

THE OPERATIONS OF THE 35TH INFANTRY (25TH INFANTRY  
DIVISION) IN THE PLAINS FIGHTING OF CENTRAL LUZON,  
PHILIPPINE ISLANDS, 9 JANUARY - 10 FEBRUARY, 1945  
(LUZON CAMPAIGN)

(Personal experience of a Regimental S-1)

Type of operation described: REGIMENT IN THE ATTACK

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ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO 2

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- A-2 Operations of the 25th Infantry Division, Luzon, P.I., (17 January 1945 to 30 June 1945) (Personal possession of author, subsequently presented to TIS Library)
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## GLOSSARY

- "cargodore" - Filipino word for personnel engaged in loading or unloading cargo or supplies, covers all phases of handling of supplies in Army terminology.
- "barrio" - Filipino word for small village or populated area.
- "banzai" - Japanese word meaning a suicidal charge or counterattack; meaning "may the Emperor live ten thousand years", advancing to death with the name of the Emperor and his destiny being shouted, executed for his sake.
- "carabao" - Type of cattle indigenous to the Orient, similar to our oxen.
- "poblacion" - Filipino word for town or city.
- "bazooka" - Army slang for the 2.36 inch rocket launcher, derived from the instrument handled by the radio comedian, "Bob" Burns.
- "M-7" - Ordnance Department nomenclature denoting the 105mm Howitzer, self-propelled which is mounted on the M-7 motor carriage, same chassis as the M-3 "Grant" medium tank.
- "Sherman" - Army slang denoting the M-4 medium tank.

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 35th Infantry, 25th Infantry Division in the Central Plains fighting, Luzon, 9 January - 10 February 1945, during the Luzon campaign.

In order to orient the reader as to the role and mission that the 35th Infantry played in these operations, we will go back to New Caledonia, June 1944. Following the operations on Guadalcanal and Vella Lavella (Northern Solomons), and a short rest period in New Zealand, the 35th Infantry, 25th Infantry Division, arrived in New Caledonia in February 1944. Here the 35th went through an intensive training program, concurrently being equipped with the latest type weapons - carbines, light machine guns 1919-A-6, anti-tank grenade launchers, 2.36 inch rocket launchers and M-7 (self-propelled 105mm Howitzers) for the Cannon Company. (The 35th had gone through the previous campaigns equipped as they were on Oahu, T.H. on 7 December 1941)

In the training phase, all personnel of the Regiment had to learn and perfect the art and methods of fighting in open terrain, which was a new and radical departure from the jungle fighting in previous campaigns, where the most elementary camouflage was necessary and where any great degree of mobility was impossible. They were accustomed to fighting under the most difficult conditions, but the tactics involved in warfare over open, relatively flat terrain were outside their practical experience. They had to learn camouflage, motor movements, to fight for roads instead of trails, and how to fight in villages and towns. (1)

(1) A-1, p.4.

During this period, the 35th was alerted for combat in June for the Kavieng, New Ireland operation, and in September, for the Leyte-Samar operation; but, due to changes in the tactical situation and difficulties in shipping logistics, they were relieved from these commitments. In November 1944, the 25th Infantry Division received Field Order 34, from Headquarters Sixth Army, which committed the Division to Army reserve afloat for the initial Luzon landing, scheduled for 9 January 1945. (2)

Field Order 1, Headquarters 25th Infantry Division, 25 November 1944, assigned the following mission to the 35th Regimental Combat Team: (35th Infantry; 64th Field Artillery Battalion; Company C, 65th Engineer Combat Battalion and Collecting Company B, 25th Medical Battalion)

"a. 35th Regimental Combat Team prepared:

- (1) To reinforce the 158th RCT in objective area on S $\frac{1}{4}$ .
- (2) Initially in Division Reserve afloat, to land in zone of action of either the I or XIV Corps when ordered by CG 25th Infantry Division at any time between S $\frac{1}{2}$  and S $\frac{3}{4}$ ." (3)

After a short, intensive period of amphibious and physical conditioning training, the 35th embarked, combat loaded, on three APAs and one AKA, at Noumea on 14 December 1944. The convoy sailed 17 December for Guadalcanal, where on 21-22 December a practice amphibious landing was executed. The convoy next sailed for Manus, Admiralty Group, where it made rendezvous with the Navy covering force and spent New Year's, 29 December 1944 - 2 January 1945. The convoy then sailed for Lingayen Gulf, Luzon and arrived 11 January 1945, two days after the initial landing by Sixth Army's I and XIV Corps. As the ships anchored off White Beach Three (San Fabian), word was received from CG Sixth (2) A-2, p.4; (3) A-2, p.8.

