

Battle of Okinawa

III MEF Staff Ride

Battle Book

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Nash



History Division
U.S. Marine Corps
Quantico, Virginia
2015

Cover background photo: *LtCol Richard P. Ross, commander of 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, 1st Marine Division, braves sniper fire to place the division's colors on a parapet of Shuri Castle on 30 May 1945. This flag was first raised over Cape Gloucester and then Peleliu.*

Official Department of Defense photo 121832

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Welcome by Commander, III MEF

Welcome to the III Marine Expeditionary Force and Marine Forces Pacific (MarForPac) Staff Ride for the Battle of Okinawa.

The Battle of Okinawa was the Marine Corps' final battle of World War II. For three months, the U.S. Tenth Army, including the Marines of III Amphibious Corps, fought a grueling and bloody struggle to seize the largest island of the Ryukyus chain. Allied planners anticipated this battle would be the opening phase of the greater struggle for the Japanese home islands. Using Okinawa as a base, they planned to launch Operation Downfall—the invasion of Japan and the endgame of World War II

Dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki shortly after the fall of Okinawa ultimately precluded the need to invade the home islands. On 15 August 1945, Japan announced that it would surrender to the Allied powers. However, the fact that Okinawa did not become the base from which the Allies would launch the final invasion of Japan does not diminish its significance. The almost fanatical defense of the island by Japanese forces and the bloody toll their efforts exacted played an important role in convincing American planners to seek means other than an invasion to force Japan's surrender. The fall of the island also helped to further isolate Japan, cutting off its supply routes with the rest of its empire and enabling the United States to more effectively blockade the home islands.

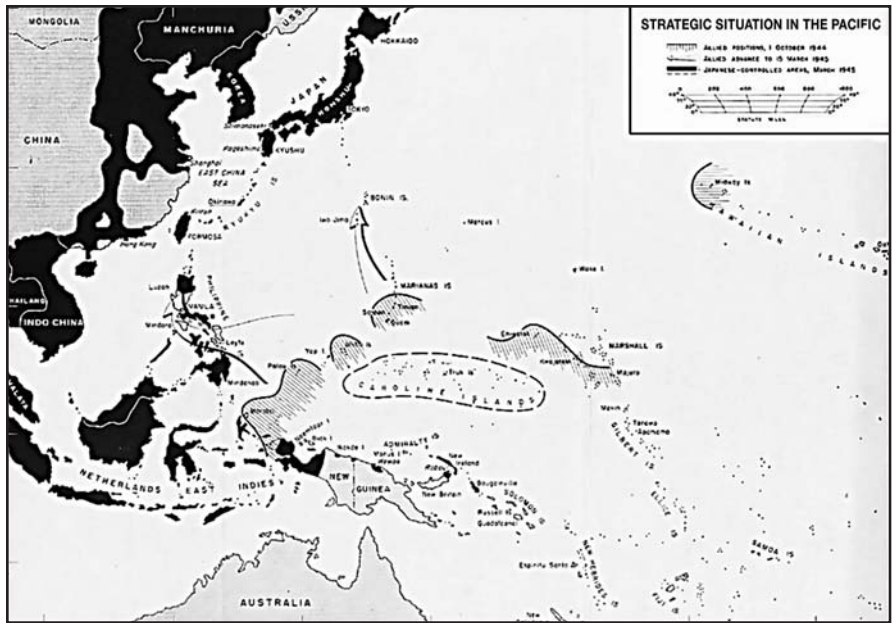
The battle proved to be the last opposed amphibious assault of World War II and the end of the grand drive across the Pacific that began with the landings on Guadalcanal in August 1942. Over the course of three years, the Allies had conducted a two-pronged assault to retake the territories seized by Japan in 1941–42 and breach Japan's inner defenses. The first, led by General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, advanced from the Solomon Islands across New Guinea and into the Philippines (refer to map on page 5). The second, commanded by Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, moved across the Central Pacific Ocean, beginning with the Gilberts in November 1943, advancing to

the Marshalls in early 1944, and culminating with the seizure of the Marianas and liberation of Guam in the summer of that year. In the course of this twin advance, the Japanese fortresses at Truk and Rabaul had been isolated, its lines of communications with its territories in Southeast Asia severed, and the home islands subjected to an unrelenting bombing campaign launched from bases in the Marianas.

Yet the Japanese showed no sign of surrendering. Indeed, in the fall of 1944, they demonstrated an even greater determination not to give up ground and capitulate. The 1st Marine Division's (1st MarDiv) fight for the island of Peleliu left the veteran division a bloodied shell. Beginning with the Philippines campaign, Japanese aircraft began suicide kamikaze strikes against U.S. Navy ships. These defensive tactics also inflicted significant casualties during the Battle of Iwo Jima, the only battle of the Pacific war where American casualties exceeded those of the Japanese.

There was a cold logic to Japan's change in tactics. Its efforts to stem the Allied assault across the Pacific had led to egregious, irreparable losses of personnel, ships, and equipment. The Imperial Japanese Navy was a shell of its former self, its carrier air arm virtually annihilated during the Marianas campaign. Unable to match the United States' industrial strength and the overwhelming power of the U.S. Marine Corps, Army, Army Air Corps, and Navy, the Japanese sought to wage a war of attrition. By choosing a deliberate defense that would inflict as many casualties upon the Allied forces as possible, the Japanese hoped that they would be convinced that a negotiated truce would be preferable to the high costs that would result during an invasion of the Japanese home islands. Therefore, the Japanese defenders would fight to the death with their mission being to make the Allies pay the highest price possible in Allied blood.

With the Marianas lost and their supply lines with Southeast Asia cut off, the Japanese leadership now faced the problem of preparing for the next Allied attack and anticipating where that attack would come. Would it be the islands of Formosa (Taiwan) or Okinawa? For the Americans and their British allies, the task was simpler if no less daunting. It now was time to breach Japan's inner defensive ring, seize



Map depicting strategic situation in the Pacific from October 1944 to March 1945.

Okinawa, and prepare for the next (and hopefully final) phase of the war, the invasion of the Japanese mainland.

What challenges would seizing an island this close to Japan involve? Could the Allies continue its successful island-hopping campaign all the way to Tokyo? What stood in the way of victory? How did the American leadership read the strategic, operational, and tactical situation? What were the Allied operational objectives and the best ways to secure them? These then were the questions of the moment and some of the things we will examine in the invasion of the Ryukyu Islands—the Battle of Okinawa—as we study on the ground during our ride culminating on the south side of Hill 89.

The Staff Ride

We will spend our days together walking and riding over the ground contested in this battle, continuing a long-standing military practice used by armies for over a century. We continue to use the title “staff

ride” for these specialized battlefield studies to evoke several objectives:

- History is important and we want to “get it right,” but history is useful only as a vehicle that moves us to a discussion of contemporary concerns to help us shape our future.
- We are conducting a seminar where the participants will share views on a broad range of ideas and issues, often from different vantage points.
- The team building that results from an intellectual adventure such as this may be as important as the substantive content of that adventure.
- Lastly, the insights that we develop, hone together, and share with others will help us as we confront again some or all of those dilemmas faced by our predecessors and as we take on increased responsibilities in our service, wherever that may carry us.

The Battlefield as a Metaphor

This staff ride complements those that you have already taken at some point in your career, whether at EWS, the Command and Staff College, or MCWar. Our staff ride offers some wonderful opportunities to visit yet again the continuing challenges of senior leadership—planning, organizing, and integrating complex operations; training and equipping individuals and units; building, leading, and rebuilding effective teams, the absolute requirement for resolute moral leadership under stress; the meshing of ideas and technology; and finally, inculcating the qualities essential to “fighting through”—closing with and slugging it out with the enemy, ultimately destroying him man to man, after all other options are exhausted.

This ride focuses on the 82-day battle known by the local population as *tetsu no bofu* (Typhoon of Steel), which began on Easter Sunday, 1 April 1945 (also April Fool’s Day). We will follow primarily III Amphibious Corps while framing the engagements fought by the Army’s neighboring XXIV Corps and Tenth Army, the higher headquarters

for the operation. This no-holds-barred fight pitting Marines and soldiers against determined Japanese defenders fighting to the death from underground positions was one of the most memorable battles in the history of the U.S. Marine Corps.

Early in March 1945, American sailors, Marines, soldiers, and airmen were firmly established throughout the Central Pacific and the Philippines, but the war against Japan was not yet won. Iwo Jima had fallen in February, and the larger strategic decision had been made to invade Okinawa rather than Formosa to gain a springboard for the invasion of Japan. With the recent memory of the fanatical resistance encountered at Peleliu and Iwo Jima still fresh in everyone's mind, no one was under any illusion that an invasion of Okinawa would be any easier. As Admiral Raymond A. Spruance maneuvered his Fifth Fleet into position to initiate the invasion on 21 March with Lieutenant General Simon B. Buckner's Tenth Army, few realized that the climactic battle of the war in the Pacific was at hand; even fewer believed that this would be one of the bloodiest battles the Marine Corps would ever fight, second only to Iwo Jima.

The leaders we will follow during this period are familiar to all of us from some of our previous study and staff rides—Nimitz, Spruance, Turner, Buckner, Geiger, del Valle, and Shepherd. We will also drop down a notch and look at division and regimental leaders in this primarily infantry, tank, and artillery fight.

We will see new and forbidding ground near towns named Naha, Maeda, Itoman, Wana, and the ancient Ryukyuan capital of Shuri. And we will see how forces of the embattled Japanese *Thirty-second Army*, fighting on Japanese soil, offer up a sustained and bitter defense, with a few offensive surprises that gave U.S. forces a taste of what they could expect to encounter during an invasion of mainland Japan.

The After-Action Review

Staff rides always end with an after-action review (AAR), a practice that fits as naturally with these rides as it does in our other training. Both armies involved in this fighting wrote comprehensive reports on

operations prior to and during the period that we are studying. They asked essentially the same questions that we ask in our reports today. What did we expect to happen? What happened? What did we learn from those experiences? And finally we add, how should this help us in the future?

A number of broad themes seem to present themselves for our study and reflection, including:

- The role, influence, and adaptation of doctrine
- Leadership, unit cohesion, and morale
- The planning and conduct of joint operations
- The role of intelligence, communications, and logistics
- Combined arms training and fighting
- Larger unit operations
- Generalship

Battlefield Guides

Our battlefield guides for this ride include experienced battlefield leaders, historians, and instructors to help us understand the complexities and context for one of the most crucial battles of World War II.

Take a few minutes to record your expectations for the staff ride on the notes pages at the end of this battle book. As we progress through presentations and discussions, and as we take time to reflect, ask yourself what is really happening and, as importantly, what is *NOT* happening. Think about these questions in the context of the challenges you face today and the solutions that you are positing. Think also about the recurring themes of these and other battlefields you know that help inform us about leading effectively through the “fog and friction” of modern military operations. All this and more we will discuss at the AAR at the end on day four.

Once again, we are off to tromp another battlefield rich in insights for us that will help guide and sustain us as we face our futures.

Commander's Intent

Purpose

To provide a leadership case study from the United States and Japanese experiences by examining the Battle of Okinawa, as part of the III MEF commanding general's professional development program.

Method

This staff ride will begin with an afternoon seminar introducing the main themes we will explore together. The discussion will focus at the intersection of the operational and tactical levels of war. The key considerations are senior-level decision making (Japanese and American), intelligence, logistics, changing the line of operations of a big organization on the fly, and command and staff in battle.

Using the III MEF headquarters as a base of operations, we will travel by bus over the next three (or four) days to various "stands" and, from our study and initial explorations of "war on the map," determine what actually happened on the ground. Each stand has been carefully chosen generally following the force, which has the initiative to illustrate a key objective, to emphasize the difficult Marine Corps, Army, and Navy coordination and integration challenges, to track the decisions of the senior leaders, and to follow the fight on the ground, as much as modern terrain considerations will allow. Throughout the staff ride, we will be emphasizing the role of the leader to shape the future, to build and sustain teams, to manage processes, and to nurture learning.

We will conclude each day with a seminar highlighting the observations and insights of the day, offering selected additional topics, and setting the stage for the following day. The commanding general will lead an after-action review at the conclusion of the staff ride at our last stop at the Peace Memorial Park in Mabuni.

End State

This rich and engaging battlefield metaphor will provide a perfect set-

ting for the III MEF Senior Leader Team to study, discuss, and reflect on the following:

- Assessing the situation for the role of operational and tactical leadership in battle;
- Understanding joint operations, “meshing the cultures,” and making it work;
- Dealing with the unexpected and decision making under uncertainty;
- Fighting through, qualities of leadership, and adaptability;
- Seeing and shaping the future; and
- Building effective teams and managing complex processes.

Schedule of Events (illustrative)

Day 1

1400–1700 Welcome brief, overview, and team building

Day 2

0800–0830 Mission brief

0830–0900 Travel to site overlooking the Hagushi beaches

0900–1200 Landings at Hagushi beach

1200–1300 Lunch, en route to Nago and Motobu Peninsula

1300–1700 III Amphibious Corps sweeps to the north, battle for Motobu Peninsula

1700–1800 Return to MEF HQ

1800–2000 Dinner followed by seminar and preview for following day

Day 3

0800–0830 Mission brief

0830–0930 Travel to Shuri Line

0930–1200 III Amphibious Corps attacks at Shuri Line

1200–1300 Lunch, en route to Naha

1300–1700 Japanese counteroffensive of 4–5 May, 6th MarDiv takes Sugar Loaf Hill, 1st MarDiv takes Shuri Castle

1700–1730	Return to MEF HQ
1730–2000	Dinner followed by seminar and preview for following day

Day 4

0800–0830	Mission brief
0830–0900	Travel to Oroku Peninsula
0900–1200	Marine turning movement at Oroku Peninsula and Naval Underground HQ
1200–1300	Lunch, en route to Yaeju-dake Line
1300–1500	Tenth Army assaults Yaeju-dake Line
1500–1530	Movement to Mabuni/Hill 89
1530–1700	Final battles along Kiyon Peninsula, cornerstone of Peace Memorial Park
1700–1730	Return to MEF HQ
1730–complete	Dinner, commanding general's AAR, and out brief (or see below)

Day 5 (Optional)

0900–1000	Final out brief with commanding general (if required)
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Author's note: the format of this staff ride battle book closely adheres to the model set forth in William G. Robertson's *The Staff Ride*, published by the U.S. Army's Center of Military History in 1987, as well as the example posed by Colonel French MacLean's *Battle of the Hürtgen Forest* battle book, written for the commander, U.S. Army Europe's staff ride in 2000. Any errors contained herein are strictly those of the author.

Commander in Chief, Pacific Ocean Areas (CinCPOA)

Joint Staff Study for Operation Iceberg

Shortly after concluding the seizure of the Marianas in August 1944, Admiral Nimitz, CinCPOA, directed his staff to begin preparing a staff study to determine requirements for the next phase of the Central Pacific offensive. While the need to take Iwo Jima had already been accounted for and plans had been drawn up accordingly, the next phase depended on whether the Allied invasion of Japan would go through the island of Formosa (Taiwan) via the Philippines or the Ryukyu Islands chain (referred to as Nansei Shoto by the Japanese) via the Marianas. Initially, General MacArthur advocated taking Formosa for use as a base to attack Japan, while Nimitz was in favor of the Ryukyuan approach.

Finally, MacArthur was won over to Nimitz's argument, partly because the campaign in the Philippines was proving to be much longer and costlier than initial estimates, requiring his full attention. With that obstacle removed—MacArthur would be designated a supporting commander—Nimitz's staff began drawing up initial plans for the invasion of the Ryukyus to determine overall theater requirements and to provide guidance for subordinate units. The operation was designated Iceberg, and the study that resulted from CinCPOA's staff became the basis for all directives concerning the operation. Nimitz did not intend the staff study to dictate or commit to any course of action. Rather, it was intended to facilitate the planning and implementation by his major subordinate commanders for their own respective operational and logistical planning.

The resulting 161-page CinCPOA staff study, issued on 25 October 1944, consisted of a 7-page concept of operations that envisioned the campaign unfolding in three phases, beginning on 1 March 1945 (for CinCPOA Joint Staff Study concept of operations, refer to packet of additional study materials). As a prerequisite, the staff assumed the capture of Iwo Jima and the neutralization of the Japanese Navy, as well as air superiority being established throughout the Ryukyus. It

foresaw the main purpose of seizing Okinawa and its surrounding islands as securing bases from which to attack mainland Japan and complete the destruction of its air and naval forces that were necessary prerequisites for a successful amphibious operation. The concept of operations was supported by eight appendices (A–H), totaling 154 pages, detailing the proposed scheme of maneuver, air operations, naval operations, submarine operations, logistics, troop list, preliminary seizure of islands (such as Ie Shima) subsequent to Phase I, and seizure and development of additional positions during Phase III.

Politically, CinCPOA could count upon President Franklin D. Roosevelt's support of Iceberg. Though the nation had been at war for nearly three years and the end of the war in Europe was only months away, the people of America, though increasingly war-weary, were united in their resolve to see the war with Japan through to victory. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were unanimous in their approval of the strategy, seeing Okinawa as a necessary stepping-stone essential for any successful invasion of the Japanese home islands. No one, except a very small group of people including the president, knew about the nuclear weapons being developed, and even then they were not certain that the atomic bomb would work. Though everyone believed that the Battle of Okinawa would be a bloody affair, few harbored any illusions that Japan would not surrender without a fight. Therefore, it was a battle that had to be fought.

The Joint Staff Study, marked top secret, was distributed throughout all the major subordinate commands, including Fifth Fleet/Task Force 50, Tenth Army, and commanding general of Fleet Marine Force Pacific. On 9 November 1944, Vice Admiral Richmond K. Turner, commander of Fifth Fleet and Task Force 51 (making the main effort) issued his personal guideline memorandum for Iceberg to his staff, which was also deeply involved in the final planning stages for Operation Detachment, the invasion of Iwo Jima. This document was to provide the basis for all subsequent planning, and except for moving the date back one month due to the prolongation of the seizure of Iwo Jima as well as some minor changes, it was to become the framework of the actual order used for the invasion, Task Force 50 Order 1-45, issued 3 January 1945.

Chronology of the War in the Pacific

19 September 1931–27 February 1932: Japanese invade and occupy Manchuria and create the puppet state of Manchukuo.

7 July 1937: Marco Polo Bridge incident sparks open war between Japan and China.

12 December 1937: Japanese bombers sink USS *Panay* (PR 5), a U.S. gunboat tasked with patrolling the Yangtze River. Public opinion in the United States turns against Japan.

1–3 September 1939: German invasion of Poland sparks World War II.

22–26 September 1940: Japan invades and occupies French Indochina.

26 July 1941: United States freezes Japanese assets, restricts trade, and establishes an oil embargo, following Japanese occupation of southern Indochina.

7 December 1941: Japan commences grand offensive against western colonial holdings throughout East Asia with a surprise attack against the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor. Four U.S. battleships are sunk and the Americans suffer more than 3,000 casualties.

8 December 1941: Japan launches invasion of the Philippines and Malaya.

8 December 1941: Japan invades and occupies Thailand.

8–10 December 1941: Japan invades and occupies Guam.

8–23 December 1941: Japan launches invasion of Wake Island. Their attempts at a landing are repeatedly thwarted by aviators from Marine Fighter Squadron 211. The Japanese finally achieve victory against the island's exhausted defenders on 23 December.

8–25 December 1941: Japan invades and seizes Hong Kong from British control.

10 December 1941: the British battleship HMS *Prince of Wales* (53)

and battlecruiser HMS *Repulse* (1916), en route to intercept the Japanese invasion force headed toward Singapore, are sunk off the coast of Malaya by Japanese bombers.

22 January 1942: Japanese forces begin offensive against British Indian Empire with an invasion of Burma.

15 February 1942: Japan's conquest of Malaya and Singapore is completed. Eighty-thousand British Commonwealth troops surrender to the Japanese.

27 February 1942: joint American-Dutch-Australian-British fleet defeated at battle of the Java Sea, opening way for Japanese occupation of Indonesia.

9 April 1942: United States and Filipino defenders of Bataan surrender to Japanese forces. Survivors suffer the Bataan Death March as they are moved from the peninsula to Camp O'Donnell 80 miles north.

18 April 1942: B-25s led by Lieutenant Colonel James H. Doolittle launch a carrier-borne raid against Tokyo.

4–8 May 1942: U.S. carriers intercept and defeat Japanese attempt to invade Port Moresby at the battle of the Coral Sea.

5–6 May 1942: Corregidor, the last American outpost in the Philippines, falls to Japanese forces. The Philippines is now completely occupied by Japan.

4–7 June 1942: Japanese launch offensive against Midway Island in an attempt to lure U.S. carriers into a decisive battle. U.S. carriers launch a counterambush that leads to the destruction of four Japanese carriers and brings an end to Japanese expansion in northern and central Pacific.

7 August 1942: United States conducts first counteroffensive of the war with the landing and seizure by two Marine divisions of an airfield on Guadalcanal. The field will be completed and named Henderson Field.

8–9 August 1942: Japanese sink American and Australian cruisers

defending forces on Guadalcanal at the battle of Savo Island. Three heavy cruisers are sunk.

12–14 September 1942: during the battle of Edson's Ridge, 1st MarDiv repels Japanese effort to seize Henderson Field.

23–26 October 1942: in the battle of Lunga Point, the Japanese attack on Henderson Field is repelled by the 1st MarDiv.

26 October 1942: during the battle of Santa Cruz Islands, the Japanese inflict considerable damage against U.S. naval forces defending Guadalcanal.

12–15 November 1942: during the naval battle of Guadalcanal, Japan suffers decisive defeat as it attempts to retake Henderson Field.

7 February 1943: the last Japanese forces withdraw from Guadalcanal.

30 June 1943: Allied forces begin Operation Cartwheel to isolate Rabaul and retake western New Guinea from Japanese control.

5 August 1943: Allied forces seize New Georgia.

1 November 1943: Allies begin operations to regain and secure Bougainville from Japanese control.

20–23 November 1943: in the Battle of Tarawa, the 2d MarDiv wages bloody battle to seize and secure Betio Island in the Tarawa Atoll as Allied forces commence the Central Pacific drive into the Gilberts. The 27th Infantry Division concurrently seizes Makin Island, another atoll in the Gilberts chain.

26 December 1943: beginning of the battle of Cape Gloucester in New Guinea.

31 January–3 February 1944: U.S. forces begin advance into the Marshall Islands for battle of Kwajalein.

17–23 February 1944: during the battle of Eniwetok, the United States successfully seizes Eniwetok Atoll from the Japanese, securing the Marshall Islands.

8 March–3 July 1944: the Japanese attempt to invade northern India is repulsed by commonwealth forces in the battle of Imphal.

4 April–22 June 1944: in the battle of Kohima, commonwealth forces secure supply lines to Imphal, ending the Japanese campaign to invade India.

22 April 1944: Allies secure Cape Gloucester.

15 June–9 July 1944: U.S. forces assault Saipan in the first wave of the Marianas campaign.

19 June–20 June 1944: a Japanese attempt to sink the Saipan landing fleet is thwarted by American carrier aircraft during battle of the Philippine Sea or “Great Marianas Turkey Shoot.” This a decisive defeat of Japanese naval air forces.

21 July–10 August 1944: United States assault and liberate Guam in the second phase of the Marianas campaign.

24 July–1 August 1944: United States assault and seize Tinian from Japanese control as it continues to secure the Mariana Islands.

15 September–27 November 1944: the 1st MarDiv and 81st Infantry Division wage a grueling struggle to seize and secure Peleliu, an island in the Palau Islands.

20 October 1944: U.S. forces land at Leyte Island and begin the liberation of the Philippines.

23–26 October 1944: United States defeats Japanese attempts to disrupt the landings at the Philippines during the battle of Leyte Gulf. This is the largest naval battle of the Pacific theater and the first use of kamikaze by Japanese.

24 November 1944: Twentieth Air Force begins strategic bombing campaign against Japan from bases in the Marianas Islands.

15 December 1944: U.S. forces land on Mindoro Island in the continuing campaign to liberate the Philippines.

9 January 1945: start of the battle of Luzon. U.S. forces begin campaign to liberate largest of the Philippine Islands.

3 February–3 March 1945: United States liberates capital city of the Philippines in the battle of Manila.

19 February 1945–26 March 1945: three U.S. Marine divisions assault and secure the island of Iwo Jima for the largest all-Marine battle of World War II.

9 March 1945: Twentieth Air Force begins firebombing campaign of Japanese cities.

1 April–22 June 1945: in the Battle of Okinawa, the United States begins campaign to seize and secure the Ryukyu Islands so that they may be used as a staging area for the invasion of the Japanese home islands.

