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Radio Intelligence in Japanese and American North Pacific Naval and Air Operations

STATUTORILY EXEMPT

Editor's Note: Originally this manuscript was a collection of research notes made for assisting Captain George McGinnis, USN (Ret.), in preparing a special Aleutians issue of the *NCVA Cryptolog*. However, during the course of the effort, the notes were smoothed out. The resultant product represents a unique perspective: the influence of both sides' radio intelligence efforts on the conduct of their tactical operations.

Little has been written on U.S. and Japanese operations in the northern Pacific during World War II. Brian Garfield's Thousand Mile War: World War II in Alaska and the Aleutians, *although popular and perhaps the best available account on the North Pacific during World War II, is only a cursory treatment of the subject. No official histories have been published specifically addressing this theater as a separate entity. Only the quasi-official histories, Samuel Morison's* History of United States Naval Operations in World War II *and Wesley Craven and John L. Cate's* The Army Air Force in World War II, *provide any accounts at all. The former devotes but seven chapters in separate volumes to it, while the latter provides only one. Thus, by any account it was a "forgotten war," especially after the United States retook Attu and Kiska. This is particularly true of the employment of radio intelligence (RI) in the theater, from both U.S. and Japanese naval perspectives.*

The campaign in the northern Pacific was, however, unique in several respects. It was the first U.S. offensive in World War II: its air offensive was the first to begin, preceding Guadalcanal by two months, and the first to be won. Its major events included the first sustained U.S. air campaign; the longest and last daylight naval surface battle; the first land-based U.S. bombing raids against the Japanese homeland; and, in the seizure of Attu, the U.S. Army's first amphibious assault in the Pacific war. It was also the progenitor of the concept of bypassing fortified enemy islands for later reduction, or letting them "wither on the vine," which was particularly effective in later campaigns in the central and southwest Pacific. The campaign also set the stage for the development of several tactical concepts that would later serve the United States well in other areas of the Pacific (e.g., amphibious command and control techniques).[1]

RI had a role to play throughout the campaign. This account relates, from the fragmentary materials available, RI's contributions, particularly at the height of the combat in 1942–43. It also briefly addresses RI's contributions in the theater after that period until

1. Brian Garfield, *Thousand Mile War: World War II in Alaska and the Aleutians*, pp. 307–08. Referred to hereafter as Garfield, *Thousand Mile War*.

DOCID: 3928916

the end of the war – a period about which Morison asserts that there is "little of interest to either the military or naval historian." [2]

THE U.S. NAVY RADIO INTELLIGENCE EFFORT IN THE NORTHERN PACIFIC

The U.S. Navy's RI effort is sporadically documented in the recently declassified *Special Research Histories* and *Special Individual Translations* held by the National Archives and Records Administration. These materials, supplemented by individual accounts by former Navy RI personnel, give a useful basis for interpreting, to some extent, RI's contributions.

Throughout the campaign the predominance of the U.S. Pacific Fleet's RI effort in support of Commander, Northern Pacific Forces (COMNORPACFOR/CTF-8) and its successor, Commander Northern Pacific (COMNORPAC/CTF-16, later CTF-90), was accomplished from shore activities outside the theater, such as at Naval Supplementary Radio Station (NAVSUPPRADSTA), Bainbridge Island, Washington, and Hawaii. However, hearability of Japanese communications in the northern Pacific, particularly those of a tactical nature, was inconsistent. Accordingly, with the U.S. offensive in the Aleutians in early 1943 and consequent transfer of COMNORPAC's flag from Naval Operating Base (NOB) Kodiak to Naval Air Station (NAS) Adak, a radio intelligence unit (RIU) was assigned to COMNORPAC Headquarters.[3] The RIU's function was similar to that of other mobile RIUs, except that during the seizure and occupation of Attu and Kiska (Operations LANDGRAB and COTTAGE, respectively) it remained shore based. Not until the naval shore bombardment and antishipping sweep against the Kuriles in February 1944 did elements of the RIU begin to consistently operate afloat.

The RIU's equipment consisted primarily of the standard mobile RIU inventory: a Model SX-28 Hallicrafter commercial HF/LVHF receiver, an RAZ LF receiver, and RAS-3 and NC200 HF receivers. It also had a Type LM-11 frequency meter for frequency measurements, RIP-5 Underwood code machines to copy traffic, and a TBK-11 .5 Kw HF transmitter for communications.[4]

With this equipment, and both from the technical data it derived locally and from that provided by Fleet Radio Unit Pacific (FRUPAC), the RIU was able to accomplish its primary functions: monitoring known Japanese naval and military circuits in the northern Pacific for indications and warning of their actions and ascertaining Japanese foreknowledge of U.S. naval activities. Unfortunately, the RIU's inability to tip the Mid-Pacific High Frequency Direction Finding (HFDF) Net or to obtain net reports in a timely manner hindered its effectiveness in the critical phases of LANDGRAB and COTTAGE.

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2. Samuel E. Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, Vol. VII, *Aleutians, Gilberts, and Marshalls: June 1942–June 1944*, p. 66. Referred to hereafter as Morrison, *Aleutians*.

3. Unpublished manuscript of Ernest J. Beath.

4. Memorandum dated 22 July 1943; to CDR Huckins; subject: Report on General Activity of RI Unit attached to COMNORPAC; s/Ernest B. Beath. Document contained in SRH-317, *Pacific Fleet Mobile Radio Intelligence Unit Reports: 1943*, pp. 28–37. Referred to hereafter as SRH-317.

DOCID: 3928916

During the summer of 1943 the RIU began monitoring the Mid-Pacific HFDF Report Net, which alleviated the problem somewhat and assisted later COMNORPAC operations.[5]

Throughout the war there were Navy radio direction finding (RDF) sites based in Alaska.[6] Initially they were at NAS Sitka, NOB Kodiak, and NOB Dutch Harbor. Because of net configurations, HFDF support to COMNORPACFOR and its successor, COMNORPAC, was indirect. Sitka and Kodiak were part of the West Coast HFDF Net, with NAVSUPPRADSTA, Bainbridge, as net control. Dutch Harbor and Sitka were part of the Mid-Pacific HFDF Net, with Hawaii as net control.

Equipment at these sites varied over time, with constant improvements and expansion of facilities. However, from 1942 to 1944 the sites were usually equipped with RB-series receivers, a DAB HFDF set, and a TBK-11 transmitter for communications.

With the progressive movement of the conflict toward the western Pacific, RDF site locations and functions changed. Environmental conditions caused the RDF site at Dutch Harbor to be moved to Naval Air Facility (NAF) Otter Point, Umnak Island, on 22 July 1943. Another site was established at NAF Amchitka in early 1943. The Sitka and Kodiak sites were deemed excess to fleet support requirements and were transferred to the U.S. Coast Guard on 15 July 1944 for use in search and rescue operations.

THE JAPANESE RI EFFORT IN THE NORTH PACIFIC

Certain RI capabilities were of tactical value to the Japanese commanders in the northern Pacific throughout the war. Unfortunately, information about them is fragmentary, usually contained as remarks by Japanese army and naval officers in postwar interrogations or as by-products of studies made of other aspects of Japanese army and naval operations. Revisiting this material sees a story emerge that, when taken in the context of the overall Japanese northern naval operations, reveals an RI effort closely analogous to the U.S. Navy's effort in the region. To better follow the description of the effort, refer to the map.

The Paramushiro Communications Unit had the distinction of being the only Japanese Navy (JN) RI shore activity that was specifically targeted against U.S. communications in the Aleutian Islands and Alaska.[7] However, its primary function was communications, and in that capacity its functions varied. At first it was attached to 12th Air Fleet as its Air Base Force Communications Unit when 24th Air Flotilla units

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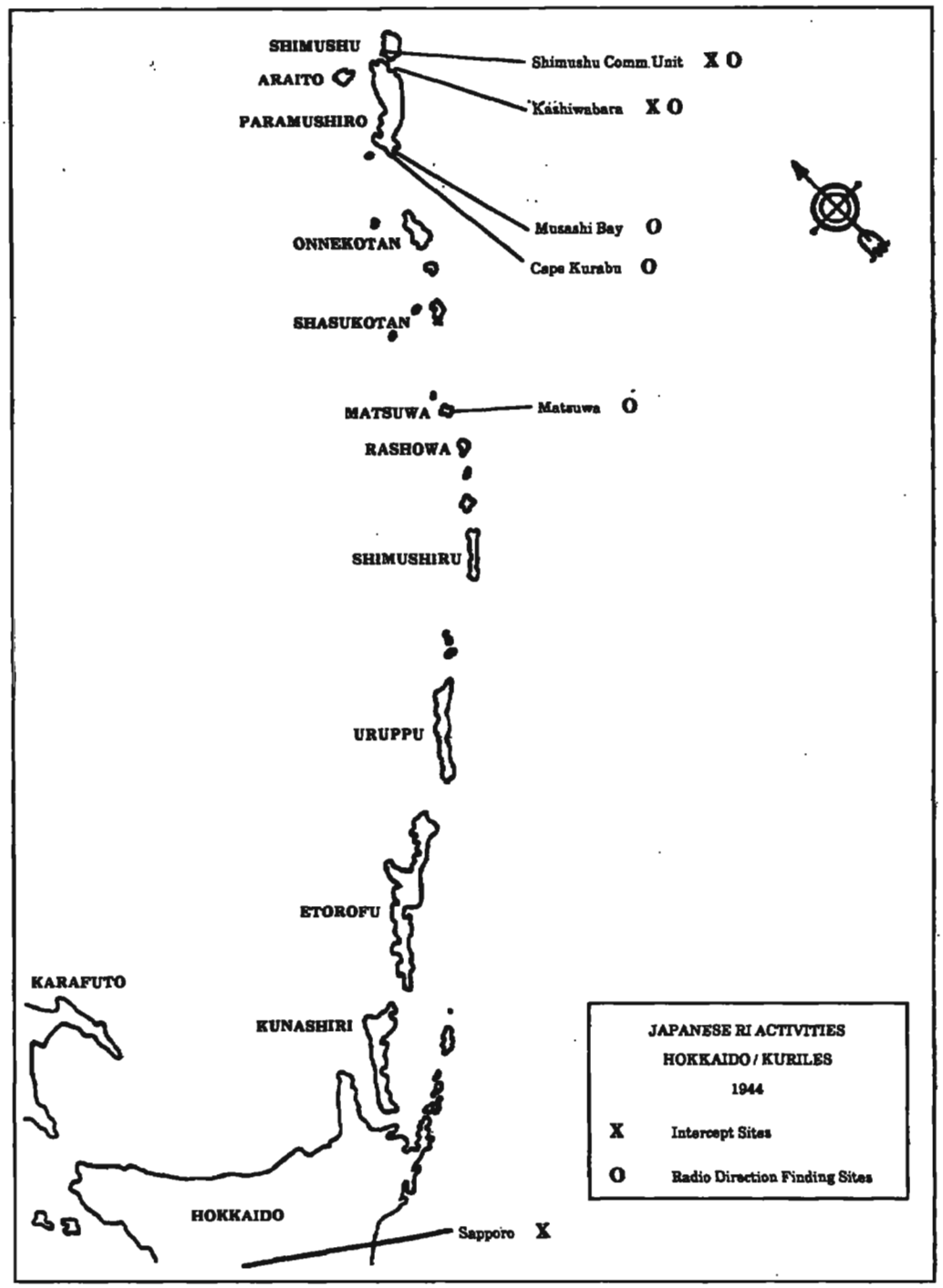
5. Memorandum serial A8-2 (3) dated 11 October 1943; to CDR T. A. Huckins; subject: Report of RI Activities; s/Ernest B. Beath. Document contained in SRH-317, pp. 145–72.

