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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 5307TH COMPOSITE UNIT (PROVISIONAL)
IN NORTH BURMA, 27 APRIL - 27 MAY 1944
(INDIA-BURMA CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Counter Intelligence Corps Officer)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY REGIMENT (PROVISIONAL)
ON A LONG RANGE PENETRATION MISSION IN JUNGLE TERRAIN

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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 5307TH COMPOSITE UNIT (PROVISIONAL)
"MERRILL'S MARAUDERS," IN NORTH BURMA, 27 APRIL - 27 MAY 1944
(INDIA-BURMA CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Counter Intelligence Corps Officer)

ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), Merrill's Marauders, in North Burma, from 27 April to 27 May 1944, during the India-Burma Campaign.

In January 1942, the Japanese invaded BURMA with two divisions which they had concentrated in SOUTHERN THAILAND. MOULMEIN was taken on 30 January, and although the SALWEEN and SITTANG RIVER crossings were bitterly contested by British, Indian, and Burmese forces, aided by the Royal Air Force, and the American Volunteer Group, (Flying Tigers), (1) later to become the 23d Pursuit Group, U.S.A.A.F., (2) these forces were quickly overwhelmed by Japanese superiority in planes, men, and equipment. RANGOON, the capital and principal port, fell 8 March, and the Japanese immediately began moving to the north. (See Map A) One Japanese division pushed up the SITTANG RIVER where Major General (later General) Joseph W. Stilwell was deploying his Chinese forces for defense of the BURMA ROAD*. The other Japanese division pushed up the IRRAWADDY RIVER, driving the Burmese and Indian defenders before it. TOUNGOO

(1) A-2, p. 3

(2) A-1, p. 32, 33

*The Burma Road extends from Rangoon to Chungking, China, approximately 1445 miles. The "Road" actually consists of a railroad from Rangoon to Lashio, a new motor road from Lashio to Kunming, China, and an old highway from Kunming to Chungking.

on the SITTANG RIVER, and PROME on the IRRAWADDY RIVER were seized early in April. From PROME the Japanese pushed north to YENANGYAUNG, then west, and on 4 May 1942, occupied the port of AKYAB on the BAY OF BENGAL. (See Map A) (3)

The Japanese landed two additional divisions at RANGOON and drove rapidly north into the upper SALWEEN valley, where they occupied LASHIO, junction of the rail and highway sections of the BURMA ROAD. (See Map A) MANDALAY was evacuated by the Chinese troops deployed there for its defense, and was occupied by the Japanese on 1 May. From LASHIO the enemy pushed up the SALWEEN valley well into CHINA. In north central BURMA they proceeded north along the IRRAWADDY RIVER almost to FORT HERTZ, and occupied KALEWA on the CHINDWIN RIVER. (See Map A) (4)

British, Burmese, and Indian survivors retreated up the CHINDWIN valley and across the CHIN HILLS, while the decimated remnants of the Chinese forces retired to INDIA via SCHINGBWIYANG. As no motor road or railroad connected INDIA with BURMA, the withdrawal was made entirely by foot. (5)

The monsoon rains of June found the Japanese holding all of BURMA except for the undesirable fringes of mountain, jungle, and swamps on the north and west. The Japanese continued pressure along the coast from AKYAB and by October 1942, despite stubborn British resistance, had reached the frontier of BENGAL, a province of INDIA. In February 1943, the enemy launched an

- (3) A-2, p. 3
- (4) A-2, p. 3
- (5) A-2, p. 4

offensive northwest from MYITKYINA, closing in on SUMPRABUM, thus threatening to destroy the British-led KACHIN* LEVIES operating in that area. (6)

The Japanese conquest of BURMA seriously menaced INDIA and cut the last land route of supplies to CHINA. (See Map A)

In addition to its strategic value, the seizure of BURMA by the Japanese was well worth the effort. The paddy fields of the valley and delta of the IRRAWADDY RIVER normally yielded seven million tons of rice. This crop solved a major supply problem for the rice-eating Japanese garrison; while any large scale Allied offensive in Burma would necessitate the Allied being supplied from far-away INDIAN bases. In their withdrawal, the British had destroyed the fields, and demolished the refinery of the rich oilfield area near YENANGYAUNG. This denied the petroleum to the enemy, but it would have been a great asset to the Allied mobility had they been able to retain it, as these field normally produced 250,000,000 gallons per year. In addition, the wolfram mines on the SALWEEN RIVER, the largest single source of Tungsten in the world, were in the hands of the enemy. (7)

The occupation of the inner basin of BURMA gave the Japanese two distinct advantages for future military operations. First, they were occupying areas least affected by either monsoon or malaria, both of which are major factors to be considered when

