

## Probing the Perimeter

Background: World War II started abruptly for the Americans, with lightning Japanese strikes on U.S. air and fleet bases in the Philippines in June of 1940. Taken by surprise by land-based bombers striking from Formosa and sea-based aircraft roaring in from four Japanese carriers, the Americans in the Philippines lost most of their aircraft and a good number of their ships and submarines in the first morning of the war.

But the American response was not long in coming. While Admiral Richardson, Commander in Chief of the United States Pacific Fleet, knew that it would be many months before the U.S. Navy could appear in force off the Philippines, he was determined to take some action quickly. Richardson had been unhappy when Admiral Stark, the Chief of Naval Operations, had directed Richardson to keep the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor rather than at its customary home port in California. Richardson was working to get the fleet ready for war; he felt that this could be much more easily accomplished at the fleet's established base at San Diego than at the Pearl Harbor outpost. And moving the fleet to Hawaii just put it that much closer to Japanese naval power.

But now that the fleet was at Pearl, Richardson decided that he needed to knock the Japanese off balance while discovering more about their Central Pacific defenses. With these goals in mind, he ordered the Pacific Fleet's carrier forces to mount a probe of Japanese defenses in the Marshall Islands.

Playing Area: The scenario is played out on a hex grid 30 hexes from north to south and 20 hexes from east to west. See the attached grid. The northwest corner of the grid is hex 0101. Taroa is in hex 0716. Roi is hex 0415. Kwajalein is in hex 0416. Jaluit is in hex 0618.

Scenario Length: 12 turns. At the USN player's option, the first turn can be a night turn.

Initiative: Neither side has a modifier to its initiative die roll.

Victory Conditions: Normal victory conditions apply. The USN player receives 10 VP per strike on an IJN base with at least 2 bombing units. A “bombing unit” is any unit with a P or M attack strength. To count as having struck, a bombing unit must not be shot down or forced off by defending CAP. The USN player receives 40 VP if the IJN player selects the “Option 2” order of battle below, and 10 VP for each turn (if any) by which the IJN player advances the entry of any option ships.

Imperial Japanese Navy Order of Battle.

Option 1:

Carrier: Kaga

Heavy Cruisers: Tone, Chikuma

Destroyers: 1 x Kagero

Air group:

Kaga: 2 A5M4, 2 B5N2, 2 D1A2

Option 2:

Carriers: Hiryu, Soryu

Heavy Cruisers: Tone, Chikuma, Myoko, Haguro

Destroyers: 2 x Kagero

Air groups:

Hiryu: 2 A5M4, 4 B5N1

Soryu: 2 A5M4, 2 B5N1, 2 B4Y1

Land based air groups: 4 A5M4, 1 G3M2

Ships at a base in the Marshalls:

Aden, Burma, Hino, Tonan Marus, Tenryu, Tatsuta, Kamikaze x 2

Submarines: 1 block

Imperial Japanese Navy Starting Positions.

- Two of the land based A5M4 units are placed at Roi and 2 at Taroa.
- The G3M2 unit can be placed at either Roi or Taroa.
- The H6K2 unit can be placed at either Roi or Jaluit.
- The ships in the Marshalls can be placed at Kwajalein or Taroa. They may be split between both locations.
- The submarine block starts within 4 hexes of Taroa.
- The option IJN naval forces begin off the hex grid, at Truk. They may appear anywhere on the western map edge 1 to 3 turns after a USN ship is spotted. The USN player receives VPs if any option ships enter before the 3<sup>rd</sup> turn after a USN ships is spotted. The option ships have 8 turns of endurance remaining on the turn that they appear. At the end of the scenario, they must be able to reach Kwajalein with their remaining endurance.
- The IJN player may have up to 15 TF blocks on the map. Any number of these may be dummies. The IJN player can freely move TF blocks in from the west edge of the map even if no ships are moving in from that edge in the turn.
- The IJN player places units on the map after the USN player.