6. Information on U.S. Navy HFDF sites extracted from SRH-295, *U.S. Naval HFDF Station, Sitka, Alaska*; SRH-303, *Navy Supplementary Radio Station Otter Point, Umnak, Alaska*; and SRH-352, *U.S. Navy Radio Station Dutch Harbor, Unalaska, Alaska.*

7. Japanese Research Section, Military History Division, General Headquarters, Far East Command, Monograph No. 118, *Operational History of Naval Communications: December 1941–August 1985, Japanese Studies in World War II*, p. 7. Document series hereafter referred to as J.R.S. Mono, and this monograph as J.R.S. Mono 118.


SHIMUSHU
ARAITO
PARAMUSHIRO
Shimushu Comm Unit X O
Kashiwabara X O
Musashi Bay O
Cape Kurabu O
ONNEKOTAN
SHASUKOTAN
MATSUWA
Matsuwa O
RASHOWA
SHIMUSHIRU
URUPPU
ETOROFU
KARAFUTO
KUNASHIRI
HOKKAIDO
Sapporo X
JAPANESE RI ACTIVITIES
HOKKAIDO / KURILES
1944
X Intercept Sites
O Radio Direction Finding Sites

DOCID: 3928916

deployed in force to the northern Kuriles in May 1943. On 1 April 1944, it was transferred to the Northeast Area Fleet's Kuriles Base Force and redesignated the "Shimushu" Communications Unit. It was a "Specially Established Unit"; in other words, it was activated in addition to the peacetime supporting establishment.[8]

The activity was composed of the unit itself, situated at the Kataoka Transmitting Station on Shimushu, and two detachments: one at Musashi Bay on southern Paramushiro, and the other, farther south, on Matsuwa. Aside from its RI role, Kataoka was also an RDF activity. The two subordinate detachments were RDF activities only. Musashi, however, acted as RDF net control. All three RDF activities used the Type 93 HFDF equipment, but Musashi and Matsuwa also possessed Types 93 No. 1 (LF) and 89 (MF) DF equipment. With respect to receiving equipment, the Kataoka facility was listed as having 15 Type 92 No. 4 special purpose receivers for intercept and RDF, while Musashi and Matsuwa had 6 receivers each for RDF only. RDF activity communications were accomplished via HF, using Type 95 No. 3, 1KW transmitters.

Shimushu's RI operations were conducted against targets assigned to it by the 1st Combined Communications Unit, as well as those developed locally. Results of this intercept were forwarded to the Owada Communications Unit for processing, including cryptanalysis within capabilities, at the Special Section, 4th Department of the Naval Ministry. There, the information received from Shimushu and other sites was fused and disseminated by the Tokyo Communications Unit.[9]

JN mobile RIUs were formed from elements of shore-based RI activities and operated afloat either aboard capital or other designated ships. They were usually smaller than comparable U.S. Navy mobile RIUs, and they operated from either dedicated RI spaces aboard the larger ships or through shared use of radio receiving spaces in others.[10] Their function was similar to that of the U.S. Navy mobile RIUs: monitoring known U.S. naval and military circuits in the northern Pacific for indications and warning of impending tactical actions, primarily through U.S. patrol aircraft and submarine traffic, as well as ascertaining U.S. Navy foreknowledge of planned and ongoing JN naval operations.

Within the northern Pacific, JN RI elements were deployed with the Northern Force in the initial Aleutian offensive of 1942 and, most likely, ashore with the 51st Communications Unit until the Kiska evacuation of 1943. Also, beginning in March 1944 mobile RIUs, each consisting of a Special Duty Group petty officer and three seamen, were assigned to escort flagships of Kuriles and other convoys to avoid American submarines and detect patrol aircraft. Ominato Minor Naval Guard District was reinforced with

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8. J.R.S. Mono 116, *The Imperial Japanese Navy in World War II*, pp. 42 and 57 (referred to hereafter as J.R.S. Mono 116); and CINCPAC-CINCPOA Bulletin 5-45 dated 1 January 1945, subject: Japanese Radio Communications and Radio Intelligence, p. 3. Latter document released as SRH-211, same subject and referred to hereafter as SRH-211.

9. J.R.S. Mono 118, pp. 7, 9–10, and 25–27; and David Kahn, *The Codebreakers: The Story of Secret Writing*, pp. 579–82. Latter source referred to hereafter as Kahn, *The Codebreakers*.

10. J.R.S. Mono 118, p. 108.

several of these teams. Generally, these surface escort RIUs were adjudged to be successful, but escort commanders could not use them to the fullest extent because the escorts usually were not equipped with HFDF.[11]

No discussion of Japanese RI efforts in the northern Pacific would be complete without reference to the Japanese Army (JA) RI effort, since it came to the fore in the air defense of the Kuriles and continued until the end of the war. There were two fixed sites in the islands north of Hokkaido: Kamisikuka on Karafuto (the lower half of present-day Sakhalin Island) and Kashiwabara on the northeastern coast of Paramushiro.[12] Until 15 March 1944 these sites were under the command of the Northern Army at Sapporo, Hokkaido. After that date, with the reorganization and redesignation of the garrison Northern Area Army to the operational 5th Area Army, the sites came under the latter's headquarters, specifically its Special Intelligence Bureau.

Until May 1944 two JA RI units were at Kamisikuka, one whose focus was on Soviet Far East ground and air forces in the Sikhote-Alin, northern Sakhalin and Kamchatka areas, and another whose focus was on USN and USAAF air forces in the Aleutians. During May, the unit with the responsibility for U.S. targets was moved to North Hiroshima near Sapporo and commenced operations there.

The Kashiwabara site was both an intercept facility and an RDF activity, with at least one subordinate HFDF detachment at Cape Kurabu on the southern tip of Paramushiro. Kashiwabara was HFDF net control.[13] Available materials indicate that their function was similar to that of an RIU: monitoring known U.S. naval and military circuits in the Aleutians for indications and warning of impending tactical actions against the Kuriles.

Unlike the centralized JN RI effort, traffic analysis and limited cipher solution within capabilities were performed at the intercept sites as well as at the Sapporo headquarters. Results were routinely exchanged between sites and Sapporo and with Tanashi, the central location for JA RI activities. There is also evidence that Kashiwabara cooperated in its RI activities with its JN counterpart at Shimushu.[14]

Thus setting the stage, the following discussion relates, from the fragmentary resources available, RI's contributions to northern Pacific operations.[15]

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11. J.R.S. Mono 118, pp. 216–17 and 222.

12. Chief Signal Officer, Signals Security Agency, *Japanese Signal Intelligence Service*, 3rd ed., 1 November 1944, pp. 13, 14, and 43. Document released as SRH-266 and referred to hereafter as that.

13. SRH-266, p. 43.

14. SRH-266, p. 38; and Kahn, *The Codebreakers*, p. 584.

15. For consistency this article uses Time Zone WHISKEY, which was the time used by U.S. and Allied forces in the Aleutians Campaign. This equates to West Longitude dates, zone plus ten hours. The Japanese used Time Zone INDIA (East Longitude dates and Tokyo time, zone minus nine). Both times were widely at variance with local sun time, as the critical meridian of zone plus ten is 150W. Any incorrect conversions are the fault of the author.

DOCID: 3928916

RI IN THE ALEUTIANS OPERATION

On 5 May 1942 Imperial General Navy Headquarters (IGNHQ) issued Directive No. 18, which was the culmination of earlier discussions on the future strategy of the "Greater East Asia Operations." The objective was to bring about a rapid end to the conflict by continuous offensive action outside the already occupied areas. During the planning discussions, Midway, the Aleutians, Fiji, Samoa, and New Caledonia were studied as the main targets to be assaulted and seized during the next stage, designated the "Second Phase."

Directive No. 94 initiated the Aleutian operations. It stated that the operational objective was to seize and destroy points of strategic value in the western Aleutians to check American air and naval activities in the northern Pacific. Adak was to be raided by a joint Army and Special Naval Landing Force, and any American installations there were to be destroyed. Following withdrawal from Adak, Kiska and Attu were to be occupied and held over the winter of 1942–1943. Prior to these amphibious operations, and to inhibit any U.S. reaction to them, NOB Dutch Harbor would be attacked by a carrier task force.[16]

Operations orders, which included composition, deployment, and employment details for the Northern Force, were issued on 12 and 24 May.[17] At about this time the Combined Fleet issued its communications plan for the operation. There was an RI portion to it, which stated that emphasis would be directed towards use of the data of the 1st Combined Communications Unit. In addition, with respect to the Northern Force, mobile RIUs aboard both carriers of the Second Mobile Task Force, *Junyo* and *Ryujo*, were tasked to provide tactical threat warning to the task group. *Junyo* was designated to coordinate the effort.[18]

The Northern Force departed Japan in three groups on 25 and 26 May. It proceeded directly to the Aleutians under "TE KE HA" (Strict Radio Silence), a medium-level Emission Control (EMCON) procedure wherein all message traffic other than that absolutely necessary for operations was prohibited.[19]

As we know, during the latter part of May the U.S. Pacific Fleet was already aware of Japanese intentions for Second Phase Operations. Admiral Nimitz had deployed his meager forces accordingly and was awaiting the Combined Fleet's multipronged assault.[20] As part of his preparations, he dispatched five cruisers, thirteen destroyers, and six

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16. J.R.S. Mono 88, *Aleutians Naval Operation: March 1942–February 1943*, pp. 8–10. Referred to hereafter as J.R.S. Mono 88.