(6) A-2, p. 4

(7) A-4, p. 14

*The Kachins inhabit North Burma and are active traders; and in addition mine amber and jade found in the area around Myitkyina. They practice nature worship, in contrast to Buddhism of the more civilized Burmans to the south. When organized by British and Americans, the Kachins were extremely helpful as guides and auxiliary troops in the campaign against the Japanese.

planning campaigns in affected areas. Secondly, the Japanese enjoyed a far better system of land communications than did the Allies. (8)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

At the Quebec Conference in August 1943, Lord Louis Mountbatten was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Southeast Asia Command, which included the China-Burma-India Theater of Operations. (9) As a result of a decision made at this conference, the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional) was to be organized to participate in the BURMA operations. This decision was made upon the request of Brigadier Orde C. Wingate for 3,000 jungle trained American Infantrymen to be organized under his direction into "Long Range Penetration Groups." Brigadier Wingate had enjoyed marked success with long range penetration units of the British Army in BURMA and was expected to direct the American force in its operations in BURMA. (10) By January 1944, the three battalions comprising the provisional unit had been transported to INDIA, organized, trained, and equipped for employment, and on 8 January was assigned to General Stilwell's field command in NORTH BURMA. (11) He expected to use it to facilitate the seizure of key points by his main Chinese forces which were beginning their drive against the Japanese 18th Division. (12)

(8) A-4, p. 14,15

(9) A-4, p. 43

(10) A-9

(11) A-2, p. 8

(12) A-2, p. 16

*The 31st and 33d Quartermaster Pack Troops, a detachment of the 835th Signal Service Battalion, and a platoon of the 502d Military Police Battalion were added to the unit in January.

In 1944, the British began offensive operations in the AKYAB and IMPHAL area, while Chinese troops attacked astride the BURMA ROAD, along the SALWEEN RIVER in southwestern CHINA. Chinese troops under the command of General Stilwell began offensive operations in the area southeast of LEDO. (See Map A) (13) Five veteran Japanese Divisions were in BURMA, and they also were ready to resume the offense. The 55th Division on the AKYAB front was extremely aggressive, while on the CHINDWIN RIVER, the 15th, 31st, and the 33d, were organizing for a strong offensive. The 18th Division, the conquerors of SINGAPORE, stood ready to oppose any advance in NORTH BURMA. (14)

The American-trained Chinese 22d and 38th Divisions, under the command of General Stilwell, began their offensive to clear the route of the LEDO ROAD. (15) The LEDO ROAD is the key to an understanding of the 1944 campaign in NORTHERN BURMA. The Combined Chiefs of Staff had recognized the importance of giving CHINA sufficient support to keep her in the war; and accordingly, as a result of a decision made at the CASABLANCA CONFERENCE in January 1943, the Combined Chiefs directed that surface communications be re-established with CHINA and the flow of air supply over the Hump be increased. (16) The resumption of land communications with CHINA had become a main aim of Allied strategy, but only a complete defeat of the Japanese in BURMA would give the

(13) A-3, p. 62

(14) A-2, p. 7

(15) A-3, p. 62

(16) A-3, p. 55

Allies the old route from RANGOON to CHINA. The LEDO ROAD was a daring effort to build a new road from NORTHEAST INDIA across NORTH BURMA, linking up with the BURMA ROAD at the frontier of CHINA. The base of departure in INDIA had rail and water communications with the larger ports of INDIA, as well as several large air fields. Included in the plans for the LEDO ROAD was the construction of a pipeline consisting of two 4-inch lines to carry gasoline pumped from INDIA to CHINA, thereby relieving the road and air traffic. This pipeline was to parallel the road as much as practicable. (17)

By early February the Allied offensive was making good progress, and the highway had been extended some 100 miles from LEDO, although the main Japanese defenses had not been reached. The 5307th Composite Unit arrived at LEDO, and General Stilwell sent it on a wide envelopment across the mountains to reach the rear of the Japanese opposing the advance of his Chinese troops. (18)

The terrain in NORTH BURMA is a veritable mass of large rivers and small streams, dense jungles, and sharp hills and mountains. The main routes of communication are native footpaths and narrow cart tracks, throughout 95% of the entire area. The climate is a tropical monsoon area with extremely heavy rainfall; average rainfall in NORTH BURMA is 75 to 100 inches per year. During the period from March to June the weather is excessively hot and humid. (19) The Marauders crossed mountains 8,000 feet

(17) A-2, p. 16-18

(18) A-3, p. 62

(19) A-6, p. 2, 3

high and moved over extremely difficult terrain in their efforts to gain access to the enemy's rear. Pack mules were used and in addition to all supplies being received by air, all casualties were evacuated by air, which in many cases necessitated the construction of air strips in the jungle so that light liaison aircraft could land to pick up their patients. After penetrating to the enemy rear areas the Marauders established road blocks, ambushed supply trains and groups of enemy reinforcements, and generally harassed the Japanese 18th Division forces opposing the advance of the Chinese. (20)

