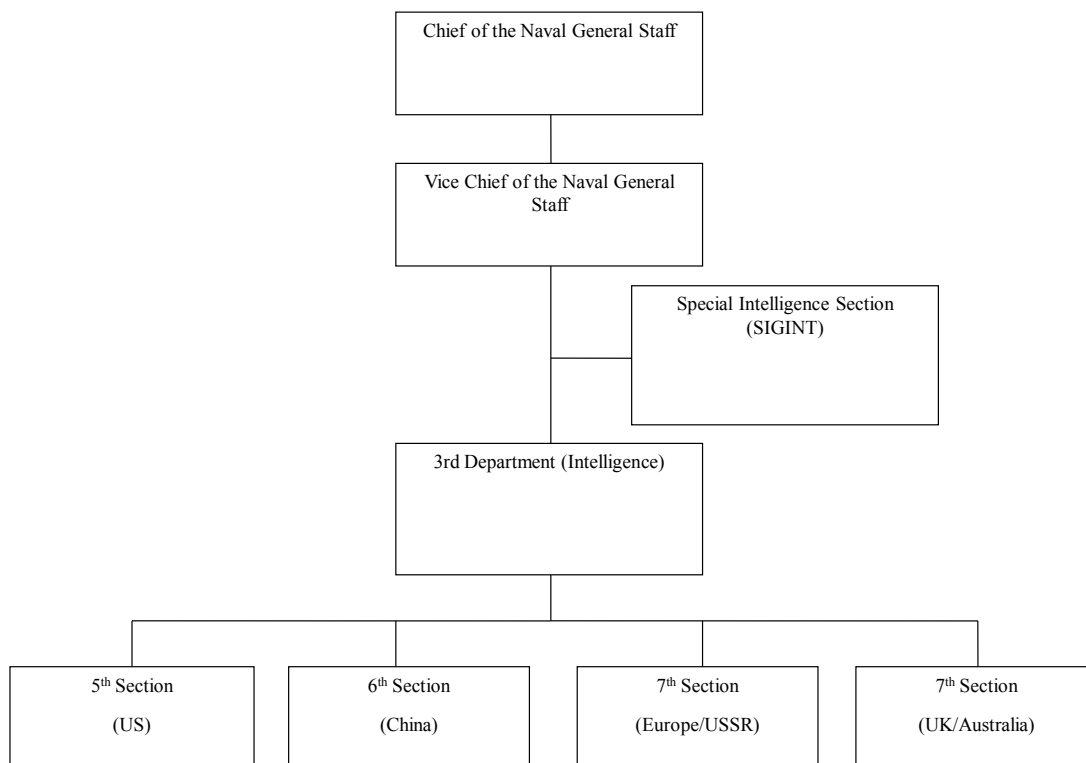
Figure 7: IJN General Staff Intelligence Organization.

fewer than ten staff until the attack on Pearl Harbor. The organization was far inferior to

the IJA intelligence apparatus against the Soviet Union."[134]

　　Intelligence duties on the Naval General Staff resided in the 3rd Department. The

3rd Department, Naval Intelligence, included the 5th Section covering the United States,

the 6th Section covering China and Manchuria, the 7th Section covering Russia and

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[134] Kotani, *Japanese Intelligence in World War II*, 69. Kotani does not specify the reasons for his assessment, but implies a vast manning difference in the intelligence branches of the two services. In addition, one must remember that the IJA and the Red Army had engaged in battles, such as at Lake Khasan and Nomonhan, in the late 1930s, providing the IJA real motivation to keep close tabs on the Red Army in the Far East.

continental Europe, and the 8th Section covering the British and their empire.[135]

Additionally, a Special Intelligence Section for signals intelligence rested outside the

normal departmental organization, directly under the Vice Chief of the General Staff, and

some cryptanalysis occurred in the 10th Section which fell under the auspices of the 4th

Department (Communications).[136]

The 5th Section broke down into further compartments for analyzing U.S.

military capacity and intentions. Rear Admiral Kaoru Takeuchi, IJN, Chief of the 5th

Section from July 1942 until the end of hostilities, described this organization and the

roles of each subsection. The 5th Section's assigned duties included: (1) an intelligence

and propaganda campaign against the U.S. and Latin America; (2) estimates of the

national affairs of the subject nations; and (3) plans for collecting information on the

subject nations.[137] The unit consisted of the admiral and his aide, with a commander or

lieutenant commander over each of the four subsections, two clerks, two civilians

temporaries, and 37 new naval officers who arrived in the summer of 1944.[138] Rear

Admiral Takeji Ono, IJN, head of the 3rd Department from early 1944 to spring 1945,

observed, "Generally speaking, the staff was badly undermanned at the beginning of the

war and was greatly increased toward the end."[139] Subsection responsibilities were as

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[135] USSBS Interrogations: No. 219: Captain Y. Arita, IJN; Subject: Japanese Naval Intelligence
Organization; Date: 2 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #8, 219-2.

[136] Ibid., 219-2. See also Kotani, *Japanese Intelligence in World War II*.

[137] USSBS Interrogations: No. 222, 222-2.

[138] Ibid.

[139] USSBS Interrogations: No. 246: Rear Admiral Takeji Ono, IJN; Subject: Japanese Naval Intelligence;
Date: 5 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #8, 246-4.
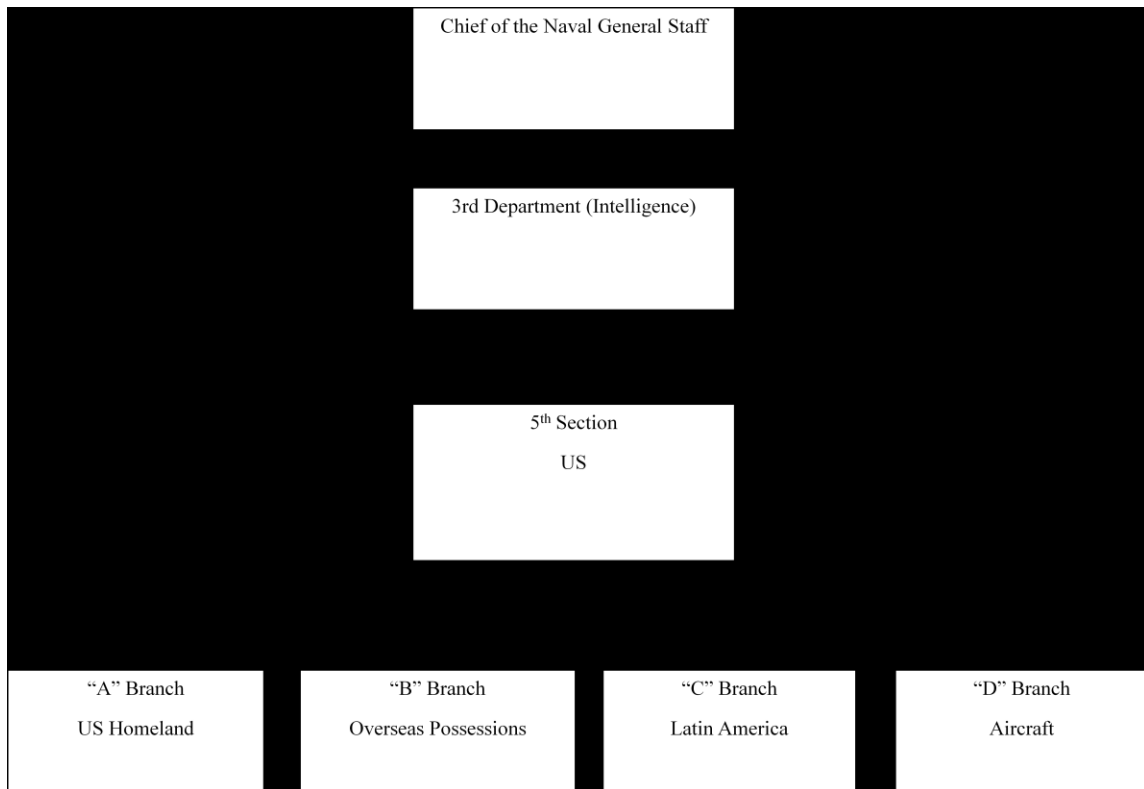
Figure 8: Organization of the 5th Section of the 3rd Department, IJN General Staff.

follows: "A" Section studied the U.S. Home Country and all aspects of American Life;

"B" Section covered overseas territories, Alaska, Hawaii, Guam; "C" Section analyzed

Latin America; and "D" Section under a naval engineer was devoted entirely to the study

of U.S. aircraft.[140] The U.S. fleet fell under the auspices of "A" Section when in home

port and "B" Section when at sea.[141]

As in the IJA, intelligence organizations below the general staff level steadily

diminished in influence and emphasis. The USSBS interrogation summary for

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[140] USSBS Interrogations: No. 222, 222-2.

[141] Ibid.

Commander Chikataka Nakajima, IJN, states the following concerning intelligence at the

Combined Naval Force (more commonly referred to as the Combined Fleet) level, just

below the Naval General Staff:

> The concept of intelligence at the Combined Naval Force, of (*sic*) fleet,
> headquarters level in the Japanese Navy was not a center through which
> intelligence matters flowed to higher and lower levels, but rather a center for
> estimating Allied strength and intentions as a basis for policy and operations
> orders issued by the Commander-in-Chief. Originally a one-man job, this section
> in the closing phases of the war had been augmented by eight other officers, most
> of whom had no training other than aviation administration….[142]

According to the transcript of his USSBS interrogation, Capt. Arita pointed out "that each

naval base and major fleet unit had a radio intelligence and sighting center, these being

the only intelligence units he knew of."[143] But the USSBS report on Japanese

intelligence states:

> The Intelligence Sections of the Naval General Staff and the Combined Naval
> Force constituted the entire intelligence organization, in the strict sense, in the
> Japanese Navy. Although most if not all of the various aspects of intelligence
> were recognized and intermittently performed in some manner in subordinate
> command (usually as a corollary or, more accurately, as a secondary duty)
> nothing even remotely resembling an intelligence organization existed below
> Combined Naval Force. No supervision was exercised over subordinate units nor
> was intelligence personnel selected for them.[144]

Rear Adimiral Ono's statements support this assertion: "The organization of the Japanese

Navy does not include intelligence officers on ships. The Captain performs these duties

himself. This included aircraft carriers. Headquarters Fleet, yes, they had Intelligence

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[142] USSBS Interrogations: No. 309: Commander Chikataka Nakajima, IJN; Subject: Fleet Intelligence
Organization and Procedure; Date: 10 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #8,
309-2.

[143] USSBS Interrogations: No. 219, 219-2.

[144] "Japanese Military and Naval Intelligence," 18.

officers. On Flag ships there is an Intelligence officer for the Flag."[145] Additionally, when questioned about the number of specialized intelligence officers at the Fleet level, Ono stated, "One to each Fleet, nine or ten, and this changed as the number of Fleets varied. In December 1941 there were five – one for each Fleet. In saying ten or eleven I include Naval stations. In December of 1941 there were five with Fleet Units and four with Naval stations. In August of 1945, there were nine."[146]

These specialized intelligence officers at the Fleet level did not operate independently on the staff. Commander Tonosuke Otani, IJN, a Staff Operations Officer for 2nd Fleet in 1943 and 1944 explained: "Each Fleet has an intelligence section attached to the Staff. As a rule, the Communications Officer doubles as Intelligence Officer. Under him there is generally on officer who is a Lt. or Lt. Cmdr. charged directly with intelligence. He has two or three assistants of the rank normally of Lt. (jg) or Ensign. Then there will be 16 or 17 petty officers included in the section. Squadrons under the Fleet do not ordinarily have their own intelligence section."[147] Otani characterized duties of Fleet intelligence as tactical in nature, while "all strategic information comes from higher echelons."[148] The USSBS report on IJN intelligence succinctly states, "At Fleet level (both surface and air) intelligence was additional duty assigned to the communications officer responsible only to the commanding officer of his

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[145] USSBS Interrogations: No. 246, 246-6.

[146] Ibid.

[147] USSBS Interrogations No. 437: Commander Tonosuke Otani, IJN; Subject: Operational Intelligence in the Second Fleet; Date: 24 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 437-3.

[148] Ibid.

fleet and this officer simply correlated available information for the immediate tactical use of his commander."[149]

The intelligence structure below the fleet level virtually evaporated, and as with the army, at these lower levels the IJN made intelligence an additional duty for officers assigned to other taskings. Otani, in addition to claiming there were no intelligence sections for the squadrons below the fleets also seconded Ono's assertion that individual ships did not generally have their own intelligence officers.[150] Intelligence at these levels was again associated with the communications officer, as confirmed by the testimony of Commander Nikichi Handa, IJN, who served as a Communications Staff Officer in both the 3rd Destroyer Squadron and the 5th Cruiser Squadron.[151] Handa described his intelligence duties thus, "Based on dispatches from the General Staff and the fleets and based on my own experience, I would estimate your [Allied] disposition, location, strength, speed and course. I did not prepare our action reports. This was done by the Senior Staff Officer."[152] These duties, he said, consumed ten percent of his time.[153] As noted previously by Ono, excepting Flagships which may have had an intelligence officer to accompany the flag, the captain performed intelligence duties on individual ship. One finds it difficult to imagine they could afford to spend much time to these duties.

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[149] "Japanese Military and Naval Intelligence," 18.

[150] USSBS Interrogations: No. 437, 437-4.

[151] USSBS Interrogations No. 433: Commander Nikichi Handa, IJN; Subject: Intelligence duties of a Communications Officer on Staff of Destroyer and Cruiser Squadrons; Date: 24 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 433-1.

[152] Ibid., 433-2.

[153] Ibid.

IJN SIGINT and Codebreaking

The IJN, like the IJA, had its own history with SIGINT efforts. In fact, according to Kotani, "The IJN began its development of SIGINT earlier than the IJA, during the Russo-Japanese War," when it used radio interception to track the movement of the Russian fleet.[154] The navy began systematic codebreaking efforts targeting the United States and Great Britain in 1929 and successfully intercepted and decoded numerous US diplomatic codes in the ensuing years.[155] In 1936, the IJN established a receiving station in Owada, Japan "specializing in communications interception, where the communications from the assistant for American military attachés in Peking to Washington, D.C., were intercepted and decrypted when the Marco Polo Bridge incident…occurred on July 7-9, 1937."[156] The IJN went on to reorganize its efforts in December 1940, pulling the SIGINT section on the General Staff outside control of the normal departments, placing it under direct control of the Navy Chief of Staff (as depicted in Figure 7).[157] The focus of SIGINT operations, however, remained the acquisition of tactical intelligence materials.[158]

The IJN did garner some important successes in its efforts, but also endured some limitations. The IJN went on to break the U.S. diplomatic Brown Code in 1938, but, unlike the IJA, it could not break the U.S. Strip Ciphers. Furthermore, the IJA did not

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[154] Kotani, *Japanese Intelligence in World War II*, 69.

[155] Ibid., 69-70.

[156] Ibid., 72.

[157] Ibid., 73.

[158] Ibid., 74.

share its deciphering knowledge with the IJN. To assist with breaking these ciphers during the Pacific War, therefore, the navy established a Special Research Section (SRS) in the Navy General Staff, but the section never succeeded. Amazingly, the navy did not realize that the IJA had already broken the ciphers until 1945.[159] The USSBS summary of the interrogation of Commander Hideo Ozawa, IJN, who served on the codebreaking operation of the Naval General Staff and later as an executive officer of the General Affairs section within the Special Intelligence Section, stated, "The Special Section analyzed ship call signs, volume of communications traffic, routing of traffic, and RDF [Radio Direction Finding], and had limited success in predicting Allied operations by this means."[160] The same summary continued, "The only information useful to the Special Section received from the Germans was the BAMS (Broadcasting Allied Movement Ships) basic code. Use of this code permitted the Japanese to break shore-to-ship transmissions to merchant ships, and estimate volume of movement of ship traffic. It did not permit tracking, however, nor did it provide information on the location of ships."[161] Japanese naval intercept stations also "intercepted the communications from the flagships of the US Asian Fleet and Pacific Fleet to Washington, D.C., and the radio transmissions between Honolulu, San Francisco, and the US capital."[162]

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[159] Ibid., 72.

[160] USSBS Interrogations: No. 208: Commander Hideo Ozawa, IJN; Subject: Japanese Communications Intelligence; Date: 2 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #8, 208-2.

[161] Ibid., 208-2.

[162] Kotani, *Japanese Intelligence in World War II*, 72.

IJN Communications Security

The Imperial Japanese Navy's failings at communication security preceding the battles of Coral Sea and Midway are well known and materially contributed to the Allies' ability to counteract those Japanese thrusts at further expansion. This resulted, in part, from Japanese overconfidence and complacency as Kotani notes: "The IJN's conceit that 'our codes cannot be broken' severely limited counter-intelligence activities. The Navy had little interest in SIGINT and HUMINT, which resulted in the shortage of funding and personnel for IJN intelligence activities. The number of staff in IJN intelligence work against the United States did not exceed ten until the war started, even though the IJN had regarded the United States as the probable future enemy. The lack of security investment caused not only the loss of secrets, but also poor information exchange with the IJA, which was relatively keen on security."[163]

This lack of emphasis at times cost the IJN dearly, as noted above, but it also served to compromise aspects of the IJA. Drea notes U.S. Navy successes when he writes, "In short, by the time of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the American navy had a cryptanalytic infrastructure with extensive practical experience against Japanese diplomatic and naval codes with perhaps forty officers capable of reading Japanese. This groundwork allowed U.S. Navy codebreakers during the opening months of the Pacific War to far outpace their army counterparts. For instance, navy cryptanalysts first penetrated JN-25 in September 1940, nearly three years earlier than the U.S. Army's

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[163] Ibid., 90.

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initial break into Japanese army ciphers."[164] Drea later reveals, "Because Japanese naval

communications often concerned joint operations undertaken with the army, U.S. Navy

intercept operators grew familiar with specific Japanese army call signs."[165] U.S.

intercepts also enabled the interception and destruction of Japanese Admiral Isoruku

Yamamoto's plane in the Solomon Islands in April 1943, resulting in the death of one of

the masterminds of Pearl Harbor and dealing the IJN a telling psychological blow.[166] The

Japanese briefly entertained the possibility that their codes were compromised, but

ultimately decided on an alternate explanation. Admiral Matome Ugaki, nearly killed on

the same mission with Yamamoto, attributed the interception to chance, but the Japanese

placed the final blame on a lower level army commander who had presumably

transmitted information about Yamamoto's itinerary in a "minor, insecure code."[167]

Winston Groom notes the cumulative effects of lax Japanese naval security as the war

progressed, writing, "Importantly, all these Japanese ships generated a huge amount of

radio chatter and American radio-intercept stations from Australia to the Aleutians, from

Midway Island to Hawaii, plucked thousands of signals out of the air and quickly began

to piece together the missing parts of the top-secret Japanese naval code puzzle."[168]

Groom goes on to elaborate, "It will be remembered that at the time of Pearl Harbor

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[164] Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War against Japan, 1942-1945*, 13.

[165] Ibid., 37.

[166] Edwin P. Hoyt, *Carrier Wars: Naval Aviation from World War II to the Persian Gulf* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989), 118.

[167] Ugaki et al., *Fading Victory: The Diary of Admiral Matome Ugaki, 1941-1945*, 359-60. Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War against Japan, 1942-1945*, 73.

[168] Winston Groom, *1942: The Year That Tried Men's Souls*, 1st ed. (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2005), 197.

Lieutenant Commander Rochefort and his team of cryptologists back in Honolulu could

read less than 10 percent of the Japanese code; a week after Doolittle's raid they were

reading nearly half of it, and by June they were reading almost all of it."[169] David Kahn

succinctly, if off-handedly, states of the Japanese in his masterful work *The*

Codebreakers: The Story of Secret Writing, "Their communications security was as bad

as their communications intelligence. Sometimes it seemed as if they didn't care."[170]

Open Source Intelligence

Open source intelligence served some of the IJN's needs just as it had with the

IJA. Captain Y. Sanematsu, IJN, chief of the "D" Section of the 5th Department on the

Naval General Staff, was asked where his section got its best information and stated:

> Your radio broadcasts. These were analyzed by us and after some experience we
> could distinguish between fact, propaganda and attempts to mislead us. Other
> Departments listened to the broadcasts, transcribed them and sent them to my
> section which analyzed them.
>   Newspapers and publications were very helpful. We got few of them
> physically, but they were analyzed by our men in neutral countries and the gist of
> them sent by radio to us.[171]

Commander Nobuhiko Imai, IJN, also a veteran of the 5th Section, seconded Sanematsu's

assertion when asked about the "best source of information for Naval Intelligence":

> Actually, radio news reports from all over the world, as we tabulated them, were
> the best sources we had. For example, we would hear of a conference between
> MacArthur and Nimitz in San Francisco, which would mean something important

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[169] Ibid., 197-98.

[170] David Kahn, *The Codebreakers: The Story of Secret Writing* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 590.

[171] USSBS Interrogations: No. 421: Captain Y. Sanematsu, IJN; Subject: Intelligence Activities of "D" Department, 5th Section Naval General Staff; Date: 22 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 421-2.

was coming up. Then we would hear of a conference in Pearl Harbor of frontline commanders, and we would try to estimate the direction of the next move. [172]

Rear Admiral Ono also agreed, citing domestic radio broadcasts as a key source of information for Japan as well as information forwarded from naval attachés stationed abroad.[173] Tellingly, they seem to have few sources or agents reading U.S. newspapers. Immediately following the battle at Midway, the *Chicago Tribune* published an article claiming the U.S. Navy had foreknowledge of the Japanese plan to invade Midway and was therefore able to parry the thrust. The revelation caused much consternation in U.S. naval intelligence circles, but the Japanese seem to never have noticed or drawn the corresponding conclusions.[174]

IJN Human Intelligence/Prisoner of War Interrogation

Like its army counterparts, the IJN tried to leverage its naval attachés and use prisoners of war to gather HUMINT on the United States and its allies. The attachés also used OSINT, as noted above, to formulate their reports but were hesitant to trust spies. Rear Admiral Ichiro Yokoyama, IJN, served as a naval attaché in Washington, D.C. in the lead up to war and stated, "You can employ spies and various other means, but one of our primary worries was that spies would turn counter-spy and be picked up by counter-intelligence. America being what it is with freedom of the press, etc., a great deal of material comes out in magazines and newspapers. By this method, we picked up much

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[172] USSBS Interrogations: No. 236, 236-5.

[173] USSBS Interrogations: No. 246, 246-7.

[174] Kahn, *The Codebreakers: The Story of Secret Writing*, 603-04.

information. Accordingly, that is where I laid my primary stress."[175] Mr. E. Sone, a

member of the Japanese Foreign Office, confirmed intelligence activities of naval

attachés in Spain and Portugal, and alluded to gathering information from other locations

such as Sweden and Switzerland.[176] Other naval attaché offices employed in intelligence

operations against the United States included Mexico, Argentina, and Berlin.[177] The

USSBS summary of Commander Imai's interrogation states, "Military and Naval

Attaches, although a prelific (*sic*) source up to 1941, diminished in usefulness as the war

progressed, and after the break with Argentina this source virtually vanished."[178]

In contrast, the Japanese navy did not value HUMINT from prisoners of war.

Both Rear Admirals Ono and Takeuchi stated they judged prisoners of war as being of

only limited utility for intelligence purposes.[179] Yet the USSBS report on Japanese

intelligence states of POW interrogations, "This source, although discounted by all of the

Japanese interrogated, contributed valuable information, as evidenced by the few

Japanese documents recovered in which these interrogations were published as well as by

the fact that certain data about U. S. forces, known to the Japanese, can be traced to no

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[175] USSBS Interrogations: No. 455: Rear Admiral Ichiro Yokoyama, IJN; Subject: Activities of Naval Attache Staff, Washington, Before Pearl Harbor Attack; Date: 27 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #7, 455-3.

[176] USSBS Interrogations: No. 442: Mr. E. Sone; Subject: Activities Information Available to the Navy; Date: 22 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #6, 442-3 – 442-4.

[177] USSBS Interrogations: No. 422: Captain Shigehiro, IJN, for information on Argentina; No. 423: Captain Wachi, IJN, for information on Mexico; and No. 411: Captain Suzuki, IJN, for information on Berlin.

[178] USSBS Interrogations: No. 236, 236-1.

[179] USSBS Interrogations: No. 246, 246-9. Interrogation No. 222, 222-8.

other source."[180] In fact, the Japanese navy often executed captured Americans after their initial interrogation. This happened to several U.S. aircrew members plucked from the ocean by Japanese destroyers during the battle of Midway.[181]

Frontline Intelligence and Captured Materials

The IJN also used reports from the frontline units to bolster its intelligence estimates. Captain Toshikazu Ohmae, IJN, had operational fleet experience and in January 1945 took over as Chief of the 1st Section, 1st Department (War Plans) of the Naval General Staff. Ohmae was asked about his sources for estimating U.S. capabilities and intentions to which he replied, "Information from the operating forces comes directly here to the planning section. The 5th Section, of course, also receives this. The 5th section collects all information, checks it, makes their evaluation, throws out information which is unreliable."[182] Allied order of battle estimations often depended on information from units at the front, as Commander Imai explained:

> The Order of Battle was estimated from information obtained from our island forces and front line units. We would make plots and graphs and then estimate. When air raids came from carriers, we would tabulate, target, type of plane, length of attack, and could deduce the strength of the carrier fleet involved in the attack. I based my estimates on a long background of experience. In the field, there might not be people with the necessary background for such an estimation, but I could use reports from the field for this purpose.[183]

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[180] "Japanese Military and Naval Intelligence," 21-22.

[181] Parshall and Tully, *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*, 288, 319-20.

[182] USSBS Interrogations: No. 350: Captain Toshikazu Ohmae, IJN; Subject: The Contribution of Naval Intelligence to War Planning; Date: 11 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #8, 350-2.

[183] USSBS Interrogations: No. 236, 236-5.

In a twist that reflects upon the IJN's attitude towards its intelligence department, and in slight contrast to Captain Ohmae's statement above, the USSBS report on Japanese intelligence says the following concerning reports from the fleet, "*Combat information from fleet* (surface and air) units and reconnaissance reports (aircraft, surface, submarine) passed by chain of command to the War Plans Department and were only infrequently routed to the 3rd Department."[184] Thus the war planners of the 1st Department often superseded the intelligence experts and analyzed information without the assistance of the 3rd Department.

Captured materials also played a role in the IJN's intelligence processes. According to the USSBS intelligence report, captured documents, although limited in number, were sent directly to the 3rd Department and were generally considered the most accurate sources of information. Rear Admiral Takeuchi's statement formed the basis of the USSBS report's assertion. Takeuchi said of his intelligence sources, "The most valuable were seized documents. Unfortunately, not many of these were seized, however," but such documents did come from variety of sources including "leaflets, documents in destroyed or submerged vessels, including some from Europe."[185] Rear Admiral Ono agreed, stating, "most reliable were captured documents."[186] Commander Ozawa stated the Japanese captured US strip codes from either Wake or Guam early in the war, and some aircraft codes from Kiska later, but they were unable to put the

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[184] "Japanese Military and Naval Intelligence," 22.

[185] USSBS Interrogations: No. 222, 222-5.

[186] Ibid. Interrogation No. 246, 246-7.

information to effective operational use.[187] As Japan transitioned to a defensive posture

later in the war, the opportunities for gathering captured material dwindled.

Aerial Reconnaissance and Photo Intelligence

The USSBS report on Japanese intelligence states, "Photo intelligence and flak

intelligence were not considered functions of the 3rd Department and no direction

whatsoever was exercised over such sporadic developments as were carried out in

operational units. In turn, the 3rd Department did not receive information developed on

these subjects except intermittently through contact with war plans."[188] Yet, as this

statement implies, lower level operational units were undertaking photo reconnaissance

missions. The report goes on to say at the Combined Fleet level, "Aerial reconnaissance

was nevertheless his [Combined Naval Force Intelligence Officer] best source in making

enemy movement estimates, in which the emphasis was on the immediate tactical

situation. Photographs rarely reached Combined Naval Force, but information derived

from them, when an interpretation was made at a subordinate unit, was received by

dispatch."[189] Rear Admiral Ono stated the IJN General Staff did not rely much on photo

intelligence because "the quality of cameras and the number of aircraft assigned to this

work was insufficient."[190] When queried about photo intelligence, Rear Admiral

Takeuchi revealed his 5th Section, 3rd Department of the Naval General Staff had

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[187] Ibid. Interrogation No. 208, 208-4.

[188] "Japanese Military and Naval Intelligence," 21.

[189] Ibid.

[190] USSBS Interrogations: No. 246, 246-10.

"nothing to do with this," that no independent photo intelligence units existed "but each air unit had its own photo reconnaissance reports," yet "photos were passed on to my section, and by studying photos, some information was gained."[191] Captain Ohmae revealed some of the photo intelligence operations conducted at Rabaul when he told his USSBS interrogators:

> In September of 1943 three photographic interpreters were sent to RABAUL. At that time we could take photographs occasionally of GUADALCANAL, NEW GEORGIA, and BUNA. Later we lost all of our good photographers and the photographic work became very inadequate. It became increasingly difficult to get any pictures at all. The pictures we did get were not given to pilots. They were used for planning. Gun positions and general information was (*sic*) marked on charts for the operational fighting and bombing squadrons, and they were instructed in communications procedures.[192]

Clearly, the Japanese valued the photos they received, but never prioritized photo intelligence.

IJN Intelligence Personnel Selection and Training

Like their IJA counterparts, Japanese naval officers perceived the intelligence career field as a backwater. But to a greater degree than the army, the navy did try to place officers with beneficial backgrounds into their intelligence billets. Rear Admiral Ono stated they selected men for the 3rd Department of the General Staff based on foreign language proficiency, but he said he and his men had no experience as foreign attachés.[193]

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[191] USSBS Interrogations: No. 222, 222-8.

[192] USSBS Interrogations: No. 350, 350-4.

[193] USSBS Interrogations: No. 246, 246-4.

The summary of the USSBS interrogation of Captain Taisuke Ito, IJN, who worked in the

Personnel Division of the Naval Ministry for the last year of the war, states:

> The Division of Personnel in the Naval Ministry usually assigned intelligence
> personnel on the basis of qualifications of: (1) foreign travel, (2) knowledge of
> foreign languages, (3) personal interest in such work. Often times intelligence
> officers would be men of rather delicate health. In choosing the intelligence
> officers for the Naval General Staff, sharpness of mind was emphasized and it
> was preferred that he be a graduate of the Naval General College. Aptitude in
> intelligence work was considered in selecting communications officers for lower
> commands such as small fleets, air groups and flotillas.[194]

Yet the number of personnel they assigned was woefully miniscule:

> At the outbreak of the war with the U. S., there were 29 officers in the entire 3rd
> Department of the Naval General Staff and one in the Combined Naval Force. By
> spring of 1945, the total of officers had been increased to 97, of whom 42 were
> assigned to the 5th Section (American intelligence) of the Central intelligence
> department, and 4 to the Combined Naval Force. The increase was made possible
> by the surplus of naval officers, resulting from the decrease in the number of fleet
> units afloat. It occurred too late to be of benefit, however. The department was
> seriously undermanned throughout the war period, was barely able to perform the
> minimum functions assigned to it, and could take on none of the other functions
> of which it had cognizance and which are considered basic intelligence duties.[195]

This self-induced manning shortage stemmed in part from the Japanese proclivity to

undervalue intelligence.

Naval intelligence personnel received little to no specialized training. Captain

Arita stated he knew of no intelligence schools in the Japanese navy other than some

communications intelligence training in the communications school.[196] Rear Admiral

Takeuchi confirmed "there were no special intelligence training schools to prepare

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[194] USSBS Interrogations: No. 432: Captain Taisuke Ito, IJN; Subject: Selection and Assignment of
Intelligence Personnel; Date: 24 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 432-1.

[195] "Japanese Military and Naval Intelligence," 18-20.

[196] USSBS Interrogations: No. 219, 219-3.

officers for the work of this section [5th Section] , such training as there was being done within the Section itself, and there were no special intelligence courses at the Naval Academy," an assessment with which Rear Admiral Ono concurred.[197] Captain Ito stated intelligence instruction at the Naval Academy consisted of "a statement of the general nature of intelligence and some use to which it might be put, but nothing beyond this."[198]

Intelligence in the Japanese Naval Air Force (JNAF)

The Japanese Naval Air Force, like the JAAF, had some of its own unique intelligence practices. The command structure for the JNAF also approximated that of the JAAF. The Navy Minister was subordinate to the Emperor and in a lateral position relative to the Navy Chief of the General Staff, with the Naval Air Headquarters (*Koku Hombu*) placed under the control of the Navy Ministry but the operational Air Fleets (*Koku Kantei*), Air Flotillas (*Koku Sentai*), Air Groups (*Kokutai*), and Squadrons (*Hikotai*) under the direction of the Combined Naval Forces subordinate to the Naval General Staff.[199] As noted earlier, "D" Branch of the 5th Section, 3rd Department of the Naval General Staff was dedicated to the study of American aircraft. The Naval Air Headquarters also had its own branch for technical intelligence. Rear Admiral Ono summed this up stating, "There was no independent Naval Aeronautical Department dealing with intelligence, but a group which sifted information of a technical nature. One

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[197] USSBS Interrogations: No. 222, 222-2. Interrogation No. 246, 246-4.

[198] USSBS Interrogations: No. 432, 432-3.

[199] "Japanese Military and Naval Intelligence," 23. As depicted in CHART X of this USSBS report.

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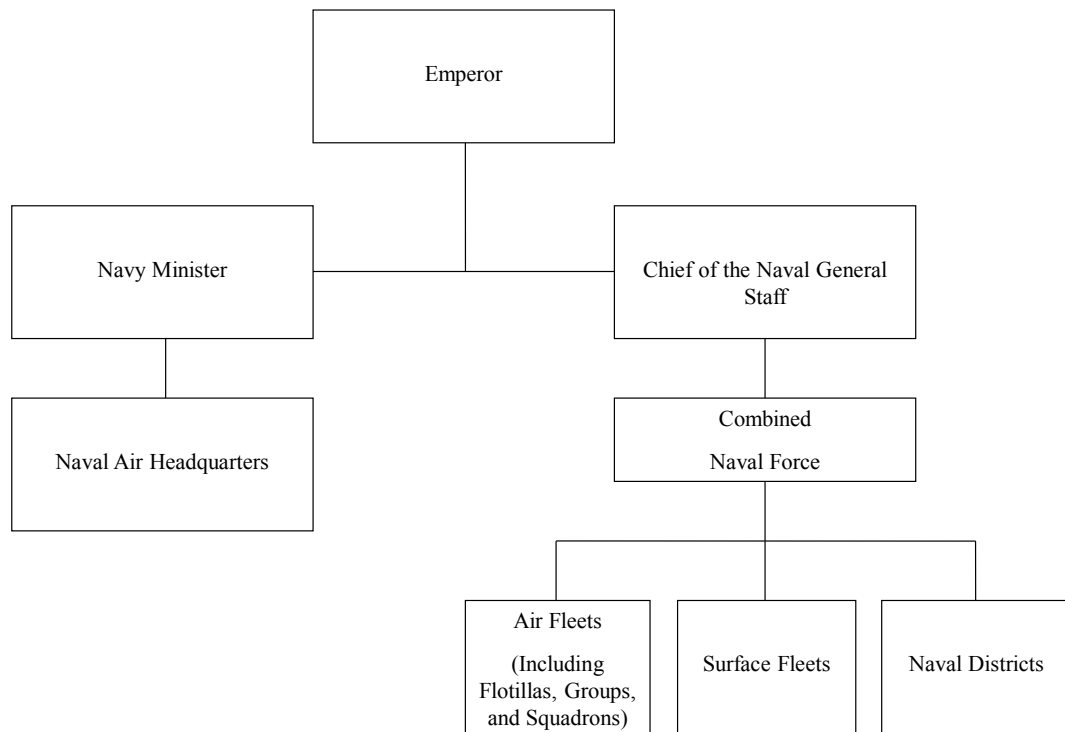
Figure 9: JNAF Air Headquarters and Operational Unit Organization.

officer did this. Most of the work was handled by Naval General Staff (Naval Air Corps

Intelligence). The 3rd Department was responsible for intelligence of a general nature for

the Naval Aeronautical organization, and they handled their own technical

intelligence."[200]

From 1943 to 1945 Commander Sashizo Yokura, IJN, served as the Air

Intelligence Officer in the 5th Section, 3rd Department, representing the one man show

described by Ono above. He stated his duties included examination of U.S. and British

[200] USSBS Interrogations: No. 246, 246-5.

aircraft, and he focused the majority of his efforts on the former.[201] Yokura listed radio

and written reports from the field, information from the 3rd Department, studies of U.S.

strikes, prisoner reports, captured aircraft and documents, and information from attachés

as some of his primary sources for evaluation, but he lamented a lack of information from

photo and aerial reconnaissance.[202] He also said there was a time lag in Japanese

evaluation of U.S. aircraft so that it was not until the end of the war that the IJN had a

better understanding of the 1943 performance of U.S. planes.[203] Commander N. Takita,

IJN, served in the same capacity as Yokura beginning in June 1945 and confirmed many

of the sources claimed by his predecessor, but Takita stressed intercepts of short-wave

radio from San Francisco as a particularly valuable source for tracking U.S. air units late

in the war.[204]

When queried by USSBS interrogators about whether he studied the technical

features and performance of enemy planes, Takita replied, "KOKU HUMBU and

YOKOSUKA technical group were responsible for such information. We got nothing

from them."[205] Lieutenant Takogo Toyoda, IJN, served in the Airframes subdivision of

the Yokosuka First Technical Air Arsenal under the control of the *Koku Hombu* from

1943 until the end of the war. The summary of his USSBS interrogation reveals:

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[201] USSBS Interrogations: No. 250: Commander Sashizo Yokura, IJN; Subject: Japanese Naval
Intelligence; Date: 5 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #8, 250-2.

[202] Ibid.

[203] Ibid., 250-3.

[204] USSBS Interrogations: No. 374: Commander N. Takita, IJN; Subject: Procedure and functions of
Aviation Unit of Section Five, Naval General Staff, 3d Department; Date: 17 November 1945, Tokyo;
Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 374-2 – 374-3.

[205] Ibid., 374-3.

The 1st Section of the 2d Department of KOKU HOMBU (Air Headquarters) was organized into technical subdivisions concerned with every phase of aircraft development and research. During the course of the War it studied a crashed F4F, F4U, SB2C, TBF, TBM-1C, and PB4Y-1 and testflew a captured F6F, P-40E, and A-20A. The comparable section in the Army testflew a captured F2A, Hurricane, PBO, B-17D, B-17E, and PBM. On the basis of such studies and flights, detailed information was compiled concerning the performance of enemy planes.[206]

It was indeed unfortunate for the Japanese that this valuable source of technical intelligence on Allied aircraft, as Takita stated, failed to share much of its information with the intelligence department of the Naval General Staff.

In subordinate units below the Fleet Headquarters and Air Headquarters, intelligence functions lost their independent structure, often being an additional duty for an officer assigned to another main task. The USSBS report on Japanese intelligence states, "In air units of the fleet below Fleet Headquarters, combat intelligence duties were secondary and usually haphazard, depending on the importance attached thereto by the commanding officer."[207] The summary of the USSBS interrogation of Commander Y. Terai, IJN, reveals:

> Intelligence officers as such were assigned only to large commands and headquarters. On individual ships and in Air Groups and squadrons, the communications officer handled many of the functions which we think of as duties of the intelligence officer.
>   Briefing of pilots on carriers was done by several different officers: the aerologist, the air officer of the ship (who had been given most of his "dope" by the communications officer), and the Commanding Officer (of the ship) himself. Interrogation of pilots was handled by having each pilot report to the senior man of his flight and so on up the line until the senior man in the air would report to the air officer and the Commanding Officer.[208]

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[206] USSBS Interrogations: No. 384: Lieutenant Takogo Toyoda, IJN; Subject: Organization and Operation of First Naval Air Technical Arsenal; Date: 19 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 384-1.

[207] "Japanese Military and Naval Intelligence," 22.

[208] USSBS Interrogations: No. 291, 291-2.

The interrogation of Commander Masatake Okumiya, IJN, a veteran of the Rabaul and Solomons campaign, showed that often "The interrogation [of pilots] was informal, taking place on the flight deck and conducted by the air officer often with the help of the Captain and one of the Staff Officers. In addition the senior pilot of a flight filed a report on the mission using a standard form for this purpose."[209] In September 1943, the IJN air arm instituted the *Yomushi* program "to train reserve officers to become ground officers with air groups and squadrons, personnel officers, athletic instructors, classification officers at flight schools, and liaison officers at aircraft factories."[210] The *Yomushi* officers "assigned to air groups and squadrons but not to carriers were the closest thing the Japanese Navy had to intelligence officers in the lower echelons," but "in no sense, however, did they focus solely on intelligence duties…."[211] One finds it astonishing that the Japanese Naval Air Force put intelligence officers on the same level as athletic instructors—a rather damning indictment of their view of the value of intelligence in war.

JNAF Aerial Reconnaissance and Photo Intelligence

Although IJN's use of aerial reconnaissance and photo intelligence has already been briefly discussed, some specific aspects of the JNAF's approach to these roles and missions require closer examination. In contrast to the U.S., the JNAF, even late in the

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[209] USSBS Interrogation No. 329: Commander Masatake Okumiya, IJN; Subject: Combat Intelligence for Air Operations – Briefing and Interrogation Procedure; Date: 12 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #8, 329-1.

[210] USSBS Interrogations: No. 605: Lieutenant Commander Masuo Yanagita, IJN; Subject: Training and Duties of YOMUSHI; Date: 28 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #7, 605-1.

[211] Ibid., 605-1.

war, did not operate special photographic reconnaissance squadrons. Commander

Yokura stated, "I realized fully the lack of system in reconnaissance. I heard that the

U.S. had special reconnaissance squadrons and thought it was a good idea. We could not

put this into practice because of shortage of planes. I made some recommendations, but

no attention was paid to them."[212] As we have seen already, Rear Admiral Ono lamented

the poor quality cameras available to the Japanese and Rear Admiral Takeuchi confirmed

responsibility for aerial reconnaissance and photography fell to each individual squadron.

Later in the war, the IJN did deploy the capable *Saiun,* or "Myrt", as a specially equipped

photographic aircraft that flew at 30,000 feet and operated in eight aircraft units (not

squadrons) spread amongst three carriers.[213]

Like the IJA, IJN training of photographic interpreters (PI) was very limited. The

USSBS report on intelligence states:

> Out of the first Navy PI class (which finished in late 1942) 5 or 6 officers went to
> Rabaul, 3 stayed at Yokosuka to teach, and the rest went to operational air groups.
> The entire second class of 20–25 members was sent to Tateyama Air Group.
> Although the third and final class of 30 members finished early in 1944, because
> there were few photos available at the time, the whole group was assigned other
> duties. Thus the entire PI officer complement of the Navy consisted of from 33 to
> 38 men.[214]

A limited number of pilots also received some special training for photographic

reconnaissance. Commander Yamaguchi stated photographic pilots received 30 hours of

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[212] USSBS Interrogations: No. 250, 250-3.

[213] USSBS Interrogations: No. 365: Commander Moriyoshi Yamaguchi, IJN; Subject: Briefing and
Interrogation of Navy Pilots and Photographic Reconnaissance; Date: 16 November 1945, Tokyo;
Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 365-5 – 365-6.

[214] "Japanese Military and Naval Intelligence," 119-20.

additional training ashore and once they became carrier based.[215] Captain Ohmae stated

the following of a Japanese scouting unit used for photographic intelligence at Rabaul:

> At RABAUL we had one scouting unit, 12 planes by organization. Usually we
> had six planes for operations, but on any one day often only three could be used.
> The Japanese aviators did not want to be members of scouting units. One
> scouting unit came to RABAUL. They had no hope of getting back to Japan, and
> every member died in RABAUL. The reason is there were only one or two
> scouting units in Japan, and therefore replacements were not available.[216]

Ohmae went on to say that the aviators used on these missions received six months of

special training at Yokosuka Naval Air Station.[217]

Conclusions

The Japanese entered and fought the Pacific War with a disjointed intelligence

system. Preceding the war and continuing well into 1943, the IJA and the IJN had

decidedly different focuses, with the former targeting the Soviet Union and the latter

targeting the U.S. and its allies. The hostility between these two services is also well

known to historians. Kotani states:

> In addition, there was no communication between the Army and Navy
> Intelligence Departments, though they were in similar roles. For that reason,
> although the codebreaking section of the IJA succeeded in breaking the Strip
> Ciphers, they did not share the method of deciphering with the IJN. Moreover, it
> is said that the Army General Staff were angry when the Army codebreaking
> section provided the method of breaking the US mechanical codes to the NID
> [Naval Intelligence]. The story shows the serious sectionalism between the Army
> and Navy. Under these circumstances, it was difficult for the Intelligence

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[215] USSBS Interrogations: No. 365, 365-6.

[216] USSBS Interrogations: No. 350, 350-4.

[217] Ibid., 350-4.

Departments of the Army and Navy to cooperate with each other in their intelligence activities.[218]

Such divisions could not help but impair Japanese intelligence activities, hampering Japanese leaders' ability to garner a more integrated and comprehensive intelligence picture of Allied intentions and capabilities.

Neither service emphasized the value of strategic intelligence to any great degree nor did the officers in both generally regard the intelligence mission as an important or a desirable duty. Both organizations provided only superficial additional training in intelligence to the officers assigned to such duties. The USSBS Japanese intelligence report concludes:

> Certain characteristics of the Japanese military mentality tended to nullify the work of intelligence. Corrupted by their own propaganda, military planners, in line with reiterated statements of divinely bestowed Japanese invincibility, overemphasized the importance of the attack at the expense of the preparatory steps necessary for its most effective execution. Being embroiled in internal political administration, suppressing information and bending it to serve political ends became second nature to Japanese militarists, and they became blind to objective intelligence.[219]

Nevertheless, this was the intelligence structure Japan employed throughout the critical phase in which combat raged in the Solomon Islands and on New Guinea from late 1942 until late 1943 and beyond. Despite these fractures in their organization that are visible in hindsight, Japanese intelligence performance should not be prejudged as an abject failure. After all, this same organization played an important supporting role in the rapid initial Japanese conquests throughout the Pacific. They did not have to be perfect, but they did need to be effective.

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[218] Kotani, *Japanese Intelligence in World War II*, 108.

[219] "Japanese Military and Naval Intelligence," 3.

Thus, Japan's intelligence performance in the south Pacific is a critical component for analysis in determining the shifts in strategic initiative during this phase in the war. Armed with the knowledge of the basic components and practices of their system one can better examine their operational successes, missteps, and their strategic judgments as the war progressed in these two important campaigns.

Chapter 5: United States' Intelligence Organization in the Pacific During World War II

Just as the national command structures demonstrated decided differences between the belligerents, the intelligence apparatuses they employed also manifested distinct characteristics. The U.S. Army and the U.S. Navy each ran its own independent intelligence network, much like their Japanese counterparts. Like their Japanese counterparts, each service also had a different focus, with the U.S. Army favoring the European Theater while the U.S. Navy favored the Pacific. However, the Allies made a deliberate effort to synthesize intelligence among and between the Allied nations and the armed services. Cooperation occurred both at the international and national levels with the Combined Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington, D.C., as well as in field commands such as the Southwest and South Pacific Areas. Efforts at cooperation, however, did not always guarantee superior results. Squabbles and disagreements existed between allies, armed services, and even within services branches. Nevertheless, while not flawless, Allied and American efforts stand in stark contrast to those of Japan and often yielded far superior results, which contributed to their successes on the battlefield and positively influenced both the progress of campaigns and the possession of strategic initiative.

U.S. Army Intelligence Organization July 1942-November 1943

The U.S. War Department stressed the importance of intelligence in its publications and field manuals. In October 1942, the department divided "military intelligence" into two categories: "War Department intelligence" and "combat intelligence." The General Staff produced the former, which consisted of "studies of possible theaters of operation and of the armed forces, resources, and political and economic conditions in all countries."[1] Combat intelligence represented intelligence produced in the field once hostilities commenced and included information based on local conditions such as enemy force movements, tactics, weaponry, morale, discipline, and terrain and weather.[2] The U.S. Army, therefore, endeavored to create the structures necessary to meet the challenges of both facets that comprised "military intelligence."

The War Department reorganized on March 9, 1942 in accordance with President Roosevelt's Executive Order No. 9028.[3] This restructuring created four organizations beneath the War Department: the General Staff; the Army Air Forces; the Army Ground Forces; and the Services of Supply (renamed Army Service Forces a year later).[4] The internal organization of the General Staff remained intact with the now familiar five sections: G-1 (Personnel); G-2 (Intelligence); G-3 (Organization and Training); G-4

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[1] "FM 7-25 Infantry Field Manual: Headquarters Company, Intelligence and Signal Communication, Rifle Regiment October 7, 1942," ed. War Department (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1942), 9.

[2] Ibid.

[3] John D. Millett, "The War Department in World War II," *The American Political Science Review* 40, no. 5 (1946): 867.

[4] Ibid.

(Supply); and the War Plans division.[5] The Military Intelligence Division (MID) served within the G-2 section. In March 1942, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson created the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) as the operating arm of the MID and placed a Special Branch for signals intelligence under the MIS's purview.[6] The Signal Intelligence Service (SIS) represented another organization deeply involved in army communications and signals intelligence, but this organization did not reside within the General Staff hierarchy. During the interwar period, the U.S. Army created the SIS under the direction of the Signal Corps to better consolidate army cryptological functions.[7] These organizations led the way in "War Department intelligence" at the national level (See Figure 10).

The U.S. Army also created an intelligence web in the subordinate echelons of command. Section 22 of "FM 7-25 Infantry Field Manual: Headquarters Company, Intelligence and Signal Communication, Rifle Regiment" dated October 7, 1942 covers "Information Sources and Collecting Agencies." This section delineated intelligence responsibilities for army units from the company up through division level and into higher echelons.

Collection responsibilities started at the company level. The company commander, assisted by his subordinates and his platoons "studies terrain and observes

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[5] Ibid.: 875.

[6] James L. Gilbert and John P. Finnegan, ed. *U.S. Army Signals Intelligence in World War II: A Documentary History* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army,1993), 3-4.

[7] Ibid., 3.
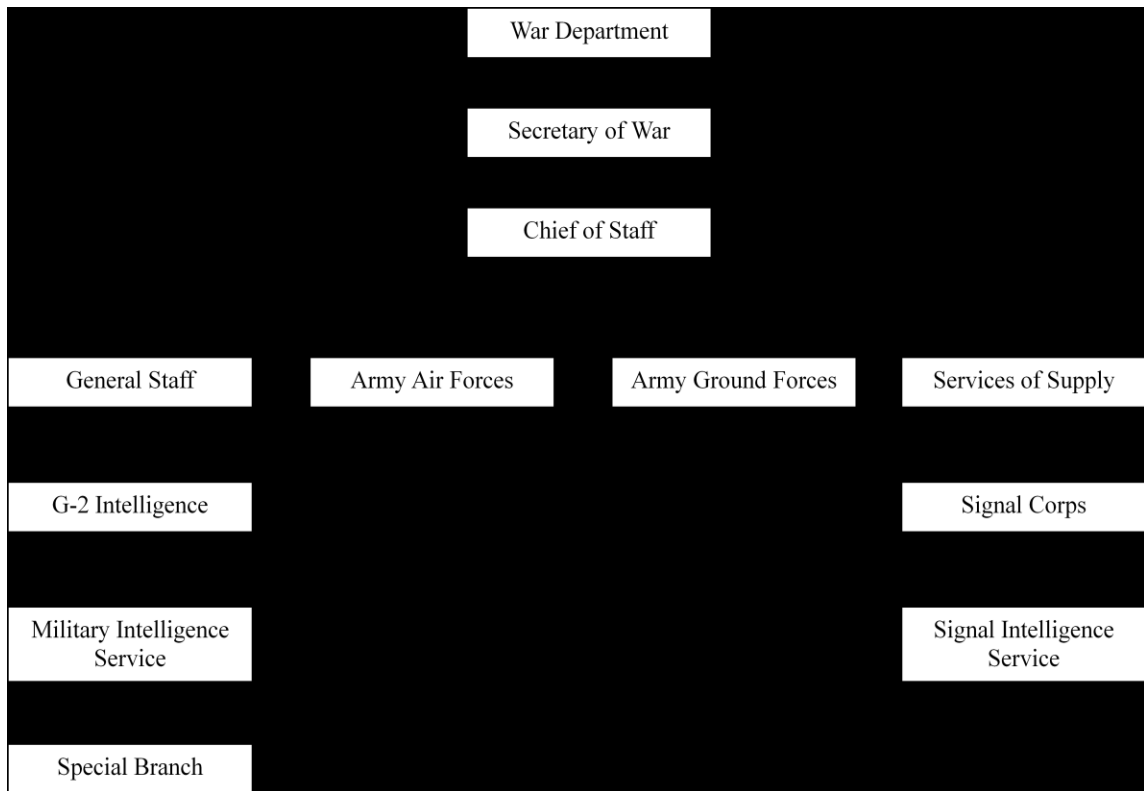
Figure 10: War Department Level Intelligence Organizations.

enemy activities."[8] The army expected companies to utilize patrols, scouts, and

observers, and to forward all information, prisoners, captured documents, and captured

enemy materiel to the battalion commander.[9] Company commanders could also expect to

receive specific intelligence taskings from the battalion commander or higher, if those

authorities determined an intelligence void needed to be addressed.[10] The army expected

commanders at all levels to be proactive and use liaisons to collect and forward

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[8] "FM 7-25 Infantry Field Manual: Headquarters Company, Intelligence and Signal Communication, Rifle Regiment October 7, 1942," 16.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

information, recognizing that troops at the point of contact would often be unable to effectively communicate information in a timely manner.[11]

The battalion commander held similar responsibilities but enjoyed the support of an S-2 intelligence section on his battalion staff, headed by a specifically designated intelligence officer.[12] The intelligence personnel at this echelon received training as scouts and observers and their duties included reading aerial photography and examining enemy prisoners, captured documents, and captured materiel.[13] The army also expected them to begin analysis of the information gained, conduct counterintelligence activities as required, and to share information with nearby units and up the chain of command.[14]

Intelligence functions expanded even further at the regimental echelon. The regimental commander also employed an S-2 section headed by the regimental intelligence officer, and he also had at his disposal an intelligence and reconnaissance platoon that conducted missions at the direction of the S-2.[15] The responsibilities of this platoon varied widely and included (but were not limited to) operating well in advance of the regiment to scout or warn of approaching enemy forces, examining terrain inaccessible to normal combat units, evaluating and disseminating information, assisting

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[11] "FM 100-5 Field Service Regulations: Operations May 22, 1941," ed. War Department (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press 1992 Reprint (1941)), 46.

[12] "FM 7-25 Infantry Field Manual: Headquarters Company, Intelligence and Signal Communication, Rifle Regiment October 7, 1942," 16.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., 18.