Army, relieving the 25th Infantry Division of all previous missions, and ordering it to land and await further orders. (4)

This marked the end of a period, during which the 35th Infantry covered 5300 miles and spent 26 days afloat in the cramped quarters of combat loaded transports.

#### THE GENERAL SITUATION

As part of the Allied strategy in the Pacific, the U.S. Sixth Army, under General Walter Krueger, landed in the Lingayen Gulf area of Luzon on 9 January 1945 with two Corps abreast, I Corps on the left and XIV Corps on the right. The XIV Corps turned South and started for Manila against light resistance; the I Corps, with the 43rd Division on the left and the 6th Division on the right, pushed to the southeast on the left flank of XIV Corps. (See Map A)

As the Sixth Army's drive to the south gained momentum against light opposition, it became apparent that the Japanese did not contemplate a defense of the Central Plains, but were leaving only suicidal delaying forces while withdrawing in strength to the lower Cordillera Mountains and the approaches to Baguio and the Cagayan Valley. (See Map A)

This decision on the part of the enemy to hold the mountainous regions on the left flank of the Sixth Army zone of action, put them in a position to launch a major counter-attack almost at will, as the drive for Manila progressed. On 16 January, the 25th Infantry Division (less 35th RCT) was relieved from Army reserve and assigned to I Corps to assist in the mission of securing the Sixth Army's vulnerable flank. (5)

#### 35TH INFANTRY IN ARMY RESERVE 11 - 28 JANUARY 1945

By 1330, 11 January, the 35th Infantry had landed on White Beach Three and closed in its initial assembly area.

(4) A-2, p.12; (5) A-3, p.97.

At 1400, the Regiment (-3rd Bn & Co A) moved out on a nine mile march to the bivouac area at Baloling; which proved to be quite a hardship for troops that had been cooped up for 26 days in cramped quarters afloat, with little or no limbering up exercises. The 3rd Battalion, reinforced by Company A, remained on White Beach unloading cargo for the Division. By 1900, the Regiment (-) was in the bivouac area and an all-around perimeter established. To the Regiment's veterans, whose previous experience had taught them to assume that all planes heard were enemy and to act accordingly, it was unusual and pleasant to know that these they heard this night were friendly. (6)

From 12 to 16 January, the 35th dispatched patrols to the east and south; while additional units from the 1st and 2nd Battalions were sent back to augment the 3rd Battalion's "cargodore" work on White Beach. During this period, Anti-tank and Cannon Companies, Company C 65th Engineer Combat Battalion and the 64th Field Artillery Battalion were placed under direct control of the Division Commander.

On 16 January, the 25th Infantry Division (-35th Inf) was relieved from Army reserve and passed to control of I Corps with the mission of seizing the Pozzorrubio - Binalonan - Urdaneta Highway. The 35th remained in Army reserve, with the 3rd and 1st Battalions on White Beach and the 2nd Battalion alerted for any mission that might arise. (See Map B)

On 18 January, the 2nd Battalion moved out with the mission of destroying a small pocket of Japanese resistance at Pao, by-passed by the 161st Infantry in their advance to the east. This mission was completed by 1400 and the 35th had inflicted and suffered its first casualties and captured its first prisoners of the Luzon campaign. (See Map B)

On 19 - 20 January, the 35th (-3rd Bn, Co C & Co E) moved to Mancag and set up a perimeter defense of the town. It was (6) A-1, p.9.

here for the first of many times, that the 35th with the assistance of P.C.A.U. (Philippine Commonwealth Administrative Unit) came in contact with the problem of caring for and feeding the large numbers of Filipinos moving back into the large towns in the wake of our advancing troops. The task of restoring order and getting the wheels of municipal government turning again was a hard one, as all previous officials were suspect as collaborationists and had to be removed. The mechanics of this operation were performed by P.C.A.U., but it was necessary for the 35th to supervise and exercise control over both the local citizenry and the P.C.A.U. personnel.