By 27 April 1944, the Marauders had at last reached striking distance of MYITKYINA, and its adjacent airfield, which was the only hard-surfaced airdrome in NORTH BURMA. The Marauders were nearly exhausted however, having fought for almost three months and could not go much longer without rest and reinforcement. (21) General Stilwell's 22d and 38th Chinese Divisions were fighting toward KAMAING, while in the IRRAWADDY valley, north of MYITKYINA, the British-led KACHIN and GURKHA* forces were fighting south toward a large Japanese supply base at NSOPZUP, after having recaptured SUMPRABUM. (See Map A) (22) MYITKYINA, utilized by the Japanese as their principal base for the defense of BURMA from the north, is situated 170 air miles southeast of LEDO, and is the northernmost point of a railroad from RANGOON, as well as the head of navigation of the IRRAWADDY RIVER. It lay

(20) A-3, p. 62

(21) A-3, p. 62

(22) A-2, p. 93

*The Gurkhas inhabit Nepal province in India and are extremely warlike. They have served Great Britain for many years in organized Infantry Regiments, and are noted for their ferocity, aggressiveness, amenability to orders and discipline, and their adaptability to the rigors of hard campaigning.

in the proposed path of the LEDO ROAD, approximately 170 air miles from the BURMA ROAD junction at LASHIO. The capture of the town and its airfield would dispose of the principal air base from which Japanese aircraft had harassed American transport planes flying supplies to CHINA. In addition, the capture of MYITKYINA by the Allies would quickly paralyze Japanese operations in NORTH BURMA. (23)

The Marauders were physically worn out, having marched and fought through several hundred miles of exceedingly difficult terrain since 9 February, and during most of that 80-day period they had lived exclusively on K-Rations, in addition nearly all of the men had suffered to some extent from dysentary and fevers. The unit had lost some 700 men killed, wounded, and sick, from their original strength of approximately 3,000. All supply and evacuation had been carried out satisfactorily by air, however there were no American replacements in the theater to refill the Marauder ranks. General Stilwell was forced to reinforce the three battalions of the Marauders with the 88th and 150th Chinese Regiments and approximately 300 Kachins to provide sufficient strength for the mission. (24) The Marauders were organized into three groups, designated as H-Force, composed of the 1st Marauder Battalion, and the 150th Chinese Regiment, commanded by Colonel Charles N. Hunter; M-Force, composed of the 2d Marauder Battalion, and the 88th Chinese Regiment, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel George A. McGee, Jr.; and K-Force, composed of the 3d

(23) A-2, p. 94

(24) A-2, p. 94

Marauder Battalion, and 300 Kachins, commanded by Colonel Henry L. Kinnison, Jr. Artillery support consisted of one battery of 75-mm pack howitzers of the Chinese 22d Division attached to H-Force, while the one battery of 75-mm pack howitzers organic to the 5307th Composite Unit was attached to K-Force for the mission. (25)

NARRATION

THE MOVE TO MYITKYINA

Moving out on 28 April, they established several road blocks behind the enemy lines to screen the main effort and directed a strong column toward MYITKYINA. (See Map B) The column crossed over the KUMON RANGE, which rose in this area to over 6,000 feet. The trail selected for use had been reported impassable and had not been used in ten years. Captain William A. Laffin, and Second Lieutenant Paul A. Dunlap with 30 Kachin Levies, and 30 coolies were assigned the mission of preceding the main column and repairing the worst places along the route. In spite of the extreme difficulty caused by the monsoon rains and low clouds, air drops were carried out successfully. Rain fell daily, and the damp heat was stifling. Footholds had to be cut in some places where the trail was so steep that pack animals could not negotiate it otherwise. In places no path of any sort could be found despite the work of Captain Laffin's advance group. Twenty pack animals with their loads of ammunition and weapons slipped on the uncertain footing of the hillsides and plunged to their death in the valleys far below. (26) Office of Strategic

(25) A-2, p. 95; A-9

(26) A-2, p. 97,98,100

Services Detachment 101 furnished the force a Kachin guide who led them on a circuitous route through jungle and paddy fields in order to reach MYITKYINA unobserved by either Japanese or natives. The guide, NAUIYANG NAU, was bitten by a poisonous snake at 2030 on 15 May, just as the force reached the upper NAMKWI RIVER, about 15 miles from the objective. He attempted to go on, but within a short time he was unable to walk on his badly swollen foot. Without his guidance the Marauders were practically immobilized. Captain Laffin and Lieutenant Dunlap made an incision at the spot where the snake's fangs had penetrated Nau's feet and for two hours sucked poison from the wound. By 0230 the Kachin had recovered sufficiently to mount Colonel Hunter's horse and continue leading the column toward its objective for the night. (27)

