

**Collection:** James V. Forrestal Papers  
**Call Number:** MC051

**Box 131**

**Folder 5 to 6**

**Preferred Citation:** Navy, 1942-1946; James V. Forrestal Papers, Box 131, Folder 5 to 6; Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library

**Find it online:** <https://findingaids.princeton.edu/collections/MC051/c04871>

*From the collections of the Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library,  
Princeton, NJ*

**Statement on Copyright Restrictions**

These documents can only be used for educational and research purposes ("Fair use") as per U.S. Copyright law (text below). By accessing this file, all users agree that their use falls within fair use as defined by the copyright law. For use outside of Fair Use, please consult the copyright rules of the United States and/or Princeton University. More information can be found online:  
<http://rbsc.princeton.edu/policies/copyright>

**U.S. Copyright law text**

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or other reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or other reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

**Policy on Digitized Collections**

Digitized collections are made accessible for research purposes. We have indicated what we know about copyright and rights of privacy, publicity or trademark in our finding aids. However, due to the nature of archival collections, it is not always possible to identify this information. We are eager to hear from any rights owners, so that we may provide accurate information. When a rights issue needs to be addressed, upon request we will remove the material from public view while we review the claim.

Inquiries about these policies can be directed to:

Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library  
65 Olden Street  
Princeton, NJ 08540  
609-258-6345  
609-258-3385 (fax)  
[mudd@princeton.edu](mailto:mudd@princeton.edu)

James V. Forrestal Papers (MC #051)

Box 131 Folder 5

Navy, 1942-1946

NAVY DEPARTMENT

HOLD FOR RELEASE  
PRESS AND RADIO  
UNTIL 9:00 P.M. (E.S.T.)  
JANUARY 25, 1946

SPEECH BY  
FLEET ADMIRAL CHESTER W. NIMITZ, U.S.N.  
CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS  
BEFORE  
THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
JANUARY 25, 1946

It is a pleasure for me to talk to you about an area of the world which is, I know, of particular interest to the members of the National Geographic Society. It is an area with which I have been rather intimately associated for the last four years. So, too, were many thousands of other Americans. Whatever else war may be, from a great crusade down to Sherman's definition, it is also a great teacher of geography.

Tonight, therefore, it is not inappropriate for me to review the recent events in the Pacific Ocean areas. That term embraces a great deal of ocean. It also includes a great deal of land. The Pacific is not a lonely ocean, as is the Atlantic. It is studded with constellations of islands. As we shall see, that was an important factor in carrying the American flag across the Pacific to Tokyo.

When Japan touched off its major war plans on December 7, 1941, it set forces in motion that spread northward to the Aleutians, eastward to Hawaii, to the south and southwest throughout Malaysia. For the first six months of the war the United Nations had to fight a retreating battle, until the perimeter of Japanese expansion was established at the battles of the Coral Sea and Midway. Thereafter the pattern of warfare saw the Japanese effort radiating outward from the home islands, while ours was a converging fight inward upon Japan in ever-concentrating strength.

Remember the Pacific is so large an ocean that it could engulf all the land masses of the world and still leave a lot of water. It was necessary to place segments of the great, fan-shaped battle front under different, but co-ordinated, commands, according to the nature of the territory to be recaptured. My command was the Pacific Ocean Areas, in which naval operations had to predominate. The operations under my command, however, were always strategically, and often tactically, related to those in the adjoining Southwest Pacific theater commanded by General Douglas MacArthur, the China-Burma Theater, and the East Indies station of the Royal Navy.

I shall not attempt to review all these operations. They are generally familiar to you all. I shall confine myself, rather, to some details of the final course of the war in my area of command.

You will remember that early in the last quarter of 1944 the converging forces under General MacArthur's and my own command were approaching the junction point at Leyte, in the south-east Philippines. In both theaters, large concentrations of Japanese forces had been isolated and neutralized on scores of islands by what has been described as leap-frog tactics. That is a picturesque if inexact description of the strategy of engulfment, of going over and around Japanese strongholds to pinch them off and let them wither on the broken vine of communications.

