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NHL — WWII, PACIFIC

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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date entered

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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

1. Name

historic Peleliu Battlefield, Palau Islands

and or common State of Peleliu, Republic of Palau (Belau)

2. Location

street & number ___ not for publication

city, town ___ vicinity of

state Peleliu code 75 county Palau code 030

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	___ public	X occupied	X agriculture	___ museum
___ building(s)	___ private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	X both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
X site	**Public Acquisition**	**Accessible**	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	___ in process	___ yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	X yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
		___ no	___ military	X other: jungle

4. Owner of Property

name Government of the State of Peleliu

street & number Republic of Palau

city, town ___ vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. None

street & number

city, town state

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes X no

date ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
___ excellent	___ deteriorated	___ unaltered	X original site
___ good	X ruins	X altered	___ moved date
X fair	___ unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Peleliu battlefield includes all of Peleliu Island which is in the southern Palau Islands. Peleliu is 30 miles south of Koror, the capital of the Republic of Palau, and 500 miles east of the Philippine Islands. It is six miles in length and two miles in width. Shaped much like a lobster's claw, the coral-limestone island is relatively flat at its southern end, where a runway from World War II still is in use. North of the former airfield, the terrain changes to a jumble of broken coral ridges generally running north and south and separated by narrow valleys or ravines. The steep cliffs and rugged peaks, with elevations up to 300 feet, contain hundreds of natural caves, which Japanese troops improved for defensive purposes. This area was known militarily as Umurbrogol Mountain or Pocket.

A string of ridges continue along the northern arm of the island terminating in a complex of peaks named Amiangal Mountain. Before the war, Japanese operated a phosphate crushing plant in this area, of which no trace remains. The shorter, eastern arm of Peleliu is low, flat ground containing swamps and dense growths of mangrove in tidal waters. By the end of the 1944 battle most of Peleliu's vegetation had been destroyed. It is said that a person could see from one end of the island to the other. Today, the island is covered with a lush, thick growth of jungle. Here and there small plots of taro and other crops are cultivated. Being only a few degrees above the equator, Peleliu's climate is humid and hot and, for persons not accustomed to it, debilitating.

Today's population of 250 people live primarily at two villages which were reconstructed after the war, Klouklubed (the capital) and Imelchol, both near the north end of the northern arm. On the fringes of Klouklubed are a Japanese reinforced-concrete radio station which bears the scars of war, the ruins of a chapel built by the 321st Infantry Regiment in 1944, and a stone monument believed to have been erected by that unit. Also at the north end of the island is Elochel Dock, built around a Japanese concrete-block pier and used by the interisland ferry and fishing boats. Near the south end of Peleliu, on the west side, is a small-boat basin that was constructed by Seabees soon after the battle. It occupies the area known as Beach Orange 3 during the American invasion.

Much evidence of Japanese defenses and of the battle for Peleliu remains.[1] The World War II invasion beaches, other than Beach Orange 3, are unchanged from their 1944 appearance except that the jungle now crowds down to the edge of the sand and coral outcroppings. Inland, there are remains, such as concrete slabs, from the post-battle American installation that covered the more level terrain. Coral outcroppings at both ends of Beaches White 1 and 2 and a low

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1. Because the writer could spend only two full days on Peleliu, the description that follows owes a considerable debt to a one-month survey carried out by Dr. D. Colt Denfeld for the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1944 **Builder/Architect**

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The battle for Peleliu Island, the Gateway to the Philippines, was the longest and one of the most hard-fought battles in the entire Central Pacific amphibious operations of World War II. In contrast to earlier combats where the Japanese had vainly attempted to annihilate the enemy on the beaches, Peleliu's defenses were organized with the main line of resistance established inland, artillery and mortar fire registered on the beaches, and defenses skillfully arranged in depth in order to sustain resistance to an attack while destroying the enemy. Although the crack Japanese troops lost the battle, their new tactics enabled them to inflict heavy losses on American Marine and Army forces and to hold out for 74 days. While some strategists have argued that the capture of Peleliu was not a necessary preliminary for the coming struggle in the Philippines, brave men bled and died in the Palaus for their beliefs and their loyalties. Peleliu marked the conclusion of the Central Pacific drive toward the Philippines. A new phase of the Pacific War was already underway.[1]

Background

Japan seized the Palau Islands, along with the rest of Micronesia, from Germany in World War I. Receiving a mandate from the League of Nations after the war, Japan established its administrative headquarters for Micronesia at Koror, the capital of the Republic of Palau today. On Peleliu Island, thirty miles south of Koror, a phosphate crushing plant was established and, by World War II, an excellent airfield had been constructed. When war came, the Palaus served as a staging area and replacement depot for Japan's forces in the Netherlands East Indies and New Guinea.

Even before the U.S. Navy carried out a devastating fast carrier strike on naval installations at Truk Atoll in February 1944, the Japanese had pulled all forward-based elements of the Combined Fleet back to Palau. At this same time, Gen. Douglas MacArthur's Southwest Pacific forces prepared to move into the Hollandia area in New Guinea in their drive toward the Philippines. Concerned that Japanese naval and air power in the Palaus could strike at Hollandia, a large task force of fast carriers under Vice Adm. Marc A. Mitscher raided Palau on March 30 and 31, 1944. Peleliu's fighter planes rose to the

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1. Adm. William F. Halsey, commander of the Western Pacific Task Forces, was the one officer who argued against attacking Palau before the operation took place. He recommended that Leyte in the Philippines be attacked directly because of the weakening Japanese position there. See E.B. Potter, Nimitz (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1976), p. 392.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 7,680 acres

Quadrangle name None **Quadrangle scale** None

UTM References Not available

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A				B			
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Erwin N. Thompson, Historian

organization National Park Service, Denver Service Center **date** June 1, 1984

street & number 755 Parfet Street **telephone** (303) 234-4509

city or town Denver **state** Colorado 80225

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

___ national ___ state ___ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title date

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1983 O - 419-311

coral ridge inland that parallels the shore all contain pillboxes and gun casemates. Beach Orange 2 is the site of the former American military cemetery and a present Palauan cemetery. In the American area are two large stone monuments that originally were dedicated to the First Marine Division and the Eighty-first Infantry Division but from which the bronze plaques have been removed.[2] A few wooden posts and small metal crosses, most with rusted American steel helmets placed on top, and a flagstaff are near the monuments. The concrete steps at a former military chapel now lead nowhere. The cemetery is known locally as "U-S-A."[3]

At the site of the airfield, three major Japanese reinforced-concrete structures remain, all bearing the signs of American bombardments. The most impressive of these is the two-story administrative building, which is similar to the Japanese headquarters at Ushi Point Field, Tinian Island. Steel shutters cover some of the windows. Nearby is a large underground air raid or storage shelter. The third structure is a heavily damaged aviation gasoline storage building of the same design as storage buildings on Saipan Island. In addition, several standard concrete air raid shelters remain in the area. Immediately after the capture of the airfield, American Seabees repaired and lengthened the two X-shaped runways. The crushed-coral, northeast-southwest runway, 6,000 feet in length, remains operable for light aircraft; the other runway is not maintained.