H Force resumed its march at noon on 16 May and crossed the NAMKWI RIVER, near the village of NAMKWI. K Force was fainting toward the enemy supply base at NSOPZUP, some twenty miles to the north, while M Force was blocking roads and trails and screening the maneuver some thirty miles to the northwest. (See Map B) The only two natives who had observed the column had been taken along with the force to prevent their alerting the Japanese garrison at MYITKYINA. In view of the fact that his force was now only some four miles from the MYITKYINA air strip, Colonel Hunter took more precautions to keep the movement of his force unknown. The Kachin guerillas assisted his men in rounding up all the inhabitants of NAMKWI, some of whom were known to be pro-Japanese,

(27) A-2, p. 106

and confined them within H Force's lines until morning. In order to maintain secrecy of the Marauders' arrival so close to the airfield, neither railroad nor telegraph line was cut. (28)

THE PLAN FOR THE ATTACK ON MYITKYINA AIR STRIP

Colonel Hunter selected the time for the attack on the airstrip as 1000, 17 May. His plan called for the 1st Battalion of the 5307th, under Lieutenant Colonel Osborne, to lead the Chinese 150th Regiment to the southwest end of the field and leave them to attack the air strip at that point. Colonel Osborne and his men were to move southwest and secure the ferry terminal at PAMATI. By controlling this terminal, the Marauders had possession of the nearest crossing of the IRRAWADDY RIVER. The plan for the attack on the air strip was based on information brought back by a six-man patrol under Sergeant Clarence E. Branscomb which enabled Colonel Hunter to accurately estimate the number of Japanese troops and Burmese workmen on the airstrip, as well as the fact that the Japanese habitually withdrew during daylight to the thick scrub and bamboo clumps at some distance from the airstrip in order to avoid the strafing of the field by Allied aircraft. (29)

THE ATTACK ON MYITKYINA AIR STRIP

The attack went off as scheduled. The Chinese 150th Regiment was led to the southwest end of the field and launched their attack from that point. The air strip was not strongly defended and the attack came as a complete surprise to the Japanese. Sporadic fighting occurred during the morning, but by

(28) A-2, p. 106

(29) A-2, p. 106

1200 the air strip was in Allied hands. Colonel Osborne pushed on to PAMATI, and by 1100 he had secured the village and ferry terminal. One Company of Marauders, reinforced with Machine Guns, was instructed to hold the ferry site, while the remainder of the Battalion returned to the air strip, where Colonel Hunter ordered the Battalion to seize Zigyun, the main ferry terminal for MYITKYINA. The Battalion left the air strip at 1700 and moved southeast to the IRRAWADDY RIVER near RAMPUR, bivouacing there for the night, prepared to move on ZIGYUN in the morning. (See Map C)

Immediately after seizure of the air strip, Colonel Hunter radioed General Merrill asking for reinforcements and supplies. The air strip could handle transport planes delivering larger cargoes than could be profitably air dropped. Supplies which had been too bulky or too heavy for parachute drops could now be brought in, and light motor transportation could also be made available. The evacuation of casualties could also be carried out much easier now that larger aircraft could be used. Previously the light liaison aircraft had been required for landings on sandbars, rice paddys, or cleared jungle areas, but now larger aircraft could be used on the airstrip. The Chinese 89th Regiment, waiting on rear fields, was ordered to MYITKYINA, and one Battalion arrived from LEDO late in the afternoon. (See Map C) Colonel Hunter also radioed M and K Forces, requesting their assistance and both Forces immediately began a forced march for MYITKYINA. (See Map B)

When it became apparent that the Japanese were not attempting to reinforce their troops near the air strip on 17 May, Colonel Hunter concluded that the enemy did not hold MYITKYINA in strength.

Intelligence reports confirmed his assumption, and although the Maruders were not organized nor equipped for an assault of prepared Japanese positions; he decided to take maximum advantage of his surprise assault by attempting to seize the city. The question confronting Colonel Hunter was whether he or the enemy could build up strength the quicker. (30)

THE PLAN FOR THE ATTACK ON MYITKYINA

General Merrill flew in and established his headquarters, ordering Colonel Hunter to attack MYINTKYINA with the disengaged portion of H Force. Two battalions of the Chinese 150th Regiment were to attack MYITKYINA, while the one battalion of the Chinese 89th Regiment, which had just arrived from LEDO would protect the air strip. The third battalion of the 150th Regiment was to remain in reserve at the air strip. The 1st Marauder Battalion would continue to hold the ferry at PAMATI, with one company reinforced, and the remainder of the battalion would continue toward ZIGYUN to secure the ferry crossing south of MYITKYINA. H Force would then control two of the three approaches to MYITKYINA from the south. (31)

THE ATTACK ON MYITKYINA

On 18 May, the 1st Marauder Battalion (minus) seized RAMPUR where they captured several warehouses of clothing and other supplies. They occupied ZIGYUN without opposition by 1000 and took several Burmese prisoners. While defensive positions were being prepared, the battalion was informed that a company of Chinese was on their way to relieve them and that they were to return to the airfield. This relief was considerably delayed as the Chinese unit engaged several groups of enemy stragglers en

