



## Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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### (World War II - Iwo Jima) [Iwo Jima Aerial Reconnaissance Photograph 1-12-45]

**Stock#:** 83775  
**Map Maker:** Anonymous  
**Date:** 1945  
**Place:** n.p.  
**Color:** (See Description)  
**Condition:** Good  
**Size:** 18.25 x 9.5 inches  
**Price:** \$ 2,500.00



#### **Description:**

#### ***Original WWII Wartime Reconnaissance Photograph of Iwo Jima***

#### ***Showing the Devastation of Unrelenting American Bombing Raids Leading up to the Invasion***

An amazing visual artifact from World War II: a wartime aerial reconnaissance photograph print of part of Iwo Jima island, made on Jan. 12, 1945. The date of this photograph is significant, as it clearly places the image during the planning stages of the Battle of Iwo Jima, which began on February 19. Specifically, the image shows the heavily pockmarked landscape after major and continuous American aerial bombardment in the months leading up to the amphibious landing and invasion. The part of the island shown is in the northeastern region. The upper right includes a section of beach that conforms to part of the northeastern coastal area. The lower middle area of the photograph appears to show roads or pathways connecting with the construction site of the third airfield on the island, called Motoyama Airfield No. 3 on a printed "Special Air and Gunnery Target Map" made and used by the United States military. As a stronghold of the Japanese, much better fortified than the southern region, any detailed reconnaissance of the north would have been of obvious importance to the United States.

The neatly drawn green and yellow grid, with each box or square designated with a letter within larger numbered quadrants, would appear to be directly concerned with the pre-invasion bombardment and reconnaissance efforts. Similar lettered grid systems can be seen on printed "Special Air and Gunnery Target" maps of Iwo Jima used by the invading forces to pinpoint targets. It would seem likely that such aerial photographs informed the making of the printed target maps; indeed these kinds of photographs must have been crucial tools to the ongoing operation at Iwo Jima.

#### **Historical context of the photograph.**



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The invasion of Iwo Jima was designated Operation Detachment, and had as its primary goal the taking of the island's two airfields, South Field and Central Field. Beginning in June of 1944, the U.S. Navy and Army Air Force began an intense bombing campaign against Iwo Jima, the longest such air and naval bombardment in the Pacific Theater, lasting some nine months. While the landscape depicted in the photograph clearly shows the devastating results of the American attacks, with the land surface pockmarked with shell holes, many Japanese soldiers were hiding underground. Not apparent in the image is the extensive tunnel system built by the Japanese that led to underground bunkers, some as deep as 90 feet below the surface. Unaware of the Japanese tunnel defense network, many on the American side believed that most of the Japanese garrison had been wiped out by the unrelenting bombing raids. As the American bombing raids intensified in the days just before the invasion, the resulting craters in the ground actually allowed the Japanese some added cover once the amphibious invasion began in earnest. At the same time these craters created some additional obstacles for the invading American marines. The tunnels and underground bunkers were evidence that the Japanese had been preparing for an invasion of the island for months. During the battle itself, the U.S. Marines (comprising a force of 60,000) faced all manner of problems not envisioned during the planning. First, the beaches were not easy for the marines to advance upon, being characterized by 15-foot high slopes of soft black ash, which prevented secure footing for the construction of foxholes. But much more devastating was that General Kuribayashi waited for the landing marines to unload quantities of men and machinery on the beaches for at least an hour before unleashing a barrage of firepower that resulted in a terrible bloodbath. In the ensuing battle, Japanese resistance was aided by the tunnel system, which allowed for swift attacks under cover of night. Eventually the Japanese began to run out of water and supplies. Most fought to the death. The M2 flamethrower was used extensively in Iwo Jima to kill Japanese holed up in caves and so-called pillbox positions. For some three months after the island was declared secure by the Americans, the Army's 147 Infantry Regiment continued to ferret out these last defenders (some 1600 were killed at this late date), who resisted the Americans from well-supplied caves. The last of these stalwarts, two men under Toshihiko Ohno, lasted four years until finally surrendering in 1949.

#### **Background and importance of wartime aerial photography.**

The importance of such aerial reconnaissance photographs in wartime planning is well documented. While some pioneering examples of wartime aerial photography made from balloons are known from the 19th century, the use of aerial reconnaissance photographs made from airplanes came into its own during World War I. In fact the renowned photographer Edward Steichen was one of the key figures from the WWI era of aerial reconnaissance photography. Steichen was also involved in WWII era war photography, but by that time his work was documentary in nature, aimed at a public audience.

One can see in the present photograph how the Navy had developed Steichen's techniques to



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good advantage. In the context of the Pacific Theater of World War II, given the use of hidden artillery positions constructed by the Japanese army, it is hard to imagine the United States operating without the aid of aerial photography.

If the iconic Joe Rosenthal AP press photo of U.S. Marines hoisting the flag atop Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima captured the public's imagination in the path to victory during the war, the present aerial reconnaissance image shows the important practical application of photography in the day-to-day conduct of the war; it is stark evidence of the crucial nature of photography as a tool of war.

#### **Rarity.**

While copies of the iconic Joe Rosenthal press photo appear at auction with some regularity, original aerial reconnaissance photographs of Iwo Jima, printed during the war for the use of the U.S. military in its preparations for the land invasion, are very rare on the market.

#### **Detailed Condition:**

Original black and white photograph print. With colored grease pencil annotations in yellow and green, including a grid system in green, with each individual box lettered. Three vertical fold marks. Some moderate general wear to edges. Withal, condition is quite good. The image was made using Eastman Topographical Safety film. In left-hand margin: VD-5, 21A IWO JIMA, 1-12-45 (2335 GCT) 24X10,000 REST.