

General Subjects Section
ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
Fort Benning, Georgia

ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE
1948 - 1949

THE OPERATIONS OF COMPANY "L", 382D INFANTRY
(96TH INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE INVASION OF
LEYTE, P. I., 20 OCTOBER 1944
(LEYTE CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Company Commander)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY RIFLE
COMPANY IN AN AMPHIBIOUS ASSAULT LANDING

Captain John H. Hoye, Infantry
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO I

15927

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Index	1
Bibliography	2
Introduction	3
The General Situation	5
The 96th Division Plan	9
The Regimental Plan	10
The 3d Battalion Plan	11
The Company Plan for the Assault	14
The Amphibious Assault	15
Analysis and Criticism	27
Lessons	30
Map A - Area of Operations, Asiatic-Pacific Theater	
Map B - Plan of Operations for the Invasion of Leyte, 20 October 1944	
Map C - Beach Blue 1	
Map D - Assault by Company "L"	
Map E - Situation - 1300, 20 October 1944	

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A-1 The Deadeyes - The Story of the 96th Infantry Division
By Orlando R. Davidson; J. Carl Willems; Joseph A. Kahl
1947 (Personal possession of author)
- A-2 Amphibious Operations - Invasion of the Philippines (October
1944 to January 1945)
Headquarters of the Commander in Chief, United States Fleet
(TIS Library)
- A-3 Report of the Leyte Operation (17 October - 25 December 1944)
Sixth Army (TIS Library)
- A-4 Operation Report - Leyte (20 October - 25 December 1944)
XXIV Corps (TIS Library)
- A-5 Operation King II, The Invasion of Leyte by United States
Troops
The Ground General School, Fort Riley, Kansas
20 August 1947 (TIS Library)
- A-6 Mistakes Made and Lessons Learned in K-2 Operation
Combat Notes No. 4
Headquarters Sixth Army
25 November 1944 (TIS Library)
- A-7 The War with Japan, Part 2 (August 1942 to December 1944)
Department of Military Art and Engineering
US Military Academy, West Point, N. Y. (TIS Library)
- A-8 The Sixth Army in Action (January 1943 - June 1945)
United States Sixth Army
December 1945 (Personal possession of Lt. Col. R. R.
Middlebrooks)

THE OPERATIONS OF COMPANY "L", 382D INFANTRY
(96TH INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE INVASION OF
LEYTE, P. I., 20 OCTOBER 1944 (LEYTE CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Company Commander)

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of Company "L", 382d Infantry, 96th Infantry Division in the invasion of Leyte, P. I. by amphibious landing on 20 October 1944.

For proper orientation of the reader, it is necessary to discuss briefly those events which took place within the Asiatic-Pacific Theater during the few months prior to this operation.

The month of September 1944 found the war in the Pacific, for the Allies, progressing at an accelerated pace due to the many successes achieved in all areas by the forces engaged and particularly those of the United States Fleet which was of a strength never before attained. Amphibious operations by United States forces were being conducted successfully in several areas in rapid succession.

In the Southwest Pacific Area, the forces under General Douglas A. MacArthur had seized their northern-most base on the coast of New Guinea at Sansapor and a successful landing had been made on Morotai Island by troops of the Sixth Army. (1) (See Map A) In the Central Pacific Area, United States Army and United States Marine Corps units under the over-all command of Admiral Chester A. Nimitz, Commander in Chief of the Pacific Ocean Areas, had seized bases in the Marshall and Marianas Islands. (See Map A) On 15 September 1944, the III Amphibious Force, comprising the 1st Marine Division and the Army's 81st Infantry Division, invaded the Palau Islands and successfully landed on Peleliu and Angaur Islands. (2) (See Map A)

(1) A-7, p. 90; (2) A-7, p. 80.

To cover the assaults on the Palaus and Morotai, carrier-based aircraft of the Third Fleet under Admiral Halsey, early in September, attacked enemy bases in the Philippines and found enemy air strength there relatively weak. (3) This information, with certain recommendations, was relayed to Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet and ultimately to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, resulting in major changes in plans for operations in the entire Pacific Theater.

In both the Central Pacific and the Southwest Pacific Areas, plans for continued operations were being effected for further advances by the forces under the command of Admiral Nimitz and General MacArthur, respectively.

The XXIV Corps, commanded by Major General John R. Hodge, was based in the Hawaiian Islands in early September 1944 and comprised the 7th and 96th Infantry Divisions. Of the two major elements of this Corps, the 7th Division was a veteran of two amphibious landings, Attu and Kwajalein, whereas the 96th Division had yet to see combat. (4)

During August and early September, these two Divisions trained on the island of Oahu, T. H., for the next amphibious operation planned in the Central Pacific Area. (5) This operation was the invasion of the island of Yap in the Carolines and was to be conducted in conjunction with the operations on Peleliu and Angaur in the Palau group of islands and further the encirclement and isolation of the Japanese sea base and island fortress of Truk. (See Map A) Training of these divisions on Oahu consisted of strenuous and complete courses in jungle warfare and continuous amphibious exercises including a full scale landing by each division in turn on the island of Maui. (6) These practice landings were conducted in Landing Vehicles, Track (LVT's) by the assault elements as the anticipated Yap operation required landings over coral

(3) A-7, p. 91; (4) A-3, p. 26; (5) A-1, p. 13; A-3, p. 26; (6) Personal knowledge; A-3, p. 26.

reefs which were known to encircle the island. (7)

15 September 1944 found the XXIV Corps afloat and supposedly on its way to engage the Japanese on Yap Island, but such was not to be. That information which Admiral Halsey had obtained from his air strikes in the Philippines in regard to Japanese air strength and forwarded to higher headquarters was cause for a revision of plans. (8) The objective of the XXIV Corps was changed to Leyte, P. I., on the day the transport groups departed the Hawaiian Islands, 15 September 1944, and the Corps was placed under the command of General MacArthur. (9) (See Map A)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

