

## OPERATION STALEMATE II

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by

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## ABSTRACT

OPERATION STALEMATE II, by Lt Col Daniel C. Hodges, 100 pages.

Operation Stalemate II was conducted on 15 September 1944 to secure the Palau Islands in the Pacific Ocean. The primary purpose of this operation was to prevent the Japanese from attacking MacArthur's western flank while he conducted operations in the Philippines. After 72 days of fighting US forces eliminated the entire Japanese garrison of 13,500 soldiers. US casualties included over 2,000 dead or missing.

Operation Stalemate II did not achieve its primary purpose of preventing the enemy from attacking MacArthur's flank because that purpose had already been accomplished. The commander of Japanese forces in the Palaus did not have the ability influence actions against the Americans in the Philippines

Prior to 15 September 1944 key leadership realized the intent of Stalemate II had already been achieved. Despite this knowledge Stalemate II was allowed to proceed because military leadership of the Pacific was hampered by an inefficient command structure. The inefficiencies manifested as disputes between personalities and services, competition for resources, and decentralized execution of two distinctly separate courses of action against Japanese forces in the Pacific. This led to duplication of efforts and execution of unnecessary tasks. Stalemate II was one such unnecessary task.

Although unnecessary at the time, Stalemate II significantly contributed to today's Joint command and control concepts. The sacrifices made by those who participated in Stalemate II continue to pay dividends for America's modern military forces.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The entire island seemed to explode. The screams and curses of men, fearful, excited, or in agony, rose above the ungodly roar of exploding shells, the smack and splatter of bullets and the rattle of amphibian tractors. Men strangled in their own blood, were blown to bits, burned to death in their landing craft, lay white and motionless with small blue holes in their bellies, or screamed and writhed in pain from monstrous, blood-gushing wounds.<sup>1</sup>

Henry Paustian, “Peleliu”

On 15 September 1944 thousands of soldiers faced each other in a bloody struggle for control of the tiny island of Peleliu, which is part of the Palau Islands group of the Western Caroline Islands of the Pacific Ocean. (See Appendixes A-1 and A-2 for a map of the Pacific Ocean and the Palau Islands.) The vaunted 1st Marine Division led the American attacking force. Defending the island was a resolute force of Japanese soldiers, with no hope of reinforcement or escape, under orders to die fighting, killing as many of their enemy as they could. American leadership anticipated a sharp fight lasting no more than three days. What occurred was a three-month contest of human endurance between equally determined foes. At the end of seventy-two days of continuous fighting, the entire Japanese garrison of 13,500 soldiers, less 300 prisoners,<sup>2</sup> had been wiped out. The victors paid dearly for their win; their enemies inflicted nearly 10,000 casualties including over 2,000 dead or missing soldiers, sailors, and Marines.<sup>3</sup> Operation Stalemate II, the American code name for the attack, was over. The US had eliminated another Japanese outpost; however, it was an outpost that the American commander in charge of the operation had recommended be bypassed.<sup>4</sup>

Prior to 15 September 1944 key leadership knew that the intent of Operation Stalemate could be realized without conducting the operation. Despite this knowledge Operation Stalemate II was allowed to proceed because the Joint Chiefs of Staff served as coequals, setting the conditions for a bifurcated Pacific theater strategy dominated by interservice rivalry, service parochialism, and personal competition.

This thesis will address five aspects of Operation Stalemate. This first chapter will look at the battle itself by determining the composition of the opposing forces, their plans for battle, and what happened during the battle. The second chapter will explore the strategic settings and opposing strategic plans for the Pacific Theater at the outset of WWII in the Pacific to the months and days just prior to the landing of Marines on Peleliu. This chapter will ascertain how planners envisioned Operation Stalemate supporting US theater strategy for both of those time periods. The third chapter describes the US leadership support for Operation Stalemate and how that support affected those who participated in the operation. The fourth chapter details the results of the US victory. Specifically addressed is how those results supported US strategic planning. This chapter also focuses on the recommendation to cancel Operation Stalemate. The fifth chapter illustrates the nature of the strategic leadership in the Pacific during World War II. This chapter includes a discussion of an inter-service and personal rivalry and the role of the US Joints Chiefs of Staff of World War II.

### US Forces

US forces that participated in Operation Stalemate II were under the command of Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, also known as Commander in Chief Pacific Operations Area or CINCPOA. Nimitz assigned responsibility for Operation Stalemate to his

Western Pacific Task Forces comprised of the Third Fleet commanded by Admiral William F. Halsey. Halsey in turn assigned the conduct of the operation to his Joint Expeditionary Force Task Force 31 that was commanded by Vice Admiral Theodore S. Wilkinson. Wilkinson's command consisted of the Western Attack Force (Task Force 32) commanded by Rear Admiral Fort and the Expeditionary Troops (Task Force 36) commanded by Major General Julian C. Smith (see figure 1).

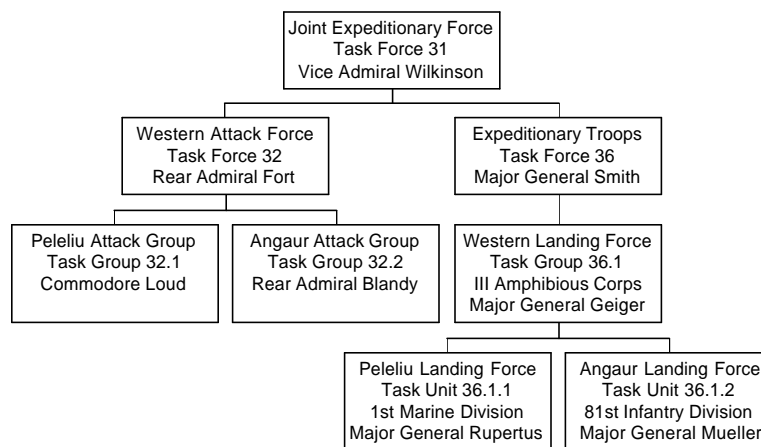


Figure 1. US Command Structure for Operation Stalemate II

Source: Robert Ross Smith, *The War In The Pacific: The Approach To The Philippines* (Center Of Military History, Washington D.C.: U. S. Army, 1984), 465.

Nimitz supported Wilkinson's Task Force 31 with covering forces from his Third Fleet, most notably from his Fast Carrier Force, which provided preliminary bombardment and close air support<sup>5</sup>. US ground forces from Major Roy S. Geiger's III Amphibious Corps totaled approximately 49,500 men, which included members of the Army, Marine Corps, and Navy.<sup>6</sup>

### Japanese Forces

Japanese forces that opposed the US attack were assigned to the Palaus Sector Group (see figure 2). Responsible for this sector was Lieutenant General Sade Inoue, Commander of the 14th Division. He commanded all Japanese land based forces that defended the Palau Islands. Inoue assigned responsibilities for the defense of Peleliu and Anguar Island to Major General Kenjiro Murai.<sup>7</sup> Murai's chief defensive architect for Peleliu was Colonel Nakagawa who commanded the 2nd Infantry Regiment. Responsibility for the defense of Anguar rested with Major Ushio Goto, Commander of the 1st Battalion, 59th Infantry Regiment.<sup>8</sup>

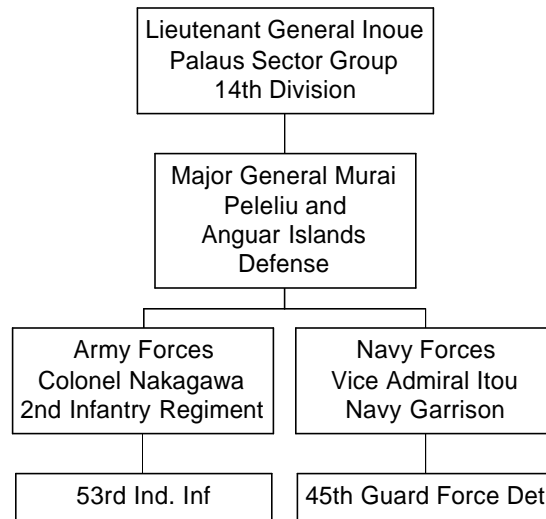


Figure 2. Figure 2. Japanese Command Structure Opposing Operation Stalemate II

Source: Robert Ross Smith, *The War In The Pacific: The Approach to the Philippines* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, U S Army, 1984), 465.

Murai's forces included naval ground units, artillery, mortars, tanks, antiaircraft units, construction battalions, various support units and laborers.<sup>9</sup> Japanese total strength on Peleliu was approximately 13,500 with another 1,500 defending Anguar.<sup>10</sup>

### US Operational Plan

US forces planned to take Peleliu by a direct assault of the 1st Marine Division. The 81st Infantry Division was to conduct a feint off the coast of the largest Palau island of Babelthuap and provide the floating reserve. The 81st was also assigned the responsibility to secure the islands of Anguar, Ulithi and Yap. The assault was to be preceded by naval bombardment from both guns and carrier-based aircraft. After the landings naval gunfire would provide fire support and carrier based airplanes were to provide close air support.

The 1st Marine Division planned to assault the western shore of Peleliu with all three of its regiments abreast. Once ashore the island was divided into three regimental sectors of responsibility. The 1st Marine Regiment was to secure the northwestern sector. The 5th Marine Regiment had responsibility for the central portion of the island, which included the primary objective of the main Japanese airfield. The 7th Marine Regiment had responsibility to secure the remaining southern portion of Peleliu.<sup>11</sup> (See Appendix A-3 for a graphic of the 1st Marine Division scheme of maneuver.) The 1st Marine Division commander stated that he felt the operation would take no more than three days to complete.<sup>12</sup>

The 81st Infantry Division was to secure Anguar when the situation on Peleliu was under control. This division planned to assault the northern and eastern shores of Anguar with two regiments. Anguar was divided into two sectors of responsibility. The

321st Regiment was responsible for the southern half of the island and the 322nd Regiment was responsible for the northern half. As with Peleliu naval gunfire and aviation would provide preparatory fires before the landing and provide fire support once the 81st Division was ashore.<sup>13</sup> (See Appendix A-4 for an illustration of the 81st Division's scheme of maneuver.) When the situation on Peleliu and Anguar was secure the 81st Division would be directed to secure Ulithi and Yap.

#### Japanese Operational Plan

Japanese forces planned to defend Peleliu and Anguar with a composite force of army and navy units. The backbone of the defense would be provided by the reinforced 2nd Infantry Regiment, which would defend in depth. A reinforced infantry battalion defended Anguar Island. The Japanese commander divided Peleliu into four sectors and designated a commander for each sector. He retained the bulk of his forces under his direct command to be used as a reserve. He placed this large reserve force on the high ground throughout the island. The western sector was defended by the 2nd Battalion. The 3rd Battalion of the 15th Infantry Regiment defended the south sector. The northern sector was defended by the 346th Independent Infantry Battalion. The fourth sector in the east was defended by a composite force under the command of an army captain.<sup>14</sup> The naval ground forces on Peleliu were primarily assigned to defend the airbase. (See Appendix A-5 for an illustration of this defensive plan for Peleliu.)

The forces on the island would have no fire support from Japanese air or navy ships. The defenders would rely on only those fire support assets co-located with them. However, the commander of the Palaus Sector Group had the capability to reinforce the defenders of Peleliu and Anguar with additional troops.

### The Battle

After weeks of intermittent US naval strikes, dedicated pre-landing US naval bombardment of the Palaus commenced on D-Day minus three, 12 September 1944. Rear Admiral Fort's ships bombarded Peleliu alternately for two days with naval gunfire and aircraft carrier based airplanes. Neighboring islands with Japanese facilities were also targeted to isolate Peleliu from enemy reinforcements. These scheduled pre-landing fires were prematurely cancelled on 14 September 1944. Admiral Fort's Western Fire Support Group commander reported that there were no remaining targets.<sup>15</sup> Thus Japanese defenders were afforded a day's respite to recover from the intense bombardment before the 1st Marine Division landed.

On 15 September the 1st Marine Division landed three regiments abreast on the western side of Peleliu. The 81st Infantry Division conducted an amphibious feint towards the Island of Babelthuap the same day. This demonstration convinced Inoue that the Americans would attack Babelthuap and Koror as soon as they were done with Peleliu and Anguar. Because of this he made no significant efforts to reinforce Murai's forces on either Peleliu or Anguar, opting instead to prepare to defend against perceived imminent American attacks on Babelthuap and Koror.<sup>16</sup> Murai's few attempts to reinforce Peleliu by boat were stopped by US Naval gunfire.

Japanese defenders on Peleliu put up a stiff fight, inflicting considerable damage to the assault force. Despite enemy resistance, the Marines gained a tenuous beachhead and advanced to their first objective, which was the airfield. The Japanese launched a sizable coordinated tank-infantry counterattack supported by accurate mortar and artillery fires. The Marines virtually destroyed all the Japanese forces that participated in the

counterattack.<sup>17</sup> D-Day ended for the Marines with unexpectedly high casualties and far short of their planned gains.

On D-Day plus one the Marines managed to advance, seizing the airfield and isolating the southern part of the island. Japanese resistance continued to be fierce. At the end of this day with mounting casualties the Marines still had not gained their planned objectives.

The next day General Geiger ordered the 81st Division to proceed with the assault on the neighboring island of Anguar. The Division's landing of two regiments followed closely behind a naval and aerial bombardment. The landing was met by limited resistance but as the 81st advanced toward their objectives the Japanese defense stiffened. However, Japanese defensive efforts on Anguar were not nearly as intense as those faced by the Marines on Peleliu.<sup>18</sup>

For the next six days, the 81st Division and the 1st Marine Division fought to gain their objectives against determined and effective Japanese resistance. By 21 September 1944, the 81st Division had isolated all enemy defenders on Anguar to a small pocket of resistance on the northwest corner of the island. Although the island was declared secure, it would take another month to completely eliminate all the Japanese defenders on Anguar.<sup>19</sup>

Admiral Halsey ordered the 323rd Regimental Combat Team to board shipping and seize Ulithi the same day Anguar was declared secure. Two days later the 323rd secured Ulithi with no casualties. Fortunately for them the Japanese did not attempt to defend Ulithi.



On 22 September 1944, General Geiger ordered the 81st Division to reinforce 1st Marine Division efforts on Peleliu with the 321st Regimental Combat Team. By this time the Marines had only secured the southern portion of the island. Japanese defenders exacted a heavy toll for the Marine gains. Marine casualties were so severe that almost a third of the 1st Marine Division's combat power had been knocked out of the fight. The hardest hit unit was the 1st Marine Regiment, which was nearly decimated as a fighting organization by this stage of the battle.

By 12 October 1944 the 1st Marine Division was nearly combat-ineffective. General Geiger moved his III Amphibious Corps Command ashore and declared the assault phase of the operation complete. Preparations began to replace the 1st Marine Division with the 81st Division. Eight days later, with the remaining Japanese defenders isolated to a small pocket of resistance, the battered 1st Marine Division was relieved of responsibilities on Peleliu.<sup>20</sup>

Japanese continued to put up organized resistance until on the morning of 27 November 1944, hostilities in Operation Stalemate II were declared over.

### Summary

Operation Stalemate II was costly in men and material for both sides. The fighting had inflicted severe casualties. The Japanese suffered 14,000 killed or captured troops while the Americans incurred almost 10,000 dead, wounded, and missing troops.<sup>21</sup>

For the Americans Operation Stalemate II was an unexpected expense in time. It was also a stark reminder of Japanese resolve and willingness to continue fighting irregardless of the situation. Even in the face of certain defeat it was clear that the Japanese soldier would fight to the death.

For the Japanese this battle was another demonstration of American power. It was another defeat in a series of defeats throughout the Pacific. This battle was the first full implementation of a new defensive strategy.

What were the strategic plans that led the Americans and the Japanese to fight over possession of these tiny islands? How did Operation Stalemate II fit into the strategic planning? What was the intended purpose of the fight for control of the island of Peleliu?

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<sup>1</sup>Henry Paustian, "Peleliu" *Kansas City* 3, no. 10 (October 1978): 63.

<sup>2</sup>Bill D. Ross, *A Special Piece of Hell* (New York, NY: Random House, 1991), 128.

<sup>3</sup>E. B. Potter, *Nimitz* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1976), 395.

<sup>4</sup>Ross, 136.

<sup>5</sup>Robert Ross Smith, *The War in the Pacific: The Approach to the Philippines* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, US Army, 1984), 465.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 471-472.

<sup>7</sup>Ross, 126.

<sup>8</sup>Smith, 462.

<sup>9</sup>Frank O. Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu* (City, State: Historical Division, Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, 1950), 18.

<sup>10</sup>Ross, 125-128.

<sup>11</sup>Harry A. Gailey, *Peleliu, 1944* (Annapolis, MD: The Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1983), 21-23.

<sup>12</sup>Ross, 106.

<sup>13</sup>Hough, 106 -107.

<sup>14</sup>Gailey, 46-51.

<sup>15</sup>Smith, 495.

<sup>16</sup>James H. Hallas, *The Devil's Anvil: The Assault on Peleliu* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1994), 154-155.

<sup>17</sup>Ross, 179.

<sup>18</sup>Hallas, 167.

<sup>19</sup>Smith, 530.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 560.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 572-573.

