

The War in the Pacific 3

From Lae to Tokyo Bay

14

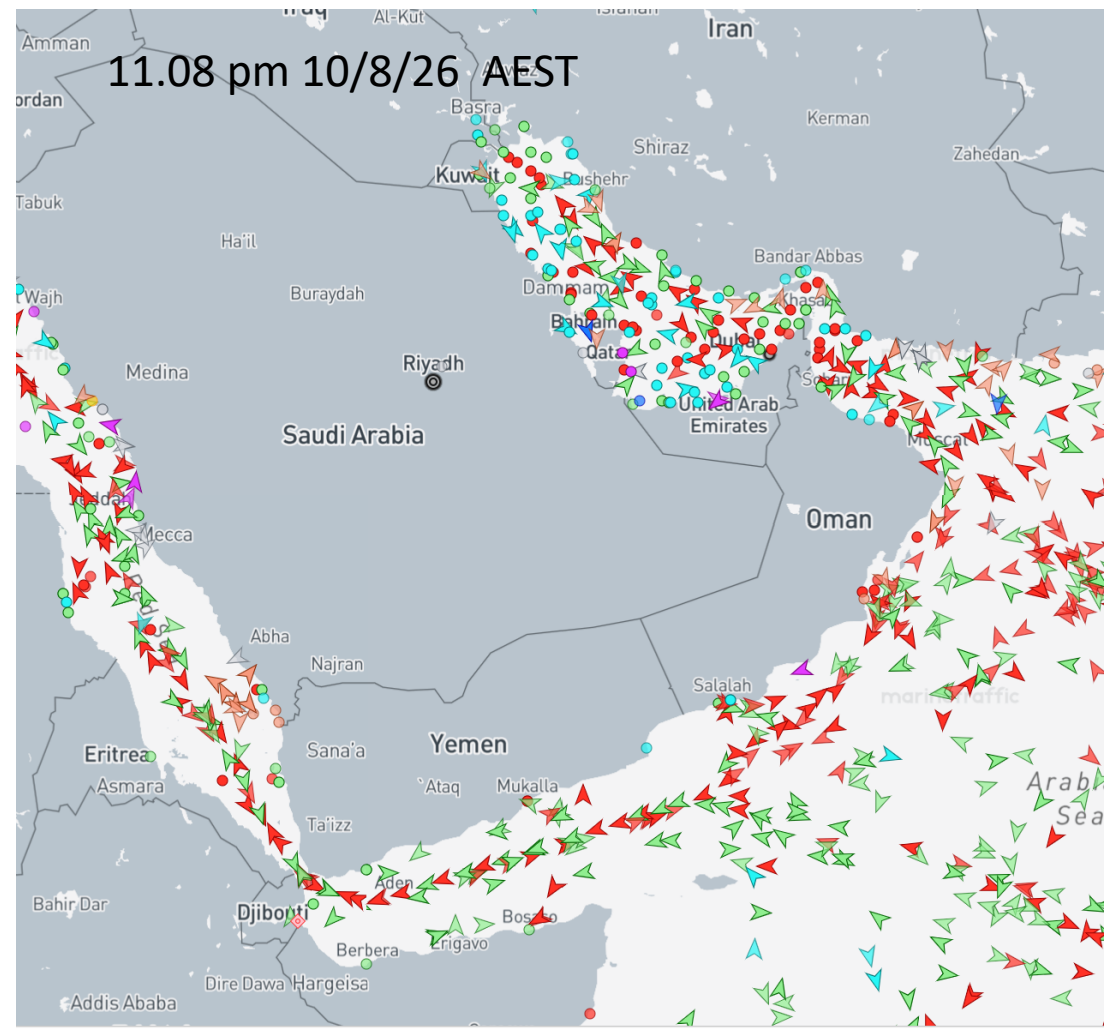
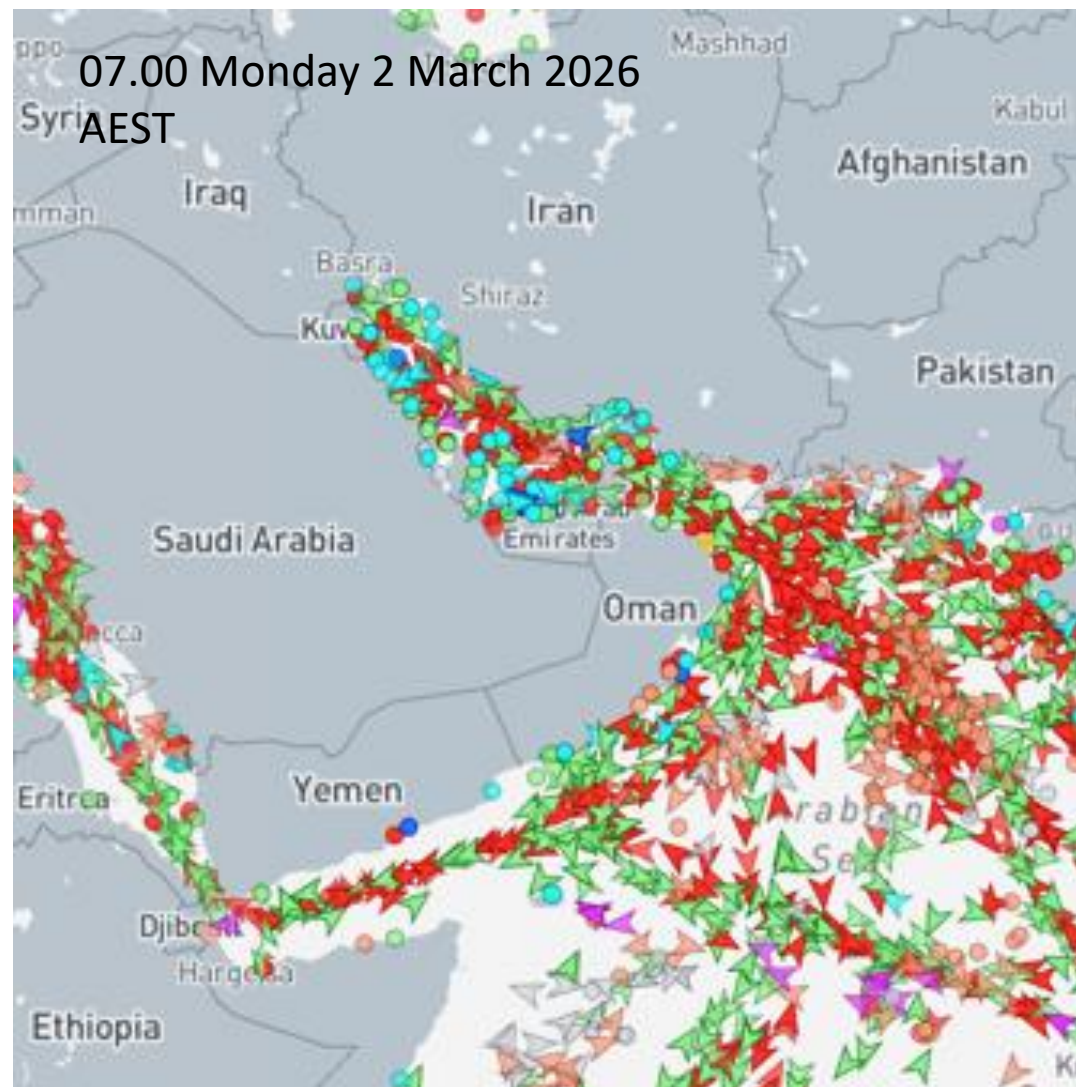
Blak, Saipan and The Philippine Sea

May and June 44





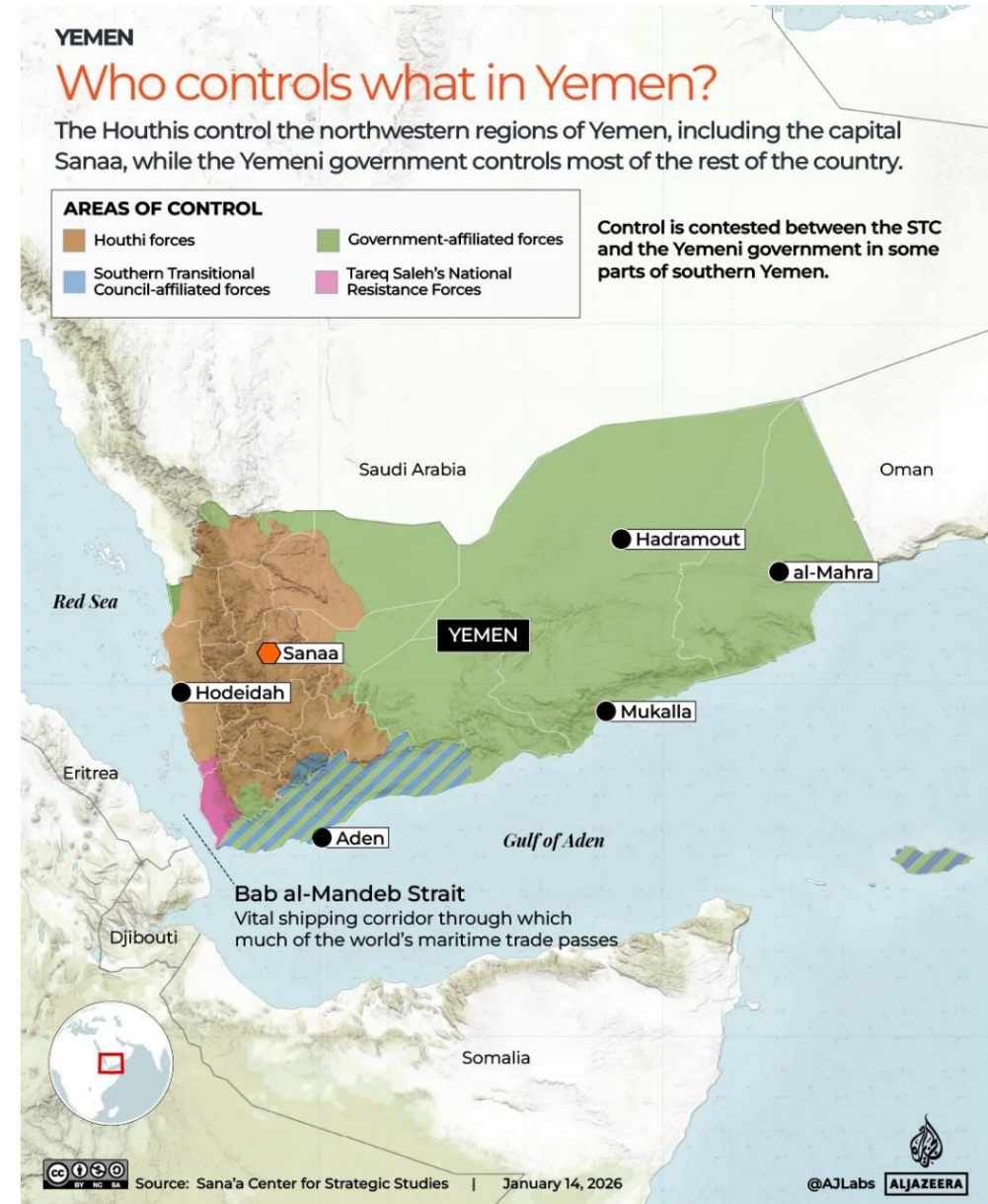
Jerry McBrien 2026



- Over the weekend, Iran issued new conditions stating that the Strait of Hormuz will remain under tight military control and will not fully reopen until the United States
 - ends its naval blockade,
 - lifts economic sanctions,
 - unfreezes assets, and
 - pays war reparations
- While Iranian officials noted that separate navigation and management talks with Oman were progressing positively, they insisted that fully unblocking the strait depends entirely on Washington meeting these broader political and economic conditions.
- “We are low-keying it,” Trump told the news website Axios in an interview on Sunday regarding the US approach to the war on Iran. This signals a complete change from his comments last week when he gave “duplicitous” Iran “one last chance” to make a deal or suffer catastrophic strikes.
- Now, Trump said, he wants to hit Iran economically instead.
- He said Iran is in “very bad shape” financially, citing high inflation and difficulty paying its own soldiers, and credited a US naval blockade in place since April with increasing that pressure.
- Al Jazeera

- Iran's original blockade of the straits of Hormuz was rendered less effective by
- Saudis ability to pump 5 million bpd to the red sea coast and
- China's drawing down its very significant reserves.
- The Houthis are attempting to close the southern exit from the red sea for Saudi oil.
- Fully loaded VLCCs can't get through the Suez Canal.
- China has less reserves than when Trump had his first brain fart about doing a better deal than Obama.

- Yemen's Houthi movement is actively escalating regional conflict by enforcing a maritime blockade in the Red Sea against Saudi-linked shipping, launching drone and missile strikes on Saudi oil infrastructure—including an Aramco refinery in Jazan—and engaging in direct clashes with Yemeni government forces.



Brent Crude Oil (USD/Bbl) 86.668 20.038 (+30.07%) 1Y

\$86 is a 32% increase from \$65



Heating Oil (USD/Gal) 4.1641 1.8731 (+81.76%) 1Y

\$4.16 is an 85% increase from \$2.25



- Back to History

US Conscription

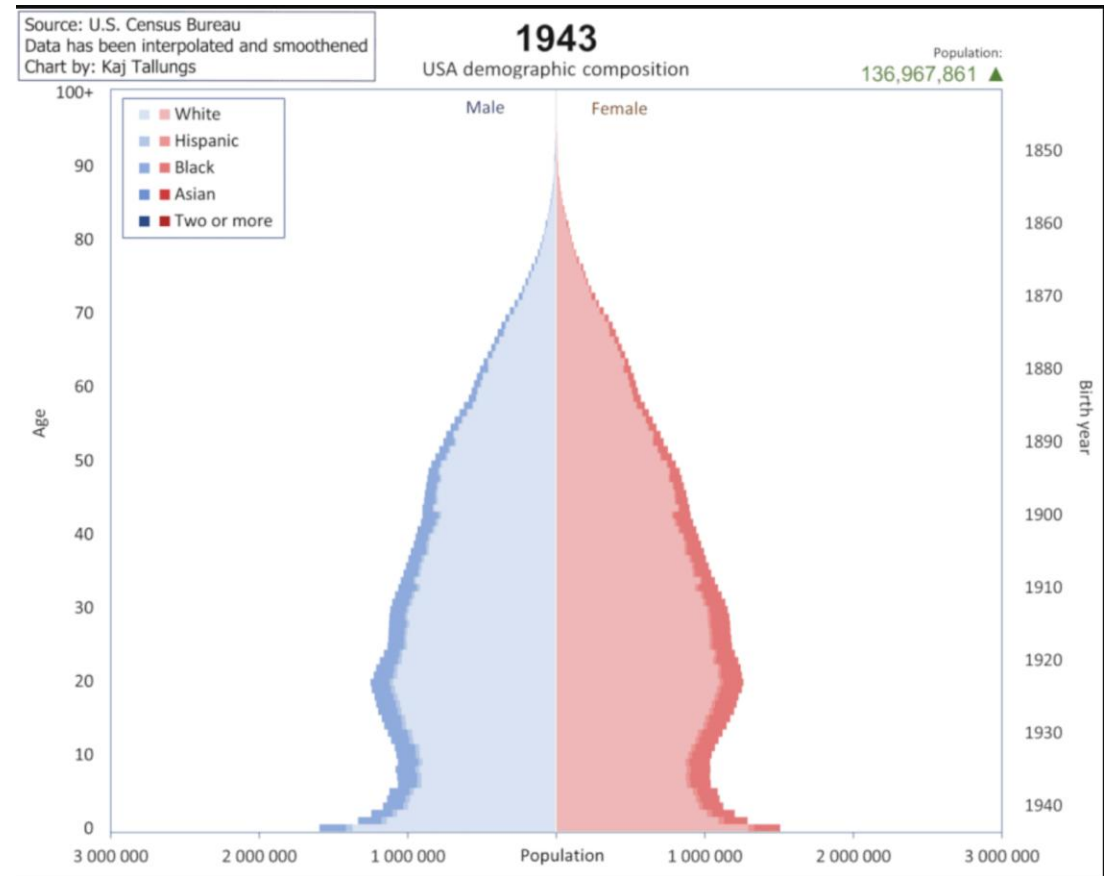
- United States conscription during World War II was established by the Selective Training and Service Act of 16 September 1940, three months after the surrender of France to the Germans, marking the first peacetime draft in U.S. history.
- It required men aged 21 to 35 to register and set a cap of 900,000 men to be in training at once except in time of war.
- Service was initially capped at 12 months.
- An amendment added 18 more months to this service period on August 18, 1941, two months after the Germans invaded the Soviet Union.
- After the attack on Pearl Harbor, service terms were extended for the duration of the war plus six months and the requirement for registration was extended to all men from 18 to 44 years of age.



President Franklin D. Roosevelt signs the Selective Training and Service Act.

US Conscription & Demographics

- The draft began with the first registration on October 16, 1940, and the first men entered military service on November 18.
- By the early summer of 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked the U.S. Congress to extend the term of duty for the draftees beyond twelve months to a total of thirty months, plus any additional time that he might deem necessary for national security.
- Some of the soldiers drafted in October 1940 talked about desertion once their original twelve-month obligation ended. Some painted the letters "O H I O" on the walls of their barracks an acronym for "Over the hill in October".
- On August 12, the United States House of Representatives approved the extension of the draft by a single vote.
- Over 50 million men registered and roughly 10 million were inducted into military service before inductions ended in 1946.



War Manpower Planning

- Civilian-run local boards reviewed individuals from those registered for availability, classification, and fitness.
- Many systems used numbers drawn from a central container or fishbowl to determine the order in which registered men were called up by local boards.
- By late 1942, the Selective Service System moved away from a national lottery to administrative selection by its more than 6,000 local boards.
- On December 5, 1942, presidential Executive Order 9279 closed voluntary enlistment for all men from the ages of 18 to 37 for the duration of the war, providing protection for the nation's home front manpower pool. The Navy and Marine Corps began procuring their personnel through the Selective Service System in early 1943.
- Paul McNutt, head of the War Manpower Commission, estimated that the changes would increase the ratio of men drafted from one out of nine to one out of five. The commission's goal was to have nine million men in the armed forces by the end of 1943.
- The US population in 1943 was estimated as 137 million.
- Forces at 9 million would be 6.5% of the population approx. 13% of the male population.
- By comparison Australian total male enlistment in WW2 was 910,000 or 12.64% of the estimated population of 7.2 million



Chairman Paul V. McNutt opens the first meeting of the War Manpower Commission, May 6, 1942.

US Navy and Marine Recruiting

- Before World War II, the US Navy and Marine Corps relied entirely on voluntary enlistments.
- The Draft. Established by the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, men were registered and called up for duty. While the Army received the vast majority of draftees, the draft also stimulated heavy voluntary enlistment.
- Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, thousands of patriotic volunteers flooded local recruiting stations daily.
- The Marine Corps Difference: The USMC remained an all-volunteer force for much of its frontline intake early on, leveraging its elite public image, though draftees were later allocated to it via the Selective Service as manpower needs peaked.
- Workforce shortages led to the creation of women's reserves (like the WAVES for the Navy and the MCWR for the Marines) to free up men for combat.
- Following the December 5, 1942 Executive Order 9279 both services had to recruit only through the Selective Service System.



1940 recruiting poster.

