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OPERATIONS OF THE "ROCK FORCE"
(503D RCT REINFORCED) IN THE RECAPTURE
OF CORREGIDOR ISLAND, 16 FEBRUARY - 8 MARCH 1945
(LUZON CAMPAIGN)

(Personal Experience of an Assistant Regimental Operations Officer)

*Patrick
19 Jan*

Type of operation described: AIRBORNE AND
AMPHIBIOUS ASSAULT OF A FORTIFIED ISLAND

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ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operation of the "Rock Force" (503d RCT reinforced) in the recapture of CORREGIDOR ISLAND 16 February - 8 March 1945, during the LUZON CAMPAIGN.

Before continuing it is necessary to cover a few of the major developments that led up to this operation.

On 20 October 1944 American troops of the Sixth US Army under General Krueger landed on the east coast of LEYTE ISLAND in the PHILIPPINES. (See Map A) (1)

During the closing days of the LEYTE Campaign, American forces again struck the Japs. This time in a sweep "around end" General MacArthur sent two RCT's ashore unopposed in southern MINDORO. (See Map A) (2) The purpose of this landing was air-bases for the LUZON Operation which was about to start.

1945 was days old when American I Corps and XIV Corps of the Sixth Army waded ashore at LINGAYEN GULF. (See Map A) (3) The mission of the Sixth Army was to push up the central planes, destroy the Japanese troops and liberate MANILA.

On 29 January, troops of the XI Corps landed on the western coast of LUZON near SUBIC BAY. (See Map A) (4) SUBIC BAY had been a big UNITED STATES Naval base prior to the war with Japan.

- (1) A-1, p. 71
- (2) A-1, p. 75
- (3) A-1, p. 75
- (4) A-1, p. 75

XI Corps troops drove straight across BATAAN to seal off the peninsula.

Airborne troops were used on 31 January to land amphibiously in the BATANGAS area and to join up with the parachute elements who jumped at TAGAYTAY RIDGE on 3 February. (See Map A) (5)

Allied forces were now closing in on MANILA from the north, west, and the southwest. (See Map A) It was only a matter of time until MANILA would fall to the Sixth Army.

THE GENERAL SITUATION

While troops were closing in on MANILA, plans were made to open MANILA BAY, so that our forces could use the excellent harbor facilities of the city as a base for the destruction of the remainder of the enemy on LUZON, and as a stepping stone for further expansion in the PACIFIC.

The entrance to MANILA BAY, which is about twelve miles wide, is guarded by a string of four islands. These are: CORREGIDOR, CABALLO, FRAILE and CARABAO. (See Map B) CORREGIDOR which is four miles long and less than one and a quarter miles wide at its widest point is the key to this defense. A ship entering either the NORTH or SOUTH Channel must pass under the mouth of the large calibre Coast Defense guns located on the island. In addition to these defenses, the channels were all guarded with controlled mines that had their nerve center on CORREGIDOR. (6) Thus, the reader can readily see that CORREGIDOR, the symbol of United States humiliation and defeat since its fall in May 1942, must again fly the American flag before MANILA could be used as a port.

(5) A-1, p. 70
(6) A-5, p. 11

Since CORREGIDOR lies two and one-half miles off the southern tip of BATAAN, its capture should logically fall to the XI Corps who was engaged at the time in sealing of BATAAN peninsula.

The detail plan for the opening of MANILA BAY is embodied in Sixth Army Field Order No. 48 issued on 7 February 1945. In short, it stated that Sixth Army supported by the Navy and the Airforce would seize the MARIVELES BAY, CORREGIDOR Area by using shore-to-shore and airborne operations would open MANILA BAY and secure BATAAN peninsula. D-Day was announced as 12 February but was later changed to 15 February. (See Map B) (7) XI Corps was given this task.

Intelligence estimates of the Sixth Army indicated that of the 235,000 enemy troops on LUZON (8) 12,410 were on CORREGIDOR and BATAAN. Of these 3300 were combat troops, the remainder were service elements; Naval personnel and the remnants of other organizations who had drifted down to BATAAN and CORREGIDOR. (9) The combat efficiency of these troops was high. They fought fanatically from caves, bunkers, and well prepared foxholes, as a last resort reverted to their old familiar tactics of the "BANZAI" charge or committed HARI-CARI. (10)

In the PHILIPPINES the months of January, February, and March are the dry season, while June, July and August are the wet months. February is the ideal time for military operations. During this month, a Commander may expect light brief showers with a monthly average of only 48". In the early mornings a light mist will be present, but it will burn off by 0300. (11)

(7) A-6, p. 49

(8) A-6, p. 11

(9) A-3, Annex No. 1

(10) Personal knowledge

(11) A-3 Appendix B to Annex No. 1

The prevailing winds at this season are from the North and North-east at about 15-20 miles per hour.

The logistical support of the Sixth Army was excellent. With the fall of OLONGAPOC Naval Base, the XI Corps had a good harbor for supply and evacuation in its own area. (See Map B) (12)

DISPOSITION AND PLAN OF THE XI CORPS

The XI Corps plan for the MARIVELES-CORREGIDOR operation was simple and complete. The 1st RCT (reinforced) would drive down the east coast of BATAAN. Elements of the 38th Division would embark at SUBIC BAY, proceed down the west coast of BATAAN to its southern tip where they would make an amphibious landing at MARIVELES. (See Map B) (13) MARIVELES will be remembered as the starting point for the infamous "death march" in 1942. The object of the MARIVELES landing was to pocket the Japs on BATAAN and to establish a base for the Corregidor show. (14) The 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry, 24th Division accompanied the amphibious force and was to stage at MARIVELES for the shore-to-shore phase of the assault on CORREGIDOR. On D + 1 at 0830I the 503d RCT would make an airborne assault on TOPSIDE CORREGIDOR. At 1030I the 3rd Battalion 34th reinforced would land amphibiously on SAN JOSE beach at the foot of MALINTA HILL, CORREGIDOR. The XI Corps announced that several briefings would be held, where all plans would be coordinated, and final details laid on. These meetings would include all three of the participating services. The date and time would be announced. These briefings spawned the spirit that caused the CORREGIDOR operation to be called "Operation Coordination." (15)

(12) A-1, p. 75

(13) A-6, p. 51

(14) A-4, p. 144

(15) A-7, p. 16

THE SITUATION OF THE 503D RCT

Since this monograph covers an unusual operation, it is necessary to vary slightly from the normal in telling this story.

The 462nd Parachute Field Artillery and the 161st Airborne Engineer Company had joined the 503 Parachute Regiment at the close of the NOEMFOUR operation in NEW GUINEA. The newly created RCT had gone into LEYTE as Sixth Army Reserve and had staged for the MINDORO landings which were completed on 15 December, 1944. (See Map A) (16) The RCT met little opposition at MINDORO, so the unit as a whole had not been battle tested.

At the close of the MINDORO operation, during which time the RCT had seen some of the hottest air battles of the Pacific, and had been on the receiving end of a 3 hour shelling by the Japanese Navy, (17) the 503d built a tent camp and began to conduct small unit training. Replacements were received from the Parachute School at Fort Benning. Equipment and supplies were brought up to RCT standards. A few key officers were shifted to equalize the number of experienced personnel in each Battalion. Several outstanding NCO's were tendered direct commissions and transferred to another Battalion within the Regiment. Officers and Non-commissioned officers schools were conducted. These schools covered the RCT SOP, Jumpmaster training, leadership; artillery forward observer methods, capabilities and limitations of the Engineer equipment.

