

Men-at-Arms

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Japanese Special Naval Landing Forces

Uniforms and equipment 1932–45



Gary Nila & Robert A Rolfe • Illustrated by T Chong

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to our late friend and
fellow collector Shelton H. Yokomizo (1943–2005)

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Illustration credits

Contemporary monochrome photographs are individually credited to their sources.

All original equipment pictured in this book is the property of the authors, unless identified otherwise; it was photographed by Tony Chong of Skyshadow Studios, Burbank, CA, unless identified otherwise. The live models were Benjamin Abbott, Jonathan Abbott, and Russell Nakaishi.

The paintings on Plates G & H are by Christa Hook.

JAPANESE SPECIAL NAVAL LANDING FORCES 1932-45

INTRODUCTION

This sailor in Shanghai, China, in 1932 poses in full battle gear with his Type 30 bayonet fixed to his Type 38 rifle, and leather Type 38 ammunition pouches. Attached to his rifle is the Imperial Japanese Navy "rising sun" flag. His steel helmet is the first pattern or "cherry blossom" style, with a frontal brass anchor badge. (Eric Doody)



AS JAPAN ENTERED THE 20th century she had visibly awakened from her long feudal sleep, and had begun to modernize with astonishing speed and vigor. The island nation lacked many natural resources, especially the oil that was needed to power factories and machinery. To gain what she needed for industrial and economic growth, Japan made armed forays into the continent of Asia. In the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, Japan defeated ramshackle Chinese armies and made large gains in Korea, as well as acquiring a strategic enclave around the harbor of Port Arthur in Manchuria; but Russia also had ambitions for Manchuria. After successfully expelling Japanese forces by diplomatic means, Russia soon sent her own troops into this territory.

At the turn of the century China was the main Asian arena of international rivalry – vast, potentially rich, but hobbled by an archaic system of government, and only feebly protected by armies whose modernization lagged far behind those of the predatory foreign powers. Japan was competing for influence in China against Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Russia and the United States. These countries all had modern navies as instruments of "gun-barrel diplomacy" to further their economic and territorial interests. Japan's own pressing need for a modern navy was clear – both to transport men and equipment, and to project Japanese power overseas in sufficient strength to meet any foreign challenge. She had already set about building and training such a navy, drawing upon the most up-to-date foreign examples, and was making extraordinary progress.

Tensions in China mounted, and in the spring of 1900 the long-festering resentment against the arrogance of "foreign devils" burst out in an episode known in the West as the Boxer Rebellion.¹ The catalyst for this violent spasm, which sought to expel all foreigners and wipe out their influence in China, was a secret society dating back to the 18th century and known as the Fist of Righteous Harmony – thus, "Boxers," from their skill in martial arts. Members of the society, and more or less open sympathizers, were

¹ See Men-at-Arms 95, *The Boxer Rebellion*

The Japanese calendar

Between 1868 and the death of Hirohito in 1989, the Japanese have had three imperial reigns. These are referred to by the following throne names: Meiji era (1868–1912), Taisho era (1912–26) and Showa era (1926–89). For the purposes of this text and the dating of Japanese equipment, only the Showa ("Enlightened Peace") era is relevant. The Japanese monthly calendar begins in January ("1", the first month), and ends in December ("12"). The Japanese annual calendar begins in the year of enthronement of a new emperor. The Showa era opened when Hirohito ascended to the Chrysanthemum Throne in 1926; to identify the Showa year, simply add its year number to 1925:

Showa year	Showa year	Showa year
7 = 1932	11 = 1936	16 = 1941
8 = 1933	12 = 1937	17 = 1942
9 = 1934	13 = 1938	18 = 1943
10 = 1935	14 = 1939	19 = 1944
	15 = 1940	20 = 1945

BELOW The *kanji* characters for the title of the SNLF, as displayed on the ribbon tally of the pre-war flat-topped sailor's cap.

Greater Japan	Navy	Special	Land Force
<i>Dai Nippon</i>	<i>Kaigun</i>	<i>Toku Betsu</i>	<i>Riku Sen Tai</i>
大日本	海軍	特別	陸戦隊

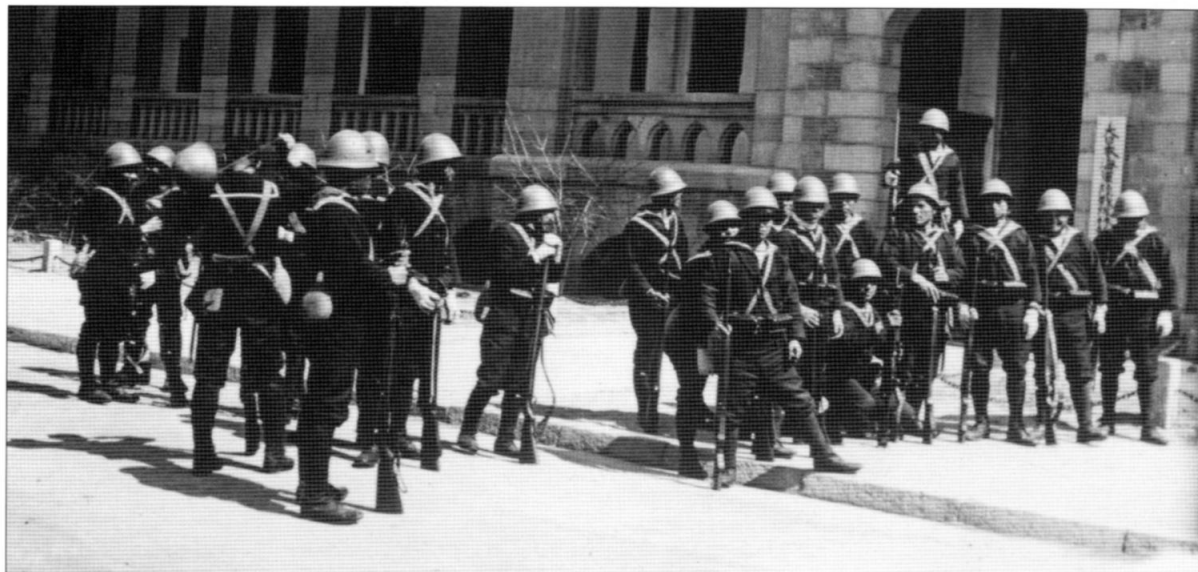
Japanese numbers

0	零	Rei	16	十六	Jū roku
1	一	Ichi	17	十七	Jū shichi
2	二	Ni	18	十八	Jū hachi
3	三	San	19	十九	Jū kū
4	四	Shi	20	二十	Ni jū
5	五	Gō	Additional useful terms are:		
6	六	Roku	Year	年	Nen
7	七	Hichi	Month	月	Gatsu
8	八	Hachi	Day	日	Nichi
9	九	Ku	Type/Model	式	Shiki
10	十	Jū	Air Force	空軍	Kugun
11	十一	Jū ichi	Navy	海軍	Kaigun
12	十二	Jū ni	Army	陸軍	Rikugun

to be found in the Imperial court surrounding the Dowager Empress Tzu Hsi. With their support, the outbreak lasted from June to October 1900; its most famous episode was the siege of the foreign legations in Beijing, and the march of a multinational force to relieve them. Two full divisions of Japanese troops took part in the operations which crushed the Boxers – the largest of all the eight national contingents.

When the fighting ended some 100,000 Russian troops were in occupation of Manchuria. Russia promised the international community that she would withdraw these forces by 1903, but failed to do so; instead she pressed ahead with developing military bases and a rail network, hoping to hold on to this new possession. After carefully isolating Russia diplomatically, on February 8, 1904, Japan launched a surprise naval attack against the Russians in Port Arthur, and two days later declared war.² This Russo-Japanese War was the first clash of two modern armies and navies in the 20th century. Although a decisive land victory was won by Gen Oyama at Mukden in February–March 1905, the final and crushing blow was struck at sea on May 27 by Adm Heihachiro Togo, who led the Japanese in the humiliating defeat of the Russian fleet at the battle of Tsushima. One of the lessons was that all future wars waged by Japan would have to depend upon naval superiority.

During the war against Russia, the Japanese utilized on their warships for the first time small detachments of naval personnel who could be deployed with small arms for shore patrol duties and/or



combat. These naval troops could be transported quickly by ships to various trouble spots as the spearhead of any large scale military action. This was the beginning of the Special Naval Landing Force (SLNF) or *Tokubetsu Rikusentai*.

After the 1905 victory, Adm Togo went to England to study British naval power, while generals from the Imperial Japanese Army traveled to Germany to explore the latest doctrines of ground warfare. Japan continued to pursue this learning curve in small tactical engagements in Korea, China and the South Seas during and after World War I, from which she profited by gaining strategically useful territories in return for a modest investment of military effort. By the eve of the 1930s, the small naval detachments of armed sailors became full time naval infantry units posted aboard various ships.

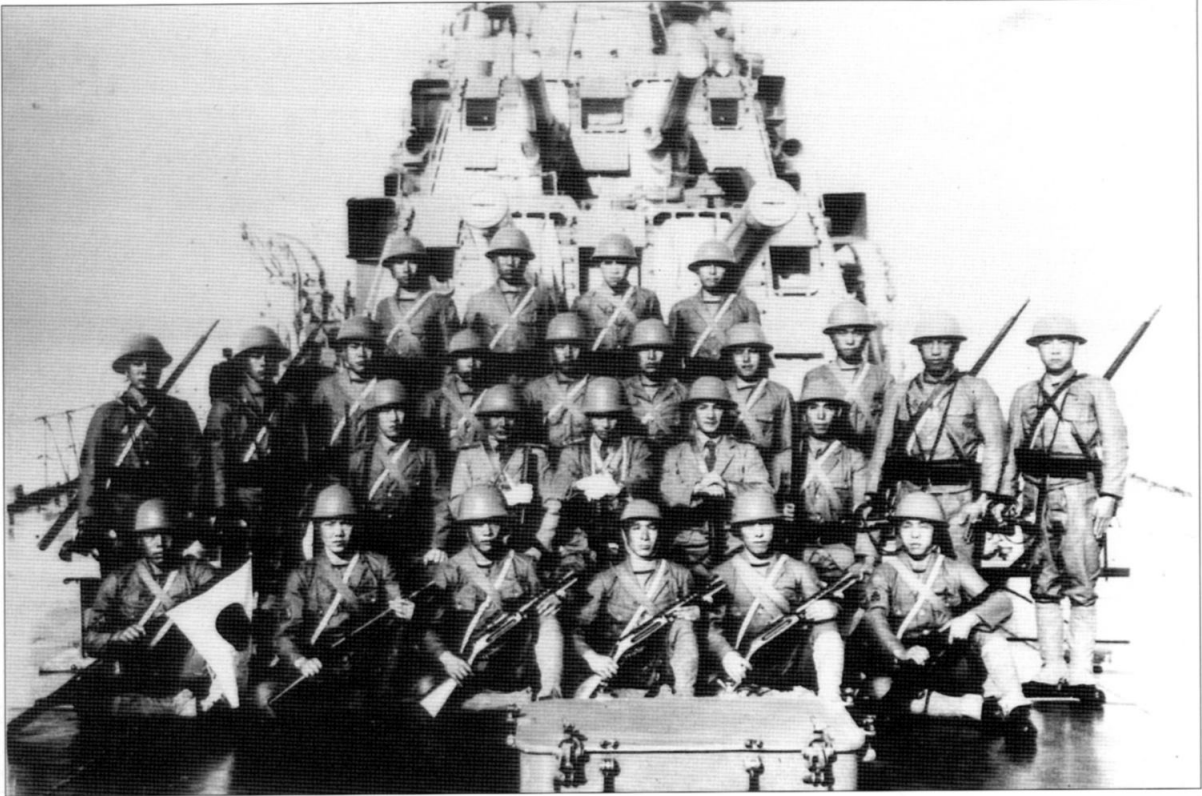
At this time, China was once again in turmoil due to years of civil war and anarchy; and once again, Japan was preparing to move against Manchuria, where she had already planted both civilian settlers and military garrisons of her Kwantung Army.

The SNLF in China

In January 1932, Japan made her move in Manchuria, declaring it to be a new and ostensibly independent state, but in fact a Japanese puppet ruled by the Kwantung Army. Far to the south, on January 28 a force of 2,000 Special Naval Landing Force troops saw their first action in what the Japanese refer to as the "Shanghai Incident." The skirmish was provoked by the Japanese Navy outside the International Settlement, with the goal of capturing Shanghai, while the Chinese protested against Japanese aggression and boycotted Japanese goods. The Japanese Army joined in the fight, but the Chinese prevented the Japanese troops from capturing Shanghai. A temporary truce was signed after foreign intervention.

