



NISEI IN THE WAR AGAINST JAPAN

Niihau

Kauai

Oahu

Molokai

Lanai

Maui

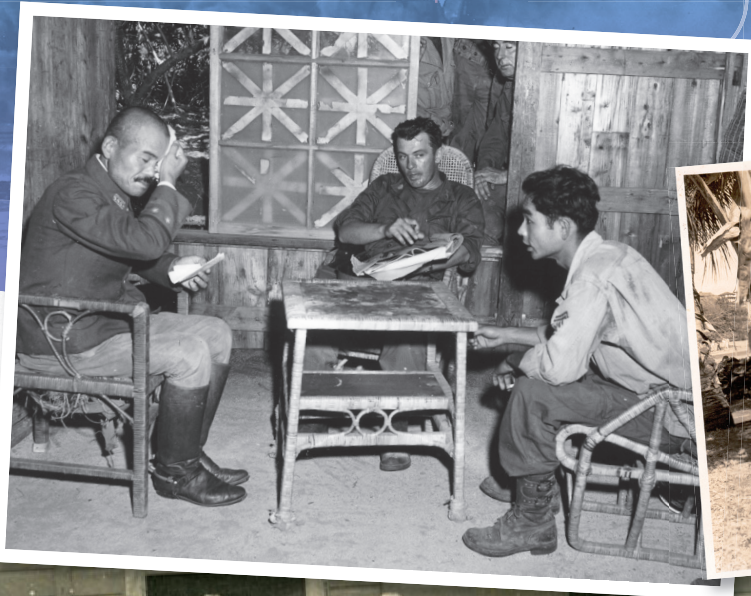
Hawaii
"Big Island"

★ December 7, 1941
Pearl Harbor
Attacked

① December 7-13, 1941
"Niihau Incident"

② December 15, 1941:
Kahului Harbor
shelled

③ January 28, 1942
USAT Royal T. Frank
torpedoed



COURTESY OF TED TSUKIYAMA



COURTESY OF GEORGE MATSUNAGA

the Hawaii Mochi

日曜日 日八

米國...
この紙は、この島に...
全米防衛を以て、...
敵機撃

Honolulu Star

8 PAGES - HONOLULU, TERRITORY

WAR
U BO
PAN

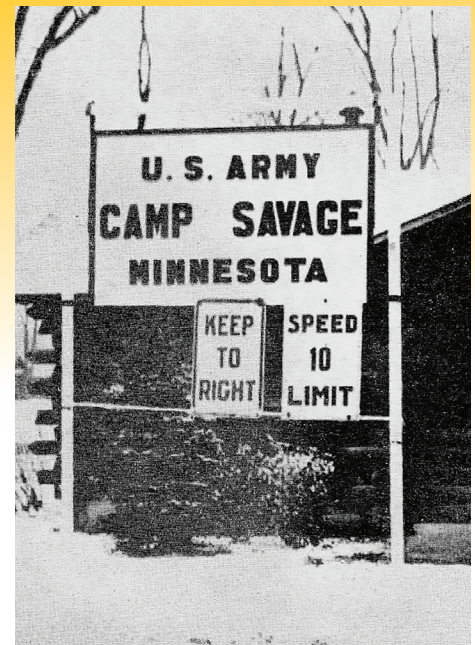
DEAD, 21

CIVILIANS ORDERED
The army has ordered
off the streets and his
phones.
Evidence that the
entered some hits was
pillars of smoke in the
on field area.
All were persons
workers, with the
been ordered to duty
a mass of racing car
A trucking street
pouring into the cit
minutes after the
Thousands of
swamped the Mut
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Nearly 6,000 American soldiers of Japanese ancestry used their knowledge of the enemy's language and culture to give America a winning edge over Imperial Japan in World War II, then helped to forge an enduring peace.

They translated documents, intercepted communications, interrogated prisoners, flushed caves, infiltrated enemy lines, and fought as combat infantrymen. Collectively, they were known as "MIS nisei."