[15] Ibid.

with enemy order of battle estimates, maintaining flank protection for the regiment, and conducting counterintelligence operations as required.[16]

The pattern of increasing intelligence assets and capabilities continued the further up the chain of command one progressed: divisions and higher headquarters received intelligence from the War Department and from their own collecting agencies, and transmitted this intelligence throughout their command to subordinate regiments, battalions, and companies.[17] The U.S. Army thus set up an intelligence structure with dedicated assests at nearly every level of command and attempted to create avenues for proper dissemination of intelligence up, down, and across the chain of command.

U.S. Army SIGINT and Codebreaking

By the time of American entry into World War II, the U.S. Army had years of experience in signals intelligence and codebreaking, which had begun to flourish in the later stages of the First World War. During the early interwar years, the army built upon this foundation and enjoyed some success against the Japanese. The story starts with the efforts of Herbert O. Yardley and the MI-8 section of the Military Intelligence Division. MI-8, under Yardley's direction known as the "Black Chamber," broke Japanese naval and diplomatic codes in the early 1920s, which gave the United States an advantage at the negotiating table during the Washington Naval Conference of 1921-22, a multi-party conference to limit the arms and naval race in the Pacific Ocean. These successes

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[16] Ibid., 18-19.

[17] Ibid., 19.

resulted in funding from both the State Department and the War Department.[18] Despite

its manifest value to U.S. security, changing political norms worked to the detriment of

the Black Chamber. The election of Herbert Hoover to the presidency resulted in a new

emphasis on ethical behavior in Washington. In 1929 Secretary of State Henry L.

Stimson was shocked to learn of MI-8s activities; he suspended the operation believing it

undermined international trust.[19] MI-8 members dispersed and Yardley went on to write

a book, which both shocked and motivated the Japanese government.

That same year, the army moved all its cryptanalytic functions from MID to the

Signal Corps via the creation of the Signal Intelligence Service (SIS) under the direction

of William Friedman, who would hold the position until 1935.[20] The SIS also struggled

in the new environment. The Japanese Foreign Ministry reacted to Yardley's revelations

with a new cipher system that undermined previous gains, and the Federal

Communications Act of 1934 now prohibited the interception of foreign messages by

U.S. governmental agencies.[21] The army worked around this restriction in very limited

fashion by claiming to decipher messages for training rather than actual intelligence.[22]

Despite the limitations, army codebreakers pressed ahead with their efforts.

The political situation changed again in 1939 when war clouds loomed on the

horizon. The new U.S. Army Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall, willingly

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[18] Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War against Japan, 1942-1945*, 8.

[19] Kahn, *The Codebreakers: The Story of Secret Writing*, 360.

[20] Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War against Japan, 1942-1945*, 8-9.

[21] Ibid., 9.

[22] Ibid.

overlooked the Federal Communications Act, allowing the army and the navy to cooperate in the breaking of the new Japanese diplomatic code dubbed "PURPLE." The two services broke the code in eighteen months; the resulting decryptions fell under the heading "Magic."[23] This breakthrough represented a critical advantage for the Allies during the war.

Yet the focus on Magic came at a cost. According to historian Edward Drea, "Tight budgets and limited personnel, however, still dictated that the army attack only one Japanese code at a time. Consequently, the SIS aimed almost its entire decryption effort at solving the Japanese diplomatic ciphers, though at the expense of extensive study of the Imperial Army's codes."[24] Indeed, success against Japanese army codes would be a long time in coming, an eerie similarity to the emphasis and results of the Imperial Army's codebreaking efforts. The geography of the Pacific and its effects on the nature of fighting offer a partial explanation in both cases. Unlike in the European theater, where large opposing army forces maintained contact with one another for months or years at a time, the Pacific exhibited generally shorter land engagements with smaller units and less consistent contact, the exception being the Philippines campaign in the final year of the war. Such sporadic contact necessarily diminished opportunities to discern "tells" and break opposing codes.

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[23] Ibid., 10.

[24] Ibid.

U.S. Army Communications Security

The U.S. Army demonstrated awareness of communications security in its intelligence publications, typically including them under the auspices of "counterintelligence." Field Manual FM 7-25 from October 1942 stated that counterintelligence included but was not limited to "secrecy discipline;…restrictions on the preparation, transmission, and use of documents;…signal communications security," and "censorship."[25] The manual later stipulated the use of various communications devices in the field and associated communications security procedures for each: for telephones, "conversations must be brief; they must also be discreet since secrecy is never assured"; and for radios, "Due to the liability for hostile interception, messages whose contents may prove useful to the enemy are cryptographed (encoded or enciphered)" and "Coded map grids, prearranged messages, and groups of letters whose meaning are not readily apparent to the enemy are useful in retaining secrecy."[26] In addition, the manual emphasized that radio discipline and security must be strictly monitored, station identities should be prearranged signals and should precede each message, and call signs must be changed and updated regularly to assure security.[27] Through these methods, the Americans aimed to inhibit Axis intelligence organizations through extensive and consistent communications security.

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[25] "FM 7-25 Infantry Field Manual: Headquarters Company, Intelligence and Signal Communication, Rifle Regiment October 7, 1942," 9.

[26] Ibid., 50-51.

[27] Ibid., 51.

In the main, their efforts proved successful against the Japanese army, especially early in the war. Part of that success, as revealed in the examination of Japan's intelligence organizations, may be attributed to the Japanese army's primary focus on the Soviet threat until the end of the Guadalcanal campaign in February 1943. David Kahn notes that the Japanese did enjoy some limited cryptographic successes against American and Filipino guerrilla bands in the Philippines, particularly in the first half of 1943.[28] But Ken Kotani surmises "the evidence demonstrates that the IJA had significant successes in breaking Allied codes, although such information often came too late in the war to have military significance."[29]

Open Source Intelligence

The U.S. Army demonstrated awareness of the value of open sources of information. The War Department included "hostile and neutral press and radio" in its general description of information sources and collecting agencies."[30] Similarly, a 1943 intelligence training memorandum from the Allied Intelligence Bureau (AIB), an element of MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Area intelligence structure, listed "Study of enemy and neutral press, broadcasting, military reports of areas, guide books, gazetteers and similar publications, and the correspondence of prisoners of war" as one of eight possible groups

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[28] Kahn, *The Codebreakers: The Story of Secret Writing*, 584-85.

[29] Kotani, *Japanese Intelligence in World War II*, 18.

[30] "FM 7-25 Infantry Field Manual: Headquarters Company, Intelligence and Signal Communication, Rifle Regiment October 7, 1942," 15.

of sources of information.[31] In theory, at least, the Americans recognized the possible

value of these types of sources.

Intelligence reports often reveal that U.S. forces did indeed monitor and utilize

open sources of intelligence. MacArthur's air intelligence directorate reported the

Japanese Imperial Headquarters' misleading announcements on Tokyo radio declaring a

great success in the Midway operation in June 1942.[32] Similar intercepts in late

September of 1942 allowed the command to identify specific Japanese units operating in

other areas such as Formosa and the Philippine Islands.[33] These sources provided another

layer of information and analysis to strengthen U.S. estimates of the situation.

Human Intelligence/Prisoner of War Interrogation

Opportunities for the use of human intelligence against Japan were limited by the

comparative dearth of prisoners taken in combat. But opportunities still existed and the

U.S. Army recognized the value of human intelligence and information garnered from

captured enemy soldiers.[34] The Allied Intelligence Bureau under MacArthur specialized

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[31] *National Archives and Records Administration: Record Group 496: Records of General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area and United States Army Forces Pacific (World War II), 1941-1947.* (Hereafter *NARA 496.*): Series: General Correspondence 1942-45, Box 321. Colonel C.G. Roberts, "Basis for Training," (Allied Intelligence Bureau, 26 August 1943), 1.

[32] *NARA 496:* Series: HQ Allied AF Intelligence Summaries: Box #279: HQ Allied Air Forces Intelligence Summaries 1942-1943. "HEADQUARTERS ALLIED AIR FORCES SOUTH WEST PACIFIC AREA DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE: INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY SERIAL NO. 8 (on information up to 12th June – 1942.)," Sections 53-54.

[33] *NARA 496:* "HEADQUARTERS ALLIED AIR FORCES SOUTH WEST PACIFIC AREA DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE: INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY SERIAL NO. 39 (on information up to 2nd October – 1942.)," Section 77.

[34] "FM 7-25 Infantry Field Manual: Headquarters Company, Intelligence and Signal Communication, Rifle Regiment October 7, 1942," 15.

in human intelligence, and in the same intelligence training memorandum mentioned above, directed the exploitation of enemy prisoners of war and enemy civilians, and urged the use of agents working behind enemy lines.[35] The army produced an entire field manual, FM 30-15, *Military Intelligence—Examination of Enemy Personnel, Repatriates, Documents and Matériel,* to address the subject of prisoners and captured enemy paraphernalia. The Allies also relied upon the now famous Coastwatchers, a network of indigenous personnel working with appointed Allied handlers who kept a watchful eye on the island chains in the South and Southwest Pacific and regularly reported enemy activity via radio.

Getting prisoners for interrogation and intelligence was often a very challenging task for ground forces, and American troops often proved their own worst enemies. A mid 1943 Military Intelligence Division report titled "Problems of Taking Jap Prisoners," which the Marine Corps also referenced, indicated some of the difficulties regarding prisoners in the Pacific War. The report, based on the Guadalcanal experiences of war correspondent Robert Miller, chastised U.S. forces for a "take no prisoners" attitude prevalent among many platoons on the front lines.[36] The report also related incidents of attempted surrender resulting in the death of the potential Japanese prisoners because

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[35] *NARA 496*: Series: General Correspondence 1942-45, Box 321. Colonel C.G. Roberts, "Basis for Training," (Allied Intelligence Bureau, 26 August 1943), 1.

[36] *National Archives and Records Administration: Record Group 127: Records of the U.S. Marine Corps, 1775 – 9999.* (Hereafter *NARA 127*): Series: Records of Amphibious Corps, compiled 1940 – 1946: Box 22, Folder 1 #2265. Lt. Col. Warren J. Clear, "Problems of Taking Jap Prisoners," (Military Intelligence Division, 10 May 1943), 1,3.

American soldiers and marines feared Japanese duplicity at the moment of contact.[37]

Here the racial stereotypes and disdain for the "other" examined by historian John Dower

had concrete impact on the battlefield, contributing to the "kill or be killed mentality" the

pervaded soldiers' and marines' attitudes.[38] Yet some Japanese were prepared to

surrender after enduring heavy bombardment or starvation, and American propaganda

broadcasts successfully enticed some of these soldiers, and their supporting laborers—

Koreans who were more prone to surrender than Japanese combat troops—to cross over

into U.S. lines.[39]

Those Japanese that the Allies did capture proved valuable to military

intelligence. The same MID report stated, "The Japanese make wonderful prisoners.

They will tell you anything you want to know."[40] A different memorandum, an Observer

Report from the South and Southwest Pacific forwarded by the Headquarters, Army

Ground Forces, went into more detail on the interrogation of Japanese prisoners and the

loyal service of Japanese-Americans, Nisei, in this endeavor.[41] According to Col. Willis

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[37] Ibid., 1-2.

[38] John W. Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1986). 60-71.

[39] *NARA 127:* Lt. Col. Warren J. Clear, "Problems of Taking Jap Prisoners," 2-3. This willingness to divulge information after capture stemmed from Japanese attitudes which considered surrender disgraceful. Having been disgraced, Japanese prisoners had nothing to lose.

[40] Ibid., 4.

[41] *National Archives and Records Administration: Record Group 337: Records of Headquarters Army Ground Forces, 1916 - 1956* (Hereafter *NARA 337*): Series: Intelligence Reports, compiled 1943 – 1946: Box 51, Folder 10. Colonel Gordon B. Rogers, "MEMORANDUM FOR GROUND GENERAL AND SPECIAL STAFF SECTIONS, HEADQUARTERS, ARMY GROUND FORCES, Subject: Observations in Southwest and South Pacific Theaters during the period 5 April, 1943 to 14 July, 1943," (Headquarters, Army Ground Forces, 25 August 1943), 4.

G. Tack and Lt. Col. Frank J. Lawrence, who observed U.S. operations in the South and

Southwest Pacific from 5 April to 14 July 1943:

> As a rule, prisoners talk freely but are disposed to be very technical when answering questions. Prisoners seem to be very truthful. A check is maintained by asking questions the answers to which are already known. On one occasion, the prisoner gave the locations of an enemy supply dump. This area was given the artillery as a suitable target. During the following concentration, an aerial observer witnessed the destruction of five enemy trucks and extensive damage to the hitherto hidden dump.[42]

Thus this limited resource could indeed prove very beneficial on the battlefield.

After-Action Reports and Captured Materials

The reference to Col. Tack's discussion of prisoners in his observer's report

provides an excellent transition into another source of information employed by the U.S.

Army, after-action and observation reports. In addition, when available, the army

exploited captured enemy materiel for intelligence gain. The Allies often shared these

materials among each other so each could gain from the experiences of the others.

Tack's report is but one of numerous reports from the South and Southwest

Pacific. Such reports could cover a wide breadth of topics and could be very thorough

and specific when required. One such report by Col. H.F. Handy covered the period of

26 September 1942 through 23 December 1942 in the Southwest Pacific and consisted of

nineteen pages supported by dozens of appendices. Col. Handy discussed numerous

topics from training to air transport, fire direction to ammunition wastage, and terrain and

weather. His report also included submissions of Australian methods of direct air support

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[42] Ibid., 4.

and Australian notes on jungle warfare.[43] Another by Col. Harry Knight recounted the

difficulties and lessons to be learned from the fighting around Buna, New Guinea and the

challenges posed by tropical disease in such Pacific locales.[44] These reports allowed for

adjustments in training, equipment, and for the dissemination of lessons learned among

the services and the Allies.

Captured documents and equipment provided another potential source of

information on the Japanese enemy in World War II, and the U.S. Army utilized such

resources when able. Historian John Winton recounts how documents captured in July

1942 revealed Japanese plans for future operations in the "New Guinea, Bismarck

Archipelago and Solomon Islands areas."[45] He also writes, "On 22 July enemy

documents recovered from a canvas bag thrown from a Japanese naval bomber shot down

at Gaille in New Guinea confirmed known information about the enemy's weather

reporting code and methods of reporting contacts with Allied forces."[46] Drea relates

another boon to MacArthur's intelligence in early 1943 when the Allies captured a list

with forty thousand names of Imperial Japanese Army officers from a lifeboat, which

later allowed Allied intelligence to correlate specific Japanese officers with specific units

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[43] Ibid., Folder 5. Col. H.F. Handy, "Subject: Report of Military Observer Southwest Pacific Theater of Operations, Col. H.F. Handy, September 26 to December 23, 1942," 1-19.

[44] Ibid., Folder 6. Col Harry Knight, "Report of Colonel Harry Knight, Cavalry, covering observations in the Southwest Pacific Theatre, during the period October 16 to December 30, 1942," 1-11.

[45] John Winton, *Ultra in the Pacific: How Breaking Japanese Codes & Cyphers Affected Naval Operations against Japan 1941-45* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1993), 68.

[46] Ibid.

in the field.[47] The Americans also used captured Japanese equipment to help train their troops to better prepare for combat against those Japanese weapons. A training memorandum from the Chief of Staff of the "Americal," or 23rd Infantry Division, dated 27 July 1943, mandated demonstration of Japanese small arms weaponry to every combat unit to familiarize the troops with the sound and destructive power of each individual piece.[48] These efforts to collect and disseminate information and intelligence from after-action reports and captured materials demonstrate a comprehensive attempt to maximize those intelligence opportunities presented to the U.S. and its allies.

Photo Reconnaissance

When the U.S. entered the war in late 1941, American photo intelligence remained in its infancy. Earlier in the year, the U.S. made strides through British assistance when Capt. Harvey C. Brown, Jr. received British photo intelligence training at Medmenham in England.[49] Brown then brought his training back to the United States and helped found a photo intelligence school for the army at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania to supplement the training already given at another photography school located in Denver.[50] As the war progressed, American capabilities greatly expanded, but the primary focus of

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[47] Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War against Japan, 1942-1945*, 73.

[48] *National Archives and Records Administration: Record Group 338: Records of the U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and Thereafter)* (Hereafter *NARA 338*): Series: Unit Histories 1940-1967, Infantry Division Section, 1940-1967, Box #2934: Americal Division (Intelligence Bulletins) Thru Americal Division (Memorandums), Folder: Americal Division – Memos 1942-43. Col. C.M. McQuarrie, "Training in Jap Weapons," (Headquarters, Americal Division, 27 Jul 1943), 1-2.

[49] Roy M. Stanley, *World War II Photo Intelligence* (New York: Scribner, 1981), 60.

[50] Ibid.

American photo intelligence efforts initially remained the European theater.[51]

Nevertheless, the Pacific theater would receive photo intelligence assets and photo

reconnaissance units operated throughout the South and Southwest Pacific areas.

The U.S. and its allies utilized photo reconnaissance quite often and generally

quite effectively. The activity is inherently tied to Army Air Force (USAAF) activities as

well, and these will be investigated in due course. But the ground elements of the army

also used aerial reconnaissance photos during their operations. The prewar "FM 21-26

Basic Field Manual: Advanced Map and Aerial Photograph Reading" stated:

> Ability to read aerial photographs is required of all military personnel. Usually
> the nearest thing to a large-scale map in any theater of operations will be aerial
> photographs in some form. Aerial photographs made under war conditions cannot
> be expected to depict clearly certain obvious information that is shown in manuals
> for training in use of aerial photographs. Lack of familiarity with aerial
> photographs will leave a unit commander with little or no knowledge of valuable
> information upon which he must make his estimate of the situation.[52]

This manual discussed the uses of vertical and oblique aerial photographs and lists six

different camera/lens combinations used by the air force.[53] It went on to describe in

detail techniques for the use of aerial photography as a map substitute.[54] The army would

put these techniques to the test in the Southwest Pacific Theater.

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[51] Ibid., 59.

[52] "FM 21-26 Basic Field Manual: Advanced Map and Aerial Photograph Reading, September 17, 1941,"
ed. War Department (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1941), 6.

[53] Ibid., 87-92.

[54] Ibid., 148-82.

Intelligence Personnel Selection and Training

Like the Japanese, the Americans to a lesser degree struggled with manning and training issues for its intelligence personnel. The case of the Special Branch is indicative of some of the travails. Army estimates in May 1942 called for a Special Branch staff of 59 officers and 85 civilians, but building an adequate staff thereafter became an ongoing struggle for a number of reasons. The exacting requirements of these positions required capable individuals of unquestioned loyalty to the United States, which greatly limited the pool of potential recruits.[55] Adding to the difficulty, the army made no allotment for potential use of enlisted personnel, further reducing the pool.[56] This resulted in the direct hire of civilian personnel to fill officer billets, which ran afoul of War Department red tape that limited direct appointments.[57] Finally, bureaucratic impediments from the Civil Service Commission also greatly hampered army efforts to acquire qualified civilian personnel.[58] These restrictions limited Special Branch manning to 28 officers and 55 civilians by March 1943, still well short of its May 1942 goal.[59]

Yet the U.S. Army's intelligence organization writ large grew at an impressive rate. During the war, communications intelligence manpower increased thirtyfold from

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[55] Ronald H. Spector, *Listening to the Enemy: Key Documents on the Role of Communications Intelligence in the War with Japan* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1988), 175. This information is taken from portions of "History of the Special Branch, MIS, War Department, 1942-44," reproduced in Spector's edited volume.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid., 176.

its humble beginnings of 331 people on December 7, 1941.[60] This rapid expansion

necessarily limited training and, according to David Kahn, not one student completed the

full 48 week course of instruction at the Fort Monmouth, New Jersey communications

intelligence school before the army forwarded them to operational billets.[61] Strength

peaked at 10,609 individuals on 1 June 1945.[62] These numbers greatly exceeded those of

the Japanese employed in the intelligence field, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Counterintelligence

The army recognized the need for protecting information as well. The War

Department stated that the aim of counterintelligence was to destroy the effectiveness of

the enemy's intelligence system.[63] Secrecy, censorship, concealment, deception, and

counterespionage are among a litany of activities that constituted counterintelligence

actions.[64] Technical Manual "TM 30-215: Counter Intelligence Corps," dated 22

September 1943, addressed the counterespionage and counter-sabotage aspects of

counterintelligence in greater detail for the benefit of theater commanders.[65] This evident

awareness translated into action.

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[60] Kahn, *The Codebreakers: The Story of Secret Writing*, 574.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

[63] "FM 100-5 Field Service Regulations: Operations May 22, 1941," 57.

[64] Ibid.

[65] "TM 30-215: Tecnical Manual Counter Intelligence Corps, 22 September 1943," ed. War Department (Washington, D.C.: War Department, 22 September 1943), 1.

The U.S. Army recognized the challenge of protecting information and took necessary precautions to do so. The Army Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC), an organization under the Military Intelligence Service, was formed on 1 January 1942.[66] Until mid 1943 the CIC's primary focus remained counter-subversion within the United States and in base areas. With a training school in Chicago, the corps grew to a strength of 543 officers and 4,431 enlisted members by July 1943.[67] In the latter part of 1943, the mission of CIC began to expand and it assisted fielded forces in greater detail.[68]

Operations in the South and Southwest Pacific areas demanded significant counterintelligence efforts. In many cases, both the areas of combat and the rear areas contained populations that may have been opposed to the Allied war effort. The question of loyalty of former colonial subjects on New Guinea, Melanesia, and in the Solomon Islands loomed large, and U.S. forces employed counterintelligence efforts in these areas to maintain proper security.[69] Similarly, many of the U.S. bases in the South Pacific area resided in French territory, which implied the possible division of the populace between supporters of Vichy and Free France.[70] The Americans viewed these efforts as a necessary precaution to suppress the potential Vichy threat and allow for secure operations in the rear areas.

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[66] John Patrick Finnegan and Romana Danysh, *Military Intelligence*, Army Lineage Series (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History For sale by the Supt. of Docs., U.S. G.P.O., 1998), 72.

[67] Ibid., 72-73.

[68] Ibid., 73.

[69] Judith A. Bennett, "Fears and Aspirations: US Military Intelligence Operations in the South Pacific, 1941-1945," *The Journal of Pacific History* 39, no. 3 (2004): 284-85.

[70] Ibid.: 286-87.

Intelligence in the U.S. Army Air Forces (USAAF)

The U.S. Army Air Forces, as a separate entity under the War Department, initially struggled to create a largely independent intelligence structure for the air war. The USAAF strained to develop an effective air intelligence system within its headquarters and to determine its relationship to the intelligence structures of the army and navy.[71] In March 1942, the War Department consolidated air intelligence functions into the Headquarters, Army Air Forces (HQ AFF) under the auspices of the Assistance Chief of Air Staff (AC/AS), Intelligence, also known as the A-2, with a staff and an Air Intelligence Service (AIS) section.[72] Owing to prewar agreements, the General Staff G-2 still had the lead in all army intelligence, which restricted the A-2 to technical and tactical air intelligence unless the G-2 demonstrated a void of knowledge in an area deemed important for the air forces.[73] The agreement was not perfect, but it gave the air forces some latitude and freedom in the air intelligence arena.

Air intelligence training also temporarily suffered under bureaucratic battles between the A-2 and the G-2. The Military Intelligence Division initially opposed Air Staff requests for the creation of an air intelligence school, feeling all army intelligence training efforts should be unified in one institution.[74] The Army Chief of Staff sided with the Air Staff in late 1941 and authorized the creation of an air intelligence school, which

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[71] John F. Kreis, *Piercing the Fog: Intelligence and Army Air Forces Operations in World War II* (Bolling AFB, Washington, D.C.: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1996), 116.

[72] Ibid., 116-17.

[73] Ibid., 46.

[74] Ibid., 126.

would take the form of the Army Air Forces Intelligence School at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.[75] School enrollment quickly expanded to meet air intelligence needs. By the end of the war the school, which had moved to Orlando, Florida and been renamed the Intelligence Division of the School of Applied Tactics, had graduated over 9,000 officers, in contrast the army's ground intelligence officers who often moved to operational billets prior to completing training.[76]

Prewar Air Corps directions illustrate how aviation units conducted their intelligence operations. Information flowed up, down and within the chain of command. Squadrons represented the smallest administrative unit within the air force. The Army Air Forces expected squadrons to forward their pilots' reports up the chain of command to wing and higher headquarters, and if necessary to use telegraph printers to forward summaries of these reports in a timely manner.[77] Wing or equivalent headquarters would send intelligence up the chain via periodic intelligence reports.[78] Unit assigned intelligence officers were responsible for informing unit personnel about the enemy situation.[79] Intelligence reports and summaries throughout the air forces often incorporated information from many of these disparate sources. A-2 intelligence summaries from the Army Air Forces Gulf Coast Flying Training Center demonstrate the

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[75] Ibid., 126-27.

[76] Ibid., 130.

[77] "FM 1-40: Air Corps Field Manual: Intelligence Procedures in Aviation Units," ed. War Department (Washington, D.C.: Chief of the Air Corps, United States Government Printing Office, 1940), 33.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

spread of air force intelligence. The 18 May 1942 summary discussed the skill and ability of Japanese pilots in combat, while follow on summaries discussed lessons learned from the battles of Coral Sea and Midway, and the experiences of American Volunteer Group pilots in China.[80] Thus while still in training, USAAF pilots received up to date intelligence from the front lines throughout the Pacific theater. The information flowed up the chain of command from the units at the front and then back down the chain to be disseminated to other commands in the hopes of increasing combat effectiveness. The USAAF hoped the comprehensiveness of this kind of intelligence dissemination would serve to better prepare its pilots for war.

USAAF Aerial Reconnaissance and Photo Intelligence

Army Air Forces efforts at photographic intelligence supported its own independent operations as well as those of the army ground forces and naval forces. Unlike in the European theater, where the American air forces benefited from close cooperation with the British, in the Pacific the USAAF photo intelligence operations started from scratch on their own.[81] The Army Air Forces had no dedicated photo intelligence capabilities in the Pacific when the war began.[82] The U.S. military developed and operated dedicated photoreconnaissance units and aircraft. The first operational unit to deploy to the Pacific was the 8th Photo [Reconnaissance] Squadron

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[80] *Air Force Historical Research Agency* (Hereafter *AFHRA*): Call # 223.606: "Army Air Forces Gulf Coast Flying Training Center Summaries: A-2 Summaries Nos. 14 (18 May 1942) through 62 (18 November 1942)."

[81] Stanley, *World War II Photo Intelligence*, 65.

[82] Ibid.

which began operations out of northern Australia in April 1942, supporting MacArthur's Southwest Pacific command.[83] In the South Pacific Area, the limited means available forced all the services to pool their efforts, first on Guadalcanal and then later with the establishment on 21 June 1943 of the joint Photo Wing South Pacific on Espiritu Santo.[84] When dedicated photoreconnaissance aircraft were not available, the USAAF often improvised with heavy bombers carrying army and naval photographers on board.[85] Such joint efforts would greatly assist with the Allied intelligence picture during the lean years of 1942 and most of 1943.

During the lead up to war, the U.S. actively worked to develop a dedicated photoreconnaissance aircraft for the looming conflict. Impressed with the performance of the twin engine British Mosquito aircraft, the U.S. began to look to the twin engine Lockheed P-38 airframe as a photoreconnaissance platform. The resulting aircraft, designated the F-4 (later upgraded P-38s were designated F-5s) became "one of the most consistently successful (if not spectacular) families of photorecon aircraft of the war."[86] Yet this was not the only airframe dedicated specifically to photoreconnaissance. Among others, the Army Air Forces built the F-7, based upon the Consolidated B-24 Liberator airframe, the F-6 family based upon the North American P-51 airframe, and the disappointing F-9, based upon the Boeing B-17 airframe.[87] The equipment on these

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[83] Ibid., 66.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid., 83.

[87] Ibid., 89-90.

aircraft included an assortment of cameras suitable to a variety of conditions and photographic angles.

The limited reconnaissance assets in the South and Southwest Pacific remained extremely active in 1942 and 1943. Statistics for the 5th Air Force under MacArthur's command demonstrate that from February through July of 1943, dedicated reconnaissance crews logged more flight hours per crew than did fighter and bomber crews, with March being the sole exception in the case of the bombers.[88] Intelligence summaries from both the Solomon Islands Air Command in 1943 and the Headquarters Allied Air Forces Southwest Pacific Area in 1942 and 1943 repeatedly make reference to aerial photography and its interpretation for both target areas and for estimates of the enemy situation.[89] Photographs often receive specific mention and made important contributions to the intelligence estimates in these documents and, therefore, the Allied appreciation of the situation in the South and Southwest Pacific Areas.

The U.S. Army and the U.S. Army Air Forces thus employed an intelligence system of impressive breadth and depth. The two arms often complemented each other in the intelligence field, as indicated by cooperation with photo reconnaissance. Yet there were other services involved in the Pacific War, each with their own intelligence system. The U.S. Navy's intelligence system made important contributions of its own and therefore requires closer examination.

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[88] *AFHRA:* Call #730.308-1: "0005 Air Force: Scale of Effort," FIFTH AIR FORCE: Hours Flown per Assigned Combat Crew, 1. The action in the Bismarck Sea may explain why the bomber crews exceeded the reconnaissance crews in flight time for the month of March 1943.

[89] *AFHRA:* Call # 749.607: "Solomon Islands Air Command: Weekly Intelligence Summaries, 7 February 1943-28 April 1944. Sea also *NARA 496:* Series: HQ Allied AF Intelligence Summaries: Box #279: HQ Allied Air Forces Intelligence Summaries 1942-1943.

U.S. Naval Intelligence Organization July 1942-November 1943

Just as the Imperial Navy and Imperial Army held different intelligence

priorities, so did the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Army, although not nearly to the same

degree as was the case with Japanese forces. The U.S. Navy tended to focus more on the

Japanese naval threat while the U.S. Army tended to focus more on the threats emanating

from the European theater. Additionally, the U.S. Marine Corps represented a ground

force under naval control, which required analysis of Japanese land forces. These factors

helped alleviate some of the potential for intelligence gaps and oversights.

It is easy to criticize the Japanese, particularly their navy, for complex

organizations. Such criticism is justified. However, the U.S. Navy also demonstrated

considerable complexity in its fleet organization and intelligence structures. The

appointment of Admiral Ernest J. King as both the Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Fleet and

as the Chief of Naval Operations in March 1942 mitigated that some of the inherent

complexities in higher level command.[90] This appointment contrasts markedly with the

situation for Admiral Isoruku Yamamoto who, as noted, turned his Combined Fleet into

something of an equal to Japan's Naval General Staff and thereby pitted the two powerful

entities against each other within the Japanese naval hierarchy. Meanwhile, Admiral

King controlled all the levers of power at the highest levels of the U.S. Navy.

Nevertheless, the intelligence structures beneath King's two positions require

elaboration. As the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), King received support from

several intelligence organizations within the Office of the CNO (see Figure 11). The

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[90] Julius Augustus Furer, *Administration of the Navy Department in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959), 113.

Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI), OP-16, fell under the auspices of the Assistant CNO for Information and Security, or OP-11-1.[91] The ONI generally operated as a point of distribution, sending reports and data to naval organizations in need of the information, but making no independent analysis of that information.[92] The War Plans Division, OP-12, held the responsibility of evaluating the information and estimating enemy intentions.[93] OP-20, Naval Communications, included radio, telegraph, and telephone communications, but made the most significant contributions to naval intelligence through signals intelligence and its sub-section OP-20-G, Communications Security. The vital role this section played in naval intelligence will be discussed in the signals intelligence section.

King had other intelligence resources supporting him in his role as the Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet (see Figure 12). Within the Headquarters of the Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet, the Intelligence section fell under the purview of the Assistant Chief of Staff (Plans), beneath the Assistant Plans section along with the Strategic Plans and Joint War Plans divisions.[94] This office followed operational intelligence, consisting of enemy fleet strength and disposition, and was headed by the Fleet Intelligence Officer who also served as the head of the Operational Information Section.[95] This awkward arrangement underwent overhaul on 1 July 1943 with the

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[91] Ibid., 116.

[92] Ibid., 119-20.

[93] Ibid., 120.

[94] Ibid., 139.

[95] Ibid., 156.
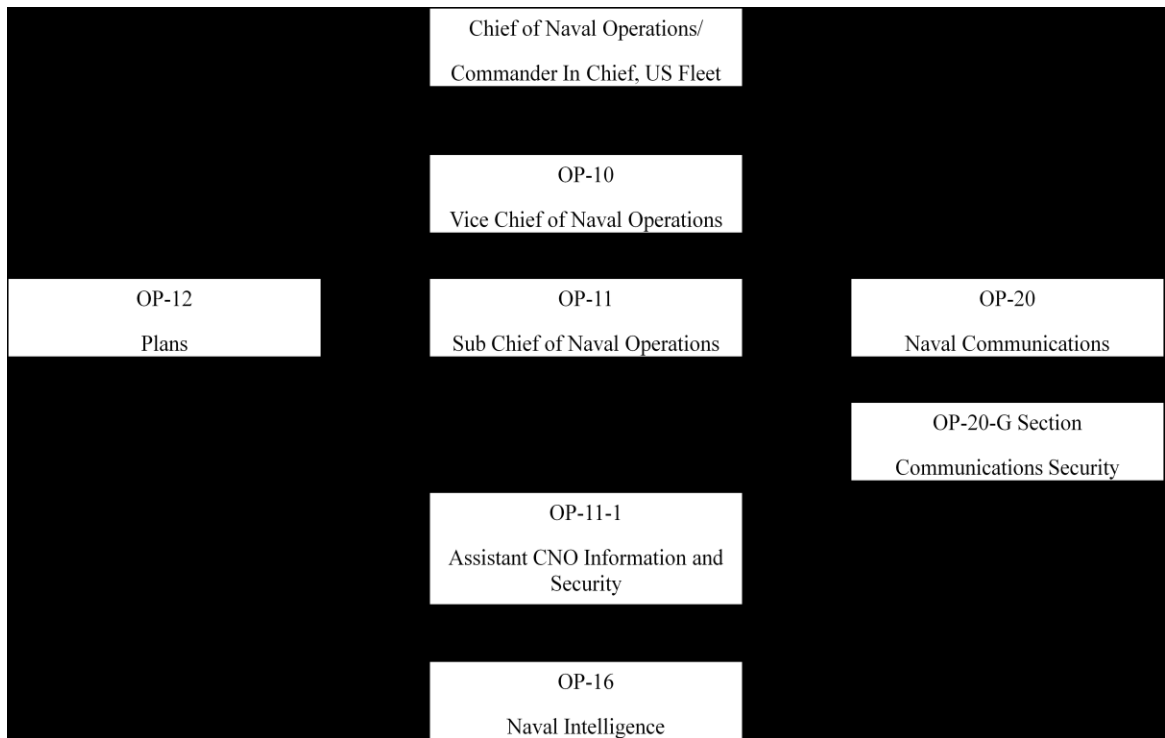
Figure 11: Office of the Chief of Naval Operations Intelligence Flow, 27 March 1942.

creation of the Combat Intelligence Division (F-2) as an independent division no longer

subordinate to the Assistant Chief of Staff (Plans).[96] This division continued to focus on

operational intelligence while the CNO intelligence organizations focused on strategic

intelligence.[97]

The U.S. Navy also had some supporting intelligence operations further afield.

OP-20-G placed a radio intercept unit in Hawaii, known as "Hypo," which also worked

very closely with the Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC).[98] During the approach

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[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid., 157.
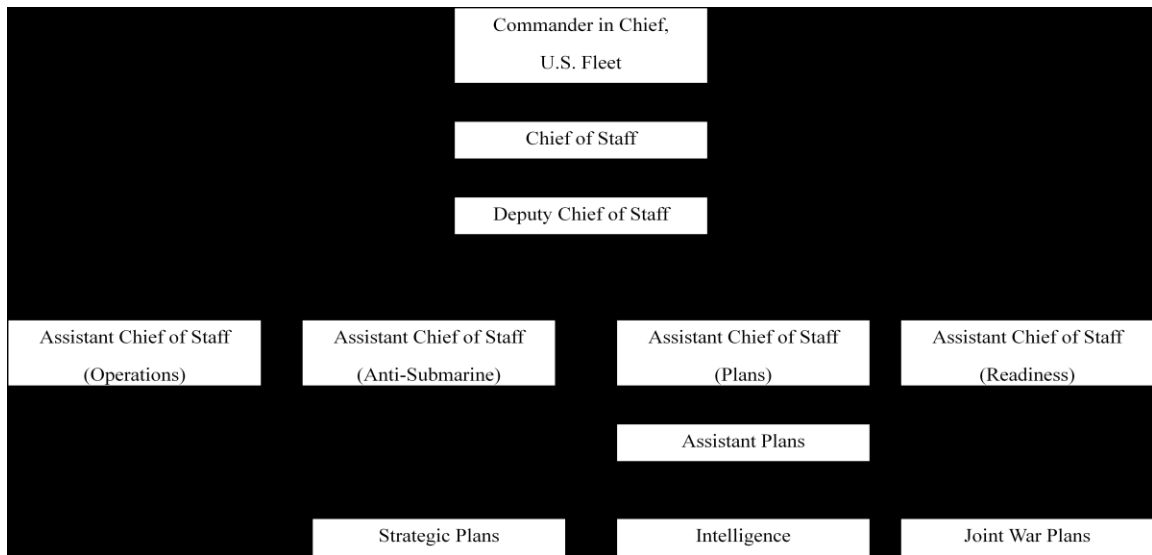
Figure 12: Intelligence Functions under Headquarters, Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet (April 1943).

Source: Condensed from Furer's chart covering the entire organization. Furer, *Administration of the Navy Department in World War II,* 139.

to war, CINCPAC Admiral Husband Kimmel began to rely heavily on Hypo and expanded its responsibilities beyond just codebreaking, resulting in an organization with semiautonomous status and a new name, the Combat Intelligence Unit (CIU).[99] In April 1942, U.S. Marine Corps Commandant Lt. Gen. Thomas Holcomb, advocated for the creation of a joint intelligence center at Pearl Harbor, which both Admiral King and Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, the new CINCPAC, endorsed.[100] Nimitz directed the creation of the Intelligence Center, Pacific Ocean Area (ICPOA) with the CIU as a

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[98] Jeffrey M. Moore, *Spies for Nimitz: Joint Military Intelligence in the Pacific War* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 3.

[99] Ibid., 4.

[100] Ibid., 6.

subordinate section in June 1942.[101] Other organizations in the South and Southwest

Pacific also assisted with naval intelligence.

The Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps operated within the naval hierarchy and

depended, in many ways, on naval intelligence for its operations but it still had its own

structure. The U.S. Marine Corps, unlike the navy proper, readily adopted the army staff

organization within the Planning and Policy Staff section of its headquarters, meaning it

had four sections at the start of the war: M-1, Personnel; M-2, Intelligence; M-3, Training

and Operations; and M-4, Supply.[102] The headquarters would undergo several

modifications during the course of the war, but the intelligence section remained intact

throughout.

U.S. Navy SIGINT and Codebreaking

The U.S. Navy enjoyed extensive successes in codebreaking and signals

intelligence against the Japanese before and during World War II. The U.S. Navy

established OP-20-G in 1924 with several intercept stations throughout the Pacific

targeting Japanese transmissions.[103] The navy also received cloak-and-dagger assistance

from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which periodically broke into the Japanese

Consul General in New York during the 1920s and 1930s to photograph Japanese naval

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[101] Ibid., 8.

[102] Furer, *Administration of the Navy Department in World War II*, 553-54.

[103] David J. Alvarez, ed. *Allied and Axis Signals Intelligence in World War II*, Cass Series--Studies in Intelligence (London: Frank Cass,1999), 48. From "Chapter 3: Signals Intelligence in Australia during the Pacific War," written by Frank Cain.

code books.[104] While working with the U.S. Army on Japan's diplomatic codes, the U.S.

Navy placed most of its emphasis on the Japanese naval codes.[105] Edward Drea relates

the dividends of these efforts at the beginning of the war:

> In short, by the time of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the American navy had a cryptanalytic infrastructure with extensive practical experience against Japanese diplomatic and naval codes with perhaps forty officers capable of reading Japanese. This groundwork allowed U.S. Navy codebreakers during the opening months of the Pacific War to far outpace their army counterparts. For instance, navy cryptanalysts first penetrated JN-25 [the basic Japanese operational naval code] in September 1940, nearly three years earlier than the U.S. Army's initial break into Japanese army ciphers.[106]

Beginning in 1941, the Allies used the codename "ULTRA" to describe information

garnered from high level Japanese army or navy codes, such as JN-25, from captured

sources, and from radio traffic analysis.[107] As the war progressed, naval SIGINT

manning multiplied nearly nine fold. According to Kahn, the navy employed about 700

people in communications intelligence in the fall of 1941 but by the end of the war

increased that number to 6,000.[108] The ability to read the Japanese naval code would

prove critical to American efforts in the battles of the Coral Sea and Midway in 1942. A

report titled "Narrative, Combat Intelligence Center, Joint Intelligence Center, Pacific

Ocean Area" noted, "In the defensive stages of the war, radio intelligence was not only

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[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid., 48-49.

[106] Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War against Japan, 1942-1945*, 13.

[107] Winton, *Ultra in the Pacific: How Breaking Japanese Codes & Cyphers Affected Naval Operations against Japan 1941-45*, 7. ULTRA originated as the as the British code name for intelligence derived from cryptanalysis. The United States at first applied the name to information the British shared with America and its use then spread to encompass all intelligence garnered from cryptanalysis.

[108] Kahn, *The Codebreakers: The Story of Secret Writing*, 574.

the most important source of intelligence in the Central Pacific, it was practically the only source. There were very few captured documents or prisoners of war. There were no photographs of enemy held positions."[109] Later, in the campaigns in the South and Southwest Pacific areas the Allies would come to rely upon a larger variety of intelligence sources.

U.S. Navy Communications Security

The U.S. Navy took communications security seriously and also endeavored to protect its ULTRA breakthrough from Japanese discovery. According to historian John Winton, "Special arrangements were made for handling ULTRA. It was revealed only to certain Flag and Senior Officers and selected members of their staffs who had been 'indoctrinated' into the secret."[110] Special precautions also accompanied transmission of ULTRA information via radio signals.[111] Often, the navy would not act on ULTRA information for fear of giving away the secret, or would be forced to devise a cover story, such as aerial reconnaissance, to explain actions taken because of intelligence gained via ULTRA intercepts.[112] The Allies had to balance the need to protect ULTRA as a source of information against the benefits to be gained in exploiting portions of that intelligence.

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[109] Spector, *Listening to the Enemy: Key Documents on the Role of Communications Intelligence in the War with Japan*, 157. This excerpt is taken from portions of the report "Narrative, Combat Intelligence Center, Joint Intelligence Center, Pacific Ocean Area," reproduced in Spector's edited volume.

[110] Winton, *Ultra in the Pacific: How Breaking Japanese Codes & Cyphers Affected Naval Operations against Japan 1941-45*, 8.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid.

The navy and the marines educated their personnel on communications and communications security as well. A U.S. Marine Corps "Mailbrief" memo dated 18 December 1942 discussed CINCPAC demands for increased security training for marine communications officers and directed communications officers assigned to the amphibious corps and the Third Marine Division to receive more training prior to their departure from the United States.[113] The navy also established a six week communications course at Camp Pendleton, California in late 1942 to better prepare communications personnel for operations in the Pacific.[114] Through these measures, the navy aimed to maintain effective communications without granting the Japanese the same advantage the Allies enjoyed in ULTRA.

Open Source Intelligence, Human Intelligence, and Prisoners of War

The navy, like the army, also monitored open source intelligence like Tokyo radio. Human intelligence and prisoners of war contributed more to the intelligence picture of naval and Marine forces.

Human intelligence filled the situation reports and summaries from units in the Solomon Islands. The sources often duplicated those of MacArthur's Southwest Pacific command: the invaluable Coastwatcher network. This network, for example, received almost daily mention in the intelligence summaries of the First Marine Division during

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[113] *NARA 127:* Series: Records of Amphibious Corps, compiled 1940 – 1946, Box #10, Folder #1520: Education – College – School : K E Rockey, MARCORPS (Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, MAILBRIEF Serial No. AO-341-gmn (06A35242), 18 December 1942), 1.

[114] *NARA127:* Series: Records of Amphibious Corps, compiled 1940 – 1946, Box #10, Folder #1520: Education – College – School : Memo: B.B. Wilson, Jr. Commanding Officer (United States Pacific Fleet Amphibious Force Communication School, Camp Pendleton, 5 February 1943).

the fighting on Guadalcanal in late November 1942.[115] The reports reveal information

garnered from coastwatchers on Japanese activity on and around the islands of New

Georgia and Santa Isabel in the Solomons, enemy aircraft losses following combat, and

the movement of enemy troop barges in the area.[116] Pieces of information such as this

could greatly enhance Allied situational awareness throughout the Solomon Islands and

New Guinea campaigns of 1942 and 1943.

Interrogations of prisoners of war also assisted in completing the Allied naval

intelligence picture during these campaigns. A report from Admiral Richmond Kelly

Turner, dated 19 November 1942, illustrates the usefulness of prisoner of war

interrogations to naval and marine efforts. Turner's report includes multiple

interrogations of Japanese prisoners, including soldiers, seamen, and aviators. These

interrogations revealed important information on a number of topics: the Japanese ground

attacks on Guadalcanal in September and October 1942; Japanese units operating in the

theater; the method and names of ships transporting Japanese troops to Guadalcanal; and

some of the technical and tactical details of Japanese land-based naval aviation.[117]

After-Action Reports and Captured Materials

The marines and the navy regularly used information from after action reports

from front line units and personnel to add to their knowledge of the situation and the

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[115] *NARA127:* Series: Records of Amphibious Corps, compiled 1940 – 1946, Box #21, Folder #5-1900: Notes on Japanese: Daily Summaries, Division Intelligence Section, Headquarters, First Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force (22-26 November 1942).

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid. Memo: R. K. Turner, AMPHIBIOUS FORCE, SOUTH PACIFIC FORCE, Office of the Commander File No. FE25/A8 Serial 087 (19 November 1942).

enemy. The Headquarters, First Marine Amphibious Corps forwarded a seven page

report dated 6 April 1943 to the commanders of the First Raider Regiment and First

Parachute Regiment titled "Combat Operations, South Pacific" discussing lessons learned

and front line reports. Some of the observations specifically addressed Japanese

weaponry, some discussed lessons learned about the need for supporting artillery or how

to mark one's own lines for the benefit of photographic aircraft, and other observations

reflected evaluations of American equipment in the challenging jungle environment.[118]

In another memo from Lt. Col. Evan F. Carlson of the Second Marine Raider Battalion to

the Commandant of the Marine Corps in January 1943, Carlson proffered a number of

suggestions based on his combat experiences to improve the combat efficiency of raider

battalions. In the memo, he describes his observations about the fighting characteristics

of the Japanese and he stresses the need for superior firepower and effective maneuver

and infiltration tactics to counter Japanese methods.[119]

Naval after action reports gave details and lessons learned concerning air and sea

actions. The navy conducted interviews of a number of naval aviators in 1944 covering

their experiences in aerial combat and published a series of confidential booklets based

on them.[120] The service also published a report "Amphibious Operations During the

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[118] *NARA127:* Box #22, Folder #6 2430: Operations 1 Nov 42 – 13 Dec 43: Memo A.F. Howard, "Combat observations, South Pacific," (Headquarters, First Marine Amphibious Corps, 6 April 1943), 1-8.

[119] *NARA127:* Box #23, Folder #4 2550: Plans (10 Nov 42-24 Mar 43): Memo: Lieutenant Colonel Evan F. Carlson, "Discussion of and suggestion for improvement in the combat efficiency in Raider battalions, based on experience gained in operations against the enemy," (HEADQUARTERS, SECOND MARINE RAIDER BATTALION, FIRST MARINE AMPHIBIOUS CORPS, January 27, 1943), 1-6.

[120] *NARA127:* Series: Reports, Studies, and Plans re World War II Military Operations, 1941-1956, Box #26, Folder: ONI OCNO File Interviews (USN, USMC Officers) WWII 1942-1945 Part 2 of 3, (Air Intelligence Group, Division of Department of Naval Intelligence).

Period August to December 1943" in April 1944 as a continuation in a series on amphibious operations.[121] Studies, reports, and interviews like these ensured information and intelligence flowed both up and down the naval chain of command, which undoubtedly benefited the war fighters and commanders in the field.

Captured materials also played an important role in naval intelligence. Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief, United States Pacific Fleet, emphasized the importance of captured material in a directive dated February 27, 1943. The directive reiterated the vital importance of both captured equipment and captured documents, and it ordered the rapid forwarding of such materials up the intelligence chain, with specific procedures for anything related to enemy codes and ciphers.[122] In another memo dated 30 November 1942, CINCPAC forwarded a list of excerpts from captured Japanese documents pertaining to orders emanating from the Japanese forces on Rabaul, New Britain.[123] Sometimes the exploitation of captured documents and codes provided immediate dividends, as during the naval battle of Santa Cruz in October 1942 when Japanese aircraft codes recovered from a crashed plane

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[121] Ibid. Box #27: Hist. Tact. Study: Salerno to CDR. TF-53 Op Plan A162-44: "Amphibious Operations During the Period August to December 1943," (United States Fleet, Headquarters of the Commander in Chief, Navy Department, 22 April 1944).

[122] *NARA127:* Series: Records of Amphibious Corps, compiled 1940 – 1946, Box #10, Folder #1580-65: Pacific Fleet Memos and Letters: Memo by R.A. Spruance, "Pacific Fleet Confidential Letter 4CL-43" (Chief of Staff, United States Pacific Fleet Flagship of the Commander in Chief, February 27, 1943).

[123] Ibid. Box #21, Folder #5 1900: Notes on Japanese: Memo by P.V. Mercer, "Captured Enemy Documents – Translation of," (United States Pacific Fleet, Flagship of the Commander in Chief, 30 November 1942).

assisted American efforts to decipher Japanese intentions.[124] The U.S. Navy was willing

to resort to extensive measures to capture documents with codes and ciphers. In late

January 1943, the New Zealand corvette *Kiwi* sank the Japanese submarine *I-1* near

Guadalcanal. The U.S. Navy then salvaged many of the code books and cipher keys from

the vessel, which although older provided a windfall of documents for intelligence

analysts that added to the Allied understanding of Japanese naval communications

security.[125] Captured materials and documents, therefore, made a difference for Allied

intelligence in the tactical, operational, and strategic arenas.

U.S. Naval Photo Reconnaissance

When the U.S. entered the war naval photographic reconnaissance lagged behind

the army, but over time it would improve markedly. According to John Prados,

"…where radio intelligence had been almost the sole source for secret information in the

early months, more sources developed to make [intelligence] fusion truly worthwhile.

One of the most important, in the long run, would be photographic reconnaissance."[126]

Like the army, the navy learned first from the British when Lieutenant Commander

Robert S. Quackenbush, Jr. from the Navy Bureau of Aeronautics paid a three month

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[124] Spector, *Listening to the Enemy: Key Documents on the Role of Communications Intelligence in the War with Japan*, 80. This information is taken from portions of "The Employment of Mobile Radio Intelligence Units by Commands Afloat During World War II," reproduced in Spector's edited volume.

[125] John Prados, *Combined Fleet Decoded: The Secret History of American Intelligence and the Japanese Navy in World War II*, 1st ed. (New York: Random House, 1995), 399-402.

[126] Ibid., 412.

visit to Medmenham in England in 1941.[127] The impetus for this exchange came from

Vice Admiral Robert L. Ghormley, future commander of the South Pacific Area.

Ghormley observed the British exploitation of this type of intelligence in the spring 1941

and pressed the navy to develop similar capabilities, resulting in the mission by

Quackenbush.[128] The navy's first operational photographic intelligence squadron,

Photographic Squadron 1 (VD-1), began operations from Espiritu Santo and then

Guadalcanal in early 1943, using the naval version of the B-24, the PB4Y-1 "Photo

Liberator."[129] Prior to this, naval photo reconnaissance operations relied on shorter range

carrier-based aircraft using hand held cameras.[130]

Following Quackenbush's return, the navy recognized the need to ramp up its

photographic intelligence efforts. Once again, with advocacy from Ghormley, the navy

pressed ahead and created a school for photographic interpreters in the Anacostia district

of Washington, D.C. with Quackenbush as one of its first instructors.[131] The school

planned to train 150 interpreters, but this number soon grew and the navy eventually

trained 500 interpreters, most at Anacostia.[132] In July 1942, the Photographic

Reconnaissance and Interpretation Section Intelligence Center (PRISIC) began operations

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[127] Stanley, *World War II Photo Intelligence*, 66. See also Prados, *Combined Fleet Decoded: The Secret History of American Intelligence and the Japanese Navy in World War II*, 358.

[128] Prados, *Combined Fleet Decoded: The Secret History of American Intelligence and the Japanese Navy in World War II*, 359.

[129] Stanley, *World War II Photo Intelligence*, 66.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Prados, *Combined Fleet Decoded: The Secret History of American Intelligence and the Japanese Navy in World War II*, 359.

[132] Ibid., 413.

at Pearl Harbor with twenty-three officers and four enlisted men.[133] A nearby photo lab

with thirty more enlisted troops and eight officers assigned to aircraft carriers augmented

PRISIC's operations.[134]

Yet the process of photo intelligence did not take place solely at major

headquarters or ashore. In an interview conducted on 10 September 1945 for the oral

histories collection of the navy, Chief Photographer Fred Bottomer, USNR, recounted his

wartime experiences. Bottomer served aboard the seaplane tender *USS Chandeleur*

beginning in November 1942. He proudly relates that the ship contained a first rate photo

lab, and he discussed a tour ashore at Guadalcanal and Munda as part of an army-navy

"Crash Intelligence Unit" that scoured the surrounding areas' jungles, even on enemy

occupied islands, in search of downed enemy aircraft to photograph.[135] His account

makes very interesting reading, combining photographic intelligence, human intelligence,

infiltration, and the capture of enemy materiel – probably a series of events in which a

Chief Photographer never expected to participate!

A memo from Admiral King in late October 1942 demonstrates the increasing

appreciation of the value of photographic reconnaissance in the South Pacific. King

stated, "I have received many communications from cognizant commanders in the Pacific

emphasizing the urgent need for suitable photographic aircraft for the South Pacific.

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[133] Ibid.

[134] Ibid.

[135] *National Archives and Records Administration: Record Group 38: Records of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, 1875-2006* (Hereafter *NARA 38*): Series: World War II Oral Histories, Interviews and Statements, compiled ca. 04/1942 – ca. 12/1946, documenting the period ca. 12/07/1941 – ca. 09/02/1945, Box #3: World War II Oral Histories and Interviews 1942-1946: Borley, CA to Buracker, WH: Chief Photographer Fred W. Bottomer, (Lt. Porter, 10 Sept. 1945), 1-5.

These airplanes are required for effective photographic reconnaissance for successful

offensive and defensive operations in that area."[136] King goes on to state that

development of suitable carrier-based aircraft for long range missions had not yet met

with success, so he was submitting a request for an additional eighteen photographic P-

38s and along with eighteen photographic B-25s.[137] This memo reinforces the claims

made by Stanley and Prados, indicating that the navy had to play catch up in the

photographic reconnaissance arena in 1942 before VD-1 became operational.

