

U.S. NAVY OPERATIONS IN WORLD WAR II



RICHMOND KELLY TURNER

PLANNING THE PACIFIC WAR



NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND

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Foreword

Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner played a pivotal role both planning and executing the war in the Pacific. R.K. Turner was the Director of War Plans for the Chief of Naval Operations in 1940–1941. As Director of War Plans, he was instrumental in creating Plan Dog, which evolved into Rainbow 5 and provided a strategic framework for World War II. In June 1942, he was sent to the Pacific to lead an ever growing armada of amphibious ships. These postings allowed Turner both to create the plans the Allies would use in the Pacific and execute them.

As today's Director of Plans, I feel a connection to Admiral Turner. As in Admiral Turner's times at OPNAV, the United States is engaged in strategic competition. I hope that we never have to execute our plans, but our job is to be prepared to execute those plans swiftly and violently if required. We have many lessons to learn from our forbearers in World War II. While we have our own planning doctrine today R.K. Turner's lessons on how he planned and executed campaigns can help guide our planning. This pamphlet identifies 10 lessons from R.K. Turner's experiences. These lessons are not meant to replace our current planning documents, but to stimulate discussion and contemplation on how we plan and fight today.

I want to thank our colleagues from the Naval History and Heritage Command for welcoming me into the archives to study the R.K. Turner collection and for their work creating this excellent pamphlet for us.

RDML Tom Williams

Director, Navy Plans, Policy and Integration

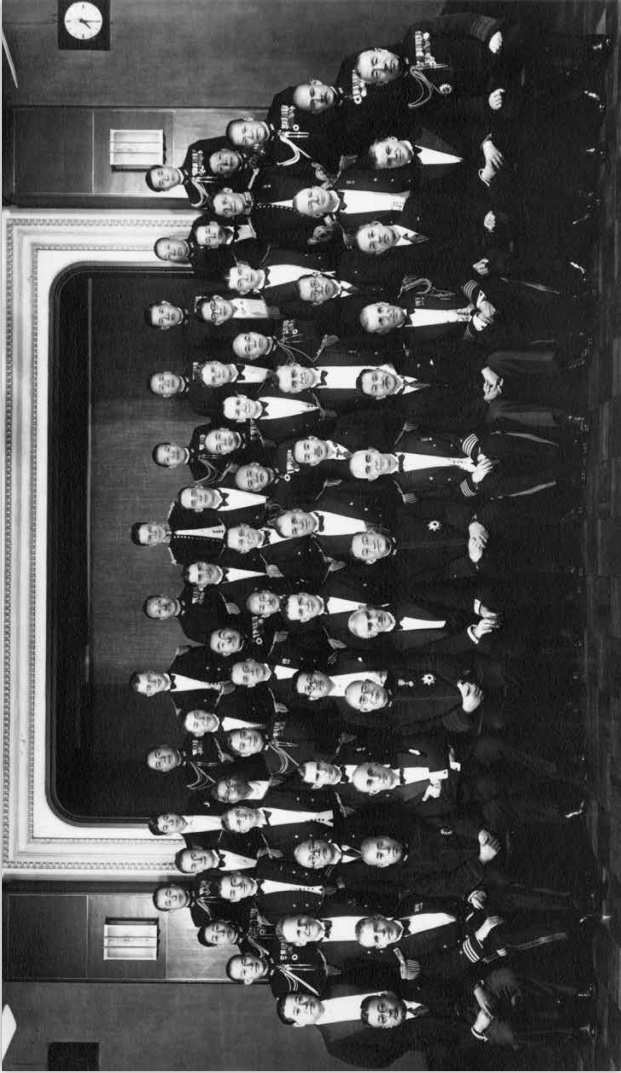
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Understand the Adversary: Respect Their Intentions and Capabilities



“Open understanding eyes.”

—Richmond Kelly Turner, 1939



Group photograph of officers present at a party in the Naval Club in Tokyo, 19 April 1939, during Captain Richmond Kelly Turner's visit to Japan with *Astoria* (CA-34). First row, third from the left, is Japanese Vice Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, who commanded the Combined Fleet after August 1939; sixth from left is the U.S. ambassador to Japan, Joseph C. Grew; seventh from left is the minister of the Japanese Navy, Admiral Mitsumasa Yonai. Captain Turner sits next to Yonai, sixth from the right. On far right in the first row is Vice Admiral Mineichi Koga, who succeeded to command of the Combined Fleet following Yamamoto's death in 1943 (Richmond Kelly Turner Papers, NHHC).

Effective planning requires an understanding of the adversary's capabilities, goals, and intentions. The ability to judge the adversary's objectives and capabilities requires taking the enemy seriously. Captain Richmond Kelly Turner had extensive contact within the Imperial Japanese Navy when he began work at the War Plans Division for the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (OPNAV) in 1940. Before World War II, Turner made four visits to Japan.¹ That familiarity helped him cultivate important intelligence contacts with Japanese officials in Washington, DC. Turner's willingness to engage with the Japanese enabled his clear evaluation of their intentions unlike many of his contemporaries.² These factors help explain Turner's keen assessment of Japan's intentions prior to the outbreak of World War II.

Turner's first contact with the Japanese, within the context of planning for war, came at the 1932 League of Nations disarmament talks in Geneva. As head of the Bureau of Aeronautics Plans Division, he reported to the senior member of the General Board of the U.S. Navy in 1931 to prepare for the talks in Switzerland.³ At the conference, Turner became friendly with some of the Japanese negotiators, including Taro Terasaki.⁴ The contacts Turner developed here would facilitate planning during his time at OPNAV, as Terasaki's brother Hidenari later worked in Washington, DC, as an aide to the Japanese ambassador.

When the Japanese ambassador to the United States, Hiroshi Saito, died in February 1939, the Navy chose Turner to render honors and return Saito's ashes to Japan. Turner commanded *Astoria* (CA-34) on its voyage to Japan, where its crew participated in the funeral for Saito and other diplomatic events. Turner instructed his crew to approach the Japanese with an open mind, that despite the fact that they might find Japan strange at first, "if you will open understanding eyes, you will discover things of

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- 1 Richmond Kelly Turner to Kichisaburō Nomura, 20 September 1950, Box 2, Folder 6, Richmond Kelly Turner Papers, Archives Branch, Naval History and Heritage Command (hereafter, RKT Papers).
 - 2 Many British and American leaders underrated the capabilities of the Japanese due to cultural chauvinism. See John A. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 94–117.
 - 3 George Carroll Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer: The Story of Richmond Kelly Turner* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1972), 111.
 - 4 RKT to Taro Terasaki, 5 November 1950, Box 2, Folder 8, RKT Papers.

great value that heretofore have been beyond your horizon.”⁵ This sentiment also reflects Turner’s personal approach to dealing with Japanese officials in Washington.

In Washington, Turner cultivated contacts with Japanese diplomats and naval attachés. In 1940, Turner and his wife got to know Ichiro Yokoyama, the Japanese naval attaché, whom Turner would later see signing the instruments of Japanese surrender in 1945.⁶ Likewise, Turner and his wife became friends with Japanese Ambassador Kichisaburō Nomura. Nomura had been the naval attaché in Washington for most of World War I and was a retired admiral. The Turners hosted Nomura for dinner; Nomura gave them a Japanese painting that became a “treasured possession” hung in the “place of honor” over the mantel in the living room.⁷

Turner’s strategic understanding of Japanese aims shows most clearly in the December 1940 “Study of the Immediate Problems concerning Involvement in War.” Based on a memorandum written by the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Harold Stark, in November, Turner and Army Air Corps Colonel Joseph T. McNarney drew up a joint estimate to guide war planning. Later known as Plan Dog after the memorandum’s recommendation to follow its fourth course of action for a two-ocean war, the document gave a prescient forecast of when and how the United States would enter the war.

Identifying a “Germany First” strategy, Turner and McNarney gave attention to Japanese political and economic goals while tying these factors to proposed American responses. Plan Dog, for instance, noted that economic sanctions against Japan increased danger of war. The plan also predicted that the Japanese would overrun British and Dutch defenses in Southeast Asia and that any war would be a long one.⁸ Plan Dog later informed the Navy’s WPL-44 (Navy Rainbow Three), which in turn became the basis for talks with the British at the

5 *The Astorian*, 15 April 1939, 3, in Box 39, Folder 43, RKT Papers.

6 Turner to Nomura, 20 September 1950, Box 2, Folder 6, RKT Papers. See also Dyer, *Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 149.

7 Turner to Nomura, 20 September 1950, Box 2, Folder 6, RKT Papers.

8 Dyer, *Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 157–160; Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941–1942*, The U.S. Army in World War II (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, 1953), 28–62.

American-British-Canadian (ABC)-1 conference in January 1941. It would be the fusion of ABC-1 decisions with extant that led to Joint Rainbow Five, the plan in effect when the United States entered the war.⁹

Turner's friendship with Nomura continued to pay dividends. Nomura, an advocate of peace with America, became a vital conduit of information on Japanese policy and internal decision-making processes. On at least two occasions in 1941, Nomura provided detailed information to Turner on Japanese political developments and strategy. Nomura's subordinate, Hidenari Terasaki, also met with Turner multiple times. In turn, Turner wrote detailed memoranda on the content of these discussions and incorporated the intelligence gained into his own strategic plans and advice.¹⁰

From a planning standpoint, Turner understood that he had to evaluate his adversary's intentions. Unlike many others, he proceeded with respect for the Japanese and their capabilities. Rather than proceeding from a position of contempt, Turner got to know his opponent. The friendly relationships he cultivated with Japanese officials gave him insight into Japanese intentions and firm intelligence for drafting his plans. Turner's memos to the President, the Secretary of the Navy, and the Chief of Naval Operations all reflect Turner's grasp of how Japanese politics bore upon Japanese strategy.

9 Edward S. Miller, *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897-1945* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 262-64, 267-72.

10 Dyer, *Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 166-68.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What are some of the best ways to gain an understanding of a potential adversary?
- How can we overcome biases when considering adversary objectives and actions?

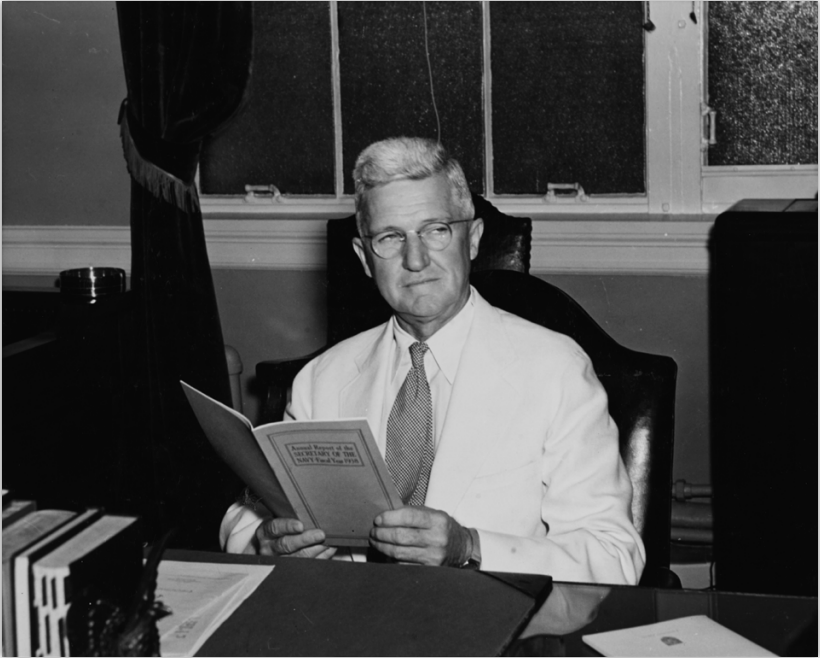
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Prepare for Policy Ambiguity and Challenge Your Assumptions



*“Continental and hemispheric defense plans are
‘defective in the extreme.’”*

—Richmond Kelly Turner, 1940



Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Harold Stark, photographed in his office, reading the *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for Fiscal Year 1938*. The photograph may have been taken on 1 August 1939, as Admiral Stark wore the same suit and tie as when he took the oath of office as Chief of Naval Operations on that date (NHHC NH-49928).

Before and during World War II, the U.S. government lacked a formal mechanism for coordinating policy and war plans.¹ Responsibility for inter-service planning belonged to the Joint Army and Navy Board (hereafter referred to as Joint Board), comprising the Chief of Naval Operations, the Army Chief of Staff, their deputies, and senior war planners. President Franklin D. Roosevelt aligned the Joint Board under his own informal supervision and direction in July 1940. The Rainbow war plans approved by the board from 1939–1941 were premised on defending the United States and Western Hemisphere from a hostile German-Italian-Japanese coalition either in alliance with Britain and France or alone. Navy planners favored an early naval offensive in the Pacific against Japan if circumstances warranted.²

Convinced of the importance of the Western allies to American security, Roosevelt sought policies to support them as far as possible short of war upon the outbreak of hostilities in Europe in September 1939. However, overwhelming public opposition to direct involvement, strict laws limiting military aid to belligerents and the slow economic recovery from the Great Depression hemmed in his options. Consequently, Roosevelt strived for political and strategic flexibility. Beyond affirming U.S. neutrality, initiating a rearmament program to support hemispheric defense (including increased Navy shipbuilding), and warning the American people of the dangers ahead, his public positions provided little specific policy guidance for war planners to work from. The ambiguity left the Joint Board uncertain whom the United States might fight, whether they could realistically plan for operating with allies, and how much those allies might contribute to the overall war effort.³

1 This situation changed with the passage of the National Security Act of 1947, which formalized the wartime Joint Chiefs of Staff and created the Defense Department and National Security Council for the formulation and coordination of national security policy and military plans.

2 Louis Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years*, The U.S. Army in World War II (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, 1962), 70–72; Stetson Conn and Byron Fairchild, *The Framework of Hemisphere Defense*, The U.S. Army in World War II (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, 1960), 3–29; Edward S. Miller, *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897–1945* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 223–31.

