

## ATTENTION

*As you begin the tour and an examination of the Japanese fortifications, it is essential to be a safe battle field explorer. The highly corrosive atmosphere has seriously deteriorated the World War II fortifications, therefore, it is important that you not go inside any of the bunkers. Falling concrete and exposed sharp and rusty rebar present a hazard to those who enter. Just as the buildings pose a hazard to you, you pose a hazard to these historic structures. **DISLODGING LOOSE SECTIONS OF CONCRETE AS WELL AS CLIMBING ON OR ENTERING THE HISTORIC STRUCTURES ARE PROHIBITED.***

*Also be aware that removal of any battle artifacts or human remains, from the structures, the ground or the reef is prohibited. There is also the danger of encountering unexploded ordnance (UXO). Do not disturb any cartridges, projectiles, shells, fuses or bombs. Report any such findings to the U.S. Army Kwajalein Atoll Environmental Office (ext. 5-4218) and the Security Police (ext. 5-6445).*

## ROI-NAMUR BEFORE WORLD WAR TWO

The first recorded exploration of Kwajalein Atoll occurred in 1542, when Spanish seafarer Ruy Lopez de Villalobos reported visiting several atolls one of which was probably Kwajalein. In 1788, William Marshall, captain of the British Royal Navy's H.M.S. Scarborough visited the region and named the groups of islands that comprise the Marshalls after himself. By the nineteenth century, crews from whaling ships, German copra (dried coconut meat) traders, and Protestant missionaries were routine visitors to the Marshalls. Germany's commercial interest in the Marshalls led to their purchase from Spain in 1885. Imperial Japan, as a member of the Allied powers during World War I, quickly seized the islands from Germany in 1914. Japanese control of the islands, despite a strong protest from the United States, was formalized by the League of Nations in 1920, whose members permitted Imperial Japan to retain the islands under a class "C" mandate which allowed no naval or military installations.

The Japanese presence in the Marshalls was of grave concern to American military officials, because the islands provided sheltered bases from which Japanese ships and planes could interdict the American supply lines to the Philippines, at that time an American colony. Army and Navy war planners had labored since 1904 to devise a strategy that, in the event of an attack, would allow American forces to move across the Pacific Ocean to relieve the Army garrison in the Philippines. A foothold in the Marshalls would provide American forces with a base of operations that would assure the recapture of the Philippines. The capture of Kwajalein Atoll would also deny the Japanese important air and submarine bases. These same bases had provided forces in the attacks against Pearl Harbor and Wake Island during the opening days of the war.

The invasion of Kwajalein, Roi, and Namur would be the second time that an American force was thrown against a fortified island. The first attempt, at Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands approximately 300 miles southeast of Kwajalein, had been a near disaster. Thus, many military planners questioned if an amphibious assault against a fortified position could ever work. For this reason the success or failure of the Marshalls invasion could affect future Allied strategy in the Pacific and in Europe. An attack in the Marshall Islands would also be the first on Japanese territory....land held by Japan before the start of World War II.

The invasion of the Marshalls was a textbook operation. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps planners carefully applied the lessons learned from Tarawa. These included longer periods of aerial bombardment and naval gunfire support, the use of tracked amphibians, and the first use of frogmen (forerunners of Navy SEALs) to scout beaches and search for underwater obstacles. Maximum use of close-air support and the early introduction of armor and artillery were also used to great effect in the Kwajalein invasion. The result was a nearly perfect operation that proved the utility of amphibious assault against fortified positions.

Plans for the invasion of the Marshall Islands, code named Operation FLINTLOCK, were issued on December 20, 1943. The 4th Marine Division was designated the strike force for the invasion of Roi and Namur. Opposing the Marines on Roi-Namur were approximately 3,500 Japanese soldiers, airmen, sailors, and Korean laborers under the command of Admiral Michiyuki Yamada. After several months of air strikes against many of the islands in the Marshalls, the three-day operation began on January 31, 1944, when elements of the 4th Marine Division began to seize islands near Roi and Namur. *Proceed from your present location to Stop 1, located next to the Beach Pavilion (Building 8270) on Roi's Perimeter Road.*