Intelligence Personnel Selection and Training

Effective intelligence requires capable and trained individuals. The army

demonstrated that acquiring such people is more easily said than done. Service in naval

intelligence could also prove detrimental to one's career and therefore hampered

recruiting. Military promotion systems often appreciate and reward combat duty and

combat commands while overlooking important supporting activities, and the World War

II American navy was no different. A report on the Combat Intelligence Center at Pearl

Harbor is worth quoting at length:

> The career of ***text withheld*** furnishes an object lesson. This officer had the
> personal misfortune to early exhibit genius in cryptography. This led to repeated
> assignment to that duty until his career became entangled in the rigidities of the
> promotion system. He was passed over for selection to Lt. Commander and was
> finally saved to the Navy by the somewhat dubious and arbitrary action of the
> Secretary of the Navy in designating him for Engineering duty only. By this
> means he achieved the rank of Lt. Commander a year after his contemporaries.

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[136] *NARA 38:* Series: Former Security Classified Chronological File ("Adm King Pinks"), 1942-45, Box
#1: 9/13/1942 – 3/31/43: Memo from E.J. King to Joint Chiefs of Staff, Serial #001284 (United States
Fleet, Headquarters of the Commander in Chief, Navy Department, Washington, D.C., Oct 26 1942).

[137] Ibid.

What this may have cost in personal pride and remuneration can only be guessed.[138]

Two things from this passage stand out. First, the author calls it a "personal misfortune" for the individual to have demonstrated "genius in cryptography," which represented a critical need to the navy. Then, in order to save the gentleman's career, the navy had to relocate a proven cryptologist to an engineering position to ensure his promotion. The problem here is plain to see – the navy valued the products of cryptology, but failed to adequately reward those who provided them. This hypocrisy could have been disastrous for the service. Fortunately for the United States, enough talented individuals served in the cryptology field despite the navy's skewed reward structure. The U.S. Navy shared this characteristic with the Imperial Japanese Navy, although perhaps not to the same degree.

The limited horizons of an intelligence career did not mean the navy lowered standards for intelligence officers. On the contrary, standards remained high for these positions. The requirements for photo interpreters provide an excellent example. Recruits needed a "college degree, knowledge of architecture, geology, engineering, or a related field, and good eyesight; they had to meet security qualifications; and be between twenty-one and twenty-nine years old."[139] Such qualification requirements, like those of the army, necessarily limited the recruiting pool.

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[138] Spector, *Listening to the Enemy: Key Documents on the Role of Communications Intelligence in the War with Japan*, 156-57. This excerpt is taken from portions of the report "Narrative, Combat Intelligence Center, Joint Intelligence Center, Pacific Ocean Area," reproduced in Spector's edited volume.

[139] Prados, *Combined Fleet Decoded: The Secret History of American Intelligence and the Japanese Navy in World War II*, 413.

The navy also needed qualified Japanese linguists. The naval language school initially started at Berkeley, California but later migrated to Boulder, Colorado and then eventually to Minnesota.[140] Intelligence recruits received training from Nisei personnel in Colorado beginning in June 1942 and by 1944 the school included courses in Russian, Chinese, and Malay.[141] Eventually the program produced more than 800 linguists, which included marines, naval personnel, and even a handful of Royal Navy recruits.[142] These linguists steadily filled an important void in U.S. naval intelligence as the war progressed.

Counterintelligence

Like the U.S. Army, the U.S. Navy also had to address counterintelligence. In 1916, the Office of Naval Intelligence assumed responsibility for naval counterintelligence operations.[143] The Counterintelligence Branch of the ONI (OP-16-B) in 1939 consisted of several sections: Naval Censorship (B-2); Investigations (B-3); Security of Naval Information (B-4); Commerce and Travel (B-5); Sabotage, Espionage, and Counterespionage (B-7); and Coastal Information (B-8).[144] As war loomed in 1939 and 1940, the ONI, at the direction of President Roosevelt, began coordination of counterintelligence activities with the Military Intelligence Division and the Federal

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[140] Ibid., 352.

[141] Ibid.

[142] Ibid.

[143] Wyman H. Packard, United States. Office of Naval Intelligence, and Naval Historical Center, *A Century of U.S. Naval Intelligence* (Washington, DC: Office of Naval Intelligence: Naval Historical Center: For sale by U.S. G.P.O., Supt. of Docs., 1996), 210.

[144] Ibid., 254.

Bureau of Investigation (FBI).[145] The primary focus for the ONI and the FBI remained

domestic security, with a wary eye cast towards Japanese-Americans.[146]   Proper

counterintelligence also demanded restrictions on information flow, and the ONI

attempted to prevent leaks through a number of activities ranging from discouraging

sailors from revealing ship movements, to censorship, and even investigating other

agencies, civilians, and journalists.[147] ONI counterintelligence activities also received

assistance and support from the naval district intelligence offices, attached to each naval

district covering the United States and its territories, whose duties included censorship

and security.[148]

 The office faced a number of counterintelligence challenges during the war. The

post Midway leak in an article published by the Chicago *Tribune,* which could have

revealed to the Japanese that the U.S. could read IJN codes, ultimately passed

unprosecuted in large part out of concern for maintaining the security of this radio

intelligence advantage.[149] Apparently, the Japanese remained unaware of the article. The

ONI also worked with other governmental agencies to ensure the passage of wiretapping

laws and to examine the files of cable and telegraph companies.[150] The navy mistrusted

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[145] Jeffery M. Dorwart, *Conflict of Duty: The U.S. Navy's Intelligence Dilemma, 1919-1945* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1983), 117-18.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Ibid., 190.

[148] Packard, United States. Office of Naval Intelligence, and Naval Historical Center, *A Century of U.S. Naval Intelligence*, 278.

[149] Dorwart, *Conflict of Duty: The U.S. Navy's Intelligence Dilemma, 1919-1945*, 191.

[150] Ibid.

members of the U.S. Communist Party and regularly precluded such individuals from assuming communications duties. Yet, despite naval hesitancy, in 1942 President Roosevelt overrode this policy on the basis of the alliance with the Soviet Union.[151]

Intelligence in the U.S. Naval Air Arm

The structure of the U.S. Navy's air arm differed from Japan's Naval Air Force. No U.S. naval air headquarters existed, as was the case with the Imperial Japanese Navy. The Bureau of Aeronautics, under the Secretary of the Navy, oversaw the development and sustenance of the U.S. Navy's air component and coordinated with the CNO to meet the readiness needs of the fleet.[152] During the interwar years, this branch relied upon open source intelligence and the reports of naval attachés to ONI in order to track the development of foreign aircraft. During the war, the system adjusted:

> In late December 1941 the Bureau's loosely knit intelligence activities were concentrated in the Planning Division. The Aviation Intelligence Branch was established in that Division the following month. The wartime functions of the Air Information Branch (name changed from Aviation Intelligence in December 1942) included the collection, analysis, and compilation of technical and operational aviation information. The Branch evaluated all forms of air intelligence and published various bulletins and summaries on the subject. Dissemination of technical aviation intelligence to units afloat and ashore, special tactical studies, liaison with the Office of Naval Intelligence, and assistance in selecting and training officers for such work became some of the other duties of the Air Information Branch.[153]

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[151] Packard, United States. Office of Naval Intelligence, and Naval Historical Center, *A Century of U.S. Naval Intelligence*, 255.

[152] Furer, *Administration of the Navy Department in World War II*, 8.

[153] Ibid., 370.

The Bureau recognized the need for increased intelligence representation in the fleet and began training reserve officers in February 1942 to serve on "staffs and with all aviation fleet and shore-based units."[154] Reorganization in August 1943 created the Deputy CNO (Air) within the CNO structure, and most of the Bureau's intelligence structures transferred to this new office.[155]

Fielded forces received intelligence from the Bureau and through the normal naval channels of intelligence already discussed. The intelligence officers trained in accordance with the previous paragraph provided a key node in the information chain and proved their worth quickly. Enclosure (B), "Notes on the duties of Air Intelligence Officers," written by Captain Forrest Sherman of the carrier *USS Wasp*, accompanied a 12 December 1942 Air Combat Intelligence memo. Sherman's enclosure reviewed the performance of four recent graduates of the school and relayed how these officers facilitated intelligence flow between the ships officers and the squadron intelligence officers.[156] The captain related some of the common air intelligence practices aboard the ship, including post sortie debrief of pilots by squadron intelligence officers and the forwarding of those reports to the air intelligence officers.[157] He also covered some of the many qualification requirements that should be expected in air intelligence officers and recognized that "the procedure for naval air intelligence is as yet only beginning to

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[154] Ibid.

[155] Ibid.

[156] *NARA 127:* Series: Records of Amphibious Corps, compiled 1940 – 1946, Box #21, Folder #4 1900: Notes on Japanese. Enclosure (B) Memo Forrest Sherman, "Notes on the duties of Air Intelligence Officers," (Commander, *USS Wasp)*, 1.

[157] Ibid., 2.

evolve, and will be developed further through experience in actual operations."[158]

Sherman concluded, "The results attained by the training and assignment of four officers

for intelligence duties in this ship have been most valuable, and have amply repaid the

effort involved. For carriers involved in active operations in forward areas the

complement of intelligence officers should include one for the carrier, one for the [air]

group, and one for each carrier squadron."[159] In Sherman's eye at least, the program was

proving its worth in combat operations.

Air intelligence also extended ashore in operational areas. The Air Combat

Intelligence Center, based at Noumeau, New Caledonia, served the South Pacific Area

under the direction of the Commander Air, South Pacific (COMAIRSOPAC) Intelligence

officer who functioned as a J-2.[160] This organization "received and disseminated all

combat intelligence, and it prepared maps, target charts, and objective folders for both

Navy air and the AAF…."[161] The U.S. Marine air wing based on Guadalcanal also ran

something of a joint intelligence center for air operations with liaisons from the

Australians, the U.S. Army, and the USAAF.[162] Such cooperation, when conducted in

good faith, served to enhance the intelligence picture for all involved and assisted in

effective joint operations.

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[158] Ibid., 6-7.

[159] Ibid., 7.

[160] Kreis, *Piercing the Fog: Intelligence and Army Air Forces Operations in World War II*, 256.

[161] Ibid.

[162] Ibid.

U.S. Naval Air Arm and Photo Reconnaissance

Admiral King's memo, cited earlier, indicated the lack of photographic aircraft in the South Pacific in late 1942, and it requested P-38 and B-25 aircraft to bridge the gap until naval aircraft made it to the region. But the navy did have photographic intelligence assets in the area on Guadalcanal in the fall of 1942. These supporting elements included photographers, lab technicians, and photo interpreters, but no independent navy photo lab.[163] The marines did, however, have a photo lab in a trailer and processed photos taken by naval photographers flying in army B-17 aircraft.[164] In this case, resource scarcity forced joint cooperation involving the army, navy, and marines.

The creation of the Photo Wing South Pacific, headquartered on Espiritu Santo, in June 1943 indicates how far the naval efforts in photoreconnaissance progressed. This wing included the navy photographic squadron, VD-1, and the marine photographic squadron, VMD-154, which also flew the "Photo Liberator" aircraft, and several army photographic groups and squadrons.[165] Naval and marine air efforts in photographic intelligence were maturing by mid 1943.

Examining the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy intelligence structures in isolation provides only a partial picture of the intelligence situation for the Allies in the South and Southwest Pacific areas. Some of the organizations mentioned above already displayed a degree of joint and combined efforts among the military branches and among the Allies. Just as in the strategic decision-making structures, the Allied intelligence structures, in

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[163] Stanley, *World War II Photo Intelligence*, 66.

[164] Ibid.

[165] Ibid.

contrast to Japan's, attempted to cultivate a measure of cooperation among the service branches and among allies. Some of these integrated structures are worth reviewing for the capabilities they brought to Allied strategic effectiveness.

Combined and Joint Intelligence Organizations

The Combined Chiefs of Staff received intelligence support from the Combined Intelligence Committee, which consisted of the American Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), the British Joint Intelligence Committee in Washington, D.C., and the British Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee based in London.[166] But given that the Allies designated the Pacific an American area of responsibility, the American JCS structure took the lead in the Pacific War, placing prominence on the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC). Members of the JIC included: Director of Intelligence for the War Department; Director of Intelligence for the Navy Department; representatives from the State Department; members of the Board of Economic Warfare; later the Director of Strategic Services; and after May 1943, Director of the intelligence staff of the Army Air Forces.[167] The JIC received intelligence inputs from the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee and from the Office of Strategic Services (OSS).[168] The OSS, a fascinating organization, did not contribute significantly to the campaigns in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, in part because the South Pacific was a naval command and because MacArthur had his own, similar organization in the Southwest Pacific.

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[166] Furer, *Administration of the Navy Department in World War II*, 654.

[167] Ibid.

[168] Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years*, 232.

MacArthur set up an extensive intelligence organization under his G-2, Major General Charles Willoughby, in the Southwest Pacific Area. This organization included important subdivisions such as the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section (ATIS), the Central Bureau, and the Allied Intelligence Bureau (AIB).[169] ATIS responsibilities included interrogating enemy prisoners and translating captured enemy documents.[170] MacArthur's command endeavored to limit knowledge of the existence of ATIS for security purposes, yet over the course of the war the organization grew from twenty-five officers and ten enlisted men to 250 officers and 1,700 enlisted troops from "the United Nations."[171] According to a draft report on the history of ATIS, the organization generated intelligence that contributed significantly to both strategic and combat intelligence in the Southwest Pacific, some of which will be detailed in the campaign study.[172] By the end of the war, ATIS had interviewed more than 14,000 prisoners of war and had published more than twenty million pages of enemy documents while employing the services of Japanese-Americans to interpret and translate.[173] ATIS provides a good example of a combined organization on the Allied side.

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[169] Moore, *Spies for Nimitz: Joint Military Intelligence in the Pacific War*, xiii.

[170] James, *The Years of MacArthur: Volume II, 1941-1945*, 178.

[171] *NARA 496:* Series: Histories 1942-45, Box #326 "MIS Histories 1942-1945," Folder "History of ATIS (Draft Copy)," (Colonel Harold Doud), Foreword, 1.

[172] Ibid., 78-83.

[173] James, *The Years of MacArthur: Volume II, 1941-1945*, 178-79. Fourteen thousand prisoners may seem a significant number that undermines claims of the capture of only limited numbers of Japanese prisoners, but this covered the period between 1942 and 1945. By means of comparison, in May 1942 the Japanese captured over 76,000 American and Filipino soldiers on Bataan alone. See John Toland, *But Not in Shame: The Six Months after Pearl Harbor* (New York: Random House, 1961), 335.

The Central Bureau represented another combined organization in MacArthur's intelligence structure. He established the Central Bureau in Australia on April 15, 1942 with a fourfold mission: provide radio intelligence to MacArthur's command; provide for Allied communication security; work closely with the Signal Intelligence Service in Washington, D.C. to break Japanese army codes; and to exchange intelligence with the British and U.S. Navy in nearby theaters.[174] American and Australian personnel worked very closely within the Central Bureau to fight the common Japanese foe.[175] The Central Bureau cooperated with other agencies in the following manner:

> External distribution of Central Bureau's labors depended upon whether the information was technical (that is, dealing with cryptanalysis) or analytical (that is, concerning intelligence). The two paths rarely crossed. Cryptanalytic aspects (Japanese codebook additive numbers, code numbers, and so on) were disseminated horizontally from Central Bureau to Arlington Hall as well as to British cryptanalysts in India. Intelligence analysis traveled vertically, going up from Southwest Pacific Headquarters to the War Department's Military Intelligence Service and down from both agencies to MacArthur's subordinate commands.[176]

Southwest Pacific command's handling of ULTRA materials left much to be desired in 1942 and could have jeopardized Allied successes in reading transmissions from Rabaul, which led to mutual accusations of poor security between the army and the navy.[177] The organization clearly had some flaws, but despite the tensions between the services, it remains another example of cooperation among allies and among military branches.

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[174] Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War against Japan, 1942-1945*, 20.

[175] Alvarez, ed. *Allied and Axis Signals Intelligence in World War II*, 44. From "Chapter 3: Signals Intelligence in Australia during the Pacific War," written by Frank Cain.

[176] Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War against Japan, 1942-1945*, 23.

[177] Ibid., 27.

The Allied Intelligence Bureau represented another such organization in MacArthur's command. This organization represented MacArthur's version of the OSS, with duties that included clandestine operations in enemy territory like sabotage, espionage, and the fomenting of guerrilla resistance movements.[178] MacArthur decided to establish the AIB in June 1942 under the Director of Military Intelligence for the Australian Army, Colonel C.G. Roberts, with support from an American finance officer.[179] The aforementioned Australian Coastwatcher network existed before AIB, but soon became one of the latter's key tools in the cloak and dagger war.[180] The Coastwatcher network also took pains to assist the South Pacific command with Australian Lieutenant Hugh Mackenzie as a Coastwatcher coordinator for the command, and as evidenced by the previously noted intelligence reports of the First Marine Division on Guadalcanal.[181] The successes of the AIB and his own desires to maintain utmost control of forces in his area led MacArthur to refuse a proposal to send OSS agents into the Southwest Pacific area.[182] MacArthur's rejection of the OSS notwithstanding, the AIB provides yet another example of intelligence cooperation on the Allied side, both among nations and across commands.

The navy and the South Pacific command also created several organizations that demonstrated joint and combined cooperation. Fleet Reporting Unit, Melbourne

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[178] James, *The Years of MacArthur: Volume II, 1941-1945*, 179.

[179] Allison Ind, *Allied Intelligence Bureau* (New York: McKay Co., 1958), 11-12.

[180] Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War against Japan, 1942-1945*, 54.

[181] Ind, *Allied Intelligence Bureau*, 25.

[182] James, *The Years of MacArthur: Volume II, 1941-1945*, 179.

(FRUMEL) is one example. FRUMEL became the advanced unit for naval combat radio

intelligence in the Southwest Pacific, and consisted of American naval communications

intelligence refugees from Corregidor in the Philippines and their counterparts from

Australia.[183] In the words of Frank Cain, "FRUMEL functioned as a joint US/Australian

naval unit," and it represented a division of the larger radio intelligence organization,

Fleet Radio Pacific (FRUPAC).[184] FRUPAC had succeeded Hypo and then the Central

Intelligence Unit in 1943.[185] By the end of August 1943, FRUMEL had four

geographically separated intercept stations in Australia.[186] The organization also

cooperated with the MacArthur's Central Bureau. Yet some tension existed in this

liaison relationship, as Willoughby claimed FRUMEL often withheld information from

MacArthur's command.[187]

Other organizations that have already received some mention deserve another

look from the perspective of joint and combined cooperation. Nearly all the air

organizations in the South Pacific Area demonstrated these cooperative characteristics.

The Air Combat Intelligence Center at Noumeau "was, to a great extent, a joint

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[183] "National Archives and Records Administration: Record Group 457: Records of the National Security Agency/Central Security Service [NCA/CCS]: SRH-268 Redman Correspondence," Department of the Navy, Naval Historical Center, http://www.history.navy.mil/library/online/srh268.htm. Memo from J.R. Redmon to Admiral F.J.Horne, paragraph 6.

[184] Alvarez, ed. *Allied and Axis Signals Intelligence in World War II*, 50. From "Chapter 3: Signals Intelligence in Australia during the Pacific War," written by Frank Cain.

[185] Moore, *Spies for Nimitz: Joint Military Intelligence in the Pacific War*, 17.

[186] Alvarez, ed. *Allied and Axis Signals Intelligence in World War II*, 50. From "Chapter 3: Signals Intelligence in Australia during the Pacific War," written by Frank Cain.

[187] Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War against Japan, 1942-1945*, 24. Edward Drea finds Willoughby's claim to be contradicted by the evidence.

intelligence center, with the COMAIRSOPAC Intelligence Officer serving as the J-2."[188]

The Photographic Wing (Composite), South Pacific also included units from all the

services. The 21 June 1943 memorandum establishing the unit appointed Colonel

William Holden, USAAF, as the commander and included flying units from the navy,

marines, and the army, as well as photographic interpreters from the navy and the

army.[189] Likewise, COMAIRSOLS represented a joint organization. Extracts from the

diary of Major Victor Dykes, who served on the COMAIRSOLS staff on three occasions

reveal the extent of that organization's joint character. Major Dykes wrote:

> There are Army Air Force units and Marine and Navy units operating under his
> [Commander Aircraft South Pacific or COMAIRSOPAC] direction. But these
> aircraft are not operated by either the Army, Navy or Marine Corps – for tactical
> use they are loaned to COMAIRSOLS (Commander Aircraft Solomons).
> COMAIRSOLS, himself may be either an Admiral or an Army or Marine general
> and he has a composite staff.[190]

All of these examples indicate that in the air intelligence component, the South Pacific

Area enjoyed a great deal of joint cooperation.

Finally, at Pearl Harbor, intelligence evolved into a joint activity as well. The

Intelligence Center, Pacific Ocean Area created by Admiral Nimitz in June 1942 laid the

groundwork for joint integration of intelligence in the future. The ICPOA served as a

bridge to meet U.S. Marine Corps Commandant Maj. Gen. Holcomb's suggestion,

proffered in April 1942, for a joint organization. In September 1943, ICPOA became the

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[188] Kreis, *Piercing the Fog: Intelligence and Army Air Forces Operations in World War II*, 256.

[189] *NARA 127:* Series: Records of Amphibious Corps, compiled 1940 – 1946, Box #20, Folder #31060-2: Aviation S+C Combined: Memo from The Commander South Pacific, "Directive for Establishing a Photographic Wing (Composite), South Pacific," (COMSOPAC, 21 June 1943), 1.

[190] *AFHRA:* Call #749.01: "Commander Aircraft Solomons (COMAIRSOLS)," extracts from diary of Maj. Victor Dykes, 1.

Joint Intelligence Center Pacific Ocean Area (JICPOA), with Colonel J. J. Twitty the Assistant Chief-of-Staff for Intelligence on the Staff of Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Fleet and simultaneously officer-in-charge of JICPOA.[191] Thus an army Colonel became the number two intelligence officer in the Pacific under Admiral Nimitz. Once again, this represented a measure of cooperation unheard of within the Japanese intelligence structures on the other side of the Pacific, where inter-service rivalries reigned supreme.

Conclusions

The brief examination of the two combatants' intelligence structures demonstrates some significant factors that influenced the campaigns in the South and Southwest Pacific, and, therefore, possession of strategic initiative. On balance, the United States and its allies rapidly developed a more mature and comprehensive approach to intelligence that integrated services and nations. Whereas the Japanese tended to focus more on immediate and tactical matters, the Allies pursued the full spectrum of intelligence from combat operations to strategic issues.

The presence of intelligence officers in the chain of command is one measure of the commitment to intelligence. The United States placed trained intelligence officers throughout most of its organizations. The army had dedicated intelligence officers down to the battalion level and the navy had dedicated intelligence officers on its ships and in its squadrons. For the Japanese, intelligence responsibilities often represented an

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[191] Spector, *Listening to the Enemy: Key Documents on the Role of Communications Intelligence in the War with Japan*, 164. This excerpt is taken from portions of the report "Narrative, Combat Intelligence Center, Joint Intelligence Center, Pacific Ocean Area," reproduced in Spector's edited volume. The report also states that the Radio Intelligence Section of JICPOA, which had been the CIU inherited from ICPOA, transformed into FRUPAC.

additional, rather than primary, duty for officers aboard ships or at the lower end of the military hierarchy. Often these Japanese officers received little or no specific intelligence training.

The evidence also points to much better intelligence cooperation and integration on the Allied side. The Japanese army and navy operated independently in the intelligence arena. They may have shared intelligence informally and certainly discussed it when formulating policies and plans at the IGHQ level, but they did not create any truly joint or integrated intelligence agencies. The Allies, although not perfect and still at times manifesting service competition and jealousies, created numerous intelligence organizations that manifested joint and combined cooperation and thereby fostered improved intelligence fusion. From the Combined Intelligence Committee to the JIC at the higher levels of command, down to the JICPOA, the AIB, the Air Intelligence Center, and other organizations in the area commands of the Pacific, the Allies created intelligence divisions and agencies that enhanced the flow and exploitation of information and intelligence to all services and all friendly nations.

Early in the war, while expanding its empire, Japan enjoyed some intelligence advantages over the Allies. By dint of conquest, the Japanese had more opportunities for the capture and exploitation of Allied materiel and prisoners of war. While they took advantage of some opportunities, such as test flying captured aircraft, they missed others. The Japanese army did not place much emphasis on the value of prisoners of war, and as the Japanese navy's treatment of captured American naval aviators at Midway indicates, prisoners could be easily discarded in short order after revealing immediate tactical

intelligence. Instead of retaining these prisoners for further exploitation and learning more about U.S. naval aviation operating procedures, the Japanese navy executed them and unceremoniously committed their remains to the ocean. Later, as the tide of Japanese conquest ebbed, these intelligence advantages diminished.

The Allies, however, enjoyed intelligence advantages in other areas. They clearly held a decided advantage in radio intelligence throughout the war, from prior to Pearl Harbor to Midway and beyond. The U.S. Army struggled against its Japanese counterpart until later in the war and the U.S. Navy likewise suffered periods of limited radio intelligence, but the overall results would provide a critical advantage. While starting from scratch at the beginning of the war, U.S. photographic intelligence developed into another advantage for the Allies during the campaigns in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. While the Allies progressed rapidly in this area, the Japanese stagnated. Another key advantage the Allies also exploited was human intelligence, in the form of the Coastwatcher network, as a key advantage over the Japanese in the South and Southwest Pacific areas. This network corroborated other intelligence, generated its valuable information, and helped mask other intelligence breakthroughs (ULTRA).

The Allies fought the Pacific War with a more comprehensive intelligence apparatus than Japan. This apparatus more readily stood up to the challenges of a long war than did the Japanese structure, designed primarily as it was for tactical exploitation. The Allied apparatus also adjusted more effectively to the increasing demands of the war. The evolution of joint and combined structures, such as the creation of JICPOA, attests to this fact. The Allies' more inclusive and integrated system would help pave the way for

Allied victories in the South and Southwest Pacific and help the Allies wrest the strategic initiative from the Japanese in late 1942 and early 1943. These organizations gave the Allies a better opportunity to increase their situational awareness and understanding of enemy capabilities, allowed them to react to Japanese moves, and enabled successful planning and execution of operations during this critical phase of the war.

Chapter 6: "East Wind, Rain"

The epic conflict between Japan and the United States began with Japan's raid on Pearl Harbor and its lightning strike into the southwest Pacific and Southeast Asia in early December 1941. Japan seized and clearly held the strategic initiative throughout the early months of the war and used it to implement an offensive strategy designed to secure vital resources for the empire. The Japanese hoped to set the stage for later phases to allow them to secure their gains and fight the war on their own terms by protecting the perimeter gained and forcing the Allies to agree to a negotiated peace. In the event, stunning Japanese successes and some of the American countermeasures caused the Japanese to reevaluate their strategy and make some important adjustments. The course of this first period leading up to and including the Battle of Midway in June 1942 set the stage for the succeeding phase in which the Allies vied for and eventually wrested the strategic initiative from Japan through campaigns in the south and southwest Pacific. Understanding the subsequent shift in strategic initiative requires an examination of this opening phase of the war.

"East Wind, Rain," represented the diplomatic code Japan sent out to its foreign missions indicating imminent war with the United States. See Van der Vat, *The Pacific Campaign,* 96.

Japan's Decision for War

The Japanese war aims included attaining primacy in their chosen sphere of influence in Asia, defeating the western nations (including eventually the Soviet Union), subduing China, and creating Japan's Asian "Co-Prosperity Sphere."[1] Japanese military actions in China and Manchuria during the late 1930s and early 1940s seriously complicated relations with the United States, which steadily ratcheted up economic pressure on Japan and finally cut off its oil supplies in 1941.[2] Obtaining unfettered access to critical resources, and oil in particular, became paramount concerns for the ensuing Japanese strategy.[3] This placed Borneo, Malaya, the Dutch East Indies, and the Philippine Islands squarely in Japan's crosshairs.[4] The Imperial Japanese Army had focused and prepared for war against the Soviet Union. The two nations carried antagonisms dating from the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese War, and had engaged in more recent combat at Lake Khasan in 1938 and at Nomonhan in 1939. But recent changes in the global situation, not least the U.S. oil embargo, forced a reevaluation. Other events that reshaped Japanese army calculations included the drubbing Soviet forces inflicted on the Japanese in the Nomonahan campaign in 1939 and the collapse of France and the Netherlands at the hands of Germany in 1940.[5] Once the Japanese had decided on war in the Pacific, peaceful relations with the Soviet Union became an important focal point for

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[1] Keegan, *The Second World War*, 249.

[2] Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II*, 254.

[3] Ibid., 252-57.

[4] van der Vat, *The Pacific Campaign: World War II, the U.S.-Japanese Naval War, 1941-1945*, 120.

[5] Ibid., 59-65.

Japanese strategy during that war.[6] Documents from the 6 September 1941 Imperial

Conference reveal Japanese thinking and state, "By cooperating with Germany and Italy,

we will shatter Anglo-American unity, link Asia and Europe, and we should be able to

create an invincible military alignment."[7] This meant a naval war against the United

States, which the Imperial Japanese Navy had long anticipated.

Following the Pearl Harbor raid, the United States embarked on its own war aims

vis-à-vis the Japanese in the Pacific. President Roosevelt held definite ideas about the

preferred outcome of the war. Almost immediately he settled on a policy of

"unconditional surrender" of the Axis powers, even if the Allies did not make this policy

known until the Casablanca Conference of 1943.[8] The president also needed to keep the

Soviet Union engaged in the war against Nazi Germany, which meant that he anticipated

the Soviet Union would emerge as a powerful player in the post war world.[9] The United

States hoped to destroy Japan's military power, but did not seek to cow the Japanese to

the same degree as it aimed to cow the German nation.[10] But a weakened and occupied

Japan could not provide an effective counterweight to the Soviet Union in the Far East, so

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[6] Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Visions of Victory: The Hopes of Eight World War II Leaders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 66-67.

[7] Saburo Ienaga, *The Pacific War: World War II and the Japanese, 1931-1945*, 1st American ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 139.

[8] Weinberg, *Visions of Victory: The Hopes of Eight World War II Leaders*, 179.

[9] Ibid., 196-97.

[10] Ibid., 203-05.

Roosevelt intended to cultivate such a counter with a stronger China.[11] All of these

considerations would shape American strategy in the Pacific War.

A number of factors shaped the Pacific War's particular character. Geography

dictated an expansive maritime war. The vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean also meant

that, unlike the European continental war, supply lines would be very long and tenuous

while the numbers of troops actually engaged in fighting on either side at any moment

would remain relatively small.[12] These geographic factors combined with the airpower

capabilities of the day to shape the war's character. In the words of historian James

Wood, "From beginning to end, fighting in the Pacific had been as much or more a

struggle for the skies as the seas, and indeed the latter was quite dependent on the

former."[13] Strong overtones of racism from both belligerents also characterized the war

in the Pacific. John Dower opined that "stereotyped and often blatantly racist thinking

contributed to poor military intelligence and planning, atrocious behavior, and the

adoption of exterminationist policies."[14]

Japanese Strategy at the Outbreak of War

Japan's strategy envisioned three phases for the war: Phase I would be a rapid

conquest of the resource-rich south; Phase II included the fortification of a perimeter

stretching from the Kuriles to Wake Island, the Marshall, Gilbert and Bismarck Islands,

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[11] Ibid., 185-86.

[12] Haruko Taya Cook and Theodore Failor Cook, *Japan at War: An Oral History*, 1st ed. (New York: New Press; Distributed by W.W. Norton, 1992), 261-62.

[13] Wood, *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War: Was Defeat Inevitable?* , 88.

[14] Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*, x.

northern New Guinea, the Dutch East Indies, and Malaya; and Phase III anticipated consolidation of the gains, destruction of the inevitable Allied counterattack, and the prosecution of a war of attrition until the enemy tired of war.[15] The Japanese strategists broke the opening phase into three stages: first they would occupy Thailand, land forces in Malaya, and attack the Philippine Islands and northern Borneo; next the Japanese would move on Dutch possessions in Borneo, the Celebes, Sumatra, and Java; and finally they would stabilize their gains and expand their control in Burma.[16]

Because of its shocking impact, the Pearl Harbor raid has come to symbolize these preplanned aggressive Japanese moves. Yet the Japanese originally formulated their plans without the raid, and only the insistence of Admiral Yamamoto ensured the raid would open the war. On January 7, 1941, Yamamoto wrote a nine page summary of his "Views on Preparation for War," in which he proposed massing the Imperial Navy's aircraft carrier divisions for an attack against Hawaii to annihilate the U.S. fleet.[17] He later insisted the operation was necessary in order to protect the flank of the planned Japanese advance into the southern areas.[18] Yet the Naval General Staff opposed Yamamoto's planned dispersion of the fleet, pitting it against the Combined Fleet commander and contributing to the divisions revealed in the examination of Japan's command structure. As already noted Yamamoto's threat of resignation cowed the Naval

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[15] Keegan, *The Second World War*, 252.

[16] van der Vat, *The Pacific Campaign: World War II, the U.S.-Japanese Naval War, 1941-1945*, 121.

[17] Hiroyuki Agawa, *The Reluctant Admiral: Yamamoto and the Imperial Navy*, trans. John Bester, 1st paperback ed. (Tokyo; New York: Kodansha International, 1982), 219-20.

[18] Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1941-1945*, 7.

General Staff and resulted in the inclusion of the Pearl Harbor raid to open the war against the Allies.

Another important aspect of Japanese naval thinking revolved around the concept of decisive battle. According to historian Richard Overy, "the Japanese admirals were obsessed with the traditional rules of sea warfare, the pursuit of a great fleet engagement like the one they had won against the Russian navy in the Straits of Tsushima 37 years before, when Yamamoto was a young midshipman."[19] This focus on decisive battle, with a strong undercurrent of battleship engagement, shaped Japanese naval strategy and behavior throughout the war.

As Dower noted, racism colored the belligerents' perceptions during the war, and it molded decisions and estimates even before combat erupted. In many ways the Japanese underestimated Allied capabilities feeling they did not have the will or skill to fight a costly war; they produced biased analyses of U.S. war making potential and exhibited an overriding, but not unreasonable, expectation that Germany would defeat Britain and the Soviet Union.[20] Historian Richard Overy states:

> Neither the Japanese nor German leaders rated Allied fighting powers very highly, and they thought even less of it after their early successes. The Japanese military in the southern zone became over-confident. Rear Admiral Takata remembered after the war the views he had heard: "They said the Americans would never come, that they would not fight in the jungle, that they were not the kind of people who could stand warfare...."[21]

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[19] Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, 33.

[20] Ienaga, *The Pacific War: World War II and the Japanese, 1931-1945*, 141.

[21] Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, 317.

The Japanese did indeed enjoy early successes in the first phase of the war that seemed to validate this outlook, but the subsequent course of the conflict would demonstrate the severity of this underestimation.

Nevertheless, the Japanese decision to act when they did demonstrated strategic acumen and some shrewd judgment of the international situation. Historian James Wood states, "The final decision for war then, rested on a realistic appraisal of the international situation, national and imperial interests, and Japan's level of military preparedness."[22] Wood sums up Japan's situation in 1941: resources cut off; a temporary military balance of power that favored Japan; the Soviet Union entangled in a fight for national survival against Germany; and the opportunity to force the West out of the Pacific and thereby gain capitulation from the Chinese.[23] Masuo Kato strikes a similar chord and reminds the reader of the dominant influence of the Japanese army. According to Kato, "Japan's decision to attack…was essentially a now or never decision. It was almost wholly an Army decision, and it represented the Army's best judgment as to the precise time at which the greatest opportunity for success might be expected."[24] They based that decision to attack at the most opportune moment on a rational estimate of the situation.

Wood, however, makes some further assertions more open to challenge. He claims the Japanese war plan differed from Japanese tradition in two ways. First, the extent of expansion, consolidation, and exploitation outside the empire represented a departure from the norm on an unprecedented scale. Second, the preemptive Pearl Harbor

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[22] Wood, *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War: Was Defeat Inevitable?*, 9.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Kato, *The Lost War: A Japanese Reporter's inside Story*, 40.

raid represented a dilution of strength from the amphibious thrusts to the south.[25]

Regarding the first assertion, while truly remarkable in scale, the planned expansion may also be viewed as a natural continuation of the Japanese attempts to grow their empire in the First World War, and their more recent adventures in Manchuria and China. His second assertion ignores the surprise torpedo boat attack on Port Arthur launched by the Japanese to open hostilities against Russia in 1904, establishing something of a precedent for preemptive action at the beginning of hostilities. Further, the diversion of aircraft carriers and their supporting ships to Pearl Harbor did weaken the southern thrust and concerned the Naval General Staff, but the Imperial Japanese Navy still regarded battleships as the primary naval weapon and geography enabled land-based air support to support the opening southern operations.

U.S. Strategy at the Outbreak of War

The U.S. strategy for war against Japan in the Pacific depended upon variables in the world situation. American and British coordination began before the war at the ABC-1 conference in early 1941 and would have serious implications for the conduct of war in the Pacific theater. If the conflict was to be a global war against Germany, Italy, and Japan, the effort against Nazi Germany would take priority according to the "Germany First" strategy. The combined British and American report from the ABC-1 conference laid the groundwork for this policy when both nations delineated their common strategic objectives:

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[25] Wood, *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War: Was Defeat Inevitable?* , 11-12.

1. The early defeat of Germany as the predominant member of the Axis, with the principal military effort of the United States being exerted in the Atlantic and European area, the decisive theater. Operations in other theaters to be conducted in such a manner as to facilitate the main effort.
2. The maintenance of British and Allied positions in the Mediterranean area.
3. A strategic defensive in the Far East, with the U.S. Fleet employed offensively "in the manner best calculated to weaken Japanese economic power, and to support the defense of the Malay Barrier by directing Japanese strength away from Malaysia."[26]

A war solely against the Japanese would give the United States more freedom of action to focus on the Pacific. In the event, less than a week after Pearl Harbor, Hitler's declaration of war against the United States ensured a global conflict.

Prior to hostilities, American planners developed and evaluated a number of different strategies for employment against Japan in the event of war in the Pacific. As early as 1911, Naval War College planners anticipated a possible conflict between the United States and Japan, planting the seeds of "War Plan Orange," in which "Orange" represented the designated color code for Japan.[27] The well-known "Rainbow Plans," which envisioned various combinations of friends and foes in the next war, superseded War Plan Orange in the interwar years as the world situation evolved. As historian Edward S. Miller notes, "No Orange Plan was ever enacted by Congress or signed by a president; even in mid-1941 Franklin Roosevelt gave only oral approval to Plan Rainbow

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[26] Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years*, 88. Admiral Harold Stark, CNO prior to the war, had drafted his own memorandum, known as the "Plan Dog" memorandum in November 1940. This memo stressed that, given the current military situation in Europe, only a U.S. led invasion of the European continent could defeat the stronger enemy, Hitler, and the Allied strategy should therefore focus on such an effort. The Allies, according to Stark, should accept the temporary loss of the western Pacific to the Japanese in the event of war in order to defeat Germany first. With this influential memorandum, the U.S. Navy, ironically, had a leading role in the U.S. acceptance of the "Germany First" strategy in conjunction with the British. See Edward S. Miller, *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897-1945* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 269-71.

[27] Edward S. Miller, *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897-1945* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 24.

Five, the fundamental policy guideline of World War II."[28] The early versions of Orange envisioned a strong defense of the Philippine Islands in the Far East to provide the time required for the U.S. fleet to sortie west, fight its way across the Pacific, and provide relief to the besieged.[29] An update in 1938 aimed to hold a line from Panama to Oahu and on to Alaska, with the expected loss of the Philippines, and the launch of an immediate naval offensive.[30] Calculations changed once again in 1941. Roosevelt's acceptance of Rainbow Five reinforced the Germany First strategy, but it did not please former U.S. Army Chief of Staff General Douglas MacArthur, now in the service of the Philippine Government, who realized he and his command in the Philippines would be sacrificed in the event of war with Japan. In what amounted to a severe disconnect in American strategy, the U.S. Army at MacArthur's urging now aimed once again to fight stubbornly on the Philippines in order to retain them as a strategic base of operations, yet the U.S. Navy still did not envision a sortie to save MacArthur.[31] The subsequent Pearl Harbor attack rendered this disconnect moot, as the navy no longer had the assets available to even attempt a rescue of the Philippine Islands.

Like the Japanese, Allied strategic calculations also suffered from the distorting effects of racism. In John Costello's assessment during the lead up to war, "Stereotypical Anglo-Saxon racial attitudes played their part in Roosevelt and Churchill's belief that a

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[28] Ibid., 2.

[29] John Costello, *Days of Infamy: MacArthur, Roosevelt, Churchill, the Shocking Truth Revealed: How Their Secret Deals and Strategic Blunders Caused Disasters at Pearl Harbor and the Philippines* (New York: Pocket Books, 1994), 9.

[30] Gailey, *The War in the Pacific: From Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay*, 47.

[31] Miller, *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897-1945*, 61-62.

scratch force of bombers and battleships would be a sufficient threat to cow the Japanese into halting their southward advance long enough for a truly powerful deterrent force to be built up in the Philippines and Singapore."[32] The Allies did not just underestimate Japanese will, they also underestimated Japanese skill. John Keegan notes, "Before December 1941 the Americans had dismissed the [Japanese] carrier force as an inferior imitation of its own. Pearl Harbor had revealed that Japanese admirals handled their ships with superb competence and that Japanese naval pilots flew advanced aircraft, dropping lethal ordinance, with deadly skill."[33] Likewise, the British also held Japanese soldiers in contempt, resulting in a similar eye-opening experience during the battle for Malaya.[34] Indeed, nearly the entire opening phase would provide an education for the Allies in Japanese determination and martial ability.

Japan Strikes

The choreographed sequence of Japanese aggression began in Malaya and at Pearl Harbor on the morning of 7 December 1941 (8 December for Japan), and spread rapidly. The Japanese quickly invaded Malaya, the Philippine Islands, the Dutch East Indies, Hong Kong, Guam, Wake Island, and eventually the Bismarck Islands. They clearly held the strategic initiative while the Allied powers generally reacted clumsily to their rapid onslaught.

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[32] Costello, *Days of Infamy: MacArthur, Roosevelt, Churchill, the Shocking Truth Revealed: How Their Secret Deals and Strategic Blunders Caused Disasters at Pearl Harbor and the Philippines*, 88.

[33] Keegan, *The Second World War*, 268.

[34] van der Vat, *The Pacific Campaign: World War II, the U.S.-Japanese Naval War, 1941-1945*, 115.

The Air Raid on Pearl Harbor

The stunning attack on Pearl Harbor did not materialize out of the blue.

Exceptional Japanese naval planning, training, security, and execution enabled the

operation to succeed in its short term objectives and tip the immediate balance of naval

power even more in favor of Japan for the opening stage of the war.

The months preceding the attack set the stage for Japanese success. Army Air

Force General Lewis Brereton evaluated Oahu's air defenses while passing through on

his way to the Philippines in late October 1941 and wrote, "I was surprised and

disappointed to note the incomplete preparations against air attacks, particularly the lack

of adequate air warning equipment."[35] While American defenses lagged, the Japanese

strike force prepared. Captain Minoru Genda, one of the lead Japanese planners for the

attack, later revealed the planning evolution of the operation during a postwar

interrogation. Genda said he first heard of the proposed operation in February 1941,

began planning for it in earnest with special attention to aerial torpedo attacks in a

shallow harbor in June and July, and followed it up with intensive training of the carrier

air groups assigned to execute the attack in September and October 1941.[36] Their

preparations paid dividends in the skies over Hawaii in December.

The Japanese accrued excellent intelligence on Pearl Harbor and also succeeded

in keeping the operation secure and achieving surprise, despite U.S. successes against

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[35] Lewis H. Brereton, *The Brereton Diaries: The War in the Air in the Pacific, Middle East and Europe, 3 October 1941-8 May 1945* (New York: W. Morrow and Company, 1946), 12.

[36] USSBS Interrogations: No. 479: Captain Minoru Genda; Subject: Japanese Naval Air Force; Date: 28-9 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 479-2 – 479-3.

their diplomatic codes. Prior to the attack, highly accurate information from spies in

Hawaii kept Yamamoto and the operation's leader, Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, abreast of

the situation at Pearl Harbor.[37] The Japanese used strict radio security prior to the attack,

passing orders through courier rather than over the radio, while the strike force

maintained radio silence enroute to Hawaii.[38] In addition, the task force deliberately

sailed on a stormy, northern approach to Hawaii to minimize chances of detection and in

the realization that the U.S. did not patrol to the north of the islands.[39] The Japanese navy

also implemented an effective radio deception plan that led U.S. intelligence to believe

the aircraft carriers in the Pearl Harbor attack remained in or around Japan as late as 1

December 1941.[40] On December 7, 1941, the first attack wave of 183 aircraft launched

from six Japanese aircraft carriers north of Oahu and upon their arrival over the island

found the skies clear of any defending aircraft.[41] The Japanese had achieved total

surprise.

The results of the Japanese raid were devastating in the near term for the U.S.

Pacific Fleet, but not decisive in a longer term operational or strategic sense. In exchange

for the loss of 29 aircraft and five midget submarines, the raid sank or damaged 18 U.S.

ships including four battleships sunk and four crippled, destroyed or damaged 288

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[37] Hiroyuki Agawa, *The Reluctant Admiral: Yamamoto and the Imperial Navy* (New York: Kodansha International, 1982), 251-52.

[38] Keegan, *The Second World War*, 254.

[39] Agawa, *The Reluctant Admiral: Yamamoto and the Imperial Navy*, 250.

[40] Ibid., 278-79.

[41] Mitsuo Fuchida et al., *Midway: The Battle That Doomed Japan* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1992), 38-39.

aircraft, and killed 2,403 Americans.[42] Any chance for an immediate American offensive

in the Pacific now rested on the bottom of Pearl Harbor alongside the once proud

battleships of the U.S. Pacific Fleet. On the other hand, Admiral Nagumo cautiously

withdrew the Japanese strike force after the second wave returned to his carriers and he

thus passed on the opportunity to launch further attacks against Pearl Harbor's port

facilities, docks, and fuel storage facilities.[43] Damage to any or all three of these would

have diminished the U.S. Navy's ability to recover from the raid and may have forced the

U.S. Pacific Fleet to operate from the West Coast of the United States. Admiral Matome

Ugaki lamented Nagumo's decision to withdraw in his diary entry of 9 December 1941:

"This [withdrawal] is open to criticism as sneak-thievery and contentment with a humble

lot in life. Since our loss is not more than thirty planes, it is most important for us to

expand our results."[44] Furthermore, by sinking the American battleships in the shallow

waters of Pearl Harbor, the Japanese made possible the salvage operations which

eventually restored all but two (the *Arizona* and the *Oklahoma*) to active operations.

Additionally, an element of chance mitigated the success of the raid. U.S. aircraft

carriers were noticeably absent from the list of damaged or destroyed ships because all of

the U.S. carriers were at sea on 7 December. The American fleet had been mauled, but

the continued existence of its aircraft carriers meant the United States retained a potent

weapon with which to counter forthcoming Japanese moves.

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[42] van der Vat, *The Pacific Campaign: World War II, the U.S.-Japanese Naval War, 1941-1945*, 21.

[43] Fuchida et al., *Midway: The Battle That Doomed Japan*, 43; Costello, *Days of Infamy: MacArthur, Roosevelt, Churchill, the Shocking Truth Revealed: How Their Secret Deals and Strategic Blunders Caused Disasters at Pearl Harbor and the Philippines*, 4.

[44] Ugaki et al., *Fading Victory: The Diary of Admiral Matome Ugaki, 1941-1945*, 47.

Perhaps the most important result of the raid, however, was its impact on U.S. resolve to fight and win the global war now enveloping much of the planet. Without the raid on Pearl Harbor, American participation and resolve would have been much more problematical.

The Attack on the Philippine Islands

Pearl Harbor represented the opening act in a sequence of disasters for the Allies. The Americans endured another humiliation in the Philippines nine hours after General Douglas MacArthur's command received word of the raid on Hawaii.[45] Despite the advanced warning that hostilities had commenced, MacArthur's Far East Air Force(FEAF), which included 107 P-40 fighter aircraft and 35 B-17 heavy bombers that the Americans considered a lynchpin of the Philippines defenses, remained passive.[46]

The first Japanese air attacks caught the Americans unaware at Clark and Iba airfields, resulted in the destruction of half of FEAF's strength and leaving Major General Brereton, MacArthur's air commander, with only 17 B-17s, 55 P-40s, and 15 older P-35s to resist the continuing air onslaught and the forthcoming invasion.[47] The lack of American resistance during the attack stunned Japanese air ace Subaru Sakai who also

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[45] James, *The Years of MacArthur: Volume II, 1941-1945*, 3.

[46] Murray and Millett, *A War to Be Won: Fighting the Second World War*, 182. Much debate continues about MacArthur's and Brereton's failure to act proactively and launch their own airstrike against the Japanese airfields on Formosa. Brereton felt he did not have MacArthur's authorization to strike and therefore withheld his long-range bombers until it was too late.

[47] Brereton, *The Brereton Diaries: The War in the Air in the Pacific, Middle East and Europe, 3 October 1941-8 May 1945*, 44.
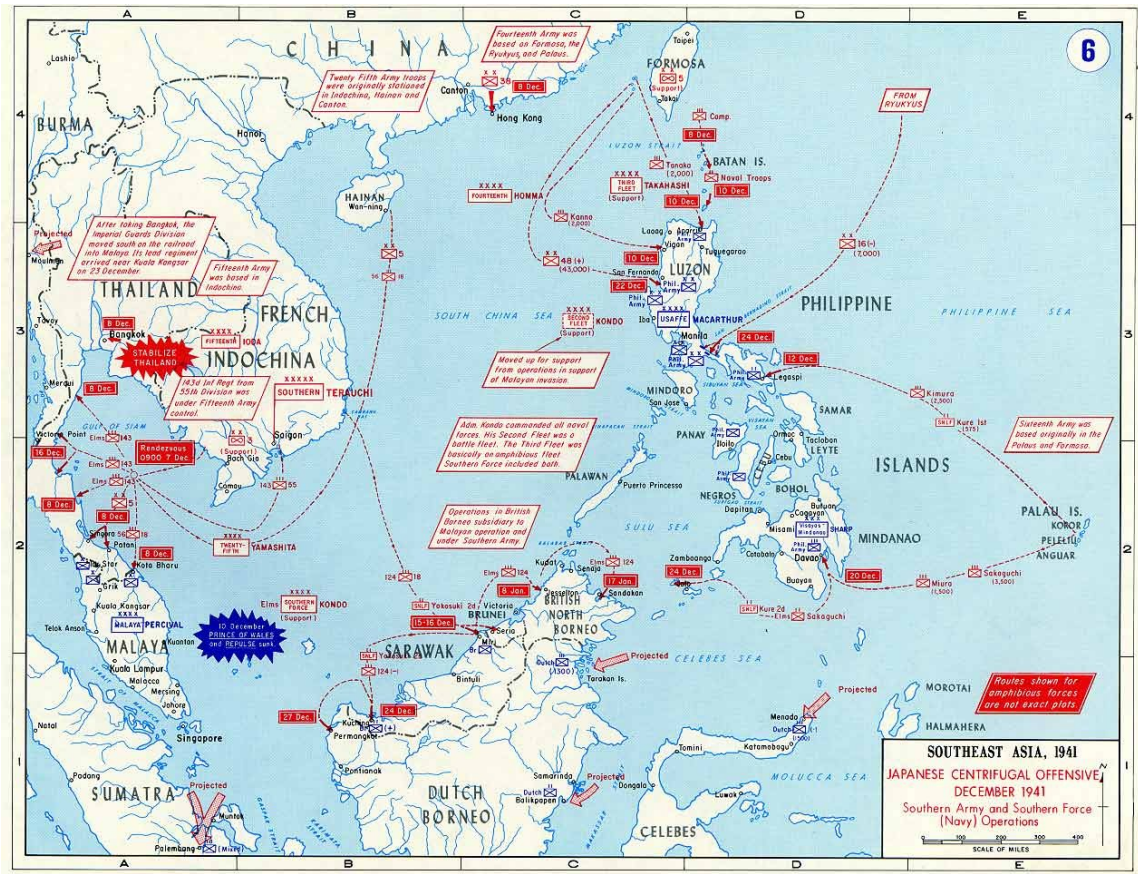
Figure 13: Japanese Southern Offensive December 1941-January 1942.

Source: History Department at the United States Military Academy Atlases: http://www.dean.usma.edu/history/web03/atlases/ww2%20pacific/WWIIAsiaGIF/WWIIAsia06.gif, accessed on 27 March 2011.

praised the "phenomenal" accuracy of his bomber comrades.[48] The preventable disaster

spurred recriminations and blame between MacArthur, Brereton, and MacArthur's Chief

of Staff, Brigadier General Richard K. Sutherland, for years to come. By 11 December

1941, Brereton's strength had dwindled to 12 B-17s, 22 P-40s and 5 P-35s.[49]

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[48] Saburo Sakai, Martin Caidin, and Fred Saito, *Samurai!*, 1st ed. (New York: Dutton, 1957), 46.

[49] Brereton, *The Brereton Diaries: The War in the Air in the Pacific, Middle East and Europe, 3 October 1941-8 May 1945*, 51.

One cannot attribute Japanese successes against FEAF strictly to luck. When Brereton assessed FEAF headquarters at Nielson Field, Philippines in early November 1941 he concluded, "The personnel, both officers and enlisted men, was entirely inadequate, and to a considerable extent inexperienced and not organized to carry out the functions of an Air Force headquarters."[50] He also noted the lack of an effective air warning net in the islands.[51] But the Japanese had been preparing. Before the attack, Sakai benefitted from photographs of Clark Field that revealed 32 B-17s and 74 other aircraft.[52] The Japanese had also conducted a trial navigation flight from their bases on the island of Formosa to within 20 miles of Luzon.[53] Brereton also claimed that the Japanese had a wide espionage net in the Philippines and had even tapped into the U.S. Army's telephone lines.[54] Poor American security and strong Japanese intelligence collection contributed to the FEAF disaster and helped shape the land campaign to follow.

Smaller Japanese landings hit the Philippines in mid December, but the main invasion by General Masaharu Homma's Fourteenth Army landed in Lingayen Gulf at 65,000 troops, air superiority, and overwhelming naval support, Homma faced the dawn

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[50] Ibid., 20.

[51] Ibid., 22.

[52] Sakai, Caidin, and Saito, *Samurai!* , 41.

[53] Brereton, *The Brereton Diaries: The War in the Air in the Pacific, Middle East and Europe, 3 October 1941-8 May 1945*, 35.

