

Amphibious Operations in the South Pacific in World War II**Volume III****PACIFIC EXPRESS
THE CRITICAL ROLE OF MILITARY LOGISTICS IN WORLD WAR II****Edited by William L. McGee
with Sandra McGee****Annotated Table of Contents****List of Maps
Foreword
Preface
Introduction****PART I, EMERGENCY SHIPBUILDING, 1941-1945**

The story of the greatest shipbuilding program in America's history.

Chapter 1, Ships for Victory

Given the daunting task of building ships faster than they were being sunk, America's shipbuilding firms found new ways to increase their efficiency and scale of production with huge new shipyards and a labor force of 640,000. The story of these major achievements provides a behind-the-scenes look at the battle for shipyard ways, steel plate, and propulsion equipment. Consider this scenario: the U.S. Navy was in desperate need of new combatants and auxiliaries; the Maritime Commission was charged with building thousands of cargo ships, transports, and tankers in order to provide worldwide logistical support for the U.S. Armed Forces and America's allies; and President Roosevelt, the Joint Chiefs, and the War Shipping Administration were arbitrating the differences.

Source: Frederic C. Lane, "Ships for Victory—A History of Shipbuilding under the U.S. Maritime Commission in World War II" (The Johns Hopkins Press, 1951. Reprint, with a new preface by Arthur Donovan, Johns Hopkins Paperbacks edition, 2001).

PART II, LOGISTICS CHALLENGES IN THE PACIFIC

The story of the vital logistics services supplied to the U.S. Armed Forces operating in the Pacific. Logistics challenges are examined—proof positive that naval warfare is not all blazing combat.

Chapter 2, Advance Bases and Floating Service Squadrons

The importance of logistics—or the lack thereof—is documented with the focus on the bloody, six-month struggle for Guadalcanal, considered by many historians to be the turning point in the Pacific war. The significant role played by Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, Commander Service Force South Pacific (Task Force 62) for the Solomons campaigns, is highlighted. The chapter closes with Rear Admiral Worrall Reed Carter's look ahead at future Pacific operations and the increasing need for mobile service squadrons in the far reaches of the Pacific.

Sources:

Rear Admiral Worrall Reed Carter, USN (Ret), *"Beans, Bullets and Black Oil—The Story of Fleet Logistics Afloat in the Pacific During World War II"* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1953). RAdm Carter was Commander Naval Bases South Pacific, 1942, and Commander of the famed "floating" Service Squadron Ten, 1944-45.

Vice Admiral George Carroll Dyer, USN (Ret), *"The Amphibians Came To Conquer—The Story of Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner"* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971).

Samuel Eliot Morison, "Breaking the Bismarcks Barrier, 22 July 1942-1 May 1944," Vol. 6, *"History of United States Naval Operations in World War II"* (Little, Brown and Co., 1950).

Chapter 3, The Naval Transportation Service in World War II

The Naval Transportation Service (NTS) regarded itself as a shipping line that operated ships at the beginning of the war. That appears to have been the intention of the War Plan which called for the Navy to provide transportation in the movement of forces overseas. However, the Navy not only lacked the personnel to man such ships, it did not have the organization to control them. Case in point: At the time of the 7 December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, the NTS had only about two dozen employees. Furthermore, it had no liaison with the Army to effect such a change.

The result: in February 1942, when the War Shipping Administration (WSA) was authorized to operate ships for the Army and the Navy, the NTS was excluded from a major participation in the operation of such a fleet. As a result, the NTS evolved into a logistics agency acting in an administrative capacity for overseas transportation as part of the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts (BuSandA). In short, once the need for a shipment was determined, the NTS found the ships to deliver it. This "freight forwarding" function was the focus of the NTS for the entire war.

Source: Bureau of Supplies and Accounts, Department of the Navy, "History of the Transportation Division" (1944).