The small unit training included the Engineer assault team, ways and means of tying in the 50 calibre machine guns in the

(16) Personal knowledge

(17) Personal knowledge

Field Artillery Battalion, also the use of the 75 Pack Howitzer as a direct fire weapon. Every weapon in the RCT was fired by all personnel in the command including cooks and clerks. All replacements were given additional jump training to bring them up to date on the SOP for jumping with equipment. (18) In all of the above training, initiative on the part of the platoon and squad leaders was emphasized.

It was at this time that the unit was blessed with the assignment of an American Japanese interpreter. The Intelligence Section already contained three Filipinos, who had been qualified as parachutist while on NOEMFOOR. (19)

The Red Cross activities were going full blast, movies were shown every night. The "Hang Fire" court-martials were brought up to date. The RCT continued with the normal tough physical training program, which is a never ending cycle in a parachute organization.

The morale was high, the esprit-de-corps was great. It was at this stage on the 3rd of February 1945, that the 503d was alerted for the probable mission of seizing NICHOLS FIELD on LUZON. (20) Preparations following the SOP were immediately started, these included checking and replacing combat equipment, and detail planning peculiar to a parachute operation. However, before too much could be done, the mission was cancelled, U.S. Troops were advancing too fast on NICHOLS FIELD. (21)

- (18) Personal knowledge
- (19) Personal knowledge
- (20) A-10, Par. No. 4
- (21) A-10, Par. No. 4

On 6 February, the RCT was again alerted this time for the mission of seizing and securing CORREGIDOR ISLAND. (See Map B)

(22) Again the big SOP wheel began to grind, a tremor of excitement ran through the RCT staff as hasty estimates of the situation was made. Eyebrows were lifted as it did not take a detail reconnaissance to tell that this would be tough as a "K" ration to digest.

CORREGIDOR is a formidable looking obstacle as it lies at the entrance of MANILA BAY with its tail running eastward into the inlet. (See Map B) The head, or the west end of the island, is known as TOPSIDE. (See Map C) It is a 500 foot plateau that drops off abruptly into cliffs and ravines which run down to the edge of the sea. This part of the island is less than 2,500 yards in diameter. The narrow center part of the island is known as BOTTOMSIDE. It is about 500 yards wide and rises to only 25 feet. On the east and standing guard over Bottomside is steep rugged MALINTA HILL which rises to over 400 feet. This hill, which is over 800 yards long and 300 yards wide, covers a huge tunnel which runs through its base from west to east. From Malinta Hill to the east is a narrow strip of land about 3,000 yards long, the highest point on this narrowing sketch is 150 feet. This strip also drops off into cliffs and small ravines down to the water's edge. There are indeed few level stretches on the island, and the whole mass is covered with a heavy low tropical growth. (23)

(22) A-10, Par. No. 4

(23) A-3, Annex No. 1

The terrain on CORREGIDOR lends its self to the development of an almost impregnable fortress. It was to this point that the United States had worked for almost 40 years prior to the fall of the island to the Japs. American Engineers had built well. Great tunnels had been dug in solid rock, powder magazines had been constructed of reinforced concrete, underground storage plants and elaborate observation posts had been built. Large and powerful multi-gun batteries had been installed on the island. (24) To these installations had been added an elaborate system of mutually supporting pillboxes with weapons of all types and calibres sited to cover all approaches to the few beaches on the island. While the bombardments of 1942 and the bombardment by the American Airforce in January 1945 had destroyed some of the larger installations, it only added to the camouflage of the caves, bunkers, and rifle pits which are the main obstacles of the Infantryman.

Photo interpretation revealed that the Japs had done little to improve or develop the island. The whole place was a mass of splintered trees, tangled undergrowth, wrecked buildings, bomb craters, pieces of steel, tin roofing, large overturned guns, and big hunks of concrete. However, a few new tunnels, pillboxes and weapons pits did show up. The photo also showed that the landing field on the eastern end of the island had not been used. (25)

Captured documents established the presence of the 3d Battalion, 22nd F.A. Regiment (less 1 Battery). These troops were equipped with 150 mm guns and totaled about 500 men. The estimated enemy strength on CORREGIDOR was 850 and was considered a minimum figure.

(26) Communications were in to Fort Hughes, Drum, and to Manila. Land mines were reported from MORRISON POINT to ROCK POINT.

(24) A-3, p. 5

(25) A-3, Annex No. 1

(26) A-3, Annex No. 1

(See Map C) Guerrilla reports indicated that CORREGIDOR was well stocked with food and ammunition.

COORDINATION

Before going into the plan of the "Rock Force" Commander, the coordination prior to the operation must be briefly considered, as it plays a big part in helping the Force Commander arrive at his final plan.

The same order that alerted the RCT also directed the Commander, Colonel George M. Jones, to report to Sixth Army Headquarters. Here he was to attend one of the many briefings that was held prior to and after the operation was underway. From the beginning, these conferences were unique. There was a sentimental aspect about retaking the "ROCK." Everyone wanted to get in on the show and do what he could. This spirit ran down the chain of command from General MacArthur to the riflemen, sailors, and tail gunners on the aircraft.

XI Corps arranged the details necessary for naval gunfire support and coordinated the employment of the 503d RCT with the Eighth Army, who would mount the RCT, and the 5th Airforce who would lift the unit. (27) Conferences were held at Sixth Army on 6 February, at XI Corps on 7 February, and on the flagships of the Commander Amphibious Group Nine on the 8th of February. Those attending the last conference included Commanding General XI Corps, Commanding General 54th Troop Carrier Wing, Commander Seventh Amphibious Force, Commander Cruisers Seventh Fleet, Commander Amphibious Group Nine, G-3 XI Corps, A-3 Fifth Airforce, Commanding Officer of the "Rock Force," (503d RCT Commander) Airborne Liaison

(27) A-9, p. 57

Officer, Sixth Army, and various staff officers assigned to the
move commands. Further coordination of naval and Far East Air-
force was conducted between airforce and air liaison officers of
the Navy at MINDORO. Detail plans for the air lift were worked
out with the 503d Commanding Officer and Commanding Officer 317th
Troop Carrier Group. The 317th was an old friend of the 503d,
having consumed many kegs of Australian beer together at PORT
MORESBY in late 1943. The Commanding Officer, 317th was a personal
friend of the RCT Commander. (28)

Major General William F. Marquat was sent by General
MacArthur to wish the unit good luck and to help out in the briefing.
General Marquat was staff adviser on Coast Artillery matter and
had been stationed on CORREGIDOR during 1942, leaving the Island
with General MacArthur. He was able to point out on the terrain
model of the island (furnished by Sixth Army) exact locations of
installations and give a vivid picture of what they looked like
on the inside. (29)

There were present in the RCT, four enlisted men and two
officers who had been stationed on CORREGIDOR before the war. These
men were interrogated and additional information brought to
light. (30)

Photographs taken as late as 7 February were available for
study and there were enough maps and aerial photos for every officer
and ken NCO in the "Rock Force." (31)

- (28) Personal knowledge
- (29) Personal knowledge
- (30) Personal knowledge
- (31) Personal knowledge

An airborne assault usually follows a set pattern, the reconnaissance, the softening up or bombing phase, the drop and the build up. In this operation, we find the bombing and reconnaissance going on at the same time. To minimize the number of reconnaissance aircraft over the target, all commanders and their staff down to and including companies were allowed to go on a regular bombing mission over the Island, or on another mission that would take them near enough to the Island to see it. Pilots from the Troop Carrier units who were to fly the paratroopers also went along on these bombing missions, some flying as co-pilot. (32)

