
The War in the Pacific 3
From Lae to Tokyo Bay
21
Out with HE in with Napalm
March 45
Jerry McBrien 2026
Google My Maps
2026 Google, INEGI, TMap Mobility
Terms
500 km
China
Beijing
北京
North Korea
South Korea
Sea of Japan
(East Sea)
Yellow Sea
East China Sea
Sapporo
札幌
Osaka
大阪
Taiwan
Philippine Sea
Myanmar
(Burma)
Hanoi
Laos
Thailand
Bangkok
กรุงเทพมหานคร
Vietnam
Cambodia
Ho Chi
Minh City
Andaman Sea
Gulf of
Thailand
South
China Sea
Luzon
Manila
Philippines
Panay
Palawan
Negros
Mindanao
Basilan Island
Malaysia
Kuala Lumpur
Singapore
Celebes Sea
Indonesia
Java Sea
Banda Sea
Jakarta
Surabaya
Arafura Sea
Timor Sea
Jayapura
Bismarck Sea
Papua New
Guinea
Port Moresby
Solomon
Islands
Coral Sea
Fiji
Samoa
French
Polynesia
Kolonia
Honolulu
HAWAII
Hilo
North
Pacific
Ocean
NORTHERN
TERRITORY

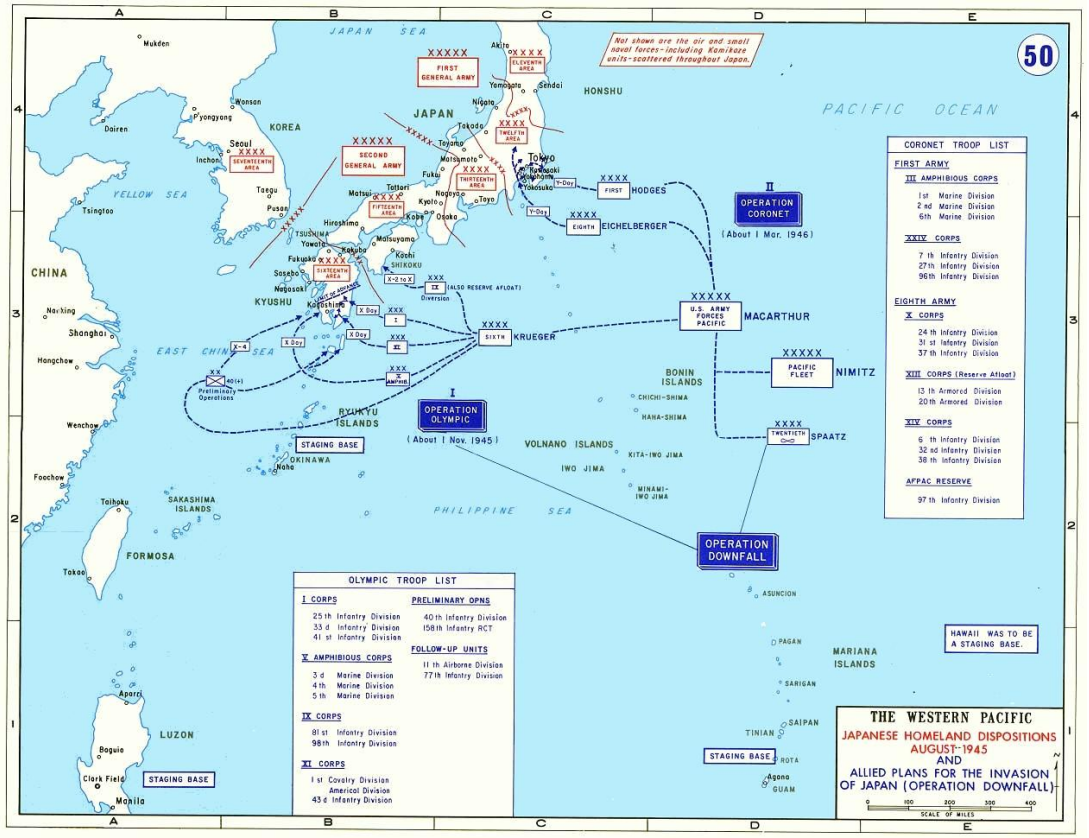
10 December 1944 – British Pacific Fleet

- Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser (photo) the commander of the British Pacific Fleet had visited Nimitz and MacArthur before taking up his command. While inspecting the landings at Lingayan Gulf on the Battleship New Mexico he survived the Kamikazi strike that killed General Lumsden on the bridge they were both standing on.
- Fraser arrived in Sydney on 10 December 1944 under the mistaken impression that Australia had asked for the BPF and promised to provide for its needs.
- Two days later, the Acting Prime Minister of Australia Frank Forde announced the allocation of £21,156,500 for the maintenance of the BPF.
- In January 1945 MacArthur agreed to release American stockpiles in Australia to support the BPF.
- The Australian government soon became concerned at the voracious demands of the BPF works programme, which was criticised by Australian military leaders.



Early 1945 - Downfall

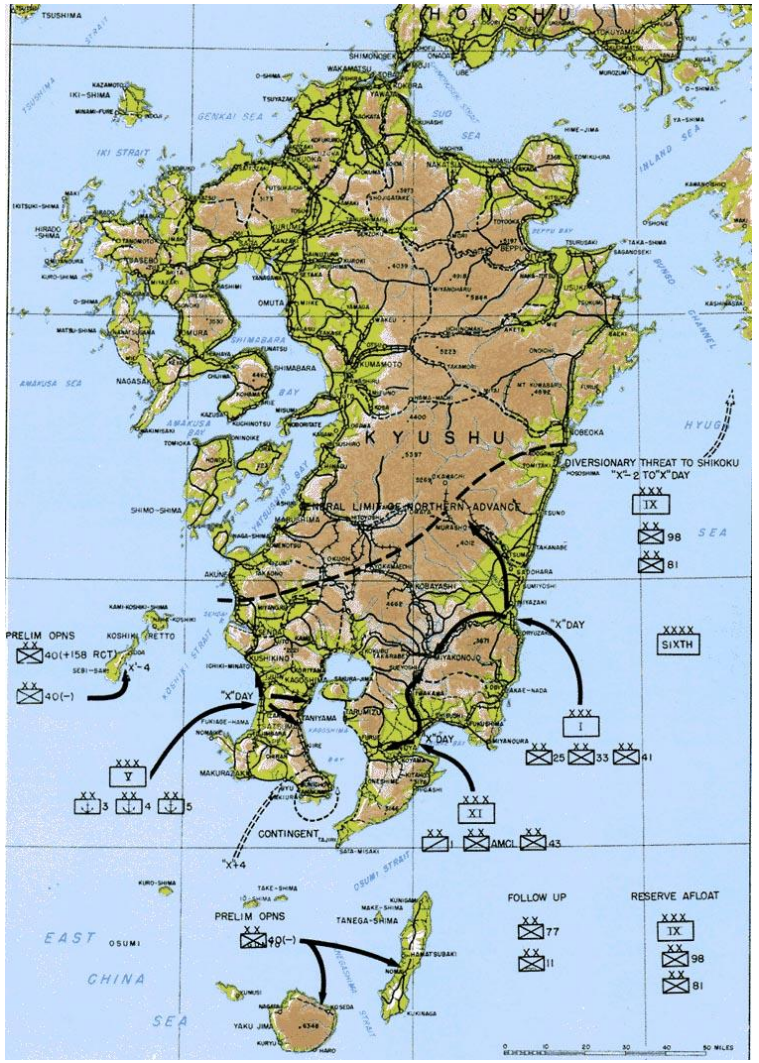
- Operation Downfall was the proposed plan by US and British forces for the invasion of the Japanese home islands.
- The operation had two parts:
- Set to begin in November 1945, Operation Olympic would land 15 US Divisions to capture the southern third of the southernmost main Japanese island, Kyūshū, with the recently captured island of Okinawa to be used as a staging area.
- In Spring 1946 would come Operation Coronet, the planned invasion of the Kantō Plain, near Tokyo, on the main Japanese island of Honshu with 45 Divisions detailed for the initial landing and follow up. Airbases on Kyūshū captured in Operation Olympic would allow land-based air support for Operation Coronet.
- Japan has very few beaches geographically suitable for sea-borne invasion. Only Kyūshū (the southernmost island of Japan) and the beaches of the Kantō Plain (both southwest and southeast of Tokyo) were realistic invasion zones.
- Japan's geography made this invasion plan obvious to the Japanese as well; they were able to accurately predict the Allied invasion plans and adjust their defensive plan accordingly.



Operation Downfall - Map

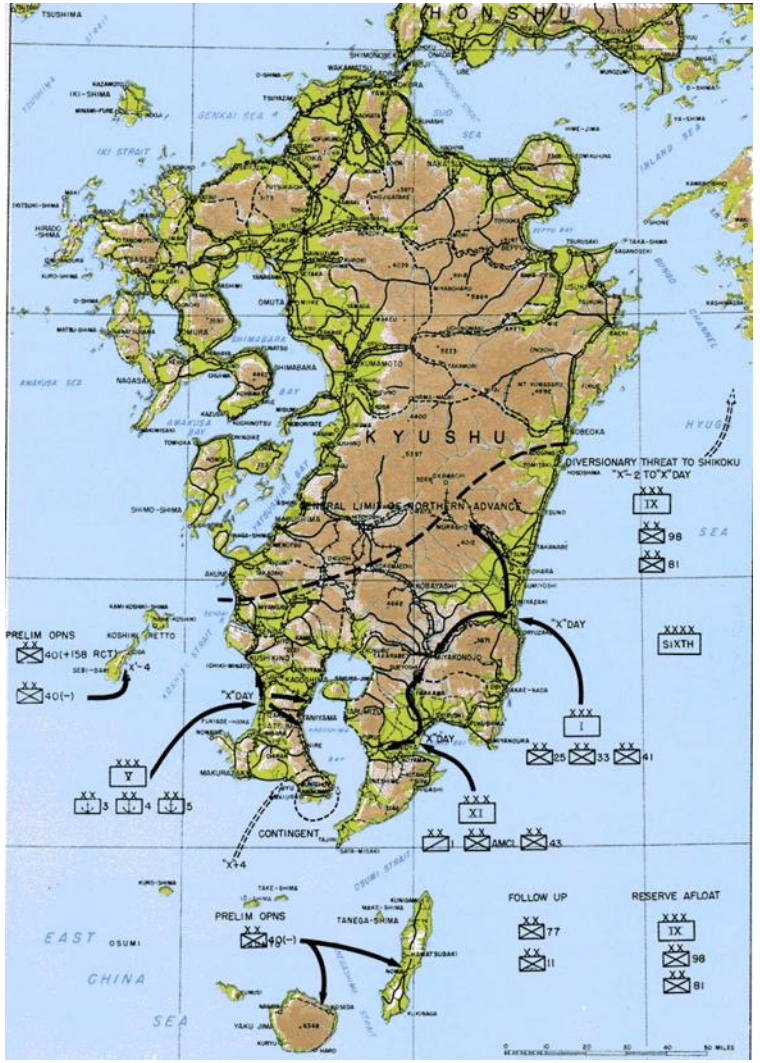
Early 1945 - Downfall

- Before the First Quebec Conference, a joint Canadian–British–American planning team had produced a plan which did not call for invasion of the Japanese Home Islands until 1947–48.
- The American Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that prolonging the war to such an extent was dangerous for national morale.
- Instead, at the Quebec conference, the Combined Chiefs of Staff agreed that Japan should be forced to surrender not more than one year after Germany's surrender.
- The United States Navy urged the use of a blockade and airpower to bring about Japan's capitulation.
- The Army, on the other hand, argued that such a strategy could "prolong the war indefinitely" and expend lives needlessly, and therefore that an invasion was necessary.
- Map of Kyūshū showing planned US troop movements during Operation Olympic



Early 1945 - Downfall

- Based on intelligence available early in 1945, Planners' assumptions included:
- "That approximately three (3) hostile divisions will be disposed in Southern Kyushu and an additional three (3) in Northern Kyushu at initiation of the Olympic operation."
- "That total hostile forces committed against Kyushu operations will not exceed eight (8) to ten (10) divisions and that this level will be speedily attained."
- "That the enemy may withdraw his land-based air forces to the Asiatic Mainland for protection from our neutralizing attacks. That under such circumstances he can possibly amass from 2,000 to 2,500 planes in that area by exercising a rigid economy, and that this force can operate against Kyushu landings by staging through homeland fields."
- "That approximately twenty-one (21) hostile divisions, including depot divisions, will be on Honshu at the initiation of [Coronet] and that fourteen (14) of these divisions may be employed in the Kanto Plain area."



15 January 1945 - Downfall

- Covering only the U.S. Army, the Army Service Forces (ASF) planning document of January 15, 1945, "Redeployment of the United States Army after the Defeat of Germany," expected that an average of 43,000 replacements for "dead and evacuated wounded" would be needed each month between June 1945 and December 1946 to carry out the final phase of the war against Japan.
- Projected losses in these categories, excluding those of the Navy and Marine Corps, totalled approximately 723,000 through the end of 1946 and 863,000 through the first part of 1947.
- ASF Casualty Estimate, January 15, 1945 (Excluding non-evacuated wounded, Navy, and Marine Corps casualties) part of the table only shown opposite. Included in the table but not shown in this excerpt are another 75,000 in the North Pacific and China-Burma-India

Quarter	Pacific Ocean Area		Southwest Pacific	
	Dead	Evacuated Wounded	Dead	Evacuated Wounded
Q3 1945	10,000	23,000	13,000	29,000
Q4 1945	16,000	35,000	12,000	28,500
Q1 1946	24,000	50,500	11,000	24,000
Q2 1946	28,000	61,000	11,000	23,500
Q3 1946	30,000	64,000	11,000	25,000
Q4 1946	30,000	65,500	10,000	23,500
1947	30,000	64,500	10,000	24,500
Total	168,000	363,500	78,000	178,000

17 January 1945 - Downfall

- On January 17, letters from President Roosevelt, General Marshall, and Admiral King to House Military Affairs Committee Chairman Andrew J. May were released to the New York Times, informing the public that
- "the Army must provide 600,000 replacements for overseas theaters before June 30, and, together with the Navy, will require a total of 900,000 inductions by June 30."
- Of the Navy's target of 300,000, a large proportion were required for "manning the rapidly expanding fleet" rather than replacing battle casualties.



Andrew May (2nd from left) with Henry Stimson, Morris Sheppard and George C. Marshall as President Roosevelt signs the Conscription Bill, 1940.

4 February 1945 - British Pacific Fleet

- After bombarding the Sumatra oil refineries, the British Pacific Fleet arrived in Australia on 4 February 1945.
- It comprised two battleships, four fleet carriers, three cruisers and accompanying destroyers.
- The Fleet Train comprised over 300,000 tons of shipping.
- The distance from Sydney was too far to allow efficient fleet support so a forward base was established at Seeadler Harbor, Manus atoll, in the Admiralty Islands, which was described as "Scapa Flow with bloody palm trees."



HMS Victorious arriving at Sydney in February 1945.

25 February 1945 – B29

- LeMay was committed to a mission in support of Iwo on D plus 4 or 5, a maximum strike in either the Tokyo or the Nagoya area.
- In either case, the target would be an engine plant--Musashino if weather permitted a visual strike, or Mitsubishi Hatsudoki if radar conditions prevailed.
- As the target date approached, however, forecasts for cloud over Tokyo and high winds over Nagoya made either alternative unattractive.
- LeMay then decided to hit Tokyo on the 25th with a maximum fire-bomb mission, using one 500-pound GP in each B-29 for spotting purposes and filling up to capacity with E46 incendiaries.
- The number of planes dispatched per mission had increased during the last month as more B-29's came in and as maintenance facilities improved.
- The mission of 25 February sent out 231 Superforts.
- This increase in force was made possible by the participation of planes from the newly arrived 314th Bombardment Wing. The wing had been assembling at North Field on Guam since 8 February.
- On the 25th the wing still had less than a third of its authorized aircraft and had completed only part of its shakedown training, but LeMay was confident that the crews assigned to the Tokyo mission would make out.



29th Bombardment Group North Field Guam 1945

25 February 1945 – B29

- 172 planes got over the target and dropped 453.7 tons of bombs.
- Results, like the size of the effort, exceeded anything achieved before.
- Heavy undercast precluded strike photos, but prints obtained from later reconnaissance missions revealed that about a square mile of the urban area had been destroyed or damaged.
- Damage assessment had changed from square feet to square miles.
- Specifically, to cite Tokyo police records 27,970 buildings had been destroyed and casualties had been numerous.
- This was the "conclusive" test of the fire bomb that the Twentieth Air Force had been asking for.

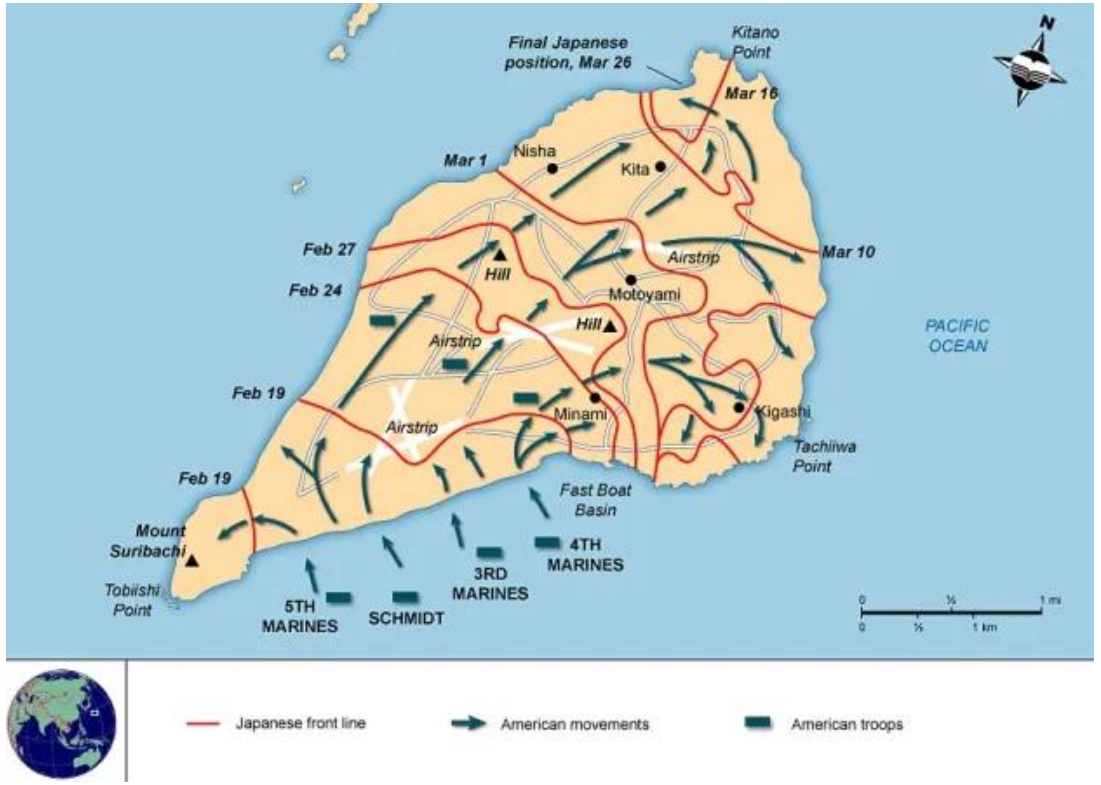


500th Bombardment Group B-29s on an incendiary bomb drop over Japan, 1945

27 February 1945 – Iwo Jima

- Despite the loss of Mount Suribachi on the south end of the island, the Japanese still held strong positions on the north end.
- The rocky terrain vastly favored defense, even more so than Mount Suribachi, which was much more vulnerable to naval artillery fire.
- The fortifications on the northern section of Iwo Jima were also more impressive than those at the southern end of the island.
- Remaining under the command of Kuribayashi was the equivalent of eight infantry battalions, a tank regiment, and two artillery and three heavy mortar battalions.
- There were also about 5,000 gunners and naval infantry available for combat.
- The most arduous task left to the Marines was seizing the Motoyama Plateau, with its distinctive Hill 382 and "Turkey knob", as well as the area in between, referred to as "the Amphitheater".
- These obstacles formed the basis of what came to be known to the Marines as the "meatgrinder".

