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THE OPERATIONS OF 1ST PLATOON, COMPANY A,
148TH INFANTRY REGIMENT (37TH INFANTRY DIVISION)
IN THE ADVANCE OF MUNDA AIRSTRIP, 18 JULY-4 AUGUST 1943
(NORTHERN SOLOMONS CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Rifle Platoon Leader)

Type of operation described: AMBUSH, BULLDOZER GUARD
ASSIGNMENT, RECONNAISSANCE PATROL, ENCIRCLEMENT,
AMBUSH PATROL, THE LAST DAY BEYOND MUNDA AIRSTRIP

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ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 1st Platoon, Company A, 148th Infantry Regiment, 37th Infantry Division, in the battle of MUNDA AIRSTRIP, 18 July - 4 August 1943, during the Northern Solomons Campaign.

In order to orient the reader, it will be necessary to discuss briefly the major events which led up to this action.

After the Japanese had been driven out of GUADALCANAL, all efforts were directed toward improving the defensive strength of the island and establishing a base there which could support further operations. Japanese airfields in the New Georgia group of islands northwest of GUADALCANAL were a threat that could not be overlooked. The main enemy air base was at MUNDA POINT on NEW GEORGIA ISLAND, only about 200 miles from HENDERSON FIELD. A secondary base was on the southeast coast of KOLOMBANGORA ISLAND. These fields had been targets for our bombers ever since they were first discovered in early December. During the ensuing three months our fliers conducted more than eighty raids against them, and several night bombardments by our warships were also undertaken. These operations, however, resulted only in temporarily neutralizing the fields, and it soon became evident that actual occupation was necessary to prevent their use. (1) (See Map A)

(1) A-1, p. 28

The immediate objectives of the campaign against NEW GEORGIA in July and August 1943 were to destroy the MUNDA garrison, seize the MUNDA airstrip and clear the seaways in the notorious Destroyer Slot. The longer range aims were to develop this airstrip for fighter cover in the bombing and neutralization of RABAU and to follow up this development with an early amphibious assault on BOUGAINVILLE, the northernmost island of the SOLOMONS and the one from which the legendary dagger could be held at RABAU'S Adam's Apple. With maximum effective fighter range set as 150 miles, BOUGAINVILLE was a necessary prerequisite to the neutralization of potent RABAU, thus the taking of NEW GEORGIA was the prerequisite to the seizure of BOUGAINVILLE. (2) (3)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

The XIV Corps under the command of Major General Oscar W. Griswold, with headquarters on GUADALCANAL, was comprised of the 25th and 37th Infantry Divisions (less two battalions of one regiment) located on GUADALCANAL; the 3rd Marine Division located on GUADALCANAL; and the 43rd Infantry Division (plus two battalions of one regiment) located on the recently occupied RUSSELL ISLANDS, 50 miles to the northwest. (See Map A) (4)

The XVI Corps was considered to be a well supplied, equipped, and trained organization. Most of the personnel were combat veterans or veterans of long extensive day and night jungle operations in the FIGI and GUADALCANAL ISLANDS.

- (2) A-6
- (3)
- (4) A-1, p. 29

Considerable training had been spent in amphibious operations in the assault and securing of beachheads. (5) (6)

A reinforced regiment of the 38th Division, which had been reconstituted at RABAUL after being almost wiped out at GUADALCANAL, now garrisoned the New Georgia area. Japanese 6th Division Headquarters was located on BOUGAINVILLE. Heavy Japanese reinforcements were on the way to the Solomon Areas in preparation for large scale defensive warfare. The most highly organized Japanese defenses were concentrated around the MUNDA Airfield. The southern perimeter of these defenses was organized into a system of pillboxes from which interlocking bands of fire could be delivered for beach protection. Organized strong points along hills overlooking the LAMBETI plantation and the MUNDA area provided depth to this perimeter defense. Dual-purpose guns provided support to the position. Two main supply dumps were located near MUNDA airstrip, one northeast and one northwest, near the beach. There were several bivouacs-- one on ARUNDEL ISLAND northwest of MUNDA, one on the smaller island between NEW GEORGIA ISLAND and ARUNDEL ISLAND, one near PIRU plantation north of MUNDA, and another about three miles north of MUNDA on the MUNDA-BOIROKA trail. Japanese shore batteries had been established near BAIROKO HARBOR and BAIROKO along the northwest coast of NEW GEORGIA ISLAND. (See Map B)

(7) (8) (9)

- (5) A-1, p. 29
- (6) A-2, p. 2
- (7) A-1, p. 30
- (8) A-2, p. 4
- (9) A-6

NEW GEORGIA was another green-jungled island twenty-five miles wide and forty miles long, blanketed along the swamps and lowlands by sharp, bitter, forbidding coral. The interior was morass of stinking mud and water-soaked tangle of tropical vegetation with large tree roots extending over and above ground. Dense forests of high trees provided a matted-foliage umbrella covering most of the island. Rain could be expected several times a day, and frequently all day and night. (10) (11)

The assault on NEW GEORGIA was to be made by troops of the 37th and 43rd Divisions reinforced by Marine Battalions, with the 25th Division held in reserve on GUADALCANAL. RENDOVA ISLAND, just a few miles south of MUNDA, was first occupied in strength to provide positions for 155-mm guns and was to be a staging point from which the real thrust against MUNDA would be made. As soon as the MUNDA airfield and other strategically important points on NEW GEORGIA were under control, preparations were made to capture KOLOMBANGORA. (See Map B) (12)

In the latter part of June 1943, the New Georgia Task Force was organized. It consisted of an infantry division, a marine raider regiment, two infantry battalions, one medium artillery battalion, and various naval base personnel such as PT boat units, antiaircraft elements and construction battalions. The mission of this force was to capture MUNDA Airfield on NEW GEORGIA ISLAND and to neutralize the VILO AIRFIELD on nearby KOLOMBANGORA ISLAND. The initial general operational plan was organized into three groups. Force A, consisting of 103rd

- (10) A-4, p. 71
- (11) A-6
- (12) A-1, p. 30

Infantry Regiment, 43rd Division, and two marine companies, was to land simultaneously near VIRU HARBOR and SEGI POINT on NEW GOERGIA ISLAND and WICKHAM ANCHORAGE on VANGUNA ISLAND. Force B, consisting of the 3rd Marine Regiment, 3rd Battalion, 145th Infantry Regiment, and 3rd Battalion, 148th Infantry Regiment, both from the 37th Division, was to land near RICE ANCHORAGE. Force C, consisting of the 43rd Division minus 103rd Infantry Regiment attached to Force A, moved on RENDOVA HARBOR preparatory to invasion of NEW GEORGIA ISLAND. (See Map B) (13)

