



Pacific War

The **Pacific War**, sometimes called the **Asia-Pacific War** or the **Pacific Theater**,^[43] was the theater of World War II that was fought in eastern Asia, the Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean, and Oceania. It was geographically the largest theater of the war, including the vast Pacific Ocean theater, the South West Pacific theater, the Second Sino-Japanese War, and the Soviet–Japanese War.

The Second Sino-Japanese War between the Empire of Japan and the Republic of China had been in progress since 7 July 1937, with hostilities dating back to 1931 with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria.^[44] However, it is more widely accepted^[f] that the Pacific War itself began on 7 December (8 December Japanese time) 1941, when the Japanese simultaneously attacked American military bases in Hawaii, Wake Island, Guam, and the Philippines and invaded Thailand and the British colonies of Malaya, Singapore, and Hong Kong.^{[45][46][47]}

The Pacific War saw the Allies pitted against Japan, the latter aided by Thailand and to a lesser extent by the Axis powers, Germany and Italy. The Japanese achieved great success in the initial phase of the campaign, but were gradually driven back using an island hopping strategy. The Allies adopted a Europe first stance, giving first priority to defeating Nazi Germany, but still managed to bring to bear the vast industrial might of the United States. The Japanese had great difficulty replacing their losses in ships and aircraft, while American factories and shipyards produced ever increasing numbers of both. Fighting included some of the largest naval battles in history and massive Allied air raids over Japan, as well as the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Japan surrendered unconditionally on 15 August 1945 and was occupied by the Allies. Japan lost its former possessions in Asia and the Pacific and had its

Pacific War
Part of World War II
<p>Clockwise from top left:</p> <p>US marines raising a flag over Iwo Jima, 1945 · Japanese naval aircraft prepare for takeoff to attack Pearl Harbor, 1941 · USS Bunker Hill after being struck by kamikazes, 1945 · Indian soldiers during the Burma campaign, 1945 · Japanese soldiers in China during Operation Ichi-Go, 1944 · Mushroom cloud after the US atomic bombing of Nagasaki, 1945</p>

sovereignty limited to the four main home islands and other minor islands as determined by the Allies.^[48]

Overview

Names of the war

In Allied countries during the war, the "Pacific War" was not usually distinguished from World War II, or was known simply as the *War against Japan*. In the United States, the term *Pacific theater* was widely used. The US Armed Forces considered the China Burma India theater to be distinct from the Asiatic-Pacific theater during the conflict.

Japan used the name *Greater East Asia War* (大東亜戦争, *Dai Tō-A Sensō*), as chosen by a cabinet decision on 10 December 1941, to refer to both the war with the Western Allies and the ongoing war in China. This name was released to the public on 12 December, with an explanation that it involved Asian nations achieving their independence from the Western powers through armed forces of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.^[49] Japanese officials integrated what they called the *Japan–China Incident* (日支事変, *Nisshi Jihen*) into the Greater East Asia War. During the Occupation of Japan (1945–52), these terms were prohibited in official documents (although their informal usage continued). The war became officially known as the Pacific War (太平洋戦争, *Taiheiyō Sensō*). The *Fifteen Years' War* (十五年戦争, *Jūgonen Sensō*) is also used, referring to the period from the Mukden Incident of 1931 through 1945.

Participants

Allies

The major Allied participants were China, the United States and the British Empire. China had already been engaged in a bloody war against Japan since 1937. The US and its territories, including the Philippine Commonwealth, entered the war after being attacked by Japan. The British Empire was also a major belligerent consisting of British troops along with large numbers of colonial troops from the armed forces of India as well as

Date	7 December 1941 – 2 September 1945 (3 years, 8 months, 3 weeks and 5 days) ^{[b][2]}
Location	<u>East Asia</u> · <u>South Asia</u> · <u>Southeast Asia</u> · <u>Oceania</u> · <u>Pacific Ocean</u> · <u>Indian Ocean</u>
Result	<u>Allied victory</u>
Territorial changes	<u>Allied occupation of Japan</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Removal of Japanese troops from <u>China</u> and <u>retrocession of Taiwan to China</u> ▪ Liberation of <u>Korea</u> and <u>Manchuria</u>, followed by the division of Korea ▪ Cession of <u>Japanese-held islands in the Central Pacific Ocean</u> to the <u>United Nations</u>, organized as the <u>Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands</u> ▪ Seizure and annexation of <u>South Sakhalin</u> and the <u>Kuril Islands</u> by the <u>Soviet Union</u>
Belligerents	
Main Allies:	Main Axis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>Japan</u> <p><u>See section</u></p> <p><u>Participants</u> for further details.</p>
 <u>China</u> ^[a]	
 <u>United States</u>	
 <u>United Kingdom</u>	
<u>See section</u>	
<u>Participants</u> for further details.	
Commanders and leaders	
Main Allied leaders	Main Axis leaders
 <u>Chiang Kai-shek</u>	● <u>Hirohito</u>
 <u>Franklin D. Roosevelt</u> ^[c]	● <u>Hideki Tojo</u> ^[e]
 <u>Winston Churchill</u> ^[d]	
Strength	

from Burma, Malaya, Fiji, Tonga; in addition to troops from Australia, New Zealand and Canada. The Dutch government-in-exile (as the possessor of the Dutch East Indies) was also involved. All of these were members of the Pacific War Council.^[50] From 1944 the French commando group Corps Léger d'Intervention also took part in resistance operations in Indochina. Some active pro-allied guerrillas in Asia included the Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army, the Korean Liberation Army, the Free Thai Movement, the Việt Minh,^[51] and the Hukbalahap.^[52]

The Soviet Union fought two short, undeclared border conflicts with Japan in 1938 and again in 1939, then remained neutral through the Soviet–Japanese Neutrality Pact of April 1941,^[53] until August 1945 when it (and Mongolia) joined the rest of the Allies and invaded the territory of Manchukuo, China, Inner Mongolia, the Japanese protectorate of Korea and Japanese-claimed territory such as South Sakhalin.^[54]

Mexico provided air support in the form of the 201st Fighter Squadron and Free France sent naval support in the form of *Le Triomphant* and later the *Richelieu*.

Axis powers and aligned states

The Axis-aligned states which assisted Japan included the authoritarian government of Thailand. Also involved were members of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, which included the Manchukuo Imperial Army and Collaborationist Chinese Army of the Japanese puppet states of Manchukuo (consisting of most of Manchuria), and the collaborationist Wang Jingwei regime (which controlled the coastal regions of China), respectively. In the Burma campaign, the anti-British Indian National Army and the Burma National Army fought alongside their Japanese allies.

Japan conscripted many soldiers from its colonies of Korea and Taiwan. Collaborationist security units were also formed in Hong Kong, Singapore, the Philippines, the Dutch East Indies, British Malaya, British Borneo, former French Indochina (after the overthrow of the French regime in 1945), as well as Timorese militia.

 14,000,000 ^[3]	● 7,800,000–
 3,621,383+ (1945) ^[nb 1]	7,900,000 (1945) ^{[11][12][13]}
 400,000 ^[8]	126,500 ^[14]
 2,000,000 ^[8]	,  ,  and other puppets: c.
 140,000 ^{[9][nb 2]}	1,000,000+ (1945) ^[15]
 1,747,465 (1945) ^[10]	
Casualties and losses	
Military	
12 aircraft carriers	25 aircraft carriers
4 battleships	11 battleships
25 cruisers	39 cruisers
84 destroyers and destroyer escorts	135 destroyers
63 submarines ^[16]	131 submarines ^[34]
21,555 ^[17] –27,000+ aircraft ^[18]	43,125 ^[17] –50,000+ aircraft ^[35]
4,000,000+ dead (1937–1945) ^[nb 3]	2,500,000+ dead (1937–1945) ^[nb 5]
Civilian deaths	
26,000,000+ (1937–1945) ^[nb 4]	1,000,000+ ^[nb 6]



The Pacific War Council as photographed on 12 October 1942. Pictured are representatives from the United States (seated), Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, China, the Netherlands, and the Philippine Commonwealth

Germany and Italy both had limited involvement in the Pacific War. The German and the Italian navies operated submarines and raiding ships in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, notably the Monsun Gruppe.

Theaters

Between 1942 and 1945, there were four main areas of conflict in the Pacific War: China, the Central Pacific, South-East Asia and the South West Pacific. US sources refer to two theaters within the Pacific War: the Pacific theater and the China Burma India Theater (CBI). However, these were not operational commands.

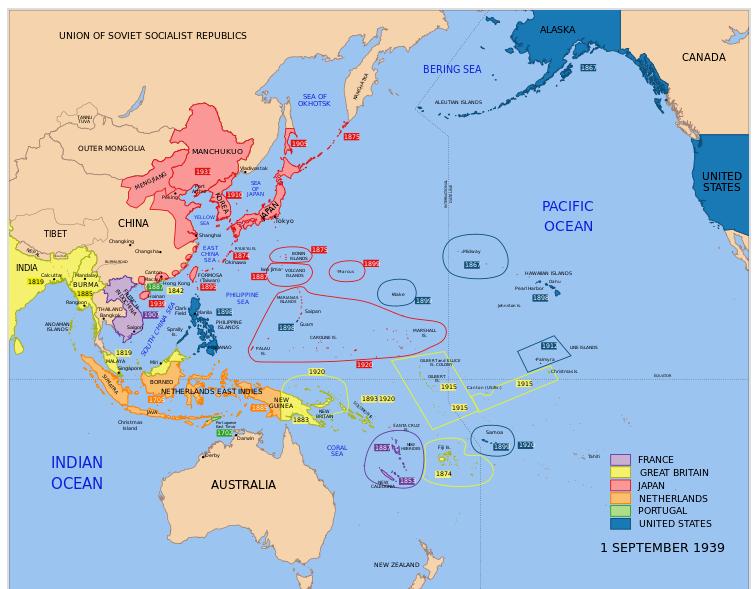
In the Pacific, the Allies divided operational control of their forces between two supreme commands, known as Pacific Ocean Areas and Southwest Pacific Area.^[55]

The Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) did not integrate its units into permanent theater commands. The Imperial Japanese Army (IJA), which had already created the Kwantung Army to oversee its occupation of Manchukuo and the China Expeditionary Army during the Second Sino-Japanese War, created the Southern Expeditionary Army Group at the outset of its conquests of South East Asia. This headquarters controlled the bulk of the Japanese Army formations which opposed the Western Allies in the Pacific and South East Asia.

Historical background

Conflict between China and Japan

In 1931, without declaring war, Japan invaded Manchuria, seeking raw materials to fuel its growing industrial economy. By 1937, Japan controlled Manchuria and it was ready to move deeper into China. The Marco Polo Bridge Incident on 7 July 1937 provoked full-scale war between China and Japan. The Nationalist Party and the Chinese Communists suspended their civil war in order to form a nominal alliance against Japan, and the Soviet Union quickly lent support by providing large amounts of materiel to Chinese troops. In August 1937, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek deployed his best army to fight about 300,000 Japanese troops in Shanghai, but, after three months of fighting, Shanghai fell.^[56] The Japanese continued to push the Chinese forces back, capturing the capital Nanjing in December 1937 and conducted the Nanjing Massacre.^[57] In March 1938, Nationalist forces won their first victory at Taierzhuang,^[58] but then the city of Xuzhou was taken by the Japanese in May. In June 1938, Japan deployed about 350,000 troops to invade Wuhan and captured it in October.^[59] The Japanese achieved major military victories, but world opinion—in particular in the US—condemned Japan, especially after the Panay incident.



Political map of the Asia-Pacific region, 1939

In 1939, Japanese forces tried to push into the Soviet Far East. They were soundly defeated in the Battle of Khalkhin Gol by a mixed Soviet and Mongolian force led by Georgy Zhukov. This stopped Japanese expansion to the north, and Soviet aid to China ended as a result of the signing of the Soviet–Japanese Neutrality Pact.^[60] In September 1940, Japan decided to invade French Indochina, which was controlled at the time by Vichy France. On 27 September Japan signed a military alliance with Germany and Italy, becoming one of the three main Axis Powers.

The war entered a new phase with the unprecedented defeat of the Japanese at the Battle of Suixian–Zaoyang, 1st Battle of Changsha, Battle of Kunlun Pass and Battle of Zaoyi. After these victories, Chinese nationalist forces launched a large-scale counter-offensive in early 1940; however, due to its low military-industrial capacity, it was repulsed in late March 1940.^[61] In August 1940, Chinese communists launched an offensive in Central China; in retaliation, Japan instituted the "Three Alls Policy" ("Kill all, Burn all, Loot all") in occupied areas.^[62]

By 1941 the conflict had become a stalemate. Although Japan had occupied much of northern, central, and coastal China, the Nationalist Government had retreated to the interior with a provisional capital set up at Chongqing while the Chinese communists remained in control of base areas in Shaanxi. The Japanese found its aggression against the retreating and regrouping Chinese army was stalled by the mountainous terrain in southwestern China while the Communists organised widespread guerrilla and saboteur activities in northern and eastern China behind the Japanese front line.