(30) A-9, p. 8

(31) A-2, p. 108

route and consumed 48 hours in reaching ZIGYUN. The Chinese dug in nine times in five miles. On the 18th of May the two battalions of the Chinese 150th Regiment attacked MYITKYINA from the north. After seizing the railroad station, they became involved in confused fighting and had to retire to a position about 800 yards west of the town, where they dug in. (See Map C) (32) The primary reason for the failure of the attack and the confused fighting of the attacking Chinese was the discovery of a supply of native liquor and the looting of a jewelry store. (33) K Force was approaching MYITKYINA from the north, however the guides lost their way about eight miles from the city and the unit was forced to bivouac for the night. With daylight, K Force discovered the MYITKYINA-MOGAUNG road near their perimeter, and they pushed on along this road. Learning of their approach, General Merrill radioed K Force to attack and secure CHARPATE, which they did without appreciable Japanese resistance, and the 3d Marauder Battalion dug in around the village, while the Chinese 88th Regiment moved to the southwest on a line from CHARPATE to the railroad. The mission of the 3d Battalion was to block the MOGAUNG ROAD and to patrol all trails converging on CHARPATE. (34) CHARPATE is situated in the midst of a flat area surrounded by rice paddies. The ground rises slightly four to five hundred yards to the northwest and this high ground was covered with a dense growth of scrub and vines. The 3d Battalion overlooked the importance of this high ground in preparing its defensive position. (See Map D) (35)

(32) A-2, p. 109

(33) A-7, p. 7; Personal knowledge

(34) A-2, p. 109

(35) A-2, p. 109

On 18 May, Lieutenant Colonel Gordon S. Seagraves, the famous "Burma Surgeon" landed on MYITKYINA air strip with four medical officers and eighteen Burmese nurses. He immediately established his small hospital in a revetment adjacent to the air strip and began operating on Chinese casualties. (36)

On 19 May, small bands of Japanese trying to enter MYITKYINA via the MOGAUNG ROAD attempted to penetrate the 3d Battalion position however none of these engagements was serious. (See Map D) (37)

General Merrill began a buildup of his force along the NAMKWI RIVER to the southwest of CHARPATE. The reinforced Company of the 1st Marauder Battalion at the PAMATI ferry was relieved by a company of the Chinese 150th Regiment on 19 May, and the Marauder company returned to NAMKWI to take up a defensive position along the NAMKWI RIVER. M Force reached NAMKWI the evening of the 19th, ill and weak from hunger, for the supplies of food which they had requested and anticipated had not been dropped. Food was secured from H Force, and the unit outposted NAMKWI and patrolled to the west and southwest. General Merrill had now placed his lines so that the Japanese reinforcements could reach MYITKYINA only from across the IRRAWADDY RIVER to the east, or along the MYITKYINA-MANKRIN or MYITKYINA-RADHAPUR roads from the north. The Allies covered all approaches from the northwest, west, southwest, and south. (See Map D) Thus far, the enemy activity had been slight; even the air strip was handling an ever increasing amount of supplies, in spite of continual sniping. (38)

(36) A-10, p. 137

(37) A-2, p. 110

(38) A-2, p. 110

COUNTER INTELLIGENCE CORPS ACTIVITIES AT MYITKYINA

The first Counter Intelligence Corps personnel arrived in MYITKYINA at this time and began preparations for carrying out the counter intelligence mission of the command. (39) British Intelligence Agencies had classified the residents of the area into three categories of security risks. The "Black List" contained the names of persons whose presence in the area was prejudicial to Allied security and whose apprehension and incarceration was desired by the British. The "White List" contained the names of persons who were known to be loyal to the Allied cause and could be trusted to cooperate. The "Gray List" contained the names of persons who could not be placed with certainty in either of the above categories. These lists had been prepared as a result of interrogation of civilian and military personnel fleeing BURMA in 1942, as well as information gained by Brigadier Wingate's long range penetration forces which had operated in SOUTH CENTRAL BURMA. With these lists in their possession the Counter Intelligence Corps Agents undertook the task of screening the large refugee camp which was being established at PAMATI. The Japanese were sending the residents of the town out to the Marauder lines in an attempt not only to cause confusion, but also to conserve for themselves what little food there was in MYITKYINA. The refugees were fed by the Allies in spite of the additional strain on the air supply facilities.

