

Navajo Code Talkers' Dictionary Class Set

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The Navajo Code Talker's Dictionary

When a Navajo code talker received a message, what he heard was a string of seemingly unrelated Navajo words. The code talker first had to translate each Navajo word into its English equivalent. Then he used only the first letter of the English equivalent in spelling an English word. Thus, the Navajo words "wol-la-chee" (ant), stood for the letter "a." One way to say the word "Navy" in Navajo code would be "tsah (needle) wol-la-chee (ant) ah-keh-di- glini (victor) tsah-ah-dzoh (yucca)."

Not all words had to be spelled out letter by letter. The developers of the original code assigned Navajo words to represent about 450 frequently used military terms that did not exist in the Navajo language. Several examples: "besh- lo" (iron fish) meant "submarine," "dah-he- tih-hi" (hummingbird) meant "fighter plane" and "debeh-li-zine" (black street) meant "squad."

Since they had to memorize the code words, they selected words that were descriptive and would not be easily mistaken over the radio in front-line combat conditions. For example, ground forces used for amphibious assault were called "frogs", a route was a "rabbit trail", a hand grenade was a "potato", a submarine was a "iron fish" and the United States was "our mother". They used names of various birds for the types of aircraft, such as "hummingbird" for fighter jet and "sparrow hawk" for dive bomber. The bombs dropped by planes were called "eggs". Some of the code words had a humorous side, the rival Army soldiers were "dog face" and the mortar was a "squat rifle". They gave the various US Marine Corps units Navajo family names, such as "Feather People" or "Bitter Water People".

The following is a list of 263 terms created by the first 32 Navajos enrolled in the Marine Corps Communication School located at Camp Elliott.

Alphabet

Alphabet	Navajo	Meaning
A	Wol-ia-chee	Ant
B	Shush	Bear
C	Moasi	Cat
D	Be	Deer
E	Dzeh	Elk
F	Ma-e	Fox
G	Klizzie	Goat
H	Lin	Horse
I	Tkin	Ice
J	Tkele-cho-gi	Jade
K	Klizzie-yazzie	Kid
L	Dibeh-yazzie	Lamb
M	Na-as-tso-si	Mouse
N	Nesh-chee	Nut
O	Ne-ahs-jah	Owl
P	Bi-sodih	Pig
Q	Ca-yeilth	Quiver
R	Gah	Rabbit
S	Dibeh	Sheep
T	Than-zie	Turkey
U	No-da-ih	Ute
V	A-keh-di-glini	Victor
W	Gloe-ih	Weasel
X	Al-an-as-dzoh	Cross
Y	Tsah-as-zih	Yucca
Z	Besh-do-gliz	Zinc

Military Designations

Word	Navajo	Literal Translation
Corps	Din-neh-ih	Clan
Division	Ashi-hi	Salt
Regiment	Tabaha	Edge-water
Battalion	Tacheene	Red Soil
Company	Nakia	Mexican
Platoon	Has-clish-nih	Mud
Section	Yo-ih	Beads
Squad	Dibeh-li-zini	Black Sheep

Communications

Word	Navajo	Literal Translation
Telephone	Besh-hal-ne-ih	Telephone
Switchboard	Ya-ih-e-tih-ih	Central
Wire	Besh-le-chee-ih	Copper
Telegraph	Besh-le-chee-ih Be-hane-ih	Communication By Copper Wire
Semaphore	Dah-ha-a-tah-ih Be-hane-ih	Flag Signals
Blinker	Coh-nil-kot-ih	Fire Blinder
Radio	Nil-chi-hal-ne-ih	Radio
Panels	Az-kad-be-ha-ne-ih	Carpet Signals

Officers

Word	Navajo	Literal Translation
Brigadier General	So-a-la-ih	One Star
Major General	So-na-kih	Two Stars
Colonel	Astah-besh-le-gai	Silver Eagle
Lt. Colonel	Che-chil-be-fah-besh-le-gai	Silver Oak Leaf
Major	Che-chil-be-tah-ola	Gold Oak Leaf
Captain	Besh-le-gai-nah-kih	Two Silver Bars
1st Lieutenant	Besh-le-gai-a-lah-ih	One Silver Bar
2nd Lieutenant	Ola-alah-ih-ni-ahi	One Gold Bar

Airplanes

Word	Navajo	Literal Translation
Airplanes	Wo-tah-de-ne-ih	Air Corps
Dive Bomber	Gini	Chicken Hawk
Torpedo Plane	Tas-chizzie	Swallow
Observation Plane	Ne-as-jah	Owl
Fighter Plane	Da-he-tih-hi	Hummingbird
Bomber	Jay-sho	Buzzard
Patrol Plane	Ga-gih	Crow
Transport Plane	Astah	Eagle

