

## Zero! and Corsairs & Hellcats — DiF Series Campaign

# Struggle for the Aleutians

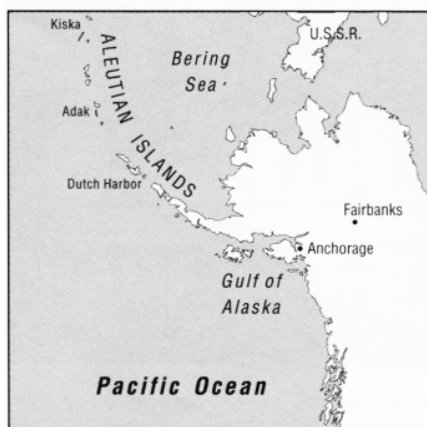
BY ROGER HORKY

The Aleutians campaign was fought almost exclusively in the air for most of its duration and thus is an excellent subject for a *Down in Flames* campaign. The vast expanse of the theatre — the opposing armies began almost 1,000 miles away from each other — and the low priority it received from both the Americans and the Japanese, neither of whom were willing to divert naval forces from other areas, compelled the combatants to rely on air power for most of the campaign. Yet the Aleutians are perhaps the worst environment on earth in which to attempt to conduct regular flight operations. High winds, fog, snow, and bitter cold were a greater danger to both sides than the enemy. The American, Canadian, and Japanese airmen who served in the Aleutians found flying to be far more dangerous than fighting.

The strategic value of the Aleutians derives from their position approximately halfway between Japan and the continental United States. The westernmost islands in the chain are just 650 miles from the Kurile Islands (which were part of Japan until 1945), and, of course, they extend eastward all the way to Alaska. Both sides in the Pacific War recognized the area's importance — in 1935, General William "Billy" Mitchell, the outspoken advocate of American airpower, declared that "he who holds Alaska holds the world" — but neither the United States nor Japan were particularly interested in venturing into the region. The harsh subarctic climate discouraged any serious consideration of fighting in the Aleutians or Alaska.

However, when Jimmy Doolittle's sixteen B-25s bombed Tokyo and other Japanese cities on 18 April 1942, there was a renewal of Japanese interest in operations in the northern Pacific. Many Japanese officers were convinced the Doolittle raiders had flown from bases in the Aleutians and wanted to deny the Americans another chance to make similar raids. That the bombers had been flown off of an aircraft carrier was difficult for them to credit. President Franklin Roosevelt's announcement that the B-25s had come from mythical "Shangri-La" just added to their uncertainty.

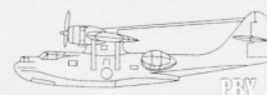
Nevertheless, the Japanese would probably have stayed out of the area had it not been for their desire to finish off the US



Pacific fleet. The handful of American aircraft carriers that had escaped the destruction at Pearl Harbor had been giving a good account of themselves in the first six months of the Pacific War. Not only did they carry the Doolittle raiders to within 600 miles of the Japanese coast, they had conducted a series of harassment raids against various Japanese island outposts in the southwest Pacific area, and, at the Battle of the Coral Sea, had prevented the Japanese from moving southwards towards Australia. The Imperial Navy wanted to draw them into a final decisive battle that would settle the question of control of the Pacific once and for all.

To do so, the Japanese devised one of their typically complex, multi-part operational plans. A small fleet would attack and invade the Aleutians in early June 1942, which was expected to lure the American carriers away from the southwestern Pacific and into the north. A second, much larger, force would then move in from the west and threaten Midway Island, which the Americans would have no choice but to defend due to its strategic value as their last major outpost west of Hawaii. The Japanese counted on their superior numbers to win the resulting battle. They were able to commit four fleet carriers, two light carriers, seven battleships, and some fifty-odd smaller ships to the effort. The Americans had but three aircraft carriers, no battleships, and about fifteen smaller vessels — fewer ships than even the IJN's Aleutian flotilla, the decoy force, which consisted of two carriers and about twenty five other warships.

### Special Note about the new aircraft cards in this issue:



This issue of *C3i* contains sixteen additional *DiF Series* aircraft cards. First of all, there are three new types of aircraft: the Japanese A5M4 *Claude*, the British Bristol Beaufighter IC, and the American A-20A. Next, the B-17Ds and B-17Es from *Zero!* have been reprinted with updated Saturation Bombing ratings as per the *Zero!* errata. Also included are a pair of B-26Bs, which are used in the Aleutians campaign in this issue. They are the same as those in *8th Air Force* and are here in order to allow players to play the campaign without owning the earlier game. Finally, the remaining aircraft (Ki-43-I, PBX and H6K) are straight reprints of aircraft in *Zero!* (with upgraded artwork by Dave Lawrence). They are part of this *C3i* package because *Zero!* contains insufficient numbers of them for the campaigns in this magazine.

The Midway operation (codenamed MI-Go) was scheduled to begin on 4 June 1942. The Aleutians operation (AL-Go) began a few days earlier to lure the Americans carriers into position. The preliminaries for both began a few weeks prior.

What the Japanese did not realize was that their naval codes had been broken. The Americans knew what their opponents were planning and were able to prepare accordingly. Aware that the Aleutians operation was a feint, the Americans could withhold forces from that area to concentrate on the defense of Midway.

At the end of May 1942, a Japanese amphibious force was sighted in the western Aleutians. The Americans, despite their knowledge of Japan's Midway plans, were not sure of Japanese intentions in the Aleutians. They reasoned that Dutch

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Harbor, on the island of Unalaska, would be the primary objective. It was the westernmost American military complex in the Alaska territory, the site of an airbase, a naval station, and a small army post. If the Japanese could capture Dutch Harbor, they could threaten mainland Alaska, and from there, move into Canada and the continental United States.

