

~~MONOGRAPH~~

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THE OPERATIONS OF COMPANY K, AND THE 3RD BATTALION,  
184TH INFANTRY (7TH INFANTRY DIVISION) ON OKINAWA,  
1 APRIL - 22 JUNE 1945 (RYUKYU CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal experience of a Company Commander and Battalion S-3)

Type of operation described: COMPANY AND BATTALION IN AN AM-  
PHIBIOUS LANDING ON, AND ATTACK AS PART OF A LARGER FORCE, IN  
THE CAPTURE OF OKINAWA, IN THE RYUKYU RETTO ( CHAIN ).

1  
Captain James B. Hewette, Infantry

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of Company K, and the 3rd Battalion of the 184th Infantry, 7th Infantry Division, in the Ryukyu Campaign, from the amphibious landing on 1 April 1945, to the capture and security of the island on 22 June 1945.

On 5 December 1944, the plan was sent to the Tenth Army Headquarters in the Hawaiian Islands from the War Department, that it had been assigned to the Pacific Fleet Command as the assault force to seize and secure the island of Okinawa, in the Ryukyu Retto. Landings were to be made 1 April 1945. Along with the assignment of this mission, was the list of divisions that would be assigned to the Tenth Army for the accomplishment of this mission, and among these was the 7th Infantry Division. (1)

On 5 December 1944, the 7th Division was engaged in heavy fighting against the Japanese main line of resistance, about fifteen miles south of Ormoc, on the west coast of Leyte in the Philippine Islands. The 7th Division had landed as one of the assault divisions on Leyte, 20 October 1944, and had been in the attack every day since that landing. Having fought about seven miles inland to the mountains, thence moved south about twelve miles to the town of Abuyog, thence west about fifteen miles across the entire width of the island, and north along the west coast, the 7th Division's strength and combat efficiency was very low. All this time a constant pressure was kept on the retreating enemy, and on this date, 5 December 1944, the enemy had retreated as far as his plan would allow him to do so, because in order for the Japanese to hold out on Leyte, his supply line by sea into Ormoc had to be kept open. (2)

For this reason, the Japanese were defending every coastal range of rugged hills that extended laterally across the division front down to the

(1) A-1, P. 5; (2) A-2, P. 5.

sea. (3)

The normal attrition of battle had depleted our ranks to about fifteen men per platoon when the island was announced secure, and the 7th Division moved back to the east coast of the island, near the town of Tarragona, 10 February 1945, to stage for the Okinawa operation. On that date, the XXIVth Corps was relieved of its responsibilities on Leyte by the Xth Corps, and it was 18 February 1945, before all elements of the XXIVth Corps closed into the staging area along the east coast of Leyte. (4)

When informed that our next operation would be in the near future, the newly assigned commander of Company K had many unanswered questions running constantly through his mind concerning the capabilities of this battered and tired sixty-five men who remained in the company. The dominating question was to what extent were the potentialities of these men to form a nucleus for the immediate absorption of new replacements, and to produce that cohesive teamwork among those replacements that were being assigned to the organization in large numbers, almost daily. The teamwork desired, was that which is so necessary among the individual members of each squad, and no less important among the squads in the company. (5)

#### PLAN FOR THE ATTACK

A war tent was set up in the regimental area about 5 March 1945. The Regimental Commander and his staff, the Battalion Commanders and their staffs, and the Company Commanders were permitted to make map studies of the new target, the plan of attack for all elements of the division in every detail, and also the general over-all plan of all units involved in the initial landings on the island. (6)

The general plan for the attack, was that on L-6, the 77th Infantry Division would capture the islands of the Kerama Retto (chain), for use as an anchorage and sea plane base. By L-1, capture Keise and employ heavy artillery for support of the landings on Okinawa. The Tenth Army with two Corps abreast,

(3) Personal knowledge, self; (4) A-2, P. 17; (5) Eye witness, self.  
(6) Personal knowledge, self.

each Corps, less one division in Tenth Army reserve, was to land on L-Day, at H-Hour, with the XXIV<sup>th</sup> Corps on the right, and the III Amphibious Marine Corps on the left; on designated landing beaches along the western coast of Okinawa opposite the towns, Kadena in the XXIV<sup>th</sup> Corps' sector, and Yontan in the III<sup>rd</sup> Amphibious Marine Corps' sector. (7)

The 7th Division was to land on L-Day, at H-Hour as the left assault division of the XXIV<sup>th</sup> Corps, with the 96th Division on the right. The 7th Division, with two regiments abreast, the 32d Infantry on the right, and the 17th Infantry on the left, was to land on beaches Purple and Orange, with the mission to advance rapidly inland, secure the Kadena Airfield, secure the objective line L plus 10 in its zone of action as soon as possible, and be prepared to continue the attack to the south along the east coast of Okinawa on Corps order. The 7th Division was to coordinate its advance with the III<sup>rd</sup> Amphibious Marine Corps on its left. (8)

#### PLANNING AND PREPARATION

The remainder of February 1945 was spent in rehabilitating, resupplying, and training the troops. Several large increments of replacements were received during this period, and were indoctrinated within their respective squads as thoroughly as time permitted. Training that emphasized combat lessons peculiar to the Japanese soldier was stressed. There were many of such lessons, and the time available for training was inadequate. Special training was carried on for communication personnel, machine gunners and snipers. A few experts were flown to Leyte, and conducted training on the sniper scope and sniperscope. A few men in each battalion were trained in the service and maintenance of this new secret weapon. Despite the many replacements received while staging for the Ryukyu Campaign, the 7th Division was about 1000 enlisted men under T/O strength when it embarked for the operation. The 74th Replacement Depot was to arrive on Okinawa in sufficient time to provide 1,200 replacements on L plus 10, and to provide for the

(7, 8) A-2, P. 2, 6.

aren't these  
the same?

