

The History of the Twentieth Century

Episode 397

“Pop Goes the Weasel”

Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

In the wake of Pearl Harbor, a single word favored above all others by Americans as best characterizing the Japanese people was “treacherous,” and for the duration of the war the surprise attack on the U.S. Pacific fleet remained the preeminent symbol of the enemy’s inherent treachery. The attack also inspired a thirst for revenge among Americans that the Japanese, with their own racial blinders, had failed to anticipate.

American Historian John W. Dower.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening War Theme]

Episode 397. Pop Goes the Weasel.

The last time I talked about the war in the Pacific was a while ago, episode 382 to be exact. That episode ended with the failure of the third Japanese offensive on Guadalcanal. That failure led the Japanese military to an inescapable conclusion: retaking Guadalcanal was impossible.

Senior commanders of the Imperial Japanese Navy would have phrased it a little differently. They would have said, Retaking Guadalcanal is impossible because the Army is incompetent. Senior commanders of the Imperial Japanese Army would have had their own way of putting it, to wit, retaking Guadalcanal is impossible because the Navy is incompetent.

I closed episode 382 by noting that by December 1942, and the first anniversary of the War in the Pacific, senior Japanese military commanders were literally coming to blows over the failure at Guadalcanal, who was to blame, and what to do next. The Army had promised the Emperor they would retake Guadalcanal, and were determined to keep their promise, if only the accursed Navy would give them the proper support. One Army commander compared the Navy’s role at Guadalcanal to putting up a ladder so a worker could get on the roof, then taking the ladder away. The Navy had concluded that the Guadalcanal campaign had cost too many ships. They

had managed to give the Allies as good as they got, but the Americans had the means to replace the ships they lost. Japan did not.

There was also the loss of supply ships to consider. Long-time listeners will remember what I've said about Japan during the Jazz Age: Japan is a nation with limited natural resources. Its economy is heavily dependent on imports. Like Britain, Japan does not produce enough food to feed its own population, and is therefore dependent on food imports as well. Most of these imports approach Japan by sea from the south along the east coast of Asia, originating from Malaya, the East Indies, Indochina, the Philippines, and Taiwan, or Formosa, as most Westerners called it at the time. You'll note that, apart from Taiwan, all these places were controlled by Western powers, a fact that was the source of strategic concern in the Japanese government and military.

Apart from that strategic concern, Japan needed cargo ships to transport all those goods. In the period between the wars, Japan embarked on a huge shipbuilding program, which was all the more remarkable when you consider that Japanese shipyards had to import most of the materials needed to build ships.

By 1940, Japan had the third largest merchant fleet in the world, behind the British Empire and the United States. Modern, diesel-powered cargo ships flying the banner of the Rising Sun plied waters around the world. Japanese passenger liners served ports on every continent and dominated the transpacific routes. Japanese oil tankers were the largest and fastest in the world.

In contrast with Germany or Italy, Japan had entered the war on a date of its own choosing and the Japanese were careful to make sure all their ships were in or near Japanese waters when they attacked Pearl Harbor. No Japanese merchant ships were seized in enemy ports or forced into internment in neutral ports.

Afterward, much of Japan's merchant fleet was rapidly converted to wartime service. The ocean liners became seaplane and submarine tenders. The cargo ships transported soldiers and supplies. The tankers refueled the Imperial Navy. Fishing trawlers were converted into minelayers.

And in wartime, production of new merchant ships only increased. The Japanese military estimated that the nation needed six million tons of merchant shipping to supply the Japanese economy and the military in wartime. That number assumes three million tons for the transport of food and raw materials for the civilian economy, and three million to be allocated to the Army and Navy for military use. Japan began the war with nearly eight million tons of merchant shipping available, and new ships regularly launching from Japan's shipyards. The Japanese felt confident their merchant fleet would be equal to the task of supporting the war effort.

As a side note, let me point out that when we speak of the tonnage of commercial ships, we are not talking about weight. Tonnage is a measure of the volume of cargo the ship can hold. In this

system of measurement, one ton equates to a capacity of one hundred cubic feet, or 2.8 cubic meters.

On the American side, the attack on Pearl Harbor had been devastating, but the attackers had concentrated their efforts on the US Navy's battleships. The submarine pens at Pearl Harbor and the subs docked in them were untouched by the attack. Within hours after the last Japanese bomb fell, the order went out to the American submarines stationed at Pearl Harbor and at Cavite in the Philippines to execute unrestricted submarine warfare against Japan.