Several concrete and coral pillboxes remain at the southern end of Peleliu as does the one circular blockhouse the Japanese had in their defenses. This blockhouse, said to be in good condition, was constructed on the same general plan as blockhouses on Saipan and Roi-Namur.[4] Japanese citizens have erected two memorials or shrines on southern Peleliu. One of these is a handsomely designed shrine sited at the foot of an unnamed ridge in the vicinity of a pre-war village named Omoak. It is enclosed with a low fence and a torii stands at the entrance. The other memorial was placed at the former United States military cemetery.

The Japanese constructed strong defense works on the northwest coast of Peleliu in the vicinity of the former village of Garekoru and named Beach Amber

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2. Bronze plaques have a short life in the Central Pacific. Bronze is simply too precious to be used in such a manner.

3. American dead were eventually reburied in the Philippine Islands.

4. Official Marine histories mention other blockhouses on Peleliu. An exhaustive, post-battle study of the island's terrain and defenses by the Intelligence Section, First Marine Division, shows only this one.

by Marines. American forces did not land at this beach; rather army troops easily overran the area on their drive north on West Road. Today, many rifle pits, gun emplacements, personnel shelters, and ammunition caves remain in the midst of the coral and jungle.

The limestone ridges and ravines in the last center of Japanese resistance, "the Umurbrogol Pocket," undoubtedly contain much evidence of the battle for Peleliu. U.S. Marines counted over 100 caves that were occupied by Japanese troops in this area. The rugged terrain and the thick jungle now covering the area make a thorough investigation difficult. The cave in which the Japanese army commanders committed suicide in a ridge named China Wall has been identified. It is described as being a vertical fault containing three separate caves.[5] One feature in the Pocket that played a critical role during the battle is accessible, Bloody Nose Ridge. The almost-sheer face of this ridge is only a few hundred yards north of the airfield, on the southern edge of the Umurbrogol complex. This particular coral peak and four others nearby were identified as the Five Sisters during the battle. The 1st Marines attacked Bloody Nose soon after landing on Peleliu and suffered devastating casualties in the failed attempt. Despite repeated attacks by Marine and Army units, the Japanese held this position for two months, almost to the end of their organized resistance.

Today, a trail and steps have been cut to the top of Bloody Nose Ridge. On top there is a large stone monument built soon after the fighting. Although there is no identification on it, it is believed to have been built for or by the 323d Infantry Regiment which finally captured the Five Sisters. In 1983, the United States Navy commander on Guam had a flagstaff and a United States flag placed on top of the ridge. From the peak one may view much of the Umurbrogol Pocket, including the other Sisters, Walt Ridge, and Horseshoe Valley. Jungle now completely smothers the harsh landscape of 1944.

Not far from Bloody Nose Ridge, sitting in a natural cave on the slope of yet another mass of coral limestone, is a Japanese 200mm (8-inch), short-barreled naval gun, one of the largest weapons in Peleliu's defenses. It was one of four such weapons that were emplaced in the northern ridges for anti-shipping and coastal defense fire and mounted on spider-like steel frameworks 23 feet in diameter. U.S. Marine intelligence officers concluded that these guns had been hurriedly emplaced for none had been fired before being captured. The weapon appears to be in excellent condition. On level ground at the base of this ridge are remnants of a barbed-wire enclosure which is believed to have been built by United States forces as a holding area for prisoners of war. Across the trail from the enclosure stands a lone U.S. light tank, M-3, mounting a 37mm gun. The white stars painted on the turret and body are clearly visible.

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5. D. Colt Denfeld, "Survey of Peleliu," a draft, 1983.

A Japanese light tank, type 95, missing its turret and 37mm gun, may be found at the northwest end of the abandoned runway, about 1,300 yards southwest of the American tank. Other vehicles remaining on Peleliu include several U.S. landing vehicles, tracked (LVT). One of these is a LVT(A)4 armed with a 75mm howitzer, M-8.[6]

Amiangal Mountain at the north end of Peleliu consists of an L-shaped complex of hills and ridges. Four hills that make up the bottom of the L were collectively named during the fighting Hill Row and, individually, Hills 1, 2, 3, and Radar Hill (after a Japanese installation). The caves in this area are larger and better made than those in the Umurbrogol Pocket. The reason for this is said to be that the Amiangal caves were constructed by Japanese naval troops who had comfort in mind as well as defense and the services of a tunnel construction unit, while army troops constructed those in the Pocket primarily for a prolonged defense. One of the larger caves in the north was a three-chambered hospital with a fourth room hollowed out one story below. Dug into Hill 3, the 140-foot-long cave was fitted out with electric lights and a radio. When U.S. soldiers entered this cave they found fifty dead Japanese, most of whom had bandages over their eyes and had been shot in the head. U.S. Marines dubbed the hospital Mercy Cave.[7] Probably the largest cave on Peleliu is found near the top of the Amiangal L. This "Thousand-Man Cave," consisting of numerous interconnected tunnels, runs entirely through the ridge and has several entrances.[8]

Peleliu Island is today a state in the Republic of Palau. All land on the island is owned by the extended families, the clans, the traditional chiefs, and the paramount chief--all at the same time. The concepts of private ownership, titles, or real estate taxes are foreign to Peleliu. Peleliu has an elected governor who heads the state on political matters.

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6. Denfeld states these are the only LVTs surviving on land battlefields in the Pacific.

7. 321d Infantry Regiment, Unit Report, October 14, 1944, World War II Operations Reports, Record Group 407, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, MD.

8. Dorothy E. Richard, United States Naval Administration of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, 3 vols. (Washington: Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, 1957), 1:157, states this indeed was the largest cave on Peleliu and when it was captured on September 30, 1944, it contained more than 1,000 men! Denfeld records in his survey that Japanese (re-?)occupied the cave as late as February 1945.

All of Peleliu Island is recommended for nomination as a National Historic Landmark so as to include: the southern end of the island with its two promontories, small-boat harbor, Japanese (and American) airfield and administrative area, landing beaches and adjacent reef on the west coast, and fortifications, weapons, and military vehicles; the complex of coral ridges known as the Umurbrogal Pocket; the west coast with its Japanese fortifications and the West Road; the north arm of Peleliu with its ridges, caves, and East Road; and the east arm of Peleliu with its fortifications. These areas contain the features and objects associated with the Japanese defenses and the battle for Peleliu.

Excluded from the recommendation are the two villages in northern Peleliu, Klouklubed and Imelchol, which were rebuilt after the war. (The manner of land tenure precludes drawing exact boundaries around the villages.) Remnants of post-battle American installations, such as concrete slabs, on Peleliu are not considered to be historically significant.

defense and many were shot down. American planes succeeded in mining the harbor at Koror and destroyed or damaged 36 Japanese ships.

