

Armor in Island Warfare

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A RESEARCH REPORT

Prepared at
THE ARMORED SCHOOL
Fort Knox Kentucky
1949 - 1950

R-502003

ARMOR IN ISLAND WARFARE



COMMITTEE ~ # 20 ~

THE ARMORED SCHOOL

FT. KNOX, KY. ~1950~

ARMOR IN ISLAND WARFARE
(WHO, WHAT, AND WHERE IN THE PACIFIC)

A RESEARCH REPORT PREPARED

BY

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THE ARMORED SCHOOL

1949 - 1950

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MAY 1950

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PREFACE

There are probably more islands in the PACIFIC OCEAN than in all the other oceans combined. Hence our task of writing a report "Armor In Island Warfare" was not complicated by a lack of islands. There were, however, many problems which confronted us at the outset.

In the first place, there are few graphic accounts of the employment of armor in the PACIFIC available. This is largely because of the fact that tanks normally supported infantry as individual tanks, in groups of two to four, or by section or platoon. Such employment precluded detailed accounts of tank action in the After Action Reports submitted by Tank Battalions, the lowest level of command required to submit such reports. The After Action Reports and Histories written by infantry units give a modicum of space to attached units.

The above is particularly true in the case of the Marine Corps armored units. No doubt there is ample material available within the archives of the Corps; however, it was not available to this committee since we were not located near the archives. Accordingly, we suggest that this report be enlarged upon with a view towards making it more complete as regards Marine Corps armored units.

Another problem which confronted us was that our mission was so broad that specific objectives had to be designated before we could begin the basic research. After reading ourselves into the history of the PACIFIC War, we were able to come up with three possible solutions to the problem:

1. To research one tank battalion throughout its operation in the PACIFIC.

2. To research the tank action on one island.

3. To compile a research report and map study of all tank action in the PACIFIC.

Solution Number 1 was discarded when it was found that only two tank battalions were employed on more than one island.

Solution Number 2 was discarded when it was found that, except for LEYTE, LUZON, and OKINAWA, there were no islands on which tanks were employed in large numbers. These three islands are specifically covered in other research reports written by student committees of The Armored School.

Solution Number 3 was adopted. We limited the study, however, to separate Army Tank Battalions and Amphibious Tank Battalions, and the Tank Battalions organic to the six Marine Divisions. Other armored units did participate in the war in the PACIFIC Area, such as separate tank companies, tank group headquarters, armored units organic to divisions and various marine amphibious units. The operations of these units, however, were not sufficiently documented to be suitable subjects for this report.

The report is assembled for easy reading. Each chapter covers a group of islands. For each island discussed, there is a short description of the terrain, followed by a description of the overall operations on the island and, finally, a section describing tank action. Following each chapter are the maps pertaining to that

chapter. These maps, when unfolded, lie just to the right of the page you are reading, giving a handy picture to aid in following the operations. At the back of this paper is a map of the PACIFIC OCEAN Area with which the paper is concerned. On this map are shown the islands on which tanks were employed with a list of the units participating in the action on each island. This map is a sister to that prepared by The Armored School entitled "Armored Divisions in the E.T.O."

Your attention is invited to Appendix 1, "Islands On Which Tanks Did Not Participate". In this Appendix are listed all those islands in the PACIFIC with which American Troops were concerned but on which tanks did not take part in the action.

Suggestions and corrections to this paper are requested and will be warmly welcomed. Please forward them to the Research and Evaluation Division, The Armored School, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

The Authors

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Scope and Purpose of Report

This is a research report furnishing a compilation of the employment of American armored units in the PACIFIC OCEAN Area during World War II. All PACIFIC Campaigns are covered -- from the Japanese invasion of the PHILIPPINE Islands in 1941 through the RYUKYUS Islands operations in 1945.

The study of armored units in the island warfare in support of infantry units embraces both Marine Corps and Army Field Force tank elements. The report consists of two parts:

1. A summary of each island action giving the terrain analysis, the situation and missions of the units participating and the employment of armored units in support of infantry including any special problems encountered insofar as armor was concerned.

2. A map of the PACIFIC OCEAN Area on which is depicted each island where armor was employed.

The Battle of the Pacific was primarily an air-infantry battle. Armor was employed only in minor units -- a platoon supporting an infantry company or battalion. It was a campaign of small advances by small infantry forces supported either by a platoon or a section of tanks. Only in a few instances were armored units used in battalion strength. The infantry nature of the Pacific Campaigns has resulted in the study of armor through the study of infantry. It is, therefore, necessary to view the entire Battle of the Pacific --

where the infantry operated and what they did -- to appreciate the armored actions involved.

Armored units found that the rugged terrain, jungle and weather conditions were the most restraining influences encountered, greater than the Japanese defenders in most instances. An appreciation of the terrain and weather is vital to the proper understanding of armor's problems. The terrain studies included in each chapter should be given careful consideration.

General Background, Pacific War

During the greater part of 1941, the undeclared war between JAPAN and the Nationalist Government of CHINA continued, apparently apart from the European conflict. The Japanese, with the concurrence of the VICHY Government of FRANCE, took over important bases in FRENCH INDO-CHINA and later, to all intents and purposes, completed the occupation of that rich country. In CHINA itself, the Japanese operations were limited to minor campaigns in HUNAN Province and to extensive aerial activity.

Then, on December 7, 1941, in the midst of peace discussions with the UNITED STATES, JAPAN struck at several widely separated points. Japanese bombers scored heavily in a surprise attack on PEARL HARBOR, the great United States stepping stone in the line of communications to the Far East. Likewise, Japanese troops launched a series of invasions against HONGKONG, THAILAND, MAYLAYA and the PHILIPPINE Islands of LUZON and MINDANAO. (Map 1)

Possibly the heaviest blows were struck in the PHILIPPINES. The paralyzing blow dealt American naval power at PEARL HARBOR immobilized the United States Pacific Fleet and dashed all hopes of sending supplies and reinforcements to the troops in the PHILIPPINES.

On the morning of December 8, 1941 (December 7 in PEARL HARBOR), at 3:30 A.M., a flash was received that PEARL HARBOR had been attacked. This message was immediately transmitted to the Admiral of the Fleet who took steps to disperse the fleet and otherwise protect its elements. At 12:00 noon that day, elements of the Air Corps in the PHILIPPINES were caught on the ground by a strong Japanese air attack and thus the chance for a successful defense of the Islands was lost at the start.

The Japanese attacking planes were located by radar as they came south off the west coast of the PHILIPPINES until opposite MANILA. They then turned at right angles and came in to deliver the blow that destroyed the offensive power, as well as crippling the defensive power, of the United States Air Force.

As a result of these attacks, the Japanese immediately won both naval and air supremacy. Now, practically immune from aerial or naval attack, the Japanese started to invade the PHILIPPINES and poured troops onto the island of LUZON. (Map 2)

The initial Japanese landings at APARRI, LEGASPI and other points south and east of LUZON were unopposed. The first landing that was opposed took place at LINGAYEN. Here the Japanese, avoiding the good landing areas, came ashore over poor landing beaches.

They used a peculiar formation in that the transports came into LINGAYEN Gulf within 2000 yards of the shore under the support of naval fire from warships farther off shore. This landing was opposed principally by artillery. Effective artillery fire was delivered against the landing boats and transports. After suffering rather heavy casualties, the Japanese forced their landings and began the drive for MANILA. The Filipino forces were neither strong enough nor sufficiently well-trained to do more than delay the hostile advance. The decisive factor in this Japanese success was their air superiority.

At the time of the initial strike by land on the PHILIPPINES there were two tank battalions assigned to the armed forces on the islands. These tank battalions were the 192d and the 194th and they comprised the Provisional Tank Group. Because of shortages of high explosive 37-mm ammunition, gasoline and spare parts, these tank units could not be effectively employed. Considering the fact, however, that at this time tanks were new to our army, and that frequently commanders in the field did not fully understand their employment, capabilities and limitations, the battalions performed remarkably well.

Principal employment of the tank units consisted of a delaying force wherein the units were moved from sector to sector often holding a defensive line of 25 miles with as few as 30 tanks. In this role of a delaying force, the tank units adopted the "checkerboard" tactics of occupying successive positions in withdrawal. This permitted

movement of the main body of defenders to the rear to prepare and occupy new defensive lines. (For a more complete and detailed report on the above-named tank battalions see "Research Report, Armor on LUZON," prepared by Committee 9, Armored Officers Advanced Class, The Armored School, 1950.)

By the end of December 1941, two large Japanese armies which had been landed on LUZON were converging on MANILA in a move to encircle the defending American and Filipino units. The American and Filipino forces eluded the trap, however, evacuated MANILA which fell on January 2, 1942, and withdrew to the rugged and difficult terrain of the BATAAN Peninsula. Although the defenders were outnumbered five to one, they held the Japanese at bay on the BATAAN battleground for three months.

Twelve weeks of constant fighting with no air support and against heavy odds exhausted the American-Filipino Army. On March 31, 1942, the Japanese forced a breach in the BATAAN lines while being supported by naval shellfire. Waves of Japanese shock troops poured through the crumbling defenses and on April 9, the Japanese over-ran the entire BATAAN sector.

Of the entire force of 43,000, about 36,000 were captured, killed or wounded in this battle. Lieutenant General Wainwright, the Philippine Force Commander, (he replaced General MacArthur who had been sent to AUSTRALIA), with a force of about 7000 soldiers, sailors and marines, and about 3000 civilians, escaped from BATAAN and fled to CORREGIDOR. This island fortress, however, was completely

cut off from aid. Japanese units stormed "The ROCK" and took it in an all-out assault on May 6, 1942. With the fall of CORREGIDOR, the Japanese had conquered the last main resistance in the PHILIPPINES.

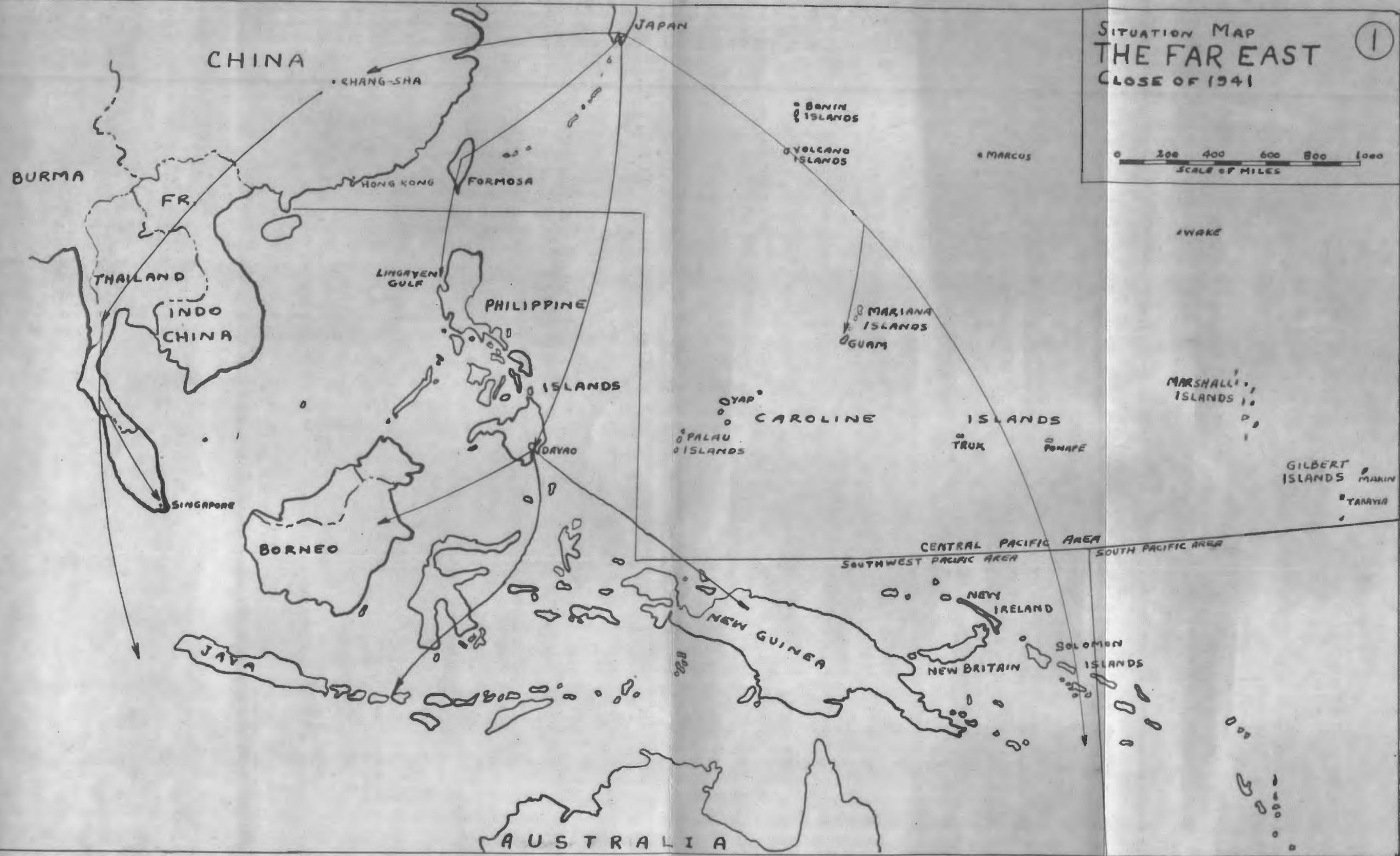
The fall of BATAAN was caused principally by the exhaustion of men produced by continual fighting over a long period of time combined with a shortage of rations. In short, defeat came as a result of reaching the physical limit of human endurance.

The first substantial Allied Offensive in the Asiatic Theater of operations after the outbreak of the war occurred on August 7, 1942 with the invasion of the SOLOMON ISLANDS. In subsequent chapters the actions of armored units involved in the come-back up through the islands will be depicted by maps and brief explanations.

SITUATION MAP
 THE FAR EAST
 CLOSE OF 1941

①

0 200 400 600 800 1000
 SCALE OF MILES

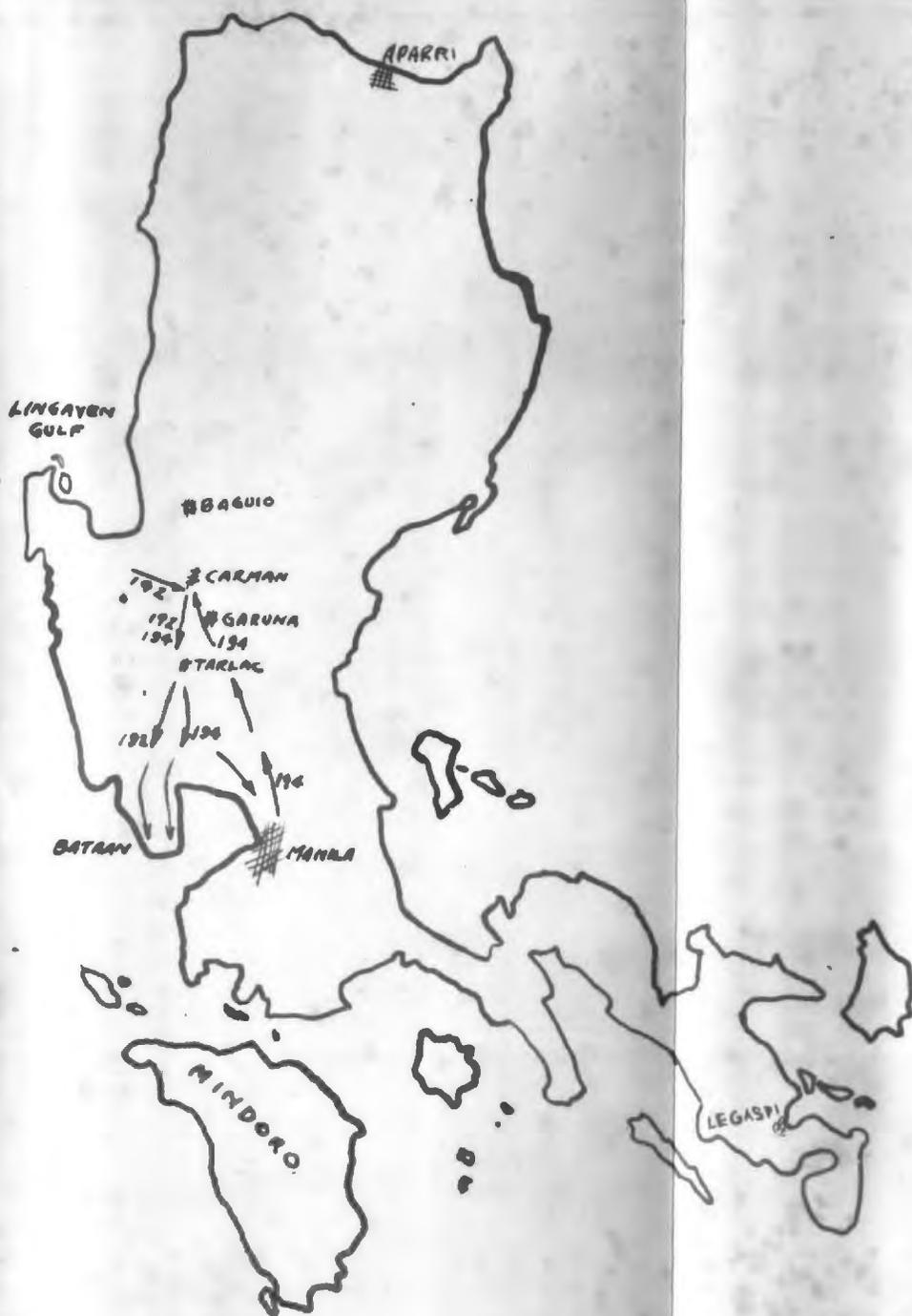


LUZON 1941
PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

2

0 50 100
MILES

6



CHAPTER 2

THE SOLOMON ISLANDS CAMPAIGN

SECTION I

General

On July 2, 1942, the U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered Allied Forces in the PACIFIC to mount a limited offensive to halt the Japanese advance toward the line of communication from the UNITED STATES to AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND. At the same time the UNITED STATES was committed to a program for building up forces in the UNITED KINGDOM to launch an offensive in EUROPE in 1942 or 1943. There were then available so few warships, transports and cargo ships, so few trained troops and so few weapons and supplies, that any offensive in the PACIFIC for which the UNITED STATES would have to provide most of the forces would necessarily be limited in scale. Yet it was essential to halt the Japanese who were then moving ever nearer to the flank of the tenuous line of communications. The Joint Chiefs' decision of July 2d led to a long, grim struggle for the possession of GUADALCANAL, an island in the remote BRITISH SOLOMON ISLANDS PROTECTORATE which was not specifically named in the orders issued by the Joint Chiefs.

Terrain

The SOLOMON ISLANDS (Map 1) are in the southern PACIFIC OCEAN, northeast of AUSTRALIA, east of NEW GUINEA, and between the NEW HEBRIDES ISLANDS and the BISMARCK ARCHIPELAGO. The islands constitute

a mountainous double chain. There are seven large islands and innumerable smaller islands in the group which occupies an area approximately 900 miles long from BUKA to the SANTA CRUZ GROUP, and 400 miles wide from ONTONG JAVA to RENNELL ISLAND. The largest and principal islands, however, form a double chain and are not more than 700 miles wide.

SECTION II

GUADALCANAL, TANAMBOGO, GAVUTU, TULAGI

Terrain

GUADALCANAL ISLAND (Map 3) is approximately 90 miles long and 25 miles wide at the widest point. Along its southern coast, jagged mountains rise precipitously from the shore line, reaching a height of 8000 feet. The northern slopes, densely wooded, give way abruptly to rolling foothills. Finger-like ridges reach into the flat coastal plain that extends along the north side of the island. Scattered throughout the high jungle foothills are numerous clearings covered with thick, high, tough-stemmed grasses. At frequent intervals, streams and rivers, originating in the foothills, flow to the coast. Some become tidal lagoons flanked by heavily overgrown swamps. Others, notably the LUNGA and the TENARU, are swift streams, flowing in relatively firm ground and offering fording sites. The thick jungle made travel, except along the rare native trails, an impossibility, save at the cost of painfully slow cutting through masses of vines and creepers. The one road on GUADALCANAL ran from

KOKUMBONA to TAIVU POINT skirting the shore line all the way. The beaches are sand or gravel falling away sharply from the water line. In many places, coral reefs extend from the shore for several miles, making coastal traffic hazardous except for the boats with the lightest draft. It was the broad level coastal plain of the north coast of GUADALCANAL that offered terrain suitable for the construction of large airfields. In the LUNGA area the Japanese were hard at work building the airfield that American Marines later named HENDERSON FIELD.

About 20 miles north of GUADALCANAL lie TULAGI, GAVUTU, TANAMBOGO and other smaller islands together with the much larger FLORIDA Island. They bound the adjoining harbors of TULAGI and GAVUTU.

GAVUTU Island, a mile and three-quarters to the east of TULAGI, is connected with TANAMBOGO by a stone causeway. These two islands form the western side of GAVUTU Harbor where the Japanese had developed a seaplane base.

Prior to our landing, intelligence reports had estimated the number of Japanese on TULAGI as approximately 800 and those on GAVUTU-TANAMBOGO about 1000. This estimate proved to be correct. On GUADALCANAL, however, only 1900 Japanese were present, concentrated between the KUKUM and the mouth of the TENARU River, in contrast to intelligence estimates of three to five thousand. About 1000 of the 1900 were labor troops of inferior quality.

General Situation

The invasion force, numbering 19,545 men, sortied in 17 transports from WELLINGTON on July 22, 1942. To strengthen his two-regiment division, the 1st, General Vandegrift had been given, as additional troops, the 2d Marines of the 2d Marine Division, the 1st Raider, 1st Parachute, the 3d Defense Battalion, and other special troops.

The immediate objectives to be seized and held by the expeditionary forces were:

1. the TULAGI-GAVUTU-TANAMBOGO area, the largest and best-developed anchorage in the southern SOLOMONS.
2. the nearly completed airfields on GUADALCANAL.

There was no opposition when the 1st Marine Division landed on GUADALCANAL the morning of August 7. The Japanese had been surprised at breakfast by the naval bombardment and had fled to the hills. That day, intelligence reports now show, there were no more than 1900 Japanese on GUADALCANAL and 1000 of these were laborers. The assault wave of the 1st Division (two battalions of the 5th Marines landed abreast) sent up "landing unopposed" flares at 0942, thirty minutes after they waded ashore on what seemed to be a deserted island.

The landing had achieved surprise, a surprise with a high value to the eventual success of the campaign. It gave the 1st Division time to get some of their awkwardly loaded supplies off the ships and it gave them practically unopposed possession of the airfield.

A simultaneously conducted operation under the command of Brigadier General William Rupertus, Assistant Division Commander, on

the adjoining islands of TULAGI, GAVUTU, and TANAMBOGO was not going so well. On TULAGI, the Japanese gave the Marines their first lesson in night attacks and infiltration.

The 1st Raider Battalion, a rugged and intensely trained unit, went ashore on the northwestern tip of 4000 yard long TULAGI on the morning of August 7, and, meeting no resistance, deployed from shore to shore of the island and pushed southeast, parallel to the ridge that spines two-thirds of the island. On August 8, the next day, two companies of the 2d Marines flanked the ridge, successfully attacked at 1500, and secured the island.

The Japs on GAVUTU and TANAMBOGO fought from the cave hillsides and the same bitter fighting as was experienced on TULAGI ensued. After fighting the Japs with knives and bayonets, mopping-up was completed on the 9th.

August 9 was to have more fateful implications than the mopping-up of a tiny island. At 0200, a Japanese Naval Task Force, whose size is even today not known, slipped undetected into the waters off GUADALCANAL and in 13 minutes left the cruiser Astoria a helpless cripple that later sank, the Chicago badly damaged, and the Canberra and Vincennes sinking.

The 1st Marine Division was now stranded on GUADALCANAL. The supply convoy, with badly-needed supplies still aboard, left the area along with the remainder of the task force.

Hope for an offensive against the Japanese on GUADALCANAL was abandoned. Instead of pushing ahead and conquering quickly the small

garrison that was on the island when they landed, Marines set up a static perimeter around the airfield. Although the Japanese mounted four major offensives, the Marines successfully defended the airfield until mid-November.

During these major offensives, General Vandergrift finally obtained some much-needed help. The 3d Division's 7th Marines, commanded by Colonel James W. Webb and the Army's 164th Infantry, reached GUADALCANAL on October 12-13, 1942.

The reinforcements gave the 1st Marine Division a force large enough to strike out in two offensives for widening the perimeter toward the west and the MATANIKAU River.

The first of these Marine offensives, launched September 23, ended in the only American defeat on GUADALCANAL. The second offensive (October 8-10), wrested the east bank of the MATANIKAU from the Japanese without major opposition.

Plans for the relief of the 1st Marine Division were under way, but it began to look as if there would be another battle before the badly-shattered and weakened outfit could leave. The Japanese were coming again. They counted on bringing in so large a force this time that they could not be denied. This calculation for a November offensive failed because they did not take into account the American Navy which had, by this time, licked its wounds and was ready to try again.

The American Navy, assisted by the Air Force on HENDERSON FIELD, smashed the Japanese Navy in a series of actions between November 11

and November 15, and ended the threat of a major November offensive.

There were no more major ground actions on GUADALCANAL while the 1st Marine Division was there. The Division completed evacuation on December 9. On this date, General Vandergrift turned his command over to Major General Alexander Patch, USA, Commanding General of the Americal Division. With the Japanese unable to attack, General Patch judged the time ripe to inaugurate the offensive which was to drive them from the island forever.

The Army's 25th Infantry Division arrived in mid-January. By this time, the high-ranking Japanese officers and the formidable force which had been reported to be on the island had been evacuated to BUIN and RABAUL. Organized resistance on GUADALCANAL had ceased.¹

Tanks in Action

2d Marine Tank Battalion. The 2d Marine Tank Battalion, part of the 2d Marine Division, supported the Marines in this action. Tank warfare in this campaign was very limited because of lack of roads, poor trafficability and jungle.

Armored warfare, typical of this campaign, can best be described in the battle for TANAMBOGO. The 3d Battalion, 2d Marine Division was given the mission of securing TANAMBOGO and the flank of the forces on GAVUTU. The battalion commander decided to send one company, less its weapons platoon, reinforced with two light tanks.

from Company C, 2d Marine Tank Battalion, to the north end of TANAMBOGO for an amphibious landing. It was a good plan and it worked but it was not an easy way to take TANAMBOGO.

...The Tank commander drove his two light eggshell monsters inland, screaming Japs ran at the tanks with pipes and crowbars to jam the treads. Sweeney's guns were all going and so were the guns of his companion tank, but there was a painful lack of room to maneuver. Rising from the turret to reconnoiter, Sweeney took a bullet through the head. The tank stalled and the crewmen fought their way out of it against Japs who were swinging knives and pitch forks. Meanwhile the other tank was stuck between two Coconut Palms. Its trapped crew was confronted by an equally horrifying attack with gruesome trimmings. The Japs fired the tank with gasoline and set upon the desperate Marines with knives and bayonets. Two Marines died and two others survived severe burns and multiple knife wounds. But the next day the bodies of forty-two Japs were counted within the sweep of the burned tank's guns...

In attacking the GIFU position on GUADALCANAL, tanks were made available to the 2d Battalion, 35th Infantry, 25th Infantry Division. These tanks greatly simplified breaking the enemy lines. Three Marine Corps light tanks, manned by soldiers from the 25th Division's Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, started up the jeep trail toward MOUNT AUSTEN's 1514-foot crest (see map). Two tanks broke down, but the third reached the top. As the tank drew near the GIFU position, infantrymen fired mortars and machine guns to drown out its sound, then cut down trees to permit the tank to approach the Japanese front lines.

Supported by 16 infantrymen, the tank drove into the northeast part of the GIFU Line at 1040 on January 22d. It pulled up close to

three pillboxes and destroyed them with 37-mm high-explosive shells. The Japanese soldiers were destroyed with canister and machine gun fire. Turning left (south), the tank broke out through the east end of the GIFU Line. At 1500 it made one more attack against the north side of the GIFU position and destroyed five more pillboxes. This one tank, in a few hours, had torn a hole in an enemy line that had withstood infantry assaults for a month.

Even though the jungle hampered their vision and freedom of maneuver the tanks proved effective in this operation. They were safe, however, only when closely employed with infantry. Light tanks, the only kind of tanks used on GUADALCANAL, were vulnerable to enemy gunfire; medium tanks would have proved more satisfactory.³

SECTION III

BOUGAINVILLE ISLAND

Terrain

BOUGAINVILLE ISLAND (Map 4), northwest of the SHORTLAND Islands, extends from the northwest to the southeast for a distance of 120 miles and averages about 40 miles in width. Two mountain ranges, the EMPEROR and CROWN PRINCE, make up most of the Island's mass. The EMPEROR Range dominates the northern half of the Island. This range, with an elevation of about 5000 feet, runs almost due north and south and is capped by MT BALBI, an active volcano, 10,171 feet high. At about the center of the Island, the mountain chain bends to the southeast becoming the CROWN PRINCE Range. There are several peaks in

this range between 6000 and 7000 feet high. This latter range decreases in elevation near its southeastern end, terminating at CAPE FRIENDSHIP. The mountain areas are heavily forested. A large lowland extends southwestward from the base of the CROWN PRINCE Range for a distance of between 15 and 20 miles to the coast. This lowland is covered with tropical rain forest, secondary forest, ~~Coc~~ coconut trees and native gardens. A narrow coastal lowland extends along the western side of the Island, interrupted only at PURNATA by hill spurs from the Central Mountain Chain. There are several coastal lowlands on the eastern coast that are small and separated by hill spurs. North of KIETA, the CROWN PRINCE Range recedes somewhat from the coast, leaving a well-watered, flat, waste region. There is a considerable area of low rolling land near the northern end of the Island consisting of raised coral ridges. A steep cliff backs the shore line around the northern end of the Island and extends southward down the east coast.

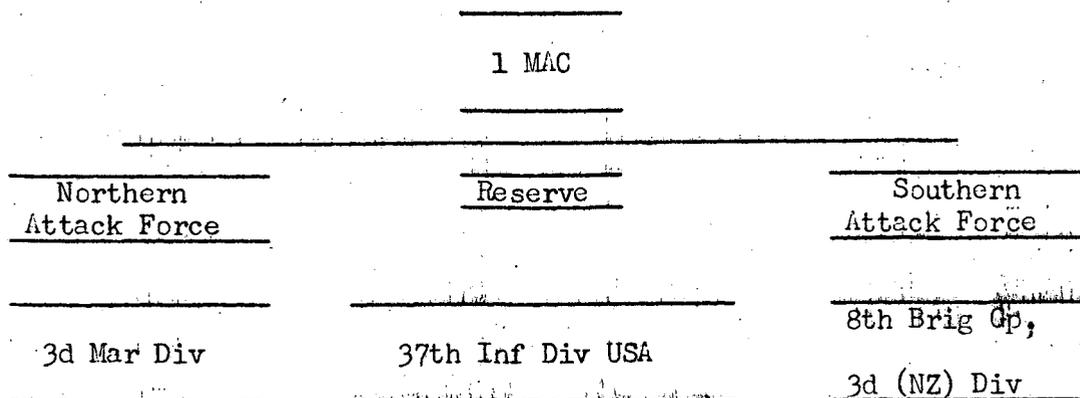
General Situation

In September 1943, preliminary plans were formulated for the seizure of a position on BOUGAINVILLE from which aircraft could operate to neutralize RABAU and from which the supply line from that base to the enemy's airfields and naval bases in the BUIN area could be cut.

The task of seizing CAPE TOROKINA region was assigned to the First Marine Amphibious Corps, commanded by Lieutenant General Alexander A. Vandergrift at the time of the operation. After the

landing, he was relieved by Major General Roy S. Geiger, in order to return to the UNITED STATES to become Commandant of the Marine Corps.

A diagram of the 1st Marine Amphibious Corps task organization follows:



On September 27th, the mission of the 3d Marine Division was announced: to land in the vicinity of CAPE TOROKINA, EMPRESS AUGUSTA Bay and to seize, occupy and defend an initial beachhead (to include PURNATA Island and TOROKINA Island) between the LARUMO and TOROKINA Rivers. The beachhead was to extend approximately 2250 yards inland from CAPE TOROKINA.

The New Zealanders and parachutists were assigned special missions directly related to the BOUGAINVILLE operation, yet not connected with the actual landing on October 27. Four days before D-Day, the Brigade, reinforced with some US Forces, made an assault landing on the enemy-held TREASURY Islands, 65 nautical miles southeast of EMPRESS AUGUSTA Bay. This operation had a dual purpose: to serve as a feint to distract the enemy from our main purpose, and to neutralize a potential threat to our line of communications. The New Zealanders

met considerable resistance in that difficult terrain but had succeeded in securing the entire area by November 12.

D-Day was set for November 1, 1943, H-Hour for 0645. The convoy reached the transport area off shore without notable incident and loaded the assault troops into the landing craft.

For the initial landing, the 21st Marines were in Division Reserve, and the 37th Infantry Division was in Corps Reserve. The assault troops consisted of the 3d Marines, 9th Marines and Raider Regiment less one battalion.

From the initial landings until the end of Marine Corps participation, the story of BOUGAINVILLE is one of a beachhead expanding slowly and inexorably against nature and the Japanese. Within this beachhead, Engineers and Seabees struggled to make usable and livable as unpromising an area as could be found in the entire PACIFIC.

The Japanese did make one abortive attempt to throw out the invaders. In many respects, this was reminiscent of their operations on GUADALCANAL. They miscalculated our numbers and position and frittered away their troops by failing to coordinate their attacks.

This offensive, if that title is justified, broke into two phases which became known as the KOROMOKINA LAGOON and PIVA TRAIL engagements.

The first elements of the Army's 37th Division had arrived on November 8. As the arrival of the remaining elements brought it up to strength, this Division was assigned the western half of the beachhead as a zone. This move greatly facilitated development of the

perimeter by allowing the marines to concentrate their full strength to the right where the heaviest resistance was being met.

After bitter resistance, the enemy withdrew and set up defensive positions in the hinterlands beyond the range of our artillery. It did not seem to enter the enemy's mind that we had gained all that we wanted of that inhospitable island. The permanent perimeter was dug in by December 10. The offensive phase of the BOUGAINVILLE operation was over. On March 24th, after a final assault by the enemy, his power on the Island was broken.

Tanks in Action

The 3d Marine Tank Battalion was the tank unit which participated in this campaign. Those elements of the tank battalion which landed, acted for the first few days as scouts and reconnoitered terrain over which they would be required to fight.

During the battle of COCOANUT GROVE (see map) a platoon of five medium tanks of the 3d Marine Tank Battalion were in support of the 2d Battalion, 21st Marines. As the tanks moved out, they became confused and fired into our own troops. In addition, several marines were run over by tanks.⁴ The tanks, less two damaged by enemy weapons, were ordered to return to an assembly position in reserve.

On one occasion, two tanks were used to support the attack of a rifle platoon, but because of thick jungle and swampy trails, the tanks were unable to do more than evacuate wounded.⁵

On another occasion, the 3d Battalion of the 3d Marines, with some light tanks attached, reduced a roadblock by hitting it in the flank. This position was a covering position for the main Japanese defense line east of PIVA.⁶

Summary

Tanks were used in close support of the Marine Battalions, but because of the limited area for maneuver, lack of roads, and the nature of the terrain, their use was restricted. In spite of these restrictions, however, the tanks proved to be effective when suitably employed. It was apparent early in the operation that close teamwork between the infantry and the tanks was necessary. Because of some unfortunate experiences of control, it was soon found that close coordination and communications were essential in the development of a smooth tank-infantry team.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 2

¹John Miller, Jr., United States Army in World War II, GUADALCANAL, The First Offensive (Washington: Historical Division Department of the Army, 1949), p 349.

²Richard W. Johnston, Follow Me (New York: Random House, 1948), pp 30-31.

³Ltr., CG 1st Marine Division to Commandant, Marine Corps 1 July 1943, SUBJECT: Final report Guada Opn.

⁴Major John N. Rentz, USMC, BOUGAINVILLE and the NORTHERN SOLOMONS (Washington: Historical Division Department of Public Information Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps), p 58.

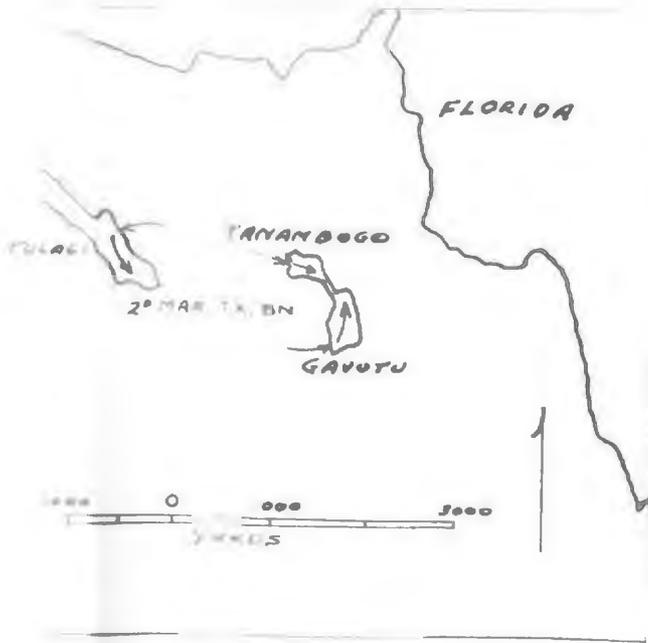
⁵Ibid, p 48.

⁶Ibid, passim.

GUADALCANAL SOLOMON ISLANDS

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BOUGAINVILLE SOLOMON ISLANDS

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CHAPTER 3

NEW GUINEA AND BISMARCK ARCHIPELAGO

SECTION I

NEW GUINEA

Terrain

NEW GUINEA (Map 5) is the second largest island in the world. With the SOLOMON ISLANDS it virtually commands the northern approaches to the vital eastern and southeastern maritime fringe of the AUSTRALIAN continent. Rugged interior terrain and lack of major developed facilities increase its qualities as a defensive barrier; conversely, various positions along the coast and on the off-lying islands offer air bases and harbors either for operations against RABAUL or for hostile movement against AUSTRALIA.

Sixty-five percent of NEW GUINEA is over 2000 feet in elevation and it has some of the most varied land surface of any area of its size in the world. Three main types of surface are found here: central mountain ranges, interior high level river basins between the mountain ranges, and two large lowland areas. The central part of the area, comprising well over half of the total land area is high, rugged and isolated. The high interior valleys are perhaps the best sites for human habitation, but they are limited in extent and are isolated. The two lowland areas, which include the SEPIK-RAWEE lowland on the north and the ELY RIVER lowland on the southwest, are wet, unhealthy and have many jungle swamps and jungle

vegetation. From a military point of view, the interior is a barrier to be avoided or to be crossed as quickly as possible.

General Situation

Japanese forces landed on northern NEW GUINEA on January 23, 1942 with the purpose of making the Island an advance base and staging area for the invasion of AUSTRALIA. This seizure placed the Japanese within 500 miles of AUSTRALIA. This distance shortened as the Japanese advanced south to SALAMAU, LAE and BUNA in early March, a move that placed them within 100 miles of PORT MORESBY, the largest Allied base of NEW GUINEA.

After consolidating their positions on the northeastern coast, the Japanese started across the Island in July with a force of 2500 men from BUNA to PORT MORESBY. Met by Australian troops midway between the two towns, the Japanese were halted, held in position for several months, and finally driven back to the coast in mid-November. This was the end of the Japanese advance against AUSTRALIA. Fighting was to continue in this area until the end of the war but the Japanese were never again able to threaten AUSTRALIA so strongly. GONA and BUNA fell to the Allies in December 1942, and January 1943 respectively, and we now had a beachhead on the northern coast of NEW GUINEA.¹

No history of the war in the PACIFIC can be complete without a summary of the continuous war that was waged on the Island of NEW GUINEA. Through June and July of 1943, the Allies pushed north

through the jungles towards SALAMAU. This was a slow, costly advance. On the night of June 30-July 1, a new method of attack was started. An amphibious landing was made near MUBO to cut off the Japanese north of BUNA. This was followed on September 4th by a landing east of LAE, on September 23 by a landing near FINSCHAFEN, which not only isolated the troops south of that point, but pushed north, exerting an everincreasing pressure on the enemy. By February 10, 1944, this force, mostly Australian, had seized SAIDOR and on April 23d had advanced to MADANG. It was at this time that the large operations started along the NEW GUINEA coast when, on April 22, a three-pronged amphibious landing was made far to the northwest. Two United States regiments landed north of AITAPE isolating the headquarters of the Japanese Eighteenth Army at WEWAK. Simultaneously, two American Divisions landed on both sides of HOLLANDIA, still further north, and seized the three airfields in that vicinity. There was bitter fighting, especially in the vicinity of AITAPE and WEWAK, and many Allied units were committed in that area, becoming "battle-hardened" and moving on to other fields of action. It was not until June 1945 that the WEWAK campaign could be considered ended. Meanwhile, on May 17, 1944, landings were made on WAKDE Island and on the mainland opposite the Island. These were followed by hops to BIAK ISLAND on May 22, to NEOMFOOR ISLAND on July 2, to SANSOPAR on July 30, and to MOROTAI ISLAND on September 15. While these landings set the stage for the invasion of the PHILIPPINES, it must not be assumed that the fighting was ended on NEW GUINEA.

Japanese were present in great numbers in the mountains and Allied troops were still committed to trying to contain them here when the war ended. Once the beaches and airfields had been seized, however, the Allies were within 300 miles of the southern coast of the PHILIPPINES and it was but a question of time until an invasion would be made in that country.²

Tanks in Action

As may be seen from the description of the terrain and the nature of the action, there was little opportunity for the use of tanks in these operations; it was only in the vicinity of AITAPE that tanks were used and they were of no great value. Company B, 44th Tank Battalion, was landed in the vicinity of AITAPE. Two days after landing, a platoon of the company was committed in defense of the airfield perimeter. This platoon supported the 103d Combat Team, 43d Division whose position was threatened by a Japanese advance from the south. This Japanese force made several attacks in an attempt to seize the TADJI Airfield. During these attacks, tanks were used in groups of two or three to support the infantry. The Japanese finally retreated. Thereafter, the tanks were used in support of patrols to fire on small enemy groups consisting of machine gun nests set up to harass our troops. August 25th saw the tanks withdrawn from action and assembled in the vicinity of AITAPE to prepare for action in other operations.³

SECTION II

NEW BRITAIN

Terrain

NEW BRITAIN (Map 6), the largest island of the BISMARCK ARCHIPELAGO, lies directly east of NEW GUINEA and is quite mountainous, with the maximum elevation near 7500 feet. There are no large mountain ranges, rather the island consists of a jumble of more-or-less isolated volcano peaks. Low flat land is rare. The Island is drained by short streams, many of which are swampy near the mouth. Tropical forest is the dominant vegetation with some areas of Kunae Grass near the western end of the Island in the vicinity of CAPE GLOUCESTER.

General Situation

Japanese troops had occupied NEW BRITAIN in early 1942 and immediately began to develop it as a supply and air base and a staging area to supply reinforcements to the neighboring islands, especially NEW GUINEA and GUADALCANAL. With the exception of making infrequent bombing raids on RABAUL, the largest settlement located on the northeastern tip of the Island, Allied forces had been unable to institute much action against the Japanese stationed there.

After the Allies seized the eastern coast of NEW GUINEA in 1943, the Japanese strengthened their forces on NEW BRITAIN and harassed our ground and sea forces from the air. RABAUL itself was only 300 miles from our nearest air base. In addition, the Island contained

five airfields with one as far west as the tip of CAPE GLOUCESTER. Neutralization of RABAU and the capture of the airfields on NEW BRITAIN became imperative if our operations in and from NEW GUINEA to the north were to continue.