Long-time listeners will also recall that the subject of submarine attacks on civilian vessels has been a fraught topic since the turn of the century. Before submarines became an accepted part of the world's navies, international law demanded that any naval vessel that intercepted an enemy civilian ship in wartime offer that ship the opportunity to surrender before firing on it. If the civilian ship does surrender, it may be boarded and searched and its cargo seized. If the attacker wants to seize the civilian ship or sink it, those actions are permissible under international law, but the attackers are held responsible for the safety of any passengers or crew aboard that ship. This means either taking the passengers and crew aboard the warship and delivering them safely to shore, or allowing them to leave their ship in lifeboats, with the proviso that the lifeboats must have sufficient supplies and equipment to reach land themselves, or at least find rescue.

That was fine for the 19th century, but the introduction of submarines complicates the picture. Submarines operate by stealth. Insisting that they announce their presence takes away their biggest advantage, especially once radios aboard ships became common, as an intercepted merchant ship could be expected to immediately announce the arrival of an enemy submarine to any nearby friendly naval vessel. By the Second World War, the introduction of anti-submarine aircraft patrols meant that any submarine that announced its presence could expect to be attacked within minutes. Also, submarines are too small to take aboard the crew of another ship, so that won't work.

In the First World War, the German Navy retaliated against the British blockade by announcing a war zone around the British Isles, entry into which by any ship flying an enemy flag made that ship liable to be attacked without warning, which was called unrestricted submarine warfare. Allied nations were appalled by the barbarity of unprovoked attacks on civilians. Famously, the sinking of the British passenger liner *Lusitania* on May 7, 1915 triggered such an outcry that in 1916 the German Navy pledged to end unannounced attacks on civilian vessels. Less than a year later, the Germans returned to unrestricted warfare, a decision that became one of the reasons the United States chose to declare war on Germany.

The London Submarine Protocol of 1936 reaffirmed that unrestricted submarine warfare was a violation of international law. Thirty-five nations assented to the protocol, including the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, and Japan.

This means that at the very least, when the US Navy began unrestricted submarine warfare against Japan, it breached its treaty obligations. So had the German Navy, but what about Japan? The Imperial Japanese Navy, the IJN, used submarines in a very different way. You may have noticed this from my descriptions of Pacific naval battles in the first year of the war. The Japanese included their submarines as part of their naval task forces and sent them into battle against Allied warships. As we have seen, Japanese submarines were used for reconnaissance, sometimes stationed in a line across the expected approach route of an enemy naval force to detect their approach. Submarines were also used to finish off enemy ships that had been damaged by air or surface attacks.

Even when Japanese submarines encountered enemy convoys of troop transports or supply ships, they typically attacked the escorting warships first. Attacking civilian vessels was contrary to Japanese military culture, in addition to being contrary to Japanese treaty obligations. Bushido, the traditional Japanese warrior code, exalted virtues such as honor, honesty, and compassion. Sneak attacks against unarmed civilian ships ran contrary to those values.

In the early months of the war, the Japanese Navy in particular strove to advance across the Pacific at every opportunity. Japan, like Germany, had a smaller industrial base than its enemies; in Japan's case the disparity was far greater. It was clear from the start that Japan could not win a war of attrition against the United States. For this reason, the Navy sought to engage the Americans as quickly as possible in a decisive naval battle that would force the Americans to come to terms. In other words, they were looking for a grand battle comparable to the Battle of the Tsushima Strait in 1905. Not only did that battle force Russia to negotiate an end to the war, it kept Russia leery of a rematch and keen to stay out of Japan's way for decades afterward.

The Navy's goal was to do the same to the United States, but the US Navy was not likely to charge into the Sea of Japan the way the Russians had. Therefore, if the Americans would not come to the IJN, the IJN would go to the Americans. This meant expanding across the Pacific. It meant seizing islands. It meant a long supply chain running all the way back to the Home Islands, filled with tempting targets for American submariners.

In the Atlantic, the British and then the Americans developed an elaborate set of tactics to defend convoys and to attack and sink German and Italian submarines. These tactics are part of what is known as anti-submarine warfare, or ASW for short. Again in sharp contrast, the IJN had little in the way of ASW assets or tactics. Japan lacked Britain's years of hard-won experience defending its cargo ships against German U-boats. The Japanese did not organize their merchant ships into convoys. The IJN did not have a class of ship dedicated to ASW like the British frigates or the American destroyer escorts. It did not even have any naval units formally designated for ASW or merchant ship protection.