Spurred on by this raid to strengthen Palau's defenses, Japan transferred the veteran Fourteenth Division under Lt. Gen. Sadae Inoue from Manchuria to Palau in April 1944. Inoue established his headquarters at Koror and placed the bulk of his army force on adjacent Babeldaup Island where he planned to fight to the death. He dispatched the reinforced 2d Infantry Regiment under Col. Kunio Nakagawa to Peleliu and one battalion of the 59th Infantry Regiment to Angaur, an island seven miles south of Peleliu. Peleliu's garrison amounted to approximately 10,500 men of whom 6,500 were combat troops and some 4,000 were naval personnel.[2]

Nakagawa carefully planned the island's defenses in depth. Potential landing beaches were mined, offshore obstacles erected, anti-tank ditches skillfully located so as to channel enemy tanks toward anti-tank weapons, barbed wire strung, and artillery and mortars placed so as to shell the beaches with direct and enfilade fire. Extensive cave fortifications honeycombed the limestone ridges in the northern half of the island.

Stalemate II

The American plan for the invasion of Palau, Stalemate II, as it finally evolved, called for Adm. William F. Halsey to command the Western Pacific Task Forces. Halsey's Third Fleet covered the approach of the Joint Expeditionary Force. Maj. Gen. Julian C. Smith, USMC, commanded the Expeditionary Troops, and Maj. Gen. Roy S. Geiger, USMC, was in charge of the III Amphibious Corps. Under Geiger, Maj. Gen. William H. Rupertus, USMC, commanded the First Marine Division which was to seize Peleliu, and Maj. Gen. Paul J. Mueller, USA, commanded the Eighty-first Infantry Division which was to caputre Angaur and Ulithi Atoll. Stalemate II was the largest amphibious force yet seen in the Pacific. Its strength totaled 800 vessels, 1,600 aircraft, and 250,000 men.[3]

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2. Because the senior naval officer on Peleliu, Vice Admiral Itou, was a flag officer and because of the intense rivalry between the Japanese army and naval commands, Inoue sent Maj. Gen. Kenjiro Murai to Peleliu to coordinate with the admiral. Colonel Nakagawa remained in command of Peleliu's defenses.

3. Simultaneous with the invasion of the southern Palaus, General MacArthur's forces seized Morotari Island, 450 miles to the southwest, as a second anchor for the forthcoming Philippines campaign.

The First Marine Division, thoroughly experienced in the Guadalcanal and New Britain campaigns, was composed of the 1st, 5th, and 7th Marine Regiments and the 11th Marine Artillery Regiment. The Eight-first Infantry Division had no previous combat experience but had completed jungle and amphibious training in Hawaii. Its 321st and 322d Infantry Regiments were assigned the capture of Angaur, while its 323d Regiment was to occupy Ulithi Atoll about halfway between Palau and the Mariana Islands. The two divisions were brought together on Guadalcanal for a week of tactical rehearsals before sailing west.

Begining in August 1944, the U.S. Thirteenth Air Force began bombing the Palaus. On September 6, Halsey's fast carrier groups started full-scale attacks on the islands. Six days later, a naval gunfire bombardment of Peleliu and Angaur began. D-Day for landing on Peleliu was set for September 15. Mine-sweepers and underwater demolition teams began sweeping the waters and removing obstacles from Peleliu's southwestern beaches. Early morning, September 15, found the Third Amphibious Corps off Peleliu. The First Marine Division prepared to land.

The Battle

Peleliu's southwestern beaches had been code-named White 1 and 2 and Orange 1, 2, and 3. The three reinforced regiments (regimental combat teams, RCTs), landing abreast on a 2,200-yard beachhead, touched shore at 8:33 a.m. On the left (north), two battalions of the 1st Marines landed on Beaches White 1 and 2. In the center, two battalions of the 5th Marines hit Beaches Orange 1 and 2. The 7th Marines came ashore in a column of battalions on Beach Orange 3 on the right (south). Immediately, murderous Japanese mortar fire and enfilading cannon fire on both flanks swept the beaches hitting as many as sixty landing vehicles and fifteen tanks. Observing the smoking vehicles, Colonel Nakagawa reported, too optimisticly, to Koror, "Our forces successfully put the enemy to rout."[4]

On the 1st Marines' extreme left flank, Japanese gunners placed enfilading fire from positions in a coral outcropping at the water's edge. Seventy yards inland, an unsuspected coral ridge was alive with Japanese who swept the beach with machine gun and rifle fire. A company of Marines successfully reduced the coral outcropping but with heavy casualties. Moreover, the company became cut off from the adjacent unit and would remain isolated for the next thirty hours. The Marine Corps' official history concludes that had the Japanese mounted a major counterattack at this point, "the Marines might have

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4. Japanese Monograph No. 49, "Central Pacific Operations Record," vol. 2, April-November 1944, p. 85.

been driven into the sea."[5] The 1st Marines' right flank battalion on Beach White 2 had better success. It reached its first objective 350 yards inland by mid-morning, encountering moderate resistance. There it halted because of the stalemate on the left. By 9 a.m., the 5th Marines had reached its objective, an open space on the west side of the airfield. The left battalion halted at that point because of the inability of the 1st Marines to advance. The right battalion had more success. Although the battalion's units became scattered, one company succeeded in driving across the island and reaching the eastern shore.

The 7th Marines on the southern flank experienced much the same withering enfilade fire as did the 1st Marines. From a small islet and a promontory at the south end of Peleliu, the Japanese delivered heavy fire against the 7th's exposed flank. The regiment continued to make progress, however, until it came up against a heavily fortified area containing the Japanese circular blockhouse. There it dug in for the night to await the assistance of tanks. In the day-long drive, the 7th Marines, too, suffered heavy casualties.

In the late afternoon, the Japanese made their first counterattack when from twelve to seventeen light tanks emerged in front of the 5th Marines.[6] Although a few tanks got through to the beachhead all but one were destroyed. Despite the troubles on the flanks, the Marines had succeeded in establishing a beachhead 3,000 yards long, 500 yards average depth, and a maximum depth of 1,500 yards.

On September 16, the 5th Marines completed the capture of the airfield. In the south, the 7th Marines overcame the blockhouse and reached the eastern shore. It gained all of southern Peleliu by nightfall except two promontories at the southern tip. In the north, the 1st Marines began a turning movement northward against the Umurbrogal ridges beyond the airfield. Quickly running into fierce resistance, the Marines made little progress.

The next day, D+2, the 1st Marines gained a few hundred yards in the level area of the west coast, up West Road, but were thwarted gain in the attempt to gain the limestone ridges, especially at Bloody Nose Ridge. The 1st Marines

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5. George W. Garand and Truman R. Strobridge, Western Pacific Operations. History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II, vol. 4 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), p. 114.

6. It is probable that the light tank on Peleliu today was one of those in this abortive attack.

counted 1,500 casualties in their ranks by the end of this third day of fighting. Meanwhile, the 7th Marines completed the capture of southern Peleliu, including the promontories; and the 5th Marines began an easy drive up the eastern arm of the island.

American light planes were able to land on the airfield on September 19. That same day, the 1st Marines renewed the attack on the ridges, making small gains, but were again stopped at Bloody Nose Ridge. To the east, a company of the 7th Marines gained the crest of Walt Ridge but, suffering extremely heavy casualties, was forced to withdraw. During the next three days both the 1st and 7th RCTs assaulted the ridges time and again, without success. By September 22, the First Marine Division had suffered nearly 4,000 casualties, the 1st Marine Regiment alone losing 56 percent of its strength. General Rupertus decided to cease frontal attacks on the southern ridges; instead, he planned a drive up the west coast and an attack on the Umurbrogal complex from the north.