13 April 1945: Franklin D. Roosevelt dies. Harry S. Truman sworn in as president.

8 May 1945: Victory in Europe Day. End of the war with Germany.

16 July 1945: Trinity atomic bomb test. First successful nuclear detonation.

6 August 1945: Twentieth Air Force B-29 drops atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

8 August 1945: Soviet Union declares war against Japan and subsequently invades Manchuria and inflicts a decisive defeat against Japanese forces there.

9 August 1945: Twentieth Air Force B-29 drops atomic bomb on Nagasaki.

15 August 1945: Japanese Emperor Hirohito announces surrender of Japan to the Allied powers. Remaining pockets of resistance in the Philippines and China surrender.

28 August 1945: Allies begin the occupation of Japan.

2 September 1945: Japan formally surrenders to the Allied powers.
End of World War II in the Pacific.

Operation Iceberg/Invasion of Okinawa Planning Overview



Official U.S. Navy photo, National Archives collection

U.S. Navy and Marine officers, some of whom would play crucial roles during the Battle of Okinawa, pictured at a staff conference at Saipan. Present are (left to right) VAdm Richmond K. Turner, USN (Task Force 51); LtGen Holland M. Smith (V Amphibious Corps); Adm Raymond A. Spruance, USN (Fifth Fleet); RAdm Marc A. Mitscher, USN (Task Force 58); MajGen Roy S. Geiger; RAdm Richard L. Conolly, USN; and MajGen Pedro A. del Valle (1st MarDiv).

1. U.S. strategy and Okinawa: an element of the Pacific island-hopping campaign.
 - The situation in October 1944—Japan via Formosa or Okinawa
 - Joint planning considerations
 - Campaign design
 - Maturation of amphibious doctrine

2. Review of Operation Iceberg via the Marine Corps planning process using a copy of the original October 1944 staff study. (Note: the amount of time that the commander of III MEF wishes his subordinate commanders and staff to devote to this activity needs to be determined. Otherwise, this could be optional.)
 - Problem framing
 - Course of action development
 - Course of action war game
 - Course of action comparison and decision
 - Orders development
 - Transition
3. Actual Task Force 51 planning assumptions. Subordinate commands in the Pacific Fleet were directed to undertake their planning for the assault on Okinawa based on the following assumptions:
 - That Iwo Jima had been seized at a sufficiently early date to permit the gun support and air support units to participate in the assault on Okinawa.
 - That the United States would maintain continuing control of the air in the objective area.
 - That assault shipping and supporting naval forces would have been released from the Luzon operations.

All the assumptions turned out to be reasonably sound. The additional six weeks separating the Okinawa and Iwo Jima operations permitted most of the ships damaged by kamikazes in the Luzon operations of General MacArthur to be repaired and returned to battle duty.

4. Actual Task Force 51 concept of operations. Operation Iceberg was planned to be carried out in three phases.

Phase I included the following:

- The capture of Kerama Retto six days before the main landings on Okinawa and the establishment there of a logistic anchorage and of a floating seaplane base;
- The capture of four very small islands (Keise Shima) just eight miles west of the Okinawa port of Naha on the day before the main landing and the emplacement of 24 155mm guns thereon;
- Assault and capture of the southern part of Okinawa—the area lying south of the narrow neck formed by Ishikawa Isthmus; and
- Possibly, the capture of the island Tonachi-jima, lying 30 miles west of the Motobu Peninsula on Okinawa.

Phase II estimated to commence 1 May 1945, included the following:

- The capture of the island Ie Shima, lying just west of the Motobu Peninsula, and
- The capture of Motobu Peninsula.

Phase III, the two operations estimated to commence on 1 July 1945 and 1 October 1945, respectively, included the following:

- The capture of Miyako-jima, an island 150 miles to the southwest of Okinawa, and
- The capture of Kikai-jima, an island 170 miles to the north-northeast of Okinawa on the way to Kyushu.

The actual basic order further provided that, subsequent to the assault on Okinawa, this force would capture, occupy, and defend ad-

ditional positions for establishing secure sea and air control over the East China Sea.

Approximately 116,000 troops were assigned to the initial assaulting units, out of a total of 183,000 troops made available by CinCPOA for the assault phases of the operation.

5. Tenth Army concept of operations (excerpt from Major Charles S. Nichols Jr. and Henry I. Shaw Jr., *Okinawa: Victory in the Pacific*, 1955):

A tentative operation plan was issued by Tenth Army on 6 January 1945 with instructions that it would be placed in effect on order of the commanding general, Tenth Army. This was done on 11 March 1945, concurrent with the briefing of Fifth Fleet units, which had been actively engaged against the enemy at Iwo Jima and had little time to prepare for the Okinawa operation.

The operation order directed XXIV Corps to land with two divisions abreast on the beaches south of Hagushi; 96th Division (Major General James L. Bradley) on the right, less one regiment in corps reserve; 7th Division (Major General Archibald V. Arnold) on the left with one regiment in division reserve but under the operational control of the commanding general, XXIV Corps. On order of the commanding general, 77th Division, one field artillery group of XXIV Corps Artillery was to be landed on Keise Shima prior to L-Day to support the attack on Okinawa. The group would revert to control of commanding general, XXIV Corps upon his arrival in the objective area. The remainder of XXIV Corps Artillery (Brigadier General Josef R. Sheetz) would land on corps order and support the corps attack with long-range interdiction, counterbattery, and harassing fires.

Simultaneously, the III Amphibious Corps was to land with two divisions abreast on the beaches north of Hagushi and move rapidly inland, coordinating its advance with XXIV Corps. The 1st MarDiv (Major General Pedro A. del Valle) was to assist the 6th MarDiv (Major General Lemuel Shepherd Jr.) in the capture of Yontan airfield by quickly seizing the high ground northeast of Chimu; thereafter, it was

to continue the attack, making the main effort on the right to maintain contact with XXIV Corps and assist its advance. The 1st MarDiv scheme of maneuver placed the 5th and 7th Marines in assault with the 5th Marines on the right. The 1st Marines remained in division reserve.

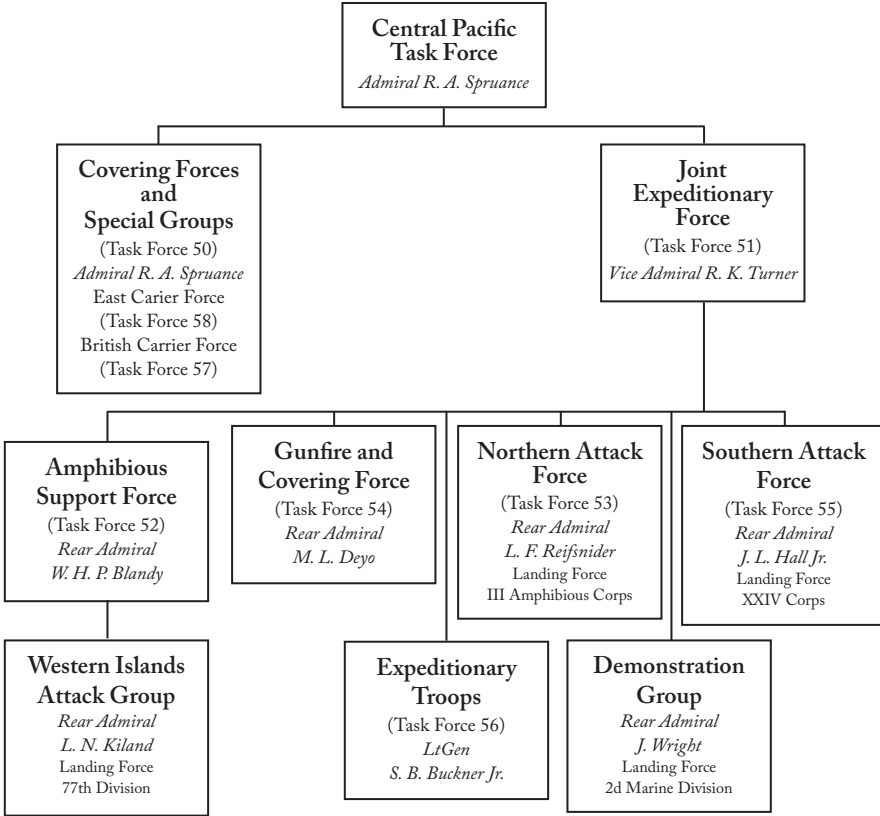
The 6th MarDiv, less the 29th Marines, would land on the left of the 1st MarDiv. The 4th Marines, less the 2d Battalion in division reserve, would be on the right and the 22d Marines on the left. The division was charged with the initial mission of capturing Yontan airfield and protecting the northern flank of the Tenth Army. The 29th Marines in corps reserve, in addition to being prepared to land on designated beaches, would stand ready to revert one battalion landing team (BLT) to the 6th MarDiv on order. III Amphibious Corps Artillery was to land on corps order to support the attack, and once ashore to coordinate field artillery, air support, and naval gunfire in the Marines' area.

For the initial phase of the operation, following the landing, the objective area consisted of that part of the island lying south of a general line across the Ishikawa Isthmus running through Chimu and including the Eastern Islands. To isolate the objective, the isthmus was to be seized quickly by III Amphibious Corps to block enemy reinforcement from the north. At the same time, XXIV Corps was to secure a general east-west line through Kuba Saki to seal off the Japanese in the south. After the capture and occupation of central Okinawa, the attack would continue to the south to secure the remainder of the objective.

Upon the completion of Phase I, the second phase was to be executed when directed by General Buckner with troops locally available. This involved the seizure of Ie Shima and the rest of Okinawa. It was contemplated that Motobu Peninsula in the north of the island would be secured by means of a combined shore-to-shore amphibious and land assault, followed by a shore-to-shore attack against Ie Shima. The capture of the rest of northern Okinawa would bring the end of Phase II.*

* Charles S. Nichols and Henry I. Shaw Jr., *Okinawa: Victory in the Pacific* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1955), 25-26.

6. Command and control relationships (shown below):



As shown in the diagram above, overall command and control for all naval, air, and ground task forces assigned for Operation Iceberg fell under Admiral Spruance, who was also designated as commander of Central Pacific task forces. He was responsible for two primary forces—the Joint Expeditionary Force (Task Force 51), charged with carrying out the actual invasion of Okinawa, and the covering forces and special groups (Task Force 50), Task Force 58 (the fast carrier force), and Task Force 57 (the British carrier force).

Task Force 51, commanded by Vice Admiral Richmond Turner, was composed of six subordinate task forces. The landing force, designated Expeditionary Troops or Task Force 56, was commanded by Army Lieutenant General Buckner. Supporting task forces were the Amphibious

Support Force (Task Force 52), Gunfire and Covering Force Group (Task Force 54), Northern Attack Force (Task Force 53), the Southern Attack Force (Task Force 55), and the Demonstration Group, which was responsible for carrying out a diversionary maneuver.

Per the *Landing Force Manual*, initial command of Task Force 54 during the landing operation would be exercised by Admiral Turner. Once the preponderance of forces were ashore, General Buckner would establish Tenth Army Headquarters and from that point forward would exercise direct command and control of all ground and air forces based on the island, including III Amphibious Corps and the Tactical Air Force, Tenth Army.

Chronology of the Battle of Okinawa



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo

14–31 March 1945: preliminary air operations.

23 March–1 April: naval bombardment.

26–31 March: the 77th Infantry Division assaults and captures Kera-ma Retto and Keise Shima islands.

1 April (Easter): amphibious landings begin on main island at Ha-gushi beach.

2 April: the 7th Infantry Division reaches the eastern coast and severs the island in two; III Amphibious Corps swings to the north; U.S. Army's XXIV Corps swings to the south.

4 April: XXIV Corps slams up against the outposts of the Japanese Machinato Line and is soon bogged down amid an interlocking de-fensive system.

6–7 April: first of 10 major kamikaze attacks (Ten-Go Plan).

9–10 April: seizure of Tsugen Shima Island by 27th Infantry Division.

16–21 April: seizure of Ie Shima Island by 77th Infantry Division.

19 April: all-out attack on outer ring of defenses of Shuri Line by XXIV Corps.

20 April: end of organized resistance on Motobu Peninsula in 6th MarDiv area of operations.

26 April: Admiral Nimitz sends a dispatch notifying Tenth Army that the Miyako Operation of Phase III had been postponed indefinitely by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington, thus freeing the III Amphibious Corps for full use on Okinawa.

1 May: the 1st MarDiv relieves the 27th Infantry Division in southern Okinawa.

4–6 May: major Japanese counteroffensive repulsed by XXIV Corps.

4 May: the 27th Infantry Division relieves 6th MarDiv in northern Okinawa.

7 May: III Amphibious Corps takes over western sector of the Tenth Army front in southern Okinawa.

8 May: the first elements of 6th MarDiv enter the lines on the southern front.

11–21 May: all-out attack by Tenth Army against the inner defenses of the Shuri Line.

30 May–4 June: Japanese *Thirty-second Army* withdraws from Shuri Line to new positions in the Kiyama Peninsula.

31 May: the 5th Marines captures Shuri Castle.

4 June: the 6th MarDiv assaults Oroku Peninsula in amphibious envelopment

18 June: General Buckner killed by Japanese artillery; Major General Roy S. Geiger assumes command of Tenth Army, he becoming the first Marine general to command a field army.

21 June: end of organized Japanese resistance.

22 June: Tenth Army raises flag for its new headquarters, marking the official capture of Okinawa.

23 June: General Joseph W. Stillwell assumes command of Tenth Army.

30 June: mop-up of southern Okinawa complete.

Suggested Routes, Maps, and Vignettes

Introduction

The Battle of Okinawa raged from 1 April to 21 June 1945, a period of 82 days encompassing some of the most savage fighting that occurred anywhere in the Pacific. More than 200,000 people were killed or wounded during the battle, including a large civilian population caught between the two opposing armies. Although Okinawa is approximately 60 miles long, most of the fighting took place in the southern third of the island, its most developed and most heavily populated portion. (Refer to Maps A and B for overall orientation.)

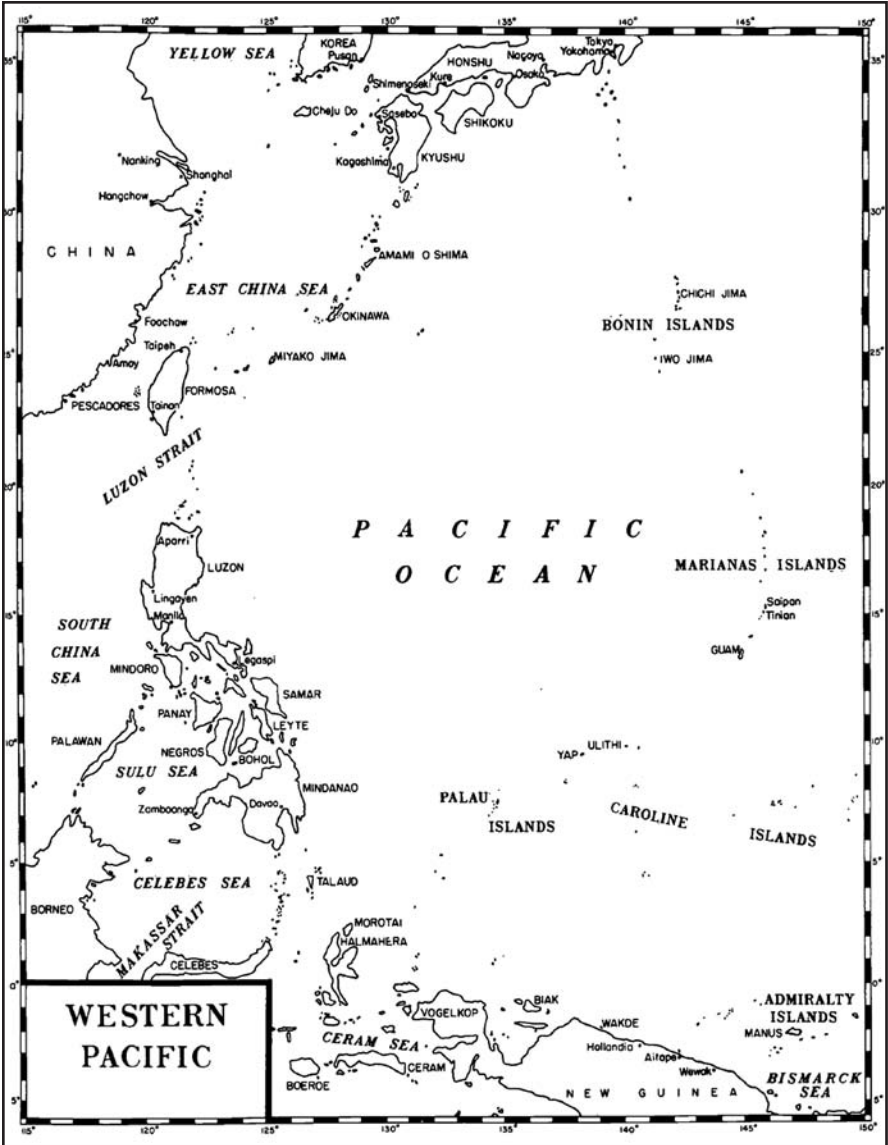
This battle book is designed to examine the Marine Corps' participation in the battle during a three-day staff ride. To accomplish this on Okinawa's crowded road network, an early start is required. While the U.S. Army's role in the battle was central to the overall Allied success (in fact it provided the majority of the ground forces), the time available limits the staff ride to those areas of the battlefield where III Amphibious Corps and its units battled the Japanese.

The first stand will focus on the landings at the Hagushi beaches, including the logistical preparations so essential for success, while the second stand will focus on the drive across the island toward the northern coast. Central to this phase was the hard fighting for the Motobu Peninsula and the capture of Ie Shima, which we will briefly discuss. The route of this guide follows no "tour" signs; therefore, the staff ride leader should recon the route before the staff ride and should have a detailed local road map. Many of the stands are in rural areas near active military installations, so be careful not to stray into off-limits areas.

The staff group leader may want to start this staff ride at a location where he or she can discuss the overview of the landings. Locations for this stand may be Kitanakagusuku (site of the EM Hotel Costa Vista parking lot) or Skyline Ridge, though the Hotel Costa Vista (the website can be found at <http://www.costavista.jp>) is much closer to the invasion beaches. This information may be covered the day or night before the ride in a briefing format.

A note on vignettes: this staff ride is designed to be scalable; that is, it can be used by units ranging in size from infantry company to MEF and from the MEF command element to the Marine air wing. As such, it is the responsibility of individual units conducting their own staff rides to select appropriate vignettes that reinforce the teaching points relevant to their units' mission. The History Division stands ready to assist units in developing these vignettes but recommends that units appoint a Marine taking part in the staff ride to serve as the focal point for vignette selection.

In regards to individual accounts, George Feifer's *Tennozán: The Battle of Okinawa and the Atomic Bomb* is a good source for vignettes, as is William Manchester's *Goodbye, Darkness: A Memoir of the Pacific War*. One of the best of the genre is Eugene B. Sledge's *With the Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa*. A particularly dramatic, first-person account is "A Hill Called Sugar Loaf" by First Sergeant Edmund H. DeMar, USMC (Ret), in *Leatherneck* (June 1995).



Reference Map A



Reference Map B

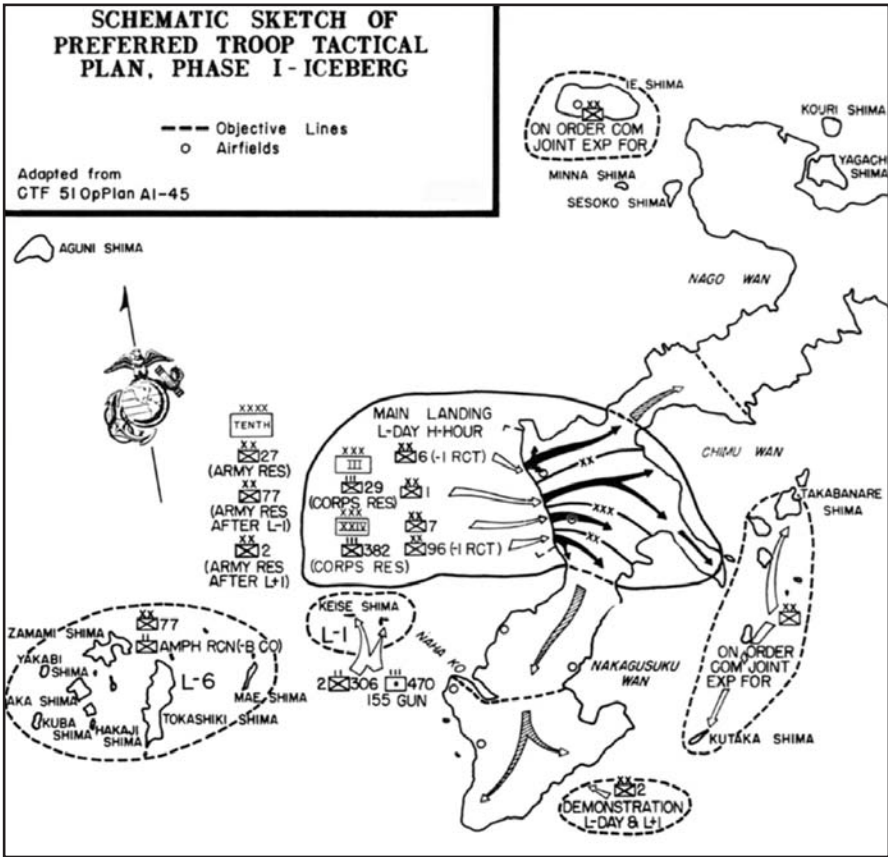
Selected Stands and Maps for the Battle of Okinawa

- | | |
|----------|---|
| Stand 1 | Landings at the Hagushi Beaches |
| Stand 2 | III Amphibious Corps Sweeps to the North; Battle for Motobu Peninsula |
| Stand 3 | The Battle at the Shuri Line; 1st MarDiv Joins the Attack |
| Stand 4 | The Japanese Counteroffensive of 4–5 May |
| Stand 5 | 6th MarDiv Takes Sugar Loaf; 1st MarDiv at Wana Ridge and Wana Draw |
| Stand 6 | Japanese Withdrawal; 1st MarDiv Takes Shuri |
| Stand 7 | 6th MarDiv Landings at Oroku Peninsula, Japanese Naval Headquarters |
| Stand 8 | Tenth Army Assaults Yazu-dake, Yaeju-dake—Kunishi Ridge Defensive Line |
| Stand 9 | Alternate Landing Beaches at Minatogawa |
| Stand 10 | Japanese Final Resistance at Mabuni and End at Hill 89; Peace Memorial Park |