(\*) (See Map B)

From 18 to 28 January, intensive patrolling was executed to the northeast and east. On the 25th all the units, except Company L, on "cargodore" duties at White Beach were relieved and returned to Regimental control at Mancag. Company L remained at White Beach until the 28th when it rejoined the 3rd Battalion at San Leon. (7) (See Map B)

On 28 January, the 35th Infantry was relieved from Army reserve and reverted back to Division control.

Prior to this period, the 161st RCT had seized Binalonan and San Manuel; the latter being a bitter battle between American Infantry and Japanese Armored forces which resulted in 800 enemy dead and 45 medium and light tanks and four 75mm and 10cm artillery pieces destroyed or captured. (8) (See Map B).

The 27th RCT, in its zone of action, had secured the Binalonan - Urdaneta Highway, seized Asingan, crossed the Agno River and seized Santa Maria on the east bank. While the 161st RCT was engaged at San Manuel, this left the 27th RCT with an exposed flank, so the Division Commander ordered them to withdraw to the west bank of the Agno to narrow the already large gap between the two RCTs and straighten out the Division line.

(9) (See Map B)

(7) A-1, p.9,10,11; (8) A-2, p.24; (9) A-2, p.25; (\*) personal knowledge.

It had become evident that the Japanese delaying forces in the Central Plains consisted of elements of the 2nd Armored Division. This piecemeal commitment had been forced on General Yamashita by the transfer of other Japanese forces to the Leyte front in 1944. (10)

MANOAG TO UMINGAN, 28-30 JANUARY 1945

On 27 January 1945, the Commanding General I Corps had redesignated the Division zone of action. The Division was ordered to hold all ground north of the Agno River in the Asingan - San Manuel area with one RCT (161st) until relieved by the 32nd Infantry Division, and to attack to the east and southeast and seized the line Lupao - Munoz(excluded). (See Map B)

The 27th RCT and the 35th RCT, on the right, jumped off at 0800, 28 January. The 27th had the mission of cutting the Rosales - San Leon - Umingan road at Pemienta and setting up a roadblock, and moving into position to attack Umingan; the 35th with the mission of advancing along both sides of the Rosales - San Leon road and also moving into position to attack Umingan. The Division Reconnaissance Troop screened the right flank by patrolling to Lupao, San Isidro, San Jose and Munoz maintaining contact with the 6th Infantry Division on the right flank. (11) (See Map B)

At 0500, 28 January, the 3rd Battalion moved by truck from Manoag to Asingan, crossed the Agno River by ponton bridge to Santa Maria, and the south to Rosales. From Rosales a motorized patrol had been sent along the Rosales - San Leon - Umingan road and had found San Leon unoccupied; so the 3rd Battalion continued to a point 1000 yards west of San Leon, where the road became impassable to motor vehicles. The 3rd Battalion de-trucked and marched into San Leon, setting up a perimeter on

(10) Statement of Major Charles F. Brewster Jr., S-2, 35th Infantry in January 1945; (11) A-2, p.25.

the northeast edge of the town. (\*) (See Map B)

The 1st Battalion meanwhile had moved from Manoag to Asingan by motor, detrucked and marched to Santa Maria and then south to San Matias where they bivouacked for the night.

The 2nd Battalion marched from Manoag to Santa Maria and established a perimeter as security for the Division Command Post and to act as Division reserve. The 35th Command Post moved and set up in its new location at San Alfonso. (\*) (See Map B)

On 29 January, the 3rd Battalion continued its advance with Company K patrolling along the railroad from San Leon to San Quintin, across the 1st Battalion's zone of advance; and Company L patrolled southeast to the Casilan River. Company I, making the main effort, advanced along the San Leon - Umingan road with the mission of securing Gonzales. At 0830 Company I made contact with a small Japanese delaying force at San Isidro; after a short fire fight, involving machine guns and mortars, the Japanese withdrew and Company I continued its advance. By 1545, advance elements of the company reached Gonzales and came under machine gun and mortar fire from the East, which proved to be a Japanese tank supported by a platoon or so of infantry, which withdrew during the night. By 2000 all companies of the 3rd Battalion had closed in the vicinity of Gonzales and dug-in for the night. (\*) (See Map B)

