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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 2D BATTALION, 34TH INFANTRY
(24TH INFANTRY DIVISION) AT HOLLANDIA, DUTCH NEW
GUINEA, 22 APRIL - 2 MAY 1944
(NEW GUINEA CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Battalion Operations Officer)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY BATTALION (IN A SHIP TO
SHORE AMPHIBIOUS LANDING) PROVIDING FLANK SECURITY FOR AN
INFANTRY DIVISION

Captain Felton H. Moore, Infantry
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO I

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ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 2d Battalion, 34th Infantry, 24th US Division at HOLLANDIA, DUTCH NEW GUINEA, 22 April - 2 May 1944.

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

It was early in 1942 when Japanese forces in the Pacific reached out like a giant octopus to engulf islands leading to the very doorstep of AUSTRALIA. With the meager Australian forces which were not committed against the Germans in NORTH AFRICA, and with the handful of men who were able to escape the Japanese onslaught to the then questionable safety of AUSTRALIA, General Douglas MacArthur formed the BRISBANE LINE in eastern AUSTRALIA. General MacArthur's defense plan envisaged the giving up of the northern half of AUSTRALIA (in the event the Japanese continued their expansion southward) in favor of defending at the BRISBANE LINE the more populated and economically valuable southern half of AUSTRALIA.

(1)

Miraculously, the Japanese did not attempt a full scale invasion of AUSTRALIA, and in late 1942, General MacArthur's small force, supplemented by the American 32d and 41st Infantry Divisions, began the first leg of the long road back.

(1) A-18, p. 22 and Personal knowledge

The turkey-shaped island of NEW GUINEA (the second largest in the world) constituted the first stepping stone along the arduous way, and the Japanese were determined to retain this newly won, prized possession. (2) The early attempts by the Allies to gain a foot hold were successful but costly indeed, and by April 1944, after slow and bitter fighting, our troops had trudged only as far as SAIDOR. (See Map A)

In the latter part of 1943, control of western NEW BRITAIN and of VITIAZ STRAIT, the strategically important strip of water connecting NEW BRITAIN and NEW GUINEA, was assured by successful landings at ARAWE by the 112th Cavalry Regiment, and at CAPE GLOUCESTER by the 1st Marine Division. (See Map A) (3)

In February and March, 1944, the American 1st Cavalry Division secured the ADMIRALTY ISLANDS, some two hundred miles north and east of NEW GUINEA. (See Map A) (4)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

By 1944 the Americans were beginning to accumulate considerable naval strength in the PACIFIC, and General MacArthur, dissatisfied with the tempo of his advance in NEW GUINEA, felt that his forces could, if adequately supported by carrier based fighter aircraft, leapfrog several hundred miles to HOLLANDIA in DUTCH NEW GUINEA, thus advancing his time schedule by some six months. (See Map A) (5) HOLLANDIA was known to be a large depot from which Japanese troops down the NEW GUINEA COAST received logistical support and its occupation by American forces would not only cut the enemy's supply line, but would give us sufficient air

- (2) A-10, p. 5
- (3) A-15, p. 32
- (4) A-17, p. 7
- (5) A-15, p. 33

and naval bases from which to control all of northeastern NEW GUINEA. The plan was subsequently approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and a portion of the PACIFIC Fleet was loaned to General Mac Arthur's Command for a limited period.

The Japanese had developed WEWAK (only 175 miles from the Allied lines at SAIDOR) into a base of tremendous importance, and they calculated that it would bear the brunt of the next Allied attack. To lend support to this theory, Allied reconnaissance planes made frequent sorties over the area, and Fifth Air Force bombers subjected the base to daily poundings. In order to reinforce their forces at WEWAK, the Japanese withdrew three thousand of their Marine troops from the HOLLANDIA area. (See Map A) (6)

The coastline in the HOLLANDIA area of DUTCH NEW GUINEA is indented by HUMBOLDT and TANAHMERAH BAYS which lie about twenty-five miles apart. The CYCLOPS MOUNTAINS, which soar to a height of seven thousand feet, dominate the terrain between the two. Lying south of the mountains is Lake SENTANI, an irregular body of fresh water about 15 1/2 miles long. On the northern shore of the lake, between it and the CYCLOPS, is a large plain which the Japs had developed into three excellent air fields. (See Map B)

There are two routes of approach to the Lake SENTANI PLAIN from the sea. One begins on the west at TANAHMERAH BAY, and the other at HUMBOLDT BAY on the east. Both routes proceed over steep trails and through many defiles. Beaches at the start of the approaches are narrow, backed by mangrove swamps, and easily defensible from hills to their rear and flanks.

The temperature in NEW GUINEA rarely rises above 95° in the shade or sinks below 72°, although there have been readings as high as 125° to 135°

in the sun. (7) The rainfall usually comes in short torrential downpours, followed by clear skies.