**SCHEMATIC SKETCH OF
PREFERRED TROOP TACTICAL
PLAN, PHASE I - ICEBERG**

--- Objective Lines
○ Airfields

Adapted from
CTF 51 OpPlan A1-45



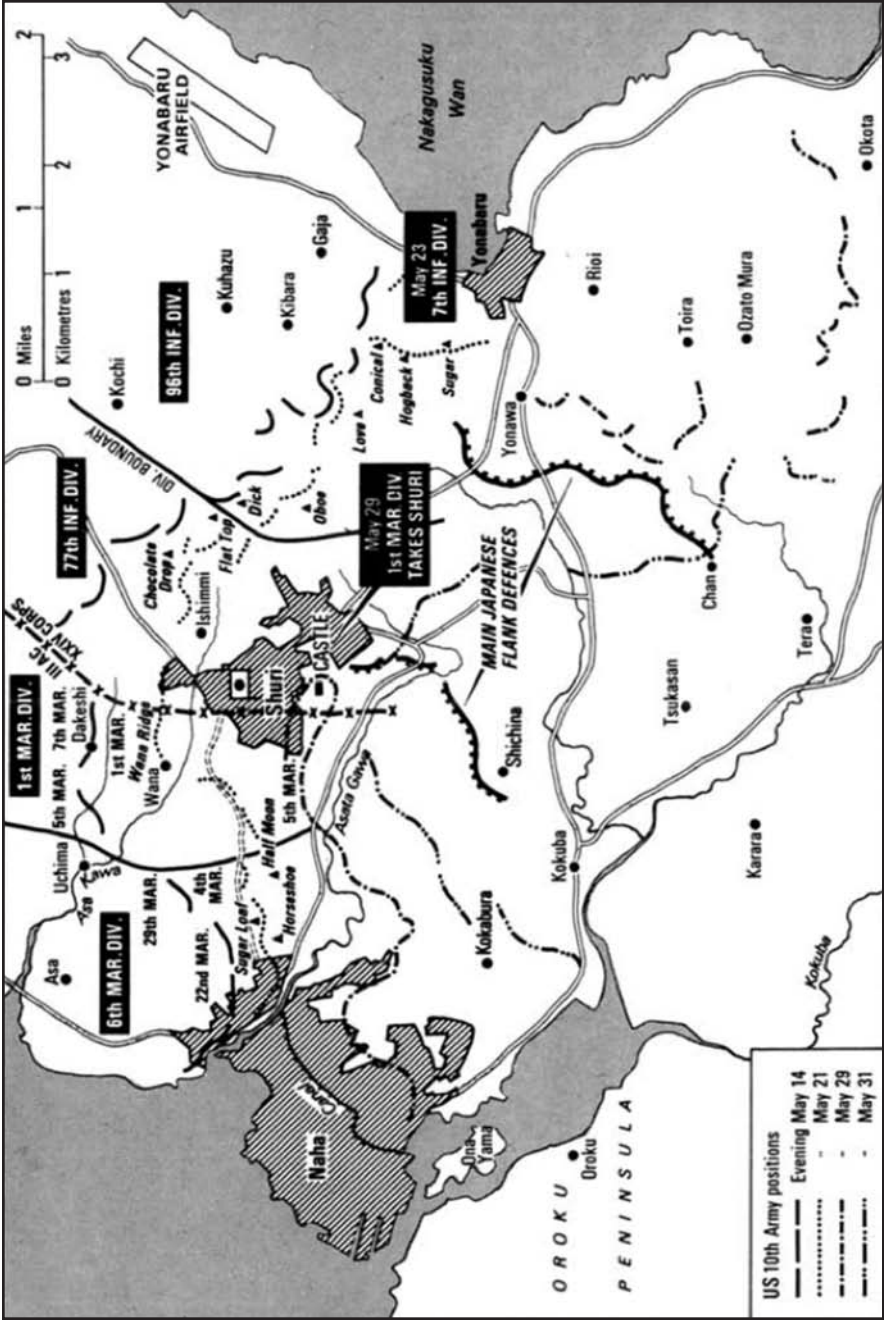
Map to Stand 1



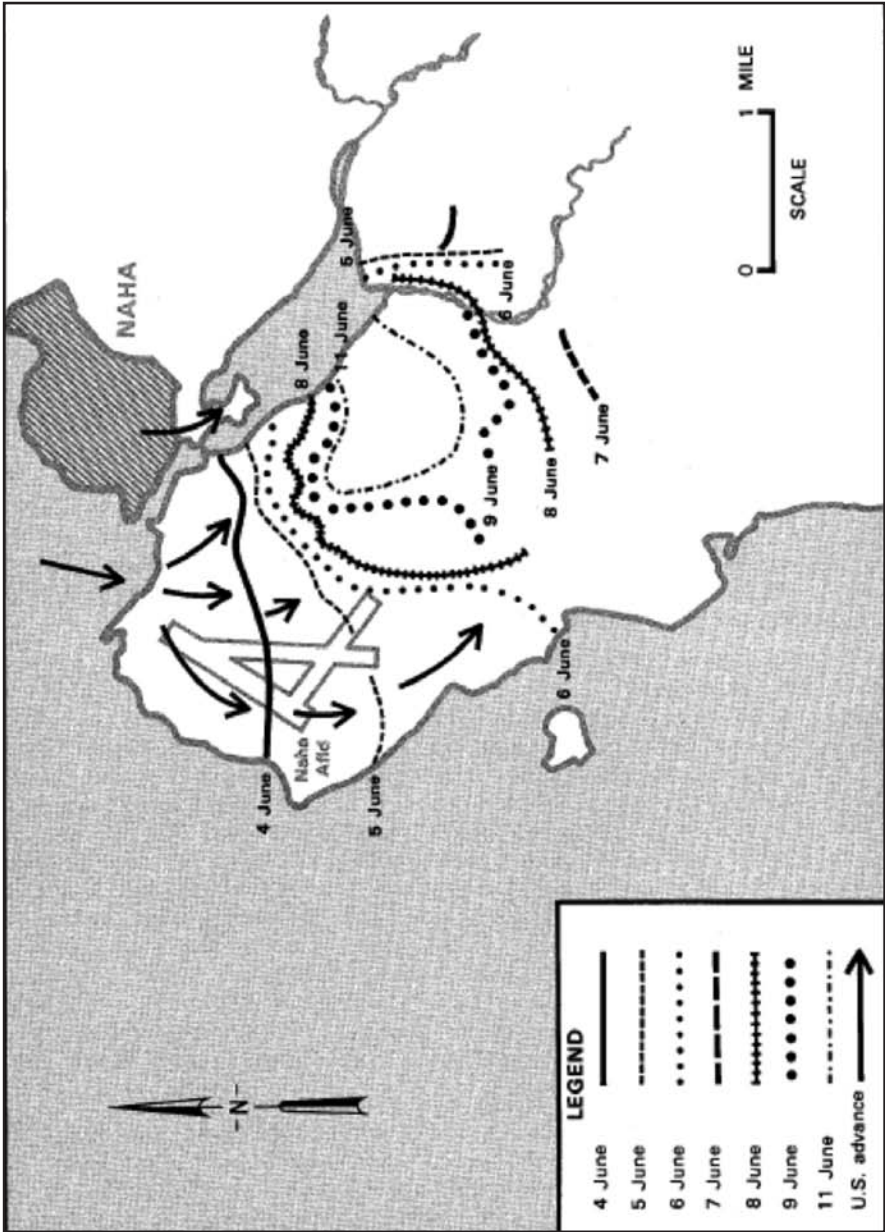
Map 1 to Stand 2



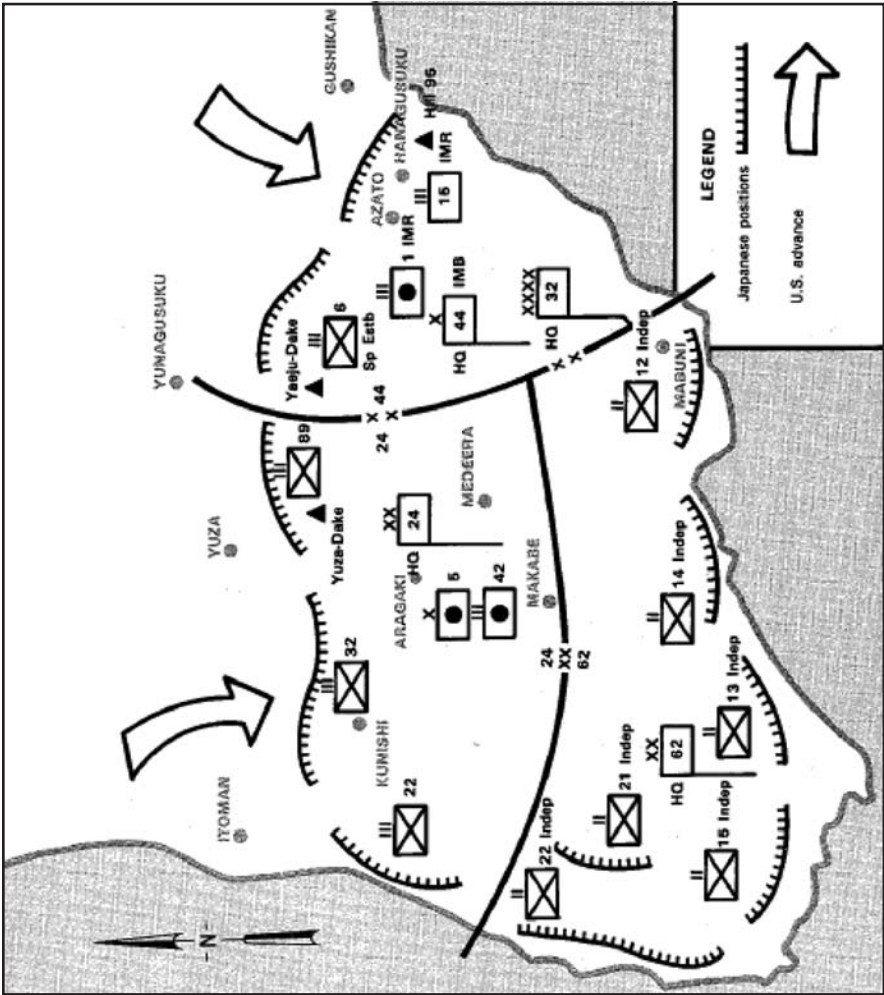
Map 2 to Stand 2



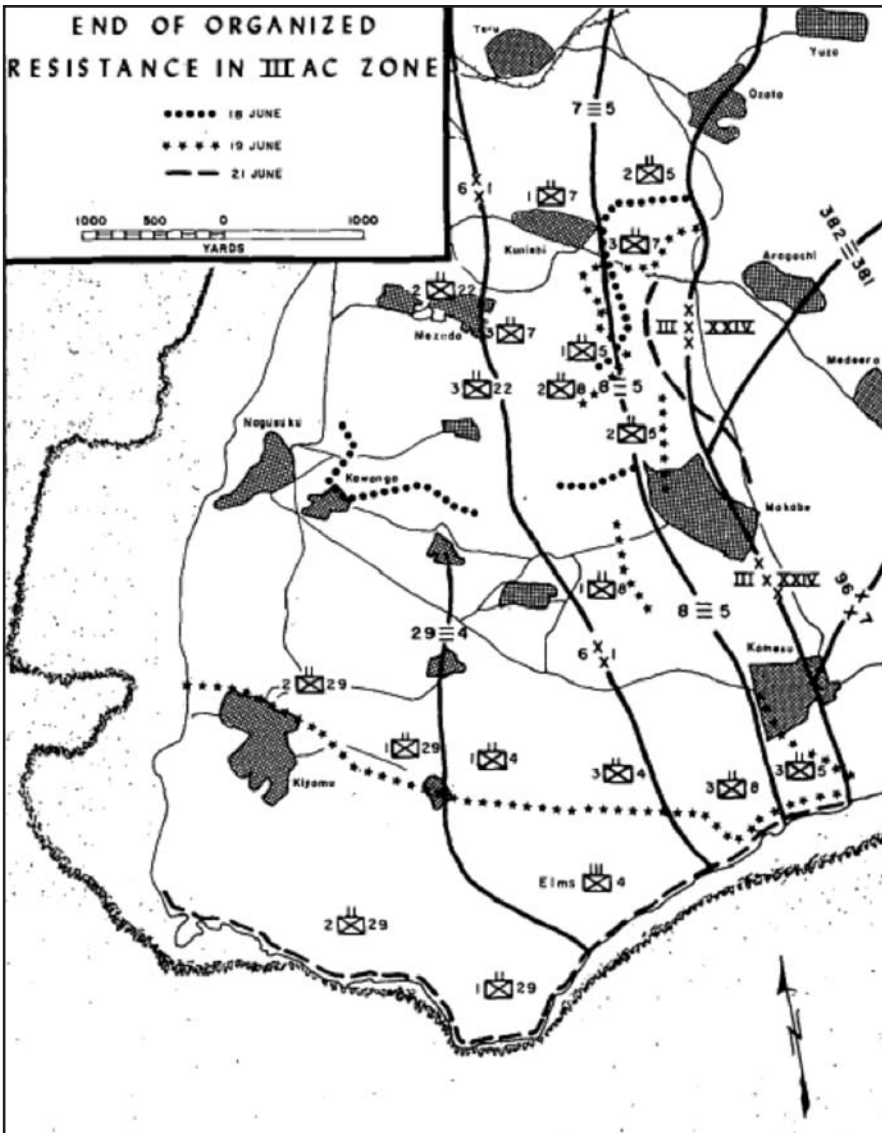
Map to Stands 3-6



Map to Stand 7



Map to Stand 8



Map to Stands 9 and 10

Stand 1

Landings at the Hagushi Beaches

Directions: the first stand is conducted in the unused parking area across the street from the Hotel Costa Vista on the hilltop on the outskirts of Kitanakagusuku. The street address is 901-2311 1478, Kisyaba, Kitanakagusuku-son, Nakagami-gun, Okinawa. Phone: 098-935-1500. (Grid 52RCE79851015)

Orientation: you are standing in the parking lot across the street from the Hotel Costa Vista, located on the hilltop overlooking the town of Kitanakagusuku. As you look to the west, Camp Foster lies directly to your front on the opposite side of the Okinawa Expressway. From this position, you can see all of the Hagushi landing beaches used during the invasion on 1 April 1945. To your north and east, you can clearly see the zones of action taken by the XXIV Corps as it cut the island in half by 2 April.

Description: at that time, the entire bay before you was filled with hundreds of ships and landing craft of all descriptions—from battleships, such as the USS *Tennessee* (BB 43), to amtracks. Kadena Air Base is located roughly in the center of the beaches, with Yomitan to the north and Chatan to the south. Extending as far north as Zampa Point, four divisions (1st and 6th MarDivs and 7th and 96th Infantry Divisions) conducted a nearly textbook landing operation.

The dust and smoke from the prelanding bombardment would have nearly obscured the area beyond the beaches, and hundreds of aircraft would be seen in the sky, conducting bombing runs and strafing attacks against known Japanese positions. The sounds of the bombardment would have been clearly audible to us at our present location. Expecting the worst, Task Force 51 and all of the other supporting naval elements carried out one of the most thorough and lethal bombardments of the Pacific war.

Still, most men going in with the initial waves fully expected to be killed or wounded. Instead, there was little resistance encountered at

the beach, to everyone's surprise. The landing troops were able to easily advance beyond the beach, overcoming sporadic and uncoordinated resistance. Few suspected that this was a deliberate part of General Mitsuru Ushijima's defensive strategy. While the landings were unopposed, this was still the largest amphibious operation in the Pacific and represents the full realization of the amphibious warfare doctrine developed in the 1930s at Quantico, Virginia.

Teaching Point 1: amphibious operations are, by their very nature, complex. Although the Japanese chose not to defend at the waterline, the landings at the Hagushi beaches were a textbook case of how to properly conduct a large-scale landing. Everything from naval gunfire, close air support, communications, ship-to-shore movement, and logistics was carried out as near to perfect as possible using the resources and technology available at the time.

Teaching Point 2: the individual Marine taking part in the landing operation on day one of the invasion fully expected that he would have to fight his way off the beach. When that did not happen, he was surprised again when no serious Japanese resistance was encountered once he moved inland. According to several of the first-person accounts consulted, this led many Marines and soldiers to believe that the battle would be a "cakewalk" compared to previous battles such as Peleliu and the Philippines. The fact that they were all proved wrong was realized within the week, when troops of the XXIV Corps ran up against the outer defenses of the Shuri Line. The takeaway is that troops must train to anticipate surprises—that when surprises occur, not to become discouraged but to adapt and overcome uncertainty.

Stand 2

III Amphibious Corps Sweeps to the North; Battle for Motobu Peninsula

Directions: from the Hotel Costa Vista, get onto the Okinawa Expressway and drive to its terminus at Exit 10 (Kyoda Interchange). This roughly approximates the route that the 6th MarDiv took as it moved north up the island. Enter Route 58 and drive through Nago

city. As soon as possible, take Route 84 north. Here, you are entering the Motobu Peninsula. After travelling two miles along Route 84, turn left and follow the signs toward Mount Yae-take (also spelled Yae Dake). Once you arrive, park in the lot and walk the remaining 1/10 of a mile across the road from the parking lot, where there is an observation platform. (Note: you cannot reach all the way up Yae Dake. There is a communications tower that is off-limits to nonofficial personnel. Coordination in advance through III MEF G-6 is advised.) (Grid 52RCQ93354650)

Orientation: from this vantage point (1,945 feet), you can clearly see to the northwest, west, southwest, and south. To the northwest, you can clearly see the island of Ie Shima, taken by the troops of the 77th Infantry Division. To the south, the city of Nago can be seen. You are now standing on the key terrain initially held by the Japanese defenders as they attempted to hold off the Marines of the 6th MarDiv from 8 to 20 April.

Description: the battle for Mount Yae-take on the Motobu Peninsula was the first heavy fighting experienced by the 6th MarDiv. While many of its battalions were not new to combat, it was the first time that the entire division was engaged. Here, the *Kunigami Detachment*, consisting of two battalions of the *44th Independent Mixed Brigade* commanded by Colonel Takesiko Udo, ended their delaying tactics and assumed a deliberate defense, intending to make the Marines pay dearly for every foot of ground.

Aided by severely broken terrain, which included steep hillsides, deep draws, and limestone caves, the defenders did just that, forcing the Marines to dig them out one by one. Although the defenders were quickly encircled, no thought was given to surrender. Finally, after five days of difficult and costly fighting, Marines overcame the last defensive positions by 20 April, though a few Japanese stragglers continued to evade capture until the war ended.

While the *Kunigami Detachment* was completely wiped out and Colonel Udo killed, the Marines paid a steep price—207 killed and 757 wounded. Having eliminated the last major pocket of resistance in the

northern two-thirds of the island, the 6th MarDiv could now concentrate on mopping up stragglers and preparing for its next mission. At the time, most Marines in the division thought that their part in the Battle of Okinawa was finished, but this was not to be.

Teaching Point 1: when it became clear that the Japanese were not going to defend on the beaches, Tenth Army ordered III Amphibious Corps to rapidly advance north to seize the northern half of the island. This forced the 6th MarDiv to configure its battalions for rapid movement along unpaved roads and in terrain that was very favorable for defense. The solution was to use amtracks and tanks to carry Marines aboard and drive north as fast as possible until they hit enemy resistance. This improvised mechanized concept worked very well until the division encountered the deliberate Japanese defense of the Motobu Peninsula, but by then most of the northern part of the island had already fallen.

Teaching Point 2: Marines were surprised when they finally encountered the *Kunigami Detachment* in its dug-in positions on the Motobu Peninsula. Expecting an easy fight, they instead had to transition to “corkscrew and blowtorch” tactics that required tremendous coordination to carry out successfully. Marines must be ready at all times to shift to different tactics and techniques as different combat situations dictate.

Stand 3

The Battle at the Shuri Line; 1st MarDiv Joins the Attack

Directions: situated in the Kakazu Heights Park, the Kyoto Tower provides an excellent 360-degree view of the area surrounding Kakazu Ridge. This place is easy to find off of Highway 58 heading south from Camp Foster or north from Camp Kinser. Look for the white signage just before the Ojana Intersection (Pref. Route 34) marking where you make your first turn; right if you are heading north on 58, left if you are heading south. At the Maehara Intersection (Pref. Route 241) turn right. After the bridge at the first light with the pedestrian overpass, turn right (follow the signs). At the next light, turn

right down the narrow road, and the park appears on your right side. (Grid 52RCQ73800500)

Orientation: once you have ascended the platform, you will immediately see Futenma Airfield approximately two kilometers to the north. To your left, you will see the town of Ginowan and the western coastline; and to your right, you will see the eastern coastline and the town of Ouki. Between these two points can be seen most of the terrain features that the XXIV Corps and the Japanese fought over between 9 and 29 April, including Kakazu Ridge, Nishibaru Ridge, Tombstone Ridge, the Tanabaru Escarpment, and Skyline Ridge. As you face to the south, you can spot most of the heavily defended key terrain features encountered by the 1st MarDiv from 29 April to 4 May, including Machinato and the Urasoe-Mura Escarpment.

Description: on 27 April, the 1st MarDiv was chopped from III Amphibious Corps to the XXIV Corps, then heavily engaged along the outermost portion of the Shuri Line, where it was bogged down in heavy fighting. Having suffered many casualties, General Buckner had convinced General Geiger of the need to attach General del Valle's division to support the Tenth Army's main effort.

With this, the nascent plan to launch another amphibious operation along the island's southeast coast evaporated and the Marines of the 1st MarDiv soon found themselves engaged in the heaviest fighting they had seen since Peleliu, as Buckner's Tenth Army continued its frontal assault. Relieving the Army's depleted 27th Infantry Division by 29 April, del Valle's Marines attacked straight into the teeth of the prepared Japanese defensive positions, suffering heavy losses in men and equipment.

As heavy rains began to fall on 1 May, the hellish conditions for both Marines and soldiers intensified. Constant shelling had turned the battlefield into a quagmire, making it difficult to move and even more difficult to keep forward elements supplied. Even evacuating the wounded required herculean efforts by Marines every step along the way. Combat raged both day and night; though the Marines were successful in eliminating one Japanese position after another, it came at a high price.

Japanese use of cave positions made it extremely difficult for Marines to locate them until they approached to a very close range, and usually after they had been fired on first. Even more effective was the Japanese's use of reverse slope defensive positions, which often resulted in the Marines having to give up positions of hills just taken when confronted by determined and well-led Japanese counterattacks that saw troops pouring forth from caves dug into the hill's reverse slopes. But this was just a taste of what was to come.

Teaching Point 1: there will be occasions where commanders are left with no option but frontal assault, with the prospect of heavy casualties being a near certainty. Commanders and troops will have to adapt themselves to the situation and fight through, relying on their individual weapons, teamwork, and training to see them through. Since such situations will require extraordinary effort by leaders at the platoon, company, and battalion levels, officer and NCO casualties will be inordinately high, requiring junior leaders to train during peacetime to be prepared to move up one or two levels of leadership should their immediate leaders become casualties so that the unit will continue to function. For example, should a company commander become a casualty, a company executive officer or platoon commander must be prepared to assume command without hesitation. Similarly, should a platoon commander or platoon gunnery sergeant be killed or wounded, corporals or sergeants must be prepared to assume these key leadership positions while continuing the fight.

Teaching Point 2: the U.S. Army attempted to outflank Kakazu Ridge defenses on 19 April using the 193d Tank Battalion unsupported by infantry. The battalion was nearly wiped out, losing 22 out of 30 tanks, when Japanese infantry, supported by mines, artillery, and antitank guns, swarmed the tanks with satchel charges and hand grenades. Marine tank battalions learned to avoid sending in unsupported armor and instead insisted on having infantry accompany the tanks all the way, even if it meant heavy losses for the infantry. As a result, no Marine tanks were lost to individual Japanese infantrymen.

Stand 4

The Japanese Counteroffensive of 4–5 May

Directions: Hacksaw Ridge, aka the Urasoe-Mura Escarpment, is located at 3-48-1 Iso, Urasoe, Okinawa Prefecture. To get there, take Highway 330 (the Urasoe Bypass) south and get off at the Highway 38 exit; turn left, going south on Highway 38. After approximately 2,000 feet, turn left at the Urasoe Junior High School. Follow the road around for about one kilometer until you come to Urasoe Elementary School. Go 500 feet past the school, and you will see the parking lot at the base of the Urasoe Castle Park. Parking is free. (Grid 52RCQ73100365)

Orientation: as you stand atop the escarpment, the scene of vicious fighting that was still taking place when the Japanese conducted their counteroffensive—the objective of their efforts, the Tanabaru Escarpment—lies four kilometers to the northeast. To the southwest, you can see the ramparts of Shuri Castle. Off to the east, you can see Conical Hill, the rightmost bastion holding the eastern flank of the Shuri Line. Off to your west (with the aid of binoculars), you can make out the white water tower marking the location of Sugar Loaf Hill. Both east and west coasts are also visible from this location.

Description: although Hacksaw Ridge/Urasoe-Mura Escarpment was the scene of an epic two-week battle between U.S. Army troops and the Japanese, it offers a good vantage point to describe and follow the action that occurred from 4 to 5 May when the Japanese *Thirty-second Army* conducted its only major counteroffensive of the campaign. Intended to encircle and destroy the 1st MarDiv in the west by an amphibious envelopment and to force the XXIV into retreating by seizing the Tanabaru Escarpment in its rear, the plan was an ambitious one that would see the Japanese Army emerge from its underground galleries and maneuver in the open for the first time in significant numbers.

Preceded by a heavy artillery barrage in the early morning hours of 4 May that caught American forces by surprise, major elements of

the *44th Independent Mixed Brigade* on the Japanese left and the *24th Infantry Division* on the right infiltrated the front lines of the 7th and 77th Infantry Divisions between Maeda and Onaga. The Japanese *27th Tank Regiment* also maneuvered in the open in support of the main attack. One infantry battalion even managed to penetrate as far as the town of Tanabaru.

However, by daylight, U.S. forces had recovered from their initial surprise and were soon able to bring superior firepower to bear that had a devastating effect on Japanese troops caught in the open, as well as upon their supporting artillery which had to move out of their caves in order to fire. Even less successful were the two amphibious operations carried out by the two engineer shipping regiments. The one on the west coast intended to cut off 1st MarDiv carried out by the *26th Engineer Shipping Regiment*, which attempted to land too close behind the front line and was intercepted by U.S. Navy coastal craft and shot up. Those troops who managed to land at Kuwan were wiped out by Marine defenders before they could seize a beachhead. The attempt on the east coast by the *23d Engineer Shipping Regiment* fared just as poorly, with most of its men killed.

