

The Round Tablette

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Welcome to the September meeting of the Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table. Tonight's speaker is LTC Sharon Tosi Lacey, author of *Pacific Blitzkrieg: World War II in the Central Pacific*. She is joined by veterans of the Pacific landing operations who will discuss their experiences.

Knocked on its heels by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States entered the war with a lot of war plans but no overarching strategic protocol. President Roosevelt's "Germany First" policy flew in the face of both the American people's anger at Japan, and strategic realities. An invasion of the European continent could not occur until 1943 at the earliest, and the Japanese were not going to wait for the Americans. If we wanted to stop the Japanese, we had to do it quickly, with a **combined effort**. † US Naval victories at Midway and the Coral Sea, that kept the sea lines of communication and supply open to Australia, were the base for offensives against Japan. † *Combined effort/operations - land, sea, and/or air operating as a team. Necessitated in the Pacific Ocean theaters by geographic realities.*

American forces in the Pacific took up the *blitzkrieg* concept traditionally associated with the European Theater, especially the German offensives of 1940. *Blitzkrieg*, "lightning war", on a strategic level came to mean a series of short decisive battles to defeat the enemy before they could recover, while on a tactical level the word evolved to mean a fast-moving combined of infantry, armor, and aircraft to overwhelm an enemy. Uniting the speed of attack transports and fast carrier airpower, land-based aircraft, and powerful light infantry forces, the Americans 'perfected' *blitzkrieg* warfare in their assault on the Japanese Empire.

Combined arms* warfare is very complicated in practice, especially when it involved two tradition bound services: the US Marine Corps and the US Army. Working together in the 2nd Division in World War I gave Marines more familiarity with the army than the army retained of them. After the war the two services' missions diverged. The Marines remained a light infantry

focused on amphibious operations and became an elite force. The Army mechanization into a heavy infantry force. Fortunately, Marine doctrine favored the Pacific realities while army doctrine better fit Europe's realities. **Different from today's meaning of multinational cooperation; it is roughly today's "joint operations."*

Command personalities sometimes interfered with the overall mission of combined forces. The best example of this was the Smith-Smith controversy. Marine Corps General Holland M. "Howling Mad" Smith (considered to be the father of amphibious warfare) was one of the most polarizing commanders in the Pacific. Charged with the training of army personnel for amphibious operations, he held anyone not a Marine in contempt and gave little praise to any "doggy." Obvious at Guadalcanal, Smith's attitude came to a head at Saipan when he removed Army General Ralph Smith, from command of the 27th Division, claiming that he was a "weak officer, incapable of handling men under his command." Ralph Smith had won two Silver Stars in World War I and knew combat command, and his men respected him. While accusing the 27th Division of a lack of fighting spirit, Holland Smith excused same behavior by Marine units as battle fatigue.

However disparate their styles might be, the American forces quickly learned to work together to achieve their common goal of defeating the Japanese. Perhaps the singular beauty of the Pacific operations, certainly the key to the successful American military leadership, was their ability to learn from each battle and build on it. Some might say that the essence of great leadership is not merely audacity but also a willingness to learn and to adapt to the circumstances present on the battlefield.

The "island hopping" strategy of central Pacific made adaptation to geography essential. Marines refined the amphibious landing techniques that both the Corps and the army used under the umbrella of air superiority and close air support to gain the lodgment base for land operations. Repeated island to island, tactical and logistical lessons had to be rapidly implemented as the forces prepared for the next invasion. The result was an effective *blitzkrieg* strategy that overwhelmed the Japanese.

If you are a veteran, or know a veteran, of one of these campaigns – contact Don Patton at cell 612-867-5144 or coldpatton@yahoo.com

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The first test of combined operations was Guadalcanal, which brought together all aspects land, sea, and air power. Often times hanging on by a thread, American forces defeated the Japanese, while both sides fought the true enemy — malaria. Both the 1st MARDIV and the army follow-on forces suffered from a lack of training before landing on Guadalcanal, but learned quickly in the crucible of combat. All major Pacific Ocean operations (to include MacArthur's) were combined operations. Each built on the previous battles' mistakes and successes, culminating in a synchronicity exhibited in OPERATION ICEBERG (the battle for Okinawa).

Combined [JOINT] operations uniting land, naval, and air forces are a given in the present day. Despite inter-service "ribbing" and rivalry, the services understand that unity is the key to strategic defense and offense..

Further Readings:

Sharon Tosi Lacey, *Pacific Blitzkrieg: World War II in the Central Pacific* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2013).
Alan Rems, *South Pacific Cauldron* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2014).
Joseph H. Alexander, *Storm Landings: Epic Amphibious Battles in the Central Pacific* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1997).
Eric Bergerud, *Touched by Fire: The Land War in the South Pacific* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996).
Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle against the Sun: The American War with Japan* (New York: Random House, 1985).
John Costello, *The Pacific War, 1941-1945* (New York: Atlantic Communications, 1981).
William B. Hopkins, *The Pacific War: The Strategy, Politics, and Players that Won the War* (Minneapolis, MN: Zenith Press, 2008).
Patrick O'Donnell, *Into the Rising Sun: In their Own Words, World War II's Pacific Veterans Reveal the Heart of Combat* (New York: Free Press, 2002).

