

# Pacific Theatre

## Part 9: The Gilbert & Marshall Island Campaign

“In which you take a shot every time I write the word atoll”

Naval Intelligence Bingo		
remote atoll	thousands of hidden Japanese	underground bunker network
we bombed them for months	no logistics	the marines win, again
8 / 13 / 33 / 88	early photoshop	no evidence of any Japanese activity whatsoever

By Lestrade aka Unpopular Opinion

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*There's no freedom of speech in the UK but I'll say my opinion anyway*

Another day, another tale of World War 2. We are several battles in and what Call of Duty/the History Channel promised me would be a grand epic of warfare turns out to just be a load of Navy intel fan fiction and an extended holiday of good old boys sailing around South Pacific islands working on their tan.\*

The campaign to liberate the [Gilbert and Marshall Islands](#) from their Japanese occupiers ran from August 1942 to February 1944. As per Wikipedia:

*“They were the first steps of the drive across the central Pacific by the **United States Pacific Fleet and Marine Corps**. The purpose was to **establish airfields and naval bases** that would allow air and naval support for upcoming operations across the Central Pacific. Operation **Galvanic** and Operation **Kourbash** were the code names for the Gilberts campaign (in modern Kiribati) that included the seizures of **Tarawa and Makin, during the Battle of Tarawa of 20–23 November and the Battle of Makin of 20–24 November 1943**. Operation **Flintlock** and Operation **Catchpole** were aimed at capturing Japanese bases at **Kwajalein, Eniwetok, and Majuro** in the Marshall Islands.”*

Casualties and losses	
~5,100 killed or missing	~21,000 killed
6,700 wounded	375 captured

Japanese in the second column, of course. As always, ridiculous numbers. 4 to 1 odds seems a bit silly given it's an entrenched force defending against an attacking force who are having to fight in unfamiliar terrain attacking established bases (generally speaking this is the scenario the Marines always find themselves in). You would expect casualties to be roughly slanted in the favour of the Japanese if anything. I've already made the joke about US troops must be wearing Iron Man robot suits given that they can hurl themselves into a series of awkward amphibious landings, capture-the-compound missions and deal with endless booby traps; minefields; hidden snipers and banzai suicide rushes along the way – but they always come out on top. We never have a wipe out, for instance. No example of “We sent in the Marines and they all got killed”, no amphibious landings sunk entirely by artillery/naval mines. These guys had the luck of the gods on their side. Or something.

More wounded than dead, again this is impressive, getting hit in a tropical swamp/forest and knocked around in the dirt, dehydrated in scorching heat with 1940's field medicine to try and keep you conscious... it's incredible that more men didn't just die of injury. Of course I wonder how many wounded are actually carted off for normal sickness, e.g. malaria or dysentery. We've seen that before. Also note how it's “or missing”, which is always interesting to me in that this allows for the possibility of the ONI/Pentagon being able to list extra men on paper, in name only, then claim they were never “found”. No body needed.

The Japanese do their usual routine of stacking a million men on an atoll the size of the White House lawn and being killed almost to a man (with the classic “but then we captured three guys... somehow”). A cynic would say the Marines are guilty of committing an endless number of massacres and that is a whole aspect of the Pacific campaign that has been swept under the carpet. I've seen enough to now think the whole thing is fake. I still couldn't tell you if the Japanese are all equipped with grenades and blow themselves up upon capture or not, the ONI can't keep the narrative consistent. If the Japanese were as fanatical as they (sometimes) are made out to be I can't see how you'd ever capture any of them.

*“Allied commanders knew that an eventual surrender of Japan would require penetration of these islands. While commander of the United States Army, General Douglas MacArthur, wanted to push towards the Philippines via New Guinea, United States Navy Admiral Chester W. Nimitz favoured a drive across the central Pacific, through the Gilberts, the Marshalls, the Carolines, and eventually the Marianas, which would put American B-29 bombers within range of Tokyo. In addition to forcing the Japanese to fight two fronts against the Allies (Nimitz driving from the east and MacArthur from the south), Nimitz's plan would neutralize the outer Japanese defences, allowing American ground, naval, and air bases to be stationed there for future attacks against other occupied island groups. These outer islands included the atolls of Tarawa and Makin in the Gilberts, and Majuro, Kwajalein, and Eniwetok in the Marshalls.”*

Or you could just go via China, who were already at war with the Japanese and would have happily helped you maintain bases inland to fly out east. You could have gone into China from the west/north west via the Aleutians (because you're allied with the Soviets) or you could go into China from the south-west (because of Indian/British operations in South Asia). Or go straight from California to Japan via Hawaii. Any of these routes would seem quicker and easier than having to fight island to island over a four year period in the south Pacific. I suspect Nimitz was getting a monthly pay-check and needed to drag it out. Also fewer people down there as witnesses that nothing happened.

*“Following Carlson's Raiders' diversionary Raid on Makin Island and the defeat at Guadalcanal, the Japanese command was growing aware of the vulnerability and strategic significance of the Gilbert Islands, and started adopting a defensive stance. Although Imperial leaders wanted to*

*heavily fortify the Marianas and Palau before the Americans could get there, commanders in the outer islands were told to try and hold the island as long as possible. Fortifications were quickly improved by the Japanese, starting in March 1943. **Makin Atoll** had a seaplane base built on the main island of Butaritari, while **Tarawa** housed barely enough room for an airfield **on its main harbour island, Betio.***

Always a defensive stance. They seize the entire Pacific rim in like a week but suddenly they can't go down into Australia or NZ, or push back against Hawaii. "Main harbour island" is funny as well. You'll see why as we go.

*"When the Americans landed, in the **Battle of Tarawa** fought on **20–23 November 1943**, nearly **5,000 Imperial Japanese Navy Land Forces**, among them **3,000 Special Naval Landing Forces**, and **1,247 construction labourers** were stationed on Tarawa; **the Makin Islands, in contrast, were only held by a total of 798 combat troops**, including some **100 isolated Japanese aviation personnel**. A detachment of soldiers from Tarawa island also occupied the island of **Abemama** in September 1942, and though initially numbering about **300**, by the time the Americans invaded the island in November 1943, most of them had been evacuated back to Tarawa, leaving only **25 Special Naval Landing Forces** behind to defend the island."*

OK so we've established the main force is at Tarawa, with 5,000 personnel. You can't really class construction workers as a proper threat to trained Marines so that's 3,753 at most who are combat ready on Tarawa. Makin has less than 800 men. Abemama has 25 men. Right. Not exactly a massive force given the Marines just dumped 11,000 men on Guadalcanal alone, won that and are on the prowl for more blood.

Also we're ignoring that these places are teeny tiny sandy atolls in the ocean. The Americans have air/naval supremacy (USA! USA!) so they can literally sail around them blasting them with cannon, or bomb the islands flat from the carriers. Mines can be dumped in the waters around the atolls and then the fleet can sail away laughing, leaving a smoking ruin with no way to get on or off the islands without support ships coming in with supplies and mine clearance operations.

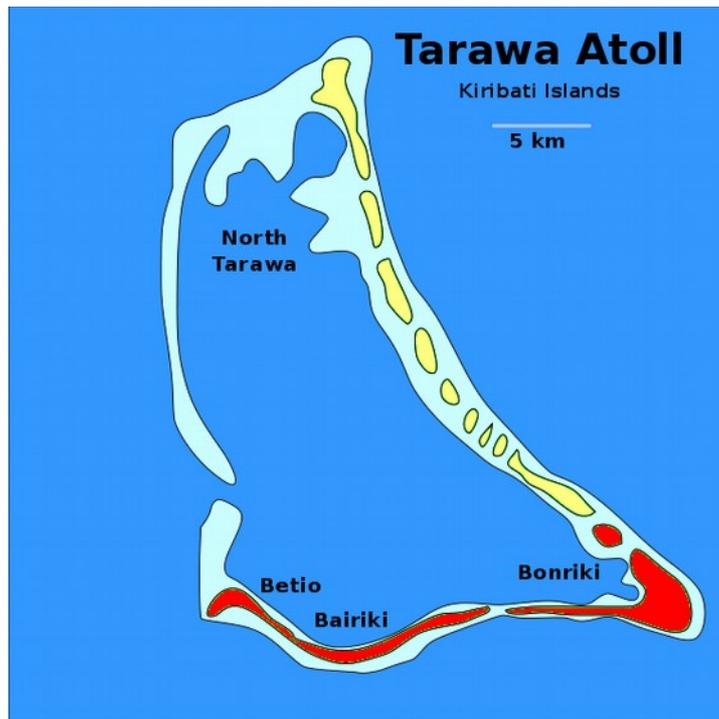
Looking at Tarawa for example:

*"**South Tarawa is a string of islets between the Tarawa Lagoon to the north, with a maximum depth of 25 metres (82 ft), and the Pacific Ocean to the south, with a depth of up to 4,000 metres (13,000 ft). The island has been built from sediments from the lagoon.**"*

And:

*"**These islets are now joined by causeways, forming one long islet on the reef along the southern side of the Tarawa Lagoon. Most of South Tarawa is less than 3 metres (9.8 feet) above sea level with an average width of only 450 metres (1,480 feet).**"*

Tarawa atoll itself is only about 12 square miles in size:



What's ridiculous is that the battle for Tarawa takes place on Betio, the chunk of the atoll in the lower left corner. [Betio](#) is only 1.54 km<sup>2</sup> (0.59 sq miles) in size.

That's why it is funny to see the main article on [the Battle of Tarawa](#):

Strength	
35,000 troops	2,636 troops
18,000 marines <sup>[1]</sup>	2,200 construction laborers (1,200 Korean and 1,000 Japanese)
5 escort carriers	14 tanks
3 old battleships	40 artillery pieces
2 heavy cruisers	14 naval guns
2 light cruisers	
22 destroyers	
2 minesweepers	
18 transports & landing ships	
Casualties and losses	
<b>U.S. Marine Corps:</b>	4,690 killed (including both construction laborers and Japanese soldiers)
1,009 killed <sup>[2]</sup>	17 soldiers captured
2,101 wounded <sup>[2]</sup>	129 Korean laborers captured
	14 tanks destroyed

It's hilarious to imagine tens of thousands of troops battling it out on a chunk of sand the size of a postage stamp. This is why I always take care to give you the sense of place, the sense of scale. They never expect you to bother actually visualising how it would work.



*Betio, present day.*

I wanted to get a photo of Tarawa from the time of the battle and I found this delightful “Where’s Wally?” image (Is it Waldo for Americans? I think it’s Waldo):



*Please take the time to zoom in on the [higher resolution original here](#) and look at the line of troops walking along the south beach (roughly in the centre of the picture). These are silhouettes. All the men on the island are little shadow people. Pasted in? I am suspicious.*

Notice how there are no ships / landing craft. Or dead Japanese. You can see the sand is nice and clean. Can you spot the Japanese airbase? A runway? Support structures? Communication towers? Looking at it fresh, what does this look like? I’ll tell you: it looks like a normal atoll hit with aerial bombardment.