Japan sponsored several puppet governments, one of which was headed by Wang Jingwei.^[63] However, its policies of brutality toward the Chinese population, of not yielding any real power to these regimes, and of supporting several rival governments failed to make any of them a viable alternative to the Nationalist government led by Chiang Kai-shek. Conflicts between Chinese Communist and Nationalist forces vying for territory control behind enemy lines culminated in a major armed clash in January 1941, effectively ending their co-operation.^[64]

Japanese strategic bombing efforts mostly targeted large Chinese cities such as Shanghai, Wuhan, and Chongqing, with around 5,000 raids from February 1938 to August 1943 in the later case. Japan's strategic bombing campaigns devastated Chinese cities extensively, killing 260,000–350,934 non-combatants.^{[65][66]}



Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, Allied Commander-in-Chief in the China theater from 1942 to 1945



Chinese casualties of a mass panic during a June 1941 Japanese aerial bombing of Chongqing

Tensions between Japan and the West

As early as 1935, Japanese military strategists had concluded the Dutch East Indies were, because of their oil reserves, important to Japan. By 1940 they had expanded this to include Indochina, Malaya, and the Philippines within their concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Japanese troop build-ups in Hainan, Taiwan, and Haiphong were noted, IJA officers were openly talking about war, and Admiral Sankichi Takahashi was reported as saying a showdown with the US was necessary.^[67]

In an effort to discourage Japanese militarism, Western powers including Australia, the US, Britain, and the Dutch government in exile, which controlled the Dutch East Indies, stopped selling oil, iron ore, and steel to Japan. In Japan, the government and nationalists viewed these embargoes as acts of aggression; imported oil made up about 80% of domestic consumption, without which Japan's economy would grind to a halt. The Japanese media, influenced by military propagandists,^[g] began to refer to the embargoes as the "ABCD line" ("American-British-Chinese-Dutch").

Japanese preparations

The Japanese Imperial General Headquarters (GHQ) began planning for a war with the Western powers in April or May 1941. Japan increased its naval budget as well as putting large formations of the Army and its attached air force under navy command. While formerly the IJA consumed the lion's share of the state's military budget (with a 73/27 split in 1940), from 1942 to 1945 there would instead be a roughly 60/40 split in funds between the army and the navy.^[70] Japan's key initial objective was to seize economic resources in the Dutch East Indies and Malaya to escape the effects of the Allied embargo.^[71] This was known as the Southern Plan. It was decided—because of the close relationship between the UK and the US,^{[72][73]} and the (mistaken)^[72] belief that the US would inevitably become involved—that Japan would also take the Philippines, Wake and Guam.

Japanese planning was for a limited war where Japan would seize key objectives and then establish a defensive perimeter to defeat Allied counterattacks, which in turn would lead to a negotiated peace.^[74] The early war was divided into two operational phases. The First Operational Phase was further divided into three separate parts in which the major objectives of the Philippines, British Malaya, Borneo, Burma, Rabaul and the Dutch East Indies would be occupied. The Second Operational Phase called for further expansion into the South Pacific by seizing eastern New Guinea, New Britain, Fiji, Samoa, and strategic points in the Australian area. In the Central Pacific, Midway was targeted as were the Aleutian Islands in the North Pacific. Seizure of these key areas would provide defensive depth and deny the Allies staging areas from which to mount a counteroffensive.^[74]

By November these plans were essentially complete, and were modified only slightly over the next month. Japanese military planners' expectation of success rested on the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union being unable to effectively respond to a Japanese attack because of the threat posed to each by Germany; the Soviet Union was even seen as unlikely to commence hostilities.

The Japanese leadership was aware that a total military victory in a traditional sense against the US was impossible; the alternative would be negotiating for peace after their initial victories, which would recognize Japanese hegemony in Asia.^[75]

Japanese offensives, 1941–42

Following prolonged tensions between Japan and the Western powers, units of the IJN and IJA launched simultaneous surprise attacks on the United States and the British Empire on 7 December (8 December in Asia/West Pacific time zones). The locations of this first wave of Japanese attacks included the American territories of Hawaii, the Philippines, Guam, and Wake Island and the British territories of Malaya, Singapore, and Hong Kong. Concurrently, Japanese forces invaded southern and eastern Thailand and were resisted for several hours, before the Thai government signed an armistice and entered an alliance with Japan. Although Japan declared war on the United States and the British Empire, the declaration was not delivered until after the attacks began.

Attack on Pearl Harbor

In the early hours of 7 December (Hawaiian time), Japan launched a major surprise carrier-based air strike on Pearl Harbor in Honolulu without explicit warning, which crippled the US Pacific Fleet, left eight American battleships out of action, destroyed 188 American aircraft, and killed 2,403 Americans.^[76] The Japanese had gambled that the Americans, faced with such a sudden and massive blow, would agree to a negotiated settlement. This gamble did not pay off. American losses were less serious than initially thought: the three American aircraft carriers were at sea, and vital naval infrastructure, submarine base, and signals intelligence units were unscathed, and the fact the bombing happened while the US was not officially at war^[77] caused a wave of outrage across the US.^[76] Japan's fallback strategy, relying on a war of attrition, was beyond the Imperial Japanese Navy's capabilities.^{[77][78]}



USS Arizona burned for two days after being hit by a Japanese bomb in the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Opposition to war in the US vanished after the attack. On 8 December, the United Kingdom,^{[i][79]} the United States,^{[j][80]} Canada,^[81] and the Netherlands^[82] declared war on Japan, followed by Australia^[83] the next day.

South-East Asian campaigns of 1941–42



British forces surrendered Singapore to the Japanese, February 1942

Thailand, with its territory already serving as a springboard for the Malayan Campaign, surrendered within hours of the Japanese invasion.^[84] The government of Thailand formally allied with Japan on 21 December. To the south, the IJA had seized the British colony of Penang on 19 December, encountering little resistance.^[85]

Hong Kong was attacked on 8 December and fell on 25 December 1941. American bases on Guam and Wake Island were lost at around the same time. British, Australian, and Dutch forces, already drained of personnel and matériel by two years of war with

Germany, and heavily committed in the Middle East, North Africa, and elsewhere, were unable to

provide much more than token resistance. Two major British warships, the battlecruiser HMS Repulse and the battleship HMS Prince of Wales, were sunk by a Japanese air attack off Malaya on 10 December 1941.^[86]

Following the Declaration by United Nations on 1 January 1942, the Allied governments appointed the British General Archibald Wavell to the American-British-Dutch-Australian Command (ABDACOM), a supreme command for Allied forces in Southeast Asia. This gave Wavell nominal control of a huge force, albeit thinly spread from Burma to the Philippines to northern Australia. Other areas, including India, Hawaii, and the rest of Australia, remained under local commands. On 15 January, Wavell moved to Bandung in Java to assume control of ABDACOM.

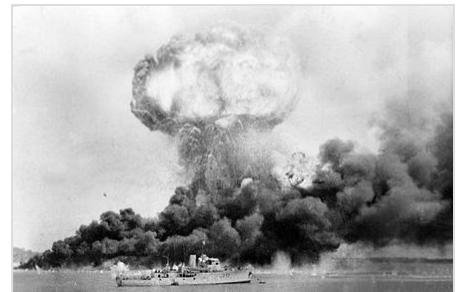
In January, Japan invaded British Burma, the Dutch East Indies, New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and captured Manila, Kuala Lumpur and Rabaul. After being driven out of Malaya, Allied forces in Singapore attempted to resist the Japanese during the Battle of Singapore, but were forced to surrender to the Japanese on 15 February 1942; about 130,000 Indian, British, Australian and Dutch personnel became prisoners of war.^[87] The pace of conquest was rapid: Bali and Timor fell in February.^{[88][89]} The rapid collapse of Allied resistance left the "ABDA area" split in two. Wavell resigned from ABDACOM on 25 February, handing control of the ABDA Area to local commanders and returning to the post of Commander-in-Chief, India.

Meanwhile, Japanese aircraft had all but eliminated Allied air power in Southeast Asia and were making air attacks on northern Australia, beginning with a psychologically devastating but militarily insignificant bombing of the city of Darwin on 19 February, which killed at least 243 people.^[90]

At the Battle of the Java Sea in late February and early March, the IJN inflicted a resounding defeat on the main ABDA naval force, under Admiral Karel Doorman.^[91] The Dutch East Indies campaign subsequently ended with the surrender of Allied forces on Java and Sumatra.^{[92][93]}

In March and April, a powerful IJN carrier force launched a raid into the Indian Ocean. British Royal Navy bases in Ceylon were hit and the aircraft carrier HMS Hermes and other Allied ships were sunk. The attack forced the Royal Navy to withdraw to the western part of the Indian Ocean,^[94] paving the way for a Japanese assault on Burma and India.

In Burma, the Japanese captured Moulmein on 31 January 1942, and then drove outnumbered British and Indian troops towards the Sittang River. On 23 February, a bridge over the river was demolished prematurely, stranding most of an Indian division. On 8 March, the Japanese occupied Rangoon. The allies then tried to defend Central Burma, with Indian and Burmese divisions holding the Irrawaddy River valley and the Chinese Expeditionary Force in Burma defending Toungoo. On 16 April, 7,000 British soldiers were encircled by the Japanese 33rd Division during the Battle of Yenangyaung and rescued by the Chinese 38th Division, led by Sun Li-jen.^[95] Meanwhile, in the Battle of Yunnan-Burma Road, the Japanese captured Toungoo after a severe battle and sent motorised units to capture Lashio. This cut the Burma Road, which was the western Allies' supply line to the Chinese Nationalists. Many of the Chinese troops were forced either to retreat to India or in small parties to



The Bombing of Darwin, Australia, 19 February 1942

Yunnan. Accompanied by large numbers of civilian refugees, the British retreated to Imphal in Manipur, abandoning most of their transport and equipment. They reached Imphal in May just as the monsoon descended, which halted operations.

Within China, cooperation between the Chinese Nationalists and the Communists had waned from its zenith at the Battle of Wuhan, and the relationship between the two had gone sour as both attempted to expand their areas of operation. The Japanese exploited this lack of unity to press ahead in their offensives.

Philippines

On 8 December 1941, Japanese bombers struck American airfields on Luzon. They caught most of the planes on the ground, destroying 103 aircraft, more than half of the US air strength.^[96] Two days later, further raids led to the destruction of the Cavite Naval Yard. By 13 December, Japanese attacks had wrecked every major airfield and virtually annihilated American air power.^[96] The previous month, a part of the US Asiatic Fleet had been sent to the southern Philippines. However, with little air protection, the remaining surface vessels in the Philippines, especially the larger ships, were sent to Java or to Australia, and the remaining American bombers flew to Australia in mid-December.^[96] The only forces that remained to defend the Philippines were the ground troops, a few fighter aircraft, about 30 submarines, and a few small vessels.



Surrender of US forces at Corregidor, Philippines, May 1942

The main Japanese landings on Luzon took place on 22 and 24 December. As the Japanese troops converged on Manila, General Douglas MacArthur began executing plans to make a final stand on the Bataan Peninsula and the Island of Corregidor. A series of withdrawal actions brought his troops safely into Bataan, while the Japanese entered Manila unopposed on 2 January 1942.^[97] On 7 January, the Japanese attacked Bataan. After some initial success, they were stalled by disease and casualties, but they could be reinforced while the Americans and Filipinos could not. On 11 March 1942, under orders from President Roosevelt, MacArthur fled Corregidor for Australia, and Lieutenant General Jonathan M. Wainwright assumed command in the Philippines. The defenders on Bataan, running low on ammunition and supplies, could not hold back a final Japanese offensive. Bataan fell on 9 April, with the 76,000 American and Filipino prisoners of war being subjected to the grueling 66 miles (106 km) Bataan Death March. On the night of 5–6 May, after an intensive aerial and artillery bombardment, the Japanese landed on Corregidor and Wainwright surrendered. In the southern Philippines, where key ports and airfields had already been seized, the remaining American-Filipino forces surrendered on 9 May.

Threat to Australia

In late 1941, as the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbor, most of Australia's best forces were committed in the Mediterranean Theatre. Australia was ill-prepared for an attack, lacking armaments, modern fighter aircraft, heavy bombers, and aircraft carriers. While still calling for reinforcements from

Churchill, the Australian Prime Minister John Curtin called for American support with a historic announcement on 27 December 1941:^{[98][99]}

The Australian Government ... regards the Pacific struggle as primarily one in which the United States and Australia must have the fullest say in the direction of the democracies' fighting plan. Without inhibitions of any kind, I make it clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom.

—Prime Minister John Curtin

Australia had been shocked by the speedy and crushing collapse of British Malaya and the Fall of Singapore in which around 15,000 Australian soldiers became prisoners of war. Curtin predicted the "battle for Australia" would soon follow. The Japanese established a major base in the Australian Territory of New Guinea beginning with the capture of Rabaul on 23 January 1942.^[100] On 19 February 1942, Darwin suffered a devastating air raid, the first time the Australian mainland had been attacked. Over the following 19 months, Australia was attacked from the air almost 100 times.

