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SHOOTING AT ISLANDS

A Deadly Game of Hit and Run

Immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbor — which tied up most of the Imperial Navy's newest I-boats — third-string submarines *RO-13*, *RO-64* and *RO-68* used their 8cm guns to shoot up "enemy flying-boat installations" on Howland and Baker islands near the equator, south of Hawaii.

What they actually shot at were shacks manned by Hawaiian teenagers, there because of a bizarre territorial dispute which had erupted six years before. The shellings instituted a new phase of the Advance Force's mission.

Pan American Airlines had plans to pioneer air travel across the Pacific, and in 1935 came to an understanding with the U.S. government. It would establish refueling bases on remote atolls for its short-legged flying boats with help from the U.S. Navy. The Navy agreed. It gave them an excuse to establish hegemony over far-flung areas of the Pacific, a concept essential for countering suspected Japanese buildups in the mandated islands.

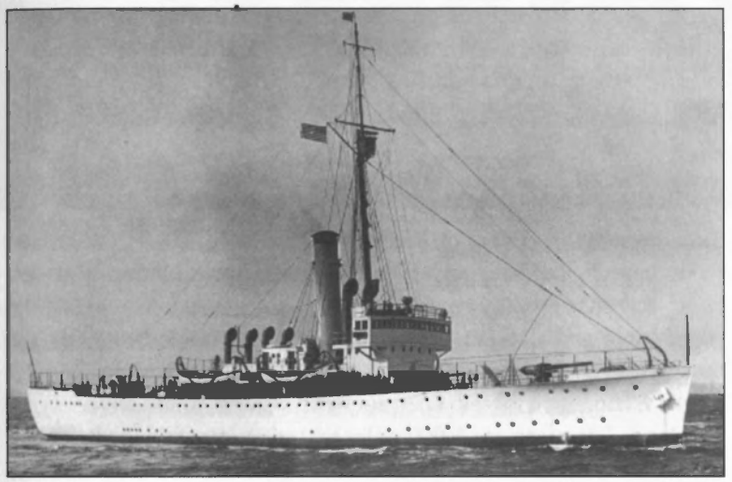
Bill Miller, director of the Bureau of Air Commerce — a single desk within the Department of the Interior — came up with the idea of colonizing uninhabited atolls known as the Equatorial Line Islands, sunblasted guano heaps called Jarvis, Baker and Howland. The islands had been claimed by the United States according the Guano Act of 1856, and had been steadily mined of bird droppings for 20 years. The phosphates gleaned from the droppings were turned into explosives. Americans abandoned the islands in 1877, and the British briefly inhabited them before they, too, left them to the sea birds.

By the 1930s both countries were competing for air routes, and the Equatorials, almost halfway between America and Australia, were once again tempting. In Hawaii, Miller sprang the colonization idea on Albert Judd, a trustee of Bishop Estate, a vast land-holding trust in Hawaii. Judd suggested that boys from Kamehameha Schools would be ideal candidates for settlers. Kamehameha Schools, not coincidentally, is an institution for native Hawaiians managed by Bishop Estate.

The Hawaiian background of these boys made them excellent pioneer material, according to Judd. He pointed out that they were used to hot weather and to living off the sea, and were disciplined by years at a private school in which ROTC was a requirement. Miller was sold, and the operation began in 1935.

England got wind of the developing plan and sent her own settlers to the islands, using New Zealand as a stand-in. Lieutenant Harold A. Meyer of the 19th Infantry, who advised Miller on military aspects of the settlement, made the extraordinary step of telephoning Washington directly from Schofield Barracks. In a two-hour call, Meyer begged for swift action.

Meyer was placed in charge. Within the day, March 20, 1935, the Coast Guard cutter *Itasca* was outfitted with supplies and Hawaiian settlers, and raced off for the Equatorials. Lieutenant Commander Frank Kenner, skipper of *Itasca*, later recalled that the little cutter never made better speed.



Coast Guard 250-foot cutter Itasca *during the 1930s. This ship became famous in 1937 as Amelia Earhart's last radio contact.*

The Hawaiians had no clue as to their destination, nor did the dozen or so soldiers who accompanied them. They had been told simply that it was a security matter. Despite a scare when the ship spotted another vessel, and a brief stop at Palmyra atoll to dig up some palm trees for transplanting, the Hawaiians and the soldiers managed to raise the American flag first on the contested atolls.

Every six months or so thereafter, depending on the availability of *Itasca*, four boys were deposited on each of the three islands. By the time of the Pearl Harbor attack, some 135 had participated in the settlement.

