

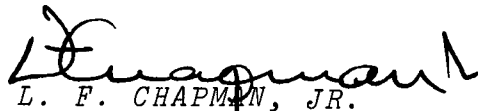
# IWO JIMA



19 February 1970

*Twenty-five years ago, on this date, our V Marine Amphibious Corps began one of the most famous battles in history. Despite the strength of its defenses, Iwo Jima's strategic location as a stepping-stone to the enemy's home islands made its capture imperative. On Iwo, members of the 3d, 4th and 5th Marine Divisions and supporting air, sea and land elements demonstrated in magnificent abundance the qualities of courage, loyalty, and selflessness which have always been our tradition.*

*This booklet is respectfully dedicated to all those who served at Iwo.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. F. Chapman, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

*L. F. CHAPMAN, JR.  
General, U. S. Marine Corps  
Commandant of the Marine Corps*

**... was a common virtue."**



After the grinding, expensive 36-day assault on the Japanese island of Iwo Jima, Admiral Chester Nimitz thus captioned the action for the ages.

The weight and depth of the defense—and more particularly the tenacity of the defenders—required the largest force of Marines ever assembled as an assault force. Once on the island, the Marines found it almost naked of natural cover. Most of the vegetation had been blown away by the terrific air and naval bombardment which preceded their landing.

Firing from shell holes and bomb craters, the Marines were limited to one tactic—frontal assault.

The cost of the eventual American victory in this amphibious classic was the highest in Marine history: 5,931 killed and 17,272 wounded. Only 1,083 of over 20,000 Japanese survived. But the living and dead of both sides shared a grudging bond: uncommon valor.

## *The Reason...*

Iwo Jima's importance lay in its location, midway between Japan and American bomber bases in the Marianas.

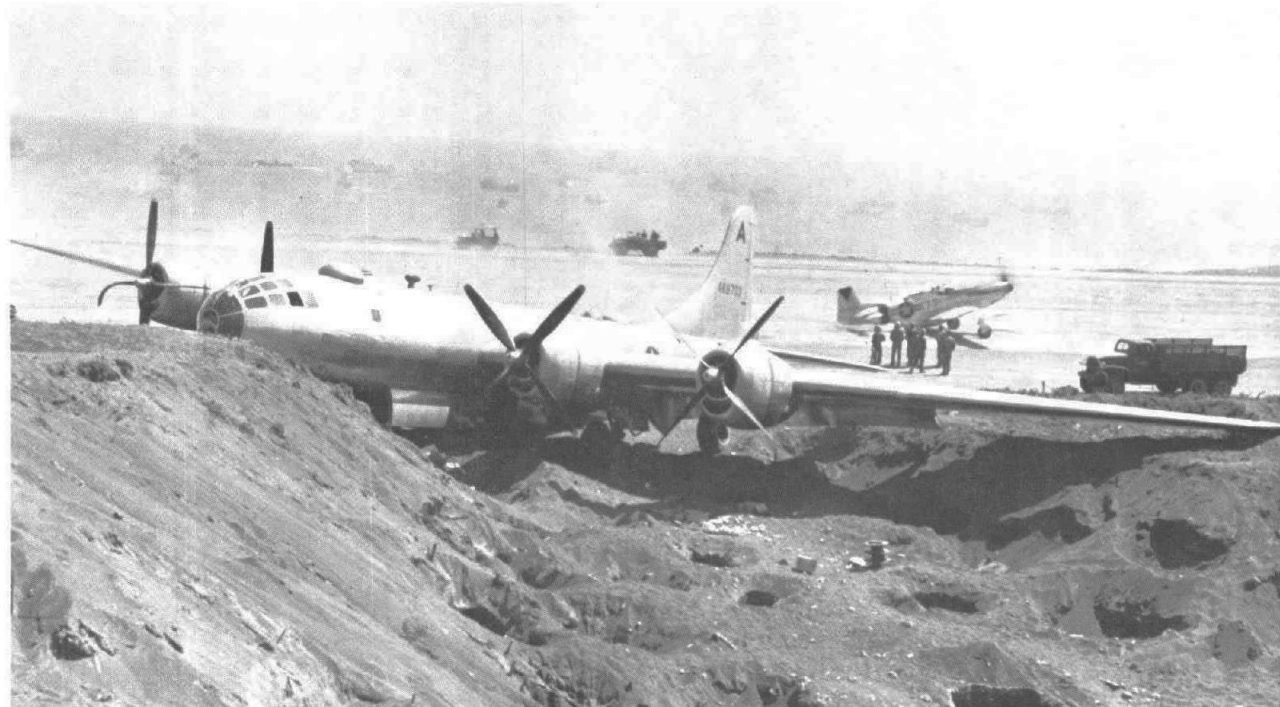
Since the summer of 1944, the Japanese home islands had been reeling from strikes by the new, long-range B-29s.

