
The Round Tablette

Founding Editor: James W. Gerber, MD (1951–2009)

© Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table 2020 All Rights Reserved.

Tuesday, 12 October 2021
35:02 Volume 35 Number 2
Published by WWII History Round Table
Written by Dr. Connie Harris
www.mn-ww2roundtable.org

Welcome to the first October 2021 session of the Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table. Tonight's speaker is Ian Toll, author of the three-volume naval history of the Pacific: *Pacific Crucible*; *The Conquering Tide*; and *Twilight of the Gods*. He will be joined by veterans of the Pacific Theater who will tell their stories of the operations of US forces in the many naval campaigns in the Pacific ocean area.

Although not the most glamorous of topics, logistics was the key element to victory in World War II. **Logistics** (properly defined) is *the aspect of military science dealing with the procurement, maintenance, and transportation of military matériel, facilities, and personnel*. Nowhere was the importance of logistics more critical to warfare than in the Pacific Theater, where strategy was constrained by vast distances, advanced bases, and logistics. Both the Allies and the Japanese had to contend with logistical problems. The Japanese had to rely on sea lanes for communication and its merchant fleet to gain the raw materials it needed to build its military forces. Unlike the Japanese, the United States industrial potential was massive and safe from the enemy. The biggest problem US military planners had was the ways and means to supply the forces in over this massive area.

Geographically the Pacific Theater was the largest theater of the war covering a third of the Earth's surface. In order to better understand the Pacific Theater's immense size it is important to indulge in some numbers. The distance from New York City to Los Angeles (LA), California is 2451 miles, and the distance from LA to Honolulu Hawaii is 2600 miles. To go from LA to Manila Philippines is almost three times the distance of New York to LA.(7292 miles) Even the distance from Honolulu to Manila is twice the distance of New York to LA.(5296 miles) The distance from LA to Tokyo is 5477 miles and the distance from Manila to Tokyo is 1662 miles.

The vast distances only provide a glimpse into the daunting logistical task. Distance and time proved to be an almost implacable enemy. The average time for a ship to go from LA to Honolulu was 14 days.

For the ship to then go on to Manila it would be another two and a half months, this was approximately the same time to from Honolulu to Sydney, Australia. In contrast, the time it took to travel from New York City to London was 15 days. While the numbers sound large but relatively benign, they fail to consider the prowling enemy forces intent on destroying the supply ships. Over 2287 ships were sunk in the Pacific Theater, and the US Merchant Marine took the highest number of casualties of any service in World War II.

When the US entered the war after Pearl Harbor, there were four commands in the Pacific, one army and one navy respectively at Hawaii and in the Philippines, and all four operated independently. The Pacific Theatre was "naturally" a navy domain because it was mostly water, but General Douglas MacArthur's presence in Australia after the fall of the Philippines made things more problematic. The navy opposed MacArthur's overall command of the Pacific, and it was finally decided that Admiral Chester Nimitz would be made Commander in Chief of the Pacific Ocean area with MacArthur in charge of the Southwest Pacific area.

Not only were there problems with the theater's size and distance and command structures, but also the interservice rivalry between the army, navy, and Marines. In the European Theater the army was the dominant service with the navy playing a supporting role, with anti-submarine operations, amphibious landings, and naval gunfire support. The navy dominated the Pacific theater, especially in the campaign against the Japanese merchant fleet. At the beginning of the war each service had its own logistics system with separate ports of embarkation. Even the Army Air Corps and naval Aviation had their own systems for procurement and supply. Most logistic and supply matters were handled by the individual services, and neither service wanted to give up their power. One plan provided that the army would supply the rations to shore while the navy would provide all fuel. The army provided the Marine Corps with supplies unless there were items unique to the Marine Corps. It would take almost three years before the coordination of logistics was realized.

