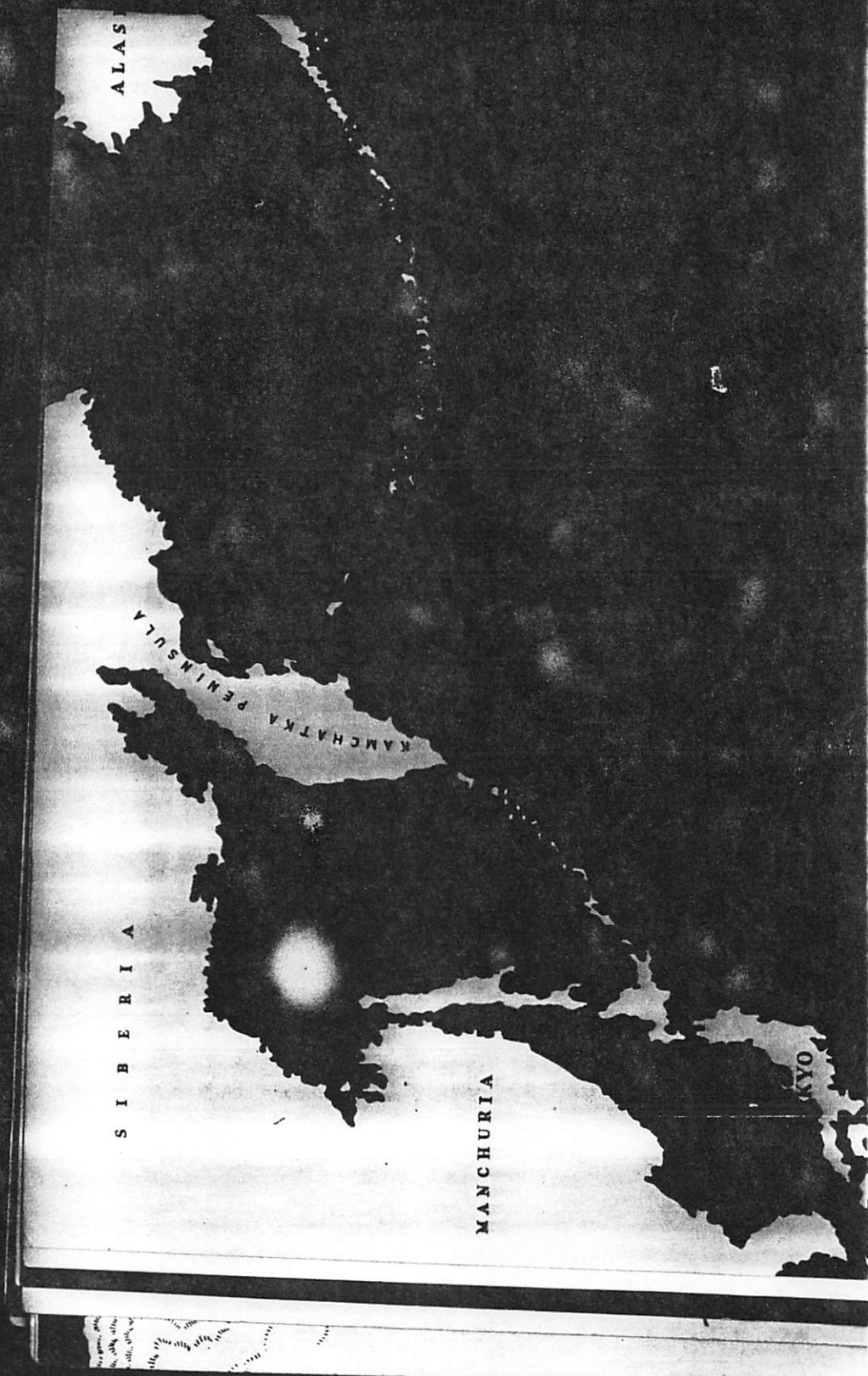


The Battle of the Aleutians...

A GRAPHIC HISTORY

1942-1943





MITSUBISHI S-00 ZERO

Japanese

During World War II it was common practice for aviation writers to refer to the Japanese Mitsubishi S-00 Zero as being overrated, inferior, and a deathtrap for its pilot. None of these statements was true. In its day the Zero was the world's greatest carrier-based fighter and more than equal to anything the United States had to pit against it in combat.

This superiority of the Zero was to continue for many months after the outbreak of war in the Pacific. It outflew and outfought the P-36A Mohawk, P-39 Airacobra, P-40 Tomahawk, and F4F Wildcat. During this period the American pilots learned that it was better to try to get above a formation of Zeros and dive through them with guns blazing, without stopping to give combat.

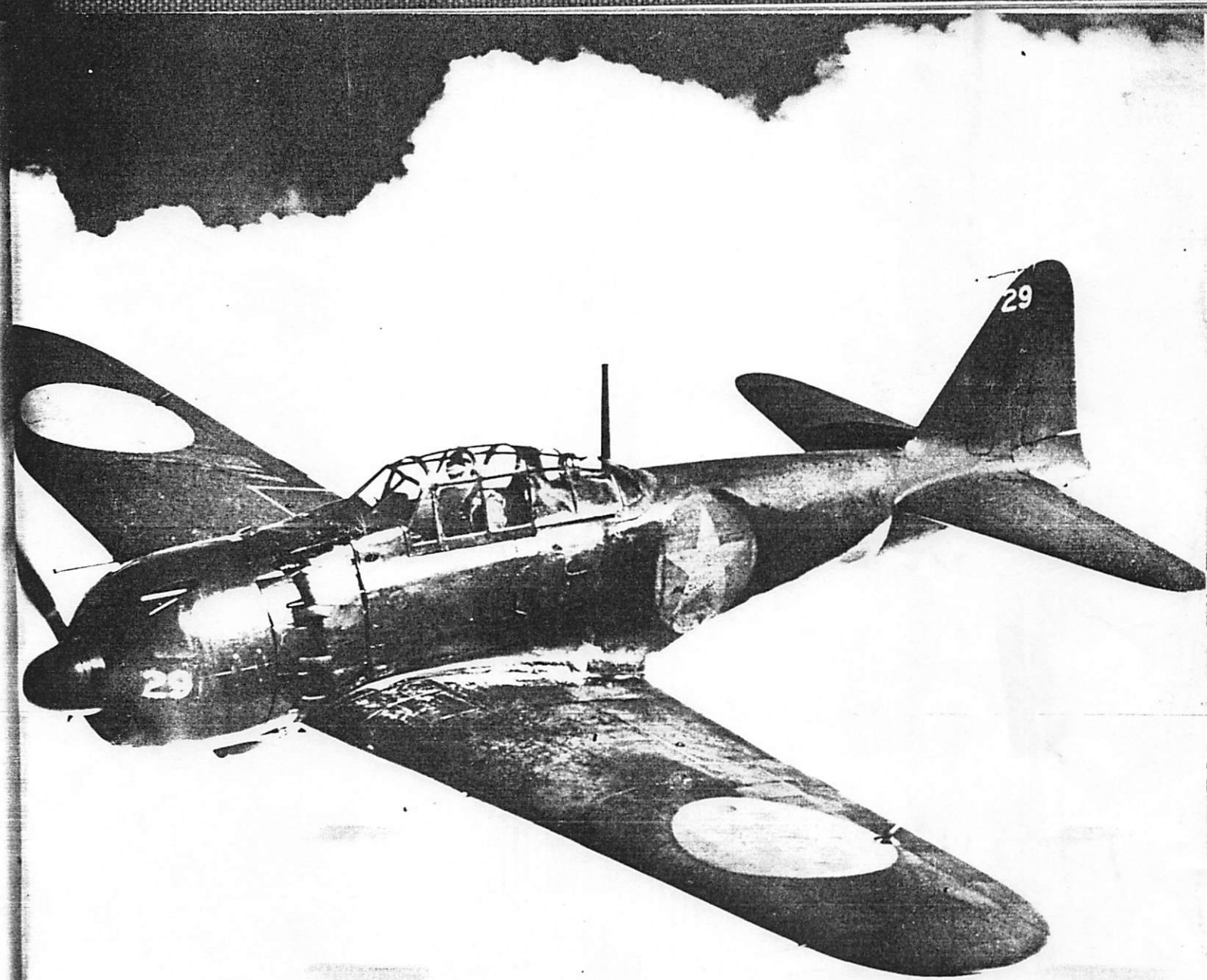
All of Japan's top aces scored the major part of their victories while flying Zeros. The highest-ranking of these was Hiroyoshi Nishizawa, who was credited with no less than 103 confirmed kills. Japan's greatest living ace, Saburo Sakai, who scored sixty-four victories, also used a Zero to shoot down five B-17 Flying Fortresses, according to his own personal story, during a single fight.

The first experimental model of the Zero was completed on March 16, 1939; six months later the plane was accepted by the Japanese Navy and ordered into production. Improvement followed improvement, each of these delaying delivery schedules. By the time of the Pearl Harbor attack, the Japanese Navy had less than 500 Zeros in active service. Before the last shot was fired in the war, 10,938 Zeros had been delivered.

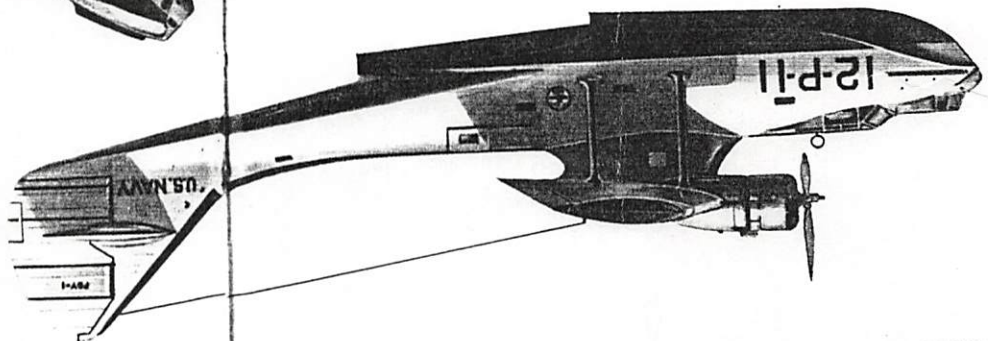
While the Zero was once the greatest fighter of its type, development did not continue rapidly enough. By 1943, the newer Allied airplanes were able to run rings around the once-deadly enemy, shooting it down in wholesale numbers.

The best armament arrangement on any production Zero consisted of two 20-millimeter cannon and four machine guns. A single 550-pound bomb could also be slung under the fuselage for dive-bombing missions.

Other data (Model 53C): Wing span, 36 feet 1 inch; length, 29 feet 9 inches; engine, 1,120-h.p. air-cooled radial Nakajima Sakae; loaded weight, 6,026 pounds; maximum speed, 346 m.p.h.; service ceiling, 35,100 feet.



CONSOLIDATED PBV and CATALINA (U.S.A.)

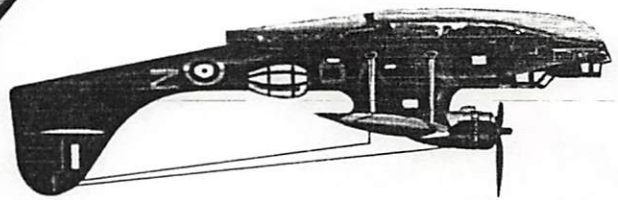


46

Consolidated PBV-1 of US Navy Squadron VP-12, Patrol Wing 1, ca 1937. Engines: Two 900 h.p. Pratt & Whitney R-1830-64 Twin Wasp fourteen-cylinder radials. Span: 104 ft 0 in. (31.70 m.). Length: 65 ft 13 in. (19.86 m.). Wing area: 1,400 sq. ft. (130.06 sq. m.). Maximum take-off weight: 28,447 lb. (12,904 kg.). Maximum speed: 178 m.p.h. (286 km/hr.) at 8,000 ft. (2,438 m.). Operational ceiling: 20,800 ft. (6,340 m.). Range: 2,115 miles (3,404 km.).