By 5 May, it was evident to General Ushijima and everyone on his staff that the counteroffensive, begun with such high hopes, was a complete failure. Not only had all the attacking units (with the exception of one battalion) been unable to reach or hold their objectives, but they had been driven back with heavy losses. The tank regiment had been virtually wiped out. But worst of all, nearly half of their artillery was lost due to naval and ground counterbattery fire. American counterattacks began in earnest on 5 May and by 7 May had recovered all of the ground that had been lost. In all, the *Thirty-second Army* had lost more than 7,000 of its best men, some 10 percent of its entire force, and had absolutely nothing to show for it. U.S. casualties had been relatively light in comparison.

With the Japanese unable from this point forward to mount anything other than local counterattacks (except for an abortive attempt by Japanese paratroopers to destroy American aircraft at Kadena airfield on 23 May), the tide had shifted. Though there were still six weeks of

heavy fighting remaining before the island was finally secure, General Buckner's biggest concern, a large-scale Japanese counterattack, had passed. Despite the fact that the III Amphibious Corps did not play a decisive role in repelling the Japanese counteroffensive (since most of the Japanese effort was directed against the Army's 7th and 77th Infantry Divisions), the fact that Geiger's Marines had held their own ground and helped to destroy a Japanese supporting amphibious assault on their right flank figured prominently in the overall American success.

Teaching Point: the Japanese counteroffensive was completely unexpected. While most commanders expected some sort of banzai attacks like what had been experienced at Saipan, no one was prepared for the scale and scope of this attempt to defeat Tenth Army. Commanders and troops at all levels should constantly assess an enemy's capability, free of cultural or mental bias, and focus on what he could do, as opposed to what you wish he would do.

Stand 5

6th MarDiv Takes Sugar Loaf; 1st MarDiv at Wana Ridge and Wana Draw

Directions: the first stand is located on the hilltop (nicknamed "100 Meter Hill") overlooking Sueyoshi Park, which encompasses Wana Ridge and Wana Draw. The park's address is 1-3-1 Shurisueyoshicho, Naha, Okinawa Prefecture 903-0801. Phone: +81 98-951-3239. Open weekdays 0900–2200 and on Saturday, Sunday, and holidays 0700–2200. The parking lot can accommodate up to 30 vehicles, but large tour buses can fit only with difficulty, and tour groups may need to be dropped off so the bus can park elsewhere. Once you park, return to the main road (Highway 241) and travel north along the sidewalk approximately 200 feet; once you pass the post office on your left and cross the bridge, turn left at the narrow footpath that parallels the creek. After 100 meters, follow the signs to the hilltop. (Grid 52RCQ71950155) Following completion of this stand, stop at Sugar Loaf Hill, located across the street (south) from the Coop Apple Town Shopping Mall and Toys "R" Us store. Located adjacent to the

Naha City Office and Omoromachi Medical Center, take Highway 58 south and get off at the Uenoya intersection, heading east. The water tower can be found on your right. (Grid 52RCQ69450225)

Orientation: from 100 Meter Hill, the town of Shuri and Shuri Castle can be seen approximately two kilometers to the south; three kilometers to the west on the northern outskirts of Naha, you can see the white water tower indicating Sugar Loaf Hill. Imagining what the battlefield looked like 70 years ago will be a challenge, since urbanization has taken over so much of this part of the island. However, by focusing on the key terrain, such as Wana Ridge, Sugar Loaf, and Shuri Castle, you can get an idea of the size and scale of the battlefield, as well as how these terrain features figured so prominently in descriptions of the battle. While there is little today to see of Sugar Loaf Hill (construction and development has trimmed it down), there is a memorial plaque mounted at the base of the observation tower; from that vantage point, you have a very clear view of Shuri Castle to the southeast and Wana Ridge to the east.

Description: at this point in the battle, III Amphibious Corps moved south to take over the right flank of Tenth Army's front line from XXIV Corps, which focused exclusively on the east half of the zone of action from Shuri to the east coast. The Marines were in for one hell of a fight. The struggle for Sugar Loaf Hill, Horseshoe Hill, Half-Moon Hill, Wana Ridge, and Wana Draw from 5 to 30 May 1945 has been described as some of the most difficult ever experienced by the Marine Corps, comparable only to Iwo Jima and Peleliu in terms of savagery, lethality, and sheer misery. Both the 1st and 6th MarDivs experienced an astronomical number of casualties, with approximately 200 Marines being lost for every 100 yards gained. More than 3,000 Marines from the 6th MarDiv were killed or wounded in the fighting around Sugar Loaf Hill alone.

In a static battlefield reminiscent of World War I, Marines fought from water- and mud-filled foxholes, while corpses of both friend and foe decomposed within an arm's reach. Constant artillery fire, interspersed with Japanese counterattacks, allowed the Marines of both divisions little or no rest, while logistical difficulties caused by im-

passible roads swollen by the rain forced them to get by on meager rations. Evacuation of casualties was fraught with danger as both the wounded and stretcher bearers were subject to the fire of an enemy with no respect for the sensibilities of the existing laws of land warfare as embodied in the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907. It is no wonder that the Battle of Okinawa had the highest rate of psychological casualties than any other battle in the Pacific; most Marines knew that the only way out was to either be killed or wounded.

Despite these obstacles, the Marines pressed doggedly onward, inflicting even greater losses upon the Japanese who continued to defend from caves and tunnels. Fortunately, the disastrous Japanese counteroffensive of 5 May had resulted in the loss of most of their remaining frontline troops and half of their artillery, resulting in their replacement by untrained service and rear-echelon troops. Even so, these men fought just as stubbornly but were slowly overcome by determined Marines and soldiers, who time and again resorted to corkscrew and blowtorch tactics using flamethrowers and satchel charges to drive the Japanese out of their positions into the open where they would be quickly killed.

Resupply became extremely difficult, particularly for the 1st MarDiv, which found itself in a muddy wasteland where even tracked vehicles had difficulty moving. Food, ammunition, and other supplies often had to be hand carried laboriously to the front lines, and the wounded were evacuated the same way. A partial solution was found when Marine torpedo bombers were used for low-level supply drops directly above frontline units.

By 19 May, Sugar Loaf had fallen to the 29th Marines and Wana Draw to the 1st Marines by the 30th. Marines began to advance into the outskirts of Naha itself. The loss of Conical Hill and the town of Yonabaru on the east coast to the Army's XXIV Corps meant that both the left and right flanks of the *Thirty-second Army* had been turned. While the stronghold at Shuri still held firm as always, General Ushijima decided to withdraw lest the remainder of his command become encircled and destroyed.

Teaching Point 1: by this point, the battle had degenerated into a no-holds-barred slugging match, with victory going to the one with the most firepower and physical endurance. Individual bravery counted for a great deal, for without it, units would have never advanced. Being a leader in such situations often demands that you set an example for your men, knowing that in all likelihood the price of doing so means that you will become a casualty.

Teaching Point 2: when conventional means of supply no longer suffice, logisticians must resort to creative ideas to get supplies ashore and to the frontline troops who need them most. In this case, the use of torpedo bombers to drop supplies was a masterstroke; for without it, 1st MarDiv's attack would have stalled. While the situation in 6th MarDiv was slightly better due to its location on the western coast of Okinawa, the use of amtracks to ferry supplies from coastal supply dumps to positions immediately behind the front lines helped enormously.

Teaching Point 3: while 6th MarDiv was learning corkscrew and blowtorch tactics in the Motobu Peninsula, 1st MarDiv—having learned them at Peleliu several months earlier—instinctively put them into practice again when its companies and battalions encountered the well-prepared enemy positions along the Shuri Line. While effective, these tactics were enormously costly in the number of Marines and soldiers killed or wounded in action. Units should train for all situations and ensure that new recruits benefit from lessons learned by those who have been in the unit longer.

Stand 6

Japanese Withdrawal; 1st MarDiv Takes Shuri

Directions: to get to Shuri Castle from all points north of Naha via Highway 58, drive south into the Naha area on Highway 58. Look for signs for Highway 29 and Shuri Castle site. Turn left on Highway 29. Drive on 29 for a considerable distance (past Highway 330). You will see signs for Shuri along the way. At Highway 50, you can veer right. This will take you to the well-marked parking area. If you miss that turn, you

can also turn right at Highway 49. From all points north of Naha coming on the expressway, exit the expressway at the Naha City exit (number 1). Turn right along Route 82. From there, you will see many signs directing you. Take a left on Highway 29 and another left on Highway 49. This will take you to the underground parking area. Parking is available on the premises. As of 2014, the parking rates are ¥940 (yen) for large vehicles and ¥310 for small vehicles. Admission fee for the castle is ¥820 for individuals and ¥660 for groups. (Grid 52RCQ71930045)

Orientation: Shuri Castle offers many vantage points that the staff ride group can use. From its northern ramparts, you can view Wana Ridge and, to the northwest, you can see the water tower marking the location of Sugar Loaf Hill. Naha is plainly visible, as well as the port area including the Oroku Peninsula, site of today's modern international airport. To the east lies the town of Yonabaru, which fell to the Army's 7th Infantry Division on 23 May. For this particular stand, the best vantage point to view the direction of the Japanese withdrawal and the terrain features that made their continuing defense feasible is the southern ramparts of the castle, where there is a large fenced-in area that can hold a group of 20 people. Looking south, you can see the Kiyau Peninsula, the goal of *Thirty-second Army*, where General Ushijima intended to continue his deliberate defense.

Description: with envelopment in the west by III Amphibious Corps and in the east by XXIV Corps a near certainty, by 22 May, General Ushijima had a decision to make—stand and defend in place and risk immediate encirclement and annihilation or withdraw to the Kiyau Peninsula to continue the fight. While the unrelenting kamikaze attacks were hammering the American fleet anchored offshore, the U.S. Navy showed no sign of departing any time soon. The attempt by the battleship *Yamato* to interdict the American fleet had failed weeks before when it was sunk halfway to Okinawa.

With no hope of relief or reinforcement, many of Ushijima's subordinates, including his chief of staff, Lieutenant General Isamu Chō, wanted to conduct "honorable death" (i.e., suicide) attacks against the Americans and be done with it; others, including his operations officer, Colonel Hiromichi Yahara, continued to maintain a more level-headed,

strategic point of view and urged the continuation of the deliberate defense that had inflicted so many casualties on the attackers. Yahara's point of view won out; instead of dying in place, Ushijima decided to withdraw his army to a more defensible position where the fight could continue, thus guaranteeing that the battle would rage for another month.

Thus, on the evening of 29 May, *Thirty-second Army* began its planned withdrawal partially concealed by heavy rains that reduced visibility to near zero. Some units left rear guards behind to cover their old positions while other units were directed to conduct counterattacks to keep the Americans off balance and to conceal the withdrawal. Though the long columns of withdrawing troops were frequently interdicted by artillery, naval gunfire, and air attack, suffering heavy losses in the process, the Tenth Army never realized that a large-scale withdrawal was taking place until the Japanese had safely arrived undetected in their new positions by 4 June along the Kunishi, Yuza-dake, and Yaeju-dake ridgelines. Nevertheless, *Thirty-second Army* lost nearly 40 percent of its remaining strength during the withdrawal, leaving only 30,000 men remaining, few of which were combat troops.

American patrols sensed that something had occurred. While the Japanese defenders seemed to be alert, they were not responding to attacks by the Marines and soldiers with the same intensity as before, and Japanese artillery fire had noticeably slackened. Encouraged by the apparent weakening of the Japanese defenders, the 5th Marines of 1st MarDiv attacked Shuri on 29 May and found the castle with its commanding views virtually undefended; all that was left was a small rear guard that fought and died in place. Despite this encouraging development, information was slow to get passed up the American chain of command, for it was not until 30 May that Tenth Army realized that Japanese intentions had changed.

Meanwhile, 6th MarDiv fought its way house to house through Naha, which had been virtually destroyed during the fighting. Although they too encountered stubborn rear guards left behind to delay their pursuers, the city had fallen to the 22d Marines by 29 May as well. The Army was enjoying similar success in the east.

However, by 31 May, Tenth Army finally realized that the Japanese had slipped the noose and an opportunity to end the battle four weeks earlier had been lost when it denied the III Amphibious Corps' proposal to conduct an end-run amphibious operation. A ground pursuit was finally undertaken by 31 May but, hampered by heavy rains that turned roadways into rivers of mud, the Americans had lost their one and only chance to catch Ushijima's army in the open and destroy it.

By 4 June, the *Thirty-second Army*, though seriously weakened, was set in its new defensive sector. Short of artillery, ammunition, and above all trained manpower, the survivors occupied elaborately prepared positions that had been painstakingly constructed months earlier by the *24th Infantry Division* and settled in with a determination to make the Americans pay dearly for every foot of ground they took. In this, they were to prove successful.

Teaching Point 1: just as the Japanese offensive of 4–5 May had been completely unexpected, so was the great withdrawal of 29 May. Failure to anticipate this course of action caught Tenth Army off guard, leading it to miss an opportunity to exploit the withdrawal with a vigorously conducted pursuit, and causing the battle to drag on for another month. Commanders and their staffs must war-game possible enemy courses of action (COAs) and develop decision points that trigger the correct response to enemy COAs.

Teaching Point 2: the Japanese withdrawal was a masterpiece of planning and execution. Operational security and a simple, effective deception plan ensured that the bulk of *Thirty-second Army* escaped before Tenth Army realized what was happening. In the future, the Marines can be certain they will face intelligent and resourceful opponents who are capable of getting inside our decision cycle and eliminate any options we have to respond in a timely manner.

Stand 7

6th MarDiv Landings at Oroku Peninsula, Japanese Naval Headquarters

Directions: finding the Kaigunjo Navy Headquarters Park can be challenging. Take Highway 58 south from Kadena toward Naha. Take a left onto Route 7 where there is a sign directing you to the headquarters, and follow it until you see another sign directing you to turn left. At the end of this road there is a T intersection with a parking garage in front. Turn left and follow the road uphill and around a small bend to a parking lot at the bottom of some stairs. Parking here is free but the lot is small and could get crowded during the busier times of year. There is an entrance fee of ¥440 for adults. The park is open year round from 0830 to 1700. (Grid 52RCP67789705)

Orientation: adjacent to the entrance to the Japanese Navy underground headquarters stands an observation tower, which provides excellent views in all directions. To the immediate north is the city of Naha and its port; to the west is the Oroku Peninsula, now occupied by the new Okinawa International Airport. To the southeast approximately eight kilometers away, you can see the Kunishi, Yuza-dake, and Yaeju-dake ridgelines protecting the approaches to the Kiyau Peninsula in the distance.

Description: with the Shuri Line now in American hands, General Buckner had to decide what to do next. He could continue with the current plan (i.e., continue battering down the Japanese defenses with frontal attacks) or try the indirect approach by conducting amphibious operations on either flank. Decidedly biased against the latter, he continued his drive south into the teeth of the Japanese defense, but finally consented to III Amphibious Corps' request to allow a shallow envelopment on the western coast of Okinawa at a point below Naha.

While the rest of Tenth Army, including the 1st MarDiv, pressed forward down the peninsula from 2 June onward, overcoming Japanese rear guards and horrendous weather along the way, 6th MarDiv prepared for its amphibious operation, scheduled to commence on 4

June. Designed to get behind Japanese defenses on the Oroku Peninsula, the attack would include both a frontal attack by one regiment over the Kokuba River in Naha, while another landed on the tip of the peninsula, with a third regiment remaining in reserve.

The landing force, spearheaded by the 4th Marines, achieved complete surprise and quickly established a beachhead in the rear of Japanese Vice Admiral Minoru Ōta's force. Reinforced later in the day by the 29th Marines, the 4th Marines had seized the airfield by the end of the second day and, by 7 June, had pushed as far as Itoman on the southwest coast, effectively isolating Admiral Ōta's 5,000 sailors.

Ironically, Ōta's troops had been initially ordered to withdraw toward the Kiyau Peninsula on 28 May but, upon arrival and seeing that no fighting positions had been prepared for them, he ordered them all to return to their old positions in Oroku the following day. Thus, they met their fate at the hands of 6th MarDiv, whose Marines systematically took Ōta's command apart. By 10 June, all Ōta could control was the terrain in the immediate vicinity of his command post. Rather than surrender, he and 175 of his men committed suicide on 13 June, most using hand grenades. The same day, 6th MarDiv declared the Oroku Peninsula clear of Japanese and became available for future missions.

Though the amphibious right hook had been an overwhelming success, it did not come cheaply—1,608 Marines were killed or wounded, and 30 tanks were destroyed. The Japanese naval forces, though surprised, fought to the death, and only 200 out of the 5,000 defenders surrendered to the 6th MarDiv.

Today, in addition to the views available atop the observation tower, visitors can tour the underground galleries of the former Japanese naval headquarters. Ōta's living quarters have been preserved, as well as the farewell message he left inscribed on the wall. Dug entirely by hand using picks and shovels, the tunnel system is an engineering wonder open to the public. At the exit, there is an excellent museum that details the fighting that took place on the peninsula, along with many artifacts retrieved from the tunnels.

Teaching Point 1: Marines must always be prepared to exploit the excellent maneuver opportunities offered by their expertise in amphibious warfare. Though the landings at Oroku Peninsula were relatively shallow, enveloping the Japanese rear by only a few miles, they were sufficient to turn the enemy's flank and swing the momentum to III Amphibious Corps' advantage. Though the number of veterans in the ranks of 6th MarDiv had decreased noticeably after two months of combat, there was still enough remaining to train the new personnel in the basics of amphibious landings.

Teaching Point 2: this was the last opposed amphibious landing of World War II. Though small in scale compared to the landing of 1 April as well as Iwo Jima, it was still larger than that carried out at Guadalcanal almost three years earlier. While amphibious operations are rare these days, Marines must still be able to plan and execute those operations on short notice.

Stand 8

Tenth Army Assaults Yazu-dake, Yaeju-dake—Kunishi Ridge Defensive Line

Directions: this stand is located at the General Simon B. Buckner Jr. Memorial at 599 Maezato, Itoman, Okinawa. (Grid 52R CP68058905) It is somewhat off the beaten path, so a thorough recon in advance is highly recommended. To get there from the Japanese underground naval headquarters, take Highway 331 south. After the point where Highway 331 and the 331 bypass intersect, turn left approximately 100 meters past the intersection onto Maezato Road. Drive about 1.6 kilometers (1 mile) east until you come to a small roadside pull off on the right. Park on the left side of the highway. Take the small pathway up the hill on the right. You will see the Buckner Memorial and find yourself standing along the eastern portion of Mezado (Maezato) Ridge, about one kilometer south of Kunishi Ridge.

Orientation: from this point on Mezado Ridge, as you look to the north, you can make out Kunishi Ridge. To the southeast looms the town of Makabe, as well as the cliffs that mark the southern coastline

of Okinawa. To the east you can see the western slopes of Yuza-dake and the Maeda Escarpment. To the west lies the sea.

Description: with the fall of Shuri and the Oroku Peninsula, the way was now open to continue the pursuit and destruction of the *Thirty-second Army* after its withdrawal to the Kiyau Peninsula. While 6th MarDiv finished mopping up the Japanese Navy forces at Oroku, by 7 June the 1st MarDiv kept pushing south through torrential rains, keeping up with Army units of the XXIV Corps to their left. The fighting during the next 2 weeks promised to be as bloody as the previous 10 weeks, with 30,000 Japanese troops holed up in caves and underground tunnels waiting for the assault.

From 7 to 10 June, most of the delay was caused by flooded roads, mud, and lack of supplies. Most Japanese encountered were rear guards or bypassed units that chose to fight it out rather than surrender. However, by 10 June, troops of III Amphibious and XXIV Corps had run up against the *Thirty-second Army's* final defensive line, which ran from west to east through Mezado, Kunishi, Yazu-dake, and Yaeju-dake ridges before terminating at the sea near Minatogawa. It would take more than a week to overcome this final defense line.

Here the decimated battalions and regiments of the (from left to right) *62d* and *24th Infantry Divisions* and the *44th Independent Mixed Brigade*, their ranks rebuilt with supply, maintenance, administrative, and headquarters troops, would make their final stand. With their defeat certain, their only hope now was to kill as many Americans as possible. Fortunately for the Americans, the defenders were short on nearly everything—primarily heavy weapons and ammunition—but they would expertly use what they had and make the Marines and soldiers of Tenth Army pay dearly for every foot of ground.

Weather continued to hamper the advance. Typhoon season began two weeks earlier than expected and roads were quickly washed out. The delivery of supplies was tremendously slowed as trucks, jeeps, and even amtracks got stuck in the knee-deep mud. Supply problems quickly intensified, forcing logisticians to once again resort to airdrops to get the supplies to where they were needed. Once again, creative

solutions had to be found to get supplies to the front. Even individual replacement had to carry water, rations, and ammunition forward. Living conditions were squalid, to say the least, with Marines and soldiers crouching in flooded foxholes or fighting positions. Trench foot became a common ailment as well as other skin problems arising from constant exposure to wet, humid conditions.

Note that, on this particular spot, while viewing the advance of the 8th Marines south of Mezado Ridge, General Buckner was struck and killed by Japanese artillery fragments on 18 June. He was the most senior U.S. general killed in action in World War II. The monument erected here by his men, as well as two smaller monuments commemorating the death of other senior Army officers nearby, is one of the few memorials on the island to honor fallen U.S. servicemen.

Teaching Point 1: during this phase of the battle, American troops had perfected the tactics developed during the previous two months, allowing them to reduce Japanese defensive positions with fewer casualties than those suffered during the battle for the Shuri Line. Practice makes perfect, provided that sufficient tools (flamethrowers, satchel charges, etc.) are at hand to carry out the task.

Teaching Point 2: when difficulties arose in evacuating wounded under fire and bringing up reinforcements, 1st and 6th MarDivs resorted to using tanks as battlefield taxis. Taking advantage of the escape hatches underneath each M4 Sherman, crews would take in the wounded from exposed forward positions after dropping off reinforcements and supplies in the same way. Using available equipment in new and different ways was a hallmark of the war in the Pacific, and Okinawa was no exception.

Stand 9

Alternate Landing Beaches at Minatogawa

Directions: from the Buckner Memorial, take Highway 331 east to the town of Gushichan. Proceed through the town until you come to the northern outskirts of town where you see a corner garage on the right. Turn right at the garage and follow the country road south for approximately one kilometer until you come to the Gushikami Castle observatory located at latitude 26°7'16.80" N, longitude 127°45'0.46" E. (Grid 52RCP75008975)

Orientation: the Gushikami Castle observatory (actually a park/picnic area), partially located on the grounds of the former castle that was destroyed in the sixteenth century, is an excellent vantage point to view the proposed landing beaches at Minatogawa. To best view them, look over the ledge at the northeastern tip of the park. In the opposite direction (west) you can view the top of the tower at the Peace Memorial Park, less than three kilometers away.

Description: the decision not to conduct a major amphibious operation on the southern coast of Okinawa is one of the greatest what-ifs of the battle. With an entire Marine division (the 2d) in reserve and plenty of amphibious shipping to spare, why did the commander of Tenth Army, General Buckner, decide not to carry one out?

The idea was floated as early as the last week of April, before 1st MarDiv was committed into action on the Shuri Line. Alarmed at the prospect of doing nothing more than carry out repetitious frontal assaults against a dug-in and fanatical enemy, Marines (and soldiers too) at every echelon chafed at having to follow unimaginative orders that countered everything Marine Corps doctrine had taught them to do, which was to use amphibious maneuver to avoid the enemy's strength.

Several senior Marines and naval officers, including Commandant of the Marine Corps General Alexander A. Vandegrift (who visited the island during this period), recommended either using 2d MarDiv or pulling out 1st or 6th MarDivs, loading them up in transports, and

conducting a landing at the relatively open beaches at Minatogawa on the island's southeast coast. This operation, Vandegrift and the others reasoned, would have turned the Japanese's flank and forced them to either commit their reserve or pull out troops from the Shuri Line in response, thus making it easier for Tenth Army to break through and end the deadlock.

The beaches themselves at Minatogawa were adequate and were wide enough to allow a force of one division to land two regiments abreast. The Japanese realized this too as early as 22 April when the *Thirty-second Army's* operations officer, Colonel Yahara, felt that the possibility of an American landing on the southern coast was his greatest fear. He knew as early as 1 May that *Thirty-second Army* had few reserves to counter a landing should it happen. Had the landing been carried out as General Geiger recommended, it may well have ended the campaign at least a month earlier. Even Major General John R. Hodge, commander of XXIV Corps, and Major General Andrew D. Bruce, commander of the 77th Infantry Division, urged landing at Minatogawa. So why did Buckner hesitate?

There were many factors weighing on his mind at the time. A primary one was that he did not want to risk such a large percentage of his force at a time when he realized that Tenth Army had hit the Japanese main line of defense at Shuri and, to overcome the Japanese, he felt that, he would need every man he had. His staff also advised him that, in their estimate, should any division be landed in the south, it would be isolated and thus on its own should it be hit by a large-scale Japanese counterattack. Furthermore, it would divert artillery, air, and naval gunfire support when Buckner and his staff felt they would need every bit of it to overcome the Shuri defenses. Finally, the logisticians on his staff believed that it would be impossible to supply a division-size force from the Minatogawa beaches inland. The specter of Anzio was also said to have influenced Buckner and his staff as well. At Anzio, an Allied corps had been isolated on a small beachhead far beyond the range of supporting artillery, except that provided by naval gunfire, and had come within a hair's breadth of being thrown back into the sea by a series of determined German counterattacks.

