

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only
received JAN - 6 1984
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic

and/or common Unai Lagua Japanese Defense Pillbox

2. Location

street & number

___ not for publication

city, town Saipan

___ vicinity of

congressional district

state C.M.

code 96950

county

code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	___ occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
___ building(s)	___ private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
___ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	___ in process	___ yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
		___ no	___ military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: not in use

4. Owner of Property

name Marianas Public Land Corporation

street & number P.O. Box 380

city, town Saipan

___ vicinity of

state C.M., 96950

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. none

street & number

city, town

state

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title See Number 9

has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes no

date

___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town

state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u>9 August 1983</u>

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

This Japanese defense pillbox was constructed of concrete and coral limestone rocks and is situated between two limestone outcroppings at the extreme southern end of Unai Laguna (Parrot Fish Beach). The pillbox is formed by the addition of a concrete and coral boulder roof, firing platform and poured concrete firing embrasure with the natural rock outcroppings serving as the walls. Structural steel used in the construction of this pillbox consists of narrow-gauge railroad tracks salvaged from the island's prewar rail lines. During the construction of the roof, the Japanese utilized coconut log shoring which is evidenced by log impressions in the ceiling.

Interior dimensions of the pillbox are approximately 2.4 meters by 2.4 meters. Presently, the interior height is approximately 1.2 meters, although the presence of storm deposited sand on the floor indicates that the original interior height was probably greater. The firing embrasure measures 850 millimeters wide by 500 millimeters high.

Leading off of the pillbox from the southern end is a trench leading to an ammunition storage area located in a natural rock crevice. A second trench running off to the west connects this pillbox to a second, uncompleted pillbox located nearby.

It is likely that the pillbox was designed to house either a 13 millimeter machine gun or a 20 millimeter cannon and was intended to lay enfilade fire against American troops attempting to land at Unai Laguna. This pillbox was designed to blend in with the natural rock outcroppings which occur in the area. Because of the skillful use of natural materials and its clever placement, the pillbox is virtually invisible to aerial reconnaissance as well as to visual sightings from sea.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–1944	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1943–44 **Builder/Architect** Japanese Military

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Unai Lagua pillbox is significant because of the unique techniques and materials used in its construction. Prior to the invasion of Saipan by U.S. forces in June of 1944, the Japanese military began an intensive program of fortification construction on the island. This program was severely hampered by the lack of construction materials especially cement and reinforcing steel. As a result, Japanese construction engineers found it necessary to substitute materials and modify design plans. The Unai Lagua pillbox is a good example of a fortification utilizing alternate construction materials and modified design plans. Coral stone was used in the place of poured concrete and railroad tracks were used in the place of manufactured reinforcing rods. One final unique feature was the use of coconut tree logs as shoring during construction of the roof. The logs were left in place to serve as sound and shock absorbing material after the pillbox was operational and were quite effective in protecting gun crews from concrete spalling during shelling and from ricocheting small arms fire. The use of these substitute materials, together with clever placement utilizing natural features, resulted in a functional defense position which was nearly invisible to aerial and ship reconnaissance.

The Unai Lagua pillbox is of significant value to American history because of its direct association with World War II in the Pacific, specifically the invasion of Saipan by U.S. forces in June of 1944. With the fall of Saipan, and later Tinian and Guam, long range U.S. bombers were brought within range of the Japanese home islands. Conventional bombing attacks launched from Saipan airfields are credited with the virtual destruction of Japan's war industry. The two atomic bomb attacks, launched from nearby Tinian, resulted in Japan's unconditional surrender in August 1945.