112th Cavalry Regimental Combat Team. On December 15, 1943, the 112th Cavalry Regimental Combat Team landed at AIRAVE on the southwestern coast of NEW BRITAIN. Their mission was to seize the airfield and then to push north and make a junction with the 1st Marine Division which was to land later on the north shore of the Island. Landing with some difficulty, the Regimental Combat Team moved inland and captured the airfield in six days. Strong enemy resistance forced the 112th to withdraw from the airfield. Another attack was launched and the airfield retaken. Enemy resistance again forced the 112th to withdraw. In this manner, possession of the airfield passed back and forth several times. In fact, it was not until the 112th was reinforced by the 158th Combat Team that sufficient strength could be concentrated to drive the Japanese entirely from the airfield. With this task completed, the 112th drove northward to make the juncture with the marines. The advance was slow and the two forces did not meet until February. At no time was there a strong line established across the island.⁴

1st Marine Division. The 1st Marine Division had the main effort in this campaign. This Division, veteran of GUADALCANAL, was ordered to take the airfield on the northwestern corner of the Island and then effect a junction with the Army troops on the southern

part of the Island. Initial plans called for two landings on December 26th on CAPE GLOUCESTER: one about six miles east of the airfield, the other southwest of the airfield. The landings east of the airfield were made by the 7th and 1st Marine Regiments (less one battalion) supported by tanks of the 1st Marine Tank Battalion. These units were to push westward to the objective while the 2d Battalion of the 1st Marines made the landing south of the airfield to intercept any fleeing Japanese.

The main landing east of the airfield was made virtually unopposed after the Japanese positions had been covered by naval escort vessels and bombed by a flight of 115 bombers, the largest single air strike to date in the theater. The beach at this point was so narrow that, as one observer stated;

A tall man could lie with his head under cover of the vegetation and his feet in the water.

Cutting through the initial jungle growth, bulldozers hit the road constructed by the Japanese for the purpose of supplying the airfield. Here there was a narrow strip of dry land fifty to several hundred yards wide; beyond that, jungle and ankle-deep swamp.

Perhaps the most important single factor in this campaign was the weather. This was the Monsoon Season during which a single day's rainfall of 20 inches was not unusual. One author gives a very graphic account of the difficulties this weather presented the troops.

...The Division could use none of its numerous trucks in mud where even jeeps foundered and had to be hauled out with winches; where artillery pieces were in above the wheelhubs; where amptracks were the only means of

supply, and where marines in their spotted jungle clothing were wet to the skin the first night and did not dry out for weeks. The little streams were all torrents. Engineers and Seabees no sooner set up a bridge than it went out; cooks at the galleys stood in water to their knees and it was hot, hot, hot...

The 7th Marines landed first and drove inland with all Battalions abreast and set up a defensive line approximately 1000 yards from shore. There was little resistance. The 1st Marine Regiment, landing in trace behind the 7th, turned right (west) with the mission of seizing the airfield. The 1st Battalion, leading, ran into opposition almost at once: an extensive roadblock which fired point blank into the Marines and inflicting heavy casualties. An ammunition-carrying amphibious tractor attacked the roadblock, but became wedged between two trees and before it could be extricated, Japanese attacked and killed two of its three crew members. Soon afterwards, two tanks which had just landed, were dispatched forward and overran the roadblock.

Pushing forward through the jungles, the marines reached the airfield on December 29. The 5th Marine Regiment had been called for from Division Reserve and was committed on the left of the 1st Marines. At 1500 hours, a coordinated attack was launched and by nightfall, the airfield had been taken. Japanese troops counterattacked twice the following day but their last attack was so costly, that they withdrew from the field.

Meanwhile, the remainder of the Japanese forces had retired under General Matsuda to an organized position about three miles

south of the original landing beaches near a mountain known to the marines as HILL 660. The 7th Marine Regiment, with the 2d Battalion of the 5th Marines attached, attacked this position on January 2, 1944 with four battalions abreast, supported by two battalions of artillery, one battalion of Engineers, and some tanks of the 1st Marine Tank Battalion. The battle lasted until January 14 when the 3d Battalion finally succeeded in flanking the enemy position on HILL 660. This virtually completed the CAPE GLOUCESTER phase of the NEW BRITAIN campaign. After two abortive Banzai charges in small numbers, the Japanese began a withdrawal toward RABAUL.

After securing the positions on CAPE GLOUCESTER, the marines moved along the north coast of NEW BRITAIN in short bounds attempting to cut off the main enemy forces. This action was not successful but by the end of February, our lines had moved to IBOLI about 60 miles east of the Cape. On March 6th, a move was made 57 miles east to the WILLAUMEZ PENINSULA by the 5th Marines. By March 9th, the Japanese positions had been overrun and the Peninsula was in our hands.

The NEW GUINEA campaign was terminated officially on March 16. It was estimated that 50,000 Japanese were yet on the island, but they were cut off from supply and reinforcements and never interfered with our operations to the west.

Tanks in Action

The 1st Marine Tank Battalion was the only armored unit engaged in the NEW BRITAIN operation. Tanks landed on D-Day immediately

behind the second wave of infantry and were sent out at once in support of the 1st Marine Regiment where they were used to overrun roadblocks, small pillboxes and strong points. Again, on the 28th of December, the tanks were called upon to charge one especially strong pillbox that was defended by artillery. The tanks overran both the artillery and the block. Tanks led the attack on the airfield after an artillery preparation, and within a few hours, the field was in possession of the marines.

On December 29th, the Japanese occupied abandoned positions on the southeast edge of the airfield. Here, in one of the fiercest fights of the campaign, a platoon of tanks, aided by the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, in driving the Japanese back into the hills.

In the struggle for HILL 660, tanks could do little in the swampy bottoms and steep ridges of the cross corridors. Bulldozers cut roads behind the advancing marines and the tanks struggled through. On January 13, two light tanks were instrumental in saving a company of the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, that was pinned down on the side of HILL 660. The tanks managed to get into a position to place direct fire on the Japanese positions, thus freeing the company. No further action was reported in the CAPE GLOUCESTER campaign.

During the landings on the WILLAUMEZ PENINSULA, novel use was made of the tanks. There was no naval fire support; the Marines braced the Sherman tanks in position on LCMs and used them for fire support for the landings.

After the beachhead had been established, tanks supported an attack inland during which one tank was damaged by a magnetic mine. In the struggle across the Peninsula, there was little opportunity for tank action and the campaign closed without further commitment of the tanks.⁵

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 3

¹Frank O. Hough, The Island War (Philadelphia and New York: John A. Lippincott Co., 1947), p 92.

²Gilbert Cant, The Great Pacific Victory (New York: The John Day Company, 1945), p 102 ff.

³After Action Report, 44th Tank Battalion.

⁴Cant, op cit, p 150.

⁵Hough, op cit, Ch 7.

NOGOTAI

NEW GUINEA

5



3/



AUSTRALIA

BISMARCK ARCHIPELAGO

6

ST. MATTHIAS ISLANDS

MUSSAU

ENIRAU



31

ADMIRALTIES

LOS NEGROS

MANUS



NEW IRELAND

GREEN ISLAND

LONG IS.

AIRFIELD

MT. MAR. TR. GN.

WILLIAMS PER.

UMBSI

CAPE GLOUCESTER

HILL 660

ARAVE

NEW BRITAIN

PINSCHHAFEN



NEW GUINEA

TROBIAND

GOODENOUGH

WOODLARK

FERNSEEN

NORMANBY

CHAPTER 4

THE GILBERT ISLANDS

SECTION I

General

The strategic situation in the fall of 1943 was as follows: In the North PACIFIC Theater we had ousted the Japanese from their footholds in the ALEUTIANS; in the South PACIFIC the 3d Marine Division was fighting in BOUGAINVILLE to complete the conquest of the SOLOMONS. In two years of fighting we had yet to capture a single point which the enemy had not themselves taken from us or one of our Allies since the beginning of the war.¹

Now the time had come to strike in the Central PACIFIC aiming in general toward that great enemy stronghold, TRUK. TARAWA was just the first of many major obstacles which must be removed to clear our way. TARAWA, with its three-strip airfield, elaborate fortifications bristling with guns of all sizes and garrison of 4000 picked men stood as the outermost bastion of the whole EAST ASIA CO-PROSPERITY SPHERE and was a constant threat to our line of communication with PEARL HARBOR.²

Terrain

THE GILBERT ISLANDS, (Map 7), in the form of an irregular crescent open to the northeast, cross the EQUATOR seven degrees west of the International Date Line. Though remote from any large body of land, the GILBERTS are virtually surrounded by other clusters of

small islands. To the north lie the MARSHALLS; to the south, the ELLICE Group; to the east, the PHOENIX Group; and to the southwest at a greater distance, the SOLOMONS. With the exception of TAMANA and NUKUNAU, the GILBERTS are atolls. Each atoll consists of several long, low and narrow islets arranged along a more or less circular coral reef which encloses a lagoon. On the seaward side of these atolls, a fringing reef platform of coral extends outward for a distance of about one-quarter of a mile. Coconut Palms and Pandanus trees grow nearly everywhere throughout these islands. Low scrub is present in most places. The vegetation affords good cover for ground operations and some concealment from the air. A more detailed description of TARAWA and MAKIN is contained in the following paragraphs.

TARAWA Atoll is triangular in shape with points to the north, southeast and south. From north to south the atoll is approximately 21 miles long. The maximum width, at the south, is the same. The northeastern and southern sides of the atoll consist of a chain of islets of varying sizes. Along the lagoon side of each islet there is a coral road. Water on the reef is so shallow at half tide, that it is possible to go from one islet to another in no more than waist-deep wading. The western side of the atoll is largely submerged reefs with depth of water variations of from 12 to 60 feet. The lagoon has numerous shallow areas. The main ship entrance channel to the lagoon is from the west about three miles north of BETIO. Anchorage is in 24 feet of water about three-quarters of a mile north

of the islets. There is good anchorage outside the Atoll in 90 feet of water one mile west of BETIO Isle. Patches of coral with shallow water over them are more numerous in the lagoons which have the quietest water. The islands of the main chain are all low. No one of them rises over 15 feet high. Soils are sandy and are shallow everywhere. In many places, coral is exposed on the surface. Owing to the small size of the islands and the porous nature of the soil there are no streams.

SECTION II

TARAWA

Terrain

See SECTION I.

General Situation

The operation for the GILBERT ISLANDS offensive was conducted by the V Amphibious Corps, a new command echelon containing both Marine Corps and Army units, commanded by Major General Holland M. Smith. Two divisions were employed: the 2d Marine Division, and the 27th Infantry Division. The 27th was as yet untried in battle. Its objective was lightly held MAKIN Island. To the veteran 2d Marine Division went the objective of TARAWA or, more accurately, BETIO, the particular island of the TARAWA ATOLL where the Japanese had their airfield and had concentrated their defense installations. BETIO is two and one-half miles long and 800 yards wide at the widest point.

On November 20th, the battle for TARAWA began in a pre-dawn twilight with a salvo from the Japanese shore batteries. After our big guns opened up, the coastal guns seized at SINGAPORE and transported to BETIO were reduced and silenced. Other, and smaller, shore guns still remained active but the long-range Vickers were eliminated.³

A platoon of scouts-snipers from the 2d Marines were the first troops ashore. It was their job to secure BETIO's long pier from which enemy snipers and machine gun crews, concentrated in this position perpendicular to the beach, hoped to harass and disorganize the unprotected flanks of the landing teams.⁴

The first assault waves reached the beach at the east end of the pier. Two minutes later the second wave came in and five minutes after that, the third.

The first waves of landing boats ran aground on a reef about 500 to 1000 yards from the beach. Boatloads of marines had to scramble over the gunwales and wade into the beach with their rifles high above their heads. Because of the staggering blows dealt the enemy by our navy and air power, few casualties were incurred from enemy fire.

Later attack waves encountered stiff Japanese resistance. The Japanese system of defense had withstood the pre-invasion pummeling which left them with advantageous firing positions from which they attempted to repel the marines. The enemy communications, however, were badly damaged. Cut off from field command, they could only meet the marines in pitched battle and fight for survival.⁵

Messages went back from shore to ship to tell the high command of the desperate fighting on shore and to ask for needed reinforcements. The 1st Battalion of the 8th Marines went in early on November 21, 1943, the second day of the battle. On that second day, the entire 2d Marine Division was ashore. The attacking units went after one-man pillboxes, dozens of concrete forts, Japs in trees, Japs in debris, Japs hiding in tank traps and Japs hiding everywhere.

There was one Banzai rush on the night of the 22d in the 6th Marines sector, but it was repulsed. The attack continued over the tiny island and at 1312 on the 23d of November, the battle for BETIO Isle, TARAWA ATOLL, was officially declared ended by Major General Julian C. Smith. The battle for TARAWA was one of the fastest and fiercest battles of World War II -- lasting only 76 hours.

Tanks in Action

The 2d Marine Tank Battalion was the only tank unit that participated in the TARAWA operation. Because of the difficult terrain and the obstacles encountered, the tanks had poor trafficability.

Some Marine tanks got ashore across the reef early in the afternoon of D-Day and did yeoman service from then on. These were the General Sherman Medium Tanks, new to the Marine Corps and whose adaptability to island fighting was regarded with considerable misgivings. They proved their worth conclusively, however, as they continued to do in subsequent operations. They easily knocked out the lighter tanks with which the enemy sought to oppose them; and, while they did

not provide the final answer to the problem of destroying heavy fortifications, there can be no doubt they saved many lives.

As the Marines moved into their final offensive to destroy the enemy's grip, two Sherman tanks, the Colorado and China Gal, with seven light tanks, supported the 3d Battalion of the 6th Marines. In a series of supporting bombproof shelters, most of BETIO's determined defenders had gathered to make one last effort for the Emperor. As the marines moved in, the Japanese in the biggest shelter suddenly broke from their cover and poured down the narrow exit channel. An infantry spotter rapped hard on the Colorado's side and the tank commander swung his gun around and fired. It was dream shot, point-blank, on the erupting stream of humanity. They estimated that 50-75 enemy troops were killed with this bowling ball shot.⁶

SECTION III

MAKIN

Terrain

MAKIN ATOLL is roughly triangular in shape with the base of the triangle to the north. The maximum east-west length is 20 miles. The northern and southern sides of the Atoll are almost continuous reef with three passages usable for shallow draft boats. On the reef are several small islets between which are several small-ship channels to the lagoon. The best ship channel lies four and one-quarter miles from the southern point of the Atoll. The lagoon is broken by many patches of coral and reefs. Small islets crown several of these reefs. A good coral road extends the length of each of the two largest islets.

General Situation

The MAKIN operation was under the direction of the V Amphibious Corps. The Corps consisted of the 2d Marine Division and the 27th Infantry Division. The 27th had the mission of securing MAKIN Island.⁷

The soldiers of the 27th Division met a very different reception on MAKIN than the Marines had encountered on TARAWA. Actually, they landed earlier, owing to the postponement of the TARAWA invasion H-Hour. The MAKIN invasion began at 0830 on D-Day. The assault combat team consisted of the 165th Infantry reinforced, together with one platoon of the V Amphibious Corps' Reconnaissance Company. The objective for this team was BUTUARITARI Island, the principal stronghold of the Atoll. The 1st and 3d Battalions hit the southwestern end with the 2d Battalion coming in about two hours later from the lagoon or northern side. Both landings met light resistance from snipers and automatic weapons but were able to drive inland quickly. At 1746 that afternoon, they succeeded in effecting a junction and securing approximately two-thirds of the island.

The next day produced more fighting, and on D + 2, Major General Ralph C. Smith, Commanding General of the 27th Infantry Division, declared that organized resistance had ceased at 1430.⁸

Tanks in Action

The 193d Tank Battalion supported the 27th Infantry Division in the action in MAKIN Atoll. In the final plans for the invasion, the 165th Regimental Combat Team reinforced was destined to make the assault.

Landings were to be made over the Red (southwestern) Beaches by the 1st and 3d Battalion Landing Teams. If the Red Beach landings went well, they were to be followed two hours later by another landing over the Yellow (lagoon) Beaches by the 2d Battalion Landing Teams. If the Red Beach landings went well, they were to be followed two hours later by another landing over the Yellow (lagoon) Beaches by the 2d Battalion Landing Team of the 165th.⁹ Light tanks of the 193d would accompany the 1st and 3d Battalions ashore while a whole company of mediums from the same unit would move ashore over Yellow Beach. The Yellow Beach landing would be made after the landings on Red Beach.

Headquarters Company of the 193d Tank Battalion manned 16 Amphibious Tractors, and after the landings on Red Beach, participated in the Yellow Beach operation and were able to give the infantry close support in cleaning out the beach shelters. The tanks of Company A, 193d Tank Battalion, landed on Yellow Beach in the second wave, but because of communication difficulties and a misunderstanding, none of the vehicles accompanied the infantry drive across the island. Shortly before 1230, the Battalion Commander managed to get the drivers straightened out and they took up their positions along the line established by the foot troops.

The infantry was stalemated after reaching the heart of the west tank barrier system which lay in the center of the island. From this hub, a series of slit trenches branched out each ending in a dug-out or shelter.

A special engineer-infantry team was formed, and while the tanks outposted the general area, three infantrymen covered the ports of the pillbox being attacked. The tanks finished the job by running over the crumpled structure completely crushing it. Methodically, pillbox by pillbox, shelter by shelter, using the same procedure on each enemy emplacement, the infantry was able to advance.

An attack to the east, scheduled for 0700, was to have the help of all the tanks on the island but it was delayed because the tanks were short of fuel.¹⁰

The remaining tank action on this island was a mopping-up of small points of resistance and was accomplished in close support of infantry and engineers. The tank support was very effective and by aggressive action, overran many enemy positions, saving the lives of many American soldiers.

Summary

The limited terrain encountered in the campaigns for TARAWA and MAKIN did not allow for the proper employment of tanks. The tanks, however, proved to be very effective in mopping-up action and the reduction of pillboxes.

Although the operations were brief, the tankers learned many valuable lessons they were able to put to good use in subsequent operations. Island fighting, they found, required careful planning and close coordination with the infantry. Beaches, obstacles, and rugged terrain were found to be vital factors in the employment of tanks.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 4

¹Frank O. Hough, The Island War (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1947) p 125.

²Ibid, p 126.

³Six Marine Corps Combat Correspondents, Uncommon Valor Marine Divisions in Action (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1946), p 66.

⁴Ibid, p 67.

⁵Ibid, passim.

⁶Richard W. Johnston, Follow Me (New York: Random House, 1948), pp 148-149.

⁷Hough, op cit, p 126.

⁸Ibid, p 146.

⁹Captain Edmund G. Love, The 27th Infantry Division in World War II (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1949), pp 27-28.

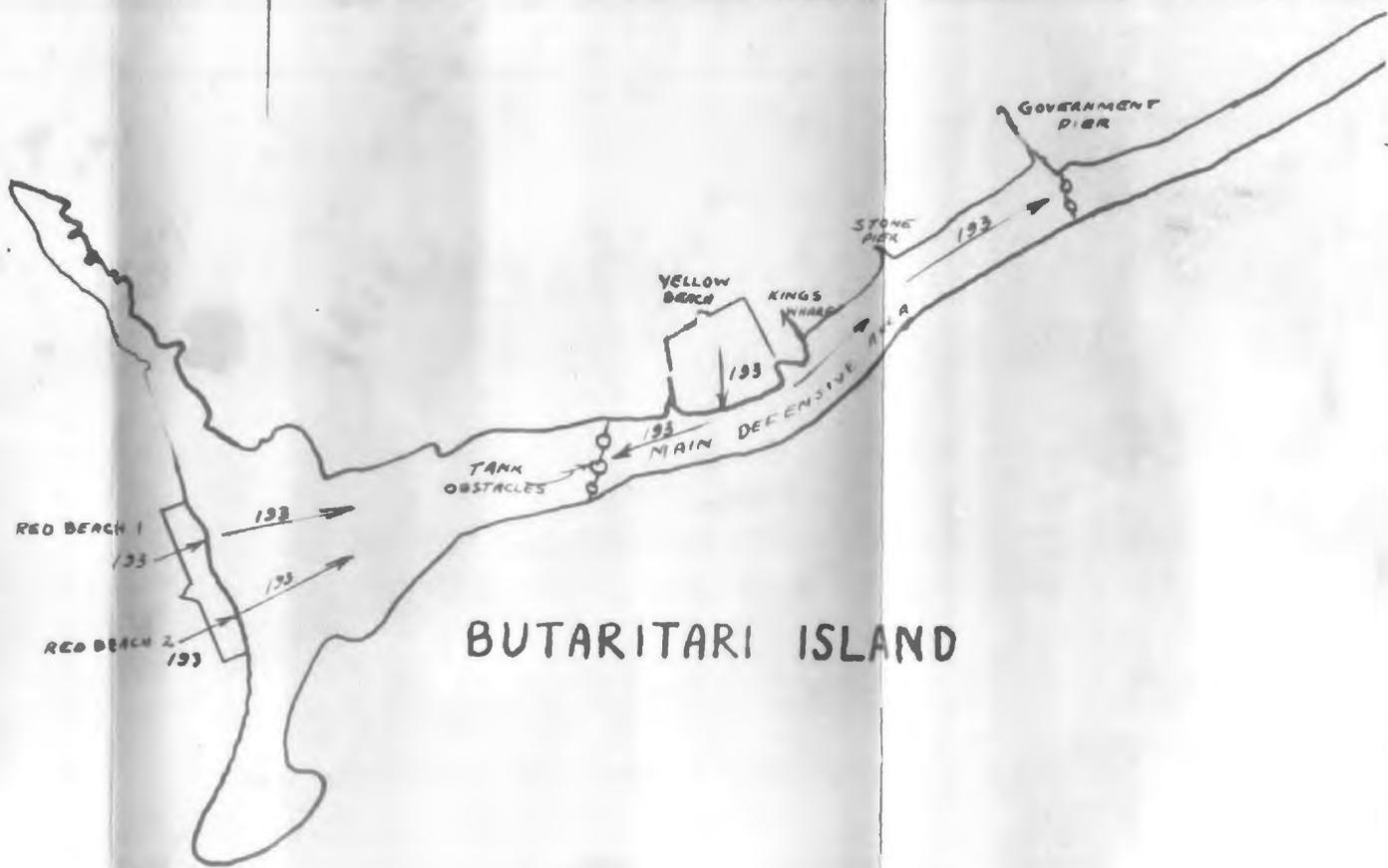
¹⁰Ibid, p 47.

MAKIN
GILBERT ISLANDS

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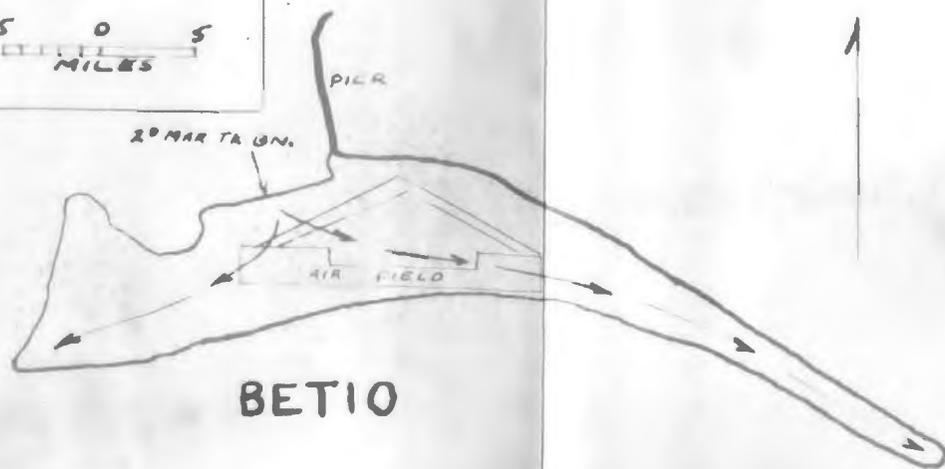
BUTARITARI ISLAND

TARAWA
ATOLL



TARAWA
GILBERT ISLANDS

7



BETIO

CHAPTER 5

THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

SECTION I

KWAJALEIN ATOLL

Terrain

The MARSHALL ISLANDS (Map 1), easternmost of the Japanese-mandated islands, lies almost midway between HAWAII and JAPAN and consist of a group of coral atolls. The most important of these atolls are KWAJALEIN and ENIWITOK. KWAJALEIN (Map 8), the largest, is in the center of the western chain of the MARSHALLS. It is the largest atoll in the world, running 66 miles from north to south and with a maximum width of 18 miles. There are more than 80 islets and islands in the surrounding reefs with approximately 25 entrances to the lagoon in the center. There is no continuous land rim and in places, the reef is submerged for long distances. The islands form a circular harbor of importance to any navy as a staging and assembly area for operations. The most vital islands from a military point of view are KWAJALEIN, located at the southern end of the atoll, and ROI-NAMUR on the north-eastern end. Both of these islands contained airfields constructed by the Japanese.

General Situation

At the time of this attack, the Japanese Garrison on KWAJALEIN consisted of approximately 5200 combat troops of the 1st Amphibious Brigade, plus several hundred service troops.¹ The ROI-NAMUR

Garrison consisted of 3700 troops from the same organization.²

7th Infantry Division. The 7th Infantry Division was given the mission of seizing KWAJALEIN ISLAND and the southern portion of the Atoll. On D-Day, January 31, 1944, the Division Reconnaissance Troop assaulted and secured two small islands, NINNI and GEA, lying 15,000 yards north of the island of KWAJALEIN and protecting the main entrance to the lagoon. On D + 1, the remainder of the Division made the main assault on KWAJALEIN, ENUBUJ and ENNYLOBEGAN, the latter being two small islands lying between KWAJALEIN and NINNI. Division plans called for the 17th Infantry Regiment to secure ENNYLOBEGAN and ENUBUJ while the 184th on the left, and the 32d on the right, assaulted KWAJALEIN. The attack proceeded approximately as planned with the island being secured on February 4th. On February 5th, numerous small islands to the northwest were taken to complete the conquest of the southern portion of the Atoll.³

4th Marine Division. The 4th Marine Division had the mission of securing the northern portion of the KWAJALEIN ATOLL including ROI-NAMUR Island and about 50 small islets nearby. On D-Day, January 31, the 25th Marine Regiment assaulted ROI while the 24th Marine Regiment landed on NAMUR. Both islands were taken by noon of the following day and the Division proceeded to clean up the numerous small islands in the vicinity. On February 7th, the northern half of the Atoll was declared secure.⁴

27th Infantry Division. The 106th Infantry of the 27th Infantry Division was the floating reserve for this operation but was not committed.

Tanks in Action

767th Tank Battalion. The 767th Tank Battalion, supported the 7th Infantry Division on the southern part of the Atoll. No tanks were used in the action of the Reconnaissance Company on D-Day. On D / 1, the tanks of the 767th, supported all infantry units engaged. Two small detachments, one consisting of two tanks and the other of four, landed on ENNYLOBEGAN and ENUBUJ in support of the 17th Infantry. In the three hours of fighting, there was little tank action and no tank casualties. The remainder of the Battalion landed on KWAJALEIN ISLAND in support of the 184th and 32d Infantry Regiments. The tanks landed on the beach by platoons and were immediately sent forward to the parts of the Island where most of the resistance was being met. By mid-afternoon, all tanks had landed; two platoons were kept in reserve on the beach while the remainder of the Battalion was committed with the infantry.

During the first day of combat, no tanks were lost as a result of enemy action, but several were lost in craters off the beach during the landing operations. Tanks were used in small numbers in support of infantry units in attacks upon Japanese pillboxes, entrenchments and strongpoints. Greatest difficulty was found to be the lack of communication between the tanks and the infantry. Usually, the external communication system of the tanks was found inoperative and when the tanks moved "buttoned up", there was difficulty in observing the supporting infantry. Since the Japanese customarily attacked the tanks with demolition, if no friendly infantry were near, the tanks tended

to hold back to insure close infantry protection. Conversely, infantry found it necessary to mount the tanks and pound with their rifles to attract the tankers' attention and point out targets. This exposed the infantry to Japanese fire. Thus, much of the value of the tanks was lost. On the occasions when these difficulties were overcome, the presence and support of the tanks quickened the rate of advance materially.

During this operation, tanks generally operated in pairs with small infantry units; however, two coordinated tank-infantry team attacks were made. On February 3d, Company A, Company B and the Assault Platoon made a coordinated attack with the 32d Infantry against a Japanese strong point and seized it within 20 minutes. The following day, a similar maneuver by Company A, 1st Platoon of Company D and a section of the Assault Platoon succeeded in running over some stubborn enemy defenses.

Throughout this campaign, the tanks would join the infantry units early in the morning, remain with them during the day except when returning to the beach for fuel or ammunition and revert back to Battalion control for the night. No tanks were knocked out by enemy weapons, but several had to be abandoned in the front lines when mired down or out of action because of mechanical difficulties. Japanese destroyed these vehicles at the first opportunity.

After KWAJALEIN ISLAND had been secured, three platoons of tanks supported the 17th Infantry in a two-day assault to capture EBEYE ISLAND to the northeast, and small detachments supported the 25th Infantry in

mopping-up operations on a series of small islets in the Atoll. Tank action in these operations was negligible.⁵

708th Amphibious Tank Battalion. The 708th Amphibious Tank Battalion (less Company D) was attached to the 7th Infantry Division for the attack on the southern islands of the KWAJALEIN ATOLL. There was practically no land action for this Battalion during the major operations, the Battalion having been organized into small provisional landing groups which had the mission of supporting the LVTs which transported the infantry to the landing beaches. Company A supported small infantry detachments in the mop-up of the surrounding islands but there was little or no resistance and no occasion for employing tanks.⁶

4th Marine Tank Battalion. The 4th Marine Tank Battalion, organic within the 4th Marine Division, landed as part of the forces of the northern assault group. On D-Day, Company A supported the 25th Marine Regiment in the initial assault of the small islands guarding the entrance to the lagoon. Resistance was light, and the islands were secured within two hours without committing the tanks. On D+1, Company B landed on NAMUR with the 24th Marines while Company C made the assault with the 23d Regiment on ROI. The resistance on ROI was light but the tanks were used with the assault troops; so aggressively, that, according to one account, when the 23d Marines reached its line of reorganization, there was some difficulty holding back the tanks. They wished to push farther without orders.⁷ NAMUR was a different story for that Island had more enemy troops and was, by nature of the buildings on the Island, a much better defensive position.

Tanks landed early in the battle, but the rubble and debris caused by the pre-invasion shelling, restricted movement by the tanks to a considerable degree. The first day, the tank action consisted of single tank or small unit fights with the tanks being used primarily as a direct fire weapon alone. On the second day, as the marines approached the northern shore, the tanks from ROI were moved to reinforce those already on NAMUR. These tanks led the assault on the final objective.

766th Tank Battalion. Companies B and C of the 766th Tank Battalion were attached to the 106th Infantry of the 27th Infantry Division and formed a part of the floating reserve for this operation. They were not committed.⁸

SECTION II

ENIWETOK ATOLL

Terrain

ENIWETOK ATOLL (Map 9), on the northwestern edge of the MARSHALL ISLANDS, is a nearly circular group of islands 21 miles long, 17 miles wide and with a circumference of nearly 70 miles. It is composed of nearly 30 isles, the largest of which is ENIWETOK ISLAND, two miles long and one-quarter of a mile wide. Next in size is ENGEBI, shaped like an equilateral triangle about one mile long on each side. The islets have the highest elevation in the MARSHALLS though the greatest height on ENIWETOK is but 20 feet above sea level at high tide. Both ENGEBI and ENIWETOK ISLANDS had thick growths of Coconut Palms which proved very valuable to the Japanese for defensive purposes during the invasion.

Both ENIWETOK and ENGEBI had airfields that had been constructed by the Japanese; in addition, the Atoll itself formed an excellent harbor. Seizure of this Atoll would isolate numerous small Japanese-held islands to the southeast and would sever the Japanese supply line south from WAKE ISLAND. Because of the proximity of the Atoll to KWAJALEIN ATOLL, recently seized by our forces, its capture was imperative.

General Situation

The Japanese Garrison on the ENIWETOK ATOLL consisted of approximately 2800 combat troops of the 1st Amphibious Brigade which had landed January 4th, and several hundred service troops. These troops were concentrated on ENGEBI, PARRY, and ENIWETOK ISLANDS with the majority on the last two.

5th Amphibious Corps Reconnaissance Company. The mission of this unit was to seize the two small islets, CANNA and CAMELIA, south of ENGEBI, on D-Day, February 17, 1944, in order that artillery could be emplaced on them for the attack on ENGEBI the following day. The mission was accomplished with little opposition and the company reverted to Corps control for the operation against PARRY ISLAND later.⁹

4th Marine Division Scout Company. This company was directed to seize BOGAN ISLAND, west of ENGEBI, then island-hop down the western side of the Atoll after which it was to revert to Corps control for the PARRY ISLAND operation. The mission was accomplished successfully against negligible enemy opposition.¹⁰

22d Marine Regiment: The mission of the 22d Marine Regiment was to assault ENGEBI ISLAND on D + 1, then to revert to Corps control for use as a floating reserve for the ENIWETOK operation. After ENIWETOK was secure, the 22d was to make the assault on PARRY ISLAND which was thought to be lightly held.¹¹

ENGEBI ISLAND was assaulted with the 1st and 2d Battalions abreast with tanks in support and the 3d Battalion in reserve. The assault waves overran the Island the first afternoon but, since numerous ships had been by-passed, the Island was not declared secure until the following day.

Because of the unexpectedly strong garrison on ENIWETOK ISLAND and the fierce resistance encountered there by Army troops, the 3d Battalion of the 22d Marines was committed on the south part of the Island in the afternoon of February 19th. This Battalion met the main Japanese defenses the first evening near the southern tip of the Island and fought for over 24 hours before subduing the defense forces.¹²

On February 23d, the 22d Marines made the assault on PARRY ISLAND, the last major stronghold of the Japanese in the Atoll. The 1st and 2d Battalions landed abreast on the northern part of the Island. As on ENIWETOK ISLAND, the resistance was especially strong, and the 3d Battalion was committed from the reserve during the first afternoon. The Island was secured by nightfall of the following day with the marines suffering 724 casualties against an estimated 2000 Japanese dead.¹³

27th Infantry Division. The 106th Infantry Regiment of the 27th Infantry Division (less one Battalion), had the mission of assaulting ENIWETOK ISLAND. The plan of attack directed a landing with the 1st and 3d Battalions abreast, 3d Battalion on the left (north). The 1st Battalion was to cross the Island, turn left, and clean out the southern part of the Island. When this had been accomplished, the Battalion was to reverse, pass through the 3d Battalion and secure the north half of the Island. The Japanese resistance was too great, however, and the Force Commander committed the 3d Battalion, 22d Marines, the first afternoon on the left flank to assist in seizing the first objective. The south half of the Island was secured by afternoon of February 21st.

The 3d Battalion, 106th Infantry, had the mission of landing with the assault wave, driving across the Island, then turning left and holding its position to prevent Japanese reinforcements from moving to the south part of the Island. After securing the south half of the Island, the 1st Battalion was to pass through the 3d Battalion and continue north. The 3d Battalion would then prepare for the assault on PARRY ISLAND. Because of the difficulties found by the 1st Battalion in the south, the 3d Battalion was directed, on the afternoon of the initial landing, to move out and secure the north half of ENIWETOK. This was accomplished by February 21st and the following day the Battalion embarked for the PARRY ISLAND operation. A landing was made on PARRY on February 23d by the 22d Marines, but the 106th remained in reserve and was not committed.¹⁴

Tanks in Action

766th Tank Battalion. Company C, 766th Tank Battalion, reinforced the 106th Infantry for the assault on ENIWETOK ISLAND. One platoon supported each of the two assault battalions while the third platoon remained in reserve at the Regimental Command Post. As in most MARSHALL ISLAND fighting, there was no concerted tank action. When the infantry were halted by a Japanese strong point or pillbox, one or two tanks were sent forward to assault the strong point. After the strong point was taken, the tanks withdrew and awaited the next call to assist the infantry.¹⁵

The greatest difficulty for the tanks was the lack of maneuver room. Preliminary air and naval bombardment had opened huge craters and made huge piles of rubble. Tanks were thus channelized and had to move slowly across the Island; tank casualties were greater from bogging down in craters than from enemy action. The dense growth of brush limited visibility and lessened the value of tanks considerably.¹⁶

4th Marine Tank Battalion. One company of tanks from the 4th Marine Tank Battalion supported the 22d Marine Regiment in its operations in this Atoll. In the initial landings on ENGEBI ISLAND, tanks landed just behind the leading assault waves. After the beachhead had been secured, the tanks spearheaded the attack across the Island, striking at pillboxes and strong points; by 1450 hours, ENGEBI had been completely overrun. Though the Island was not declared secure until the following day, because of the number of snipers still at large, the tanks had accomplished their mission and were reembarked at nightfall to prepare for the ENIWETOK operation.¹⁷

The 3d Battalion of the 22d Marines landed on ENIWETOK ISLAND to reinforce the 106th Infantry Regiment during the afternoon of the day the assault was made. Tanks from the 4th Marine Tank Battalion accompanied the 22d Marines as that unit pushed across the Island and turned to the south. As in the case of the 766th Tank Battalion, the tanks were hampered by the rubble, craters and dense brush and had to be used singly or in pairs on pin-point targets pointed out by the infantry.

On February 22, the tanks of this Battalion were landed on PARRY ISLAND, again in support of the 22d Marines. Here the same dense underbrush was prevalent as on ENIWETOK plus natural caves and coconut log revetments which had withstood the preliminary bombardment. This was the same story as on the other island with individual tanks striking at small targets. By nightfall, most of the Island was overrun by tanks and the following morning, PARRY ISLAND was declared secure virtually ending the MARSHALL ISLANDS campaign.

708th Amphibious Tank Battalion. Company A, 708th Amphibious Tank Battalion, escorted landing craft of the 106th Infantry in the assault on ENIWETOK ISLAND and provided fire support for the establishment of the beachhead but did not proceed inland.¹⁸

Summary

The islands in the MARSHALLS were so small that tanks could not be effectively employed. Of necessity, tank support consisted of isolated actions with one to three tanks overrunning roadblocks or

engaging pillboxes. There were no tank versus tank battles. Tactically, the greatest difficulty in the use of tanks was the lack of communications between infantry and the tanks. The tank exterior communication system failed frequently thus reducing the tank's effectiveness.

Terrain, lack of roads and good ground surface, and impassable jungle in the Southwest PACIFIC all contributed to the minor part played by tanks in these battles. Where these conditions varied enough to enable tanks to operate in what might be called "the normal role", results were excellent. These opportunities were the exception.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 5

¹ Gilbert Cant, The Great Pacific Victory (New York: The John Day Company, 1945) p 173.

² Carl W. Proehl, The Fourth Marine Division In World War II (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1946), p 25 ff.

³ Cant, op cit, p 168 ff.

⁴ Proehl, op cit, p 24 ff.

⁵ After Action Report, 767th Tank Battalion.

⁶ After Action Report, 708th Amphibious Tank Battalion.

⁷ Fletcher Pratt, The Marines' War (New York: William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1948), p 126.

⁸ After Action Report, 766th Tank Battalion.

⁹ Frank O. Hough, The Island War (Philadelphia and New York: John A. Lippincott Co., 1947), p 202 ff.

¹⁰ Ibid, p 203.

¹¹ Bevan G. Cass, History of the Sixth Marine Division (Washington: The Infantry Journal Press, 1948), p 8 ff.

¹² Hough, op cit, p 203 ff.

¹³Pratt, op cit, p 185 ff.

¹⁴Captain Edmund G. Love, The 27th Infantry Division in World War II (Washington: The Infantry Journal Press, 1949).

¹⁵After Action Report, 766th Tank Battalion.

¹⁶Cant, op cit, p 170.

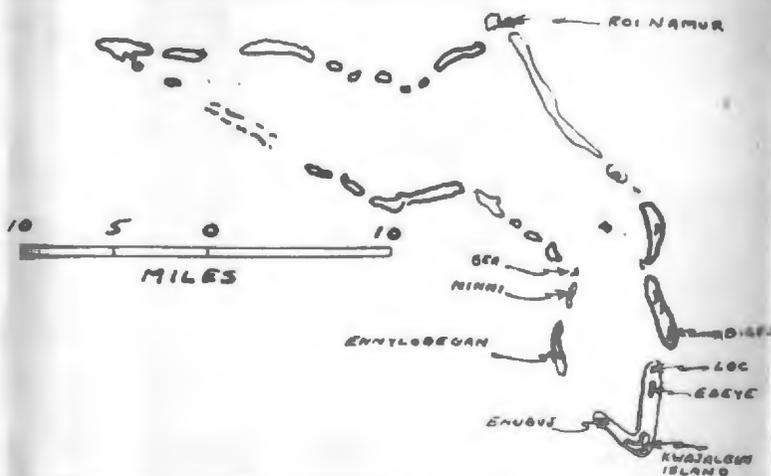
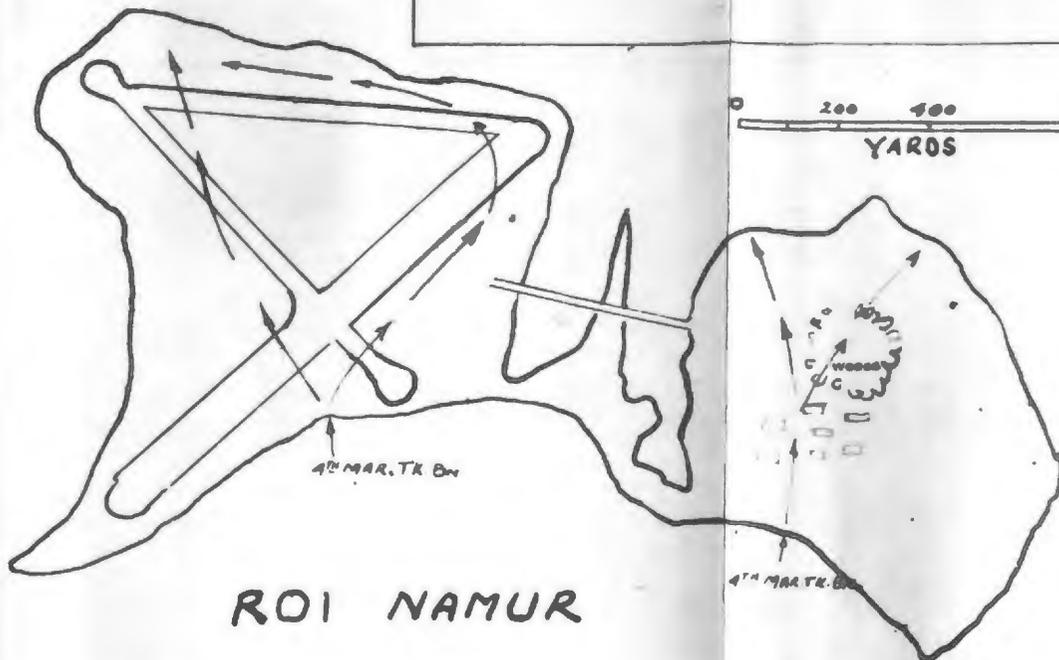
¹⁷Ibid, p 184.

¹⁸After Action Report, 708th Amphibious Tank Battalion.