The defense of the eastern Aleutians relied upon the small army garrison on Unalaska, Task Force 8 (a tiny detachment of ships the navy could ill afford to withhold from Midway), Fleet Air Wing 4, and the 11th Air Force, all of which came under the USN's North Pacific command. Fleet Air Wing 4 was primarily a patrol unit, equipped with Consolidated PBV Catalinas (later in the campaign FAW-4 would receive Lockheed PV-1 Venturas for offensive operations, and in the last months of the war began flying Lockheed PV-2 Harpoons and Consolidated PB4Y-2 Privateers, as well). A single squadron of Grumman F4F Wildcats was transferred to Kodiak Island in June 1942 in anticipation of the Japanese attack, but it saw no action and was reassigned to the southwest Pacific four months later. It was the 11th Air Force that was the primary striking force in the Aleutians, operating both bombers and fighters.

At the beginning of the campaign, XI Fighter Command included Curtiss P-36 Hawks (although these remained on the mainland and did not see action in the Aleutians), Curtiss P-40E Warhawks (including those belonging to the 11th Fighter Squadron, the famous "Aleutian Tigers" led by Colonel John Chennault, son of General Claire Chennault, commander of the Flying Tigers), and Bell P-39 Airacobras (which were eventually withdrawn because their tricycle undercarriages were too fragile for the rough airfields in the theatre). Later, the P-40Es began to be supplemented by P-40Ks in 1943.

Shortly after the fighting began, the first Lockheed P-38s arrived in Alaska. The type made its combat debut in the theatre and was the mainstay of the 11th Air Force's fighter forces during the campaign. The P-38D, -E, -F, and -J all served in Alaska during World War Two, but the majority of Lightnings in the Aleutians between 1942 and '43 were winterized 'G' models.

The 11th Air force operated an odd assortment of bombers in the Aleutians campaign. These included Boeing B-17E Flying Fortresses (and a single 'B' model,

called "Old Seventy," left over from cold-weather tests conducted prior to the war), Consolidated B-24 and LB-30 Liberators (the latter being an export model), Martin B-26 Marauders (eventually phased out of the campaign in favor of the North American B-25 Mitchell), and Douglas B18 Bolos (a bomber variant of the DC-3 commercial transport, these aircraft were kept on the mainland). A squadron of Douglas A-24 Banshees (the Army variant of the SBD Dauntless) arrived late in the campaign.

The Canadians, recognizing the threat to their homeland if Alaska were invaded, transferred the RCAF's X Wing to Alaska and placed it under 11th Air Force command. Created expressly for the campaign, the unit was originally composed of a bombing/reconnaissance squadron flying Bristol Bolingbroke (the Canadian-built version of the Blenheim IV), and a fighter squadron equipped with Kittyhawk Is (as the P-40D was known in Commonwealth air forces) and, later, Kittyhawk IVs (the equivalent of the P-40N). A second fighter unit was added in early 1943. The bombers performed anti-submarine patrols in the Gulf of Alaska, while the fighters were assigned to defensive duties in the Anchorage area. The Americans later tried to transfer some of the Kittyhawks to forward bases, but only two arrived. The others were lost en route, victims of the horrific Alaskan weather. A few RCAF fighter pilots did see action in the Aleutians, however. The Americans had more aircraft than airmen in the theatre so assigned several Canadian fliers to an advanced unit. There they were given nine Curtiss P-40Ks to treat as their own. The Canadians painted RCAF roundels on them but the aircraft were never formally transferred to Canadian inventory (the P-40K was equivalent to the Kittyhawk III).

The Americans' belief that the Japanese were primarily interested in the eastern Aleutians seemed to be confirmed when Dutch Harbor was bombed on 3 June 1942. A small force of Nakajima B5N Kates and Mitsubishi A6M Zeros from the aircraft carrier *Ryujo* bombed and strafed naval and military installations in the area early in the morning. The attacking group was not as large as it had been originally planned. The *Ryujo's* Aichi D3A Vals turned back when their commanding officer received word that the clouds over the target were too low to dive bomb safely. The Vals, Kates, and Zeros from the aircraft

carrier *Junyo* were also supposed to have taken part in the raid but were forced to abort when they encountered a storm front.

As soon as the Japanese were detected, a squadron of P-40s was scrambled from an airbase elsewhere on the island (built in secret to protect the Americans' limited fighter assets) but arrived too late to intercept the Japanese bombers. They did, however, encounter some reconnaissance floatplanes conducting post-raid damage surveys. At least one of the scouts was shot down, the rest returning to the cruisers on which they were based.

The Japanese waited until the afternoon of the next day before conducting a follow-up raid (in part because they needed time to analyze intelligence gathered during the first raid — the only photographs they possessed of the area had been taken twenty years before!). This time, the attackers included dive bombers, their commander unwilling to disappoint his superiors a second time. The Americans were ready for the second attack and launched their fighters in time. In the dogfight that ensued, two P-40s and two Vals were shot down. Two more D3As were damaged and failed to return to their carriers. A fifth Japanese plane, a Zero, was hit by ground fire and crash-landed on a nearby island.