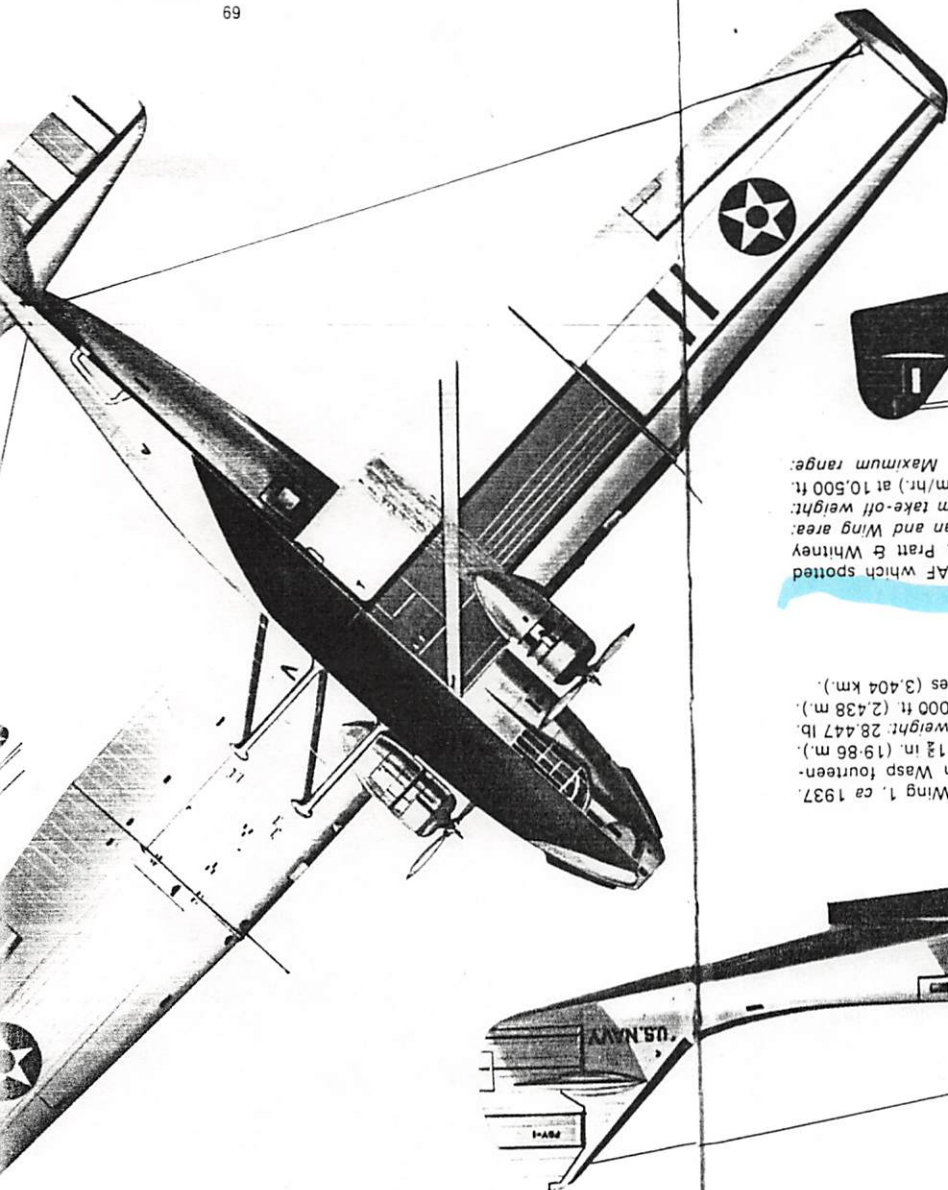
47

Consolidated Catalina I (PBV-5) of No. 209 Squadron RAF which spotted the Bismarck on 26 May 1941. Engines: Two 1,200 h.p. Pratt & Whitney R-1830-S1C3-G Twin Wasp fourteen-cylinder radials. Span and Wing area: as for PBV-1. Length: 63 ft 10 1/2 in. (19.47 m.). Maximum take-off weight: 34,000 lb. (15,422 kg.). Maximum speed: 190 m.p.h. (306 km/hr.) at 10,500 ft. (3,200 m.). Operational ceiling: 24,000 ft. (7,315 m.). Maximum range: 4,000 miles (6,437 km.).



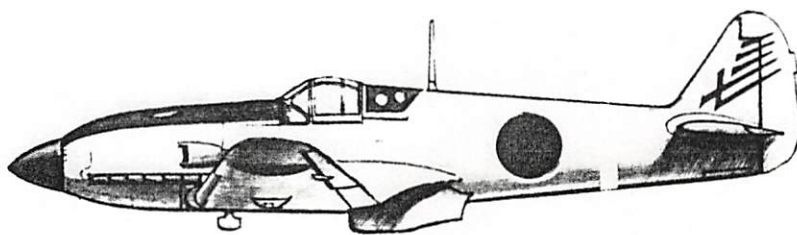
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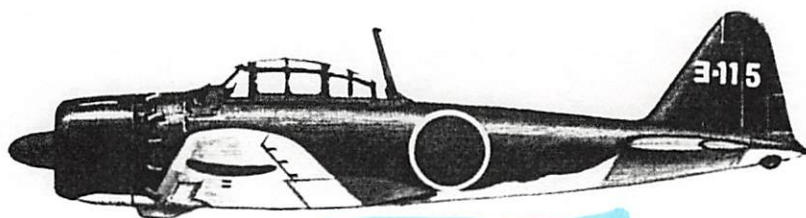


Planes of the Pacific

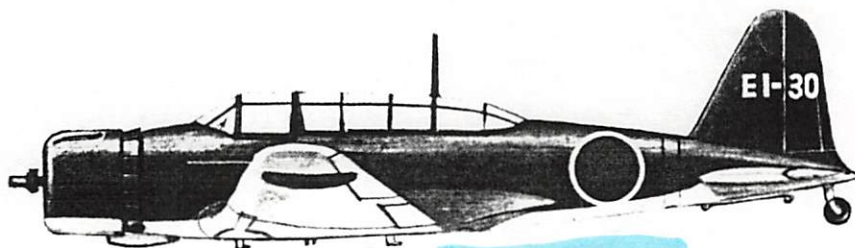
Virtually all the American planes that saw service in Europe were also used in the Pacific, but the reverse was not always the case. The outstanding example was the huge B-29 Superfortress, which bombed only Japanese targets. American carrier planes also did most of their work in the Pacific: the Hellcat, the Corsair (flown by Marine squadrons), and the Avenger torpedo-bomber. The Japanese carrier-based Nakajima B5N1 ("Kate" in the American code-name system) played a leading part in the Pearl Harbor attack. The Zero-sen, though a good plane, had an early reputation out of all proportion to its abilities. The "Tony," a formidable high-altitude fighter, caused much worry when it began attacking B-29's over Japan in the last months of the war. The Japanese Navy's two-engine land-based bomber was the "Betty"; its lack of armor made it very vulnerable. Although the B-25 Mitchell served around the world, its most spectacular role was in the Pacific, when these normally land-based bombers took off from a carrier with the Doolittle raiders to attack Tokyo. And the P-40 Warhawk was best known, with a shark's mouth painted under its nose, as the plane of the Flying Tigers in Burma and China.



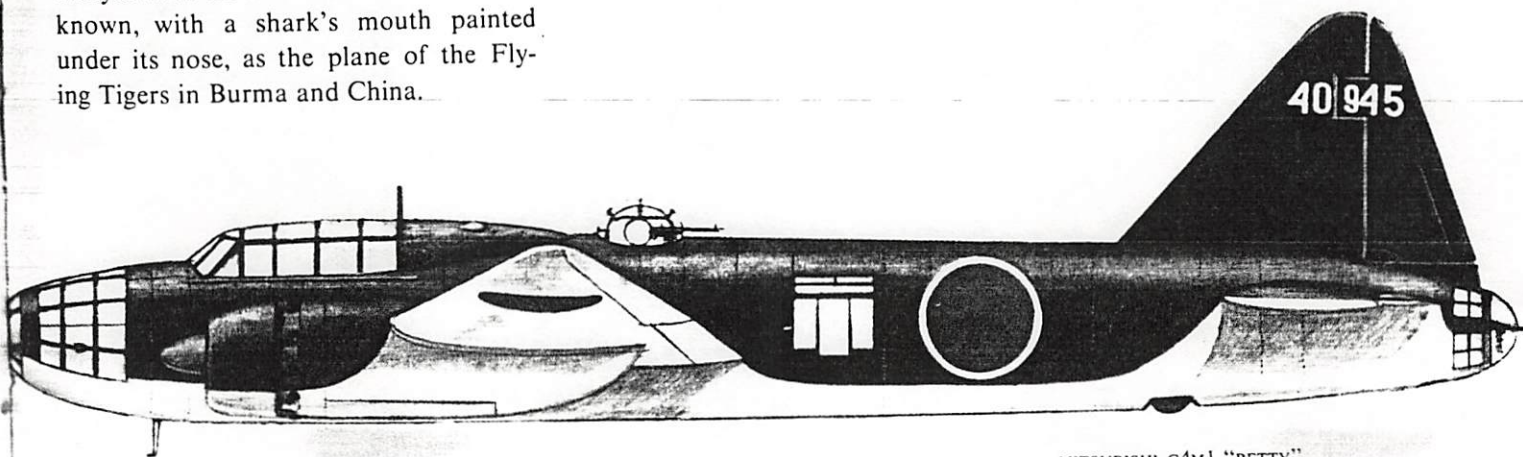
KAWASAKI HIEN "TONY"



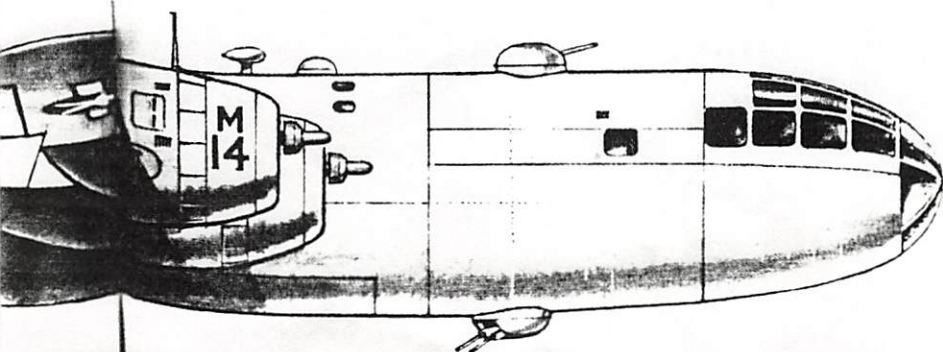
MITSUBISHI ZERO-SEN "ZEKE"