In early 1942 elements of the IJN proposed an invasion of Australia. The IJA opposed the plan and it was rejected in favour of a policy of isolating Australia via blockade by advancing through the South Pacific.^[101] The Japanese decided upon a seaborne invasion of Port Moresby, which would put Northern Australia within range of Japanese bomber aircraft.

President Franklin Roosevelt ordered MacArthur to formulate a Pacific defence plan with Australia in March 1942. Curtin agreed to place Australian forces under the command of MacArthur, who became Supreme Commander, South West Pacific. MacArthur moved his headquarters to Melbourne in March 1942 and American troops began massing in Australia. Enemy naval activity reached Sydney in late May 1942, when Japanese midget submarines launched a raid on Sydney Harbour. On 8 June 1942, two Japanese submarines briefly shelled Sydney's eastern suburbs and the city of Newcastle.^[102]



Dutch and Australian PoWs at Tarsau, in Thailand in 1943. 22,000 Australians were captured by the Japanese; 8,000 died as prisoners of war.

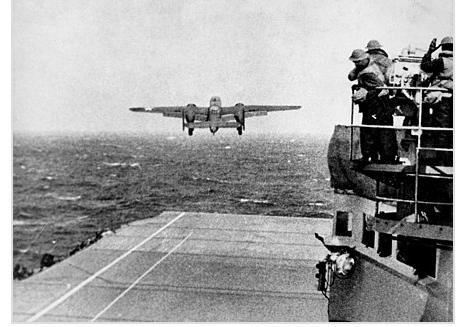
Allies re-group, 1942–43

In early 1942, the governments of smaller powers began to push for an inter-governmental Asia-Pacific war council. The Pacific War Council was formed in Washington DC on 1 April 1942, with President Franklin D. Roosevelt, his key advisor Harry Hopkins, and representatives from Britain, China, Australia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Canada. Representatives from India and the Philippines were later added. The council never had any direct operational control, and any decisions

it made were referred to the US-UK Combined Chiefs of Staff. Allied resistance, at first symbolic, gradually began to stiffen. Australian and Dutch forces led civilians in a prolonged guerilla campaign in Portuguese Timor.

Japanese strategy and the Doolittle Raid

The Second Operational Phase was planned to expand Japan's strategic depth by adding eastern New Guinea, New Britain, the Aleutians, Midway, Fiji, Samoa, and strategic points in the Australian area.^[103] The Naval General Staff advocated an advance to the south to seize parts of Australia, but with large numbers of troops engaged in China and Manchuria, the Imperial Army declined to contribute the forces necessary.^[103] The Naval General Staff still wanted to cut the sea links between Australia and the US by capturing New Caledonia, Fiji, and Samoa. Because this required far fewer troops, on 13 March the Naval General Staff and the Army agreed to operations with the goal of capturing Fiji and Samoa.^[103] The Second Operational Phase began well when Lae and Salamaua, located in eastern New Guinea, were captured on 8 March. However, on 10 March, American carrier aircraft attacked the invasion forces and inflicted considerable losses. The raid had major operational implications because it forced the Japanese to stop their advance in the South Pacific, until the Combined Fleet provided the means to protect future operations.^[103]



A B-25 bomber takes off from USS Hornet as part of the Doolittle Raid.

Concurrently, the Doolittle Raid occurred in April 1942, where 16 bombers took off from the aircraft carrier USS Hornet, 600 miles (970 km) from Japan. The raid inflicted minimal material damage on Japanese soil but was a huge morale boost for the US; it also had major psychological repercussions in Japan, exposing the danger to the Japanese homeland from American carrier forces.^{[104][105]} With only Marcus Island and a line of converted trawlers patrolling the vast waters that separate Wake and Kamchatka, the Japanese east coast was left open to attack.^[105]

Admiral Yamamoto proposed to achieve the destruction of the US Navy by occupying Midway Atoll, an objective he thought the Americans would be certain to fight for, as Midway was close enough to threaten Hawaii.^[106] During a series of meetings held from 2–5 April, the Naval General Staff and representatives of the Combined Fleet reached a compromise. Yamamoto got his Midway operation, but only after he had threatened to resign. In return, Yamamoto had to allocate one carrier division to the operation against Port Moresby and include an attack to seize strategic points in the Aleutian Islands simultaneously with the Midway operation. These were enough to remove the Japanese margin of superiority in the Midway attack.^[107]

Coral Sea

The attack on Port Moresby was codenamed MO Operation and was divided into several parts. Tulagi would be occupied on 3 May; the carriers would then conduct a sweep through the Coral Sea to find and destroy Allied naval forces, with the landings conducted to capture Port Moresby scheduled for 10 May.^[107] The MO Operation featured a force of 60 ships led by two carriers, and 250 aircraft.^[107] However, the actual battle did not go according to plan; although Tulagi was seized on 3 May, the

following day, aircraft from the American carrier *Yorktown* struck the invasion force.^[107] The element of surprise was lost due to the success of Allied codebreakers. From the Allied point of view, if Port Moresby fell, the Japanese would control the seas to the north and west of Australia and could isolate the country. An Allied task force under the command of Admiral Frank Fletcher, with the carriers *USS Lexington* and *Yorktown*, was assembled to stop the Japanese advance. On 7 May, the Japanese carriers launched a full strike on a contact reported to be enemy carriers, but the report turned out to be false. The strike force found and struck only an oiler, the *Neosho*, and the destroyer *Sims*.^[108]



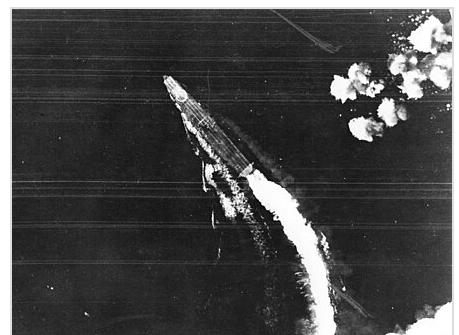
The aircraft carrier *USS Lexington* explodes on 8 May 1942, several hours after being damaged by a Japanese carrier air attack.

The American carriers also launched a strike with incomplete reconnaissance, and only located and sank the light aircraft carrier *Shōhō*. On 8 May, the opposing carrier forces finally found each other and exchanged air strikes. Aircraft from the two Japanese carriers succeeded in sinking the carrier *Lexington* and damaging *Yorktown*. In return the Americans damaged *Shōkaku*. Although *Zuikaku* was left undamaged, aircraft and personnel losses to *Zuikaku* were heavy and the Japanese were unable to support a landing on Port Moresby. As a result, *MO Operation* was cancelled,^[109] and the Japanese were forced to abandon their attempts to isolate Australia.^[110]

Although they managed to sink a carrier, the battle was a disaster for the Japanese, as all three carriers that were committed to the battle would now be unavailable for the operation against Midway.^[109] After Coral Sea, the Japanese had four fleet carriers operational—*Sōryū*, *Kaga*, *Akagi* and *Hiryū*—and believed that the Americans had a maximum of two—*Enterprise* and *Hornet*. *Saratoga* was undergoing repair after a torpedo attack, while *Yorktown* had been damaged at Coral Sea and was believed by Japanese naval intelligence to have been sunk. She would sortie for Midway after just three days of repairs.

Midway

Admiral Yamamoto viewed the operation against Midway as the potentially decisive battle of the war which could lead to the destruction of American strategic power in the Pacific,^[111] and subsequently open the door for a negotiated peace settlement.^[109] Through strategic and tactical surprise, the Japanese would knock out Midway's air strength and soften it for a landing by 5,000 troops.^[109] After the quick capture of the island, the Combined Fleet would lay the basis for the most important part of the operation. Yamamoto hoped that the attack would lure the Americans into a trap.^[112] Midway was to be bait for the USN which would depart Pearl Harbor to counterattack. When the Americans arrived, he would concentrate his scattered forces to defeat them. An important aspect of the scheme was *Operation AL*, which was the plan to seize two islands in the Aleutians, concurrently with the attack on Midway.^[109]



Hiryū under attack by B-17 Flying Fortress heavy bombers

However, in May, US intelligence codebreakers discovered the planned attack on Midway. Yamamoto's complex plan had no provision for intervention by the American fleet before the Japanese had expected them. Planned surveillance of the American fleet in Pearl Harbor by long-ranged seaplanes did not occur as a result of an abortive identical operation in March. Japanese submarine scouting lines that were supposed to be in place along the Hawaiian Islands were not completed on time.^[113]

The battle began on 3 June, when American aircraft from Midway spotted and attacked the Japanese transport group 700 miles (1,100 km) west of the atoll.^[114] On 4 June, the Japanese launched a 108-aircraft strike on the island but failed to deliver a decisive blow to the island's facilities.^[115] Most importantly, the strike aircraft based on Midway had already departed, adding to the 116 carrier aircraft on their way to attack the Japanese. The aircraft from Midway attacked, but failed to score a single hit. In the middle of these uncoordinated attacks, a Japanese scout aircraft reported the presence of an American task force, but it was not until later that the presence of an American carrier was confirmed.^[115] Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo was put in a difficult tactical situation.^[116] After quick deliberation, he opted for a delayed but better-prepared attack on the American task force.^[116]

However, beginning at 10:22am, American SBD Dauntless dive bombers surprised and attacked three of the Japanese carriers.^[116] *Sōryū*, *Kaga*, and *Akagi* were turned into blazing wrecks. A single Japanese carrier, *Hiryū*, remained operational, and launched an immediate counterattack. Both of her attacks hit *Yorktown* and put her out of action. Later in the afternoon, aircraft from the two remaining American carriers found and destroyed *Hiryū*. The crippled *Yorktown*, along with the destroyer *Hammann*, were sunk by the Japanese submarine *I-168*. With the striking power of the Kido Butai having been destroyed, Japan's offensive power was blunted. Early on the morning of 5 June, the Japanese cancelled the Midway operation.^[117]

New Guinea and the Solomons

Japanese land forces continued to advance in the Solomon Islands and New Guinea. From July 1942, a few Australian reserve battalions fought a stubborn rearguard action in New Guinea, against a Japanese advance along the Kokoda Track towards Port Moresby. The militia were relieved in late August by troops from the Second Australian Imperial Force. In early September 1942 Japanese marines attacked a strategic Royal Australian Air Force base at Milne Bay, near the eastern tip of New Guinea. They were beaten back by Allied forces, the first defeat of the war for Japanese forces on land.^[118]

On New Guinea, the Japanese on the Kokoda Track were within sight of Port Moresby but were ordered to withdraw to the northeastern coast. Australian and US forces attacked their fortified positions and after more than two months of fighting in the Buna–Gona area finally captured the key Japanese beachhead in early 1943.

Guadalcanal

Allied forces became aware through coastwatchers of a Japanese airfield under construction at Guadalcanal.^[119] On 7 August 1942, 16,000 US Marines landed on Guadalcanal and Tulagi in the Solomons. Vice Admiral Gunichi Mikawa, commander of the newly formed Eighth Fleet at Rabaul, quickly sailed to engage the Allied force off the coast of Guadalcanal. On the night of 8–9 August,

Mikawa's quick response resulted in the [Battle of Savo Island](#), a brilliant Japanese victory during which four Allied heavy cruisers were sunk,^[117] while no Japanese ships were lost. It was one of the worst Allied naval defeats of the war.^[117] The victory was mitigated only by the failure of the Japanese to attack the vulnerable transports. Had they done so, the first American counterattack in the Pacific could have been stopped. The Japanese originally perceived the American landings as nothing more than a reconnaissance.^[120]

With Japanese and Allied forces occupying parts of the island, over the following six months both sides poured resources into an escalating battle of attrition. US air cover based at [Henderson Field](#) ensured American control of the waters around Guadalcanal during daytime, while superior night-fighting capabilities of the IJN gave the Japanese the advantage at night. In August, Japanese and US carrier forces engaged in an indecisive clash known as the [Battle of the Eastern Solomons](#), resulting in the sinking of the light carrier *Ryujo*. In October, US forces successfully challenged the Japanese in night fighting during the [Battle of Cape Esperance](#), sinking one Japanese cruiser and one destroyer for the loss of one destroyer. During the night of 13 October, two Japanese fast battleships *Kongo* and *Haruna* bombarded Henderson Field. The airfield was temporarily disabled but quickly returned to service. On 26 October, the Japanese carriers *Shokaku* and *Zuikaku* sank *Hornet* and heavily damaged *Enterprise* in the [Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands](#). The loss of *Hornet*, coupled with the earlier loss of *Wasp* to the IJN submarine *I-19* and heavy submarine damage to *Saratoga* in September, meant that US carrier strength in the region was reduced to a single ship, *Enterprise*. However, the two IJN carriers had to retire to home waters. From 12 to 15 November, Japanese and American surface ships engaged in fierce night actions in the [Naval Battle of Guadalcanal](#), one of the only two battles in the Pacific War during which battleships fought each other; two US admirals were killed and two Japanese battleships sunk.

