



0. JUST A MOP-UP? - Story Preface

1. A PACIFIC EMPIRE

2. DANGEROUS OPPONENTS

3. DEATH IN CHINA

4. ATROCITIES IN CHINA

5. ABOUT IWO JIMA

6. THE ARMADA ARRIVES

7. JAPAN'S IWO JIMA DEFENSES

8. LETTERS FROM IWO JIMA

9. JUST A MOP-UP?

10. D-DAY: 19 FEBRUARY 1945

11. THE UNBROKEN CODE

12. INCHING TOWARD SURIBACHI

13. A FLAG-RAISING ON SURIBACHI

14. THE REPLACEMENT FLAG RAISERS

15. THE FAMOUS PHOTOGRAPH

16. FLAG RAISERS DIE IN BATTLE

17. KURIBAYASHI'S LAST LETTERS

18. SECURING IWO JIMA

19. IWO JIMA MEDALS OF HONOR

20. SURVIVORS RAISE CASH via WAR BONDS

21. WHY IWO JIMA WAS CAPTURED

22. FIRE BOMBS OVER TOKYO

23. RESULTS of WAR

24. THE REST OF THEIR LIVES

25. EPILOGUE - EARTHQUAKE in JAPAN

26. Awesome Guide to 21st Century Research

Despite the Allies' best efforts to "soften-up" Japan's defenses on Iwo Jima, the battle for the key island was brutal and far from just a "mop-up" (as U.S. military officials had hoped). In this scene, we see litter bearers getting the wounded to aid stations. The picture appears in *Iwo Jima: Amphibious Epic* (a USMC Historical Monograph by Lt. Col. Whitman S. Bartley, USMC), at [page 128](#).

To lessen the need for hand-to-hand combat, the U.S. Navy and Army/Air Force engaged in final pre-battle preparations:

- For 74 consecutive days, beginning on the 8th of December, 1944, [B-24s](#) (from the U.S. Seventh Air Force) [bombed](#) Iwo Jima, and other islands, in the area.
- Pre-H-Hour (when hostilities commence) naval bombardment [pounded](#) Iwo's beaches. Much of the ordered bombing never took place, however, due to weather issues.

- The Seventh Air Force dropped 500-pound bombs on airfield number 2.
- Naval gunfire areas attempted to lessen the defenders' impact on the Marines.
- As the initial wave of troops made for shore in their LVTs (tracked landing vehicles), with support ships in the foreground, Navy gunboats provided cover with rockets and 40mm shells.

Had the Navy's big guns taken out the enemy and their fortifications? Were the earlier bomb runs enough to make the Marine's job just a "mop-up?" What did the Japanese think (scroll down 50%) about the bombardment?

For two days we cowered like rats, trying to dig ourselves deeper into the acrid volcanic dust and ash of Iwo Jima. Never have I felt so helpless, so puny, as I did during those two days. There was nothing we could do, there was no way in which we could strike back. The men screamed and cursed and shouted, they shook their fists and swore revenge, and too many of them fell to the ground, their threats choking on the blood which bubbled through great gashes in their throats. Virtually every last structure on Iwo Jima was torn to splintered wreckage. Not a building stood. Not a tent escaped. Not even the most dismal shack remained standing. Everything was blown to bits. The four fighter planes which had returned from our last sortie were smashed by shells into flaming pieces of junk.

As the first wave of Marines (many loaded down with one hundred pounds of weapons and gear) came ashore, hidden Japanese guns were silent. Kuribayashi's orders held firm: No one fires until Iwo's beaches are clogged with men and equipment. After an hour the silence was over. Everything changed as the island erupted in fire power from both sides.

When the defenders opened fire, everyone - especially the Marines - knew this would be no simple "mop-up" expedition.



US Marines pinned down at Iwo Jima on February 19, 1945. USMC Photo.

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

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/JUST-A-MOP-UP-Flags-Of-Our-Fathers>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/JUST-A-MOP-UP-Flags-Of-Our-Fathers>

Media Stream



B-24s Used by the U.S. in Iwo Jima

Image online, courtesy the historylink101.com website.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/B-24s-Used-by-the-U.S.-in-Iwo-Jima>



View of B-24s Bombing Iwo Jima

U.S. Air Force Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archive.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/View-of-B-24s-Bombing-Iwo-Jima>

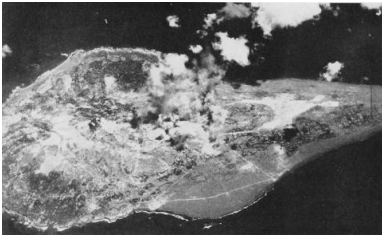


Iwo's Beaches Pounded with Navy Attack

Image online, courtesy the ibiblio.org website.

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Bombs Dropping on Airfield Number 2

Image online, courtesy the ibiblio.org website.

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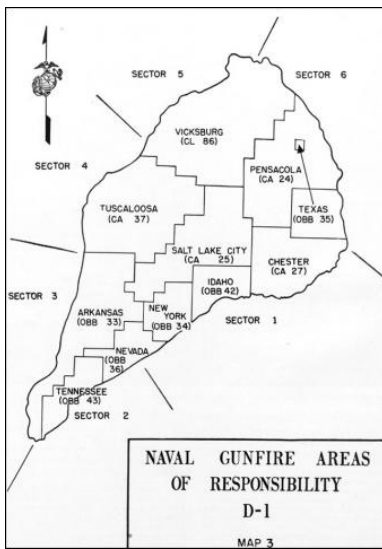


Naval Gunfire Areas Map

Image online, courtesy the ibiblio.org website.

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Naval Gunfire Area Map of D-1

Image online, courtesy the [ibiblio.org](http://www.ibiblio.org) website.

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Wave of Troops Coming Ashore to Iwo Jima

Image online, courtesy the [ibiblio.org](http://www.ibiblio.org) website.

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Troops Coming Ashore to Iwo Jima

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Support Ships Used by U.S. at Iwo Jima

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Marines Coming Ashore in Iwo Jima

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JUST A MOP-UP?

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Iwo Jima - Defensive Positions

From KETC, *Living St. Louis*, with producer Anne-Marie Berger. Online, courtesy KETC channel at YouTube.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Iwo-Jima-Defensive-Positions>