No

arrival of 3,000 replacements every thirty days to include L plus 50 days.(9)

#### COMBAT LOADING

Combat loading by the 7th Division started early in March 1945. Due to the lack of piers and port facilities, supplies and equipment were loaded over the beaches into landing boats, landing craft, and landing ships; hauled out to the anchored transports and assault cargo vessels, and loaded aboard. This means of combat loading was a slow process and once began, required all available troops to work in shifts continuously, in order to get the ships properly loaded for the operation. Thirty days supply of all classes were carried in the assault shipping. (10)

#### TRAINING AND REHEARSALS

After embarkation for the voyage to the target about 14 March 1945, training consisted of debarkation, abandon ship and other drills. Rehearsals were made on beaches in the Rizal-Tarragona area on the 16 and 19 March 1945, only a few miles north of the staging area. The beaches selected for the rehearsals bore no resemblance to those of the target, as they were sandy, and the map showed the landing beaches on the target to be separated from the open sea by a coral reef from 300 to 500 yards out, and protected by a seawall about eight feet high. After rehearsals were completed, the ships moved to logistics anchorages, or other anchorages as directed off the northeast coast of Leyte. (11)

After departure from Leyte for the target, highly effective instruction was conducted in orientation concerning the target. Very good aerial photographs, relief maps, and mock-ups were studied closely, and every man received thorough instructions as to what his job would be upon hitting the beach. In addition to the mission of their respective units, the troops were oriented concerning the geography and history of Okinawa; the strength and composition of enemy forces on the island, to include enemy capabilities of counter-attacking by air and amphibious forces. Troops were oriented on (9, 10) A-1, P. 6, & Personal knowledge, self; (11) A-2, P. 18-19.

matters concerning military government also, and many other subjects. (12)

#### GEOGRAPHICAL

In the study of the Okinawa Gunto (Group) consisting of Okinawa Shima (Island) and numerous<sup>s</sup> smaller islands, we learn that these are located at the approximate center of Nansei Shoto. The central link in the chain which screens the China Sea from the Pacific Ocean is Okinawa, the largest and most important island of the Nansei Shoto. It lies roughly at an equal distance from Formosa on the southwest, China on the west, and Kyushu, Japan on the northeast. It is roughly 300 nautical miles from Formosa, 450 from Shanghai and 360 from Kyushu. (13)

The population of Okinawa is about 500,000. The people are racially a mixed group. The languages spoken are Ryukyuu and Japanese. Farming is the chief occupation. (14)

Okinawa is about sixty-five miles long, and averages from three to ten miles wide. Its physical geography favors defense. The northern two-thirds has rugged mountainous terrain bordered by dissected terraces, which generally end at the coast in steep cliffs. An estimated 80 % is heavily wooded. Troop movements would be difficult, and vehicles, tracked or wheeled found it difficult to operate off the roads. The southern one-third is generally rolling, broken however, by a number of steep escarpments and ravines. Eighty percent is cultivated with sugar cane and sweet potatoes. (15)

Nakagusuku Wan (Bay) and Chimu Wan (Bay) on the east coast are the only substantial fleet anchorages south of Kyushu. Naha Ko (Harbor), the leading port of Nansei Shoto, has an inner harbor where vessels up to 3,000 tons can unload. (16)

Approximate population of the leading cities: Naha-65,000 and Shuri-17,000. The road system on Okinawa is developed the best in the south, but most roads are narrow, making two-way traffic difficult. (17)

The number of airfields on the island totals five, with one other in the nearby vicinity on the island of Ie Shima. (18)

(12) A-2, P. 11; (13 - 18) A-2, Inclosure No. 4.

## THE OPERATION

The trip from Leyte was uneventful, except the convoy had to skirt around a hurrican for several days. The amphibious Support Force consisted of five support groups. Each group contained from eight to ten of the appropriate number of battleships, cruisers and destroyers. The Naval Gunfire Support Plan called for supporting the capture of Okinawa by sustained neutralization, destruction, counter-battery and harassing bombardments, commencing on L-7; by intensive close support of the landings on Kerama Retto, Keise Shima, and Okinawa; by bombardments for supporting the diversionary feint at the landing near Sakibaru Daki; and thereafter by delivering call fires, deep supporting, counter-battery, illumination, and harassing fires. Finally it aimed to prevent the movement by sea of enemy troops for support or evacuation of the position. (19)