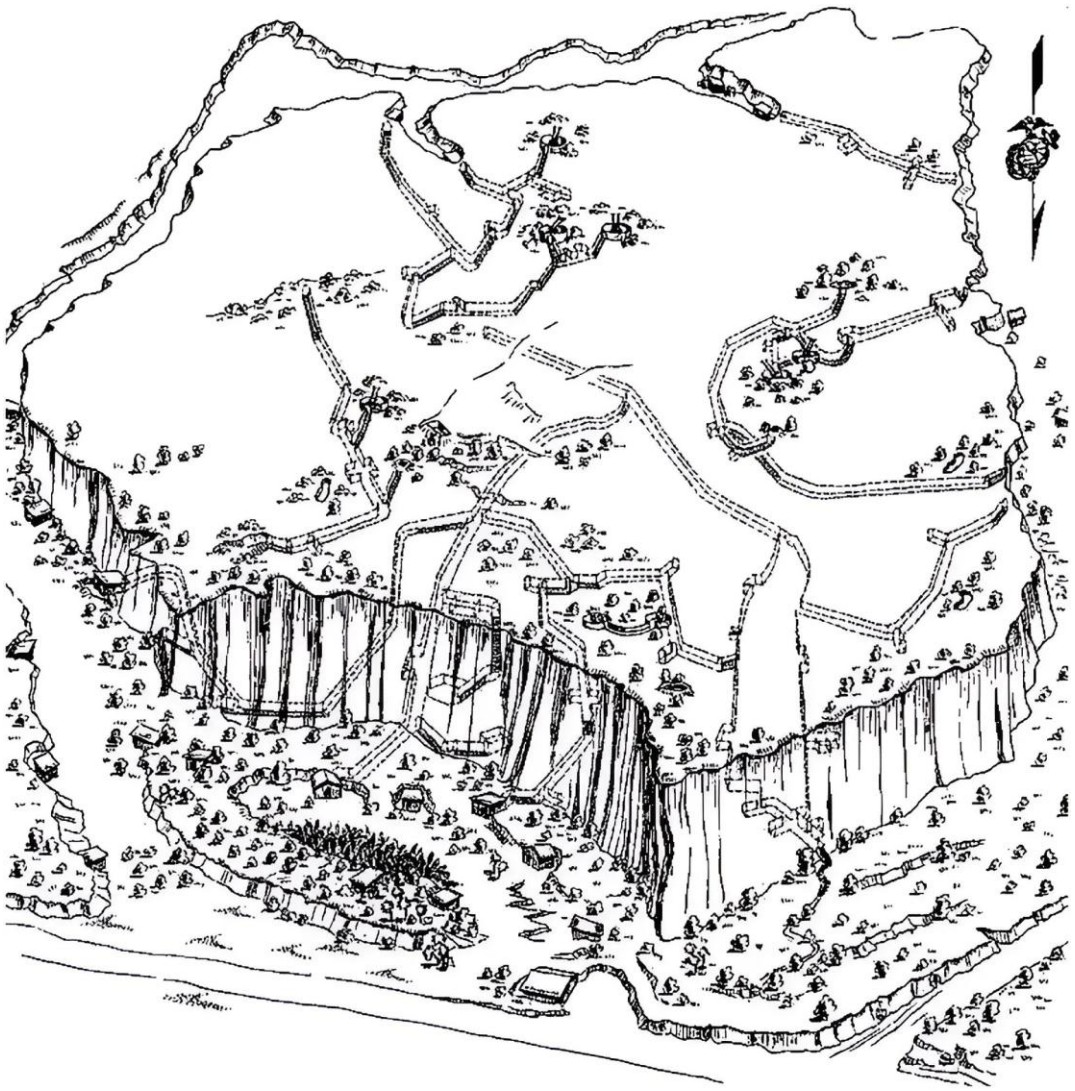
- Dates approximate.



27 February 1945 – Iwo Jima

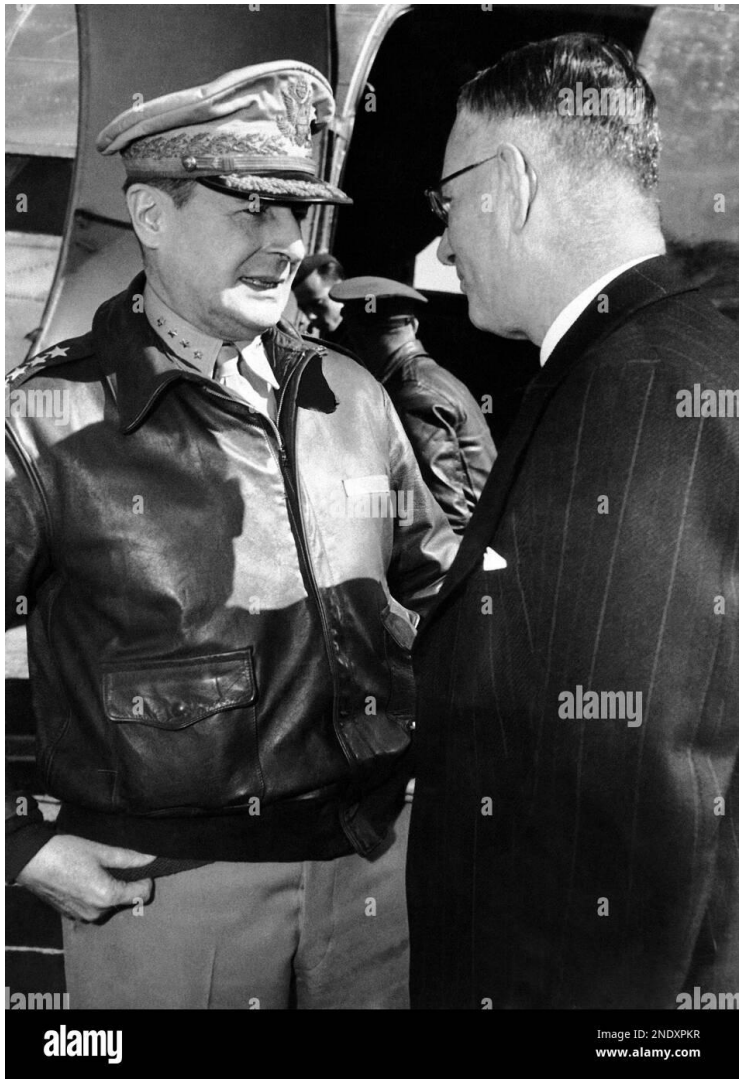
- While the “Meatgrinder” positions were being reduced on the right flank, American units on the left were clearing out Hill 362 with just as much difficulty.
- Sketch of Hill 362A, made by the 31st U.S. Naval Construction Battalion. Dotted lines show the Japanese tunnel system.

- Dates approximate



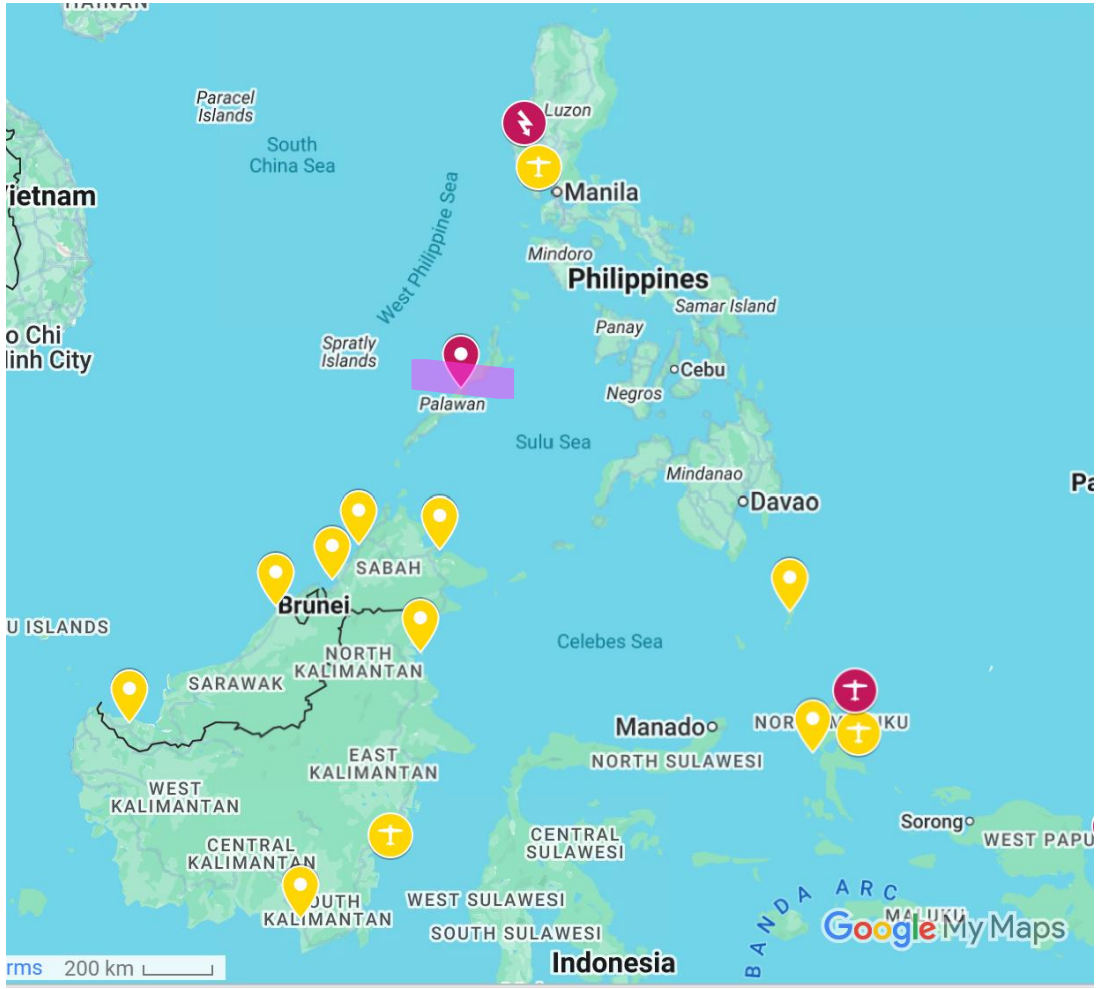
27 February 1945 – SW Pacific

- The letter from Curtin to MacArthur on 27th February seems extremely gentle:
- “It was understood, following our discussions last June … that two A.I.F. divisions would be used in the advance to the Philippines. The 7th and 9th Divisions were nominated for this purpose … I feel that we should adhere to the basis of our previous discussion and limit the Australian component of your spearhead forces to the 7th and 9th Divisions.
- It was laid down in the 1914-18 war that the Australian Forces serving outside Australia should be organised into and operate as a homogeneous formation appropriate to their strength, and that they should be commanded by an Australian officer. This course was followed in the Middle East in the present war.
- When the South West Pacific Area was established … General Blamey was appointed Commander of the Allied Land Forces which provided for the observance of the principle in respect of the command of the Australian Army.
- I shall be glad, therefore, if you could inform me of the arrangement that is contemplated in regard to the operational control and command of the First Australian Corps in particular, and of the Australian Land Forces in New Guinea and adjacent islands, and of the manner in which it is proposed to ensure the observance of the basic principle I have mentioned.



• 28 February 1945 - Philippines

- Palawan on 28th February.
- After two days of heavy air bombardment over Palawan itself, the southern Philippines and other near-by enemy-held areas, elements of the Eighth American Army landed at Puerto Princesa.
- Besides the town, two airfields were captured from which Allied aircraft could patrol across the South China Sea .



February 1945 – B29

- The 58th Bombardment Wing redeployed from India/China to West Field on Tinian in February.



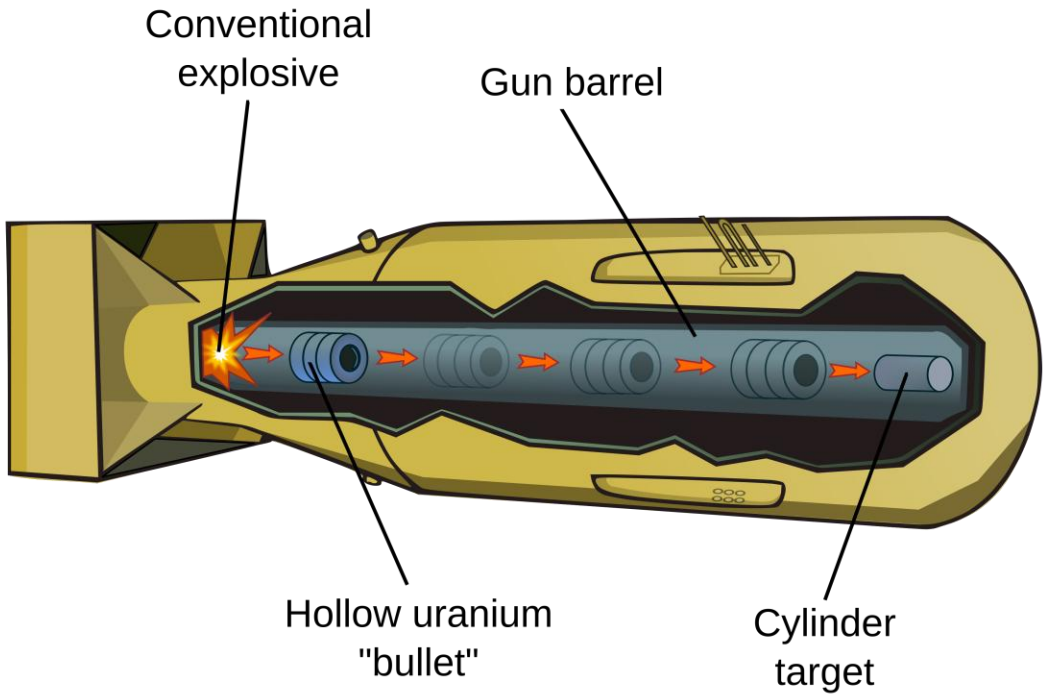
February 1945 – B29

- 1000th B-29 delivery ceremony at the Boeing Wichita plant in February 1945



February 1945 – Manhattan Project

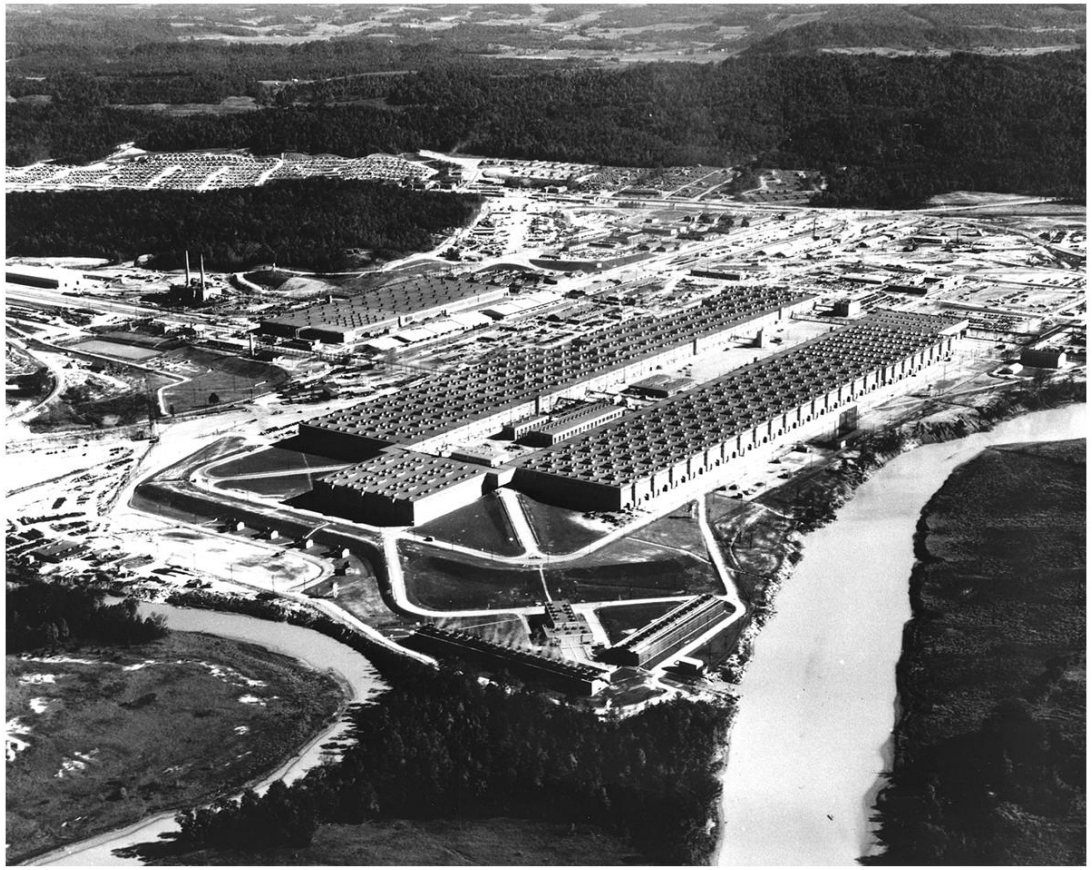
- The design specifications for the Little Boy bomb were completed in February 1945, and contracts were let to build the components.
- Three different plants were used so that no one would have a copy of the complete design.
- The gun and breech were made by the Naval Gun Factory in Washington, D.C.;
- the target case and some other components by the Naval Ordnance Plant in Center Line, Michigan; and
- the tail fairing and mounting brackets by the Expert Tool and Die Company in Detroit, Michigan.
- 64 kilograms of Uranium enriched to 80% U235 would be required to make the fissile components. K-25 at Clinton Engineer Works was designed to produce around 30 kilograms of enriched uranium per month.
- Cumulative deliveries of U-235 to Los Alamos reached 20 kgs at the end of February



The "gun" assembly method. When the hollow uranium projectile was driven onto the target cylinder a critical mass was created, a nuclear explosion resulted.