"When we were invited to participate, there was a rush of applicants," recalled Abraham Piianaia, one of the first recruited. "They only wanted graduates, and for boys right out of high school, at the height of the Depression, the $3 a day they paid was good money." It was more than the soldiers made, who were rotated off the islands after a few months, leaving the boys alone.

At first the Hawaiians lived in pup tents, eventually graduating to wooden shacks dubbed "Government Houses," which were open on

On the beach at Jarvis Island, a group of Hawaiian students wave goodbye to the supply ship. For the next six months or longer, the teenagers were on their own.

the sides to let the cool night breeze blow through. All fresh water had to be brought to the islands. The 50-gallon water drums were too heavy to boat to the shore, so each was dumped over the side of the supply ship and allowed to drift ashore. If the drums landed on the wrong side of the island, the boys walked across the island to get a drink. Whenever it rained, open containers on the island were set out.

Jarvis Island, nearly 1,000 miles east of Baker and Howland, had a ghost town still standing, testimony to American and British guano miners of the previous century. A 25-foot-high sign still read "The Pacific Phosphate Company of London and Melbourne." On the beach was the wreck of the barkentine *Amaranth*, which provided lumber for furniture, shacks and surfboards.

The settlers' main tasks were logging hourly weather reports, clearing land for a runway and servicing a small lighthouse. They also collected wildlife samples for the Bishop Museum of Honolulu. Otherwise, it was very much a Robinson Crusoe existence on the islands, which rose barely a dozen feet from the sea. Responsibility for the project was transferred to the Department of the Interior. Meyer's involvement was remembered in a billboard-sized sign, which declared Baker's few buildings to be the town of "Meyerton."

In the opening days of 1937, Howland Island was suddenly taken over by Navy engineers who put in a short airstrip. The runway was built in anticipation of Amelia Earhart's planned 'round-the-world flight. When Earhart cracked up her Lockheed on the runway at Luke Field in Pearl Harbor, while taking off for Howland, the flight was rescheduled for the summer.

Earhart next tried to fly around the world in the opposite direction. On the leg between Lae and Howland, her aircraft disappeared, the last radio signals being picked up by *Itasca*, which had paused along her route to give bearings. Earhart and her aircraft vanished despite a massive Navy search. A shower and private bedroom the Hawaiians had built expressly for Earhart went unused. They grieved for her, and built a 20-foot sandstone monument which they called the Amelia Earhart Lighthouse.

Things were quiet for the next few years, marred only by the death of a colonist in 1938 of peritonitis brought on by appendicitis. Coast Guard cutter *Taney* traveled 1,310 miles at full speed to save the boy, but arrived too late.

Canton and Enderbury islands were added to the program the same year, and were the subject of an exchange of notes between the United States and Great Britain in 1939, the upshot being an agreement to joint administration for at least 50 years, after which the agreement could be extended indefinitely. Each government was to be represented by an official, and the islands were to be available for communications and airports for international aviation — but only of American or British-empire airlines.

Similar circumstances prevailed at Christmas Island, under administration of British High Commissioner of the Pacific, headquartered in Suva. America claimed a seaplane base there, as both countries claimed sovereignty based on occupancy. Britain, however, controlled the island from the end of World War I to 1941. Johnston Island, actually a string of islets that were technically part of the Hawaiian Sea Frontier, was under sole jurisdiction of the United States. All the islands were prized solely for their location.

The Kamehameha students serviced the islands' meager facilities, and spent the rest of their days fishing and working on their tans. "Lobster every day, which we ate raw," said Piianaia. "And the island had these big rats, which ate the pili grass. Vegetarians. We used to catch them and roast them for red meat. They were delicious!

Itasca *approaches Baker Island. The small size of the atoll is apparent.*

"We were paid our salary in a lump sum when we went back to Honolulu, and it was quite a bit of money. We let our hair and beards grow long, it made us feel like explorers. But as soon as we went home, we hit the barber shop."

At night, the bowl of universe blazed above the isolated atolls. Falling stars were so bright they'd cast a shadow. One night, the waters roiled with hundreds of porpoises, a pod that seemed to stretch to the horizon. Some evenings were reserved for ghost stories, punctuated by the sound of birds crying eerily in the night.

Given driftwood, a crab net and a softball, basketball could be played on Baker Island.

There was magic there. Piianaia went back for a second tour, and one morning smelled something in the wind.