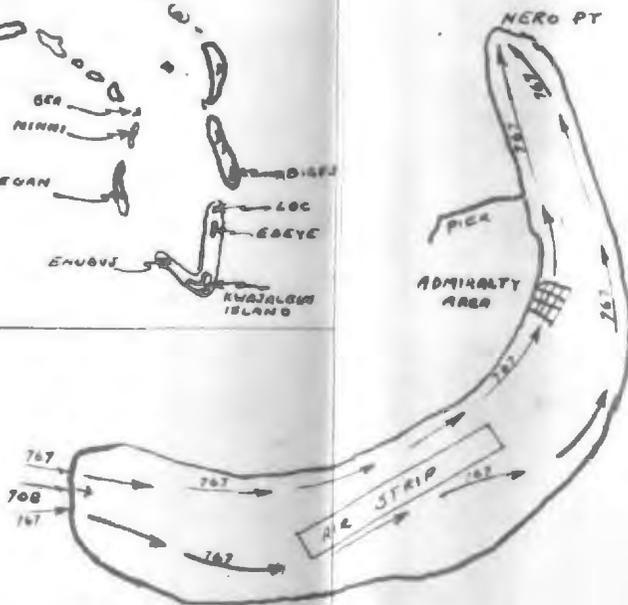
KWAJALEIN MARSHALL ISLANDS

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KWAJALEIN ISLAND

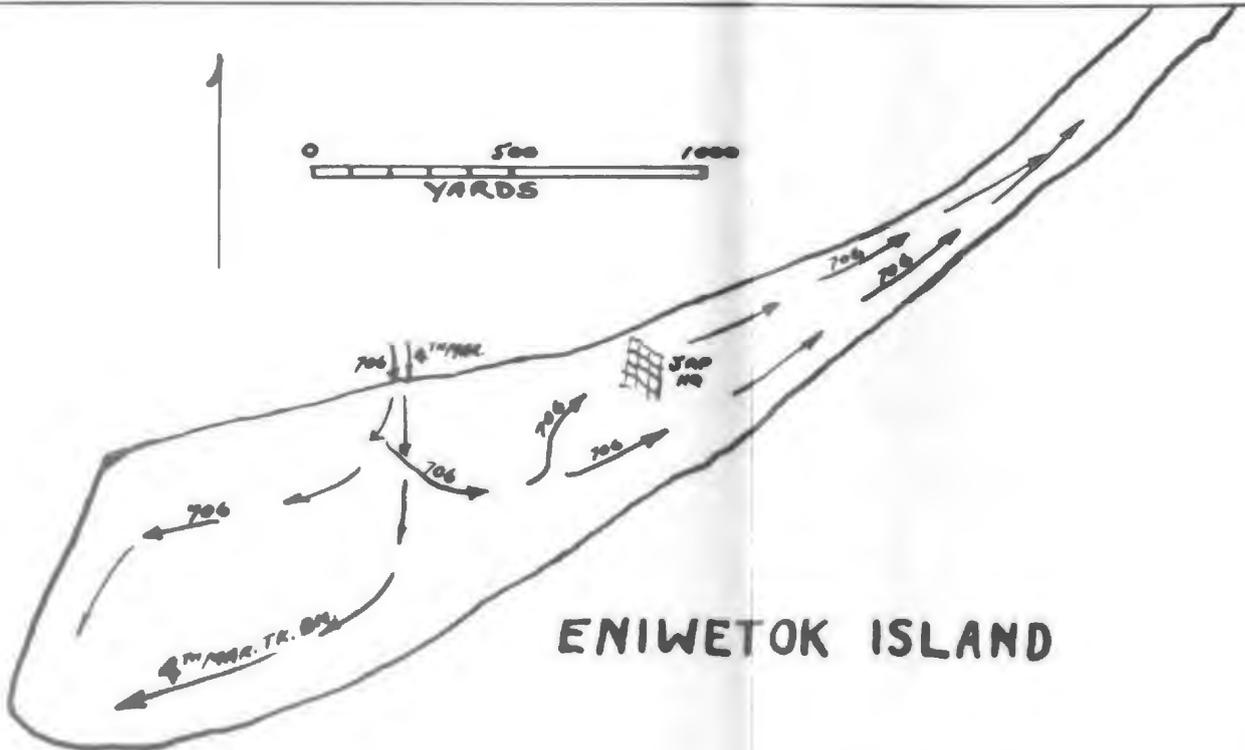


ENIWETOK ATOLL MARSHALL ISLANDS.

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ENIWETOK ISLAND

CHAPTER 6

THE MARIANA ISLANDS

SECTION I

GENERAL

Terrain

The MARIANA ISLANDS, 1500 miles east of the PHILIPPINES, are basically coral but have been raised and distorted by volcanic action. There are four major islands in the Group: SAIPAN, TINIAN, TOTA, and GUAM.

General Situation

The campaign which took place on three of the MARIANA ISLANDS, SAIPAN, TINIAN, and GUAM, was one in which flexibility and change were the watchwords. Plans were changed up until the day of the invasion; the timetable was changed because of the Japanese Navy in the Battle of the PHILIPPINE SEA, and even commanders were changed during the operations. The original task organization was as follows:

Fifth Fleet.....Admiral R. A. Spruance USN
Joint Exped Forces.....V. Admiral R. K. Turner USN
Expeditionary Troops.....Lt Gen H. M. Smith USMC
Northern Troops and
Landing Force.....Lt Gen H. M. Smith USMC
2d Marine Division.....Maj Gen T. E. Watson USMC
4th Marine Division.....Maj Gen Harry Schmidt USMC
Southern Troops and
Landing Force.....Maj Gen R. S. Geiger USMC
3d Marine Division.....Maj Gen A. H. Turnage USMC
1st Marine Brigade.....B. Gen L. C. Shepherd USMC
Floating Reserve 27th
Infantry Division.....Maj Gen R. C. Smith USA
Res 77th Inf Division....Maj Gen A. D. Bruce USA

The MARIANA ISLANDS are part of a continuous chain of islands extending 1350 miles southward from TOKYO. These islands afford protected lines of sea and air communications. Our capture of the MARIANAS would cut this line and give us bases from which we could control seas farther west and also bomb JAPAN. The MARIANAS are not atolls but rather independent islands. Hence, the methods used for the capture of the GILBERTS and the MARSHALLS, wherein minor islands were used as artillery bases, could not be used here.

The Northern Troops and Landing Force landed on, and seized, SAIPAN. They, in a shore-to-shore operation, they invaded TINIAN to the south. The Southern Troops and Landing Force took GUAM.

Tanks were used on all three of the islands as shown in the following table:

TABLE 1

TANK UNITS IN THE MARIANAS

Unit	SAIPAN	TINIAN	GUAM
1st Marine Armored Amphib Bn			X
2d Marine Armored Amphib Bn	X	X	
2d Marine Tank Battalion	X	X	
3d Marine Tank Battalion			X
4th Marine Tank Battalion	X	X	
6th Marine Tank Battalion (Elements)			X
706th Tank Battalion			X
708th Amphib Tank Battalion	X	X	
762d Prov Tank Battalion	X		

SECTION II

SAIPAN

Terrain

SAIPAN (Map 10) is roughly 12 miles long and five miles wide. A chain of mountains runs from north to south on the Island. The

eastern side is steep, being clifflike at all major changes of elevation. The western part slopes gradually to flat, cultivated land. MOUNT TOPATCHAU, 1554 feet high, is in the center of the Island, and although the land drops away on all sides, the northern part of the Island remains rough and mountainous. The cliff drop-offs are actually the edges of plateaus which are bisected and dissected by ravines and gullies. In general, the Island is non-trafficable; roads had to be cut for trucks and tanks; only limited movement of a few hundred yards could be made off the roads.

General Situation

The 2d and 4th Marine Divisions landed abreast on the west side of SAIPAN beginning at 1840, June 15, 1944.¹ The 2d Marine Division landing north of CHARAN KANOA had the western half of the Island as its zone. It proceeded slowly northward against weak resistance, held back because of difficulties in maintaining contact on its right flank. It was pinched out of line on D / 19 at TANAPAG HARBOR where the Island narrows. The 4th Marine Division landed south of CHARAN KANOA, drove south, then east, and then north to secure the eastern half of SAIPAN. The 27th Infantry Division began landing on D / 1, relieved the 4th Marine Division on the south, and drove across ASLITO AIRFIELD to NAFUTAN POINT. On D / 7, the 27th less one battalion was inserted in the gap between the 2d and 4th Marine Divisions and given the center of the Island as its zone. The 27th was pinched out on D / 22 north of TANAPAG while the 4th Marine Division drove on to the north coast.

Assault forces carried 32 days supply of food and a 20-days' supply of fuel. There was no shortage of fuel on the Island, however, for the first few days it was necessary for the tanks to return to the beaches for fuel.

Tanks in Action

The 2d Marine Armored Amphibious Battalion. The 2d Marine Armored Amphibious Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel R. M. Fawell, consisted of a Headquarters, Headquarters and Service Company and four lettered companies. This Battalion, with 75-mm Howitzers in the armored turrets of their LVTA's, had the mission of preceding the first wave of the 2d Marine Division which were in LVT's. They were to cover the movement across the reef and to the first objective, about one mile inland. They began firing about 300 yards from shore but they had some of their fire masked when a few of the faster LVT's crossed their front. Of the 68 LVTA's in the Battalion, three were disabled before reaching the beach, and 28 more were disabled on the beach by obstacles and enemy fire. They were well ahead of the infantry most of the day, and even engaged in a tank vs. tank battle.

The Battalion was used to guard the beaches during the remainder of the campaign, and to support the left flank. On the evening of D + 4 - D + 5, they successfully stopped a Japanese amphibious landing on our beaches. On D + 12, they gave close fire support against targets near the beaches as the 2d Marine Division went into GARAPAN.

708th Amphibious Tank Battalion. The 708th Amphibious Tank Battalion, commanded by Major J. L. Rogers, consisted of a Headquarters and Headquarters and Service Company and four lettered companies of 18 LVT's each. Each LVT mounted a 37-mm gun or 75-mm howitzer and machine guns. The Battalion had the mission of forming the first wave of the 4th Marine Division for its landings south of AFETNA POINT, thus leading the LVT's. They were also to lay a cover of fire on the beach, secure the immediate beachhead, and assist in the capture of the prescribed phase line, designated O-1.

Company B preceded the Landing Team formed by the 3d Battalion of the 23d Regiment, LT 3/23. One amphibious tank hung on a reef and had to be left behind. Once the tanks had landed, natural and man-made obstacles canalized the company's movement down the narrow street of CHARAN KANOVA. Here they lost two vehicles to anti-tank guns and two to terrain obstacles. The Company managed to reach the first ridge but the infantry had not yet arrived. They stayed there until ordered back to the beach that evening to refuel. On the beaches, no Class III supply point had been set up so the tanks had to go back to the ships for fuel.

Company A preceded the Landing Team formed by the 2d Battalion of the 23d Regiment, LT 2/23. One tank was lost on the approach to the beach. Seven more were hung up on natural and man-made obstacles in the first 200 yards of beach. Six hundred yards farther inland, artillery and mortars disabled three more. The remaining five

amphibious tanks arrived at their objective, phase line O-1, and took up defensive positions until the infantry arrived. At 1800 they returned to the beach and took up defensive positions.

Company D preceded the Landing Team formed by the 2d Battalion, 25th Regiment, and went 200 yards inland without difficulty. As they tried to cross a railroad on a narrow road, two tanks were put out of action by artillery. Infantry joined them on the O-1 line whence they made a coordinated attack against machine gun nests.

Company C led the Landing Team formed by the 1st Battalion of the 25th Regiment. During the movement to the beach, one tank was hit, and six were delayed by obstacles. Small arms fire wounded a number of tank commanders, but 10 tanks were able to lead the infantry one mile inland to the ridge. Here they destroyed some enemy artillery and mortars on the reverse slope of the ridge. The Japanese regained the ridge and two attacks by infantry and amphibious tanks were required before the ridge could be retaken. From June 16th until the end of operations on the Island, elements of the Battalion were used to lead infantry attacks. One platoon supported the attack at AGINGAN POINT. They were also used in conjunction with standard tanks in small actions and for firing from the water into the cliff faces. Amphibious tanks, although much less mobile on land and much thinner-skinned than land tanks, led attacks frequently and thus suffered very high vehicular casualties.²

2d Marine Tank Battalion. The 2d Marine Tank Battalion of the 2d Marine Division was commanded by Major Charles W. McCoy. It

consisted of a Headquarters and Headquarters and Service Company; three-letter companies, A, B, and C, all equipped with M-4 type tanks; and one company, D, with light tanks as its principal weapon. The light tanks mounted flamethrowers in the bow gunner's position. The tanks were supposed to be landed on AFETNA POINT because LCM's could avoid the reefs in that location. However, the Japanese held the point and the tanks had to land farther to the north. A pilot tank was sent ashore 15 minutes after the assault wave landed to mark a route over the reefs. The pilot tank was disabled by antitank fire from AFETNA POINT after marking the route. The remainder of the Battalion arrived safely on shore by that afternoon. The Battalion was committed immediately in a fierce fight in which eight tanks were disabled, one permanently. One company unsuccessfully attacked south to take AFETNA POINT. About daylight on D / 1, five tanks from the Battalion counterattacked an enemy penetration along the beach on the north flank. The tanks not only stopped the penetration but also drove it back. On the right flank, they successfully attacked AFETNA POINT. Before dawn on D / 2, the Japanese made a regimental tank attack but were driven off with the loss of about 30 tanks before the 2d Battalion could get into the action. On at least two other occasions, the infantry drove off enemy tank thrusts with their own weapons before our tanks were used; however, in the late afternoon on D / 7, seven Japanese tanks appeared on the beaches south of GARAPAN where the 2d Battalion was waiting. Our tanks, along with four 75-mm half-tracks, destroyed six and drove off the seventh. The 2d Division

went into GARAPAN on D / 12, with tanks leading the way. There was some rifle and machine gun fire but the fire from the one company of tanks silenced the guns in the ruins and the marines advanced rapidly. One of the companies of the Battalion supported a battalion of marines attacking GARAPAN from the east. The terrain was so rough there that the tanks could barely crawl into a position from which to fire. Farther inland, the right regiment of the 2d Marine Division, when caught in an open area dominated by a cliff, used the tanks to aid the Corpsmen in evacuating the wounded. The tanks were driven between the cliff and a casualty. Corpsmen following the tank would give first aid rapidly, put the casualty on a stretcher, and start carrying the wounded man to the rear. The tank would then cover the withdrawal.

Since the Japanese cave positions made day movement difficult, a night tank attack was tried on D / 12, in the same area as the previous incident. The light flamethrowing tanks moved forward to burn the cave areas while illuminating shells and medium tank searchlights lit the plateau. Infantrymen covered the tanks from their positions to forestall enemy tank hunters but did not follow the attack until the next day. The results were not outstanding although the show was spectacular.

Well-coordinated teams of medium tanks, flamethrowing tanks, assault engineers and small-arms-teams produced excellent results the next day in GARAPAN while cleaning out strong points. The Battalion continued helping the infantry until the division was pinched out of the line.³

4th Marine Tank Battalion. The 4th Marine Tank Battalion, organic to the 4th Marine Division, was commanded by Major Richard K. Schmidt on SAIPAN, and was organized the same way as the 2d Marine Tank Battalion. As with the 2d Battalion, the 4th's tanks were to land on AFETNA POINT, but had to go south to get ashore. Here they encountered difficulties because of the heavy swells. Two tanks of Company A had their electrical systems drowned out and a third was damaged while trying to help the others. This Company was immediately sent to AGINGAN POINT to help the right battalion of marines. They arrived just as the enemy launched a two-company infantry assault. The tanks drove against the attackers, and with the aid of the infantry, massacred the enemy. No tanks were lost. The tanks then spread out over the Point to overrun Japanese installations.

Company B had only four of its 14 tanks available by the time the Company assembled on the beach. One tank sank while unloading from its ship; one smashed its fording equipment; one was grounded on an underwater obstacle; one had its electrical system drowned out; one was taken over by the 2d Battalion on landing; and five disappeared into a deep water hole while crossing the reef.

Company C landed as a unit and was ordered to attack toward the high ground towards the east. The morale of the Marines soared when the tanks arrived to help in the attack against the Japanese who apparently were correspondingly depressed by the sight of the tanks.

Company D began landing on D-Day, but had no mission that day.

On D / 3, and D / 4, the Battalion of tanks, split up among the regiments, covered the infantry advance and led small-scale attacks. On D / 5, the right flank (south) regiment of the 2d Division had a novel use for tanks. In order to clear a cliff-like ridge in the MAGICIENNE BAY area, which he could not capture the previous day, the regimental commander planned to have the tanks move along the base of the cliff. This was to be done three times; the first time the infantry commanders would ride in the tanks and make a reconnaissance; the second trip was a feint; and, on the third trip, the men would ride with the tanks and clean out the caves. Another company of infantry moved along the top of the cliff at the same time. The scheme worked out as planned even though the defenders held their fire until the third pass. The tanks destroyed by fire those caves that couldn't be reached by either the infantry below the cliff or above.

The terrain around MAGICIENNE BAY on the KAGHAN PENINSULA made tank movement difficult. The Japanese made it almost impassable with roadblocks and mines. At one time, tanks had to wait four hours before a road could be cleared for them to move forward to support an attack. In fact, on D / 10, June 25th, the attack scheduled for 0730 didn't get started until 0815 because of the difficulty in moving tanks from the assembly area to the attack position.

Mines really stopped the tanks of the 4th Marine Tank Battalion on D / 18, when they attempted to attack 4th of JULY HILL with the infantry. The mine fields kept the tanks about 1000 yards from the hill

and the attack failed. When the attack started again the next day, July 4th, tanks were lost when trying to bypass the mines and as a result, two were disabled.

As the campaign drew to a close in northeastern SAIPAN, the Navy and tankers cooperated at one point, where a tank was used as a forward OP to adjust naval gunfire. Missions and corrections were radioed to Shore Fire Control and thence to the ship.⁴

762d Provisional Tank Battalion. The 762d Tank Battalion was originally scheduled to come as a unit; however, because of a lack of shipping space, Companies A and C were left behind and a second light tank company, Company D of the 766th Tank Battalion, was attached. This provisional unit consisting of a Headquarters and Headquarters Company, a Service Company, one medium tank company and two light tank companies was designated the 762d Provisional Tank Battalion. It was commanded by Major Aldon M. Hoffman, and was attached to the 27th Infantry Division for the operations on SAIPAN.

The Battalion landed beginning on D / 1, and was used to bring food and ammunition to the infantry from the beaches. They led the infantry in the capture of ASLITO AIRFIELD on D / 3, and then continued east in a series of small actions to NAFUTAN POINT. On D / 5, loud-speakers, mounted on the tanks, were employed in asking the Japanese in the caves along the shore to surrender. This was quite successful as 335 civilians came over to the United States Troops. The enemy troops continued to fire. In the last Battalion operation on NAFUTAN before moving north, the tanks were to lead an attack. The tanks went

in the wrong direction and wound up firing on our own troops. The infantry battalion commander concerned, got up on a tank, straightened them out, and led the attack from his elevated position. When the 27th Division was moved from NAFUTAN POINT to the north, one battalion of infantry and one light tank platoon was left behind to clear out the Point. These tanks were employed against the Japanese who were occupying cliffs and caves.

When the 27th Infantry Division went into the line between the two Marine Divisions, it found itself in the worst tank territory on the Island. The attack on cliffs was a normal daily occurrence. Tanks tried to neutralize the caves but the Japanese would reappear after the firing and stop the troops trying to get to them. There was some tank vs. tank action such as on D / 9, when our tanks succeeded in destroying four enemy tanks by fire. Also, tanks were used to draw small-arms fire so that the accompanying infantry could locate the well-camouflaged positions.

Two platoons of the 762d got into trouble on D / 12, when attempting to lead an attack against a Japanese cliff position east of MT. TOPATCHAU. As the tanks moved out, it started to rain. Dust on the tanks turned to mud. The crews' vision became so blurred that the tanks became turned about so that they fired into their supporting infantry. A few hours later, the attack was renewed and was successful.

By July 1st, after 14 days of operations with little maintenance, the number of usable tanks dropped to the point where it was necessary in some companies to pool the tanks and eliminate the platoons. As

the Division hit the beaches near TANAPAG on D / 18, an enemy strong point was located on the flank to the left. Tanks, each sheltering a group of infantrymen, advanced against heavy machine gun fire blasting a path. When the tanks were finally stopped by the terrain the infantry rushed the position. The infantry protected the tanks from individual tank hunters while the tanks covered the infantry.

When moving up the western beaches on D / 20, July 5th, the infantry was taken under fire by the machine guns apparently firing from a beached barge. Two tanks rolled down the beach, fired at the barge and stopped the enemy fire. Then, as the tanks turned away, they hit a minefield and the enemy machine guns reopened fire. On July 6th, tanks were engaged on the beach where the Japanese had set up a defense in a ditch stopping the left battalion of the 27th Infantry Division. Five tanks were sent up the coastal railroad tracks to locate the position. The tracks of the lead tank got stuck in the rails and then the first and second tanks were hit by antitank fire as the second tried to by-pass the first. The tanks were recovered by cable. Later three light tanks attacked the ditch (now located) and found a tanker's dream. Using machine guns and canister, they killed over 100 Japanese soldiers who were shoulder to shoulder in the ditch in the middle of the open beach.

In the pre-dawn of D / 22, the Japanese launched a Banzai attack. This attack isolated two battalions of the 27th Division in TANAPAG. The regimental commander concerned sent forward one platoon of light tanks early in the day to make contact with these battalions. Two

of these tanks were stopped by the enemy and a third beached up off the road. Since no infantry was with these tanks, they retired along with a platoon of medium tanks to the regimental CP. During the afternoon, three light tanks again tried to get through to TANAPAG -- this time through the surf. All three fell in a hole and drowned their motors. Finally, two medium tanks broke through to TANAPAG along the beach. The commander of one of the cut-off battalions used the tank radio to tell the regiment what had happened. Then the tanks took some of the men and officers back to the regiment.

The 762d Provisional Tank Battalion lost seven officers and 74 men killed, wounded or missing in action during the operations on SAIPAN. Seventeen light and five medium tanks were lost. Details of the operations of this Battalion on SAIPAN are well covered in the report made by Committee 8, Advanced Officers Class, The Armored School, 1949.⁵

Summary

Tanks on SAIPAN were equally valuable for their fire power and for the morale effect that armor evokes. The flame-thrower tanks, much too small, were a good field test for those that were used later on IWO, PELELIU, and OKINAWA. The Japanese forces used magnetic mines to great advantage disabling numerous tanks. In terrain which gave so much cover and concealment to the defender, individual tank hunters were a constant menace. Tanks were required to return to the beaches and even to the ships during the first few days to obtain fuel and

ammunition. Communications between tanks and infantry were makeshift -- frequently resulting in poorly-coordinated attacks. Generally, the terrain held the tanks to overwatching roles.

SECTION III

TINIAN

Terrain

TINIAN (Map 11) lies about two and three-fourths miles south of SAIPAN. It is roughly $10\frac{1}{2}$ miles long and about five miles wide at its widest point. On the north there is considerable high ground culminating in MT. LASSO, 500 feet high. The rest of the Island is rather flat, smooth and rolling except in the south, where the plateau drops off in steep escarpments.

General Situation

Using SAIPAN as a base, the Northern Troops and Landing Force, now under Major General Schmidt, made a shore-to-shore landing operation on the north-western beaches of TINIAN. The 4th Marine Division landed on July 24th and drove south along the west side of the Island. The 2d Marine Division landed behind the 4th beginning on D-Day, drove east then south. TINIAN was a fast-moving operation lasting only nine days and was an operation in which the tanks had an exploitation phase. A Japanese counterattack on D plus one, was unsuccessful and so costly to them, that there was little fighting on the Island after that.

Tanks in Action

708th Amphibious Tank Battalion. This Battalion which had seen considerable action on SAIPAN, as noted previously, preceded the 4th Marine Division in the landings on TINIAN as on SAIPAN. Only two line companies and a headquarters, however, participated here. As on SAIPAN, the amphibious tanks were used in conjunction with land tanks to aid the infantry advance. A few times, they were used from the water to fire into enemy positions that were difficult to hit from land.

2d Marine Armored Amphibious Battalion. This Battalion too was used as on SAIPAN to support the landings of the 2d Marine Division. It saw very little action.

2d Marine Tank Battalion. The tankers found it reasonably easy and found an almost European-type war here when tanks could break away for a long run. By D / 5, the Battalion had overrun its objective for the day and proceeded to the next day's line. They did run into booby-trapped gasoline drums, artillery and obstacles at this point and had to retire. It wasn't until D / 6, on the southeastern shore of the Island, that it was necessary to use flamethrowing tanks to eliminate some cliff positions. The night of D / 6, July 30th, an enemy attack advanced to within five yards of our lines. Tanks went out at dawn and wiped out their rear guard as they were leaving.

4th Marine Tank Battalion. As soon as the tanks of the 4th Marine Tank Battalion landed, they ran into a hornet's nest of machine guns that were pinning down the right flank regiment of the 4th Marine

Division. The underbrush, woods and cane fields were so dense that it was almost impossible to locate the guns. During the next hour, the tanks cruised through the area and eventually flushed some snipers and located and destroyed some machine guns. All tanks were ashore by 1900. The Japanese made their anticipated counterattack early in the morning of D / 1, led by tanks. Tanks of the 4th Marine Tank Battalion got into the fight about dawn after the attack had been slowed. The tank fire helped the artillery break up the attack and then destroyed four or five enemy tanks. Immediately after this, a dead man stopped a tank. This tank was out cleaning up the battlefield when it ran over a Japanese who had died the night before while carrying a bangalore torpedo and blew a track. Then, while being repaired by the tank recovery crew, the tank was blasted by a magnetic mine placed on it by a Japanese just before he was shot.

By D / 4, the opposition was so light that tanks were leading an exploitation-type advance, held back only by the need to clear the zone of the enemy. The tank companies were attached to the regiments; this organization prevented the tanks from acting as a unit. By D / 5, the tank-led race was just north of TINIAN TOWN and the left flank units could not establish contact with the retreating enemy. Most of the casualties were from heat stroke rather than enemy weapons. On D / 6, July 30th, TINIAN TOWN was taken though not without some opposition from cave positions that had to be burned out by the flame-throwing tanks.

The defenders of the island put up a last stand on the rugged southern tip of TINIAN. Here the terrain and mines made tank movement

very difficult on D / 7. The tanks shelled and burned the caves with the loss of only one tank and that to a Japanese five-inch naval gun.

A detailed report of the action of the 4th Marine Tank Battalion on TINIAN is covered in the report of Committee 8, 1949, mentioned in the footnotes for this chapter.

Summary

The terrain and weak antitank measures made operations on TINIAN less difficult for the tanks than those found on SAIPAN.

SECTION IV

GUAM

Terrain

GUAM (Map 12) is the southernmost of the MARIANA ISLANDS. It is about 34 miles long and from six to nine miles wide. From AGANA southward, there is a long wide ridge whose highest point is MT. TENTO. The ridge is cut up by numerous gorges and ravines. North-south travel along the ridge is good, but east-west travel leads from one ridge to a ravine and to another ridge. The Island is covered with dense undergrowth.

General Situation

Originally, D-Day for GUAM was to be three days after the start of the SAIPAN operation. The landings on GUAM were postponed, however, until July 21st because the fleet was diverted for the action in the

PHILIPPINE SEA, and because of the difficulties on SAIPAN. Also, the 27th Infantry Division, having been committed on SAIPAN, left the invasion forces without a reserve. The 77th Infantry Division at HAWAII was brought in as the reserve for the GUAM operation.

The 3d Marine Division and the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade were landed abreast on GUAM on July 21st. The 3d Division landed on the beaches north of the OROTE PENINSULA to capture the beach area south of AGANA and CABRAS ISLAND. After initial strong resistance on the beaches and the hills dominating them, the Division was able to go north on the west side of the Island against weak delaying action which offered little resistance. The 1st Brigade, composed of the 4th Marine RCT and the 22d Marine RCT, landed south of OROTE PENINSULA (with the 305th RCT, 77th Infantry Division, attached) with the mission of cutting off the base of the Peninsula and clearing it. After accomplishing this initial mission, the Brigade patrolled the southern half of GUAM until it was moved up to take over the west flank of the Island north of FINEGAYEN.

The 77th Infantry Division landed behind the 1st Brigade, protected the east flank of the Brigade while it was on the Peninsula, then drove east to the far shore and then north to the end of the Island. The Division met a little resistance at MOUNT BARRIGIDA and some more at MOUNT SANTA ROSA but in general had a fast-moving operation.⁷

Tanks in Action

1st Armored Amphibious Battalion. The 1st Armored Amphibious Battalion, a Marine unit, was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Metzger.

This Battalion preceded the landings on both beaches and pounded the shore installations with their 75's. They did not proceed inland nor have any further missions except guarding the beaches at night.

3d Marine Tank Battalion. The 3d Marine Tank Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel H. J. Withers, was organized the same as the other two tank battalions on SAIPAN. During the first few days on GUAM, tanks of the 3d Battalion were used to blast the caves and cliffs that the marine infantry were trying to assault. On D / 4, a tank-infantry assault on the heights north of MOUNT TENJO succeeded although all the accompanying infantry were killed. The tanks closed the caves with their fire but had to withdraw because their position was untenable without infantry. The tank platoons were apportioned to the front-line battalions and stayed up in the front lines with them. This paid off on the night of D / 4 - D / 5 when the Japanese made a 10-battalion attack which drove down to the beaches. The tanks were immovable pillboxes that pared away the Japanese units so that those that did reach the beaches were completely disorganized and without officers. This attack so decimated the enemy strength that there were no further strong attacks and only weak resistance for the remainder of the campaign. That day, July 26th, the left flank of the 3d Marine Division attacked.

...The attack went slowly forward during the morning behind tanks that lent confidence to the men, and released them from the tension that held them when an infantry line moved against hidden positions and concealed machine guns with hope of discovering them before they had opened fire and caused a casualty... The tanks had become the infantry's cannon; their machine guns moving forward in the great turrets took

the place of the heavy Brownings firing between gaps on the flanks of the advancing troops. When the four tanks first rolled up to the line of the 2/9 as they had started their drive, the men cheered and shouted...⁸

In taking MOUNT CHACHAO just north of MOUNT TENJO on D / 7, the infantry and tanks combined in a wide flanking movement to cut off the defenders as the main attack came up the western slopes.

There was no opposition as the tanks led the Division in exploitation up the west side of GUAM until the Division arrived opposite MOUNT BARRIGIDA. Here the Division ran into the outposts of the Japanese defense and had to use two tanks in the assault of this outpost line. A reconnaissance in force was made to locate the Japanese. One company of tanks accompanied this force. When the patrol lost its way, it ran into an extensive roadblock. The patrol retired in good order and that evening, August 3d, a sharp fight developed there in which our tanks came within 15 feet of the enemy's tanks without seeing them in the dense undergrowth. The roadblock was reduced and when other tanks of the 3d Battalion knocked out some machine gun nests, the infantry succeeded in advancing. Enemy resistance melted away except for disorganized delaying action. The tanks were very useful against this type of opposition as they would proceed down the road firing at and eliminating the individual field pieces harassing our troops. Forward observers rode on the tanks calling for artillery fire on likely enemy positions.

On the last day of the fighting, August 10th, a tank vs. tank battle occurred when our tanks working up a cliffside road ran into five Japanese tanks. These enemy tanks were part of a night attack

which had taken place the previous night on the extreme northern tip of the Island. The Japanese tanks were quickly knocked out.

6th Marine Tank Battalion. The 6th Marine Tank Battalion was not on GUAM as a unit; in fact, it was not activated as a battalion until two months after the GUAM campaign. The tank company of the 4th Marine RCT, both of which were on GUAM, became, respectively, Companies A and B of the 6th Marine Tank Battalion when it was subsequently activated. Captain Harry Calcut commanded the Tank Company of the 22d RCT and Captain Philip Morrell commanded the Tank Company of the 4th Marine RCT.

By 1100 on D-Day tanks were leading an attack south of OROTE PENINSULA to help capture the initial objective. That night when the Japanese attacked trying to drive the marines back into the sea, our tanks destroyed theirs and the attackers withdrew when they saw their vehicles lost. On D / 2, our attack around the eastern end of the Peninsula failed when our tanks were unable to traverse the rice paddies and the infantry sank hip-deep in mud. Two of our tanks were hit by antitank guns while looking for a route through the paddies.

On D / 3, however, tanks led the attack along the higher ground just off the beaches. They moved up the coast road blasting the coconut log emplacements. Five Japanese tanks attempted to stop the attack but were quickly eliminated by tanks from the 22d. The attackers reached the base of the Peninsula and crossed it the next day.

The tanks moved west on OROTE PENINSULA along with their RCT's but were not of much help because of the terrain and the underbrush. The marine infantry assault units moved forward in the Japanese positions clearing a lane through the mines and then signalled the tanks

to come up. The tanks were used successfully on D + 6 and D + 7 in two coordinated attacks. In these attacks, the tanks were massed (one company) along with a platoon of light tanks from the 706th Tank Battalion, and breakthroughs occurred on both flanks. All resistance on the Peninsula came to an end after these two attacks.

The tank companies were given a few days rest while the infantry patrolled the southern end of GUAM. Then, on August 1st, they moved down the west side of the Island with their RCT's against no resistance.⁹

706th Tank Battalion. The 706th Tank Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Stokes, consisted of a Headquarters and Headquarters Company, a Service Company, three medium tank companies, and one light tank company. It was attached to the 77th Infantry Division on GUAM. The medium tank companies, reinforced with elements of Headquarters Company were attached to the regimental combat teams throughout the GUAM operations. The RCT commander attached tank platoons to battalions in each instance. The light tank company remained under Battalion control and was used for reconnaissance, fire missions or as otherwise needed. Some of these light tanks were attached to the 1st Marine Provisional Brigade as mentioned previously. In the fighting on the OROTE PENINSULA, the Japanese weakened in the face of the combined assault permitting the marines to advance 600 yards against what had been heavy resistance. The light tanks alone destroyed four pillboxes, numerous dugouts and approximately 250 enemy.¹⁰

The medium tanks were not engaged until August 2d, when one platoon helped infantry by overrunning machine guns and snipers on the east and

south sides of MOUNT BARRIGIDA. That same day, 14 of the light tanks were sent out on a reconnaissance to the north and east of MOUNT BARRIGIDA. This patrol met a roadblock which it destroyed but was attacked by about a company of infantry when the lead tank, on a narrow road, became bellied on a stump. The tanks drove off the enemy and returned to its own lines with no losses.

On August 7th, D / 17, a coordinated tank-infantry attack was planned and executed against the town of YIGO. The Battalion was used as a unit although two medium companies were held in reserve. The light tanks led the attack followed by the mediums which were in turn followed by the infantry. The tanks overran machine gun emplacements but were hit from the flank and had two medium and two light tanks knocked out before the infantry could locate and destroy the guns. The tanks went on into YIGO and the infantry continued to follow.¹¹

The operations of this unit on GUAM are covered in the report of Committee 8, The Armored School, 1949.

Summary

Tanks were used only twice in units larger than platoons. In both cases, however, massing the tanks proved to be the most practicable means of employment. Generally, the terrain encountered was not conducive to tank action.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 6

¹Draft Monograph SAIPAN (USMC: Historical Division, 1949), passim.

²After Action Report, 708th Amphibious Tank Battalion, 17 April - 26 July 1944, passim. (Sp rpt)

³R. W. Johnston, Follow Me (New York: Random House, 1948), passim.

⁴Committee 8, Advanced Class, The Armored School, Armor in Operation Forager, a student committee report, (Fort Knox: The Armored School, 1949), passim.

⁵Captain Edmund G. Love, The 27th Infantry Division in World War II (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1949), passim.

⁶Historical Division, USMC, Campaign for the MARIANAS (USMC: Historical Division, 1946), passim.

⁷Campaign for the MARIANAS, op cit, passim.

⁸Ibid, p 26.

⁹Ibid, passim.

¹⁰Committee 8, Advanced Class, The Armored School, op cit p 122.

¹¹History 77th Infantry Division, Ours To Hold It High (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1947), passim.

CHAPTER 7
THE PALAU ISLANDS
SECTION I
PELELIU ISLAND

Terrain

The PALAU ISLANDS are a peculiar formation, a series of volcanic islands inside a coral reef, 77 miles long and 20 miles wide. They lie at the western extremity of the vast CAROLINE Chain which runs east and west across the PACIFIC OCEAN a few degrees above the Equator.

The PALAU Chain consists of six large islands and numerous islets sometimes rising perpendicularly to a height of 600 feet above high water mark.

BABELTHUAP, the largest of the islands, is more than equal in size to all the remaining islands, notably KOROR, ANGAUR, PELELIU, MALAKAL and ARAKALEAU. Economically valuable for its phosphate and aluminum ore deposits, BABELTHUAP is the strongest of all, heavily fortified and a much more powerful base in reputation and in fact than mysterious TRUK.

PELELIU (Map 13) is a small island with an extreme length of about six miles and a maximum width in the vicinity of the airfield of about two miles, including a dense mangrove swamp. This section is level, low-lying and mostly cleared. Not far north of the airfield, the Island divided into two prongs, separated by tidal swamp and shallow reef, giving it, vaguely, the shape of a lobster's claw. The eastern prong is much shorter tapering off into two islands. This eastern prong is low, swampy in places, and much of it is heavily overgrown.

The western prong, giving the Island its greatest length, is high ground; a long, narrow ridge, UMURBROGOL MOUNTAINS, starting just above the airfield and extending to the extreme northern tip, makes a formidable obstacle. This ridge, (UMURBROGOL MOUNTAINS) is covered with scrub jungle and consists of an incredible maze of vertical cliffs, declivities angling off in all directions, and precipitous slopes topped by weird spires and pinnacles and littered with great coral chunks and boulders.

The big airfield lay at the southern end of PELELIU and had been erected out of what had been swamp. All along the western face of the beach below the airfield and to a lesser extent along the eastern shore, the most likely places for an American landing, cocoanut-log cradles, concrete tetrahedrons, and barbed-wire systems were strewn from the reef's edge, intermingled with mines, of both controlled and contact types. There were more mines on the beach itself below high water mark. Inland, the roads were all mined with 100 lb. aerial bombs as were all the defiles in the limestone which constitutes the structural bulk of the Island. The only direct anti-boat defenses were on NGARAMOKED ISLAND off the southern tip of PELELIU, on a little island just north of PELELIU and on a point just before the west coast of PELELIU turns northeast. In each case, 37-mm or 75-mm guns were installed in concrete pillboxes heavy enough to be impervious to bombing. All beaches were extensively tank-trapped with systems of ditches and mined obstacles two or three deep. Machine gun pillboxes were placed on the flanks of the tank traps themselves where they could not be hit except by a tank actually in the trap.^{1,2}

The General Situation

The WESTERN CAROLINES, mandated islands of JAPAN since World War I, were heavily fortified and formed a sector of the inner defense belt guarding the island empire of JAPAN. Inasmuch as the Japanese forces in the CAROLINES constituted a salient that separated the two advancing United States forces, it became necessary to cut off this salient by occupying the island group of PALAU, YAP, and ULITHI. This would provide us with a fleet anchorage which the MARIANA ISLANDS did not offer.

With the conquest of the PALAU ISLANDS, our forces would have control of the southern half of the crescent-shaped chain of islands which run from JAPAN to the Southern PHILIPPINES, and would complete the isolation of the enemy-held Central and Eastern CAROLINES, including the great Japanese naval base at TRUK. If the Japanese continued to hold their heavily-fortified anchorage in the PALAU ISLANDS, it would be possible for them to emerge from any point in their defense belt and strike our forces and supply lines. Militarily speaking, it was a too well-fortified base to leave in our rear.³

The mission of seizing the islands of PELELIU and ANGAUR, known as "Operations Stalemate II", was given to the III Amphibious Corps. To coincide with this strike in the CAROLINES, the Southwest PACIFIC Force was to move out to and seize MOROTAI. This action was designed to establish air and minor naval facilities, in addition to further isolating Japanese forces on HELMHERA, who would otherwise be in a position to jeopardize any movement toward the Southern PHILIPPINES.

The target for the III Amphibious Corps was the PALAU ISLANDS. The primary reason for the entire campaign on PELELIU and ANGAUR was the early seizure of the airfield in the southern part of PELELIU and a construction site for a bomber base on ANGAUR. Once this objective was taken, the PHILIPPINES, the next target in the movement toward JAPAN, would be within bombing range, only 450 miles to the northwest.

The III Amphibious Corps consisted of the 1st Marine Division (1st, 5th, 7th Marine Regiments, Infantry) and the 81st Infantry Division, U. S. Army. These principal components were reinforced with four marine and two army amptrack units, plus several independent artillery battalions and the necessary naval and air supporting forces. It is to be noted that the 1st Marine Division had an organic tank battalion while the 81st Infantry Division was reinforced by the 710th Tank Battalion.⁴

The Corps plan of action called for the assault on PELELIU on September 15, 1944, by the 1st Marine Division. The PELELIU assault forces contained approximately 28,000 men with the 323d Regimental Combat Team from the 81st Infantry Division in Corps reserve.

On September 15th, following an intense preliminary air and naval bombardment, the 1st Marine Division landed on the western beaches near the Island's southern end. The 5th Marines made the landings as the center unit with the 1st Marines on their left; both Regiments landed with two battalions abreast and the third in support. The 7th Marines, landing on the right, used only one battalion in the assault, one in support while the third was the Division reserve. The

7th was to go in across the southernmost beach, swing right, clear NGARAMOKED and the southern tip of PELELIU.⁵ The 5th Regiment was to push across the airfield and beyond to clean out everything in the low ground of the main body of the Island. The 1st Marines was to take the most northerly beach, capture the outlying points from which the beachhead might be swept by fire and anchor the flank for the first night. In the morning they were to wheel and ascend the ridge on the Island's long peninsula from two directions.⁶

The assault met with considerable opposition. The first wave of amphtracks hit the beach at 0632 passing through small-arms fire. As though their arrival were a signal, the guns near the beach, many of those on the ridge, and a mortar barrage opened simultaneously. Amphtracks and DUKWs were hit across the shelf area and sank or drifted burning while marines strove to wade ashore. The guns on the island north of NGARAMOKED were particularly deadly with their enfilade fire. This fire cut up the right flank of the 7th badly and caused confusion among the platoons and companies reaching the beach.⁷

When the marines had advanced about 200 yards inland, fierce counterattacks, supported by tanks, were launched against them. These attacks were repulsed and on the next day, the airfield was seized. Progress was slow over this terrain where there was little room for maneuver, but by October 9th, the enemy had been forced into a small area in the northern part of the Island. There, it was necessary to ferret him out, a process that was to continue for many more weeks.

Tanks in Action

The first eight days of fighting on PELELIU was strictly a marine affair. Before the landing was eight hours old, the Japanese launched a major counterattack. This counterattack was launched with vigor and determination at 1630 on D-Day, September 15th. On the whole, it was well-planned, utilizing a preliminary artillery and mortar barrage to cover an assault made by about 13 tanks supported by infantry. It was, however, poorly timed. The marine infantry had been able to establish themselves on shore and their tanks (1st Marine Tank Battalion), thirty in number, had come safely across the reef before noon, though several were temporarily damaged by mines on the beach, and joined their respective combat teams.⁸

The point of impact of the enemy thrust fell between the 1st and 5th Marine Regiments.⁹ (Map 13). Detachments of specially trained infantrymen rode the tops of the tanks and more swarmed behind.¹⁰ (The Japanese Army troops on PELELIU were top quality, most of them veterans of the crack Kwantung Army of Manchurian fame.¹¹) It was a fine melee while it lasted only it did not last very long. The infantry riding on tanks and those following were cut down by small-arms fire from the marines in their foxholes. The Jap tanks, instead of concentrating on mopping up the infantry and breaking through to the artillery positions, chose to slug it out with the few Shermans that managed to reach the scene. The first Sherman to arrive (there were five in all) clattered through the line of waiting infantry and barged head-on into the Japanese formation, cutting a swath of destruction

clear through it. At this point, the Sherman was hit by a shell from the ridge in such a way as to cripple its steering mechanism so that it could travel only straight forward or straight backward. The tank commander thereupon swung his turret around, ordered the tank into reverse and charged in on the rear of the attackers who were already being knocked out by the bazookas and antitank guns of the infantry.¹²

Japanese 37-mm gunfire tore the tracks from one of our tanks and bent the gun of another. Every time the American 75's hit a Jap tank, they made a 12-inch hole while the second shell burned the tank. The crippled marine tank destroyed no fewer than six enemy tanks. When the fight was over, no less than all thirteen Jap tanks had been destroyed.¹³ All the Japs in the attack had been killed and their supporting troops had vanished. The net result was that, although some marine units had sustained severe losses, the Jap tank ceased to be a tactical factor on PELELIU.¹⁴

Tanks continued to be used freely, principally in close support of infantry. Theirs was the mission of providing direct fire into caves and crevices and to be used as close artillery. They were especially effective in the assault on the airfield and the southern and eastern sector of the island. This area was characterized by scrub jungle, high grasses, teeming with blockhouses, camouflaged pillboxes and lesser installations defended by many automatic weapons.¹⁵ As mentioned above, tanks were used freely but they were hit too. This was particularly true in the move to the north along the west coast and in the assault on NGESEBUS and KONGAURU ISLANDS. In the reduction of the Jap pockets in the UMURBROGOL MOUNTAINS, the use of tanks was limited.

