

Never Forget Our Veterans Foundation

Guadalcanal and Tarawa: A Prologue From Our Managing Director

July 2018

The Battles of Guadalcanal and Tarawa

The battles of Guadalcanal (7 August 1942–February 1943) and Tarawa (20–23 November 1943) were the first major assaults of the Pacific War. At that time, they were the bloodiest, most ferocious, and costliest engagements in Marine Corps history. Combined, more than 2,000 marines, sailors, and airmen were killed, with an additional 5,000 wounded.

The Lost Graves of Marines, Sailors, Soldiers, and Airmen

Seventy-five years later, there are still an estimated 300+ Missing in Action (MIAs) on Guadalcanal (Solomon Islands) and 400+ MIAs on Tarawa (Republic of Kiribati). Sadly, there are no cemeteries in either place memorializing the gallant men who gave their lives so that we could live ours.

The Present-Day Situation

Both the Solomon Islands and the Republic of Kiribati are economic, environmental, and humanitarian nightmares. The Guadalcanal battlefield is littered with battle relics, which are now overgrown with vegetation. Most Solomon Island children are forced to end their education in the sixth grade because they cannot afford the \$200 per year required to continue. Scholarships previously funded by the 1st Marine Division Association—veterans of the battle committed to improving the lives of those impacted by the war—have stopped because most of their members are no longer with us.

Tarawa's infamous "Red Beach," where so many Americans were killed or wounded, is now a de facto garbage dump because the country's landfills are full (just imagine if that were the case at Normandy in France). Clean drinking water on the heavily populated islet of Betio is scarce, which has resulted in one of the highest infant mortality rates in the Pacific, as well as numerous waterborne diseases.

Together, the Solomon Islands and Republic of Kiribati encompass two million square miles of ocean that provides invaluable fishing resources. Both countries are very loyal to the United States, and both do not offer fishing rights to the Peoples Republic of China, despite that nation's egregious over-fishing in their respective waters. The impact of China's exploitation of the natural resources in the Pacific will be felt by these countries for decades to come.

Why We Must Care

1. Current members of our military must be assured that they will not be left behind.
2. It is unacceptable that the Guadalcanal battlefield is an overgrown weed patch covering up war time relics and the Tarawa battlefield is a garbage dump.
3. Families and friends are entitled to have a cemetery and appropriate memorials for each MIA where they could pay their respects and have a quantum of solace.
4. Helping these countries with their economical, educational, environmental, and humanitarian needs will serve as a "Living Memorial" to those who fought and died there. It will encourage local cooperation in our search for MIAs, solidify the good will we enjoy with the local communities, and even help thwart any illegal expansion schemes currently underway in the Pacific.

Our Need

We need your support to bring home those left behind, clean up the battlefield, build a memorial cemetery for the missing, and improve the environmental and public health situation in Tarawa. Please visit us online to learn more about our initiatives. For a personal report of the situation, please contact me directly.

Anchors Aweigh!

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