"What is that?" he said, and the boys stood around sniffing. "Smells like teriyaki!" joked one, but to Piianaia it did smell like Japanese cooking. Soon they saw a gray warship pull up alongside the island — Piianaia describes it as looking like a cross between a destroyer and a freighter, probably a seaplane tender — with the flag of Japan on her stern. The ship put over a launch, which began pulling for shore. The boys decided that the ship couldn't see the Government House too well, so they ran up a pole with a large American flag on it. Immediately, the launch turned around and went back to the ship, and the Imperial Navy hastily departed the Equatorials.

The Japanese didn't forget about the strategic islands. In December 1941, the boys on Baker were Walter Burke, Blue Makua, James Coyle and James Pease. On Howland, the colonists were Richard Whaley, Joe Keliihahanui, Thomas Bederman and Elvin Matson. By then, too far out of flying routes, Jarvis was deserted.

On the morning of the 8th, Burke went outside to raise the American flag and saw the RO-boat just offshore, ungainly in the water. The submarine fired a round and ripped off the top of the Government House. Burke dashed inside and told the dazed colonists that they'd "better skeedaddle out of there." The four ran across the island in record time, and sought shelter by digging foxholes. Burke ordered the others to disperse across the island, so that a lucky shell wouldn't get them all. The RO-boat walked shells across the island, methodically demolishing the building and other facilities, including the Earhart light station.

That night, the boys went back to survey the wreckage. Pieces of tin were scattered from the Government House roof, which they used as sunshades the next day. At noon, a four-engined H6K "Mavis" flying boat passed over the island, and let go a salvo of bombs.

The boys piled brush atop their foxholes for camouflage. The bomber came back nearly every day from its base in the Marianas or Marshalls, gutting the atoll with high explosive. Not much of the food was saved, and rats got into the rest, but there was a little coffee, and

palolo leaves to chew on, and the ocean provided fish and squid. The flag which never got raised on the morning of Dec. 8 was wrapped in a gunny sack and buried, marked by a cairn of stones.

The boys settled in to wait, cut off from the rest of the world. Christmas dinner was lobster under a full moon and carols into the dawn. They kept a low profile, going to ground whenever a Japanese submarine or destroyer came by. After weeks of bombing, they expected the Japanese to land any moment.

Closer to Pearl Harbor, at a few minutes before 7 p.m. on the night of Dec. 15, submarines surfaced near Kahului, Maui, and Johnston Island. The submarine near Kahului, probably *I-1,* fired 10 shells at the town before running for the sea. Two fell into the harbor, and three hit the cannery of the Maui Pineapple Company, racking up $700 in damage. Panicky residents grabbed their valuables and started to flee the town, but were eventually persuaded to return by Maui police and Boy Scouts.

At Johnston, the attackers were *I-16* and *I-22*, stopping off on their passage to Kwajalein. The two submarines approached the tiny, flat island in cloudy weather and were surprised when it appeared less than 1,000 yards away.

Using the deck gun of a submarine was a difficult proposition, and rarely done except in ideal circumstances. The couple of minutes it took to surface and prepare the gun leaves the submarine wallowing defenseless, and the rangefinders were portable and therefore not very accurate. The usual way of hitting a target was to bracket it with shells. The chances of successfully using a manually loaded deck gun during the moil of battle were slim. The gunnery officer on board tended to be the most junior.

Japanese submarines carried about 20 rounds of deck gun ammunition stored in waterproof lockers in the deck. If the submarine intended to fire more rounds than those, additional ammunition was hauled up from the magazine on a hoist. This arrangement was slow and awkward, and had the disadvantage of requiring a hatch to be opened on deck that could not be sealed from the inside. The combination of a crash dive and an improperly sealed ammunition hoist could result in water cascading into the I-boat.

The guns were virtually useless against attacking aircraft. Japanese submarines were not equipped with ranging radar, not even by war's end, and the only submarines that fired back at aircraft were those that couldn't dive out of harm's way.

In circumstances where the submarine could creep toward the target unseen and on the surface — or where no return fire was expected — the deck gun could be used to good result, as the 4.7-inch round packed a wallop. The targets of opportunity were seacoasts by night, or undefended shipping. Both tended to become scarce after the first few months of war.

Against shore targets, ranges were calculated by estimating the distance from the submarine's presumed location on a seacoast map.

Blazing away on the gun deck of an I-boat. Although this is a posed picture for propaganda purposes, the size of the large gun is noteworthy.

Where the first round landed was a matter of great curiosity to gun crewmen, who were literally taking a shot in the dark.

"It was quite useless to aim for a small target, and the usual practice was to plaster a particular area with the idea of frightening the populace," Torpedo Officer Mochitsura Hashimoto wrote later. He also explained that shore bombardments were unpopular with submarine skippers, who worried about counterattacks against their fragile craft.