The island of Leyte, eighth largest in the Philippine archipelago, is located in the central portion of Visayan group of islands. Seizure of this island by United States forces would split the Japanese forces in the Philippines and provide adequate bases for future operations to reoccupy the remainder of the islands. (10) (See Map A)

The Japanese were anticipating an American invasion of Mindanao, P. I., with the possibility of an attack in the Central Philippines, but believed such an attack would require at least two months' preparation after the landings at Morotai and in the Palaus. (11) The original invasion date for the Leyte operation had been set for 20 December 1944 by General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area, earlier in the year, but as a result of those events mentioned previously, this date had been moved forward two months to 20 October 1944 and thus contributed strategic surprise to the other conditions favoring a major effort in this area. (12) (See Map A)

Of the islands comprising the Visayan Group in the Philippines, Leyte offered the best geographic location for a large-scale military operation. (13) Thirty-five miles of good beaches were to be found

(7) Personal knowledge; (8) A-7, p. 91; (9) A-4, p. 4; (10) A-3, p. 1; (11) A-7, p. 95; (12) A-3, p. 17; (13) A-3, p. 11.

along its eastern coast and the large, fertile Leyte valley provided room for maneuver of large army units. (14)

Japanese forces, known to be located on the island and available for its defense, comprised the 16th Division reinforced with approximately 4000 other troops or a total garrison of about 20,000. (15) Extensive field fortifications were known to be located along the eastern coast covering the landing beaches, but the extent to which they were being manned was not known. (16)

It was anticipated that once the major landing location was confirmed, the Japanese would make an all-out effort to drive the American forces from the Philippines, utilizing all the forces available, in order to protect their position in the control of these strategic and fruitful islands. Forces available to the commander charged with the defense of the Philippines, General Tomoyuki Yamashita, exceeded 270,000 army troops of the Fourteenth Area Army with Headquarters in Manila and the Thirty-fifth Army with Headquarters on Cebu. (17) (See Map A) The 16th Division was of the latter Army which controlled all of the forces in the central and southern Philippines. (18) In addition, and not the least to be considered, was the capability of the Japanese Fleet to interfere with the landing operation and its support.

The United States Sixth Army was designated, by General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area, to seize and occupy Leyte Island and such adjacent areas as required to protect the operations in that area. (19) Major units of the Sixth Army were the X and XXIV Corps.

The X Corps comprised the 1st Cavalry Division and the 24th Infantry Division (-) while the XXIV Corps comprised the 7th Infantry Division and 96th Infantry Division (-). Sixth Army reserves were to be, initially, the 381st Infantry of the 96th Division, held afloat, the 77th Infantry

(14) A-3, p. 5; A-7, p. 95; (15) A-4, p. 22; (16) A-4, p. 22; (17) A-7, p. 94; (18) A-7, p. 94; (19) A-3, p. 91.

Division at Guam and the 32d Infantry Division at Hollandia, NEI and Morotai. (See Map A)

The 77th and 32d Infantry Divisions, however, could not be anticipated to arrive in the Leyte area until mid-November as the shortage of shipping required the use of those transports carrying the initial assault units to lift these two divisions. (20)

To provide safe entry for the invasion fleet, the entrance to Leyte Gulf was to be secured with landings on Dinagat, Homonhon and Suluan Islands on A-3 day by the 6th Ranger Battalion which was part of Sixth Army. (See Map B)

The 21st Infantry Regiment (Reinforced) of the 24th Infantry Division, was to land on Panaon Island, south of Leyte and thus protect the extreme left flank of the Sixth Army on 20 October 1944. (See Map B)

Landings on the east coast of Leyte were to be accomplished by the X and XXIV Corps on A-Day (20 October 1944) with the initial waves hitting the beaches at H-Hour (1000). (21) The X Corps was to land on the right in the Tacloban and Palo areas while the XXIV Corps was to land in the Dulag-Liberanan area on the left. (See Map B)

Each Corps was to land with two divisions abreast and move rapidly inland to seize the important airfields in their zones. In the X Corps' zone, the city of Tacloban was also made an objective of the Corps and its capture assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division which was to be on the right. In the XXIV Corps' zone, the town of Dulag became an objective of the 7th Division on the left flank. (See Map B)

The assault divisions were thus aligned for the proposed landing, from right (North) to left (South): 1st Cavalry Division, 24th Infantry Division (-), 96th Infantry Division (-) and 7th Infantry Division, with (20) A-3, p. 23; (21) A-3, p. 93; Personal knowledge.

a gap between the two Corps of approximately 15 miles. (22) (See Map B)

The XXIV Corps had departed the Hawaiian Islands in two groups. The Tractor Group consisted of Landing Ships, Tank (LST's) and carried the amphibious vehicles and tanks to be used on the assault landing with the personnel required to operate and maintain them. In addition, a few personnel from each of the assault landing teams rode with this group to maintain and protect organizational property of the Infantry units that were to transfer to these vessels in the staging area. The Transport Group consisted of larger and faster (Troop Transport and Cargo) vessels than those in the Tractor Group and carried the bulk of the Corps' troops. The Tractor Group sailed on 11 September and the Transport Group followed on 15 September 1944.

This entire force arrived at Eniwetok, staging area for the Yap operation, on 25 September 1944. (23) (See Map A) Here the troops in the subordinate units were first notified of the change in objectives. (24) This change resulted in the designation of a new staging area which was to be Manus Island in the Admiralty Islands south of the equator. (See Map A)

Departure from Eniwetok was made on 26 and 28 September with the Tractor Group again departing on the earlier date. (25) These two groups closed on Manus Island 4 October 1944. Transfer of the assault units of the corps to the Tractor Group was then accomplished and these units sailed for Leyte 11 October.

