



# Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle

*Richard B. Frank*

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## **Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle** Richard B. Frank

The battle at Guadalcanal--which began eight months to the day after Pearl Harbor--marked the first American offensive of World War II. It was a brutal six-month campaign that cost the lives of some 7,000 Americans and over 30,000 Japanese. This volume, ten years in the writing, recounts the full story of the critical campaign for Guadalcanal and is based on first-time translations of official Japanese Defense Agency accounts and recently declassified U.S. radio intelligence, "Guadalcanal" recreates the battle--on land, at sea, and in the air--as never before: it examines the feelings of both American and Japanese soldiers, the strategies and conflicts of their commanders, and the strengths and weaknesses of various fighting units.

## **Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle Details**

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**Richard B. Frank**

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# From Reader Review *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle* for online ebook

## Marcus says

Sorry for using this tired phrase, but in this case it is completely justified - if you are to read a single book about Guadalcanal campaign, then this is the book you want to read. It is very detailed, comprehensive and yet readable account of a World War II campaign that was as decisive as it was unique. There are many reasons why I think this is superior choice on this topic - Frank covers all aspects of the campaign - land, sea and air. Just that fact alone makes it a rarity. Also, the book is based on both American and Japanese sources and covers actions of both sides. Last but not least, despite the very complex nature of the topic, Frank manages to narrate the events in very accessible manner. There is only one thing that I wish was better covered, and that's the maps. It's not that they are not there, but I wish there was more of them and with better detail.

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## Hank Hoeft says

When my wife saw that I was reading an 800-page book on the battle of Guadalcanal, she asked me if it was really all about just one battle, or if it digressed and covered a wider scope. I told her that yes, it did indeed focus on "just one battle," but that "battle" was actually a six-month campaign. *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle* really does live up to its subtitle. The detail Richard Frank goes into is deep and extensive, and exhaustively researched. I've read a lot of books on World War II, but I admit that I had a misconception of what happened on Guadalcanal. I'd always had the impression that the U.S. Marines (and later, U.S. Army) on the island hunkered down behind an extremely small perimeter (essentially, the airfield begun by the Japanese and completed by the Americans), and let the Japanese tide break against it. I had no idea the American strategy actually included so many aggressive proactive offensive moves outside the perimeter against the Japanese troops.

Another reason why *Guadalcanal* is so lengthy is that all aspects of the campaign--land, air, and sea--are covered with the same thorough detail. Many books on Guadalcanal cover only one aspect of the campaign, but Frank tackles the Herculean task of giving all three aspects equal shrift. The air war was a grinding war of attrition that the American forces won only slowly--and almost didn't win at all. The war at sea included six or seven major naval battles, including several devastating and humiliating defeats for the U.S. Navy, and was the last time in the Pacific War that U.S. naval forces fought against a numerically superior enemy.

Besides the thoroughness of his account, something else I appreciated about Frank's narrative is his unflinching objectivity. For example, many accounts of the air war over the Solomon Islands use U.S. claims for planes destroyed in tracking the progress of the air war. Frank gives the U.S. claims, but also cites Japanese records to give what is surely a more accurate accounting of aircraft actually lost. Where the facts are fuzzy and uncertain, the author gives as many different accounts as he had been able to unearth. It all makes for a narrative that is complete and as close to objective truth as it is possible to get.

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## e.West Smith says

An amazing piece of scholarship on what was America's first counter-thrust against the Empire of Japan. Exhaustively researched, Mr. Frank's account of the conflict in late 1942 highlighted the hubris of the IJN and IJA as they first dismissed, then underestimated and finally reacted too late. Great read for aficionados of the Pacific War.

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### **Sarah Crawford says**

As the book says, this is pretty much a "definitive" type of account, meaning it is full of details, maps and photos. The book, for example, has 105 pages alone of notes on the material in the main text. Basically, anything you wanted to know about the battle is probably in this book. It's not a type of book for a casual read, of course, and it would mainly interested those interested in the in-depth history of the Pacific war.

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### **Reggie says**

Very detailed chronological account of the land, sea, and air campaign with both Allied and Japanese viewpoints. Maps included but there could have been more (I love maps). Author points out where there are still questions about what exactly happened in certain events and will state what is purely speculation. The writing style is easy to read, not written like a "stuffed shirt historian".

