



Episode 802, Story 1: Iwo Jima Map

Eduardo Pagan: Our first story explores whether this map could unlock new information regarding one of the bloodiest battles of World War II. At 0900 hours on Monday, February 19, 1945, the first wave of roughly 80,000 U.S. forces land on the black volcanic sands of Iwo Jima. Their goal: to wrest control of this tiny pacific island from Japan. By the numbers, American troops have every advantage in manpower and artillery. But they confront a hidden enemy who refuses to surrender, and will fight to the death – even in the face of inevitable defeat. And thus, the campaign for Iwo Jima results in one of the most grueling and ferocious battles in U.S. military history. Now, a California native, and daughter of an Iwo Jima veteran, wants to know what role this long-forgotten map may have played in Japanese strategy during that battle.

Linda: I was just shocked that my father had something that he'd kept for 60 years that no one in the family knew he had.

Eduardo: I'm Eduardo Pagan, and as a first step in this investigation, I'm meeting with Linda Dinkel to learn more about this artifact. How did you find this map?

Linda: This is my dad's World War II photo album. And four years ago I decided that I wanted to work very hard on his life story and were going through the album and I was closing the book and when I turned over to the last cover there was this paper. And I asked him what this was and he said, "Oh, it's just a map of Iwo Jima". And I go, "Really?" And I said, "Well this is amazing. How did you get it?" And he said, "Well I took it off of a dead Japanese soldier".

Eduardo: Linda explains that her father, Garn Stanworth, is now suffering from early Alzheimer's, but he had recalled finding this map on February 21, 1945 – only three days into the campaign. Down here at the bottom right there appears to be a stamp in English. Do you know what that might be about?

Linda: This is the okay from our military that it was permitted to come back into the United States.

Eduardo: Linda shows me a collection of her father's memories from WWII, including an oral history of his experiences that she's been compiling for future generations.



Eduardo: What can I find out for you?

Linda: Well what I would like to know is whether what was on this map was important or not important?

Eduardo: It sounds to me then in trying to research this map we might be able to tell you a little bit more about your own father's history.

Linda: That would be great. I would really appreciate it.

Eduardo: Well, I've pulled up a map of Iwo Jima and there's no question about it, the shape of the island conforms with the map that I found online. I'm surprised that something so fragile survived through battle. It's printed or written on some very delicate paper, which I'm guessing might be rice paper. Now as I look over the rest of this map there are Japanese characters all over it and of course I don't read Japanese. There's a legend to the lower left with symbols and Japanese wording next to it. There are some symbols here that look to me that they could be landing strips. A search confirms that there were two airfields on the island. This is interesting: those airfields were a reason U.S. military planners targeted the Pacific island. By early 1945, the war had turned in the Allies' favor. By seizing Iwo Jima, some 600 miles south of Tokyo, the U.S. would deny Japan a vital airbase for staging aerial counter attacks on incoming B-29 bombers. The enormous challenge of defending the 8-square-mile island from roughly 80,000 invading marines fell to the island's commander – General Tadamichi Kuribayashi.

I wonder if I can get any clues about what role this map may have played in the conflict from Garn's oral history. Now this is a part of the conflict that always gives me pause, is a father. He was 17 years old when he enlisted. That's the age of my oldest son. As a member of the U.S. army air corps, Garn was among the first wave of troops to land on the island. He spent his days ferrying supplies to marines on the front lines. Oh, here's an interesting passage. He writes here, "I could see the flag was raised up on Suribachi and we knew it was our guys up there." So garn was an eyewitness to a very iconic moment of American history. Unfortunately, there's nothing about the map in his recollections. I want to get the document translated, but my first stop is Arlington, Virginia.



2010 marks the 65th anniversary of the battle of Iwo Jima. Veterans of the conflict are gathering to pay tribute to those who died in arms. At the time of the invasion, retired Lieutenant General Lawrence Snowden was a marine company commander leading more than 200 men on the frontlines. Today, he's offered to help with our investigation. General Snowden, thank you so much for meeting with me. Do you have any guess what this map might be about?