February 1945 – Manhattan Project

- K-25, the production gas diffusion plant, commenced operation in February 1945, and as cascade after cascade came online, the quality of the product increased.



Oak Ridge K-25 plant

1 March 1945 - Marianas LORAN B29

- The 88th Navy Construction Battalion, assigned to clear this site, was very cooperative and had started work on 6 December. Stevedores, furnished by Commodore Kessing, were also available, and when the MENKAR arrived and anchored close to the site, assisted in the unloading.
- The crew started work at Ulithi on 17 December.
- The LORAN station was on the air 26 December, pairing with Cocos Island.
- Construction of this chain was completed in February, 1945, and the stations were commissioned on 1 March.
- Immediately the signals were used by the 21st Bomber Command.



1 March 1945 - Marianas LORAN B29

- “Captain Crabtree, Signal Corps, Radar Officer for the 30th Bomber Group, 7th AAF, “We have been waiting for Loran service in this area. Your speed in getting a signal on the air has undoubtedly stepped up the accuracy and repetition on bombing runs”.”
- “Lt. Byrnes, Loran Maintenance Officer, 30th Bomber Group, 7th AAF, “The speed with which you erected your stations and put signals on the air has caught us short. Now our navigators are clamoring for service on their sets and also charts for the area”.”



• 4 March 1945 – B29s

- But on 4 March LeMay sent his planes over the familiar route to Musashino for another precision strike.
- This top-listed target, which had been visited seven times by the B-29's and once by carrier planes, still stood virtually intact.
- Repeated failures, as Norstad (photo) had irritably reminded LeMay, lent added importance to the target.
- The force dispatched on the 4th was the largest ever directed against the target--192 planes.
- But Nakajima's luck held. The area was again heavily clouded and the planes dropped elsewhere by radar--159 in urban areas of Tokyo and 17 on last resort targets. Results in all cases were unobserved.



- Serving together in Algiers in January 1943 in Jimmy Doolittle's Twelfth Air Force, Paul Tibbets was assigned as the assistant operations officer for bomber operations directly under Lauris Norstad.
- Their contrasting personalities and military philosophies led to a famous, career-defining clash.
- The feud peaked during a strike planning meeting.
- Norstad ordered a low-level daylight bombing mission against Bizerte at an altitude of 6,000 feet.
- Tibbets fiercely objected, arguing the altitude was suicidal due to dense German flak.
- In front of the planning staff, an exasperated Tibbets famously offered to fly the mission at 6,000 feet on condition that Norstad fly along with him as his co-pilot.
- Norstad backed down and allowed a high-altitude attack, but the insubordination permanently fractured their working relationship.
- Norstad reportedly began the process to have Tibbets court-martialed. To protect him, Jimmy Doolittle had Tibbets transferred back to the United States in early 1943.
- Paul Tibbets described Norstad in his autobiography as a "quintessential military bureaucrat," a "social climber," and a "political animal"



The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh with the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, General Norstad and his wife, at their private residence Villa St Pierre, Marnes-la-Coquette, near Paris. The Queen and the Duke were visiting General Norstad on the third day of their State visit to France.

• 4 March 1945 – B29s

- This eighth fiasco at Musashi marked the end of precision bombing as the main thrust of XXI Bomber Command's operations.
- Losses had been high, rising in January to 5.7 per cent of bombers airborne. Bombing from altitudes in the neighborhood of 30,000 feet, the Superforts suffered relatively little from flak. Fighter interception, however, was often aggressive and effective, the more so because the restricted pattern of B-29 attacks allowed the enemy to concentrate his fighters in the Tokyo-Nagoya area.
- The long overwater trip to target and back, without a friendly base en route for refueling or repair, took its toll of wounded or malfunctioning planes. These difficulties were reflected in the statistics of losses incurred through February: twenty-nine B-29's were lost to enemy fighters, one to flak, nine to a combination of fighters and flak, twenty-one to operational difficulties, and fifteen to unknown causes.
- The results didn’t justify these losses or the hideous losses suffered by the Marines and the Navy to acquire the airstrips or the monstrous cost of the B29 program.

4 March 1945 – B29s

- Like its sister organization in the CBI and VIII Bomber Command in the ETO, XXI Bomber Command had experienced the usual troubles of a pioneering organization. The supporting services—airfields, maintenance, navigation aids, supply, weather, communications, reconnaissance, and air-sea rescue--had developed slowly in an area newly won from the enemy and under a theater command whose first interest was not strategic bombardment.
- During this whole period the command operated with inadequate facilities.
- Assembly, difficult at best on high-altitude missions, was complicated by congestion on the single-strip fields; the long interval between first and last plane airborne (238 minutes on one mission, 193 on another) increased the already heavy fuel consumption required by long missions and the climb to bombing altitudes of 30,000 feet. Thus the B-29's theoretical bomb load of ten tons was reduced to an actual three tons.
- The slender fuel reserve made it impossible to check navigational errors or to compensate for headwinds.
- The most serious obstacle to successful bombardment was weather. Severe frontal conditions, frequently encountered on the trip north from the Marianas, increased fuel consumption, scattered formations, and made navigation so difficult that many crews missed the landfall entirely.
- The proportion of planes bombing visually had diminished progressively through the winter months: 45 per cent in December, 38 per cent in January, 19 per cent in February. Radar bombing seldom proved successful. The AW/APQ-13 radar often malfunctioned at extreme altitudes, and radar operators were in general not sufficiently trained to get maximum results.
- Cloud cover as a hindrance to bombardment was familiar to the AAF from bitter experience over Europe, but the tremendous winds encountered at bombing altitudes over Japan offered a novel and most disconcerting problem. With wind velocities reaching 200 knots and more, drift was difficult to correct and bomb runs had to be charted directly upwind or downwind. Attacking Japan's best-defended cities directly in the teeth of a 200-knot wind was unthinkable; going downwind the B-29's reached ground speeds in excess of 500 miles per hour, in which case neither bombsights nor bombardiers could function properly.

4 March 1945 – B29s

- By March 1945 after more than three months the USAAF's commanders believed the results to date did not justify the high costs of the B-29 program and was making no significant contribution to defeating Japan.
- They needed improvement.
- Some of the limiting factors were being relieved, there were more aircraft, more airstrips and support services were improving.
- The fundamental issue remained.
- It took too many G.P. bombs to destroy an economy the size of Japan’s and they had to be placed more accurately than current methods could achieve.



4 March 1945 – B29s

- Tests conducted at Eglin Field and Dugway Proving Ground on model urban areas of typical Japanese construction seemed to add scientific confirmation to a judgment, based on common sense, that Japanese cities would be highly susceptible to incendiary attacks.
- Arnold's target directive of 19 February indicated the significant trend: precision attacks on engine factories would still enjoy first priority, but incendiary attacks against the selected urban areas moved into second place ahead of assembly plants, and Nagoya, Osaka, Kawasaki, and Tokyo were designated primary targets under radar conditions. Moreover, a large-scale test raid against Nagoya carried an overriding priority.
- The test was made at Tokyo on 25 February rather than at Nagoya and was most encouraging.
- In March, LeMay, with an increased force on hand, was committed to a heavier effort with the Iwo campaign lagging and the assault on Okinawa imminent. Conditions within the theatre urged a more effective attack and a process of elimination as well as Washington’s urging drove a wider use of incendiary methods.
- Photo: M-69 incendiary tests on Japanese style structures at Dugway Proving Ground. Photo from Standard Oil, Design and Construction of Typical German and Japanese Test Structures at Dugway Proving Grounds, Utah, 1943.



4 March 1945 - B29s

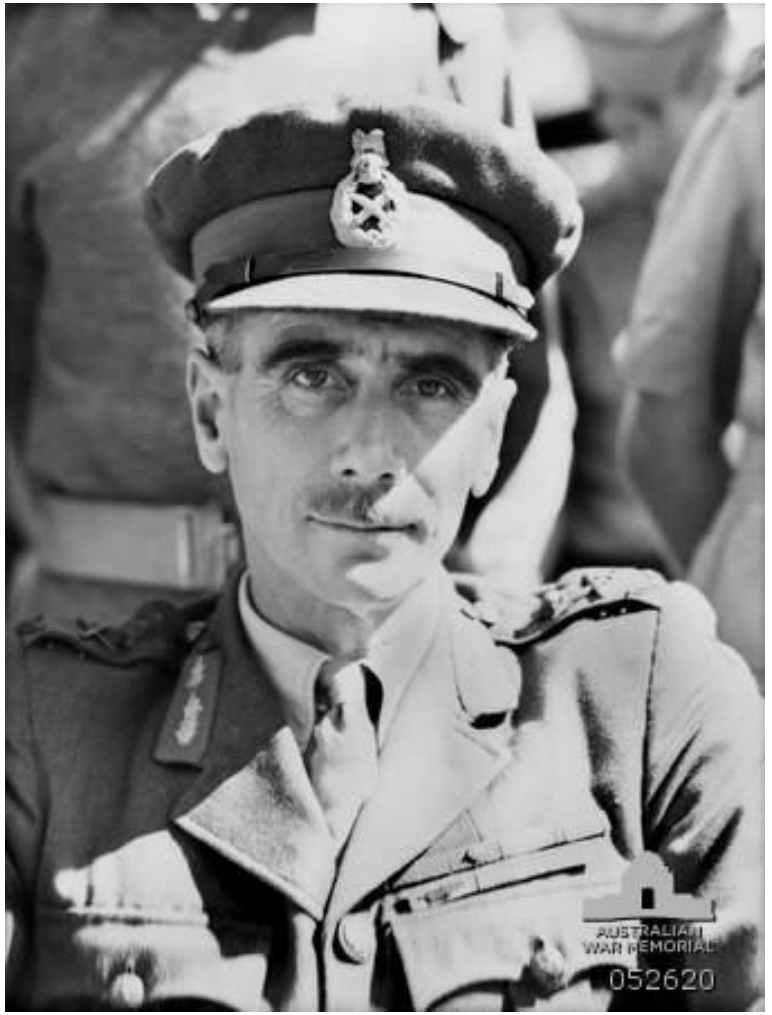
- On March 4 1945 while fighting was still going on on Iwo Jima the B-29 Dinah Might of the USAAF 9th Bomb Group reported it was low on fuel near the island and requested an emergency landing.
- Despite enemy fire, the airplane landed on the Allied-controlled section of the island (South Field) without incident and was serviced, refueled and departed.
- From this first B-29 touch down to the end of the war, 2,241 B-29s landed at Iwo Jima.
- Otherwise many of these would have been lost.
- Iwo Jima became the base of the VII Fighter Command.



42-65286 1st Bomb Squadron, 9th Bombardment Group, the first to land on Iwo Jima, 4 March 1945.

5 March 1945 - Australia

- In June 1944, Vasey (photo) became seriously ill with malaria and acute Peripheral neuropathy, and for a time was not expected to live.
- 7th Division soldiers in the hospital constantly asked the nursing staff about his progress.
- The men called him 'Bloody George, not after his casualties, but after his favourite adjective, and Vasey's personable style of command attracted immense loyalty from his men.
- "Vasey owns the 7th," wrote a Melbourne journalist, "but every man in the division believes he owns Vasey." He was again Mentioned in Despatches on 21 July 1944.
- Vasey slowly recovered.
- In February 1945, Frank Forde pressed for Vasey to be given another active command. Blamey, who still had doubts about Vasey's physical fitness despite Vasey being given an A by an Army medical board, reluctantly appointed him to command the 6th Division, then in action in the Aitape-Wewak campaign.
- Vasey flew north to take up his new command. The aircraft, RAAF Lockheed Hudson A16-118, took off from Archerfield on the afternoon of 5 March 1945. A cyclone was ravaging the Queensland coast at the time. The aircraft crashed into the sea about 400 yds off Machans Beach, just north of the mouth of the Barron River, about a mile short of the Cairns Airport. Vasey was killed along with all those on board.



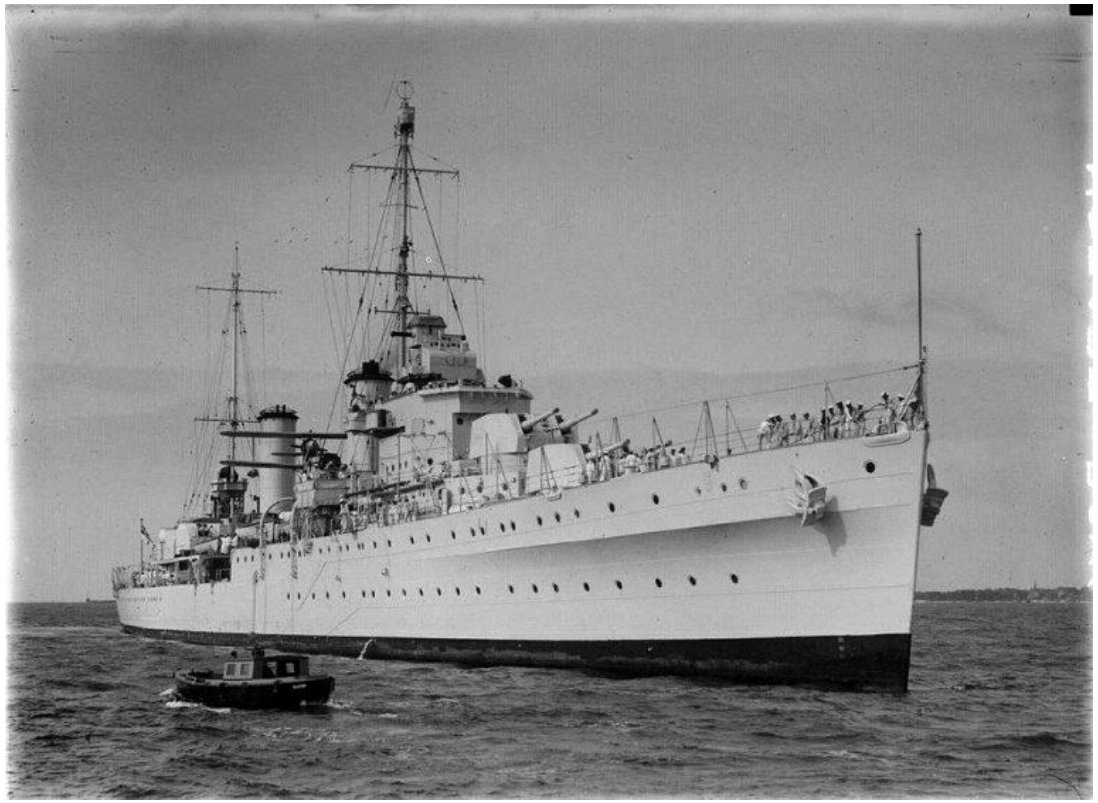
5 March 1945 - Australia

- On 5th March MacArthur replied to Curtin 's letter of 15th February.
- In it he expressed in black and white what Blamey had described as the gradual "insinuation of American control and the elimination of Australian control".



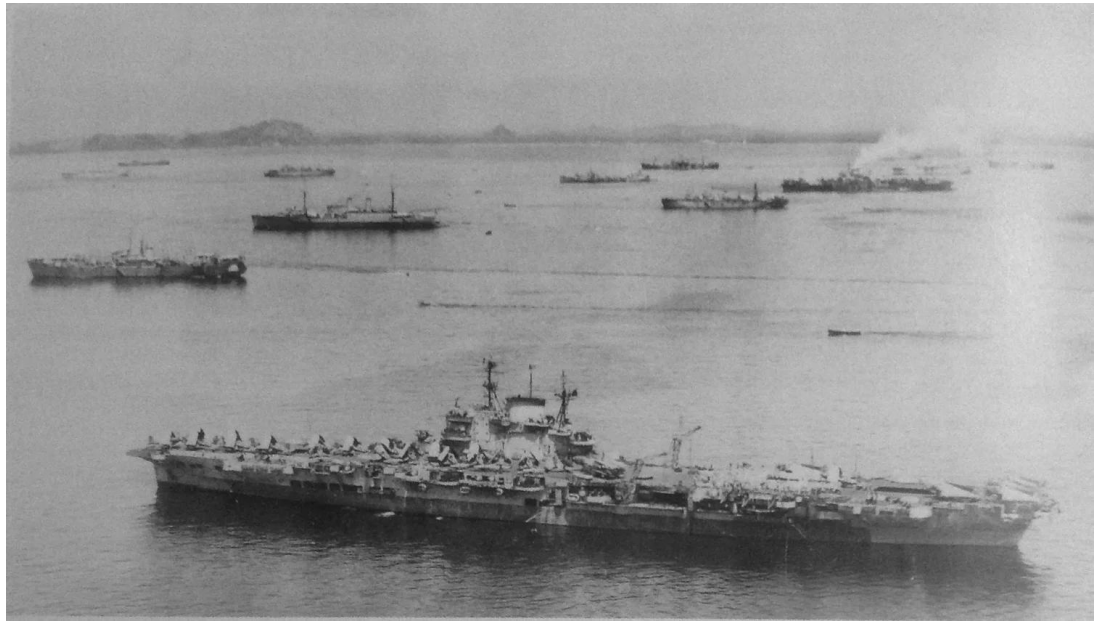
5th March 1945 - BPF

- The combined Australian-American group disbanded, and on 1st March the Australian ships—Shropshire, Arunta and Warramunga—sailed for Manus.
- The first two were to proceed to Australia for a refit, but in the meantime they were replaced in the South-West Pacific by Hobart (photo) which was one of the few ships in Seeadler Harbour when they reached there on 5th March.
- After being torpedoed off the Solomons in July 1943, Hobart had been in dockyard hands in Sydney until December 1944. She recommissioned on 7th December and after shakedown cruises and exercises left Sydney on 6th February for Manus.