## CHAPTER 2

### STRATEGY OF STALEMATE

#### Strategic Settings

In a post-World War I environment, an era of economic decline, Japan and the US found themselves in competition for access to resources. Most coveted by both countries was the vast material wealth of China. The United States wanted to see China controlled by the Chinese, thereby ensuring US access to China's resources through diplomatic relations with a sovereign Chinese government.<sup>1</sup> A natural-resource poor Japan viewed China as a supply of raw materials and a market for their produced goods. If Japan controlled China she would greatly reduce her reliance upon imports, most notably those from America, to fuel her growing economy and support a quest for status as a major world power. To this end Japan, whose foreign policy was dominated by its own Army, undertook military action to corner the market on Chinese resources by starting wars with Manchuria in 1931 and China in 1937.<sup>2</sup> Late in 1937 Japanese forces sunk a US Naval vessel operating in Chinese territory. This incident combined with the military aggression against China and a Japanese alliance with AXIS powers eventually led the US to respond with a series of economic measures, including an embargo on aircraft and aircraft parts against Japan. The US also began supplying China with military aid. Japan countered months later by announcing their intentions to form a Co-Prosperity Sphere in the summer of 1940. The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was a Japanese plan for economic domination and eventual control of most of the southern and western Pacific Ocean areas.<sup>3</sup>

By this time war had erupted in Western Europe. The US was actively providing Great Britain economic support and waging an undeclared naval war in the Atlantic Ocean against Germany to protect the shipping lanes to and from the United Kingdom.<sup>4</sup> Japan took advantage of the turmoil in Europe by stationing troops in Vichy French Indochina. The US saw this as a threat to its line of supply to China that ran through Burma. Japan garnered full AXIS support for its Co-Prosperity Sphere by signing the Tripartite Pact with Italy and Germany. This pact obliged the signatories to support each other in the event that a country that they were not already at war with should attack any of one of them. Any move the US now made against Japan could be grounds for war against the AXIS. The US placed further economic embargoes of strategic materials on Japan despite the Tripartite Pact.<sup>5</sup>

For the next year the US wielded economic and diplomatic measures against Japan to diffuse the enmity between the two countries or pressure Japan to strike an agreement favorable to US desires. Japan, emboldened by military successes in China and stunning military victories by her AXIS allies, continued to work towards realization of its Co-Prosperity Sphere. In spite of the genuine diplomatic efforts of Japan and the US, both countries actively planned for war against one another. On 7 December 1941 Japan opened the war in the Pacific by attacking the US Naval Base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The next day the US announced a declaration of war against Japan. A few days later AXIS powers declared war on the US drawing America fully into World War II.<sup>6</sup>

#### 1942 Strategic Situation

By early 1942 Japanese military forces had achieved a series of remarkable successes throughout the Pacific. In response to the Japanese invasion of the Pacific the

Allies created an *ad hoc* command known as ABDACOM, which is short for American, British, Dutch, and Australian Command. The ABDACOM area of responsibility included Burma, Malaya, the Dutch East Indies, Western New Guinea, Northwest Australia, and the Philippines. The British General Sir Archibald Wavell commanded ABDACOM. His naval commander was Admiral Thomas Hart of the American Navy. Commanding his air forces was British Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Pierce. And commanding his ground forces was the Dutch Lieutenant General Hein Poorten.<sup>7</sup> This effort to establish unity of command did little to stop the Japanese advance. The most telling event of the failure of ABDACOM was the fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942. There Japanese forces stunned a British-led allied force with an overwhelming victory, killing or capturing almost 139,000 allied troops in the process<sup>8</sup>. With the fall of Dutch defenders on Batavia on 1 March 1942 ABDACOM was soon after dismantled. Only the Americans in the Philippines still contested the Japanese advance. However, the US-led allied force in the Philippines was soon overrun leaving only Australia in Allied hands.<sup>9</sup> By August 1942 the Japanese had seized most of the land territory of the Pacific Ocean extending north into Manchuria and China, west to Burma, and south to Java and most of New Guinea. New Zealand, the Hawaiian Islands, and Australia were the last major landmasses in the Pacific not under Japanese control. But the US was fighting back. The Americans inflicted a psychological blow to the Japanese by conducting a bombing raid against her home islands. This bombing raid led by Lieutenant Colonel James H. Doolittle, came just weeks after the Japanese military publicly announced to Japan that no foreign power could raid the home islands.<sup>10</sup> The US Navy won a significant naval engagement by stopping a Japanese thrust towards Midway Island. And the 1st Marine

Division was defeating repeated Japanese attacks while defending an important airfield on Guadalcanal even though they were literally stranded on the island.

### US 1942 Theater Strategy

In 1942 US strategy was focused on winning the war on the European continent. This strategy came about as result of prewar planning, strategic developments and allied agreements that necessitated the modification of existing plans. However, the US had been planning, in one form or another, for war against Japan since the 1890's. When Japanese warships were spotted near Hawaii, then assistant secretary of the navy, Theodore Roosevelt sought plans for the defense of the Hawaiian Islands in case the Japanese attempted to annex what was then the independent Hawaiian republic. This incident and many others over the course of a decade raised tensions between Japan and the US so much so that formal military staff action was taken to plan for a fight against Japan. The initial basic plan, which would guide US military strategy against Japan for over thirty years, the same plan that would heavily influence the strategy at the onset of the Pacific war, was conceived at the US Naval War College in 1907. The Blue verses Orange Plan worked out by the Naval War College staff later evolved into what was known as War Plan ORANGE.<sup>11</sup>

War Plan ORANGE was a plan for US military response to Japanese aggression in the Pacific. The plan's authors made some assumptions to assist in their planning. They felt that Japan would attack America's interests and military forces in the western Pacific, seize territory necessary to exploit the natural resources and defend their newly acquired possessions. The planners did not envision Japan attacking the continental US. They assumed that Japan's intent would be to outlast America in a protracted defensive

war setting the conditions for peace negotiations that would leave Japan in possession of most of her gains. Planners saw a potential war with Japan being conducted in three phases. In Phase I the US would defend its home ports, possibly conduct small raids and prepare for an offensive. Phase II would be an American counter-attack led by naval and air units culminating in a decisive naval battle, which the US would win. In Phase III US forces would isolate and blockade Japan from the rest of the world, placing her in an economic stranglehold, all the while bombing her infrastructure until she sued for peace. War Plan ORANGE did not envision attacking Japanese forces either on Japan's home islands or in China.<sup>12</sup>

The US eventually adopted War Plan ORANGE as formal policy. Adjustments to the plan were made periodically over the years with the Army and the Navy cooperating to fulfill the basic intent of the original plan. In 1937 a rift of disagreement developed among influential members of the Army and Navy. The Army argued for a defensive posture while the Navy wanted to conduct offensive operations as soon as possible. After lengthy negotiations the Navy's opinion to maintain the immediate offensive nature of ORANGE won out. However, the Army drastically curbed support of the plan by significantly reducing the commitment of air and ground forces for the plan. The prospects for success in a War Plan ORANGE without Army support were not favorable. With a changing strategic overseas situation and continued inter-service debate, US planners sought a different set of plans to guide American responses. By 1940 War Plan ORANGE was dropped as formal war policy.<sup>13</sup>

In the spring and summer of 1939 US military planners began the creation of a series of plans designated RAINBOW. The Rainbow Plans were adapted from existing



planning to take into account the strategic settings of 1939. Five specific Rainbow plans were created.<sup>14</sup> RAINBOW 5 assumed that the US, Great Britain and France would be allied against AXIS forces and a hostile Japan. This plan called for early deployment of US forces to the European and or African continents to be used to participate in the defeat of Germany and Italy. A strategic defensive was to be maintained in the Pacific until success against AXIS forces allowed for offensive actions against the Japanese. The US found themselves in just such a situation in early 1942, albeit France had been defeated as a nation.

During the development of the Rainbow plans, and immediately after the successful reelection of President Roosevelt in 1940, a memorandum from the Navy was sent to the President. In his memorandum, Admiral Harold Stark offered four alternative courses of actions for the US to follow to meet the challenges of the developing strategic situation. He laid his recommendations out in four paragraphs. Paragraph four, labeled “D” recommended the US prepare for a strong offensive in the Atlantic while remaining on the defense in the Pacific. Paragraph “D” or Plan Dog, as it was later referred to, became the guiding document for initial World War II US strategic planning.<sup>15</sup> With this guidance in mind American military planners met with their British counterparts and came to an agreement on Allied strategy should America enter the war. Both US and British planners agreed on the basic concept of Admiral Stark’s Plan Dog. However, British planners sought to have a commitment of US forces to assist in the defense of Singapore should Japanese forces attack. The US would not commit to this request believing that they did not have enough resources to hold possessions in the Pacific.

However, both parties agreed to the spirit of Plan Dog. The results of this meeting were published in the ABC-1 report:

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 a manner best calculated to support the defense of the Malay Barrier by directing Japanese strength away from Malaysia.”<sup>16</sup>

Out of this guidance came the “Germany First” strategy. The prior planning that most suited this strategy was plan RAINBOW 5. Tentative work began anew on RAINBOW 5 pending presidential approval of the ABC-1 report. President Roosevelt did not specifically approve ABC-1, however, chief war planners interpreted his ambiguous response as permission to implement detailed planning to support ABC-1.<sup>17</sup> RAINBOW 5 was the plan for US action when America was drawn into the war in Dec 1941.

After formally entering World War II the US hosted ARCADIA, which was an Allied strategy conference in December 1941 and January 1942. At this conference the US formally adopted Plan RAINBOW 5 as the strategy for the war. The decision to create ABDACOM for command of Allied Pacific war efforts was made at this conference but the primary focus of the planning was on the war in Europe. After the collapse of ABDACOM the US proposed a new form of command for the Pacific areas. The US suggested that they have primary responsibility for actions against Axis forces in the Pacific. Allied nations whose territories or forces fell under the direction of US command had the right to abstain from US-led operations, but the US was essentially in

command of all operations in the Pacific. The allies agreed and the US took sole command of the Pacific.<sup>18</sup>

The US established two areas of responsibility for the Pacific. The Army would direct operations in the Southwest Pacific Area and the Navy would control the Pacific Ocean Areas. The Pacific Ocean Areas was subdivided into four separate areas: Central Pacific Area, North Pacific Area, South Pacific Area, Southeast Pacific Area. (See Appendix A-6.) The initial guidance for commanders of both the Southwest Pacific Area and the Pacific Ocean Areas was defensive in nature. But in the Pacific Ocean Areas the commander was to prepare for major amphibious operations against Japanese positions. These offensive operations were conducted in both the areas of responsibility. The Navy planned to implement these orders by working towards a major offensive across the Central Pacific as planned for in War Plan Orange.<sup>19</sup> Commanding the Southwest Pacific Ocean Area for the Army was General Douglas MacArthur. Commanding the Pacific Ocean Areas for the Navy was Admiral Chester Nimitz. While General MacArthur struggled vainly to hold onto the Philippines, Admiral Nimitz took steps to implement those naval actions outlined by War Plan Orange. Planned reinforcements considered necessary to win the Pacific war against Japan were given second priority to building strength for the war with Germany.

#### Japanese 1942 Theater Strategy

The Japanese felt that they had a limited opportunity to become an equal world partner among the major powers. They needed access to resources to sustain their growing economy. Using the chaos caused by Germany's invasion of Western Europe,

the Japanese planned to quickly seize these resources, push Western powers out of the region, build strong defenses and negotiate a favorable end to hostilities.

The Japanese overall goal was to become economically self-sufficient. Their main objective towards achieving that goal was the possession of natural-resource-rich territories, especially those resources in the Dutch East Indies. Their plan had three phases. Phase I was to seize the geographical space described in their Co-Prosperity Sphere and establish a perimeter to protect those newly acquired territories. In Phase II Japan would consolidate its forces and establish defenses. Phase III was to be purely defensive in nature maintaining the integrity of the Co-Prosperity Sphere.<sup>20</sup> (See Appendix A-7 for a map of Japanese strategic plans.)

The bulk of the Japanese Army would remain in China and Manchuria. Additional forces were required to garrison pre-war possession of Korea, Formosa and Indochina and to defend the Japanese home islands. Army air power was to be brought into the area to support all ground operations. In addition to the strike on Pearl Harbor, the Imperial Japanese Navy would support Army operations by providing carrier-based air support, amphibious landing support and defend against US or allied naval actions. They Navy would protect Japan's sea lines of supply. The Japanese Navy also planned to position itself in a manner that would allow it to intercept any American naval attempt to breach the eastern border of the Co-Prosperity Sphere. To accomplish this it intended to conduct operations as far south as Australia, as far east as Fiji and Midway islands and as far north as the Aleutian Islands.<sup>21</sup> This attempt by the Japanese Navy resulted in costly clashes with US Naval forces at Midway Islands and Guadalcanal early in the war.

The Imperial General Headquarters created a command structure to facilitate achievement of their goals. Specifically they created the Southern Army Command to execute those operations necessary to gain the territory required to create the Co-Prosperity Sphere.

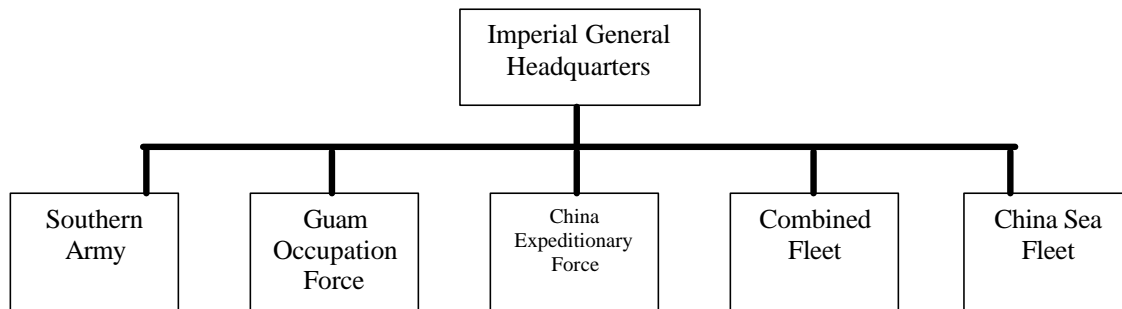


Figure 3. Imperial Japanese Force Structure

*Source:* Louis Morton, *The War In The Pacific: Strategy And Command: The First Two Years* (Office Of The Chief Of Military History, Department Of The Army, Washington D.C.: U. S. Army, 1962), 111

To understand the basic Japanese operational plan for seizing these territories look at the subcommand structures of the Southern Army, the Guam Occupation Force, and the Combined Fleet. These command structures coupled with the diagrams of Japanese offensive plans (See Appendix A-7) adequately illustrate how the Imperial General Headquarters envisioned achieving their military goals. The Imperial Japanese Navy designated a portion of their fleet as the Southern Forces. The Southern Forces were the primary naval support to the Southern Army for its Pacific operations.

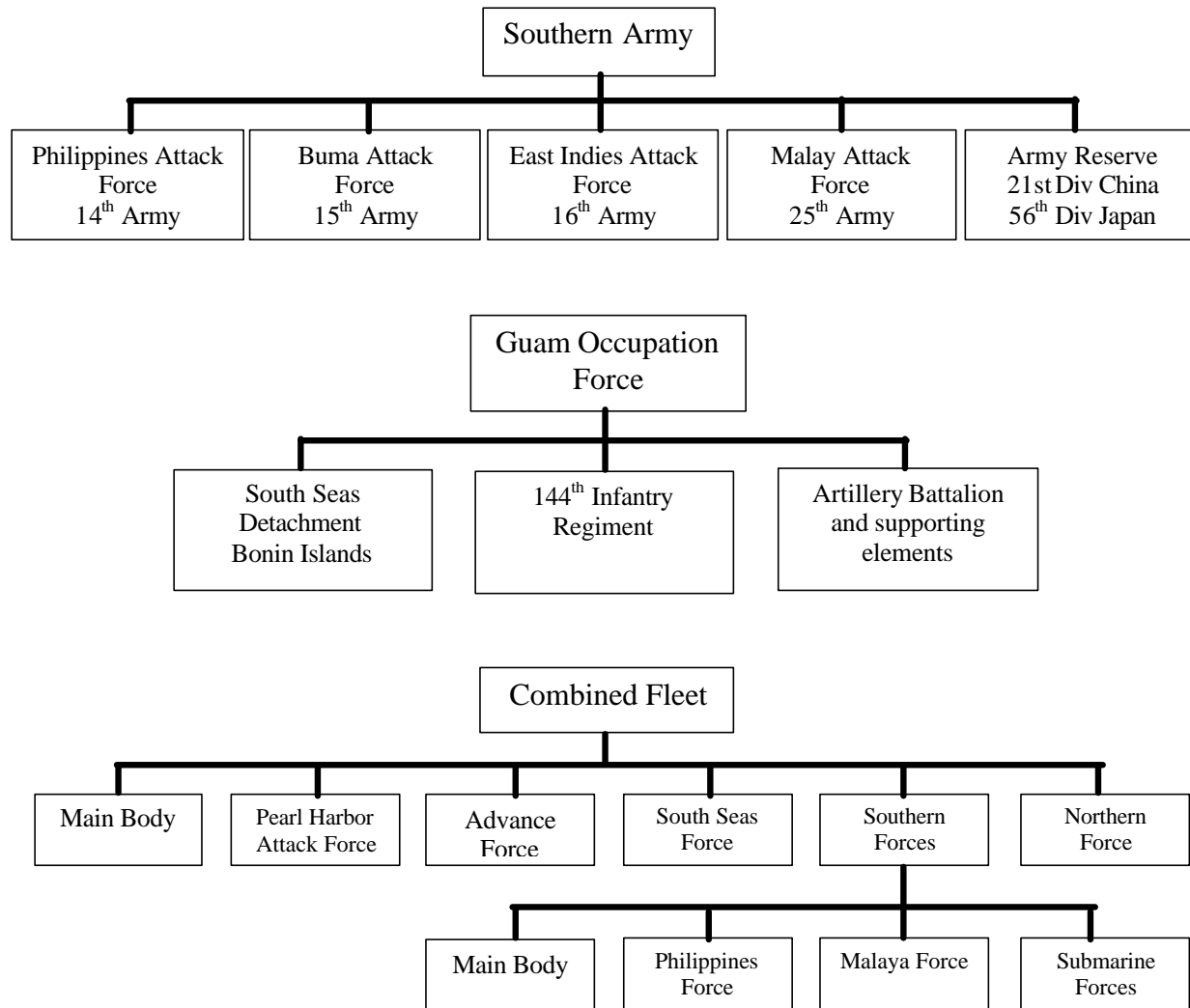


Figure 4. Japanese Operational Command Structure for the Pacific Offensive

Source: Louis Morton, *The War In The Pacific: Strategy And Command: The First Two Years* (Washington D.C.: Department of the U S Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, 1962), 111.

An important aspect of Imperial General Headquarters planning was to have fighter aircraft coverage for each step of their ground and naval operations. They intended to maintain control of the air by seizing or building airstrips or positioning aircraft carriers to support air operations wherever needed. Their planning hinged on

conducting operations within the coverage of fighter aircraft. Most often their initial objectives were the seizure of existing airfields that would in turn be utilized to support Japanese airplanes.<sup>22</sup> This pattern of operations was to become dominant for both the Japanese and Americans throughout the war in the Pacific. It would later become a critical factor in the planning for Operation Stalemate.

#### Operation Stalemate Linkage to 1942 Theater Strategy

Operation Stalemate was not yet designated at this time. However, War Plan ORANGE saw the seizure of or the reduction of Japanese forces on the Palaus, Ulithi and Yap as necessary for Phase II offensive operations. ORANGE planners specifically viewed the Palaus as a vulnerable spot in the anticipated Japanese defensive positions. If taken by US forces the Japanese flank would be exposed. The Palaus would also provide US fleet anchorages and a staging base to launch attacks against Japanese positions in the Southern Philippines.<sup>23</sup>

#### 1944 Strategic Situation

Axis forces had been defeated and expelled from Africa. Fascist Italy had surrendered. In mid-1944 the Allies landed en masse on the European continent and pushed German forces east liberating Paris by August 1944. American and British forces pressed the Germans hard from the west while Russian forces attacked Germany from the east. The defeat of Germany seemed close at hand. Japan could not hope to gain any support from its AXIS ally.