Estimates of enemy strength were based primarily on air reconnaissance, radio intercept, and reports from former Dutch and native residents of the area. These sources indicated that within the HOLLANDIA area were two regiments of infantry and one regiment of marines. (8) Enemy morale was thought to be high since the Emperor's forces still dominated most of the southwest PACIFIC; and only in certain restricted localities was their rule even challenged. Their supply lines from the PHILIPPINES were still open, and their depots were well stocked with multitudinous types of supply. They could be expected, as evidenced by previous engagements, to defend HOLLANDIA with tenacity.

The HOLLANDIA task force, which was given the code name "Reckless," was built around I Corps and was commanded by Lieutenant General Robert L. Eickelberger. It consisted of the 24th Infantry Division and the 41st Infantry Division (less one regimental combat team), reinforced by tanks, artillery and other units. The total strength of the force was 37,500 combat troops and 18,000 service troops. (9)

The first objective was the capture of the CYCLOPS, SENTANI, and HOLLANDIA airdromes, and to accomplish this, elements of the 41st Division would land on HUMBOLDT BAY and press inland, while elements of the 24th Division would land at TANAHMERAH BAY and seek a trail through the mountains in order to converge on the airdromes from two sides. (10)

The 24th Division's landing points were designated RED BEACHES Numbers 1 and 2. The first battalion of the 21st Infantry was to land on

- (7) A-10, p. 29
- (8) A-15, p. 66
- (9) A-15, p. 65
- (10) A-15, p. 65

RED BEACH Number 1, which was located at the southern end of DEPAPRE BAY. Two battalions of the 19th Infantry and the remaining two battalions of the 21st Infantry were to land on RED BEACH Number 2, which was situated on the east central shore of TANAHMERAH BAY. One battalion of the 19th Infantry was to remain afloat as division reserve. (See Map C)

The 34th Infantry Regiment, a part of the 24th Infantry Division, was designated Corps reserve, and was to be prepared to land on D plus 2. (11)

The 41st Division in HUMBOLDT BAY was to land on WHITE BEACHES Numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4. Elements of the 162d Infantry were to land on WHITE BEACHES 1 and 2 with the primary mission of capturing HOLLANDIA town, while the 186th Infantry was to land on WHITE BEACHES 1, 2, and 3 with the mission of capturing the airdromes as quickly as possible. The exact location of WHITE BEACH 4 was to be determined after the initial landing on WHITE BEACH 3. (See Map D) (12)

Another task force, designated as "Persecution" and commanded by Major General Jens A. Doe, was to make a simultaneous landing at AITAPE, some eighty miles southeast of HOLLANDIA. This force consisted of the 163d Infantry Regiment of the 41st Infantry Division, and elements of the 32d Infantry Division. (13)

DISPOSITIONS AND PLANS OF THE 34TH INFANTRY

Beginning 19 April at GOODENOUGH ISLAND, just off the southern tip of NEW GUINEA, the 34th Infantry loaded each of its battalion landing teams on separate naval transports. The regiment, as Corps Reserve, would in all probability be committed in the 24th Division's sector, since the main

- (11) A-15, p. 70
- (12) A-14, p. 81
- (13) A-14, p. 89

effort was to be at TANAHMERAH BAY; but it was, nevertheless, to be prepared to land at either HEBOLDT on TANAHMERAH BAYS. Definite missions or objectives were to be assigned by the Corps Commander after he had been able to determine the success of the initial landings. (14)

THE BATTALION SITUATION

The 2d Battalion, having had extensive amphibious training on the beaches in HAWAII, at The Amphibious Training Center near NEWCASTLE in AUSTRALIA, and on the beaches at GOODENOUGH ISLAND, felt that it was sufficiently prepared for any task which lay ahead. In addition, during the ten days prior to embarkation on GOODENOUGH ISLAND, the rifle companies of the battalion were rotated on FERGUSON and NORMANDY ISLANDS (in the D'ENTRECASTEAUX Group) for landing exercises on beaches which resembled those in the HOLLANDIA area. In rear of the beaches was dense jungle terrain, a replica of that revealed by HOLLANDIA Aerial photographs.

(See Map A)

The Heavy Weapons Company personnel would normally be attached to the rifle companies during the training exercises on nearby islands. The battalion Intelligence Section, the Communications, Antitank, and Ammunition and Pioneer Platoons were undergoing intensive training on GOODENOUGH during most of the daylight hours.

During this ten day period, the battalion staff was given the information necessary to prepare loading plans and landing diagrams; but, in the interest of security, the staff members were not told the final destination, and all sand tables, charts, maps, and aerial photographs were void of place names. This information was not given until all units were aboard ship.

(14) Statement of Colonel William Jenna, then Regimental Commander of 34th Infantry, on 18 April 1944

The Battalion received approximately seventy-five replacements one week before embarkation, and these men participated in the final landing exercises with their new units. They had all received their basic training at Camp Croft, South Carolina, all were teen-agers, and all quickly adjusted to the battalion routine. The morale of the unit was exceptionally high. Most of the members of the battalion had seen the smoking, twisted wreckage left by the Japs at PEARL HARBOR, and were anxious to settle a score.

