

Failure at Iwo Jima and Okinawa

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Kevin Denton

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12,000 United States Marines dead and 36,000 wounded along with over 40,000 civilians killed from just one battle-The Battle of Okinawa.¹ And the Battle of Iwo Jima resulted in another 7,000 killed soldiers approximately². Throughout the Pacific War there were many battles fought between the United States of America and the Japanese however no battle had accrued such a large amount as that in the Battle of Okinawa. In actuality it is considered the single largest death toll in one battle during the Pacific War. The U.S. death toll was more at Okinawa than at Guadalcanal and Iwo Jima combined. According to historians, such as John Costello, Both of these Japanese islands were seen as successes and important for the United States in the military takeover of the Japanese home islands as "intermediate jump-off points"³ to Japan's homeland. However, it was at the cost of thousands of lives from American soldiers. It is believed that Iwo Jima and Okinawa were of great importance to the victory in the Pacific War. They were said to be the areas in which they could use as landing strips for the atomic bombs that would later destroy the Japanese homeland.

¹ John Pike. "Battle of Okinawa." GlobalSecurity.org - Reliable Security Information. 26 Apr. 2005. Web. 16 May 2011. <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/okinawa-battle.htm>>

² Robert Burrell. "Breaking the Cycle of Iwo Jima Mythology: A Strategic Study of Operation Detachment." JSTOR. Journal of Military History, Oct. 2004. Web. 17 May 2011. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3396966>>

³ John Costello. *The Pacific War*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1981. Print. 449

Involvement of the United States in the Pacific War was a necessity but the attacks on islands such as Iwo Jima and Okinawa were poorly executed and unnecessary in order to achieve a victory. Historian Robert S. Burrell believes the result for attacking islands such as Iwo Jima and Okinawa did not justify or satisfy the outcome of losing so many soldiers. The different agendas by different military divisions caused many casualties during the battle and it has been justified by what the result was for the battle on Iwo Jima⁴. As the Pacific War progressed, so did the United States' strategy in taking over the Pacific. Each island or territory was captured for one specific reason or another in order to achieve the ultimate goal of a Japanese surrender. However, Iwo Jima and Okinawa were islands that were seen by the United States to have great military importance but the execution caused the deaths of soldiers on both sides and even civilians on Okinawa. If the United States were to use an alternative approach they could have properly used Tinian island in order to achieve the same goal without the massive amount of death.

The origins of the Pacific War can be examined by many different scopes in who actually started the Pacific War between the United States and Japan. Scholar Scott Sagan gives in which he states

⁴ Robert S. Burrell. "Breaking the Cycle of Iwo Jima Mythology: A Strategic Study of Operation Detachment." 1143

“The origins of the Pacific War are best viewed as a mutual failure of deterrence. The Japanese government wanted to expand into Southeast Asia, but sought to do so while deterring American intervention in support of the European colonial powers. The United States attempted to prevent Japanese expansion, but sought to do so without precipitating war in the Pacific.”⁵

Subsequently on December 7th, 1941 at Pearl Harbor the Japanese attacked the United States and started the Pacific War. From here, the battles spread all over the Pacific Ocean to many other land masses specifically the islands that were between the U.S. and Japan.

It is necessary to look at major battles that occurred in the Pacific War to understand what tactics worked against the Japanese and which tactics were unsuccessful. One of the first battles that occurred once the United States declared war on Japan was the fall of the Philippines. In this attack, the United States lost fewer men than the Japanese (roughly around 2,000 men).⁶ Even though the United States lost the first battle against the Japanese in the Pacific War, it might have been to the advantage of the United States. According to Peter Darman, the U.S. not only lost around 2,000 men but around 11,500 soldiers