Japan achieved some success in China in an offensive against Nationalist Chinese forces. The success of this Japanese offensive put the Japanese in position to seize US

airfields operating in Eastern China.<sup>24</sup> But Japan was on the defensive throughout the Pacific. US and Allied forces had isolated and defeated Japanese forces virtually everywhere along the periphery of Pacific Japanese expansion. In defense of the Marianas Islands the Japanese Imperial Navy had hoped to score a decisive victory. The Japanese viewed this fight with the American navy as the decisive battle of their southern war effort.<sup>25</sup> The Japanese received their battle but it was decidedly decisive in favor of the Americans. In just one day of fighting during the Battle of the Philippine Sea the Japanese lost 315 aircraft as opposed to US losses of just 30 aircraft. The US victory at sea left Japanese land forces in the Marianas isolated and vulnerable. Consequently the US succeeded in capturing Saipan, Tinian, and Guam.<sup>26</sup> The Japanese strategic defensive perimeter in their southern war had been breached and their naval air fleet was crippled.

The US economy was producing war materials and fighting men at a far greater pace than the Japanese could produce. Adding to the imbalance of strategic supply production was the success that US and Allied forces were having on interdicting Japanese sea supply routes. US attacks on Japanese merchant ships, primarily by US submarines and aircraft, had severely crippled Japan's ability to adequately re-supply and replace their forces. Japanese losses of merchant shipping rose dramatically in 1944 as compared to losses in 1942.



Table 1. Japanese Merchant Shipping Losses in World War II

<b>Tons Lost</b>	74	37	103	43	105	39	62	114	54	177	168	88	<b>1,064</b>
<b>Ships Lost</b>	17	9	20	9	24	10	12	23	14	36	30	25	<b>229</b>
<b>1942</b>	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	<b>Total</b>
<b>Tons Lost</b>	355	519	264	128	259	278	252	295	419	512	421	188	<b>3890</b>
<b>Ships Lost</b>	95	112	67	38	64	71	66	66	120	130	97	43	<b>969</b>
<b>1944</b>	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	<b>Total</b>

\* Gross Tonnage expressed in 10,000 ton increments rounded to the nearest 1,000 tons

*Source:* The Joint Army-Navy Assessment Committee, *Japanese Naval and Merchant Shipping Losses During World War II by All Causes* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1947), pages 29-37 and 49-78.

In 1944 Japan lost 3,890,000 tons of merchant shipping compared to an Allied loss of 1,804,000 tons. The Allies actually experienced a net gain of 12,241,000 tons of merchant shipping deliveries.<sup>27</sup> The Allied figures are for all theaters of war. Less than half of these shipments were being delivered to the Pacific theaters in 1944 but those shipments still far outpaced Japan's capacity to sustain its forces. The Imperial Japanese Navy undertook a study, due in part to the severe shipping losses, which concluded that Japan could not win the war. The author of the study went so far as to suggest the removal Japanese War Minister General Hideki Tojo and that Japan make peace on any terms.<sup>28</sup>

The Allied efforts at interdicting Japan's sea lines of supply were dramatically impacting the standard of living for Japanese civilians. In order to maintain war material production levels more civilian businesses were converted into war production. Teenagers and more women were brought into the labor force. Schools reduced classroom instruction and many school buildings were transformed into military

warehouses. A seven-day workweek was established. Home heating supplies were drastically rationed. Clothing and food were in short supply and most forms of public entertainment were cancelled. Public transportation was so crowded that commuters began vandalizing trains.<sup>29</sup> With the austere conditions on the home islands and the growing public awareness of Japan's mounting military losses, the political climate changed and War Minister Tojo was forced out of office.

Phase III of Japan's strategic plan to establish the Co-Prosperity Sphere was failing. She could not defend her newly acquired territories due to her inability to stop the US advance across the Pacific. She could not supply her military nor exploit the resources she gained due to the extremely effective campaign against her merchant shipping. Japan was losing the war.

#### US Theater Strategy, 1944

The US still maintained the "Germany First" overall strategy. The preponderance of strategic support, by a slight margin, was being sent to win the fight against Germany. Of the forces committed overseas roughly two-thirds of the US Army and one third of the US Navy were engaged in the fight against Germany. The remaining forces were being employed against Japan.<sup>30</sup>

Allied planning in late 1943 concluded that the main effort of operations against Japan would be in the Pacific. Operations in China and Southeast Asia were relegated to supporting roles. The US maintained a two-pronged Pacific strategy with simultaneous advances across New Guinea and the Central Pacific. No priority was given to either advance, rather they were to be mutually supporting. Some planners favored supporting the Central Pacific drive, which supported the old War Plan ORANGE concept and the

employment of a new long-range bomber, the B-29 Superfortress. Yet the plan maintained that both offensive were mutually supporting and would proceed at the same time. Admiral Nimitz's forces in the Pacific Ocean Areas were to move on the Marshals, the Carolines and Truk and then onto the Marianas Islands. MacArthur's forces in the Southwest Pacific Ocean Areas were to continue advancing along the northern coast of New Guinea.<sup>31</sup>

In July of 1944 President Roosevelt met with General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz to discuss the Pacific war strategy. The discussion centered on the issue of who would have priority of effort in the Pacific. Should the Philippines be liberated in the Southwestern Pacific Ocean Area or should the drive in the Pacific Ocean Area to seize Formosa and isolate the Japanese home islands receive precedence? The historical record of the President's decision is unclear. Some writers conclude that the President decided in favor of General MacArthur's plan to recapture the Philippines. Later statements by President Roosevelt lend credence to those conclusions. Whatever the President's decision was, what is clear is that the Joint Chiefs ordered MacArthur to attack Leyte in the Philippines and Nimitz was to provide support with the Pacific Fleet. Upon seizure of Leyte, the Southwest Pacific Ocean Area and Pacific Ocean Area forces were to combine to conduct attacks either against Luzon and Manila or Formosa and Amoy on the China coast.<sup>32</sup>

#### Japanese 1944 Theater Strategy

With the fall of the Marianas the Japanese realized that they had no hope of attaining their pre-war goals. They now sought to delay the Allied advance, primarily against the Americans, to protect their home islands. The Japanese withdrew their main

defenses westward. They were now defending along their inner defenses. The inner defensive line extended from the north to south beginning at the Kurile Islands running through Japanese home islands, continuing south through the Ryukyu Island where Okinawa lay, to Formosa then onto the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies. (See Appendix A-8 for a map of Japanese Inner Defenses.) The main effort in protecting the inner defensive line was to be made in the Philippines. If the Allies were to seize the Philippines then Japan's supply lines would be cut off from the resources of the southwest Pacific. Losing the Philippines would also cut off all of the remaining forces of the Southern Army from the main islands. Additionally the Allies would be able to mount attacks against the heart of the Japanese Empire from the Philippines. There they would concentrate their efforts at stopping the Allied advance.<sup>33</sup>

Imperial General Headquarters assumed that the Allies would attempt to retake the Philippines before attacking the Japanese Home Islands. On the basis of this assumption the Imperial General Headquarters issued orders for a decisive battle in the Philippines area. These orders were code-named the "Sho-Go" operations. Sho-Go plans called for the Japanese army and navy to cooperate in a decisive battle on or near the Philippine island of Luzon. The Luzon sector was chosen because Imperial General Headquarters planners realized that the American navy could isolate the Philippines and prevent movement of reinforcements or repositioning of forces in the area. Luzon was determined to be a definite target of an Allied attack. Luzon also offered a developed logistical and communications infrastructure, which allowed greater mobility for the defending forces. Forces elsewhere in the Philippines area were to conduct a delaying

action and maintain key airfields and naval bases as long as possible to achieve maximum destruction of enemy forces with the combat power they had on hand.<sup>34</sup>

The Palaus were viewed as the strategic eastern gateway to the Philippines. The Japanese felt that they could not hold the Palaus but did not want the Americans to use it as a staging base for future operations. Prior to his removal from office War Minister General Tojo met with General Inoue, Commander of the Palaus Sector Group, to discuss plans for the defense of the Palaus. Tojo instructed Inoue to hold the islands as long as possible to deny their use by the enemy and to kill as many Americans as possible before the last Japanese dies at their posts.<sup>35</sup> This order was implemented with new Japanese army defensive tactics for defense against amphibious attacks. Prior defensive tactics placed emphasis on strong beach positions and local counter-attacks designed to prevent the enemy from establishing a decisive force on the shore. The new orders issued from Imperial General Headquarters were as follows.

- (1) preparation of the main line of resistance at some distance from the beach shall minimize the effectiveness of enemy naval shelling;
- (2) organization of defensive positions in depth to permit a successive wearing down of the strength of the attacking forces; and
- (3) holding substantial forces in reserve to mount counterattacks at the most favorable moment.<sup>36</sup>

The commander of the Palaus Sector group was among the first Japanese units to have the time and the resources to implement the new tactics. Peleliu would be the first time American forces faced Japanese defenders wholly prepared with the new defensive tactic.

## Operation Stalemate Linkage to 1944 Theater Strategy

In the summer of 1943 the US Joint War Plans Committee and the Joint Planners developed a tentative schedule for operations against Japan. This schedule called for Nimitz's forces in the Central Pacific to conduct operations against Japanese forces in the Palau Islands by 31 December 1944.<sup>37</sup> Planning for simultaneous advances in the Pacific, one offensive by MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Area forces, and one offensive by Nimitz's Pacific Ocean Area forces, with the general objective of capturing the Formosa-Luzon-China coast areas being the target, continued to be the approach used by Joint Planners. On 12 March 1944 the Joint Chiefs Of Staff issued a directive in line with this planning approach. In that directive the Palaus were to be seized to support an attack on Mindanao Island of the Philippines.<sup>38</sup> Admiral Nimitz's staff had conceived Operation Stalemate prior to the 12 March 1944 Joint Chiefs Of Staff Directive. With the guidance of the 12 March 1944 directive, Nimitz sent an order directing that forces begin preparing Operation Stalemate to be conducted no later than 15 September 1944.<sup>39</sup>

Throughout the rest of the year both Navy and Army planners vied for support of their version of Pacific war strategy. Admiral King argued for a direct approach to Formosa by isolating and bypassing the bulk of the Philippine Islands, while General MacArthur contended that the Philippines needed to be liberated. The argument was decided by events in early September 1944. US carrier raids conducted on southern Philippine islands determined that the southern Philippines were only lightly defended. The commander of the carrier forces, Admiral Halsey, recommended bypassing the southern islands of the Philippines. Instead of attacking Mindanao, Halsey suggested that the more northern island Leyte be the initial target of the offensive, placing them much

closer to Luzon, which was the main objective of the Philippines. The Joints Chiefs of Staff approved this recommendation. Admiral Halsey had recommended that the supporting attacks east of the Philippines, to include seizing the Palaus be cancelled as well. Admiral Nimitz approved all of Halsey's recommendations with the exception of canceling the Palau's operations. Operation Stalemate would proceed in an abbreviated form as Operation Stalemate II.<sup>40</sup>

### Summary

Japan attempted to become a world power by seizing control of the strategic resources in the Pacific. She assumed that the United States would not have the perseverance to undertake a protracted war and that former European powers would be too busy dealing with the war in Europe to challenge her military actions against their Pacific possessions. Japan was wrong in that the United States did have the will power and resolve as a nation to block her military bid for Pacific dominance. Now Japan faced an allied force that was steadily driving towards her homelands. Operation Stalemate and control of the Palau's was another step towards breaching her inner defenses.

The United States began the war in the Pacific almost as she had envisioned 25 years earlier with the Army defending territory while the Navy conducted limited offensive attacks and raids. However, with the focus of the war on Europe the fight in the Pacific evolved into two parallel offensives. In the Southwest Pacific the Army led the attack. In the Central Pacific the Navy led the attack. Operation Stalemate came about to support both Army and Navy objectives.

The level of support provided by the US strategic leadership can determine just how important Operation Stalemate was. How much support did Stalemate receive? What

level of support did those tasked to carry out the operation receive? How did this support affect the outcome of Operation Stalemate?

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<sup>1</sup>Louis Morton, *The War in the Pacific: Strategy and Command: The First Two Years* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, 1962), 45-46.

<sup>2</sup>Dan Van der Vat, *The Pacific Campaign: World War II, the U.S.-Japanese Naval War, 1941-1945* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 14.

<sup>3</sup>Morton, 51-54.

<sup>4</sup>Allen R. Millet and Peter Maslowski, *For The Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1984), 399.

<sup>5</sup>John Toland, *The Rising Sun* (NY: Random House, 1970), 63-64.

<sup>6</sup>John A. Garraty, *The American Nation: A History of the United States*, 5th Ed. (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1983), 691.

<sup>7</sup>Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle Against The Sun: The American War With Japan* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 127.

<sup>8</sup>Vat, 117.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 134-137.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 154-157.

<sup>11</sup>Edward S. Miller, *War Plan Orange* (Annapolis, MD: United States Naval Institute, 1991), 21.

<sup>12</sup>Miller, 3-4.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 214-215.

<sup>14</sup>Kent Roberts Greenfield et al., *Command Decisions* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1960), 23-24.

<sup>15</sup>Spector, 65-67.

<sup>16</sup>Morton, 88.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 85-91.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 243, 252.



<sup>19</sup>Morton, 251.

<sup>20</sup>Vat, 120-121.

<sup>21</sup>Morton, 109-111.

<sup>22</sup>Vat, 122.

<sup>23</sup>Miller, 206-207.

<sup>24</sup>Maurice Matloff, *The War Department: Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943-1944* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1959), 475-477.

<sup>25</sup>Vat, 316.

<sup>26</sup>Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of the United States Naval Operations in World War II*, vol. 8, *New Guinea and the Marianas, March 1944-August 1944* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953), 318-321.

<sup>27</sup>Robert W. Coakley and Richard M. Leighton, *The United States Army in World War II, The War Department: Global Logistics and Strategy, 1943-1945* (Washington DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1968), 842.

<sup>28</sup>Toland, 475.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 523-525.

<sup>30</sup>Coakley and Leighton, 393-395.

<sup>31</sup>Spector, 276-280.

<sup>32</sup>D. Clayton James, *The Years of MacArthur, 1941-1945* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975), 533-536.

<sup>33</sup>Major General Charles A. Willoughby, *Reports of General MacArthur: Japanese Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area*, vol. 2, Part I (Washington, DC: publisher??, 1994), 307.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 322-330.

<sup>35</sup>Bill D. Ross, *A Special Piece of Hell* (New York, NY: Random House, 1991), 123-124.

<sup>36</sup>Willoughby, 322.

<sup>37</sup>Matloff, 206-207.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid, 458-459.

<sup>39</sup>Ross, 14.

<sup>40</sup>Spector, 419-418.

## CHAPTER 3

### STRATEGIC SUPPORT

In the weeks and days preceding the assault on Peleliu US military strategy in the Pacific had still not been decided. Equipment and resources were shuffled from area to area while US military planners haggled over which efforts should receive priority. Just a few days before Operation Stalemate was to begin, a decision was finally reached. The emphasis was placed on General MacArthur's operations to rescue the Philippines from Japanese occupation. MacArthur's plans to retake the Philippines were code named Musketeer I, Musketeer II and Musketeer III.<sup>1</sup> The scope of Operation Stalemate was altered to reflect the new emphasis. Operation Stalemate II, as it was renamed, became a supporting attack for MacArthur's Musketeer operations.

Most of the forces available in the Pacific were placed in support of the Musketeer operations. The Musketeer operations also received the majority of available fire support. Designated as a supporting operation, Operation Stalemate was not given much priority for allocation of resources. The planning resources for Stalemate of both time and facilities for the major subordinate participating commands were scarce. The training area provided for the principal ground combat unit was woefully inadequate. Necessary equipment for the amphibious operation was delivered late. Allocation of some of the amphibious shipping required for Stalemate II was also diverted to support other operations.

The recollections of a Marine who fought on Peleliu capture the nature of the support given to Stalemate II.

While we were under MacArthur's jurisdiction or plan, and we were through New Britain until Peleliu, he was in charge, and our equipment was very, very poor, our kit, uniforms and that sort of thing, we just didn't have good equipment. I do know that we didn't have a full compliment of the latest amtracks on Peleliu. Some had the ramp in the rear that dropped. The one that I went in one, you bailed out over the side. That was probably a six-foot drop I guess. You had people climbing on top of each other and stuff like that.<sup>2</sup>

#### Forces Allocated to Operation Stalemate

Much of the force allocated for the original plan was reassigned to support other operations. The original Operation Stalemate plan called for two amphibious corps to seize the Palaus. The Marines would command the III Amphibious Corps composed of the 1st Marine Division and the 81st Infantry Division. The III Amphibious Corps' task was to take Anguar and Peleliu. The Army was to command the XXIV Corps that included the 7th and 77th Infantry Divisions. They were assigned to seize the main Palau island of Babelthuap. The 27th Infantry Division located in Guam was designated as the floating reserve. The general reserve force was the 5th Marine Division stationed in Hawaii.<sup>3</sup>

When the decision was made to accelerate operations in the Philippines the XXIV Corps was reassigned to support MacArthur's Musketeer operations. The 27th Infantry Division and the 5th Marine Division were also pulled from Stalemate. The III Amphibious Corps was forced to carry out the operation with only two divisions. General Geiger would have to create a reserve from these two divisions. This alone was a serious limitation that further diminished his available combat power. Although the main Palaus island of Babelthuap was dropped as an objective, Operation Stalemate II would still be required to seize the additional islands of Yap and Ulithi.

