After the Battle of Midway, Allied forces went on the attack. On August 7, 1942, U.S. Marines landed on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. For the next six months, with U.S. Navy and Army support, the Marines held their position against Japanese ground, air, and sea attacks. In February 1943, the Japanese abandoned both Guadalcanal and New Guinea.

As the war continued, Japan could not recover from the heavy losses it sustained. America’s wartime industry, however, kicked into high gear and was able to replace its losses. New navy vessels spearheaded the offensive that was launched in 1943. Using air and sea attacks, the Allied forces developed a new strategy. They skipped over locations where there was a large Japanese force and landed instead on islands where they could establish bases and launch the next westward-moving attack. The cut-off Japanese positions were allowed to “wither on the vine.”

This island-hopping strategy was used in the Gilbert Islands in November, the Marshall Islands in January 1944, the Caroline Islands in February, and the Mariana Islands in June. In October, American forces landed in the Philippines. By early 1945, Allied forces once again controlled sites in the Philippines that they had had to abandon in 1942.

The Japanese became desperate as Allied forces approached their homeland. From mid-February to the end of March, U.S. Marines fought fiercely.

U.S. Navy cryptographers also played a role. They broke the Japanese Navy’s code and discovered that Japan was planning to invade eastern New Guinea, a large island near Australia. Using this information, the U.S. Navy met the Japanese invasion force in the Battle of the Coral Sea (see page 16).

After Doolittle’s raid, the Japanese were determined to destroy the U.S. Pacific Fleet once and for all. The Japanese Navy crafted an elaborate plan to invade Midway Atoll, expecting to surprise the Americans as it had at Pearl Harbor. But U.S. cryptographers figured out the plan. The U.S. Navy was alerted, and the outcome of the battle that followed turned the tide of the war in the Pacific. ♦️

Cryptographers are people who are skilled at creating or studying secret writing or encoded messages.

In the end, Japan’s attack on U.S. territories awoke “a sleeping giant” as America began mass-producing war materials.
to gain control of the tiny island of Iwo Jima. On April 1, the Americans invaded the island of Okinawa, just 340 miles from the Japanese mainland. Japanese troops fought to the death rather than surrender. The loss of life on both sides in the Pacific was enormous.

The U.S. military prepared to invade Japan in November 1945. American attacks on Japanese cities increased, including firebombings of Tokyo that killed thousands of Japanese civilians.

On August 6, an atomic bomb dropped on the Japanese city of Hiroshima killed some 70,000 people. After the atomic bombing of Nagasaki three days later, Japan’s leaders realized that further resistance was useless.

On September 2, 1945, Japanese officials boarded the U.S. battleship Missouri in Tokyo Bay and signed a formal surrender agreement. The fighting in Europe had ended in May with the German surrender. World War II was finally over. —E.M.

The second bomb dropped on Japan on August 9, 1945, ended fighting in World War II.

CHECK OUT THE MAP ON PAGES 12–13.

THE REST OF THE STORY