

NEWS

U.S., Japan Commemorate World War II Battle of Peleliu

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The U.S. Navy and Marine Corps and the Japan Self-Defense Force participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Peleliu Peace Memorial Park here yesterday to remember the service members who lost their lives during the World War II Battle of Peleliu.



Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Walter Greber, left, and Japan Maritime Self Defense Force Lt. Cmdr. Satoshi Hirokami participate in a wreath-laying ceremony commemorating the World War II Battle of Peleliu at the Peleliu Peace Memorial

Park in Palau, April 12, 2018. Navy photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Micah Blechner

Members of the British Royal Navy and Royal Australian Navy also attended the ceremony.

Considered the bitterest battle of the war for the U.S. Marines, the first U.S. invasion force landed in Peleliu on Sept. 15, 1944. Expected to last only four days, the battle stretched more than two months, with a casualty rate exceeding that of all other amphibious operations during the Pacific War.

The ceremony included remarks from Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Walter Greber, the staff noncommissioned officer in charge for security, and Lt. Cmdr. Satoshi Hirokami, a member of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force and the Joint Staff.

Solemn Ceremony

The two service laid a wreath at the concrete cenotaph erected to memorialize those who perished during the Peleliu battle. The ceremony concluded with the playing of "Taps" by two buglers to honor the sacrifice made by those who fought in the battle.

"While the Battle of Peleliu gave us insight into emerging Japanese defense tactics, these lessons could not have been learned without the sacrifice and service of our U.S. troops," Greber said. "The battle underscores our warfighting history, determination and will, as well as the resolve of the Japanese."

U.S. Marines of the 1st Marine Division, and later, soldiers of the U.S. Army's 81st Infantry Division fought to capture an airstrip, encountering a well-armed Japanese force defending 500 caves that honey-combed the small coral island, a maze the Marines soon nicknamed "Bloody Nose Ridge."

U.S., Japan Relations 'Stronger Than Ever'

"Today, times have changed and the relationship between Japan and the United States has become stronger than ever as can be seen in this event," Hirokami said. "We together mourn the soldiers who lost their lives here."

Following the ceremony, U.S. and Japanese participants visited the Peleliu Elementary School and played sports and listened to a performance by the U.S. Navy Pacific Fleet band with more than 50 students, while the medical staff conducted health screenings at the Peleliu clinic, providing blood-glucose, vital signs and height/weight measurements, as well as prescription eye glasses.

"We have witnesses today who came from ... the Republic of Palau and the United

Kingdom. [This] shows the special relationship among us," Hirokami said. "It is my sincere hope that our visit here contributes to the further development of our cooperative relations."

The U.S. sailors and Marines and Japan Self-Defense Force staff members came to Palau aboard USNS Brunswick as part of Pacific Partnership 2018, the largest annual multilateral humanitarian assistance and disaster relief preparedness mission.

"Our history is important to us. It keeps the memory of the sacrifices of our former brothers and sisters made remembered," Greber said. "It also allows us to learn from past mistakes and continue to evolve."

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