In addition, a few Burmese had made huge profits trafficking in American flyers shot down over BURMA. After having received a large prepaid reward of silver Rupees which the American flyers

(39) Personal knowledge; Statement of Major D.E. Mackenzie, then Commanding Officer, Counter Intelligence Corps, China-Burma-India Theater, 29 May 1944

carried for the purpose of rewarding anyone who helped them return to the Allied lines, the Burman would bury the silver Rupees where he could reclaim them at a later date, and then lead the American flyer into the hands of the Japanese. In this manner the Burman received two bounties; one from the American flyer, and another from the Japanese who were paying large sums for American flyers. Several of these individuals were captured as a result of interrogations of the refugees and investigations conducted in the hills surrounding MYITKYINA. Native labor for use on the air strip was screened and refugees and line crossers were interrogated for information of tactical value. Information was gathered on Japanese strength, morale, supplies, and the location of headquarters and command posts in MYITKYINA. Major White of the British Civil Affairs Service arrived in the area and took charge of the stockade which was housing a large number of Burmese. One young girl was engaged in the dangerous occupation of running Japanese troops through the Marauder lines. After her capture by the Counter Intelligence Corps, she readily admitted that she had led numerous groups of Japanese soldiers through the Kunai grass and jungle surrounding MYITKYINA into the city, using several devious routes whereby she had been able to avoid Marauder or Chinese lines, patrols, or outposts. This young girl was later executed by the British for her assistance to the Japanese in the MYITKYINA campaign.

It was learned from refugees at the PAMATI camp that a number of Japanese comfort girls had been present in MYITKYINA when the city was attacked. The comfort girls were camp followers of various Asiatic races whose mission was to entertain the Japanese troops-- a sort of legalized prostitution. Efforts were immediately made to

locate these women, and one by one they were gradually accounted for; however, one was not found until many months later when she was located living in INDIA. The pilots of transport planes leaving MYITKYINA airstrip for INDIA had been only too glad to furnish transportation to their bases in INDIA for any refugee who had asked, and as a result a close check had to be maintained at the air strip to insure that no civilians left MYITKYINA without authorization. In spite of this security check at the air strip and the briefing of all flying crews landing at MYITKYINA, illegal air traffic flourished.

A pass system was initiated for the refugees and many were given permits to travel away from the combat area, however the majority remained in the refugee camp at PAMATI.

An illicit radio station in the hills surrounding MYITKYINA was broadcasting news of Allied plane arrivals and troops and equipment unloading at the MYITKYINA air strip, and as a result several teams of Counter Intelligence Corps Agents, together with Burmese police, entered the hills in an effort to locate the broadcaster. Signal Intelligence units were employed and after a lengthy, arduous chase one long Japanese and a small, but powerful, radio was captured.

Plans were made to place Counter Intelligence Corps personnel with assault units to insure that trained intelligence personnel were available when Japanese command posts were uncovered. In this manner looting and unnecessary destruction of documents was avoided. Japanese prisoners were evacuated by air to INDIA after a cursory interrogation at MYITKYINA. The Counter Intelligence Corps had several agents present who could speak Japanese and these agents assisted in the interrogations. (40)

(40) Personal knowledge

Meanwhile, General Merrill began forming a Myitkyina Task Force for his planned coordinated attack on the town. This plan involved the reshuffling of all units of his command. The Marauder Battalions were to be combined under the command of Colonel Hunter; and the Chinese Regiments were to operate as separate units. As this reorganization was completed, General Merrill became ill, and had to be evacuated, Colonel John E. McGammon assuming command. (41)

The Myitkyina Task Force was unable to undertake its mission of a coordinated attack on the town. The Japanese had been able to reinforce the garrison, an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 enemy having come in from NSOPZUP, MOGAUNG, and even further south, despite the Marauders efforts to cover the main approaches to the town, and the last ten days of May saw the Allies engaged in a defensive struggle to hold the air strip. The Japanese had built up more strength at MYITKYINA than the Allies and by 23 May were passing over to the offensive.

If the Japanese were successful in their attempt to regain the air strip, then the American and Chinese troops in the MYITKYINA area would be left with no way of escape except the rugged jungle trail over which they had come, and they were in no condition for such an ordeal. The most drastic measures were justifiably taken to muster a force adequate to defend the airfield. Since no Infantry replacements were available within the theater, the higher command reluctantly directed that the evacuation of sick and exhausted Marauders be held to an absolute minimum. Marauders convalescing in INDIA after evacuation from BURMA were rushed to MYITKYINA. Some 200 arrived at the air strip, but medical

officers declared that 50 were unfit for combat and these were returned to INDIA. Fortunately a small group of replacements did arrive in INDIA, and these were rushed to MYITKYINA by air. These replacements, together with the 209th Engineer Combat Battalion, fighting as Infantry, strengthened the Allied forces at MYITKYINA and kept the Japanese from securing the air strip. The 239th Engineer Combat Battalion arrived 28 May to further strengthen the defenses. (42)

