

COST OF WAR

ILLUSTRATING THE HUGE LOSSES OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR, WE PRESENT A FURTHER SELECTION OF SHOT-DOWN, WRECKED, AND CAPTURED AIRCRAFT FROM OUR FILES
BY MICHAEL O'LEARY



These *Raidens* have had their landing gear retracted but it is not known if this was done by the Japanese or the Americans occupying the field. Gleaming new Douglas C-54 Skymasters in the background began arriving at Atsugi immediately after the field was secured. The transports brought in personnel and supplies to occupy the field along with intelligence teams to examine the captured aircraft. With its high performance, the *Raiden* (Allied codename "Jack") was of particular interest. The interceptor was armed with four 20mm cannon. Atsugi, named after the nearby city, was built by the Japanese Navy in 1938. It became home to the 302 Naval Aviation Corps whose fighters were tasked with defending Tokyo against American bombing raids. With American occupation, it became home to the 3rd Bomb Group and the 49th Fighter Squadron.

American occupation personnel arriving at Atsugi airbase in Japan's Kanagawa Prefecture found a huge selection of enemy aircraft — many of which had been gathered for suicide attacks against the American invasion fleet. Of course, the atomic bombs put an end to the invasion. The field was littered with everything from light trainers to the most current fighters. General Douglas MacArthur was worried about Japanese fanatics that might take some of these aircraft to attack US ships and aircraft so occupation of the airfields was a priority. This dramatic view shows Mitsubishi J2M *Raidens* (Lightning Bolt) minus propellers and other pieces of equipment. One of the first things that MacArthur did was to order that all aircraft have their propellers removed. If this did not take place, then the airfield would be attacked. Designed by Jiro Horikoshi, creator of the Zero, the J2M was a point-defense interceptor that would go after high-altitude B-29 bombers. Maneuverability would be sacrificed for climb performance and heavy armament. The Mitsubishi Kasei engine was buried behind a long cowl and was cooled by an intake fan and connected to the propeller with an extension shaft and this arrangement can be seen in the first aircraft.