17. J.R.S. Mono 88, p. 10–11.

18. J.R.S. Mono 118, pp. 262–64.

19. J.R.S. Mono 118, p. 41.

20. For an excellent treatment of Admiral Nimitz's appreciation of and decisions made from RI information during April–June 1942, see Henry F. Schorreck's article "The Role of COMINT in the Battle of Midway," contained in Summer 1975 issue of *Cryptologic Spectrum* (U), pp. 3–11. This article has been released as SRH-320, same subject.

submarines to the northern Pacific to augment the existing light forces in the Alaska Sector. Rear Admiral Theobald, designated COMNORPAC/CTF-8, was Officer in Tactical Command (OTC).[21]

Prior to the JN-25 fleet cryptographic system change of 28 May, which temporarily halted U.S. RI success,[22] enough information was gleaned on the Aleutian operation for the following RI-based message to be sent to CTF-8 on 282153 May:

FM: CINCPAC

TO: CTF 8

INFO: COMNORWESTSEAFRON

COMINCH

TASK ORANGE NORTHERN FORCE INDICATED TO SEIZE AND SECURE ADVANCED SEAPLANE AND NAVAL OPERATING BASES IN ALEUTIANS (KISKA OCCUPATION FORCE DESIGNATED PLUS OCCUPATION FORCE FOR ANOTHER PLACE POSSIBLY ATTU) X INDICATED STRENGTH ONE NACHI, TWO MAYA, ONE RYUJO, ONE XEV, ONE ABUKUMA, ONE KUMA, FOUR HIBIKI, EIGHT SHIGURE, ONE CHITOSE, 2-3 XAV, 8 SS PLUS TRAIN TRANSPORTS CARGO VESSELS X ORANGE HEAVY BOMBERS WILL BASE AT HOROMUSHIRO AND PARAMUSHIRO ISLAND KURILES FOR RECONNAISSANCE AND SUPPORT.[23]

Rear Admiral Theobald, while accepting the Northern Force strength, did not accept that the undefended and lightly inhabited western Aleutians would be the primary target. Rather, he believed that the JN effort would be against Dutch Harbor. He disposed his forces accordingly, moving the main body of TF-8 400 nm south of Dutch Harbor to "back door" the Northern Force. TG-8.1, his Air Search Group, consisting of 20 PBYs, would cover the intervening approaches to Dutch Harbor.[24]

As history has borne out, Rear Admiral Theobald's disregard of Japanese intentions partly resulted in the Northern Force's success. It should be noted, however, that a critical part of the Northern Force mission was missing in the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC) message: the task to raid Dutch Harbor to cover the western Aleutians amphibious operations. As a result, aided by abominable weather conditions (for both sides), the Second Mobile Task Force slipped in between TF-8 and Dutch Harbor and

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21. Samuel E. Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, Vol. IV, *Coral Sea, Midway, and Submarine Actions: 1942–June 1944*, p. 166. Referred to hereafter as Morison, *Coral Sea*.

22. SRH-230, p. 10. The "D" or "RO" system was the principal Combined Fleet cryptographic system employed in JN tactical operations. The U.S. Navy's success in exploiting this system, which it designated as "JN-25," is well documented. See Kahn, *The Codebreakers*, pp. 563–89, for a description of the system as well as an account from declassified and unclassified sources of the U.S. Navy's exploitation of it.

23. CINCPAC message 282153 May 1942 to CTF-8. Contained in SRMN-004, *OP-20G File of CINCPAC Intelligence Bulletins: 16 March–June 1942*, p. 108.

24. Morison, *Coral Sea*, p. 170.

DOCID: 3928916

carried out a two-day strike. Further, although the Adak amphibious raid was canceled, the Kiska and Attu occupations proceeded without incident.[25]

Although operationally successful, Northern Force participants' observations on overall intelligence support were less than laudatory. However, there are fragments of JN RI contributions to the operation. On 3 June the Owada Communications Unit reported to the Northern Force that intercept and HFDF indicated that three to four U.S. warships were at Kodiak, one of which was thought to be a light cruiser; in the vicinity of Dutch Harbor, there were also three to four ships, including a "powerful warship." This report apparently was the sole piece of RI-derived information on Rear Admiral Theobald's TF-8, which was assembling in the area prior to the attacks. Of note is that the light cruiser in Kodiak equated to USS *Nashville* (CL-43), Theobald's flagship, which had arrived there on 27 May.[26]

Also of note is the success that was achieved by Second Mobile Task Force RIUs in support of the Dutch Harbor strikes. During the morning of 3 June, a TG-8.1 PBY, deployed from the forward base at Unmak, approached the vicinity of the task force. Although it was using its airborne radar for surface search, heavy overcast and squalls prevented any indication of the carrier task force. The PBY's reconnaissance reports were intercepted by the *Ryujo* RIU. *Ryujo*'s Communications Officer reported that "the sensitivity of the radiotelephone from the enemy flying boat was maximum, and it was certain the aircraft was overhead, above the overcast." Based on this information, *Junyo*'s combat air patrol (CAP) was vectored to this location and shot down the PBY.[27]

The following day, another PBY located the task force at 0650W, transmitted a contact report, and attempted to bomb one of the carriers. However, it was driven off by antiaircraft fire. At the time of this activity, two other PBYs were circling Unimak Pass waiting for clearance to land with torpedoes that they were ferrying to Unimak. They intercepted the 0650W report and proceeded immediately to the reported location. At around 1100W, they relocated the task force and began tracking its movements. The JN RIUs aboard the carriers intercepted their 1100W contact report and were thus aware of their presence. At around 1200W one of the PBYs positioned itself for a lone attack through a break in the overcast. *Ryujo* ascertained the PBY's intention and alerted the task force to its approach. The aircraft was engaged by antiaircraft as it attempted to

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25. Morison, *Coral Sea*, pp. 166 and 180–81.

26. Interrogation of CDR Mastake Okumiya, IJN, "Aleutians Campaign: Carrier Attack on Dutch Harbor," (USSBS No. 97), p. 96 (referred to hereafter as USSBS No. 97); and J.R.S. Mono 88, p. 31. A summary treatment of the Japanese intelligence situation and of its efforts to rectify its shortcomings with regard to the AL Operation is contained in the Mono on pp. 29–31.

27. USSBS No. 97, p. 94; and J.R.S. Mono 118, p. 270. For additional information regarding the PBY shootdown, see Interrogations of LTJG Wylie M. Hunt, USNR, and AERM1/C William C. House, USN, "Aleutians Campaign: Japanese Second Mobile Force and the Kiska Garrison," (USSBS No. 606).

DOCID: 3928916

make a torpedo run on the *Junyo* and, although severely damaged in the attack, managed to return to base. The *Junyo* was not hit.[28]

RI IN THE RESUPPLY EFFORTS AND BATTLE OF THE KOMONDORSKIS

All Japanese accounts regarded the effort of resupplying their garrisons on Attu and Kiska as the most difficult phase of their Aleutian operations. It represented a continuing drain on resources that they could ill afford. In the period between the occupation of the islands in June 1942 and the Battle of the Komondorskis in March 1943, the JN Fifth Fleet lost through American submarine, surface and air action three destroyers and seven merchant ships, the latter totaling 33,000 tons. Three additional destroyers and one merchant ship sustained severe damage.

Nonetheless, resupply efforts did make it through the tightening ring U.S. forces established around the islands. As an example, between 1 November 1942 and 20 February 1943, 18 of 21 ships succeeded in delivering their cargoes, despite almost incessant attacks by USAAF and USN aircraft on the Japanese installations on the islands.[29]

To facilitate the runs into the islands, Japanese ships used a novel tactic based on RI.[30] From their experience they determined that, generally, American aircraft patrolled 15-degree sectors out to a radius of 600 nm from Adak, and later Amchitka. Accordingly, when the ships arrived at the 600 nm radii from those locations, the Japanese monitored U.S. patrol aircraft frequencies to determine from the airborne planes which sectors were not being patrolled or when the aircraft were commencing their return legs to base. The resupply ships then began their runs into Attu or Kiska either through the uncovered sectors or through a patrolled sector behind the American aircraft as they returned to base. Arrivals at Kiska or Attu were planned for evening hours, with an overnight off-load and a departure before daylight. The outboard route for the resupply ships was selected in

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28. J.R.S. Mono 118, p. 271.

29. Interrogation of CDR Shigefuso Hashimoto, IJN, "Aleutians Campaign and Defense of Kuriles: Planning and Operations from November 1942 to August 1945" (USSBS No. 102), p. 115 (referred to hereafter as USSBS No. 102); Interrogation of CDR Nifumi Mukai, IJN, "Aleutians Campaign: Occupation of Kiska, the Kiska Garrison, and Operations in the Kuriles" (USSBS No. 99), p. 105 (referred to hereafter as USSBS No. 99); and Interrogation of LTC Kazume Fujii, IJA, "Aleutians Campaign: Japanese Army Garrisons on Attu and Kiska" (USSBS No. 408), p. 369 (referred to hereafter as USSBS No. 408).

30. Interrogation of CAPT Rokuji Arichika, IJN, "Aleutians Campaign: Operations of the Japanese First Destroyer Squadron" (USSBS No. 367), pp. 303–04. Referred to hereafter as USSBS No. 367.

DOCID: 3928916

the same manner for the run-in, aided by continuous reports provided by the two JN Mark I Type 1 early warning radars of the 51st Communications Unit at Kiska.[31] The system worked reasonably well through January 1943, and ships were attacked in harbor only when they could not depart by daybreak.

