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OPERATIONS OF COMPANY C, (REINFORCED) 6TH RANGER INFANTRY
BATTALION IN THE LIBERATION OF ALLIED PRISONERS OF WAR, AT
PANGATIAN PRISON, IN THE VICINITY OF CABANATUAN,
28 - 31 JANUARY 1945
(LUZON CAMPAIGN)

(Personal observation by Headquarters Company Commander)

Type of operation described: RANGER COMPANY, WITH ATTACHED ELEMENTS,
PENETRATING ENEMY ZONE; ATTACKING ENEMY GARRISON; LIBERATING
ALLIED PRISONERS OF WAR; AND WITHDRAWING TO FRIENDLY LINES

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ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO II

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ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of Company C, (Reinforced) 6th Ranger Infantry Battalion, Sixth US Army in the liberation of 512 Allied Prisoners of War, from the Japanese stockade, at PANGATIAN, in the vicinity of CABANATUAN, 28 - 31 January 1945, during the LUZON Campaign.

To best understand this operation, it is necessary for the reader to become acquainted with certain actions that had taken place earlier in the LUZON Campaign.

On 9 January 1945 elements of the US Sixth Army successfully effected amphibious assault landings in the LINGAYEN GULF area of the island of LUZON. Initial landings were made with the XIV and I Corps abreast, the XIV Corps on the right. (See Map A) (1)

(2) By 16 January 1945 Sixth Army had seized a beachhead almost 30 miles deep at its deepest point and approximately 30 miles wide. The landings and establishment of a base of operations constituted the completion of the first two phases of a four fold mission. Other phases were: first, to advance southward and seize the CENTRAL PLAIN - MANILA area; and secondly, by subsequent operations to establish control of the entire island. (3)

The 6th Ranger Infantry Battalion, constituting a portion of the

- (1) A-1, p. 1
- (2) A-1, p. 21
- (3) A-1, p. 1

Sixth Army reserve, landed on the beachhead unopposed on 10 January 1945. A perimeter defense was immediately set up and further orders awaited.

(4)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

General Yamashita, the Japanese Commander on LUZON, had deployed his forces so as to offer only token resistance against elements of XIV Corps. By 21 January 1945 the town of TARIAC in the CENTRAL PLAIN area had been taken. Meanwhile, the I Corp had encountered considerable opposition on the left flank. (See Map B)

Because of enemy opposition in the I Corp area, which constituted a threat to the newly won beachhead, the capture of MANILA, prior to the advent of the rainy season, was imperative. (5) With the capture of the CLARK FIELD area and the arrival of fresh troops on the island, the drive for MANILA was intensified and entry into the city soon became imminent.

Although the battle of MANILA later proved to be a bitter conflict, it was an exception to the apparent Japanese strategy of defending in mountainous areas. (6) This fact is significant to the reader, because the location of PANGATIAN prison was in the flat lands of the CENTRAL PLAIN; and as later proved, did not fit into the Japanese plan of defense. (See Map B)

Still in Sixth Army reserve the 6th Ranger Infantry Battalion had moved inland from the beach. A bivouac area was established near CALASIAO. (See Map B) Except for a few sporadic air raids the battalion had seen nothing of the enemy. (7)

- (4) Personal knowledge
- (5) A-1, p. 1
- (6) A-1, p. 2
- (7) Personal knowledge

At that time it was not known exactly how the battalion was to be employed, but every man was ready for any mission that might be assigned. Preceding the invasion of LEYTE by three days the battalion had made assault amphibious landings on three small islands that commanded the entrance to LEYTE GULF. The assigned mission was accomplished and only a minimum number of casualties were sustained. Since that time the battalion had been well rested. The men were in excellent health, units were approximating authorized strength, supply was efficient, and morale was exceedingly high. All members of the organization had undergone extensive training in NEW GUINEA and had acquired a confidence and an ability that molded them into a fighting team second to none. (8)

Little had been learned as to the exact type of enemy troops that might be encountered on LUZON, when and if the battalion was committed; but the Japanese soldier could always be expected to afford formidable and fanatical opposition. Generally, the combat efficiency of the Ranger Battalion was excellent; whereas that of the Jap was an unknown factor.