3 David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 426–38; Morton, *Strategy and Command*, 69–70.

Germany's rapid defeat and occupation of France in May–June 1940 upended the assumptions underpinning policy and war planning. Pre-war naval plans assumed the British and French navies would provide reasonable security in the Atlantic, allowing the U.S. Navy to concentrate in the Pacific to face Japan. In July, the General Board of the U.S. Navy advised the Secretary of the Navy that the service was not ready for war. Captain Richmond Kelly Turner and his colleagues understood how unprepared the American armed forces were to defend against simultaneous threats in the Atlantic and Pacific. The Joint Board's new planning assumption was that the United States would have to fight alone after Britain was defeated by Germany.⁴

Britain appealed to the United States directly for old surplus U.S. Navy destroyers, aircraft, munitions, steel, and financial credit. Roosevelt ordered planes and weapons released for sale, which intensified disagreement with the service chiefs, who believed these assets were necessary for American rearmament. He also called for emergency defense spending. Congress passed the Vinson-Walsh Two-Ocean Navy Act in July 1940 to build a navy capable of achieving sea control in both the Pacific and the Atlantic. Most ship deliveries would not occur until 1943, so the Navy had to plan to fight with the current fleet until then. Roosevelt appointed staunch Republican internationalists, Frank Knox and Henry L. Stimson, to his cabinet that summer as secretaries of the Navy and War respectively.⁵

Although the French Navy did not fall into German hands as feared, the Royal Navy was overstretched defending against a possible German invasion of Britain, a submarine campaign in the Atlantic, and supporting British positions in the Mediterranean Sea, Africa, and Middle East. Since Britain could spare few ships to defend Singapore, Churchill requested the United States send part of its Pacific Fleet there to deter Japanese aggression. Roosevelt ordered the Pacific Fleet to remain in Hawaii following

4 Morton, *Strategy and Command*, 75–78; Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 449–51; Mark Skinner Watson, *Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations*, The U.S. Army in World War II (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, 1950), 107–08; George Carroll Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer: The Story of Richmond Kelly Turner* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1972), 156–57.

5 Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 438–51, 457–59. The July 1940 “Two-Ocean Navy” act was the last of several Congressional laws passed between 1934 and 1940 that reversed the effects of post-WWI treaty limitations and created the Navy's WWII force structure.

exercises in May 1940 for that purpose. The Army and some Navy leaders worried that the fleet's forward position in Pearl Harbor, combined with Roosevelt's hawkish policy toward Japan, might invite Japanese attack rather than deter it (although Navy planners disagreed). Japan had already taken advantage of events in Europe to occupy northern French Indochina in September 1940, a springboard for a potential invasion of Malaya and the Dutch East Indies. It formally joined the German-Italian Entente shortly thereafter.⁶

Roosevelt precariously sustained his short-of-war policy as he sought reelection to an unprecedented third term as president through the autumn of 1940. The Republican candidate, Wendell Willkie, contested Roosevelt's advantage on foreign policy by voicing clear support for Britain and rearmament. Wary of the electoral implications of the first peacetime conscription law in U.S. history, Roosevelt hesitated to back it until Willkie did so first, shortly before Congress approved it in September. The president pushed through an exchange of surplus destroyers for leases on British bases in Newfoundland, the Caribbean, and Western Atlantic on executive authority the same month.⁷ In October, Roosevelt dramatically guaranteed, "Your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars."⁸ Though he won reelection comfortably in November, this campaign promise further complicated his policy to support Britain.⁹

Roosevelt's re-election and British victory in the Battle of Britain enabled the service chiefs to seek an alignment of policy and joint war planning in late 1940. Discussions with Secretary Knox prompted Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Harold Stark to reexamine the Navy's strategic thinking. Amid conversations with Turner and other staff members, Stark assessed potential war scenarios, probable U.S. interests, objectives, and the current global strategic situation. He summarized his findings in a

6 Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942*, The U.S. Army in World War II (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, 1953), 15-16; Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Rising Sun in the Pacific, 1931-April 1942*, History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, Vol. III (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1955), 44-45, 49-50. On the Navy planners' demurrals, see Miller, *War Plan Orange*, 231-49.

7 Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 454-63

8 Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 463

9 Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 463-64.

memorandum outlining four possible courses of action in the event of war.¹⁰ Stark endorsed the fourth, option D (or Dog), calling for the United States and Britain to make a combined effort to defeat Germany and Italy in Europe first, while standing on the defensive in the Pacific. Realizing that naval power alone would be insufficient to defeat Germany, it also called for sending large land and air forces to Europe and Africa to undertake a full-scale ground offensive. Stark sent a copy of his memo to Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall on 4 November, the day before the election, seeking inter-service agreement on a recommendation ultimately destined for the president. Marshall quickly concurred with Stark's assessment. After revising his memo based on the Army's comments, Stark forwarded it to Secretary Knox on 13 November.¹¹

What followed was an unofficial presidential concurrence. Knox passed the document to Roosevelt. Due to its political sensitivity, Roosevelt stored it in a White House classified safe and never responded to it.¹² When Stark and Marshall subsequently sought to resubmit the memo, Roosevelt likely prompted Secretary of State Cordell Hull to indicate his own general agreement with it and suggest that there was no need to resend a "technical military statement" to the president. Roosevelt's tacit approval allowed planning to proceed amidst ongoing policy uncertainty. On 18 November, the Joint Board instructed Turner and his Army

10 Memorandum, Admiral Harold R. Stark to Frank Knox, 12 November 1940, Navy Department "Plan Dog" Index folder, Box 4, Safe Files, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library. According to Army historian Mark Watson, "The impulse for 'Plan DOG' probably came from Naval War College discussions of April 1940, for when Captain Turner came from that institution to Washington to head the Navy WPD, on 25 October, he brought with him the April studies and the conclusions to which they led notably that in a two-ocean war priority should be given to the defeat of Germany which would end the threats to Western Hemisphere security; that aid to the democracies would hasten that defeat; and that action against a belligerent Japan should be initially defensive." Mark Skinner Watson, *Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations*, The U.S. Army in World War II (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1951), 118n79.

11 Stark to Knox, 12 November 1940; Turner, "Some Problems of War Planning," 11, 13–15; Matloff and Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941–1942*, 28–29; Morton, *Strategy and Command*, 81n27.

12 Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 480–81. Roosevelt's copy of the memo was not declassified until 1958, which possibly explains why the authors of the Army histories (written in the early 1950s) were unable to determine if he had actually seen it or not. Letter, L. J. Darter to Herman Kahn, 20 February 1956, Navy Department "Plan Dog" Index folder, Box 4, Safe Files, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library.

counterpart, Army Air Corps Colonel Joseph T. McNarney, to begin joint planning based on “Plan Dog.” When Roosevelt met with Hull, Stimson, Knox, Stark, and Marshall in mid-January 1941 to explain his strategic views, he largely echoed those expressed in the Plan Dog memo. Turner’s and McNarney’s work established the basis for subsequent secret U.S. planning discussions with Royal Navy representatives and combined U.S.-British war plans developed later in the year. The “Germany First” policy informed the Joint Board’s revised Rainbow Five and Navy WPL-46 war plans, which provided the foundation for combined planning and strategy after the United States entered the war in December 1941.¹³

Between the outbreak of war in Europe and his 1940 reelection campaign, Roosevelt pursued maximum flexibility in military policy within the constraints of domestic politics. He allowed the Joint Board to plan for hemispheric defense with vague policy guidance and requirements. The dynamic situation in Europe left the board’s planning assumptions in flux as Germany defeated France and threatened Great Britain with invasion. After the British parried the German onslaught and his successful reelection, Roosevelt began to reveal his intent to the service chiefs informally through his cabinet secretaries. This guidance allowed the Joint Board planners to better establish strategic priorities and begin the process of formulating realistic courses of action.

13 Turner, “Some Problems of War Planning,” 13–14, 16; Matloff and Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941–1942*, 32–62; Morton, *Strategy and Command*, 83; Watson, *Prewar Plans and Preparations*, 124

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What can planners do in the absence of clear policy guidance?
- Why is it important to reassess assumptions?

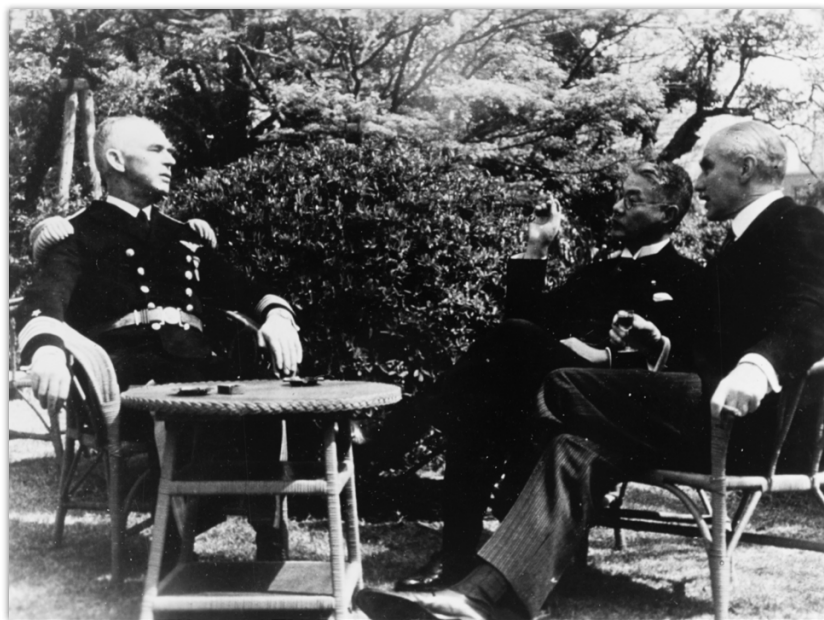
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Plans Evolve Based on Changing Circumstances



“Recommendation. That trade with Japan not be embargoed at this time.”

—Richmond Kelly Turner, 1941



(Left to right) Captain Richmond Kelly Turner, U.S. Navy, Commanding Officer of *Astoria* (CA-34); Hachirō Arita, Foreign Minister of Japan; and United States Ambassador Joseph C. Grew, hold a discussion in the ambassador's garden, April 1939 (NHHC NH-69109).

Plans must evolve as assumptions are updated and circumstances change. When Rear Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner advised against freezing Japanese assets in response to their occupation of French Indochina in July 1941, he believed such a response would push Japan into a corner from which the only outcome was war.¹ He recommended against such a policy because he knew the Navy's strategic position in the Pacific was weak and that the defense of the Philippines would not be fully prepared until March 1942.² His warning, much like those of Ambassador Joseph Grew in Tokyo, fell upon deaf ears at the State Department and with the President.³ Turner understood the sanctions ratcheted up tensions and continued to urge restraint in a futile effort to buy time for U.S. defenses in the Pacific to solidify.

In September 1940, Japan occupied northern French Indochina. Japan, at war with China since 1937, wanted to cut foreign supply for Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek, much of which flowed through southern Chinese ports, French Indochina, and Burma. Overextended by the protracted conflict, Japan wanted to bring China to the bargaining table, thus it became a strategic priority to isolate Chiang Kai-shek from his means of continuing the war. President Roosevelt, seeking to sustain China against Japan, reacted to the move into Indochina with a prohibition on Japan against the export of scrap metal, aviation gasoline, and most types of machine tools.

Navy planners kept a close eye on Japanese strategic intentions. A little over a month after Roosevelt's prohibition, retired Admiral Harry E. Yarnell, then serving as the special adviser to the Chinese Military Mission, wrote to Admiral Harold Stark, then Chief of Naval Operations, that Japan intended to dominate the entire Far East and that "this policy cannot be changed by threats or appeasement."⁴ The simplest way for the

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- 1 Richmond Kelly Turner to CNO, Study of the effect of an embargo of trade between the United States and Japan, 19 July 1941, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1941*, vol. IV, *The Far East*, eds. John G. Reid, Louis E. Gates, and Ralph R. Goodwin (Washington, DC: GPO, 1956), 839–40.
 - 2 Memorandum for the President, Estimate concerning the Far East Situation, 5 November 1941, Box 5, Folder 10, Richmond Kelly Turner Papers, Archives Branch, Naval History and Heritage Command (hereafter, RKT Papers).
 - 3 For further reference, see Lew Paper, *In the Cauldron: Terror, Tension, and the American Ambassador's Struggle to Avoid Pearl Harbor* (Washington, DC: Regnery Books, 2019).
 - 4 Memorandum on Far Eastern Situation for CNO, 7 October 1940, Box 5, Folder 8, RKT Papers.

United States to deter Japan in those circumstances was to keep China in the war through loans and war material via the Burma Road. Still, given the importance of helping Britain defeat Germany, Stark recommended diplomatic and military policies in the Pacific be “extremely limited and defensive.”⁵ Throughout the spring of 1941, Stark seemed to vacillate between overt suspicion of Japanese intentions and an understanding that Japan desired peace. At one point, he accused the Japanese of wanting to attack the British, the Dutch and the Americans in succession in one sentence, followed in the next sentence, with “At present, she desires not to go to war with the United States at all.”⁶

In March 1941, the new Japanese ambassador to Washington met with Turner to discuss rising tensions. Kichisaburō Nomura told Turner directly that most political factions in Japan did not seek war with the United States and wanted a way to resolve the war in China. At the same time, Japan needed access to the rice and rubber in French Indochina.⁷ Less than a month later, Ambassador Grew sent a similar warning back to Washington, arguing that Secretary of State Cordell Hull or the President should simply tell Nomura such an action would provoke an American response. Neither did so.⁸

In early July 1941, Japan secretly decided to occupy all of French Indochina. This would not only provide access to raw materials but also partially close Allied supply lines to China. As Nomura told Turner later that month, the occupation was required since U.S. export restrictions on Japan (including the prohibition of U.S. ships entering Japanese ports) meant Japan was short of oil, iron ore, rubber, cotton, and food.⁹ Despite all these pressures, Nomura concluded that Japan very much wanted to reach some sort of peace to reduce tensions throughout Asia.¹⁰

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- 5 Mark A. Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy in World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 31.
 - 6 Memorandum for the President, Analysis of the situation in Indo-China, 5 February 1941, Box 5, Folder 12, RKT Papers.
 - 7 RKT to CNO, Report of conversation with the Japanese Ambassador, 13 March 1941, Box 5, Folder 8, RKT Papers.
 - 8 Paper, *In the Cauldron*, 186.
 - 9 Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *Stilwell's Mission to China*, The U.S. Army in World War II (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, 1952), 3–49.
 - 10 RKT to CNO, Report of conversation between the Japanese Ambassador and RADM R.K. Turner, 21 July 1941, Box 5, Folder 10, RKT Papers.