During the campaign, most of the Japanese aircraft based in the South Pacific were redeployed to the defense of Guadalcanal. Many were lost in engagements with the [Allied air forces](#). Japanese ground forces launched repeated attacks on heavily defended US positions around Henderson Field but suffered appalling casualties. To sustain these offensives, resupply was carried out by Japanese convoys, termed the "[Tokyo Express](#)" by the Allies. The convoys often faced night battles with enemy naval forces in which they expended [destroyers](#) that the IJN could ill-afford to lose. Fleet battles involving heavier ships and even daytime carrier battles resulted in a stretch of water near Guadalcanal becoming known as "[Ironbottom Sound](#)" from the multitude of ships sunk. However, the Allies were much better able to replace these losses. The Japanese [evacuated the island](#) and withdrew in February 1943. In the six-month war of attrition, the Japanese had lost as a result of failing to commit enough forces in sufficient time.^[121]



US Marines rest in the field during the Guadalcanal campaign in November 1942.

By late 1942, Japanese headquarters had decided to make Guadalcanal their priority. Contrarily, the Americans, most notably, US Navy admiral John S. McCain Sr., hoped to use their numerical advantage at Guadalcanal to progressively drain Japanese man-power. Ultimately nearly 20,000 Japanese died on Guadalcanal compared to just over 7,000 Americans.

Stalemate in China and Southeast Asia

China 1942–1943

In mainland China, the Japanese 3rd, 6th, and 40th Divisions, a grand total of around 120,000 troops, massed at Yueyang and advanced southward in three columns, attempting again to cross the Miluo River to reach Changsha. In January 1942, Chinese forces scored a victory at Changsha, the first Allied success against Japan.^[122]

After the Doolittle Raid, the IJA conducted the Zhejiang-Jiangxi Campaign, with the goal of locating surviving American airmen, applying retribution on the Chinese who aided them, and destroying air bases. This operation started on 15 May 1942 with 40 infantry and 15–16 artillery battalions, but was repelled by Chinese forces in September.^[123] During this campaign, the IJA left behind a trail of devastation and engaged in biological warfare, spreading cholera, typhoid, plague and dysentery pathogens. Chinese estimates put the death toll at 250,000 civilians. Around 1,700 Japanese troops died, out of a total 10,000 who fell ill when Japanese biological weapons infected their own forces.^{[124][125][126]}

On 2 November 1943, Isamu Yokoyama, commander of the Imperial Japanese 11th Army, deployed around 100,000 troops to attack Changde.^[127] During the seven-week Battle of Changde, the Chinese forced Japan to fight a costly campaign of attrition. Although the Japanese captured the city, the Chinese were able to pin them down long enough for reinforcements to arrive and encircle them. The Chinese then cut Japanese supply lines, provoking a retreat and Chinese pursuit.^{[127][128]} During the battle, Japan used chemical weapons.^[129]

Burma 1942–1943

In the aftermath of the Japanese conquest of Burma, there was widespread disorder and pro-Independence agitation in eastern India and a disastrous famine in Bengal, causing up to 3 million deaths. Wavell (commander-in-chief in India) was nevertheless eager to mount counterattacks into Burma.

One attack was an offensive in Arakan intended to secure Akyab island, important for its port and airfield. The 14th Indian Infantry Division advanced overland down the Mayu peninsula. The offensive was stalled at Rathedaung and Donbaik, only a few miles north of Akyab, by numerically inferior Japanese forces who occupied almost impregnable bunkers. Repeated assaults, from January to March 1943, failed to overcome these positions.^[130] A Japanese division moved to Arakan from Central Burma and attacked the 14th Indian Division's exposed left flank, overrunning several units.



Chinese troops during the Battle of Changde in November 1943

The headquarters of the 26th Indian Infantry Division took over the front, and intended to mount a riposte. However, the exhausted and demoralised troops which it inherited failed to stand firm and the division was forced to fall back to the Indian frontier in the first week in May.

Most officers accepted that the fiasco resulted from inadequate training for jungle warfare.^[131] To offset the depressing results of the Arakan offensive, the Allies widely publicised a long distance raid mounted by the Chindits under Brigadier Orde Charles Wingate. The Chindits suffered heavy losses (1,138 out of a force of just over 3,000) and had inflicted only minor damage to the Japanese lines of communication. However, Wingate insisted that ordinary British and Indian troops could fight in the jungle as easily as the Japanese. The raid also contributed to the Japanese decision to invade India during 1944.

In August 1943 the Allies formed a new South East Asia Command (SEAC) to take over strategic responsibilities for Burma and India from the Commander-in-Chief, India, who headed the British Indian Army. In October 1943 Winston Churchill appointed Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten as its Supreme Commander. Wavell was appointed Viceroy of India and immediately took measures to address the famine in Bengal. General Claude Auchinleck became commander in chief of the Indian Army and revitalised its administration and training establishments.^[132] The British and Indian Fourteenth Army was formed to face the Japanese in Burma. Under Lieutenant General William Slim, its training, morale and health greatly improved. The American General Joseph Stilwell, who commanded US forces in the China Burma India Theater, directed aid to China and prepared to construct the Ledo Road to link India and China.

In 1943, the Thai Phayap Army invasion headed to Xishuangbanna in China, but were driven back by the Chinese Expeditionary Force.

Allied offensives, 1943–44

Midway proved to be the last great naval battle for two years. The US used the ensuing period to turn its vast industrial potential into increased numbers of ships, planes, and trained aircrew.^[133] At the same time, Japan, lacking an adequate industrial base or technological strategy, a good aircrew training program, or adequate naval resources and commerce defense, fell further and further behind. In strategic terms the Allies began a long movement across the Pacific, seizing one island base after another. Some Japanese strongholds like Truk, Rabaul, and Formosa, were neutralized by air attack and bypassed. The goal was to get close to Japan itself, then launch massive strategic air attacks, improve the submarine blockade, and finally (only if necessary) execute an invasion.



Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and General Joseph Stilwell, Allied Commander-in-Chief in the China theatre from 1942 to 1945



American forces landing at Rendova Island, June 1943

The US Navy did not seek out the Japanese fleet for a decisive battle, as Mahanian doctrine would suggest (and as Japan hoped); the Allied advance could only be stopped by a Japanese naval attack, which oil shortages (induced by submarine attack) made impossible.^{[134][135]}

Allied offensives on New Guinea and up the Solomons

In the South Western Pacific the Allies seized the strategic initiative for the first time during the War and in June 1943, launched Operation Cartwheel, a series of amphibious invasions to recapture the Solomon Islands and New Guinea and ultimately isolate the major Japanese forward base at Rabaul. Following the Japanese Invasion of Salamaua–Lae in March 1942, Cartwheel began with the Salamaua–Lae campaign in Northern New Guinea in April 1943, which was followed in June to October by the New Georgia campaign, in which the Allies used the Landings on Rendova, Drive on Munda Point and Battle of Munda Point to secure a secretly constructed Japanese airfield at Munda and the rest of New Georgia Islands group. Landings from September until December secured the Treasury Islands and landed Allied troops on Choiseul, Bougainville and Cape Gloucester.

These landings prepared the way for Nimitz's island-hopping campaign towards Japan.

Invasion of the Gilbert and Marshall Islands

In November 1943 US Marines sustained high casualties when they overwhelmed the 4,500-strong garrison at Tarawa. This experience drove the Allies to improve their techniques of amphibious landings, implementing changes such as thorough pre-emptive bombings and bombardment, more careful planning regarding tides and landing schedules, and better coordination. Operations on the Gilberts were followed in late-January and mid-February 1944 by further, less costly, landings on the Marshall Islands.



The Allied leaders of the Asian and Pacific Theaters: Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Winston Churchill meeting at the Cairo Conference in 1943

Cairo Conference

On 22 November 1943 US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and ROC Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, met in Cairo, Egypt, to discuss a strategy to defeat Japan. The meeting was also known as the Cairo Conference and concluded with the Cairo Declaration.

Submarine warfare

US submarines, as well as some British and Dutch vessels, operating from bases at Cavite in the Philippines (1941–42); Fremantle and Brisbane, Australia; Pearl Harbor; Trincomalee, Ceylon; Midway; and later Guam, played a major role in defeating Japan, even though submarines made up a small proportion of the Allied navies—less than two percent in the case of the US Navy.^{[135][136]}

Submarines strangled Japan by sinking its merchant fleet, intercepting many troop transports, and cutting off nearly all the oil imports essential to weapons production and military operations. By early 1945, Japanese oil supplies were so limited that its fleet was virtually stranded.

The Japanese military claimed its defenses sank 468 Allied submarines during the war.^[137] In reality, only 42 American submarines were sunk in the Pacific due to hostile action, with 10 others lost in accidents or as the result of friendly fire.^{[138][139]} The Dutch lost five submarines due to Japanese attack or minefields,^[140] and the British lost three.

American submarines accounted for 56% of the Japanese merchantmen sunk; mines or aircraft destroyed most of the rest.^[138] American submariners also claimed 28% of Japanese warships destroyed.^[141] Furthermore, they played important reconnaissance roles and rescued hundreds of downed fliers.

Within hours of Pearl Harbor, in retribution against Japan, Roosevelt promulgated a new doctrine: unrestricted submarine warfare against Japan. This meant sinking any warship, commercial vessel, or passenger ship in Axis-controlled waters, without warning and without aiding survivors.^[k] While Japan had a large number of submarines, they did not make a significant impact on the war. In 1942, the Japanese fleet submarines performed well, knocking out or damaging many Allied warships. However, IJN (and pre-war US) doctrine stipulated that only fleet battles, not commerce raiding, could win naval campaigns. So, while the US had an unusually long supply line, leaving it vulnerable to submarine attack, Japan used its submarines primarily for long-range reconnaissance and only occasionally attacked US supply lines. The Japanese submarine offensive against Australia in 1942 and 1943 also achieved little.^[142]

As the war turned against Japan, IJN submarines increasingly served to resupply strongholds which had been cut off, such as Truk and Rabaul. In addition, Japan honored its neutrality treaty with the Soviet Union and ignored American freighters shipping military supplies from San Francisco to Vladivostok,^{[143][144]} much to the consternation of its German ally.



The torpedoed Yamakaze, as seen through the periscope of an American submarine, Nautilus, in June 1942



The I-400 class, the largest non-nuclear submarines ever constructed

The US Navy, by contrast, relied on commerce raiding from the outset. However, the problem of Allied forces surrounded in the Philippines in early 1942 led to diversion of boats to "guerrilla submarine" missions. Basing in Australia placed boats under Japanese aerial threat while *en route* to patrol areas, reducing their effectiveness, and Nimitz relied on submarines for close surveillance of enemy bases. Furthermore, the standard-issue Mark 14 torpedo and its Mark VI exploder both proved defective and were not corrected until September 1943. Worst of all, before the war, a US Customs officer had seized a copy of the Japanese merchant marine code, not knowing that the Office of Naval Intelligence had broken it.^[145] The Japanese promptly changed it, and the new code was not broken again by OP-20-G until 1943.

Only in 1944 did the US Navy begin to use its 150 submarines to maximum effect: installing effective shipboard radar, replacing commanders deemed lacking in aggression, and fixing the faults in the torpedoes. Japanese commerce protection was "shiftless beyond description",^[1] and convoys were poorly organized and defended compared to Allied ones, a product of flawed IJN doctrine and training. The number of American submarines patrols (and sinkings) rose steeply: 350 patrols (180 ships sunk) in 1942, 350 (335) in 1943, and 520 (603) in 1944.^[147] By 1945, sinkings of Japanese vessels had decreased because so few targets dared to venture out on the high seas. In all, Allied submarines destroyed 1,200 merchant ships – about five million tons of shipping. At critical stages of the Guadalcanal, Saipan, and Leyte campaigns, thousands of Japanese troops were killed or diverted from where they were needed. Over 200 warships were sunk, including a battleship and no fewer than eight carriers.