The morning of the 29th found the 1st Battalion with a 6000 yard gap between its right flank and the 3rd Battalion. The Battalion advanced slowly to the southeast, over flat terrain cut by many small streams, with the primary objective of catching up to the 3rd Battalion. Extensive patrolling was necessary on the right flank to flush out the Japanese patrols operating between the two battalions. Company C, 65th Engineer Combat Battalion accompanied the 1st Battalion, constructing a "dozer" road along the Battalion's line of march. At times the (\*) personal knowledge - 9 -

lead bull-dozer was operating with the advance guard of the Battalion. The unfordable Bahili River, which flowed across the route of advance, proved to be an obstacle until the Engineers constructed a crossing passable for vehicles. By nightfall, the 1st Battalion had advanced to a line running from La Paz on the right, northwest across the Bahili River to Salvador, without meeting any organized resistance. (\*)  
(See Map B)

On 30 January the 3rd Battalion, with Company L leading, was given the mission of securing the high ground southeast of Caridad. By 1400, this piece of key terrain had been occupied and strong patrols were sent probing towards Umingan and to the east. The 1st Battalion continued to the southeast, meeting scattered Japanese patrols, and by nightfall was astride the San Leon - Umingan road, from Santa Maria to Caridad. (\*)  
(See Map B)

#### 27TH INFANTRY AT PEMIENTA

Meanwhile, the 27th RCT had advanced southeast and occupied Baligayen, then along the trail running through the small barrios of Buenavista and Esperanza and south to the junction with the San Leon - Umingan road, 600 yards west of Pemienta, without any contact with the enemy.

At 1300, 29 January, the advance guard of the 1st Battalion 27th Infantry, advancing east on the San Leon - Umingan road, made contact with the enemy in Pemienta. The 1st Battalion immediately deployed and attacked, and by 1800 had occupied three-fourths of the barrio, at which time the troops dug in for the night. Two roadblocks were established, one 800 yards west of the barrio, with three 37mm AT guns facing west; and the other block on the Western edge of the "barrio", with three 37mm AT guns facing east. (12) (See Map C)

(12) A-2, p.26; (\*) personal knowledge.

From 1915 to 1945, 29 January, Japanese artillery and mortars from Umingan subjected the 1st Battalion perimeter to intense and accurate fire which reached an intensity of 30 rounds per minute; this fire continued intermittently through the rest of the night. At 2000, the first roadblock destroyed two Japanese tanks approaching from the west, but due to increasing enemy fire and expenditure of all ammunition were forced to withdraw. While this was taking place, the second roadblock shifted their guns to face west and added an M-7 (105mm Howitzer SP) to face the threat of further attacks from the west. (13)  
(See Map C)

At 2345, an enemy motorized column, advancing east on the San Leon - Umingan road, passed through the vacated first block and approached the second block. As the column approached the block, fires from the 37mm AT guns, the M-7 and "Bazookas", as well as normal and emergency barrages of the Division artillery, were brought down upon it.

The lead vehicles were hit and caught fire halting the entire column on the road; for the next four hours the battle continued with the Japanese unlimbering 10cm howitzers and bringing point blank fire on the Battalion's positions. Small groups of Japanese made "banzai" charges continuously until 0430, 30 January, at which time contact was broken and the Japanese withdrew, leaving the wreckage of 44 tracked, semi-tracked and wheeled vehicles and 123 dead on the road. (14)  
(See Map C)

On 30 January, the 27th RCT was ordered to continue the advance on Umingan, with the mission of cutting the San Quintin - Umingan road and moving into position to attack Umingan from the northwest. (15) (See Map B)

UMINGAN, 31 JANUARY - 2 FEBRUARY 1945

Field Order 6, 25th Infantry Division, 30 January 1945  
(13) A-2, p.26; (14) A-2, p.26; (15) A-2, p.27.

gave the 35th RCT the mission:

"Continue the advance, cut Umingan - Lupao Road  
block hostile forces from Southeast and Northwest."

All troop movements were to be at night. (16)

At 1900, 31 January, the 1st Battalion moved out on a sixteen mile cross-country march, southeast to the Karayogan River, then east to the Umingan - Lupao road. By 1100, 1 February, roadblocks were established at Masiil-Siil and San Roque, thereby cutting off the Japanese garrison at Umingan from retreating to or receiving reinforcements from Lupao. (\*)

(See Map B)

The 3rd Battalion followed the 1st Battalion, maintaining contact by patrols, and went into an assembly area 1500 yards southeast of Umingan, astride and blocking the secondary road to Umingan. (\*) (See Map B)

Ammunition supply was a critical factor on the advance; the 1st Battalion having to break trail for the entire sixteen miles, was unable to use any transportation. The 81mm Platoon was stripped down to two mortars and all personnel of the platoon, plus the A & P Platoon, carried mortar ammunition. The Machine Gun Platoons had to hand-carry their weapons and ammunition; and, being unable to take along the 37mm AT guns, extra 2.36" rockets were carried by all units of the Battalion.