Based on his understanding of Japanese policy, Turner knew a strong reaction by the United States to the occupation of Indochina—such as strengthening the economic embargo by including oil exports—would produce “an immediate severe psychological reaction in Japan and ... probably result in a fairly early attack by Japan on Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies, and possibly would involve the United States in early war in the Pacific.” If the United States did not implement an oil embargo, however, it was possible the Japanese would not attack Britain or even might attack Siberia instead. After just completing an analysis of Japanese imports and exports, Turner understood the logical conclusion of pushing Japan too far with economic pressure. With that in mind, he recommended to Admiral Stark that “trade with Japan not be embargoed at this time.” Six days later, the Japanese occupied Saigon, and the day after that the President announced the oil embargo.¹¹

Once the embargo was in place, both Stark and Turner began arguing for delay in implementation. In a response to Admiral Husband Kimmel’s personal letter to Admiral Stark in early September, he argued for restraint, noting, “It is important to the United States to keep Japan from entering the war on the side of Germany, provided we do not have to pay too much for it.”¹² Given the dire need for more time to send reinforcements to Asia, he concluded, “The longer we can keep the situation in the Pacific in status quo, the better for all concerned.”¹³ By this point, however, Stark and Turner’s Navy-centric voices were even more isolated. The Army’s War Plans Division, wholly pessimistic about the Soviet Union’s chances of survival in summer, had completely reversed course. The Army planners strenuously argued for increasing economic pressure on Japan and more lend-lease to China. They hoped to render Japan “incapable of offensive operations” against Soviet Union, United States, or Dutch and British possessions in the Pacific.¹⁴

11 RKT to CNO, Study of the effect of an embargo of trade between the United States and Japan, 19 July 1941, in *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1941*, vol. IV, *The Far East*, 839–40.

12 RKT to ACNO, Comment on Admiral Kimmel’s personal letter to ADM Stark, 24 September 1941, Box 5, Folder 10, RKT Papers.

13 RKT to ACNO, Comment on Admiral Kimmel’s personal letter to ADM Stark, 24 September 1941, Box 5, Folder 10, RKT Papers.

14 Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries*, 55–56.

In another memorandum for the President on 5 November, Stark and Turner again argued for a delay, noting defenses in the western Pacific would not be strong enough until March 1942. They contested that war with Japan ought to be avoided before then, and that those increased defenses might well then be “a deciding factor in deterring Japan overall...”¹⁵ Ironically the Army too had gotten cold feet, in part because there were no signs Japan would attack Siberia. They urged Hull to make some sort of concession to preserve peace for ninety days, arguing the “most essential thing now is to gain time.”¹⁶ All to no avail, as Hull, with Roosevelt’s approval, rejected Japan’s peace proposal in a rejoinder they knew would mean war.¹⁷

Turner clearly understood the logical conclusion of the phrase “overtaken by events.” Over the course of mid-to-late 1941, he adapted his policy recommendations and strategic proposals to changing circumstances, especially after the embargo began to bite and diplomatic negotiations stalled. In the months leading up to Pearl Harbor, his advice changed from preventing war to deferring war. He continued passing warnings up the chain of command and pleading for more time to get Pacific defenses in order. Civilian leadership did not agree with him, however, and the long-running 1930s disagreement between civilians and the military over political ends and military means was above his paygrade.

When the disaster finally occurred and the Japanese tsunami swept across the Pacific, Turner adapted once again.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What types of events or changes in the strategic environment might necessitate a change in plans?
- What can planners do to ensure they are ready to adapt and evolve their plans?

15 Memorandum for the President, Estimate concerning the Far East Situation, 05 November 1941, Box 5, Folder 12, RKT Papers.

16 Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries*, 60.

17 Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries*, 61.

4

Build Plans around a Realistic Assessment of Resources



Pre-1941 plans were “largely so much waste paper.”

—Richmond Kelly Turner, 1947



Admiral Ernest J. King, U.S. Navy, Chief of Naval Operations and Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet, circa 1942 (NHHHC 80-G-K-16224).

When Captain Richmond Kelly Turner arrived at the War Plans Division, he found plans in need of reassessment. The fluid international situation and lack of firm strategic direction from domestic policymakers challenged Turner's ability to make assumptions and understand commander's intent. Despite challenges, Turner laid out a basic plan for the Navy to defend the western Pacific. Rather than proceeding from a basis of what resources might be available in the future, he based his assumptions on the forces then available to the Navy. Because he rooted his plan, Navy Rainbow Three, firmly in current force levels, it served as the basis for the Navy's component of Joint Rainbow Five. The United States went to war with Joint Rainbow Five, and, largely due to Turner's influence, this plan gave the United States the blueprint for victory in the Pacific.

In the 1930s, plans remained at a broad strategic level without clear direction from U.S. policymakers. The rapid pace of change in the international situation, occasioned by the often quick and unpredictable aggressive acts of Germany and Japan, rendered operational planning moot. Turner observed that by the mid-1930s, plans had become "hopeful, rather than realistic" and "become outmoded by events."¹ After the war, he concluded that War Plan Orange "included unrealistic Navy Building, Personnel, and Base Development Programs."² As the prospects of war loomed, Turner realized the need to draft plans based on the current Navy fleet.

Turner recalled, "in October 1940, when I entered the Navy Department as Director of War Plans, the world and domestic situations were dark."³ Germany had overrun Poland, Norway, and Western Europe; Russia had occupied half of Poland; and Italy had entered the European war. In the Pacific, Japan held large portions of China and had become more aggressive, embarking on expansion into Indo-China. Domestically,

1 Richmond Kelly Turner, "Some Problems of War Planning: An Address by Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, U.S.N., at the National War College, January 28, 1947," 4, in Box 22, Folder 39, Richmond Kelly Turner Papers, Archives Branch, Naval History and Heritage Command (hereafter, RKT Papers).

2 RKT to Commandant of the Marine Corps, 22 February 1951, "Comments on historical monograph 'The Central Solomons Campaign,'" 15 in Box 21, Folder 19, RKT Papers.

3 Turner, "Some Problems of War Planning," 8-9.

“the United States was in the midst of a very bitter Presidential Campaign in which both the Democratic and Republican candidates had made public commitments that had a very hampering effect on our future adequate preparation for a global war which (it seems to me) any sensible person should have seen was unavoidable for the United States.”⁴ After the war, Turner judged that American war plans had been “largely so much waste paper” because none of them “fit the situation.”⁵ In Turner’s opinion, operational planning had not kept up to the pace of events. From Turner’s standpoint in 1940, war seemed certain in the short term, but the plans he found failed to address that fact. He spent his time as the director of War Plans Division updating plans and preparing the Navy for war.

There was tension in the joint planning process. The Navy prepared plans based on its current fleet size, though it expected growth in wartime. The peacetime Army was quite small, but expected to grow exponentially to fight a major war. Army planners made their decisions based on the expectation of a greatly expanded force rather than based on their forces on hand. Both services wanted plans that gave them leading roles in the conflict. The joint plans had foundered on the lack of support from the Army. Although the President had approved plans Rainbow One and Rainbow Four, the Army had focused its attention on a variant plan, Rainbow Four, “since that plan envisaged a stronger Army effort than did Rainbow No. One.”⁶ Much like Rainbow One, Rainbow Four contemplated a much more defensive posture and presumed abandoning the Western Pacific to adversary. The Navy also shied away from Rainbow One, as it took a nearly total defensive approach. The Navy thought it best to include a plan for aggressive action in the Pacific. For its part, the Army prepared its own supporting plan for Rainbow Four but they never issued it.⁷

Thus, when Turner reported to Chief of Naval Operations Harold Stark, he received the tasks of creating “an immediate temporary plan for a major war in the Pacific.”⁸ Based on this requirement for a plan suitable for

4 Turner, “Some Problems of War Planning,” 8–9.

5 Turner, “Some Problems of War Planning,” 10.

6 Turner, “Some Problems of War Planning,” 8.

7 George Carroll Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer: The Story of Richmond Kelly Turner* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1972), 162–63.

8 Turner, “Some Problems of War Planning,” 11.

immediate implementation, Turner drafted Navy Rainbow Three. In this plan, Turner assumed that the United States, allied with the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, would defend the Western Pacific from Japanese aggression. Uncertain about what forces the United Kingdom could commit to the Pacific, Turner assumed that the U.S. Navy would be responsible for most of the effort. The latter informed the decision to assign roughly 75 percent of capital ship allocations to the Pacific, with the rest retained in the Atlantic. Turner also assessed that the cruiser-centered Asiatic Fleet would “inevitably” be pushed from the Philippines back to the Malay Barrier or the Indian Ocean.⁹ Navy Rainbow Three focused entirely on the Pacific and did not include discussion of war with Germany.

After the January 1941 promulgation of Navy Rainbow Three, the Navy implemented aspects of it, such as the organization and functioning of shore establishments and the formal creation of the Pacific and Atlantic Fleets, in February. Most shifts had taken place by April. Consequently, Turner recalled, “by spring of 1941, we had a valid Naval War Plan suitable for emergency use, and had approved most of the departmental, district, and fleet supporting plans.”¹⁰ The Army played no role in Navy Rainbow Three. Indeed, the Army could only “stand on the defensive with the garrisons of their normal peacetime deployment.”¹¹ The Army itself admitted that most of its plans were “Staff studies” rather than plans, because unlike the Navy, it had no “impressive force-in-being.”¹² In the War Plans Division, Turner had translated broad strategic plans for operational use in an emergency.

Turner recalled, “with considerable modification, [Navy] Rainbow Three formed the basis of the naval plan we later prepared and actually used during the war ([Joint] Rainbow Five).”¹³ Rainbow Five provided an overall U.S. strategy upon the outbreak of war and initial emergency responses. Beyond specific initial proscriptive features, Turner reflected later that “its major strategic features and most of its subsidiary requirements provided the basic but elastic framework of the actual naval

9 Turner, “Some Problems of War Planning,” 12.

10 Turner, “Some Problems of War Planning,” 13.

11 Turner, “Some Problems of War Planning,” 13.

12 Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer: The Story of Richmond Kelly Turner*, 165, 166.

13 Turner, “Some Problems of War Planning,” 13.

campaigns of the war.”¹⁴ Turner’s work on Rainbow Five had stemmed from his assessment of the early Joint Rainbow plans and Rainbow Three, the latter of which aimed to match means and ends. The progression of Navy planning under Turner demonstrated its iterative nature. As war drew nearer, assumptions changed and plans moved from the theoretical into the practical.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How does planning change as conflict approaches?
- How should planners think about future vs. current capabilities and resources?

14 Turner, “Comments on historical monograph ‘The Central Solomons Campaign,’” 16.

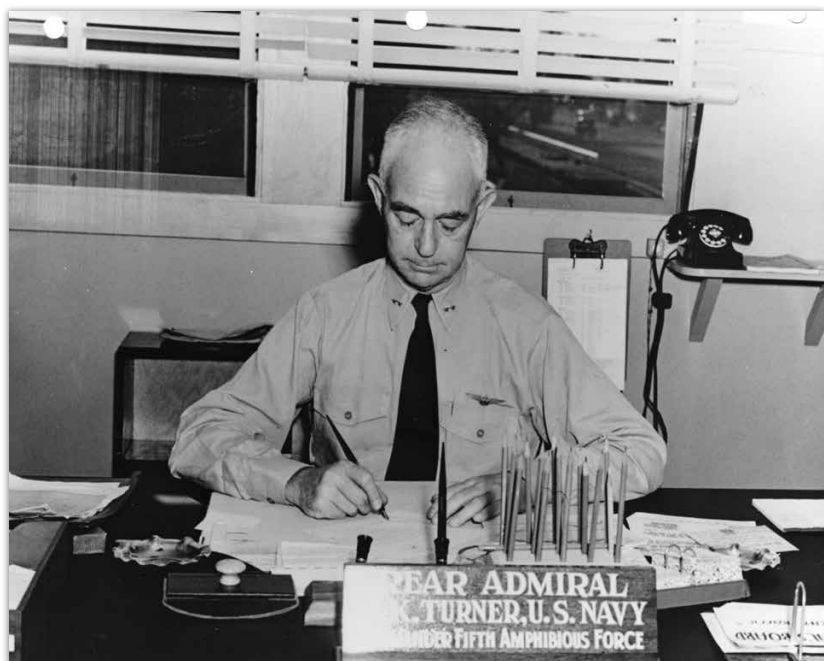
5

Research and Preparation Enable Swift Implementation and Adaptation



“By the summer of 1941, the United States finally had a realistic global strategic war plan, with the United Kingdom as a prospective ally, and Russia as a participant in the fighting against Germany.”

—Admiral Richmond K. Turner, 1947



Rear Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, Commander, Fifth Amphibious Force (Richmond Kelly Turner Papers, NHHC).