Underwater warfare was especially dangerous; of the 16,000 Americans who went out on patrol, 3,500 (22%) never returned, the highest casualty rate of any American force in World War II.^[148] The Japanese losses, 130 submarines in all,^[149] were higher.^[150]

Japanese offensives in Asia, 1944

Japanese counteroffensives in China, 1944

In mid-1944 Japan mobilized over 500,000 men^[151] and launched a massive operation across China under the code name Operation Ichi-Go, their largest offensive of World War II, with the goal of connecting Japanese-controlled territory in China and French Indochina and capturing airbases in southeastern China where American bombers were based.^[152] Though Japan suffered about 100,000 casualties,^[153] these attacks, the biggest in several years, gained much ground for Japan before Chinese forces stopped the incursions in Guangxi. Despite major tactical victories, the operation overall failed to provide Japan with any significant strategic gains. A great majority of the Chinese forces were able to retreat out of the area, and later come back to attack Japanese positions at the Battle of West Hunan. The constant defeats the Japanese suffered in the Pacific meant that Japan never got the time and resources needed to achieve final victory over China. Operation Ichi-go created a great sense of social confusion in the areas of China that it affected. Chinese Communist guerrillas were able to exploit this confusion to gain influence and control of greater areas of the countryside in the aftermath.^[154]

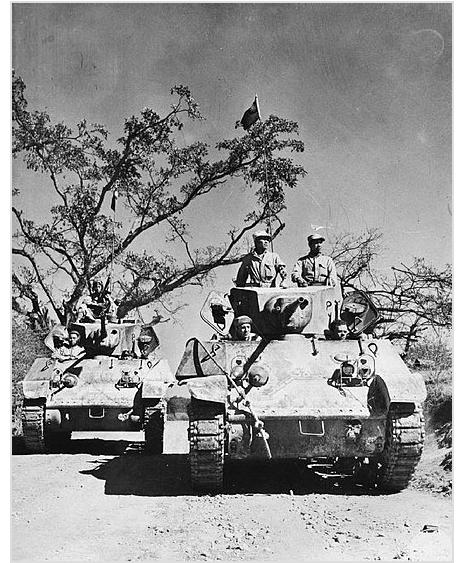
Japanese offensive in India, 1944

After the Allied setbacks in 1943, the South East Asia command prepared to launch offensives into Burma on several fronts. In early 1944, the Chinese and American troops of the Northern Combat Area Command (NCAC), commanded by the American Joseph Stilwell, began extending the Ledo Road from India into northern Burma, while the Indian XV Corps began an advance along the coast in Arakan Province. In February 1944, the Japanese mounted a local counter-attack in Arakan. After early Japanese success, this counter-attack was defeated in the Battle of the Admin Box when the isolated Indian divisions of XV Corps stood firm, relying on supplies dropped by parachute.

The Japanese launched a long-planned offensive, codenamed Operation U-Go, into India in mid-March.^[155] Lieutenant General Slim, commanding Fourteenth Army, and his forward commander, Lieutenant General Geoffrey Scoones, planned to withdraw into the Imphal plain and force the Japanese to fight with their communications stretching over scores of miles of jungle trails. However, they were slow to respond when the attack was launched and did not foresee some Japanese objectives.^[156] Some British and Indian units had to fight their way out of encirclement, but by early April they had concentrated around Imphal. Several units were flown from the Arakan to reinforce them. A Japanese division which had advanced to Kohima in Nagaland cut the main road to Imphal and isolated a small British garrison, but failed to capture the whole of the defences at Kohima. During April, the Japanese attacks against Imphal failed, while fresh Allied formations relieved the garrison of Kohima and drove the Japanese from the positions they had captured on Kohima ridge.

As many Japanese had feared, their inadequate lines of communication and the failure of Mutaguchi's gamble on an early victory meant that their troops starved. Once the monsoon rains descended in mid-May, they also succumbed to disease in large numbers. During May, while Mutaguchi continued to order attacks, the Allies advanced southwards from Kohima and northwards from Imphal. The two Allied attacks met on 22 June, breaking the Japanese siege of Imphal. The Japanese finally broke off the operation on 3 July. They had lost over 50,000 troops, mainly to starvation and disease—the worst defeat suffered by the IJA to that date.^[157]

Although the advance in Arakan had been halted to release troops and aircraft for the Battle of Imphal, the Americans and Chinese had continued to advance in northern Burma, aided by the reinforced Chindits operating against the Japanese lines of communication. In mid-1944 the Chinese Expeditionary Force invaded northern Burma. They captured a fortified position at Mount Song.^[158] By the time campaigning ceased during the monsoon, the Northern Combat Area Command had secured a vital airfield at Myitkyina after a prolonged siege, which eased the problems of air resupply from India to China over "The Hump".



Chinese forces on M3A3 Stuart tanks on the Ledo Road

Beginning of the end in the Pacific, 1944

In May 1943, the Japanese prepared Operation Z or the Z Plan, which envisioned the use of Japanese naval power to counter American forces threatening the outer defense perimeter line: from the Aleutians down through Wake, the Marshall and Gilbert Islands, Nauru, the Bismarck Archipelago, New Guinea, then westward past Java and Sumatra to Burma.^[159] In 1943–44, Allied forces in the Solomons began driving relentlessly to Rabaul, eventually encircling and neutralizing the stronghold. With their position in the Solomons disintegrating, the Japanese modified the Z Plan by eliminating the Gilbert and Marshall Islands, and the Bismarck Archipelago as vital areas to be defended. They then based their possible actions on the defense of an inner perimeter, which included the Marianas, Palau, Western New Guinea, and the Dutch East Indies. Meanwhile, in the Central Pacific the

Americans initiated a major offensive, beginning in November 1943 with landings in the Gilbert Islands.^[160] Japanese garrisons in the Gilberts and then the Marshalls were crushed.^[160] The strategy of holding overextended island garrisons was fully exposed.^[161]

In February 1944, the US Navy's fast carrier task force, during Operation Hailstone, attacked the major naval base of Truk. Although the Japanese had moved their major vessels out in time to avoid being caught at anchor in the atoll, two days of air attacks resulted in significant losses to Japanese aircraft and merchant shipping.^[161] The Japanese were forced to abandon Truk and were now unable to counter the Americans on any front on the perimeter. Consequently, the Japanese retained their remaining strength for what they hoped would be a decisive battle.^[161] The Japanese then developed a new plan, known as A-GO: a decisive fleet action that would be fought somewhere from the Palau to the Western Carolines.^[162] It was in this area that the newly formed Mobile Fleet along with large numbers of land-based aircraft, would be concentrated. If the Americans attacked the Marianas, they would be attacked by land-based planes in the vicinity. Then the Americans would be lured into the areas where the Mobile Fleet could defeat them.^[162]

Marianas and Palau

On 12 March 1944, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed the occupation of the Northern Marianas, with a target date of 15 June. All forces for the Marianas operation—535 warships and auxiliaries together with a ground force of over 127,500 troops—were to be commanded by Admiral Raymond A. Spruance.^[163] For the Americans, the Marianas operation would provide the interruption of the Japanese air pipeline to the south; the development of advanced naval bases; the establishment of airfields to base B-29s from which to bomb Japan; and the choice among several possible objectives for the next phase of operations, which would keep the Japanese uncertain. It was also hoped that this penetration of the Japanese inner defense zone might force the Japanese fleet out for a decisive engagement.^[164] The ability to plan and execute such a complex operation in the space of 90 days was indicative of Allied logistical superiority.



US Marines during mopping up operations on Peleliu, September 1944

On 15 June, the 2nd and 4th Marine Divisions supported by a naval bombardment group landed on Saipan. However, Japanese fire was so effective that the first day's objective was not reached until Day 3. After fanatic Japanese resistance, the Marines captured Aslito airfield on 18 June.^[165] Nafutan, Saipan's southern point, was secured on 27 June. In the north, Mount Tapotchau, the highest point on the island, was taken on 27 June. The Marines then steadily advanced northward. On the night of 6–7 July, a banzai attack took place in which three to four thousand Japanese made a fanatical charge that penetrated the lines near Tanapag before being wiped out. Following this attack, hundreds of locals committed mass suicide. On 9 July, organized resistance on Saipan ceased. The US Marines reached northernmost tip of Saipan, Marpi Point, twenty-four days after the landing. Only isolated groups of hidden Japanese troops remained.^[166]

A month after the invasion of Saipan, the US recaptured Guam and captured Tinian. Saipan and Tinian were used extensively by the US military as they finally put mainland Japan within round-trip range of American B-29s. Japanese forces attacked the bases on Saipan and Tinian from November 1944 to January 1945. The United States Army Air Forces based out of these islands conducted an intense strategic bombing campaign against Japanese cities of military and industrial importance, including Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, and Kobe.

The invasion of Peleliu in the Palau Islands on 15 September, was notable for a drastic change in Japanese defensive tactics, resulting in the highest casualty rate amongst US forces in an amphibious operation during the Pacific War.^[167] Instead of the predicted four days, it took until 27 November to secure the island. The strategic value of the landings is still contested.^[168]

Philippine Sea

When the Americans landed on Saipan in the Marianas the Japanese viewed holding Saipan as imperative. Consequently, they responded with their largest carrier force of the war: the nine-carrier Mobile Fleet under Vice Admiral Jisaburō Ozawa, supplemented by 500 land-based aircraft. Facing them was the US Fifth Fleet under Admiral Raymond A. Spruance: 15 fleet carriers and 956 aircraft. The clash was the largest carrier battle in history.

On 19 June, a series of Japanese carrier air strikes were shattered by strong American defenses. The result was later dubbed the *Great Marianas Turkey Shoot*. All US carriers had combat-information centers, which interpreted the flow of radar data and radioed interception orders to the combat air patrols. The few Japanese attackers that managed to reach the US fleet in a staggered sequence encountered massive anti-aircraft fire with proximity fuzes. Only one American warship was slightly damaged. On the same day, *Shōkaku* was hit by four torpedoes from the submarine *Cavalla* and sank with heavy loss of life. The *Taihō* was also sunk by a single torpedo, from the submarine *Albacore*. The next day, the Japanese carrier force was subjected to an American carrier air attack and suffered the loss of the carrier *Hiyō*.^[161] The four Japanese air strikes involved 373 carrier aircraft, of which 130 returned to the carriers.^[169] Many of these survivors were subsequently lost when *Taihō* and *Shōkaku* were sunk by American submarine attacks. After the second day of the battle, losses totaled three carriers and 445 aircrew with more than 433 carrier aircraft and around 200 land-based aircraft. The Americans lost 130 aircraft and 76 aircrew, many losses due to aircraft running out of fuel returning to their carriers at night.

Although the defeat at the Philippine Sea was severe in terms of the loss of the three fleet carriers, the real disaster was the annihilation of the carrier air groups.^[170] The Japanese had spent the better part of a year reconstituting their carrier air groups, and the Americans had destroyed 90% of it in two



The Japanese aircraft carrier *Zuikaku* and two destroyers under attack in the Battle of the Philippine Sea

days. The Japanese had only enough pilots left to form the air group for one of their light carriers. The Mobile Fleet returned home with only 35 aircraft of the 430 with which it had begun.^[161] The battle ended in a total Japanese defeat and resulted in the virtual end of their carrier force.^[171]

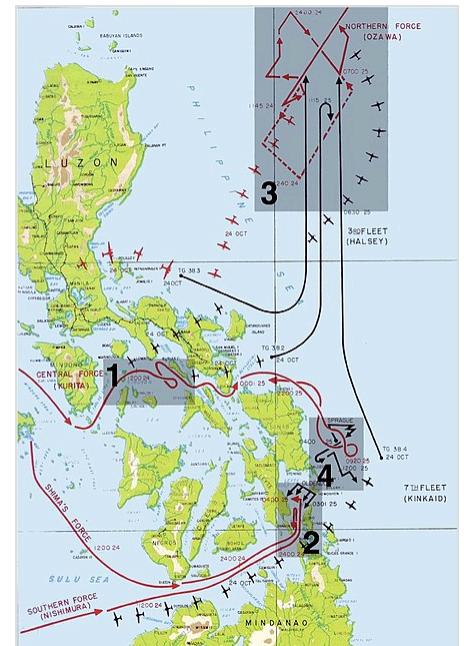
Leyte Gulf, 1944

The disaster at the Philippine Sea left the Japanese with two choices: an all-out offensive or allow the Americans to cut the sea lanes between Japan and Southeast Asia. Thus the Japanese devised a plan to force a decisive battle by utilizing their last remaining strength – the firepower of its heavy cruisers and battleships – against the American beachhead at Leyte. The Japanese planned to use their remaining carriers as bait to lure the American carriers away from Leyte Gulf long enough for the heavy warships to enter and to destroy any American ships present.^[172]

The Japanese assembled four carriers, nine battleships, 14 heavy cruisers, seven light cruisers, and 35 destroyers.^[172] They split into three forces: the "Center Force", under the command of Vice Admiral Takeo Kurita, which included the battleships *Yamato* and *Musashi*; the "Northern Force", under the command of Ozawa, which had four carriers and two battleships partly converted to carriers; and the "Southern Force", containing one group under the command of Shōji Nishimura and another under Kiyohide Shima. The Center Force would pass through the San Bernardino Strait into the Philippine Sea, turn southwards, and then attack the landing area. The Southern Force would strike at the landing area through the Surigao Strait, while the Northern Force would lure the main American covering forces away from Leyte. Japanese carriers embarked just 108 aircraft.^[172]