Casualties for Tarawa?

Casualties and losses	
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1,009 killed <sup>[2]</sup>	17 soldiers captured
2,101 wounded <sup>[2]</sup>	129 Korean laborers captured
	14 tanks destroyed

As per Wikipedia:

*“On Tarawa, **Keiji Shibazaki** had 4,836 troops, including around 2,600 Special Naval Landing Forces, 1,000 Japanese construction workers, and 1,200 Korean labourers. He planned to use these units to primarily defend Betio, **the largest island in the atoll**. **Betio was the site of a crucial Japanese airfield**. To protect it from capture, Keiji had 14 coastal defence guns, 50 pieces of field artillery, 100 machine gun nests, and 500 pillboxes installed, as well as a large wall built across the northern lagoon.”*

Where is the airfield? I search “Betio, Tarawa, WW2” and I get this:



Well, that’s a significant development to the atoll in the previous photo with the little lines of shadow soldiers. This is Tarawa in March of 1944. So this would be the airfield the Americans have built the atoll into. Are we doing another Guadalcanal? i.e., an invasion of an airfield but the airfield is only built by the Americans after the invasion? It would appear so.

Wikipedia then talks about [Japanese preparations](#) where we learn that Betio was crammed with 2,217 construction workers/engineers to build and maintain the defensive fortifications. 1,200 of these were Korean labourers, so as usual we have the bizarre mental image of a tiny spit of sand with over 2,000 men doing construction work (and needing food, water, sanitation, accommodation

and so on). Also the logistical stress of having to deal with over a thousand slave labourers who want to rebel / escape / kill you. Would you even need that many men for an area so small? Surely 500 workers would be overdoing it? But that's not all – we then have 2,609 Japanese soldiers (of the Special Naval Landing Force) stationed on the atoll, backed up with 14 tanks. They must have been packed in like sardines!

Again, this is all on Betio. As per Wikipedia:

*“Shaped roughly like a long, thin triangle, the tiny island is approximately **2 miles** (3.2 km) long. It is **narrow**, being only **800 yards** (730 m) wide at its widest point.”*

And:

*“A series of **fourteen coastal defence guns**, including four large Vickers 8-inch guns purchased during the Russo-Japanese War **from the British**, were secured in **concrete bunkers** around the island to guard the open water approaches. It was thought these big guns would make it very difficult for a landing force to enter the lagoon and attack the island from the north side. The island had a total of **500 pillboxes or "stockades"** built from logs and sand, many of which were reinforced with cement. **Forty artillery pieces were scattered around the island in various reinforced firing pits.**”*

Scroll back up to the Where's Waldo/Wally picture on page 5 and tell me if you see evidence of 500 pillboxes, plus an airfield, plus accommodation / warehouses / water storage for 4,800 men. Or the engineering facilities for the tanks and planes. Or the planes. Or the coastal guns. If you don't trust that photo and think I'm cherry picking, get googling and see what you find.

Here's a coastal gun, on Tarawa, allegedly from the Japanese who survived the battle:



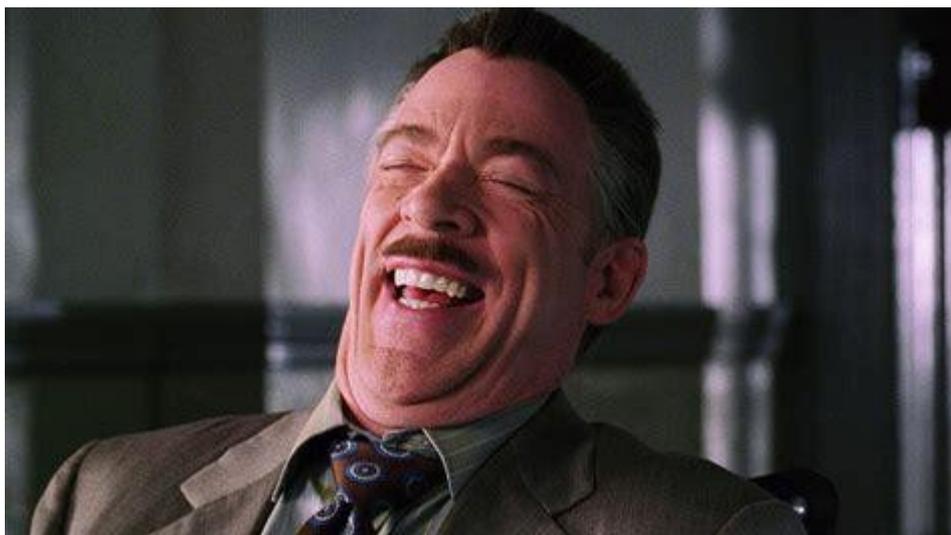
It has kept in pretty good condition, hasn't it?



Say it along with me: Built. After. The. War. It's a prop! No way is that a genuine artillery piece sat at the seaside for 75 years! Moving on:

So the Americans decide to attack Betio because it's serious business and needs taking out. I don't know why Rabaul (the Japanese HQ that was running the show during Guadalcanal) could just be encircled and ignored but Tarawa absolutely positively needed to be smashed, but there we are. Being American, they decided that overkill was just a word used by cowards and the British so the Marines brought quite a lot of firepower:

*"The American invasion force to the Gilberts was the largest yet assembled for a single operation in the Pacific, consisting of 17 aircraft carriers (6 CVs, 5 CVLs, and 6 CVEs), 12 battleships, 8 heavy cruisers, 4 light cruisers, 66 destroyers, and 36 transport ships. On board the transports was the 2nd Marine Division and the Army's 27th Infantry Division, for a total of about 35,000 troops."*



Take a moment to reflect on how completely over the top this is. 17 aircraft carriers. Just that alone would allow them to bomb Betio until it was 30 feet underwater. The [Yorktown](#) carried around 100 aircraft. Seventeen carriers! This is comical. Now throw 18,000 Marines at the remaining Japanese

that have managed to somehow survive the mass incendiary bombardment and we're looking at a fairly uneven fight.

This would be like me challenging Miles to a portrait drawing competition. We sit down, he cracks open a Monster Energy drink and gets to work. I'm looking around for a pencil sharpener and wondering how to draw a nose properly. It's not going to go well is my point.

So who was the poor soul who had to fight the Americans? That would be [Rear Admiral Keiji Shibazaki](#):



No idea what's going on with the photo quality there. Original [here](#).

From Wikipedia:

*“Shibazaki was promoted to Kaigun Taii (lieutenant) in 1921, and after taking courses in navigation, was assigned as chief navigator to Tachikaze, oiler Kamo and survey ship Musashi. After his promotion to Kaigun Shōsa (lieutenant-commander) in 1927, he was appointed aide-de-camp to Prince Kuni Asaakira from 1932-1933.”*

Who was this Prince [Asaakira](#)?

*“Prince Kuni Asaakira (久邇宮 朝融王, Kuni-no-miya Asaakira-ō, 2 February 1901 – 7 December 1959), was third head of the Kuni-no-miya, a collateral branch of the Japanese imperial family and vice admiral in the Japanese Imperial Navy during World War II. He was the elder brother of Empress Kojun (Nagako), the consort of Emperor Shōwa (Hirohito), and thus a maternal uncle to the Heisei Emperor.”*

Shibazaki was the personal assistant/secretary to the uncle of Emperor Hirohito. A fairly important guy then.

*“He built extensive defences on Betio to defend its strategically important airfield, and famously boasted to his troops that “it would take one million men one hundred years” to conquer the island.”*

A very important airfield. Famous last words?

*“Shibazaki was killed in action on the first day of the Battle of Tarawa, sometime during the mid-afternoon of 20<sup>th</sup> November 1943. Reportedly, he and all his senior officers were killed by 5" naval gunfire (airbursts) from a United States Navy destroyer, either USS Dashiell or USS Ringgold, after the men were spotted walking to a secondary command post away from the front lines on the beaches. Shibazaki was posthumously promoted to vice-admiral.”*

Famous last words. I'm amazed it was a naval shell that killed him and not massive aerial bombardment. Was Nimitz trying to save on plane fuel or something? Still, well done for surviving until the afternoon at least, you'd think it'd have been over and done with within about an hour.

The Marines kick things off before dawn on the morning of 20<sup>th</sup> November, 1942. There's a weird sub-plot involving the Marine's not knowing what a neap tide is and not planning their assault around it, despite the low tide screwing with their amphibious landing:

*“Marine Corps battle planners had expected the normal rising tide to provide a water depth of 5 feet over the reef, allowing their four-foot draft Higgins boats room to spare. However, on this day and the next, the ocean experienced a neap tide, and failed to rise. In the words of some observers, "the ocean just sat there", leaving a mean depth of three feet over the reef.*

*A New Zealand liaison officer, Major Frank Holland, had 15 years experience of Tarawa and warned that there would be at most 3 feet depth due to the tides. Shoup warned his troops that there would be a 50–50 chance that they would need to wade ashore, but the attack was not delayed until more favourable spring tides.”*

I mean of course you'd need to wade to shore, if the boats need 5 feet of ocean to operate and it's a low tide of 3 feet at best. I'm not a sailor but this seems pretty straightforward. You would work out when the neap tide had ended and chill at a safe distance in the meantime. They could have literally waited a couple days and things would have been normal. But no, despite warning the Marines... apparently didn't understand how to plan for an amphibious landing...!? I'm not sure why this has been put in the narrative. If taken at face value it indicates the Marine Corps have incompetent commanders.

We have a second weird beat about the Landing Vehicles, aka “Alligators”:

*“The supporting naval bombardment lifted and the marines started their attack from the lagoon at 09:00, thirty minutes later than expected, but found the tide had not risen enough to allow their shallow draft Higgins boats to clear the reef. Only the tracked LVT "Alligators" were able to get across. With the pause in the naval bombardment, those Japanese who had survived the shelling were again able to man their firing pits. Japanese troops from the southern beaches were shifted up to the northern beaches. As the LVTs made their way over the reef and into the shallows, the number of Japanese troops in the firing pits slowly began to increase, and the volume of combined arms fire the LVTs faced gradually intensified. The LVTs had a myriad of holes punched through their non-armoured hulls, and many were knocked out of the battle. Those 'Alligators' that did make it in proved unable to clear the sea wall, leaving the men in the first assault waves pinned down against the log wall along the beach. A number of 'Alligators' went back out to the reef in an attempt to carry in the men who were stuck there, but most of these LVTs were too badly holed to remain seaworthy, leaving the marines stuck on the reef some 500 yards (460 m) off shore. Half of the LVTs were knocked out of action by the end of the first day.”*

I love how the Marines had these landing craft which were “non-armoured”. Literally the point of these things is to get infantry safely to shore... so they buy a load of turkeys which get made into Swiss cheese and then sink. How!? Why!? Was none of this equipment ever tested? Nobody

bothered to fire a rifle at them and notice there was a hole in the side? It's like the PT boats from the Kennedy fairytale last chapter which can't fire torpedoes. If it's just fiction, fair enough, if it's a true story then the Marine Corps is again stupid and negligent to its own men.

