



# *Bywater's War:* *Pacific Navies Between 1922 - 1939*

*Robert Eldridge*

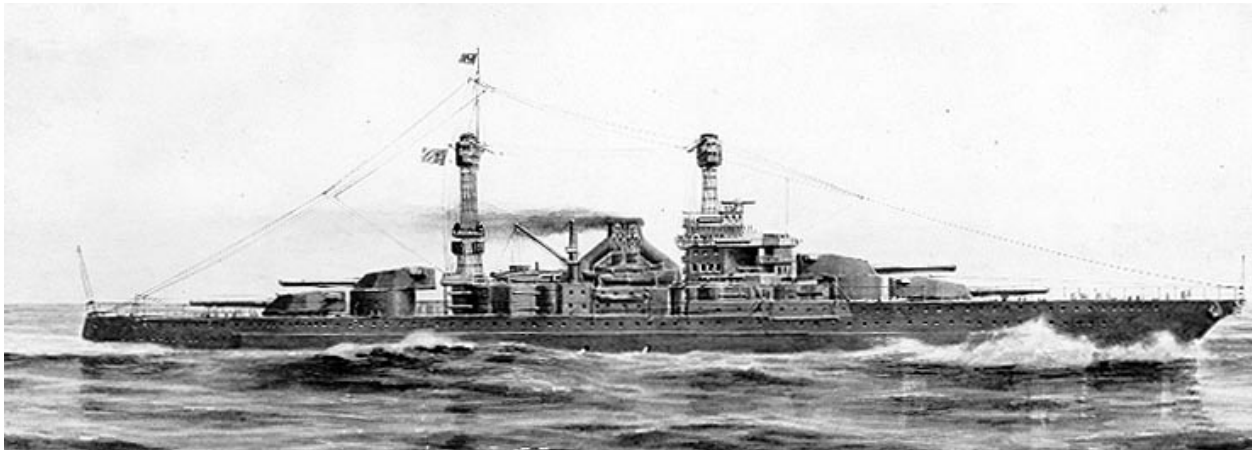
*Historicon 2012*

*Admiralty Trilogy Seminar*



# Overview

- ◆ **Historical Background** – a discussion of the state of the Pacific navies from 1922 – 1938 and the influence of politics on their development
- ◆ **Bywater's “*The Great Pacific War*”** – a novel about a large scale naval war between the U.S. and Imperial Japan
- ◆ **Other Pacific Wars** – a look at some alternative possibilities for conflict in the Pacific between the two world wars
- ◆ ***Bywater's War* supplement discussion**

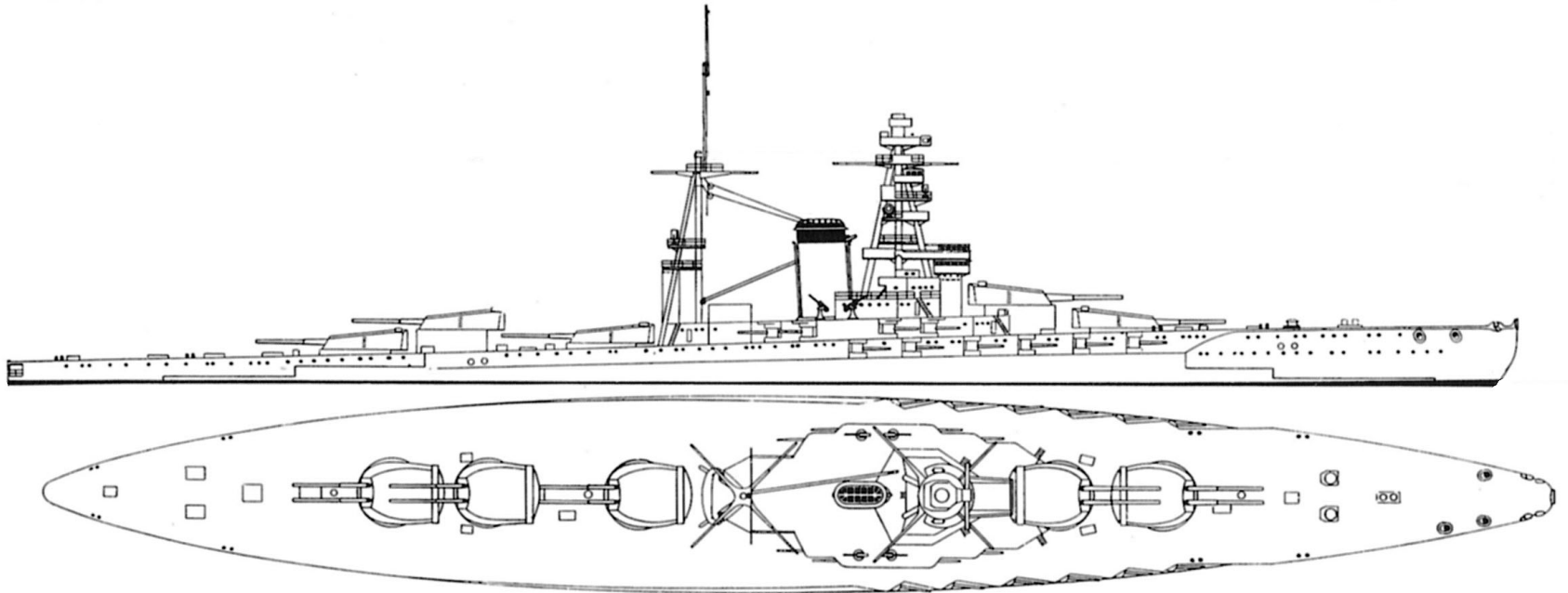


*South Dakota  
Class Battleship*



# The Pacific Navies in 1922

- ◆ **The Japanese 8 – 8 Plan**
- ◆ **The American 1916 Naval Defense Act and subsequent plans**
- ◆ **Plans for a U.S. fleet base at Guam**



*Kaga Class Battleship*



# Naval Limitations

## The Washington Treaty of 1922

- ◆ **Imposed a ten year holiday on capital ship construction**
  - Some battleships on the ways were completed, some were converted to aircraft carriers
- ◆ **Limited future battleships to 35,000 tons and 16-inch guns**
- ◆ **Limited cruisers to 10,000 tons and 8-inch guns**
- ◆ **Froze base construction and fortifications in the Pacific**



*Lexington Class Battlecruiser and Aircraft Carrier Models*



# More Limits

## London Naval Treaty of 1930

- ◆ Placed limits on the numbers of 8-inch gun cruisers
- ◆ Limited future cruisers to 6-inch guns
- ◆ Placed tonnage limits on destroyers and submarines
- ◆ France and Italy *did not* participate