When the war against Japan began, the United States Navy had substantial numbers of submarines in the Pacific, about seventy. They were untouched by the Japanese attacks on Pearl

Harbor and the Philippines. American submarines were better suited to raids on convoys. Compared to other submarines of the period, American submarines were bigger. They carried more fuel, were faster, and had a longer range, and they carried more torpedoes, as many as 24. American submarines were equipped with desalination equipment to provide water for the crew, and they were air conditioned, an important consideration in tropical warfare.

Knowing the specs on American submarines, you might have expected to hear more about the American submarine campaign in the Pacific over the course of 1942. But you didn't, because I didn't have much to tell you. The campaign was frustratingly ineffective. In fact, you can add these disappointing results to the list of reasons why the IJN hadn't developed any significant anti-submarine capability. They had very little reason to.

This is not to say the Japanese weren't losing merchant shipping. By the end of the Guadalcanal campaign, Japan had only six million tons of shipping available, the pre-war estimated minimum. But by this time, both the Army and the Navy had requisitioned more than their shares of the total, leaving the civilian economy with only 2.6 million tons, significantly less than the minimum needed to maintain the Japanese economy. After Guadalcanal, both the Army and the Navy were increasing their demands for military production. Just to give one example, the military wanted aircraft production increased to 4,000 planes per month. That's an incredible number, considering that Japanese factories had never before reached even the level of 1,500 planes per month. One wonders where the military expected to find pilots for all these planes. But even if pilots could be found and factory capacity made available, Japan didn't have the shipping capacity to import the necessary quantities of bauxite, the ore from which aluminum is smelted.

American submarines contributed to Japanese merchant shipping losses, but most of those losses came from air attacks. The numbers sunk by submarine were not too worrisome. Prewar Japanese estimates predicted losses of 70,000 tons per month, which was considered a manageable number. Over the first year of the war, Japan lost on average less than 50,000 tons per month to enemy submarines, not a number that generated much concern in the IJN. Over the summer months of 1943, though, this began to change. Senior IJN commanders noticed a sharp uptick in sinkings by submarines. September losses exceeded 100,000 tons. So did October's. November's losses broke the 200,000 mark for the first time. December 1943 and January 1944 saw losses of 250,000 tons each month.

True, the Americans were building more and more submarines, which meant rising numbers of American submarines on patrol at any given time, but these rising numbers alone could not account for the sudden dramatic increase in sinkings. Japanese naval commanders therefore concluded that it must have something to do with their torpedoes. For some reason, American torpedoes were suddenly a lot more dangerous.

Yes, they were. There's a whole story behind that. In the Thirties, the US Navy began development of a new submarine torpedo to replace the Mark 10, which was a First World War weapon. The new torpedo, the Mark 14, incorporated a number of technological advances.

The problem was that torpedoes were expensive, and this was the Great Depression. The Navy could not afford live fire tests that would destroy the torpedo, so torpedoes were tested in simulated attacks and retrieved afterward. When America entered the war in December 1941, the US was producing a mere 23 Mark 14 torpedoes per day. In fact, it wasn't until 1945 that torpedo production caught up with demand. These shortages meant that even in wartime, torpedoes were too valuable to subject to live fire tests.

When American submarines began hunting Japanese ships, their crews quickly discovered how unreliable the Mark 14 torpedo was. They failed in every imaginable respect. They ran too deep and would pass under the enemy ship and continue on without exploding. Sometimes they exploded prematurely. Sometimes they hit the hull of the enemy ship so hard the submarine could detect the sound of the impact, and yet they still failed to explode.

Worst of all, despite gyroscope systems designed to keep the torpedo on the proper course toward its target, sometimes one would run in a full circle, coming back around and threatening to destroy the very submarine that launched it. Only about one in ten Mark 14s actually exploded on target, no matter how carefully the submarine lined up the shot.

Clearly, there was something wrong with the Mark 14. Submarine commanders were sure of it and were complaining about it regularly to their superiors.

In fact, there were multiple design flaws in the torpedo; so many that it was hard to tease out why the torpedo did what it did. Submarine crews were convinced the torpedoes ran too deep, which was why they passed under their targets. The Navy's Bureau of Ordnance insisted the crews must be adjusting the torpedoes' depth setting incorrectly and recommended additional training.

In August 1942, the Bureau finally acknowledged a problem with depth settings. The flaw was discovered and corrected, but the torpedo's performance barely improved. The Mark 14 had two detonators: a magnetic detonator that could detect the metal hull of the enemy ship, and a contact detonator that would set off the explosive on contact. Neither of them was working properly. The magnetic detonators frequently set off the explosive too early. For example, in April 1943, the submarine USS *Pompano* got off six shots at the Japanese fleet carrier *Shokaku*. The crew detected at least three explosions, but they were all premature and *Shokaku* escaped unscathed.