Before the invasion, General Rupertus thought he could capture Peleliu in four days. A week had now passed and despite the heavy casualties, Rupertus was unwilling to call for assistance from army troops of the Eighty-first Infantry Division. He remained so stubborn about this, that the corps commander, General Geiger, had to step in and direct the 321st Infantry Regiment to move from Angaur to Peleliu, where it landed September 23. The depleted 1st Marine Regiment was taken off Peleliu on September 30, its casualty figure having reached 1,672.

Another reason Rupertus wished to take northern Peleliu at this time was the 25,000-man Japanese force on Babeldaup that could be expected to reinforce Peleliu. Indeed, on September 23, Japanese barges approached the island from the north. The Americans spotted this reinforcement and sank the barges. Most of the Japanese made it to shore nevertheless. The same scene occurred the following night. It was estimated that from 600 to 700 Japanese reinforcements reached Peleliu.

On September 24, Rupertus sent his unwanted soldiers on a push up the West Road. The 321st RCT reached its objective, discovering along the way a trail running across the ridges toward East Road.[7] A company, directed to explore the trail, moved eastward and succeeded in capturing Hill 100, the northern bastion of the Japanese defenses in the Umurbrogal ridges. The following day,

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7. On this drive up West Road, the army troops gained the enmity of the 7th Marines who were assigned the task of following the 321st to screen the West Road from flanking fire. The soldiers were supposed to have moved along the west ridge and the road; in fact, they stayed only on the road, forcing the 7th Marines to fight the Japanese on the ridge.

the 321st reached East Road thus dividing the Japanese defenses on the island. At the same time, it pushed north along West Road until it reached the village of Garekoru. The 5th Marines took over at this point to begin the process of cleaning up the northern tip of Peleliu and its elaborate caves in the Amiangal ridges. On September 28, the 5th Marines also occupied Naegebus Island and its unfinished runway. Marine Fighter Squadron 114 provided air support on this occasion.

As September drew to a close, Japanese losses were estimated to be over 9,250, while the First Marine Division's casualties had mounted to over 5,000 men.

On September 30, the 7th Marines began an asault on the Umurbrogal ridges in an effort to reduce the pocket, which measured about 1,500 yards north to south and 500 yards in width. Elements of the 5th Marines joined the attack the following day. By October 3, the Marines had captured the crests of two important ridges, Walt and Boyd, on the eastern side of the pocket, thus opening East Road. The 7th Marines, particularly, experienced heavy casualties in this four-day fight. By the evening of October 4, the 7th "was no longer able to function as an effective combat unit on the regimental level."[8] Rupertus ordered the 5th Marines to relieve the 7th.[9]

Between October 6 and 14, the 5th Marines made repeated attacks on the pocket, steadily making small gains, particularly in the north and northwest. It captured such landmarks as Baldy Ridge, Ridge 120, Ridge 3, Hill 140, and knobs of coral not named. Then, on October 14, General Rupertus withdrew all the First Marine Division from the battle lines, replacing it with the 321st RCT and a battalion of the 323d Infantry Regiment freshly arrived from Ulithi Atoll.[10] Rupertus remained in command at Peleliu until October 20 when Maj. Gen. Paul J. Mueller, commanding the 81st Infantry Division, replaced him. During the month the First Marine Division fought on Peleliu it suffered no fewer than 6,265 casualties, of which 1,124 were dead and 117 were missing.

Colonel Nakagawa reported on October 14 that his force had been reduced to 1,150 armed men.[11]

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8. Garand and Strobridge, Western Pacific Operations, p. 236.

9. The 321st replaced the 5th Marines in northern Peleliu and offshore islets. It was its turn to become angry at the Marines for not having done a better job of cleaning out Japanese-held caves.

10. All of the 323d RCT was on Peleliu by October 24.

11. Japanese Monograph No. 49, p. 143.

The Eighty-first began a methodical tightening of its lines around the pocket on October 21. Not without difficulty it captured the northern hills called the Five Brothers, one by one. In Horseshoe Valley, west of Walt Ridge, it succeeded in cutting the Japanese off from their water supply at Grinlinton Pond. (This accomplishment was offset by heavy rains that replenished the Japanese water supply.) On November 2, the 323d RCT captured the Five Sisters, including Bloody Nose Ridge against which the 1st Marines had hurled itself so long ago. Japanese fighting strength was now reduced to 350 men. Little action occurred on either side between November 4 and 9 as a typhoon swept over Peleliu. On November 13, the assault and occupation of Peleliu was again announced, this time by General Geiger.

That same day, the two infantry regiments began the final drive. On November 24, the Japanese burned the 2d Infantry's regimental flag and all secret documents. In the evening a last radio message was sent to Koror advising that the 56 remaining combatants had organized into seventeen raiding groups and would hide in the jungle and caves to harass the enemy. During the night, General Murai and Colonel Nakagawa committed suicide. It had taken U.S. forces almost 2½ months to complete what began as a four-day operation.

The Eight-first Division did not declare an end to organized resistance until November 27:

> At 1030, 27 November all organized resistance on Peleliu ceased when the Commanders of the battalions of the 323rd Infantry met at the cave which had been the headquarters of Colonel Kunio Nakagawa, Commanding Officer of the 2nd Regiment, 14th Japanese Imperial Division and the last high ranking Japanese Commander on Peleliu.[12]

The division's casualties in the Palaus amounted to 542 killed and 3,275 wounded or injured. For months to come, Japanese continued to be captured or killed on the island. In January 1945, a Japanese raiding party landed on Peleliu. It was swiftly wiped out. Twenty-seven Japanese surrendered in April 1947. As late as 1955 a Korean civilian was seized on Peleliu--two years after the Korean War.

As they had in earlier battles, Japanese-Americans (Nisei) performed important duties on Peleliu as interpreters and translators. The Third Amphibious Corps reported also that it had made extensive use of the famous Navajo Talkers in

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12. 321st Infantry, "Operation Report, Stalemate II, Palau Islands," December 29, 1944, Adjutant General's Office, World War II Operations Reports, 1940-1948, Record Group 407, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, MD.

their radio communications. Not so successful was the use of the Marines' war dogs. While the dogs served well in the beginning on sentry duty and patrols, they became increasingly nervous and tired under the strain of heavy mortar fire. As the battle progressed, many of their handlers were killed or wounded and strangers could not work the dogs. An exceptional dog was Duke, Z876, a German shepherd, who carried twenty pounds of maps and papers 1½ miles across the airfield under heavy enemy mortar fire.

The remaining Japanese in Palau, some 25,000, spent the rest of World War II waiting for the enemy to land so that they could give their lives for their Emperor. The opportunity never came. On Peleliu, U.S. Navy Seabees reconstructed the Japanese airfield and built a naval base. Army engineers hacked a bomber field out of the jungle on nearby Angaur. Ulithi Atoll became an important fleet anchorage, especially for the 1945 invasion of Okinawa.

Bloody Nose Ridge, Five Sisters, Five Brothers, China Wall, Death Valley, Snipers' Mile, Hell's Pocket, Baldy Ridge. . . . The Palau operation turned out to be one of the bloodiest battles of the Pacific War--and one of the most forgotten.