Who was leading the Marine detachment? Colonel David Shoup:

*“Colonel David Shoup was the senior officer of the landed forces, and he assumed command of all landed marines upon his arrival on shore. **Although wounded by an exploding shell soon after landing at the pier, Shoup had the pier cleared of Japanese snipers and rallied the first wave of marines who had become pinned down behind the limited protection of the sea wall. Over the next two days, working without rest and under constant withering enemy fire, he directed attacks against strongly defended Japanese positions, pushing forward despite daunting defensive obstructions and heavy fire. Throughout, Colonel Shoup was repeatedly exposed to Japanese small arms and artillery fire, inspiring the forces under his command. For his actions on Betio, he was awarded the Medal of Honor.**”*

He landed... on the pier... which was covered in Japanese snipers... who are somehow alive despite naval/aerial bombardment on an exposed pier... he helps kill the snipers... then stays awake for 48 hours fighting the 5,000-odd Japanese on this tiny atoll... constantly shot at... but not killed or rendered unconscious.

Who was this absolute chad?



The man himself. He radiates alpha male energy. Original [here](#).

*“Born in Indiana **to an impoverished family**, Shoup joined the military **for financial reasons**. Rising through the ranks in the interwar era, **he was twice deployed to China during the Chinese Civil War**. He served in **Iceland** at the beginning of U.S. involvement in World War II, and as a staff officer during the Pacific War. He was **unexpectedly** given command of the 2nd Marines, **and led the initial invasion of Tarawa**, for which he was awarded the **Medal of Honour** and the **British Distinguished Service Order**. He served in the Marianas campaign, and **later became a high-level military logistics officer.**”*

I liked this bit:

*“Regarded by friends as very sociable, he met **Zola De Haven** in his first year and later said he had been instantly attracted to her. They were both very competitive in academics and athletics, and the two dated throughout high school; they were married in 1931. After high school, Shoup attended **DePauw University**, where he was **one of 100 awarded the Edward Rector Scholarship, giving him full tuition. Majoring in mathematics**, he joined the Delta Upsilon fraternity and **maintained high marks**, narrowly failing the selection criteria for Phi Beta Kappa Society. **He was on the track and field and rifle teams, and also competed in the wrestling and football teams.** He won the Indiana and Kentucky Amateur Athletic Union marathon in 1925. **He waited tables, washed dishes and worked in a cement factory to help pay his expenses. Lack of funds compelled him to take a year off after his junior year to teach school, and his expenses were further strained when he contracted a severe case of pneumonia and incurred hospital bills. He opted to enrol in the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) to offset his living expenses, and later recalled that this was the only reason he joined the military. He graduated from DePauw in 1926.**”*

He comes from poverty, does work in China, then is stationed in Iceland, then suddenly gets transferred from Iceland to run the show on Tarawa, gets a Medal of Honour and later goes into logistics. He works a bunch of tiring, long-hour jobs but also is a star athlete. Right. I won't dwell on Mr. Shoup but have a look at his bio and military career, it's such a weird tale and seems fishy.

Anyway, with all the LVT's sinking (and the tanks they were trying to bring in also getting knocked out or sunk) the Marines end up hiding behind the sea wall and having to slowly go inland. This bit takes another two days. No, really. The battle starts pre-dawn on the 20<sup>th</sup> and wraps up around lunchtime (13:30 to be precise) on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. I'm not going to go into the ins and outs of the order of battle because I find the entire premise ridiculous (scale of forces vs. size of territory). Have a read of [this section of the article](#) and see what you think. Miles may see some particularly stupid quotes he would like to put here for mockery.

Wikipedia sums up all the nonsense I've been talking about in this bit:

*“Of the **3,636 Japanese** in the garrison, **only one officer and sixteen enlisted men surrendered.** Of the **1,200 Korean labourers** brought to Tarawa to construct the defences, **only 129 survived.** All told, **4,690 of the island's defenders were killed.** The 2nd Marine Division suffered **894** killed in action, **48 officers and 846 enlisted men**, while an additional **84** of the wounded survivors later succumbed to what proved to be fatal wounds. Of these, **8** were officers and **76** were enlisted men. A further **2,188** men were wounded in the battle, **102 officers and 2,086 men.** Of the roughly 12,000 2nd Marine Division marines on Tarawa, **3,166 officers and men** became casualties. Nearly all of these casualties were suffered in the **76 hours** between the landing at **0910 November 20 and the island of Betio being declared secure at 1330 November 23.**”*

Always with the Funny Numbers. These Korean labourers are slave stock brought over at gunpoint to do work for the Japanese. You murdered nearly all of them? Really? What, they fought the Marines willingly? The Japanese armed them... and they helped their captors? What?

I think the idea of this battle was to have a great big “Marines Storm The Japs: Dangerous But Necessary” plot-line. All building up to the final act of “We Had To Drop The Bomb” meme. The problem is this backfired a tad, as the public were baffled at the amount of carnage incurred:

*“The heavy casualties suffered by the United States at Tarawa sparked public protest, where headline reports of the high losses **could not be understood for such a small and seemingly unimportant island.** The public reaction was aggravated by the unguardedly frank comments of some of the Marine Corps command. General Holland Smith, commander of the V Amphibious Corps who had toured the beaches after the battle, likened the losses to **Pickett's Charge at***

**Gettysburg.** Nimitz himself was inundated with [fake] angry letters from families of men killed on the island.

Back in Washington, newly appointed Marine Corps Commandant General Alexander Vandegrift, **the widely respected and highly decorated veteran of Guadalcanal**, reassured Congress, pointing out that "Tarawa was an assault from beginning to end". A New York Times editorial on 27 December 1943 praised the Marines for overcoming Tarawa's **rugged defences and fanatical garrison**, and warned that **future assaults in the Marshall's might well result in heavier losses**. "We must steel ourselves now to pay that price."

Hmm. Finally:

**"In the aftermath of the battle, American casualties lined the beach and floated in the surf. Staff Sgt Norman T. Hatch and other Marine cameramen were present obtaining footage that would later be used in a documentary. With the Marines at Tarawa contained scenes of American dead so disturbing that the decision of whether or not to release it to the public was deferred to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who approved it."**

Very interesting. Dead in the surf you say? Not in the Where's Wally shot. What's this I hear about a movie made of the battle? So disturbing that they had to go to President Roosevelt to decide if the public should see it? Aha! We know this is going to be good!

Buckle up, get the popcorn. It's on [Youtube](#):



World War 2: brought to you by Warner Bros and the Office of War Information.

I don't know if this is a genuine thing, but I love the idea that back in the day if you wanted to give special sealed orders to a fleet you had to sail alongside, fire a grappling hook onto their deck and hoist across a bag containing the orders:



A shame they didn't have radio or Morse code or anything back then.



At 1:56 we have a shot of the Marines setting up ammunition belts and then test-firing their guns at the sky. After all these previous papers I am convinced this is what 90% of actual Pacific Theatre experience would have been to the average armed forces member – day to day routine, boot polishing, bunk making, weapons drills, operations drills. Then some ONI sneak films you shooting the sky and edits it into a “naval battle” newsreel later.



At 3:05 we see this is filming the dawn raid, men getting into boats, that sort of thing. Very exciting to see a sneaky twilight amphibious assault. The problem here is that this obviously contradicts the cannon plot of the battle, which commences with a 6am a ship-to-shore cannon duel between battleships Colorado & Maryland vs. the Japanese shore guns. The battleships win and destroy the Japanese emplacements with a massive fireball. You would think the camera crew might have captured some of that, but no. The Marines go in later, about 3 hours later, around 9am when the sun was properly up. **So much for that “doing more before 9am” thing.**



We then have shots of battleships firing at the atoll from very very far away so nothing of detail can be seen (nor of any return fire, or emplacement destruction). Hard to tell for sure but it looks bigger than Betio would be.



At 3:30-3:40 the narrator talks about the air support bombing and strafing the island – including shots from Tarawa beach itself. This is baffling, how are they filming these shots?

What I would suggest you are watching in these first few minutes is nothing less than a Naval drill, an exercise, of shooting at an empty atoll from sea and sky. There is nothing on the atoll, other than the secondary camera crew. There are no Japanese. Let us keep watching, with this in mind.

By 4:29 the narrator has advised us that 4 million pounds of explosives have been dropped on Tarawa. We have several shots of Marine transports sailing around unmolested. Where is the Japanese return fire? Or the sinking Alligators? Or the neap tide / exposed reef?



At 4:32 we see a wrecked ship half-sunk next to Betio which, according to the narrator, has Japanese gunners hiding within. The Marines have some fun with target practice to bomb the ship:



Again, this very much smells of a drill or exercise. No naval gun emplacements. No return fire, tracer fire, Anti-Air fire from the atoll. No enemy planes, despite this being a Very Important Airfield. At 5:00 the narrator comments about how there is “no organised resistance” from the Japanese. Someone should tell him this is a 3 day battle.



From 5:30 – the beach of Tarawa. You can see the atoll is already shredded.



5:44 – again with the complete lack of Neap Tide / pillboxes / sinking LV's...



...which is immediately contradicted at 5:52 by pulling the camera back and saying the men had to wade ashore due to wrecked LV's. No wrecks in sight here. In the previous frame you can see they are landing normally.



6:21 – The Marines are then shown to be lying flat on the beach all bunched together (good thing the Japanese don't have planes or artillery or mortars right?). It's very quick but I think I spot the troops smiling and joking. I suspect the loud "dakka dakka" gunfire noises in this bit is just inserted on the audio track and wasn't actually happening. If you watch any Iwo Jima newsreel footage they do exactly the same thing there. I think what we're seeing are the Marines being ordered to lay on the sand while two or three planes carefully bomb the atoll interior to give background explosions.



6:38 – you can see the man on the right as he's turning is standing around, smirking.



Or this bit around 7:20 where the chap by the tree walks towards the camera. He's not doing anything to protect himself, he's not acting like he's in the middle of a deadly shoot-out, his body language is of an extra on a set. I like all the smoke they've pumped out to give a literal fog of war. Remember how small the atoll is across, so a man sprinting forward across the flat ground should be getting his feet wet on the opposite shore in a short space of time.

It's easier if you rewatch this part with it muted. Stop hearing "bullet noises" and you can see it's a bunch of guys hanging around on the wrecked pre-bombed atoll. There are no Japanese here, it's a training drill.



I like the bit at 7:48 where they ask the squaddie to flick his head to the side and flip his helmet off as if he's been shot.