General Snowden: Clearly it's Iwo Jima and here's Mount Suribachi down this end; it appears to me that it's informing that region where some of their major units are.

Eduardo: Although General Snowden doesn't speak Japanese either, he says the map's apparent concentration of forces to the north, away from the beaches, was exactly what he confronted during the landing on February 19, 1945.

General Snowden: General Kuribayashi chose not to defend the beach. He chose to let us come ashore which was a perfect killing zone.

Eduardo: Kuribayashi had transformed Iwo Jima into a massive underground fortress hidden beneath the island. His men excavated over 11 miles of tunnels, connecting a maze of subterranean artillery stockpiles, bunkers, and gun posts, effectively cloaking his defenses, while leaving the marines devastatingly exposed.

General Snowden: I think what we didn't expect was the kind of tremendous fire power that we faced. There was very little concealment. And your only option to escape the fire that was coming was to get down in that black sand.

Eduardo: I imagine you saw many of your men fall?

General Snowden: There's no question about that and it's a dreadful experience to watch a young man with all of his insides poured out in the sand, but he's still alive. And he, he looks at you with that, that blank stare and says, "Help me, help me captain," and you can't help. Nobody could help.



Eduardo: I explain how Garn had taken this map from a dead Japanese soldier. What exactly was the protocol then of what soldiers had to follow in gathering this kind of intelligence?

General Snowden: It was important to us to recover any kind of information we could get off the bodies of the dead. They were trying to find little bits of information that would tell us something, that would help us in the course of the battle. There were interpreters around who would take a look at a map like this, and expedite it on back up to the next higher headquarters.

Eduardo: The General is not surprised Garn never mentioned the map to his family until recently.

General Snowden: If a guy has experienced the killing and carnage that goes with a hot battlefield, he doesn't want to say in effect to his family, "Yes, I've killed a lot of guys out there. I shot 'em or hit 'em with a grenade or did something." He doesn't want them to think about him as being that kind of killer.

Eduardo: General Snowden, you've describe an enemy that was very well entrenched in defending the island. What got them to finally surrender?

General Snowden: Well, they didn't finally give up. They had roughly 22,000 defenders and less than a thousand came out alive. It was brutal face to face confrontation, kill, or be killed.

Eduardo: An expert on Japanese history, Dr. Daqing Yang, has translated the map. I'm meeting him at the George Washington University library. This is the original map. Here we go.

Dr. Yang: Very interesting. Well, this is a very unusual map. It's not a combat map but it's a repair map for the electric power grid on the island of Iwo Jima.

Eduardo: The power grid was crucial to supporting the Japanese defense of Iwo Jima. The soldier carrying it may have been inspecting electrical lines immediately following the invasion, when he was killed.



Dr. Yang: What is interesting is the fact that the dates are left blank. And it indicates that it was meant for the repair crew to locate where the power grid was damaged and to complete the repair work necessary.

Eduardo: Well tell me about some of these symbols. What do they indicate?

Dr. Yang: The term used here is no longer used in present day Japanese. I'd have to go to an old Japanese-English technical term dictionary to find out what they meant. They are actually radar located on two separate locations on the island. And of course these two radar stations were very, very important for the Japanese because the whole island is located on the flight paths of the U.S. B-29 bombers on their way to Japan.

Eduardo: Dr. Yang also points out the locations of several high voltage generators, a radio tower, and a power line.

Dr. Yang: These high voltage electric cables were all buried underground and they were a part of this massive underground tunnel system.

Eduardo: Dr. Yang explains that for almost half a century the Japanese veterans who fought in these tunnels had stayed silent about their experiences.

Dr. Yang: In our library I found this recent publication in Japanese that was based on the interviews of some of the Japanese survivors. There were very few of them now and many were reluctant to speak about their experience on the island.

Eduardo: The survivors recounted how their underground tunnel system – much of it built upon a former sulfur mine – became an inferno as the U.S. forces advanced.

Dr. Yang: And the tunnels were hot, full of sulfur smell and then increasingly stench from the dead Japanese or the wounded Japanese. There was no water. There was no food. It was a condition that these veterans describe as hell.