I-16 got lost as she approached Johnston, leaving the attack to *I-22*. Both submarines were unaware Navy transport *William Ward Burrows* had arrived early that afternoon with barge *PAB-7* in tow. The transport had slowly steamed from the now-dangerous oceans near Wake Island, and while trying to enter the calm waters of the atoll, the tow bridle snagged a coral head. It was late afternoon before the transport unloaded the barge and 77 civilian contractors on Johnston. The rest of the cargo would have to wait until the next day.

The civilian workers were ordered to remain on Johnston until a runway, bombproof shelters, sewage and saltwater lines and a number of other amenities were completed.

Captain Ross A. Dierdorff anchored *William Ward Burrows* over the shallow coral shelf south of Johnston, reasoning the ship was safer there from submarine attack than cruising the blue water beyond the lagoon. The coral heads that caused problems earlier that day were well-known, and considered enough to scare off any submarines. Even so, a full submarine lookout was posted, the bridge fully manned and the engineering department told not to get too far from their engines. Satisfied, Dierdorff went down to dinner.

On the island, the newly emplaced American gun batteries observed flashes winking on the northern horizon, as did a radio striker strolling toward the radio shack. He ran into the shack and informed the supervisor of the mysterious flashes, and they both peered northward. Through a small squall obscuring the distance in that direction, the flashes were timed at 20 seconds apart. Behind them, the south was clear and *William Ward Burrows* stood out in relief, etched by the setting sun against the darkening sky.

At 6:10 p.m., dinner on the transport was interrupted by a General Quarters alarm — officer of the deck Ensign J.A. Paterson also saw the flashes, correctly deducing they were muzzle blasts. Moments later, shells began striking the atoll. As the officers rushed out on deck, they saw shell hits "laddering up and down the island." Overshoots and ricochets bounced into the water near them, one raising a geyser 30 yards from the stern.

One of the first salvos landed near the civilian contractors' power house, one shell making a small hole as it passed through the wood-frame building without exploding. Another burst on a telephone pole outside the building and showered the area with hot shrapnel, as well as abruptly cutting communication between Johnston and Sand Islet to the south. The splinters riddled both a 1,200 gallon oil tank, setting it afire, and a 50,000 gallon water tank, quickly emptying it.

Oil flames touched off the power house and the two civilian operators ran for their lives. Blazing oil spread quickly behind them as more shells landed nearby, apparently targeted on the prominent water tower. One civilian leaped into a manhole beside the road, not realizing the burning oil would follow him in. He climbed out quickly, his hands covered in flames.

The damage control party arrived and began to fight the fire with sand and salt water. Two shells shredded an additional power building, and another passed through the mess hall without exploding.

At the naval air station on Sand Islet, the damage on Johnston gave observers the impression the "island seemed doomed." The oil fire was upwind and threatened to sweep the entire island from one end to the other. A wall of flames blossomed more than 50-feet tall, throwing the remaining buildings and scurrying people into silhouette and throwing greasy coils of black smoke into the air.

Radio reports received in Pearl Harbor, arriving on top of accounts of shelling in Kahului, said "Johnston Island ablaze!" The 14th Naval District sent out a Hawaii-wide warning; *Contemplated Japanese uprising among Jap sympathizers tonight. Be especially alert.*

On the transport, Captain Dierdorff conferred hurriedly with Lieutenant Commander E.I. McQuiston, his executive officer, and

gunnery officer Lieutenant W.B. Colborn. The glare from the raging oil fire reflected across the lagoon surface, punctuated blackly by splashes of shrapnel. They decided that discretion was the better part of valor, particularly since they had 132 civilians still on board and their own guns couldn't reach the raiders. The ship ran for it.

The transport frantically surged forward at 6:30 p.m. and then shuddered to a stop. The port anchor was fouled in the coral and Dierdorff ordered the chain cut. The ship cleared the anchorage and headed out into deep water, where, several miles out, Dierdorff spun the ship around and cut the engines. Shrouded by rain squalls, she rode quietly for several hours, skirting the shoal.

The island's 3- and 5-inch guns fired several shells in the direction of the faraway muzzle flashes. Nothing could be made out in the misting rain and oil smoke, and the flashes stopped as soon as the island began firing back.

Perhaps because of the extravagant damage on Johnston, observers who did pick out "dim objects in their telescopes" were positive the attackers were capital ships, much larger than submarines. The battle report speculates that the attacking force was a light cruiser and a destroyer that turned tail at the first sign of resistance.