[54] Ibid., 51.

on 22 December and the fight for the archipelago commenced in earnest.[55] With 65,000

troops, air superiority, and overwhelming naval support, Homma faced the remnants of

FEAF and MacArthur's 130,000 soldiers. Although MacArthur's command enjoyed

numerical superiority, it consisted of 22,400 U.S. troops, 12,000 well-trained Filipino

Scouts, with the remainder being mostly inexperienced Filipino troops.[56] MacArthur

belatedly withdrew to the Bataan peninsula where he hoped to hold out until reinforced,

but MacArthur's ill advised attempt to stop the Japanese on the invasion beaches now left

the defenders short of food within their Bataan peninsula defenses.[57] The Japanese had

expected a fight for Manila and ignored intelligence that MacArthur would instead

defend Bataan, but while this slowed the Japanese timetable it could not fend off the

inevitable.[58] After MacArthur's stealthy escape from the islands in March 1942, U.S. and

Filipino forces on Bataan capitulated on 9 April, sending 12,000 Americans and 64,000

Filipinos into Japanese captivity.[59] The final bastion of significant American resistance,

Corregidor Island, fell to the Japanese on 6 May, followed thereafter by the remaining

U.S. commands in the islands.[60] A smaller Japanese ground force had defeated a larger

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[55] James, *The Years of MacArthur: Volume II, 1941-1945*, 23.

[56] Gailey, *The War in the Pacific: From Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay*, 51, 109-10.

[57] Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II*, 313-15.

[58] Saburo Hayashi, *Kogun: The Japanese Army in the Pacific War* (Quantico: Marine Corps Association, 1989 (1959)), 37-38.

[59] Costello, *Days of Infamy: MacArthur, Roosevelt, Churchill, the Shocking Truth Revealed: How Their Secret Deals and Strategic Blunders Caused Disasters at Pearl Harbor and the Philippines*, 3.

[60] James, *The Years of MacArthur: Volume II, 1941-1945*, 148-49.

Allied force in a six month campaign to secure a strategic geographic position athwart the trade routes necessary to transport vital resources from the southwestern Pacific to Japan.

Malaya and the Dutch East Indies

Nearly simultaneously with the Pearl Harbor attack, the Japanese began landings in Malaya. Advanced elements of Japan's Twenty-Fifth Army landed at Khota Baru and Singora on December 8, followed by the bulk of the army two days later.[61] In an action that put an exclamation point on the results of Pearl Harbor and the vulnerability of battleships to air attack, on 10 December the Japanese navy's 22d Air Flotilla, for the loss of only four aircraft, attacked and sank the British battleship, *HMS Prince of Wales*, and battlecruiser, *HMS Repulse*, as they endeavored to counterattack the Japanese landings in northern Malaya.[62] As in the Philippines, the Japanese established air and naval supremacy to support their army's advance. General Tomoyuki Yamashita, moving adroitly against British forces and Commonwealth forces that outnumbered his army twofold, soon took all of Malaya and punctuated his victory with capture of the supposedly impregnable fortress of Singapore in February 1942 after a 70 day campaign.[63] The Japanese suffered 10,000 casualties, but inflicted 38,000 and

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[61] Hayashi, *Kogun: The Japanese Army in the Pacific War*, 36.

[62] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, 28.

[63] Murray and Millett, *A War to Be Won: Fighting the Second World War*, 179-81.
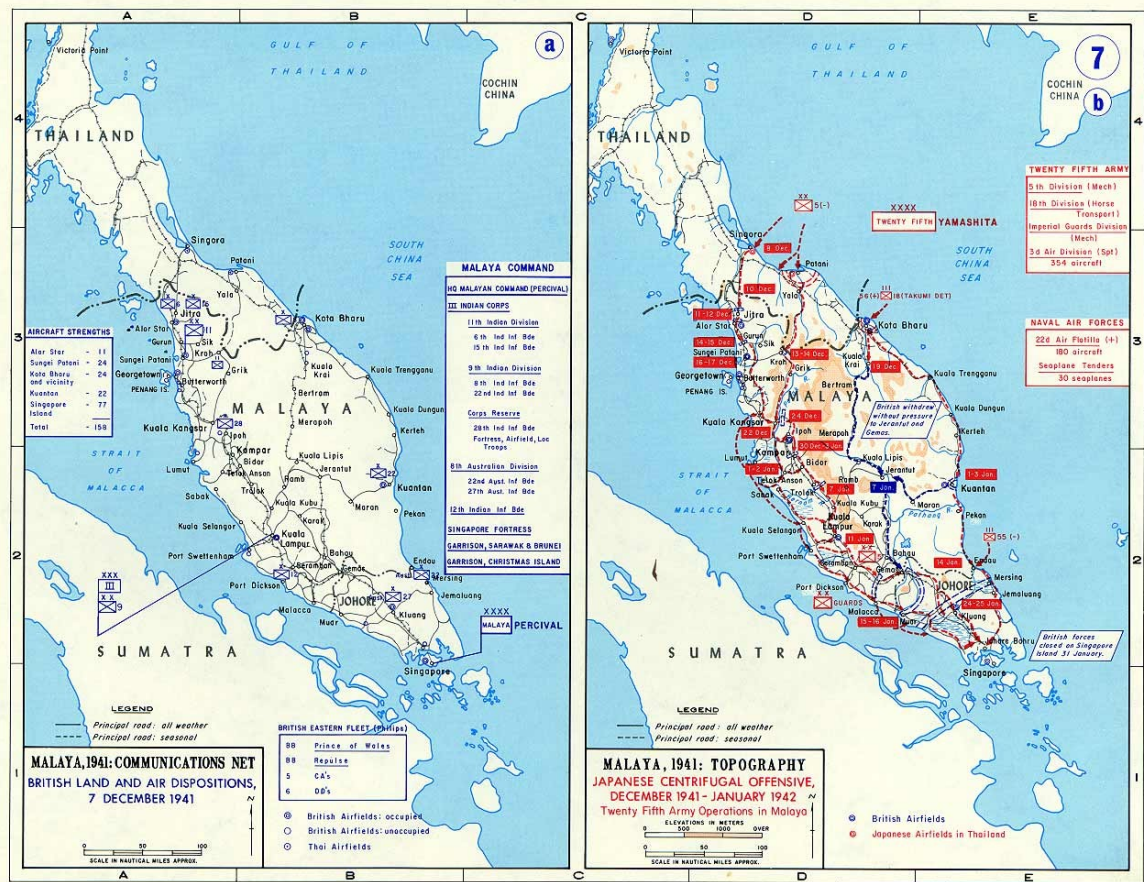
Figure 14: Japanese Malayan Offensive December 1941-January 1942.

Source: History Department at the United States Military Academy Atlases: http://www.dean.usma.edu/history/web03/atlases/ww2%20pacific/ww2%20pacific%20%20maps/ww2%20asia%20map%2007.jpg, accessed on 27 March 2011.

captured more than 130,000 prisoners in what many regard as the most humiliating defeat in British military history.[64]

The Japanese army's performance in Malaya shocked the Allies' psyche and proved that the Japanese soldier would represent a formidable foe in the war. In November 1942, as the United States struggled against this same foe in the jungles of the

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[64] Ibid., 181.

Solomon Islands and New Guinea, the COMSOPAC forwarded a report titled "Lessons from Malaya," written by a British battalion commander who had fought the Japanese during this opening campaign. The author lamented the unrealistic training of the British troops in Malaya and stressed the increased importance of tactics and quality over quantity in a jungle environment.[65] He also praised the morale and motivation of the Japanese soldier who was, "daring, mobile, quick and mentally alert for somebody was [always] ready to go in front and be the first to buy it," qualities he found lacking on the British side.[66] He found the Japanese set a fast tempo and maintained it, making it difficult for the British to adjust or react effectively.[67] He also noted that the jungle could mitigate a firepower advantage because of the close nature of the combat and that the British command set up unrealistic defensive positions based on the reading of a map rather than the actual terrain and topography.[68] These Japanese strengths and British shortcomings resulted in the unexpectedly rapid loss of Malaya and Singapore and opened the way further south into the Netherlands East Indies and north into Burma.

In another impressive campaign, the Japanese once again achieved their aims and secured the oil resources in Borneo, the Celebes, and Java. The Japanese had already captured British possessions in northern Borneo in December and now looked further

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[65] *NARA 127:* Series: Records of Amphibious Corps, compiled 1940 – 1946, Box #21, Folder #1900 Notes on Japanese. Memo From The Commander South Pacific Area and South Pacific Force, "Lessons from Malaya," (Assistant Chief of Staff , J.W. Smith, November 15, 1942), 3-4.

[66] Ibid., 5.

[67] Ibid., 7.

[68] Ibid., 10-12.
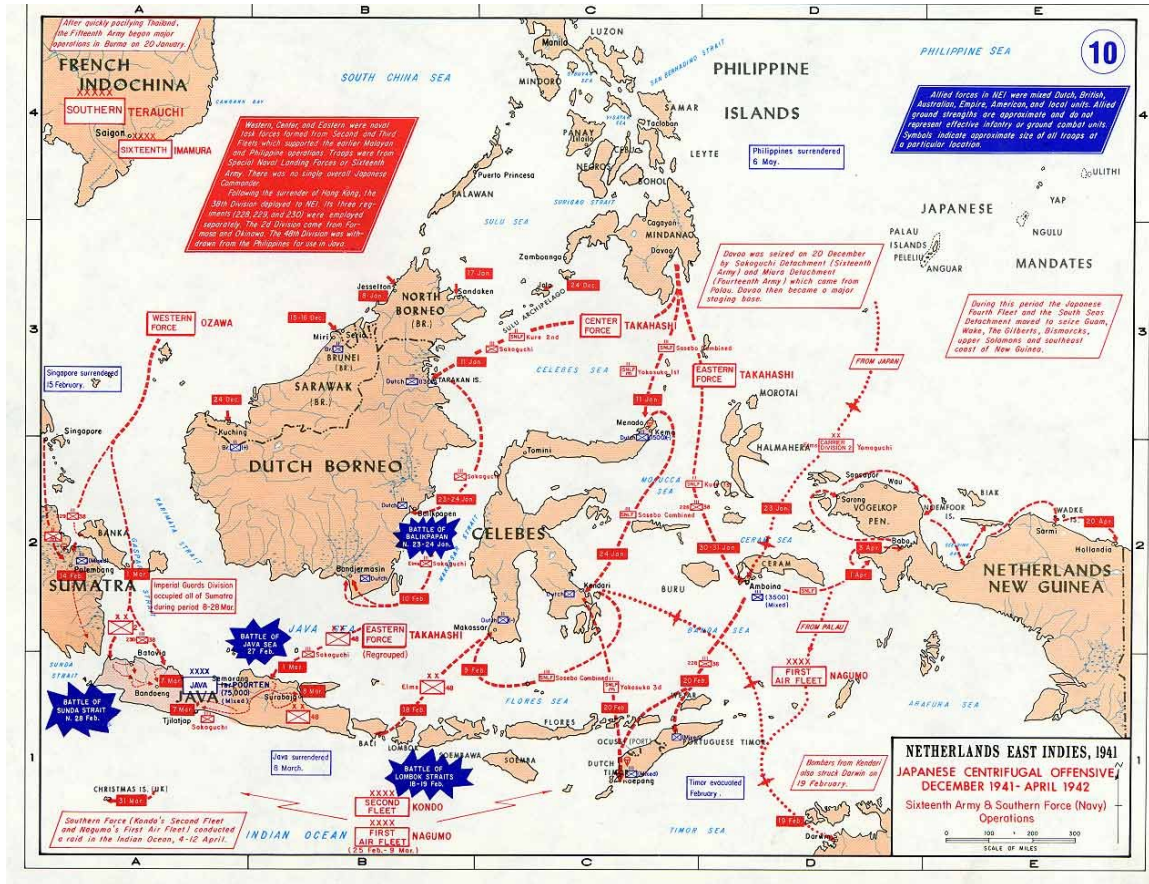
Figure 15: Japanese Conquest of the Netherlands East Indies December 1941-April 1942.

Source: History Department at the United States Military Academy Atlases:
http://www.dean.usma.edu/history/web03/atlases/ww2%20pacific/ww2%20pacific%20%20maps/ww2%20asia%20map%2010.jpg, accessed 27 March 2011.

south.[69] The operation proceeded almost like a game of hopscotch, with sequential jumps

from one strategic position to the next, using naval paratroops and amphibious operations

of the Japanese Sixteenth Army, supported by the IJN Third Fleet and the 21st and 23d

Air Flotillas.[70] Both air flotillas followed the advance, moving south to a series of new

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[69] Hayashi, *Kogun: The Japanese Army in the Pacific War*, 38.

[70] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, 29. See also Hayashi, *Kogun: The Japanese Army in the Pacific War*, 38.

air fields in order to ensure Japanese land and sea operations remained under friendly air cover at all times.[71] By 9 March 1942, the Japanese had taken Palembang, Batavia, and Surabaya when the Allied forces defending the Netherlands East Indies surrendered, sending more than 93,000 soldiers into Japanese captivity.[72]

Several actions in the air and on the sea enabled this Japanese success. Throughout February the Japanese kept up pressure on the Allied air forces in Java, and by 24 February Admiral Ugaki comfortably declared that the Japanese had cleared Allied air power from eastern Java.[73] The Pearl Harbor carrier strike force supported these operations with air raids on Ambon on 23 January and then on Darwin, Australia on 19 February to reduce Allied strength and prevent Allied reinforcements from entering the battle.[74] In the Battle of Makassar Strait on 4 February, Japanese air power prevented an Allied force of cruisers and destroyers from engaging a Japanese amphibious force of nearly equal strength. The Allies suffered heavy damage to two cruisers and light damage to a third, but the Japanese force proceeded unmolested.[75] In the Battle of Badung Strait on 19-20 February, the Allies forced a Japanese invasion force headed for Bali to return to port, and damaged several Japanese ships in the process. But the Allied performance in the battle was unimpressive, while the Japanese destroyers demonstrated

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[71] USSBS Interrogations: No. 601: Commander Ryosuke Nomura, IJN; Subject: Japanese Land Based Air Operations in the CELEBES and RABAUL Area; Date: 28 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 2.

[72] Hayashi, *Kogun: The Japanese Army in the Pacific War*, 39.

[73] Ugaki et al., *Fading Victory: The Diary of Admiral Matome Ugaki, 1941-1945*, 95.

[74] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, 31.

[75] Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1941-1945*, 53.

skill at night fighting, a characteristic that would soon become familiar to the U.S.

Navy.[76] Next, in the Battle of the Java Sea which started on 27 February, a Japanese

force of four cruisers and 14 destroyers tangled with an Allied force of five cruisers and

nine destroyers, sinking three Allied cruisers and four destroyers.[77] The next night, at the

Battle of Sunda Strait, the Japanese sank two more Allied cruisers.[78] During this

campaign, the Japanese had dominated combat, with minor exceptions, on the land and

sea as well as in the air.

The Central Pacific, South Pacific, and the Indian Ocean

A few more Japanese operations deserve mention to round out their initial tide of

conquest in the Pacific. The Japanese landed on Guam on 10 December 1941 at 1625

hours and the island surrendered the next morning at 0645 hours.[79] Wake Island alone

provided a brief glimmer of positive news for the Americans. U.S. Marines repulsed the

first attempt to take the island on 11 December, but the Japanese soon returned with a

stronger force and captured the island on 23 December.[80] Fuchida recounted the

Japanese successes as the Philippines campaign progressed, noting that in addition to

Guam and Wake, the Marianas, Makin/Tarawa, and the southern anchorages of Rabaul

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[76] Ibid., 55-60.

[77] Agawa, *The Reluctant Admiral: Yamamoto and the Imperial Navy*, 288-89.

[78] Ibid., 289.

[79] Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1941-1945*, 22.

[80] Ibid., 25-26.

and Kavieng fell to Japan by the end of January 1942.[81] Meanwhile, Admiral Nagumo's carrier force continued its operations in support of Japanese maneuvers and conducted some raids in the Indian Ocean in early April. Nagumo launched a 315 airplane raid against Colombo on 5 April, then sank the British cruisers *Dorsetshire* and *Cornwall* later that day, and culminated the exercise with an attack on Trincomalee and the sinking of the British light carrier *Hermes* on 9 April.[82] With the temporary exception of the setback at Wake, the Japanese had rapidly imposed their will on the Allies.

Through early April, the Japanese plan had unfolded on or ahead of schedule, testament to their judgment and appreciation of the situation at the opening of the war. In April, May, and June, however, their momentum slowed as the Allies regained some of their footing.

The Doolittle Raid

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the remains of the U.S. Pacific Fleet operated with caution. U.S. carrier task forces raided on Japanese bases in the Marshalls, on Wake, at Rabaul, and in New Guinea.[83] The Americans, however, soon hatched a daring plan that changed the strategic calculus in the Pacific War. On 18 April 1942, a U.S. carrier task force under the command of Admiral William "Bull" Halsey, launched sixteen army B-25 bombers led by Lieutenant Colonel James H. Doolittle for the first

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[81] Fuchida et al., *Midway: The Battle That Doomed Japan*, 45-46.

[82] Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1941-1945*, 107-11.

[83] Murray and Millett, *A War to Be Won: Fighting the Second World War*, 190.

American bombing raid on the Japanese homeland.[84] The risks were high and the

physical damage inflicted on Japan was slight, but the raid encouraged the American

people and its impact on Japanese thinking shaped the future course of the war. Admiral

Ugaki, in his diary entry for 19 April wrote:

> In view of this recent success, undoubtedly the enemy will repeat this kind of operation while attempting raids from China. Therefore we must take steps to watch far to the east and, at the same time, always keep a sharp lookout on the threat from the west. As I felt the necessity of drawing up a definite plan now, I expressed my views to the staff officers, hoping they would use them as their guide.[85]

Admiral Yamamoto viewed the American success as a failure on his part and resolved to

press for operations that would force the U.S. aircraft carriers into a final, decisive battle

for command of the Pacific Ocean.[86] Those Japanese leaders who had previously

opposed Yamamoto's plan now relented and agreed to the operation that ultimately led to

the Battle of Midway.[87] Thus the raid had a prominent impact on ensuing Japanese

strategy, all out of proportion to the damages in Tokyo.

The Battle of the Coral Sea

The Battle of the Coral Sea represented a portent of things to come for the

Japanese. Their initial plan and opening operations had succeeded at very low cost and

the Japanese now began to adjust to their successes. The drive for further expansion in

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[84] Ibid.

[85] Ugaki et al., *Fading Victory: The Diary of Admiral Matome Ugaki, 1941-1945*, 114.

[86] Fuchida et al., *Midway: The Battle That Doomed Japan*, 72.

[87] Ibid.

the New Guinea and Solomon Islands areas originated with the local Japanese forces that

had occupied Rabaul in January. They looked to Port Moresby, on the southeast coast of

New Guinea, as a strategic target to protect Rabaul and isolate Australia so the latter

could not provide a springboard for an eventual Allied counterattck. Vice Admiral

Shigeru Fukudome, staff officer on the Japanese Naval General Staff, stated:

> After RABAUL was taken and subsequent operations were extended it became more and more clear that a broad area would have to be occupied to secure RABAUL; just exactly who made the original proposal, I do not know, but it is certain that the demand originated at RABAUL, probably on the Navy side, and it [the amphibious occupation of Port Moresby] was approved by Central Authorities. When the decision to take PORT MORESBY was made, the Army reaction to it was that it would be quite simple to occupy PORT MORESBY by sea-borne operation.[88]

This operation resulted in the first American-Japanese carrier engagement of the Pacific

War.

Preceding the battle, as the Japanese fleet ran rampant through the Pacific, U.S.

radio intelligence had been making headway against Japanese naval codes. According to

historian Winston Groom, "Importantly, all these Japanese ships generated a huge

amount of radio chatter and American radio-intercept stations from Australia to the

Aleutians, from Midway Island to Hawaii, plucked thousands of signals out of the air and

quickly began to piece together the remaining parts of the top-secret Japanese naval code

puzzle."[89] The Americans benefited from their increased knowledge as radio intercepts

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[88] USSBS Interrogations: No. 503: VADM Shigeru Fukudome, IJN; Subject: The Naval war in the Pacific; Date: 9 December 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 39.

[89] Groom, *1942: The Year That Tried Men's Souls*, 197.

forewarned Admiral Nimitz of the forthcoming Japanese thrust on Port Moresby, detailing much of the timing and strength of the Japanese operation.[90]

Japanese radio intelligence also provided some limited information on U.S. movements in the prelude to the battle. Admiral Ugaki wrote on 3 May 1942 that radio intelligence noted "comings and goings of enemy task forces in Hawaii around the 25th and 27th [of April]. One of them seemed to have headed for the south."[91] Yet, despite this hint of American activity, Japanese intelligence did not inform the high command of the "whereabouts, number, or kind of U.S. and Australian warships" that might be lurking in the Port Moresby operational area.[92] The Americans, therefore, entered the battle with a clearer picture of the enemy situation than did the Japanese.

From 4-8 May, the two fleets fought a stand-off carrier battle in which aircraft provided the striking power. The Japanese lost 43 aircraft, the light carrier *Shoho,* sunk, and had another fleet carrier, the *Shokaku,* damaged. Significantly, the Port Moresby invasion force turned back without capturing its objective.[93] The U.S. fleet lost the large carrier *Lexington,* the destroyer *Sims,* and the oiler *Neosho,* and 33 aircraft, as well as suffering significant damage to the carrier *Yorktown.*[94] For the first time in the Pacific War, the U.S. Navy had thwarted a Japanese conquest.

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[90] Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1941-1945*, 120; Keegan, *The Second World War*, 271-72.

[91] Ugaki et al., *Fading Victory: The Diary of Admiral Matome Ugaki, 1941-1945*, 119.

[92] Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1941-1945*, 121.

[93] Gailey, *The War in the Pacific: From Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay*, 151-52.

[94] Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1941-1945*, 129. Gailey, *The War in the Pacific: From Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay*, 151-52.

Evolving Japanese Strategy and Plans

Japanese strategy began to evolve following the rapid conquest of their initial

objectives. The push for more expansion, as exhibited by this first attempt to take Port

Moresby, soon reached into the highest levels of the Japanese command structure. The

Japanese army and navy had different ideas about the future course of the war. The army

wished to stick to the initially planned, shorter perimeter, fortify the positions gained, and

then parry the Allied counterattacks. The navy thought otherwise, and pushed for a

larger, "outer perimeter." When queried after the war about this divergence and the

adoption of the naval view, Admiral Fukudome gave a lengthy response. It is worth

quoting in full as it reveals many of the strategic calculations with which the Japanese

had to contend:

> From the very beginning there were two divergent views: namely (1) holding a
> long line; (2) the other, compact, as you have said; the Navy favoring the former
> and the Army the latter. The two views in the end, however, came together more
> or less with the Navy's view prevailing, and I still believe that was the wiser of
> the two plans because, had we elected to occupy the narrower area, that would
> have enabled your forces to take the intermediate bases without any opposition so
> that the greater distance from the UNITED STATES would not enter into the
> picture as a serious factor. The closer you could come without opposition, the
> closer you were to the heart of the area which it was incumbent upon us to
> protect. If you used from these near bases those attacking planes which far
> outranged ours, it would have placed us at a decided disadvantage, so the Navy's
> idea of occupying this more expansive area with the hope of getting a chance to
> strike a heavy blow against your fleet from one of the outlying bases, we felt,
> gave us a greater chance for continued success, and through that line we intended
> to gain time.
> Time, we felt, was very important. If the war could be continued long enough, we
> expected there might be slips on your side of which we could take advantage. I
> believe if we had elected this other line, defeat would have come sooner.[95]

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[95] USSBS Interrogations: No. 524: Admiral Shigeru Fukudome, IJN; Subject: War in the Pacific; Date: 12
December 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 10-11.

Following the completion of their initial conquests, the Japanese had to address these divergent opinions of the army and navy.

Fukudome's answer touches upon a number of strategic concerns for the Japanese navy in the Pacific War. The first is the differing approaches to Pacific War strategy by the two Japanese services. Next, geography loomed very large in his calculations, noting the Japanese desire to strain U.S. capabilities through the use of distance from the United States. But his solution was to expand the Japanese perimeter, which could not help but increase the battlefield's distance from Japan. Fukudome did not address this seemingly paradoxical aspect of further expansion in his answer. His response also demonstrated an appreciation for the importance of land-based airpower in the war and a respect for the heavy bomber, given his reference to aircraft of long range. Additionally, he manifested the undercurrent of decisive battle with his hopes of "striking a heavy blow" against the U.S. fleet.

The Japanese attempted to reconcile these concerns with strategic adjustments in the spring of 1942. The navy persuaded a reluctant army to go along with continued expansion. The *Senshi Sōsho,* Japan's postwar account of the Pacific War, relates the Japanese assessment of the situation around Rabaul:

> At that time, Imperial Headquarters had completed attacks on key areas in the southern region. Recognising that the main base for Allied counter-attacks would be the Australian mainland, Imperial Headquarters planned a blockade operation to isolate Australia from the US. This would involve attacks on the islands of Samoa, Fiji, and New Caledonia, the main air and sea relay bases between Hawaii and the Australian mainland.[96]

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[96] Senshi Sōsho, *Japanese Army Operations*, 1.

Yet Japanese plans did not end there. The high command also laid out plans for operations against the Aleutians, Eastern New Guinea, Cocos, and India.[97] The Japanese navy had gone so far as to suggest an invasion of the Australian mainland, but the Imperial Army General Staff refused because it could not spare the ten divisions the operation would require.[98]

The army did, however, press ahead with preparations to support the further expansion agreed upon. On 18 May, Imperial General Headquarters Army Department in its Directive 1152 created the 17th Army for the Fiji, Samoa, and New Caledonia operation and for the capture of Port Moresby.[99] Directive 1154 listed the order of battle for the 17th Army and directed the commander of the Southern Army in the newly captured areas to support the new army's lines of communication.[100] But before any moves could be made by the 17th Army, IGHQ made another adjustment to the overall plan.

The results of the Doolittle Raid caused Admiral Yamamoto to insist upon a change of plans. He demanded the Midway operation take precedence. Army GHQ disagreed, but after negotiations the revised plan made a move on Midway and the Aleutians the next step, to be followed by the drive against Fiji, Samoa, and New

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[97] Far East Command, "Japanese Monograph No. 45: Imperial General Headquarters Army High Command Record, Mid 41- Aug 45," 48.

[98] Ibid., 50.

[99] *NARA 550:* Series: Organizational History Files, compiled 1959 - 1973, documenting the period 1931 – 1973: "Imperial General Headquarters Army Directives, Volume II, Directives No. 901- No. 1600, (19 Jul 41-26 Aug 43)," (General Headquarters, Far East Command, Military Intelligence Section, General Staff Military Historical Section), 61.

[100] Ibid., 62-63.

Caledonia.[101] In rapid succession, Japan had modified its initial strategy and then quickly amended its own reformulation. The resulting operation would evolve into the momentous and, for the Japanese, disastrous Battle of Midway.

Analysis of the First Phase of the Pacific War

Japan held the strategic initiative throughout the opening stage of the war, dictating the tempo of operations and compelling the Allies to fight those battles that aligned with Japanese war aims. How did resources, intelligence, strategic acumen, combat effectiveness, and chance influence possession of the strategic initiative and the course of the war?

Resources

Japan began the war with a large military establishment. Yet of the fifty-one established divisions forty of them remained tied down in China and Manchuria..[102] Furthermore, the paper strength of an army in the Pacific War can be misleading. Once again, the geography of this vast maritime theater often limited the numbers engaged in combat. The review of Japan's initial conquests demonstrates that the Japanese conducted some of their largest operations, such as the invasion of the Philippines and Malaya, with outnumbered ground forces. Despite their numerical inferiority, the

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[101] Far East Command, "Japanese Monograph No. 45: Imperial General Headquarters Army High Command Record, Mid 41- Aug 45," 51.

[102] Ibid., 12.

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Japanese achieved their objectives in a timely fashion and dealt their adversaries stinging blows in the process.

Pilots represent another important resource. Japan opened the war with 2,500 pilots in the Imperial Navy and 3,500 pilots in the Imperial Army.[103] These pilots received extensive training and many benefited from combat experience in the skies over China.[104] By comparison, the U.S. Navy alone began the war with 3,500 regular pilots and 6,000 reservist pilots, all trained and with respectable flight experience.[105] The Japanese had crafted their aviation component very effectively for their opening moves and for a brief war, but they had not prepared their pilot pool or training system for a longer war with high attrition.[106] The Japanese simply did not produce pilots quickly enough for a long, attritional war. This weakness would manifest itself in the later years of the war.

The Allies enjoyed a clear manpower advantage, yet Japan successfully prosecuted its war of conquest despite unfavorable force ratios. The Japanese had the requisite aviator strength to realize their aims. One must look to other aspects of their resource base to see what enabled these Japanese successes.

In materiel terms, the number of aircraft available and the size of the competing naval establishments represent the key areas of comparison for the opening phase of the Pacific War. Both nations increased naval construction in the prelude to the war. The

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[103] Gailey, *The War in the Pacific: From Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay*, 63.

[104] Ibid., 63-64.

[105] Wood, *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War: Was Defeat Inevitable?* , 92.

[106] Gailey, *The War in the Pacific: From Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay*, 64.

Japanese implemented their *Marusan* program in 1937, which eventually resulted in the construction of the super-battleships *Yamato* and *Musashi,* while the U.S. Two Ocean Navy Act ensured a rapid increase in U.S. naval forces, but not until 1943.[107] In 1941, the Imperial Navy boasted ten aircraft carriers, ten battleships, thirty-seven cruisers, 110 destroyers, and sixty-three submarines.[108] Total Allied naval forces in the Pacific amounted to three fleet aircraft carriers, eleven battleships, thirty-five cruisers, 100 destroyers, and eighty-six submarines.[109] Rough parity characterized most categories between the Allies as a whole and Japan, but the aircraft carrier disparity deserves further illumination. The Japanese had the six fleet carriers that conducted the Pearl Harbor raid, and four light carriers of smaller size but able to steam with the fleet. In these opening months of the war, the U.S. Navy had six fleet carriers between the Atlantic and the Pacific, as well as two older and slower light carriers. While the U.S. light carriers contributed markedly less to American operations than the Japanese light carriers, the Americans could, and did, transfer aircraft carriers between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Nevertheless, U.S. Admiral Husband Kimmel and Admiral Halsey claimed that the Japanese fleet held an advantage over the U.S. Pacific Fleet in "every category of fighting ship."[110] This was not true at the beginning of the war, but would soon become

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[107] Fuchida et al., *Midway: The Battle That Doomed Japan*, 28-29.

[108] Military Supplies Division United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *Japanese Naval Shipbuilding* (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1946), 6.

[109] James F. Dunnigan and Albert A. Nofi, *Victory at Sea: World War II in the Pacific*, 1st ed. (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1995), 4.

[110] William Frederick Halsey and J. Bryan, *Admiral Halsey's Story* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1947), 70.

reality. In the opening days of the war, Japan sank or neutralized eight American battleships at Pearl Harbor and two British battleships near Malaya. The subsequent naval battles in the Indian Ocean and around the Netherlands East Indies also inflicted disproportionate losses on the Allied naval forces. These battles titled the naval balance in the Pacific in the favor of the Imperial Japanese Navy.

The United States had 12,300 aircraft in the Army Air Force in December 1941, and an additional 5,300 naval aircraft for a total of 17,600 planes.[111] The Japanese initiated hostilities with 4,826 aircraft in the JAAF and 2,120 in the JNAF for a total of 6,946 planes.[112] Production figures for the year 1941 provided a portent of things to come, with the U.S. making 26,277 new aircraft and the Japanese producing just 5,088.[113] But, as was the case with the army, strength of numbers on paper does not tell the whole story. While executing their southern operations, the Japanese brought more than 1,500 aircraft from the JAAF and from land- and carrier-based naval aviation to bear against just 650 front-line Allied aircraft in the Philippines, Malaya, the Netherlands East Indies and Burma.[114] Despite their overall numerical disadvantage, the Japanese massed superior aircraft numbers over the battlefield when and where it counted during the opening moves of the war.

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[111] Dunnigan and Nofi, *Victory at Sea: World War II in the Pacific*, 245.

[112] Ibid.

[113] Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, 331.

[114] Basil Henry Liddell-Hart, *History of the Second World War* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1970), 209.

Yet even during this early stage of the war Japan's limited aircraft production began to reveal itself as an Achilles' heel. Between December 1941 and April 1942 production struggled to keep pace with naval losses: the fighter pool grew from 660 aircraft to 676, with 300 expenditures and 316 new manufactures; the carrier strike aircraft pool decreased to 307 aircraft from a start of 330; while land-based strike aircraft increased from 240 to 277.[115] Naval leaders were aware of the problem. Fuchida later wrote that by April 1942 "the vast majority of units not only had no reserve planes whatever but were below normal operating strength."[116] On 23 April 1942, Admiral Ugaki noted in his diary, "What we regret most is the insufficient production capacity of aircraft."[117] Production statistics for 1942 reveal the growing discrepancy between the U.S. and Japan with the former producing 47,826 aircraft and the latter only increasing production to 8,861 aircraft.[118] The wear and tear on Japanese naval aircraft and lack of replacements did not bode well for the future.

In materiel terms Japan held the numerical advantage over the Allies at the point of contact during these early days of the war, but only because the Japanese enjoyed the strategic initiative and could dictate where and when battles would occur. The Japanese navy started out with marginal superiority over the Allied naval forces in most categories, but after their successful operations at Pearl Harbor and in the areas around Malaya and

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[115] USSBS Interrogations: No. 414(Annex A): Cmdr. Fukanizu, IJN; Subject: Production, Wastage and Strength Japanese Naval Air Force; Date: Nov. 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, Plate 86-1.

[116] Fuchida et al., *Midway: The Battle That Doomed Japan*, 62.

[117] Ugaki et al., *Fading Victory: The Diary of Admiral Matome Ugaki, 1941-1945*, 116.

[118] Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, 331.

the Netherlands East Indies, their advantage increased markedly. The pattern in the air mimicked that on the ocean, but the Japanese started with an even larger airpower advantage at the various points of contact during their initial conquests. They pressed their airpower advantage to destroy those Allied air forces that attempt to resist the Japanese onslaught. These twin advantages on the sea and in the air made possible the capture of the vital resource areas that drove Japan's opening strategy for the war.

Technology also played a role in Japan's conquests. Man usually designs technology to meet a need, address a problem, or overcome a challenge. Invariably, choices and tradeoffs characterize the development of new technology, often increasing effectiveness in one aspect while perhaps compromising another. Airplanes are no exception, and a strength or advantage in one aspect of combat performance often demands sacrifices in others.

Nevertheless, Japanese combat aircraft demonstrated some superior technological advantages over Allied aircraft during this phase of the war. Throughout the war, Japanese aircraft engines limited their aircraft's performance and therefore drove some compensatory design modifications.[119] To compensate for the limited power output of their engines, the Japanese reduced aircraft weight often by excluding the use of armor and self-sealing fuel tanks in their fighter aircraft, both of which reduced combat durability.[120] Japanese designers did work some wonders within these constraints, but

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[119] *AFHRA:* Call # 168.1703-63: United States Strategic Bombing Survey, Military Analysis Division. *Japanese Air Weapons and Tactics*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey (Pacific) Military Analysis Division, 1947.

[120] Sakai, Caidin, and Saito, *Samurai!*, 129.

they stressed range and agility over sturdiness and survivability.[121] According to

historian Eric Bergerud, "As a rule of thumb, fighter range for the Allies meant between

150 and 250 miles; for the Japanese it was 250-350 miles."[122] The Japanese "Zero"

fighter operated from both land bases and aircraft carriers. It proved to be a terrifying

nemesis of Allied pilots at the beginning of the war and it boasted an incredible 1,000-

1,200 mile range.[123] Japanese ace Saburo Sakai rated the Zero far superior in

maneuverability and performance to the two Allied mainstay fighters he met over the

Philippines, the P-40 and the P-36.[124] Additionally, the G4M "Betty" twin engine land-

based naval bomber also boasted some impressive performance characteristics with a

3,745 mile range and a nearly 1 ton payload.[125] In four engine bombers, however, the

Allies held the edge. Sakai expressed admiration for the speed and defensive

characteristics of the American B-17s, and Japan would never produce any operational

heavy bombers.[126] Overall, however, Japan benefited from a technological edge in the air

at this point of the war. James Wood succinctly notes that, with the priority given to the

Atlantic theater of operations, "…for more than a year the Americans in the Pacific

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[121] Wood, *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War: Was Defeat Inevitable?* , 90.

[122] Eric M. Bergerud, *Fire in the Sky: The Air War in the South Pacific* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 9.

[123] Sakai, Caidin, and Saito, *Samurai!* , 42.

[124] Ibid. P-36 comparison on p. 63, and P-40 comparison on p. 66.

[125] van der Vat, *The Pacific Campaign: World War II, the U.S.-Japanese Naval War, 1941-1945*, 124.

[126] Sakai, Caidin, and Saito, *Samurai!* , 50. Gailey, *The War in the Pacific: From Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay*, 61.

fought with inferior or obsolescent aircraft that, initially at least, were outclassed by Japanese machines."[127]

Japanese army technology was on the whole not as impressive. Throughout their conquests, Japanese small arms proved effective and generally reliable even if not overpowering.[128] Japan's subjugation of Malaya involved the use of dozens of tanks while the British defenders had none.[129] Japanese tanks at the beginning of the war included the Type 95 light tank and the Type 94 and 97 medium tanks; all were slow and only lightly armed.[130] These Japanese tanks generally did not measure up to the newer Allied models, but this disadvantage was not decisive since armor was destined to play a limited role in the Pacific War.

The Japanese produced ships with a specific goal in mind. Japan's naval strategists understood that they could not out-manufacture the United States, so they focused instead on offsetting their presumed quantitative deficiency with qualitative superiority. Accordingly, they aimed to launch ships that were individually superior to their enemies' ships, with an emphasis on maximum offensive capabilities and speed.[131] Historians David Evans and Mark Peattie have elaborated on this concept:

> These measures included the development of a long-range subsurface offensive capability; the perfection of night combat techniques by torpedo squadrons; the achievement of superior design and construction in heavy cruisers; the devising of

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[127] Wood, *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War: Was Defeat Inevitable?* , 91.

[128] Gailey, *The War in the Pacific: From Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay*, 60.

[129] Liddell-Hart, *History of the Second World War*, 224.

[130] Gailey, *The War in the Pacific: From Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay*, 60.

[131] Fuchida et al., *Midway: The Battle That Doomed Japan*, 27.

the tactic for "outranging" the enemy; the development in the 1930s of a night combat force of fast battleships; the forging of a superb naval air arm; and finally, the construction of the most powerful battleships ever to enter the ocean.[132]

They then built such a fleet. The battleship *Yamato*, launched in late 1941, was the largest in the world and carried 18-inch guns; Japanese cruisers outgunned their contemporaries with up to ten 8-inch guns and multiple torpedo launchers; and the Japanese *Fubaki* class destroyers designed for night torpedo attacks represented a major offensive addition to the fleet.[133] The Japanese, lacking radar capabilities, developed excellent optics to assist in their night fighting tactics, and they developed the remarkable oxygen-fueled Type 93 "Long Lance" torpedo with its tremendous range, hitting power, and stealth through lack of a wake.[134] The United States held an important edge in radar technology on its ships and for air warning ashore, but, as Admiral Halsey admitted, often struggled to employ the equipment effectively early in the war.[135] American torpedoes, however, often failed miserably, missing their targets, running too deep, and not detonating upon contact because of multiple design flaws.[136] These torpedo problems plagued the Americans well into the war.

On balance, Japan leveraged an overall technological edge at the beginning of the war. Japan employed superior aircraft and superior naval technology to extend the

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[132] Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887-1941*, 206-07.

[133] Ibid., 220-32.

[134] Fuchida et al., *Midway: The Battle That Doomed Japan*, 209 – for reference to the optics. Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1941-1945*, 60 –for reference to the torpedo.

[135] Halsey and Bryan, *Admiral Halsey's Story*, 72.

[136] Wood, *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War: Was Defeat Inevitable?* , 48.

empire. Those advantages the Americans enjoyed in heavy bombers and in radar technology did not play a large enough role in early combat to tip the technological balance.

In the category of resources as a whole, Japan also barely edged out the Allies at the beginning of the war, but this superiority would not last. Japanese advantages in materiel and technology helped to offset the disparity in manpower in the opening campaigns of the war, but like a hockey team playing short-handed with exceptional players, qualitative advantages would only bring victory if Japan could hold onto the puck known as strategic initiative.

Intelligence

The intelligence war began before the shooting war. Prewar prejudices distorted both sides' impressions of the capabilities of the other. According to Subaru Ienaga, Germany's successes against the Western powers caused the Japanese to underestimate British Commonwealth forces' capabilities and also contributed to a "shoddy analysis" of American war-making capacity.[137] On the other hand, racial stereotypes shaped American perceptions of their Japanese foe by discounting the capabilities of the Japanese carrier force as inferior copies of the U.S. model.[138] Pearl Harbor rudely corrected this fallacy.

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[137] Ienaga, *The Pacific War: World War II and the Japanese, 1931-1945*, 141.

[138] Keegan, *The Second World War*, 268.

Japanese intelligence effectively supported the initial operations. Spies in Hawaii

provided the Pearl Harbor planners with accurate information about the status of

American defenses and the U.S. Pacific fleet.[139] Rear Admiral Takeuchi revealed that

Japan had complete information on U.S. forces in Hawaii in large measure from open

source intelligence like newspapers and other publications, in addition to personal

observations.[140] General Brereton, as previously noted, lamented the reach and

effectiveness of Japanese espionage in the Philippines, and Sakai confirmed the

contribution of Japanese photo intelligence prior to the air raid on Clark Field. Indeed,

photo intelligence revealed that one estimate of 900 American aircraft in the Philippines

was wildly high of the mark, enabling more accurate campaign planning.[141] In

November 1941, Japanese assessments of Allied strength in Malaya and the Netherlands

East Indies amounted to 60-70,000 troops and 320 aircraft in the former and 85,000

troops and more than 300 aircraft in the latter.[142] These Japanese calculations tended to

underestimate Allied manpower, as prisoner hauls revealed, while overestimating Allied

air strength. Japanese signals intelligence, as Admiral Ugaki recorded, knew of the

departure but not the composition of an American task force destined to partake in the

Battle of the Coral Sea.

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[139] Agawa, *The Reluctant Admiral: Yamamoto and the Imperial Navy*, 251-52.

[140] USSBS Interrogations: No. 222, 222-3.

[141] USSBS Interrogations: No. 495: Captain Toshikazu Ohmae and Commander Meriyoshi Yamaguchi, IJN; Subject: Japanese Navy Air Force; Date: 6 December 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 495-2.

[142] *NARA 550:* Series: Organizational History Files, compiled 1959 - 1973, documenting the period 1931 – 1973, Box #22: Japanese Monographs: Nos. 143-152. Army Force Far East Headquarters, Military History Section, "Japanese Monograph No. 152: Political Strategy Prior to the Outbreak of War, Part V," in *Japanese Monographs*, 16-17.

The United States and the Allies derived the vast majority of their intelligence from radio intercepts and decrypts. Yet despite the remarkable success of the Magic decrypts beginning before the war, the Americans failed to anticipate the Pearl Harbor raid and tended to focus most of their energies on the Philippine Islands.[143] Historian Allan R. Millett states that radio intelligence enabled the American resistance at Coral Sea and at the forthcoming Battle of Midway in June 1942.[144] But the Americans often struggled with more conventional intelligence means during this phase. General Brereton lamented his lack of knowledge about the enemy air forces on Formosa before those forces destroyed his command in the Philippines in December.[145]

The Japanese clearly held an edge in intelligence collection and analysis during this first phase of the war. They pieced together a more realistic, if not entirely accurate, appraisal of the situation for each of their operations than did the Allies and they reaped the corresponding rewards. The Allies had just begun to leverage their strategic advantage in radio intelligence at Coral Sea, but would extend this advantage in the coming months. The changing relative capabilities of Japanese and American intelligence services would play a major role in the shifting of the strategic initiative from Japanese to American favor in late 1942 and 1943.

Both sides also endeavored to protect their operations with counterintelligence and security measures. The Japanese guarded their Pearl Harbor plan zealously and the

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[143] Costello, *The Pacific War 1941-1945: The First Comprehensive One-Volume Account of the Causes and Conduct of World War II in the Pacific.*, 118.

[144] Allan R. Millett, "Guadalcanal and Martin Clemens," In *Alone on Guadalcanal: A Coastwatcher's Story* by Martin Clemens (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1998), 10.

[145] Brereton, *The Brereton Diaries: The War in the Air in the Pacific, Middle East and Europe, 3 October 1941-8 May 1945*, 37.

success of that operation attests to the effectiveness of their security. But Japan did not know that the Allies had broken their naval and diplomatic codes, a devastating security breakdown. But American efforts also stuttered. Safeguarding the secret of the Magic breakthrough dominated American concerns and they did this successfully. Yet they failed to secure their defenses in the Philippines and Pearl Harbor from Japan's prying eyes, with devastating results.

The overall intelligence picture favored Japan during this opening stage. They had a clearer picture of the situation at the front, while the United States failed to fully capitalize on its greatest advantage, radio intelligence. Roberta Wohlstetter accurately revealed the American intelligence failure at Pearl Harbor writing, "If our intelligence system and all our other channels of information failed to produce an accurate image of Japanese intentions and capabilities, it was not for want of relevant materials. Never before have we had so complete an intelligence picture of the enemy."[146] Despite the picture the U.S. pieced together, the Allies still misread their intelligence and underestimated Japan's abilities to conduct military operations and wage a war of conquest in late 1941 and early 1942.

Racism and cultural blinders contributed to the intelligence challenges for both sides and no doubt influenced the way the Allies underestimated the Japanese military threat. Historian John Dower elaborates the roles of racism and culture in the Pacific War with his book *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War.* The Western nations, according to Dower, had been conditioned by decades of colonial rule over

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[146] Roberta Wohlstetter, *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1962), 382.

Asian lands to take for granted a racial and cultural superiority over their Asians.[147] The Japanese view of their *Yamato* race engendered similar feelings concerning their own superiority. The Japanese exaggerated their own spiritual strength and social cohesiveness while denigrating the material strength and moral fiber of the Allies.[148] Dower writes, "prejudice and racial stereotypes frequently distorted both Japanese and Allied evaluations of the enemy's intentions and capabilities."[149] During the first few months of the war, these attitudes undermined the U.S. intelligence picture. Americans had assumed the Japanese to be inferior warriors and underestimated the effectiveness of the Japanese carrier force and Japanese pilots, thereby contributing to their intelligence shortcomings at the opening of the war.[150]

Strategic Acumen

Japanese strategic acumen at the beginning of the war demonstrated something of a paradox. The Japanese military rapidly achieved their initial goals, validating their planning and their assessment of the military balance at that time. Historian Richard Overy writes, "No one was more surprised by the speed and completeness of Japanese successes than Japanese leaders themselves. They had expected a campaign of six months or more, not twelve weeks; they had anticipated losing a quarter of their fleet, but

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[147] Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*, 5.

[148] Ibid., 259.

[149] Ibid., 11.

[150] Keegan, *The Second World War*, 268.

lost only three destroyers."[151] For Wood, these results reveal just how accurate the

Japanese risk assessment was and that they had indeed struck the Allies at the most

opportune time.[152] But this success revealed the paradoxical nature of their planning.

According to Fuchida, "Japan's strategy-makers had been so engrossed in the immediate

problem of acquiring oil resources that they had formulated no concrete strategic program

for the ensuing course of hostilities after these resources had been won."[153] In January

1942, Admiral Ugaki felt Japan must press its advantage through an attempted invasion

of Hawaii to force a decisive naval battle.[154] Ugaki kept one eye on the calendar: "As

time passes, we would lose the benefit of the war results so far gained. Moreover, the

enemy would increase his strength, while we would just be waiting for him to come."[155]

In the subsequent strategy debate between the Japanese army and navy, the two agreed to

take advantage of their dominance thus far and extend the perimeter further. This

reformulated strategy, with the addition of new "outer perimeter" operations directed at

Fiji, Samoa, New Guinea, the Solomons, and Midway, triggered the forthcoming

campaigns that would yield the strategic initiative to the Allies.[156]

 The Japanese strategy completely overturned the United States' strategy at the

beginning of the war. The belated American decision in mid 1941 to revert back to

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[151] Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, 33.

[152] Wood, *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War: Was Defeat Inevitable?* , 12.

[153] Fuchida et al., *Midway: The Battle That Doomed Japan*, 54.

[154] Ugaki et al., *Fading Victory: The Diary of Admiral Matome Ugaki, 1941-1945*, 74.

[155] Ibid.

[156] Wood, *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War: Was Defeat Inevitable?* , 15.

earlier plans to hold the Philippines disintegrated under Japanese bombs at Pearl Harbor and Clark Field, and under MacArthur's poor decisions. The Allies could not mount any effective counteractions to stem or reverse the enemy onslaught and to save their possessions in the Far East. As a result, the strategy had to be temporarily altered to fit the existing conditions in the Pacific. Overy writes, "In the early months of 1942 American strategy crystalised into a single objective, to keep some kind of military foothold in the southern Pacific as a springboard for a future offensive," with a focus on Australia.[157] This focus on Australia and the south meant that Japanese plans to extend the perimeter in that same area threatened the new American strategic priorities.

Opportunities seized or lost remain a corollary of the strategic acumen discussion. Japan missed two significant opportunities during the opening hostilities. First, Admiral Nagumo's decision to withdraw from Pearl Harbor after the second wave of his attack returned, as noted, left American dry docks and oil farms in commission allowing for both a more rapid recovery from the raid and continued U.S. naval operations from Hawaii. Second, the Japanese did not commence, and would never initiate, unrestricted submarine warfare against the Allies' vulnerable shipping resources because they remained focused on destroying enemy combat vessels.[158] The United States did not miss this same opportunity, but instead declared unrestricted air and submarine warfare

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[157] Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, 34.

[158] Wood, *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War: Was Defeat Inevitable?*, 63.

against Japan six hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor.[159] As a result, the United Sates would reap great rewards from unrestricted submarine warfare later in the conflict.

The Japanese certainly bested the Americans and their allies in achieving surprise. Pearl Harbor, aided by some radio deception to keep the U.S. thinking the Japanese carriers remained in home waters, clearly stunned the Americans and altered the strategic balance at the beginning of the war. The Japanese also achieved surprise in the Philippines and elsewhere as they secured their targeted resource areas. The United States did achieve one notable surprise with the Doolittle Raid, and this would have strategic consequences for the next phase of the war, but its immediate effects did not alter the Pacific situation to any significant degree.

The Japanese demonstrated superior acumen to that of the Allies at this stage in the war. Their plans more closely matched reality and they secured their initial aims rapidly, demonstrating a good balance of ends, ways, and means for the first six months. They were not perfect, missing some critical opportunities, and their strategic decisions in early 1942 set the stage for the Allies to vie for and then take the strategic initiative in the conflict. But for the opening phase, the Japanese proved as superior in their judgment as they did in their execution.

Combat Effectiveness

When measuring combat effectiveness in terms of completing one's assigned mission with the least expenditure of resources in the shortest amount of time, the

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[159] van der Vat, *The Pacific Campaign: World War II, the U.S.-Japanese Naval War, 1941-1945*, 140.

Japanese forces reigned supreme during this first phase of the war.[160] On land, sea, and air, Japan, with the temporary exception at Wake Island and the more significant exception in the Coral Sea, imposed its will on the Allies.

Combat experience and discipline characterized the Japanese army in late 1941. Intensive training "produced an army of tough, fatalistic troops who could be almost invincible in the attack."[161] James Wood describes the army as a light infantry force that obsessed about the offensive while scorning the defensive, disregarded logistics, held nearly suicidal expectations of its troops, and accepted attritional tactics.[162] The army placed its main emphasis "on 'spirit' at the expense of scientific know-how, mechanization, and modernization."[163] The Japanese army held a long tradition of night attack predating firearms and it returned to the tactics of night attack in the 1920s with the realization it could not stand up to the growing industrial and resource power of the Soviet Union.[164] The Japanese answered the challenge of fighting a superior great power with an emphasis on tactical surprise through night attacks unsupported by heavy weaponry, and they trained extensively in this regard.[165] This night training paid handsome dividends when applied to amphibious operations early in the war. Adding the

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[160] Mansoor, *The GI Offensive in Europe: The Triumph of American Infantry Divisions, 1941-1945*, 3.

[161] Gailey, *The War in the Pacific: From Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay*, 55.

[162] Wood, *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War: Was Defeat Inevitable?* , 104-05.

[163] Agawa, *The Reluctant Admiral: Yamamoto and the Imperial Navy*, 128.

[164] *NARA 550:* Series: Organizational History Files, compiled 1959 - 1973, documenting the period 1931 – 1973, Box #3: Japanese Night Combat parts 1 & 2: "Japanese Night Combat: Part 1 of 3 Parts, Principles of Night Combat," (Headquarters United States Army Forces, Far East and Eighth United States Army Military History Section, Japanese Research Division, 1955), 5, 13-15 .

[165] Ibid., 51.

darkness of night to the already complex maneuver of amphibious attack did not slow

Japanese landings in the Philippines, Malaya, Wake, Guam, or the Netherlands East

Indies.[166] The pattern continued with another successful night landing near Salamaua,

New Guinea in March 1942.[167] The Japanese tactics, training, and discipline served them

well on land as they repeatedly overran larger Allied armies in impressive and rapid

fashion.

The Japanese navy demonstrated similar skill and discipline in these early

operations. Naval leaders sensed the coming war in the late 1930s and the Combined

Fleet conducted its training and maneuvers not as peacetime practices, but instead "as

intensive as though a major war were in progress."[168] Just as the army had, the navy

swept aside Allied resistance in the southern operations. From Pearl Harbor to Ceylon,

the Japanese carrier force had operated with impunity until checked at the Battle of the

Coral Sea in May 1942. Fuchida attributed Japanese skill at the concerted use of multiple

aircraft carriers in an operation, something the U.S. Navy still struggled to sort out, to the

efforts and insights of Captain Minoru Genda.[169] The Japanese skill at night fighting and

their ships superior armament also contributed to their successes: "The synergy of

excellent ships, superbly trained crews, aggressive leadership, and integrated use of air

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[166] Ibid., 165.

[167] *NARA 550:* Series: Organizational History Files, compiled 1959 - 1973, documenting the period 1931 – 1973, Box #10: Japanese Monographs Nos. 31-35, Folder: Japanese Monograph No. 33: Southeast Area Operations Record, Part 1: South Seas Detachment Operations: Army Force Far East Headquarters, Military History Section, "Japanese Monograph No. 33 (Army): Southeast Area Operations Record Part 1, South Seas Detachment Operations Record (3 January-30 May 1942)," in *Japanese Monographs*, 10.

[168] Agawa, *The Reluctant Admiral: Yamamoto and the Imperial Navy*, 174.