Company C, 65th Engineer Combat Battalion followed closely behind the 1st Battalion, laboring all through the night, and by 0800, 1 February had constructed a road by hand that would take vehicles up to  $\frac{3}{4}$  ton.

The 2nd Battalion, still under Division control, on the night of 30-31 January had marched from Santa Maria to Gonzales. On the night of 31 January - 1 February, they marched cross-country and went into position astride the Umingan - Lupao road north of Masiil-Siil. (\*) (See Map B)

(16) A-1, p.13; (\*) personal knowledge.

At 0700, 1 February, a 2nd Battalion roadblock on the Umingan - Lupao road proved the effectiveness of the 37mm cannister shell against personnel. A group of 23 Japanese soldiers in column of two were advancing south on the Umingan - Lupao road, driving several head of carabao ahead of them. The 37mm gun crew let the animals pass and then fired two rounds of cannister at point blank range. The result was both gratifying and effective, 20 dead and 3 mortally wounded. (\*)

Intelligence reports indicated the Japanese would defend Umingan in strength, with a force estimated at 500 men. They had prepared fortifications to defend against an attack from any or all directions utilizing a concentration of anti-tank weapons, with emphasis on shifting of supporting weapons, to cover any sector for a concentration of firepower. (17)

On 1 February, the 27th Infantry, following an air strike and artillery preparation, attacked Umingan from the northeast and northwest employing two battalions abreast. The 1st Battalion on the right reached a point 250 yards from the "poblacion" before the artillery barrage lifted, but could make no further progress due to intense 47mm, machine gun and rifle fire. An effort was made to employ tanks, but this proved impractical due to the boggy condition of the rice paddies. The 3rd Battalion attacking south astride the San Quintin - Umingan road advanced to within 150 yards of the "barrio" of Nancalabasan, before being pinned down by intense enemy fire. This battalion continued to make limited gains throughout the day and reached the edge of Umingan before digging in for the night. The 2nd Battalion, initially in reserve, was committed as the interior battalion in the attack; after meeting stubborn resistance, they located a covered approach into the "poblacion" through a creek bed on the left flank of the 1st Battalion. By nightfall, a penetration into (17) A-2, p.25; (\*) personal knowledge.

Umingan had been accomplished. (18) (See Map D)

At this time, the Division Commander ordered the 35th Infantry to use two battalions in a coordinated attack from the south and southeast. A patrol from the 3rd Battalion had entered Umingan from the southwest and found that the Japanese had prepared positions in the Southern sector of the "poblacion". ~~Although~~ these were lightly held, as most of the Japanese were concentrated in the Northern sector opposing the 27th Infantry. The 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 27th were ordered to maintain pressure to their front until contact was made with the 3rd Battalion of the 35th; the 3rd Battalion of the 27th was to continue the attack from the northeast. (19) (See Map D)

The 2nd Battalion, released from Division control, was ordered to move that night back to a line of departure 1500 yards southeast of Umingan and attack at 0800, 2 February. During this move they were attacked by an estimated company of the enemy; this opposition was repulsed after a short engagement and the surviving elements by-passed. (20) (See Map D)

The 3rd Battalion was ordered to move to a line of departure south of Umingan and attack the Western half of the "poblacion" from the south at 0730, 2 February. (\*) (See Map D)

On 2 February, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions jumped off on schedule against light resistance; by 0930 they had occupied the Southern half of Umingan, with the Japanese crowded into a narrow sector between the 27th and 35th in the Northern half. The major problem here, was the coordination of fires between the 27th and 35th, as the gap between regiments was only 200 yards in some places and mortar and machine gun fires from all sides were concentrated on the Japanese. By 1000, the Japanese resistance was contained by the 27th in the Northwest portion of the town; the 3rd Battalion, having established contact with the 1st Battalion of the 27th, was relieved. The 2nd Battalion (18) A-2, p.28; (19) A-2, p.28; (20) A-1, p.13; (\*) personal knowledge.