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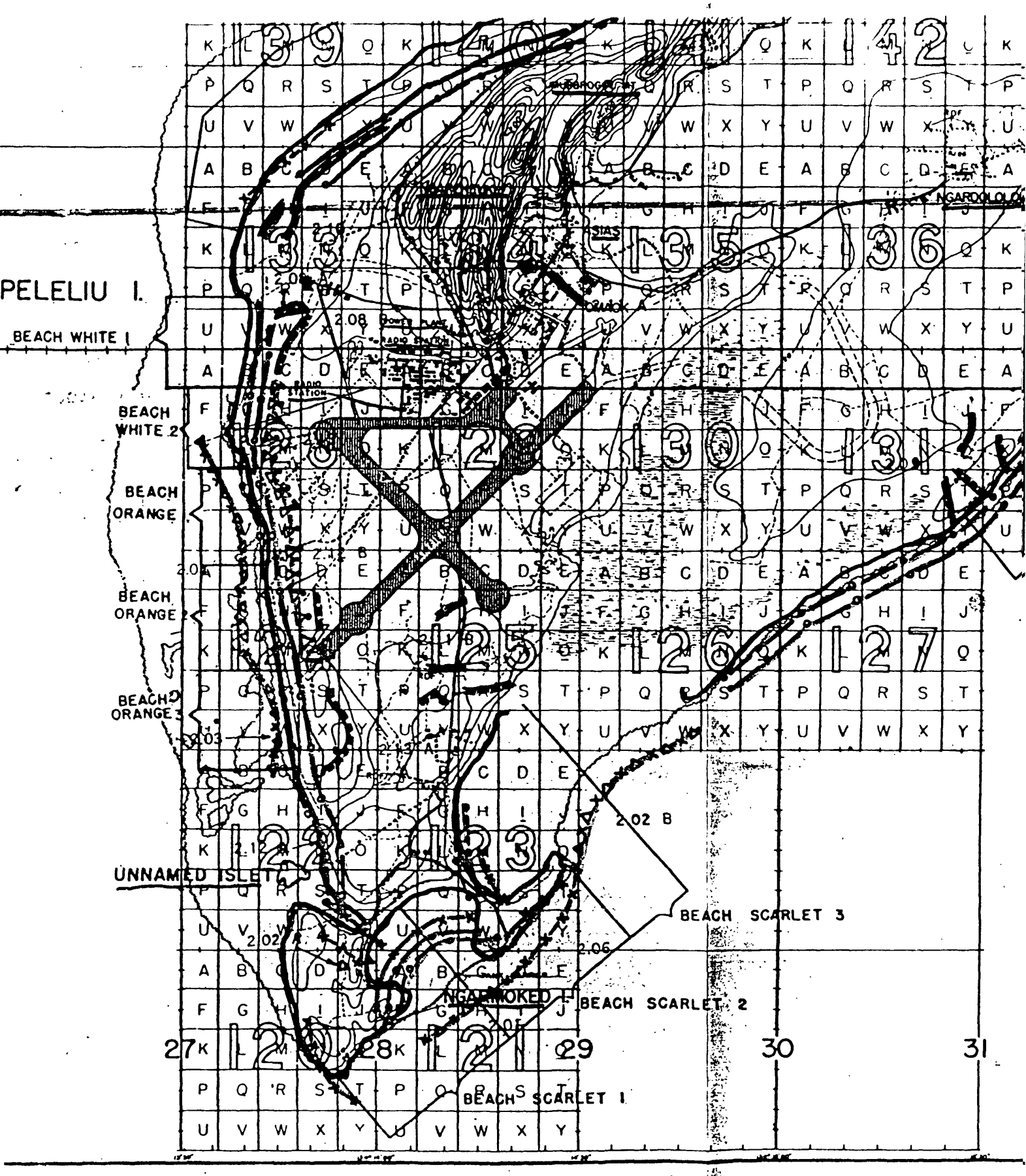
GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

The boundary of Peleliu Battlefield is the natural boundary of Peleliu Island where it meets the sea. The United States landings on Peleliu and the subsequent fighting involved all of the island with no exception. Structures in the two villages of Klouklubed and Imelchol are within this boundary but are excluded from the historically significant terrain, both being of post-war construction. Land surveys have not been made on Peleliu and, because of local customs concerning land tenure, specific boundaries cannot be drawn around these villages.