The 317th Group flew into MINDORO and set up a temporary base. The Staff of the 317th almost lived with the Headquarters of the 503d RCT. Daily conferences were held. TC pilots who had not flown paratroopers were given additional training. They were also brought up to date regarding the SOP for Jumpmaster pilot coordination during the jump. (33)

Staff Officers from the RCT contacted naval liaison officers on MINDORO, and were oriented as to the capabilities and procedure for naval gunfire during the coming operation. Arrangements were made to have PT boats stand by during the drop to pick up troops should they miss the Island on the jump. ~~Arrangements during the~~ air lift was also laid on. (34)

Our communications personnel contacted the 592 JASCO Detachment, and the 6th Air Support Party to tie up communications. It was through these people that some of the best support ever given an Infantryman in combat, was coordinated. (35)

The author has purposely mentioned the coordination in this monograph to show the great number of personal contacts. These

- (32) Personal knowledge
- (33) Personal knowledge
- (34) Personal knowledge
- (35) Personal knowledge

contacts were made so that each Commander would know exactly what was expected of him. He would also know enough about the other Service or Unit so that plans could be changed easily.

THE PLAN OF THE ROCK FORCE COMMANDER (See map D)

Before going into the plan of the Commander, consideration must be given to the tools that were available for the job. The following list is the order of battle of the "Rock Force." (35)

Ground Troops

2962

(1) 503d RCT

a. 503d Parachute Regiment

b. 402d Parachute Field Artillery Battalion

c. 161 Airborne Engineer Company

(2) 3d Battalion, 34th Infantry Reinforced by: 1598

a. 3d Platoon AT Company 34th Infantry

b. 3d Platoon Cannon Company 34th Infantry

(3) 2d Battalion, 151 Infantry (relieved 3d Bn, 34th Inf)

(4) Eighteenth Portable Surgical Hospital (reinforced)

(5) 174 Ordnance Service Detachment (Bomb Disposal)

(6) Detachment 592 EB & SR

(7) Detachment 98th Signal Battalion

(8) Detachment 1st Platoon, 603d Tank Company

(9) Detachment 592 JASCO

(10) Detachment 6th ASP

Naval Forces

(1) Detachment Task Force 78.3

Air Forces

(1) Elements of Fifth Airforce

(2) 317th TC Group

Total for "Rock Force" D + 1

4560

(36) A-10

The 503d Parachute Regiment was organized into three Battalions, a Regimental Headquarters Company, and a Service Company. Each Battalion contained a Headquarters Company in which was found the communications platoon, the 81 mortar platoon of 4 mortars, and a light machine gun platoon of 12 guns. The T/O strength of the parachute rifle company was eight officers and 119 E.M. There were 3 rifle platoons of 3 squads each, and a weapons platoon with 3 60mm mortar squads in each company. There were three ~~latter~~ companies in each battalion. This organization was not according to the T/O then in effect, but the Regiment had found this organization more effective and had been using it for over fifteen months. Regimental Headquarters ~~Company had a Demolition platoon and a Communications platoon.~~ Service Company contained the Parachute Maintenance Platoon.

The plan for retaking CORREGIDOR falls into four categories. The first is: The preparation or softening up process. From 23 January until 15 February, 3,128 tons of bombs fell on the "Rock." While this was not a lot of bombs compared to the other theatres, when one considers the small area into which they were dropped, it was quite a saturation. No better way to illustrate the effectiveness of these bombings than to consider the anti-aircraft fire received by our planes on the first run. Crews reported that ack ack was intense. On the day of the parachute drop, antiaircraft fire was light. (37) Another reason for these bombings was to keep the enemy off TOPSIDE during the daylight hours. Just before the jump, plans were made to bomb and strafe the island, a bombing and strafing line was planned (See Map D) so that strafing could go on BOTTOMSIDE during the drop.

Plans were made to have A-20s on stand-by with smoke, should it be needed. (38)

The next step in the plan is the air movement. There are several factors that must be carefully considered, these are the aircrafts available, the number of troops that are to be transported, the movement distance from the marshaling area to the drop zone. Naturally the meteorological conditions at the time must be considered. For the CORREGIDOR operation there were available 56 C-47 aircraft. The estimated flight time from MINDORO to the target was 1 hour and 15 minutes. The strength of the RCT was approximately 3000 men with their equipment. Thus we see the flight plan developing as 3 separate lifts since it is impractical to split battalion combat teams. (39)

The following are excerpts from FO No 9, Hq 503d RCT, dated 13 February, 1945 and explain the tactical plan of the Commander. (40)

(1) The 3d Battalion, 503d RCT with Battery A and one (1) platoon of Battery D, 462d F.A. Battalion and 3d Platoon 161 Airborne Engineer Company attached will:

Drop on Fields "A" and "B" (See Map D) at 0830I and secure drop area.

(2) Upon being relieved by the 2d Battalion, advance and seize the high ground approximately 600 yards NE of the Hospital. (See Map D)

(3) Support the amphibious landing of the 3d Battalion, 34th Infantry by fire.

(4) Effect contact with 3d Battalion, 34th.

(38) A-9, p. 60
(39) A-10
(40) A-10

The 2d Battalion with Battery B and one (1) platoon Battery D, 462d F.A. Battalion attached will:

(1) Drop on Fields "A" and "B" at 1215I and relieve the 3d Battalion from defense of the perimeter around the drop area.

(2) Exploit the terrain north and west of the Drop Zone.

The 1st Battalion with Battery C and one (1) platoon Battery D 462d F.A. Battalion attached will:

(1) Drop on Fields "A" and "B" on D + 2 at 0830I as RCT Reserve.

(2) Be prepared to exploit terrain south of the Drop Zones.

Regimental Headquarters Company, Service Company, Battalion Headquarters, 462d F.A., and the 161 Engineer Company (-) would drop with the 1st and 2d lift and perform normal duties of administration, communications, supply, fire direction, demolition and medical service. The Regimental Executive officer would come in with the 3d lift on D + 2. Executive officers of companies in the 2d and 3d lifts would jump with the 1st lift, so that they would be familiar with the situation and area of operation of their company when it arrived. (41)

The 3d Battalion, 34th Infantry would make an overwater movement from MARIVELESE, and land on San Jose Beach (See Map D) on D + 1 at 1030I, seize and hold Malinta Hill, and make contact with the 503d on Topside. The 3d came under command of ROCK Force upon coming ashore. (42)

(41) Personal knowledge

(42) A-8, p. 5

In the plan for the aerial assault, one of the basic principles of airborne operations must be omitted. If one looks at Fields "A" and "B", he can readily see that these are the only drop zones on TOPSIDE, and that they are only 1,050 feet and 975 feet respectively. From this it can be seen that a variation from the normal must be used to get the troops on the two small fields. The plan for this was to have the aircraft split up into two columns as they approached the island. They were to fly in trail across "A" and "B" fields with 25 second intervals between planes. It was estimated that eight men could jump on each pass. To get the men on the field, the Jumpmaster must consider the prevailing wind which in this case was a headwind blowing 15-20 M.P.H. The altitude was 550 feet. With these factors in view, the Jumpmaster would have to delay his jump command over the "go" point so that the headwind wouldn't blow his men off the field. Plans were made for adjustment of altitudes and jumping signals from the control plane circling over the formation. (43)

In considering the aerial assault, we must keep in mind that the Japanese airforce was almost non-existent at this time and we had air cover throughout the flight.