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### **Roger Burk says**

Like the dust jacket says, this is the definitive history of the Guadalcanal campaign, from the bold and even foolhardy American seizure of an airfield at the tip of Japanese expansion in the southwest Pacific to the brilliantly planned and executed Japanese withdrawal of their last skeletal survivors six months later. The campaign is an epic of hardship, determination, and perseverance in American military history, but how much greater were the hardship, suffering, and perseverance of the Japanese! It seems like they got the worst of every air battle. American defeats on the ground resulted in moderate casualties and falling back to rethink the situation; Japanese defeats on the ground resulted in near-annihilation. American logistic support was virtually undisturbed; Japanese logistic support was constantly harried by planes from Guadalcanal and elsewhere, by submarines, destroyers, cruisers, and eventually PT boats. The Japanese on Guadalcanal never had enough artillery, ammunition, or food. They were foolishly reinforced with more men when the men already there could not be supported. They realized too late what was at stake and what it would take to expel the Americans: simply make Henderson Field unusable by putting it under artillery fire. Only at sea, particularly in night surface actions, were the Japanese at an advantage. In the Battle of Tassafaronga, a force including five American cruisers tangled with Japanese destroyers screening a convoy to Guadalcanal. After the Americans opened fire, the Japanese filled the water with torpedos and sank one cruiser and severely damaged three others, driving them away. On the other hand, in the Battle of Friday the Thirteenth an American cruiser force intercepted Japanese battleships and their screen on their way to bombard Henderson Field. None of the American guns could penetrate the battleships' main armor belt, but the topsides of one were so thoroughly wrecked that she had to be scuttled. The Americans paid for it with a cruiser and four destroyers sunk.

Annoyances: Inexplicably, despite all the maps for each major action, no single good reference map of the entire island or of the entire Solomons. A great deal of who-moved-where detail in the accounts that is

impossible to follow without extremely close attention. But overall, this indispensable account will assure that the great deeds of the Americans and the Japanese in this pivotal campaign of WWII do not fade from our memory.

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### **Joe Owen says**

IN-Depth history of the Battle of Guadalcanal from the US and Japanese strategy and warfare. The land, sea, and air battles are analyzed and reviewed. This is not for the beginner who doesn't know anything about the battle. It is for those who are familiar about the history and want to learn about the battle in-depth.

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### **Urey Patrick says**

This is a "must" read for anyone interested in the War in the Pacific - the opening chapter dealing with the strategies and influences affecting Japan and the US leading up to the war, and the closing chapter reflecting on the Guadalcanal campaign alone make it worthwhile. Guadalcanal was one of the most significant events of WW II - in the space of eight months following Pearl Harbor, the US bombed Tokyo - fought Coral Sea and reversed Japanese expansion - fought Midway and changed the course of the war - and landed on Guadalcanal... the first step in repelling and defeating imperial Japan. It is an amazing series of events - land battles, sea battles, moves and counter-moves over a six month period, related from both US and Japanese perspectives. The author examines and explains events, personalities, decisions good and bad, objectively and clearly. This is a fascinating book about an historically significant, but relatively unrecognized, campaign.

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### **Jon says**

Frank wrote the Definitive account of the battle.

What many contemporary readers don't realize is that

the campaign included some of the largest ship to ship battles in history. Unbelievable heroism. I gave this to my uncle who was a participant and he recalled watching the ship battles at night off the coast in iron bottom sound. This book is one of the best executed history books ever written.

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### **Bap says**

In the summer of 1942, the US had been defeated at almost every turn by the Japanese. With the Germany first strategy, it was no sure thing that america's limited resources could defeat the Japanese who had run rampant. The Japanese had no yet been defeated on land. This book is an excellent account of the battle on land and sea that raged from August 1942 through early 1943. The Japanese fought capably and fanatically and it was a near thing but the americans also fought well and eventually were able to assert naval superiority and defeated the Japanese defenders.

The Pacific war was fought with tenacity and ferocity. No quarter asked, none given.