5th March 1945 - BPF

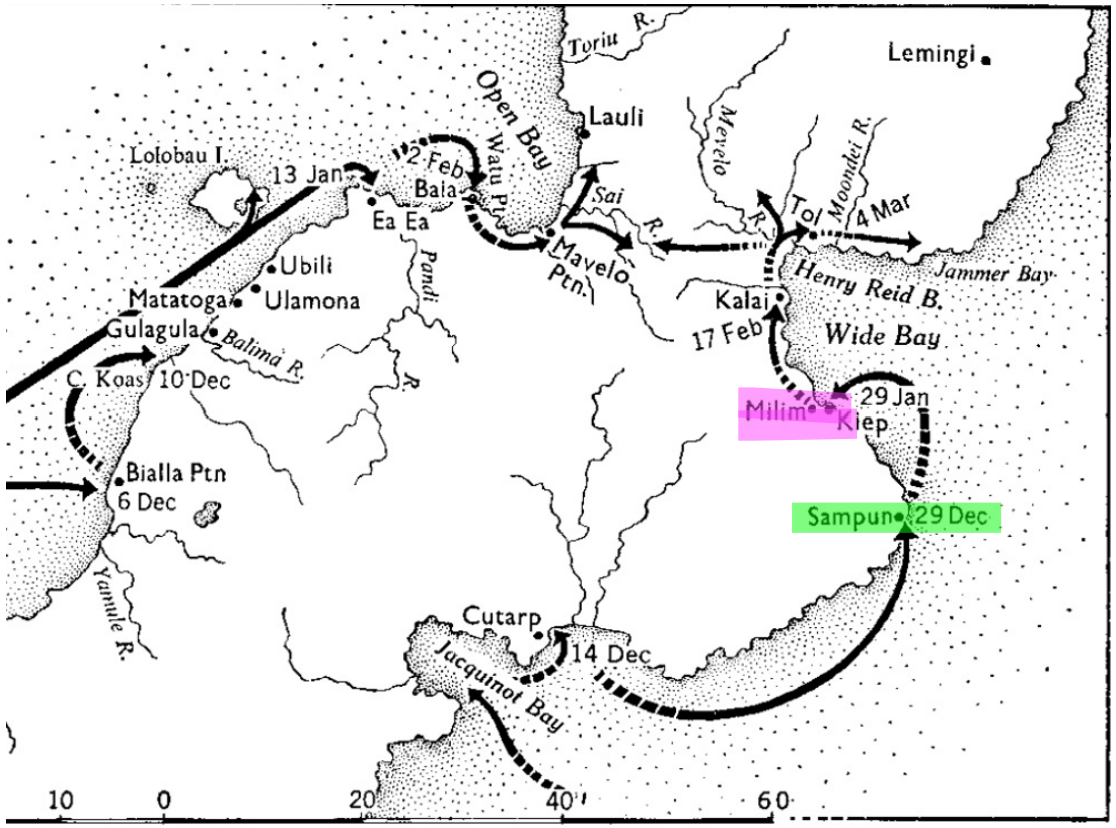
- While there the British Pacific Fleet arrived in Seeadler Harbour.
- Alliston, in Warramunga, recorded that
- They made an inspiring sight and I think all hands were genuinely pleased to see them. A considerable amount of ship visiting developed from this meeting and from all sides one heard glowing accounts of the hospitality with which the R.N. had been welcomed in Australia.
- But Midshipman Francis in Shropshire observed: "When we entered harbour at 1730 and passed through portion of the Eleventh Fleet lying at anchor, I noticed that the close range armament on the cruisers and destroyers left a lot to be desired."
- On 10th March the Australian ships parted company. Shropshire and Arunta proceeded for Sydney, while Hobart and Warramunga sailed together for Leyte, to take part in the Cebu operation at the end of the month.



One of only a very few images of the BPF anchored at Manus. HMS VICTORIOUS in the foreground, with elements of the Fleet Train and possibly HMS INDEFATIGABLE in the background.

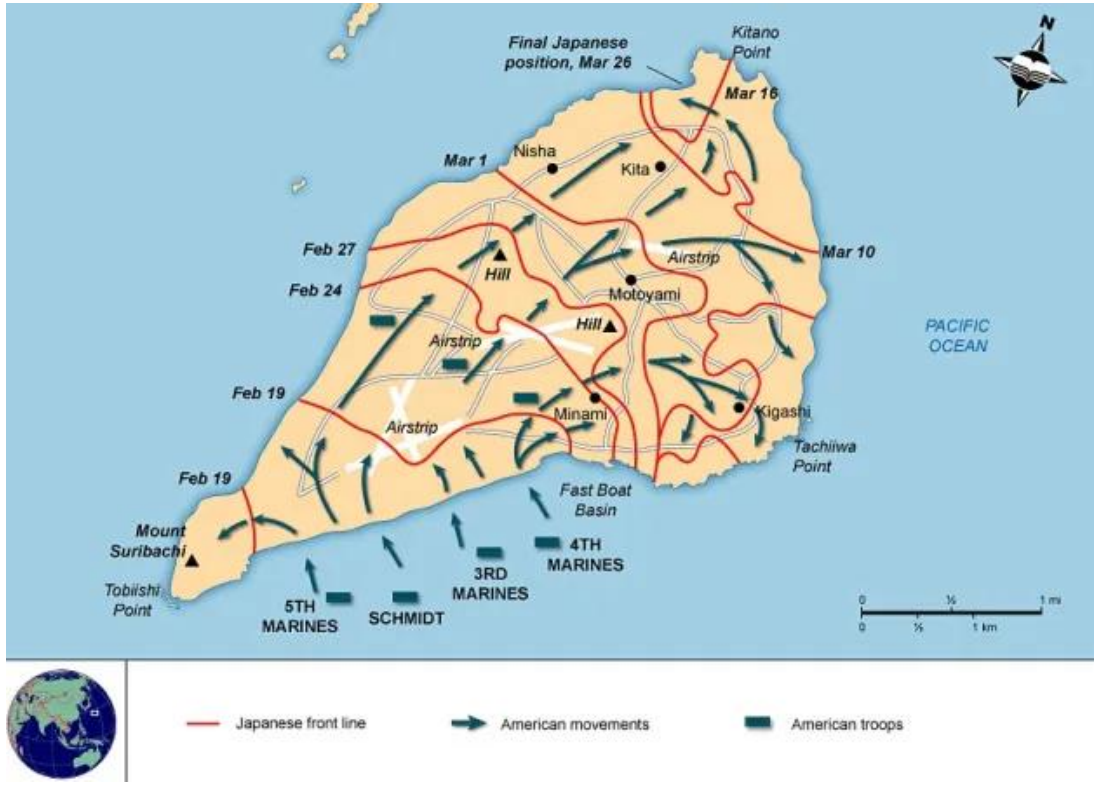
March1945 – New Britain

- After this, a series of engagements took place over a six-week period to reduce the main Japanese position around Mount Sugi, commencing with the 19th Infantry Battalion's assault across the Wulwut River on 5 March.
- The position around Mount Sugi, which stretched across a number of ridges to the west of the Wulwut, was strongly defended with mortars, machine guns and pillboxes, and heavy rain also frustrated Australian attempts to reduce the Japanese stronghold.
- Fierce fighting followed, culminating with the 14th/32nd's attack on Bacon Hill on 18 March.
- Following the capture of Waitavalo–Tol area in March and April, the Australians exploited towards Jammer Bay and sent patrols to link up their northern and southern drives.



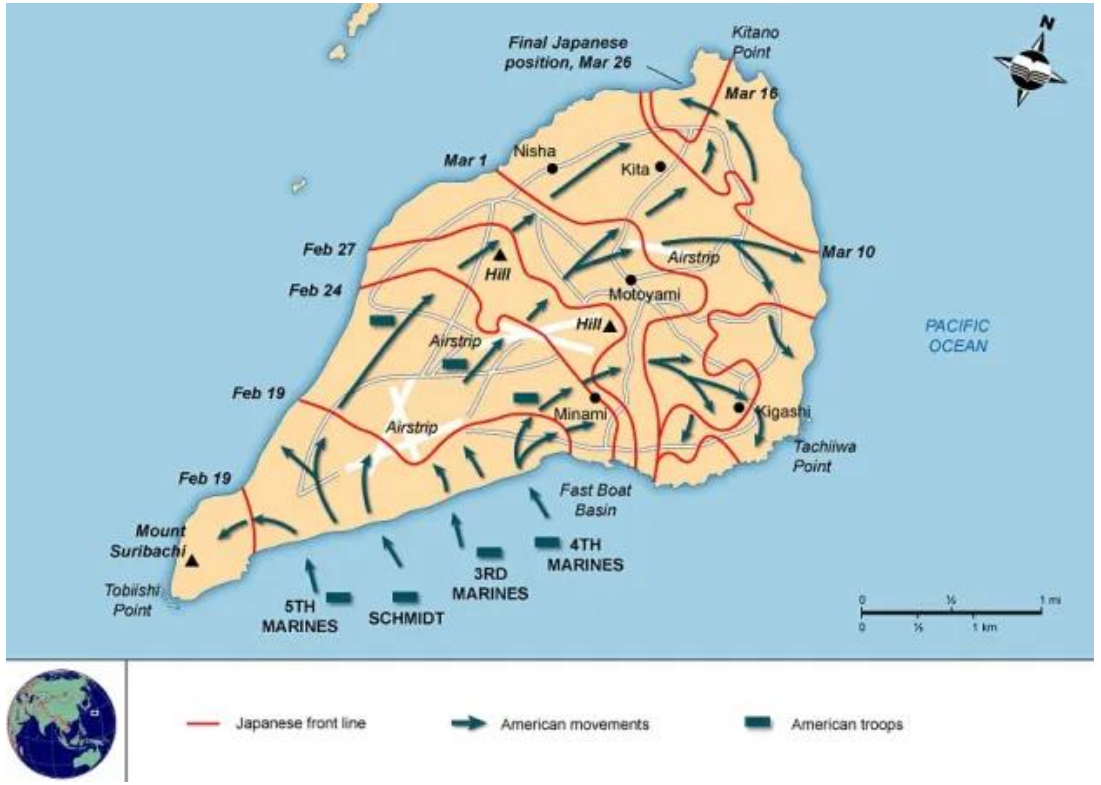
6 March 1945 – Iwo Jima

- Close air support was initially provided by fighters from escort carriers off the coast.
- This shifted over to the 15th Fighter Group, flying P-51 Mustangs, after they arrived on the island on 6 March.
- Similarly, illumination rounds (flares), used to light up the battlefield at night, were initially provided by ships but were later provided by land-based artillery.



7 & 8 March 1945 – Iwo Jima

- Over time, the Japanese learned basic American combat tactics, which usually involved a heavy bombardment before an infantry attack.
- Consequently, Erskine ordered the 9th Marine Regiment to attack under cover of darkness with no preliminary barrage.
- This was a resounding success, with many Japanese soldiers killed while still asleep.
- This became a key moment in the capture of Hill 362.
- The hill held such strategic importance that the local IJA commander of the area decided on a banzai charge with the optimistic goal of recapturing Mount Suribachi.
- On the evening of 8 March, Captain Samaji Inouye and his 1,000 men charged the American lines, inflicting 347 casualties (90 deaths).
- The Marines counted 784 dead Japanese the next day.
- The same day, elements of the 3rd Marine Division reached the northern coast of the island, splitting Kuribayashi's defenses in two.



- Dates approximate.

9/10 March 1945 – B29

- In light of the poor results of the precision bombing campaign and the success of the 25 February raid on Tokyo and considering that many tons of incendiaries were now available to him, LeMay (photo) decided to begin firebombing attacks on Japan's main cities during early March 1945.
- This was in line with Arnold's targeting directive for XXI Bomber Command, which specified that urban areas were to be accorded the second-highest priority for attacks after aircraft factories.
- The directive also stated that firebombing raids should be conducted once M-69 bombs had been tested in combat and the number of B-29s available was sufficient to launch an intensive campaign.
- To maximize the effectiveness of the firebombing attacks, LeMay ordered the B-29s to bomb by night and fly at the low altitude of 5,000 feet.
- The decision to attack at night ruled out the command's standard technique of lead-crew bombing. Formation flying at night was not feasible, and with flak rather than enemy fighters the chief danger, a tight formation would be a handicap rather than a source of defensive strength. With planes bombing individually from low altitudes, bomb loads could be sharply increased, to an average of about six tons per plane.
- As Japan's night fighter force was weak and the anti-aircraft batteries were less effective at night, LeMay proposed to send his B-29's in without ammunition for their guns. The added bomb weight that could be carried in lieu of an average load of 8,000 rounds of machine-gun shells would be about 3,200 pounds.
- Intervalometers were set at 50 feet. This setting was supposed to give a minimum density of 25 tons per square mile.



9/10 March 1945 – B29

- The first firebombing attack in this campaign—codenamed Operation Meetinghouse—was carried out against Tokyo on the night of 9 and 10 March.
- XXI Bomber Command mounted a maximum effort, and on the afternoon of 9 March 346 B-29s left the Marianas bound for Tokyo. They began to arrive over the city at 2:00 am Guam time on 10 March, and 279 bombers dropped 1,665 tons of bombs.
- The raid caused a massive conflagration that overwhelmed Tokyo's civil defenses and destroyed 16 square miles of buildings, representing seven percent of the city's urban area.
- The Tokyo police force and fire department estimated that 83,793 people were killed during the air raid, another 40,918 were injured and just over 1 million lost their homes.
- Damage to Tokyo's war production was also substantial.
- Fourteen B-29s failed to return (4.0% loss rate) and a further 42 were damaged by anti-aircraft fire. Five of the downed crews were picked up at sea by air-sea rescue units.
- Photo: ORDNANCE MEN ON SAIPAN ISLAND load B-29 with incendiary clusters.



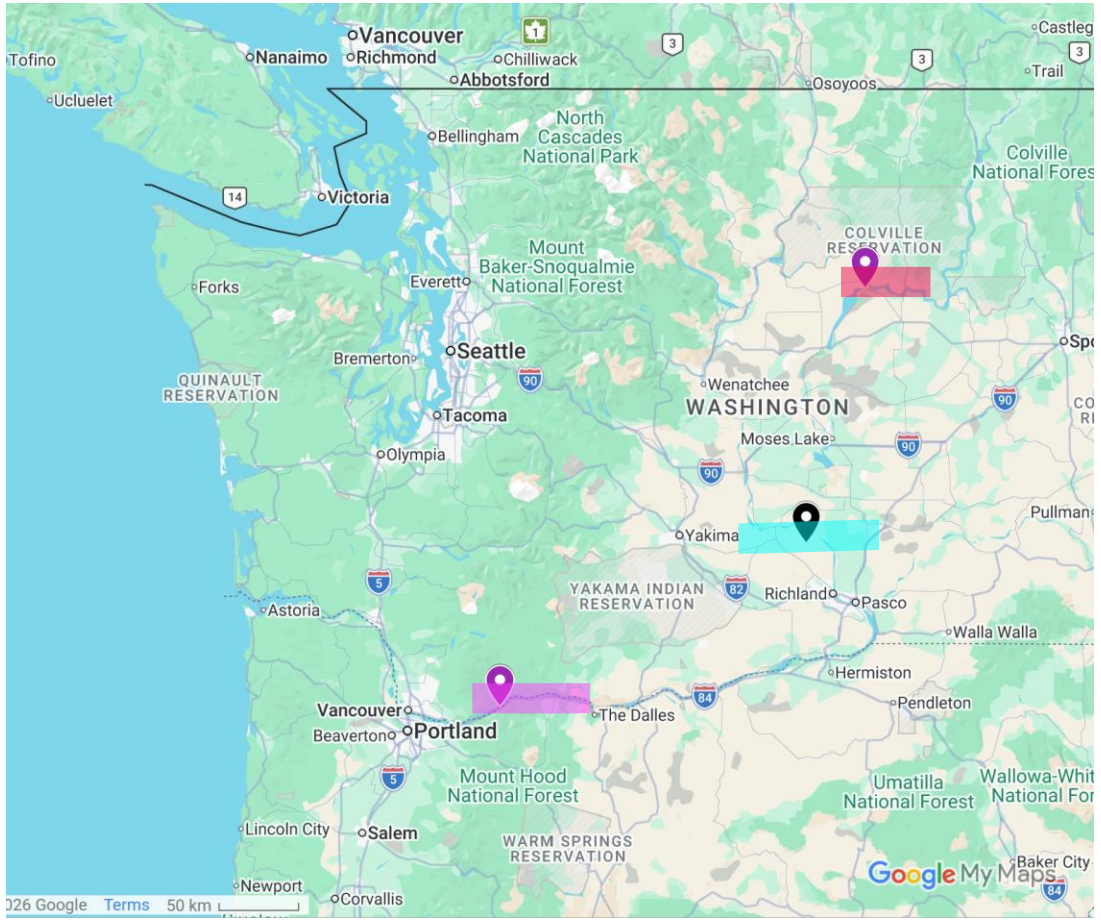
10 March 1945 - Philippines

- Ten days after the landing at Palawan the next stage of the Philippines operation was mounted.
- This was the seizure of Zamboanga on the south west tip of Mindanao.
- The purpose of this landing was to control the approaches to north-east Borneo and to support the consolidation of central and eastern Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago.
- This operation was preceded by a three-day naval bombardment and heavy air strikes.
- In the fifteen days before the landing, American bombers dropped about 950 tons of high explosives and 15,000 gallons of napalm mixture on the town and its immediate vicinity.



10 March 1945 – Manhattan Project

- Although the Hanford reactors could be shut down in two-and-a-half seconds, they would still generate heat due to the decay of fission products. It was therefore vital that the flow of water should not cease.
- If the power failed, the steam pumps would automatically cut in and continue to deliver water at full capacity for long enough to allow an orderly shutdown.
- On 10 March 1945, a Japanese balloon bomb struck a high-tension line running between Grand Coulee and Bonneville.
- This caused a surge in the lines to the reactors.
- A scram was automatically initiated and the safety devices shut the reactors down.
- The bomb failed to explode and the transmission line was not badly damaged.