The dry season was at its height. The weather was hot and humid. Rivers were low and fordable, and the blazing sun had turned rice paddies into hard masses of caked and cracked mud. (9)

THE SPECIAL SITUATION

On 27 January 1945 a guerrilla officer reported to Sixth Army that some 300 - 500 Allied Prisoners of War were in a concentration camp, at PANGATIAN, near CABANATUAN. (See Map B) (10) It was also reported that this camp was guarded by a small Japanese garrison.

The nearest American troops to the prison camp were advance elements of the US 6th Division. These troops had reached GUMBA approximately 25

- (8) Personal knowledge
- (9) Personal knowledge
- (10) A-3, p. 16

miles from PANGATIAN. Intelligence reports indicated that large enemy forces, including tanks, were evacuating to the north, using the CABANATUAN - SAN JOSE and the CABANATUAN - RIZAL highways. (See Map B) Primarily, movements were being made at night in order to escape possible destruction by our air force; air superiority had been established early in the campaign. Daylight hours were being spent by these enemy transients in camps along the route of evacuation. One of the camps used for rest and stop-over purposes was PANGATIAN, the same camp in which were confined our prisoners of war. (11)

Realizing that large scale movements of enemy troops toward the mountains to the north might cause a possible evacuation of the prisoners, or even the wholesale slaughtering of them by the Japanese; a plan of rescue was initiated by Sixth Army.

While a special intelligence team of Alamo Scouts* was dispatched to gain all possible information about the situation, the mission of the rescue of the prisoners was assigned to the 6th Ranger Infantry Battalion.

THE BATTALION PLAN

Returning to the bivouac area after receiving orders from Sixth Army, Lieutenant Colonel Henry A. Mucci, Ranger Commander, lost no time in arriving at his decisions. The battalion was assembled and told of the mission by the battalion commander. The selection of Company C, commanded by Captain Robert W. Prince, to perform the mission was announced. Inasmuch as a Ranger Company consisted of only three officers and 65 enlisted men, (See Chart C) hardly an adequate force for the mission volunteers were accepted. Every man in the battalion expressed a desire to participate.

(11) A-2, p. 1

* Alamo Scouts - special reconnaissance units used by Sixth Army to obtain strategic intelligence

The battalion commander selected the 2d Platoon of Company F, commanded by First Lieutenant J. Frank Murphy, communications personnel from Headquarters Company, and at least one representative from the remaining units. (12) Officers and men were briefed by the use of maps, photos, and information then available.

A general plan was formulated. Equipment to be taken would include: two K type rations per man; one canteen of water but a full supply of halazone tablets in the jungle type first aid packets; one pair of wire cutters per man; individual arms and plenty of ammunition to include hand and rifle grenades; Browning automatic rifles would replace light machine guns of the weapons squads; no packs would be worn; for this mission fatigue caps would replace the conventional steel helmet. (13) A radio relay station would be established at GUIMBA to maintain communication between the attacking force and the rear command post.

Going by truck to GUIMBA, the Rangers would enter enemy occupied territory and proceed further by foot, traveling mostly at night. Before leaving GUIMBA however, arrangements would be made with the 6th US Division as to recognition signals on the return trip. In GUIMBA too, guerrilla guides would be met. They would lead the Rangers until such time as contact could be made with the Alamo Scouts, in the vicinity of BALINCARIN. A cross country route would be taken avoiding native barrios*, with special precautions taken at the crossing of the two main highways bisecting the area of operations. (14)

It was realized that the march to the stockade, the attack, and the rescue would be a sizeable task in itself. More difficult, however, would be the job of returning with some 500 men whose physical condition

(12) Personal knowledge

(13) Personal knowledge

(14) A-6, p. 18

* Barrios - small native villages

could hardly be anticipated as good. In order to accomplish this, assistance would be needed from the native population along the return route of march. Coordination would be made by guerrillas whose assistance in many matters was now foreseen as a major factor in the overall and continuous planning.