However, after Center Force departed from Brunei Bay on 23 October, two American submarines attacked it, resulting in the loss of two heavy cruisers with another crippled. After entering the Sibuyan Sea on 24 October, Center Force was assaulted by American carrier aircraft, forcing another heavy cruiser to retire. The Americans then sank *Musashi*. Many other ships of Center Force were attacked, but continued on.^[172] Convinced that their attacks had made Center Force ineffective, the American carriers headed north to address the newly detected threat of the Japanese carriers of Ozawa's Northern Force. On the night of 24–25 October, the Southern Force under Nishimura attempted to enter Leyte Gulf from the south through Surigao Strait, where an American-Australian force led by Rear Admiral Jesse Oldendorf ambushed the Japanese.^[173] American destroyers and naval gunfire destroyed two battleships and three destroyers, with only a single Japanese destroyer surviving. As a result of observing radio silence, Shima's group was unable to coordinate its movements with Nishimura's group and arrived at Surigao Strait in the middle of the encounter; after making a haphazard torpedo attack, Shima retreated.^[173]

Off Cape Engaño, 500 miles (800 km) north of Leyte Gulf, the Americans launched over 500 aircraft sorties at the Northern Force, followed by a surface group of cruisers and destroyers. All four Japanese carriers were sunk, but the Japanese had succeeded in drawing the American carriers away from Leyte



The four engagements in the Battle of Leyte Gulf

Gulf.^[173] On 25 October the final major surface action fought between the Japanese and the American fleets occurred off Samar, when Center Force fell upon a group of American escort carriers escorted only by destroyers and destroyer escorts. Both sides were surprised, but the outcome looked certain since the Japanese had four battleships, six heavy cruisers, and two light cruisers leading two destroyer squadrons. However, they conducted a largely indecisive gunnery duel before breaking off. Japanese losses were extremely heavy, with four carriers, three battleships, six heavy cruisers, four light cruisers and eleven destroyers sunk,^[174] while the Americans lost one light carrier and two escort carriers, two destroyers and two destroyer escorts. The Battle of Leyte Gulf was the largest naval battle of World War II and arguably the largest naval battle in history. For the Japanese the defeat at Leyte Gulf was catastrophic—its navy's greatest ever loss of ships and men in combat.^[175] The inevitable liberation of the Philippines also meant that the home islands would be virtually cut off from the vital resources from Japan's occupied territories in Southeast Asia.^[175]

Philippines, 1944–1945

On 20 October 1944 the US Sixth Army, supported by naval and air bombardment, landed on the favorable eastern shore of Leyte, north of Mindanao. The US Sixth Army continued its advance from the east, while the Japanese rushed reinforcements to the western side. The US reinforced the Sixth Army successfully, but the US Fifth Air Force devastated Japanese attempts to resupply. In torrential rains and over difficult terrain, the US advance continued across Leyte and the neighboring island of Samar to the north. On 7 December US Army units landed and, after a major land and air battle, cut off the Japanese ability to reinforce and supply Leyte. Although fierce fighting continued on Leyte for months, the US Army was in control.



General Douglas MacArthur wading ashore at Leyte

On 15 December 1944 landings against minimal resistance took place on the southern beaches of the island of Mindoro, a key location in the planned Lingayen Gulf operations, in support of major landings scheduled on Luzon. On 9 January 1945 General Krueger's Sixth Army landed its first units on the western coast of Luzon. Almost 175,000 men followed within a few days. With heavy air support, Army units pushed inland, taking Clark Field, 40 miles (64 km) northwest of Manila, in the last week of January.

Two more major landings followed, one to cut off the Bataan Peninsula, and another, that included a parachute drop, south of Manila. Pincers closed on the city, and on 3 February 1945 American forces pushed into Manila. The month-long battle for Manila resulted in over 100,000 civilian deaths and was the scene of the worst urban fighting by American forces in the Pacific theater. As the advance on Manila continued from the north and the south, the Bataan Peninsula was rapidly secured. On 16 February paratroopers and amphibious units assaulted the island fortress of Corregidor, and resistance ended there on 27 February.

In all, ten US divisions and five independent regiments battled on Luzon, making it the largest campaign of the Pacific War, involving more troops than the US had used in North Africa, Italy, or southern France. Forces included the Mexican Escuadrón 201 fighter-squadron as part of the Fuerza

Aérea Expedicionaria Mexicana, with the squadron attached to the 58th Fighter Group of the United States Army Air Forces that flew tactical support missions.^[176] Of the 250,000 Japanese troops defending Luzon, 80 percent died.^[177] The last Japanese soldier in the Philippines, Hiroo Onoda, surrendered on 9 March 1974.^[178]



US troops approaching Japanese positions near Baguio, Luzon, 23 March 1945

The Eighth Army invaded Palawan Island, between Borneo and Mindoro (the fifth-largest and westernmost Philippine island) on 28 February 1945, with landings at Puerto Princesa. The Japanese put up little direct defense of Palawan, but cleaning up pockets of Japanese resistance lasted until late April, as the Japanese used their common tactic of withdrawing into the mountain jungles, dispersed as small units. Throughout the Philippines, Filipino guerrillas aided US forces to dispatch the holdouts.

The US Eighth Army moved on to its first landing on Mindanao (17 April), the last of the major Philippine Islands to be taken. Then followed the invasion and occupation of Panay, Cebu, Negros and several islands in the Sulu Archipelago. These islands provided bases for the US Fifth and Thirteenth Air Forces to attack targets throughout the Philippines and the South China Sea.

Final stages

Allied offensives in Burma, 1944–1945

In late 1944 and early 1945, the Allied South East Asia Command launched offensives into Burma, intending to recover most of the country, including Rangoon, the capital, before the onset of the monsoon in May. The offensives were fought primarily by British Commonwealth, Chinese and American forces against Japan, assisted to some degree by Thailand, the Burma National Army and the Indian National Army. The Commonwealth land forces were drawn primarily from the United Kingdom, British India, and Africa.



Royal Marines landing at Ramree

The Indian XV Corps (including two West African divisions)^[179] advanced along the coast in Arakan Province, at last capturing Akyab Island. They landed troops behind the retreating Japanese, inflicting heavy casualties, and captured Ramree Island and Cheduba Island, establishing airfields used to support the offensive into Central Burma. The Chinese Expeditionary Force captured Mong-Yu and Lashio,^[180] while the Chinese and American Northern Combat Area Command resumed its advance in northern Burma. In late January 1945, these two forces linked up at Hsipaw. The Ledo Road was completed, linking India and China, but too late in the war to have any significant effect.

The Japanese Burma Area Army attempted to forestall the main Allied attack by withdrawing their troops behind the Irrawaddy River. Lieutenant General Heitarō Kimura, the new Japanese commander in Burma, hoped that the Allies' lines of communications would be overstretched trying to

cross this obstacle. However, the advancing British Fourteenth Army switched its axis of advance to outflank the Japanese.

During February, the Fourteenth Army secured bridgeheads across the Irrawaddy. On 1 March, mechanised units of IV Corps captured the supply centre of Meiktila, throwing the Japanese into disarray. While the Japanese attempted to recapture Meiktila, XXXIII Corps captured Mandalay. The Japanese armies were heavily defeated, and with the capture of Mandalay, the Burmese population and the Burma National Army (which the Japanese had raised) turned against the Japanese.

During April, Fourteenth Army advanced 300 miles (480 km) south towards Rangoon, but was delayed by Japanese rearguards 40 miles (64 km) to the north. Slim feared that the Japanese would defend Rangoon house-to-house during the monsoon, which would commit his army to prolonged action with disastrously inadequate supplies, and in March he had asked that a plan to capture Rangoon by an amphibious force, Operation Dracula, which had been abandoned earlier, be reinstated.^[181] Dracula was launched on 1 May, to find that the Japanese had already evacuated. The troops that occupied Rangoon linked up with Fourteenth Army five days later, securing the Allies' lines of communication.

The Japanese forces which had been bypassed by the Allied advances attempted to break out across the Sittaung River during June and July to rejoin the Burma Area Army which had regrouped in Tenasserim in southern Burma. They suffered 14,000 casualties, half their strength. Overall, the Japanese lost some 150,000 men in Burma. Only 1,700 Japanese soldiers surrendered and were taken prisoner.^[182] The Allies were preparing to make amphibious landings in Malaya when word of the Japanese surrender arrived.

Iwo Jima

Although the Marianas were secure and American bases firmly established, the long 1,200 miles (1,900 km) range from the Marianas meant that B-29 aircrews bombing Japan found themselves ditching at sea if severely damaged. Attention focused on the small island of Iwo Jima, about halfway between the Marianas and Japan. American planners recognized the strategic importance of the island. The island was used by the Japanese as an early-warning station against impending air raids on Japanese cities.^[183] Japanese aircraft based on Iwo Jima were able to attack the B-29s on their bombing missions, and even to attack installations in the Marianas themselves.^[183] The capture of Iwo Jima would provide emergency landing airfields for B-29s and a base for P-51 fighter escorts^[184] as well as land-based air support to protect US naval fleets in Japanese waters.^[185] However, the Japanese had also come to realize the strategic value of Iwo Jima, and Lt. General Tadamichi Kuribayashi was assigned command of the island in May 1944. The Japanese began constructing elaborate defenses, making the best possible use of the island's natural caves and uneven, rocky terrain. The island was transformed into a massive network of bunkers, hidden guns, and underground passageways leading from one strong point to another.^[186] The



Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima, an iconic photograph taken by Joe Rosenthal on 23 February 1945, depicts six United States Marines raising a US flag atop Mount Suribachi.

Japanese also went to great lengths to construct large underground chambers, some as much as five stories deep to serve as storage and hospital areas with thick walls and ceilings of reinforced concrete.^[186] A series of strong points covering the landing areas were also built, most covered with sand and carefully camouflaged. Well-camouflaged 120mm and 6-inch guns were emplaced so that their fire could be directed to the beaches. Smaller-caliber artillery, antiaircraft guns, and mortars were also hidden and located where only a direct hit could destroy them.^[187] The Japanese were determined to make the Americans pay a high price for Iwo Jima and were prepared to defend it to the death. Kuribayashi knew that he could not win the battle but hoped to inflict severe casualties so costly that it would slow the American advance on Japan and maybe give the Japanese bargaining power.^[186] In February, a total of 21,000 Japanese troops were deployed on Iwo Jima.^[186]

The American operation ("Operation Detachment") to capture the island involved three Marine divisions of the V Amphibious Corps, a total of 70,647 troops,^[188] under the command of Holland Smith. From mid-June 1944, Iwo Jima came under American air and naval bombardment, until the days leading up to the invasion.^[187]

An intense naval and air bombardment preceded the landing but did little but drive the Japanese further underground, making their positions impervious to enemy fire. The hidden guns and defenses survived the bombardment virtually unscathed. On the morning of 19 February 1945, 30,000 men under the command of Maj. General Harry Schmidt landed on the southeast coast near Mt. Suribachi, where most of the island's defenses were concentrated. As soon as the Marines pushed inland they came under devastating machine gun and artillery fire. By the end of the day, the Marines reached the west coast, but their losses were severe: almost 2,000 men killed or wounded. On 23 February, the 28th Marine Regiment reached the summit of Mt. Suribachi, prompting the now famous Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima photograph, often cited as the most reproduced photograph ever and the archetypal representation of the Pacific War. For the rest of February, the Americans pushed north, and by 1 March, had taken two-thirds of the island. It was not until 26 March that the island was secured.

Iwo Jima was one of the bloodiest battles fought by the Americans during the Pacific War. American casualties were 6,821 killed and 19,207 wounded.^[189] The Japanese losses totaled well over 20,000 men killed, with only 1,083 prisoners taken.^[189] Historians debate whether it was strategically worth the casualties sustained.^[190]

Okinawa

The largest and bloodiest battle fought by the Americans against the Japanese came at Okinawa. The seizure of islands in the Ryukyus was to have been the last step before the actual invasion of the Japanese home islands. Okinawa, the largest of the Ryukyu Islands, was located 340 miles (550 km) from Kyushu.^[191] The capture of Okinawa would provide airbases to intensify aerial bombardment of Japan and for direct land-based air support of the invasion of Kyushu. The islands could also allow for tightening the blockade of Japanese shipping and be used as a staging area and supply base for any invasion of the home islands.^[192]

The Japanese troops defending Okinawa, under the command of Lieutenant General Mitsuru Ushijima, totaled some 75,000–100,000, augmented by thousands of civilians. American forces for the operation totaled 183,000 troops in seven divisions (four US Army and three Marine) under the

Tenth Army.^[193] The British Pacific Fleet operated as a separate unit; its objective was to strike airfields on the chain of islands between Formosa and Okinawa, to prevent the Japanese reinforcing Okinawa.

After an intense seven-day bombardment the main landings on Okinawa took place on 1 April 1945, on the Hagushi beaches of the island's west coast.^[194] However, there was little opposition at the beaches as the Japanese had decided to meet the Americans farther inland out of range of naval gunfire. About 60,000 American troops landed on the first day, seizing the two nearby airfields and pushing across the narrow waist of the island.