Most, but not all, were graduates of the **Military Intelligence Service Language School**. The majority were nisei—"second generation" children of immigrants from Japan, but some were sansei—"third generation" grandsons of immigrants.

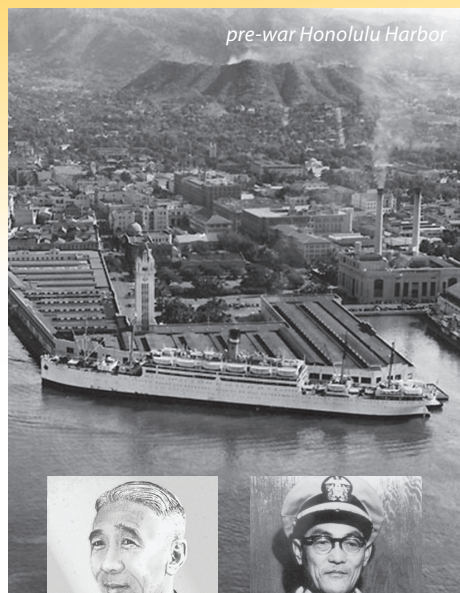


Bob Honke

All of them were suspect after Japan's December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, none more than the kibei—U.S. citizens by birth who had been educated in Japan—who usually were the best linguists of them all.

These American soldiers of Japanese ancestry were supplemented by smaller numbers of haole, Chinese, or Korean Americans who underwent the same training. Together, these soldiers who served in military intelligence in the war against Japan were credited with shortening the war and saving countless lives. Theirs was not a single story, but a collection of unique tales, often undocumented or cloaked in secrecy.

The MIS also deployed thousands of soldiers in the war against Nazi Germany. These soldiers, often from families that fled the rise of fascism in Europe, trained at Camp Ritchie, Maryland, and came to be known as the Ritchie Boys.



pre-war Honolulu Harbor

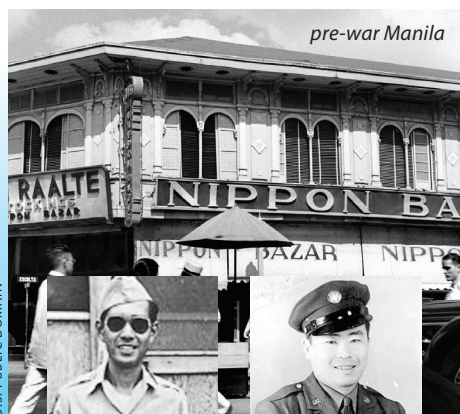


Gero Iwai



Douglas Wada

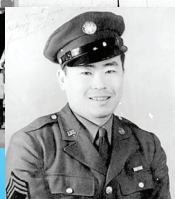
America began using nisei soldiers for intelligence a decade before Pearl Harbor, when Gero Iwai, a University of Hawaii ROTC graduate, was assigned to keep tabs on Hawaii's large ethnic Japanese community. Naval Intelligence in Hawaii soon recruited Douglas Wada to do the same. In early 1941, the military intelligence recruited two young nisei who had been standout Junior ROTC officers at McKinley High School—Richard Sakakida and Arthur Komori, a UH graduate. In April 1941, they sailed to Manila, posing as draft dodgers and reporting on the large Japanese community. Once Japan invaded in December 1941, Sakakida and Komori became combat interpreters for General Douglas MacArthur, earning praises before Bataan fell. The trustworthy early performance of these four individuals laid the foundation for many more AJAs to serve America in uniform.



pre-war Manila



Richard Sakakida



Arthur Komori



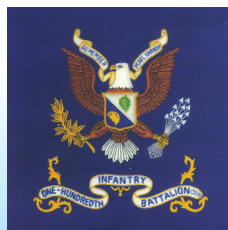
AJA linguists in Presidio, San Francisco.



Herbert Miyasaki, left, with Brig. Gen. Frank Merrill.