From their baptism of fire, the Japanese Special Naval Landing Forces began to take shape as an elite organization whose units were tasked to handle difficult assignments. The four major naval bases in

SNLF troops in Shanghai 1934 – the sign to the right of the entrance reads *Kaigan Toku Betsu Sen Tai Ozaki* ("Navy Special Landing Force, Ozaki Unit"). Dressed in blue winter shipboard uniform, they wear the Navy Type 2 steel helmet. (Gary Nila)



Aboard the IJN destroyer *Hiyodori* in June 1937, these SNLF troops of the 2nd Shanghai unit pose with their officers. They wear the first pattern green tropical uniforms over white sailor undershirts, and the second, more flared pattern of steel helmet introduced in c.1932 (see photo, page 14). Under magnification, red-on-green round rating patches can be seen on the right sleeve. The four men in the center of the front row hold Bergmann 7.63mm sub-machine guns imported from Belgium or Switzerland; the IJN designated this as the Type "BE" (the first two letters of Bergmann). Some of the others have the long Arisaka Type 38 rifle. (Kazuhiko Osuo)

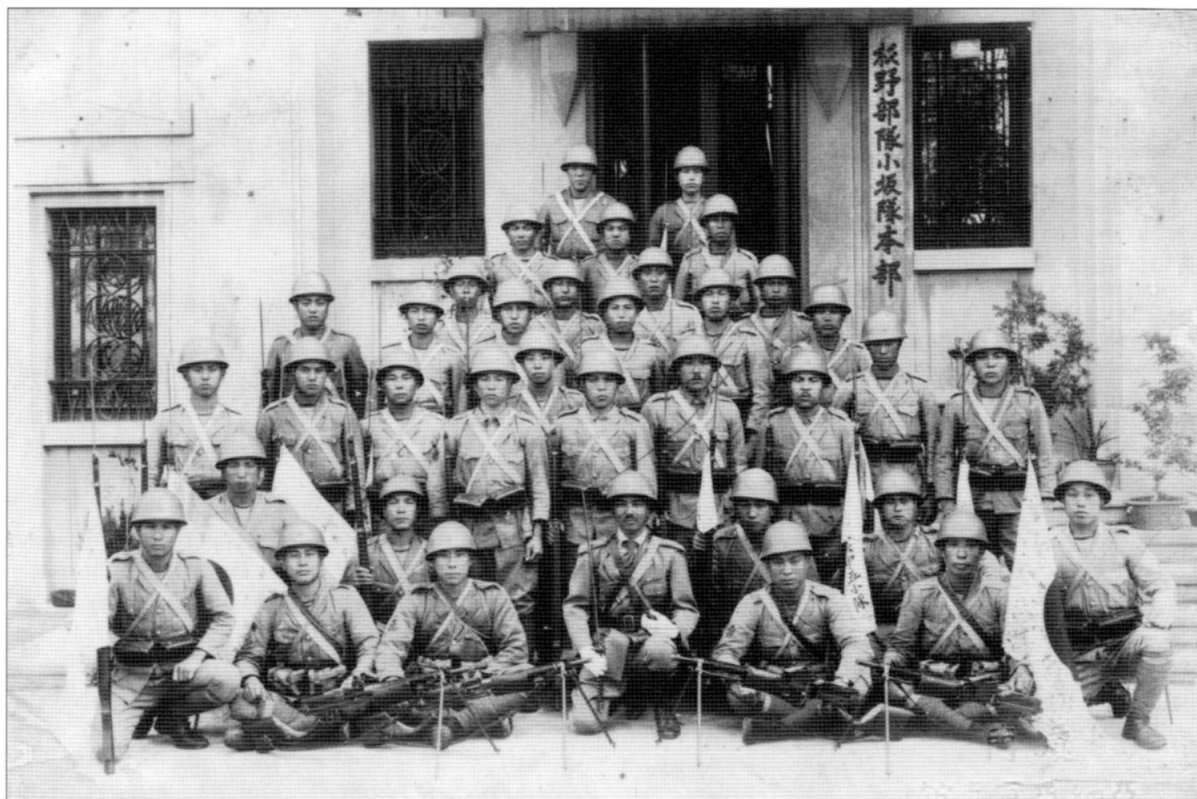
Japan – at Kure, Maizuru, Sasebo, and Yokosuka – each raised SNLF units which underwent specialized training, included the use of light artillery and amphibious landing operations.

It was inevitable that continuing Japanese pressure on their territory would eventually force the Chinese to take a stand. The Japanese Army provoked an armed clash with Chinese Nationalist government troops at the Marco Polo Bridge south of Beijing on July 7, 1937; and this ignited the Sino-Japanese War.³ The first large scale engagement by the SNLF in the China War occurred at Shanghai on August 13, 1937. The Chinese 87th and 88th Divisions tried to drive the Japanese from the International Settlement, which was defended by 2,000 SNLF troops, augmented by 300 sailors from their warships on the Yangtze river, and 1,000 Navy men who had just arrived from Japan two days before. Although outnumbered by more than seven to one, the Japanese stood their ground. They rushed in reinforcements from Japan while a political resolution was sought; stubbornness on both sides prevented an end to the fighting, and the war soon raged out of control. The Japanese would eventually raise SNLF units in China (the Hankow, Shanghai, and Yangtze River SNLF).

The SNLF in World War II

At the time of Japanese and US entry into World War II on December 7, 1941, there were 16 units of the SNLF in existence. The largest unit, with 1,600 men, was the 1st Sasebo SNLF, followed by the 2nd Sasebo (1,400), and the 1st and 2nd Kure units (1,400 men each). The other

3 See MAA 424, *The Chinese Army 1937-49*



12 units had approximately 750 to 1,000 men each. Within the SNLF there were two specially trained and equipped parachute units, the 1st and 3rd Yokosuka SNLF, with about 750 men in each.⁴

During the war the SNLF were erroneously referred to by the Allied forces as "Japanese Marines." Technically, there was no comparison to the US Marine Corps, which was controlled separately from the US Navy and Army, whose several complete divisions were specifically trained and equipped to take beachheads in amphibious landings prior to the arrival of the Army. The SNLF did not enjoy independent status; and, as indicated, their unit manpower usually approximated to two battalions at most.

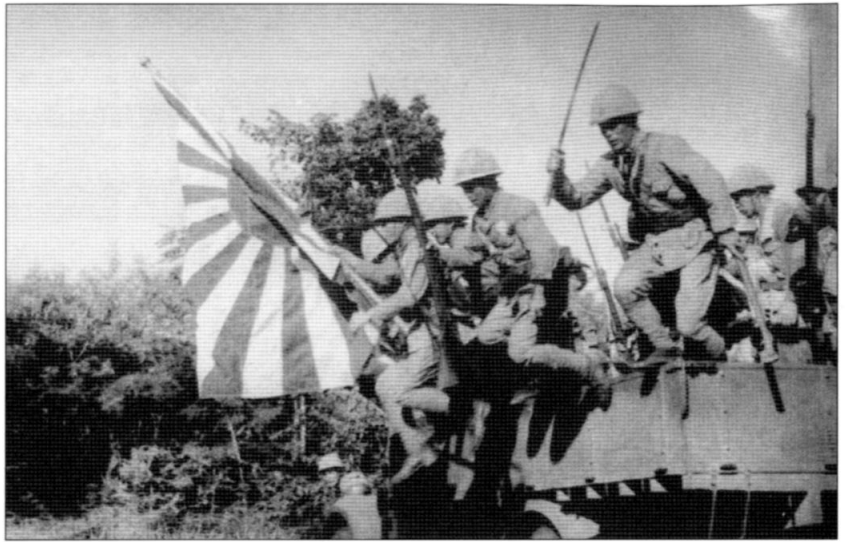
Due to political differences and a superiority complex, the Imperial Japanese Navy and Army seldom cooperated – a situation which led to much needless and wasteful duplication of effort and expense, and to poor operational coordination. This made it all the more important that the Navy have their own contingent of infantry troops to accompany their warships on overseas missions. With their own troops, naval commanders could in theory guard their own overseas anchorages, and could exert control over the local situation rather than being directed by their rival Army counterparts.

When the Pacific War started the SNLF participated in the invasion of the Philippines. Japanese air raids knocked out key airfields and caught the Filipino and American garrisons off guard. The 1st Kure SNLF waded ashore at Legaspi, Luzon Island, on December 12, 1941, with 575 men – this modest landing being considered at the time a

Men of the 1st Maizuru SNLF pose in front of their headquarters in China, 1937. The banner at upper right reads "Sugino Unit – Kosaka Squad Headquarters"; and on the flag above the left shoulder of the third man from the right, front row, the word *shotai* (platoon) can be made out. These sailors wear Navy Type 2 helmets, and first pattern green uniforms over white shipboard undershirts; red-on-green rating patches can be seen on several right sleeves. The officer at front center has a green tie, and removable green shoulder boards with rank insignia. Four Nambu Type 11 light machine guns rest on their bipods at the front, their gunners wearing canvas and leather ammo pouches. (Eric Doody)

⁴ See Elite 127, *Japanese Paratroop Forces of World War II*

By January 25, 1942, two days after landing, troops of the 1st Sasebo SNLF under the command of RearAdm Horii had captured the area around the important harbor of Rabaul at the northern end of New Britain in the Bismarck Islands, and the troops moved on towards the center and south. Note the gold-colored wooden ball finial on the IJN flag; unlike the Imperial Army type, which had the red disc centered, the Navy version had the *hinomaru* off-set towards the hoist side. (Mainichi Press)



major operation. The 2nd Kure SNLF landed at Davao on Mindanao Island on the 20th. Facing only weak and disorganized resistance, the SNLF units suffered few casualties.

The battle for Wake Island proved a more formidable task, when the outnumbered US Marine Corps garrison fought back tenaciously. A landing attempt by the Maizuru Independent SNLF on December 11 was repulsed by American shore batteries. On December 23 the Maizuru SNLF returned, reinforced by Army units, and stormed the southern shores of Wake and Wilkes islands at 0235 hours. In a dubious victory for the Maizuru SNLF, the US garrison was forced to surrender by 0800 hours.

The first use of Imperial Navy parachute troops occurred on January 11, 1942, when the 1st Yokosuka SNLF (Cdr Toyaki Horiuchi) were air-dropped to take the Dutch airfield at Langoan outside the town

On January 23–24, 1942, the Sakaguchi Command lost four IJN transport vessels carrying troops while heading for Balikpapan on Borneo. Nevertheless, these members of the 2nd Kure SNLF entered Balikpapan early on January 25 with virtually no resistance. Note that the officer at their head is wearing third pattern tropical uniform. (Mainichi Press)



of Manado on Celebes Island (in present-day Indonesia, then the Netherlands East Indies.) This airborne assault, by some 430 men, was preceded by amphibious landings by the 1st and 2nd Sasebo SNLFs, totaling some 2,500 men, under Capt Kunizo Mori. The opposition at Manado was a force of about 1,500 Dutch and local troops, mostly reservists and militia. The paratroopers dropped directly on the defended Langoan airfield and took casualties, finally totaling 32 dead and 32 wounded, but the combined airborne and amphibious operations were swiftly successful.

On February 20, 1942, the paratroopers of the 3rd Yokosuka SNLF (LtCdr Fukumi) carried out an unsuccessful operation against Penfui Airfield near Kupang on West Timor, an area held by a Dutch/Australian force of some 1,600 troops. Simultaneous beach landings were carried out about ten miles to the south, by the Army's reinforced 228th Infantry Regiment and the 1st Kure SNLF, in all totaling 4,600 men. In order to avoid repeating the casualties suffered at Langoan, where paratroopers had dropped directly on top of the defenses, the 630-odd paratroopers of the 3rd Yokosuka SNLF were dropped on a DZ ten miles from their objective – much too far for them to advance quickly through thick forest. They were held up on the single road by stubborn resistance, losing about 36 killed and 34 wounded; and by the time they reached their objective on February 22 it had already been occupied by the amphibious 1st Kure SNLF.

Although other Navy airborne operations were planned, none was carried out; and in December 1942 the 1st and 3rd Yokosuka SNLFs were shipped back to Japan and their personnel absorbed into a reorganized, conventional 1st Yokosuka SNLF.

Among other offensive actions involving the Special Landing Forces, the 3rd Yokosuka SNLF landed at Tulagi Island in the Solomons in April 1942 to establish a seaplane base; however, US Marines liberated the island on August 7, 1942, at the start of the Guadalcanal campaign. Other SNLF troops fought on Guadalcanal itself.



In March and April 1942, detachments of the 2nd Maizuru SNLF shipped from Rabaul to make a series of landings on the northern coast of New Guinea; subsequently the SNLF stationed 515 men in five locations on this coast, including Manokwari and Fakfak. In early May a convoy carrying the 3rd Kure SNLF from Rabaul to take part in the attempted capture of vital Port Moresby on the southeastern coast was intercepted by the US Navy with heavy losses, and turned back. These troops posing for a photographer in one of the northern locations are identifiable by their IJN flag, and also by their distinctive water canteens – from which the censor has erased any tell-tale markings of their unit designation. (Mainichi Press)

During October 1942, SNLF troops of the Western Philippines Command landed at Balabac Island, part of the Palawan chain, to eliminate Filipino guerrilla resistance. These troops appear well equipped as they wade ashore; at left, note their commanding officer confidently standing in the middle of the boat with his arms folded. Under magnification, the man cut by the right edge of the photo can be seen to wear a round red-on-blue petty officer's rating patch on his right sleeve. The man at far left wears a black-on-white seaman rating patch. (Mainichi Press)



SNLF troops were committed to combat elsewhere in the Solomons and on New Guinea during 1942; but the disastrous losses suffered by the Imperial Japanese Navy at the battle of Midway that June had already begun to limit Japan's naval capability to maneuver freely over the vast distances between her island outposts. As the IJN continued to suffer increasing losses at the hands of the Allied navies and air forces, the SNLFs became ineffectual in their planned special role: without naval superiority, aggressive landing operations could not be mounted. The Special Naval Landing Forces were henceforth limited to defensive fighting on Japanese-held islands, and in such battles these small units lacked the strength to make much difference, whatever their morale and determination. Intense jungle warfare, tropical diseases, and the tightening Allied stranglehold on Japanese lines of supply (which led to real hunger and shortages of all kinds) continued to sap the strength of the dispersed garrisons. At least four main SNLF units were dissolved in 1942 (1st and 2nd Kure, 1st and 2nd Sasebo SNLFs).

The last real sting inflicted by the Special Naval Landing Forces occurred during the battle for Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands on November 20–23, 1943. There some 1,500 men of the 7th Sasebo SNLF fought side by side with 1,100 sailors of the 3rd Special Base Force (formerly the 6th Yokosuka SNLF), to defend the main positions on Betio atoll and outlying smaller islands against the landings by the US 2nd Marine Division. This was the first major US amphibious assault on a Japanese-held island, where new equipment and new tactics would be tried out. Before the atoll was taken on the third day, nearly 1,000 US Marines were killed, missing or died of wounds, and nearly 2,300 others were wounded. Of the Japanese garrison, just 17 were captured alive.

Many Japanese garrisons were bypassed and left to wither on the vine as the US war machine advanced relentlessly across the Pacific towards the Home Islands. SNLF units on Saipan, Iwo Jima and Okinawa were slaughtered in their turn in 1944–45; by that time they were no longer elite troops in any sense, due to lack of training, leadership, equipment and morale. Very few of their veterans survived to see the end of the war.

SNLF units

Documentation is far from complete; note that in several of the original captions to photos in this book, units are identified by designations not

listed here, or simply by the commanding officer's name. The strengths of units varied at times, and the numbers quoted are approximations. Since they were mobile units they took part in various operations – either complete, or in detachments of as little as one company – that included amphibious landings, jungle warfare and garrison duties. In combat against heavily armed and organized Allied forces during various Pacific battles many units sustained heavy losses, and their survivors were consolidated into other naval units, such as Base and Guard Forces.

Hankow Naval Base:

Personnel served along the Pearl river in southern China.