The first major Japanese counterattack occurred on 6 and 7 April, in the form of attacks by kamikaze aircraft and a naval operation, called Ten-Go. Under the command of Admiral Seiichi Itō, the battleship Yamato, the light cruiser Yahagi and eight destroyers were assembled as bait to draw away as many American carrier aircraft as possible, in order to leave Allied naval forces vulnerable to large-scale Kamikaze attacks. As a consequence of Japanese fuel shortages the Yamato had only enough to reach Okinawa. Off Okinawa it was planned to beach the battleship and use her 18.1-inch (46 cm) guns to support fighting on the island.^[195] After being sighted by an American submarine and reconnaissance aircraft, naval attack aircraft sunk the Yamato, Yahagi and four of the destroyers.^[196] Mass Kamikaze attacks intensified during the following three months, with 5,500 sorties being flown by the Japanese.^[197]

In the northern part of Okinawa American troops only met light opposition, and the area was seized within about two weeks. However, the main Japanese defenses were in the south. There was bitter fighting against well-entrenched Japanese troops, but US forces slowly made progress. The seizure of Shuri castle, the center of Japanese resistance, on 29 May represented both a strategic and psychological blow.^[198] Organized resistance was not over until 21 June;^[199] many Japanese went into hiding and the campaign was not declared over until 2 July.

The battle for Okinawa proved costly and lasted much longer than the Americans had expected. The Japanese skillfully utilized terrain to inflict maximum casualties.^[200] Total American casualties were 49,451, including 12,520 dead or missing and 36,631 wounded.^[201] Japanese casualties were approximately 110,000 killed, and 7,400 taken prisoner.^[201] 94% of the Japanese soldiers died along with many civilians.^[202] Kamikaze attacks also sank 36 ships, damaged 368 more and killed 4,900 US sailors, for the loss of 7,800 Japanese aircraft.^[203]



USS Bunker Hill burns after being hit by two kamikazes. At Okinawa, the kamikazes caused 4,900 American deaths.



US Marines pass a dead Japanese soldier in a destroyed village on Okinawa, April 1945

China, 1945

After Japanese victories in Operation Ichi-Go, Japan was losing the battle in Burma and facing constant attacks from Chinese Nationalist forces and Communist guerrillas in the countryside. The IJA began preparations for the Battle of West Hunan in March 1945, mobilizing 80,000 men to seize Chinese airfields and secure railroads in West Hunan by early April.^[204] In response, the Chinese National Military Council dispatched the 4th Front Army and the 10th and 27th Army Groups with He Yingqin as commander-in-chief.^[205] At the same time, it airlifted the entire Chinese New 6th Corps, an American-equipped corps and veterans of the Burma Expeditionary Force, from Kunming to Zhijiang.^[204] Chinese forces totaled 110,000 men, supported by about 400 aircraft from Chinese and American air forces.^[206] Chinese forces won decisively and launched a large counterattack in this campaign. Concurrently, the Chinese repelled a Japanese offensive in Henan and Hubei.^[205] Afterwards, Chinese forces retook Hunan and Hubei in South China. Chinese launched a counter offensive to retake Guangxi which was the last major Japanese stronghold in South China. In August 1945, Chinese forces retook Guangxi.

Borneo, 1945

The Borneo campaign of 1945 was the last major campaign in the South West Pacific Area. In a series of amphibious assaults between 1 May and 21 July, the Australian I Corps, under General Leslie Morshead, attacked Japanese forces occupying the island. Allied naval and air forces, centered on the US 7th Fleet under Admiral Thomas Kinkaid, the Australian First Tactical Air Force and the US Thirteenth Air Force also played important roles in the campaign.



Australian soldiers landing at Balikpapan on 7 July 1945

The campaign opened with a landing on the small island of Tarakan on 1 May. This was followed on 1 June by simultaneous assaults in the northwest, on the island of Labuan and the coast of Brunei. A week later the Australians attacked Japanese positions in North Borneo. The attention of the Allies then switched back to the central east coast, with the last major amphibious assault of World War II, at Balikpapan on 1 July.

Although the campaign was criticized in Australia as a "waste" of the lives of soldiers, it achieved a number of objectives, such as increasing the isolation of significant Japanese forces occupying the Dutch East Indies, capturing major oil supplies and freeing Allied prisoners of war, who were being held in deteriorating conditions.^[207] At one of the very worst sites, around Sandakan in Borneo, only six of 2,500 British and Australian prisoners survived.^[182]

Landings in the Japanese home islands (1945)

Hard-fought battles on the Japanese islands of Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and others resulted in horrific casualties on both sides but finally produced a Japanese defeat. Of the 117,000 Okinawan and Japanese troops defending Okinawa, 94 percent died.^[177] Faced with the loss of most of their experienced pilots, the Japanese increased their use of kamikaze tactics in an attempt to create unacceptably high casualties for the Allies. The US Navy proposed to force a Japanese surrender through a total naval blockade and air raids.^[208] Many military historians believe that the Okinawa

campaign led directly to the atomic bombings as a means of avoiding the ground invasion of Japan. This view is explained by Victor Davis Hanson: "because the Japanese on Okinawa... were so fierce in their defense (even when cut off, and without supplies), and because casualties were so appalling, many American strategists looked for an alternative means to subdue mainland Japan, other than a direct invasion. This means presented itself, with the advent of atomic bombs, which worked admirably in convincing the Japanese to sue for peace [unconditionally], without American casualties."^[209]

Towards the end of the war as strategic bombing became more important, a new command for the United States Strategic Air Forces in the Pacific was created to oversee all US strategic bombing in the hemisphere, under General Curtis LeMay. Japanese industrial production plunged as nearly half of the built-up areas of 67 cities were destroyed by B-29 firebombing raids. On 9–10 March 1945 LeMay oversaw Operation Meetinghouse in which 300 B-29s dropped 1,665 tons of bombs, mostly napalm-carrying M-69 incendiary bombs, on the Japanese capital.^[210] This attack is seen the most destructive bombing raid in history and killed between 80,000 and 100,000 people in a single night, destroying over 270,000 buildings and leaving over 1 million homeless.^[210] In the ten days that followed, almost 10,000 bombs were dropped, destroying 31% of Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka and Kobe.

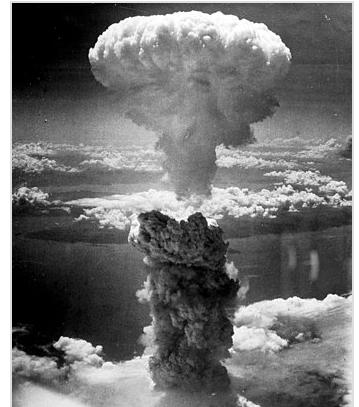
LeMay also oversaw Operation Starvation, in which the inland waterways of Japan were extensively mined by air, which disrupted the little remaining Japanese coastal sea traffic. On 26 July 1945, US President Harry S. Truman, Chiang, and Churchill issued the Potsdam Declaration, which outlined the terms of surrender for Japan as agreed upon at the Potsdam Conference. This ultimatum stated that, if Japan did not surrender, it would face "prompt and utter destruction".^[211]

Atomic bombs

On 6 August 1945, the US dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima in the first nuclear attack in history. In a press release issued after the bombing, Truman warned Japan to surrender or "expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this Earth".^[212] On 9 August, the US dropped another atomic bomb on Nagasaki. More than 140,000–240,000 people died as a direct result of these two bombings.^[213] The necessity of the atomic bombings has long been debated, with detractors claiming that a naval blockade and incendiary bombing campaign had already made invasion, hence the atomic bomb, unnecessary.^[214] However, other scholars have argued that the atomic bombings shocked the Japanese government into surrender and helped avoid Operation Downfall, or a prolonged blockade and conventional bombing campaign, any of which would have exacted much



American B-29
Superfortresses drop
incendiary bombs over the
port city of Kobe, June 1945



The mushroom cloud from
the nuclear explosion over
Nagasaki

higher casualties among Japanese civilians.^[213] Historian Richard B. Frank wrote that a Soviet invasion of Japan was never likely because they had insufficient naval capability.^[215]

Soviet entry

In February 1945 during the Yalta Conference the Soviet Union had agreed to enter the war against Japan 90 days after the surrender of Germany.^[216] At the time Soviet participation was seen as crucial to tie down the large number of Japanese forces in Manchuria and Korea, keeping them from being transferred to the Home Islands to mount a defense to an invasion.^[216]

On 9 August, exactly on schedule, the Soviet Union entered the war by invading Manchuria. A battle-hardened, one million-strong Soviet force, transferred from Europe,^[217] attacked Japanese forces and landed a heavy blow against the Japanese *Kantōgun* (Kwantung Army).^[218]

The Manchurian strategic offensive operation began on 9 August 1945, with the Soviet invasion of the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo. This was the last campaign of the Second World War and the largest of the 1945 Soviet–Japanese War which resumed hostilities between the USSR and Japan after almost six years of peace. Soviet gains on the continent were Manchukuo, Mengjiang (Inner Mongolia) and northern Korea. The USSR's entry into the war was a significant factor in the Japanese decision to surrender as it became apparent the Soviets were no longer willing to act as an intermediary for a negotiated settlement on favorable terms.^[219]

In late 1945, the Soviets launched a series of successful invasions of northern Japanese territories, in preparation for the possible invasion of Hokkaido:

- Invasion of South Sakhalin (11–25 August)
 - Maoka Landing (19–22 August)
- Invasion of the Kuril Islands (18 August to 1 September)
 - Battle of Shumshu (18–23 August)

Surrender

The effects of the American air and naval attacks,^[220] two atomic bombings, and the Soviet entry were profound. On 10 August 1945, Japanese Prime Minister Kantarō Suzuki and his Cabinet decided to accept the Potsdam terms on one condition: the "prerogative of His Majesty as a Sovereign Ruler". At noon on 15 August, after the American government's intentionally ambiguous reply, stating that the "authority" of the Emperor "shall be subject to the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers", the Emperor Hirohito broadcast the rescript of surrender.^[221]

Should we continue to fight, it would not only result in an ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation, but also it would lead to the total extinction of human civilization.



Douglas MacArthur signs the formal Japanese Instrument of Surrender on USS *Missouri*, 2 September 1945.

—Emperor Hirohito, The Voice of the Crane: The Imperial
1945^[222]

In Japan, 14 August is considered the end of the Pacific War. However, as Imperial Japan actually surrendered on 15 August, this day became known in the English-speaking countries as V-J Day (Victory in Japan).^[223] The formal Japanese Instrument of Surrender was signed on 2 September 1945. The surrender was accepted by MacArthur as Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers. MacArthur then went to Tokyo to oversee the occupation of Japan (from 28 August 1945 to 28 April 1952, the Treaty of San Francisco came into force).

Casualties

Allied

United States

American casualties were 107,903 battle deaths^[224] and 208,333 wounded.^{[20][225]} The figure for battle deaths include Army prisoners who died in Japanese captivity, this is the standard itemization of for US deaths in the Pacific War. However, historian John W. Dower notes that there are inconsistencies within the official US statistics themselves.^[224] Over half of all American losses suffered in the Pacific occurred between July 1944 and July 1945.^[226] Combined, the US and allied navies lost nearly 200 warships, including 4 battleships, 12 aircraft carriers, 25 cruisers, 84 destroyers and destroyer escorts, 63 submarines, and nearly 30,000 aircraft. This gave the Allies a 2–1 exchange ratio with the Japanese in terms of ships and aircraft.^{[17][227]}



American corpses sprawled on the beach of Tarawa, November 1943

The US protectorate in the Philippines suffered considerable losses. Military losses were 27,000 dead (including POWs), 75,000 living POWs, and an unknown number wounded, not counting irregulars that fought in the insurgency.^[23] Between 500,000 and 1,000,000 Filipino civilians died due to war-related shortages, massacres, shelling, and bombing.^[31]

China

- Chinese state media outlet China Daily lists the total number of military and non-military casualties, both dead and wounded, at 35 million.^[228] Duncan Anderson, Head of the Department of War Studies at the Royal Military Academy, states that the total number of casualties was around 20 million.^[229]
- The official account of the war published in Taiwan reported that the Nationalist Chinese Army lost 3,238,000 men (1,797,000 wounded, 1,320,000 killed, and 120,000 missing) and 5,787,352 civilians casualties putting the total number of casualties at 9,025,352.^{[230][231]} The soldiers of the Chinese Communist Party suffered 584,267 casualties, of which 160,603 were killed, 133,197 missing, and 290,467 wounded. This would equate to a total of 3.82 million combined NRA/CCP casualties, of which 1.74 million were killed or missing.^{[230]>[231]}

- An academic study published in the United States estimates Chinese military casualties as 1.5 million killed in battle, 750,000 missing in action, 1.5 million deaths due to disease and 3 million wounded; civilian casualties: due to military activity, killed 1,073,496 and 237,319 wounded; 335,934 killed and 426,249 wounded in Japanese air attacks.^[232]
- Rudolph Rummel gave a figure of 3,949,000 people in China murdered directly by the Japanese army while giving a figure of 10,216,000 total dead in the war with the additional millions of deaths due to indirect causes like starvation or disease.^[233] Famines during the war caused by drought affected both China and India: the Chinese famine of 1942–43 in Henan led to starvation deaths of 2 to 3 million people, Guangdong famine caused more than 3 million people to flee or die, and the 1943–1945 Indian famine in Bengal killed about 7 million Indian civilians in Bihar and Bengal.^[234]
- According to historian Mitsuyoshi Himeta, at least 2.7 million civilians died during the "kill all, loot all, burn all" operation (Three Alls Policy, or *sanko sakusen*) implemented in May 1942 in north China by general Yasuji Okamura.^[235]
- The property loss suffered by the Chinese was valued at 383 billion US dollars according to the currency exchange rate in July 1937, roughly 50 times the gross domestic product of Japan at that time.^[236] The war created 95 million refugees.^[237]