Even though there were turf wars over which service carried the supplies, each service agreed on the need for ice cream. Great Britain under wartime rationing banned ice cream, but the US did not, seeing it as a symbol of the home front and therefore a

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

morale booster for the troops. The importance of ice cream was clearly evident when the Japanese torpedoed the *USS Lexington* in 1942, sailors raided the freezer for the ice cream filling their helmets and licking them clean before abandoning ship. The Army Air Corps figured out how to make ice cream in the back of B-17's. They would put the mixture in the tail portion and as they flew, the mixture would be constantly mixed. If the air crew completed its mission and made it back alive they would have a tasty treat. The Navy went so far as to create an ice cream barge. In 1945 the Navy bought a ship from the Army Transportation Services and spent a million dollars refurbishing it to be a floating ice cream shop, which cruised around the Pacific making deliveries.

The World War II battles in the Pacific Theater have been etched in the historical records, with names like Corregidor, Rabaul, Guadalcanal, Leyte Gulf, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. They all bring to mind the heroic men who fought them. Behind all those battles and the men who perished are the logistical planning and supply lines to make their efforts successful.

Further Readings:

Ian Toll, *Pacific Crucible: War at Sea in the Pacific 1941-1942* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2012)
 Ian Toll, *The Conquering Tide: War in the Pacific Islands, 1942-1944* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2015)
 Ian Toll, *Twilight of the Gods: War in the Western Pacific, 1944-1945* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2020)
 James Hornfischer, *The Fleet at Flood Tide: America at Total War in the Pacific, 1944-1945* (New York: Bantam Books, 2016).
 William Craig, *The Fall of Japan: The Final Weeks of World War II in the Pacific* (New York: Open Road Media, 2017).
 John C. McManus, *Fire and Fortitude: The US Army in the Pacific War, 1941-1943* (New York: Dutton Caliber, 2019).
 Peter Schrivers, *Bloody Pacific: American Soldiers at War with Japan*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

Announcements:

Vietnam War Roundtable – **TBD**
 Post-9/11 Roundtable (zoom) – **TDB** –
 World War I Roundtable (zoom) – 13 OCT. 2021 –
 All: – rdietrich@mnmilitarymuseum.org
 Twin Cities Civil War Round Table – 19 Oct. 2021 –
Bleeding Kansas - www.tccwrt.com - info@tccwrt.com
 St. Croix Valley Civil War Round Table – 28 Oct. 2021 – *Second Day at Gettysburg* - 715-386-1268 -
rossandhaines@comcast.net
 Military History Book Club, Har Mar Barnes & Noble
 - TBD - sdaubenspeck52@gmail.com
 Minnesota Military Museum, Camp Ripley, 15000
 Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345 - 320-616-6050 -
<http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/>
 Minnesota Air Guard Museum - 612-713-2523 -
www.mnangmuseum.org
 8th AF Historical Society of MN, KC Hall

Bloomington, Wednesdays at 1130 -
<https://www.8thmn.org>.
 Friends of Ft. Snelling - www.fortsnelling.org
 World Without Genocide - 651-695-7621 -
<http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/>
 Fagen Fighters WWII Museum, Granite Falls, MN -
 Air show - 2022 - 320-564-6644 -
<http://www.fagenfighterswwiimuseum.org>.
 Alliance Francaise 612-332-0436 - www.afmsp.org
 Selim Center for Lifelong Learning, UST,
<https://www.stthomas.edu/selimcenter/>
 Western Naval Historical Association
info@wnha.net
 Honor Flight - Jerry Kyser - 651-338-2717 -
crazyjerry45@hotmail.com
 CAF - Commemorative Air Force - 651-455-6942 -
www.cafmn.org

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 2021-2022

26 Oct. Reinforcing the Philippines
 9 Nov. Deutsch Lecture – Arcadia Conference
 14 Dec. Pearl Harbor attack
2022
 11 Jan. Patton: the Enigma
 8 Feb. Wake Island
 8 Mar. Nuremburg Trials – Goering
 22 Mar. Florence Finch - Filipino Heroine
 12 Apr. Doolittle Raid
 10 May Last Battle: in the Alps

**The Round Table is a 501.c.3 non-profit.
 We would greatly appreciate your
 supporting the HCDWW2RT.**

<images>