5 Scott Sagan. "The Origins of the Pacific War." JSTOR 18.4 (1988): 893-922

6 Peter Darman. World War II: Stats and Facts. New York: Fall River Press, 2009. Print. 117

were prisoners of the Japanese. Thus, it required the Japanese to have a substantial amount of men be stationed in Philippines to control the area because of its strategic importance in the Pacific. Also, being that the Philippines was not a huge target for Japan like Malaya it cause the Japanese military to begin to spread their army too thin.⁷ The U.S. was still not successful in the battles ahead against the Japanese. The battle for the Java Sea was a large naval battle between Japan and the Allied forces of the United States, Britain, and France. In the end, the Japanese were still successful in taking control of another area, this being the Java Sea which cut off all Allied ships and allowed the Japanese to take control of Java.⁸

In May of 1942, the United States engaged with the Japanese in the Battle of the Coral Sea. The immediate result of the battle was that the Japanese defeated the United States and were able to sink many more of the U.S.'s ships. One of the ship's that was great damaged and later destroyed was one of the larger carriers named *Lexington*. A soldier retells his view when he says "It was a terrible sight watching her burn and all those men trying to make it over the side and down the lines into the water. She (Lexington) stayed afloat, burning, and then after they had everybody alive off, one of our destroyers had to sink her

⁷ Peter Darman. World War II: Stats and Facts. 117

⁸ Peter Darman. World War II: Stats and Facts. 118

with torpedoes.”⁹ Many of the ships that were damaged in the battle were not salvageable and it was necessary for the U.S. to destroy all of the damaged ships. Comparing the results of the battle,

It looked bad for the Americans. One large carrier lost and one damaged out of four available in the Pacific, one oiler and one destroyer sunk to one Japanese small carrier, one destroyer and several small craft sunk, and one fleet carrier out of six damaged. Coral Sea was a tactical defeat for the Americans, because as the weaker side they lost more ships and aircraft. But it was a strategic defeat for the Japanese, who felt obliged, for the first time since they had opened their southern front, to halt a major advance and to change their plans.¹⁰

Although the United States had lost the battle at that moment, it turned out to be more beneficial because the Japanese left the area because of their lack of military presence. Thus, it can be seen as a significant point in the Pacific War. The Battle of Midway is also a significant battle for the first victory that occurred for the United States.

The Battle of Midway was a huge decisive battle for the United States in seeing that it is possible to defeat the Japanese. Not only did the Japanese lose

⁹ Oliver North. War Stories II: Heroism in the Pacific. Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, INC., 2004. Print. 108

¹⁰ Dan Van der vat. The Pacific Campaign: World War II, the U.S.-Japanese naval war, 1941-1945. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991. Print. 107

many soldiers and men throughout this battle, but it became a huge morale loss for them in realizing that they might not be the best military in the Pacific as they thought originally. And according to a Navy officer that was recalling the battle he said that after his attack "I looked back and could see three carriers-all of them with explosions on their decks and burning from bow to stern. It was all over in just minutes"¹¹Overall, the United States lost a little over 300 men while the Japanese lost around 3,500 men and also 4 carriers.¹²

Soon after the Battle of Midway came a new military attack strategy for the United States to quickly and smoothly take over islands in the Pacific. This new strategy was started by General Douglas MacArthur which was the "United States launched a counter-offensive strike known as "island-hopping," establishing a line of overlapping island bases, as well as air control. The idea was to capture certain key islands, one after another, until Japan came within range of American bombers."¹³ The victory was the first of three key moves that led to success in Pacific War prior to the attacks on Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

The second key success for the United States was the ability and execution to defeat and destroy major aircraft carriers, warships, and also large aircrafts. This can be seen in the success of three major attacks. The Gilbert

11 Oliver North. War Stories II: Heroism in the Pacific. 126

12 Peter Darman. World War II: Stats and Facts. 119

13 "Island Hopping." United States American History. 2002. Web. 11 Oct. 2011. <<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1671.html>>

Islands attacks in November 1943 became a success because of the amphibious attack that was used and also the lack of warships that surrounded the islands.¹⁴ The result of this was that the United States was able to take control of the islands very quickly. The Battle of Leyte Gulf in October 1944 eliminated all naval threats in the area and allowed for more amphibious attacks to be made without opposition by the Japanese. The Battle of the Bismarck Sea in March 1943 was the last battle to complete this in which the United States along with the Australians were able to bomb many aircraft carriers holding numerous fleets and allowed for air superiority for the United States.¹⁵