11 March 1945 - Kamikazes

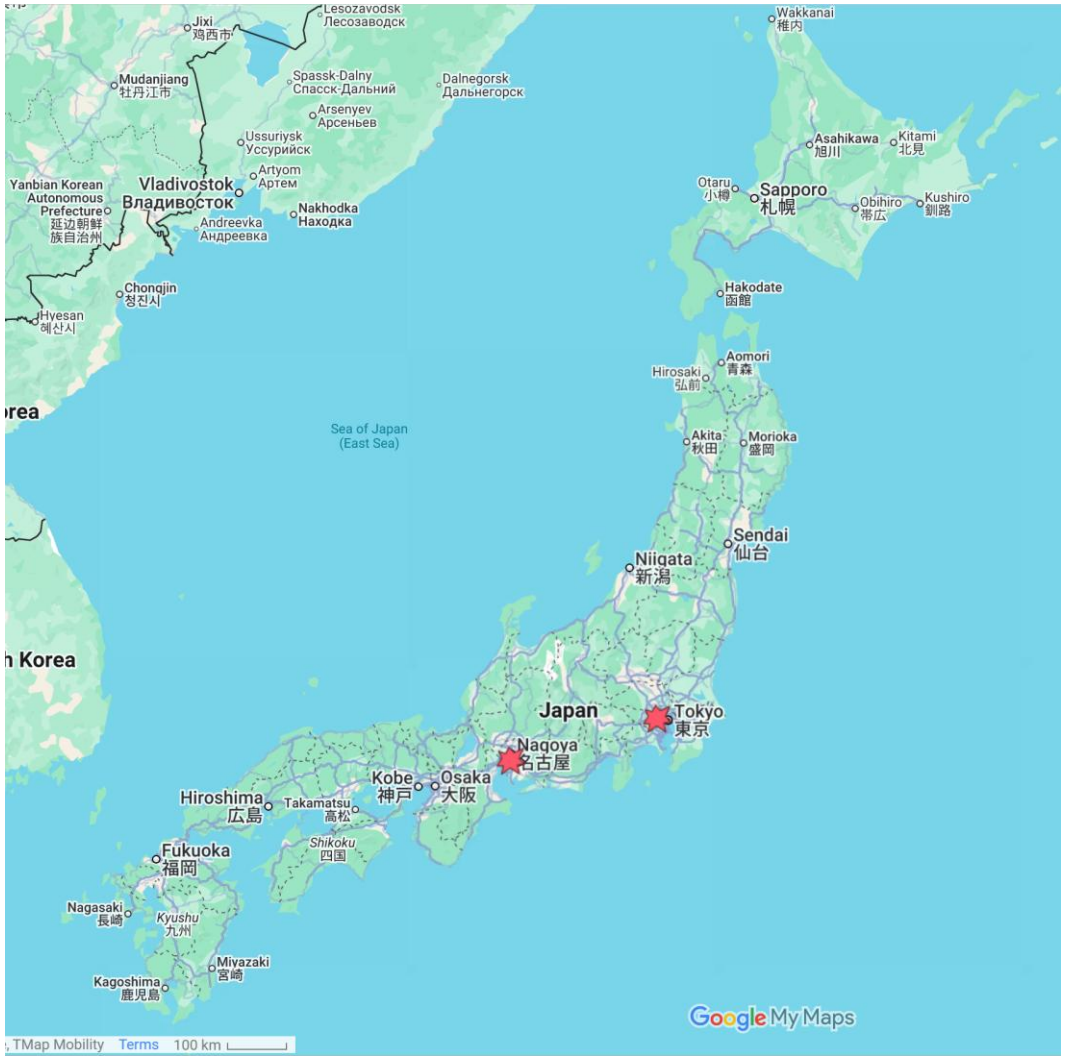
- Damage to several Fifth Fleet carriers had reduced the number of operational US task groups from five to four.
- USS Saratoga had been badly damaged and CVE Bismark Sea sunk by kamikaze aircraft at Iwo Jima.
- On March 11, the Essex class carrier, USS Randolph was damaged in a night kamikaze attack on the Ulithi anchorage.



The hole in the aft section of USS Randolph's flight deck after a kamikaze attack in Ulithi harbour.

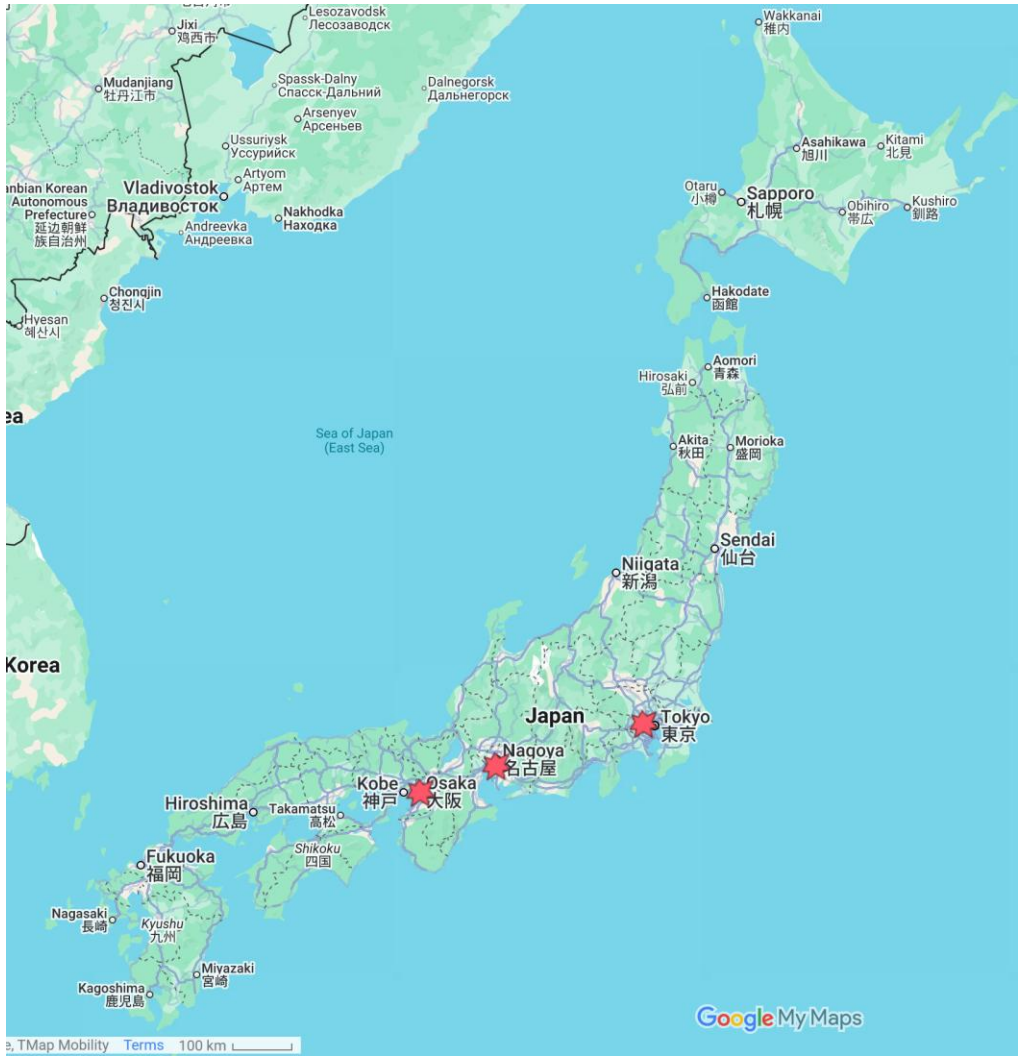
11/12 March 1945 – B29

- The firebombing of Tokyo was followed up with similar raids against other major cities.
- On 11 March 310 B-29s were dispatched against Nagoya this time armed with two hundred rounds of .50-caliber ammunition for the tail guns.
- The bombing was spread over a greater area than had been the case at Tokyo, and the attack caused less damage. Nevertheless, 2.05 square miles of buildings were burnt out and no B-29s were lost to the Japanese defenses.



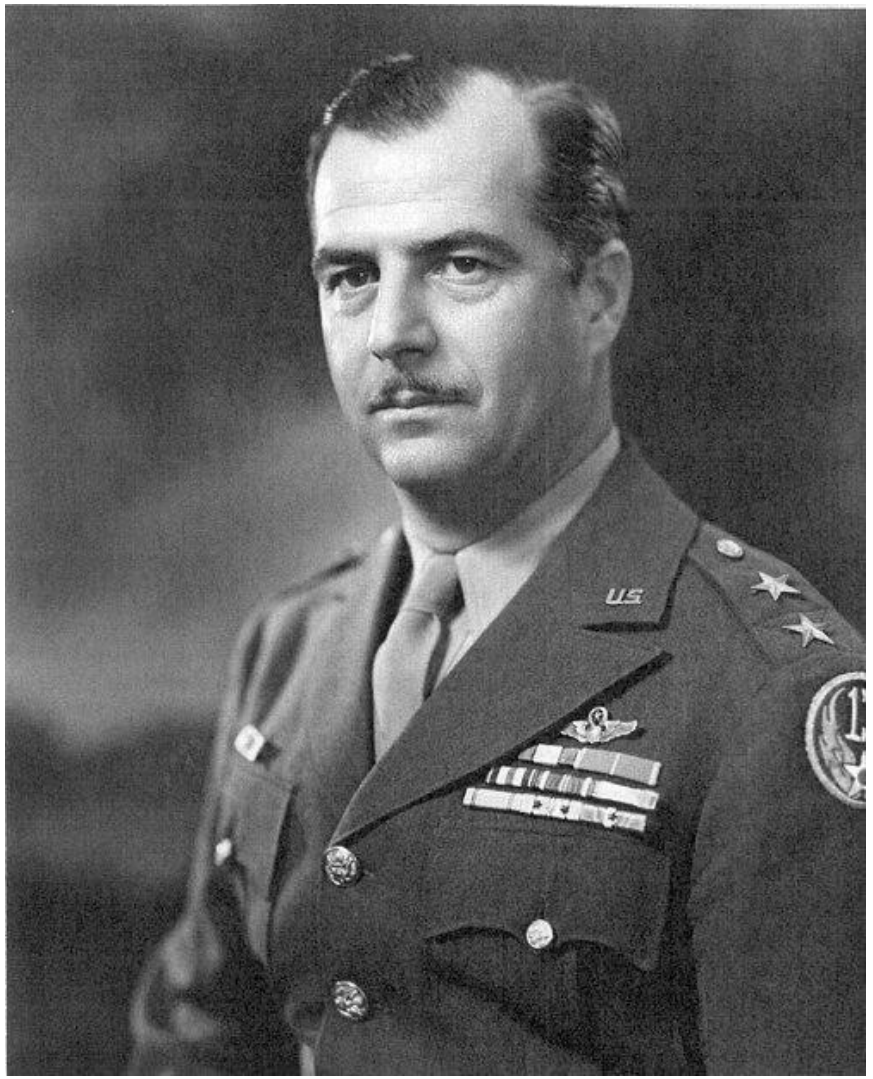
13/14 March 1945 – B29

- On the night of 13 and 14 March, 274 Superfortresses attacked Osaka.
- Over Osaka they found an 8/10 cloud cover and had to resort to radar bombing.
- This proved an advantage rather than a handicap.
- Unable to sow their bombs by sighting visually on pathfinder fires, bombardiers were forced to drop after a controlled run, releasing on an offset aiming point.
- With this technique, the B-29's achieved a thicker and more uniform pattern, than had been possible with the impressionistic methods used at Nagoya.
- This destroyed 8.1 square miles of the city for the loss of two aircraft.
- The Osaka fire department listed 3,988 dead, 678 missing, 8,463 injured and 134,744 houses destroyed.



15 March 1945 – S. W. Pacific

- After a conference at Leyte with Whitehead, Wurtsmith (photo) (now commanding the Thirteenth Air Force), Bostock and Air Vice-Marshal Isitt of the Royal New Zealand Air Force, Kenney assigned operational control of the New Zealand Air Force to Bostock, and told him that he would be responsible for all air operations south of the Philippines.
- He also told Wurtsmith to support Bostock whenever he needed help, and particularly in land operations in the Netherlands East Indies.
- Bostock was to designate the targets and coordinate the timing of the American and Australian missions.
- Bostock opened an advanced headquarters (ADRAAFCOM) at Morotai on the 15th March.
- The Advanced Headquarters was set up very close to the headquarters of the Thirteenth Air Force's Bomber Command, with which it was to work in the planning and carrying out of the Borneo operations.
- Wurtsmith had arrived in Australia as commander of the 49th Pursuit Group in February 1942. The 49th moved to Darwin area in March and April 1942 and became its principal defense.



16 March 1945 - Aitape

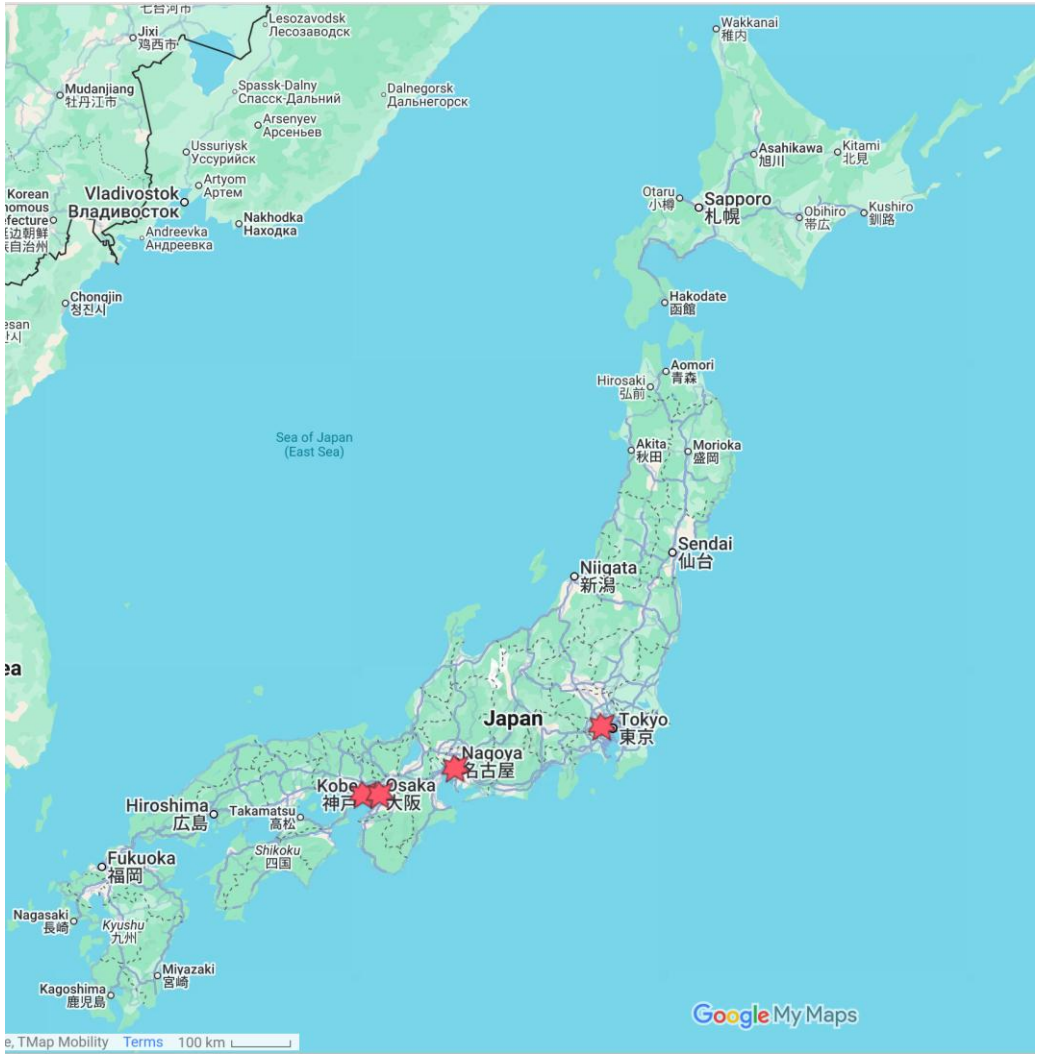
- On 16 March 1945, the airfields at But and Dagua on the coast were occupied, although fighting continued further inland from there over the course of the following fortnight as the Australians fought to gain control of the Tokuku Pass.



Dagua airfield, New Guinea, on 25th March, four days after it was occupied by the 2/2nd Battalion.

16/17 March 1945 – B29

- Kobe was the next target in the firebombing campaign and was attacked by 331 B-29s on the night of 16 and 17 March.
- Kobe, with its long irregular waterfront, provided an excellent radar target.
- The planners appreciated by now the value of greater concentration to insure the merging of individual fires.
- Flight schedules were accordingly changed to cut down the duration of the attack and the aiming points were plotted in a closer pattern. The resulting firestorm destroyed 2.9 square miles--a fifth of the city's area--had been burned over.
- Police reported 2,669 dead or missing and 11,289 injured. 66,000 houses were destroyed.



17/18 March 1945 - Philippines

- The USN night fighters seemed to be more effective against individual snoopers than against large attacks.
- Enterprise night fighters, on the night of seventeen/eighteen March downed two more patrol planes.
- Photo: An H8K2 patrol seaplane in flight, immediately before being shot down by the U.S. Navy PB4Y-1 from which the photograph was taken, 2 July 1944.



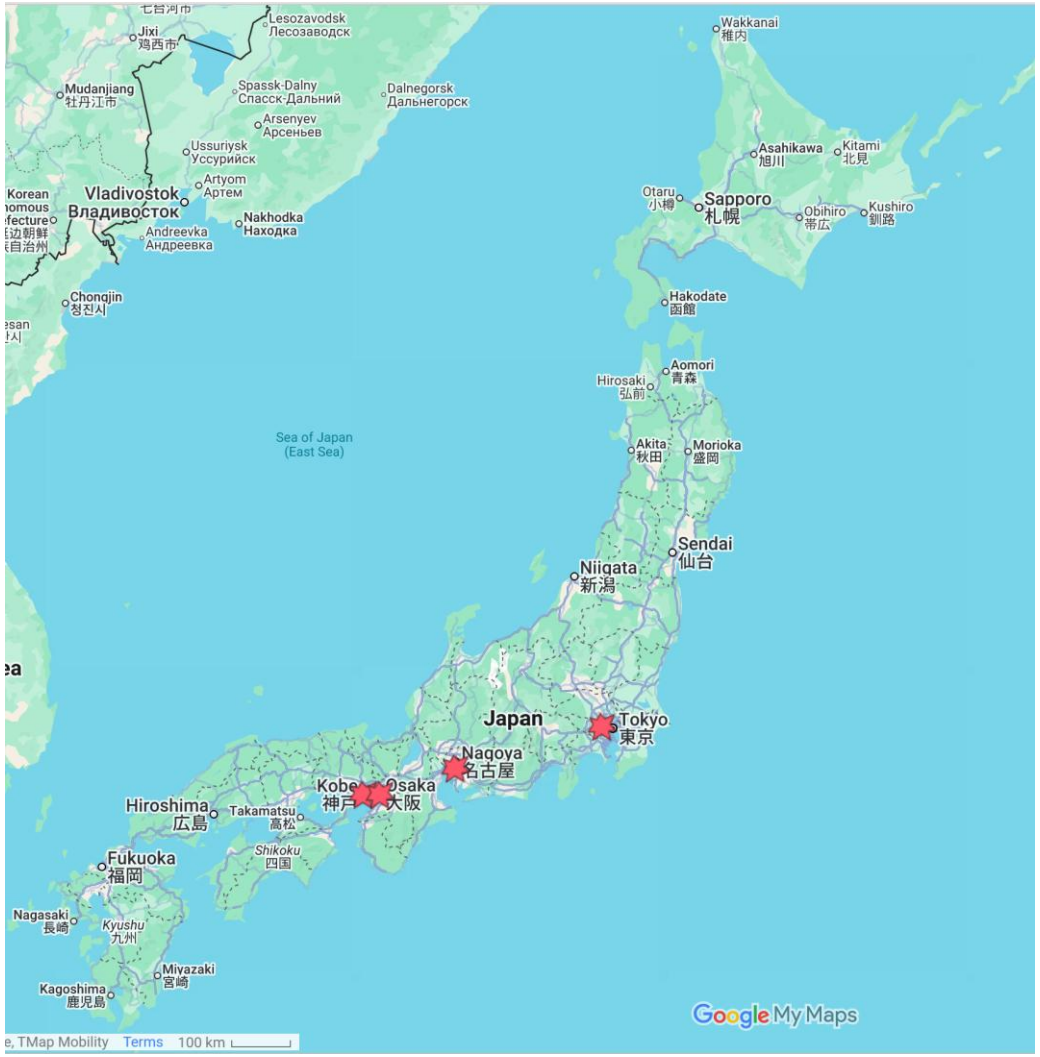
18 March 1945 - BPF

- On 18 March the BPF sailed for Ulithi.
- It comprised the battleships King George V (Flagship of Vice-Admiral Rawlings) and Howe;
- the four fleet carriers Indomitable (Flagship of Rear-Admiral Sir Philip Vian (photo)), Victorious, Illustrious and Indefatigable;
- the 4th Cruiser Squadron of four ships;
- and the 25th, 4th, and 27th Destroyer Flotillas , comprising the light cruiser Euryalus (Flagship of R.A.(D), Rear-Admiral J. H. Edelsten), and 12 destroyers. H.M.A. Ships Quickmatch (Commander Becher) and Quiberon (Lieut-Commander Knox) were in the 4th Flotilla, of which Quickmatch was leader, with Captain R . G. Onslow, R.N., Captain (D), and staff on board.
- Vian had a record of brilliant victories but he has been described as a dark and difficult man. Admiral Ramsay, the naval commander for D Day selected Vian to command the Eastern Task Force but noted in his diary: "I think he is not quite normal at times."