However, by February 1943 the situation altered drastically and made further resupply by the previous means impractical. The reason for this was twofold. The full operation of the new U.S. air base at Amchitka, only 60 nm from Kiska, made Kiska Harbor subject to bombing attacks several times daily; more importantly, COMNORPAC's shore bombardment of Attu and antishipping sweep in mid-February were successful.[32]

Vice Admiral Hosogaya, Commander-in-Chief JN Fifth Fleet, therefore decided to use high-speed transports, escorted by all available Fifth Fleet surface combatants. These convoys, designated "Urgent Transport of the A Operation," had the dual objectives of resupplying the islands as well as engaging and destroying COMNORPAC forces in surface action.[33]

The first convoy was conducted between 8 and 14 March with the 17-knot transports *Asaka Maru* and *Sakito Maru*, escorted by the heavy cruisers *Nachi* and *Maya*, the light cruisers *Abukuma* and *Tama*, and six destroyers from JN Destroyer Squadron One (temporarily attached to JN Fifth Fleet as convoy escort). It arrived at Holtz Bay, Attu,

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31. The type of radar used by Kiska's 51st Communications Unit was identified through the first USAAF use of a FERRET. Following a photoreconnaissance mission of Kiska, a USAAF aircraft returned with photographs of a pair of unusual structures at one of the Japanese positions. It was thought the structures might be radar sets, and an obvious way to confirm this was to fly an aircraft through the area carrying one or more intercept receivers. USAAF Headquarters embarked on a crash program to specifically modify an aircraft for this role. Under the project code named "FERRET," a B-24D Liberator was rapidly converted during December 1942 and January 1943, having installed in it a SCR-587, modified to tune down to 30 MHz; a S27 Hallicrafters commercial receiver; homing antennas; and a breadboard model of a pulse analyzer, built by the Naval Research Laboratory. In early February the B-24 flew to Adak under the deployment designation Operation BEAVER I. On 6 March it took off on its first operational mission, lasting five hours. During that mission, transmissions were intercepted from both radars. After the initial intercept, the aircraft then circled the island at different altitudes to ascertain gaps in the radars' coverage. Two additional missions further refined coverage information. After the third mission, a contour map of the radar coverage was formulated and provided to 11th Air Force Headquarters. Based upon this information, an air strike was launched on 16 March. However, it failed to destroy the radars. For some time thereafter, the radars although repeatedly targeted, continued to operate. Alfred Price, *The History of Warfare*, Vol. I, *The Years of Innovation: Beginnings to 1946*, pp. 51–55. One Japanese Army officer observed after the war that the radar warning from the radar sites was good. They acquired U.S. aircraft almost as soon as they took off from NAF Amchitka – well within the radars' 90 nm range. USSBS No. 408, p. 369.

32. J.R.S. Mono 88, p. 80.

33. Interrogation of CDR Mastake Okumiya, IJN, "Aleutians Campaign: The Japanese Historical Account of the Naval Battle Fought off the Komondorski Islands," (USSBS No. 438), pp. 399–400. Referred to hereafter as USSBS No. 438.

DOCID: 3928916

during the evening of 10 March, with the transports off-loading in less than two hours. On both sides of Attu, the surface combatants stood by but met no opposition. The force then retired to Paramushiro without incident.[34]

It is interesting to note that at 1000W on 10 May Ominato Communications Unit broadcast a message for the 51st Communications Unit at Kiska and the Paramushiro Communications Unit to maintain radio silence. This remained in effect only until 1130W, after which Kiska resumed originating traffic. This unusual activity implied that JN offensive activity in the Aleutians was possible. Accordingly, COMNORPACFOR sent the following message:

FM: CTF-8 102040 MARCH 1943
TO: TF-8
ULTRA X ABOUT 10 HOURS WILLIAM (PLUS 10) OMINATO DIRECTED BODDLE [KISKA] AND HOROMUSHIRO TO SECURE RADIO X ALL FORCES FROM INCUBUS [ ] WESTWARD BE ALERT FOR DEVELOPMENTS X NO CHANGE IN PLANNED OPERATIONS IS REQUIRED AT PRESENT.[35]

One can conjecture that evidence was there in the intercept. However, without specific reference to it in Japanese communications, it is difficult, even with the hindsight afforded by history, to equate the information to the First Urgent Transport.

On 24 March the JN Fifth Fleet, with an identical organization as before but with an additional transport, *Sanko Maru*, departed for another run to Attu.[36] This time, the United States was alerted to the operation when the following message was intercepted. As first translated it read as follows:

FM: SON 0 240326 MARCH 1943
TO: EME 0
KEHI 6
INFO: HITU 4
HAYO 4
1. SOMETHING ABOUT 6 VESSELS AT AQ [ATTU] AND AQ [BLANK].
2. COMMANDER #51 BASE FORCE CONFER WITH STAFF OF (. . . . .) AT ATTU, EMBARKED IN [BLANK] ARRIVE AT ATTU ON X-DAY. GET TOGETHER REGARDING TRANSPORTATION BY SUBMARINE OF [BLANK]. MAKE PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION.

34. USSBS No. 408, p. 367; and USSBS No. 367, p. 104.

35. CINCPAC Intelligence Bulletin of 27 March 1943, contained in SRH-287, *Radio Intelligence in World War II Tactical Operations in the Pacific* (Appendix): *March 1943*, pp. 337–339. Referred to hereafter as SRH-287.

36. USSBS No. 367, p. 104; and USSBS No. 438, p. 399.

DOCID: 3928916

As a result of the foregoing translation, CINCPAC sent the following message to CTF 16:

FM: CINCPAC 261953 MARCH 1943
TO: CTF 16
ULTRA X 6 VESSELS BELIEVED EN ROUTE TO ATTU X COMMANDER KISKA BASE WILL CONFER WITH A STAFF MEMBER PRESUMABLY ABOARD ONE OF ABOVE VESSELS X CONFERENCE WILL DEAL WITH TRANSPORTATION OF SOMETHING OR SOMEBODY BY SUBMARINE X THE VESSELS ARRIVE X-DAY AS YET UNKNOWN.

Further work on the intercepted message revealed a substantive change in the particulars and provided the first indication of Fifth Fleet involvement:

FM: SON 0 240326 MARCH 1943
TO: EME 0
KEHI 6
INFO: HITU 4
HAYO 4
FROM COMMANDER NORTHERN FORCE. OPERATION ORDER # [BLANK]
1. NORTHERN FORCE WILL PROVIDE ESCORT FOR (. . . . .), (. . . . .), AND (. . . . .), LANDING AT ATTU AND AQ [BLANK] ON X-DAY [SCHEDULED FOR 25 MARCH]. ON X PLUS 1 DAY CARRY OUT [BLANK] IN SAID [BLANK]. THEREAFTER SUBMARINES WILL TAKE OVER THE TRANSPORTATION FROM ATTU TO KISKA.
2. COMMANDER #51 BASE FORCE CONFER WITH STAFF OF (. . . . .) (ARRIVING AT ATTU ON X-DAY IN (. . . . .) REGARDING DETAILS OF SUB TRANSPORT AND, MEANWHILE, MAKE ALL NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS.

This retranslation caused CINCPAC's original message to be amended:

FM CINCPAC 261953 MARCH 1943
TO: CTF 16
CINCPACS ULTRA X REFER MY ULTRA 252159 X 3 MARUS ESCORTED BY UNKNOWN UNITS WERE DUE ATTU 26 MARCH EAST LONGITUDE DATE X 1 MARU WAS TO GO UNIDENTIFIED PLACE NEAR ATTU X CONFERENCE WAS TO ARRANGE DETAILS TRANSPORTATION FROM ATTU TO KISKA USING SUBMARINES.[37]

CTF 16 directed TG 16.6, consisting of the heavy cruiser USS *Salt Lake City* (CA-25), the light cruiser USS *Richmond* (CL-9), and four destroyers, to place itself in a blocking position west of Attu. Rear Admiral McMorris, CTG 16.6, later confessed that he anticipated a "Roman Holiday" when he encountered the resupply ships. He had no idea of the strength of the escort, but on the morning of 26 March he found out when both forces met in Soviet territorial waters near the Komondorski Islands. McMorris later stated in his after-action report that "the situation had now clarified . . . but it had also radically and unpleasantly changed." A running surface engagement, called the Battle of the Komondorskis, ensued and lasted over four hours.[38]

37. CINCPAC Intelligence Bulletin of 27 March 1943, contained in SRH-287, pp. 337–39.

38. For details of the engagement, see Morison, *Aleutians*, pp. 22–36.

DOCID: 3928916

Morison minimizes a detail from Japanese accounts that is significant in understanding Vice Admiral Hosogaya's decision to halt the convoy attempt and retire to Paramushiro.[39] When Rear Admiral McMorris alerted COMNORPAC, USAAF support could not be provided rapidly because all available ready B-24 and B-25 aircraft at Adak and Amchitka were scheduled for a strike against Kiska and had been configured with general-purpose bombs. To reconfigure for an antishipping strike required rearmament of all aircraft with armor-piercing bombs, as well as the installation of long-range auxiliary tanks in the B-25s. This involved a considerable effort while the battle raged. Topping off the delay was the fact that, when the aircraft were ready, a two-hour snow squall hit Adak. Finally, three B-25s, escorted by eight P-38 fighters, departed Amchitka at 1326W, and thirteen B-24s and eight B-25s departed Adak ten minutes later.[40]

At some point before the departure of these aircraft, Kiska's 51st Communications Unit ascertained through intercept that "10 plus U.S. aircraft were taking off from AQM [Japanese designation for Kuluk Bay, Adak]." This information was relayed at about 1130W to the JN Fifth Fleet. It was calculated that it would take the aircraft approximately three hours to cover the 550 nm between Adak and their position. Advised of this and aware of the inconclusive nature of the running surface battle as well as a shortage of fuel and armor-piercing ammunition, Vice Admiral Hosogaya broke off the battle at 1204W. The USAAF bombers did not sight the JN ships during their mission and returned to base.[41]

The Battle of the Komondorskis, the last classic surface action in naval history, was essentially a draw. It was one of the few battles in which RI played a role in the events that led to it, as well as those that caused its termination. It is also instructive to note that the U.S. naval task force established itself in its blocking position based on intentions as noted in the ULTRA dispatches. Both of these messages, however, were based on incomplete analysis of one message. They failed to address the strength and composition of the Japanese convoy escorts. Rear Admiral McMorris and others believed what they wanted to believe from their knowledge and experience of past Japanese northern Pacific convoy operations in which the escort, if any, was light. It was only through its superior seamanship, and the Japanese commander's lack of aggressiveness, that the U.S. task force was able to extricate itself from a very precarious situation.

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39. Morison, *Aleutians*, p. 32.

40. COMNORPAC Message 270810 March 1943 contained in SRH-287, p. 377.

41. USSBS No. 102, p. 112; USSBS No. 367, p. 305; USSBS No. 438, p. 400; and J.R.S. Mono 88, p. 81. The following part of a JN Fifth Fleet message to Combined Fleet on the Komondorskis engagement (Battle Report No. 25, DTG 272239 March 1943), intercepted by U.S. Navy RI, is also germane:

> . . . (BLANKS) THE DEPARTURE OF PLANES FROM THE AIR BASE AT AQM (KULUK BAY) (BLANKS) FLED TO THE EAST.
>
> AFTER THAT, THE FLEET PICKED UP OUR CONVOY AND RETURNED TO NGC (PARAMUSHIRO STRAIT) TO ESCAPE ATTACK BY ENEMY PLANES.

