

## **MAINE MAST SPEECH**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, I stand before you to honor the extraordinary bravery and sacrifice displayed during the Battle of Iwo Jima, specifically the heroic moments on Mount Suribachi. This battle, fought from February 19 to March 26, 1945, stands as a testament to the courage and resilience of the United States Marines and the tenacity of the Japanese forces.

Located in the Pacific Ocean, Iwo Jima was of strategic importance during World War II. The island's airfields provided a crucial base for the Japanese to launch attacks and intercept American bombers. The capture of Iwo Jima was deemed essential by Allied forces to secure a staging area for the eventual invasion of Japan.

The Battle of Iwo Jima was characterized by some of the fiercest and bloodiest fighting of the war. The Japanese defenders, under the command of General Tadamichi Kuribayashi, had fortified the island with a complex network of tunnels, bunkers, and artillery positions. Despite being outnumbered, the Japanese soldiers displayed incredible resolve, determined to defend their positions to the last man.

On February 23, 1945, a pivotal moment occurred on Mount Suribachi, the highest point on the island. After days of relentless combat, a patrol of U.S. Marines reached the summit and raised the American flag. This iconic image, captured by photographer Joe Rosenthal, became a symbol of hope and determination for the Allied forces. The flag raising on Mount Suribachi represented not just a tactical victory, but a profound message of resilience and unity in the face of adversity.

However, the battle was far from over. The Japanese forces continued to fight with tenacity, engaging in relentless and brutal combat. The Marines, undeterred by the harsh conditions and heavy casualties, pressed on with unwavering courage. Their perseverance and sacrifice were instrumental in securing the island.

The Battle of Iwo Jima came at a great cost. Nearly 7,000 U.S. Marines and Navy personnel lost their lives, and over 19,000 were wounded. The Japanese defenders suffered devastating losses, with approximately 18,000 soldiers killed and only a few hundred taken prisoner. The battle left an indelible mark on both nations and underscored the immense human cost of war.

As we reflect on the bravery and sacrifice displayed at Iwo Jima and Mount Suribachi, we honor the valor of the U.S. Marines who fought and died for their country. Their actions exemplify the highest ideals of duty, honor, and patriotism. We also recognize the tenacity and determination of the Japanese soldiers who defended their homeland with unwavering resolve.

May we never forget the lessons learned from this historic battle and continue to strive for a world where such sacrifices are no longer necessary. Thank you. Semper Fidelis.