

SAIPAN

COMBAT ORDERS NO. 2

By Matthew Hobbs

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SUPERHERO ROLEPLAYING IN A WORLD ON FIRE, 1936-1946

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Foreword

The 1944 Battle for Saipan was the beginning of the end of the Pacific war. The Allies had followed an initial string of retreats in 1942 with the bloody capture of Guadalcanal and the Japanese Navy's devastating defeat at Midway. In 1943 and 1944 the U.S. Navy, Marines and Army battled from island to island, driving Imperial forces slowly before them.

On Saipan and the other islands of the Marianas the Japanese commanders—led by Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, who had commanded the attack on Pearl Harbor itself in 1941—arrayed an air force desperate to halt the American advance. But American fighters caught the Japanese air force on the ground and destroyed it utterly, and without air cover the Japanese had no way to stop American bombers from blasting their positions as ships brought troops ashore.

This is the story of a single squad in that momentous battle. As superpowered Talents of the Special Instruction School—Marines wearing the “pitchfork patch” of the Devil's Own—their unique abilities put them in some of the deadliest action, but they're only a small part of the invasion. Some of the most infamous events on Saipan, such as the mass death of Japanese troops and civilians at Suicide Cliff, happen far away. But these Talents face horrors of their own.

If you're going to be a player in this campaign, read no further. Hand the book to the game master. You'll be glad for the surprises later on.

As the game master running this adventure, you'll be well served to note the day-to-day conflicts that the players face among their own—difficulties with each other and American non-player characters.

The rank structure of every modern military has educated officers commanding working-class enlisted men. Not every officer is willing to take the risks to which he puts his men, and not every soldier is willing to tolerate an up-and-coming officer.

Some troops are gung-ho volunteers. Others are draftees who don't yet know what they're willing to risk for their companions.

Some are would-be heroes who'll crack when they're needed most. All are prone to bragging and competition.

Some of these sons and fathers are veteran killers, while others still feel civilization's restraints.

Most are ordinary men just trying not to let each other down.

The players should have plenty to think about as they fight to conquer Saipan.

*Shane Ivey, editor
Arc Dream Publishing*





Introduction

June, 1944. The U.S. military has advanced through the Pacific in two main thrusts. In the west, the Navy and Marine Corps led an island-hopping campaign that successfully took the Gilbert and Marshall Islands. In the south, the U.S. Army won victories at Guadalcanal, Bougainville and most recently New Guinea.

Admiral Nimitz's drive now continues with a push to the Marianas Islands. The Marianas are the southern links in a chain of islands that sweep upward to Japan, only 1,350 miles away. Air bases on the Marianas would put Allied heavy bombers in range for attacks on Tokyo.

Vice Admiral Spruance's Fifth Fleet is assigned the task of capturing the Marianas. Lieutenant General Holland "Howlin' Mad" Smith, USMC, is in command of the V Amphibious Corps, the grunts assigned the work of seizing the islands, and he will personally command the assault on Saipan.

Occupied Saipan

Saipan is about the length of Manhattan Island but twice as broad, roughly fifteen miles long by seven miles wide. Inland hill masses dominate sandy beaches, with two prominent ridgelines framing a central valley planted in sugar cane.

The island has mixed volcanic and coral atoll origins, which means heavy jungle, jagged cliff faces, rock outcroppings and plenty of sinkholes and caves.

The highest peaks coincide with major U.S. objectives: Mount Nafutan, 407 feet, to the southeast; Mount Kagman, about the same height, on the east coast; Mount Marpi, 833 feet, at the northern tip; and Mount Tapotchau, 1,554 feet, on the west side of the central valley.

Japan has controlled Saipan since World War One, and there are nearly 30,000 civilians on the island, a mix of Chamorro natives, Japanese civilians and Korean laborers. The largest town is Garapan on the west coast, and many small villages are sprinkled along the coastline.

The Japanese military force is about the same size as the civilian population. Lt. Gen. Yoshitsugu Saito commands the Army's forces, roughly 22,000 strong: the 43rd Division (reinforced), the 47th Mixed Brigade (infantry, artillery and engineers), a tank regiment, an anti-aircraft regiment at Aslito Airfield and assorted support and transportation units.

Japanese naval forces, including the 55th Naval Guard Force and the highly trained marines of the 1st Yokosuka Special Naval Landing Force, are

commanded by Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, commander of the Central Pacific Fleet and the 5th Base Force—who also commanded the 1941 raid on Pearl Harbor. The naval forces are mostly concentrated at Garapan.

The American Force

Two U.S. Marine divisions and one Army division have been assigned to the action: the 2nd Marines, 4th Marines, and the Army's 27th Infantry Division. The 2nd Marines and the 27th Infantry saw action at Makin and Tarawa. The 4th Marines are relatively untested.

The basic plan calls for an assault to land on the western beaches of the island. The two Marine divisions will go in first, leaving the Army division on the ships in reserve.

One Marine division will hold the beaches while the other first drives east then pivots to the north, sweeping any Japanese resistance into the northern half of the island. The Marines are then to push north and clear the island of all Japanese hold-outs, with the Army's 27th Infantry Division serving as a corps reserve.

The player characters are Talents and Marines, members of an SIS team—commandos and raiders trained at the Special Instruction School, "Hell's Motel," to use their impossible Talent powers to overcome obstacles no ordinary Marine could face. (A team of pregenerated SIS Marines can be found at the end of this book; see Arc Dream Publishing's *Talent Operations Command Intelligence Bulletin No. 3: Marine Talents in the Pacific Theater* for details on SIS character creation.)

The Marines have ten SIS squads assigned to the Marianas campaign. Most of them are going ashore in the first wave of the assault.

In a surprise decision by Admiral Spruance, the players' SIS squad is attached to the Army's 165th Infantry Regiment, one of the three infantry units in the 27th. The sentiment from higher up seems to be that the Army needs the extra help—they have no Talent units of their own for this operation.

The SIS team is nominally under the command of Col. Gerard Kelley, commander of the 165th Infantry Regiment, who has never commanded Talents before. Of course, the Talents are still Marines, and are an asset that belongs to the highest commander in the theater. "Howlin' Mad" Smith has used SIS teams in his operations and sees them as tactical heavy-hitters, much like one of his Marine tank companies. He could pull them from Army command at any time.