In the beginning of 1945, just about a year ago, we were in a position where we could choose both the time and place of attack. Your naval forces had brought about the capture of Guam, Saipan and Tinian in the Mariana Islands. They had also acquired bases in Ulithi and the western Carolines which neutralized such Japanese strongholds as Truk. We could base, stage or support forces to strike in any direction, including the Japanese homeland. American seapower had won control of the Pacific to within 500 miles of the Japanese coast and was beginning to penetrate the China Seas.

Indeed, our submarines were virtually in control of those latter waters. The shipping lanes upon which Japan depended to feed her war machine with the loot of Asia were constantly patrolled by our submarines. Japanese tankers, troop ships and merchantmen were being decimated.

Japan, in consequence, was on short rations. Human beings can accommodate themselves to a starvation diet for a long while, but you can't put ships and guns and airplanes on short rations. Here then is an historic demonstration of sea-power. Everywhere the enemy fleet dared expose itself, it met superior forces and was driven farther back with irreparable losses. Our carrier-borne aircraft, and now from captured territory the big Army bombers, were searching out the enemy's ships and raining fire on his industry. His pipe-lines of raw materials going into Japan, and processed materials outward bound, were punctured and soon to be cut.

We know now, from interviews with high-ranking Japanese officers and captured documents, that Japan had lost all hope of victory by the dawn of 1945. The most they could hope for was a stalemate. They over-optimistically based that hope on the fact that they had a large reserve of aircraft and that their ground armies were largely intact, well-armed and of high morale. The war ended with those armies still intact, stunned by the Emperor's surrender. You see, they did not comprehend sea-power. They had airplanes by the thousands, but no fuel to raise them from the ground because your Navy had severed Japan's oil lines. The remaining warships had not enough fuel to make a last desperate sortie.

But in January of 1945 we did not know that the war would be over before the middle of August. Maybe we did not ourselves know how good we were. Perhaps it was only sound caution. Anyhow, the central fact of January's operations was the invasion of Luzon, major Philippine Island, by the combined forces under General MacArthur. The Pacific fleet was heavily committed either in combat or transport, or as covering forces. In the latter function the fast carrier task force of the Third Fleet not only neutralized--and kept neutralized--enemy air strength in Formosa and Northern Luzon but also made a sweep of the South China Sea.

This sweep resulted in the sinking of 40 enemy ships totalling 127,000 tons and damage to 22 ships displacing 70,000 tons. One hundred and eleven enemy planes were destroyed. The THIRD Fleet forces then demonstrated the impunity with which American sea-power could operate by transiting the narrow straits between the Philippines and Formosa to attack Formosa, Hainan Island and Hong Kong on January 15-16. The total damage done the enemy by these THIRD Fleet operations in damage to the enemy was 91 ships totalling 293,900 tons sunk, 99 ships totalling 323,100 tons damaged, and 615 aircraft destroyed.

But there was more achieved than this material damage. From this time on no area outside of the immediate Japanese homeland and Northern China was safe from assault by our carrier force. Even Japan itself was to feel the weight of carrier raids during the next month. The weakness of enemy air reaction in the entire region of the China Sea demonstrated that the area was wide open for future attack. Further, these successes were achieved in almost continuous bad weather. Once more our seagoing men had shown they could remain at sea and fight under the most adverse conditions. How they were able to do this is a thrilling story in itself, and presently, I shall relate it.

These operations could not be without cost to ourselves. The USS TICONDEROGA took heavy damage from suicide attacks southeast of Formosa, and other ships suffered minor damage.

In January land-based air from the Marianas continued heavy assaults on Iwo Jima and irregular and smaller attacks on the Bonin Islands. Likewise our surface forces twice bombarded Iwo Jima and the Bonins. Submarine interdiction continued at its successful high level. Our underwater forces sank 193,300 tons and damaged 95,850 tons of enemy shipping during this month.

In the latter part of January land-based air began to operate effectively in the Philippines and the forces of the Pacific Fleet were freed for use in operations which had long been delayed. Heavy strikes on the main islands of Japan had been scheduled in the latter part of 1944 but had been postponed to support the Philippines situation. These plans were now put back into a place of first priority.

