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THE INVASION OF MINDANAO ISLAND
10 MARCH - 10 JULY 1945
(SOUTHERN PHILIPPINE CAMPAIGN)
(An Historical Monograph)

Type of operation described: AMPHIBIOUS ASSAULT AND OCCUPATION
OF MINDANAO ISLAND

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Index.....	1
Bibliography.....	2
Introduction.....	3
Original Plans for the Philippine Invasion.....	6
The General Situation.....	7
The Invasion of the Zamboanga Peninsula.....	7
The Invasion of Mindanao.....	9
Analysis and Criticism.....	20
Lessons.....	24
Map A -- Orientation and Strategic	
Map B -- Zamboanga Peninsula Campaign	
Map C -- Mindanao Campaign	

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of units of the Eighth U. S. Army in the invasion of Mindanao Island from 10 March 1945 to 10 July 1945.

The Victor IV (V-4) operation on the Zamboanga Peninsula and the Victor V (V-5) operation on Mindanao proper were separate and independent actions and for the sake of clarity will be treated as such.

Mindanao is the second largest island of the Philippine group (Luzon is the largest) and is the southernmost of the major islands. It is a tropical island bounded on the south by the Celebes Sea, on the east by the Pacific Ocean, on the west by the Sulu Sea, and is separated from the Visayan group of islands to the north by the Mindanao Sea. Map A.

The seven mile wide Panguil Isthmus between Iligan Bay and Illana Bay joins the Zamboanga Peninsula to the main land mass of the island. These two land masses are separated for all practical purposes because of the high rugged mountains, and lack of suitable roads and other overland communications. (1) Map C.

The terrain of Mindanao is a combination of mountains, jungle and swamps and is ideally suited for defensive operations. For the most part, the area is quite heavily wooded with rain forest. In the invasion of the island, it was necessary for our forces to overcome the many natural obstacles that oppose the invader in this particular type of terrain. Distances were great between suitable landing beaches and the main Japanese forces. Routes of approach were few and most of these were under observation from nearby high

(1) A-2, P. 28

ground on which small defending forces could cause many delays and casualties. (2)

The coastline of Mindanao is very irregular, featuring many inlets and bays, and extending approximately 1,400 miles. The harbors lack base facilities and therefore are good for shelter only. The eastern coast is considered useless due to the heavy swells of the Pacific and further due to the impenetrable mountains which deny access inland. The north coast is considerably different, being exposed only to the comparatively sheltered waters of the Mindanao Sea. The terrain inland is not so dense or inaccessible and there are many flat plateaus. There are several suitable sandy landing beaches available in this northern area. In the south and southwest there are large bays including Davao Gulf, Sarangani Bay and Illana Bay. These all offered excellent sandy beaches suitable for landings.

(3) Map C.

There are many mountains in Mindanao and in the central portion are found a north and south chain of volcanic peaks, dominated by Mt. Apo (9,692 ft.), highest point in the Philippines. This high peak overlooks Davao Gulf. In spite of the many accessible landing sites, inland features are in many cases so forbidding that some areas are yet unexplored. (4)

The Zamboanga Peninsula has considerable unexplored interior and a range of mountains varying in height from 1,500 feet to a 4,400 foot peak twelve miles northeast of and overlooking Zamboanga town. This peninsula is generally circled by flat coastal plains averaging four and one half miles in width. They are well cultivated, with rice paddies and coconut groves predominant. (5)

There are only three roads on Mindanao of tactical importance. Two are on Mindanao proper and the other circles the southern tip of

(2) A-1, P. 6; (3) A-1, P. 8; (4) A-1, P. 9; (5) A-2, P. 28.

the Zamboanga Peninsula. Highway No. 3, also known as the Sayre highway, runs from the vicinity of Agusan-Bugo on Macajalar Bay to Kabakan in the south where it joins highway No. 1. The northern shore is paralleled by highway No. 1 until it swings south through the Lake Lanao region to Malabang, Parang and Cotabato town, thence east to Digos on the Davao Gulf and northeast to Davao. The Zamboanga Peninsula is encircled by a hard-surfaced road running from Pantalon on the west coast to Buenavista below Taguete Bay on the east coast. Water transportation on a few of the larger streams augments the limited facilities. (6) Map C.

