

**Where in the World is . . .  
The Marshall Islands (V73)  
CQ Zone 31 ITU Zone 65  
IOTA OC-028**

Think WW II - the big one. Names of individual atolls are engraved forever in American military history. Part of Admiral Nimitz' island hopping strategy, islands in the Marshall and Gilberts chains became battle grounds. After the war, the islands, especially Bikini and Eniwetok atolls became U.S. atomic testing grounds. The first hydrogen bomb was tested there,



Officially named the Republic of the Marshall Islands, none of the 29 low-lying coral atolls and the five coral islands in the Marshall group rises to more than 20 feet above high tide. The islands are coral caps set on the rims of submerged volcanoes rising from the ocean floor. The island units of the Marshalls are scattered over about 180,000 square miles of the Pacific.

The Marshall Islands consists of 29 atolls and 5 individual islands totaling about 1,225 islands and 870 reef systems scattered over 750,000 square miles of the Central Pacific. After almost four decades under US administration as the easternmost part of the UN Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, the Marshall Islands attained independence in 1986 under a Compact of Free Association.

Because of the close association with the United States the Marshall Islands currency is the U.S. Dollar.

The largest atoll in the group is Kwajalein, which has a land area of only six square miles but surrounds a 655-square-mile lagoon. The U.S. maintains a large missile testing facility and radar station on it. Its majority English-speaking residents (about 1,000 mostly U.S. civilian personnel) are often called by the shortened name; *KWAJ*.



In 1885 Germany gained control over the Marshall Islands from Spain under the demarcation limits set by the Protocol of Rome. At the outbreak of World War I in Europe, Japan joined the Triple Entente; an treaty of friendship between the U.K, France and Imperial Russia. She seized the Marshall Islands against only token resistance. In 1922 the

islands were placed under Japanese administration as a League of Nations Mandate until the beginning of World War II in the Pacific. 1941.

In early 1944, the U.S. 7th Infantry Division, invaded Kwajalein. Of the 8,782 Japanese personnel deployed to the atoll, 7,870 "Japanese" were killed according to U.S. military documents. Additionally, many of the native Marshallese fled the island in their canoes just before the battle. In February 6, 1944, Kwajalein was claimed by the United States and was designated, with the rest of the Marshall Islands, as a United Nations Trust Territory under the United States.

In the years following, Kwajalein Atoll was converted into a staging area for campaigns in the advance on the Japanese homeland. After the war ended, the United States used it as a main command center and preparation base in 1946 for Operation Crossroads, the first of several series of nuclear tests at the Marshall island atolls of Bikini and Eniwetok.



Most people living on this speck of an Army base smack in the middle of the Pacific Ocean develop some passion that substitutes for life in the "real" world, as they call it. For some its golf. There is a small 9-hole course, next to the only runway. It is maintained by volunteers many who also work at the *Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site*.

Kwajalein Atoll has been leased by the United States for missile testing and other operations from well before independence for the Marshall Islands. Although this military history has influenced the lives of the Marshall Islanders who have lived in the atoll through the war to the present, the military history of Kwajalein has prevented tourism. Since 2000, Kwajalein has become one of five preferred

locations from which rockets can be launched into equatorial orbit.

Access to KWAJ, as those in the know call it is restricted. Basically, the entire island is a U.S. Army base. A visitor needs a letter of permission or be employed as a civilian to get on the weekly flight to KWAJ.

The Marshall Islands are number 110 on the Club Log Most Wanted list. QRZ lists 146 licensed amateurs in the



**CONFIRMING CONTACT**

RADIO	DATE	UTC	MHz	MODE	RST
1com 9100	8/22/17	0419	14	SSB	519

Marshall Islands but none on the *KWAJ*. MY most recent QSO was with Randy, V73/WW6RG. Randy is a commercial pilot who sometimes has a layover on the atoll.

Reporting from the Dark Side,  
Ron, K5HM