[169] Fuchida et al., *Midway: The Battle That Doomed Japan*, 34.

power enabled the Imperial Navy to outthink, out maneuver, and outfight the Allied naval contingents decisively despite their desperate resistance."[170]

The Battle of the Coral Sea broke the string of Japanese naval successes. This battle requires closer scrutiny as it revealed some strengths and weaknesses of both navies in the carrier warfare that would characterize the next stage of the Pacific War. Most noticeable, during this battle American carrier pilots proved to be more formidable foes than much of the resistance previously encountered by Japan's own naval aviation elite.[171] American naval aviators sank the light Japanese carrier *Shoho* with an estimated eleven bomb hits and five torpedo hits, while also scoring three bomb hits the next day on fleet carrier and Pearl Harbor veteran *Shokaku*.[172] American pilots noted that the supporting Japanese ships scattered during their attack rather than forming a ring of defensive firepower around the carrier *Shoho*.[173] The veteran Japanese pilots scored bomb hits on both American carriers present at the battle, sinking the *Lexington* and severely damaging *Yorktown*. Despite their apparent skill and success, the U.S. attacks manifested their own faults. American torpedo bombers performed remarkably well against the *Shoho,* but in the next day's engagement against *Shokaku* Japanese observers noted that the American aircraft launched their slow torpedoes too far away from the

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[170] Wood, *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War: Was Defeat Inevitable?* , 75.

[171] Parshall and Tully, *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*, 65.

[172] Ibid.

[173] Edwin P. Hoyt, *Blue Skies and Blood: The Battle of the Coral Sea* (New York: Paul S. Eriksson, Inc., 1975), 54.

target, allowing the ship to maneuver and either avoid or outrun the threat.[174] Yet, in his

May 7th, 1942 diary entry while the battle still raged, Admiral Ugaki lamented the loss of

Shoho and wrote, "A dream of great success has been shattered. There is an opponent in

war, so one cannot progress just as one wishes. When we expect enemy raids, can't we

employ the forces in a little more unified way? After all, not a little should be attributed

to the insufficiency of air reconnaissance."[175] In these remarks, Ugaki recognized some

important areas of concern for the Japanese navy in future operations. To date, Japan had

"progressed just as it wished," but the Allies were now regaining their balance.

Japan's naval and army air forces also demonstrated their combat effectiveness

against their Allied counterparts, and Japanese air power assisted the Japanese

domination on land and sea. The Japanese army and navy conducted exceptional prewar

training, and their air forces followed suit. Prewar Japanese naval pilot training

manifested stringent qualification requirements and a 60-70% attrition rate.[176] In 1941,

the average Japanese front line pilot had 600 flight hours, with 50% of the army pilots

and 10% of the navy pilots having combat experience.[177] By comparison, at the

beginning of the war, Japanese naval pilots received 700 hours of flight training to a

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[174] USSBS Interrogations: No. 46: Commander H. Sekino, IJN; Subject: Coral Sea Battle, 7-8 May 1942; Date: 17 October 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #6, 46-3. Interrogation No. 53: Captain M. Yamaoka, IJN; Subject: Solomon Island Operation and Battle of Coral Sea; Date: 19 Oct. 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #8, 53-4.

[175] Ugaki et al., *Fading Victory: The Diary of Admiral Matome Ugaki, 1941-1945*, 122.

[176] Sakai, Caidin, and Saito, *Samurai!* , 10, 17.

[177] *AFHRA:* Call # 168.1703-62: Military Analysis Division United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *Japanese Air Power* (Washington, D.C.: United States Strategic Bombing Survey (Pacific) Military Analysis Division, 1946), 5.

respectable, but much lower, 305 hours for American naval pilots.[178] The Japanese

training and combat experience paid off in combat, and Allied pilots did not impress

Saburo Sakai in the first few months of the war: "I am firmly convinced that in those

early days of the war the individual skill of our pilots was definitely superior to that of

the men flying the Dutch, Australian, and American fighters."[179]

Some statistics back up Sakai's assessment of these opening stages. While

attacking Colombo in the Indian Ocean on 5 April 1942, ninety-one Japanese bombers

escorted by thirty-six fighters tangled with forty Royal Air Force fighters, with the latter

losing nineteen aircraft to the former's seven.[180] During the entire foray into the Indian

Ocean that April, the Japanese carrier strike force lost only seventeen aircraft while

sinking twenty-three Allied merchant vessels.[181] Throughout the entire course of its

destructive sweep from Pearl Harbor to Darwin and the Indian Ocean, the Japanese

carrier strike force's moderate losses amounted to fifty to sixty aircraft in combat and

twenty to thirty operational losses, leaving approximately 300 aircraft intact.[182] The 21st

and 23rd Air Flotillas also suffered only light to moderate combat losses of between ten

and twenty aircraft each while conquering the southern resource area.[183] While

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[178] Dunnigan and Nofi, *Victory at Sea: World War II in the Pacific*, 256.

[179] Sakai, Caidin, and Saito, *Samurai!* , 88.

[180] van der Vat, *The Pacific Campaign: World War II, the U.S.-Japanese Naval War, 1941-1945*, 135.

[181] Ibid., 135-36.

[182] USSBS Interrogations: No. 479, 479-5.

[183] USSBS Interrogations: For the 21st Air Flotilla see: Interrogation No. 424: Captain Bunzo Shibata, IJN; Subject: 21st Air Flotilla; Date: 18 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 424-6. For the 23rd Air Flotilla see: Interrogation No. 601: Commander Ryosuke Nomura, IJN; Subject: Japanese

sustaining these limited losses, the Japanese naval air force destroyed American air power in Hawaii and, in conjunction with the JAAF, neutralized Allied air power in Malaya, the Philippines, and the Netherlands East Indies; a perfect example of achieving one's aims rapidly with limited expenditure of resources.

Yet combat did expose some weaknesses in the Japanese methods. The extreme selectivity and high attrition rate of the Japanese navy's pilot training system did not bode well for a long war with heavy pilot attrition. This, however, had no impact on the opening phase of the war. Second, while Japanese fighter pilots bested their Allied counterparts in these opening engagements, the Japanese pilots fought well in maneuvering engagements known as dogfights, but the Americans soon learned to avoid such engagements and developed different tactics to avoid the Japanese strengths.[184] During their rapid advance to the south, Japanese construction of forward airbases proceeded more slowly than anticipated, contributing to higher operational losses on rough airfields.[185] Finally, the advance to the south also demonstrated that the Japanese had much work to do in aircraft logistics if they were going to meet the other important aspect of combat effectiveness, endurance.[186] By March 1942, the 23rd Air Flotilla's aircraft losses to all causes, not just combat, amounted to eighty-eight aircraft, but they

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Land Based Air Operations in the CELEBES and RABAUL Area; Date: 28 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #6, 601-2.

[184]Mark R. Peattie, *Sunburst: The Rise of Japanese Naval Air Power, 1909-1941* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2001), 309-12.

[185] USSBS Interrogations: No. 424, 424-5 - 424-6.

[186] USSBS Interrogations: No. 601, 601-3.

received only forty replacement aircraft.[187] Once again, the swiftness of conquest in this

first phase temporarily masked these Japanese deficiencies.

Japan clearly held an edge in combat effectiveness throughout this opening phase

of the war. Its forces dominated the Allied armies, navies, and air forces while extending

Japanese conquests. The Battle of the Coral Sea checked this run of success, but on

balance the Japanese achieved nearly all of their aims in a timely fashion and at low cost.

Nevertheless, Japanese forces exhibited weaknesses that would threaten their longer term

prospects if the Allies could ever gain the strategic initiative from them.

Chance

Chance interceded in the first phase of the war in several instances. First and

foremost, none of the U.S. Pacific Fleet's aircraft carriers were in Pearl Harbor on the

morning of December 7th. Had they been in port, there is little doubt they, like many of

their battleship brethren, would have ended resting on the bottom of the harbor. The loss

of aircraft carriers would have left the United States with no means of countering the

Japanese, save submarines—a weak option given what we now know about the

deficiencies of the American MK XIV torpedo—and Japanese plans to isolate Australia

by taking Port Moresby would have stood a much greater chance of success. The

carriers' survival ensured that the U.S. still had some means to resist Japan.

Nagumo's decision to leave Pearl Harbor after the second wave represents an

example of human interplay with chance in this phase. He had already achieved a great

victory and likely understood the importance of his carrier strike force to the Japanese

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[187] Ibid., 601-2.

war effort. From that stand point his decision remains sound. Yet it is also revealing. With very little loss in the first two attacks, Nagumo turned away before damaging the dry docks or fuel depots, perhaps out of trepidation based on the absence of the American carriers; or in a different phrase, out of fear of the unknown. This may be an unfair criticism in some respects, but it seems fair to say that Nagumo could have taken a calculated risk and pressed the attack further with much potential for gain. He did not do so.

Finally, Generals MacArthur and Brereton missed a similar opportunity in the Philippines. When weather over Formosa delayed the departure of Japanese aircraft designated to strike the Far East Air Force, American commanders balked instead of launching their own strike. Whether the Americans could or would have caught the Japanese aircraft on the ground is moot. Had they launched a strike against Formosa, American aircraft would not have been caught and destroyed on the ground that afternoon. The overall outcome of the campaign would not likely have changed, but resistance in the Philippines may have been more effective and durable if American air assets had not been halved on the first day. Fog at Formosa presented MacArthur with an opportunity, but hesitation in the face of the "fog of war" took that opportunity away.

Conclusion

The Japanese seized the strategic initiative on 7 December 1942 and held it throughout the first months of the Pacific War. They had superior resources overall, with strengths in technology and materiel offsetting deficiencies in manpower. Japanese

intelligence supported their operations and strategic planning while shielding the timing and location of Japanese raids and amphibious landings. The Allies, despite important successes against Japanese diplomatic and naval codes, lost the intelligence battle in this first phase of the war. Japanese opening moves caught them flat-footed despite awareness that war loomed. Japan's plans proved more realistic and the Japanese matched their ends, ways, and means for a rapid conquest of the resource areas they deemed necessary for the sustenance of their empire. Allied plans to hold Malaya, Singapore, and the Philippines shattered under the hammer blows of the Japanese army, navy, and air force. In terms of combat effectiveness, the Japanese bested the Allies on the land and sea, as well as in the air. The Japanese achieved their objectives rapidly with minimal expenditure of resources, while any weaknesses in the endurance of their military forces did not manifest themselves before June 1942. The United States benefited more than Japan in the category of chance. The absence of American aircraft carriers at Pearl Harbor and Nagumo's failure to destroy the naval facilities during that raid left the Allies with some means of defense in the Pacific despite Japan's early successes. Two of those carriers thwarted the Japanese at Coral Sea. MacArthur's missed opportunity at Formosa was significant but did not rise to the same level of importance. Thus Japan held advantages in four of the five underlying foundations of strategic initiative and therefore seized and maintained that initiative throughout the opening months of the war.

Yet Coral Sea served as a portent of the future. The U.S. Pacific Fleet had regained some of its balance and the Japanese had amended their strategy to incorporate a

new "outer perimeter" to defend their conquests. Continued Japanese expansion and the renewed determination of the U.S. Pacific Fleet to resist their thrust resulted in a momentous battle near the tiny island of Midway in the central Pacific. The results of the Battle of Midway in June 1942 would do much to shape the course of the war for the next year and a half. All eyes now turned toward the central Pacific.

Chapter 7: Midway

The Battle of Midway in June 1942 followed closely on the heels of the Battle of the Coral Sea. The second of the carrier engagements between the U.S. Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy, Midway reshaped the strategic calculus in the Pacific. The dramatic and spectacular American victory captured the American public's imagination and has become a legend in the lore of U.S. naval history. Yet the victory neither decided the war nor granted the United States naval dominance in the Pacific Theater. Japan's loss during the Battle of Midway of four of the six carriers that had struck Pearl Harbor returned some balance to the comparative naval strengths in the Pacific. In consequence, Japanese strategic choices necessarily narrowed, while American freedom of action increased. The results of Midway allowed the United States and the Allies to challenge Japan's hold on the strategic initiative. June 1942 marked the end of Japanese free reign in the Pacific. In the battle's immediate aftermath, the Allies were still reacting to previous and ongoing Japanese operations in the South and Southwest Pacific but Midway allowed them to do so forcefully and to begin vying for the strategic initiative.

Japan's Decision to Strike Midway in June 1942

Since January 1942, Admiral Yamamoto and his Chief of Staff, Admiral Matome

Ugaki, had focused on plans for taking Midway as a means to threaten Hawaii and force

a decisive fleet battle.[1] Yamamoto faced opposition from the Naval General Staff and the

IGHQ. He continued to press for support for his plan to attack Midway and, once again

using the threat of possible resignation as he had for Pearl Harbor, secured grudging

approval for the operation from his nominal superiors in early April 1942.[2] The Doolittle

Raid that followed less than a fortnight later, reinforced the decision and may have

assisted with advancing the timeline for the operation. The Japanese army warily agreed

to postpone the Fiji, Samoa, New Caledonia operations in favor of Midway, but at a cost.

The compromise reached between the army and navy stipulated that Midway would take

priority over the Fiji operation, but the navy must divert forces from the Midway

occupation to simultaneously assault the Aleutian Islands in the north.[3] This compromise

underwrites the judgment of Jonathan Parshall and Anthony Tully, who correctly

maintain in *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway* that the Aleutian

thrust did not represent a psychological diversion for the main effort against Midway but

was instead another important objective in the eyes of the Japanese war machine.[4]

Timing played a key role in the Midway campaign in several respects. Foremost,

the advance of the start date placed Midway immediately on the heels of the Battle of the

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[1] Ugaki et al., *Fading Victory: The Diary of Admiral Matome Ugaki, 1941-1945*, 75.

[2] Gordon William Prange, Donald M. Goldstein, and Katherine V. Dillon, *Miracle at Midway* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982), 22-23.

[3] Hayashi, *Kogun: The Japanese Army in the Pacific War*, 51.

[4] Parshall and Tully, *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*, 431.

Coral Sea. The results of that battle cost the Japanese the use of the carriers *Shokaku* and *Zuikaku*. In effect, with the Midway operation and the Aleutian push occurring so close to the attempt to invade Port Moresby, Japanese strategy was overreaching by trying to expand the perimeter in the Pacific in three places nearly simultaneously. Tully and Parshall sum up the situation succinctly, "Thus a strategic formulation process that should have logically reached a final decision in favor of a unified strategy with a single near-term objective, in fact resulted in de facto support for *three* objectives in two theaters, none of which was mutually supporting."[5] Timing also affected the Midway invasion tactically and operationally. Japan had trained for and succeeded in nighttime amphibious operations and planned to employ the tactic against Midway. As a result, the landings demanded a full moon, which translated into an attack no later than 8 June 1942 or suffer a month delay until the next full moon in July.[6] This target date necessarily dictated the timing of the supporting naval and air operations, constraining the freedom of action for the Japanese carrier strike force commander, Admiral Chuichi Nagumo.

Yet, despite these constraints and the consequent dispersion of effort, Yamamoto judged that he retained sufficient strength to achieve his aims. Obviously aware of the unavailability of their own two carriers from Coral Sea, the Japanese, demonstrating the weakness of their naval intelligence at that time, believed, based on pilot reports, they had sunk both American carriers that had participated in the battle.[7] Such a trade ensured continued Japanese superiority in aircraft carriers in the Pacific and, more specifically,

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[5] Ibid., 37.

[6] Ibid., 65.

[7] Ugaki et al., *Fading Victory: The Diary of Admiral Matome Ugaki, 1941-1945*, 123.

for the operation against Midway. On the eve of battle the Japanese estimate of the

situation expected the Americans to be unprepared to defend Midway: "His [America's]

morale was not at once shaken by his crushing defeat in the Coral Sea on 7-8 May 1942;

and the last 10 days of May saw the sudden return of lively activity throughout enemy

areas after our fleet sortie from Hashira Jima; he is paying singular attention to the

Australian Area; the time is ripe to strike at Midway and the Aleutians."[8]

Admiral Nimitz Reacts to Japanese Plans

The U.S. Pacific Fleet's radio intelligence capabilities grew throughout early

1942. As the Battle of Midway loomed, the U.S. network intercepted approximately 60

percent of the Imperial Navy's message traffic and read about 40 percent of that haul.[9]

American officers pieced together Japanese plans for the attack on Midway and its

supporting operations, such as "Operation K" for the reconnaissance of Pearl Harbor.

Accurate intelligence allowed Admiral Nimitz to plan his own countermoves, such as

thwarting the planned aerial reconnaissance.[10] Yet there remained vastly different

opinions of the Japanese objectives among U.S. intelligence agencies and officers from

Pearl Harbor to Washington, D.C. Admiral Ernest J. King at first feared another

Japanese strike to the south until intelligence from codebreakers in Melbourne confirmed

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[8] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, 58.

[9] Prados, *Combined Fleet Decoded: The Secret History of American Intelligence and the Japanese Navy in World War II*, 315.

[10] Ibid., 316-17.

the opinion of those at Pearl Harbor that Midway was the target.[11] Nimitz, with some of

his own staff officers still expressing skepticism about the presumed Japanese attack,

committed his three remaining operational aircraft carriers, including the damaged but

usable *Yorktown,* to the defense of Midway Island.[12]

In so doing, Nimitz took a calculated risk based upon his interpretation of the

enemy's capabilities and intentions. General Delos Emmons, the army commander

responsible for the defense of Hawaii, remained fearful of Japan's possible moves and

cautioned Nimitz that the Japanese still held the capacity to strike at Oahu.[13] Nimitz

nevertheless chose to concentrate most of his forces for a "fleet-opposed invasion" of

Midway, with a small naval surface force to counter the anticipated strike against the

Aleutians.[14] He also increased the aircraft, ground forces, and anti-aircraft artillery

defenses on Midway Island.[15] With the intelligence he had on hand, Nimitz hoped to

surprise the Japanese aircraft carriers at their most vulnerable moment:

> It was assumed that the Japanese Striking Force would begin launching at dawn—
> attack planes southward towards Midway, search planes north, east, and south. At
> that hour the American task forces, on course southwest through the night, should
> be 200 miles north of Midway, ready to launch on receiving the first report from
> U.S. search planes of the location, course, and speed of the enemy. With good
> timing and good luck they would catch the Japanese carriers with half their planes
> attacking Midway. With better timing and better luck they might catch the enemy
> carriers while they were recovering the Midway attack group. That the

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[11] Ibid., 317-18.

[12] Ibid., 321-22.

[13] E. B. Potter, *Nimitz* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1976), 79.

[14] Ibid., 79-80.

[15] Ibid., 81.

Americans might catch the Japanese carriers in the highly vulnerable state of rearming and refueling the recovered planes was almost too much to hope for.[16]

Nimitz directed his carrier task force commanders, Admirals Frank Fletcher and Raymond Spruance, to operate under the theory of calculated risk in which they did not expose their forces to attack by superior enemy forces unless they had the prospect of inflicting greater damage upon the enemy.[17] Nimitz, through his actions preceding the battle, demonstrated a willingness to trust his own judgment and thereby manifested the *coup d'oeil* so lauded by Carl von Clausewitz. His decision to oppose Yamamoto and Nagumo cleared the way for an epic naval showdown north of the tiny island of Midway in the central Pacific.

Battle Joined

The resource balance for the Midway operation, on paper, appeared daunting for the Americans. The Japanese armada included eleven battleships, four large aircraft carriers, one light aircraft carrier, one seaplane carrier, thirteen cruisers, and fifty-eight destroyers.[18] The American force opposing them included just three aircraft carriers, eight cruisers, and fourteen destroyers.[19] Japan employed two light aircraft carriers, one seaplane carrier, six cruisers, and fifteen destroyers in the simultaneous attack on the

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[16] Ibid., 87.

[17] Ibid.

[18] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, 74-76.

[19] Ibid., 74.

Aleutians.[20] The Americans mustered six cruisers, five Coast Guard cutters, and eleven

destroyers to oppose these assault forces.[21] The Japanese heavy and light carriers

expected to embark a grand total of 367 strike and fighter aircraft amongst them.[22] The

three American carriers embarked 233 operational aircraft, with an additional ninety-six

combat aircraft and thirty-one long range PBY Catalina patrol planes on Midway

Island.[23] On paper, the Japanese enjoyed a staggering advantage in ships and a potential

advantage of thirty-eight combat aircraft for the coming battles.

The paper strength of the forces proved to be illusory. The Japanese plan

dissipated carrier and aircraft strength among numerous, widely separated task forces,

with two light carriers out of the main battle supporting operations in the Aleutians. The

Americans concentrated their carriers in two task forces, Task Force 16 and Task Force

17, operating in close proximity to one another and to the island of Midway, a division of

forces necessitated by the fact that *Yorktown* was delayed in Pearl Harbor undergoing

repairs for damage suffered at the Coral Sea and could not join the others until the eve of

battle. In addition, the Japanese carrier air groups operated below strength, leaving

Nagumo and his four carriers in the strike group with a total of 248 aircraft, not their

nominal strength of up to 261 aircraft.[24] Taken together with the absence of the *Zuikaku*

and *Shokaku* as a result of Coral Sea, the Japanese carrier strike group entered the

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[20] Ibid., 99-100.

[21] Ibid., 101.

[22] Fuchida et al., *Midway: The Battle That Doomed Japan*, 216-22.

[23] Parshall and Tully, *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*, 95-96.

[24] Ibid., 90.
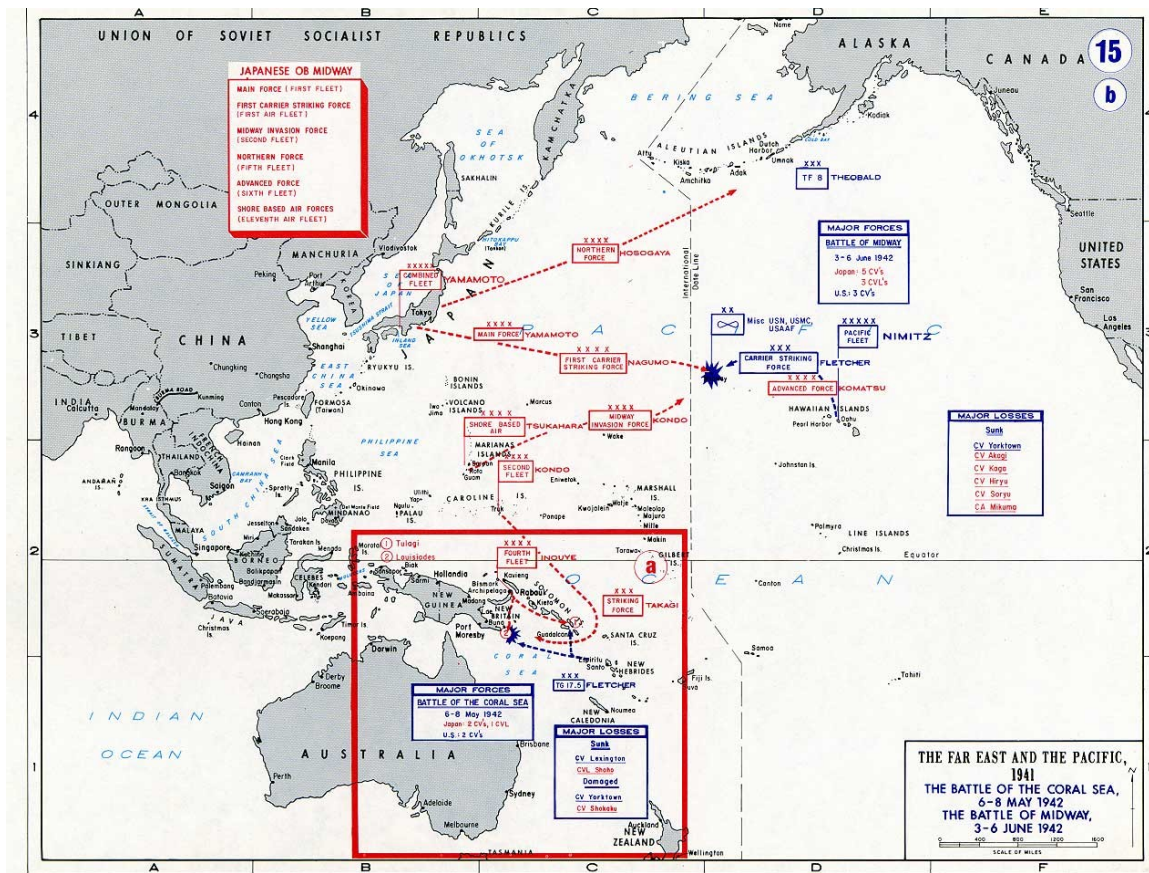
Figure 16: Battles of Coral Sea and Midway.

Source: History Department at the United States Military Academy Atlases: http://www.dean.usma.edu/departments/history/web03/atlases/ww2%20pacific/ww2%20pacific%20%20maps/ww2%20asia%20map%2015.jpg, accessed 16 April 2008.

Midway battle at only 60 percent of its potential air power strength compared to Nagumo's aircraft strength of 412 aircraft at Pearl Harbor.[25] Therefore, at the point of contact and the locus of the battle to the north of Midway, Japan pitted four aircraft carriers, a total of twenty warships, and 248 aircraft against three American aircraft carriers, a total of twenty-five warships, an unsinkable island airfield at Midway, and

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[25] Ibid.

nearly 330 strike and fighter aircraft.[26] Where it mattered most the Americans

outnumbered the Japanese, at least in the air, a product of Nimitz's vision and foresight.

Prelude to Combat

The United States dominated the Japanese in intelligence throughout the battle of

Midway. Surprise had benefitted early Japanese operations from Pearl Harbor to the

Philippines and Malaya. American radio intelligence, however, precluded Japanese

surprise at Coral Sea and then again at Midway. But at Midway, unlike at Coral Sea, the

Americans leveraged their radio intelligence to achieve surprise in accordance with their

hopes of attacking the Japanese carrier strike force while it was most vulnerable. Nimitz

also employed a deliberate deception effort to make the Japanese believe the American

focus remained on the south Pacific. In the prelude to battle, Nimitz ordered Vice

Admiral "Bull" Halsey to deliberately expose Task Force 16 with the carriers *Enterprise*

and *Hornet* to Japanese detection around the Solomon Islands before it sailed for

Hawaii.[27] Admiral Ugaki's diary confirms that the ruse successfully garnered Japanese

attention when, on 15 May 1942, a flying boat from the island of Tulagi spotted and

reported the location of the American task force.[28] But Nimitz's efforts also required

additional security measures to ensure the Japanese did not detect U.S. preparedness for

the invasion of Midway. Radio intelligence revealed Japanese plans for "Operation K,"

to launch an aerial reconnaissance flight over Pearl Harbor by staging flying boats with

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[26] Ibid., 433-34.

[27] Ibid., 93.

[28] Ugaki et al., *Fading Victory: The Diary of Admiral Matome Ugaki, 1941-1945*, 126.

submarine support in the French Frigate Shoals located 500 miles northwest of Hawaii.[29] The operation commenced the last week of May, but Nimitz, armed with foreknowledge of Japanese plans, anchored U.S. vessels at the preplanned Japanese rendezvous point forcing the Japanese to cancel the mission.[30] This maneuver deprived the Japanese of up to date intelligence on the U.S. fleet on the eve of the battle. Compounding the Japanese lack of knowledge of U.S. fleet dispositions, Imperial Navy submarines sent to scout the waters between Pearl Harbor and Midway arrived at their stations too late to detect the two American carrier task forces that had departed Hawaii in late May.[31] According to Fuchida, who was present at Midway, the Japanese "had not the slightest idea that the enemy had already sortied, much less that a powerful enemy force was lying in wait, ready to pounce upon us at any moment."[32] Thus the Japanese entered the battle unaware of the location or intentions of the U.S. aircraft carriers, while the U.S. carrier task force commanders had a much clearer picture of what to expect and when to expect it.

The Carrier Forces Engage

Regardless of American advantages in these preliminaries, the battle still needed to be fought and its outcome was anything but foreordained. The actions taken by the on-scene commanders and the performance of American and Japanese aircrews on 4 June 1942 would settle the issue and set the stage for the next phase of the Pacific War.

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[29] Fuchida et al., *Midway: The Battle That Doomed Japan*, 86.

[30] Potter, *Nimitz*, 88.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Fuchida et al., *Midway: The Battle That Doomed Japan*, 117.

On 3 June, two events confirmed the American intelligence appreciation of Japanese moves and validated Nimitz's trust in his Pearl Harbor intelligence station, Hypo. An alert naval patrol aircraft from Midway detected and shadowed the Japanese Midway invasion task force, with its troop transports, about 600 miles west of the target island.[33] That afternoon B-17 bombers from Midway attacked, but caused no damage to, the troopship convoy.[34] Meanwhile, the northern Japanese task force commenced its operations in the Aleutians with an air attack on Dutch Harbor.[35] The main event would open nearer to Midway the next morning.

The Japanese initiated the action as planned in the early morning hours of 4 June. The day commenced with the pre-dawn launch of search aircraft to scour the area to the northeast of Nagumo's carrier task force for any possible American naval presence and the launch of the 108 aircraft strike force against Midway. The Japanese reserved the remainder of their strike aircraft to counter any unexpected appearance of U.S. warships.[36] Once again, alert naval patrol aircraft from Midway spotted the Japanese, Nagumo's carrier force in this instance, and Midway's radar detected the incoming Japanese air strike, allowing all the operational American aircraft to take off and avoid destruction on the ground.[37] The Japanese pilots executed the attack with their usual skill, but the escape of the American aircraft and the limited size of the strike force meant

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[33] Ibid., 123.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid., 125.

[36] Ibid., 130-35.

[37] Parshall and Tully, *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*, 134-35.

that the Midway airstrip remained operational.[38] Meanwhile, events to the north of the island began to unfold, much to the detriment of Nagumo's force.

Nagumo and his carrier strike force certainly expected a busy morning, but surely nothing along the lines of what transpired between 7 a.m. and 11 a.m. that day. American patrol aircraft spotted Nagumo's carriers shortly before 6 a.m. and, armed with the location of the Japanese carriers, American commanders launched a series of strikes against the enemy force.[39] U.S. Navy and Army bombers armed with torpedoes and launched from Midway commenced the first attacks against the Japanese between 7 and 7:30 that morning.[40] Those Japanese who witnessed these first aerial torpedo runs observed a performance that would characterize American torpedo attacks throughout the battle: the aircraft launched their torpedoes too far from their targets and the torpedoes were too slow, making evasion easy.[41] While these attacks progressed, Nagumo ordered his reserve aircraft to be rearmed for the necessary second attack against Midway, a land target, as opposed to their current state of readiness to strike against naval targets.[42] Shortly thereafter, at 7:30 a.m., one of the Japanese search aircraft spotted an American naval task force but did not report the presence of aircraft carriers until fifteen minutes

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[38] Fuchida et al., *Midway: The Battle That Doomed Japan*, 138-39.

[39] Parshall and Tully, *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*, 154-55.

[40] Ibid.

[41] USSBS Interrogations: No. 165: Captain H. Ohara, IJN; Subject: Battle of Midway, 4-6 June 1942. Damage to Aircraft Carrier, Soryu. Date: 25 October 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #2, 165-2. See also: Interrogation No. 11: Captain Susumu Kawaguchi, IJN; Subject: Hiryu (CV) at the Battle of Midway; Date: 10 Oct 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #5, 11-4. Interrogation No. 138: Lt. Comdr. Hiroshi Toxuno, IJN; Subject: Battle of Guadalcanal, 12-14 November 1942. Battle of Midway, 4-5 June 1942. Battle of Villa Stanmore, 6 March 1943; Date: 25 October 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #8, 138-4.

[42] Parshall and Tully, *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*, 154-55.

later when the search crew reported a single carrier. At that time Nagumo ordered the

rearming of his aircraft reversed to deal with the unexpected ship-borne threat.[43]

Unknown to Nagumo, *Hornet* and *Enterprise* began launching their aircraft to attack the

Japanese carriers at 7 a.m., and *Yorktown* followed suit at 8 a.m.[44]

Events soon began to snowball. Midway's aircraft continued to pressure

Nagumo's fleet, with two groups of dive-bombers and another series of attacks from

high-level B-17 bombers, disrupting the Japanese fleet from about 7:55 a.m. to 8:35 a.m.,

which delayed the recovery of the Japanese aircraft that had struck at Midway earlier.[45]

In a repetition of the previous day's attack against the Japanese transports and setting a

pattern for future operations in the Pacific, the high-level B-17 bombers scored no hits

against the maneuvering vessels below.[46] Between 8:35 a.m. and 9:15 a.m. things

seemed to settle down for the Japanese strike force, which had yet to suffer any damage.

Nagumo's carriers recovered the waiting Midway attack aircraft and continued to prepare

their aircraft to attack the recently located American carrier.[47] Nagumo did not realize

that this temporary lull represented the eye of the storm and the onrushing second half of

that cyclone would soon swamp his cherished carriers.

American attacks, this time consisting of carrier-borne aircraft, resumed shortly

after 9:15 a.m. Torpedo Squadron Eight, from *Hornet,* followed by Torpedo Squadron

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[43] Ibid. It is worth noting that given Japanese estimates of the outcome at Coral Sea, the presence of a single American carrier closely matched their estimate of American strength.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] USSBS Interrogations: No. 165, 165-2 – 165-3.

[47] Parshall and Tully, *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*, 154-55.

Six, from *Enterprise,* attacked between 9:15 a.m. and 10:10 a.m. Torpedo Squadron

Eight fell to the last man and Torpedo Squadron Six lost all but four aircraft to Japanese

fighters and anti-aircraft fire, with no hits scored against the Japanese ships.[48] Despite

the Americans' horrendous losses and the poor results, these torpedo attacks prevented

the Japanese carriers from launching their rearmed strike aircraft and drew the Japanese

fighter cover down to sea level and out of position.[49] Throughout the morning, American

attacks had been strung out and sequential, making them easier for the Japanese to

counter than a coordinated, multi-directional attack including both bomber and torpedo

aircraft. The next attack changed that dynamic to the detriment of Nagumo's carriers.

Yet another American torpedo squadron, Torpedo Squadron Three from *Yorktown*,

commenced its run on the Japanese task force at 10:10 a.m., joined in part through

happenstance by several dive-bomber squadrons, Bombing Three, Scouting Six, and

Bombing Six, at 10:20 am.[50] According to Parshall and Tully, "This was far and away

the most challenging threat the Japanese faced all morning. And it was against this attack

that Japanese defenses would finally and catastrophically fail."[51] In rapid succession,

American bombs holed the flight decks of the carriers *Akagi, Kaga,* and *Soryu,* with only

Hiryu escaping unscathed to carry on the battle.[52] The latter carrier chose valor over

discretion in characteristic Samurai tradition and elected to continue to fight against what

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[48] Ibid., 206-14.

[49] Ibid., 209.

[50] Ibid., 154-55, 219.

[51] Ibid., 219.

[52] Fuchida et al., *Midway: The Battle That Doomed Japan*, 156-57.

was now, with three Japanese carriers out of action, undeniably a superior American carrier force.

Fight on *Hiryu* did, and effectively for a brief time. Shortly after the devastating American attack, she launched her first counterstrike consisting of eighteen dive bombers and six escorting fighters; a meager package compared to that employed by both sides earlier in the morning.[53] This relatively small force penetrated Task Force 17's defenses and scored three bomb hits and two near misses on *Yorktown,* another testament to the skill of Japanese naval pilots.[54] *Hiryu* snuck in a second punch that afternoon, another small strike force of ten torpedo planes and six fighters mistaking *Yorktown* for an as yet undamaged American carrier. The small force scored two torpedo hits on the already battered American vessel, putting it out of action to be sunk later by a Japanese submarine.[55] The remaining American carriers found and savaged *Hiryu* with a dive-bombing attack shortly after 5:00 p.m. that afternoon.[56] As the day drew to a close, the Japanese continued to maneuver and plan for an attempt to salvage victory at Midway, but the loss of Japan's four carriers had decided the issue in the United States' favor and the ensuing American control of the air now diminished any chance of Japanese success.

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[53] Ibid., 168.

[54] Parshall and Tully, *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*, 297.

[55] Ibid., 311-18.

[56] Ibid., 324-28.

Losses

Japan suffered a devastating defeat at the Battle of Midway. A cruiser and all four aircraft carriers in Nagumo's strike force ended up on the bottom of the Pacific, with the associated loss of all their aircraft and thousands of men.[57] Japanese personnel losses included over 120 airmen, not a crippling loss but nevertheless significant, and more than 720 difficult to replace aircraft mechanics.[58] The Americans also paid a price. *Yorktown,* struggling with its recent wounds from Midway and the lingering effects of damage from Coral Sea, and the destroyer *Hammann* both sank as a result of a successful torpedo attack by the Japanese submarine I-168 on 6 June as the vessels made their way back to Pearl Harbor.[59] In addition to those two vessels, the Americans also lost some 150 aircraft and a total of 307 men.[60]

Performance in Battle

How did the Americans achieve such a complete victory? A brief examination of the combatants' performances in these actions offers some explanation for the final outcome and Japan's defeat.

Intelligence efforts before the battle enabled the Americans to begin the contest with a decided advantage in situational awareness and to surprise Admiral Nagumo with their carrier presence near Midway. The comparative performance of the two sides'

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[57] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, 77.

[58] Parshall and Tully, *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*, 417.

[59] Morison, *The Two-Ocean War: A Short History of the United States Navy in the Second World War*, 161-62.

[60] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, 77.

aerial reconnaissance efforts reveals that the American efforts helped them maintain an advantage in situational advantage throughout the decisive morning of 4 June, proving that Admiral Ugaki's observation following the Coral Sea, that the Japanese needed to pay particular attention in this area, was indeed prescient. Captain Watanabe, a gunnery officer on Yamamoto's staff cited Japanese search failures as the cause of the loss at Midway during his postwar interrogation.[61] Fuchida agreed, lamenting the poor Japanese search plan employed during the battle.[62] In addition, a number of factors inhibited effective Japanese reconnaissance on 4 June: the Japanese doctrine left the majority of scouting to the floatplanes attached to their cruisers and had few dedicated search units aboard their carriers; some of the floatplanes employed at Midway were older Type 95 aircraft with very limited range; the Japanese search plan employed too few aircraft, with seven aircraft expected to cover an area the size of Sweden; and the Japanese cruisers launching the search aircraft experienced delays that put the aircraft behind schedule.[63] One of the scout aircraft, in part because of the delay, spotted an American task force at 7:40 a.m. but misreported its position by sixty miles and initially failed to inform Nagumo that the force included a carrier.[64] In contrast, American patrol aircraft from Midway located the Japanese invasion task force on 3 June, enabling a bombing attack, and then located the Nagumo's carrier strike force the next morning allowing strike aircraft from Midway and the American carriers to repeatedly attack that force.

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[61] USSBS Interrogations: No. 65: Captain Y. Watanabe, IJN; Subject: Pearl Harbor – Midway - Solomons. Date: 15 October 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #8, 65-4.

[62] Fuchida et al., *Midway: The Battle That Doomed Japan*, 131.

[63] Parshall and Tully, *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*, 108-10. 132.

[64] Ibid., 159-64.

Technology also played an important role in the heat of combat. Unlike the Americans, the Japanese had no radar on their ships at Midway and did not have radio controlled fighter direction to counter the American attacks with their combat air patrol.[65] The American carriers and Midway did have radar and radio fighter direction, which gave them the opportunity to increase their situational awareness and buy to react more quickly to the situation as events unfolded.

The primary U.S. torpedo bomber employed at Midway was the TBD Devastator. This aircraft was the first all-metal carrier monoplane used in the U.S. fleet and had been in service for five years when the war started.[66] By the time of Midway, the TBD was obsolete with a limited range, slow speed, light defensive armament, and lacked self-sealing gas tanks, making it very vulnerable.[67] During the battle, only six of the forty-one TBDs that attacked the Japanese carriers survived.[68] The Nakajima B5N2 "Kate" torpedo bomber represented the Devastator's Japanese counterpart. This aircraft was "probably the finest torpedo bomber in the world at the outbreak of the Pacific war" because it "was large, relatively fast, and capable of hauling a heavy bomb or torpedo load."[69] The opening phase of the war revealed the merits of the Japanese fighter, the Zero. The U.S. navy countered at Midway with two versions of the Grumman F4F

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[65] USSBS Interrogations: No. 11: Captain Susumu Kawaguchi, IJN; Subject: Hiryu (CV) at the Battle of Midway; Date: 10 Oct 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #8, 11-7.

[66] Alvin B. Kernan, *The Unknown Battle of Midway: The Destruction of the American Torpedo Squadrons*, The Yale Library of Military History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 30.

[67] Ibid., 30-32.

[68] John B. Lundstrom, *The First Team: Pacific Naval Air Combat from Pearl Harbor to Midway*, 1st Naval Institute Press pbk. ed. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 343-63.

[69] Parshall and Tully, *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*, 481.

Wildcat. Lieutenant Commander John S. Thach, a Wildcat pilot who participated in the battle, lamented that the newer version of the Wildcat, the F4F-4, couldn't come close to matching the Japanese Zero in climb, maneuverability, and speed.[70] But another Midway fighter veteran, Lieutenant Commander James Flatley, stressed the strengths of the Wildcat as excellent armament (either four or six .50 caliber machine guns, depending on the model) and survivability, while correctly pointing out that teamwork in the air could compensate for the aircraft's deficiencies.[71] In other words, the F4F could, and would have to, hold its own until newer aircraft arrived in 1943. Each navy also utilized dive bombers during the battle. The Japanese Aichi D3A1 "Val" was a reliable and effective machine that the Japanese had planned to replace, but production delays forced the Vals to remain in frontline service.[72] The American dive bomber, the SBD Douglas Dauntless, represented America's top performer at the battle. Bombs from this aircraft destroyed all four Japanese carriers, and the aircraft had good range, durability, defensive armament, speed, and carrying capacity for its mission.[73] The SBD, like the F4F, continued to serve the U.S. well into the next phase of the war. One final, but significant note: the vaunted American B-17 high-level bomber, a technological marvel for the time with no Japanese equivalent, inflicted no damage against the Japanese fleet. Despite Army Air Corps protestations, the B-17 was clearly designed for high altitude strategic bombing of industrial centers and not for the targeting of enemy fleets.

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[70] Lundstrom, *The First Team: Pacific Naval Air Combat from Pearl Harbor to Midway*, 441.

[71] Ibid., 445.

[72] Parshall and Tully, *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*, 482-83.

[73] Kernan, *The Unknown Battle of Midway: The Destruction of the American Torpedo Squadrons*, 26.

Good technology is beneficial, but it still must be employed properly by commanders and operators. Coral Sea provided both sides with their first experiences in stand-off carrier warfare, but it occurred so close in time to Midway that there simply was no time for in-depth analysis of that battle's lessons or for more than basic modifications to carrier operating procedures.[74] Once the meticulous Japanese plan ran afoul of the unexpected American carrier presence at Midway, Admiral Nagumo struggled to adjust to the situation. In their excellent study of the battle, Parshall and Tully accuse the Japanese of "plan inertia," in which Nagumo's and his staff's overriding concern for adhering to doctrine and of maintaining the timetable of the operation prevented a more flexible and effective reaction in the face of the unanticipated threat.[75] The U.S. commanders, in contrast, leveraged the advantages intelligence and reconnaissance afforded them and handled their task forces competently in accordance with Nimitz's directive for calculated risk. The results speak for themselves, with Japan suffering devastating carrier losses while inflicting only limited damage on the American fleet.

Operational performance was mixed for both sides. As was now customary, the Japanese launched an integrated attack against Midway using aircraft from multiple carriers, a feat the U.S. could not yet duplicate.[76] But, because of the ensuing flow of the battle, the Japanese never got the chance to launch such a coordinated attack against the American carriers. The Americans struggled to mount a coordinated attack from a single carrier. The sequential nature of the earlier American airstrikes on the Japanese fleet

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[74] Lundstrom, *The First Team: Pacific Naval Air Combat from Pearl Harbor to Midway*, 300.

[75] Parshall and Tully, *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*, 164-71.

[76] Ibid., 129.

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eased the Japanese task of defense. Experience, where they had it, showed for the

Americans. *Yorktown,* having just fought at Coral Sea, was the only American carrier

whose air group attacked in unison, aided by chance by bombers from *Enterprise,* and

delivered the death blows to three Japanese carriers.[77] In marked contrast, *Hornet's* air

group suffered a nearly 50 percent rate of attrition on the morning strike, with many

aircraft never sighting the enemy and no damage inflicted on the Japanese fleet.[78]

Tactically, both sides demonstrated both skill and shortcomings. Japanese

fighters savaged American torpedo bombers and successfully escorted three attacks that

inflicted damage upon the Americans, but due to poor positioning and bad luck they

failed to protect their carriers from the American dive bombers. Japanese strike pilots

manifested impressive skill, attaining multiple hits against the *Yorktown* despite the small

size of their strike forces. American fighters stood up to the mighty Zero, but failed to

protect the obsolete U.S. torpedo bombers, and allowed small numbers of Japanese

aircraft to severely damage one of their carriers. American strike aircraft performed in

mixed fashion. No American carrier torpedo bombers scored any hits against the

Japanese fleet, yet the dive bombers demonstrated their skills by destroying four Japanese

carriers.

Endurance proved a key contributor to American combat effectiveness and the

U.S. victory. The United States took an important edge in this arena before the battle

even commenced. *Yorktown* arrived back at Pearl Harbor on 27 May needing an

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[77] Ibid., 216-17.

[78] Ibid., 274.

estimated ninety days worth of work to repair the damages suffered at Coral Sea.[79]

Nimitz demanded the carrier be shorn up for action within three days; *Yorktown* sailed for

Midway on 30 May.[80] In contrast, both the Japanese carriers engaged at Coral Sea

missed the Midway battle: *Shokaku* suffered significant damage that could not be

repaired in time, and *Zuikaku,* although not physically damaged, could not reconstitute

her depleted air group in time to make the sortie with the rest of the fleet.[81] The same

dichotomy in staying power revealed itself on 4 June. Excellent American damage

control kept the *Yorktown* in action despite multiple bomb hits, and induced the Japanese

to inadvertently strike the carrier a second time thinking it a different, undamaged

American vessel. The Japanese carriers present at Midway, however, never recovered

once damaged by American aircraft. A number of factors conspired to render Japanese

damage control efforts far inferior to that of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, costing Japan the use

of its four carriers at Midway *and ever after*.[82]

Chance

Chance and the human capacity for dealing with it influenced the battle on several

occasions. Chance and the fog of war befuddled Nagumo when his search aircraft

detected an American task force but made no mention of the presence of a carrier. Part of

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[79] Potter, *Nimitz*, 85.

[80] Ibid., 85-86.

[81] Parshall and Tully, *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*, 65. Japanese air groups operated organically with their carriers and did not rotate to other vessels in the same manner as U.S. Navy flying squadrons.

[82] Ibid., 276-78.

Nagumo's dilemma and hesitancy could be traced back to Japanese experiences in the

Coral Sea where they launched an errant strike against an American oiler and destroyer,

believing them to be a carrier force.[83] Nagumo's flat-footedness this time cost him an

opportunity to inflict greater damage on the U.S. fleet. Another chance happening,

related to poor navigation and execution by a search aircraft, meant that Nagumo missed

the opportunity to detect an American carrier task force between 6:15 and 6:30 a.m. and

possibly avert the ensuing disaster.[84] The third significant contribution by chance

involved the *Enterprise's* dive-bomber group under the command of Lieutenant

Commander Clarence Wade McCluskey. At 9:55 a.m. on 4 June, with gas in their tanks

dwindling, McCluskey's group nearly missed out on the action, until they sighted the

Japanese destroyer *Arashi*, which had separated from Nagumo to chase an American

submarine, racing north to rejoin the Japanese fleet.[85] This chance sighting enabled

McCluskey's group to attack Nagumo's task force at the same time as *Yorktown's* air

group, and from a different axis, thereby overwhelming Japanese air defenses.

A Changed Naval Balance in the Pacific

May and June 1942 were not kind to the Japanese Imperial Navy's carrier force.

Losses at Coral Sea and Midway, which amounted to five carriers, forced the Japanese

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[83] Samuel Eliot Morison, *Coral Sea, Midway and Submarine Actions, May 1942-August 1942*, vol. 4, History of United States Naval Operations in World War II (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2010 (1949)), 33-37.

[84] Parshall and Tully, *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*, 174-75.

[85] Ibid., 217.

navy to reorganize.[86] The United States suffered as well, losing both the *Lexington* and *Yorktown.* The Japanese navy now sailed a hodgepodge of aircraft carriers: the modern and effective fleet carriers *Shokaku* and *Zuikaku;* the recently commissioned but less reliable *Junyo* and *Hiyo* (converted from ocean liners); and the light carriers *Hosho, Ryujo,* and *Zuiho.*[87] Less than a week after the battle, the carrier *Wasp* passed through the Panama Canal to augment the U.S. Pacific Fleet's three remaining carriers*, Enterprise, Hornet,* and *Saratoga.*[88] The numbers still seem skewed, seven to four in Japan's favor, but in reality the four large American fleet carriers matched well against the heterogeneous collection operated by Japan, of which only the first two could be considered true fleet carriers. Despite Japan's continued numerical advantage in battleships, this shift in the carrier balance really meant a shift in the naval balance, and an evening of the odds.

Strategic Reactions to the New Naval Balance

Japan's dramatic reversal at Midway thus altered the strategic initiative in the Pacific from the Japanese favor to a balanced equilibrium. Both sides reevaluated their plans and strategy to match their views of the current situation. The decisions and calculations made in the wake of Midway determined the future course of the war and set the conditions for the Allies assume sole possession of the strategic initiative.

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[86] USSBS Interrogation No. 252: Captain Yasumi Toyama, IJN; Subject: (1) Transports at Midway. (2) Transports at the Battle of Eastern Solomons 25 August 1942. (3) Battle of Tassafaronga 30 November 1942; Date: 1 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #2, 252-4.

[87] Parshall and Tully, *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*, 418-19.

[88] Morison, *Coral Sea, Midway and Submarine Actions, May 1942-August 1942*, 257.

Japanese Reaction and Reevaluation of Strategy

Following the defeat at Midway, the Japanese attempted to conceal the extent of the disaster from their own public. In an active cover up assisted by Emperor Hirohito, the wounded remained quarantined in hospital wards in Japan, the uninjured survivors of the lost carriers were quickly and quietly dispersed to other commands without receiving any shore leave, and the press reported Midway as another glorious victory for the imperial forces.[89] More importantly for future strategy, the Japanese navy also concealed the full extent of its losses, and therefore the impact on its operational capabilities, from the Imperial Army.[90]

As the Japanese gaze returned to the south, the effects of the battle immediately altered their plans, although their strategy of continuing the advance in New Guinea and the Solomons remained intact. A week after Midway, however, the IGHQ ordered the 17th Army commander to temporarily delay the planned operations against Port Moresby and against Fiji-Samoa-New Caledonia.[91] The next Imperial Army directive, dated 12 June 1942, instructed the 17th Army commander to coordinate plans locally with the naval forces at Rabaul to initiate an overland operation to capture Port Moresby after securing positions on the north coast of New Guinea.[92] By the end of July 1942, the

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[89] Parshall and Tully, *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*, 385-87.

[90] Ibid., 385.

[91] *NARA 550:* Series: Organizational History Files, compiled 1959 - 1973, documenting the period 1931 – 1973: "Imperial General Headquarters Army Directives, Volume II, Directives No. 901- No. 1600, (19 Jul 41-26 Aug 43)," Imperial General Headquarters Army Department Directive #1,179, (General Headquarters, Far East Command, Military Intelligence Section, General Staff Military Historical Section), 81.

[92] Ibid., Imperial General Headquarters Army Department Directive #1,180, 81-82.

Japanese decided to cancel the Fiji-Samoa-New Caledonia operation altogether and to focus on their advances in New Guinea and in the lower Solomon Islands.[93] They thus planned to continue to expand their perimeter through offensive action, but in a more limited fashion.

U.S. Reaction and Reevaluation of Strategy

Coral Sea had already demonstrated the Imperial Japanese Navy was not invincible, and the Americans recognized the opportunity that their excellent intelligence provided them at Midway. The 3 June 1942 entry in Admiral Nimitz's command summary stated, "The whole course of the war in the Pacific may hinge on the developments of the next two or three days."[94] A follow up entry on 4 June, after the battle had commenced, stated, "CincPac [message] 051225 generally records the start of what may be the greatest sea battle since Jutland. Its outcome, if as unfavorable to the Japs as seems indicated, will virtually end their expansion. We lost a large percentage of highly trained pilots who will be difficult to replace."[95] Before the battle had even ended, the U.S. Pacific Fleet considered its possible future implications.

In reality, the thoughts of the Joint Chiefs of Staff preceded the battle as they also turned their gaze southward. A JCS memo to the CCS dated 24 May 1942 assessed the current state of affairs in the Pacific and revealed deep concerns over the Japanese threat

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[93] Ibid., Imperial General Headquarters Army Department Directive #1,218, 123.

[94] *Naval History and Heritage Command, Operational Archives Branch, Washington Navy Yard: Collection 505: Papers of FADM Chester W. Nimitz, USN 1902-1976* (Hereafter *NHHC 505*): Box #1: Command Summary Fleet Admiral C.W. Nimitz, U.S. Navy, Book 1: 7 December 1941 – 31 August 1942, Volumes 1,2,3, Pages 1-861, p. 570.

[95] Ibid., 571.

posed to Australia, citing Japanese force superiority and their geographically superior position of interior lines.[96] A week later, Admiral King followed up this report with a message to CINCPAC, Admiral Nimitz, discussing the importance of destroying advanced Japanese bases, such as that located at Tulagi in the Solomon Islands, in order to protect Australia.[97] The results at Midway provided the Americans with an opportunity to act on these thoughts, a topic of much strategic debate at the highest levels of the U.S. command structure.

Admiral King and General MacArthur both recognized a window to act afforded by the U.S. victory at Midway. An 8 June 1942 memorandum from General MacArthur to General Marshall, U.S. Army Chief of Staff, proposed that an offensive against the New Britain-New Ireland area, using a Marine amphibious division, two U.S. Army divisions, and an Australian division supported by two aircraft carriers stood an excellent chance of success if implemented in a timely fashion.[98] King recognized Midway as a "golden opportunity," but had his own ideas for action in the South Pacific Area.[99] He replied to Marshall, regarding MacArthur's proposal, stating the U.S. Navy already had plans for operations in the area that would be predominantly naval and amphibious in

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[96] *National Archives and Records Administration: Record Group 165: Records of the War Department General and Special Staff, 1903-1947.* (Hereafter *NARA 165*): Series: Security Classified General Correspondence 1942-47, Box #118: 1942-43: Projects – Area Central Pacific – South Pacific, Folder: SW Pacific Area: 24 May 1942 Memo Subject: Situation in the Pacific, 1-4.

[97] Ibid., 31 May 1942 Naval Message #010100, From: COMINCH, For Action: CINCPAC, Information: COMSOPACFOR, COMSWPACFOR, 1.

[98] Ibid., AG 913, June 8, 1942 From: GHQ SWPA, To: Chief of Staff, Signed MacArthur, 1.

[99] Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years*, 299.

character, and he felt operations aimed directly at Rabaul premature.[100] These differences

in opinion soon led to army/navy infighting over who should command any upcoming

operation in the south Pacific.

