



THEIR GUNS WERE ALWAYS READY

BY JAMES THOMPSON

OUR PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY OF THE MIGHTY IOWA-CLASS BATTLESHIPS – THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL WARSHIPS. THIS IS THE THIRD SEGMENT ON THE USS MISSOURI (BB-63) - PART FIFTEEN



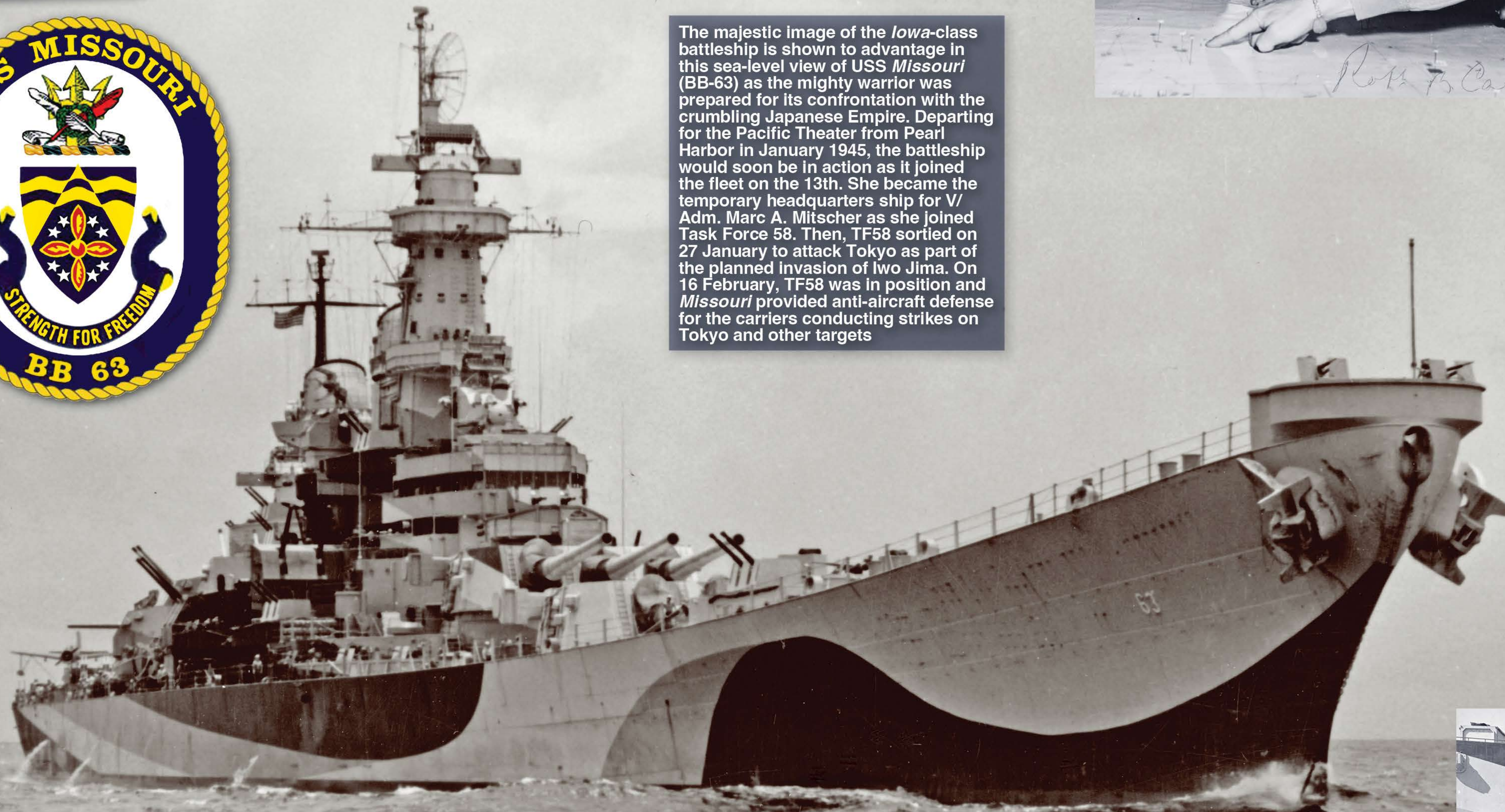
The majestic image of the Iowa-class battleship is shown to advantage in this sea-level view of USS *Missouri* (BB-63) as the mighty warrior was prepared for its confrontation with the crumbling Japanese Empire. Departing for the Pacific Theater from Pearl Harbor in January 1945, the battleship would soon be in action as it joined the fleet on the 13th. She became the temporary headquarters ship for V/Adm. Marc A. Mitscher as she joined Task Force 58. Then, TF58 sortied on 27 January to attack Tokyo as part of the planned invasion of Iwo Jima. On 16 February, TF58 was in position and *Missouri* provided anti-aircraft defense for the carriers conducting strikes on Tokyo and other targets



Admiral William F. Halsey, Commander, 3rd Fleet, listens in the "flag plot" room while an aide makes a suggestion during the planning of *Missouri's* strike on Japan. Directly to his left is R/Adm. R.B. Carney. For most of March, the battleship provided effective anti-aircraft support against Japanese aircraft attempting to reach the American carriers. The enemy had a large reserve of all forms of aircraft that would be thrown in a final, desperate suicide attempt against the American fleet.



Two WAVES look out through the armored rear door of a 5-inch turret while visiting USS *Missouri* prior to the battleship's departing for the Pacific. The ladies are Yeoman Second Class Blanche Oswald and Yeoman Third Class Betty Martin. Once in the Pacific Theater, the battleship's 5-inch guns were in constant action. On 19 February, the sleek shape of *Missouri* pulled into position off Iwo Jima and began blasting that hell hole in support of the costly invasion. In addition to bombardment and protecting the carriers, *Missouri* and the other battleships acted as oilers for the escorting destroyers. This was because the fleet's logistics train could not accompany the strike force during raids.



In an action that shook the sea, *Missouri* lets go with a salvo from two of her 16-inch turrets. Note the shells in flight. Using her 16-inch and 5-inch weapons, *Missouri* smashed targets on Iwo Jima but the enemy was firmly embedded into the rocky ground and the Japanese would take a terrible toll of invading Marines. When the USS *Franklin* was heavily damaged, *Missouri's* task group was detached to cover the carrier's withdrawal.



Supplying a ship the size of the *Missouri* was an endless task. In this photo, a veritable human chain totes boxes of Lucky Strike cigarettes from the truck up the gangway and onto the battleship's forward deck. The Navy noted that the sailors smoked an average of five cases of cigarettes during a tour at sea.