The U.S., however, had no protective fighters with enough range to escort the big Superfortresses. Many fell prey to Japanese fighter-interceptor attacks.

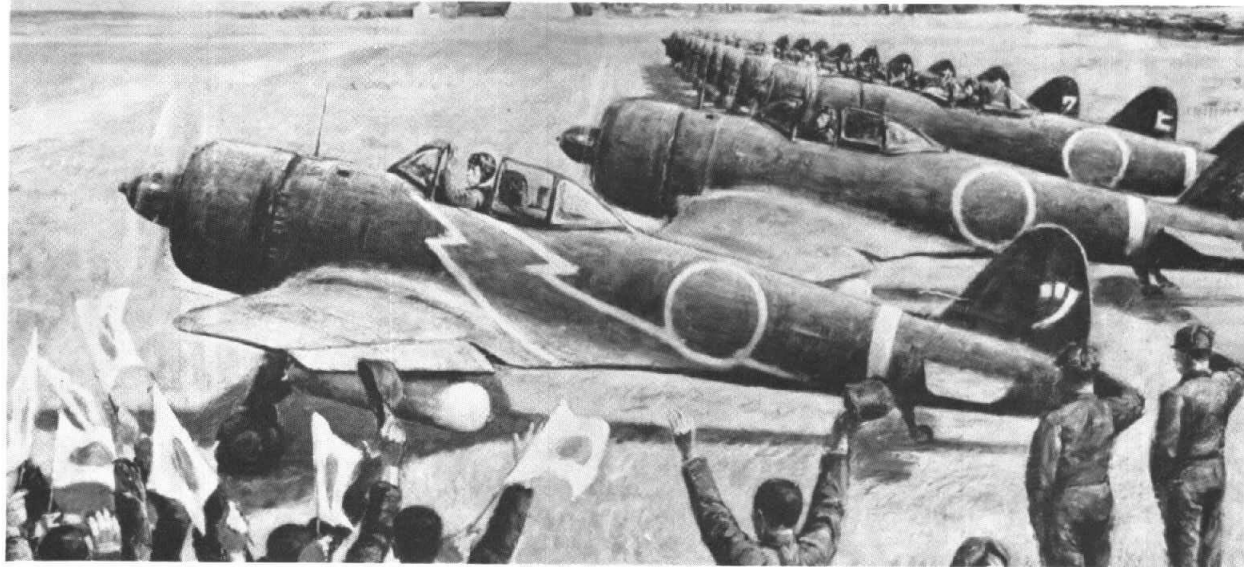


Iwo, with its three airfields, was ideally located as a fighter-escort station. It was also an ideal sanctuary for crippled bombers returning from Japan.

The fact that Iwo was part of the Tokyo Prefecture also weighed heavily on the Japanese mind. If Iwo fell, it would be the first part of the traditional homeland to be captured.



# The Defenders...



The Japanese command was well aware of Iwo's importance. In June, 1944, they sent Lieutenant General Tadamishi Kuribayashi to take charge of the army units stationed there. Rear Admiral Toshinosuke Ichimaru, one of Japan's foremost naval aviators, followed shortly to command the naval forces.

The two of them built defenses that U.S. Marines would find the toughest of any they had encountered in the long Pacific war. Kuribayashi had better than two infantry regiments, a tank regiment, two artillery and three mortar battalions, and several heavy weapons companies.

Ichimaru had two large fighter units, a construction battalion, and several coast defense and anti-aircraft units.

In all, over 20,000 men—a formidable force.

