

Record: 1**Title:** War in the Pacific. (cover story)**Authors:** McIntyre, Edison**Source:** Cobblestone. Jan1994, Vol. 15 Issue 1, p4. 31p. 19 Black and White Photographs.**Document Type:** Article**Subjects:** WORLD War, 1939-1945 -- Campaigns -- Pacific Ocean**Geographic Terms:** PACIFIC Ocean**Abstract:** Presents an overview of World War II in the Pacific. History of the Japanese military buildup and war against China; Why Japan attacked the United States; Japanese victories; Admiral Chester Nimitz; Attacks by US and Allied forces; Coral Sea; Midway; Guadalcanal; New Guinea; General Douglas MacArthur; Surrender. INSETS: ALSIB pipeline to victory, by Robert H. Redding.;Builders in battle (Seabees), by Virginia Calkins.;Image of Iwo Jima (photo by Joe Rosenthal), by Randy Krehbiel..**Lexile:** 1030**Full Text Word Count:** 3024**ISSN:** 0199-5197**Accession Number:** 9401067557**Database:** MAS Ultra - School Edition

WAR IN THE PACIFIC

THE BIG PICTURE

In 1854, a U.S. naval squadron led by Commodore Matthew Perry arrived in Tokyo Bay, near the Japanese capital. For more than two centuries, Japan had avoided almost all contact with Europeans and Americans. Perry's visit helped reopen Japan to foreign trade, and the Japanese began to adopt European technology (such as steamships, railroads, and modern weapons) and many European-style institutions (schools, a national legislature, and an army and navy).

The Japanese also adopted the policy of imperialism, or colonialism. Many Japanese believed that if Japan was to become wealthy and powerful, it needed to acquire industrially important colonies. In 1894, Japan went to war with China and a year later won Korea and the island of Formosa (now Taiwan). Over the next four decades, Japan seized territory in Asia and the Pacific from China, Russia, and Germany.

By 1937, military leaders controlled Japan. In July, the Japanese launched an all-out war to take over China. The Japanese conquered much of eastern China, but by 1939, the two countries had fought to a stalemate. The United States sided with China against Japan, but most Americans did not want to go to war so far from home. Still, President Franklin D. Roosevelt threatened to cut American trade with Japan if it did not withdraw from China. In May 1940, he stationed the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii,

as a further warning to Japan.

But the Japanese did not stop. By August 1940, Japanese troops occupied the northern part of French Indochina (now Vietnam). In September, Japan signed a treaty of cooperation with Germany and Italy, whose armies were busy overrunning Europe and North Africa. In July 1941, the Japanese occupied the southern part of Indochina. Roosevelt, busy aiding Britain in its war against Germany, ordered a freeze on trade with Japan.

Japan had little oil of its own; without oil and gasoline from the United States, its army and navy could not fight. In October 1941, a new Japanese government led by General Hideki Tojo, faced a dilemma. If Japan withdrew from China, American trade would resume, but the proud Japanese army would be humiliated. If the Japanese remained in China, Japan would need a new source of oil.

Tojo and his advisors knew that the United States would have a big advantage over Japan in a long campaign. The United States had more people, money, and factories to manufacture weapons and war supplies. But the Japanese believed that the Americans and British, already deeply involved in the war against Germany, did not have the military strength to defend their Asian and Pacific territories. The Japanese had a large, modern navy and an army hardened by years of combat in China. They hoped that many quick victories over the Americans and British would force peace, leaving Japan in control of eastern Asia and the western Pacific.

As the Japanese prepared for war, the Tojo government continued negotiating with the United States, hoping that Roosevelt might change his mind and resume trade with Japan. But the United States demanded that Japan withdraw from both Indochina and China. Roosevelt was confident that the Japanese would not risk attacking the powerful United States.

As negotiations continued in the fall of 1941, the U.S. Army and Navy rushed to reinforce Hawaii and the Philippine Islands. U.S. military leaders warned Roosevelt that their forces would not be ready for war until the spring of 1942.

On December 1, 1941, Tojo's government, with the consent of Japan's emperor, Hirohito, decided to end negotiations and attack U.S. forces on December 8 (December 7 in the United States). For strategic reasons, the Japanese planned a lightning strike on the huge naval force at Pearl Harbor. American leaders knew that Japan was about to strike (U.S. intelligence officials had broken the Japanese diplomatic code), but they did not know that Pearl Harbor would be a target.

