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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 2D BATTALION, 63D INFANTRY  
(6TH INFANTRY DIVISION) ON 21-25 JANUARY 1945 AND OF  
COMPANY E, 63D INFANTRY ON 26 JANUARY 1945 IN THE  
VICINITY OF CAMP ONE, LUZON, P. I.  
(Personal experience of a Bn S-2 acting as S-3,  
and later in command of a rifle company)

Type of operation described: BATTALION AND COMPANY IN THE ATTACK

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INTRODUCTION

"The President of the United States ordered me to break through the Japanese line and proceed to Australia for the purpose, as I understand it, of organizing American defense against Japan. The primary purpose of this is the relief of the Philippines. I came through, and I SHALL RETURN."

These were the words spoken by General Douglas MacArthur upon his arrival at Adelaide, South Australia, 20 March 1942. (1)

On the following pages an attempt will be made to portray the experiences of a battalion S-2 acting in the capacity of S-3, and later in command of a rifle company. The place is in the vicinity of Camp One, Luzon, P. I. The units with which this narrative will be primarily concerned are 2d Battalion, 63d Infantry, (6th Infantry Division) and Company E, 63d Infantry. The time is from 21-26 January 1945.

THE GENERAL SITUATION

15 September 1944 found New Guinea completely in our control and a successful landing made on the island of Morotai. In addition to this the enemy aerial strength in the Philippines had been greatly reduced and much enemy shipping had been destroyed in that area. This good news caused General MacArthur to move up his schedule two months and set 20 October 1944 as the date for the assault on Leyte.

Control of the Philippines would give our forces the bases they needed for future operations against the coast of China and Japan itself as well as virtually cutting off the Japanese supply line from her homeland to her conquests in the Southwest Pacific, the Netherlands East Indies, Singapore and Burma. (See Map A)

(1) A-1, p. 5

While in the midst of its preparations for the Leyte Campaign, Sixth Army Headquarters received on 1 October 1944, a directive designating that army as the force that would invade Luzon. (2)

The best landing beaches were north of Lingayen between Damortis and San Fernando (La Union). Of course this area was most heavily defended by the enemy both near the beach and inland on the high ridges overlooking the beach. In the Mangalden-Dagupan-Lingayen area the landing beaches were not good but to compensate for that the coast was very lightly held. In addition the latter area gave access to an excellent road net, the Lingayen airstrip and the port facilities of Sual. (3)

In order that the reader may better project himself into the situation, time will be taken here for a brief study of the terrain and climate. The Central Luzon Plain, approximately 110 miles long and 40 miles wide, extends from Lingayen Gulf south to Manila. North of the Gulf the Central Gran Cordillera Mountain Range parallels and lies close to the west coast. Some of the mountains in this range rise to a height of more than 9,000 feet. This range extends from the north tip of the island along the coast to Lingayen Gulf and then southeast until it joins the Sierra Madre Range. The Sierra Madre is the main mountain range of Luzon and lies close to the east coast. The area in which the following action took place is covered with cogon grass two to three feet high, low brush and scattered trees.

The climate of this area is tropical and consists of two seasons - dry and wet. The dry season lasts from December to April, which leaves the remainder of the year as the wet season. During January the temperature ranges from 85° during the day down to 69° at night.

A word might also be said about disease and pests. At night the mosquitoes, some of which are malaria carriers, buzz and sting from dusk until dawn. By day the flies are a constant source of annoyance, to say nothing

(2) A-2, p. 5,6; (3) A-2, p. 7

of the filth they carry from the fields fertilized with human fecal matter. Bacillary dysentery is the commonest form of intestinal infection in the area and following the Japanese occupation it was found to be quite prevalent. Another difficulty is tropical ulcer which is found in all humid, tropical areas and results from any small scratch, cut or abrasion. If the affected area is covered, the tissues get soft and refuse to heal. If the skin is left uncovered, hordes of flies will settle on it and cause infection to occur. When a morsel of food is lifted to the mouth it must be brushed free of flies and then secured quickly behind closed lips to deny the pests entrance to the mouth.

The foregoing comments can be summed up by saying that this action was to take place in a hot, humid, tropical climate, in an unpopulated area that was characterized by a growth of high, sun-burned grass. (4)

#### THE ENEMY

##### Their Plans

As early as September 1944, the Japanese forces on Luzon concluded from an estimate of the situation that they would not be able successfully to defend the Central Plain in the face of our superior forces. Their plan was to withdraw into the mountains and fight a long delaying action. Although plans had been made well in advance for the withdrawal and disposition of all Japanese units on Luzon, all but two were still en route when the U.S. Army landed in Lingayen. The only two enemy units in position on 9 January 1945 were the 23d Division and the 58th Independent Mixed Brigade. They were defending the Pozorrubio-Rosario area and the coast north to San Fernando. (5)

##### Their Tactics

There were some peculiarities of enemy tactics which will bear study. In the early stages of the Pacific War, when the Japanese soldier seemed

(4) A-4, p. 17,85-90; (5) A-3, p. 1-2

invincible, he used the twin slogan: "Surprise - Attack". When the Americans took the initiative and put the Jap on the defensive he could not adjust himself to the changed situation. His reaction was to make "Banzai" attacks night after night, which only resulted in his being slaughtered by the well coordinated American defensive fires. The Japanese high command, recognizing the need for a change in their doctrine, began training their troops both physically and psychologically in defensive measures. By the time our forces landed in Lingayen Gulf they found an enemy well schooled in defensive tactics.