The climate of Mindanao is typical of the tropics, with an average temperature of 80 degrees. The humidity seldom falls below 80%. The heaviest rains occur during April and May and the mean annual rainfall is 91.8 inches. (7)

The estimated strength of the Japanese forces on the Zamboanga Peninsula was 7,000. This information was believed to be quite accurate due to the well organized guerrilla activities there. Reports of enemy dispositions in Zamboanga town were quite detailed, and very elaborate defensive works were known to have been prepared. The troops were concentrated in a triangle from Caldera Bay to Pasananca to a point just east of the town proper. On Mindanao proper the enemy situation was quite different. From the extremely efficient 10th Military District guerrilla organization the Japanese here were estimated at 30,000 and under the command of the XXXV Army (Corps). The principal combat units were the 100th Division and remaining elements of the 30th Division. The largest concentration was known to be in the Davao Gulf area where it was estimated there were 15,500 combat, naval and service troops. The only other sizeable concentration was an estimated 8,500 in the provinces of Misamis Oriental and Northern

(6) A-1, P. 10-11; (7) A-1, P. 13.

Bukidnon. This included 30th Division personnel and numerous air-ground personnel at the Del Monte strip and other airfields. In all other areas his strength was limited. An estimated 3,000 were in the important Kabakan-Malabang-Parang area but guerrilla troops had been continually harassing them. In the Sarangani Bay area the strength was believed to be approximately 2,500. It can be seen from the above estimates that the enemy, although considerable in force, was spread over a large area. Our continuous air attacks restricted his daytime movement and he was further restricted by his lack of transportation and the poor condition of the roads and trails. (8) Map C.

The guerrilla forces on Mindanao were organized and ably commanded by an American, Colonel Wendell W. Fertig, and totalled more than 25,000 troops. These guerrillas were able to control 95% of Mindanao because the Japanese limited their activity to the main coastal cities and the roads and waterways. (9)

ORIGINAL PLANS FOR THE PHILIPPINE INVASION

Early in June 1944, General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area issued a broad general plan of impending operations designed to liberate the Philippines. In addition to the landings already made at Aitape, Hollandia, Wakde-Sarmi, and Biak, the plan contemplated the occupation of the Noemfoor-Sansapor area, invasion and occupation of Morotai in the Halmaheras on 15 September 1944, Salebaboe Island in the Talaud group 20 October 1944 and Sarangani Bay in southern Mindanao 15 November 1944. These operations were to be followed by an airborne assault against Misamis Oriental in Northern Mindanao on 7 December 1944. A strong offensive was to be launched against the Leyte-Samar area on 20 December 1944.

By 14 September 1944, the air attacks of Admiral Halsey's Third U. S. Fleet carrier forces had been so devastating to Japanese air

(8) A-2, P. 43; A-1, P. 14-16; (9) A-1, P. 17.

and shipping that GHQ decided that operations for the liberation of the Philippines could be accelerated. The schedule of operations was advanced by cancelling, for the time being, the Talaud and Mindanao operations, and moving up the Leyte-Samar operation to 20 October 1944. (10)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

The Leyte-Samar invasion was a success as was the subsequent seizure of Mindoro and Marinduque Islands in mid-December. These operations split the Japanese Philippine garrison and gave the Allies complete control of all waterways plus bases from which American planes and naval craft could continuously harass Japanese garrisons. On 26 December 1944, when Japanese resistance on Leyte was officially declared broken, GHQ directed that the Eighth U. S. Army assume control of operations in the central and southern Philippines. The Sixth Army was then given the responsibility for the invasion and occupation of Luzon. While the Luzon operation was at its height, GHQ directed the Eighth Army to launch the Victor Series of operations which were designed to liberate the Visayas, Palawan and the Sulu Archipelago, plus the Zamboanga Peninsula and Mindanao. Thus we see that the island, which the Japanese expected would be invaded first in our return to the Philippines, became the scene of the final offensives--the Victor IV and V operations. (11) Map A.

THE INVASION OF ZAMBOANGA PENINSULA

The Southwest Philippines are that group of islands surrounding the Sulu Sea and include Palawan, the Sulu Archipelago, and the Zamboanga Peninsula. Map A.

