



AIRPOWER RESEARCH  
INSTITUTE  
(CADRE/AR)

# EXPEDITIONARY WARFARE: THE WORLD WARS

OVER THERE...



OVER THERE...



THE YANKS ARE COMING!

GERMAN EMPIRE



OVER THERE...

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## FOREWORD

In this second collection of case studies of expeditionary operations, the Research Division of CADRE's Airpower Research Institute has tightened the historical focus. Collected herein are instructive expeditionary campaigns of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, with particular reference to the two world wars and to the inter-war period.

As with the first collection of wider-ranging case studies, the objective once again is to glean insights that may prove useful to senior USAF leadership as it implements the Expeditionary Air Force concept and transforms the USAF culture into one with an expeditionary-mindset. These cases serve as a reminder that airmen have had a long tradition of expeditionary operations throughout this century. Viewed against that historical backdrop, the EAF is building upon a familiar and established theme.

Unlike the first collection, this set of studies consists exclusively of cases that involve at least some use of air forces. Like the first collection, this group includes experiences of other nations, in addition to those of the United States. Cases have been chosen with a view toward identifying both successes and failures in expeditionary operations and lessons to be learned from each.

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# 1. Expeditionary Failure, German East Africa

## Expeditionary Lessons Learned:

- ◆ British control of the sea and information inhibited German resupply.
- ◆ Poor leadership, weak troops, and underestimation of enemy capabilities and intent led to early British failure.
- ◆ British gradualism forced constant troop reinforcement, but was never sufficient to end the campaign.
- ◆ Allied strategy was hindered by mistrust and hidden agendas.
- ◆ Adapting to the harsh environment proved more important than combat.

## Operational History:

In 1914, fueled by a desire for conquest and a need to eliminate bases which might support German commerce raiders, the British launched a series of expeditions intended to seize Germany's colonial territories in Africa and the Pacific. Supported by Commonwealth and some Allied forces, these expeditions were largely successful, but the campaign in German East Africa (modern day Tanzania) proved a disaster.

**Surrounded** by enemy colonies, **cut off from the sea** by the Royal Navy, and isolated by **disrupted radio links**, the colony fought the war without much support from Germany. In October 1914, the British launched an amphibious expedition to capture the port of Tanga (northern port near the border of British East Africa). The force employed rejects not wanted elsewhere, **poorly trained Indian troops led by officers of questionable abilities**. Although the landing was initially unopposed, German reinforcements repulsed the attack and the green troops retreated.

Fighting on the ground during 1915 was inconclusive, although the Royal Navy launched two memorable expeditions. One destroyed a German commerce raider in a sheltered river delta. Another sent a force overland to gain control of Lake Tanganyika. (Source of the movie, *African Queen*)

In 1916, South African troops took the field under Lt. Gen. Jan Christian Smuts. Driven south by the ponderous allied columns, the **Germans only engaged in battle under favorable conditions--all the while letting supply difficulties and the environment take their toll on the invaders. Allied non-combat losses (from disease) were 30 times those of combat!** By contrast, the German *Askaris* (locally recruited black troops) were supplied less but fought better. Well trained and led they were prepared for the rigors of bush warfare.

By 1917, the Germans were so short of supplies they even attempted resupply by airship from Europe. Pressured from three sides, the Germans took advantage of **poor allied coordination**. Hanging tough before larger British forces of some 200,000, the Germans never exceeded 15,000 and did not surrender until after the Armistice in 1918. In four years of war a large expeditionary force could not defeat a well-conducted defensive army.

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## 2. Gallipoli: How NOT to Run an Expedition

### Expeditionary Lessons Learned:

- ◆ Leadership is always critical. Tentative Allied leadership contrasted sharply with that of the Turks and Germans and was a major factor in the outcome.
- ◆ Inattention to details courts disaster.
- ◆ War is a team effort. Inadequate minesweeping proved disastrous.
- ◆ War is dynamic. If the Allies had attacked earlier, they might have won.

### Operational History:

In 1915, the Russians, battered by the Central powers in the west and about to be invaded by Turkey in the south, appealed for British help. An attack through the Dardanelles could knock the Turks out of the war as well as insure supplies to and grain from the Russians. The Royal Navy attacked on its own, fortified by its disdain for the Turks along with the known weakness of the defenses. But the Turks had been alerted by a November 1914 naval bombardment and took action to defend themselves. While the coastal area could only be lightly defended because of its expanse and rough character, the Turks laid mines, covered by fixed and mobile guns. Allied operations that began in late February 1915 were characterized by **delays**. In a major thrust one-month later, 16 battleships got entangled in an unswept minefield that sank or disabled six. Although the defenders were almost out of ammunition, the naval forces were out of drive. It was now the army's turn.

