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THE WAR IN MICRONESIA

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A Briefing Paper
Prepared for the

U.S. Park Service of Guam

by the

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The War in the Pacific

Introduction

This briefing paper is being prepared at the request of the U.S. Park Service on Guam, T. Stell Newman, Superintendent. Its purpose is to brief members of the Park Service in preparation for their continuing work in planning for appropriate national park facilities in those areas under American jurisdiction.

This paper is not history, but rather a practical, simple-- and hopefully useful--introduction to the area within the context of the Park Services' particular purpose. The information contained herein is drawn from secondary sources, the oral testimony of Micronesians, and from personal experience.

The paper has several sections. First there is a general introduction which attempts to describe what Micronesia is with regards to the various political and ethnic groups. Then there is a section on Japanese fortifications. In this section the background of how the fortifications came to be erected is given. This may be helpful in locating present day sites as well as informants who will have more information. Finally, there is a section on current political developments. This political situation is constantly changing, so this section will be rather short-lived in accuracy, but it provides a framework. The Park Service will have to be aware and sensitive to the political situation in the islands.

Definitions

MICRONESIA (the small islands) has a geographic, cultural, and political meaning. Geographically it encompasses the Marianas, Carolines, Marshalls, and Gilbert Islands. Nauru Island is also included.

Culturally it includes generally the same groups, although there is a heavy Polynesian influence at Kapingamarangi and a Melanesian influence at Tobi. Some ethnographers have considered the Ellice Islands to be culturally Micronesian.

Politically the definition is more complicated. Until recently Micronesia was usually considered as synonymous with the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands which included all the Marshalls, Carolines, and Marianas except Guam. Guam has been a U.S. Possession since 1898 and an unincorporated Territory of the United States since 1952.

In 1969 the people of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands entered into formal future political status negotiations with the United States. In 1972 the people of the Northern Mariana Islands broke away from the rest of the island groups and entered into completed separate negotiations. After a plebescite and election of a government, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) was formed. The first Governor, Carlos Camacho took office on 9 January, 1978 at Saipan. Hence the Mariana Islands now contain two political entities: Guam, a territory, and the Commonwealth which is all the rest of the Mariana Islands.

The other island groups in the Trust Territory held a constitutional convention in 1975. All the people voted on

the adoption of this document on 12 July, 1978. Four districts ratified: Yap, Ponape, Truk, and Kosrae. Two did not: Palau and the Marshall Islands. The four ratifying formed the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and their government, with an elected President, Tosiwo Nakayama, and a Vice President, Petrus Tun, came into being officially on 10 May, 1979. Elected as governor in each of the four states in the Federation are: Leo Falcam of Ponape, John Mangafel of Yap, Erhart Aten of Truk, and Jacob Nena of Kosrae.

The Marshall Islands drafted and had accepted by their people, a constitution which was passed in referendum in March, 1979. In April an election was held for their new legislature, called the Nitijela. It has 33 members and provides for the election of one President, who is also a member of the legislative branch as well. There is no vice president. Amata Kabua was chosen as the first President and was inaugurated on 1 May, 1979.

In April, 1979, the Palauans also held a constitutional convention. Their document has not yet been approved.

As it now exists the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands consists of four separate government entities: the Northern Marianas (CNMI), the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), and Palau. All of these government entities are in transitional status and are technically still part of the TTPI until the official UN termination of the Trusteeship, which is now scheduled for 1981. Greater attention will be given to the political situation later on in this paper.

Where the War Happened in Micronesia

Of the more than 2000 islands in the Micronesian area, all were touched or otherwise affected by the war. Troopships visited, soldiers came ashore, and in many areas land was taken and fortifications built. On a few islands bombings and strafings took place, and on still fewer major conflicts occurred where men were engaged in desperate struggle.

Major battles took place at: Tarawa in the Gilberts, 1943; Kwajalein in the Marshalls, 1943; Peleliu, 1944; Saipan, 1944; and Guam and Tinian, 1944. A spectacular encounter occurred at Truk in 1944 when admiral Wm. "Bull" Halsey in command of carrier task force #58 struck and sent to the bottom some 87 Japanese ships. No invasion, however, was made at Truk.

Role Played by Micronesians

As far as is known, no Micronesians took up arms in the struggle on either side of the conflict. They were innocent victims; bystanders and witnesses. No consideration of them was taken in the planning by the allies for the invasions. The Japanese did relocate some islanders when they expected a battle to take place. For example, most natives were evacuated to Babelthuap before the Peleliu invasion.