Ships

Word	Navajo	Literal Translation
Ships	Toh-dineh-ih	Water Clan Fleet
Battleship	Lo-tso	Whale
Aircraft Carrier	Tsidi-ney-ye-hi	Bird Carrier
Submarine	Besh-lo	Iron Fish
Mine Sweeper	Cha	Beaver
Destroyer	Ca-lo	Shark
Transport	Dineh-nay-ye-hi	Man Carrier
Cruiser	Lo-tso-yazzie	Small Whale
Mosquito Boat	Tse-e	Mosquito

Months

Word	Navajo	Literal Translation
January	Yas-nil-tes	Crusted Snow
February	Astah-be-yaz	Small Eagle
March	Woz-cheind	Squeaky Voice
April	Tsha-chill	Small Plant
May	Tah-tso	Big Plant
June	Be-ne-eh-eh-jah-tso	Big Planting
July	Be-ne-ta-tsosie	Small Harvest
August	Be-neen-ta-tso	Big Harvest
September	Ghan-jih	Half
October	Nil-chi-tsosie	Small Wind
November	Nil-chi-tso	Big Wind
December	Kesh-mesh	Christmas

Countries

Word	Navajo	Literal Translation
Africa	Zhin-ni	African
Alaska	Beh-hga	With Winter
America	Ne-he-mah	Our Mother
Australia	Cha-yes-desi	Rolled Hat
Britain	Toh-ta	Bounded By Water
China	Ceh-yehs-besi	Braided Hair
France	Da-gha-hi	Beard
Germany	Besh-be-cha-he	Iron Hat
Iceland	Tkin-ke-yah	Ice Land
India	Ah-le-gai	White Clothes
Italy	Doh-ha-chi-yali-tchi	Stutter
Japan	Beh-na-ali-tsoisi	Asian
Philippines	Keyah-da-na-ilhe	Floating Land
Russia	Sila-goche-ih	Red Army
South America	Sha-de-ah-ne-mah	South Our Mother
Spain	Debeh-de-nih	Sheep/Pain

General Vocabulary

Word	Navajo	Literal Translation
Action	Ah-ha-tinh	Action
Advance	Nas-say	Ahead
Airdrome	Nilchi-began	Air House
Alert	Ha-ih-des-ee	Watchful
Allies	Nih-hi-cho	Our Friends
Along	Wol-la-chee-snez	Long Ant
Also	Eh-do	Also
Alternate	Na-kee-go-ne-nan-dey-he	Second Position
Amphibious	Chal	Frog
And	Do	And
Annex	Ih-nay-tani	Addition
Approach	Bi-chi-ol-dah	Moving To
Are	Gah-tso	Large Rabbit
Armored	Besh-ye-ha-da-di-teh	Iron Protected
Arrive	Il-day	Came
Army	Lei-cha-ih-yil-knee-hi	Dog Faces
Artillery	Be-al-doh-tso-lani	Many Big Guns
As	Ache	Ace
Assault	Altseh-e-jah-he	First Strike
Attached	A-hid-day-tih	Attached
Available	Ta-shoz-teh-ih	Available
Battery	Bih-be-al-doh-tka-ih	Three Guns
Base	Bih-tsee-dih	Foundation
Be	Tses-nah	Bee
Been	Tse-nah-nesh-chee	Bee/Nut
Before	Bih-tse-dih	Prior
Begin	Ha-hol-ziz	Start
Belong	Tse-nah-snez	Long Bee
Block	Da-dey-than	Block
Bombs	A-ye-shi	Eggs
By	Be-gah	By

Camp	To-alsteh-hogan	Temporary House
Camouflage	Di-nesh-ih	Hide
Can	Yah-di-zini	Can
Cannoneer	Be-al-doh-tso-dey-dil-don-igi	Big Gun Operator
Capacity	Be-nel-ah	Capacity
Capitol	Tkah-chaе	Sweat House
Captured	Yis-nah	Captured
Casualty	Bih-din-ne-day	Out Of Action
Class	Alth-a-a-teh	Class
Coast Guard	Ta-bas-dsissi	Shore Runner
Code	Yil-tas	Peck
Column	Alth-kay-ni-zih	Column
Combat	Da-ah-jih-gahn	Fighting
Combination	Al-tkas-ei	Mixed
Commander	Bih-keh-he	Senior
Commanding Officer	Hash-kay-gi-na-tah	War Chief
Concentrate	Ta-la-hi-jih	One Place
Confidential	Na-nil-in	Keep Secret
Conquered	A-keh-des-dlin	Won
Convoy	Tkai-kah-o-nei	Move On Water
Counter-attack	Woltah-al-ki-gi-jeh	Counter-act
Creek	Toh-nil-tsanh	Little Water
Debouchment	Dzilth-gahn-ih	Apache
Defense	Ah-kin-gil-toh	Defend
Department	Hogan	Central House
Dispositions	A-ho-tay	Disposition
Displace	Hih-do-nal	Move
Do	Tse-le	Small Pup
Echelon	Who-dzoh	Line
Engineer	Day-dil-jah-hi	Fire Builder
Enlist	Bih-zih-a-da-yi-lah	Signature
Escape	A-zeh-ha-ge-yah	Escape
Establish	Has-tay-dzah	Set Up
Estimate	Bih-ke-tse-shod-des-kez	Guess
Execute	A-do-nil	Will Happen