Kure Naval Base:

1st Kure SNLF – 1,400 men; landed at Legaspi, Philippines, at start of Pacific campaign; Celebes, Ambon, Timor & (Dutch) Borneo, Netherlands East Indies (NEI); disbanded 1942

2nd Kure SNLF – 1,400 men; landed on Mindanao & Jolo Island, Philippines, at start of Pacific campaign; disbanded 1942

3rd Kure SNLF – New Guinea operations; also landed on Tulagi and Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands

5th Kure SNLF – formed May 1, 1942; New Guinea operations;
see 2nd Combined SNLF (below)

Photographed in late 1944 near Rabaul on New Britain, these SNLF troops still wear fairly complete and clean tropical uniforms with light field equipment. Left to defend the last remaining Japanese naval airfields, at the end of long maritime supply lines severed by continual Allied air and submarine attacks, the garrison of this once vital facility was bypassed by the US amphibious forces after its naval and air assets had been neutralized. (Robert Reichelderfer)



6th Kure SNLF – formed November 1, 1942; New Georgia during Solomons operations; *see* 8th Combined SNLF

7th Kure SNLF – Bougainville, Santa Isabel during Solomons operations

Maizuru Naval Base:

1st Maizuru SNLF – 750 men; Hainan, China, 1939

2nd Maizuru SNLF – 1,000 men; landings on Wake Island, Guam, New Britain and New Guinea

4th Maizuru SNLF – formed September 5, 1942; reinforced Guadalcanal during Solomons operations

5th Maizuru SNLF –

Sasebo Naval Base:

1st Sasebo SNLF – 1,600 men; disbanded 1942

2nd Sasebo SNLF – 1,400 men; landings on Luzon, Philippines; disbanded 1942

Combined Sasebo SNLF – 3,500 men; temporarily formed from 1st and 2nd; landings on Celebes, NEI

5th Sasebo SNLF – formed May 15, 1942; New Guinea operations

6th Sasebo SNLF – New Georgia, Bougainville during Solomons operations

7th Sasebo SNLF – destroyed on Tarawa, Gilbert Islands, in November 1943

8th Sasebo SNLF – 750 men

Shanghai Naval Base:

c.750 personnel operated along the Yangtze river, China

Yokosuka Naval Base:

1st Yokosuka SNLF – 850 men; originally parachute unit; dropped Celebes; detachment of reorganized conventional unit sent to Truk, September 1943; main force destroyed on Saipan, June 1944

2nd Yokosuka SNLF – 750 men; landings in British Borneo, December 1941; disbanded 1942; reformed from 1st Yokosuka SNLF personnel, June 1943, and to Nauru Island

3rd Yokosuka SNLF – 850 men; originally parachute unit; dropped Timor; later consolidated into 1st Yokosuka SNLF, and destroyed on Saipan, June 1944

4th Yokosuka SNLF – 750 men

5th Yokosuka SNLF – formed May 1, 1942; New Guinea, and Guadalcanal during Solomons operations; *see* 2nd Combined SNLF

6th Yokosuka SNLF – 1,500 men; disbanded on Makin, Gilbert Islands on September 20, 1943, to become 3rd Special Base Force; destroyed on Tarawa, November 20–23

7th Yokosuka SNLF – formed November 20, 1942; New Georgia during Solomons operations; *see* 8th Combined SNLF

2nd Combined SNLF – formed May 1, 1942 from 2,800 men of 5th Kure and 5th Yokosuka SNLFs; commanded by RearAdm Minoru Ohta; disbanded July 1, 1942 on Guam

7th Combined SNLF – formed from 4,200 men of 7th Kure SNLF and IJA III/23rd Inf Regt; Santa Isabel during Solomons operations

8th Combined SNLF – Formed November 5, 1942 from personnel of 6th Kure and 7th Yokosuka SNLFs (4th Maizuru also assigned, but posted elsewhere); commanded by RearAdm Minoru Ohta; New Georgia during Solomons operations

UNIFORMS: HEADGEAR

The SNLF soldier wore a number of different items of clothing and headgear between the early China campaigns of the 1930s and the end of the Pacific campaign. These changes were largely due to fluctuating availability of materials, as well as improvements based on battlefield experience. This text concentrates on the immediate identification of the main types, rather than attempting to list all known variations.

China, 1932-41

Sailor caps

Initially the sailors of the occupation force in Shanghai in 1932 wore their winter (blue wool) or summer (white cotton) issue shipboard service uniforms, which included the flat-topped seaman's cap – sometimes called the “Donald Duck” cap, after the Walt Disney cartoon character. These caps were all made of dark blue woolen material; during the summer months a white cotton cover was fitted over the crown to match the white summer uniform. The black cotton-silk ribbon “tally” worn around the cap band bore printed gold characters in Japanese *kanji* script identifying the name of the sailor's ship. By 1935 the tallies bore machine-embroidered characters rather than printing (see “Insignia” below, under 1940s rating patches). A limited number of cap tallies were also produced during the mid 1930s bearing the characters *Dai Nippon Kaigun Toku-Betsu Riku-Sen-Tai* – “Greater Japan Special Navy Landing Force” (see accompanying illustrations on pages 4 and 14.)

Japanese naval officers wore dark blue woolen visored (peaked) caps with a black leather visor and chin strap. These bore on the front center an insignia in gold-colored wire comprising an anchor “fouled” by a cable or chain, a *sakura* (cherry blossom), and a foliate wreath. This cap, too, was fitted with a white cotton cover over the crown in the summer months.

Blue wool field caps

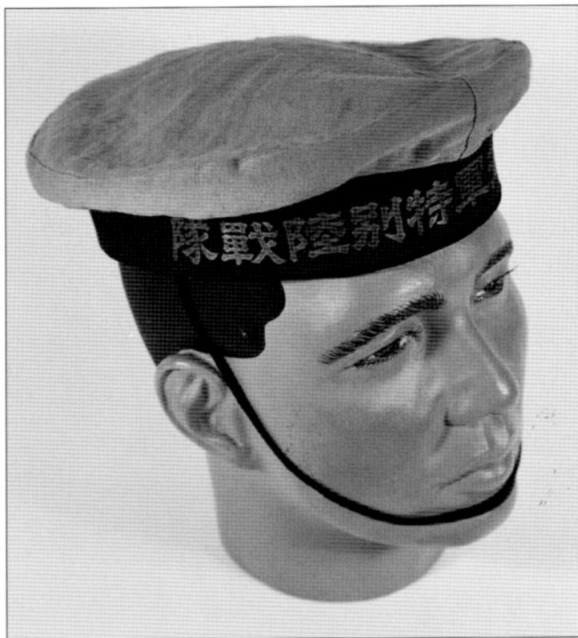
Shortly after the Shanghai occupation, Japanese sailors and officers alike were issued dark blue woolen field caps with a wool visor, a black leather chin strap fixed with plain flat metal side buttons, and a black leather interior sweat band. These caps were sewn from three roughly oval sections, the two seams passing fore and aft. In each side were two or three ventilation holes. Above the visor and chin strap a yellow felt anchor insignia was centered on an oval blue woolen patch. At a glance, the caps of sailors and officers were identical, although the latter were often of superior materials and manufacture.

Green wool field caps

As described above, by 1937 naval ground units had developed from landing parties of seamen into the more permanently land-based SNLF, as in Shanghai, Kure, Maizuru, Sasebo and Yokosuka. The winter and summer shipboard dress was now being used only by personnel assigned

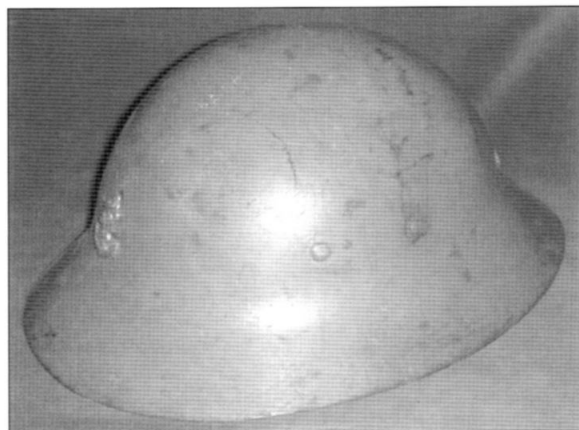


A naval officer, photographed in 1937 after more than two months' fighting in the streets of Shanghai (August 9–October 31), during which outnumbered SNLF troops literally had no time for shaving. He wears a green wool field cap with a leather chin strap, and the original two-piece appliqué insignia of a yellow felt anchor sewn to a green oval patch. His soft green cloth shoulder boards, with a single centered gold stripe, can just be seen; and he seems to wear the dark blue neck tie, replaced with dark green at about this period. (Mainichi Press)



A rare example of the 1932 sailor's flat-topped cap with the tally printed in gold-colored kanji script "*Dai Nippon Kaigun Toku Betsu Riku Sentai*" – "Greater Japan Navy Special Land Force." The summer cover in this case is khaki-tan rather than the usual white.

Rare example of the early variation widely flared helmet worn from c.1932 along with the the more common "cherry blossom" style. This helmet is finished in light greenish-brown, but has a brass IJN anchor-and-sakura badge. (John Egger)



to ships, and the actual landing force troops had adopted dark green drab woolen and/or cotton uniforms similar in cut to the tan drab uniforms of their Imperial Army counterparts. The dark blue wool field caps were now replaced with green wool caps of the same design, with the same type of "two-piece" appliqué insignia – a yellow felt anchor sewn to a green wool oval patch. The chin strap was now brown leather, still with plain flat metal side buttons, and the twin or triple vent holes were retained. The enlisted man's and officer's caps still showed no major exterior difference.

Tropical neck flaps

Service ashore in the Chinese summer exposed Japanese military personnel to extreme heat and direct sunlight, and accordingly neck flaps were introduced for fixing to the caps when in the field. These flaps (in the West sometimes called "havelocks", after the British general of that name who popularized their use in Victorian India), were made from four separate cotton cloth strips

measuring about 6in long, stitched together side by side at the top where the resulting panel attached to the cap. Four large brown metal wire hooks were individually sewn to the strips, engaging with four corresponding string loops sewn around the edge of the field cap. In 1937 it was estimated that the Shanghai Naval Supply Depot produced and issued approximately 10,000 of these sun curtains for distribution among both IJN and IJA troops. In the 1940s additional limited orders were made for naval troops serving in the Pacific islands, although Army troops adopted these field cap flaps more widely.

The first Navy helmets

During the Shanghai occupation of 1932 a number of types of steel helmets began to be issued to Japanese naval personnel. These included helmets resembling the dish-shaped World War I British "Brodie" and US M1917A1. From 1930 the Japanese military had issued trials batches of at least three distinct indigenous helmet designs. One was the so-called "cherry blossom" type; this term – after "plum blossom," the name used for a Chinese copy – came from the shape of an external plate covering ventilation holes at the apex of the skull. This helmet had a one-piece skull with an integral flared brim, the front part of which was slightly extended. The Navy issue helmet was painted in gray; fixed to the front was an embossed brass badge of an anchor "fouled" with a chain or cable, with a *sakura* (cherry blossom) centered on the shank. (The Imperial Army issue was painted a greenish-brown, and fitted with a five-point metal star badge). Later production of this helmet eliminated the "cherry blossom" plate for economy reasons, leaving the group of 12 ventilation holes at the apex exposed.

A second and slightly differing shape of helmet, with a more widely flared brim, is also known to have been used along with the “cherry blossom” at Shanghai in 1932 (see accompanying photographs). It should be noted that field caps were commonly worn under these helmets for added comfort, as the leather helmet liners were inferior.

Navy Type 2 helmet

The Japanese Navy Type 2 steel helmet, which made its debut in early 1939, was a simple, deep, pot-shaped design patterned after the Army Model 90, with a less flared brim than the “cherry blossom”, and much less than that of the second type worn in 1932. The Navy helmet shell was now painted in a greenish-brown color, and was issued in small, medium and large sizes. This helmet would continue in use throughout the Pacific War, with slight variations to its front anchor emblem, and to the liner and chin tape fastening.

The early Type 2 helmet had a heavy brass embossed emblem of the fouled-anchor-and-*sakura* fastened to the front of the shell; some early emblems were of nickel-plated steel. Welded on the back of the anchor emblem is a split (double) flat prong that passes through a slit in the front of the helmet, spreading flat inside in order to secure the liner. Two additional split prongs pass through holes in the rear sides of the helmet to secure the liner at these points, showing flat round heads on the outside of the shell.

The helmet liner consists of a cowhide sweatband to which are attached three separate pad sections terminating in double tongues; these are secured at the desired tension by an adjustable olive drab tie string passing through holes in the tongue ends. Between the steel shell and each of these leather sections is a folded cloth cushion. Three solid metal rings are attached to three separate welded inserts in the helmet shell, at the rear center and each side. A flat loop of heavy woven cotton webbing tape is attached to the rear ring; and a second, long tape passes through this loop and directly through the side rings, its ends being knotted to secure the helmet under the chin (see Plate H for alternative methods of arranging the tape). Again, most soldiers wore their field caps under their helmets for added cushioning.



The Navy Type 2 steel helmet, patterned after the Army Model 90. This too is painted greenish-brown and has the naval badge fixed to the front of the skull, by two prongs passing through a slit in the steel.



Three SNLF green field caps dating from the 1940s, all with cloth chin straps. (Left) enlisted seaman, yellow embroidered anchor; (center) petty officer, late war, with anchor-and-*sakura*, and single black stripe around base; (right) officer, late war, with wreathed anchor-and-*sakura*, and two black stripes.

Labels in three SNLF green field caps. (Left) enlisted seaman's cap, the standard sewn-in label marked Size 1 (large) at the Yokosuka Naval Depot, in month 12 of the year Showa 18 – December 1943. (Center) light brown lining of an officer's cap, the officers' white diamond-shaped label inked with the surname "Ise" in *kanji* characters. (Right) enlisted seaman's cap made in 1945, with the ink stampings that replaced the sewn-in label from 1944 – in this case, it is marked Size 3 (small) by the Shanghai Naval Depot.



The Pacific campaign, 1941–45

After Pearl Harbor and the opening of the Pacific campaign in December 1941, the cap tallies of the IJN were changed to read "Greater Imperial Japanese Navy" for security reasons, so as not to reveal to the casual observer which ships were in port.

Enlisted men's and petty officers' field caps

The SNLF enlisted man of the 1940s wore a dark green cotton field cap, with circular pierced rivet ventilators in the sides, as well as two circular rivets (four in total) in the back of the cap for size adjustment by means of a tie string. The chin strap was now of folded and sewn cotton cloth, and sewn rather than buttoned in place; and the "one-piece" anchor badge was now embroidered on to the green oval patch. Sewn inside the top of the cap was a 2in x 2½in white cotton label with printed *kanji* characters designating the date and the location of issue by a naval supply depot – in many cases this was Yokosuka, Sasebo or Kure. Additional columns on the printed label allowed the wearer to add his personal information.

Commander Baba of the SNLF 6th Battalion (right), photographed during a counter-attack operation on the Japanese-occupied bank of the River Soshu in Shanghai, October 1937. Baba and his fellow officer (far left) wear Navy Type 2 helmets with brass anchor badges, both with custom-made helmet nets. Cdr Baba is wearing removable green shoulder boards on his first pattern tunic. At left foreground, note the rear of the field cap with its size-adjustment knot. (Mainichi Press)



The early IJN petty officer's field cap was identical to that of the enlisted man, including the embroidered anchor patch and the sewn-in supply depot label. The only difference was the addition of one sewn-on black cloth stripe running around the cap at chin strap level, identifying the wearer at a glance as holding a petty officer rank. During the course of the war the anchor badge acquired a *sakura*; the officer's badge simultaneously acquired a wreath (see below), so the rank difference was maintained.