After the hostilities ceased the U.S. troops treated Micronesians variously. In the Marshalls where there had been a strong U.S. influence due to the activities of the Boston Mission Society which had begun there and at Kosrae

and the eastern Carolines in 1854, the islanders were treated as liberated people. At Saipan where the Japanese influence was heavy, the islanders were placed in detention camps until proper identification could be made and islanders separated from Japanese nationals.

After the islands were secured the Americans identified all islanders with some competence or aptitude in English to be used as translators. These few people, after their translating skills were no longer necessary, became teachers and teacher-trainers. Today some members of this group hold positions of leadership in the islands. They include: Senator Roman Tmetuchul of Palau, David Ramarui, Director of Education for the TTPI, and Dwight Heine, Special Advisor to the High Commissioner. Of course there are many others, but these are three especially prominent ones. Ramarui and Heine were the first college graduates (UHM) to return to the islands in the early 1950s.

Most islanders over the age of forty can speak some Japanese. The style they use, however, is a low form used by servants. Most all of the people in this group attended some Japanese schooling which was provided. In all cases this schooling was segregated: Japanese children had their own schools, natives had theirs. But Japanese teachers taught both groups. Religion was segregated. Micronesians were not permitted to become Shintoists. Some Christian Missionaries were permitted to carry on their activities. These were stopped in the late 1930s after Japan withdrew from the League of Nations.

Micronesians' View of the War

Generally the Micronesians are very impressed by the might of the U.S. war machine which in the space of two and a half years reduced to rubble everything the Japanese had done and built in the thirty years preceeding the hostilities. Since both sides have offered some form of war reparations, the Micronesians have attempted to optimize their gain from this, hence they will praise and criticize both sides as appropriate for their interests. But this is not to be taken as a hostile or dishonest gesture. They have done this for all times in the past with whalers, missionaries and colonists. And they have survived and gained this way. Since the war, the Micronesians have gained in status, wealth, and opportunity, but few will see this connection and credit the war for it.

General Background:

The Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, commonly referred to as Micronesia, includes three islands chains--the Carolines, Marshalls and Marianas--spanning an ocean area about the size of the continental United States. About 100 of the some 2,100 islands in the Western Pacific Ocean, north of the equator between Hawaii and the Philippines are inhabited.

The total population is about 125,000 people, living on a total land area of about 528 square miles. The population growth rate is almost 4% a year; 50% of the population is under the age of 15.

The Trust Territory is divided into three entities: the Marshalls, Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia (which includes Ponape, Truk, Kosrae and Yap). Although English is the official language, each district has its own culture and language. (While the Northern Marianas is still part of the Trust Territory, it has been separated administratively from the other entities because the people chose to join in a commonwealth with the United States.)

Since 1947, the United States has administered the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands as one of the eleven United Nations trusteeships. Micronesia is the only trusteeship designated a "strategic trust" by the U.N., giving the United States almost unlimited military rights. The U.S. has used the islands for nuclear weapons tests, naval and air bases, missile testing, and as a CIA training base for Asian operatives and later, it is reported, for the training of Vietnam advisors. In accepting the role of administering authority of the Trust Territory, the United States is obligated to promote the political, economic, social, and educational advancement of Micronesia by the Trusteeship Agreement, and more generally, by the United Nations Charter.

The great diversity in Micronesia, is a particularly interesting subject and deserves more attention and explanation here. Many people who know the islands tend to think in terms of the old districts of the Marshalls, the Marianas, Truk, Yap, Palau, Ponape, and Kosrae. Even within these entities there are many more divisions and some of these occasionally threaten to divide the organization even further.

People in Micronesia place their first loyalties with their family and clan. Next with their village. After this they may feel a district loyalty, or they may feel more comfortable with people from a neighboring island even though that island may be politically in another district. The Marshalls are an example of separation from the rest. The islands are all low atolls and are fairly homogeneous ethnically. There are two major dialects of Marshallese; one for the Ralik Chain and one for the Ratak Chain. Basically mutually intelligible, there are a few vocabulary and pronunciation differences.

Kosrae (pronounced KO-shai) is the newest district. For years the people there strived for separate status because they didn't feel appropriately a part of Ponape. Although their language is similar to some of the others, it is separate and distinct and is not understood by others.

Ponape is a place where many islanders live. There are Kosraean, Mokilese, Polynesians from Kapingamarangi and Nukuoro, and Mörlockese from the Truk district. Ponapean and Trukese languages are similar and overlap. It is relatively easy for those islanders to learn one another's languages. Between Ponape and Kosrae are the two atolls of Mokil and Pingelap. Mokil, the closest to Ponape, has a distinct language not understood automatically by Ponapeans. Yet Pingelap, the farthest from Ponape, has a language that is understood by both Ponapeans and Mokilese.

