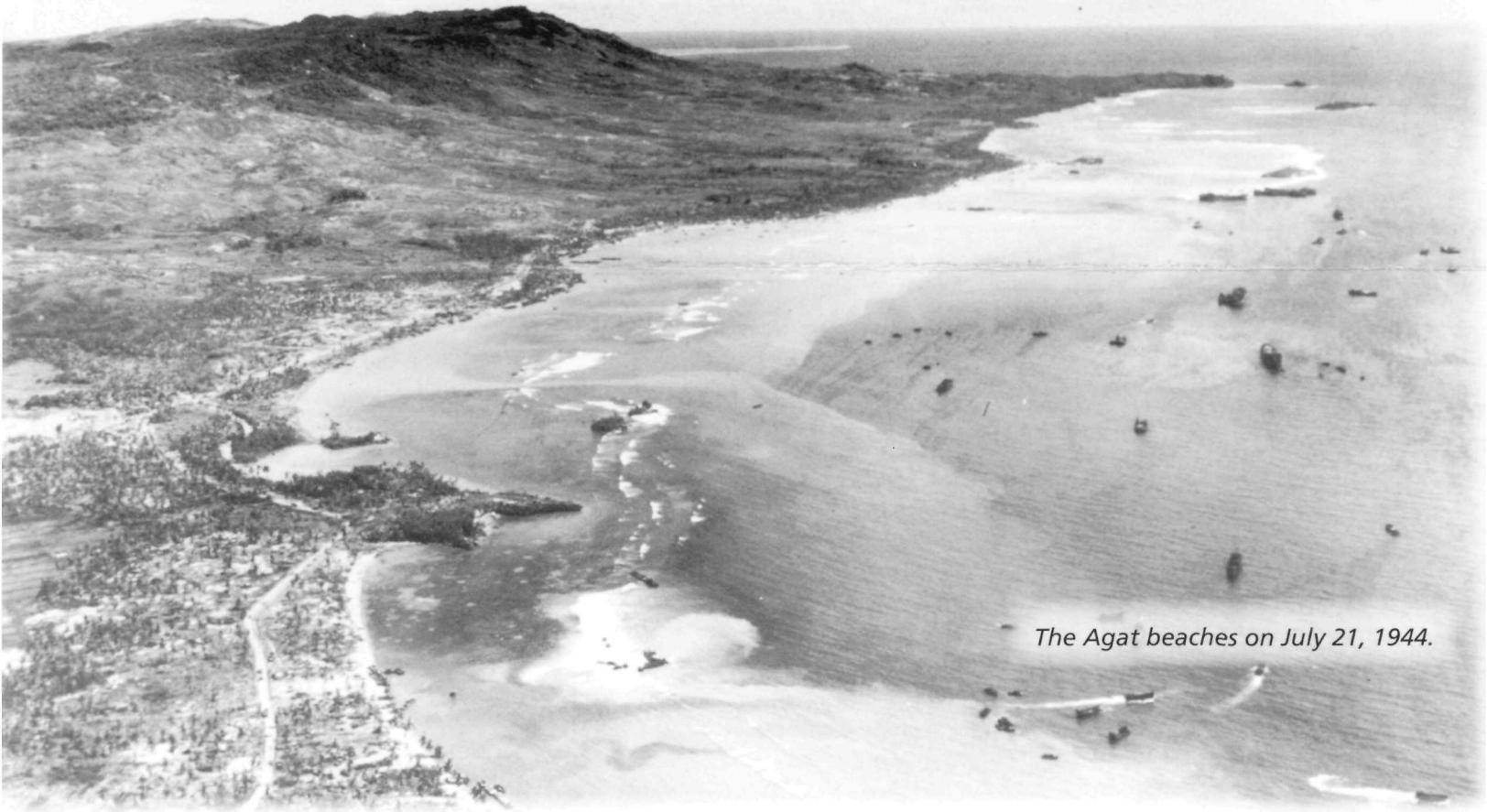




Ga'an Point



The Agat beaches on July 21, 1944.

In preparation for the American landings at Asan and Agat, for nearly two weeks a deafening rain of shells, rockets, and bombs battered Guam. At dawn, on July 21, 1944, 20 transport ships with nearly 31,000 men prepared for the attack on the southern landing beach in the village of Agat. The 1st Provisional Marine Brigade (combined forces of the veteran 4th and 22nd Marines) and the 305th Regimental Combat Team of the U.S. Army 77th Infantry Division planned to secure the beachhead, link up with the northern landing troops, and take the Japanese airstrip at Orote Peninsula. This plan was much easier said than done. Marine Raymond G. Schroeder would later remember:

"We lost 75 men in an area the size of a football field, most of them in the first ten minutes...and for every dead man, there are always two to three wounded. Our company had the most casualties of any in our battalion...We were at point-blank range, no place to go except straight ahead."