US Navy Personnel

- On 7 December 1941, the United States Navy had a total active-duty strength of 337,349 personnel, consisting of 35,760 officers and 301,589 enlisted members.
- 4,183,466 individuals (390,037 officers and 3,793,429 enlisted personnel) served in the U.S. Navy between December 7, 1941, and December 31, 1946.
- Its peak active strength reached approximately 3.38 million personnel in 1945.
- During World War II, the United States Navy suffered 62,614 deaths(of which 36,950 were due to enemy action) and 37,778 wounded, according to data from the Naval History and Heritage Command.
- Deaths were 1.50% of total enlistment.

Type	30 June 1939	7 December 1941	14 May 1945	Note
Battleships	15	17	23	(all types)
Fleet carrier	5	7	28	
Escort carrier	0	1	71	
Cruiser	36	37	72	(all types)
Destroyer	127	171	377	(all types)
Frigate	0	0	361	
Submarine	58	112	232	
Amphibious warfare	0	0	2,547	(including small craft)
Total active	394	790	6,768	

US Navy Size of the Fleet

I believe the line fleet carriers should read Fast Carriers. I believe it includes both CV and CVL.

Australian Military Casualties

Australian Enlistments, Embarkations and Deaths	WW1	World War 2				
	AIF and AFC	Army	Aircrew	Groundstaff	Total RAAF	Total Land & Air
Population	4,900,000	7,065,000	7,065,000	7,065,000	7,065,000	7,065,000
Enlisted	416,809	726,543	28,763	188,137	216,900	943,443
Females		35,800	0	27,200	27,200	63,000
Males	416,809	690,743	28,763	160,937	189,700	880,443
Enlisted as % of population	9%	10%	0%	3%	3%	13%
Male Enlisted as % of Population	9%	10%	0%	2%	3%	12%
Embarkations (inc Darwin) and all other aircrew	331,781	396,661	28,763	37,515	66,278	462,939
Embarkations, Darwin & All Aircrew as % of enlisted males	80%	57%	100%	23%	35%	53%
Outcomes						
Killed in action missing believed dead and died of wounds	53,596	10,694	6,189	200	6,389	17,083
Dead while prisoner of war	397	8,019	152		152	8,171
Non battle casualty deaths accidental	(6,291	3,216	3,031	648	3,679	6,895
Non battle casualty deaths illness	(	2,822	68	274	342	3,164
Total Deaths	60,284	24,751	9,440	1,122	10,562	35,313
Deaths as % of Male Enlistments	14%	4%	33%	1%	6%	4%
Deaths as % of Embarkations	18%	6%	33%	3%	16%	8%
Battle and PoW deaths as a % of Embarkations	16%	5%	22%	1%	10%	5%

- The ratio of Dead to Wounded in the USN seemed very high so I went looking for the figures in other navies which are shown opposite.

Naval Casualties	Enrolled	Peak strength	Dead	Wounded	Casualties	D to T	D to W
USN	4,183,466	3,793,429	62,614	37,778	100,392	1.50	165.74
RN	1,500,000	865,000	51,578	14,663	66,241	3.44	351.76
RAN	53,100	39,650	2,170	579	2,749	4.09	374.78
Total Deaths & Wounded?							
Wrens Enemy action		75,000	102	22	124	0.14	463.64
Wrens total		75,000	303	?	?	?	?

RAN	
Preexisting 1939 approx	5,000
Enlisted in Australia	11,039
Enlisted/engaged outside Aus	37,061

RAN does not include unknown number of accidental injuries
 WRENS non enemy action fatalities are attributed to accidents, illness, and hazardous transport duties.

The sinking of SS Aguila by a German U-boat in August 1941 resulted in the loss of 21 Wrens heading to Gibraltar.

During a German air raid near the Royal Naval Air Station HMS Daedalus a stray anti-aircraft shell struck the Mansfield Hostel, where 24 members of the Wrens were having dinner, killing 10.

1 May 1944 - Australia

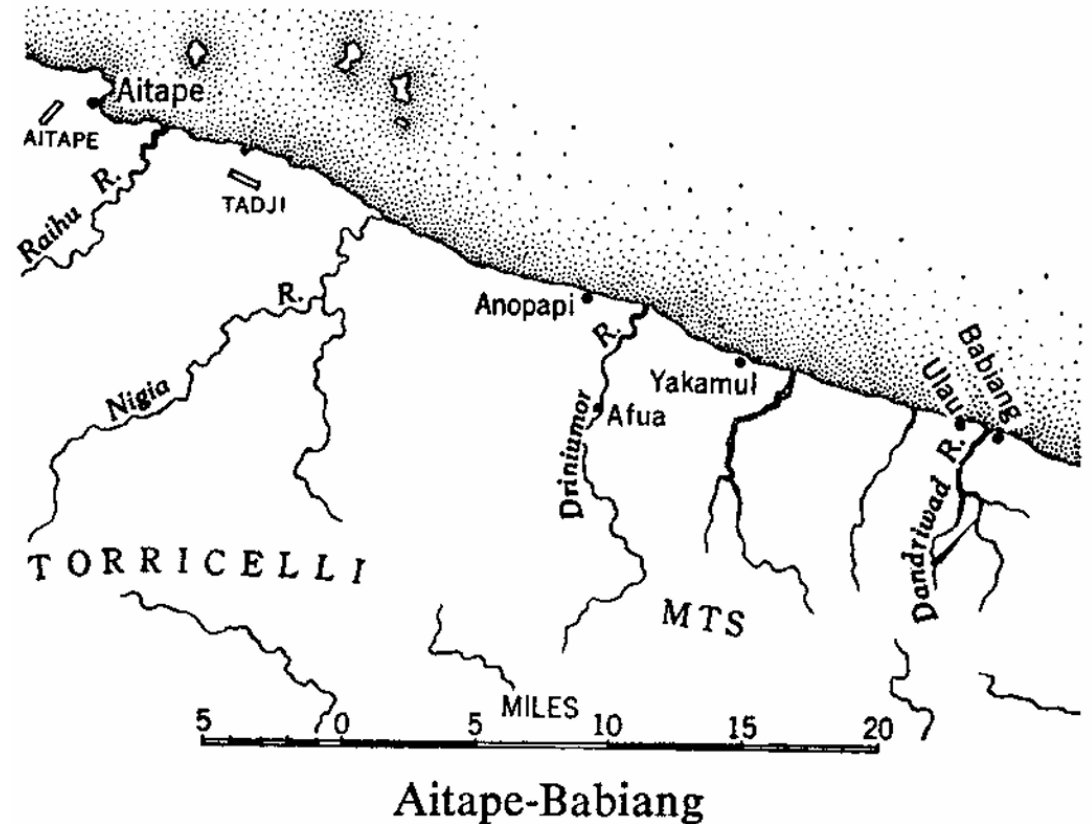
- The Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference opened in London on 1st May. The subjects fell into two main groups:
- (a) The conduct of the war in order that the Governments could review their war efforts in relation to the strategic plans, and
- (b) Post-war problems, both Empire and international



British home secretary Herbert Morrison in friendly conversation with John Curtin, with prime minister Winston Churchill looking on. Curtin was in London for a meeting of leaders of Commonwealth countries in May 1944.

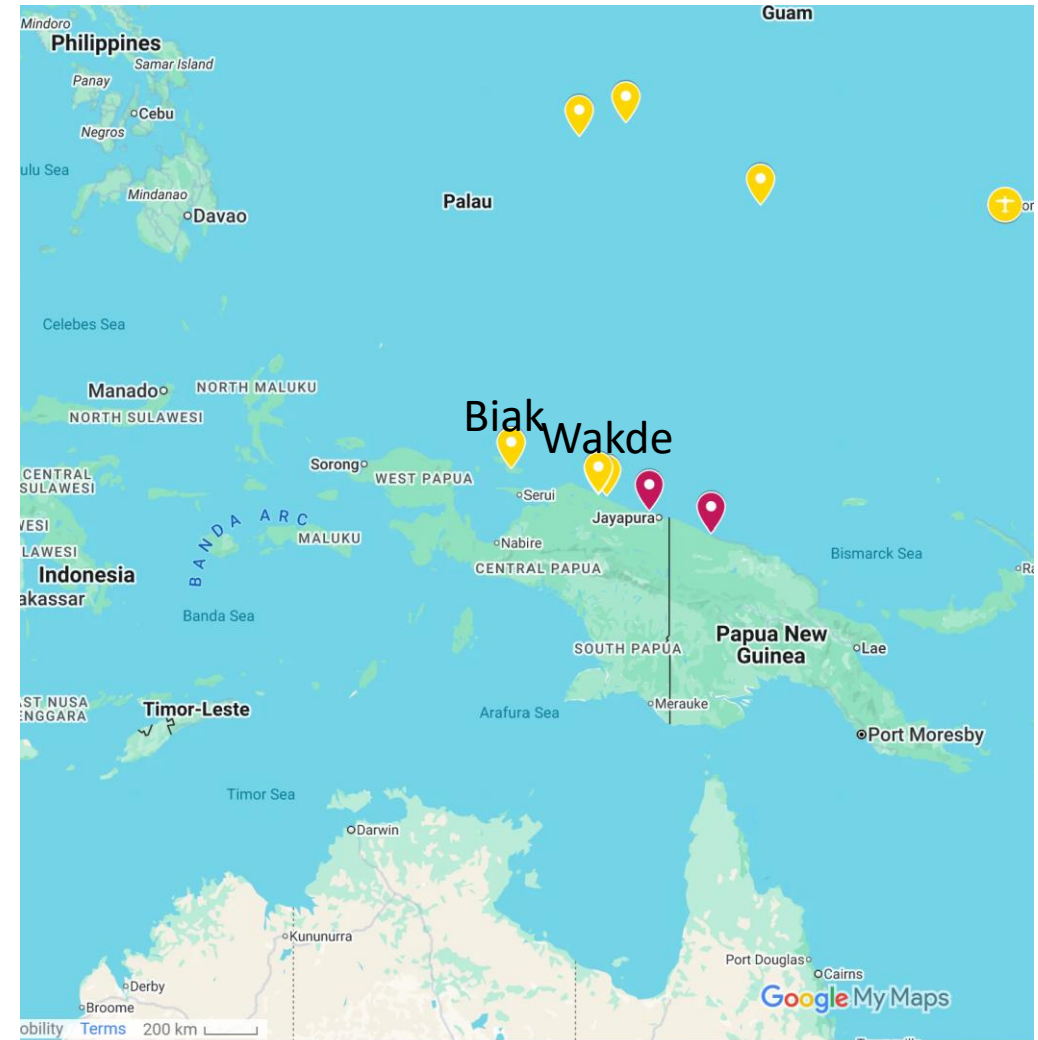
7th May 1944 – New Guinea

- In May the 32nd American Division had been concentrated at Aitape where it formed a perimeter about 9 miles wide by two deep round the Tadjai airfield.
- Patrols moved east as far as Babiang, 25 miles from Aitape, and in that area from 7th May onwards there were clashes with strong parties of Japanese.
- The divisional commander, Major-General Gill, decided to maintain a forward position on the Dandriwad River, but the Japanese pressed on and forced a withdrawal to the Driniumor, about 12 miles from the perimeter.



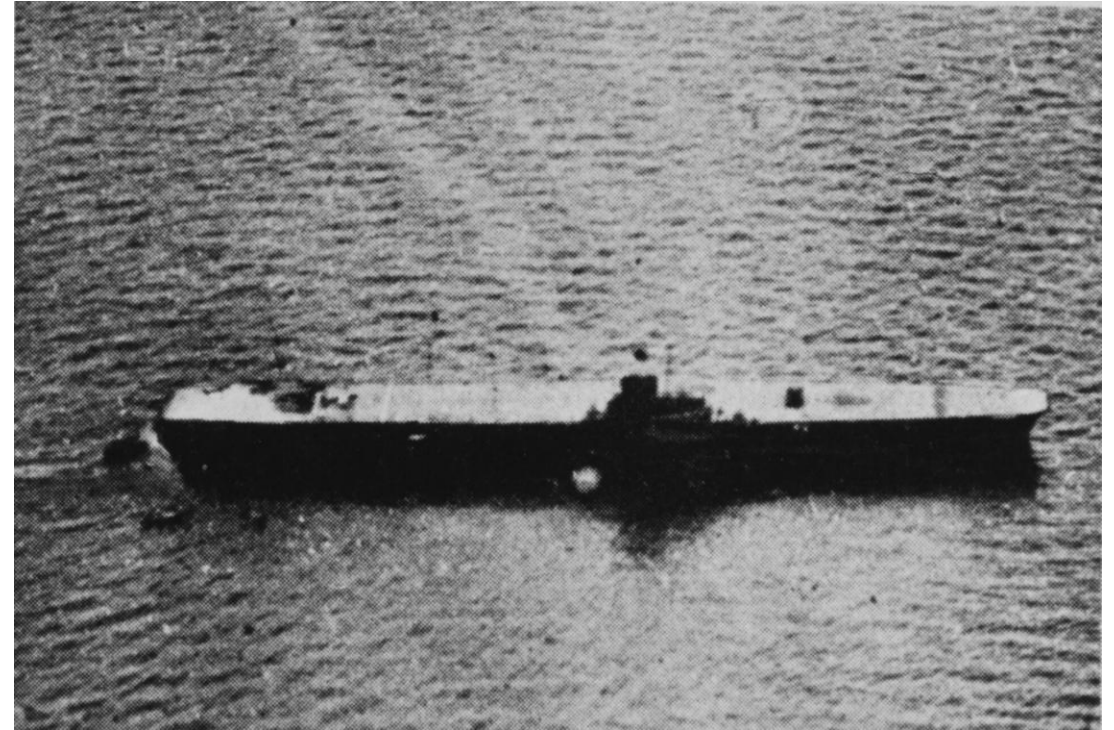
9 May 1944 – Dutch New Guinea

- Low level reconnaissance photos showed that the Sarmi area was not suitable for airfield development.
- On May the 5th reflecting on the disappointments of developing satisfactory airfields at Cape Gloucester Saidor Hollandia and Sarmi Whitehead warned that the entire Maffin and Sawar area was a mudhole.
- He felt strongly that the operation should be aimed purely at the capture of the mainland immediately opposite Wakde and the island itself.
- The way Japanese work was proceeding there made Whitehead sure that Biak was the most promising airfield site in the whole area between Nadzab and Mindanao in the Philippines.
- On May 9 it was agreed that it would be feasible to capture Wakde on May the 17th and Biak ten days later.



14 May 1944 – Philippine Sea

- On 15 April, Vice-Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa officially transferred his flag from Shōkaku to Taihō to take advantage of the new carrier's extensive command facilities.
- Shortly thereafter, the First Mobile Force departed Lingga and arrived on 14 May at Tawi-Tawi off Borneo, where the fleet could directly refuel with unrefined Tarakan Island crude oil and await execution of the planned Kantai Kessen ("decisive battle") known as Operation A-GO.



Aerial photograph of Taihō, anchored in Tawi-Tawi, Philippines, May 1944

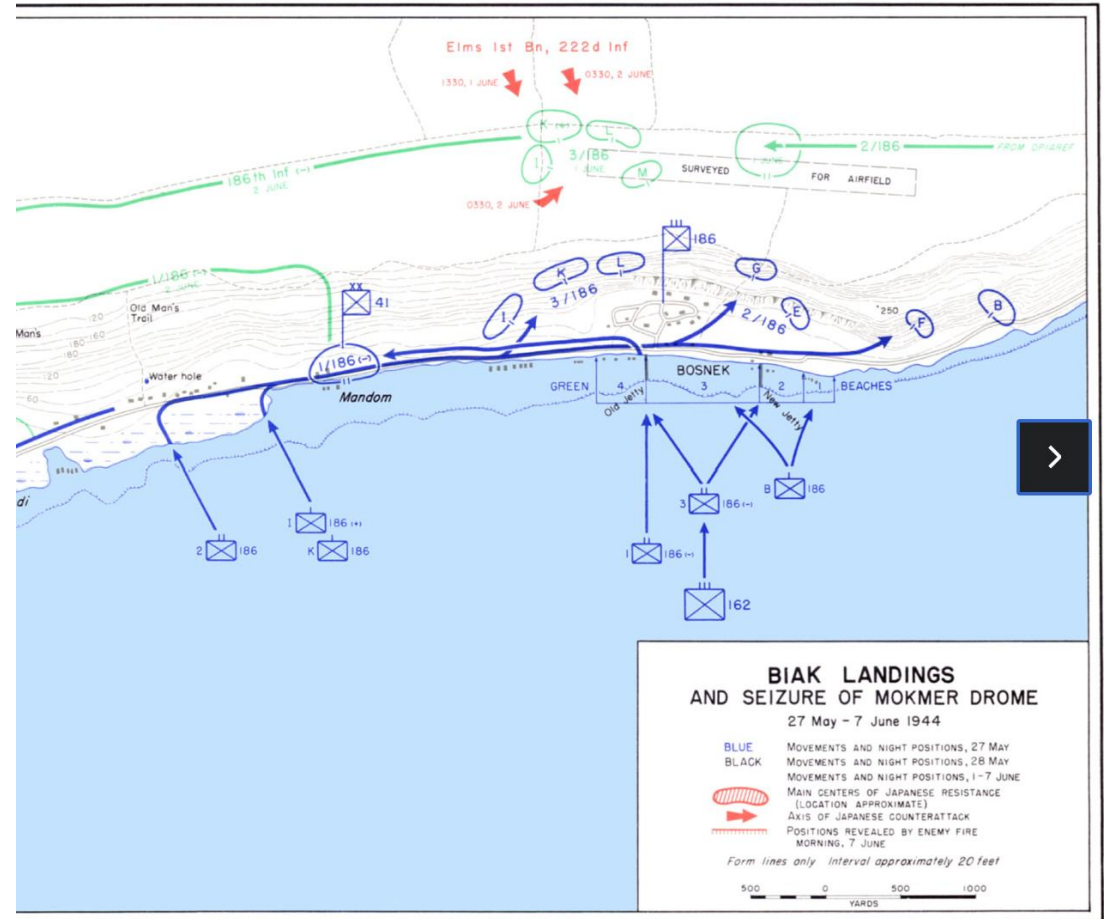
17 May 1944 – Dutch New Guinea

- On 17th May, as a preliminary move, a regiment landed on the mainland with no opposition; and a force landed on a very small unoccupied island near Wakde whence mortars and machine-guns fired on Wakde itself.
- After an intense bombardment from land, sea and air, a battalion was landed on Wakde itself at 9:10 on the 18th.
- After three days of severe fighting in which 40 Americans and 759 Japanese were killed the island was declared captured on 20 May and handed over to the air force.



27 May 1944 – Dutch New Guinea

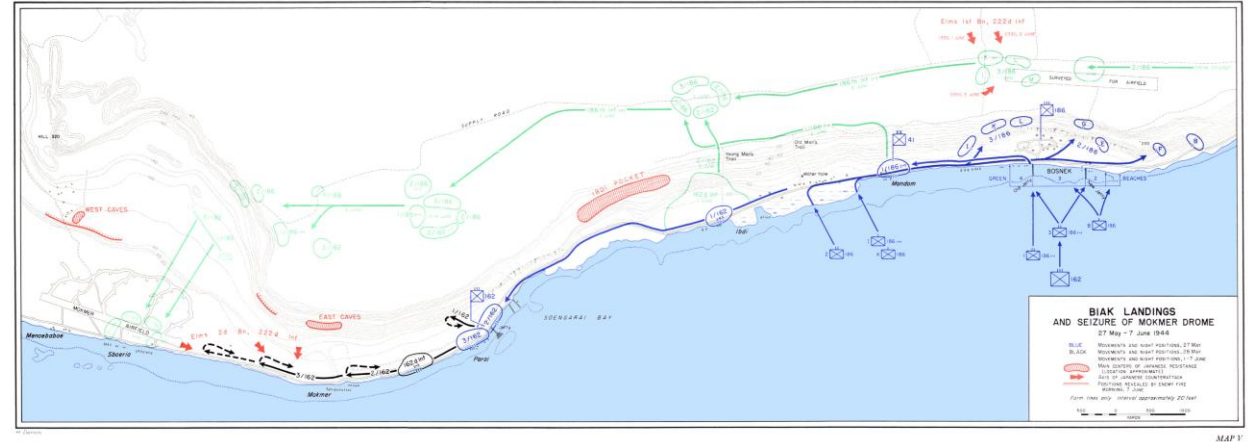
- Biak, the next objective, 315 miles west of Hollandia, is a coral-fringed island consisting mainly of tangled, jungle-clad hills but possessing in the south-west a narrow coastal plain large enough to house several airstrips.
- Allied Intelligence estimated the garrison at some 2,000.
- Against this force was to be launched the 41st Division (less one regiment), which was to land on 27th May east of the airstrip area on a narrow coral shore dominated by a high cliff.
- The craft drifted westward and reached the shore, which was veiled by haze from the bombardment, 3,000 yards west of the intended places, but the landing was virtually unopposed and by 5:15 in the afternoon 12,000 troops had landed, with 12 M4 Sherman tanks, 29 field guns and 500 vehicles.
- By nightfall the beach-head seemed secure.