A-Day, 20 October 1944, found the entire Central Philippines Attack Force, which included the Seventh Fleet and the Seventh and Third Amphibious Forces, in Leyte Gulf prepared for landing. In all, this force comprised more than 650 ships of all types. (26)

(22) A-3, p. 23; (23) A-4, p. 35; (24) Personal knowledge; (25) A-4, p. 35; Personal knowledge. (26) A-7, p. 92.

It is of interest to note that all troops of the XXIV Corps had been aboard ship at least 35 days prior to the actual assault landing on this hostile shore. (27)

THE 96TH DIVISION PLAN

In accordance with XXIV Corps' orders, the 96th Division planned to land on the island of Leyte over the landing beaches between the Calbasag River on the left and the Liberanan River on the right. (See Map B)

The assault landing was to be made with two regiments abreast with the 382d Infantry on the left and the 383d Infantry on the right. The 381st Infantry was to remain afloat and comprise Sixth Army reserve until released to the Division.

The initial waves of the two assault regiments were to hit their assigned beaches at 1000 on 20 October 1944. The 383d Infantry was to land on Beaches Orange 1 and 2 and then, utilizing its amphibious tractors, wheel to the right and cross the Liberanan River and encircle the dominating terrain feature, Catmon Hill. The 382d Infantry, landing on the left over Beaches Blue 1 and 2 was to proceed directly inland, maintaining contact with the 7th Infantry Division on the left along the Calbasag River and protect the left flank of the Division. By moving directly inland, the 382d Infantry would prevent infiltrating reinforcements of the Japanese from assisting the defense of Catmon Hill and protect the open flank of the 383d Infantry in its encirclement and neutralization of the initial Division objective. (28)

In conjunction with the 7th Division on the left, the 96th Division was to sweep inland with the 382d Infantry in a wide turning movement to the west and north and, once Catmon Hill was secured, move directly north on the right with the 383d Infantry to secure the Corps' Beachhead (27) A-3, p. 35; (28) A-1, p. 21.

Line. This line enclosed the area bounded by Tanauan to the north, Dagami to the northwest, Burauen to the southwest and Dulag to the south. (See Map B)

THE REGIMENTAL PLAN

Colonel Macy L. Dill, commanding the 382d Infantry Regiment, designated two battalions of his regiment to make the initial landings on Beaches Blue 1 and 2. The 2d and 3d Battalions were given this mission, with the 3d Battalion to be on the left and to make its landing on Beach Blue 1. The 1st Battalion was to constitute the regimental reserve and land behind the 3d Battalion.

The initial regimental objective was Hill 120 which was located approximately 800 yards inland from the beach directly in the center of the 3d Battalion zone of advance. Both assault battalions were ordered to move rapidly inland once the landing was made to a phase line approximately 2000 yards west of the beach. From this line the advance would be continued on regimental order.

The left flank of the regimental zone was placed along the Calbasag River which also constituted the left flank of the Division. Contact with the 32d Infantry of the 7th Division was to be made as soon after landing as possible and maintained throughout the advance inland. The right flank was to join the 383d Infantry, initially, but was not anticipated to remain covered once that regiment began its turning movement toward Catmon Hill. (See Map B)

Destruction or capture of all enemy installations and personnel within the regimental zone was the general order. However, the warning was made that this was an island whose native population was friendly toward the United States government and due care would be taken in the handling and treatment of the inhabitants. (29)

(29) Personal knowledge.

THE 3D BATTALION PLAN

With the exception of the change in location and redesignation of objectives, the 3d Battalion, 382d Infantry plan of attack was essentially the same as that prepared for the Yap operation. (30) The Battalion was to land on Beach Blue 1 with two companies abreast, Company "L" on the left and Company "K" on the right. (See Map C)

The line of departure would be designated by guide boats 2000 yards offshore. The initial wave was to touch shore at 1000 and proceed as far inland as possible in its landing vehicles. "As far inland as possible" was intended to mean as far as the anti-tank ditch which Intelligence indicated as paralleling the shoreline some 400 yards inland. (31) Troops were then to unload and proceed forward to seize Hill 120, the battalion objective.

Company "L", on the left, was given the additional mission of securing Hill 90, a small hill just north of the mouth of the Calbasag River and the two bridges across the river on the two lateral roads crossing the battalion zone. The bridges were to be taken intact, if possible, and held until relief was made by Company "G", 32d Infantry of the 7th Division on the left. (See Map C)

A gap was to exist between Company "L", 382d Infantry on the right and Company "G", 32d Infantry on the left of the river, initially, due to a sand spit which paralleled the shoreline southward several hundred yards from the Division boundary to the mouth of the Calbasag River. This gap was to be closed by the 32d Infantry as soon as that unit was ashore and contact made with Company "L". The river was inclusive to the 7th Division in its designated zone of action. (32) (See Map C)

Companies "K" and "L" were to land in the 1st and 2d waves, in LVT's (30), (31), (32) Personal knowledge.

of the 728th Amphibious Tractor Battalion, preceded by eight amphibious tanks of the 780th Amphibious Tank Battalion. Subsequent waves would land the balance of the 3d Battalion with the entire unit being ashore upon arrival of the 6th wave.

Company "I" was to mop up the area in rear of the assault companies and be prepared for commitment in any direction while Company "M" (-) would support the assault companies from positions in the vicinity of the anti-tank ditch when ashore. (See Map C)

Attached to the battalion for the initial phase of the operation were one company of the 763d Tank Battalion, one platoon of Cannon Company, 382d Infantry, one platoon of Anti-tank Company, 382d Infantry and a platoon of Company "B", 321st Engineer Battalion. The medium tanks of the Tank Battalion and the M-7s of Cannon Company would not be landed until the 3d Battalion had advanced some distance inland as they were not scheduled to land until after the entire battalion was ashore. These units were further attached to the assault companies, "K" and "L". The Cannon platoon, one platoon of the medium tanks and the anti-tank platoon were all attached to Company "L". (33) In addition, one section of heavy machine guns from Company "M" was attached to each of the assault companies. Once the objective had been taken, companies were to reorganize and prepare to continue the attack on order on an azimuth of 278 degrees.