On 30 June, 172nd Infantry Regiment, 43rd Division, completed the RENDOVA landing. On 4 July, the 172nd and 169th Infantry Regiments of Force C effected a landing at ZANANA. The plan called for a move to the BARIKE RIVER and then an advance, regiments abreast, to LAMBETI plantation. This was to be followed by a sweep up the beach to MUNDA Airport where, in conjunction with the RICE ANCHORAGE FORCE attacking from the north, the Japs were to be "driven into the sea." Japanese resistance before BARIKE was disquietingly ineffectual. However, both regiment's supply lines became long, lonely trails bulldozed through the jungle from ZANANA BEACH. The two arms of the BARIKE RIVER were crossed on the 9th and advance elements of both the 172nd and 169th Infantry Regiments, 43rd Division, pushed westward against developing defenses, sited in the low-lying hill masses and camouflaged with jungle growth. Every step was a constant fight against logistics, jungle, mud and Japs. The two regiments were strung out in a single column along the

(13) A-2, p. 3

trail and were becoming rather intermingled. The Japs were on the offensive and were raiding every night--all night. The standard tactics of steady pressure against a solid enemy line were meaningless, for in no area was the jungle secure. The Japs night harassing against the 169th on the right flank was novel and demoralizing. The 172nd's drive for a new beach near LAIANA, 800 yards west of ZANANA, was stalled as Japs punctured the supply lines with infiltrators and mortar shells. The foe was both elusive and ubiquitous. On the 11th an enemy wedge split up the two regiments. Japanese troops inside the 169th Infantry line breached the thinly held ZANANA supply trails--ambushing carrying parties, litter bearers, and engineer road details. More troops were needed to control a desperate jungle campaign which was taking its expensive toll of hungry, sleepless, and frightened men as it got more and more out of hand. (See Map C) (14) (15)

DISPOSITIONS AND PLANS OF THE 148TH INFANTRY REGIMENT

On orders from the Commanding General of the New Georgia Invasion Force, Major General Oscar Griswold, the 145th Infantry Regiment was hurriedly shipped to RENDOVA during the second week in July with the mission of relieving the 169th and strengthening the American line--a tenuous front which then ran north and south from LAIANA BEACH, roughly 800 yards from the original ZANANA landing point. Destroyer transports rushed the 148th Infantry Regiment from the RUSSELL ISLANDS to RENDOVA on the 17th. Then LCI's transported the 1st Battalion, 148th

(14) A-2, p. 4
(15) A-4, p. 79

Regiment, to ZANANA BEACH on the 18th. On the night of the 17th, the same surrounding band of Japs who had attacked the 145th supply dump at ZANANA had also charged the 43rd Division's CP at ZANANA BEACH. Scantily protected, the CP called for an artillery box barrage, with shells bursting 50 yards from the CP. The barrage was effective and saved the General's life. However, the CP tent looked like "Swiss Cheese." (See Map C) (16)

When the 148th landed, however, that beach was clogged with psychoneurotics from the 43rd Division, awaiting evacuation; and their tales, related with nervous gestures, and accompanied by fearful shifting of the eyes, sobered the 148th Infantry dough-boys. It was a common occurrence, they said, for the Japs to sneak into the American lines at night with a can of phosphorescent paint and mark GI helmets. When the soldier stood guard that night, the Japs could tell where the guard posts were and could infiltrate into American lines at will. Then, of course, the Japanese often crept into the lines scattering some kind of sleeping powder which would lull the perimeter guards into a comatose state making full-scale night attack simple. The Japanese also put sleeping tablets in the creeks so that an American soldier going for a drink would soon drowse off to sleep and fall prey to a lurking Oriental. Naturally, the Japanese all talked English, and some of them had clear, resonant Harvard accents. In fact, stated one shaking psycho, he was sure that the soldier calling him was a Jap because no one in his outfit spoke such good English. (17)

(16) A-4, p. 83

(17) A-4, p. 83

So the stories went, and the more incredible the tales, the more awe-inspired were the untried doughboys of the 148th Infantry Regiment. The Regimental Commander early recognized the hazard of the jungle nights and standing operating procedures were distributed to all troops. (18)

The 148th Infantry Regiment began fighting its way around the 169th's northern flank. Lieutenant Sidney Godkin, Company F, establishing an outpost around the 43rd Division's water point 3000 yards from the beach, suddenly spotted a long column of soldiers weaving casually along a trail to his front. Unable to visualize the presence of enemy columns inside our lines and mistaking these troops for Army engineers, Goodkin shouted himself hoarse demanding that the "engineer's" recognize him. After a few minutes he was able to attract the attention of several men in the column and they unhesitatingly peppered his position, seriously wounding him in the groin. Before he was evacuated, he passed all known information to the Regimental Commander. Major Bethers, Regimental S-3, led a two-jeep reconnaissance party forward to contact the embattled 169th Infantry Regiment. Unaware of the precarious Jap-dominated supply road, Bethers; Captain Edward Nicely, S-2; and a squad of riflemen wipped blissfully on until, 800 yards west of the water point, a Jap light machine gun emplaced around a bend opened up, killing two enlisted men, wounding Captain Nicely and three other soldiers, and knocking out both jeeps. Now aware of the uncertainty ahead. Colonel Baxter decided to move the 1st Battalion forward in force the next morning. (See Map C) (19)

(18) A-4, p. 84

(19) A-4, p. 84

NARRATION (20)

THE COMPANY PLAN

Just before Major Bether's reconnaissance patrol moved out, 1st Platoon, Company A, 148th Infantry Regiment was ordered to contact Lieutenant Goodkin's outpost. Feeling quite confident and fresh, this platoon moved out thinking that no enemy could stop them; all stories and rumors on the beach were dismissed. Along the trail many dead Jap bodies littered ZANANA TRAIL. Firing could be heard in the distance which spurred the platoon on at a more rapid rate of march. When the outpost was reached, a fire fight was in progress and Major Bethers was evacuating the wounded. Since it was getting late, Major Bethers ordered the platoon leader to return with his platoon to his company. It was not realized that darkness falls quickly in the jungle and much difficulty was encountered while returning to the company perimeter defense for the evening. Rations and water was issued the men by 1st Sergeant "Ducky" Swann. 1st Sergeant Swann was an elderly Ohio National Guard soldier with many years of service to his credit. Due to his patriotism he chose to remain with the same unit rather than remain in the states. In the process of helping the supply sergeant issue the rations, many enlisted men asked certain questions by calling his name out loudly. Since he was a well liked and efficient individual, he was more than glad to assist the younger enlisted men. It soon became very dark and the jungle seemed to awaken and be alive. The rumors and tales from the psychos began to race through

(20) This entire Narration is taken from personal experience and knowledge of the writer. Unless another source is indicated it should be presumed that personal experience is the source.

the green troops' minds. We were all told prior to leaving for New Georgia that the few English speaking Japs could not pronounce a word commencing with the letter "L". It wasn't long until a voice in the outer perimeter commanded "Load and Lock."

Instinctively, some men obeyed the command. However, the majority of the company had their weapons loaded and ready. Then, what appeared humorous to the company but not to 1st Sergeant Swann, a voice called "Ducky Swann." The more the voice called for "Ducky Swann," the more obvious it was that Sergeant Swann's teeth were getting a rapid chatter. After enduring a miserable night, it was decided to send 1st Sergeant Swann to a more suitable assignment in the zone of interior. Not, however, without his strong protests.