As plans crystallized, Marshall and King exchanged a series of pointed

memorandums discussing the question of command, with Marshall favoring MacArthur

and King favoring Nimitz. Marshall emphasized the need for unity of command and

pointed out that the major objectives of the upcoming action lay in the area afforded to

General MacArthur, the Southwest Pacific Area.[101] King responded aggressively,

arguing that the initial portion of the operation must be conducted predominantly by

forces from the South Pacific Area, that MacArthur's forces could provide little in the

way of support, and, more startlingly, threatening to move ahead with the operation with

or without U.S. Army support.[102] Marshall took exception to the threat and hoped to

resolve the issue through direct, personal discussion.[103] The two continued working

towards a solution until they reached a satisfactory compromise that granted naval

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[100] *NARA 165:* Series: Security Classified General Correspondence 1942-47, Box #118: 1942-43: Projects – Area Central Pacific – South Pacific, Folder: SW Pacific Area: COMINCH FILE: FF1/A16-3(1) Serial #00482, Memorandum dated Jun 11, 1942, 1-2. See also Louis Morton, *Strategy and Command,* 296: King and his chief naval planner, Rear Admiral Charles M. Cooke, felt the threat of Japanese land based aircraft in the area precluded safe operation of carrier task forces in the New Guinea-Rabaul area. King and Cooke felt a more methodical step-by-step advance, beginning in the southern Solomon Islands, afforded the best opportunity for success in the coming offensive while limiting the risk to the four remaining American carriers in the Pacific.

[101] Ibid.: June 26, 1942 MEMORANDUM FOR ADMIRAL KING: Subject: Offensive Operations in the South and Southwest Pacific Areas. Signed: GCM Chief of Staff, 1-2.

[102] Ibid.: COMINCH FILE: FF1/A16-3(1) Serial #00555, Memorandum dated June 26, 1942, 1-2.

[103] Ibid.: June 29, 1942 MEMORANDUM FOR ADMIRAL KING Signed: GCM Chief of Staff, 1.

command for the first portion of the upcoming offensive, occupying portions of the lower Solomon Islands.[104]

The concept of this offensive, agreed to by the JCS on 2 July 1942, laid the groundwork for the future course of the war. The "Joint Directive for Offensive Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area: Agreed Upon by the United States Chiefs of Staff" stipulated three sequential tasks for the offensive: seizure and occupation of the Santa Cruz Islands, Tulagi, and adjacent positions under command of CINCPAC; seizure and occupation of the remainder of the Solomon Islands, of Lae, Salamaua, and northeast coast of New Guinea under the command of General MacArthur; and the seizure and occupation of Rabaul and adjacent positions in the New Guinea-New Ireland areas.[105] The JCS set the target date for the first task as 1 August 1942 and reserved to themselves the timing of the remaining tasks and the transfer of command.[106] Task one represented a limited offensive in reaction to Japanese incursions in the south, designed to secure the lines of communication to Australia and set the conditions for later, more substantial and strategic advances when conditions allowed.

Roosevelt and the Impact of Grand Strategy on the Pacific in Mid 1942

While King and Marshall haggled over the command structure of the forthcoming counteroffensive, they also participated in another debate involving global strategy. This

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[104] Ibid.: JOINT DIRECTIVE FOR OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS IN THE SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA: AGREED UPON BY THE UNITED STATES CHIEFS OF STAFF, July 2, 1942, Signed by E.J. King and G.C. Marshall, 1-2.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid.

debate had even greater influence on the course of the Pacific War and the Allied seizure of strategic initiative therein.

Resource competition between the Pacific Theater, particularly the South Pacific, and the European Theater had already required presidential clarification. President Roosevelt sent a memorandum to General Marshall on 6 May 1942, in response to memos from both King and Marshall concerning resource allocation among the theaters. Roosevelt clearly expressed his preference to focus on Operation "Bolero," the buildup of forces in England in preparation for a second front against Germany to relieve pressure on the Soviet Union, over sending too many resources to the south Pacific, despite the Japanese threat to Australia.[107] If the President believed this finally settled the matter, he was mistaken.

Plans for a counteroffensive in the Pacific coincided with strategic debates between the Allies, as the opinions of the JCS began to sour on the strategic judgment of their British cousins. Roosevelt's ruling in May 1942 pleased Marshall because of his belief that Germany represented the bigger threat and had to be defeated as quickly as possible. Yet in July 1942, the British began backing away from their earlier commitment to a second front in Europe in late 1942 or 1943.[108] The British instead proposed an Allied invasion of North Africa to complement British operations in Egypt and Libya. Such an operation would undoubtedly postpone Operation "Roundup," the

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[107] *Genea Archives - BACM Research: World War II Historical Document Archive Dvd-Rom Disc 1of 4.* FDR Presidential Papers 1: FDR06I.pdf: May 6, 1942, MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL GEORGE MARSHALL, Chief of Staff, Signed: FDR, 1.

[108] Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years*, 308.

planned 1943 invasion of continental Europe.[109] Marshall balked at what he considered a

dangerous diversion of American resources and argued, with King's backing, that, should

the British abandon "Bolero" and "Roundup" the United States should turn its full

attention against the Japanese threat.[110] Roosevelt, intent on keeping the American focus

on the European Theater, called their bluff. He ordered Marshall and King, along with

presidential advisor Harry Hopkins, to proceed to London and confer with the British for

the next move in the European Theater.[111] Roosevelt issued his guidance to these

representatives in a 15 July 1942 memo which stipulated they should attempt to remain in

compliance with the initial agreements for operations in Europe, but if no agreement

could be reached they could accept a North African operation as proposed by the British.

He again emphasized his rejection of the plan to focus on Japan.[112] In this memo,

pointedly signed "Commander-In-Chief," Roosevelt again expressed his concerns

regarding the possible collapse of the Soviet Union, listed the myriad of dangers he

associated with the loss of the Middle East and the Suez Canal, and stressed that the

defeat of Germany, in his view, "means the defeat of Japan, probably without firing a

shot or losing a life."[113] The President made clear his position as Commander-in-Chief

and his expectations on strategy for 1942 and beyond. Roosevelt's political will to focus

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[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid., 308-09.

[111] *NARA 165:* Series: Top-Secret Card Index to Correspondence in Series 15: Box #1: 000.1 – 311.2: Telegram, 7/14/42, from Pres. Roosevelt 7/14/42 to C/S (Chief of Staff), 1.

[112] *Genea Archives - BACM Research: World War II Historical Document Archive Dvd-Rom Disc 1of 4.* FDR Presidential Papers 1: FDR06H.pdf: July 15, 1942, MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL MARSHALL, ADMIRAL KING, HON. HARRY L. HOPKINS, 1-3.

[113] Ibid.

on Germany necessarily came at the expense of resources to the Pacific and would make seizing the strategic initiative in that theater more difficult.

Conclusion

The Japanese suffered a stunning defeat at Midway. Admiral Nimitz capitalized on his intelligence superiority and took a calculated risk that paid handsome dividends and revealed his strategic acumen. His subordinates performed effectively, although not flawlessly, and delivered the firepower necessary to cripple the Japanese carrier strike force. The Japanese performed well tactically, but American carrier endurance and durability, both before and during the battle, helped offset the Japanese tactical skill at Midway and Coral Sea. The Japanese demonstrated inflexibility regarding their plan and Admiral Nagumo struggled in his efforts to operate in a confusing, swirling battle. The United States benefited from radar, which helped with their situational awareness and buying them time during combat. The Japanese had superior torpedoes, torpedo bombers, and fighters, but the flow of the battle, in no small part attributable to the surprise appearance of the U.S. fleet, undermined their potential. As a result, Japan lost four of its best fleet carriers, while the Americans lost only one. This changed the naval balance in the Pacific in terms of carrier striking power, placing the U.S. on a more equal footing with Japan.

The shift in carrier balance, in turn, shifted the strategic calculations of each side. The Japanese looked south and planned to continue their advance on New Guinea overland and in the Solomons via short island hops. They canceled their ambitious

operation to attack Fiji-Samoa-New Caledonia. The Americans sensed that Midway

provided them a fleeting opportunity to counterattack. They, too, looked to the South

Pacific. MacArthur envisioned his own ambitious plan to take the entire New Britain-

New Ireland area. King thought his plan too ambitious and planned a limited offensive in

the southern Solomons to help protect Australia and to establish the conditions for future

advances up the Solomon Islands chain. The U.S. JCS had to work out their command

disagreements and developed an acceptable compromise, while at the same time

conducting a debate with their British allies over Atlantic strategy. Roosevelt rejected

JCS plans to focus on the Pacific in the event the British insisted on a North African

campaign, and thereby ensured the Allied struggle to wrest strategic initiative from the

Japanese would occur without a massive influx of resources.

Despite the manifest results of the battle, Midway did not yield the strategic

initiative to the Allies but did place it in dispute. The Japanese, however, thought

otherwise believing they still held the initiative. Historian Richard Frank writes, "In the

view of the Imperial Army, however, the strategic initiative still rested with Japan," and

they leveraged that initiative by attempting an overland attack on Port Moresby, New

Guinea.[114] The Combined Chiefs of Staff, in memo C.C.S. 91 on 7 July 1942, also

believed that Japan retained the strategic initiative and anticipated an advance in the

south Pacific as a possible enemy course of action.[115] Yet the Americans now enjoyed a

freedom of action they had not experienced since Pearl harbor. King's plan to hit the

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[114] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 43-44.

[115] Hayes, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in World War II: The War against Japan*, 157.

lower Solomons amounted to a limited offensive designed to check the Japanese threat.

In Woods words:

> The threat of continued Japanese expansion, in other words, checkmated American plans to stand on the defensive in the Pacific. A Japanese decision to hold to the originally planned limits of the advance, on the other hand, would have allowed the United States to do almost nothing in the Pacific while she turned her energies to the Battle of the Atlantic and a quick invasion of the European continent.[116]

Roosevelt would not allow a full blown focus on the Pacific, but the U.S. felt compelled to do what it could to protect the logistical route to Australia. Midway afforded the Americans the chance for a counterpunch and enabled them to begin to vie for the strategic initiative. The counterpunch soon evolved into a brawl and ensured the course the Pacific War would run through the South Pacific until late 1943.

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[116] Wood, *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War: Was Defeat Inevitable?* , 15.

Chapter 8: New Guinea and Guadalcanal, July-October 1942

Following Midway, both combatants focused their strategies on the southern Pacific, placing them on a collision course for an epic eight month struggle involving two intertwined campaigns: eastern New Guinea, also known as the Papuan Campaign, and Guadalcanal. Historians almost invariably examine these campaigns individually, but the symbiotic effect of the two concurrent campaigns enabled the Allies to seize the strategic initiative from the Japanese. Yet, during the opening stages of these campaigns, the outcome remained very much in doubt and, in both, the Allied actions represented reactions to the Japanese strategy of continued advance. The Japanese aimed to cut off Australia, while the Allies reacted to keep the lines of communication open between the South Pacific and the United States.

Implementation of the Opposing Post-Midway Strategies

The authorizations for the Japanese advances in New Guinea and the Solomons reveal much about the Japanese command structure. The Japanese army had no detailed plans for the Pacific War following their initial successful conquests, and planned to focus instead on the continental concerns of China, Burma, and the Soviet Union.[1] In the case of New Guinea, in mid 1942 IGHQ began to analyze the possibilities of an overland

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[1] Senshi Sōsho, *Japanese Army Operations*, 67.

advance from northeast New Guinea to capture Port Moresby, a process soon influenced

by Lt. Col. Masanobu Tsuji. The Japanese army began studying the feasibility of an

advance from Buna, on northeast New Guinea, through the imposing Owen Stanley

Mountains via the Kokoda Trail in June and July 1942, but the Commander of the South

Seas Detachment, General Tomitaro Horii, felt success unlikely without the construction

of better roads.[1] Yet Lt. Col. Tsuji, a staff officer from the IGHQ sent forward to

coordinate, authorized the overland advance on 17 July 1942 of his own accord; IGHQ

was leaning towards an overland attack, but was still waiting for an assessment from the

17th Army before proceeding.[2] Not unlike events in China and Manchuria in the 1930s, a

mid level army officer acting on his own initiative wielded undue influence on Japanese

actions. The 17th Army pressed ahead for the overland attack.

Meanwhile, the advance in the Solomon Islands represented Japanese navy

aspirations. Having seized Tulagi in the southern Solomons earlier in the year, the IJN

aimed to convince their army brethren that further advances were necessary to secure

Rabaul and to prepare for continued action to isolate Australia and prevent its use as an

Allied base for counterattacking Japan.[3] The navy's view of future operational activities

included the construction of additional air bases in important locations on New Guinea

and in the Solomon Islands chain.[4] As a result, the Japanese navy began examining the

possibility of placing an airfield on Guadalcanal in the lower Solomons in late May 1942,

[1] Ibid., 98.

[2] Ibid., 101.

[3] Ibid., 91-92.

[4] Ibid., 92.

and the Naval General Staff authorized its construction on June 13, 1942.[5] The activity did not escape Allied notice.

These two operations, the advance over the Kokoda Trail and the construction of the Guadalcanal air base, had commenced with the Japanese army's tacit approval, but without specific agreements. The army did not anticipate a significant draw on its resources to the southern Pacific, and instead kept its eyes on continental Asia. Once these operations commenced they would soon draw the Imperial Japanese Army into a desperate struggle in some of the most difficult and formidable environments in the world.[6]

The Allies Move to Implement Their Planned Counteroffensive

The Allies remained intent on the "Germany First" grand strategy, which President Roosevelt forcefully reaffirmed in July. Yet the Allies, prompted by Admiral King, fully intended to seize the opportunity presented by their victory at Midway to counter the continuing Japanese advances in the Pacific. The 2 July 1942 declaration by the JCS served as the basis for the upcoming counteroffensive, and the Americans prepared to move on "Task One," the seizure of the Santa Cruz Islands, Tulagi and adjacent positions, which included Tanambogo, Gavutu, and Guadalcanal. Admirals King and Nimitz assigned the task, with the U.S. Army's agreement, to Vice Admiral Robert T. Ghormley and his recently activated South Pacific Command. Ghormley had

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[5] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 31.

[6] Eric M. Bergerud, *Fire in the Sky: The Air War in the South Pacific* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 659. In Bergerud's words, these battles unexpectedly became the "main event" in the Pacific.

been advised by Nimitz via memo that one of his chief duties as ComSoPac

(Commander, South Pacific) would be to prepare to launch a major amphibious offensive

against Japanese positions.[7]

Ghormley, however, hesitated at the proposal. On July 11, 1942, he sent a

message to both King and Nimitz stating the operation was only feasible if MacArthur

and the Southwest Pacific Force provided the land-based aircraft needed to interdict the

Japanese in the northern Solomons.[8] MacArthur shared Ghormely's doubts about the

forthcoming operation and both felt that the Allies should delay a counteroffensive until

they had the strength to accomplish all three tasks envisioned by the JCS in rapid

sequence.[9] The Joint Chiefs of Staff recognized the risks involved, but they also knew

the world situation meant that sufficient resources would be a long way off, and believed

the rapid accomplishment of the first task "absolutely essential."[10] The operation,

codenamed "Watchtower" would proceed as planned, despite its risks and the associated

objections of the two area commanders appointed to carry it out and support it. In the

words of Guadalcanal veteran and historian, Samuel Griffith:

> WATCHTOWER was conceived planned and launched on a crash basis in which
> the controlling element was time…. Thus, this first Allied offensive of World

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[7] *NARA 38:* Series: Records Relating to Naval Activity During World War II: World War II War Diaries, Box #1: SCAPJAP, NSCO: 7 Dec 1941 – Dec 1943 to COMINCH: 7 Dec 1941 – Dec 1943. Memo dated 6/5/42 From: The Commander in Chief, United States Fleet, To: All Bureaus and Offices of the Navy Department. Subject: Instructions Relative to duties as Commander, South Pacific Area and South Pacific Force. Reference: (a) Cincpac Serial 090W, p. 1.

[8] *NHHC 505:* Box 1: Command Summary Fleet Admiral C.W. Nimitz U.S. Navy, Book One: 7 December 1941-31 August 1942, Volumes 1,2,3, Pages 1-861. War Plans CincPac Files: Subject: Captain Steele's "Running Estimates and Summary" covering the period 7 December 1941-31 August 1942, 615.

[9] Miller, *Guadalcanal: The First Offensive*, 19-20.

[10] *NHHC 505:* Box 1, Captain Steele's "Running Estimates and Summary" covering the period 7 December 1941-31 August 1942, 615.

War II was destined to reveal a near-frantic and sometimes near-fatal series of improvisations. Such is the penalty inevitably exacted in war of those who for whatever reason neither make careful estimates nor lay comprehensive plans.[11]

The Campaigns Begin

It is interesting to note that the Japanese offensive moves to Buna, New Guinea and over the Owen Stanley Mountains and the U.S. moves against the lower Solomons occurred over the objections and pessimistic estimates of the local commanders. The drawn out struggles in both areas validated many of the concerns expressed by those appointed to carry out these hasty operations. The campaigns would hang in the balance for some time, with neither side sure who would emerge victorious. In July 1942, the Japanese moved first.

Buna, Gona, and the Kokoda Trail

The Japanese moved on Gona and Buna in northeast New Guinea in late July 1942, in preparation for the overland advance on Port Moresby. The initial elements of the invasion departed Rabaul harbor on 20 July and landed near Buna and Gona on the late afternoon and early evening of 21 July.[12] Allied intelligence anticipated a forthcoming Japanese move to New Guinea. Japanese aerial reconnaissance of the Buna and Kokoda areas telegraphed the Japanese intentions, while radio intelligence and documents captured by an Australian guerrilla force near Salamaua indicated the future

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[11] Samuel B. Griffith, *The Battle for Guadalcanal* (New York: Lippincott, 1963), 29.

[12] Senshi Sōsho, *Japanese Army Operations*, 106.
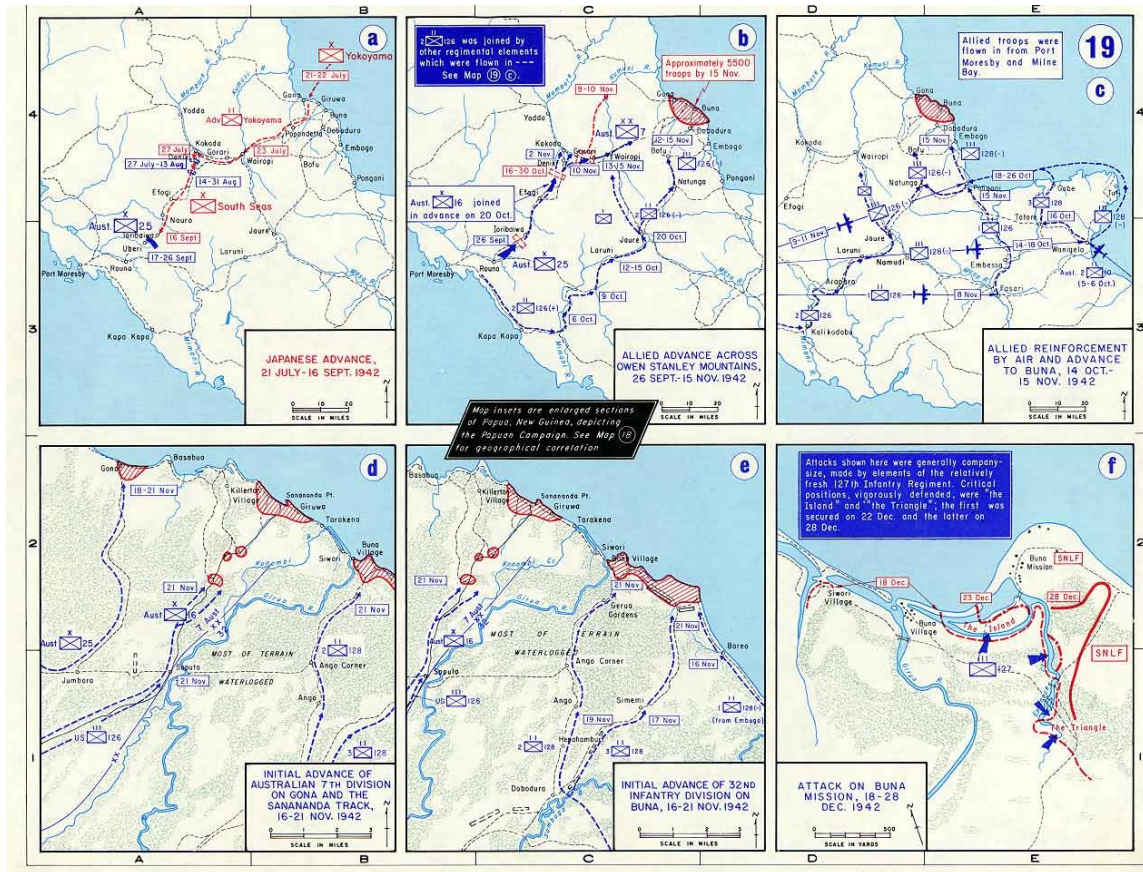
Figure 17: Buna/Kokoda Campaign 1942.

Source: History Department at the United States Military Academy Atlases:
http://www.dean.usma.edu/departments/history/web03/atlases/ww2%20pacific/ww2%20pacific%20%20maps/ww2%20asia%20map%2019.jpg accessed 16 April 2008.

deployment of several Japanese units to New Guinea.[13] The Allies responded to the

landings with a series of fifteen air attacks against Buna and Gona, ranging from single

fighter aircraft to groups of heavy and medium bombers.[14] Despite the Allied reaction,

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[13] Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War against Japan, 1942-1945*, 40.

[14] *NARA 496*. Series: Combined Operations Intelligence Center Situation Reports 1942-1943, Box #164: Folder: Situation Reports from the C.O.I.C. to G2 USAF: June 26, 1942 – August 31, 1942. General Headquarters Southwest Pacific Area, Situation Report No. 313, 3-7.

which damaged one transport and one destroyer, the landings proceeded apace and Buna

quickly fell to the Japanese.[15] After quickly securing Buna and Gona, the Japanese

rapidly advanced south on the Kokoda Trail, moving at night to avoid attacks by Allied

aircraft.[16] Japanese reinforcements soon followed. Construction units completed a

rudimentary airfield at Buna by 18 August, which enabled the arrival of the main body of

the South Seas Detachment on 18 August.[17] A harrowing struggle against Australian

troops along the Kokoda Trail now beckoned.

MacArthur and the senior Australian, General Thomas Blamey, anticipated the

possibility of a Japanese advance on Port Moresby from the Buna area and had taken

steps to prepare for such an eventuality.[18] The Japanese, buoyed by their successes to

date, nevertheless proceeded with confidence. The words of Vice Admiral Fukudome

provide some insight into the thinking of Japan's strategists at this point in the war, and

help explain the course of events in the Solomons and on New Guinea:

> The [Japanese] Army thought that the [Owen Stanley] mountains could be very
> easily crossed. Back of that thought was an erroneous impression on the part of
> the Japanese Army that the U.S. Army presented no serious problem, in other
> words the Army estimated the U.S. Army much too lightly; that applies also to the
> Australian Army. Our Army learned this truth only after the reverses at
> GUADALCANAL and the SOLOMONS. This under-estimation of U.S. and
> Australian Armies led to the belief that even after we lost GUADALCANAL [in
> early August 1942] that that position could be easily recovered with perhaps as

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[15] *NARA 550.* Series: Organizational History Files, compiled 1959 - 1973, documenting the period 1931 – 1973, Box #16: Japanese Monographs: Nos. 86 to 97, Folder: Japanese Monograph: No. 96: Eastern New Guinea Invasion Operations, 7-8.

[16] Senshi Sōsho, *Japanese Army Operations*, 107.

[17] *NARA 550.* Folder: Japanese Monograph: No. 96: Eastern New Guinea Invasion Operations, 9.

[18] Dudley McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area--First Year: Kokoda to Wau*, Australia in the War of 1939-1945. Series 1, Army V. 5 (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1959). Accessed from http://www.awm.gov.au/histories/second_world_war/volume.asp?levelID=67907.

small a force as 500 crack troops. The same idea was behind the Army belief that the crossing of the OWEN STANLEY range would be a simple operation.[19] The battle along the Kokoda Trail commenced almost as soon as the Japanese secured Buna; it was anything but simple.

By mid August 1942, more than 14,000 Japanese had landed in the Buna area to support the overland march on Port Moresby via the Kokoda Trail.[20] Among them were 2,000 soldiers of the 41st Infantry Regiment, selected for the operation by General Horii because of their jungle fighting experience gained in Malaya.[21] Little did they know the veterans of the Australian 7th Division, with two years of combat experience in the Middle East, raced to meet them.[22] Following their pattern in Malaya, the Japanese made good progress in August and early September, pushing the Australians back to Imita Ridge within forty miles of Port Moresby.[23] Yet the supply situation strained to support the Japanese advance, greatly limiting the ammunition available for Japanese machine guns and supporting artillery.[24] Japanese planning, in part based upon photo reconnaissance, erroneously believed that forces could be supplied via motorized transport from Buna all the way inland to the village of Kokoda, contributing to the

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[19] USSBS Interrogations: No. 503, 503-39.

[20] Bergerud, *Touched with Fire: The Land War in the South Pacific*, 136.

[21] Costello, *The Pacific War 1941-1945: The First Comprehensive One-Volume Account of the Causes and Conduct of World War II in the Pacific.*, 317.

[22] Bergerud, *Touched with Fire: The Land War in the South Pacific*, 137.

[23] Ibid., 136-41.

[24] Senshi Sōsho, *Japanese Army Operations*, 133-34.

supply difficulties.[25] By mid September, the Australians dug in at Imita Ridge and held

their ground, while the Japanese halted to rest, resupply, and reinforce their efforts with

elements of the 2d Division prior to a final push on Port Moresby.[26] Neither side knew it,

but those reinforcements would never arrive. The Japanese would advance no further.

The Australians fought over the same terrain and under the same elements,

resulting in similar sustainment difficulties. They met the formidable supply challenge

through the combined use of motorized transport, horses and mules, native carriers, and

air dropped materiel.[27] The latter method, limited by the jungle and mountainous terrain,

under the best of conditions would only allow for recovery of 75% of the materiel

dropped.[28] Despite their best efforts, the Australians remained logistically constrained.

In mid September, the Australians estimated they outnumbered the Japanese on New

Guinea 30,000 troops to 10,000, but felt outnumbered them at the point of contact

because of the difficult logistical situation.[29]

The supply situation, the Australian position on Imita Ridge, the Allied position at

Milne Bay, and events in the Solomons altered the New Guinea campaign in September

1942. The Japanese army had ordered Horii to limit his advance towards the end of

August and then, on 23 September, ordered the South Seas Detachment to abandon its

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[25] Ibid., 135.

[26]Bergerud, *Touched with Fire: The Land War in the South Pacific*, 142.

[27] *NARA 406:* Series: Historical Reports 1942, Box #305: HIS Administrative Section Historical Report 1942-43, Folder: Mackechnie Force Notes On Ops Morobe-Nassau Bay Area: HQ NG Report dated 25 FEBRUARY 1943, "NOTES REGARDING ACTIVITIES OF ORDINANCE SERVICES IN CONNECTION WITH OWEN-STANLEYS-BUNA-GONA CAMPAIGN," 1.

[28] Ibid., HQ NG Report dated 1 Mar 1943, "NOTES ON OPERATIONS – OWEN STANLEYS – BUNA AREA," 1.

[29] McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area--First Year: Kokoda to Wau*, 234.

advance on Port Moresby and to fall back towards Buna.[30] Meanwhile, the Australians

began to transition to the offense and started to cautiously push back on the Japanese in

late September.[31] Throughout October, the Japanese commenced a steady withdrawal

with the Australians close on their heels, maintaining pressure and demonstrating jungle

fighting skills of their own.[32] Some of the Japanese troops soon resorted to cannibalism

to make up for their lack of supplies, and the Australians continued their advance to the

town of Kokoda by the beginning of November.[33]

Battle of Milne Bay, August-September 1942

While executing the overland attack on Port Moresby, the Japanese also turned

their attention further east to the Allied position and airfields near Rabi and Milne Bay,

New Guinea.[34] The Japanese landed the Kure 5th Special Naval Landing Force, a

battalion-sized formation, via a cruiser, destroyer, and sub-chaser flotilla in the face of

stout Allied resistance near Milne Bay on 25 August 1942.[35] Allied air attacks soon

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[30] Hayashi, *Kogun: The Japanese Army in the Pacific War*, 55.

[31] McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area--First Year: Kokoda to Wau*, 246.

[32] Bergerud, *Touched with Fire: The Land War in the South Pacific*, 142.

[33] Milner, *Victory in Papua*, 104.

[34] *NARA 550:* Series: Organizational History Files, compiled 1959 - 1973, documenting the period 1931 – 1973, Box #16: Japanese Monographs: Nos. 86 to 97, Folder: Japanese Monograph: No. 96: Eastern New Guinea Invasion Operations, 11.

[35] Ibid., 11. Japan's Special Naval Landing Forces (SNLF) did not quite equate to U.S. Marines. The Japanese SNLF units did make amphibious landings and often engaged in fighting. They were, however, not as proficient in infantry tactics as their army counterparts. Against light resistance or in unopposed landings they performed quite well. In attack against a determined foe, they performed poorly. They could be very stubborn in defense. See War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, 76.

destroyed the Japanese stores of food and ammunition and placed the landing force in a precarious situation.[36] On 29 August, the Japanese reinforced their efforts by landing the Kure 3rd and Yokosuka 5th Special Naval Landing Forces, but Allied airpower continued ravaging the Japanese.[37] Allied air attacks forced the Japanese to move at night and hide during daylight hours. Furthermore, reinforcements sent from Buna lost all of their landing barges to Allied air attacks and wound up stranded on nearby Goodenough Island for two months.[38]

MacArthur's intelligence helped the Allies stay ahead of Japanese moves. General Headquarters, South West Pacific Area Situation Report No. 347, dated 25 August 1942, recorded the air attack by twelve P-40 aircraft that contributed to the marooning of the Japanese on Goodenough Island, and further recorded the tracking of the Japanese convoy that landed the assault force at Milne Bay.[39] Prior to these actions, Allied intelligence anticipated a possible Japanese move against Milne Bay based upon observations of Japanese aerial reconnaissance and upon captured documents that indicated Milne Bay as a target.[40] The Allied presence at Milne Bay grew accordingly.

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[36] *NARA 550:* Series: Organizational History Files, compiled 1959 - 1973, documenting the period 1931 – 1973, Box #16: Japanese Monographs: Nos. 86 to 97, Folder: Japanese Monograph: No. 96: Eastern New Guinea Invasion Operations, 11.

[37] Ibid., 11-12.

[38] Ibid., 12.

[39] *NARA 496:* Series: Combined Operations Intelligence Center Situation Reports 1942-1943, Box #164: Folder: Situation Reports from the C.O.I.C. to G2 USAF: June 26, 1942 – August 31, 1942: General Headquarters, South West Pacific Area Situation Report No. 347, dated 25 August 1942, 6-8.

[40] Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War against Japan, 1942-1945*, 44.

On 8 August the force consisted of nearly 6,200 men, and by 22 August it had grown to more than 8,800 men.[41]

The Japanese did not have a clear picture of the Allied situation at Milne Bay, estimating the area was being held by a much smaller force of up to three companies and twenty to thirty aircraft.[42] They initially landed a force of 1,170 naval assault troops with some limited tank support and on 29 August landed 770 more troops as reinforcements.[43] These combined forces ran into strong resistance from the Allied troops defending the area. The Japanese soon realized they had no hope of achieving their objectives and taking the surrounding airfields. Admiral Mikawa, the 8th Fleet commander at Rabaul, decided to evacuate the force and by 6 September the surviving Japanese returned to New Britain.[44] The Japanese lost nearly 600 killed in the operation to the Allies' 322 killed and 198 wounded.[45] Having preceded Horii's retreat along the Kokoda Trail, the Japanese defeat at Milne Bay represented the first significant Japanese defeat on land in the Pacific War.

Guadalcanal: A Struggle on Land, Sea, and in the Air

The Japanese occupation of Tulagi in May of 1942 initially attracted Allied attention to the lower Solomon Islands, but soon Japanese activity on the nearby island of

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[41] McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area--First Year: Kokoda to Wau*, 159.

[42] Milner, *Victory in Papua*, 79.

[43] Ibid., 83-86.

[44] Ibid., 87.

[45] Ibid.

Guadalcanal began to garner greater interest. The Allies monitored the Japanese through a variety of means. A Southwest Pacific Area Situation Report from 20 May 1942 noted that a Japanese Kawanishi 4-engine flying boat made a thorough reconnaissance of Guadalcanal three days earlier over an area on the island suitable for the rapid construction of a fighter airfield.[46] A month later, another report noted multiple destroyer visits to the same area and fires on the plains indicating Japanese preparations for airfield construction.[47] The Australian Coastwatcher network, including the detachment under the now famous Martin Clemens, monitored the construction of the airfield and estimated a Japanese strength of 3,000 on the island.[48] These reports and the danger this airfield represented explain the importance the JCS placed on expediting the operations against Tulagi and "surrounding areas" despite the objections and hesitations of Ghormley and MacArthur.

The operation proceeded in early August, representing the first Allied counteroffensive of the Pacific War. The Japanese knew the Allies had something in the offing, but they did not know the objective of the forthcoming effort. The 8th Signals Units of the 8th Base Force at Rabaul and the Navy Department of the Imperial General Staff both noted changes and increases in Allied signals communication in July and anticipated the changes as a precursor to an Allied operation.[49] Admiral Onishi of the 8th

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[46] *NARA 496:* Series: Combined Operations Intelligence Center Situation Reports 1942-1943, Box #163: April 1, 1942 – June 26, 1942, Folder 2: Situation Reports from C.O.I.C. to G2 USAF:A May-June-42. Situation Report No. 249, dated 20/5/42, 3.

[47] Ibid., Situation Report No. 282, dated 21 June 1942, 3.

[48] Griffith, *The Battle for Guadalcanal*, 20-21.

[49] Senshi Sōsho, *Japanese Army Operations*, 122.
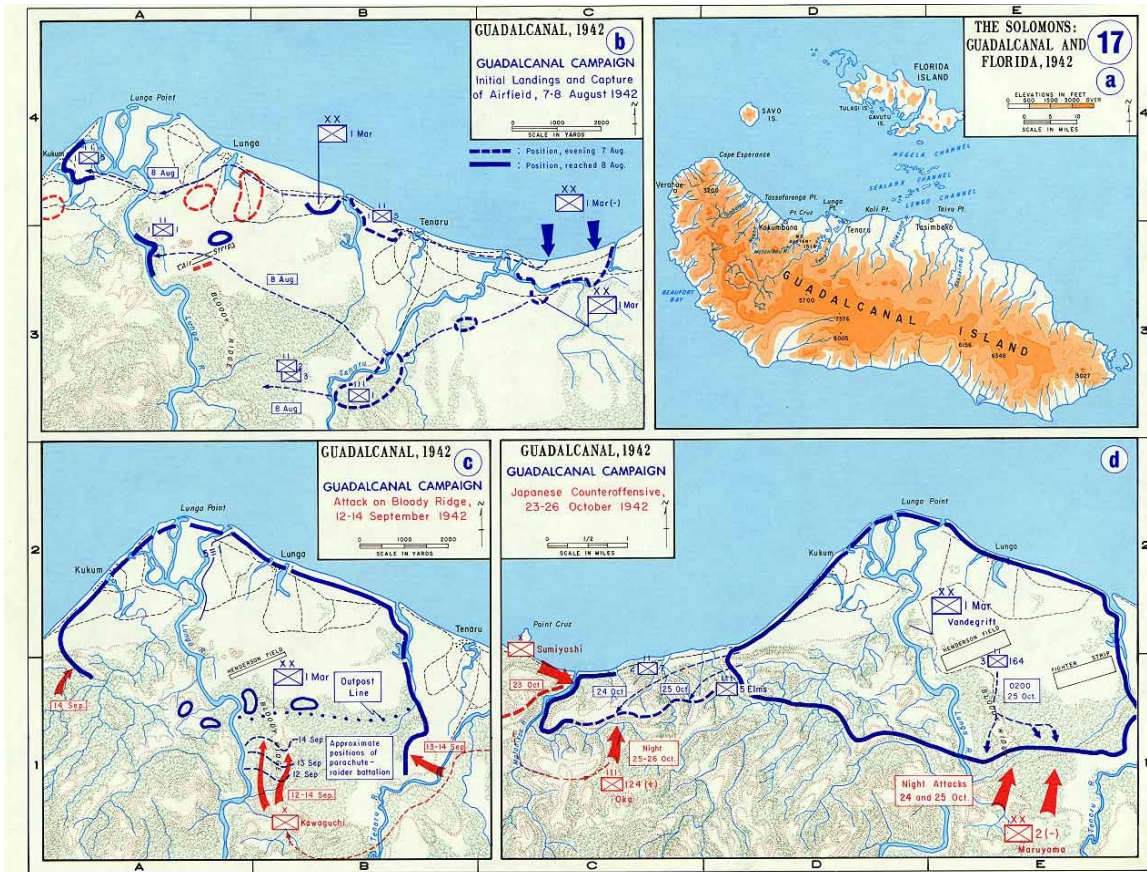
Figure 18: The Guadalcanal Campaign 1942.

Source: History Department at the United States Military Academy Atlases:
http://www.dean.usma.edu/departments/history/web03/atlases/ww2%20pacific/ww2%20pacific%20%20maps/ww2%20asia%20map%2017.jpg accessed 16 April 2008.

Fleet anticipated a potential move against Guadalcanal, but on 4 August the Imperial

Navy Department issued a memo that stated they expected the upcoming American

operation to reinforce New Guinea.[50] On 7 August the American force centered on the

hastily cobbled-together 1st Marine Division (reinforced) landed at Tulagi and

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[50] Ibid.

Guadalcanal, surprising the Japanese, much to the chagrin of Admiral Ugaki of the Combined Fleet.[51] A grueling six month campaign had begun.

Local Japanese forces at Rabaul reacted rapidly and violently to the landings. On 7 August fifty-three aircraft from Rabaul attacked while aircraft from several American aircraft carriers attempted to defend and support the landings.[52] Admiral Mikawa at Rabaul sortied five heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, and a destroyer to attack the American fleet the following evening in a night engagement.[53] Meanwhile, Marines seized the smaller islands of Tulagi, Tanambogo, and Gavutu after fierce fighting, and by their second day ashore on Guadalcanal had seized the nearly completed Japanese airfield, while encountering little resistance.

The ensuing naval engagements of Savo Island on the night of 8-9 August and Cape Esperance on 11 October had serious ramifications for the course of the campaign and for the forthcoming naval struggle. Savo Island was an unmitigated disaster for the Allies, but it could have been worse. As in the opening stages of the war, Japanese training in night fighting and their remarkable "Long Lance" torpedoes allowed the Imperial Navy to dominate its foe, as the Allies lost four cruisers, with another damaged, and more than 1,000 dead without inflicting any serious damage on the Japanese force.[54] Yet Admiral Mikawa did not press on to attack the U.S. transports further to the south, missing a great opportunity to send valuable Allied shipping to the bottom of the sea and

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[51] Ugaki et al., *Fading Victory: The Diary of Admiral Matome Ugaki, 1941-1945*, 177.

[52] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 64-69.

[53] Ibid., 86-87.

[54] van der Vat, *The Pacific Campaign: World War II, the U.S.-Japanese Naval War, 1941-1945*, 213.

to stop the Allies in the opening phase of the operation to reduce Rabaul.[55] But the battle

did establish Japanese dominance in the waters around Guadalcanal, at least during the

hours of darkness. The Allies did not contest this control until the Battle of Cape

Esperance two months later. The Americans acquitted themselves well in this later

engagement, sinking one Japanese cruiser, one destroyer, and damaging another cruiser

for the loss of one destroyer and damage to another destroyer and a cruiser.[56] The

Japanese, however, still managed to get some of their destroyer transports through to land

more troops and artillery to reinforce their forces on Guadalcanal.[57]

These major nighttime surface engagements alternated with two major carrier

battles: the Battle of the Eastern Solomons on 24-25 August and the Battle of Santa Cruz

on 25-26 October. In the first encounter, two American carriers attempted to stop the

landing of Japanese reinforcements at Guadalcanal, distantly screened by a protective

force that included three Japanese carriers.[58] When the battle ended, the Americans had

lost twenty aircraft and had one carrier, the *Enterprise*, heavily damaged by three bomb

hits but had turned back the Japanese reinforcements, destroyed ninety Japanese aircraft,

and sank one light carrier and one destroyer, while also damaging a cruiser and a

seaplane tender.[59] Having frustrated Japanese aims, the battle stood out as an American

victory. The latter battle was not as clear cut, and in between the Eastern Solomons and

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[55] Halsey and Bryan, *Admiral Halsey's Story*, 113.

[56] van der Vat, *The Pacific Campaign: World War II, the U.S.-Japanese Naval War, 1941-1945*, 228.

[57] Costello, *The Pacific War 1941-1945: The First Comprehensive One-Volume Account of the Causes and Conduct of World War II in the Pacific.*, 350-51.

[58] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, 110-13.

[59] Ibid., 113.

Santa Cruz battles the U.S. Navy lost the carrier *Saratoga,* damaged on 31 August, and the carrier *Wasp,* sunk on 15 September, to Japanese submarine attacks.[60] At Santa Cruz, the Japanese fleet sortied to support a major concurrent air and land effort designed to take back the airfield on Guadalcanal and thereby evict or destroy the American forces on the island.[61] Tactically the Americans suffered more damage, losing one carrier and one destroyer sunk, receiving damage to another carrier, a battleship, a cruiser, and a destroyer, and losing more than seventy aircraft.[62] The Japanese lost no ships but nearly 100 aircraft, while sustaining damage to one fleet and one light carrier, one cruiser, and two destroyers.[63] The American fleet, however, remained in operation around Guadalcanal and the Japanese offensive failed to recapture Guadalcanal thus thwarting Japan's larger objectives.

The battle for Guadalcanal also flared up repeatedly on land. The Japanese made almost monthly thrusts at the American perimeter around the airfield, now christened "Henderson Field" by its marine owners in honor of one of their own aviators lost in the Battle of Midway. The first attempt occurred on the night of 21 August, with the assault carried out by the Ichiki Detachment, a regimental-sized formation hurriedly rushed to Guadalcanal to counter the American landing. The Japanese, not knowing the strength of the American force and assuming the forces landed at Guadalcanal were withdrawing to

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[60] Ibid., 119.

[61] Ibid., 119-20.

[62] Ibid., 123.

[63] Ibid.

the island of Tulagi, ordered the Ichiki Detachment to recapture the airfield.[64] Ichiki's ill-advised night attack against a numerically superior foe ended in disaster for the Japanese force, with 800 Japanese soldiers from his elite detachment killed while inflicting only ninety-nine casualties on the marines and never threatening the airfield.[65] The next Japanese thrust came between 12-14 September with an attack by a reinforced brigade at "Edson's" or "Bloody" Ridge. Once again the Japanese attacked based on faulty intelligence, as General Kawaguchi led this effort against what he thought amounted to 5,000 Americans defenders.[66] On 13 September, Kawaguchi attacked the American perimeter from the jungle to the south, launching 2,400 troops of his against a ridge held by 600 Americans under the command of Marine Lt. Col. Merritt A. Edson, but once again the Americans held and inflicted heavy losses on the attacking Japanese.[67] The Japanese, having learned in August and September that rushing into the attack would not dislodge the Americans from Guadalcanal, prepared for a more coordinated assault in late October.[68] Once again, however, they underestimated U.S. strength, anticipating an enemy force of 10,000 while the Americans in reality had more than twice that number

[64] *NARA 127:* Series: Reports, Studies, and Plans re World War II Military Operations, 1941-1956, Box #13: Quantico Newsletter, 1941 to Intell. Section, Tsingtao, Trial of Russians, Folder: Intelligence Center Pacific Ocean Areas Office of the Marine Liaison Officer "Japanese Land Forces (No. 2) Tactics," October 20, 1942. Translation of the captured documents detailing the "IKKI (sic) Detachment Orders" for the landing on Guadalcanal included in "Intelligence Center, Pacific Ocean Areas: Japanese Land Forces No. 2 Tactics, Oct. 20, 1942," Enclosure A, 5-7.

[65] Griffith, *The Battle for Guadalcanal*, 86-87.

[66] Groom, *1942: The Year That Tried Men's Souls*, 301.

[67] Ibid., 303-07.

[68] Hayashi, *Kogun: The Japanese Army in the Pacific War*, 59-60.

on the island.[69] The Japanese attacks in divisional strength using the 2nd Sendai Division from 23-25 October once again ended in failure and in disproportionate losses for the assaulting force.[70] Thus between August and October, the Japanese attempted to take back the Guadalcanal airfield with three separate attacks, all of which resulted in severe losses to the attacking force. Neither side knew it at the time, but the October attack represented the last serious land assault by the Japanese to retake this strategic position.

Throughout the campaigns on New Guinea and Guadalcanal, combat also raged in the skies over the battlefields. Indeed, securing bases suitable for airfields to support the next push often drove the operations of both sides. The Japanese pushed towards Port Moresby and Milne Bay to gain use of the airfields there to isolate Australia, while the Americans landed on Guadalcanal to prevent the Japanese from establishing an air presence there. Rabaul, with its complement of Japanese land-based naval aircraft served as the hub for the Japanese air war effort, supported by the Combined Fleet's aircraft carriers. The Allies operated predominantly out of airfields on New Guinea and, after mid August, on Guadalcanal, supported by carriers when available.[71] The character of the maritime environment in the South and Southwest Pacific Areas enabled the side with

[69] *NARA 550:* Series: Organizational History Files, compiled 1959 - 1973, documenting the period 1931 – 1973, Box #3: Japanese Night Combat parts 1 & 2: "JAPANESE NIGHT COMBAT: Part 3 of 3 Parts, SUPPLEMENT: NIGHT COMBAT EXAMPLES (HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES ARMY FORCES, FAR EAST and EIGHTH UNITED STATES ARMY MILITARY HISTORY SECTION, Japanese Research Division, 1955), 583.

[70] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 364-65. Frank admits casualty calculations for the battle are problematic, but his extensive research leads him to the conclusion that the U.S. Marines lost no more than ninety killed, while the Japanese actually sustained more than the 2,200 dead estimated by the 1st Marine Division.

[71] John B. Lundstrom, *The First Team and the Guadalcanal Campaign: Naval Fighter Combat from August to November 1942* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1994), 96. The first American aircraft, totaling nineteen F4F-4 Wildcat fighters and twelve SBD-3 Dauntless dive-bombers, landed at Henderson Field on Guadalcanal on 20 August 1942.

air superiority to greatly restrict the operational flexibility of its opponent by hampering the movement of reinforcements and supplies. The battle for control of the air, therefore, resulted in a sustained battle of attrition. At this stage of the battle, no major Japanese Army Air Force formations were committed to the South Pacific.[72] Japanese naval aircraft carried the fight in the air and focused the majority of their efforts on Guadalcanal at the expense of operations in New Guinea.[73] The Allies had independent air commands in the South and Southwest Pacific Areas, and both remained active in supporting the operations in their geographic areas of responsibility, while aircraft from SWPA often struck directly at Rabaul as well.

At Guadalcanal a pattern soon emerged. The defeat of the Allied naval force at the Battle of Savo Island had yielded nighttime control of the waters around Guadalcanal to the Japanese. But the establishment of Allied aircraft on Guadalcanal, often assisted by supporting aircraft carriers, meant the Allies controlled those waters during daylight. As early as 23 August 1942 a Japanese convoy destined for Guadalcanal turned back because of the Allied air pressure, and the Japanese soon resorted to the less efficient method of making high speed night runs using destroyers, rather than transports, to land troops, equipment, and supplies on the island; these operations became the legendary "Tokyo Express."[74]

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[72] USSBS Interrogations: No. 485: Lieutenant Colonel Roji Tanaka, IJA; Subject: Japanese Army Air Forces in SOLOMONS Campaign; Date: 28 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 485-1 – 485-2. The First JAAF units began arriving at Rabaul in November and December 1942.

[73] *AFHRA:* Call # 168.1703-62: *Japanese Air Power*, 13.

[74] *AFHRA:* Call # 168.1703-65: United States Strategic Bombing Survey, Military Analysis Division. *Employment of the Forces Under the Southwest Pacific Command*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey Military Analysis Division, 1947, 12.

Airpower enthusiasts are often enamored with statistics. While statistics do not

tell the whole story, they do reveal some of the character of the air war in the South

Pacific around Guadalcanal. In the struggles for control of the air in the southern

Solomons between 1 August and 16 November 1942, including both naval carrier battles,

the Japanese lost just over 500 aircraft to all causes while the Americans lost 480

planes.[75] These figures demonstrate the heavy attrition taking place. Both sides

maintained capable air forces in the fight, despite the losses, but the disparity in aircraft

production meant the American air forces could sustain losses, replace them, and

continue to grow. The Japanese, in contrast, struggled to sustain their force. The

ramifications of this production disparity played out from late 1943 onward.

Just as they had on land and sea, the Japanese made a concerted effort in the air to

dislodge the American position on Guadalcanal. The 11th Air Fleet ramped up its

operations against Henderson Field on Guadalcanal on 21 October and sustained

increased efforts until 26 October, when the attacks ceased after it was clear the ground

offensive had failed to capture the airdrome.[76] Despite the Japanese efforts to reduce and

destroy the joint American air force on Guadalcanal, the "Cactus Air Force" as it now

regarded itself, still operated from Henderson Field to defend the island.

After the completion of nearly three months of battle on land, sea, and in the air

around Guadalcanal, the issue remained undecided. Three Japanese land attacks against

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[75] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 609-10.

[76] *NARA 550:* Series: Organizational History Files, compiled 1959 - 1973, documenting the period 1931 – 1973, Box #19: Japanese Monographs: Nos. 118-125, Folder: Japanese Monograph: No. 121: Outline of Southeast Area Naval Air Operations, Part 2: "Monograph No. 121 (Navy) Outline of Southeast Area Naval Air Operations Part II, Aug 42 – Oct 42, Prepared by Second demobilization Bureau," 44-45.

the American perimeter had failed to retake the airfield. Four naval battles shaped the pattern of reinforcement and resupply, but had not fully wrested sea control from either side. The constant battle in the air bled both sides, yet both air forces remained in the fight.

Analysis of Shifting Strategic Initiative

The possession of the strategic initiative also remained in dispute. The battles in eastern New Guinea and in the southern Solomon Islands resulted from the Japanese advances to the south to isolate Australia. The Allies had countered these moves with what they believed would amount to a limited counteroffensive to protect their lines of communication. The confrontation resulted in two independent but closely intertwined campaigns that developed from an anticipated prelude to the "real" war in the central Pacific into the locus of the Pacific War. They evolved into a full-fledged confrontation that would decide who would dictate the continuing course of the war. How had the elements interacted to during this period of equibrium?

Resources

The mobilization and use of manpower resources between July and October 1942 followed a pattern similar to that of the opening months of the war. Despite the large size of the Japanese army, commitments in China and Manchuria, as well as the geography of the Pacific theater limited the numbers engaged at the point of contact. Meanwhile, the United States, despite the Allied grand strategy focused on defeating Germany first, had

poured resources into the Pacific to stem the rapid and unexpected Japanese advance. By June 1942, the U.S. Army had over 300,000 troops in the Pacific Theater compared to only 60,000 in the Atlantic Theater; between July and September these numbers would grow to nearly 400,000 and 200,000 respectively.[77] Yet the United States also fell victim to the constraints of geography and to the need to defend a line of outposts protecting the sea route to Australia, resulting in limitations on the number of troops available for action on the front lines.

Once again, the Allies typically had a manpower advantage at the various points of contact. But, as in their earlier conquests, the Japanese did not shrink from engaging superior forces. On New Guinea, the Japanese attempted to take Port Moresby against a larger American and Australian force. The Japanese also attempted to dislodge 8,000 Allied soldiers with a force of just 2,000 at Milne Bay, although here they believed the Allied force to be much smaller. On Guadalcanal, the Japanese operated from a position of numerical inferiority throughout the battle.[78] Unlike the opening operations of the war, in these battles the Japanese failed to take their objectives.

The materiel competition between the combatants also continued. To wage the air war in the South Pacific following the American landing on Guadalcanal, the Japanese had the 25th and 26th Air Flotillas in Rabaul, with a nominal combined strength of ninety-

[77] Richard M. Leighton and Robert W. Coakley, *Global Logistics and Strategy: 1940-1943*, vol. 1, United States Army in World War II: The War Department (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, Deptartment of the Army, 1955), 716-17.

[78] Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1941-1945*, 238. Force ratios on Guadalcanal from 7 August through the end of October 1942: on 7 August 2,200 Japanese to 10,000 Americans; on 20 August 3,600 Japanese and 10,000 Americans; on 12 September 6,000 Japanese to 11,000 Americans; and on 23 October 22,000 Japanese to 23,000 Americans

six fighters, eighty-seven bombers, and six flying boats.[79] As Japanese naval historian

Mark Peattie writes, "In the spring and early summer of 1942, Japanese naval air power

in the southwestern Pacific was at its zenith. Not only was it strategically positioned; its

qualitative and quantitative superiority in aircraft and personnel was never again so

great."[80] The Japanese maintained a force of approximately 200 aircraft at Rabaul

through October 1942.[81] Meanwhile, in July 1942, the Allies had only two squadrons of

fighters at Port Moresby in New Guinea and several bomber groups based in Australia.[82]

Allied land-based fighter and attack aircraft from the South Pacific Area did not have the

range to support operations in the Solomons until they moved to Guadalcanal and

operated from Henderson Field in late August. The arrival of aircraft at Henderson Field

represented a seminal event in the Guadalcanal campaign. Between 20 August and 21

September, the American South Pacific command fed 153 aircraft to Henderson Field

and on 22 September the field held eighty-seven serviceable aircraft.[83] The strength of

the Cactus Air Force waxed and waned throughout the battle, but the Japanese never fully

eliminated the American air presence on Guadalcanal.

Midway had narrowed the gap between the combatants in aircraft carriers, but the

Imperial Japanese Navy still remained a potent force which had suffered only negligible

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[79] USSBS Interrogations: No. 424, 424-6.

[80] Peattie, *Sunburst: The Rise of Japanese Naval Air Power, 1909-1941*, 176.

[81] USSBS Interrogations: No. 446-Supp.: Captain Takashi MIYAZAKI, IJN; Subject: Air Operations of Japanese Naval Air Forces based at RABAUL, including NEW GUINEA and SOLOMONS; Date: January 1946, Washington, D.C.; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 446-Supplement Plate 97-1.

[82] Intelligence Assistant Chief of Air Staff, Historical Division, "Army Air Forces Historical Studies: No. 17: Air Action in the Papuan Campaign, 21 July 1942 to 23 January 1943," (August 1944), 8-9.