#### Imperial Japanese Navy Scenario Rules.

1. Air strikes from IJN carriers are subject to some limits. Any strike from Kaga is limited in size to 5 air units, no more than 3 of which may be bombing units. Any strike from Hiryu or Soryu is limited to 4 air units, no more than 2 of which may be bombing units. A “bombing unit” is any air unit with a P, M or A attack strength.
2. Carrier born aircraft had a difficult time finding their way back to their carriers after a search or strike before the advent of homing equipment. The farther the aircraft had ranged, the greater the difficulty. Further, some of the early carrier-based monoplanes during this time suffered reliability problems or high accident rates. To simulate all this, roll D12 whenever any air unit is returning from a strike more than 3 hexes distant. On a roll of 1, roll D6.
  - a. For B5N1 units, count the unit as shot down on a D6 roll of 1-4.
  - b. For all other units striking beyond 3 hexes, count the unit as shot down on a D6 roll of 1-2.
3. Roi and Taroa do not have radar or other early warning systems. Kwajalein and Jaluit do not have airfields. All bases have ports.

4. IJN ships may refuel from the Tonan Maru, as long as she and they are stationary in the same port.
5. The G3M2 unit may attack with torpedoes only if it is flying from Roi.
6. The H6K2 unit supplies search capabilities from the location at which it is based. It may not engage (or be engaged) in combat.
7. In this era, before USN aircraft had armor and self-sealing fuel tanks as a matter of course, IJN antiaircraft fire is resolved just like USN antiaircraft fire.
8. The IJN player has no dummy ships.
9. As the USN ships do not yet have radar, there is no -2 modifier for searching TFs with announced CAP.
10. The ships beginning on the map may not move until a USN ship is spotted. They may exit from the west edge of the map.

#### United States Navy Order of Battle.

Carriers: Saratoga, Enterprise

Heavy Cruisers: Astoria, Minneapolis, San Francisco, Indianapolis, Chicago, Portland

Destroyers: Phelps, Selfridge, 3 x Farragut, 3 x Bagley

Air groups:

Saratoga: 1 F2A-1, 1 F3F-1, 2 SB2U-2, 2 SBC-3, 2 TBD-1

Enterprise: 2 F3F-2, 2 BT-1, 2 SBC-3, 2 TBD-1

Submarines: 2 blocks (8T and 2 speed)

#### United States Navy Starting Positions.

- Each carrier must be in a separate task force.
- The USN player may form up to 4 TFs at the start of the scenario.
- The TFs start anywhere in the easternmost hex row (row 20). All ships are fully fuelled.
- The USN player may have up to 15 TF blocks on the map. Any number can be dummies.
- The submarine blocks may start within 4 hexes of any of the IJN bases.
- The USN player places units on the map before the IJN player.
- USN TFs may freely exit from the east edge of the map.

### United States Navy Scenario Rules.

1. Air strikes from USN carriers are limited in their potential composition. Any P weapon bombing units in excess of 3 launched by a carrier in a single strike must be units with 2P attack strengths.
2. Carrier born aircraft had a difficult time finding their way back to their carriers after a search or strike before the advent of homing equipment. The farther the aircraft had ranged, the greater the difficulty. Further, some of the early monoplanes during this time suffered reliability problems or high accident rates. To simulate all this, roll D12 whenever any F2A-1 flew CAP in a strike phase or is returning from a strike mission, whenever a BT-1 is landing, or whenever any air unit is returning from a strike more than 3 hexes distant. On a roll of 1, roll D6.
  - a. For F3F-1, F3F-2, SB2C-2 and TBD-1 units, count the unit as shot down on a D6 roll of 1-2.
  - b. For F2A-1 and BT-1 units striking beyond 3 hexes, count the unit as shot down on a D6 roll of 1-4.
  - c. For F2A-1 and BT-1 units in other circumstances, count the unit as shot down on a D6 roll of 1-2.
3. The US Mark 13 Mod 0 air-launched torpedo was not as effective as its Japanese counterpart, but it was significantly more reliable than the Mark 13 Mod 1 version that succeeded it. The A strengths for the TBD-1s assume that they are armed with the Mod 0 torpedo. There is a chance that any give TBD-1 unit has instead been armed with the Mod 1 version. Whenever a TBD-1 unit attacks with its A strength, roll D6. On a roll of 1-3, it has the Mod 1 version and its A strength is halved.
4. The USN player has no dummy ships.

Outcome. The IJN did not get advance warning of the US strike, but neither did the USN know that the IJN had based a carrier force at Truk to backstop its Marshall bases. The IJN force steamed out of Truk as soon as search aircraft from Taroa sighted one of the USN task forces. The scene was set for the first-ever battle between aircraft carriers.