Although the enemy abandoned his "Banzai" tactics he adopted a technique of small group infiltration. The objective of these infiltration groups was "annihilation of U.S. fighting strength". However, before the war ended the Japanese discovered this practice also to be costly and relatively ineffective. (6)

#### THE INVASION PLAN

##### Sixth Army

The Sixth Army Plan was to establish a beachhead in Lingayen Gulf with I Corps on the left and XIV Corps on the right, each corps having two divisions abreast. This would complete Phase I. Phase II would include the destruction of all forces north of the Agno River and secure all crossings of that river while Phase III called for the destruction of all enemy forces in the Central Plains area and the capture of Manila. (7) (See Map B)

##### I Corps

The I Corps plan was to land in the Dagupan-Mabilao area of Lingayen Gulf with the 43d Infantry Division on the left and the 6th Infantry Division on the right. The part of the mission pertinent to this discussion was the protection of Sixth Army's left flank. (8)

(6) A-3, p. 24-26; (7) A-2, p. 6; (8) A-2, p. 5

### THE REGIMENTAL SITUATION

Despite the fact that the 63d Infantry was a part of the 6th Division, it was landed in I Corps reserve and was not returned to its parent organization until February. Therefore, this monograph will not be burdened with the mission of the 6th Division. It is desirable, however, to know the Division's status of training. Before going overseas in July of 1943, the Division maneuvered in Louisiana, Tennessee and the Great American Desert in California. It defended the island of Oahu, Hawaii for six months, took jungle and amphibious training on Oahu and at Milne Bay, New Guinea. The 6th Division "fought the bloodiest battle of the New Guinea campaign at Lone Tree Hill, Maffin Bay and officially terminated the New Guinea campaign by making the last major amphibious assault at Sansapor, Dutch New Guinea". (9)

On 10 January 1945, the 63d Regimental Combat Team landed on the beaches of Lingayen Gulf and went into bivouac at Angio. The 63d RCT (less 53d FA Battalion and 3d Battalion) was attached to the 43d Infantry Division on 12 January and given the mission of seizing a portion of Highway 3 between Damortis and Rosario. The 3d Battalion remained in I Corps reserve. On 20 January 1945 the objective was taken. (10)

During this same period elements of the 43d Division and the 158th Regimental Combat Team had been fighting to secure Highway 3 from Damortis through Rosario and down to Pozorrubio. By 24 January all of Highway 3 had been secured except for the piece from the Bued River south to Sison. A strong enemy force from the garrison at Camp One was holding this critical terrain feature. (11) (See Map C)

On 24 January the 63d RCT (less 3d Battalion and B Company) was designated as the Yon Force and ordered to make a dawn attack on 25 January. The objective - named "New York" - was the mountain mass which dominates

(9) A-5, Preface; (10) A-6 and Personal Knowledge; (11) A-7

Camp One, Agat, Highway 3 and its bridge across the Bued River. The intermediate objective "Chicago" was a hill which dominated a bend in Highway 3 about 500 yards west of the bridge. The plan was to attack with two battalions abreast, 2d Battalion on the left. The line of departure was a rather vague one extending east from a sharp bend in the Sayton River. To maintain contact during the approach march the 2d Battalion was designated as the base and ordered to guide on the Sayton River. (12) (See Map D)

#### THE BATTALION SITUATION

The 2d Battalion, 63d Infantry was relieved during the morning of 21 January 1945 and moved by truck south to Bunday. The rest of the day was spent bathing, washing clothes and cleaning weapons in addition to writing recommendations for decorations and promotions. The next day, 22 January, the Battalion was moved north to Bush Ridge at a point just west of the junction of the Apangat and Sayton Rivers.

When 2d Battalion received its mission for the attack on New York its only attachment was to be an engineer demolition squad. It was decided that the Anti-tank Platoon would have to be left behind because of the impassable terrain. All other weapons and ammunition would be hand carried. One type K emergency ration was to be carried. Resupply would be accomplished by Filipino carrying parties. Evacuation would also have to be by means of carrying party. The combat efficiency of the Battalion was about 70%. Moreover, on 15 January Battalion Headquarters had lost its Executive Officer, S-3 and nearly the entire Communications Platoon. The clothing worn was that found throughout the tropics - cotton drawers, two-piece denims, woolen socks and combat boots. (13)

As acting S-3 about noon of the 24th I was given an NCO and 6 privates from G Company and instructed to reconnoiter for a good route down from Bush (12) A-6 and Personal Knowledge; (13) Personal Knowledge