MAP V

28-29 May 1944 – Dutch New Guinea

- On the 28th and 29th, however, the Japanese attacked, and cut the road behind the 162nd Regiment which was advancing along the coastal shelf to the airstrips and hemmed it in.
- It was re-embarked and brought back to the beach-head. The third regiment of the division arrived on 31st May.



17 May 1944 – Indian Ocean

- Shortly after the Cockpit attack force returned to Ceylon, Saratoga received orders to return to the United States for a refit.
- On Admiral King's suggestion, she and most of the other ships involved in Operation Cockpit conducted an attack on Soerabaya on her return journey.
- This raid, Operation Transom, was undertaken on 17 May.
- Its objective was to divert Japanese forces from the Allied landing on Wakde island off New Guinea and make use of the American aircraft carrier on its return voyage to the Pacific.



Saratoga in 1943 or 1944

17 May 1944 – Indian Ocean

- The Eastern Fleet was organised into three forces for Operation Transom.
- Force 65 comprised four battleships, two cruisers and eight destroyers.
- Force 66 was made up of the two carriers, two cruisers and six destroyers.
- Force 67 was the replenishment group and comprised six tankers, a water distilling ship and two cruisers.
- Because of the distance to be covered from Ceylon and the Royal Navy's lack of experience in underway replenishment, the final plans for the operation involved the Eastern Fleet refuelling at Exmouth Gulf in Western Australia before striking Surabaya.
- Force 67 departed on **30 April**. Forces 65 and 66 sailed on 6 May. The Allied ships proceeded to Exmouth Gulf on a course that kept them at least 600 miles from Japanese airfields to avoid being detected or attacked.
- The warships arrived at Exmouth Gulf on **14 and 15 May**.



17 May 1944 – Indian Ocean



One of the main differences in the force was to substitute Grumman Avengers (right) for Illustrious's usual air wing of Fairey Barracuda (left) torpedo and dive bombers. This change was made because Surabaya's defences were expected to be stronger than those at Sabang, and Somerville had decided to launch the aircraft 180 miles from the city, which was beyond the Barracudas' effective range.

17 May 1944 – Indian Ocean

- HMAS Adelaide sailed from Fremantle in Western Australia to protect the tankers while they were at Exmouth Gulf; this allowed their two escorting cruisers to augment Force 66 during the attack.
- Two squadrons of Spitfires were transferred from No. 1 Wing RAAF at Darwin to Exmouth Gulf to protect the Eastern Fleet while it refuelled
- The 380th Bombardment Group of the USAAF, based near Darwin, was to bomb Surabaya on the night after the carrier raid to prevent the Japanese from dispatching aircraft to attack the Eastern Fleet as it withdrew.



HMAS Adelaide Built by Cockatoo Island Dockyard,
Laid down 20 November 1915 commissioned 5
August 1922. 25 knots. 7 * 6 inch guns?

17 May 1944 – Indian Ocean

- The Eastern Fleet departed Exmouth Gulf on the afternoon of 15 May.
- It arrived at the flying off point at 6:30 am local time on 17 May without being detected.
- The aircraft were launched and formed up with the rest of their force by 7:20 am.
- Two British Avengers crashed during takeoff, their crews being rescued.
- The attack on Surabaya commenced at 8:30 am. The Japanese had not detected the aircraft as they approached, and were taken by surprise.
- The force made a well-synchronised attack. No Japanese fighter aircraft were encountered, and the anti-aircraft guns were largely ineffective. One of Saratoga's Avengers was shot down, and both members of its crew became prisoners of war.
- The Allied pilots claimed to have damaged ten ships, demolished both the Wonokromo oil refinery and the Braat Engineering Works and destroyed 16 aircraft and several buildings at an airfield.



View of the attack on Surabaya, Netherlands East Indies, on 17 May 1944 by aircraft from USS Saratoga and HMS Illustrious during "Operation Transom".

17 May 1944 – Indian Ocean

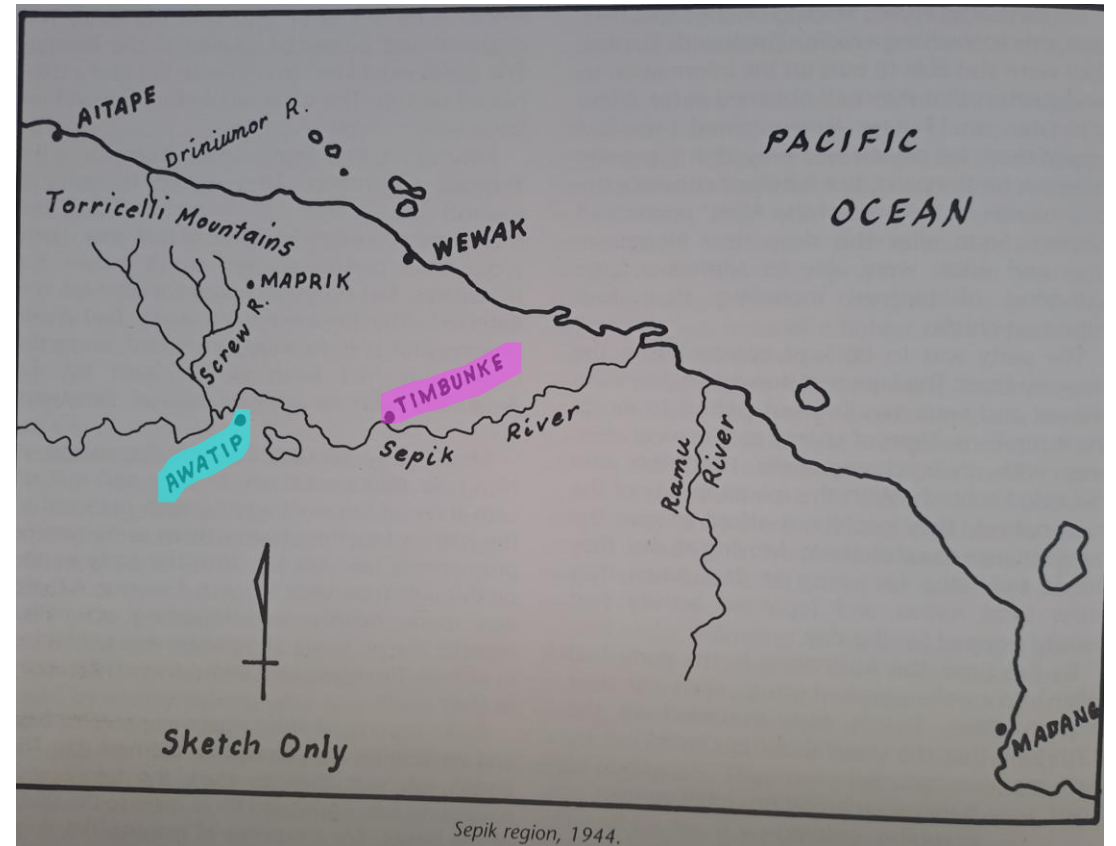
- After the strike force completed landing on the carriers at 10:50 am, the Eastern Fleet withdrew to the south-west in an attempt to obscure the fact that it was headed for Exmouth Gulf.
- Saratoga and her three escorting American destroyers detached from the Eastern Fleet shortly before sunset on 18 May and proceeded to Fremantle.
- The remainder of the Eastern Fleet reached Exmouth Gulf the next morning, and sailed for Ceylon before sunset after refuelling again.
- Adelaide and one of the Australian destroyers that had been attached to the Eastern Fleet left Exmouth Gulf bound for Fremantle after the tanker group departed on 19 May.
- The Eastern Fleet arrived back at Ceylon on 27 May.



Illustrious's crew farewelling Saratoga on 18 May 1944

27 May 1944 – Dutch New Guinea

- Two parties from the Allied Intelligence Bureau moved into the Sepik River area to learn whether the Japanese were using it as an escape route.
- On 20th May 1944 Lieutenant B. W. G. Hall and two others were landed at **Timbunke**.
- A week later (28 May), Captain H. A. J. Fryer with 8 Australians and 25 natives, was landed by two Catalinas on a lagoon near **Awatip**, 20 miles west of Hall.
- Natives told them there were Japanese posts up and down stream and a canoe mail service.
- Fryer intercepted the latest mail and sent it out to be translated, then travelled to the head of the Screw River.
- The party continued to operate in the area until the end of August.



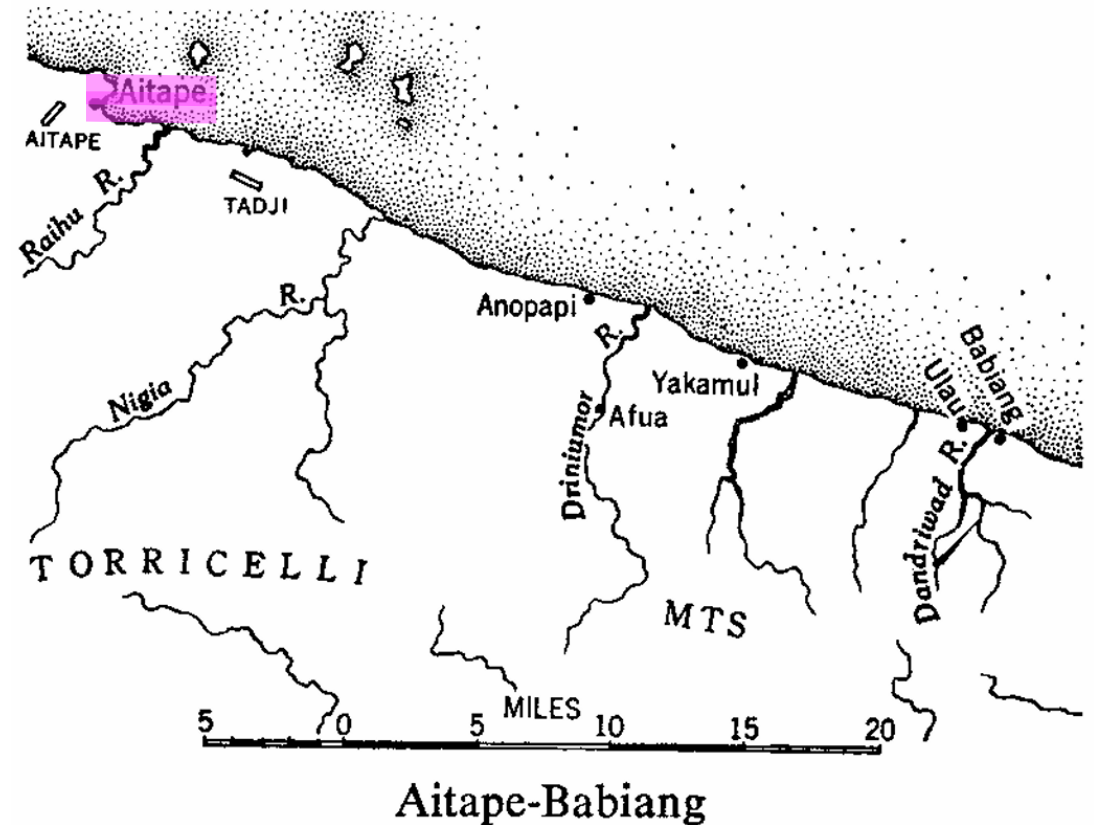
May 1944 - Pacific

- George H W Bush served in the Pacific theater, where he flew a Grumman TBM Avenger, a carrier torpedo bomber.
- His squadron was assigned to the USS San Jacinto (CVL-30) as a member of Air Group 51,
- Bush flew his first combat mission in May 1944, bombing Japanese-held Wake Island, and was promoted to lieutenant (junior grade) on August 1, 1944.



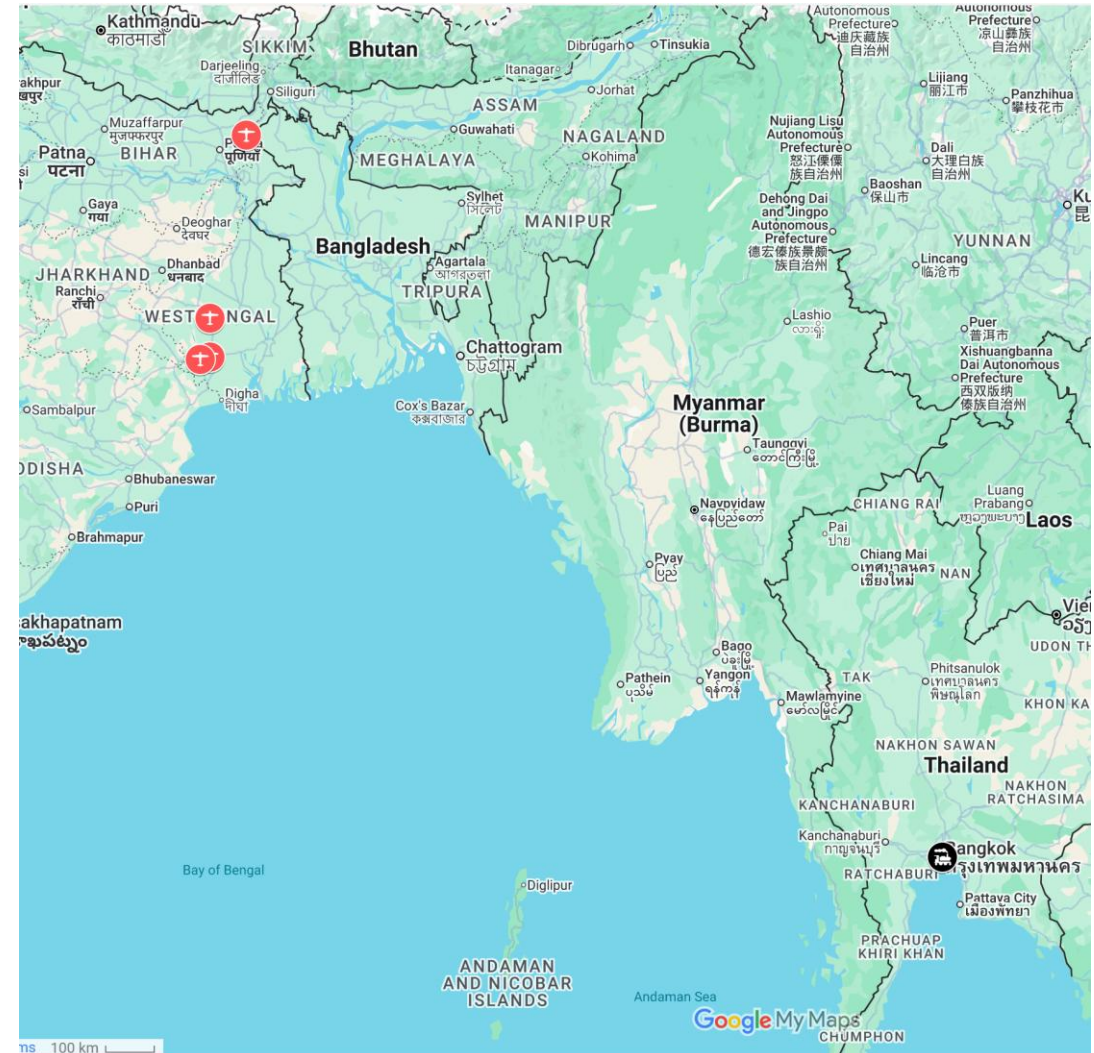
June 1944 – New Guinea

- Radio messages intercepted in June suggested that the Japanese would attack the Aitape perimeter in the first ten days of July using 20,000 men and with 11,000 in reserve.
- Thereupon the 112th Cavalry Regiment was sent to Aitape and XI American Corps headquarters (Major-General Charles P. Hall) took command.
- The 43rd Division and the 124th Regiment were also ordered to Aitape to help meet the coming attack.
- Whitehead bolstered the air forces there with the 110th Recon squadron and RAAF beaufighters and beauforts.



5 June 1944 – B29

- Operation Matterhorn was the name for the B-29 Superfortress offensive against the Empire of Japan from airfields in India and China.
- On 10 April 1944, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) informally approved Operation Matterhorn.
- The operational vehicle was to be the 58th Bombardment Wing (Very Heavy) of the XX Bomber Command.
- The first B-29 reached its base in India on 2 April 1944 and the first B-29 bombing raid from India took place on 5 June 1944. Ninety-eight B-29s took off to attack the Makasan railroad yards at Bangkok.
- The primary flaw in the Operation Matterhorn plan was that all the supplies of fuel, bombs, and spares needed to support the forward bases in China had to be flown in from India over the Hump,



Air Route over the “Hump”



Air Route over the “Hump”

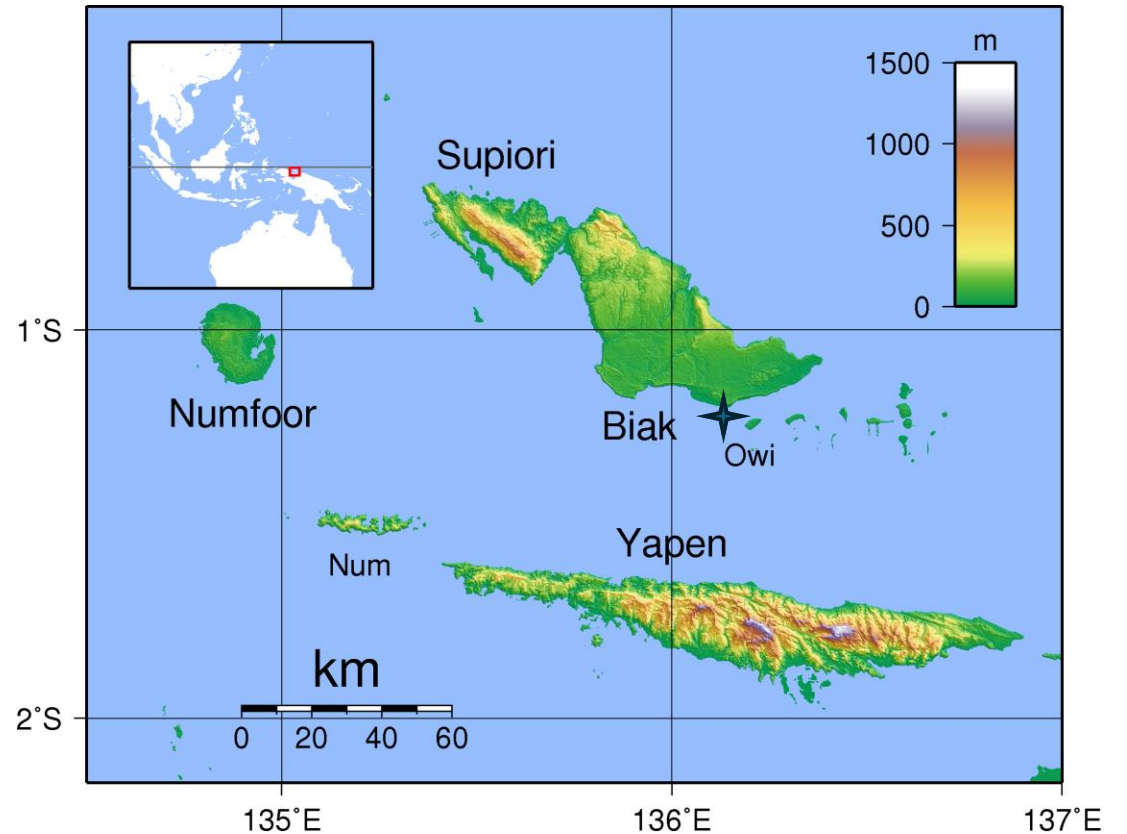
- The Brahmaputra valley floor lies 90 feet above sea level at Chabua.
- From this level the mountain wall surrounding the valley rises quickly to 10,000 feet and higher.
- Flying eastward out of the valley, the pilot first topped the Patkai Range, then passed over the upper Chindwin River valley, bounded on the east by a 14,000-foot ridge, the Kumon Mountains.
- He then crossed a series of 14,000–16,000-foot ridges separated by the valleys of the West Irrawaddy, East Irrawaddy, Salween, and Mekong Rivers.
- The main "Hump", which gave its name to the whole awesome mountainous mass and to the air route which crossed it, was the Santsung Range, often 15,000 feet high, between the Salween and Mekong Rivers.
- East of the Mekong the terrain became less rugged, and the elevations more moderate as one approached the Kunming airfield, itself 6,200 feet above sea level.