Maps available for use by the companies were of little value due to inaccuracies and scale. (34) Six contact prints of an aerial photo taken of the area a few weeks prior to the landing from too great an altitude and obscured for the most part by cloud cover, were provided each company. In addition, a mimeographed sketch of the landing beaches and that area extending approximately 800 yards inland was furnished all units to include squads. (35)

(33) Personal knowledge; (34) A-4, p. 19; (35) Personal knowledge.

In addition to the aerial and naval bombardment to precede the landings, one destroyer would support the battalion by fire with a concentration on Hill 120 scheduled from H-Hour to H plus 10. Two LCI (R) (Landing Craft, Infantry, Rocket) would accompany the 1st wave to the shore and provide a rolling barrage by opening fire at a range of 1100 yards when the wave reached that distance from the beach and continue to fire as rapidly as possible until 100 yards offshore. One of these craft was positioned on either flank of the battalion. (36)

The Battalion Command Post, when ashore, would be located directly in rear (seaward side) of Hill 120. (37) (See Map C) The battalion aid station would be established behind a fairly large sand dune in Company "K" zone and seaward of Highway No. 1. (See Map C)

Communications within the battalion would be primarily by use of the SCR-300 radio. This command net would open when the line of departure was reached and function as the primary means of communications until wire could be laid once the battalion was ashore. SCR-536 radios were to be used within the company command nets. (38)

All units would carry one unit of fire for all weapons and additional mortar and machine gun ammunition was to be carried in man-powered two-wheeled carts. The battalion ammunition dump would be located in the anti-tank ditch. (See Map C)

Individual equipment would consist of combat packs, two full canteens of water, assault rations (hard candy in small cellophane packages), poncho, assault-type gas-mask, life preserver, steel helmet and individual arms and ammunition. (39)

Individual rolls and "A" bags were to be carried ashore sometime after the reserve battalion had landed and would be dropped in the vicinity of the battalion ammunition dump. (40)

(36), (37), (38), (39), (40) Personal knowledge.

THE COMPANY PLAN FOR THE ASSAULT

The company plan required the 1st and 2d platoons to move directly inland after unloading from the tractors at or near the anti-tank ditch. Under the covering fires of the amphibious tanks with their 75mm howitzers and machine guns plus the 50 caliber machine gun fire from the tractors, these two platoons were to clear this supposedly formidable and permanent type defensive obstacle, utilizing shaped charges, pole charges and flame throwers. Scaling ropes and grapples were carried for the purpose of getting into the ditch and out the far side.

Once across the ditch the leading two platoons were to proceed to Hill 120, following the ten minute concentration to be fired by a supporting destroyer, seize the left portion of that terrain feature, reorganize and prepare to continue the attack on order. In addition, the 2d platoon was to extend to the left to the river and make contact with Company "G", 32d Infantry. (See Map C)

The 3d platoon, upon landing, was to swing directly to the south (left) and seize Hill 90. Once this was accomplished, the platoon would successively take the two bridges across the Calbasag River, leaving a half squad at each after capture until relieved by troops of the 32d Infantry. Once the second bridge was taken, the 3d platoon would move to the woods just inland from Highway No. 1, reorganize, report to the company command post and be prepared for commitment as the support platoon. (See Map C)

The Heavy Machine Gun Section, as soon as it was unloaded, would take up hasty positions along the beach to support the 3d platoon in its capture of Hill 90. Upon completion of this mission, this section would displace forward south of Hill 120 to occupy positions in rear of the left flank of the 1st platoon in preparation for continuing the attack.

The mortar section of the Weapons Platoon was to occupy a battery position in the center of the company zone and just west of Highway No. 1 and to report when ready to support the attack. The Company Command Post was to be located in the woods west of Highway No. 1 in rear of the 2d Platoon. (41) (See Map C)

THE AMPHIBIOUS ASSAULT

Dawn of A-Day, 20 October 1944, found Company "L", 382d Infantry on board LST 745 passing through the strait between Homonhon and Dinagat islands into Leyte Gulf. The ship's crew were all at "Battle Stations", but the members of Company "L" and those attachments which were to go ashore with them were all on deck gazing toward the west to catch a first glimpse of the island of Leyte of which they knew so little and which, to most of them was an unheard of place prior to 25 September of that same year.

The sea was calm and, as daylight increased visibility, it was noted that the weather would be clear and warm. All of Leyte Gulf appeared to be covered with shipping. The X Corps had already cleared the entrance and was steaming toward the northern end of the Gulf.

The assault troops of Company "L" had been fed a really complete breakfast before daylight and left little in the way of rations in the ship's store. All automatic weapons had been test-fired two days previously and ammunition issued to the men the day before. The required amounts of ammunition had supposedly been loaded into the LVT's in the tank deck by the Transport Quartermaster prior to departure from Oahu, but when this was issued to the men, it was discovered that certain types of ammunition were short. These included fragmentation grenades, caliber 45 ammunition and rifle grenades of all types.