was relieved later in the morning, leaving the 27th to finish mopping up isolated pillboxes and small pockets of enemy resistance in the cemetery and the area south of it. (21)

(See Map D)

Here for the first time, we met determined resistance by Japanese units other than the 2nd Armored Division. Umingan was defended by the 3rd Battalion, 26th Independent Mixed Regiment and the 2nd Company, 63rd Infantry, 10th Infantry Division. Prior enemy action had consisted of delaying actions by scattered elements of the 2nd Armored Division. The Japanese motorized column, destroyed at the Pemienta roadblock, consisted of one tank company and two batteries of self-propelled artillery from the 2nd Armored Division proceeding to Umingan as reinforcements. Had this column reached Umingan that night, they would have had ample time to dig in their tanks and artillery pieces, thus making a formidable addition to the defenses. (21a) (\*)

#### LUPAO, 2 - 8 FEBRUARY 1945

The fall of Umingan and the relief of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions paved the way for the 35th Infantry's attack on Lupao. During the assault on Umingan, the 1st Battalion had maintained a block astride the Umingan - Lupao road, south of Masil-Sil; prepared to launch the attack on Lupao when ordered. (See Map B)

Lupao was located along the Umingan - San Jose road at the junction with the secondary road from Munoz. The "poblacion" was surrounded by rice paddies with bamboo groves and heavy thickets along the outer edges. (22) (See Maps B & E)

A word about rice paddies. They are Normandy hedgerows in miniature. About fifty feet to a side, they are all at different levels to facilitate flooding; dikes a foot thick, sun-baked to the hardness of brick and covered by grass, separate them. Cover was excellent for fifty feet, but you had to climb over the dike to get to the next bit of cover! Japanese fire (21) A-2, p.28; (21a) A-2, p.28; (22) A-1, p.15; (\*) personal knowledge.

was sited to cover the tops of these dikes, with the natural results. The whole area was as flat as a pool table, and graduated down from the town, with no place from which the attacking forces could observe. All the advantage was with the defenders.

(23) (See Map E)

Lupao was considered to be a minor point in the Japanese network of defenses protecting Highway #5, their main escape route from Manila to the Baguio and Cagayen Valley areas. The Japanese strength was thought to be concentrated at Umingan, San Isidro and San Jose. Intelligence obtained from civilians and Guerrillas indicated that the town was held by a company of Infantry and three or four companies of tanks. (24)

(See Map B)

Field Order 2, 35th Infantry, 2 February 1945, directed the 1st Battalion not only to advance immediately to seize and secure Lupao by 1800, 2 February, but to send patrols to the south, reconnoiter for a road to the east and establish a block on this road. The 2nd Battalion was to follow the 1st Battalion to reach San Roque by dark, and the 3rd Battalion was ordered to move to Masiil-Siil as Regimental reserve. (25) (See Map B)

On the afternoon of 2 February, the 1st Battalion, B Company leading, jumped off and made excellent progress until it ran into heavy fire from machine guns, mortars and light artillery. These came from a small barrio north of Lupao proper, bordered by a copse of woods running vertical to the road. Later investigation revealed that the strong point of this area was a 15 foot erosion ditch, fully exploited both for cover and concealment. A 75mm AT gun was in the center, commanding the road from San Roque for 500 yards; this was reinforced by a 75mm Mountain gun and a 47mm AT gun. Supporting riflemen and machine guns were dug in for 500 yards to the left. The right flank was secured by two dug-in tanks across the road. The Battalion withdrew at dark, and artillery and mortar fire was laid on the enemy positions, knocking out the 75mm AT gun. (26) (See Map E)

(23) A-1, p.15; (24,25,26) A-1, p. 15-16.