On L-Day the naval gunfire and assault landings were executed according to plan, with one exception - every wave was eight minutes late - but as the time interval between waves remained the same, the waves came in properly. Despite the clear sunny weather, a dim silhouette of the highest coral peaks on the island could hardly be seen. This poor visibility was due to the thick smoke and clouds of dust caused by the naval gunfire exploding fuel and ammunition dumps along the landing beaches, and as far south as Naha. Naval gunfire spotter planes were over the island constantly, and in addition to their fire control missions, relayed information back to the ships regarding the progress of the landings on the beaches and the progress of the advances inland. (20)

The 184th Infantry was the reserve regiment of the 7th Division, and the 3rd Battalion was the reserve of the 184th Infantry. The troops were permitted to eat an early noon meal aboard ship, and alerted at 1145 for debarkation. Heavy equipment was brought topside, and placed at debarkation stations to facilitate the speed of loading into the landing boats when final orders (19, 20) Personal knowledge, self.

were received to go over the sides of the ship for the landing ashore. (21)

Orders were received about 1230 to start debarkation, and land on the island according to plan. The boats of the leading companies, K on the right and I on the left, hit the coral reef about 300 yards off beach Purple 2 at 1830, and the troops waded ashore in waist deep water. A strong wind had started blowing earlier in the afternoon, and while approaching the shore in the LCVP's against this wind, each wave would break over the bow of the landing craft, and most of the troops were completely drenched by the time they reached the coral reef. Darkness was approaching rapidly by the time all elements of the battalion had waded ashore, and the cold night felt more intense because of the wet, clinging clothing. (22)

After a brief reorganization, the battalion moved in column, with Company I leading to its initial objective, which was the security of the town of Kadena. The leading elements reached the town at first darkness, and a race with complete darkness allowed reconnaissance patrols to conclude that the town had been evacuated, except for a number of bleatting goats and barking dogs. It was too dark to completely search out all buildings in the town, also the buildings were scattered over too great of an area for a battalion to secure, which was thought would have been too difficult, had delaying enemy troops been hiding in the town with the mission of delaying our forces as long as possible. (23)

It was decided to organize a perimeter defense in an open area just west of the town. The moon was shining brilliantly, and the weather was getting colder as the time approached midnight. The wet clothing increased the penetrating effect of the cold night considerably. (24)

At 2300 the battalion received a radio message from regiment to move to a position about 400 yards east of the Kadena Airstrip, and that the 2d Battalion had been informed because this move involved passing in front of the line held by that organization. (25)

(21 - 25) Personal knowledge, self.

About 2330 the battalion moved out in a column of companies, with Company K leading. The Battalion S-3 and Company Commander were leading the column to check on the direction and rate of march to the new area. As the leading elements approached the 2d Battalion's position, the company was fired on by a light machine gun from Company E. Four of the men were wounded before we were able to shout out our identification during the brief time between machine gun bursts. After the casualties were treated and evacuated, the battalion moved into the designated position for the remainder of the night. (26)

At 1600 on L-Day, forward elements were 5,000 yards inland. At 0730, 2 April 1945, the 3rd Battalion moved northeast along the airstrip to about 200 yards beyond, thence east along the road to the town of Dakushaku, with the mission to follow the 17th Infantry by bounds and secure the division's left flank. By 1510, 2 April the assault elements of the 17th and 32d Infantry Regiments had reached a line running north and south through the towns of Chibana and Nishibaru, which was to be defended for the night. Patrols from the 17th and 32d Infantry Regiments reached the east coast of the island before dark. The 3rd Battalion, 184th Infantry was ordered to move to Chibana and dig in south of the town to fill a gap that had developed between the 17th Infantry and elements of the 6th Marine Division. (27)

When the battalion reached this position, forward reconnaissance patrols brought back information about a number of caves being located along the reverse slopes of the hills forward of our position, and that voices were heard in these caves. The voices proved to be those of civilians on the island, who had sought protection in the caves from our troops, and during the night 2-3 April 1945, these civilians attempted to storm through our lines during the early morning hours of darkness. None succeeded in getting through however, and quite a number of them were injured in the attempts to do so. (28)

About daylight on the morning of 3 April 1945, two Jap soldiers were (26, 27, 28) Personal knowledge, self.

seen attempting to move through our lines to the rear, however they were killed immediately and this was the first glimpse of enemy action for Company K since landing on the island; and for about two-fifths of the command, it was their first enemy encounter during the war. The two Jap soldiers had no shoes on, were lightly equipped, wore short pants and woolen caps. They were armed with rifles, and it was believed that their mission was to infiltrate through our lines and create as much of a nuisance as possible, before being either killed or captured. (29)

At 1120, 3 April, the 3rd Battalion still in reserve moved south along the road to the town of Shimabaku, where we dug in for the night. At about 1100 hours, the assault regiments of the 7th Division executed a turning movement to the right to continue the attack south. At this time, the 184th Infantry was committed on the right to relieve the 17th Infantry. The 32d Infantry remained in the attack on the left, on a frontage of about 1500 yards, with its left flank along the east coast of the island. The 17th Infantry constituted the division reserve. (30)

