

IWO JIMA – PLACES IN NEWS

NEWS: Japan's Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako made a rare visit to the tiny Pacific island of Iwo Jima to mark the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II.

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

The Battle of Iwo Jima (1945)

Duration and Objective

- **Dates:** Fought from **February 19 to March 26, 1945.**
- **Strategic Objective:**
 - To **capture Iwo Jima** as a forward base for **air operations** against mainland Japan.
 - The island was located midway between the **Mariana Islands and Japan**, ideal for launching **bomber raids** and as an **emergency landing site.**

Combatants and Military Strength

- **United States:**
 - Deployed nearly **70,000 Marines.**
 - Supported by **450 naval ships**, Army divisions, and Navy Seabees (combat engineers).
- **Imperial Japan:**
 - Defended by around **21,000 soldiers**, heavily fortified in an intricate network of **tunnels, caves, and bunkers.**



Key Events and Symbolism

- **February 23, 1945:**
 - U.S. Marines famously **raised the American flag atop Mount Suribachi**, symbolizing a turning point and morale boost.
 - This moment was immortalized in the iconic photograph by Joe Rosenthal.

Casualties and Human Cost

- **U.S. Casualties:**
 - Over **25,000** casualties, including more than **6,800 deaths**.
- **Japanese Casualties:**
 - Nearly **all 21,000 defenders were killed**; only **216 were taken prisoner**, indicating the fierce resistance and Japanese policy of no surrender.

About Iwo Jima

- **Location:**
 - A small volcanic island in the **Volcano Islands** group in the **western Pacific Ocean**.

- Lies approximately **1,220 km (760 miles)** south-southeast of Tokyo.
- **Geographic Size:**
 - Only about **8 square miles (20.7 sq. km)** in area.
- **Post-War Condition:**
 - Currently **off-limits to civilians**.
 - The landscape is marked by **rusted tanks, decaying warship debris, and war-era ruins**, symbolizing the brutality of the conflict.

Fact Box: World War II Overview (1939–1945)

Causes of World War II

- **Treaty of Versailles (1919):**
 - Imposed **harsh reparations on Germany**, creating resentment and laying the foundation for extremism.
- **Rise of Totalitarian Regimes:**
 - **Fascism in Italy** (under Mussolini) and **Nazism in Germany** (under Hitler) promoted expansionist agendas.
- **Global Economic Crisis:**
 - The **Great Depression** (1930s) led to mass unemployment and instability, fueling militarism and nationalism.

Main Participants

- **Axis Powers:**
 - Germany, Italy, Japan (later joined by Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, etc.).
- **Allied Powers:**
 - United States, United Kingdom, Soviet Union (after 1941), China, Free France, and **India** (as part of the British Empire, contributed over 2.5 million troops).

Major War Zones

- **Europe:**
 - Battles in **Normandy (D-Day), Berlin, Stalingrad, Monte Cassino**, and others.

- **Pacific Theater:**
 - Battles in **Pearl Harbor, Midway, Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, Okinawa.**
- **North Africa:**
 - Engagements at **El Alamein, Tobruk,** and other locations.

Consequences and Legacy

- **Allied Victory:**
 - Resulted in the **defeat of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan.**
- **Creation of the United Nations (UN):**
 - Established in 1945 to **prevent future global conflicts** and promote international cooperation.
- **Beginning of the Cold War:**
 - Post-war tensions between the **Soviet Union and Western Allies** led to decades of ideological and geopolitical rivalry.
- **Wave of Decolonization:**
 - WWII weakened European powers, triggering **independence movements** across **Asia and Africa.**