We then have several minutes of the Marines playing around with flamethrowers, rifles and grenades. They sure teach those coconut trees a lesson. Again, all in keeping with a "demonstration of equipment" practice drill. No Japanese, no return fire, no corpses on the ground.

At 9:56, a Japanese corpse:



As always, no gore / blood / dismemberment, no way to tell these are actual corpses. You know what we never see in these pictures either? What should be right next to or on each corpse of a Japanese soldier killed in battle?

One of these:



Funny how they weren't armed.

We then have several minutes of the Marines firing into smoke or walking around an empty atoll. See for example at 12:29 where we get this shot:



The Marines are just running around in the open, broad daylight. This is a good example of how flat and cover-free this atoll is. There's nowhere to hide. The smoke I imagine was artificially generated and for dramatic effect. Also to disguise the lack of enemy. The 540-odd pillboxes and artillery sites are well hidden.



12:55 – Supplies of food and ammunition being towed in by landing craft. Nice and easy given how terrible the fighting is supposed to be. You can see a distinct lack of corpses and sunken LV's in the water.



13:11 – undefended and unarmed, the “Chaplains Assistants” have time to walk bare-chested along the sands picking up dog tags. A peaceful walk on Tarawa.



13:17 – We then see these two, Lieut. Gen. [Holland M. Smith](#) and Maj. Gen. [Julian C. Smith](#), strolling along together smiling. The camera tracks them as they walk past calmly into what appears to be an intact wooden building...



...the camera then cuts away. I don't think we're supposed to see a functional tropical admin building on Tarawa, let alone one being used by Marine Corps brass mid-battle.



Weird how all three US ground force commanders have the same surname, right? There's supposed to be no relation, but what are the odds? Someone will do a genealogy check and find they are all close cousins I expect.



13:25 – Here's Admiral [Harry Hill](#) giving out orders / having a chat with his friends. Again this is all in broad daylight, the battle is allegedly still ongoing, nobody is in any danger.



13:36 – The narrator informs us that the pillboxes are in fact hidden underground. The Marines must use excavation equipment to reach these pillboxes and kill the Japanese, who are still alive and scuttling around in their tunnels like rats or moles. The narrator explains that “many” of the pillboxes and bunkers are built **20 feet deep** under the sand. No really, this is what they are telling audiences in the 1940’s with a straight face. I find this so annoying that nobody called bullshit.



13:56 – “Our first prisoners”. Japanese? Perhaps. Asians, of some stripe, not wearing uniforms or insignia. Also smiling. They must be happy to have been dug out of their subterranean lair.



14:26 – American “casualties”. Say it with me: no blood, no gore, no bullet wounds visible. No insignia, no dropped weapons, clean sand, no dismemberment.



The really scary corpse, to shock the audience. He rotted that much? In 48 hours? Really? I like how he's on his back and the blood somehow pooled in his face. They flipped the body? So why no sand on the chest/arms/face? This is clearly a corpse that has been dead for some time, now bloated and rotten, dropped on the sand to freak people out. No bullet wounds or bloodstains on the uniform so I assume they dressed the body after death.



14:41 – Finally, some floating corpses. Or at least four of them. I assume these are actual bodies and not mannequins. We're not really seeing evidence of the 4,000+ dead as is supposed to have happened, eh?



14:45 – Same again, a small stack of bodies with the usual (say it with me) no blood, no gore, no bullet wounds visible. No insignia, no dropped weapons, clean sand, no dismemberment. The bodies are then all buried at sea, so that’s nice and easy – no evidence.

The Narrator says it “cost less than a thousand” lives to take Tarawa, which contradicts the canon narrative that 1,009 Marines were killed and 2,101 were wounded.



16:00 – Captured Japanese. OK. Well, this proves there were definitely a half dozen East Asians on the atoll I guess. Stripped to their underwear with no insignia, uniform, means of identification and completely uninjured one could be forgiven for wondering if they are hired actors to play a role. Island natives, perhaps?



16:51 – The Japanese command post, defeated by “TNT and flamethrowers”. Question: why were the pillboxes built 20 feet underground but the main command building is sat right there on the surface? Seems to be an odd way round to do that.



17:00 – Before the fighting is finished, the Marine Construction Battalions are already on Betio building an airfield. Or repairing an airfield, it's unclear at this point. Watch for yourself but this section very much looks like the construction of the airfield in the first place. This was an empty atoll, the Marines then bombed it, then they did a mock invasion exercise, then they built an airstrip.



Well that was fun. I enjoyed having the Marine Corps show me their lies, in a colour movie, in a 20 minute showtime. Thank you for that guys, that was a lot easier than needing to unravel Guadalcanal by carefully reading dozens of articles.

If you're interested, you can also watch "[The Capture of Tarawa from Japan – 1943](#)", which is less than 10 minutes long and supports everything I've just covered. It also features even more ridiculous corpses (i.e. mannequins dressed in uniform) but I won't spoil that for you here. We also see the Korean labourers (conspicuously absent from the first film) who could easily double as the "captured Japanese" we saw earlier:



The "[Gallery](#)" section of the Tarawa Wiki page has some pics of the defeated Japanese, such as this gruesome one:



Original [here](#).

I'm left wondering how you can shoot yourself in the head with a rifle and yet there's no blood on the wall of the log cabin behind you.

More photos:



Again, no airfield. Original [here](#).



*“Marines on Red Beach, 11am Day 2 of the Battle.”* Original [here](#).

Surely the Marines are not just sat on the beach? Where are their defences? How could it possibly take more than a day to cover an area of this size?

Anyway, that’s enough about Tarawa.

The [Raid on Makin Island](#) (17-18 August 1942) was a bizarre, abortive farce of a raid by the Marines on the atoll now known as [Butaritari](#). Taken at face value one is baffled by the Marine’s complete incompetence – and by the lack of any historical analysis pointing this out. Everyone’s just like “yeah it was a success and it was good for morale”.

As per Wikipedia:

*“The aim was to destroy Imperial Japanese installations, take prisoners, gain intelligence on the Gilbert Islands area, and divert Japanese attention and reinforcements from the Allied landings on Guadalcanal and Tulagi. Only the first of these objectives was achieved, but the raid did boost morale and provide a test for Raider tactics.”*

What the Marines did was land on the island, kill the Japanese, kill their commander, fail to get any intel and stir up Japanese attention to reinforce Makin so that in the future it was harder to take (and lead to the Battle of Makin Island). I guess you could say they created a distraction? I guess. It’s not like landing on Guadalcanal was difficult, I showed you how the Marines literally walked up the beach and onto an abandoned airfield.

If they’d gone in with more men (or a better plan) they could have captured the island entirely. Instead they had to run away and – due the baffling non-explanation of “some of our outboard motors failed” had to abandon men behind on the beach(!) until hours later:

*“At 19:30, the Raiders began to withdraw from the island using **18** rubber boats, **many of which no longer had working outboard motors**. Despite heavy surf, seven boats with 93 men made it to the subs. **The next morning** several boatloads of Raiders were able to fight the surf and reach the sub, but **72 men, along with just three rubber boats, were still on the island**. At 23:30, the attempt by most of the Raiders to reach the submarines failed. Despite significant effort, **11** of **18** boats were unable to breach the unexpectedly strong surf. **Having lost most of their weapons and equipment, the exhausted survivors struggled back to the beach to link up with 20 fully armed men, who had been left on the island to cover their withdrawal**. An exhausted and dispirited Carlson **dispatched a note** to the Japanese commander that **offered to surrender**, but the Japanese messenger was killed by other Marines, who were unaware of Carlson's plan*

*At 09:00 on **18** August, the subs sent a rescue boat to stretch rope from the ships to the shore that would allow the remaining Raiders' boats to be pulled out to sea. However, just as the operation began, Japanese planes arrived and attacked, sinking the rescue boat and attacking the subs, which were forced to crash-dive and wait on the bottom the rest of the day. The subs were undamaged. At 23:08, having managed to signal the subs to meet his Raiders at the entrance to Makin Lagoon, Carlson had a team led by Lt. Charlie Lamb **build a raft made up of three rubber boats and two native canoes** powered by the two remaining outboard motors. **Using that raft, 72 exhausted Raiders sailed 4 miles (6.4 km) from Makin to the mouth of the lagoon, where the subs picked them up.**”*

I suppose nobody realised that you could have a shuttle run of the working boats to go back and forth from the beach to the submarine, dropping off batches of men at a time until everyone was evacuated? Rather than abandon them to the Japanese?

We also get the usual Funny Numbers and direct confirmation (via Japanese records) that the Marines lied about the numbers of enemy soldiers killed. This obviously opens the issue of “how often are you lying about enemy KIA’s” and how maybe this means that the Marines are inflating combat deaths generally which would have a domino effect battle to battle that would give you a really warped total kill-count to the Pacific Campaign... but as always the historians aren’t bothered and nobody asks this. We read:

*“SMC casualties were given as **18** killed in action and **12 missing in action**. Of the 12 Marines missing in action, **one was later identified** among the 19 Marine Corps graves found on Makin Island. Of the remaining **eleven** Marines missing in action, **nine were inadvertently left behind** or returned to the island during the night withdrawal. They were subsequently captured, moved to Kwajalein Atoll, and executed by Japanese forces. **Kōsō Abe** was subsequently tried and executed by the Allies for the murder of the nine Marines. **The remaining two Marines missing in action were not accounted for.***

*Carlson reported that **he had personally counted 83 Japanese bodies and estimated that 160 Japanese were killed based on reports from the Makin Island natives with whom he spoke**. Additional Japanese personnel may have been killed in the destruction of two boats and two aircraft. Morison states that 60 Japanese were killed in the sinking of one of the boats. **Japanese records are however more precise and the entire garrison casualties were 46 killed of all ranks (not including the purported large casualties Carlson reported for the boats he had sunk)**. **This was confirmed when supporting Japanese forces returned to the island and found 27 Japanese survivors of the raid.**”*

I’m calling it now that there were no boats sunk and the Marines only killed 46 Japanese, assuming the entire raid itself isn’t also fiction. The Japanese have no reason to lie about their troop losses post-war. Given that Carlson is claiming his men killed about 160 men, then another 50 or 60-odd

from the sunken boats you're looking at the Americans boasting they fought around 4 times the number of actual.

I'm not going to dwell on the Raid because it's just ridiculous on the face of it. If it was true then God help those men that they couldn't organise themselves better, but to me it reads like fiction.

The Marines would return, however. From 20<sup>th</sup> November – 24<sup>th</sup> November 1943 you had [the Battle of Makin Island](#).



*“Soldiers of the US Army's 2nd Battalion, 165th Infantry, struggle to shore on Yellow Beach on Butaritari Island” - Original [here](#).*

Perhaps the water is so churned up with sand kicked up by them wading along that the entire ocean becomes bone-white and completely obscures the lower half of each Marine. It's such a sunny day the sky has also become a white void, as it does. Or perhaps this is a paste-up, with the tell-tale dodgy contrast? Wait, yep, it's a paste-up – look at the original, zoom in, you can see the glowing white line around the troops where they've overlapped separate cropped individuals and slotted them in next to each other.