Meili Snow Mountain, prominent landmark on the high Hump.

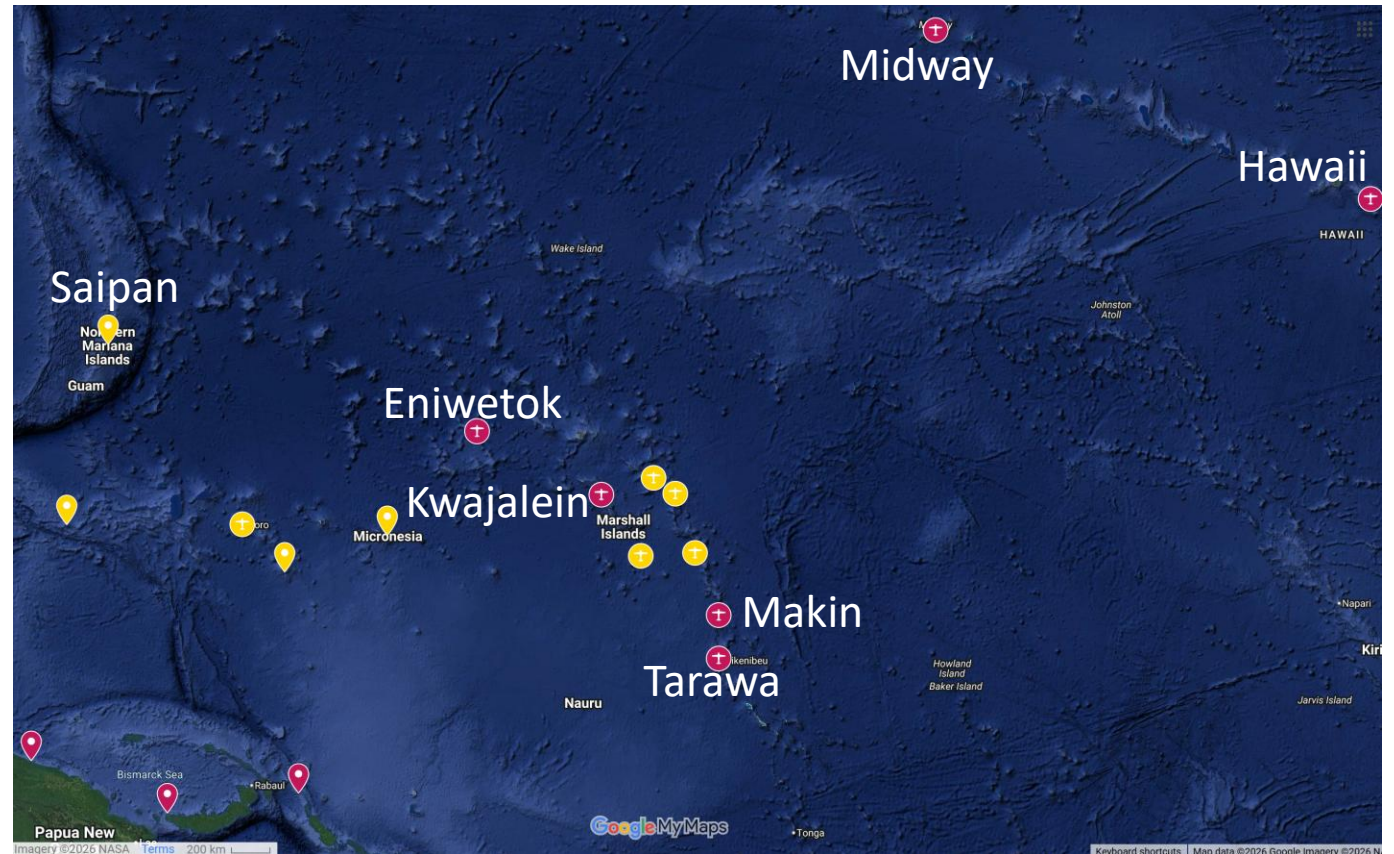
7 June 1944 – Dutch New Guinea

- On Biak the division advanced slowly westward and on the 7th June captured the easternmost airstrip✦, but it was still under fire from Japanese in the hills.



9 June 1944 - Marianas

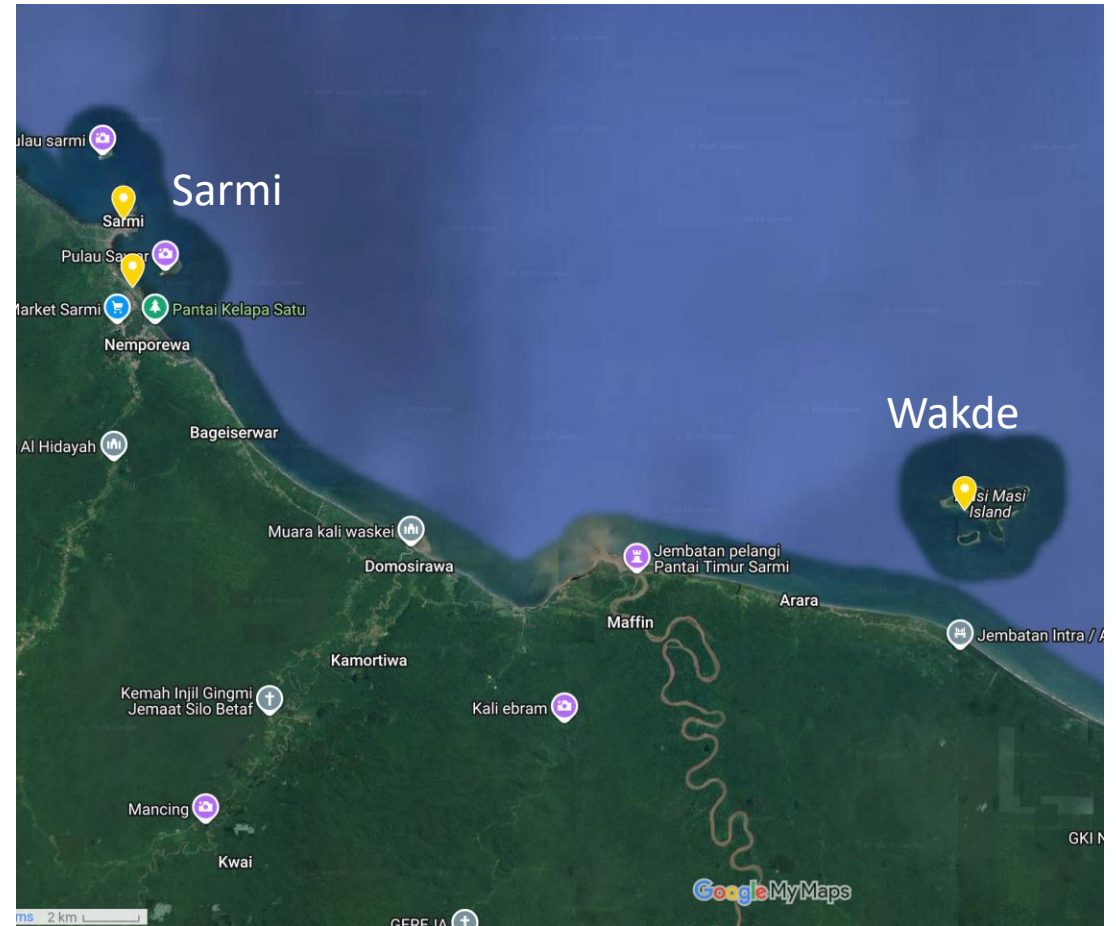
- The Saipan invasion fleet, consisting of over 500 ships and 300,000 men, got underway days before the Allied forces in Europe invaded France in Operation Overlord on 6 June 1944.
- It was launched from Hawaii, briefly stopping at Eniwetok and Kwajalein before heading for Saipan.
- The Marine divisions left Pearl Harbor on 19–31 May and met at Eniwetok on 7–8 June;
- the 27th Infantry Division left Pearl Harbor on 25 May and arrived at Kwajalein on 9 June.



The scale is 200 kilometres. For comparison the distance from Southampton to Ouistreham by sea is almost exactly 200 kilometres.

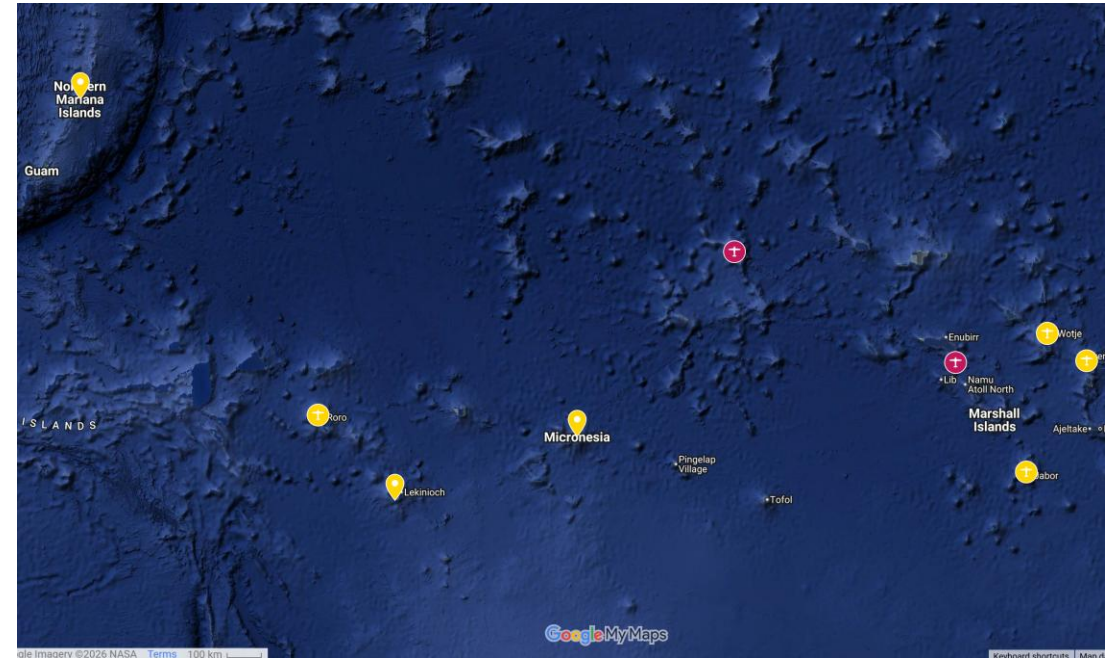
10 June 1944 – Dutch New Guinea

- Krueger now set about clearing the Japanese from the Sarmi area. This led to a long and bitter struggle.
- In the **second week of June** the 6th American Division was brought in.



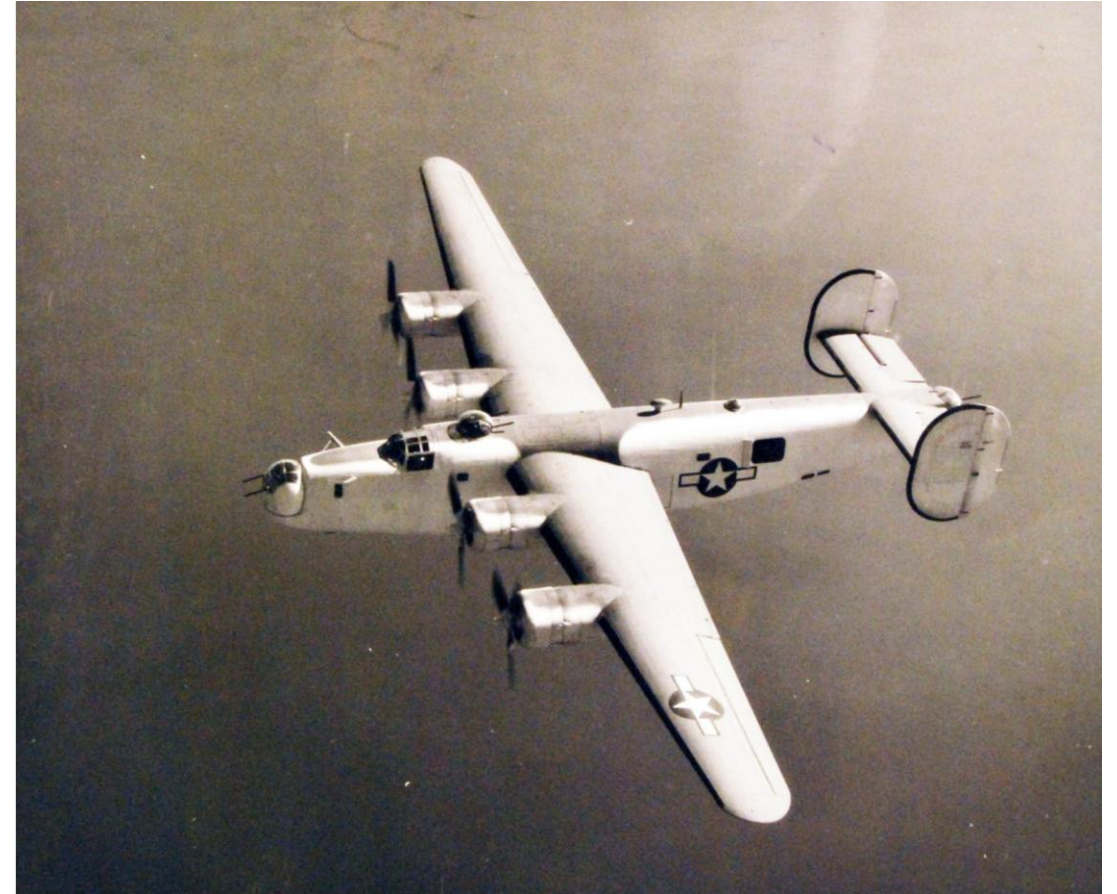
10 June 1944 - Marianas

- On 6 June 1944, Task Force 58, now numbering seven fleet carriers and eight light carriers under the command of Admiral Marc A. Mitscher, left its bases in the Marshall Islands and headed for the island of Saipan.
- The fifteen carriers carried 956 airplanes. Non-carrier strength of the force included seven battleships, eight heavy cruisers, thirteen light cruisers, and fifty-eight destroyers.
- RADM Clark's Task Group (TG) 58.1 was in the lead, and on **10 June** LT Ridgway's CIC team detected Japanese patrol planes approaching the force.
- He vectored a CAP of covering Hellcats who brought down the first snoopers at forty-seven miles and destroyed the second a few minutes later. Neither had a chance to send out a contact report.



11 June 1944 - Marianas

- Later that day (10th) a land based navy Liberator bomber (photo) encountered a Mitsubishi G4M bomber that it proceeded to shoot down, but not before the “Betty” reported the task force’s position.
- The report was overheard by TG radio monitors, and as a result, RADM Clark requested permission of ADM Mitscher to send two picket destroyers fifty miles ahead of the task group, and one twenty-five miles ahead to act as communications relay.
- All destroyers had fighter director teams aboard and controlled their own CAP.
- On 11 June, long range Japanese patrol bombers attacked the task force, and the fighter directors aboard the picket destroyers and their CAP fighter pilots shot down six patrol bombers forty miles away from the task force.



11 June 1944 - Marianas

- On **11 June**, over 200 F6F Hellcats from the Fast Carrier Task Force launched a surprise attack on Japanese airfields in Saipan and Tinian, putting roughly 130 Japanese aircraft out of operation at the cost of 11 American aircraft.
- The attack destroyed most of the 1st Air Fleet's land-based planes that had been deployed to defend the Marianas and gave the Americans air superiority over Saipan.
- Planes from the task force continued their attacks until **14 June**, harassing fields, bombing military targets, and burning cane fields on the southern half of Saipan.
- By the end of the week, the 1st Air Fleet had been reduced to about 100 aircraft.



13 June 1944 - Marianas



Willis Lee, gunner, Victor of the Second Naval Battle of Guadalcanal and holder of the record for the most medals at a single Olympic Games.

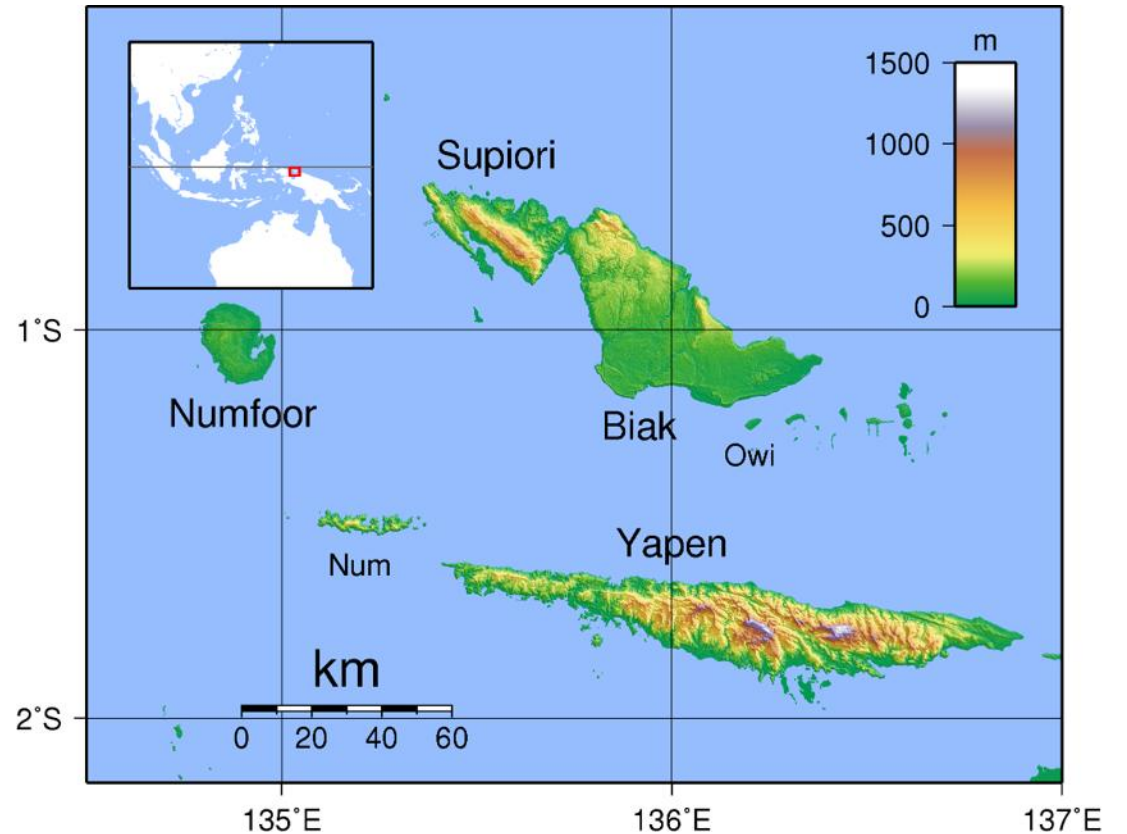
- On **13 June**, seven fast battleships and 11 destroyers under Vice Admiral Willis Lee began the naval bombardment of Saipan.
- Most of these battleships' crews had not been trained in shore bombardment, and the ships fired from more than 5.5 miles to avoid potential minefields.
- The bombardment damaged much of Garapan and Charan Kanoa, but it was relatively ineffective at destroying the island's defenses.
- The **following day**, seven older battleships, 11 cruisers, and 26 destroyers commanded by Rear Admiral Jesse B. Oldendorf continued the shelling.
- These crews were trained in shore bombardment and moved closer to shore because the sea was found to be free of mines.
- This bombardment eliminated many emplaced anti-aircraft positions, but it, too, failed to destroy most of the beach defenses.