South of Ponape there are three atolls. Ngatik (pronounced NGA-chik), the first, was "invaded" by British mutineers years

ago who killed all the men on the island. Today one can see many Angoloid features among the Ngatikese, and their language is a dialect of Ponapean with a generous mixture of English vocabulary. The next two islands, Nukuoro and Kapingamarangi, were settled by Polynesians many years ago. The people are physically large with many Polynesian features and customs. Their Polynesian language cannot be understood by any other Micronesians.

Going westward we come to the Truk district where we find a great deal of complication among languages and ethnic groups. The lagoon is the main part of Truk. "Real" Trukese come from the lagoon, since that is where the mountains are. The correct way to say it is "chuk" which means mountain. The outer islands in the Truk district are atolls and the people living there do not consider themselves Trukese. But even in the lagoon all the people are not harmoniously unified. Faichuk--in the west lagoon area--centers around the island of Tol. Faichuk is a subdistrict and many people there think that they ought also to be politically separate. The villages and islands of the Truk lagoon--incidentally the world's largest lagoon at 40 miles wide--fought each other for centuries and some of the conflicts carry on today. None of these disputes are violent, but nonetheless there are strong political separatist feelings.

The outer islands southward from Truk are the Mortlocks. Their language is similar and much trading tradition between the Morlockese and the Trukese exists. Many people from the

Mortlocks live in the lagoon area of Truk and learn the language easily. Traditionally, however, not many Trukese lagoon people bother to learn Mortlockese. Here also there has been some feeling politically for creating a separate Mortlockese district.

Far west of the Truk lagoon are the Western and Namonuito island groups. These are among the most traditional islands in Micronesia. The people still wear traditional dress and maintain much of their sailing and navigational skill. Their language is quite different and not mutually intelligible with Trukese. The people in the Westerns have much more in common with the people from the Yap district than with those from Truk.

North of Truk are the Hall Islands. They have much contact with the Trukese and their language is more and more similar.

Next we come to the Yap district. There the human relationships are complicated and highly organized. Yap proper is a complex of the islands of Map, Yap, and Remung; separated by shallow, narrow, mangrove channels. The people who live there are the true Yapese. Theirs is the land of the great stone money quarried hundreds of miles away in Palau and brought to Yap by canoe. They are a people cautious of the outside world. The women wear grass skirts and the men wear thus, a complicated arrangement of loincloth of hibiscus fibre. Their language is completely different from all others in Micronesia, and difficult to learn.

The Yapese chew the green betelnut, wrapping it in a leaf and sprinkling it with lime. This is a custom shared by Palauans. Other Micronesians also chew betelnut, but not as a social habit like the Yapese and Palauans. Yap at one time controlled an empire that included all the outer islands of Yap together with the Westerns and Namonuitos. Yap is also the only place with a strictly defined and inflexible caste system.

The outer islanders of the Yap district are not Yapese, but Carolinian, and are related ethnically and linguistically to the western islands of the Truk District and the southwest islands of Palau. Satawal is the outermost island of the Yap District and the people there speak a language close to the Western Truk dialect. Excellent navigators and sailors, they make occasional trips to Saipan even today which is some 600 miles distant.

Ulithi, the language, is spoken on the outer islands of Yap including Ulithi, Sorol atoll, and Fais. To the south of these places is Woleai. Their dialect is different enough from Ulithian to be considered a special language of its own. The outer Yap islands in the area including Farulep, Euripik, Ifalik, Elato, and Lamotrek, all speak versions of Woleaian.

There has been talk of forming a new district which would include all the outer islands of the Yap district plus the Western and Namonuito Islands of the Truk District. These form one unit ethnically, and speak--as we have noted--only three different, but closely related languages. But this idea has only been in the talk stage, and none of the islanders so

far have developed strong enough feelings to attempt a real separation and all that it would politically entail.

There are two distinct ethnic groups in Palau. The majority, Palauans, live on the islands of Babelthuap, Kayangel, Koror, Peleliu and Angaur, and they speak a distinct language. The other group lives in the southwest islands of Sonsorol, Tobi, Pulo Anna, and Merir. They are related ethnically and linguistically to the outer islands of Yap and the Westerns of Truk. But many have moved to the district center in Koror where they have started their own community.

Japanese Fortifications

The traveler in Micronesia, almost anywhere he goes, will invariably come across the remains of military fortifications. In all cases these remains are the last vestiges of the Japanese military presence in the islands. Lately, many of the ruins have become prime tourist attractions.

It is seldom realized that these old bunkers, pillboxes, and seaplane ramps, are the last surviving specimens of their kind anywhere in the world. They are national historic sites not only a part of the recent Micronesian past, but also of the world's past during a period of extreme and desperate international human struggle.