An oil tank farm, barracks, anti-aircraft batteries, and a radar installation (which some sources describe as a radio station) were among the targets struck in the two raids. The attackers also bombed and strafed an anchored barracks ship and the seaplane base in the harbor. At least one PBV was destroyed on the water (it had just begun its take off run when the raiders appeared). Over forty Americans were killed on the ground and a like number wounded. The Americans began searching for the Japanese fleet as soon as the first raid had ended. At least two PBVs found the flotilla but were shot down before they could report its position. On the second day, however, another Catalina crew managed to avoid the flak and fighters protecting the fleet and radioed its location. A handful of B-17s, B-26s (armed with torpedoes), and LB-30s were assigned to attack the ships. The crews of these aircraft reported scoring strikes on a number of vessels, including an aircraft carrier, but no Japanese ships were actually hit (a Soviet freighter in the area was strafed by P-38s on their way to Unimak Island but fortunately no damage was done). A number of American aircraft were lost in the attacks.

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The Americans continued to search for the Japanese fleet for several days thereafter. The crew of one B-17 reported making radar contact with a transport and bombing it through a thick undercast but it was later determined that the "freighter" had been an uninhabited island. The Japanese were no longer in the area, having withdrawn shortly after the second Dutch Harbor raid. Admiral Yamamoto had instructed the Aleutians fleet to join him at Midway. A short time later he changed his order and directed the fleet to proceed with its original mission, the invasion of the Aleutians.

The raids against Dutch Harbor were just a diversion. The Japanese never intended to take Unalaska. Their actual objectives, the islands of Attu and Kiska, were at the far western end of the Aleutian chain. Attu was occupied on 5 June 1942 and Kiska was taken two days later. Both fell without resistance. The planned invasion of a third island, Adak, was cancelled when the Japanese realized that it was within range of the American land-based bombers based on Unalaska. The Americans, still thinking that the Japanese were coming east, did not discover the Japanese presence on either Attu or Kiska for almost a week.

The conquest of Attu and Kiska represented the first time that American sovereign territory had been occupied by a hostile foreign power since the War of 1812. Yet most Americans had no idea that there was fighting going on in Alaska. The Battle of Midway and its aftermath occupied American attention during the early summer of 1942. After that, the invasion of Guadalcanal, the first Allied offensive of the Pacific War, received all of the press. The War and Navy Departments accorded a very low priority the Aleutians and did little to inform the public about the campaign beyond allow director John Huston to produce a documentary called 'Report from the Aleutians' in 1943. The Japanese, on the other hand, proclaimed that the conquest of the Aleutians was a tremendous victory. Of course, they were trying to divert attention from the disaster at Midway. The Imperial Navy had gotten the battle it wanted, but not the desired results: the Americans lost a single aircraft carrier; the Japanese, four. The battle ended Japanese hopes of expansion in the Pacific. Two windswept, rocky islands in the frigid North Pacific were poor compensation for their losses (historians have speculated that if the Japanese had not attacked the

Aleutians and kept the *Junyo* and *Ryujo* with the Midway fleet, the outcome of that battle might have been different).

The Americans responded to the invasion by assigning every bomber in the theatre (perhaps thirty in all) to raid Kiska as frequently as possible in an attempt to push the Japanese back off of the island. The bombers went unescorted, however, as no American fighter had the range to reach Kiska from Unalaska (Attu went completely unmolested because it was beyond the range of all but patrol aircraft). These raids, which became known as "the Kiska Blitz," did not force the Japanese to withdraw but did inconvenience their attempts to establish permanent facilities on the island. The Japanese simply hid in caves and bunkers when there were bombers overhead.

The Americans had so few heavy bombers that the Navy's PBY Catalinas were also assigned to the Kiska Blitz. They could not carry a heavy bomb load but could undertake more missions in a day than the aircraft based on Unalaska because they operated from Atka Island in the central Aleutians (supported by seaplane tenders, the flying boats could operate from any large calm body of water). However, the slow and lumbering 'Cats' were mauled so badly by flak and fighters that naval aircrews started referring to Kiska as the "PBY elimination center." Nor could the seaplane tenders sustain the pace of such intense operations indefinitely; they were also vulnerable to air attack. When the Japanese bombed the tender *USS Gillis* in July, all such craft were withdrawn to the east and the PBYs were reassigned to their regular patrol duties (the seaplane tenders were able to return to the central Aleutians

by August after the Navy arranged to have P-38s provide air cover for them, but the PBYs were rarely used as bombers after the Kiska Blitz).

After this initial round of activity the two sides settled in for a long campaign. Their land forces were at opposite ends of a thousand-mile-long island chain; the Americans could do little to dislodge the Japanese but the Japanese were simply not capable of further advancement. Nor did either belligerent have any capital ships in the theatre. The only major naval action of the campaign, the Battle of the Komondorski Islands, fought on 26 March 1943, was a fairly small affair involving six cruisers and about ten smaller vessels. The USN did, however, manage to conduct naval bombardments against the Japanese garrisons on Kiska and Attu on occasion.




The first time this occurred, the Japanese responded with a feeble and unsuccessful air attack against the American flotilla, but they soon realized that the attacks were about as effective as the Kiska Blitz had been and thus could be ignored. The Americans came to the same conclusion - one particularly unproductive barrage in 1943 became known as "the Navy's spring plowing". The surface forces assigned to the theatre were simply too small for the vast scale of the campaign, dictating that the majority of the fighting in the Aleutians between June 1942 and April 1943 take place in the air.

Yet the harsh climate of the Aleutians made it difficult to conduct regular flight operations. World War II in the North Pacific, a day-by-day chronology of the campaign, lists many dates for which the entry about aerial activities notes simply "All air missions save for meteorological flights cancelled due to weather" (and there were plenty of times when even the weather patrols were grounded). Although most of the Japanese records for the campaign were destroyed or went missing, it has been estimated that they lost some 70 aircraft in combat and nearly 200 to other causes. The Americans suffered 184 operational and 41 combat losses in the Aleutians, a ratio of 4.5 to one. In the other theatres of the Pacific War, the ratio was closer to three to one.