Because of the wildly broken nature of the terrain it was a simple matter to make the caves mutually supporting in most instances. To use the tanks to any degree, extensive bulldozing was usually required to move the tanks into firing positions. Even then, they could seldom be very effective. In connection with the tanks, it is interesting to note that of thirty brought in during the original landing, only nine were permanently disabled although all but one were out of action at one time or another.¹⁶

There was no room for maneuver, and the numerous crevices in the rock and coral caused the tanks considerable trouble by their tracks becoming caught in the crevices. As soon as the Japs saw a tank in trouble, they placed a mortar concentration on it.¹⁷

On D / 8, the 321st RCT from ANGAUR arrived to reinforce the tired marines and to lend impetus to the final assaults. Attached to the 321st RCT was a company of medium tanks (Company A, 710th Tank Battalion) together with a Provisional Mortar Platoon and the Assault Gun Platoon of the 710th.

The 321st RCT, supported by the tanks and assault guns of the 710th, pushed up the narrow coastal flat along the west coast line. The advance was slow, but was characterized by the use of armored patrols to determine the enemy's location and strength, and then to continue the assault with infantry supported by tanks.¹⁸

At this time, two factors, other than the obvious one of eliminating the enemy there, urged the immediate seizure of Northern PELELIU. One was the securing of a convenient base for assaulting the adjacent

island of NGESEBUS with its fighter strip. The other was to hold the entire shore line and thus prevent reinforcements to the enemy garrison from the island above PELELIU.¹⁹

Tanks from the 710th Tank Battalion reinforced by marine tanks proceeded to the north cleaning out field pieces and caves and then covered the ridges to the east while the marines invaded NGESEBUS and KONGAURU ISLANDS. These objectives were stormed in a shore-to-shore operation supported by marine and army tanks and LVTA's moving across the reef. Resistance was severe in places and light in others. By nightfall, all of KONGAURU had been secured and the remaining Japanese pinned in on the northwestern tip of NGESEBUS where they were liquidated the following day.²⁰

There was now only one group of Japs remaining but it was a big group still well-established in the middle section of BLOODY NOSE RIDGE which overlooked the airfield.²¹ Tank-infantry teams moved around the northern tip of PELELIU and attacked southward west of the hill mass. Enemy resistance was narrowed in this northern sector to RADIO HILL and a strongly held pocket on the low ground to its west and south. With tanks leading infantry and eliminating bunkers, pillboxes and automatic weapons, this pocket was reduced. The hill was finally stormed and mopped up on September 30th.²²

Meantime, the tank-infantry team of the 321st RCT forged from the flats on the west coast to the east and south to complete the isolation of the pocket of enemy remaining in the mountains.

The UMURBROGOL Pocket, when the fighting had ceased everywhere else on the Island, was about 900 yards long by about 400 yards wide at the widest point. Its reduction boiled down to a matter of getting the infantry into the pocket with flamethrowers and demolitions and to blast out or seal each individual cave. This was attrition of the enemy at its deadliest.²³

Summary

The tanks of the marines and the 321st RCT played a most important role in the PELELIU operation. Even though they were restricted by terrain and many hours of bulldozer work had to be accomplished to provide roads for them, their protective armor and firepower were a definite factor in the reduction of enemy resistance. Tanks were constantly harassed by mines; however, in most instances, they resulted only in blown tracks. These tracks were either repaired or replaced usually on the spot with protection for the mechanics provided by other tanks neutralizing enemy guns and snipers from positions surrounding the disabled tank. Likewise, smoke from the tank guns provided protection for repairs and to assist in movement under cover thereof.

SECTION II

ANGAUR ISLAND

Terrain

ANGAUR (Map 14), a fairly small island lies approximately six miles outside the reef at the southern end of PELELIU. ANGAUR is similar in topography to PELELIU, mostly flat coral and limestone. In the

northwest corner there is high ground, 200 feet above sea level, consisting of scrub jungle, covered pinnacles and steep cliffs. ANGAUR is smaller than PELELIU measuring only 5000 yards long and less than 4000 yards across at its widest point. The shoreline has steep cliffs 20 to 40 feet high.

On ANGAUR most of the possible landing beaches were protected by anti-boat barricades, sometimes double and generally at the reef line. The beaches were also laced with antitank ditches or barricades.

The Island had no harbors but did have an extensive narrow gauge railroad network, mostly out of repair. Roads were generally eight to 12 feet wide, coral surfaced and suitable only for light traffic.

General Situation

The other principal component of the III Amphibious Corps at this time was the 81st Division, Major General Paul J. Mueller Commanding. This unit was as yet untried in combat. Its initial mission, together with its covering force, was to stage a demonstration off BABELTHUAP ISLAND on D-Day, stand by aboard ship to support the PELELIU landing if necessary, then assault the island of ANGAUR.²⁴

When it became apparent that the 1st Marine Division had the situation on PELELIU under control, the 81st Infantry Division (less the 323d RCT) was committed to the assault of ANGAUR ISLAND September 17, 1944. The 321st and 322d Infantry Regiments reinforced were landed on two widely separated beaches on the eastern shore; the 321st landed on Beach Blue and the 322d on Beach Red. The two regiments made a

junction between their beachheads late on D-Day. Following this, they swept across the Island in line from east to west. Upon reaching the phosphate-refining village of SAIPAN on the western shore, the 321st swung to the south and cleaned up that part of the Island while the 322d, which had encountered some serious resistance in the high ground to the northwest, closed in to isolate that resistance. One stubborn group held out in a cave-filled pocket until October 15, but since they were in no position to threaten the eventual outcome of the operation, the 322d was content to contain them. ANGAUR was declared secure on September 20th, at which time, the far shore had been reached in all sectors and mopping-up completed except for the single pocket in the northwest hills.²⁵

Tanks in Action²⁶

The 710th Tank Battalion, attached to the 81st Infantry Division was distributed as follows: Company A plus a Provisional Mortar Platoon reinforced with six mortars was attached to the 321st RCT; Company B was attached to the 322d RCT; the Battalion (-) and including three M-10 TD's was placed in Division reserve; one Battalion Command Tank was placed with each company.

All tanks of Company A, 710th Tank Battalion were on the beaches by 1000. Tank barriers on Blue Beach had not been cleared by bulldozers in the assault waves; however, by 1100, the tanks were clear of the beaches. One enemy pillbox on the beach was destroyed by a tank as it came across a reef from the LCT. The tanks were hampered in their

movement by the coral formations consisting of jagged outcroppings and large areas of crevices and fissures. Heavy jungle growth covered all of the terrain off the beach. Due to the condition of the beach, tanks were forced to go ashore in eight feet of water. Waterproofing on the tanks was damaged in some instances and resulted in complete or partial flooding of one or two tanks.

As mentioned above, the dense jungle growth just off the beach made necessary the use of tanks to shoot into this jungle with 30 caliber machine guns and 75-mm tank guns, blasting the foliage away to provide visibility and fields of fire. In firing into the jungle growth, each tank took an area and searched it; while enemy troops were seldom seen, upon moving forward, many dead Japanese were found in the areas fired upon, and in no case had the enemy succeeded in getting close to the tanks with any kind of demolition or anti-tank mines. The infantry followed the tanks at from 25 to 50 yards. Tanks failed to draw small-arms fire; only unsupported infantry was fired upon.

During the assault southward from the beach (Beach Red), the tank-infantry teams of RCT 322 and Company B, 710th Tank Battalion forced the withdrawal of the enemy from their positions and killing most of the enemy. Numerous pillboxes were destroyed. One Japanese 77-mm gun was encountered emplaced on the high ground near and west of the phosphate plant. This gun, firing from a range of about 500 yards made three hits on one tank. No permanent damage was done to the tank. The crew was merely shaken up. One hit was received on

the side armor of the left sponson, one hit on the turret and one on the rear deck. The Japanese gun was located and destroyed by tank fire without further incident. During this operation, the tanks consistently led the infantry by approximately 50 yards. Their fire was directed whenever necessary by the infantry commander, through the use of a 536 radio or the sound-powered telephones mounted externally on the tanks. In this action, only one platoon of tanks was utilized because of the impassable terrain over which the units were operating.

In the advance from Beach Blue to the west, the tank-infantry team made up of the 321st RCT and Company A, 710th Tank Battalion, encountered enemy artillery fire which caused them some uncomfortable moments and resulted in the death of a tank commander and a platoon leader. After the occupation of MIDDLE VILLAGE, tank-infantry columns were dispatched south along the west edge of the Island, turned east to cross the Island to the eastern beach (Green 2) and tied in with the south flank of the remainder of the RCT. Infantry rode the tanks during this maneuver and dismounted frequently to reconnoiter to the flanks. This force encountered a great many enemy positions but all were unoccupied. After joining the remaining elements of the RCT, the tanks were placed in perimeter defense for the night.

The move south through the phosphate plant and SAIPAN TOWN was characterized, in part, by the attack on a concrete emplacement on the high ground northwest of the phosphate plant. Fire from the tanks finally drove all the occupants of the position out into the

open where they were destroyed by tank fire and infantry small-arms fire. APC ammunition proved very effective in the destruction of this concrete emplacement which had reinforced concrete walls more than 18 inches thick. The range was 400 yards.

The crater on ROMAULDO HILL proved to be an enemy strongpoint. Entrance to this crater was through a narrow railroad cut at the south end. It was found that the ground in the crater was impassable for tanks because of crevices and rock pinnacles, except for the several forks of the narrow-gauge railroad running around the crater. These railroad beds were barely wide enough to accommodate the tanks, and in the attempt to move into the crater, two tanks overturned from the roadbed, one catching fire immediately. The other tank was disarmed and abandoned. This incident resulted in dismissing this plan and decision to support infantry from the mouth of the railroad cut. During the time the tanks were inside the crater, several hits were sustained from Japanese guns of 37-mm or 40-mm, but no damage resulted.

Five days of action, wherein tanks from the mouth of the cut supported infantry in their efforts to exterminate the Japs in their positions in the crater brought no clear-cut results. Therefore, it was decided to try to move tanks into the crater from the northeast side. Previously, a road had been constructed from the northeast side of the crater to Beach Red and an attempt was made at this time to bulldoze routes into the crater as an extension of this road. Tanks covered the bulldozing during this phase of the operation.

Thereafter, tanks were able to give fire support to the infantry from their newly-made positions, resulting in fire from the south (railroad cut) and northeast into the crater. Likewise, 155-mm Howitzers were placed in the railroad cut to fire around the rim of the crater. A medium tank was used as an artillery observer's tank from which to adjust this fire, the tank being placed in a position on commanding ground about 200 yards from the rim of the crater.

During the remainder of the operations on ANGAUR, tanks were called upon intermittently for supporting fires and perimeter and beach defense. The terrain of the final action of mopping-up was such that it was impossible to use the tanks.

Summary

Because of the terrain in this operation, it was usually necessary to move the tanks in column. The Japs, when attacking these columns, usually fired on the last vehicle apparently in the hope of disabling the last tank and thereby blocking the escape route to the others. Their weapons were unable to damage our tanks to that extent.

The necessity for close cooperation between combat engineers and the tankers in close terrain of the type encountered on ANGAUR was brought out forcibly. On a number of occasions, it would have been impossible for the tanks to support the infantry without prior preparation of firing positions by the engineers for the tanks. Likewise, the engineers could not have prepared these positions without the cover afforded by the tanks. Hence -- COOPERATION.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 7

¹Major Frank O. Hough, USMCR, The Island War (Philadelphia-New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1947), passim.

²Fletcher Pratt, The Marine's War (New York: William Sloane Associates Inc., 1948), passim.

³Ibid, pp 328, 329.

⁴Ibid, p 336.

⁵Major Frank O. Hough, op cit, p 301.

⁶Pratt, op cit, p 365.

⁷Ibid, p 337.

⁸Hough, op cit p 300.

⁹Pratt, op cit, p 339.

¹⁰Hough, op cit, p 300.

¹¹Ibid, p 298.

¹²Ibid, p 300.

¹³Pratt, op cit, pp 339, 340.

¹⁴Hough, op cit, pp 300, 301.

¹⁵Ibid, p 303.

¹⁶Ibid, p 308.

¹⁷Pratt, op cit, p 342.

¹⁸Hough, op cit, p 306.

¹⁹Ibid, p 306.

²⁰Ibid, p 307.

²¹Pratt, op cit, p 343.

²²Hough, op cit, p 307.

²³Ibid, p 308.

²⁴Ibid, p 299.

²⁵Ibid, p 305.

²⁶Operations Report, 710th Tank Battalion, pp 1-10 (Note: Remainder of the material for this chapter obtained from this reference.)

SAIPAN MARIANA ISLANDS

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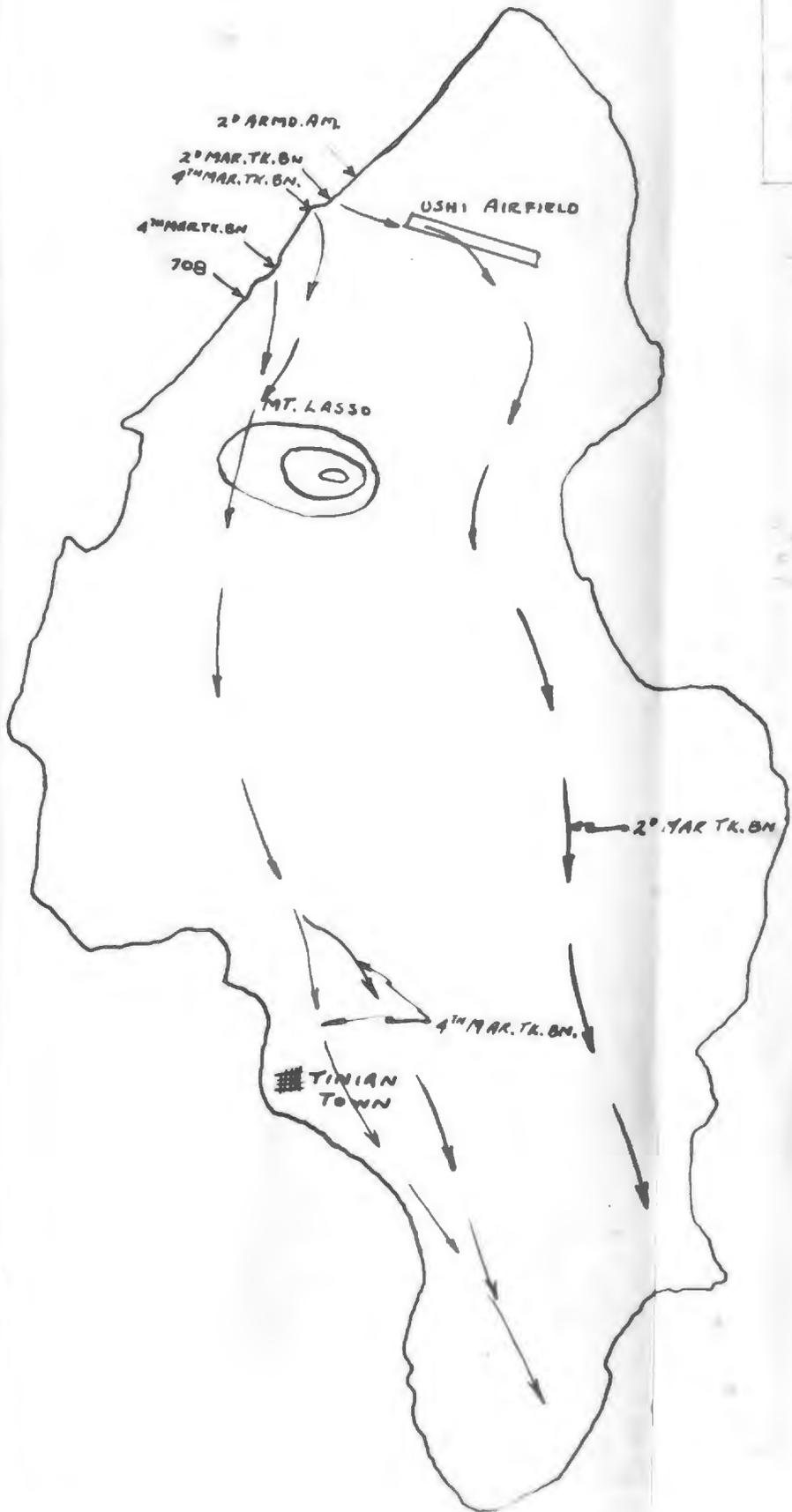
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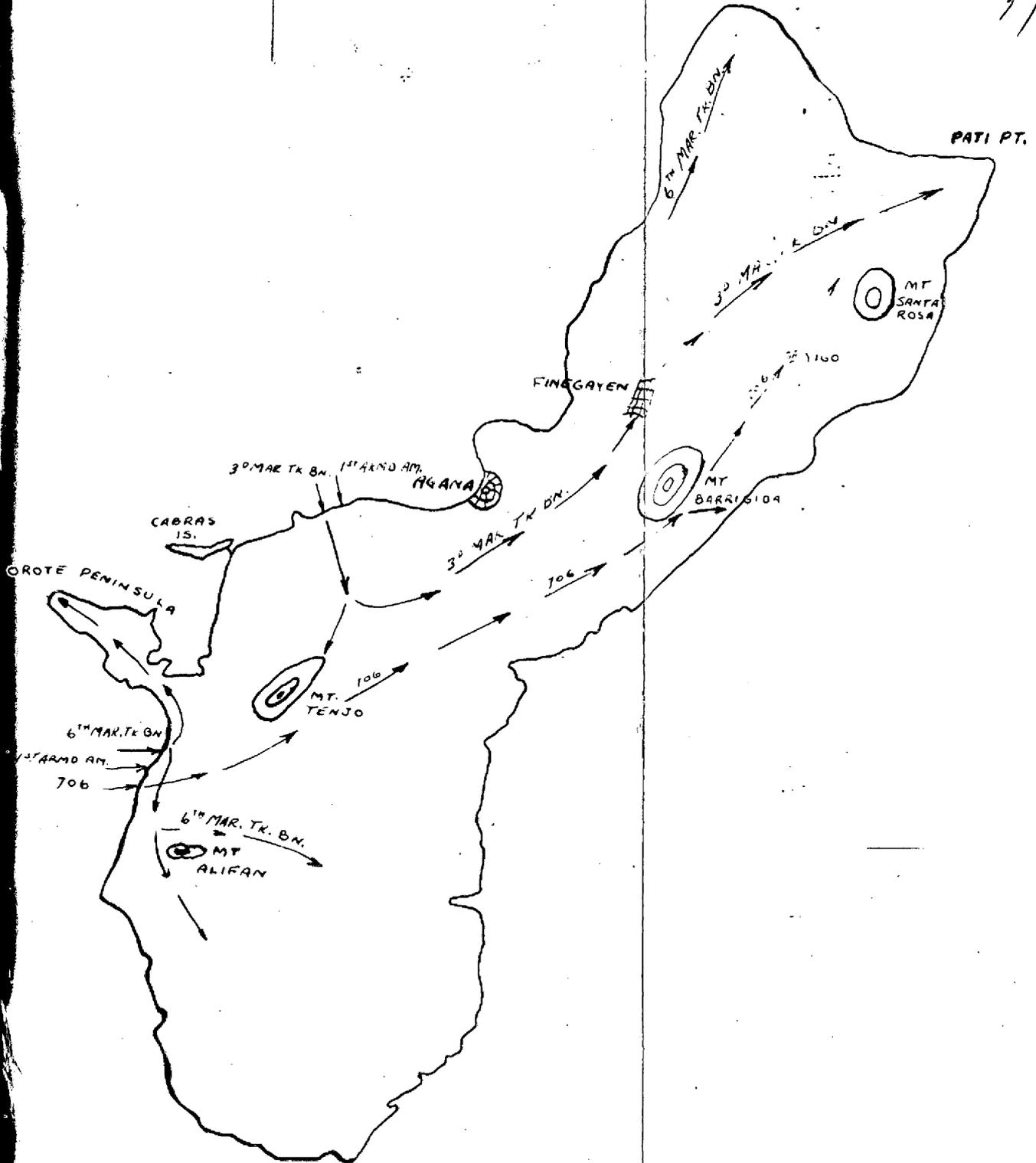
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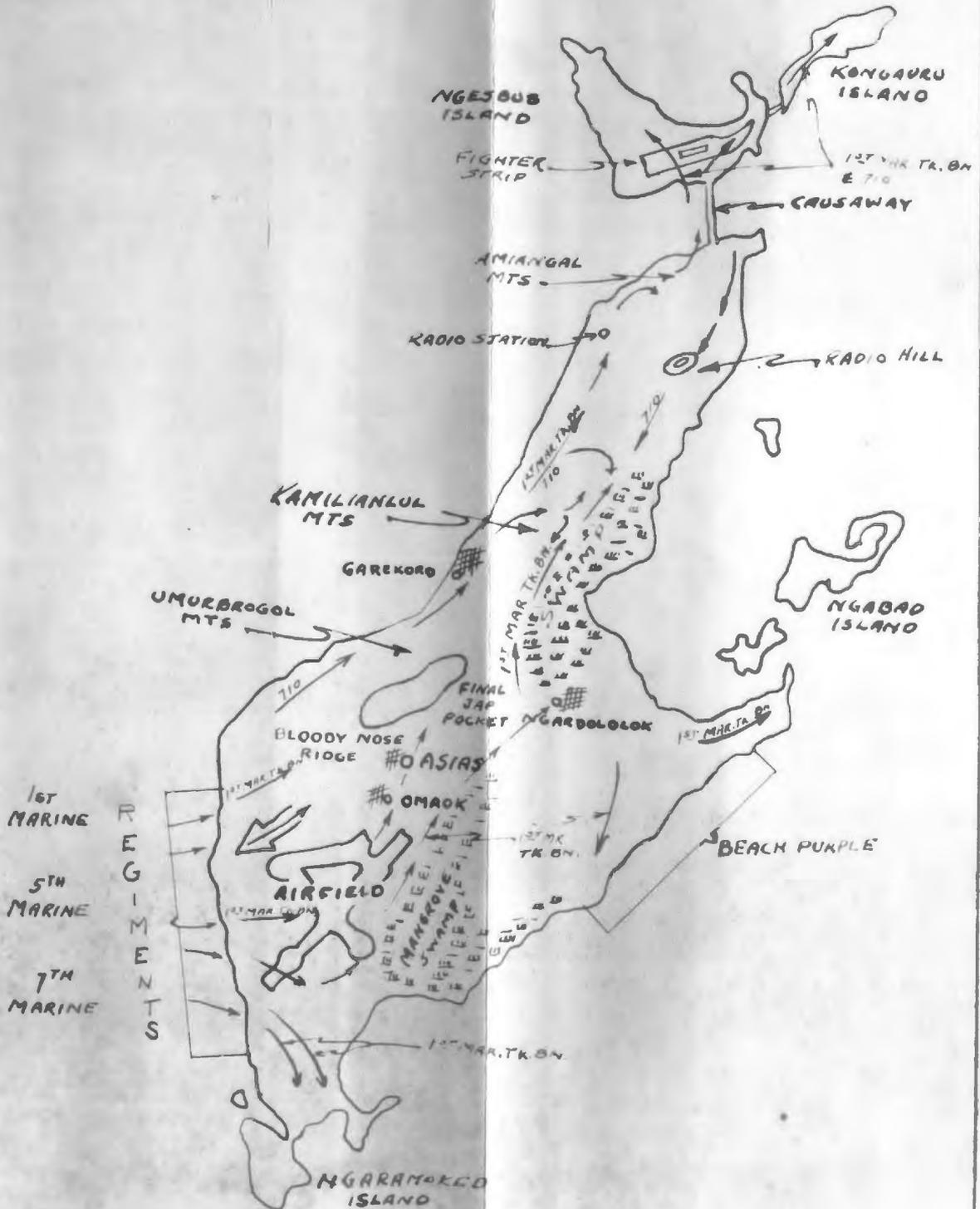
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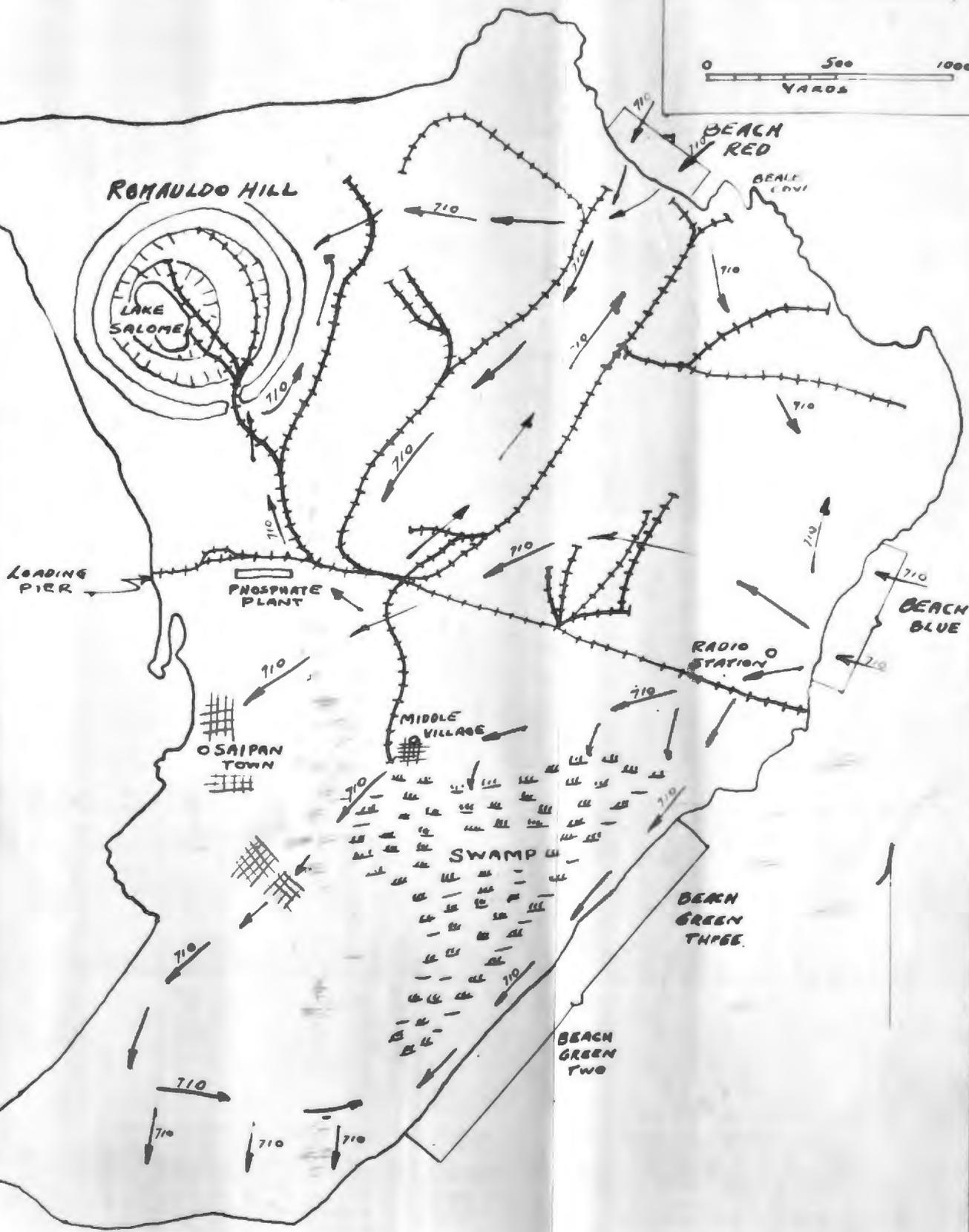
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ANGAUR 14
PALAU ISLANDS 97



CHAPTER 8

THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

SECTION I

GENERAL

The PHILIPPINE ARCHIPELAGO, comprising over 700 separate islands, is about 500 miles from the coast of ASIA. This chain, extending 1100 miles from east to west, possesses an irregular coastline totaling over 12,500 miles. Many fine harbors exist in this chain, most of them undeveloped, and there are many landing beaches. The PHILIPPINE ISLANDS, by virtue of their strategic location, completely dominate the eastern part of the SOUTH CHINA SEA.

From a military point of view the PHILIPPINE ISLANDS may be considered to fall into four strategic groups as follows: LUZON, MINDANAO, The VISAYAS or CENTRAL ISLANDS, and the SULU ARCHIPELAGO, the chief island of which is JOLO.

The great number of islands, as well as the difficulties involved in moving troops to any threatened point, largely resolves the problem of defense into an effort to hold only the largest and most important land areas, particularly LUZON and MINDANAO.

In addition to their military value, the PHILIPPINE ISLANDS possess natural resources of considerable importance to JAPAN or to any other empire-building nation. The largest chromite lode in the world and the most extensive high-grade iron deposits in the FAR EAST are located in the PHILIPPINES. Gold mining is one of the country's chief sources of wealth, and manganese and copper are found in large

quantities. Hemp, sugar, copra, coconut oil, and tobacco are the principal agricultural products while virgin hardwood forests constitute a valuable reserve of national wealth. The total land available is ample for the needs of the population which numbers almost 17,000,000.

General Situation

The fall of CORREGIDOR, on May 6, 1941, marked the end of the PHILIPPINE Campaign for the Japanese. The "Pearl of the Orient" was now in their hands.

General Douglas MacArthur ordered by the President of the UNITED STATES to leave the PHILIPPINES before they were taken by the Japanese, made the prophetic statement, "I shall return."

By early fall of 1944, the United States Forces had gained the initiative and were moving relentlessly across the PACIFIC. The Japanese were now being continually kept off balance by the timing and sequence of UNITED STATES' blows. Dangerously weakened by attrition in important categories of weapons, the Japanese had been steadily forced back.

In preparation for our further advance, the Japanese, after the loss of the MARIANAS, developed the SHO Plans, a series of alternatives with which to counter any American thrust against their island chain. Sho No. 1 provided for the defense of the PHILIPPINES, Sho No. 2 for the FORMOSA-NANSEI SHOTO-SOUTHERN KYUSHU area, Sho No. 3 for KYUSHU-SHIKOKO-HONSHU and Sho No. 4, HOKAIDO.¹

As it was considered most probable that Sho No. 1, the defense of the PHILIPPINES, would be the operation actually called for, the Japanese Army concentrated its efforts on reinforcing that Archipelago.

Insecure at sea and in the air, they met the problem of how to be strong everywhere at once by the best possible compromise; strongly manning LUZON and preparing a mobile counter-landing force to delay, or, if possible, to throw back our troops after we had committed them to a specific objective.

As a consequence of the September operations, particularly the successful carrier strikes on the PHILIPPINES, and of information of the weaknesses of Japanese forces there, it was decided to strike directly at the VISAYAS. In mid-September therefore, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed the Commander-in-Chief, SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA, to seize and develop bases and install forces in the CENTRAL PHILIPPINES, and directed the Commander-in-Chief, PACIFIC OCEAN AREA, to augment the forces of the SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA and to furnish necessary naval support.

Reoccupation of the PHILIPPINES by General MacArthur's forces would mark the completion of the SOUTHWEST PACIFIC THEATER's immediately assigned mission and the successful return would also bisect the JAPANESE EMPIRE. Forces in that theater would then be available for whatever the subsequent situation might demand.

At 0800, on October 17, 1944, an advance party of Rangers began landing on the islets in the mouth of LEYTE GULF to secure the entry to the Gulf. On the 20th, United States Forces went ashore against

relatively light opposition. This was because of the heavy loss of ships and planes by the Japanese prior to the landing.

A few days later, General MacArthur's prophecy was fulfilled. He again landed on the PHILIPPINES.

SECTION II

LEYTE

Terrain

LEYTE (Map 15) is traversed by a belt of mountains, the CENTRAL CORDILLERA RANGE, running from CARIGARA BAY in the north, to CARALIAN BAY and SOGOD BAY in the south. This range of mountains consists almost entirely of extinct volcanoes and are characterized by interlacing, knife-like spurs and ridges, heavily overgrown with tropical foliage and deeply cut ravines. The CORDILLERA RANGE forms an effective natural barrier between the eastern and western coastal areas of the island. North and east of this mountain range lies the LEYTE VALLEY, a broad, agriculturally rich plain, where most of the Island's food is grown. Occupying approximately 250 square miles, LEYTE VALLEY forms a wide corridor between the CENTRAL CORDILLERA RANGE and the hills to the east. To the north, it opens towards CARIGARA BAY and in the south it slopes into the lowland coast between TACLOBAN and ABUYOG. Two smaller valleys are the TACLOBAN VALLEY, which lies south of TACLOBAN and joins the LEYTE VALLEY in the vicinity of PALO and the ORMOC VALLEY which lies north of the town of ORMOC. These two valleys are noted for their coconut plantations and sugar cane fields.

The east coast, from CATAISAN POINT on the north to the town of ABUYOG on the south, possesses the best landing beaches on LEYTE. From ABUYOG south to CABALIAN BAY, the east coast is rugged and unsuitable for landing operations. CARIGARA BAY is the most prominent terrain feature on the north coast. Shallow water, swamps and high ground east and west of the Bay greatly restrict the north coast of LEYTE for military operations. The west coast from RABIN POINT to ORMOC is very irregular. ORMOC BAY has an adequate anchorage for a large number of vessels and possesses the only suitable landing beaches along the entire west coast of the island. The south coast has two deep bays, the SOGOD and the CABALIAN. The entire southern portion of the Island is rugged and mountainous except for a narrow coastal plain on which is built the narrow road that runs around the southern end of the Island.

General Situation

The initial Allied thrust into the PHILIPPINE ISLANDS was the LEYTE operation from October 17th to December 26, 1944. This offensive action was conducted by the UNITED STATES Sixth Army under command of Lieutenant General Walter Krueger. The LEYTE operation was divided into three tactical phases. Phase One, which consisted of an amphibious operation to secure the entrance to the LEYTE GULF, was completed by the 6th Ranger Battalion in two days, October 17 and 18, 1944. Phase Two, which ran from October 20th to November 2d, consisted of seizing and securing the coastal strip of eastern LEYTE

from TACLOBAN to DULAG and the opening of the SAN JUANICO and PANAON STRAITS. The Third Phase was the completion of the task of clearing the Island of all organized Japanese resistance. This Third Phase was completed during the period of November 3d to December 26, 1944.

Phase Two of the LEYTE operation began on October 20, 1944, when the X and XXIV Corps landed abreast on the eastern coast of LEYTE. In the X Corps zone, the 1st Cavalry Division landed to the north near SAN JOSE with the 24th Infantry Division, less the 21st Infantry Regiment, on its left. On the first day, the 1st Cavalry Division seized the TACLOBAN airfield and captured TACLOBAN the next day. Five days later, the Division was moving northwest toward CARIGARA where it met, on October 29th, the 24th Infantry Division (-), which had previously secured PALO. On November 2, 1944, CARIGARA was captured by a coordinated attack of the 1st Cavalry and 24th Infantry Divisions.

Meanwhile, in the XXIV zone, the 7th Infantry Division landed on the south flank of the 96th Infantry Division in the vicinity of DULAG. On October 21st, the 7th Division captured the DULAG AIRSTRIP, and within the next four days it seized three airfields in the BURAUEN area. On October 29th, DAGAMI was captured. In the meantime, other elements of the 7th Division had moved south to secure ABUYOG and then across the Island to occupy BAYBAY. By October 31st, relief of the 7th Infantry Division was initiated by the 96th Infantry Division which had secured the southern portion of the LEYTE VALLEY. Thus, on November 2, 1944, Phase Two of the LEYTE operation was completed.

The 24th Division moved westward from CARIGARA on November 3d, and this marked the beginning of Phase Three of the operation. PINAMOPOAN was captured on November 4th and the Division then turned south until it was stopped at BREAKNECK RIDGE near LIMON.

In the XXIV zone, the 96th Infantry Division eliminated enemy resistance west of DAGAMI; and, in conjunction with the 11th Airborne Division, which had reinforced the Sixth Army, began a push westward across the mountains. Meanwhile, the 7th Infantry Division concentrated in the BAYBAY area, and then moved northward toward ORMOC. Another division, which had reinforced the Sixth Army, the 77th Infantry Division, made an assault landing south of ORMOC on December 7th and captured ORMOC on December 10th. The 77th then continued north along HIGHWAY NO. 2 and contacted elements of X Corps, the 1st Cavalry Division and the 32d Infantry Division, which had replaced the 24th Infantry Division. This closed the trap on the major portion of the enemy forces on LEYTE. On December 25th, a battalion of the 77th Division, made an assault landing at PALOMPON, the only remaining Japanese port on the west coast of LEYTE. This was the climax of the LEYTE operation.²

Tanks in Action

The battle for LEYTE was primarily an infantry battle. Tanks were used in minor units, sections, platoons, rarely as a company and only once as a battalion. All of the tank action was in support of infantry, and for that reason, it is necessary to keep in mind the

brief foregoing discussion of the overall operation on the island of LEYTE. The tank units that participated in the LEYTE campaign included the following: 44th Tank Battalion, 706th Tank Battalion, 763d Tank Battalion, 767th Tank Battalion, 776th Amphibious Tank Battalion and the 780th Amphibious Tank Battalion.

44th Tank Battalion. The 44th Tank Battalion, less Company C, supported the action of the 1st Cavalry Division, the 24th Infantry Division and the 32d Infantry Division. On D-Day, Company A of the 44th, landed with the 12th Cavalry Regiment. After the initial landing Company A was unable to accompany the 12th Regiment. Because of swampy ground it could not move off the roads.³ On November 4, 1944, Company A was attached to the 21st Infantry of the 24th Division. At this time, the 24th was advancing south from PINAMOPOAN towards ORMOC. The 21st Regiment used the tanks in units of from two tanks to a platoon to reduce hostile automatic weapons emplacements, to engage enemy tanks, and to render fire support to the advancing infantry. On November 10th, a platoon of Company A attacked a hill known as "LITTLE CASINO" without infantry support. The terrain was such that the tank guns could not be depressed enough to fire at the enemy dug-in positions. Most of the effective fire that the Platoon delivered came from the individual arms of the crews. The next day saw the capture of the hill with a tank-infantry team. On November 15th, Company A was attached to the 32d Infantry Division. The 32d used the tanks in small groups against various targets until the 77th Infantry Division was met moving from ORMOC northward. On December 22, 1944, Company A was released to its parent battalion.

Company B of the 44th Tank Battalion was attached to the 7th Cavalry Regiment and for the first three days after the assault landing it was part of a tank-infantry team used to clean out machine gun nests and mortar positions in the SAN JOSE-TACLOBAN area. Thereafter, Company B saw no tank action but the personnel were used by the 1st Cavalry Division on dismounted outposts and patrols.

Company D was employed in a manner similar to Company B's employment. They supported the 1st Squadron of the 7th Cavalry Regiment in seizing an airstrip on the CATAISAN PENINSULA on the first day. Thereafter, the Company saw very little tank action.⁴

776th Amphibious Tank Battalion. The 776th Amphibious Tank Battalion, minus Company D, was attached to the 7th Infantry Division for the assault landing on LEYTE. Company A supported the 1st Battalion of the 184th Infantry; Company B supported the 3d Battalion, 184th Infantry and the 3d Battalion, 32d Infantry; and Company C supported the 2d Battalion, 32d Infantry. All of the companies of the 776th Amphibious Tank Battalion participating in the assault, landed abreast in the first wave at 1000 October 20, 1944. Although mortar and small arms fire was received immediately upon landing the companies moved inland approximately 250 yards firing direct fire missions on pillboxes, retreating enemy soldiers and other targets. Then the Battalion took up firing positions to support the advancing infantry by overhead fire.

The second platoon of Company A, 776th Amphibious Tank Battalion, tried to move up the DAGUITAN RIVER to secure the DAO Bridge in conjunction with an overland attack by the 184th Infantry.⁵ The

amphibious tanks were unable to move upstream because of the swift-ness of the stream. The platoon then tried to move overland but it was stopped by swamps. It then returned to the mouth of the DAGUITAN and helped protect the left flank of the 7th Division by going into position and giving indirect fire support. Meanwhile, the third platoon of Company C had a similar mission to help the 32d Infantry secure a bridge over the CALBASAG RIVER. This platoon was stopped by felled trees and swampy ground. It returned to the Company area.

The 776th Amphibious Tank Battalion remained in position giving fire support to elements guarding the left flank of the 7th Infantry Division until November 5th. At that time, it was relieved and went into rehabilitation bivouac until used in the action on the west coast of LEYTE. On November 30th, Company C reinforced by the 2d and 3d Platoons of Company B joined the 7th Division in the BAYBAY area. Company C, reinforced, supported the 7th Division in its move up the coast towards ORMOC by flanking enemy positions by water and rendering fire support to the infantry who were advancing overland.

Company A of the 776th Amphibious Tank Battalion furnished the amphibious tank element of the task force of the 77th Infantry Division which made the assault landing to capture ORMOC. On December 7th, Company A landed and protected the flanks of the succeeding landing waves. For two days, Company A was in position giving direct fire support to the 305th Infantry. On the 8th, one platoon was attached to the 902d Field Artillery Battalion. On the 9th, Company A moved along the coast protecting the left flank of the 77th

Division. At 0900, on December 10th, Company A moved into ORMOCC, the first unit to arrive in that town.⁶ On the 11th, the Company continued the advance along the beach to the vicinity of LANAC. On December 11th and 12th, Company A was placed under control of Division Artillery, 7th Infantry Division, for indirect fire mission. After that it occupied positions for defending the ORMOCC beach until it embarked, on December 24th, for the assault landing at PALOMPAN.

Company A of the 776th Amphibious Tank Battalion supplied all of the artillery support to the task force which made the assault on PALOMPAN. Company A launched its attack on the beaches at 0700 December 25th after moving 28 miles across open water. The assaulting battalion used Company A for fire support, to reconnoiter small islands off the coast and to make small flanking attacks on the enemy by water. This ended the action of the 776th Amphibious Tank Battalion on LEYTE except for mopping-up operations on some of the adjoining islands.⁷

767th Tank Battalion. Four platoons of the 767th Tank Battalion took part in the initial assault on LEYTE. The Battalion was attached to the 7th Infantry Division, and its four assaulting platoons landed in the second to fifth waves. The remainder of the Battalion landed in the 10th to 14th waves. Company A was attached to the 32d Infantry, Company B was attached to the 184th Infantry and Company C to the 17th Infantry. One platoon of Company D was attached to the 32d Infantry, one platoon to the 17th Infantry and the remainder of Company D was attached to the 184th Infantry. For the first two days, the companies remained attached to the infantry regiments and were then returned to their parent battalion. While operating with the infantry regiments,

the tank companies were normally held in reserve. Platoons were sent out to help the battalions when needed. The primary mission of the tanks was to clean out Japanese pillboxes and machine gun nests.