Attached to the Battalion as interpreters for the coming operation were two Javanese boys, known to us simply as Chris and Charlie. They had fought for a year with guerrillas against the Japanese on DUTCH TIMOR, and were evacuated to AUSTRALIA on a Dutch destroyer. Among their many capabilities was the ability to speak seven variations of the Malayan language. (15)

The days were long and hot, and the occasional thundershowers, rather than interfering with training, only served to cool the perspiring bodies. It was dangerous to bivouac on the white sand banks of any nearby stream for the stream itself, following one of the tropical thundershowers, might be a mere trickle one minute and a flood of water the next. Several men of the battalion learned this by bitter experience when most of their equipment was washed away.

Malaria was known to have infected whole units in the early days of the PACIFIC war, and by concentrating on its malaria discipline, the battalion was able to exhibit an enviable record as far as its malaria casualties were concerned. Atabrine was consumed daily by individuals, and specially trained anti-malaria squads functioned in each company. The Battalion Surgeon was particularly interested in the program, and was

(15) Personal knowledge .

constantly seeking ways of reducing the cause and effect of this tropical menace.

THE BATTALION PLAN OF EMPLOYMENT

The battalion staff and Company Commanders were informed by the Regimental Commander, Colonel William W. Jenna, that the regiment would initially be in Corps Reserve, prepared to land on D plus 2 and operate in either the 24th Division or the 41st Division's Area. The Battalion itself might operate with the regiment as a combat team or separately as a battalion landing team. It was possible that a portion of the regiment would operate with the 24th Division and a portion with the 41st Division. Flexibility was to be the keynote of the Corps Reserve.

The officers were given ample opportunity to examine the sand tables and aerial photographs which portrayed the HOLLANDIA area. The terrain in the two division areas was similar: large, deep water bays, capable of anchoring the large troop and supply ships, white sand beaches with dense jungle undergrowth immediately in rear, and infrequent trails or tracks leading into the mountains beyond.

Each battalion was to be loaded with its equipment on a separate troop ship to facilitate employment in accordance with the Corps Commander's plan.

FINAL PREPARATIONS

The Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Colonel James F. Pearsall, preferred to prescribe what rations and equipment the men of his battalion landing team would carry into combat, but a specific list of items was sent down by regiment with an added note to the effect that showdown inspections would be held prior to embarkation to insure that each man had the prescribed equipment. The list included far too many items, but Regiment was adamant and turned a deaf ear to the Battalion Commander's

protests. The individual soldier had his pack loaded with his jungle hammock, blanket, raincoat, change of shoes, socks, toilet articles, mess kit, intrenching tool, and six cans of type "C" ration. This, of course, was in addition to his gas mask, rifle, full belt of ammunition, two extra bandoleers of ammunition, and steel helmet. The mortar ammunition bearers were hardest hit since they carried a full vest of shells on top of all this. Later, when descending on the ship's cargo nets, the bundlesome type life preserver was mounted around this mass of equipment.

(16)

The loading began in the early afternoon of 19 April, and proceeded smoothly despite a few last minute changes in the billeting and stowage plans. The docks at GOODENOUGH are limited, and the battalion personnel was shuttled out to the naval transport which was lying at anchor some five hundred yards out. By late afternoon, the loading was completed and the Battalion had the evening meal aboard ship.

Once aboard, a volume of information in the form of maps, aerial photographs, and terrain studies - including place names - was distributed as far down as the platoon level. The terrain studies, compiled mostly by former residents of the HOLLANDIA area, included such minute things as the names of the plantation owners, the number of buildings, cows, sheep, and mules on the plantations, and even the depths of the fresh water wells. There was a wealth of information about the HOLLANDIA tides and phases of the moon. It was felt by the members of the Battalion Staff that our intelligence forces had done a remarkable job in assembling this vast amount of material, and each person aboard had four days in which to digest it.

(16) Personal knowledge

NARRATION

THE LANDING ON D PLUS 2

On the morning of 22 April, as the D plus 2 Convoy headed west from MANUS ISLAND in the ADMIRALTIES toward HOLLANDIA, the assault elements of the 24th and 41st Divisions touched ground on HUMBOLDT and TANAHMERAH BAYS. (17)

The landings by elements of the 24th Division on RED BEACH 2 in TANAHMERAH BAY were surprisingly and happily enough unopposed, but there were difficulties ahead which had not been foreseen on the aerial photographs. RED BEACH 2 was only thirty yards deep and was backed by a swamp through which only infantrymen bearing small arms could pass. Also it was discovered that there was no road connecting RED BEACH 2 with RED BEACH 1, and construction of a road between the two soon proved impracticable. This was especially serious since the only trail to the airdromes began at DEPAFRE on RED BEACH 1, and there was now no overland route for the transport of RED BEACH 2 supplies to RED BEACH 1. (18)

The 41st Division back at HUMBOLDT BAY was meeting with unexpected success, so the Corps Commander reached a decision making the HUMBOLDT BAY area the principal Corps landing point, and changing the emphasis of the attack to the 41st Division's drive inland. The D plus 2 Convoy was directed to HUMBOLDT BAY. (19)

On the morning of D plus 2, as the ships bearing the Corps Reserve approached HUMBOLDT BAY, there could be seen bright flashes in the sky, and a huge fire appeared to be raging in the vicinity of WHITE BEACH 2. Later it was learned that during the night of 22 April, one lone Japanese plane had dropped four bombs, one of which fell squarely in the middle of

(17) A-15, p. 66, 70

(18) A-15, p. 70

(19) A-15, p. 70

an abandoned Jap ammunition dump. A tremendous fire swept up the beach for a mile, gobbling up much of the American food, ammunition and supplies on WHITE BEACH 2. This placed the men of the task force on half rations, and they were ordered to expend only the necessary amounts of ammunition.