In most of the other parts of Asia and the Pacific, which were for a time under Japanese military domination, similar examples of fortifications have long since disappeared from the landscape, having been swept away, buried, or displaced. Curiously, one of the few positive things that can be said about the relative slowness of development in Micronesia since

the war is that most of these concrete bastions have been permitted to stand.

Japanese Occupation, 1914-1922

The occupation of German Micronesia by the Japanese from August to October, 1914, was an acceptable move on the part of both the British and the Americans. The Japanese were allied with the British at the time due to treaties signed in 1902 and 1905. The British were quite busy with the war against the Germans on the European front, and were happy to have the Imperial Navy handle the German Pacific colonies.

The Americans, of course, had an interest in the islands since they held Hawaii, Wake, Midway, Guam, and the Philippines, all of which--accepting Hawaii--were in the greater Micronesian area. Also, the Americans were concerned over German aggression. Guam was exposed--surrounded by German territory in 1914--and there was concern that the Germans may attack with their garrisons at Saipan and Rota.

But the Americans were neutral in 1914, and they were also militarily weak in the Pacific. Therefore, the Japanese seizure of Micronesia from the Germans came as a somewhat reluctant relief. The occupation did not result in a greater friendship between the Japanese and the Americans. The Imperial Navy immediately lowered a "bamboo curtain" around the islands. Foreigners were excluded; even allies.

Intelligence Reports of Japanese Fortifications

As early as 1917, while the First World War was still being fought, the Americans began to probe for information

concerning Japanese activities in Micronesia. In that year Roger Welles, U.S. Director of Naval Intelligence, directed the Governor of Guam to "submit to the Office of Naval Intelligence any information of interest. . . in regard to the political and commercial occurrences that take place in the adjacent islands."

Back in 1916 the British administration in the Gilbert Islands had been notified by the Japanese in the Marshalls, that an embargo had been established upon the "touching of British and Australian ships at the Marshall Island group." The British, on getting this news, immediately sent their steamship Mawatta, to Jaluit as a test case. The Japanese admiral refused her permission to enter. This episode caused considerable ill-feeling and suspicion towards the Japanese on the part of the British.

In 1920, Arthur Herrman, an American businessman at Kusaie, reported to the U.S. Naval Attache at Tokyo, that there were "100 Japanese naval and government officials in Truk alone," and that there were also "three large coal piles at Truk, Ponape, and Jaluit." Herrman also stated that, in Truk, "a rock-walled chamber, about 100 feet square, has been constructed in the side of a hill, with an iron door and a wooden fence in front."

In 1920, an American marine, who was married to a Guamanian woman, and who had travelled through Yap and Palau in a small boat, reported that in talks with natives from the Western Carolines, he had heard that the Japanese had "guns and carriages in Upper Palau", and that "some of the guns were as large as ten inches."

The reports available to the Americans and the British on Japanese activities in the Mandates during the 1920s and before, were those gathered by their intelligence networks, as well as the official public reports which the Japanese government submitted to the League of Nations. Of these, the former were often based on heresay from native residents and were generally alarmist; the latter, of course, were official, but could also be a devious whitewash. A reasonable look backwards today however, based on existing evidence from subsequently available Japanese records, indicates that during the 1920s really didn't fortify the Mandates.

Of course there were "improvements" made during the early years. Docks and harbors were built or improved, railroad systems were installed on some islands--notably Saipan and Rota--where large sugar centrals were being developed that required such rail facilities. But improvements, while they have clear military significance in time of war, are not fortifications.

Japanese Build-Ups in the 1930s

By the 1930s the mandates were Nipponized. A generation of Micronesians were acculturated and made dependent upon Japanese consumer goods from the home islands. An expanding island economy created a position of near full employment. The mandates were a virtual extension of the home islands. The Japanese foreign policy was coming more and more under the influence of the militarists in the government.

Between 1933 and 1934 Japan made the decision to construct improvements which would have clear military significance. These were not overt military improvements, but rather quasi-military in nature. But they were "permanent". It was decided that four "key" areas would be located at Palau, Saipan, Truk, and Ponape. Ponape would be the last to be developed.

The construction program which began in these key areas in 1934 was a cooperative effort between the Imperial Navy and the Japanese civilian administration (South Seas Bureau). The first project undertaken in 1934 was a seaplane ramp at Koror, Palau (the ramp is still there). Shortly thereafter Aslito Airfield was begun at Saipan (today this is Isley and Kobler fields).

Harbor improvements and navigational aids were constructed also at Saipan and Palau between 1934 and 1939. Communications centers were built at Truk and Saipan (today the Catholic high school occupies the site at Truk). Oil storage facilities were installed at all four key base areas between 1934 and 1939. At the same time airstrips were started at Tinian and Pagan in the Marianas, but the main emphasis was still on the other areas.