Chapter 4, Builders at the Front

This chapter leads off with brief profiles of the U.S. Navy's Bureau of Yards and Docks (BuDocks), the Civil Engineer Corps (CEC), and the birth of the Naval Construction Battalions (NCB), the latter known as the "Seabees." The story then shifts to the South Pacific where Seabees are building Advance Bases. We follow the Sixth NCB ashore on Guadalcanal where they support the Marines in the Battle for Henderson Field. The First "Special" (Stevedore) NCB is profiled—the first of many stevedore battalions to serve overseas during the war. Many Seabee construction projects are briefly described.

The valuable contributions of the Marine Corps Engineers and their Pioneer Battalions are profiled.

Sources: Firsthand accounts of Seabee contributions, both of the construction and stevedore battalions, are provided by: Lieutenant Mark H. Jordan, CEC, USN, "Saga of the Sixth"; Captain Larry G. DeVries, CEC, USNR, "Seabees on Guadalcanal," WWII Naval Journal (July/August 1994) and "Builders at the Front" (1996); Claude S. Gulbranson, USNR, "History of the First Special U.S. Naval Construction Battalion, 1942-1946" (1994); and Lieutenant (jg) William Bradford Huie, CEC, USNR, "Can Do! The Story of the Seabees" (E. P. Dutton & Co., 1944).

Additional sources:

Bureau of Yards and Docks, Department of the Navy, "Building the Navy's Bases in World War II—History of the Bureau of Yards and Docks and the Civil Engineer Corps, 1940-1946," 2 vols. (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947).

Marine Corps Historical Center publications: "Engineering on Guadalcanal," Headquarters Bulletin (January 1944); "Building Under Fire: Marine Corps Engineers" by Lieutenant Colonel James G. Frazer, USMC, Engineering News-Record (February 1944).

PART III, MANNING THE SHIPS AND DELIVERING THE GOODS

Profiles of the crews who manned the ships. Their mission—to deliver the goods.

Chapter 5, U.S. Merchant Marine and U.S. Navy Armed Guard

Profiles of two entirely different crew types who served together in thousands of ships during WWII—the civilian merchant mariners who operated the ships and the Naval Armed Guard who protected the ships and their valuable cargo from enemy attacks.

John Gorley Bunker leads off the chapter with a discussion of Merchant Marine crews, followed by the status of labor relations during World War II. A World War II Merchant Mariner, Bunker writes from experience having served on two Liberty ships "...plus a half-dozen other merchant types as fireman, oiler, deck engineer and purser." Much of the information in Bunker's book is not readily available in research libraries.

Vice Admiral Emory S. Land, wartime head of the Maritime Commission and the War Shipping Administration, provides his viewpoint on the controversial subject of labor relations. Thanks to his imagination and organizational ability, the greatest program of shipbuilding in the world was successfully achieved. (See also Chapter 1.)

William L. McGee served on three Liberty ships and one Victory ship during World War II. He recounts his indoctrination into the Naval Armed Guard and, before long, how he got in the heat of action. Recalled are the events of 16 and 23 June 1943 in the Solomon Islands, "The Fatal Voyage of Task Unit 32.4.4." Three out of four Liberty ships in the unit were lost to air or submarine attacks. Interviews with many of McGee's shipmate survivors, as well as escort crew members, provide a firsthand replay of the action.

Bruce L. Felknor, a radioman in the wartime Merchant Marine, provides several thought-provoking observations in his "Looking Ahead" at technological and economic changes in maritime logistics, as well as military-Merchant Marine relations.

Sources:

John Gorley Bunker, "Liberty Ships—The Ugly Ducklings of World War II" (Naval Institute Press, 1972).

Vice Admiral Emory S. Land, "Winning The War With Ships—Land, Sea and Air, Mostly Land" (Robert M. McBride Co., 1958).

William L. McGee, "Bluejacket Odyssey, 1942-1946—Guadalcanal to Bikini, Naval Armed Guard in the Pacific" (BMC Publications, 2000).

Bruce L. Felknor, ed., "The U.S. Merchant Marine at War, 1775-1945" (Naval Institute Press, 1998).