The Allies had already decided that if war had to be waged in the Atlantic and the Pacific at the same time, Germany must be dealt with first. (Germany was considered a more dangerous enemy than Japan.) Thus, the Allies followed a defensive strategy against Japan, merely trying to hold their territories against Japanese attacks.

Japan's air and naval forces quickly gained the upper hand, however, cutting off the Allied territories from reinforcements and supplies. Guam and Wake, two small U.S. islands, fell quickly in December 1941. In the Philippines, General Douglas MacArthur's forces had to abandon the Philippine capital of Manila and retreat to the Bataan Peninsula in January 1942. Short of food and medicine, American and Filipino

troops held out on Bataan until April 9. The little island of Corregidor was forced to surrender a month later, on May 6. The Japanese treated many American and Filipino prisoners brutally, and thousands died in captivity.

During the first months of the war, the Japanese also occupied Thailand, captured British Malaya and Burma, and took over the oil-rich Netherlands East Indies. By the end of April 1942, Japan's army and navy had greatly expanded the empire and were threatening India and Australia. Despite the Allies' defensive strategy, the U.S. Pacific Fleet, under Admiral Chester Nimitz, began striking back early in 1942. Aircraft carriers that had escaped the Pearl Harbor disaster launched hit-and-run raids against the Japanese, including an attack on Japan itself, led by Lieutenant Colonel James Doolittle.

U.S. Navy code breakers also fought back. They broke the Japanese navy's secret code (different from the Japanese diplomatic code broken before the United States entered the war) and discovered that Japan was planning to invade eastern New Guinea, a large island near Australia. Using this information, the U.S. Navy met the Japanese invasion force in the Battle of the Coral Sea, on May 4-8, 1942. For the first time in the war, the United States turned back a major Japanese naval attack. The Americans' ability to read Japanese coded messages was important throughout the war. Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, commander of Japan's Combined Fleet, wanted to destroy the U.S. Pacific Fleet in a decisive battle. He chose to invade Midway, two small islands one thousand miles northwest of Pearl Harbor. Yamamoto knew the Americans would fight with everything they had to defend Midway. He expected to surprise them as he had at Pearl Harbor, but this time the U.S. Navy knew he was coming. On June 4, 1942, U.S. planes sank four Japanese aircraft carriers. Yamamoto had to call off the invasion.

Despite the setbacks in the Coral Sea and at Midway, the Japanese continued to advance in the South Pacific, threatening Australia and the Allied supply lines to that country. Rather than remain on the defensive, Allied forces went on the attack. On August 7, 1942, U.S. Marines landed on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. They captured an airfield, and for the next six months, with U.S. Navy and Army support, they defended it against strong Japanese ground, air, and sea attacks. In February 1943, the Japanese gave up and left Guadalcanal.

In the fall of 1942, Australian and American troops led by General MacArthur pushed back another Japanese invasion in eastern New Guinea. By February 1943, that part of the big island was in Allied hands.

The successes on New Guinea and Guadalcanal gave Allied leaders renewed confidence, and Allied forces began capturing islands around the major Japanese base at Rabaul. By early 1944, Allied air attacks had cut off Rabaul and nearby Japanese bases from reinforcements and supplies. This island-hopping strategy- isolating some Japanese-held positions through air and sea attacks without landing troops on them - became a standard Allied practice throughout the rest of the war.

After clearing Japanese forces from Alaska's Aleutian Islands in the summer of 1943, the Americans began a new offensive that fall in the central Pacific. The first landings were on Makin and Tarawa, in the Gilbert Islands. The Tarawa assault was especially bloody; more than one thousand U.S. Marines were killed in three days of fighting. Out of more than three thousand Japanese defenders, only seventeen survived. U.S. troops were often reluctant to take Japanese as prisoners of war, and they discovered

that most Japanese soldiers preferred to fight to the death, or even commit hara-kiri (suicide), rather than surrender.

The U.S. Navy lost four aircraft carriers in 1942, but many more new ships took their place in 1943. In contrast, Japan's shipyards could not keep up with the Imperial Navy's losses. The United States' new "fast carriers" spearheaded the Allied offensive in the central Pacific. In January and February 1944, the U.S. Marines and Army captured Kwajalein and Eniwetok in the Marshall Islands. Other Japanese-held islands, such as Wotje in the Marshalls and Truk Atoll in the Carolines, were isolated by repeated air attacks.