Although the planning and construction of the four key base areas was a "permanent" endeavor, there were no guns brought in at the time to protect the establishments. The bases were still "improvements" and not "fortifications". Japan did not feel that she was breaking her promise to the League of Nations not to fortify the islands, and she continued to send annual reports to the League.

At the same time, however, Japan became even more suspicious of foreigners. Travel through the mandates was more severely restricted. Had the Japanese permitted foreigners free access, it is quite possible that she would have squelched some of the world's suspicions of her island activities. Observers would have seen and reported an unprecedented commercial and industrial boom in the Micronesian economy. But Japan did not permit most journalist-correspondent visitors to enter, and hence world suspicion of Japan increased.

The Americans, of course, continued their efforts at penetrating the mandates. In 1936, the U.S. invited two Japanese ships to visit some Alaskan harbors, which had previously been closed to foreign ships, in exchange for an American ship visiting the mandates. Japan refused.

In 1935 a seaplane ramp was started at Saipan, and in the same year an airfield was begun at Truk on Etan island (still there but now overgrown and unused). In 1938 an airfield was started at Peleliu, and in the following year one at Ponape (the field at Peleliu was further improved by American forces in 1944-45).

Of the four key base areas which were begun between 1934 and 1939, only one--Saipan--was actually completed by 1939, and there were no guns in place to protect it in that year.

Intensive and Extensive Construction, 1939-1941

In 1939 the Japanese shifted their construction program from a quasi-military effort to an overt-military effort. At the 1946-48 War Crimes Trials at Guam, the Japanese contended

that no military fortifications were begun in the islands prior to the war. Subsequent evidence from Japanese records however, has proven that fortifications were started at least two years before Pearl Harbor.

Even before the availability of the new evidence, it was clear that the military build-up had started well before the outbreak of hostilities. When Admiral Halsey conducted carrier raids on the Marshalls in 1942, he was resisted by island-based aircraft from air bases which bristled with coastal guns. These must have been started to be put into place before the war.

The Marshalls were the first area to be intensively built-up, militarily. In the summer of 1939 the Imperial Navy sent a task force inspection team to the Marshalls to make recommendations for base construction. Several factors led to the Japanese construction in the Marshalls. For one thing, the Japanese had improved and enlarged their warships; they had more power and a longer range, hence it became feasible to base them farther from the home islands. Another reason was the successful Japanese development of heavy, land-based bombers. Lastly, there was a motivational reason: the U.S. during the later 1930s, had considerably increased its naval strength at Pearl Harbor, thus placing the Americans in striking distance of the Marshalls. Those islands would be vulnerable if not fortified.

In 1939 the task force inspection team selected Kwajalein, Wotje, Maloelap, and Jaluit for fortifications, and in 1940 construction began, thus making eight key bases in all of the mandates.

Air facilities were the first priority in the construction program¹ and after these came fuel facilities. Oil pumps and oil storage tanks were installed at Saipan, Palau, Truk, Ponape, and Jaluit. Heavy fuel oil could be stored in the improved facilities and Eniwetok was added as a fuel storage area early in 1941. The fuel stored at these bases was used in the initial Japanese offenses early in the war.

In 1940 garrison troops were moved into Micronesia for the first time in more than twenty years. As the year of 1941 approached the records show that at least ¥121,000,000 was allocated to mandates construction from various budget items. Shore facilities were built at all eight key bases in 1940-41 at a cost of ¥6,632,750, and by June, 1941, money was being allocated for maintenance of anti-aircraft artillery, and in August ¥2,562,750 was earmarked for additional gun positions. During 1941 ¥4,675,000 was devoted to submarine bases which were to be completed by October 31, 1941 at Ponape, Kwajalein and Truk. And ¥246,300 went for oxygen-gas-producing stations to service torpedoes at Ponape, Kwajalein, and Jaluit.

Between 1939 and 1941 more construction took place and more was accomplished in the way of military build-up than in all the years before.

¹Seventy per cent of the money for construction in 1940-1941 went into air facilities at the eight key bases.

Japanese Preparation Before Pearl Harbor Attack

In 1940 the Japanese Fourth Fleet established command at Truk. Large numbers of defending garrison troops were brought into the mandates to take up positions in the eight key base areas, and also to assist in their construction which was still going on.²

The Fourth Fleet, which was in over-all command, was divided into four sectors: I, Western Carolines Group Sector; II, Eastern Carolines Group Sector; III, Marianas Group Sector; and IV, Marshalls Group Sector.³ Each group sector was commanded by a rear admiral and each had the following units under his command: base forces, defense forces, communications unit, surface elements, and a small air unit.