Ridge and across the Apangat River. A good deal of care was to be taken in the selection of a route since the move would be made in the dark. The patrol walked through the tall grass down the steep slope to the river and found a shallow place to wade across. Coming back to the base of the hill again some time was spent in searching before an excellent trail was found. This trail led back up the hill to within 300 yards of the 2d Battalion Command Post. About half way up the hill we had come across a 155mm "dud" lying in the middle of the trail. After some deliberation it was decided to recommend that the engineer demolition team be required to remove the dud. (14)

At 0230 on 25 January the Battalion assembled on the jeep road which ran through the area. The order of march was G Company plus a section of heavy machine guns, F Company plus a section of heavy machine guns, Headquarters Company, H Company (-) and E Company. G Company led the move down the mountain trail in single file. The reconnaissance patrol of the previous day (less the acting S-3) was guiding the column. The Battalion Commander kept his one man staff with him in the 2d Platoon of G Company. Because the trail was steep and twisting the descent was very slow and eventually stopped. The reason for this was that the dud had not been removed the previous evening nor were the engineers up front so they could remove it now. Finally some soldier grabbed the dud and heaved it into the ravine below. As we reached the bottom of the hill the column piled up again. There was room now to move off the trail so I worked my way along the column to see what the trouble was. By this time the Battalion Commander was fuming, so something had to be done. The moon wasn't shining at this time of the month and visibility was almost nil. There was a good deal of confusion at the head of the column. The trail had led into some sort of yard where the dim shapes of two buildings could be made out. The patrol had lost the trail in this yard and had come face to face with a

(14) The remainder of this monograph is based on personal knowledge and experience.

large irrigation ditch. On the reconnaissance the day before we had picked up this trail at the foot of the hill and followed it to the top. Since it was nearly sundown by that time we had not reconnoitered the trail out to the river. The result was not good. The irrigation ditch was about 6 feet deep, 10 feet across and held 2 feet of water. The far bank was steep and covered with trees and underbrush. I found the G Company Commander - a big, blustering Texan - storming about, voicing his opinions of the situation in a hoarse stage whisper. He blundered on a place where a crossing could be made with the aid of a low-hanging tree branch and began moving his company over one by one. Meanwhile I found the patrol leader and told him my plan. I felt certain there was an established crossing in the near vicinity so I sent him in one direction while I went in the other. Due to the heavy undergrowth and poor visibility I found it necessary to get into the water and wade right up the middle of the ditch. I had not gone more than 20 yards before I found the trail again. Hurrying back to the troops who were waiting silently, if not patiently, I broke the column off near the ditch and ordered the men to follow me to the crossing I had located.

At this point there was a short burst of automatic fire and a sharp cry. An automatic rifleman had accidentally discharged his piece while trying to negotiate the low-hanging tree branch and had wounded his squad leader in the leg. Four G Company men were designated to return the man to the Regimental Aid Station.

Another 100 yards through a grassy field brought us to the Apangat River very near the crossing site selected the previous day. After making the crossing we found ourselves in the flat, cultivated valley and discovered that the visibility was much better. It was in this area that 1st and 2d Battalions were supposed to make contact but there was no sign of the 1st Battalion. Since radio silence had been imposed until H-hour there

was no feasible means of contacting either 1st Battalion or Regimental Headquarters.

The formation was changed now to a dispersed column of twos and the Battalion set off in a northeasterly direction. Every rifle platoon put two men about 100 yards to each flank for security. The time was approximately 0500 now and it was getting light enough to be able to see several hundred yards. In another hour it was daylight and the Battalion had been able to move fast enough to be in position at the Line of Departure. The entire battalion was in the river bed which was almost entirely dried up. Cover and concealment were provided by the 3 foot river bank and its fringe of small, scrubby trees. The mortars of the rifle companies as well as the 81mms of H Company were placed in position here. Wire communication was established with Regimental Headquarters and the Battalion situation was telephoned back. It was also noted that no contact whatsoever had been made with 1st Battalion. 2d Battalion was ordered to move out and seize all of Chicago, the intermediate objective, instead of just the left half as had been originally planned. The attack was launched at 0700 with F Company on the left, G Company on the right and E Company in reserve. The Battalion Commander took his SCR 300 radio and the Heavy Weapons Company Commander with him and left the rest of his Command Group in the river bed. I wasn't sure of what my duties were supposed to be but I maintained contact with Regimental Headquarters and kept all CP personnel dispersed.

No preparatory fires were to be used because the plan was to surprise the enemy. The attack companies jumped off in a column of platoons with each platoon in a column of squad columns. The men moved cautiously and noiselessly across the open intervening space. By the end of the first hour the companies had reached the foot of the objective and were scouting a number of native huts located there. No enemy was seen but there were numerous documents, small pieces of clothing and other evidence that the

Japanese had been using these buildings. Not a shot had been fired to this point and all talking was conducted in whispers. From my position in the river bed I could watch the progress of the troops and was impatient to get up where I could take a closer look. Taking Sergeant Sloan and his 6-man Intelligence Squad, I moved up to the group of huts. Meanwhile F and G Companies had formed a long skirmish line and were working their way up the slope. About half way up a Jap jumped out of his fox-hole, threw a grenade and began running up the hill. He was killed before he had taken a dozen steps. Moving quickly to the emplacement evacuated by the Jap a heavy machine gun was captured intact. Why the enemy soldier did not man his gun will always be a mystery. At any rate this action broke the tension somewhat in addition to invoking rifle fire from positions scattered along the crest. These rifle positions were searched out and 8 more of the enemy were eliminated without any American casualties occurring.

