
The Round Tablette

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Welcome to the first March meeting of the Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table. Tonight's speaker is Adrian Martin, who co-authored *Operation Plum* with Dr. Larry Stephenson and wrote *Brothers from Bataan*. He will be joined with veterans from the 27th Bombardment Group (27th BG) and Philippine defense veterans.

Throughout the first third of the twentieth century American strategic military planning in the Pacific focused on the Japanese Empire. Before World War I, US plans rested on the "color" plans: black for Germany, red for Great Britain, green for Mexico, and orange for Japan. The "Orange" plan called for an "offensive war primarily naval in character" where there would be the meeting of two great battle fleets. During the 1930s, the plans were revised to a "Rainbow" plan because of the increased international tensions between the United States and Germany, Italy, and Japan. In January 1941, the American and British general staffs met and decided that in the event of war with those three countries, the main efforts would be made in the Atlantic first with Germany and Italy. The "Rainbow" plan for the Pacific changed from an offensive war to a defensive one.

The Japanese had plans of their own; for decades they planned for a Pacific war against the United States. Before World War I, the Japanese Imperial Navy planned on seizing control of the Philippines and Guam and destroying the US fleet as it crossed the Pacific to come to the rescue. Training to this plan, the Japanese gained great expertise in night fighting and carrier aviation and operations, trained to function in all weather, and developed some of the best submarines and torpedoes available before 1942. What their plans lacked was clear strategic goals that meshed with their available military, naval, economic, and other resources.

In late 1941, the Japanese army and navy finalized their operational plans. They had already taken Manchuria, Korea, China and French Indo-China, and with these strongholds they planned simultaneous attacks on Malaya, the Philippines, and the Dutch East Indies, and launch an offensive into Burma. Then they planned to cut American lines of communication across the Pacific by capturing Wake Island and Guam. The Japanese hoped the United States would respond by sending its naval fleet into the central Pacific and so the Japanese navy could destroy the fleet close to the home islands. However, Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku insisted on a change in plans; his carriers would cross the northern Pacific and attack Pearl Harbor. They hoped to destroy enough of the American fleet, particularly the carriers, to gain time, so Japanese forces could consolidate their power to maintain a barrier to the inevitable American counter-attack.

Many American planners doubted the Philippines could be defended, but on July 26, 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt froze all Japanese assets within the US and the War Department created the US Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE). Roosevelt also recalled General Douglas MacArthur out of retirement to command American and Philippine Forces on the archipelago.

Part of the reinforcements sent to the Philippines was the 27th BG. Formed in 1940, the 27th BG trained at the Barksdale Airfield near Shreveport, Louisiana. When training was completed in late 1941, personnel and planes were shipped separately. Arriving in Manila on November 20, 1941, personnel had nothing to fly. The convoy with planes, equipment, and aviation fuel left San Francisco on November 14, 1941, stopped at Honolulu, and was in the middle of the Pacific when Pearl Harbor was attacked at which time the convoy was diverted to Brisbane, Australia.

Defending the Philippines depended on the Asiatic Fleet, the USAFFE, about 140 aircraft, 31,000 American and Filipino regulars, and 100,000 Filipino conscripts and Douglas MacArthur. Among the

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reinforcements sent to the Islands were the 192nd and 194th Tank Battalions from the Wisconsin and Minnesota National Guards. None of these proved adequate to halt the Japanese invasion. Even, though forces in the Philippines knew of the events at Pearl Harbor, once again the majority of the bombers and fighter planes were destroyed on the ground from a bombing attack on December 8th. MacArthur could not stop the Japanese invasion of both northern and southern Luzon. He ordered his forces into battle, but they were outmatched by the larger, better trained Japanese. MacArthur finally ordered a retreat to the Bataan peninsula abandoning food, supplies, and munitions. He set up command and governmental headquarters on Corregidor. By April 1942, MacArthur had relinquished command to Lieutenant General Jonathan Wainwright, while disease, malnutrition, and ammunition shortages sealed the fate of those remaining. Wainwright surrendered in early May 1942.

The 27th BG remained on the Philippines at the time of the Japanese invasion and fought as infantrymen. Some pilots and mechanics were flown to Australia to assemble their planes from the convoy. More pilots were able to escape from Corregidor in January 1942 and the remnants of the 27th engaged the Japanese over Indonesia. In March 1942 what was left of the 27th BG was absorbed into the 3rd Bomber group. Of the 1209 men who arrived on the Philippines only 20 returned to the United States a year later.

The opening salvo of the war in the Pacific was a monumental success for the Japanese. From Pearl Harbor in December 1941 to the Battle of Midway in June 1942, the Japanese defeated the US armed forces conducting an Asian version of “*Blitzkrieg*.” They gained almost all their objectives at minimal cost. However, their victories awoke the sleeping giant and rallied US public support to victory.

Further Reading:

Adrian R. Martin & Dr. Larry Stephenson, MD, *Operation PLUM: The Ill-Fated 27th Bombardment Group and the Fight for the Western Pacific* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2010).
 William Bartsch, *Everyday a Nightmare: American Pursuit Pilots in the Defense of Java, 1941-1942* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2010).

Glen Williford, *Racing the Sunrise: The Reinforcement of America’s Pacific Outposts, 1941-1942* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2010).

William Bartsch, *Doomed at the Start: American Pursuit Pilots in the Philippines, 1941-1942* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1995).

William Bartsch, *December 8, 1941: MacArthur’s Pearl Harbor* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2003).

Announcements:

Twin Cities Civil War Round Table - Mar. 20, 2012 Age of Lincoln www.tccwrt.com - 612-724-3849

St Croix Valley Civil War Round Table - Mar. 26, 2012 First Manassas - Steve Anderson - 715-386-1268

Rochester WWII History Round Table – Mar. 12, 2012 Luther Col. Goes to War, 507-280-9970; www.wv2roundtable-rochester.org

Minnesota Military Museum, Camp Ripley, 15000 Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345, 320-616-6050, <http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/>

Air Show - Eden Prairie - July, 14-15, 2012; <http://www.airexpo-mn.org/> - 952-746-6100

Honor Flight - Jerry Kyser - crazyjerry45@hotmail.com - 651-338-2717

CAF - Commemorative Air Force - www.cafmn.org or Bill at 952-201-8400

Minnesota Air Guard Museum - www.mnangmuseum.org 612-713-2523

Friends of Ft. Snelling, www.fortsnelling.com

TUSKEGEE AIRMAN Mjr. Joseph Gomer – Galaxie Library in Apple Valley, MN - 11 AM Sat. 25 Feb. www.dakotacounty.us/library

Round Table Schedule 2011-2012

2012

Mar 22 Japan’s Mistake: Starting the War
 Apr 12 Jedburgs-Jumping Behind Enemy Lines
 May 10 Battle of Leyte Gulf

If you are a veteran, or know a veteran, of one of these campaigns – contact Don Patton coldpatton@yahoo.com

This is our 25th Year!



POW participants of Bataan Death March.
 Courtesy Gen. Douglas MacArthur Foundation

If you liked tonight’s program, view our prior programs [Fall of the Philippines](#) in Feb. 1998 or [Pearl Harbor of the Philippines](#) in Dec. 2004. You may order these tonight for delivery next month by seeing Rob at the desk, or online at: www.barros.us/online-store.cfm or contact Rob at (763) 639-3399