The logistical support for the operation was as follows: Four days prior to D-Day, an advance element of three officers and fifty men would be sent to San Marcelino with equipment that would arrive by water. This detail would land at Mariveles with elements of the 38th Division. When the beach on CORREGIDOR was clear, they would land and set up a rock force supply dump on San Jose beach. All supplies arriving by water would be

(45) Personal Knowledge

placed in this dump. Plans were also made for aerial supply from the rear base at MINDORO. The supplies would be placed in a dump on topside. (44)

The overall plan of the rock force Commander emerges in four phases, and it is in these four phases that the narration will be covered. They are: Phase I, The Aerial Assault on Topside. Phase II, The Amphibious Assault. Phase III, Destruction of the Enemy on Topside. Phase IV, Destruction of the Enemy East of MALINTA HILL. (45) (See Map E)

FINAL PREPARATION AND THE AIRLIFT (See Map A) (46)

On D-Day the 151st R.C.T. and the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry went ashore at MARIVALES as planned. On MINDORO, last minute preparations were being made. Newsmen and photographers arrived, more briefings of pilots and jump masters were held. Aircraft were parked, last minute maintenance performed, and numbers were chalked on the planes. Parachutes and equipment bundles were issued. All bundles were rolled and checked for the last time. Weapons were cleaned and oiled. Ammunition was issued, each man carrying two W-P grenades and two fragmentation grenades. Down in the artillery, howitzers were cleaned and packed into parachutes. Additional information was received from XI Corps, Headquarters. Services for the faiths were available, with more than the usual numbers attending. Letters were written and carefully censored. Tents were struck, rolled and turned into S-4. Flight Manifests were made and turned into R.C.T. headquarters. The parking plan and flight plan was issued to the battalions and separate companies, according to SOP. An extra canteen to each man was issued along

- (44) Personal knowledge
- (45) A-10
- (46) Personal knowledge

with four meals of K-ration. Each platoon leader took his platoon to the briefing room, and using the terrain model gave them the big picture, the company mission and the mission of the platoon. During the evening, captured Japanese film of the surrender of CORREGIDOR in 1942 was shown. The film showed the Japs maltreating American PWs and stomping the American flag into the ground. After waking up in the middle of the night as per usual and eating a breakfast of soggy pan cakes and syrup, the first lift entrucked at 0600 and moved to ELMORE and HILL Air strips. By 0700 hours all troops were embarked. The aircraft took off, made up their formation and winged their way toward CORREGIDOR. (47)

While the transports were closing on CORREGIDOR, B-24s and A-20s were bombing and strafing the island. These aircraft picked up light ack-ack, but immediately smothered it with machine gun fire. One flight of A-20s were on stand by with smoke, should the rock force commander call for it. The Navy also closed in for a few broadsides at the rock.

Veteran troops of the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry was also busy, loading on their landing craft and making ready for their landing at 1030I. (48)

NARRATION

PHASE I, THE AERIAL ASSAULT

At 0825, 16th February, troops at MARIVELES picked up tiny specks in the sky and all who were not engaged with the Nips sat down to watch one of the most spectacular shows of the Pacific War.

(47) Personal knowledge

(48) Personal knowledge

At 0830I, the control ship of the formation was over CORREGIDOR. A-20s were making their last strafing run over topside. A curtain of dust hung over the whole island. The transports approached the island in two columns and at exactly 0833I the green light went on in the lead ship over "B" Field. (See Map E) The first paratrooper, Lieutenant Colonel John Erickson, Battalion Commander of the 3rd Battalion, counted off four seconds and stepped into thin air. The rest of his stick followed at split second intervals. Phase I had begun. The chutes had hardly opened before the troops were preparing for one of the roughest, most rugged landings, they would ever make. The same action was taking place on "A" Field. By 0950 the drop was completed and the planes were MINDORO bound for another load. (49)

The sky was clear, visibility unlimited, while down on the rock amid the underbrush, splintered trees, wrecked buildings, bomb craters, Japanese machine gun nests, caves and at the waters edge, troops of the RCT were beginning to assemble. It is during this stage of the assault that airborne troops are most vulnerable. Several troopers were blown over the cliffs and landed among the Japanese defenders. It was one of these groups, while fighting their way to Topside, ^{where} met and killed the Japanese Commander of the 1st and near BREAKWATER PALM. (See Map E) This was confirmed by a PW captured several days later. It was at this stage that prior training of service and administrative personnel, in close combat, came to the front. The rock force CP was established in the hammocks on the north side of the parade ground. (See Map E)

Communications, both radio and wire, were in to the 3rd Battalion,

(49) Personal knowledge

who had formed a perimeter defense around Topside, running generally along the 500 foot contour line. (See Map E) The Regimental Aid station was also set up in the barracks. Medical personnel from 3rd Battalion, Regimental Headquarters, and Artillery were pooled. All these units used the same facilities since they were so close together. Casualties began to pour in, mostly jump injuries. Regimental Headquarters and Service Company had to furnish extra men to help the Medics carry litters and recover medical bundles dropped from the planes. Even with this augmentation, there were not enough men to do the job right. Few medical records were kept during the first few days. It is better to help a wounded man, than to have a record of a dead one. Jump casualties were not as high as had been expected. It was estimated that 15% of the first lift were casualties. It was several days before an accurate figure was available. (50)

All during this time, the rock force CP was under small arms fire from both inside and outside of the perimeter. The Commander was then handed another problem, the wind had increased to about 25 miles per hour by 1015. The second lift due at 1230 might not be able to jump. At 1100 hours the American flag was run up on Topside and ~~and~~ ~~by~~ ~~the~~ ~~use~~ ~~of~~ ~~machine~~ ~~gun~~ ~~and~~ ~~sniper~~ ~~fire~~. At 1240, the Second Battalion began to drop, the wind had died down to about ten miles per hour. They had plenty of other trouble though, the Japs were now awake and as with the first lift, they jumped into light anti-aircraft fire which damaged some planes and wounded a few personnel in the planes. Experience in the first lift had showed that it was better to delay six seconds after the go point.

(50) A-10 Medical Annex

As a result, only a few jumpers drifted over the cliffs and into the sea. Most of the men landed well up on Topside. The jumpers in the air came in for more ground fire than the first lift, which had caught the Japs completely by surprise. Our Small Arms fire silenced some of the Jap guns, but it was difficult to fire since our troops were landing among the Japs. Several men of the second lift landed shooting and some were killed before they got out of parachute harness. (51)

When the Second Battalion reported into the CT Net, they relieved the 3rd Battalion on the perimeter, which left them free to start the consolidation of Topside. For the remainder of the day, the 3rd Battalion fought as companies and platoons. Their patrols spread out like the fingers on your hands and with the help of Naval gunfire began to probe the Japanese positions.