[83] Lundstrom, *The First Team and the Guadalcanal Campaign: Naval Fighter Combat from August to November 1942*, 238.

damage in other combat ship categories thus far in the war. The four naval large naval

battles between August and October involved varying force levels. At Savo Island, seven

Japanese cruisers and a destroyer engaged a force of five Allied cruisers and six

destroyers.[84] The Japanese employed three carriers, eight battleships, five cruisers, and

eighteen destroyers against the Americans at the Battle of the Eastern Solomons.[85] The

Americans countered with a smaller force of two carriers, one battleship, four cruisers,

and ten destroyers.[86] As was the case for each stand-off carrier battle, the number of

aircraft on the carrier decks represented the real striking power of the fleets, with 173

Japanese aircraft pitted against 154 American planes.[87] The battle at Cape Esperance

pitted four Japanese cruisers and a destroyer against four American cruisers accompanied

by five destroyers.[88] In the final encounter at Santa Cruz, another carrier battle, Japan

had four carriers, four battleships, ten cruisers, and twenty-eight destroyers against an

American force of two carriers, one battleship, six cruisers, and fourteen destroyers.[89]

Once again the Japanese had an edge in ship-borne aircraft: 199 to 136.[90] Overall, with

the exception of Cape Esperance, the Japanese marshaled equal or superior resources for

the four naval encounters between August and October 1942.

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[84] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, 108.

[85] Ibid., 110-13.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 167-73.

[88] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, 115-17.

[89] Ibid., 119-23.

[90] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 374-78.

Thus the materiel disparity between the Allies and Japan tightened during this period. Japan had a strong naval air force at Rabaul, and maintained that strength through October despite grueling losses. But that force focused predominantly on the Guadalcanal operation, at the expense of other priorities. This gave the Japanese a materiel advantage in land-based aircraft in the struggle for Guadalcanal, but ceded the same advantage to the Allies in the campaign on New Guinea. The Japanese navy, however, still demonstrated materiel superiority over its Allied foe, particularly in the large carrier battles of the Eastern Solomons and Santa Cruz.

No really significant technological changes in the air war affected the two forces between July and October, although forthcoming changes on the Allied side were in the offing. The Japanese continued to rely on their mainstays: the Zero fighter, the G4M "Betty" land-based bomber, the "Val" dive-bomber, and "Kate" torpedo bomber. The vast majority of Allied aircraft remained familiar to the Japanese as well: Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Hudson bombers, P-40s, B-17s, F4F Wildcats, and Dauntless dive-bombers. Others had also made some minor appearances earlier in the war, such as the B-26 medium bomber and the TBF Avenger carrier-borne torpedo bomber which had participated in small numbers at Midway, and the B-25 Mitchell medium bombers that had participated in the Doolittle Raid. Some new American aircraft did make their first appearances. P-38 aircraft began arriving in the South and Southwest Pacific Areas, and A-20 light bombers also operated from some of General George Kenney's Fifth Air Force bases in Australia and new Guinea. Both of these aircraft would play a significant role in the continuing battle for New Guinea and the

Solomons, but the first P-38 aircraft suffered teething troubles with fuel leaks and the A-20s arrived in theater without bomb racks or machine guns.[91] Other new American aircraft included the P-400, an export version of the P-39 with reduced armament, and the B-24 heavy bomber. This variety of Allied aircraft indicates two aspects of the air war in the southern Pacific at this point: both the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy were heavily involved whereas only the Japanese naval aircraft opposed them, and the U.S. had begun to field improved aircraft, which did not bode well for the Japanese in 1943. Yet, in mid to late 1942, the Allies predominantly operated aircraft that did not match the Japanese in range or performance, with the notable exception of heavy bombers. Radar, which was operational on Guadalcanal even before any American aircraft had arrived, remained an important advantage for the U.S. by allowing Cactus' fighters to reach an attack position in time to intercept Japanese raiders before they hit the airfield.[92]

The Japanese navy continued to leverage the technological advantages it had used to complete its conquest of the southern area: fast and powerful cruisers and destroyers, excellent night optics, and the "Long Lance" torpedo. American torpedoes, in contrast, continued their unreliable performance. The U.S. Navy's use of its radar advantage remained spotty. Despite the potential advantage of radar, its poor employment and

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[91] *AFHRA*: Call # 168.7103-71 V2: "General George C. Kenney Diaries Volume II, 1 September 1942-31 October 1942," see 8 September and 17 September entries for P-38 fuel tank problems. For the A-20 information see: George C. Kenney, *The Saga of Pappy Gun* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1959), 48.

[92] Bergerud, *Fire in the Sky: The Air War in the South Pacific*, 463-64.

overreliance on it at Savo Island contributed to the tremendous Japanese victory in that battle.[93]

Technology in the land battles did not differ significantly between the two combatants, particularly early on at Guadalcanal. Historian Richard Overy has characterized much of the Japanese infantry's equipment as "obsolete," such as their 1905 rifle that was slow to fire and accurate only at short distances, their 1914 Hotchkiss model heavy machine gun, their small artillery pieces of 75mm or less dating from 1905 or 1922, and their 1922 model light machine gun.[94] His description is accurate, but reports from the field prove more forgiving of Japanese weapons. In one such report, U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel Louis A. Walsh, Jr. offered a more positive appreciation of enemy weaponry. According to Walsh, the small caliber of the Japanese rifle meant that its discharge resembled that of "flashless gun powder," which served well in darkness, jungle, and camouflage. Walsh also praised the Japanese light machine gun as being more portable and better suited to the jungle environment than its U.S. counterpart, and he referred to the Japanese 50mm knee mortar as "the Jap's most effective and most accurate weapon."[95]

Turning his analytical eye on American equipment, Walsh found the .30 caliber heavy machine gun too bulky for effective jungle operations, but found the Browning Automatic Rifles (BAR) and canister rounds fired from 37mm anti-tank guns to be very

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[93] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 122-23.

[94] Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, 222.

[95] *NARA 337:* Series: Intelligence Reports, compiled 1943 – 1946, Box #51: Folder 8: Walsh Obs Report: Memo HEADQUARTERS ARMY GROUND FORCES, Army War College, Washington, D.C., Subject: Observer Report, dated March 13, 1943, Appendix IV, 1.

effective.[96] During these early stages of the fighting on Guadalcanal the marines also fought with old weaponry, like the model 1903 Springfield rifle. Former marine turned journalist/historian Ore Marion pointed out that the Springfield '03 represented a good weapon, but was a slower bolt action rifle, unlike the U.S. Army's newer M-1 Garand semi-automatic rifles, and Marion backed Walsh's positive evaluation of the BAR.[97] Taken together, clearly neither side yet had a significant technological advantage in the ground war.

The technology gap, like the resource gap, had narrowed slightly between July and October 1942, but Japan retained a slim advantage. The Japanese still enjoyed a slight superiority in aircraft, as Peattie observed, but newer American models had begun to arrive in the south Pacific, the American advantage in heavy aircraft remained, and radar early warning proved a significant boon in combat. The Japanese also retained their naval superiority, although the Americans gained some experience with the use of radar in surface combat at Savo Island and at Cape Esperance. On land, the challenging character of jungle warfare with its limited visibility and close-quarter combat contributed to neither side leveraging any decisive advantage with its infantry weaponry.

The overall resource element, including manpower, materiel, and technology still favored the Japanese, but much less so than in the opening phase of the war. The Allies outnumbered the Japanese on land. But Japan held a very slight edge in materiel in the air and a larger edge in naval power. The Allies began to gain on, but not yet surpass,

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[96] Ibid., Section III, 9-10.

[97] Ore J. Marion, Thomas Cuddihy, and Edward Cuddihy, *On the Canal: The Marines of L-3-5 on Guadalcanal, 1942*, 1st ed., Stackpole Military History Series (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2004), 225.

Japan technologically by putting their own advantages of heavy bombers and radar to better use while also introducing newer aircraft like the TBF Avenger and the P-38 Lightning into combat in increasing numbers.

Intelligence

The intelligence war changed in the south Pacific because of a number of factors. The Japanese were now operating further afield and in remote areas with which they had little contact prior to the war. This stands in contrast to their earlier operations that focused on the Far East and on Hawaii, with its significant Japanese population, where the Japanese had more time and resources to assist in planning prior to the actual outbreak of war. The Allies, however, operated in areas with which they were more familiar than the Japanese and where they had established relationships with indigenous people, allowing for the creation of the Coastwatcher network. Additionally, the geography of the area enabled extensive aerial reconnaissance and photography, unlike the operation at Midway located in the open spaces of the central Pacific. Finally, the Japanese had recently changed their naval codes and the U.S. could no longer decrypt Japanese radio traffic, but instead had to rely more on radio traffic analysis to anticipate enemy activity.[98] The Allies, therefore, entered a critical period of the war without their most important intelligence advantage to date, which in many ways had been their only source of reliable intelligence.

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[98] *NHHC 505:* Collection 505: Papers of FADM Chester W. Nimitz, USN 1902-1976, Box #1: Command Summary Fleet Admiral C.W. Nimitz, U.S. Navy, Book 1: 7 December 1941 – 31 August 1942, Volumes 1,2,3, (Pages 1-861), 791.

Despite the loss of efficacy in decryption of naval codes, the Allies generally maintained an accurate estimate of Japanese intentions and capabilities during this period of the war. Japanese aerial reconnaissance of the Buna and the Kokoda Trail forewarned MacArthur of the coming Japanese effort to cross the Owen Stanley Mountains and attack Port Moresby overland. MacArthur's intelligence apparatus also deduced the attack on Milne Bay by integrating intelligence from aerial reconnaissance, captured documents, and patterns in Japanese aerial reconnaissance. Radio traffic analysis monitored Japanese aircraft carrier activity based out of Truk harbor on 23 August 1942, the eve of the Battle of the Eastern Solomons.[99] Admiral Nimitz's personal diary entry for 23 October reveals he was well aware of the forthcoming Japanese push on Guadalcanal and that he anticipated a "supreme test" in the offing.[100] Throughout both campaigns on New Guinea and in the Solomons, the coast watchers fed intelligence to the Allies that warned of Japanese naval and troop movements, as well as on impending air attacks launched from airfields at Rabaul. Coastwatchers on Bougainville regularly provided Henderson Airfield with forty-five minutes of warning for Japanese aircraft flying from Rabaul down the Solomon Islands chain, allowing the Cactus Air Force to scramble aircraft in time to fight off the attack.[101] Throughout this period, the integrated Allied intelligence efforts prevented the Japanese from achieving any kind of strategic surprise.

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[99] Ibid., 832.

[100] *NHHC 505*. "Nimitz Diary" (Reference Library), Only 1 Box, 23 October 1942 entry.

[101] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 206-07.

Japanese efforts, however, did not yield the same results. Despite intelligence, based upon radio traffic analysis, indicating a forthcoming Allied operation, the Japanese failed to anticipate the major landing at Guadalcanal. The Japanese had also underestimated the Allied force defending Milne Bay and, partly as a result, landed insufficient forces to meet their objectives there. The Japanese continually fell into the trap of underestimating the Allied forces facing them on Guadalcanal. Colonel Kazuji Sugita, an intelligence officer with the Japanese 2d Division on Guadalcanal in September and October, later lamented his inability to get accurate information on the American forces from his superiors at 17th Army Headquarters on Rabaul. He also faulted poor Japanese army and navy cooperation as a contributing factor to poor Japanese intelligence in the Solomons.[102] Sugita relayed that the Japanese struggled estimating the number of Allied reinforcements landed on the island, and that they captured very few documents and little equipment.[103] Throughout this period, the Japanese gleaned only a hazy picture of the Allied situation.

Intelligence collection and analysis clearly favored the Allies at this point in the war. The Allies anticipated Japanese moves and more closely judged Japanese strength. The Japanese often underestimated Allied strength and failed to anticipate the landings in the Solomon Islands despite indications of a forthcoming Allied operation.

The Allies also bested Japan at security during this phase. They protected Operation Watchtower and the attack on Tulagi, Gavutu, Tanambogo, and Guadalcanal. They also effectively masked their strength at Port Moresby, Milne Bay, and around

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[102] USSBS Interrogations: No. 402, 402-4.

[103] Ibid., 402-4 – 402-5.

Henderson Field. The Japanese made one major improvement in security during this period by changing their naval codes, which eliminated what had been the major source of intelligence for the Allies in recent months. However, the Japanese failed to nullify the coastwatcher network and failed to prevent extensive Allied reconnaissance and photo intelligence. The Japanese also often tipped their coming moves with their own efforts at aerial reconnaissance, which astute Allied analysts used to anticipate the landings at Buna and at Milne Bay and the march over the Kokoda Trail. These failures allowed the Allies to stay abreast of Japanese movements in the southern Pacific.

Overall, the intelligence competition favored the Allies between July and October 1942. The Allies developed a clearer picture of the Japanese capabilities, but shielded their own operations more successfully than their foe.

Strategic Acumen

Japanese early successes in the initial conquests had altered their strategy, resulting in a reach for the so called "outer perimeter." The operations against New Caledonia, Fiji, and Samoa grew out of this reevaluation, but the Battle of Midway resulted in their delay and then cancellation. However, the Japanese decided to continue their expansion in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. These moves represented a dangerous threat to Australia's lifeline and prompted the Allies to alter their own strategy and begin a counteroffensive in the southern Pacific, a line of attack at odds with the prewar plan to island hop across the central Pacific. The JCS decided to seize the opportunity presented by Midway to launch a limited operation designed to protect the

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lines of communication to Australia and set the conditions for a larger, strategic offensive designed to destroy the Japanese presence at Rabaul. Despite the declared policy of "Germany First," the Americans took a risk and divided their limited, but growing, resources between the Atlantic and Pacific theaters at a critical time in the war. President Roosevelt proved unwilling to commit anything but the most essential materiel to counter Japan, therefore increasing the level of risk, but the JCS pressed ahead with Operation Watchtower nonetheless, even over the reservations of Ghormley and MacArthur.

The Japanese premised their strategic approach on a fundamentally flawed assumption that colored the opening phases of the overland advance on New Guinea and the battle for Guadalcanal: they judged the United States incapable of launching any kind of counteroffensive until 1943.[104] The results of this thinking are plain to see. Most Japanese initially believed the landings at Guadalcanal represented a small reconnaissance in force, not a major amphibious effort to take the airfield.[105] This assessment, consistent with the assumption that no significant counterattack would occur until 1943, enabled the Japanese to divide their forces with simultaneous advances in late August against Port Moresby and Milne Bay while also landing the small Ichiki Detachment on Guadalcanal. They achieved none of their objectives and would have been better served to prioritize their operations and concentrate their resources. In contrast, the Allies benefitted from this situation in part by design. Admiral Nimitz looked upon both campaigns as mutually supporting to increase the pressure and complexity against Japan, and he hoped for a coordinated advance by Allied forces on

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[104] Senshi Sōsho, *Japanese Army Operations*, 1.

[105] Griffith, *The Battle for Guadalcanal*, 44.

New Guinea to solidify that mutual support.[106] The Japanese division of forces, both on

the ground with the three August operations and in the air where the available naval

aircraft focused almost exclusively on Guadalcanal at the expense of New Guinea,

demonstrated the wisdom of the Allied approach.

The situation in both campaigns, however, remained precarious throughout these

trying months, but especially so on Guadalcanal. Here, Nimitz made another important

strategic decision that demonstrated his own strategic assessment of the situation and

which would have positive ramifications for the American efforts in the coming months.

On 17 October 1942, Nimitz relieved Ghormley of command in the South Pacific Area,

supplanting him with Admiral Halsey. Nimitz, in his handwritten diary, noted the hours

of "anguished consideration" he devoted to the decision, and wrote: "Reason (private)

Ghormley was too immersed in detail and not sufficiently bold and aggressive at the right

times."[107] The timing makes this a courageous decision given Nimitz's expression of

trepidation about the situation, and coming only one week before the large Japanese push

to take back Guadalcanal.[108] Ghormley, a man whom Nimitz respected, had remained

pessimistic and hesitant throughout the Guadalcanal struggle, but Halsey soon seized the

reigns and reinvigorated the command in the South Pacific Area. On 20 October 1942,

Halsey met with Maj. Gen. Archer Vandegrift, the marine commander for all the U.S.

forces on Guadalcanal and asked the latter if the Americans could hold, to which

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[106] *NHHC 505:* Collection 505: Papers of FADM Chester W. Nimitz, USN 1902-1976, Box #1: Command Summary Fleet Admiral C.W. Nimitz, U.S. Navy, Book 1: 7 December 1941 – 31 August 1942, Volumes 1,2,3, (Pages 1-861), 649.

[107] *NHHC 505*: "Nimitz Diary" (Reference Library) Only 1 Box, entry for 17 Oct. 42.

[108] Ibid., entry for 14 Oct. 1942.

Vandegrift responded, "I can hold, but I've got to have more active support than I've been getting."[109] Vandegrift did hold against the Japanese October attacks, and Halsey infused his South Pacific Area command with a new, aggressive spirit, but the campaign on Guadalcanal remained in doubt for several weeks to come.[110]

The Americans achieved greater surprise than their adversaries during this period. None of the Japanese operations caught the Allies fully unprepared. The amphibious landings in the Solomons, however, hit the Japanese in an unexpected area, creating surprise and mental dislocation. In his 7 August 1942 diary entry, Admiral Ugaki noted of the American attack on Guadalcanal: "That we failed to discover it until it [the force] attacked deserves censure as extremely careless. A warning had been issued two days before. Anyway, we were attacked unprepared."[111]

The Japanese also missed a crucial strategic opportunity at the very beginning of the Guadalcanal campaign. Despite winning an incredible victory against the Allied covering force at the Battle of Savo Island, Admiral Mikawa did not seize the opportunity to destroy the Allied transports support the landings. As Richard Frank notes, "There can be little doubt that destruction of the transports by Mikawa…on the morning of August 9, would have ended the campaign shortly in ignominious defeat for the Allies."[112] Frank attributes Mikawa's decision to the IJN's Decisive Battle Doctrine that viewed the destruction of the enemy surface fleet as granting automatic debilitation of his command

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[109] Halsey and Bryan, *Admiral Halsey's Story*, 117.

[110] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 335-36.

[111] Ugaki et al., *Fading Victory: The Diary of Admiral Matome Ugaki, 1941-1945*, 177.

[112] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 121.

of the sea, but which ignored the impact of modern aircraft which could, and at Guadalcanal did, invalidate this proposition.[113] Japanese sensitivy to the loss of major combat vessels, such as heavy cruisers, surely factored in as well. As the battle unfolded, aircraft based at Henderson Field ensured the Allies controlled the sea by day while the Japanese controlled it only at night. Mikawa had unwittingly let slip a golden opportunity to inflict a strategic setback on the Allies.

Overall, therefore, the Allies demonstrated superior strategic acumen when compared to the Japanese during this period. Japanese plans did not match reality and they did not balance their ends, ways, and means either on New Guinea or with respect to Guadalcanal. The Allies did a good job with ends, ways, and means on New Guinea, but cut it very close and nearly overreached in the Solomon Islands. Nevertheless, they held onto Henderson Field, although the issue remained in doubt until the end of November. The Allies had seized the opportunity afforded by the outcome of the Battle of Midway to check the Japanese advance and begin to wrest the strategic initiative from them.

Combat Effectiveness

The Japanese ground units employed on New Guinea and Guadalcanal retained the discipline and experience that represented the hallmarks of the Japanese army in the first stage of the war. Their Allied opponents consisted of a more heterogeneous mix, from the battle hardened Australian 7th Division, with its previous Mid East service, to untested U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps units. The ensuing combat revealed much about both sides.

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[113] Ibid.

The Japanese started their Kokoda operations with similar offensive success to that initially experienced in the jungles of Malaya. Yet the campaign soon bogged down and eventually stopped at Imita ridge, within site of the Japanese objective of Port Moresby. The Japanese attack on Milne Bay resulted in abject failure and heavy loss of life. The three major Japanese night assaults in August, September, and October on Guadalcanal at times pressed the Americans, but did not achieve their objectives and also resulted in disproportionate loss to the Japanese attackers. In defense, however, the Japanese resisted with a stubbornness on Tulagi, Gavutu, and Tanambogo that foreshadowed the bloody fighting that would come later in the war.[114]

Each side assessed reasons for the Japanese failures despite their using the previously successful tactic of attacking at night. The Japanese believed that U.S. air superiority over Guadalcanal and Japanese army ignorance of the topography of the island forced long marches in the jungle that weakened the attacking forces, and that heavy American firepower combined with an effective trip wire warning system enabled the Allies to resist their attacks.[115] An operations report from the 1st Marine Parachute battalion related the effectiveness of the American artillery barrage against the Japanese night assaults on Edson's Ridge, on 13 and 14 September 1942.[116] General Vandegrift

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[114] Ibid., 79.

[115] *NARA 550:* Series: Organizational History Files, compiled 1959 - 1973, documenting the period 1931 – 1973, Box #3: Japanese Night Combat parts 1 & 2: "Japanese Night Combat: Part 1 of 3 Parts, Principles of Night Combat," (Headquarters United States Army Forces, Far East and Eighth United States Army Military History Section, Japanese Research Division, 1955), 166-67.

[116] *NARA 127:* Series: Reports, Studies, and Plans re World War II Military Operations, 1941-1956, Box #1: Amphib Corps Pac Flt to 1st Corps, Tank Bn., Folder: 1st Parachute Battalion; Operations Report September 13-14, 1942, "OPERATIONS REPORT FIRST PARACHUTE BATTALION, Document 23689, 1-2.

himself also credited the effectiveness of marine 105mm artillery in this same battle, while praising the Japanese soldiers' skill and determination.[117] Likewise, the postwar Japanese accounts appreciate the training and mental attitude of the marines on Guadalcanal.[118] General Vandegrift's unorthodox decision to organize a cordon defense with a continuous perimeter around the airfield represents a key to the Americans success. Analyzing Japanese capabilities and propensities, as well as his own forces strengths and weaknesses, Vandegrift went against conventional military wisdom with this decision, but in so doing took a calculated risk that paid handsome dividends and deprive the Japanese of one of their favorite tactics: night infiltration around the flanks of an opponent.[119] Thus the American and Australian troops facing the Japanese in mid- to late-1942 now had the discipline, equipment, and training/experience to face down the fearsome Japanese night assaults.

Japan struggled with sustaining their troops in the field to give them staying power in the fight. The Japanese army generally expected its troops to gather the majority of their provisions from their local area of operations, but the Owen Stanley Mountains and the jungles of Guadalcanal could not provide the necessary requirements. Japanese troops along the Kokoda Trail resorted to cannibalizing Australian corpses,

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[117] *NARA 127:* Series: Reports, Studies, and Plans re World War II Military Operations, 1941-1956, Box #13: Quantico Newsletter, 1941 to Intell. Section, Tsingtao, Trial of Russians, Folder: Correspondence Between Gen Vandegrift & Gen Holcomb Concerning Fighting on Pacific Islands 1942: 15 September 1942 letter from General Vandegrift to U.S. Marine Corps Commandant, General Holcomb, 1-5.

[118] *NARA 550:* Series: Organizational History Files, compiled 1959 - 1973, documenting the period 1931 – 1973, Box #3: Japanese Night Combat parts 1 & 2: "Japanese Night Combat: Part 1 of 3 Parts, Principles of Night Combat," (Headquarters United States Army Forces, Far East and Eighth United States Army Military History Section, Japanese Research Division, 1955), 167.

[119] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 261-63.

despite meager and ineffective attempts to keep them provisioned through air drops.[120]

The Japanese *Senshi Sōsho* states flatly that by late September, "The mechanism for

maintaining supply for the South Seas Force [on New Guinea] was broken."[121] The

situation for the Japanese Kawaguchi Detachment and 2d Division on Guadalcanal was

not much better. Post war Japanese accounts state that the dependence on destroyers for

supply instead of transports meant "it was impossible to supply sufficient quantities of

materiel essential for ground action" making the equipment of both units "totally

inadequate and even their food supplies were dangerously low."[122]

   The Allies also struggled with supply, but to a lesser degree. General Vandegrift

noted the minimum of supplies and the short rations that characterized the marines' first

two weeks on Guadalcanal, but said the troops made light of the hardships and

maintained high morale.[123] Like the Japanese, the Allies also used airlift to sustain and

reinforce their positions, providing endurance. In just one example, between 18 and 24

September, as the Australians made their stand on Imita Ridge, General George Kenney

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[120] USSBS Interrogations: No. 495, 495-3. The Japanese tried to air drop supplies to the Japanese soldiers retreating along the Kokoda Trail using the G4M "Betty" bombers at night, with untrained crews. Ohmae estimates a recovery rate of the supplies as 25% percent. To this author, having extensive training and experience in nighttime tactical airdrops, even 25% seems rather high given the nature of the terrain with both jungle and mountains, and a lack of trained aircrews. Regardless, the Japanese clearly could not sustain their efforts despite the airdrops.

[121] Senshi Sōsho, *Japanese Army Operations*, 133.

[122] *NARA 550:* Series: Organizational History Files, compiled 1959 - 1973, documenting the period 1931 – 1973, Box #3: Japanese Night Combat parts 1 & 2: "Japanese Night Combat: Part 1 of 3 Parts, Principles of Night Combat," (Headquarters United States Army Forces, Far East and Eighth United States Army Military History Section, Japanese Research Division, 1955), 166.

[123] *NARA 496:* Series: Reports of the Commander, Fleet Marine Force Guadalcanal 1943, Box #731: G-3 Admin: Reports of the Commander, Fleet Marine Force, Relating to Operations on Guadalcanal 1943, Folder: Division Commander's Final Report Guadalcanal Phase III: "DIVISION COMMANDER'S FINAL REPORT ON GUADALCANAL OPERATION PHASE III," 11.

and the Fifth Air Force flew 4,000 men of the 128th Infantry Regiment of the U.S. 32d

Infantry Division from Australia to reinforce Port Moresby on New Guinea.[124] Air lift

also supplied thousands of pounds of food, shoes, ammunition and clothing to sustain the

Australian and American forces fighting in the New Guinea jungles.[125] Through such

efforts the Allies remained fit to fight.

The Allies demonstrated better combat effectiveness on the land between July and

October on both New Guinea and in the Solomons. Allied ground forces took and held

on to their objectives, while the Japanese army and Special Naval Landing Forces failed

to complete their missions in large measure due to poor tactical performance compared to

their Allied foes. In addition, the Japanese suffered disproportionate losses in their failed

efforts. Throughout the period, both sides struggled to keep their forces equipped and

fed, with the Allies enjoying better success.

On the sea, advantages were not as clear cut. In two major nighttime surface

engagements, both sides could claim one tactical victory: the Japanese clearly won at

Savo Island and the Americans did better at Cape Esperance. But in both cases, the

losing side still managed to land forces and supplies on Guadalcanal despite the

unfavorable engagement. In terms of shipping sunk or seriously damaged, the Japanese

clearly came out ahead. The Japanese lost one cruiser and one destroyer sunk, with one

cruiser seriously damaged. Recent scholarship explains the disproportionate losses.

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[124] *AFHRA:* Call # 168.7103-71 V2: "General George C. Kenney Diaries Volume II, 1 September 1942-31 October 1942," entries for 18 and 24 September 1942.

[125] *AFHRA:* Call # 168.1703-71: United States Strategic Bombing Survey (Pacific), Military Analysis Division. *The Fifth Air Force in the War Against Japan*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey (Pacific) Military Analysis Division, June 1947, 27.

According to historian Jeff Reardon, during the 1920s and 1930s the U.S. Navy consciously focused on "big guns" for a presupposed daytime fleet engagement against the Imperial Navy, while ignoring the potential hitting power of the surface-launched torpedo.[126] The Japanese, recognizing their likely materiel inferiority in war against the United States, planned differently. They too focused on "decisive battle," but they planned to attrite the American fleet using torpedoes in nocturnal attacks prior to the decisive engagement.[127] The American deficiency revealed itself at Savo Island, while the marginal tactical victory at Cape Esperance masked continued inferiority to the Japanese in night tactics.[128] For this period, in operational terms, the Japanese came out ahead, as the victory of Savo Island granted them sea control at night allowing them to contest the American lodgment on Guadalcanal.

The carrier war also generated mixed results. Despite significant losses, the Americans at the Battle of the Eastern Solomons had turned back the Japanese attempt to land reinforcements on Guadalcanal. At Santa Cruz, the Japanese navy punished the American fleet, but had failed to effectively support the large Japanese effort to retake Guadalcanal. Yet on the whole, Eric Bergerud's assessment rings true: in these carrier battles the U.S. Navy, regardless of loss, achieved its objectives while the Imperial Navy did not.[129]

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[126] Jeff Reardon, "Breaking the U.S. Navy's 'Gun Club' Mentality in the South Pacific," *The Journal of Military History* 75, no. 2 (April 2011): 533-34.

[127] Ibid.: 538.

[128] Ibid.: 541.

[129] Bergerud, *Fire in the Sky: The Air War in the South Pacific*, 424.

One other aspect of the sea war demands brief mention. Although the Japanese never implemented unrestricted submarine warfare against the Allied merchant fleet, Japanese submarines effectively stalked their warship prey around Guadalcanal. During this critical period, Japanese submarines damaged the carrier *Saratoga* and sank the carrier *Wasp*. In the most notable U.S. submarine success against warships during this period, an American submarine sank the cruiser *Kako* on 10 August near Rabaul.[130] This differential, one Japanese cruiser in exchange for two U.S. carriers either disabled or sunk, clearly favored the Japanese and greatly reduced U.S. naval strength during these trying months.

Naval combat effectiveness was a close run competition during this phase of the war. The United States retained a very marginal edge and more successfully accomplished its naval missions supporting New Guinea and Guadalcanal between July and October. The Japanese, however, successfully secured enough freedom of operation during the night hours, and vied for more control during the daylight hours, to sustain a determined effort to retake Guadalcanal.

The air battle also taxed both sides, a battle in which Japan no longer dominated. The air battle over Guadalcanal represented almost a statistical dead heat in terms of losses between August and early November. But the continued existence of the Cactus Air Force remained the key factor. The marvelous performance and range of the Japanese aircraft enabled them to regularly attack Henderson Field and to attempt to gain air superiority over Guadalcanal, but they could never wrest that control from the

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[130] Peter Young, *The World Almanac Book of World War II: The Complete and Comprehensive Documentary of World War II* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: World Almanac Publications; Prentice-Hall, 1981), 168.

Americans. The Japanese ran into some of the same problems the Germans experienced

against the British in the Battle of Britain in 1940. The Americans had an early warning

net that included radar and the coastwatcher network, which allowed the Americans to

meet the attackers in the air rather than being caught on the ground as at Pearl Harbor and

the Philippines. In addition, the long trip from Rabaul meant that the Japanese fighter

aircraft had limited fuel for combat and that any damaged aircraft or downed aircrews

stood a much greater chance of perishing than American planes and crews who operated

much closer to their base. Japanese ace Saburo Sakai also credited the Americans with

improved performance, stressing their teamwork and improved tactics.[131] The Americans

also used airlift to provide endurance for their air force. During the struggle for

Guadalcanal in October, the Americans arranged for the airlift of critically needed fuel

drums to keep the Cactus Air Force in operation.[132] The effort succeeded at a critical

juncture in the campaign and ensured daylight operations for the Japanese around

Guadalcanal would remain costly.

The campaign over New Guinea differed substantially at this juncture. The

Japanese navy and naval aircraft at Rabaul focused on Guadalcanal. The army focus on

New Guinea lacked air support, as no Japanese army fighter or bomber aircraft operated

in theater. The situation allowed General George Kenney and the Fifth Air Force to

interdict Japanese supplies, strike at Japanese beachheads, and launch attacks against

Rabaul to support both the New Guinea and Solomons operations. Allied air efforts

contributed greatly to the aforementioned breakdown of Japanese logistical support for

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[131] Sakai, Caidin, and Saito, *Samurai!*, 163.

[132] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 320.

the South Seas Detachment, and air attacks destroyed much of the food and munitions the Japanese had landed in support of their Milne Bay attack.

The overall air war thus favored the Allies during this period. Yet again, the Allies completed their missions and contributed to the Allied successes in both campaigns. The Japanese effectively ceded air control in one campaign and failed to achieve their goals in the other.

Chance

Chance intervened during this period on several occasions, both in the form of happenstance and in the form of command decisions made in the face of uncertainty. First, the Guadalcanal invasion force advanced under the cover of bad weather, which contributed to the inability of the Japanese reconnaissance aircraft on Tulagi and Rabaul to spot the fleet and enabled the Americans to surprise the Japanese.[133] Second, On August 8, Admiral Fletcher, who was in charge of the carrier force supporting the invasion, decided to withdraw his carriers to the south because heavy Japanese air attacks had depleted his fighter defenses.[134] This decision left the invasion force exposed, and revealed Fletcher's hesitancy to operate in the unknown, likely born from his experiences losing the carriers *Lexington* and *Yorktown* in earlier battles and his awareness of the strategic value of the remaining American carriers.[135] Third, Admiral Mikawa, after

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[133] Ibid., 60.

[134] Costello, *The Pacific War 1941-1945: The First Comprehensive One-Volume Account of the Causes and Conduct of World War II in the Pacific.*, 324-25.

[135] John B. Lundstrom, *Black Shoe Carrier Admiral: Frank Jack Fletcher at Coral Sea, Midway, and Guadalcanal* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006), 368-83. Historians have widely criticized Fletcher

achieving his victory as Savo Island, did not press his attack on the Allied transports

further to the south, unwilling to risk his force after such a victory.[136] Fourth, chance

deprived each side of another aircraft carrier in the two carrier battles. At the Eastern

Solomons, the American carrier *Wasp* and her sixty-two aircraft unwittingly missed the

carrier battle while refueling, which cost the United States a chance to employ "decisive

quantitative superiority" in that engagement.[137] Two months later, at Santa Cruz, the

Japanese carrier *Hiyo* missed the battle with engine trouble but transferred some of her

aircraft to another carrier and to Rabaul.[138] Finally, a chance rain squall at Cape

Esperance had obscured the Japanese vision but not the American ships' radars, allowing

the Americans to gain tactical surprise in that battle.[139] In previous night surface

engagements, the Japanese sighted the Americans first and initiated combat with an

unexpected barrage of Long Lance torpedoes.

Four out of the six important examples of chance listed above favored the Allies.

To be sure, Fletcher's flinch in the face of strong Japanese resistance at Guadalcanal

represented a real danger to the operation, but the Japanese missed the opportunity to take

advantage of the withdrawn American carriers. Indeed, Mikawa's own flinch on that

same evening largely nullified the opportunity presented by Fletcher's withdrawal. The

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for this decision. Lundstrom, however, makes a cogent argument in Fletcher's defense. Regardless, the invasion remained exposed at a critical juncture, which provided a fleeting opportunity for the Japanese.

[136] Morison, *The Two-Ocean War: A Short History of the United States Navy in the Second World War*, 175-76.

[137] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 165.

[138] Ibid., 370-71.

[139] Reardon, "Breaking the U.S. Navy's 'Gun Club' Mentality in the South Pacific," 541.

Allies dodged a bullet that could have ended the first counteroffensive in the Pacific less than forty-eight hours after its commencement. Chance during this period favored the Allies.

State of Strategic Initiative

Borrowing H.P. Willmott's analogy, the strategic initiative now lay "like a gun in the street" at the end of October 1942. The Japanese still held an edge in resources writ large, but shifts had occurred in the other categories underlying possession of the initiative. During this period, the Allies practiced better intelligence, both in collection and analysis and in security. They also demonstrated better judgment and strategic acumen, matching their ends, ways, and means and achieving surprise in a manner the Japanese failed to emulate. Combat effectiveness on the land, sea, and in the air ebbed and flowed, but generally favored the Allies in all three mediums. Finally, chance and the fortunes of war also favored the Allies. The advantages held in four of the five areas analyzed allowed the Allies to firmly place the strategic initiative in dispute. Both sides became entangled in the concurrent campaigns on New Guinea and in the Solomons, but neither had controlling influence over the war at this juncture.

Conclusion

The combatants were well aware of the dynamic situation as this period progressed. In late August, Admiral Ugaki had realized that Guadalcanal would be a

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"prolonged" battle.[140] At the end of September, he wrote, "Looking back, I find nothing has been accomplished this month."[141] Then, at the end of October, despite the Japanese navy's success at Santa Cruz, Ugaki admitted his focus remained on the army's failure to recapture the airfield on Guadalcanal even as the carrier battle raged.[142] His last diary entry for October foretold of continued operations against the island in a coming general offensive the next month.[143] At the same time, Emperor Hirohito celebrated the naval victory of Santa Cruz, but urged his soldiers and sailors to redouble their efforts to take back Guadalcanal.[144] The struggle was far from over.

Nimitz knew this as well. His 30 October 1942 diary entry, written at 3:45 AM is worth quoting:

> I am not so busy as I am mentally churned up. My imagination is very vivid and I realize my helplessness so far away. No one knows better than I do the difficulties that confront Halsey and Vandegrift and the superiority enjoyed at present by the Japs. I am so aware of what might happen that it keeps me very much preoccupied. Our forces are doing grand work with less strength than our opponents and if matters continue until next summer we hope to see our strength considerably built up.[145]

The October victory around Henderson Field, Nimitz was well aware, bought more time but did not settle the issue on Guadalcanal.

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[140] Ugaki et al., *Fading Victory: The Diary of Admiral Matome Ugaki, 1941-1945*, 193.

[141] Ibid., 221.

[142] Ibid., 251.

[143] Ibid., 255-56.

[144] Edwin Palmer Hoyt, *Yamamoto: The Man Who Planned Pearl Harbor*, 1st Lyons Press ed. (Guilford, CT: Lyons Press, 2001), 219.

[145] *NHHC 505:* "Nimitz Diary" (Reference Library) Only 1 Box, entry for 30 Oct. 42.

MacArthur also chimed in with an emphatic request for more resources of every kind to save the situation in the Solomon Islands and thereby save his Southwestern command as well.[146] Meeting the far ranging demands of MacArthur's message would have required cancelling or postponing the upcoming invasion of North Africa, something President Roosevelt remained unwilling to do.[147] The South and Southwest Pacific would continue to get only limited support, despite the possibility of once again ceding the initiative in the Pacific to the Japanese.

According to Dan van der Vat, "At the end of October both sides were as determined as ever to get the upper hand on Guadalcanal and in the surrounding waters in the coming month."[148] The campaigns on Papua, New Guinea and Guadalcanal would reach their denouement in the period between November 1942 and the end of February 1943. Another large battle around Guadalcanal loomed in November. Allied forces prepared to push back at the Japanese on the northeast shore of New Guinea. There remained a great deal of fighting to decide which side would come out on top in each campaign and would therefore gain possession of the strategic initiative – and with it the ability to dictate the future course of the war.

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[146] Hayes, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in World War II: The War against Japan*, 191.

[147] Ibid., 191-93. Roosevelt ordered his military leaders to make sure that every weapon needed to hold in the Pacific made its way there, but he phrased his memo in such a manner to ensure it came at the expense of the buildup in England, and not through diversion from Operation Torch in North Africa.

[148] van der Vat, *The Pacific Campaign: World War II, the U.S.-Japanese Naval War, 1941-1945*, 232.

Chapter 9: The Allies Seize the Strategic Initiative, November 1942 – February 1943

The failed Japanese attack on Henderson Field in October 1942, accompanied as it was by large-scale air and sea action, set the stage for yet another push on Guadalcanal by the Japanese in November. Both sides steeled themselves for the forthcoming confrontation. On eastern New Guinea, the Allies had resisted the Japanese thrusts at Port Moresby and at Milne Bay, but the Japanese remained ensconced along the northern portions of the Kokoda Trail and in the Buna, Gona, and Sanananada area along the northern coast. MacArthur prepared his forces to launch their own two pronged counterattack to displace the Japanese lodgment. Both campaigns remained far from over, but between November 1942 and February 1943, the Allies would secure their position on Guadalcanal, and after bloody fighting in the jungles of New Guinea, would seize their objectives there as well. In winning these two campaigns, the Allies also seized the strategic initiative in the Pacific War and would wield greater influence over the course of that war until its conclusion in August 1945. But how did they manage to successfully close out these hard-fought battles and reap the corresponding rewards?

Caught in Each Others' Grip: The Continuing Confrontations in the Southern Pacific

Neither side had launched their operations in the southern Pacific intending to force long and large-scale confrontations that evolved into attritional battlefields, but that is exactly what occurred. The Japanese had aimed to isolate Australia to prevent its development as a base for potential Allied counteroffensives into the resource area Japan conquered earlier in the war. The Allies aimed to protect the lines of communication to the same in order to hold on the defensive in the Pacific. Yet the Japanese moves south forced an Allied reaction, which in turn, resulted in increased Japanese efforts to achieve their ends. After October both sides remained committed to their strategies.

The Japanese high command reevaluated the situation at the end of October 1942. In their view the "southeast Pacific," as they called the Guadalcanal and New Guinea areas, represented the most likely area for an Allied counterattack.[1] This potential avenue of Allied attack seemed to the Japanese to allow the Allies to concentrate strong land, sea, and air forces to threaten Japanese sea control in the western Pacific, and then retake the southern resource area and launch air attacks against Japan from the south.[2] These calculations spurred the Japanese army high command to reorganize for the coming fight and create the 8th Area Army to oversee the entire area, with the already established 17th Army to focus on Guadalcanal and the Solomon Islands while a newly created 18th Army

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[1] *NARA 550.* Series: Organizational History Files, compiled 1959 - 1973, documenting the period 1931 – 1973, Box #11: Japanese Monographs Nos. 41 and 45, Folder: Japanese Monograph No. 45: Imperial General Headquarters Army High Command Record, 67-68.

[2] Ibid., 68. This progression, after all, closely approximated MacArthur's own vision for future Allied operations against the Japanese.

would focus on New Guinea.[3] The Japanese planned to strengthen their forces by

sending additional army divisions to the area and by moving Japanese Army Air Force

units to Rabaul to help with the air war and to make yet another effort at capturing the

airfield on Guadalcanal.[4]

The Allies also continued to focus on the south Pacific, anticipating the Japanese

would do the same. The U.S. Navy's estimate of the situation on 1 November 1942

expected continued Japanese pressure in the Solomons and on New Guinea, but did not

expect another Japanese "grand offensive" because of the losses they had suffered in the

late October battles.[5] On 3 November, the navy noted the general situation on

Guadalcanal "is not unfavorable" and that there had been no real interruption of logistical

support or reinforcements to the island since the October confrontation.[6] Meanwhile, on

New Guinea, MacArthur prepared to act. Despite the Australians' continued progress

along the Kokoda Trail, MacArthur had temporarily postponed plans to shift to offensive

operations in late October to await the outcome of the critical situation on Guadalcanal.[7]

The successful repulse of the Japanese effort on Guadalcanal enabled MacArthur to

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] *NHHC 505:* Collection 505: Papers of FADM Chester W. Nimitz, USN 1902-1976, Box 2: Command Summary Fleet Admiral C.W. Nimitz U.S. Navy, Book Two: 1 September 1942-31 December 1942, Volumes 1, 2, Pages 862-1262. War Plans CincPac Files: Subject: Captain Steele's "Running Estimates and Summary" covering the period 1 September 1942-31 December 1942, 1150.

[6] Ibid., 1151.

[7] Milner, *Victory in Papua*, 116-17.

switch gears and authorize a larger offensive against the Japanese positions near Buna, slated to begin in mid November.[8]

During this period there were fewer named battles than in the previous four months, although the ground and air forces of both sides remained in almost constant engagement. MacArthur's offensive against Buna and Gona encapsulated the end of the struggle on New Guinea, but it lasted from November 1942 into late January 1943. The final struggle for Guadalcanal resulted in two more named naval confrontations, the Battle of Guadalcanal and the Battle of Tassafaronga, and on land would hereafter be characterized by the steady advance of the Americans, particularly once the Japanese decided upon withdrawal. Although perhaps less dramatic and not punctuated by definable confrontations as in August through October, the combat remained difficult and bloody in both locations.

Pushing the Japanese Out of Papua, New Guinea

The Allies commenced their offensive against the Buna positions on New Guinea with a misplaced overconfidence. The defeats inflicted upon the Japanese along the Kokoda Trail and at Milne Bay now seemed precursors to the rapid eviction of the Japanese and the Allied occupation of the northeast coast of New Guinea.[9] The supply situation for the Australians, now advancing north over the Kokoda Trail, improved drastically with the capture of Kokoda village and its airfield, which enabled reliable

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[8] Ibid., 118-19.

[9] Robert L. Eichelberger and Milton Mackaye, *Jungle Road to Tokyo* (London: Odhams Press Limited, 1951), 41.

airlift support in order to continue the attack to the northern coast.[10] By 13 November,

the Australians had pushed the Japanese further north, with heavy fighting, making them

fall back upon the positions in the Gona area.[11] The Americans also used an air bridge to

assemble elements of the 32d Infantry Division at Pongani, 30 miles southeast of Buna.[12]

These maneuvers set the stage for the coming battle.

The Allied plan of attack against the Japanese Buna/Gona beachhead envisioned a

three pronged advance with the Australians hitting from the southwest, and the

Americans hitting from the south and southeast.[13] On 16 November they began their

advance.[14] Two weeks later, despite heavy, bloody fighting and repeated Australian

attacks, the village of Gona remained in Japanese hands[15] The Americans also struggled

against Buna. Two weeks after the commencement of the attack, the village remained in

Japanese hands. General MacArthur ordered Major General Robert L. Eichelberger to

proceed to the Buna area, relieve Major General Edwin F. Harding and take over

command of the 32d Infantry Division and reinvigorate the Buna attack.[16] The expected

rapid Allied triumph against the Japanese beachhead never materialized.

The defensive positions of the Japanese around Buna and Gona replicated the

trench warfare of World War I, with intertwined trenches and bunkers. But unlike World

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[10] Milner, *Victory in Papua*, 119-20.

[11] Ibid., 121.

[12] Ibid., 121-23.

[13] Ibid., 126-27.

[14] Ibid., 130-31.

[15] Ibid., 147-50.

[16] Eichelberger and Mackaye, *Jungle Road to Tokyo*, 41-42.

War I in Europe, the setting was a jungle with its myriad of additional challenges to both combatants. The bloody confrontation continued into December and beyond, with Gona falling first to the Australians on 9 December, but requiring another ten days for the Allies to mop up remaining Japanese resistance.[17] Buna fell to the Americans on 3 January 1943.[18] Yet many Japanese remained ensconced in the jungle at Sanananda, between Buna and Gona, an area the Allies did not clear until 22 January.[19] The Papuan campaign thus ended more than two months after MacArthur launched his offensive, and the costs to both sides had been heavy. Between late September 1942 and late January 1943, the Japanese lost approximately 8,000 dead and wounded compared to Allied casualties of more than 2,300 dead and 13,000 wounded or ill from disease.[20] As along the Kokoda Trail, some Japanese troops had resorted to cannibalism during their fanatical, last-stand resistance.[21]

The End on Guadalcanal, November 1942-February 1943

The denouement of the Guadalcanal campaign began after the defeat of the Japanese in the naval Battle of Guadalcanal in mid November. Another naval tussle, the Battle of Tassafaronga, followed a fortnight later. After this series of naval engagements, the Japanese never again made an attempt to assault and capture Henderson Field.

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[17] Costello, *The Pacific War 1941-1945: The First Comprehensive One-Volume Account of the Causes and Conduct of World War II in the Pacific.*, 380.

[18] Milner, *Victory in Papua*, 321.

[19] Eichelberger and Mackaye, *Jungle Road to Tokyo*, 80.

[20] Ibid., 80-81.

[21] Groom, *1942: The Year That Tried Men's Souls*, 343.

Instead, American forces on Guadalcanal, like MacArthur's in New Guinea, transitioned to offensive operations to eliminate the Japanese threat.

The Japanese attempt to land more forces on Guadalcanal and launch a decisive attack against Henderson Field precipitated the naval Battle of Guadalcanal from 13-15 November. Unlike the regular runs of the high speed "Tokyo Express" destroyer transports, in this effort the Japanese employed eleven transports in an effort to land 7,000 soldiers, 31,000 artillery shells, and enough food to feed 30,000 men for twenty days.[22] The Japanese committed capital ships to the effort to force through these much needed supplies and reinforcements, but the attrition to the Japanese carrier force and its air groups at Santa Cruz precluded any significant aircraft carrier support for the operation.[23] The United States, however, still had the damaged carrier *Enterprise* and its air group operating in the area.[24]

The naval Battle of Guadalcanal involved three sequential engagements. In the first during the early hours of 13 November, a force of five American cruisers and eight destroyers engaged a Japanese force of two battleships, one cruiser, and fifteen destroyers in another night surface action.[25] In the ensuing confused action that represented something more akin to a knife fight than a naval battle, the Americans lost three cruisers and four destroyers, while the Japanese lost one battleship, *Hiei*, and two destroyers.[26]

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[22] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 428.

[23] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, 125.

[24] Ibid., 126.

[25] Ibid., 127.

[26] Ibid.

But once again, the Japanese broke off the action and failed to complete their primary mission of bombarding Henderson Field.[27] The next day aircraft from Henderson Field (including air squadrons from the *Enterprise* operating from the air strip), attacked a Japanese bombardment force that had hit Henderson Field in the early morning darkness, and also located and attacked the large Japanese transport force headed to Guadalcanal.[28] In addition to sinking one cruiser and six transports and damaging three cruisers and two destroyers, these air attacks forced one transport to abort the run while the remaining four would later beach themselves on Guadalcanal.[29] In the third and final encounter of the battle, American and Japanese battleships met head to head for the first time in the night hours of 14-15 November. This fight pitted two American battleships and four destroyers against a Japanese force of one battleship, four cruisers, and nine destroyers.[30] Losses amounted to three American destroyers sunk and one battleship and one destroyer damaged, while the Japanese lost one battleship and one destroyer sunk.[31] This round of the battle represented an American victory in terms of fleet damage, but it enabled the remaining four Japanese transports that had survived the air attacks on the 14th to get through and beach on Guadalcanal where they were then subject to repeated attacks by

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[27] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 451.

[28] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, 126.

[29] Ibid., 128.

[30] Ibid., 129.

[31] Ibid.

the Cactus Air Force.[32] In overall terms, the Americans won the battle handily, allowing the Japanese to land only 2,000 troops, four days worth of rice, and 260 boxes of artillery shells for the loss of ten invaluable transports.[33]

The next naval engagement occurred at the end of November in the Battle of Tassafaronga, yet another night fight. The Japanese aimed to make another Tokyo Express run with eight destroyers to provision their forces on Guadalcanal while the Americans aimed to stop them with a force of five cruisers and six destroyers.[34] The Americans achieved tactical surprise, but, despite their superior force, got the worst of the fight. The U.S. Navy lost one cruiser sunk and three suffered major damage from Japanese torpedoes, while the Japanese navy lost one destroyer sunk and one lightly damaged.[35] The defeat was a tactical embarrassment for the Americans and another clear demonstration of Japanese skill in night fighting and torpedo technology. Yet again the Japanese turned back without achieving their aims and delivering the badly needed supplies to Guadalcanal.[36]

The naval Battle of Guadalcanal demonstrated the growing air and sea control enjoyed by the Allies around that island, but much ground fighting remained ahead. Throughout November the Americans began to push more aggressively outside their perimeter around the airfield, particularly to the west, but lines soon stabilized and

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[32] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 487-90.

[33] Ibid., 490.

[34] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, 139.

[35] Ibid., 139-40.

[36] Ibid., 139.

remained relatively static during December and into January 1943.[37] In December, the 1st Marine Division departed for rest and refit and U.S. Army Major General Alexander M. Patch took command on the island.[38] The South Pacific Area then activated the U.S. XIV Corps on Guadalcanal, consisting of the Americal Division, the 25th Infantry Division, and the 2d Marine Division, on 2 January 1943.[39] That month the XIV Corps conducted a series of offensives pushing west from the airfield to clear the Japanese. Unknown to the Americans, on 31 December the Japanese, realizing the increasing American control over the seas and air around the island, had decided to abandon Guadalcanal, and evacuate their remaining troops.[40] Under American pressure, but in a coordinated and largely successful evacuation, the last of the Japanese left the island on 8 February and the campaign for Guadalcanal ended.[41] Richard Frank provides the best estimates for total losses during this tumultuous campaign: the Americans lost a total of 7,100 killed and permanently missing on land, sea, and in the air, while Japanese losses exceeded 30,300.[42]

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[37] Miller, *Guadalcanal: The First Offensive*, 209.

[38] Ibid., 213.

[39] Ibid., 218.

[40] Hayashi, *Kogun: The Japanese Army in the Pacific War*, 62-64.

[41] Ibid., 64-65.

[42] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 614.

The Allies Seize the Strategic Initiative

With the successful conclusions of the Papuan, New Guinea and Guadalcanal campaigns, the Allies had finally seized control of the strategic initiative in the Pacific War. The Japanese decision to evacuate Guadalcanal also carried with it changes in their plans for New Guinea; changes that imply the Japanese knew they had ceded the initiative to the Allies. Without giving up on potential future operations against Port Moresby, the Japanese decided to pull back from Papua while maintaining and reinforcing other positions such as Lae and Salamaua on the north coast of New Guinea.[43] The Japanese also decided to prepare strong positions in the central and northern Solomons to shield Rabaul from the now strong American presence in the southern Solomons.[44] These decisions represent tacit admission that the situation in early 1943 precluded Japan from isolating Australia, meaning Japan could no longer pursue its aims in expanding the perimeter, and forced the Japanese to prepare to react to forthcoming Allied moves, a sure sign the initiative had passed to the Allies.

A review of the elements contributing to possession of the strategic initiative is in order to determine how they influenced the Allied seizure of that initiative in this final, critical period of these two campaigns.

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[43] Hayashi, *Kogun: The Japanese Army in the Pacific War*, 62-64.

[44] Ibid.

Resources

The manpower situation during this phase changed slightly.[45] On New Guinea,

Allied forces continued to outnumber the Japanese at the point of contact. The weakened

Australian 7th Division and the fresh but inexperienced U.S. 32d Infantry Division

squared off against remnants of multiple Japanese units around Buna and Gona that

totaled between 6,000-8,000 troops.[46] On Guadalcanal in mid November the Japanese

achieved parity for the first time in the campaign with an estimated 30,000 troops against

the American presence of 29,000 troops.[47] Despite this brief advantage, the Japanese

defeat at the the naval Battle of Guadalcanal precluded any Japanese land offensive on

the island. Soon the balance shifted back to the Allies: on 9 December the Americans

had 40,000 troops on the island to Japan's 25,000, and Japan's decision to withdraw from

Guadalcanal in late December meant that the Japanese numbers continued to shrink while

the Americans' grew.[48]

The material situation remained similar to that of the previous phase, but superior

American aircraft production did begin to show in the south Pacific.[49] To date the

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[45] Keegan, *The Second World War*, 297. It must also be noted at this time the balance of U.S. troops in the Pacific and the European theaters began to shift. In January 1943, the U.S. had 460,000 troops in the Pacific, but the build-up in England and operations in the Mediterranean now drew 380,000 Americans troops. Since September, 60,000 American soldiers had headed to the Pacific against 180,000 that had headed to Europe, despite the precarious situation in the South Pacific. This division of effort amply demonstrates Roosevelt's commitment to Europe.