Finally, the troops would depart the following morning. The exact time of attack could not be accurately determined at this stage, but it would probably be the evening of the 29th. One thing was certain, speed and surprise were of the essence. Planning would continue enroute with final decisions being made and plans formulated after receiving reports from the Alamo Scouts.

Final briefing completed, the battalion commander, in the absence of a Chaplain, said a prayer for success. Then, after a solemn speech, the battalion commander asked each Ranger to take an oath to die fighting rather than let harm befall the prisoners. Every man took the oath.

(15)

28 January 1945 dawned hot and clear. As planned the previous evening the force entrucked for GUIMBA, arriving shortly after noon. Guerrilla guides were contacted. Coordination was made with the 6th US Division for recognition signals on the return trip. Two green flares would be fired by the Rangers; a like signal from the 6th Division would signify recognition.

NARRATION

THE PENETRATION TO BALINCARIN (See Map D)

At 1400 hours 28 January 1945, Company C, reinforced, a group of 5 officers and 115 enlisted men, personally led by Lieutenant Colonel Henry A. Mucci, the battalion commander, departed from GUIMBA. (16)

(15) A-2, p. 2 and personal knowledge

(16) A-1, p. 30

Traveling cross country the Rangers halted for a short time near LOBANG. Here inquiries were made of the guerrilla leader, one Captain Joson, as to the enemy situation. Not only was information gained but Captain Joson and some 80 armed men joined the force. (17)

A feeling of tension prevailed as our column continued its penetration through country dotted with Japanese garrisons. The first major feat was to cross the CABANATUAN - SAN JOSE highway undetected. This was done, under cover of darkness, approximately three miles south of BALOC.

Taking full advantage of the darkness, and with Captain Joson's men being used as guides and security, the Rangers forded the TALAVERA RIVER at 2400 hours. (18) Thus far, everything had gone according to plan. There was only one major hurdle between our column and the rendezvous with the Alamo Scouts. This hurdle, a main highway leading to RIZAL was crossed without incident.

Dawn was breaking, on the morning of 29 January 1945, as the party arrived at BALINCARIN, some five miles from their objective. The Alamo Scouts were awaiting the arrival. While Lieutenant Colonel Mucci and Captain Prince conferred with First Lieutenant Tom Rounasville and other Scout leaders, the men ate a K ration and got some rest. (19) Since departing from GUIMBA, a forced march of approximately 22 miles had been executed.

POSTPONEMENT OF THE ATTACK

The Alamo Scouts reported to Lieutenant Colonel Henry A. Mucci that they had not yet been able to procure complete information relative to the enemy strength in the stockade. However, they were keeping a careful surveillance over the activities of the enemy and would report information as obtained.

(17) A-2, p. 2

(18) A-2, p. 2

(19) Personal knowledge; statement of Captain Tom Rounasville, then an Alamo Scout, 15 December 1949

While awaiting the desired intelligence report, the battalion commander was not idle. Since the attack was tentatively scheduled for that evening there was much to be accomplished. Arrangements were made with the guerrilla area commander, one Captain Pajota, to aid in many ways. First, there was the element of security. Being so close to an enemy garrison, it was feared that the presence of our force might be detected. No chances could be taken. It was decided that Captain Pajota's command would establish all around security in depth. Civilians north of the CABANATUAN - CABU road would remain there, and those entering this area would not be permitted to leave until the rescue had been accomplished. Dogs would be muzzled to keep them from barking and all chickens would be penned up. (20)

Captain Pajota would also arrange for sufficient carabao* carts to transport 200 men. He would make arrangements to have food distributed along the return route. Among his command of some 250 men, 160 were unarmed; these would be used as litter bearers. The remaining 90 men, all armed, would assist in support of the tactical plan. (21)

Reconnaissance by Alamo Scouts and guerrillas would continue throughout the day. The possibility of Japanese armored and motorized troops near the objective was a threat to our forces, who would be most vulnerable to counterattack once the prisoners had been released. To minimize this threat, a radio message was dispatched to Sixth Army requesting air coverage along the return route.