The 41st U. S. Division was assigned the V-4 operation with the mission of establishing control over the Zamboanga area and its air

(10) A-3, P. 17-18; A-5, P. 12; (11) A-1, P. 23.

strips, and destroying the enemy forces therein. J-Day was 10 March 1945. The Thirteenth Air Force began the pre-invasion bombardment on 1 March and continued concentrating on enemy aircraft, personnel and supply dumps in the Zamboanga area. The Navy started its pre-assault bombardment at 0700 the morning of J-Day and continued until late afternoon. Eight motor torpedo boats had entered Basilan Strait the previous day and were operating in that vicinity. The division, less the 186th RCT, landed the first assault wave approximately 5,000 yards west of Zamboanga at San Mateo at 0915. Four battalions were landed within 30 minutes, encountering some light machine gun fire. The remainder of the division landed soon thereafter, leaving no floating reserve. Progress was rapid against light opposition, the enemy having abandoned an extensive pattern of wire entanglements, pillboxes and trenches. By nightfall the two regiments (162nd and 163rd) were advancing slowly against stiffening resistance. The 162nd Infantry had occupied San Roque village and, in addition, had extended the beachhead to a depth of 3,500 yards. The 163rd Infantry, attacking toward Zamboanga town, had reached Baliwasan Creek just northwest of the town. By 1700 of the following day, with the support of air missions and naval bombardment, and further supported by tanks, the 163rd Infantry entered Zamboanga. The assault was so fast that it denied the enemy an opportunity to destroy the town's facilities, most important of which was the 800 foot pier. San Roque airfield also was captured, thus completing the seizure of all four initial objectives.

(12) Map B.

On 12 March, after clearing the town and the peninsula to the east, the 163rd Infantry turned north toward Pasananca with the intention of enveloping strong enemy positions in the hills. This advance was stopped by heavy machine gun and mortar fire. Mines were encountered

(12) A-2, P. 46, 49-50.

and had to be removed before vehicles could advance. In the meantime, other 41st Division forces were expanding west of the landing area, and patrols reaching the Caldera Bay area reported no enemy contact. Mercedes to the northeast, Caldera Point and Recodo to the northwest were seized 13 March. The final push on Pasananca began on 14 March preceded by an air and artillery bombardment. The resistance on all fronts was stiffening and the daily advances becoming shorter and shorter. On 17 March the high ground north of San Roque and west of Pasananca was secured. The 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry arrived on 19 March from Palawan and on the 21st took its position in the line. By 24 March, the Japanese positions in the hills behind Pasananca were pierced and the mop-up began. The job of expanding and consolidating positions, coupled with aggressive patrolling, became the order of the day. The fanatical resistance of the enemy began disintegrating as his supply lines and evacuation routes were severed. All missions were reported as complete on 7 April, thus setting the stage for the invasion of Mindanao. (13)

THE INVASION OF MINDANAO

X Corps reinforced, and the 24th and 31st Infantry Divisions, were designated by Eighth Army as the forces for the V-5 operation. There were a total of 42,754 combat troops allocated and these were widely scattered with principal units coming from Leyte, Mindoro and Morotai. R-Day was originally set for 12 April but nonavailability of assault craft caused a delay until 17 April. The 24th Division (consisting of the 19th, 21st and 34th RCT's) was given the assault mission and the 31st Division was scheduled to land on R plus 5. The Malabang area was originally chosen for the landing, but a message from guerrilla forces on 12 April stating that Malabang town and the

(13) A-2, P. 51-56.

airfield were in guerrilla hands, caused a revision of plans. Subsequently the order was changed to make Parang, 17 miles to the south, the area of assault with an administrative landing at Malabang. The initial objective was the Parang-Cotabato area, and in addition, a juncture with the guerrilla forces in the Malabang area. It was predicted that our troops would not meet any sizeable number of enemy in this sector. With this in mind, it was felt that the area could be quickly secured and established as an advanced base for logistical support of the planned actions to destroy the main enemy forces. (14) Map C.

During the night of 16 - 17 April, the 24th Division arrived in Polloc Harbor, and at 0630 the naval bombardment of Parang and Cotabato began. The assault waves deployed on schedule and one battalion of the 21st Infantry landed at Malabang at 0800. The 19th RCT landed at Parang unopposed and encountered a few enemy stragglers as they advanced inland. The 21st RCT (less one battalion) followed the 19th RCT, with the 34th RCT remaining afloat as Division reserve. By nightfall a 4,000 yard beachhead had been secured with elements of the 19th RCT reaching a point 2,000 yards north of the Simway river. Patrols of the Battalion at Malabang pushed north to the vicinity of Lake Lanao and reported no enemy contact. By R plus 1, the initial mission had been accomplished substantially ahead of schedule. Only two casualties had been reported. (15) Map C.

In order to exploit the initial successes, it was decided to drive rapidly east and secure the Pikit-Kabakan area. Kabakan is located astride the junction of highway No. 1 (east-west) and highway No. 3 (Sayre highway) which runs north to the coast. Securing this junction would split the enemy, reduce the load on the roads and cut the enemy's critical communication lines. Reconnaissance of the

(14) A-1, P. 18-23; (15) A-1, P. 24-25.