(20)

About 0500 hours (D plus 2), the 2d Battalion Commander, while still aboard ship, received a radio message from the Regimental Commander to the effect that the 2d Battalion was attached to the 41st Division and would proceed as soon as possible to FIM, where contact would be made with the Division Commander. (See Map D). The Battalion Commander and the Battalion S-3 placed themselves in the first wave of boats going ashore in order that the Division Commander's plan for the employment of the 2d Battalion could be ascertained as quickly as possible. The first wave landed at FIM about 0730 hours.

Immediately in rear of the landing site at FIM the terrain rises abruptly, and it was a long pull to the top of LEIMOK HILL which overlooks all of JAUTEFA and HUMBOLDT BAYS. Along the way the Battalion Commander and S-3 constantly inquired as to the location of the 41st Division Command Post, but no one seemed able to give a positive location. Finally, at the top of the hill, a 41st Division staff officer was located who stated that it was back on WHITE BEACH 3. This necessitated a quick trip back to FIM to head off the remainder of the Battalion troops who were on the way to the FIM JETTY, and the reloading of the troops who were already ashore. This reshuffling of troops was time consuming, and it was about 1000 hours before the Division Commander, Major General Horace Fuller, was located.

General Fuller oriented the Battalion Commander and S-3 as to the

(20) A-14, p. 80

situation, and directed the Battalion to move eastward to HOLLEKANG to serve as left flank security for the Division. (See Map E) The 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry, was directed to assist in the unloading of supplies which had been diverted from WHITE BEACHES 1 and 2 after the bombing. The 3d Battalion, 34th Infantry, was to follow the advance of the 186th Infantry toward the air fields.

THE MOVE TO HOLLEKANG

After a hasty meal of type "C" ration, the 2d Battalion moved eastward along the crescent-shaped beach in the order E, F, Headquarters, H, and G. The sand on and near the wide beach was deep, and the going was slow for the overloaded troops. No enemy troops were encountered along the way, and it was mid-afternoon when the Battalion closed on HOLLEKANG. The Battalion Commander promptly divided the area into sectors and directed that a perimeter type defense be formed, with each of the rifle companies on the outer perimeter. The left portion of the perimeter was anchored to the LAHO RIVER and the rear portion to HUMBOLDT BAY. The outer portion of the perimeter on the south was thrust forward to the edge of dense jungle undergrowth. Several large grass huts on stilts bordered this southern edge of the perimeter, and men of the rifle companies were placed underneath in fox holes which gave them some protection from the elements without materially restricting their fields of fire. All men were placed in pairs in V-type fox holes which permitted, in quiet moments, one man to rest while the other was watchful.

As the F Company Commander was dividing his sector into platoon areas, he discovered in one of the smaller grass huts a Jap soldier, pretending to be dead, rolled up in a blanket. The Company Commander, detecting a slight twitching of the eyelashes, placed his carbine barrel against the Jap's head, and immediately he sprang to his knees pleading for mercy.

Our interpreters, Chris and Charlie, determined that he had been left by his comrades when they fled to the hills during the naval bombardment. The prisoner was placed under guard and sent via jeep to the Division PW enclosure on WHITE BEACH 3.

The men of E Company discovered two dead Japanese near the LAHO RIVER as they prepared their sector for defense. They had apparently been hit during the pre-invasion bombardment.

The first night at HOLLEKANG was a memorable one. Being in combat for the first time, and finding the Japanese within the perimeter during the afternoon, set the men on edge. There was grenade throwing and rifle firing at the slightest rustle of a bush, especially on the outer perimeter which bordered the jungle. The following morning the Battalion Commander instructed the men of the Battalion to use only their bayonets and machetes at night, with no rifle firing or grenade throwing except in the event of a Japanese attack in force.

Extensive patrolling was directed by the Battalion Commander for D plus 3. Each rifle company furnished four patrols, consisting of a rifle squad each, and the routes were coordinated by the Battalion S-3. The Company E patrols were to comb the DJAR PENINSULA, the F Company patrols reconnoiter both banks of the LAHO RIVER for a distance of approximately two miles, and the G Company patrols reconnoiter south to the vicinity of GOYA. (See Map E)

About midday, one of the patrolling squads from Company E reported the location of a large Japanese supply dump on the western shore of the DJAR PENINSULA. It was found to contain an abundance of communications equipment and dozens of soft, white blankets, apparently the type used by the Japanese Navy since each blanket had a large blue anchor superimposed in the center. In addition there were great quantities of food, mostly rice and canned shrimp and crabmeat. Dirty breakfast dishes gave

evidence of a hasty retreat by a half dozen Japanese. (21)

The remainder of the Battalion patrols searched diligently, but reported no enemy contacts. Mutually supporting log pillboxes were found abandoned on the trails leading south from HOLLEKANG.