What we do know is that the relatively shallow amphibious envelopment carried out on 7 June by 6th MarDiv was very successful and achieved complete tactical surprise, despite using worn-out amtracks and exhausted Marines who had been fighting on the Shuri Line for a month. Could this have been carried out earlier, when more equipment was still operational and more Marines with landing experience were still serving in the ranks? It would be worth conducting a mini-wargame to see how this might have turned out.

Incidentally, the headquarters of the *44th Independent Mixed Brigade* can be viewed below the eastern face of the hill below Gushikami Castle Park, located in a series of caves and manmade tunnels facing to the east. It was here where the Japanese right flank was finally breached on 19 June and where many of the surviving staff members of the brigade headquarters chose to commit suicide rather than surrender to the Americans. Though much of it has been closed off to cave explorers, much can still be seen by looking through the remaining openings.

Teaching Point 1: Marines at all levels should always look for opportunities to exploit the Marine air-ground task force's (MAGTF's) unique capabilities. Should a MAGTF find itself in the position where it is under a joint task force not led by a Marine officer, the commander and staff may have to educate the supported command as to how a MAGTF can be employed for the best advantage.

Teaching Point 2: an amphibious envelopment was the Japan's greatest worry. Had the Tenth Army attempted one in late April or early May, it would have turned the tide of the battle and may have led to a successful conclusion earlier than it did. When conducting a COA wargame, the Red Team should be instructed in the importance of using a reverse method (i.e., what are the Blue Team's most dangerous/most likely COAs?) for war-gaming possible MAGTF responses, to ensure that opportunities for maneuver are not overlooked.

Stand 10

Japanese Final Resistance at Mabuni and End at Hill 89; Peace Memorial Park

Directions: take Highway 58 south until it becomes Highway 331. Continue south to the bottom of Okinawa and you will see road signs in English and Japanese leading you all the way to the park. Free parking is available. Hours are 0900–1700 daily, closed on Mondays and from December 29 to January 3. Museum admission is ¥300 for adults. Phone: 098-997-3844. (Grid 52RCP72008655)

Orientation: once in the park, the staff ride group should first walk up the steps (about 1/2 mile) to Hill 89 in order to view the entire Kiyan Peninsula from the south. Here, one can see the hills to the north, including Kunishi Ridge, Yuza-dake, and Yaeju-dake, and understand that once these defensive bastions fell to the advancing Americans, there was little to stop them since the ground levels out nearly all the way to the southern coast.

After viewing the terrain, take a moment to walk into the park from the back side of the hill where you can view the spot where the Japanese commanders committed suicide. View all the monuments erected to the various Japanese units that met their end here, as well as the memorial gardens where black granite obelisks are engraved with all the names of the fallen, Allied and Japanese. Then, time permitting, the staff ride group is encouraged to visit the museum itself.

Description: when Yaeju-dake fell to the Americans on 12 June, any semblance of a coherent Japanese defense collapsed. By 15 June, both flanks had been turned, resulting in the remaining Japanese forces being compressed into pockets at Madeira, Kiyan, and Mabuni. Headquarters for *Thirty-second Army* was situated in a series of caves in the limestone cliffs at Mabuni near Hill 89 in far more spartan surroundings than what they had enjoyed when they formerly occupied the underground tunnel complex below Shuri Castle.

The last organized defense was attempted on 19 June by the *24th In-*

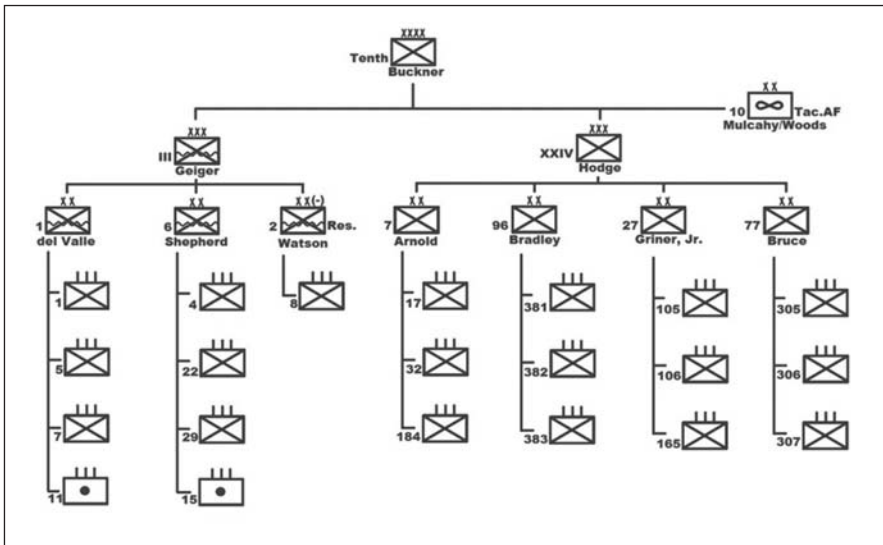
fantry Division at Madeira, and by the *44th Independent Mixed Brigade* east of Mabuni. By 20 June, even these were crushed by the concentric American advance. The western portion of the Kiyau Peninsula fell to III Amphibious Corps by 21 June. *Thirty-second Army's* headquarters at Mabuni was overrun on 22 June by the 7th Infantry Division. Earlier that morning, Generals Ushijima and Chō committed ritual suicide on a ledge overlooking the sea on Hill 89. But, by this time, the battle was practically over.

Marines and soldiers continued mopping up and hunting for stragglers until the end of June and several large groups of Japanese surrendered after the war was over. Work immediately began on preparing the island to be the staging base for the invasion of Japan. Construction work had progressed substantially, especially regarding the building of 22 additional airfields, when the news arrived announcing the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. When the war ended on 2 September, most of this work stopped and the surviving Marines and soldiers of Tenth Army breathed a sigh of relief—they would be going home alive.

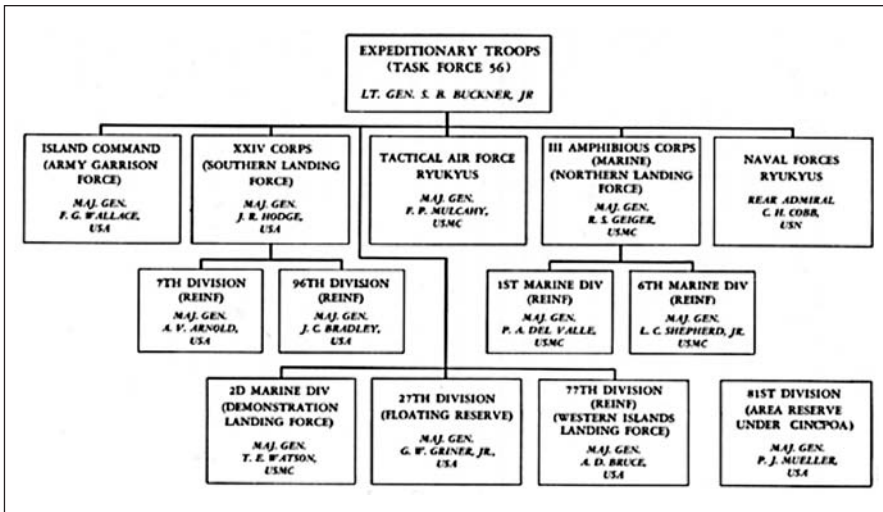
Teaching Point 1: breaking up the tactical integrity of enemy units led to the quick collapse of the Japanese defenses. Penetrating their front line and attacking into their rear areas in order to separate them from the frontline units left the Japanese with no adequate response and no time to react.

Teaching Point 2: many Japanese soldiers attempted to evade capture dressed as civilians and by mixing in with columns of refugees. In order to avoid or lessen the chances of ambushes or suicide attacks, thorough screening of all noncombatants, including women, must be taken into consideration. Several high-value targets, such as Colonel Yahara, were able to evade detection for months by posing as simple peasants after successfully fooling their interrogators.

Tenth Army Order of Battle



Task organization, Task Force 56/Tenth Army



U.S. ground forces order for Operation Iceberg (182,821 total as of 1 April; 146,451 were ashore as of 8 April; the number had increased to 190,301 by 30 June).

U.S. Tenth Army (Task Force 56)

- 1st Engineer Special Brigade
- 53d Antiaircraft Artillery Brigade
- 20th Armor Group
- 80th Medical Group

III Amphibious Corps

- 1st Marine Division (26,274)
- 6th Marine Division (24,356)
- 2d Marine Division (Tenth Army Reserve)

XXIV Corps

- XXIV Corps Troops
- XXIV Corps Artillery
- 1181st Engineer Construction Group
- 7th Infantry Division (21,929)
- 27th Infantry Division (16,143)
- 77th Infantry Division (20,981)
- 96th Infantry Division (22,330)

Tenth Army Tactical Air Force (Task Group 99.2)

- Headquarters Squadron, 2d Marine Aircraft Wing
- Air Defense Command (Task Unit 99.2.1)
 - Marine Aircraft Group 14
 - Marine Aircraft Group 22
 - Marine Aircraft Group 31
 - Marine Aircraft Group 33
 - Marine Aircraft Group 43
- 301st Fighter Wing (P-47 Thunderbolts)
 - 318th Fighter Group

413th Fighter Group

507th Fighter Group

VII Bomber Command

11th Bombardment Group, Heavy (B-24 Liberators)

494th Bombardment Group, Heavy (B-24 Liberators)

41st Bombardment Group, Medium (B-25 Mitchells)

III Amphibious Corps Concept of Operations



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo

BGen Merwin H. Silverthorn, chief of staff, aboard the command ship a day before an attack, designates on a relief map a Japanese position on the beach of Okinawa Shima in the Nansei Shoto island group to MGen Roy S. Geiger, commanding general of III Amphibious Corps, and other members of the staff including (from left) BGen D. R. Nimmer, Corps Artillery; Col Walter A. Wachtler, C-3; and LtCol Sidney S. Wade, C-2.

The following synopsis of the III Amphibious Corps concept of operations for Operation Iceberg is drawn from *Victory and Occupation: History of the U.S. Marine Corps in World War II* by Benis Frank and Henry Shaw.

General Geiger became involved in the planning for Iceberg in November 1944, when he was directed to report to General Buckner for planning purposes. Upon receipt of this order, the III Amphibious Corps commander immediately reported by dispatch. Shortly thereafter, III Amphibious Corps headquarters received a copy of the tentative Plan Fox together with all available intelligence on the prospective target and a request that Geiger prepare a tentative corps operation plan.

When the III Amphibious Corps plan was completed, and at the request of Buckner, Geiger, accompanied by his chief of staff, Brigadier General Merwin H. Silverthorn; his G-2, Lieutenant Colonel Sidney S. Wade; his G-3, Colonel Walter A. Wachtler; his G-4, Colonel Francis B. Loomis Jr.; and other members of his staff, departed Guadalcanal for Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, arriving at Schofield Barracks on 9 December. After personally contacting their opposite numbers on the Tenth Army staff, the III Amphibious Corps staff officers prepared to present their plan to General Buckner.

Geiger planned to employ the 1st and 6th MarDivs in the assault, with General del Valle's division on the right or south flank. The choice of these divisions was logical since they were both located in the Solomons and there would be no problem in establishing liaison. The 2d Division, based in Saipan, would be the floating reserve of the Army, according to the III Amphibious Corps plan.

The question then arose regarding what steps would be taken if the Japanese were encountered in strength as III Amphibious Corps advanced eastward across Okinawa, for there was no doubt that an additional division would have to be inserted in the line before the east coast was reached. Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith took this question up with the Tenth Army commander, who agreed that III Amphibious Corps would have first call on 2d MarDiv.

General Watson's division was scheduled to make the feint landings on the southeast coast of Okinawa on L-Day and L plus 1, and it was not contemplated that Geiger would need it before the third day of the operation. The III Amphibious Corps staff members presented their plan orally to General Buckner on 19 December, when it was approved. According to General Smith, who was present on this occasion, Geiger's staff members "did a very creditable job."

Scheme of Maneuver

Basically, the scheme of maneuver ashore was designed to attain early use of the airfields so that land-based air supremacy over the target could be gained and held. An additional dividend derived from the capture of the airfields would be their use as staging bases for continu-

ing mass air raids on both Japan and those areas within flying range of Okinawa under enemy control. As in the case of earlier amphibious landings in the Pacific, certain preliminary softening-up steps had to be taken before the main assault was launched.

Kerama Retto was to be seized by the 77th Infantry Division (Reinforced) on 26 March 1945, or six days before L-Day. Following the first day of operations in the Kerama Retto and beginning the night of the 26th, Marines of the Fleet Marine Force Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion were to reconnoiter the reef islets of the island group. First they were to investigate Keise Shima for the presence of enemy troops, and in the following days and nights prior to L-Day, they were to land on Aware Shima, Mae Shima, and Kuro Shima. To support the landing on Okinawa, a field artillery group of XXIV Corps Artillery was to land and be emplaced on Keise Shima prior to L-Day.

While these operations were underway, Okinawa would receive increased air and naval gunfire bombardment, which would mount in intensity until the first assault waves neared the beaches. At this time, the fire would lift from the beach area and continue inland. The Army and Marine divisions were to land on the Hagushi beaches, General Geiger's corps on the left. The mouth of the Bishi Gawa marked the beginning of the corps boundary, which roughly followed the course of the river, to a point just north of Kadena; here, the line headed almost due east to bisect the island.

Once landed north of the Hagushi town, the Marine assault divisions were to move rapidly inland, coordinating their advance with that of XXIV Corps. On the Marine left flank was the 6th MarDiv—the 22d Marines on the left and the 4th Marines, less its 2d Battalion in division reserve, on the right. The 29th Marines, the third infantry regiment of the 6th MarDiv, was corps reserve and was to be ready to land on any of the beaches. It was also to be prepared to revert one battalion landing team to the 6th MarDiv on order.

General Shepherd's initial mission was the capture of Yontan airfield while protecting the northern flank of the Tenth Army. General del

Valle's division, landing to the right of the 6th, was to assist in the capture of Yontan by quickly seizing the high ground northeast of Kina. The attack was then to continue, with major emphasis placed on maintaining contact with General Hodge's corps and assisting his advance. The 1st MarDiv scheme of maneuver placed the 5th and 7th Marines in the assault, the 7th on the left, and the 1st Marines in division reserve.

Adjoining the 1st MarDiv was to be the 7th Infantry Division, with one regiment in division reserve but under the operational control of XXIV Corps. The other Army assault division was to be 96th, which was to land with two regiments abreast and a third in corps reserve. Artillery support for the Marines was to come from III Amphibious Corps Corps Artillery and those artillery units organic to the divisions. General Geiger's guns were to land on his order to support the attack and, once ashore, corps artillery would coordinate all supporting arms in the Marine sector. XXIV Corps Artillery, less the group on Keise Shima, would land on General Hodge's order and support the attack with long-range interdiction, counterbattery, and harassing fires.

Following the initial landing, operations were designed to isolate the Phase I objective, which consisted of that part of the island lying south of a general line drawn across the Ichikawa Isthmus, through Chimu, and including the Eastern To prevent enemy reinforcement from the north and to fulfill its assignment in Phase I, III Amphibious Corps was to gain control of the isthmus as swiftly as possible. To seal off the Japanese in the south, General Hodge's troops were to drive across the island, his right flank units holding a line that ran through Futenma to Kuba Saki. Once the central portion of the island had been captured and secured, the direction of attack would be faced to the south and continued until all of the objectives of the first phase had been achieved.

Phase II, the seizure of northern Okinawa and the capture of Ie Shima, was to be executed with Tenth Army troops locally available when Buckner was satisfied that Phase I had been accomplished. The first major military objective in the north was Motobu Peninsula, which

was to be taken by means of simultaneously launched attacks from sea and land. Once the peninsula had been gained, a shore-to-shore assault would be made against Ie Shima. The end of Phase II would be signaled when the rest of northern Okinawa had been captured.

While higher echelon air planning for Iceberg detailed both strategic and tactical missions, the Tenth Army was more immediately concerned with the latter. Carrier-based tactical aviation, aboard the Task Force 52 escort carrier group (Transport Group 52.1, Rear Admiral Calvin T. Durgin), was to provide the invasion force with air support until Major General Francis P. Mulcahy's squadrons were established ashore and could take over. At this time, the Tactical Air Force (TAF) would also be responsible for overall air defense.

When this responsibility was assumed, TAF operations would be based on the following order of priority: (1) attainment of air superiority by annihilation of enemy aircraft in the air and on the ground and destruction of enemy air installations; (2) interdiction and destruction of enemy troop and supply movements immediately within or heading toward the target area; and (3) execution of combined air-ground attacks on specific frontline objectives.

The importance of the first priority lay in Tenth Army recognition of the yet-existing Japanese air strength and the threat it posed to the invasion force. As soon as Air Defense Command (ADC) fighter squadrons were established ashore on captured airfields, they were to begin fulfilling their assigned missions. From these fields, ADC was to provide air defense to ground units on the island and naval forces in its environs.

Combat air patrols, close air support, and other related flight missions were considered the means by which the defense was to be maintained. Although it was a function of ADC, close air support is not normally a part of air defense; it is more closely associated with a ground offensive concept.

Despite this fact, however, Okinawa's terrain and the nature of the Japanese defenses were to provide Marine aviators of the Air Defense

Command with ample opportunities to display close air support techniques born of experience accumulated in earlier Pacific campaigns.*

(History Division note: this was the official III Amphibious Corps concept of operations. As you will see during execution of the plan, the situation changed rapidly and continually, requiring commanders and staffs at all levels to adjust their plans to successfully continue the mission. Fighting a tough, resourceful enemy defending his homeland will always require that a MAGTF expect the unexpected yet still be able to react accordingly to get the job done.)

* Benis M. Frank and Henry I. Shaw Jr., *Victory and Occupation: History of the U.S. Marine Corps in World War II*, Vol. V (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1968), 66–69.

III Amphibious Corps Order of Battle



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo

III Amphibious Corps (66,636)*

Headquarters, III Amphibious Corps

III Amphibious Corps Headquarters and Service Battalion

III Amphibious Corps Medical Battalion

III Amphibious Corps Signal Battalion

1st Military Police Battalion

11th Motor Transport Battalion

7th Service Regiment

Amphibious Battalion, FMFPac (Attached)

* Excluding 2d MarDiv.

III Amphibious Corps Artillery

1st Provisional Antiaircraft Artillery Group

2d Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion

5th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion

8th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion

16th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion

2d Provisional Field Artillery Group

1st 155mm Howitzer Battalion

3d 155mm Howitzer Battalion

6th 155mm Howitzer Battalion

7th 155mm Gun Battalion

8th 155mm Gun Battalion

9th 155mm Gun Battalion

1st Marine Division (26,274)

Headquarters Battalion, 1st Marine Division

1st Marines

5th Marines

7th Marines

2d Battalion, 8th Marines

11th Marines (Artillery)

1st Engineer Battalion

1st Medical Battalion

1st Motor Transport Battalion

1st Pioneer Battalion

1st Service Battalion

1st Tank Battalion

3d Armored Amphibian Battalion (Provisional)

1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion

8th Amphibian Tractor Battalion

6th Marine Division (24,356)

Headquarters Battalion, 6th Marine Division

4th Marines

22d Marines

29th Marines

15th Marines (Artillery)

6th Engineer Battalion

6th Medical Battalion

6th Motor Transport Battalion

6th Pioneer Battalion

6th Service Battalion

6th Tank Battalion

1st Armored Amphibian Battalion

4th Amphibian Tractor Battalion

9th Amphibian Tractor Battalion

**2d Marine Aircraft Wing (under control of Tactical Air Force,
Tenth Army)**

Marine Aircraft Group 14

Marine Aircraft Group 22

Marine Aircraft Group 31

Marine Aircraft Group 33

Marine Aircraft Group 43

U.S. Commander Biographies



Official U.S. Army photo

MajGen Roy Geiger and LtGen Simon Buckner, USA, with helmet, commanding general Tenth Army, as they met at headquarters of III Amphibious Corps.



Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz (24 February 1885–20 February 1966): the senior U.S. naval commander in the Pacific theater during World War II, Chester W. Nimitz served as commander, Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas. Born in Fredericksburg, Texas, Nimitz graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1905. His early career was marked by service aboard submarines, destroyers, and battleships and as a military observer in Germany. Between 1920 and 1923,

he studied the logistical requirements for fighting in the Pacific at the Naval War College. Notable early commands included the, Submarine Division 20 (1929–33) and the cruiser USS *Augusta* (CA 31)

(1933–35). He was appointed to rear admiral following duty at the Bureau of Navigation in Washington, DC, between 1935 and 1938. His subsequent commands included Cruiser Division Two, Battleship Division One, and chief of the Bureau of Navigation. Following the Pearl Harbor attack, he was appointed commander in chief Pacific Fleet with the rank of admiral. He subsequently commanded the United States' drive across the Central Pacific. In December 1944, he was promoted to fleet admiral. Following the war, he served as chief of naval operations from 1945–47. He retired to California, where he died at his home in 1966.



Admiral Raymond A. Spruance (3 July 1886–13 December 1969): one of the United States' senior naval commanders during World War II, Raymond Spruance served as the commander of the Fifth Fleet and Central Pacific Force during the Battle of Okinawa. A native of Baltimore, Maryland, Spruance graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1906. Notable prewar duties included commanding officer of five destroyers, staff billets, service at the Naval

War College, commanding officer of the battleship USS *Mississippi* (BB 41), command of the Tenth Naval District and Caribbean Sea Frontier, and command of a cruiser division. In June 1942, he commanded Task Force 16 at the Battle of Midway and was instrumental in the United States' decisive victory against the Japanese fleet during that engagement. Following Midway, he served as chief of staff to Admiral Nimitz and later as deputy commander in chief. In 1943, he was appointed the commander of the Central Pacific Force and, as commander of the Fifth Fleet, directed the Gilberts, Marshalls, and Marianas campaigns. He was also commander during the battles of Iwo Jima and Okinawa. He succeeded Nimitz as commander in chief Pacific Fleet in 1945 and served as the president of the Naval War College from 1946–48. He died in California in 1969.



Admiral Richmond K. Turner (27 May 1885–12 February 1961): Richmond Turner was the United States' primary amphibious forces commander throughout the Pacific War. During the Battle of Okinawa, he served as commander of Joint Expeditionary Force/Task Force 51. A native of Portland, Oregon, he graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1908. His early duties included service aboard destroyers, gunboats, and battleships and as an ordnance officer. In

1927, he received training as a naval aviator and subsequently served as commander of Aircraft Squadrons, Asiatic Fleet and executive officer of the carrier USS *Saratoga* (CV 3). Following service at the Naval War College and as commander of the cruiser USS *Astoria* (CA 34), he led the War Plans Division in Washington from 1940 to 1941. Following the outbreak of the war, he became assistant chief of staff of the U.S. Fleet and was then appointed commander of Amphibious Force, South Pacific Force in June 1942. In that capacity, he led the successful amphibious campaigns at Guadalcanal, the Gilberts, Marshalls, Marianas, and Bonin Islands. His postwar billets included service on the Navy Department's General Board and U.S. Naval representative on the United Nations Military Staff Committee. He retired in 1947 and died in California in 1961.



Lieutenant General Simon B. Buckner Jr. (18 July 1886–18 June 1945): Simon Buckner was the commanding general of the Tenth United States Army/Task Force 56 during the Battle of Okinawa. A native of Kentucky, Buckner attended the Virginia Military Institute before being appointed to the United States Military Academy, from which he graduated in 1908. His early service included tours in the Philippines, superintendent of

the Virginia Military Institute, commandant of cadets at West Point, posts at the General Service Schools at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas,

and Army War College in Washington, and regimental commands. During the early years of World War II, he served as the commander of the Army's Alaska Defense Command. In 1944, he was given command of the newly activated Tenth Army, a joint Army-Marine Corps formation, which he subsequently led at Okinawa. On 18 June 1945, just days before the end of the struggle for the island, he was killed by Japanese artillery fire. He was the last American general to die in combat during World War II. His command was assumed by III Amphibious Corps commander Major General Roy Geiger.



