

# PACIFIC MARINES, KIRIBATI AND U.S. EMBASSY SUVA COMMEMORATE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF TARAWA

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Nov. 21, 2023

TARAWA, Kiribati – Pacific Marines, alongside the Government of the Republic of Kiribati and U.S. Embassy, Suva, co-hosted the 80th Annual Commemoration of the Battle of Tarawa at the Betio Sports Complex, Tarawa Atoll, Kiribati, on Nov. 22, 2023.

Ceremony participants included U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Fiji, Kiribati, Tonga, Nauru, and Tuvalu Marie Damour; His Excellency, Taneti Maamau, President of the Republic of Kiribati; and Col. Matthew Brannen, Deputy Director for Operations, Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency.

“Kiribati and the United States share an enduring commitment to freedom, democracy, rule of law, human rights, and regional peace and stability in the Blue Pacific. With today’s ceremony, we commemorate standing side by side in World War II to secure our collective freedom, as we continue to work together to promote security and prosperity,” said Ambassador Damour.

Marines from 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marines also participated in the ceremony, highlighting 2nd Marine Division’s historical role as one of the first units ashore during the capture of Betio in 1943.

The Battle of Tarawa was a pivotal engagement in the Pacific

Theater during World War II. The actions that took place during the preparation and execution of the Battle of Tarawa led to significant innovations in amphibious warfare, including improvements to landing craft and intelligence-gathering procedures, marking it as a crucial turning point in momentum of the island-hopping campaign.

A portion of the ceremony honored the repatriation of unidentified remains discovered on Tarawa. Following the ceremony, the remains will be transported back to DPAA facilities in Hawaii for possible identification.

“As we commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Tarawa in Kiribati, we stand united in honoring the sacrifices of those who endured the harsh realities of combat and those who gave the last full measure of devotion to our Nation,” said Col. Brannen. “The opportunity underscores our unwavering commitment to fulfilling the Nation’s promise that no one is left behind. In the face of history, we renew our dedication to the mission of the DPAA, ensuring closure for families and preserving the legacy of those who bravely served. This moment reminds us that our duty to the fallen is timeless, and we press forward in the relentless pursuit of the fullest possible accounting for our missing heroes.”

The ceremony served as a reminder of our history with Allies and partners across the Pacific, as well the Marine Corps’ enduring commitment to the region as ‘Soldiers of the Sea.’

U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific is the largest operational command in the Marine Corps and the Nation’s expeditionary force-in-readiness in the Indo-Pacific. Pacific Marines serve alongside the joint force and like-minded Allies and partners to preserve and maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific region.