L plus 3 saw several changes. The unloading of assault shipping was 72 % complete, when Jap suicide planes began to attack the transports in earnest, and many were hitting their targets. Those attacks continued to be daily occurrences, and much valuable time was lost, as far as unloading was concerned. Jap planes came over at night also, usually in pairs, and bombed the transport area. Our troops hit well organized and camouflaged positions, including caves, trenches and dugouts. The Jap artillery came into play with interdictory, harassing and counter-battery fire, not the single gun fire which our troops had encountered in previous operations. (31)

At 0730 hours on L plus 4, the 3rd Battalion moved south to the town of Kishaba, following the attacking troops by bounds; thence to <sup>A?</sup>stanniva, and about 600 yards beyond to an assembly position for the night, east of the town of Nodake. Late that afternoon, Jap long range interdictory artillery fire commenced to fall on the road where it passed through a cut about 500 yards (29, 30) Personal knowledge, self. (31) A-2, P. 21-22.

to the front of our assembly position. (32)

On L plus 5, the 184th Infantry continued the attack, with the 1st Battalion on the right, the 2d Battalion on the left, and the 3rd Battalion in reserve, along one of the inland roads leading generally south, through the abrupt walls of coral defiles, steep wooded ravines, and barren, rolling hills covered with tombs. The assault troops drove in the Jap OPLR, and reduced a strong point 1000 yards west of the town of Ukuna, which consisted of blockhouses carved out of solid rock, innumerable caves, and pillboxes, an extensive trench system and inverted double apron wire. (33)

Jap suicide planes continued their attacks on the transports in the harbor with increased intensity on the 5th and 6th of April, with a great deal of success. The unloading of ships was delayed forty-eight hours. The pace of the assaulting troops was slowing down, and early in the afternoon of 6 April 1945, casualties were being moved to the rear. This was not very good for the new replacements, however the combat soldiers began to show an even greater outward sign of alertness and confidence. About 1300, 6 April, we received orders that the 3rd Battalion would move through the 1st Battalion at 0730, 7 April 1945, and continue the attack to the south. (34)

The necessary reconnaissance and coordination with the 1st Battalion was made that afternoon. The formation for the attack was two companies abreast, with Company K on the right, and Company L on the left. Harassing enemy artillery fire commenced falling in the area about 1600, and continued at irregular time intervals, throughout the night. Many of the rounds were duds. During one firing siege, twelve such duds landed in the occupied by Company K. (35)

At 0630, 7 April 1945, the assault elements of the 3rd Battalion moved out of the assembly position, and crossed the line held by the 1st Battalion, and designated as the line of departure on time, and advanced about 1000 yards to the next high terrain feature, when the right assault platoon of Company K ran into the only fortified position in the company zone of responsibility. This position was a dominating hill of all surrounding ground, for a distance (32-35) Personal knowledge, self.

of about 800 yards in all directions. The hill was free of any grass or undergrowth, and the earthen trench system, and gun positions could be seen through the field glasses. The right platoon of Company K attempted to envelop this hill from the right flank, however during the envelopment, came under fire from a hill farther to the right, which was in the 96th Division zone. After the necessary coordination was made, Company I was sent to occupy that hill, in order that the attack would not be harassed from the right flank. During the movement of Company I, the right assault platoon was withdrawn under the cover of artillery fire on this fortified hill in the company zone, and referred to as battle scarred hill. Lines were reformed, and a second attack with two platoons abreast was launched on this position at 1320 hours from the east, following a ten minute artillery preparation, which lifted as the troops had advanced half way up the quite steep slope, and begun the assault on the trench system and gun positions. This hill was captured, and the Battalion forward O.P. moved immediately to this vantage point, and Company K was ordered to continue the attack to seize Red Hill, about 600 yards to the south. This move was accomplished with little trouble, except for a few snipers firing in the area. When the right assault platoon reached the northern nose of Red Hill about 1700 hours, it was decided that time was not available to advance over the remainder of this hill, because it was thickly wooded, and the positions the company occupied were abandoned dugouts and caves recently vacated by the Japs, which was an indication of more enemy positions farther up the wooded slope of this hill, along the top or reverse slope, that were probably occupied, and the company commander didn't want to get his company involved in a fight under these conditions just at dark. The company was ordered to consolidate its position, and gain contact on the left with Company L. The right flank of the company was refused, and bent back to gain contact with Company I on the hill to the right rear. (36)

(36) Personal knowledge, self.

At 0700 hours, 8 April, Company K with one platoon of tanks attached, attacked in column of platoons, with the tanks and infantry together forming infantry-tank teams. Upon reaching the wooded crest of Red Hill, the Japs placed very accurate sniper fire on the troops from the trees, and the resultant casualties suffered prevented the troops from following the tanks close enough to protect them from the Japs, consequently one of the tanks was knocked out, and the others had to withdraw in haste, lest they suffer the same fate. About this time very effective artillery fire was placed on that portion of Red Hill occupied by Company K, and the assault troops were withdrawn to the protected positions that had been occupied the night before. During this assault, a very heavy toll in casualties had been suffered. These two days action had reduced the company to about seventy percent of combat efficiency. (37)

It was then decided to commit the reserve company in the seizure of Red Hill. Fortunate for the Japs the terrain dictated the approach of Red Hill to be the one taken by Company K, consequently Company I choose the same route of advance at 1430 hours, and enjoyed the same success until the crest of the hill had been reached. At that time the company suffered the same type of devastating artillery fire which covered that portion of Red Hill occupied by Company I. As a result, the company withdrew to positions occupied by Company K the night before, and reorganized for the attack that was ordered for 0700 hours, 9 April 1945. (38)