What were the numbers for the Battle?

Strength	
6,470 soldiers	400 soldiers
3 escort carriers	400 Japanese and Korean labourers
4 old battleships	3 light tanks
4 heavy cruisers	4 anti-tank guns
16 destroyers	1 submarine
9 transports & landing ships	

Casualties and losses	
763 killed (697 Navy, 66 Army)	395 killed
185 wounded	17 soldiers captured
1 escort carrier sunk	129 Korean labourers captured
1 battleship lightly damaged	1 submarine damaged

Again, ridiculous overkill. Nearly 7,000 men versus 400. The labourers don't count. Surely they would surrender immediately? No, these are fanatics. Of course the Marines kill pretty much everyone. Interesting that 763 Americans die. What happened to the robot armour? Looking closer we see the losses are almost entirely Navy, mostly due to the loss of the Escort Carrier [Liscome Bay](#).

As per [Wikipedia](#):

*“On 24 November 1943, her munitions were catastrophically detonated by a torpedo attack by the Japanese submarine I-175 while she was acting as the flagship of Carrier Division 24, which was supporting operations on Makin. She quickly sank with the loss of 644 men. Her loss is the deadliest sinking of a carrier in the history of the United States Navy.”*

And:

*“At about 05:10, a lookout on the starboard (right) side of Liscome Bay reported seeing a torpedo headed for the ship. The torpedo struck behind the aft engine room, as Liscome Bay was conducting its turn, and detonated the bomb magazine, causing a devastating explosion that engulfed the ship and sent shrapnel flying as far as 5,000 yards (4,600 m) away. Considerable debris fell on the battleship New Mexico about 1,500 yards (1,400 m) off, while a sailor on board the escort carrier Coral Sea was reportedly hit by a fire extinguisher from Liscome Bay. The entire task force was rocked by the explosion, but no other ships were significantly damaged. A mushroom cloud erupted, rising thousands of feet above the wreck of Liscome Bay.*

*The detonation sheared off nearly the entire stern of the carrier, killing everyone behind the forward bulkhead of the aft engine room. Seawater quickly rushed into the gap, mixing with oil released from the hull. Both the hangar and flight decks were heavily damaged. Parts of the superstructure, including the radar antenna, collapsed onto the deck. The forward part of the hangar was immediately engulfed in flames, igniting the few remaining planes on the flight deck. Planes fell off the carrier's deck. Steam, compressed air, and fire-main pressure were lost throughout the ship. Fires on the flight deck caused ammunition within the burning aircraft and*

*anti-aircraft guns to detonate, further complicating matters. The gasoline coated water surrounding Liscome Bay caught fire, hampering efforts by survivors to escape.”*

Dramatic stuff. I like the flying fire extinguisher.

“At 05:33, only 23 minutes after the explosion, **Liscome Bay listed to starboard and sank; 53 officers and 591 enlisted men were killed, including Captain Irving Wiltsie, Rear Admiral Henry M. Mullinnix and Doris Miller. 12 Grumman TBM Avenger torpedo bombers, 7 Grumman FM-1 Wildcat fighters, and 4 Grumman F4F Wildcat fighters went down with Liscome Bay.**”

You may wish to investigate the side-threads of “[notable crew](#)”:

- **John G. Crommelin:** Chief of Staff of Carrier Division 24, politician.
- † [William H. Hollister & Richard J. Hollister](#): three brothers who served in the U.S. Navy who all died in 1943, two aboard Liscome Bay; namesake of destroyer USS Hollister (DD-788)
- **Robert Keeton:** Future legal scholar, **United States District Judge**
- † **Doris Miller:** First African-American to receive the Navy Cross, namesake of frigate USS Miller (FF-1091), and of USS Doris Miller (CVN-81), a Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft carrier scheduled to be laid down in 2026 and launched in 2029.
- † **Henry M. Mullinnix: Admiral of Carrier Division 24**, namesake of destroyer USS Mullinnix (DD-944)
- † Irving D. Wiltsie: Captain of Liscome Bay, namesake of destroyer USS Wiltsie (DD-716)
- [William J. Woodward Jr.:](#) banker and thoroughbred horse-breeder

[Doris Miller](#) was the dude played by Cuba Gooding Jr. in the Pearl Harbour movie – the black cook who shoots down Japanese planes from the stricken West Virginia. I now appreciate Pearl Harbour is fake, so therefore Miller didn’t do that, therefore they’re closing the loop by having him “die” at Makin. The Hollister brothers reminds me of the [Sullivan Brothers](#), “killed” at Guadalcanal. I couldn’t help but notice the banker at the bottom of the list, but he survived until being shot by his wife in the “Shooting of the Century”. You just know that’s going to be shenanigans as well.

You can read the [War Record](#) on what happened and they admit that it’s unusual for the ship to be damaged as it was by the torpedo, but conclude it had to happen because of the torpedo causing a chain of detonations throughout the vessel.

There’s no photography/footage of the ship sinking and I can’t trust the survivor’s statements so I can’t conclusively say what happened. My suspicion would be that they deliberately sank a carrier by detonating bombs onboard and claimed this was due to an enemy torpedo, also that they’re using the sinking to create fake casualties.

As per Wikipedia:

*“The complete occupation of Makin took **four days** and cost considerably more in naval casualties than in ground forces. Despite possessing great superiority in men and weapons, the 27th Division had difficulty subduing the island’s small defence force. **One Japanese Ha-Go tank was destroyed in combat, and two tanks placed in revetments were abandoned without being used in combat.***

***Against an estimated 395 Japanese killed in action during the operation, American ground casualties numbered 66 killed and 152 wounded. U.S. Navy losses were significantly higher: 644 deaths on the Liscome Bay, 43 killed in a turret fire on the battleship USS Mississippi, and 10***

*killed in action with naval shore parties or as aviators, for a total of 697 naval deaths. The overall total of 763 American dead almost equalled the number of men in the entire Japanese garrison.”*

Photos:



“Army invades Makin Island Gilbert Islands” – original [here](#). So that’s another empty island being bombed. Load up the original image, zoom in. It’s empty!



*“Bombardment of Makin Island viewed from USS Baltimore” – original [here](#).*

I get the sneaking suspicion that the soldier and the ship are inserted into that shot. Why does that soldier have a thick horizontal band of darker black on his mid-section? It’s not the photo, that doesn’t extend across the shot.



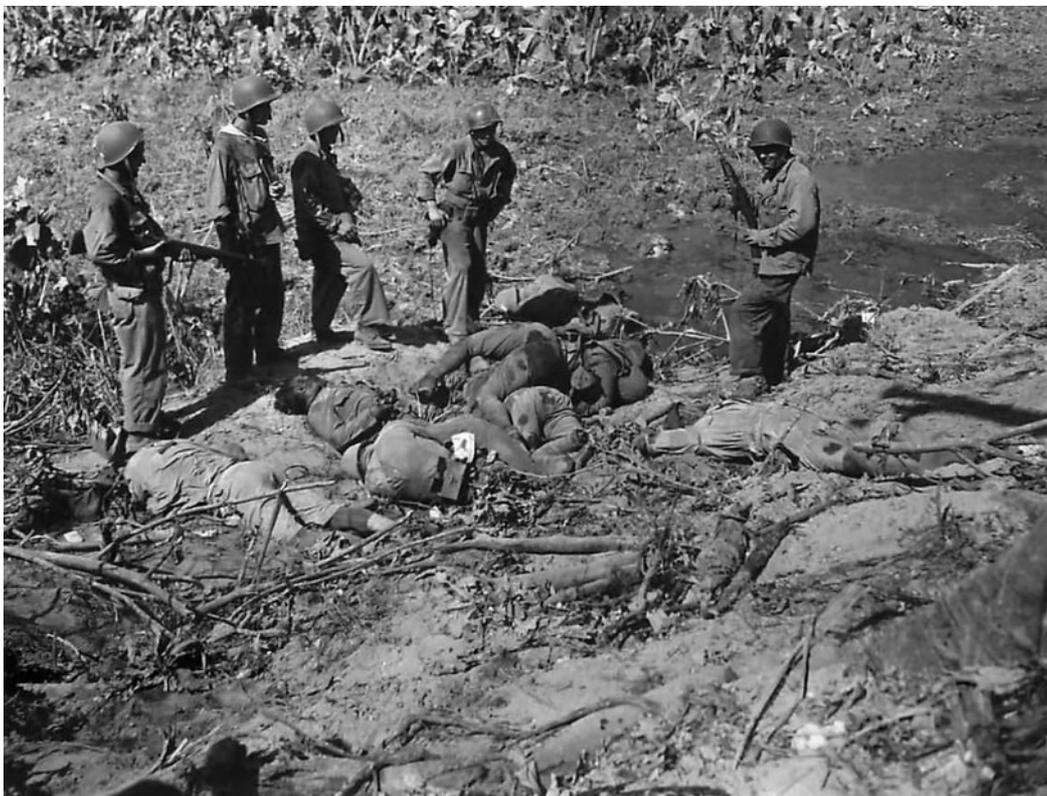
Interesting title of this one: *“US Troops inspect Japanese dummy gun on Makin Island”*. Original [here](#).

It’s a prop gun? OK. To trick the Americans and dissuade them from attacking, I guess. Definitely not Americans making a fake gun, pretending the Japanese were on an island they weren’t. That would be me misunderstanding, for sure.



*“US Troops move through ruins of Japanese warehouse on Makin” – original [here](#).*

Is it a Japanese warehouse? Is this even on the same island? The aerial shots show it's empty. Where was this hiding? Bear in mind the native islanders probably built a hut or two over time.



*“Soldiers view bodies of Japanese troops killed during the invasion of Makin” – original [here](#).*

A few bodies out in the open, no defensive structures e.g. sandbags. No dropped rifles. No blood, no gore, no dismemberment. Clean ground, no identifiable signs of being Japanese. Were they dragged together from elsewhere? Are we supposed to believe they all dropped dead on the spot? Why are the Marines standing over them smirking like that? Because they're tough guys going "Ha! That's for Pearl Harbour!" or something I guess. Definitely not because they're posing for a photo with prop corpses / mannequins.

Another aerial shot of Makin:



"TBM-1C Avengers over Makin Island, 1943" – original [here](#).

You can see how thin the atoll is. Ocean on the left, more ocean on the right. A thin strip of sand and jungle. A tiny little pier sticking out with some huts, just below the middle of the lower smoke trail. Miles do my eyes deceive me or as those planes pasted in? They're too bright. Yes, pasted, and pasted way too close together for the first three. They are eating one another's wings.