On October 23d, the 767th Tank Battalion engaged in the only recorded action of a battalion-size tank unit on LEYTE.⁸ The 767th Tank Battalion attacked along the highway from DULAG to BURAUEN with Company A on the left, Company B on the right and Company C following along the road. Company D was left in the bivouac area to protect the supply columns. The mission of the 767th was to precede the 17th Infantry along the DULAG-BURAUEN Highway covering from 200-300 yards on each side of the Highway. They were given no infantry support. The attack jumped off at 0800 on the morning of the 23d. The line of departure was the north-south road 2000 yards west of the DULAG AIRSTRIP. By noon, the Battalion had covered three and one-half miles and had seized SAN PABLO. The resistance had been light. The most notable incident was that of a Japanese soldier climbing on the rear deck of a tank to place a satchel charge. The tank following killed the Jap and shot the charge off the tank with machine gun fire. The Battalion stopped at SAN PABLO for re-supply and then continued its advance at 1400. By 1600, the Battalion had taken the two SAN PABLO airstrips and had entered BURAUEN. The infantry following had moved so slowly they were two miles to the rear so the 767th was ordered to withdraw to its bivouac area. This was in accordance with the policy of never having the tanks bivouacked in front of the infantry.⁹ The next day, the attack was repeated with a

few changes. Company D was given Company C's mission and Company C was given the mission of turning north to overrun the BURI AIRSTRIP. Resistance was much greater this second day, mostly because of mines. On entering BURAUEN, several tanks hit mines and were disabled. These knocked-out tanks blocked the streets for the remainder of the columns. By noon, the 17th Infantry had arrived and proceeded to mop up the town.

The tank action discussed above was not successful for several reasons. For one, the tanks were not as aggressive as they might have been. For this lack of aggressiveness, the Battalion Commander was relieved of his command. Also, the infantry made a grave mistake in not giving the tank battalion some infantry support. Had the tanks been accompanied by as much as one rifle company the first day, the second day's attack probably would have been unnecessary. This action ended the independent operations of the 767th Tank Battalion on LEYTE.

From this time forward, the tanks of the 767th Tank Battalion were used in small units to support infantry action. The only other action of armor worthy of note was in the "Battle of Stone Bridge."¹⁰ On October 28, 1944, STONE BRIDGE was attacked by Company F of the 17th Infantry supported by the 1st and 2d Platoons of Company C, 767th. After a short preparation, the attack jumped off. The tanks proceeded along the road and the infantry moved to their flanks off the road. Three tanks managed to get across the bridge but the remainder of the force was stopped at the stream. The three tanks moved ahead alone. This proved to be a costly error. Two of the tanks

were disabled and the crew of one lost. The remaining tank with two crews withdrew to the Bridge. A flanking attack by the infantry then reduced the position and the way to DAGAMI was open to the American Forces. The lesson learned in this action is that, when tanks leave the protection of the infantry, they invite disaster.

After DAGAMI was captured, the 767th Tank Battalion returned to the BURAUEN-DAGAMI area and remained there for the duration of the fight for LEYTE.¹¹

780th Amphibious Tank Battalion. The 780th Amphibious Tank Battalion was attached to the 96th Infantry Division on August 24, 1944. The Battalion trained with the 96th Infantry Division for the LEYTE operation. For the assault landing on LEYTE, Companies A and B were given the mission of leading the attack of the 382d Infantry and Companies C and D were given the mission of leading the attack of the 383d Infantry. The amphibious tanks were to precede the infantry by 50 yards, open fire 300 yards from the beach, and secure the beach by direct fire from the first good firing positions. This fire was to be lifted when masked by the advancing infantry. Thereafter, the tanks were to support the infantry by indirect fire. It was not planned to use the amphibious tanks farther inland than 500 yards.

The LST's carrying the 780th Amphibious Tank Battalion moved into SAN PEDRO BAY on the morning of October 20, 1944. The tanks were debarked and at 0930 the Battalion moved in line across the line of departure which was 4000 yards from the beach in the vicinity of SAN JOSE. Fire was opened by all weapons of all companies 300 yards

off shore, and the firing continued until the advancing infantrymen of the 96th Infantry Division masked the direct fire from the tanks.

Company A was held up by antitank obstacles 200 yards inland and received mortar fire from HILL 120 to the southwest. Company B was initially stopped by trees and stumps on the beach. These two Companies finally extricated themselves and moved inland in support of the 382d Infantry. Companies C and D, meeting light resistance at first, moved inland 500 yards, reorganized and proceeded to aid the 1st Battalion of the 383d Infantry in a river crossing. On October 21st, Companies C and D pulled back to tie in with the field artillery and render indirect fire support to the infantry. On October 22, Companies C and D were ordered to move to TIGBAW to support the 383d Infantry. They were stopped by mud and were unable to carry out this mission. Meanwhile, Companies A and B continued in close fire support of the 382d Infantry until October 23d. On that date, all companies of the 780th Amphibious Tank Battalion were released to control of their parent battalion and the Battalion was reassembled on the beach.

For five days the 780th Amphibious Tank Battalion remained on the beach performing beach defense missions. On October 29th the Battalion moved in mass to a position 300 yards southwest of TELEGRAPHO to support by fire the attack of the 381st Infantry on CATMON HILL. During the night, the tanks fired harassing fire on enemy positions and the next day continued in their role as artillery in support of the infantry attack.

The 780th Amphibious Tank Battalion moved into a bivouac north of SAN ROQUE on November 1st and the next day they moved to a semi-permanent bivouac one mile south of RIZAL. Here they remained until the end of the LEYTE campaign furnishing patrols, security forces, beach defenses and guards for the XXIV Corps Headquarters.¹²

763d Tank Battalion. The armor support, other than that of amphibious tanks with the 96th Infantry Division in the LEYTE operation, was provided by the 763d Tank Battalion. Companies A and B were attached to the 382d Infantry, and Companies C and D were attached to the 383d Infantry. The mission assigned to these companies was to land directly in rear of the assault waves of the infantry and from then on to support the advance of the infantry as directed.

At 1044, October 20, 1944, the tanks were landed in the 96th Division zone in the seventh wave. Companies A and B were under command of the Battalion Commander, and Companies C and D were under command of the Battalion Executive Officer. Very little resistance was encountered on the beaches and the tanks proceeded inland supporting the infantry. About 1000 yards inland, the tanks were stopped by swamps. The infantry went on without the tanks and the 763d reassembled on the beach.

On the 25th of October, Company A of the 763d Tank Battalion was attached to the reserve infantry regiment, the 381st, and moved north with the 381st to TANUAN and then west to KILING. Very little enemy resistance was encountered during this move. At KILING, Company A was attached to the 382d Infantry which had been contacted. The

Company supported the 382d in its action west of DAGAMI until it was stopped by poor roads and weak ridges. On November 6, Company A returned to DAGAMI and remained inactive for two weeks. On the 20th, a part of Company A was organized into tank-artillery batteries and reinforced the 96th Division's Artillery until December 10th. At that time, Company A was attached to the X Corps and moved to LIMON. There they were given the mission of supporting the advance of the 32d Division south along the road towards ORIOCC. Company A continued in this role until juncture was made with the American forces advancing from the south and then they were released and returned to DAGAMI.

After the initial landing, Company B of the 763d Tank Battalion was inactive until November 20th. At that time, the company was attached to the 96th Division's artillery and was used to provide indirect fire support throughout the remainder of the LEYTE Campaign.

When the 763d Tank Battalion returned to the battalion assembly area on the beach after the initial assault, Company C was ordered to reconnoiter a route to PIKAS. One platoon of Company C plus a platoon of Company D set out on this mission. The medium tanks of Company C led and succeeded in making the bridges impassable for the light tanks of Company D.¹³ As a consequence, the platoon from Company D lagged behind and were attacked by a force of Japanese carrying pole charges. One tank was disabled and the platoon was stopped. The platoon of medium tanks tried to return to the aid of the light tanks but they could not turn around on the narrow road. Finally,

another platoon of Company C was sent to the rescue. The net result was a day wasted, a tank lost, and the mission unaccomplished. This could have been avoided if some infantry had accompanied the tank platoons. Company C did very little thereafter until November 29th. Then, like Company B, they were attached to the artillery for indirect fire support.

After the assault landings, Company D was used for patrol work, to mop up by-passed enemy pockets of resistance and for security forces for engineer work parties. During the last half of the campaign, Company D remained inactive in bivouac near DAGAMI.¹⁴

706th Tank Battalion. The 706th Tank Battalion arrived in the LEYTE GULF at 0600 November 23, 1944, and debarked at 0900 in the vicinity of DULAG on the east coast of LEYTE. A bivouac was set up in the UBAN-TARRAGONA area. The Battalion remained in this bivouac performing beach defense missions and carrying out administrative tasks for the duration of the LEYTE campaign.

Companies A and D were detached and saw action with the 77th Infantry Division. Company A moved by water to ORMOC and joined the 307th Infantry Regiment at VALENCIA. The company, minus one platoon, took up defensive positions on the VALENCIA AIRSTRIP. The 2d Platoon was attached to the 2d Battalion of the 307th Infantry. The only significant action of the Company was the action of three tanks attached to an infantry patrol. West of SAN JOSE on December 24th; these three tanks fired 28 rounds of 75-mm HE on targets designated by the patrol leader and killed approximately 40 enemy soldiers.¹⁵

At 0800, December 20th, Company D left UBAN and made an overland march along HIGHWAY 1 to BAYBAY and then up the coast to join the 77th Division. On arrival, one platoon was attached to the 307th Infantry and the remainder of the Company to the 305th Infantry. The next day, Company D was ordered to report to the 306th Infantry west of LIBUNGAO. The tanks proceeded up HIGHWAY NO. 2 to KANANGA. Here they were stopped by enemy dug-in along the TOGBONG RIVER. The tank company made an attack and drove the enemy out. One hit by a mortar shell made a hole in the top of one of the tanks. The tank commander was killed. This was the only serious damage sustained by Company D at this time.

For the next two days, Company D moved in support of the infantry against sporadic enemy resistance. The end of the fight for LEYTE was in sight.¹⁶

Summary

The use of tanks on LEYTE left much to be desired. Many successful operations were conducted by the tank units there, but many opportunities to use the tanks to telling advantage were overlooked or disregarded. Several reasons for this are apparent. In the first place, the terrain on the Island was poor for tanks and in the training of the tank units, not enough emphasis was placed in orienting the tankers as to the nature of the ground over which they were to fight. In the second place, there was a serious lack of training between the tankers and the infantry resulting in a mutual misunderstanding of each other's capabilities and limitations.

Generally, the tank action on LEYTE was characterized by the employment of armor in small units supporting and being supported by the infantry. Frequent use was made of the tanks to augment the artillery fires supporting the infantry. Finally, poor terrain and the lack of a suitable road net proved to be the most limiting obstacles found in using tanks on LEYTE.

SECTION III

LUZON

Terrain

The island of LUZON is the longest and most important of the PHILIPPINE ISLANDS (Map 16). LUZON stretches 500 miles from north to south. It has a maximum width of about 140 miles. The broad section of the Island, north of MANILA, contains four distinct mountain ranges. It also contains two great valleys or plains. In the extreme north from APARRI the 40 mile wide CAGAYAN VALLEY offers a spacious route of invasion. To the southwest of the CARABALLO MOUNTAINS, PA PANGA PLAIN extends this avenue of approach as far as MANILA BAY. This second great lowland, highly cultivated and averaging 50 miles in width, offers the best route of invasion on LUZON. There are excellent landing beaches along the shores of capacious LINGAYEN GULF. These beaches are only 150 miles across the GULF from MANILA.

Immediately to the south of MANILA, LAKE TAAL and LAGUNA DE BAY effectively canalize the approach routes to the city. From that direction, particularly fine landing beaches are found at LEGASPI and ANTIHONAN. On the east coast and along the shore of BATANGAS PROVINCE

in the west we find the key to the Island's communication systems, both road and rail.

Vegetation varies with the terrain; great stands of Pine trees high in the mountains yield to tropical forests on the slopes and in the uncultivated lowlands.

Precipitation, rather than temperature, determines the seasonal differences. The northeast monsoon which brings rain to eastern LUZON prevails from OCTOBER to May. At the end of the northeast monsoon season, the southwest monsoon starts. This drenches western LUZON and is frequently accompanied by cyclonic storms or typhoons. The temperature averages about 80 degrees the year round.

Since terrain and weather are vital factors in any military operation, it would be well to bear these factors in mind as we progress through the LUZON campaign.

General Situation

During the planning of the LUZON operation, it was decided to conduct it in three phases. Phase I was to be an amphibious assault to seize and consolidate beachheads in the LINGAYEN-DAMORTIS area of LINGAYEN GULF and to initiate the establishment of air and ground base facilities therein. Phase II was to be an attack to destroy all hostile forces north of the AGNO RIVER and to seize and secure crossings of the River. The final phase, Phase III, was the destruction of hostile forces in the central plain area and the continuation of the attack to capture MANILA.¹⁷

The major combat units initially assigned to the Sixth United States Army for the LUZON campaign were as follows:

- I Corps
- XIV Corps
- 6th Infantry Division
- 25th Infantry Division
- 37th Infantry Division
- 40th Infantry Division
- 43d Infantry Division
- 158th Infantry Regimental Combat Team
- 13th Armored Group.

After this troop list had been decided upon, intelligence sources indicated that the enemy had built up his strength on LUZON from the original estimate of 150,000 to 235,000 troops. As a result of this information, it was decided to make the following troops available as reinforcements for operations on LUZON:

- 1st Cavalry Division and 112th RCT
- 32d Infantry Division reinforced¹⁸
- 41st Infantry Division reinforced

Originally, the landing date was set at December 20, 1944. However, it became necessary to set that date back to January 9, 1945. In view of the vagueness of the enemy situation in the objective area the initial objectives assigned to the two Corps of the Sixth Army were limited. The field order directing the amphibious movement and landing of the I and XIV Corps merely ordered each Corps to seize a specified beachhead and then to be prepared to advance southward when ordered. This southward advance was to have as its objective the securing of crossings over the AGNO RIVER with a view to facilitating an aggressive offense at the earliest practicable date.

I Corps commenced landing operations the morning of January 9, 1945. The Corps landed with two divisions abreast. The 43d Infantry

Division landed on the left on beaches in the SAN FABIAN-MABILAO area. The 6th Infantry Division landed on the right on beaches in the MANGALDAN area. There was no opposition to either of the landings.

In the meantime, the XIV Corps landed the same morning, also with two divisions abreast. The 40th Infantry Division landed on the right on beaches in the LINGAYEN area, and the 37th Infantry Division on the left landed on beaches in the BINMALEY area. Again the landings were without opposition.

By the end of the day, the Sixth Army had accomplished initial lodgment in the LINGAYEN GULF region of central LUZON with negligible casualties.

As the Corps moved inland, the front was characterized by the lack of organized enemy resistance, while on the I Corps front bitter opposition was met. Very early in the operation it became evident that the Japanese Commander (General Yamashita) did not intend to give battle in the CENTRAL PLAIN area. He elected to defend strongly what amounted to flank protection in the mountains.

The situation had now developed to the point where the Sixth Army was facing, on its left, the strong enemy forces in the mountains to the northeast and east. This constituted a serious threat to its base of supply. These supply bases had to be secured while the Army was driving to the south to secure the CENTRAL PLAIN-MANILA areas. No other bases would become available until MANILA, 120 miles to the south, could be reestablished as a port. It was imperative that this be accomplished prior to the advent of the rainy season.

While I Corps continued pressing against the enemy's defenses in front of the Army's left, the XIV Corps was pushing southward and it secured crossings over the AGNO RIVER and captured TARLAC. The arrival of the 32d Infantry Division, 1st Cavalry Division and the 112th Regimental Combat Team on S / 18 then provided sufficient forces to permit employment of the XIV Corps in an all-out drive to MANILA. I Corps was able, at the same time, to protect the base on LINGAYEN GULF and continue the attack against the enemy forces in the northeast. In rapid succession the XIV Corps captured CLARK FIELD, drove the opposing enemy forces into the ZAMBALES MOUNTAINS west of FORT STOTSENBURG, and secured crossings over the PAMPANGA RIVER at CALUMPIT.

The 1st Cavalry Division, which had landed on the LINGAYEN beaches on January 27th and had been assigned to the XIV Corps, crossed the PAMPANGA RIVER at CABANATUAN on February 1st. It then advanced rapidly southward and on the night of February 3d, drove into GRACE PARK in MANILA and liberated hundreds of allied internees who were being held by the Japanese in SANTO TOMAS UNIVERSITY.

Meanwhile, the 37th Infantry Division had crossed the PAMPANGA RIVER at CALUMPIT and was driving rapidly to Manila along HIGHWAY 3. In a desperately fought and month-long battle, the XIV Corps, spearheaded by these two Divisions, succeeded in securing MANILA on March 4, 1945.

During this time, the 40th Infantry Division was engaged in the mountains west of FORT STOTSENBURG.

Two additional amphibious assault landings were made on LUZON. These forces were initially under control of the Eighth Army. The

first landing was made in the SAN ANTONIO-SAN NARCISCO area of ZAMBALES PROVINCE. This force was part of XI Corps and consisted of the 38th Infantry Division and elements of the 24th Infantry Division. On January 30th, XI Corps passed to control of the Sixth Army. After opening SUBIC BAY as a naval base, this force drove east along HIGHWAY 7 to isolate BATAAN PENINSULA and to prevent an enemy withdrawal to BATAAN.

The second landing was made at NASUGBU in BATANGAS PROVINCE. This landing was made by the 11th Airborne Division, reinforced by elements of the 24th Infantry Division on January 31st. The advance was northward on HIGHWAYS 17 and 1. This force reached the southern outskirts of MANILA on February 10th. It then passed to the control of the Sixth Army.

Consistent with his policy of defending the mountainous areas, General Yamashita had organized a series of strong points northward from LAGUNA DE BAY to include the IPO DAM area. His forward positions were so located that he could bring long range artillery fire to bear on MANILA. Sixth Army then commenced a series of operations against this fortified area. It finally broke the remaining organized resistance on May 21st.

Other Sixth Army forces during this time drove south and southeast of MANILA to open BALAYAN and BATANGAS BAYS and to clear enemy forces from the region south of LAGUNA DE BAY.

Simultaneously with these operations in south-central and southern LUZON, the I Corps, reinforced by the 33d Infantry Division, continued its attacks against the enemy's mountain strongholds. The Corps

drove the enemy back all along its front, captured BAGUIO and advanced along the VILLA VERDE TRAIL (32d Infantry Division) and HIGHWAY 5 (25th Infantry Division). After long and desperate fighting, it totally defeated the enemy and secured the IMUGAN-SANTA FE-BALETE PASS on May 27th and thereby gained a route to the upper CAGAYAN VALLEY.

In the meantime, other elements of the Sixth Army following an amphibious assault landing at LEGASPI in the ALBAY GULF area of the southeastern BICOL PENINSULA, on April 1st, secured the northern exits to SAN BERNARDINO STRAITS. Turning northward, they drove up the BICOL PENINSULA, cleared the BICOL PROVINCES of the enemy forces and made contact with units of the XIV Corps (1st Cavalry Division) driving southeast. The juncture of these forces marked the end of all organized enemy resistance in southeastern LUZON.¹⁹

With the breakthrough in the IMUGAN-SANTA FE-BALETE PASS and the subsequent advance of Sixth Army forces into the upper CAGAYAN VALLEY, the LUZON campaign drew to a rapid close. While the 37th Infantry Division of the I Corps was sent northward into and down the CAGAYAN VALLEY, airborne forces were landed in the enemy's rear near APARRI to assist in blocking all avenues of escape to the north. When contact was made between these two forces on June 26th, the campaign on LUZON was ended.

The only remaining enemy forces of any strength on LUZON had been split into two pockets of almost equal size; one pocket was in the SIERRA MADRE MOUNTAINS east of the CAGAYAN VALLEY; the other, in the KIANGAN-BONTOC area where the Japanese had elected to make a final

defensive stand. The rest of the operations consisted of mopping up these forces.

Tanks in Action

716th Tank Battalion. The 716th Tank Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Lorwyn E. Peterson, made an assault landing on January 9, 1945 with the 43d Infantry Division on the shores of LINGAYEN GULF. Elements of the Battalion participating in the landing were Headquarters Company (-), Service Company (-), and Companies B, C, and D (-). The Battalion assembled in bivouac at PALAPAD.

Company A of the 716th and the 3d Platoon of D/716th went ashore with the 6th Infantry Division the same day. This landing was made on beaches in the MANGALDAN area.

On January 15, Companies C and D and one platoon of Company B moved into position south of HILL 355 and southwest of MOUNT ALAVA. The Assault Gun and Mortar Platoons of Headquarters Company moved into position on HILL 318 west of HILL 355. These Platoons were to provide supporting fires for the attack. The attack was launched in conjunction with the 169th Infantry of the 43d Infantry Division. The tanks were able to make only a limited advance because of the terrain. They did, however, succeed in neutralizing four pillboxes.

Two days later, tanks of Company C moved to the vicinity of MALASIN. Tank action along the road north of the Town resulted in the tanks overrunning enemy machine gun and mortar positions. The same platoon then participated in a tank-infantry attack with the 103d Infantry of the 43d Division and drove the enemy back to

POZORRUBIO. The advance was rapid and the enemy was overwhelmed.

While the remainder of the Battalion worked with elements of the 43d Division, Company A took part in an attack on the town of URDANETTA. Company A worked with elements of the 6th Infantry Division. The enemy had dug in his tanks along the approaches, roads and the main streets of the town. The enemy tanks were those of the Japanese 2d Armored Division stationed in the CABANATUAN-SAN NICHOLS area. During this tank-infantry attack, our tanks encountered and successfully destroyed machine guns, tanks and tankettes. URDANETTA was taken in one day and the next day the Company was used in the mopping-up phase.

On the afternoon of January 18th, the 2d Battalion of the 169th Infantry Regiment moved north with the mission of seizing and holding the inverted "Y" at the junction of the SISSON-ROSARIO and POZORRUBIO-ROSARIO ROADS. This would put them squarely across the main enemy supply route to HILL 355 and would complete the encirclement of that position. Two medium and six light tanks of the 716th Tank Battalion spearheaded the continuous fight along the road. The tanks cleared the road by using 75-mm, 37-mm, and machine gun fire. Although under continuous artillery and mortar fire all along the route the tanks reached their objective in short order.

After this objective had been taken, the tanks outposted the area while the infantry dug in for the night. This position was also under constant artillery and mortar fire while it was being outposted. The Infantry Battalion Commander, believing that the tanks were

drawing this fire, ordered the officer in command of the tanks to return to POZORRUBIO for the night and return the next morning. This order was obeyed, but resulted in dire consequences for the infantry.²⁰

During the night, as a result of constant shelling and an enemy Banzai charge, the Battalion Commander was killed, and twelve of his officers and about one-fourth of the enlisted men were killed. This was the scene that greeted the tankers when they returned the next morning. The situation was very critical and unless help came soon this vital position would be lost. The tank officer immediately radioed his Battalion Commander and informed him of the situation.

The Commanding Officer of the 716th Tank Battalion then moved the Assault Gun Platoon and the balance of his reserve to POZORRUBIO and he set out in his tank for SISON. After a look at the situation, he returned to POZORRUBIO. The Battalion Commander then briefed the tank commanders on the situation and afterwards led his small force to the road junction. They arrived at this road junction from the southeast at a most opportune time. A force of Japanese were attacking the road junction with infantry, cavalry, and self-propelled guns. The tanks of Company D met the Japanese attackers head on. The Assault Gun Platoon hit them on the flank and poured 105-mm fire into them at a range of 200 yards. The enemy attack was decisively crushed.

Company C joined the 25th Infantry Division in its attack on SAN MANUEL on January 10th. This town was well-fortified with antitank guns and dug-in tanks. The enemy was again employing his tanks as

pillboxes. This deprived his tanks of mobility but added protection to their very thin armor plate. It took three days of close tank-infantry team fighting before this enemy strong point fell.

On January 22d, a platoon of Company B made a coordinated attack on HILL 355 with troops of the 169th Infantry (43d Infantry Division). The tanks preceded the infantry, overran enemy infantry positions and forced the enemy into the open where they were machine gunned. The tankers effectively employed enfilading fire on enemy trench systems on the hill. HILL 355, however, was to prove to be a tough nut to crack. It was heavily fortified with antitank guns, pillboxes, caves, trenches and automatic weapons. This enemy position held out for 12 days against the constant onslaught of our tanks and infantry as well as the constant pounding it received from our air and artillery.

Working closely with the infantry, tanks proved to be highly efficient in mopping-up operations. Platoons of Company D, the light tank company, were employed on reconnaissance missions as well as other types of missions as described above. One platoon was continuously used on reconnaissance missions. It worked in enemy territory from January 9th to February 8th without a casualty in vehicles or personnel.

The Battalion's assault guns were employed as tanks during the battle for MANILA. For this reason, it is believed that the Assault Gun Platoon's actions during the battle for MANILA should be included in this report. In reading the following account, it will be helpful to visualize the assault guns as tanks.

Because it had the only 105-mm guns mounted in the M4 Tanks, the Assault Gun Platoon of the 716th Tank Battalion received orders the night of February 16th to make an immediate forced march to MANILA and report to XIV Corps for duty.²¹ The platoon was then attached to the 37th Infantry Division. The primary mission assigned to it in MANILA was to make close-in direct assaults on the larger fortified buildings and to knock out pillboxes retarding the infantry's advance. Two typical accounts of the Platoon's employment in MANILA follow. These are given not only to show their employment but also to bring out some innovations that were made on the spot and which effectively assisted these vehicles in fulfilling their mission.

One afternoon, during the battle for MANILA, the assault guns were being moved through the streets of the city preceding the infantry. The tanks would move up to a building, blast a hole in it and the infantry would move through that hole to reduce resistance in the building. The tanks were supporting the right flank of the 3d Battalion (14th Infantry), in an attack on the MANILA THEATER, WATER WORKS, and POST OFFICE buildings. The tanks were at the POST OFFICE when a hurried call told them to return to the CITY HALL. In a ground floor room at the southwest corner of the building a strong enemy pocket continued to hold out. This position commanded the corridor with a heavy machine gun. One tank drove into position to take the corner room under fire. A shell penetrated the wall flushing out eight marines who were cut down by the bow gunner. This did not bring out all of the enemy, however, and some still held out on the lower floor.

To meet this problem, the Platoon Leader wired together two 105-mm HE shells and taped a hand grenade to the fuses. This charge was then sandbagged in the room above the enemy stronghold and when detonated blew out the floor. An infantry flamethrower finished the job.²²

On February 23d, the tanks were ordered to give direct support to the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 145th Infantry in a massed coordinated attack on INTRAMURAS. After a tremendous barrage by heavy artillery and other supporting guns for several hours, advance elements of engineers and infantry quickly moved in to clear the East gates of mines. Behind them came the assault gun tanks leading the infantry through the gates to press the attack. In the demolished walled city, the narrow streets were choked with rubble making tank maneuver and detection of mines impossible. In the close-in fighting, the tanks were forced to use machine guns to knock out hostile prepared positions in crumbled buildings. The tank guns were only used on strongly defended street intersections.

The last fortified position was taken on March 3d and on March 4th, 1945, the Assault Gun Platoon was relieved from attachment to the 37th Infantry Division. This action was the final operation for elements of the 716th Tank Battalion on LUZON.

754th Tank Battalion. The 754th Tank Battalion commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Leroy C. Arndt, on the morning of January 9, 1945, was poised afloat in the LINGAYEN GULF prepared to make its landing on the island of LUZON. Two platoons of Company A were the first to disembark. They landed on the 37th Infantry Division's beach.

The 3d Platoon was unable to land until several days later because of the rough surf.

Company B, in the meantime, was landing on the 40th Infantry Division's beach area. This landing was made without incident. The remaining units of the Battalion which were with the 37th Infantry Division did not complete their landings until January 17th.

Company B was committed the next day. The 1st Platoon was called upon for direct fire support in the vicinity of PORT SUAL, PANGASIN PROVINCE. The tanks supported the infantry during this operation by placing direct fire on pillboxes and trenches. This fire proved highly effective and enabled the infantry to proceed and take the objective.

During the period from the landings until February 5th, the 754th Tank Battalion, less Company B, supported elements of the 37th Infantry Division usually with direct fire. It was rare indeed when the tanks were able to accompany the infantry. This was because of the terrain that in most places was unsuited for tank operations.

Company B supported elements of the 40th Infantry Division in much the same manner.

On February 5th, a platoon from Company B was rushed to the aid of Company A of the 108th Infantry (40th Infantry Division). This Company was completely surrounded by the Japs in front of our lines. The tanks laid down effective fire on the enemy knocking out machine guns and neutralizing hostile fire. This action permitted the infantry to withdraw. Wounded infantry were evacuated on the decks of

the tanks. It was remarkable that this tank platoon suffered no vehicular or personnel casualties.

On February 7th, the 754th Tank Battalion (less Company B) operated in the city of MANILA as Corps Reserve. During this operation, the tanks were used primarily as mobile artillery firing at strong points at close range. Mines were a continuous hazard and the possible lanes of approach to the enemy installations were canalized by narrow streets. The infantry had to move slowly through these streets and because of the well-fortified enemy installations covering all avenues of approach, mine sappers found it difficult to sweep lanes. The examination for mines was of a necessity hasty and resulted in many being overlooked. Several tanks were damaged by mines in areas that were supposedly cleared. During these operations, the Battalion (-) was attached to the 37th Infantry Division, 43d Infantry Division and the 6th Infantry Division, 38th Infantry Division, 1st Cavalry Division.

On February 8th, Company B was still in the CLARK FIELD area; the remainder of the 754th Tank Battalion had gone to MANILA. Platoons of the Company were supporting separate battalions of the 40th Infantry Division in their attacks on SNAKE HILL and TOP OF THE WORLD HILL. This action was characterized by the tanks being employed to fire on pillboxes, machine gun positions, caves, and to knock out automatic weapons. An interesting note during this operation is the fact that although two tanks hit mines, only one was disabled and that it suffered only by a blown track. A third tank hit an improvised mine that consisted of two aerial bombs weighing about 50 pounds each. Although the tank was temporarily disabled, it was soon repaired.

The next day, a platoon of Company B operated in support of the 3d Battalion of the 160th Infantry Regiment in their final assault against TOP OF THE WORLD HILL. It was found that the most effective weapon against the enemy positions in the hillsides and in the brush at the top of the hill was improvised 75-mm cannister ammunition. These rounds had been prepared before the 754th had left BOUGAINVILLE. The rounds were improvised by replacing the projectile of a high explosive shell with the cannister projectile from howitzer ammunition.²⁴

Another platoon in the meantime was supporting the 108th Infantry. This platoon surprised an enemy strong point which was located west of TOP OF THE WORLD HILL. The platoon moved over very rugged terrain to outflank the position and take it from the rear. Another platoon was able to make a deep penetration and destroy several 20-mm gun positions before it withdrew.

On February 10th, Company D replaced Company B in attachment to the 40th Infantry Division.

The next day, one platoon of Company D supported the 1st Battalion of the 108th Infantry in the hills west of FORT STOTSENBURG. This platoon, combining flanking and frontal assaults, destroyed or neutralized enemy positions. This enabled the infantry to advance and take the objective.

Company D was relieved from this attachment on February 27th and placed in X Corps Reserve.

44th Tank Battalion. The 44th Tank Battalion minus Company C, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Tom Ross, landed on LUZON during the morning of January 11, 1945. The landing was made on beaches in the northern part of the LINGAYEN GULF area with the 13th Armored Group. Company C landed two days earlier with the 6th Infantry Division on beaches in the same general area.

Company C was the first unit of this Battalion to see action against the enemy on LUZON. The enemy had destroyed most of the bridges and the unloading of Bailey Bridges was impeded by high surf. During this period from January 13th to January 16th, the unit was employed as part of the Division Reserve. On January 17th, this Company went into action for the 1st time on LUZON. Operating with the 20th and 1st Infantry Regiments in the CABARUAN HILLS, the tanks encountered a well dug-in enemy whose defensive positions were on controlling terrain. His antitank guns were skillfully placed and always covered by machine gun fire. The movement of the tanks was restricted by the terrain; therefore, fire support for the infantry was delivered from overwatching positions. When the tanks did move, broken terrain caused the infantry to move in close proximity to the tanks.

The final attack in which Company C took part in this area was launched with two tank platoons abreast, followed by an attached platoon of light tanks and with one platoon of medium tanks supporting. The tanks moved forward on a 600-yard front firing at every suspected enemy position. This attack lasted two hours and at the end of this

time, our tanks had advanced one-half mile ahead of the infantry front lines. After returning to the infantry lines and re-supplying with ammunition, a second attack was launched. The infantry followed the tanks in this attack at about 200 yards distance. The objective was taken with many enemy casualties but none for our tanks or infantry.

From February 1st through February 7th, the Company supported regiments of the 6th Infantry Division in their attacks on MUNOZ and SAN JOSE. The 3d Platoon supported the infantry attack on MUNOZ while the remainder of the Company supported the SAN JOSE attack.

The enemy had committed one reinforced tank company from the 2d Armored Division, one artillery battery and an infantry company to defend MUNOZ. The Jap tanks, well dug in, were used as pillboxes and were covered by fire from small arms, machine guns and light artillery pieces used as antitank guns. The tank operations were limited by flat boggy ground and deep water-filled irrigation ditches. As a result of constant reconnaissance, the tank platoon leader was able to move his tanks to a defiladed position from which point he could support the infantry. The advance was stopped, however, for whenever any vehicle attempted to move into MUNOZ, it was knocked out by antitank fire.

In the meantime, the remainder of Company C supported the 63d Infantry in a cross-country move of about seven miles cutting the MUNOZ-SAN JOSE HIGHWAY, then moving east towards SAN JOSE attacking astride the MUNOZ-SAN JOSE HIGHWAY. At the village of ABAR, the Company hit the main defenses in front of SAN JOSE. The Japanese

had placed antitank guns and machine guns to cover a water barrier. In the heavy fighting that followed, the tanks eliminated five of the antitank guns but were still unable to make a crossing because of heavy fire covering the road leading across the stream. Finally, the 2d Platoon, using smoke to screen its movements, crossed the obstacle. After crossing the stream, this Platoon laid fire on the enemy allowing the infantry to advance and reduce the remaining anti-tank guns.

While the 1st and 2d Platoons were advancing along the Highway, the attached light tank platoon, plus the Company Headquarters tank and an assault gun moved around the enemy's left flank and blasted the enemy's rear and flank.

The final attack on this objective was made on February 5th and at the same time the attached light tanks moved cross-country and around the enemy's left flank to join the 1st Infantry at SAN JOSE.

After SAN JOSE had been taken, the last major point of exit from the CARABALLO MOUNTAINS was sealed.²⁵ The enemy elements in MUNOZ were trapped. When the Japs tried to break out of MUNOZ on February 7th, they were destroyed.

During the period of February 19th to March 15th, Company C supported the 6th Infantry Division mainly by reinforcing the fires of its artillery. The tanks fired over 50 missions in attacks on the NOVALICHES WATER SHED area and in attacks on the SHIMBU LINE in

the MONTALBAN-MARIKINA sector. At times, the ranges to the targets exceeded 10,000 yards.²⁶

On March 15th, Company C was relieved from attachment to the 6th Infantry Division and attached to the 43d Infantry Division. A platoon participated in a well-coordinated attack with the 2d Battalion of the 103d Infantry on BM 7, which was a strongly fortified hill one mile northeast of TERESSA. This objective was taken in short order.

On March 27th, Company C was relieved and saw no further action on LUZON.

During this time, the remainder of the Battalion had been released from attachment to the 13th Armored Group and attached to the 1st Cavalry Division.

The 44th Tank Battalion, less Company C, took part in the "Flying Column". This was so named because it was highly mobile and had as its mission a 100-mile dash to MANILA. Elements of the Battalion were with each column. These columns each operated on separate routes but all of the routes were generally parallel. The columns started out on February 1st led by elements of the tank companies. This drive was characterized by the enemy's fighting a delaying action. Blown bridges, mines, pillboxes and antitank guns, all had to be overcome before the columns finally arrived at MANILA.

On February 3d, with Company B leading, the first column reached MANILA. The advance consumed a total of 66 hours.

During this operation, supply lines were stretched thinly. Arriving in MANILA, the units found that rations and ammunition were in very short supply but fortunately, a supply train managed to get through the sniper-infested route.

Once in MANILA, units of the 44th Tank Battalion attached to elements of the 1st Cavalry Division participated in the bitter fighting to take the city.

Company B in one instance was sent through ROSARIO HEIGHTS to make a reconnaissance sweep and to secure the reservoir located there. Although this mission involved fighting in the city's streets the tanks were not given any infantry support. Heavy resistance from 20-mm guns, small arms, Molotov cocktails, satchel charges and 120-mm dual purpose guns was encountered. One platoon that reached the reservoir was driven off by antitank fire and had three of its tanks destroyed and two damaged. Each time the tanks tried to take the objective alone they were driven off. Finally, supporting infantry accompanied the tanks and the reservoir was secured.²⁷

Hundreds of rounds of tank ammunition were expended against the concrete buildings during this operation. Company B, during the 10 days of fighting in the city, expended 3500 rounds of 75-mm and 183,000 rounds of caliber .30 ammunition.

A technical inspection of Company A's tanks on March 26th showed the need for 19 new engines and 16 sets of tracks. In spite of this fact, the Company was attached to and supported, the 11th Airborne Division before the necessary repairs could be accomplished.²⁸

Company B relieved Company A after a short time and participated in the attack on BROWNIE RIDGE, MT. MACOLOD.

BROWNIE RIDGE is a natural defensive position for the enemy and to these natural features of caves, ridges, and ravines were added pillboxes, bunkers, trenches and foxholes in depth. A tank-infantry-artillery team took this position in four days.

On July 1, 1945, the 44th Tank Battalion was relieved of all tactical responsibility on LUZON.

775th Tank Battalion. The 775th Tank Battalion commanded by Lieutenant Colonel W. Becker, landed on LUZON on January 11, 1945. This landing was on D + 2 days and the unit disembarked on beaches midway between MABILAO and SAN FABIAN. Company B was attached to the 32d Infantry Division on February 7th. The 2d Platoon of this Company was the first element to engage the enemy. A tank dozer from this Platoon moved up to repair a section of the VILLA VERDE TRAIL. Although under constant artillery and mortar fire, this bulldozer tank accomplished its mission. This Platoon continued to support the infantry of the 32d Infantry Division for three days in this sector. The missions given the platoon were those of laying direct fire on caves and pillboxes.

Company C was attached to the 25th Infantry Division on February 7th. Company C was further attached to the 25th Reconnaissance Troop. The mission of this force was to protect the right flank of the Division in the SAN JOSE -BONGABON sector. An additional mission given this company was that of creating a show of force in front of the local

populace. There were many people in this sector who were neither friendly nor unfriendly towards the Americans. A few were outright Japanese sympathizers. Many of these people were heavily armed and could have done considerable damage. Tankers of Company C, working closely with the Counterintelligence Corps, succeeded in disarming the civilians in the SAN JOSE-BONGABON sector.

Company A, minus the 3d Platoon, was attached to the 43d Infantry Division at POZORRUBIO about February 8th. During its action with the 43d Infantry Division, the Company was used primarily in a defensive role. It was given the mission of setting up roadblocks in the 103d Infantry's sector. The 43d was relieved by the 33d Infantry Division and for the period of February 14th to March 14th, the Company was attached to the 136th Infantry (33d Infantry Division). The 3d Platoon rejoined Company A at this time.

In the 136th Infantry's attack on HILLS 600 and 800, the tanks were given the mission of firing into caves and neutralizing gun positions. These hills are located 10,000 yards north and northeast of POZORRUBIO. The fire of the tanks was effective and the infantry was able to advance to its objective.

Only one platoon of Company D landed with the Battalion. The remainder of the Company did not come ashore until February. This Company had its platoons attached to three different Divisions. One platoon was attached to the 25th Infantry Division and operated with the 25th Reconnaissance Troop. This Platoon supported the Troop

in carrying out security patrols east and southeast of TABLANG, east of BONGABON and south to CABANTUAN. One section was also used with the 27th Infantry Regiment to keep the supply route open. This Section had to keep this route, which paralleled HIGHWAY 5, clear of roadblocks and infiltration parties. Frequent roadblocks set up by the enemy were discovered in this manner.

The other two platoons of Company D joined the 33d and 32d Infantry Divisions respectively. The platoon with the 32d was utilized as part of that Division's Reserve. This platoon was frequently called upon to trace reports of infiltrating parties in the division area. The above Platoon was also used to provide bridge guards. The platoon with the 33d Infantry Division participated in the 123d Infantry's move to AMBAN GOWAN and then continued on to ARINGAY. There it joined the 130th Infantry. The Platoon then supported this Regiment in its attacks on CAVA and BAUANG. The Platoon Leader's tank was the first American vehicle to cross the double span bridge over the BAUANG RIVER. At BAUANG the platoon was used to perform reconnaissance missions and patrols to SAN FERNANDO. The Platoon also conducted reconnaissance east along HIGHWAY 9 to and somewhat beyond NAGIULIAN.

In the meantime, Company A, attached to the 43d Infantry Division, participated in that Division's attack to the north on BAGUIO. This attack began in the second week in March. The Company supported the Infantry in their drive along HIGHWAY 3. The tanks were unable to proceed beyond CAMP FOUR because the enemy had blown the bridges over the large rivers and gorges in that area.

Company A was next given the mission of supporting a battalion of the 123d Infantry in its operations along the CABA-GALIANO ROAD. The three platoons alternating daily, supported the infantry and provided protection to the engineers while they were building roads.

On March 30th, the 123d Infantry supported by a platoon of tanks attacked GALIANO while the remaining two tank platoons were used to lay fire on the town. GALIANO fell to this tank-infantry attack.

During this time, Company B, with the 32d Infantry Division, was operating in very rough terrain. As untankable as the terrain was, however, one platoon operating along the ARBOREDO RIVER VALLEY was able to reduce an enemy strong point that had delayed the infantry for over a week. This task was completed in a hail of artillery and machine gun fire. Another platoon operating with the 128th Infantry along the VILLA VERDE TRAIL was accomplishing unbelievable tasks with its tanks. These tanks were used to bulldoze roads. In doing this task it was necessary for the tanks to climb 60 degree slopes while under enemy fire.

Company C in the meantime operating with the 25th Infantry Division was alternating its platoons and sections among the infantry regiments. The Division was moving north on HIGHWAY 5. Tanks had to be bulldozed up steep hills. Climbing these seemingly impossible slopes, the tanks worked along with the infantry knocking out pillboxes and antitank guns. The advance was slow and tortuous. One hundred to 300 yards a day was the average success. It was an operation not visualized by the tacticians. In some of the most difficult

fighting terrain in the southwest PACIFIC, Company C slowly pushed its way along with elements of the 25th Division. The Division pushed its advance through the BALETE PASS to the floor of the CAGAYAN VALLEY that leads to the northern tip of LUZON.

During this operation, it was necessary to secure the high ground on each side of the Valley before any attempt could be made to go through on the main road. The mountains on either side had some slopes with as steep a gradient as 65 degrees. Tanks had to be bulldozed up these slopes. There were no paths and it was necessary to make roads by dozing or, as frequently occurred, the tanks made their own roads by crashing through the heavy forest vegetation. On one occasion, in order to fire at pillboxes and gun positions, three tanks had to blast the undergrowth to make a field of fire.