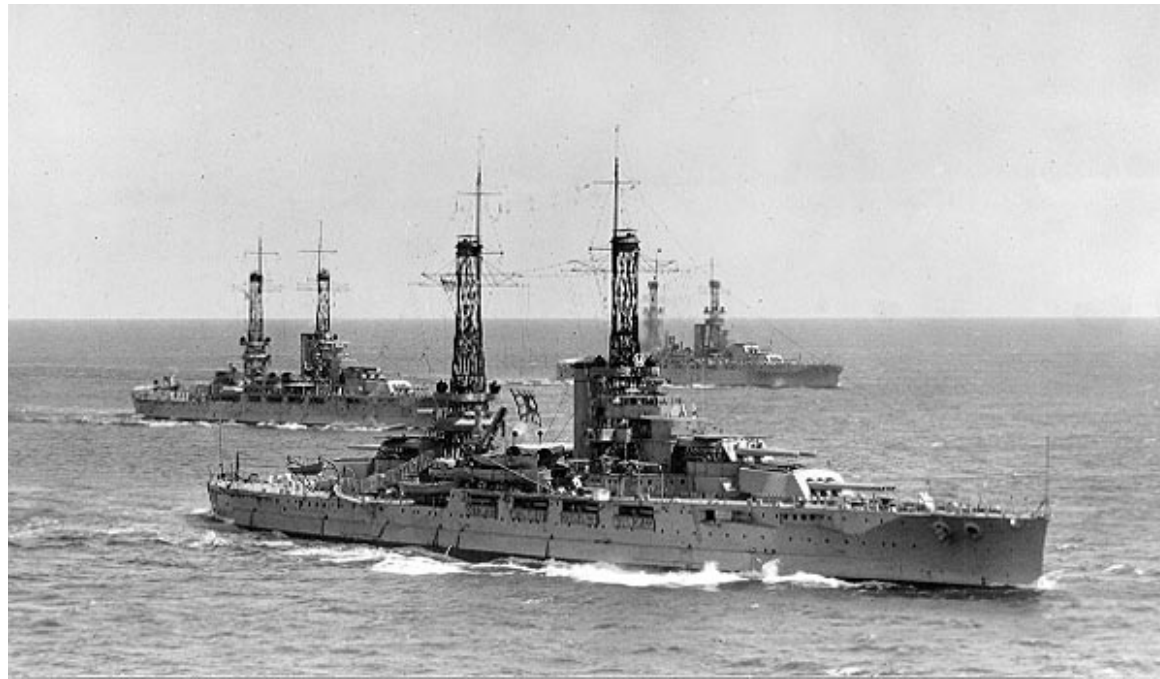


*Furutaka Class Treaty Cruiser*



# The United States Fleet

- ◆ Created in 1922 by combining the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets into a single operational entity
- ◆ The Asiatic Fleet and the Special Service Squadron remained independent
- ◆ Battle Fleet originally based in the Pacific, Scouting Fleet based in the Atlantic
  - Scouting Fleet moved to the Pacific in 1932

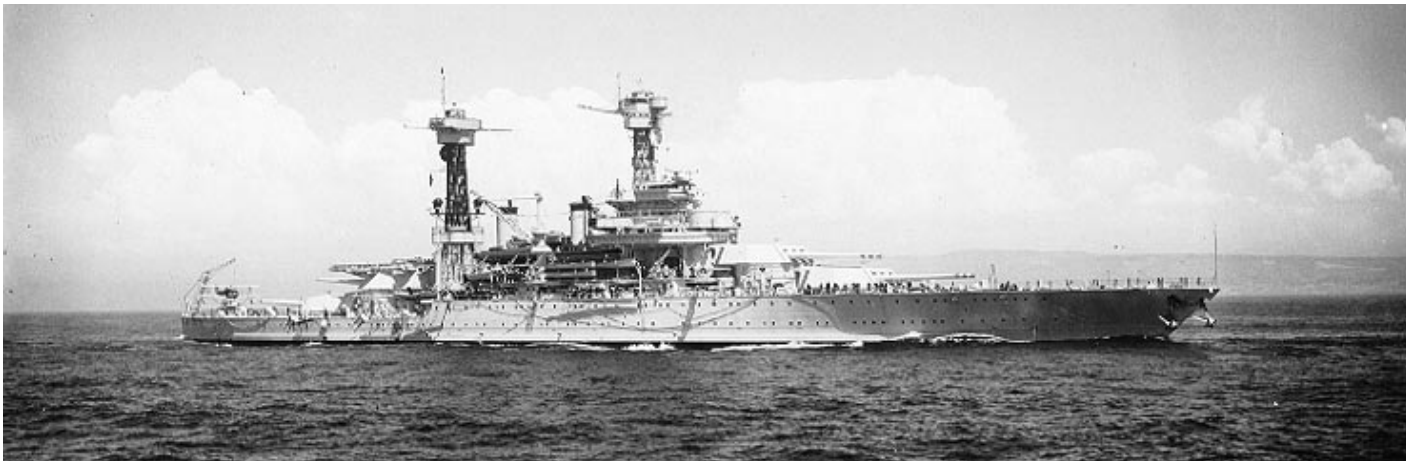


*U.S. Navy Battleships*



# Organization of the United States Fleet

- ◆ **Battle Force (Battle Fleet until 1930)**
- ◆ **Scouting Force (Scouting Fleet until 1930)**
- ◆ **Control Force (abolished in 1931)**
- ◆ **Base Force**
- ◆ **Submarine Force (from 1930, previously independent)**
- ◆ **Parallel structure of “type” commands for training and technical issues**



*USS California*



# Japanese Combined Fleet

- ◆ **Not permanently established until 1924**
- ◆ **Did not have its own HQ staff until 1933**
- ◆ **Originally consisted of the First (Battle) and Second (Scouting) Fleets**
- ◆ **Number of Fleets expanded as situation with China worsened**
- ◆ **First Air Fleet not formed until 1941**