The shortage of hand grenades was corrected by improvisation,
(41) Personal knowledge.

utilizing pull-type igniters and caps with Composition C-2 explosives packed into tin cans, grenade cartons and whatever else was available along with nuts, bolts, nails and other material picked up on the ship. The quantity of Composition C-2 aboard was more than adequate for the operation. A large quantity of ammunition of all types was stored beneath the vehicles on the tank deck and was to constitute reserves to be put ashore after the landing. This supply could not be tapped, however, as the temporary flooring between the vehicle tracks and the supply could not be removed. The shortage of caliber 45 ammunition was corrected by drawing upon the Navy from its ammunition lockers for 5000 rounds. The shortage of this ammunition was due for the most part to the fact that the majority of the infantrymen armed with pistols had traded their weapons with tractor-men for the sub-machinegun (Grease Gun) with which they were individually armed. No substitute could be provided for the shortage of rifle grenades. (42)

LST 745 reached its designated anchorage at approximately 0800. The ship lay-to in this position some 4000 yards offshore from Blue Beach while the bow-doors were opened and the engines of the vehicles on the Tank deck warmed up. A previously rehearsed procedure permitted the landing troops to remain on deck during this period. Rather than depend upon the four passage-ways into the tank deck for loading of personnel, the procedure had been devised whereby the troops were able to form on the upper deck directly over their assigned vehicles and upon signal from the company commander drop through the ventilating ports in the deck into the LVT's below. This permitted complete loading in less than two minutes as against a time of fifteen to twenty minutes by the other method.

The vehicles were boarded at 0820 and the lead amphibious tank entered the water through the bow-doors at 0825. As soon as the last
(42) Personal knowledge.

amphibious tractor had departed the LST, all vehicles proceeded to the rendezvous area where reorganization was effected. This location was approximately halfway between the LST area and the line of departure.

Meanwhile, the naval preparation was being delivered upon the beaches and bombing and strafing missions were being flown over the objectives and anticipated enemy strong points. The only observed enemy reaction to these preparations were three Japanese airplanes which were destroyed in the air before inflicting any known damage.

Naval guide craft picked up the landing vehicles and tanks in the rendezvous area and lined up the waves in preparation for crossing the line of departure with the four amphibious tanks in the lead and evenly spaced across the company front of approximately 400 yards. One hundred yards to the rear of this line were located the four amphibious tractors carrying the 1st and 2d Platoons of Company "L". The 1st Platoon, plus attached Light Machine Gun Squad and Engineer Squad, rode in the right two tractors. The left two vehicles contained the 2d Platoon with attachments identical with those of the 1st Platoon. The second wave of landing infantrymen carried the 3d Platoon, Company Headquarters, the balance of the Weapons Platoon and the attached section of heavy machine guns from Company "M". These troops were arranged with the 3d Platoon, Heavy Machine Gun Section and a portion of Company Headquarters in the left two vehicles while the balance of the company filled the remaining two tractors. Each subordinate unit within the company was divided between two vehicles in order to minimize loss of an entire tactical group should a vehicle be hit and destroyed or have to drop out of the formation due to mechanical failure. The company commander rode the second vehicle from the left in the second wave. (43)

The lead tanks crossed the line of departure at approximately 0940

(43) Personal knowledge; Statement of Captain James A. Fitzpatrick, then Executive Officer, Company "L", 5 February 1949.

and struck out for the beach at full speed. The first wave followed at a distance of 100 yards while the second wave crossed the line of departure one minute behind the first. These intervals were not to be maintained the entire distance as the battalion commander had authorized the company commander to land his second wave as close to, or with, the 1st wave as the situation permitted in order that the entire company might be ashore at relatively the same time. (44)

As the waves drove toward the beach all unit commanders, company and platoon, searched the shoreline for landmarks and at the same time compared what they saw to what Intelligence had given them. Changes and differences were mentally noted and deviations from the original company plan of attack were anticipated.

When the first wave reached the line 1100 yards from the beach, the accompanying LCI (R) opened its barrage and continued firing until it seemed it would ram the small jetty on the left flank. Surprisingly, no returning fire was felt. At 1000 the first wave hit the beach, followed almost immediately by the second. (45)

Here the company's first surprise was encountered. All but two of the eight amphibious tractors struck cocount log piling erected in the surf and along the beach, which raised up the vehicles and left them spinning their tracks futilely. The two remaining vehicles promptly halted also and it was therefore necessary to disembark on the surfline instead of at the anti-tank ditch some 400 yards inland. (46) (See Map D)

The troops unloaded with alacrity and immediately moved out in their assigned directions amid the din of constantly firing 75mm Howitzers, 30 cal. and 50 cal. machine guns from the four amphibious tanks and eight amphibious tractors stretched along 400 yards of beach. In addition, machine

(44) Personal knowledge; Statement of Captain James A. Fitzpatrick, then Executive Officer, Company "L", 5 February 1949; (45), (46) Personal knowledge.

gun fire from following waves was passing directly overhead and to the flanks.

As the 1st and 2d Platoons reached the edge of the beach and moved out across the level plain toward the objective, they met their first enemy fire. The right flank of the first platoon was swept with machine gun fire coming from its right front from a position near the base of Hill 120. The 2d Platoon also received machine gun fire plus accurate rifle fire from its front. Both platoons promptly hit the ground and for a short period of time refused to move forward in the face of this fire. The company commander moved from individual man to individual man, as did the other officers, and in some cases forcibly propelled the men forward. The beach was rapidly becoming crowded and forward movement had to be sustained. This hesitation on the part of the leading platoons, however, was of short duration and the advance then moved rapidly. (47) (See Map D)

The 3d Platoon, meanwhile, had moved rapidly down the beach and was not subjected to the fire encountered by the 2d Platoon as the slight difference in elevation between the water's edge and the beachline was enough to protect rapidly moving, crouched-over men. This platoon deployed quickly from the water's edge inland as it approached Hill 90 and proceeded to move over and around that objective with no opposition. Two enemy gun emplacements were uncovered at Hill 90, one on the north side and one on the south. Either naval bombardment or aerial bombing had completely destroyed both. (48) (See Map D)

Once the 1st and 2d Platoons had overcome their initial paralysis under enemy fire, there was no further hesitation on the part of any man in either unit. The machine gun fire which had stopped the first Platoon (47), (48) Personal knowledge; Statement of Capt. James A. Fitzpatrick then Executive Officer, Company "L", 5 February 1949.