While the rest of the Battalion was slowly making its way forward, March 24th found Company D with one platoon in the vicinity of BONGABON acting as a security force. Two of its platoons plus Company Headquarters was now with the 33d Infantry Division. The elements of Company D attached to the 33d Division supported the advance of the infantry from BAUANG along HIGHWAY 9 towards NAGUILLIAN and BURGOS. Patrols of two or three tanks and sometimes one or more platoons of infantry aggressively patrolled the flat areas.

A coordinated attack was made on high ground three miles east of NAGUILLIAN. The entire force of 13 tanks supported two infantry companies in the attack.

In the 33d Infantry Division's drive along HIGHWAY 9 from BURGOS towards BAGUIO at least a platoon of Company D was in the point of the advance at all times.²⁹ These tanks fired along the road as the point moved forward, clearing the way for the infantry. At SABLAN the 33d Division was relieved by the 37th Infantry Division. One platoon and Company Headquarters remained with the 33d Division. The other platoon with Company B was attached to the 37th Division.

Company A, meanwhile, was operating with the 43d Division and was moving forward along the road from GALIANO to ASIN. This route was extremely hazardous because it was canalized by high ground on the south and a dry river bed on the north. In addition, vision was limited by heavy shrubs and trees. Tanks fired while moving and were closely supported by the infantry. Many enemy night infiltrations were attempted during this move. The tank spotlights were used very effectively to crush these infiltrations. On April 28th, tank elements of Company A entered the town of IRISAN located just west of BAGUIO.

Company B, now attached to the 37th Infantry Division, consisted of the Company minus one platoon, plus one platoon of Company D. The detached platoon of Company B was still operating with the 25th Infantry Division on the VILLA VERDE TRAIL. From NAGUILIAN the Company attacked toward BAGUIO with infantry units. The remaining miles along the road to BAGUIO were very difficult indeed not only because of terrain but also because of the enemy's fanatical resistance. The following example illustrates this point.

...As the lead tank rounded a sharp curve it was immediately hit by a round from an antitank gun. Orders were given to the second tank to back up out of the line of fire. In doing so, the driver accidentally backed off the road and the tank dropped about four hundred feet. The third tank in the column was called up to give support while rescue efforts were made. As blood plasma was being given the wounded, the Japs counterattacked. They bayoneted the wounded. At the same time, two enemy tanks with explosives tied to them, rounded a curve and rammed two of our tanks. A single man left in the tank loaded and fired the 75mm gun knocking out the first enemy tank and then assisted by the platoon leader knocked out the second one...³⁰

A few days later tanks of Company A were hurriedly summoned to deal with a Jap tank that had overrun an infantry advance outpost. Two tanks went forward to within 50 yards of the outpost and with one round knocked out the enemy tank.

On April 24th the Company was in sight of BAGUIO. As the two lead tanks rounded a curve towards the city an estimated 12 77mm guns fired on them. By moving in rapidly the tanks were able to enter the city. Tanks and crews from the 775th Tank Battalion were the first American troops to enter BAGUIO.

A drive towards TRINIDAD commenced almost immediately. Tanks, followed closely by infantry, entered the town on April 28th.

Company C, still attached to the 25th Division, was advancing to the tip of northern LUZON. The terrain was very hilly and crisscrossed with ravines. The enemy was defending the ravines and commanding terrain. Progress was very slow, advances limited to about 300 yards a day.

During this time, Company Headquarters and one platoon of Company D were still attached to the 33d Infantry Division. On April 28th infantry units of the 130th Regiment and this Platoon of Company D cleared the CAMP JOHN HAY area in BAGUIO. This was the last action in which this element of Company D engaged on the island of LUZON.

Meanwhile, Company A was preparing to start its advance with elements of the 33d Infantry Division towards TRINIDAD. During the month of May this Company advanced up the mountain trail (HIGHWAY 11) toward TRINIDAD and then on to ACOPS PLACE. The 1st Platoon operated in the vicinity of SAPINIT on a road paralleling HIGHWAY 11. Its mission was to protect ambulances as they evacuated the wounded. The evacuation distance was about five miles and the road was extremely hazardous. Enemy snipers operated vigorously but while the tanks were escorting the ambulances the snipers held their fire.

In June, Company A did some minor patrolling for the 6th Infantry Division. This was the last action on LUZON in which Company A participated.

In the meantime, Company B was relieved from attachment to the 33d Infantry Division and attached to the 37th Infantry Division for operations in the CAGAYAN VALLEY. The Company moved from TRINIDAD to SOLANO, NUEVA VISZCAYA, in two days. Their march continued in an effort to catch the fast-moving 37th Infantry Division in its whirlwind drive. The 3d Platoon was detached from the 37th Infantry Division on June 8th and moved from SANTIAGO to BAGABAGL. Its mission was to support the infantry along the trail west from BAMBANG to SALINAS.

It fulfilled its mission by direct fire accounting for many of the enemy ~~troops~~ and much enemy equipment.

On June 18th, the remainder of the Company was moving with the 148th Infantry. One of the platoons encountered eight Jap tanks along a trail leading to SALINAS. All of the enemy tanks were speedily knocked out.

Meanwhile Company C was attached to the 37th Infantry Division which was driving for APARRI. Each day, the advance was from 10-20 miles. It was so rapid that the enemy was helpless and with no semblance of organization. BAYOMBANG was taken by June 6th.

The push through ORIUNG PASS completely stunned the enemy as tanks spearheaded the drive. CORDON and SANTIAGO fell on successive days following the penetration of the Pass. The tanks had at last come into their own and were operating on the flat ground of the CAGAYAN VALLEY. The advance swung north and met opposition at BALASIG just north of SANTIAGO. The tanks of Company C, however, cracked these defenses before the day was over and moved to CAUAYUAN. Only isolated strong points existed from there to TUGUEGERARO, important air center of the valley.

On June 25th, a junction was made with the 11th Airborne Division as they moved down from APARRI. The Company then engaged in mopping up until relieved from the 37th Infantry Division on August 18th.

This was the last unit to be relieved and with its relief the 775th Tank Battalion saw no further action on LUZON.

Summary

When General Yamashita, the Japanese Commander on LUZON, decided not to include the CENTRAL PLAINS area in his defense, any plans we had for the employment of armor in mass had to be discarded.

The CENTRAL PLAINS area would have been the ideal place for the employment of armor. This area is flat, well-drained, broad and offered unlimited possibilities for the use of tanks in mass. Instead, the Japanese commander elected to defend the mountainous sections on LUZON.

As a result of unfavorable terrain, tank employment was one of piecemeal commitment rather than mass. Normally, tanks were used in platoon-size units. The platoons were attached to various infantry units and it was not unusual, for one company to have its platoons working with three different divisions.

Unfamiliarity as to the limitations and capabilities of our armor proved to be a costly factor in the battle for LUZON. As a result, armor was not fully utilized and, when improperly employed, excessive losses resulted.

Although armor proved to be very effective in this operation, it is particularly important when operating over terrain such as was encountered on LUZON that all commanders and troops be familiar with the capabilities and limitations of armor.

SECTION IV

PANAY-NEGROS

Terrain

Situated in the very heart of the PHILIPPINE ARCHIPELAGO and separated from MINDANAO on the southeast by the MINDANAO SEA and from MINDORA on the northwest by the SULU SEA, lies a group of islands known as the SOUTHERN VISAYAS. This group includes the four major islands known as PANAY, NEGROS, CEBU, and BOHOL and several lesser islands. Generally the characteristics common to the PHILIPPINE ISLANDS as a whole apply to the SOUTHERN VISAYAS. Their terrain features generally follow the typical pattern of the central mountain mass surrounded by low-lying coastal plains scored by numerous short, turbulent, and seldom-navigable streams. The islands are heavily wooded and native methods of land cultivation tend to permit the development of vast areas of high-growing grass or "congones" which seriously hamper movement and limit observation.

General Situation

Eighth Army Field Order No. 21 designated the 40th Infantry Division reinforced, (less the 108th Regimental Combat Team) as the task force to carry out the Victor-I operation. The 503d Parachute Regimental Combat Team was placed in Army Reserve. The first phase of this operation was the seizure of PANAY. It was scheduled to begin on March 18th with an assault landing on the OTONTIGBAUN area of southern PANAY. This accomplished, our forces were to speed to the east, seize

and secure ILOILO CITY and the nearby airfields and harbor installations. The second phase of the operation, the liberation of NEGROS OCCIDENTAL, was to be launched when directed by the Commanding General of Eighth Army.

The first wave hit the beach at 0905. The landing was made in a column of battalions with the 1st Battalion, 185th Infantry, leading. Beachhead areas were promptly secured and by 1400 four battalions were ashore. The unloading of vehicles and supplies was seriously impeded by a ten-yard strip of soft sand through which all vehicles had to be towed before reaching hard ground.

The 185th Infantry advanced rapidly along HIGHWAY No. 1, an excellent coastal road, and reached OTON by 1700. By nightfall, it had driven 10 miles to AREVALO where it stopped for the night. Elements of the 160th Infantry were engaged on the northern and western flanks of the bridgehead.

The drive for ILOILO continued the next day and following the reduction of resistance in MOLO, ILOILO was secured on March 20th without opposition. During this advance, the 3d Battalion of the 185th Infantry swung to the north to secure MANDURRIAO AIRFIELD and JARO.

At this point, the PANAY phase of the Victor-I Operation entered the mop-up stage. The Division continued patrol action on the island until March 29th when the attack on NEGROS began. The 2d Battalion, 160th Infantry, remained on PANAY to complete the mop-up.

For the NEGROS operation, the 503d Parachute Regimental Combat Team was added to the task force and the 164th Regimental Combat

Team (American Division) was placed in Army Reserve.

The landing on NEGROS OCCIDENTAL was made at PULUPANDAN at 0930 on March 29th and was unopposed. The 185th RCT led the Division ashore and began the advance to BACOLOD. Small groups of enemy were found and 16 Japanese were killed. The following day, the 1st Battalion, 185th Infantry, supported by tanks, outflanked and eliminated an enemy strongpoint that opposed a crossing over the MAGSUNGAY RIVER. The advance continued and on March 30th, BACOLOD was secured. Continuing their northward drive against minor resistance, elements of the 185th seized SILAY on April 3d.

From this point, the attack swung inland over the gently rising cultivated plain between the coast and the mountain ranges of north-central NEGROS. The advance through this zone was rapid as the Japanese interposed only small delaying elements in an attempt to gain time for the organization of their defenses in the interior.

On April 4th and 5th, GUIMBALON and CONCEPTION were secured. As the two RCT's of the 40th Division neared the Japanese main line, where last-ditch resistance was expected, the 503d Parachute RCT was committed.

By April 9th our forces were situated, three RCT's abreast, with the 503d covering the north flank, the 160th on the south flank, and the 185th in the center. From this formation, the coordinated attack to crack the Japanese main line was launched on the morning of April 9th. Resistance increased with every yard of advance confirming the intelligence estimate that the Japanese main defenses had been encountered.

The defenders fought vigorously and with determination, exploiting advantageous positions to the fullest.

As the Division reached its objective at the end of April, it became evident that the Japanese were withdrawing to the southeast to reorganize in the HILL 3355 sector. To meet this maneuver, the 503d, (leaving one battalion to protect the northern flank) was shifted southward to the Division's right flank. Here it was given the mission of driving northeast to cut the Japanese supply and evacuation route while the 185th and 160th attacked from the north and west respectively.

This phase of the operation that began on May 15th required our troops to fight uphill through heavy rain forest and steep mountains. Enemy organization appeared to be disintegrating and resistance was less determined. But this breakdown in organization was offset to some extent by the better defensive terrain in which the Japanese were now operating. By May 26th, however, the enemy evacuation route was cut and soon thereafter the enemy was incapable of any sustained operations. On June 4th, the Philippine Army Forces of the 7th Military District, under control of American Forces, took over the pursuit of the remaining Japanese.³¹

Tanks in Action

PANAY (Map 17). The 716th Tank Battalion minus Companies A and B was attached to the 40th Infantry Division and further attached to the 185th Infantry for the PANAY-NEGROS operations. On March 18, 1945,

the Battalion went ashore at TIGBAUAN, PANAY. The beach area was quickly mopped up and the tanks and infantry drove on towards OTON. The Assault Gun Platoon and Company C were attached to the 1st Battalion, 185th Infantry, and with them, drove toward ILOILO on the following day. In the vicinity of MOLO the enemy was found behind a heavy concrete wall at the west edge of the town. The assault guns and two tank platoons from Company C were used to blast through the barrier. After 30 minutes of continuous firing our troops were able to move forward.

The 3d Platoon of Company C was attached to an infantry company whose mission it was to move south of MOLO toward ILOILO. Directly south of MOLO the forces received small arms fire from a group of about 40 pillboxes and air-raid shelters situated in a grove of Coconut Palms. Two tanks moved in to attack, covered by the remainder of the Platoon, and neutralized these positions without casualties. On the following day, tanks and infantry moved in to take MOLO without opposition the enemy having evacuated during the night. The infantry then mounted on the tanks and the column moved rapidly into ILOILO. This ended participation in the PANAY operation by Company C, 716th Tank Battalion.

Meanwhile, Company D and the Reconnaissance and Mortar Platoons, with the 3d Battalion, 185th Infantry, attacked CARPENDER'S BRIDGE, quickly capturing it. In a rapid march to HIGHWAY No. 3 at JARO, the MANDURRILAO AIRFIELD was captured.

By March 21st enemy resistance was scattered and ineffective. Three tanks of Company D and the Reconnaissance Platoon with infantry made a reconnaissance in force from CABATUAN to JANIUARY. On March 23d, reconnaissance was continued. A large enemy pocket was located and destroyed in the vicinity of SANTA BARBARA. The next day the Battalion reverted to division control and for the next three days prepared for the NEGROS operation.

NEGROS OCCIDENTAL (Map 18). On March 29th, the Battalion (-) arrived at NEGROS. Units were shuttled ashore at PULUPANDAN. Company D supported the 1st Battalion, 185th Infantry, and moved along HIGHWAY 1 to BAGO. The drive continued to the outskirts of BACOLOD where contact with the enemy was made. The next day BACOLOD was secured and Company D moved 6000 yards east of the city. The 3d Platoon, with Company C of the Infantry, reconnoitered roads and approaches to the MATABONG RIVER. Enemy contact was made but broken off. The next day, reconnaissance was continued southeast of TALISAY to CONCEPTION without contact. On April 2d, during the attack on TALISAY, Company D while supporting the infantry destroyed 26 enemy and 22 pillboxes. From April 3d to the 6th the Company was employed on reconnaissance missions without incident.

On April 6th, the Battalion minus Companies A, B, and C, reverted to division control and moved to PULUPANDAN to embark on the next day for the staging area on MINDORA. This left Company C as the only tank element on the Island.

Company C, coming ashore with the assault waves of the 2d Battalion of the 185th Infantry, immediately drove north across the

BAGO RIVER, through the town of BAGO and along HIGHWAY No. 1 towards the Provincial Capitol, BACOLOD. The move was made with the infantry riding the tanks. The first night was spent at the BACOLOD AIRPORT, about a mile south of the town after covering about 16 miles against sporadic sniper fire. Tank-infantry teams secured the town the next morning. Two platoons of the tanks were used to envelop the town from two directions and the 3d platoon acted as a base of fire.

While the remainder of the Company stayed in bivouac at BACOLOD, the 3d Platoon was attached to the 160th Infantry and supported it in the drive towards GRANADA and CONCEPTION. An advance of five miles was made against minor resistance. For the next few days, the tanks were employed by sections on reconnaissance missions. On April 2d, tanks and an infantry patrol succeeded in occupying a part of CONCEPTION but they were ordered to withdraw. The next morning after an artillery preparation, tanks and infantry secured the town. Aerial bombs employed as mines were found in this sector. No other major advances were made in this sector. The 3d Platoon remained in bivouac with the 160th Infantry for about a week.

On April 2d, the remainder of the Company, working with the 1st Battalion, 185th Infantry, occupied TALISAY after encountering light resistance. Using HIGHWAY 1 as an axis, SILAY, 10 miles north of BACOLOD, was taken. On April 4th, the Company (-) with a platoon of infantry acted as the covering force for the 2d Battalion and moved towards GUTMBALON, eight miles away. Just short of the town at a bridge over the MUYAO RIVER the covering force ran into heavy resistance

and was forced to withdraw. The infantry dismounted from the tanks and the tanks moved rapidly off the road to the southwest of the town. With one platoon as the base of fire, the other moved to the north into the edge of the town. Simultaneously the infantry moved into the town from the west and the town was seized and secured. From April 5th to the 8th, the two platoons were used on patrol missions.

On April 8th, the 2d Platoon of Company C was attached to the 503d Parachute Regimental Combat Team. By this time, the situation had developed into three main axes of advance, a Regimental Combat Team with a tank platoon attached, on each.

The 3d Platoon at CONCEPTION moved with elements of the 160th Infantry in its drive to the east. The platoon was used on reconnaissance as well as close-support missions. On April 10th, the Platoon led the 1st Battalion in an 8000 yard advance. For the remainder of the month, and during May, the Platoon was used primarily in a secondary mission of firing concentrations into the heavily organized Japanese positions on HILL 3155. On June 2d, the Platoon was relieved and returned to the Company area in the vicinity of SILAY.

Meanwhile, the 1st Platoon, with the 185th, led the infantry in a slow advance over the length of a long, narrow, wooded ridge located approximately 1200 yards north of the northern slopes of HILL 3155. On April 27th, this Platoon with elements of the other two tank platoons of Company C spearheaded a regimental attack in which the LANTAWAN PLATEAU was successfully seized and occupied. This marked the furthest advance in this sector and until May 10th, the Platoon

remained in the area firing at targets of opportunity from positions on the Plateau. Tank fire was used to mark targets for air strikes. On May 10th, the 1st Platoon moved to the Company area in the vicinity of SILAY.

During the period, the 2d Platoon moved east with the 503d. It was used on reconnaissance, direct support missions, and as the basis for tank-infantry teams. On May 10th, the Platoon was relieved and rejoined the Company.

With the exception of a five-day period when the 1st Platoon returned to LANTAWAN PLATEAU to fire in conjunction with the artillery, this marked the end of tank action on NEGROS OCCIDENTAL.³²

Summary

During the PANAY-NEGROS operation, the tanks were employed as platoons or sections in support of companies and battalions of infantry. In only one instance, the seizure of BACOLOD, NEGROS, were tanks employed as a company unit. In all instances it appears that the tanks were used to the best advantage. When the road net and the terrain permitted, they were used as the basis of tank-infantry teams resulting in rapid advances and early seizure of objectives. In mountainous terrain, the tanks were employed in secondary missions of fire support.

SECTION V

CEBU

Terrain

CEBU is one of the four main islands in the SOUTHERN VISAYA group (Map 19). It is a long narrow island similar to NEGROS and PANAY in topographical aspects. Mountain chains with elevations up to 3000 feet form the backbone of the Island. It is heavily populated and as a result has been practically cleared of trees in order to grow corn. Minor forested areas, however, are found in the central mountains.

General Situation

Eighth Army designated the Americal Division, reinforced, (less the 164th Regimental Combat Team in Army Reserve) as the task force for the Victor II Operation. The Division's primary mission was to liberate CEBU but the operation also included the seizure and occupation of NEGROS ORIENTAL and BOHOL. March 25th was designated as the target date but this was later changed to the 26th. By an amphibious assault our troops were to seize a beachhead in the TALISAY area on the eastern coast of CEBU. Then they were to advance rapidly along the coast to the northeast and capture CEBU CITY, its airfields and harbor installations. Further plans were to include the seizure of other islands covered in this operation when and as ordered.

At 0830 on March 26th, the invasion of CEBU was launched with an amphibious assault near TALISAY, five miles southwest of CEBU CITY.

Resistance to the assault was limited to sporadic small arms and mortar fire; however, the entire length of the landing beach was mined with shells and bombs ranging in size from 60-mm mortar shells to 250-pound aerial bombs. Also extending the length of the beach was a personnel barrier consisting of sharply pointed bamboo barbs 12-18 inches long, partially covered with vines and jutting up from the sand at a 45-degree angle. Despite these and other barriers, elements of the Division pushed rapidly forward and by D + 1, CEBU CITY was in our hands. After this, resistance stiffened and later developed into fanatical defensive fighting with frequent localized counterattacks.

On April 9th, the Division's 164th RCT, which had been in Army Reserve, arrived and was released to the Division. The 3d Battalion was sent to BOHOL and the remainder of the Regiment was moved 25 miles by a concealed route to the rear of the enemy's right flank. Beginning on April 12th, the three combat teams accelerated their attacks against BABAG RIDGE, and on April 18th, patrols of the 164th and 132d Infantry met on the Ridge. As of April 20th organized resistance was officially declared broken in the CEBU CITY area.

By rapid marches and shore-to-shore movement up the coast, the Americal Division systematically blocked the attempts of the Japanese to organize another defensive line and evacuate from the Island. Patrols continued to hunt down the scattered enemy remnants until early in June.

Tanks in Action

Company B, 716th Tank Battalion, was attached to the Americal Division for the CEBU operation. The Company landed on D-Day, but saw no action until the 28th. At this time, the 1st Platoon was designated to support the 1st Battalion, 182d Infantry. The mission of the tanks was to support the infantry by neutralizing enemy pillboxes that were holding up the advance. Although numerous pillboxes were destroyed our forces were unable to get into a tenable position and the infantry was forced by nightfall to withdraw to the original position. The next day, the attack was continued. The tanks and infantry succeeded in advancing against small arms fire through a heavy mine field for 2000 yards to the foot of HILL 31. Infantry arrived at the crest of the Hill, but were prevented from going over by fierce fire. The tank platoon with a platoon of infantry made several attempts to move around the right flank of the Hill but each time they were repulsed by heavy fire. An attack was then started around the left flank but was called back to allow the artillery to soften up the area. During the withdrawal the entire hill was blown up by the enemy causing the infantry heavy casualties and killing one officer, one enlisted man, and wounding five others from the tank company. Caves in the Hill had been filled with torpedoes, depth charges, and aerial bombs and these tremendous charges had been detonated by remote control.

Meanwhile, the 2d Platoon of Company B moved up to support the 2d Battalion, 182d Infantry, in the capture of LAHUG AIRFIELD. With little difficulty the enemy was driven to the southeast where they

occupied hills overlooking the field. During the attack on these positions, the tanks reduced 10 pillboxes and four concrete emplacements but the attackers were unable to hold their ground and were forced to withdraw. One tank was disabled by a mine and though towed from the Airfield and protected through the night it had to be abandoned at dawn the next day.

On March 30th, the 2d and 3d Platoons of Company B with the 1st Battalion, 182d, attacked northeast from HILL 31. Thirty pillboxes and five concrete emplacements were destroyed as well as one 90-mm mortar. Tanks with infantry seized ground on the right side of the Hill but again withdrawal was necessary as 90-mm mortar fire forced the infantry back.

Next day, the 2d Platoon of the tanks, with Company G of the 182d, advanced 1000 yards past HILL 31 to the east destroying 35 pillboxes. The 3d Platoon advancing north along HILL 31 was stopped by a bridge that was mined with aerial bombs. The bombs could not be removed because of heavy sniper fire.

The next day, the 2d Platoon, Company B, assisted Companies E and G of the 182d Infantry in a coordinated attack on a hill mass 2000 yards northwest of HILL 31. One section of tanks was employed with each company of infantry. The reinforced companies thus formed converged on the objective after an advance of 1000 yards. On the same day, the 3d Platoon of Company B led an attack made by the 2d Battalion. Five concrete machine gun positions and trenches dug out of solid coral were reduced.

Missions similar to the above were continued until April 10th. At this time the tanks began to encounter serious difficulties with the terrain. A typical action showing this, is that of the 3d Platoon with the 3d Battalion, 132d Infantry, in an assault on HILL 26. The attack proceeded down a ridge to a point 400 yards from the base of the Hill where the tanks were stopped by a deep gorge. Thus the Platoon was able to give covering fire only.

Until April 17th, Company B, operating in sections or platoons, continued to assist the infantry in the slow tedious job of advancing from one hill to another. On April 18th, patrols of the 164th and 132d Regiments met on BABAG RIDGE and organized resistance in the area was broken.

On April 19th, Company B's 2d Platoon assisted the 1st Battalion, 82d Filipino Infantry, in an attack on a hill mass 2000 yards west of BASAK. The area was thickly mined with 75-mm shells and engineers were required to clear a path for the tanks. In taking the objective 15 pillboxes were destroyed.

Two days later the same platoon was split into two sections and advanced with the 1st Battalion of the 132d Infantry astride HIGHWAY No. 1 in an attempt to contact and destroy elements of the withdrawing Japs. Progress was hindered by 20 abatis roadblocks, tank traps 9 feet wide and 13 feet deep flooded with water, and aerial bombs and artillery shells used as mines. An advance of eight miles was made, nevertheless, against sporadic resistance from mortars and machine guns.

On April 25th, the 2d Platoon of Company B was attached to the 164th RCT. This Regiment (less the 3d Battalion) made an unopposed landing on NEGROS ORIENTAL at DUMAGUETE on April 26th. The Platoon assisted the infantry in its rapid pursuit of the enemy in the initial phases of this operation. On May 5th, the Platoon was relieved and returned to CEBU.

Until May 19th, the platoons of Company B assisted the infantry in the search to block and capture the remaining Japanese on CEBU. During this period, elements of the Company participated in two of the infantry's shore-to-shore movements when the 3d Platoon landed at CATNON POINT on April 23d and when the 1st Platoon landed at TABUELAN on April 29th.

On May 19th, the 1st and 3d Platoons joined Company B Headquarters in CEBU CITY. Until May 29th, the 2d Platoon engaged in extensive patrol work. The return of this Platoon on that date marked the end of the CEBU operation for Company B, 716th Tank Battalion.

Summary

During this operation, the tanks were employed in close-support missions advancing with the infantry and assisting mainly in the reduction of pillboxes. During the later stages serious difficulties with the mountainous terrain were encountered and the tanks were forced to revert to the secondary role of fire support. After the main Japanese positions were destroyed the tanks were employed to good advantage in the pursuit of the Japanese troops remaining on the Island.

SECTION VI

ZAMBOANGA (MINDANAO), JOLO

Terrain

The ZAMBOANGA PENINSULA, comprising over one-sixth of the land areas of MINDANAO ISLAND, is attached to the mainland at its western extremity by the narrow PANGUIL ISTHMUS (Map 20). The Peninsula is 150 miles long. In addition to its narrow peninsula connection to eastern MINDANAO, ZAMBOANGA is further isolated by the high, densely wooded and almost impenetrable mountains that rise in the center and by the lack of a suitable road net and other means of overland communications. The general elevation of the rugged unexplored interior is from 1500-2000 feet, but at a point only 12 miles distant and to the northeast of ZAMBOANGA TOWN, this mountain range rises to an unnamed peak 4400 feet high. The coastal plains that ring the Peninsula are narrow and generally flat. In the vicinity of ZAMBOANGA TOWN for example, they average four and one-half miles in width. From this coastal plain, steep hills spring upward allowing unlimited observation of the terrain and shoreline below. These plains, especially in the ZAMBOANGA region, are well-cultivated with all arable ground covered by rice paddies and cocoanut groves. The productive areas are interspersed with stretches of scrub grass and occasional swamps.

ZAMBOANGA is separated from the SULU ARCHIPELAGO by the 10-mile-wide BASILAN STRAIT. This Archipelago is made up of some 370 islands, the vast majority of which are small, uninhabited and unimportant.

The three major islands, each the nucleus of its own sub-archipelago or island group are: BASILAN, just across the strait from ZAMBOANGA TOWN; JOLO, at the center of the chain; and TAWI TAWI in the extreme south just 30 miles from the north-east tip of BORNEO.

Geographically, the islands of the Archipelago are a semi-submerged continuation of the volcanic ridge which forms the ZAMBOANGA PENINSULA. BASILAN, except for the coastal areas, is densely covered with rain forest. JOLO has high mountains, with large, grass-covered slopes that are ideal for grazing cattle while the alluvial lowlands produce excellent crops of bananas and exotic fruits. TAWI TAWI is almost completely unexplored but aerial photos show it to be heavily forested.

General Situation

The seizure of the ZAMBOANGA PENINSULA and the SULU ARCHIPELAGO were known as the Victor IV operation. Eighth Army assigned both tasks to the 41st Infantry Division. The Division, less the 186th Regimental Combat Team which was engaged on PALAWAN, assaulted ZAMBOANGA PENINSULA at 0915, March 10, 1945 at SAN MATEO. Light machine gun fire was encountered but progress was rapid and by noon two battalions were moving toward the secondary objectives which were strategic points near the airfields. During the day SAN ROQUE was taken and by nightfall the 162d Infantry had expanded its bridgehead to a depth of 3000 yards. Elements of the 163d Infantry had reached BALEWASAN CREEK just north of ZAMBOANGA TOWN. The following day,

ZAMBOANGA TOWN and the airfield in the vicinity of SAN ROQUE were in our hands. The next morning, the drive through the foothills to secure PASANANCA jumped off, the 162d driving north of SAN ROQUE and the 163d driving due north out of ZAMBOANGA TOWN. By March 18th, the two forces had joined and by March 24th the Japanese positions in the hills behind PASANANCA were pierced and the lengthy job of mopping up began.

During the ensuing weeks the infantry pressed gradually forward and by the latter part of April, enemy resistance weakened considerably as he was maneuvered into smaller and smaller pockets. As his supply lines and routes of evacuation were severed, his fanatical resistance disintegrated.

During the latter stages of the above operation, an island-hopping campaign to the south was in progress. On April 7th, the 163d Infantry (less the 2d Battalion) began unloading for an assault on JOLO. The landing on the 9th was unopposed. The first strong opposition was met at MOUNT DATU, four miles south of JOLO TOWN, on D / 1.

On April 16th, the 1st Battalion, 163d Infantry, began its push on MOUNT DAHO. It was here that the Japanese had decided to make their main stand on the Island. With the support of artillery and air the main positions were overrun and the back of the Japanese resistance was broken. The remainder of the operation was principally concerned with mopping up the Island.³⁵

Tanks in Action

ZAMBOANGA (Map 20). On February 18, 1945, Company A of the 716th Tank Battalion boarded LST's at LINGAYEN GULF for MINDORO, where they were to join the 41st Infantry Division for the assault on ZAMBOANGA-JOLO. Battalion Medics, Service Company trucks and a wrecker from Battalion Maintenance were attached for this operation. The period February 26th to March 6th was spent in tank-infantry training and maintenance. In order for this personnel to become acquainted and to learn the ways of each unit, a platoon of tanks spent a day with each infantry company. On March 6th, the unit loaded on LCM's for the coming operation.

The infantry assault waves hit the beach at SAN MATEO at 100915. At 1000 the tank company went ashore and the various platoons joined their previously designated units. The 1st Platoon was attached to the 162d Infantry, the 2d Platoon to the 2d Battalion of the 163d Infantry and the 3d Platoon to the 3d Battalion of the 163d Infantry. Company Headquarters assembled in the vicinity of the WOLF AIR STRIP.

The tank platoons accompanied their respective Battalions and rapid progress was made against relatively light opposition initially but increasing by the end of the day. Elements of the 162d occupied SAN ROQUE village and extended the beachhead to a depth of 3500 yards. The 163d was on BALIWASAN CREEK just north of ZAMBOANGA TOWN. During the day, the tanks were credited with destroying 12 enemy machine gun nests and killing approximately 60 Japs. At 1800, the tanks withdrew and assembled on the east end of WOLF AIR STRIP for the night. This practice of assembling the Company each night was continued throughout the campaign.

On the morning of the 11th, the platoons moved out to support their respective units. The 3d Platoon continued the advance to the outlying edge of ZAMBOANGA TOWN. The 2d Platoon, still with the 2d Battalion of the 163d, assisted in the capture of SAN ROQUE AIR STRIP. The Company destroyed 15 pillboxes and numerous small arms installations during the day.

At 1330, on March the 12th, the 1st and 2d Platoons of Company A moved out to support the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 163d Infantry in the drive to the north from ZAMBOANGA TOWN toward PASANANCA. Resistance intensified and there was little progress made against machine gun, mortar and 20-mm fire. The tanks knocked out six 20-mm guns, several machine guns and killed an estimated 100 enemy in an intense two-hour fight.

The next day, the 163d continued the advance to the north. At this time, the 3d Platoon of Company A also joined the fight in support of the 1st Battalion. They advanced 800 yards astride the SANTA MARIA--PASANANCA ROAD. The next day, 500 yards were gained with the Company accounting for 32 pillboxes.

On March 15th, the 1st Platoon joined Company E of the 162d Infantry and assisted in the release of a platoon that had been pinned down earlier in the day. The tanks furnished overhead fire, driving the enemy from their positions and allowing the infantry to withdraw to positions of safety. The 3d Platoon continued to support the 163d in securing PASANANCA and the high ground in the vicinity.

The 1st Platoon, still with the 163d, supported the 2d Battalion on the 17th. The infantry advance was held up while attempting to cross a valley approximately 500 yards wide. The tanks went into position on the high ground overlooking the valley and poured 150 rounds of 75-mm into the Jap intrenchments. Under the cover of this fire, the infantry crossed the valley and seized the enemy position.

On March 20th, after a day of maintenance for all tanks in the Company area, three tanks of the 2d Platoon supported the 1st Battalion, 163d Infantry, by destroying 6 pillboxes, one 20-mm gun and a radar position. From March 21st to April 7th, Company A remained in a rest area. The time was devoted to maintenance and care of personal equipment. Tracks were changed on all tanks.³⁶

JOLO (Map 20). On April 7th, Company A, 716th Tank Battalion, was attached to the 163d Infantry to participate in the JOLO operation. The landing on JOLO on the 9th was unopposed. However, all roads were heavily mined, thus making mechanized movement relatively slow.

The next day, the 1st Platoon supported the 1st Battalion, 163d Infantry, in the vicinity of MOBO. Crews of the tanks killed two Japs attempting to knock out our tanks with pole charges. The 2d Platoon supporting the 3d Battalion advanced 500 yards cross-country to HILL 874. This rapid advance was made possible by a road which was built by a tank dozer with the infantry following in support of the tank. The remainder of the Company shelled HILL 927 and HILL 836 at a range of 4000 yards. Company A spent the night in JOLO CITY.

The 2d Platoon of Company A supported the 3d Battalion on April 11th. The attack continued on HILL 572 after a preparation by the tanks. The tanks accompanied the infantry in the advance but the force was turned back. On April 12th, the 3d Platoon joined the 3d Battalion and assisted in the advance by direct fire on enemy positions. The platoon was credited with killing 200 Japs in the day's engagement. The 2d Platoon was used to fire observed fire at a range of 5000 yards.

Company A returned to its former base at ZAMBOANGA on April 13th and entered a period of intense maintenance.³⁷

Summary

During the ZAMBOANGA-JOLO operation the tanks were habitually employed as platoons with infantry battalions. They assisted the infantry mainly in the reduction of pillboxes and machine gun nests. On several occasions, the tanks were called upon to fire as artillery. One practice worthy of note that was employed by the Company during the ZAMBOANGA phase was that each night all tanks in the Company were assembled in a central location. The platoons moved out of these assembly areas early each morning to join the infantry units to which they were attached.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 8

¹The Campaigns of the Pacific War, a report prepared by United States Strategic Bombing Survey (Pacific) Naval Analysis Division (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1946), p 9.

²Report of the Leyte Operation, 17 October 1944 to 25 December 1944, a report prepared by the Sixth United States Army (Reproduced by 39th Engr Base Topo. Bn, 1945), passim.

³After Action Report, 44th Tank Battalion, 17 July 44 - 22 December 44, Jan 45 - June 45, p 4.

⁴Ibid, passim.

⁵After Action Report, 776th Amphibious Tank Battalion, 20 October 44 - 30 January 45, Feb 45, April - June 45, passim.

⁶Ibid, passim.

⁷Ibid, passim.

⁸Armor on Leyte, a research report prepared by Committee 16, Officers Advanced Class, The Armored School 1948-1949, p 72.

⁹Ibid, p 74.

¹⁰Ibid, p 48.

¹¹After Action Report, 767th Tank Battalion, 1 Jan 44 - 31 Dec 44, passim.

¹²After Action Report, 780th Amphibious Tank Battalion, 20 Oct - 25 Dec 44, 1 April - 30 June 45, passim.

¹³Armor on Leyte, op cit, p 95.

¹⁴After Action Report, 763d Tank Battalion, 22 April 42 - 30 June 45, passim.

¹⁵After Action Report, 706th Tank Battalion, 23 Nov - 25 December 44, p 4.

¹⁶Ibid, passim.

¹⁷Sixth Army Report of the Luzon Campaign, January 9, 1945 - 30 June 1945, I p 6.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid, passim.

²⁰After Action Report, 716th Tank Battalion, January 9, 1945 - February 8, 1945, p 58.

²¹Ibid, p 71.

- ²²Ibid, p 73.
- ²³After Action Report, 754th Tank Battalion, Jan 9, 1945 - June 30, 1945, p for Feb 8, 1945.
- ²⁴Ibid, p for Feb 9, 1945.
- ²⁵After Action Report, 744th Tank Battalion, July 17, 1944 - June 1945, p 4.
- ²⁶Ibid, passim.
- ²⁷Ibid, p 9.
- ²⁸Ibid, p 12.
- ²⁹After Action Report, 775th Tank Battalion, Sept 20, 1943 - July 1, 1945, p 14.
- ³⁰Ibid, p 9.
- ³¹Report of the Commanding General, Eighth Army, on the PANAY-NEGROS and CEBU Operations, Victor I and II, pp 21-27.
- ³²After Action Report, 716th Tank Battalion, pp 10-21.
- ³³Report of the Commanding General Eighth Army, op cit, pp 61-70.
- ³⁴After Action Report, 716th Tank Battalion, op cit, pp 32-40.
- ³⁵Report of the Commanding General, Eighth Army, on the PALAWAN and ZAMBOANGA Operations, Victor III and IV, pp 46-60.
- ³⁶After Action Report, 716th Tank Battalion, op cit, pp 24-28.
- ³⁷Ibid, pp 29 - 30.

LUZON 16

PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

1945

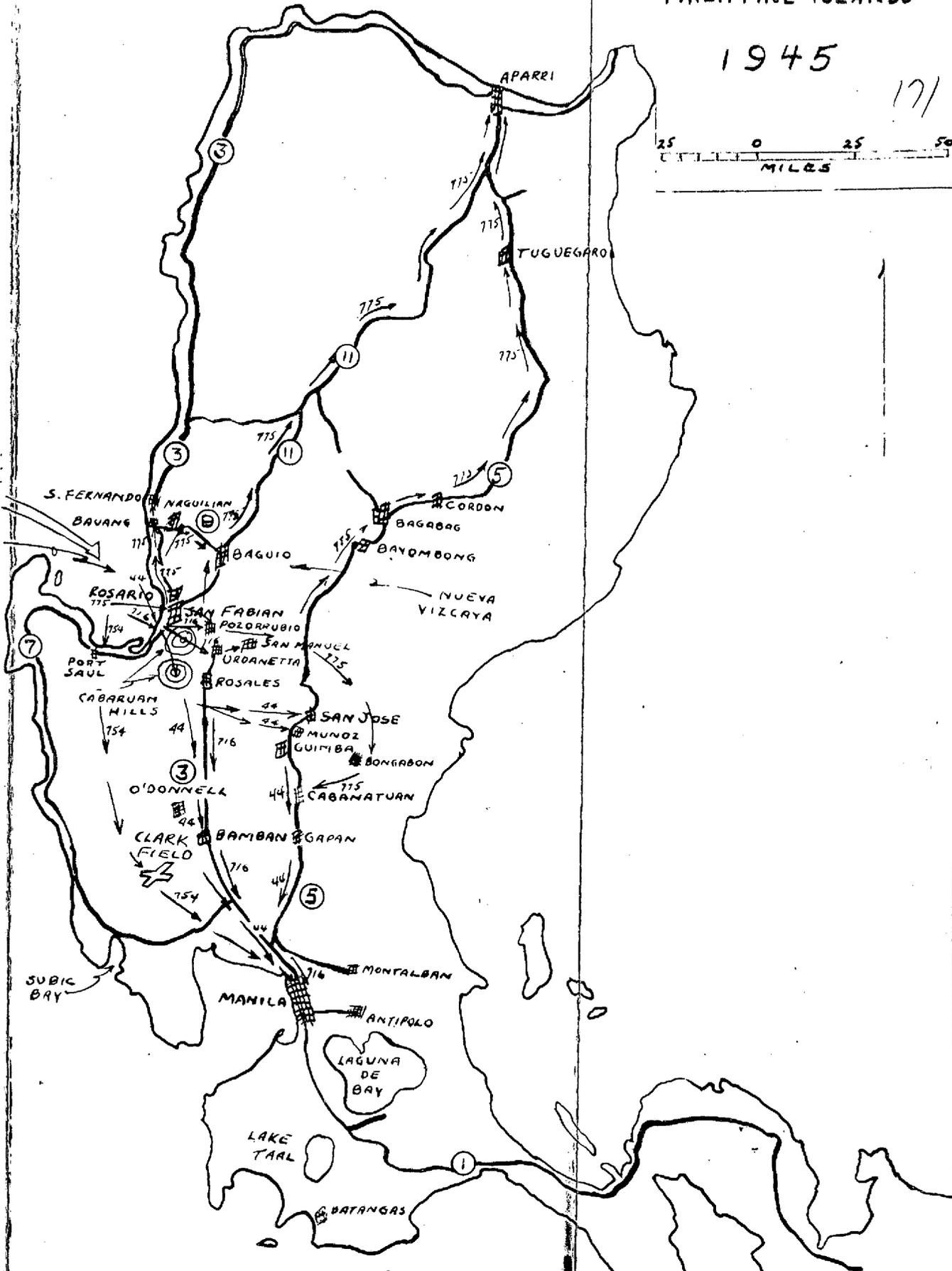
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715 TK. BN.
716 TK. BN.
754 TK. BN.
44 TK. BN.

