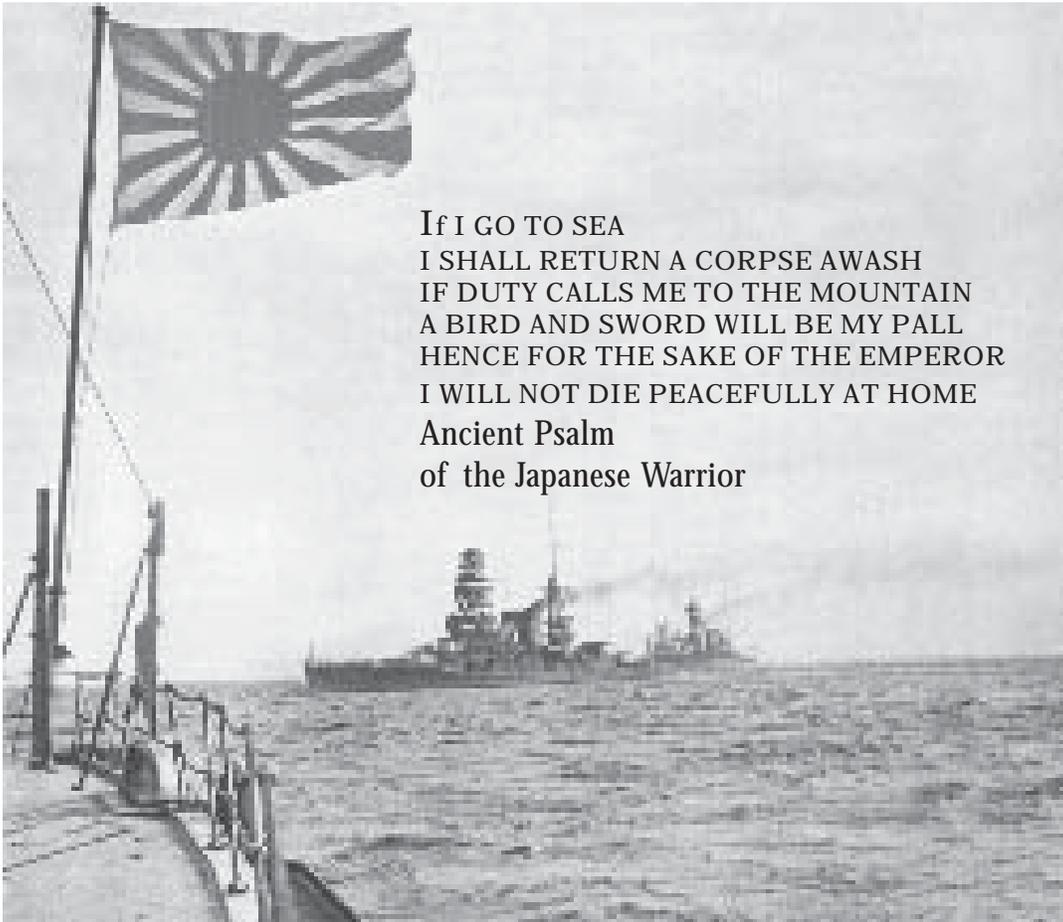


MISSION
COMPLETED



If I GO TO SEA
I SHALL RETURN A CORPSE AWASH
IF DUTY CALLS ME TO THE MOUNTAIN
A BIRD AND SWORD WILL BE MY PALL
HENCE FOR THE SAKE OF THE EMPEROR
I WILL NOT DIE PEACEFULLY AT HOME
Ancient Psalm
of the Japanese Warrior

Pacific Theater: If I Go To Sea

Invasion conditions for Europe were exactly right in June, yet who would have realized that while the invasion of France was progressing, huge battles were also taking place on the other side of the world in the Pacific — involving a combination of novices and battle-tested veterans.

Global affairs had for much of 1943-44 on the one hand beckoned Japan to consume herself defensively and to prepare, train, and refit her imperial forces for a dual in the Pacific. By June, 1944, near the Sulu and Celebes Sea in Tawi Tawi, just north of Borneo, the Japanese were ending fleet activities. Knowing well the war power of carrier planes, with over 500 aircraft, the Japanese Admiralty responded with a plan envisioning a powerful battle for a fateful future naval engagement in which to destroy their anti-axis enemy, the United States.

U.S. military leaders knew the Japanese were preparing for some line of defense and amassing their vessels. Patrol kept an eye on waters off the World War II Asian mainland, keeping always at least two submarines patrolling targeted seas off Tawi Tawi, secretly.

Early during the morning of June 13, part of an armada began quietly pulling out of the heavily guarded port of Tawi Tawi. (Three days before a smaller force had departed Tawi Tawi, but no carriers.) At 12 Noon a considerable larger body of Japanese ships, it looked like the Fleet, steamed forward at 21 knots: a heavy escort





of destroyers, cruisers, four large battleships, five very heavy cruisers protecting six prized carriers. But no allied admiral knew this at that time, because the naval armada was blanketed in a black-out. Only the lonely submarine *Redfin* on patrol did; she trailed and counted the departing convoy from a distance. In the night, *Redfin* gave word to Australian radio monitors who in turn gave word to Nimitz who in turn relayed it

The Japanese Navy sailed from Tawi Tawi in an effort to prevent the capture of the Marianas. It instituted an elaborate plan to destroy the U.S. invasion fleet. So China, Celebes, Java Seas—near Tawi Tawi—all combined over 2 ½ million square miles of ocean. This geographic scope pertained on the other side of the Date-line. The reconnaissance floatplane in the picture is a Kingfisher, a scoutplane that flew at a cruising speed of 119 mph with a maximum range of 1,155 miles. One may never understand life at sea, some veterans spent 15 months at sea without touching land.

on to the war-front American carriers. The scouting lasted only so long because of natural logistics, after a considerable time of trailing, the faster fleet, with its superior speed, left the little sub, and all contact was lost. No submarine of any country could travel as fast as war ships above the seas during the World War.

The forces spotted were in the progress of forming into three mighty carrier divisional bodies. The 1st Imperial Division, centered on the veteran carriers *Shokaku*, *Zuikaku*, and the newest aircraft carrier, a fast and mighty 31,000 ton *Taiho*. The 2nd Division had three carriers, *Hiryu*, *Junyo*, and *Ryuho*. The latter two were veterans of the Aleutians. The 3rd Division possessed the carriers *Chitose*, *Chiyoda*, and *Zuiho*. The latter mobile carrier force made up the naval body of ships, including the superbattleships *Yamamoto* and *Musashi*—both completed after Pearl Harbor and able to outgun anything the U.S. or Britain possessed.

Their dual objective: to simply hold the Marianas—the most