The last key success in the Pacific War in early battles was the implementation of Operation Cartwheel.¹⁶ This strategy was used for most of the war in that the United States would “advance quickly using air superiority and to bypass major Japanese strongpoints, leaving them isolated and impotent. It also involved attacking Japanese weak spots, avoiding frontal assaults wherever possible, and using techniques of deception and surprise”.¹⁷

¹⁴ Peter Darman. World War II: Stats and Facts. 116-130

¹⁵ Daniel Harrington. "A Careless Hope: American Air Power and Japan, 1941." *Pacific Historical Review*, 48.2 (1979): 217-238. R. J. Overy. The Air War, 1939-1945 . New York: Stein and Day, 1980. Print. 111-130

¹⁶ Gene Santoro. "Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War." *History Net: Where History Comes Alive - World & US History Online*. 29 Jan. 2010. Web. 22 May 2011. <<http://www.historynet.com/edward-j-drea-on-japans-imperial-army.htm>>

¹⁷ Peter Darman. World War II: Stats and Facts. 123

This strategy led to many victories for the Allies in the Pacific War. The Marianas and the Battle of the Philippine Sea were results of following this strategy and became easy successes for the United States. Also, the success with Operation Cartwheel developed another smaller strategy called Operation Flintlock which allowed the newly acquired islands (all closer to more Japanese islands) were in range for the United States to start using recon and atomic bombs on Japan's homeland.

However, there were also three main failures that the United States should have learned from in the battles that came before Iwo Jima and Okinawa. The first failure of the United States is one of underestimating the Japanese military. The United States did not anticipate a large fight from the Japanese in the Pacific War and also the United States was highly unprepared in the early stages of the war. The fall of the Philippines is a perfect example of the United States being unprepared to fight the Japanese. During the attack, the Japanese forced MacArthur's troops out of the Philippines and remove all military personnel in the Bataan Peninsula. Another example of this was the Battle of Java Sea in which the United States along with other Allied forces all was defeated by the Japanese military and resulted in the invasion of Java.¹⁸ In both cases, the Japanese had brought a significant amount of soldiers, warships, and

¹⁸ M. Pearlman. John Adams. "If Mahan Ran the Great Pacific War: An Analysis of World War II Naval Strategy". Naval War College Review 2009, 62(4), 170

aircrafts to the battles which significantly outnumbered the Allies that they were fighting. After these battles however, the United States rethought their military strategies in the Pacific.

A second failure by the United States in the Pacific War was the inability to stop large aircraft attacks brought about by the Japanese. The Japanese had some successes in damaging many United States naval ships by originally using dive-bombing and torpedo plane attack strategies to hurt the United States. As seen in the Battle of Coral Sea and the Battle of Santa Cruz, the United States was unable to stop huge damages to occur to their navy and personnel during these battles. Although both of these battles could be considered a victory for the United States, the damages were enormous for the United States and caused many ships to become inactive for some time during the Pacific War.¹⁹

One final failure that happened to the United States was using a frontal assault on some islands that the Japanese occupied. This can viewed through a tough victory for the United States on Guadalcanal. The United States had a frontal assault that resulted in the death of a few thousand soldiers for the United States. Guadalcanal was still a victory for the United States because of its importance to air fields and the Solomon Island attacks, but resulted in the

¹⁹ Carroll Shershun. "The World's Most Costly Airstrip." *Aerospace Historian*, 14.4 (1967): 239-244

unnecessary death of many United States soldiers.²⁰ This was one of the few times that the United States lost a large amount of soldiers, the other few occurred on Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