Let us see what was happening among the huts at the bottom of the hill. The Intelligence Squad was poking around from hut to hut unearthing a tremendous number of documents. The search was not systematic but rather every man for himself. It is quite possible that the men were as interested in finding souvenirs as they were in unearthing military information. Sergeant Sloan had a memorable experience while conducting a one-man search of a hut. The bamboo floors of these typically Filipino huts were built on stilts about five feet off the ground. The entrance is usually just an open doorway. As Sergeant Sloan walked up to a hut and poked his head through the doorway he found himself looking into the muzzle of a rifle that had a Jap on the other end of it. The Jap snapped the trigger but miracles do happen for the piece failed to fire. Throwing himself to the ground under the hut Sergeant Sloan emptied all 15 rounds from his carbine into the floor above him. He reloaded with another

clip and began shooting again until he saw blood dripping down and knew he had made a hit. When he saw the blood he ceased firing and began moving out to a position which covered the doorway, listening and watching meanwhile for any movement. There was none so he looked through the doorway once more and found his would-be killer was dead. Inspection of the Japanese 25 caliber bolt action rifle revealed that there was a round in the chamber and the hammer had fallen on it.

By noon the Battalion Commander felt justified in notifying Regimental Headquarters that Chicago had been seized and was under our control. We were ready now to advance to New York, the final objective about 1500 yards to the east. We were informed that 1st Battalion had become lost that morning and were at this time fighting in a grove of trees about 1000 yards to the south of our position. We were ordered to hold Chicago while 1st Battalion advanced on New York.

Our hill was roughly egg shaped with the longer axis running east and west. The southeast end of the hill was concave in shape and it was here the Battalion Commander chose to put his perimeter. When the troops were all in position and ready to start digging, an order was received to send one company out to establish a roadblock. The Damortis-Rosario-Pozorrubio Highway passed on the other side of our hill, made a double bend and went across the river. E Company, with a section of heavy machine guns attached, was designated as the unit to establish a roadblock at the first bend in the highway. The company was pulled out of the perimeter and told to wait until sundown before moving away from the shelter of the hill. By the time the perimeter was reformed it was late afternoon and time to start digging if we were to be settled by dark. G Company was along the top of the slope forming the north arc. F Company tied in on the west flank of G and swung south and east as far as it could go. The remaining gap in the southeast corner was filled with every available H Company and Headquarters Company

man. The mortar crews of the rifle companies as well as H Company put their guns in place in the center and then took up positions on the perimeter. A small switchboard was set up and lines were run to each company. No hourly reports would be made in a case like this but communication would be available in case of an emergency. It was SOP for "lights out", "no noise" and everyone in his foxhole before dark. The reason for lights out is obvious. Noise was banned so that the men on guard could listen for the enemy they could not see. Everyone had to stay in his foxhole because anything that moved above ground after dark was treated as an enemy. Fire discipline was very strict. If a man felt certain there was an enemy in front of his position he was to throw a hand grenade. Rifles would not be used unless the enemy was upon the position before he was discovered. Machine guns would be used only to repulse an attack in force. This was to prevent the enemy from pinpointing any position. Three-man emplacements were used with 5 to 10 yards between emplacements. Each emplacement consisted of three individual holes in a row with about a one foot wall of earth separating one trench from the other. Thus if a grenade or shell landed in a trench it would cause only one casualty, but the three men were close enough to one another to maintain personal contact. They rotated guard duty by changing at hourly intervals throughout the night. If I have made myself clear it can be seen that a walk around this perimeter would disclose one man awake every 15 yards.

At about 1800 hours mortar shells began landing in G Company's area wounding several men. They were brought down to the Battalion Surgeon in the center of the perimeter where they spent the night. None of them were seriously wounded and it was much too late to begin to start walking back in any case. The G Company Commander determined that the enemy mortars were located in a heavy clump of woods on the east side of our hill. Either

the enemy had moved in there since our capture of the objective or else a thorough job of mopping up had not been done. In my opinion the latter was true. A number of well placed rounds from our 81mm mortars silenced the enemy in that sector for the remainder of the night. By now the sun had gone behind the Chocolate Drop Mountains we had left this morning so E Company was given the word to move out. They were ordered to go straight south in a small irrigation ditch which extended south to north on our side of the hill. The cogon grass growing in this area was three feet high and the ditch was a foot deep, so by moving in a crouched position some concealment could be achieved. The Company was to move to a clump of trees about 300 yards to the south and then take advantage of the concealment afforded by the trees to move east to a position just opposite the point of the road they were to block. All this precaution had to be taken because it was certain the enemy had observation on this flat open terrain from his positions on New York. At dark the Company moved very cautiously up to the road and dug its perimeter on the outside of the bend. The highway from here to the bridge was built on a fill. The bank was about eight feet high at this bend. Thus an enemy force of foot troops could maneuver on the other side of the highway in comparative safety. If the enemy chose to, he could crawl up onto the highway and put himself in a position from which to toss hand grenades into the American emplacements below. As a matter of fact, during the night one Japanese leaped from the road into the perimeter swinging a two-handed samurai sword and screaming like a madman. The American soldier he landed beside jumped up and fired his carbine just as the slashing sword struck it from his hands. The American instinctively threw up his left arm and caught the next slashing blow on the wrist suffering a smashed watch and a slashed arm. At this point Technical Sergeant Tom Hendrix, an American Indian who was platoon leader of the 1st Platoon, joined the battle. Before the Jap could swing again the hunting knife of

