

## MEDIA ADVISORY

For Immediate Release  
November 16, 2018

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### 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF TARAWA TO BE COMMEMORATED AT WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL

*Wreaths will be laid at the Pacific Arch of the Memorial in honor of the 35,000 Americans who served and in remembrance of the nearly 1,700 Americans killed and more than 2,000 wounded during the Battle of Tarawa.*

**Washington, D.C.** – On Tuesday, November 20<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 a.m., the Friends of the National World War II Memorial (Friends) will host a brief ceremony and wreath presentation at the World War II Memorial’s Pacific Arch to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Tarawa, the 1943 U.S. amphibious landing at the heavily fortified, Japanese-held island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll in the Gilbert Islands.

The November 20-23, 1943 Battle of Tarawa was the first American offensive of the critical Central Pacific Campaign and the first time in the Pacific War that the U.S. faced serious Japanese opposition to an amphibious landing. One combat correspondent soon after called it “*the toughest battle in Marine Corps history.*” The American invasion forces was the largest yet assembled for a single operation in the Pacific. On board the transports was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division and a part of the Army’s 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, for a total of about 35,000 troops.

The 18,000 U.S. Marines sent ashore were expected to easily secure the tiny island of Betio; however, low tides prevented some U.S. landing crafts from clearing the coral reefs around the island allowing Japanese coastal guns to bombard the vessels and forcing the Marines to wade toward shore – hundreds of yards away – through chest-deep water amidst enemy fire. Despite heavy resistance from the 4,500 well-prepared and well-supplied Japanese troops dug in on Betio, the Marines finally took the island after a 76-hour battle in which both sides suffered heavy casualties.

During the November 20<sup>th</sup> ceremony at the World War II Memorial, WWII veterans will present wreaths at the Pacific Arch of the Memorial in honor of the 35,000 Americans who served and in remembrance of the nearly 1,700 Americans killed and more than 2,000 wounded during the Battle of Tarawa.

*The Friends of the National World War II Memorial's WWII 75th Anniversary Commemoration is generously sponsored by AT&T. Generous support has also been provided by the Albert and Ethel Herzstein Charitable Foundation and Worthington Industries.*

**Who:** World War II Veterans  
Military District of Washington

**Where:** National World War II Memorial  
17<sup>th</sup> Street between Constitution and Independence Avenues  
Washington, DC

**When:** Tuesday, November 20, 2018 at 11:30 AM

**About Friends of the National World War II Memorial ([www.wwiimemorialfriends.org](http://www.wwiimemorialfriends.org)):**

Founded in 2007, the Friends of the National World War II Memorial (Friends) is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to honoring and preserving the national memory of World War II and to creating the next “Greatest Generation” of tomorrow. To meet this mission, Friends sponsors an annual public lecture series featuring prominent historians; hosts an annual teachers conference in Washington, DC; and collects and archives video interviews of World War II veterans and other members of the Greatest Generation. Additionally, Friends has the lead responsibility in planning, staging, and funding five or more major national commemorative events annually and is currently sponsoring a national four-year World War II 75th anniversary commemoration. Friends relies on private support to breathe new life into the Memorial and to ensure that it continues to serve as a living lesson for all Americans.

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