Officer's field cap

Japanese naval officers' field caps were normally manufactured in higher quality cloths such as wool gabardine, heavy cotton or fine linen. In many cases the caps were custom-made along with the officer's privately tailored service uniform. They were of the same style and design as the enlisted and petty officer field caps, but with two immediate differences. Two sewn-on black stripes passing around the base of the cap clearly identified the wearer as an officer. Officers' caps also had a distinguishing front badge, with a *sakura* centered on the anchor shank; during the mid-war years a semi-circular wreath was added around the sides and bottom of the anchor. Thus, unlike those worn during the China campaign, these caps now immediately identified an officer's status to his troops – but also, unfortunately, to enemy marksmen. Officers' caps bore no sewn-in naval supply depot label, but a diamond-shaped cloth label was sewn inside either the top or side. This might bear the officer's name, embroidered or written in ink.

As the war continued in the Pacific and throughout Asia, it had an increasing impact on Japanese war production and material resources. Shortcuts in manufacturing were introduced to save time and materials. Minor luxuries such as circular pierced rivets for cap ventilation holes or adjustment strings gave way to simple stitch-reinforced holes, and inked stamps replaced cloth naval supply depot labels. The quality of materials varied depending on sources and availability.

Behind the front lines in China, 1938, these SNLF troops are seen gathered among Korean laborers (who are not in uniform, but wear long dark coats). The five soldiers in the right foreground have camouflage nets over the cloth covers of their Navy Type 2 helmets. (Gary Nila)



Navy Type 3 helmet

By late 1941 the Navy Type 2 steel helmet was being modified to accommodate the reduced availability of materials and to shorten production time. The frontal anchor emblem was now made of lightweight steel rather than brass, and had less embossed detail. Helmet liners were now made of pigskin and other inferior leathers, and the pads were filled with straw. By early 1943 Type 3 helmets were appearing with yellow stencil-painted anchor badges instead of applied metal emblems. It has been suggested that these helmets may have been intended for shipboard use only, but there is no firm information to support or disprove this. By early 1944 the helmet liners were being made of canvas, and the chin tape retaining rings were of an open-ended swivel style.

Helmet camouflage

In present-day collections a few examples of Japanese Navy Type 2 or 3 and Army Model 90 helmets have surfaced in the described factory-applied greenish-brown paint finish, but with added black and brown painted camouflage designs. Upon inspection the additional paint colors appear to be field applications. Navy and Army helmet shells completely painted in flat black are also known, and it has been speculated that this finish may have been applied for night camouflage. Such uses of daytime or nighttime camouflage paint remain speculative, and have not been supported by documented wartime accounts.

Lastly, Navy helmets are known in blue-gray finish; it is plausible that these may have been used in shipboard operations, but again, there is no known supporting documentation.

Navy helmet covers and nets

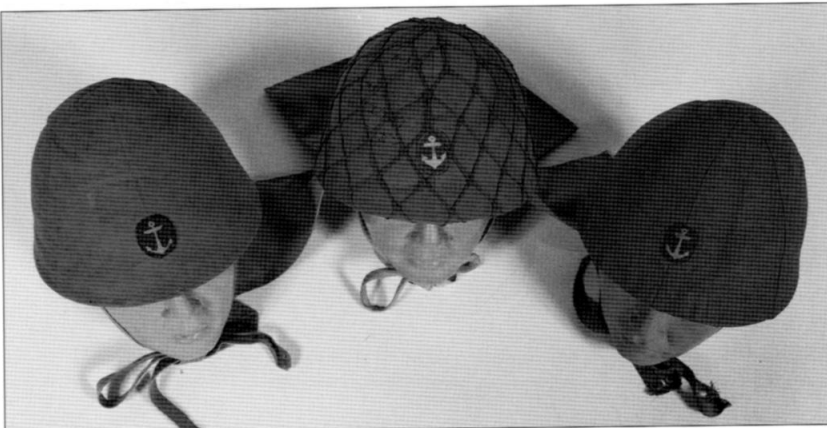
A cover was produced to fit over the Type 2 and 3 steel helmets, primarily as field camouflage to eliminate reflections, though it also deflected the sun's heat to some extent. This cotton cloth cover was sewn from six triangular segments meeting towards the top. It had a single sewn-in draw string running around the bottom edge, which was turned inside the helmet edge and knotted to secure it snugly. Sewn inside the white cloth-padded interior was a 2in x 2½in white cotton label giving the date and supply depot of issue.

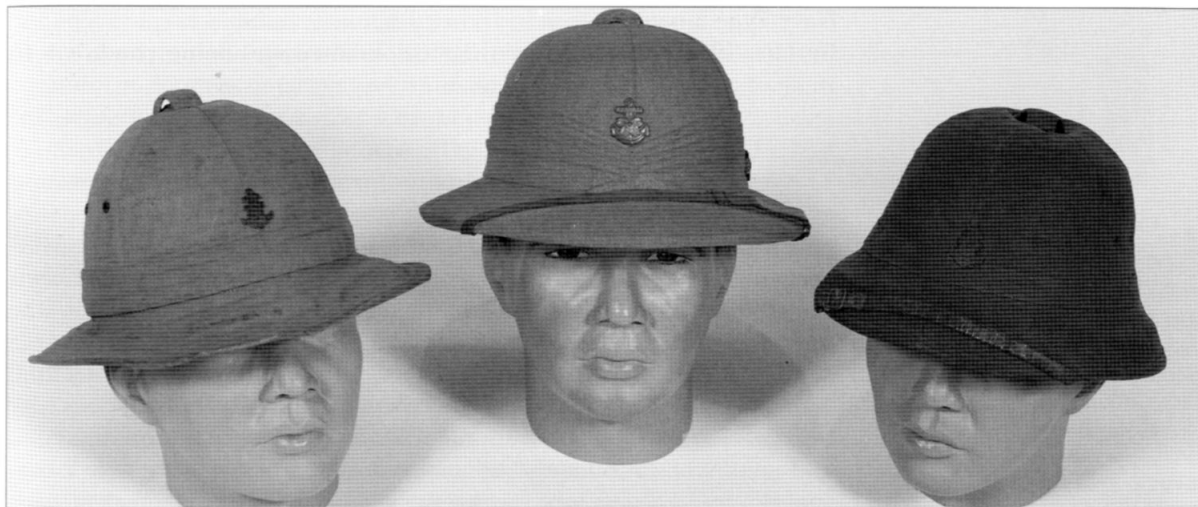
During the China campaign, the helmet cover front insignia had been the same two-piece (i.e. appliqué) yellow wool felt anchor on an

oval green wool patch as worn on the green wool field cap. During the Pacific campaign the insignia was modified in the same way, to a yellow anchor embroidered directly on to a green cloth patch.

Although limited use of helmet nets was made by Navy troops in China, this only became widespread as SNLF units were deployed to occupy the Pacific islands, where the

Three examples of the Navy helmet cover, sewn from six triangular segments, in various shades of olive drab cotton. (Left) c.1937, with yellow felt anchor badge sewn to green cloth oval. (Center) c.1941, with embroidered anchor, and showing the four spreading flaps of its attached "havelock" or sun curtain. The net is original - Japanese nets began with a "spoked" knot at the top, from which the strings spread downwards. (Right) 1945 cover, with an embroidered silk anchor on a green satin background - there was no difference between officers' and enlisted ranks' late war covers.





Three naval tropical pith helmets.

(Left) petty officer's helmet, of woven straw construction covered with olive drab canvas cloth; two vented metal grommets each side, vented dome at apex, dark brass anchor badge with *sakura* centered on the shank.

(Center) custom-made officer's helmet, of cork construction covered with olive drab wool gabardine cloth; vented dome, brown leather chin strap, brass anchor badge with centered *sakura*.

(Right) 1945 officer's helmet, of green woven straw; vented dome, leather chin strap, and late war steel anchor-and-*sakura* badge, as used on late manufacture steel helmets.

vegetation encouraged the use of expedient camouflage in order to blend into the surroundings. As the war dragged on, the restraints on Navy supply depots limited central production and issue of all items that could be procured easily in the field from local sources and materials. While Army helmet nets were made of light olive drab string, Navy issue nets were initially of a darker blueish-green. The design of both Navy and Army helmet nets began with a circular "spoke knot" at the top, from which the string cords were led down the sides and interwoven to make mesh squares approximately an inch across. At the helmet's edge two draw strings were laced around the bottom, enabling the net to be adjusted, and tied at the back.

Tropical pith helmets

Well before the Japanese occupation of China the pith helmet – popularized in the European colonies in the mid 19th century – was already in widespread use by civilians and troops right across southeast Asia. Such headgear gave good head, neck and eye protection from heat and sunlight, was comfortably light in weight, and was inexpensive, since it was made from locally available materials (i.e. cork, hemp, straw or palm fiber, covered with cotton and other light cloths). In military use its obvious drawback was that it afforded no ballistic protection.

Japanese naval enlisted men were only allowed to wear olive drab or green-colored pith helmets for work details or off duty. These displayed a simple metal anchor emblem on the front. Imperial Navy petty and commissioned officers wore pith helmets more commonly, including while on active duty, in green, tan or white cloth. The officer's pith helmet had a more ornate metal anchor badge, sometimes of "fouled" design and/or with the *sakura* centered on the shank.

CLOTHING

The SNLF uniforms worn during the "Shanghai Incident" of 1932 consisted of naval shipboard clothing for officers, petty officers and seamen, depending upon the season; blue wool uniforms were worn during the winter months, and whites during the summer. By early 1933

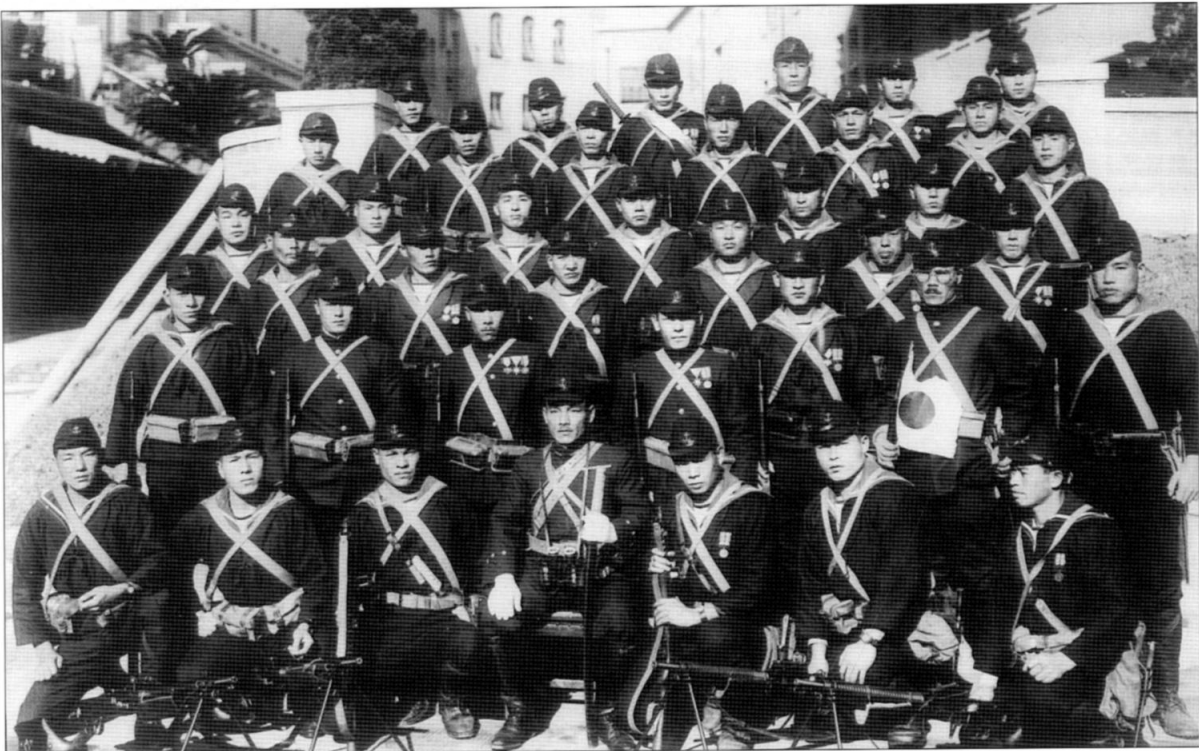
the SNLF began their transition to a more suitable tropical combat uniform resembling that of their Imperial Army counterparts, but in their distinctive "sea green" color.

Enlisted men and petty officers

The first patterns of SNLF tropical uniform (1933 & 1935) consisted of waist-length green cotton jackets with matching straight-legged pants, differing in shade from the drab tan uniforms of the Army. The 1937 and 1940 patterns were of conventional tunic length, worn with pants of "half-breeches" shape, full in the thigh and tightened below the knee. The tunic had an open collar with small lapels; two pleated patch pockets on the breast and unpleated pockets on the skirts were secured with button-down flaps, usually shaped to a point. Pointed shoulder boards were sewn in at the shoulder seams. The early buttons were flat and made of brass, showing an embossed anchor with the *sakura* superimposed at the top, on the stock. The shank on the rear of each button passed through a stitch-reinforced slit and was secured by a metal split ring. Three large buttons secured the front of the tunic, and six smaller buttons the pocket flaps and shoulder straps.

Inside the lower left panel of the tunic was sewn a 2in x 2½in white cotton label with printed *kanji* characters identifying the date and supply depot of the garment's issue, e.g. Yokosuka, Sasebo or Kure. Extra columns on the printed label allowed the wearer to add his personal information; but such labels were rarely filled out by the wearer, as it was common for naval uniform items to be reissued if a sailor was transferred, or if he became a casualty – that way the new recipient would not be haunted by the fate of a named previous owner. This same cloth

SNLF troops pose with their commanding officer (front row, center) in Shanghai, 1934. They all wear the winter issue blue wool shipboard uniform with blue wool field caps, and some display medals on their left chests – a practice strictly limited to formal parades and inspections. The straight-legged blue pants are confined not by canvas leggings but by dark blue puttees – note the standing man at front right. Two Nambu Type 11 light machine guns rest in the foreground; and the men immediately flanking the officer hold Bergmann 7.63mm sub-machine guns. The man left of the officer has a white-hilted dress dirk thrust into his belt.



issue label may be found sewn into the waistband area of the matching uniform pants.