Submarine crews asked permission to deactivate the magnetic detonators on their torpedoes. The Navy refused to give it. Some crews did anyway, against orders, and soon word got out among American sub crews that the Mark 14 performed better that way. Finally, in May 1943, after the Navy's most successful submarine, USS *Wahoo*, returned from a patrol having fired all its

torpedoes and scored zero hits, the commander of the Pacific Submarine Force finally authorized crews to deactivate the magnetic detonators.

Once those two problems were identified and corrected, it became clear the contact detonator wasn't working right either. Torpedoes were hitting Japanese ships, and in some cases even getting lodged in the enemy ship's hull, and yet they wouldn't explode. In September 1943, new and more reliable contact detonators were installed.

After all these modifications, the Mark 14 torpedo finally became a reliable weapon and the American submarine campaign against Japanese shipping started to become a serious threat.

[music: Traditional, "Pop Goes the Weasel."]

It was in December 1942 that the Japanese military finally conceded that Guadalcanal could not be taken, and developed plans to evacuate the island. The Navy had been ready to give up for some time; it was the Army that took some convincing. They blamed the Navy for their difficulties and insisted the battle on Guadalcanal could be won, if only the Navy could deliver to the island half the supplies the Americans were getting.

On December 29, a staff officer returned from Rabaul with a report that Army and Navy commanders on the scene were in agreement that the campaign could not be won. The Army was at last convinced. Army and Navy commanders met with the Emperor to explain the decision to evacuate Guadalcanal and the village of Buna on New Guinea. More about that in a few minutes.

The Emperor listened to their explanations and observed that it was the American air units on Guadalcanal, the so-called Cactus Air Force, which had given the enemy the decisive advantage. That much was obvious, but then the Emperor asked a difficult question: why was it that the Japanese military had been on Guadalcanal for more than a month before the Americans arrived and in that time had not been able to complete the construction of an airfield, but once the Americans took over, they were able to get the job done in a matter of days?

The Navy commander, Admiral Nagano, could only apologize to the Emperor and point out that the enemy had construction machinery, while the Japanese had to rely on forced labor. The Emperor was not pleased. He authorized the withdrawals, but suggested the Army and the Navy needed to do better in the future.

In early January, the Americans began an offensive to expand their control over Guadalcanal. A few days later, the Tokyo Express brought a fresh battalion of Japanese soldiers to Guadalcanal to hold back the Americans and cover the withdrawal, and Japanese naval forces in the Solomon Islands were increased. Australian and American intelligence picked up on these movements, but interpreted them to mean the Japanese were gearing up for a fourth offensive to take the airfield.

Instead, as the rear guard held off the Americans, the Japanese 17th Army withdrew to the western end of Guadalcanal for evacuation. The night of February 7th, 1943, the last of more than

ten thousand Japanese soldiers left the island. It took another two days before the Americans realized they were gone. At last, after six months of vicious, desperate combat, Guadalcanal was secure.

The Americans would begin building additional airfields on the island and port facilities to station ships there, turning Guadalcanal into a forward base from which to launch an offensive up the Solomon Islands chain, with the ultimate goal of taking the Japanese base at Rabaul.

A thousand kilometers to the east, on New Guinea, American and Australian units under the command of American General Robert Eichelberger had been fighting their way across the Owen Stanley Range from Port Moresby, aiming to cross the peninsula and eject the Japanese from the northeastern coast, a second prong of the advance on Rabaul. Douglas MacArthur told Eichelberger to take the village of Buna or not come back alive.

Buna lay on the coast at the far end of the Kokoda Trail. The Japanese had their air forces based there, so seizing that airfield was crucial for the same reason that seizing the airfield on Guadalcanal had been crucial.

The conditions on New Guinea were just as hard, if not worse, than on Guadalcanal. But this time it was the Australians and Americans advancing through the jungle to take a Japanese airfield. The island was rife with malaria, and the Australians especially had little experience with the disease, and a shortage of necessities like mosquito netting and quinine. The entire region along the northeast coast of New Guinea is basically a giant swamp except for a strip of solid ground along the shore which in most places is less than a kilometer wide. The marshy ground inland ruled out the use of vehicles or heavy artillery. There was nothing to it but to slog through the swamps on foot to take on the prepared Japanese defenses along the coast.