The following morning Company I attacked Red Hill close behind a terrific artillery preparation, and was successful in driving the enemy from his reverse slope, and cave defensive positions. The 3rd Battalion, then consolidated its lines, and was ordered to hold and defend the present position. (39)

The battalion remained in this position from 10-18 April 1945. During this period, the men in Company K had an opportunity to rest, clean up and shave for the first time since landing on the island. The position was quiet (37, 38, 39) Personal knowledge, self.

during each day, except for the long range firing on the Japs seen moving from cave to cave on two prominent rock and coral crags to the southwest. (40)

Company K received thirty-two replacements on 13 April, and after a brief orientation on the present situation, and what had happened since the company landed on the island, these men were assigned to the respective platoons and squads on an even basis in order that they might gain the maximum assistance and combat experience from the old men in the company. Squad and platoon leaders were urged to especially get to know these men during this ? lax period. (41)

On the afternoon of 17 April 1945, the company was informed that an all-out attack would be resumed all along the front at 0640 hours, 19 April, supported by the fires from twenty-seven artillery battalions. (42)

The 27th Infantry Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. Griner, was brought into the line along the west coast to relieve the 96th Division of some of its front, and committed to attack with the 96th Division on its left, and the 7th Division along the east coast at 0640 hours, 19 April, following a forty minute artillery preparation, augmented by naval gunfire. On 19 April the attack was launched according to plan, supported in addition to twenty-seven artillery battalions, by naval gunfire and heavy air support. (43)

A large portion of the ammunition fired during the forty minute preparation was with delay fuse, to dig the enemy out of his caves. The formation for the attack in the 3rd Battalion's zone, was Company K on the right, with one platoon of tanks, making the main effort, Company I to support by fire from present position, and Company L in reserve. The first objective for Company K was the two precipitous rock and coral peaks, where the Japs had been sniped at for the past ten days. The climb up the nearer peak was slow and rough, and when the supporting fires lifted the Japs came out of their cave positions, and began throwing grenades down the slope and the troops were forced to withdraw. Later attempts to envelop the first peak around the right (40, 41, 42) Personal knowledge, self; (43) A-1, P. 26-27.

brought mortar, machine gun and sniper fire from the more distant peak, and the enveloping force of one platoon was forced to withdraw. The tanks were brought up to support that platoon in another enveloping attack, by covering the advance of the infantry, and firing into cave positions. During the early afternoon on 19 April, the platoon with three tanks proceeded once more to envelop the first peak. During the movement, the platoon came upon a deep tank trap, which extended from the base of the peak to a natural gorge. The tanks halted there, however being within range, continued to support the advance of the platoon by delivering long range machine gun fire, and 75 MM fire on suspected enemy positions. The troops' advance was unopposed until they started up the west slope of the nearest peak, when it was discovered that the Japs had allowed them to pass some of their positions, and were firing on their front and both flanks. The supporting fires from the tanks were ineffective, not only due to the excessive range, but also because the Japs were in caves. Casualties wither killed or wounded were inflicted on the platoon constantly, whether the men tried to seek cover from whatever folds were available in the ground there, or to withdraw to the rear. It seemed that anyone who moved became a target. Then the enemy artillery fire was concentrated on the platoon, and also the tanks that were attempting to neutralize the enemy position. The tanks were ordered to fire smoke to conceal the withdrawal, and the platoon messenger, the only man left in the platoon who was the most capable to take charge, was informed of the plan, and ordered to evacuate all wounded and withdraw the remainder of the platoon when a sufficient smoke screen had been laid down. This messenger was among the last group of replacements assigned to the company while on Leyte, about a week before embarkation for the invasion of Okinawa. (44)

About the same time the enveloping platoon was ordered to withdraw, the platoon assaulting the peak from the north informed the company commander that casualties were too great for the platoon to hold its position any longer.

When the company commander contacted this platoon, he learned that the only experienced combat man, a Private First Class, whom he had placed in command of the platoon, had been shot through the leg earlier in the day, and had been evacuated to the rear. This platoon was likewise ordered to withdraw. (45)

The execution of the withdrawal was accomplished at 1500 hours, and a defensive position from which to attack the next morning at 0730 hours was occupied for the night. The company organization was down to two rifle platoons of about eighteen men each, and a weapons platoon with only gun crews necessary to keep the weapons in action. (46)

It was felt that these rocky peaks needed more softening up, and during the night, a 155 MM artillery piece was moved up in the front lines, and at daylight commenced firing flat trajectory into cave openings in each of the peaks. Company K attacked at 0730 hours, 20 April, and reached the top of the first peak, however the Japs were in cave positions along the southwest slope, and the troops were unable to advance any farther. Several attempts to do so brought more casualties. Then the enemy began shelling the peak with artillery and mortars; the Jap troops in the vicinity were in caves and out of danger. The assault platoons were ordered to withdraw to the positions occupied the night before, and await further orders. (47)

Company B, 17th Infantry was attached to the 3rd Battalion, 184th Infantry, and attacked the twin peaks through Company K at 1700 hours, 20 April, and were able to get half way up the slope of the first peak and dig in for the night. Company B, 17th Infantry resumed the attack at 0730 hours, 21 April and upon reaching the top of the first peak, met the same devastating mortar, artillery and small arms fire, that had been inflicted upon Company K the day before, and was forced to withdraw to positions near the base of the peak at 1600 hours for the night.