Jesse Oldendorf, navigator, had done good work against U Boats in the Caribbean and supporting the landings in the Marshals. No victories yet.

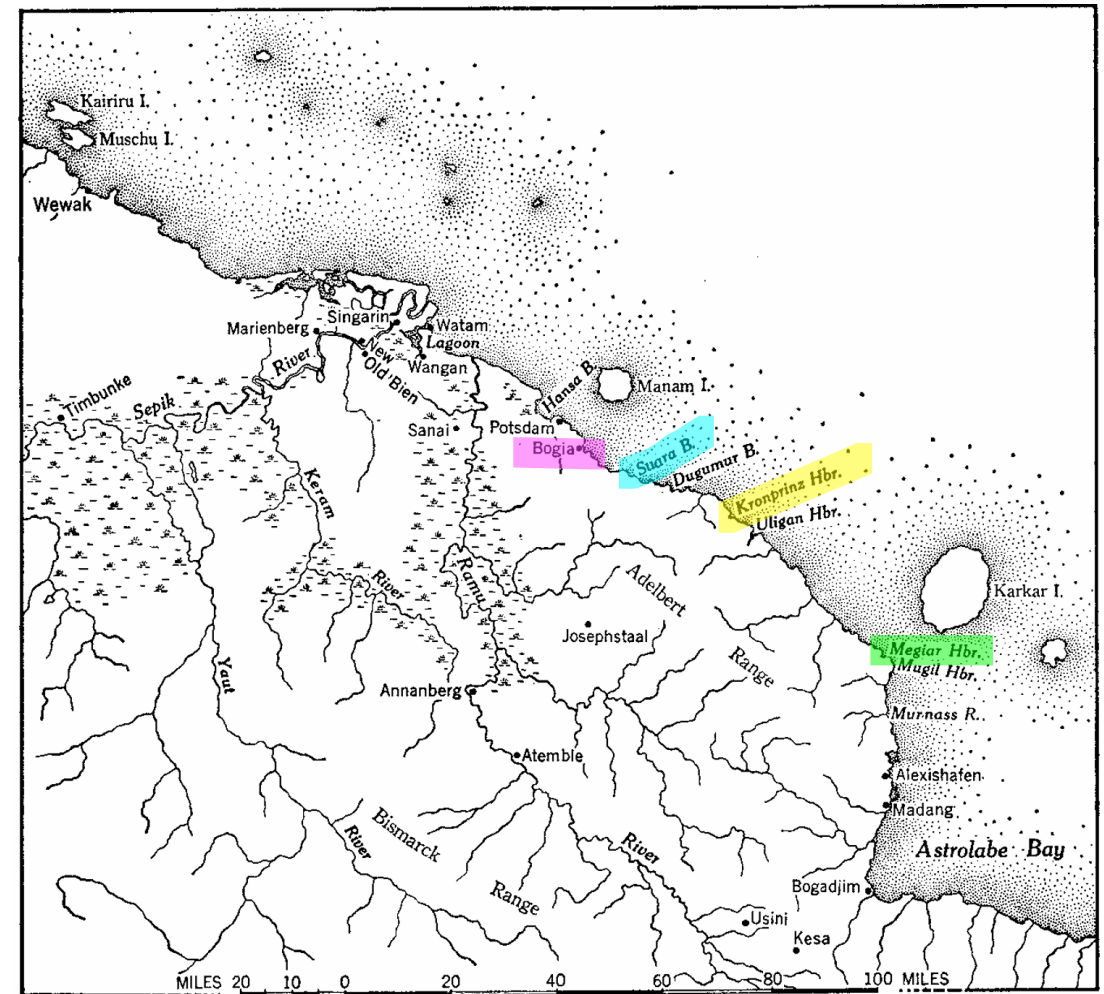
13 June 1944 – Dutch New Guinea

- Progress on Biak was very slow and on **13th June** a regiment of the 24th Division from Hollandia was ordered to Biak.



13 June 1944 – New Guinea

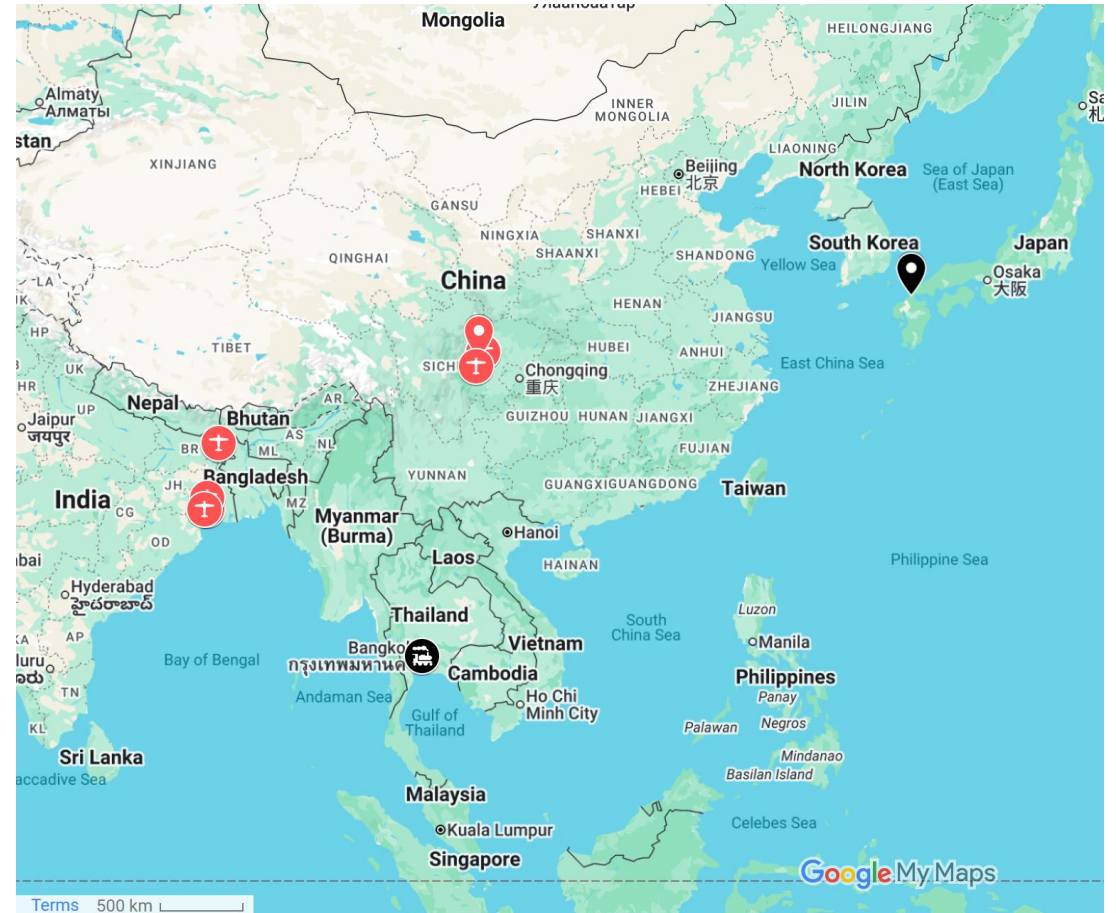
- When General Savage issued his first instruction as G.O.C. New Guinea Force on 8th May he included one sentence which said, "Maintain pressure on the enemy northward of Alexishafen by patrol activity."
- The 35th Battalion moved to **Megiar Harbour** on 10th May and gradually the patrols stretched out along the coast.
- At the beginning of June the 35th Battalion reached **Kronprinz Harbour** without opposition.
- Patrols reached **Suara Bay** five miles west from Dugumur Bay on 9th June.
- The 35th Battalion was relieved by the 4th, which resumed the advance accompanied by the Papuan troops.
- Patrols reached **Bogia** on 13th June and were told by a solitary Chinese that the Japanese had departed before the end of April



Madang-Wewak

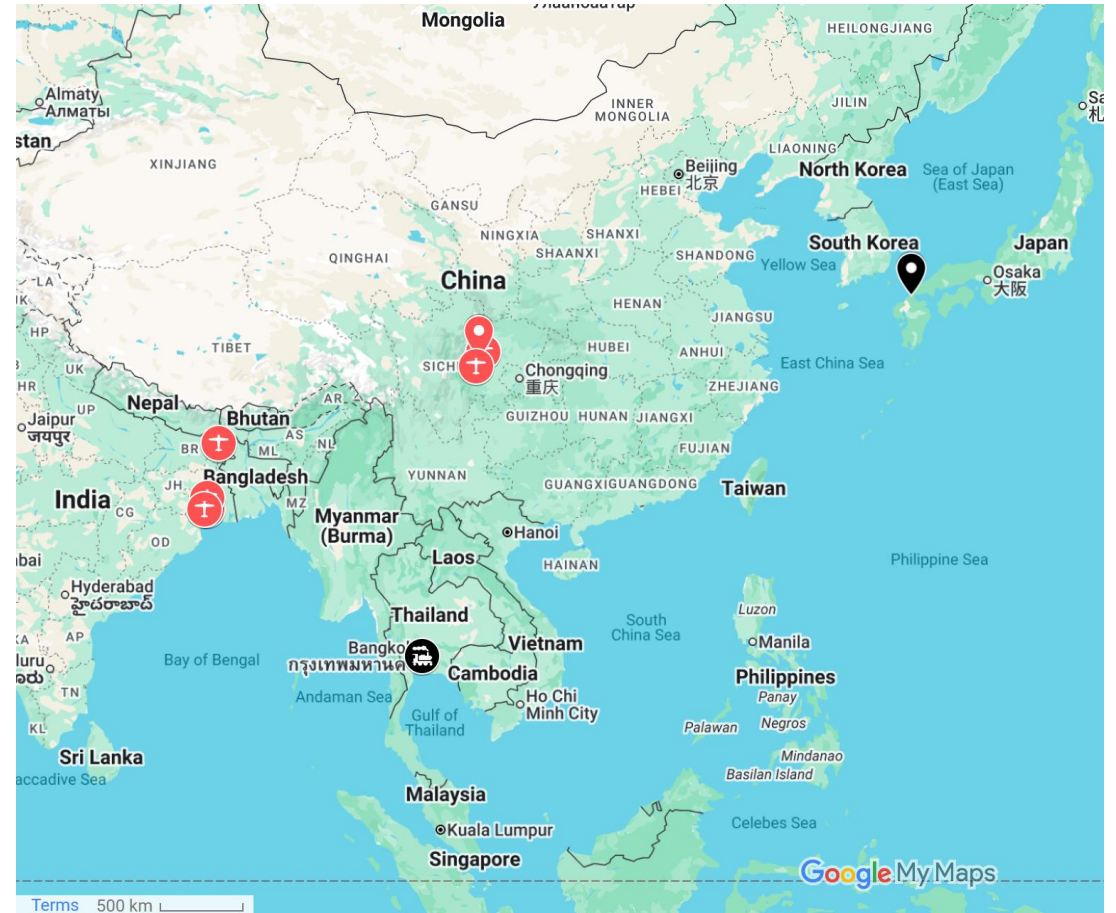
14/15 June 1944 – B29

- By mid-June, enough supplies had been transported over the Hump and stockpiled at Chinese forward bases around Chengdu to permit the launching of a single attack against targets in Japan.



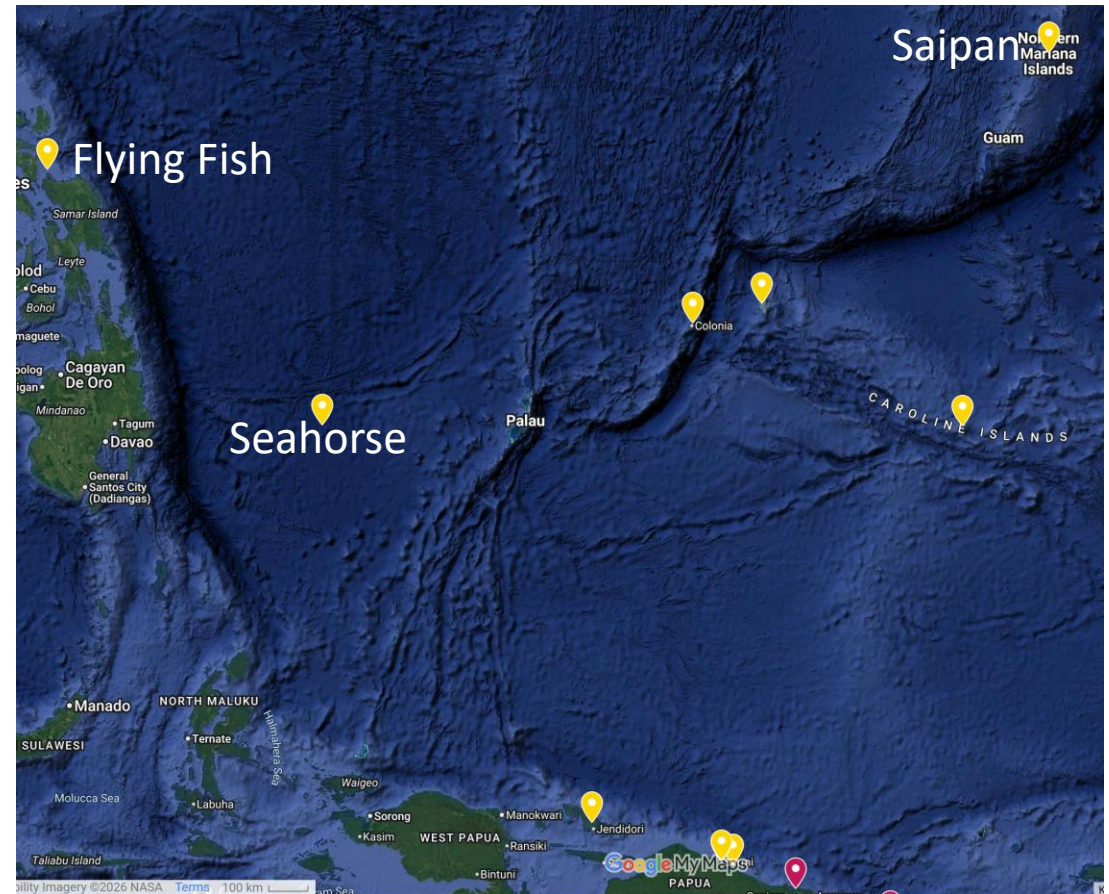
14/15 June 1944 – B29

- It was a nighttime raid to be carried out on the night of 14/15 June 1944 against the Imperial Iron and Steel Works at Yawata on Kyūshū.
- Unfortunately, the Japanese had been warned of the approaching raid and the city of Yawata was blacked out and haze and/or smoke helped to obscure the target.
- Only 47 of 75 aircraft dispatched reached the target. 15 aircraft bombed visually while 32 bombed by radar. Only one bomb actually hit anywhere near the intended target, and the steel industry was essentially untouched.
- Although very little damage was actually done, the Yawata raid was hailed as a great victory in the American press, since it was the first time since the Doolittle raid of April 1942 that American aircraft had hit the Japanese home islands.



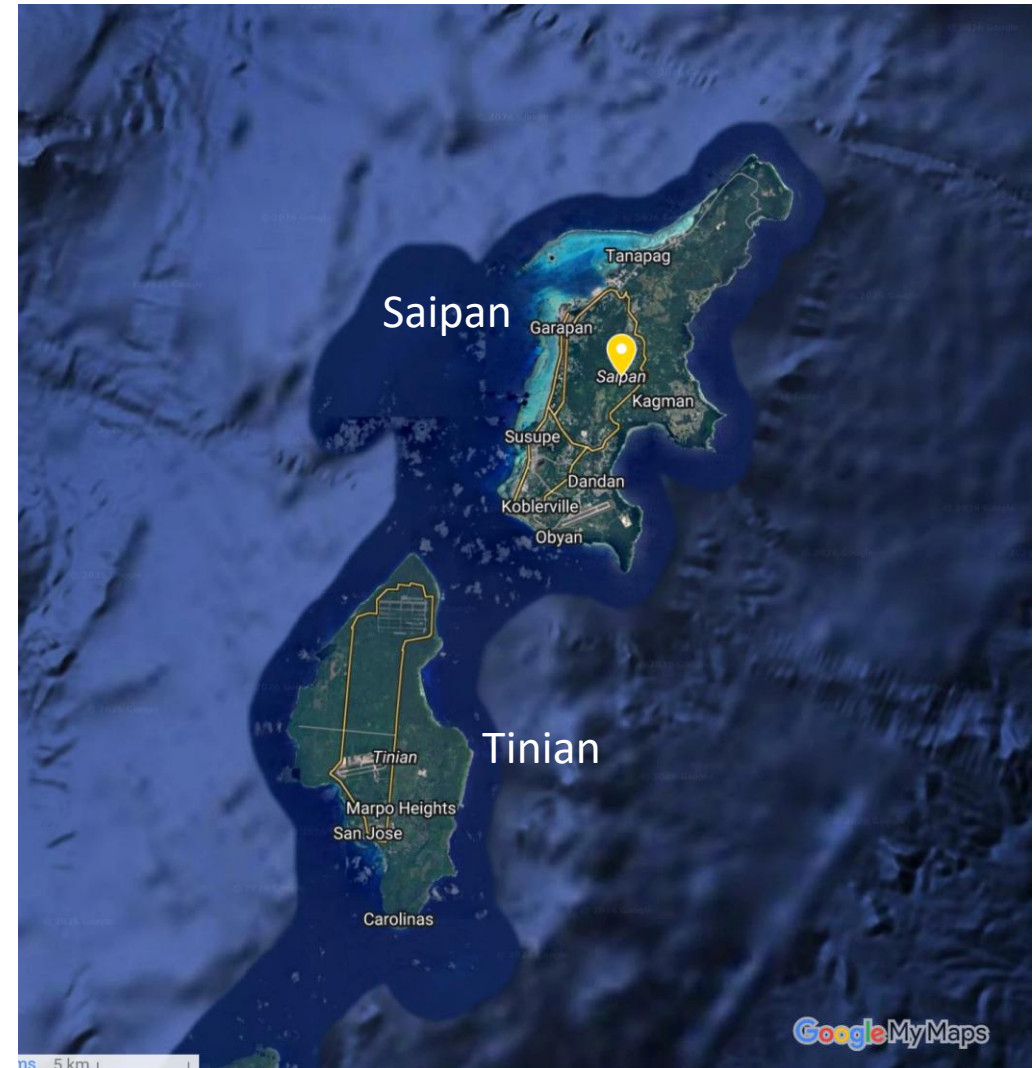
15 June 1944 - Marianas

- At 18:35 on 15 June the submarine USS Flying Fish sighted a Japanese carrier and battleship force coming out of San Bernardino Strait.
- An hour later USS Seahorse spotted a battleship and cruiser force steaming up from the south, 200 miles east of Mindanao.
- The submarines were under orders to report sightings before attempting to attack, so Flying Fish waited until nightfall, then surfaced to radio in its report.
- Fifth Fleet commander Spruance was convinced that a major battle was at hand. After consulting with Nimitz at Pacific Fleet Headquarters in Hawaii, he ordered Rear Admiral Marc Mitscher, commander of the Fast Carrier Task Force (Task Force 58), who had sent two carrier task groups north to intercept aircraft reinforcements from Japan, to reform and move west of Saipan into the Philippine Sea.
- TF 52's battleships, cruisers and escort carrier groups were ordered to remain near Saipan to protect the invasion fleet and provide air support for the landings.



