Marines Commemorate 80th Anniversary of the Battle of Guadalcanal



U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Steven R. Rudder, commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific, makes remarks during the anniversary of the Battle of Guadalcanal at the Guadalcanal American Memorial in the Solomon Islands, Aug. 7, 2022. The ceremony commemorated the 80th anniversary of the battle, and served to honor the fallen and strengthen the U.S. relationship with the Solomon Islands and other Pacific allies and partners. The historic battle was codenamed Operation Watchtower and was the first major offensive and decisive victory for the allied forces in the Pacific theater. *U.S. Marine Corps / Cpl. Dillon L. Buck*

CAMP H. M. SMITH, Hawaii – Gen. Steven Rudder, commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific (MARFORPAC), traveled to Honiara, Solomon Islands, as part of a U.S. interagency delegation led by Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman from Aug. 7-9, said

Chuck Little, of U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific, in a release. The delegation, which also included U.S. Ambassador to Australia Caroline Kennedy and other senior U.S. military officers, participated in several events commemorating the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Guadalcanal, and further strengthened long-standing partnerships between the United States and the nations in attendance: Solomon Islands, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand.

Rudder was joined on the trip by other senior U.S. military officers, including fellow Marines Lt. Gen. Stephen Sklenka, deputy commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command; Lt. Gen. George Smith, commanding general, I Marine Expeditionary Force; and Maj. Gen. Benjamin Watson, commanding general, 1st Marine Division. The delegation included U.S. military officers from units that also heroically fought during the battle: Vice Admiral Andrew Tiongson, commander, U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area; Rear Adm. Jeffrey J. Kilian, commander, Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Pacific/director, Fleet Civil Engineer, U.S. Pacific Fleet, U.S. Navy; and Maj. Gen. Joseph Ryan, commanding general, 25th Infantry Division, U.S. Army.

On Sunday, Aug. 7, the United States hosted a memorial ceremony on Skyline Ridge, the site of the World War II Guadalcanal American Memorial. The hour-long ceremony, which started at 7 a.m., was largely planned and executed by MARFORPAC Marines. The ceremony was the first time a joint service color guard marched on Guadalcanal, carrying the national ensign and flags from each of the military services that fought in the battle: the U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, and U.S. Coast Guard. A quintet from the 1st Marine Division provided music for the event.

In his remarks, Rudder highlighted the important impact of the battle.

“So we’re here to remember those sacrifices that were made; it

changed the history of the Solomon Islands, and it changed the history of our nation," Rudder said. "I do not want to pass up the opportunity to show my dear appreciation for the Solomon Islanders. They were instrumental in everything we did and they endured hardships that we can't imagine."

"But it makes no sense to remember those sacrifices without looking to the future; and we pledge from Indo-PACOM and the United States Marine Corps, that we will look forward."

Other speakers at the ceremony included American Battle Monuments Commissioner Mr. Bud Pettigrew and Deputy Secretary of State Mrs. Wendy Sherman.

Sherman, whose Marine father fought and was wounded on Guadalcanal, spoke of the impact of the battle on both the military and Solomon Islanders. "With the benefit of hindsight, it is easy for us gathered here today to recognize the Battle of Guadalcanal as a turning point in the Pacific theater, and indeed in the Second World War. But for the Marines patrolling the dense and humid jungle, who had to be wary of both enemy snipers and crippling disease; for the sailors who fought terrifying night battles in the seas around these islands; for the airmen who engaged in countless dogfights in the skies above, the future was unknown and unknowable. And in many of those places – like here in Solomon Islands – civilians saw their world upended as well, as bombs and mortars fell on their towns and villages, destroying the lives of innocents."

During the ceremony, Sklenka and Rudder placed a wreath at the base of the monument on behalf of all U.S. service members.

Immediately following the U.S. ceremony, the Solomon Scouts and Coast Watchers (SSCW) Trust hosted a memorial event at the SSCW monument. At this ceremony, during which Ambassador Kennedy spoke, MARFORPAC provided a color guard at the request

of the event organizers. Sklenka and Rudder laid a wreath at this ceremony on behalf of all U.S. service members.

Following the SSCW ceremony, the U.S. delegation traveled to the Point Cruz Yacht Club to attend a ceremony hosted by the U.S. Coast Guard, honoring Medal of Honor recipient Douglas Albert Munro. Afterward, the U.S. delegation traveled to the Japanese War Memorial Peace Park for a ceremony hosted by the Government of Japan. At both ceremonies, Sklenka and Rudder laid a wreath on behalf of all U.S. service members.

On Monday, Aug. 8, the U.S. delegation attended the fifth and final ceremony, which was hosted by the government of Solomon Islands. The event took place at the Bloody Ridge National Peace Park, which was named after an important battle fought by U.S. Marines in September 1942.

Throughout the seven-month battle for the island, American forces fought side-by-side with Allies from the Solomon Islands, Australia, Britain, New Zealand, the Kingdom of Tonga, and Fiji. The bravery, determination, and commitment of the Allied forces was critical to ensuring the strategic victory that marked a turning point of the war in the Pacific.

In her remarks at the Skyline Ridge ceremony, Deputy Secretary of State Sherman reflected on what came out of the battle for Guadalcanal 80 year ago. “Today – as we have been every day since the war ended – former combatants are united here as partners in peace. We have built schools and clinics together, conducted scientific research together, shared vaccines to combat the pandemic together. We have helped each other recover from natural disasters, protected each other from the impacts of climate change. We have celebrated and mourned and grown together. And above all – forged in the experience of the Second World War and made deeper with each passing year – we have built profound and enduring ties with each other, as

one Pacific family.”