on the right had apparently focused its attention upon Company "K" and did not fire again into "L" Company's area. This gun, which was located in a log and earth constructed pill-box, well camouflaged, was destroyed by the left platoon of Company "K" in its advance. Meanwhile, the 2d Platoon advanced in short rushes, and the farther it advanced, the more spasmodic and inaccurate became the enemy fire to its front. Both platoons reached the anti-tank ditch at about the same time and found, instead of the concrete, well constructed, permanent type obstacle anticipated, a ditch gouged out of the earth approximately five feet deep and seven to nine feet in width. A few Japanese were found in this ditch still alive and most of them were promptly killed. Three managed to feign death, but were killed by members of Company Headquarters who were following close on the heels of the first platoon. (49) (See Map D)

The two leading platoons quickly jumped what was supposed to be their first real test of hard fighting and proceeded on toward the objective. It was about this time that the close, humid, tropical heat and the results of many days at sea in cramped quarters with little opportunity for adequate exercise began to affect all troops physically. The life preservers which everyone had worn coming ashore had all been dropped on the beach according to battalion S.O.P., but now, gas masks, packs and even some ammunition were discarded. (50)

Light, scattered mortar fire began to fall throughout the company zone and spurred the leading platoons forward. However, several cases of heat exhaustion occurred and these men were placed in the shade for rest and aid from the medics, if needed. Both platoons reached the company objective and started reorganization by 1030. The 2d Platoon extended its left flank to the river immediately and notified the company commander by messenger as to its location. The 1st Platoon, meanwhile, had skirted

(49) Personal knowledge; Statement of Capt. James A. Fitzpatrick, then Executive Officer, Company "L", 5 Feb., 1949; (50) Personal knowledge.

around the south slope of Hill 120, taking in a little of the hill itself in its zone of advance. The support squad of this platoon was found by the company commander near the cut where Highway No. 1 touched the hill, resting in large shell craters. He ordered the squad to mount the hill and clear its top of enemy personnel immediately. (51) (See Map D)

The company commander and his small command group moved to the designated C.P. location at this time. (See Map D) This group, which consisted of the SCR-300 operator, four messengers (one from each platoon) and the platoon sergeant of the Weapons Platoon who had joined him at the base of Hill 120 to notify him that the three 60mm Mortars were in position and ready to fire, promptly took cover in the group of trees. The company commander's SCR-536 operator and company bugler, both the same man, and the radio had disappeared in the excitement on the beach. Sniper fire from the woods to the front of the forward line of infantrymen began to harass the men at this time plus the fire of what sounded like one 75mm field piece firing from a position across the river and using Hill 120 as its target. (52)

The 3d Platoon, during the time the 1st and 2d Platoons were moving from the anti-tank ditch to the objective, was efficiently accomplishing its assigned missions. The first bridge was secured intact without opposition. The second bridge was being defended by a Jap machine gun, but this position was quickly taken. A squad working forward along the river caught the crew by surprise before it could swing its line of fire in that direction. The weapon was sighted to fire along the road to the north. Why it had not fired upon the 1st and 2d waves as they crossed the road was never known. One half squad was left at each bridge, according to instructions, and the remainder of the platoon moved to its assembly area in the woods. (See Map D)

(51), (52) Personal knowledge.

As the company C.P., was being established, a terrific volume of fire began to fall on Hill 120 where portions of the 1st Platoon were located and other troops were seen to be moving about on the rear slope. This fire included white phosphorous and soon the entire hill was obscured from view from the company command post. It was then realized that this fire must be the ten minute concentration which was to have been provided by the supporting destroyer. The Battalion C.P. was contacted by SCR-300 radio to request immediate lifting of this fire and the emergency "Lift fire" pyrotechnics were discharged into the air, but it was doubted if they could be seen through all of the smoke and dust. After about four minutes of firing, the concentration was lifted but not without exacting a toll upon friendly troops. It was later learned that the lifting of the fire was accomplished by pyrotechnic signal from the beach area. (53)

The company executive officer joined the company commander immediately after this fire was lifted. With his SCR-536 radio, contact with the platoons was attempted, but only powerful transmissions between navy aircraft supporting the attack in some other locality could be heard. Since radio communication was useless and no wire available to the platoons, all communications were dependent upon messengers. (54)

The three rifle platoons reported their position, casualties and ammunition supply by messenger. All of these reports were received by 1100. The mortar section had, as yet, not fired one round and a direct wire line had been laid from the mortar position to the C. P. All machine guns were attached to platoons and their reports were included with those of the platoons. The total casualties at this point were one killed, one missing and approximately twenty-five wounded. Of the wounded, sixteen had been burned in varying degrees by the white phosphorous which had

(53), (54) Personal knowledge; Statement of Capt. James A. Fitzpatrick, then Executive Officer, Company "L", 5 February, 1949.

fallen on Hill 120. The platoon leader of the 1st platoon had been wounded by sniper fire and had gone to the rear to the aid station. The platoon sergeant of the 1st Platoon had been caught in the naval fire on the hill and was in no condition to lead his unit. As a result, one of the squad leaders was in command of that platoon. The 2d and 3d Platoons were in good shape, but Company Headquarters had, ironically, received almost as many casualties as had the 1st Platoon, having received a portion of the fire which the destroyer had dropped on the rear slope of Hill 120.