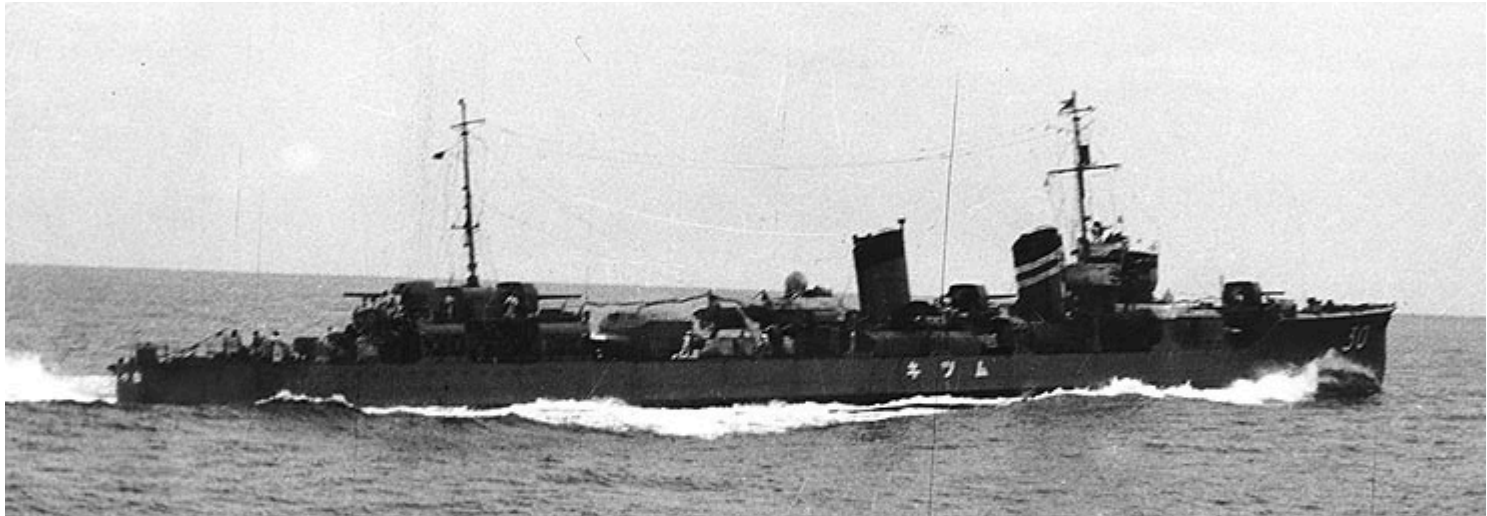
*Akagi Class Aircraft Carrier*





# Organization of the Combined Fleet

- ◆ Each fleet contained multiple *Sentai*
- ◆ Unlike other navies, *Sentai* are numbered sequentially, not differentiated by type, although certain numbers are reserved for certain classes of ships
- ◆ Each fleet included one or more destroyer squadrons, submarine squadrons, and carrier divisions

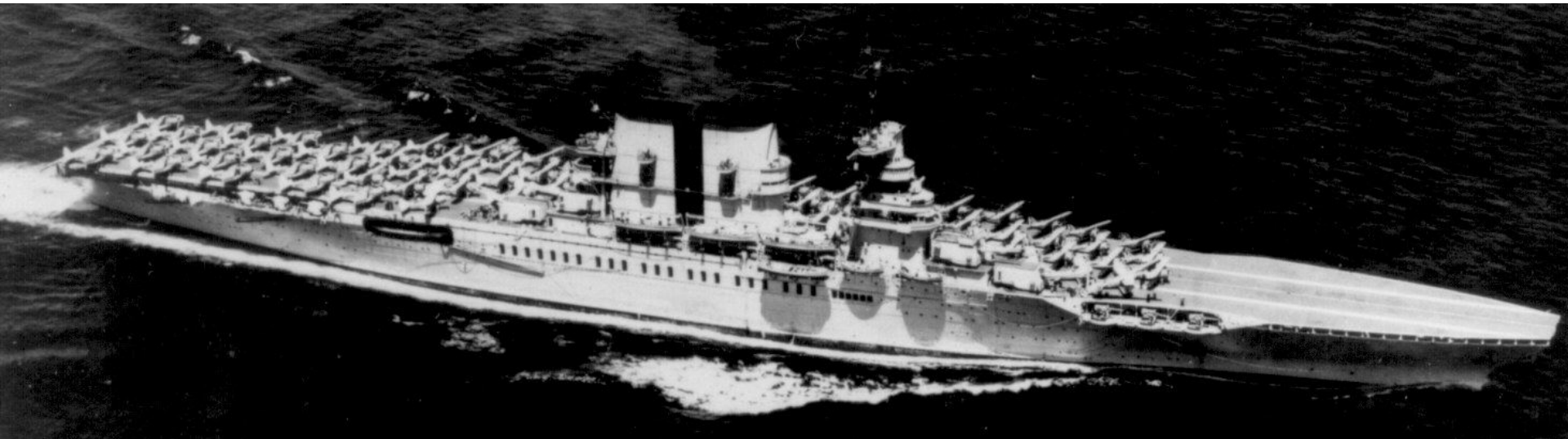


*Mutsuki Class Destroyer*



# Technical Trends Between the Wars

- ◆ **Overriding influence of treaty restrictions**
- ◆ **Limitation on battleships meant increased emphasis on cruisers**
- ◆ **Development of naval aviation enhanced by the presence of big carriers**
- ◆ **Experiments with rigid airships and land-based aircraft**
- ◆ **Emphasis on increased operational radius for submarines**