Army operations were even more botched and much more costly. While the invasion was **delayed** by weather and **reloading of the transports**, the Turks reinforced their ground defenses. Although the Allied invasion tactically surprised the outnumbered Turks, the defenders held, due to fighting spirit and **superior leadership**. The Allied advance stalled with heavy losses due to ineffective naval fire support, **tepid leadership**, shortages of landing craft, too few maps, confusion, poor coordination, and primitive communications. Neither reinforcements nor a second series of landings changed the situation. In sharp contrast to this classic failure, the evacuation of the invading force was a near perfect operation. The Allies effectively used deception and tight security, demonstrated excellent planning and coordination, and achieved prompt execution in the evacuation, withdrawing without losing a man and completing the operation in early January 1916.

Each side suffered about one-quarter million casualties, Turkey outlasted Russia, and the war went until fall of 1918. While some speculate on “what might have been” had the Allies won, most associate Gallipoli with military disaster. Although the Australians and New Zealanders commemorate 25 April (the initial landings) as ANZAC day, their Remembrance Day, the operation is mostly remembered as a costly defeat. Surely Gallipoli is an example of how **NOT** to run an expeditionary operation.

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### 3. The Egyptian Expeditionary Force, 1916-18

#### Expeditionary Lessons Learned:

- ◆ An undeveloped and naturally inhospitable theater of operations requires extensive logistical preparation. Access will not be quick or easy. Sustainment will be a major challenge.
- ◆ Successful integration of joint forces is highly advantageous. British air and naval forces made land forces much more effective.
- ◆ Successful coordination of combined forces requires constant attention. The British were artful in bringing the Arabs along. Friction between Germans and Turks increased as their prospects declined, thus accelerating force disintegration.
- ◆ The greater the understanding of the political, diplomatic, and cultural environment by military leadership, the greater the possibility of military success.

#### Operational History:

The British stood up the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) in early 1916. Composed of garrison troops in Egypt and veterans of the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign, it was the EEF that eventually launched an expeditionary campaign against Ottoman Palestine, with the ultimate objective of conquering Syria and knocking Turkey out of World War I.

**A full year of logistical preparations was required** to position the EEF for the offensive into Palestine. Egypt's Sinai Peninsula lay as a formidable natural barrier between the Suez Canal and Gaza, gateway to the Ottoman Empire. The northern edge of the Sinai was the focus of Herculean efforts to simultaneously advance water, road, and rail lines to support an expeditionary force that ultimately grew to several hundred thousand men, tens of thousands of animals (camels, horses, and donkeys), and assorted stores of weapons, ammunition, and equipment. Perhaps most remarkable was construction of a 12-inch pipeline through which water was pumped for a distance of over 200 miles.

From the time General Sir Edmund Allenby assumed command of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in June 1917, the EEF was hugely successful. Field Marshall Wavell is said to have called Allenby "the best British general of the Great War." Surprise, mobility, and concentration were the keynotes to Allenby's victories, backed by relentless pursuit. But success was strongly abetted by **sustained support** on his flanks **by the Royal Navy** and the "Arab Northern Army," respectively. Captain **T.E. Lawrence** who served as liaison officer, tactician, logistics officer, demolition specialist, and charismatic leader **brilliantly managed Britain's Arab alliance**. Arab revolutionary forces tied down several Turkish divisions with sieges, diversionary attacks, and guerrilla tactics.

**The Royal Air Force was highly instrumental** in achieving strategic surprise in two major engagements by denying the enemy aerial reconnaissance. RAF planes were also lethal in pursuit of retreating troops. Finally, establishment of air superiority made it possible to destroy or degrade the enemy's command, control, and communications centers.

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## 4. The Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935-36

### Expeditionary Lessons Learned:

- ◆ Logistical and political preparation of the theater were critical to success. Roads, port facilities, and air bases were developed well in advance of expeditionary force deployment. Organic military aviation was a decisive factor in all operations – in reconnaissance, communications, and attack missions. It was particularly devastating in a pursuit role against retreating forces.
- ◆ Aircraft in large numbers were used for the first time ever in the resupply of a corps-size unit in the field.
- ◆ Italy's winning strategy and tactics were soundly based on knowledge of the Ethiopians' political and military weaknesses and operational propensities in the field.