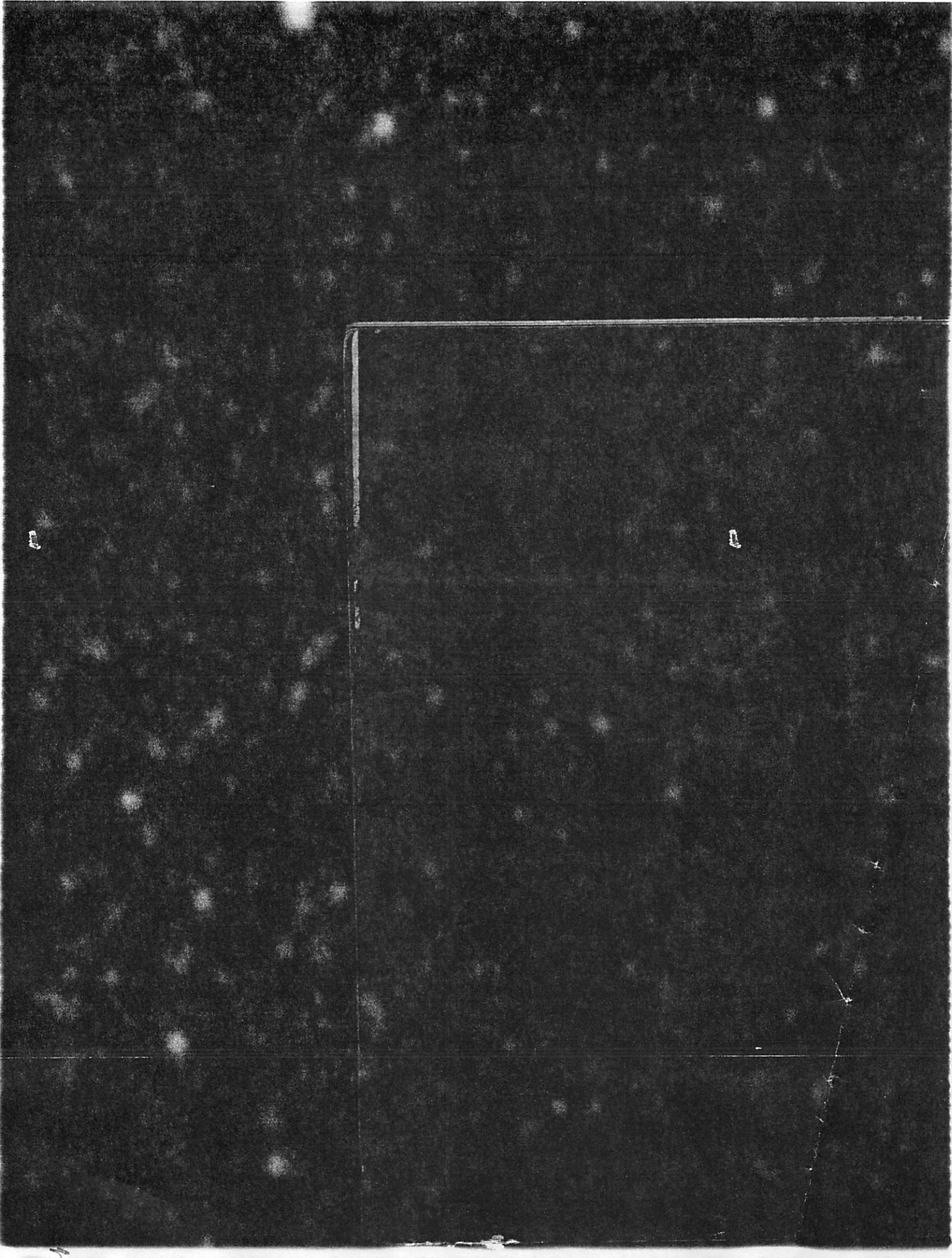


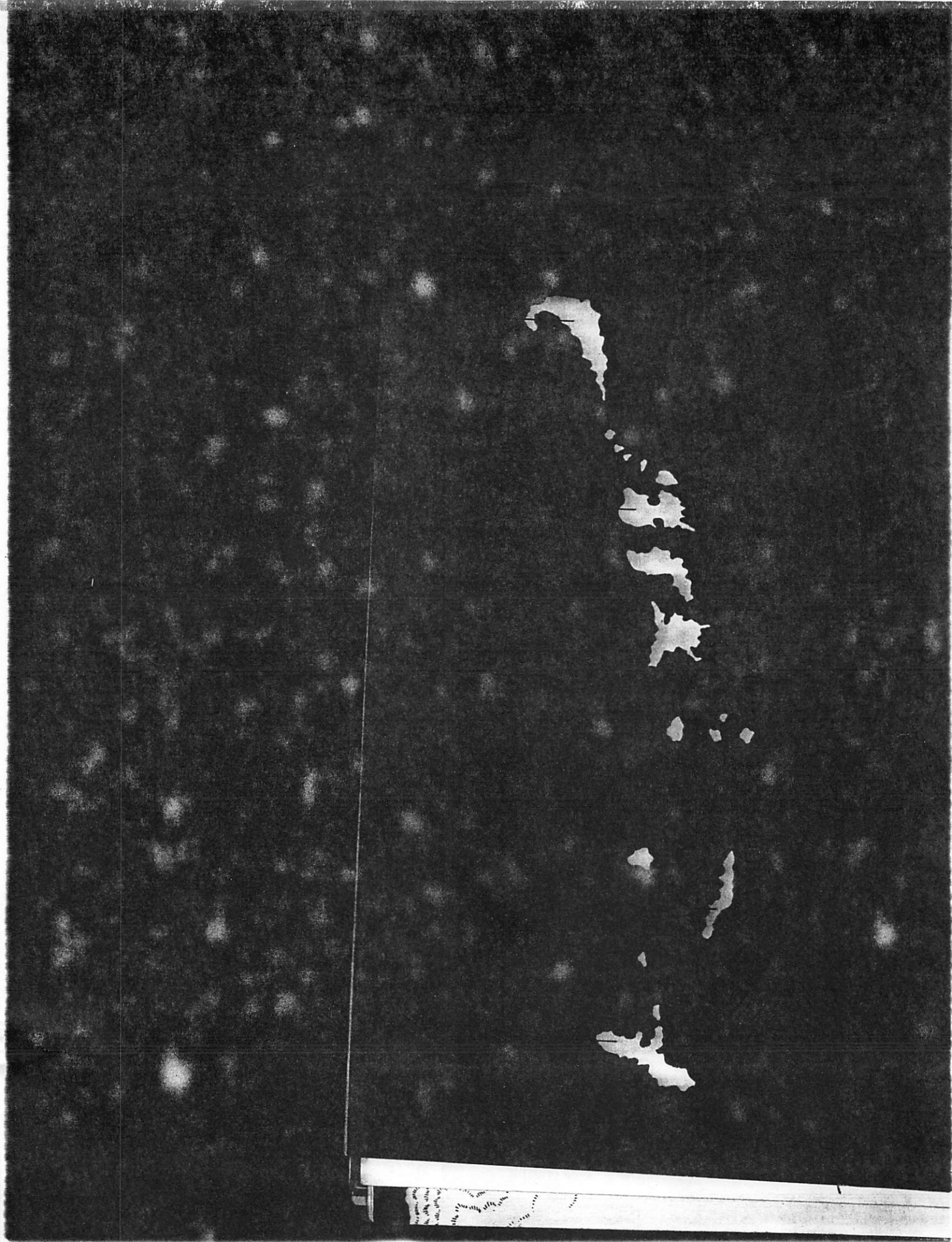
NAKAJIMA B5N1 "KATE"



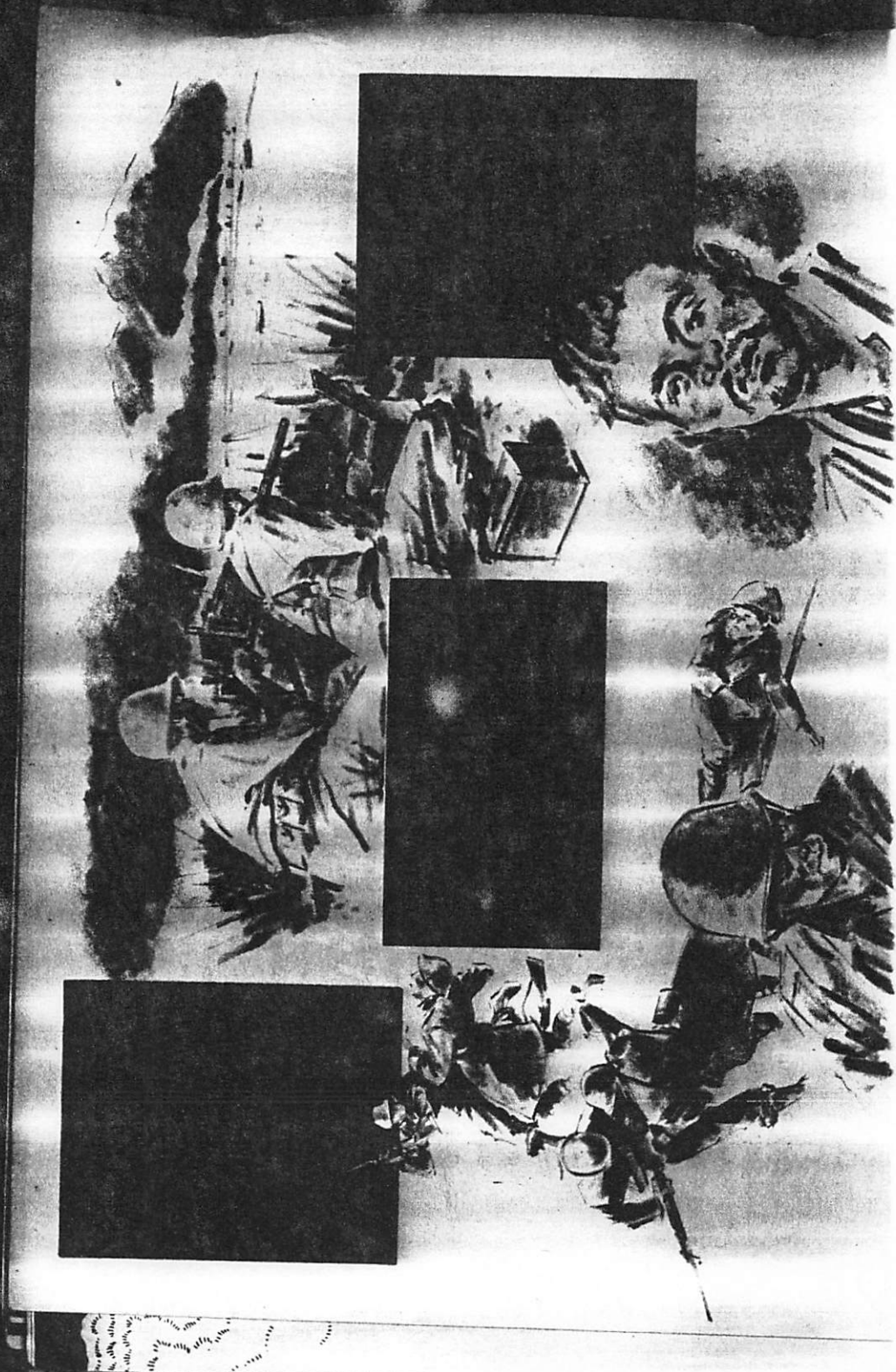
MITSUBISHI G4M1 "BETTY"







Massacre Bay, 3,000 or 4,000 yards inland, and the valleys leading to Chichagof Harbor. ★ The beaches of Chichagof Harbor and Holtz Bay were strongly defended against frontal attacks, but no protection was given to the area immediately north of Holtz Bay, and some of our forces landed there unopposed. In general, the enemy used the same tactics he had used—and is still using—in the Southwest Pacific. Though he lacked foliage and tropical growth, he prepared excellent camouflaged positions, and dotted the terrain with fox holes, two-man caves and light machine gun and mortar positions. ★ Enemy rifle fire was generally inaccurate, and the sniping, though annoying, was never a serious hindrance to our progress. But, in the early stages of the fight, small groups of Japanese with light machine guns and the so-called “knee mortar” often had our troops hugging the ground, unable to advance. ★ The constant use of “small group” tactics forced us to search thoroughly every square foot of area to our rear as well as on our flanks. Japanese would lie motionless for hours at a time. Their rifles and machine guns gave out no flash, no smoke, to betray their positions. ★ The enemy on repeated occasions counter-attacked against superior numbers in daylight, though it has been said that the Japanese attack only at night. ★ The much-discussed fanatically reckless fighting spirit was shown by the small number of prisoners we took, by their killing their wounded rather than letting them fall into our hands, and by such desperate kill-or-be-killed assaults as that of May 29th, in which every Japanese who could walk took part, some armed only with bayonets tied on the end of sticks. ★ A last attempt to aid the Attu garrison by a formation of sixteen Japanese bombers was blocked by Eleventh Air Force fighters. Only four of the enemy planes escaped destruction. They fled in the fog. ★ The annihilation of the Japanese at Chichagof Harbor was completed on Memorial Day, May 30, 1943. ★ An observer at Attu said, “American troops do their best fighting when they can close with the enemy and see what they are shooting at.” ★ On July 10th U. S. planes took off from Attu—to bomb Paramushiru.

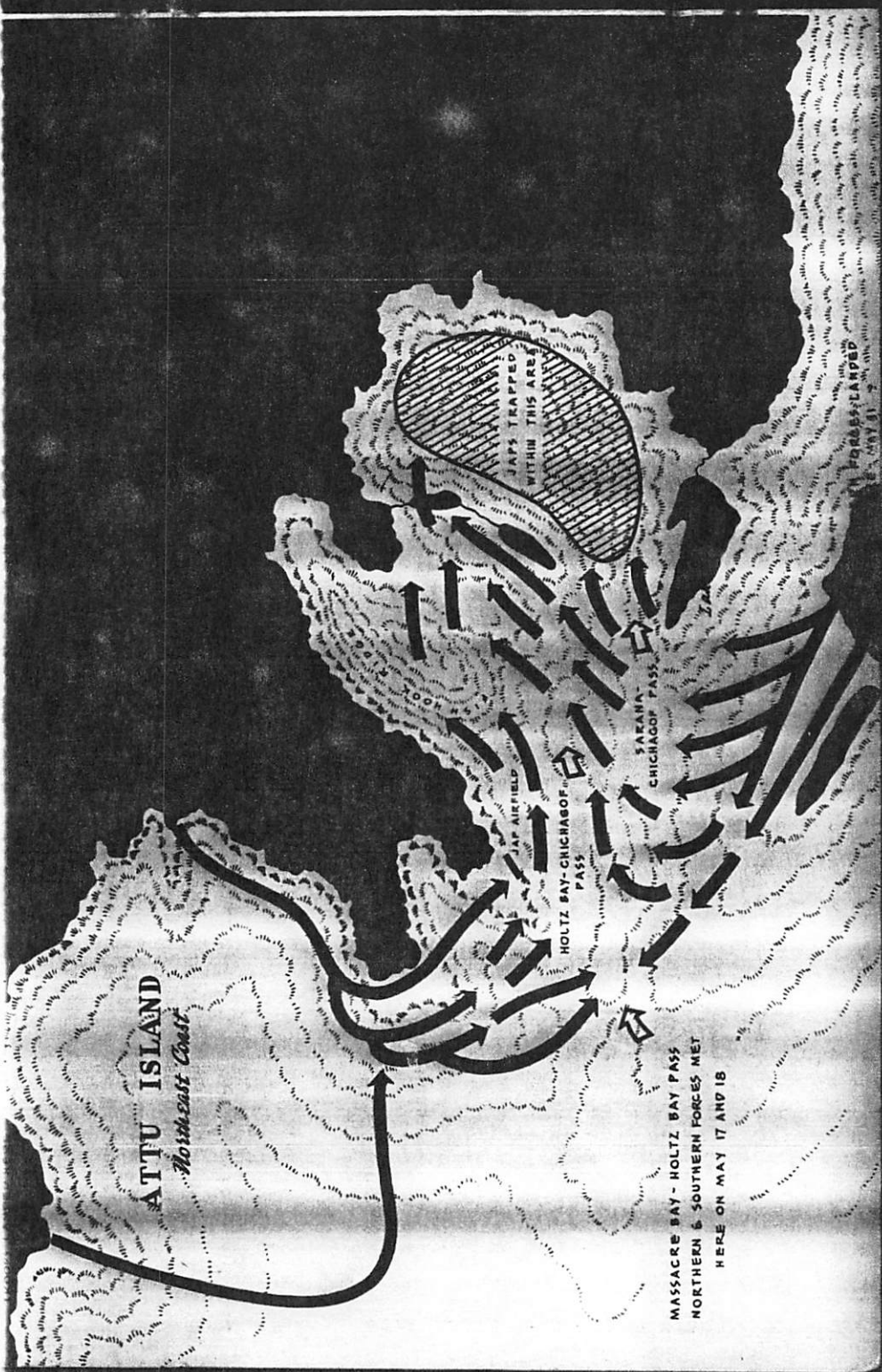


ATTACK... the Battle of Attu

THE JAPANESE had occupied Attu in June, 1942. In mid-September a Jap infantry battalion moved from Attu to Kiska. Our air reconnaissance first reported this movement on September 22nd. It is probable that the Japanese either evacuated Attu completely or withdrew most of their forces at that time. ★ In late October a reoccupation force from Japan reached Attu. Beach defenses were immediately constructed in both arms of Holtz Bay and the Japanese garrison was reinforced from time to time until March 1943. By then there were about 2,200 men in the garrison. ★ The most important mission of the Japanese garrison on Attu—aside from defense of the island—was the construction of an airfield at the East Arm of Holtz Bay. Thanks to Adak and Amchitka, our mastery of the air kept them from accomplishing that mission. ★ Attu is about forty miles long, twenty wide, and its highest peak rises more than 3,000 feet above the sea. ★ On May 11, 1943, after being delayed four days by bad weather, U. S. forces landed on the island. ★ From the very beginning the Japanese were on the defensive, and made the most of the terrain for that purpose. ★ The occupied portion of Attu was divided by the Japanese into two main defense sectors, (1) the Holtz Bay sector, and (2) the Chichagof sector, which included Massacre Bay and Sarana Bay. ★ Although they must have expected a landing at Massacre Bay, the Japanese had not organized beach defenses in that area. Instead they chose to defend the high ground at the northern end of