**STOP #1- ROI INVASION BEACHES** - The assault on Roi and Namur was to be carried out by the 4th Marine Division. The plans called for the Navy to secure the pass inside the lagoon and then Marine elements would seize and secure the outlying islands. Once secured, these islets would serve as bases for artillery to support the main force landing in a coordinated assault on Roi and Namur. The wartime intelligence photographs of Roi suggest an island similar in appearance to the one you now see. The current airfield is an enlargement of the Japanese one, from which Japanese fighters flew sorties against Americans. You are standing on an area of beach that is close to the center of the Marine advance. The 1st Battalion, 23d Marines was responsible for the area designated RED Beach 2, while the 2nd Battalion, 23d Marines landed in an area designated by the invasion planners as RED Beach 3 (see map on marker). Landing craft of the 23d Marine Regimental Combat Team came ashore on the beach you can see from this location at 1133 hours (11:33 A.M.) on February 1, 1944, and under light opposition moved across present-day Perimeter Road towards their objectives on the north side of the island. *Move south-west on Perimeter Road to the end of the runway. Be mindful of approaching and departing aircraft.*

**STOP #2 WENDY POINT** - As you look to your left you will notice a chain of islets. The first two, Ennuebing (nearest) and Mellu, were seized by the Marines on January 31, to secure the ocean channel into the lagoon and to serve as a base for artillery and supplies. The point of land to your left was designated Wendy Point by the American intelligence officers. In 1944, it contained Japanese defensive positions consisting of rifle pits and communications trenches. The Japanese did not begin to fortify the lagoon side of the islands until late 1943; therefore, the heavier, permanent defenses were located on the northern shore of the islands. The defenders expected the Imperial Japanese Navy to play a much greater role in the defense of the islands than was actually the case. An earlier Japanese plan, designated Plan Z, called for their fleet to sortie from Truk and serve as the islands' primary defense. *Continue on Perimeter Road until you reach the Japanese cemetery.*

**STOP #3 JAPANESE CEMETERY** - This small Japanese cemetery was dedicated to the memory of nearly 3,500 Japanese soldiers, sailors, and airmen who died while defending Roi and Namur. Immediately after the battle thousands of Japanese dead were interred in common graves. Following the war, some of the Japanese remains were removed to Japan. *You should turn left on the next road and continue until you reach an intersection, then turn right on to Speedball Road.*

**STOP #4 JAPANESE 5" GUNS** - As you approach the north shore, or ocean side, you will see an increasing number of fortifications. Continue on Speedball Road until you reach the best surviving example of a large gun position on either Roi-Namur or Kwajalein. As you stand behind this Japanese five-inch gun position and look seaward, you hold the view of the Japanese defenders who were waiting for an ocean side attack that never came. This emplacement is part of a complex that supported two gun positions. As you look seaward, you will notice the remains of a fire direction mount that serviced two gun emplacements. On your left are the remains of a

structure similar to the one at which you are standing. The guns lying on the ground were recovered from the reef in 1999. To your left rear is the ammunition storage facility for these guns. *Continue on Speedball Road to Pandanus Road and the battlefield marker located next to Building 8176.*

**STOP #5 END OF MARINE ADVANCE** - As discussed at the previous battle view, most of the Japanese defensive structures were located to provide a defense from an ocean side invasion (note their location on the map on marker). Now, look directly north to see the end of the line of advance that concluded at 1800 (6:00 P.M.) on February 1. If you wish to visit a nearly intact blockhouse proceed down the road behind Building 8132 to KYZI-FM (Building 8161) and west along the beach. While the Marines advanced across open ground, they enjoyed the advantage of being able to attack the fortified positions from the rear. These blockhouses served as command posts for specific areas the beach and were placed to provide interlocking fields of fire into an invasion force. The troops would fire machine guns from inside of the accordion like gun ports. The specially designed openings prevented all but direct fire from entering the bunkers. You will note the large number of nicks on the land side of the bunkers. These were caused by Marine small-arms fire. *Continue east on Pandanus Road to the next marker.*