### Operational History:

However harshly one may judge the motives of Benito Mussolini in the conquest of Ethiopia in the mid-1930s, a close examination of the operational achievements of Italian expeditionary forces reveals remarkable success in the face of formidable natural obstacles. Numbering around half a million men, deploying thousands of miles from home, and facing a harsh environment and courageous, if ill-equipped, enemy forces, the Italians acquitted themselves extraordinarily well.

It is hard to visualize the **magnitude of the task** faced by Marshall De Bono and his engineers **to prepare the theater** for arrival of large numbers of Italian troops in northern and southern operational areas. Ethiopia was essentially devoid of roads for motor vehicles, had very limited port facilities and only two short railway lines, and offered virtually no local resources. De Bono's choice was to rely on development of a road system and thousands of trucks as the chief means of supplying 500,000 men over great distances.

The Italians wisely took advantage of rivalries among numerous feudal chiefs in Ethiopia who not only distrusted each other but also the central government of Emperor Haile Selassie. Italian political agents worked incessantly before and during the war to undermine the loyalty of native chiefs toward the Emperor, and even to gain their complicity in some cases. De Bono calculated that Italy's **political preparation of the battlefield** prevented some 200,000 warriors from taking up arms against the Italians.

**The role of military aviation** in this war was multi-faceted, innovative, and **highly instrumental to the Italian victory**. Principal missions of aircraft organic to all corps-level formations were reconnaissance/observation, liaison/communications, bombing, and strafing. The ever-present menace of aircraft over the battlefield operating from airstrips near the front compelled concealment and dispersion of enemy forces, thus discouraging mass actions and offensive spirit. Perhaps the most decisive employment of Italian military aircraft was in pursuit of retreating troops.

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## 5. Intervention of a Soviet Expeditionary Aerial Force in Spain

### Expeditionary Lessons Learned:

- ◆ Timely intervention can turn events around.
- ◆ Victory was associated with technological superiority that rapidly changed. Equipment that had once dominated the battlefield, in short order was junk.
- ◆ Guadalajara showed how air power can repulse and savage an armor assault.

### Operational History:

In July 1936 a military revolt in Spain degenerated into a drawn out civil war. The Germans and Italians aided the Nationalists while the western democracies did little but talk. Only the Soviets lent the Republicans any significant military assistance. The impact of **Soviet air aid** became apparent when Russian aircraft appeared in combat in November 1936 and quickly established **air superiority** over the Italian and German biplanes. Later the Soviets employed the even better performing I-16 monoplane that was the first to fly with a number of major technological innovations of the era.

The one major Republican victory came in March 1937 when a powerful Nationalist column broke through northeast of Madrid near **Guadalajara**. Wet weather forced the largely motorized force of about 1,000 vehicles to string out ten miles along one road, and grounded the Nationalist air force that was operating off of sod fields. Soviet aircraft using a concrete runway were able to get airborne, find the enemy, and effectively attack. **Aviation was a major factor** in this Republican victory. The Nationalists lost many troops, much equipment, and considerable prestige in this battle.

The Republican advantage was brief. In mid-1937 the Germans regained the technical edge with the Bf-109s that outperformed the Soviet fighters. This **technical advantage**, greater numbers, and superior German tactics and training led to Nationalist **air superiority**. This **air power advantage**, combined with the Nationalist victories in the ground war, the increasingly tight blockade, and Soviet obsession with the purge of its officer corps, led to the gradual phasing out of Soviet aid in the fall of 1938. The war ended in late March 1939 when the Nationalists took Madrid and Valencia.

The Soviets greatly influenced the war with a relatively small number of personnel, probably no more than 4,000, of whom 1,000 were pilots. The Soviets also sent 1,000 to 1,500 aircraft to the Republicans. The scale of the Soviet contribution is evident when comparing this number with the size of the entire German Air Force during this same period; the *Luftwaffe* grew from a front-line strength of 2,000 in 1937 to 2,900 in August 1938.

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## 6. German Airpower in the Spanish Civil War: Maximum Impact, Minimum Cost

### Expeditionary Lessons Learned:

- ◆ Political sympathy for a cause may lead a nation to support it even when it does not concern a vital interest.
- ◆ Small covert operations, though expanded into large overt operations, may still be heavily influenced by intelligence services.
- ◆ If assistance is tailored to meet the needs of the recipient, it can be decisive even if it is small.
- ◆ Small expeditionary elements are most effective if they emphasize airpower.
- ◆ Properly used, expeditionary operations can provide invaluable training benefits.