The fire burned wildly for nearly an hour and was finally brought under control by bulldozing the blazing power house. Without communications, a small boat was launched from the Navy base to determine damage and casualties at Johnston, and on the way back, skewered itself up on a coral head. The crew remained stuck there overnight.

At 11:30 p.m., with communications restored, Dierdorff asked Johnston if further help was needed. Johnston replied there were no serious casualties, and therefore, no pressing reason to return. *William Ward Burrows* got under way for Pearl Harbor shortly before 1 a.m., presumably still loaded with Johnston's cargo.

The next morning, another Pacific island held by Americans was giving the Japanese headaches. A spirited defense by American Marines on Wake was exacerbated when two Imperial submarines collided while on patrol. Part of the invasion screening force, *RO-66* accidentally rammed *RO-62*, commanded by Lieutenant Hideyuki Kurokawa. Most of the submarine crew were saved before *RO-62* floundered and sank.

"That island is almost bewitched," Rear Admiral Matome Ugaki recorded in his diary.

On Dec. 20, the chief of staff of the Japanese 6th Fleet signaled the 2nd Submarine Squadron that "in the event of shelling a Hawaiian strong point, the principal target must be shipping and military installations in order as far as possible to avoid harming our own nationals."

At the same time, frustrated at their lack of success in Hawaiian waters, the I-boats of 3rd Submarine Squadron were ordered home to Kwajalein, leaving behind the 2nd Squadron.

This charming domestic vignette — familiar to military families — was taken on Johnston Island in 1946 and meant to show off the pleasant living conditions there. Beyond the cottages is the aircraft ramp, and beyond that, the sea. There is not much more to Johnston.

Three of these 3rd group submarines paused on Dec. 22 to shell Johnston Island again, as well as Palmyra. Apparently, their aim was off, as there is no record of notable damage. *I-71's* shells ranged Johnston, but skipper T. Kawasaki reported inconclusive results "because visibility was bad."

Not mentioned was that *I-71* ceased firing as soon as the shore battery fired back. Third Squadron I-boats were given the reason for the shelling attacks on the 23rd: "Progress report part IV: (2) Concerning the atrocities of the American Army, mentioned above, which factors have a great relation to the fate of a majority of Japanese on future battlefields, first of all, these cruel killers of Japanese will be thoroughly investigated, and you will take note of the above mentioned and give orders for punishing quickly those involved, at a ratio of 50 to 1." The "atrocities" referred to the Wake defense by American Marines.

That night, *I-73* shelled Johnston's Sand Islet and destroyed the CAA homing tower. "Knocked down a large radio tower!" skipper Akira Isobe noted. The pair of five-inch guns on Johnston fired 20 rounds at *I-73*, estimated at 7,000 yards range.

I-75 also shelled Palmyra and "destroyed a structure which apparently (is) a radio transmission station." In the excitement, *I-75* ran aground but managed to get away. *I-68's* turn came on Christmas Eve, when the air station was shelled from 3,000 yards distance. Six rounds were fired, one of which hit U.S. Engineer Department Dredge *Sacramento*, causing minor damage. The Americans fired two star shells and 12 "navy common AP (armor-piercing) shells." No hits, and the submarine submerged.

On Christmas Day, the civilians were placed under the command of the island commandant "for necessary defense and protection measures in the present emergency." The next day, an order from

Pearl negated the instant draft. The commandant of Johnston was ordered to retain as few civilian workers as possible to finish the runway. By the end of December, a third of the island's 307 civilians were evacuated to Honolulu.

I-74 spied on Howland Island between Dec. 23 and 25 and "recognized installations for ships."

On Dec. 27, the I-boats still in Hawaiian seas were ordered, *to carry out a reconnaissance attack on the important areas of the Hawaiian Islands according to the following table.*

Submarine I-2 *at Kahului Harbor. Submarine* I-3, *Nawiliwili Harbor (Kauai Island). Submarine* I-1 *at Hilo.*

The time is fixed at twilight and night on (30) December.

Targets for attack are ships, harbor and bay installations, and other military installations.

After completion of the attack, sub I-2 *and* I-1 *shall proceed to Alenuihaha Channel and* I-3 *to the sea area of Kauai Island and perform observation duty. After sunset on 2 January it shall return to patrol area.*

On the 29th, an addendum: *In the attack on strategic point of 31 December, if no enemy ships are anchored at said place, all ships will carry it out as quickly as possible after about 2100.*

I-1 and *I-2* also were given patrol sectors in the channel, *I-1* riding on the Kona side and *I-2* cruising near Kohala.