In June 1944, U.S. forces invaded Saipan in the Mariana Islands. Japanese aircraft carriers tried to stop the invasion, but by then most of the experienced Japanese aviators who had ruled the skies early in the war had been killed. American pilots were now clearly superior. In what became known as the "Marianas Turkey Shoot," the Japanese lost approximately four hundred airplanes and three large aircraft carriers. After losing so many planes and pilots, Japanese carriers ceased to be an important factor in the war.

Along with Saipan, U.S. forces captured Tinian and won back Guam. These islands became bases for B-29 aircraft that could bomb Japan. The loss of Saipan, an important Japanese possession, forced General Tojo's government to resign.

When General MacArthur left the Philippines in 1942, he vowed, "I shall return." After capturing several new bases in New Guinea (and isolating more Japanese troops there), he was ready to fulfill his promise. On October 20, 1944, MacArthur's troops landed on Leyte, in the central Philippines, and captured the island in several weeks of hard fighting. The Japanese navy tried to stop the invasion but suffered heavy losses in the Battle of Leyte Gulf. The once-mighty Imperial Navy would have little impact on the rest of the war.

In January 1945, MacArthur's forces landed on Luzon, the largest of the Philippine Islands. They quickly retook Bataan and Corregidor, but parts of Manila were destroyed in heavy fighting. Thousands of Filipino civilians were killed. Many Japanese soldiers retreated to remote parts of the islands, where they held out until the end of the war.

Allied forces were starting to approach Japan itself, already cut off from its outlying possessions by relentless U.S. air and submarine attacks. In February 1945, U.S. Marines invaded the tiny island of Iwo Jima, where the U.S. Army wanted to establish emergency airfields for its B-29s. More than six thousand Americans and twenty thousand Japanese were killed over the next month before the B-29s could land on the island.

The Japanese became desperate as Allied forces approached their homeland. On April 1, the Americans invaded the island of Okinawa, just three hundred forty miles from the Japanese mainland. Japanese troops fought fiercely, and more than 110,000 were killed. Hundreds of suicide airplanes, called kamikazes, attacked the U.S. invasion fleet. More than twelve thousand Americans were killed before fighting on Okinawa ended in June.

The Allies were expecting even heavier casualties when they invaded Japan. The first landing was

scheduled for November 1945. U.S. air attacks on Japanese cities increased, including firebombings of Tokyo by B-29s that killed thousands of Japanese civilians. On August 6, a B-29 dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima, killing some seventy thousand people. After the atomic bombing of Nagasaki three days later, Japanese leaders realized that further resistance was useless.

On September 2, 1945, Japanese officials boarded the U.S. battleship Missouri and signed a formal surrender agreement. Ironically, the ceremony took place in Tokyo Bay, where Commodore Perry had first met the Japanese almost a century before.

PHOTOS: The Japanese war machine was efficient and brutal. A screaming baby was almost all that was left after Shanghai's South Station was bombed by the Japanese on August 28, 1937. The Chinese were divided into two opposing political groups - the Nationalists, led by Chiang Kai-shek, and the Communists, led by Mao Zedong. They put aside their differences to fight Japan.

MAP: This map shows the Pacific theater and the extent of Japanese expansion (area within dotted line) up to 1942.

PHOTO: Following the fall of Bataan, the Japanese marched some 75,000 Allied soldiers 55 miles to waiting trains. War weary and malnourished, many could not make it. Stragglers were shot or bayoneted, and the journey was soon called the Bataan Death March. Here soldiers carry comrades in makeshift litters.

PHOTO: Deciphering codes was crucial to the Allied effort. This machine was used to decipher the Japanese diplomatic code.

PHOTO: Victory in the Pacific depended on who ruled the seas. Here, in December 1945, 8 U.S. warships steam to an anchorage after fighting the Japanese in the Philippines.

PHOTO: A U.S. airplane prepares to land on the USS Yorktown in July 1944.

PHOTO: On November 13, 1942, 5 brothers who were serving on the USS Juneau were killed when their ship was sunk. By 1943, the Sullivan brothers were featured in a U.S. government poster aimed at bolstering patriotism.

PHOTO: Edward J. Steichen, a commander at the time this 1943 photo was taken (and later recognized as an acclaimed photographer), took many outstanding photographs of aircraft carrier life.

