

G U R P S[®]

WWII[™] Leyte Gulf

**AN e23 SOURCEBOOK
FOR GURPS[®] FROM
STEVE JACKSON GAMES
FOR 3 TO 6 PLAYERS**

By Vincent Cooper
Edited by Gene Seabolt
Maps by Ed Bourelle



GURPS, Warehouse 23, and the all-seeing pyramid are registered trademarks of Steve Jackson Games Incorporated. *Pyramid*, *GURPS WWII: Leyte Gulf*, e23, and the names of all products published by Steve Jackson Games Incorporated are registered trademarks or trademarks of Steve Jackson Games Incorporated, or used under license. Some art copyright © 2004 www.clipart.com. All rights reserved. *GURPS WWII: Leyte Gulf* is copy-

right © 2004 by Steve Jackson Games Incorporated. The scanning, uploading, and distribution of this material via the Internet or via any other means without the permission of the publisher is illegal, and punishable by law. Please purchase only authorized electronic editions, and do not participate in or encourage the electronic piracy of copyrighted materials. Your support of the author's rights is appreciated.

STEVE JACKSON GAMES
e23.sjgames.com



1. AN EPIC END

The Battle of Leyte Gulf is neither widely known by the general public nor the subject of exciting war movies. It is, however, famous for several reasons. It remains the largest naval action ever fought, and on the Japanese side included the two largest warships the world had seen. It also witnessed the return of MacArthur to the Philippines. Finally, the infamous Japanese *kamikaze* suicide pilots first sortied in this engagement.

COLLISION COURSE

U.S. General Douglas MacArthur had convinced Filipino President Manuel L. Quezon to appoint him to the splendid rank of field marshal – but the egotistical MacArthur was a defeated man when he boarded a patrol boat on the night of March 11, 1942, to flee the Philippines. Regardless, head held high, he made a vow to return, one that bordered on arrogance given the overwhelming Japanese victories of the time. In the next two years, however, the United States turned the tide and began to bear down on the Japanese empire with overwhelming might. In early 1944, the Allied advances reached a decision point: Should their main thrust continue toward Formosa (the direct route to Japan) or divert to the Philippines (an important resource in what remained of the Japanese conquests)?

MacArthur skillfully argued against U.S. Admiral Chester Nimitz to convince U.S. President Roosevelt in late July 1944 that the Philippines should be given priority. The landing of U.S. forces at Leyte was scheduled for December 20, 1944. Admiral William Halsey already was roaming the area with his 3rd Fleet, however, meeting little opposition and overwhelming those Japanese forces he did encounter. Given that intelligence, the aggressive U.S. commanders brought the invasion date forward.

American troops went ashore on October 20 and met some opposition, but not nearly enough to prevent

the establishment of beachheads. Four hours later, MacArthur fulfilled his promise to return, and promptly made it clear that Leyte was as much a personal victory as a political or military goal. “I have returned,” he intoned in a speech on the landing beach, ignoring the thousands of troops and sailors also involved in the invasion. “I now call upon your supreme effort. . . . Rally to me.”

Meanwhile, the increasingly desperate Japanese had anticipated that the Americans might return to the Philippines; their high command drew up four plans for counterattacks depending on whether the main Allied thrust targeted the Philippines, Formosa, the Ryukyus, or Kyushu. *Sho Ichi Go* (Operation Victory One) dealt with the Philippine archipelago. The plan was for the various elements of the Japanese fleet to converge on the invasion area and utterly wipe out the Allied landing force. No provision was made as to what would happen next, and it isn't clear that even the planners



expected the desperate measure to succeed. At a minimum, though, they intended to inflict so many casualties that the United States would feel compelled to offer easier terms for ending the war.

The effort was to be an “all-or-nothing” rush to glory or defeat. Japanese Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa’s force of mostly empty aircraft carriers would act as a decoy; they would approach from the north to lure Halsey’s deadly 3rd Fleet away from the battle. Meanwhile, a Center Force and two southern fleets of surface warships would converge on Leyte Gulf in a pincers movement.

The complex plan called for precise timing and a great deal of luck. The center and two southern groups would take direct routes to Leyte Gulf through narrow straits that would leave them highly vulnerable to air attacks if detected, but offered good odds of rapidly slipping under the “umbrella” of aerial reconnaissance undetected. With good fortune, and if the Japanese admirals coordinated the attack well, it held the possibility of achieving complete surprise.

Fittingly, Japanese prewar naval strategy – prior to the rise of the aircraft carriers – had anticipated a final fleet encounter between Japan and the United States in the region of the Philippines. The superbattleships *Yamato* and *Musashi* had been built to carry the day in exactly this sort of epic confrontation. Now, for the first time, these two vessels would join the war. The hopes of the Japanese military leadership sailed with them.

THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF

The following narrative does not weigh events as a standard history would, presenting the ebb and flow of the Battle of Leyte Gulf from an admiral’s perspective. Instead, it briefly describes the larger scheme of things, while isolating particularly good opportunities for role-playing in greater detail.