PELELIU I.
BEACH WHITE 1
BEACH WHITE 2
BEACH ORANGE
BEACH ORANGE 2
BEACH ORANGE 3
UNNAMED ISLET
NGARDOLOLOK
NGARMOKED
BEACH SCARLET 1
BEACH SCARLET 2
BEACH SCARLET 3
2.02 B
27
28
29
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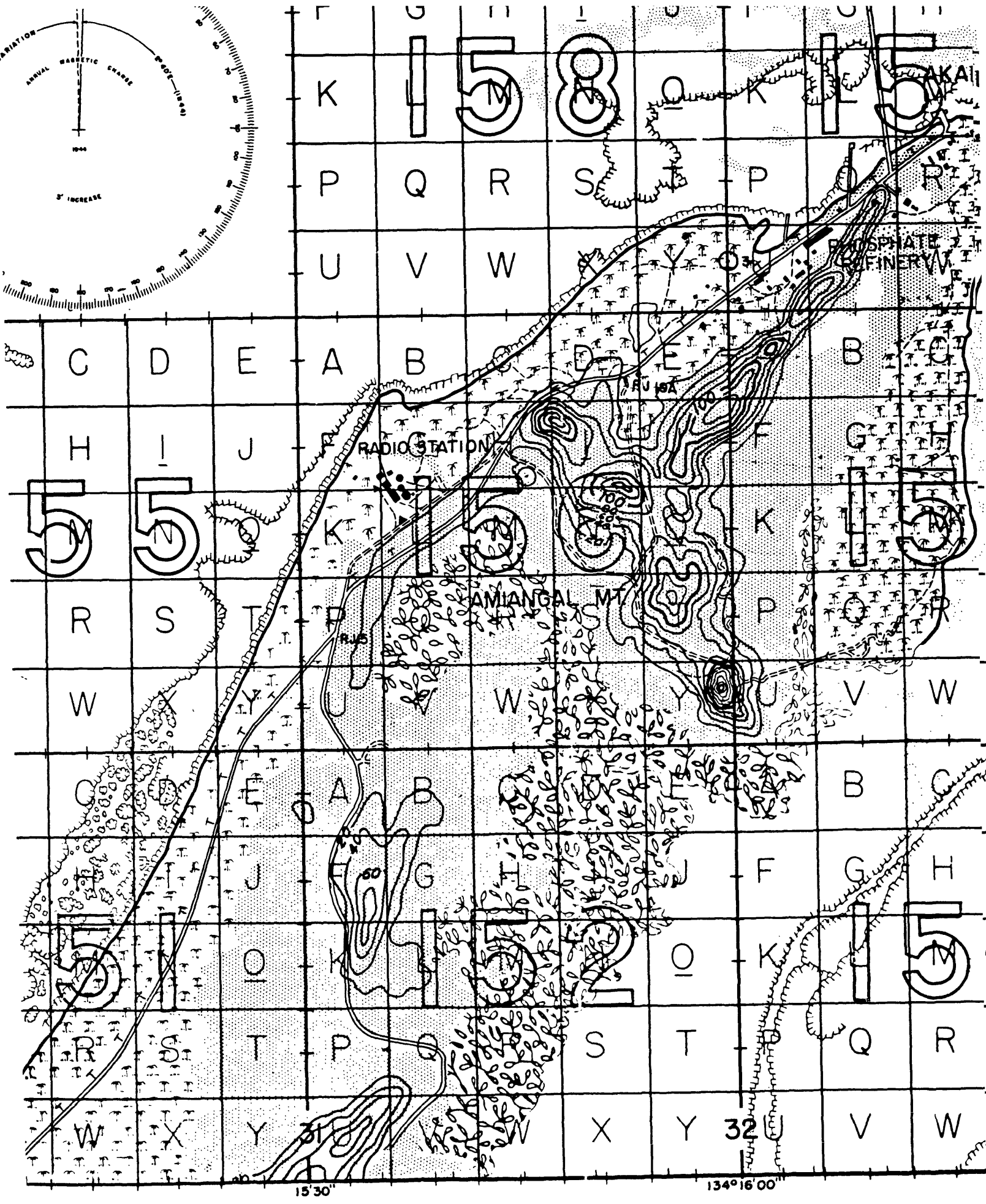
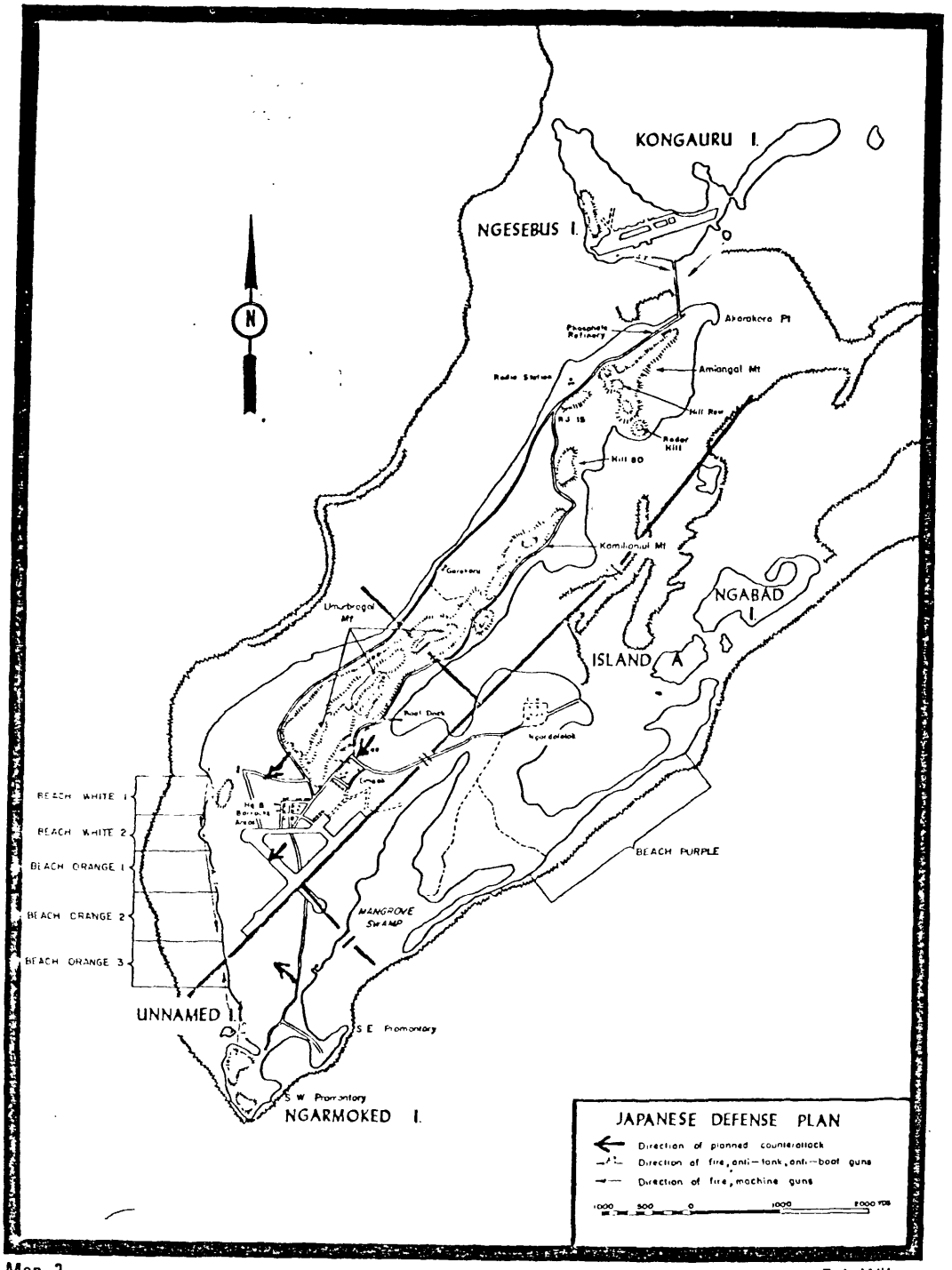
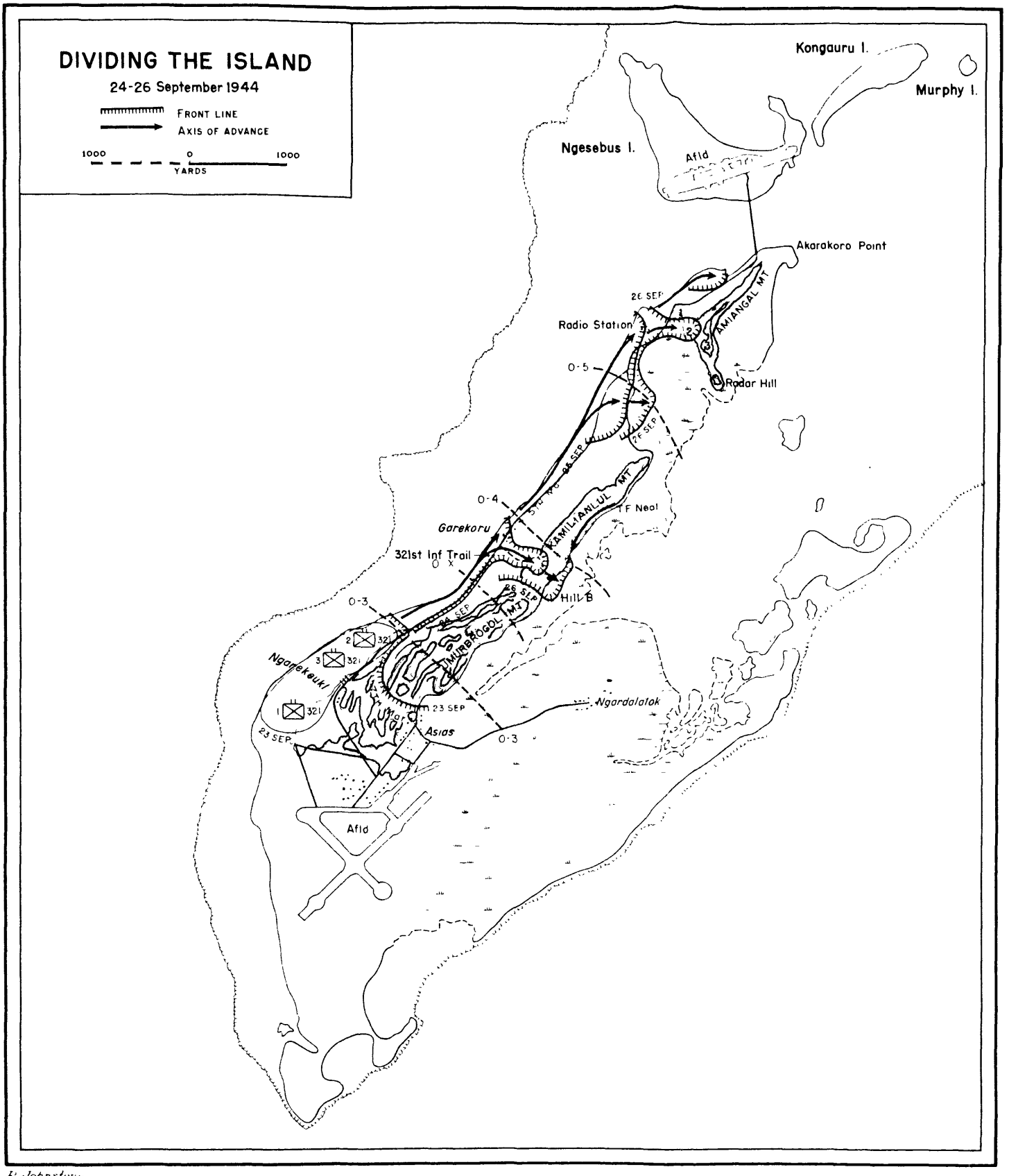