HUNTED DOWN IN HIS HOLES



MASSACRE BAY - HOLTZ BAY PASS
NORTHERN & SOUTHERN FORCES MET
HERE ON MAY 17 AND 18

JAPS TRAPPED
WITHIN THIS AREA

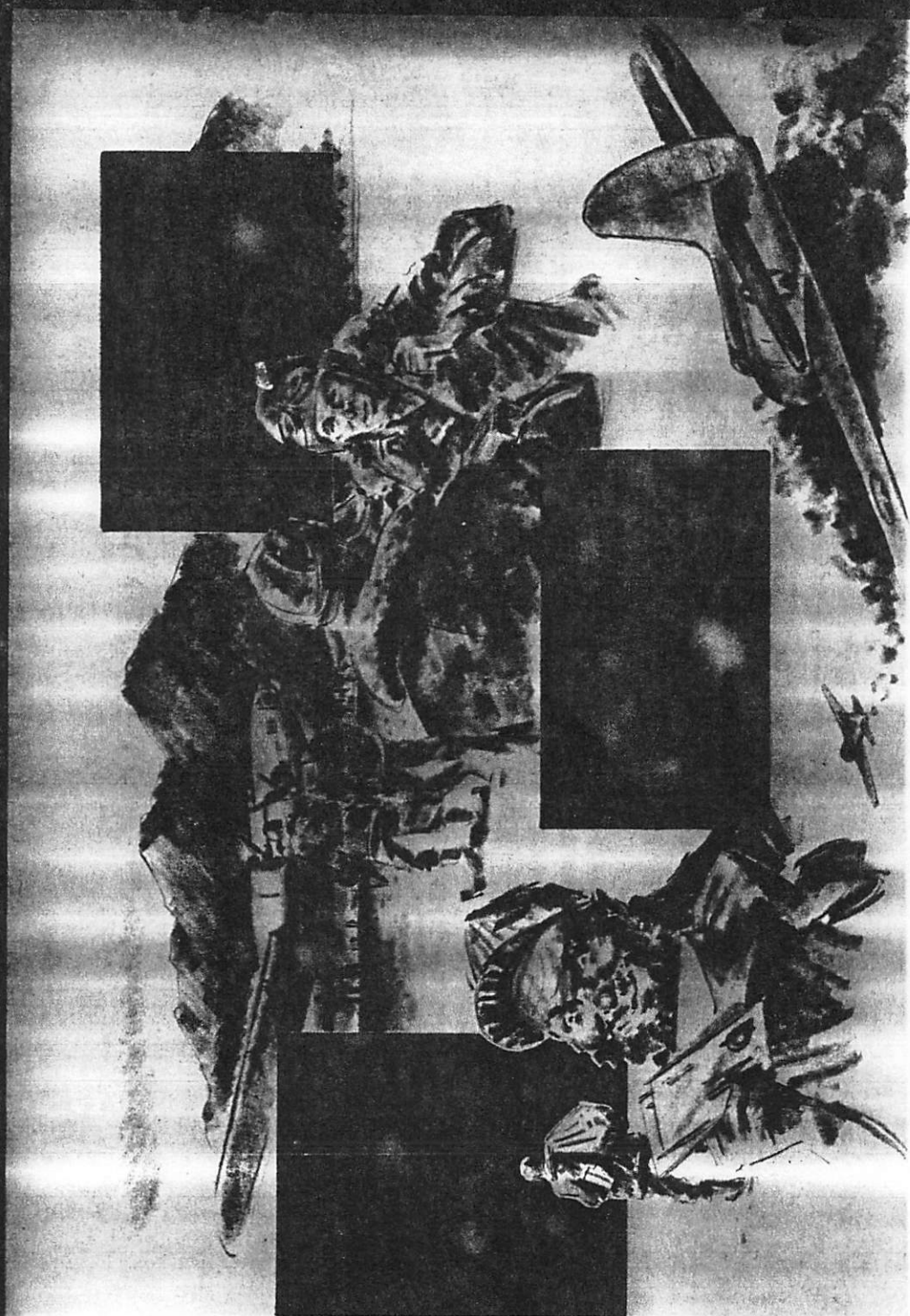
ATTU ISLAND
Northeast Coast

JAP AIRFIELD

HOLTZ BAY - CHICHAGOF
PASS

SACAMA
CHICHAGOF PASS

him with literally nothing. No one who has not seen it can have any conception of the tremendous quantity of supplies and equipment that must be moved from ship to shore. And, once ashore, all this vast mountain of material had to be transported by hand. Vehicles were of little use in those all-important early days of the occupation. ★ And these men did what they had come to do. They built their airfield. From January 24th on, Japanese planes scouted and bombed Amchitka whenever weather permitted. But by February 18th a new fighter strip was ready for Warhawks and Lightnings. The Japanese bombers came over no more. ★ The occupation of Amchitka, like the occupation of Adak five months before, let us still further increase the pressure on the Japanese at Attu and Kiska. Within two months our reconnaissance and bombing missions had forced the enemy to give up attempts to bring reinforcements and supplies to Attu and Kiska by surface vessels. ★ Aerial photographs taken on January 19th had revealed the beginnings of an enemy fighter strip south of Salmon Lagoon, on Kiska. This strip—and another strip begun at about the same time on Attu—were the targets for constant attacks throughout the spring. As a result of these constant attacks, and of our success in keeping supply ships from bringing adequate machinery to the islands, the Japanese failed to finish either airfield. ★ With the occupation of Amchitka, the stage was set for a new phase in the Aleutian campaign. We had been racing the Japanese for island bases. Now we were next door to the Japanese-held base of Kiska. Attu, the only other base the Japanese held in the Aleutians, was nearly two hundred miles farther away. Either island would have to be taken by force. And Kiska was the more important of the two, as well as the more accessible. ★ It was decided to by-pass Kiska and take Attu first. For this there were two reasons: (1) The Japanese were expecting us to attack Kiska, and (2) with Attu in our hands we would have the Japs on Kiska—not surrounded, for with the weather as violent as it is in the Aleutians no island can ever be kept surrounded—but pinched between our bases.



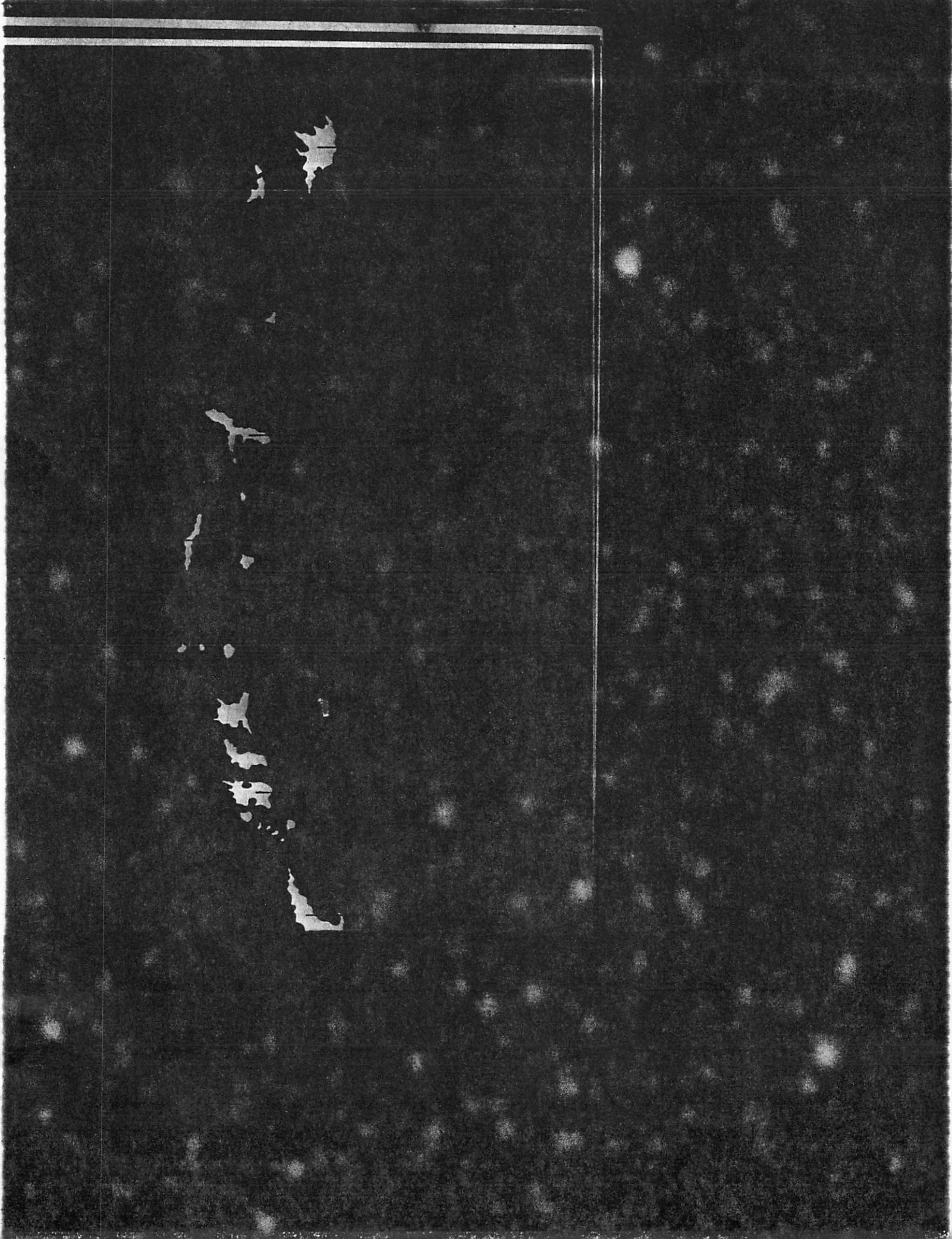
COUNTER-ATTACK . . . the Move on Amchitka

OUR AIRFIELD on Adak was a little more than 200 miles from the Japanese on Kiska, and nearly twice that distance from Attu. Planes left Adak to strike at the Japanese every day that the weather let them. But there was another island on which planes could be based only seventy miles from Kiska. This was Amchitka, one of the flattest of the Aleutians. ★ Scouting parties on Amchitka hid while Japanese reconnaissance planes circled overhead. In December, our scouts reported that Japanese patrols had dug test holes on Amchitka, hunting for suitable airfield sites. Another race for an Aleutian island was on. ★ On January 12, 1943, U. S. forces landed on Amchitka. They came ashore as they had come ashore at Adak—wading through icy surf. They came ashore from jam-packed freighters and transports and barges that had sailed and been towed through long days and nights of fog and storm. ★ Again bad weather had no favorites. It kept the Japanese planes home at their bases, and played havoc with our shipping. Not until twelve days later were our Amchitka forces attacked from the air. And they made good use of those twelve days. ★

It was the story of Adak over again. Men toiling without rest in winter rain and wind, in the bitter cold surf of Constatine Harbor, through black Aleutian mud, over hard rock and heavy tundra. Unloading, carrying ashore, storing, protecting arms, ammunition, food, equipment, fuel even to the smallest kindling. For here in the Aleutians the soldier's needs are many and the country can supply



WILD WIND IN THE ALEUTIANS



the sudden wild wind of the Aleutians. Nobody knows how hard the wind can blow along these islands where the Bering meets the Pacific. Later there was a gauge to measure the wind on Adak, but it only measured up to 110 miles an hour, and that was not always enough. The wind sometimes blew it over the top. ★ That first morning the wind stopped landing operations with only a portion of our force ashore and, by noon, had piled many of the landing boats on the beach. The men ashore had no tents, no shelters of any kind. They dug holes in the ground and crawled into them for protection against wind and rain and cold. ★ When the wind had quieted enough to let the others come ashore, they too dug holes and lived like that while the cold, wet and backbreaking work of unloading ships by means of small boats went on. ★ And they did what they had come to do. They built an airfield. They built an airfield in twelve days. Engineers, infantrymen, artillerymen alike, they drained and leveled a tide-water flat and a creek bed, and by September 12th planes were taking off. ★ On September 20th, an army task force occupied the island of Atka, sixty miles east of Adak. There, too, airfields, docks, and military facilities were constructed. Atka became another link in our chain of Aleutian bases. ★ On September 14th Adak bombers scored hits on three large cargo vessels at Kiska, sank two mine-sweepers, and strafed three midget submarines and a four-motored flying boat. Hundreds of miles had been lopped off our roundtrip distance to Kiska and Attu and back—and to Paramushiru, the northern Japanese stronghold. ★ The Japanese retaliated with token bombings of Adak on October 2nd and 3rd. The men on the island called the enemy flier Good Time Charlie because he came over around three o'clock in the morning. Good Time Charlie did not worry them very much. They had built their airfield. Their job was now to maintain and protect it. They built docks and roads, and they moved from their holes to tents, and then into quonsets and Pacific huts. They had more fuel now—and could cook food instead of living on C rations. ★ We had run our race for an island and won.

miles from the ocean bed; there are few places where the ocean is deeper than here. Once upon a time, long ago, this now-sunken range may have been a land-bridge from Asia to America over which America's prehistoric inhabitants slowly made their way east to this new land. ★ Now we have made of these islands a road over which we may swiftly make our way to Asia. ★ The Eleventh Air Force—with many strong bases on the Aleutians—is now the northern arm of a gigantic many-armed air force pineer closing on the Japanese Empire; the Seventh Air Force in the Hawaiian Islands, the Thirteenth Air Force in the Solomon Islands, the Fifth Air Force in New Guinea, the Tenth Air Force in India, the Fourteenth Air Force in China. ★ Elements of the Eleventh Air Force have already struck at the strong Japanese military and naval installations on Paramushiru and Shimushu. On July 10, 1943, and again on July 18th, August 11th and (only a few days before this account was written) on September 11th, B-24 and B-25 planes made bombing runs, dropping about 115,000 pounds of bombs on these Japanese targets. ★ The story of the Aleutians in this war is not yet finished.