The fog in the Aleutians was so heavy and so frequent that one pilot claimed that "when visibility was 200 feet it was considered a clear day" (another joked about clouds so thick he could not see his co-pilot). Weather rolled in with amazing swiftness. An airfield could begin landing

**Zero! DIF Series Volume III**

*Rise and Fall of the Imperial Japanese Air Force*  
**Published:** 2001 **Nominee:** CSR Awards  
**Game Design:** Dan Verssen  
**Game Developer:** Mike Lemick  
**Art Director:** Rodger B. MacGowan

 <b>Powers</b> SBD BM	 <b>ATTACK ANGLE</b>	 <b>Anabuki</b> K127 D SBU A
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**Contents:** 88 Color Counters; 150 Color Cards; Rule Book; Campaign Book; 8 Target displays; 6 Campaign Maps; Bookcase Box  
**Time to play:** 15 minutes (dogfights) and 1 hour (campaigns)  
**Unit Scale:** Individual aircraft  
**Players:** 2+

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operations with CAVU (ceiling and visibility unlimited) conditions and be closed by fog before the last airplane was safely on the ground. Life magazine published a series of photographs showing an army base in the Aleutians going from sunny and clear to fogbound in just over fifteen minutes.

American aircrews expected to find the target area on Kiska obscured by clouds more often than not. Sometimes only the tops of the mountains on the island peeked up through the undercast. The American bombers crews grew very adept at DR (deduced reckoning) bombing using these peaks as guides. Some of the braver pilots would fly under the clouds, often bombing from less than one hundred feet of altitude (the Japanese were reported to have strung cables between some of the mountaintops on Attu and Kiska to snag low-flying aircraft, but there is no evidence that any aircraft were ever brought down this way). Later in the campaign, the Americans relied more and more upon radar bombing equipment, which greatly eased the task of finding and fixing a target.

The combination of fog and mountains was especially hazardous. The Aleutians were formed by volcanic activity and most of the islands had high peaks on them. An airplane that flew into a "cloud with rocks in it" (the dreaded cumulo granite) would usually not fly out. Most of the mountains on Kiska and those near American airfields in the Aleutians all have at least one airplane wreck on them.

The mountainous terrain also affected wind patterns, much as tall buildings do in a city. The resulting gusts, called "williwaws," were dangerous and unpredictable. Williwaws consisted of both horizontal and vertical air currents, capable of reaching up to 100 mph, which made formation flying extremely difficult. Airmen were warned that the rotary winds produced by a williwaw made it "possible to have a strong eddy current strike one wing [of their airplane] but not the other."

Williwaws were not the only hazardous wind conditions in the Aleutians. The usual weather patterns at that latitude blow from west to east, meaning that American aircraft flying from Adak or Unalaska to Kiska almost always encountered headwinds. If the wind was strong enough—and gale force blows were not uncommon—the airplane's groundspeed might be reduced to a walking pace, even though its indicated airspeed might be in excess of 300 knots.

Flying into the wind consumes a lot of fuel. Escort fighters, lacking the endurance of bombers and patrol aircraft, often had to turn back on days with sustained high winds.

In most environments, strong winds act to dissipate fogbanks, but the unique atmospheric and oceanic conditions of the northern Pacific permit fog to form faster than it could be blown away. The Aleutians became known as "the land of the 50-mph fogs." Heavy fog and high wind are dangerous enough by themselves; the two combined were particularly deadly.

In addition to wind and fog, airmen had to contend with icing conditions, rain, low visibility, "sea smoke," and many other meteorological hazards. Steep barometric gradients meant that altimeters, which determine an aircraft's height by measuring air pressure, could misrepresent an airplane's altitude by as much as one thousand feet. Little wonder that in 1943 an Air Force officer wrote a pamphlet called "Enemy no. 2 in the Aleutians: Weather." The number one enemy, the Japanese, tried desperately to build an airfield on Kiska, but their engineers were just not equal to the task of grading and paving an airstrip out of volcanic rock and the marshy "muskeg" vegetation that grows on the island. As a result, the only Japanese aircraft based in the Aleutians were seaplanes and flying boats. For long-range patrols and shipping strikes, they employed Kawanishi H6K Mavis (which were so badly mauled they were withdrawn in the fall of 1942, however). American bombers encountered Nakajima A6M2-N Rufes (the floatplane variant of the Zero) and Mitsubishi F1M Petes performing as interceptors. The Japanese also operated Kawanishi E7K Alf, Nakajima E8N Dave, Aichi E1 3A Jake, and Yokosuka E14Y Glen reconnaissance floatplanes in the area.

American construction personnel were better equipped than their Japanese counterparts and by the end of September 1942 they were able to build an airstrip on the island of Adak, just 250 miles from Kiska. Flying time to that island was reduced considerably. The Japanese failed to notice the new base for a week and did nothing to hinder its completion. The American bombing campaign continued, but as autumn gave way to winter, good flying days grew less and less frequent, until the last six weeks of 1942, when poor weather grounded most American aircraft. But in mid-January 1943, the Americans

completed an airstrip on Amchitka Island, less than one hundred miles from Kiska (the Japanese discovered it immediately and made several unsuccessful attempts to bomb it before it was completed). Weather had less of an effect on the shorter flights made possible by the new base. And for the first time, Attu was within range of American airpower. As the weather improved, the pace of bombing increased.