15 June 1944 - Marianas

- Saipan has a tropical marine climate. Though the island has a mean rainfall of 86 inches per year, the rainy season does not begin until July.
- Unlike the small, flat coral atolls of the Gilberts and Marshalls, Saipan is a volcanic island with diverse terrain well suited for defense. It is approximately 47 sq miles and has a volcanic core surrounded by limestone.
- In the center of the island is Mount Tapotchau, which rises to 1,554 ft. From the mountain, a high ridge ran northward about 7 miles to Mount Marpi. This area was filled with caves and ravines concealed by forest and brush, and the mountainous terrain would force tanks to stay on the island's few roads, which were poorly constructed.
- Saipan was the first island during the Pacific War where the United States forces encountered a substantial Japanese civilian population, and the first where U. S. Marines fought around urban areas. About 26,000 to 28,000 civilians lived on the island, primarily serving the sugar industry. Most of them were Japanese subjects, primarily from Okinawa and Korea; a minority was Chamorro people.



15 June 1944 - Marianas

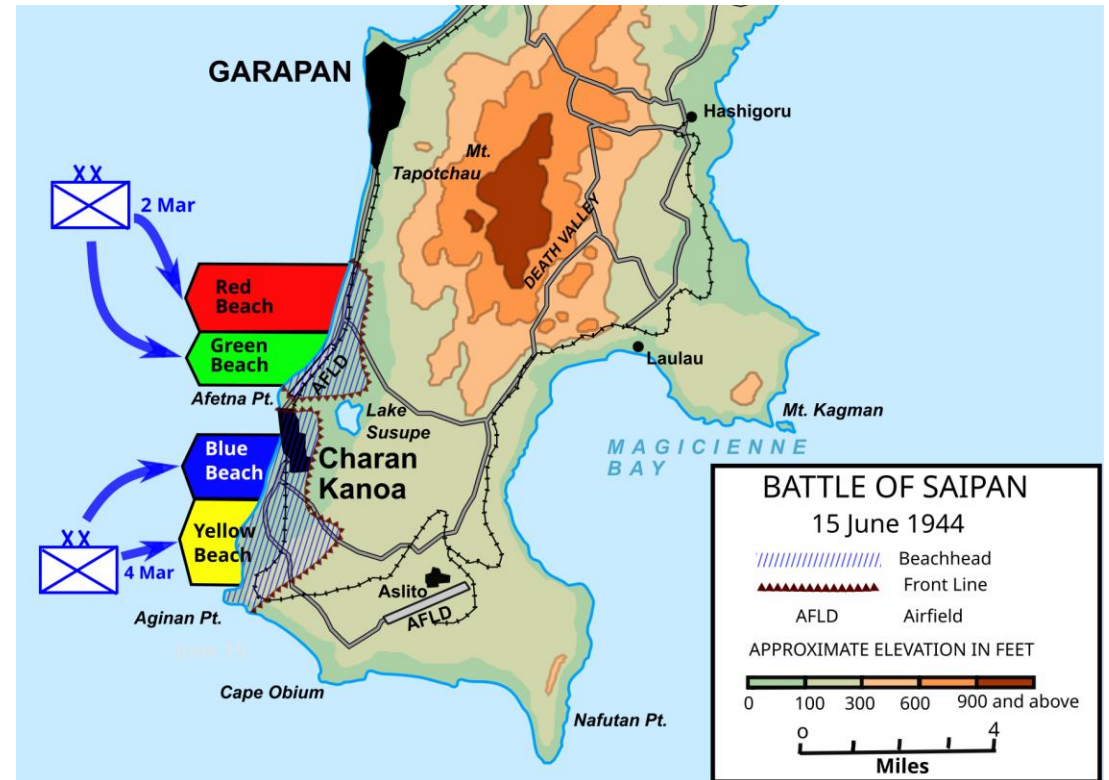
- The D-Day for the amphibious landing was 15 June, beginning around 08:40.
- Naval and aerial bombardments in preparation for the landings began earlier in the morning, disrupting the Japanese communications network.
- The guns of the warships provided continuous supporting fire throughout the day.



LVTs heading for shore on 15 June. Birmingham in foreground; the cruiser firing in the distance is Indianapolis

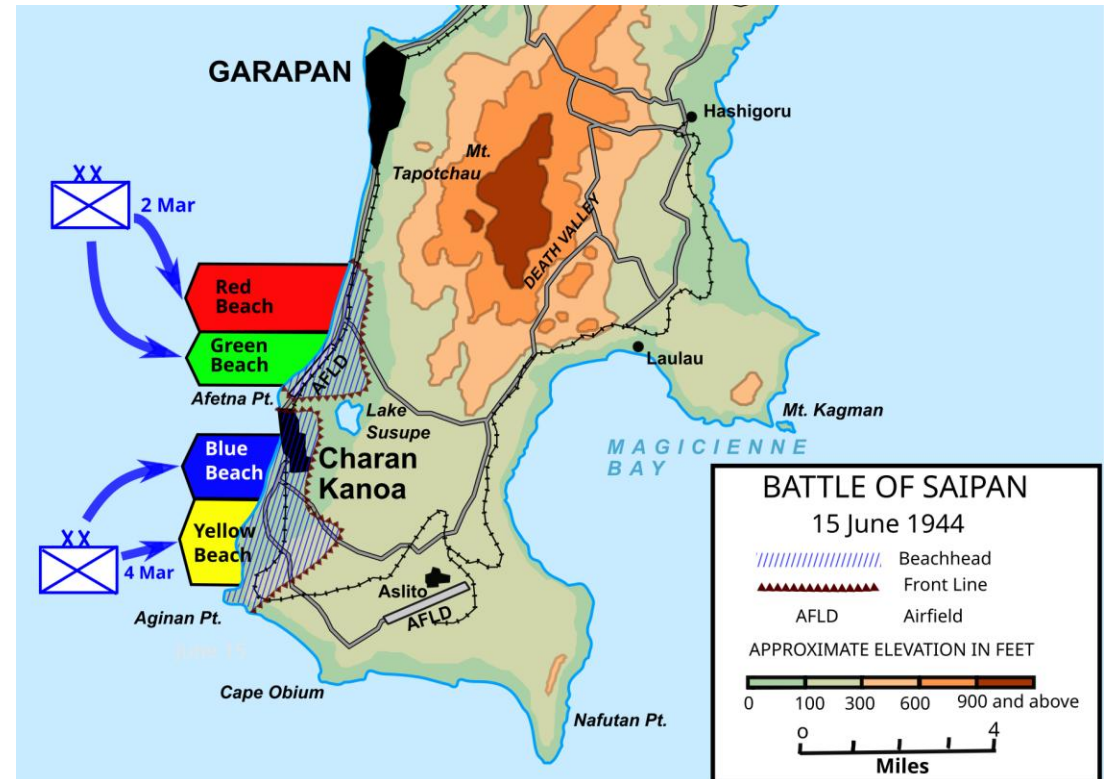
15 June 1944 - Marianas

- The V Amphibious Corps landed on the southwest beaches of Saipan.
- The 2nd Marine Division landed on two beaches, named Red and Green, of Charan Kanoa, and the 4th Marine Division landed on the beaches named Blue and Yellow, south of the town.
- Approximately 700 amphibious vehicles participated in the assault, including 393 amphibious tractors (LVTs) and 140 amphibious tanks. Within 20 minutes, around 8,000 men were on the beaches.



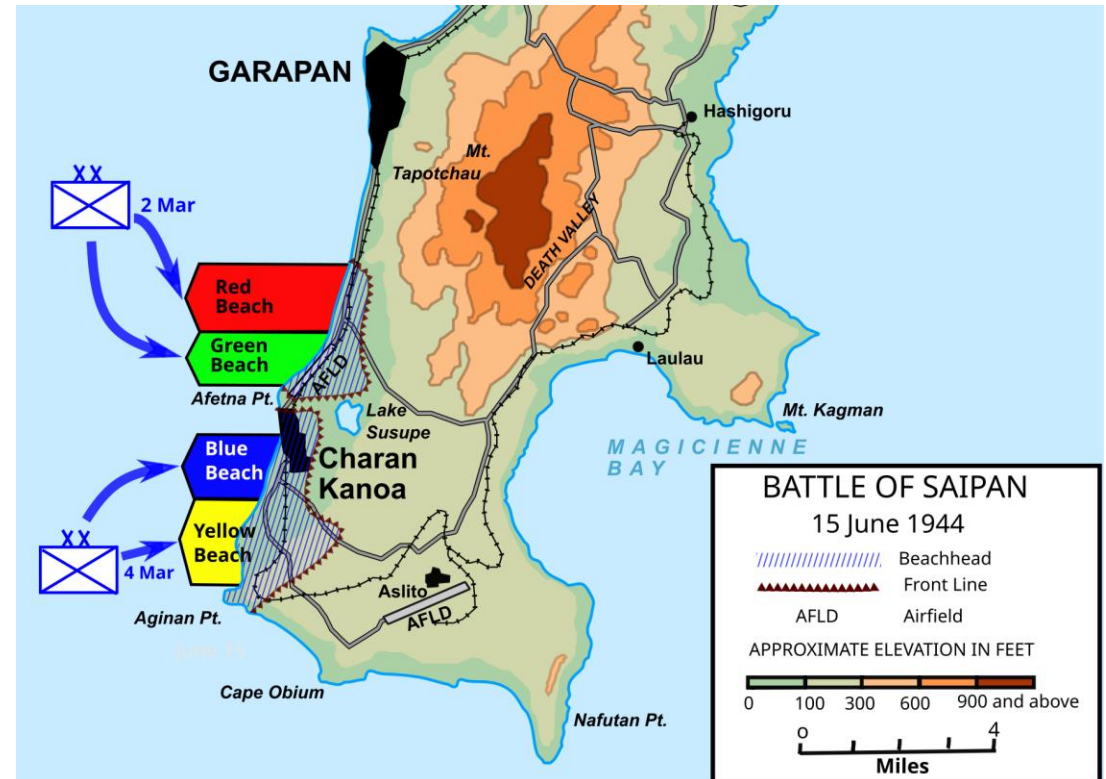
15 June 1944 - Marianas

- The beaches were fortified by trenches and a few pillboxes, but the landings were mainly contested by constant and intensive fire by Japanese artillery, mortars, and machine guns.
- The Japanese had concentrated at least 50 large artillery pieces on the high ground—including at least 24 105-mm howitzers and 30 75-mm field pieces—around the invasion beaches.
- Many were deployed on reverse slopes, and pennants had been placed on the beach for accurate ranging.
- The Americans suffered over 2,000 casualties, the majority due to artillery and mortar fire.
- 164 amphibious tractors and amphibious tanks, about 40% of those engaged during the day, had been destroyed or damaged.
- By the end of the day, the Marines managed to establish a bridgehead about 5.5 miles along the beach and 0.5 mile inland, and had unloaded artillery and tanks.
- The bridgehead was only about two-thirds the size of the planned objective, the two Marine divisions were separated by a gap just north of Charan Kanoa, and the Japanese artillery remained intact on the high ground surrounding the beach.



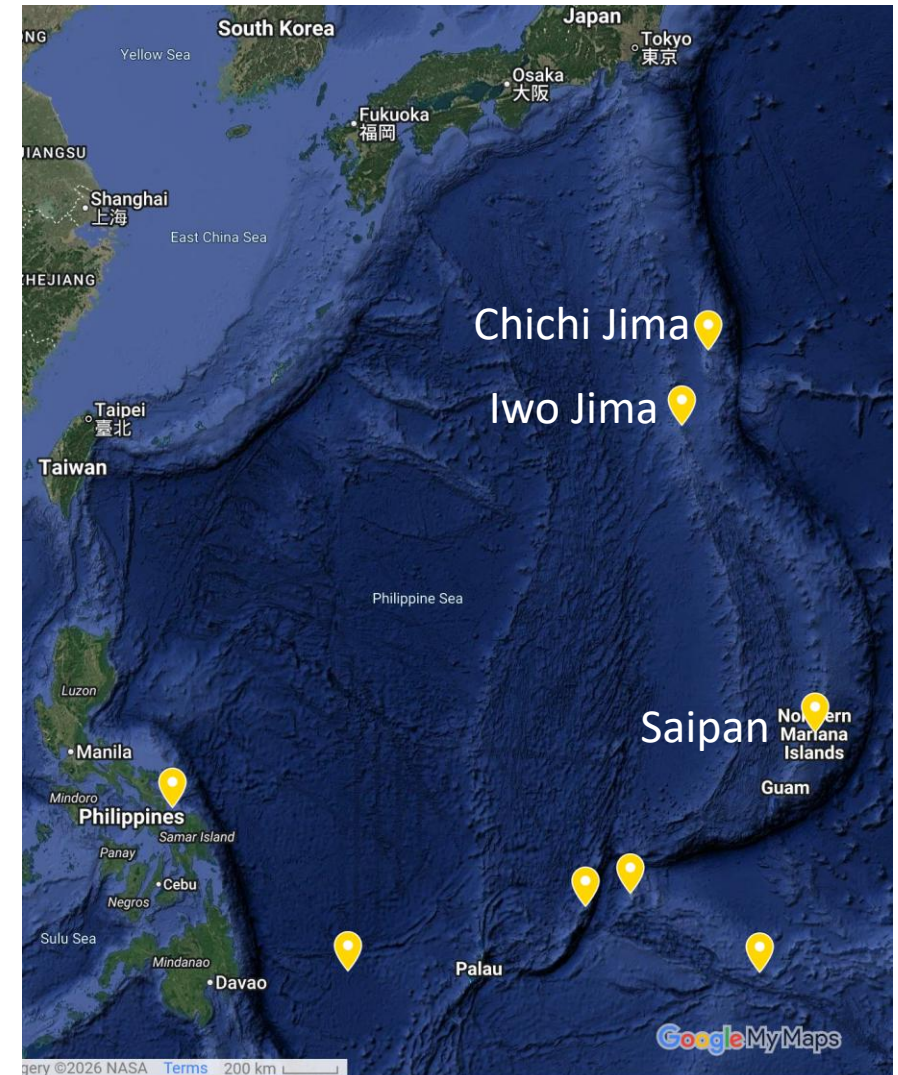
15/16 June 1944 - Marianas

- The Japanese launched repeated counterattacks during the night and the early hours of the following morning, mostly by poorly coordinated small units.
- All the attacks were repulsed, partly by the firepower provided by the tanks and artillery that had been unloaded during the day, as well as by American warships that illuminated the combat areas with star shells.
- On 16 June, Holland Smith committed his reserves to reinforce the beachhead, ordering two of the three regiments of the 27th Infantry Division—the 165th and the 105th—to land.
- He proposed to indefinitely postpone the 18 June invasion of Guam.
- The two Marine divisions on Saipan spent most of the day consolidating the beachhead.
- The 2nd Marine Division began to close the gap between the two divisions north of Charan Kanoa, and the 4th Marine Division cleared the area around Aginan point on the southwest of the Island.



15 and 16 June 1944 - Marianas

- While some of the fast carriers and battleships were disposed to the westward to meet the threats sighted by the submarines, two carrier task groups attacked the Japanese bases of Iwo Jima and Chichi Jima on 15 and 16 June .
- During this strike to the northward the carrier planes destroyed enemy planes in the air and on the ground, and set fire to buildings, ammunition and fuel dumps, thus temporarily neutralizing those bases, and freeing the invasion forces from attack by enemy aircraft coming from the Bonins and Volcanos.
- The forces employed in the northward strike were recalled to rendezvous west of Saipan, as were also many of the ships designated to give fire support to the troops on Saipan.



16/17 June 1944 - Marianas

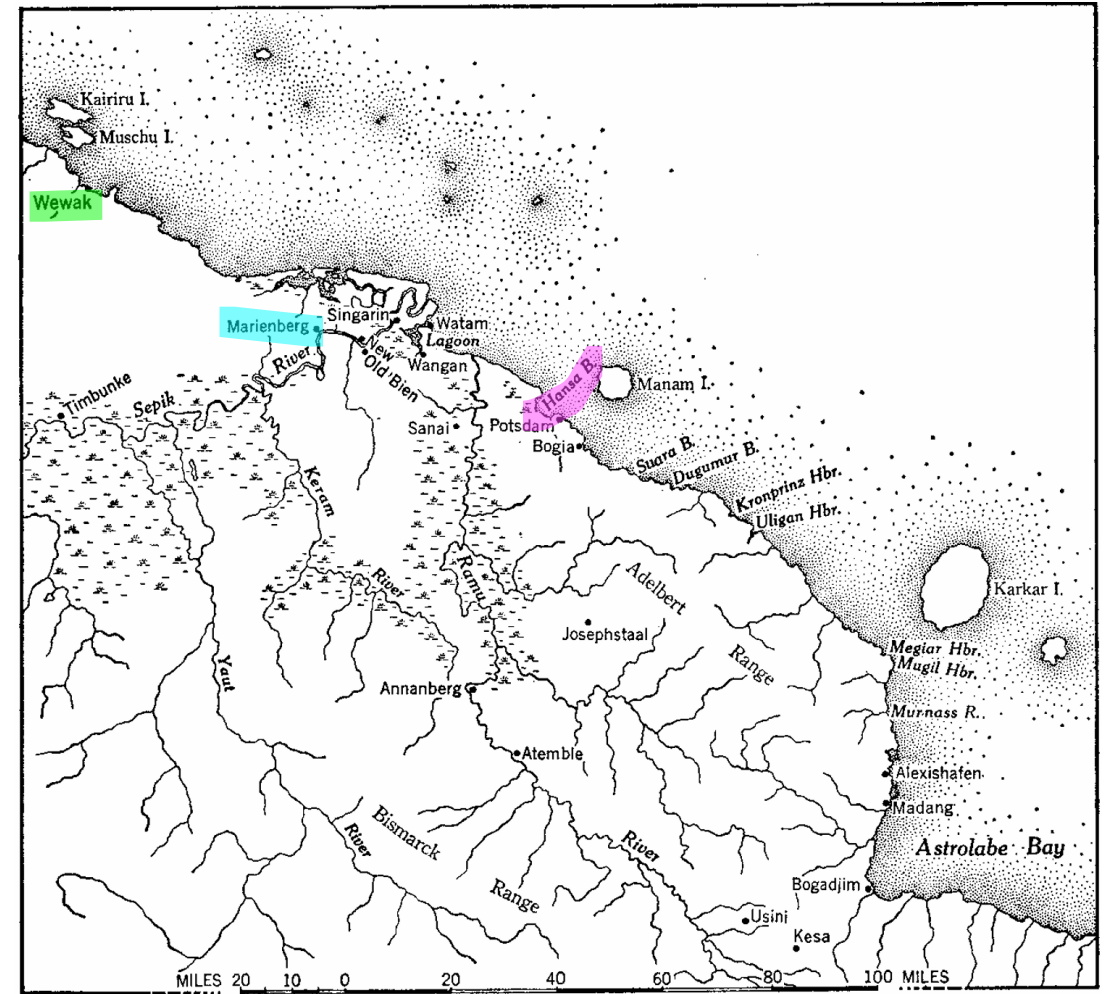
- During the night, Saitō launched a tank assault on the flank of the beachhead just north of Charan Kanoa with around 35 Type 97 medium tanks and Type 95 light tanks and about 1,000 soldiers.
- The attack was poorly coordinated. Nagumo's naval troops, who were supposed to be part of the attack, did not cooperate.
- The attack was broken up by bazookas, 37 mm anti-tank guns, M4 Sherman tanks, and self-propelled 75 mm howitzers.
- Around 31 Japanese tanks were knocked out.