From this point forward until July, the Fast Carrier Task Force and related units gave a seagoing performance which, for endurance, ability to absorb punishment without deflection from the goal, and damage done to the enemy has no parallel in naval history. These operations came in three phases:

- 1) Support of the invasion of Iwo Jima;
- 2) Support of the invasion of Okinawa;
- 3) Preparation for final operations against Japan.

Being the largest ocean area over which single actions have ever been fought, the scope of this battle zone is difficult to appreciate without having been in it. It is hard to explain the difficulties involved in a battle whose interdependent movements take place simultaneously hundreds of miles apart. Yet that is precisely what occurred in each of the actions of 1945.

Early in February, heavy fleet forces began to bear down upon Iwo Jima. A group of heavy warships moved toward Iwo Jima to concentrate their huge firing power on the island. From the Marianas the heavy bombers of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps shuttled in and out on daily schedules. And somewhere off Iwo Jima, within aerial striking distance, escort carriers of the Pacific Fleet were assembling.

• All this activity burst upon the Japanese on February 16. On that date the Fast Carrier Task Force of the FIFTH Fleet sent its aircraft against the mainland of Japan to destroy more than 500 enemy planes in two days of offensive action. Simultaneously, battleships, cruisers, and lesser units of the Pacific Fleet brought Iwo Jima under a bombardment which was not to cease until there were no targets left. And naval aircraft from the escort carriers, with land-based Army, Navy and Marine planes, raked Iwo Jima fore and aft, day after day.

On February 19 began the land action which will be remembered as long as the war is remembered. The FOURTH and FIFTH Marine Divisions invaded the island, to be followed by elements of the THIRD Marine Division. It was a battle which lasted until the latter half of March. When Iwo Jima was won it gave the United States forces in the Pacific safety from air attacks on Marianas bases, an advance base and emergency landing field for heavy bombers and fighters operating against Japan, and a base to secure the flank of our routes westward.

While this operation was proceeding, our fast carrier task forces performed the dual function of immobilizing enemy air strength and preparing the way for the attack on the Okinawa group. Planes of the force struck the Tokyo area on February 25 and ranged southward to strike Okinawa and other islands of the Ryukyus on March 1. In the meantime, the B-29's of the TWENTIETH Air Force were making their devastating raids on Japanese cities.

This was truly "the rolling offensive" which we had begun in the Gilbert Islands in November 1943. Now it was about to reach its phase of greatest effect.

On March 18 and 19 our carrier task forces struck Kyushu airfields and inland sea bases, including the large naval establishment at Kure. Its two-day strike cost the enemy more than 550 aircraft and resulted in sufficient damage to the remnants of the Japanese fleet to reduce the possibility of serious surface interference in the impending Okinawa operations. On March 24 the fast battleships bombarded the coastlines of the Ryukyus and two days later Army troops began to make the preliminary landings in Kerama Retto. And on that date the Japanese learned that forces of the British Pacific Fleet, operating with the FIFTH Fleet, were in action. British planes attacked the Sakishima group in the Ryukyus.

On March 28 the old battleships, which had long served so usefully in preinvasion bombardment appeared off the coast of Okinawa and the enemy knew that his time there had come.

On April 1 the largest amphibious operation of the Pacific war began when the TENTH Army, composed of the TWENTY-FOURTH Army Corps (SEVENTH, TWENTY-SEVENTH, SEVENTY-SEVENTH and NINETY-SIXTH Infantry Divisions) and the Marine THIRD Amphibious Corps (FIRST Marine Division, SIXTH Marine Division, and elements of the SECOND Marine Division) struck the western beaches of Okinawa. From this day until June 21, when organized resistance was broken, all operations in the Pacific Ocean Areas centered on the Okinawa operation.

The battle was costly both to ourselves and the enemy. When it was over, the Japanese had lost about 4,000 aircraft. We had lost 36 ships, sunk, and 368 damaged, all of the ships sunk being light units. They had lost their most powerful battleship and most of the escorting force with it had been sunk or damaged. They had lost their thirty-second army and more than 100,000 men. They had lost and we had won an island base large enough to support large forces of Army, Navy and Marine fighters, medium bombers and heavy bombers. An island which provided seaplane bases for our search aircraft. An island whose harbors provided a repair base for our ships, a major staging base. A base which neutralized Formosa and nearby China, and put us on the threshold of Japan's front door.