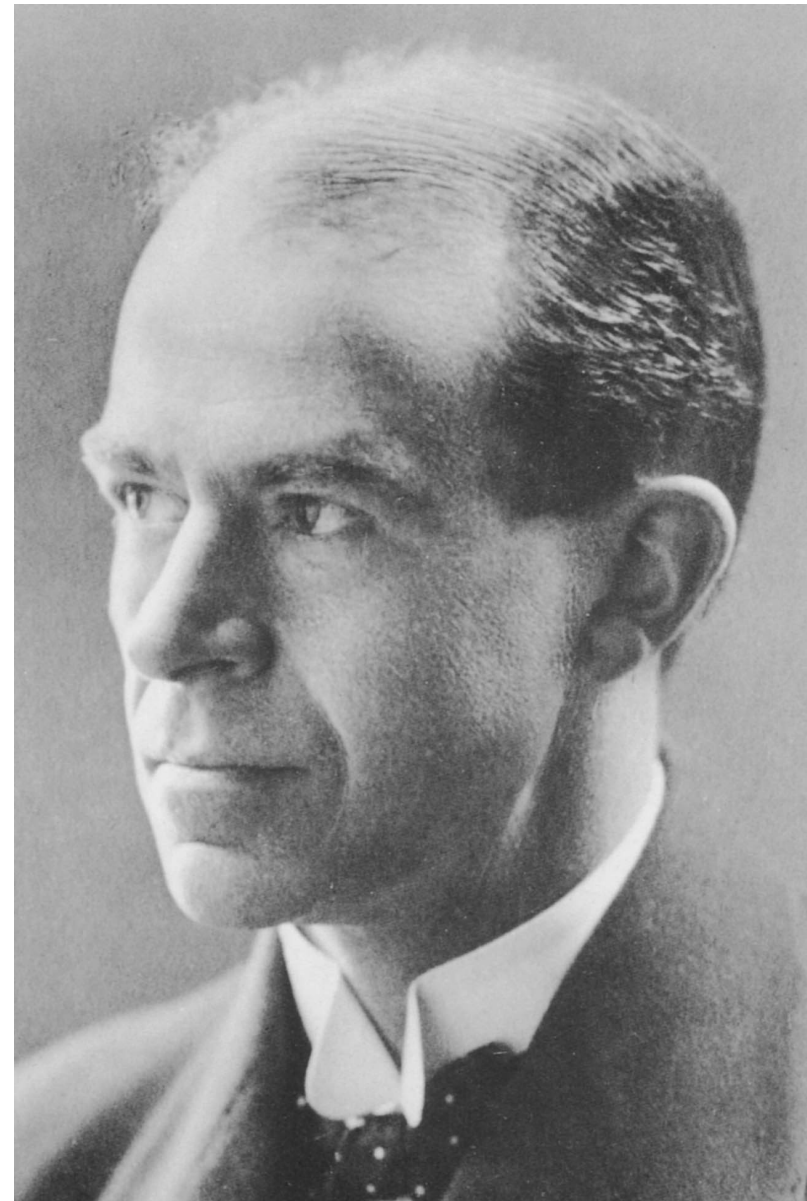


*USS Saratoga*



# Who Was Hector C. Bywater?

- ◆ **Naval analyst, spy, journalist, and author**
  - **Extensive world-wide network of sources on naval matters**
- ◆ **Spied on German naval installations for the Admiralty before World War I**
- ◆ **Became well-known for his coverage of the 1922 Washington Conference**
- ◆ **Published his novel “*The Great Pacific War*” in 1925**
- ◆ **Died under questionable circumstances in 1940**





# Imagining a Pacific War

- ◆ **Bywater wrote his book after the Washington Treaty was signed, it was published in 1925**
- ◆ **Bywater did not foresee many developments like the 1925 treaty that outlawed poison gas and the 1930 London Treaty**
- ◆ **Bywater did correctly forecast the general outline of the Pacific War that actually occurred in 1941 – 45**
  - **Surprise attack by Japan**
  - **U.S. island hopping campaign**
  - **Under appreciated the role of airpower**
    - **Understandable in 1925**



# Bywater's Great Pacific War

- ◆ **Begins in 1931 with a surprise Japanese attack with a suicide freighter that blocks the Panama Canal**
- ◆ **Small U.S. Asiatic fleet is destroyed and Philippines quickly conquered**
- ◆ **Guam falls after a heroic and prolonged defense**
- ◆ **Japanese submarines and aircraft raid the Pacific Coast of the U.S.**



# Bywater's Great Pacific War (Part 2)

- ◆ **The U.S. Scouting Fleet is attacked by Japanese submarines as it rounds Cape Horn**
- ◆ **An American attempt to attack the Bonins is repulsed with heavy losses**
- ◆ **A Japanese expedition against Samoa is destroyed, providing the first U.S. victory of the war**
- ◆ **The Americans advance and seize Truk as an advanced base**

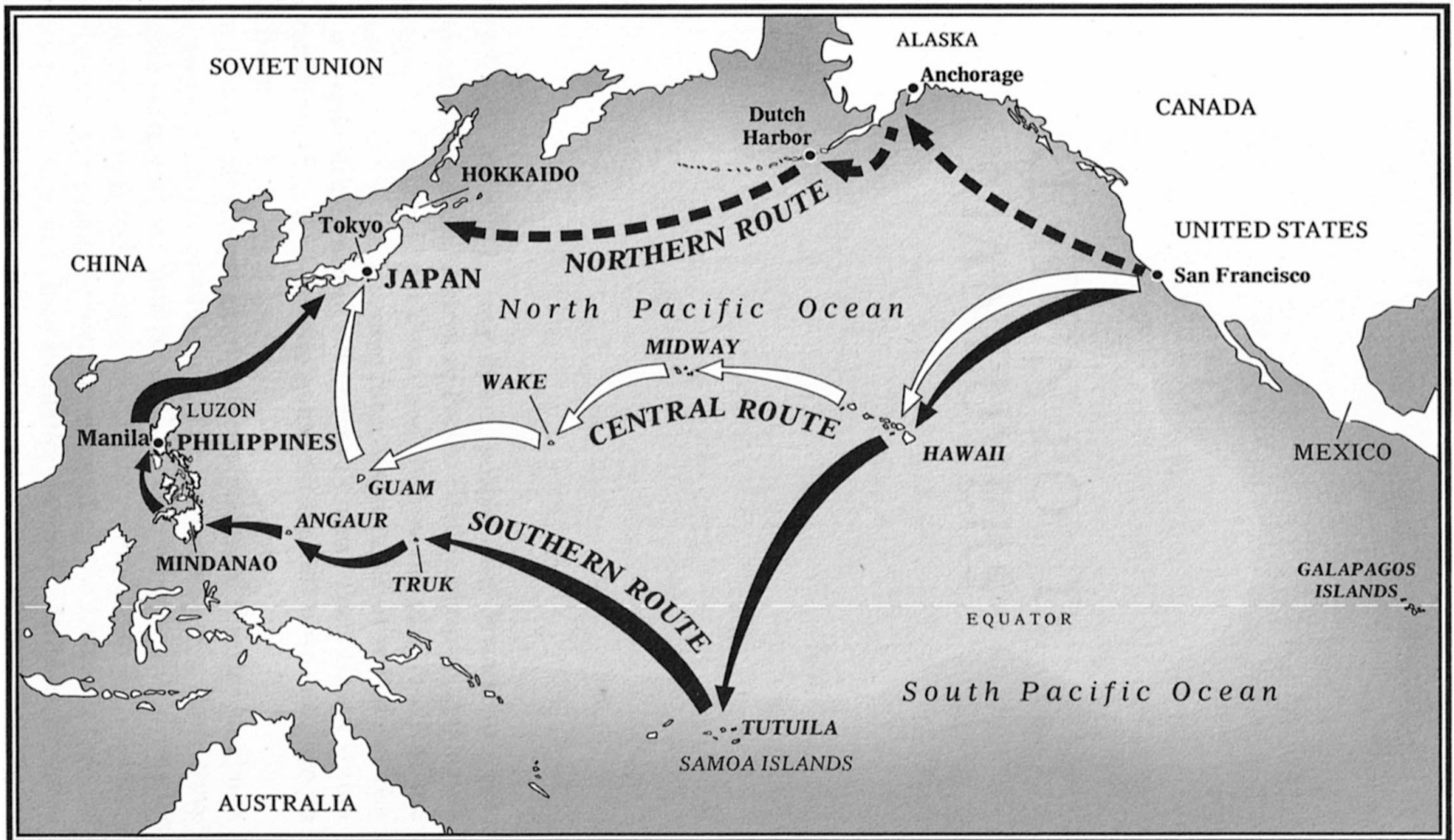


# Bywater's Great Pacific War (Part 3)

- ◆ **The Americans use dummy battleships to deceive the Japanese**
- ◆ **The Japanese sortie to attack the U.S. dummy fleet off Yap, only to find themselves cut off from their base by the real U.S. Fleet**
- ◆ **The United States wins the climatic battle off the island of Yap, sinking five Japanese capital ships while losing only two**