CINCPAC Intelligence Bulletin of 27 March 1943, contained in SRH-287, p. 381.

DOCID: 3928916

RI IN THE SEIZURE AND OCCUPATION OF ATTU

Between 11 and 29 May 1943, COMNORPAC conducted its first amphibious assault when it seized Attu. The assault's objectives were to construct airfields on the island in order to sever Japanese lines of communication to the western Aleutians; to deny the Near Islands to the Japanese; to render continued Japanese occupation of Kiska untenable; and to establish a base of operations for the future reduction and occupation of Kiska.[42]

Upon arrival in the amphibious objective area, the Navy had planned two landings for the 11th: a main assault at Massacre Bay on the southern coast and a subsidiary assault on the northeastern coast. The subsidiary assault was scheduled first, when elements of the assault force's Provisional Scout Battalion were to be landed at Austin Cove (near Holtz Bay) at 0300W. Follow-on forces were to land at Holtz Bay by 0500W. Then, at 0800W, the main assault was to be conducted at Massacre Bay.

Foggy weather and the complicated deployment and employment of forces forced heavy use of the assault forces' TBS circuits on 10 May, which, as was noted in an after-action report, "was when the task force was well outside the intercept range from either Attu or Kiska." Use of this circuit was also necessary during the final approach to the beachheads, and it increased to a heavy volume while the Southern and Northern Landing Forces were just offshore, several hours prior to H-hour. Further, the fog delayed the Southern Landing Group's assault at Massacre Bay until 1530W, leaving the forces already ashore in a precarious position.[43]

There was considerable apprehension at COMNORPAC about the possibility of Japanese detection of the Provisional Scout Battalion's Austin Cove landing. This concern apparently was alleviated somewhat by the COMNORPAC RIU, whose monitoring of known Japanese naval and military frequencies failed to reveal any indications of Japanese foreknowledge of this landing or of the other forces' approach. This is supported by the after-action report on the assault, which noted that "tactical surprise was achieved, as the enemy did not transmit URGENT traffic until the preassault bombardment began."[44]

Japanese and other U.S. sources revealed this was not the case. With the months of preparation and consequent buildup of U.S. forces in the region, the Japanese were under no illusions about what to expect, and efforts began to reinforce the Northern Area to counter this imminent threat. All during April U.S. Navy RI witnessed a marked upsurge

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42. CINC U.S. Fleet SECRET Information Bulletin No. 9 dated 5 October 1943, subject: "Battle Experience: Assault and Occupation of Attu Island, May 1943," p. 1. Extracts from the report are reproduced in U.S. Naval Historical Center's *U.S. Naval Experience in the North Pacific during World War II: Selected Documents*, Washington, D.C., Ronald H. Spector, et al; eds., pp. 1–35. The bulletin is referred to hereafter as CINC U.S. Fleet, Bulletin No. 9, while the latter publication referred to hereafter as Spector, *U.S. Naval Experience*.

43. Morison, *Aleutians*, pp. 41–43; CINC U.S. Fleet, "Bulletin No. 9," p. 7.

44. SRH-289, *The Employment of Mobile RI Units by Commands Afloat: World War II*, p. 18 (referred to hereafter as SRH-289); and CINC U.S. Fleet, "Bulletin No. 9," p. 7.

in traffic volume on the northern Pacific circuits. CINCPAC Bulletin of 29 April noted that it was the highest level seen since the Solomons Campaign, and it was not for manipulative deception purposes, as had been thought earlier. Rather, it contained what was believed to be valid administrative and intelligence traffic, as well as authentic communications addressed to submarines.

There was also evidence of a buildup of Japanese forces in the Kuriles. As early as 3 April, it was conjectured that a new destroyer squadron had been formed and appeared through intercept to be identified with the Northern Area, since most of the traffic originated by the new command was addressed to or rebroadcast by Ominato Communications Unit. Also, during the middle of the month the Japanese Air Force (JNAF) 24th Air Flotilla was observed shifting some of its elements into the Kuriles (JNAF 752nd Air Group (VB); and 281st Air Group (VF)). This reinforcement continued into May, when it was observed that on 16 May the air flotilla's headquarters had deployed from its home base at Kisarazu to Paramushiro.[45]

On 4 May the JN Fifth Fleet notified the Attu Sector Garrison that an assault was imminent, but because of the lack of sufficient forces, naval support or reinforcements could not be expected until late May. Accordingly, the garrison was on its own. For six days the garrison manned its positions along the beaches in anticipation of the assault. By 10 May the troops were exhausted from fatigue and exposure to the elements. Colonel Yamasaki, the Sector Commander, believed that the alert was a false alarm, and he ordered a standdown and return to base.

However, during the night of 10–11 May the garrison, perhaps its 51st Communications Unit Detachment, intercepted amphibious force communications on both sides of the island, most likely over the TBS circuits. Alerted of the imminent assault, Colonel Yamazaki directed a movement of garrison forces from their base camps, not to the beach defenses but rather to the high ground between Holtz and Massacre Bays. The intent of this deployment was to conduct a protracted defense from prepared positions on key terrain in the eastern half of the island, and thereby prevent linkup between the main and subsidiary assault forces.[46]

After D-Day, with the protracted battle ashore, COMNORPAC was increasingly concerned about probable Japanese naval and air reactions. Well he should have been, because in addition to the March-May JNAF reinforcements into the Kuriles, it was

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45. J.R.S. Mono 116, p. 13; and SRH-288, *Radio Intelligence in World War II Tactical Operations in the Pacific: April 1943* (referred to hereafter as SRH-288), pp. 37–39. Although RI tentatively identified as Destroyer Squadron Eleven, it was in reality Destroyer Squadron One (CL *Abukuma* plus six DDs), which had changed flagships to CL *Kiso*, because of *Abukuma*'s scheduled refit. It is quite possible RI intercepted *Kiso*'s movements north from Maizuru and equated that to a new squadron.

46. Morison, *Aleutians*, pp. 40, 43; Garfield, *Thousand Mile War*, p. 213. Both Morison and Garfield cite the same primary sources for Colonel Yamasaki's actions: J.R.S. Mono 89, *Northern Area Operations: February 1943–August 1945*, pp. 11, 17 (referred to hereafter as J.R.S. Mono 89); and Joint Intelligence Center, Pacific Ocean Areas Item No. 4986, "Professional Notebook of Ensign Toshio Nakamura."

DOCID: 3928916

known through strategic RI that surface reinforcements were assembling in Japanese homeland waters for operations in the northern Pacific. The U.S. Navy knew that, aside from JN Third Fleet's Carrier Division One (CVs *Zuikaku* and *Shokaku*, and CVL *Zuiho*) and Cruiser Division Seven (CAs *Suzuya*, *Kumano*, and *Mogami*) at Yokosuka, a force of deployed Third Fleet units was dispatched from Truk Anchorage for combining with these other forces and for subsequent movement into the northern Pacific. The JN Third Fleet force would have been a formidable opponent, as indicated by the Truk – Homeland transit, comprising BB *Mushashi*, Battle Division Three (BBs *Kongo* and *Haruna*), CVL *Hiyo* from Carrier Division Two, and Cruiser Division Three (*Tone* and *Chikuma*).[47]

Only one escort carrier, USS *Nassau* (ACV-16), supported the assault, and the nearest U.S. air base from which fighter and bomber support could be obtained was at Amchitka, 250 nm to the east. Nevertheless, there were insufficient aircraft available for a continuous CAP. JNAF elements based in the northern Kuriles, 750 nm west of Attu, had an excellent opportunity for attack.

The situation was "most uncomfortable" from the COMNORPAC RIU's point of view. In organizing attacks against mobile forces, the principal method used by the Japanese to gather target data was air reconnaissance. Interception of contact and amplification reports from these efforts provided ample indications of an impending attack, especially if they were followed closely by an increasing number of airborne aircraft on the circuit employing tactical signals. During LANDGRAB, however, Japanese garrison forces, defending the high ground above Massacre and Holtz Bays, provided this target information, but the method of transmission and channels employed made any conclusions through traffic analysis about the time, scope, and targets of enemy attack little more than conjecture. The JNAF High North tactical air circuit had only been reactivated in March and had been little used since then. Consequently it was not known what, if any, tactical circuits the JNAF would use, or whether the strike aircraft would employ radio silence, since it was assumed that an Air Control Unit (JNAF airborne control aircraft) was superfluous.[48]

At 1100W on 22 May an aircraft was active in the vicinity of Attu, transmitting weather data to Paramushiro. A follow-up action was therefore expected, but its time could not be predicted since no other traffic was noted. The expected attack occurred at 1548W, when 12 G4M (BETTY) aircraft from the Paramushiro-based JNAF 752nd Air Group launched a series of torpedo attacks against USS *Phelps* (DD-360) and USS *Charleston* (PG-51) at their fire support stations off Holtz Bay. Fortunately no damage was done to either ship, while the attacking force lost one bomber to antiaircraft fire. Subsequent RIU study of the logs of enemy transmissions revealed that the JNAF dispatched a weather reconnaissance aircraft into the target area a few hours before the attack, and the High North tactical circuit used by the planes was heard only after the attack began. With these factors as a basis for predicting further attacks, the RIU

47. J.R.S. Mono 89, p. 6; J.R.S. Mono 116, pp. 6–7; and Morison, *Aleutians*, p. 44.

48. SRH-289, p. 19.

DOCID: 3928916
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increased its vigilance for these weather reports. On 23 May at 1200W, a JNAF aircraft transmitted a weather report to Paramushiro. With this slim bit of information, COMNORPAC directed that a CAP be maintained over Attu. The CAP was provided by P-38 fighters from the Amchitka-based USAAF 54th Fighter Squadron. At 1540W a Navy PBY patrol aircraft made radar, then visual, contact with a formation of 16 aircraft about 50 nm west of Attu, approaching the island. The CAP was alerted and at 1650W intercepted the attacking force at 15,000 feet over the center of the island. The Japanese attack was rapidly broken up, with the Japanese losing seven BETTYs, while two P-38s were lost. No BETTYs succeeded in breaking through and attacking the force beachhead.[49]

The JNAF 752nd Air Group attempted another air strike on 29 May; however, the weather deteriorated to such an extent that the strike was canceled while the aircraft were en route. This was the last attempt by the Japanese to assist the Attu garrison, and the remainder of the fighting was confined to land operations.[50] The COMNORPAC RIU noted that Attu Sector Garrison's communications finally went off the air on 29 May, after having moved from Holtz Bay to the vicinity of Chichagof Harbor with the retreating Japanese garrison.[51]

Three factors led to the termination of Japanese plans to use the heavy surface reinforcements against COMNORPAC. One was, of course, the deteriorating situation on Attu in which the ultimate defeat of their garrison was ensured. The second factor was U.S. activities in the Central Pacific, wherein the 16–21 May Truk to Homeland transit of *Musashi*, et al., ran through a gauntlet of U.S. submarines. During the Battle of Attu, 18 submarines made 19 contacts with this task force and other JN Third Fleet units in Homeland waters. Seven of the submarines made eight attacks, with confirmed damage to at least three carriers: *Hiyo* (major damage), *Unyo* (light damage), and *Taiyo* (heavy damage).[52]

The third factor, the most important, was the realization by IGNHQ that the Attu and Kiska garrisons would eventually be lost. Regardless, their continued occupation was

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49. SHR-289, p. 19; CINC U.S. Fleet, "Bulletin No. 9," p. 35; and Wesley F. Craven and John L. Cate, eds., *The Army Air Force in World War II*, Vol. IV, *The Pacific: Guadalcanal to Saipan: August 1942–July 1944*, pp. 384–85. Hereafter referred to as Craven and Cates, *The Army Air Force*.