RESCUE OF THE MISSIONARIES

Late in the afternoon of D plus 3, two lean, white men in torn civilian clothes appeared at the battalion command post. Apparently no one had noticed their entry into the battalion area, since they were alone when they introduced themselves to the battalion staff. They stated that they were missionaries who had been prisoners of the Japanese for two years; and that the remainder of their group (some one hundred and twenty-three in number, including women and children) were abandoned by the Japs south of HOLLEKANG near the village of GOYA. They claimed that twenty-one of the group were so weak that they would have to be carried out of the area on litters. After a lengthy conversation with the two, the Battalion Commander determined to send, on the following morning, the necessary men to return the group to HOLLENKANG.

Early on the morning of D plus 4, with the two missionaries as guides, the party set out for GOYA. One rifle company furnished security for the group, while another rifle company, freely interspersed with battalion aid men, was equipped to evacuate them.

The route to GOYA led over trails where the mud, due to occasional tropical thunderstorms, was frequently ankle deep. When the party arrived at the missionary encampment, the situation was just as had been described by the guides. The missionary group had apparently placed much confidence in their two representatives who were sent to contact the Americans for they had packed their belongings into bags which could be strapped to

(21) Personal knowledge

backs, and were ready to move out. The litter patients were loaded, and the group began the tortuous trip back down the muddy trail. The litter bearers had to be rotated frequently to prevent heat exhaustion, and it was fortunate that the Battalion Commander had an entire company of men to call upon. Many of the women had huge packs upon their backs and the soldiers offered help in carrying them, but, to a person, they refused.

It was late afternoon when the group returned to the battalion area, and when the missionaries realized that at long last they were safe and in due time would be transported back to civilization, tears began rolling down their cheeks. The battalion had been on half rations for several meals due to the burning of the American dump on WHITE BEACH 2, but each man was eager to share what remained with the missionaries. (22)

The group, composed of UNITED STATES, GERMAN, POLISH, CZECHOSLOVAKIAN, AUSTRALIAN, and SWISS missionaries, had, in 1942, been stationed down the NEW GUINEA COAST in the vicinity of FINSCHHAFFEN. Prior to each American and Australian advance up the Coast, the Japs would move them back to a position of relative safety where they were required to serve the Japanese. They were permitted to raise food in small gardens, but were moved to a new location prior to harvesting time. When the group was moved from WEWAK to HOLLANDIA, the ship on which they were being transported was attacked by American planes, and the Captain of the ship, refusing to let it be known that women and children were aboard, crowded the group into a small compartment just below deck, where seventy of them were killed. (23)

A medical missionary, Dr. Theodore Braun of HOSMER, SOUTH DAKOTA, displayed a meager bag of instruments with which he had performed

(22) Personal knowledge

(23) Statement of Sister Antonia (Mary Ruhall of Effingham, Illinois) on 26 April 1944

incredible operations. When the leg of Father Ney, a German missionary, had become gangrenous, Dr. Braun sawed through the bone with a carpenter's saw after the Japs refused him proper instruments. Most of the missionaries, due to the lack of food and medicines, suffered from malaria, dysentery, and beriberi. (24)

Throughout the night, the Battalion Surgeon, Captain Donald Cameron, and his aid men ministered to the sick. The following morning, D plus 5, the group was loaded into 2½ ton trucks and taken to the Division Command Post on WHITE BEACH 3 where they would be loaded onto ships for transport to AUSTRALIA.

During the afternoon of D plus 4, word was received from 41st Division Headquarters that patrols from the 24th and 41st Divisions had met on the HOLLANDIA DROMES, and that the primary objectives were in American hands.

THE LAST DAY AT HOLLEKANG

The natives in the area were, fortunately enough, friendly to the American forces, and Chris and Charlie were able to ascertain from them bits of information relative to Jap movements. One native boy offered to guide a patrol to a small village two miles south GOYA where several Japanese were in hiding. (See Map E) To guard against ambush, two squads from Company E were sent with the native, and from a nearby hill, he pointed out the exact huts in the village which the Japs were occupying. One squad was left on the hill overlooking the village, while the other crept to within twenty-five yards of the grass huts. It was apparently meal time, for the Japs in each of the huts were gorging rice. When the squad was in position, the squad leader called for the Japs to come out, which they did, via the back door, on the dead run for the nearby jungle.

