

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

The battle for the airfield will be extremely difficult for the 1st Marines. They are short-staffed and short-supplied.

But the battle for the Japanese will be equally hard. Their commander gives them a simply-worded order: "Rout, stab, kill and exterminate the enemy before daybreak."

It is 10 p.m. on the night of September 12th. The Japanese make their first charge. For two nights, they make bayonet charges. For two nights, the Marines respond with their weapons. Facing superior firing power is not the norm for Japanese soldiers at this stage of war in the Pacific.

Plus ... there is something else working against them. They have just completed a tiring, grueling trek through Guadalcanal's jungle. As a result, fewer soldiers than usual take part in each bayonet charge.

Yet ... the Japanese charges continue, in wave after wave of hurtling men with bayonets. Responding Marines can only do so much. Human arms - even for young, fit men - begin to tire after throwing so many grenades and firing so many bullets.

Positioned on the other side of the airfield, Marines in foxholes are dug in. They hear the screaming and firing and wait for their turn to fight. The waiting, for them, becomes extremely difficult. They cannot let-down their guard. They are not yet needed in the battle.

Disease (such as malaria) and exhaustion are also taking a significant toll on the Marines. That combination is becoming lethal, as fit-to-fight Marines diminish in number.

Edson's Ridge - where the bayonet charges are taking place (and named for Col. Merritt Edson) - will later be called "Bloody Ridge." At the end of all the fighting, the Marines have killed more Japanese than the Japanese have killed Marines.

The following month, Marine Sgt. John Basilone and the 7th Marines have arrived at Guadalcanal. On October 24, 1942, Basilone leads two squads of machine gunners to set up their positions at Edson's Ridge. The Japanese are trying to recapture the airfield, again.

Making their way through the jungle, again, the Japanese are unable to carry all their heavy artillery. The Marines, however, are also not in the best of shape.

Too-few Marines (about 700) have to cover too-large a territory (more than a mile) while holding-off around 3,000 (perhaps more) Japanese soldiers. In the Battle for Henderson Field, the Marines will be reinforced by 700 Army reservists.

So vital is the battle, to keep the airfield, that the Marines cannot give ground. They cannot turn and run. They must endure against overwhelming odds.

John Basilone knows machine guns. He knows how to keep them operating. He, and his fellow Marines, are incredibly brave. They have to be - they are facing equally brave opponents.

At 1:15 a.m., on October 25th, a group of Japanese soldiers reach the end of their trek through the jungle. Tired and disoriented, they are unaware that John Basilone, and his group of men and machine guns, are directly in front of them. They soon find out.

More than a hundred Japanese soldiers are quickly killed. But as they realize what is happening, they respond with their own charge and knock-out two American machine guns.

As Japanese soldiers keep coming, Basilone and his Marines are in trouble. They have to keep fighting, with only two machine guns left.

See, also:

Video Biography of John Basilone - SPOILER ALERT for end of "The Pacific"

Guadalcanal - War in the Pacific, Part 1

Guadalcanal - War in the Pacific, Part 2

Guadalcanal - War in the Pacific, Part 3

Guadalcanal - War in the Pacific, Part 5

Credits:

Clip from "Shootout - WWII: Guadalcanal," online courtesy The History Channel.

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Series originally aired:

2005

Series released on DVD:

A&E Home Video, May 2007

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Guadalcanal-Edson-s-Ridge)

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See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Guadalcanal-Edson-s-Ridge)

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