Mindanao river had established the feasibility of using both branches as a route of overwater advance. This, in addition to lightening the load on the already overtaxed highway, would cause a pincer movement against the enemy. For this river mission, the 2nd Battalion, 21st Infantry was attached to the 533rd Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment. This force of 1,000 men was divided into two groups and proceeded independently down both branches of the river. Opposition on the north branch was nil and to the south only very slight. Leading elements were ordered to proceed and join forces at the river fork. Only scattered resistance was met and by nightfall the force was in front of Lomopog. A perimeter was formed for the night with the gunboats deployed in support. (16) Map C.

The 19th RCT, in the meantime, was pushing rapidly eastward over highway No. 1 which was hardly more than an improved trail. The enemy had methodically destroyed all bridges and the bad road conditions necessitated supply by air. Gunboats of the river force were directed to reconnoiter the river upstream from Lomopog and foot reconnaissance was ordered to determine the condition of the road from Paidu Pulangi to Fort Pikit. Meanwhile, troops were arriving to reinforce the area, and the 21st RCT took over the security of the river. The reconnaissance patrols reported the river clear as far as Inogog, just south of Fort Pikit, and the road clear halfway to Fort Pikit. Plans were made on 20 April for a two-pronged attack on Fort Pikit, one by land from the northwest and the other by water from the south. ^{THE} Guerrilla estimate of enemy strength in the vicinity of Fort Pikit was 700. Both forces moved out at 1100 on 21 April. The town and the fort were occupied by our troops at 1600 and it was obvious, from the amount of equipment left behind, that the enemy's withdrawal was

(16) A-1, P. 26-27

hasty and unrehearsed. On 23 April the town of Kabakan and the junction of highways 1 and 3 were captured by elements of the 34th RCT. The remainder of the division began closing in on the Kabakan area with the division command post opening there. Thus ended the successful overwater drive up the Mindanao and Pulangi rivers. The Division had advanced 60 miles in seven days. (17) Map C.

Elements of the 34th RCT on 24 and 25 April were steadily advancing East on highway No. 1 toward Digos on the Davao Gulf. Sporadic but ineffective resistance was quickly dispersed in several locations. Also on 25 April a battalion of the 21st RCT was sent north of Kabakan to secure the ferry across the Pulangi river. By 26 April the 1st Battalion, 34th RCT had advanced to a point within 8 miles of Digos where heavy resistance was encountered. The enemy continued to destroy all bridges and he was now laying some mines to impede our progress. The 31st Division, which landed behind the 24th Division on D plus 5, took over the security of the supply lines. The 21st RCT (less one battalion that was guarding the ferry north of Kabakan) reverted to corps reserve.

Plans were being formulated for exploitation of initial successes by driving north on the Sayre highway. In order to have a full corps in the Kabakan-Davao area the Eighth Army Commander requested the 108th RCT (40th Division) be landed in the Macajalar Bay area to drive south on the Sayre highway and the 162nd RCT be brought from Zamboanga to guard lines of communication. These plans were approved by GHQ on 29 April.

By 29 April, the 34th RCT had almost completed clearing the Digos area and the 19th RCT had arrived and promptly turned north toward Davao, followed by the 21st RCT. Guerrillas were used to help

(17) A-1, P. 29-31; A-13, P. 17-22

guard the communication lines and also secured Talkud Island in Davao Gulf. Intelligence sources, including the guerrillas, had indicated numerous enemy in the area, and as they had not been contacted, there was cause for anxiety regarding safety of the extended communication lines. The rapidity of the advance had not permitted troops to search out and destroy enemy along the line of advance. With the mopping up of the Digos area, the 24th Division immediately launched a drive up the coast toward Davao with the 19th RCT in the lead. Resistance was light and on 2 May the southern bank of the Davao river had been reached. The bridge over the highway had been destroyed and was covered by anti-aircraft and artillery fire from the hills. However, a damaged crossing site further upstream was hastily repaired, a crossing forced, and the bridgehead secured. The enemy had apparently evacuated his main forces to the hills but only after they had infested the town with mines and booby traps. On 4 May Davao was cleared of the enemy but only after severe and tenacious house to house fighting against heavy mortar, artillery and small arms fire. Thus fell the last major city held by the Japanese in the Philippines. (18) Map C.