With the reorganization of Company "L", those heavy units which had been attached and were to land in later waves, began to report into the C.P. The first to report was the attached platoon of medium tanks from the 763d Tank Battalion. The platoon leader was ordered to move his tanks through the open area around the base of Hill 120 and position them in the center of the company zone, in rear of the left flank of the 1st platoon and the right flank of the 2d Platoon, in preparation for resuming the attack on battalion order. (See Map E)

The Anti-tank platoon leader was next to report to the C.P. and he was directed to place his guns near the second bridge and cover Highway No. 1 toward the south as contact with Company "G", 32d Infantry had not yet been made on the left. (See Map E)

The Cannon Company platoon leader reported to the company commander about this time and was asked if he could find positions from which his weapons could support the next phase of the attack. Because of the flat terrain and the very close range, this platoon leader said that he would be unable to fire until the company had moved some distance forward of its present line except for direct fire at point targets. Such targets were not available at this time and he was directed to place his guns in the woods in rear of the 3d Platoon and be prepared to support the company later. At the same time it was suggested that he accompany the company

commander to an observation post on Hill 120 within the next few minutes.
(55) (See Map E)

The Artillery Forward Observer and his party had arrived at the command post shortly after the heavy shelling of Hill 120 had ceased and had already moved up the hill to obtain an O. P.

Before making his planned departure for the O.P., the company commander ordered the heavy machine gun section, which had been supporting the 3d Platoon, to move to positions near the left flank of the 1st Platoon at the base of the hill and to be prepared to support the attack when it resumed. This was accomplished by that section without incident.

The platoon of attached tanks moved into position at this time, led by their platoon leader who was on foot. As he was directing the lead tank to its position he was killed by sniper fire from the woods to the front of the 2d Platoon. (57)

Radio contact with the Battalion C.P. had been uninterrupted and the company situation had been reported, as had that of Company "K". The two companies were in physical contact on the forward slope of Hill 120 and both were ready to continue the attack. However, no orders for such a move had been received. (58)

The Company Commander of Company "B", 763d Tank Battalion arrived at the company C. P. at 1200 and stated that he had been unable to find the battalion C.P. in rear of Hill 120. He asked if his remaining platoon and company headquarters tanks would be of any use to Company "L". Not desiring to refuse any support offered, the "L" Company Commander answered in the affirmative and stated that these tanks could be used to support the company as it advanced across the open area west of Hill 120. (59) (See Map E)

(57), (58), (59) Personal knowledge.

The Japanese continued to harass the troops with sniper fire, sporadic mortar fire and the methodical firing of the one field piece which was **pounding Hill 120**. One group, about platoon size, was reported moving across the far edge of the open area toward the river in front of the 1st Platoon, but these were the only enemy troops observed by members of the company since the objective had been taken. (60)

Beginning at 1215, intense mortar fire began to fall in the 2d Platoon area. Six men were wounded almost at once and a request for litter bearers was sent to the company C.P. by messenger. The mortar fire then increased its coverage and pounded the entire company area. At 1230 a tree burst directly over the company C.P., wounded the company commander, the company executive officer and two messengers. One messenger was killed and the entire C.P. group was made ineffective for a short period by this one shell burst. (61)

The executive officer was ordered to the rear to obtain litter bearers and to have his own wounds attended. The Weapons Platoon leader was directed to take command of the company and to try to ascertain what was taking place in the 1st and 2d Platoon positions. Rifle and automatic weapon fire were now being placed on the company in addition to the mortar fire. The 1st and 2d Platoons, all ground mounted machine guns and the tank machine guns were firing rapidly into the woods in front of the 2d Platoon. (See Map E)

The Japanese counterattack which followed this firing struck the center of the 2d Platoon at approximately 1300 and drove toward the beach area. Approximately 150 Japanese were involved. They succeeded in advancing as far into the company's position as the 3d Platoon area in the woods in rear of the C.P. Here the leading elements were stopped by the 3d Platoon and elements of the 1st Battalion which constituted the regi- (60), (61) Personal knowledge.

mental reserve and which was being reorganized after landing. (62) (See Map E)

Isolated pockets and individual Japanese soldiers were eliminated as rapidly as they were found throughout the company area. However, the last of the counterattacking enemy were not killed until approximately 1500 and then only after the entire area had been thoroughly swept by Jap-hunting patrols. Much of the punch of this counterattack was lost due to the noise the enemy made in approaching the position through the woods. This had alerted the 2d Platoon. The combined fire of the heavy machine gun section and the machine gun fire from the platoon of tanks caught the counterattack on its left shoulder and took much of the effectiveness out of the Jap charge. (See Map E)

The company was reorganized and orders were received to move out in the attack at 1530. The Regimental S-3 had been placed in command of the battalion at about the time the counterattack had penetrated the company's forward line. The original battalion commander and the battalion executive officer had both become casualties from the ill-timed naval fire on Hill 120. (63)

The attack moved forward without further opposition with the company in the formation chosen prior to the counterattack. The 2d Platoon moved through the woods extending along the river and the 1st Platoon moved directly across the open area to the west, maintaining contact with Company "K" on the right. The 3d Platoon moved by bounds through the woods in rear of the 2d Platoon. The tanks attempted to stay up with the infantry, but when they entered the open area, they quickly came to a halt. The entire flat plain was practically a swamp which, in places, was even difficult for men on foot to negotiate.

(62), (63) Statement of Capt. James A. Fitzpatrick, then Executive Officer, Company "L", 5 February, 1949.

The battalion advanced 800 to 1000 yards and then was ordered to halt the advance and prepare a perimeter defense for the night. Darkness was almost upon them and all units were eager to take up a defensive position to stave off anticipated Japanese night attacks. Casualties for the day's action totalled five killed and approximately forty-five wounded. The company commander had been evacuated at the height of the counterattack, leaving three officers with the company.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In analyzing the operations described herein, it is my opinion that the actions of Company "L" contributed a fair share to the total success of the invasion of Leyte, P. I. In an operation which was marked by a lack of an aggressive defense on the part of the Japanese, except in widely separated localities, this company was assigned one of the few beaches which provided any semblance of a defense. It successfully destroyed the enemy and attained its assigned objective.