The men continued resting and checking equipment for the remainder of the day. At 1800 hours the force moved from BALINCARIN to PIATEROS, a distance of about three miles. On arrival at PIATEROS the Rangers were

(20) Personal knowledge; statement of Captain Tom Rounasville, then an Alamo Scout, 15 December 1949

* Carabao - water buffalo used as a beast of burden

(21) A-2, p. 2

met by guerrilla scouts. The situation looked bad. It was reported that many Japanese troops were spending the night at the stockade and that enemy mechanized elements were moving along the GABANATUAN - RIZAL road in large numbers. Should the Rangers attack that night as originally planned or should they wait? If they stormed the stockade that night, there was the possibility of becoming engaged with the transient Japanese troops both at the highway and at the stockade. Our force would be outnumbered. Detailed information on the situation was lacking. About the only thing in favor of the original plan was the fact that they were close to the objective, and as yet their presence was probably undetected. This would afford surprise, but would this sole advantage outweigh the disadvantages? The attack could be postponed one day, but certainly it must materialize on the night of the 30th regardless of the enemy situation. If our force waited, the desired detailed information probably could be procured. The enemy transients would probably be gone. By waiting one day the presence of our force might be detected and surprise lost. The battalion commander, after due consultation with Captain Prince, decided to postpone the attack until the evening of the 30th. (22)

FINAL PLANS

On the morning of the 30th both Alamo Scouts and guerrillas were actively engaged in securing information. The Rangers laid low in PLATEROS, anxiously awaiting the final detailed plan.

In mid-afternoon the Alamo Scout reconnaissance teams returned to PLATEROS. They had done their job well. Enough detailed information had been obtained to enable the formulation of final plans.

Information concerning enemy personnel was: the transient troops who had been spending the night in the stockade had departed, but approximately 150 other transients had moved in at 1100 hours, apparently to spend the

remainder of the day; the personnel of the garrison itself consisted of 73 officers and men; an estimated 800 enemy, with tanks and trucks, were in CABU. (23)

Other information obtained, was: the stockade was 600 yards wide and 800 yards long; (See Map E) this area was enclosed by barbed wire fences 6 to 8 feet tall and spaced 4 feet apart; the interior was subdivided by barbed wire fences. Protecting the stockade was a pillbox located at the northeast corner of the enclosure; it was manned by four Japanese soldiers. Three observation towers, each 12 feet high were occupied. Near one of the observation guard towers was the main entrance, closed by an 8 foot gate and secured with a heavy lock. This entrance was guarded by a Japanese sentry. Inside the camp, located in a shed, were 4 tanks and 2 trucks. Activity in the camp appeared to be normal, and little traffic had passed the camp during the day. The prisoner's area was the buildings in the northeast portion of the stockade. (24)

Guerrillas reported an estimated 7,000 Japanese troops and some tanks in CABANATUAN. In all probability, they were stopping there for the day and would move north that night. (25)

Lieutenant Colonel Mucci now had the information he desired. He realized that the Japs at CABANATUAN would be on the move shortly after dark; and that it would be imperative to complete the rescue, and be on the return march early in the evening. He decided to attack at dusk.

The battalion commander consulted his officers and arrived at a detailed plan. Every man was given a particular assignment and briefed on the overall plan. All Rangers were imbued with the necessity for surprise.

- (23) A-2, p. 3
- (24) A-2, p. 3
- (25) A-1, p. 31

Guerrilla forces under Captain Pajota would establish a roadblock at a small stream that crossed the CABU road. This stream was about 200 yards from the stockade (See Map E). One Ranger would be attached for liaison purposes. Another roadblock, manned by the guerrillas of Captain Joson, would be located on the CABANATUAN highway. This force would have a six man bazooka team, under Staff Sergeant White of Company F, attached. Both forces were given the mission of preventing reinforcements from reaching the Japanese garrison. Neither would withdraw until two red flares had been fired. The second one would signal the successful fording of the PAMPANGA RIVER on the return trip.