At 0800 hours, 22 April, Company B again attacked the twin peaks, and was successful in taking, and holding the first peak, although subjected to (45, 46, 47) Personal knowledge, self.

enemy mortar and artillery fire. By the end of the day, casualties in Company B were heavy, and the remainder of the 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry relieved the 3rd Battalion, 184th Infantry, and Company B reverted to the control of the 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry. (48)

On 23 April 1945, Companies A and C, 17th Infantry launched a coordinated attack on the second peak through Company B and captured it without a casualty. Evidently upon losing the first rocky peak, the Japs had abandoned the second one.

After being relieved, the 3rd Battalion moved at 0945 hours to an assembly position with the rest of the 184th Infantry, that had been placed in division reserve. (49)

During this all-out attack which began on 19 April, the artillery fired over 10,000 tons of ammunition, and the casualties averaged 527 a day for the three divisions. Until the all-out attack casualties averaged 178 per day. (50)

In the reserve position the battalion was allowed to get some much needed rest. While in this area, another group of replacements was received, and after a day or two to permit assignment, orientation and adjustment within the squads, mop up patrol missions close behind the front lines were assigned, in order to train and indoctrinate the new men for combat as much as possible. (51)

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE JAPANESE SOLDIER

I think it is fitting at this time to discuss a few factors that were influential in the training of the Japanese soldier that made his way of thinking and acting, so utterly different from ours. What caused the Japanese soldier to hold out so tenaciously to his defense positions? The Jap had been a soldier almost from the day of his birth.

The following describes the type of soldier who faced our troops on Okinawa:-

He was a runt, but his body had been hardened through marching in full pack and equipment, in all kinds of weather and terrain. He was probably a (48, 49) Personal knowledge, self; (50) A-3 P. 48; (51) Personal knowledge, self.

veteran, for his army had been at war since 1931. (52)

Japanese boys became soldiers the moment they could walk, and wore the uniform of old Japan, a uniform that had been handed down by a Japanese chieftain, who over 250 years ago had committed an act of disrespect toward the Dictator by drawing his sword in answer to an insult in the Dictator's palace. For this act of disrespect the chieftain was permitted to commit hara-kiri. Hara-kiri is the Jap's way of killing himself by slitting his stomach with a long knife, which act is believed to right any wrong that has been committed. This particular chieftain had 47 henchmen, and upon their master's death, they were disbanded. In accordance with their military code, they murdered the Dictator. Then they all committed hara-kiri at their master's grave. (53)

Tourists that went to Japan noticed that every school boy was in a uniform, the uniform that had been handed down by this Japanese chieftain and his henchmen for over 250 years. The uniform was rarely removed except for sleep. This custom of uniform wearing was picturesque too, but behind it was an idea, the idea that if Japan was to beat the world, every Japanese male would have to be a strong and able soldier. (54)

In school, at play, throughout their childhood, Jap boys were never allowed to forget they were soldiers of the Emperor. They actually believed the Emperor was a God, who was destined to rule the world. Foreigners who refused to accept his rule were considered rebels against divine authority. This fact was voiced in Japan's Prime Minister Hotta in a document called "The Tanaka Memorial" which read in part as follows:

"To have Japan's Emperor rule over the whole world is the will of Heaven. The nations of the world will come to look to our Emperor as the Great Ruler of all nations. They will come to follow our policy and submit themselves to our judgement." (55)

When they were old enough to carry them, Jap boys were given guns. These  
(52, 53, 54, 55) A-5, P. 4, 8, 24.

These guns became their most precious possession. With them they could fight for, and if necessary die for, the Emperor whom they believed to be a direct descendant of Amaterasu, a heavenly sun goddess. From early youth they felt that no greater honor was possible for a warrior than death on the battle field. (56)

Japanese soldiers were good students. What they learned they didn't readily forget. Too bad they had learned such strange and dangerous things; such as the idea that Japan was begotten of God, and its Emperor was the only heavenly ruler on earth. (57)

The code of the Japanese soldier was that duty was weightier than a mountain, while death was lighter than a feather. The Japanese soldiers regarded the orders of their superiors as issuing directly from the God-Emperor. They were warned that death was honorable, but surrender was disgraceful. (58)

The Japanese civilian seemed meek, mild and simple, but the moment he put on a uniform he became a different man. He became arrogant and proud of himself - a big shot. The explanation is that the uniform gave him the authority of the Emperor. (59)

As a soldier, he received 10 yen, about \$2.36 every month. Of these, 8 yen went to his family and one and six-tenths yen went to compulsory savings. The rest, about fifteen cents, left from his monthly pay was his to squander as he saw fit. The small army pay didn't make any difference to the Japanese soldier, his chief desire was to be a soldier of the Emperor. This fact meant that he could beat and kill other people, loot their homes, rape their women, and try to carry the fear of Japan into the hearts of all who might oppose the Emperor's desires. (60)

The Japanese worker was likewise given an opportunity to contribute toward this common goal by paying back from thirty to ninety percent of his wages to the government, either in bonds, taxes or savings. (61)

(56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61) A-5, P. 8, 10, 14, 26.