**STOP #6 PFC RICHARD ANDERSON** - Near this location Marine Private Richard B. Anderson, while taking a Japanese emplacement under attack, dropped an American hand grenade. In order to save the lives of his fellow Marines, he threw himself on the grenade. This location also marks the end of the advance of the left flank of the 23d Marines (see map). They successfully secured their objective by 1700 (5:00 P.M.) on February 1. Another Japanese pillbox is located on the beach. This fortification, unlike the previous one, had been severely damaged by air and naval bombardment. Despite the heavy damage, the small arms fire at the rear of the pillbox suggests some defenders survived to resist the advance. As you move back onto Eleanor Wilson Road, you will see a Japanese sea wall constructed about 1939. *Continue south on Eleanor Wilson Road until you reach the headquarters of the Japanese air commander.*

**STOP #7 JAPANESE AIR HEADQUARTERS** - This building was used as the headquarters from which the Japanese commander and his staff implemented the Imperial Japanese strategy for air operations in the Pacific. The long cylindrical structure adjacent to the headquarters building is an air raid shelter. The Japanese military complex on Roi-Namur was more than a stationary airfield; it was also an important logistical center and base of operations for Japanese submarines. *You have now completed the tour of the Roi battlefield. To continue your tour move south on Eleanor Wilson Road to Copra Road. Turn left and continue east to the intersection of Copra and TRADEX Roads.*

**STOP #8 GREEN BEACH 1** - At the intersection of Copra and TRADEX Roads look south towards the lagoon. You can see GREEN Beach 1, where the 3d Battalion, 24th Marine Regimental Combat Team landed at 1145 (11:45 A.M.) on February 1. In 1944, a series of Japanese defenses consisting of rifle pits, communications trenches, and anti-tank ditches stretched from your right to what is now a fill area and to your left to Yokahoma Pier. The small concrete pillbox almost directly in front of you housed a 13mm heavy machine gun and proved to be especially troublesome to the Marines until it was reduced by naval gunfire. *Continue east on Copra Road until it intersects with a dirt road and stand behind the battlefield marker.*

**STOP #9 GREEN BEACH 2** - Orient yourself behind the marker and take note of the photograph in the lower right hand corner that shows U.S. Marines dismounting from an amphibious tractor. Study the photograph, and then turn toward the beach. There you will see Yokahoma Pier,

originally constructed by the Japanese and still in use today (see map). During the invasion it served as a reference point for the 24th Marine Regimental Combat Team which landed at GREEN Beach. *Follow the dirt road to the two large Japanese structures and continue to the marker on your left.*

**STOP #10 MARINE ADVANCE** - The two buildings, you just passed, served as Japanese diesel fuel storage facilities for the submarines that operated out of Namur. Your present position places you approximately in the center of the advance of "F" and "A" Companies on the Marine right flank at about 1300 (1:00 P.M.) on February 1. From your present position look at the area a few hundred yards to your left. In 1944, it was the site of a Japanese ammunition storage building (see map). One of the lessons learned from the battle of Tarawa was the requirement for specially trained combat engineers, known as boat teams by the Marines, to neutralize enemy fortifications with satchel charges or bangalore torpedoes. At 1305 (1:05 P.M.) on February 1, the Marine advance was held up by automatic fire from the building. A Marine boat team moved in and threw a satchel charge inside of the structure. Unknown to the Marines, the building was filled with high explosives. The resultant explosion threw debris hundreds of feet into the air and created such heavy, choking smoke that some believed that the Japanese had launched a gas attack. One Marine, who was headed ashore in an assault boat, described a shock wave that was so strong that it literally stopped the boat in its place. The explosion disrupted communications and all but stopped the advance on Namur for the remainder of the day. *Continue your tour by taking the left fork on the dirt road in front of you. As you intersect with another dirt road take a left and proceed north about 100 yards to a blockhouse.*



**Explosion at Ammunition Storage Facility**

**STOP #11 NADINE POINT** - You are entering the Japanese defensive position code-named Nadine Point by American intelligence officers. The entire area was a honeycomb of interconnected trenches. These trenches, designed to provide support and communications to the large blockhouse, were discovered in 1995 during an archaeological survey of the island. The battleship U.S.S. Maryland provided fire-support to the Marines and many of the marks on the pillbox are from the Maryland's projectiles. *Walk around the structure and move south on the dirt road next to the shoreline, then stop at the air raid shelter on your right.*