18/19 March 1945 – B29

- Nagoya was attacked again on the night of 18 and 19 March, and the B-29s destroyed 2.95 square miles of buildings.
- Only one Superfortress was shot down during this attack, and all members of its crew were rescued after the aircraft ditched into the sea.
- This raid marked the end of the first firebombing campaign as supplies of incendiary bombs were exhausted.



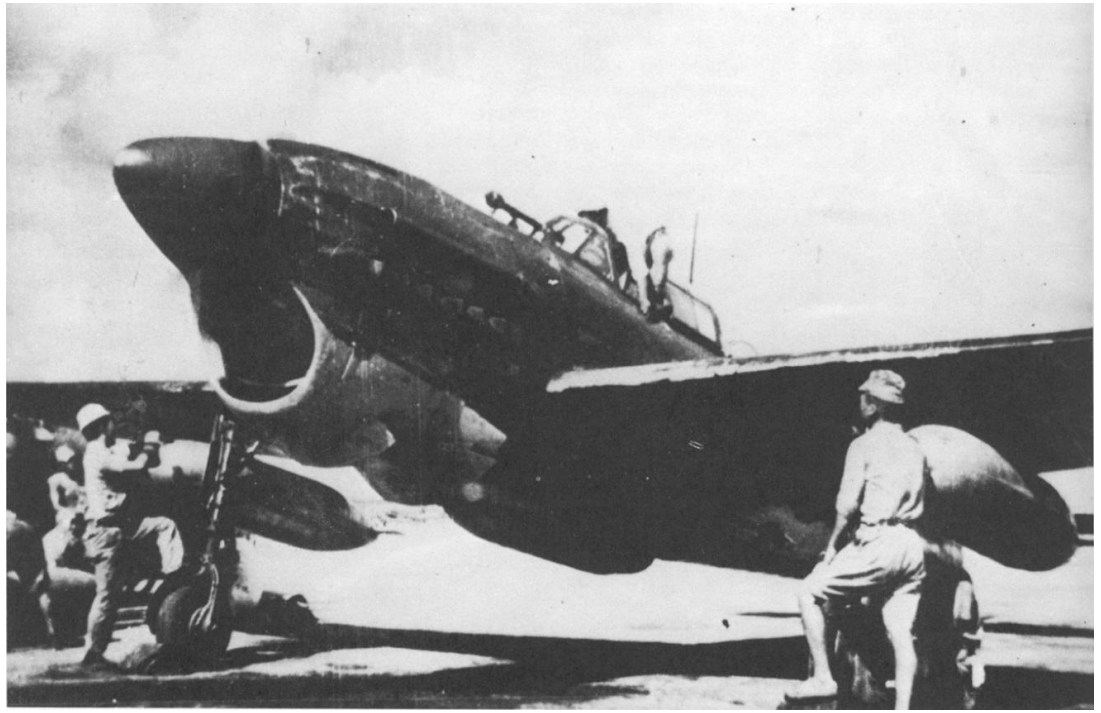
17 -22 March 1945 – SW Pacific

- The Tarakan operation was discussed at a conference at General Headquarters on 17 March and the Balikpapan operation on 20th March.
- The target date for Tarakan was now set at 29th April and for Balikpapan at 22nd May.
- By 21st March General Morshead's staff had prepared studies for both operations and Morshead went to Morotai on the 22nd to give preliminary instructions to General Wootten, GOC 9th Division.
- Photo: Wooten as a Brigadier in 1943.



19 March 1945 -Japan

- Task Force 58 ranged along the Japanese coast attacking airfields to reduce the capability to oppose invasion force.
- Before dawn on 19 March 1945, Franklin, which had closed to within 50 miles of the Japanese coast, closer than any other U.S. carrier during the war, launched a fighter sweep against Honshū and later a strike against shipping in Kure Harbor.
- The crew had been called to battle stations twelve times in six hours that night and the Captain downgraded the alert status to Condition III, allowing his men freedom to eat or sleep, although gunnery crews remained at their stations. A single Yokosuka D4Y "Judy" dive bomber approached Franklin without being detected by radar.
- As Franklin was about halfway through launching a second wave of strike aircraft, the Japanese dive bomber pierced the cloud cover and dropped two semi-armor-piercing bombs before the ship's anti-aircraft gunners could fire.



D4Y1-C (Judy) preparing for takeoff in Mariana Islands, 1944

19 March 1945 -Japan

- When struck, Franklin had 31 armed and fueled aircraft on her flight deck, and these caught fire almost immediately. The bombs soon began detonating progressively, although "Tiny Tim" air-to-surface rockets loaded aboard the Corsairs mostly flew overboard when their motors ignited because of the Corsairs' three-point, nose up attitude.
- The hangar deck contained planes, of which 16 were fueled and 5 were armed. The forward gasoline system had been secured, but the aft system was operating.
- The explosion on the hangar deck ignited the fuel tanks on the aircraft, and a gasoline vapor explosion devastated the deck. The twelve "Tiny Tim" rockets aboard these planes ricocheted around the hangar deck until their 138 lb warheads detonated.
- Of the personnel who were in the hangar only two survived. One "Tiny Tim" warhead lodged on the third deck below the forward elevator and was not removed until Franklin reached Ulithi.
- Expert damage control saved her, but she would spend the duration in a shipyard.



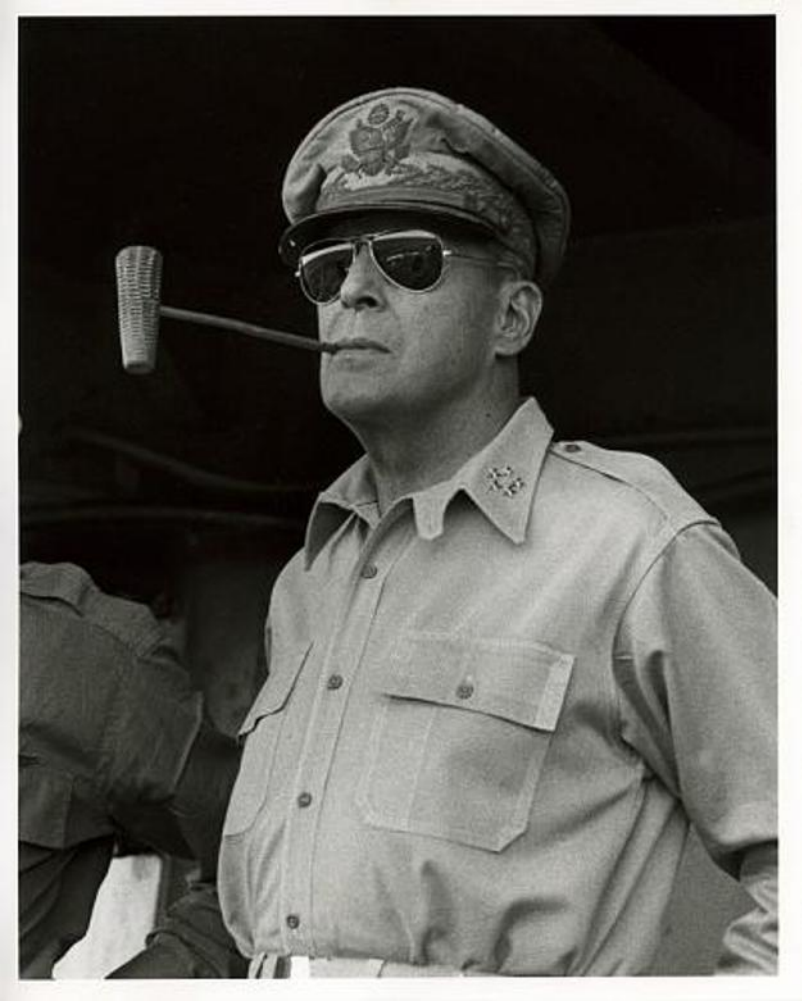
Franklin listing, with crew on deck, 19 March 1945

20 March 1945 - Philippines

- The Japanese again used ‘deceiving paper’ on the night of 20 March to allow a number of snoopers to avoid interception.
- Giman-shi (literally "deceiving paper") consisted of strips of aluminum-coated paper. When dropped from aircraft, these strips would reflect radar waves, creating a cloud of false targets on enemy radar screens.

20 March 1945 - Australia

- On 20th March Curtin informed War Cabinet that he had received the following answer from MacArthur:
- “In categorical reply to your basic question, I would state that my plans contemplate the use of all the Australian forces now assigned to the South-West Pacific Area.”
- War Cabinet noted that about 19,000 men of the R.A.A.F. were serving overseas. It was decided that the Australian manpower position and the early return of R.A.A.F. personnel after the defeat of Germany should be taken up with the United Kingdom Government.
- In the meantime no commitments were to be entered into for the allotment to the South-East Asia Area of R.A.A.F. squadrons serving overseas.



21 March 1945 - Tarakan

- On 21st March General MacArthur instructed General Morshead that, using the 26th Brigade Group, he was to seize and hold Tarakan Island, and destroy the enemy's forces there.
- The Netherlands Indies government was to be re-established and the oil-producing and oil processing installations conserved.
- As soon as the airfield on Tarakan had been repaired squadrons of the First Tactical Air Force were to be established there:
- one wing of fighters by P-plus-6 day,
- a wing of attack bombers by P-plus-15,
- and staging facilities for two additional squadrons of fighters and two of attack bombers by P plus-20.
- As soon as possible the brigade group was to be relieved by a garrison force and freed for operations farther west.
- Photo: Morshead with MacArthur on Labuan in June 1945



21 March 1945 - Kamikazes

- On 21 March in an American carrier task group 320 miles at sea from Kyushu at noon a single large raid showed up at over 100 miles on the cruiser Vincennes' radar.
- Vincennes' FDO notified Task Group 58.1 fighter director LT Charles Ridgway who immediately vectored airborne CAP to check out the raid, launched backup TG 58.1 fighters, and called on the other three task groups to launch fighters in support.
- As a result there were 150 Corsairs and Hellcats vectored out to meet the raid. Corsairs from the fleet carrier Bennington took on the fighter protection, shot down twenty Zeros, and prevented the rest from engaging twenty-four Hornet and Belleau Wood Hellcats that attacked G4Ms.
- Intercept was fifty miles out from the main body, and all eighteen bombers were shot down at a cost of two USN fighters.



The Betties were carrying Ohka glider/rocket kamikaze projectiles. The device achieved great speed, but with limited range. The slow, heavily laden mother aircraft had to approach within 20 nmi of the target, making it vulnerable to defending fighters.
This was the first operational use of the Ohka.

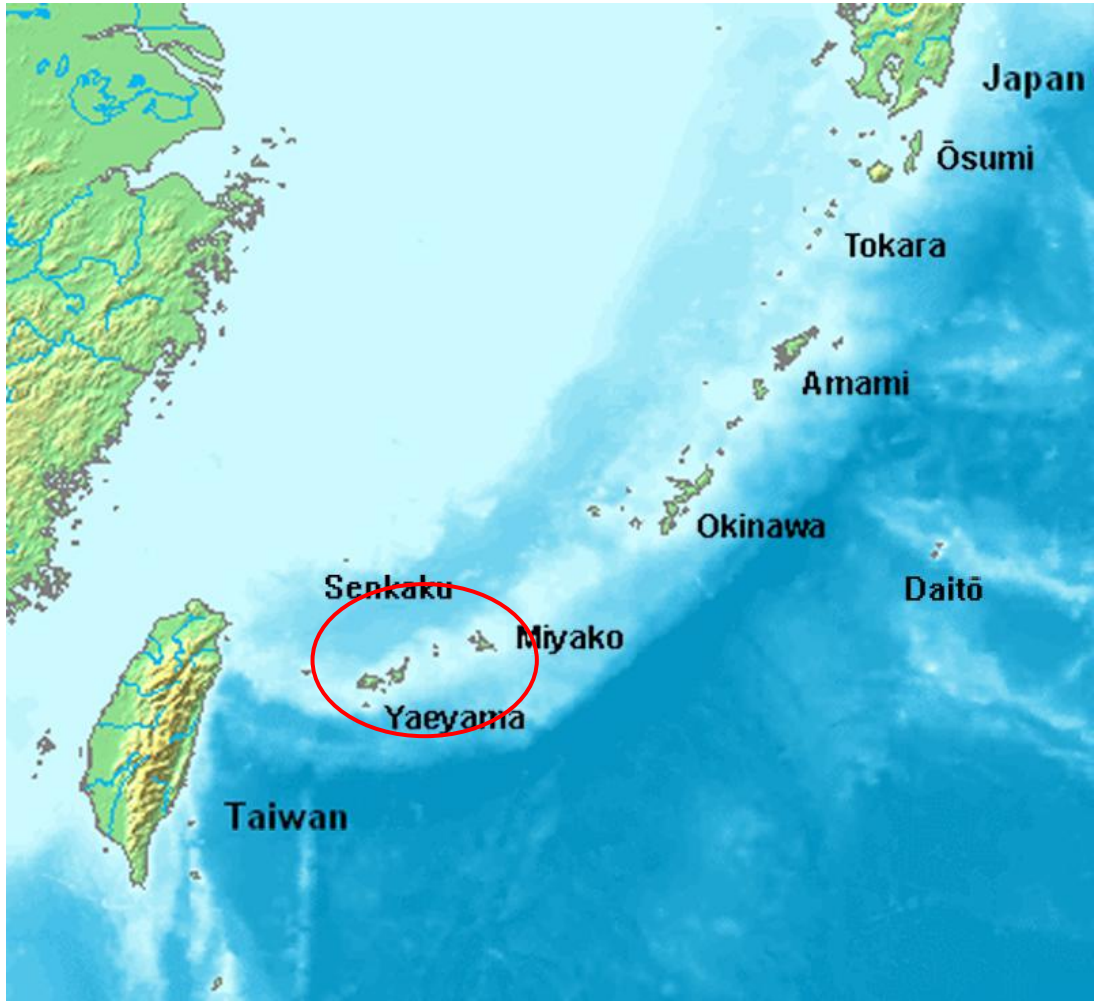
23 March 1945 -

- Aerial photo of a rendezvous between the British submarine HMS Telemachus and a Catalina of No. 112 Air Sea Rescue Flight RAAF in the Banda Sea, Netherlands East Indies, 23 March 1945.
- An engineer officer, injured in an accident, was transferred from the submarine to the Catalina by dinghy and flown to Darwin, Australia.



23 March 1945 - BPF

- On the 23rd, on its assignment to the American Fifth Fleet, the BPF became Task Force 57. As such it sailed from Ulithi at 6.30 a.m. on the 25th, and forty-eight hours later met the tanker group about 480 miles south of Okinawa and refuelled.
- TF.57 covered the American left flank by neutralising the airfields of the Sakishima Islands, alternating, whilst fuelling, with the escort carriers of the Amphibious Support Force.



23/24 March 1945 – B29

- The Command's next major operation was an unsuccessful night precision attack on the Mitsubishi aircraft engine factory conducted on the night of 23 and 24 March.
- Five of the 251 aircraft dispatched were shot down.
- B-29s also began to drop propaganda leaflets over Japan during March. These leaflets called on Japanese civilians to overthrow their government or face destruction.



