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Soon after they landed on a Saipan beach, 4th Division Marines are hit with fire power from waiting and hidden Japanese soldiers. Photo included in *Saipan: The Beginning of the End*, a USMC Historical Monograph by Major Carl W. Hoffman, USMC, at page 57. Public Domain.

Saipan is the largest of fifteen islands in the western Pacific Ocean known as the Marianas. Japanese forces held the strategically significant island on 15 June 1944 when America launched its amphibious attack.

A magnificent drawing of Saipan's Tanapag Harbor, by Hans Mangelsdorf, is part of the Army's Art Collection. It depicts the massive forces that were launched to capture the island. The Empire's hero of Pearl Harbor, Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, was in command of Japanese forces. It would be his last battle.

Tinian Island, the starting point of Enola Gay's atomic bomb run to Hiroshima, is about three miles south of Saipan. It would also be the site of fierce battles during the summer of 1944.

Fighting on Saipan was savage, as it had been on Tarawa (in November of 1943) and the Marshall Islands (in February of 1944):

- Enemy guns were trained on the beaches as the first wave of Marines to hit the Saipan beach took cover behind a sand dune.
- They had to wait for their attack orders until the next three waves of Marines had arrived.
- Crawling under an avalanche of bullets, they tried to take their assigned positions.
- Sailors on the *USS Monterey*, meanwhile, made sure they had enough food to get them through the long hours ahead.
- Marines, using captured oxen and carts, transported supplies to the front lines.

- Army reinforcements from the 27th Division disembarked from LSTs and moved across the coral reef toward Saipan's beach.
- Those who made it ashore were able to advance behind their tanks. Some Americans took refuge in bunkers.

A Marine Corps patrol found a Japanese mother and her four children hiding in a hillside cave. They had taken shelter from the fierce fighting near their home.

Another Marine rescued a tiny infant, still alive, in a ravine. He passed the child from Marine to Marine until the baby reached medics who could try to help.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/AMPHIBIOUS-ASSAULT-on-Saipan-Wind-Talkers-Navajo-Code-Talkers-in-WWII>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/AMPHIBIOUS-ASSAULT-on-Saipan-Wind-Talkers-Navajo-Code-Talkers-in-WWII>

Media Stream

Marines under Fire at Saipan Beach

This picture is one of many featured in *Saipan: The Beginning of the End*, a USMC Historical Monograph by Major Carl W. Hoffman, USMC. It shows U.S. Marines soon after they made an amphibious landing on a section of Saipan's beach in June of 1944.

Appearing at [page 57 of Hoffman's book](#), the illustration has this official caption:

BARELY ON THE BEACH, these 4th Division Marines lie flat and try to spot the source of the fire which has them immobilized.

This particular beach landing put the Marines in a position that was different from other amphibious landings:

*Locating the enemy there was a difficult job; the usual Japanese tactic was to remain concealed in their "spider holes" until the Marines had passed by them; then the lids of the holes would be opened and rifle or light machine-gun fire directed at the Marines' rear. (See *Saipan: The Beginning of the End*, at [page 57.](#))*

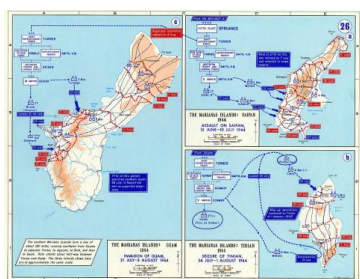
Here, the Marines were facing Japanese firepower before, not after, they "had passed by them."

Click on the image for a better view.

Illustration from "Saipan: The Beginning of the End," a USMC Historical Monograph, Major Carl W. Hoffman, USMC. Online via iBiblio, sponsored by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Public Domain.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Marines-under-Fire-at-Saipan-Beach>



Marianas Islands - Map

Map image online, courtesy U.S. Military Academy.

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Marshall Islands - Savage Fighting

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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Saipan - Aerial View

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

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Saipan - Family Hiding From the Fighting

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

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Saipan - Moving Across a Coral Reef Toward Shore

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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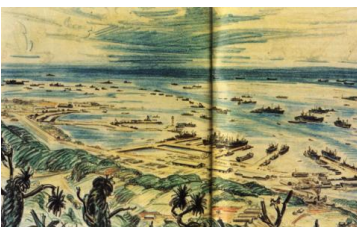


Saipan - Moving Forward

Image from the *U.S. Army in World War II: Campaign in the Marianas*. Online, courtesy ibiblio at University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill).

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Tanapag Harbor - Drawing of Invasion Vessels

Image from the *U.S. Army in World War II: Campaign in the Marianas*. Online, courtesy ibiblio at University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill).

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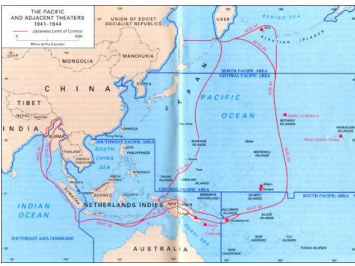


Tarawa - Military Operations

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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The Pacific Theater - Map

Image from the *U.S. Army in World War II: Campaign in the Marianas*. Online, courtesy ibiblio at University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill).

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Tarawa - Captured by Allies in 1943

This video clip of historical battle footage, released by the Department of Defense, was compiled by United News (part of United Newsreel Corporation) in 1943. It is online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Tarawa-Captured-by-Allies-in-1943>