# ROI-NAMUR NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

## WORLD WAR TWO BATTLEFIELD TOUR

**STOP #12 SALLY POINT** - The area around the air raid shelter and along the shoreline was another Japanese defensive complex called Sally Point. Japanese troops from this point poured heavy fire into the Marines, as they attempted to secure the positions on GREEN Beach. Japanese troops at Sally Point also fired on Marines on Ennugarret Island (next island south on the reef) who had established artillery firing points there the previous day. *Continue through Sally Point to the intersection of Copra and Surf Roads. Turn right on Surf Road and stop at the large ammunition bunkers.*

**STOP #13 AMMUNITION STORAGE BUILDING** - The ammunition bunker you see is identical to the one that caused the large explosion (described in stop 10) and the delay in the advance. As you walk around the building notice the marks from the small arms fire and the heavy projectile penetration of the building. When you come upon the double door, look for the holes burned through the iron doors, most likely by high explosive anti-tank rockets fired from a 2.36-inch bazooka. *Proceed on Surf Road and turn left on a dirt road and move to the intersection of ALTAIR Road.*



The Ammunition Storage Building as it appeared during the battle

**STOP #14 LT JOHN POWER** - The push on the left flank was spear-headed by the 3d Battalion, 24th Marines. The Japanese inside their fortifications directed heavy fire into the advancing Marines and the advance began to slow. Lieutenant John V. Power received the Medal of Honor for his actions in neutralizing an enemy pillbox. *As you continue your advance on ALTAIR Road you will come abreast of an air raid shelter on your left. Stop at the shelter and look to the right.* A line from your position to Nadine Point marks the end of the first day of the Marines' advance on Namur (see map). The massive explosion of the Japanese explosives storage building (stop 10) not only held up the Marine advance, it also provided the Japanese with an opportunity to recover and better organize their defenses.

**STOP #15 PVT RICHARD SORENSON** - By nightfall the Japanese had managed to regroup and launch a series of uncoordinated but vicious counter-attacks against the dug-in Marines. During one such attack, near your present location, Marine Private Richard K. Sorensen rolled on a Japanese hand grenade and absorbed the blast in order to protect his fellow Marines. Private Sorensen, who received the Medal of Honor, survived and was a guest of the U.S. Army at the 50th anniversary of the invasion of Roi and Namur in 1994. *Continue along ALTAIR Road and pass in front of the TRADEX/ALCOR complex. Proceed down the dirt road to the shoreline to the next marker.*