The 2d Platoon of Company F, under First Lieutenant Murphy, was given the difficult mission of moving to the eastern side and to the rear of the camp. They would attack and destroy the pillbox, kill the sentries in the two observation guard towers in their area, attack the rear gate, kill any Japs they might encounter in the transient section of the stockade, and prevent any enemy from entering the compound in which the prisoners were located. (See Map E) (26)

First Lieutenant William J. O'Connell commanded the 1st Platoon of Company C. He was assigned the mission of entering the stockade by the main gate, pushing through to the Jap quarters, destroying enemy personnel and vehicles, and allowing no Japanese personnel to escape to the western side of the camp. (See Map E) (27)

The 2d Platoon of Company C, led by First Lieutenant Melville Schmidt, was given the job of freeing the prisoners. To accomplish this: each of the two assault sections would enter the main entrance and support the attack by fire; the weapons section, assisted by Alamo Scouts, would

(26) A-2, p. 4
(27) A-2, p. 4

assemble the prisoners and lead them to safety. (28)

Since Lieutenant Murphy's platoon had the mission requiring the most time to get into position, he would coordinate the attack. When his men opened fire the attack would commence.

The signal for withdrawal would be a red flare fired by Captain Prince. He would do this as soon as he was positive that all prisoners had been rescued. Rangers would assist in the evacuation of wounded and form a rear guard. There was one remaining detail; telephone lines would be cut by Staff Sergeant White on the west, and by guerrilla Lieutenant Tombo on the east. They would do this as the attack commenced. (29)

At 1700 hours, 30 January 1945 our force departed from PLATEROS to a position approximately 700 yards from the objective. The ground was now flat and open except for a few small trees and the small stream that crossed the main highway. This was the same stream where Captain Pajota would place his roadblock. Moving slowly, the Rangers inched their way along the stream to assault positions. By 1925 hours Company C was in position in a ditch that ran along the northern shoulder of the CABANATUAN - CABU road. Some men were less than 25 yards from the objective. They waited in the fast disappearing daylight for the signal to commence firing. Meanwhile, the 2d Platoon of Company F, taking full advantage of the stream line and on coming darkness, had reached their assault positions. (30)

THE ATTACK ON THE STOCKADE (See Map E)

At 1945 hours the 2d Platoon of Company F opened fire. A squad led by Staff Sergeant Millican attacked the pillbox killing the Japs therein. Simultaneously, the sentries in the observation towers and at the rear

(28) A-2, p. 4

(29) Personal knowledge; statement of Captain Tom Rounasville, then an Alamo Scout, 15 December 1949

(30) Personal knowledge; statement of Captain Tom Rounasville, then an Alamo Scout, 15 December 1949

gate were killed by other elements of the 2d Platoon, who then entered the gate and fired into the buildings that were in the southeast and south-central sections of the stockade.

On hearing the firing in the rear the 1st Assault Section, 1st Platoon, Company C, stormed the main entrance. Staff Sergeant Theodore Richardson broke the lock on the gate by shooting it with a pistol. Other members of his section poured through the gate, systematically liquidating Japanese personnel in the quarters section of the stockade. The 2d Assault Section covered the attack of the 1st Section by firing through the fence at predesignated buildings. The Weapons Section, under Staff Sergeant Stewart, followed the 1st Section through the gate; circled the right flank; and accomplished their mission of destroying the two trucks and four tanks parked in the motor shed. As their fires became masked by the 1st and Weapons Sections, the 2d Section entered the stockade and took up positions so that no enemy personnel escaped to the west. (31)