In the brilliant moonlight of Dec. 30, the towns of Hilo, Kahului and Nawiliwili were shelled within a three-hour period. Shells splashed short of the Kahului pier, and others passed completely over the town, in the direction of Puunene. Army guns wildly returned fire.

In the teachers' cottages bordering Kauai High School, which sat on a bluff overlooking the Nawiliwili Harbor, the whistle and explosion of shells awakened 10-year-old Ellie McCollom. *Bombs!* she thought, excited. *But I don't hear any airplanes.*

She ran onto the front porch of the blacked-out cottage, joined by her mother, grandmother and 9-year-old brother. Nothing was visible, though the shells seemed to scream by directly overhead before detonating up the slope. Ellie's father had died some months before and her mother fretted in the darkness. Their neighbor in the cottage duplex, another teacher named Katashi Nose, reeled sleepily out his front door. "Woke me up," he complained.

The harbor of Kahului, Maui, in 1938. Shells fired from the sea burst around these piers.

Mrs. McCollom asked advice, and Nose suggested they head for a cave up the road. He herded the family there while the shells impacted. "My brother and I skipped along, excited," McCollom recalled. The little group crowded into the cave, and Nose went back to sleep, undisturbed by the explosions.

After a while, the shelling ceased, and the McColloms woke up their sleepy neighbor. The excitement was over for the night.

At least 15 shells crashed into Nawiliwili, although damage was limited to a canefield fire and $500 worth of shrapnel rips in a gasoline tank and a home. The next morning, Ellie McCollom saw a dud shell in the road next to her home. It sat there like a malignant animal while guardsmen routed traffic away. The shell was the first sign of the enemy the girl had seen, and she stared at it, fascinated, until she was chased away by a soldier.

Two shells fired at Hilo had better luck, one knocking a hole in a pier and the other starting a fire in some hala trees by the airport. *U.S.S. Hulbert* fired one round in response, and the 55th Coast Artillery shot back as well. Since *I-1's* target seemed to be some oil tanks, a long-delayed camouflage program was enthusiastically renewed at daybreak.

Also on the way to Kwajalein from the West Coast in late December, *I-25* picked up enemy radio transmissions on the I-boat's direction-finder apparatus. Curious, the boat followed the signal, which lead them midway between Johnston Island and the Marshalls.

The signal was presumed to come from an island, but upon approach during Jan. 8, was described by the skipper as an aircraft carrier. Peering through-the periscope, he detailed the flight deck, derricks and aircraft to the bridge crew. He smiled and ordered a spread of four torpedoes. The crew heard the explosions and happily claimed an aircraft carrier.

No other ships of any kind, Allied, Imperial or neutral, were in this area. Perhaps the crew of *I-25* successfully hit an atoll.

Also on her way to Kwajalein at this time, *I-9's* floatplane made a clandestine visit at Pearl Harbor.

On Jan. 19, while lying in wait for targets northeast of Hawaii, submerged at 90 feet, *I-24* heard the sound of successive explosions. The submarine crew believed they were the targets. After a time, the periscope was cautiously raised but nothing seen. Perhaps, they figured, a search aircraft had jettisoned its bomb load.

I-24 formed up with *I-18* to shell Midway Atoll. Arriving in the dark of night, they were forced to dive by a patrol vessel. *I-24* popped back up to fix position and target, down again at sunrise. In the morning, they sighted a merchant vessel through the periscope.

Officer Mochitsura Hashimoto recalled great excitement among the crew at the unexpected target, though when the I-boat moved closer, he discovered the merchant ship was well shielded inside the atoll lagoon.

There was an argument at the noon meal as to whether they should shoot at the Midway targets right at the appointed time, even if not in the proper position, or wait until only the right angle was achieved. Hashimoto was anxious to get it over with — as first lieutenant, he was in charge of trimming operations, and would be working below with no inkling of what was going on topside.

On Jan. 23, in company with *I-18*, *I-24* crept up on the atoll on a brilliantly star-lit night. *I-24* surfaced with five minutes to spare, and so was able to jockey into position. Hashimoto began to fill buoyancy tanks in preparation for a possible crash-dive.

The submarine started shooting at what skipper Hiroshi Hanabusa thought was an aircraft hangar. Seven rounds were readied. By the fifth round, lights were twinkling on shore. The gun crew congratulated themselves on what they thought were secondary explosions caused by their gunfire. Suddenly, *I-24's* bow was braced by shellfire. The lights on shore were muzzle flashes. Hanabusa ordered a crash dive, catching Hashimoto by surprise. The tanks weren't completely prepped, but *I-24* went down quickly anyway. The seventh round was left sitting on deck, unfired.