Major General Roy S. Geiger (25 January 1885–23 January 1947): Roy Geiger commanded the III Amphibious Corps and, for a brief time, the Tenth Army during the Battle of Okinawa. Born in Florida, he graduated from Florida State Normal and Industrial College and Stetson University before enlisting in the Marine Corps in 1907. He was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1909. His initial duties included service with battleship detachments in Nicaragua, the Philippines, and China. In 1917, he completed flight training in Pensacola, Florida, and became a naval aviator, among the first in the Marine Corps. In 1918, he commanded the First Marine Aviation Force. During the interwar years, he commanded several Marine squadrons and attended the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, the Army War College, and the Naval War College. He became commanding general of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing in 1941. In this capacity, he led the Cactus Air Force's defense of Guadalcanal during the Solomons campaign. After serving as director of Marine aviation in 1943, he took command of the I Amphibious Corps and led it during the battle of Bougainville. He led the same formation (redesignated III Amphibious Corps in 1944) during the battle of Guam. He commanded the corps again at Okinawa and temporarily took command of the Tenth Army when its commander, Lieutenant General Buckner, was killed in action on 18 June 1945. The next month, he assumed command of Fleet Marine Force Pacific,

which he held until being recalled to Headquarters Marine Corps in 1946. He died in 1947.



Major General Pedro del Valle (28 August 1893-28 April 1978): Pedro del Valle commanded the veteran 1st MarDiv during the Battle of Okinawa. Born in Puerto Rico, he graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1915 and was subsequently commissioned a Marine second lieutenant. Initial duties included service in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, battleship detachments, and Marine Corps Schools in Quantico. He served as an assistant naval attaché to the U.S. embassy in

Italy from 1935 to 1937 and observed Italian forces during the Ethiopian War. He commanded the 11th Marines from 1941 to 1942 and led that regiment during the battle of Guadalcanal. Following service as president of the Marine Corps Equipment Board from 1943 to 1944, he became commanding general of III Amphibious Corps artillery during the battle of Guam in August 1944. In November of that year, he assumed command of the 1st MarDiv, which he led at the Battle of Okinawa. Following postwar duties at Headquarters Marine Corps, he retired in 1948. He died in Maryland in 1978.



Major General Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr. (10 February 1896-6 August 1990): Lemuel Shepherd commanded the 6th MarDiv during the Battle of Okinawa. A native of Norfolk, Virginia, he graduated from the Virginia Military Institute in 1917 and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps. With the 5th Marines, he served with the American Expeditionary Force during World War I. Following his

service in Europe, he became White House aide and aide-de-camp to the Commandant of the Marine Corps. Subsequent duties included command of a battleship detachment, service in China, and duties at

the Marine Corps Schools in Quantico. In March 1942, following the outbreak of World War II, he organized and trained the 9th Marines. He was appointed assistant division commander of the 1st MarDiv in 1943 and served with that formation during the New Britain campaign from December 1943 to March 1944. In May of that year, he assumed command of the 1st Marine Provisional Brigade and led that formation during the battle of Guam. The brigade served as the building block of the 6th MarDiv, which Shepherd commanded during the Battle of Okinawa and during occupation duties in China. The following year, he became Assistant Commandant and chief of staff of Marine Corps Headquarters and then as commandant of Marine Corps Schools from 1948 to 1950. He commanded the Fleet Marine Force during the Korean War and was appointed Commandant of the Marine Corps in 1952. He retired in 1956 but was subsequently recalled to serve as the chairman of the Inter-American Defense Board from 1956 to 1959. He died in California in 1990.



Major General Francis P. Mulcahy (9 March 1894–11 Dec 1973): Francis Mulcahy was commanding general of the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing and the Tactical Air Force, Tenth Army, during the Battle of Okinawa. A native of New York, Mulcahy graduated from the University of Notre Dame in 1917 and was subsequently commissioned in the Marine Corps. Attending naval flight school that year, he became a naval aviator and served with the Allied air forces in

World War I. During the interwar years, he saw service in the Banana Wars in Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic and attended the Air Corps Tactical School, the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth and the Naval War College. At the start of World War II, he was serving as an observer of the British campaign in North Africa. He assumed command of the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing in August 1942 and led that formation in the Solomon Islands. He then served as the commanding general of aircraft, Fleet Marine Force Pacific, before his assignment as the commander of the Tactical Air Force, Tenth Army. He retired from the Marine Corps in 1946 and died in California in 1973.

Japanese Strategy and Okinawa



Official Imperial Japanese Army photo

The following synopsis of the Japanese strategy is drawn from *Okinawa: The Last Battle* by Roy E. Appleman, James M. Burns, Russell A. Gugeler, and John Stevens.

The active formulation of a defense plan for the Ryukyus dates from the American capture of the Marianas in June and July 1944. The first plan for the ground defense of the Ryukyus was established in a *Thirty-second Army* directive of 19 July 1944. This document outlined a plan to destroy the Americans at the water's edge that, failing to "annihilate" them from previously constructed positions, embodied a fortified defense in depth. In accordance with this directive, construction of cave and underground positions began in the summer of 1944. The command on Okinawa was convinced that the situation was urgent and informed the troops that "the Empire is determined to fight a showdown battle with an all-out effort for the preservation of national unity when the enemy advances to the

Nansei Shoto.” In instructions issued in August, *Thirty-second Army Headquarters* stated:

The enemy counteroffensive has become increasingly severe and they have infiltrated into our central Pacific defense area and are now boldly aiming toward the Nansei Shoto. Should we be unable to defend the Nansei Shoto, the mainland and the southern frontier would become isolated. Thus, the execution of the present war would be extremely difficult and would become a life-and-death problem for our nation.

In the early part of 1945, important changes were made in the original defense plan. It was decided not to attempt the destruction of the invading forces at the beaches but to have the *Thirty-second Army* offer a strong resistance around a central fortified position; a decisive land battle would be avoided until the kamikaze planes and the Japanese fleet should destroy the American warships and transports. The general character of the final plan reflected the critical situation that faced General Ushijima with the departure of the *9th Division* for Formosa and with the fading of prospects for reinforcements. He had to alter his plans to fit his resources, so depleted by now that he had to mobilize virtually the entire civilian population of the island.

The Japanese high command was determined to hold Okinawa and planned to employ the major portion of the empire’s remaining air strength as well as a large portion of its fleet in an attack on the American sea forces. The Japanese hoped to isolate and weaken the invading ground forces by destroying the American naval units and support shipping lying off Okinawa. To accomplish this, they relied chiefly on bomb-laden planes guided to their targets by suicide pilots, members of the Japanese Navy’s *Special Attack Corps* known as the *Kamikaze (Divine Wind) Corps*. This desperate measure was expected to equalize the uneven ground battle by cutting off the Americans from supplies and reinforcements. It would enable the *Thirty-second Army* to drive the invaders into the sea.

Despite the hopes of the Japanese high command, planning of the

Thirty-second Army for the defense of Okinawa proceeded on the assumption that it was impossible to defeat the enemy and that the most that could be done was to deny him the use of the island for as long a period as possible and inflict the maximum number of casualties. Acting on this assumption, General Ushijima drew his forces together into the southern part of Okinawa and, from the strongly fortified positions around Shuri, prepared to make his stand there as costly to the enemy as possible. He would not go out to meet the invaders; he would wait for them to come to him and force them to fight on his terms. The *Thirty-second Army* artillery was instructed not to fire on the invading ships and landing forces to avoid revealing its positions and exposing them to the devastating naval gunfire of the Americans. Units were not to oppose landings in their sectors until enough enemy troops had been brought ashore to render escape by sea impossible. The *Thirty-second Army* planned to defend only the southern third of Okinawa strongly. The principal defenses would be established in the rugged ground north of Naha, Shuri, and Yonabaru. Landings north of this line would not be opposed; south of it the Americans would be met on the beaches. Wherever the Americans landed, they would eventually come up against the Shuri defenses, where the main battle would be fought.

The Japanese estimate of American plans was very accurate. The enemy expected the Americans to land across the Hagushi beaches on the west coast, with 6–10 divisions, and to strike out for the Yontan and Kadena airfields. He anticipated that American landing forces would form large beachheads of two-division strength each, hold within these perimeters until sufficient supplies were unloaded to permit a strong attack, and then advance behind massed tanks and concentrated artillery fire. The Japanese estimated that it would take the Americans about 10 days to launch their attack against the main Shuri defenses. They believed that the Americans intended to draw the main Japanese force into the Shuri Lines so that a not too costly secondary landing could be affected with perhaps one division on the east coast somewhere south of Shuri, near Minatoga.

The *Thirty-second Army* disposed its available troops in accordance with its general plan of defense and its estimate of the enemy's capa-

bilities. Only two battalions of the *2d Infantry Unit* were left in the north to defend not only the Motobu Peninsula but also Ie Shima, where they destroyed the island's airfield. The only force stationed in the area immediately behind the Hagushi beaches was the *1st Specially Established Regiment, Boeitai*, which was ordered to fight a delaying action and then, after destroying the two airfields in the sector, to retreat. The *62d Division* manned the defensive belt across the island north of the Naha Shuri-Yonabaru line. Its *63d Brigade* was to absorb the shock of the American attack southward at the narrow waist of the island between Chatan and Toguchi, while the main line of resistance was established from Uchitomari to Tsuwa north of the Shuri defenses. Deployed to support the *63d*, the *64th Brigade* was dug in to fight in the successive positions around Shuri. Artillery attached to the *62d Division* was emplaced in direct support on the west side of the line.

Having selected the Shuri area as their main battle position, the Japanese with shrewdness and great industry organized the ground for a strong defense. The main zone of defense was planned as a series of concentric positions adapted to the contours of the area. Caves, emplacements, blockhouses, and pillboxes were built into the hills and escarpments, connected by elaborate underground tunnels, and skillfully camouflaged; many of the burial tombs were fortified. The Japanese took full advantage of the terrain to organize defensive areas and strong points that were mutually supporting, and they fortified the reverse as well as the forward slopes of hills. Artillery and mortars were emplaced in the caves and thoroughly integrated into the general scheme of defensive fires.

To meet the threat of landings in the south, the *Thirty-second Army* stationed the *24th Division* in defensive positions covering the Minatoga beaches and extending across the southern end of the island. The *44th Independent Mixed Brigade* was moved to the Chinen Peninsula and was ordered to cooperate with the *24th Division* in repelling any landings in the area. Artillery was registered on the Minatoga beaches, and some of the 320mm mortars were moved to this sector.

During the long period of planning, the Japanese Imperial Gener-

al Staff and the *Thirty-second Army* were constantly concerned with fixing the probable date of the American invasion; each changed its view several times and on occasion they were not in agreement. It was during and after the invasion of Saipan, Tinian, and Guam, in the summer of 1944 that the Japanese first expected an immediate invasion of Okinawa and, accordingly, began to pour troops into the island. But after the invasion of the Palaus and Leyte in September and October 1944, the Imperial General Staff in Tokyo considered it unlikely that sufficient American troops would be immediately available for another major operation. During the Philippines operations at the end of 1944, the Imperial General Staff in Tokyo was in doubt as to whether the next blow would fall on the south China coast or on Formosa, although the command of the *Thirty-second Army* was still convinced that Okinawa would be invaded and pushed forward preparations for its defense.

Again, at the beginning of 1945, the Imperial General Staff was uncertain whether the next American attack would be against Formosa or Okinawa. By the end of February, as a result of the invasion of Iwo Jima, which pointed to the American strategy of cutting off the Japanese home islands from the mainland and the Indies, the Japanese concluded that Formosa would be bypassed and that Okinawa would be the next target. Their aerial reconnaissance and intelligence reports revealed an increase in west-bound American shipping to the Philippines and the Marianas during the latter part of February—an increase that swelled to large proportions early in March; this seemed a clear indication of the imminence of another American operation. When the invasion fleet appeared off Iwo Jima, it was considered by some to be a feint for the invasion of Okinawa. With the Iwo Jima battle in progress and submarine activity increasing around the Ryukyus, it was taken for granted that the invasion of Okinawa would soon follow on or about 1 April 1945.

As one of the last steps in preparing for the expected struggle, the Japanese command on Okinawa on 21 March ordered all air, shipping, and rear-echelon units to “prepare for ground combat.” On 27 March, the day after the American invasion of the Keramas, *Thirty-second*

Army advised its units that “the enemy is planning to land his main strength tomorrow, the 28th, on the western coast of southern Okinawa, in particular in the Yontan-Kadena sector.” When the American forces invaded Okinawa, a few days later than had been predicted, the *Thirty-second Army* adhered strictly to its plan of offering little resistance until the invaders should come up against their outposts at the Shuri Line. The Japanese *Combined Fleet* commander, meanwhile, prepared to execute his plan, delayed by Task Force 58’s foray into the Inland Sea in March, to destroy the American fleet by air and surface action. Before many days had passed, the enemy was to react to the invasion with a fury never before encountered.*

* Roy E. Appleman et al., *Okinawa: The Last Battle* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, 1947), 92–96.

Japanese Order of Battle



Official Imperial Japanese Army photo

Imperial Japanese Army Units

Thirty-Second Army (7,075)

24th Infantry Division (14,360)

Headquarters

22d Infantry Regiment

32d Infantry Regiment

89th Infantry Regiment

42d Field Artillery Regiment

24th Reconnaissance Regiment

24th Engineer Regiment

24th Transport Regiment

Signal Unit

Decontamination Training Unit
Ordnance Repair Unit
Veterinary Hospital
Water Supply and Purification Unit
1st Field Hospital
2d Field Hospital

62d Infantry Division (11,623)

Headquarters
63d Brigade Headquarters
 11th Independent Infantry Battalion
 12th Independent Infantry Battalion
 13th Independent Infantry Battalion
 14th Independent Infantry Battalion
 273d Independent Infantry Battalion
64th Brigade Headquarters
 15th Independent Infantry Battalion
 21st Independent Infantry Battalion
 22d Independent Infantry Battalion
 23d Independent Infantry Battalion
 272d Independent Infantry Battalion
Engineer Unit
Signal Unit
Transport Unit
Field Hospital
Veterinary Hospital

44th Independent Mixed Brigade (4,485)

Headquarters

2d Infantry Unit

15th Independent Mixed Regiment

Artillery Unit

Engineer Unit

5th Artillery Command

Headquarters

1st Medium Artillery Regiment (-)

23d Medium Artillery Regiment

7th Heavy Artillery Regiment

100th Independent Heavy Artillery Battalion

1st Independent Artillery Mortar Regiment (-)

1st Light Mortar Battalion

2d Light Mortar Battalion

21st Antiaircraft Artillery Command

Headquarters

27th Independent Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion

70th Field Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion

80th Field Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion

81st Field Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion

103d Independent Machine Cannon Battalion

104th Independent Machine Cannon Battalion

105th Independent Machine Cannon Battalion

Machine-Gun Units

- 3d Independent Machine-Gun Battalion
- 4th Independent Machine-Gun Battalion
- 14th Independent Machine-Gun Battalion
- 17th Independent Machine-Gun Battalion

Antitank Units

- 3d Independent Antitank Battalion
- 7th Independent Antitank Battalion
- 22d Independent Antitank Battalion
- 32d Independent Antitank Company

11th Shipping Group (four sea-raiding battalions)

7 Independent Battalions (light infantry formed from seven sea-raiding base battalions)

49th Line of Communication Sector

Engineer Units

19th Air Sector Command

27th Tank Regiment

Army unit total: 66,636 (This figure represents the total Japanese strength. Included in it, however, are an estimated 5,000 Okinawans, mostly regular conscripts, who were integrated into Japanese units.)

Imperial Japanese Navy Units

Okinawa Base Force (headquarters, coast defense, and anti-aircraft personnel)

27th Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron

33d Midget Submarine Unit
37th Torpedo Maintenance Unit
Torpedo Working Unit
81mm Mortar Battery
Oroku Transmitting Station
Naha Branch, Sasebo Naval Stores Department
Naha Branch, Sasebo Transportation Department
Naha Navy Yard, Sasebo Naval Base
Oroku Detachment, 951st Air Group
Nansei Shoto Air Group
226th Construction Unit
3210th Construction Unit

Navy unit total: 8,825 (This figure represents both regular naval ratings and the Japanese, Korean, and Okinawan military civilians who were utilized in the naval land combat organization.)

Okinawan

502d Special Guard Engineer Unit
503d Special Guard Engineer Unit
504th Special Guard Engineer Unit
Blood-and-Iron-for-the-Emperor Duty Unit (high school students)
Boeitai assigned to the Army
Boeitai assigned to the Navy
Nursing students
Regular conscripts not included under Army units
Okinawan total: 23,350
Grand total (rounded out):
 Army units: 67,000

Navy units: 9,000

Okinawans: 24,000

Japanese strength on Okinawa: 100,000

Source: Charles S. Nichols and Henry I. Shaw, *Okinawa: Victory in the Pacific* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, U.S. Marine Corps, 1955), 302–4.

Japanese Commander Biographies



Lieutenant General Mitsuru Ushijima (31 July 1887–22 June 1945): Mitsuru Ushijima commanded Japan's *Thirty-second Army* during the Battle of Okinawa. Born in Kagoshima Prefecture, he graduated from the Imperial Japanese Army Academy in 1908 and from the Army Staff College in 1916. His first appointments included service with the Japanese forces based at Vladivostok, Russia, during the international intervention for the Russian

Civil War, administrative postings with the War Ministry, and command of the Imperial Japanese Army's *1st Infantry Regiment*. During the Second Sino-Japanese War, he commanded the *36th Infantry Brigade* and the *11th Division*. Between 1941 and 1944 he served in billets in Japan as commandant of the Noncommissioned Officers Academy from 1941 to 1942 and commandant of the Imperial Japanese Army Academy from 1942 to 1944. He took command of the *Thirty-second Army* on Okinawa that year and was tasked with preparing it for an anticipated American landing. He led his forces throughout the battle for the island until his death on 22 June 1945 when he committed ritual suicide rather than surrender to American forces.



Lieutenant General Isamu Chō (19 Jan 1895–22 June 1945): chief of staff of the *Thirty-second Army* during the Battle of Okinawa, Isamu Chō was a native of Fukuoka Prefecture. Graduating from the Imperial Japanese Army Academy in 1916 and the Army Staff College in 1928, his first service was with the *Kwantung Army* in eastern China. Throughout his career, Chō participated in a number of organizations and plots dedicated to undermining Japan's liberal democratic institutions and creating an ultranationalist state

and society. During the Second Sino-Japanese War, he commanded

the *74th Infantry Regiment* and served as chief of staff of the *26th Division* in Manchuria, where his unit was involved in a series of border incidents with the Soviet Union. Between 1940 and 1942, he served in Southeast Asia and helped plan the Japanese invasion of that region in 1942. He returned to Manchuria in 1942 and served there in various posts until 1944. He was appointed chief of staff of the *Thirty-second Army* in 1945 and helped build the elaborate defenses around Shuri Castle. He committed ritual suicide alongside his commanding general on 22 June 1945.



Colonel Hironichi Yahara (12 Oct 1902–7 May 1981): Hironichi Yahara was the *Thirty-second Army's* operations officer during the Battle of Okinawa. Born in Tottori Prefecture, he graduated from the Imperial Japanese Army Academy in 1923 and from the Army War College in 1929. Among his first assignments was serving as an exchange officer in the United States with the 8th Infantry in 1933. Following his return to Japan, he worked as an instructor and in various staff billets in Southeast Asia between 1940 and

1941. He returned to Japan as an instructor that year and was subsequently assigned as a senior staff officer for the *Thirty-second Army* on Okinawa in 1944. During the Battle of Okinawa, he supported defensive tactics that he hoped would grind down the American forces through attrition. Against Yahara's wishes, General Ushijima ordered him not to commit ritual suicide. Yahara escaped the Japanese lines disguised as a civilian but was eventually apprehended by the Americans and became a prisoner of war. The most senior *Thirty-second Army* officer to survive, he published an account of the Battle of Okinawa in 1973. He died in 1981.



Vice Admiral Minoru Ōta (7 April 1891–13 June 1945): Minoru Ōta commanded the Japanese naval forces during the Battle of Okinawa. Born in Chiba Prefecture, he graduated from the Imperial Japanese Naval Academy in 1913. Upon graduation, he served on several battleships and then enrolled at the naval artillery school. Following further service aboard battleships, he became an instructor at the Naval Engineering College. During the First Shanghai Incident of 1932, he commanded a battalion of Japanese

special naval landing forces and commanding the *6th Kure Special Naval Landing Force* in 1938 during the Second Sino-Japanese War. He was slated to command the landing forces for Midway, though American victory during the battle of Midway meant that Japan was unable to launch the operation to seize the island. Following this he served in New Georgia and in staff billets until assignment to Okinawa in 1945. During the struggle for the island, he commanded all the naval forces and oversaw the defense of the Oroku Peninsula. When his position was encircled by American forces, he committed ritual suicide on 13 June 1945.

The Kamikazes—Divine Wind and the Fleet that Came to Stay



Official Imperial Japanese Army photo



Official U.S. Navy photo

By the spring of 1945, Japanese air power was virtually nonexistent. The long Allied island-hopping campaign in the Central Pacific combined with the equally costly march up the Solomons and Papua New Guinea island chains had inflicted such a heavy cost on Japanese naval and army aviation forces, particularly in trained pilots, that the Japanese could no longer hope to challenge their enemy on equal terms. The Great Marianas Turkey Shoot of the previous June had effectively destroyed the Japanese naval air arm, leaving only land-based aviation in a position to challenge the approaching Pacific Fleet. With no significant assets to offer the *Thirty-second Army*, including aircraft to provide aerial interdiction or close air support, the Japanese defenders of Okinawa had no hope that their rescue would come from the sky.

There was, however, one force that might turn the tide in the Japanese's favor—the *Kamikaze (Divine Wind) Special Attack Corps*. First introduced during the battle of Leyte Gulf in October 1944, this all-volunteer corps was created to deliberately crash their bomb-laden aircraft directly upon the decks of Allied warships, with the intent of sinking them at the relatively cheap cost of an obsolescent airplane and barely trained pilot. Fueled with the fanaticism of the Bushido cult and adoration of their emperor, the new corps had no shortage of volunteers. Sufficient aircraft were still available throughout the home islands that would penetrate the combat aerial patrols over the fleet and dive through clouds of antiaircraft fire to incinerate themselves and their intended victims.

Initially derided by the Allies as a foolish last-ditch act of desperation, the *Divine Wind* achieved results far in excess of anything its developers could ever hope for. While these suicide aircraft at no point had any chance to wipe out the enormous fleet of ships encompassing Okinawa, they still inflicted enormous damage. During the kamikaze offensive against American forces at Okinawa (codenamed Operation Ten-Go), more than 1,800 special attack aircraft based in Kyushu and Formosa carried out a series of attacks between mid-March and the end of June 1945.

The most lethal attack was the one carried out 6–7 April against the Allied invasion fleet when 355 kamikazes and nearly 100 convention-

al aircraft struck over a 19-hour period, sinking 6 ships and damaging 21 others, inflicting more than 500 casualties, for a loss of 400 aircraft. During the 10 individual large-scale attacks carried out under the Ten-Go operations plan, more than 1,100 kamikaze aircraft were shot down by anti-aircraft fire and by fighter aircraft, as well as several hundred conventional aircraft. U.S. Navy losses were horrendous; by the end of the battle, more than 26 ships were sunk and 225 damaged, with 9,731 crewmen being killed or wounded—the highest number of casualties suffered by the U.S. Navy during any battle in the Pacific.

The ships of the Pacific Fleet comprising Task Force 50, of which Task Force 51 was a subordinate element, made up the mightiest invasion fleet ever assembled in history. Formed around the core of Fifth Fleet, Task Force 50 at one point had eight American and British task forces subordinated to it, including 300 warships, of which there were 43 fleet and escort carriers, 18 battleships, and 1,139 other ships including 327 dedicated to supporting the logistics effort ashore. Though Admiral Spruance and his commanders had anticipated kamikaze attacks and had made considerable efforts toward combating them, including air strikes on home airfields, they could not have imagined the ferocity of the attacks when they finally came.

Coupled with the one-way journey of the gigantic battleship *Yamato* on 6 April, the *Divine Wind's* offensive created wide consternation among Task Force 50, causing some of its commanders at one time or another to contemplate pulling out as the Navy had done during the initial stages of the battle of Guadalcanal. But unlike Guadalcanal, Spruance insisted that this fleet had come to stay. The *Yamato* was sunk by 10 torpedo and 5 bomb hits on 7 April and never got anywhere near Okinawa. Four of its escorting destroyers were sunk as well, in exchange for the loss of 10 carrier-based aircraft. It represented the last hope of the Japanese and was sent to the bottom, along with any chance that the Japanese would fight to a draw.

Spruance's fleet continued to fight kamikazes on the sea and in the sky until the end of the battle, all the while providing magnificent support to the forces engaged ashore. Though the loss of life and ships was unbearably high, never once did the fleet stop supporting the

troops. And by the time that the smoke from thousands of shot-down kamikazes had cleared, the U.S. Navy was the undisputed master of the Pacific.