The first evidence of difficulty became clear on 21 May, in the area north of the air strip. The 3d Battalion of the Marauders had left CHARPATE at 1000 in an attempt to reach the road junction north of RADHAPUR. Short of the junction, they encountered an enemy position with tight bands of automatic fire directed over level terrain which pinned the Marauders to the ground and forced them to dig in. During the night the Japanese came down the MOGAUNG ROAD through CHARPATE to attack the 3d Battalion's rear, however they were beaten off after a severe fight. The 3d Battalion withdrew to their original position near CHARPATE at daylight and resumed patrolling. (See Map D) (43)

At 2200 on 23 May, a battalion of Japanese launched an attack on CHARPATE from the high ground northeast of the village. This was the high ground that the Marauders had overlooked in their preparation of the defense of CHARPATE. The Japanese attack penetrated the Marauder lines early in the action, and the Marauders were barely able to repel the attack after suffering severe casualties. The following morning, 24 May, the Japanese

(42) A-8, p. 6

(43) A-8, p. 6

resumed the attack, and in order to avert a rout the 3d Battalion was ordered to break contact with the enemy and withdraw to the railroad, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the south. The Japanese occupied CHARPATE and held it in force immediately upon the withdrawal of the Marauders. On 25 May, the Japanese, supported by mortar fire, attacked NAMKWI in great strength, forcing the 2d Battalion to pull back to a ridge about halfway to MYITKYINA. With the Japanese seizure of NAMKWI they had recaptured two of the villages on the approaches to MYITKYINA. (44)

On 27 May, Company C of the 209th Engineer Combat Battalion was attached to the 2d Battalion, and this force was ordered to reconnoiter the CHARPATE area and to attempt to reach RADHAPUR. South of CHARPATE the 2d Battalion was attacked, and though the Japanese were not present in great strength, fatigue, dysentary, malaria, and malnutrition had so decimated and wasted the Marauders that the unit was not effective for combat. Several men went to sleep from exhaustion during the engagement. Lieutenant Colonel McGee, who was in command of the unit, lost consciousness three times, and between relapses directed the battalion from an aid station. The attack was successfully beaten off, however Lieutenant Colonel McGee was convinced that his troops were unfit for further combat and asked to have his unit relieved as soon as possible.

This was the last action at MYITKYINA for most of the Marauders. The 1st and 3d Battalions were back near the air strip, and neither had sufficient men fit for combat to be termed a fighting force. It was apparent that a larger force was required to besiege the city, a task for which the Marauder unit had not

been organized nor trained, and which it was not strong enough to accomplish. Only 1310 men had reached MYITKYINA and of this number 495 had been evacuated to rear hospitals between 17 May and 27 May. Allied reinforcements finally arrived to carry on the fight, and about 200 men of the 1st Battalion, nearly all replacements who had recently joined the unit, remained in the area until the fall of MYITKYINA on 3 August. The remnants of this force took part in the final attack on MYITKYINA. (45)

RESULTS OF THE OPERATION

The 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), although it did not capture its assigned objective--MYITKYINA, did succeed in capturing the only hard surfaced air strip in the NORTH BURMA area. The capture of this air strip, only two miles from the objective, enabled the Allies to reinforce and build up for the ultimate capture of MYITKYINA, and also to support further offensive efforts in NORTH BURMA which culminated in the successful completion of the LEDO ROAD, on 28 January 1945. The name of the road was changed on that date to the "STILWELL ROAD" in honor of General Stilwell. MYITKYINA was the key to the Allied effort in opening land communications and supply routes to CHINA, and the Marauders by taking and holding the adjacent air field, made its capture possible.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. SUPPLY

A highly mobile force operating behind the enemy's forward defensive positions cannot depend upon normal methods of supply. Regular supply lines would have been impractical, if not impossible,

(45) A-8, p. 6

in the operations of the Marauders. Tactical mobility would have been greatly reduced and secrecy impossible. In operations of this type the success of the mission depends upon secrecy. Although far from perfected, air dropping of food and ammunition was adopted for the long range penetration mission of the Marauders. Air supply requires accurate and quick communication between the units in the field and the rear supply base, careful packaging to insure safe arrival at destination, skilled pilots and crews, and cargo aircraft of suitable types. In addition, air supply operations must be planned with utmost care and foresight to insure that supplies in adequate quantity are available for shipment at a moments notice. Ground troops cannot wait on good flying conditions for food and ammunition, and the operations of the Marauders in Burma proved conclusively that long range penetrations into enemy held territory can be successfully supplied and sustained by air supply, if air superiority is attained.

2. REPLACEMENTS

In all combat operations sufficient replacements must be provided, and when engaged in combat operations in terrain and under climatic conditions such as was experienced in North Burma, a large number of non-combat casualties must be anticipated.