The 31st Division, consisting of the 124th, 155th and 167th RCT's, landed at Parang on D plus 5 and elements were immediately assigned to guard the lines of communications. The Division, less the 167th in army reserve, was released to I Corps on 23 April and was directed to proceed to the vicinity of Kabakan. The Japanese forces to the north were concentrated mainly along and adjacent to the Sayre highway from Damulog to Macajalar Bay. The largest concentrations were known to be in the vicinity of Impulatao and Malaybalay. Plans had been implemented earlier for the landing

(18) A-13, P. 24-25; A-1, P. 33-36, 48-49.

of the 108th RCT in the Macajalar Bay area to drive to the south. Thus we see that with this pincer movement driving both to the north and south, the Sayre highway would be secured, numerous enemy destroyed and his remaining forces split. Map C.

The 124th RCT moved north from Kabakan on 27 April with the initial mission of securing the junction of the Kibawe-Talomo trail, some 50 odd miles north from Kabakan. (Map C) Thus began an advance against the enemy and the terrain, the latter at times seeming the more potent. Resistance from the enemy was sporadic and light, accentuated by small delaying actions for which this terrain was ideally suited. The road became famous for its precipitous slopes, its hairpin turns, the jungle terrain and the rocky gorges. It crossed numerous streams and the enemy executed some very effective delaying actions by destroying all of the bridges. At one point a cable was stretched across a gorge and artillery pieces and jeeps were suspended from it and pulled across. Under the circumstances, the advance was rapid, and on 3 May the RCT was firmly established at Kibawe, having captured the airfield and established a road block on the Kibawe-Talomo trail. This almost completely isolated the Japanese in the Davao sector. (19). (Map C.)

The regiment resumed the advance on 5 May and encountered heavy resistance just to the south of Lake Pinalay from a force estimated to be 400-500 Japanese astride the highway in well dug-in positions. The enemy fought furiously for 5 days during which time our air force made daily strikes using Napalm and demolition bombs. On 10 May Maramag strip No. 1 had been secured and the enemy had been flanked. On 12 May the enemy pocket was reduced after a heavy air and artillery preparation. There were 350 counted enemy dead. (20)

(19) A-1, P. 38-39; A-13, P. 26-27. (20) A-1, P. 39-40; A-13, P. 27

The 167th Infantry on 6 May was relieved of its duties as rear guard by the 162nd Infantry (41st Division), and moved to the vicinity of Kibawe, relieving elements of the 155th Infantry on the Kibawe-Talomo trail. The mission on this trail was (first) to block the Japanese retreat from the Davao area to central Mindanao and (second) to secure a possible avenue of attack against the rear of the Davao defenders. On 10 May the 108th RCT landed near Agusan on Macajalar Bay and started south. (21) Map C.

On 13 May, the 155th RCT passed through the 124th RCT and advanced on Maramag strip No. 2. The strip was secured without opposition on 14 May and the regiment continued a rapid advance to the north. Valencia, with its airstrip, was taken on 15 May and this was approximately 20 miles south of Malaybalay where the enemy was expected to make a firm stand. The X Corps G-2 had definite information that the Japanese were rapidly evacuating supplies and personnel east from the Malaybalay area toward Silae. Large fires indicated they were burning supplies, installations and bridges as they retreated. It also was an indication that they were no longer capable of offering effective resistance. Elements of the 155th Infantry reached the outskirts of Malaybalay on 20 May and began receiving accurate artillery fire from the hills to the northeast. By 22 May the town was cleared and the Division command post established there. Leading elements continued the advance north and established contact with elements of the 108th RCT near Impalutao on 23 May. Map C.

The landing of the 108th RCT in the Agusan-Bugo area had been unopposed and they immediately started south on the Sayre highway. Resistance was light and scattered, the enemy having abandoned many

(21) A-1, P. 40.

excellent defensive positions. By 12 May the Del Monte airfield had been secured. Heavy enemy fire was received on 13 May as the RCT approached Mangima Canyon near Tankulan. Patrols found the canyon to be strongly defended by weapons of all calibers. The enemy had organized a strong defense, surrounded by mines, wire and booby traps. By maneuver and aggressive action, plus air strikes and artillery, the canyon was breached and the advance to the south continued. Dalirig was occupied on 19 May. The 3rd Battalion (reinforced) of the 164th Infantry (Americal Division) had landed at Agusan on 14 May and was placed in RCT reserve. They guarded the lines of communication and assisted in mopping up. The RCT advanced the remainder of the way to the junction with the 31st Division forces without opposition. (22) Map C.

