

# TARAWA



## INTRODUCTION

The Battle of Tarawa was fought on 20–23 November 1943 between the United States and Japan at the Tarawa Atoll in the Gilbert Islands, and was part of Operation Galvanic, the U.S. invasion of the Gilberts Islands.

Nearly 6,400 Japanese, Koreans, and Americans died in the fighting, mostly on and around the small island of Betio, in the extreme southwest of Tarawa Atoll.

The Battle of Tarawa was the first American offensive in the critical central Pacific region. It was also the first time in the Pacific War that the United States had faced serious Japanese opposition to an amphibious landing. Previous landings met little or no initial resistance, but on Tarawa the 4,500 Japanese defenders were well-supplied and well-prepared, and they fought almost to the last man, exacting a heavy toll on the United States Marine Corps. The losses on Tarawa were incurred within 76 hours.

One player represents the United States of America's land and naval forces, the other has Japan's land forces.

The Japanese have built extensive fortification, tunnels, and other defensive positions. The Americans, United States Marines, US Army and Naval Air, are well equipped and trained,

- The **Americans** must advance and conquer the airfield and all other objectives.
- The **Japanese** must hold desperately against the onslaught of their enemy, hoping to inflict enough casualties to force the Americans to cease operations.

Be careful with the supply lines for the Americans, as Japanese counterattacks could cut units off from the beach-head supply sources. Japanese units are always in supply, reflecting their preparation of extensive supply caches.

## DURATION

Duration: 18h+

Favored Side: Americans

Most Difficult Side to Play: Japanese

The Tinian campaign lasts 21 turns, from 20<sup>th</sup> November till 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1943, each representing 6 hours,

The **Americans** always plays first.



# FORCES

The **American forces** include **United States Marines Corps (2<sup>nd</sup> USMC)** and **United States Navy** units.

The **Japanese forces** include **Japanese Army** and **Japanese Navy Land (equivalent of Marines)** units.

## MAPBOARD

The map represents the entire island of Tarawa, and “landing areas” where USA land units arrive.

Naval Air and Fire Support icons and units are placed in two “Off Map” Boxes representing the US Navy fleet offshore supporting the invasion.

There are objectives on the main map that yield Victory Points

**AIR STACKING:** in this scenario it is limited to 4 points of stacking in all regions except off-map boxes, where it is unlimited. Most air units have a 1 point stacking value (the Naval Fire support units are classified as ‘air’ units for purpose of movement and action but are worth 0 stacking points).



## VICTORY ★★★★★

### IMMEDIATE VICTORY

The **American player** wins if he conquers all airfield regions, structures and the “Last Redoubt” (Grid 1701 and Grid 1801).

The **Japanese player** wins if a preset level of Victory Points is reached, those VP being earned when US Marine units are eliminated in combat. He also wins automatically if his opponent does not control all the regions of the Airfield by the end of Turn 9.

Otherwise, the player with the most Victory Points at the end of the scenario wins the game.

### BONUS VP

Many regions and structures give VP when captured, and may cause loss of VP if lost. All of those are shown by the VP stars on map and in the region navigator. *Right click on any owned region and examine the “Regions” tab and the “Structures” tab to see locations that award VP.*

Elimination of any **US** Armor or Mobile Infantry gives **Japan** +3 VP each, and **USA** -2VP each.

Elimination of and **Japanese** Armor or Mobile Infantry gives **USA** +1VP each.

# REINFORCEMENTS

## AMERICANS

2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division - Division Commander: Maj. Gen. Julian C. Smith

[Turn 1] November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1943, 0600

2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Regiment with 3 Infantry battalions and 1 Weapons Company,  
8<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment with 3 Infantry battalions and 1 Weapons Company,  
10<sup>th</sup> Artillery Regiment with 3 battalions,  
2 Tank Companies.

[Turn 2] November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1200

8<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment with 1 Infantry battalion, Headquarters of 2<sup>nd</sup> Marines Division

[On or after Turn 5]

6<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment with 3 Infantry battalions and 1 Weapons Company,  
10<sup>th</sup> Artillery regiment with 1 battalion.

## JAPAN

Gilbert Islands defense forces, commanded by Rear Adm. Keiji Shibazaki

3<sup>rd</sup> Special Base Force (formerly 6<sup>th</sup> Yokosuka SNLF) : 3 Infantry Battalions, 1 Artillery Battalion

7<sup>th</sup> Sasebo SNLF : 3 Infantry Battalions, 1 Artillery Battalion

111<sup>th</sup> Construction Unit, Various MG, AT, AA units

No reinforcements in this scenario, but cards allow for the rebuild of some previously destroyed units.

# SPECIAL RULES

## WEATHER

At the time of this scenario some storms may occur in this part of the Pacific Ocean. This is handled via the play of cards or events. Bad weather will usually 'ground' all air forces and limit the movement ability of land forces.

## REPLACEMENTS

USA receives 1 replacement every turn, beginning Turn 2.

Japan receives 1 replacement every turn, beginning Turn 2. Note : Japan AI receives 2 replacements every turn beginning turn 2.

Additional replacements and constructions for both sides are handled by cards.

## CARDS

One card is drawn each turn in this game, and players may keep up to 7 of them in hands.

# SPECIAL RULES

## SUPPLY SOURCES

Supply affects **American** units only. Their supply sources ( the landing beaches) are identified by the supply icon.

American units are considered to carry enough supplies for 3 days (12 turns), after which normal supply rules are in effect.



## BREAKTHROUGHS

In this scenario, breakthrough are not possible.

## START OPTIONS

The game offers to both sides an array of different starting options, each at a cost in victory points.



The other side will not be aware of your choice, thereby creating new situations at each start of the game.

- The **Americans** may stay with the historical setup, request more Air Support, request more replacements or decide that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division is not needed [which also disallows more tanks!].
- The **Japanese** may choose to stay with the Historical setup, build more bunkers, receive a small number of air units, or ask for more replacements.

All those options and gambles are yours to discover. The game's event and cards allow full replay ability thanks to the numerous various situations that they create.

## NO ARMOR TERRAIN OR ANTI-TANK DITCHES

Several regions do not allow Armor units to enter.

There are indicated by display of the "No Armor" icon.



## FOG OF WAR

Both sides benefit from a partial fog of war, i.e. the player cannot see what an enemy stack contains (only a flag is displayed on those that are nearby to friendly units) until they enter in battle with those.

# DESIGN NOTES

This game is dedicated to all United States Marines past, present and future. Thank you for your service.

- The outcome of the game is inevitable: USA will eventually clear the island of Japanese forces. To make the game interesting without losing sight of the history, “milestones” are set that award Victory Points to Japan if not met.

*[Hint: Every Marine unit **eliminated** in combat gives Japan 3 Victory Points. Be careful!]*

- The defenses of the island of Betio (Tarawa) are formidable. Additionally, there is a “Final Redoubt” in the east that is well fortified.
- The modeling of Naval gunfire from Battleships and Cruisers posed interesting problems. Most SGS games are at a scale where artillery support is carried in units that are present in the same region as the battle [as they are also in Iwo Jima]. The naval “heavies” however have range that can reach every region on the map. Attempts to place units representing the gunfire each turn via reinforcements was getting very code intense and subject to errors and endless “bugs”. The solution is the “pseudo-Air” units that appear every turn. They have the same “infinite range” as the Carrier Air Groups, but cannot be intercepted or fired on in battle.
- Due to the small size of the island, the 105mm Artillery of the USMC 10<sup>th</sup> Regiment could actually target any part of the island. Accordingly, these units instead represent the “targets” of batteries stationed near the beaches. Therefore, they do not contribute to stacking limits.