# Bywater vs War Plan Orange

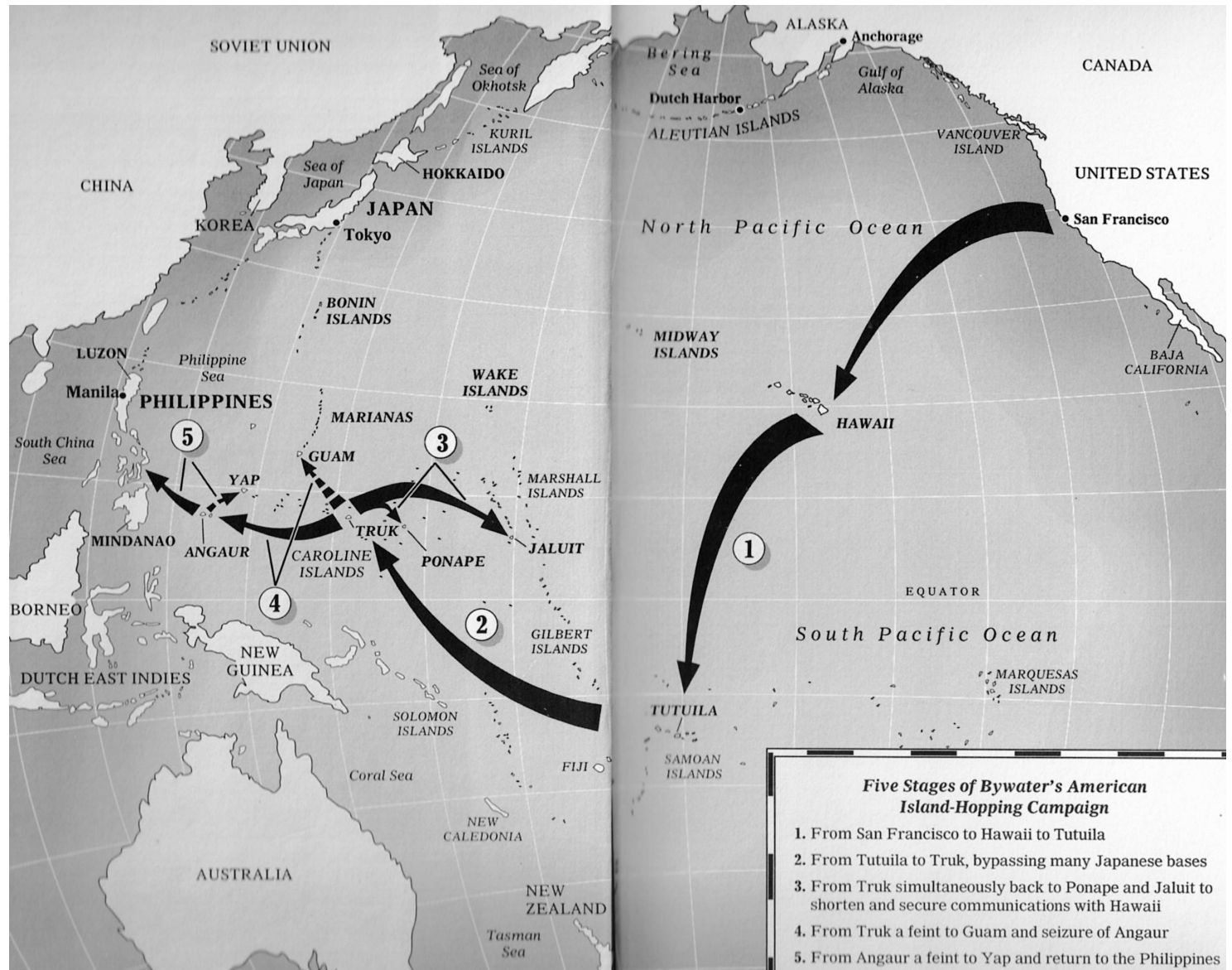


*Possible avenues of attack by the U.S. Navy in Bywater's "The Great Pacific War"*