The United States' abrupt entry into World War II in December 1941 did not immediately alter the fundamental strategic assumptions or war plans developed over the preceding months. The Army and Navy implemented Rainbow Five, which commenced a build up to take the strategic offensive in the European theater and to assume a strategic defensive in the Pacific. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor meant the Pacific Fleet could not conduct offensive operations in the Central Pacific as previously planned. This ended the last tangible holdover from the Orange family of war plans the Navy had started developing for conflict with Japan in 1906. Although the plans were rendered moot, decades of study and research by Navy officers proved invaluable in shaping Pacific war plans from 1942–1945.¹

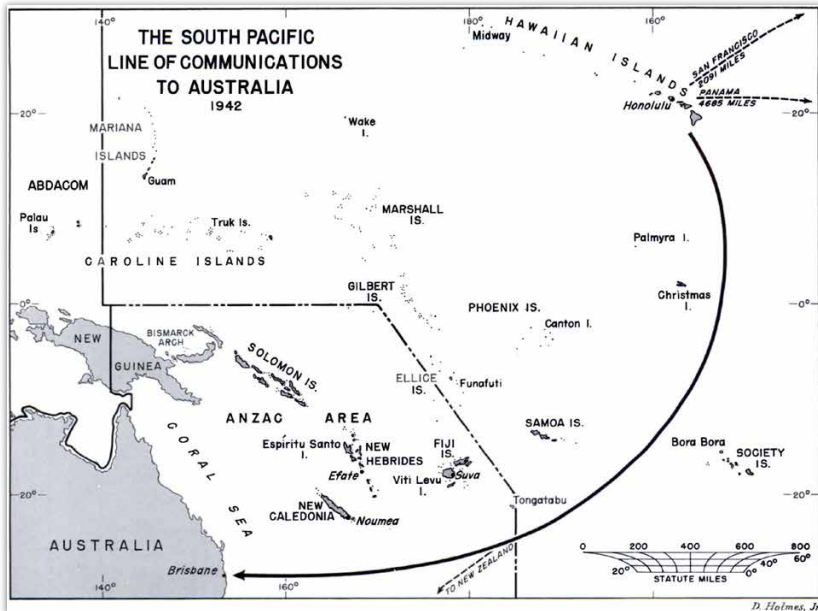
While committed to the “Germany First” strategy, both President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill supported aggressive efforts to slow the Japanese Pacific offensive. At the Arcadia Conference in Washington, DC, in December, Roosevelt, Churchill, and the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) agreed that in addition to safeguarding Hawaii, Australia, New Zealand, and India, the allies would seek to hold “points of vantage from which an offensive against Japan can eventually be developed.”² Admiral Ernest J. King, the newly appointed Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet (COMINCH), leveraged this caveat to take the offensive sooner rather than later. He charged Admiral Chester Nimitz, the new Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet (CINCPACFLT), with maintaining the sea line of communications (SLOC) with Hawaii and Midway, and “only in a smaller degree less important,” holding open the line to Australia.³ King believed this line had to be defended in depth. In addition to garrisoning Samoa, Fiji, and Bora Bora, King persuaded the

1 Louis Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years*, The U.S. Army in World War II (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, 1962), 139–43; Edward S. Miller, *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897-1945* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 331–46.

2 Thomas B. Buell, *Master of Sea Power: A Biography of Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980), 165–66, 168–69; U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Conferences at Washington, 1941–1942, and Casablanca, 1943*, eds. Frederick Aandahl, William M. Franklin, and William Slany (Washington, DC: GPO, 1968), 3–849; Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 233–35.

3 Gray Book, Vol. 1, 124, Chester W. Nimitz Papers, Archives Branch, Naval History and Heritage Command.

Army and the British to divert ships from the Atlantic to send troops to New Caledonia, the loss of which would sever the direct line to Australia.⁴



Map. The South Pacific Line of Communications to Australia.

From Louis Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years*, The U.S. Army in World War II (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, 1962), 206.

The threat to U.S.-Australia SLOC soon manifested after Japan captured Rabaul, in the Bismarck Archipelago, and Bougainville, in the Solomon Islands, on 23 January 1942, portending moves into the lower Solomons, New Hebrides, and Ellice islands.⁵ King elevated Rear Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner to Assistant Chief of Staff (Plans) and brought Navy planning under his direct purview by transferring most of the War Plans Division from OPNAV to the COMINCH staff in mid-January 1942.⁶ In early February, King enlisted Turner to convince Army planners

4 George Carroll Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer: The Story of Richmond Kelly Turner* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1972), 239–42; Morton, *Strategy and Command*, 204–12

5 Morton, *Strategy and Command*, 212–14.

6 Memo, Commander in Chief, United States Fleet to Chief of Naval Operations, Re: Organization of Office of Commander in Chief, United States Fleet, 15 January 1942, War Plans Division #2 folder, Box 5, Richmond Kelly Turner Papers, Archives Branch, Naval History and Heritage Command.

to send troops and aircraft to Funafuti, Efate, and Tongatabu islands to create mutually supporting defensive positions and a base area for eventual offensive operations. The Army balked at diverting more forces from Europe and planned offensive operations in the Pacific, and even questioned whether holding Australia was vital to the war effort.⁷

Allied resistance collapsed in the Dutch East Indies in early March. Churchill and Australian Prime Minister John Curtin appealed to Roosevelt for American help to defend Australia, India, and the Middle East. They also requested more action by the Pacific Fleet to distract the Japanese. King took the opportunity on 5 March to lobby the President on his plan to secure the U.S.-Australia SLOC and to stage a step-by-step general advance up the Solomons to Rabaul from a base in the New Hebrides.⁸ Roosevelt approved, stating to the CCS that “it is an established fact that activity in the Pacific would follow the Navy’s general scheme.”⁹ The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) soon thereafter approved the Navy’s basing requests. Churchill and the CCS agreed to place the Pacific theater under American direction. King and the JCS divided the theater into a Pacific Ocean Area under Nimitz and a Southwest Pacific Area under General Douglas MacArthur.¹⁰

Turner soon put his division to work crafting a campaign plan based on King’s proposal, but they already had a wealth of planning experience to draw upon. Although the Orange plans varied in detail over the years, they collectively envisioned a war in three stages largely dictated by geography. In the initial phase, Japan would seize Allied outposts and key resource areas in the Western Pacific. While U.S. forces would be unable to prevent this, their bastion in the eastern Pacific would allow them to mobilize and stage raids on the perimeter of the Japanese advance. In middle phase, the Pacific Fleet would assume the offensive and advance westward through the Marshall and Caroline Islands to capture a Navy advance base in the Philippines. This is where Navy strategists expected

7 Grace P. Hayes, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in World War II: The War against Japan* (Washington, DC: Historical Section, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1953; reprint, Annapolis, MD: United States Naval Institute Press, 1982), 137–38, 781n4, 782n8; Morton, *Strategy and Command*, 217–19.

8 Buell, *Master of Sea Power*, 187–88, 531–32.

9 Hayes, *The War against Japan*, 782n10

10 Buell, *Master of Sea Power*, 188–90; Hayes, *The War against Japan*, 138–39.

the great Mahanian decisive battle to occur, leading to the decisive defeat of the Japanese Fleet. The final phase involved an air and sea blockade of Japan forcing capitulation.¹¹

The strategic campaign concept Turner provided to King on 16 April flowed along familiar lines only in four phases. Phase 1 was to hold the South and Southwest Pacific while amphibious forces were assembled and trained, and to conduct raids against exposed enemy positions. Phase 2 involved an allied amphibious-air-sea offensive through the Solomons and New Guinea to retake the Bismarck Archipelago, along with large raids on the Caroline and Marshall Islands to attrite enemy forces. Phase 3 was an advance into the Central Pacific to capture the Caroline and Marshall Islands, and establishment of naval and air bases. Phase 4 was an advance in the Dutch East Indies or the Philippines, whichever offered the best potential strategic advantages.¹²

Turner's War Plans Division utilized knowledge derived from years of Orange planning, anticipated Japanese intentions, and Admiral King's intent to quickly develop a new iteration of the Rainbow war plan for the Pacific Theater. COMINCH approved Turner's concept and a week later issued the revision to Nimitz as Navy Basic War Plan, Rainbow Five, WPL-46-PC.¹³ King had given Nimitz his steaming orders to put the plan into effect. Phase 1 was in operation. The commanders looked for the opportunity to transition from Phase 1 to Phase 2. They did not have to wait long; a few weeks later in early June, the Pacific Fleet's victory at the Battle of Midway dramatically changed the balance of power with respect to Japan. The updated version of Rainbow Five proved flexible enough to enable the rapid exploitation of the new strategic circumstances.

11 Hayes, *War in the Pacific*, 139–140; Miller, *War Plan Orange*, 4–5.

12 Memo, ACofS(P) to ComiCh, "Pacific Ocean Campaign Plan," 16 April 1942, CNO(WPD) file "A16-3(4) Pacific Ocean (whole)," cited in Hayes, *War in the Pacific*, 783n12.

13 Ltr, CominCh-CHO to CincCPac, Information and Instructions Relative to the Pacific Campaign," 00298, short title WPL-46-PC, 23 April 1942, CNO(WPD) file "WPL-46-PC #990," cited in Hayes, *War in the Pacific*, 783n12; Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 252–53.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How does the act of planning support future operational adaptation?
- What type of planning should the U.S. Navy engage in today to prepare for future conflicts?
- What is the purpose of a strategic defense?
- What is a disposal force?
 - Was the U.S. Army or U.S. Navy disposal force in the Pacific?

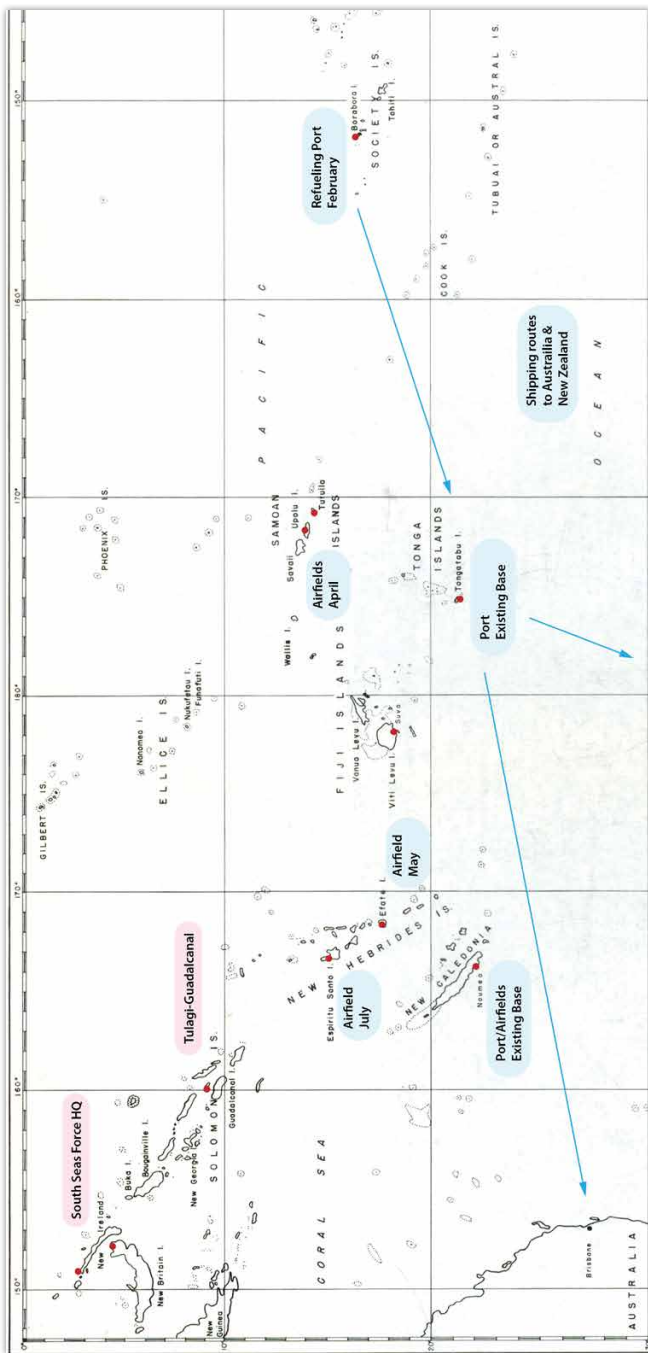
6

Allow for the Tyranny of Time and Distance



“Both the final victory and the six-month campaign that preceded it were to a large extent a matter of logistics.”

—ONI Combat Narrative, The movement of supplies into the Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area



Bases in the southwest Pacific, 1942. Allied bases in blue, while Japanese bases appear in red. After map adapted from *Building the Navy's Bases in World War II: History of the Bureau of Yards and Docks and the Civil Engineer Corps, 1941-1946*, Vol. II (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1947).

Despite the confusion following the initial Japanese attacks, the smoldering wrecks of eight battleships in Pearl Harbor provided a certain clarity. Many of the pre-war plans were immediately obsolete and others rendered impossible. On 8 December 1941, for example, the pre-war plan to occupy the Marshall and Caroline Islands was formally abandoned. Additional operation planning suffered the same fate in the months thereafter. Initially much time and effort was expended strengthening Allied positions in the Far East, which included the defense of Allied positions at Singapore and the Dutch East Indies (DEI).¹ Strategic planners knew the Japanese seizure of the raw materials of Southeast Asia “would seriously affect the war economies of all the Associated Powers... and closing the Burma Road would prevent effective support to China.”² However, the fast-moving Japanese detachments quickly overran both Allied positions and plans in the region and, once inside the Allied decision loop cycle, continued overturning even ad hoc decisions almost daily. By 7 January, 1942, Bataan was under attack, Sarawak occupied, and the Japanese were in Malaya. By the end of the month, Singapore was under siege and surrendered in February. In March, Allied forces in Sumatra and Java had surrendered, and the British were driven back to the Indian border after losing Burma.³

In the South Pacific, the situation was different. American naval planners knew the supply routes to Australia were critical to its defense and had pushed for their protection from the start. In early December, small Marine garrisons at Palmyra and Samoa were reinforced.⁴ On 30 December 1941, Admiral Ernest J. King, Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Fleet, approved a plan to build a base in Teavanui Harbor, Borabora, Society Islands, then controlled by the Free French. The plan envisioned tank

1 For example, see *Directive to the Supreme Commander in the ABDA Area*, Arcadia Conference (Washington, DC), December 24, 1941–January 14, 1942, Report, 10 January, 1–4.

2 Richmond Kelly Turner to Chief of Naval Operations, Study of the effect of an embargo of trade between the United States and Japan, 19 July 1941, in *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1941*, vol. IV, *The Far East*, s

3 Mary H. Williams, *Chronology 1941–1945*, U.S. Army in World War II (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, 1960).