Although there were supporting forces assigned to the operation, the infantry divisions did the bulk of the fighting. Each division had three infantry regiments. These infantry regiments were the principal maneuver elements available to the commander. Each infantry regiment had approximately 3,000 men. That gave Geiger approximately 18,000 assault troops to secure Anguar, Peleliu, Yap and Ulithi. All of the approximately 15,000 men the Japanese had defending Anguar and Peleliu were expected to fight. The Americans essentially attacked the Japanese with a 1.2 to 1.0 ratio. Accepted ratio for attacking an established defense was 3.0 to 1.0. The loss of three infantry divisions before the battle even started caused Geiger to fight the Japanese on an almost 1 to 1 basis.<sup>4</sup>

#### Fire Support Allocated to Operation Stalemate

Stalemate II received much of its operational level fire support before assault troops conducted landings on 15 September. But the primary goal of most of these efforts was not conducted specifically to support Stalemate. In February 1944 Rear Admiral Marc A. Mitscher's Task Force 58, which included 12 aircraft carriers with over 600 aircraft, attacked the Japanese naval stronghold of Truk Island. After a decisive defeat at the hands of Task Force 58 Admiral Mineichi Koga, Commanding The Combined Fleet, fled Truk to the safety of the Palaus. Mitscher's Task Force 58 pursued the Japanese fleet to the Palaus Islands. There, Mitscher concentrated his efforts on the airfields of Peleliu and Anguar islands. For two days in early March Task Force 58 rendered these airfields useless. The Japanese lost 129 aircraft. The airfield's runways and support facilities were also destroyed. The aggressive pursuit by Task Force 58 trapped many of the support ships of the Japanese Combined Fleet. US dive-bombers and torpedo planes destroyed or damaged most of these ships after destroying the airfields on Peleliu and Anguar. This

action rendered the Palaus' air and naval power projection capability useless by destroying facilities required to support the Japanese aircraft and their Combined Fleet. Japanese forces on the Palaus were incapable of offensive action as a result of Task Force 58's attacks.<sup>5</sup>

Other raids against the Palaus were conducted in mid-March 1944 when aircraft carriers raided the Palaus in support of MacArthur's Operation Cartwheel in New Guinea. A heavier aircraft carrier raid was conducted in July 1944 causing extensive damage to above ground installations. US Army aviation also attacked the Palaus in June and August 1944 in support of operations in the Marianas Islands.<sup>6</sup>

The sixth of September 1944 marked the first day that operational fire support was used specifically to support Stalemate II. Three fast carrier groups started a three-day attack against the Palaus. This attack was principally carried out with naval aircraft but there was some naval gunfire bombardment as well. Since there was little Japanese opposition the size of the attack was reduced and the ships departed for operations against Japanese forces in the Philippines. On 10 and 11 September 1944 Task Group 38.4 arrived and attacked anti-aircraft installations on Peleliu and Anguar. Task Group 38.4 remained on station to support the prelanding bombardment delivered by the Western Gunfire Support Group and provide close air support during the amphibious landings.<sup>7</sup>

Task Group 38.4 was a subunit of Task Force 38. Task Force 38 consisted of Task Group 38.1, Task Group 38.2, Task Group 38.3 and Task Group 38.4. The entire Task Force 38 carried a complement of eight aircraft carriers, eight light aircraft carriers, six battleships, six heavy cruisers, nine light cruisers, and forty-eight destroyers. Of Task Force 38's ships Task Group 38.4 had just two carriers, two light carriers, two

battleships, two heavy cruisers and 15 destroyers.<sup>8</sup> Previous amphibious operations in the Central Pacific had an entire task force providing cover for the landings and operations ashore, however, with the emphasis on the Philippines only one quarter of Task Force 38 supported Operation Stalemate II.

Rear Admiral Oldendorf's Fire Support Group and Rear Admiral Ralph Ofstie's Escort Carrier Group provided dedicated operational fire support for Stalemate II. Both groups were part of Admiral Fort's Task Force 32.<sup>9</sup> Oldendorf commenced a planned three-day naval bombardment of Peleliu and Anguar on 12 September 1944. On the morning of the third day of the bombardment Oldendorf cancelled the fires due to an apparent lack of remaining targets.<sup>10</sup> This decision proved to be a contentious issue with the Marines as they found plenty of targets to deal with upon landing on Peleliu.

#### Planning, Training, and Equipment Resources for Operation Stalemate

Time and space allocated for planning Operation Stalemate II was poor at best. The 81st Infantry Division and the 1st Marine Division performed the majority of the planning for ground operations on Anguar and those on Peleliu. Major General Paul J. Mueller's 81st Infantry Division staff conducted the planning for the assault against Anguar. His division was dispersed throughout Oahu, Hawaii during most of the planning. His division was well trained but Stalemate would be its first time in combat.<sup>11</sup>

For the assault against Peleliu the 1st Marine Division's assistant commander, Brigadier General Oliver P. Smith, using an ad hoc staff of junior officers, conducted almost all of the planning.<sup>12</sup> General Smith conducted most of his planning on the tiny island of Pavuvu. Pavuvu was an island that spanned just ten miles at its longest point and six miles at its widest point. But only a fraction of that space was habitable. The

island was undeveloped so the Marines had to construct their own facilities from the ground up. The area beyond the bivouac site was impassible swamp and jungle. The Marines expanded the tiny campsite by mining coral and hauling the crushed coral to create roads and vehicle parks. What little firm ground the Marines were able create was used for vehicle staging and administrative support facilities. The human conditions on Pavuvu were deplorable. It was hot and humid. The island was covered by rotting coconuts and infested with land crabs and huge rats. The whole area reeked with the rank smell of fetid coconuts. The crab's nocturnal activities and the nightly raids by hordes of rats deprived men of sleep. For weeks men slept in mud and standing water and had to take showers in the rain until facilities were constructed. Most importantly there was little to no space dedicated to training. Heavy equipment such as tanks, artillery and amphibious tractors could not leave the man-made hardstands. The weapons firing ranges that the Marines were able to create were small, rudimentary and of limited use. Infantry units conducted mock-skirmishes through bivouac areas. All training was limited to company-level and below.<sup>13</sup> These conditions were totally inappropriate for a unit that would soon land three regiments abreast on a hostile enemy shore.

It was not until late August 1944 that the 1st Marine Division and the 81st Infantry Division conducted joint planning for the operation. They did accomplish limited joint rehearsals of the amphibious landing. On August 27th and 29th the divisions made practice landings on Guadalcanal. Both divisions also conducted individual rehearsals but the beaches they used did not resemble those they would actually attack.<sup>14</sup>

Equipment for both divisions was in short supply or delivered late and in some cases not supplied at all. These shortages affected the 1st Marine Division the most.



Virtually every class of item was in short supply. Items such as spare parts, vehicles, radios, weapons replacement items like machine gun barrels, and even man-packed flamethrowers arrived too late to be issued as planned.<sup>15</sup>

The Marines were short of both terrestrial and amphibious vehicles. LVT's, which were lightly armored, tracked amphibious assault vehicles, and DUWKs, which were amphibious trucks, were not delivered to the Marines in sufficient numbers until just before the ships were loaded for the attack. The LVTs were used for landing combat troops on the beaches for the primary assault and later to ferry troops and supplies to and from the ships. The DUWKs were used as to haul men, supplies and equipment to and from the ships. The Marines had to borrow some DUWKs from the Army so that it could train personnel to operate the vehicles. Equally important to basic operation of a DUWK was the training of personnel to load and unload ungainly items such as artillery pieces and radio jeeps. The shortage of the DUWKs caused severe inefficiencies in preparing for the amphibious assault. Vehicles and crews that should have been practicing loading and unloading combat troops and equipment were either in training themselves or not available.<sup>16</sup>

The shortage of LVTs was also a significant training issue. Moreover when the LVTs were finally delivered they were of a model that few of the Marines had any experience with. The Marines used the first LVT arrivals to train their crews. With only few remaining weeks before the battle, and just half of their new LVTs delivered the Marines were shocked to learn that the remaining delivery of their LVTs would be of different versions from the new model. They had to adjust training to account for different weapons mounted on the newer LVTs.<sup>17</sup>

## Shipping Allocation for Operation Stalemate

Allocation of some amphibious shipping was diverted to support MacArthur's Musketeer operations. In mid-1944 Army amphibious resources and Vice Admiral Thomas C. Kincaid's Seventh Fleet, often referred to as MacArthur's Navy, were augmented with landing craft to provide enough amphibious support to conduct the Philippine campaign.<sup>18</sup> The priority on the Musketeer operations caused a lack of shipping for Operation Stalemate. The lack of shipping caused problems equipping combat troops, conducting amphibious training, and planning for Stalemate.

Some vital equipment was not loaded due to lack of shipping. Some of the equipment left behind seriously reduced firepower available to the Marines during the fighting on Peleliu. In one instance the Marines were forced to leave sixteen Sherman tanks behind. Only two tank-carrying ships arrived to load the 1st Marine Division's forty-six tanks. There was insufficient room to fit all the tanks on the ships. With no more ships available, and an attack timetable already running, the Marines were forced to leave for Peleliu without all of their tanks. They carried out the assault without the benefit of the firepower provided by those sixteen tanks.<sup>19</sup>

Essential amphibious ships for the assault were not available for training until August 1944. Launching and recovering amphibious vehicles from ships at sea is a challenging task. A critical facet of amphibious operations is the specialized training required to quickly transfer assault troops from ship to shore. In lieu of ships the Marines were forced to practice with a few un-serviceable landing craft. The landing craft were repaired and sent to the Marines in order to practice operating with what few LVTs and

DUKWs they possessed.<sup>20</sup> This lack of sufficient training assets was a severe limitation and added much to the complexity of their training preparations.

Loading for an amphibious operation is an extremely complicated procedure. Meticulous planning goes into ensuring that every piece of equipment is loaded in the proper order so that it can be accessed and sent ashore in the sequence called for in the battle plan. If equipment is improperly stowed it may be inaccessible at sea or the entire ship may have to be unloaded in order to gain access to the equipment. The potential delays caused by improperly stowed equipment can have deadly consequences to troops fighting on the beach.

The officers and men who do the planning and actual loading of the ships need to be trained and ideally have experience in the process in order to accomplish the task efficiently. They also need to know what ships will be available so they can plan for the load-plan of each ship, as all ships are not alike. There was much confusion among planners as to what ships would support the operation and when they would arrive for loading. To complicate matters with shipping the assault force was embarked aboard ships at five separate locations: Pavuvu, Banika, Guadalcanal, Tulagi, and Espiritu Santo.<sup>21</sup> What ships were allocated to Operation Stalemate did not arrive for loading in a timely manner. Embark officers were forced to make spur of the moment plans and rush loading of men and equipment. In one instance seven ships designed to carry 6,000 troops and their equipment failed to arrive at all.<sup>22</sup>

### Summary

Assigned a supporting role, the strategic support for Operation Stalemate was given second priority. The forces allocated were insufficient to establish accepted combat

force ratios when attacking a deliberate defense and not enough to establish an adequate reserve force. The operational fire support was less than it could have been. Limited resources for planning and training had adverse effects on preparations for the assault. And lack of equipment and necessary shipping introduced needless friction and complexity to the Operation.

The purpose of Stalemate II was to provide flank security for MacArthur's operations against Japanese forces in the Philippines by preventing the Japanese from using the Palaus to launch attacks. Once in US hands, air raids could be launched against Japanese forces in support of the Musketeer Operations. Did Operation Stalemate II accomplish its objectives? Was Operation Stalemate II worth the cost? Did the outcome of this operation justify the recommendations that it be cancelled?

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<sup>1</sup>William Manchester, *American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur, 1880-1964* (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1978), 372.

<sup>2</sup>Henry J. Paustain, participated in Operation Stalemate II as a Platoon Sergeant for C Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Fifth Marines, USMC, interview by author, digital recording, Lawrence, KS, 20 October 2003.

<sup>3</sup>Harry A. Gailey, *Peleliu, 1944* (Annapolis, MD: The Nautical and Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1983), 16.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>5</sup>Bill D. Ross, *A Special Piece of Hell* (New York, NY: Random House, 1991), 118-119.

<sup>6</sup>Robert Ross Smith, *The War in the Pacific: The Approach to the Philippines* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, Department of the US Army, 1984), 494.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 495.

<sup>8</sup>E. B. Potter, *Bull Halsey* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1985), 288.

<sup>9</sup>James H. Hallas, *The Devil's Anvil: The Assault on Peleliu* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1994), 26.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 37.

<sup>11</sup>Gailey, 26.

<sup>12</sup>Ross, 86.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 62-70.

<sup>14</sup>Gailey, 32.

<sup>15</sup>Frank O. Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu* (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1950), 31.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 29-30.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 31.

<sup>18</sup>Robert W. Coakley and Richard M. Leighton, *The United States Army in World War II, The War Department: Global Logistics and Strategy, 1943-1945* (Office of the Chief o

f Military History, Department Of The Army, Washington D.C.: U. S. Army, 1968), 494.

<sup>19</sup>Ross, 102.

<sup>20</sup>Hough, 29.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 34.

<sup>22</sup>Ross, 101.

## CHAPTER 4

### A PROFITLESS VICTORY

US forces did prevail in their attacks against those Japanese forces defending the Palau Islands attacked during Operation Stalemate II. However, when the fighting for Peleliu ended in late November 1944 there remained thousands of Japanese troops defending the Palau Islands. The Japanese held the main Palau island of Babelthuap and the lesser island of Koror with an estimated 25,000 troops in prepared defenses.<sup>1</sup> Babelthuap had an unfinished airfield and a fair naval anchorage. With thousands of Japanese troops still defending the Palau's largest island, was the intent of Operation Stalemate fulfilled when the fighting was over? What danger did the defenders of Peleliu and Anguar pose to operations in the Philippines that Lieutenant General Sade Inoue's 14th Division on Babelthuap and Koror not pose? What benefit did US forces gain after Stalemate II ended? Admiral Halsey, Commanding the Stalemate II Operation made previous recommendations to cancel the entire Palau operation. What caused him to determine that seizure of the Palau was no longer necessary? American Pacific strategists feared that the Japanese would launch attacks against American forces operating in the Philippines from the Palau. Did the Japanese even possess the ability to conduct offensive operations from the Palau Islands on 15 September 1944?

#### Strategic Outcome of Operation Stalemate II

The official intent of Operation Stalemate II was to secure MacArthur's flank by preventing the Japanese from launching naval or air attacks from the Palau Islands. Nimitz was to seize and prepare the airfield on Peleliu as a staging area for air attacks on

Japanese forces in the Philippines in support of MacArthur. Nimitz also planned to establish naval bases and fleet anchorages to support the drive north and west against Japanese forces in the Pacific.

The Japanese did not use the Palau Islands to launch any significant attacks against US forces operating in the Philippines during the Musketeer Operations. Whatever ability the Japanese had to attack US forces in the Philippines from the Palaus prior to Operation Stalemate II was lost after the Americans seized Peleliu and Anguar. Lieutenant General Sade Inoue's 14th Division on Babelthuap and Koror were isolated. US naval presence and the establishment of US airbases on Peleliu and Anguar Islands ensured that Japanese forces could not use the Palau Islands to conduct offensive operations against US forces in the Philippines. Loss of control of the Palaus denied the Japanese use of seaplane bases, a submarine base, fleet anchorages and airfields. Without the use of their Palau facilities the Japanese were effectively deprived use of the entire Western Caroline Islands area.<sup>2</sup> The loss of these facilities coupled with the presence of permanent US airfields on Peleliu and Anguar, and a strong US naval presence on Ulithi and Yap rendered the Japanese powerless to significantly affect US operations in the area.

US Marines captured the Peleliu airfield after the first few days of fighting. By 27 September 1944 Marine aircraft began using the airfield on Peleliu for air operations against Japanese forces in the Palaus.<sup>3</sup> This airfield was eventually made operational to support the new long-range B-29 Superfortress heavy bomber. The runways were lengthened and paved. Permanent hangers and support facilities were constructed and all preparations were made to support bombing of the Japanese home islands.<sup>4</sup>

The US constructed two 6,000-foot runways on Anguar. The first airfield constructed on Anguar was ready for limited operations on 15 October 1944. Four days later the other airfield was put into limited use.<sup>5</sup> These runways were to be used by US Army bombers to support Musketeer Operations in the Philippines; however, difficulties in support and training delayed bombing missions from these newly constructed airfields. Army medium bombers from the Seventh Air Force's 494th Bomb Group were tasked to begin operations against the Philippines from Anguar by 15 October 1944. But issues with terrain and storage facilities on Anguar delayed the ability to support these operations for six days past 15 October. Once the airfields were fully operational the 494th Bomb Group determined that it was not trained well enough to conduct operations in the Philippines. The bomb group spent the next several weeks flying combat missions against Japanese forces in the Palaus and on Yap Island to improve its training readiness. The first bombing missions against Japanese forces in the Philippines were not launched from the Palaus until 17 November 1944.<sup>6</sup> By this time the US had already established airfields in the Philippines that were more effective for attacks against Japanese forces. The tempo and success of operations in the Philippines had rendered any support offered by US airbases in the Palaus almost irrelevant.

By the end of Operation Stalemate II the Japanese airfield and air support facilities on Yap Island were also captured and put to use by American forces. The Japanese had previously stationed about forty fighter aircraft on Yap, but most of these airplanes had been destroyed prior to the assault on Peleliu.

Several naval facilities were established as a result of Operation Stalemate II. The northern Kossal Passage of the Palaus was utilized as a fleet anchorage for US naval units



operating in the area. Submarine pens were constructed among the reefs just south of Peleliu. The naturally sheltered deep-water anchorage of Ulithi was seized unopposed by the 323rd Regiment of the 81st Division on 21 September. The Japanese had abandoned their facilities leaving over fifty permanent buildings, including barracks and supply buildings to the Americans.<sup>7</sup> The US Navy quickly developed the existing facilities and the natural harbor provided by Ulithi into a major support installation. During October 1944 a massive towing operation was taken to transfer the Navy's Service Squadron Ten from Eniwetok to Ulithi.<sup>8</sup> This was a significant move of over 1,000 nautical miles. The new base at Ulithi greatly increased the sustained operating range of Nimitz's naval forces in the Pacific. The seizure of Ulithi was of tremendous use to the Navy; Ulithi became the hub of all US naval activity for the remainder of the war in the Pacific. It was described by Naval Archives as "one of the great bargains of the Pacific war."<sup>9</sup>

### Recommendation to Cancel Stalemate II

Prior to 15 September 1944 Operation Stalemate was seen as unnecessary. Admiral Halsey, Nimitz's commander responsible for conducting Operation Stalemate, recommended that the Palaus could be bypassed. On 12 and 13 September 1944 Halsey's Task Force 38 attacked Japanese forces in the central Philippines. Task Force 38 destroyed almost 200 Japanese aircraft, inflicted considerable damage to Japanese facilities and sunk a dozen Japanese support ships. Only eight US airplanes were lost during the attacks. During the fighting a downed US naval aviator was rescued by Filipinos. His rescuers told the pilot that there were no Japanese troops defending Leyte. The weak Japanese defensive response against Task Force 38 and the information brought back by the downed Task Force 38 pilot convinced Halsey that the Japanese

were weak in the central Philippines. He saw an opportunity to speed up the planned timetable for attacks in the Philippines. Halsey suggested the cancellation of several intermediary operations planned for execution prior to MacArthur's Musketeer Operations. He suggested that operations against the Talauds, which were just south of the Philippines, and operations against the Palaus and Yap be cancelled. He felt that all forces and shipping planned for use against those objectives should be given under MacArthur's control to support operations in the Philippines. He also suggested that the first Philippines objective of Mindanao be bypassed in lieu of attacks against Leyte.<sup>10</sup>

Before Task Force 38's 12 and 13 September 1944 attack against the Philippines Halsey had already had reservations about the plans for Operation Stalemate. Those plans included seizing the Palaus, Yap, and Ulithi Islands. With US forces firmly in control of the Marianas Islands he felt that Japanese air power in the Caroline Islands was no longer a threat to US forces. He also felt that the Palaus and Yap could not be reinforced from Japan. In his opinion Ulithi was the only objective worth seizing. Attacks against Japanese forces in the Palaus and on Yap would be a waste of time and American lives.<sup>11</sup> Halsey recognized that the thousands of Japanese troops defending the Palaus were isolated and posed no threat to US operations against the Philippines.