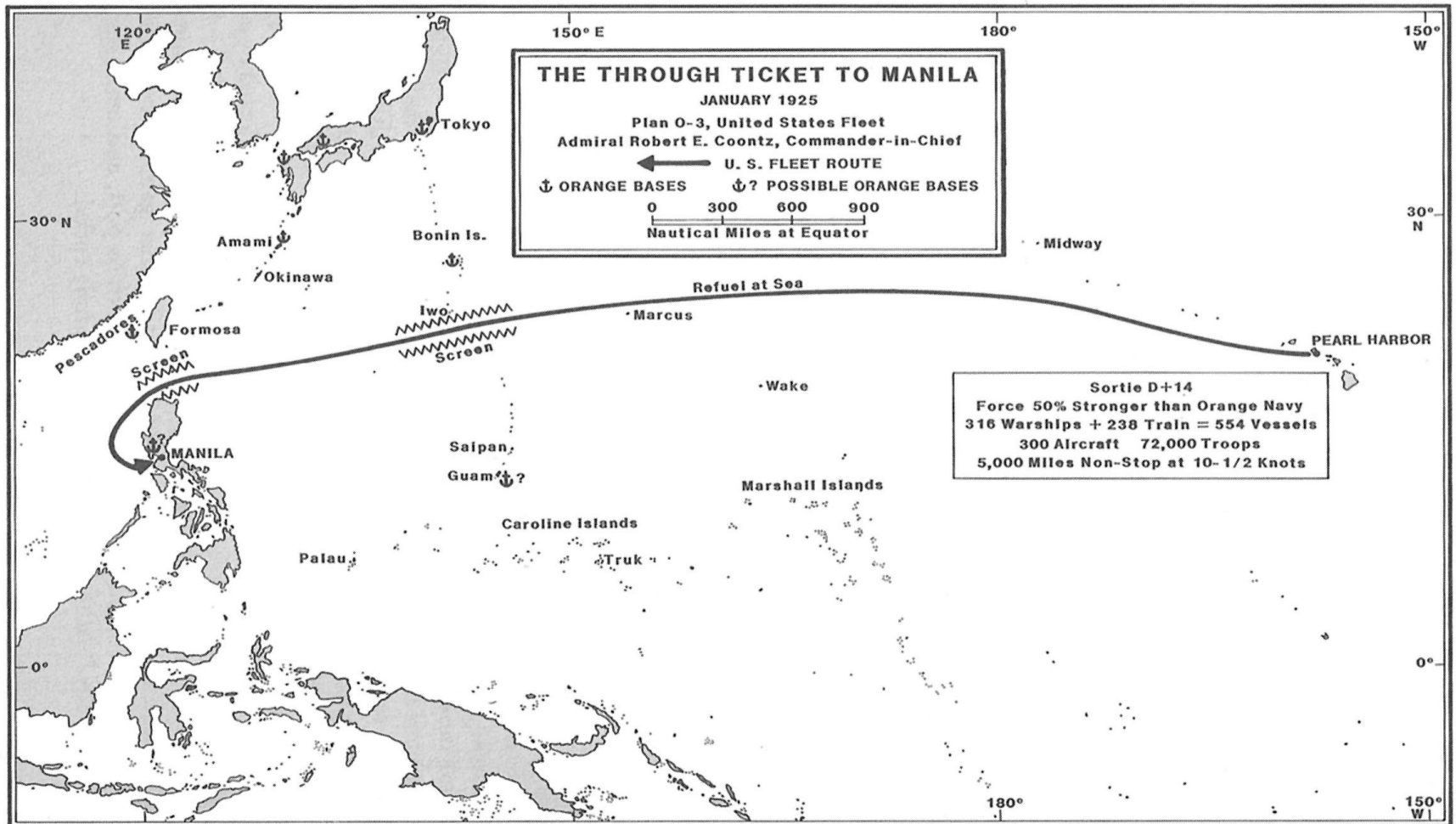
# Bywater vs War Plan Orange



Route taken by U.S. Navy in "The Great Pacific War"