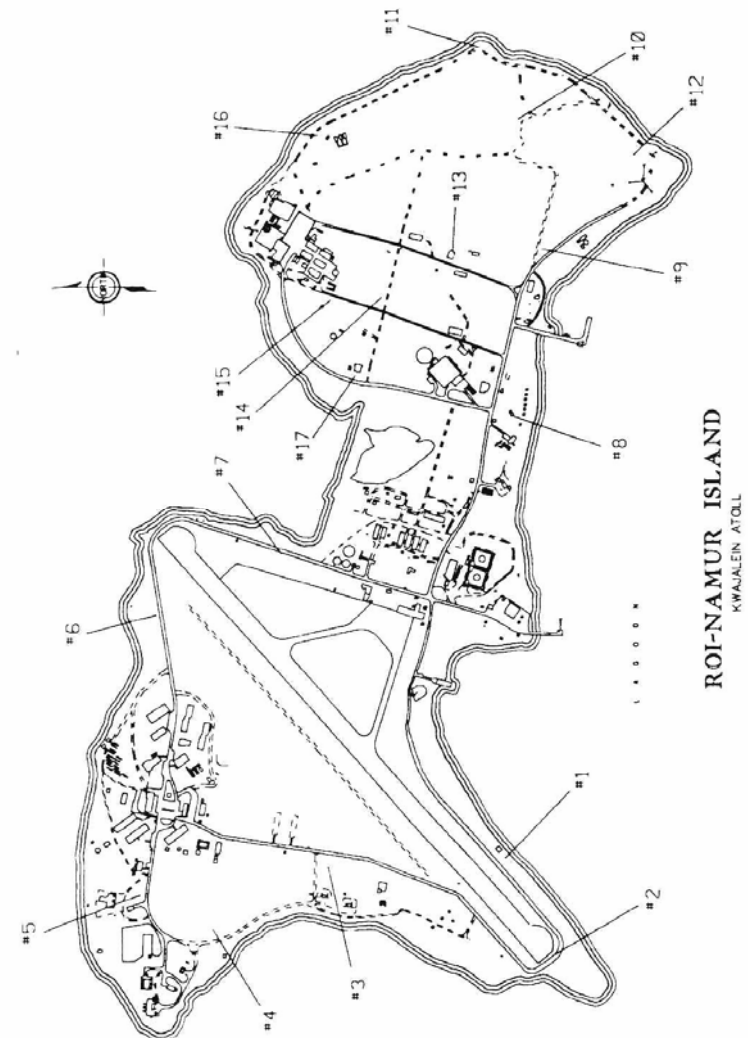
PFC Richard K. Sorensen 1924-2004

**STOP #16 LTC AQUILLA DYESS** - The last organized resistance took place around the area in which you are now standing. The remaining defenders waited for the final Marine onslaught. On the morning of February 2, the Marines launched their final assault converging from the right and left flanks on the Japanese position (see map). The assault was led by Lieutenant Colonel Aquilla J. Dyess, who was mortally wounded during the last action on the island. *Return on the same path. Pass the TRADEX/ALCOR complex and move south on TRADEX Road. Continue on TRADEX Road to a series of Japanese structures on your left.*

**STOP #17 JAPANESE SUPPORT COMPLEX** The complex that stands before you are the remains of the (from left to right): Torpedo Workshop, Oxygen Generating Plant, Fuel Storage Building, and the Main Power Plant. The area south of this complex was the Japanese cantonment area that included an administration building, a hospital, and barracks for the Japanese military personnel garrisoned on Roi-Namur. Most of those buildings were wood and did not survive the battle or U.S. rebuilding on the island.

The Fourth Marine Division Association has erected a plaque, which lists those Americans who paid the ultimate sacrifice in this battle to defeat Imperial Japan. Namur was officially declared secure at 1418 (2:18 P.M.) on February 2, 1944, after two and one-half days of fighting. American losses on Roi-Namur included 190 Marines killed in action or from wounds received; another 547 Marines were wounded. Japanese losses included 3,472 killed in action. Fifty-one Japanese were captured along with 40 Korean laborers.

The campaign in the Marshalls was best summed up by Marine Corps General Holland Smith who concluded that "very few recommendations can be made to improve upon the basic techniques previously recommended and utilized in the Marshalls." While the Marshalls were the last of the coral atolls captured in the Pacific Theater, they provided a testing ground for the lessons learned at Tarawa and proved amphibious operations could be successful. Strategically, their capture made it possible to launch the drive against the Marianas at a far earlier date than had originally been anticipated and therefore in the words of Admiral Chester W. Nimitz "we get on with the war."



For more information on the battle for Kwajalein Atoll and the historic structures here, we recommend *U.S. Army in World War II, the War in the Pacific. Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls* by Phillip A. Crowl, and *Comprehensive Resource Inventory and Preservation Planning Study for World War II Cultural Resources at the United States Army Kwajalein Atoll*, by Carl Kuttruff, Stephen James Jr., Jack C. Hudson and Nancy Farrell.

This brochure was prepared by the U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command Historical Office with support from the U.S. Army Kwajalein Atoll Environmental Office. For questions concerning the preservation of the battlefields and other historic sites contact the U.S. Army Kwajalein Atoll Environmental Office or the USASMDC Historical Office at DSN 645-2830 or (256) 955-2830.

UNITED STATES ARMY  
KWAJALEIN ATOLL

REPUBLIC OF THE  
MARSHALL ISLANDS