ENEMY AMBUSH

Early on the morning of the 19th, ammunition and rations were distributed. It was noted how time consuming it was to issue the "C" rations and how much waste there was after the men had received the rations. Since an issue of three day's ration was given each individual and this amount was bulky and heavy, only the coffee units and meat components were carried. The remainder was thrown off to the side into the jungle. It is believed that a flat square can packaged in bandoleers similar to the .30 caliber M1 bandoleers would be in great favor in more ways than one. The men could receive the rations as rapidly as the bandoleers of ammunition and sling them over one shoulder. Also the square can would not interfere with one's crawling during a fire fight. A round can is a hindrance and must be discarded during a similar situation. Another great contribution would be the inclusion of heating tablets.

Since Company A was selected as the advance guard of the Battalion, the company was disposed with the 3rd Platoon leading, followed by the 2nd Platoon, then the weapons platoon, and in the rear the 1st Platoon.

The 1st Battalion started up the trail with the remainder of the Regiment protecting the 43rd Division's rear. This route led past "Butchers Ridge." Here lay 17 bodies of American soldiers, brutal evidence of the Jap's earlier ambush.

Since the Regimental Commander had orders to relieve the remnants of the 169th Infantry Regiment at "Parachute Drop" by 1400 hours the same day, he ordered the advance guard to proceed at a more rapid rate. Wide flanking patrols could not be executed in the dense jungle and only observation could be gained from the trail.

Just to the northwest of the bridge, 3rd Platoon, the point of the battalion ran into jungle trouble. As the company passed the bend in the road and the entire 3rd platoon crossed the bridge the Japs opened up on the column with a well concealed heavy machine gun, light machine guns and rifles. Colonel Baxter, accompanying the main body, crept forward to reconnoiter. As he put it: "Nobody had shot at me for twenty-five years and I was curious to see if I could still take it. I got as far as a big tree in the bend of the road and found everybody pretty flat, including some wounded, so I naturally peered around a tree kind of careful like. I saw Lieutenant 'Pappy' Drews lying extra flat in a rut on my side of the bridge about fifty feet ahead, and asked him where the bastards were. He said, without raising even so much as his eyebrows, 'Right ahead on the trail,

and lookout--you're right in the line of fire.' Then they opened up and directed a few around me, so I got flat too, realizing that Drews was in a bad spot. When they quit, I eased up to the tree and peeked half as much as before and ordered Drews to roll to the left into the jungle. He said, 'I can't Colonel.' I told him it was an order, so he rolled and, thank God, came out with just his left shoulder creased a quarter of an inch. Lieutenant Colonel Hydaker and Captain Wendt had come up, so we worked out a little scheme to rout the Jap off the hill. We sent from the 1st Platoon, squad leader Sergeant Harris and his squad to the right, and squad leader Sergeant Shaner and his squad to the left, on a double envelopment--but all that accomplished was to tell us there were more Japs there than we had expected." (See Map C) (21)

Lieutenant Colonel Hydaker, the battalion commander, then called the 1st Platoon Leader of Company "A" to receive an attack order. The order was not an elaborate five paragraph field order as one is taught and uses under more favorable conditions and terrain. A wide envelopment was ordered on the left flank of the enemy.

Then another order was given to the platoon leader which later on in the day during a fire fight caused him to have to make a decision with hesitation and uncertainty. This order in effect as given by the battalion commander was "Don't return until the enemy is wiped out." As a parting shot it was repeated again.

(21) A-4, p. 85

The 1st Platoon Leader hastily oriented his squad leaders and platoon sergeants and had the platoon form a platoon dump. While preparations were being made to attack, aid men tried to pick up the wounded; even though they wore the red cross brassard, the enemy fired on them and seriously wounded all aid men and litter bearers. This in turn made the platoon more anxious to close with the enemy and destroy him.

The platoon was organized into a diamond formation with a five pace interval between individuals. This later proved the best formation when the proximity of the enemy was not known exactly and all-around protection was desirable. The company had only one compass. It was in possession of the weapons platoon leader and it was necessary that it be borrowed every time a patrol was sent out.

As the platoon cautiously executed the wide envelopment in an effort to gain surprise over the enemy, many defects in training and organization were seriously noted. At all times the platoon leader had to remain with the point. Much confidence and good leadership were expected of the Platoon Sergeant who brought up the rear and corrected bunching. It was soon learned that due to the unusual strain at the point and lack of previous training as scouts, only about two men in the entire platoon could satisfactorily use the compass. At times it was believed that some men shirked the duty of taking a turn at the point by stating that they did not know how to use the compass.

As the platoon approached the BARIKE RIVER, proper security measures were insured. The point, including the platoon leader, crossed and searched the far side for any enemy. Then the remainder of the platoon crossed.

During the crossing a member of the platoon was noticed to be unfit for this mission. Since the banks of the river were high, each soldier assisted the one behind him to climb up by lowering his rifle and pulling the next person up the bank. It was noted that this individual had his safety catch off with the muzzle pointing toward the other person's chest in an effort to assist him. Luckily another member of the squad made a correction on the spot. This particular individual had been on permanent kitchen police up until the day the platoon was assigned this particular mission. It is cited because in a few hours the same individual became a psycho case and restraint had to be used on him during a fire fight to keep him from being killed by the enemy.

As the platoon advanced towards the enemy's rear and flank, it was noticed that the platoon leader's submachine gun's drum type magazine had a tendency to make a noise just when silence was of paramount value. The fifty round drum rattled due to the large number of shells in the drum. Later on it was discarded for the thirty round clip type magazine which proved very satisfactory.

The platoon functioned like veterans and each member seemed to be doing his best. Strict discipline on the insistence of the platoon leader during the past training proved to be the foremost attribute for success in this mission and other assignments to follow. Surprise was gained in the enemy's rear and one machine gun crew was dispatched. Since it necessitated that the platoon maneuver along the enemy's flank toward the friendly forces pinned down, the enemy shifted his defenses. His local security was good around his machine guns. Surprise was lost.

Only one other alternative was left and that was to attack against the flank via the fire and maneuver method. For several hours slow progress was being made due to the fact of the enemy's knowledge of the terrain and his experience in jungle fighting and confidence of victory due to his previous successes. It was only through good training in discipline that the platoon maintained a fire and maneuver skirmish line. Even though the movement was slow every man moved forward. Only one man acted odd. The word psychoneurotic was unknown at this time, but the platoon leader diagnosed that this same individual who had not performed his duties well at the river crossing was mentally sick. This man envisioned a blonde woman and demanded that a hot meal be fed him during the fire fight toward the main enemy defense. Two men were robbed from the platoon to hold this individual down and escort him to the rear.

It began to get late and it was evident that in an hour it would be dark. To the platoon leader's way of thinking his mission was not accomplished for many of the enemy remained and the heavy machine gun was too well concealed, emplaced, and protected to knock out. More progress forward was made and the platoon succeeded in getting another light machine gun to the flank of the heavy machine gun. By this time the platoon was close to the men ambushed. Due to poor visibility, one of these men fired at the platoon leader and barely missed his head. On the recommendation of the noncommissioned officers and the final decision of the platoon leader, it was decided to make one last attempt at the heavy machine gun and then withdraw. The platoon leader had previously set his mind on digging in where he was

stopped for the night. However, the last effort was foiled due to too few grenades and since they were painted yellow the enemy very easily located them and tossed them back.

