

America At War

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More than half a year has passed since air war started on Japan from the Marianas. The power is on; it is hurting the enemy, and it will hurt more when Nippon gets 2½ times the tonnage that was dropped on Germany, whose area was several times greater.

Japan's desperate bid for defense with suicide pilots cannot slow the Allies, according to Vice Admiral Mare A Mitscher. He said only one in a hundred planes that attack Navy craft ever get to their targets. Nevertheless, this form of attack has damaged many ships, killed many men, and required some redesign by Navy.

Navy pilots' reports that the Japs had come up with new fighters out-speeding the Corsairs, and with superior tactics, are discounted by Navy spokesmen. Tired pilots in tired planes, when attacked by a fresh enemy group, they say, often get pessimistic impressions. Even if the Japs had superior new designs, they could not build enough of them to have much effect. Furthermore, new and superior designs are on their way to our Navy air arm.

Pres Truman, in his recent report to Congress, estimated Japanese air power at something over 3,000 combat planes. He probably means frontline equipment available for action. This would compare with German's top available air strength of about 5,000 planes. The President calculated Japan's monthly production of aircraft at 1,250 to 1,500 per month at this time, despite a half year of American air attack on factories.

The President said his military policy is (1) to pin down Jap forces where they are, divide them, and destroy them piece by piece; (2) concentrate overwhelming power on each attacked segment; (3) use aircraft, ships, armor and artillery massively to save life; (4) apply relentless pressure so that the enemy cannot rest or reorganize.

Secretary Forrestal says Navy has three main tasks: (1) deliver men and supplies needed for present and future operations; (2) seal off the areas of attack in advance; (3) open up, support, and supply the beach-heads.

Many of the bombardment groups have already been moved from Europe to the Pacific. The powerful Eighth Air Force, which with the British RAF spread destruction over Naziland, will move across, and will be armed with

B-29s, P-51s, P-47s, P-80s, and others now in the taper-off stage. The British have moved in with carrier task forces. US Navy reveals it has 26 carriers and 65 escort carriers in action (less those under repair) and is building more under forced draft.

Because Japan's production is extensively piece work in homes, whole cities are being systematically burned down. Scouts are already photographing smaller cities and towns. Experience has shown that, in many cases, fire keeps plants down longer than demolition by bombing; it warps machines so they cannot be re-installed. But fires do not burn well in certain kinds of weather, and explosives continue a major weapon.

Okinawa, taken at great cost of time and life, will be the most powerful advance base in the history of war. It, is only 350 mi from Jap mainlands, 972 mi from Tokyo, short distances for late model planes. The island group can accommodate massive Army and Navy air forces.

The Japanese are already assuming the Nazi "fortress" defense attitude. Their navy has failed. Now their air forces are weakening, and the suicide technique is not improving their situation. Creditable thinkers believe the enemy may collapse in a matter of months under punishment from the air. But confidence in their hard-driving land forces, so long as those forces can get weapons and supplies, may keep Japan going for a long time.

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