To prevent any sizeable organization or grouping of enemy forces to the east of the Sayre highway and to further destroy them, the 31st Division, plus the 108th RCT, with the 2nd Battalion of the 164th Infantry attached, was directed to advance into eastern Bukidnon Province. These drives were initiated on 25 May, at 5 points along the highway, with forces composed of reinforced battalions in most instances. Resistance ^{to} of all of these drives varied from none at all to well organized delaying positions. Advances were slow due to the poor condition of the trails and the nature of the terrain, but by 12 June the towns of Silae and Cabanglasan were captured. Aggressive patrolling was the order of the day for the next few weeks and by the end of June American troops were withdrawn into the Valencia-Malaybalay area. Guerrilla reports, plus information gathered from other intelligence sources, indicated that the enemy would attempt to join his forces east of the Sayre highway with those retiring south from Surigao Province.

(22) A-1, P. 43-46; A-11, P. 140.

To counter this, the 155th RCT was moved to Bugo on 19 June. A battalion was embarked with the mission of landing near the town of Butuan on Butuan Bay and advancing down the Agusan river to the vicinity of Waloe to prevent this junction of enemy forces. The landing was made on 23 June. (Map C). The Agusan river was found to be navigable so the battalion proceeded south in landing craft (mechanized.) A base was established 61 miles to the south near La Paz and was garrisoned by a rifle company. Another rifle company, in conjunction with guerrilla troops, advanced 10 miles south and captured Waloe on 1 July after overcoming an estimated force of 200. This action trapped the enemy remnants in the mountains between the Pulangi and Agusan rivers where they roamed aimlessly seeking sustenance from the land. Any semblance of organized resistance in this area was definitely broken. (23) Map C.

As was mentioned earlier, the 167th Infantry relieved the 155th Infantry on the Kibawe-Talomo trail on 10 May 1945. With this relief began one of the most strongly resisted actions encountered on the island. The trail had been previously reconnoitered as far as the Pulangi river by the 155th Infantry and they stated that it was passable for 2½ ton trucks. Elements of the 167th Infantry reached the Pulangi river on 13 May. From this point toward Sanipon the advance was very slow due to the condition of the trail and small enemy delaying actions. On 16 May the drive came to a virtual standstill a mile north of Sanipon where the enemy had prepared strong defensive positions on both sides of the river. The Japanese appeared to be well equipped with machine guns, mortars and small arms. The advance from 16 May to 26 May was measured in yards and on this day another battalion moved south from Kibawe to assist in the action. On the 27th the position was outflanked and the Japanese north of

(23) A-1, P. 70-74; A-13, P. 29-31

Sanipon were quickly dispatched as our troops occupied the town. Gains were consolidated and enemy pockets eliminated by aggressive patrolling. By 2 June one battalion had crossed the river and started east and south toward Pinamola against stiffening resistance. On 10 June the battalion had advanced to positions about 5,000 yards beyond Sanipon. During the period 10-19 June, even with the aid of guerrillas, the advances were never more than 300 yards per day. By 24 June the entire regiment had been pressed into service and by maneuver had flanked the enemy positions. On 28 June the enemy's will to resist was broken and Pinamola was occupied on 30 June. The advance was hardly 6 miles in a period of more than 30 days but the mission had been accomplished. Higher headquarters had directed earlier that, due to the condition of the trail and the terrain, the advance would not proceed farther. Operations in the area continued until the end of the war. Pressure on the enemy was maintained by constant and aggressive patrolling. (24) Map C.

Davao had been razed by enemy demolitions and our own bombings, as had the docks and piers. The harbor was blocked by sunken ships thus making it useless as a supply base. With the fall of Davao on 4 May began the more difficult task of pursuing the enemy and destroying him in the mountains whence he had fled. Main blows were directed against the enemy in the Guma area, on hill 550, and in the Mintal-Tamogan region west and northwest of Davao. The 19th Infantry spent two weeks mopping up the area immediately to the north and west of Davao, and on the 17th started northeast on highway No. 1 toward Ising. Here they were to join up with guerrilla forces operating in this area. This was accomplished after an advance of 24 miles against light resistance.

(24) A-10, P. 104-107; A-1, P. 66-68; A-13, P. 30.