Darkness was falling rapidly and the decision was executed to make an orderly withdrawal. All progressed in good order. A back azimuth of an added 5 degrees to the right was allowed to foil any ambushing parties on the return trip. Special vigilance was kept to the rear. Sergeant Wykoff, the platoon guide, spotted an enemy soldier following the platoon at a distance in the rear. He immediately warned the others and waited for an opportunity to make certain he could destroy the enemy with his rifle. By lingering behind and waiting behind a tree he felled the Jap with one good round in the head.

During the platoon leader's return he had visions of being court-martialed and disgraced for disobeying an order and returning before his mission was completed.

Returning on the trail he was greeted by the outer perimeter of the company. The company had withdrawn with the battalion to better positions for the impending night. The 1st Platoon's pack dump was now in the enemy's hands. It is mentioned because later on in the campaign it had some intelligence value in identifying the enemy units confronting this regiment.

The company commander was happy to see the platoon leader and the platoon for it was assumed that it had been also ambushed or pinned down due to the long fire fight that could be heard by the company. A call was made to battalion immediately and the platoon leader was ordered to report to the battalion commander at

once. Still fearful of the disciplinary action confronting him, he reported to the battalion commander with anxiety.

Much to his surprise, the battalion commander greeted him in a cordial manner and even presented him with a "D" bar. It was then learned why everyone was happy to see the platoon leader. It was surmised that the platoon was wiped out and if no word was heard of it by nightfall, artillery and mortar fire was to be placed in the same area where the platoon leader was located. Much to the platoon leader's relief he had made the correct decision and learned that he who is up front decides what should be done. This experience was invaluable in future operations for it taught the platoon leader to use his initiative to the utmost advantage.

The next morning Company C swept wide around the Jap's left end, engaging in a bitter fire fight that rooted the stubborn pocket from the jungle just before dark. By the 21st, the entire regiment was intact northwest of the Parachute Drop.

BULLDOZER GUARD ASSIGNMENT

A not too popular assignment on the 23rd was given to the 1st Platoon--guarding the engineer bulldozer as it cut a trail through the jungle.

The bulldozer was tracked gold. It really spearheaded an infantry advance, because only so far as it pushed and cut could infantry jeeps and supplies go. The Americans realized this, and a full platoon of riflemen always guarded the precious machine and its priceless driver. To no avail. For the Japs knew, too, that the key to an American blitz was this loud, raucous thing; and they would lie in ambush, deducing by the sound and the terrain just what direction the dozer must take. The

drivers were not protected by the steel cabs with slits, an innovation which came later. They were completely exposed, sitting high in full view of anyone, and it was probable that within seventy-two hours the operators would be dead or, if they were lucky, just wounded. The casualty rate was so great for these dozer technicians that one regimental commander, asking for trained men, promised that whoever volunteered to drive through to MUNDA airfield, only one mile away, would receive a direct commission. One man reluctantly accepted the proposition, but the next day as he stood up on his machine trying to figure out the best path around a large tree, he was shot in the head and killed. (22)

For several hours no incidents occurred. Then the driver was wounded by a hidden enemy which was lying in wait. The platoon managed to put up a strong enough fire fight to evacuate the driver safely. However, as was learned later, in the path of the dozer were strong main enemy defensive positions. The platoon was driven back and artillery and mortar fire were placed on these positions.

It appeared that the enemy had great respect for the monster. Observation revealed that at least fifteen of the enemy made a hasty look at the bulldozer. However, no harm was done to it. It was thought that the enemy would at least cut the wiring. Of the many times that the bulldozer fell into the enemy's hands, it was learned that no damage was incurred. After recapture the motor started immediately and another driver resumed the duties as a dozer operator.

(22) A-4, p. 94

RECONNAISSANCE PATROL

On the morning of the 25th, a call was received by the company commander from the battalion commander for the 1st Platoon's Leader to report immediately to the battalion commander. It was surmised by the platoon leader that another patrol was impending. As he arrived at the Battalion CP he was told by the battalion commander that he had just volunteered for a reconnaissance patrol. Since the platoon was prepared for a patrol it was not a surprise.

At this time the battalion commander presented the platoon leader with a very scarce instrument that he had longed to have as his own. It was the scarce lensatic compass. Since the battalion commander knew that the platoon leader always had to borrow the weapons platoon leader's compass he gave him this one that someone had found on a dead American soldier near the parachute drop. With many thanks it was received eagerly.

Only four other men were to accompany the platoon leader on the 4000 yard reconnaissance patrol. Strict orders were given to push on for 4000 yards regardless of enemy resistance. The mission was strictly for reconnaissance and the patrol was not to engage in a fire fight. This was emphasized as the regimental commander sought information of the enemy to the regiment's front for the next day's push forward. He believed one look was worth a thousand words.

The patrol had to be very aggressive inasmuch as 4000 yards had to be covered with a full report before 1500 hours. After 1500 hours artillery would commence firing and it would be assumed that the mission had failed and the patrol was destroyed by the enemy.

Returning to the company immediately, four hand-picked noncommissioned officers were selected by the platoon leader to accompany him on this mission.

All members of the patrol were equipped alike. On the waist belt hung a canteen of water, in the pockets were three clips of ammunition and a "D" bar, and each man wore a soft fatigue cap and was armed with an M1 rifle.

Since the jungle tends to bleach one's skin, an attempt was made to darken the face and hands with mud. This, however, proved unsatisfactory for after the mud dried it fell off the skin. It was later proved in Bougainville and the Philippine Campaign that black theatrical grease paint put up in thick sticks is the best camouflage for the face and hands. These had to be procured through bartering from the division special service section. However, they could easily be issued to the companies as expendable items.

This precaution of camouflage is necessary, as stated before, due to the bleached skin. In some instances it was learned that the enemy could observe two white hands and aim between them, although not seeing the individual too plainly, hitting its mark. Also, when one moves his head from the concealed position the bleached face would stand out.

This unit did not have the jungle camouflage suit and were happy that they didn't. It was found that the two piece fatigue suit had most advantages and very little, if any, disadvantages. The green fatigues soon picked up the natural surrounding terrain such as coral dust and/or mud which blended excellently with the immediate surroundings. Also, more freedom of movement would be had both on the move or when the call to nature came about. The

camouflage suit was too heavy and restricted much needed air from the body. Also, it was the belief that the bright colors could be picked out more easily than green in a dark green background.

The jungle boot was quite satisfactory and proved quite popular especially on patrols where stealth was required. Then, too, even though one walked through mud or water, they seemed to dry out quickly.

Thus equipped the patrol moved out immediately to its objective. Extreme caution and previous experience was utilized. Paths and trails were avoided like a bubonic plague. Clearings and artillery shelled areas were also bypassed. It was learned that it was better to work one's way through the jungle in the thickest area rather than take the easy way to ones designation because such mentioned places usually contained an ever watchful enemy ambush.