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## Eric Smith says

It took me a little less than four years to finish this book. Why? Because it is so detailed, a step-by-step trip through a nightmare campaign during world war 2. The author tracks every ship and every regiment - almost every company - as they slog it out in a bloodbath of horror called the Guadalcanal Campaign. The book vibrates with definitive reporting, tables, maps, and reporting of facts. It also makes clear the brutal and genocidal nature of the fighting in the Pacific. I had a hard time getting through it, obviously as it took me over 3 years. But I stuck with it and I'm glad I did. Do I recommend the book? To a general reader, no. No way. It's just too dense and military, but to a person who has some understanding about the war in the Pacific and what they are getting into with this book, then it is definitive. With stars you have little choice, so I gave it 4 but with a HUGE caveat.

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## Paul says

I read this, breaking into my books to read because I am staying away from reading *When the Magisterium Intervenes*, and because I started to read *FRank's Downfall* (which led me to other books on the end of WWII in the Pacific, more about which later) which led me to read this book on Guadalcanal because Franks is really a very good researcher.

I am old enough to barely remember this battle, the long, brutal turning point of the Pacific War.

I now read about the events, not as heroism, although heroism was there, but as a series of lessons in policy - really immediate moral judgments about what to do in difficult times.

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## Joseph says

This book contains tons of detail. If you are into detail this is the book for you. But, for me, the book almost devolves into minutiae. I checked this book out of the library for three weeks, then renewed it for another three weeks. The reason I checked it out is that I am researching Guadalcanal to try and gain a better understanding of what it was like for my father who fought on Guadalcanal as an enlisted man with the 25th ID. The book gave me some detail and if you want to know how the battle unfolded this is an excellent book. But, it is almost too detailed and too clinical. At times it is so bogged down that you need to retrace your steps and backup to find out when the action is taking place. If you are looking for something that will give you a real feel for what it was like to have fought there the book leaves you wanting more. While it singles out individual acts of heroism, it leaves me wanting to know more. Additionally, the index does not always take you where you need to go and there is no centralized bibliography. Finally, I have no way of knowing if some documents like "Operations of the 25th Infantry Division on Guadalcanal" 9 Dec 1947 and compiled by under the direction of MGen Collins were consulted or even available for the author. Finally, the role of Japanese Americans and intelligence is underplayed. It may be that the author did not have access. The story of Americans of Japanese Ancestry in the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) who served on Guadalcanal needs to be told. However, if you want to know that 1700 shells from 155/105 mm howitzers were expended on certain Japanese positions in a 1½ hours, this is the book for you.

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## **Jean-Vincent says**

Tom Clancy said of Frank's book that it *will surely become the standard history of the U.S. Navy's most important campaign*. After having read it, I tend to agree with him, although I'd be tempted to add that it is perhaps one of America's armed forces most important campaign ever, arguably the true turning point of the Pacific war.

I definitely recommend this book to anyone wishing to acquire an articulate, well researched view of the campaign. Frank digs deep into American and Japanese sources to detail his study. He provides a remarkable , captivating pace for such a heavy, complex subject (considering Frank presents ground, naval and air operations).

The only (slight) downside is about maps. While the book's maps are clear and well done, they are too few, and don't convey quite rightly the terrain or the evolution of situations. This, however, is a very common shortcoming found in military history books and perhaps the tools to properly display this crucial information are only just being used. In this regard, Frank's book is quite above the average. I would thus suggest anyone embarking on this read should keep a good map of both Guadalcanal and the Solomons close at hand.

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## **Patrick says**

This is perhaps the best campaign history I have ever read. It is the equal of the best Civil War campaign histories by Catton and Stephen Sears, which for me are the best researched and literary books available on specific American military campaigns. Frank does a superb job of establishing the background that resulted in thousands of men fighting over this obscure little island in the South Pacific. He then does an equally fine job of detailing the various maneuvers of the Japanese and American navies and land forces as they sought to gain an advantage in the struggle for this island. I thought that I would not enjoy the chapters covering the naval battles that were so critical to this campaign, but Frank explains the decisions and the subsequent actions very well, and thus I found those parts just as interesting as the coverage of the events on land.

A great book, highly recommended for anyone who enjoys military history. Very well researched and sourced. Franks gives equal coverage to both the Japanese and the Americans. This book is quite an accomplishment.

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