Following closely behind the 1st Platoon the 1st Assault Section of the 2d Platoon entered the stockade; pushed through the enclosure in which the prisoners were kept; and opened fire on the southeast section of the stockade, which was already being fired on by the forces of Lieutenant Murphy. The 2d Assault Section followed the 1st Section and provided protection to the right flank of the prisoner's compound. The Weapons Section of the 2d Platoon, assisted by Alamo Scouts, went immediately to the section in which the prisoners were held. They quickly informed the prisoners what was happening and herded them out the gate toward PLATEROS. (32)

(31) Personal knowledge; statement of Captain Tom Rounasville, then an Alamo Scout, 15 December 1949

(32) Personal knowledge; statement of Captain Tom Rounasville, then an Alamo Scout, 15 December 1949

Captain Prince, after personally checking the compound and satisfying himself that all men had been evacuated, fired a red flare. This was the signal for withdrawal. It was now 2015⁴ hours; the entire attack and clearing of the enclosure had required only 30 minutes. Surprise had been complete. The rapidity of the action had so overcome the enemy that only feeble resistance had been encountered. (33)

THE BATTLE AT THE ROADBLOCK (See Map D)

All had gone well at the stockade. The column started the withdrawal to friendly lines; and as the last elements forded the PAMPANGA RIVER, the second red flare was fired by Captain Prince. The forces of Captain Joson pulled out immediately and acted as rear security for the column.

The roadblock of Captain Pajota was busily engaged at this time. Japanese forces from CABU, an estimated 800 strong, had been alerted by the firing during the attack. Traveling along the road at double-time, the enemy approached the roadblock. Captain Pajota had deployed his forces cunningly. They formed a "V", with the open end toward CABU. The Japs, totally unaware, ran into the trap. As the head of the Jap column was about 15 yards from the point of the "V", the guerrillas opened fire. At point blank range Browning automatic rifles, submachine guns and rifles mowed the enemy down, slaughtering great numbers in a short time. Pandemonium reigned. The Japanese were completely disorganized and commenced firing wildly. Tanks that followed the dismounted troop never crossed the bridge. After holding for about an hour the guerrillas slipped off into the darkness. An estimated 300 enemy were killed compared to 9 guerrillas wounded in action. (34)

(33) Personal knowledge; statement of Captain Tom Rounasville, then an Alamo Scout, 15 December 1949

(34) A-2, p. 6

THE WITHDRAWAL TO FRIENDLY LINES (See Map D)

The task of evacuating the prisoners now faced the liberators. Carabao carts had been procured by the guerrillas. These carts were placed across the PAMPANGA RIVER. They were loaded with the 100 litter patients, who thus far had been borne by litter bearers. In addition to these patients there were 412 other prisoners, who had been liberated. The Rangers, guerrillas, prisoners and carabao carts formed an unprecedented sight as they pulled into PLATEROS. (35)

While in PLATEROS, the column was reorganized. More carabao carts were procured for the anticipated reduction in the number of men who could complete the journey on foot and would have to be transported. Food and water was also provided by friendly natives. Those wounded who were unable to continue were left in PLATEROS. An American medical officer, who had been a prisoner, volunteered to remain as the Ranger surgeon, Captain James W. Fisher, had been mortally wounded. Alamo Scouts and guerrillas were left as guards for the wounded. They were instructed to construct a cub strip for possible evacuation of the wounded. (36)

As groups were organized they departed from PLATEROS to BALINCARIN. All who were able walked. Many of the liberated were determined to make the march on foot and accepted aid and transportation only as a last resort.