Commonwealth

Between the Malayan Campaign (130,000 discounting some 20,000 Australians),^[238] Burma Campaign (86,600),^[239] Battle of Hong Kong (15,000),^[240] and various naval encounters, British, Dominion and Empire forces incurred some 235,000 casualties in the Pacific Theater, including roughly 82,000 killed (50,000 in combat and 32,000 as POWs).^[241] The Royal Navy lost 23 warships in the Pacific and Indian oceans: 1 battleship, 1 battlecruiser, 1 aircraft carrier, 3 cruisers, 8 destroyers, 5 submarines, and 4 escorts.^[242] There were significant indirect losses to the British Empire territories of India and Burma, including 3 million deaths in the Bengal famine and 0.25 to 1 million deaths in British Burma.^[32]



Indian prisoners of war shot and bayoneted by Japanese soldiers

Australia incurred losses of 45,841 not including natural deaths: 17,501 killed (including POW deaths in captivity), 13,997 wounded, and 14,345 living POWs.^[243] New Zealand lost 578 killed, with an unknown number wounded or captured.^[244] Eight Royal Australian Navy warships were sunk: 3 cruisers (*Canberra*, *Perth*, and *Sydney*), 2 destroyers, and 3 corvettes.^[242]

Others

Between Lake Khasan, Khalkin Gol, advisors deployed to China, and the 1945 operations in Manchuria and the Kuriles, Soviet casualties against Japan totaled 68,612: 22,731 killed/missing and 45,908 wounded.^[245] Material losses included some 1,000 tanks and AFVs, 5 landing ships, and 300 aircraft.^{[246][247][248][249]} Mongolian casualties were 753.^[25]

The entire 140,000-strong Royal Dutch East Indies Army was killed, captured, or missing by the conclusion of the East Indies Campaign. 1,500 colonial and 900 Dutch soldiers were killed in action.^[250] Most of the colonial soldiers were freed on the spot or deserted. Of the ethnic Dutch troops, 900 were killed in action and 37,000 became prisoners. 8,500 of these POWs would die in

Japanese captivity.^[241] Dutch naval losses in the Pacific numbered 2 cruisers, 7 destroyers, 5 submarines, 7 minelayers, and 7 minesweepers.^[251] About 30,000 Dutch and 300,000 Indonesian forced laborers died during the Japanese occupation of the East Indies,^[252] while 3 million Indonesian civilians perished in famines.^[253]

Similar to the Dutch, the 65,000-strong French colonial army in French Indochina (16,500 European French and 48,500 colonial) disintegrated at the end of the Japanese invasion. 2,129 European French and 2,100 Indochinese colonial troops were killed, while 12,000 French and 3,000 colonial troops were kept as prisoners. 1–2 million deaths occurred in French Indochina during the Japanese occupation, mostly due to the 1945 Vietnamese Famine.^[254]

Axis

Eight hundred thousand Japanese civilians and over two million Japanese soldiers died during the war. According to a report by the Relief Bureau of the Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare in 1964, combined Japanese Army and Navy deaths during the war (1937–1945) numbered approximately 2,121,000 men, mostly against either the Americans (1.1+ million), or against Chinese factions (500,000+). The losses were broken down as follows:^[255]



IJA soldiers after a suicide charge on US Marine positions in Guadalcanal



Charred remains of civilians killed in the 10 March firebombing of Tokyo, codenamed Operation Meetinghouse, which killed an estimated 100,000 people, March 1945

Losses

Location	Army dead	Navy dead	total
Japan	58,100	45,800	103,900
Bonin Islands	2,700	12,500	15,200
Okinawa	67,900	21,500	89,400
Formosa (Taiwan)	28,500	10,600	39,100
Korea	19,600	6,900	26,500
Sakhalin, the Aleutian, and Kuril Islands	8,200	3,200	11,400
Manchuria	45,900	800	46,700
China (incl. Hong Kong)	435,600	20,100	455,700
Siberia	52,300	400	52,700
Central Pacific	95,800	151,400	247,200
Philippines	377,500	121,100	498,600
French Indochina	7,900	4,500	12,400
Thailand	6,900	100	7,000
Burma (incl. India)	163,000	1,500	164,500
Malaya & Singapore	8,500	2,900	11,400
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	900	1,500	2,400
Sumatra	2,700	500	3,200
Java	2,700	3,800	6,500
Lesser Sundas	51,800	1,200	53,000
Borneo	11,300	6,700	18,000
Celebes	1,500	4,000	5,500
Moluccas	2,600	1,800	4,400
New Guinea	112,400	15,200	127,600
Bismarck Archipelago	19,700	10,800	30,500
Solomon Islands	63,200	25,000	88,200
Totals	1,647,200	473,800	2,121,000

General George C. Marshall put Japanese "battle dead" against the Americans at 965,000 (South Pacific: 684,000, Central Pacific: 273,000, Aleutians: 8,000), with 37,308 captured, from 7 December 1941 to 30 June 1945 (the war had yet to conclude). These are juxtaposed with the losses in the theater of the US Army alone, suggesting Japanese naval casualties were not included. His figure for Japanese "battle dead" in China was 126,000 in the same period.^[256]

The IJN lost over 341 warships, including 11 battleships, 25 aircraft carriers, 39 cruisers, 135 destroyers, and 131 submarines, almost entirely in action against the US Navy. The IJN and IJA together lost 45,125 aircraft.^[257]

Germany lost ten submarines and four auxiliary cruisers (*Thor*, *Michel*, *Pinguin*, and *Kormoran*) in the Indian and Pacific oceans.^[242]

War crimes

By Japan

During the Pacific War, Japanese soldiers killed millions of non-combatants, including prisoners of war, from surrounding nations.^[258] At least 20 million Chinese died during the Second Sino-Japanese War.^[259] The Three Alls Policy was responsible for the deaths of more than 2.7 million Chinese civilians.^{[260][261]}



A Filipino woman and child killed by Japanese forces in the Manila massacre

The Nanjing Massacre is the most infamous example of Japanese atrocities against civilians during the war.^[262] According to the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, more than 200,000 Chinese civilians were killed,^[263] while the Nanjing War Crimes Tribunal concluded that over 300,000 died. The Manila massacre killed over 100,000 Filipino civilians.^[264] Japan also employed biological weapons.

According to the findings of the Tokyo Tribunal, the death rate of Western prisoners was 27%, seven times that of Western POWs under the Germans and Italians.^[182] Some of the more notorious instances of abuse of prisoners were the Bataan Death March and forced labor in the construction of the Burma–Thailand "Death Railway". Around 1,536 US civilians died in Japanese internment camps, compared to 883 in German internment camps.^[265]

A widely publicized example of institutionalized sexual slavery are "comfort women"—200,000 women and girls, mostly from Korea and China, who were forced to serve in Japanese military camps.



A young Chinese girl from a Japanese 'comfort battalion' being interviewed by a British officer.
Rangoon, Burma, 1945

By the Allies

The firebombing of Tokyo has been described by writer Jonathan Rauch as a war crime.^[266] A United States Strategic Bombing Survey estimated that 84% of the attacked area was residential, mostly inhabited by women, children and the elderly;^[267] the over 100,000 victims constitute the deadliest aerial bombing raid in history.

American soldiers commonly collected the body parts of dead Japanese soldiers as trophies.^[268] American soldiers are alleged to have committed rapes during the Battle of Okinawa.^[269]

Tribunals

The International Military Tribunal for the Far East in Ichigaya from 29 April 1946 to 12 November 1948 tried those accused of the most serious war crimes. Military tribunals were also held throughout Asia and the Pacific.^{[270][271]}

See also

- [Dissent in the Armed Forces of the Empire of Japan](#)
- [European theatre of World War II](#)
- [Hull note](#)
- [Japanese-American service in World War II](#)
- [Japanese holdouts](#)
- [Japanese in the Chinese resistance to the Empire of Japan](#)
- [Nanshin-ron](#)
- [Pacific Theater aircraft carrier operations during World War II](#)
- [Pacific War campaigns](#)
- [War Plan Orange](#)
- [Yasukuni Shrine](#)
- [Wallis and Futuna during the Second World War](#)



Notes

- a. Fighting an undeclared war against Japan since 7 July 1937, declared war on 9 December 1941.^[1]
- b. Although Japan had been invading and occupying China since 1937, war was not officially declared. Japan would later attack Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, which brought the contained war in China into the wider global conflict.^[1]
- c. Until April 1945
- d. Until July 1945
- e. Until July 1944
- f. "For fifty-three long months, beginning in July 1937, China stood alone, single-handedly fighting an undeclared war against Japan. On 9 December 1941, after Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, what had been for so long a war between two countries now became part of a much wider Pacific conflict."^{[1][2]}
- g. : "It was not an official term, but a term of incitement used by the Japanese media, under the guidance of the military, in order to stir up the Japanese people's sense of crisis..."^{[68][69]}
- h. The Neutrality Patrol had US destroyers fighting at sea, but no state of war had been declared by Congress.
- i. See [United Kingdom declaration of war on Japan](#).
- j. See [United States declaration of war on Japan](#).
- k. The US thereby reversed its opposition to unrestricted submarine warfare. After the war, when moralistic doubts about Hiroshima and other raids on civilian targets were loudly voiced, no one criticized Roosevelt's submarine policy. (Two German admirals, [Erich Raeder](#) and [Karl Dönitz](#), faced charges at the [Nuremberg War Crimes Trials](#) of violating international law through unrestricted submarine warfare; the court acquitted them after they proved that Allied merchant ships were legitimate military targets under the rules in force at the time.)

- I. Chihaya went on to note that when the IJN belatedly improved its ASW methods, the US submarine force responded by increasing Japanese losses.^[146]
1. Strength of the US Military in Asia and the Pacific as of war's end: Army: 1,770,036,^[4] Navy (excluding Coast Guard and Marines): 1,366,716,^[5] and Marine Corps: 484,631.^[6] These figures do not include the Coast Guard or naval personnel in the China-Burma-India theater.^[7]
2. These numbers do not include the Royal Netherlands Navy.
3. 3.8 million Chinese military deaths (1937–1945; 3.2 million Nationalist/allied and 580,000 Communist),^[19] 301,237 United States military battle casualties,^[20] with 208,333 wounded in battle^[20] and 107,903 battle deaths.^[21] 52,000 British casualties including 12,000 deaths in captivity, 17,501 Australians killed,^[22] 27,000 killed (including POWs who died in captivity), 70,000+ captured (not including those who died), unknown wounded from the Philippine Commonwealth (not including guerrilla forces),^[23] around 9,400 Dutch killed including 8,500 who died in captivity (likely not including colonial forces), 578 New Zealander casualties (not including those who served in other allied naval and air forces),^[24] 63,225 Soviet casualties (12,031 killed and missing, 42,428 wounded and sick; does not count the 1938–1939 Soviet-Japanese Border Wars), 5000 French military casualties in Indochina, 300 Mongolian casualties^[25] and 5 Mexican deaths^[26] Malaria was the most important health hazard encountered by US troops in the South Pacific during World War II, where about 500,000 men were infected.^[27]
4. Estimates of 1 to 6 million Chinese civilian deaths (1937–1945);^[19] around 4 million civilian deaths from the Dutch East Indies;^[28] 1–2 million Indochinese civilians;^[29] around 3 million^[30] Indian civilian deaths in the Bengal famine of 1943; 0.5 to 1 million^[31] Filipino civilian deaths; 91,000^[20] to 1,000,000^[32] Burmese civilian deaths; 50,000^[33] East Timorese civilian deaths; and hundreds of thousands of Malayan, Pacific and other civilian deaths.^[28]
5. 2,133,915 Japanese military deaths 1937–1945,^[36] 1.18 million Chinese collaborator casualties 1937–1945 (432,000 dead),^[37] 22,000 Burmese casualties, 5,600 Thai troops killed,^[38] and 2,615 Indian National Army (Azad Hind) killed/missing.^[39]
6. 460,000 Japanese civilian deaths (338,000 in the bombings of Japan,^[40] 100,000 in the Battle of Okinawa, 22,000 in the Battle of Saipan), 543,000 Korean civilian deaths (mostly due to Japanese forced labor projects),^[41] 2,000–8,000 Thai civilian deaths^[42]

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- Film Footage of the Pacific War (<http://www.britishpathe.com/record.php?id=12427>) Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20111106041638/http://www.britishpathe.com/record.php?id=12427>) 6 November 2011 at the Wayback Machine
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