All arms were carried at the hip with the sling extended to the maximum and slung over the left shoulder. If at all possible, as we moved through the jungle, we tried not to swing our arms. One can, surprisingly, gain more ground and be closer to the enemy in this particular method of movement. It appears that an enemy's eyes are alerted more easily as one swings his arms. Since one does not move at a rapid pace in the jungle, it is difficult to see a slow moving person approaching with as little motion of the body as possible.

We had only gone about 800 yards when a sniper spotted the patrol and fired, but missed. Since our mission was to move on, we kept moving. Also, it is useless to look for a sniper. The

best defense is to keep moving and not stop long enough for him to take accurate aim. Another 500 yards was covered when it was discovered, almost too late, that we had bumped into a platoon of Japs carrying one heavy machine gun and one light machine gun. They were headed for our lines. Since it was ordered that the platoon leader not engage in a fire fight but accomplish the mission, a wonderful opportunity to execute an ambush of our own was passed up. It was first planned to kill the two Japs carrying the heavy machine gun, then it would be simple to get most of the others for the remainder of the platoon would try to recover the heavy machine gun. Also, our patrol was few in number and limited on ammunition which, too, helped in the decision not to attack. However, it is believed if a portable radio had been available at the time that this important information could have been called back to our parent unit and they could have eliminated this patrol.

Contacting more snipers on the way, the objective was reached. A sketch was made of the enemy emplacements. Some were occupied, but most appeared to be unoccupied. This, however, only meant that when the regiment would approach these emplacements they would be occupied by the enemy. Allowing 10 degrees to the right on the back azimuth and with not too much difficulty the reconnaissance patrol returned to the regimental command post with the information sought by the regimental commander.

It was revealed that the enemy patrol previously seen had ambushed the platoon guarding the engineer bulldozer, killing the operator and several men in the guarding platoon.

ENCIRCLEMENT

Progress the next few days for the entire regiment was good. 1st Battalion patrols had gone as far as BIBLO HILL which, according to patrol reports, was relatively free of the Nips. However, this hill possessed numerous unoccupied bunkers, pill-boxes, and interlocking trenches and by the time the regiment was in position to assault, the unoccupied emplacements had magically filled up with a Nipponese garrison which had probably accumulated in this final pocket as the Americans drove them back. The point of the 148th was not 1500 yards from the 161st on its left (south) flank, and patrol contact with the 161st was practically an impossibility. Further, the 148th lead elements had marched 1200 yards beyond their ration dump and 1800 yards beyond the farthest point which 37th Reconnaissance, Division MP's, and the 161st reserve battalion had secured. The situation of the 148th was not precarious now, but a long, thin line of troops guarding one exposed flank out of contact with the line on the other flank and at the far end of a vulnerable, unprotected supply line was a definite gamble. The stakes were high ones: the rapid completion of the New Georgia Campaign by sealing off the Japanese against the sea. The 148th held most of the high cards: tough troops, superior equipment, and the flush of victory. The Japanese were forced to call the 148th's hand and the show down was one of the high points of the war. (See Map C)

Quoting the 37th Division after-action report: The harassing of the 148th supply line, ambushing of vehicles, and intermittent sniping was caused by not more than 200 Japs,

constituting a roving band who appeared from the northeast and who had either come up from VIRU HARBOR in an attempt to join the Jap forces at MUNDA or had come from SUNDAY INLET on the northwest and had become lost on the way to MUNDA and whose approach thereto was intercepted by the 148th Infantry. (23)

Company A was given the mission of guarding the regimental ration dump. Japanese troops easily broke into the high ground around the dump, and poured machine-gun, knee mortar, and rifle fire into the ration boxes and the ammunition. Hastily stacked ration boxes were stacked above ground foxholes. The Japanese assaults were discouraged and broken up. But the Japanese failure here was unfortunately not the case all along the 148th's sector.

All trails to the regiment were now no-man's land. The 200-odd band of Japanese infiltrators chopped themselves into small units built around several machine guns. The entire north jungle was their balliwick and thus the entire American right flank was their hunting ground. No more casualties could be evacuated but had to remain in their own perimeter. (24)

In G Company sector 20mm fire was being received from well concealed antiaircraft positions. Since no artillery officer was available to register artillery on this position, the 1st platoon leader was called upon to perform this mission. Being a former artilleryman, the mission did not seem difficult at first.

Not knowing the enemy location too well he commenced relaying the information for registration, unknowingly, about 100 yards

(23) A-4, p. 98

(24) A-4, p. 99

from the enemy 20mm guns. After receiving a few quick near misses, he narrowly and with difficulty escaped to a machine gun emplacement. As the first smoke shell landed it was almost dark. Registration had to be done by sound and flash method. Shifts in deflection had to be done by compass direction inasmuch as the different artillery units were located on separate scattered islands supporting the main island of NEW GEORGIA. Bold changes in deflection and range were executed in order to place rapid fire for effect before the enemy could take adequate cover. The mission of neutralization with this artillery was successful for the next morning the guns and positions were captured with little or no opposition.

Inside the 1st Battalion perimeter, the troops dug in for the night of complete isolation from the rest of the regiment and the Division. (25) Water was low and had to be obtained by cutting the long water type vines. When this type of vine was located it yielded a satisfactory liquid that was more than welcome. By mixing cocoa or coffee from the "C" ration in the helmet as it was filled, no obnoxious taste was experienced. Ponchos were also spread out in a fashion to capture the rain.

When it rained one had to be especially watchful against surprise attacks. The Jap knew that the American soldier would be seeking shelter and warmth under a shelter half or poncho. With the assistance of the heavy downpour and further listening hampered by this shelter he could easily launch his attack against our positions. Contrary to belief, the nights and rain in the jungles are quite cold. Since none of the men had heavy

(25) A-4, p. 99

clothing, blankets, or packs, the poncho seemed to be the answer. It could be folded over the cartridge belt in rear of the body and was always available. Whereas once a pack was discarded it was never seen again.

With the evacuation route cut off, the regimental aid station became the collecting point for all 148th casualties. One hundred and twenty wounded soon accumulated in a regimental aid station designed to treat a few soldiers with minor wounds. Some of the casualties had creases in the arms and legs. Others suffered from bullet holes in the chest and stomach, and the presence of these serious cases, above everything else, underlined the necessity for breaking out of the Japanese ring. The wounded were placed in a tremendous hole blasted and dug by fatigued aid men and Headquarters Company volunteers. Without water, without adequate medicine, without necessary surgery, without anything except fortitude, these men silently rested on litters and shelter halves. No one whimpered or cried. When a man died, he did so gently and without excitement. Their patience and courage inspired the rest of the trapped regiment, and the subsequent annihilation of the Japanese trappers and the breakthrough were accomplished by men who couldn't quit because their shot-up buddies wouldn't let them. (See Map C) (26)

After making little progress on the night of the 31st digging was in progress but at a slow pace. Most of the soil was of a coral like structure. Here the infantry hand axe proved invaluable. A pick mattox was useless as a shovel, but the axe bit into the soil a little at the time. It was always in demand

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when digging ordinary shelters. Since the holes were dug at the base of trees or around them, many long thick roots from these large trees and other lesser trees presented a mass of roots which had to be severed before another shovelful of soil could be excavated.

