

THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC

By the Numbers

(National Archives and Records Administration, WC 980.)

(From the Collection of The National WWII Museum, 2011.075.135.)

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800 MILLION

Square feet of Marsden (or Marston) mat produced by the United States during World War II in order to quickly build runways and airstrips in rough terrain.¹ Each section of these interlocking, pierced-steel planks weighed 70 pounds.

65 MILLION

Estimated total worldwide deaths as a result of World War II (military and civilian).²

40 MILLION

Estimated civilian deaths as a result of World War II (across all theaters).³

20 MILLION

Estimated deaths in China as a result of World War II.⁴

16.1 MILLION

US military personnel serving in World War II (across all theaters).⁵

2.7 MILLION

Estimated Japanese deaths during World War II (military and civilian).⁶

115,000

Square miles of ocean that comprised the battlefield for the Battle of Leyte Gulf, the largest naval engagement of World War II.⁷

110,000

Japanese Americans incarcerated in wartime relocation camps.⁸

109,000

US military deaths in the Pacific theater.⁹

60,000

American soldiers and Marines involved in the invasion of Okinawa, the largest amphibious operation of the Pacific war.¹⁰



15,000 US Army troops, 60 percent of whom were African American, involved in the construction of the Ledo Road from Ledo, India, to Kunming, China. ¹¹

5,500 Women's Army Corps members who served in the southwest Pacific during World War II. ¹²

3,500 Miles Japanese fleet traveled to launch its attack against Pearl Harbor. ¹³

3,041 Estimated number of Japanese kamikaze attacks launched during World War II. ¹⁴

2,200 Number of servicemembers who lived aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Enterprise*. ¹⁵

473 WWII Medal of Honor recipients. ¹⁶

80 American airmen who participated in the Doolittle Raid, the first US direct strike against Japan, a daring attack involving 16 B-25 bombers launched from the deck of an aircraft carrier. ¹⁷

3 Number of atomic bombs detonated by the United States during World War II (at the Trinity test site, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki). ¹⁸

2 US presidents who served in office during World War II. ¹⁹

¹ Barry W. Fowle, ed., *Builders and Fighters: US Army Engineers in World War II* (Washington: DC, Office of History, US Army Corps of Engineers, 1992), 202.

² The number of WWII fatalities is a contested issue, with estimates ranging from 50 to 80 million. This wide range depends upon how civilian fatalities are counted and whether deaths from war-related famine are included, with fatality estimates for individual countries varying widely. The eminent WWII historian Gerhard Weinberg, for instance, places the estimated number of total deaths at 60 million, a number that includes “at least 15 million” Chinese fatalities. Historian Rana Mitter, meanwhile, estimates that “some 14 million to 20 million Chinese” died during the war, which suggests the total could be at least as high as 65 million. See Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II*, Rev. Ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 894; Weinberg, *World War II: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 123; and Rana Mitter, *Forgotten Ally: China’s World War II, 1937-1945* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013), 363. For a similar estimate, see also Williamson Murray and Allen R. Millet, who explain that “fifty years of study by a legion of demographers have produced only estimates of civilian losses for the war years, 1937–1945, but this much is known: World War II killed at least twice as many innocents as soldiers, of whom at least 21 million died.” See Murray and Millet, *A War to Be Won: Fighting the Second World War* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 554.

³ Donald L. Miller, *The Story of World War II* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 640.

⁴ Rana Mitter, *Forgotten Ally: China’s World War II, 1937-1945* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013), 363.

⁵ Nese F. DeBruyne and Anne Leland, *American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics* (Congressional Research Service, 2015), 7.

⁶ John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 298–9.

⁷ H.P. Wilmott, *The Battle of Leyte Gulf: The Last Fleet Action* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 6.

⁸ Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty: An American History*, 2nd Seagull Edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company), 823.

⁹ The source for this number is Richard B. Frank, “US Battle Deaths, Asia-Pacific Theaters,” Memorandum to The National WWII Museum, May 5, 2016. Frank explains:

There is no single authoritative source for US battle deaths for services in all of the Asia-Pacific theaters. Those theaters included: Southwest Pacific Area, Pacific Ocean Areas, China-Burma-India theater and at least some deaths in what was classified by the Army as “North America” but was further subdivided into a specific category for the Aleutian Islands.

