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The Navajo Code Talkers made a significant contribution to the war in the Pacific, on behalf of the Allies, during World War II. The Japanese never broke their Code. This monument to the Code Talkers is located at Window Rock, Arizona. Image by Alexander Glazko, online via Wikimedia Commons.

*Were it not for the Navajos,
the Marines would never
have taken Iwo Jima!*

Major Howard M. Conner
The Navajo Code Talkers

The United States was in serious trouble. Following its disastrous surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Japan held the upper hand in the Pacific.

Japanese soldiers, wearing the rings of American colleges and high schools, could speak English fluently. Educated in the U.S., these men routinely intercepted, and decoded, American military messages. The U.S. needed what has always eluded a country at war: an unbreakable code.

In February of 1942, Philip Johnston, a civilian engineer and World War I veteran, had an idea. What if America's military forces were to use the Navajo language as the basis of a secret code?

Johnston knew something about that language. The son of Protestant missionaries to the Navajo people, he had spent most of his life on, or near, the reservation. He was one of about 30 non-Navajos who could speak the unwritten, extremely difficult language.

Writing a letter outlining his thoughts, Johnston set in motion a life-changing event for 29 Navajo men living on their ancestral homelands. Within months, those men would use their language to develop a code that was never broken during the war.

It remained a national secret until 1968.

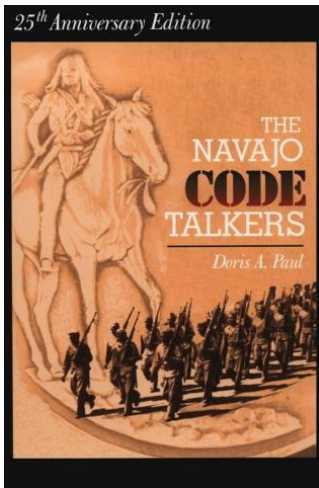
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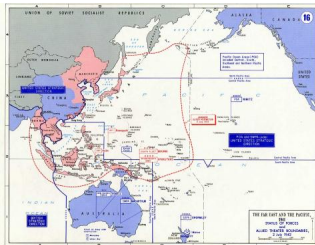
Media Stream



The Navajo Code Talkers - by Doris A. Paul

Image online, courtesy amazon.com website.

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Allied Forces - Pacific Theater, July 1942 Boundaries

Annotated map online, courtesy U.S. Military Academy.

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Philip Johnston - Navajo Code Talkers

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Philip Johnston - Family

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Navajo People and the Johnston Missionary Family

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Working with the Navajo People

Image online, courtesy [Northern Arizona University website](#).

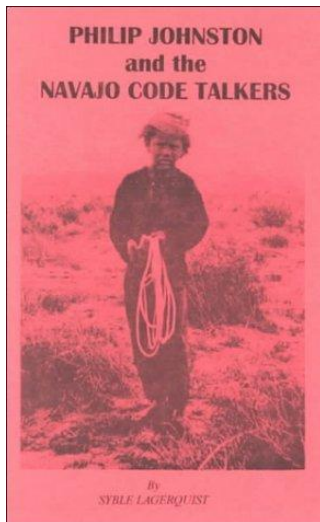
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View of the Navajo Reservation Area

Image online, courtesy [Northern Arizona University website](#).

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Philip Johnston and Navajo Code Talkers - By Syble Lagerquist

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