
Introduction

In the words of Admiral Worrall Reed Carter, one of the U.S. Navy's foremost experts on logistics support in the Pacific theater during World War II:

“From 7 December 1941, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, until they admitted defeat in August 1945, our fleet continuously grew. During those stirring and difficult times, the accounts of ship actions, air strikes, and amphibious operations make up the thrilling combat history of the Pacific theater. Linked inseparably with combat is naval logistic support, the support which makes available to the fleet such essentials as ammunition, fuel, food, repair services—in short, all the necessities, at the proper time and place and in adequate amounts. This support, from advanced bases and from floating mobile service squadrons and groups, maintained the fleet and enabled it to take offensive action farther from home supply points than was ever before thought possible.”

—*Adm W. R. Carter, USN (Ret), Commander Naval Bases South Pacific, 1942; Commander famed “floating” Service Squadron Ten, 1944–45.*

Now consider this statistic: A total of 16.1 million men and women served in the U.S. Armed Forces in World War II:

- Average length of active duty: 33 months

- Average time served overseas: 16 months
- Percent serving abroad: 73%
- Percent who never served abroad: 27%
- *Ratio of support troops to combat troops: ten-to-one**

This support-to-combat ratio of ten-to-one makes sense if you consider all the manpower it took to build, operate and maintain the many advance bases around the world. In the case of seagoing personnel, the Merchant Marine and Army Transportation Corps manned thousands of ships with crews made up of civilian and military personnel. The U.S. Navy had hundreds of auxiliaries—such as cargo, transport, hospital, stores, repair, tankers and ammunition ships—all classified as non-combatants even though many of them experienced enemy attacks from time to time. And these are just two examples that illustrate the need for manpower support.

For source material for this three-volume series, *Amphibious Operations in the South Pacific in World War II*, Samuel Loring Morison (grandson of famed World War II naval historian, Admiral Samuel Eliot Morison) researched and gathered archival documents and recommended books on the following subjects:

- The new landing ships and crafts and their crews.
- Amphibious operations from Guadalcanal to Bougainville.
- Seabee construction and stevedore battalions.
- Marine Corps engineers and pioneer units.
- Emergency shipbuilding under the Maritime Commission.
- Logistical challenges in the Pacific.
- Naval service squadrons.
- Manning the long-, medium- and short-haul vessels with U.S. Navy, Coast Guard, Merchant Marine, and Army crews to keep the “Pacific express” pipeline filled.

* Source: Department of Defense and the U.S. Census Bureau, and U.S. Army Military History Institute; *Warfare and Armed Conflicts, A Statistical Reference* (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Record Administrator) 584.

The first two points became the subjects of *The Amphibians Are Coming!* and *The Solomons Campaigns, 1942–1943*, Volumes I and II respectively in the series. The last six points—and then some—are the subjects covered in this Volume III.

Due to space limitations, it is not within the scope of this book to profile every military or civilian service or agency that was a component of the “Pacific express.” In fact, it is with due apologies that we, the editors, had to agree to cut three logistics services at the last minute. The Army Engineers were slated for a much larger role in the book. The Army’s Service of Supply (later Army Service Force) and the Navy’s Bureau of Supplies and Accounts—both procurers of supplies for shipment overseas—receive brief mentions, but not the full chapters we had visualized for them.

However, it is believed that the major components of the “Pacific express” that are covered in the following pages will reinforce this statistic: For every individual who served in blazing combat during World War II, ten—men and women—served in a support role.

—*Sandra McGee*