



# Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle

By Richard B. Frank

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“Brilliant...an enormous work based on the most meticulous research.”—*LA Times Book Review*

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.

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

- Sales Rank: #52986 in Books
- Published on: 1992-01-01
- Released on: 1992-01-01
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x 1.80" w x 6.00" l, 1.81 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 848 pages

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

New translations of Japanese accounts, recently declassified documents and strategies and tactics of both sides inform this record of America's first major offensive of the Pacific war. According to PW, "This highly readable rendering of the critical campaign in the Pacific is first-rate military history." Illustrated.

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From Library Journal

In his outstanding first book, a Vietnam veteran and lawyer establishes Guadalcanal's decisive place in the history of World War II. The Guadalcanal campaign was "triphibious," combining air, land, and sea elements. Though the Japanese were surprised by the United States counterattack, forces in the theater were balanced so closely that the outcome was by no means certain. Frank evaluates the adversaries' strengths and weaknesses, stressing in particular the shortcomings of the U.S. Navy and the Japanese Army. He argues convincingly that Guadalcanal was the turning point in the Pacific--not least because it proved that the U.S. armed forces could meet their enemy in adversity and prevail. Recommended for all World War II collections.

- *D.E. Showalter, Colorado Coll., Colorado Springs*

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### Review

It is fair to say that, if you want to read a good account of the Battle of Guadalcanal on land (as opposed to the battle at sea), you will have to go a long way to find a more comprehensive report than this book. Make no mistake, it is well researched, well put together and well written. The book comprises 880 pages (including Indices) of fine print with an additional 22 pages of glossy B&W photos (39 pictures altogether) placed together at the centre. Having said that, I did personally find particular problems with the index system which frustrated me at first and, as a researcher, it was not as though I was new to the concept! Nevertheless, I am happy to admit that it was me who may have been at fault and for that reason I am happy to write this revised review. Of course, there are books which people read from cover to cover and others which are used purely for research purposes and only consulted as and when needed. For me, this book was expected to fall into that latter category but, almost as soon as I started looking for some specific item of information, I found myself drawn into reading the entire work. It really is that compelling. Altogether, one of the better accounts which scores heavily for attention to detail, depth of research and for being such a darned good read. There really is not much more you could want from any book. --By Ned Middleton

Richard B. Frank has written what I consider to be the authoritative account of the Guadalcanal campaign of August 1942-February 1943. A military offensive undertaken by the United States seven months after the Japanese attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbour, the Guadalcanal campaign was marked on both sides by successes as well as by setbacks. What I found particularly fascinating was Richard Frank's detailed description of the Imperial Japanese Navy's three areas of superiority over the U.S. Navy during their naval engagements: (1) highly trained naval gunners and commanders who were well-versed in night fighting naval tactics; (2) night optics/night vision capabilities; (2) the Long Lance torpedo. In a number of instances, Japanese naval lookouts were able to see approaching U.S. Navy ships long before the U.S. Navy could identify Japanese vessels! The superiority of the Long Lance torpedo over its American counterpart (the latter was virtually useless in sinking anything!) allowed the Imperial Japanese Navy to seriously damage or sink a number of American ships. Frank also points out that during the naval encounters off the coast of

Guadalcanal, the U.S. Navy utilised radar with mixed results. Land masses - like Savo Island just off the north-west coast of Guadalcanal - produced misleading images on the U.S. Navy's radar screens at night. In addition, with the exception of U.S. Admiral Willis "Ching" Lee who commanded a battleship-based naval task force off the coast of Guadalcanal, few American naval officers had been trained in the use of naval radar and were thus unable to understand or properly exploit this new technology within the confined waters of "Iron Bottom Sound." I was particularly intrigued to read Frank's detailed descriptions of U.S. Marine Major General Alexander Vandegrift's calculated, strikingly bold, even risk-taking tactical dispositions and offensive operations against the Japanese Army, particularly the series of battles along the Matanikau River just west of the U.S. Marine base at Henderson Field. These actions, based on his and his staff's brilliant analyses of the strengths and shortcomings of the Japanese Army, allowed the U.S. Marines to keep the Japanese Army off balance. When the Japanese Army did strike, the Marines more than met the challenge. After all the setbacks and successes, victory came to the Americans in February 1943 with Japan's withdrawal from the island that the Japanese soldiers called "Starvation Island." A companion book to Frank's account of the Guadalcanal campaign, and one that I would highly recommend, is James Jones's autobiographical novel, "The Thin Red Line," based on Jones's experiences as a combat infantryman in the U.S. 25th Infantry Division during the Guadalcanal campaign. Richard Frank's book immortalises those Americans and Japanese who fought on the land, in the air and on the seas in this epochal military campaign.

--David Kirk

After the Americans defeated the Japanese at the battle of Midway, an offensive was planned for the Solomon Islands. The primary target was the island of Guadalcanal. In this book, Mr. Frank describes the landings and the capture of Henderson Field in vivid detail. I was also impressed with his descriptions of the fateful battle of Savo Island, where the Allies lost 4 heavy cruisers to an inferior Japanese force. Admiral Fletcher's decision to remove the carriers is discussed, along with the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal, where the 5 Sullivan brothers died on the U.S.S. Juneau. Perhaps the most interesting part of this book to me was how Mr. Frank not only provides the American viewpoint of the battle, but also the Japanese viewpoint. It was interesting to read about how aircraft and casualty claims were greatly exaggerated by both sides. I also felt that the final chapter was interesting in the way that everything was summarized for the reader. I have been reading books about the Pacific war since I was in the 4th grade, and this is the most comprehensive account of the entire Guadalcanal campaign that I have come across. This book is a must read for any World War II reader --Larry Petersen

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **William Riser:**

Reading can called imagination hangout, why? Because if you find yourself reading a book mainly book entitled Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle your head will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in each and every aspect that maybe mysterious for but surely will end up your mind friends. Imaging every single word written in a e-book then become one web form conclusion and explanation that maybe you never get just before. The Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle giving you yet another experience more than blown away your mind but also giving you useful information for your better life in this particular era. So now let us show you the relaxing pattern at this point is your body and mind will likely be pleased when you are finished examining it, like winning a casino game. Do you want to try this extraordinary paying spare time activity?

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Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle can be your answer given it can be read by you who have those short time problems.

**William Tietjen:**

In this era which is the greater particular person or who has ability to do something more are more valuable than other. Do you want to become one of it? It is just simple way to have that. What you have to do is just spending your time little but quite enough to enjoy a look at some books. On the list of books in the top collection in your reading list is usually Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle. This book and that is qualified as The Hungry Hillside can get you closer in turning into precious person. By looking upwards and review this book you can get many advantages.

**James Robinson:**

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