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January 12, 1943	<i>American forces occupy Amchitka</i>	August 15, 1943 . . .	<i>Allied forces occupy Kiska</i>

The Northern Highway to Victory

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The Aleutian Islands are the tops of submerged mountain peaks—a 1,000 mile westward extension of the high volcanic ranges of the Alaska Peninsula. Some of these submerged peaks rise more than four

island by large surface vessels. Enemy submarine activity in the waters around Kiska increased in late spring and early summer but was unsuccessful. A number of them were sunk by our naval forces. ★ Bad weather and our concentration on Attu gave Kiska some rest in May. But after Attu fell we went to work on Kiska in earnest. Throughout June and July the intensity of our attack increased almost daily. ★ During the first six months of 1943 the Eleventh Air Force dropped more than 3,000,000 pounds of bombs on the enemy installations. After the fall of Attu this deadly power was concentrated on Kiska. Nearly 900,000 pounds of bombs were dropped on that island in July. ★ Demolition, general purpose, incendiary and parachute fragmentation bombs were released from high level, medium level, deck level and dive approaches. Fuzes ranged from instantaneous to long delay. Liberators, Mitchells, Dauntless dive bombers, Lightnings and Warhawks swooped over Kiska in coordinated and determined attacks. Kiska Island was to be made untenable. ★ The first indication of a possible Japanese attempt at evacuation came on July 10th, when a navy PBV spotted four small cargo vessels between Kiska and Japan. Mitchells and Liberators sank one, left one sinking, and damaged the other two. ★ In aerial photographs taken over Kiska from June 22nd on, other evidence of what might be preparations for evacuation were seen. This evidence included the destruction of some barracks, the removal of some guns, and unusual activity among barges in Kiska Harbor. On July 28th the Kiska radio went off the air. Later aerial photos showed trucks parked in the same position day after day. Naval shelling of Japanese installations drew no answering fire, and Eleventh Air Force units had only small-arms fire to contend with. ★ Presumably the main body of Japanese troops had finished its evacuation of Kiska during the night of July 28th, going by barge to waiting surface ships or submarines. ★ At daylight of August 15, 1943, U. S. and Canadian troops occupied Kiska. Even those enemy detachments responsible for the small-arms fire reported by planes over the island after July 28th had cleared out.

RETREAT... *Flight from Kiska*

WITH ATTU in our hands the Japanese occupation of Kiska was doomed. And the Japanese knew it as well as we did. ★ Kiska was first occupied on June 5, 1942, by a special landing party of 500 Japanese marines. At the same time some twenty Japanese ships, including four transports, moved into Kiska Harbor. ★ In September the Kiska garrison was reinforced by about 2,000 additional personnel, and, at about this time, was placed under the command of Rear Admiral Akiyama. Shortly afterwards an infantry battalion was moved to Kiska from Attu. In December 1942 and January 1943 additional anti-aircraft units, engineers and infantry arrived at Kiska, and in the spring of 1943 the tactical command was transferred from the Imperial Navy to Lt. General Higuchi, commanding general of the Northern Army. ★ Japanese fighter and reconnaissance plane replenishments, boxed and crated, came to the island on the decks of small plane transports carrying seven to nine planes each trip. ★ By air combat and by strafing planes on the ground, the Eleventh Air Force whittled the Japanese air strength down as fast as new planes could be brought in. At no time during the enemy occupation of Kiska did he have more than fourteen effective planes on hand. ★ March and April 1943 saw increasingly severe bombing attacks on Kiska. On March 26th, a light U. S. naval force engaged a heavier enemy fleet and foiled an effort to run supply ships into Attu or Kiska. This was probably the last known Japanese attempt to supply either



THEY WORKED AROUND THE CLOCK

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ALASKA

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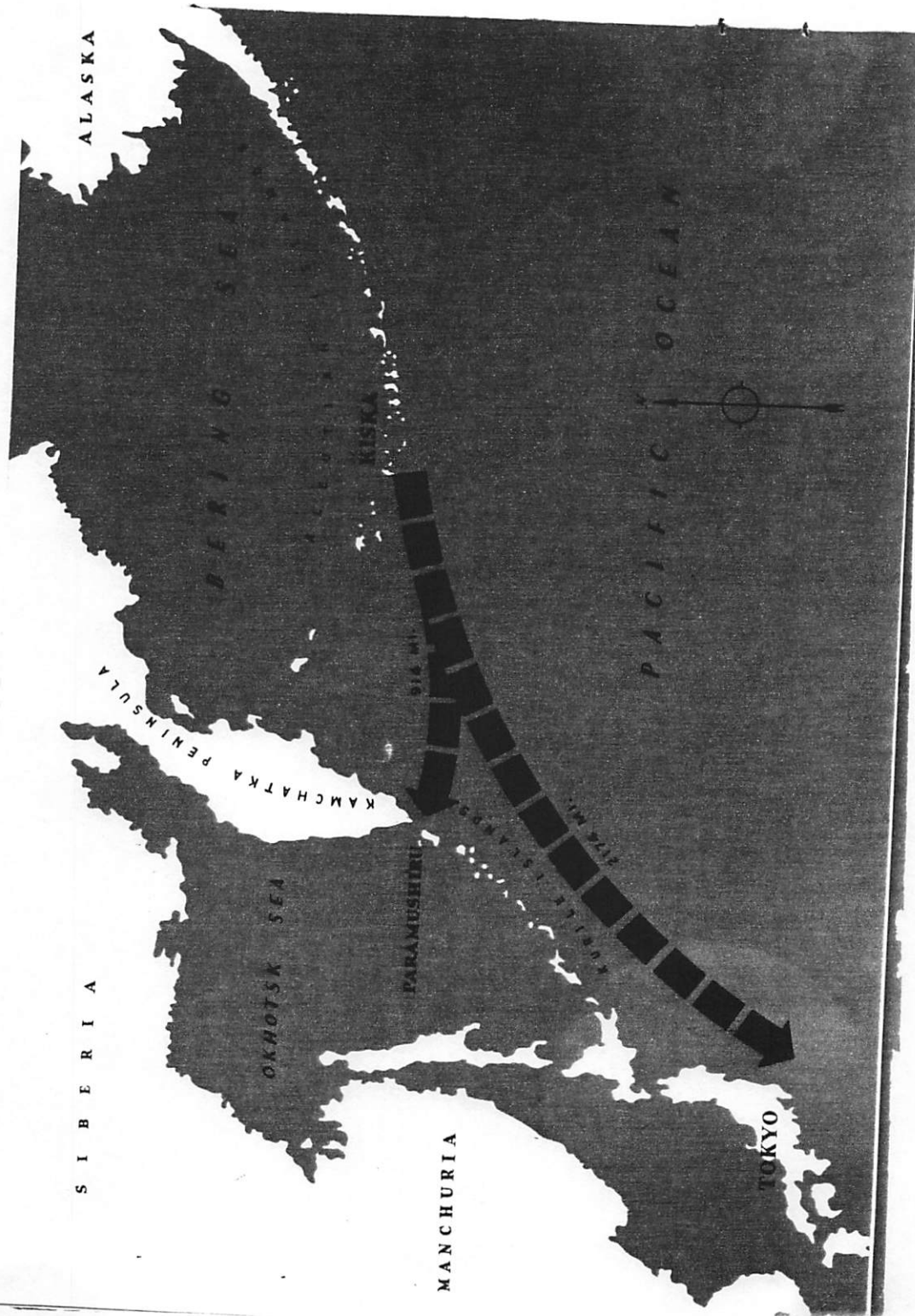
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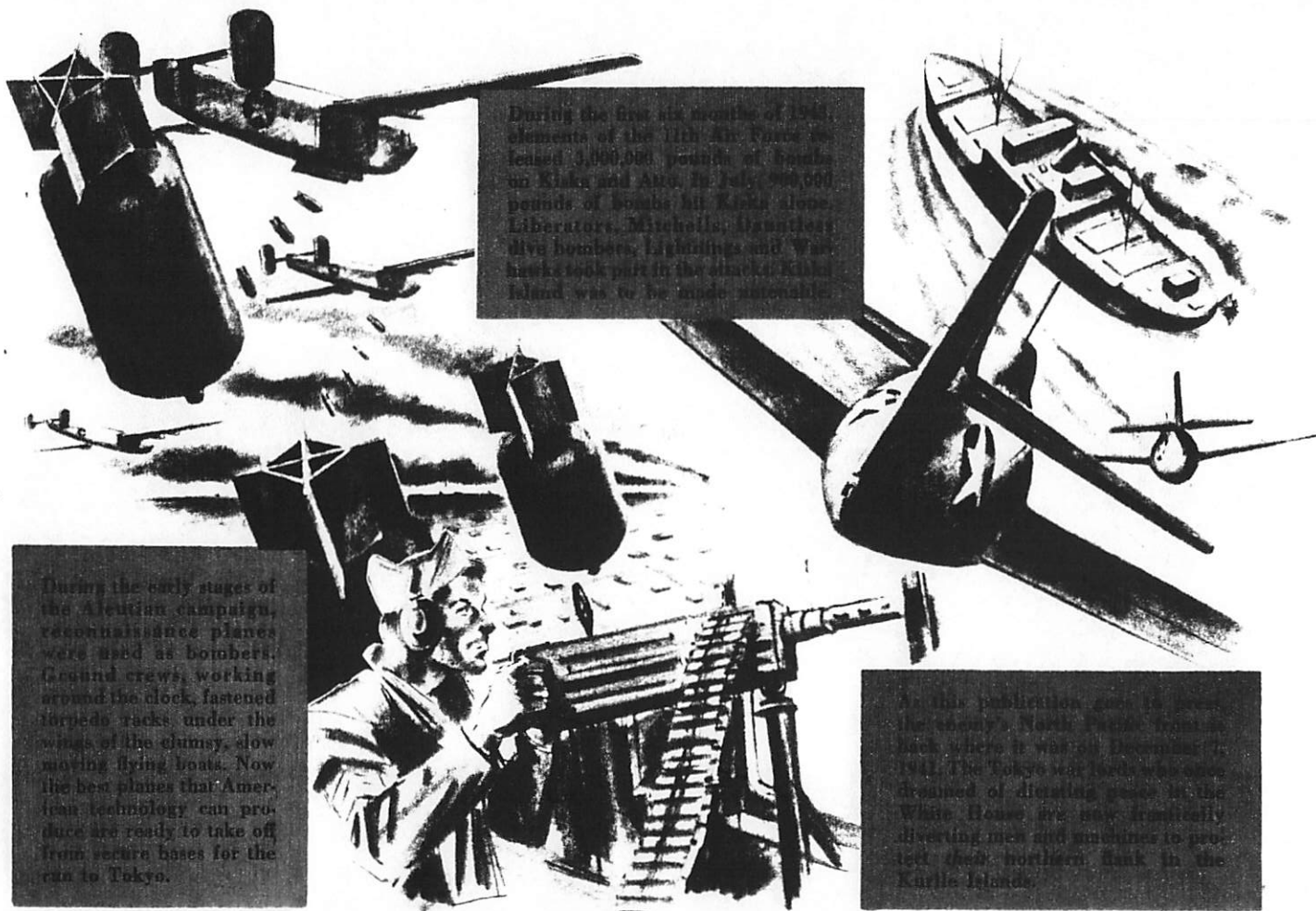
"The campaign thus far having provide
attack on the enemy, was then brough

The Aleutian Islands are the tops
the high volcanic ranges of the Ale



In this publication
the Navy Department
has announced that
the Japanese have
evacuated Kiska
Island. The Japanese
troops are now
being moved to the
Kurile Islands.

island by large surface vessels. Enemy submarine activity in the waters around Kiska increased in late spring and early summer but was unsuccessful. A number of them were sunk by our naval forces. ★ Bad weather and our concentration on Attu gave Kiska some rest in May. But after Attu fell we went to work on Kiska in earnest. Throughout June and July the intensity of our attack increased almost daily. ★ During the first six months of 1943 the Eleventh Air Force dropped more than 3,000,000 pounds of bombs on the enemy installations. After the fall of Attu this deadly power was concentrated on Kiska. Nearly 900,000 pounds of bombs were dropped on that island in July. ★ Demolition, general purpose, incendiary and parachute fragmentation bombs were released from high level, medium level, deck level and dive approaches. Fuzes ranged from instantaneous to long delay. Liberators, Mitchells, Dauntless dive bombers, Lightnings and Warhawks swooped over Kiska in coordinated and determined attacks. Kiska Island was to be made untenable. ★ The first indication of a possible Japanese attempt at evacuation came on July 10th, when a navy PBY spotted four small cargo vessels between Kiska and Japan. Mitchells and Liberators sank one, left one sinking, and damaged the other two. ★ In aerial photographs taken over Kiska from June 22nd on, other evidence of what might be preparations for evacuation were seen. This evidence included the destruction of some barracks, the removal of some guns, and unusual activity among barges in Kiska Harbor. On July 28th the Kiska radio went off the air. Later aerial photos showed trucks parked in the same position day after day. Naval shelling of Japanese installations drew no answering fire, and Eleventh Air Force units had only small-arms fire to contend with. ★ Presumably the main body of Japanese troops had finished its evacuation of Kiska during the night of July 28th, going by barge to waiting surface ships or submarines. ★ At daylight of August 15, 1943, U. S. and Canadian troops occupied Kiska. Even those enemy detachments responsible for the small-arms fire reported by planes over the island after July 28th had cleared out.