The first patterns of jacket and tunic were worn over the white undershirt, trimmed with blue-black tape at the neck, that was worn as part of a sailor's shipboard uniform; this showed in the open neck of the tunic. Wool undershirts were issued for winter wear, and cotton for summer. This undershirt also had the sewn-in white cotton supply depot issue label.

By 1937, the tunic buttons were being made of gold-colored aluminum, retaining the embossed anchor and *sakura*. The white sailor's undershirt was now replaced with a long-sleeved green cotton button-up shirt with a small collar.

To speed up wartime production Japanese manufacturers initially began taking production shortcuts to minimize hand labor. As the war progressed and the Allied air and submarine campaign to strangle Japanese shipping lanes took increasing effect, strategic materials such as oil, iron ore, tin and rubber from occupied overseas territories became scarce. By 1942 the flat aluminum tunic buttons were already being replaced with plastic (so-called "second pattern" buttons). The pleats disappeared from the tunic breast pockets, and the patch skirt pockets were discontinued, replaced with internal slit pockets. By 1944 ("late war production pattern"), the aluminum and/or plastic buttons were giving place to buttons made from plain wood, and the sewn-in cloth issue label became a blue or black ink stamp, giving the same *kanji* supply depot details. Captured Japanese uniforms and equipment were evaluated by US military intelligence to monitor the decline of Japan's war economy, and the reduced quality of the green cotton uniform material was noted.

Officers

From 1933, the SNLF officer's tropical uniform was also a green tunic, worn with matching half-breeches that fastened below the knee with seven small buttons. The tunic had an open collar with long lapels; the two pleated patch chest pockets and two unpleated "bellows" side pockets were secured with pointed button-down flaps. The officer's uniform tunic used

This SNLF officer wears the Navy Type 2 helmet; the first pattern tropical combat uniform, with removable shoulder boards of soft green cloth and deep lapels; a leather sword belt and naval sword, with leather-covered combat scabbard; and, on a second cross strap, a holstered Nambu semi-automatic, with a cord lanyard diagonally around his body. The wooden Ozaki Unit headquarters sign behind him reads, on the uncropped print, "*Kaigun Toku Betsu Riku Sen Tai Ozaki*." (Robert Rolfe)





China, c.1938: this officer wears the collar tabs of a vice-admiral (two *sakura* emblems on a wide gold braid stripe) on the lapels of his tan khaki short-sleeved tropical shirt; note that he wears a second, white collared shirt under this. The uncropped print shows matching short pants and a cloth belt. His green wool field cap has a leather chin strap, and a yellow felt anchor badge sewn to a green wool patch.

(Robert Reichelderfer)

either flat buttons like the enlisted men, or domed buttons, both made of brass; the motif was an embossed anchor, but for officers with the *sakura* centered on the shank instead of high on the stock. There were three large front buttons and four small pocket buttons, secured by split rings through the shanks as on the enlisted men's uniform. On the rear of the tunic an expansion pleat ran down the spine, and horizontal waist seams gave a deep "false belt" effect. On some examples a sewn-on loop secured with a button at the top was added to the left side of the waist to support a sword belt. On the point of each shoulder, sewn-on loops allowed the attachment of the naval officer's shoulder boards (see "Insignia", below).

Sewn inside the middle or bottom of the left panel of the tunic was a white cloth diamond-shaped name label. These labels – if not simply left blank – might show anything from fancy inked *kanji* characters to custom-embroidered silk *kanji*, usually dependent on the rank of the individual.

The major difference between the uniforms of the enlisted men and their officers lay not in their cut but in their quality, which was determined by where and how the officer's uniform was manufactured. The IJN had independent tailors in

Japan, where officers could get fitted for their uniforms, using the higher quality cotton and wool gabardine materials. When SNLF officers were serving in China many had their uniforms custom-made by local tailors. Throughout the war numerous variations of cotton and wool gabardine materials were used to make up officers' uniforms, though all maintaining the regulation Navy green color.

The officer's tunic was worn with a green or khaki-tan cotton long sleeved shirt, and in 1933 this was briefly worn with a blue-black bow tie. By 1935 the green or tan shirt was worn with a standard long blue-black neck tie. The lapels on the tunic were slightly altered in cut to reduce the opening of the collar, tunics thereafter showing four front buttons. From 1937 the "second pattern uniform" might be seen, with the green shoulder boards permanently sewn into the seam, though still secured at the neck end by a domed naval button. The blue-black neck tie was replaced with a dark green tie, considered less conspicuous for field use.

From 1940, the sewn-in shoulder boards were eliminated entirely from the uniform ("third pattern uniform"), and instead collar tabs on the tunic lapels identified the rank. The neck tie was mostly limited to formal inspections or parades, and in the field an open-neck green, khaki-tan or white shirt was worn, its collar folded outside the tunic collar. Plastic naval buttons (with embossed anchor and centered *sakura*) began to be used in place of metal to support the war economy. Japanese naval officers were always image-conscious and took pride in their appearance; as the war dragged on, they noted with concern the deteriorating quality and workmanship of uniforms and equipment, which reflected the increasing strains on the whole war effort.

INSIGNIA

Rating patches

In the early years of the 20th century the Imperial Japanese Navy was greatly influenced by the British Royal Navy, upon which it sought to model itself in various ways; and one minor feature was the use of "rating" insignia on the sleeves, to identify a man's department within the ship's company and his confirmed proficiency within that branch.

Between 1920 and 1930, IJN sailors wore high quality dark blue or black 3in discs bearing their rating insignia on the right sleeve of their winter service uniforms. (Collectors use the term "round rating" for these patches.) These hand-made insignia identified the sailor's specialty (e.g. gunnery, paymaster, medical, etc.) by an embroidered gold-colored wire symbol. On the back of the disc were sewn four black-painted metal "eye" clips, so that the patch could be tack-sewn to the sleeve.

During the 1930s the gold wire insignia were replaced with three other styles:

Red felt symbol on round dark blue wool patch

Dark blue or black felt symbol on round white cotton patch

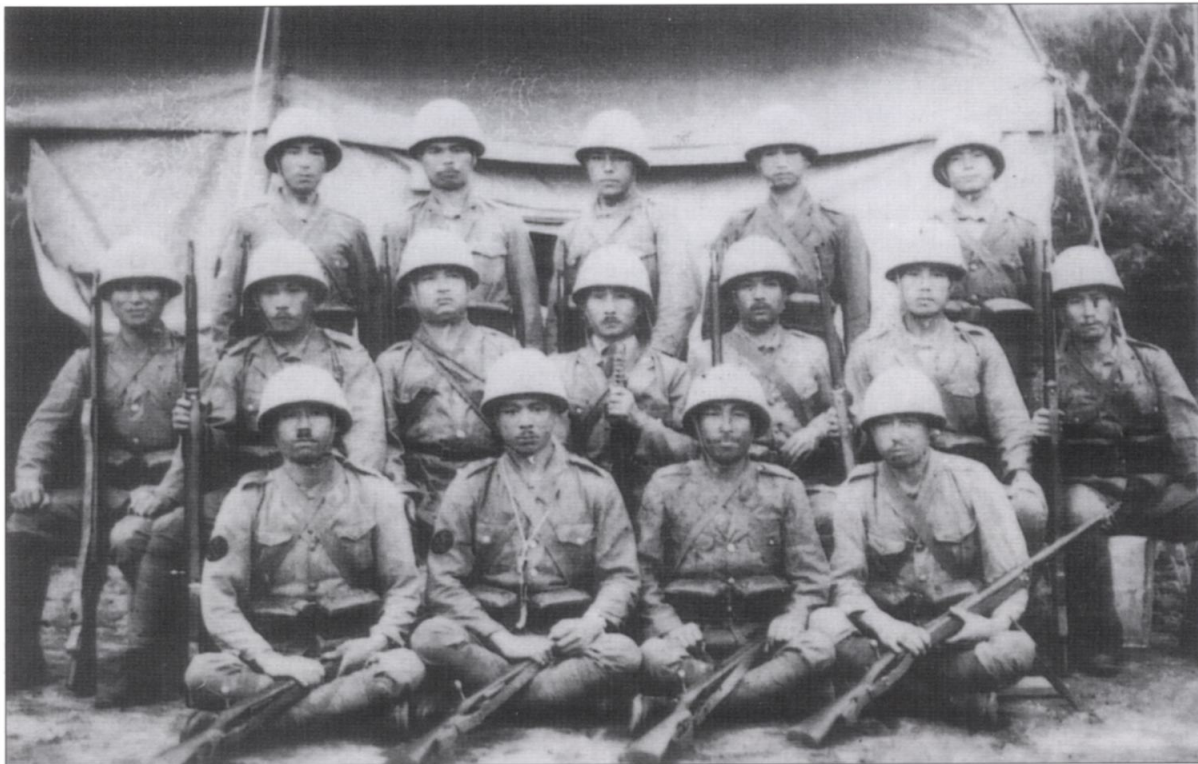
Red felt symbol on round green cotton patch

The "red-on-blue" insignia were primarily worn on the dark blue winter issue shipboard dress. The red felt was cut into a design symbolizing the sailor's specialty or proficiency. A red *sakura* indicated advanced training in a particular discipline, and a red wreath identified a petty officer rank. The red felt shapes were sewn on to the woolen patch; on the reverse was an exposed white paper backing, with no protective lining. The "black-on-white" insignia were primarily worn on the summer issue white shipboard dress; and the "red-on-green" primarily by Special Naval Landing Forces personnel, though also by some Naval Aviation disciplines. Unlike the red-on-blue type, both black-on-white and red-on-green rating insignia had a white cloth rear lining.

In 1942 (officially in November), the IJN discontinued all round rating insignia on service dress, adopting instead a shield-shaped black cotton patch worn on the right sleeve. This measured 9½in wide by 3in deep; the top and sides were straight, forming three sides of a square, while the bottom came to an arrowhead point. The rear of the insignia showed white cloth lining. Butted into the bottom angle of the patch was a machine-embroidered yellow anchor. Above this at the top of the patch might be one, two or three horizontal yellow bars, which identified the seaman's rating: from basic – no bars, through third, second and first class. A yellow wreath surrounding the sides and bottom of the (slightly lifted) anchor identified petty officers, in which

Photographed in November 1941, SNLF Capt Miyamoto still wears the first pattern green tropical tunic with removable shoulder boards, three front buttons and deep lapels, over a tan shirt with a green tie. His sword belt and gloves are leather. The translation reads, "Captain Miyamoto of a troop bearing his name, in Showa 16 [1941], 11th month [November]." (Eric Doody)





Troops of the 1st Maizuru SNLF pose in Hainan, China, in 1939 with their officer (center, second row.) Apart from the sailor at front right, who has a 6.5mm Type 38 rifle, all the enlisted men hold the superior 7.7mm Type 99, and all wear Type 99 ammunition pouches. These men still display round red-on-blue rating patches on their right sleeves. One leading seaman (second from left, front row) has the white lanyard with a bosun's whistle around his neck. (Eric Doody)

cases one, two or three yellow bars at the top indicated ranks from second class, through first class, to chief petty officer. These wartime insignia are today termed "yellow-on-black." A sailor's specialty was identified in the center of the insignia, between the top of the anchor and the rating bars if any, by a *sakura* in one of nine colors. The *sakura* was made of a brass/copper alloy, and painted or filled with the appropriate colored enamel; it had double metal prongs on the back, which were inserted and spread to pin it to the cloth. The branch identifying colors were as follows: yellow = Seaman; red = Medical; white = Paymaster; dark blue = Bandsman; violet = Engineering; green = Ground Crew; light blue = Aviation; brown = Construction; light purple = Mechanic.⁵

All naval insignia were tacked in four or six corners and were never fully sewn down to a uniform, so as to allow for easy removal for security purposes or laundering.

Shoulder and collar insignia

From the early 1930s naval officers' shoulder boards and collar tabs for both winter and summer service uniforms were made of dark blue wool, ornamented to identify the exact rank by stripes of gold wire embroidery and small metal *sakura* blossoms.

As early as 1933, when the first pattern green SNLF officers' uniforms appeared in China, the removable shoulder boards and the collar tabs for this tropical combat uniform were made in a matching green cotton or wool material, to the same design as the dark blue wool insignia; the

(continued on page 33)



1



3



2

LEADING SEAMAN, WINTER
SHIPBOARD DRESS;
SHANGHAI, CHINA, 1932



1



3



2



4

CHIEF PETTY OFFICER, TROPICAL COMBAT DRESS, c.1939–42



1



3



2



4

NAVAL COMMANDER, FIELD COMBAT DRESS, c.1942–45



1



3



2



4

SNLF SEAMAN WITH TYPE 89 GRENADE DISCHARGER, c.1940–45



1



2



3



4



5

MISCELLANEOUS EQUIPMENT, c.1940-45

1 & 2: SNLF officer's assault equipment

3: Late war tunics, gasmasks & equipment

4: First aid kit

5: Tabi shoes and puttees

1

a

b

c

d



INSIGNIA – see text commentary for details

2

a

b

c

d

e



OFFICERS' RANK INSIGNIA
- see text commentary for details

1



2



3



4



9



5



7



6



8



10



1-3: Helmets, showing liner, and
methods of tying chin tapes
4-6: Method of tying puttee
tapes, and puttee label



same obviously applied to the sewn-in shoulder boards introduced in 1937. In 1940 the shoulder boards were eliminated from use on officers' tropical combat uniforms, and only collar tabs continued in use, worn on the lapels; both blue and green backings were seen. (See Plate G for a selection of shoulder board and collar tab rank insignia.)

Prior to 1942, the shoulder boards and collar tabs for some naval officers incorporated a narrow silk edging each side of the gold wire stripes within the insignia, which identified their specialty. These colors followed those of the *sakura* on ratings' sleeve patches described above, e.g. red for medical officers, violet for engineering, etc. With Japan's entry into World War II this practice was discontinued for all formal Navy service dress uniforms.

SNLF identity labels and tags

For comparison purposes, readers may value a description of the identity tag used by Imperial Japanese Army enlisted men. This was a flat brass oval tag worn on a neck tape; it measured 1³/₄in x 1¹/₄in, with squared slits top and bottom for attaching the tape. Japanese *kanji* characters were stamped or embossed on this tag; reading from top to bottom, these identified the soldier's unit and serial number only, but never his name. For security, the arm of service was frequently abbreviated or even disguised – e.g. “mountain” might be used to identify “artillery.” Many Army officers had two brass discs: one exactly like that of the enlisted men, and another individual disc, often embossed with fancy *kanji* script giving his rank and surname, e.g. “Captain Takahashi.”