The most authoritative source for US Navy (including Coast Guard) and Marine Corps battle deaths is: *History of the Medical Department of the United States Navy in World War II, The Statistics of Diseases and Injuries, Navmed P-1318, Volume 3, Division of Medical Statistics*, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Navy Department.

This provides the following figures (page 84), just for Asia-Pacific areas:

Navy:	29,263
Marine Corps	19,163
Total:	48,426

The most authoritative source for the US Army (including then the Army Air Forces) is: *Army Battle Casualties and Nonbattle Deaths in World War II, Final Report, 7 December 1941 – 31 December 1946, Statistical and Accounting Branch, Officer of the Adjutant General, Under Direction of Program Review and Analysis Division Office of the Controller of the Army, O.C.S.*

The Navy and the Army did not use the same categories of campaigns and theaters, although many clearly match. These numbers do, however, include deaths of prisoners of war. The ultimate numbers provided in this Army source are:

55,145 in all “Pacific Area Campaigns” (page 93).

Adjustments:

There are two adjustments required to get close to an accurate figure for “battle deaths” in the Asia-Pacific theater.

Campaigns Not Identified:

Army battle deaths in the “Pacific Area” also include 5,639 fatalities for which no theater association was made. Presumably, however, this number includes primarily those who died en route to a combat theater (as these figures are in the section for battle deaths, not non-battle deaths.) A reasonable and probably low estimate is that 2,000 of these deaths can be assigned to the Asia-Pacific theaters. This would include the aviators and passengers killed flying out to theaters or persons otherwise killed in transit. Another unresolved possibility is that the figure includes a large portion of—if not all of—the 1,000 men lost in the tragic sinking of the troopship *Rohma*, sunk by German aircraft in the Mediterranean but packed primarily with US Army personnel headed to the China-Burma-India theater.

Merchant Marines:

The other great question mark involves deaths of US Merchant Marine sailors. There is a figure now used (including at The National WWII Museum) for the whole war of some 9,000 deaths among US Merchant Marine sailors, but so far I have not been able to locate any breakdown by theaters. We know a very large portion of these deaths occurred in the enormous loss of shipping off the US East and Gulf coasts in the first half of 1942. An arbitrary but probably reasonable estimate is that about 3,500 of these deaths occurred in theaters in the Asia-Pacific war (including notably the Indian Ocean). It is possible this figure is somewhat high, but to the degree it is, it probably only offsets what is very likely a low number for Army battle deaths for which no theater is assigned.

So, the final estimated of Asia-Pacific battle deaths would be:

Navy:	29,263
Marine Corps	19,163
Army:	55,245
Without Adjustments:	103,571
Adjustments:	
Army Unassigned Theater:	2,000
Merchant Marine:	3,500
Total:	109,071, or “109,000”

¹⁰ Roy E. Appleman, James M. Burns, Russell A. Gugeler, and John Stevens, *Okinawa: The Last Battle* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1993), 75.

¹¹ Miller, *Story of World War II*, 593.

¹² Judith A. Bellafaire, *The Women’s Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service*, US Army Center of Military History Publication 72-15, <http://www.history.army.mil/brochures/wac/wac.htm>.

¹³ David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 517.

¹⁴ This number reflects an average of the two numbers Richard B. Frank provides for October 1944–March 1945. See Richard B. Frank, *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 180.

¹⁵ *Dial Telephone Directory, USS Enterprise*, May 20, 1941, Collection of The National WWII Museum, 2007.006.001. Once the United States entered World War II, the number of men aboard the *Enterprise* climbed to as many as 2,919, according to the *USS Enterprise* (CV-6) Association, <http://www.cv6.org/company/muster/#A>.

¹⁶ Congressional Medal of Honor Society, <http://www.cmoths.org/medal-statistics.php>.

¹⁷ James Scott, *Target Tokyo: Jimmy Doolittle and the Raid that Avenged Pearl Harbor* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2015), xiii.

¹⁸ Frank, *Downfall*, 260-72, 283-287.

¹⁹ The White House, “The Presidents,” <https://www.whitehouse.gov/1600/Presidents>.