20 S. McGowan. "General George C. Kenney World War II", *Military History Journal*, (1996), 11(2), 10-11

Battle	Location and Date	Casualties
Fall of Philippines	Luzon, Philippines. December 1941-May 1942	U.S.-2,000 killed and 11,500 taken prisoner Japan-4,000 killed
Battle of the Java Sea	Java Sea, Pacific Ocean February 1942	U.S.-5 warships and 5 cruisers sunk. Japan-1 cruiser and 6 destroyers damaged
Battle of the Coral Sea	Southwest of Solomon Islands, Pacific Ocean May 1942	U.S.-543 killed or wounded Japan-1,074 killed or wounded
Battle of Midway	Pacific Ocean June 1942	U.S.-307 killed Japan-3,500 killed
Guadalcanal	Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands August 1942-February 1943	U.S.-1,600 killed and 4,200 wounded Japan-14,000 killed and 9,000 dead from disease
Battle of Santa Cruz	Santa Cruz Island, Solomons, Pacific Ocean October 1942	U.S.-266 killed Japan-500 killed
Battle of the Bismarck Sea	Bismarck Sea, New Guinea March 1943	U.S.-2 bombers and 3 fighters shot down Japan-2,890 killed and 4 destroyers sunk
Gilbert Islands	Central Pacific Ocean November 1943	U.S.-3,407 killed and wounded Japan-4,690 killed and 17 taken prisoner
Tinian Island	Marianas Islands June-August 1944	U.S.-1,899 killed and wounded Japan-6,056 killed and 236 taken prisoner
Battle of the Philippine Sea	The Philippine Sea June 1944	U.S.-76 killed Japan-445 killed
Battle of Leyte Gulf	Leyte Gulf, The Philippines October, 1944	U.S.-10 ships sunk Japan-35 ships sunk
Iwo Jima	Iwo Jima, Pacific Ocean February-March 1945	U.S.-6,821 killed and 19,217 wounded Japan-20,867 killed and 1,083 taken prisoner
Okinawa	Ryukyu Island chain, Pacific Ocean April-June 1945	U.S.-12,000 killed and 36,000 wounded Japan-107,539 killed, 10,755 taken prisoner, 42,000 civilians killed

A table with all major battles in the Pacific War along with casualties for each side.²¹

Before the attack on Iwo Jima the Joint War Planners Committee for the United States had given reasons in which why the United States needed to attack Iwo Jima and Okinawa. The reasons for the attacking both of the islands were:

- a. Providing fighter cover for the application of our air effort against Japan.
- b. Denying these strategic outposts to the enemy.
- c. Furnishing air defense bases for our positions in the Marianas.
- d. Providing fields for staging heavy bombers (B-24 Liberators) against Japan.
- e. Precipitating a decisive naval engagement.²²

The reasons for the attack were many and made it difficult to decipher which was the major reason for why the United States needed to capture Iwo Jima.

The clearest reason for the attack came three days before the attack on February 16, 1945 when Vice Adm. Richmond K. Turner stated at a press conference that "the primary reason for capturing Iwo Jima was to provide "fighter cover for the operations of the B-29s which are based here in the

²¹ Peter Darman. World War II: Stats and Facts. 117-130. J. Overy. The Air War, 1939-1945 . 111-130. Dan Van der vat. The Pacific Campaign: World War II, the U.S.-Japanese naval war, 1941-1945. 100-112

²² Robert S. Burrell. "Worth the Cost? Justification of the Iwo Jima Invasion." History Net: Where History Comes Alive - World & US History Online. Web. 17 Nov. 2011. <<http://www.historynet.com/worth-the-cost-justificaton-of-iwo-jima-invasion.htm>>.

Marianas."²³ This seems as the clearest reason for capturing both islands. Iwo Jima was the next island that the United States wanted to capture.

Iwo Jima was one of the first home islands that the United States decided to attack during the Pacific War. So, in the middle of February the United States military decided to commence Operation Detachment²⁴, which was the code name for the attack on Iwo Jima. Throughout the whole battle that took place on the island, the United States had 6,821 men killed and 19,217 wounded.²⁵ While the Japanese had 20,867 soldiers killed and 1,083 taken prisoner throughout the battles on Iwo Jima, this was one of the bloodiest battles that had occurred in the Pacific War in which both sides lost an incredible amount of men. It seems very implausible that the United States would allow for this enormous amount of casualties to occur with all the knowledge that they gained during the previous battles in the Pacific. There are a few reasons why this was one of the bloodiest and poorly run operations during the Pacific War.