H Company under Captain Joe Conway pushed a platoon out on the knob about 700 yards southeast of BATTERY POINT. (See Map E) Here they found some very fine defensive positions. Why the Japs gave up these positions without a fight is known only to the oriental mind. G Company moved into the old American AA emplacements, 500 yards west of the south dock. (See Map E) It was from

~~the above positions, that the amphibious assault was supported~~
by fire. Fifty caliber machine guns were set up in the buildings on the east side of "B" field to help with this task. (See Map E) While G and H Companies were supporting the landing of the 34th, 3rd Battalion Headquarters, Regimental Headquarters, and Service Companies were mopping up inside perimeter on Topside. G Company in their positions could place fire on the road from Bottomside to Topside. (52)

(51) Personal knowledge

(52) A-8, p. 7

By 1100 hours part of the field artillery battery was assembled and ready to fire for the force. The only problems they had were securing their ammunition bundles and firing their howitzers under sniper fire. During the day, their guns were used as a direct fire weapon, to silence an enemy position, or fire HE into a cave or building. (53)

During the first lift, one of our planes carrying a demolition section from Regimental Headquarters Company developed engine trouble, and had to drop out of formation while out at sea. A message from the Command Ship of the second lift informed the Rock Commander that the plane had made land over LUZON and that the troops had bailed out near SAN MARCELINO. It was later learned, that the troops were picked up, flown back to MINDORO, and came in with the 1st Battalion.

By 1500 hours, the Rock Force Commander felt the situation was well in hand. He requested permission for the third drop to be cancelled. He recommended that XI Corps arrange for the planes to fly over CORREGIDOR, drop their bundles on "A" Field, land at SAN MARCELINO, (See Map B) and come in by landing craft on SAN JOSE beach. This plan would give Colonel Jones one Battalion Combat Team intact without the casualties they would sustain on a parachute drop. The XI Corps Commander concurred with recommendation, and made the necessary arrangements for the change in plans.

At 1700 hours the 3rd Battalion, less G and H Companies, pulled back into the perimeter on Topside. Machine guns were put into position, positions checked, artillery and mortars registered,

and coordination had been made for destroyers to fire star shells during the night for illumination. At this stage, he who controlled Topside, controlled CORREGIDOR.

Rock Force Headquarters began to take on the look of all headquarters. The place had been swept but a few desks and chairs were found, one being carved teak wood, quite out of place but substantial. Maps were up on boards and reports were coming in. The place was still under sporadic small arms fire. Documents taken from seven dead Japs near the barracks gave the first identification of the enemy on the Island. They were members of a naval unit, all were well fed and equipped. (54)

During the early part of the evening, a staff meeting was held to lay plans for the coming of daylight. It seems as though daylight was always a scarce substance during this operation. The plans were simple. Each Battalion was given a sector and told to kill all of the Japs in it. From this meeting came the first fairly accurate casualty report for the drop and for the subsequent action. The reported figure of jump injuries was 161, but more were expected to come in for treatment when things quieted down a bit. This proved to be true, the final figures on jump casualties were as follows 3 KIA on jump due to malfunctions of the parachute, 2 KIA on striking obstacles on landing, KIA before they were out of their harness 8, and injuries running from light to severe - 203. Nine men were blown over the cliffs into the water and were picked up by PT boats. A total of 11%. (55) At this briefing and all others called by the Rock Force Commander, he followed

(54) A-10 Intelligence Annex

(55) A-10 Medical Report; A-8, p. 16

a set pattern. He merely gave each Battalion a mission; he then asked the Battalion Commander what help he wanted to do the job. It then became the Task Force Commander's job to coordinate the firepower and logistical support necessary to complete the job. This method proved very effective. At this meeting, a status of weapons was rendered. The F.A. had only 5 mortars in action, out of 9 dropped, 2 were damaged on landing, and 2 more were under such heavy enemy fire that they were unable to retrieve them the first day. (56) Several 81 mortars and light machine guns were damaged on hitting rocks or other obstacles on landing.

Airstrikes were teed up for the 17th, and plans were made to cover all of Topside with fire while the 1st Battalion (3rd lift) was dropping their bundles on "A" field.

During the night, the enemy was seen moving about apparently trying to get organized. They probed our perimeters all night, and a few rounds of mortar fire fell on our position. Communication wires were cut and men were hit. The Medics worked as best they could, but movement at night is restricted.

PHASE II, THE AMPHIBIOUS ASSAULT

At 1030I, the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry hit SAN JOSE beach (See Map E) after a terrific bombardment by rocket ships, cruisers, and destroyers, they crossed the beach under enemy fire and lost several vehicles to enemy mines along the waters edge. One of these vehicles contained the radio equipment with which Rock Force was to communicate with XI Corps. When this information was sent to the Task Force Commander, it was not news. The 3rd Battalion, 503d supporting the landing by fire had seen the incident and reported it to the Commander. The Battalion Commander

(56) A-8. p. 19

of the 34th called for NaI gunfire which silenced some of the automatic fire his unit was getting while crossing the open beach. The 34th then scaled the 300 foot MALINTA HILL. By 1330 this fine Battalion was astride the hill and had the Island cut into two parts. Much heavy close-in fighting was to take place for them to stay on MALINTA. Part of their mission was accomplished.

~~The link-up with the 34th on the road to Topside was easier said than~~

done. Contact under fire was made with the 3rd Battalion 503, but it was too late on the 18th before the road to Topside was opened. (57)

~~During the night, the 34th dug in as best they~~ could. They, too, were having trouble with prowlers. During the night, they had to drive back an insane Bonzai charge. Some of the Japs were using sawed-off shotguns captured from the Americans in 1942. An uncermied number of the enemy was observed attempting to move along the road north of MALINTA HILL. (See Map E) Fire rained down on them with unobserved results. All in all, there were few men who slept on CORREGIDOR during the night 16 February, 1945. (58)

PHASE III, DESTRUCTION OF THE ENEMY ON TOPSIDE

Daylight of the 17th and the dead of both sides laying out in the open. When the sun came up they began to smell and collect flies. Our dead were picked up, but no one worried about the Japs. The wounded were moved to an aid station, K rations were eaten, and some of the last canteen of water was drunk. A silence settled over some sections of the Island, while all hell broke loose at others, as our patrols countered the enemy. During the

- (57) Personal knowledge
- (58) Personal knowledge

night, the Japs had moved back into the positions that they had been driven from the day before. It was now apparent that each position occupied would have to be destroyed, and every cave and pillbox sealed off. So on the 17th was set the pattern that systematically destroyed the Nip on CORREGIDOR. (59)

At 0830 the 3rd lift was over "A" field, dropping their equipment bundles. This flight also came in for ground fire from the enemy. The 1st Battalion landed at SAN MARCELINO, (See Map B) were trucked to SUBIC BAY (See Map B), and via destroyers to SAN JOSE Beach on CORREGIDOR. (See Map E) This landing was also contested by heavy automatic and sniper fire which pinned the Battalion on the beach until Naval gunfire silenced it. After crossing the beach and organizing the Battalion, it was decided that they go into a perimeter defense on ~~the beach~~ (See Map E) The time was 1630 and it was getting dark. (60)

During the morning, heavy fighting took place around the ice house, MORRISON POINT, and BREAKWATER POINT. (See Map F) Air-strikes supported the BREAKWATER POINT attack and hit the Japs for the 34th north of MALINTA HILL. The Navy supported the scrums around MORRISON POINT, ROCK POINT, and BREAKWATER POINT during the morning and afternoon. This support did not preclude the use of artillery, which supported the action at SEARCHLIGHT POINT. The results of the fighting on the 17th widened the perimeter slightly. (See Map F)

On the morning of the 18th, the 1st Battalion fought its way to topside. A hasty conference was called and new Battalion sectors of responsibility assigned. (See Map G) Each patrol, platoon, or