The Marshalls received additional guard units since there were more bases located there. The Fourth Fleet continued to grow in strength during 1941 and by the time of Pearl Harbor had a conglomerate of military and support forces: shore defenses, construction workers, four light cruisers, eight destroyers, submarine forces, an air flotilla, many troop transports, sub-chasers, mine-sweepers, mine-layers, gunboats, and patrol vessels. The following table will more precisely define the meaning of the Japanese strength in 1941:

² Construction was generally carried on by laborers specifically assigned for the purpose. Their social rank was as follows: I, Japanese; II, Okinawan; III, Korean; IV, Micronesian. Garrison troops were used to speed up the work.

³ In some literature these group sectors are referred to as: Palau GS, Truk GS, Saipan GS, and Jaluit GS.

DEFINITION OF FORCES IN 1941

Forces	Personnel
Base Forces	165 to 1,613
Defense Forces	250 to 510 men
Guard Forces	400 to 900 men

The various group sectors within the Fourth Fleet were supplied with offices, warehouses, ammunition storage magazines, and barracks, at a cost of ¥700,000, and ¥10,000,000 was allotted for base and defense force installations alone on Truk, Palau, Saipan, Kwajalein, and Ponape in 1941.

The most intensive build-up period began after the start of the war. The cold, hard figures show that the mandates were stronger in 1944, when the Americans invaded, than they were in 1941. The Marianas garrison in 1944 had 30,000 men, while in 1941 the whole of Micronesia had 36,000 men. In mid-1941 the Marianas alone had operational airfields with a 400 plane capacity, while in 1941 the whole of Micronesia had only 8 airfields, all of which were not completely operational.

Moreover, Japanese construction of fortifications was never completed. Serious supply shortages during the war prevented much construction. When the Americans invaded Saipan in July, 1944, they found many fortifications unfinished, and construction still going on. The islands of Micronesia were invulnerable no longer than it took the United States to dominate the seas and air surrounding them.

AIRFIELDS AND SEAPLANE RAMPS IN THE MANDATED ISLANDS
 UNDER JAPANESE OCCUPATION, DECEMBER 8, 1941

Location	Type	Started	Completed
MARIANAS			
Saipan	airfield	1934	1935
	seaplane ramp	1935	1935
Tinian	airstrip	1939-40	1941?
Pagan	emergency airstrip	1934?	1940?
WESTERN CAROLINES			
Palau	airfield	1938	1940
	seaplane ramp	1934	1936
EASTERN CAROLINES			
Truk	airfield	1935	1941
	airfield	1940	1941
	airfield	1939	1941
	seaplane ramp	1940	1941
	seaplane ramp	1940	1941
Ponape	airfield	1939	1941
	seaplane ramp	1940	1941
MARSHALLS			
Kwajalein	airfields:		
	1 strip	1940	1942
	3 strips	1940	1941
Wotje	seaplane ramp	1940	1941
	airfield (2 str)	1940	1941
Maloelap	airfield (2 str)	1940	1941
Jaluit	seaplane ramp	1940	1941

The Gilbert Islands

These islands have been renamed Kiribati (pronounced: KIRA-bash) by the people. Kiribati is the islanders' way of saying "Gilbert." The first WWII battle in Micronesia took place there in 1943 at Tarawa atoll. Until November of 1943, the name Tarawa was buried deep in obscure pages of the history of Pacific exploration and colonial expansion. Except to certain planners in Washington and Tokyo, and the men responsible for executing their plans, this small atoll and its main island, Betio, were virtually unknown. Then, in a brief span of time, "seventy six stark and bitter hours' that island was taken. And the man who commanded its captors could truthfully say that in the battle there the 'heroism of both attackers and defenders is worthy to stand beside the most renowned in the history of warfare'.

Tarawa lies some 2,500 miles southwest of Pearl Harbor and 1,300 miles Southeast of Truk, which was the main Japanese bastion in the Central Pacific during the early years of World War II. The strategic value of Tarawa in 1943 lay in its location. It was the most important atoll in the Gilbert Islands, headquarters of the Japanese garrison and site of the island group's only airfield. To the North and West were Japanese bases in the Marshalls and Carolines, to the South and East were Allied-held islands that guarded the lifeline from Hawaii and the US to the South Pacific, New Zealand, and Australia.

Most Allied operations in 1942 and the first six months of 1943 were aimed at securing that lifeline. The roll-back of

Japanese forward positions in the South and Southwest Pacific started in August 1942 with seizure of Guadalcanal in the Southern Solomons and the securing of Papua in eastern New Guinea. In 1943 the methodical advance continued, with each objective determined in large part by its suitability as an airbase, and its location within range of friendly land-based fighter aircraft.