The first failure that occurred with the attack on Iwo Jima was the questioning of the importance of the island to the United States. Many people that were in the military at that time felt that the lives lost were not equal to what

²³ Robert S. Burrell. "Worth the Cost? Justification of the Iwo Jima Invasion."

²⁴ Joseph Alexander. "Battle of Iwo Jima." History Net: Where History Comes Alive - World & US History Online. World History Group, 12 June 2006. Web. 11 Oct. 2011. <<http://www.historynet.com/battle-of-iwo-jima.htm>>

²⁵ Peter Darman. World War II: Stats and Facts. 129

was accomplished at Iwo Jima. Admiral Charles S. Adair who was a navy captain during the Pacific War revealed his thoughts on the attack: "I don't think Iwo Jima should have been taken, because of the cost to take it. And I don't think the value was there. I don't think it was needed, and if every plane that landed on Iwo Jima, that had to critically, were added up, and the pilots were added up, I'll bet they wouldn't anywhere near total 25,000."²⁶ Even some of the main people involved with the decision making did not even see the importance of Iwo Jima. The retired Chief of Naval Operations William Pratt felt that "expenditure of manpower to acquire a small, God-forsaken island, useless to the Army as a staging base and useless to the Navy as a fleet base ... (one) wonders if the same sort of airbase could not have been reached by acquiring other strategic localities at lower cost"²⁷ Looking at the attack from a military strategic side it seems that there are many who question the importance. Also, there are even more who question if the casualties in the attack were worth the island.

The next way the attack on Iwo Jima went wrong was the initial bombing that was supposed to occur days before the attack. Seventy days before the attack, the U.S. started to do preliminary aerial bombing of Iwo Jima in hopes to

²⁶ Robert S. Burrell. "Breaking the Cycle of Iwo Jima Mythology: A Strategic Study of Operation Detachment." 1144

²⁷ William Harrison Fetridge. *The Navy Reader*. Freeport, NY: for Libraries, 1971. Print. 316

make it easier to attack in the future.²⁸ The United States used nearby islands to take off and land the planes that were doing the aerial bombing against Iwo Jima. However, it was not making much improvement on the highly protected Japanese forces that were stationed there. After this failed attempt,

Holland Smith, the Marines general in charge of the landing operation, knew that even the most impressive aerial bombings would not be enough, and requested 10 days of naval bombardment before his Marines struck the beaches. The Navy rejected his request and would only provide a three-day bombardment. When the bombardment began, Smith realized it was not even a full three-day bombardment. Visibility limitations due to weather led to only half-day bombardments on the first and third days.²⁹

Therefore, the Marines that were first on the beaches of Iwo Jima were not properly outfitted for a partial bombing that was originally supposed to give the Marines a much easier time to take over Iwo Jima. The United States did not want to halt any attack because they felt a sense of urgency to move throughout the islands in the Pacific in order to get closer to Japan. Without the full ten day bombing it was already going to be very difficult for the Marines and

²⁸ Peter Chen. "Battle of Iwo Jima | World War II Database." World War II Database: Your WW2 History Reference Destination. 2002. Web. 17 Oct. 2011. <http://ww2db.com/battle_spec.php?battle_id=12>

²⁹ Peter Chen. "Battle of Iwo Jima | World War II Database."

they did not even allow to have the full three days to be set forth. So the result was the deaths of thousands of Marines because of a lack of preparation and protection for those who approached Iwo Jima.

