



Adm William F Halsey

Commander of Task Force 38 and Third Fleet. The Philippine invasion disclosed 12 battleships, over 20 cruisers, over 15 aircraft carriers, 18 escort carriers, myriad destroyers and landing ships, protected by over 1000 aircraft. The Philippine campaign was long and extended into 1945. It will be covered in the next book. The naval battles of late Oct 1944-The Battle off Samar, The Battle of Cape Engaño, The Battle of Surigao, The Battle of Sibuyan Sea- will also be covered in detail next volume. The onslaught of something new: fiery Kamikaze attacks (bottom page 194.)



24th Inf Div



Eighth Army

They were reinforcing Leyte when the invasion broke. The first to return by ship to the Philippines were the 500 men of Company D, U.S. 6th Ranger Battalion, commanded by Colonel H.A. Mucci. They were loaded off Rear Admiral Oldendorf's advance force, which incidentally had the rough luck to run smack into a typhoon on October 16. The typhoons are called bagyós by Filipinos. Many on board ship had been seasick as the angry gray waters tossed them about. But the assaulting Ranger reaped a quiet, still night of October 17-18, and tore apart the Japanese radio-radar broadcasting stations at the entrances of Leyte. Not destroying them would have given the enemy time to signal the pre-arrival of the U.S. Navy and Royal Australian invasion forces.

About 15 miles east of Leyte Gulf, with lots of deadbeat time, around midnight the eve of the bombardment, the invasion convoy slowed to a minimum. (The only incident was when one GI accidentally fell overboard; he was later rescued after a brief search.)

The invasion fleet, totaling 750 vessels, silently waited off Leyte Gulf, some 600 miles above Morotai. By sunset of the nineteenth the main landing force stood poised at the entrance. The invasion convoy consisted of 420 transports. Three types of carriers were represented in U.S. attack forces: the escorts or baby flattops, the light carriers, and the big heavy carriers which weighed over 33,000 tons, each loaded with over 80 airplanes. Yet, this tonnage represented only a portion of the armada. Over 20 light and heavy carriers, forming part of the heavy Pacific Fleet that was dubbed Task Force 38 (or TF 58 depending on which admiral was in command) were out at sea, even farther away!

Bombardment of Leyte began at 7 a.m., on October 20, 1944—two months ahead of schedule—and reached its crescendo from 9 a.m. until about 10 a.m. with rocket barrage and high-level gunfire. At 9:43 eleven LCI rocket craft also began firing over ten thousand 4.5 inch rockets over the entire landing areas.

For two days the shores of the Philippines had been plastered by gun bombardment. This was joined by aerial bombardment, based on approximately 18 escort carriers.