By contrast, the Special Naval Landing Forces used one of the following items. The first was simply a white cotton label approximately 3in square – there was no standard size – sewn to the tunic above the sailor's left breast pocket. On this label he wrote by hand in *kanji* characters such personal information as his rank, surname, serial number, unit, and/or blood type: e.g., “Seaman 1st Class Takai, Takeda Battalion, Sometani Unit, Blood Type O.” However, many SNLF men wrote fewer details, or simply did not use a label at all.

In place of the sewn-on label many SNLF personnel used an oval white plastic badge, approximately 1¹/₂in x 2in, on which they wrote in *kanji* their personal information as described above, in greater or lesser detail (see accompanying photograph for examples). These plastic ovals were either tack-sewn or fixed with a rear pin, above the left breast pocket.

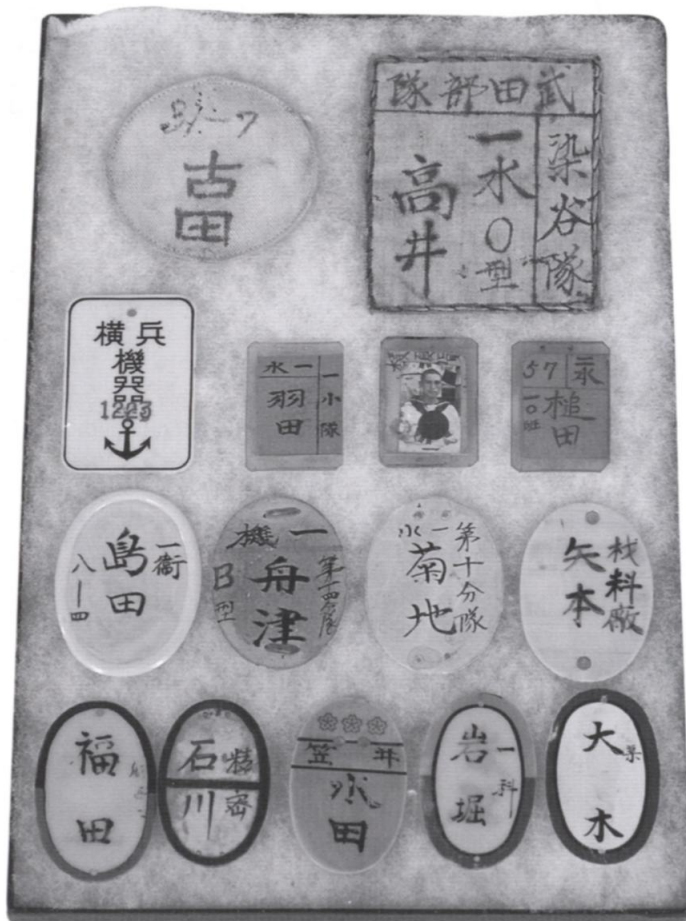
Footwear

As described above, the SNLF troops occupying Shanghai in the early 1930s wore winter blue wool or summer white cotton shipboard uniforms in their landing engagements. Both enlisted ranks and officers



1943: Seaman 2nd Class Kawamura poses in his second pattern green tropical uniform. He can just be seen to wear the post-1942 yellow-on-black rating patch on his right sleeve; and note the black embroidered variation of the usual yellow anchor badge on his field cap. On the white identity label sewn to his left chest Kawamura's surname is written in *kanji*, with his rank of *Sui* (seaman). His tunic has flat aluminum buttons with the embossed anchor and high-placed *sakura*. (Robert Reichelderfer)

Examples of script on SNLF identity badges and label:
 (Top row, left to right) 31-7, Furata; Seaman 1st Class Takai, Takeda Battalion, Sometani Unit, blood type O
 (Second row, left) *Not a man's tag, but marked Yokohama Arsenal Machinery 1223;*
 (thereafter, left to right) Seaman 1st Class Haneda, 1st Squad; (with small photograph) Seaman Enatsu, Yokosuka Naval Barracks; 57th Group 10, Seaman 2nd Class Tsuchida
 (Third row, left to right) 8-4, Leading Seaman Shimada; Division 14, Seaman 1st Class Funatsu, Engineering; Division 10, Seaman 1st Class Kikuchi; Yamoto, Supply Procurement
 (Fourth row, left to right) Fukuda (name only) Ishikawa, Engineering; Warrant Officer Mizuta; Iwabori, Medical; Ohki (name only).



wore lace-up ankle boots ("landing shoes") made of blackened cowhide, with hobnailed soles. The enlisted sailor in winter dress would wear either dark blue wool puttees, or parade-style white cotton canvas spat-type leggings fastened by exterior side buttons. With the summer uniform, only the white leggings would be appropriate. The officers would wear either dark blue wool puttees, or stiff black leather wrap-around leggings secured by narrow double or triple straps.

By early 1937, with the issue of the green combat uniforms, the enlisted ranks' legwear changed to green wool puttees with cotton ties. Sewn inside each puttee was a conventional white 2in x 2½in naval supply depot issue label. In the field SNLF officers continued to wear the stiff black leather leggings, while some high ranking naval commanders wore custom-made black leather riding boots. The resources and availability of materials had a significant impact on all modifications, and most leather used during this period was of local Chinese origin.

By late 1938, SNLF troops had begun wearing *tabi* shoes. These had black or olive drab canvas tops and were secured by two metal clips, at the heel and ankle; the soles and deep welts were made of rubber. The early *tabi* had divided toes, i.e. with a separated big toe. Later production examples were made with a single rounded toe cap, to expedite manufacture (see Plate E5). Although the *tabi* offered more comfort and ease of movement in the field, they were less supportive

than a leather boot, and gave little protection in rough terrain; sharp stones or roots could puncture them, causing injuries. By 1943 supplies of rubber from occupied Malaya were becoming increasingly rare in Japan, and the production of *tabi* dwindled. Parallel shortages meant that pigskin and other inferior leathers were replacing cowhide as the material for boots, and metal hobnails were eliminated.

Shoes of any sort were an increasingly valuable commodity to the Japanese soldier during World War II. Those isolated on Pacific islands were starved of all kinds of resupply by the Allied interdiction of the sea lanes; and many SNLF men, like their Army counterparts, were forced to strip shoes, clothing and equipment from the corpses of their fallen comrades. Relatively few SNLF personnel survived to return to Japan, and after the war civilian goods were too scarce for surviving veterans to discard their military footwear before it wore out completely. This accounts for the small numbers of SNLF-style boots and *tabi* shoes that survive in collections today.

FIELD EQUIPMENT

In the 1930s Special Naval Landing Forces personnel were issued with a full set of field equipment, comparable to that of their Army counterparts. Naturally, in the later years of the Pacific campaign the availability of these items was as subject to shortages as clothing and all other items. The following listing covers regulation issue equipment rather than various late-war field expedients.

Haversacks

The haversack – sometimes referred to by collectors as a “bread bag,” though this is quite inappropriate in a Japanese context – was much smaller than a knapsack or backpack. It was intended to carry limited food rations, other small necessities and the soldier's personal items, and was normally worn slung to hang at the hip.

The haversack issued to Imperial Navy troops was noticeably different from that of the Imperial Army. The Army haversack was of tightly woven smooth cotton material in a light olive drab color. The Navy haversack was of a heavier, looser cotton weave sometimes resembling burlap or hessian, and was a darker green in color. Both Navy and Army haversacks were suspended to the soldier's waist level by a buckle-adjusted cloth shoulder strap, and closed with a cover flap. The bag itself was divided internally into two compartments. The Army style was secured by two cotton tie tapes under the flap, whereas the Navy style had two leather or cloth straps with metal buckles. Army haversacks were stamped in black ink with a Roman numeral for the *Showa* issue year, e.g. “18” for 1943. The early (1939) Navy haversack had a tan or olive drab label sewn on the front beneath the flap, where the sailor could write his name and/or unit designation.

Three naval haversacks. (Left) 1937, of heavy canvas with high quality buckled leather straps on flap. (Center) c.1941, of thinner canvas, with poorer quality straps; note white sewn-on label for owner's details. (Right) c.1943, of dark green canvas, cloth flap straps with metal end tags. On the flap is written “2 8 1 Air,” which may be the unit designation for the IJN 281st *Kokutai* (Air Group). This unit was established, with 48 A6M5 Zero fighters under Cdr Shigehachiro Tokoro, at Maizuru Air Base on February 20, 1943, under control of Yokosuka Naval Base.



Canteens

Navy and Army canteens were also noticeably different. The IJA canteen was an aluminum bottle, painted olive drab, with a combination wood-and-cork stopper, and was carried in a cradle arrangement of olive drab cloth straps suspended from an adjustable shoulder strap.

The Navy canteen had an oval aluminum body and was closed with an aluminum screw cap. Early (1932) canteens had a dark green cover of heavy canvas – similar to the material and color used for the haversack – with an adjustable leather shoulder strap. The cloth cover fitted over the canteen body on both sides, but had a slit opening at the bottom secured with a buckled leather strap. An aluminum drinking cup

Eight SNLF canteens. Officers and enlisted men carried the same oval aluminum canteen with a screw cap and retainer chain, in a canvas cover. Early manufacture canteens had covers with an opening at the bottom secured with a strap, to give access to a cup carried at the bottom of the canteen; later the cup was eliminated and the cover was closed at the bottom. *Kanji* numbers and names are sometimes found marked on the covers.

(Top, left to right): c.1932, cup, open bottom with canvas strap; c.1935, cup, open bottom with leather strap; c.1940, no cup, closed bottom, marked "Ute 115"; c.1937, cup, open bottom with leather strap, marked "Nagato 739."

(Bottom, left to right): c.1945, no cup, non-regulation central zipper; c.1939, cup, open bottom with canvas strap, marked "5-23"; 1944, no cup, closed bottom, marked "Shida 108"; no cup, closed bottom, marked "17 Shi 51."



fitted over the bottom of the canteen inside the opened section of the cover, which could be unstrapped to give access to it.

In 1935 the leather shoulder sling and bottom cup securing strap were replaced with canvas straps. By 1937 the drinking cup was eliminated, and with it the opening in the bottom of the canteen cover. The canvas cover now fitted over the whole of the canteen, and was laced on the upper shoulders with string. Thereafter the Navy canteen remained unchanged until early 1945 when, due to lack of resources, "last ditch" canteens were made of lightweight aluminum, and the covers of a low quality cotton canvas.

First aid kits

Unlike IJA soldiers, SNLF personnel were each issued with a first aid kit. This was not meant to duplicate the supplies carried by the medical corpsman assigned to each unit, but rather to enable the soldier to carry out immediate first aid in the event such assistance was not readily available.

The first aid kit consisted of packages wrapped in wax paper, printed with the naval supply depot anchor and *kanji* identifying the contents – bandages with gauze, cloth strip wraps for tying the bandages, an aluminum can of sulfonamide powder, bottles of salt tablets, malaria pills, insect repellent, and miscellaneous opiates for pain (in powder, pill or syrette forms). With the passage of time and depending upon availability these contents varied quite widely, and the drugs in particular were often unobtainable. The kit sometimes also contained condoms and venereal disease ointments.

These first aid supplies were contained in a green canvas pouch with a shoulder strap, and secured with a leather strap or cloth tie tape. The top of the canvas case was marked with the International Red Cross

symbol, and *kanji* script reading e.g., “Size 2 [medium size] first aid bag” (see Plate E4).

Belts and ammunition pouches

At Shanghai in 1932 SNLF personnel were issued with a brown leather belt with a steel frame buckle, supporting the leather Type 38 cartridge pouches, which were of stiff, old-fashioned, box-like construction. The two front pouches each carried 30 rounds of 6.5mm ammunition for the Type 38 rifle, and a third rear pouch carried 60 rounds (and the rifle oil can, in loops on its right side surface). The top lid of the frontal pouches opened outwards, away from the body, and was secured by a strap across the top ending in tabs passing down to brass studs on each side surface; the rear pouch opened inwards, towards the body, and was secured by a tab and stud on the outer surface. Men who were issued with the Nambu Type 11 light machine gun carried instead the Type 11 ammunition pouches, made of heavy olive drab canvas with leather straps and belt loops.

By 1939 all SNLF troops were wearing the tropical green combat uniform, and more were now carrying the 7.7mm Arisaka Type 99 rifle. The Type 99 ammunition pouches differed slightly in appearance from the Type 38, in that they had what appeared to be a vertical raised seam centrally on the front surface, and a heavier leather bottom surface; however, they accommodated the same total load of 120 rounds. By 1942, pouches were appearing in the front lines made of hard rubber (vulcanized fiber) with rivets, or sewn from rubberized canvas; they were otherwise of similar appearance to the Type 38 pouches. Waist belts were also being made of rubber and/or rubberized canvas. By early 1945, “last ditch” pouches were being made of heavy green canvas with leather or canvas securing straps, and the belts of similar material – or even of woven hemp or rope.



Three variations of the naval officer's mapcase. (Left) 1939, brown leather with pencil loops, stitched-on IJN anchor emblem above leather flap strap. (Center) 1942, green canvas, inked IJN anchor above leather flap strap. (Right) 1945, leather, with side pencil loop, embossed IJN anchor.



Five models of handguns used by the IJN. (Top left) 8mm ("Papa") Nambu Type 14 with lanyard, and large modified trigger guard; (bottom left) improved 1904 Nambu, with Navy anchor marking; (center) 9mm Type 26 revolver; (top right) 8mm Type 94; (bottom right) imported 7.65mm Fabrique Nationale/ Browning M1910. (Steve Hayama)



(Left) 1904 ("Grandpa") Nambu, recognizable by the adjustable tangent rear sight and the grip safety catch; (right) a 7.65mm Type Hamada. (John Ziobro)

Bayonets and frogs

These items, too, suffered from Japan's deteriorating situation as the war progressed. Before 1941 the Type 30 bayonet had a "hook guard" or quillon, designed to catch and trap the opponent's blade during bayonet fighting. By 1942 this was eliminated to save materials and production time, leaving only a straight guard. Type 30 bayonet scabbards went from metal (before 1942), to some vulcanized fiber examples (1942-43),

and finally to wood or bamboo at the end of the war.

The frog suspending the bayonet scabbard from the belt was made of leather from before 1932 until 1941. Thereafter they were made from vulcanized fiber and in various combinations of leather and rubberized fabric until late 1944, and by 1945 they were made from green canvas.

Knapsacks

The SNLF knapsack was simply a bag of heavy green canvas, with shoulder straps to sling it and cloth tie tapes to secure it. Sewn to the outside was a smaller compartment with cloth straps for closure. Unlike the Army backpack, which was more compartmentalized, the Navy knapsack was more like a duffle bag with shoulder straps. Some early 1939 knapsacks had a sewn-in label for the user's name and/or unit designation, but after 1940 a simple issue stamp on the inside of the closure flap was adopted instead.