Japanese Type 97 medium tank knocked out in 17 June attack

17 June 1944 – New Guinea

- By the 14th patrols passed through Potsdam, deserted except for about 90 emaciated Chinese, and during the next few days the 4th Battalion explored a deserted Hansa Bay, reaching the northern tip of the harbour on 17th June.
- The Australians learnt from the Chinese that there were no Japanese anywhere in the area and that the withdrawal of thousands of them had taken place by day and night weeks ago.
- The Japanese went by foot to the mouth of the Ramu which was crossed at night in boats, by foot to Wangan, by barge up the Sepik to Marienberg, and finally by foot to Wewak.



Madang-Wewak

17/18 June 1944 - Marianas

- In the following days, the 2nd Marine Division on the northern half of the bridgehead cleared the area around Lake Susupe, reached the objectives for the first day of the invasion and slowly moved north toward Garapan and Mount Tapotchou.
- The 4th Marine Division began their advance on Aslito Field.
- On 18 June, the two regiments of the 27th Infantry Division, which was now fighting as a unit, captured the field as the Japanese withdrew to Nafutan Point.
- The 4th Marine Division reached the island's eastern coast, cutting off the Japanese troops at Nafutan Point.
- Holland Smith ordered the 27th Infantry Division to quickly capture Nafutan Point, but it was unable to do so.
- Smith had estimated that no more than 300 Japanese soldiers were in the area, but more than 1,000 were defending the rough terrain. The battle for the point continued for over a week.
- The American transports continued to unload throughout 17 June. The following day, they sailed east toward safety, while the warships set off for battle with the Japanese fleet.

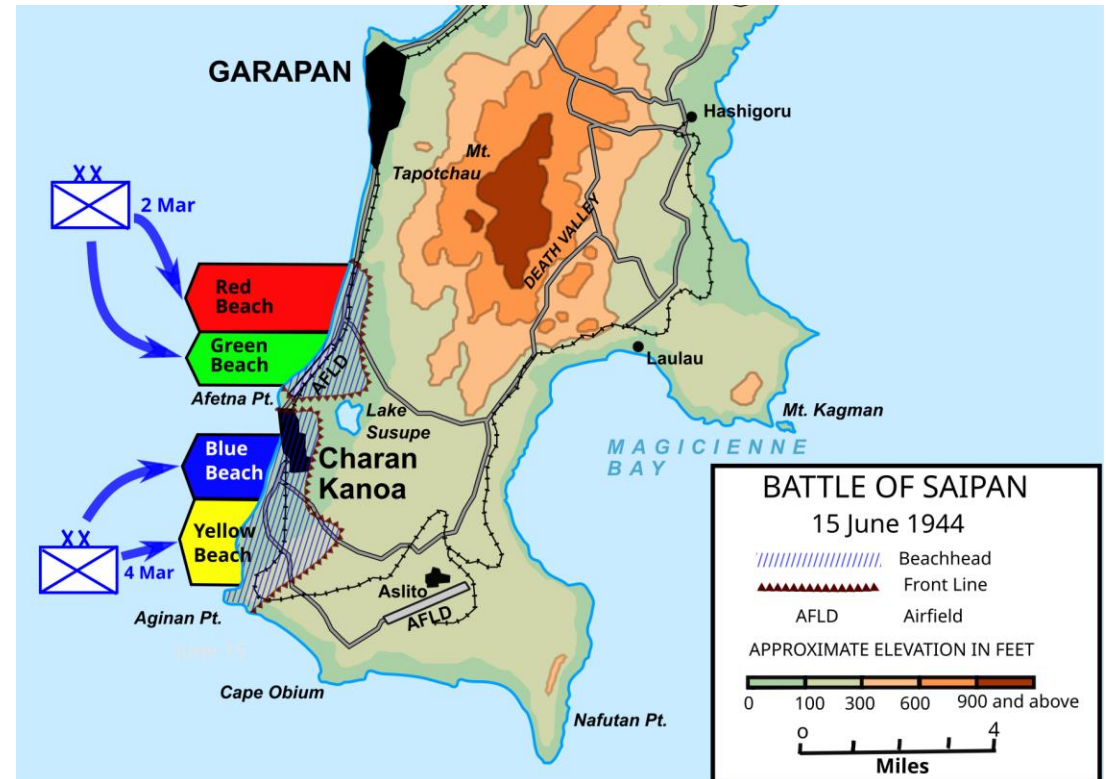


A "Satan", an M3 Stuart tank with a Ronson flamethrower, incinerates a Japanese pillbox on Saipan, June 1944.

The Ronson was developed by the British Petroleum Warfare Department in 1940. Having insufficient range it was rejected by Britain but taken up by Canada for development. From there it came to the attention of the United States. V Amphibious Corps placed orders for 30. The Chemical Warfare Service CENPAC in Hawaii installed the Ronsons in 24 M3 Stuarts for the Battle of Saipan.

19/20 June 1944 - Marianas

- By 19 June, the Japanese began withdrawing to a new defensive line in the center of the island.
- By this time, the Americans had suffered over 6,000 casualties.
- The Marine divisions headed north toward the new Japanese defenses, and Holland Smith called for the last reserve of the Expeditionary Force the the 106th regiment of the 27th infantry Division, to land on 20 June.
- The battle for Nafutan point continued for over a week.



18/19 June 1944 - Marianas

- Shortly before midnight on **18 June** Nimitz radioed Spruance that a Japanese vessel had broken radio silence. The message intercepted was an apparent dispatch from Ozawa to his land-based air forces on Guam.
- Radio direction-finding placed the sender approximately 355 miles west-southwest of TF 58.
- Mitscher realized that there was a chance of a night surface encounter with Ozawa's forces. Arleigh Burke, Mitscher's chief of staff (a former destroyer squadron commander who had won several night battles in the Solomons), assumed that battle line commander Willis Lee (photo) would welcome the opportunity.
- But Lee strongly opposed such an encounter. Having personally experienced a confused night action off Guadalcanal, Lee was not enthusiastic about a night engagement with Japanese surface forces, believing that his crews were not adequately trained for it.



19 June 1944 - Marianas

- Shortly after learning Lee's opinion, Mitscher requested permission from Spruance to move TF 58 west during the night, to reach a launch position at dawn that would allow for a maximum aerial assault on the enemy force.
- Spruance considered for an hour, then refused Mitscher's request.
- Spruance's decision was influenced by his orders from Nimitz, who had made it clear that the protection of the invasion fleet was the primary mission of TF 58.
- Spruance had concerns that the Japanese would attempt to draw his main fleet away from the Marianas with a diversionary force while slipping an attack force in to destroy the landing fleet.

Photo # 80-G-225341 Adm. Raymond A. Spruance, April 1944



19 June 1944 - Marianas

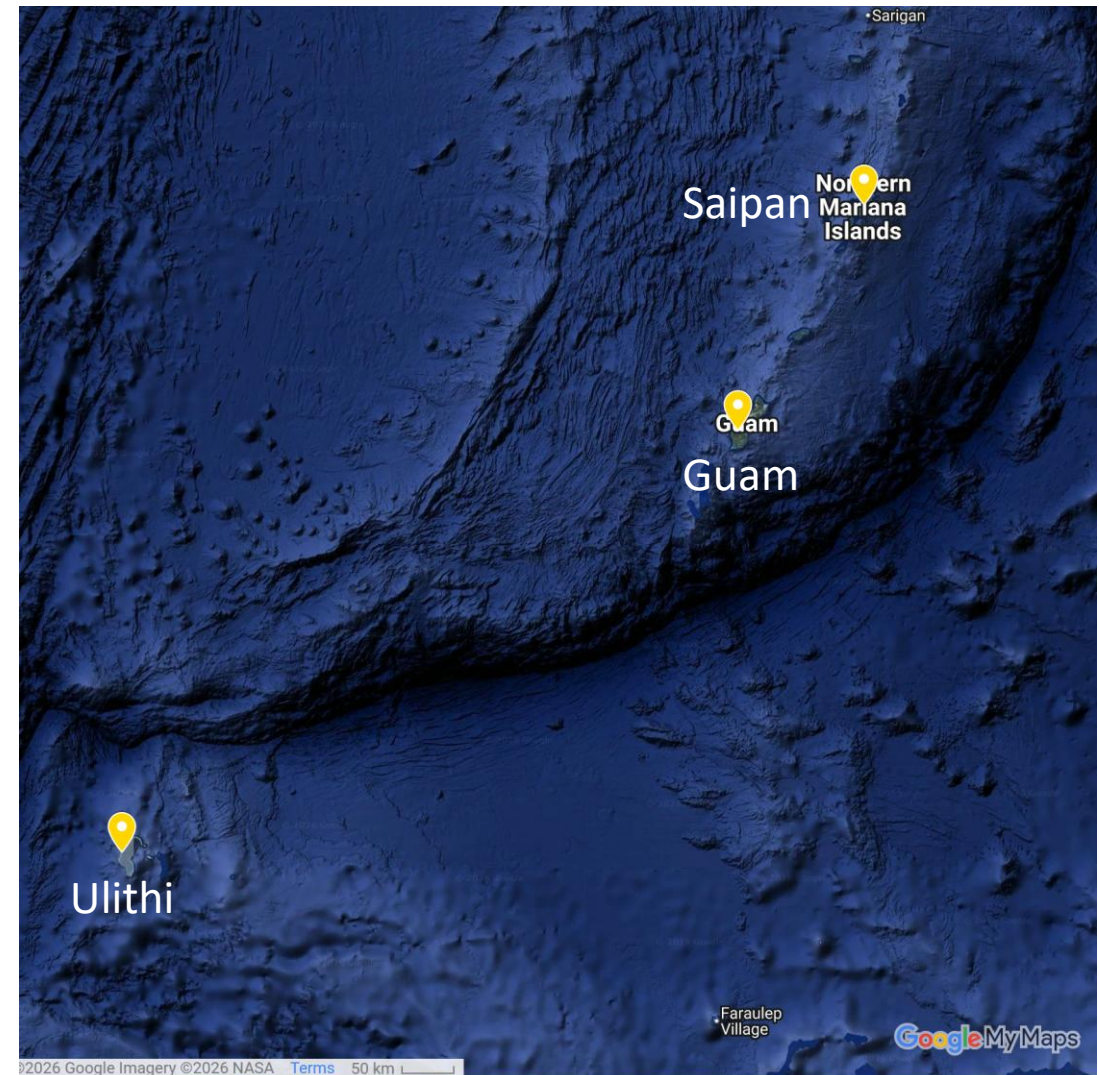
- The Japanese had already launched their morning search patrols, using some of the 50 aircraft stationed on Guam, and at 05:50 one of these, a Mitsubishi A6M Zero, found TF-58.
- After radioing his sighting of U.S. ships, the bomb-carrying Zero attacked picket destroyer Stockham but was shot down by the destroyer Yarnall.



USS Yarnall underway in 1944. Laid down 5 December 1942. Commissioned 30 December 1943. 35 knots, 5 * 5 inch and 5 twin 40mm guns.

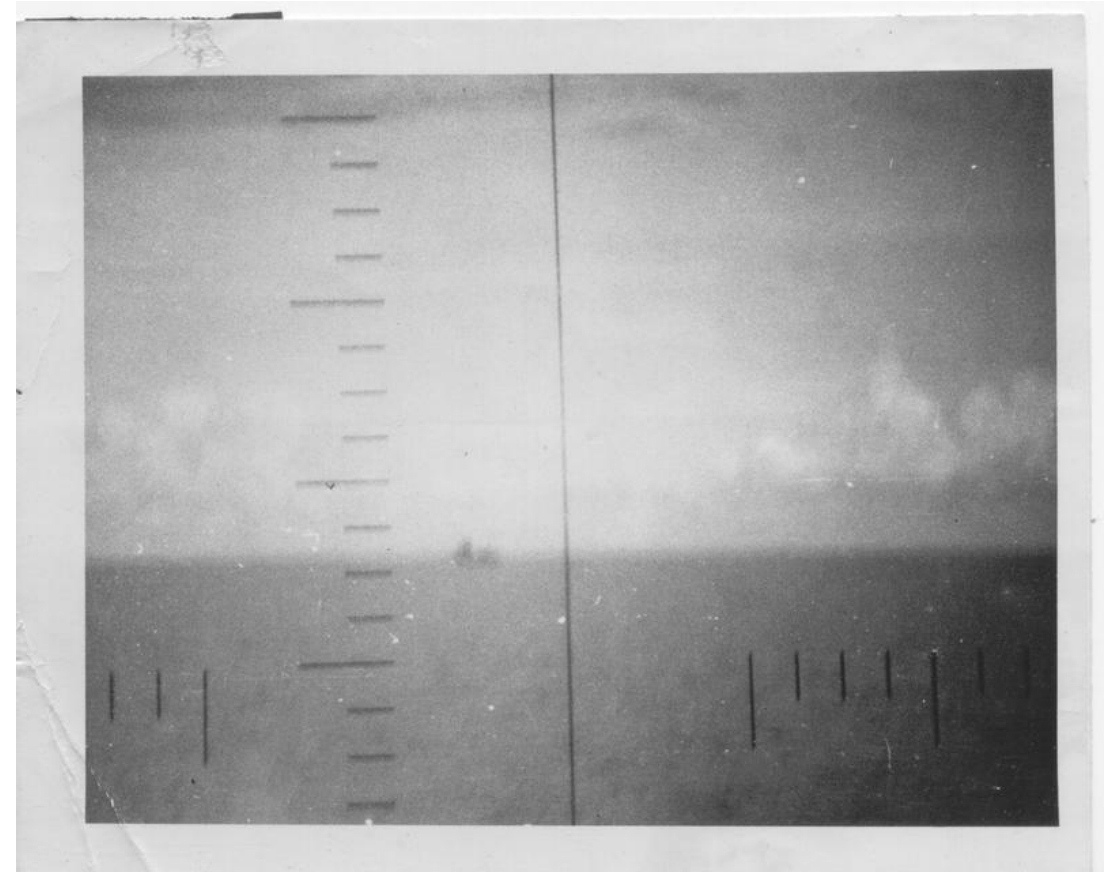
19 June 1944 - Marianas

- At 0705 LT Ridgway's radar operators on Hornet detected a large number of aircraft over Guam, and Ridgway vectored four fighters to see what was going on.
- They found a number of Japanese planes circling to land at Orote Field on Guam, and the Hellcats attacked, while informing Ridgway what they had found.
- He had twenty-four more fighters launched, while RADM Clark radioed the task force commander that they needed more fighters over Guam.
- The landing aircraft had pretty surely been dispatched from the approaching First Mobile Fleet.
- The Hellcats destroyed thirty-five Japanese planes at Orote for the loss of one Hellcat. They might have done more, but at 0937 the task force FDO detected a large group of bogeys coming from the west at 130 miles and recalled the fighters to cover the force.
- ADM Mitscher ordered the launch of all torpedo and dive bombers to orbit safely east of Guam to free the carrier decks for fighter use, and get dangerous gasoline and bomb loads out of the way.



19 June 1944 - Marianas

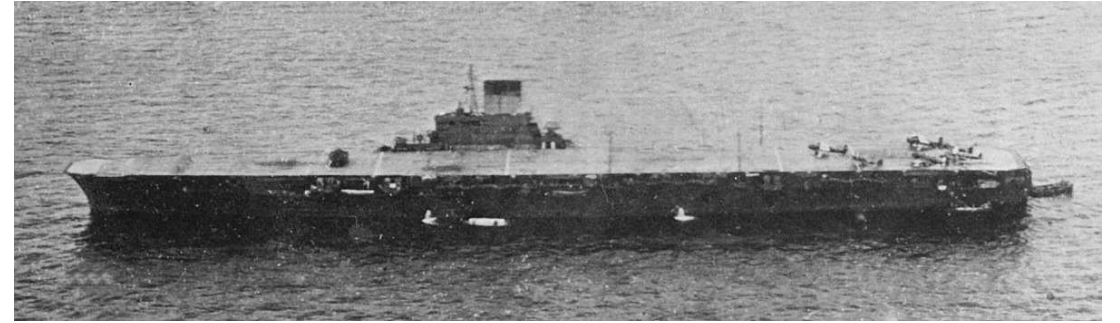
- At 08:16 the submarine USS Albacore, which had sighted Ozawa's carrier group, had maneuvered into an ideal attack position;
- Lieutenant Commander James W. Blanchard selected the closest carrier as his target, which happened to be *Taihō*, the largest and newest carrier in the Japanese fleet and Ozawa's flagship.
- As Albacore was about to fire, however, her fire-control computer failed, and the torpedoes had to be fired "by eye".
- Determined to go ahead with the attack, Blanchard ordered all six torpedoes to be fired in a single spread to increase the chances of a hit.
- *Taihō* had just launched 42 aircraft as a part of the second raid when *Albacore* fired the torpedo spread.
- Of the six torpedoes fired, four veered off-target. Japanese pilot Sakio Komatsu had recently launched and from his aircraft sighted one of the two torpedoes which were heading for *Taihō*. Komatsu dived into the path of the torpedo which then detonated.
- The sixth torpedo struck the carrier on her starboard side and ruptured two aviation fuel tanks.



Taihō photographed from USS Albacore's periscope, 19 June 1944

19 June 1944 - Marianas

- The carrier's escorting destroyers made depth charge attacks but caused only minor damage to *Albacore*.
- Initially, the damage to *Taihō* seemed minor; the flooding was quickly contained and the carrier's propulsion and navigation were unaffected.
- *Taihō* quickly resumed regular operations, but gasoline vapor from the ruptured fuel tanks began to fill the hangar decks, creating an increasingly dangerous situation on board.



19 June 1944 - Marianas

- USS Cowpens (CVL-25) (The Mighty Moo) underway in the Pacific. The Independence-class light carriers were two-thirds the size of an Essex, which made them a tight fit for the complement of 33 planes.
- The flight deck was only 73 feet wide; an F6F had a 42-foot wingspan and a TBF Avenger 54—giving pilots very little margin for error.
- The Cowpens was part of TG 58.4 the smallest of the four carrier groups in Task Force 58 including the Moo, her sister ship Langley (CVL-27), and the Essex (CV-9).
- After a brief diversion to the Bonin Islands the Moo rejoined the task force off the Marianas on 18 June.