Sergeant Hendrix was plunged into his throat and the battle ended as abruptly as it had started. By light of day the Jap was identified as a senior NCO. Why he chose to attack the Company single-handed, I will never know. That was the only action E Company experienced that night.

Back on our side of the hill I had dug my trench very close to the west side of the perimeter. Some time during the night I was awakened by a single shot. Raising my head very cautiously I could make out the form of the man whose trench was end to end with mine and on the outer edge of the perimeter. Whispering I asked him what was the matter. He answered that someone had raised up on his knees right in front of him so he fired and the form fell. This incident was not conducive to sleep so I spent the rest of the night in direct support of that sector of the perimeter. In the morning we identified the nocturnal visitor as being a Jap - now dead. Sergeant Sloan stripped the body of all articles of military information and put them with the mound of documents and weapons on hand. Later in the day the Battalion S-4 took all these articles back to Regimental Headquarters. If any intelligence was learned in higher headquarters, and I am sure some was, we were never told about it.

After the men had eaten a breakfast of K rations the Battalion was ordered to move forward to the highway and await further orders. One reinforced platoon of F Company was left behind to hold the hill and protect the casualties in the aid station. G Company led off in a column of twos followed by the Command Group and F Company in that order. The column of twos I speak of is a staggered formation with irregular intervals between men. Upon reaching the road the Battalion was halted and spread out. G Company extended along a line parallel with the road and beyond E Company's perimeter of the previous night. F Company was deployed along the rear of this area. Things now began to occur in rapid succession.

When the Battalion Commander saw the so-called road block E Company had established he called for the acting Company Commander and gave him a brief but pointed lecture on road block tactics. The second occurrence was the shelling of our position by mortar fire and direct 75mm artillery fire. Again G Company was the one being hit and the cry of "Medic" could be heard frequently. The S-4 brought up his Filipino carrying party at this time. He had rations and ammunition for the Battalion and litters with which to evacuate casualties. After reporting to the Battalion Commander the S-4 joined me in the irrigation ditch. It was now that our S-3 who had been wounded on 15 January jumped across the ditch and rejoined his Battalion Commander. Just as I was breathing a sigh of relief at the prospect of going back to strictly S-2 duties I heard the Battalion Commander call my name.

Unbeknown to me the Battalion had been ordered to send a company to reinforce 1st Battalion. E Company had been designated for the assignment and had already moved to the south side of the Battalion between F and G Companies. Upon approaching the Battalion Commander I saw the acting E Company Commander (the Company Commander had been wounded a few days earlier) white and trembling and heard him say, "I can't, I can't do it. I'm not qualified to lead a company. I'll get all the men killed."

Then I got my orders. "Rainville," said the C.O., "take charge of E Company and report to C.O. of the 1st Battalion."

"Yes Sir," I answered. As I turned toward E Company I met a man who said, "I'm Sergeant Hendrix, Platoon Leader of the 1st Platoon. My platoon is ready to move out."

I told him to go ahead, thinking to myself that the sooner we got out of this shell fire the better.

#### E COMPANY OPERATION

Let us pause here to assess the combat efficiency of this company. When E Company landed in Lingayen Gulf just 16 days ago it was at full T/O&E

strength. It had been thoroughly trained and had had some combat experience in Maffin Bay and Sansapor, New Guinea. Morale and esprit de corps were high. By the 21st of January the company had lost its commander and two platoon leaders and 50% of its NCO's and riflemen. Now the Executive Officer was lost due to combat fatigue.

Locating the Company CP I made an attempt to assemble a Command Group. The situation was this: the one remaining lieutenant rifle platoon leader had just gone to the Battalion Aid Station to have a wound dressed. The 1st Sergeant had a small wound that he wanted to have dressed and the Communication Sergeant requested relief because of combat fatigue. Every face I looked into was lined with anxiety and uncertainty. I found the understudy for the Communications Sergeant, had him gather up his group and follow me. Sergeant Hendrix put in another appearance to ask my advice on a problem. Taking me to a fringe of bushes he pointed out the general location of the 1st Battalion across the river. Then he pointed out the route we had to take. It lay parallel to the bridge and across an open piece of ground which actually was the dry river bed. I judged it was over 400 yards to the base of the mountain--New York--on the far side of the river. This area was under observation of the enemy and the 1st Platoon had drawn mortar fire as soon as they showed themselves. The Sergeant's problem was how to cross this area - whether by squad rushes or by platoon rush. The time was about 1330 and the sun was beating down unmercifully. The men were not in the best physical condition and 400 yards was too far to run. In addition to this I recalled having been taught something about not stopping in artillery fire. The decision was to spread out and move across at a fast walk. In spite of the mortar fire we passed through we had only one casualty - Sergeant Hendrix. He was seriously wounded. Upon reaching the far bank we climbed the steep hill and contacted 1st Battalion.