Halsey submitted his recommendations to Admiral Nimitz. Nimitz did not agree with Halsey's entire proposal. Nimitz did not want to cancel the Palau operation. Nimitz believed that the airfield on Peleliu and the Palaus' Kossol Passage anchorage would be useful for supporting forces in Leyte. Despite his disagreement with Halsey's suggestions Nimitz forwarded them to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. With an abbreviated form of Operation Stalemate in mind Nimitz offered MacArthur the Third Amphibious Force and

the XXIV Army Corps. But he insisted that the Palaus Operation still take place.<sup>12</sup> The Joint Chiefs were attending the OCTAGON conference in Quebec, Canada. Upon receiving Halsey's recommendations, with Nimitz's caveat to retain Stalemate, the Joint Chiefs immediately sought the opinion of General MacArthur. MacArthur was at sea observing radio silence so his Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Richard K. Sutherland, responded for him. He concurred with Halsey's recommendations but contested the information that there were no Japanese troops on Leyte. However, he agreed that moving directly to Leyte was the best course of action. Less than two hours after receipt of Nimitz's radio message the Joint Chiefs approved Halsey's suggestions less the cancellation of the Palaus operation.<sup>13</sup> Stalemate II, as it was renamed in a Warning Order from Nimitz's staff, would proceed on 15 September 1944.

#### Stalemate II Objectives Had Already Been Accomplished

When the Joint Chiefs approved Halsey's plan to accelerate operations against the Pacific they chose to allow Nimitz to retain Operation Stalemate. The new Operation Stalemate II still had the same strategic objectives as envisioned in the original operation, albeit some of the operational objectives had been discarded. The primary purpose of Stalemate II remained in ensuring that MacArthur's east flank was secure from Japanese interference against his operations in the Philippines. A secondary strategic purpose of Stalemate II was to provide a base to launch air attacks against Japanese forces in the Philippines in support of MacArthur's operations.

Before Stalemate II was launched the Japanese had no ability to project any force from the Palau Islands. Thus the primary goal of Stalemate II had already been achieved. Admiral Halsey recognized this. His operations against Japanese airpower in the

Carolines and on the Palaus had been extremely successful. He also knew that the US victories and subsequent occupation of the Marianas Islands prevented the Japanese Navy from reinforcing the Palaus and using the Palau naval facilities to stage for and conduct operations from. He must have formed his opinions on the wastefulness of landing troops against Japanese defenders in the Palaus from the Japanese inability to successfully contest any of his recent US naval actions, especially those carrier air attacks against Japanese air and naval bases in the region.

A review of major US Navy and Army air attacks in the Carolines prior to Halsey's recommendation to cancel Operation Stalemate support Halsey's assessment of the Japanese inability to launch operationally significant attacks from the Palaus:

1. 30 March to 1 April 1944--Task Force 58 sought battle with the Japanese Combined Fleet in the Palaus in March 1944. The Japanese fleet withdrew so Task Force 58 launched carrier airplanes against the Palau islands sinking a destroyer and sinking or damaging thirty-five other vessels.<sup>14</sup> Task Force 58 attacks continued on 1 April 1944 and included the islands of Yap, Ulithi, Ngulu, and Woleai. The combined results of the three-day attacks accounted for destroying almost 150 Japanese aircraft, sinking two Japanese destroyers, sinking four Japanese escort vessels and 104,000 tons of Japanese merchant and naval auxiliary ships. Many other Japanese vessels were also damaged. Japanese airfields, shore installations, and fleet anchorages at all locations were severely damaged. The raids included aerial mining of waters that temporarily blocked the Japanese fleet anchorage in the Palaus.<sup>15</sup>
2. 30 April 1944--Task Force 58 operated against targets in the Palaus.<sup>16</sup>
3. June 1944--Bombers from the U.S. Army's Fifth Air Force struck Japanese air and

naval bases in the Palaus and other islands of the Western Carolines.<sup>17</sup>

4. 25 to 28 July 1944--Task Force 58 conducted a heavy raid against Japanese installations in the Palaus causing much damage to Japanese facilities and destruction of some Japanese aircraft.
5. 8 August to 5 September 1944--Aircraft from the U.S. Army's Thirteenth Air Force bombed Japanese air and naval bases in the Palaus and other islands of the Western Carolines. The Thirteenth Air Force dropped approximately 885 tons on bombs on Japanese targets in the Palaus.
6. 6 to 8 September 1944--Task Force 58 attacked Japanese installations and forces on the Palaus. Task Force 58 flew about 1,470 sorties causing extensive damage to ammunition and supply dumps, barracks, warehouses and other buildings.
7. 7 and 8 September 1944--Task Group 38.4 attacked Japanese forces and installations on Yap and Ulithi.
8. 10 and 11 September 1944--Task Group 38.4 attacked Japanese forces and installations in the Palaus. These attacks were delivered primarily against targets on Peleliu and Anguar.<sup>18</sup>

During Task Force 58's attacks of 6 to 8 September 1944 US aviators claimed to have destroyed only four Japanese aircraft.<sup>19</sup> The low number of enemy aircraft kills was not due to the skill of the Japanese pilots. It was due to the fact that the Japanese had very few remaining serviceable aircraft left in the Palaus.

The success of US submarine operations against Japanese shipping must also be considered. Submarine attacks were very effective in disrupting the Combined Fleet and Japanese merchant shipping freedom of movement in the Western Carolines. US

submarine operations contributed much to the isolation of Japanese forces on the Palaus. A review of US submarine operations in the Carolines during the month of January 1944 illustrates the effect on Japanese activities in the area.

1. 1 January 1944 – The US submarine *Balao* (SS-285) damaged a Japanese transport ship south of Truk in the Carolines.
2. 12 January 1944 – The US submarine *Albacore* (SS-218) sank two Japanese gunboats southwest of Truk in the Carolines.
3. 14 January 1944 – US submarines *Scamp* (SS-277), *Albacore* (SS-218) and *Guardfish* (SS-217) attacked a Japanese convoy south of the Palaus and sank two fuel tankers and one destroyer.
4. 16 January 1944 – the US submarine *Blackfish* (SS-221) sank a Japanese transport southwest of Truk in the Carolines.
5. 20 January 1944 – US submarine *Gar* (SS-206) sank a Japanese cargo ship headed towards the Palaus and the US submarine *Sea Dragon* (SS-194) damaged a Japanese supply ship northwest of Truk in the Carolines.
6. 21 January 1944 – US submarine *Seahorse* (SS-304) attacked a Japanese convoy sinking a Japanese army transport and cargo ship southeast of Palau Islands.
7. 23 January 1944 – US submarine *Gar* (SS-206), sank a Japanese transport ship south of Palau.
8. 26 January 1944 – US submarine *Skipjack* (SS-184) sank a Japanese destroyer 140 miles northwest of Ponape in the Carolines.
9. 30 January 1944 – US submarine *Seahorse* (SS-304) attacked a Japanese convoy sinking a Japanese army cargo ship southeast of Palau.

10. 31 January 1944 – US submarine *Trigger* (SS-237) sank a Japanese auxiliary submarine depot ship and damaged a Japanese destroyer northwest of Truk, in the Carolines.<sup>20</sup>

From February to August 1944 US submarines accounted for an additional twenty-five Japanese ships sunk. In addition to actual sinking, US submarines conducted many attacks that caused damage to other Japanese ships.<sup>21</sup>

The combination of repeated US attacks on the Palaus, Yap and Ulithi and the effective interdiction of Japanese shipping by US submarines prevented the Japanese from using the Palaus to stage attacks on US forces. The Japanese had no opportunity to build up offensive power from the Palaus because of these repeated intense attacks. The Japanese commander of The Palaus Sector Group did not possess the ability to do other than defend his islands.

One more fact to consider is that the Japanese Combined Fleet had been beaten. Truk was the Combined Fleet's base of operations and command center. When Task Force 58 smashed Japanese defenses and facilities at Truk during mid-February 1944, the Japanese Combined Fleet was forced to flee to the Palaus to establish a new base. Task Force 58's attack in late March 1944 on the Palaus forced The Combined Fleet to retreat closer to the Japanese home islands. After these successive setbacks the Combined Fleet lost the Battle Of The Philippine Sea in mid-June 1944. The Combined Fleet was not an effective force for the remainder of the Pacific war. Without the support of the Combined Fleet the Palaus Sector Group commander could do little but sit on his islands and wait for the Americans to come.

### Summary

Operation Stalemate II did not achieve its directed primary purpose of preventing the enemy from attacking MacArthur's flank due to the fact that that purpose had already been achieved. The Japanese commander of the Palaus Sector Group could not influence actions against the Americans in the Philippines. Stalemate II cost The Palaus Sector Group commander several thousand soldiers and a few of his islands and required him to contend with the presence of permanent enemy air and naval bases in his sector. But he still retained control of the largest landmass of the Palaus. The operational significance of his position was unchanged because of Stalemate II.

Beginning in April 1944 the Palaus Sector Group Commander did not have the ability to conduct offensive operations from his islands. The Combined Japanese Fleet was unable to support the Palaus. Repeated devastating US air attacks, a strong US naval presence and the effective action of US submarines prevented Japanese forces from mounting operationally significant attacks from the Palaus.

Stalemate II did achieve its secondary purpose of providing airbases to support MacArthur's Musketeer Operations, however, due to a well-executed Japanese defense and issues that delayed employment of Palaus-based US aircraft, the secondary purpose of Stalemate II was only partially accomplished. MacArthur's successful operations in the Philippines provided him ample airbases with which to support his attacks. Thus the untimely attainment of the operation's secondary purpose rendered it ineffective.

In hindsight it is clear that Admiral Halsey's recommendations to cancel Operation Stalemate were justified. It is clear that the Japanese forces in the Palaus were not able to have any affect on MacArthur's Musketeer operations.



There are many factors that led to the US Joint Chiefs of Staff approval of the execution of Stalemate II. The most important factors were those future plans for Pacific operations once the Philippines were recaptured, the command climate of the US forces in the Pacific, an ongoing competition between the Army and the Navy and the organization and role of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff. These primary factors set the conditions to allow a seemingly unnecessary operation to be approved.

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<sup>1</sup>Frank O. Hough, *The Assault On Peleliu* (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, 1950), 17.

<sup>2</sup>Major General Charles A. Willoughby, *Reports of General MacArthur, Japanese Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area*, vol. 2, Part I (Washington, DC, 1994), 348.

<sup>3</sup>Willoughby, 348.

<sup>4</sup>Bill D. Ross, *A Special Piece of Hell* (New York, NY: Random House, 1991), 340.

<sup>5</sup>Robert Ross Smith, *The War in the Pacific: The Approach to the Philippines* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, US Army, 1984), 530.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 573.

<sup>7</sup>Ross, 222-223.

<sup>8</sup>Robert W. Coakley and Richard M. Leighton, *The United States Army in World War II, The War Department: Global Logistics and Strategy, 1943-1945* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1968), 567.

<sup>9</sup>Ross, 223.

<sup>10</sup>E. B. Potter, *Bull Halsey* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1985), 227.

<sup>11</sup>E. B. Potter, *Nimitz* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1976), 320.

<sup>12</sup>Potter, *Bull Halsey*, 323-324.

<sup>13</sup>Ross, 137-139.

<sup>14</sup>Potter, *Bull Halsey*, 269.

<sup>15</sup>Smith, 49.

<sup>16</sup>Robert J. Cressman, *The Official Chronology of the US Navy in World War II*, Chapter VI: 1944 (Washington, DC: Contemporary History Branch, Naval Historical Center, n.d.); [database on-line]available from [http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/USN-\]Chron/USN-Chron-1944.html](http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/USN-]Chron/USN-Chron-1944.html); Internet; accessed on 8 March 2004.

<sup>17</sup>Smith, 279.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid, 495.

<sup>19</sup>Smith, 495.

<sup>20</sup>Cressman

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER 5

### PACIFIC COMMAND CLIMATE

Operation Stalemate II was a supporting effort for a larger operation. As such, the focus of attention at the highest levels of command was elsewhere. The given support for Stalemate II failed to meet the requirements of the operation resulting in shortages of supply items, equipment, training facilities, planning facilities and planning opportunities, forces to conduct the operation and assault and amphibious shipping. Stalemate II was a non-essential operation provided with insufficient resources to accomplish the stated mission in a timely manner.

The US military leadership in the Pacific did not willingly undertake a known unnecessary operation. Rather Stalemate II was a byproduct of the strategic and operational leadership environment of the US military in the Pacific during WWII. This environment thus far had produced a series of case-by-case agreements between the representatives of both services that generally led toward the achievement of a shared goal albeit through different concepts. The goal remained the total defeat of Japanese military forces in the Pacific. How the victory was accomplished was decided through debate and compromise for each new operation. Stalemate II was one of the compromises that netted one Service huge gains, however, the cost was unexpectedly high.

#### The Nature of Strategic Leadership in World War II Pacific

The use of the forces assigned to the services, the objectives and type of missions conducted, the allocation of resources that took place clearly within either the Army's or the Navy's area of responsibility were left up to either service to decide. Friction

occurred where resources were insufficient to meet the needs of both Nimitz and MacArthur. Friction occurred where either Nimitz or MacArthur required the service-specific capabilities of the other to successfully accomplish a desired goal. The adjudication of who worked for whom and who supported whom or who was the main effort was worked out through mutual agreements by local staffs of both services. If the local commands could not reach agreement the issue was referred up the chain of command to be reviewed and hopefully decided upon. Those decisions unable to be worked out at the lower staff levels were ultimately sent to the Joint Staff. At the Joint Staff service planners would haggle over resources and capabilities allocations until an agreement was finally reached. Issues concerning the Pacific were regularly brought before the Chief of Staff of the Army and the Chief of Naval Operations.

Common disagreements occurred over utilization of carrier-based naval aircraft, amphibious assault troops and amphibious shipping. A classic example of the friction caused by this loose command arrangement was how the Joint Staff made arrangements for Navy carrier-based aircraft to support Army ground operations in New Guinea. The Joint Staff directed Nimitz to support MacArthur's Operation Reckless during amphibious landings against Japanese forces in New Guinea. MacArthur wanted Nimitz's aircraft carriers to provide pre-landing support and to remain in the area to provide close air support for eight additional days. Nimitz refused to allow his aircraft carriers to remain in the area for that long for fear that the Japanese would sink or damage his primary offensive capability in the Pacific. Nimitz finally allowed the carriers to remain in the area supporting MacArthur's troops for only three days after the initial

amphibious landings.<sup>1</sup> It was still left up to Nimitz to determine what level of support he chose to provide even though the Joint Staff had directed Nimitz to support MacArthur.

Another instance of friction over finite resources was the struggle over assault shipping. Amphibious transports and tracked amphibious landing craft were often in short supply. In late 1943 and early 1944 the priority of amphibious shipping was placed in support of Nimitz's drive in the Central Pacific. During Nimitz's offensive MacArthur was still conducting operations in his Southwest Pacific Area on New Guinea and other adjacent islands. At this time Admiral Halsey was conducting operations for MacArthur to secure facilities on Bougainville. Due to the allocation of shipping, Halsey was forced to conducting landings with insufficient shipping to transport his entire amphibious assault force. He only had enough shipping to safely land one division. This lack of shipping caused him to shuttle his forces from Guadalcanal to Bougainville rather than conduct one simultaneous landing. MacArthur was also forced to use improvised merchant shipping in lieu of amphibious ships to continue his operations in New Guinea.<sup>2</sup> Even though Nimitz was given priority of amphibious assault shipping his forces still suffered from lack of sufficient resources. During the assault on Tarawa many of Nimitz's Marines were forced to wade hundreds of yards to shore under Japanese fire because the assault force did not have enough amphibious tractors to carry the Marines ashore over coral outcroppings that prevented conventional landing craft from reaching the shore.

#### Personalities and Interservice Rivalry

This command arrangement created an environment that fostered competition for resources. Those operations that demonstrated the most success gained the service

responsible the most credibility. More success in previous operations represented a more powerful bargaining position for service planners competing for resources for future operations. It also provided ample opportunity for enmity between the two services. Army and Navy units were tasked organized for individual operations and frequently found themselves temporarily under another service's leadership. Disputes were frequent with a dysfunctional relationship often developing during these temporary leadership arrangements. It was common practice to petition one's service for another opinion if a subordinate commander did not like his orders or felt that his unit was being improperly used.

Disputes involving command relationships and authority of local commanders were commonplace in the Pacific theater during WWII. One infamous incident that generated mutual mistrust was the relief of the Army's 27th Infantry Division commander, Major General Ralph Smith, by his then corps commander Marine Lieutenant General Holland Smith. Holland Smith was very critical of the 27th Infantry Division's performance on Saipan. To address the problem he relieved the 27th's commander. The relief of an Army general by a naval forces commander was not well received and caused a torrent of official visits and protests by the Army. The matter reached the War Department. Nimitz attempted to keep the hostility at a minimum by recommending that the matter be settled locally. He also emphasized his opinion that Army units should be able to serve under Marine leadership and vice a versa.<sup>3</sup> This incident was a burden on senior staffs of both the Army and the Navy for many months.

Another incident involved a suggestion by Nimitz to shift a portion of his Pacific Ocean Area boundaries to include the Admiralty Islands. The Admiralty Islands lay just

off the northeastern coast of New Guinea. They were in MacArthur's South West Pacific Area of responsibility. After MacArthur's forces captured these islands the Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted them developed into a major base to support operations against Japanese forces on New Guinea, the Palaus, the Philippines and Formosa. The Joint Staff envisioned this new base as providing support to both MacArthur and Nimitz's forces. General Marshall suggested that MacArthur delegate the construction of the facilities on the Admiralty Islands to Admiral Halsey, who was working for MacArthur at the time. Halsey had the necessary capabilities to accomplish this task. The forces that were working for Halsey relied heavily on resources supplied from Navy support that fell under Nimitz's command. To address a potential command issues in accomplishing what would be a purely Navy mission Nimitz suggested the shift in boundaries. This shift would mean that MacArthur would lose a portion of his area of responsibility. When MacArthur learned of Nimitz's suggestion he was visibly upset. He termed Nimitz's suggestion as a sinister attempt to encroach upon his territory. He wrote a letter to the Joint Chiefs stating that his professional integrity and his personal honor were at stake and demanded that he be given the opportunity to personally present his case to the Secretary of War and the President. As a result of this boundary dispute the Joint Chiefs recalled both Nimitz and MacArthur to Washington to settle this matter and to discuss future strategy. While Nimitz dutifully reported to the Capital, MacArthur declined to appear in Washington. He sent a representative instead citing the need to fight a war in his area as being more important than a trip to Washington. The issue was resolved and the boundaries were left unchanged. However, the matter did make it to the ears of the

Secretary and the President.<sup>4</sup> This was yet another incident of a personal rivalry, albeit a one-sided rivalry that had to be dealt with at the highest levels.