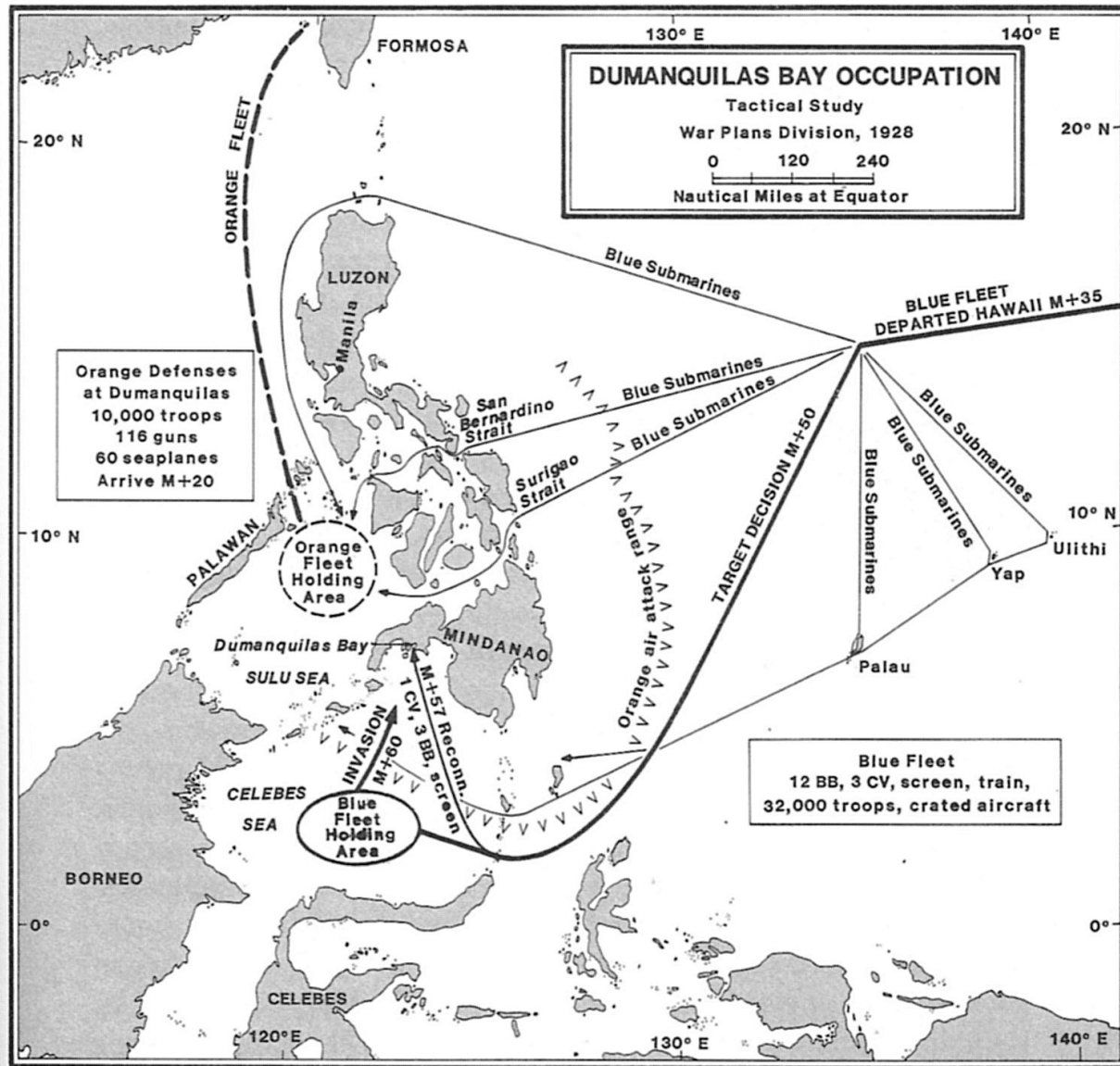
# Bywater vs War Plan Orange



War Plan Orange, "Through Ticket" in 1925 – Central Route



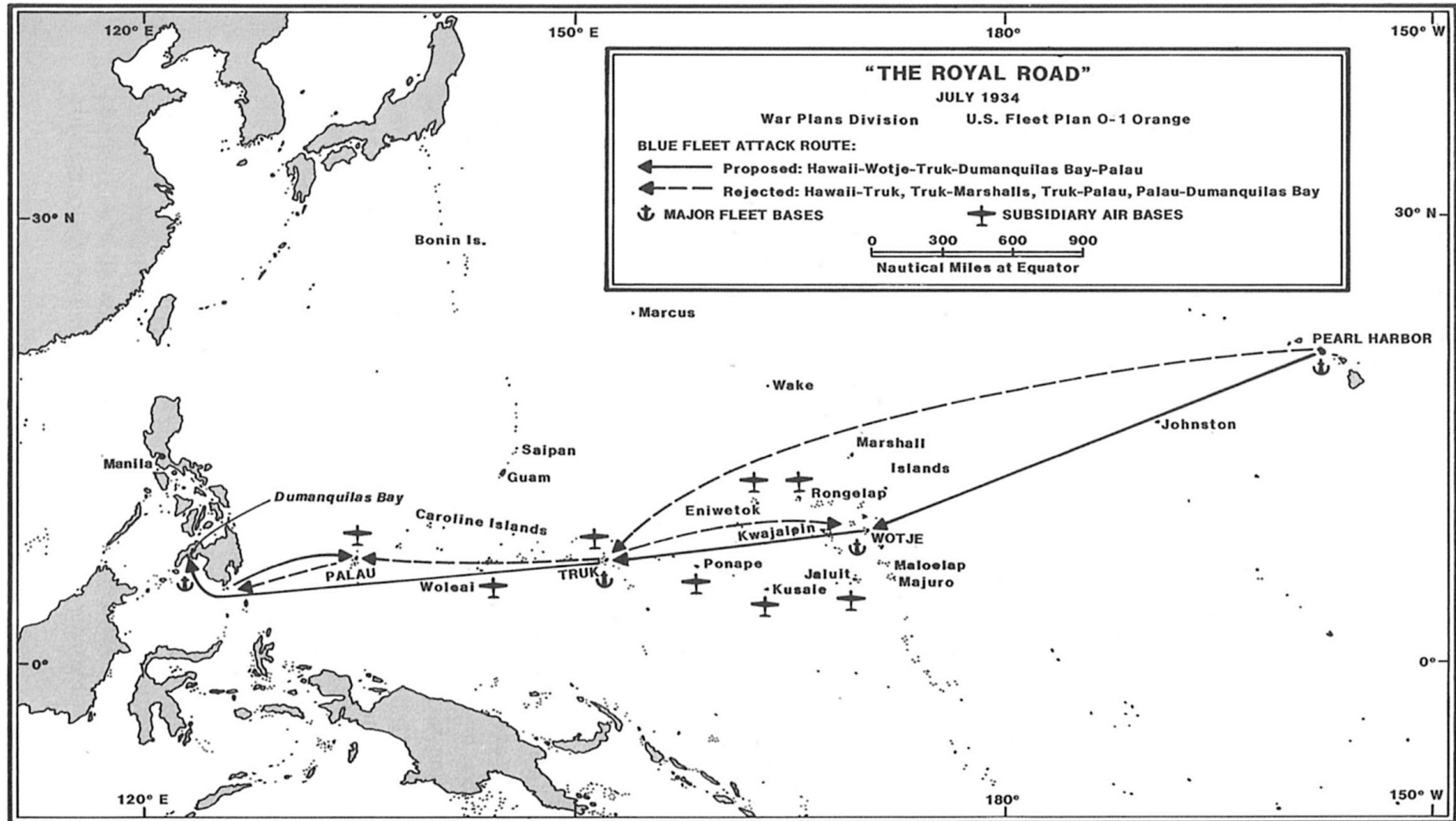
# Bywater vs War Plan Orange



Central role of the Philippines in War Plan Orange



# Bywater vs War Plan Orange



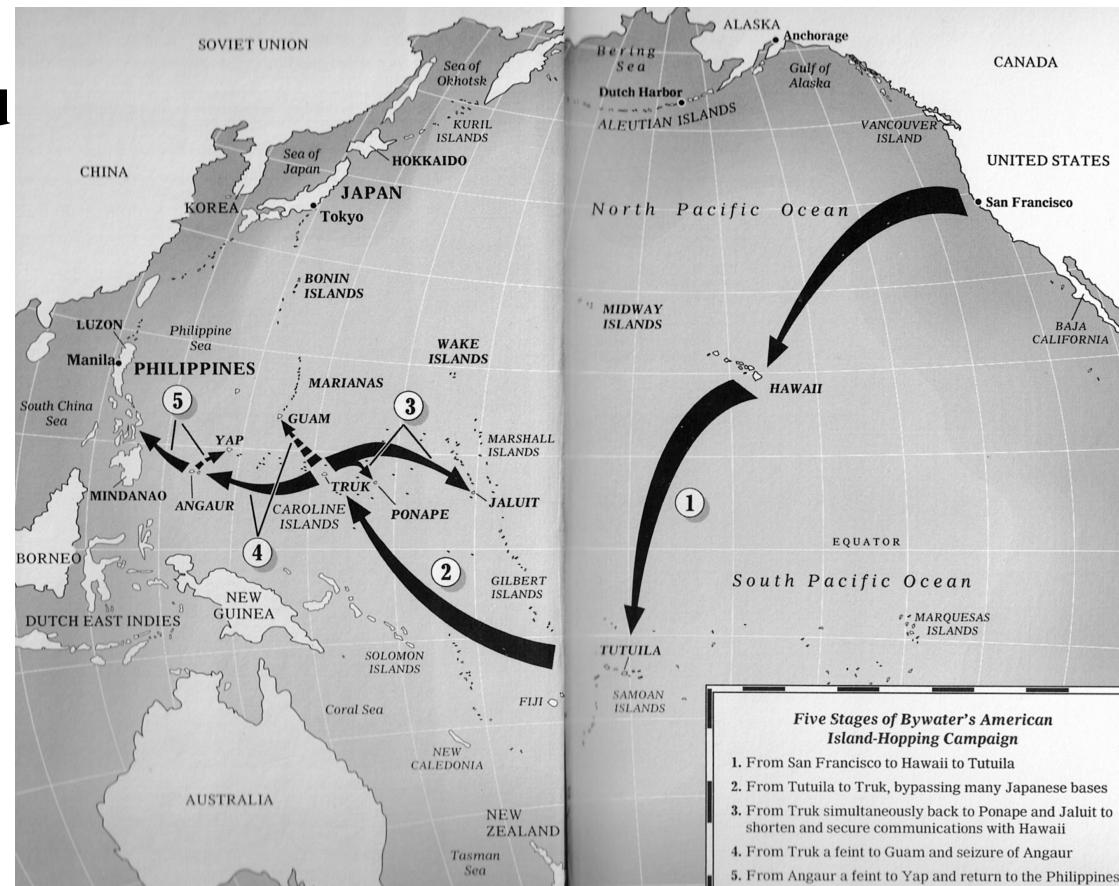
War Plan Orange, "The Royal Road" in 1934 – Southern Route