Announcements:

Twin Cities Civil War Round Table -
Oct. 20, 2015 – Corinth - www.tccwrt.com -
info@tccwrt.com - NEW PLACE
St Croix Valley Civil War Round Table - Sept. 28,
2015 – Appomatox - 715-386-1268 –
rossandhaines@comcast.net
Rochester WWII History Round Table –
507-280-9970; www.w2roundtable-rochester.org
Minnesota Military Museum, Camp Ripley, 15000
Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345, 320-616-6050,
<http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/>
Honor Flight - Jerry Kyser - crazyjerry45@hotmail.com - 651-338-2717
CAF - Commemorative Air Force - www.cafm-n.org 651-455-6942
Minnesota Air Guard Museum - www.mnangmuseum.org 612-713-2523
Friends of Ft. Snelling, www.fortsnelling.org
Fagen Fighters WWII Museum, Granite Falls, MN,
320-564-6644, <http://www.fagenfighterswwiimuseum.org>.
World Without Genocide, 651-695-7621, <http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/>

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Airshow - Eden Prairie - July 2016
www.wotn.org 952-746-6100
Fort Snelling Civil War Weekend, Aug. 2016
Military History Book Club, Har Mar Barnes &
Noble: 23 Sept. Porch, *Conquest of Morocco* -
sdaubenspeck52@gmail.com

We need volunteers to drive our veterans to and from meetings. Please contact Don Patton at cell 612-867-5144 or coldpatton@yahoo.com

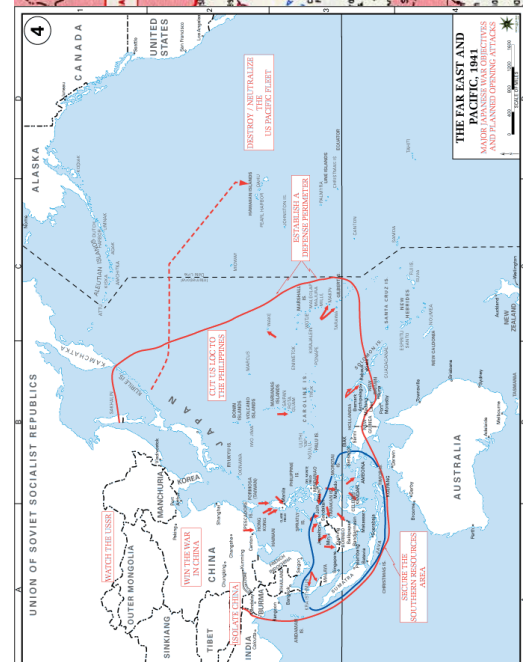
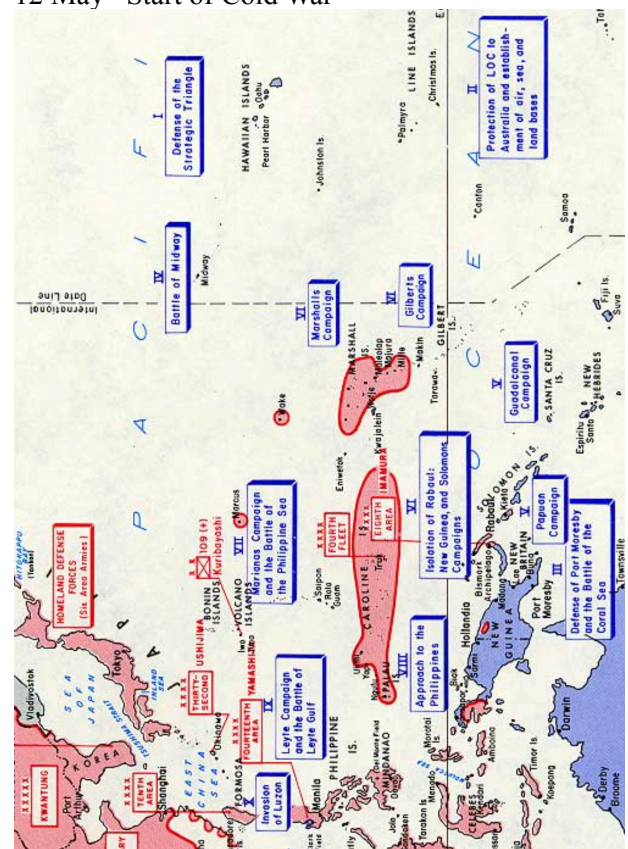
Round Table Schedule 2015-2016

2015

8 Oct. American Warlords
22 Oct. Seals of WWII
12 Nov. War Crimes Trials
10 Dec. Carrier Operations in Pacific

2016

14 Jan. German-Russians Operations
11 Feb. Liberation of Concentration Camps
10 Mar. Mobilization for War
24 Mar. Birth of New Age of War
14 Apr. Operation Dragoon/Anvil
12 May Start of Cold War



See our programs on YouTube at <http://youtube.com/w2hrt>