4 George Carroll Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer: The Story of Richmond Kelly Turner* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1972), 239.

storage for 200,000 barrels fuel oil, 37,500 barrels of gasoline, a seaplane base, improved harbor, and facilities for a 3,500 man garrison, all intended to support the logistics supply route and air ferry route from the United States to the South Pacific.⁵

This supply route required not only harbors and airfields, but also required garrisons. Navy leaders took this point to the joint U.S.-United Kingdom Arcadia strategy conference, then ongoing in Washington, DC. On 31 December 1941, the Joint Planning Committee (JPC) agreed that Australia was both the extreme right flank of the “Malay Barrier” (then extending west to Singapore), and an essential supporting position for future theater operations in the South Pacific. In support of those concepts, the JPC released a report on 10 January 1942 titled the “Defense of Island Bases between Hawaii and Australia.”⁶ In discussion the next day, King pointed out New Caledonia was critical to the sea lines of communication (SLOC) to Australia. Not only were the islands’ nickel mines “a tempting bait for the Japanese, but also if the Island was in Japanese possession, all reinforcements ... would have to take a longer route south of New Zealand.”⁷

Understanding the problem was one thing; resolving it was another one. The primary issue was shipping. Throughout the war, the demand for cargo ships exceeded the supply. After a follow on discussion on 11 January, the JPC agreed to accelerate reinforcements to the South Pacific by delaying troop shipments to Northern Ireland by one month and reducing lend-lease shipments to the Soviet Union by thirty percent for 3–4 months.⁸ Perhaps not coincidentally, news arrived that same day that a Japanese detachment had seized the port of Menado in the Celebes as part of their attacks south against the Dutch. More ominously, stepped-up Japanese air attacks against Rabaul suggested a move eastward into the South Pacific was imminent.

5 *Building the Navy's Bases in World War II: History of the Bureau of Yards and Docks and the Civil Engineer Corps, 1941–1946*, Vol. II (Washington, DC: GPO, 1947), 191.

6 *The Chiefs of Staff Conferences: Defense of Island Bases between Hawaii and Australia*, Arcadia Conference, Annex, 10 January 1942, 1–4.

7 See *The Chiefs of Staff Conferences: Defense of Island Bases between Hawaii and Australia*, Arcadia Conference, Minutes, 11 January, 6.

8 See *The Chiefs of Staff Conference: Shipping for United States reinforcements for the Far East*, Arcadia Conference, Minutes, 12 January, 4.

On 15 January, Rear Admiral Turner's War Plans Division (WPD) initiated a plan calling for the establishment of Advanced Base units to build and to operate Main Fleet (Lion) bases and 12 secondary (Cub) bases. While components could be scraped together, operating equipment, specialized materials, and machinery were all in short supply. This system would take time to implement, and the first base construction and improvement efforts would all be extemporized. Much of the initial equipment was taken from a stockpile previously accumulated at Quonset Point, Rhode Island, in support of United Kingdom's lend-lease efforts.⁹

The first major movement into the South Pacific occurred on 22 January; a reinforced Army brigade of 10,000 men and another 7,000 air and support troops sailed from New York for Nouméa, New Caledonia. The convoy also included 400 aircraft and 4.5 million gallons of aviation gasoline intended to anchor the western edge of the island supply chain before the route diverged south to Australia or north towards the approaching Japanese. A second, smaller convoy of 4,300 men, which comprised of the Army garrison (162nd Infantry) and Navy Construction detachment 'Bobcat' (258 Sailors) for Borabora, departed Charleston on 27 January.¹⁰

By the end of the month, the Japanese had arrived in the South Pacific. Following major air attacks, the Japanese occupied the ports of Kavieng and Rabaul in the Bismarcks and landed a small detachment on Bougainville. In response, Turner pressed King for more reinforcements. He argued the fundamental Navy position that "strong mutually supporting defensive positions in Samoa, Fiji, and New Caledonia are essential for protection of sea and air communications from United States to Australia and for the defense of the island areas of the mid-Pacific and for maintaining a base area for an eventual offensive against Japan."¹¹ Turner recommended to King that all further reinforcement of Iceland and the United Kingdom be suspended and sufficient men and materials be sent to the Pacific to insure its defense. He argued that available resources were

9 Dyer, *Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 422; Duncan S. Ballantine, *U.S. Naval Logistics in the Second World War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), 57.

10 *Building the Navy's Bases*, vol. II, 192; Arcadia, *Chiefs of Staff Conference Minutes*, 12 January 42, 3.

11 Dyer, *Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 240-41.

insufficient for a divided effort and that if both continued then the United States would probably be defeated in the Pacific.¹² Luckily, the Japanese paused in their advance into the Solomons, too focused on the battles in Malaya, the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies.

The Japanese pause, fortunate though it was, also gave the Army time to resist Turner's pleas. Deeply involved in planning for a possible quick-turn intervention in French North Africa, Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall argued the South Pacific be limited to the strategic defensive since shipping tonnage was needed in the Atlantic. Indeed, his staff was not even sure holding Australia was vital to the U.S. efforts; Brigadier General Dwight D. Eisenhower advised Marshall on 28 February that holding Australia was not a "mandatory task."¹³ The next day, the collapse of Allied defenses on Java provided the Navy with a key ally. Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill, devastated by the loss of Singapore, proposed postponing operations against French North Africa until the fall. He knew this would free up shipping for more U.S. Navy activity in the Pacific and hopefully relieve pressure on Commonwealth forces in India. Following this decision, Joint Planners eventually agree to send 41,000 Army troops and 15,000 Marines as garrisons in the South Pacific.¹⁴

This phase of the war was a race to see which force would culminate first. The campaign for the Solomons was waged by nations at the shoe-string edge of war. Both sides faced challenges at the logistical ends of their tethers. The Japanese, stretched thin by offensive operations along a 4,000 mile arc from Burma to New Guinea, had difficulty finding the shipping capacity to move troops into the South Pacific. Initial operations were only launched against New Guinea in March, resulting in the capture of Lae and Salamaua on the 7th, with additional small landings at Buka and elsewhere in the northern Solomons a week later.

On the Allied side, the tyranny of distance meant the Navy convoy for Borabora did not arrive until 17 February. At Borabora they discovered there was no fresh water supply for the force, and their administratively

12 Memo, Turner to King, "Recommended new strategic deployment against Japan," 17 Feb 42, CNO(WPD) file, "A16-3(4) Pacific Ocean Area (whole), cited in Grace Person Hayes, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in World War II: The War Against Japan* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1982 [1953]), 773n35.

13 Dyer, *Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 242–43.

14 Dyer, *Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 244–46.

loaded cargo delayed construction operations for almost two weeks. The reinforcement convoy for Nouméa was delayed by both poor weather and slow ships, and it did not arrive until 12 March, almost two months after departing New York. That same day, the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed to send troops to Tongabatu, including the 2nd Construction Battalion (CB), but those would not arrive until 9 May, a day after the Battle of the Coral Sea. The decision to build an airbase on Efate (an island north of Nouméa and 800 miles from Guadalcanal) was taken on 20 March, and while a few Army engineers arrived in early April, the Navy's 3rd CB did not arrive until 4 May.¹⁵

In spite of these delays, the greater logistical capacity of the Allies came to the fore in April and May 1942. First, on 9 April, the 4th and 5th CB detachment and their equipment sailed from Norfolk for Samoa, where they were assigned to build airbases at Upola and on Wallis Island. More significantly, the 3rd CB detachment, which arrived on Efate on 4 May, finished the 6,000-foot runway only 24 days later. Ten days later, on 8 July, a detachment sailed from Efate to Espiritu Santos to construct an airfield there in only 20 days. This occurred simultaneously with construction of oil storage facilities at Suva, a major port improvement project at Nouméa, and the fuel tanks at Borabora becoming operational by the end of July.¹⁶

By mid-April, Allied planners were aware of further Japanese preparations for operations in the South Pacific. In the ongoing race to cover approaches to Nouméa, King ordered Vice Admiral Robert L. Ghormley to "Prepare to launch a major amphibious offensive against positions held by the Japanese." Six days later, on 29 April, Ghormley formed the South Pacific Amphibious Force. Built around the 1st Marine Division, it comprised 13 transports (AP), five attack cargo (AK) ships, and four destroyer transports (APD).¹⁷ These were timely decisions as the discovery in early May that Japanese detachments had arrived at Tulagi and Guadalcanal on 3 May to construct a seaplane base and an airfield. This advance, which was exactly what King had long feared, set in motion plans for what would ultimately be Operation WATCHTOWER.

15 Williams, *Chronology*.

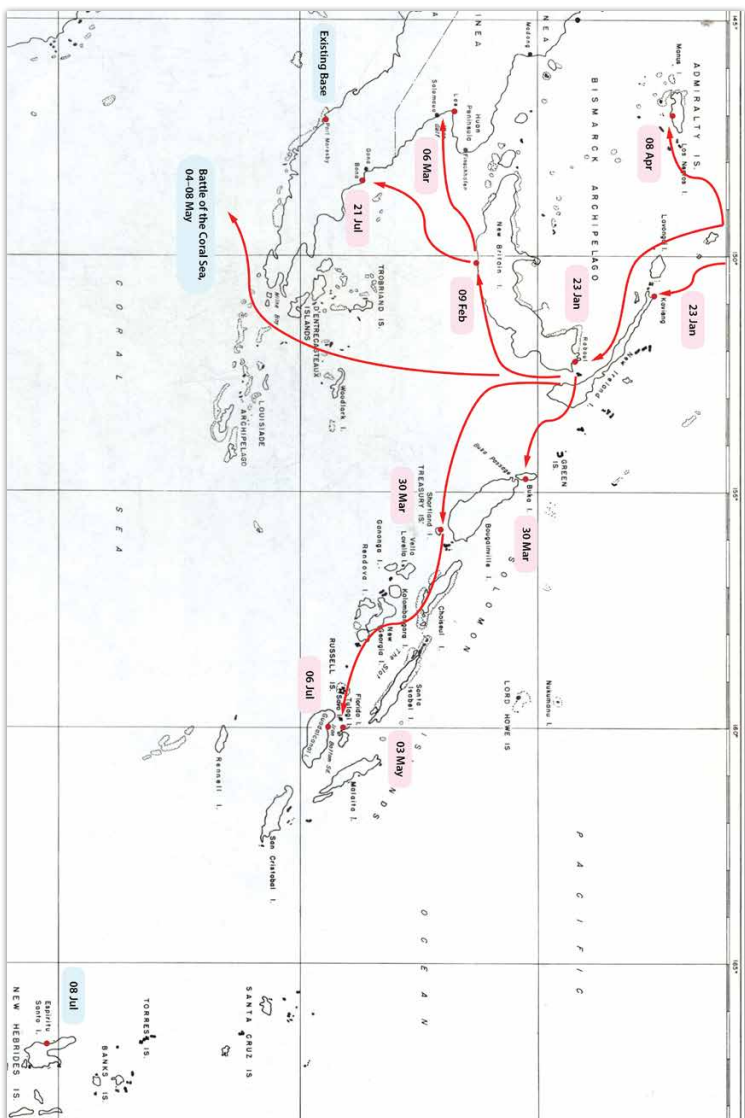
16 Williams, *Chronology*.

17 Dyer, *Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 261–62, 280.

While the strategic victories in the Coral Sea and Midway freed Ghormley and Turner to concentrate on preparing for landings in the Solomons, only the continued progress in building and improving the logistics infrastructure of the South Pacific island chains allowed Operation WATCHTOWER to go forward. This was especially true for the chain of airfields in the South Pacific, which allowed the rapid shifting of replacement aircraft to Nouméa and forward. The operationally critical bases on Efate and Espiritu Santos were finished in June and July, but the staging fields further east at Tutuila, Upolu, Samoa, and the New Zealand-controlled airfields on Suva, Fiji, were just as important.¹⁸

The race to the Solomons meant that the Allies had to advance before their logistics support facilities were fully prepared, a situation also faced by the Japanese. These difficulties meant that the force with the greater logistical capacity would shape the campaign's outcome. This is best illustrated by the capture of the still incomplete Japanese airfield on Guadalcanal on 7 August, which the Japanese had worked on for over a month (and had occupied for three), but could not finish. In contrast, the American airfields at Efate and Espiritu Santos were operational in 24 and 20 days respectively, and Henderson field itself on Guadalcanal was operational 12 days after the initial landings.

18 *Building the Navy's Bases*, vol. II, 252–54.



Japanese advance into the southwest Pacific. Allied bases in blue, while Japanese bases appear in red. After map adapted from *Building the Navy's Bases in World War II: History of the Bureau of Yards and Docks and the Civil Engineer Corps, 1941-1946*, Vol. II (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1947).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How do planners balance requirements for a multi-front war?
- What role should logistics play in planning?
- What is culmination?
 - Were Japanese or Allied forces closer to culmination during the race to the South Pacific?

7

**Achieve Unity of Command if Possible;
Strive for Unity of Effort, if Not**



*“Unity of command increases the chances of
victory.”*

—Admiral Richmond K. Turner



Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas confers with South Pacific Area officers, possibly on board *Argonne* (AG-31) at Noumea, New Caledonia, on 28 September 1942. From left to right: Major General Richard K. Sutherland, U.S. Army, Chief of Staff to General Douglas MacArthur; Admiral Chester Nimitz; Vice Admiral Robert L. Ghormley, Commander South Pacific Force; and Major General Millard F. Harmon, U.S. Army Air Forces, Commanding General U.S. Army Forces South Pacific Area (NHHC NH-58423).

Although U.S. Navy Commander in Chief (COMINCH) Admiral Ernest J. King had long planned a counteroffensive in the South Pacific, when the opportunity to do so arose after the Battle of Midway, an overly complex command organization made unity of command difficult to achieve. This factor combined with a short time for preparation to threaten unity of effort as well. Following President Franklin Roosevelt's approval of the offensive concept on 5 March 1942, King and Rear Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner's COMINCH War Plans Division began preparing to implement it. With Japanese military power ascendant in the Pacific and the Allies ambivalent about allocating resources to counter it, however, the opportunity, means, and timeline for executing the strategy were indeterminate. Designing the appropriate command and control architecture for Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet (CINCPACFLT) Admiral Chester W. Nimitz's vast Pacific theater command offered another challenge. Turner proposed a basic framework on 26 March. He advised King that taking bases in the Solomon and Santa Cruz Islands would require amphibious assaults supported by enough naval and air strength to ensure continuous local superiority. He recommended assigning a naval commander for a South Pacific area sub-command with orders to carry out a campaign of operations within his power.¹

Admiral King instructed Nimitz on 3 April to establish a South Pacific Area (SOPAC) command within his Pacific Ocean Areas, to nominate a subordinate commander, and to "Prepare for execution of major amphibious offensives against positions held by Japan initially to be launched from South Pacific and Southwest Pacific area."² Nimitz selected Vice Admiral Robert L. Ghormley, who arrived in Washington, DC, on 17 April, to consult with Turner on plans for his new command. King told Ghormley "I do not have the tools to give you to carry out the task as it should be," but "In time, possibly this fall, we hope to start an offensive in the South

1 Assistant Chief of Staff (Plans) to Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet, Re: Strategic deployment in the Pacific against Japan, 26 March 1942, War Plans Division #2, Jan. 7, 1942-Mar 26, 1942 folder, Box 5, Turner Papers, NHHC.