On 3 February, the 1st Battalion resumed the attack but was unable to make any further progress. The 3rd Battalion was ordered to cut around the east flank of Lupao, cut the Lupao - San Jose road, and prepare to attack from the south; this envelopment was completed by 1400. Engineer bulldozers, operating with the advance guard of the Battalion, constructed a dozer road to facilitate the advance. That night, the 1st Battalion again withdrew to permit heavy artillery and 4.2 inch mortar fire to be brought down on the enemy positions. It was apparent that the Japanese were concentrated in the northern sector of the "poblacion". (\*) (See Map E)

On the morning of 4 February, the 3rd Battalion attacked from the south with I and K companies abreast. This attack was to draw the Japanese down from the north, permitting the 1st Battalion to continue the attack, three hours later, against a supposedly weakened position. Here was an under-estimate of the enemy capabilities, as we shall see later. (\*)

I and K Companies, closely following an artillery barrage, were able to advance 200 yards before being pinned down by fire from six camouflaged tanks; it seemed as if every hut and thicket concealed a tank. After suffering heavy casualties, both companies withdrew back to their line of departure, under the protective fire of the artillery and mortars. At 1800, the same attack was repeated, and this time was more successful as both companies gained the edge of the town, before digging in for the night. (27)

L Company was initially in reserve, with the 1st Platoon providing protection for the forward Command Post. At 0900 a Japanese tank broke through and, though hit by 37mm fire, overran one AT gun before being finally knocked out by Captain Fair, L Company Commander, with a "bazooka". The rest of the company was committed to the flank and rear protection of the Battalion; (27) A-1, p.16; (\*) personal knowledge.

so it was necessary to bring up E Company to keep the bulldozer road open for supplies and evacuation. (28)

The 1st Battalion's attack was delayed by a Japanese counter-attack, spearheaded by three tanks; this attack was repulsed by 1130 and the attack continued with A and C Companies abreast. B Company was in position astride the dry stream-bed and irrigation canal, securing the left flank of the Battalion. A Company attacking along the road was stopped at the edge of the "barrio" by heavy tank and machine gun fire; C Company having maneuvered around south of the "barrio", knocked out three tanks loaded with troops, before withdrawing to position in line with A Company, due to expenditure of all "bazooka" ammunition. (\*) (See Map E)

Obviously, the Japanese were not going to be tricked into weakening their defense at the North end of Lupao. The next step, then, was to hit them still harder from the south. The 2nd Battalion moved around by the bulldozer road to a line of departure on the right of the 3rd Battalion, ready to attack by 1300, 5 February. (29) (See Map E)

At 0845, 5 February, the 3rd Battalion had jumped off after a five minute artillery preparation, with I, K and L Companies abreast. I and K Companies, supported by M-7s and Sherman tanks, advanced 200 yards before being pinned down by the fire from six camouflaged, dug-in tanks, two of which were knocked out by the M-7s and Shermans. L Company, on the left, ran into tanks and supporting machine guns and riflemen before crossing their line of departure. After heavy fighting they reached the school house astride the Munoz road, having suffered casualties including the company commander. The 2nd Battalion attacked at this time, with G Company passing through K Company. Both battalions continued the attack and, by nightfall, had occupied the Southern half of the "poblacion". (\*) (See Map E)

(28) A-1, p.17; (29) A-1, p.17; (\*) personal knowledge.

The 1st Battalion attempted to continue the attack, but with the Japanese defense as strong as ever, they could make no progress. For the rest of the battle, the 1st Battalion contained the enemy with a holding attack. (30)

On 6 February the 2nd and 3rd Battalions continued the attack at 0730, with E and G Companies abreast on the right of the road, and I and L Companies abreast on the left. By 1000, both battalions had reached the last road before the North edge of Lupao, after knocking out ten tanks. As there were strong Japanese positions in the woods north of the "poblacion", the battalions withdrew several hundred yards to allow artillery concentrations to be brought down on the Japanese; following this, the work of finding and knocking out the dug-in tanks continued until nightfall, when the battalions dug in for the night. Tanks could be heard moving all during the night. Harassing fire by 4.2 mortars and artillery was used on the Japanese positions all that night. (31) (See Map E)

The morning of the 7th was spent in patrolling, trying to locate the concealed tanks and the approaches to them. Three Shermans and two M-7s had been attached to each battalion, and the entire day was devoted to tank hunting. By nightfall, ten more tanks had been knocked out and the battalions dug in for the night with little or no gain from the previous day's positions. (32)

During this day's action, a crew member of an M-7 performed an act of heroism beyond the call of duty. The M-7 was advancing down a street to engage an enemy tank, when it was caught in the cross-fire of another tank and a 47mm AT gun; the M-7 sustained seven direct hits through the front and side armor, two of them HE-AT, killing or wounding the driver and five crew members. The sole, unwounded survivor, although ordered to leave the M-7, jumped down into the driver's seat and, sitting