The Japanese Resistance

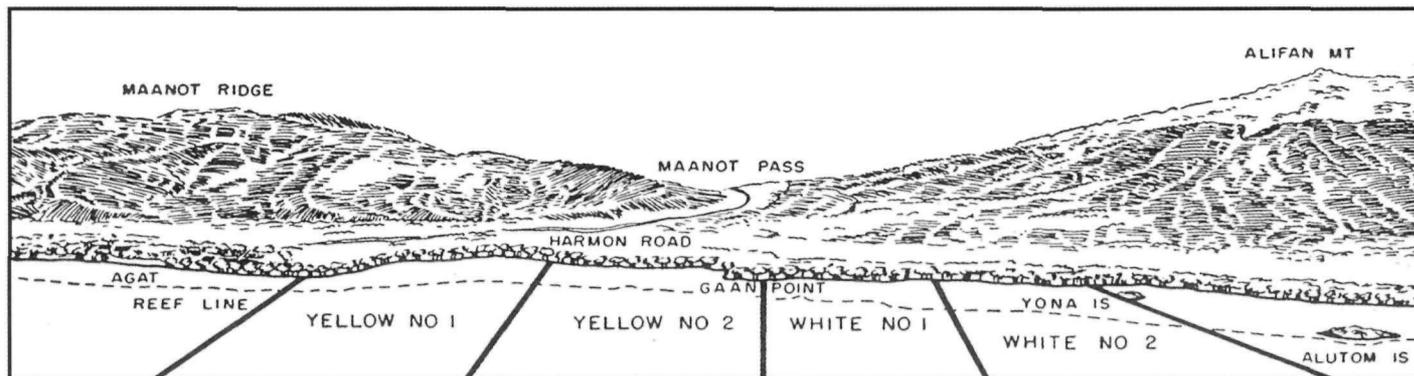
The beaches of Agat were heavily fortified by the Japanese with pillboxes, bunkers, and trenches. Offshore fortifications included mines and palm log cribs filled with coral and joined together by wire cable. Japanese resistance at Agat was particularly stiff and American casualties were high that first day - well over 1,000 men were wounded, killed, or missing in action at Agat alone. As American LVTs (Landing Vehicles Tracked) approached the beach

across the wide reef at Agat, mortar and artillery fire fell upon them. Two 75-mm guns, a 37-mm gun, and multiple machine guns at Ga'an Point inflicted considerable damage on both the landing craft and the 22nd Marines fighting their way ashore. As many as 24 landing craft were sunk or severely damaged. A frontal assault failed to silence these defenses, but they were eventually knocked out by tanks.

Trouble on the Beach

To provide needed support, the inexperienced U.S. Army 77th Infantry Division was ordered ashore. They were expecting to be met by landing craft at the reef edge, but were devastated to discover that none were available to land them. According to Lt. Col. James Landrum, "literally we were just dumped... we were supposed to transfer to amtracs. They just weren't there." Instead, they waded 500 yards through the water, fully exposed to Japanese fire. Meanwhile, one aid station party received a direct artillery hit as it landed; its medical supplies were destroyed and only one member of the medical team escaped unharmed.

The first night on the beach was a long one, as ammunition ran low and troops waited for the Japanese to counterattack. That counterattack came as a banzai charge. Finding courage in the face of impending death, Japanese soldiers prepared to make a bold last move. The 38th Regiment launched a terrifying night assault on the Americans, but it ultimately failed. Col. Tsunetaro Suenaga, the regiment's commander, and most of his men were killed. Three days later, on July 24, the southern beachhead was secured. After nearly three weeks of intense fighting, Guam was declared secure on August 10, 1944.



This 1944 sketch shows Ga'an Point as the center of the U.S. landing beaches at Agat.

The Defenses at Ga'an Point



The pillbox nearest the shore, pictured above, held a formidable 75-mm gun and still bears the scars of bullet holes and battle damage. A double-barreled anti-aircraft gun is preserved at the site today.

Ga'an Point's large stronghold was the last fortification to fall during the battle at Agat and today serves as a reminder of Japanese military ingenuity. The defensive position here was

both well-conceived and well-concealed, as the engineers were masters at using the natural environment to their advantage. Also wielded to the Japanese advantage were Chamorro laborers, who, forced under threat of punishment, constructed fortifications like these. Embedded on the concrete wall of the blockhouse is the inscription of the engineering company that oversaw the completion the structure.



Visitors to Ga'an Point can view a Japanese 25-mm gun and a 200-mm gun used in battle, similar to those in these historic photographs.



Ga'an Point Today

There were over 7,000 American casualties during the battle for Guam. Japanese forces on Guam numbered close to 18,500; just over 1,000 of these were taken prisoner. The rest were killed in action, died of wounds, or died by their own hands to honor their Emperor. Nearly 1,000 Guamanians died during the occupation and the battle, and afterward, many remained homeless. Navy Civilian Affairs Units quickly set up large refugee camps, called "tent-cities," including one at Agat. Here, food, shelter, and medicine were provided until refugees could rebuild their homes.

The concrete latrine foundation, just offshore, is a reminder of the stark conditions Guamanians faced on their war-ravaged island.

Today, the flags of the United States, Japan, and Guam fly at Ga'an Point in memory of all who died during the conflict here. Regardless of nationality or political ideology, the men who fought on Guam fought bravely. Some fought for deeply-held personal beliefs. Most fought because their country asked them to. All sacrificed greatly, and in many cases, they sacrificed their own lives.