On 12 May the 162nd RCT and the 3rd Battalion, 163rd Infantry (41st Division) arrived and assumed responsibility for the lines of communication in the Davao area. The 21st and 34th RCT's meanwhile had been advancing toward Mintal against strong resistance. Air strikes and Corps artillery supported these attacks but the enemy was determined. It was the same in both RCT areas but the main resistance was broken on 12 May and Mintal was captured on 13 May. A push was rapidly started toward Tugbok and against weakening resistance the town was captured and completely cleared on 19 May. Sometime later in the day the enemy launched three strong, well-organized and well-supported fanatical counter attacks, but each was repulsed. By 29 May, all resistance in the area around Mintal had been broken and the division was reassembled for further action. The remaining action was filled with small unit patrolling and mopping up against varied degrees of enemy resistance. The 34th RCT relieved the 21st RCT in this area and the latter prepared to clear out the area southwest of Mintal. Later the 19th RCT joined the 34th and together they continued to the northwest with Tamogan as their objective. This town was taken on 24 June and remaining actions consisted of patrolling and placing ambushes and road blocks. Anti-aircraft artillery units were used to advantage as infantry and also in support of field artillery during these later actions. By 30 June the enemy was thoroughly defeated and broken up into small wandering bands. (25) Map C.

Casualties for the Mindanao campaign, exclusive of the Zamboanga Peninsula, were as follows:

Killed in action	653
Wounded in action	2,881
Injured	197

(25) A-1, P. 48-64

Missing in action	6
Died of wounds	<u>102</u>
Total	3,839

The most losses were suffered by the 24th Division which lost 425 killed and 2,003 wounded. This was due in part to the heavy and difficult fighting in the Davao sector and also to the preponderance of enemy forces in that area. Enemy losses up to 30 June were 12,535 killed and 512 prisoners taken. During the period 20 August to 4 November, 328 enemy were killed and 22,441 surrendered. This accounts for 35,815 Japanese casualties and prisoners of war. The number buried by Japanese troops, killed by guerrillas, and those who died of wounds in isolated areas, added to the above, gives a total substantially in excess of the original estimate. (26).

The campaign was officially closed on 30 June 1945 with units of the X Corps still actively engaged seeking out enemy remnants. Clashes on a small scale continued until rumors of the Japanese surrender were heard on 11 August 1945. Thus we see that fighting was in progress at the time of the Japanese surrender, on the island that was originally scheduled to be invaded first in our "Return to the Philippines."

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

Flexibility of plans played an important role in the invasion of Mindanao, both from the higher and lower command level. We have seen where the general plan as outlined by GHQ in June 1944 was changed considerably to speed up the return to the Philippines. The landing at Parang was originally scheduled for Malabang and changed while troops were at sea only two days prior to the assault.

(26) A-1, P. 79

The ability to change over from one plan to another without loss of efficiency is commendable.

Due credit must certainly be given the extremely effective pre-invasion and pre-assault bombardments by the Air Corps and the Navy in both the Zamboanga and Parang landings. The accuracy and volume of the pre-assault bombardment at Zamboanga caused the enemy to withdraw from extensively fortified and dug in positions. This allowed the assault troops to gain footholds on the shores with minimum losses and considerably lessened the task of securing the airfields and Zamboanga town. If the enemy had not been forced to withdraw from these positions, he would have been able to inflict heavy casualties on the assaulting troops. At Parang, although the enemy was fewer in number, the bombardment helped reduce the will to resist. Both landings were made with minimum losses and here we have an excellent example of supporting arms really doing a closely coordinated and efficient job. It is felt that in the later phase of the Zamboanga campaign that maximum utility of the Air Force was not used in spotting and reporting enemy artillery positions in the hills. These artillery pieces, which caused considerable damage and harassment to our troops, could have been given the same treatment as the landing areas with proper coordination and control.

It is obvious in the Zamboanga operation that the U.S. commander had a great amount of faith in the ability of his two regiments to successfully assault the beach and establish a beachhead. The above statement is prompted by the fact that all available troops were committed on D Day, thus leaving no floating reserve for an emergency. In criticizing this action however, it must be remembered that the 3rd regiment of the division was then in action on Palawan, plus the fact that detailed information of enemy positions and strengths had been previously available from the well

organized guerrilla units.

The enemy was outguessed and outmaneuvered in many instances in this campaign. Originally he was led to believe that ^{the} initial landings would be on Mindanao. When U.S. troops landed on Leyte and enemy troops needed reinforcing, an abortive attempt was made to effect this reinforcement with troops from Mindanao. Allied control of sea and air almost precluded any enemy daytime movement on land or sea. When the invasion of Mindanao was made, the enemy had been thoroughly severed from ^{his} ~~its~~ sources of supplies, thus rendering him much less effective.