50. USSBS No. 98, p. 100; and USSBS No. 102, p. 113.

51. SRH-289, p. 20.

52. J.R.S. Mono 116, pp. 6–7; Morison, *Aleutians*, p. 44; and Clay Blair Jr., *Silent Victory: The U.S. Submarine War Against Japan*, p. 435.

DOCID: 3928916

superfluous to strategic plans for "Third Phase Operations."[53] Accordingly, while the JN Third Fleet forces were being assembled, IGNHQ issued Directive No. 246 on 20 May, which mandated withdrawal from the islands and strengthening of the Kuriles. Further counteroffensive operations with Combined Fleet units were terminated, and JN Fifth Fleet was directed to implement the evacuation.[54]

The skillful and protracted, yet hopeless, defense by the Attu Sector garrison resulted in a battle that lasted two and a half weeks, under abominable weather conditions. In consequence, Attu was costly. The entire Japanese garrison was wiped out; 2,531 were killed and only 28 prisoners were captured. Moreover, for the United States it was the second most costly U.S. infantry battle of the Pacific War in ratio to the size of the forces engaged. U.S. casualties were 3,829: 549 killed and 1,148 wounded in action, 1,200 casualties from severe cold, 614 from disease, and 314 from other nonbattle causes. This equated to 35 percent of the assault force.

The Battle of Attu, however, was little publicized at the time and has not been even today. The reasons for this remain speculative (e.g., the operation's mistakes and failures and the more important campaigns in other parts of the Pacific Theater). Of note is an Army Signal Corps photographer's wry comment: "No Marines . . . otherwise, it would have been world history."[55]

RI's contributions to LANDGRAB were mixed. From an operations security standpoint it was a failure. Strategic and tactical surprise was not achieved. The Japanese had ample warning of the impending operation and of the alert of the Attu Sector Garrison in time for redeployment. The COMNORPAC RIU's monitoring of known frequencies failed to indicate this Japanese foreknowledge. However, absence of traffic providing such indications did not necessarily equate to reality. On the plus side, it did provide indications of impending JNAF activity, and the monitoring quickly acquired the Japanese procedures for executing the attacks. Had there been more indicators, the RIU was ready to provide the requisite support.

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53. During the winter and spring of 1943, the IGNHQ conducted an assessment of the war's general direction. The operational policy, as developed and promulgated in Directive No. 209 dated 25 March 1943, was to conduct a extended, yet protracted defense that would cause the Allies to lose their will to continue the war. Operations conducted under this policy were referred to as "Third Phase Operations." Conceptually this defense was to be carried out in an inner and an outer zone. In the North Pacific this translated into the JN Fifth Fleet being responsible for the defense of the outer zone and, in cooperation with Ominato Minor Naval Guard District, for the defense of the inner zone. The JN Fifth Fleet was tasked with conducting intensive surveillance of the North Pacific and the area east of Japan proper; continuing its defense of the western Aleutians in concert with the JA in order to check an American invasion of Japan by the northern route; and conducting air and submarine operations designed to engage and destroy American air and surface forces, as well as to sever their sea lines of communications. J.R.S. Mono 161, *Inner South Seas Islands Area Naval Operations: Part I: Gilbert Islands*, pp. 54–60. Referred to hereafter as J.R.S. Mono 161.

54. J.R.S. Mono 89, p. 7.

55. Garfield, *Thousand Mile War*, p. 262.

DOCID: 3928916

Undoubtedly, the U.S. Navy's strategic RI contribution, with respect to ascertaining JN Third Fleet composition, disposition, locations and intentions, was of more import. Had not the Japanese discontinued their intention to counterattack U.S. forces, the subsequent information that would have been acquired would have been of considerable tactical value to both COMNORPAC and CINCPAC.

RI IN THE KISKA EVACUATION (OPERATION KE)

After the issuance of IGNHQ Directive No. 246 on 20 May, the JN Fifth Fleet implemented detailed planning to evacuate the islands. With the loss of Attu, planning concentrated on Kiska's evacuation. Early June was targeted for its completion. In executing the evacuation, the new Commander-in-Chief JN Fifth Fleet, Vice Admiral Shiro Kawase initially decided to conduct the evacuation by submarine (Vice Admiral Hosogaya had been relieved of command for Fifth Fleet's performance in the Battle of the Komondorskis.) Eleven submarines were attached to Fifth Fleet for the effort.[56]

Japanese submarine activity of this type in the northern Pacific had not gone undetected. As early as March, based upon JN Fifth Fleet's 240326 March message (see above), CINCPAC had forecasted that submarines were to be used for transport work in the Aleutians between Attu and Kiska.[57] During April and May, analysis of intercepted traffic led to the definitive conclusion that Japanese submarines would be used for transportation to and from Kiska. Accordingly, COMNORPAC forces, then engaged in the Battle of Attu, were so advised:

FM COMNORPACFOR 130753 MAY 1943
TO: CTF 51
NORPACFOR
ULTRA FROM COMNORPACFOR X ACTION CTF 51 X INFO OTHERS X THIS IS INTERCEPT X THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT ENEMY IS USING SUBS FOR TRANSPORT TO AND FROM JACKBOOT [KISKA].[58]

This was a good opportunity for the COMNORPAC RIU, since it was ascertained in early June that one of the Ominato Communications Unit broadcasts was an exclusive submarine operational net. There were ample indications of submarine activity in the net's traffic, and it was often possible by traffic analysis to foresee their intentions to run into Kiska. Further, it was Japanese procedure to have these submarines call up the Kiska's 51st Naval Communications Unit on its ship-shore circuit directly before the entry into harbor and furnish an estimated time of arrival. The Japanese submarines' Type 99

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56. J.R.S. Mono 88, p. 82. Submarine forces employed by JN Fifth Fleet were

SUBDIV 1	SUBDIV 1	SUBDIV 7	SUBDIV 12	SUBDIV 19
I-9	I-21	I-2	I-169	I-156
I-34	I-24	I-7	I-175	I-157
I-155				

57. CINCPAC Bulletin No. 337, contained in SRH-287, p. 393.

58. SRMN-013, Part II, *CINCPAC Intelligence Bulletins: 24 February–30 June 1943*, p. 134.

DOCID: 3928916

LF/HF transmitters were loud and clear, and good RDF fixes could have been possible from RDF if the RIU had the capability at that time to flash the Mid-Pacific Net.[59]

U.S. destroyer pickets covering the entrance to Kiska Harbor were alerted whenever it was determined through analysis of this net's traffic that a resupply mission was probable. However, no information on the submarine's location or probable time of entry into the harbor could be given. These alerts may have proven beneficial on at least three occasions, however, when (1) PC-487 rammed and sank the I-24 on the morning of 10 June about 50 miles NE of Attu; (2) the USS *Frazier* (DD-607) sank the I-9 by naval gunfire at 1830W, 13 June, about ten miles NNE of Kiska; and (3) the USS *Monaghan* (DD-354) engaged the I-7 with naval gunfire at 2125W, 15 June, about ten miles SSW of Kiska Harbor, causing it to run aground.[60]

COMNORPAC's plans for the amphibious assault on Kiska went ahead with D-Day set at 15 August. On or about 21 July, CINCPAC advised COMNORPAC that the Japanese were planning a sizable supply or evacuation operation into Kiska, with an arrival date of 26 July.[61]

This was indeed the case. With the combat loss of three submarines, noncombat damage to three others, and only 842 personnel evacuated in this manner, JN Fifth Fleet reassessed its options.[62] It was concluded that further submarine evacuation was too slow and costly and that only a one-time surface evacuation would suffice. To this end a task force, centered on Destroyer Squadron One, was formed. Initially, it was planned to extract the Kiska garrison at 2100W on 10 July, and to this end the task force departed Paramushiro Strait on 6 July. The route selected was one in which there was a high probability of fog and that was reasonably secure from air search. The task force reached its standby area on 11 July; however, good weather continued and the force eventually had to return to Paramushiro for refueling. The task force again departed Paramushiro Strait at 0110W on 21 July and retraced its previous track to the standby area. The force sortied under EMCON, except for two messages transmitted to Kiska by the flagship *Tama* to

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59. Memorandum serial A8-2(3) dated 11 October 1943; to CDR T. A. Huckins; subject: Report of RI Activities; s/Ernest B. Beath. Document contained in SRH-317, p. 145. For details on Japanese submarine communications procedures, see J.R.S. Mono 118, pp. 226–33. As heretofore noted, the RIU secured a 500-watt TBK transmitter compatible with the one used by the Mid-Pacific RDF net. This provided some contact with that net but did not allow flashing and proved to be a fruitless compromise. As a further effort toward receiving some RDF information, cable connections were obtained with the HFDF site at NAF Amchitka. However, both of these efforts were too late to be of value for LANDGRAB and COTTAGE.

60. Because of lack of documentation at this time, it is uncertain whether or not the RIU had a specific role in this action; however, it may be assumed that it provided indications of the submarines' transits based on the information available. Note that the USS *Frazier* did not sink I-31, as asserted by Morison, *Aleutians*, p. 57; rather, it was the I-9. I-31 was missing during its Paramushiro-Kiska transit after 13 May and was presumed by the Japanese to be an operational loss. See Hansgeorg Jentschura, et al., *Warships of the Imperial Japanese Navy*, pp. 174–75 and J.R.S. Mono 116, p. 242.