The Japanese high command, knowing that the Americans would invade Attu and Kiska once the weather permitted, instructed the Aleutian garrisons to hold on "at all costs." A number of attempts to reinforce the islands were made, but most were turned back by blockading American submarines and aircraft. The handful of transports that made it through to Attu and Kiska did so under the cover of bad weather, but the aircraft, guns, supplies, and other equipment they delivered were insufficient for the garrisons' needs.

American intelligence recognized that Kiska was the more heavily defended of the two islands, so the first American offensive in the Aleutians was operation LANDCRAB, the invasion of Attu, on 11 May 1943, even though that island is several hundred miles further west than Kiska. Despite a lengthy pre-invasion bombardment (the naval gunfire being directed by spotters flying in the Curtiss SOC Seagulls and Vought O52U Kingfishers based on the cruisers supporting the invasion) and air strikes by the F4F Wildcats from the escort carrier *USS Nassau*, as well as air attacks from 11th Air Force aircraft, the Japanese put up a spirited defense. The Japanese made a number of attempts to bomb the invasion fleet from the air but most failed due to the weather. In late May, however, their opportunity came. A formation of nineteen Mitsubishi G4M1 'Betty' medium bombers from the Kurile Islands appeared over Holtz Bay and attacked a cruiser and a destroyer, losing two of their number to flak. The next day, a second attack in the same area was met by a squadron of P-38s from Amchitka. In a furious dogfight, five Bettys were destroyed and seven damaged. One Lightning failed to return to its base.

The 11th Air Force supported the invasion by bombing Japanese installations and troops, providing photographic reconnaissance, and airdropping supplies to units in advanced positions. The Japanese on Kiska were granted a brief respite during

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the struggle for Attu, but were not completely ignored. While American heavy bombers were busy in the west, Kiska was regularly subjected to strafing attacks by American P-40s and Canadian Kittyhawks.

Although outnumbered four to one, the 2800 defenders of Attu held out for eighteen days. The Americans were not prepared for the ferocity of the Japanese defenders, who would rather die than surrender. Attu was the first, but not the last, place in the Pacific where American soldiers faced desperate "banzai charges." Less than thirty Japanese soldiers were ultimately taken prisoner; the rest were killed. American casualties amounted to 1800, one third of them fatalities.

After Attu was secured, the Americans could concentrate all of their efforts on Kiska. Operation COTTAGE, the invasion of the island, was scheduled for 15 August, 1943. The pace of bombing increased steadily through June and July, culminating in an all-out effort in early August. The Americans did not want a repeat of the bloodbath at Attu.

The American aircrews assigned to bomb Kiska in the weeks before the invasion began noticing that the Japanese were not as active as they had been. Bomb craters remained unfilled, flak was virtually non-existent (only green crews reported ground fire), vehicles did not move from day to day, and no enemy personnel were seen. When they reported their observations, they were told that the Japanese had obviously dug in to await the inevitable invasion. The bombing continued.

Some 29,000 American and 5300 Canadian troops took part in the invasion of Kiska. Casualties were surprisingly light. Only 53 men were killed, all in friendly fire incidents. There were no Japanese on Kiska - they had completely evacuated the island two weeks earlier! On 29 July, six IJN destroyers had sailed into Kiska Harbor under the cover of fog and darkness and in less than sixty minutes took aboard the entire 5200-man garrison, then departed.

The liberation of Kiska was the last episode in the Aleutians campaign, but the theatre would no longer be ignored. To prevent the Japanese from ever attempting another invasion, the Americans quickly fortified the western Aleutians, building army, navy, and air bases on Kiska, Adak, Shemya and other islands. For the rest of the conflict, American and Canadian soldiers, sailors, and airmen suffered cold, isolation, and boredom while protecting

North America's westernmost frontier.

The Japanese fear that American aircraft in the Aleutians could bomb their homeland eventually came to fruition. Both the Army Air Force and the Navy used the islands as a base of operations for air strikes against the Kurile Islands (The Japanese considered the Kuriles to be part of the Imperial homeland but were forced to cede them to the USSR as part of the surrender terms). From 18 July 1943 until VJ-Day, AAF B-24s and B-25s, often escorted by P-38s, and US Navy PV-1s and PV-2s attacked the islands on a regular basis, the first attacks on Japanese sovereign territory since the Doolittle raid in April 1942 and the only attacks against Japan itself until Operation MATTERHORN began in late 1944 (actor Charlton Heston served as a B-25 radio operator/gunner in the Aleutians during this period). The Japanese were compelled to transfer fighters, better used elsewhere, to defend the area. By the end of the war, Japanese fighter losses in other theatres were so great that the Kuriles squadrons amounted to one quarter of total Japanese fighter assets.

As a final note, it should be mentioned that air-to-air combat was a rarity in the Aleutians. The Americans recorded just 34 victories in aerial combat in the fourteen months of the campaign. Japanese airmen claimed 30 kills but the number is more likely nearer ten. No pilot of either side achieved ace status. The most successful American airman was a P-38 pilot, Lieutenant Frederick Moore, who had three victories. The highest scoring Japanese pilot in the theatre, Ensign Saburo Kitahata, was also credited with three kills, all while flying a Zero. At the time of his death in New Guinea in 1943, his score had risen to ten victories. A number of future aces began their careers in the Aleutians, however, including Major Thomas McGuire (38 kills) and Lieutenant Colonel Gerald R. Johnson (22 kills). Both flew P-39s in Alaska but did not shoot down any aircraft, although Johnson had two unconfirmed victories. Neither began scoring officially until they started flying P-38s in other Pacific theatres (McGuire was KIA in the Philippines in early 1945). The Canadians claimed but one air-to-air kill in the Aleutians, a Rufe that fell to Squadron Leader Ken Boomer's P-40K in September 1942.