Banzai is the Japanese national cheer, which means ten thousand years, forever. (62)

The character analysis of the Japanese soldier wasn't new to the 7th Division, the first U.S. Army troops to face the enemy on American soil (Attu), and after annihilating the enemy there, had penetrated his highly proclaimed impenetrable defenses on the Kwajalein Atoll, in the Marshall Islands; and on the island of Leyte in the Philippines. An even sharper alert was necessary to combat the cunning treachery of the Jap soldier on Okinawa, because we were his unwelcomed opponents on his home field and if he had ever harbored any intentions of saving face before, he must do it here, under the very nose of his divine leader, the Emperor. Also the civilian populace, some 500,000, were for the most part of Japanese descent, and were expected to take active resistance within the capabilities of any weapons that may have been made available for their use. (63)

#### THE JAPANESE COUNTER-ATTACK

On 29 April 1945, the 3rd Battalion, 184th Infantry relieved the 3rd Battalion, 32d Infantry in the Hill 178 sector, about 1,000 yards north of the dominating peak of conical hill. Patrols worked feverishly, trying to determine where the enemy points were, however were unsuccessful. Company L attacked Gaja Hill which was 400 yards northeast of Conical Hill, at 0230 hours, 2 May 1945, and caught the enemy completely by surprise and quickly occupied his positions, however this hill was abandoned the following night due to the accurate Jap mortar fire from perfect observation posts on the high peak of Conical Hill that looked down into the fox holes on Gaja Hill. During the later part of April the 1st Marine Division relieved the 27th Division of its sector. This relief was completed 1 May 1945, and the 27th Division was scheduled to garrison the island, and was placed under Island Command. (65)

The 77th Infantry Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. A. D. Bruce, was (62) A-5, P. 6; (63) Personal knowledge, self; (64) A-4, P. 22; (65) A-1, P. 29.

assembled on Okinawa by 29 April 1945, and relieved the 96th Division on 30 April. The 96th Division passed to Corps reserve, and began a short period of rehabilitation and absorption of replacements. (66)

During the night 3-4 May 1945, the Japanese launched a general counter-attack all along the front with the immediate objective of capturing the Futema area, and the ultimate objective of recapturing Kadena Airfield. The bulk of the Japanese 24th Division was moved from the south into the line, and employed in this effort. A full strength battalion of Special Engineer troop attempted a landing in rear of our lines near Yonabaru Airfield, but were discovered and practically destroyed by naval forces and the 7th Division Reconnaissance Troop. Only an estimated twenty men of this force reached shore, and these were quickly destroyed. During the night 3-4 May, the enemy fired an artillery preparation of some 7,600 rounds of all calibers, and on 4 May, approximately 8,600 additional rounds of artillery in support of his counter-attack. This ill-fated counter-attack cost the enemy at least 6,227 dead, five prisoners of war and 59 destroyed artillery pieces.

On 7 May the 6th Marine Division was committed in the line on the right of the 1st Marine Division. (67)

From 1-10 May 1945, the front lines remained unchanged. The 96th Division came up from its rehabilitation area, and relieved the 7th Division on 11 May. The 7th Division, after forty-straight days of action was withdrawn to a rehabilitation area about ten miles in rear of the front lines to rest and receive replacements. (68)

#### THE BREAK THROUGH

The 7th Division moved to an assembly position in the vicinity of and north of Conical Hill, 20 May 1945, and on 22 May, attacked in column of regiments with the 184th Infantry leading. The 184th Infantry, with the 3rd Battalion leading the assault, attacked in a column of battalions, and quickly seized the dominating hill mass south and southeast of Yonabaru. The (66, 67) A-1, P. 29; (68) A-4, P. 25.

exploit through the enemy's line was followed by over two weeks of continuous rain, and by far the worst weather encountered in the entire campaign. Tanks and artillery needed to support our advance were brought into position only after many hours of laborious effort or not at all. During the last ten days in May an estimated thirteen inches of rain was reported. Supply and evacuation was almost entirely by hand carry. The road from the north, the only supply road from established supply dumps in the 7th Division's zone, soon became impassable to wheeled vehicles and within two or three days disappeared completely, and had to be abandoned. It was then necessary to establish a supply and evacuation point at Yonabaru on 31 May, utilizing water transportation to maintain elements of the 7th Division. (69)

In spite of these handicaps, the attack continued and some progress was made although at a slow pace. On the 30 May 1945, another enemy stronghold fell to the 77th Division at the town of Shuri, under the shock action of flame throwing tanks and assaulting infantrymen. Casualties during the six day battle for Shuri was 4,425, an average of 737 per day. Now with two breaks in the enemy main line of resistance, his capability of organized resistance was diminishing rapidly. On 4 June 1945 the weather cleared up and the Chinen Peninsula was cut off by the 7th Division from the remainder of the Jap held southern tip of the island. The attack then turned southwest, with the terrain offering a great hinderance to the advance of the troops. Terrain consisting of steep rocky and coral escarpments, in the sides of which were numerous caves of natural formation had to be searched out and closed. Some of these caves bordered on that of being a labyrinth, with streams running through them, and some had openings leading down to another level of passage ways underneath.