During the first six months of 1943, elements of the 11th Air Force released 1,000,000 pounds of bombs on Kiska and Agat. In July, 900,000 pounds of bombs hit Kiska alone. Liberators, Mitchells, Dauntless dive bombers, Lightnings and Warhawks took part in the attack. Kiska Island was to be made uninhabitable.

During the early stages of the Aleutian campaign, reconnaissance planes were used as bombers. Ground crews, working around the clock, fastened torpedoes racks under the wings of the clumsy, slow moving flying boats. Now the best planes that American technology can produce are ready to take off from secure bases for the run to Tokyo.

In this publication, we have seen the enemy's North Pacific front in back where it was in December 1941. The Tokyo war room was once dreamed of dominating Japan. The White House are now frantically diverting men and machines to protect their northern flank in the Kurile Islands.

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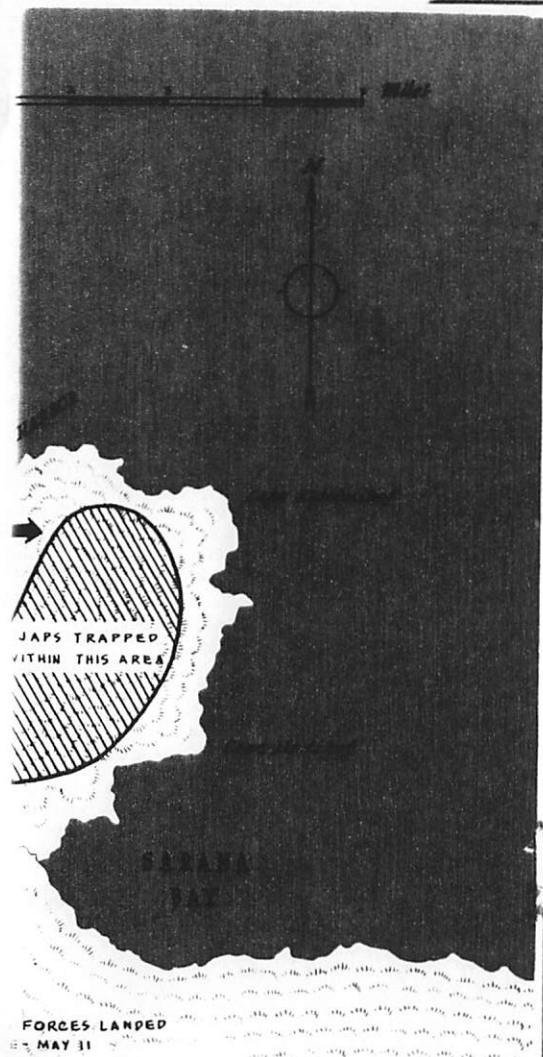
Massacre Bay, 3,000 or 4,000 yards inland, and the valleys leading to Chichagof Harbor. ★ The beaches of Chichagof Harbor and Holtz Bay were strongly defended against frontal attacks, but no protection was given to the area immediately north of Holtz Bay, and some of our forces landed there unopposed. In general, the enemy used the same tactics he had used—and is still using—in the Southwest Pacific. Though he lacked foliage and tropical growth, he prepared excellent camouflaged positions, and dotted the terrain with fox holes, two-man caves and light machine gun and mortar positions. ★ Enemy rifle fire was generally inaccurate, and the sniping, though annoying, was never a serious hindrance to our progress. But, in the early stages of the fight, small groups of Japanese with light machine guns and the so-called “knee mortar” often had our troops hugging the ground, unable to advance. ★ The constant use of “small group” tactics forced us to search thoroughly every square foot of area to our rear as well as on our flanks. Japanese would lie motionless for hours at a time. Their rifles and machine guns gave out no flash, no smoke, to betray their positions. ★ The enemy on repeated occasions counter-attacked against superior numbers in daylight, though it has been said that the Japanese attack only at night. ★ The much-discussed fanatically reckless fighting spirit was shown by the small number of prisoners we took, by their killing their wounded rather than letting them fall into our hands, and by such desperate kill-or-be-killed assaults as that of May 29th, in which every Japanese who could walk took part, some armed only with bayonets tied on the end of sticks. ★ A last attempt to aid the Attu garrison by a formation of sixteen Japanese bombers was blocked by Eleventh Air Force fighters. Only four of the enemy planes escaped destruction. They fled in the fog. ★ The annihilation of the Japanese at Chichagof Harbor was completed on Memorial Day, May 30, 1943. ★ An observer at Attu said, “American troops do their best fighting when they can close with the enemy and see what they are shooting at.” ★ On July 10th U. S. planes took off from Attu—to bomb Paramushiru.

The enemy on Attu was trapped and he knew it. He discarded all hope of reinforcement or rescue. His one aim was to kill as many Americans as possible before he was killed. One night, a wild attack broke through our lines. Then he was hunted down in his holes and killed.

The battle of Attu was not the turning point of the war. It was, however, the last round of the invasion on North American soil. He ran away from Alaska. Perhaps he learned on Attu that the American soldier was more than his match in battle skill, in courage, in intelligence—or anything else.



Massacre Bay, 3,000 or 4,000 yards from the beach. The Japanese were given to the area immediately around Chichagof Harbor and Holtz Bay. In general, the enemy used the terrain with fox holes, two-on-one fire was generally inaccurate, and progress. But, in the early stages of the so-called "knee mortar" tactic, the use of "small group" tactics as well as on our flanks. Japanese guns gave out no flash, no smoke, counter-attacked against superior only at night. ★ The much-discussed prisoners we took, by their kill-or-be-killed attitude, such desperate kill-or-be-killed attitude, some armed only with a garrison by a formation of sixteen four of the enemy planes escaped at Chichagof Harbor was complete. "American troops do their best fighting at." ★ On July 10th U. S. p



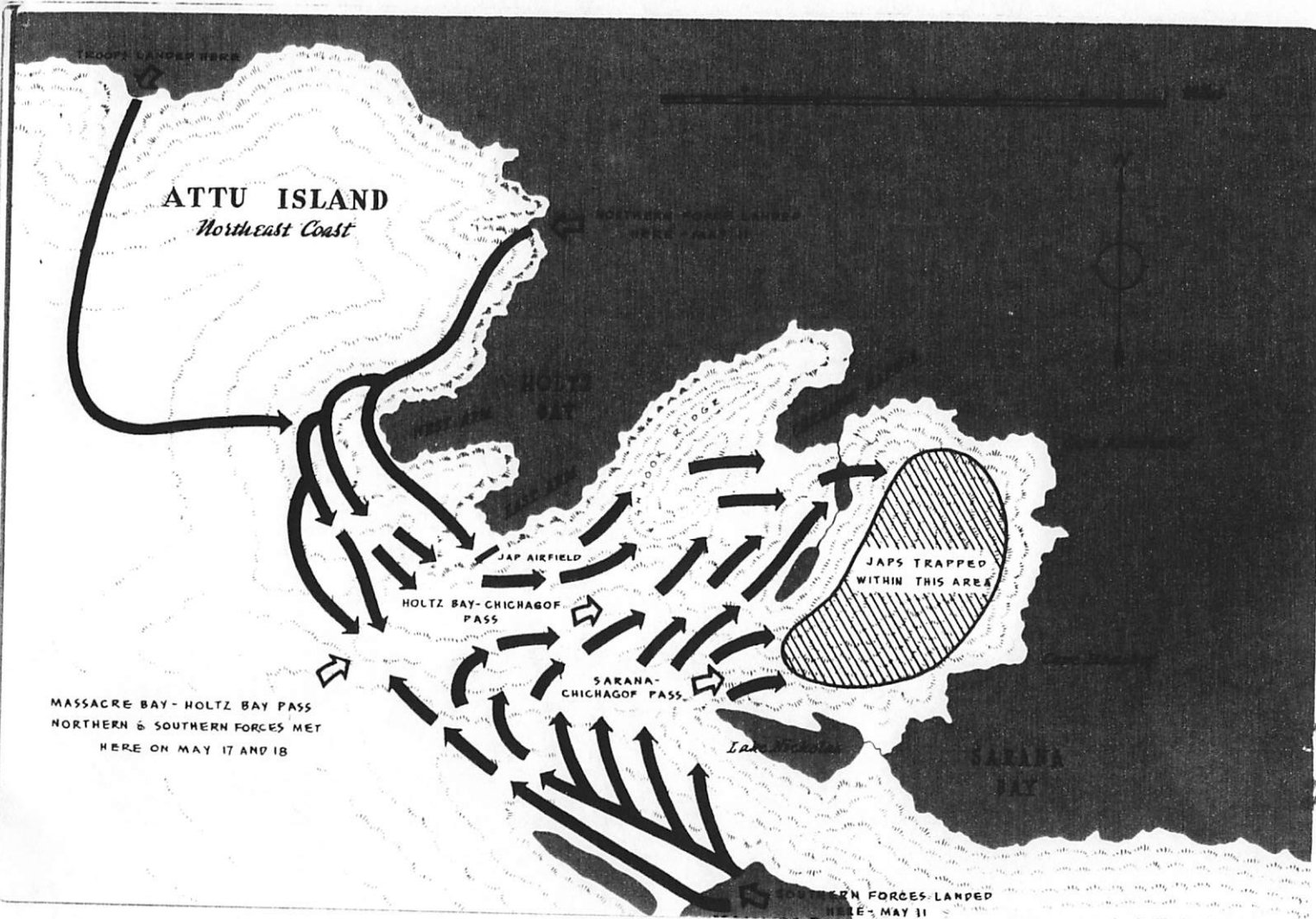
ATTACK... the Battle of Attu

THE JAPANESE had occupied Attu in June, 1942. In mid-September a Jap infantry battalion moved from Attu to Kiska. Our air reconnaissance first reported this movement on September 22nd. It is probable that the Japanese either evacuated Attu completely or withdrew most of their forces at that time. ★ In late October a reoccupation force from Japan reached Attu. Beach defenses were immediately constructed in both arms of Holtz Bay and the Japanese garrison was reinforced from time to time until March 1943. By then there were about 2,200 men in the garrison. ★ The most important mission of the Japanese garrison on Attu—aside from defense of the island—was the construction of an airfield at the East Arm of Holtz Bay. Thanks to Adak and Amchitka, our mastery of the air kept them from

accomplishing that mission. ★ Attu is about forty miles long, twenty wide, and its highest peak rises more than 3,000 feet above the sea. ★ On May 11, 1943, after being delayed four days by bad weather, U. S. forces landed on the island. ★ From the very beginning the Japanese were on the defensive, and made the most of the terrain for that purpose. ★ The occupied portion of Attu was divided by the Japanese into two main defense sectors, (1) the Holtz Bay sector, and (2) the Chichagof sector, which included Massacre Bay and Sarana Bay. ★ Although they must have expected a landing at Massacre Bay, the Japanese had not organized beach defenses in that area. Instead they chose to defend the high ground at the northern end of



HUNTED DOWN IN HIS HOLES



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HUN

May 3rd, at 10:00 am, the first P-51s came to Amchitka. The crews were served a hot meal that was waiting for them. The planes were serviced and the same afternoon they were dropping bombs on Kiska!



him with literally nothing. No one who has not seen it can have any conception of the tremendous quantity of supplies and equipment that must be moved from ship to shore. And, once ashore, all this vast mountain of material had to be transported by hand. Vehicles were of little use in those all-important early days of the occupation. ★ And these men did what they had come to do. They built their airfield. From January 24th on, Japanese planes scouted and bombed Amchitka whenever weather permitted. But by February 18th a new fighter strip was ready for Warhawks and Lightnings. The Japanese bombers came over no more. ★ The occupation of Amchitka, like the occupation of Adak five months before, let us still further increase the pressure on the Japanese at Attu and Kiska. Within two months our reconnaissance and bombing missions had forced the enemy to give up attempts to bring reinforcements and supplies to Attu and Kiska by surface vessels. ★ Aerial photographs taken on January 19th had revealed the beginnings of an enemy fighter strip south of Salmon Lagoon, on Kiska. This strip—and another strip begun at about the same time at Attu—were the targets for constant attacks throughout the spring. As a result of these constant attacks, and of our success in keeping supply ships from bringing adequate machinery to the islands, the Japanese failed to finish either airfield. ★ With the occupation of Amchitka, the stage was set for a new phase in the Aleutian campaign. We had been racing the Japanese for island bases. Now we were next door to the Japanese-held base of Kiska. Attu, the only other base the Japanese held in the Aleutians, was nearly two hundred miles farther away. Either island would have to be taken by force. And Kiska was the more important of the two, as well as the more accessible. ★ It was decided to by-pass Kiska and take Attu first. For this there were two reasons: (1) The Japanese were expecting us to attack Kiska, and (2) with Attu in our hands we would have the Japs on Kiska—not surrounded, for with the weather as violent as it is in the Aleutians no island can ever be kept surrounded—but pinched between our bases.



There are landing strips where the wind blows west on one side and east on the other. The rain falls in Siberia, and hits the Aleutians—sideways, at sixty miles an hour! A man can't survive more than thirty minutes in the Bering Sea.

The world now lay somewhere beyond the fog and storm. When the day's work was done, the men tackled such "homey" problems as the washing of clothes in icy water. Lumber was scarce. Packing cases were used to fashion crude shelves, tables and chairs. But the pioneer instinct is strong in the American soldier.

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COUNTER-ATTACK . . . the Move on Amchitka

OUR AIRFIELD on Adak was a little more than 200 miles from the Japanese on Kiska, and nearly twice that distance from Attu. Planes left Adak to strike at the Japanese every day that the weather let them. But there was another island on which planes could be based only seventy miles from Kiska. This was Amchitka, one of the flattest of the Aleutians. ★ Scouting parties on Amchitka hid while Japanese reconnaissance planes circled overhead. In December our scouts reported that Japanese patrols had dug test holes on Amchitka, hunting for suitable airfield sites. Another race for an Aleutian island was on.