Fail	Cha-al-cind	Fail
Field	Clo-dih	Outside
Fire	Coh	Fire
Flank	Dah-di-kad	Side
Flare	Wo-chi	Light Streak
Grenades	Ni-ma-si	Potatoes
Guard	Ni-dih-da-hi	Guard
Have	Jo	Have
Headquarters	Na-ha-fah-ba-hogan	Main House
Hospital	A-zey-al-hi	Place Of Medicine
Install	Ehd-thah	Put In
Invade	A-tah-gi-nah	Move Into
Is	Seis	Seven
Island	Seis-keyah	Seven Land
Left	Nish-cla-jih	Left
Location	A-kew-eh	Spot
Machine Gun	A-knah-as-dinih	Rapid Fire Gun
Magnetic	Na-e-lahi	Pick Up Iron
Maneuver	Na-na-o-nalth	Move Around
Manufacture	Besh-be-eh-el-ih-dih	Metal Factory
Mechanic	Chiti-a-nayl-inih	Car Repairman
Message	Hane-al-neh	Message
Military	Sila-go-keh-goh	Soldiers
Mine	Ha-gade	Mine
Mortar	Be-al-doh-cid-da-hi	Sitting Gun
Navy	Tal-kah-sila-go	Sea Soldiers
Not	Ni-dah-than-zie	No/Turkey
Objective	Bi-ne-yei	Goal
Observed	Hal-zid	Seen
Occurred	Yeel-tsod	Taken
Of	Toh-ni-tkal-lo	Ocean Fish
Or	Eh-dodah-goh	Either
Order	Be-eh-ho-zini	Direct
Ordinance	Lei-az-iah	Underground
Overlay	Be-ka-has-tsoz	Over Lap

Paranthesis	Astanzh	Rib
Penalize	Tah-ni-des-tanzh	Set Back
Primary	Altseh-nan-day-hi-gih	1st Position
Proceed	Nay-nih-jih	Go
Protect	Ah-chanh	Self Defense
Railhead	A-do-geh-hi	Shipping & Receiving Point
Rally	A-lah-na-o-glalth	Gathering
Range	An-zeh	Distance
Reached	Baz-ni-tsood	Reached
Reconnaissance	Ha-a-cidi	Inspector
Reinforce	Nal-dzil	Reinforce
Relieved	Nah-jih-co-nal-ya	Remove
Replacement	Ni-na-do-nih	Replacement
Report	Who-neh	Got Words
Representative	Tka-naz-nili	Triple Men
Request	Jo-kayed-goh	Ask For
Retreat	Ji-din-ned-chanh	Move Back
River	Toh-yil-kal	Much Water
Route	Gah-bih-tkeen	Rabbit Trail
Runner	Nih-dzid-teih	Runner
Sabotage	A-tkel-yah	Hinder
Saboteur	A-tkel-el-ini	Troublemaker
Sailors	Cha-le-gai	White Caps
Seamen	Tkal-kah-dineh-ih	Seamen
Secret	Bah-has-tkin	Secret
Side	Bosh-keesh	Side
Signal	Na-eh-eh-gish	By Sign
Shell	Be-al-doh-be-ca	Shell
Short	Be-oh	Short
Space	Be-tkah	Between
Stream	Toh-ni-lin	Running Water
Submerged	Tkal-cla-yi-yah	Under Water
Submit	A-nih-leh	Send
Such	Yis-cleh	Socks
Supplementary	Tka-go-ne-nan-dey-he	3rd Position

Supply	Nal-yeh-hi	Supplyu
Territory	Ke-yah	Land
That	Than-zie-cha	Turkey Hat
The	Cha-gee	Blue Jay
There	Bih	There
They	Ni-ghai	They
Together	Ta-bil	With
Torpedo	Lobe-ca	Fish Shell
Tracer	Beh-na-al-kah-hi	Track
Traffic Diagram	Hane-ba-na-as-dzoh	Story Line
Troops	Nal-deh-hi	Troops
Unit	Da-az-jah	Bunch
Vicinity	Na-hos-ah-gih	There About
Was	Ne-teh	Was
Weapons	Beh-dah-a-hi-jah-geni	Weapons
Zone	Bah-na-has-dzoh	Area

Punctuation

Word	Navajo	Literal Translation
Colon :	Naki-alh-deh-da-al	Two Spots
Comma ,	Tsa-na-dahl	Tail
Dash -	Us-dzoh	Dash
Parenthesis ()	Astsanh	Rib
Period .	Da-ahl-zin	Black Spot
Question ?	Ah-jah	Ear
Semi Colon ;	Da-ahl-zhin Bi-tsa Na-dahl	Spot Tail