LINGAYEN GULF

SUBIC BAY



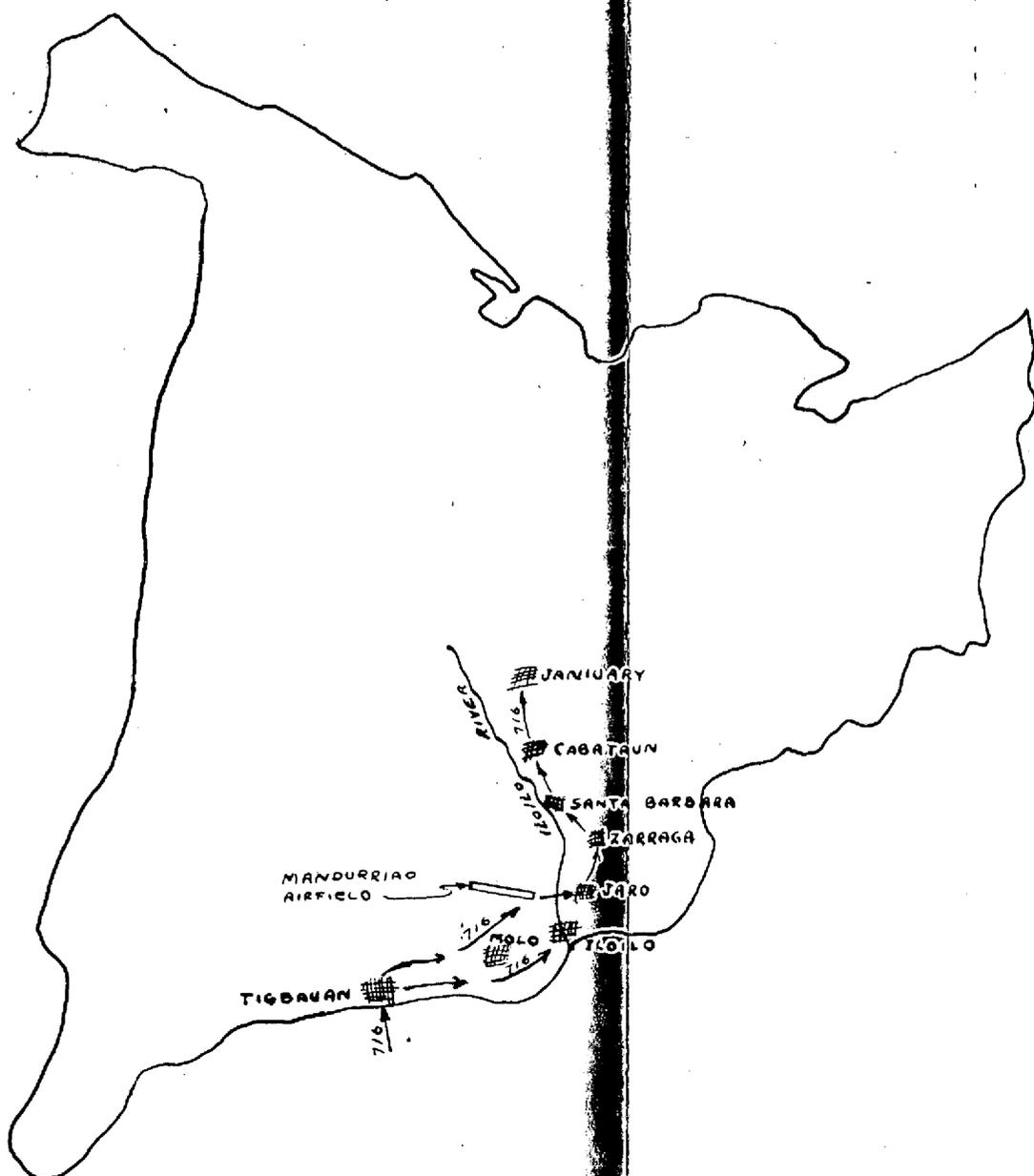
PANAY

PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

17

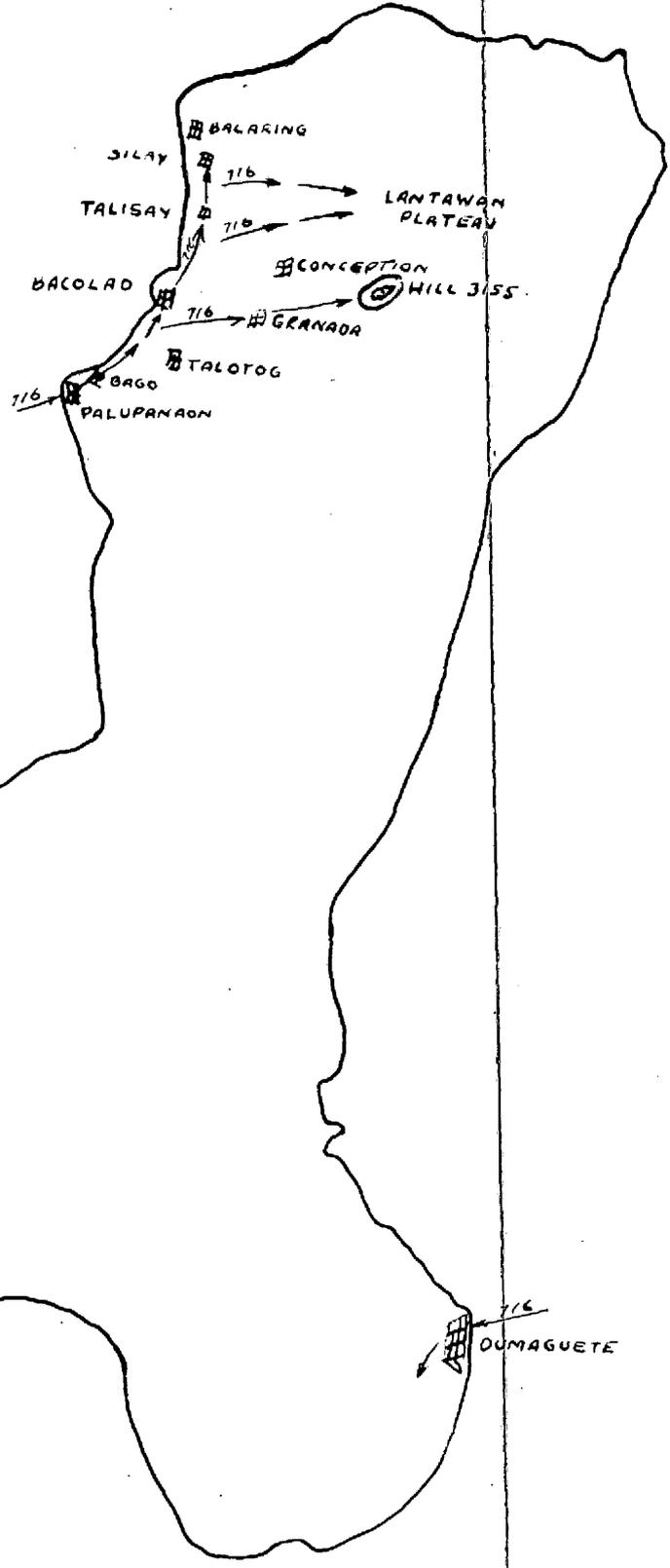


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NEGROS (18)
PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

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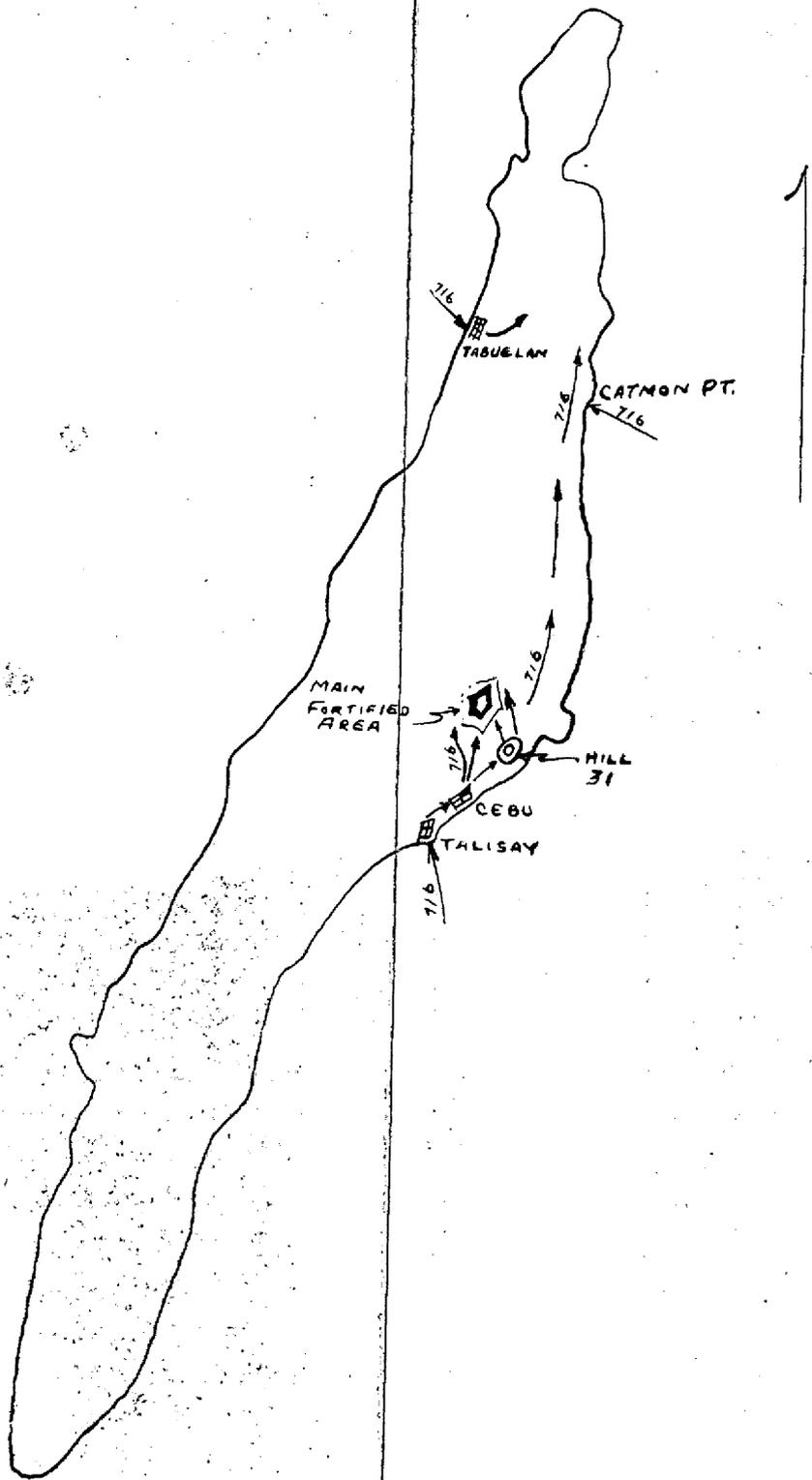
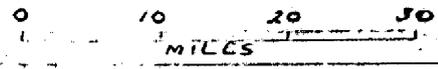


CEBU

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PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

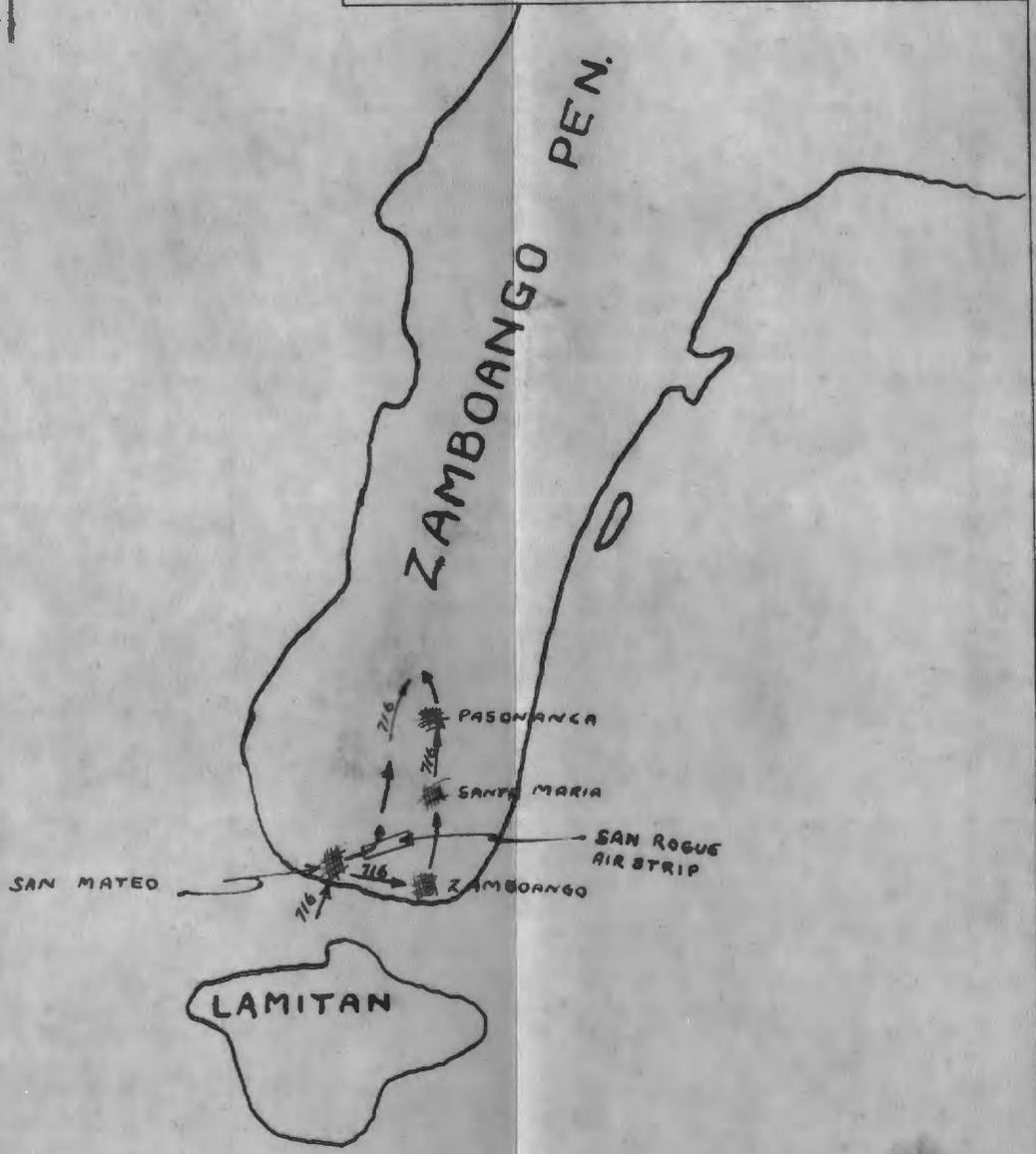
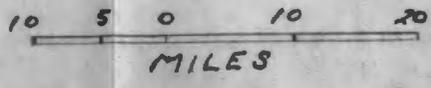
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MINDANAO - JOLO
PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

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CHAPTER 9

IWO JIMA ISLAND

Terrain

Since IWO JIMA (Map 21) is the only one of the VOLCANO ISLANDS on which combat took place, the terrain of this Island only will be discussed.

IWO JIMA is a volcanic island five and one-half miles long and two and one-half miles wide at its widest point. The Island is generally triangular. At its knob-like southern end is a dead volcano, MT. SURIBACHI, a broad cone 556 feet high with a deep jagged crater. The base of MT. SURIBACHI is surrounded by rocks and some gnarled stunted trees with little foliage. Its sides are steep, rough and rocky. Just north of this point is the narrowest and lowest part of the Island. Starting at this narrow point are beaches on each side of the Island stretching 3500 yards northward. From each of these beaches the ground slopes up and in to a tableland on which is located AIRFIELD No. 1. From the southern tip of the Island up past AIRFIELD No. 2 the soil is a sliding black volcanic sand. North of AIRFIELD No. 2 there are a series of wild rocky ridges that twist across the Island from one shore to the other. The highest of these ridges is 382 feet while several others are over 360 feet high. This whole northern area is a mass of crags, gullies, chasms and hills that come one after the other and end in cliffs at the extreme end of the Island in the north.

General Situation

IWO JIMA was a Marine Corps operation. It was performed by three marine divisions, the 3d, 4th, and the 5th, all under the V Amphibious Corps, a Marine Headquarters. The chain of command was as follows:¹

- Fifth Fleet - Admiral R. A. Spruence USN
- Joint Exp Force - V Adm R. K. Turner USN
- Exp Troops - Lt Gen H. M. Smith USMC
- V Amphibious Corps - Maj Gen H. Schmidt USMC
- 3d Mar Div - Maj Gen G. B. Erskine USMC
- 4th Mar Div - Maj Gen S. B. Cates USMC
- 5th Mar Div - Maj Gen K. E. Rockey USMC

IWO in the VOLCANO ISLANDS is only 660 nautical miles from TOKYO. In addition to its strategic location on the innermost ring of defenses of JAPAN, it was the main base for the interception of the American B-29's. The need for taking the Island was illustrated by the fact that on March 4th, the first crippled B-29 landed on AIRFIELD No. 1 less than two weeks after the initial landings. More important though was the fact that B-29's when bombing JAPAN could have a fighter escort based on IWO.

The 4th and 5th Marine Divisions landed on the southeast shore of IWO JIMA on February 19, 1945. The 3d Marine Division was in reserve, landing on February 21st and eventually going into the gap between the 5th Division on the left and the 4th Division on the right. The mission of the 5th Division was to advance inland as rapidly as possible and cross ~~the~~ Island to the western beaches. Then the 27th RCT of the Division was to move northward while the 28th RCT was to attack MT. SURIBACHI.² The 4th Division was charged with

capturing the northeast end of AIRFIELD No. 1, the high ground between AIRFIELDS No. 1 and 2, and the right half of the Island.³ The tank battalions organic to the three divisions engaged in the operation. The 2d Armored Amphibious Battalion under an Armored Amphibious Group also participated but reports of its action were not available for this research.

Tanks in Action

5th Marine Tank Battalion. The 5th Marine Tank Battalion commanded by Lieutenant Colonel W. R. Collins consisted of a Headquarters and Headquarters and Service Company and three letter companies. They were equipped with M4-type tanks, some mounting flamethrowers.

For the initial operations on the Island, Company C of the Battalion was attached to the 28th RCT which wheeled south after crossing the Island. The remainder of the Battalion was attached to the 27th RCT. H-Hour was 0900 and the first tanks were ashore by 0930.⁴ By the end of D-Day, IWO had been split in two and the RCT's proceeded as planned. On D / 1, tanks spearheaded the advance of the 27th RCT in the capture of its part of AIRFIELD No. 1.⁵

On D / 2, the 27th RCT, assisted by tanks, advanced about 1000 yards and, in doing so, created a large gap between it and the 4th Division on the right flank. Elements of the 3d Division were thrown into this gap but could not eliminate the Jap salient that existed just west of AIRFIELD No. 2 and north of AIRFIELD No. 1. In an attempt to overrun these defenses, the tanks of all three divisions

were concentrated on D / 5 for a coordinated attack. Tanks led the attack and the 21st RCT from the 3d Division attached to the 4th Division eventually came abreast of the 5th Division units.⁶

For the attacks on both HILL 362A and HILL 362B, tanks led the attack but hand-to-hand fighting was the deciding factor.⁷ For the latter HILL, armored bulldozers were used to clear roads so that tanks could be brought up for direct support.

When the Japs were finally compressed into the northwest tip of the Island, a tank-led assault was attempted. Flame-throwing tanks were the most effective since they "caused the Japs to leave their caves and run."⁸ The pocket was so small and the terrain so broken that artillery could not be used effectively. Tanks went into position over newly constructed roads that were mined nightly by the enemy. Tanks had practically no effect on the concrete pillbox in the gorge where the Japs were trapped.⁹

4th Marine Tank Battalion. The 4th Marine Tank Battalion was commanded by Major R. K. Schmidt and was organized in the same way as the 5th. It was equipped with M4-type tanks, some mounting flame-throwers. Tanks of the 4th Marine Tank Battalion, landing 10 minutes after those of the 5th Marine Tank Battalion, went into action on the beaches in close support of the mortar-bedeveled infantry. Others burned the Japs out of their smashed fortifications.¹⁰ Again, as with the 5th Tank Battalion, tanks led the infantry in the assault to capture AIRFIELD No. 1 on D / 1.

The coordinated tank attack on D / 5 mentioned in a preceding paragraph was in support of the 4th Division. All the tanks on the Island were used and aided in the capture of the lower half of AIRFIELD No. 2.

On D / 6, when elements of the 4th Division were held up east of AIRFIELD No. 2, part of the 4th Tank Battalion launched an attack through the 3d Division zone to outflank the defenses in front of the left regiment. The attack succeeded in gaining about 300 yards, a considerable distance for IWO JIMA. Demolition teams and flame-throwing tanks attacked through mine fields to aid in isolating and then in mopping up TURKEY KNOB.

The 4th Division turned southeast as the 3d Division took over the center of the Island. This extreme eastern portion of IWO was so filled with craters, crevices, caves and ravines that it was almost impenetrable for tanks.

3d Marine Tank Battalion. The 3d Marine Tank Battalion, commanded by Major Holly H. Evans, was organized as the other Marine Tank Battalions and similarly equipped.

This Tank Battalion was first used on IWO JIMA in the coordinated attack of the three battalions on D / 5. The tanks of the 3d Battalion, however, did not arrive in time and the infantry jumped off without them. When the tanks did arrive, they made headway across AIRFIELD No. 2 runway by using direct fire. These tanks drew "heavy mortar fire which resulted in heavy casualties to the accompanying infantry; then, they were subjected to fast accurate cannon fire. Nine tanks were knocked out before they succeeded in destroying a number of enemy installations including three heavy guns."¹¹

The next day, February 25th, tanks led the 9th Marine's attack across the northern end of AIRFIELD No. 2 to the high ground defending it. The attack succeeded with numerous tank losses.¹²

On February 27th, tanks of the 3d Marine Tank Battalion attacked on the left, west of the Airfield, and advanced up to 1200 yards despite the loss of 11 tanks. Their presence and fire power (using point-blank fire on enemy installations) were a decided advantage. "Features of the action were the ... decisive aid rendered the infantry by the tanks."¹³

The next day, the 21st RCT with the 3d Tank Battalion, attached, jumped off north of AIRFIELD No. 2 where five Jap tanks were encountered. These Jap tanks were disposed of by the infantry bazooka teams. The attack gained about 500 yards.

Moving ahead of the two flank divisions, the 3d Division made good progress in the flat center of the Island. On March 1st and 2d, the Division, on the southern part of AIRFIELD No. 3, attacked north with its tanks knocking out many enemy positions.

For the attack on HILL 362B in coordination with the 5th Division, the 3d Division used tanks in direct support in an overwatching role. The tanks drew fire when moving up into position but once they were in position and firing, the Jap fire decreased noticeably.¹⁴

HILL 362C was to be taken by a night attack. This attack failed when the attacking companies were cut off and decimated in the morning. Elements of the 3d Tank Battalion with one company of infantry were thrown into the attack to relieve the trapped units. The tanks,

firing machine guns, heavy weapons and spouting flame, moved into the pocket and managed to extricate the remnants of the marine infantry by hauling them out in the tanks. During the attack on these Hills the tanks were the best weapons available and proved to be the deciding factor in the engagement. They were restricted by the terrain, anti-tank guns and mine fields which together took a toll of 15 tanks.¹⁵

Upon reaching the far end of the Island part of the Division turned northwest while the balance of the Division remained to eliminate CUSHMAN's POCKET. Each DCT was given a tank company to assist in mopping-up the pocket. Only one tank at a time could be used against the southern end of the pocket because of the narrow ravines. The Japs, meanwhile, were tank-hunting with pole charges and Molotov cocktails.

Because of the terrain space, "the tanks played as equally important a role as the artillery in the success of the operation. Many times when the infantry found it impossible to gain another yard...the tanks running interference for the foot troops opened up holes."¹⁶

Summary

Throughout the 23 days on IWO JIMA tanks of the three Marine Divisions were in continuous support of the infantry, frequently in direct fire roles more often than leading the attack. The flame-throwing tanks were invaluable against caves and pillboxes which large caliber shells merely scarred.

The terrain, as shown in the opening paragraphs, generally was unsuited for tank action. Engineers often had to bulldoze roads in front of the tanks before the tanks could move forward.¹⁷ Flame-throwing tanks were used time and again against caves as the units moved forward, and here, for the first time in the PACIFIC, the Japs used mine fields¹⁸ in a manner comparable to that of the Mediterranean and European Theaters.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 9

¹The Fourth Marine Division, a report by the Historical Division USMC, 1945, p 43.

²The Fifth Marine Division, a report by the Historical Division USMC, 1945, p 8.

³The Fourth Marine Division, op cit, p 44.

⁴The Fifth Marine Division, op cit, p 23C.

⁵Ibid, p 9.

⁶Ibid, p 10.

⁷Ibid, p 12.

⁸Ibid, p 14.

⁹Ibid, p 16.

¹⁰Uncommon Valor, (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1946), p 149.

¹¹The Third Marine Division, (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1948), p 229.

¹²Uncommon Valor, op cit, p 113.

¹³The Ninth Marines (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1946), p 83.

¹⁴The Third Marine Division, op cit, p 237.

- 15 The Ninth Marines, op cit, p 86.
- 16 The Third Marine Division, op cit, p 250.
- 17 Uncommon Valor, op cit, p 185.
- 18 The Third Marine Division, op cit, p 251.

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CHAPTER 10
THE RYUKYUS ISLANDS

SECTION I

General

This chapter relates the employment of armor in the RYUKYUS ISLANDS (Map 22). Inasmuch as the situation and operations were of four separate and distinct parts, the chapter is divided into four sections. Section I presents the events leading up to and the reasons for the operations discussed in the succeeding sections. Section II deals with the operations in the KERAMA RETTO and the KEISE ISLANDS; Section III relates the operations on OKINAWA and Section IV the operations on IE SHIMA.

Introduction

As early as August 1943, the possibility of offensive operations in the RYUKYUS ISLANDS had been under consideration by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. On October 30, 1944, the necessary directive was issued by Central Pacific Forces.

In addition to maintaining unremitting pressure on the Japanese, our strategy in the PACIFIC area was directed toward the seizure or destruction of the industrial heart of JAPAN. It was our policy to reach this critical area by successive steps across the PACIFIC designed to avoid the main hostile forces and to take advantage of Japanese vulnerability to blockade and air attack.

The line MARIANAS-LUZON had already been advanced on the right to IWO JIMA. The invasion of OKINAWA would secure the general line BONIN-RYUKYUS and give us bases from which the full weight of our air power could be thrown against the Japanese homeland and its vital industrial heartland. Thus, if our air force alone could not defeat or force the surrender of Japan, they would, at least, be able to give full air support to an invasion from their bases in the BONIN-RYUKYUS line.

To carry out this plan OKINAWA was selected as the most logical target in the RYUKYUS since it constituted the largest land mass in the entire archipelago.¹

All elements to be engaged in the landing operations were organized as the Joint Expeditionary Forces under the command of Vice Admiral Turner. Lieutenant General Simon B. Buckner, Jr., was assigned to command the expeditionary troops in addition to his duties as Commander of the United States Tenth Army. The Joint Expeditionary Forces included the Tenth Army as the assault force and its organization included three marine divisions and four army divisions.

Terrain

The RYUKYUS ISLANDS, together with the SATSUMAN SHOTO, make up the NANSEI SHOTO (Southwestern Islands). They lie between ~~RYUKYU~~ KYUSHU and FORMOSA screening the EAST CHINA SEA from the NORTH PACIFIC OCEAN. The five island groups that make up the chain are on the arc of a circle, convex toward the PACIFIC OCEAN. One of the five, OKINAWA

GUNTO, is the most important island in the NANSEI SHOTO. There are eight principal islands in this group and there are a number of smaller islands. The sandstone and limestone can be excavated easily to make underground installations. All the islands are surrounded by coral reefs with openings in the reefs at the mouths of streams. Large trees on these islands are rare except in the northern part of OKINAWA JIMA. Tall grass and dense undergrowth are lacking. There are several open plains, some of which are devoted to sweet potato and rice cultivation. The crops are irrigated by the many small streams that flow from the mountain ridges.

SECTION II

KERAMA RETTO

Terrain

The KERAMA RETTO, approximately 18 miles to the southwest of OKINAWA, consists of three relatively large islands and a number of smaller islands. It is a part of the OKINAWA GUNTO. The islands are hilly and the summits of the hills are covered with dense forests.

The largest island of the group is TOKASHIKI, 10,000 yards long and 3000 yards wide. Throughout its entire length and breadth it is a mass of serrated ridges and high hills. The island has only a few steep trails that cannot be traversed by vehicles.

ZAMAMI, the next largest island of the group is approximately 5500 yards long and 4000 yards at the widest spot. Ridge lines follow the longitudinal axis of the Island. There are valleys flanked by sharp ridges and two deep coves on the Island that can be used as harbors. Ridges and hills are covered by dense forests and high grasses.

AKA SHIMA is an island measuring about 5400 yards by 3000 yards and is the island next in size in the KERAMA RETTO. Shaped like a Sting Ray, it is covered by a succession of ridges that are dominated by two peaks. Reefs surround the Island and the beaches for the most part are narrow and rise abruptly to the hill mass.

HOKAJI and GERUMA SHIMA are linked longitudinally by an encircling reef that follows the contours of the two land masses. Both islands are hilly. HOKAJI, 1800 yards long by 800 yards wide, contains a hill mass roughly 80 meters high that covers the length of the Island.

GERUMA SHIMA, 1500 yards by 1500 yards in size, has one hill mass that gradually rises to a height of 154 meters. The hills are wooded and the lower terraces are tilled.

AMURO SHIMA measures about 2000 yards by 800 yards. It has little to offer in the way of hills. The southern end of the Island has one ridge about 100 yards high. The northern half of the Island is barely above sea level with three small noses 30-40 meters high.

KUBA SHIMA is 2000 yards in length and 900 yards in breadth and is entirely mountainous. The slopes rise abruptly from the beaches. Hills are precipitous, running to well over 200 meters in height with one peak on the southern coast rising to 270 meters above sea

level. Generally, within 200 yards of the beaches, ridges rise to the 160 meter contour line. The hills are very rough and covered with brush and trees.

The last island of any size in the KERAMAS is YOKABI, a rough and steep hill mass to the water's edge that measures 1500 by 1200 yards. It has practically no beaches. The buildings of an old copper mine cling to the slopes above the most passable landings.

General Situation

The Western Islands Landing Force, comprised of the 77th Infantry Division and its attachments, was given the mission of seizing the KERAMA and KEISE ISLANDS. The seizure of these Islands was necessary in order to provide an anchorage and seaplane base which would subsequently be used by the United States Navy during the assault on OKINAWA (Map 23).

Five assault landings were made on the initial day of the operation, and they were made on ZAMAMI, AKA, HOKAJI, GERUMA and YAKABI. GERUMA was assaulted by the 1st Battalion Landing Team of the 306th Infantry and was captured in three hour's time. The 2d Battalion Landing Team of the 306th Infantry landed on the beaches of HOKAJI unopposed.

The 3d Battalion of the 305th Infantry assaulted AKA against initial scattered resistance including one strong point. After reduction of this resistance, intensive patrolling of the Island continued for two days when the Battalion was withdrawn on March 29, 1945.

The 1st Battalion of the 305th Infantry was given the mission of capturing ZAMAMI and at the outset met only light resistance, the Japanese having fled before the assault into the hills. Later the enemy made nine separate Banzai attacks against the 1st Battalion. On March 29th, the 1st Battalion was relieved by the 2d Battalion and withdrawn from the Island.

The Island of YAKABI was captured by the 2d Battalion of the 307th Infantry meeting only light opposition. The landing was made at 1341 on March 26th, and the Island was secured by 1600 on the same day.

On March 27th, the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 306th Infantry made landings on TOKASHIKI, the largest island in the group. Opposition on both Battalion beaches was light. Preceded by heavy air, naval and artillery support fires, the Battalions landed on the west coast of the Island, the 1st Battalion on the north and the 2d Battalion on the south. Both Battalions moved inland, swung north, and, paralleling each other, moved to the northern end of the Island to seize and secure it. Capture of the Island was declared accomplished on March 29th and the Battalions were reembarked on their LST's the same day.

On March 27th, Company B of the 305th Infantry moved to ZAMAMI and from there to AMURO. No enemy was found on AMURO and the Company returned to ZAMAMI.

Meanwhile, Company G of the 307th ICT landed on KUBA ISLAND, found no enemy and returned to its parent unit.

On March 31st, the 2d Battalion of the 306th RCT, supported by a platoon of Company D, 708th Amphibious Tank Battalion, made unopposed landing on the islands of KAMIYAMA, NANGANAN and KEUFU. These islands made up the KEISE GROUP. The islands were secured and made available to the 155-mm Gun Field Artillery Battalions that were to support the main landings on OKINAWA on the following day.²

Tanks in Action

During the capture of the islands of the KERAMA NETTO and the KEISE group, elements of the 708th Amphibious Tank Battalion supported the Battalion Landing Teams of the 77th Infantry Division. The mission of the 708th was to form the assault waves of the several landing teams in moving to the beaches and, by utilizing all weapons, lay fire on and in the immediate vicinity of the beaches while enroute. After the landings were made, the tanks were then to support by fire the inland movement of the infantry units.

The secondary mission of elements of the 708th, in conjunction with the Battalion Landing Teams, was to provide beachhead defense during the hours of darkness.

The companies of the 708th Amphibious Tank Battalion were attached to the four Battalion Landing Teams from the infantry. Attachments were made as follows: A/708 to 1st Bn/305, B/708 to 3d Bn/305, C/708 to 1st Bn/306 and D/708 to 2d Bn/306.

Company A of the 708th led the 1st Battalion of the 305th in its assault on ZAMAMI, using a wedge formation. Crossing the sea wall

on the beach, the landings were made as scheduled, but it was impossible for the tanks to move inland from the beach. The 1st Platoon was then deployed on the beach in defensive positions while the rest of the Company proceeded to AKENASHIKI SHIMA.

The 3d Platoon of Company A of the 708th was attached to the 1st Battalion of the 305th on March 27th. The Platoon joined the infantry battalion on ZAMAMI ISLAND and the combined team then moved to AMURO SHIMA where it made an unopposed landing.

On March 27th, Tanks of the 2d Platoon of A/708 were sent to ZAMAMI to support the infantry by clearing enemy from caves. Released the same day after accomplishing their mission, the tanks of this Platoon rejoined their Company and the Company was reloaded on its LST's.³

Company B of the 708th Amphibious Tank Battalion was attached to the 3d Battalion of the 305th Infantry and led the shoreward movement of the attack force across its line of departure and into the bay between AKA and GERUMA. The three Platoons of this Amphibious Tank Company led the assault and upon reaching the beaches on AKA moved inland for 100 yards to the edge of the town of AKA. As the infantry moved still farther inland, the tank company remained in its initial positions to deliver fire on call from the infantry elements. Targets for these "on call" missions were enemy pillboxes, caves and other positions. During the night, the tanks were used as elements of the beach defense. On March 29th, the Company reloaded on its LST's.

Company C of the 708th, supporting the 1st Battalion of the 306th Infantry, formed the assault wave for the landing on GERUMA. Utilizing a wedge formation, and firing all weapons in the approach, an unopposed landing was made. The Company took up firing positions on the beach and fired into suspected enemy positions while the infantry moved to secure the Island. Defensive positions were held around the town of GERUMA and the Company remained on call to support the infantry as needed. Two of the Company's tanks were used to accompany the infantry tractors in an encirclement of the Island clearing out enemy-occupied caves. At 1615 the Company was released from attachment to the infantry and reloaded on its LST's.

(See next page)

Company D of the 708th Amphibious Tank Battalion, minus one platoon, supported the landings of the 2d Battalion of the 306th ICT on HOKAJI. No enemy resistance was encountered on the beach. One of the assault platoons was employed inland as far as the terrain permitted. Only light and scattered resistance was met. The Company was released from attachment at 1215 and was reboated.⁴

On March 27th, Company D of the 708th took up a wedge formation and landed on Orange Beach of TOKASHIKI and met no resistance. Two platoons moved inland as far as the terrain permitted and set up firing batteries for indirect fire missions on call from the infantry. The other platoon moved inland over more favorable terrain supporting an infantry advance to the south and east. That night, the Company reassembled on the beach to provide beach security.

On March 28th, the Company moved to another beach to support the infantry elements in clearing caves. Company D was released on March 29th and reboated.⁵

The 2d Battalion of the 306th Infantry was given the mission of seizing and securing the KEISE ISLANDS just off the west coast of OKINAWA. One platoon of Company D of the 708th was attached in support of this operation. Landings were made on the islands of KAMIYAMA, NANGANAN and KEUFU. No opposition was encountered and the Islands were made available to the artillery units designated to support the main landings on OKINAWA on April 1, 1945.⁶

This concluded the operations of the Western Islands Landing Force in the KERAMA RETTO and the KEISE ISLANDS.

SECTION III

OKINAWA

Terrain

OKINAWA is the largest island of the OKINAWA GUNTO (Map 24). The principal city, NAHA, is in the southwestern part of the Island and the road and railroad system is centered here. There are three railroad lines on OKINAWA, one steam and two horse-drawn systems. OKINAWA has the most complete road system of any of the islands of the NANSEI SHOTO. It is almost entirely encircled by roads and can be crossed in several places.

OKINAWA is nearly 69 miles long and its width varies from 2.3 to 18.4 miles. The southwestern and northeastern portions of the Island differ greatly. The latter area is mountainous and wooded, rising steeply from the sea, with few inhabitants and very little cultivated land. The southwestern area is populous and consists of hills, valleys and plateaus that are highly cultivated except for sparse growths of trees. Short streams are numerous. There are many small sections in this part of the Island where landing fields could be constructed after considerable grading. In 1945, however, there was only one commercial airfield on the Island at NAHA. The highest points on OKINAWA are in the northern part of the Island, where some elevations exceed 1500 feet and in general are above 1000 feet. Highest elevations in the southern part of the Island do not exceed 500 feet.

The coasts of OKINAWA are very irregular with many bays and inlets becoming choked with growing reefs. Those in the north, north-eastern and southeastern areas of the Island are the only sections whose coasts are comparatively free of coral. The first two sections are too steep to be effective landing areas. The southern, south-eastern, southwestern and central west coasts are of moderate height and have considerable lowlands at the seashore. Banyan, Betel Nut, Palm and other tropical trees grow along the southern coast. Hedges of large Cacti are found and these make the passage of troops difficult. Low hills lie behind the shore a short distance and dominate the beaches of these coasts. The northern end of the Island is high with a Live Oak and Pine forest growing on the hilltops. A narrow shingle beach fringes the coast. The northeastern and northwestern coasts are steep and almost barren.

General Situation

The initial landings on D-Day, April 1, 1945, and subsequent attacks were carried out by the Northern Landing Force consisting of the III Amphibious Corps containing the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions and the Southern Landing Force consisting of the XXIV Corps with the 7th and 96th Infantry Divisions. The 2d Marine Division and the 77th Infantry Division remained in floating reserve (Map 24).

The landings were made with the two Corps abreast, each Corps with two divisions abreast and each division with two regiments

abreast. The interior division of each corps advanced across the Island from the HAGUSHI Landing Beaches to the east shore, severing the Island against little opposition. The exterior divisions in each Corps turned to the outer flank, swung north and south respectively, and the battle for OKINAWA was joined.

Northern OKINAWA

The task organization of the Northern Landing Force consisted of the III Amphibious Corps with the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions, the attachments to those Divisions and the Corps Troops. (Map 24).

1st Marine Division. In the assault landings, the 1st Marine Division was on the right and accomplished its mission of severing the Island in its zone by April 4, 1945. The Division then occupied static positions as reserve for the III Amphibious Corps until it was attached to the XXIV Corps on April 29, 1945.⁷

6th Marine Division. The 6th Marine Division landed on the III Amphibious Corps' left abreast of the 1st Marine Division. The 6th Marine Division moved to the northeast and then up the northern part of the Island with the mission of seizing and securing the northern half of OKINAWA. The 6th advanced rapidly and at the end of four weeks had completed the occupation of all the northern portion of the Island.

27th Infantry Division. On May 1, 1945, the 27th Infantry Division, with a security mission, relieved the 6th Marine Division which

then prepared to move south to join the battle for southern OKINAWA.

Tanks in Action

1st Marine Tank Battalion. The 1st Tank Battalion (Marine), organic to the 1st Marine Division, landed with and supported the Division's attack to the east coast. In the second week of April, the 1st Marine Tank Battalion was employed in reconnoitering all road nets in the Division zone.⁸

6th Marine Tank Battalion. During the operations of the 6th Marine Division, the 6th Marine Tank Battalion gave close support to the foot elements of the Division by tank-infantry action, firing on pillboxes, caves and other enemy positions in small unit actions. Tanks were normally employed in platoon-size groups or smaller.

Southern OKINAWA

The XXIV Corps, on April 1, 1945, made assault landings on OKINAWA's HAGUSHI Beaches on the United States Tenth Army's right flank. Pushing inland, the Corps swung south with the mission of seizing and securing southern OKINAWA (Map 25).

Task organization of the XXIV Corps included the Corps Troops, and the 7th and 96th Infantry Divisions with their respective attachments. The 7th Infantry Division was the interior division and the 96th was on the Corps right flank. On April 9, 1945, the 27th Infantry Division was attached to the Corps and on April 27, 1945, the 77th Infantry Division was also attached.

7th Infantry Division. This Division took part in the initial assault landings on OKINAWA with the mission of pushing through to the east coast on the left of the XXIV Corps. After achieving this mission, the Division turned south and still on the Corps left, began its advance to seize and secure that portion of southern OKINAWA in its zone. The advance continued to the south until it was stopped at the MACHINATO-KAKAZU Line. After a period of reorganization, the 7th participated in a Corps coordinated attack that carried the Division to the SHURI LINE. On May 10, 1945, the Division was relieved by the 96th Infantry Division and the 7th Division reverted to Corps reserve until May 22d. On that date, the Division was recommitted to exploit a gap created on the 96th Division's left flank at the east end of the SHURI LINE. The 7th Division was then able to continue the advance to the southern tip of OKINAWA along the east coast.¹⁰ (Map 26).

96th Infantry Division. This Division participated in the assault landings on OKINAWA on the right of the XXIV Corps. The Division moved inland generally to the center of the Island with two regiments abreast. Wheeling to the south, the Division took up positions with its right flank on the west coast and attacked to the south as the right flank of the XXIV Corps. The advance continued until it was halted at the MACHINATO-KAKAZU LINE on April 4th. Meanwhile, elements of the 7th Division moved into positions on the left of the 96th. On April 15th, the 27th Division relieved elements of the 96th on the right and the 96th became the Corps interior

Division. As the interior Division, it participated in the attack to the south in the center of the Corps zone.

On May 1, 1945, the III Amphibious Corps was given the right half of the XXIV Corps zone relieving the 27th Division in its zone with the 1st Marine Division. With its sector now narrowed to the left half of the Island, the XXIV Corps relieved the 96th Division by committing the 77th Infantry Division in the 96th's zone. The 7th remained committed in place.

The 96th reverted to Corps reserve until May 10th when it was sent to relieve the 7th in the SHURI LINE.

The 96th took up the attack on the SHURI LINE on May 10th. On May 22d, after having fought against bitter resistance in the SHURI area, the 96th had pinched out the 77th and by so doing, had created a gap on its left. The 7th Division was now sent in to fill the gap created in the area between the 96th's left flank and the east coast.

The 96th continued the attack to the south-eastern tip of the Island on the right flank of the Corps until the Island was declared
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secure.

27th Infantry Division. By nightfall of April 15th, the 27th Infantry Division had completed relief of elements of the 96th Infantry Division on the Corps' right flank.

Prior to this, the Division had been afloat having been assigned the mission of garrisoning the Island of OKINAWA. One regimental combat team had been sent to IE SHIMA in preparation for landing on

TSUGEN SHIMA in the EASTERN ISLANDS. One Battalion and elements of the 708th Amphibious Tank Battalion finally made the assault and effected the seizure of TSUGEN SHIMA.

Meanwhile, the developments of the battle for OKINAWA had indicated the need for the 27th Infantry Division in the line. Accordingly, the Division was given the mission of relieving elements of the 96th and assuming responsibility for the right flank of the XXIV Corps.

Upon completion of the indicated relief, the Division launched its attack to the south against the MACHINATO-KAKAZU LINE. The bulk of the action initiated by the 27th occurred in this area. This was predominantly infantry action in extremely difficult terrain. The fighting centered around the reduction of well-organized series of Japanese positions in successive and adjoining hills, pockets and ridges. The 27th maintained its attack pushing eventually as far south as the towns of YAFUSU and NAKAMA. The fighting continued until May 1 when the Division was relieved by the 1st Marine Division. On May 2d, the 27th began its move to the northern end of OKINAWA where it entered on the mission of garrisoning that area of the Island.¹³

77th Infantry Division. The 77th Infantry Division, having completed its operations on IE SHIMA, was promptly landed on OKINAWA and given the mission of relieving the 96th Division on April 30, 1945, assuming responsibility for the right flank of the XXIV Corps, was now generally on a line bisecting the island of OKINAWA. On this

date, the III Amphibious Corps took over the right of the Island with the 1st Marine Division in the line.