The invasion was made during the rainy season, thus adding to the normal obstacles which were many and varied. The delaying tactics used by the enemy in impeding our progress included the thorough and systematic destruction of all bridges, thus making it impossible for artillery and heavy engineer equipment to keep in supporting range of the infantry at all times. It has been estimated that there was one bridge for every one and three quarter miles of road from Parang to Digos. The heavy traffic on highways No. 1 and 3 soon reduced them to impassable quagmires in many places. This imposed an almost insurmountable task on the engineers. It is believed that this situation could have been partially alleviated by anticipating the adverse road and bridge conditions and planning for the early landing of additional supporting engineers.

In addition to the rains, Mindanao furnishes many and varied types of terrain. The mountains are rugged and the jungles are almost impenetrable in many places, and the few open areas are relatively flat and under cultivation. The enemy utilized these terrain features but not to the maximum extent. At times the

terrain was the more efficient enemy and slowed us down more. However, in spite of the adverse conditions, the enemy was aggressively sought out and pursued.

It is felt that plans could have been more thoroughly prepared in anticipation of the very light enemy resistance and the rapid advance inland. Additional combat troops should have been made available initially to support either a fast or slow advance. If light resistance was met, they could be employed to guard the lines of communication. If the advance met with heavy resistance, the additional troops could be employed where needed most. It was not a good morale factor to know that there were many enemy retreating into the jungle on both sides of the road. There were insufficient troops initially to seek them out or to adequately guard the communication lines. This deficiency was later corrected by securing additional troops.

The bright spot of the planning phase of the operation was the anticipation of using the Mindanao river for logistical support and movement of troops. This anticipated use of the river prompted the inclusion of the 533d Boat and Shore Regiment in the combat troop list. The successes attained initially were for the most part a direct result of having these troops and their equipment available. Use of the river insured an adequate supply route and materially reduced the load on the overtaxed highway. It also avoided the necessity for continuous supply by air in the first phase of the operation. Having this engineer unit with its many boats and landing craft, even though navigation on the river was questionable, was commendable from its inception. This Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment certainly could have been used on other important missions if the river had not been navigable.

Supply and evacuation by air is becoming more and more important as was demonstrated in this operation, particularly the Sayre highway action. The rains during May, plus heavy traffic, soon rendered most of the highway and all of the trails impassable. Available engineers could not keep abreast of the situation thus necessitating air supply. The problem did not become acute in this action due entirely to the availability of operational airfields in the immediate vicinity of the action. It would be a relatively simple research project to find many similar situations where the solution was not as simple.

The Japanese were very cooperative during their retrograde movements by neglecting to take the time and/or the trouble to destroy facilities such as piers, public utilities and airfields. There were instances where our planes landed on airstrips only hours after they were captured, and some were taken intact. The enemy also neglected to use the principles^{ies} of mass and organization in depth in his defense of the island. It is believed that he could have massed the Davao Bay and Malaybalay forces, thereby slowing down the attacking forces and inflicting a greater number of casualties. The terrain north and west of Davao and also that on the Sayre highway was ideally suited to defense in depth but rarely did he use it to the utmost advantage. The deficiencies noted above materially aided the U.S. forces in the rapid and systematic destruction of the enemy.

LESSONS

Some of the lessons emphasized by this operation are:

1. The will to resist of any enemy is materially lessened by entirely isolating him from his source of replacements and supplies.
2. Properly coordinated and executed pre-invasion and pre-

assault bombardments by the Navy and Air Corps materially weaken a defenders will to resist.

3. Well organized and properly controlled guerrilla bands can render invaluable assistance as intelligence gathering agencies both before and after an invasion, and this potential should be exploited fully.

4. Flexibility is essential ~~is~~ regardless of the planning level.

5. Sufficient combat troops should be provided initially to mop up by-passed resistance and to guard lines of communication in fast moving situations. If the advance is not as fast as contemplated, the troops can be used to good advantage by assigning them other essential missions.

6. Training in night operations is and will continue to be of prime importance in any operation, and especially so in a jungle operation.

7. It is becoming more and more important that the infantryman receive extensive training in the detection and removal of mines and booby traps.

8. Caves and fortified positions are difficult and costly to take without the aid of supporting fires.

9. Very careful plans are necessary in estimating the number of engineer troops needed for a particular operation. In this operation there were not enough engineers initially.

10. Navigable rivers can be used to good advantage for tactical advance of troops and as supply routes.

11. It becomes necessary at times for the infantry to fight without its artillery and engineer support.

12. There is no substitute for individual and collective aggressiveness.

13. Once the enemy is on the run, pursue him relentlessly and break contact only when absolutely necessary.