The 1st Battalion had lost its Commanding Officer and was down to about 35% combat efficiency. There were enemy dead and pieces of bloody American clothing and equipment strewn everywhere. I told the Weapons Platoon Leader to disperse the company and let me know how many men we had. Meanwhile, I reported to the 1st Battalion Executive Officer who was now in command and had his CP in the deep ravine on the west side of the highway. He told me his south flank on the east side of the highway was open and that his S-3 would show me where to put my company. At this time my Weapons Platoon Leader reported that there were 75 men in the company and that the crew-served weapons totaled 2 60mm mortars and 2 light machine guns.

After making a hasty reconnaissance of the ridge to be occupied I gathered the NCO's in the draw to give them the situation. I took this opportunity to give them a pep talk and impress upon them the necessity for bolstering the morale of their men. At this time I discovered that Lt. Egbert, leader of the Third Platoon, had returned from the Aid Station and that Technical Sergeant Tipton was the senior rifle platoon NCO present. We formed two rifle platoons with Egbert and Tipton as the leaders and began to prepare our position on the south ridge. The pep talk had the desired effect for the men were much steadier by now. Evidently the former Executive Officer had never been sure of himself and this had been a decidedly bad influence on the entire company.

By 1500 hours the rest of the 2d Battalion began moving into the 1st Battalion area. I reported to the 2d Battalion Commander telling him what had transpired since I left him three hours before. At 1600 I was summoned to the 2d Battalion CP which had been installed on the slope of our ridge. There I met our new Regimental Commander who gave me a mission to be accomplished before dark. New York was the northernmost of three mountain peaks that rose to a height of 1000 feet. E Company was ordered to occupy the

middle peak. The Regimental Commander recommended that the assault be made with neither 60mm mortars nor wire communication because time was so short and the ascent so rugged. No medical attachments were made. A section of heavy machine guns manned by 14 H Company men brought our total manpower up to 89. The Regimental Commander further recommended that we back track to the river, make a wide sweep and come back up on a line directly west of the objective. My men were not pleased about leaving the positions they had just dug but they were eager to leave this area. I walked over to the highway and looking first toward the river and then up the highway it took less than ten seconds to decide on our route of advance. It would be a long, tiring march by way of the river while it couldn't be more than 500 or 600 yards by highway. It was nearly 1700 hours now and time was running out. We moved on the road well dispersed with a single file on each side. Topping the rise we saw American soldiers just entering the little village of Agat about 400 yards to our front. Moving rapidly now we made contact and found them to be L Company of our Regiment. After having been in I Corps reserve since S-Day the 3d Battalion had finally been committed with the mission of moving north from Sison to secure the highway between that point and the remainder of the 63d Infantry.

We were now at a point just west of our objective and could see a logical avenue of approach. A narrow black top road led off from the main highway toward the objective and then swung gradually north following a contour line. On the east side of the road was a long, low nose no more than 30 feet high. A well defined path led up from the road and straight across the middle of the nose. (See Map D) As I stood talking to the L Company Commander I noticed one of his patrols returning down the black top road and waited for their report. It was negative. We wasted no more time but started right up the side road with Sgt Tipton's

platoon in the lead. My Command Group was in the last squad of the leading platoon followed by the Weapons Platoon leader with his platoon plus the section of heavy machine guns. Lt. Egbert and his platoon were bringing up the rear. At this point an artillery captain reported to me with a four man radio crew and informed me he was to be my Forward Observer from our own 53d Field Artillery Battalion. This was the first time that we had our own artillery support since we left the beachhead area. Sgt Tipton's scouts had left the road and were moving cautiously along the path toward the crest of the nose. For a width of perhaps 50 yards there were no trees or underbrush but to the left were scattered trees. (See Map D) The path angled over and entered the edge of these trees before crossing the crest of the nose. Still following the path the scouts and the leading squad had passed over the crest and were moving down the forward slope when things began to happen. A Jap seemed to jump out of the ground along the open portion of the crest and began running down the slope to the east. A burst from the automatic rifle brought him down but this was the signal for determined resistance to begin. The open portion of the nose came alive with enemy positions and mortar shells began falling on the west slope and on the black top road. Sgt Tipton moved all of his platoon into the edge of the woods building up a firing line from the crest down the east slope. His men were exchanging small arms fire and hand grenades with the enemy. The farthest Jap position was less than 50 yards from our firing line.