The 77th Division proceeded to attack south with its major action along the Escarpment leading to the SHURI LINE. The Division fought continuously to reduce the Escarpment and then participated in the attack and reduction of the SHURI LINE, the enemy's main battle position. The action was begun on May 1st and the 77th was employed as a Division until it was pinched out by the 96th and 1st Marine Divisions just south of the SHURI LINE. Thereafter, the 77th followed the 96th in mopping-up operations to the southern and southeastern end of the Island.

Even though the Island was now overrun by our troops, small isolated pockets of enemy held out. The Division was called upon from time to time, to provide units to eliminate these enemy pockets.

On June 25th, OKINAWA was declared secure and the 77th Infantry Division made preparations to move to the PHILIPPINE ISLANDS to train and equip for the invasion of JAPAN.¹³

1st and 6th Marine Divisions. As a result of the stubborn opposition confronting the XXIV Corps in southern OKINAWA, on May 1, the III Amphibious Corps with its 1st Marine Division, took over the right flank of the XXIV Corps, relieving the 27th Infantry Division in the lines with the 1st Marine Division.

By May 10th, the 6th Marine Division had been committed on the right of the 1st Marine Division.

Both Marine Divisions, with their organic tank battalions, participated in the United States Tenth Army attack to the SHURI LINE, the breaking of the line and the subsequent continuation of the attack to the southern end of OKINAWA. Throughout the action, the move was made with the two Marine Divisions abreast, the 6th Marine Division on the right.

Tanks in Action

776th Amphibious Tank Battalion. This Battalion, initially attached to the 7th Infantry Division, supported the Division in its move to the beaches as leading elements in the assault. On the beaches, the Battalion supported the infantry by indirect fire until April 7th. After this date, the tanks continued to support the Division by direct fire and indirect fire support and reinforced the Division's artillery fires.

On April 15th, Company D of the 776th was attached to the 96th Infantry Division and given the mission of outposting the Field Hospital supporting that Division. Company D returned to battalion control on May 14th. On May 10th, the Battalion, less Companies A and D, passed to operational control of the 96th furnishing artillery support to elements of the Division. Company A was used on a beach security mission during this time. May 21st saw the 776th, less Companies A and D, reattached to the 7th Division with the mission of fire support. Companies B and C of the 776th remained with the 96th reinforcing the fires of the 921st Field Artillery Battalion.¹⁴

711th Tank Battalion. The 711th Tank Battalion was attached to the 7th Infantry Division throughout its operations on OKINAWA. The Battalion was employed in small units, generally of not greater than platoon size in support of infantry elements. Tanks were used to lead infantry in the attack, support the infantry advance by fire, as a reserve to exploit success or to break up counterattacks, and to reinforce artillery fires. Tanks were also used frequently to transport supplies to isolated infantry units and to evacuate wounded under difficult combat conditions.¹⁵

One medium tank company was used as a unit on two successive nights as a flank guard for elements of the Division.

One flamethrower tank company of the 713th Flamethrower Tank Battalion was attached to the 711th Tank Battalion for a part of the OKINAWA operation. These tanks were particularly valuable for the reduction of dug-in and fortified positions, caves and pillboxes.

The flamethrower tanks were closely supported by standard tanks and foot troops for close-in protection as they attacked the enemy positions. Small groups of from one to six tanks (flamethrower) were generally used in any given operation.¹⁶

780th Amphibious Tank Battalion. The 780th supported the 96th Infantry Division in its assault landings. After making the landings the Battalion pushed inland 2000 yards supporting the infantry advance by fire. It assisted in mopping up the beach area and in beachhead defense. After the initial assault of the beaches, the companies took up the role of reinforcing the artillery fires of the 96th Infantry Division until 3 April.¹⁷

763d Tank Battalion. This Battalion supported the 96th Infantry Division by attachment of companies to infantry regiments as required. Employment of companies was generally as one platoon to a battalion of infantry to give close support to the foot elements. Tanks were used to lead the advance when the terrain allowed and to deliver direct and indirect fire into enemy positions of all kinds. ¹⁸

The Battalion remained in attachment to the 96th Division throughout the OKINAWA operation.

Elements of the 713th Flamethrower Tank Battalion were attached to the 763d Tank Battalion to assist in eliminating enemy positions such as dug-in positions, caves and pillboxes. Attachments were made as required from the 713th and were not continuous in the battle for OKINAWA.

193d Tank Battalion. This Battalion was attached to the 27th Infantry Division throughout its action on OKINAWA. The Battalion operated with elements detached to the infantry regiments and with tank platoons further detached to the infantry battalions as required. Generally, there was little unsupported tank action because of the terrain which prevented the exploitation of the tanks' capabilities. Tanks were used mainly in groups of twos and threes to support the infantry by direct fire on enemy caves and positions.

The outstanding action of the Battalion concerned Company A in support of the 1st Battalion of the 105th Infantry. Company A, reinforced to a strength of 30 vehicles including the Battalion's assault guns and flamethrowing tanks from the 713th Flamethrower Tank

Battalion, maneuvered south along Route 5 in the 96th Division's zone. The Reinforced Company passed through the cut between KAKAZU RIDGE on the west and the NISHIBARU RIDGE on the east. Three tanks were lost in this part of the move because of road mishaps and mines but none from enemy fire. Moving through the cut, the Company missed the trail leading to KAKAZU VILLAGE which was the objective. Continuing south, the Company ran into heavy antitank fire and lost five tanks. The Company Commander pushed on, however, and thinking he had at last found the proper trail, swung to the west. For over an hour this force roamed at will in this area in the first strictly armored warfare practiced thus far in the small-island warfare of the PACIFIC.¹⁹

After knocking out several enemy positions and causing the Japs to seek new positions, the Company Commander realized he was lost. He then retraced his steps to the north along Route 5, found the proper trail of KAKAZU and attacked his objective. For three and one-half hours the tanks occupied the Village, moving up and down the streets blasting everything in sight while waiting for the infantry to come over the KAKAZU RIDGE and join them. In this absolutely unsupported tank action, the village of KAKAZU was destroyed and the remnants of the Japanese forces were either killed or fled. Of the 30 vehicles originally making up this mobile task force, 22 were lost in the action. Eight vehicles only were able to return to their initial positions when so ordered. Eventually, all but five were salvaged, but the action had been costly.

The Company had been forced to withdraw because the 1st Battalion of the 105th had been unable to carry out the attack over the Ridge.²⁰

Throughout the remainder of the 27th Division's operations on OKINAWA, the 193d provided close fire support to the infantry elements. Action was concluded for this Battalion on May 1st.

706th Tank Battalion. Armored support was given to the 77th Infantry Division by the 706th Tank Battalion throughout the OKINAWA operations. Companies of the Battalion were attached to the infantry regiments and platoons were further attached to the infantry battalions. There was no concerted tank action effected by the Battalion. The nature of the infantry action was such that it was impossible to employ tanks other than in platoons or groups of from one to three tanks. Tanks were used primarily to support infantry by direct fire where one, two, or three tanks would accompany the infantry to caves or other enemy positions and cover the infantry advance by direct fire on the enemy positions.²¹

708th Amphibious Tank Battalion. The 708th Amphibious Tank Battalion was attached to the 6th Marine Division on May 30, 1945 and remained in attachment until June 23, 1945. The Battalion mission during this period was to provide beach defense in the assigned areas of the right flank of the Division's zone of action and to occupy and defend the NAHA AIRFIELD against a possible enemy airborne attack.²² (Map 27).

On June 3, 1945, two platoons of Company D of the 708th were used to transport elements of the 6th Reconnaissance Company to the

island of ONO YAMA. Following the landing on ONO, two tanks were used to move across the bridge from NAHA providing cover from machine gun fire coming from the OROKU PENINSULA. (Map 27).

1st and 6th Marine Tank Battalion. The 1st and 6th Marine Tank Battalions, organic to the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions respectively, gave close and continuous support to the infantry elements of their Divisions. The tanks, as in army units, were employed in small units numbering from single tanks to platoons. These tanks were employed in both direct and indirect fire support against enemy positions of all kinds. The tanks either led or followed the infantry as the terrain permitted.

The Marine Divisions with their tank units were used throughout the operation on OKINAWA until the Island was declared secure on June 23, 1945.

Summary

The assault landings were made and the subsequent battle for OKINAWA was fought by the United States Tenth Army. Tenth Army contained the III Amphibious Corps and the XXIV Corps. Divisions participating in this action included the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions, and the 7th, 27th, 77th, and 96th Infantry Divisions. Armored support was provided these Divisions by the 776th, 708th and 780th Amphibious Tank Battalions; the 193d, 706th, 711th, and 763d Tank Battalions; the 713th Flamethrower Tank Battalion.

The employment of tanks was generally in small units of one to five vehicles, and these small groups were used in about every role of which they were capable. The tanks were used to lead infantry in

the advance, to accompany infantry when the foot troops provided the close-in protection required by the tanks, and to follow infantry giving the infantry close fire support. Tanks were utilized to reinforce the fires of artillery units and to provide direct and indirect fire support to the infantry. Tanks were further used in destroying enemy caves, pillboxes and dug-in positions as the terrain and situation permitted.

Tanks were greatly limited in their employment by both the enemy organization of several defensive lines and by the terrain. Terrain was by far the more limiting factor of the two cited conditions that existed.

The battle for OKINAWA was long and bitterly contested and one of the most costly operations in the war with JAPAN. Predominantly an infantry action, the role of the tanks may be called minor but they were, nevertheless, a valuable support and aid when the terrain and situation permitted their use.

SECTION IV

IE SHIMA

Terrain

IE SHIMA, the island with which this section of the report is concerned, lies several miles northwest of NAGO WAN and three miles west of OKINAWA. It is about five miles long with a conical peak, IEGUSUGU YAMA, near the eastern end of the Island, rising about 557 feet. The rest of the Island is a flat plateau with steep sides and fringed with beaches.

General Situation

Following the mop-up of the KERAMA RETTO and the KEISE ISLANDS, higher headquarters deemed it necessary to seize the island of IE SHIMA since the Island constituted a massive permanent aircraft carrier at the doorstep of JAPAN. It was necessary to seize the Island and its airfields for our own use as well as to deny its use to the enemy. (Map 28).

Constituting a threat to operations on OKINAWA by virtue of its location, the United States Tenth Army designated the 77th Infantry Division to seize and secure IE. Elements of the Division that just completed the KERAMA and KEISE operations were reboated and on April 14, 1945, were given their missions and were briefed for the capture of IE.

Even though the evidence pointed to the evacuation of the Island by the enemy, the Commanding General of the 77th Division and his staff regarded these reports with suspicion. Similar conditions on other islands had proved the Japs to be masters at the art of camouflage and deception. It was believed that at least 2500 Japanese occupied the Island of IE. Later reports at the end of the action showed that the Island was held by approximately 5000 Japanese soldiers and 1500 armed civilians.

77th Infantry Division. The 306th RCT, landing on Beach Green T-1, moved swiftly inland with the 1st and 2d Battalions abreast. Moving in a northeasterly direction, it crossed the gently rising ground to the southwest tip of the airfield. Seizing the airfield,

the Regimental Combat Team continued to the east to a position about 700 yards northwest of the pinnacle of IEGUSUGU YAMA. The 3d Battalion of the 306th RCT landed in rear of the 1st and 2d Battalions, echeloned to the left rear and swept around the western and northwestern end of IE. Its job consisted of mopping up small groups of isolated enemy and cleaning out caves, pillboxes and machine gun positions. From this left rear position, the 3d Battalion moved on to the left of the 1st and 2d Battalions. The regiment then proceeded to draw a curving line around IEGUSUGU YAMA from the western side and around the northern side at a distance of about 500 yards from the base of the Mountain. Holding this line until April 20th, the 306th launched a coordinated attack against the mountain stronghold that lasted until noon of the 21st. At that time, all the enemy north of an east-west line, drawn through the peak, had been reduced.

The Regiment then assisted in mopping-up the scattered enemy troops on the south side of the Mountain and in other parts of the Island.

The 1st Battalion of the 305th RCT landed on Beach Red T-2 and promptly moved inland about 400 yards. The Battalion then swung east and advanced to the town of IE. The 3d Battalion of this RCT landed on Beach Red T-1 and advanced parallel to the 1st Battalion to the first phase line 800 yards west of IE TOWN and on line with the 1st Battalion. At 1300, April 17th, troops of the 307th RCT passed through the 1st Battalion of the 305th RCT and took up the advance in that Battalion's zone. The 1st Battalion of the 305th then reverted to Regimental reserve.

The 3d Battalion of the 305th RCT continued the advance to IE TOWN where it established and held positions on the outskirts of the Town. The 2d Battalion of the 307th passed through and attacked eastward against the town proper. During this attack, it was supported by the 3d Battalion of the 305th. The 1st Battalion of the 305th then attacked along the right flank of the 307th with the mission of protecting the Division's main effort against attack from the southeast. At this time, the Battalion came under the control of the 307th RCT.

The 3d Battalion of the 305th then moved through IE TOWN and attacked to the east acting as the contact unit between the Division's flanking regiments. This advanced continued to positions about 300 yards from the base of IEGUSUGU YAMA.

On April 21st, the elements of the 305th, with the 307th, launched a coordinated attack against the southern slopes of IEGUSUGU. By noon, the 305th had been pinched out by the joining of the 306th and the 307th.

The 307th RCT landed on Beaches Red T-3 and T-4 on April 17, 1945 advancing to IE TOWN and passing through the 1st Battalion of the 305th in the outskirts of the Town. The attack, supported by the 305th, was pressed toward IEGUSUGU YAMA through the town and against the mountain slopes.

Continuing the attack, the 307th swung around until it faced the southern slopes of the Mountain. On April 21st, the 307th launched a coordinated attack against the southern slopes of the Mountain and by noon had established contact with the 306th coming over the Mountain

from the north. The 3d Battalion of the 305th was pinched out in this operation.²³

Tanks in Action

During the IE SHIMA operation, the 77th Infantry Division was supported by the 708th Amphibious Tank Battalion and the 706th Tank Battalion, both attached. The 708th supported assault and ground action while the 706th supported ground action only.

708th Amphibious Tank Battalion. The 708th Amphibious Tank Battalion took part in landings on Beaches Red T-1, T-2, T-3, T-4, and Green T-1. Company A landed on Beach Red T-2, B landed on Beach Red T-1, and C and D landed on Green T-1.²⁴

Company A in its landings on T-2, supported the 1st Battalion of the 305th RCT with direct fire neutralizing hostile machine gun positions, pillboxes and caves. The Company then moved in line formation preceding the infantry and using their 75-mm howitzers to eliminate enemy positions. The tank advance was halted by a series of strong points in a ravine which extended across the entire Company front. The tanks and infantry working as a team were able to reduce the strong points but the ravine still could not be crossed by the tanks. At this time, the Company was withdrawn to its LST's.

On the 17th of April, Company A again made a landing this time on Beach Red T-4. No firing was done because troops of the 305th were under the guns and the beach was so heavily mined, the Company could not be employed. This concluded Company A's action on IE SHIMA.

Company B of the 708th landed on Beach Red T-1, April 16th using all weapons during the approach to the Beach to support the landings of the 305th. A wedge formation was used with two platoons while the 3d Platoon moved slightly to the center rear and in reserve. Rough terrain and mined areas prevented the employment of the Company after reaching the Beach.

Company B made another landing on April 17th on Beach Red T-3 supporting the 3d Battalion of the 307th RCT. A line formation was used in the approach to the Beach with the 1st Platoon in the center, the 2d Platoon on the left and the 3d Platoon on the right. The Company was unable to use its firepower and could not be employed because of troops in the area and because of the heavy mining in and around the Beach.

On the 16th of April, Companies C and D of the 708th proceeded 4000 yards to Beach Green T-1 in support of landings made by the 306th RCT. Company C supported the 1st Battalion of the 306th of the left half of the Beach and Company D supported the 2d Battalion of the 306th on the right half of the Beach. Landings were further supported by naval rocket and gun fire.

Company C moved off the Beach inland with the 1st Battalion of the 306th, but, because of heavily mined areas, followed the infantry supporting them by direct fire. The Company moved behind the infantry to the airfield where it was used to reinforce the perimeter defenses of the infantry. Remaining there until the 18th, Company C supported the infantry in its eastward attack by direct fire on enemy positions. Numerous mines slowed the tanks on

the 18th to such an extent that the Company was released. No further employment of Company C ensued during operations on the Island.

Company D of the 708th Amphibious Tank Battalion supported the 2d Battalion in its attack to and across the airfield. Mined areas precluded the further use of tanks after the 18th of April when the Company was released with no further action on IE SHIMA.

706th Tank Battalion. On April 18th, the 706th Tank Battalion began landing portions of its Battalion Staff, and Companies A and C with their attachments from Headquarters and Service Company. On the 19th of April, Companies B and D, with elements of Headquarters and Service Company, were landed.

On the 18th, Company A was attached to the 307th RCT. On the 19th, Company C was attached to the 307th RCT. On the 19th, Company D was attached to the 306th RCT and on the 20th, Company B was attached to the 306th RCT.

Throughout the operation on IE SHIMA, the tanks were employed in direct fire support of the infantry generally by attaching one platoon to an infantry battalion. The mobility and firepower of the tanks were used to reduce enemy fortifications of all kinds that held up the infantry's advance. Direct fire was employed against caves, pillboxes and machine gun positions.²⁵

Operations on IE SHIMA for the 706th Tank Battalion were concluded on April 23d and the elements of the Battalion were relieved on April 24th for movement to OKINAWA.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 10

¹Department of Military Art and Engineering, United States Military Academy, The War With Japan Part 3, January to August 1945 (West Point, New York: Department of Military Art and Engineering, USMA, 1947), pp 56 and 57.

²History of the 77th Infantry Division, Ours To Hold It High, (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1947), p 231 ff.

³After Action Report, 708th Amphibious Tank Battalion, 2 April - 22 April 1945, p 10.

⁴Ibid, p 12.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid, p 14.

⁷Captain James R. Stockman USMC, The First Marine Division on OKINAWA (Headquarters USMC: Historical Division, 15 August 1946), p 3.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Major Phillips D. Carlton USMC, The Conquest of OKINAWA, An Account of the 6th Marine Division; and Captain James R. Stockman USMC, The Sixth Marine Division; (Headquarters USMC: Historical Division, 1946), passim.

¹⁰The War with JAPAN, op cit, p 67 ff.

¹¹After Action Report, 96th Infantry Division, 1 April - 30 June 1945, passim.

¹²Captain Edmund G. Love, The 27th Infantry Division in World War II (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1949), passim.

¹³Ours To Hold It High, op cit, Part VI passim.

¹⁴After Action Report, 776th Amphibious Tank Battalion, 1 April - 30 June 1945, passim.

¹⁵After Action Report, 711th Tank Battalion, 1 April - 30 June 1945, passim, pp 5-21.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷After Action Report, 780th Amphibious Tank Battalion, 1 April - 30 June 1945, passim.

18 After Action Report, 763d Tank Battalion, 1 April - 30 June 1945, passim.

19 Love, op cit, p 618 f.

20 After Action Report, 193d Tank Battalion, 1 January - 30 June 1945, passim.

21 Ours To Hold It High, op cit, Part VI, passim.

22 Addendum Number 2 to Operations Report, 708th Amphibious Tank Battalion, 30 May - 30 June 1945, p I ff.

23 Ours To Hold It High, op cit, Part V passim.

24 After Action Report, 708th Amphibious Tank Battalion, 2 April - 22 April 1945, passim.

25 After Action Report, 706th Tank Battalion, 23 Nov 44 - 21 June 45, passim.

APPENDIX 1

ISLANDS ON WHICH TANKS DID NOT SEE ACTION

General 4 - ALEUTIAN ISLANDS, PLYCUS, CANTON, SAHOA, ELLICE ISLANDS.

CHAPTER

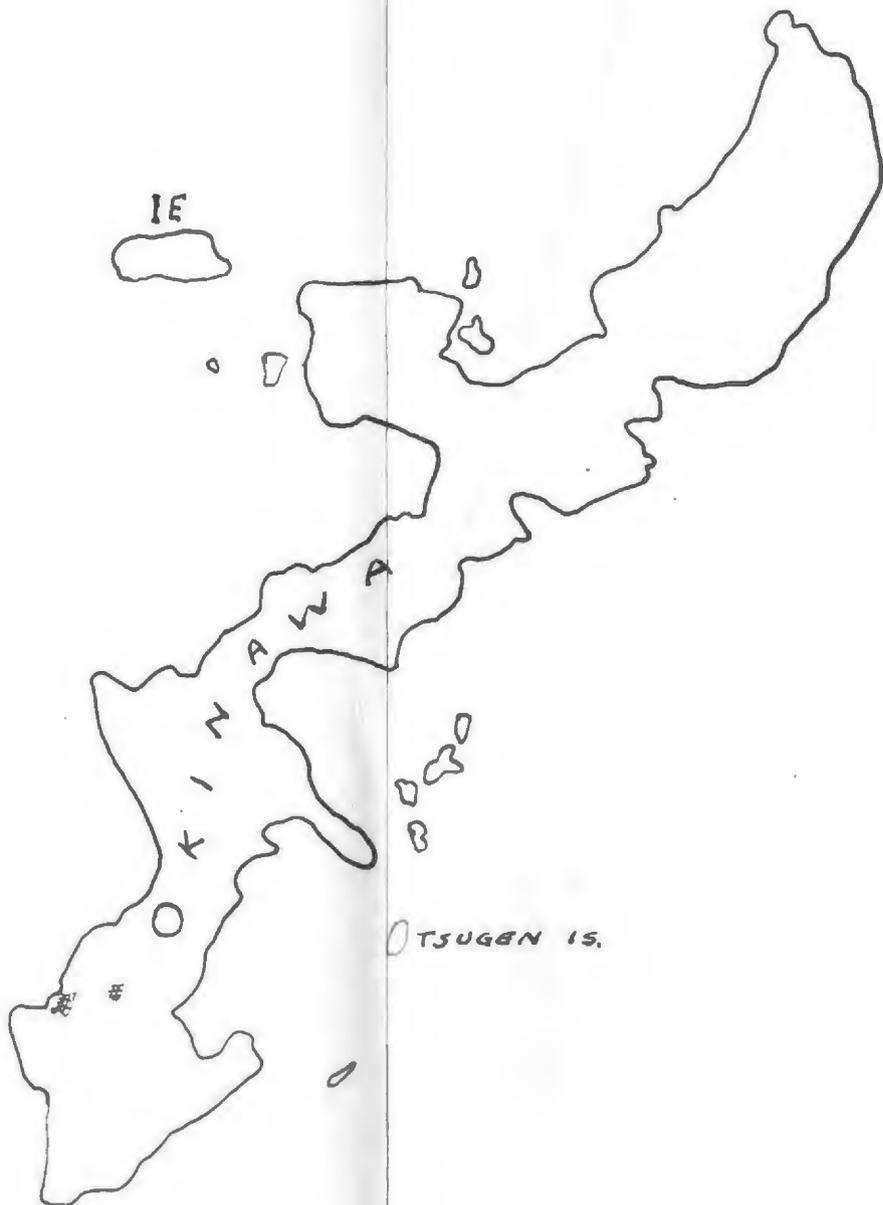
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- 2 - FLORIDA, SAVO, CHOISEUL, N. GEORGIA, VELLA LAVELLA, HUNDA, RENDOVA, KOLOMBANGARA, PURUATA, BUKA, GREEN, MUSSAU, EMIRAU, RUSSEL ISLANDS, TELSURY ISLANDS.
- 3 - WOODLARK, TROBIANO, GOODENOUGH, FERGUSSON, NORMANBY, LONG ISLAND, ADMIRALTIES, UMBOI NE. IRELAND, BIAK, MAKDE, NOELFOOR, MOROTAI.
- 5 - MAJURO, WOTJE.
- 6 - ROTA, MANIAGASSA.
- 7 - TRUK, NGULU, ULITHI, YAP, BABELTHUAP, NGARAGONG, CARABA, NGABAD.
- 8 - DINGAT, HOMOMHON, SULUAN, PANLON, PACIJAN, PORO, PONSON, SAMAR, BOHOL, BILIRAN, MASBATE, MARINDUQUE, CATANDUANES, CALAMIAN GROUP, CORREGIDOR, PALAWAN, BALABAC, SANGA-SANGA, BASILAN, MINDORO, GRANDE, CALAMIZO, SULU ARCHIPELAGO.
- 9 - VOLCANO ISLANDS less IFO JIVA, BONIN ISLANDS.
- 10 - KUME, TONAKI, AGUNI, TAKABANARE, IKE, HIBANZA, HANAHIKA, YAGACHI, KOURI, MINNA, SESOKO, IHEYA ISLANDS.

RYUKYU RETTO

22



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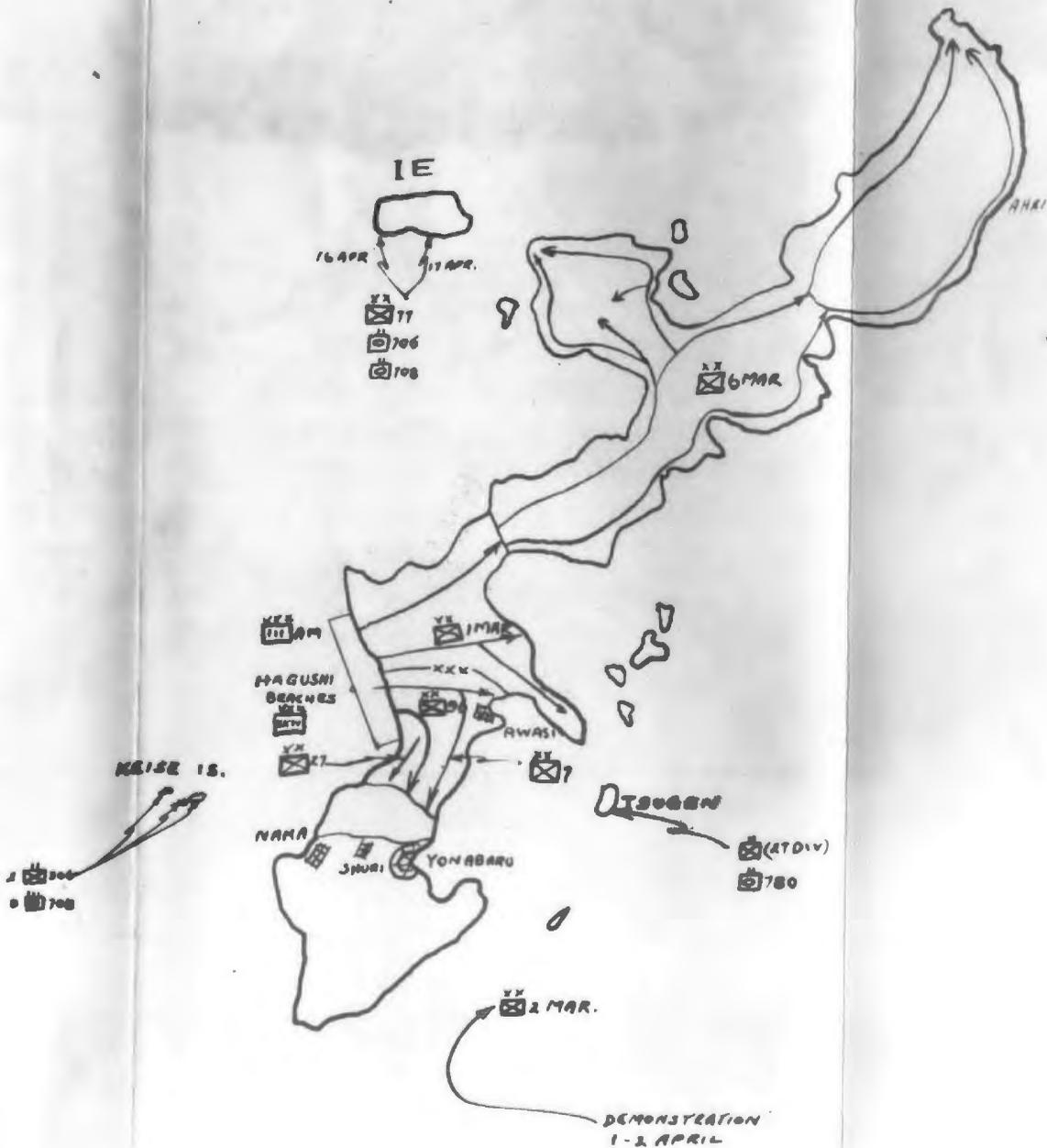
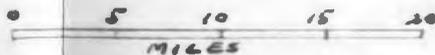
KERAMA RETTO
KINAWA
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OKINAWA

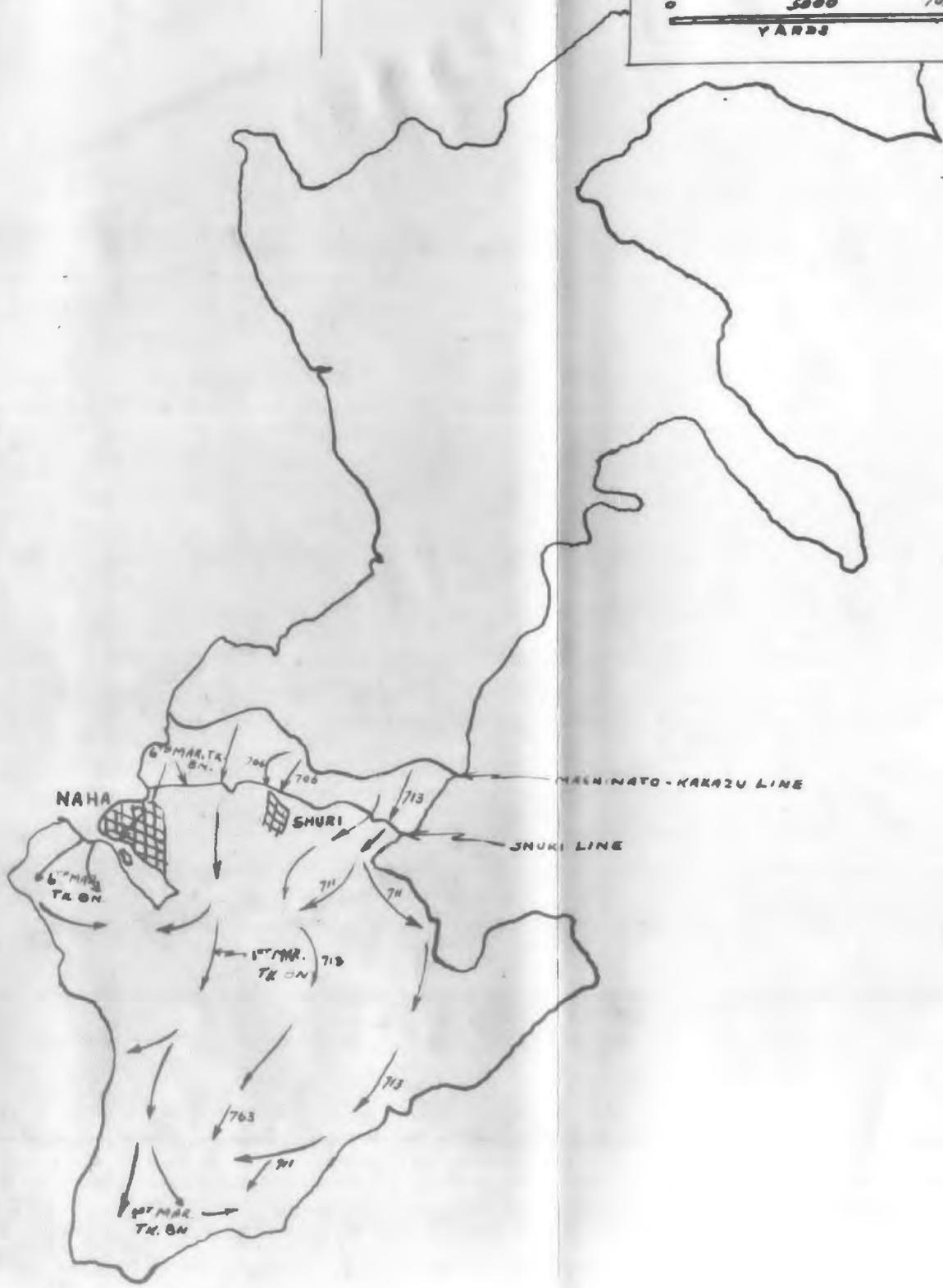
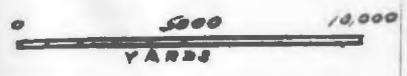
RYUKYU RETTO

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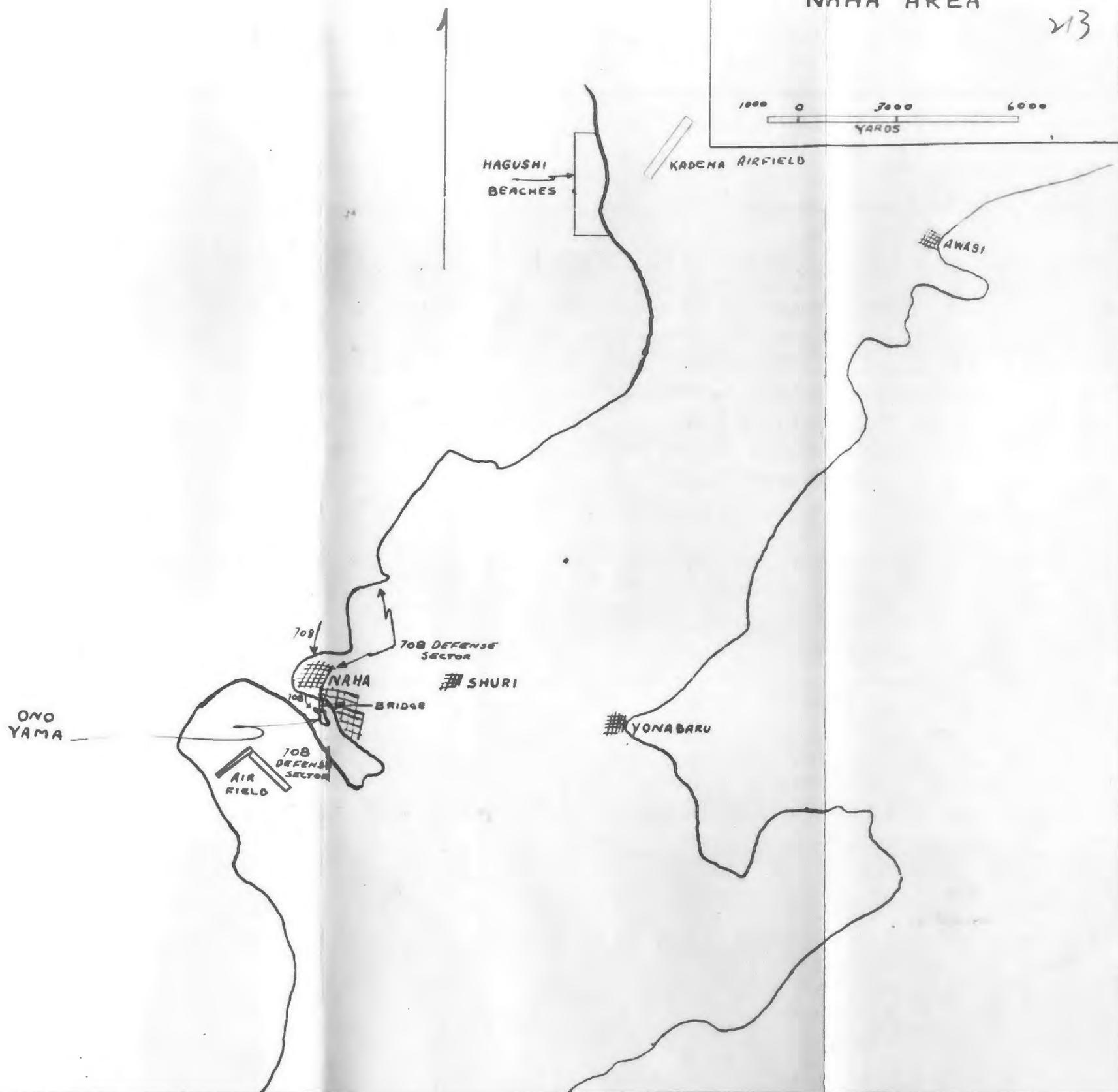
OKINAWA (26)
SOUTHERN PART
213



OKINAWA
NAHA AREA

27

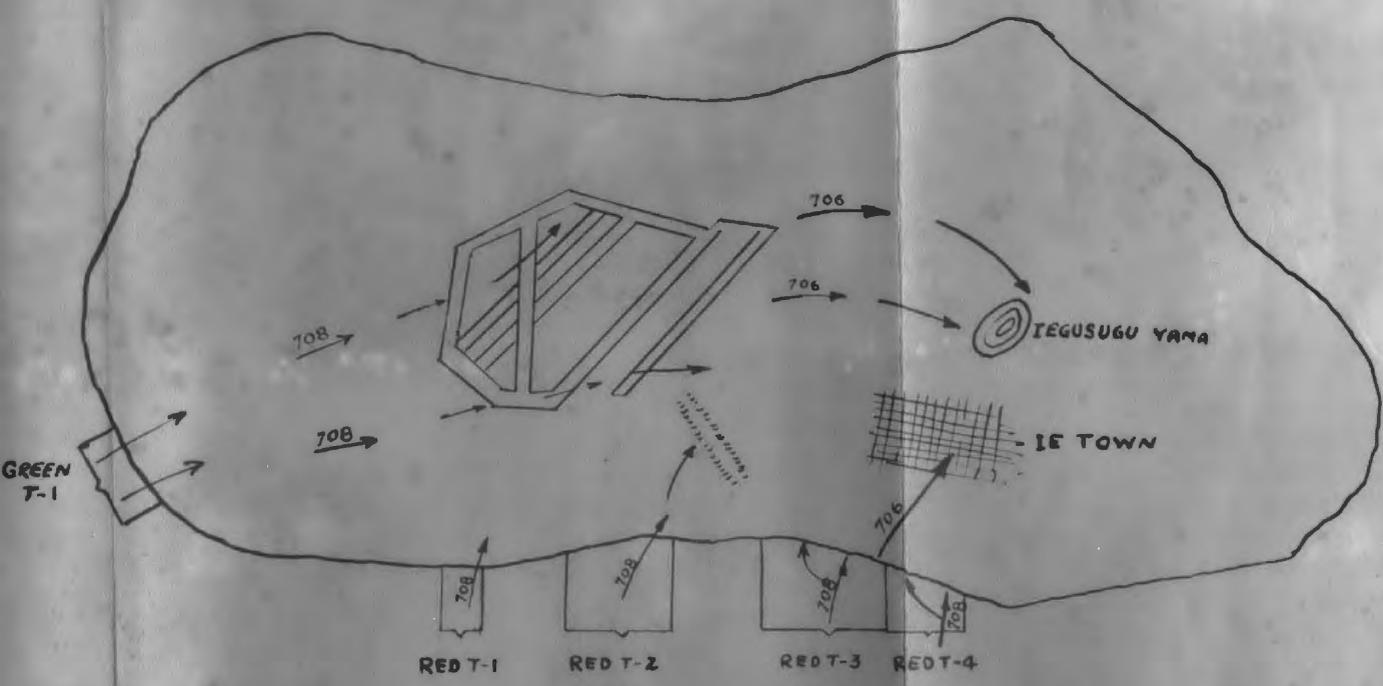
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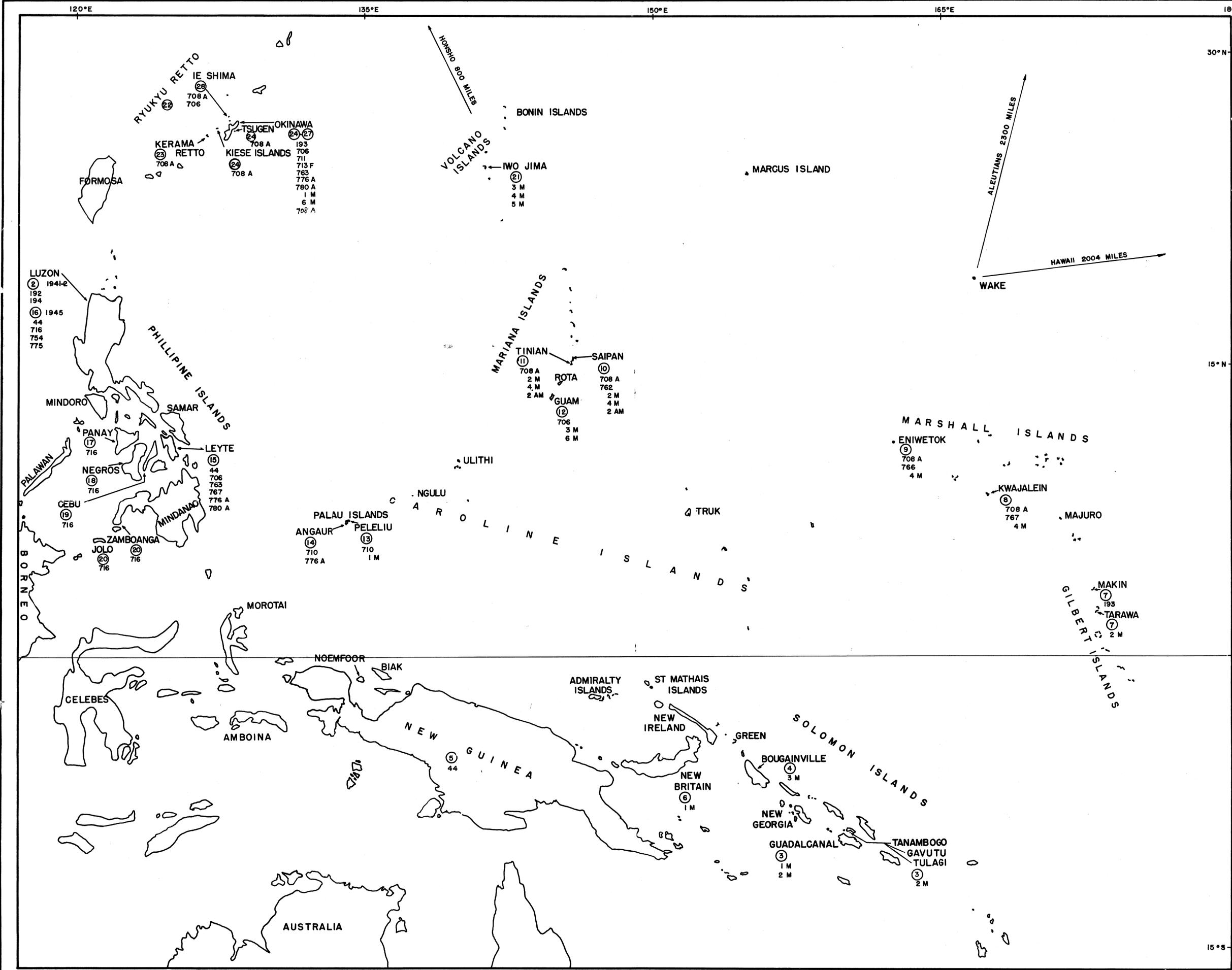


IE SHIMA RYUKYU RETTO

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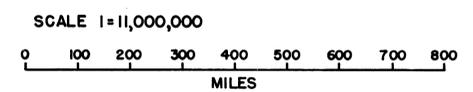


ARMOR IN THE PACIFIC

BY
 COMMITTEE #20
 ADVANCED OFFICER COURSE
 #1
 MARCH 1950

THE ARMORED SCHOOL
 FORT KNOX KENTUCKY

KENNETH L SIPES
 LT COL INF
 CHAIRMAN



- LEGEND:
- ⑥ - SEE MAP 6 OF REPORT PROPER
 - GUAM - NAME OF ISLAND
 - 193
 - 706 - TK BATTALION
 - 711
 - 713F - FLAME THROWER TK BN
 - 776A - AMPHIBIOUS TK BN
 - 6M - MARINE TK BN