2 King to Nimitz, 1905Z 3 April 1942, Nimitz Gray Book, Vol. 1, Chester W. Nimitz Papers, Archives Branch, Naval History and Heritage Command, 332.

Pacific.”³ Ghormley conferred with Nimitz in Hawaii in early May, who placed an unusual circumspection on his command authority. Nimitz assigned the missions to naval task forces placed under Ghormley’s direction. Ghormley was not to interfere in the execution of these missions unless circumstances required.⁴

At the end of April, King informed Nimitz of the formation of a SOPAC Amphibious Force “and that intensive training be undertaken for minor landing offensives and counterattacks to be designated at a later date.”⁵ King did not name a commander, but with his departure from the COMINCH staff imminent, Turner hoped to take this command.⁶ The prospect for amphibious operations increased following the Japanese capture of Tulagi Island in the lower Solomons on 3 May. Later that month, Nimitz proposed to General Douglas MacArthur attacking Tulagi using a Marine Raider battalion based on Samoa. King supported a limited raid, but MacArthur warned the Japanese had garrisoned the island with a regiment and could reinforce the area quickly from Rabaul.⁷

The victory at the Battle of Midway in early June changed the strategic situation, but the Navy and Army had to settle on how to seize the initiative and take advantage of it. MacArthur proposed an operation to take Rabaul using his ground and air forces supported by two Navy carriers to Army Chief of Staff General George Marshall on 8 June. Though Army and Navy planners were favorable, Rear Admiral Charles M. Cooke, Jr., Turner’s successor as COMINCH Chief of Staff (Plans), opposed it because it would expose the carriers to land-based air attack in confined waters. This proposal appeared to justify the Navy’s unwillingness to place

3 George Carroll Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer: The Story of Richmond Kelly Turner* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1972), 261; Richard B. Frank, *Guadalcanal* (New York: Random House, 1990), 15.

4 War Diary of Commander South Pacific Area and South Pacific Force, 1-31 May 1942, World War II War Diaries, Other Operational Records and Histories Series, Record Group 38, National Archives, 4.

5 US Naval Administrative Histories of World War II, *History of the Amphibious Forces, US Pacific Fleet*, Vol. I, Navy Department Library, 41.

6 Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 262–63.

7 Grace P. Hayes, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in World War II: The War against Japan* (Washington, DC: Historical Section, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1953; reprint, Annapolis, MD: United States Naval Institute Press, 1982), 140–41; Louis Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years*, *The U.S. Army in World War II* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, 1962), 293–94.

its forces under MacArthur's command. As an alternative, King offered Marshall an operation under Ghormley to occupy Tulagi and Santa Cruz Island, followed by a joint campaign under MacArthur to take New Guinea and Rabaul. After King threatened to undertake the operation with Navy resources alone, Marshall relented, suggesting a three-phase campaign. The seizure of Tulagi and Santa Cruz by Ghormley would be Phase 1. MacArthur would direct Phase 2, the capture of the remainder of the Solomons, and Phase 3, the conquest of New Guinea and Rabaul. King tried to place Ghormley under direct JCS command but Marshall insisted Nimitz retain overall authority. King and Marshall approved the compromise on 2 July, designating the campaign PESTILENCE and the Tulagi-Santa Cruz operation WATCHTOWER, with a start date of 1 August.⁸

Nimitz assigned Ghormley "strategic command in person" for WATCHTOWER, appointed Turner to lead the SOPAC Amphibious Force, and named Vice Admiral Frank "Jack" Fletcher to command the supporting aircraft carrier task forces.⁹ After intelligence revealed the Japanese preparing an airfield on Guadalcanal Island, King and Nimitz prioritized landings there and on Tulagi, with the Santa Cruz occupation to follow. Ghormley and MacArthur conferred briefly in Australia and jointly assessed the available air bases as insufficient to achieve air superiority in the area and a scarcity of support shipping. Together they concluded on 8 July that "the successful accomplishment of the operation is open to the gravest doubts. It is recommended that this operation be deferred."¹⁰ Now in a race to invade before the Japanese completed their airfield, King and Marshall responded that "it is necessary to stop without delay the enemy's southward advance" and that they did "not desire to countermand operations already underway."¹¹

Following weeks of uncertainty, the effort to mount WATCHTOWER proceeded with hectic haste, which placed great stress on the theater

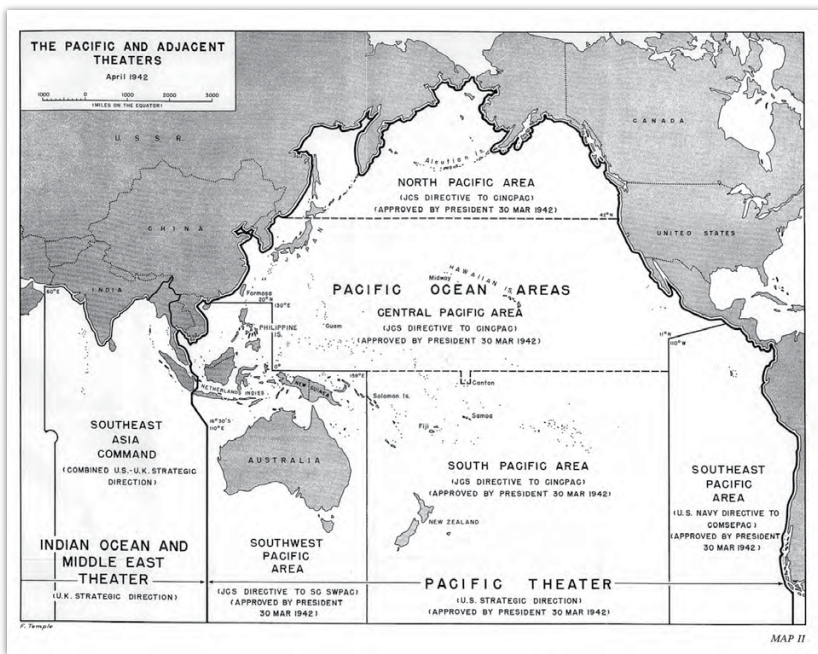
8 Hayes, *The War Against Japan*, 141–48; Morton, *Strategy and Command*, 294–303.

9 John B. Lundstrom, *Black Shoe Carrier Admiral: Frank Jack Fletcher at Coral Sea, Midway, and Guadalcanal* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2013), 320–21; Frank, *Guadalcanal*, 55--56; Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 277–85.

10 Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 285–286; Morton, *Strategy and Command*, 303–04; 306–07.

11 Frank, *Guadalcanal*, 35–38, 43; Morton, *Strategy and Command*, 307; Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 286–88.

command and control arrangements. Problems and disagreements arose but little time existed to resolve them. Ghormley designated Fletcher as the joint task force commander and officer in tactical command. Even with a week's delay until 7 August, the timeline for WATCHTOWER permitted only one senior leadership conference to reconcile planning differences. This occurred on 27 July aboard Fletcher's flagship, *Saratoga* (CV-3), as the WATCHTOWER force assembled for a rehearsal in the Fiji Islands. Ghormley did not attend the conference. Due to delays travelling from his headquarters in Auckland, New Zealand, he sent his chief of staff, Rear Admiral Daniel J. Callaghan, to preside in his stead.



From Louis Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years*, The U.S. Army in World War II (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, 1962).

At the conference, Fletcher questioned the incomplete planning, the inability of the expeditionary force to train together, and inadequate logistics. Turner tentatively planned for the Santa Cruz occupation force and the transports to depart Guadalcanal and Tulagi by the evening of the second day, leaving only the cargo ships to finish unloading supplies. He

and Major General Alexander Vandegrift, commanding the Marine landing force, requested that Fletcher's three carriers remain for three to six days to cover the cargo offload. Concerned about the vulnerability of the carriers to Japanese land-based and naval air attacks and the availability of fuel, Fletcher committed to remain in support for only 48 hours. Without Ghormley present to adjudicate the issue, Fletcher's view prevailed that the risk to his carriers outweighed extending air coverage for debarking the remainder of the landing force's supplies. With his unloading dilemma unresolved, it fell to Turner to determine how long to keep his force on station. Following a frustrating, truncated but useful landing rehearsal, the WATCHTOWER invasion force steamed for Tulagi and Guadalcanal on 31 July.¹²

12 Frank, *Guadalcanal*, 50–57; Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 299–311; Lundstrom, *Black Shoe Carrier Admiral*, 325–42.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What is the difference between command and control? Who had command authority over the SOPAC area? Who was exercising control of the battle space?
- What does it mean to seize the initiative?
 - Did the U.S. victory at the battle of Midway seize the initiative or did it create the opportunity for the U.S. Navy to do so?
 - What do you do with the initiative once it is seized?
- What are some of the ways to achieve unity of effort amongst multiple commands?
- How does the commander balance risk to mission and risk to force?

8

Account for Friction in War, Where Everything Is Simple, But Even the Simplest Thing Is Difficult



“It does not necessarily follow that because we took a beating somebody must be the goat.”

—Captain G. L. Russell,
on the findings of the Hepburn Report



Battle of Savo Island Testimony. Lieutenant Commander Harry B. Heneberger, former gunnery officer of *Quincy* (CA-39), uses a chart of Guadalcanal and the Florida Islands to describe the action of the Battle of Savo Island, in which his ship was sunk. Photographed circa September-December 1942 (NHHC 80-G-16521).

Partly improvised and ill-prepared, with unreconciled leadership differences and disparate priorities, WATCHTOWER's risks multiplied when combat began. It started before dawn on 7 August 1942 with the successful seizure of Tulagi and the Guadalcanal airfield. Fifteen thousand Marines from Major General Alexander Vandegrift's 1st Marine Division landed from transports, supported by naval gunfire from Rear Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner's South Pacific Amphibious Force and carrier air strikes from Vice Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher's Task Force 61. The Japanese reacted swiftly. Two air attacks from Rabaul were launched against the invasion force on 7 August and another the next day. The Japanese damaged a transport (later scuttled) and two destroyers for the loss of thirty-six planes. Fletcher's carriers lost fourteen fighters to combat and accidents while providing combat air patrol coverage over the landing areas. Among the attackers were Japanese naval carrier-type bombers, leading Fletcher to suspect the presence of enemy aircraft carriers (they flew one-way missions from Rabaul, but Fletcher had no way to know that). He operated under standing instructions from Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet, issued before Midway not to expose his carriers to enemy attack without the prospect of inflicting comparable damage in return.¹ Citing his diminished fighter strength and a need to refuel his carrier groups, Fletcher asked Vice Admiral Robert L. Ghormley, Commander, South Pacific Area, on the evening of 8 August for permission to withdraw the next morning.²

This left Turner with a choice. Heavy Japanese resistance on Tulagi had forced him to commit part of the afloat reserve on 8 August at Vandegrift's request. This meant that the transports would not depart for the Santa Cruz landings that evening as originally planned, though Fletcher was unaware of this decision. Turner called Vandegrift and British Rear Admiral Victor Crutchley, who commanded the Amphibious Force's six heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, and 15 destroyers screening the transports and cargo ships, to a conference that night to discuss his tentative decision to withdraw all of his ships the next day. They discussed

1 Robert C. Rubel, "Deconstructing Nimitz's Principle of Calculated Risk: Lessons for Today," *Naval War College Review* 68, No. 1 (Winter 2015): 1–16.

2 Richard B. Frank, *Guadalcanal* (New York: Random House, 1990), 59–82, 89–94; George Carroll Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer: The Story of Richmond Kelly Turner* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1972), 384–85.

sighting reports by Australian Air Force bombers of a Japanese naval force, misidentified as three cruisers and a seaplane tender, moving southeast from Rabaul. Turner and Crutchley judged the force to be bound for an anchorage in the central Solomons, from which it could launch air attacks the next day. Vandegrift, alarmed at the prospect of Turner's departure, asked to check his force on Tulagi before deciding.³

A short time later, the Japanese task force, comprising five heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, and a destroyer under the command of Vice Admiral Gunichi Mikawa, slipped undetected between American destroyer pickets and around the southern side of Savo Island. At 0133, 9 August, it attacked, sinking four heavy cruisers (three U.S. and one Australian) and damaging another American heavy cruiser and two destroyers. Turner's transports and cargo ships, the target of Mikawa's attack, were spared when the Japanese column became disordered as it swung to the north around Savo. Fearing the time needed to reorganize would expose his force to attack by American carrier aircraft at daylight, Mikawa set course for Rabaul, foregoing the opportunity to turn his overwhelming tactical success into a strategic one.⁴

The Battle of Savo Island was the worst open-sea defeat ever suffered by the U.S. Navy. One thousand and seventy-seven American and Australian sailors were killed and 700 wounded. In response, Ghormley approved Fletcher's request to withdraw. Turner lingered until the nightfall on 9 August to recover survivors and unload as many supplies as possible before ordering his remaining force to steam for Nouméa, New Caledonia. He left Vandegrift's Marines with about 17 days of food and substantial ammunition but without the rest of their supplies and many of their heavy weapons.⁵

An official board of inquiry, ordered by Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, convened in December 1942, led by Admiral Arthur Hepburn.

3 Frank, *Guadalcanal*, 94–100; John B. Lundstrom, *Black Shoe Carrier Admiral: Frank Jack Fletcher at Coral Sea, Midway, and Guadalcanal* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2013), 368–83; Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 360–69.