### Operational History:

By 1936, Spanish politics was becoming fragmented, polarized, and violent. In July, the Army rebelled against the recently elected leftist government and the nation descended into a brutal civil war that lasted almost three years. The Germans were drawn into the war ten days after the revolt began.

Much of the rebellious army (the "Nationalists") was in North Africa and could not get to Spain because the navy (after the sailors killed their officers) sided with the Government. The Nationalists requested aid from Germany. Against the advice of the army and the foreign ministry, Hitler decided to send covert air assistance. The Germans used transport aircraft from their civilian airline to airlift over 12,000 Spanish troops and their equipment from North Africa to Spain in the critical early stages of the war. This was the first time in history that an entire army and its equipment had been airlifted to war and it saved the Nationalist cause.

As the war progressed, the German aid became more overt and expanded to include equipment, training, extensive air combat operations, and limited ground combat. Since the initial operation was covert, the **German intelligence services became heavily involved at the start and remained key players even after aid became overt.** The **German expeditionary force** in Spain was **never larger than 6,500 troops**, but it was designed to address the specific weaknesses of the Nationalist forces and **had an enormous impact** on their eventual success. Germany provided 80 percent of the Nationalists' air forces and gave them air superiority. On the ground, the Germans provided extensive training and technical support. In return, the **Germans learned important combat lessons in Spain.**

Though 750,000 Spaniards died in the Civil War, **careful use of a small force that emphasized airpower** enabled the Germans to make **an important, perhaps decisive, contribution** to the war's outcome at a cost of about 300 German lives.

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## 7. Italian Forces in the Spanish Civil War: High Price for Limited Gain

### Expeditionary Lessons Learned:

- ◆ Expeditionary forces must be trained, organized, and equipped to accomplish their missions.
- ◆ Political tensions with the host nation rise rapidly if large numbers of poorly disciplined troops are sent.
- ◆ Even erstwhile allies will be highly contemptuous of a friendly expeditionary force that begins operations with an arrogant attitude, then subsequently fails.
- ◆ Large ground forces committed to a long war incur casualties that may be out of proportion to the value of the conflict.

### Operational History:

Benito Mussolini wanted Italy to dominate the Mediterranean, and a friendly Spain would help him achieve this. Shortly after the Spanish Generals revolted, Mussolini agreed to assist them but he was not content to simply train and support the Nationalists. He wanted Italy to make an independent, highly visible, and decisive contribution to the cause.

With this goal in mind, **Italy sent large but disorganized and poorly trained ground forces** to fight in Spain under Italian Generals. Italian troop strength in Spain rose to three divisions and nearly 45,000 troops fighting as an Italian Corps. However, the first major Italian offensive (the Guadalajara campaign in March 1937) ended in disaster when heavy rains grounded the Italian air forces but not those of their Republican opponents. The unopposed Republican air forces devastated the Italian armored columns. When Republican ground forces counterattacked, the Italians fled (much to the amusement of their Spanish allies).

Over time, the performance of the Italian troops improved but the size of the force created problems of its own. The **Italians** became conspicuous in the bars and brothels of the rear areas and too **often wound up** brawling with "friendly" Spaniards and **straining relations between the two nations**. Even worse, some of the Italians responded to supply problems and poor leadership by deserting to the enemy.

In all, over 100,000 Italian troops and nearly 6,000 Italian airmen fought in Spain. The large Italian forces in Spain made an important contribution to the eventual Nationalist victory, but that victory was really won by Spanish ground forces supported by German air forces. **Italy gained little from the war but paid for those meager gains with more than four thousand Italian lives.**

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## 8. Expedition to Norway: A Study in Failure

### Expeditionary Lessons Learned:

- ◆ A poorly led superior force will have difficulty defeating a well-led inferior force.
- ◆ Air power dominated the campaign, allowing an inferior force to defeat a larger one.
- ◆ Intelligence proved critical in the campaign.
- ◆ Combined operations are complicated at best, and, at worst, are a recipe for disaster.

