

## US History

### World War II - The Pacific

#### Learning Target:

*I can analyze the island hopping strategy by examining several key island campaigns.*

### 3. Island Hopping

#### *Island Hopping –*

- Air & sea power was the key to victory in the Pacific
- US decided to seize only strategically important islands instead of trying to recapture all all Japanese held islands
- The goal was to get within striking distance of mainland Japan
- The island victories would allow the US to bomb Japan with B-29 bombers
- Began in Nov. 1943 in the Gilbert Islands

#### *Tarawa (Gilbert Islands) -*

- November 1943
- Very difficult island for the US to take
- Encircled with a coral reef that made US troops have to wade ashore with no protection
- US lost 1000 marines and 2000 others were injured
- The victory gave the US a vital airstrip to start their island hopping campaign

#### *Saipan & Guam (Mariana Islands) -*

- June 1944 the US marines landed under cover of air and naval fire from aircraft carriers
- Saipan fell in July and cost the Japanese over 350 planes they could not afford to lose
- Guam fell in August
- Both islands gave vital airstrips to begin launching bombing campaigns on mainland Japan

#### *Peleliu -*

- September 1944 the marines invaded after a lengthy naval bombardment that was thought to be successful but was not.
- Peleliu had the highest casualty rate out of all Pacific battles
- Controversial battle due to lack of strategic importance (island hopping importance?)
- Decided to fight here to protect MacArthur's right flank when retaking the Philippines
- No other invasion would be launched from Peleliu and it was largely ignored in the media due to the retaking of the Philippines several months later

#### *Recapturing the Philippines –*

- The US island hopped from Tarawa and Guadalcanal to New Guinea
- After winning these key battles they set their sights on reclaiming the Philippines
- At the Battle of Leyte Gulf the Japanese fleet was handed a crushing defeat in the fall of 1944
- From this point on the Japanese Naval Fleet was no longer a threat
- February 1945 MacArthur reentered Manila keeping his promise to return