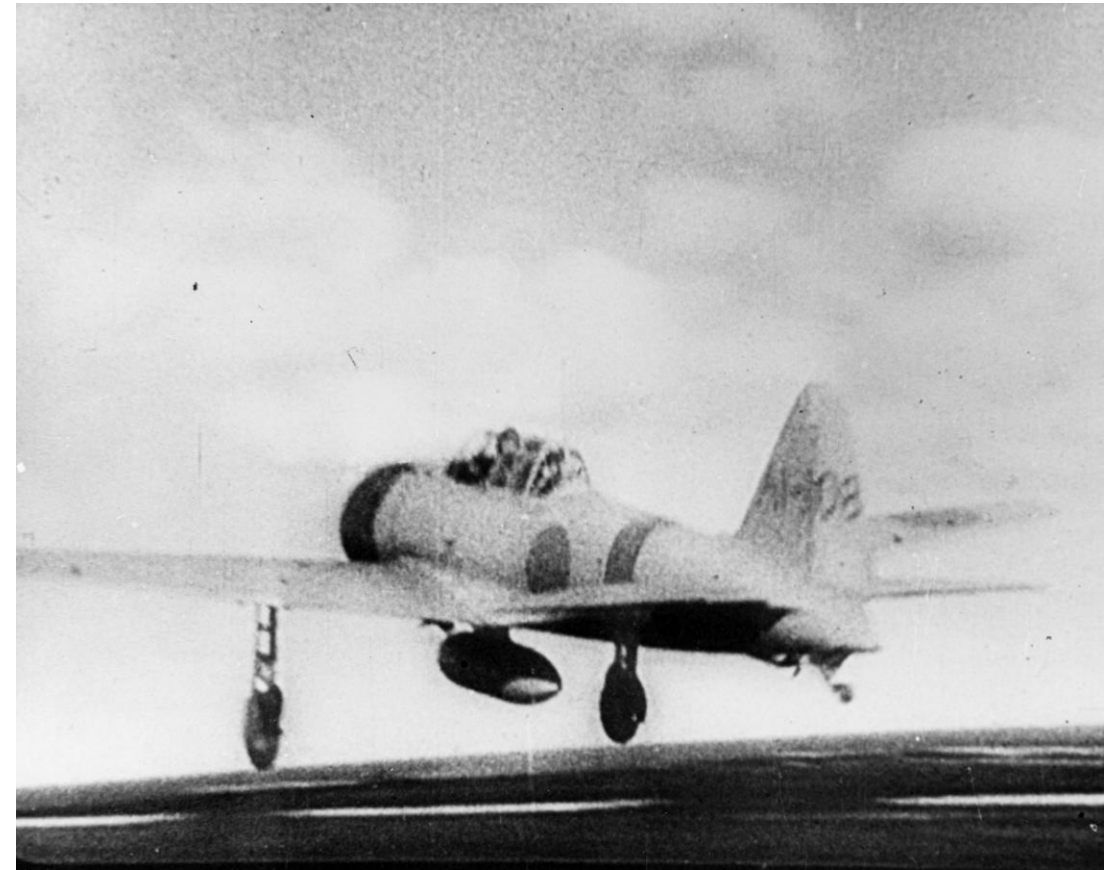
19 June 1944 - Marianas

- On the 19th the Moo had orders to keep eight F6F Hellcats in the air at all times and another 14 ready to launch at a moment's notice.
- When the leading wave of the enemy attack began to appear on U.S. radar screens. The planes already in the air charged toward the enemy.
- All 15 American carriers swung into the wind and accelerated to 20 knots to launch aircraft. The Cowpens was the first to get her ready fighters into the air.
- McKinley recalled, the Moo's planes assembled in the air with whomever they could find, pointed their planes west toward the enemy, and "hung on their propellers" to gain altitude as fast as possible.



19 June 1944 - Marianas

- Brownie was in the first rotation of the Moo's combat air patrol that morning.
- He was guided into the fight by one of the fighter direction officers, whose calm voice on the radio steered him to within five miles of the enemy and then directed him to "look sharp".
- Seeing dark specks ahead Brownie called out, "Tally ho!" and turned his division of four planes to attack.
- The enemy formation of 25 to 30 planes was scattering and only the fighters remaining at his altitude.
- As Brownie closed in, two Zekes turned to meet him. Brownie and his wingman, "Raffles" Raffman, turned into the lead plane to attack.
- The Zeke broke off and made a climbing turn. Brownie engaged his Hellcat's water injection system for a burst of speed. He closed to within 200 yards, and firing from behind and below, sliced parts off the Zeke. As Brownie pulled away, Raffman moved in behind and set the enemy ablaze, sending it arcing down to the sea.
- With the enemy formation scattering, Brownie and Raffman headed back to base. Through a break in the clouds they spotted a lone airplane circling. Brownie moved in to investigate, thinking that "if it was one ours it would not be circling." Drawing closer, he confirmed it was a bomb-carrying Zeke and maneuvered onto its tail. "I splashed him in flames with one burst," he recalled.



A Mitsubishi A6M2 "Zero" (officially Zeke) Model 21 takes off from the aircraft carrier Akagi, to attack Pearl Harbor

19 June 1944 - Marianas

- McKinley recalled “the sky was full of planes at all altitudes, some burning and falling.”
- He and Stieglitz were climbing through 7,500 feet when he saw a trio of Jill torpedo planes flying in a tight V-formation a thousand or so feet below.
- With a wave and a point from his cockpit, McKinley signalled to Stieglitz that he would attack.
- The pair swooped down behind the torpedo bombers, who split up as the two Hellcats closed in.
- McKinley chased the pair that broke to the right and Stieglitz the lone Jill that turned to the left.
- Stieglitz caught up with his quarry and quickly flamed it. He called out “scratch one fish” on the radio, pulled away in a climbing turn and was never seen again.



Nakajima B6N Tenzan torpedo bomber in flight, Allied reporting name Jill.

19 June 1944 - Marianas

- McKinley (photo) pursued the remaining two Jills into a high-speed dive toward the wave-tops.
- They weren't taking evasive action, so he closed to within 100 yards or so before opening fire.
- After several gun bursts, the lead aircraft started smoking until it rolled over and careened into the water.
- McKinley followed it to make sure that it went in, and then sped after the second Jill, which was trying to make a break for it, skimming above the waves.
- Pulling in behind, McKinley was so focused on his target that he did not notice they were heading directly toward a friendly Essex-class carrier. The flattop's antiaircraft guns were blazing away, trying to down the Jill before it dropped its torpedo.
- McKinley hit the plane with several bursts of fire; it lost control and hit the water with a tremendous splash.
- Seeing the friendly carrier a mile ahead—and the splashes from its gunfire hitting the water all around him—McKinley pulled away.
- Citation: Lieutenant Donald J. McKinley, United States Navy, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for extraordinary achievement in aerial flight as Pilot in Fighting TWENTY-FIVE (VF-25), embarked in U.S.S. COWPENS (CVL-25), over the Marianas on 19 June 1944.



19 June 1944 - Marianas

- By **1000** 450 Hellcats and a number of night fighter Corsairs had been launched to intercept the oncoming air armada.
- Under the coordination of Task Force 58 FDO LT Joseph R. Eggert, a former New York stockbroker, the fighter direction teams coached the fighters to favorable intercept positions at 25,000 feet.
- The Hellcats and Corsairs went through the oncoming formations in waves. The new Japanese pilots did not have the experience or skill of the defending U.S. Navy pilots, who described the flaming and smoking Japanese planes as falling like leaves.
- Some attackers made it through the fighter screen, but most were brought down by massed AA fire, many projectiles being tipped with the new radar proximity fuse.



Fighter aircraft contrails mark the sky over Task Force 58, 19 June 1944

19 June 1944 - Marianas

- Haley and Adams fell behind while climbing toward the melee. They saw a dogfight at wave-top level and dived down to join the fray— five Hellcats trying to dispatch a single Zeke.
- The enemy pilot was particularly skilled and used his plane's maneuverability at low altitude to keep the Hellcats from getting into a good firing position.
- After failing to connect with a few bursts of his own, Haley's guns started overheating, so he pulled away.
- He was circling above the fray when the Zeke somehow eluded the other U.S. fighters and fled to the west.
- Haley spotted him and turned in pursuit. After a race of about 40 miles, he managed to close the distance and get on the enemy's tail. He missed with his initial burst but anticipated his prey would try to roll to the left, as the Zeke was sluggish to the right at that speed. Sure enough, the enemy pilot broke to the left—straight into Haley's gunsights.
- With a blast from all six of his guns, Haley caught the Zeke in the wing root and cockpit. It rolled over and went straight into the sea.
- Suddenly aware that there was no one else in sight, Haley turned back for home.
- Years later, he vividly recalled his relief when the task force drew into view. "It was an awesome sight, the whole Fifth Fleet steaming west, stretching to the limit of my visibility from horizon to horizon."



Lt Cdr Gaylord (Brownie) Brown, who led the Moo's fighter pilots and accounted for a Zeke and a half; Lt Cdr Bob Price, who spent 11 days adrift on a raft; and the Moo's torpedo squadron commander, Lt R. B. Cottingham,

19 June 1944 - Marianas

- Damage to ships was limited to a non-disabling bomb hit on the battleship South Dakota and minor damage to the carriers Wasp and Bunker Hill. 385 Japanese planes had been destroyed at a cost of forty Hellcats.
- It was a set piece example of what fighter direction should be. The Japanese raids came in at high altitude, with minimal evasive maneuvers, but from many points of the compass. Of the fighter direction during the attacks, Commander Task Force 58 noted:



USS Bunker Hill is nearly hit by a Japanese bomb during the air attacks of June 19, 1944. The Japanese plane, with its tail shot off, is about to crash, at left. Photographed from USS Monterey (CVL-26).

19 June 1944 - Marianas

- The four major attacks were each hit at ranges of some 50-60 miles from the carriers and each time with sufficient altitude advantage to our fighters. It was the first time that a major enemy air blow has been made on our forces without the loss of or serious damage to at least one of our carriers.
- It proved that the long and costly efforts in research, training, and the practical application of radar have not been in vain.
- ...Every effort was made to insure that an adequate number of fighters were being vectored out against each raid....
- Of 33 interceptions initiated as a result of radar or visual contact, 28 were completed successfully, resulting in the destruction of 141 enemy planes.



Combat Information Center with the ship at General Quarters Directing the Fighters.

19 June 1944 - Marianas

- Another submarine, USS Cavalla, was able to maneuver to an attack position on the 25,675-ton carrier Shōkaku (photo) by about noon.
- The submarine fired a spread of six torpedoes, three of which struck Shōkaku on her starboard side.
- Badly damaged, the carrier came to a halt. One torpedo had hit the forward aviation fuel tanks near the main hangar, and aircraft that had just landed and were being refueled exploded into flames. Ammunition and exploding bombs added to the conflagration, as did burning fuel spewing from shattered fuel pipes.
- With her bows subsiding into the sea and fires out of control, the captain gave orders to abandon ship.
- Within minutes, there was a catastrophic explosion of aviation fuel vapor which had built up between decks, which blew the ship apart. The carrier rolled over and sank about 140 miles north of the island of Yap at coordinates 12°00'N 137°46'E .
- 1,263 men were killed. There were 570 survivors, including the carrier's commanding officer, Captain Hiroshi Matsubara.
- Destroyer Urakaze attacked the submarine, but Cavalla escaped with relatively minor damage despite near misses from depth charges.



19 June 1944 - Marianas

- Meanwhile, Taihō was falling victim to poor damage control.
- Hoping to clear the explosive fumes, an inexperienced damage-control officer ordered her ventilation system to operate at full blast. This action instead spread the vapors throughout Taihō, putting the entire vessel at risk.
- At approximately 14:30, a spark from an electric generator on the hangar deck ignited the accumulated fumes, triggering a series of catastrophic explosions.
- After the first explosions, it was clear that Taihō was doomed, and Ozawa and his staff transferred to the nearby destroyer Wakatsuki.
- Soon thereafter, Taihō suffered a second series of explosions and sank (west of the Mariana Islands, near coordinates roughly 12°0'N 138°12'E).
- From a crew of 2,150, 1,650 were lost.

- The Kaidai-class submarine I-184 was sunk in the Philippine Sea by a TBF Avenger from USS Suwannee (CVE-27) at coordinates 13°01'N 149°53'E.

20 June 1944 - Marianas

- Early-morning TF 58 searches on 20 June found nothing.
- An extra mid-day search by Hellcat fighter pilots was also unsuccessful.
- Finally at 15:12 a garbled message from an Enterprise search plane indicated a sighting. At 15:40 the sighting was verified, along with distance, course, and speed. The Japanese fleet was 275 miles out, steaming due west at 20 knots.
- The Japanese were at the limit of TF 58's strike range, and daylight was slipping away. Mitscher decided to launch an all-out strike.
- After the first attack group had launched, a third message arrived, indicating the Japanese fleet were 60 miles farther out than previously reported.
- The first launch would be at their limits of fuel and would have to attempt landing at night. Mitscher cancelled the second launch but chose not to recall the 240 planes of the first launch.



Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher, Commander, Task Force 58, on board his flagship, the aircraft carrier USS Lexington (CV-16), at the time of the Marianas campaign, June 1944.

20 June 1944 - Marianas

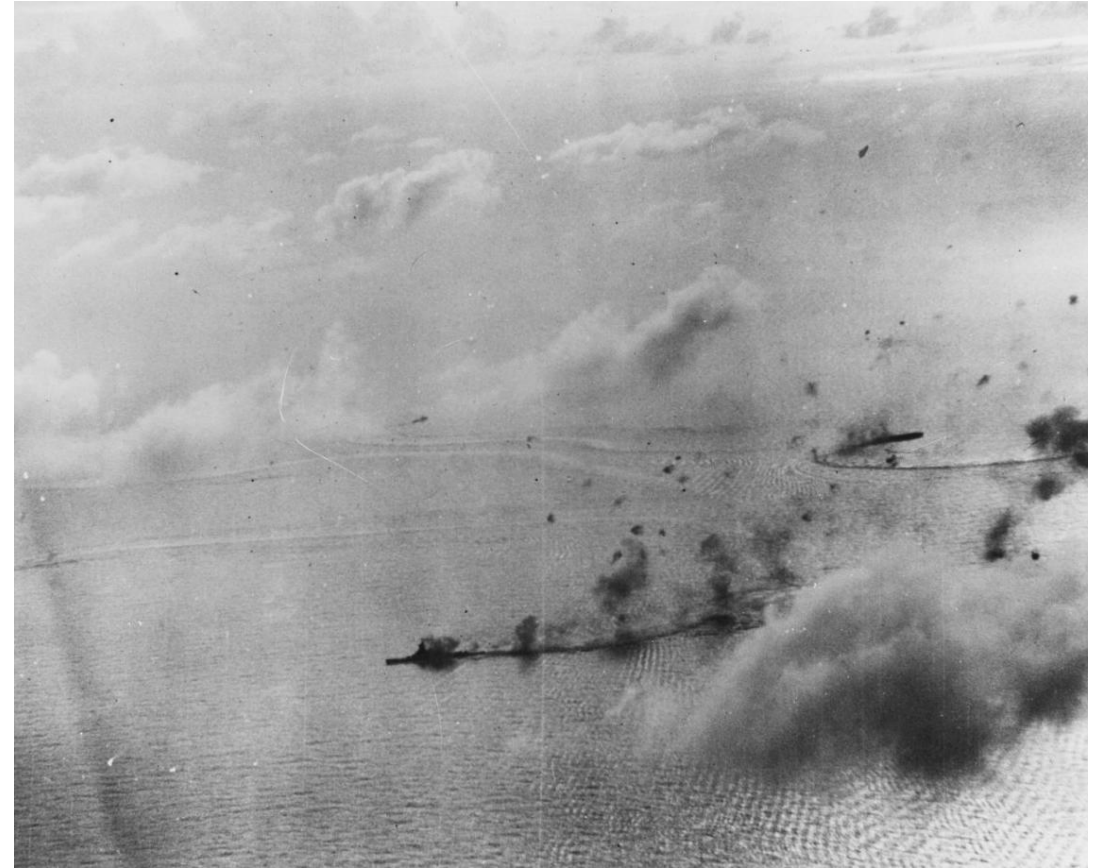
- The first ships sighted by the U.S. strike were oilers, 30 miles before the carrier groups.
- The strike group from Wasp, more concerned with their low fuel levels than with finding the more important Japanese carriers and battleships, dived on the tankers.
- Two of these were damaged so severely that they were later scuttled, while a third was able to put out fires and get underway.



TBF Avenger torpedo planes and SB2C Helldiver dive bombers from the Fast Carrier Task Force en route to attack the 1st Mobile Fleet, June 1944 during the Battle of the Philippine Sea

20 June 1944 - Marianas

- The carrier Hiyō was attacked and hit by bombs and torpedoes from four Avengers from Belleau Wood.
- Hiyō was set afire after a tremendous blast from leaking aviation fuel. Dead in the water, she sank stern first, with the loss of 250 officers and men. The rest of her crew, about one thousand, were rescued by Japanese destroyers.
- The carriers Zuikaku, Junyō and Chiyoda were damaged by bombs.



Japanese Carrier Division 3 under attack by Task Force 38 planes, 20 June 1944. The battleship in the lower center is either Haruna or Kongo. The carrier Chiyoda is at right. Photographed from a USS Bunker Hill (CV-17) aircraft (80-G-231831).

20 June 1944 - Marianas

- Twenty American aircraft in the strike were destroyed by Japanese fighters and anti-aircraft fire.
- After the protracted strike most of the aircraft returning to their carriers were dangerously low on fuel, and night had fallen.
- At 20:45, the first returning U.S. aircraft reached TF 58. Knowing his aviators would have difficulty finding their carriers, Admiral Joseph J. Clark (photo) of Hornet decided to illuminate his carrier, shining searchlights directly up into the night, despite the risk of attack from Japanese submarines and aircraft. Mitscher backed up the decision, and soon every ship in Task Force 58 was lit up. Picket destroyers fired starshells to help the aircraft find the task groups.

Photo # 80-G-402229 Rear Admiral Joseph J. Clark, USN



20 June 1944 - Marianas

- 80 of the returning aircraft were lost.
- Some crashed on flight decks, but the majority ditched into the sea. Some pilots intentionally went down in groups to facilitate rescue, and more ditched individually either in a controlled landing with a few gallons of fuel left or in a crash after their engines ran dry.
- Approximately three-quarters of the crews were rescued from the sea, either that night from crash locations within the task forces, or over the next few days
- Photo: Lieutenant Ronald P. Rip Gift relaxes with other pilots in a ready room on board USS Monterey (CVL-26), after landing on her at night following strikes on the Japanese fleet, 20 June 1944. Note admonition "Get the Carriers" on chalk board in the background.



21 June 1944 - Marianas

- U.S. forces gave chase, but the battle was over.
- The four Japanese air strikes involved 373 carrier aircraft, of which 243 were lost and 130 returned to the carriers;
- many of those were subsequently lost when Taiho and Shōkaku were sunk.
- After the second day of the battle, losses totalled three carriers, more than 350 carrier aircraft, and around 200 land-based aircraft.
- Aboard the Lexington afterward, a pilot was heard to remark "Hell, this is like an old-time turkey shoot!"



Lt. Alexander Vraciu downed six Japanese dive bombers in a single mission on 19 June 1944. On 20th while escorting bombers in an attack on the Japanese carriers, Vraciu downed his nineteenth plane, making him the leading U.S. Navy ace, although he held that title for only four months.

19/20 June 1944 – The Marianas

- The Battle of the Philippine Sea,

