

NOTICE: THIS VIDEO CLIP ABOUT A WORLD WAR II BATTLE COMBINES HISTORICAL FOOTAGE, FROM THE U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES, WITH INTERVIEWS AND RECREATED SCENES.

Exactly eight months to the day, after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, 11,000 American Marines land on a Pacific island called Guadalcanal. They are about to commence the first Allied offensive against the Empire of Japan.

Their immediate objective is to capture an airfield which Japanese construction workers are building. If that airfield were completed, and operated by the Japanese, Allied shipping in the Pacific would be dangerously compromised. This is a mission the Allies cannot lose.

At first, it seems that "Operation Watchtower" (the battle's code name) would go smoothly. Days have passed without heavy fighting since most of the 2,600 Japanese men on the island are working on the airfield. Then ... ships from the Japanese fleet arrive, and everything changes for the Allied fighters.

Under heavy bombardment, Allied ships (still stocked with ground supplies) are forced to withdraw. Marines are left on the island without enough material to support them.

Many of the Marines are barely out of high school. Although highly trained, they are young. Their average age is eighteen. They will ultimately oppose Japanese soldiers - mostly in their 20s - who have seen prior combat.

The Japanese know the island's terrain. They are extremely confident and, to this point in the war, have been very successful. They live by a military code known as "Bushido," meaning "way of the warrior."

Part of a warrior's way is to follow seven virtues:

- Rectitude
- Courage
- Benevolence
- Respect
- Honesty
- Honor
- Loyalty.

But those virtues also lead to something else, for a Japanese soldier: A fight to the death.

Five days after the invasion's start, twenty-five Marines find themselves unprotected on a Guadalcanal beach, opposing two hundred Japanese soldiers. The killing soon begins, in earnest.

Some of the Americans are using malfunctioning weapons. Twenty-two Marines die was a result of the shootout.

One survivor has no choice but to swim away from the battle scene. Bullet shots, from the shore, miss him - but as he turns toward the beach, he observes the glint of bayonets in the sunlight.

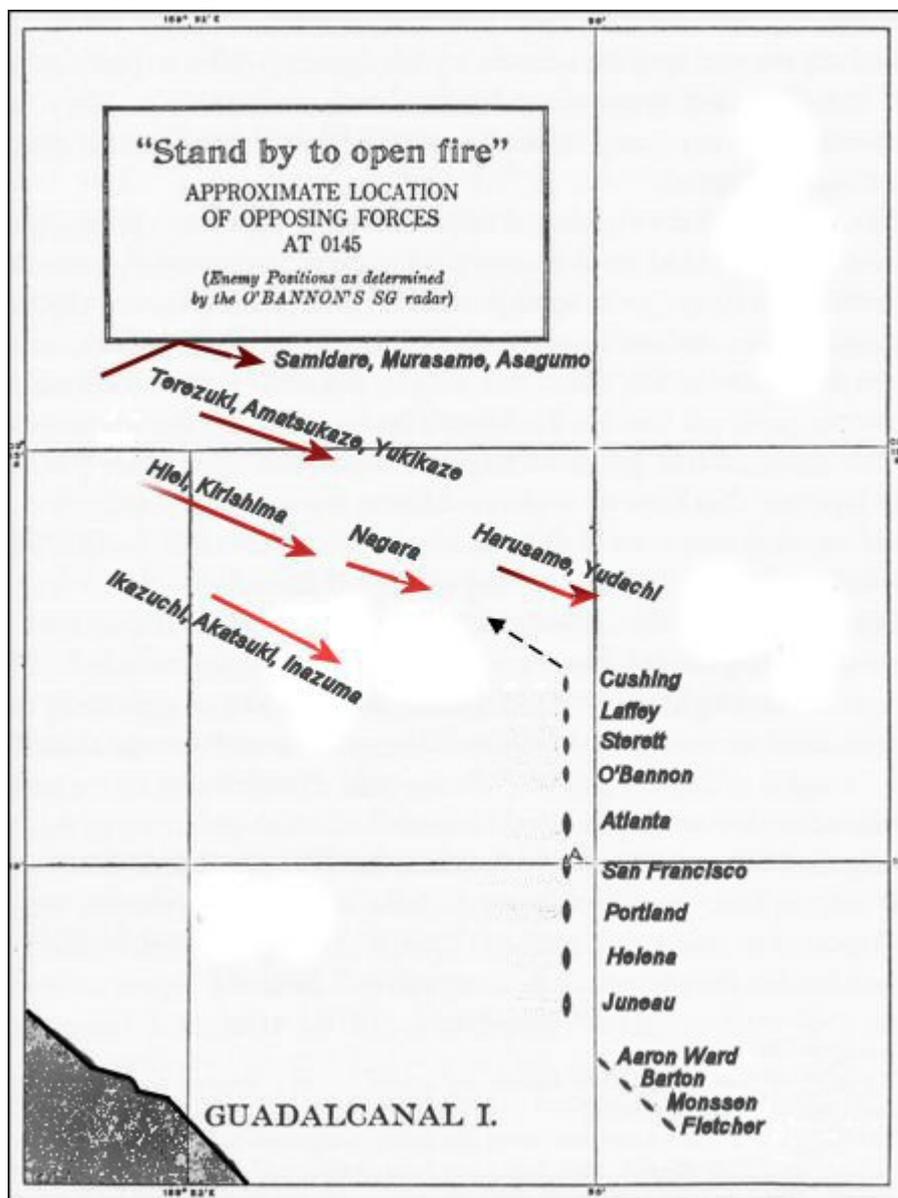
He instantly recognizes what is happening but cannot believe what he sees.

On the 12th of November, 1942, a naval battle between Japan and the Allies (mostly American men and ships) begins. Also known as the "Third and Fourth Battles of Savo Island and, for the Japanese, the the "Third Battle of the Solomon Sea," this "Naval Battle of Guadalcanal" was fiercely fought over three days.

The purpose of this battle, for the Allies, was to prevent Japanese reinforcements (around 7,000 men) from reaching Guadalcanal (via naval troop transports) and retaking the airfield (known as "Henderson Field") which the Allies had captured and controlled.

When U.S. military commanders learned about Japan's plans, and the sending of so many reinforcements to Guadalcanal, they dispatched resources (including planes and warships) to stop the Japanese soldiers from reaching the island and recapturing (or destroying) the airfield.

This modified map—from "The Battle of Guadalcanal, 11-15 November, 1942," by Colin G. Jameson (at page 19)—depicts the location of opposing ships.



The three-day naval battle was deadly, for both sides, but the victory went to the Allies. Their efforts stopped the Japanese Empire from retaking Guadalcanal.

See, also:

Video: Guadalcanal - Battle of the Tenaru (Ilu River)

Video: Guadalcanal - Battle at Edson's Ridge Begins (move clip to 8:38)

Video: Guadalcanal - Battle at Edson's ("Bloody") Ridge

Video: Guadalcanal - John Basilone at Edson's ("Bloody") Ridge

Video: Robert Leckie Historical Footage

Image and Brief Bio: Robert Leckie

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Photo of Marines at Guadalcanal, linked in the above description, from the U.S. National Archives and online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. The picture is described in the Historical Monograph - *Marines in World War II, The Guadalcanal Campaign* (by Major John L. Zimmerman, USMCR Historical Section, Division of Public Information Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1949) - as follows:

Fresh troops from the 2d Marine Division during a halt. Note clean-shaven faces and good condition of equipment and clothing. (Zimmerman, chp 8, page 129.)

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

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Guadalcanal-War-in-the-Pacific>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Guadalcanal-War-in-the-Pacific>