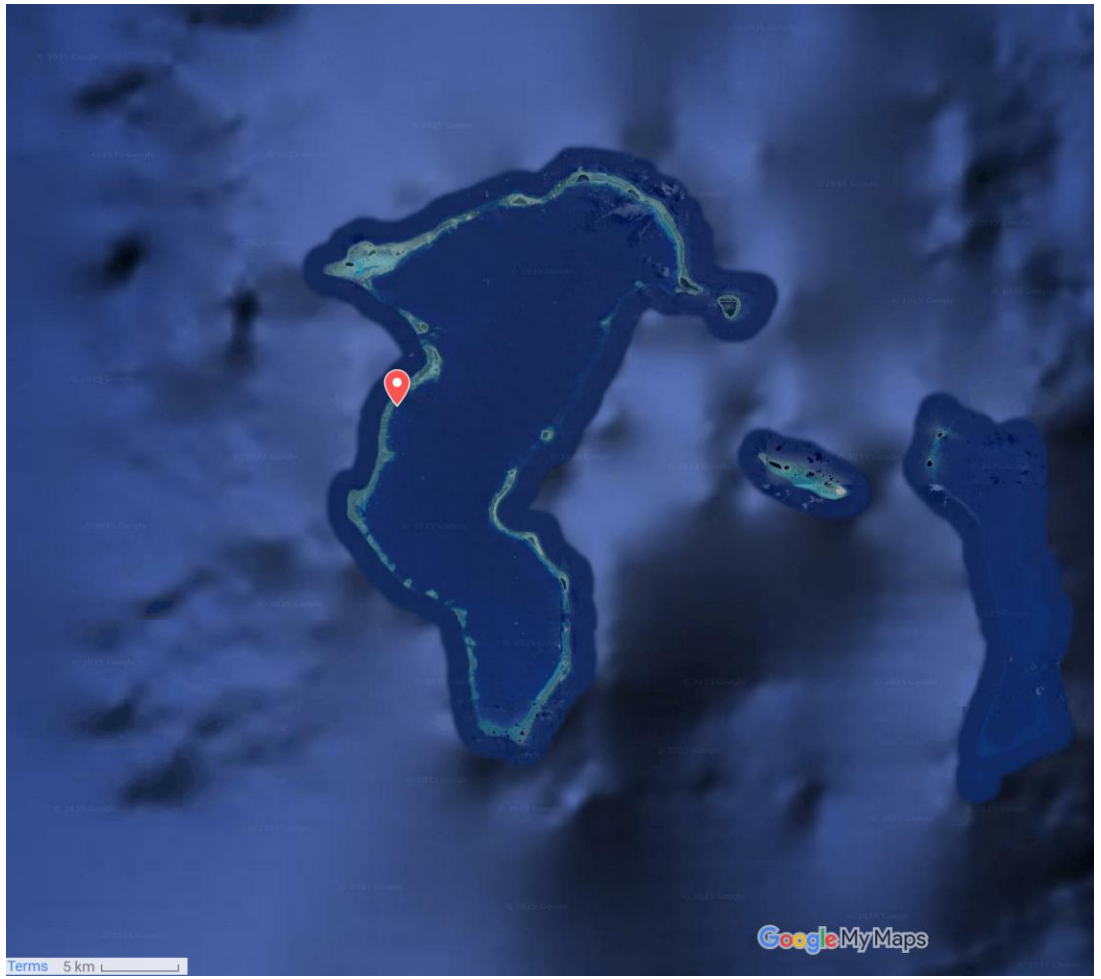
23/24 March 1945 – B29

- The USAAF assessed that the firebombing campaign had been highly successful and noted that American losses during these attacks were much lower than those incurred during day precision raids.
- Accordingly, the Joint Target Group (JTG), which was the Washington, DC–based organization responsible for developing strategies for the air campaign against Japan, developed plans for a two-stage campaign against 22 Japanese cities.
- However the JTG also recommended that precision bombing attacks on particularly important industrial facilities continue in parallel to the area raids.
- While this campaign was intended to form part of preparations for the Allied invasion of Japan, LeMay and some members of Arnold's staff believed that it alone would be sufficient to force the country's surrender.



March 1945 - Logistics

- “During the 10 days that we spent at Ulithi, I had an experience that demonstrated the degree of fine-tuning the Navy had achieved by then.
- Facing the Okinawa operation, our ship's automatic weapons complement suffered a serious breakdown. The failure of a small fibre gear, probably no more than six inches in diameter, rendered a 40mm-quad mount inoperative.
- In all of our millions of rounds of firing at the AATCs I had never seen this breakage before, nor indeed any failure at all in the servo system that linked our mounts to the Mark 51 directors.
- With the stripped gear in hand, I headed for the barges of Service Squadron 10, with little hope of finding this obscure part. But I need not have worried.
- At SERVRON 10, in one of those delightful encounters with an old friend, I met one of our Bermuda supply officers who had taken the three-day course at Southlands. He soon produced the necessary gear and even gave me a spare.”
- Lieutenant Bob Wallace, USS Idaho.



Ulithi Atoll

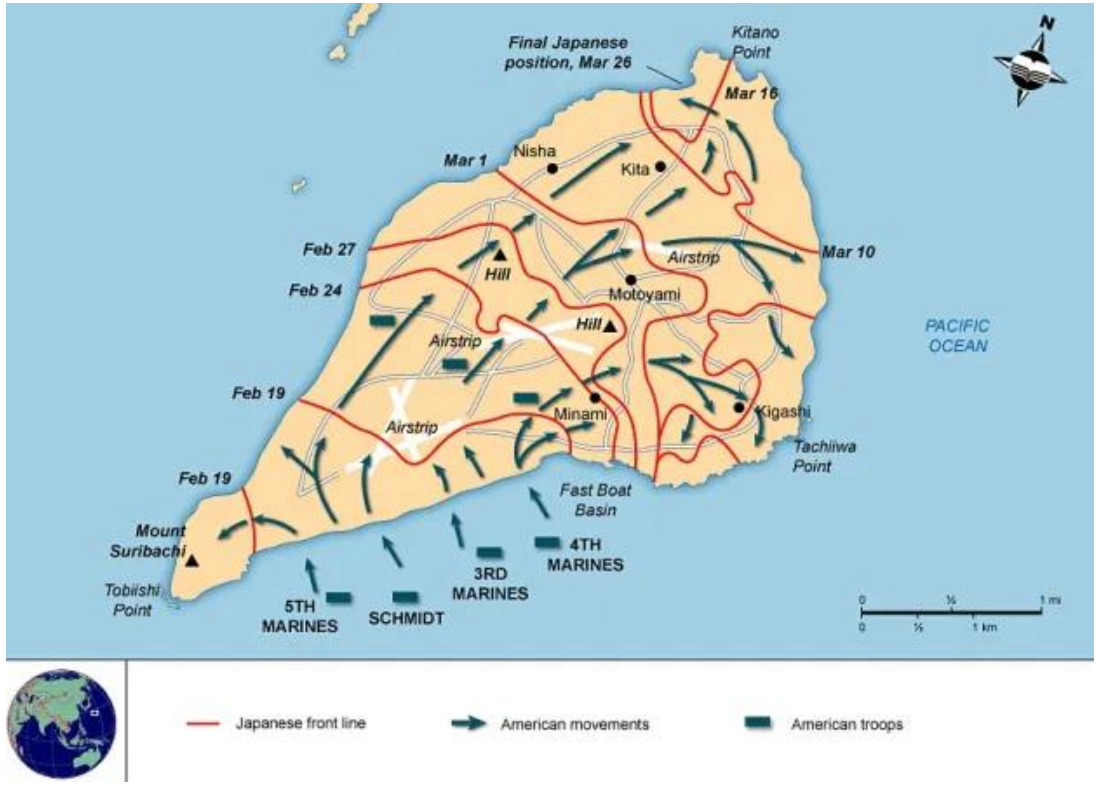
26 March 1945 - Okinawa

- “With the certainty of an extended large-scale presence at Okinawa, the Navy needed a secure base for refueling, ammunition replenishment, and repair of damaged ships, instead of having to do these tasks in the open ocean.
- Through the foresight of Vice Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, our amphibious commander who disregarded much counsel against it, we seized the Kerama Retto, a tight group of islands only 15 miles to the west.
- Before the attack began on Okinawa itself, we occupied this group in a largely bloodless operation.
- The main roadstead was capable of holding 75 large ships, with both entrances closed by steel nets. The kamikazes made a few small, partially successful attacks on Kerama Retto, but basically it was a tough place to approach, with its excellently sited radar and antiaircraft guns on the surrounding hills.
- Through the long Okinawa campaign, we retired to the anchorage for bullets, fuel, repairs, and mail.”
- Lieutenant Bob Wallace, USS Idaho.



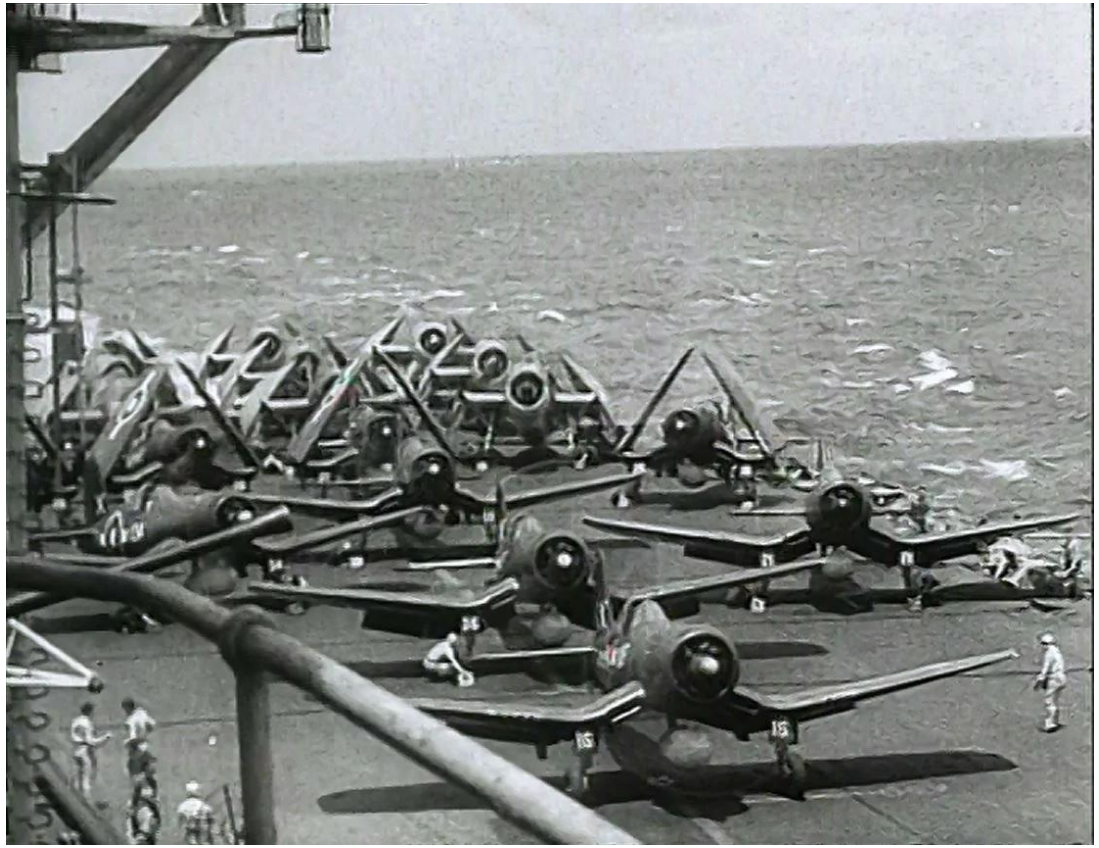
26 March 1945 – Iwo Jima

- Although the island was declared secure at 18:00 on 16 March (25 days after the landings), the 5th Marine Division still faced Kuribayashi's main stronghold, located in a gorge 700 yds long at the northwestern end of the island.
- On 21 March, the Marines destroyed the command post in the gorge with four tons of explosives, and on 24 March Marines sealed the remaining caves at the northern tip of the island.
- However, on the night of 25 March, a 300-man Japanese force launched a final counterattack in the vicinity of Airfield No. 2. Army pilots, Seabees, and Marines of the 5th Pioneer Battalion and 28th Marines fought the Japanese force for up to 90 minutes, suffering heavy casualties (53 killed, 120 wounded).
- The island was officially declared secure at 09:00 on 26 March.
- "the 36-day assault resulted in more than 26,000 American casualties, including 6,800 dead." Iwo Jima was the only U.S. Pacific battle where the American casualties exceeded those of the Japanese, although Japanese deaths were three times the number of Americans KIA.



26 - 27 March 1945 - BPF

- At daylight on 26th March TF.57 was in its flying off position, about 80 miles south of Miyako, and during the morning and afternoon strikes were flown off to attack the airfield targets in the Sakishima Islands.
- Quiberon recorded that "although the fleet was brought to five minutes notice for air attack on three occasions . . . no hostile aircraft were sighted.
- TF.57 continued its air strikes on the 27th, and after dark retired to refuel.
- "These two days' operations," remarked Becher in Quickmatch's report, "were successful, the enemy airstrips being neutralised and a number of aircraft being destroyed on the ground."



A strike of Corsairs and Avengers is launched from HMS FORMIDABLE.

27 March 1945 - Okinawa

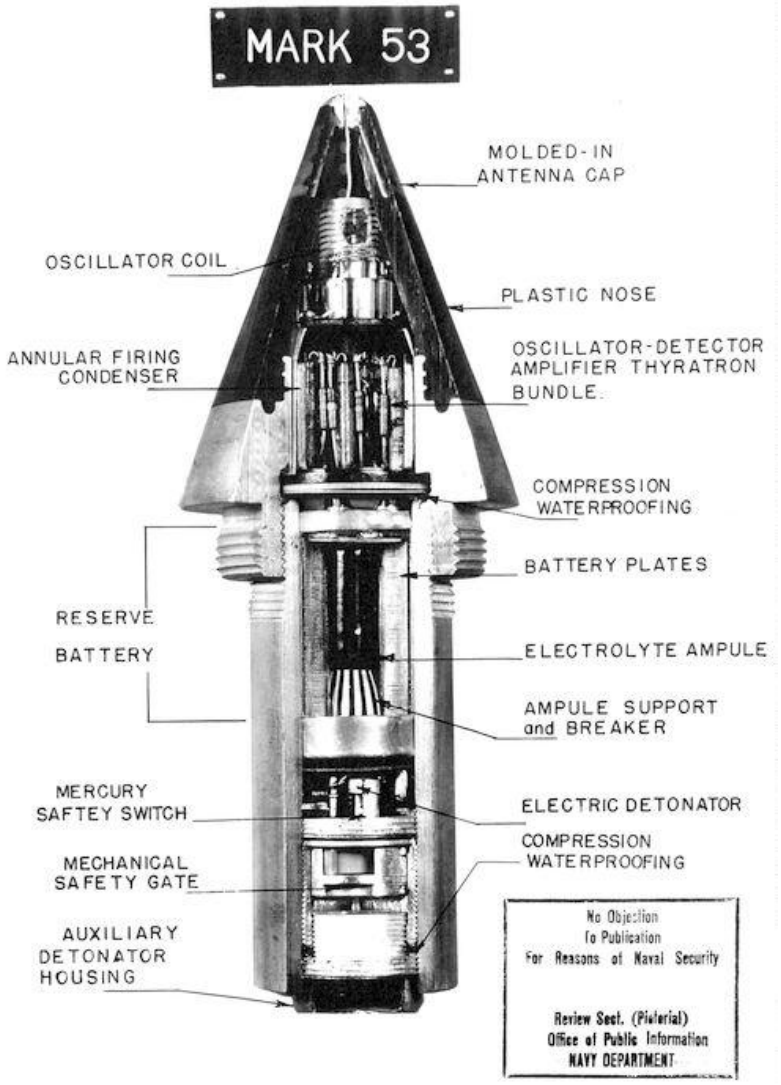
- “After our arrival at Okinawa on 26 March, we did not have long to wait for antiaircraft action of our own.
- The next morning enemy aircraft were reported an hour before any reached our (Idaho’s) vicinity.
- Then at 0620, shortly before sunrise, a twin-engine "Frances" made the mistake of flying past Idaho after dropping a bomb that did not score.
- At a range of 5,800 yards, our 5-inch turrets opened fire. It was about as auspicious an introduction as anyone could have hoped for.
- With five guns firing together, the plane burst into flames almost immediately. I would guess that she was destroyed by the very first salvo. But other salvos were already on their way when the hit was observed, and it took a bit of time for the guns to get the cease-firing order.
- The entire firing lasted only 15 seconds with a total of 20 rounds expended—only one a VT.
- The performance was perfect, and if the VT exploded, it was not needed. The aircraft was smothered by the shells bursting around it.”
- Lieutenant Bob Wallace, USS Idaho.



Lieutenant Bob Wallace, automatic weapons officer and Division Officer of the 8th Division, USS Idaho.

27 March 1945 – Air Defence

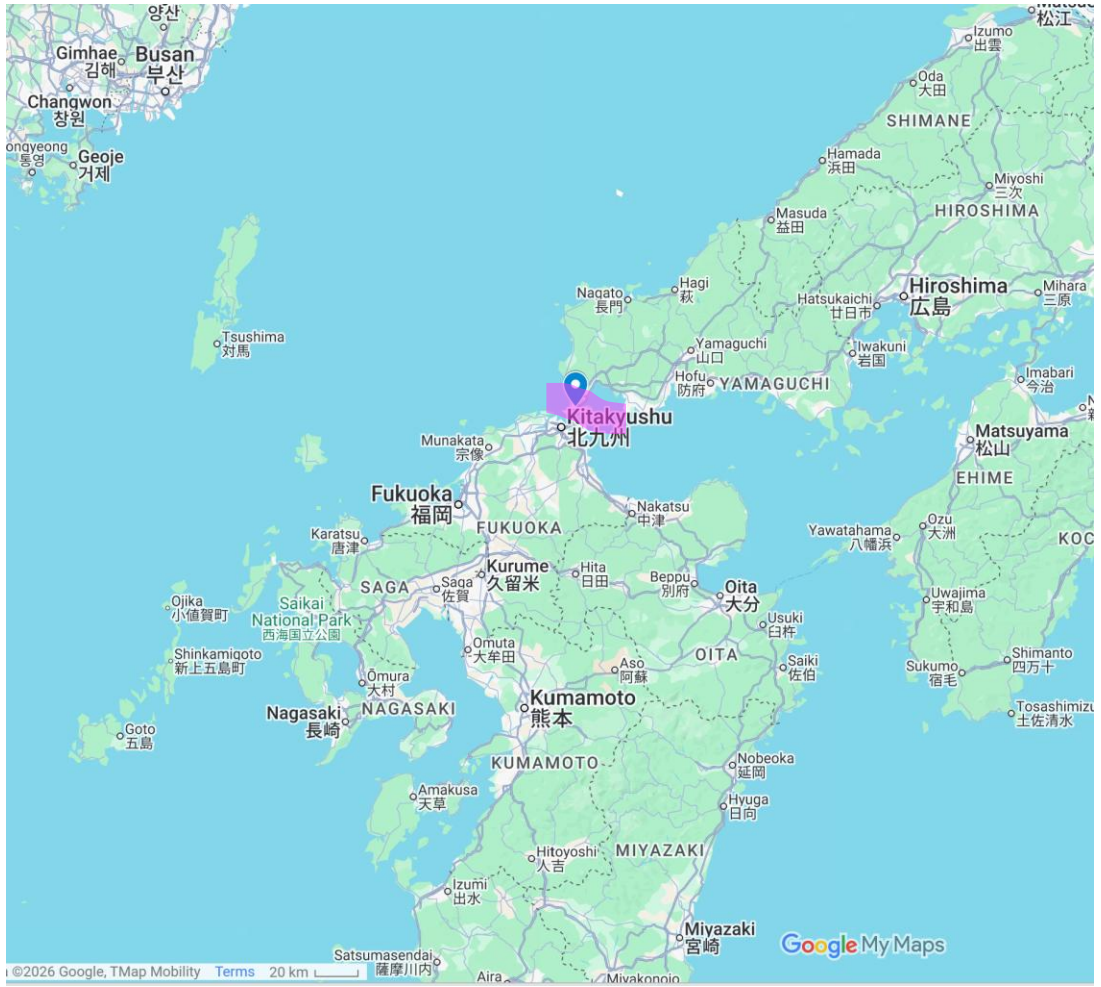
- In firing at aircraft, a 5-inch 38-caliber gun did not fire all VT fuses but instead mixed them in with ordinary antiaircraft common (AAC) on which the fuses were preset at the guns.
- These shells would all explode, thus performing more or less as tracers.
- By observing the bursts of the preset fuses the director operator could tell where his shells were going relative to the target.
- Wherever the bursts were moving, he knew that his deadly VT fuses were among them and he could make appropriate corrections, somewhat in the manner of "spotting" surface fire.
- Lieutenant Bob Wallace, USS Idaho.