The Australian 7th Division approached the Japanese positions in mid-November. You may recall this was just after the failure of the third and largest Japanese assault on Henderson Field on Guadalcanal. Any thought of further reinforcing the Japanese 17th Army on that island had to be ruled out in view of the threat to Buna.

Again, the Japanese Army and Navy were in disagreement. The Navy believed that holding back an Allied advance up the Solomon Islands was the higher priority, while the Army was becoming more concerned about New Guinea.

The Japanese fought tenaciously, as always, through the months of November, December, and into January despite diminishing supplies. The last supply shipment, brought in by submarine, arrived on Christmas. By mid-January, the Japanese rice ration was down to 70 grams, or about two and a half ounces, per day, about a tenth of what the Japanese Army considered a standard soldier's ration. Indeed, some historians argue that the heavy fighting to take Buna and the nearby Japanese positions was unnecessary, because the garrisons were on the verge of

starvation. When Allied forces finally secured the area, at the end of January, they found evidence that the Japanese defenders had been forced to cannibalize their own dead.

The fighting on Guadalcanal gets more attention, but the fighting here was just as bad and Allied losses were greater. The Allied force in this campaign numbered some 30,000, about half the Allied force on Guadalcanal at its peak, and they suffered 2,000 killed and 4,000 wounded, about double the losses on Guadalcanal. The Japanese are believed to have lost some 7,000 soldiers.

After the campaigns on Guadalcanal and New Guinea, a lull followed during the months of February and March as both sides rebuilt their forces and considered their next moves. Douglas MacArthur was putting together an ambitious plan to take the Japanese stronghold of Rabaul on New Britain. The Japanese were planning counterstrikes.

The man responsible for implementing those counterstrikes was Admiral Yamamoto. In late March, he put together a plan for a series of air strikes on Allied airfields and naval forces on New Guinea and in the Solomon Islands. In early April, he moved his headquarters from Truk to Rabaul to take personal command of the coming air offensive.

On April 7, 1943, the largest Japanese air strike since Pearl Harbor hit Guadalcanal. The pilots returned to Rabaul with the usual exaggerated claims of enemy planes shot down and enemy ships sunk. In fact, the Allies had lost one American destroyer and one New Zealander corvette, with seven planes shot down. The Japanese lost 21 planes.

Over the next several days, there were more strikes against Allied targets on New Guinea. Again, little actual damage had been done, but the reports coming back to Rabaul from excitable Japanese pilots led Yamamoto to conclude that his air campaign had cost the Allies 175 planes shot down plus two destroyers and one cruiser sunk, which were satisfying numbers.

Before returning to Truk, Yamamoto decided to make a tour of Japanese air units stationed in the Solomons and on New Guinea. Officially this was to inspect Japanese defenses in the region, but Yamamoto also meant for the visits to help reinforce Japanese morale after the defeats on Guadalcanal and New Guinea. A staff officer wrote out Yamamoto's itinerary by hand and took it to fleet headquarters on Rabaul. He wanted the itinerary distributed to the various base commanders by courier, but the communications officer insisted it had to be sent by radio. Wasn't there a risk the Americans would intercept and decode the transmission? asked the staff officer. The communications officer assured him that was impossible. There was no way the Americans would be able to decipher the message; new code books had recently been issued and had only taken effect two weeks earlier, on April 1.

So on April 13, the coded message was transmitted. Minutes later, it was in the hands of US naval intelligence at Pearl Harbor, the same crew who had helped the US win the Battle of Midway. They worked all night and had the message decoded by dawn on the 14th. At 8:00 that morning, the fleet intelligence officer, Commander Edward Layton, entered the office of

Admiral Nimitz. He laid a piece of paper on the Admiral's desk and announced, "Our old friend Yamamoto."

Nimitz glanced down at the paper. The first leg of Yamamoto's itinerary had him departing Rabaul at 6:00 AM on the 18th, less than three days from now, arriving at Ballale Island in the Solomons at 8:00 AM. His eyes went back to Layton. "Do we try to get him?"

"He's unique among their people," Layton replied. To the officers and crew of the Imperial Japanese Navy, he was a beloved father figure. "You know the Japanese psychology. It would stun the nation."

Nimitz wondered if Yamamoto might be replaced by a better commander. There was no better commander, Layton told him. Yamamoto stood "head and shoulders" above anyone else in the IJN. Nimitz approved the mission, which would be called Operation Vengeance, as Yamamoto was the officer who had planned the attack on Pearl Harbor. Nimitz assigned the mission to Admiral Halsey, as it was in his area of operation.