Moving on: the [Battle of Kwajalein](#) was from 31<sup>st</sup> January – 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 1944.

*"The United States launched a successful twin assault on the main islands of Kwajalein in the south and Roi-Namur in the north. The Japanese defenders put up stiff resistance, although outnumbered and under-prepared. The determined defense of Roi-Namur left only 51 survivors of an original garrison of 3,500."*

Strength	
46,670 <sup>[1]:27–28</sup>	<b>Kwajalein:</b> about 5,000 <b>Roi-Namur:</b> about 3,000 <sup>[1]:31</sup>
Casualties and losses	
<b>Kwajalein:</b> 142 killed 845 wounded 2 missing <b>Roi-Namur:</b> 206 killed 617 wounded 181 missing <sup>[1]:88</sup>	<b>Kwajalein:</b> 4,300 killed 166 captured <b>Roi-Namur:</b> 3,500 killed 87 captured <sup>[1]:88</sup>

Again just insane numbers – nearly 47,000 men vs. less than 8,000. Come on. Complete wipe-out of the Japanese as you would expect. Note the **181** missing on Roi-Namur.

The poor guy tasked with leading a defence against the Americans was Admiral [Akiyama Monzō](#), who we learn from Wikipedia:

*“However, later in 1943, he was assigned command of the 6th Naval Base Force and ordered to Kwajalein, in the Marshall Islands, replacing Vice Admiral Koso Abe. American forces had recently taken the Gilbert Islands, including Makin Island and Tarawa. Akiyama was in command of 5000 troops on the main islet of Kwajalein itself, with another 3000 troops on the islet of Roi-Namur on the opposite end of the same atoll. However, **most of these troops were poorly-trained reservists with no combat experience.** Akiyama arrived in November 1943 and immediately ordered the construction of fortifications; however, the topography of the small islands made defence in depth impossible and there was no time or materials to construct anything substantial, such as the concrete bunkers which had served the Japanese defenders so well on Tarawa. Akiyama was also aware that there were no plans to send reinforcements, supplies or to plan for an evacuation, as the island had already been declared outside Japan's "absolute defence zone" by Imperial General Headquarters. On the first day of the American landings, he left his bunker to observe the front line, and was killed in action.”*



Note that this is the reality on the ground for the Japanese: reservist troops, no combat experience. No way to build proper defences because there is no material available for this. There are no reinforcements, no co-ordination with the rest of the Japanese Army/Navy (i.e. these islands are always sitting ducks that the Americans can attack and retreat from at will), there are no logistical supply lines and no way to escape.

I think we need to query how thousands of men can survive on an atoll for months with no food or drinking water being supplied. I think we need to query how all these atolls are (according to Hollywood/newsreels) magnificently defended but in reality the Japanese only have access to sand and coconut trees. I think we need to question the war time propaganda concept that the Japanese

are insane, suicidal fanatics to a man and that when they are outgunned by an enemy fleet with tens of thousands of Marines they decide to keep fighting until only 200-odd are left out of the original 8,000. Would we expect any other nation's soldiers to fight like this? I wouldn't. You'd kill maybe half and they'd look to surrender, probably less than that. Most men would be able to do the back-of-a-napkin maths of equivalent troop strength and realise when the situation was completely hopeless – and then look to negotiate.

Also, the Americans bombed the hell out of the place beforehand:

*“The bombardment by the Southern Attack Force, including the battleship USS Tennessee, plus B-24 bombers from Abemama and artillery on Carlson island was devastating. **The Navy had changed its bombardment tactics based on the Tarawa experience and used armour-piercing shells as well as firing into the island at closer ranges.** The Official U.S. Army history of the battle quotes a soldier as saying **“the entire island looked as if it had been picked up 20,000 feet and then dropped.”** Landing beaches Red 1 and 2 were assaulted at 0930 on 1 February, the Americans reaching halfway across the runway by sunset. **Although the Japanese counterattacked every night, the island was declared secure by the end of the fourth day.**”*

So on the one hand the Japanese have no proper defences and yet they can survive massive aerial / artillery bombardment. Obviously the atoll would be decimated. This would quite likely have killed the entire Japanese garrison by itself. The idea of the Japanese then managing to fight for 4 days is ridiculous. I scoff at the “counterattacked every night” – what do they do during the day? Where could they possibly hide? What are they, the creature from [Alien](#)?

Please note the final bit of Wikipedia's piece on the battle:

*“After the war ended, **over 150 still operational US aircraft were sunk near Roi-Namur, which was cheaper than transporting the air-planes back to the US mainland.** The airplane graveyard included several Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bombers, Vought F4U Corsairs, Grumman TBF Avengers, Curtiss SB2C Helldivers, North American B-25 Mitchells, Curtiss C-46 Commandos and Grumman F4F Wildcats.”*

Now this is just me speculating, but what if... what if this happened a lot more than they say?

What if they dumped various bits of military hardware as they went on their tour of the atolls, which would leave a bunch of rusting machines on the ocean floor. We have this discrepancy of “The war is fake” butting up against “there's a bunch of planes and boats you can dive down and see to this day so you're wrong, there was a conflict”. I would suggest this is one explanation: that the military was littering (essentially) as they travelled around setting up their little bases for future use and this was done to save money on transportation.



*“Marines storm a pill box on Namur, Kwajalein Atoll.” - original [here](#).*

A completely naked man sits watching a some kind of brick or concrete structure. No Japanese insignia on the building. A pillbox/bunker? We know they didn't have the resources to one on Kwajalein so it can't be. Why is he naked? The Japanese had uniforms. Did they strip him? Why? Why are the Marines standing around with their hands on their hips watching this scene? It's so strange.

There's more photos [on this website](#). Some examples:



*“Troops inspect a bunker after capturing the Kwajalein”* – original [here](#).

This is a photograph of three men posing with their rifles looking at a mound of dirt, presumably caused by the mass artillery bombardment. You can see how utterly blasted the surrounding landscape is.



“Japanese soldier surrenders to Marines on Namur” – original [here](#).

What’s going on with the light in this photo? It’s incredible. Almost like something out of a religious painting. What’s strange about the surrendering “Japanese” (Filipino, surely?) man is how sharply detailed his face is, despite being backlit. The soldier on the left and the soldier on the right appear pasted in, especially clear around the helmet of the soldier on the right (you can see the more angular lines from the cropping). Did “Japanese soldiers” commonly not wear pants as part of their uniform? Just a codpiece and a bandana around the thigh like Chachi? This isn't a Japanese soldier, it is one of the Marines' gay cabin boys caught in a dance.



“Landing crafts tanks supplies troops on Kwajalein” – original [here](#).

Interesting that the Marines are seen here dropping off men and supplies on what appears to be a pristine atoll. The trees/foliage are intact. No bomb craters. No fires. Is this... before the battle? No that can't be right, it was already bombarded by then. Is this... after the battle? Then what happened, did they plant a bunch of coconut trees?

Compare that landscape to something like this for example:



*“Battle of Kwajalein Marines”* – original [here](#).

So what happened? They landed and THEN burned the island down? What about the artillery/aerial bombing? Thinking about it, why is the ground not full of craters and how is that hut only just burning down now? Then we have this one:



*“Kwajalein on day before bombardment”* – original [here](#).

So this looks very different again, with a visible settlement and fishing village. Looks like a Lookout Mountain photolab creation to me.



“Soldier with flamethrower views fallen soldiers on Namur” – original [here](#).

Apparently the Japanese fought naked – or at least, wearing only loincloths. Tap on the original photo link, zoom in, inspect the “corpses” – no visible wounds/injury/blood. Are these Imperial Japanese soldiers or are they local natives who are playing dead?

Alright, that’s enough of that nonsense.

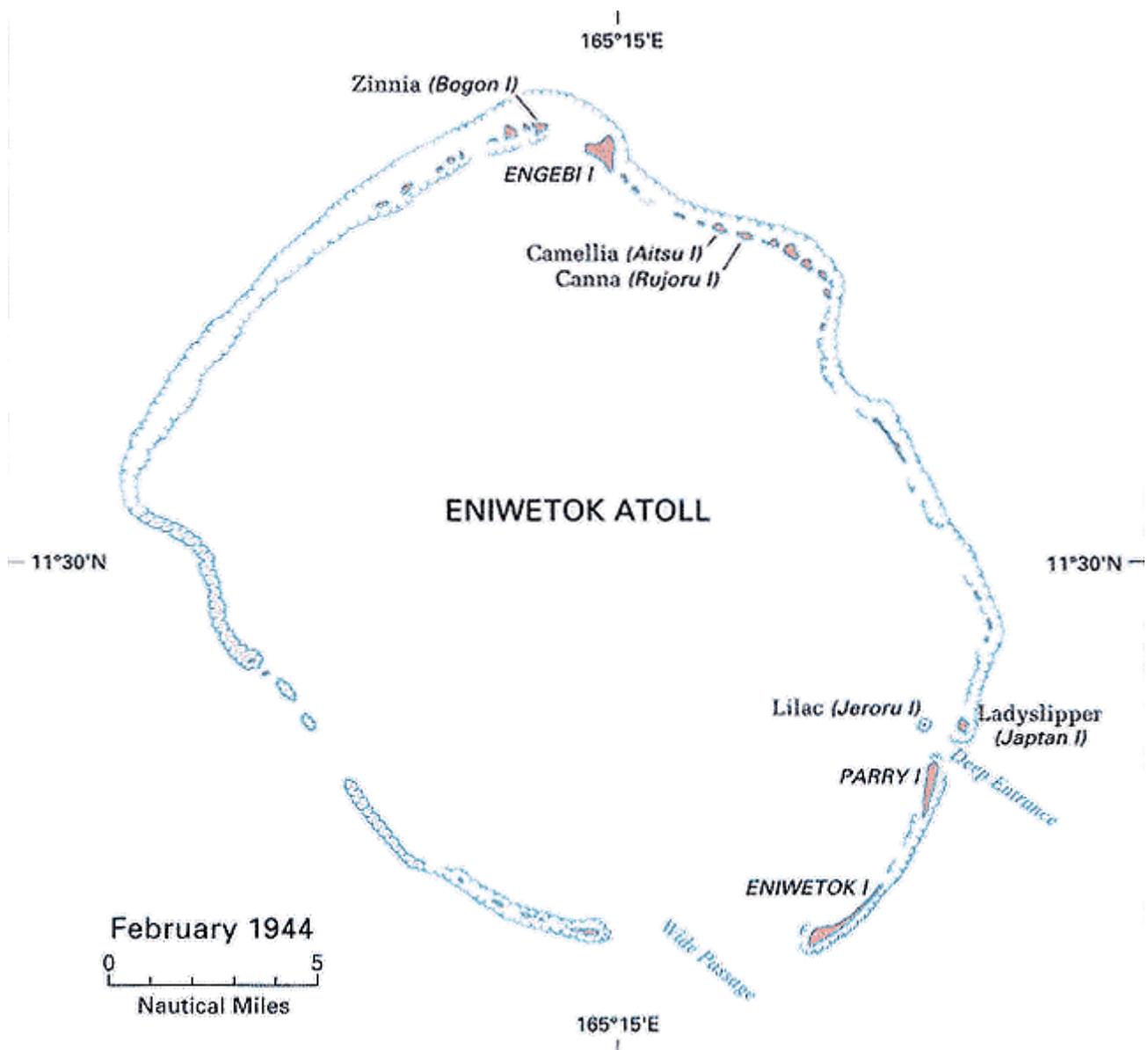
During [the Battle of Apamama](#) (August 1942) Wikipedia gives us a length bit of fiction that I can’t be bothered to cover in full. At least the ONI clerk who typed it up was having fun. Here’s a nice extract to give an example of how ridiculous it is:

*“At 1400, an **English-speaking Apamamese boy puffing a cigarette** that Lt. Hand had given him appeared, shouting **“The Saps are all dead.”** He had secluded himself near the Japanese radio station and observed the remaining Japanese that survived the Navy/Marine gunfire. **The garrison commander, a Japanese Captain, assembled his troops in two ranks and was giving them an oration to motivate his troops. The Japanese captain brandished a samurai sword in one hand and waved a pistol in the other, urging them to “Kill all Americans!”** During his violent gesturing the pistol accidentally discharged, shooting himself in the stomach, killing him. **Completely demoralized, the Japanese troops began digging their own graves; when they were done, they lay down in them and shot themselves in their jaws, committing mass suicide.**”*

*Captain Jones dispatched his executive officer, Lt. Silverthorn and Lt. Corey with two platoons to investigate. When they arrived at the Japanese CP at 1700, they confirmed the death of the twenty-three dead Japanese defenders in all. It was difficult for them to understand why they committed suicide; near each individual firing position were several hundred rounds of ammunition, and from ten to forty hand grenades. Also lying about were approximately a dozen rifles, ten pistols, two light machine guns, and one heavy machine gun. An examination of the position revealed that the Japanese had fire superiority despite their inferior numbers. The area included the radio station, officers' quarters, QM shed, boat shed, numerous huts, and live chickens. No articles were touched and all men were cautioned about touching any of the many wires. The Marines began to bury the dead with help from the Apamamans."*

Yep. Legit history, clean and fresh. I'm not going to accept that happened and I'm not going to spend time disproving it point by point, it's just dumb.

What about the [Battle of Eniwetok](#)? This is 17<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 1944.



*“Eniwetok is a large coral atoll of 40 islands **with a land area total less than 5.85 square kilometres (2.26 sq mi)**. It has a mean elevation above sea level of 3 metres (9.8 ft). and surrounds a deep central lagoon, 80 kilometres (50 mi) in circumference.”*

Remember, this is the place that was later hit with 30 megatons of nuclear bombs in 43 tests from 1948-58, though we aren't told why it was chosen. We are assured that before the bombs were dropped, bodies of US servicemen were removed to be reburied with their families in the US. Ridiculous, since it begs the obvious question: why weren't they returned to the US in the first place? Also, do you remember John Woods, the moron who allegedly acting as hangman after the Nuremberg trials? The guy who didn't know how long to make the rope? He was supposedly killed on this little atoll in 1950 at age 39, when he accidentally electrocuted himself. So that's how they faked that death. When he later started blabbing about events, they could claim he wasn't John Woods, just some crazy guy who looked like him. The point being, they loved faking events at Eniwetok. No one there to claim otherwise

Again, a teeny tiny place. Numbers?

Strength	
2 regiments	3,500 <sup>[1]:32</sup>
• 22nd Marine Regiment	9 light tanks
• 106th Infantry Regiment	3 anti-tank guns
	3 naval guns
	4 mountain guns
Casualties and losses	
313 killed	3,380 killed
77 missing	144 captured <sup>[1]:88</sup>
879 wounded <sup>[1]:88</sup>	1 naval gun destroyed

3,500 men (allegedly) stationed on it, 144 captured and **3,380** killed (of course). Americans lose **313**. Always with the Funny Numbers.

*“**Engebi**, at the northern end of Enewetak Atoll is triangular in shape, with a palm grove on the eastern side of the island, and an airfield across the northern end. **The island was lightly defended by a garrison of 60 men with a battery of two 12 cm guns and two twin mounted 13 mm machine guns. The island also had 500 non-combatants.** On 4 January 1944 the 1st Amphibious Brigade arrived on Eniwetok, of which **692 men from the brigade and 54 naval personnel** were assigned to Engebi under the command of **Colonel Toshio Yano.**”*

There's not really anything online about Yano, no photos, no bio, nothing. He's just "A Colonel who died on Eniwetok". As always reflect on the schism between the small territory and the lack of supplies vs. the alleged defensive strength of the Japanese. These men would all need food, clean water and sanitation. They are not going to sit around naked on an atoll meditating in the heat.

From Wikipedia:

*“On 16 February United States Navy aircraft from TG 58.4 attacked Engebi **taking the airfield out of operation, destroying one of the coastal defence guns at the north-eastern corner of the island and up to 14 aircraft.** The main invasion fleet arrived off Eniwetok early on 17 February.*

**Naval bombardment of Eniwetok began on 17 February, and at 13:18, US forces landed on Canna and Camelia islets, near Engebi. No resistance was encountered. A blocking force was placed on the island chain to the south of Engebi to stop the defenders from escaping.”**

This is what I'm saying: they can simply bomb the hell out of the islands. Nobody is going to survive this. The airfield is immediately eliminated so the Japanese threat is neutralised. They don't even have the capacity to fire back and shoot down the American planes!

**“At 06:55 on 18 February, the battleship USS Colorado and the cruiser USS Louisville began to bombard the northern and eastern end of the island. The battleships USS Tennessee and USS Pennsylvania opened fire on the beach defences at dawn, and at 07:20 the destroyer USS Phelps (DD-360) began direct fire. At 08:00 a naval air attack began, and at 08:11 the naval bombardment resumed. Artillery from the islets captured on 17 February also added to the bombardment.”**

As if anything could remain functional with that amount of firepower levelled at it.

**“The main landings were carried out by two battalions from the 22nd Marine Regiment, commanded by Colonel John T. Walker, which landed on Engebi on 18 February at 08:43, (UTC+12) the next day supported by medium tanks and two 105mm self propelled guns. There was very little resistance at the beach, except from the southern tip of the island. The airfield was quickly captured, and within an hour the tanks had reached the northern shore. The 3rd Battalion landed at 09:55 (UTC+12) and began to mop up the few remaining defenders. The island was declared secure by 14:50 (UTC+12), though mopping-up continued through the next day. US losses included 85 killed and missing plus 166 wounded. The Japanese lost 1,276 killed and 16 captured.”**

Imagine taking a day to cover this amount of ground, with the supporting fire they had:



“Strike photograph taken over Engebi Eniwetok Atoll from an F6F Hellcat from VF-12 in February 1944” – original [here](#).

Tap on that original link, right click on the image and open the image in a new tab so your browser lets you zoom in properly. Let's assess, shall we? I see a runway, or at least a dirt strip cleared along the middle of the atoll which the CB's could carve out in an afternoon. I can see the Americans have bombed the hell out of it, what with all the craters and rising smoke from the bombs they're dropping at the time the photo is taken. I can see three planes... two on the south side of the runway, extreme left, one on the upper side of the runway, to their right. I don't see any major buildings, comms tower, any depots, any storage facilities, troop barracks, warehouses, water storage, fuel, etc. I can't see any hangers or even tarp sheets to cover the planes to keep them safe from rain or saltwater spray (let alone any kind of mechanics bay to repair the planes and refuel them). I can see a pier on the north side of the atoll, but this is a small fishing pier for locals, not a proper dock for offloading cargo from logistics ships or submarines, nothing very heavy. I don't see any bunkers, gun emplacements, trenches, anti-naval cannon emplacements or anti-air emplacements. I don't see any troops or personnel running for cover despite this being mid bombardment. I don't see any Japanese insignia, e.g. a single flagpole with the Imperial flag.

My point is: what the hell are they talking about? There's nothing there!

That's Engebi. The main atoll, Eniwetok:

***“Eniwetok Island is a long, narrow island, widest at the western end, and very narrow on the eastern end. A road existed on the lagoon shore on the western half of the island, where the settlement was located. This topography meant that defence in depth was impossible. On Eniwetok itself, the Japanese had 779 Army troops, 24 civilians and five naval personnel all under the command of Lt Col. Hashida Masahiro. The defenders had two flame throwers, 13 grenade launchers, 12 light machine guns, two heavy machine guns, one 50mm mortar, eleven 81mm mortars, one 20mm automatic gun, three 20mm cannons and three Type 95 light tanks. Most of the defences were made up of foxhole and trenches, but work had also begun on some concrete pillboxes, which were not completed.*”**

***At 07:10 (UTC+12) on 18 February two cruisers and two destroyers opened fire on Japanese positions from the lagoon side of Eniwetok. At 07:40 (UTC+12) a third destroyer opened fire to the east of the landing beaches and at 08:10 (UTC+12) a fourth destroyer also commenced bombardment. At 08:10 (UTC+12) the naval gunfire was halted for 15 minutes to allow for a carrier aircraft attack. The first troops landed at 09:17 (UTC+12), but the initial landings immediately ran into problems. The short naval bombardment meant that many Japanese positions remained intact, and the American LVTs could not scale an 8 feet (2.4 m) sand dune just inland. These early problems were quickly overcome, and the Americans reached the ocean shore of the island by 11:45 (UTC+12). A Japanese counter-attack, carried out by 300-400 men, hit the western part of the American line, which was supported by mortar fire. The attack was over by 12:45 (UTC+12), and had failed to break the Americans.”***

So the destroyers pound this strip of dirt for two hours straight and also allow the aircraft carriers to carpet bomb the place but somehow over half of the Japanese forces remain alive to immediately launch a suicidal counterattack. OK. The Marines sail straight into a sand dune and this scuppers the LVTs (of course) but they presumably climb out and walk over the dune to proceed.