Proximity fuze MK53 removed from shell. Circa 1950s.

27 March 1945 – B29s

- On the night of the 27th the 313th Wing sowed aerial mines in the Shimonoseki Strait. The mission was intended to bottle up the Inland Sea during the Okinawa assault, but it inaugurated a mining campaign which was to have strategic as well as tactical objectives. ? Map?



27 -31 March 1945 – B29s

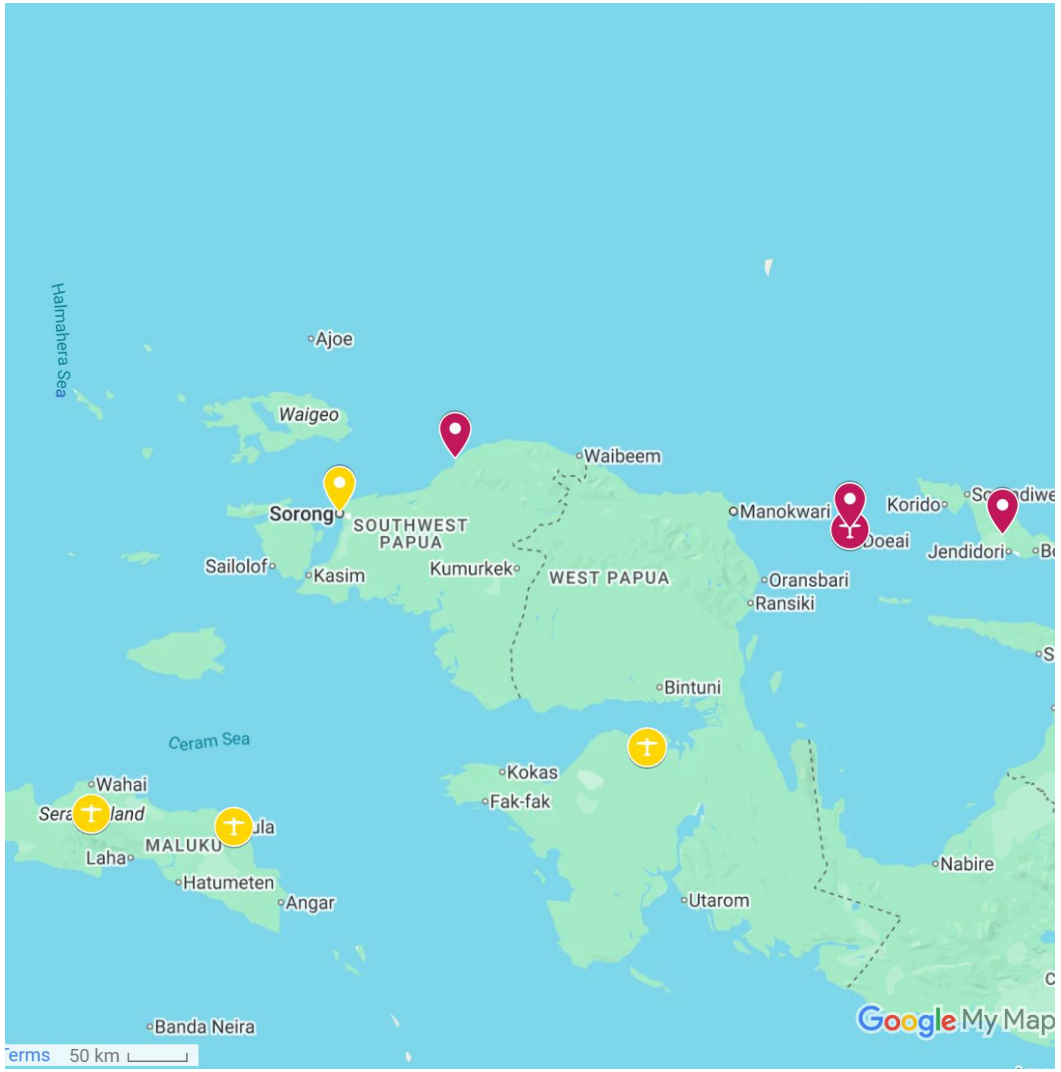
- The B29s were used to attack airfields in southern Japan from late March to mid-May in support of the invasion of Okinawa, an island only a few hundred miles south of the home islands.
- Prior to the landings on 1 April, the XXI Bomber Command bombed airfields in Kyushu at Ōita and Tachiarai as well as an aircraft plant at Ōmura on 27 March and struck Ōita and Tachiarai again on March 31. No B-29s were lost in these raids.



A B-29B of the 501st Bombardment Group takes off on a mission on 26 June 1945. The long horizontal bar running between the aircraft's landing gear is the antenna for the Eagle radar.

29 March 1945 – New Guinea

- Of 84 of 81 wing's sorties over the Vogelkop peninsula only 36 found targets.
- During a sweep on the 29th March Pilot Officer McClintock came down to 600 feet over Babo and his aircraft, being apparently hit by anti-aircraft fire, burst into flames.
- With some difficulty McClintock baled out, his parachute opening just above the tree tops.
- Landing uninjured on a small peninsula he quickly slipped out of his parachute harness and, using his compass to keep in a northerly direction, moved from the area through marshy ground.
- After thirty minutes walking he reached a creek and using his dinghy paddled to the sea and thence to a small island.
- Shortly afterwards he again put to sea where some hours later he was picked up by an air-sea rescue Catalina and was returned, little the worse for his experience, to his base at Kamiri.



31 March 1945 - Okinawa

- By late afternoon on 28th March the group of eight islands was secured .
- "On 31 March when the writer entered Kerama Kaikyo on board Tennessee, the roadstead already had the appearance of a long-established base, and 35 vessels were anchored there.“ (Morison)



31 March 1945 - BPF

- On the 31st TF.57 was back in its launching area after refuelling, and its air strikes on the Sakishima group were resumed.



Avengers and Seafires line up on the deck of HMS Implacable (R86) and warm up their engines before taking off. A destroyer is following the carrier, while a battleship is seen in the distance (upper right).

March 1945 - Australia

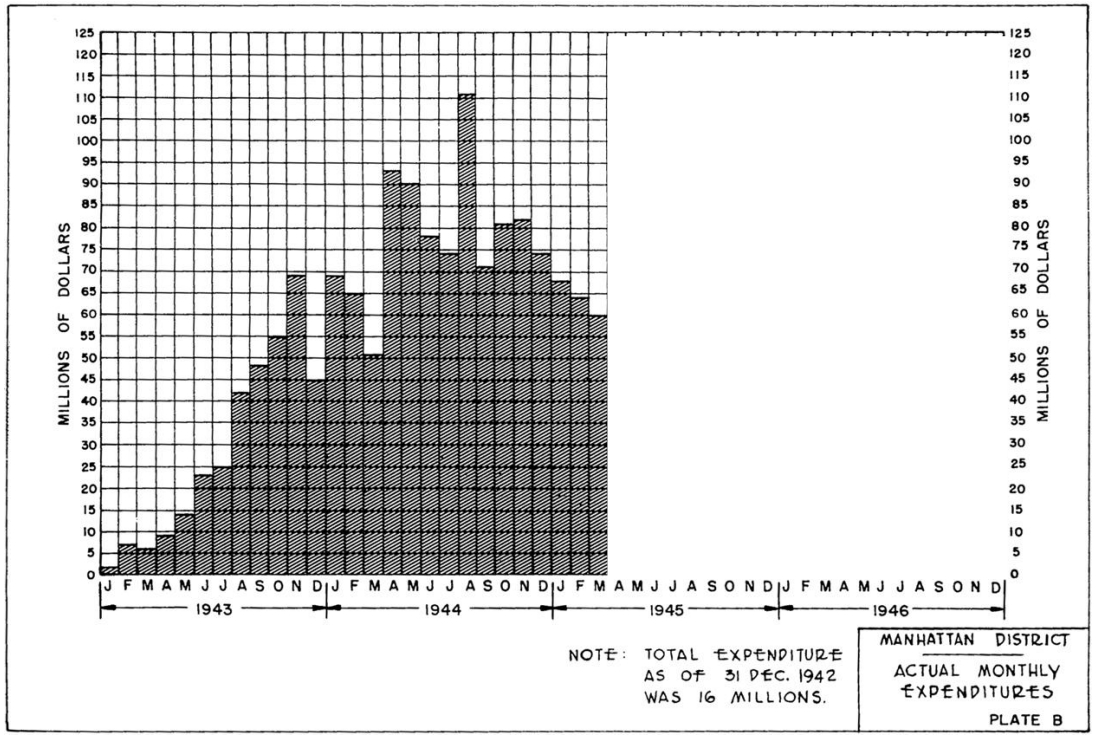
- Curtin took up direct with MacArthur the question of a review of United States requirements in order to find out what facilities or supplies the American forces might no longer require as they moved farther north and what they might be able to relinquish to the British naval forces.
- MacArthur agreed that there should be a proportionate allocation of Australian production for logistic support of each of the Allied forces based in Australia and that the advent of the British Fleet called for new arrangements. Accordingly an American was appointed to confer with the Defence Committee.
- War Cabinet was informed of the release of certain facilities by the United States forces, reductions in American demands on Australian production and manpower, and the probable future developments.
- Food still remained a major and undiminished American demand, but munitions demands were reduced to a third of their former size and the programme of construction work practically ceased in March.
- The direct employment of Australian civilians by the United States forces had fallen by the end of February from 23,000 to 13,000 and it was estimated by the Australian authorities that the reduction in the volume of supplies for the United States forces resulted in a falling-off from 49,000 to 19,000 of the number of persons engaged in the production of these supplies.



The trawler Sea Hawk of the Small Ships Section, United States Army Services of Supply, Southwest Pacific Area. Around 3000 Australians enlisted in the Small Ships Section during the Second World War. They were not inducted members of the US Army, but were civilians attached to the Army.

March 1945 - Manhattan Project

- As it grew in size and cost, Congress was deliberately kept ignorant of the project, because of concerns that Congressmen were prone to leaking information.
- Appropriations requests were quietly slipped into other bills, but the project's mounting costs and large facilities (which appeared to many to produce nothing) attracted scrutiny from several Congressional auditors.
- These Congressional inquiries, along with the need for smooth budgetary approval, led to Bush, Groves, and Stimson agreeing in the spring of 1944 that a few high-ranking Congressmen should be told of the project's purpose.
- By March 1945, exactly seven Congressmen were officially informed. The funds were hidden into appropriation requests with the inconspicuous headings, frequently "Engineer Service Army" and "Expediting Production."



March 1945 – New Guinea

- During a three-day period in March, two Beauforts blew up in mid-air while releasing their bombs.
- The aircraft were pulled from strike missions for ten days until the problem was traced to a faulty tail unit in the 100-pound bombs.



Beauforts of No. 100 Squadron near Wewak, January 1945

March 1945 – New Guinea

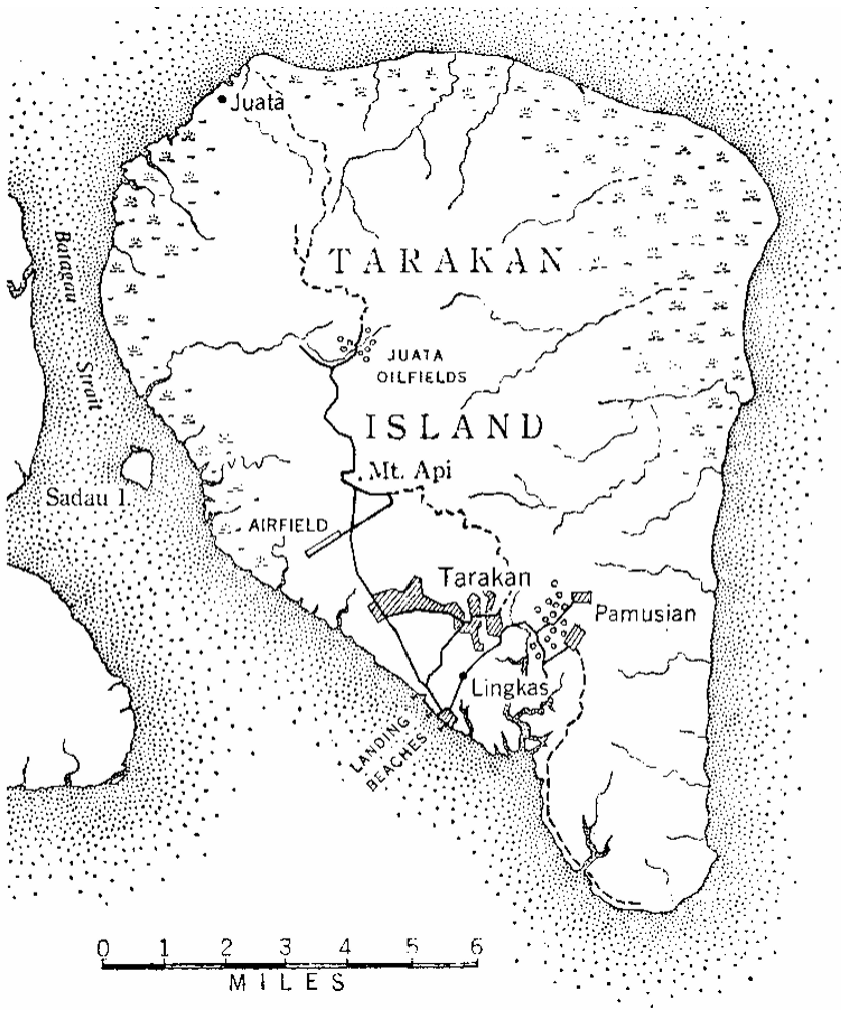
- A third New Guinea battalion was constituted in March, and in May the formation of a fourth was ordered.
- These went most of the way towards replacing the Australian battalions disbanded in the last year of the war.



PIB soldiers around the Song River, March 1944

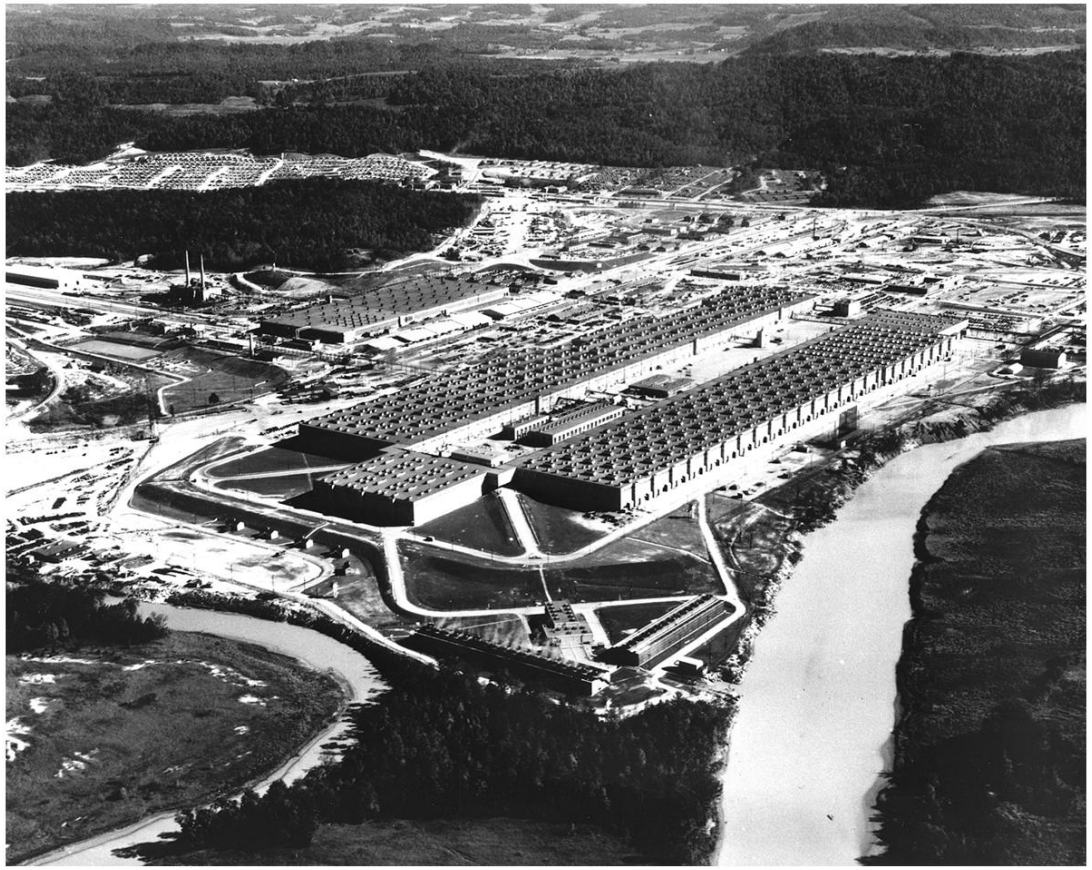
March 1945 - Tarakan

- By the end of March the planning headquarters of Amphibious Group Six of the American Navy (which would carry the attacking force to Tarakan), I Corps, the 9th Division, the 26th Brigade, and Advanced R.A.A.F. Command were all on Morotai and inter-Services planning was in progress.
- The shores of Tarakan were muddy and often covered with mangroves , and inland, rising steeply from a swampy coastal plain, was a tangle of hills and small steep gullies covered with dense rain forest and secondary growth.
- Only one beach—that at Lingkas, the port of Tarakan town which lay two miles inland—was considered feasible for the landing of so large a force and it was very flat and soft and, inevitably, was commanded by strong defences.
- It had the advantage of exit roads able to carry the heavy equipment needed to repair the only airfield, which was three miles and a half to the north-west.
- This field had often been cratered by Allied bombers and was now water-logged.



March 1945 – Manhattan Project

- In March 1945, Y-12, the electromagnetic enrichment plant, began receiving feed enriched to 5 percent from K-25.
- The output of this plant was also in the form of uranium hexafluoride (UF_6).



Oak Ridge K-25 plant



Thanks for your attention.