The Naval power of the United States had made good its promise to drive right through the Central Pacific.

When land-based air on Okinawa became sufficiently strong in late June to protect our establishments, our task forces withdrew for rest and repair. Then began the memorable operations against the main islands of Japan by the THIRD Fleet, culminating in our battleships, cruisers, and destroyers shelling the coastlines of Honshu and Hokkaido at will.

I am convinced that the complete impunity with which the Pacific Fleet pounded Japan at point-blank range was the decisive factor in forcing the Japanese to ask the Russians to approach us for peace proposals in July.

Meanwhile, aircraft from our new fields in the Okinawa group were daily shuttling back and forth over Kyushu and Shokoku, and B-29's of the TWENTIETH Air Force were fire-bombing major Japanese cities.

The pace and the fury were mounting and the government of Japan, as its official spokesmen have now admitted, were looking for a way to end the war. At this point the Potsdam Ultimatum was delivered and the Japanese knew their choice.

They were debating that choice when the atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima. They were debating that choice when the Soviet Union entered the war. They were debating that choice when our ships shelled installations within less than 100 miles of Tokyo.

And the nation which had been so arrogant asked for peace. Japan accepted our surrender terms and laid down her arms on August 15.

Symbolically, the planes of our fleet were over Japan at the hour the surrender was accepted. Our carrier pilots who had looked through their sights at targets from Tarawa to Tokyo leveled off upon orders of the THIRD Fleet Commander and flew back to the force. It was the only time the officers and men of the Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas failed to complete an assigned mission.

The atomic bomb merely hastened a process already reaching an inevitable conclusion, but I would have you remember that even that bomb was delivered by seapower to an airplane on an island captured by seapower, which flew with fuel supplied by seapower.

So, you may ask, what is seapower. We know how it works. What it is?

The factors in successful seapower are varied and complex. They arise from the fundamentals of our national strength. They include not only the weapons themselves, the ships and guns and airplanes, but the training and the talents to employ them successfully. As I never tire of pointing out, because I realize so few understand it, seapower has its roots deep in the core of our country. They draw nourishment from the farms and ranches that feed our men. They derive from our mines, our logging camps, our mills and factories. There is scarcely a village in the geographical center of the continent which does not contribute in some way to American seapower. This resource of strength was demonstrated by the manpower and industrial power which enabled your Navy to drive the enemy back upon his own shores, to throttle him, starve him, and literally to pin him to the shelltorn soil.

The way we used that productive strength was as vital as the fact of production. President Roosevelt, the two Secretaries of War and the Navy, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff must be given prime credit for the coordination of productivity at home and its expenditure on the enemy. But in the final application of organized American power, sea and land and air power, industrial and military, it was the strategy of duplicate command and servicing at sea that concentrated the whole effort. Duplicate command and servicing at sea brought to Naval warfare in effect the principles of industrial mass production, the industrial production line.

Here is how they worked. Servicing at sea meant that our warships were physically able to operate continuously away from base--continuously. From all quarters of the country the railroads brought to the docksides of California, Oregon and Washington the products of America's farms, factories and oil fields.

There the materiel was loaded on ships which steamed in continuous procession to the forward combat areas of the Pacific. They met our fighting ships at sea and pumped them full of fuel oil, replenished their lockers with food and ammunition. The mail was delivered at sea. Mobile repair units patched up our damaged ships at sea, or in the lagoons of captured islands. The sick and wounded were transferred at sea to home-bound ships. Thus the maximum use of every ship and airplane was employed. They could be kept going on the only spot where fighting equipment is any good--where the fighting is. Servicing at sea doubled and tripled the effectiveness of your fleet.

It was a pace, however, that only inanimate machines could endure. The hands and brains that employed the machines had to have rest--a little rest--and time to study and plan new operations. That is where the principle of duplicate commands enters.