Finally, the last failure that occurred during Operation Detachment was what historian Robert Burrell referred to as "service rivalry". This is essentially the rivalry that waged and grew stronger between the United States Army and Army Air Force against the United States Navy. Burrell implies that the cause of so many American lives lost was because of the hastiness of the military to execute this operation in order to get a swift victory. He states that the Army along with Army Air Force and Navy "influenced the decision to initiate Operation Detachment. The Marine Corps, which paid the heaviest price, remained completely excluded from the decision making process".³⁰ The result of this was an execution of an attack that cost the lives of more Americans than any other attack so far in the Pacific War. And the U.S. Marines were the first ones on Iwo Jima to fight against the Japanese. The United States was able to take control on Iwo Jima but the cost was thousands of soldiers dying. This was not the last time that the United States caused thousands of people to die.

The island of Okinawa was the last major area of importance to the United States before they attacked the Japanese homeland. Okinawa held

³⁰ Robert S. Burrell. "Breaking the Cycle of Iwo Jima Mythology: A Strategic Study of Operation Detachment." 1143

thousands of Japanese soldiers throughout its terrain and held a large amount of civilians who lived on the island previous to the Pacific War. The battle of Okinawa is seen as a failure because of the huge amount of lives lost throughout the extensive battle on the island. George Feifer explains, "American casualties in history's largest land-sea-air battle were more than double those on ghastly Iwo Jima and Guadalcanal combined, and ten Japanese died for every American. But the Good War's last full-scale encounter killed more civilians than combatants."³¹ Altogether there were around 12,000 killed in the battle of Okinawa and around 105,000 Japanese killed. There were also around 42,000 civilians that were killed throughout all attacks during the battle.³²

The reason for such a high number of indigenous people dying on Okinawa is given as two-fold. According to MilitaryHistory.com the first part is that because of a high resemblance to the Japanese soldiers, many were shot in the villages that they lived in. This is also attributed to the fact that many Japanese soldiers would kick out the civilians and hide until United States troops came around and would try to ambush them. The Japanese would keep the men to fight and tell the women and children to go to another part of the Island. The other reason for the high amount of deaths is because of mass suicides. The Japanese soldiers would tell the civilians that the Americans would

³¹ George Feifer. "The Rape of Okinawa." 33

³² Peter Darman. World War II: Stats and Facts. 129

"would rape the women and eat the children".³³ Thus, causing many to commit suicide or run directly at the United States military and be killed rather than be dishonored.³⁴

The Battle of Okinawa is considered the last battle of the Pacific War. After capturing the island, the next major attack was the nuclear bombs on the Japanese homeland. And the deaths in those two bombs were catastrophic. It is not wild to think that there is a possibility that because of the large amounts of deaths that occurred in the late battles during the Pacific War pushed the United States military and President Truman to use the atomic bombs.