(59) Personal knowledge
(60) Personal knowledge

company had attached to it elements from the Engineer Company or from the Demolitions Platoon of Regimental Headquarters Company. The method of attack throughout the campaign ran generally as described below. The Infantry would assault a position, kill all of the Japs if they could. When the enemy would hold up in the numerous caves and bunkers, the Infantry would cover the entrances with fire while an Engineer or Demolition Team would either seal the cave with TNT or burn them out with their flamethrowers. It was during this period, that our people used a little trick which was effective and became popular throughout the rest of the fighting. The high wind on the Island caused a heavy draft in some of the caves which caused the flamethrowers to blow back into the face of the operator. To solve this problem they just gave the enemy position a squirt of napalm and gasoline unignited. A WP grenade was then thrown into the position which ignited the napalm. Out came the Japs, sometimes on fire, and was cut down by our weapons. On many occasions when the resistance was light, our Infantry would drive the Japs underground and move on. The Engineers following close behind would seal the position with explosives, and then push on behind the Infantry. By the 23 of February our troops had attacked and sealed 164 caves and bunkers on Topside. (61)

The assault on the larger fortifications such as Batteries GEARY, HEARN, SMITH, WHEELER, etc. (See Map C) proved to be more of a problem. These big gun positions were usually heavily defended. They were honeycombed with underground storage rooms, powder bents and passages. To capture one of these positions,

(61) A-8, p. 8

platoons or companies were employed. The attack on one of the larger positions would go something like the description below. The troops would cover the emplacement with fire. A 75 howitzer would be wheeled up and fire direct fire at the opening, or at the steel door if it was closed. Sometime the Infantrymen would be called on to help man the howitzer. The Demolitions people would already have a 5 gallon GI can filled with gasoline and napalm. To this can they would have taped six or eight WP grenades and two blocks of TNT on each side. The whole contraption was tied to one of the many ventilator shafts on top of the position. A 3 second fuse was set which would go off and drop the can into the position. Fifteen minutes later, another fuse would go off. This system proved helpful in capturing all of the large concrete emplacements. Battery Wheeler was captured three times before it finally stayed in our hands. (62)

The water problem was alleviated somewhat by the 1300 hour supply drop on the 17th. 1250 gallons were dropped and most of it was recovered. These supply planes flying in from MINDORO also brought rations, ammunition, and medical supplies. A number of the parachutes did not open and some of the precious supplies were splattered over the island. On the afternoon of the 18th, the road from Bottomside to Topside was open, but was still under scattered small arms fire. Some supplies from San Jose beach did arrive on Topside, and the wounded and dead were evacuated to San Jose beach. Transportation was now available for Topside. Up until the 18th, the only transportation on Topside was one of two jeeps which had made the dash from

(62) Personal knowledge

Bottomside to Topside on the afternoon of the 17th. One of these jeeps was badly damaged by enemy fire and was unserviceable. The Portable Surgical Hospital moved to Topside and began to function. All in all the operations of the 18th were highly successful. Our wounded who had been lying on concrete floors since the 16th were evacuated. The supply situation had improved, the enemy was rapidly being destroyed on Topside. Our casualties for the day were 33 KIA, 75 WIA. Among casualties being evacuated on the 18th, were the two chaplains of the combat team, both having been injured on the jump on the 16th.

On the 19th beginning at 0300 hours, the enemy launched his old familiar BANZAI. About four hundred Japs stormed our positions ~~from the vicinity of Dubois, Wheeler and Smith.~~ (See Map Y) Heavy hand to hand fighting took place, with the enemy enjoying local successes. This attack carried the Japs all the way to the 2nd Battalion CP. With the coming of daylight, the small groups which were successful in penetrating our perimeter, were eliminated. At 0830 the Nips exploded a large ammunition dump down near BREAKWATER POINT. This explosion caused casualties on both sides. After the blast, approximately twenty Japs formed a circle nearby, while our troops looked on, they committed mass hari-cari by holding grenades to their stomach. (63) During the day our troops continued to assault caves and bunkers in the BREAKWATER POINT area. Nine caves were attacked and sealed in the vicinity of the Ice house, and nine more around MORRISON POINT. (See Map G) Bombing and strafing runs were made against CAPE CORREGIDOR. The Navy was still making light at night with their star shells, and giving fire support on call during the day.

(65) Personal knowledge

The fighting today resulted in 493 Japs KIA, and three prisoners were taken. Regimental Headquarters notified that we would have to furnish graves registration personnel. This means pulling a man away from his T/O job at regiment. The Red Cross comfort station was working, serving hot coffee to all who came in. The Red Cross Field Director had jumped with the combat team and had set up on the first day in vicinity of the aid station. (64)

All during the 20th and 21st of February, the destruction of the enemy on Topside went on. On the evening of the 20th during the Staff meeting, it was learned that CAPE CORREGIDOR was free of the enemy, and that there were no Japs to oppose our forces from WHEELER POINT to SEARCHLIGHT POINT. (See MAP 2) Forty-eight caves and tunnels were sealed during the twenty four hour period.

The water situation on CORREGIDOR was solved, a twelve hundred and fifty gallon Navy cube was set up on San Jose beach for the storage of water. Two bull dozers and a road scraper were brought up from the beach to work on the MSR, and to begin the construction of a cub strip on "A" field. The Rock Force Commander requested that surrender leaflets be dropped on the island. XI Corps took care of this request by drawing up leaflets especially designed for the Japs on the Rock.

Finally, at 2130 on the evening of the 21st, the enemy blew MALINTA TUNNEL. Every soldier on the island had been sweating it out, especially the men of the 34th who knew they were literally sitting on a powder keg. The explosion rocked the whole island, and was felt as far away as Bataan and Manila. The blast caused

(64) Personal knowledge

landslides on Malinta Hill which buried some of the doughboys from the 34th. It was later learned from prisoners that the explosion caused a great number of casualties inside the tunnel. They stated the purpose of blowing the tunnel was to destroy the troops blocking the island, and to launch an attack which would take them to Topside. Their plans went haywire as the explosion was greater than they had expected. It not only killed a great number of their troops, but the ensuing landslide blocked the road along which they were to launch their attack. On 22nd and 23rd of February, mopping-up continued all over Topside. Our patrols were killing Japs in areas reported clear of the enemy. The first three phases of the Corregidor show were drawing to a close. The softening up of the eastern end of the island began on the 22nd of February when P-47s dropped 4,000 gallons of Napalm, 38 500-pound demolition bombs, and fired 31 thousand rounds of .50 caliber ammunition.

The supply situation was excellent. The first cub planes landed on the Island and the Engineers continued to work on the roads. Mail was dropped by supply planes from MINDORO along with 2700 pair of coveralls. Water ration was now four quarts per man per day. The troops were eating IO in I rations, a welcome change from "K".

On the afternoon of the 23rd of February, the Combat Team Commander and the Battalion Commanders of the 1st and 3rd Battalions went to the OP on Malinta Hill. Here they studied the eastern end of the Island, and made plans for Phase IV. The plan for the attack down the narrow three thousand yard stretch of the east end of the island called for the 1st Battalion

in the assault, followed closely by the 3rd. The 3rd Battalion was to mop-up small islands of resistance which would leave the 1st Battalion free to exploit any or all breaks in the fighting. The pattern would follow the already proven system. Before attacking an objective, either an Air, Naval or Artillery concentration would be placed upon it. The Battalion would then jump off, and assault the objective as soon as the friendly fire was lifted. In this way they often caught the Nip still ~~and before he~~ could re-man his positions. The plan for Topside during Phase IV was to have the 2nd Battalion remain and to continue the mopping up of isolated pockets of enemy. (65)

Late in the afternoon of the 23rd of February, the 1st and 3rd Battalions moved to assembly areas on Bottomside in preparation for the destruction of the enemy on the tail of the Island.