4 Frank, *Guadalcanal*, 102–17; Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Struggle for Guadalcanal, August 1942–February 1943*, History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, vol. V (Boston: Little, Brown, 1949), 17–64; Richard W. Bates and Walter D. Innis, *The Battle of Savo Island: August 9th, 1942, Strategic and Tactical Analysis* (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, 1950).

5 Frank, *Guadalcanal*, 117–20, 124–27.

After personally interviewing as many senior officers as possible, Hepburn compiled a report that concluded, “The primary cause of this defeat must be ascribed generally to the complete surprise achieved by the enemy.”⁶ For this, he attributed a lack of readiness among the Allied ships, communications failures, over reliance on radar, poor air reconnaissance, and the premature withdrawal of carrier support. For the most part, he declined to ascribe individual responsibility. Nimitz and Admiral Ernest J. King, Commander in Chief, U.S. Navy, concurred. Turner blamed “a fatal lethargy of mind which induced a confidence without readiness, and a routine acceptance of outworn peacetime standards of conduct. I believe that this psychological factor as a cause of our defeat was even more important than the element of surprise.”⁷

Subsequent analyses of the battle by analysts and historians have examined the role of senior leadership in the debacle. Leaders who escaped wartime censure were dogged by post-war criticism. As the strategic commander, Ghormley bore accountability for failing to clarify Fletcher’s responsibilities as joint task force commander after declining to assume that role himself. However, it is impossible to determine whether Ghormley’s reticence was due to Nimitz’s proscriptive guidance or to his own shortcomings as a commander. Faulted by many for his seeming lack of aggression, Fletcher claimed vindication through his fealty to Nimitz’s instructions. Both Turner and Crutchley were cited for tactical mistakes that Hepburn characterized as “more or less excusable error[s] of judgement.”⁸

It should also be acknowledged that many of the problems that resulted in the Savo Island disaster stemmed from the highly compressed timeline imposed largely at King’s insistence. With more time to think and plan, perhaps Ghormley could have better prepared Fletcher, and Fletcher and Turner might have found a compromise to their disagreements. Time for

6 Morison, *The Struggle for Guadalcanal*, 61–64.

7 Hepburn’s inquiry censured only Captain Howard Bode, commanding officer of *Chicago* (CA-29); Morison, *The Struggle for Guadalcanal*, 61–64; Frank, *Guadalcanal*, 122–23; Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 359–60.

8 Frank, *Guadalcanal*, 102–17; Morison, *The Struggle for Guadalcanal*, 17–64; John B. Lundstrom, *Black Shoe Carrier Admiral: Frank Jack Fletcher at Coral Sea, Midway, and Guadalcanal* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2006), 329–37; Bates and Innis, *The Battle of Savo Island*, 342–66; Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 355–402.

rehearsal and exercises would have better prepared the force commanders and their ships, but lack of combat experience also played a role. The Navy suffered several more galling defeats in the waters around Guadalcanal before they developed the skills and capabilities to fight the Japanese on equal terms at night.⁹

However vexing, the defeat at Savo Island did not halt the WATCHTOWER counteroffensive. Despite the risks, King had solid reasons for insisting on initiating his South Pacific campaign when he did, and for the manner in which it was undertaken. It yielded strategic and tactical surprise, which permanently forestalled Japanese initiative, and galvanized Allied morale. The ensuing Solomon Islands foothold allowed the United States to effectively attrite Japanese military power over the next several months at the over-extended edge of their logistical capabilities. Yet, King (admittedly with Marshall's concurrence) took a more significant gamble than is usually acknowledged. WATCHTOWER's ultimate success cannot conceal the high level of strategic, operational, and tactical risk the operation carried at all levels. That risk rendered Turner's Amphibious Force vulnerable to counterattack and compounded the consequences of the lack of preparation and readiness. Mikawa certainly enjoyed rare luck in arriving at the most opportune time to take advantage of the Allies' thin margin for error. If the Japanese admiral had simply been more tenacious, he could have inflicted a major strategic reversal on the Allied position in the South Pacific. King's gamble escaped failure at the very outset by sheer chance.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Turner's statement "confidence without readiness" and "acceptance of outworn peacetime standards of conduct" are seemingly at odds with each other. What is the measure of readiness in peacetime? Is it different in conflict? Why must planners understand the difference?
- How can planners proactively think about and work through potential friction points?

9 Frank, *Guadalcanal*, 292–312, 428–518, 577–81; Morison, *The Struggle for Guadalcanal*, 147–68, 225–313, 351–59; Trent Hone, "Give Them Hell!": The U.S. Navy's Night Combat Doctrine and the Campaign for Guadalcanal," *War in History* 13, No. 2 (April 2006): 171–99.

9

Infrastructure and Experience Are Critical to Logistics



“Whatever else it is, so far as the United States is concerned, it is a war of logistics.”

—Admiral Ernest J. King, 23 April 1944



33rd Construction Battalion constructing Quonset hut pilots' quarters on one of the Russell Islands, 10 November 1943 (NHHC 80-G-56521).

Operation WATCHTOWER reinforced to Rear Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner and SOPAC that logistics depends upon the establishment of a logistics infrastructure. The rapidity of the landings at Guadalcanal and Tulagi took place before a logistical network could be constructed on the islands between Nouméa and the west coast (see Chapter 6). Throughout the campaign, the Navy's effort remained ad hoc. Army Air Forces Lieutenant General Henry "Hap" Arnold, who visited SOPAC in September 1942, found the situation so poor he commented "the Navy...was hanging on by a shoestring" and "they did not have a logistic setup efficient enough to insure [sic] success."¹

In the race to capture Guadalcanal before the Japanese could finish an airfield, SOPAC launched the operation before a logistics network had been established in the area. Leaders partially understood this risk; however, Navy logisticians did not have experience to foresee all of the potential problems they were facing. For example, leaders understood that supply posed a problem, but they had little frame of reference for the challenges they would face until they launched the operation. As a participant in WATCHTOWER later noted, "the Navy was unprepared logistically to conduct operations at the end of a 6,000 mile pipe line."²

Before World War II, the U.S. Navy had not had to forward-deploy in a truly contested area or one bereft of logistical infrastructure. The Great White Fleet had sailed around the world, but it coaled at friendly stations along the way. Operations had been brief enough during the Spanish-American War that the fleet had not had to reckon with full-scale resupplies of ordnance. Likewise, the U.S. Navy operating during World War I used well-developed British bases for forward deployment. The Navy had experience projecting force, but it had not ever had to ensure the right material got to the right place in support of full-scale naval combat.³ As one post-war commentator put it, "in the day to day peacetime fleet operations, there were few really large difficult logistical problems demanding

1 George Carroll Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer: The Story of Richmond Kelly Turner* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1972), 413.

2 Commodore Peyton, quoted in Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 433.

3 Duncan S. Ballantine, *U.S. Naval Logistics in the Second World War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947), passim.

command decisions.”⁴ Line officers left logistics largely to the Supply Corps; one Navy logistician, looking back at the Navy before World War II, judged that “the command corps...lacked skill and experience in handling logistical matters on a large scale.”⁵

Navy leaders certainly knew the importance of logistics. Vice Admiral Robert L. Ghormley, Commander South Pacific Area and South Pacific Force (COMSOPAC), for instance, knew that he had to make allowances for increased fuel consumption during combat operations. However, the U.S. Navy was ill prepared to make accurate estimates of requirements without a basis for making theoretical assumptions of projected consumption. To make matters worse, Ghormley lacked trained logisticians to support such planning.⁶ Inadequate shipping to move supplies within theater compounded the problem of getting supplies where they needed to go in the first place.⁷

In June 1942, the logistics apparatus in the South Pacific became partially established. COMSOPAC requested a CUB base from the United States a small advanced base (the proposed movement of a LION, a major all-purpose base was canceled for lack of shipping).⁸ The LION and CUB concepts for pre-fabricated and pre-designed bases had grown from the experience of building the base at Borabora and Efate. The Navy had sent tailor-made packages to those places, but quickly discovered that “detailed planning for specific locations was impractical, because it was not possible to draft the complete plans in sufficient time to permit procurement and shipping.”⁹

The CUB base package was essential for sustainment. Despite operating in the SOPAC theater, the CUB commander took orders direct from Nimitz. This command structure led to control difficulties when local

4 Dyer, *Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 403.

5 Dyer, *Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 403.

6 Worrall Reed Carter, *Beans, Bullets, and Black Oil: The Story of Fleet Logistics Afloat in the Pacific during World War II* (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 1953), 23.

7 ONI Combat Narrative, *Guadalcanal and Tulagi Bases*, 3, WWII Command File-CNO-Intelligence Combat Narratives, National Archives.

8 ONI Combat Narrative, *Movement of Supplies into the Guadalcanal and Tulagi Area, 7 August - 15 November 1942*, 16, WWII Command File-CNO-Intelligence Combat Narratives, National Archives.

9 *Building the Navy's Bases in World War II: History of the Bureau of Yards and Docks and the Civil Engineer Corps, 1941-1946*, Vol. I (Washington, DC: GPO, 1947), 120.

commanders asked for support in addition to his orders to build a small airbase after the August landings at Guadalcanal.¹⁰ At Guadalcanal, competing demands arose, with CUB being pulled between building an airbase and supporting the troops.¹¹ Turner was well aware of the logistics crisis by then. Indeed, for months after the initial landings, Turner remained focused on the many small details of supply, spending perhaps eighty percent of his time on these logistical problems.¹² It was only by November 1942, a full three months after the initial landings, that the supply process was systematized.¹³ Therefore, the movement of logistical support to enable operations and to create an adequate supply pipeline lagged far behind the operational needs because the risk of allowing Japanese entrenchment on Guadalcanal was so large.

Guadalcanal and Tulagi exposed the problems with supplying troops in a contested environment, beyond planning oversights. WATCHTOWER planning had not included plans for either scheduled or automatic resupply.¹⁴ The initial landing forces had not expected the difficulties of moving supplies from ship to shore in a combat situation. As a post-war commentator put it: “The first lesson the amphibians learned at Guadalcanal was that they were going to have to get used to being shot at.”¹⁵ Shore fire and air raids protracted the unloading process. Activity ceased under the threat of air raids; false alarms added offload time. The number of men and small boats for the operation proved insufficient for wartime conditions. To compensate for fewer landing craft, inexperienced crews overloaded the small boats, which grounded and stuck on the beach, exacerbating the landing craft shortage. Without boat repair facilities, landing craft repairs took longer. Once on the beach, supplies began to pile up and create backlogs, as proper beach parties had not been established.¹⁶ The Japanese interfered with regularly scheduled supply times. The lack of naval and air superiority in the theater exposed the already limited shipping to danger.

10 Dyer, *Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 433.

11 Dyer, *Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 425.

12 Carter, *Beans, Bullets, and Black Oil*, 27; Dyer, *Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 404.

13 ONI Combat Narrative, *Movement of Supplies into the Guadalcanal and Tulagi Area*, 7 August - 15 November 1942, 4.

14 Dyer, *Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 433.

15 Dyer, *Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 348.

16 Dyer, *Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 348-53.

There had been no conception of how difficult it would be to sustain the immediate landing of troops at Guadalcanal and Tulagi.

The development of the logistics bases at Guadalcanal and Tulagi, as part of operations—CACTUS and RINGBOLT—introduced Turner and the amphibious forces to operational challenges. The campaign also started the Navy on a path to creating a logistical support system sufficient for the Pacific War, including floating repair docks, repair ships and specialized maintenance units. Aspects of the logistics problem stretched from the means of production to the organization and administration of the continental naval districts to the movement of supplies in theater to the supply of operating forces, and innovations, such as in-theater repair. The Navy would manage to reduce these challenges to a manageable scale, but ad hoc solutions to persistent problems continued until the war ended. Only after the war would logistical planning be put on a solid footing within OPNAV, and from there the Navy worked to rationalize the process and procedures from production to distribution to the end-user. The lesson that Turner saw was that in-theater commanders had to address logistical matters and iteratively improve the situation so far as they could, but that changes had to come from the center in order for there to be lasting change. Due to the unknown unknowns, logistics during wartime require flexibility.¹⁷

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- This chapter details the impact of logistics shortfalls on operations. Chapter 7 discusses the deficiencies in command and control and their operational impacts. What was the key operational function for planners to consider in SOPAC?
- How do you synchronize the operational functions in planning?

¹⁷ Ballantine, *U.S. Naval Logistics*, passim.

10

Learn from Mistakes



“I could always find things I didn’t do or could have done better in any big operation.”

—Richmond Kelly Turner, 1960



Russell Islands Occupation, February 1943. Marine Raiders head ashore from *Sands* (APD-13) on February 23, 1943. They landed without opposition on Pavuvu Island (NHHHC USMC 54768).

Though the initial invasion and occupation of Guadalcanal and Tulagi succeeded, the conduct of the operation revealed weaknesses in American amphibious warfare doctrine. Rear Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner began soliciting recommendations from his command for improving landing techniques on 23 August, just two weeks after the WATCHTOWER landings. These recommendations, combined with those derived from the Operation TORCH landing in North Africa in November, formed the basis for a revised Fleet Training Publication 211 *Ship to Shore Movement*, issued by Admiral Ernest J. King's Office of the Commander in Chief, U.S. Navy, in January 1943.¹

That same month, Turner suggested staging an amphibious landing on the unoccupied Russell Islands, twenty-five miles northwest of Guadalcanal. The intent would be to improve Guadalcanal's defense by seizing an advance base for radar and fighter coverage and motor torpedo boats, as well as a staging point for forthcoming operations in the Solomons. Vice Admiral William Halsey (who had replaced Vice Admiral Robert L. Ghormley as COMSOPAC in October 1942) preferred something on a larger scale, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff remained undecided on the next move in the area. On 29 January 1943, Nimitz approved Halsey's proposal to move immediately to take the Russells as long as they remained undefended by the Japanese. SOPAC issued a warning order on 7 February, an operations order on 12 February, and a plan for Operation CLEANSLATE on 15 February.²

Unlike the previous year, Turner and the SOPAC Amphibious Force staff were ready to prepare and execute CLEANSLATE on a tight schedule. They had several advantages this time, including a functional forward logistics and land-based air support base at Guadalcanal-Tulagi. Turner also now had at his disposal the first twelve Landing Craft, Tank (LCT) vessels deployed to the Pacific theater, specifically designed for amphibious operations, capable of delivering troops, cargo, or armored vehicles directly onto a beach. The availability of the LCTs, air cover, and close

1 George Carroll Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer: The Story of Richmond Kelly Turner* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1972), 457–58.