During the early stages of the war in the Pacific Nimitz's Navy forces made the most progress. Successes at Guadalcanal, Midway, and the Coral Sea demonstrated that Navy forces were capable of beating Japanese forces in the Pacific. The Navy also possessed much greater mobility than Army forces in the Pacific. The majority of Nimitz's Pacific Ocean Area was water. The facts that the Navy maneuvered by sea, carried its own "air force" by sea, had the proper assets to secure sea-lines of communications, and had the corporate knowledge (courtesy of the Marine Corps) of how to conduct amphibious operations were compelling reasons why the preponderance of assets should go to the Navy in the fight against the Japanese. Navy forces were also a good choice for economy of force use in that it was much easier to support a sea-based force than a land-bound force. When a ship required re-supply or maintenance the ship could travel to a secure area for support, or a support ship could travel to the area where the support was required.

Nimitz was a well-respected man and superlative leader. He was not outspoken and did not seek personal recognition or glory. His humility was displayed by the fact that he did not publish his memoirs or write an autobiography after his retirement from the Navy. He did not seek his appointment as Commander in Chief of Pacific Ocean Area. Prior to the US entry into World War II, Nimitz had been selected as Commander in Chief, US Fleet, a position that would have made him second in rank only to the Chief of Naval Operations. President Roosevelt personally selected him for this position. Nimitz turned down the offer citing his relative junior rank at the time. Shortly after the



Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor the President directed that Nimitz take command of the Pacific fleet. From that time until the end of the war Nimitz would hold that position.<sup>5</sup>

In Pearl Harbor Nimitz ran a well-organized staff and kept to a fairly rigid routine of staff work, social events, and exercise. He was very open to the opinion of members of his staff and particularly interested in the thoughts and opinions of his field commanders. To this end he would invite the captains of every naval vessel of his command that passed through Pearl Harbor to meet with him at his headquarters. Naval officers of all ranks, from the very junior to the most senior would spend a few moments with Nimitz and share their thoughts on war strategy and issues important to the individual commander.

Nimitz kept a copy of the principles of war on his desk. He also posted a sign on his wall that read:

1. Is the proposed operation likely to succeed?
2. What might be the consequences of failure?
3. Is it in the realm of practicability of materials and supplies?

Nimitz instructed his staff to be able to answer those three questions for any operation they proposed to him.<sup>6</sup>

Nimitz did not have any political aspirations. He was by all accounts a modest man who served for purely altruistic reasons. He was willing to cooperate with his counterparts. Nimitz backed MacArthur's proposal to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for Operation Reckless in New Guinea even though he disagreed with the proposed carrier coverage.<sup>7</sup> Another important factor of Nimitz's leadership was that he did not have the stigma of failure on him. He had replaced the former commander of the Pacific Fleet after

the disastrous attack on Pearl Harbor. Nimitz did not have to make amends or make up for previous failure.

For the most part Nimitz retained the same staff that worked under his predecessor at Pearl Harbor. Nimitz's leadership was normally a relaxed style that served to calm his subordinates and include them in whatever decisions he made. Nimitz's opinion of MacArthur was one of respect and amusement. He felt that MacArthur would seek to impress people and catch attention wherever possible.<sup>8</sup>

MacArthur did have to recover from the stigma of defeat. He left the Philippines abandoning his command to attacking Japanese forces. Upon leaving he vowed to return and liberate the Philippines. He turned what should have been a public relations disaster into a cause to right an injustice. The common theme of MacArthur's justification for support in his area of operations was his promise, on behalf of America, to liberate the Philippines. During the July 1944 meeting at Hawaii with President Roosevelt and Nimitz, MacArthur's mantra was the need to keep America's promise to recapture the Philippines.<sup>9</sup>

MacArthur's forces did not share the advantages of the navy's forces. Where naval units were mobile Army units were land-bound. While the Navy benefited from the mobile airfields provided by aircraft carriers Army aviation was constrained by the fixed airfields that supported their operations. Most operations MacArthur conducted relied on Army aviation. That aviation was limited to the operational combat radius of the bombers and fighters flying from fixed airfields. The Army had to rely on the Navy to support them with shipping of all types to conduct operations. MacArthur was given the Seventh Fleet to compensate for this disadvantage but those dedicated naval assets were far fewer

in number and capability than the rest of Pacific Fleet. Even with his own naval assets MacArthur was forced to bargain with the Navy for additional naval assets to support virtually every operation he conducted.

MacArthur compelled people to follow him through force of his personality. MacArthur was a man of extreme courage and an enormous ego. He was very intelligent, however, he was very eccentric too. He was prone to pompous behavior and occasional temper tantrums. In one instance MacArthur seriously insulted President Roosevelt during an argument over the 1934 military budget. The incident caused such a stir that MacArthur offered his resignation. Roosevelt turned down MacArthur's offer to resign but concluded that MacArthur's huge ego combined with his superb leadership abilities made him a dangerous man and that it was best to keep MacArthur in a position on the inside where he could be controlled rather than on the outside where he would be a threat.<sup>10</sup>

MacArthur was well known for seeking personal notoriety. He even vied for political office as a potential presidential candidate against Roosevelt in the 1944 election.<sup>11</sup> He also played for favorable public opinion whenever he had the opportunity. At the July 1944 meeting at Hawaii with President Roosevelt and Nimitz, MacArthur purposely arrived late in an extravagantly long limousine accompanied by a noisy motorcycle escort. The timing of the arrival, the flashy motorcade and MacArthur's non-regulation attire of his prewar Philippine field-marshal cap and old airman's jacket were sufficient to draw the attention and adulations of the crowd and media.<sup>12</sup>

Unlike Nimitz MacArthur maintained a relatively small staff of personal confidants. He kept to himself and made major operational decisions seeking advice from

only a select few. He also surrounded himself with a handpicked staff rather than relying on the existing members of his commands. During major operations MacArthur often would isolate himself, and sit tensely remaining quiet, only conferring with a select few members of his staff<sup>13</sup>.

MacArthur was actively in competition for resources with Nimitz. By early 1944 the public's attention was drawn to a string of victories by Nimitz's forces. The gains achieved by MacArthur's operations in the Southwest Pacific were far behind those results of Nimitz' operations in the Pacific Ocean Areas. By this stage of the war the Navy had smashed the Japanese impregnable fortress at Truk and captured the Marshall Islands. MacArthur's operations were not receiving any public attention. MacArthur needed something to gain the initiative in the Pacific and accelerate the pace of operations against the Japanese. He and his staff developed the bold plan to seize portions of New Guinea, code named Operation Reckless. Reckless proved to be an unqualified success and succeeded in not only gaining the attention of the public, but focused the attention of the Joint Staff on his operations.<sup>14</sup>

#### The Commander of the 1st Marine Division

There is a side note to history here that casts a shadow on the senior Marine Corps leadership present at Operation Stalemate II. This story within a story is germane to this thesis because it illustrates the nature of the command climate and how high-level decisions were made in the Pacific during World War II. It also shows the rift of mistrust at the operational level among the Services in the Pacific. On Peleliu Major General William H. Rupertus was commanding officer of the 1st Marine Division, which was the principal maneuver element, designated the main effort for Operation Stalemate II.

However, the outcome of the fighting generated considerable criticism of Rupertus' leadership, so much criticism that the Commandant of the Marine Corps relieved Rupertus of command shortly after Stalemate II concluded.<sup>15</sup>

The issues with Rupertus' leadership were many. As noted in chapter 3, Rupertus' Assistant Division Commander, Brigadier General Oliver P. Smith conducted most of the planning for the ground phase of operations on Peleliu. Rupertus was absent from the division for most of the planning. When the 1st Marine Division arrived on Pavuvu after a grueling operation at Cape Gloucester General Rupertus did not initially accompany his men. Instead he accepted an invitation from General MacArthur to stay as his guest at MacArthur's headquarters in Brisbane Australia. There, MacArthur tried to win the support of Rupertus in an attempt to retain control of the 1st Marine Division.<sup>16</sup>

MacArthur viewed the Marines as excellent assault troops and wanted to keep them for operations in his area, however, the Marines belonged to Nimitz. Any use of the Marines by MacArthur had to be approved by Nimitz. MacArthur was attempting to gain an edge on Nimitz by applying pressure on the Joint Chiefs from the bottom up to have a Navy asset permanently assigned to his Army command. Although his attempts were unsuccessful, this incident shows the machinations that were at work to gain priority of use of assets available in the Pacific Theater.

Soon after Rupertus rejoined his division on Pavuvu he was recalled to Washington to chair the Marine Corps lieutenant colonel and colonel selection board. Rupertus was gone for over six weeks. In his absence Smith planned for Stalemate, however, Rupertus denied Smith the full use of the Division's staff. Smith was forced to create a staff of junior officers taken from other staff sections.<sup>17</sup>

When Rupertus returned to Pavuvu from Washington he found a demoralized division of Marines whose subordinate leaders had no confidence in his abilities. He continued to isolate himself from his subordinate leaders both by physical presence and his moody behavior. He was often referred to as “Rupe the Stupe” by members of his command. The planning that Rupertus did participate in was heavily influenced by his optimism. His predictions of a quick victory were not shared by most of his staff and only served to further isolate him from his staff and subordinate leadership. His relationship with his second in command became so dysfunctional that he instructed his regimental commanders to disobey Smith if he tried to change the plan during the fighting.

Most of the major commands responsible for Operation Stalemate II were afforded very little time for joint planning. Most did not have but a few opportunities to discuss the plan with the 1st Marine Division commander or staff. These staffs were actively engaged in operations against Japanese forces in the Marianas Islands. What little planning they did have was influenced by Rupertus’ optimism.

Rupertus’ immediate commander, Major General Roy Geiger, did not agree with the optimistic view of the upcoming fight either. Geiger, whose attention was focused on Guam until 15 August 1944, felt that Rupertus’ plan was too optimistic and lacked a sufficient reserve force. Rupertus intended to seize Peleliu without the assistance of Army units. Rupertus did not trust Army units. Joint planning between the 81st Infantry Division and 1st Marine Division staffs was very limited and tainted by a Marine attitude of superiority and an Army feeling of distrust of Marines. Rather than plan for an available regiment-sized reserve force provided by the Army’s 81st Infantry Division, Rupertus choose to use one of his battalions from the 7th Marine Regiment as a reserve.<sup>18</sup>

Geiger allowed Rupertus to continue with his plan only because Geiger's III Amphibious Corps Reserve was the entire 81st Division. He felt that with the size of his reserve force he could personally handle crises should they arise. Also the 81st was not planned to seize Anguar until D+1 or until the situation on Peleliu was under control. If the fighting was tougher than expected the Anguar landing could be postponed.

During the fighting reports from Peleliu made it appear that the Marines were making good progress. The "apparent" progress on Peleliu led to the commitment of two-thirds of the III Amphibious Corps reserve force to seize Anguar on D+2. Rupertus' lack of request for reinforcements from the Army during the first few days of fighting on Peleliu led Geiger in part to agree to release part of the Corps Reserve to seize Anguar.

At the same time Admiral Halsey directed that Ulithi be seized "as early as practical . . . with resources on hand." The commander of Joint Expeditionary Task Force 31 responsible for conducting Stalemate II was Vice Admiral Wilkinson. The operation was going as planned from his perspective. Reports from the fighting were positive and part of the reserve had been committed to seize Anguar. Rupertus had not called for assistance. Rupertus' previous optimism seemed justified. With Admiral Halsey's guidance that Ulithi be seized as soon as possible and an apparent victory soon at hand Wilkinson gambled and committed the remaining reserve to seize Ulithi. The senior Marine under Wilkinson argued strongly against using the last of the III Amphibious Corps reserve; however, on D+2 the entire III Amphibious Corps reserve was committed.<sup>19</sup>

There are other infamous incidents involving Rupertus' conduct during Stalemate, but those are best discussed elsewhere. What can be seen from the Rupertus' experience

is: (1) that there was an interservice struggle for resources at the highest levels as noted by MacArthur's attempts to subvert Rupertus' loyalty, (2) there was a lack of cooperation between Navy and Army forces as noted by mutual mistrust displayed by the 81st Infantry Division and the 1st Marine Division, and (3) there was a multilayered command structure consisting of units from both services which changed from operation to operation consisting of staff principals who were normally afforded little time to carry out joint planning before the conduct of an operation.

### Why Ulithi

Why did Admiral Halsey push for early seizure of Ulithi? As noted in chapter 4 Ulithi proved to be the most valuable asset gained by Operation Stalemate II. Ulithi was 200 hundred miles north of the Palaus. To repeat from chapter 4, the new base at Ulithi greatly increased the sustained operating range of Nimitz's naval forces in the Pacific. The seizure of Ulithi was of tremendous use to the Navy; Ulithi became the hub of all US naval activity for the remainder of the war in the Pacific.

The seizure of Ulithi surely prevented the Japanese Combined Fleet from using its facilities to stage attacks on MacArthur's Philippine Operations, however, the Japanese had abandoned Ulithi and showed no indications of reoccupying the facilities. So the intent of seizing Ulithi to protect MacArthur's flanks could have been accomplished with a simple reconnaissance mission rather than an occupation.

A strong argument can be made that the motive for the seizure of Ulithi was purely a Navy initiative. The seizure of Ulithi greatly increased the Navy's ability to support a drive toward isolation of the Japanese home islands. Also at the time of Operation Stalemate II no clear guidance had been issued for what was supposed to occur



after MacArthur liberated the Philippines. The vague guidance of “two mutual drives combining into one effort” still remained in effect.

At this point of the War in the Pacific the Navy had accomplished the most tangible military gains. But the Army had made great strides in catching up with the Navy successes. MacArthur’s brilliant maneuvers in New Guinea and his willingness to assume the risks involved in executing Halsey’s proposed changes to his Musketeer Operations was earning much support among senior military leadership. Even though Roosevelt’s guidance supported MacArthur’s liberation of the Philippines, there was still the question of what happened after MacArthur delivered his promise to free the Filipinos. The Navy and the Army were still very much in competition to produce the most victories, thereby gaining the most resources to prosecute the war in the Pacific according to their own vision of how to achieve success. Ulithi provided the means for Nimitz to sustain his Navy forces in the drive and isolation of the Japanese home islands. Ulithi was a key component to the Navy’s vision of success against Japanese forces in the Pacific. Therefore the capture of Ulithi had little to do with Operation Stalemate II, and much to do with the Navy’s vision of future operations in the Pacific.

Ostensibly the Joint Chiefs of Staff could have had more direct influence over the Palaus operation. Since Stalemate II was essentially part of a compromise, the subsequent impact of the collective Joint Staff leadership was negligible, leaving the decision to execute the operation up to the Navy.

#### Role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

The Joint Chiefs of Staff of the time represented their services well, but when they had major disagreements their only recourse was to seek decision from the president.

In 1939 President Roosevelt placed the Joint Board of military advisers under his direct supervision. Prior to this time the Joint Board had reported to the two Service Secretaries.<sup>20</sup> This move later evolved into what was known as the War Council. The War Council consisted of the President, the Secretary of State, The Navy and Army Secretaries, the two service chiefs and the Army Air chief.<sup>21</sup> The members of the War Council worked independently or together throughout the war. For the most part all members of this council were co-equals, save the President himself, and they cooperated or compromised to make major decisions directing the war effort. In those instances where disagreement occurred guidance was sought from the president to adjudicate the dispute. The President had a world war to contend with. He was not able to focus for very long on any single problem. To allow the President freedom to maintain a view of the overall conflict the service chiefs attempted to come to agreement wherever possible. They did not involve the President on issues of disagreement between the services unless it was absolutely necessary.

#### Role of Today's Joint Chiefs of Staff

Today's strategic leadership is better organized to manage multiple simultaneous operations. There will always be personalities to contend with. But our joint concept as established by the 1986 Goldwater Nichols Act and recent joint initiatives provide more checks and balances and abilities to clearly establish priorities and command relationships for theater operations. Under the Goldwater Nichols Act the Secretary of Defense is responsible to the president of the United States for employment of the military. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were reorganized to fall under the control of a single chairman. The Chairman is made the ranking military officer and is drawn from one of

the four services by appointment. The Chairman has a deputy to assist him in his duties. The Chairman serves as the principal military advisor to the president. The Joint Chiefs are responsible for training, equipping and sustaining armed forces and to provide advice on the proper employment of the military. The intent of the Goldwater-Nichols act follows:

In reorganizing DoD, Congress' overarching concern centered on the excessive influence of the four services, which had inhibited the integration of their separate capabilities into effective joint fighting units.<sup>22</sup>

Congress declared nine purposes for this act:

1. to strengthen civilian authority;
2. to improve military advice;
3. to place clear responsibility on combatant commanders for accomplishment of assigned missions;
4. to ensure that the authority of combatant commanders is commensurate with their responsibility;
5. to increase attention to strategy formulation and contingency planning;
6. to provide for the more efficient use of resources;
7. to improve joint officer management;
8. to enhance the effectiveness of military operations;
9. and to improve Department Of Defense management.<sup>23</sup>

Another joint initiative established to assist in establishing an unambiguous chain of command is the Unified Command Plan. The Unified Command Plan identifies a single commander for geographic areas and or functional responsibilities. The areas or functions controlled by the single commanders are referred to as Unified Commands. The

Unified Commanders report directly to the Secretary of Defense. The Joint Chiefs of Staff provide the necessary support required by the Unified Commanders to carry out their missions as assigned by the Secretary of Defense.

The Unified Command Plan also provides guidance for the designated commander that outlines their responsibilities. Unified Commands are given specific missions and planning priorities. The first Unified Command plan was adopted in 1946.<sup>24</sup> These plans are periodically reviewed to reflect the international strategic situation. Areas or functions are assigned as needed according to the present situation.

### Why Care About Stalemate II Today

Attention must be paid to history today so that past mistakes are not repeated. Many lessons of historical military ventures become irrelevant due to technological developments. Concepts and techniques on proper employment of ancient tools of warfare, like the trebuchet, caltrops, or naphtha, in most instances will not be relevant to modern warfare. However, command and control is one concept that has been and still remains pertinent and vital to the successful conduct of military operations. The current United States military concept of “jointness” makes a modern-day Operation Stalemate II less likely. The Goldwater-Nichols Act and the Unified Command Plan reduce the potential for errors associated with command and control. However, contemporary history shows examples of US military operations that shared similar issues to the command arrangements used during World War II in the Pacific.

The United States involvement in military operations in Kosovo to protect Albanians from unwarranted Serbian aggression had issues of command relationships and resource allocation that World War II Pacific commanders would have been intimately

familiar with. General Wesley Clark was Commander in Chief United States European Command. As a unified commander he controlled those forces assigned to him to execute missions within his area of responsibility. He was also the Supreme Allied Command, Europe of forces operation under the control of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Events in Europe led Clark to lead Operation Allied Force to halt Serbian aggression against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.