[46] James, *The Years of MacArthur: Volume II, 1941-1945*, 240.

[47] E. B. Potter and Chester W. Nimitz, eds., *Triumph in the Pacific: The Navy's Struggle against Japan*, A Spectrum Book (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall,1963), 28.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, 331. According to Overy, the Americans produced 47,826 aircraft in 1942 while Japan produced a total of 8,861.

Japanese naval air force had carried the fight alone in the south Pacific, but this would soon change. At the end of November 1942 the Japanese organized the 6th Air Division under the command of the 8th Area Army to control the Japanese Army Air Force units that would soon arrive to support the ongoing operations and lift some of the burden from the Japanese navy.[50] JAAF aircraft moved to Rabaul in December and fifteen aircraft, operating from Buna, New Guinea engaged in their first combat against the Allies in the last ten days of 1942.[51] The influx of Japanese army aircraft sustained Japanese air power in the south Pacific, despite months of attrition to Japanese naval aircraft. After the evacuation of Guadalcanal, the combined Japanese air strength in the combat area still exceeded 200 strike and fighter aircraft.[52] During this period, the Japanese army sent the 1st and 11th Air Divisions, totaling 100 fighters, from the 12th Air Regiment, the 10th Air Division of reconnaissance aircraft, and the 14th Air Division with its twenty-seven bombers to Rabaul.[53] On Guadalcanal, U.S. air power dwindled to just twenty-nine aircraft on 26 October, but had risen to 188 aircraft of all types by the end of November 1942.[54] Meanwhile, during this period, 5th Air Force's strength in SWPA remained nearly the same as it was in September and October, in part because of the priority the

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[50] *NARA 550:* Series: Organizational History Files, compiled 1959 - 1973, documenting the period 1931 – 1973, Box #10: Japanese Monographs Nos. 31-35, Folder: Japanese Monograph No. 32: Southeast Area Air Operations Record: "Monograph #32 (Army): Southeast Pacific Area Aerial Opn Record," 2.

[51] Ibid., 4.

[52] Ibid., 5.

[53] USSBS Interrogations: No. 485, 485-1.

[54] Miller, *Guadalcanal: The First Offensive*, 173-74.

Allies placed on the South Pacific Area, which enabled the increased numbers of aircraft on Guadalcanal.[55]

The materiel balance during the naval confrontations for this period still generally favored the Japanese. American industrial might began to assert itself at home, but had not yet titled the balance at the point of engagement in the Pacific.[56] In the two surface naval engagements that opened and closed the naval Battle of Guadalcanal, the Japanese outnumbered their American opponents significantly. Yet in the last battle, at Tassafaronga, the Americans employed a superior force. No carrier actions took place during this period of the war as the *Enterprise* remained the only operational, if damaged, American fleet carrier in the Pacific following Santa Cruz. The Japanese carriers had also suffered some damage at that battle, but the losses in their carrier aircraft had been heavier and with greater impact. As a result, the carrier actions that characterized mid to late 1942 temporarily ceased until both sides rebuilt their carrier fleets.

Technology remained essentially a constant, with some minor changes around the edges mostly favorable to the Allies. The P-38 aircraft that made their appearance earlier in the SWPA began to overcome their teething troubles and now also entered the fray on

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[55] *AFHRA.* Call # 168.1703-71, *The Fifth Air Force in War Against Japan*, 13.

[56] Admiral Ernest Joseph King, *Our Navy at War: A Report to the Secretary of the Navy, Covering Our Peacetime Navy and Our Wartime Navy and Including Combat Operations up to March 1, 1944* (Washington, D.C.: United States News, 1944), 9-11. American naval construction times decreased markedly once hostilities commenced. Battleship construction time reduced by 18% to thirty-two months, carrier construction time by over 50% to just over 15 months, submarines' by 50% to seven months, and destroyers' by 64% to just over five months. Indeed, the average monthly construction of U.S. destroyers in 1942 amounted to 6.75 ships per month. These numbers presaged the American materiel dominance that characterized the last two years of the Pacific War as, in 1943, the U.S. Navy stood on the cusp of a commissioning boom whose roots could be traced back to prewar planning. The Imperial Japanese Navy received one battleship, six carriers, two cruisers, nine destroyers, and twenty-two submarines from Japanese shipyards in 1942 (United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *Japanese Naval Shipbuilding*, 2.). But as time passed, the Japanese could not hope to match American construction.

Guadalcanal in late November 1942.[57] The P-38s fought their first real action against the

Japanese on 27 December 1942 over New Guinea and, while their contribution during

this period of the war remained limited, they represented a portent of things to come for

the Japanese.[58] Japanese naval and army pilots would come to respect the P-38, with

Lieutenant Kunie Iwashita, IJN, rating it the best American fighter he encountered during

the war, and Senior Private Guy Toko, IJA, rating it the second best American aircraft he

faced.[59] The American's also innovated with technology from the field, specifically with

modifications to the A-20 and B-25 bombers designed to make those platforms more

effective. As early as July and August 1942, Lieutenant Colonel Paul I. "Pappy" Gunn

had installed multiple .50 caliber machine guns in a modified nose on the A-20, making

the aircraft a devastating gun platform.[60] General Kenney liked the modification and

later, in November, ordered Gunn to undertake similar efforts with the B-25 aircraft in

the 5th Air Force.[61] Like the P-38, these modifications were destined to play a more

important role later in the conflict, but they demonstrated slight improvements in U.S.

aircraft technology late in 1942. The introduction of Japanese army aircraft also altered

the composition of Japanese airpower to a degree. Aircraft like the light twin-engine

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[57] Miller, *Guadalcanal: The First Offensive*, 173-74.

[58] *AFHRA*. Call # 168.7103-71 V3: "General George C. Kenney Diaries, Volume III, 1 November 1942-31 December 1942," entry for December 27, 1942.

[59] USSBS Interrogations: No. 496: Lieutenant Kunie IWASHITA, IJN; Subject: Japanese Naval Air Combat & Tactics; Date: 3 December 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 496-2. Interrogation No. 386: Senior Private Guy TOKO, IJA; Subject: Combat Techniques of the JAAF; Date: 20 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 496-3.

[60] Kenney, *The Saga of Pappy Gun*, 48-49.

[61] *AFHRA:* Call # 168.7103-71 V3: "General George C. Kenney Diaries, Volume III, 1 November 1942-31 December 1942," entry for November 19, 1942.

Kawasaki Ki-48 "Lily" and the nimble Nakajima Ki-43 "Oscar" fighter now rose to meet the Allied threat.[62] Yet these aircraft did not represent large steps forward in technology. The Oscar was even more nimble than the Zero, but it used the same engine, had lighter armament, and its lighter airframe restricted its speed.[63] But in the main, both sides continued to employ the same or similar aerial technology with which they had started both campaigns.

As in the air, technology on land and sea remained very similar. The weaponry employed by both sides did not undergo any major upgrades during this period. But at sea the Americans were beginning to demonstrate a better understanding of the employment of radar during a night surface engagement. Admiral Willis Lee, who led the Americans to victory during the battleship engagement that closed the naval Battle of Guadalcanal, attributed his success almost entirely to his possession of radar.[64] This advantage remained fleeting, however. The Battle of Tassafaronga later that month once again demonstrated that a smaller force of Japanese destroyers could still best a larger American force that contained cruisers and enjoyed the advantage of radar. American naval commanders were improving their employment of radar at an uneven rate; at Tassafaronga improper coordination allowed all the American cruisers to fire on the same enemy ship because of its prominent radar signature, leaving the remaining Japanese

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[62] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 574.

[63] Bergerud, *Fire in the Sky: The Air War in the South Pacific*, 219-21.

[64] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 486.

ships unmolested.[65] The battle represented a perfect example of the pitfalls of overreliance on radar technology by the U.S. Navy.

The resource competition remained a tight contest during this phase of the war. The Allies for the most part retained a slight advantage in manpower at the point of contact. In the air the Japanese sustained a large air force, while the American air forces on New Guinea and Guadalcanal grew and finally surpassed the Japanese. Japan retained materiel superiority on the seas, but that would change as 1943 progressed. Technologically, the Allies made minor gains but still fought with inferior torpedoes and with fighter aircraft that could not match the performance and range of the Japanese Zero. In Edward Drea's assessment, "In January 1943 Japan still held the preponderant air, naval, and ground strength in the Southwest Pacific and retained the strategic initiative in New Guinea."[66] The latter portion of his statement overstates the case, but his opening proposition rings true. By January 1943, Allied strength had grown significantly in the Solomons and South Pacific Area. Although the overall resource advantage remained marginally in the Japanese favor for this period, the strategic initiative passed to the Allies after the victories on Guadalcanal and in Papua, New Guinea.

Intelligence

Neither side shined in the intelligence arena during this four month period of the war. The Americans anticipated the Japanese activity around Guadalcanal prior to and during the naval Battle of Guadalcanal, and kept track of Japanese shipping in and around

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[65] Reardon, "Breaking the U.S. Navy's 'Gun Club' Mentality in the South Pacific," 547.

[66] Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War against Japan, 1942-1945*, 63.

the Solomon Islands.[67] Such intelligence allowed the Allies to meet and defeat the

Japanese push. American intelligence also precipitated the Battle of Tassafaronga when

the Americans, likely through radio decrypts, learned of the forthcoming Japanese

attempt to land supplies on Guadalcanal and maneuvered to block the attempt.[68] But U.S.

estimates of Japanese strength on the ground in the Buna and Gona areas left much to be

desired. The intelligence summary for General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area on

27/28 November 1942 estimated a total of 3,000 Japanese troops in that area, when in

reality the Japanese had more than 6,000.[69] MacArthur's intelligence chief, General

Willoughby, also underestimated the Japanese ability to reinforce the Buna area with

fresh troops.[70] These underestimates contributed to the unexpectedly long and bloody

action required to finally clear the area of Japanese forces. But the Japanese remained

largely reactionary to Allied moves, unable to anticipate Allied operations through their

murky intelligence picture. When the Allies landed forces at Oro Bay to assist in the

attack against Buna, the first Japanese knowledge of the operation came just two hours

before the landing when a patrol plane spotted the Allied convoy in the bay.[71]

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[67] *NHHC 505:* Collection 505: Papers of FADM Chester W. Nimitz, USN 1902-1976, Box 2: Command Summary Fleet Admiral C.W. Nimitz U.S. Navy, Book Two: 1 September 1942-31 December 1942, Volumes 1, 2, Pages 862-1262. War Plans CincPac Files: Subject: Captain Steele's "Running Estimates and Summary" covering the period 1 September 1942-31 December 1942, 1163-1168.

[68] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 504.

[69] *NARA 496:*Series: Organization of the Allied Intelligence Bureau 1942-45, Box #469: G-2 Admin: Records Relating to the Organization of the Allied Intelligence Bureau 1942-1945, Folder: Notes on New Guinea Operations Jan 43: "Advanced Echelon General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area, Military Intelligence Section, General Staff: I-III: Daily Summary of Enemy Intelligence, IV: G-2 Estimate of the Enemy Situation, V: Special Intelligence – Secret, No. 250x, Date Nove. 27/28/42," 3.

[70] Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War against Japan, 1942-1945*, 51-52.

[71] Ibid., 49.

In terms of security, the Allies generally protected their operations while the Japanese had mixed results. Japanese code encryption failures continued to reveal much to the Allies. U.S. Navy "Ultra" intercepts detected the forthcoming influx of Japanese army airplanes to Rabaul in mid December, and at the same time detected the move of Japanese troops to Madang on New Guinea.[72] But the Japanese shielded their most important operation, the evacuation of Guadalcanal, quite effectively. Until the last Japanese soldiers had departed Guadalcanal in early February 1943, the Americans believed the Japanese were *reinforcing* the island and Admiral Nimitz praised Japanese skill in successfully masking the operation and saving the majority of their remaining forces.[73] This evacuation helped the Japanese to avoid an even greater debacle and represents an important security achievement, yet given their other security failures the Japanese still ceded an advantage to the Allies.

As in the previous period, the Allies bested Japan in overall intelligence between November 1942 and February 1943. The Allies generally held a better appreciation of the situation and could and often did counter Japanese moves. Like the Germans in Europe, the Japanese in the Pacific never realized the full extent to which their communications security had failed. Although not as beneficial to the Allies as at Midway, communications intelligence still contributed to the better Allied appreciation of the situation in the south Pacific.

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[72] Ibid., 55-56.

[73] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 597.

Strategic Acumen

The strategic decisions of the previous period had tied both combatants to the dual campaigns in the southern Pacific. But this phase of both campaigns caused strategic reevaluations resulting in some dynamic changes.

The Japanese had entered the period planning to retake Guadalcanal and then to build up strength using an influx of army units and army aircraft to settle the issue in the south Pacific. After their push on Guadalcanal in mid November 1942 failed, the Japanese decided to occupy other strategic areas in the Solomons and to secure their lodgments in New Guinea.[74] The Japanese army and navy would cooperate to eliminate Allied airpower on Guadalcanal and then retake that island as well as Tulagi.[75] Plans changed over the course of late November and December resulting in the Japanese decision to withdraw from Guadalcanal on 31 December 1942. The Japanese estimate of the situation in January 1943 anticipated future Allied moves against Rabaul and recognized that air and sea superiority belonged to the Allies over Guadalcanal and eastern New Guinea.[76] The Japanese recognized the decision to give up on Guadalcanal and also in eastern New Guinea represented a major shift had occurred in the war in the

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[74] *NARA 550:* Series: Organizational History Files, compiled 1959 - 1973, documenting the period 1931 – 1973, Box #11: Japanese Monographs Nos. 41 and 45, Folder: Japanese Monograph No. 45: Imperial General Headquarters Army High Command Record, 69.

[75] Ibid., 69. See also *NARA 550:* Series: Organizational History Files, compiled 1959 - 1973, documenting the period 1931 – 1973, Box #5: Imperial General Headquarters Navy Directives, Folder: Imperial General Headquarters Navy Directives: Numbers 1 to 182 (11/05/1941-12/29/1942), 138-145: "Imperial General Headquarters, Navy General Staff Directive No. 159 Appendix: Army-Navy Central Agreement Concerning South Pacific Area Operations, 18 Nov 42."

[76] *NARA 550:* Series: Organizational History Files, compiled 1959 - 1973, documenting the period 1931 – 1973, Box #11: Japanese Monographs Nos. 41 and 45, Folder: Japanese Monograph No. 45: Imperial General Headquarters Army High Command Record, 75-6.

south Pacific: "By this new plan, the Japanese force yielded the offensive and assumed defensive positions in the Solomons area. It was a major turning point of the war in this area.[77] Once again, the Allies had foiled Japanese plans.

Yet American plans had not gone exactly smoothly either. Faulty intelligence estimates led MacArthur and his command to expect rapid occupation of the Buna/Gona/Sanananda area on New Guinea, yet those operations lasted from November 1942 well into January 1943, and at great cost.[78] But the Allies eventually seized those positions and evicted the Japanese from Guadalcanal and secured that island as well. The Allies therefore met their objectives for this period.

Surprise did not shape this period of the two campaigns. Neither side conceived of, nor executed, any operations designed to achieve strategic surprise along the lines of Pearl Harbor, Midway, or the amphibious landings at Guadalcanal. Both remained committed to the bitter struggles of attrition on Guadalcanal and New Guinea, resulting in warfare over predictable terrain, and in the surrounding seas and air lanes.

The Americans missed one potential opportunity to deal further significant damage to the Japanese. The Japanese expected heavy losses in the evacuation of Guadalcanal and anticipated removing approximately 5,000 soldiers, but in the end were able to evacuate more than twice that number to fight another day.[79] Had the Americans pressed the Japanese more closely on Guadalcanal in January and February, they likely could have inflicted greater loss. But as Nimitz noted, effective Japanese security for the

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[77] Ibid., 77.

[78] Eichelberger and Mackaye, *Jungle Road to Tokyo*, 41.

[79] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 595.

evacuation made the Americans fear a renewed Japanese offensive and to advance cautiously in the face of a potentially growing threat. This missed opportunity, however, did not negate the victory on Guadalcanal.

The Allies clearly came out ahead of the Japanese with regard to strategic acumen in this period. The Allies better matched plans to reality and achieved them. Neither side gained any advantage from surprise. The Allies missed a small opportunity to inflicted greater damage on the Japanese army at Guadalcanal, but this did not represent a decisive element in the campaign.

Combat Effectiveness

On land, the two sides largely switched roles during this period. The Allies transitioned to the attack on both New Guinea and Guadalcanal, while the Japanese reverted to the tactical defensive. Allied effectiveness was mixed. The Allied forces around Buna struggled to defeat a well entrenched, but numerically inferior foe. The green American 32d Infantry Division, in particular, struggled against the Japanese. The report from Colonel H.F. Handy, U.S. Army, who observed the early stages of the Buna operation, claimed the U.S. forces underestimated the Japanese soldiers' capabilities in defense and noted that the American division had not had any artillery support for its attack against the Japanese fortified line.[80] Another report on Buna, from Colonel Harry Knight, cited training deficiencies, overreliance on artillery or mortar support, and

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[80] *NARA 337:* Series: Intelligence Reports, compiled 1943 – 1946, Box #51, Folder 5: Handy Obs Report: "Memo To: The Commanding General, Army Ground Forces, Washington, D.C., Subject: Report of Military Observer Southwest Pacific Theater of Operations, Col. H.F. Handy, September 26 to December 23, 1942," 4, 11.

leadership "from the rear" as strong inhibitors to the American performance around Buna in late 1942.[81] On Guadalcanal, the U.S. Army troops involved in the closing battles on the island moved slowly and methodically, in part because of terrain and logistics and in part because they remained wary that another Japanese offensive lay just around the corner.[82] Nevertheless, in the end, the Allied forces achieved their missions on both New Guinea and Guadalcanal while the Japanese forces failed.

A large part of the Japanese failure and Allied success traced back to their respective abilities to sustain their combat power at the front. Japanese Lieutenant General Shuichi Miyazaki, Chief of Staff of the 17th Army during the Guadalcanal campaign, revealed Japan's logistical struggles in his post war report titled "Personal Experiences During the Solomons Campaign." Miyazaki stated that as early as October and November only 20 percent of the supplies sent from Rabaul could make it to Guadalcanal owing to U.S. air superiority and the vulnerability of Japanese transport vessels to air attack.[83] In his estimate, the supply shortage caused the Japanese defeat, as approximately one third of the Japanese forces on Guadalcanal died of starvation.[84] The situation around Buna deteriorated in similar fashion for the Japanese. The rice ration for the Imperial Army's soldiers around Sanananda steadily dwindled in December 1942 and

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[81] *NARA 337:* Series: Intelligence Reports, compiled 1943 – 1946, Box #51, Folder 6: Knight Obs Report: "Memo To: The Commanding General, Army Ground Forces, Washington, D.C., Subject: Report of Colonel Harry Knight, Cavalry, covering observations in the Southwest Pacific Theatre, during the period October 16 to December 30, 1942," Appendix B, 15.

[82] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 597.

[83] USSBS Interrogations: Lieutenant General Shuichi Miyazaki, Chief of Staff of the 17th Army, "Personal Experiences During the Solomons Campaign," Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #5, 4-10. Attempts to sustain the force with destroyer transports, barges, and even submarines failed to meet Japanese needs.

[84] Ibid., 8-11.

January 1943, from the normal twenty-eight ounces per day, down to ten ounces, and then to two ounces until the food ran out.[85] By comparison, following the naval Battle of Guadalcanal, American sea and air control enabled supplies to flow to the island. The supply situation for the Allies on northeast New Guinea remained challenging and relied predominantly on airlift, later augmented by sealift. According to General Kenney, the food supply situation for the troops around Buna in late November balanced on a knife's edge as adverse weather hampered airlift, but once the weather cleared the situation immediately eased.[86] Whatever supply struggles the Allies experienced on New Guinea and Guadalcanal, they paled in comparison to the levels of deprivation experienced by their Japanese counterparts.

On land, therefore, the Americans proved more combat effective than the Japanese. Although the Japanese held off superior Allied forces on New Guinea for several months and deftly covered their evacuation on Guadalcanal, their skillful defensive tactics could not overcome their sustainment deficiencies. The air and sea war also contributed to those logistical struggles.

The Allies also edged the Japanese at sea. The Americans clearly won the naval Battle of Guadalcanal which paid handsome dividends: the Americans landed substantial reinforcements on Guadalcanal, while the Japanese landed only a few; the U.S. Navy traded two cruisers and seven destroyers for two Japanese battleships, one cruiser, three

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[85] Milner, *Victory in Papua*, 346.

[86] *AFHRA:* Call # 168.7103-71 V3: "General George C. Kenney Diaries, Volume III, 1 November 1942-31 December 1942," entries for November 20 and 21, 1942.

destroyers, and twelve transports.[87] At Tassafaronga, superior Japanese night fighting

tactics once again inflicted an embarrassing defeat on a superior U.S. force, but the

Japanese failed to complete their mission and to land supplies on Guadalcanal. Thus the

Japanese squandered their tactical success in that battle.

The first naval battle in November proved to be a tipping point with serious

implications for the sustainment of forces on Guadalcanal, and therefore for possession of

the island. Following the naval Battle of Guadalcanal, the Japanese found transportation

of troops and supplies to the island by destroyers and slower landing barges too difficult

and costly, mostly because of Allied air superiority, which often found and attacked the

barges while simultaneously whittling down Japanese air strength at Rabaul.[88] The mid

November surge had failed to give Japan sea control and the Japanese navy had not

eliminated the Cactus Air Force through either ship bombardment or air action.

Control of the air was key to the battles on both land and sea. In the struggle for

Guadalcanal, the best estimates for comparative air losses between 16 November 1942

and 9 February 1943 once again come from historian Richard Frank. Frank estimates the

Allies lost 134 aircraft to all causes in this period, while Japanese losses amounted to

176-77 aircraft to all causes.[89] Taken with Frank's numbers for the period between 7

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[87] van der Vat, *The Pacific Campaign: World War II, the U.S.-Japanese Naval War, 1941-1945*, 237.

[88] USSBS Interrogations: No. 467: Commander Tadashi YAMAMOTO, IJN, and Captain Toshikazu OHMAE, IJN; Subject: SOLOMON Islands Actions 1942-43; Date: 20 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 467-6.

[89] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 610-11.

August and 15 November 1942, the Americans lost 615 aircraft to Japan's 682 for the entire Guadalcanal campaign.[90]

The Allies won the air war during this period, despite the relative parity in aircraft losses. Although aircraft expenditures in the Guadalcanal campaign were closely matched for both combatants, the Allies secured air superiority over the island, inflicted damage against both the Japanese navy and army, and more decisively, rendered the costs of continued Japanese supply and reinforcement of Guadalcanal prohibitive. This latter consequence of Allied air superiority directly reduced Japan's ability to sustain its forces on the island. By comparison, the Japanese could neither isolate the Americans on the Guadalcanal, nor destroy their land based air forces there, and as a result gradually ceded air superiority. The same tale echoed in New Guinea, but with a twist. During this period, 5th Air Force repeatedly struck at the Japanese defenses in and around Buna and Gona, albeit with limited effectiveness. But, as at Guadalcanal, the key contribution the Allied air force made was the isolation of the Japanese garrison, which increased in effectiveness after November when the Allies opened the Dobodora airbase adjacent to Buna.[91] The twist in New Guinea was that, while the Allied air forces isolated the Japanese from their supplies, the same air forces played a major role in sustaining the Allied ground force.

Another aspect of the air war deserves mention. The opening of Dobodura airfield by the Allies, so close to the front and during the battle, demonstrated the Allied

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[90] Ibid., 611.

[91] Bergerud, *Fire in the Sky: The Air War in the South Pacific*, 589-90.

ability to rapidly construct forward airbases. Airbases such as Dobodura and those

constructed earlier around Milne Bay laid the foundation for future Allied success in the

Papuan campaign because they enabled more effective employment of the Allied air

forces. The Japanese understood the concept as well, but did not prove as successful at

air base construction. Lieutenant General Kawabe, IJA, Chief of the General Affairs

Section of the Army Bureau of Aeronautics until April 1943, praised the American ability

to rapidly build supporting airbases with good maintenance support, while lamenting

Japan's inability to do the same.[92] This inability greatly hampered the JAAF logistical

network and increased Japanese aircraft operational losses before they even reached the

combat zone.[93] The Japanese constructed a rudimentary airfield at Buna following their

initial landings in August and built Buin airfield on Bougainville in October to support

the fight against Guadalcanal.[94] Yet these airfields did not significantly alter the course

of those campaigns.

In terms of overall combat effectiveness, the Allies came out ahead in this period.

The Japanese soldiers proved very stubborn and skillful in defense, often demonstrating

superior tactical skill to that of the inexperienced American troops facing them, but the

Japanese army could not sustain its forces. The story at sea contributed to this outcome.

Again, the Japanese often demonstrated better tactical skill at nighttime surface

engagements, although the Americans at times could best them, but the Japanese often

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[92] USSBS Interrogations: No. 447: Lieutenant General KAWABE, IJA; Subject: Overall Planning and Policies; Date: 26 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 447-3.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 295.

did not complete their mission even after a tactical victory. This contributed to the Americans' ability to achieve sea superiority over the Japanese, which then allowed for the isolation of Japanese troops on Guadalcanal and the shielding of Henderson Field and the Cactus Air Force from naval bombardment. Finally, both sides sustained strong air forces, and neither side could eliminate the other's air power, but the Allies employed their air force more effectively. They achieved air superiority over Guadalcanal and over eastern New Guinea, which enabled them to support their own ground and sea forces, while helping to isolate the Japanese garrisons at both locations.

Chance

Chance did not affect this period of the war to the level it had in the previous period and at Midway, but a couple of incidents deserve mention. Two examples occurred in the first surface engagement of the naval Battle of Guadalcanal. Chance and confusion determined the very character of the engagement. The commander of the American force, Admiral Daniel Callaghan, lacked the newest radar on his flagship and entered the fray with a confused picture of the tactical situation.[95] Callaghan hesitated during the opening moments of the meeting engagement as he tried to sort out the situation, but this delay cost him the temporal advantage gained through early radar detection of the onrushing Japanese force.[96] As a result, instead of a stand-off gunnery and torpedo engagement, this battle devolved into a melee with both fleets intertwined

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[95] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, 125.

[96] Ibid.

amongst each other, with every ship effectively fighting independently.[97] Such a fight

provided some advantages to the Americans because the two Japanese battleships

outgunned and outranged the American cruisers. A fight at such close ranges somewhat

mitigated this Japanese advantage as well as that of the Japanese torpedoes. The

American fleet suffered greater damage, but the Japanese commander, Admiral Hiroaki

Abe, decided to disengage and cancel his planned bombardment of Henderson Field, a

decision that later resulted in his forced retirement from the Japanese navy.[98] Similarly,

at the Battle of Tassafaronga, Japanese Admiral Tanaka, despite savaging an American

task force, failed to complete his mission to land supplies on Guadalcanal.

Neither of these examples demonstrates a decisive advantage to either side in

terms of chance during this period. At best, they amounted to a marginal advantage for

the Allies. More significantly for the campaign as a whole, the Japanese naval

commanders demonstrated a consistent pattern that had started at the Battle of Savo

Island. Following a clash of surface forces around Guadalcanal, Japanese commanders

often abandoned their primary mission regardless of the outcome of the initial

engagement. This differed from the opening phase of the war in which, despite surface

engagements with Allied task forces of ABDACOM, the Japanese had often, though not

always, followed through with their primary mission after the clash. Reasons for the

demonstrated caution are unclear, but one may speculate that the results of Coral Sea and

Midway, as well as the fluid situation around Guadalcanal may have introduced a

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[97] Ibid.

[98] Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, 461.

measure of doubt in the Japanese naval commanders; doubt not present when the tide of Japanese victories ran high in the opening months of the war.

Conclusion

The Allies clearly seized the strategic initiative from Japan with the victories on Papua, New Guinea and Guadalcanal. Resources during this period still marginally favored the Japanese, but by early 1943 that began to change. In terms of intelligence, the Allies had once again better matched their plans to realities and had more effectively balanced ends, ways, and means. Allied intelligence was not perfect, indeed it was quite faulty around Buna, but the Allies generally maintained a better estimate of the situation and operated more effectively based on their more accurate appreciation of the situation. The comparison of combat effectiveness between the combatants remains very interesting. The Japanese fought very well on land in the tactical defense, often besting their Allied foes. The Japanese navy also continued to display its mastery of night surface engagement tactics. Yet these tactical advantages did not translate directly into superior combat effectiveness. The Japanese struggled to sustain their forces, a key reason for their failures on Guadalcanal and New Guinea. The Japanese navy squandered tactical victories and yielded sea control. In the air, the Allies demonstrated better combat effectiveness across the board and gained air superiority that also contributed to Japanese struggles on the land and sea. Thus despite occasional tactical superiority, the Japanese on the whole remained less combat effective. The Allies fought adequately on land and sea, and fought well in the air, but more importantly they sustained their forces

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to a much better degree than did Japan. Finally, chance at best granted the Allies a

marginal advantage in the naval battles around Guadalcanal. Taken together, advantages

in intelligence, strategic acumen, and overall combat effectiveness enabled the Allies to

wrest the strategic initiative from Japan despite a relative resource balance and the latter's

tactical proficiency in land defense and nighttime surface engagements at sea.

The Pacific War would now chart a difference course with the Allies in the

driver's seat. The campaigns on Guadalcanal and the Papua, New Guinea ended within a

month of each other. With these victories, the Allies gained more than just territory in

the Solomon Islands and New Guinea, and more than a reprieve for Australia. No longer

would Japan dictate the course of the war. Following February 1943, the Allies, in the

main, determined the tempo and the focus of operations in the Pacific War.

Less than two weeks after the victory on Guadalcanal, the U. S. forces occupied

the Russell Islands, just northwest of Guadalcanal, their next baby step up the Solomon

Islands chain. In early March, Allied air forces in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea

destroyed a large Japanese shipping convoy carrying reinforcements and supplies for the

remaining Japanese positions in northern New Guinea, an indication of the difficulties

Japan would face while implementing its new strategy in the southern Pacific.

The Allies struggled to come to an agreement over Pacific strategy and the

associated dedication of resources at the Casablanca Conference in January 1943.

Following that conference, the U.S. JCS crafted a directive on 28 March 1943 for the

direction of the war in the Pacific: MacArthur and Halsey were to continue to establish

advanced air bases, move north and west along the coast of New Guinea, and occupy the

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Solomons as far north as southern Bougainville with the objectives of inflicting losses upon the enemy, retaining the initiative, and preparing for the seizure of the entire Bismarck Archipelago.[99] The Allies would successfully proceed along those lines in the coming months, culminating with the invasions of Bougainville and Tarawa in November 1943, with the latter opening the central Pacific offensive that navy planners had envisioned before the war.

The dual campaigns in eastern New Guinea and Guadalcanal also had another important effect on the later stages of the war. These battles and the follow on actions in the central Solomons and western New Guinea throughout 1943 severely depleted the Japanese naval air arm and army air force, which hampered Japan's ability to counter the Allied offensive in the central Pacific.[100] Beginning with the Battle of Midway, slowly accelerating in the rest of 1942, and then drastically accelerating in 1943, the experience of Japanese naval pilots steadily decreased.[101] The JAAF also suffered similarly after its introduction to the southern Pacific in 1943. According to Lieutenant General Kawabe, the army lost its best pilots defending these areas, drastically reducing its ability to resist Allied efforts in later campaigns on western New Guinea and in the Philippine Islands.[102] Taken together with the losses inflicted on the Japanese land forces and on the Japanese

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[99] John Miller, *Cartwheel: The Reduction of Rabaul*, United States Army in World War II: The War in the Pacific. (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Dept. of the Army, 1959), 19.

[100] USSBS Interrogations: No. 139: Commander Chika Taka NAKAJIMA, IJN; Subject: GILBERT-MARSHALLS Operations. Naval Strategic Planning; Date: 21 October 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #5, 139-3.

[101] USSBS Interrogations: No. 444: Capt Takeshi MIENO, IJN; Subject: Japanese Naval Air Personnel and Training; Date: 26 November 1945, Tokyo; Microfilm Publication M1654, Reel #9, 444-1.

[102] USSBS Interrogations: No. 447, 447-4.

navy, the cost of these campaigns did not bode well for Japan. The Japanese war

machine of late 1943 to 1945 could not match its predecessor of 1941 and 1942.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

During the eight month period between July 1942 and February 1943, the Allies and Japanese engaged in two concurrent campaigns in the Southern Pacific; campaigns that resulted in attritional warfare for the possession of strategic locations in the Solomon Islands and in Papua, New Guinea. But there was more than territory at stake. The outcome of these unforeseen struggles determined who would possess the strategic initiative in the conflict and, therefore, would wield greater influence over the future course of the war. Neither side's prewar planning envisioned warfare on this scale in the southern Pacific, but the early course of the war and the rapid Japanese successes at limited cost altered the strategic calculus for both combatants. The Japanese felt they now had the ability to extend their perimeter further to better secure their gains and isolate Australia. The Americans felt they had to react to the unforeseen tide of Japanese conquest and, specifically, had to protect the lines of communication between Hawaii and Australia. Thus the operations in the southern Pacific, originally envisioned by both sides as limited operations preceding the anticipated decisive naval battle in the central Pacific, instead evolved into the decisive effort in 1942 and 1943. Indeed, combat continued in and around the Solomon Islands, New Guinea, and New Britain well into 1944, while the Allies' central Pacific drive did not commence until November 1943, opening with the bloody battle of Tarawa. But Allies had held the strategic initiative for

nine months by the time of the invasion of Tarawa. They retained that initiative until the end of the war in September 1945.

Strategic initiative in war represents the ability to influence the course of the conflict by waging those battles, operations, and campaigns most suited to the accomplishment of one's own political ends, while avoiding those detrimental to the same. Possession of strategic initiative implies greater influence but not total control over the course of events in war. The importance of strategic initiative is that it grants the possessor greater flexibility and more options for future operations. Rather than simply reacting to the impulses of the foe, the possessor of strategic initiative enjoys more freedom to pursue those aims and objectives suited to its goals in the conflict. Yet the caveat must be that more freedom also implies more responsibility, and the need for great diligence when developing a strategy. Choosing the wrong strategy could cede the initiative and possibly result in defeat, as the Japanese discovered after the Battle of Midway. In many ways, possession of the initiative could complicate the strategists' task because of the presumed increase in options. Which course of action would be best? Hypothetically, it would seem that the side that possesses the strategic initiative at the end of the conflict is more likely to win the war, but such a conclusion requires more comparative analysis than just the mid phase of the Pacific War. There is no doubt that the Allies, having seized the initiative in early 1943, held it throughout the remainder of the Pacific War and leveraged it all the way to victory, but there may yet be examples to the contrary in other conflicts.

Possession of strategic initiative, in turn, results from a myriad of factors. This study has identified five primary areas of comparison among combatants that may contribute in varying degrees to the possession of strategic initiative: resources, intelligence, strategic acumen, combat effectiveness, and chance. Political will is another caveat in that, at times, political judgment may preclude the possession of strategic initiative or, to the contrary, may demand an attempt to seize it. One cannot assume that both sides are fully politically engaged in a conflict at all times. This list is not exhaustive given all the factors that affect and contribute to strategy, but it provides a useful construct for analyzing shifts in possession of strategic initiative during a given conflict. Understanding how these elements influenced possession of the initiative and how they interacted with one another may assist in gaining a greater understanding of the causes, course, and outcomes of a conflict and the thought processes of the combatants.

Japan seized and held the strategic initiative in the opening months of World War II in the Pacific. The Japanese leveraged their resource advantage, based on materiel superiority and technology, as well as their better intelligence collection and security. Their initial strategic judgment greatly exceeded that of the Allies as they achieved strategic surprise and matched their plans with reality to rapidly achieve their aims. In terms of combat effectiveness, the Japanese manifested superior tactical and operational skill while also sustaining their forces, and they bested the Allies on land, sea, and in the air. Chance, in the form of human capacity to deal with the unknown, favored the Allies at this point, with Nagumo's failure to launch a third wave to destroy the dry docks and oil reserves at Pearl Harbor and with the absence of any U.S. aircraft carriers in the

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harbor during the attack. Japan manifested strong political will by launching the war of conquest.   Thus with the political will to wage a war of conquest, the Japanese seized and held the strategic initiative with advantages in four of the five comparative categories; as a result, the war proceeded according to their plans. The Allied advantage in chance could not overcome their other deficits, but the continued existence of the American aircraft carriers and the facilities at Pearl Harbor played a key role for the Allies later in the Pacific War.

The Japanese received a rebuke at the Battle of the Coral Sea and endured a disaster with the Battle of Midway in June 1942. At the latter battle, the Japanese had a significant, seemingly insurmountable, resource advantage. But the Americans enjoyed a large advantage in intelligence that enabled them to make superior strategic judgments. This time the Americans achieved the surprise upon which the Japanese had based their entire plan. During the battle, both sides demonstrated mixed operational performance. The Japanese operational plan divided their fleet and squandered their resource superiority, but the Japanese still coordinated multiple aircraft carrier strikes better than the Americans. Tactically, the Japanese pilots demonstrated remarkable skill and on an individual level bested the Americans, but the Americans were skilled fliers in their own right and performed well enough tactically to defeat the Japanese. Meanwhile, American aircraft carriers, specifically the *Yorktown,* demonstrated endurance and survivability that the four Japanese carriers sunk at Midway could not match. The Americans, in this battle, proved more combat effective. Finally, in terms of chance, the Americans came out ahead once again. While Admiral Nagumo struggled to operate when plans went

awry and Japanese search efforts suffered multiple failures, American pilots demonstrated individual initiative that serendipitously produced a devastating multi-axis air attack on the Japanese carrier fleet. This battle did not transfer the strategic initiative to Allies, but it did even the naval odds a bit in the Pacific and allowed the Allies to begin to vie for the initiative.

Following Midway, the Japanese believed they still held the strategic initiative and aimed to exercise it through continued expansion in the southern Pacific. Although the Japanese cancelled the occupation of Midway and the planned invasions of Fiji-Samoa-New Caledonia, they still envisioned isolating Australia through the presumably less ambitious plans of advance in eastern New Guinea and the lower Solomon Islands. The Allies continued to react to Japanese moves and hoped to take advantage of the Midway victory with a counteroffensive operation designed to protect the vital lifeline to Australia. The strategic equilibrium created by Midway granted the Allies greater freedom of action and allowed them to vie for the initiative with their counteroffensive. These calculations set the stage for the epic struggles on Papua, New Guinea and on Guadalcanal, struggles that ultimately ended with the Allies in possession of the strategic initiative.

The first phase of these campaigns lasted from July to the end of October 1942 and encapsulated some dramatic, high intensity confrontations on land, sea, and in the air. The resource gap at this stage had narrowed, but the Japanese still retained an edge. The Allies, as they had a Midway, bested the Japanese in intelligence collection and security. The Allies also demonstrated better strategic acumen by matching objectives with

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capabilities, although the landing on Guadalcanal left no safety margin. The Japanese, however, did not achieve any of their objectives this phase. The Allies also achieved strategic surprise with their landing at Guadalcanal and, in general, the Allies recognized and exploited opportunities better than the Japanese. Once again, at sea and in the air the Japanese often, although not always, demonstrated superior tactical skill. On the ground, however, Allied soldiers performed better. On the whole, the Allies again demonstrated superior combat effectiveness by achieving their aims even in the face of tactical setbacks and by sustaining their forces more successfully. Four out of six significant examples of chance and human capacity to operate in the unknown favored the Allies, with the most important being Admiral Mikawa's failure to attack the Allied invasion fleet after the Battle of Savo Island. Had he done so, the Guadalcanal campaign and the course of the Pacific War would likely look very different to the historian today.

The most significant example of the influence of political will occurred during this period. President Roosevelt clung doggedly to the Allies' grand strategy of "Germany First" and refused to divert any but the bare minimum of resources to the Pacific to counter the Japanese threat to Australia. If he had diverted more personnel and materiel, at the expense of the planned invasion of North Africa, the precarious Allied resources situation in the south Pacific would have significantly eased. The Guadalcanal and New Guinea campaigns may then have followed a different course, strategic initiative in the Pacific may have shifted sooner, and the war would again look very different to today's historian. But Roosevelt aimed to seize the strategic initiative in the European Theater of operations first.

The period ended with the strategic initiative in the Pacific clearly up for grabs. Neither side had more influence over operations as both were locked into the bloody and costly campaigns on New Guinea and in the Solomons. The Allies had leveraged advantages in intelligence, strategic acumen, combat effectiveness, and chance to overcome the Japanese advantage in resources and keep the strategic initiative in the "disputed" column. Allied political will, in the form of Roosevelt, delayed a possible full blown transfer of the initiative to the Allies earlier in the war, but that shift came with the denouement of both campaigns in the next period of the war. The Japanese reaction to the campaigns in the Solomons and New Guinea, with the heavy commitment of the navy and the growing commitment of the army demonstrated that Japanese political will remained strong.

Between November 1942 and February 1943, the Allies defeated the Japanese in eastern New Guinea and evicted them from Guadalcanal. In so doing, they wrested control of the strategic initiative for the first time in the Pacific War. This period did not have as many named naval battles as the previous period, but the fighting remained constant and grueling. On land, the Allies generally switched to the tactical offensive while the Japanese troops reverted to the defensive. The resource gap closed even further. The Allies continued to demonstrate superior, but not perfect, intelligence and better security. Neither side achieved any strategic surprises, but the Allies still revealed better judgment by matching ends, ways, and means. Combat effectiveness followed a similar pattern. At sea during night engagements and on land in defense, the Japanese possessed excellent tactical skills, but the Allies did better at actually completing their

missions and sustained their combat power in superior fashion as well. Allied control of the air helped gain control of the seas around Guadalcanal, which in turn effectively cut off the Japanese garrison on the island. Around Buna, Allied air superiority accomplished the same goal, effectively isolating that Japanese bastion. The Japanese fought remarkably well despite starvation and unimaginable deprivations, but their effectiveness necessarily waned. Chance did not intercede in this phase to any significant degree. With advantages in intelligence, strategic acumen, and combat effectiveness, the Allies finally seized the strategic initiative. They leveraged the strategic initiative offensively in 1943 by continuing operations in the Solomons and on New Guinea, indirectly targeting the strong Japanese bastion at Rabaul. By the end of 1943, the Allies had enough resources to open a second offensive with a drive across the central Pacific while General MacArthur continued his push across the southern Pacific. The Japanese, meanwhile, did their best to counter Allied moves, but after February 1943 they could no longer determine the course of the war.

How did the elements interact with regard to possession of strategic initiative? Resources obviously represent a critical component of war making capacity. Generally, having more resources eases the strategist's task by allowing for more options and flexibility. Yet having more resources than one's opponent does not guarantee one the possession of the strategic initiative. The Japanese had resource superiority for much of this study, yet they nevertheless lost the strategic initiative by February 1943. At Midway, the Japanese navy's proclivity for division of forces mitigated its resource advantage and contributed to its defeat. The Japanese can be faulted in a similar manner

in August 1942, when they divided their land forces between Kokoda, Milne Bay, and Guadalcanal and leaving them at a disadvantage in each location. A more concentrated effort in one location may have yielded better results. Thus strategic decisions and operational practices could easily mitigate or eliminate resource advantages.

Intelligence was a key indicator of who held the initiative or why possession of the initiative shifted in each phase. The Japanese enjoyed an intelligence advantage at the beginning of the war and held the initiative. The Americans evened the odds by leveraging their intelligence advantage at Midway. The Allies continued to hold an intelligence advantage in the last two periods of this study. In the first period from July to October 1942, the initiative as it remained in dispute. In the second period between November 1942 and February 1943, the Allies finally seized the initiative. This represents a strong correlation between superior intelligence and possession of the initiative, with the brief battle of Midway being the exception.

The intelligence competition also speaks to the intelligence organizations employed by both sides. During the first phase of the war, the Japanese intelligence system worked quite well. Yet the Japanese had more time to develop their intelligence for their opening moves than they would once the fighting commenced and the situation grew more fluid. The opening Japanese moves also occurred in areas closer and more familiar to Japan or to deployed Japanese forces, with the exception of Hawaii. Thus it was easier to gather a more accurate picture in these areas than would be the case after the perimeter had expanded further from the Japanese home islands. Once the Japanese operated further from home, in the less familiar reaches of the Solomon Islands and New

Guinea, and had to collect and gather intelligence under the pressures of war, the Japanese system demonstrated its weaknesses. Human intelligence dropped off and the Japanese struggled with radio intelligence and codebreaking. Furthermore, the Japanese army and navy never created a joint intelligence center, and the army commanders on Guadalcanal could not even get good intelligence on their American foes from their higher echelon based in Rabaul. As a result, Japanese intelligence demonstrated much less fidelity than that of their Allied opponents. This, in turn, hampered strategic decisions and the conduct of operations.

The Allies improved their intelligence capabilities and performance as the war progressed. The U.S. Army and Navy shared intelligence better than their Japanese counterparts. The Allies also did a better job sharing intelligence among nations. MacArthur set up several agencies that integrated intelligence from various services and Allied nations. The South Pacific Area and the Southwest Pacific Area also coordinated and communicated with regard to intelligence. On the whole, the Allies practiced their intelligence activities in a more joint and combined fashion than did the Japanese. In addition, the Allies in the Pacific, particularly the U.S. Navy, often performed brilliantly with respect to radio intelligence, which granted huge advantages at Coral Sea and Midway. When the Japanese changed their codes after Midway, much of the information from this source dried up, but the Allies continued to leverage radio traffic analysis to garner important information on the whereabouts and possible activities of the Imperial Japanese Navy. While waging campaigns in the Solomon Islands and on New Guinea, the Allies also benefited tremendously from human intelligence provided by the

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coastwatcher network, and developed a robust photo intelligence capability as well. With a more integrated and comprehensive intelligence effort, the Allies produced a far better intelligence product and operated with a much clearer picture than did their Japanese foe.

Yet combatants must properly utilize intelligence for it to be effective and contribute to the war effort. In every period here examined, the side with an intelligence advantage made better strategic decisions. The Japanese excelled in the beginning, but the Allies did much better at Midway, New Guinea, and on Guadalcanal. A little knowledge went a long way and enabled commanders to calculate their moves more effectively. Proper security also assisted with the achievement of strategic surprise on several occasions, such as at Pearl Harbor, Midway, and Guadalcanal. The Japanese exhibited superb strategic acumen during their opening moves, but following that phase the Allies consistently made better strategic judgments, typically supported with better intelligence.

Intelligence, however, is not the sole explanation for the Allies' strategic superiority. Once again, the decision making organizations employed by each side shaped their strategies. The Japanese operated by making Army-Navy central agreements that stipulated the responsibilities of each service with regards to agreed upon strategy. The traditional divergent focuses of the two Japanese services also hampered effective strategy in the south Pacific. The Japanese army continued to focus on and prepare for possible war with its traditional enemy, the Soviet Union, China, and Manchuria. Once the conquest of the resource area ended successfully, the Japanese army remained content to return its focus to the Soviet Union and let the Japanese navy

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fight against its traditional foe, the United States. The Japanese army grudgingly agreed to expansion of the defensive perimeter, but in so doing made its own demands, occupying the Aleutians, that stretched Japan's resources even further. The Japanese army also demonstrated little interest in the operations north of Australia favored by the navy, having already rejected an invasion of the continent down under.

This kind of compromise and these divergent priorities were symptomatic of the Japanese system. Since the Emperor rarely intervened to settle inter-service disputes, there was no single authority above the two service chiefs of staff to force a common policy. Nor did the Japanese develop a true joint staff that worked together to blend service concerns and develop joint plans. Integration occurred only at the highest levels of the Imperial General Headquarters, if at all. This resulted in mid 1942 in a compromise to expand beyond the originally planned defensive perimeter in three divergent directions: the north, central, and southern Pacific. The Japanese secured success only in the northern Pacific, occupying Attu and Kiska in the Aleutians, but for little gain. Exacerbating the Japanese problems, when things began to heat up in the southern Pacific, the Japanese army was late to the fight. Few Japanese army aircraft arrived until late 1942. The Japanese army would also eventually divert a number of army divisions to the area, but fed troops into the battle in piecemeal fashion while their main strength remained in Manchuria and China. While the army reacted slowly, the Japanese naval air arm and the Japanese fleet suffered steady attrition in the air and waters around New Guinea and Guadalcanal. The Japanese also maintained separate commands for the army and navy in the field, expecting local commanders to make local

agreements that supported the direction given in the central agreements. They had no unity of command in theater to match that embodied by MacArthur, Nimitz, Ghormley, and Halsey.

American and Allied commanders benefited from a more integrated command system. The creation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, modeled on the British system, greatly assisted with inter-service cooperation and the development of American strategy. U.S. Army-Navy squabbling did not disappear, as the pointed post-Midway exchanges between Marshall and King demonstrate, but the JCS system generally kept the Allied war machine in the Pacific focused on the same objectives. Additionally, when necessary, President Roosevelt could and did override his military leaders to ensure the military strategy matched his grand strategy. General MacArthur and Admirals Ghormley and Halsey also enjoyed supreme command over nearly all military personnel in their designated areas of responsibility. They could employ their resources as they saw fit without having to reach an army-navy compromise in the field. Allied commanders integrated aircraft, ships, intelligence, and ground troops from different services and nations into a single force directed towards common objectives. Instead of the Japanese situation in which the Solomons received the majority of the Imperial Navy's focus and New Guinea that of the Imperial Army, the Allies operated joint commands in both. With the JCS guiding the overall effort from above, the Allies operated more effectively and implemented a better strategy through proper and coordinated prioritization of effort.

The combatants still had to fight and win battles, making combat effectiveness an important area of analysis for strategic initiative. The findings are interesting. In several

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cases, the Japanese remained tactically superior yet less combat effective than the Allies.

The Allies learned quickly how to counter the Japanese night infantry tactics that had

succeeded earlier in the war and how to use teamwork in the air to counter the capable

and nimble Japanese aircraft and their very experienced and skilful pilots. The Japanese

infantry, naval personnel, and aircrews remained skilled warriors throughout these

campaigns, but the Allies performed well enough at the tactical level to counter their

highly trained adversaries. The Allies, after the opening phase of the war, sustained their

forces much more effectively than did the Japanese, which proved a key component of

Allied victories. Tactical prowess does not feed and arm the soldier, and as Japanese

sustainment failed so too did the combat capabilities of their fielded forces. The bottom

line assessment reveals that the Allies achieved their missions with slightly fewer

resource expenditures than the Japanese, who failed to meet their objectives despite

heavy losses.

Finally, chance played an important role in a number of ways, the most important

of which favored the Allies. This study already addressed chance and opportunity at

Pearl Harbor and its implications for the remainder of the war. One of the most

important revelations with respect to chance in the Pacific between 1942 and February

1943 is the difference between the willingness of the Allied and Japanese commanders to

accept risk. Although not always the case (Fletcher at Guadalcanal is an important

exception) the Allied commanders dealt better with calculated risks and the unknown.

Nimitz's gamble at Midway is one example, as is the conduct of Admiral Fletcher and

Admiral Spruance during that battle. The JCS determination to launch the Guadalcanal

operation over the objections of MacArthur and Ghormley is another. In contrast, the

Japanese often hesitated or hedged, even after winning a battle. Nagumo flailed at

Midway once the Japanese plan went awry. Mikawa missed his golden opportunity to

destroy the U.S. invasion fleet at Guadalcanal following his victory at Savo Island. After

the Battle of Tassafaronga, the Japanese turned back and did not land their supplies on

Guadalcanal despite their tactical victory. During the naval Battle of Guadalcanal, the

Japanese bombardment force abandoned its objectives on the first night of that

engagement after a short, sharp fight with an inferior American cruiser force. Thus the

Japanese navy often failed to complete its missions, regardless of the outcome of the

actual engagement.[1] Often satisfied with a tactical victory, they abandoned their primary

missions without taking the further risks to necessary to complete them. This hesitancy

greatly reduced Japan's combat effectiveness during this period of the Pacific War.

The division of forces between Kokoda, Milne Bay, and Guadalcanal in August

reinforces the symbiotic nature of the New Guinea and Solomons campaigns. Mid to late

August 1942 presented the greatest opportunity for the Japanese to potentially avert two

long, attritional struggles and their ensuing defeats in those campaigns. Following

Mikawa's naval victory at Savo Island, had the Japanese diverted the forces destined for

Milne Bay and Kokoda to Guadalcanal instead, they may have been able to retake the

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[1] It is worth noting that the Imperial Japanese Navy continued to demonstrate this deficiency throughout the war. As late as October 1944, Admiral Kurita missed the opportunity to smash the U.S. transports supporting the invasion of Leyte in the Philippines. The Japanese employed effective tactical deception to lure Admiral Halsey's powerful covering force away from the landings so that Kurita's own powerful force might stop the invasion. The plan, in part, worked and Kurita sailed into the midst of a much less potent force of escort carriers and destroyers that were no match for his force of battleships, cruisers, and destroyers. Kurita engaged the American force, inflicted significant damage, and then turned his force around without pressing on to hit the exposed transports. In so doing, Kurita missed a real opportunity to defeat the invasion.

airfield at a time when American strength on the island was at its lowest. Had they secured Guadalcanal in this fashion, they may have then been able to refocus on New Guinea with a similar concentration of effort. Instead, they employed inferior resources at all three locations and failed at each. The dual campaigns also influenced the air war, with New Guinea taking a back seat to Guadalcanal for the Japanese. The Japanese essentially yielded air superiority to the Allies on New Guinea while simultaneously failing to win it over Guadalcanal. Thus analyzing these campaigns in isolation often inadvertently obscures their synergistic effects on the course of the war. It certainly leads to an underestimation of the importance of the New Guinea campaign to the larger war.

From August 1942 to the spring of 1943, the Japanese lost the strategic initiative in the Pacific War and the Allies seized it. The Allies did so without a preponderance of resources, without superior aircraft or ships, and with a mixed assortment of experienced and inexperienced ground troops. They challenged the Imperial Japanese war machine at the zenith of its power and came out on top after two long and challenging campaigns on New Guinea and Guadalcanal. Leveraging superior strategic acumen, supported by good intelligence, and enacted with combat effective forces, the Allies wrested the strategic initiative from the Japanese. A different outcome with respect to chance at Pearl Harbor, Midway, or Guadalcanal would certainly have altered the course of these campaigns and the war itself, but fortune often favored the Allies, who took calculated risks, and punished the hesitant Japanese who did not. While seizing the initiative, the Allies inflicted damaging losses on the Imperial Army, Imperial Navy, and the air forces of both. These losses in some cases amounted to the cream of the crop of the Japanese

forces and made the Japanese task of resistance much more difficult in the later stages of the war. In contrast, after they had seized the initiative the Allies could count on steadily increasing resources and combat power. Although they did not have those resources in the south Pacific at the time, Allied commanders knew they were on the way. This knowledge undoubtedly figured in to the strategic calculations of both sides even during this period of relative Japanese advantage. But the fact remains that the Allies seized the strategic initiative and were winning the war well before they had the overwhelming resource advantage needed to destroy the Japanese empire in the Pacific.

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