VARIATION
ANNUAL MAGNETIC CHANGE
1944
3' INCREASE
PHOSPHATE REFINERY
RADIO STATION
AMIANGAL MT
RJ 16A
RJ 16
15'30"
134°16'00"



Map 3 E. L. Wilson



R. Johnston

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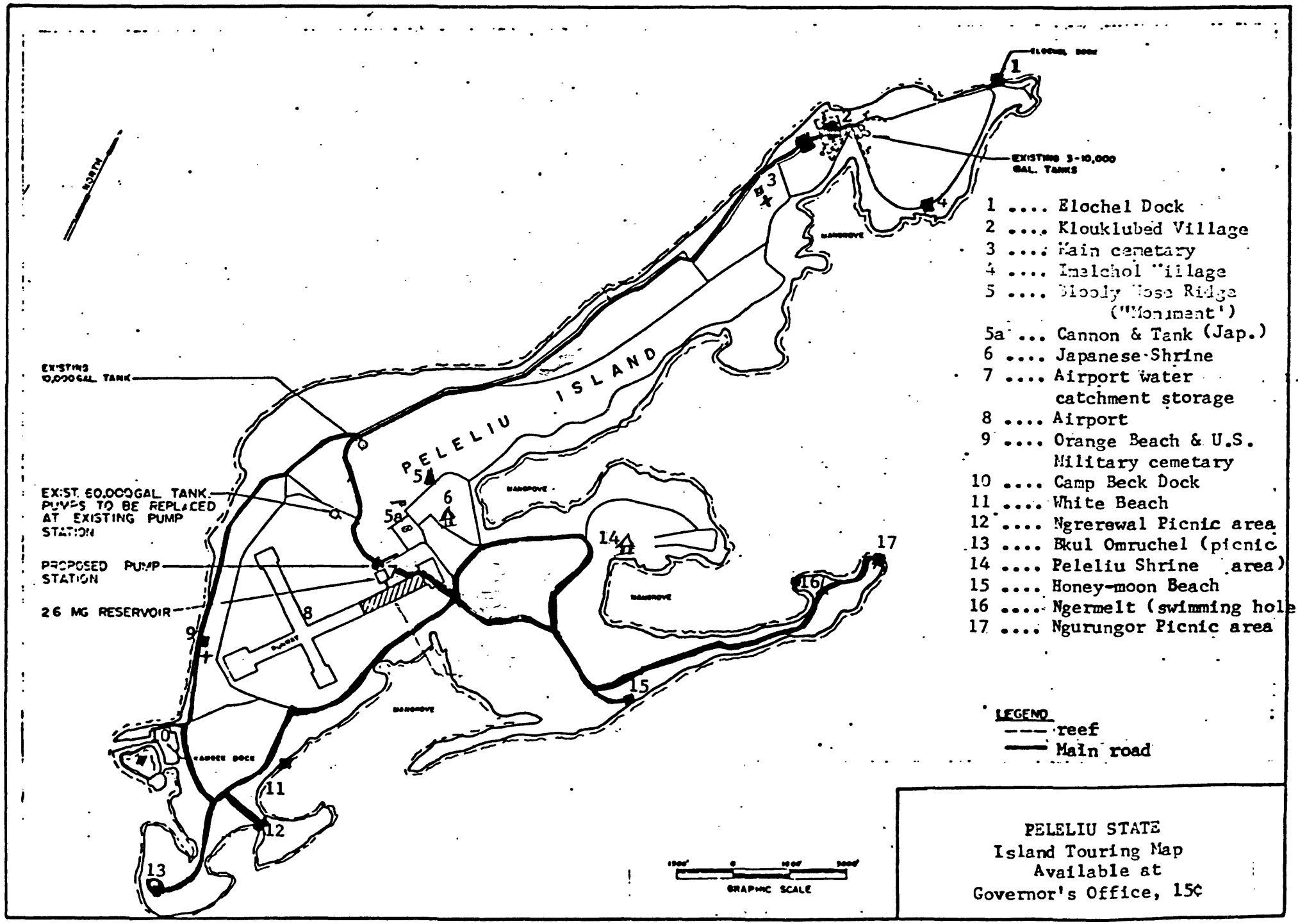
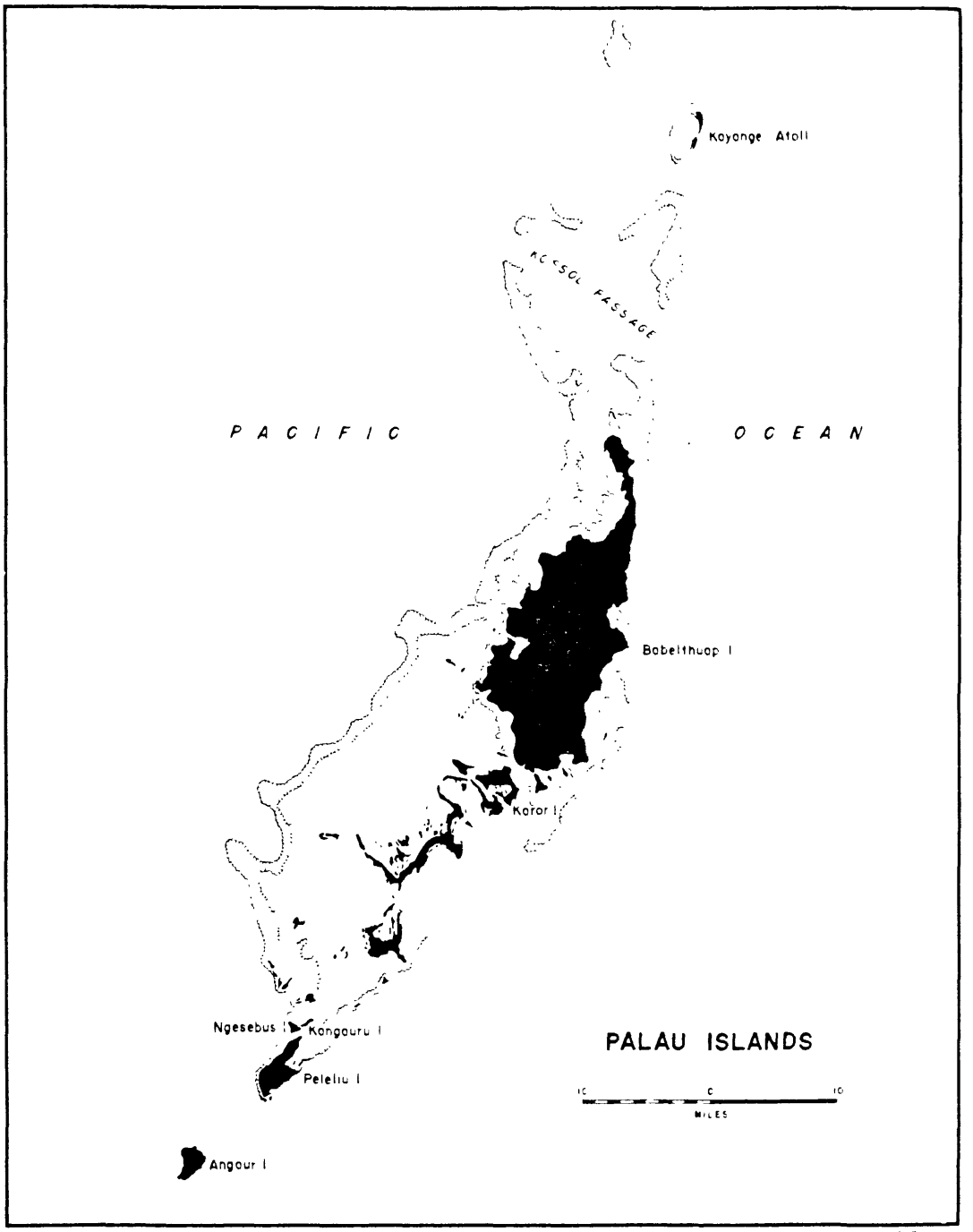
MAP X