(30,31,32) A-1, p.18; (\*) personal knowledge.

on the decapitated body of the driver, backed the vehicle out of the line of fire. (\*)

The night of 7-8 February saw the collapse of the organized resistance in Lupao. Eleven Japanese tanks attempted to break out through the 35th Infantry's lines; six were destroyed and five broke through B Company's lines and raced for the foothills, east of Lupao, where they attempted to shell our positions but were unsuccessful, due to their inability to sufficiently depress their tank guns. These tanks were later found, deserted by their crews. (33) See Map E)

At 1000, 8 February, both battalions continued mopping up the remaining enemy positions and, by 1015, contact was made between G and B Companies. At 1130, the town of Lupao was declared secure by the Regimental Commander, Colonel Stanley R. Larsen. As a climax, an American flag, which had been secreted in the Municipal Building of Lupao during the Japanese occupation, was hoisted at noon over the town square. (34)

The 35th Infantry lost ninety-six killed and two hundred and sixty-eight wounded; the Japanese lost 842 killed, 33 tanks and 3 artillery pieces destroyed. The estimate of the Japanese strength in Lupao was in error, as evidenced by the following units identified:

3rd, 4th and 6th Co's, 10th Tank Regiment  
2nd Company, 7th Rank Regiment  
6th Company, 2nd Armored Division Maint. Unit  
Elements of 2nd Mobile Infantry Regiment  
Elements of 2nd Armored Division Engineers. (35)

An appreciation of the mission performed by the 35th Infantry at Lupao is expressed in part, in the letter from Major General Innis P. Swift, Commanding General I Corps:

"In this operation the destruction of a large number of tanks and other vehicles, and the annihil-

(33,34) A-1, p.19; (35) A-2, p.31.

ation of enemy forces possessing many automatic weapons was accomplished under difficult conditions by infantry troops. This reflects a high state of training, skill, and confidence in the use of organic infantry weapons." (36)

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In analyzing the operations of the 35th Infantry, three distinct facts stand out from the mass of comments that can be made about the operation as a whole.

The Japanese, although failing to employ their 2nd Armored Division intact in the early stages of the campaign, did employ elements of the Division in a series of skillful, well executed delaying actions. Their use of dug-in tanks and supporting weapons, mutually supporting and massed in depth, at Lupao, was an excellent example of the doctrine and principles of defense. Throughout the campaign on the Luzon Plains, their skillful employment of numerically inferior forces in well-organized defensive positions, delayed the advance of two of our divisions sufficiently to allow the escape of some of their forces north from Manila and construction of defenses in the Caraballo Mountains, guarding the approaches to the Cagayan Valley.

A major criticism of our troops, was the lack of and failure to properly utilize reconnaissance. Both at Umingan and Lupao, the failure to determine the location and extent of the Japanese defensive positions caused needless casualties in many instances.

The last criticism is the failure to employ Napalm bombs, which were available, by the supporting Air Forces to burn out the bamboo groves at Lupao, thus exposing the tank positions; as was done very successfully in all remaining battles of the Luzon Campaign.  
(36) A-1, p.61.

## LESSONS

Some of the lessons emphasized by these operations are:

1. The effects of a long period aboard transports, without exercise, is detrimental to the physical condition of troops. Had the 35th Infantry been committed to combat, initially upon landing, their poor physical condition would have been disastrous.

2. In amphibious landings, the failure to provide sufficient numbers of service troops places a burden on the combat troops, in having to furnish a large portion of their forces for "cargodore" duties on the beach, over an extended period of time.

3. That enveloping maneuvers of troops at night, if skillfully executed, can effect one of the Principles of War, that of surprise.

4. That thorough reconnaissance prior to and during battle is of the utmost importance.

5. That the Infantry - Tank fighter team, when closely coordinated in mutual support, can be effective in close-in fighting against strong enemy defenses.

6. That the 37mm AT gun does not have sufficient punch against medium tanks except at minimum range.

7. That the AT rifle grenade and "bazooka" is not effective against tanks, naturally or artificially camouflaged, as the camouflage deflects or causes premature detonation of the projectile before penetration.

8. That the re-supply of ammunition, particularly AT grenades, 2.36 inch rockets and AT gun rounds, to units engaged in combat, must be executed at all costs.