PHOTO: Burn victims after a kamikaze attack feed each other aboard the USS Solace.

PHOTO: A catapult officer scampers up the side of a burning U.S. warplane to help free the pilot after a crash landing on the USS Enterprise in November 1943.

PHOTO: Snapping his camera's shutter just as a Japanese bomb exploded on the USS Enterprise on August 24, 1942, photographer Robert Frederick Read was killed by the blast that he captured on film.

PHOTO: The wounded are transferred from the USS Bunker Hill to the USS Wilkes Barre following a

kamikaze attack on May 11, 1945, off Okinawa.

PHOTO: Marine defenders on Okinawa light up the sky with anti-aircraft fire in 1945.

PHOTO: PT boats were small, quick, lightweight vessels used extensively in the Pacific. Here a boat patrols off New Guinea in 1943.

PHOTO: General MacArthur (center) wades ashore at Leyte in October 1944, making good on the promise of return he made 2 years earlier.

PHOTO: Soldiers on both sides of the conflict in the Pacific were guilty of atrocities against civilians, but they performed many acts of kindness as well. Here a Marine coaxes a mother, her four children, and their dog from a dark hillside cove following fierce fighting on Saipan in June 1944.

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By Edison McIntyre

### **ALSIB PIPELINE TO VICTORY**

U.S. Marines man a machine gun above an inlet in Alaska. Besides being U.S. territory, Alaska was vital to the war effort for other reasons. In June 1942, the United States signed the Lend-Lease Act, guaranteeing that the United States would send the Soviet Union all the help it could. Aircraft were high on the list of priorities. On September 29, 1942, Soviet pilots began flying warplanes to their country from Ladd Field, near Fairbanks, Alaska. Three years later, on September 20, 1945, the last flight left Ladd Field, via the ALSIB, the nearly 7,000-mile Alaska-Siberia route over which airplanes had been ferried. By then, 7,926 warplanes of all types - fighters, bombers, and cargo ships - had paused at Ladd Field on their way overseas. This "pipeline to victory" had helped win the war.

-Robert H. Redding

PHOTO: U.S. Marines man a machine gun above an inlet in Alaska.

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By Robert H. Redding

BUILDERS IN BATTLE

A sign in the offices of many construction battalions during World War II read: "The difficult we do immediately. The impossible takes a little longer." The men doing the impossible were members of the naval construction battalions, popularly known as Seabees. Their organization was created on December 28, 1941, 3 weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Recruited from the civilian construction industry, the Seabees built and repaired harbor facilities, air and naval bases, roads, railroads, barracks, and hospitals. When they lacked tools or supplies, the Seabees improvised. Radiators for jeeps and trucks were made from metal ammunition cases. Fifty-gallon fuel drums were used for culverts and roofs. Beer and soft drink baffles made insulators for power and communication lines. When short of shovels, Seabees used their helmets. The Seabees often had to work close to the frontlines, under enemy fire. Trained to use weapons, they joined in the fighting whenever necessary. When asked to do a job, Seabees responded, "Can do." This spirit earned them the respect and admiration of all branches

of the military service, as shown in tributes such as this by Commander Don Knowlton, MC, USNR:
"The Seabees are the workingest, fightingest bunch of men I ever saw."

-Virginia Calkins

PHOTO: A group of Seabees

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By Virginia Calkins

### **IMAGE OF IWO JIMA**

Of all the images we have of war, Associate Press photographer Joe Rosenthal's photograph of 6 U.S. Marines raising the Stars and Stripes on Mount Suribachi, on the Japanese island of Iwo Jima, is one of the most famous. The Marines called Iwo Jima "eight square miles of hell." Twenty-one thousand Japanese were packed onto the small island, most of them hidden in 13,000 yards of tunnels built as many as 5 levels deep. On February 19, 1945, the United States attacked the island. Six thousand Americans, mostly Marines, died. The Japanese held out practically to the last man. Rosenthal's picture, taken on the fourth day, did not seem very dramatic at the time. The Marines were actually replacing a smaller flag that had gone up earlier and were in relatively little danger. But the photo captured America's imagination. It appeared in newspapers around the world, inspired 2 motion pictures, and became the model for the Marine Corps Monument in Arlington National Cemetery.

-Randy Krehbiel

PHOTO: 6 U.S. Marines raising the Stars and Stripes on Mount Suribachi, on the Japanese island of Iwo Jima.

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