PHASE IV, DESTRUCTION OF THE ENEMY EAST OF MALINTA HILL

On the 24th of February after an intensive aerial bombardment and an artillery concentration, the 1st Battalion passed through the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry on MALINTA HILL. They immediately met stiff resistance in the form of mortar, sniper and machine gun fire. The 3rd Battalion, 303d was following close on the tail of the 1st Battalion, mopping up and sealing caves. By late afternoon, the 1st Battalion had reached a line running from INFANTRY POINT to CAMP POINT. (See Map H) The troops stopped and prepared positions for the night under mortar and machine gun fire. During the early part of the night, at a Battalion conference in a bomb crater, a mortar shell killed or wounded almost every key officer in the 1st Battalion. Among the

(65) Personal knowledge

dead was the very fine Battalion Commander, Major Robert H. Woods. The Battalion executive officer who was among those not wounded assumed command. (66)

Around 0300 hours, the enemy assembled a force of about six hundred just east of INFANTRY POINT, and prepared to launch a counter-attack. Three hundred of the six hundred were killed when massed artillery fire fell on his assembly area. The enemy still launched his counter-attack but was unsuccessful. At 0400 the enemy withdrew toward CAVALRY POINT carrying his wounded with him. Here the enemy began to show even greater desperation, as many attempted to evacuate the Island by swimming. Some of these were taken prisoner; some were destroyed by strafing planes.

On 25th of February Rock Force lost the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry who departed from the Island for another operation. They were relieved by the 2nd Battalion, 151st Infantry of the 38th Division. The 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry had killed over 800 Japs, holding Malinta Hill for ten days.

The 1st Battalion supported by two tanks continued to advance down the tail of the Island. Since this was the first occasion that troops of the 503rd had employed the tank Infantry team, they experienced considerable difficulty in tank Infantry coordination. Advances on the 25th were preceded by air strikes and artillery concentrations. Destroyers of the Navy were sitting in the bay on a "Let us fire basis". By the end of the day, our troops were at a line running from CAVALRY POINT to MONKEY POINT. (See Map H)

(66) A-10

During the day, a C-47 dusted the Island with DDT to kill some of the millions of flies which swarmed over everything. The surrender leaflets dropped earlier were taking effect as ten PWs were captured, and many of the 553 killed during the day, had copies of leaflets on their body. (67)

On the morning of the 26th, the enemy again resorted to mass hari-cari. As the 1st Battalion was waiting for an artillery concentration to lift, the Japs blew an underground ammunition dump at MONKEY POINT. (See Map II) It was a terrific explosion, killing some 150 of his own troops and killing or wounding 195 from the 1st and 3rd Battalions. So great was the explosion, that stones fell on the destroyer 2000 yards out in the bay. The 3rd Battalion immediately pushed through the 1st Battalion and got set for the expected counter-attack which didn't materialize. Every aid man and doctor on the Island was needed to care for the injured and dying in the 1st Battalion. More transportation was called up as the ambulance which was supporting the attack was crushed by a huge boulder. In 1/2 hour after the explosion, medical corpsmen and doctors from the destroyers were ashore and helping with the injured. (68)

The 3rd Battalion pushed on down the island under scattered resistance and reached the extreme east end at 1600 hours on 27 February. (69) CORRIGIDOR had now returned to its own. It was estimated that 300-500 Japs were left on the island. The destruction of the remainder of these pest was left to the 3rd Battalion on the east and the 2nd Battalion on Topside. The 1st Battalion was reorganizing on Topside.

(67) Personal knowledge
(68) Personal knowledge
(69) Personal knowledge

American troops were now swarming all over the Island. For the first day since 27 January bombs did not fall on the Island. Naval gunfire was used along the waterline caves as mopping up continued. More caves and tunnels were sealed as the last remaining Japs were ferreted out of their mole-like existence.

On 2nd March, the 3rd anniversary of the activation of the 503d as the first Parachute Regiment in the U.S. Army, General MacArthur returned to CORREGIDOR. He recommended the Rock Force for the Presidential Unit Citation, which was a fitting birthday present for the 503d.

The ROT remained on CORREGIDOR until 8 March, during which time they continued to mop up and get equipment in shape.

In summary: the Rock Force had recaptured this heavily fortified Island from approximately 6,000 Japs. Our forces had suffered 210 KIA and 789 WIA. The enemy had suffered 4773 counted dead, 976 believed dead or escaped by swimming, and 24 PWs. (70)

Our Engineers and Demolition teams sealed over 400 caves, tunnels, and fortifications, expending some 17 tons of explosives. (71)

During the landing and the fighting that followed, the Navy fired 2,000 rounds of 4-inch, 2,300 rounds of 5-inch, and 1500 rounds of 6-inch ammunition at targets on the Island. They also fired 1,200 rockets to support the amphibious landing. These figures do not count the extensive fire from PT boats patrolling the fortress. (72)

- (70) A-10
- (71) Personal knowledge
- (72) A-9, p. 60

The air arm also rendered great services. Between the landing on 16 February, and the close of the campaign, 407 sorties were flown. During this time 466 500-pound demolition bombs were dropped. 55,500 gallons of napalm was dropped and 320,000 rounds of caliber .50 expended. (73)

From Phase I through Phase III artillery and mortars fired over 6,000 rounds of all type shells, and expended 320,000 rounds of .50 caliber ammunition. (74)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. PRIOR TRAINING

The small unit training of both the combat and service elements of the RCT while on MINDORO paid off. This was particularly so during the first few days after the drop on Topside. Here you will remember all elements of the command were engaged with the enemy. Another place where prior training paid off was when Infantrymen were shifted to the howitzers and functioned as a member of the gun team.

2. COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

The close and efficient support received by the Infantrymen in this show, was accomplished by the many personal contacts, and the cooperative spirit of all the services. Probably the sentiment attached to the recapture of CORREGIDOR helped. At any rate it was there. When an Infantry Commander has destroyers standing by begging for a fire mission and heavily armed aircraft circling overhead wanting to get into the fight, certainly one could say that was cooperation. When a commander, through his

(73) A-9, p. 61

(74) A-8, p. 11

staff and diligent attention to the little points, places these fires in the most advantageous spot, certainly we can say that is coordination.

3. FLEXIBILITY

When the Rock Force commander requested that his 1st Battalion be brought in by water rather than by parachute, he was aware of the big job it would be to get the Battalion on CORREGIDOR after the change in plans. The G-4 of the XI Corps, aware of the SOP of the 503d, placed that system into effect in his movement of the Battalion from San Marcelino airfield to SUBIC BAY. The Navy aware of the change in plans had LCVPs waiting for the Battalion at the Beach. The Battalion was loaded on APDs and landed at CORREGIDOR only a few hours after they had flown over the Island and dropped their bundles.

(See Map B for distance)

4. JUMP CONTROL

Control during the jump by the control ship enabled a greater number of troops to hit the small jump field. It is felt this was one of the most important aspects of the air drop.

5. EMPLOYMENT OF AIRBORNE TROOPS

When one first looks at CORREGIDOR, he invariably wonders where airborne troops could be employed here. He finds no areas as large as those prescribed in field manuals for the dropping of airborne troops. If the Commander will take the calculated risk and drop well trained troops with the maximum degree of control, this type of operation can be successful. In this type of operation, the commander must exploit the principle of surprise to the maximum degree.

