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Enemy Installation Map Iwo Jima Volcano Islands.

Stock#: 63716
Map Maker: (Interpron Two)

Date: 1945 February 11
Place: n.p. (Guam? Hawaii?)
Color: (See Description)
Condition: See Description
Size: 24 x 20.5 inches

Price: SOLD



Description:

Secret Enemy Installation Map of Iwo Jima prepared for the American invasion, heavily annotated to show the progress of the battle.

A rare “Secret” map of Iwo Jima, issued little more than a week before February 19, 1945 U.S. invasion. The map shows the American landing zone on the southern end of the island and the Japanese defensive installations in minute detail… at least as they were known to American forces before the landings. This example has been heavily annotated, likely during the battle by an American serviceman, to show day-by-day progress of American forces as they first established a beachhead then advanced north and south to capture the island.

Background

Iwo Jima, whose name translates as “Sulfur Island,” was an important midway point between Allied bomber bases in the South Pacific and the Japanese home islands. 700 miles from Tokyo and 350 from the nearest U.S. airbase, with a central plain suitable for building large runways, American planners viewed it

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as a valuable target. The battle for the island was among the bloodiest of the Pacific Theater of the Second World War. In total, more than 6,800 U.S. Marines lost their lives and more than 19,000 were wounded, while 18,000 of the roughly 20,000 Japanese defenders and further thousands of civilians were killed. In light of these terrible losses, there was, and still is, dispute about whether the invasion had been merited:

> *As early as April 1945, retired Chief of Naval Operations William V. Pratt stated in Newsweek magazine that considering the "expenditure of manpower to acquire a small, God-forsaken island, useless to the Army as a staging base and useless to the Navy as a fleet base ... [one] wonders if the same sort of airbase could not have been reached by acquiring other strategic localities at lower cost.* (Wikipedia)

The map

This ENEMY INSTALLATION MAP IWO JIMA would have provided planners and troops on the ground with a staggering amount of information about the natural and man-made landscape. Contours are given at 20-foot intervals, symbols indicate bluffs and terraces, and the mapmakers seem to have attempted to indicate every dwelling and other civilian structure on the island. Most strikingly, 35 distinct symbols are used to indicate different elements of the Japanese defenses, including for example eight distinct types of gun (from machine guns to heavy artillery), range finders, rifle pits, air raid shelters, searchlights, radio towers, &c, &c. Superimposed on the whole is a detailed grid of numbered "1000-yard target areas" and lettered "200-yard target squares." These, or later iterations thereof, would have guided the pre-landing bombardment that blanketed the island, though ultimately with little effect, and enabled troops on the ground to call in fire support during the battle itself.

The map was issued on February 11, 1945, just eight days before D-Day Iwo Jima, and was the product of a long, complex, multi-layered mapping effort. It began in September 1944, when the 1633 rd Engineering Photomapping Platoon used aerial reconnaissance photos taken over the past month to add contour lines to a 1943 base map. Thenceforth, aerial reconnaissance of the island continued more or less right up to D-Day, with intelligence units updating the map as new information became available (Click here, 1 for example, to view a "Situation Map" issued in November 1944.) The map offered here includes photographs taken as late as February 10 and represents the culmination of that effort. Some 1800 copies were rushed into print and distributed to American forces as they embarked from Guam and Saipan en route to Iwo Jima.

> *... the extremely low level oblique photography of practically the entire island obtained early in February, 1945, was without doubt the finest photography yet provided in support of Central Pacific operations. Excellent photography obtained between 2 February and 10 February was used as the basis for a Joint Enemy Installation Map issued 11 February.* (Report of Intelligence IWO

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The map is in itself remarkable, but this example is extraordinary, having been heavily annotated in colored pencil, almost certainly by an American service member during the battle (See endnote below.) 2 Large green arrows indicate the landing zones along the island's southwest shore (Though the printed map projects landings along the southwest short, the continuous heavy surf there made them impracticable.) Color-coded lines, keyed to a pasted-on legend at lower right, showing day-to-day progress of American forces between February 19 and March 3 (The island was not declared secure until March 26, and it is not known why the annotations end mid-way through the battle.) An American flag atop Mount Suribachi indicates its capture on February 23, and may allude to the flag-raising commemorated in the iconic photograph.

Tragically, for all the sophistication of the American intelligence effort and the resulting maps such as the one offered here, the results were disastrous. American planners failed to understand the defensive strategy of Japanese General Kurabayashi or the complexity and extent of the Japanese fortifications, which included a huge network of linked underground bunkers, well-hidden and -protected artillery positions, interlocking fields of fire, and some 11 miles of tunnels. They also vastly overestimated the impact of the months-long pre-invasion bombardment, which left these fortifications largely intact on the day of the invasion. Indeed, one recent writer quotes Admiral Chester Nimitz, American Commander-in-Chief, Pacific, as having said "Well, this will be easy. The Japanese will surrender Iwo Jima without a fight." (Derrick Wright, The Battle for Iwo Jima, p. 51)

In all, a very rare planning map for one of the major battles in the Pacific Theatre of the Second World War, with detailed and interesting annotations giving it a unique immediacy to the event.

Detailed Condition:
Three sheets printed in colors, joined at an early date to form a single map of Iwo Jima. Irregularly trimmed some time thereafter to remove extraneous duplicative legends &c, now 29 ¾"h x 24 ¾"w at its greatest extent. With extensive annotations in ink and colored pencil depicting progress of the battle, explained by a pasted-on manuscript legend at lower right. Moderate discoloration from old adhesive, some minor soiling including palm- and finger-prints, lower sheet separated from top two sheets.