Official U.S. Navy photo

Photographed from a USS Ticonderoga (CV 14) aircraft, Third Fleet aircraft carriers anchor in Ulithi Atoll on 8 December 1944 during a break from operations in the Philippines. The carriers are (from front to back) the USS Wasp (CV 18), USS Yorktown (CV 10), USS Hornet (CV 12), USS Hancock (CV 19), and Ticonderoga.

Comparative Ranks

Commissioned Officer Ranks

U.S. NAVY	U.S. ARMY	U.S. MARINE CORPS	JAPANESE ARMED FORCES*
Ensign	Second Lieutenant	Second Lieutenant	<i>Shō-i</i> (Second Lieutenant/Ensign)
Lieutenant (Junior Grade)	First Lieutenant	First Lieutenant	<i>Chū-i</i> (First Lieutenant/Lieutenant [Junior Grade])
Lieutenant	Captain	Captain	<i>Tai-i</i> (Captain/Lieutenant)
Lieutenant Commander	Major	Major	<i>Shōsa</i> (Major/Lieutenant Commander)
Commander	Lieutenant Colonel	Lieutenant Colonel	<i>Chūsa</i> (Lieutenant Colonel/Commander)
Captain	Colonel	Colonel	<i>Taisa</i> (Colonel/Captain)
Commodore	Brigadier General	Brigadier General	<i>Shōshō</i> (Major General/Rear Admiral)
Rear Admiral	Major General	Major General	<i>Chūjo</i> (Lieutenant General/Vice Admiral)
Vice Admiral	Lieutenant General	Lieutenant General	<i>Taisho</i> (General/Admiral)
Admiral	General	General	—
Fleet Admiral	General of the Army	—	<i>Gensui</i> (Field Marshal)
Admiral of the Navy	General of the Armies	—	<i>Dai Gensui</i> (The Emperor)

* Japan used the same term for both army and navy officer ranks. Naval ranks were indicated by the term *Kaigun*, while army ranks were indicated by the term *Rikugun*. Thus a rear admiral was a *Kaigun Shōshō*, and a major general was a *Rikugun Shōshō*.

Enlisted Ranks

U.S. NAVY	U.S. ARMY	U.S. MARINE CORPS	IMPERIAL JAPANESE NAVY	IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY
—	—	—	—	<i>Nitōbei</i> (Private Second Class)
Apprentice Seaman	Private	Private	<i>Ittō Suihei</i> (Seaman)	<i>Ittōbei</i> (Private First Class)
Seaman Second Class	Private First Class	Private First Class	<i>Jōtō Suihei</i> (Able Seaman)	<i>Jōtōbei</i> (Senior Private)
Seaman First Class	Corporal	Corporal	<i>Suihei Chō</i> (Leading Seaman)	<i>Heichō</i> (Lance Corporal)
Petty Officer Third Class	Sergeant	Sergeant	—	<i>Gochō</i> (Corporal)
—	Technician Third Grade	Staff Sergeant	—	—
Petty Officer Second Class	Staff Sergeant	Platoon Sergeant	<i>Nitō Heisō</i> (Petty Officer Second Class)	<i>Gunsō</i> (Sergeant)
—	Technician Second Grade	Technical Sergeant	—	—
Petty Officer First Class	Technical Sergeant	Gunnery Sergeant	<i>Ittō Heisō</i> (Petty Officer First Class)	<i>Socho</i> (Company Sergeant Major)
—	Technician First Grade	Master Tech. Sergeant	—	—
Chief Petty Officer	Master Sergeant First Sergeant	Master Gunnery Sergeant First Sergeant Sergeant Major	<i>Jōtō Heisō</i> (Chief Petty Officer)	<i>Juni-I</i> (Regimental Sergeant Major)

Weapons and Equipment



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo

Weapons and Equipment—U.S. Forces

Rifles

M1 Garand



By 1945, the M1 had replaced the M1903 Springfield as the standard rifle used by both the Army and Marine Corps. As a semiautomatic rifle, the Garand gave U.S. forces a superior rate of fire against Japanese forces, and U.S. infantrymen could fire up to 40–50 rounds per minute. Ammunition was placed in eight-round clips into an internal magazine. It was well built, easy to use, and devastatingly accurate.

Caliber:	.30
Length overall (without bayonet):	43.6 in.
Muzzle velocity:	2,800 ft./sec.
Weight:	9.5 lb.
Range:	500 yd.

M1A1 Carbine



The M1 Carbine provided those soldiers and Marines with specialized tasks, such as mortar crews, paratroopers, and machine-gun crews, with a light-weight and accurate defensive weapon. The weapon's small size, large magazine (15 rounds), and high rate of fire (30 rounds per minute [rpm]) was of particular value in the Pacific theater, where close-quarters combat was common. Nevertheless, its stopping power was far less substantial than the M1 Garand.

Caliber:	.30
Length overall (without bayonet):	35.6 in.
Muzzle velocity:	1,990 ft./sec.
Weight:	5.2 lb.
Range:	300 yd.

Browning Automatic Rifle



A mainstay of Marine Corps arsenals since the Banana Wars, the Browning automatic rifle, or BAR, was a standard armament of small-unit fireteams. By the Battle of Okinawa, Marine and Army infantry squads were usually equipped with two to three BARs each. The weapon was difficult to use and provided less firepower than a standard squad light machine gun. It could be fired prone, using a bipod, or standing as a shoulder-fired or waist-fired automatic rifle.

Caliber:	.30
Length overall (without bayonet):	43.7 in.
Muzzle velocity:	2,282 ft./sec.
Weight:	19.8 lb.
Range:	1,500 yd.

Machine Guns

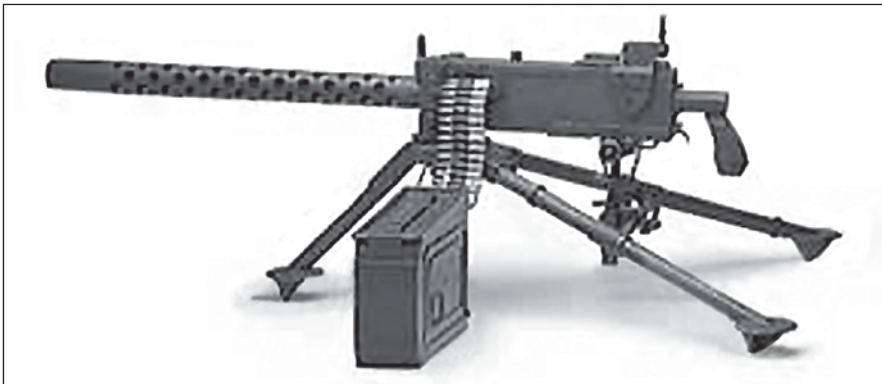
M1928A1/M1A1 Thompson submachine gun



A popular weapon due to its substantial stopping power, the Thompson was a particularly effective infantry weapon for close-quarters jungle combat. Several different models were used, ranging from the complex M1928A1 to the simpler M1 and M1A1.

Caliber:	.45
Length overall (without bayonet):	33.5 in.
Muzzle velocity:	935 ft./sec.
Weight:	10.6 lb.
Range:	160 ft.

Browning M1919A4 air-cooled .30-caliber medium machine gun



The air-cooled Browning .30-cal was a standard squad, company, and vehicle mounted machine gun. Weighing only 31 pounds, it was a

versatile and well-built weapon that could fire at a rate of 400–500 rounds per minute. It was utilized both with infantry units and on tanks, aircraft, and other vehicles.

Caliber:	.30
Length overall (without bayonet):	37.94 in.
Muzzle velocity:	2,800 ft./sec.
Weight:	31 lb.
Range:	1,500 yd.

Browning HB M2 .50-caliber heavy machine gun



A mainstay of American arsenals since its introduction, the .50-cal M2 Browning was a powerful, versatile, and highly effective heavy machine gun. It was a common armament on U.S. armored vehicles, including tanks and amtracks. Most fighter planes used in the Battle of Okinawa were equipped with six to eight .50-cal machine guns.

Caliber:	.50
Length overall (without bayonet):	65.1 in.
Muzzle velocity:	2,910 ft./sec.
Weight:	83.78 lb.
Range:	2,000 yd.

Flamethrowers

M1/M1A1/M2-2 flamethrowers



Flamethrowers were highly effective against bunkers and other fortifications. They used a variety of fuel, ranging from petrol, petrol with napalm powder, naval fuel oil and diesel, and bunker fuel oil. The fuel was ignited by compressed hydrogen or nitrogen.

Range: M1: 15–20 yd.

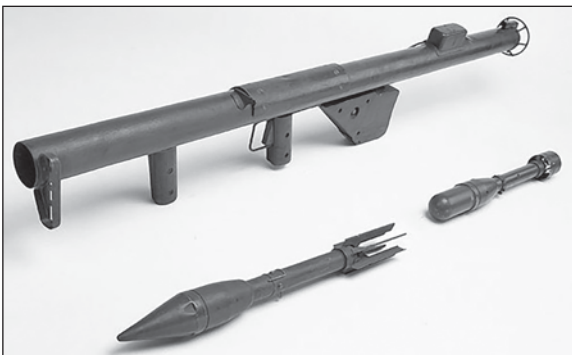
M2: 50 yd.

M2-2: 60 yd.

Duration of fire: 6–9 sec.

Handheld Antitank Weapons

M1/M9/M9A1 Bazooka



Easy to use, versatile, and highly effective, the Bazooka was a recoil-less antitank rocket launcher that could penetrate about 4.7 inches of armor. They were also useful against enemy pillboxes.

Length	M1: 54 in. M9/M9A1: 61 in.
Caliber:	2.36 in.
Warhead:	M1: M6-shaped charge M9/M9A1: M6A3/C-shaped charge
Range:	250–300 yd.

Artillery

M1A1 75mm Pack Howitzer



Pack Howitzers were highly mobile field pieces that could be broken down into six separate loads for animal transport or towed by a truck. Its lightweight (just under a ton) design made it an ideal piece for the artillery units of Marine battalion landing teams.

Caliber:	75mm
Weight:	1,439 lb.
Traverse:	6 degrees
Elevation:	+5 degrees to +45 degrees
Muzzle velocity:	1,250 ft./sec.
Range:	9,600 yd.
Ammunition:	High explosive, high explosive antitank, smoke, chemical

M2A1 105mm Howitzer



By 1945, most light artillery units utilized M2A1 105mm howitzers alongside the smaller 75mm pack howitzers. Weighing about two tons, the heavier pieces could still be towed by a one-ton truck. It had a maximum range of about 12,330 yards and a rate of fire of two to four rounds per minute.

Caliber:	105mm
Weight:	4,980 lb.
Traverse:	46 degrees
Elevation:	-5 degrees to +66 degrees
Muzzle velocity:	1,550 ft./sec.
Range:	7 mi.
Ammunition:	High explosive, high explosive antitank, smoke, chemical

M1/M1A1 155mm Howitzer



Serviced by a crew of 11, the 155mm howitzer had an effective range of about nine miles and could fire about one to three rounds a minute. Weighing in at 5.67 tons, it was moved by a D-18 dozer/tractor.

Caliber:	155mm
Weight:	12,800 lb.
Traverse:	25 degrees
Elevation:	-2 degrees to +63 degrees
Muzzle velocity:	1,847 ft./sec.
Range:	9 mi.

M1A1 155mm Gun "Long Tom"



Weighing in at 13.4 tons, the powerful Long Tom had an effective rate of fire of one to three rounds per minute and could hit targets at more than 14 miles. It was serviced by a crew of 11 and was transported by a D-18 dozer/tractor.

Caliber:	155mm
Weight:	30,600 lb.
Traverse:	60 degrees
Elevation:	-2 degrees to +65 degrees
Muzzle velocity:	2,799 ft./sec.
Range:	14.7 mi.
Ammunition:	Armor-piercing, high explosive, smoke, chemical

M1 81mm mortar



The standard battalion mortar, the 81mm M1, weighed 136 pounds and had a maximum effective range of more than 3,000 yards. Muzzle-loaded, drop fired rounds included 6.87 pounds of light high explosives, 10.62 pounds of heavy explosive, and white phosphorus and illumination rounds.

Caliber:	81mm
Rate of fire:	18 rpm
Muzzle velocity:	700 ft./sec.
Range:	3,290 yd.

M2 60mm mortar



The standard light mortar used by American infantry units, the M2 60mm was a muzzle-loaded, drop fired piece that could launch a three-pound explosive round or an illumination round. Its rate of fire was about 18 rounds per minute.

Caliber:	61mm
Rate of fire:	18 rpm
Muzzle velocity:	518 ft./sec.
Range:	2,000 yd.

Armor

M4 Sherman Medium Tank



The principal Allied tank of World War II, the M4 Sherman, was often outclassed by better armed and armored German tanks in the European theater. In the Pacific, however, the Sherman was more than a match for Japanese armored vehicles and provided essential support to Marines and soldiers throughout the Okinawa campaign.

Weight:	33.4 tons
Length:	19 ft., 2 in.
Width:	8 ft., 7 in.
Height:	9 ft.
Crew:	5 (commander, gunner, loader, driver, codriver)
Armor:	76mm
Armament:	75mm gun, .50-cal MG (machine gun), two .30-cal MGs
Speed:	25–30 mph
Range:	120 mi.

LVT-4 (Landing Vehicle Tracked 4)



Better known as amtracks, LVTs gave U.S. assault forces a significant and powerful sea-to-shore capability. They were particularly useful in the Pacific, where islands were often ringed by rugged reefs on which the standard vehicle/personnel landing craft would run aground. Once ashore they could serve as armored transports.

Weight:	16.5 tons
Length:	26 ft., 1in.
Width:	10 ft., 8 in.
Height:	8 ft., 1 in.
Crew:	2-7
Aarmor:	6-13mm
Armament:	Two .50-cal MGs
Speed:	20 mph on land, 7.5 mph in water
Range:	150 mi. on land, 75 mi. in water

LVT(A)-4 (Landing Vehicle Tracked [Armored] 4)



A heavier armed and armored version of the amtrack, these so-called “amtanks” were designed to provide better fire support for U.S. assault forces at the beach and were armed with a 75mm howitzer. These armored amtracks were also useful during inland fighting, where they could perform the functions of a tank.

Weight:	19.95 tons
Length:	26 ft.
Width:	10 ft.
Height:	10 ft.
Crew:	6 (commander, gunner, loader, driver, assistant driver, antiaircraft machine gunner)
Armor:	6–38mm
Armament:	One 77mm M2/M3 howitzer, three .30-cal Browning MGs
Speed:	24 mph on land, 6.8 mph in water
Range:	124 mi. on land, 74.5 mi. in water

Aircraft

Vought F4U Corsair Fighter-Bomber



Coupling superior speed and maneuverability with the ability to carry a substantial ordnance load of rockets and bombs, the Corsair was a model close air support airframe. Its dynamic performance capabilities also made it an effective interceptor against Japanese kamikaze attacks. By 1945, it was the backbone of the Marine Corps’ aviation arm.

User:	USN/USMC
Crew:	1
Speed:	446 mph
Service ceiling:	36,900 ft.
Range:	1,005 mi.
Armament:	Six .5-inch MGs, eight 5-inch rockets, or two 1,000-pound bombs

Republic P-47 Thunderbolt Fighter-Bomber



Nicknamed “The Jug” because of the shape of its fuselage and large size, the Thunderbolt was the heaviest single-engine fighter in U.S. service. Able to take substantial punishment and carry a large ordinance load of bombs and rockets, the plane was an ideal ground support fighter plane. Like the Corsair, it was an effective fighter as well.

User:	USAAF
Crew:	1
Speed:	433 mph
Service ceiling:	43,000 ft.
Range:	800 mi.
Armament:	8 .5-inch MGs, 10 5-inch rockets, or 2,500 lb. of bombs

Northrop P-61 Black Widow Night Interceptor



Designed as a radar-equipped night fighter, the Black Widow was utilized primarily as a ground attack plane in the Pacific theater. Its long wings, powerful engines, and center bomb rack allowed it to carry an arsenal of bombs and rockets.

User:	USAAF
Crew:	2-3
Speed:	366 mph
Service ceiling:	33,100 ft.
Range:	610 mi.
Armament:	Four 20mm cannons, four .5-inch MGs, six 5-inch rockets, or four 1,600-pound bombs

Grumman TBF/TBM Avenger Torpedo Bomber



Built to replace the antiquated TBD Devastator as the Navy and Marine Corps' principal torpedo bomber, the Avenger bore the stout and craggy design features associated with the Grumman "Iron Works." It

was a capable attack plane able to carry both antishipping torpedoes and bombs.

User:	USN/USMC
Crew:	3
Speed:	267 mph
Service ceiling:	30,100 ft.
Range:	1,130 mi.
Armament:	Three .5-in MGs, one .3-inch MG, eight 3.5-inch or 5-inch rockets, or one Mark 13 torpedo or 2,000 lb. of bombs.

Curtiss SB2C Helldiver



Although the Helldiver had largely replaced the venerable SBD Dauntless as the Navy's primary dive-bomber by 1945, it never quite eclipsed the latter airframe in the affections of Navy pilots, who preferred the SBD's more forgiving performing characteristics. Nevertheless, carrier-based Helldivers could deliver a substantial bomb load against Japanese ground targets throughout Okinawa.

User:	USN
Crew:	2
Speed:	295 mph
Service ceiling:	29,100 ft.
Range:	1,165 mi.
Armament:	Two 20mm cannons, two .3-inch MGs, 2,000 lb. of bombs

Grumman F6F Hellcat Fighter



Easier to fly aboard carriers than the Corsair, the Hellcat served as the Navy's premier carrier fighter during the latter years of World War II. A match for the Japanese Zero, Hellcats were largely responsible for the destruction of the Japanese naval air arm during the battle of the Philippine Sea. It could also carry bombs and rockets for ground attack. A small number of Marine squadrons flew the night fighter variant of the rugged airframe.

User:	USN/USMC
Crew:	1
Speed:	330 mph
Service ceiling:	37,300 ft.
Range:	1,530 mi.
Armament:	Six .5-inch MGs, two 1,000-pound bombs, or six 5-inch rockets

North American B-25 Mitchell Medium Bomber



Renowned as the plane that carried out the first American bombing raid against the Japanese home islands, the Mitchell was a versatile medium bomber able to deliver substantial ordnance against enemy targets.

User:	USAAF
Crew:	6
Speed:	272 mph
Service ceiling:	24,200 ft.
Range:	1,350 mi.
Armament:	12–18 .5-inch MGs, 3,000 lb. of bombs

Consolidated B-24 Liberator Heavy Bomber



Alongside the B-17, the Liberator was one of the Army Air Force's standard heavy bombers upon America's entry into the war. Its longer range made it a more suitable airframe for the Pacific theater, and the plane served as both a bomber and cargo plane.

User:	USAAF
Crew:	11
Speed:	290 mph
Service ceiling:	28,000 ft.
Range:	2,100 mi.
Armament:	10 .5-inch MGs, 5,000 lb. of bombs (normal), 12,800 lb. of bombs (maximum)

Weapons and Equipment—Imperial Japan



Image courtesy of Jody Harmon of Harmon Maneuver Art



Official Imperial Japanese Army photo

The following Japanese weapons, ranging from small arms to tanks, are representative of the most common types encountered by Marines and soldiers during the Battle of Okinawa.

Pistol

Model 14 (1925) 8mm Pistol



This was a semiautomatic, recoil-operated, magazine-fed hand weapon. A development of the Nambu 8mm pistol, its front sight is a blade-type sight and the rear sight is a nonadjustable open V notch. The safety lever is moved to the forward position for fire and rearward for safe. An unusually large trigger guard permits firing with a gloved hand.

Caliber:	8mm (.315 in)
Capacity of magazine:	8 rounds
Weight (empty):	2 lb.
Muzzle velocity:	950 ft./sec.

For ammunition, rimless ball cartridges were provided and were interchangeable in the Nambu and the model 94 pistols.

Rifle

Model 99 (1939) 7.7mm Rifle



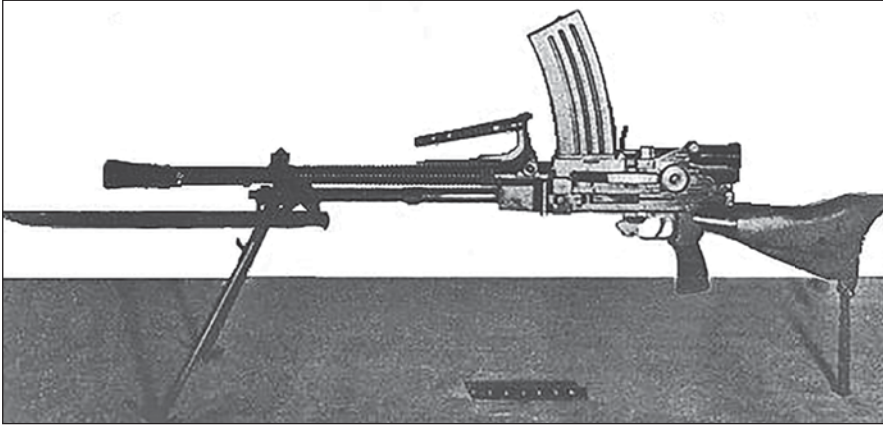
The Japanese replaced their 6.5mm weapons with this shorter, heavier caliber weapon, an improved version of model 38 (1905) Arisaka rifle. The rifle has a blade front sight and a leaf rear sight graduated from 500 to 1,500 meters. Modifications, other than the larger caliber which also help to identify this piece, are as follows: monopod under forend; anti-aircraft sight arms attached to rear sight leaf; magazine floor plate hinged to forward part of trigger guard; and sling swivels attached to side instead of under part of rifle.

Caliber:	7.7mm (0.303 in.)
Length overall (without bayonet):	44 in.
Muzzle velocity:	2,300 ft./sec.
Weight:	8.8 lbs.

For ammunition the weapon used five-round clips, three clips to a package. It fired a rimless type, supplied in ball, tracer, and armor-piercing varieties. This ammunition can be used in the 7.7mm model 92 (1932) machine gun, but the model 92 ammunition is semirimmed and cannot be used in the rifle.

Machine Guns

Model 99 (1939) 7.7mm Light Machine Gun



This was a gas-operated, magazine-fed, air-cooled, light machine gun. Its appearance is almost identical to model 96 with two exceptions, that it has an adjustable rear monopod and a barrel-locking nut instead of a barrel catch. It can further be identified by the markings on the top of the receiver meaning "99 Model." It has a blade front sight and a rear peep sight controlled by a click drum graduated from 200 to 1,500 meters, as well as a windage adjustment. A telescopic sight 10-degree field of view and 2.5 magnification were also provided. The safety lever on the right side of the trigger housing is set at horizontal to fire and vertical for safe.

Caliber:	7.7mm (0.303 in.)
Length overall:	42 in.
Weight (without magazine or bayonet):	20 lb.
Magazine capacity:	30 rounds
Muzzle velocity:	2,300 ft./sec.
Cyclic rate of fire:	800 rounds per minute

For ammunition the weapon used 7.7mm rimless ammunition only. This ammunition was used in the Model 92 heavy machine gun, but the semirimmed ammunition for model 92 could not be used in this gun.

Model 92 (1932) 7.7mm Heavy Machine Gun



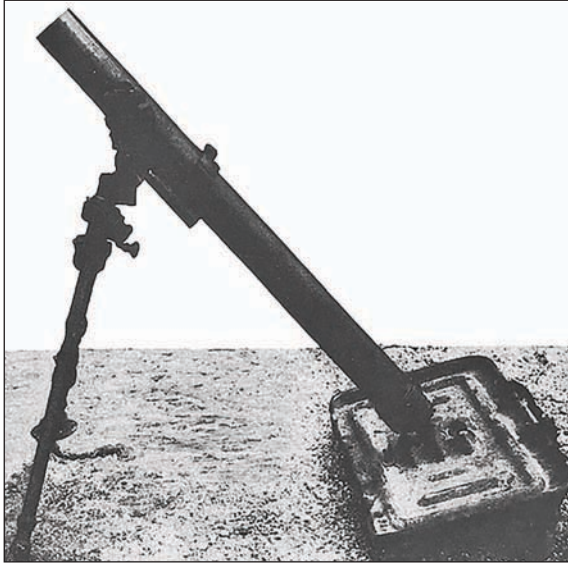
This was the standard Japanese heavy machine gun. It is a gas-operated, strip-fed, full automatic, air-cooled, modified Hotchkiss-type weapon. Its forerunner, which was still frequently encountered, was the Model 3 (1914), which fired 6.5mm ammunition. The standard sights consist of a blade front sight and a rear peep sight mounted on a post adjustable for windage and range (300–2,700 meters). Special anti-aircraft front and rear sights are provided, and there are three variations of optical rear sights, which are often used. The weapon is set on safety by turning the trigger thumb piece.