The enemy was all around and within the perimeter. It was difficult to locate him due to the sharp crack of his rifle, his smokeless powder and the method of firing he employed. When we fired our weapons, he would also, but when we ceased firing, he did likewise. Since water was nonexistent for several days, thirst was more apparent. The water type vines became exhausted in the area at the beginning of the encirclement. In the late evening to add insult to injury, an enemy sniper concealed in a tree above the foxhole threw an empty salmon can made in California on the occupants. Repulsing several attempts of infiltration the night had passed.

The next morning, 1 August, at daybreak orders were received to make an all out final effort to breakthrough. The 1st Platoon Leader was given the mission of trying to make one of the first breakthroughs. After forming the company in line of skirmishers, it was discovered only thirty some odd men existed. Since there was no need for the weapons platoon to support the attack due to the thick jungle and no mask clearance for their mortars, they too, were lined up as skirmishers and functioned as riflemen.

The attack hadn't progressed twenty yards when the line was hit heavily by knee mortar, machine gun and rifle fire. This discouraged the men. Since no other officers were present in

the company the 1st platoon leader had the task of encouraging the men to attack and keep on a skirmish line. It seemed futile, for the enemy was up to his usual trickery. An English speaking Jap gave the command, "Pull Back." That was about all the skirmishers had to hear. It spread like wild fire along the line. It was only through strong, forceful leadership that the line of skirmishers was reformed by the 1st platoon leader.

Another attempt to assault the enemy positions was made. Considerable ground was gained at the expense of heavy casualties. However, it placed the skirmishers at a few yards from the enemy positions. The 1st platoon leader found himself pinned down under two light machine guns with two seriously wounded men alongside of him. Cautioning the one man to lie still, he held the other soldier in a motionless position. It had been learned a while back that the enemy did not fire at persons motionless. They fired at anyone that moved or appeared to have any life left in him. Since the one soldier was very seriously wounded, all effort was concentrated on him. He was shot through the helmet with the bullet going through his right eye. It was learned later on that the bullet stopped in his head after going through the eye. His life was spared because it was the practice to lower the helmets during the assault for just an occasion as this bullet going through the soldier's eye, but was spent enough to stop a complete penetration after having gone through the steel helmet and fiber lining. It was learned that the other man was shot through the heart. However, the platoon leader knew that it must be a superficial wound inasmuch as the man would not be alive to tell him about it. He thus reassured the soldier that

he would live.

Things appeared hopeless again for most men were actually pinned down. The 1st Platoon Leader had carried on his belt two grenades which he thought were still there when he reached down to get one and toss it in the enemy machine gun position. Much to his surprise, they were gone for in the process they had fallen off the belt while he was crawling and creeping. A grenade pouch would have been the answer, but at this stage of the war none were existent, at least to his unit. By this time one of the scouts from his platoon worked into a position to toss a grenade which not only eliminated the machine gunners, but gave the signal for the continuation of the assault.

As the assault progressed, it was discovered that the wearing of the helmet low to cover the eyes had saved a few more lives. It is strongly believed that the helmet could be improved upon by adding another piece of metal in the front and cushioned by another piece of fiber. Also an entrenching tool designed, so as to be carried on the cartridge belt with the handle detachable from the shovel metal part. This metal part could be improved upon by making it more concave and with straps to place over the heart in the assault. A more concave shovel would also be more efficient to bite into the earth when digging in. It is common knowledge that the two most dreaded wounds are the head and heart type. Even if portable surgical hospitals are available, they are practically of no use to this type of wound since it is a mortal wound. Most deaths and wounds were caused by gun shot at close range, at the most not over thirty yards.

As the attack pressed closer to the consolidation of the exposed 161st Infantry flank, American Browning Automatic Rifles

and water cooled heavy machine guns were used by the enemy. They overrun a portion of this regiments positions and were using the weapons to their advantage and to our loss. We feared the Browning Automatic Rifle especially, for we realized their hitting power and superior fire power. At this stage of the assault, the men kept a steady fire and maneuver which did not stop. The enemy must have had dysentary for human feces was quite prevalent and made the American soldier more determined to wipe him out for his filthy poor latrine discipline. The last strongpoint was reached. It consisted of several enemy manning a water cooled machine gun and two Browning Automatic Rifles. Tossing several grenades and firing immediately in the area where the grenades landed so that they could not be retrieved and tossed back, the resistance was all over. However, precaution was used for the enemy had donned our helmets and jungle suits. Then, too, many that were wounded had to be shot through the head to make certain that no treachery would be practiced by these individuals feinting death. One of the enemy was feinting death by kneeling behind the heavy machine gun with one hand on the trigger. Knicking him from the flank and overturning him, the startled Jap looked up too late to do any damage.

At 1038, field telephones buzzed throughout the Division zone. All available trucks, ambulances, and jeeps were rushed to the 148th sector where one hundred twenty-eight wounded men were awaiting a long-delayed evacuation. In two hours the wounded were crowded in the 37th Clearing Station, and none of the group died, although several of their mates had passed on in previous isolated nights and days. The 148th Infantry went into Division

Reserve, fed a warm meal of spaghetti and green beans, drank gallons of water, and slept. The next morning, their rest was to an end, but for the night, sleep and not the Japanese was king. One of the men in the platoon found the platoon leader's soap case which had been taken by the enemy on the first day's action. This proved that many of the same enemy that operated near the beach were the same in this area.

AMBUSH PATROL

The next day found the platoon moving forward again. While both battalions of the 148th Infantry pushed to slice the MUNDA-BAIROKA TRAIL, the 1st Platoon Leader was called to report to the regimental commander. He had just returned from a short patrol, but knew something was up in form of a patrol.

Reporting to the regimental commander he was informed that for a change a new experiment was to be put into effect. He was given orders to proceed to the MUNDA-BAIRKO TRAIL with the mission of ambushing the Japs as they retreated from MUNDA Airport or tried to reinforce or resupply it. Also his orders were that he would establish sound power telephone communication and would not return until given a personal order from the regimental commander. Three enlisted men from the regimental communication platoon would go along with the patrol and lay the wire. Immediately upon completion of their mission of laying wire they were to be released and directed to return to the regimental command post.

Hasty preparations were conducted by the 1st platoon leader. Even though his platoon bore the brunt of the company patrols and assaults none of the men complained or grumbled. A total of

twenty men were to go including an aid man armed with a Winchester pump 12 gauge shot gun firing double ought shot. About every third man was armed with the most preferred gun, the Browning Automatic Rifle. Loose rounds of .30 caliber shells were packed into empty .30 caliber machine gun boxes in order to carry the maximum amount of ammunition. The ammunition bag issued today did not exist then. This was to be a patrol to last over a day and night, thus the men carried only the bare essentials for ammunition had to be carried in large quantities and had the highest priority. No help or resupply on anything could be expected. The patrol was to operate strictly on its own.