It is unfortunate that the Aleutians campaign is not very well known, because it was one of the more fascinating episodes in

the history of World War Two. This game was designed to convey the unique flavor of the campaign—the appalling weather, the limited resources available to the combatants, the slow but steady American advance down the island chain, and the inexhaustible capacity of the Kiska garrison to absorb the punishment of a seemingly endless series of air raids—without becoming static or repetitive. It is hoped that Down in Flames players will find it both fun and challenging. The designer certainly enjoyed researching and creating it.

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**CAMPAIGN COMPONENTS** In addition to the campaign sheet accompanying this article, players will need aircraft, targets, and other components from both Zero! and Corsairs & Hellcats to play this campaign. The campaign also makes use of the *Radar Station* target from The Rise of the Luftwaffe. This target was reprinted in C3i Nr15. If it is not available, substitute the *Seaplane Base* target (4B) instead.

**CAMPAIGN RULES**  
The Aleutians campaign is played according to standard DiF Series rules (as presented in Zero! and Corsairs & Hellcats) with the following additions. There are new resources and a new Target System (Island Outpost) as well.

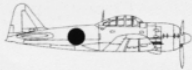
**Special Attu/Kiska Target Rules**  
Various Japanese target types on Attu and Kiska have special attributes.

1. The Supply Center and Ground Forces targets (part of the ISLAND OUTPOST Target System) are all dug in: all Bomb damage is reduced by one point per draw (minimum 1 point); strafing is unaffected.
2. The Airfield is incomplete: All bomb damage increased by one point per card draw; strafing is unaffected.
3. The Freighter (part of the HARBOR Target System) is at anchor. The penalty for bombing naval targets [21.63] does not apply and torpedoes may not be used.

**Variable mission aircraft**  
Several of the missions on the target matrices list Mission aircraft by generic type (i.e., Heavy Bomber). Use the following charts to determine the actual aircraft involved. Note that the Medium Bombers are determined by the phase of the campaign being played; all other types are determined by a card draw.

# DiF Series: *Struggle for the Aleutians*

## FOOTNOTE: The Aleutian Zero



The Japanese paid a higher price for their Aleutian adventure than might be realized. The material cost of the campaign – the men, time, effort, and equipment lost in the Aleutians – is fairly apparent. But the Japanese also suffered intangible losses, the value of which is more difficult to calculate. The forces assigned to the Alaskan invasion could have been put to better use at Midway (despite having broken the Japanese codes, the Americans still required a lot of luck to win), the battle that represented the end of Japanese expansion in the Pacific War. And by invading the Aleutians, the Japanese drew American attention to the possibility of operating in the area. But the most substantial loss – comparable to the debacle at Midway in its significance, in the opinion of one Japanese writer – was the forfeiture of the myth and mystique that surrounded the Mitsubishi A6M Zero.

It must be remembered that before the war Europeans and Americans had dismissed the products of the Japanese aircraft industry as inferior imitations of western designs. The appearance of the A6M2 in the early days of the Pacific war came as quite a shock to the Allies. The nimble and long-ranged Zero was a thoroughly modern airplane and easily bested the most advanced western aircraft it encountered, such as the Curtiss P-40 Warhawk, the Hawker Hurricane, and the Grumman F4F Wildcat.

By the time of the Battle of Midway, airmen such as Claire L. Chennault of the *Flying Tigers* and John S. Thach of the US Navy had identified some of the Zero's weaknesses and had developed tactics for exploiting them. But the A6M still ruled the skies over the Pacific. Such was its reputation that Allied airmen referred to any single-engined Japanese fighter as a "Zero" – even in China and Burma, where the IJN, the sole user of the A6M, did not venture.

The Japanese lost only one Mitsubishi A6M2 Zero during the Aleutians campaign. The light bombers on the Dutch Harbor raid of 4 June 1942 were accompanied by a handful of Zeros from the *Ryujo*. Encountering little aerial opposition, the Zero pilots decided to strafe some of the harbor facilities. Three machines, including one flown by Flight Petty Officer Tadayoshi Koga, attacked the docks and an anchored PBY.

Koga's airplane was struck by a bullet that severed a fuel or oil line. Alerted by his wingmen that he was losing fluid, Koga checked his instruments and decided that he could not reach the carrier. He and his companions set course to Akutan Island, a few miles east of Unalaska, a pre-arranged area for emergency landings. There they found a likely looking meadow. Indeed, the field appeared so well suited for landing – spacious, flat, and seemingly firm – that Koga elected to make a wheels-down landing. He lowered his landing gear and flaps, opened his cockpit canopy, and raised his seat for better visibility.

The area was muskeg; the high grass in the field hid the soft marshy ground beneath. The Zero touched down and immediately flipped over. Koga was killed instantly. His squadron mates circled the aircraft looking for signs of life but soon accepted that Koga had died in the crash. They returned to the *Ryujo* to report the loss. The aircraft was described as "unsalvageable."

On 10 July 1942, over a month after the Dutch Harbor raids, a PBY crew flying a routine patrol over Akutan spotted Koga's Zero. They completed the mission and reported their find. Their superiors were not very interested, but the PBY's pilot insisted that an attempt be made to recover the wreck.

The salvage team sent to Akutan discovered that the Zero was almost intact. Its landing gear had been torn off and its propeller and vertical stabilizer were damaged, but most of the rest of the airframe was in remarkably good condition. Koga's remains were buried and his aircraft was placed on a barge and shipped to San Diego. There it was restored to flying condition.