(24) Statement of Dr. Theodore Braun of Hosmer, South Dakota on 26 April 1944

THE MOVE TO TAMI

Early on the morning of D plus 6, the Battalion was packed and ready to load on the LCTs (Landing Craft Tanks) which were beginning to drop their ramps on the beach near the mouth of the LAHO RIVER. The water-borne move around CAPE DJAR required about an hour, and about 0900 hours the the first boats attempted to land near SKOMABO. Two of the boats were nearly swamped by the high surf at this point, and all of the craft were required to move west to SKOJAMBE for another try at the landings. (See Map E) Here the surf was rough also, but several men from each boat finally were able to wade ashore with long ropes for succeeding men to hold to as they disembarked. Considerable equipment was lost and many of the vehicles were drowned out before the Battalion completed the landings around noon.

Because of the barrier which was offered by the DJAR MOUNTAINS, radio communication with Company G of the 162d Infantry had been impossible from HOLLEKANG. Contact was made, however, as soon as the Battalion landed at SKOJAMBE, and the Commander of Company G indicated his location in the vicinity of the TAMI Drome. The Battalion promptly moved out as soon as its major elements could be assembled near the beach, and Company F, the leading rifle company, made contact with Company G, 162d Infantry, in the early afternoon.

The Commander of Company G, 162d Infantry, explained that his company had encountered no organized enemy resistance, but that snipers in large numbers had been active throughout the area and had made work impossible for a battalion of Air Corps Engineers, who had followed them into the area with the mission of placing the drome into operation within a period of seventy-two hours.

As soon as a reconnaissance of the area was made, Company G, 162d

Infantry, was relieved, and it returned via boat to HOLLEKANG.

Our own regiment had made available to us, at the last minute, one of the larger vehicular type regimental radios. It came in on one of the last boat loads from HOLLEKANG, and contact with Division was re-established as soon as it reached the battalion area near the TAMI Drome.

The Commander of the Engineer Battalion informed the 2d Battalion staff that the Engineers who had landed at HUMBOLDT BAY were having a most difficult time constructing a usable road to the HOLLANDIA, SENTANI, and CYCLOPS Dromes, and that the American fighter planes based there were restricted in their operations, due to lack of gasoline. Some gasoline was being flown in on C-47 transport planes, but the supply line was over five hundred miles long, and a considerable quantity of this gasoline was being consumed by the transport planes themselves on their return trips. The plan then was to place the TAMI Drome into operation as quickly as possible in order that it could serve as a relay point in the chain of supply. Gasoline would be brought in fifty-five gallon drums by ship to WHITE BEACH 3 where it would be reloaded into LCTs for transport to the mouth of the TAMI RIVER. Here it would be loaded into trucks by personnel of the 2d Battalion and transported to the TAMI Drome where it would be loaded into planes for the trip to HOLLANDIA, SENTANI, and CYCLOPS Dromes. The 2d Battalion was also to furnish personnel for the reloading of the drums at the TAMI strip. It was a long and expensive gasoline supply route, but the fuel was urgently needed by the planes which could now reach out to the northern tip of NEW GUINEA.

Vigorous patrolling was instigated by the Battalion, and within forty-eight hours the Engineers were able to work around the clock on three, eight-hour shifts. The snipers, who were firing mostly from trees,

were eliminated principally by spraying the suspected areas with large volumes of automatic weapon's fire.

At one end of the TAMI Drome was a wrecked German Messerschmidt plane which the Japs had apparently been using prior to the American invasion. The Platoon Sergeant of the Battalion Ammunition and Pioneer Platoon was examining the forward part of the plane when one of his buddies touched a control in the cockpit, discharging the 20-mm guns in the wings of the plane. One of the shells seared through both of the Sergeant's legs. He was immediately rushed to the Battalion Aid Station where he was given a steady flow of blood plasma and injections of morphine. It was midnight before an evacuation boat could arrive from Division, and after living for two additional days in the Division Clearing Station, he died. (27)

A patrol from Company G encountered a Japanese machine gun on the SKOMABO Trail where it disappears into the DJAR MOUNTAINS, and its leader was killed before the remainder of the patrol could eliminate it. (See Map E) On the body of one of the dead Japanese was found a diary which gave a day by day account of his activities from D-day until the day on which he was killed.

A Navy patrol ship searching the Coastal area at night had reported to the 41st Division Headquarters the presence of several individuals in the vicinity of WUTONG attempting to give signals with blinking lights. The 2d Battalion was furnished a number of LCMs (Landing Craft Mediums) and directed on D plus 8 to send a company of men to investigate this area. Company E, led by Captain Edgar Ross, landed above the village, reconnoitered the entire area, killed eight Japs and captured three.

(27) Personal knowledge

The prisoners stated that they had hoped the Navy patrol ship was one of their own which had been sent to pick them up. (See Map E) (28)

Attached to the Battalion for the move to the TAMI Drome were two representatives from NICA (NETHERLANDS INDIES CIVIL AUTHORITIES). These individuals in pre-war days were among those who ran the Civil government throughout DUTCH NEW GUINEA, and they were now charged with the responsibility of administering the civil affairs of the natives and of recruiting native labor. The natives, in addition to frequently serving as guides for the combat patrols, constructed, under the supervision of the NICA personnel, elaborate grass huts which served as Command Posts and covered storage for supply items.