I-18 never got a shot off before being targeted by the shore batteries. Hashimoto considered the raid a complete failure, and complained that it would have been better to wait until the anchored merchant had left the safety of the lagoon. The two submarines then ran west for four hours, submerged in case Midway sent patrol aircraft after them. Surfacing, they found themselves "in the teeth of a rising sea."

The waves continued to grow restless. Near the Bonin Islands, the weather was very heavy, and waves slammed greenly against the windows of *I-24's* bridge. Standing watch, Hashimoto got soaked, and was happy to be relieved by the navigation officer. The torpedo officer lowered himself off the bridge, ready to go below and change into dry clothes.

The open hatch above Hashimoto suddenly exploded with sea water and broken glass; he was knocked off the ladder. Stunned, Hashimoto heard voices shouting in pain. He scrambled back up the ladder and found skipper Hanabusa, the navigation officer and rest of the bridge crew writhing on the deck, which was slippery with blood and sea water.

A wave had crashed through the thick glass bridge windows, shattering them into razor-edged shrapnel. Hashimoto applied what first aid he could and cried for help. When the deck was clear, Hashimoto took over the aborted watch and spent the next several hours alone and shivering on the damaged bridge.

At Baker Island, a warship showed up on Jan. 28. The teenage

colonists hid in their foxholes and watched the gray destroyer put over a boat, which began pulling for shore. "Oh boy, we've had it now!" said Burke.

They saw a blonde head among the sailors and realized that the boat must be American. It was destroyer *Helm*, making the dash from Pearl Harbor to retrieve the colonists. "We found those guys living like Robinson Crusoe," remembered Victor Dybdal.

The boys threw off the brush cover and rushed to shore, where the boat halted just at reef's edge. In his haste, Burke badly cut his foot on a piece of jagged shrapnel buried in the sand. Blood poured out, and he was concerned the scent would attract sharks. The Navy officer in charge of the boat refused to row to the other side of the island, where the waters were quieter.

The "Government House" and weather hut on Baker Island. By the time help arrived from Honolulu, these had been blown away by the Advance Force.

Makua swam back to shore and convinced Burke to swim for the boat. Even sharks were better than the daily bombings from the Japanese Navy.

Aboard *Helm*, the Hawaiians learned that Whaley and Keliihahanui had been killed by the shelling on Howland, and that they were buried there. Bederman and Matson were still in shock, their adventure turned tragic.

Skipper Chester Carroll secured from General Quarters as the destroyer moved away from Baker, and he came down to quiz the survivors. Just as they told the lieutenant commander that a Japanese bomber came over every day promptly at noon, they heard the sound of feet running on deck, always the first sign of impending danger on a destroyer. Dybdal looked at his watch: noon. As he gained the deck, a pair of bombs bracketed the destroyer; Dybdal could see the "Mavis" flying boat circling around for another run.

The aircraft made three passes, missing each time. By the third run, the destroyer's anti-aircraft guns were hosing the sky around it. The plane fled. *Helm* turned around and raced back to Pearl.

By the beginning of 1942, radar was in operation on these isolated islands and Japanese submarines couldn't get close without tipping their hand. After this month of aggressive shellings, Japanese submarine attacks against islands thinned out. In March 1942, *I-4* attacked Cocos Island, which was attacked again by *I-166*[1] in January 1943, to cover while Guadalcanal was evacuated. *I-8*, along with cruiser *Nara* and a destroyer also fired on Canton Island to cover the Guadalcanal evacuation.

On Aug. 31, 1942, the flying-boat base in Graciosa Bay in the Solomons was shot at by *I-19* from outside the bay. There was little damage, so a week later *I-3* entered the bay and repeated the attack, actually hitting some targets.

[1] *The number was changed from* I-66 *in 1942.*

In mid-October 1942, *I-7* shelled the airfield on Espiritu Santo, and repeated the attack a few days later. Damage was claimed.

Despite the real, though minor, damage caused by submarine-based shellings, balanced against the imaginary successes of the midget submarines at Pearl Harbor, I-boats returning from Hawaii in the spring of 1942 were impressed into a new squadron, the 8th, comprised of *I-18, I-20, I-21, I-22, I-24, I-27, I-29* and *I-30*. Under the command of Rear Admiral Ishizaki, the 8th was to train for "special operations" — which included midget submarines. But no such "special operation" for the rest of the war would equal the wide-ranging scope of the Advance Force offensive.