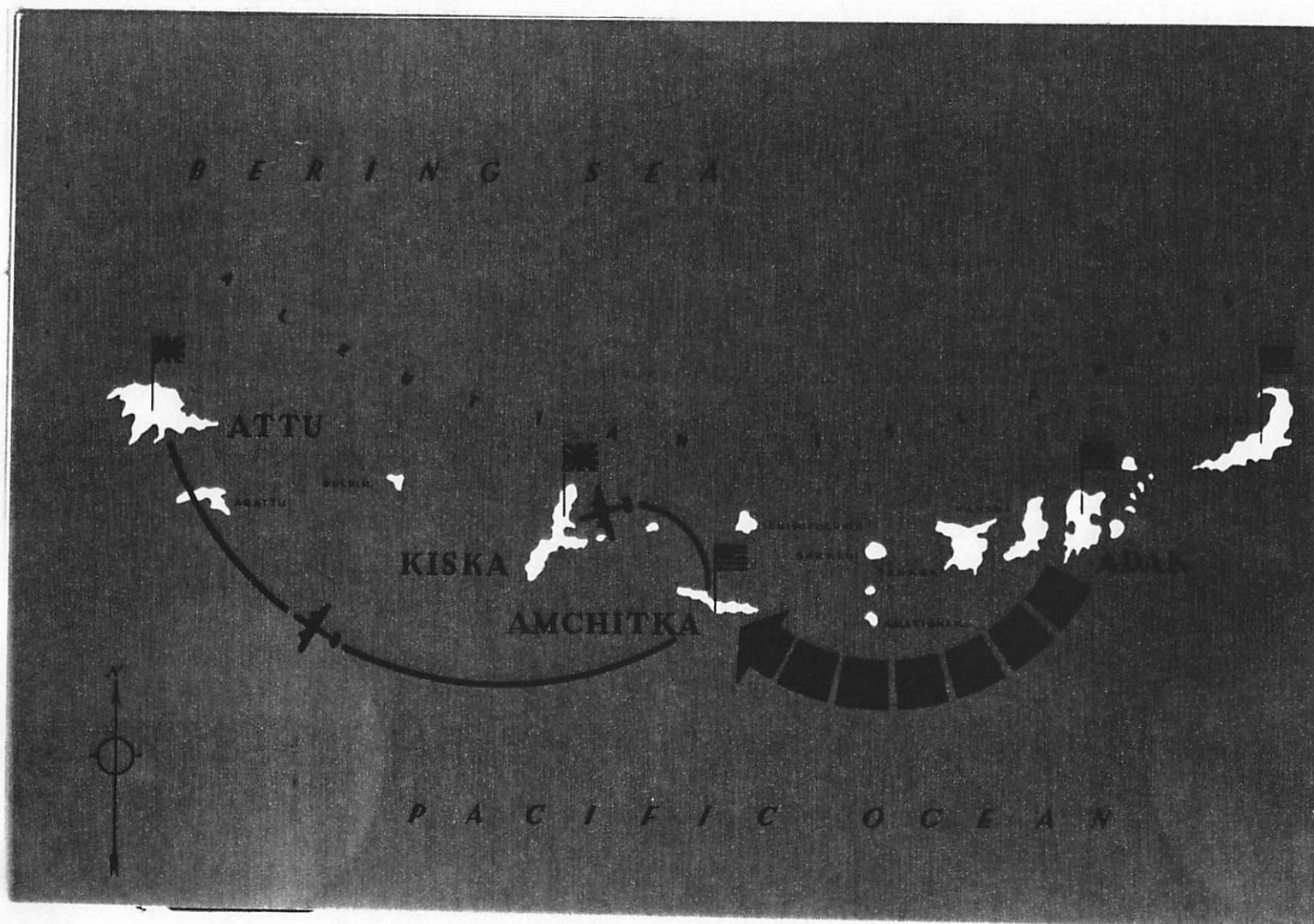
★ On January 12, 1943, U. S. forces landed on Amchitka. They came ashore as they had come ashore at Adak—wading through icy surf. They came ashore from jam-packed freighters and transports and barges that had sailed and been towed through long days and nights of fog and storm. ★ Again bad weather had no favorites. It kept the Japanese planes home at their bases, and played havoc with our shipping. Not until twelve days later were our Amchitka forces attacked from the air. And they made good use of those twelve days. ★

It was the story of Adak over again. Men toiling without rest in winter rain and wind, in the bitter cold surf of Constantine Harbor, through black Aleutian mud, over hard rock and heavy tundra. Unloading, carrying ashore, storing, protecting arms, ammunition, food, equipment, fuel even to the smallest kindling. For here in the Aleutians the soldier's needs are many and the country can supply



WILD WIND IN THE ALEUTIANS





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WILD WIND IN THE ALEUTIANS



operations in the Aleutians
were invariably carried out
in the face of great danger. Men
were lashed into mechanicalness
by sudden gusts of icy winds.
Low beaches merged with
barren tundras and mud, so
that not even the wild tracks
could move across it.

the sudden wild wind of the Aleutians. Nobody knows how hard the wind can blow along these islands where the Bering meets the Pacific. Later there was a gauge to measure the wind on Adak, but it only measured up to 110 miles an hour, and that was not always enough. The wind sometimes blew it over the top. ★ That first morning the wind stopped landing operations with only a portion of our force ashore and, by noon, had piled many of the landing boats on the beach. The men ashore had no tents, no shelters of any kind. They dug holes in the ground and crawled into them for protection against wind and rain and cold. ★ When the wind had quieted enough to let the others come ashore, they too dug holes and lived like that while the cold, wet and backbreaking work of unloading ships by means of small boats went on. ★ And they did what they had come to do. They built an airfield. They built an airfield in twelve days. Engineers, infantrymen, artillerymen alike, they drained and leveled a tide-water flat and a creek bed, and by September 12th planes were taking off. ★ On September 20th, an army task force occupied the island of Atka, sixty miles east of Adak. There, too, airfields, docks, and military facilities were constructed. Atka became another link in our chain of Aleutian bases. ★ On September 14th Adak bombers scored hits on three large cargo vessels at Kiska, sank two mine-sweepers, and strafed three midget submarines and a four-motored flying boat. Hundreds of miles had been lopped off our roundtrip distance to Kiska and Attu and back—and to Paramushiru, the northern Japanese stronghold. ★ The Japanese retaliated with token bombings of Adak on October 2nd and 3rd. The men on the island called the enemy flier Good Time Charlie because he came over around three o'clock in the morning. Good Time Charlie did not worry them very much. They had built their airfield. Their job was now to maintain and protect it. They built docks and roads, and they moved from their holes to tents, and then into quonsets and Pacific huts. They had more fuel now—and could cook food instead of living on C rations. ★ We had run our race for an island and won.



During those first days on Adak, there was an informal affair. When there was time to be spared, efforts were made to build a fire to warm up such delicacies as Spam and the like that came in cans. The Aleutian soldier soon learned that his was no "glamor" assignment. The battered ships that came to port carried shells and engines and steel men.

No one knew when the Japs would come. Very rapidly the men of the coast artillery and the AA units prepared to welcome him with roaring metal. Night and day the crews stood by their loaded guns. They knew that they guarded not only their barren island, but also the stepping stones to North America.



Landing operations in the Aleutian theater were invariably carried out in the face of great danger. Ships would be lashed into mountainous waves by sudden gusts of icy winds. The narrow beaches merged with the treacherous tundra and mud so deep that not even the wide-track cats could move across it.



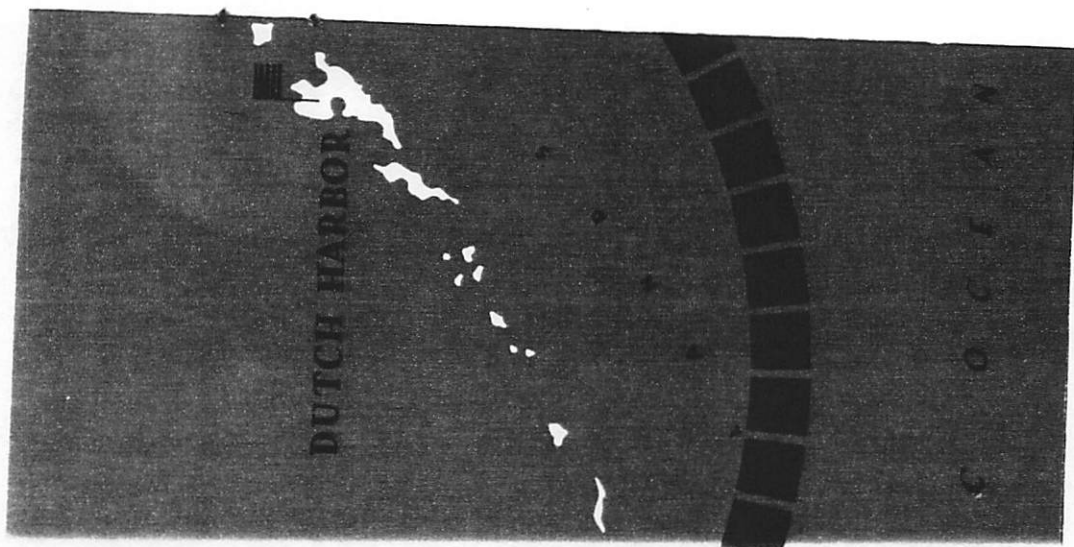
the sudden wild wind of the Aleutian where the Bering meets the Pacific measured up to 110 miles an hour at the top. ★ That first morning t ashore and, by noon, had piled up no shelters of any kind. They died of wind and rain and cold. ★ When they dug holes and lived like that while the small boats went on. ★ And in twelve days. Engines were water flat and a creek bed, and the army task force occupied the island. military facilities were constructed. September 14th Adak bombers sank and strafed three midget submarines, lopped off our roundtrip distance to the Japanese stronghold. ★ The Japanese 3rd. The men on the island called it 6 o'clock in the morning. Good Times. Their job was now to maintain a series of holes to tents, and then into quarters instead of living on C rations. ★

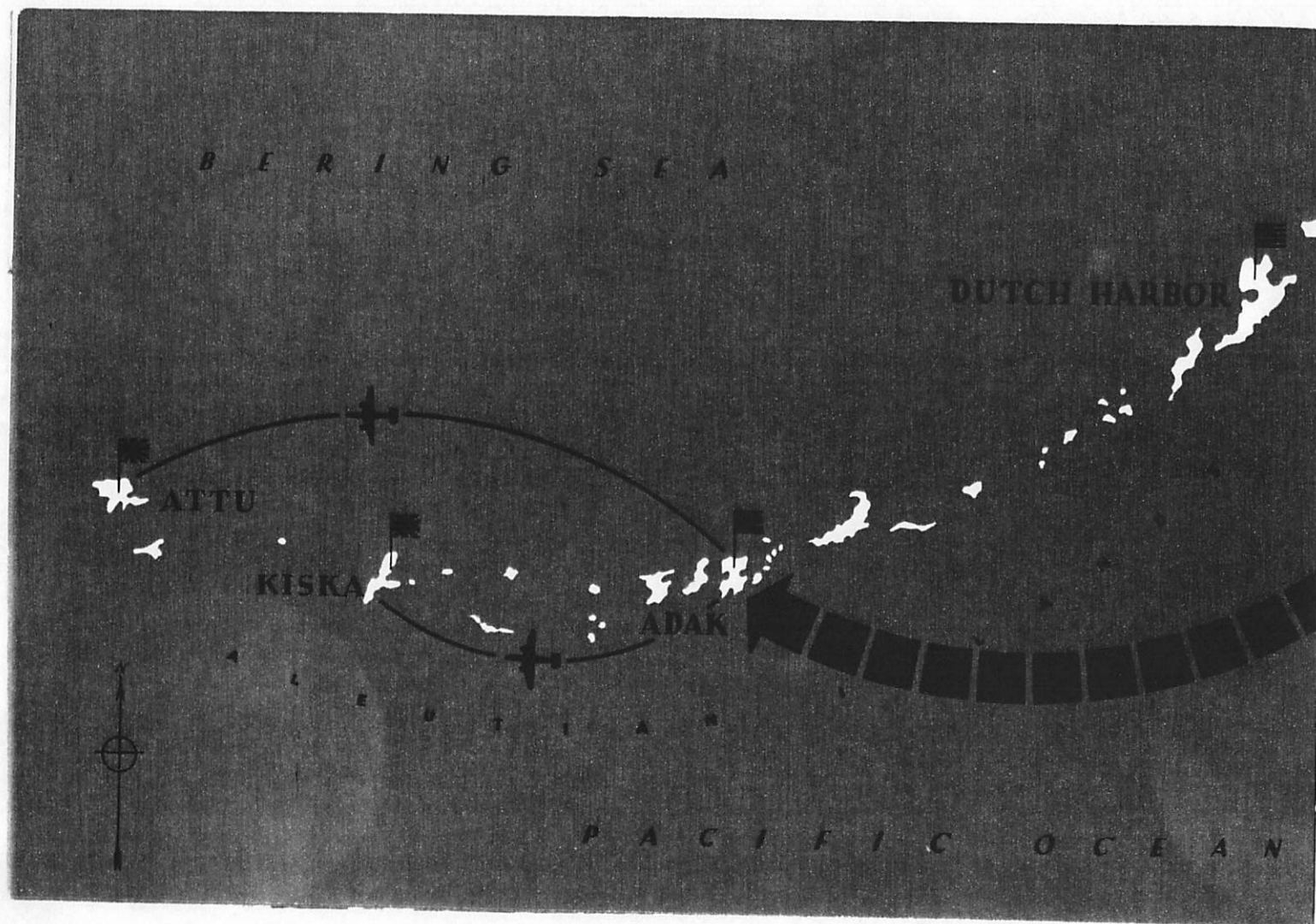
COUNTER-ATTACK ... the Occupation of Adak

