

The Ghosts of Iwo Jima, 2006, 262 pages, Robert S. Burrell, 1585444839, 9781585444830, Texas A&M University Press, 2006

In February 1945, some 80,000 U.S. Marines attacked the heavily defended fortress that the Japanese had constructed on the tiny Pacific island of Iwo Jima. Leaders of the Army Air Forces said they needed the airfields there to provide fighter escort for their B-29 bombers. At the cost of 28,000 American casualties, the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Marine Divisions dutifully conquered this desolate piece of hell with a determination and sacrifice that have become legendary in the annals of war, immortalized in the photograph of six Marines raising the American flag on Mount Suribachi. But the Army Air Forces' fighter operations on Iwo Jima subsequently proved both unproductive and unnecessary. After the fact, a number of other justifications were generated to rationalize this tragically expensive battle. Ultimately, misleading statistics were presented to contend that the number of lives saved by B-29 emergency landings on Iwo Jima outweighed the cost of its capture. In *The Ghosts of Iwo Jima*, Captain Robert S. Burrell masterfully reconsiders the costs of taking Iwo Jima and its role in the war effort. His thought-provoking analysis also highlights the greater contribution of Iwo Jima's valiant dead: They inspired a reverence for the Marine Corps that proved critical to its institutional survival and its embodiment of American national spirit. From the 7th War Loan Campaign of 1945 through the flag-raising at Ground Zero in 2001, the immortal image of Iwo Jima has become a symbol of American patriotism itself. Burrell's searching account of this fabled island conflict will advance our understanding of World War II and its continuing legacy for the twenty-first century. At last, the battle's ghosts may unveil its ultimate, and most crucial, lessons.

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