

America At War

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Aiming to cut Japan off from all its southern conquests, Navy has launched a drive from the South Pacific northwesterly toward the China coast. With 3,000,000 tons of Japanese shipping already sunk out of Nip's estimated total of 8,000,000, Navy chiefs hope that further crippling of the Rising Sun supply lines can bring about collapse of the enemy's amphibious empire. Swiftly growing strength of US carrier forces in the Pacific is being used with constantly greater effect in this direction.

If bombing and invasion of Jap mainland are necessary, Gen Claire Chennault, 14th Air Force Commander, says that necessary bases will be ready whenever the Navy beaches on China and that the 14th will furnish tactical assistance for landings. Chennault's job is made herculean by Jap blockade of China, which limits supply lines to air transport from India. This air route, however, is constantly being augmented with Curtiss C-46 *Commandos* and other new cargo craft, and Ledo road to China is being pushed to completion with all possible speed.

Although Japs still occupy Truk in the Carolines, Navy's air arm operating from flat-tops has devitalized it as a major naval base — in fact Jap fleet was reported to have left there. The Marianas, only 1,200 mi from Japan, have been brought under Allied attack, and only the Bonin Islands, less than 800 mi out, remain between the Nip's mainland and the U. S. Navy and our air forces.

Becoming encountered more frequently by American airmen is Japan's new *Tony* fighter with inline liquid cooled engine and mounting a 37-mm hub-firing cannon. Performance is very good, combat pilots report, and, while the craft makes a formidable foe, it burns as well as any other Jap aircraft.

Growth of Allied carrier force is indicated by reports that in this weapon we now outnumber the Nips by at least 10 to 1; Allies could now mount a 1,000-plane mission in the Pacific. Two types of carrier-borne fighters — the Grumman F6F *Hellcat* and Vought F4U *Corsair* — last year destroyed 884 Jap planes at a loss of 170 American craft. *Hellcats* went into action in September, *Corsairs* in February of last year.

In Europe, Allied air war entered entirely new phase, first when American fighter planes appeared over Berlin then when B-17s and B-24s, with P-51 and P-38 fighter cover, took over systematic daylight precision destruction of Germany's first city. Besides meaning that almost no part of Nazidom is any longer safe from Allied air attack, it indicated quicker attrition of the *Luftwaffe's* defensive fighter force.

The German air force is losing so heavily, in two ways, that some air leaders hope it may become ineffectual by late summer. In the air, during one recent week, the American 8th destroyed 439 Nazi planes, while the U. S. 15th, in Italy, accounted for 205, a tidy total of 644 — a lot more than the Germans could build in that time. Some officials estimate that half the enemy's fighter plant capacity has been paralyzed, possibly reducing output to a figure well below 1,000 a month.

Meanwhile, despite heavy losses in some of the larger attacks, American bomber losses on an over-all basis stand at 3.1 percent and fighters at 0.7 percent since the 8th first attacked Germany in Aug 1942. Both figures are far below prewar loss estimates. This has been one contributing factor to heavier and heavier AAF armadas — flights of 1,000 *Flying Fortresses* and *Liberators* are common nowadays, and reports indicate our forces are going out with 100 percent fighter cover all the way.

Prime Minister Churchill reported that the American air force now outnumbers the RAF, which is also continuing to grow so that the air war is being stepped up far beyond anything yet employed or imagined.

Russia, too, is building bases and establishing bomber commands with one objective — Germany.

Despite really tremendous growth of Allied air power, no less an authority than Churchill warns that the United Nations cannot count on writing Germany off this year — it may take well into next year, he says. Things are going well but there's still a lot of war ahead.

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