The Zero was immediately tested against every fighter in American inventory. Mock combats soon revealed the type's strengths and weaknesses, confirming what Allied airmen in the field had long suspected about the type's performance. It was agile, long-ranged, and climbed quickly, but was lightly built (no armor or self-sealing fuel tanks), rolled poorly at high speeds, and could not perform sustained negative-g maneuvers. Airmen throughout the Pacific were instructed how best to fight the Zero based on tactics developed by pilots who flew against Koga's Zeke (the system of using personal names to identify Japanese aircraft, developed by an American in the southwest Pacific in mid-1942, was not widely used in other theatres for another year) in dogfights over California.

It has often been asserted that the Grumman F6F Hellcat was specifically designed to counter the Zero, based upon information gleaned from Koga's machine. This is not true. The aircraft that eventually bested the Zero – the Hellcat, the Vought F4U Corsair, and others – were all flying in prototype form by the time Koga's Zero was recovered. But the Akutan Zero, as the machine became known, provided the Allies their first opportunity to test the type under controlled conditions.

Koga's Zero was destroyed in February 1945 in an accident. A Curtiss SB2C Helldiver overran it while taxiing, chopping it to pieces with up with its propeller. The badly damaged Zeke had to be scrapped. Only a few parts were kept, most ending up in museums.

There is an interesting twist in the tale of the Akutan Zero. Tadayoshi Koga had a reputation for hating Americans. He would not have been pleased to learn how he had aided their war efforts. Nor would he have been happy to learn how his story intersected that of a famous American. Before it was destroyed, Koga's Zero was featured in a short training film called "The Identification of the Zero." In the movie, a young pilot mistakes a friendly P-40 for a Zeke and nearly shoots it down. He quickly learns how to identify a Reisen in the air by studying film footage and photographs of the Akutan Zero and returns to combat to score a victory over the agile A6M2. The role of the pilot was played by a relatively unknown actor who went on to achieve success in other endeavors – a fellow named Ronald Reagan.

### MEDIUM BOMBER CHART

Phase	Aircraft
Summer-Fall 1942	2 B-26B
Wntr '42- Sprg '43	2 B-25D
Summer 1943	2 B-25D

### HEAVY BOMBER CHART

Draw random Action Card	
Color	Aircraft
Red	2 B-24D
Blue	2 B-17E
White	1 B-24D and 1 B-17E

USAAF BOMBER chart	
Draw random Action Card	
Color	Aircraft
Red	2 B-24D
Blue	2 B-25D
White	2 B-17E

RYUJO AIR GROUP	
Draw random Action Card	
Color	Aircraft
Red	L/W B5N, L/W D3A
Blue	L/W B5N
White	L/W D3A

### Mountainous Terrain

Certain targets in the mission matrix are identified as being in Mountainous Terrain. When attacking such a target, draw one Action card at the beginning of each turn of the Over the Target phase for each aircraft (both attackers and defenders) at Very Low

Altitude. If a white-bordered card is drawn the aircraft is destroyed. Players do not gain VP for enemy aircraft destroyed as a result of terrain collisions.

# Zero! and Corsairs & Hellcats Campaign

## Weather

This rule does not apply to the Dutch Harbor phase of the Dutch Harbor/Kiska Blitz campaign (the weather was a minor factor during the raids). Before the target is determined at the beginning of each mission, draw an Action card and refer to its color to determine weather conditions for the mission. Cross-reference the card with the Normal Weather table. Weather conditions affect play as noted.

Note that in the Winter 1942-Spring 1943 phase of the Aleutians campaign, read one line below the line for the card drawn for all missions. The "Severe Weather" resource requires players to use the Severe Weather chart in lieu of the Normal Weather chart.

## NORMAL WEATHER TABLE

(Use for all missions except when directed otherwise) Read one line below the line for the card drawn for all missions during Winter 1942-Spring 1943

Card drawn	Weather	Effect
Red	Clear	None
Blue	Undercast	Reduce each Medium or Heavy Bomber's Bomb cards by one.
White	Overcast	Starting altitude for all formation aircraft reduced by one level (minimum Very Low). Target-Bound phase increased by one turn.
One below White	Headwinds	Add three turns to the Target-Bound Phase. Remove all Allied single-engined fighters (Kittyhawk I, P-40E, P-39K) from mission.

## SEVERE WEATHER TABLE

(Use when directed to by resource) Read one line below the line for the card drawn for all missions during Winter 1942-Spring 1943

Card drawn	Weather	Effect
Red	Fog over Target	Reduce each medium or heavy Bomber's Bomb cards by two. Strafing prohibited.
Blue	Icing Conditions	At beginning of Target-Bound phase, draw one random action card per attacking aircraft and refer to color. Blue indicates aircraft aborts and is removed from mission.
White	Williwaws	Turret Support rating for all formation aircraft reduced by one. Does not apply to aircraft that are out of formation due to damage. Target-Bound phase increased by one turn.
One below White	Fog over Base	At end of Home-Bound phase, draw one random action card per attacking aircraft and refer to color. White indicates aircraft destroyed. Blue indicates aircraft destroyed only if it was already damaged. Attacking player forfeits 10 VP per aircraft lost.

## NEW RESOURCES

### Abysmal Weather

This mission cancelled. Resource selected by opponent expended.

### Aleutian Tigers

No effect if mission aircraft are American. Otherwise, American player receives L/W P-40E.