From BALINCARIN the column moved to MATAAS NA KAHUY, arriving around 0200 hours on 31 January 1945. More carts were procured as there were now almost 200 men who were unable to continue on foot. At this point the column included a total of 51 carts and stretched one and a half miles. (37)

(35) Personal knowledge; statement of Captain Tom Rounasville, then an Alamo Scout, 15 December 1949

(36) A-2, p. 8

(37) A-2, p. 8

Due to the number of carts and the condition of the terrain, the crossing of the RIZAL highway presented a major obstacle. It was necessary to travel the road itself for about a mile before finding a suitable place to leave the highway and continue cross country. To protect this movement two roadblocks were set up by the 1st Platoon of Company C; one at a location about 400 yards above the point where the column entered the road, and the other about 400 yards from the point where the column left the road. Approximately one hour was required to complete the crossing which was done without incident. (38)

At 0800 hours the column reached SIBUL. Here information was obtained by radio that the town of TALAVERA was in our hands. Request was made by radio for ambulances and trucks to meet the column in SIBUL to evacuate the liberated men. This was done and the ex-prisoners of war were moved to GUIMBA for hospitalization and processing.

The mission was accomplished.

To summarize the results of this operation: the 6th Ranger Infantry Battalion successfully performed all phases of their assigned mission. A penetration some 29 miles into the enemy zone was made. Reconnaissance was thorough and complete. Full use was made of the guerrillas and the native population, who donated their services willingly; some made the supreme sacrifice. Surprise for the attack was complete, and the rescue was accomplished quickly. The column successfully withdrew over some 19 miles of enemy territory. (39) Viewed from the company level on up to theatre level, nothing more could have been asked of the participants of this action. They carried out their duties with valor and bravery. The thing foremost in the minds of every man was the liberation of the Allied Prisoners of War; personal safety was never considered.

(38) A-2, p. 8

(39) A-2, p. 10

The results of the mission can be further measured in the number of casualties sustained compared with casualties inflicted. The Rangers had one officer and one enlisted man killed and one wounded. Alamo Scout casualties amounted to one man wounded. Approximately 27 guerrillas were killed or listed as missing. The Japanese casualties in the prison camp amounted to the entire garrison of 73 plus the 150 transients. An estimate of Japanese casualties at the roadblock was difficult to determine, but there were well over 200 killed. (40) 512 Allied Prisoners of War were liberated.

For their part in this action and per General Order No 39 dated 21 February 1945, Hq USA Forces Far East, Lieutenant Colonel Mucci and Captain Prince were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and all other officers were awarded the Silver Star, and all enlisted men the Bronze Star. By General Order No 26, War Department dated 9 April 1945 Company C and the 2d Platoon of Company F were cited for outstanding performance of duty and awarded the Distinguished Unit Badge.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. PLANNING

The fact that this operation met with such success can be attributed to several things, one of the most important being the overall planning that was done. The decisive orders issued, and actions that ensued therefrom are evidence of careful, minute, and deliberate planning at all echelons. Nothing was left to chance: the rapidity and decisiveness of the attack on the stockade was accomplished, in part, because every man had been thoroughly oriented on his own particular assignment, and the part his job played in the overall plan of attack; security

(40) A-1, p. 31

measures, in varied forms, were planned for, and used, during the entire operation; the use of guerrillas was foreseen and plans made for their employment; signals used for coordination were simple and concise. Equipment taken varied only slightly from usual. The type and amounts taken were carefully selected so that speed could be realized without sacrifice of needed items. Reconnaissance had been planned for in advance. This was so well coordinated and pre-planned that the Rangers were provided with a continuous flow of information on which to base their decisions, and from which evolved a continuous estimate of the situation. Planning was a continuous process, with final orders being issued only after careful deliberation. It is difficult to mediate on what might have been the outcome of this operation had not planning been complete.

2. RECONNAISSANCE

Little more could have been desired as to information provided to the Rangers by Alamo Scouts and guerrillas. The reconnaissance mission was carried out with vigor and enthusiasm as evidenced by the completeness and exactness of detail which were indicative of intelligence reports. Reconnaissance was continuous throughout all phases of the operation. No new methods were used. The Alamo Scouts knew their job and went about it with a methodical application that brought results. The enemy's every move was so carefully observed that the battalion commander was never in doubt as to the course of action to pursue. Reconnaissance was a most important factor in the successful completion of this operation.