Gas masks

All the known models of gas mask used by the Japanese military before and during World War II were of the type with a separate face mask and filter canister joined by an air hose. In general the Japanese masks offered good protection against the common types of war gases; however, their face pieces were made for small Asian heads and were uncomfortable when fitted to anyone of larger stature.

The Navy gas mask identified as the Model 93, Type 2 (1929) had a gray-colored rubber face piece with aluminum-rimmed eye pieces. The gray canister measured approximately 5½in high x 6½in wide x 3in thick. A gray or green canvas carrier bag was provided for the face piece only; the canister was carried on the user's back, supported by a canvas strap harness (see Plate B).

The Navy gas mask identified as the Model 93, Type 3 (1937) was practically identical to the Navy Type 2, except that the face piece and hose were olive drab, and the valve housing was made of brown plastic instead of aluminum. The canister was also slightly smaller, c.4½in high x 5¾in wide x 3in thick.

WEAPONS

The SNLF were issued with the same range of small arms and light crew-served weapons as the Imperial Army. The following brief notes identify the main types which may be seen in photographs of these units, using in all cases the Army type designations.

Handguns

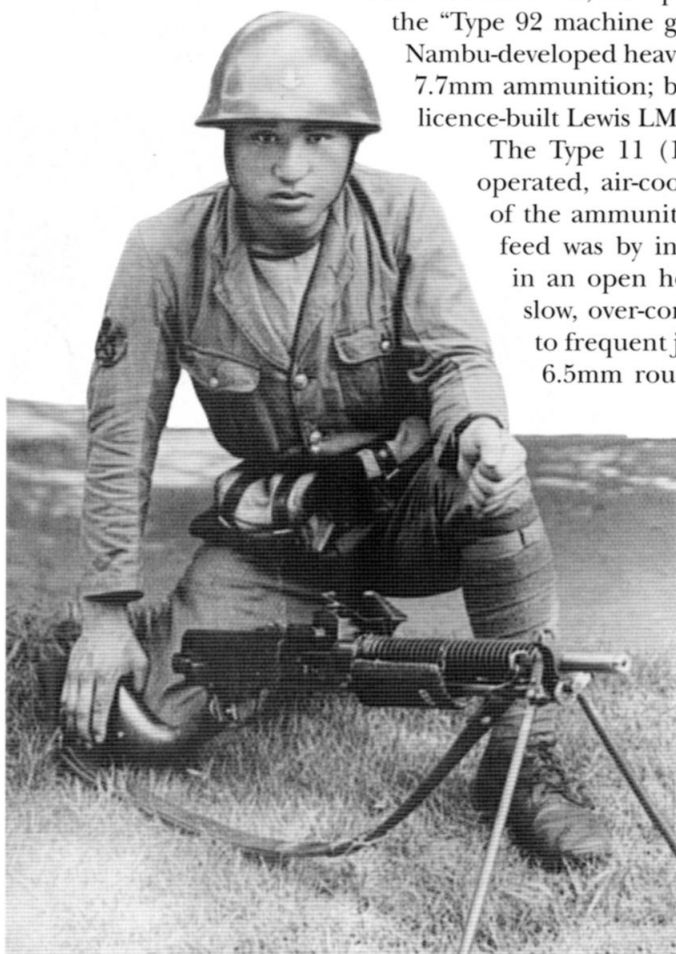
Before World War I the Japanese military had developed their own six-shot, double-action 9mm revolver, the Model Type 26 (1893).

In 1904 an Imperial Army officer, Col Kijiro Nambu, developed a recoil-operated, magazine-fed 8mm semi-automatic pistol superficially resembling the German P08 Luger. This was slightly modified, and eventually became the Type 14 (1925), which differed from the original only in the safety catches and sights; both models took an 8-round magazine. In 1934 the 8mm Type 94 pistol was produced, mainly for export, but it was also accepted by the military; somewhat crude in manufacture, this unattractive weapon took only a 6-round magazine and had inferior muzzle velocity to the Type 14. Late in the war very limited production was reported of a 7.65mm Type Hamada pistol with a 9-round magazine. Prior to 1939 Japan imported small quantities of foreign handguns, including FN/Browning semi-automatics from Belgium; some of these were acquired privately by individual officers.

Standard small arms as used by SNLF troops. (Top) 7.7mm Nambu Type 99 light machine gun; Type 97 hand grenade. (Rifles, top to bottom) "Last ditch" 6.5mm weapon produced in February 1945; 7.7mm Type 99 Arisaka long rifle; short Type 99.



This young seaman 1st class stationed in Shanghai in 1935 poses with Type 11 light machine gun – notice the feed hooper for ammunition clips on the left side of the receiver. He carries on his belt the substantial canvas and leather ammunition pouches; and on the right sleeve of his first pattern tropical uniform the red-on-green *sakura*-and-crossed anchors of his rating is clearly visible. Under his tunic he wears the sailor's traditional shipboard undershirt. (Eric Doody)



Rifles

The Arisaka Type 38 rifle (named after its developer, Col Nariakira Arisaka) began production in 1905. This bolt-action weapon, based on the Mauser design which was then becoming a world standard, used a 6.5mm semi-rimmed cartridge and had a fixed 5-round magazine. It was produced in two barrel lengths: 31.4in, and 19.9in in the carbine version.

Experience in China proved the need for a larger caliber weapon with greater range and penetration, and in 1939 the Japanese military began replacing the 6.5mm rifles with the Arisaka Type 99, taking a rimless version of the 7.7mm semi-rimmed cartridge already used in the Army's Type 92 (1932) machine gun, and with a superior chromed bore. The Type 99 was again a bolt-action weapon with a 5-round magazine, and was produced in two barrel lengths – 31.4in and (in much greater numbers) 25.8 inches. It never completely replaced the Type 38 in service, and the need for two different calibers of rifle ammunition was an obvious handicap for Japanese logistics.

Light machine guns

The lack of cooperation between the Imperial Army and Navy led to chaotic and wasteful duplication in the procurement of machine guns, as of so much else; a simple example of the confusion caused is that of the "Type 92 machine gun". In Army terminology this referred to a Nambu-developed heavy machine gun taking semi-rimmed or rimless 7.7mm ammunition; but the Navy used the same designation for a licence-built Lewis LMG taking a different, rimmed 7.7mm round.

The Type 11 (1922) light machine gun was a 6.5mm gas-operated, air-cooled weapon, which required oil-lubrication of the ammunition to ensure efficient cartridge extraction; feed was by inserting six 5-round clips of rifle cartridges in an open hopper on the left side of the receiver. This slow, over-complex system was vulnerable to dirt and led to frequent jams, and the long-range performance of the 6.5mm round was in any case inadequate for a squad automatic weapon.

By 1936, SNLF units began receiving the Type 96; this was another gas-operated, air-cooled LMG using lubricated 6.5mm ammunition. Although it was more efficiently fed by a 30-round curved box magazine, it was subject to jamming if reduced-charge rifle ammunition was used.

The Type 96 began to be replaced in 1939 with the Type 99 – again gas-operated, air-cooled and fed from a 30-round magazine, but of improved design and taking the superior rimless 7.7mm ammunition; this did not need oil lubrication, and the Type 99 was much more effective and reliable in the field than the earlier types.

Grenade discharger

The 50mm Type 89 (1929) grenade discharger/light mortar was an efficient and versatile weapon, widely issued to infantry platoons. Weighing little more than a rifle, it was a simple tube with a screw-on half-cylindrical base (whose shape deceived some Allied troops into the entirely mistaken and dangerous belief that it could be fired braced against the thigh – thus the term “knee mortar”). The Type 89 was loaded down the muzzle with a range of projectiles – high explosive, white phosphorus, and various pyrotechnic and smoke bombs, or Type 91 hand grenades fitted with propellant charges; fired with a trigger, it had a range of anything between 200 and 700 yards.

Hand grenades

The Japanese military used three types of fragmentation grenades. The Type 91 (1931) had a 7- to 8-second delay fuse; the Type 97 (1937) had a 4- to 5-second delay; and both types had segmented cast cases for fragmentation. The Type 99 (1939) was produced with a smooth case for speed of manufacture; this type was often referred to by US troops as the “Kiska” grenade, after the island in the Aleutians where they first encountered it. All these grenades could be activated by holding the grenade with the fuse pointing downwards, removing the safety pin on its string loop, and striking the head of the fuse against a solid object such as a helmet, while keeping the hands clear of the gas vent holes; they were then thrown immediately, since the delay fuses were often erratic.

The SNLF troops of the 81st Security Battalion, under the command of RearAdm Fukashi Kamijo, arrived in Camranh Bay, French Indochina, on August 13, 1941, aboard the transport vessel *Hiyoshi Maru*. Here, on September 22, men of the 81st are seen performing a landing drill over the beach at Camranh. The seaman 1st class in the left foreground (note round red-on-blue rating patch) is preparing to fire his Type 89 grenade discharger/ light mortar, a versatile and effective weapon which was conventionally issued at a scale of three per platoon in Japanese infantry units. Note that the men in the background wear white ID labels – unusually – above their right breast pockets; the left side was normal, but the other visible features make clear that this is not a reversed photo. (Mainichi Press)



Swords

All naval officers were required to have a military sword for ceremonial use. These were not issued, and officers either purchased them from the *suiikosha* (naval officers' club), or used family or privately acquired blades. A machine-made sword blade cost anything from 10 to 20 yen, but a hand-made blade perhaps 280 yen (in December 1941, 10 yen was worth roughly US \$2.30 or UK £0.58p; this was roughly a Japanese senior private soldier's monthly pay). Petty officers were issued their swords by the Navy.

If an officer had a sword that was a family heirloom, the blade might be removed from its civilian mounts and fitted with naval furniture for military use. Naval scabbards had two hanger rings, Army scabbards only one.

Because the IJN did not issue to living personnel individual awards or decorations for valor and distinguished service (all heroes were dead heroes), some admirals took matters into their own hands and presented swords to deserving officers. These were long *katana* blades (24–30in) in wooden scabbards, with *kanji* inscriptions, accompanied by a citation scroll.

Daggers

After a junior grade officer graduated from naval academy he was presented with a *tantô* dress dagger; this had a single-edged blade (with blade guards) like that of a Japanese sword, mounted in a wooden hilt, with a grip covered with white ray or sharkskin (*same*) and wrapped with brass wire. Scabbards prior to 1939 were covered with brown or black polished ray or sharkskin between two gilded brass mounts; scabbards produced after 1940 used skins less frequently, and more commonly black or brown cowhide. Two loose, opposing brass rings were mounted at the top of the scabbard, so that the dagger could be worn from a belt and hangers under the left side of the uniform tunic. The naval officer's dagger was strictly a ceremonial or dress weapon; contrary to popular myth, there are no known cases of its being used to commit *seppuku* (ritual suicide by disembowelment).

Shanghai, 1934: this Navy officer, wearing blue uniform and field cap, poses on a Type 89B medium tank, yet he still gives pride of place to his sword. A naval flag has been painted on the side of the tank, and immediately below the 57mm gun a brass naval anchor vehicle badge had been welded on top of the original Army star. (Gary Nila)



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When a serviceman left for the front it was customary for family, neighbors and/or comrades to sign a national flag for him with wishes for his good fortune. This flag bears the following inscriptions, from one veteran of Shanghai to another: (first column) "Shanghai [Shinto] Shrine"; (second column) "To Seaman 1st Class Katoh"; (center column) "Praying for long-lasting luck in battle"; (fourth column) "From Petty Officer 2nd Class Ohnuki"; (fifth column) "Kainan Island Campaign."

THE PLATES

A: LEADING SEAMAN, WINTER SHIPBOARD DRESS; SHANGHAI, CHINA, 1932

In the infancy of the SNLF, landing force personnel wore the dark blue wool shipboard dress of loose jumper and straight pants with infantry equipment. The "first pattern" Navy steel helmet – the so-called "cherry blossom" helmet – is painted greenish-brown, though gray examples were also seen. Note the characteristic extended frontal brim, the blossom-shaped ventilator cover plate at the apex, and the detailed embossed brass anchor badge fixed to the front. Under the blue jumper is worn a white undershirt with dark blue tape trim at the neck; over the jumper's blue flap collar is a bright blue cotton collar with inset white tape edging. Round red-on-blue rating insignia are worn on the jumper sleeves: on his right, the *sakura* (cherry blossom) over two crossed anchors, indicating leading seaman; and on his left, the *sakura* over a horizontal cannon barrel, indicating graduation from the regular gunnery course.

Over his black laced boots, white cotton-canvas leggings are fastened up the outside with small white buttons; note at the top rear (A3) the remnants of tie tapes. The brown leather waistbelt, with a single-prong steel frame buckle, supports two front and one rear box-like Type 38 ammunition pouches (note oil bottle, A3); and a frog on the left hip for the metal scabbard of the Type 30 bayonet – note (A2) the bayonet's large hooked quillon. Pale olive drab cloth slings over his left shoulder support a Navy water canteen and haversack at the right hip. The sailor's weapon is the 6.5mm Arisaka Type 38





Chief Petty Officer Minoru Iizuka poses near the turret of his tank in September 1942 on Nauru Island, west of the Gilberts. From June 1943 the island's garrison included the 2nd Yokosuka SNLF, disbanded in 1942 but newly reformed using personnel from the formerly parachute-trained 1st Yokosuka SNLF. Iizuka is wearing a tan tropical work shirt and shorts, and a white summer naval field cap (more properly, deck cap) with the one black stripe of a petty officer. Iizuka was killed with his tank crew on November 21, 1943, during a US bombardment of the air base on Nauru. (Kazuhiko Osuo)

rifle. To this he has tied a Japanese national flag, in white with a centered red *hinomaru* or sun disc. This flag is a personal possession, and almost every serviceman had one – indeed, it was the most common souvenir taken by Allied soldiers from the battlefields. It bears in black ink the customary wishes for good fortune in life and battle signed by the sailor's family, friends, neighbors and work colleagues, or by comrades, when he left for the front. (Blue wool pants courtesy of Russell Naikishi)

B: CHIEF PETTY OFFICER, TROPICAL COMBAT DRESS, c.1939–42

This young chief petty officer wears the "second pattern" tropical uniform (1937), with sewn-in shoulder boards, and

full combat equipment. His Navy Type 2 helmet has a "second pattern" cloth cover (embroidered anchor badge, rather than appliqué,) under a camouflage net. He wears a pair of standard Japanese military issue eye glasses. The broad collar of his tan-khaki shirt is folded outside that of his tunic. The latter is of heavy greenish cotton; it has four patch pockets, the breast pair with box pleats, the skirt pair unpleated but with "bellows" expansion (B2). The buttons are of gold-colored aluminum, bearing an anchor and centered *sakura*; just visible on his upper right sleeve is the round red-on-green rate patch of his rank – a *sakura* over two crossed anchors, within an open-top wreath. Low-cut black leather boots are covered at the top by stiff black leather wrap-around leggings fastened by two buckled straps.