Eduardo: So this map is potentially quite significant for an American soldier?



Dr. Yang: I would say so because these communication centers were affiliated with two major command centers. This one belonging to General Kuribayashi.

Eduardo: Had Garn's map helped U.S. forces root out the Japanese on Iwo Jima? I'm only a short drive away from the U.S. Marine Corps archives in Quantico, Virginia, which boasts a vast collection of documents captured on battlefields. Mike Miller is head archivist of special collections. I've got here a map that was captured off a Japanese soldier by a member of the U.S. Air Corps by the name of Garn Stanworth. Have you ever seen a map like this?

Mike Miller: No I haven't. No I haven't. This looks particularly rare.

Eduardo: Why would it be rare?

Mike: Well at this point of the war the Japanese had learned that we were using the captured documents against them. And so they had ordered their military personnel not to carry these documents unless absolutely necessary and if captured to destroy them. Do you have any idea what date this was captured?

Eduardo: Well to the best of Garn's memory, this was captured on February 21st. Although the stars and stripes would soon fly over Mount Suribachi, Mike knows that at this stage in the battle most of the fighting was still to come.

Mike: People think about Iwo Jima as the flag raising and that took place down here. But the major part of the fight was on the other end of the island. The vast majority of the casualties took place up here. Places like the "Rock Pile", "Charlie Dog Ridge", Hill 362, 382.

Eduardo: Give me a sense of how costly these battles were for our side.

Mike: They were amazingly tough for the marines. One battalion had over 100% casualties in officers because the officers would go back after being wounded, get hit again and again.



Eduardo: Had our captured map helped guide the marines as they fought their way north? Did military intelligence keep a record of all of the intelligence items that they had gathered off the battlefield?

Mike: Certainly. We can take a look at the daily intelligence summaries because those were generated everyday of the battle.

Eduardo: Great. Let's go sit down, check them out.

Mike: Okay. These are the original reports of the battle of Iwo Jima and if we go back here into the document we'll look for the intelligence summaries that were done day by day.

Eduardo: The entries record the carnage of battle...But reports for February 21st and subsequent dates make no specific mention of our map. Had Garn not shown the map to his commanding officers, immediately after capturing it? It's almost unthinkable. But Mike directs me to the stamp, which Linda thought indicated that Garn had been allowed to bring the captured document back to the states.

Mike: This tells us a lot about the document. Because that's the stamp that....

Eduardo: What Mike tells me will certainly be news to Linda. Linda I want to thank you for inviting me to be a part of this investigation and in some small way pay honor to that generation that gave so much to our country. This map shows the locations of generators, even radar sites and other sites that would be very important to the defense of Iwo Jima. This is an extremely rare document.

Linda: Oh, that's amazing.

Eduardo: But had her father shown the map to army intelligence during the battle? Linda had thought the stamp had permitted Garn to bring the map back to the United States. But it meant something entirely different.



Mike: That's the stamp that the intelligence sections would use when the document was turned in to them as proof that it was used as intelligence for the battle.

Eduardo: Mike says the words "examined in the field" reveal it was a piece that had fit into a bigger intelligence jigsaw puzzle.

Mike: In particular with this map. Tactical intelligence is one thing. That is immediate. That has to be given down to the unit as quickly as you can, as accurately as you can. But other intelligence is more strategic.

Eduardo: And so your father found this map and passed it up the chain of command so that it reached the appropriate intelligence officers and they could then utilize this and it would have been one piece of this larger jigsaw puzzle that they needed to put together to understand where the enemy was and where their resources were located to where they needed to strike next.

Linda: Really....

Eduardo: Yes. Yes. Your father wasn't just scrounging for souvenirs. He was actually obeying orders.

Linda: I'm really glad you found out this.

Eduardo: It was my pleasure to help.

Linda: Thank you so much.

Eduardo: Thank you. Initially estimated to last eight days, the invasion of Iwo Jima raged for over a month. An estimated 17-to-20,000 Japanese soldiers, and more than 6,800 U.S. servicemen, lost their lives fighting for the island.