3. SECURITY

Security in any military operation is of prime importance. When a mission calls for the operation to take place in enemy territory then this element takes on an added significance. At the very outset of this operation security measures were employed. During movements the conventional type of rear guard protection was used. Guerrilla guides were utilized to lead the column so as to avoid enemy installations. Full

advantage was taken of the hours of darkness so movements could be made with less chance of detection. Road blocks were put in at critical locations in order to protect the column. Even a unique method was employed when dogs were muzzled and chickens penned up. A line of demarcation was defined, across which no civilian was allowed to traverse. In the advance to assault position, the small amount of cover and concealment offered by the small stream was used to the utmost. Every precaution was taken to avoid detection. The success of the methods employed and their importance to the outcome of the operation cannot be minimized.

4. SURPRISE

If one single principle could be determined the most important, in enhancing the success of this operation, it is the opinion of the writer that surprise is that element. So sudden was the strike, so thorough and well executed the plan, that the enemy was taken completely by surprise, and was never able to organize his forces. Had the Japanese only the slightest hint of what was about to happen, they could have laid a trap that would have resulted in the possible annihilation of our entire force and the massacreing of the prisoners. The men had been imbued with the necessity of surprise. They realized that it was paramount. They saw to it that surprise was achieved.

5. COORDINATION

In the attack on the stockade coordination was obtained by a simple yet effective method. On reaching assault positions the 2d Platoon of Company F coordinated the attack by opening fire. All men thoroughly understood the signal and commenced the attack simultaneously. The use of flares is another efficient means that was utilized by the Rangers for control purposes. A simple method of control, easy to understand and easy to apply is preferable to more complicated means. Coordination between units, may be effected by liaison personnel. Although there were no personnel actually assigned for liaison purposes, the Alamo Scouts and

guerrilla leaders kept in personal touch with the Ranger Commander. This method proved satisfactory to all concerned in an operation in which absolute cooperation was mandatory if the mission was to be accomplished.

6. LEADERSHIP

It would be a fallacy to even imagine that this operation could have reached a successful conclusion without superb leadership. The fact that every man in the battalion volunteered for the mission and that those selected took an oath to die rather than fail is an example of the courage and confidence the men had in their leaders. The battalion commander displayed high leadership qualities by personally leading his troops, even though they amounted to only company size in total personnel. Captain Prince left the stockade only after assuring himself that all prisoners had been evacuated. Continued planning, keen foresight, decisive action, and undying devotion to duty personify all the qualities essential to sound leadership; these principles were demonstrated in this action.

7. ASSISTANCE BY GUERRILLAS AND CIVILIANS

Needless to say, the ease with which the mission was accomplished can be attributed to the willing assistance of the guerrillas and natives. Without this aid the mission would have been much more difficult and losses to Ranger personnel and prisoners of war would have been greater. Perhaps the operation would have been doomed to failure. Guerrillas were successfully utilized in many roles, as; guides, security, litter bearers, for reconnaissance, and as combat troops in support of the tactical plan. Their bravery and loyalty are worthy of the highest praises. Civilians offered the sole means of transportation for the injured and wounded. They provided food and water when it was needed most. It is doubted if the services of guerrillas and civilians could have been used more fully or to better advantage. In a mission behind enemy lines it is imperative that the capabilities of a friendly ally be used to the maximum extent.

LESSONS

1. Careful, minute, continuous, and detailed planning based on known facts and followed by decisive orders and actions is mandatory if penetration of an enemy zone is to be successfully accomplished.
2. Reconnaissance must be complete and exacting and carried out with vigor and enthusiasm if maximum results are to be obtained.
3. When operating in enemy territory every possible means of security must be employed if detection is to be avoided.
4. When surprise is complete the attacker may so demoralize an opponent that the enemy can never become organized sufficiently to take the initiative.
5. Simple signals and personal contact are the best means to control and coordinate a military operation in an isolated situation.
6. There is no substitute for good, sound leadership based on mutual loyalty, confidence and devotion to duty.
7. In an operation behind enemy lines the support of friendly peoples must be procured and utilized to an extent commensurate with their capabilities.