***“At 14:25 (UTC+12) the 3rd Battalion, 22nd Marines landed to push towards the western end of the island, and by nightfall had reached the south-west corner of the island. The Marine commander, Colonel Ayers, ordered that the attack continue through the night to eliminate the*”**

*Japanese pocket in the north-west corner. A Japanese counterattack at 09:10 (UTC+12) on 19 February reached the Marine battalion command post but was repulsed. The 3rd Battalion continued to press the attack south along the east coast. Progress was slow, and the Japanese spider hole defensive positions were intact and had to be eliminated one-by-one, with heavy undergrowth providing good defensive cover.*

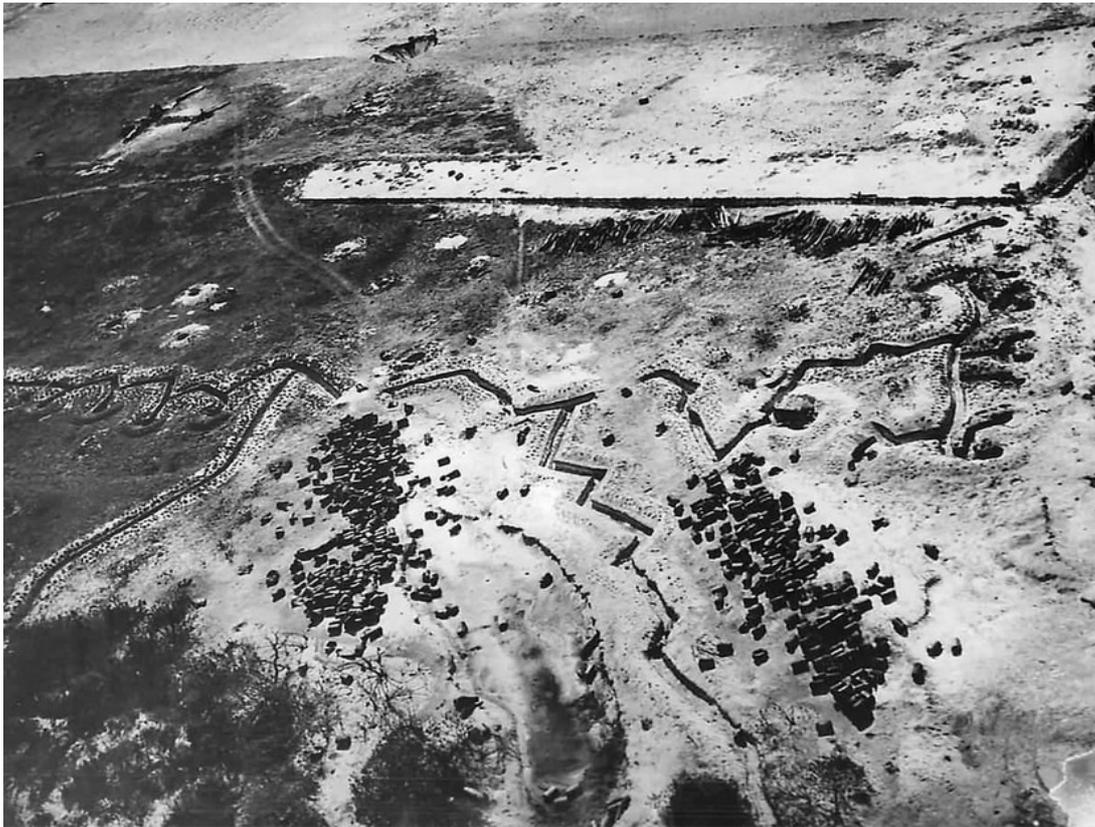
*The fighting in the west came to an end on the morning of 20 February; however, the island was not declared secured until 21 February. 37 Americans **were killed or missing** and 94 wounded. The Japanese had **800 dead** and 23 prisoners.”*

Ok... so somehow these artillery/navy cannon/aerial bombardments are doing absolutely nothing to affect the entrenched Japanese, who we must remember are simply digging a shallow trench in the sand and crouching down. Are they really that well defended?



*“Smoke rises from Eniwetok after pre-invasion “softening-up” attacks by U.S. Navy carrier aircraft on February 3, 1944.” - original [here](#).*

Isn't this just Engebi from a different angle? What's with the planes on the runway – are they pasted in? What's with the weird smoke effects? This looks like a paste up.



*“Aerial View Zig Zag Japanese Trenches on Engebi Island 1944” – original [here](#).*

Hmm. So that’s not visible in the initial photo we looked at. Just south of the runway? That’s not lining up with the aerial photo of Engebi being bombed. Also, is this really the fortifications that 1,200 men could hide in, sufficient to withstand the bombardment? If not, where are the rest of the trenches in the aerial shot? Or the bunkers they would have needed to avoid being killed?

Wrapping up our tour of this absolute nonsense we arrive at the takeover of Parry Island, which housed the Japanese commander General Nishida:

*“Parry island was smaller than Eniwetok and more heavily defended and was the HQ of 1st Amphibious Brigade commander General Nishida. When the invasion began the Japanese had **1,115 troops and 250 other personnel on Parry.**”*

We read on:

*“The island is tear-drop shaped with the larger end to the north, facing the lagoon. The Japanese defences consisted of a series of **eight** strong points along the beach, **protected by trenches and a network of foxholes.**”*

*Based on experience at Eniwetok, **the American naval bombardment of Parry Island was more thorough.** On 22 February, the battleships USS Tennessee and USS Pennsylvania and the heavy cruisers USS Indianapolis and USS Louisville and the destroyer USS Hailey **delivered more than 900 tons of explosive onto the island,** with the 104th Field Artillery on Eniwetok and the 2nd Separate Pack Howitzer Battalions on Japtan providing additional fire support. The invasion force consisted of the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 22nd Marines, the veterans of Engebi. The 1st Battalion advancing on the right and the 2nd Battalion on the east. The landing occurred at 09:00 (UTC+12), with **a combined force of Marines and tanks advancing rapidly past Japanese***

**positions once machine gun fire had been suppressed, followed by demolition and flame-thrower squads clearing out spider holes and Japanese defenders who had been bypassed, followed by three-four men squads mopping up any survivors.**

*At 10:00 (UTC+12), remaining Japanese artillery was suppressed by naval bombardment, and by 11:55 (UTC+12), the 1st Battalion reached the ocean shore, and with the 2nd Battalion taking the northern tip of the island by 13:00 (UTC+12). The 1st Battalion then turned to the southern tip of the island, reinforced by the 3rd Battalion along the lagoon shore. At 19:30 (UTC+12), the regimental commander radioed "I present you with the island of Parry", **though operations continued through the next day.** U.S. casualties included **73 killed and missing** plus 261 wounded. **The vast majority of Japanese soldiers were killed, including General Nishida, although 105 survivors were captured.**"*

900 tons of explosive? On Parry Island? It's a mile and a half long and barely 400 metres wide! Look it up on Google Maps, it's called "Medren" for some reason. The whole island would be vaporised.

It gets more ridiculous when we read [this article](#):

*"Originally the plan was to invade Parry Island at the same time as Eniwetok, but the need to commit the reserve forces to secure Eniwetok delayed the invasion of Parry. **This was, in fact, beneficial since it allowed additional days of pre-invasion bombardment by the U.S. Navy.** It had been learned **that the Japanese force on Parry Island was larger than on the other islands.** So the longer the bombardment, the less opposition the Americans might have to face.*

*The bombardment, aided by captured maps showing the island's defences, **was more effective than the usual preliminary bombardment.** The Navy placed **944 tons of high explosives on Parry, the aviators dropped another 99 tons, and field artillery contributed 245 tons before the first Americans set foot on the island.**"*

But do go on and tell me how you then had to spend hours and hours fighting the Japanese in their magical "spider holes" that kept them immune to that. Or that over 100 men were captured alive.

We also have Funny Numbers in that the main article on Parry is saying the Japanese have "1,115 troops and 250 other personnel on Parry" (i.e. 1,365 men) but if you look at the article on [Nishida](#) specifically it says:

*"With heavy naval artillery support, US Marines stormed Parry island on 22 February 1944, sustaining **131** casualties (37 KIA), against which **Nishida and almost all of his 800 defenders were annihilated.** Nishida was posthumously awarded the Order of the Golden Kite, 4th class and was promoted to lieutenant-general."*

So which is it? Did they take Parry with over 1,300 men or was there 800 men? Since Nishida was leading the Japanese forces and Parry is supposed to be more heavily defended than everywhere else, then why does Engebi (the island to the north) have 1,276 killed? With 800-ish on Eniwetok Island itself that only gives us about 2,900 Japanese on the entire atoll chain... but Wikipedia is giving us this:

Casualties and losses	
313 killed	3,380 killed
77 missing	144 captured <sup>[1]:88</sup>
879 wounded <sup>[1]:88</sup>	1 naval gun destroyed

Further, if the Japanese are squatting on these islands, why do they have absolutely no naval or air capabilities? If the Americans are approaching wouldn't there be some kind of naval battle first? Or submarine battles? Or an aerial dogfight? Or even one American plane being shot down by Japanese anti-air?



*“With dead Japanese lying outside a concrete bunker, an American serviceman takes a break from battle to grab a bite, February 20, 1944.” original [here](#).*

I suspect the face of the Marine “grabbing a bite” has been altered in some way. It’s extremely visible when you would think he would be in shadow. The mouth looks wrong, like a cartoonish upside down “:(” emoji. Why is his rifle so enormous? Look how out of scale it is with his body. What is the guy on the right doing? Bent over in prayer? Reading tea leaves? Why is he existing in a ghostly grey-scale compared to the guy in the middle? This is a doctored image, again.

Finally, you can see [this video](#) which is recordings of an American plane flying over the Eniwetok atoll system. Try and spot anything to indicate a military emplacement. It’s an empty atoll cluster.

If you’re a clever clogs you might remember from the initial Wiki quote on page 1 that there was another island, called Majuro, which was part of this campaign.

If we go to [this page on Wikipedia](#) we read:

*“Majuro Atoll was claimed by the German Empire with the rest of the Marshall Islands in 1884, and the Germans established a trading post. As with the rest of the Marshalls, Majuro was captured by the Imperial Japanese Navy in 1914 during World War I and mandated to the Empire of Japan by the League of Nations in 1920. The island then became a part of the Japanese*

mandated territory of the South Seas Mandate; although the Japanese had established a government in the Mandate, local affairs were mostly left in the hands of traditional local leaders until the start of World War II.

**On January 30, 1944, United States Armed Forces invaded, but found that Japanese forces had evacuated their fortifications to Kwajalein and Enewetak about a year earlier. A single Japanese warrant officer had been left as a caretaker. With his capture, the islands were secured. This gave the U.S. Navy use of one of the largest anchorages in the Central Pacific. The lagoon became a large forward naval base of operations and was the largest and most active port in the world until the war moved westward when it was supplanted by Ulithi (Yap, Federated States of Micronesia)."**

Couldn't make it up. The largest anchorage in the Central Pacific. An absolutely key logistical capture point. What did the Japanese do? They abandoned it. Nobody was there – just one “warrant officer” chilling in a deck chair. The Americans could just walk straight in and take it for themselves. Please reflect on how ridiculous that is. Fighting atoll by atoll for the slightest tactical advantage (“Ooh, just enough space for an airfield! Ooh, a boatplane dock!”) and the Japanese completely disregard Majuro.

These are all just empty islands.

This is all completely ridiculous.

More to come.

Summer Holiday [Outro Music](#).