### Operational History:

Norway had been a neutral in World War I and wished to remain one in World War II. This was not to be because of its strategic location. Shortly after the war erupted in September 1939, Churchill proposed mining Norwegian waters. On 8 April the Royal Navy began to mine only a day before the Germans launched their invasion. The British had some warning of German naval movement but concluded it was an effort to break ships out to the Atlantic, as they did not anticipate a German invasion of Norway. Thus the Allies moved their superior navies in the wrong direction to oppose the invasion, and thus **nullified their only major advantage** in the campaign, sea power.

Within a week of the German attack, the Allies began landing at three points in Norway. But the **diverse allied forces proved no match for unified German units**. Confusion, lack of coordination of the polyglot forces, multiple languages, and lack of training, experience, supply, and proper equipment were major Allied problems. Rugged terrain and poor weather made matters worse. **German air power was especially effective** as the Allies had few aircraft and minimal antiaircraft protection. GAF divebombers battered allied ground and naval forces, harassed allied air forces, and effectively bombed supply ports and lines. British carrier and land-based air proved woefully inadequate.

At Narvik the Allies had superior numbers against a small, cutoff German force. Hitler despaired, if not panicked, and authorized the commander to withdraw into internment in nearby Sweden. But tough German troops, **solid leadership**, and allied failings permitted the German force to survive. On 24 May orders reached Norway to evacuate. (The German attack in France on 10 May that reached the English Channel on 22 May changed the complexion of the war.) The Allies decided to take Narvik and destroy its port facilities before pulling out. This they were able to do on 27 May, but the tough German defenders withdrew undefeated into the countryside. The Allied stay was brief; in early June the Allies pulled out.

The campaign was a clear German victory. The Allies lost the campaign; the Norwegians lost their country.

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## 9. German Expedition to Norway, 1940: Military Success but Political Failure

### Expeditionary Lessons Learned:

- ◆ A bold plan that simultaneously attacks all the enemy's centers of gravity can overwhelm him before he can react.
- ◆ Seapower is only decisive outside the range of land-based airpower. In the face of air superiority, surface seapower is ineffective.
- ◆ If one target is absolutely essential, then it is worth attacking in two independent ways. Rapid capture of Oslo was essential and the main sea-borne assault failed but a simultaneous airborne assault succeeded.
- ◆ Brilliant military success cannot entirely substitute for effective political planning.

### Operational History:

In early 1940, Germany was at war with Britain and France. Norway was an uneasy neutral courted by both sides. Since she had remained neutral during the First World War, Norway hoped to do so again but both Britain and Germany were trying to force her to join the war. Not surprisingly, **Hitler struck sooner and harder** than did British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain.

The greatest obstacle to German success was British naval superiority but the **Germans had superior airpower**. German deception operations enabled their ships to get to Norway safely and, on the morning of 9 April 1940, they launched amphibious assaults on the most important Norwegian ports and communications sites. Simultaneous airborne assaults (some of the first in history) took the critical airfields at Stavanger and Oslo. At Bergen and Oslo, the Norwegian shore batteries held off the German ships but in both cases German airpower facilitated success. The Germans controlled all the Norwegian centers of gravity by the evening of the first day. In the far north, initially beyond the range of German airpower, the British captured Narvik but were soon forced out.

The Germans' one serious mistake was that when the Norwegian government did not immediately accept German occupation, they allowed the pompous and paranoid Vidkun Quisling to declare himself head of a new Norwegian government. **Quisling was a boon to allied propaganda**. Hatred of him strengthened Norwegian resistance to German occupation and forced the Germans to station much larger forces in Norway than would have been necessary under an administration more acceptable to the Norwegian people.

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## 10. Philippine Force Buildup Before WW II

### Expeditionary Lessons Learned:

- ◆ World War II was an expeditionary war of greatest importance.
- ◆ Air forces have a powerful psychological effect on the enemy.
- ◆ Forces have to be combat ready to survive significant enemy forces.
- ◆ Parallel combat operations and surprise attacks are paralyzing.
- ◆ The theater commander and air commanders have to understand combat realities.
- ◆ Combined and joint relations need to be realistically thought out.
- ◆ Base security and alternate landing fields are necessary for large air operations.

### Operational History:

World War II, composed of **many separated theaters**, was the **biggest expeditionary operation in the history** of the United States. Even though this country was not at war in the waning days of 1941, a large expeditionary force, air included, was being rushed to the Philippines in anticipation of conflict with Japan.