FROM ROBERT ROSS SMITH, THE APPROACH TO THE PHILIPPINES

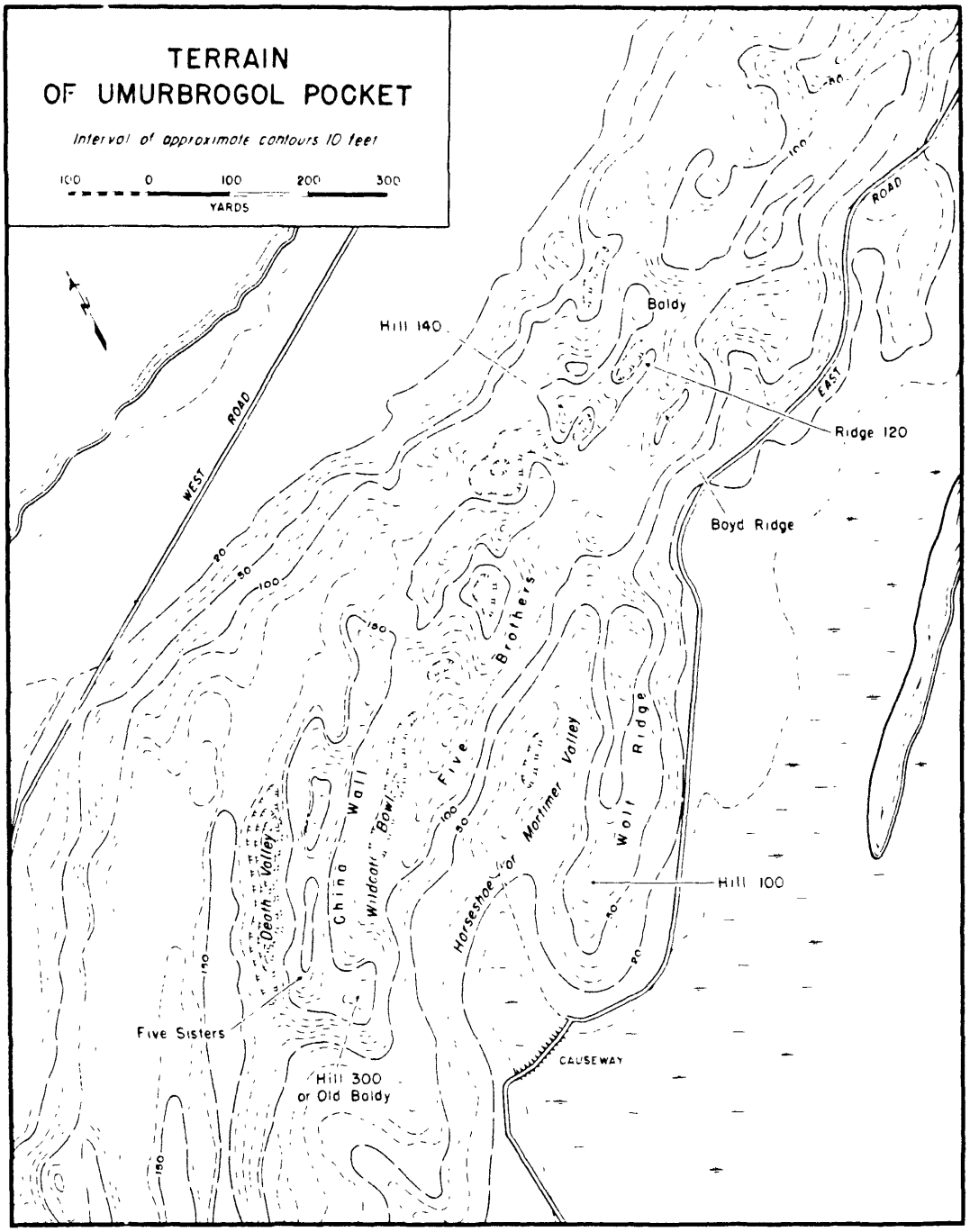


PELELIU STATE
Island Touring Map
Available at
Governor's Office, 15¢



MAP 19

FROM ROBERT ROSS SMITH *THE APPROACH TO THE PHILIPPINES*



MAP 21

FROM ROBERT ROSS SMITH THE APPROACH TO THE PHILIPPINES