61. Whether or not this source was RI is unknown from available documentation.

62. USSBS No. 102, p. 113; J.R.S. Mono 88, p. 83.

request weather information as well as to provide information about the specific time of and procedures for the evacuation. For manipulative deception purposes, *Tama* used a submarine callsign and operating procedure.[63]

Up until 27 July there was good flying weather for air reconnaissance, the result of a polar air mass that moved through the Aleutians. However, on 27 July and continuing through 29 July, a storm front advanced from the Kuriles and passed over the western Aleutians. Aerial reconnaissance of Kiska was impossible because of the storm and subsequent pea-soup-thick fog.[64]

The Japanese evacuation proceeded very smoothly under cover and deception, despite COMNORPAC's surface action forces having been deployed to blockade Kiska when it had received the 22 July report of Japanese sortie to the island. At 1330W on 28 July, Destroyer Squadron One reached a position 50 nm south of Kiska and proceeded toward the harbor. By navigating through sounding and radar, and by obtaining lines of bearing on the last leg into the harbor from a radio beacon on the South Head, the ships entered Kiska Harbor at 1740W. Within 55 minutes, all 5,183 remaining garrison personnel were embarked. The ships immediately departed, splitting up into two groups, which reached Paramushiro on 31 July and 1 August, respectively.[65]

At about 1800W on 28 July, COMNORPAC RIU intercepted three URGENT messages transmitted in rapid succession by the 51st Communications Unit. This was the last time it was heard. Subsequent callsign analysis of the addressees on these messages provided a tie-in with Destroyer Squadron One, as the 51st Naval Base Force had referenced prior message traffic to unidentified elements associated with that squadron. The RIU thus assumed that these elements would be used in the operation and that it had been postponed from the 26th until the 28th. However, this analysis had proven too late to be of value.[66]

When clearing weather finally came on 4 August, a USAAF air strike, the first since 27 July, was conducted by the newly arrived 407th Bombardment Group. Post-strike bomb damage assessment revealed an obvious change in Kiska activity since the 27th: 30 bomb craters had not been filled in; no repairs had been made to above-ground structures from the 27 July strike; vehicles were in the same positions; and ten to twelve fewer *Kaibetsu* landing barges were evident. However, confusion was added to the picture by 407th Group pilot reports of "only meager and inaccurate AA and small arms fire" over

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63. USSBS No. 367, pp. 306–07; USSBS No. 102, pp. 113–14; USSBS No. 84, p. 368; and J.R.S. Mono 88, p. 84.

64. The 27–29 July storms were followed by the development of a stagnant low pressure area over the Bering Sea and by a simultaneous northward extension of a subtropical Pacific high. This situation caused an almost impenetrable fog over the entire Aleutian chain that, with the exception of 4 August, persisted through 10 August. This situation was "icing on the cake" for Destroyer Squadron One because it provided cover for the entire return transit from Kiska to Paramushiro. Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, Air Staff (Intelligence), *Impact*, Vol. 1, No. 7, October 1943, pp. 28–29.

65. USSBS No. 73, pp. 306–07.

66. SRH-289, pp. 21–22.

DOCID: 3928916

Kiska. This confusion was compounded by reports from the U.S. Army Second Signal Service Battalion Detachment (RI) at Anchorage that Kiska was still operating a radio station. As far as the COMNORPAC RIU was concerned, the 51st Communications Unit had remained unheard since 1800W on 28 July.[67]

On 6 August *Vichy* Radio broadcast a Japanese report that U.S. forces had landed on Kiska, lending credence to the assumption that the Japanese had either evacuated or at least lost contact with Kiska. Evacuation of Kiska by the Japanese was suspected, although concrete evidence was still lacking. Despite a recommendation by Major General Simon Buckner, CG Alaska Sector, and the Marine Corps observer, Major General Holland Smith, to use the Provisional Scout Battalion in an amphibious reconnaissance of Kiska to confirm Japanese presence or absence, Rear Admiral Kinkaid decided to proceed with the operation as planned with the forces already assembled.[68]

The amphibious assault was conducted, as scheduled, on 15 August. U.S. forces' arrival at the Japanese installations two days later confirmed that the Japanese garrison had indeed been evacuated. Morison referred to it as a "bootless bombardment and bloodless occupation."[69] While his characterization of the bombardment is not disputed, a bloodless occupation it was not. At 0134W on 18 August USS *Abner Read* (DD-526) struck a drifting Japanese mine while patrolling off the northwest coast of Kiska. The resulting explosion killed 71 men and injured 34 others. Ashore, because of the fog, the expectation that the Japanese might still be on the island and the relative inexperience of the landing force, 24 men were accidentally shot to death, and Japanese land mines and booby traps killed four others. Fifty others were wounded by accidental shootings or by explosives.[70]

Operation KE was a success because of both Japanese tactical skills and a set of fortuitous circumstances. The weather's influence on the action cannot be denied since doubt was not cast on Japanese presence on the island until after 4 August, just 11 days prior to the assault. The U.S. Navy's RI contribution up to 28 July was to facilitate COMNORPAC's close-in blockade of the island and to alert the command of the impending second sortie by Destroyer Squadron One. However, neither the Navy's contribution nor that of the U.S. Army was able to confirm or deny Japanese presence on the island after 28 July. Had either been able to do so, Rear Admiral Kinkaid might have proceeded differently.

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67. SRH-289, p. 22; Garfield, *Thousand Mile War*, p. 292; and Craven and Cates, *The Army Air Force*, p. 390. It is unknown from available records whether the Second Signal Service Battalion Detachment at Anchorage produced these reports. SRH-289 states only the "Army RI Unit at Anchorage." The Second Signal Service Battalion Detachment at Anchorage was the only Army RI unit there, according to available records. However, with only two personnel assigned in May 1943, it was far smaller than the detachment at Fixed Site No. 7 at Fairbanks. See "History of the Second Signal Service Company and the Second Signal Service Battalion: 1 January 1939–30 June 1944," contained in SRH-135, *History of the Second Signal Service Battalion: 1939–1945*, pp. 80–151.

68. SRH-289, p. 22; and Morison, *Aleutians*, p. 62.

69. Morison, *Aleutians*, p. 61.

70. Morison, *Aleutians*, pp. 63–64; Garfield, *Thousand Mile War*, p. 297.

DOCID: 3928916

THE SITUATION AFTER THE ALEUTIANS CAMPAIGN

After the U.S. seizure and occupation of the western Aleutians, the North Pacific became a sideshow. The Combined Chiefs of Staff determined not to proceed further with operational plans for the invasion of Japan via the Aleutians-Kuriles route; however, the contingency option to do so would remain. Accordingly, a considerable drawdown of U.S. forces began. COMNORPAC retained Fleet Air Wing Four, but its surface action forces were reduced essentially to a task group of prewar light cruisers and destroyers. The U.S. Army ground combat forces that participated in the Attu and Kiska assaults were withdrawn for duty elsewhere, and the USAAF 11th Air Force offensive strength was reduced to one heavy and one medium bomber squadron.[71]

On the Japanese side, in implementing "Third Phase Operations" the JN Fifth Fleet was redesignated the Northeast Area Fleet. It was charged to cooperate with the Ominato Minor Guard District in establishing inner and outer defensive zones by the winter of 1943–1944, to patrol the zones extensively, and to counterattack American invasion forces and destroy them when reinforcements arrived. To facilitate patrolling, picket boat divisions were organized and deployed as far east as 155E longitude. Submarines augmented this patrol, conducting reconnaissance missions specifically targeted against Dutch Harbor, Kiska, and Attu. In addition to the submarine operations, and in order to keep American forces off balance, air, surface, and amphibious raids were to be conducted whenever possible against American bases west of Dutch Harbor.[72] Concurrent with the Navy's efforts, the Japanese Army began to strengthen the Kuriles under the so-called "First Reinforcement." Beginning in April 1943 and continuing through the summer of 1944, a steady stream of units moved northward. (See map on page 66.) In less than a year, Japanese army strength in the Kuriles went from 8,000 to 41,000 and on Hokkaido from 17,000 to 34,000.

The Navy continued to maintain light forces in the islands. At no time during 1944 did the Northeast Area Fleet have surface forces that approached parity with the residual United States naval forces under COMNORPAC. The JNAF Twelfth Air Fleet, under Northeast Area Fleet control during the year, rotated air group detachments into JNAF

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71. Craven and Cates, *The Army Air Force*, pp. 392–97.

72. J.R.S. Mono 161, pp. 61–70. Fortunately for U.S. forces, there was only one air attack on the Aleutians after the seizure of Kiska. This occurred at 1800W on 13 October 1943, when JNAF 801st Air Group PBYs bombed U.S. installations in the vicinity of Massacre Bay, Attu. Damage was light because of the inaccuracy of the bombing, but U.S. forces were surprised by the attack and failed to intercept any of the attackers. Available Japanese records do not indicate further attacks on American bases after this date; however, there may have been. Whether U.S. records reflect this is unknown.

DOCID: 3928916

air bases inthe Kuriles for both air defense and antisubmarine patrolling duties, but at no time did it have elements permanently stationed in the Kuriles.[73]

A Naval Historical Center publication, *U.S. Naval Experience in the North Pacific During World War II: Selected Documents*, remarks that recent studies have indicated that the U.S. deception plans for the northern Pacific met with some success. The plans led the Japanese to maintain forces in the North Pacific that otherwise could have been redeployed to meet U.S. offensives elsewhere in the Pacific. In addition to the damage they inflicted, these operations served as one element in a U.S. diversionary campaign designed to convince the Japanese that an amphibious assault on its northern flank was probable.[74]

In some respects this is true, but, as records indicate, the Japanese forces deployed to the Kuriles were mainly ground defense forces. One can argue that they were held in place, at least through 1944. However, in the spring of 1945 the Japanese Army redeployed some of these forces to meet the more obvious threats approaching Japan from the central and southwest Pacific, and JN surface and garrison forces were withdrawn in their entirety.