Meanwhile, a month before Pearl Harbor, some visionary officers opened the Army's first school for Japanese linguists, in San Francisco. Forty-five graduated in May 1942, including one from Hawaii – Dr. John Alfred Burden. The son of missionaries, Burden grew up in Japan and earned a medical degree. He settled on Maui as a plantation doctor. By the time he was sent to the South Pacific in mid-1942, Japanese Americans had been classified aliens unacceptable for service and could not be drafted. And racial hysteria had triggered the eviction of all Japanese Americans from the West Coast. The newly renamed Military Intelligence Service Language School moved to Minnesota, the only state that welcomed the AJAs.

Early graduates of the MIS school went to Australia, the Southwest Pacific, and the Aleutian Islands. Burden led a language team of nisei on Guadalcanal that proved their battlefield value. In late 1942, about 60 soldiers were transferred to Camp Savage from the 100th Infantry Battalion at nearby Camp McCoy, Wisconsin. One of them, Herbert Miyasaki of Paaui, Hawaii, objected and was told by his commander, "Anybody can shoot one rifle, but not everybody can speak Japanese." Those transfers from the 100th, pre-war draftees from Hawaii who had been training for more than a year, drew praise for their



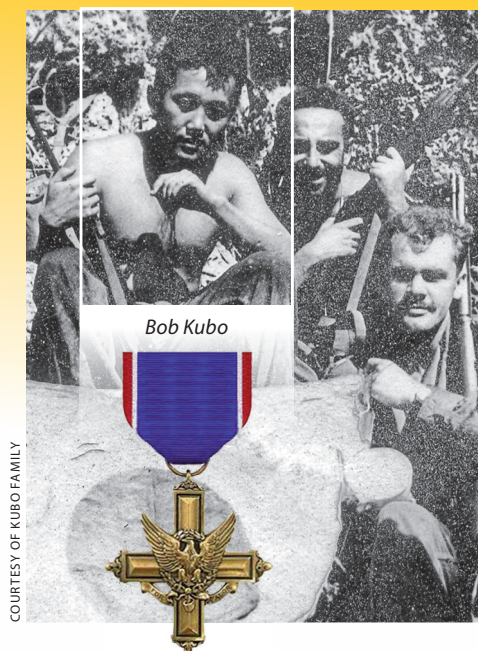
Dr. John Alfred Burden, center, in Guadalcanal.



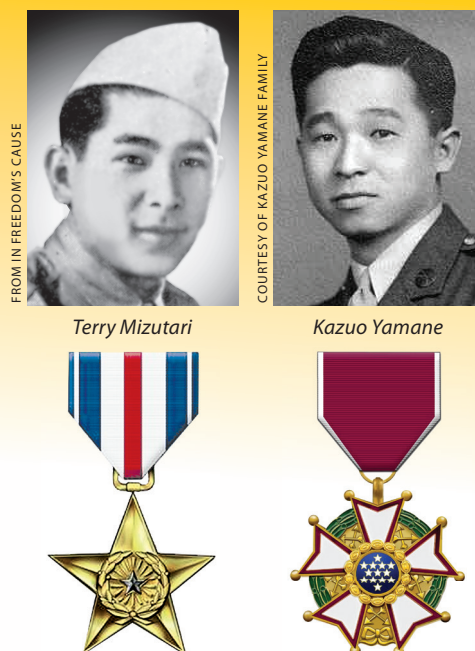
sharp soldiering and came to be known as the "senpai gumi," the pioneer group. Miyasaki was one of 14 nisei who served with Merrill's Marauders, the celebrated jungle fighters in Burma.



Nisei linguists attending the MIS school at Camp Savage in Minnesota (the Gopher State) adopted as their mascot a graphic of a gopher in a Native American headdress drawn by MISLS student and former Disney illustrator Chris Ishii. The updated gopher art shown here is based on one of Ishii's alternatives.



Bob Kubo



Terry Mizutari

Kazuo Yamane

Another senpai was Hoichi "Bob" Kubo, of Puukolii, Maui. He earned the Distinguished Service Cross on Saipan, entering a cave alone and convincing nine Japanese soldiers to surrender and to free 122 civilians they were threatening to kill.