Chapter 6, U.S. Army Transportation Corps

The Army's sea-going transportation problems and their solutions during World War II are addressed. The construction, acquisition and maintenance of Army vessels, such as transports, cargo vessels, and tug boats, were seldom covered by the consumer-oriented media during WWII. This chapter addresses this neglect with answers to many questions this writer/editor had been searching for.

The opening section recounts the establishment of the Transportation Corps shortly after the start of World War II, followed by a discussion of the Army's field establishment and of the importance of logistics at America's ports of embarkation. The critical role of shipping is examined as well as the urgent need to plan and prepare for amphibious operations. The Army's relations with the U.S. Navy and the War Shipping Administration are examined as well as the critical allocation of troopships. Operations of the Army's large and small vessels are then discussed. Subjects range from the role of the civilian crews on oceangoing vessels to ship armament and gun crews (most U.S. Navy Armed Guardsmen) plus the ship's radio service. The assignment, manning and operation of small boats are scrutinized.

Finally, there is a comprehensive study of the Army's extensive World War II fleet with selectively excerpted passages that augment earlier discussions with vessel definitions and designations of Army

ship and watercraft. Informative tables plus meaningful observations and conclusions are followed by photographs representative of the Army's World War II "Navy."

Sources:

Chester Wardlow, "The Technical Services, Transportation Corps: Responsibilities, Organization, and Operations," United States Army in World War II (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1951).
David H. Grover, "U.S. Army Ships and Watercraft of World War II" (Naval Institute Press, 1987).

Chapter 7, U.S. Coast Guard-Manned Vessels in World War II

The critical role of the Coast Guard in amphibious operations in World War II is largely unheralded. Likewise, few people—civilians as well as veterans—are aware that the Coast Guard fully-manned 351 naval vessels including 76 LSTs (Landing Ship, Tank), 21 cargo (AK) and attack cargo (AKA) ships, 75 frigates, and 31 transports (AP). Furthermore, the Coast Guard manned more than 800 cutters, 288 U.S. Army vessels, and thousands of amphibious landing craft. The Coast Guard's valuable participation in the amphibious operations in the Solomons campaigns is documented. This is followed by a brief description of vessel types manned by the Coast Guard.

Sources: Coast Guard Historian's Office publications: Robert M. Browning, "The Coast Guard and the Pacific War" (1995); Robert Erwin Johnson, "Coast Guard-Manned Naval Vessels in World War II" (1993; and Robert L. Scheina, "The Coast Guard at War" (1987). Winn B. Frank, "Farewell to the Troopship," Naval History (January/February 1997).

Chapter 8, Filling the Pipeline

The summary of the cargo lift of the U.S. Merchant Marine during World War II.

Source: Vice Admiral Emory S. Land, USN, "The United States Merchant Marine at War: Report of the War Shipping Administrator to the President" (15 January 1946).

Chapter 9, Lessons Learned

Valuable lessons were learned during the sixteen-month struggle for the Solomons, including the employment of the revolutionary new landing ships and craft, proper beachhead management, night landings, diversionary landings, offshore toeholds, and leapfrogging.

The strategical concepts of offshore toeholds and leapfrogging would be employed in future operations. The risk the United States incurred in the south and southwest Pacific by dispensing its forces and conducting two strategic offenses—Solomons and New Guinea—brought substantial rewards.

Source: William L. McGee, "The Solomons Campaigns, 1942-1943—From Guadalcanal to Bougainville, Pacific War Turning Point (BMC Publications, 2002).

APPENDIX, U.S. Merchant Ship Casualties in the Pacific Ocean Areas, 7 December 1941-10 August 1945.

Ship data includes Vessel, Gross Tonnage, Operator, Cargo, Attack Locations, Attack Methods, Attack Damage, Personnel Aboard, Casualties, and Ship's Armament.

Sources:

Robert M. Browning Jr., "U.S. Merchant Vessel War Casualties of World War II (Naval Institute Press, 1996).
Captain Arthur R. Moore, "A Careless World...A Needless Sinking—A History of the Staggering Losses Suffered by the U.S. Merchant Marine, both in Ships and Personnel during World War II" (American Merchant Marine Museum, U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, 1983).

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