THE NAVY had a weather station on Kiska. When this station failed to send its usual reports after June 7th enemy interference was suspected. But not until June 11th did the weather permit air reconnaissance. Then Japanese were seen on Kiska and Attu. ★ The next day Eleventh Air Force bombers made runs over Kiska, hitting and setting fire to two cruisers and one destroyer. ★ Two days later the Japanese bombed a seaplane tender at Atka Island and, a week after that, began to reconnoiter Adak. The battle of the Aleutians was becoming a race for the possession of those islands in the chain which were suitable for landbased aviation. ★ Meanwhile we bombed and strafed Kiska and Attu whenever the weather permitted, and our surface ships and submarines attacked Japanese shipping in Aleutian waters. On June 18th a transport was sunk in Kiska Harbor. On July 4th two of our submarines sank three, and possibly four, enemy destroyers. On August 7th U. S. warships shelled Kiska Harbor. On August 31st we took our first Japanese prisoners in this theater—five survivors of a destroyed Japanese submarine. ★ And on August 30th U. S. forces landed on Adak. ★ The first landing boat hit the beach at daylight, seven o'clock in the morning. It was quiet. The men had embarked prepared for almost any kind of trouble, but, twelve hours before they landed, news had come that there were no Japanese on the island. They had won their race. They had gotten there first. ★ And then trouble came, a willawaw,

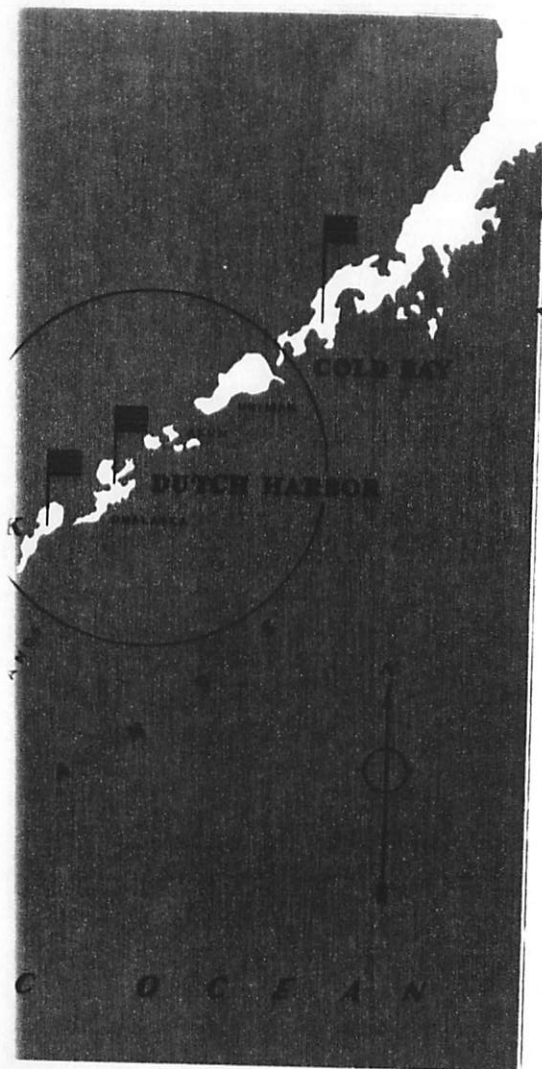


LANDRUM OF THE ALEUTIANS



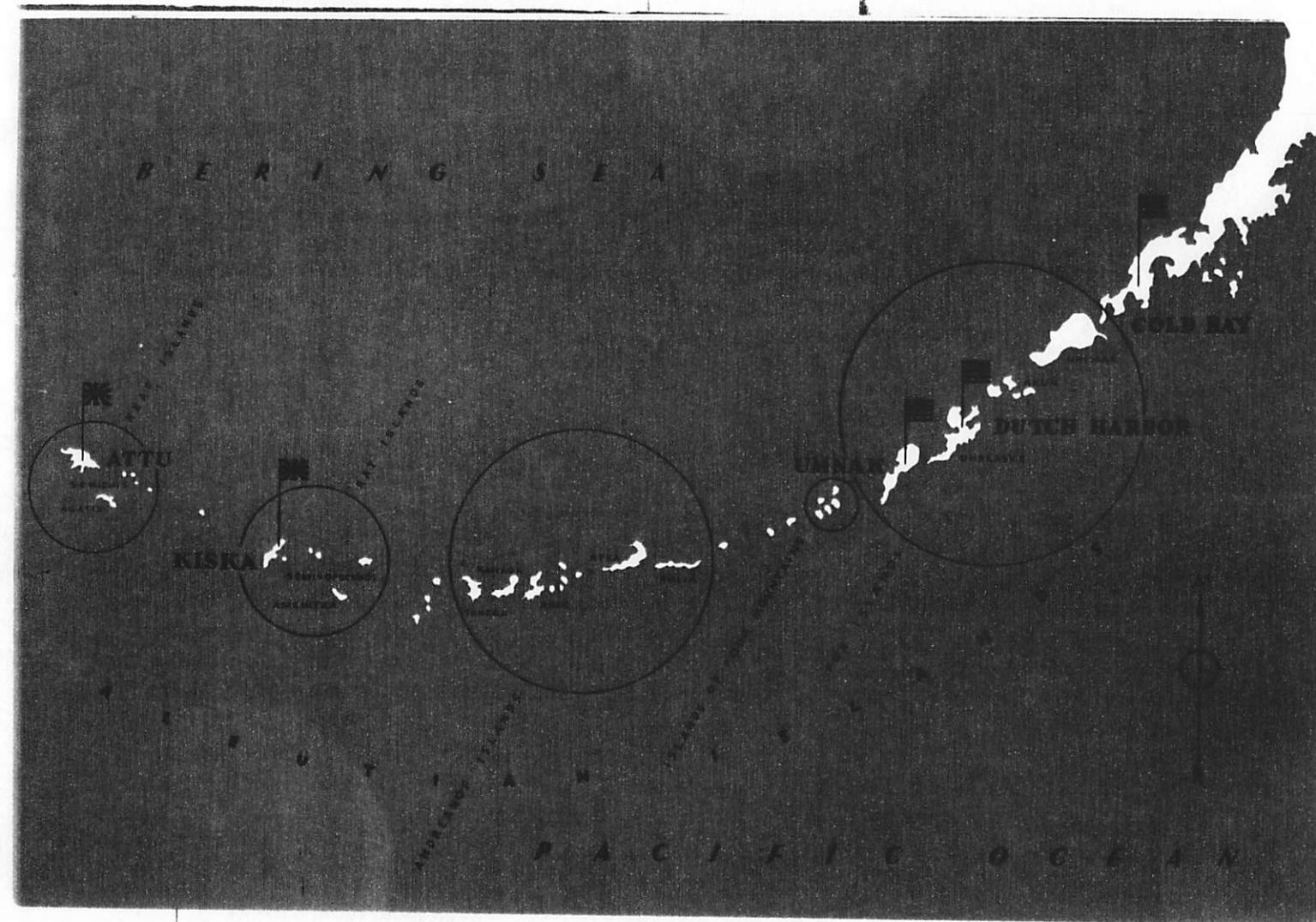


THE NAVY had a weather station on Kiska. On June 7th enemy interference was a serious annoyance. Then Japanese were seen. They made runs over Kiska, hitting a U.S. ship. The Japanese bombed a seaplane on Adak. The battle of the Aleutians was fought on islands which were suitable for landings whenever the weather permitted. The Japanese landed in Aleutian waters. On June 18th they landed on Kiska Harbor. On July 4th two U.S. warships shelled Kiska Harbor. Three, and possibly four, enemy destroyers were sunk. U. S. warships shelled Kiska Harbor. We took our first Japanese prisoners on Kiska. On August 30th U. S. forces landed on Kiska. A landing boat hit the beach at dawn. The morning. It was quiet. The Japanese were prepared for almost any kind of attack. Before they landed, news had reached the Japanese on the island. They had gotten there first. ★ And then the



ENEMY ATTACK... *Dutch Harbor bombed*

WHEN, ON DECEMBER 7, 1941 the Japanese first attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor we had, on all our Alaskan islands, only two small army posts and naval bases. One was on Kodiak Island. The other was at Dutch Harbor on Unalaska. In all wide-spread Alaska we had but six small army posts. ★ In June, 1942, the Japanese struck at Dutch Harbor. But this time they did not catch us napping. Two secret airfields had been hastily installed just east and west of Dutch Harbor. One was at Cold Bay, near the tip of the Alaska Peninsula. The other was on Umnak Island. The Blair Packing Co. and Saxton & Co., supposed to be canners of fish, were the disguises these secret airfields wore. ★ On June 2, 1942, two Japanese aircraft carriers were reported less than 400 miles south of Kiska. They were moving eastward. Bad weather fought against us there. Air reconnaissance was almost impossible. Patrol planes would find the Japanese, only to lose them again in fog and storm before bombers could be brought to the spot. Bad weather always played a part in Aleutian warfare. ★ On June 3, and again on June 4, bombers and fighters based on these carriers attacked Dutch Harbor. Bad weather fought against American and Japanese alike. All available planes of the Eleventh Air Force had been rushed to our two secret airfields. They went up to meet the Japs, who had thought our nearest airfield was on distant Kodiak. Many of the Japanese planes failed to return to their carriers. Bad weather had a lot to do with that. But that same bad weather made it impossible for our planes to destroy the Japanese carriers or their convoying warships. ★ The enemy task force withdrew from Dutch Harbor, and occupied Kiska, some 700 miles to the west. ★ War had come to the Aleutians—to a chain of islands where modern armies had never fought before. Modern armies had never fought before on *any* field that was like the Aleutians. We could borrow no knowledge from the past. We would have to learn as we went along, how to live and fight and win in this new land, the least known part of our America.



WHEN, ON DECEMBER 7, 1941 the
 all our Alaskan islands, only two
 other was at Dutch Harbor on Unalaska.
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 Two secret airfields had been built
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THE INTELLIGENCE SECTION,
HEADQUARTERS, ADK, ALASKA
OCTOBER, 1943

HENRY W. HALL, Infantry
Intelligence Officer

Layout . SGT. HARRY FLETCHER

. . . CPL. DASHIELL HAMMETT
CPL. ROBERT COLODNY

achment 29th Engineers stationed
Western Defense Command
1944

THE LOYAL COURAGE, vigorous energy and determined fortitude of our armed forces in Alaska—on land, in the air and on the water—have turned back the tide of Japanese invasion, ejected the enemy from our shores and made a fortress of our last frontier. But this is only the beginning. We have opened the road to Tokyo; the shortest, most direct and most devastating to our enemies. May we soon travel that road to victory.”



W.B. Buckneger
LIEUTENANT GENERAL, USA

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

PRODUCED BY THE INTELLIGENCE SECTION,
FIELD FORCE HEADQUARTERS, ADAK, ALASKA
OCTOBER, 1943

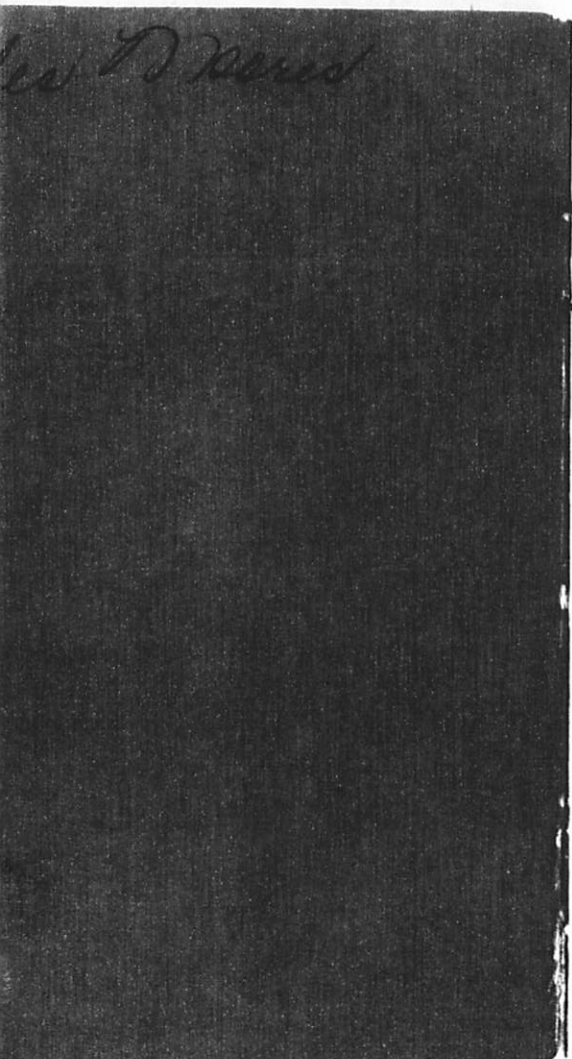
MAJOR HENRY W. HALL, Infantry
Intelligence Officer

Illustrations, maps and layout . SGT. HARRY FLETCHER

Written by CPL. DASHIELL HAMMETT
CPL. ROBERT COLODNY

Reproduction by detachment 29th Engineers stationed
with Headquarters Western Defense Command
1944

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THE BATTLE OF THE ALEUTIANS

*In honor and memory of the men of the North Pacific Theater who died
so that a continent might be free*

★ ★ ★

A chain of unsinkable aircraft carriers now stretches across the North Pacific—from the shores of Alaska to the threshold of Japan. This small book is a partial record of the men who fought for these Aleutian bases, and the men who built them into impregnable fortresses that history will remember as the Northern Highway to Victory.