There were also worries that this might reveal that the US Navy could read the Japanese naval code. A cover story was devised; it would say that a spy on Rabaul spotted Yamamoto boarding his plane and radioed that information to the Allies.

A straight-line course from Guadalcanal to Ballale was out of the question. Japanese radar and ground observers in the Solomons would detect the approaching American strike force. So a more elaborate route was devised, which would head west from Guadalcanal and then turn north, so the strike force would approach over open water.

But that meant the round trip would be more than 1,000 miles, beyond the range of most American planes stationed in the Solomons. The one plane capable of such a raid was the Lockheed P-38 fighter—that's the funny looking one with the double fuselage. They could do the job, although even P-38s would need drop tanks.

Sunday, April 18, 1943, was the anniversary of the Doolittle Raid. Yamamoto dressed in fatigues rather than his customary dress whites to avoid attracting attention. Before he left, he gave the deputy naval commander at Rabaul two scrolls to pass on to whomever would take command after he left. The scrolls contained poems composed by the Meiji Emperor and copied out by hand. Yamamoto had done the calligraphy himself.

Yamamoto and his staff rode aboard two Mitsubishi G4M medium bombers, known to the Allies as "Bettys." Six Zeroes, the main Japanese fighter plane, would provide escort.

Eighteen P-38s were assigned to Operation Vengeance. They took off from the airfield on Guadalcanal 35 minutes before Yamamoto's plane took off from Rabaul.

Two of the American fighters had mechanical problems and had to turn back. The other sixteen flew their assigned course at low altitude, 50 feet or 15 meters, barely above the wavetops and observing radio silence. They had only a compass and their air speed indicators with which to navigate, but that was enough to get them to the chosen intercept point at 7:34 AM, one minute ahead of schedule.

Yamamoto's planes arrived a minute later, right on time. The Americans were surprised to see two bombers; they had only expected one. Four of the sixteen American planes were assigned to shoot down Yamamoto's plane; would they be able to get both of them?

The P-38's dropped their tanks—no, wait, one of the pilots couldn't get his tank released, so he and his wingman turned back. These planes were two of the four assigned to take down the bombers. Now there were only two attacking planes left.

A moment later, the Japanese bombers suddenly descended to low altitude, while the Americans could just make out drop tanks falling from the bellies of the Zeroes. They had been spotted.

The other Americans engaged the Zeroes while the two attack planes bore down on the bombers. A cannon shot from one of the P-38s hit the Betty's left engine. It burst into flames and the bomber crashed into the jungle. That was Yamamoto's plane.

The second bomber was struck in the tail by machine gun fire while over water; the pilot crash landed in the sea. Three of those aboard survived, including Yamamoto's chief of staff, Vice Admiral Ugaki Matome. One P-38 was shot down. The others returned safely to Guadalcanal.

News of the success of Operation Vengeance was transmitted to Admiral Halsey. The first words in the message were "Pop goes the weasel."

We'll have to stop there for today. I thank you for listening and I'd like to thank Richard for his kind donation, and thank you to Jennifer for becoming a patron of the podcast. Donors and patrons like Richard and Jennifer help cover the costs of making this show, which in turn keeps the podcast available free for everyone always, so my thanks to them and to all of you who have pitched in and helped out. If you'd like to become a patron or make a donation, you are most welcome; just visit the website, historyofthetwentiethcentury.com and click on the PayPal or Patreon buttons.

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We're in the period now where we're preparing for our son's surgery, so allow me to remind you that we are on a biweekly schedule for the time being—hopefully not too long. Actually, by the time this episode is released, the surgery will be over, although it hadn't been done yet when I recorded this. I hope everything went well, and I hope you'll join me in two weeks' time, here on the *History of the Twentieth Century*, as we continue with the situation in the Pacific and consider Japan's plans to build its own trade bloc in the region. The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere, in two weeks' time, here, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. A state funeral was held for Admiral Yamamoto in Tokyo on June 5. A million people lined the streets as the procession passed. Yamamoto received a posthumous promotion to Marshal Admiral, the highest rank in the Imperial Japanese Navy and was awarded the Order of the Chrysanthemum, Japan's highest honor. Germany awarded him the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross, one of that country's highest honors.

Admiral Koga Mineichi replaced Yamamoto as Commander in Chief of the Combined Fleet. Said his successor, "There was only one Yamamoto and no one can replace him."

[music: Closing War Theme]