# Bywater vs War Plan Orange

## ◆ How much influence, if any, did Bywater have on U.S. Navy planners?

- War Plan Orange changed to a more southerly route by the mid-1930s
- Focus on Philippines and Guam as launch sites for attacks against Japan

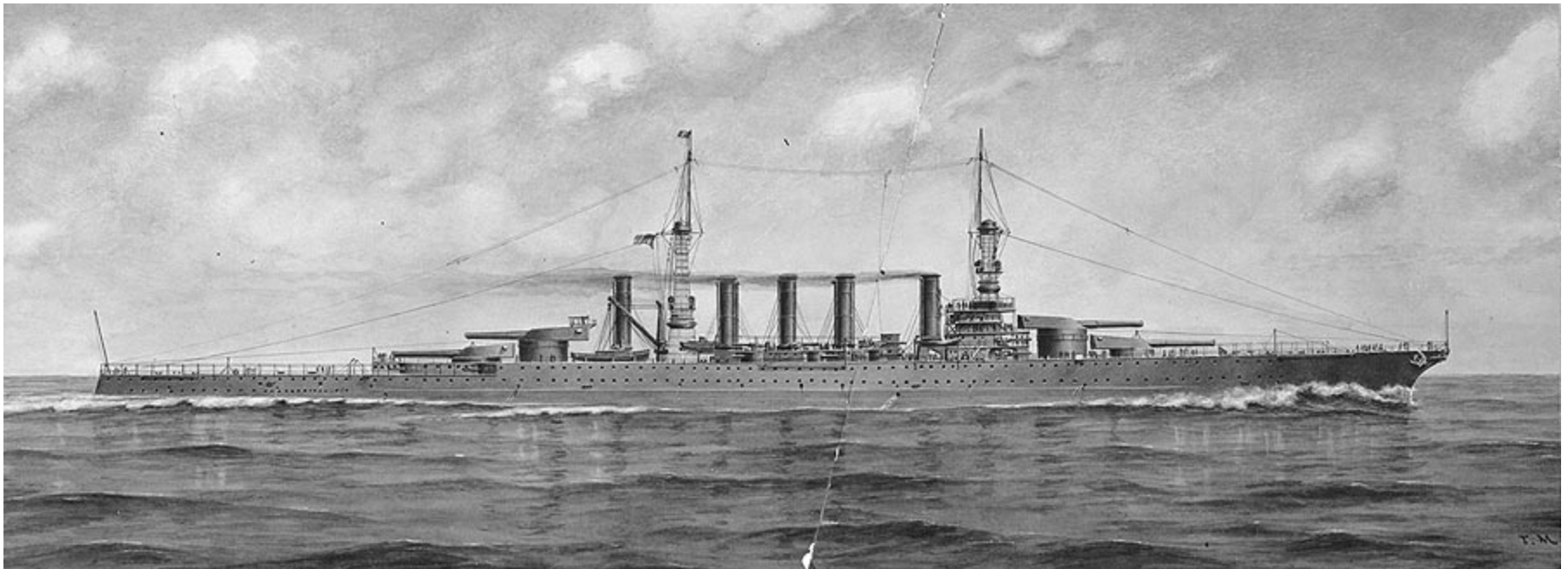


*Route taken by U.S. Navy in "The Great Pacific War"*



# Other Pacific Wars

- ◆ **What if the Washington Conference had failed?**
- ◆ **The Shanghai Incident of 1932**
- ◆ **The *Panay* Incident of 1937**



*Lexington Class Battlecruiser*



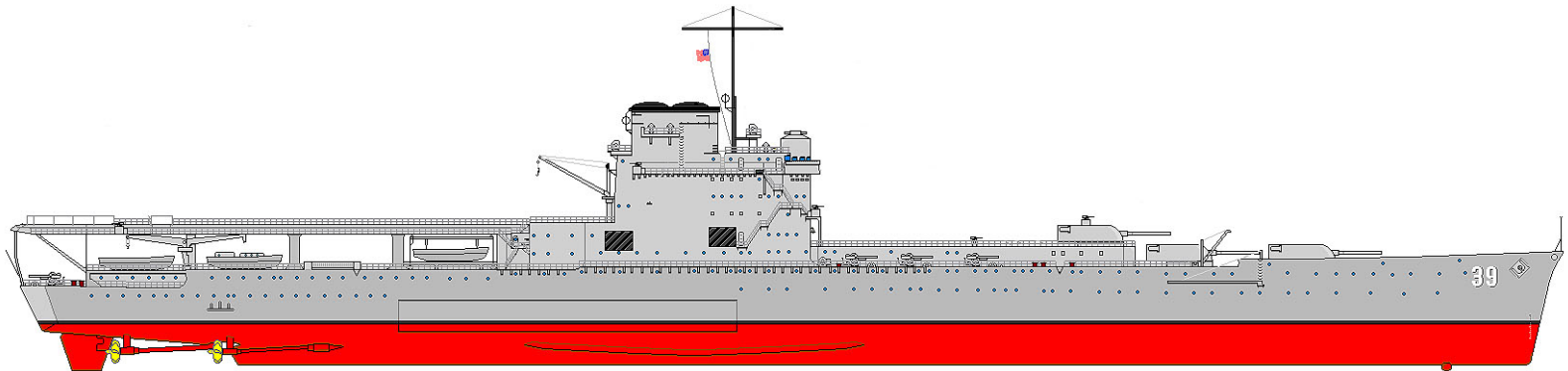
# Recommended Reading

- ◆ Hector C. Bywater, *The Great Pacific War*
- ◆ Hector C. Bywater, *Navies and Nations*
- ◆ Hector C. Bywater, *Sea-power in the Pacific*
- ◆ William H. Honan, *Visions of Infamy*
- ◆ John Jordan, *Warships After Washington*
- ◆ Edward S. Miller, *War Plan Orange*
- ◆ David C. Evans and Mark R. Peattie, *Kaigun*



# Bywater's War

- ◆ ***Command at Sea* supplement**
- ◆ **Thirteen scenarios depicting incidents from Bywater's novel, including the climactic Battle of Yap**
- ◆ **Six scenarios from a hypothetical 1926 war with no Washington Treaty, including many uncompleted U.S. and Japanese capital ships**
- ◆ **Three scenarios from a hypothetical 1932 war, including one with the airship *Akron***
- ◆ **Seven scenarios from a hypothetical 1939 war, including some with the hypothetical flight deck cruiser**



*U.S. Navy Flight-deck Cruiser Design*





# Questions