The events take place from October 23-25, 1944. To maintain the proper feel, times are given in military format, with p.m. times adding 12 to their civilian notation. Thus, 0630 is 6:30 a.m. while 1830 means 6:30 p.m.

This chapter only briefly describes the types of ships and composition of units involved in the battle. Those with no previous familiarity with the Battle of Leyte Gulf can find more complete descriptions of the forces in Chapter 2.

ADMIRAL TAKEO KURITA

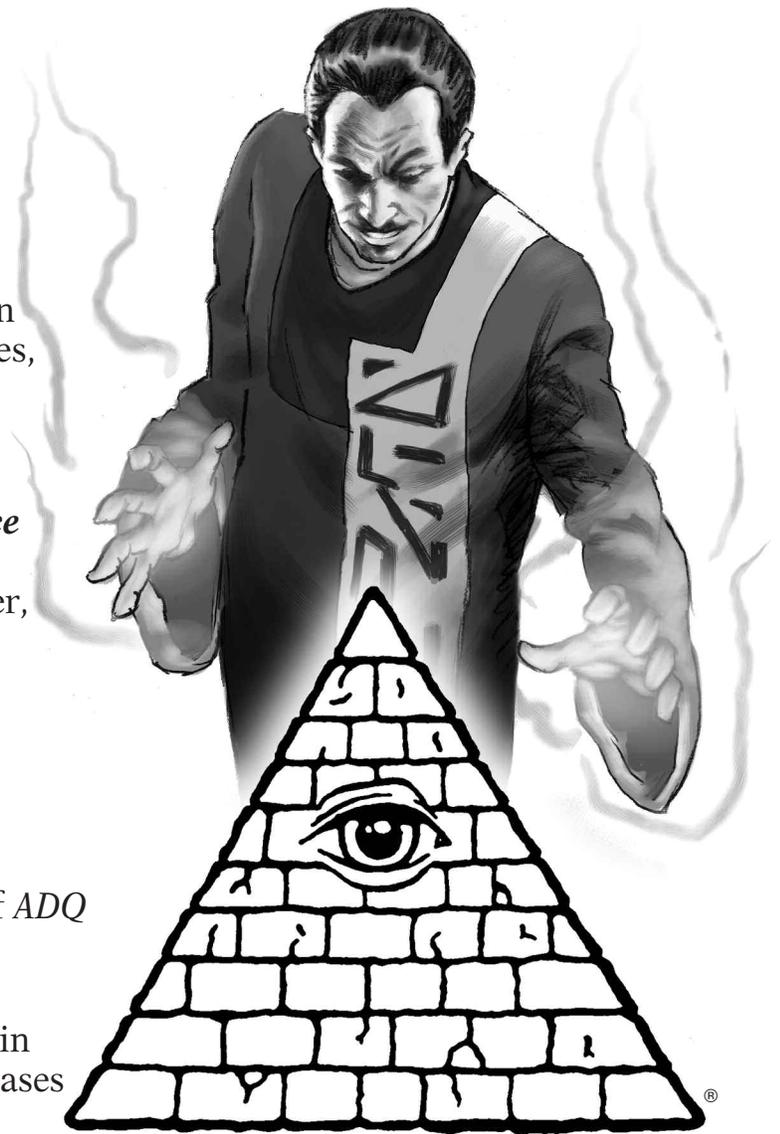
Takeo Kurita was born in 1899. He graduated from the Japanese Naval Academy at Etjima and commenced a career that included service on destroyers and cruisers. He was present at Midway, Guadalcanal, and the Battle of the Philippine Sea. He was uncertain, if not defeatist, in the exercise of his commands, to the extent that he had retreated and abandoned his shore bombardment when faced with four torpedo boats at Guadalcanal. His willingness to retreat in the face of a strong fighting spirit (not to be confused with a numerically stronger or more powerful opposition) was underscored at the Battle of the Philippine Sea, when Kurita quickly advocated withdrawal. This tendency to avoid risk became an important factor in the battle off Samar Island on October 25. On the other hand, he was a recognized expert in the use of torpedoes, and for his entire career had served on surface ships, which would play the dominant role in the fighting this day.



STUCK FOR AN ADVENTURE? NO PROBLEM.

Warehouse 23 sells high-quality game adventures and supplements in print and PDF formats.

- Free downloadable adventures for *GURPS*, *In Nomine*, and *Traveller*!
- Fun gaming accessories – shot glasses, shirts, specialty six-siders, and more!
- PDFs from Atlas Games, Amarillo Design Bureau, Pelgrane Press, Goodman Games, and many others – plus gems from the up-and-comers.
- Original material for *Transhuman Space* and new *GURPS* supplements from Kenneth Hite, Phil Masters, David Pulver, Sean Punch, and William Stoddard!
- Fully searchable files of *GURPS Fourth Edition* supplements.
- Digital editions of out-of-print classics, from *Orcslayer* and the complete run of *ADQ* to *GURPS China* and *GURPS Ice Age*.
- Buy board games and roleplaying PDFs in the same order! Download digital purchases again whenever you need to.



STEVE JACKSON GAMES
warehouse23.com