Now you cannot plan an operation while conducting one, anymore than you can whistle while eating soda crackers. And so we had one Fleet Commander and his staff at sea conducting an operation while another Commander and his staff were ashore planning the next battle in which the identical ships would be employed. Admiral Halsey would be fighting the ships while Admiral Spruance was at Pearl Harbor or Guam working on plans. When Halsey came back, his mission accomplished, Spruance sailed forth. You see, we reversed the old stage coach procedure and instead of changing horses we changed drivers. It had the Japanese crazy. They thought we had two identical fleets alternating at sea. What we had were alternating commands and an unbroken line of constant supply. That, ladies and gentlemen, is seapower in the application.

Those sources of supply were not exclusively material and physical. They were also intellectual. The all-over planning for the coordination of warfare on a global scale was the responsibility of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Combined Chiefs of Staff who represented in the degree of their interest the ideas of the several members of the United Nations.

The whole war had to be fought as a whole. The effect of an operation in Europe or Africa had to be weighed in terms of effect upon the forces engaged in the Pacific. The directives I received from the Joint Chiefs were necessarily and pointedly brief. In other words, the directives gave the broad description of the strategy. The refinement and details of strategy and of tactics were of local responsibility.

Here the Joint Staff of the Pacific Fleet and the Pacific Ocean Areas began to function. The boldness and imagination shown by this staff in execution of broad directives of strategy drove the war ahead at swift pace.

Now, Joint Staff work means just that--the joint workings of all fighting elements. On my staff I had not only Navy men and Marines, but soldiers and Army airmen. The chief of my planning section was a Navy man, with an Army deputy and a Marine and an Army Air Corps representative respectively in line. Chief of my Intelligence was an Army officer, with a Navy man next in command. Operations was under a Navy officer, whose deputy was an Army officer, with the Marines and Army Air to assist. Logistics, which is actually the science of the procurement of supplies, was under an Army officer, with Navy and Marine assistants. All communications were under a Naval officer, deputized by a Marine and an Army man. Army, Navy and Marines, Air Forces and Coast Guard, they all not only worked together but they ate together and slept together.

Together we went to work to translate the directives from Washington into a battle plan, preparing an estimate of all possibilities, completing virtually all the intelligence work and most of the logistics. Then the plans were turned over to the alternate commander of the Third or Fifth Fleet for completion, discussion and execution. Their execution is a matter of record. With boldness of planning went boldness of execution. It was team-work such as has never before existed.

The enemy had no such team-work. Germany, without concept of sea-power, let the Wehrmacht dominate. Admiral Doenitz tells us now that the German Navy had plans for super-submarines before the war which could fight submerged for 70 days and cruise around the world, but the Army would not grant priorities for their building. We asked the Japanese why they did not use their submarines against our supply lines. Their Chief of Naval Operations replies that the Army insisted the submarines be used to carry supplies to the Army garrisons who were being starved by our own submarine warfare against the Jap surface ships.

But on our fighting teams, General Eisenhower and General MacArthur sought the counsel and advice of naval subordinates, even as I had Army and Army Air Force men on my team. The Joint Chiefs of Staff was a team of equals, where Army, Navy and Air Force met, planned, discussed, weighed, and made decisions based on teamwork, free from domination of any one service. And of the teamwork that existed on the home front, I have profound admiration and gratitude.

The war ended only five months ago. It already seems remote to most of us. But in that short time the demobilization program has reduced our victorious fleet almost to impotency. Only the fact that nobody threatens our security today allows me to contemplate the state of our Navy with some degree of equanimity. Inspired by the record of that Navy in keeping war from America and making it possible to defeat our enemies on their own soil, I hope our present weakness is but transitory. I hope it will never again become a habit. A few days ago I described to the managing editors of the Associated Press newspapers my concept of a sturdy, independent American seapower as a guarantor of peace--not only peace for the United States but for the world. If I can sum up that speech for you in one sentence, I believe that no second Tojo or imitator of Hitler will start a new war of world conquest if he must confront an already prepared United States, and for a maritime nation there is no defense superior to an efficient combination of sea and air power.

My attempt tonight has been to give you both perspective and focus on the achievement of our victory, particularly in the Pacific. I have tried to give you a look at the progress and the effect of combat as I saw it myself. And now I invite you actually to look upon some of the scenes of the war at sea, in motion pictures. I am most grateful to the National Geographic Society for this opportunity to report to you all--mission accomplished.

\*\*\*