One reason for this was the political-military intention to deter or funnel Japanese expansion. Another was the existence of B-17s which made a defense of the islands seem feasible to some military leaders like George Marshall. In the fall of 1941 Marshall began to send an allocation of America's best planes, 300 B-17s and many first-line air superiority P-40s to defend the island.

Events tumbled quickly for MacArthur's theater command. Japan used its own expeditionary air forces to humble the defenders, producing a physical and psychological **military paralysis** by hitting several sites at once. The first target was American aircraft. Many of the 35 B-17s on hand were bombed on the ramps at Clark Field. P-40s fought it out with superior Japanese fighter pilots. Within two days there were only a few planes left to contest the multiple Japanese amphibious assaults.

MacArthur gave **too much credit to air force potential** to give him defensive security, and he did not know how to use his airpower. Furthermore, when things got exciting after news of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, he did not listen to his new air commander. When war surprised him, aircraft were employed with poor results. The Japanese military had an **asymmetrical advantage** but they also used surprise. The B-17s, bunched together for **base security**, were destroyed on the ground.

**Combined and joint considerations were poorly developed.** Talks with Pacific allies showed forward thinking about combined operations, but the attack came before development of an effective defense, and before the Navy would agree to this drastic altering of the war plans. MacArthur was left **without a Navy supply line**. The Philippines were isolated thousands of miles from support, and the newly birthing expeditionary force squandered with little effect. In effect it was easier to get the expedition started and more difficult to get it adjusted to a larger conflict. All MacArthur had was the promise that "I shall return."

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## 11. Guadalcanal: Success, Just Barely

### Expeditionary Lessons Learned:

- ◆ Land based air power was the key to this operation and to Allied victory.
- ◆ Interservice cooperation was sadly lacking and its absence complicated successful operations.
- ◆ Getting there, “firstest with the mostest” can deliver victory, but at a cost.
- ◆ Supply was critical, and largely determined ultimate victory.
- ◆ Technology was not a key to victory. The Japanese had better torpedoes and fighters.

### Operational History:

The early months of World War II went badly for the U.S. The Japanese, who had won striking victories and were threatening allied lines of communications with Australia and New Zealand, began building an airfield on Guadalcanal in July 1942. Only a few days earlier the JCS had agreed to send an expedition there which landed on 7 August and achieved complete surprise. Both sides pumped reinforcements into the brutal ground war fought in terrible terrain by brave, but **poorly supplied**, troops. The U.S. carriers had to pull back out of danger, but Americans retained **air superiority, using, joint, land-based airpower**. For a while the Japanese initially held nighttime naval superiority.

The Marines quickly found themselves on their own as the Navy, which feared to risk its precious carriers, withdrew. There was heavy fighting at sea, with the tactical advantage swinging back and forth. The Japanese had the advantage at night, with **superior tactics** and **torpedoes**, while the US had radar and **air superiority**. One consequence of this hotly contested naval battle was that both sides could only **partially supply** their forces. The naval losses were about equal in the campaign, but the U.S. could afford such attrition. The Japanese could not.

The land battle was confused, difficult, and deadly. Throughout, the Japanese made numerous attempts to dislodge the Marines, but, as brave as they were, their piecemeal, uncoordinated assaults did not produce positive results. Losses were high, but lopsided against the Japanese. The jungle terrain contributed to the problems, making communications tenuous and movement slow, and reducing the combatants to battle mainly with light weapons, at close range. **Supply was a major problem for both sides**.

By the end of the year the outnumbered Japanese were losing the battle of attrition and were no longer capable of offensive action, thus they decided to pull out. In contrast to the mismanaged ground campaign, the Japanese were able to pull off a brilliant evacuation without detection and without a loss during the first week of February 1943.

The Guadalcanal campaign was one of the critical and decisive battles of World War II. It was the first Japanese land defeat and marked the beginning of the Allied advance toward Tokyo. Guadalcanal shattered the Japanese soldiers' reputation as superior jungle fighters, but this action reinforced their renown for bravery and stamina, dedication and sacrifice. Likewise the U.S. Marines added to their own reputation for courage and tenacity.

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## 12. Rommel in North Africa: The Campaign from a German Point-of-View

### Expeditionary Lessons Learned:

- ◆ The campaign in North Africa again demonstrates the importance of leadership.
- ◆ Supply is critical to victory.
- ◆ Intelligence played a major role in this campaign, especially in supply interdiction.
- ◆ The Axis performed well due to superior tactics and leadership.
- ◆ Air power played a significant role in both battlefield support and supply interdiction.