After negotiating several thousand yards, signs of the enemy became apparent. However, they were avoided and all past experience was brought into play to reach the MUNDA-BAIRKA TRAIL and set up the ambush. A few snipers were eliminated on the way. Since the platoon leader knew that according to the azimuth and distance given him he had a considerable distance to traverse, more speed was introduced. This, however, almost proved fatal. Working as always in previous patrols at the point with his most reliable and efficient scout, Sergeant Camie Watson, who was later killed in an assault in the Philippine Campaign, stepped into prepared Japanese positions and bivouac and supply area. The enemy was just as surprised for he was eating rice and did not expect any Americans in this particular area. Just as quickly as they had stepped into the positions, they stepped back. At this time the remainder of the patrol had caught up with the point. It was lucky that they had,

for a fire fight broke out immediately. It was then realized that a large force was in front and the flanks. A nose of a ridge line presented itself to the right flank which the platoon leader instinctively ordered his platoon to reach and seize. This part of the ridge was lightly occupied at this particular moment and was soon occupied. A hasty perimeter defense was established and positions occupied. (See Map C)

The communication personnel had evidently conscientiously laid the sound power line as ordered and produced the KES telephone minus the clapper in the bell. The wires were hooked up and the platoon leader tried ringing the regiment, but no communication could be had. A thorough check and recheck was made by the communication personnel, but to no avail. It was then assumed that the wire had been cut. Since the platoon leader had orders to send the communication personnel back to regiment, he dispatched a message with them and gave them a back azimuth to follow in order to reach the regimental command post. As can be imagined these enlisted men were glad to be on their way for they did not relish the idea of being with this particular patrol. They had only been gone five minutes when they returned. On trying to return to regiment they ran into several of the enemy and killed two. This time the platoon leader gave them another back azimuth and ordered them to use all caution for the area was alive with the enemy. No word was heard from them, it was assumed they were successful in sneaking out of the perimeter defense.

In the meantime these veteran patrolmen conducted themselves accordingly. There was no promiscuous firing of weapons. Everyone was alert and no unnecessary noises were made. Strategic

positions were well occupied by cunningly concealed men who had mastered some of the so called mysteries of the enemy. Every attempt of infiltration by the enemy was foiled. Listening posts did such a good job that the enemy never did get a look of the platoon's defensive positions. Command of the MUNDA-BAIRKO TRAIL was gained from this well concealed position. Orders were given by the platoon leader that only one man would fire at the enemy if he approached singly. The man designated was an above average expert rifle shot. Large volume of fire would be avoided for this would reveal our positions and waste ammunition. It wasn't long until an unusually large Jap was seen approaching up the trail with a knee mortar strapped on his back. The selected expert rifleman fired one shot, and the victim crumbled from the deadly accuracy of this rifleman hitting him between the eyes. Every man was tense for it was not known what, if anything, the enemy would do hidden in the jungle across the trail. Several more of the enemy repeated the process after a few minutes of trying to traverse the trail singly. Each one was killed by the same rifleman at approximately the same spot. Finally a Jap officer wearing leather puttees came forward to look over the dead and possibly try to determine the exact direction of fire from our perimeter. As he was about to reach for some object on a dead victim's body he, too, was dispatched. In the meantime the enemy was trying to feel out our positions, but with no success.

Startled and surprised by the unexpected dull thud ringing of the telephone, the platoon leader answered it. Much to his amazement the Regimental Communication Warrant Officer was on the line. He reported the three communications men had safely

returned and very happy to be back. And that he was one sound power reel length in the jungle talking to me and was glad he did not have to go the remaining three reels to find the trouble. He related that he was ordered by the regimental commander to personally with a patrol to find the trouble and get communication with me. He then asked me if I was satisfied with the communication and that he would like an order to report back to the regimental command post. The request was granted and a call was made to the regimental commander posting him with the patrol's progress. It was confirmed that the patrol would remain for the night and the next day. Also the platoon leader's former artillery battalion, 140th Field Artillery Battalion had just moved into a new firing position on the island of NEW GEORGIA, and he could have the pleasure of registering the battalion into the enemy supply dumps. This would also foil any attempts of BANZAI attacks on the platoon during the night. It was comforting to know that protective artillery support would be given during the night. It was also learned that this sound power line had first priority on the Regimental switchboard and one man constantly listened at the other end. Evidently the three communication men that laid the wire were trying to make up for their hasty error in splicing the wire that was the cause for no communication when they arrived at the patrol's objective. In effect a "granny" type splice or much more like an ordinary knot was made hooking up the first and second sound power reel.

About 200 hours Lieutenant Colonel Wolfe, the 140th Field Artillery Battalion, called for information to register his battalion. This was done by sound and flash and with very good results. Large ammunition and gasoline dumps were hit and

exploded. The ammunition exploded for a considerable length of time to the bright accompaniment of gasoline and oil burning. This infuriated the enemy and attempts were made to peirce the platoon perimeter. A box barrage was dropped which broke up the attempt. One man was wounded by the shell fragments from this close barrage. It was real satisfaction to hear and see the explosions and fire in front of the platoon. Much to the disappointment of the platoon leader he could not drop a shell on a Jap officer evidently in command who was yelling commands and giving orders to his badly frightened soldiers. As much as he tried following him with an artillery battery, the yelling and commanding would reappear in another area. This proved to an advantage also, for it also located new ammunition dumps that were blown up.

The next day found the patrol harassed by Japs trying to locate the exact positions by shaking bushes and small trees trying to draw our fire. Knee mortar fire was also received. Then to the right of the patrol and on the same ridge line a heavy fire fight was in progress. Upon investigation, it appeared that an American Unit was trying to seize this ridge line. Calling the regiment immediately it was learned that the 27th Infantry Regiment of the 25th Division was trying to take the ridge line. It was hoped by the platoon leader that the attack would press closer so that he could launch an attack from the flanks since he was told that this friendly unit knew of his location. However, some fire was received from the friendly forces, but no casualties were sustained. About 1500 hours this friendly regiment pulled back, evidently for the evening. Then

about 1600 hours orders were received from the regimental commander to try to get back to regiment before dark.

This proved much more difficult than was expected. It seemed that every avenue of escape was blocked by the enemy for he was expecting something like this to happen. A weak point was located and through the combined superior efforts of the entire patrol a slow but nerve racking withdrawal was executed toward the 27th Infantry Regiment positions. The platoon leader did not know the exact location of this regiment and feared being caught in a cross fire or fire from the regiment. After careful observation as the withdrawal was executed, the friendly infantry positions could be seen on high ground. Leaving the remainder of the patrol under cover and concealment, the patrol leader attempted to expose himself and talk with these friendly forces. After several attempts which almost proved fatal, he approached their positions with his hands above his head. After he was recognized, he immediately had his platoon advance and pass through the friendly lines. The platoon leader reported to the battalion commander that commanded this particular sector and gave him all the information he knew of the ridge he was trying to seize. It was learned that this battalion commander did not know of the platoon leader's patrol position on the ridge line.