By late summer, naval and land forces under Vice-Admiral William Halsey, Commander South Pacific, had reached New Georgia in the central Solomons and begun the construction of a series of fighter and bomber fields near Munda. His next target was to be Cape Torokina on Bougainville where another airfield complex would be built. To the West, General Douglas MacArthur's Southwest Pacific forces were moving into position to strike at Cape Gloucester on the opposite end of the large island of New Britain from the Japanese headquarters at Rabaul. With Cape Gloucester in his hands, MacArthur could move safely through the Dampier Straits between New Guinea and New Britain and attack west along New Guinea's coast towards the Philippines.

The initial objective in the Central Pacific drive was to have been the Marshall Islands, which had been in Japanese hands since the First World War. Little was known of these 'mystery islands', but the defenses were believed to be strong and the garrison large. In addition, the naval and air base at Truk, which posed a threat of both land and carrier-based air attacks, was far closer to the proposed objectives in the Marshalls than it was to the Gilberts. An attack on the Marshalls was a cal-

culated risk that few men of higher authority or responsibility were prepared to take.

In the light of what happened later in the Pacific fighting-- and not too much later--it is hard for the armchair strategist to see why Tarawa was a necessary target, but no amount of hindsight can match the pressures and realities of the existing situation. The American fleet was rebuilding but still it was not strong. The forces available for the two-pronged attack, MacArthur's and Nimitz's, were not impressive. The decision was made to seize a first objective in the Central Pacific that could be readily taken with the available resources--or so it seemed at the time.

Various Island Contacts for Investigation

In each main settlement in Micronesia there can be found people who are local authorities on the war years. In many cases there are people surviving who worked for the Japanese during their administration. In other cases there are people whose families worked for the Japanese and who have information which has been handed down.

It is always a good practice in Micronesia to "work from the top down" when making inquiries about anything. Hence, in each state, district, or settlement visited, it is best to make an initial inquiry with the Governor. As of this writing they are:

Saipan, CNMI.	Carlos Camacho
Yap, FSM	John Mangafel
Palau	Kim Bachellor

Truk, FSM Earhart Aten
 Ponape, FSM Leo Falcam
 Kosrae, FSM Jacob Nena
 Marshalls Amata Kabua
 Kiribati Unknown

Besides the official people and the traditional leaders, there are, in each district center, people who have lived there for extended periods and who have information about the war; especially about the locations of crashed planes, wrecked vehicles, and remains of buildings. The following is a listing:

PERSON	PLACE	CONNECTION
Fran Defgnin	Yap	Assistant to many visiting anthropologists over the years
Sam Falanruw	Yap	Former Peace Corps Director and first Yapese PC official
Roman Tmetuchul	Palau	Former translator at US war crimes trials at Guam
Joseph Tellei	Palau	Former chief of Palauan police under Japanese
Minour Ueki	Palau	Former construction worker for Japanese airfield
Hans Williander	Truk	Lt. Governor
Francis X. Hezel, S.J.	Truk	Director of Micronesian Seminar at Xavier High School
Pencile Lawrence	Ponape	Assistant to many anthropologists over the years
Jack Adams	Ponape	Ex-patriate, very knowledgeable about wrecked airplanes and machinery

Russ Varner	Ponape	Ex-patriate, very knowledgeable
Joab Sigrah	Kosrae	Lived through the war
Singkchy George	Kosrae	Lived through the war, and is now education director
Carl Dominick	Marshalls	Lived through the war
Jacob Lanwi	Marshalls	Lived through the war and is now a medical officer

The Political Situation

A commentary on the present-day Micronesia program would be incomplete without some consideration of the political status developments which have taken place recently. Although I am by no means an expert in Micronesian political affairs, and have no particular political views to represent, I will explain something, simply, of what has taken place. As is well known, Micronesia was one of eleven UN Trust Territories created after WWII. However, Micronesia is different from the others; it was designated as mentioned earlier as a "strategic trust". This meant that while it had to be administered according to the agreements prescribed by the UN Trusteeship Council, it was also special in the sense that it had military importance and therefore also was controlled by the UN Security Council. Of course the military importance of the islands was not something which emerged out of WWII. It goes back well over a hundred years when trade and commerce became intensive in the Pacific on a large scale. After the Americans and Spanish had what Harvard professor Frank Friedel refers to as "their splendid little war" in 1898-99, and the Philippines and Guam came under US control, there was great interest in the military circles in Washington of getting control of all of Micronesia as well. But, instead, Germany bought it

from the Spanish.

The Japanese, after seizing the islands from the Germans after WW I, placed them under an Imperial Navy administration of the area always maintained a strong naval presence. When the League of Nations established a Class C Mandate in Micronesia, the Japanese were still primarily interested in the military significance, and this led eventually to their withdrawal from the League in 1935 and fortification of the islands in preparation for war with the West.