Caliber:	7.7mm (0.303 in.)
Weight (including tripod):	122 lb.
Strip capacity:	30-round clips
Cyclic rate of fire:	450 rpm
Muzzle velocity:	2,400 ft./sec.

For ammunition this gun used 7.7mm semirimmed ammunition (ball, tracer, armor piercing, and incendiary). It also used the 7.7 rimless ammunition if loaded on strips.

Mortar

Model 97 (1937) 81mm Mortar



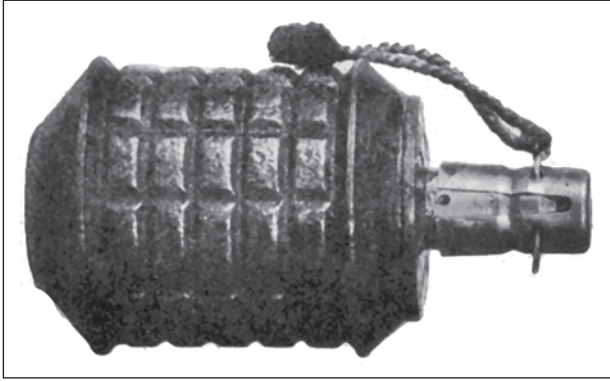
This weapon was very similar to the U.S. 81mm mortar M1. It is a smooth-bore, muzzle-loading, high-angle fire weapon, which breaks down into three sections for transport. The mortar is provided with a collimator sight, which is heavier and more complex than the U.S. M1 sight.

Caliber:	81mm (3.19 in.)
Maximum range (light shell):	3,100 yd. (approximately)
Length of barrel:	49.5 in.
Total weight:	145 lb.
Weight of shell:	6.93 lb. (1 lb. of TNT)

For ammunition, this weapon fired high explosive shells which are interchangeable with the U.S. M43 81mm light shell. Heavier shells have been reported, but no specimens have been recovered. The fuses can be adjusted to give instantaneous or delayed action detonations.

Grenade

Model 97 (1937) Hand Grenade



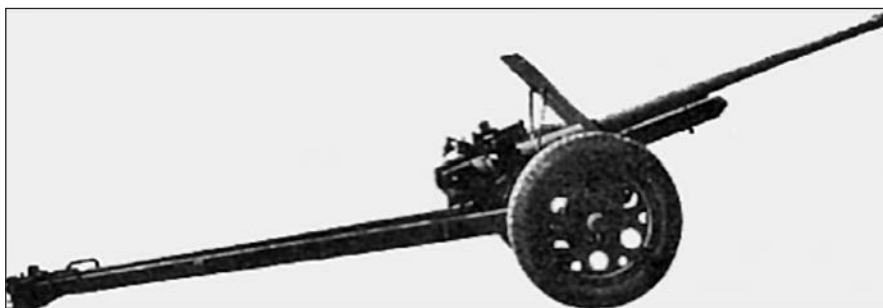
The model 97 (1937) fragmentation hand grenade was carried by all frontline troops and is almost identical with Model 91, except that it has no provision for a base propellant attachment and has a shorter fuse delay time. It cannot be fired from a grenade discharger.

Length overall:	3.75 in.
Diameter:	1.97 in.
Weight:	1 lb. (approximately)
Fuse delay:	4-5 sec. (approximately)

To operate, arm with safety pin in position, screw firing pin down into firing pin holder as far as it will go. To throw, hold the grenade with the fuse pointing down. Remove safety pin, being sure that safety cover does not fall off. Strike head of fuse against solid object such as helmet, keeping hand clear of gas vent hole. Throw immediately as timing for the fuse is sometimes erratic.

Antiarmor

Model 1 (1941) 47mm Gun



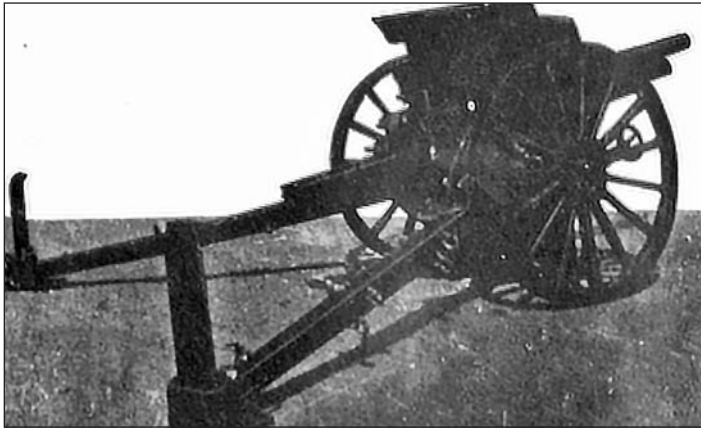
This is an antitank weapon of modern design. The wheels are independently sprung, and a lock is provided on each wheel for locking the springs out of action. It has a semiautomatic, horizontal, sliding-wedge breech mechanism. The low silhouette, wide tread, and long split trails give this gun excellent stability. Preliminary tests indicate a muzzle velocity of 2,700 feet per second. The steel disc wheels are fitted with sponge rubber filled tires.

Caliber:	47mm (1.85 in.)
Weight:	1,600 lb.
Traverse:	60 degrees
Elevation:	+19 degrees
Depression:	-11 degrees
Muzzle velocity	2,700 ft./sec.

For ammunition, armor-piercing high explosive and standard high explosive shells have been recovered.

Artillery

Model 95 (1935) 75mm Gun

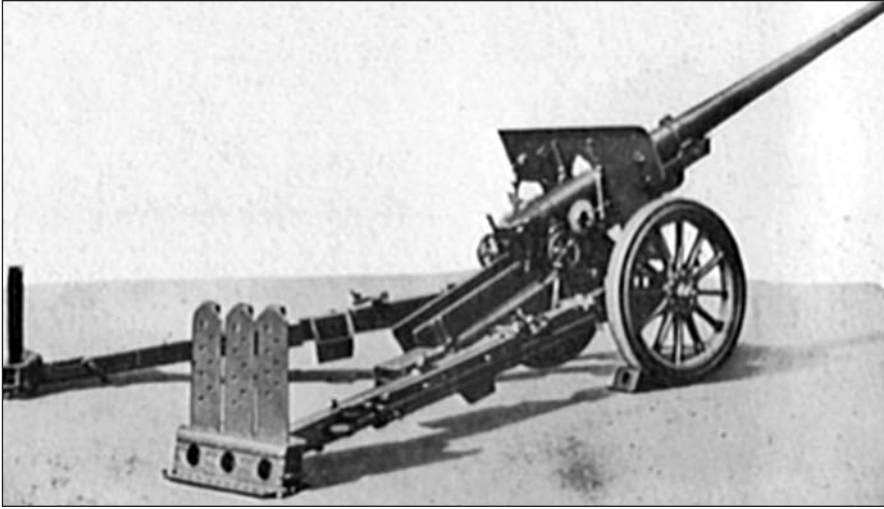


The 75mm Model 95 gun was a horse-drawn piece with split trails, hydropneumatic recoil mechanism, and horizontal, sliding-wedge type breechblock. A comparison with the Model 90, designed five years earlier, reveals that this later weapon had only the apparent advantage of reduced weight. On the other hand, it suffered from loss of range and lower muzzle velocity. It is seemingly more rugged in construction than the Model 94 mountain gun and yet gave a lower performance than the Model 90 field gun. The Model 95 was not designed to replace either of these guns but was to be used by some unit other than the field or pack artillery.

Caliber:	75mm (2.95 in.)
Maximum range:	11,000 m. (12,000 yd.), also reported as 9,000 m. (9,850 yd.)
Traverse (total):	50 degrees
Maximum elevation:	+43 degrees
Maximum depression:	-8 degrees
Muzzle velocity:	500 m./sec. (1,640 ft./sec.)
Weight:	2,438 lb.
Sight:	Panoramic
Maximum rate of fire:	10–12 rpm

For ammunition, the model used high explosive, armor piercing, shrapnel, smoke star, and chemical.

Model 92 (1932) 105mm Gun



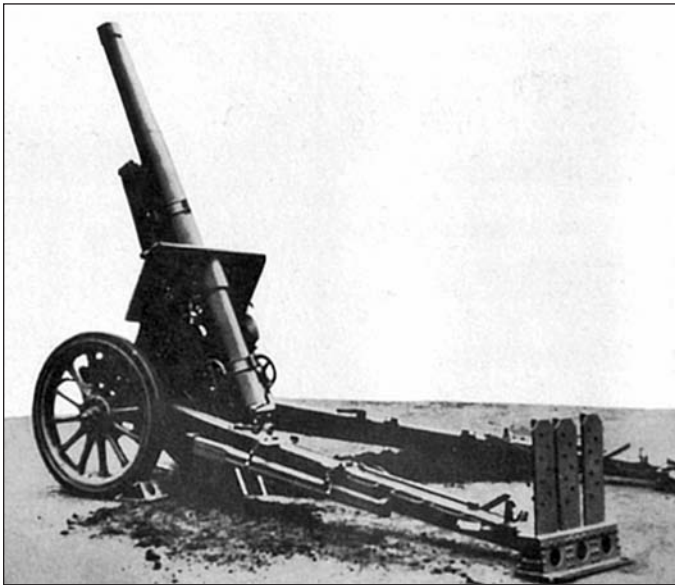
This weapon superseded the Model 14 (1925) 105mm gun. Readily recognized by its long slender barrel and trail, it was designed particularly for long-range fire. Other distinctive features are the pronounced length of the sleigh and the three-step interrupted thread breechblock. The recoil system is hydropneumatic. Mounted on heavily constructed wooden wheels with solid rubber tires, the weapon is normally tractor drawn but may be drawn by a 5-ton truck.

Caliber:	105mm (4.13 in.)
Maximum range:	18,700 m. (20,100 yd.), also reported as 16,400 yd.
Traverse (total):	30 degrees
Maximum elevation:	+48 degrees
Maximum depression:	-10 degrees
Weight in firing position:	6,600 lb.
Muzzle velocity:	2,500 ft./sec.
Sight:	Panoramic
Tube length:	5 ft., 6 in.

Maximum rate of fire:	6-8 rpm
Weight of HE projectile:	33 lb.

Ammunition is semifixed. The following types of projectiles have been recovered: high explosive (long pointed shell); high explosive; chemical; and armor piercing. Time fuses were provided for the smoke, incendiary, and chemical shells. The standard model 88-point detonating (instantaneous or delay) fuses were used with the high explosive and chemical shells.

Model 96 (1936) 150mm Howitzer



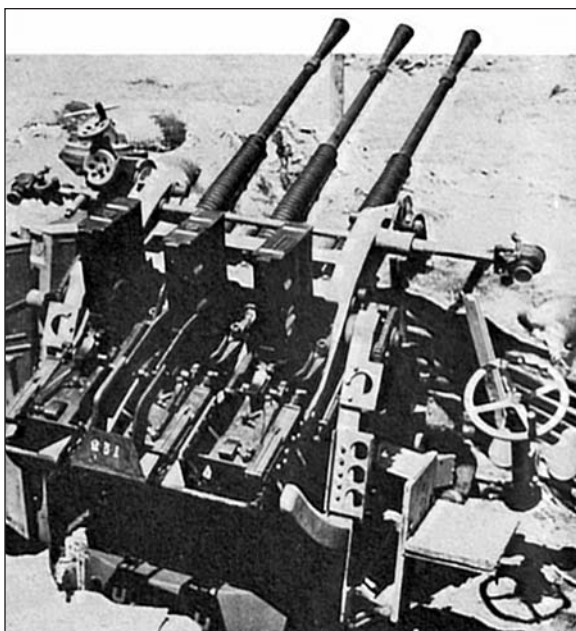
A well-designed and effective weapon, it was the most modern of its type known to be possessed by the Japanese. Mounted on sturdy, rubber-shod, wooden wheels, the weapon was normally tractor drawn. One of the outstanding characteristics was the extreme elevation of 75 degrees, used only when a deep loading pit was dug beneath the breech. Other features are a long split trail, interrupted thread breech-block, and a hydropneumatic recoil mechanism.

Caliber:	150mm (5.9 in.)
Maximum range:	10,000 m. (11,000 yd.)

Traverse (total):	30 degrees
Maximum elevation:	+75 degrees
Maximum depression:	-7 degrees
Weight in firing position:	8,765 lb.
Sight:	Panoramic
Tube length:	11.57 ft.
Rate of fire:	6–8 rpm
Weight of HE projectile:	80 lb.

For ammunition, the Model 96 used semifixed high explosive, armor piercing, shrapnel, smoke, and incendiary tracer.

Model 96 (1936) Type 2, 25mm Antiaircraft-Antitank Automatic Cannon



This was a gas-operated, air-cooled, magazine-fed, full automatic or semiautomatic machine cannon. It was used in dual- and triple-fixed mounts, emplaced customarily around airstrips for antiaircraft defense. However, it was capable of a 10-degree depression, which makes it effective for direct fire against ground targets. Traverse and elevation are controlled by hand wheels.

Caliber:	25mm (.984 in.)
Estimated vertical range:	14,000 ft.
Traverse:	360 degrees
Maximum elevation:	+80 degrees
Maximum depression:	-10 degrees
Magazine capacity:	15 rounds
Weight (single gun without mount):	246 lb.
Weight (three guns triple mount):	5,330 lb.
Sight:	Optical linked to analog computer
Cyclic rate of fire (per barrel):	300 rpm
Muzzle velocity:	2,978 ft./sec.

For ammunition, the weapon was furnished with high explosive tracer, high explosive, and armor-piercing tracer ammunition.

Armor

Medium Tank Model 97 (1937)



This tank was the most common Japanese armored vehicle employed against U.S. forces during the Battle of Okinawa. The Type 97 (1937) medium tank first appeared in the Philippines in 1942 and was used in Burma and throughout the Pacific theater. A number of Type 97 mediums (improved) constituted a sizable part of the Japanese armored division, which operated on Luzon in the Philippines in Jan-

uary and February 1945. Although this tank is considered a superior fighting vehicle compared to prewar U.S. and Allied tanks, Japanese armor on Okinawa, concentrated in the *27th Armor Regiment*, never mounted an attack with more than 16 tanks at any one time and rarely employed the principle of mass. Instead of making use of the mobility of its tanks, the Japanese frequently chose instead to employ them from fixed defenses and emplacements and to make piecemeal counterattacks. As a result, the Japanese armored effort resulted in little more than delay. Compared with the U.S. M4 Sherman, the Type 97 was decidedly inferior but could still be used effectively against infantry lacking antitank weapons.

Weight:	15 tons
Length:	18 ft.
Width:	7 ft., 8 in.
Height:	7 ft., 8 in.
Clearance:	16 in.
Crew:	4
Armor:	8–25mm (0.32–0.98 in.)
Armament	
Main:	One 57mm Model 97 gun
Hull:	One 7.7mm Model 97 MG
Rear turret:	One 7.7mm Model 97 MG
Ammunition:	57mm 80 rounds HE (high explosive) or 40 rounds APHE (armor-piercing high explosive); MG 2,350 rounds ball or 1,350 rounds AP
Engine:	12-cylinder diesel
Horsepower:	150 hp at 2,000 rpm
Speed:	25 mph
Range:	100 mi.

Comparative Losses



Official U.S. Army photo



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo

U.S. Losses

Marine Corps

Unit	KIA/DOW	WIA	MIA	Total
III Amphibious Corps:	35	149	4	188
1st Marine Division	1,115	6,745	41	6,901*
6th Marine Division	1,622	6,689	15	7,326
Subtotals:	2,772	13,583	60	14,415

(*Includes 376 casualties suffered by 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, while attached to 1st MarDiv.)

Army

Unit	KIA/DOW	WIA	MIA	Total
XXIV Corps:	55	346	2	403
7th Infantry Division	1,122	4,943	3	6,068
27th Infantry Division	711	2,250	24	3,255
77th Infantry Division	1,018	3,968	40	5,026
96th Infantry Division	1,506	5,912	12	7,430
Subtotals:	4,412	17,419	81	22,182

Evacuation due to battle fatigue (Army and Marine Corps): 26,200

Total ground combat losses: 7,374 KIA/DOW 31,807 WIA 239 MIA
 Total: 39,420

Total including battle fatigue: 65,620

Replacements received: USMC: 11,147 Army: 12,277 Total: 23,424

Navy

Ships: 36 sunk, 368 damaged (Includes 43 so badly damaged they were later scrapped.)

Personnel losses:

4,907 KIA/MIA

4,824 WIA

Total: 9,731

Air (Army, Navy, and Marine Corps)

Aircraft lost in combat: 458

Lost due to other causes: 305

Total aircraft losses: 763

(Includes 41 Marine aircraft lost in combat and 166 USMC aircrew KIA from various causes.)

Total U.S. personnel losses: 75,351

Japanese Losses (estimated)

Land forces (including Imperial Japanese Army and Navy)

KIA/MIA: 66,000

Captured: 7,400 Japanese and 3,400 Okinawan militia and laborers (*Boeitai*)

Surrendered postwar: 8,950 (includes Japanese and *Boeitai*)

Total Japanese taken prisoner (excluding *Boeitai*): 10,755

Imperial Japanese Navy (excluding garrison on Okinawa)

16 warships sunk, including battleship *Yamato*

3,650 sailors and airmen KIA/MIA

Air forces

- 7,830 aircraft destroyed (including kamikaze)
- 4,155 lost in direct combat
- 2,655 lost in operations (during takeoff or landing, engine failure, etc.)
- 1,020 destroyed on the ground in Japan or Formosa
- 4,600 airmen KIA/MIA

Civil-Military Operations

The Battle of Okinawa was fought amidst a densely populated rural area that sustained tremendous damage to its civilian infrastructure, particularly in the south where most of the heavy fighting took place. Of a civilian population estimated at 355,000 prebattle (some 80,000 had been evacuated to the mainland prior to the battle), approximately 285,272 were registered afterward by U.S. Army and Marine Corps civil affairs units, which rose to 295,000 by 1 July. Between 42,000 and 50,000 men, women, and children are initially believed to have died during the battle due to causes ranging from naval gunfire to air bombardment as well as atrocities carried out by Japanese troops. The total number of civilian dead was revised upward to 122,000 after postwar study (this number undoubtedly included Okinawans pressed into service as laborers or militia). Thus, nearly a third of the island's civilian population perished during the fighting, and the destruction of centuries-old farms raised the specter of famine upon the survivors. To govern the occupied territory, a military government manned by both Navy and Army civil affairs forces was established charged with the responsibility of easing the suffering of the civilian population as well as getting it back to work and assisting in the cleanup and reestablishment of government functions such as public health and schools. American civil administration continued in Okinawa until 15 May 1972, when the island formally reverted to Japanese control.

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USMC and U.S. Navy Medal of Honor Awardees

On an individual basis, 24 servicemen received the Medal of Honor for actions performed during the Battle of Okinawa. Thirteen of these went to the Marines and their organic Navy corpsmen, nine to Army troops, and one to a Navy officer.

Within III Amphibious Corps, 11 Marines and 3 corpsmen received the award. Eleven of the 14 were posthumous awards. Most, if not all, deceased Medal of Honor recipients have had either U.S. Navy ships or Marine Corps installations in Okinawa named in their honor.

The Marine Corps and Navy Okinawa Medal of Honor awardees, and a brief synopsis of their award citations, include the following:

Corporal Richard E. Bush, USMC, 1st Battalion, 4th Marines. Severely wounded while leading the first squad to penetrate the Mount Yae-take inner defenses, he was evacuated to a nearby aid station. When an enemy grenade landed in the midst of the wounded men, he unhesitatingly pulled it to his body to protect his comrades from serious injury or death on 16 April 1944.

Hospital Apprentice First Class Robert E. Bush, USN, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines. He was administering plasma to a wounded officer on an exposed ridgeline when the enemy attacked. He fought off the charging enemy with his pistol and a carbine, killing six despite his own serious wounds. He calmly ignored his critical condition until his patient was evacuated on 2 May 1945.

*Major Henry A. Courtney Jr., USMC, 2d Battalion, 22d Marines. Gallantly leading by personal example, he inspired a small group of men from his unit to assault and capture the crest of Sugar Loaf Hill. He continued to lead attacks against the superior enemy defending forces until killed by a hostile mortar burst on 14–15 May 1945.

Corporal James. L. Day, USMC, 2d Battalion, 22d Marines. By his extraordinary heroism, repeated acts of valor, and quintessential

battlefield leadership, Corporal Day inspired the efforts of his outnumbered Marines to defeat a much larger enemy force in sustained combat operations against Japanese forces on Okinawa, Ryukyu Islands, on 14–17 May 1945.

*Corporal John P. Fardy, USMC, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines. When heavy enemy small-arms fire drove his squad to cover in a narrow drainage ditch and an enemy grenade fell among the men, he smothered the lethal explosion with his own body to protect his comrades' lives on 6 May 1945.

*Private First Class William A. Foster, USMC, 3d Battalion, 1st Marines. Dug in with another Marine on the point of a perimeter defense during a fierce close-in battle with the enemy, he threw himself on a grenade that landed out of reach in his foxhole to protect the life of his comrade on 2 May 1945.

Private First Class Harold Gonsalves, USMC, 4th Battalion, 15th Marines. After repeatedly braving terrific enemy bombardment to aid his forward observation team, he dived on an enemy grenade that landed in his midst, sacrificing his own chances of survival to protect his fellow Marines on 15 April 1945.

*Pharmacist's Mate Second Class William D. Halyburton Jr., USN, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines. When his assault unit suffered severe casualties, he unhesitatingly went to the aid of the wounded man closest to the enemy positions. He interposed his own body as a shield in the line of fire and continued his ministrations until he was killed on 19 May 1945.

*Private Dale M. Hansen, USMC, 2d Battalion, 1st Marines. Using a rocket launcher, a rifle, and grenades, he seized the initiative at a critical point in the battle action and in a one-man assault destroyed a pillbox, a mortar, and 12 of the enemy, materially aiding the accomplishment of his company's mission on 7 May 1945.

*Corporal Luis J. Hauge Jr., USMC, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines. Making a determined one-man assault on a pair of enemy machine-gun positions holding up his company's advance, he wiped out one with

grenades and, although painfully wounded, continued his attack and succeeded in destroying the second on 14 May 1945.

*Sergeant Elbert L. Kinser, USMC, 3d Battalion, 1st Marines. During an enemy counterattack when a grenade fell in the midst of his men, he threw himself on the deadly missile and absorbed the full force of the shattering explosion with his own body on 4 May 1945.

Hospital Apprentice First Class Fred F. Lester, USN, 1st Battalion, 22d Marines. He was hit while going to the aid of a wounded man. Although he was again wounded dragging his patient to safety, he directed the administration of proper medical treatment to several men, steadfastly refusing aid for his own wounds, which he realized were fatal on 8 June 1945.

*Private Robert M. McTureous Jr., USMC, 3d Battalion, 29th Marines. When machine-gun fire suddenly assailed stretcher bearers evacuating his unit's wounded, he made two one-man grenade assaults on the enemy gun positions. Although seriously wounded, he stoically crawled 200 yards to shelter before calling for aid on 7 June 1945.

*Private First Class Albert F. Schwab, USMC, 1st Battalion, 5th Marines. Attacking alone up a high ridge, he used his flamethrower to burn out an enemy machine gun that had pinned down his unit. When a second machine gun opened up, he attacked directly into its fire, silencing it as he fell fatally wounded on 7 May 1945.

(*Posthumous award)

The secretary the Navy also awarded Presidential Unit Citations to the 1st and 6th MarDivs, the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing, and Marine Observation Squadron 3 for "extraordinary heroism in action against enemy Japanese forces during the invasion of Okinawa." Marine Observation Squadron 6 also received the award as a specified attached unit to the 6th MarDiv.

Note Page



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo
Marines observe a TBM Avenger dropping supplies in early June 1945.



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo
A Marine fires bazooka rocket launcher at Japanese positions in Okinawa in June 1945.

Author's Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Mr. Charles D. Melson, the Historian of the Marine Corps, for his advice and Dr. Nick Schlosser of the U.S. Army Center of Military History for assisting in the construction of the U.S. order of battle charts and the War in the Pacific timeline for this publication, as well as the section on U.S. weapons. In addition, the mentorship of Colonel (US Army, Ret) French MacLean, a veteran staff ride small group leader, towards the development of this volume has been invaluable. Lastly, the author would like to thank the members of the USMC History Division, Editing and Design Branch, for all the work that went into making this publication a reality.

Back cover: the device reproduced on the back cover is the oldest military insignia in continuous use in the United States. It first appeared, as shown here, on Marine Corps buttons adopted in 1804. With the stars changed to five points, the device has continued on Marine Corps buttons to the present day.