When this action had started I was near the crest but still in the open. Looking around I made a quick estimate of the situation and moved about half way back down the slope before calling for Lt. Egbert. By the time he came up I had noted that there was a narrow ravine cutting the nose at a point to my right. In addition I had pinpointed two Jap positions right on the crest of the nose. I was no more than 20 yards from

these positions and their occupants could very easily have shot me had they raised up in their holes. Instead they were blindly tossing one grenade after another out of their holes in all directions. When Egbert arrived in a few minutes I gave him the situation, pointing out in particular the two positions I had spotted. He was instructed to make an envelopment on the right flank, making use of the cleft or ravine. (See Map D) He went back down the side road to his platoon and began to execute the plan without delay.

Meanwhile, where were my mortars? I had been advised against taking them. We had no support from the Battalion 81mm mortars either. The artillery F.O. group, however, had put their radio in action on the side road directly behind me and were trying to get a fire mission through. Captain Roten, the Forward Observer, was in the 2d Platoon and wanted to place a curtain of fire to our front to seal off any possible counter-attack. Much credit must be given to this F.O. group for their actions on 26 January 1945.

The enemy knee mortar shells were raining down all this time and were falling for the most part along the side road and in a large shade tree on the bank. Unfortunately this was the spot where my weapons platoon had halted and where the artillery radio was set up. Casualties began occurring in great numbers. Sgt Tipton's platoon was also suffering casualties. All of the artillery men were hit, three of them fatally. My acting Communications Sergeant helped the one remaining man move the artillery radio on the path where it cut through the bank and afforded some cover. Despite the fact that this man was bleeding heavily from a leg wound he applied a tourniquet and stayed with his radio set. The Forward Observer was using the 2d Platoon SCR 536 to communicate with his radio operator who was using my SCR 536.

By 1900 the positions on the nose had been cleaned out and Sgt Tipton's platoon had driven to the foot of the east slope where they overran more positions, capturing two 90mm mortars and four knee mortars. The sun had gone down and darkness was setting in rapidly. Mortar fire was still falling on our position but the intensity had decreased considerably. I found time now to report my situation to the Battalion Commander and ask for further orders. He ordered E Company to move back into Agat and consolidate a perimeter defense in coordination with L Company. This was good news to a new and confused company commander. The Company lost no time in withdrawing across the highway and beginning to dig in. The Forward Observer withdrew only far enough to allow himself a degree of safety while he registered defensive fires for the night. When he was satisfied he entered the perimeter - alone. His operator had died at his post.

While digging was in progress a casualty report and head count were taken. E Company had three known dead while all four artillerymen were believed dead. The number of wounded was indeterminate due to the fact that E Company men had had to evacuate their own casualties all the way back to the Battalion Aid Station. Litters had to be improvised from ponchos and shelter halves and since the carry was so far it was certain a number of men had not been able to return before dark. The head count revealed a total of 51 officers and men. This figure included the artillery Forward Observer and the 14 men from H Company.

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In the foregoing pages an attempt has been made to convey to the reader primarily the impressions of an individual and secondarily the operations of a unit. This individual was not in a position at the time to know the why or wherefor of the mission, objective, adjacent organizations or supporting units. With this fact in mind let us proceed to

analyze and criticize the actions of the author and the operation as we see it.

1. The Battalion. The intermediate objective designated for the 2d Battalion was ideal in that it was well within range of the supporting weapons, was an easily identified terrain feature and could be seen from the Line of Departure.

Despite the few minor difficulties encountered the Battalion's approach march was generally speaking well conducted and orderly. Likewise the battalion attack ran smoothly and according to schedule.

The surprise achieved by the omission of preparatory fires allowed the Battalion to occupy the intermediate objective before being noticed by the enemy holding the dominating terrain of the final objective. In addition it is now apparent that the Battalion approached the rear of the enemy position thus achieving complete surprise.

2. E Company. The road block assignment was the first mission given to the then acting company commander. The reasons for his failure to establish an adequate block and for his emotional breakdown on the following day are unknown to the author. The result of a few days of this sort of leadership was a badly demoralized and disorganized company. It is very interesting to note the uplift in morale that followed the change in leaders. By the time the author was put in command of E Company he had desired such an assignment for many months. He was so engrossed with his new job and so busy from the outset that he obviously had no room for fear or worry. Consequently his calm and self-assured manner had the desirable effect on the members of his command.

The mission given to E Company by the Regimental Commander was rather obscure. Knowledge gathered since this operation reveals that the 1st Battalion was suffering heavy casualties from enemy mortars, believed to be near the base of the center mountain. The reader will recall that

E Company was given no information of the enemy. The mission was simply to "seize and occupy that mountain". It is hard to say what difference, if any, it would have made had a more specific mission been given. However, it is felt that at least the commander of a unit should be given all enemy information available. The more information he has the better can the unit commander employ his troops and supporting weapons. The thorough training and esprit de corps of E Company enabled it to accomplish the real mission.

It was a mistake to leave all of the company mortars behind particularly when there was no other mortar support. Some additional medical support should have been furnished a company on a separate mission.

3. Personal criticisms. In examining the author's actions throughout this operation several glaring errors are to be found:

a. He failed to make a complete reconnaissance of the trail to be used for the Battalion's approach march.

b. He failed to remove beforehand an obstruction in that trail - the unexploded artillery shell.

c. He should have personally led the Battalion down the hill and across the river. The approach march was a success in spite of and not because of the part he played.

d. He committed the error of moving the entire company out of the village of Agat and leading them blindly into contact with the enemy. Thus the bulk of the company came under enemy fire simultaneously. A more extended formation would have avoided this situation and might possibly have prevented some casualties.

