

Uncommon Valor was a Common Virtue

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This year, the Navy and Marine Corps honor the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Iwo Jima (<https://www.marines.mil/News/Special-Features/Special-Features-Topic/Article/2086496/SpecialFeature/SFIwojima/we-are-iwo/>), and the sacrifices of our Marines and Sailors. The Battle of Iwo Jima, which began 75 years ago today, still provides a crucial lesson about the demands of warfighting with a near-peer competitor in the Pacific.

At the heart of every military victory are the toughness, initiative, accountability, and integrity of American service members. Inspired by the uncommon valor of the Greatest Generation, today's Sailors and Marines carry on a two-century tradition of warfighting excellence, adaptation, resilience, and readiness. The Battle of Iwo Jima is a powerful reminder of the importance of [combat ready ships with battle-minded crews](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gBM84wRjPX4) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gBM84wRjPX4>).

During World War II, the island of Iwo Jima was a Japanese fortress of strategic importance. The island is located roughly halfway between Saipan and Tokyo, and planners in the end stages of the war recognized that the island could be an ideal base for allies and raid escorts. It could also help to fuel the forthcoming invasion of Okinawa, as well as the eventual invasion of Japan.

[Initial carrier raids against Iwo Jima began in June 1944](https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/wars-conflicts-and-operations/world-war-ii/1945/battle-for-iwo-jima/iwo-jima-sailors-view.html) (<https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/wars-conflicts-and-operations/world-war-ii/1945/battle-for-iwo-jima/iwo-jima-sailors-view.html>). But prior to the invasion in February, Adm. Raymond A. Spruance and other Navy planners authorized three days of naval bombardment.

Shortly after 9 a.m., on Feb. 19, 1945, Marines landed, initially finding little enemy resistance. Coarse volcanic sand hampered the movement of men and machines up the beaches. As the protective naval gunfire subsided to allow for the Marine advance, the Japanese emerged from their fortified underground positions to begin a heavy barrage of fire against the invading force.

The 36-day assault resulted in tens of thousands of casualties on both sides. The Marines' efforts, however, provided a vital link in the U.S. chain of bomber bases. In the end, Iwo Jima was won not only by the fighting spirit of the Marines, but by the meticulous planning and support provided by the Navy and Army through supply efforts, medical care, and air and naval gunfire.

When the battle was over, Adm. Chester Nimitz, commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, stated "[uncommon valor was a common virtue](https://media.defense.gov/2013/Feb/19/2000007896/-1/-1/0/130215-M-XN800-01Z.JPG)." (<https://media.defense.gov/2013/Feb/19/2000007896/-1/-1/0/130215-M-XN800-01Z.JPG>) There are times when a higher level of courage, or valor, is required to accomplish an impossible task. Most do not have the ability to muster this type of courage, but the uncommon valor harnessed by the Sailors and Marines at Iwo Jima was critical to the success of the invasion and victory in the Pacific.

Twenty-seven [Medals of Honor](https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/b/battle-of-iwo-jima-us-navy-and-marine-corps-personnel-awarded-the-medal-of-honor.html) (<https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/b/battle-of-iwo-jima-us-navy-and-marine-corps-personnel-awarded-the-medal-of-honor.html>) were awarded to Marines and Sailors, 14 posthumously, more than were awarded for any other single operation during the war.

The Navy continues to develop its logistics and support capabilities in the service of a renewed commitment to Navy and Marine Corps collaboration. Sailor and Marines working together – as America's integrated Naval Power – has and will make the difference between victory and defeat. These two forces cannot succeed without their counterpart.

The success of amphibious operations at Iwo Jima are instructive for today's joint effort to [align Navy and Marine Corps](https://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=111853) (https://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=111853) concepts, capabilities, programming, planning, budgeting, and operations to ensure that the fight, wherever it develops, can be taken to the enemy ashore.

Warfighting knowledge is gained through the study of our history, especially the history of the Battle of Iwo Jima. By passing on the hard-won lessons of yesterday, America's Navy is committed to leveraging warfighting knowledge for the maintenance of a flexible and agile integrated force.

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