✓ The high-level decision to change objectives was sound, but the effect upon the lower tactical units which were to initiate the action was poor. The sudden decision to abandon an excellent, well prepared and thoroughly rehearsed plan of operations for one which permitted little time for preparation by the smaller units, left much to be desired.

✓ Ten days were wasted aboard the transports in constant briefing and rehearsing of troops for an operation which had already been discarded. Once the transport group had departed the Hawaiian islands, the change in objectives should have been announced. This would have permitted additional detailed briefing, of which assault troops never seem to have enough.

✓ Despite the number of years during which the United States Government controlled the Philippine Islands, suitable maps were not available

for reproduction and issuance to small units for this operation. As a result, an amphibious assault landing was conducted with company officers dependent upon a sketch for orientation and use ashore.

The landing itself was conducted in an admirable manner by all concerned and indicated the worth of the considerable and detailed training this untried unit had received. All elements of the company and its attachments completed the debarkation and movement to shore with precision and dispatch.

✓ It is believed that thirty-five days spent aboard troop transports under crowded conditions is far too excessive. Such a prolonged period at sea is detrimental to both the mental and physical conditioning of the men. When called upon to produce the exertions of combat after such a period, particularly in the tropics, exhaustion and loss of aggressiveness result in the earliest stages of the action.

✓ The orders received by the company and the assignment of its missions were detailed and adequate. For an amphibious operation, the mission assigned the company was not abnormal in requiring the immediate commitment of all elements. However, anticipated opposition was overestimated to a considerable degree. The lack of good intelligence or the incorrect evaluation of information obtained was apparently cause for this. The weakness of the opposition facilitated the earliest accomplishment of the assigned mission, but adequate intelligence would have eliminated the need for carrying additional equipment and explosives.

✓ The assignment of an objective relatively close to the landing beaches with directions to halt forward movement upon reaching that objective, to await further orders, is not believed to be sound. Although more time was considered necessary for the capture of Hill 120 than that actually consumed, acquisition of as large a beachhead as possible in the

shortest time in a proven principle of successful landing operations. Had the attack continued beyond the initial objective with the momentum attained at that position, I believe that fewer casualties would have been received from naval gunfire and the Japanese counterattack might never have been attempted.

✓ Weapons and equipment carried ashore by the landing troops were excellent and, if anything, more than necessary. The assault-type gas mask, strapped to each man's left thigh, restricted movement and was an uncalled for additional burden. All radios functioned well. The inability to operate the SCR-536 radio was not due to mechanical failure, but to lack of coordination in assignment of radio frequencies.

✓ The unfortunate shelling of Hill 120 by supporting naval gunfire after the hill was captured was due either to poor timing or failure in coordination. Placement of such fire on a time basis when shore conditions are as little known as in this operation, invites trouble. This is especially true when signals for lifting such fire are dependent upon pyrotechnics. Coordination between army units and naval gunfire parties must be very close to insure against just such an error as occurred in this operation. The accuracy and effectiveness of naval gunfire cannot be over emphasized. The destruction and limited opposition to the landing on the beach made this apparent.

The results of this one-day action by Company "L", 382d Infantry were the successful seizure of the assigned beach and capture of Hill 120 which was considered an important terrain feature for use as an O. P. for further operations. The seizure of the two bridges across the Calbasag River permitted the unimpeded lateral movement of transportation and supplies over the limited road net available. The actual number of enemy troops killed by the company is not known, but it is believed that the Japanese losses far exceeded our own.

LESSONS

✓1. Sudden changes in tactical and strategical plans in modern warfare should be anticipated at all times. Flexibility of plans permits rapid utilization of available strength at the opportune moment.

✓2. Dissemination of information effecting the employment of a unit should be accomplished at the earliest opportunity, providing security regulations are not violated. (This is particularly true when valuable time and effort would be wasted by withholding such information.)

3. Sufficient large-scale maps to provide each unit of platoon size and larger with at least one copy is a necessity for proper orientation and conduct of military operations.

✓4. Prolonged inactivity under crowded conditions aboard transports at sea can materially reduce the combat efficiency of assault troops.

5. The first introduction to enemy fire by untried troops requires immediate and positive action on the part of all leaders lest the success of the operation be jeopardized. (This is certainly true of a special operation which requires proper timing and aggressive action in maintaining the initiative gained by preparatory fire such as that preceding an amphibious assault.)

6. Only the minimum essentials of clothing, equipment and weapons need be carried by assault amphibious troops fighting in the tropics. (The climate in itself poses an additional burden to rapidly moving infantry and prohibits carrying any more than that necessary for a bare existence.)

7. Scheduling supporting fire for a definite time, based upon assumed conditions without adequate control and communications, invites trouble.

8. Organization in depth is necessary during reorganization prior to resuming the attack, if counterattacks are to be successfully repelled.

✓9. The dismounted messenger remains one of the most important means of communication within a rifle company.

✓10. The loss of key personnel in combat must be anticipated and preparations made beforehand for their prompt replacement in order that operations may continue without unnecessary delay.

✓11. Thorough training and adequate preparation are essential for successful amphibious operations. ¹⁶ Teamwork and cooperation among all elements of a battalion landing team reduce casualties and hasten victory.

✓12. Ammunition supply stored aboard ship for later issue should be examined at the earliest practicable moment to insure against shortages.

✓13. Improvised grenades made of explosives, pull-type igniters, caps and a short length of fuse make excellent substitutes for concussion grenades.

✓14. Good photo reconnaissance prior to amphibious operations is necessary to obtain the latest information concerning beach obstacles.

✓15. Timesaving procedures for use in debarkation prior to the movement to shore should be devised and practiced in training and rehearsals.

✓16. Coordination in the assignment of radio channels for all units engaged in amphibious operations must be achieved.

✓17. Initial unit objectives for assault landing troops should be sufficiently distant inland to permit rapid movement forward.