The native chief of the SKOSAI village, upon one occasion, brought one of the members of his clan to the NICA authorities and stated that the individual had just clubbed his wife to death on the beach with a piece of driftwood because she refused to come into their hut. The accused was placed under guard and the following day was sent to the NICA Headquarters near the Division Command Post. The local NICA representatives stated that he would be given a trial, and if found guilty, would be executed, since all of the natives were familiar with the DUTCH system of law.

Extensive patrolling and the elimination of scattered Japanese continued daily, and by 2 May, the TAMI gasoline supply system was in full operation with no interference by the enemy. The engineers, who had lost some of their equipment at the beach due to the rough surf, did an outstanding job of repairing and extending the air strip, which proved invaluable in the Allied supply chain.

The 2d Battalion remained in the TAMI area until the end of May

(28) Statement by Captain Edgar Ross, then Commander of Company E, 346th Infantry, on 30 April 1944

when they were withdrawn in order to participate in the BIAK ISLAND operation with the remainder of the 34th Infantry.

SUMMARY

In summary, this first landing on DUTCH territory since the fall of the EAST INDIES, advanced our progress in the PACIFIC by many months, and isolated the reinforced Jap strongholds of WEWAK and HANSA BAY. The elements of six Japanese divisions and one brigade (about 60,000 men) lay cut off between HOLLANDIA and SAIDOR. (29) In addition, likewise isolated, were 50,000 enemy troops on NEW BRITAIN, 10,000 on NEW IRELAND, and 22,000 on BOUGAINVILLE. (See Map A) (30)

The Reckless Task Force was the largest ever assembled up to that time in the PACIFIC, and it was the first time a landing was made under a naval and air bombardment. (31)

The Navy and the Fifth Air Force, including their pre-invasion bombardments, destroyed 245 Jap planes on the ground. (32)

Surprise was complete. The enemy withdrew some combat troops from the HOLLANDIA area prior to invasion, and the Commander of the HOLLANDIA air fields had not laid out a plan of defense until two hours after the landings. (33)

The 24th Division alone killed and captured 2,273 Japanese during a period of weeks, and suffered, themselves, only 43 killed and 70 wounded. (34) Casualties for the 41st Division were likewise exceedingly light.

(29) A-5, p. 27

(30) A-2, p. 29

(31) A-15, p. 65

A-14, p. 75

(32) A-15, p. 69

(33) A-15, p. 74

(34) A-8, p. 11, 13

More than 600 Jap supply dumps containing food, ammunition, medical supplies, communications equipment, etc., were captured. In the words of General Eichelberger: "I believe HOLLANDIA was the richest prize, supply-wise, taken during the PACIFIC war," and, "I think - in the matter of blood and tears - HOLLANDIA was the AMERICAN victory most economically purchased." (35)

HOLLANDIA, with its harbor capable of anchoring an entire fleet, became a city of 140,000 men. One hundred and thirty-five miles of pipe lines eventually carried gasoline to the air fields. (36) From HOLLANDIA, a large portion of the force which later invaded the PHILIPPINES set sail.

The HOLLANDIA Operation was described by General George C. Marshall, then Army Chief of Staff, as being a model of strategic and tactical maneuver. (37)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. INDIVIDUAL EQUIPMENT

The individual, for this particular operation, was encumbered with enough equipment to weigh down the stoutest individual. Prior to prescribing the exact items to be carried by each individual, it is believed that, if time is available, considerable experimentation should be conducted by personnel of the prescribing headquarters. Individuals with various combinations of equipment could be given certain fatiguing tests to determine the suitability of the varying loads. The blanket, a cumbersome item in a jungle pack, could easily have been eliminated since, in most instances, the raincoat provides sufficient warmth at night in jungle climates. The individual ration load could have been reduced considerably by the issue of the type "D" ration. Since the unit was to be in reserve

(35) A-15, p. 74, 76

(36) A-15, p. 74

(37) A-15, p. 76

initially, the full rifle belt with a maximum of one extra bandoleer of ammunition would have been sufficient. The spoon from the mess kit could have been retained, and the mess kit itself dispensed with. A reduction of individual equipment is made more important by the fact that little, if any, sleep or rest is achieved during the night preceding an amphibious landing, some individuals become weakened by seasickness enroute to shore, and the intense heat of the tropics hastens exhaustion.

2. MALARIA DISCIPLINE

Malaria instruction and training is all-important prior to the time a unit moves into malarious territory. Atabrine tablets (or the new chloroquine tablets) must be effectively administered to individuals by whatever means are necessary. The 2d Battalion officers rigidly supervised the atabrine consumption, thereby reducing malaria losses to the minimum. Individuals formed by platoons with 1/4 canteen cup of water, and each man, as his name was called, would step forward, swallow his atabrine tablets, and turn his cup upside down to indicate that the tablets were not in the cup. An inspection of the mouth was made to insure that the tablets were not merely held without swallowing. Some individuals who are subject to seasickness will insist that the atabrine is causing this sickness, but rarely is this true, and the atabrine consumption must be continued regardless of individual objection. Native villages, where malaria abounds, must be avoided and at night individuals must persevere in the use of insect repellent, head nets, and gloves.

3. INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION

The thoroughness with which the pre-invasion intelligence forces gathered information contributed immeasurably to the success of the HOLLANDIA operation by making available to the battalion a great quantity of material which could be passed on to every individual in the unit. The information

which listed place names was wisely withheld until aboard ship; but once the loading was completed, the Battalion Commander was able to present to each platoon leader a complete set of intelligence documents, along with a thorough orientation as to what might be expected in the HOLLANDIA area. Space and ample time was made available to the platoon leaders for small unit presentations of the wealth of information. Prior to disembarking, each individual in the Battalion was able to picture mentally a portion of what was in store for him. Especially valuable to the platoon leader was Terrain Handbook 25 (NEW GUINEA) which gave a detailed description of the entire HOLLANDIA area and its people. Combat, especially for the first time in an unknown land, is an awesome experience; and a considerable share of the fearfulness and strangeness can be eliminated by indoctrinating, as thoroughly as possible, the individuals who are called upon to share the unpleasantries and hardships.

4. INTERPRETERS

It is believed that the many services rendered by Chris and Charlie, the two Javanese interpreters, were invaluable. It is important to have on the Battalion level interpreters (and always more than one) who can speak the language of the native people. This service would not be difficult to acquire when operating in most European countries, since many Americans are of European descent; but it becomes increasingly difficult when operating on the many islands of the PACIFIC, and the ability to supply trusted interpreters would require long range planning prior to entry into a hostile area. Chris and Charlie made ideal and invaluable assistants in that they were also able to speak and understand the language of the enemy.

5. THE GASOLINE SUPPLY PLAN

The difficulty of completing the road from HUMBOLDT BAY to the HOLLANDIA Dromes resulted in the adoption of a make-shift plan for supplying gasoline

to the newly based American fighter planes. This flexibility in the method of logistical support is commendable, in spite of the fact that the loaded drums had to be man-handled innumerable times. Considerable difficulty in unloading was experienced by the 2d Battalion personnel at the mouth of the TAMI RIVER, due to unusually low tides, but this was preferable to the use of beach landing points where the boats would be subjected to the rough surf. The success of additional amphibious landings in the immediate future was dependent upon the timely operation of the HOLLANDIA Dromes. The victories at WAKDE and BIAK evidence "mission accomplished."

6. ENGINEER EQUIPMENT

The primary purpose of island hopping in the PACIFIC was to establish advance bases from which our aircraft could operate at increasing ranges against the enemy. While in most instances it is true that our objectives were airstrips which had been constructed and operated by the Japanese, in few cases were our planes able to use the strips extensively without considerable regrading and hard-surfacing. This required a mass of multi-type engineer equipment which could be operated by trained and competent personnel. In addition, in order to advance supplies to these bases, it was necessary to follow the assault troops as quickly as possible with engineer equipment which could improve old trails or blaze new ones capable of handling heavy vehicular traffic. The motorization and mechanization of the assault troops themselves has indicated the need for prompt engineer support. At HOLLANDIA, even though slowed in their operations initially, the Engineers were able to complete in a matter of days a two-lane road from HUMBOLDT BAY to the HOLLANDIA Dromes, a feat the Japanese had not been able to accomplish in two years.

7. ENEMY DEFENSE

The rapid advance of the Japanese in the PACIFIC in the early days of the war, and the tenacity with which they defended their positions in NEW GUINEA, led rise to the opinion that the Japanese soldiers were superior fighters. They appeared well versed in all phases of the art of warfare. In view of this, it is difficult to understand how they could have been surprised in small groups as frequently as they were in the HOLLANDIA Area. Innumerable times they failed to put out local security or to adopt an adequate warning system, and were either captured or killed without offering the slightest resistance. In no place throughout the HOLLANDIA Area did the Japanese defend in force, which was particularly surprising in view of the fact that they held dominating terrain which was laced with mutually supporting log pillboxes. It is believed that they could have delayed any attacking forces for days had they elected to defend. Also equally surprising was the willingness with which many Japanese submitted to capture. This picture presented quite a contrast to the Japs of previous operations who would bitterly defend the last ditch, and then resort to hari-kari.

LESSONS

1. Individual equipment for troops participating in amphibious landings should be kept to the minimum consistent with that required for the accomplishment of the mission.
2. Malaria discipline is essential to success in tropical climates, and officers of all units should be held responsible for its rigid enforcement.
3. The maximum amount of intelligence information, in keeping with security, should be distributed to all individuals prior to an amphibious operation.

4. Interpreters who can speak the language of the enemy as well as that of the native people should be made available as far down as the battalion level.

5. Individuals in this mechanized era who are responsible for the supply of Class III items must make plans which are flexible enough to overcome unforeseen obstacles.

6. Engineer equipment, operated by competent personnel, contributes immeasurably to the success of amphibious operations and should be made available in sufficient quantity to permit rapid exploitation of the landings.

7. Defending troops which possess good positions on dominating terrain can and should exploit these positions to their maximum advantage.