The Jap fought a stubborn defense to the last with unabated suicidal ferocity, which was gradually overcome by much rugged close-in fighting. (70)

After a coordinated attack on the Japanese defensive position Yaeju-Dake, 10 June 1945, his ability to offer organized resistance ceased. Following the (69, 70) A-1, P. 32-33.

mop-up of those die-hard Jap pockets of resistance in the Mabuni and Hill 69 sector, the island was declared secure, 22 June 1945.

The artillery of the 7th Division fired 257,411 rounds of ammunition in support of the infantry; a total of 5,672 tons of steel and high explosive. (71)

The Commanding General of the XXIV Corps expressed the outcome of the operation as follows: The greatest tribute must go to those superb ground soldiers of the Army and Marine Corps, who slugged it out on Okinawa for almost three months, advancing yard by yard, through all the various adverse conditions of weather and terrain, against strong defenses and fanatical resistance to eliminate well over 100,000 inspired sons of Nippon from the island, and reduce all vestige of enemy resistance.

Our total losses on land for the entire period was, 6,960 killed and 29,598 wounded, a total of 36,558 giving an average of 458 a day. Losses on the sea due to mines, torpedoes, and air attacks, amounted to 4,907 killed and missing, and 4,824 wounded, a total of 9,731. For both land and sea the casualties numbered 11,867 killed and missing and 41,382 wounded. The Japanese losses exceeded 100,000 men. (72)

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In making a study of this operation it may be debated that the month long attack on the town of Shuri could have been avoided by landing an amphibious expedition in rear of the enemy's Shuri line. This had been considered. The coast in that area was bordered by reefs. Beaches were limited due to long cliff fronts. Assuming that the available beaches could be captured, a G-4 study showed that supplied<sup>s</sup> for not exceeding one division could thereafter be landed daily. A G-3 study indicated that one division would not have been of sufficient size to have had a fair chance of surviving.

The enemy's cave defense line had not been foreseen, and was not immediately evaluated at its true value. This led to the release of one division as not needed for the operation. It was found that this division was needed

very badly.

The effect of artillery preparations and air strikes on cave defenses was materially under what had been expected. It was often nearly useless. It was necessary to attack caves by separate compartments, while adjacent compartments were kept under fire. This resulted, during May, in an average advance of only about one-half a mile a week.

Best results against the caves were from tank flame throwers, assisted by smoke screens, and with the support of troops on foot. However good this was, mud sometimes stopped the tanks and it was necessary to get along without them.

Japanese artillery was good. There was much of it, and it was unfortunately accurate. It caused considerable losses to personnel and materiel. Some of the artillery fired out of caves, into which guns were withdrawn when not firing. To neutralize this kind of position, direct hits on cave openings were required.

Best cave defenses were those connected by tunnels linking a number of cave openings. To capture these required that all caves of the set be under attack at the same time. It was not always possible to locate a complete set, as caves were camouflaged, and there was no easy way of telling which way the tunnels ran to form these sets of caves.

The majority of installations encountered in the operation was in caves and fortified areas, consequently 100 lb bombs or larger general purpose bombs caused little damage. One thousand pound bombs or larger with delay fuse obtained excellent results. No bombs were effective against caves, unless placed directly on the entrance. Since this type of target was suitable for delay fuse, pilots could make low precision attacks.

Japanese losses exceeded 100,000 men, or well over twice American casualties. A part of this loss was due to the custom of killing their own wounded, or the wounded killing themselves. However, making allowances for this, it seems that American tactics were so far superior to those of the Japanese that

notwithstanding a desperate defense, it was possible to overcome it with fewer losses.

During the all-out assault on the enemy's main battle position running east to west from Yonabaru through Shuri to Naha, all five divisions in the Tenth Army were committed, and at that time, 22 May 1945, the end of the fighting could not be predicted even with the capture of the Naha, Shuri, Yonabaru line. However no reserve was available to exploit a break through or repel a counter-attack.

Replacements arrived in larger numbers and more frequently than units were able to absorb and train in the time available for same. As a result, the cohesive fighting spirit, the teamwork, the combat efficiency, the unit pride and division esprit de corps dropped proportionately.

#### LESSONS

Some of the lessons to be learned from this operation are:

1. Terrain must be thoroughly analyzed and particular attention given to studying the ground in an attempt to locate compartments, and terrain features which can be isolated, neutralized and destroyed successively, thus enabling a concentration of power and weapons on one locality at a time.
2. If one avenue of attack permits the use of tanks, use this avenue in preference to others. Then use this avenue as a wedge to mop up adjacent positions.
3. While an attack is being concentrated in one sector, pressure must be kept on the adjacent sectors.
4. There is no position that the Japs could build which was impossible to take. However general attacks against such positions result in an unprofitable loss of manpower. As long as time is available, casualties may be kept to a minimum by successively taking and occupying a portion of the position at a time, concentrating the supporting weapons where the local action is taking place.