#### LESSONS

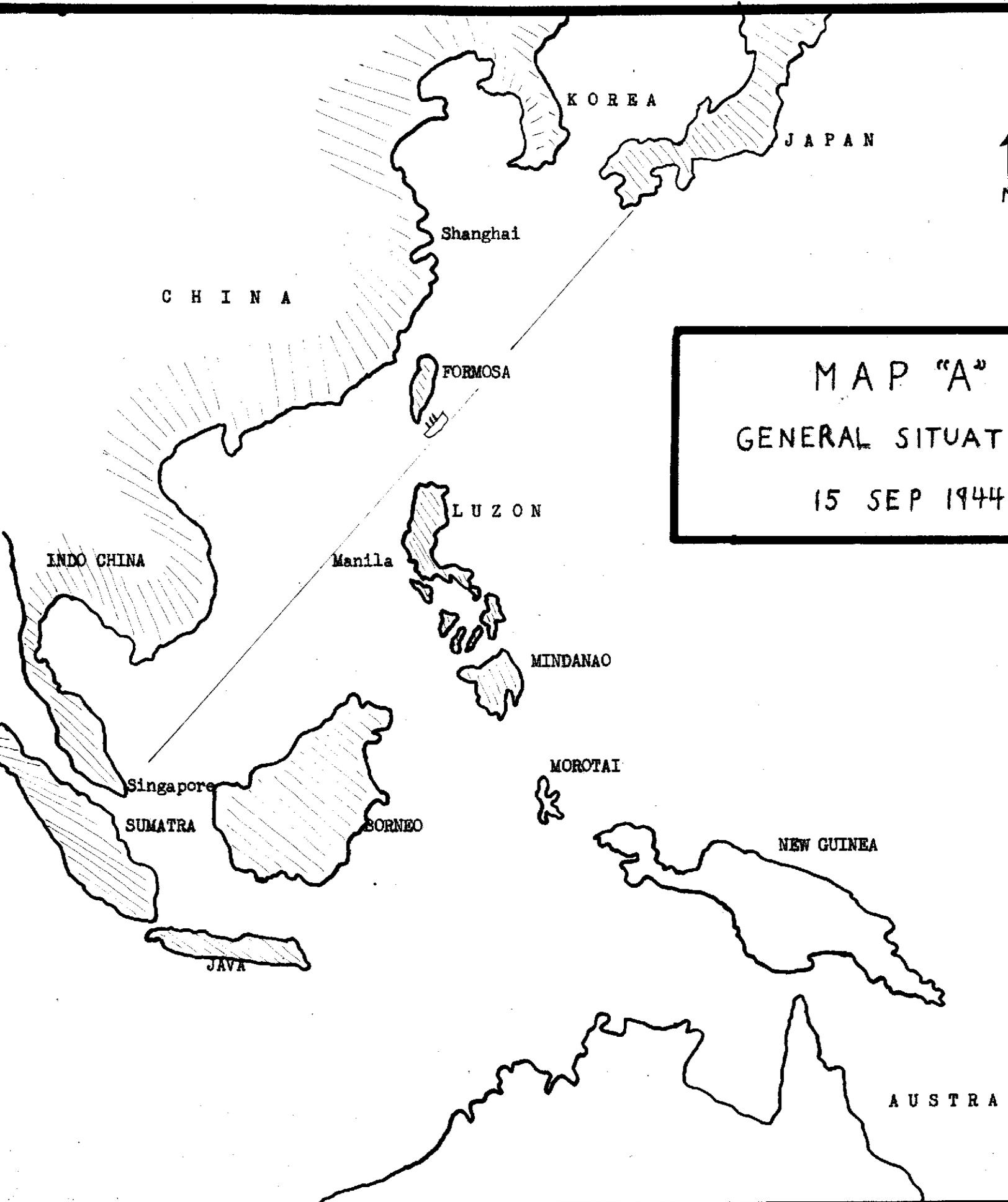
Some of the lessons learned in this period of action were:

1. Surprise obtains maximum results with minimum loss.
2. An incomplete reconnaissance is little better than none at all.

3. A rifle company should never attempt a mission of any type and particularly a separate mission without at least one of its organic mortars in support.

4. A unit sent on a separate mission must be given adequate medical support.

5. The formation from the Line of Departure to the point where the unit comes under enemy fire must be as dispersed as observation will permit.



K O R E A

J A P A N

S h a n g h a i

C H I N A

F O R M O S A

L U Z O N

M a n i l a

M I N D A N A O

I N D O C H I N A

S i n g a p o r e

M O R O T A I

S U M A T R A

B O R N E O

N E W G U I N E A

J A V A

A U S T R A

M A P " A "
GENERAL SITUAT
15 SEP 1944

# MAP "B"

INVASION PLAN  
LINGAYEN GULF LUZON

9 JAN 1945