During Allied Force Clark answered to two masters. As Commander in Chief United States European Command Clark was responsible to the United States Secretary of Defense and ultimately to the President of the United States. As Supreme Allied Command, Europe Clark took his directions from the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.<sup>25</sup> Throughout Allied Force Clark faced issues of insufficient resources and assets from both US and allied forces. His guidance was at times ambiguous and he was often left to his own designs to determine the best course of action. At other times he was given very restrictive guidance with little room for initiative. There was also friction among senior officers in the Joint Chiefs of Staff concerning what level of support was appropriate to give to Clark's efforts.

Allied Force was successful but the complicated command and control structure was cumbersome and placed unnecessary friction on an extremely complicated military problem. The experiences of our strategic leadership during Operation Allied Force reinforce the need to study pertinent military history.

An appropriate guide to keep modern military planners from repeating those mistakes of command and control associated with the WWII Pacific command climate are the nine purposes for the establishment of the Goldwater-Nichols Act as stated by

Congress. These purposes can prove a useful guide of how not to conduct large-scale operations. Particularly germane to what occurred during Operation Stalemate II are Congress's Goldwater-Nichols Act purposes three, four, and six.

The third stated purpose was to place clear responsibility on combatant commanders for accomplishment of assigned missions. The guidance given to the two principal commanders in the Pacific was anything but clear and was delivered from multiple masters. There must be a method of conveying clear guidance to combatant commanders. At the outset of establishment of any combatant commanders area of responsibility the commander should have the benefit of report to one single command.

The fourth stated purpose was to ensure that the authority of combatant commanders is commensurate with their responsibility. Commanders should not be given tasks that they do not have the authority to accomplish. In the same vein the commander should have the means to accomplish those missions they are responsible for. The commander should not have to bargain with another entity to acquire necessary resources to prosecute the mission. Those issues of support should be handled at a higher level of command giving the commander the freedom to plan for the employment of his forces vice fighting for forces to employ.

The sixth stated purpose was to provide for the more efficient use of resources. Combatant commanders should be allocated sufficient resources to accomplish the mission. Barring political constraints a unified commander should be assigned a mission that is within his capabilities to accomplish. If additional assets beyond those possessed by the commander are required then those assets should be furnished or the scope of the mission should be reduced to within the capabilities of the existing forces.

## Summary

The strategic military leadership of the Pacific was hampered by an inefficient command structure. The inefficiencies manifested as disputes between personalities and services, competition for resources, and decentralized execution of two distinctly separate courses of action against Japanese forces in the Pacific. The War Council was essentially a body of co-equals with no single member, save the President, possessing more authority than another member. This leadership structure led to duplication of efforts and execution of unnecessary tasks. Stalemate II was one such unnecessary task.

Today's strategic military leadership is better suited to handle global conflict. Lessons learned during WWII in the Pacific have been incorporated in today's command and control construct to minimize the instance of the common problems associated with command and control during the time of Operation Stalemate II.

In the end was Operation Stalemate II worth the sacrifice? If it was not worth the sacrifice should blame be placed for the loss of human capital and unnecessary expenditure of finite resources during time of war? Could Operation Stalemate II been prevented?

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Ross Smith, *The War in the Pacific: The Approach to the Philippines* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, US Army, 1984), 20.

<sup>2</sup>Robert W. Coakley and Richard M. Leighton, *The United States Army in World War II, The War Department: Global Logistics and Strategy, 1943-1945* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1968), 402.

<sup>3</sup>E. B. Potter, *Nimitz* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1976), 305-309.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid*, 286-287

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid*, 3-9.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid, 221-227.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, 289-291.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, 291.

<sup>9</sup>Dan Van der Vat, *The Pacific Campaign: World War II, the U.S.-Japanese Naval War, 1941-1945* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 341.

<sup>10</sup>Van der Vat, 168.

<sup>11</sup>William Manchester, *American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur, 1880-1964* (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1978), 356-362.

<sup>12</sup>Van der Vat, 341.

<sup>13</sup>Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun: The American War with Japan* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 146.

<sup>14</sup>Edward J. Drea, *Audacious but Hardly Reckless, CGSC Op Readings Book AY 03-04* (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College), C319RC-375-C319-382.

<sup>15</sup>Ross, 337.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 56.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 86.

<sup>18</sup>James H. Hallas, *The Devil's Anvil: The Assault on Peleliu* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1994), 14-31.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 110.

<sup>20</sup>Kent Roberts Greenfield et al., *Command Decisions* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, US Army, 1960), 26.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 40.

<sup>22</sup>James R. Locher, *Victory on the Potomac: The Goldwater-Nichols Act Unifies the Pentagon* (College Station, TX, Texas A&M University Press, 2000), 437.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 437.

<sup>24</sup>Ronald H. Cole et al., *The History of the Unified Command Plan, 1946-1993* (Washington, DC: Joint History Office, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1960), 11.



<sup>25</sup>General Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War: Bosnia, Kosovo, and the Future of Combat* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2001), 77.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS

Clearly there was a lack of control at the strategic level during the war in the Pacific. There was no unity of command and effort. Two commanders, both strong personalities were allowed to drive towards the same goal using different methods. There was duplication of effort and fierce competition for resources. No single event of the Pacific War illustrates this more clearly than Operation Stalemate II.

Was Nimitz to blame for directing an unnecessary operation? Why did Nimitz proceed with Stalemate II even though it was apparent that the operation was not needed to accomplish its stated goals? The short answer to these two questions is “no” and “because he could.” This is not to say that Nimitz purposely placed soldiers, sailors, and Marines in harm’s way to fulfill some ulterior motive. His motives were very much focused on winning the war against Japan. From his perspective Stalemate II measured up to his three edicts.

1. Is the proposed operation likely to succeed? Yes it was likely to succeed according Nimitz’s planners. Nimitz had the assurance of Major General Rupertus’ optimistic view of the swift outcome of the operation. The endorsement of the commanding officer of the primary amphibious landing force, the most experienced and best infantry division in the Marine Corps, the heroes of Guadalcanal, surely influenced Nimitz’s decision. Especially since Nimitz’s leadership style placed much stock in the opinion of commanders in the field. Also, other than Halsey’s recommendation to cancel the operation altogether, none of Nimitz’s commanders or staff expressed any reservation to Nimitz about the outcome of the operation.

2. What might be the consequences of failure? With Halsey's recommendation to cancel Stalemate altogether Nimitz must have felt that a failed operation against the Palaus would have little impact on MacArthur's Musketeer operations in the Philippines. And surely Nimitz, like Halsey recognized that the Japanese were unable to mount any significant offensive operations from the Palaus. The risk must have appeared to be minimal. Conversely the gains of those air and naval facilities on Peleliu and Anguar represented at least an increase in fleet support for naval operations closer to the Japanese home islands. There was also the prospect of gaining the use of the naval facilities at Ulithi which, if put to use by his Navy support units meant a tremendous increase in Nimitz's ability to sustain forward operations. The potential gains far outweighed the risks.

3. Is it in the realm of practicability of materials and supplies? Once again, the optimistic assessment of Rupertus factored into this aspect of Nimitz' three questions. The confidence displayed by Rupertus and the fact that he did not make any plans for use of the Army forces available furthered the impression that there were ample resources available to achieve a successful outcome. Then there was also the change to the original Stalemate plans directed by Nimitz. With this change the bulk of the Japanese forces were being bypassed. None of the reservations over Rupertus' failure to plan for the employment of Army forces by commanders senior to Rupertus must have reached Nimitz. It must have appeared to Nimitz that the goal was attainable with those assets he had on hand.

Finally, there is the question of Ulithi, an objective over 200 miles away from the Palaus. Ulithi fit well into the Navy's vision of how to defeat the Japanese. Ulithi

provided a significant capability to support naval surface and air forces well forward of the existing Navy support infrastructure in the Pacific. Ulithi had been identified as suitable for and advanced fleet base during the development of War Plan Orange.<sup>1</sup> Ulithi was a key enabler to the Navy's success against the Japanese. Nimitz was able to safely move his main fleet support facilities over 1000 nautical miles closer to Japanese territory. Stalemate II provided a convenient collection of resources to draw from. Ulithi was an economy of force operation within an operation that paid huge dividends.

One other interesting piece of information is the way that Nimitz is said to have become aware of the existence of Ulithi. Among Nimitz personal hobbies was a fondness of maps. Nimitz would study as many maps as he could get. During one of his frequent map reading sessions Nimitz came across an atoll named Ulithi. He noted that it possessed a huge deep-water lagoon that was capable of accommodating several hundred ships.<sup>2</sup> This discovery could have placed potential use of Ulithi by Nimitz to the forefront of his thinking. Nimitz must have researched prior war plans to see how Ulithi factored into those plans. At the very least his map finding surely made him aware of the presence, capability and potential of Ulithi.

### The Bottom Line

Ulithi was the true goal of Operation Stalemate II. Nimitz was allowed to continue with Stalemate II because the Joint Chiefs had no direct visibility of Operation Stalemate II. The Joint Chiefs, with the help of ambiguous guidance from President Roosevelt, had already settled the major issue of priority of support for the near-term operations. Operations with excess forces in another area of responsibility were left up to the responsible commander as long as there were sufficient resources available for the

primary effort. The Joint Chiefs would not make another decision until the next point of friction arose. Once discovered the Joint Chiefs would again argue until they came to a decision by mutual agreement. The pattern of deciding support operation by operation would continue up until the end of the war.

Stalemate II was not the product of ulterior motives or the result of one seeking personal gain. The United States military strategic leadership of WW II was poorly organized to prevent this situation. There was no single authority other than the President to decide military issues. Personalities dominated in an environment where the established decision-making process was not clearly defined.

The enormous cost in human capital, both American and Japanese, and the delays incurred by the unanticipated ferocity and success of the Japanese defense were not anticipated. The roles of the Pacific had been reversed. MacArthur's stunning accomplishments in New Guinea with the success of Operation Reckless had drawn the attention away from Nimitz's series of successes. A new plan, developed by the Navy yet executed by MacArthur to bypass major objectives in the Philippines promised a similar outcome as experienced with Operation Reckless. With the focus of effort on operations in the Philippines, Stalemate II and other operations in Nimitz's Pacific Ocean Area of responsibility were now the sideshows. The Joint Chiefs viewed Stalemate II as a supporting function and left the execution of that function to the responsible area commander. The Joint Chiefs did not stop Stalemate II because they were focused on the operations against Japanese forces in the Philippines.

The Marines, Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen who fought and died to win Operation Stalemate II were not carelessly placed in harm's way. Their triumphs were not hollow

nor were their losses in vain. Their victory hastened the defeat of the Japanese military power of the Southern Army defending the Pacific. Their sacrifices ultimately carried America closer to victory in the Pacific.

However, it is obvious that the sacrifices of those men who fought in Operation Stalemate II were not the best use of America's most precious resource. It seems that their efforts could have been best used elsewhere and that those Japanese forces on Peleliu and Anguar could have been bypassed just like their parent command was bypassed on Babelthuap. It seems that Operation Stalemate II was not necessary.

### Who Is to Blame

If there is blame to be placed it rests at the highest levels of military command. For it was the War Council, which was the President, the Secretary of State, The Navy and Army Secretaries, the two service chiefs and the Army Air chief, who were ultimately responsible for the command arrangements of the Pacific.

Yet blame is too harsh a word for a group of individuals that accomplished what no Americans had ever done. Never before had America participated in so great a conflict. It was conflict that literally spanned the entire world. No American civil and military staff had ever contended with the amount of operations and the scope of military activity faced by the War Council of WWII. By the end of the war America was arguably the leader of the Free World. The War Council was dealing with issues that literally impacted every person on the planet. The War Council had no model to work from to establish a command and control structure for global conflict. The complex nature of command of every aspect of the American military during WWII in itself was an almost insurmountable task. It is amazing that War Council was able to maintain control at all.

Fortunately, they were successful. The War Council prevailed and left a record of all their successes and failures. We have learned from their experience and incorporated their knowledge into our present day military command structure. Their efforts were the geneses for our modern military organization.

In conclusion there is no blame. There is, however, a valuable lesson that has applicability to today's American military. Although costly, Operation Stalemate II was not a needless sacrifice. It was simply another stone set in the foundation of American military power. This power has enabled America to remain free to make those choices that are best for the American people.

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<sup>1</sup>Edward S. Miller, *War Plan Orange* (Annapolis, MD: United States Naval Institute, 1991), 345.

<sup>2</sup>E. B. Potter, *Bull Halsey* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1985), 278.

ILLUSTRATIONS

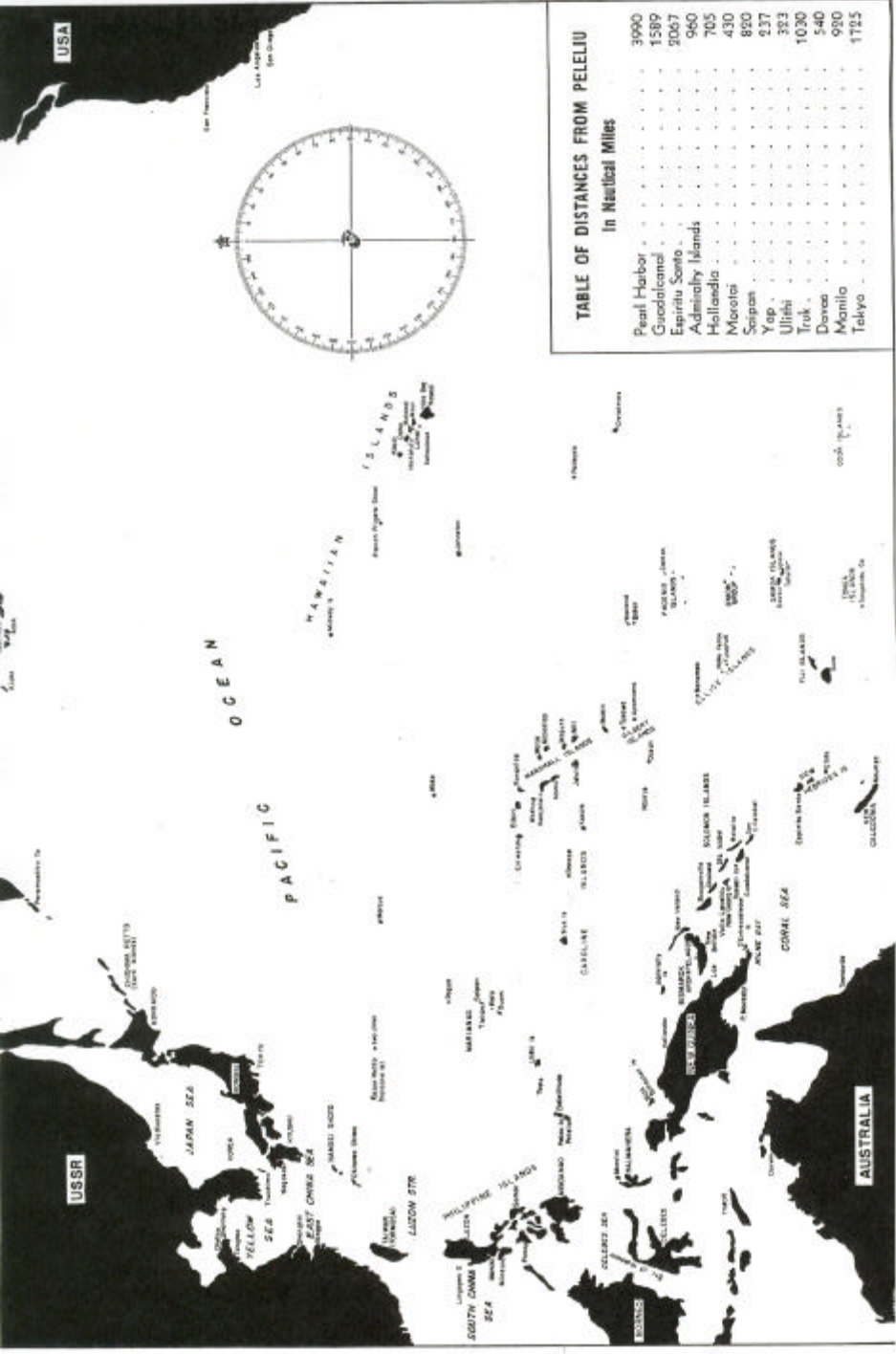


Figure 1A. Pacific Ocean. Source: Frank O. Hough, *The Assault On Peleliu* (Historical Division, Headquarters US Marine Corps, 1950), 5.



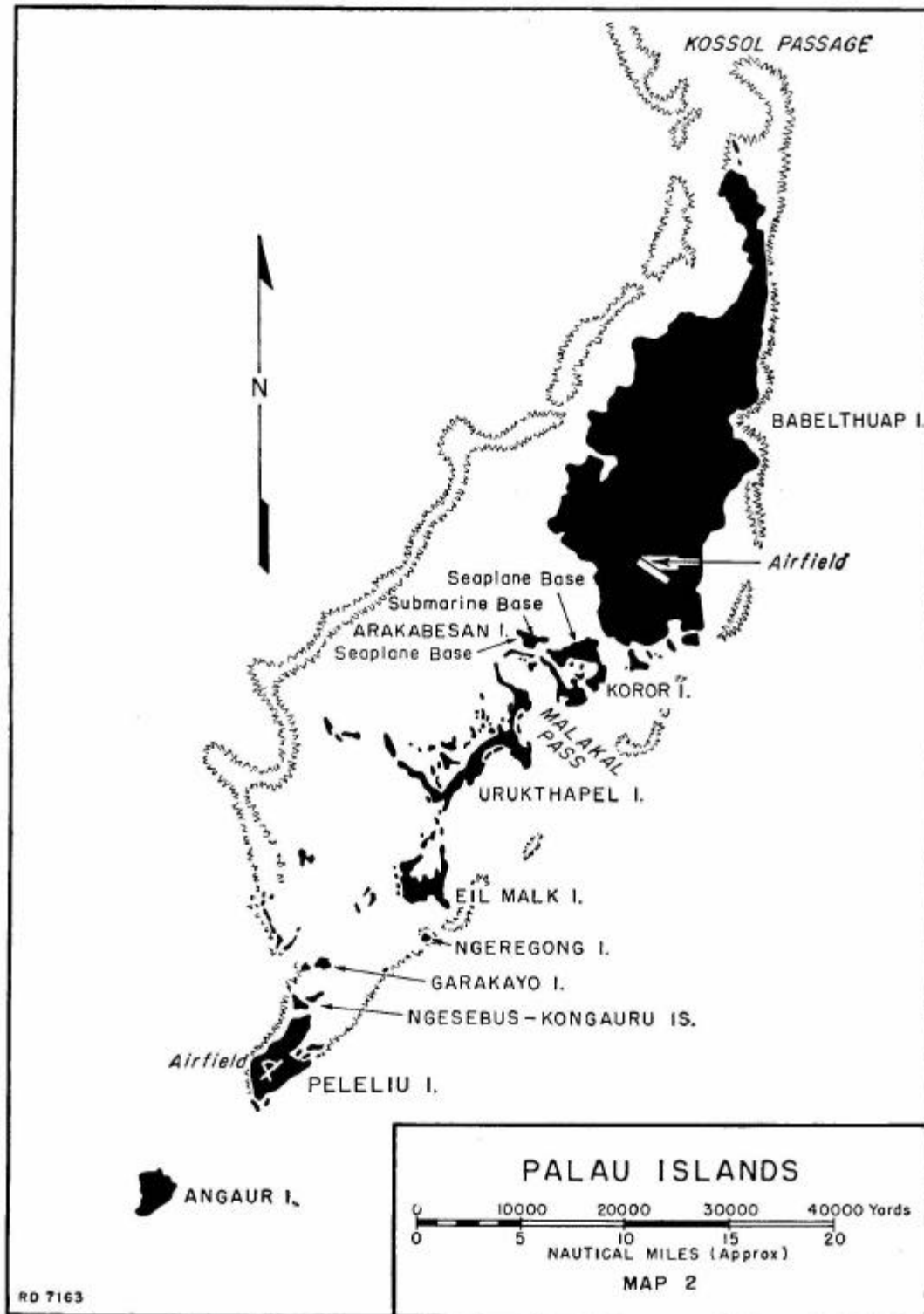


Figure 2A. Palaus Islands. *Source: Frank O. Hough, The Assault on Peleliu* (Historical Division, Headquarters US Marine Corps, 1950), 5.