The lack of replacements gradually decimated the Marauders until the unit was unfit for combat. The problem of replacements became so acute that evacuation of casualties was ordered held to an absolute minimum, and 200 casualties recuperating in hospitals in India were rushed back to Myitkyina. Although 50 were classified by the Medical Officers as unfit for combat, the remaining men were returned to combat. In addition, the 209th Engineer Combat Battalion was employed as Infantry, and later,

(beyond the scope of this monograph) an additional Engineer Combat Battalion, the 239th, was similarly employed. The lack of replacements seriously handicapped the Marauders in the completion of their mission.

3. SECRECY, SECURITY, AND SURPRISE

The success of long range penetrations into enemy held territory depends upon secrecy and security maintained during the march. The Marauders did their utmost to deny the enemy the knowledge as to their exact whereabouts. During the march to MYITKYINA one battalion was feinting and harassing far to the north, while a second battalion was presumably marching toward the enemy supply base at Nsopzup. Actually, however, the main column was marching over high mountain peaks, using a trail which had not been used for ten years, and believed to be impassable. To keep the enemy from learning that such a strong Allied force was in the Myitkyina area the Marauders forced such Burmese as were encountered to accompany the column, and in addition the village of Namkwi was placed in protective custody of the Marauders the night prior to the attack on Myitkyina air strip. These precautions were necessary to keep the civilians from informing the Japanese, and resulted in the Marauder attack and subsequent capture of the vital air strip coming as a complete surprise to the enemy.

4. EVACUATION

Evacuation of the great majority of Marauder casualties from the combat zone after they had been treated by Medical Corpsmen or surgical teams was accomplished by converted light liaison aircraft. Light aircraft landing on air-drop areas, rice paddies, or gravel bars along the rivers, flew the wounded, often within

a period of hours after injury, to the rear air strips, or to collecting and clearing companies in the rear areas. Ambulance planes transported the casualties to Evacuation, Station, or General Hospitals further to the rear. Speed in evacuation of sick and wounded saved the lives of many men who could not have withstood the journey overland through the jungle.

5. INFORMATION OF THE ENEMY

The information of the enemy in the possession of the Marauders was excellent. The reconnaissance patrol led by Sergeant Branscomb performed its mission in an outstanding manner, securing valuable and timely information of the Japanese activities at the air strip and the approximate number of personnel actually there. This information enabled Colonel Hunter to attack and successfully take the air strip with minimum forces, meanwhile employing another portion of his small force on another mission, that of securing the ferry terminals. The Intelligence estimates of the number of enemy located in Myitkyina were accurate, and it is still a matter of debate among those who were present as to whether or not the Chinese 150th Regiment could have taken Myitkyina on 18 May, had they not become confused in the fighting adjacent to the railroad station, and consequently withdrawn. The Japanese reinforcements that poured into Myitkyina from Nsozup, Mogaung, and the surrounding areas were expected and although efforts were made to block their entry into the town, the Allies were not present in sufficient strength to block all entrances to the city.

6. OCCUPATION OF KEY TERRAIN

The failure of the 3d Marauder Battalion to occupy the high ground 400 to 500 yards to the northwest of Charpate on 19 May, resulted in the Battalion being surprised by Japanese counter-attacks from that area, using the highground and cover to their advantage. The occupation of this high ground would have put the Marauder Battalion in a better position for defense of the area, and subsequent action proved that the high ground was essential for the integrity of their defensive positions in Charpate.

7. USE OF THE COUNTER INTELLIGENCE CORPS

Sufficient Counter Intelligence Corps personnel were not available in February 1944, when the Marauders began their penetration, to permit attaching Counter Intelligence Corps personnel to the unit. However, if such personnel had been available a small detachment should have been attached to the unit. Counter Intelligence Corps personnel could have assisted materially in all counterintelligence measures, and since many Counter Intelligence Corps Agents spoke fluent Japanese, their value to the unit would have been greatly increased. Such missions as rounding up stray Burmese as the column neared its objective, the detention of the residents of Namkwi in protective custody the night prior to the attack on the air strip, and searching Japanese command posts for documents, are all proper Counter Intelligence Corps functions, and had trained Counter Intelligence Corps personnel been available to perform these missions combat infantrymen would have been released for their primary duty.

LESSONS

1. Long range penetrations into the rear of enemy held territory can be successfully supplied and sustained by air drops of food and ammunition, if air superiority exists.

2. Sufficient numbers of well trained infantrymen must be available as replacements for casualties of long range penetration units engaged in operations over rugged terrain where losses from disease and malnutrition are excessive.

3. The success of long range penetrations into enemy held territory depends upon the secrecy and security maintained during the march to the objective area.

4. Evacuation of casualties from units penetrating into the enemy's rear areas can be successfully carried out by the utilization of light liaison aircraft.

5. Maximum information of the enemy is essential to successful planning and conduct of operations.

6. To gain maximum security and observation, units must push forward aggressively to occupy key terrain features and should organize these key terrain features for defense.

7. Counter Intelligence Corps personnel should be made available to long range penetration units to assist the units in fulfilling their counter intelligence requirements.