

This historic footage, from the U.S. National Archives and the Department of Defense, tells the story of Peleliu from both the Allied and the Japanese perspective. The compiled clips are narrated by Jim Bishop (who fought in the battle).

Move the video forward, to 1:53, to immediately begin viewing the Peleliu battle scenes.

Aerial and naval bombardment attempted to "soften-up" the defenders, but no one knew just how securely the Japanese had constructed their Peleliu defenses.

All of the shelling, including the destructive power of the Navy's big guns, hardly touched the dug-out caves, concrete pillboxes (see photo, [page 119](#), from *With the Old Breed* by E.B. Sledge) and other fortifications which the Japanese military leaders had ordered their workers to create.

Marines from the 1st Division were met with heavy firing when they first landed on [Peleliu's beaches](#). Eugene Sledge describes what it was like:

The Marine Corps had trained us new men until we were welded with the veterans into a thoroughly disciplined combat division. Now the force of events unleashed on that two-mile by six-mile piece of unfriendly coral rock would carry us forward unrelentingly, each to his individual fate.

*Everything my life had been before and has been after pales in the light of that awesome moment when my amtrac started in amid a thunderous bombardment toward the flaming, smoke-shrouded beach for the assault on Peleliu. (E.B. Sledge, *With the Old Breed*, page 52.)*

Why was this battle fought? Sledge continues his description of events:

Since the end of World War II, historians and military analysts have argued inconclusively about the necessity of the Palau Islands campaign. Many believed after the battle - and still believe today - that the United States didn't need to fight it as a prerequisite to General MacArthur's return to the Philippines.

Adm. William F. ("Bull") Halsey suggested calling off the Palau operation after high-level planners learned that Japanese air power in the Philippines wasn't as strong as intelligence originally had presumed it to be. But MacArthur believed the operation should proceed, and Adm. Chester W. Nimitz said it was too late to cancel the operation, because the convoy was already underway.

Because of important events in Europe at the time and the lack of immediate, apparent benefits from the seizure of Peleliu, the battle remains one of the lesser known or understood of the Pacific war. Nonetheless, for many it ranks as the roughest fight the Marines had in World War II. (Sledge, pages 52-53.)

It wasn't just the fighting men who said the battle was one of the toughest of the war:

Maj. Gen. (later Lt. Gen.) Roy S. Geiger, the rugged commander of the III Amphibious Corps, said repeatedly that Peleliu was the toughest battle of the entire Pacific war. A former commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Clifton B. Cates, said Peleliu was one of the most vicious and stubbornly contested battles of the war, and that nowhere was the fighting efficiency of the U.S. Marine demonstrated more convincingly. (Sledge, page 53.)

What made the fight for Peleliu so difficult?

Peleliu also was important to the remainder of the Marines' war in the Pacific because of the changes in Japanese tactics encountered there. The Japanese abandoned their conventional all-out effort at defending the beach in favor of a complex defense based upon mutually supporting, fortified positions in caves and pillboxes extending deeply into the interior of the island, particularly in the ridges of Umurbrogol Mountain. (Sledge, pages 52-53.)

The Marines later named that mountain "Bloody Nose Ridge."

See, also:

[Battle of Peleliu - Marines Land on the Beaches](#)

[Battle of Peleliu - Cave Warfare](#)

[Eugene \("Sledgehammer"\) Sledge Describes the Battle of Peleliu](#)

[Video: 5-Part Biography of Eugene \("Sledgehammer"\) Sledge](#)

[Video: Robert Leckie Historical Footage](#)

[Video: Biography of John Basilone](#)

Historic-Footage Scenes from the Battle of Peleliu

Credits:

Clip of historic battle footage from the U.S. National Archives and Department of Defense, compiled as "Battleline - Peleliu." Online, courtesy Archive.org.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Battle-of-Peleliu-Japanese-Defenses0>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Battle-of-Peleliu-Japanese-Defenses0>