Figure 3A. 1st Marine Division Scheme of Maneuver. Source: Frank O. Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu* (Historical Division, Headquarters, US Marine Corps, 1950), 20.

Figure 3A is a map of Peleliu Island illustrating the 1st Marine Division's scheme of maneuver. The map includes a north arrow and a scale bar (0 to 1000 yards). The legend, titled "SCHEME OF MANEUVER", defines the symbols used: solid lines for "Regimental Boundaries", dashed lines for "Phase Line", and arrows for "Direction of Drive".

The map shows the island's coastline and various geographical features, including:

- Beaches:** BEACH WHITE 1, BEACH WHITE 2, BEACH ORANGE 1, BEACH ORANGE 2, BEACH ORANGE 3, and BEACH PURPLE.
- Islands and Points:** KONGAURU I., NGESEBUS I., Akarokora Pt., Amiangol Mt., Hill 15, Hill 80, Hill 100, Kamiliangol Mt., Umurbragol Mt., Ngardolek, Ngarmoked I., and the Mangrove Swamp.
- Other Features:** Phosphate Refinery, Radio Station, R2 IS, Road Hill, Hill 100, Kamiliangol Mt., Umurbragol Mt., Ngardolek, Ngarmoked I., and the Mangrove Swamp.

Arrows indicate the direction of drive for various units, showing a general advance from the beaches towards the interior of the island.

MAP 4

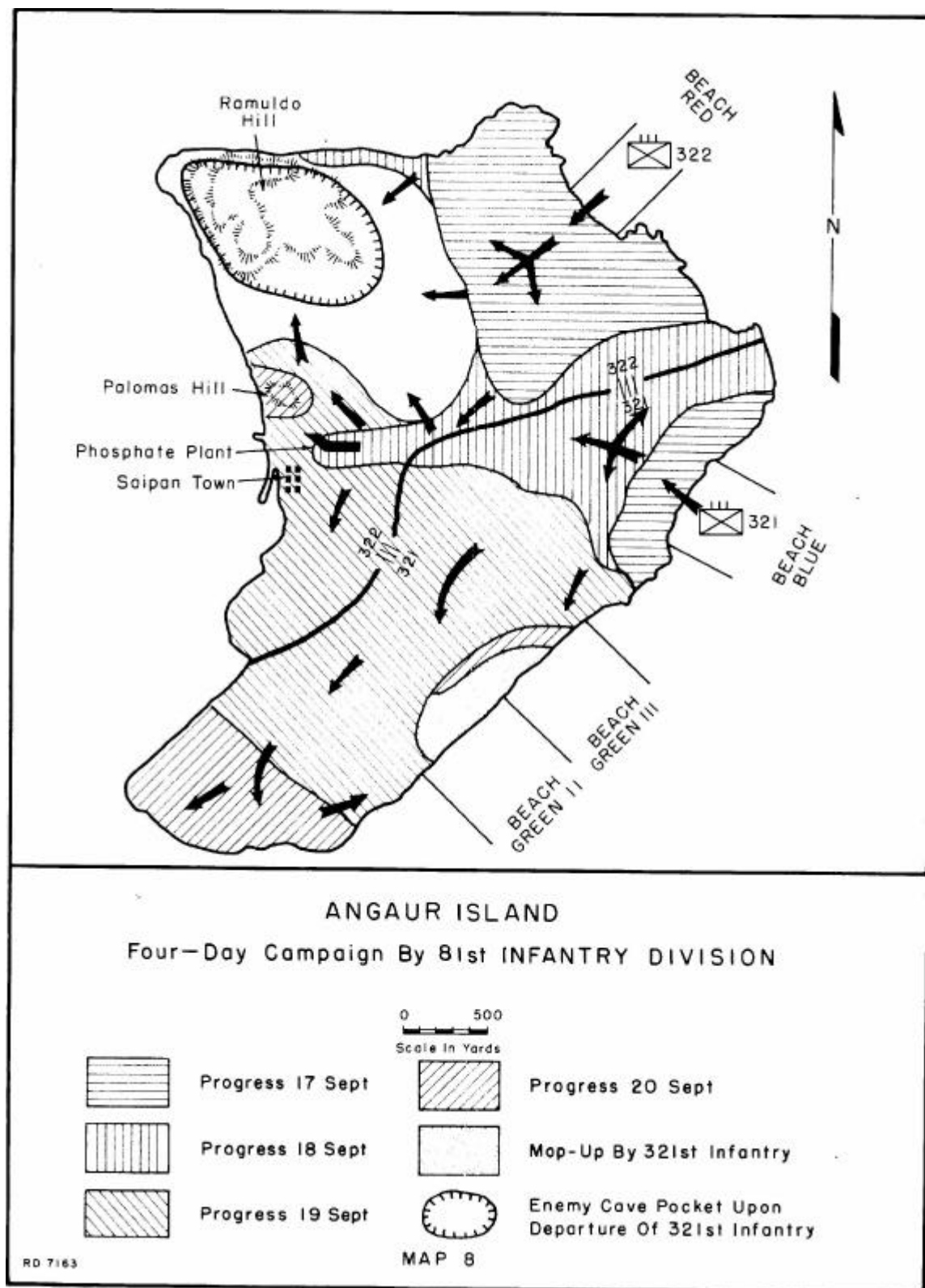
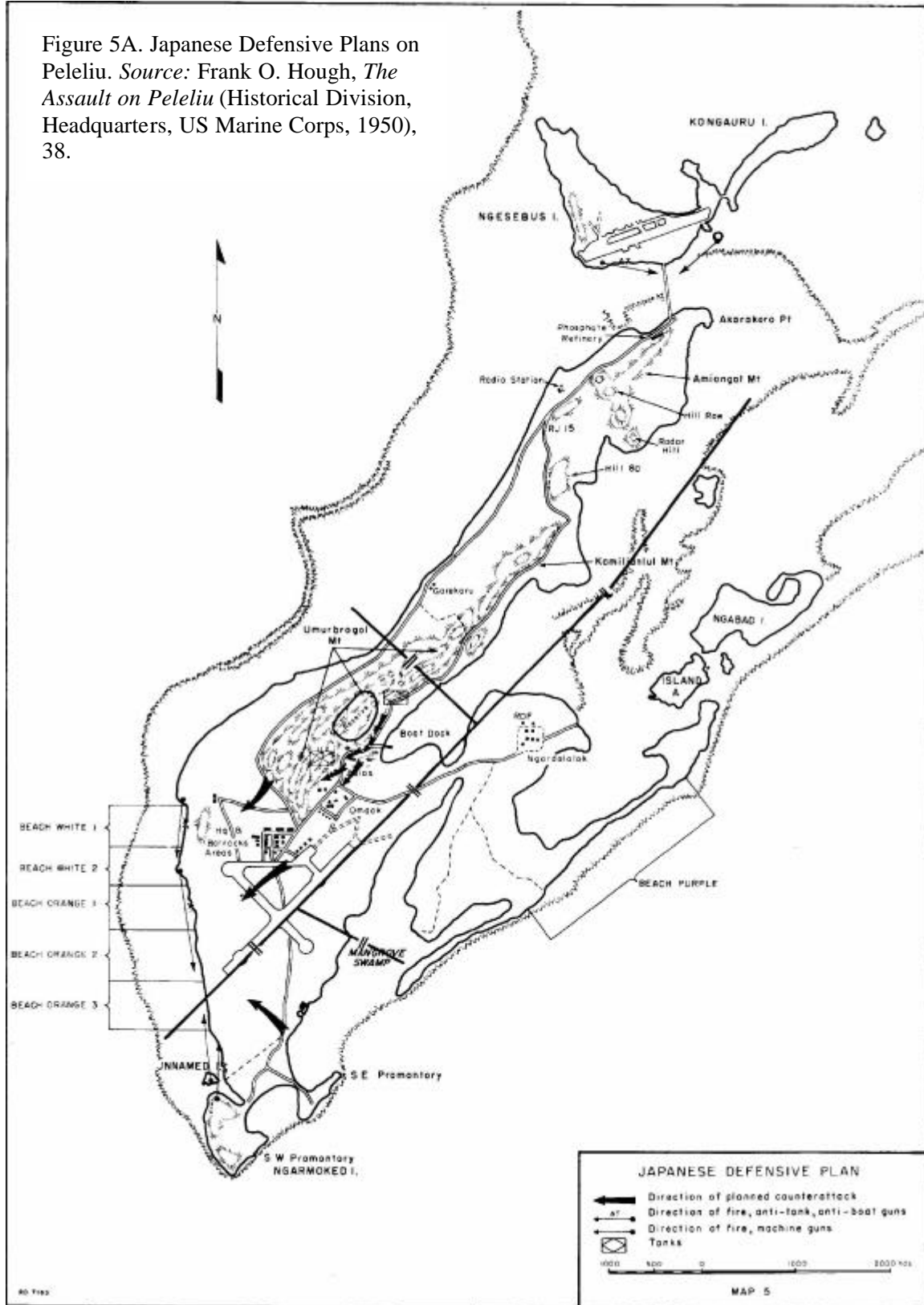


Figure 4A. 81st Infantry Division Scheme of Maneuver. Source: Frank O. Hough, *The Assault On Peleliu* (Historical Division, Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, 1950), 20.

Figure 5A. Japanese Defensive Plans on Peleliu. Source: Frank O. Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu* (Historical Division, Headquarters, US Marine Corps, 1950), 38.





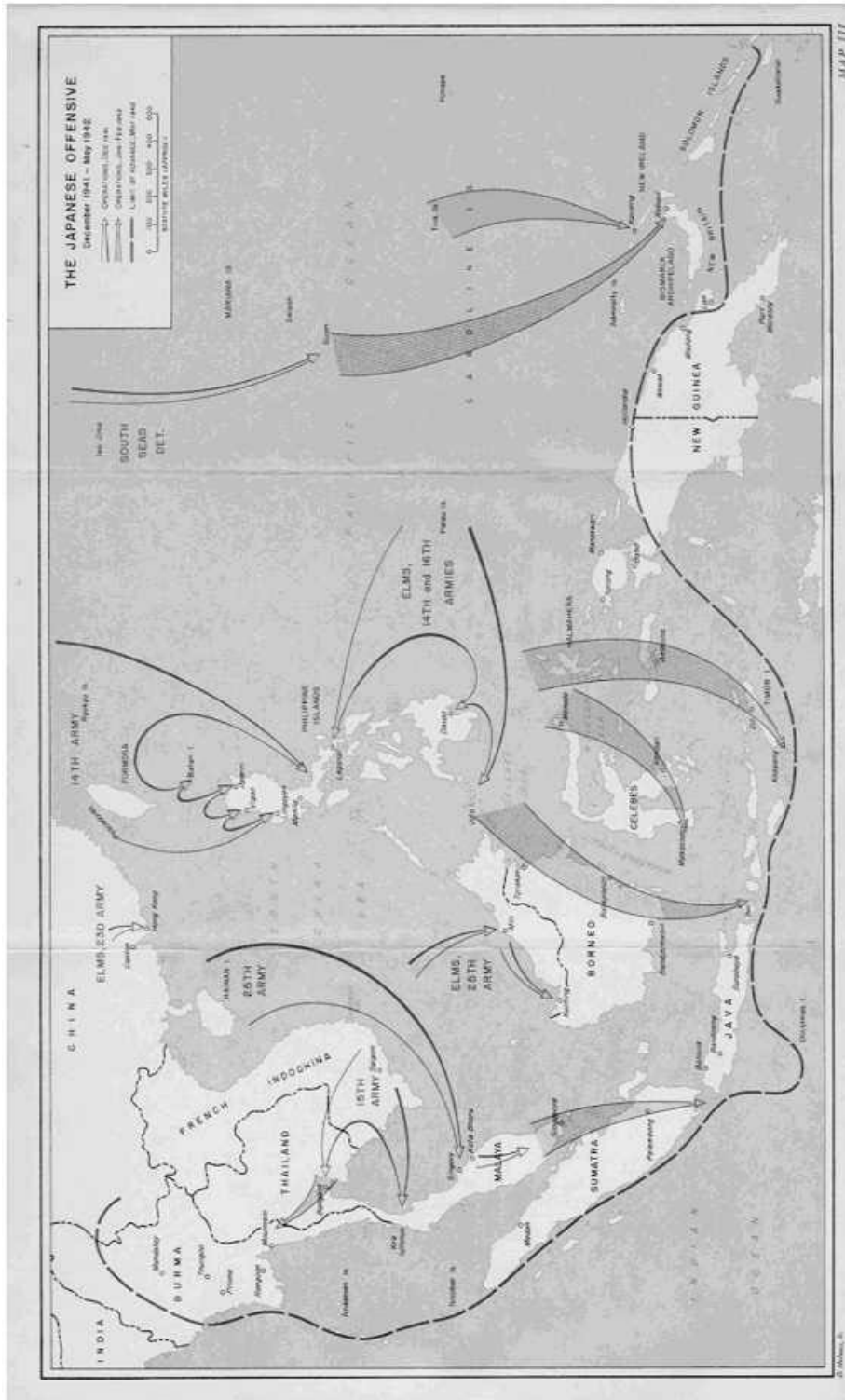


Figure 7A. Japanese Operational Plan For Pacific Offensive 1941 *Source: Louis Morton, The War In The Pacific: Strategy And Command: The First Two Years* (Office Of The Chief Of Military History, Department Of The Army, Washington D.C.: U. S. Army, 1962), Map III.

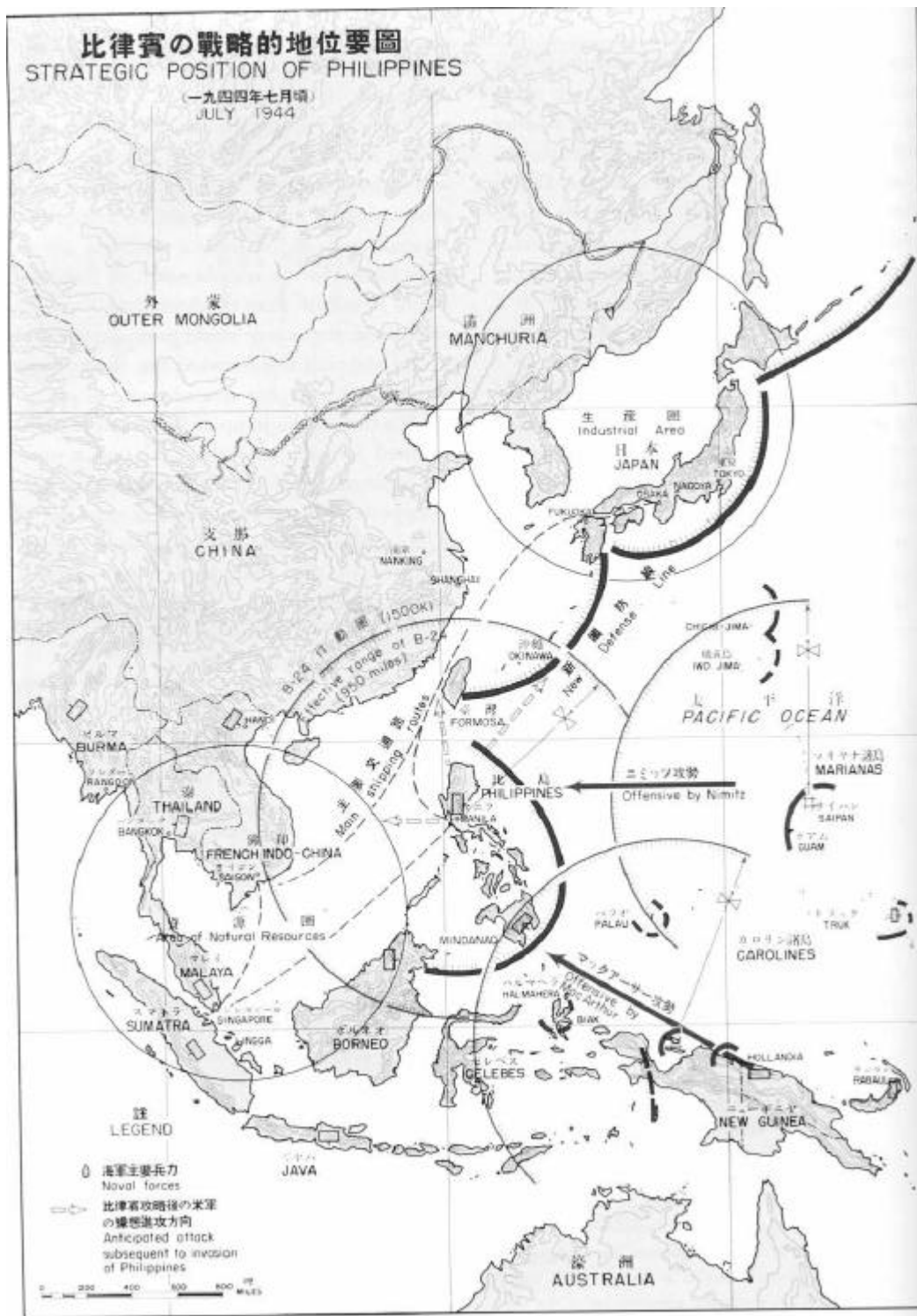


Figure 8A. Japanese Defensive Strategy 1944. Source: Maj Gen Charles A. Willoughby, *Reports of General MacArthur, Japanese Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area*, vol. 2, part 1 (Washington, DC, 1994), 308.

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