THE LAST DAY BEYOND MUNDA AIRSTRIP

Reporting back to the company it was learned that MUNDA Airstrip was taken and that positions were to be dug in for the night near the Jap Naval Supply Point. (See Map C)

By this time the entire company had gained considerable combat experience and knew how to properly deal with the enemy. As per usual a night attack was made against the company perimeter defense. Since the enemy always tried to locate the telephone wire and follow it to the company command post, the wires were unhooked and tied to a piece of branch and tossed outside of the perimeter. It was learned through experience that all holes should be dug in the outer perimeter and none located in the center. Anything in the center was considered enemy and grenades could thus be tossed in the center without doing any harm to friendly troops. Good fire discipline paid off for thirty enlisted enemy and three officers of the enemy lay dead in the company perimeter the next day. It was found that the pistol was a good night weapon for the Jap had the habit of looking in the hole first, it was easy to reach over to his face without missing. The rifle was a little awkward to maneuver in a hole occupied by three men. However, nine of the thirty-three enemy dead were killed in front of one hole alone with a soldier armed with an M1 rifle.

Early the morning of the 4th of August found the regiment near the coast. What few remnants of the enemy that remained tried to reach the island of ARUNDEL by rafts, boats, and swimming. Many committed suicide rather than surrender. It was relatively simple to shoot the well defined targets in the water. Everyone joined in the firing for it was like a Coney Island shooting gallery trying to hit as many targets as possible.

The remainder of the third platoon that was ambushed initially on the approach march after crossing the bridge reported back to the company. It was learned that during the night,

Squad Leader Sergeant Amaden was bayoneted by the enemy. In the afternoon he had begged for help, but the aid men could not get to him. The Japs used him and other wounded as bait to lure help and then fire on the litter bearers. One individual that had been cautioned and corrected by his superiors on maneuver and practice platoon problems to take cover and concealment failed to do also during the ambush and as a result was killed. His attitude was that when the real thing happens he'll know better.

These men escaped during the night by following the river and then by following the sound of friendly artillery firing. They had wandered around in the jungles for five days before locating a place to swim to a small island where a friendly artillery battery was located. Although badly bruised and quite thin from their experience, they had returned. One other individual miraculously escaped death by deinting death on the trail after he had been shot through the top of his helmet, but no harm to him. The enemy ran over him and on him during the day and part of the evening. He, too, escaped via the same route.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. DISCIPLINE

First and foremost, discipline is the most important principle of jungle operations. The good "Joe" type officer is not respected by the enlisted men when the chips are down. Enlisted men must be addressed as "Men" and not "Fellows" or "Boys." Especially, when about to face the enemy they want to be known as men and treated like grown men. After combat they will thank an officer for insisting on correcting their mistakes prior to

combat. They will do exactly the same thing a leader permits them to get away with on maneuvers or training.

Hence, during combat unnecessary casualties are accounted for due to the lack of corrections before combat.

2. STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURE

The development of an SOP for nearly everything that could possibly lend itself to standardization proved of most effective use in many aspects of the operation. On landing the platoon knew what type foxholes to dig, how and where to organize a strong perimeter defense. This coupled with march formations, patrolling, intelligence, supply and superior weapons fire discipline was responsible for less casualties and a small number of psychoneurotics.

Never remain in one perimeter defense position for more than one night. The enemy and land crabs multiply after the first night.

Squad latrines and the immediate burial of all "C" ration cans and other trash proved that sanitation could be maintained at the highest level, thereby eliminating dysentary and curbing additional noises at night when the land crabs and the enemy are inquisitive.

The enemy did not like our type of perimeter defense because he could not locate our flanks or command posts.

No promiscuous firing at night resulted in little or no casualties during a night attack by the enemy.

3. COMMUNICATIONS

Since many difficulties were encountered with radios in the jungle due to extreme adverse conditions, sound power wire

communication proved to be the most effective means of communication. All wire parties must be guarded and every man know how to make and apply the proper splice if a break in the wire is discovered or two pieces of wire must be spliced. A need for a light portable effective radio exists especially for patrols and during a night attack.

4. WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION

The crying need was for a very light weapon capable of placing an explosive on a point target. The 81mm mortar and 105mm howitzers proved to be the best close support artillery. Smokeless powder is needed for small arms due to the proximity to the enemy. Browning Automatic Rifle proved to be a superior weapon for the jungle.

Once a mortar container seal is broken, it should be used as soon as possible. Many shorts resulted due to the fact that the powder increments became damp when carried several days in the damp and muddy jungle.

Visibility is usually nil -- which limits the use of maneuver and artillery to very orthodox means.

5. PHYSICAL FITNESS

Troops must be trained and toughened before they reach an operation. Prior intensive repeated training on the FIJI ISLANDS, GUADALCANAL and the RUSSELL ISLANDS proved to be invaluable during the operation. Life became an affair of simple things, always done with great effort. To walk or crawl without drawing enemy fire; to keep one's own weapons free from mud; to kill Japs, and between times to nibble at cold emergency rations or doze fitfully. Plus the malaria discipline of taking the atabrine tablet daily, the application of mosquito repellent, and the

use of the Halazone water purifying tablets. An individual feels just like he appears.

6. LEADERSHIP AND TACTICS

Once the enemy is shelled, aggressive immediate assaults should be executed on his positions to gain surprise first.

Speed should not be sacrificed for caution.

Local security is of prime importance in the jungle. A careless unit results with not only high casualties but a high percentage of psychoneurotics.

Units on flanks should be kept informed and in contact at all times so as not to expose flanks.

Patrol reports must be acted upon by the commander at once, for what is true at the moment may be absolutely wrong three hours later.

All men in an infantry regiment must be trained as a rifleman, first, then his other speciality, if any, for jungle operations.

7. NIGHT MOVEMENTS

No night movement should be attempted. Since it is difficult to move during daylight hours, it is foolhardy to attempt movement at night. You are in the enemy's backyard and he is the master of night movements. It is cheaper to wait for him and then destroy him.

8. RATIONS

In order to facilitate issuance of "C" rations and curb the waste of "C" rations, a square type tin shaped "C" ration is needed and must be packed in a similar bandoleer as .30 caliber MI ammunition. Also included should be an adequate supply of heat tablets to warm these rations. Emphasis should also be

placed on seasoning the "C" ration and different varieties included. The hard candy should be eliminated since it tends to loosen one's fillings. A softer candy such as a fudge type should be substituted.

This would not only expedite issuance of rations and cut down on waste, but build the morale of troops since it is difficult or impossible to get a hot meal to the troops, each individual or small groups could make their own hot meal.

LESSONS

1. Discipline is the most important principle in jungles.
2. The development for a standing operating procedure for nearly everything that can possibly lend itself to standardization will speed up all possible and permissible activities in or out of combat.
3. Communications are very important in the jungles. Since wire proved the most satisfactory, more training on the laying and care of telephone wire should be stressed to all personnel.
4. The proper care of weapons prior to combat proved less malfunctions during combat. Ammunition should not be exposed to the elements, proper care and handling cannot be over-emphasized.
5. Troops must be in top physical condition and toughened to adverse living and weather conditions prior to an engagement in the jungles.
6. The principles of leadership and tactics, as taught by our Field Manuals, apply 100 per cent in the jungle.

7. ^{in jungles} No night movements should be attempted. Little if anything can be gained by night movements. Even though the enemy executed many night attacks, little or no casualties resulted from his attacks.

8. A better "C" ration in size, shape, quality, and packaging is required to curb waste and time to issue rations. Food is the only morale factor in the jungle since very few, if any, hot meals are served.