### Operational History:

The collapse of Italian forces in North Africa late in 1940 prompted German intervention in the Mediterranean Theater. Although General Erwin Rommel and the German vanguard arrived in North Africa in February 1941, the British did not expect an attack until summer because they knew through broken codes of the German **logistical problems** and orders to stand fast. Thus Rommel surprised both friend and foe when he quickly took the offensive. After the *Luftwaffe* neutralized the supply port of Benghazi, forcing the British supply lines back 200 miles, Rommel attacked and won smashing victories. With **air superiority** the Germans made good use of decoys and attacked British fuel stocks. German speed, daring, and ruses overcame the lackadaisical, **poorly commanded** British forces.

For almost the next two years, the war swung back and forth across the North African desert. To a large degree, **supply determined victory**. **Air power** largely determined what could get through to the armies in the desert. The tiny island of Malta proved to be vital for, while badly pounded by Axis aircraft, it withstood the aerial siege and remained a key allied outpost and base. The Allied **ability to read German messages** was crucial in the effort against German supply lines, accounting for 40 percent of the Axis shipping losses. On two occasions, fall 1941 and fall 1942, the Axis forces came close to exhausting their supplies.

Given their **tenuous supply** situation, the Axis forces performed very well, particularly as the majority were Italians, not considered front line troops by most. Much of this success can be attributed to the energetic, inspiring, and **brilliant tactical leadership of Rommel**. German combined arms tactics, especially coordinated use of tanks and anti-tank guns, were also clearly superior to Allied tactics. In addition, the Germans displayed superior tank recovery methods that were most useful given the limited supply situation. On the other side, **British leadership was** for the most part **inferior**, especially at the top level. The British lacked coordination and cooperation, and their piecemeal attacks squandered their advantages in men and machines. In brief, Rommel's forces were superior in mobile and offensive warfare.

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## 13. Expeditions to Nowhere: The Aleutians

### Expeditionary Lessons Learned:

- ◆ US code breaking put the Japanese at a enormous operational disadvantage, and, as a diversion for Midway, the Aleutians invasion failed before it began.
- ◆ Weather and lack of preparation cost more men, ships, and aircraft than combat.
- ◆ Divided US command hampered the US response.
- ◆ Both Japanese and US expeditions succeeded operationally, but were dead-ends because they served no larger strategy.

### Operational History:

The Japanese invasion of the Aleutian Islands was planned to provide a diversion for their Midway operation. A task force, including light carriers and amphibious troops, would open the Midway operation with an air strike against Dutch Harbor. Additional strikes would be followed by amphibious assaults on the outer Aleutian Islands. These actions were intended to blunt any US build up which might threaten Japan and to provide bases to anchor the northern end of Japan's new outer defensive line.

The Japanese invasion went according to plan and the Japanese seized the islands of Attu and Kiska. But even without the reversal at Midway, the strategic value of this new and remote theater was questionable. **The Japanese could not support and defend these outposts**, and the atrocious climate made a US thrust through the Aleutians towards Japan very unlikely.

The operation failed as a diversion **because signals intelligence warned the US command** of both the Aleutian and Midway operations. The US commanders decided to postpone retaking the Aleutians and concentrate on defeating the Japanese at Midway. When the US did respond, the ineffective bombardment by US air and naval forces only served to demonstrate **strained relations between the two commands** (North Pacific Area and Alaska Defense Command) responsible for the defense of this theater.

The U.S. Navy eventually isolated the islands and an invasion of Attu was approved. **The troops lacked cold weather items**, but the campaign was expected to last only a few days. In a foretaste of later invasions, the Japanese chose not to oppose the landings. Later, as the American troops advanced across the spongy tundra of Attu's valleys, the Japanese attacked from secure positions in the rugged heights. A grim battle of attrition developed that ended when the remaining Japanese troops launched a suicidal night assault.

The follow-on seizure of Kiska was planned as a full-blown invasion but proved an empty victory since the Japanese had secretly evacuated the island. The U.S. Army was philosophical about the campaign, citing the value of lessons learned to later amphibious and cold weather operations. However, for its size, **the campaign was one of the most costly of the Pacific War.**

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## 14. TORCH: Twelfth Air Force to Africa, WW II

### Expeditionary Lessons Learned:

- ◆ Significant differences can arise between civilian policy makers and military commanders.
- ◆ Forward bases are very useful for big operations.
- ◆ Training counts heavily when engaging a competent enemy.
- ◆ Asymmetrical attack tends to dispirit the enemy quickly.
- ◆ Big campaigns require joint and combined planning and operations.
- ◆ Centralized command is crucial, especially when allies are part of the campaign.
- ◆ Even basic doctrine can be set aside for special emergency situations.