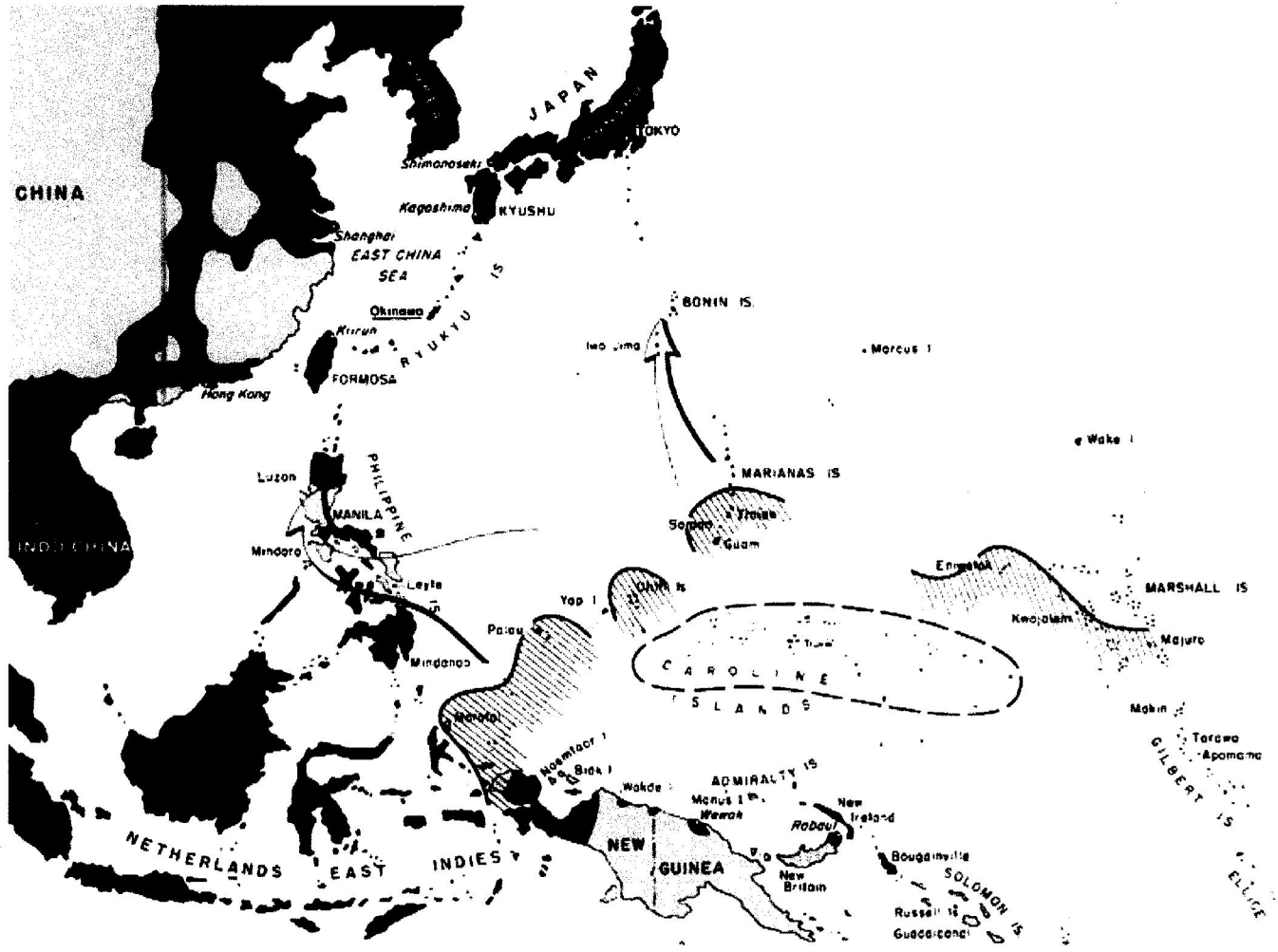
³³ Laura Lacey. "Battle of Okinawa." Military History Online. 2003. Web. 11 Oct. 2011.

<<http://www.militaryhistoryonline.com/wwii/okinawa/default.aspx>>

³⁴ Laura Lacey. "Battle of Okinawa."

This is a map that shows the position of the United States and Japan in the Pacific War in 1945.³⁵

³⁵ Robert S. Burrell. "Worth the Cost? Justification of the Iwo Jima Invasion."



Now there is possibility for the United States to still have defeated the Japanese without the unnecessary deaths of thousands of people from both sides of the war. It is difficult to truly know if any other means could have had the same affect of ending the war, and possibly had much less death toll after the battles. Possibly the most effective alternative to attacking on Iwo Jima and

Okinawa could have been to use Tinian Island more effectively to directly attacking the Japanese homeland while skipping Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

Tinian Island was one of three major islands in the Northern Mariana Islands. It had a small inhabitation before World War II and became a small airstrip for the Japanese at the beginning of the Pacific War.³⁶ It was a critical island in the success of the United States' victory over Japan. Leading up to the U.S. capture of the island their air forces used napalm strikes which had been the first time it was used in any combat. Once the island was captured, the primary use of it was as an airfield for many airstrikes by the Army Air Force. The island was reconstructed greatly in order "accommodate the new B-29 Superfortress, a US bomber that was just beginning to be mass-produced in early 1944 and which had a flying range equal to the distance from Saipan, Tinian and Guam to Japan and back -- about 1500 miles."³⁷ These new planes were greatly successful in the attacks against the Japanese. So, the United States built airstrips in the North and West parts on Tinian Island. This island became the "largest airport of World War II.. Six runways, each 8,500 feet long, saw scores of

³⁶ "Tinian (island, Northern Mariana Islands) -- Britannica Online Encyclopedia." *Encyclopedia - Britannica Online Encyclopedia*. Web. 22 Nov. 2011. <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/596616/Tinian>>.