2 Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 459–60; Louis Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years*, *The U.S. Army in World War II* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, 1962), 370–75.

proximity of the objective permitted the Amphibious Force to plan a shore-to-shore assault. There would be no need to land troops and supplies from large attack transports and cargo ships. The Amphibious Force would conduct the movement entirely with the LCTs, seven destroyers, four destroyer-transport, and four fast minesweepers. The 15,000 strong landing force—including elements of the Army 43rd Infantry Division, Marine 3rd Raider Battalion, Marine 11th Defense Battalion, 35th Naval Construction Battalion, an ACORN air base unit, and naval base personnel—began staging in echelons in transports and cargo ships from Nouméa and Espiritu Santo to Guadalcanal on 11 February.³

Flying his flag in a fast minesweeper, Turner led the first attack wave of 4,000 troops from Guadalcanal to the Russells on 21 February, where they executed landings in three locations at dawn and secured the islands with no resistance. The operation had already achieved complete success before the Japanese reacted with air strikes two weeks later. Over the next two months, the Amphibious Force directed the movement of 12,000 more personnel and 48,517 tons of supplies to the Russells and the construction of an advanced naval and air base. Of CLEANSULATE, Turner reported that the experience gained in shore-to-shore amphibious techniques would prove useful in planning future operations. He also pointed out that successful amphibious operations depended not only on moving and on landing the initial assault force, but also all of the succeeding echelons, sustainment, and replacements, with enough protection to keep losses at an acceptable level, in a single continuous process.⁴

In January, the JCS reaffirmed the agreement that General Douglas MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Area (SWPAC) command would take over strategic direction of the drive up the Solomons to Rabaul, while Halsey retained operational and tactical control over Pacific Fleet units allocated to SOPAC. As CLEANSULATE got underway, Halsey proposed to Nimitz that the next target should be to seize the Japanese airfield on New Georgia Island in April. Nimitz approved and on 3 March, Turner turned over command of CLEANSULATE to begin planning the new operation. A SOPAC-SWPAC conference in March confirmed the New Georgia operation, but

3 Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 458–72.

4 Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 467–74.

MacArthur delayed setting a date for it while he and his staff prepared an overall plan for capturing the Solomons-New Guinea-Rabaul area, designated Operation CARTWHEEL. Halsey did not issue a planning directive for New Georgia, designated Operation TOENAILS, until 17 May, with a target date of 15 June “or shortly thereafter.”⁵

Given time for extended preparations, Turner took advantage of the opportunity to lay a sound logistical foundation for TOENAILS. In January, he recommended to Halsey a buildup of supplies and material in the Guadalcanal-Russells area, which Halsey designated Operation DRYGOODS, and implemented in February. SOPAC logisticians stockpiled 50,000 tons of supplies, 80,000 barrels of gasoline, and tens of thousands of tons of equipment in readiness for TOENAILS. The delay also permitted the arrival in theater of new Landing Ship, Tank (LST) and Landing Craft, Infantry (LCI) amphibious vessels to join the LCTs. The naval and ground forces allocated to TOENAILS began assembling in the Guadalcanal-Russells area the first week in June. Turner conducted no full-scale dress rehearsal, in violation of doctrine, to avoid tipping off the Japanese about the impending operation. The Japanese launched air strikes against the staging area during the first half of June, sinking an LST and an attack cargo ship, but they suffered significant combat losses. They left the SOPAC Amphibious Force unmolested thereafter.⁶

TOENAILS began prematurely on 21 June, when Turner sent fast destroyer-transport to land the 4th Marine Raider Battalion on the western tip of New Georgia to prevent the Japanese from occupying a site where SOPAC intended to build a forward airfield. When this provoked no enemy response, the rest of TOENAILS commenced on schedule on 30 June, with simultaneous landings by the Amphibious Force of elements of the 43rd Infantry Division to occupy anchorages on Vangunu and Rendova Islands, adjacent to New Georgia. While the landing forces quickly seized their objectives against light resistance, fighter cover from the Russells largely repelled a large Japanese air attack. Only one Amphibious Force ship was struck, Turner’s flagship *McCawley* (AP-10), which sustained a torpedo hit and had to be sunk by screening destroyers.

5 Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 473, 481–98.

6 Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 499–501, 512–13.

On 2 July, the Amphibious Force began landing a regiment of the 43rd Division on the southeast coast of New Georgia, followed two days later by an assault on the northeast coast by the 1st Marine Raider Battalion and other Army units. These two columns became bogged down as they advanced on Munda airfield against stiff Japanese resistance. As his landing ships and boats continued to ferry follow-on echelons, support elements, and supplies, Turner recommended to Halsey and the Army commanders that they make a change in the ground force command organization to reinvigorate the operation. Before a decision was reached, however, Halsey relieved him on 15 July, to honor a previous request from Nimitz to send Turner to Pearl Harbor to take command of the amphibious force preparing for the forthcoming offensive in the Central Pacific.⁷

TOENAILS once again validated the shore-to-shore amphibious assault concept, as well as the importance of plentiful logistical support forward. The new landing craft and ships also demonstrated their worth, although there were still not enough of them to provide a safe margin for losses. TOENAILS also demonstrated certain characteristics that distinguished Pacific theater amphibious operations. Turner preferred daylight landings to night operations, and he sought to land forces on undefended beaches as opposed to fortified ones wherever possible. The capture of toeholds on islands and anchorages near the main objective also increasingly figured into planning. Turner carried all of these lessons on to his new command.⁸

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What lessons observed did Turner apply to Operations Cleanslate and Toenails?
- What lessons from Turner in the South Pacific are applicable today?

7 Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 533–49; Morton, *Strategy and Command*, 504–07.

8 Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 587–92.

**Epilogue:
From the Gilberts to the Defeat of Japan**



“Kelly Turner was a Fighting Admiral.”

—Admiral Chester Nimitz, 1961

In August 1943, Turner reported for duty in Pearl Harbor dual-hatted as Commander, Amphibious Forces, Central Pacific, and, as Commander, Fifth Amphibious Force, assigned to Vice Admiral Raymond Spruance's Central Pacific Force (soon renamed Fifth Fleet). Spruance had asked Nimitz specifically for Turner's services to help plan and lead the long-anticipated offensive into the Central Pacific. Promoted to vice admiral in March 1944 at Nimitz's recommendation, Turner took command of Amphibious Forces, Pacific Fleet, in addition to Fifth Amphibious Force. In May 1945, he was advanced to the rank of admiral.⁹ Between 1943 and 1945, he directed six consecutive, fully successful, amphibious assault operations:

- GALVANIC – Gilbert Islands, November 1943
- FLINTLOCK – Marshall Islands, January–February 1944
- CATCHPOLE – Eniwetok Atoll, February 1944
- FORAGER – Marianas Islands, June–August 1944
- DETACHMENT – Iwo Jima Island, February 1945
- ICEBERG – Okinawa Island, March–July 1945

Turner and Spruance proved to be ideal partners, working together to develop a signature style of ship-to-shore amphibious doctrine and techniques. In contrast with WATCHTOWER, Spruance commanded the Fifth Fleet task forces at sea and maintained operational control over landing operations to coordinate responses to potential enemy surface or air counterattacks. Turner resolved a bone of contention with the Marines by agreeing to delegate responsibility for determining when to transfer command of the landing operations to the landing force commander on shore. He and Spruance concurred that responsibilities for follow-on defense and base construction activities were to be defined before an operation and that the fleet commander would determine when the changeover would occur with the landing forces. Turner also took over Pacific Fleet amphibious doctrine by preparing and updating *Tactical Orders, Amphibious Forces, Pacific Fleet and Current Doctrine for Amphibious Forces, Pacific Fleet*.¹⁰

9 George Carroll Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer: The Story of Richmond Kelly Turner* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1972), 598–99, 846–49, 1107–08.

10 Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 630–32, 636–37, 861.

Turner arranged for the amphibious force commander, the landing force commander, and their staffs to be in physical proximity for the planning phase when possible, particularly for newly appointed leaders and new staffs. When preparation time was short, planning would be done concurrently at all levels. Though difficult for lower level staffs, this allowed any problems to be uncovered and addressed before planning at the higher levels became embedded into orders. In November 1943, Turner created a Special Planning Staff for Fifth Amphibious Force. Based in Pearl Harbor, its mission was to conduct advance planning for future operations while the Amphibious Force staff conducted current operations. This ultimately effort proved unsatisfactory as the work the Special Planning Staff did had to be redone on the basis of lessons learned by the Amphibious Force staff from their most recent experience.¹¹

These updated doctrinal concepts were first put to the test during Operation GALVANIC. Tarawa proved to be the most heavily defended atoll invaded by Allied forces in the Pacific during World War II with beaches better protected against amphibious assault than those encountered in any other theater of war, with the possible exception of Iwo Jima. The intense battle convinced Turner that future amphibious operations needed far greater firepower support.¹² In his report on GALVANIC, he recommended, “Far more attention should be paid to the destruction of enemy defenses before landings are attempted.”¹³ He suggested weeks of preliminary air strikes and several days of deliberate naval bombardment. Per the Navy’s request, U.S. Army Air Force bombers in the South Pacific attacked Japanese air bases in the Gilbert and Marshall islands to suppress enemy airpower that might be used to attack the amphibious forces. Turner greatly emphasized coordinating tactical and strategic air support during landing operations for his amphibious forces and Navy and Army Air Force commands working with them. His efforts to strike the most

11 Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 619–20, 623–24, 981.

12 Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 644–45; Philip A. Crowl and Edmund G. Love, *Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls*, *The US Army in World War II* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1955), 74

13 Commander, Fifth Amphibious Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet to the Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet, Re: Report of Amphibious Operations for the Capture of the Gilbert Islands, 4 December 1943, RG 38 World War II War Diaries, Other Operational Records and Histories, NARA, 144.

effective balance between local direction and joint airpower operations continued through the end of the war.¹⁴

As with WATCHTOWER, CLEANSLATE and TOENAILS, the operational situation precluded full-scale dress rehearsals for GALVANIC or FLINTLOCK.¹⁵ Following FLINTLOCK, Turner reemphasized the importance of complete rehearsals and follow-on critiques: “Careful and detailed rehearsals of scheduled attacks against defended positions are considered to be a most important feature of the preparation of assault forces for amphibious operations... The final rehearsal period in this, as in previous operations, was too short.”¹⁶ After the war, Nimitz remarked, “[Turner’s] insistence on rehearsals was a major factor in his success.”¹⁷ This led to five days of full-scale rehearsals for FORAGER in May 1944, eight days for DETACHMENT in January 1945, and approximately a week for the dispersed ICEBERG landing forces in March 1945.¹⁸

Turner’s efforts paid off handsomely as his amphibious forces spearheaded Spruance’s Central Pacific drive through the Marshalls to the Marianas in 1944. The capabilities of the Fifth Amphibious Group staff had progressed to the point by February that plans for Operation CATCHPOLE were completed less than a week after receiving the order to do so from Nimitz, all while Turner’s forces were finishing up FLINTLOCK. Following the successful occupation of Saipan, Tinian, and Guam in September 1944, Turner returned to Pearl Harbor while Nimitz placed the Pacific Fleet’s striking forces under Halsey’s Third Fleet to support MacArthur’s invasion of the Philippines beginning in October. Turner’s Amphibious Forces, Pacific Fleet, staff had grown five times larger than the one he had for WATCHTOWER. Planning for landings on Iwo Jima and Okinawa took place concurrently in late 1944, with two separate landing force organizations.¹⁹

The Pacific Fleet’s amphibious operations had grown to such a size and scope that by the time of Operation DETACHMENT in February 1945,

14 Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 1057–58.

15 Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 637–38, 731.

16 Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 843.

17 Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 853.

18 Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 844, 853, 892–93, 1006–08, 1082–83.

19 Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 827–30, 983.

Turner delegated tactical command of the assault to his second-in-command, Rear Admiral Harry W. Hill. Hill had earned Turner's trust while serving as his key subordinate since GALVANIC. Turner's WATCHTOWER amphibious task force had 51 ships. Fifth Amphibious Force numbered 495 ships for DETACHMENT and 1,213 for ICEBERG. Amphibious Forces, Pacific Fleet, had grown to 657,000 officers and sailors by March 1945. Operation Iceberg in April 1945, which involved landing the entire U.S. 10th Army—comprising one Army corps, one Marine corps, and attached auxiliary forces—constituted the largest amphibious operation to be undertaken in the Central Pacific Ocean area.²⁰

Nimitz relieved Turner of his role in ICEBERG in May 1945 to allow him and his staff to begin preparing for the projected invasion of the Japanese home islands, known as Operation DOWNFALL.²¹ Later that month, Turner received promotion to full admiral. In June, he proceeded to Manila to coordinate joint Army-Navy planning for the first stage of DOWNFALL, an amphibious landing on Kyushu, designated Operation OLYMPIC, scheduled for November. However, combat operations ceased on 15 August following the atomic bomb attacks, and Turner joined Nimitz in Tokyo for Japan's formal surrender on 2 September. He turned over command of Amphibious Forces, Pacific Fleet, to his successor in October.²² Upon Turner's return to Hawaii, Nimitz greeted him with a simple message: "A hearty welcome to PEARL and a 'Well Done' to the man who not only knew how, but did."²³ Following a tour serving with the new United Nations organization, Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner retired from service in 1947.²⁴

20 Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 983, 998, 1005, 1063–64.

21 For considerations of how the experience of the last year of war in the Pacific shaped plans for the invasion of the Japanese home islands, see D. M. Giangreco, *Hell to Pay: Operation DOWNFALL and the Invasion of Japan, 1945–1947*, rev. ed. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2017); Marc S. Galicchio and Waldo H. Heinrichs, *Implacable Foes: War in the Pacific 1944–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

22 Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 1106, 1107–08.

23 Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 1116.

24 Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 1115–17, 1135–36.

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