While deployed to the Kuriles, these Japanese forces were not in action, except in defense against harassing air raids or against shore bombardment by naval forces. Further, they were required to maintain their defensive positions and hence were unavailable for combat assignment elsewhere. Moreover, their resupply and movements afforded excellent shipping targets for American submarines. This resulted in a heavy loss of transport ships, as well as the loss of at least 4,300 personnel or about 10 percent of the manpower deployed to the islands.[75]

RI IN KURILES STRIKE OPERATIONS

With the meager forces available, COMNORPAC conducted offensive strikes against installations and shipping in the Kuriles even before the seizure of Kiska. Commencing

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73. Interrogation of MAJ Masuda Shimada, IJA, "Aleutians Campaign: Deployment of Japanese Army Forces in the Kuriles: 1942–1945," (USSBS No. 103), p. 443; and interrogation of CDR Koichi Shimada, IJN, "Aleutians Operation: Japanese Twelfth Air Fleet in the Kuriles and North Pacific," (USSBS No. 341), pp. 272–73. It should be noted that the Northeast Area Fleet, which had earlier been stripped of its picket boat units by the Combined Fleet during August 1944, was dissolved on 5 December 1944. On that date also, the Kuriles Area Base Force was transferred to the JNAF Twelfth Air Fleet. The Shimushu Communications Unit was within that force structure. Consequently, it once again became an Air Base Communications Unit and continued in this function, aside from its radio intelligence activities, until it was withdrawn from the Kuriles in its entirety on 18 June 1945. J.R.S. Mono 116, pp. 42 and 57.

74. Spector, *U.S. Naval Experience*, p. 44.

75. USSBS No. 103, p. 443.

DOCID: 3928916

with the first bombing raid against Kashiwabara on 18 July 1943, and continuing until August 1945, over 1,500 USAAF and USN sorties were conducted against the Kuriles.[76]

These missions could be costly, however. On 11 September 1943, seven B-24s and twelve B-25s raided Kashiwabara. They ran into intense, accurate flak over the target, as well as 60 JA and JN fighters in a 50-minute air battle. Ten of the nineteen bombers failed to return from the mission (seven crash-landed at Petropavlovsk USSR, and the crews were subsequently repatriated), and all of the surviving bombers were damaged. In this single mission the 11th Air Force lost 50 percent of its bomber strength, and five months were to elapse before another mission was attempted.[77]

It seems apparent that the Japanese were ready and waiting for many of these raids. It has been observed that neither the JAAF 54th Fighter Regiment, which was a permanent air defense force in the Kuriles, nor the JNAF fighter air groups that deployed to Kuriles air bases from 1943 to 1944, maintained CAPs.[78] However, in many instances when U.S. raids closed on their targets, Japanese fighters were airborne and waiting, or AAA defenses were particularly accurate and timely in their concentrations.

A possible explanation for this readiness is the example of a U.S. Navy VPB-131 night rocket attack mission on 20 February 1944 against the fishing cannery at Minami Cape, Shimushu. Four PV-1 *Ventura* aircraft were used, one of which was severely damaged by flak over target and failed to return (the crew bailed out safely over Kamchatka, USSR).[79] Of note, though, is that a JA alert message on the Minami raid was issued 48 minutes before the arrival of the U.S. aircraft over target.

By the summer of 1944, U.S. photoreconnaissance and RI, probably collected by the U.S. Army 2nd Signal Service Battalion Detachment at Amchitka, provided a partial solution to this advanced warning capability. Photo interpretation revealed the location of five early warning radar installations and at least two HFDF sites on Paramushiro and Shimushu. The radars were of the type that had ranges of only 60–90 nm. Analysis of the intercepted JA alert messages, however, revealed that this range did not account for many of the alerts. Further, picket boat locations did not account for the available messages. It was concluded that the method of reporting, using vectors from Kashiwabara, indicated that HFDF cuts or fixes were plotted based on intrastrike communications or air-ground traffic with base.[80]

Beginning in February 1944, COMNORPAC surface action units conducted aperiodic shore bombardment and antishipping operations against installations in the Kuriles. By

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76. Garfield, *Thousand Mile War*, p. 305.

77. Craven and Cates, *The Army Air Force*, pp. 396–97.

78. Spector, *U.S. Naval Experience*, p. 65.

79. Spector, *U.S. Naval Experience*, p. 63.

80. SRH-266, pp. 43–44.

Air Strike/ Target or Date	JA Alert DTG	Stated Distance of U.S. Strike from Kashiwabara	Minimum Advance Warning (Minute)
11AF B-25/ P-38 Strafing/ Paramushiro	060009I Feb 44	122 nm at 50 degrees	81
VPB-131 HVAR/ Minami Zaki	210027I Feb 44	128 nm at 85 degrees	48
17 Apr 44	182005I	144 nm at 90 degrees	95
28 Apr 44	292330I	140 nm at 85 degrees	90
12 May 44	132100I	125 nm at 75 degrees	60
25 Jun 44	262347I	153 nm, no bearing given	38

the end of the war over 15 sorties were made.[81] The forces involved had varying task group designations; however, they were centered on a cruiser-destroyer surface action force consisting of the older light cruisers with escorting destroyers. Beginning with TG 94.6's bombardment of Kurabu Cape on southern Paramushiro on 4 February, COMNORPAC RIU personnel were deployed with these forces.

During this initial mission, an RIU "traffic analyst" was aboard an escorting destroyer, USS *Pickering* (DD-685). Until just before sunset on 3 February (2031W), the analyst reported to the flagship, USS *Richmond*, that there was no indication of Japanese knowledge of TG 94.6's presence in the target area. However, because both visual and radio silence was in effect after that time until H-hour (0231W, 4 February), it was impossible for Rear Admiral Brown, the OTC, to receive the analyst's periodic negative reports. Had there been detection of the group's presence, this fact would have been relayed by TBS. In his After Action Report, Rear Admiral Brown remarked that, in future deployments of this nature, ". . . it was a practical necessity that . . . intelligence units be placed aboard the flagship" and "under no other circumstances can the OTC promptly receive or evaluate such intelligence or effectively direct the quest for specific facts that are particularly important."[82]

Following this sortie, and at least as evidenced by later sorties in the late spring and summer of 1945, the COMNORPAC RIU rotated personnel and equipment aboard the task group flagship during the group's deployment periods. For the remaining sorties there was little to no evidence of Japanese foreknowledge of the task group's approach to the Kuriles, and Japanese reactions to its activities were sporadic and unaggressive. By late

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81. Garfield, *Thousand Mile War*, p. 304.

82. CTG 94.6 letter A16-3: Serial: 006 dated 12 February 1944; to CINC U.S. Fleet; subject: Report of Bombardment of Southeast coast of Paramushiro on 4 February 1944 by TG 94.6; s/RADM W. D. Baker, p. 12. Report was reproduced in whole in Spector, *U.S. Naval Experience*, pp. 44–53.

in the war the COMNORPAC RIU's monitoring of Japanese circuits in the Kuriles reflected, for the most part, the reactions of JA defense forces. The JN circuits that were intercepted reflected inter- and intra-island garrison force communications and ship-to-shore communications involving inter-island logistics activities. No surface force and little air base communications were evident.[83]

No combat casualties occurred in these shore bombardment and antishipping sweeps. This was due to two basic reasons: tactical surprise and the lack of a means by which the Japanese could impede the task group while in the area.

Thus, by the end of the war, action in the northern Pacific ended with a relative calm, at least with respect to American forces. An amphibious assault in the Kuriles did finally take place; however, the attackers came from an entirely unanticipated direction: the USSR.

IN RETROSPECT

From the foregoing, from a variety of fragmentary sources, conclusions regarding RI's contribution can be drawn.

Throughout the war most of the U.S. Pacific Fleet's RI effort in support of naval forces in the northern Pacific was accomplished from shore activities outside the theater. However, hearability of Japanese communications in the Northern Pacific, particularly those of a tactical nature, was inconsistent. Accordingly, in the U.S. offensive in the Aleutians in early 1943, an RIU was assigned to these forces.

The Japanese RI effort, being analogous to the U.S. Pacific Fleet's RI effort, suffered the same limitations, especially after the evacuation of the Aleutians. However, it was able to provide support to the Kuriles air defense effort later in the war.

Tactical RI's experience in the northern Pacific was also similar to the problems that other U.S. and Japanese RIUs faced when pitted against opponents whose local communications structures were relatively unknown or newly established. It took experience in traffic and signals analysis to exploit them, and consequently time was

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83. See the following after-action reports from SRH-309, *Pacific Fleet Mobile Radio Intelligence Unit Reports: 1945:*

USPACFLT CRUDIV ONE memorandum: dated 12 June 1945; from Radio Intelligence Officer, COMNORPAC to OinC FRUPAC; subject: COMNORPAC RIU Operations 2–12 June 1945 (I) . . . ; s/Stephen L. Mooney, pp. 292–93.

USPACFLT CRUDIV ONE memorandum: dated 27 June 1945; from Radio Intelligence Officer, COMNORPAC to OinC FRUPAC; subject: COMNORPAC RIU Operations 22–27 June 1945 (I) . . . ; s/Stephen L. Mooney, pp. 294–97.

USPACFLT CRUDIV ONE memorandum: dated 22 July 1945; from Radio Intelligence Officer, COMNORPAC to OinC FRUPAC; subject: COMNORPAC RIU Operations 14–23 July 1945 (I) . . . ; s/Stephen L. Mooney, pp. 298–99.

required. The JN Second Carrier Task Force RIU's contribution to Operation AL was limited. Japanese RI assistance to the JN Fifth Fleet convoy runs, on their final legs into Kiska and Attu, was more successful, primarily because of their increased familiarity with U.S. air reconnaissance communications in the Aleutians. Because it was in theater a short time, the COMNORPAC RIU's contribution to the seizure and occupation of Attu was minimal. Further, while its contributions to the blockade of Kiska were beneficial, its ability, as well as that of strategic RI, to ultimately discern Japanese intentions in the Kiska evacuation operation was also minimal. Finally, with the decision not to proceed with a northern Pacific offensive against the Japanese homeland via the Kuriles, the RIU's support to the follow-on small-scale tactical operations was likewise minimal.

Viewing both sides from an RI standpoint, two aspects are of note. One involved communications security. From the earliest part of the campaign, it was apparent that tactical indications and warning support could be provided from traffic and signals analysis and could be considerably enhanced with RDF. Just because the United States won the Battle of Attu does not excuse the communications insecurities that led to the loss of both strategic and tactical surprise and to the second most costly U.S. infantry battle of the Pacific War in ratio to the size of the forces engaged.

The second aspect involved the misinterpretation of details of RI-based information. In Operation AL one commander disregarded intentions and used his own judgment. As a result, the enemy was able to carry out its mission and return without incident. In the Battle of the Komondorskis, another commander believed what he wanted to believe from his past experience. It was almost a fatal decision.

Thus, even in a "forgotten war," aspects of which were of "little interest to the military or naval historian," certain facets of it are of interest when viewed from an RI perspective. They served as lessons then and can serve as lessons now.

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