### Amchitka raid

May not be selected for last mission of phase. Disregard mission drawn, play mission B (L/W A6M2-N and one E1 3A, all carrying bombs, against an airfield) instead. If the airfield is not completely destroyed, the Allied player receives L/W P-39K for the next mission in addition to any other resource selected. Treat the A6M2Ns and the E13A as light bombers for VP purposes.

### Betty raid

Disregard mission drawn, play mission C (four G4M1 Betty bombers carrying bombs against a target selected from the CONVOY Target System) instead.

### Choppy Seas

Negates effect of "Floatplane Interceptors" resource.

### DR Bombing

Disregard effects of "Undercast" weather condition, except for naval targets.

### XI Fighter Command

Draw one random action card, refer to color:

Color Aircraft  
 Red L/W P-38G  
 Blue L/W P-40E  
 White 2 L/W P-38G

### Floatplane Interceptors

Draw one random action card, refer to color:

Color Aircraft  
 Red L/W A6M2-N  
 Blue L/W F1M  
 White L/W A6M2-N, L/W F1M

### Juno Air Group

If mission aircraft are American, Japanese player receives 2 L/W A6M2 Zeros as resource aircraft. Otherwise, Japanese player receives L/W D3A Val, L/W B5N Kate, and L/W A6M2 Zero (all but the A6M2s carrying bombs) as resource aircraft.

### Kiska Blitz

Has effect only if target location is "Kiska." Add one PBY to attacking aircraft, unless mission aircraft are PBYS, in which case add one B-17E.

### Koga's Zero

No Japanese aircraft may "break off" during the Over the Target phase. Increase by one the number of Target Flak cards drawn. If an A6M2 Zero is destroyed during this mission, the Allied player is awarded an additional 25 VP.

### Low Ceiling

Opponent must remove all dive bombers (D3A) from mission. Affects both mission and resource aircraft.

### Mavis raid

Disregard mission drawn, play mission A (one H6K carrying bombs against a

freighter) instead. Treat the H6K as a medium bomber for VP purposes.

**Meteorological Flight**

Negates the effect of the "Severe Weather" resource.

**Naval Bombardment**

Disregard mission drawn and play mission B (L/W A6M2-N and one H6K, all carrying bombs, against a USN cruiser) instead. If the Japanese player selects the "Floatplane Interceptors" resource, he receives L/W F1M as well.

**Old Seventy**

Add one B-17D to the Mission aircraft.



**Pre-Invasion Bombardment**

Draw one extra bomb card for each bombing aircraft to represent effect of pre-invasion naval bombardment.

**Radar Bombing**

Disregard effects of "Undercast" and/or "Fog over Target" weather conditions.

**Search for IJN Fleet**

Disregard mission drawn, play Mission 4 (one PBY on Patrol) instead. Opponent receives L/W A6M2 in lieu of the resource he selected. Result of this mission may generate a second mission. If the PBY survives the Patrol, draw a random Action Card to determine whether a second mission will be played, and if so, which one. Cross-reference color of card with appropriate target matrix (chart below) for result of first mission. If the PBY was damaged, read one column to left of that for patrol mission result.

	One Left of Miss	Miss	Hit	Direct	Vital
Red	No Mission	No Mission	Freighter	Destroyer	Cruiser
Blue	No Mission	Freighter	Destroyer	Cruiser	Light Carrier
White	Freighter	Destroyer	Cruiser	Light Carrier	Fleet Carrier

All missions have 9 Target-Bound turns, 8 Home-Bound turns. The Japanese player receives 2 L/W A6M2. American player receives 2 B-17E carrying bombs at Low altitude and 2 B-26B carrying torpedoes at Very Low altitude. No resources may be selected for mission.

**Severe Weather**

Disregard the weather drawn for the mission. Draw again for weather using the Severe Weather chart. Remember to read one line below the line for the card drawn for all missions during Winter'42—Spring'43 phase of the Aleutians campaign.

**Sitting Duck**

Your opponent receives the aircraft listed in parentheses, at the altitude indicated.

**Storm Front**

No effect if mission aircraft are American. Otherwise, negates effect of "Junyo Air Group" resource.

**USS Gillis raid**

Disregard mission drawn, play mission A (one H6K carrying bombs against a freighter) instead. Treat H6K a medium bomber for VP calculations.

**Veteran Aircrews**

Treat all non-skilled light bomber pilots as having the "B" skill.

**C3i Magazine Feedback Questions**  
Issue Nr.16, 2005

After you've finished reading this issue, read the Feedback questions below, and send me your answers, and any *comments or suggestions* you might have, to [rbmstudio@aol.com](mailto:rbmstudio@aol.com). Or send a postcard. Or *photocopy this page* and send to:

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**Questions 1 through 16** ask you to rate this issue, its articles, and graphics ( 0 = no opinion; 1 = poor -to- 5 = excellent ).

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. From the Editor's Desk **RBM**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Mercenary: 1st Punic War **SPQR**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Peace, Land, and Bread **REDS!**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. If not us, then who? **REDS!**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Ancient World **Rise of Roman Rep.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. *Churubusco* Battle INSERT **Gringo!**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. A Back Hander **Von Mansteins BB**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Ruin of the Reich **Europe Engulfed**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. A Perspective **June 6**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Struggle for Aleutians **Zero!/C&H**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Battle of Bismarck Sea **Zero!/C&H**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Marshall Islands Campaign **Zero!**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. INSERT: *DiF Series* Aircraft Cards
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. INSERT: **C3i Nr.16** Countersheet
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. This Issue Overall
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. Graphic Design of Issue Overall

**C3i Magazine Poll:** Please list your "Top Ten" favorite games published by GMT Games LLC.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.



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