Most accounts of the AJAs in the Pacific were classified during the war, to avoid revealing U.S. capabilities to the enemy and for the safety of the nisei and their relatives in Japan. Despite martial law censorship, when 243 nisei from Hawaii volunteered for the MIS in mid-1943, the Honolulu newspapers published their names and hometowns and said they had volunteered for "special duty" with the army as interpreters and translators. They weren't enough to meet the Army's needs. Another 250 were transferred from the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. A new recruiting drive in Hawaii produced more than 300 volunteers who arrived at Camp Savage in February 1944. After that, drafting of AJAs resumed, and helped to fill the MIS classes.

MIS nisei were assigned to every major U.S. unit in the Pacific and Asia. There were at least 50 nisei on Iwo Jima. Two months later, more than 300 AJA linguists took part in the invasion of Okinawa. A handful of AJA volunteers served with Detachment 101 of the Office of Strategic Services, operating with native guerrillas far behind the lines in Burma. They included Dick Hamada, who singlehandedly saved a Nationalist Chinese battalion, and Ralph Yempuku, whose exploits led the Japanese to offer a \$20,000 reward for him dead or alive. General MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Area headquarters eventually used hundreds of AJAs in its Allied Translator and Interpreter Sections. While the Navy and Marine Corps refused to enlist AJAs, they made extensive use of the nisei, borrowing them by the score.

MIS AJAs proved especially valuable on the front lines, providing on-the-spot review and translation of captured documents and interrogation of prisoners. MIS nisei also served with Air Force and Signal Corps units, gleaming valuable information in the first war where radio communications played a major role.

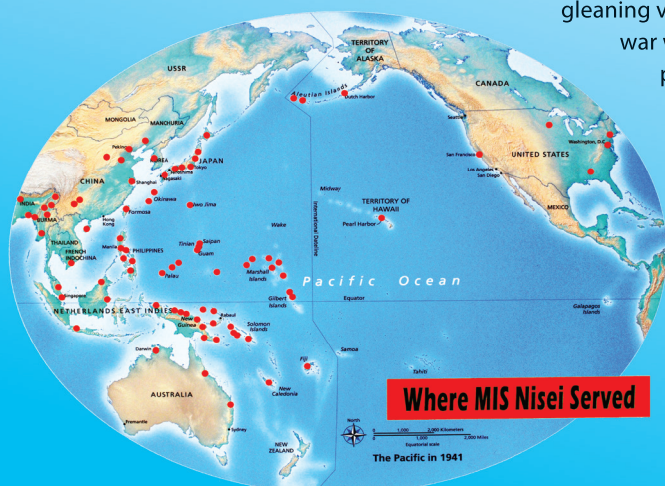
Another senpai, Honolulu kibe Kazuo Yamane, was assigned to the Pacific Military Intelligence Research Section at Camp Ritchie in late 1944 when he discovered the complete inventory of Japanese ordnance in a box of documents that had been captured on Saipan and deemed of no military value. Yamane's jackpot was used for the rest of the war, to select bombing targets, for example. After the war, it helped occupation forces disarm Japan.

The AJAs in the Pacific did not suffer the high casualties that the infantrymen of the 100th and 442nd did in Europe. The twenty-six MIS nisei who gave their lives included Terry Yukitaka Mizutari, son of a Japanese language school principal from Hilo, killed in New Guinea in June 1944. Mizutari, a transfer from the 100th, was defending the 6th Infantry Division command post against a night attack and was awarded a posthumous Silver Star.

After the war, the MIS nisei played a vital role in disarming, then rebuilding Japan and dispelling the wartime hatreds. A contingent of WACs (Women's Army Corps) nisei volunteers arrived to serve



as translators. Thousands of AJAs were deployed throughout Japan to help with the occupation. Later, many of them used the G.I. Bill to attend top colleges, then came home to Hawaii to lead the social and political changes that led to statehood in 1959.



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