

# Federal Grant Issued For UXO Removal

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Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) The Department of Public Lands (DPL) received a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency for the removal of UXO across the 150-acre Marpi Village. Several hundred million pounds of UXO are estimated to be in Saipan as a result of the Japanese occupation of the island and the 1944 battle for the Marianas.

Efforts were conducted in the 1960s to clear UXO from the island but only approximately 2,000 tons were removed leaving millions of pounds in place. Once UXO is cleared from the Marpi Village, construction can begin on the 400 residential houses planned for the area.

Marpi Village is located on the north side of the island where economic development has been relatively slower compared to other areas of Saipan. There is a push to develop land in Saipan to meet the backlog of residents waiting for homestead permits. DPL hopes to have the area cleared and permits issued in Marpi Village by 2008.

The EPA grant is unique because it is designed to address UXO resulting from a war / historic battle. Without the grant, developers would have to privately fund the cleanup and in return pass those costs onto new homebuyers. Programs like the DoD Munitions Response Program (MRP) specifically exclude historic battlefields and sites.