### Operational History:

Roosevelt, with Churchill's urgings, laid on TORCH. **Political decisions can force the military into awkward combat situations.** The Americans lacked sufficiently trained airmen and soldiers. Navy shipping was in short supply. But being good soldiers, everyone in Eisenhower's London headquarters quickly got busy with TORCH planning. Ike had hoped that American forces would have time for **additional training when they got to Africa.** That prospect was denied when Germany decided to contest the battle in Tunisia. The British 1<sup>st</sup> Army and American forces were hurriedly sent into action. At least Africa offered an opportunity to bloody American forces and engage Germany from the southern periphery.

TORCH was a **combined and joint expeditionary effort** out of England, **from one forward base to another.** Although men, equipment, and supplies went to Africa directly from the United States, a steady stream also flowed southward from England. Even the aircraft, short-legged fighters included, would fly from bases in southern England, springboard off the Gibraltar airfield, and land in Northwest Africa.

The Twelfth Air Force was a **composite force**, composed of fighter, bomber, attack, and supply commands. This gave it the flexibility to attend to any number of requirements demanded by combat. Arnold also assigned two senior officers, Vandenberg and Norstad, to help Doolittle, who had limited command experience.

Eisenhower followed the premise that the TORCH force would have **asymmetrical power** for this **the most ambitious amphibious assault, to date, in American history.** The Allies hoped to quickly dispirit the French, forcing surrender and a change of sides. They did not want a grinding battle that embittered everyone.

After the French surrender, all units reformed under Doolittle. But the rumor that air operations did not follow doctrine was correct. The Army needed protection from Luftwaffe bombers, and having no anti-aircraft defense, called on the 12<sup>th</sup> AF to protect it. **Emergency situations require doctrinal distortions.** The need for a **centralized command structure** to encompass all the allied forces was not fully implemented until after Kasserine.

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## 15. BOLERO: Eighth Air Force to England, WW II

### Expeditionary Lessons Learned:

- ◆ A forward base is necessary for major operations.
- ◆ Expeditionary forces can be configured as composite forces for flexibility.
- ◆ Central command of all air units was achieved under a theater commander.
- ◆ It took a large bomber force to make an effective weapon in 1943.
- ◆ Maritime transport was an important limiting factor in WW II.
- ◆ Security of operating bases for the bombing force was imperative.
- ◆ Conducting operations in more than one theater at a time requires compromised allocations.
- ◆ The amount of material required for an air-only campaign may be difficult to obtain and maintain for political, military, and inter-service reasons.

### Operational History:

The air campaign in Europe against German forces had a slow and troubled beginning. Because of the Japanese threat, a heavy share of air strength was diverted westward, and the expeditionary American air arm in Europe could only limp into battles thirty-six weeks after war began. Even then, events, especially the invasion of Africa overtook initial planning and BOLERO, the movement of an expeditionary **buildup in England**, was functionally **delayed until 1943**.

The Eighth Air Force was formed in January 1942 under a **central command**. It was a **composite air force** composed of fighter, bomber, air support, and service commands. Like all early numbered air forces it was to have enough flexibility to handle all potential air missions, but **bombers were the effective force**. Getting forces, trained personnel, equipment, and aircraft ready from a low production baseline was problem number one. Another limiting funnel was sea transport. Resources for Operation TORCH, organized at the last minute, had to be **drawn from other expeditions**, and Operation BOLERO got hit hard.

Still, Maj. Gen. Carl Spaatz and many air leaders hoped to continue the buildup of an air expeditionary force in **England's safe haven** to create another front against Germany. The important issue to airmen was the bombing campaign against Germany. Gen. H.H (Hap) Arnold originally wished to withhold the heavy bombers from action until he could unleash a force of considerable size, but this is not how events played out.

American airmen sought to prove the case for service independence by conducting a successful bombing campaign. Gen. Ira. C. Eaker and other air leaders believed the British bombing campaign had the potential to defeat Germany without ground operations. He also understood that **time, political factors, and service considerations would not permit an air only effort**, and that combined air-ground operations in Europe were inevitable.