His weapon is the Type 38 rifle, but his leather waistbelt nevertheless supports a set of Type 99 pouches – note central front seam (B2); these were often preferred to the Type 38 if they were available. Over his left and right shoulders respectively he wears the cloth slings for his Navy canteen and haversack. The post-1937 canteen cover is secured at both "shoulders" with lacing through metal grommets; note also (B4) the aluminum screw cap and retainer chain, and white-painted *kanji* characters (top to bottom) "7 (in diamond), 1, 4 (circled – leader), 5, 1". Also shown on B4 is the gray Navy Type 3 gasmask filter canister,

secured by a cloth strap cradle on shoulder and waist straps. Its corrugated rubber tube leads to the face piece in a tan satchel supported on a cloth waist strap just above the leather belt; the satchel marking "II-4, 22969" is believed to be a manufacturer's lot number. (Entire uniform, leggings and boots courtesy of Nakata Shoten)

C: NAVAL COMMANDER, FIELD COMBAT DRESS, c.1942-45

This IJN commander serving with an SNLF unit wears the "third pattern" tropical combat uniform (1940), with the rank displayed only on collar tabs worn on the lapels. The field cap has the two black stripes around the base that identified all commissioned officers, and the officers' badge – an anchor with centered *sakura* over an open-top wreath – is embroidered in yellow silk on a satin disc. **C3** shows an alternative headgear, a tropical pith helmet covered with green wool gabardine cloth; this has a dull brass anchor-and-*sakura* badge pinned to the front, and a leather chinstrap is worn up over the front of the brim.

These examples of the tunic and matching pants are also made of a fine wool gabardine in a drab shade of green. The depth of the collar opening has been reduced since the first pattern, so there are four front buttons. The patch breast pockets have boxed pleats, but the skirt pockets are now internal, with only the flaps showing. In **C4**, note the expansion pleat down the spine, and the "false belt" effect of the horizontal seams in the small of the waist. His shirt collar is folded open over the tunic collar (**C2**), above the lapels displaying IJN collar tabs of this rank – two gold braid stripes and two blossoms, here on the original navy-blue wool backing. Stiff black leather leggings with buckled straps are worn over black "landing shoes" – low-cut laced ankle boots.

His field equipment begins with a late war (c.1944) Sam Browne-style sword belt in brown leather and green canvas, with leather and canvas fittings and brass D-rings (see **C2**, **C3** & **C4**); its shoulder strap passes from the rear left hip, up

over the right shoulder and down to the front left hip. This supports, on two green canvas hangers (one of which is just visible in **C4**), a Navy officer's sword with a brown silk knot (**C2**); this had virtually no practical combat value, but was carried for reasons of tradition and as a symbol of authority. Over the sword belt, on a narrow brown leather strap passing over his left shoulder, are a canvas holster for the Type 94 pistol, and a leather pouch for 20 rounds of 8mm pistol ammunition (**C2**). Next, he has put on the canvas slings for a canvas mapcase, with leather fittings, hanging behind his left hip; and for a canteen slung behind his right hip, its canvas cover marked here "5-1, (i), 3, 1". On top of these slings, a cord lanyard from the butt of the pistol divides to pass diagonally around the body from right hip to left shoulder (**C2** & **C4**). Finally, he has hung around his neck a pair of Navy binoculars on a combination leather and canvas strap, with canvas eye cup covers (**C2**).

D: SNLF SEAMAN WITH TYPE 89 GRENADE DISCHARGER, c.1940-45

This enlisted man wears the "third pattern" tropical uniform (1940), over the IJN sailor's blue-trimmed white summer undershirt. His field cap bears a second-type anchor badge, embroidered on a backing patch. Partly visible on the front of his left shoulder (**D2**) is a white identification label on which he has written personal details in black ink *kanji*

Imperial Japanese Navy uniform buttons:

(First left, top & bottom) Front and side views of half-round button in gold-colored aluminum, with admiral's motif – wreathed anchor with *sakura* centered on shank

(Second left, top) 1937 flat brass button for enlisted men, with *sakura* placed high, on stock of anchor

(Second right, top & bottom) Flat, gold-colored aluminum button for petty officer, with *sakura* centered on shank of anchor.

(Right) 1945 light brown plastic pocket button for petty officer, with *sakura* centered on shank of anchor.





Naval "rising sun" flags in red on white, with an off-set *hinomaru* but the same 16 rays as Army versions. The top example is a troop-sized cotton flag tied to a wooden pole with a gold-colored ball finial (courtesy Kenneth Radman). The lower flag is rather larger, at 3ft x 4ft 6in suitable to be flown on a troop transport. Note also, at center, five variations of the metal naval anchor and anchor-and-*sakura* badges that were mounted on the front of SNLF light and armored vehicles.

characters. The pants are confined by green wool puttees with cotton tapes, here crossed at the front; his black canvas and rubber *tabi* shoes have divided toes (D1).

Over the tunic he wears an armor vest with a pale olive drab cover incorporating steel plates (D2 & D4); occasionally issued, but not standard equipment, this gave chest and back protection from projectile fragments and low caliber ammunition, but not from high velocity rifle and machine gun rounds. Over this are the canvas shoulder slings for the green haversack behind his left hip, and the canteen on his right. Over these (D2) are slung the pouches for eight rounds of ammunition for the Type 89 grenade discharger/light mortar, made from strong tan canvas with leather strap-and-stud fastening; directly above each quadruple pouch note black metal quick-release hooks. At the rear (D4), the crossed straps support the mortar tool bag, also on quick-release hooks. Other rear details of the equipment show the haversack marked, from top to bottom, " 7 (circled), 1, 2, 0, 0." Slung to hang behind the right hip is a light tan gasmask bag with a white sewn-on ID tag on the flap, and a stamped manufacturer's lot number "8371".

At the figure's feet (D1 & D3) are the Type 89 discharger with its brown leather muzzle cover in place; 50mm projectile; and the leather-fitted tan canvas bag in which the discharger was carried, slung from the shoulder, when out of the line. (Entire uniform, armor vest and Type 89 pouches courtesy of Robert Reichhelderfer; Type 89 discharger, projectile and canvas case courtesy Alexander MacIver)

E: MISCELLANEOUS EQUIPMENT, c.1940-45

E1 & E2: SNLF officer's assault equipment

This armor vest, like the enlisted man's type on Plate D, was not standard equipment; it too has a number of separate steel plates in pockets inside the black leather cover, and gave comparable protection. It covers the chest and belly only, and is supported at the back by crossed canvas straps riveted at

the shoulders and fastened at the hips. Around the waist is an early (c.1940) brown leather sword belt, with a cross strap passing over the right shoulder; this supports a sword hanger on the left hip, and a contemporary brown leather mapcase behind it. A tan leather strap over the left shoulder supports a leather holster for the Type 14 pistol on his right hip; and tan canvas straps over his right and left shoulders respectively support the canteen and binocular case behind his hips. The latter bears *kanji* reading "68 diving (*sen*)."

E3: Gasmasks, late war tunics & equipment

(Left) The model wears a 1945 issue Type 3 steel helmet with painted anchor badge. The late war tunic, with plastic buttons, shows yellow-on-black insignia on the right sleeve: a double good conduct chevron, above the rating patch of seaman 2nd class (one top bar above the *sakura* and anchor). The Type 2 gasmask has a gray-black face piece and rubber hose, and is carried in a tan canvas bag on the right hip. At right front of the late war rubberized canvas belt, opposite the ammunition pouch made of the same material, the small pocket for a Type 97 hand grenade is an individually made-up piece, not on issue item.

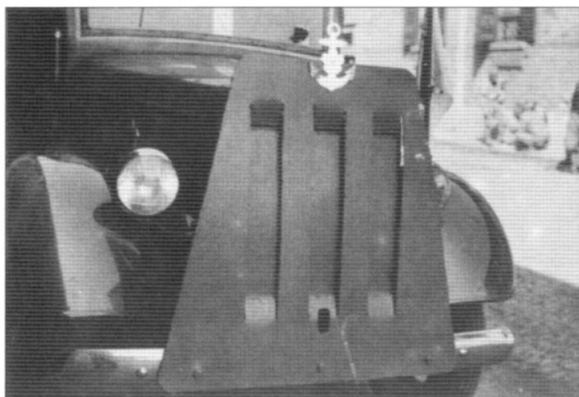
(Right) The late war cloth helmet cover has an embroidered anchor badge. The tunic – note typical variation of shade from the other example – has plastic buttons, and straight flaps on the unpleated pockets; on the left sleeve the yellow-on-black *sakura* marks an elementary rating from a specialist course – gunnery, ordnance, etc.

The Type 3 gasmask has an olive drab face piece and rubber hose. The belt equipment is of vulcanized fiber.

(Front) Type 3 gasmask as issued from a naval supply depot, in a blue-gray stiff cardboard case with metal reinforcement; this contains the mask, filter canister, and carrying bag.

E4: First aid kit

The contents varied over time. This example has the standard drab canvas satchel with a cloth sling, leather fastening tab and stud. Just visible painted on the top of the



Shanghai, 1937: an SNLF staff car protected against guerrilla hand-grenade attacks with a makeshift steel-plate radiator guard, adorned with a brass naval anchor-and-sakura.

flap is the internationally recognized Red Cross symbol, and on the front, black *kanji* script reading "Size 2 [medium] first aid bag." The aluminum can at right contains sulfa powder; between the two bandage packets at front is a green box containing a tube of VD ointment – this was not standard issue, but was sometimes available. Typical items not shown here are bottles of salt tablets, anti-malarial drugs, insect repellent and pain-killers; but again, these were far from universally available.

E5: Tabi shoes

Made of canvas and rubber, and fastened by metal clips at the back, these were issued to the IJA and IJN from 1938 until rubber supplies became exhausted, as an alternative to hobnailed leather boots. The pair on the left are late-manufacture single-toe shoes in the usual black color; the pair at right are of the earlier divided-toe design, here a rare example made in olive drab color. Each is shown with a rolled pair of puttees, showing the stores depot label (see also Plate H).

F: INSIGNIA

F1: SNLF red-on-green round rating insignia, pre-c.November 1942; and officers' shoulder boards on green backing, c.1933–40

Row (a) Anchor symbols identify all as assigned to the Seaman branch of service, as worn by most SNLF combat personnel. *From left to right:* Chief petty officer; petty officer 1st class; petty officer 2nd class; leading seaman; seaman 1st class; seaman 2nd class.

Row (b), *from left to right:* Petty officer 2nd class, Paymaster branch (crossed pencils); leading seaman, Paymaster; seaman 2nd class, Paymaster. Leading seaman, Engineering (crossed wrenches); seaman 2nd class, Engineering; reverse of patch, showing white cotton backing and four black metal eyes for fixing.

Row (c), *from left to right:* Leading seaman, Construction branch (crossed geometric compasses); seaman 1st class, Construction; variation of cotton backing; petty officer 2nd class, Medical branch (scalpel); seaman 2nd class, Medical.

Row (d), *from left to right:* Ensign, special service (narrow gold braid); ensign (normal braid); lieutenant junior grade;

lieutenant j.g., Medical (red edging to braid); lieutenant; lieutenant-commander; admiral (wide braid.)

F2: Wartime field cap badges, c.1940–45; officers' collar tabs, c.1939–45; helmet badges, c.1939–45

Column (a) Field cap insignia, machine-embroidered in yellow on green cloth backing and cut out to circular or oval shape. *From top to bottom:* Ranking civilian attached to IJN, 1945; officer, 1945; officer, 1944; officer, 1940–42; petty officer, 1944; enlisted seaman, 1944; enlisted seaman, 1944 – black variation.

Column (b) Warrant officers' and officers' collar tabs of rank, c.1939–45, on green cloth backing. *From top to bottom:* lieutenant j.g., Engineering (purple edging), & ensign, Engineering; lieutenant j.g.; warrant officer, & lieutenant j.g.; warrant officer; warrant officer; petty officer lapel insignia, 1944–45.

Column (c), *from top to bottom:* Vice-admiral; rear-admiral; captain (stained examples); commander; lieutenant-commander (stained examples). Four brass anchors for petty officers' shoulder boards, 1937–39, & bordered anchor badge of IJN school; three yellow embroidered anchors for enlisted field caps, 1945; four anchor badges for steel helmets – first three of steel, 1944–45, and fourth of brass, 1937.

Column (d), *from top to bottom:* Unidentified collar insignia, in yellow & red, with *sakura* set on one & two stripes; lieutenant; lieutenant j.g.; ensign; ensign (stained example); ensign, Medical.

Column (e) Field cap insignia, still uncut from green cloth backing. *From top to bottom:* Civilian attached to IJN, 1945; officer, 1945; officer, 1945; petty officer, 1945; enlisted seaman, 1940; enlisted seaman, 1945.

G: OFFICERS' RANK INSIGNIA

The sequence of insignia identifying warrant and commissioned ranks is illustrated here, for variation, on the removable navy-blue stiff shoulder boards worn by some naval officers assigned to the SNLF, 1933–c.1937; the removable or fixed green shoulder boards, worn c.1937–40; and the collar tabs, worn with either blue or green backing, 1933–45.

G1: Warrant officer

G2: Ensign

G3: Lieutenant junior grade

G4: Lieutenant

G5: Lieutenant-commander

G6: Commander

G7: Captain

G8: Rear-admiral

G9: Vice-admiral

G10: Admiral

(Illustration by Christa Hook)

H: HELMETS AND PUTTEES

H1 & H2: Navy Type 2 helmet, showing different methods of arranging chin tapes

H3: Interior of helmet, showing liner and tapes, and cloth cover tightened with draw string. The arrow indicates front center

H4 & H5: Method of tying puttee tape

H6: Stores label on puttees

(Illustration by Christa Hook)

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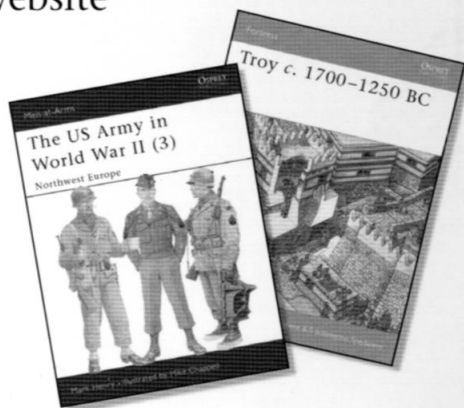
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