³⁷ Tinian." *GlobalSecurity.org - Reliable Security Information*. Web. 17 Nov. 2011. <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/tinian.htm>>.

B-29's departing and landing to and from bombing runs around the clock."³⁸

Later on the island became the area in which both atomic bombs were loaded onto planes and then dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but this was not until after the United States had attacked Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

Tinian island was a perfect place to launch huge attacks against Japan. It was only about 1500 miles away from the homeland and the United States recently developed the B-29 which was capable of flying to Japan and all the way back to Tinian without refueling its' tank. John Gaudino, a World War II veteran, flew B-29's in the Pacific War and specifically flew around the island of Tinian. He stated "it was known between all the pilots that Japan was reachable and could successfully be attacked through our aircrafts. However, it was unknown how much extra fuel was there if we were to be attacked by fighter planes."³⁹ The fighter planes that he discusses are those who would have been stationed on Iwo Jima if there had been no attacks later on in the Pacific War. Iwo Jima seemed to be the main concern to the United States military when trying to attack Japanese homeland directly.

So it seems that the alternative to attacking Iwo Jima and Okinawa which was to just use Tinian and attack large Japanese cities directly would be a

³⁸ Tinian." *GlobalSecurity.org - Reliable Security Information.*

³⁹ Gaudino, John. Personal interview. 16 Apr. 2011.

successful attempt with only one obstacle being the threat on Iwo Jima. The threat was a possible air defense that could shoot down the B-29's that would pass by in order to get to and from Japan's mainland. As mentioned previously, the main reason for attacking Iwo Jima was to provide escort services for the B-29 toward the mainland. However, it seems that "The official Army Air Forces history failed to mention even a single instance of a B-29 shot down near the island. Its authors declared that "the idea of seizing the island derived less from its menace while in Japanese hands than from its potential value as an advanced base for the 20th Air Force."⁴⁰ The failed attempt of escorting the B-29's caused the military to change the reasoning of attacking Iwo Jima from a defensive stance to one of being more advantageous for the United States. This does not change much of what the outcome was but it definitely shows how the military did not use Iwo Jima how they originally planned.

This alternative strategy in the Pacific War does not change the outcome but could possibly save thousands of lives on both sides of the war including many civilians' death that had occurred on Okinawa. This strategy focuses mainly on using Tinian more efficiently and it is even possible to have other fighter planes still escort them to and from Japan. It must be conceded that there is a chance that this would put the planes in much more danger because

⁴⁰ Tinian." *GlobalSecurity.org - Reliable Security Information.*

there would be no friendly islands between the Marianas Islands and Japan. However, looking at the evidence it is very likely that they would have not seen any opposition from Japan while going towards the island. This ultimately would have put fewer lives at stake throughout the Pacific War.

Thousands of lives were lost at Iwo Jima and Okinawa and seems that it could have been prevented if there were better forethought into the plan of attack. Okinawa exemplifies how war does not only hurt those in the battle but also the indigenous people that are in the surrounding area, and in this case it caused many natives to be killed. Iwo Jima was another unnecessary battle which caused the lives of many American soldiers and even more wounded. With questionable reasons for why a small island needed to be captured, the attack leaves questions of uncertainty and the expenditure of large amounts of soldiers and money to something that in the end was useless to the Pacific War. Largely it can be seen as how military leaders see the ends justifying the means with disregard of the lives of one's own countrymen, the lives of the enemy, and the lives of those who are caught in the middle.

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