The American commitment in Micronesia has always been in accordance with the terms established by the Trusteeship Council, including the promotion of education and social development leading to a self-determining political status for the people there. Immediately following the cessation of hostilities in 1944-45, schools were among the first institutions to be reopened. The Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) became official on 18 July, 1947. The US pledged to "promote the development of the inhabitants... towards self-government or independence as may be appropriate to the particular circumstance of the Trust Territory... and the freely-expressed wishes of the peoples concerned."

It was in 1969 that serious talks began between the Micronesian and American representatives. An early aim of the US was to see some sort of unified Micronesia emerge out of all these political status negotiations. At that time there were six administrative

districts in the Trust Territory--the Marianas, Yap, Palau, Truk, Ponape, and the Marshalls--and these cover an area larger than the continental US. As the talks went on however, it became clear that not all of the islanders wanted to unify. Some wished to remain separate.

Micronesians have never been unified, really. And it wasn't too surprising to see this development. There are ten to twenty distinct languages according to some experts, and at least eleven different ethnic divisions scattered over the one hundred or so inhabited islands in the three million square miles of ocean.

In 1972 the Northern Marianas--all those Mariana Islands except Guam (which is a US territory)--started separate negotiations with the US. This has led to a complete separation of the Northern Marianas from the rest of the Trust Territory, and this was solidified in 1978 when the first elected governor, Carlos Camacho, took office after all the people held a plebescite choosing a commonwealth status with the United States.

The Marianas negotiations had taken a little over two years, and their covenant--signed by President Ford on 15 February, 1975--will formalize their commonwealth status when the Trusteeship officially ends; the present target for this being 1981.

The other islands--the Carolines and Marshalls--had drafted a constitution at Saipan in 1975 which would serve as the legal basis for their proposed unified government. In addition to this constitution, a negotiated political status concept of "free association" had been developing with the US, for these islands.

This negotiation process is still going on and the free association concept is also based upon a covenant. After some conflicts between the political "fit" of the covenant with the proposed constitution were worked out, all the people in the Carolines and Marshalls voted on the acceptance of the proposed constitution. This was done on 12 July, 1978. The results were that four districts--Truk, Yap, Kosrae, and Ponape--accepted the constitution, and two districts--the Marshalls and Palau--did not. Kosrae, mentioned above, is a new district, which had been formed out of the district of Ponape.

The governing rules for the election had called for the constitution being approved by a majority of voters in at least four of the six districts; and also that if four or more of the districts accepted the constitution, it would be effected within one year after the election. Hence, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)--Truk, Yap, Ponape and Kosrae--officially came into being on 10 May, 1979. The new FSM Congress, which was sworn-in on that date elected Tosiwo Nakayama of Truk as the first President, and Petrus Tun of Yap as the first Vice President, and they were inaugurated on 15 May, 1979. Elected as governor in each of the four new states of the federation are: Leo Falcom of Ponape, John Mangafel of Yap, Erhart Aten of Truk, and Jacob Nena of Kosrae.

The new capitol of the new Federation is at Ponape. Under the constitution each state elects one congressman-at-large for

a four year term, and other congressmen for two year terms based on population. Only those elected for four years terms can be elected President and Vice President. Those chosen for these offices must resign from the Congress and special elections are held to fill their places.

The Marshalls and Palau districts must now create their own governments since they have rejected the federated constitution. In December, 1978, the Marshalls drafted and had accepted by the people, a constitution which was passed in a referendum in March, 1979. In April an election was held for their new legislature, which there is called the Nitijela. It has thirty-three members and provides for the election of one president who shall also be a member of the legislative branch as well. There is no vice president. Amata Kabua was chosen as the first President, and was inaugurated on 1 May, 1979. He had also served for many years in the old Congress of Micronesia.

In April, 1979, the Palauans also held a constitutional convention. Their document has not yet been approved. It provides for a general election of President and Vice President.

Therefore, as it now exists, Micronesia--the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands--consists not of seven districts, but of four separate government entities: the Northern Marianas, effective 9 January, 1978; the Marshall Islands, effective 1 May, 1979; the Federated States of Micronesia, effective 10 May, 1979; and the Palau Islands whose status change is soon to be voted upon. Still, all of these government entities will be part of the TTPI until the official UN termination of the Trusteeship which is now scheduled for 1981.

CONCLUSION

World War II was by far the greatest--most spectacular--event to ever take place in Micronesia. Those alive who witnessed it are popular locally and, in most cases, are eager to relate stories about the time and the people they met or knew. Informants on the period are numerous and rich with tales, legends, and stories.