Hawaiian teenagers Walter Burke, Blue Makua, James Coyle, James Pease, Thomas Bederman and Elvin Matson show their relief at arriving safely home in Honolulu. Classmates Richard Whaley and Joe Keliihahanui were killed during the Advance Force offensive.

TORPEDO JUNCTION

"ONE INSANE, ONE INJURED, AND PROCEEDING HONOLULU."

Peggy McMurtry began to haunt the Matson office in San Francisco when *Lahaina* became overdue. "Where's that ship?" she demanded. She was usually told that it must have been diverted to another port. One day, she asked about *Lahaina* and was startled to see the people behind the counter look knowingly at each other and shake their heads.

"What's going on? Where is my husband's ship?" she insisted.

"We're not sure, actually," said the clerk. "By the way, your husband — was he a good swimmer?"

Peggy McMurtry's husband had been sunk by submarine *I-9* on Dec. 11. The sinking had been a stroke of good fortune for the Japanese — freighter *Lahaina* had come to them. Japanese submarines had little luck when first hunting in Hawaiian waters. Although *I-9*, *I-10* and *I-26* each sank a merchant ship during the four days after the attack, none were within range of Hawaii-based air patrols. The blockading submarines were constantly harassed in the sea and from the air and rarely got an opportunity to get off a shot. The carrier chase of Dec. 9 to 15 provided some excitement, but was fruitless, and resulted in the loss of *I-70*.

The 2nd and 3rd submarine squadrons were ordered to patrol the Hawaiian sea frontier until late December, just in case something came up. The 1st squadron *I-9*, *I-15*, *I-17* and *I-25* — and the three screening submarines for Kido Butai *I-19*, *I-21* and *I-23* of the 2nd Submarine Division — were ordered to proceed to the West Coast, "charged with the duty of destroying communications and raiding ships." As the submarines went east they hoped to pursue ships going to the American mainland. They either saw none, or were outrun by their prey.

Added to the group were *I-10* and *I-26*, already halfway to the coast. *I-26* proceeded directly to the Seattle area, off Cape Flattery. The rest of the group arrived in the sea area 500 miles from Seattle on the 16th, with no enemy observed. The submarines then dispersed, taking up stations off West Coast shipping ports.

The risk of running supplies to the about-to-be-besieged Hawai-

"NAVY OFFICIALS SAID THERE ARE INDICATIONS
THESE SMALL SHIPS ARE EXTREMELY DARING
AND WOULD RESORT TO SELF-SACRIFICE TO
CARRY OUT THEIR OBJECTIVES."

WASHINGTON STAR, DEC.16, 1941

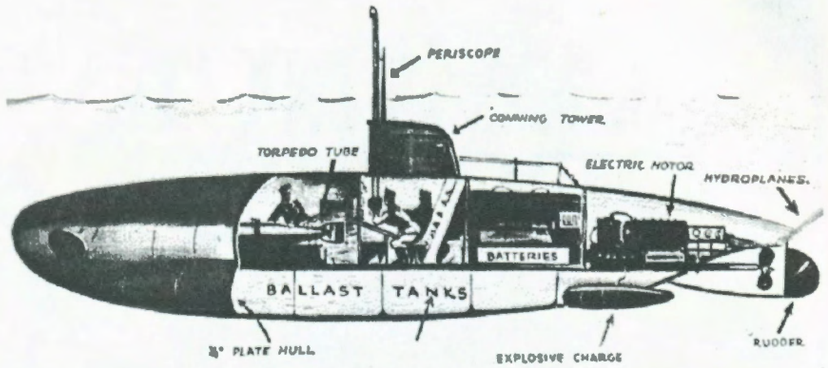
ADVANCE FORCE PEARL HARBOR

THE IMPERIAL NAVY'S UNDERWATER ASSAULT ON AMERICA

BURL BURLINGAME

P·A·C·I·F·I·C
MONOGRAPH

KAILUA, HAWAII



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This spectacularly incorrect newspaper graphic of the Pearl Harbor midget submarine was still being distributed by the Associated Press in 1991, 50 years after the Dec. 7, 1941, attack.

"ANY WAR IS WRONG — A MISTAKE OF THE POLITICIANS. BUT IT WAS BEYOND THE REACH OF ANYONE TO STOP THE WAR, SOMETHING HUMAN STRENGTH AND WILL COULD NOT STOP. THERE WAS NO CHOICE BUT TO FIGHT THE GOOD WAR, HONORABLY AND HARD."

KAZUO SAKAMAKI

The sleeve patch of a master torpedoman in the Imperial Japanese Navy features red torpedoes and chrysanthimum on a blue shield. This insignia was phased out in 1942.