

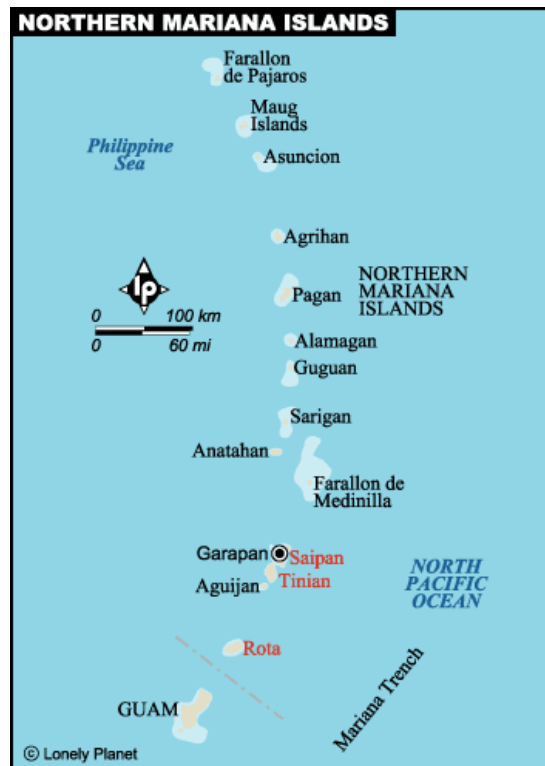


HOME DPA HISTORY



Post 3457 History

Garapan, Saipan Memorial Post 3457



"Post 3457 History"

Chartered: 21 May 1996

Original Location: Saipan, Marianas

New Location: Meeting place moved from Oleai Beach Restaurant to New Post Home in May of 2002

Commander-in-Chief: Paul A. Spera

Present Commander:

(2002 - 2003) John Ramsey

Past Commanders

(2001 - 2002) Dan Hocking, Post was "ALL STATE".

(1999 - 2000) Peter Callaghan

(1998 - 1999) Anthony Cabrera

(1996 - 1998) Joseph C. Reyes

History Behind the Post Name: Saipan Post 3457 (Chartered 21 May 1996)

Some VFW Posts in Department of Pacific Areas have their location as their name, such as Saipan Post 3457. Although the word "Saipan" conjures up images of one of the fiercest battles in the Pacific War, this tropical island, located 3 miles north of Tinian, and 130 miles NNE of Guam, is today the capital of the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

In 1944, U.S. war strategists cited several important reasons for invading Saipan. In early 1944, for example, B-29s were just beginning to be mass-produced for the Army Air Corps. These "Super Fortresses" had a fully loaded flying range of 2,850 miles, about the distance from Saipan or Tinian (from where the Enola Gay eventually flew) to Tokyo and back. In addition, the Navy wanted Saipan and Guam developed as advance bases, and hoped a Marianas operation would draw out the Japanese Combined Fleet for a sea battle. It was thus imperative to wrest Saipan from the Imperial Japanese Army.

An armada of 535 ships backed the invasion of Saipan, code-named Operation Forager. The ships carried more than 125,000 American military personnel, over two-thirds of them Marines. The troops included the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Marine Divisions, and the U.S. Army 27th and 77th Infantry Divisions. At 0840 hours on 15 June 1944, barely a week after the Allied landing at Normandy, Operation Forager commenced. Within 20 minutes, 700 Amtracs carried 8,000 Marines of the 2nd and 4th Marine Divisions ashore to establish beachheads along 4 miles of beach at Unai Chalan Kanoa, on the island's southwest coast. The 2nd Division landed to the north, near Garapan, and the 4th Division to the south. Although Navy warships had pounded the shore for two days prior to the landing, deeply entrenched enemy guns rained shells down on the Marines with deadly effect. In the first day alone, the Marines suffered 2,000 casualties and lost 28 tanks. Two days later, early on the morning of 17 June, elements of the 27th Infantry Division landed on the beach south of the sugar company pier at Unai Chalan Kanoa. They were tasked to move inland and southward to secure Aslito airfield and the Nauftan Peninsula, the island's southern tip. Savage fighting ensued in the mountains.

By July 9th, organized Japanese resistance ceased. On the U.S. side, 3,100 of the 71,000 U.S. troops who landed on Saipan had been KIA and another 13,000 were WIA or MIA. The Japanese defenders fared much worse: of 32,000 soldiers, 29,500 died as a result of fighting, including an estimated 3,000 who died on 7 July alone in one of the war's largest banzai charges, which started around 0400 and lasted roughly until noon. It ended near Tanapag.

Names given to some of the rugged terrain testify to the bitter fighting on Saipan: Death Valley, Purple Heart Ridge, and Harakiri Gulch. As history shows, the successful invasion of Saipan cut off vital Japanese supply and communications lines and let American B-29 bombers move within range of the Japanese homeland. Although Saipan Post 3457 is one of the newer VFW Posts in Pacific Areas, it is proud of its name's heritage. And most fitting, it holds its Post meetings in San Jose, within sight of the historic invasion beaches at Unai Chalan Kanoa.

Compiled and edited by Tom Elliott, Post 2485

If you have anything to add to the History of the Department of Pacific Areas, either to the Department, Districts or Posts, Please Email dpahist@vfwdeptpacific.org with the information in Document format.