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Sometimes, during the Battle of Saipan, doctors had to operate in blackout conditions. Robert Benney created this painting depicting "Doctors performing brain surgery by flashlight during the blackout of a Japanese air raid." Image online courtesy the U.S. Army Medical Department; [Office of Medical History](#).

Days passed and, with Army support, the Marines were able to take over key enemy fortifications. Using a [mountain gun](#) they captured from the Japanese, Marines turned the gun on [Garapan](#), the administrative center of the island.

The Navajos were able to prevent disaster at key moments [during the Saipan battles](#). Doris Paul records one poignant incident in her book, *The Navajo Code Talkers*:

*One night the enemy retreated to a new line several hundred yards to the rear, and a few hours later, the Marines advanced to the old positions previously held by the Japanese, when a salvo exploded nearby. They radioed headquarters, reminding them that Americans now held this position, but another salvo came over. It was then they "knew the score."*

*Headquarters did not believe them. And why should they? The Japanese had imitated American broadcasts many times before.*

*Again they were showered with mud from a salvo that came even closer. And then they heard the question from headquarters: "Do you have a Navajo?"*

*The Marine says he will never forget the message that was sent by the single Navajo in the battalion, although he couldn't understand a word of it. A few minutes later he and his comrades saw a cloud of smoke rising from the Japanese positions.*

*They had been saved from being "clobbered" by their own artillery by that Navajo message. (Code Talkers, page 66)*

Even though disasters were averted, death was a common event during the Saipan invasion:

- The Marines set up [refugee camps](#), away from the fighting, for people whose homes were in the battle areas.
- The Corps itself suffered heavy casualties. Some soldiers were buried at sea. Others, including an [unknown](#)

Marine, were buried on the island.

- A Navy chaplain held a Mass for some of the 2,000 Marines who fell during the initial landings.

Nothing, however, could have prepared the Americans for the biggest banzai charge of the war which took place during the early morning of July 7. Realizing they were going to lose Saipan, huge numbers of Japanese committed mass suicide.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/CODE-TALKERS-and-the-BATTLE-of-Saipan-Wind-Talkers-Navajo-Code-Talkers-in-WWII>

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/CODE-TALKERS-and-the-BATTLE-of-Saipan-Wind-Talkers-Navajo-Code-Talkers-in-WWII>

## Media Stream

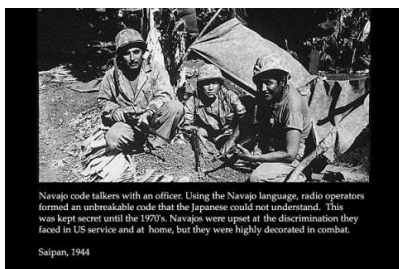


### Flashlight Surgery at Saipan

Robert Benney created this artwork, depicting "flashlight surgery" during the Battle of Saipan (in the summer of 1944). The image is online via the U.S. Army Medical Department; Office of Medical History. "Released to the Public."

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Navajo code talkers with an officer. Using the Navajo language, radio operators formed an unbreakable code that the Japanese could not understand. This was kept secret until the 1970s. Navajos were upset at the discrimination they faced in US service and at home, but they were highly decorated in combat.

Saipan, 1944

### Navajo Code Talkers - Effective in Saipan

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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