6. SHORTAGE OF MEDICAL PERSONNEL

Medical personnel of the combat team worked day and night for the first few days of the operation. They were augmented by as many men as could be spared from Regimental Headquarters and Service Company. Maximum efficiency was gained by pooling all medical personnel. The Medical Section still could not keep up with their work. Additional personnel are a must for future operations where casualties will run high and means of evacuation are doubtful.

7. SUPPORTING FIRES

Our troops, throughout the campaign, followed close upon the heels of rolling barrages, or assaulted a position immediately ~~after lifting of Naval gunfire. When airstrikes were employed,~~ the same system was used, most of the time the napalm would still be burning, and the enemy would be caught just emerging from his caves and tunnels. Often he would still be groggy and away from his gun positions.

8. POSITION OF THE SUPPORT AND THE RESERVE DURING THE ATTACK

During the attack down the narrow eastern end of the Island, the 3rd Battalion followed close behind the 1st Battalion. All small pockets of resistance were ~~by passed by the 1st Battalion~~ and were taken care of by the 3rd Battalion and its engineers. When the 1st Battalion was so severely jolted by the MONKEY POINT explosion, the 3rd Battalion Commander was so close he could see the disorganization in the 1st Battalion sector. He was able to immediately push through and prepare for counter-attack. Had the enemy launched a counter-attack after the explosion, it is doubtful if it would have succeeded.

9. INFANTRY TANK TEAM TRAINING

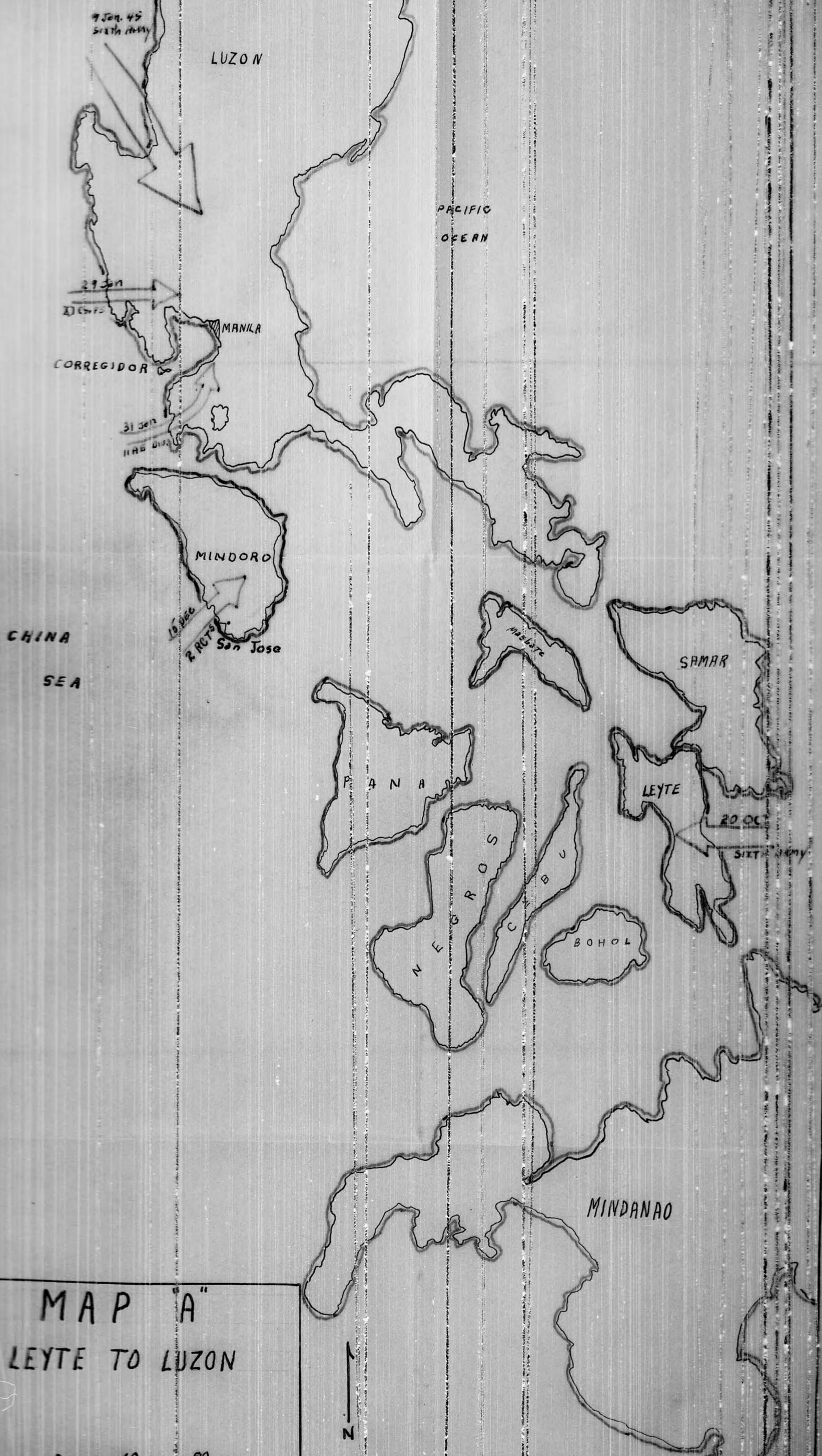
During the push down the eastern end of the Island by the 1st and 3rd Battalions, the two tanks on the Island were used extensively. During the first days fighting, maximum efficiency was not gained in the employment of these weapons. This was due to lack of prior training in this type of warfare. After the first days experiences, the Tank Infantry team began to click.

10. SPECIALISTS

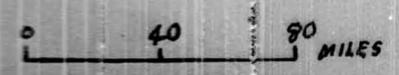
The Japanese troops on Corregidor were disposed to repel an amphibious attack from the sea. They know first hand what this type of assault had cost them in 1942. Theirs was a good defense. To illustrate the effectiveness of this defense, let us look at Phase II of the operation. The 34th landed under the supporting fire of one Battalion from Topside on commanding ground. A tremendous rocket and naval gunfire preparation preceded their assault. Their casualties were heavy in both men and equipment. On the following day, when the 1st Battalion attempted to land on the same beach, they were driven off. Destroyers had to come in close to silence these guns covering the beach. There were now on the Island to cover the landing of the 1st Battalion three battalion combat teams. The 1st Battalion was pinned down on the beach 32 hours after the first airborne troops had landed on the Island. From these facts, it can be assumed, that the casualties for storming San Jose beach without friendly troops on Topside, would have been far greater than the heavy injuries received during the two airborne drops.

LESSONS

1. All men in a parachute unit must be trained to fight, employing any weapon in the organization.
2. Close coordination and cooperation featuring ~~the~~ personal contact is necessary for a truly successful combined arms assault.
3. Knowledge of the supporting and supported unit lends flexibility to an operation.
4. Control, either in the air or on the ground, must be present during the dropping of parachute troops and equipment in a restricted area.
5. Airborne troops can be employed in seemingly impossible areas if the troops are well trained, the drop controlled, and the commander willing to take the calculated risk.
6. Medical detachment must have additional personnel assigned for future operations.
7. Attacking troops, should follow a rolling barrage or an airstrike as close as possible, to catch the enemy before he can reman his positions, and while he is still groggy.
8. The support ~~of~~ reserve should follow closely behind the Assault Unit, to mop up and to be in a position to exploit gains, or to be committed quickly when needed.
9. Parachute troops should have training with tanks to perfect Tank Infantry team work.
10. By employing special troops in the role they are trained and equipped to perform, the overall casualties for an operation will be less.

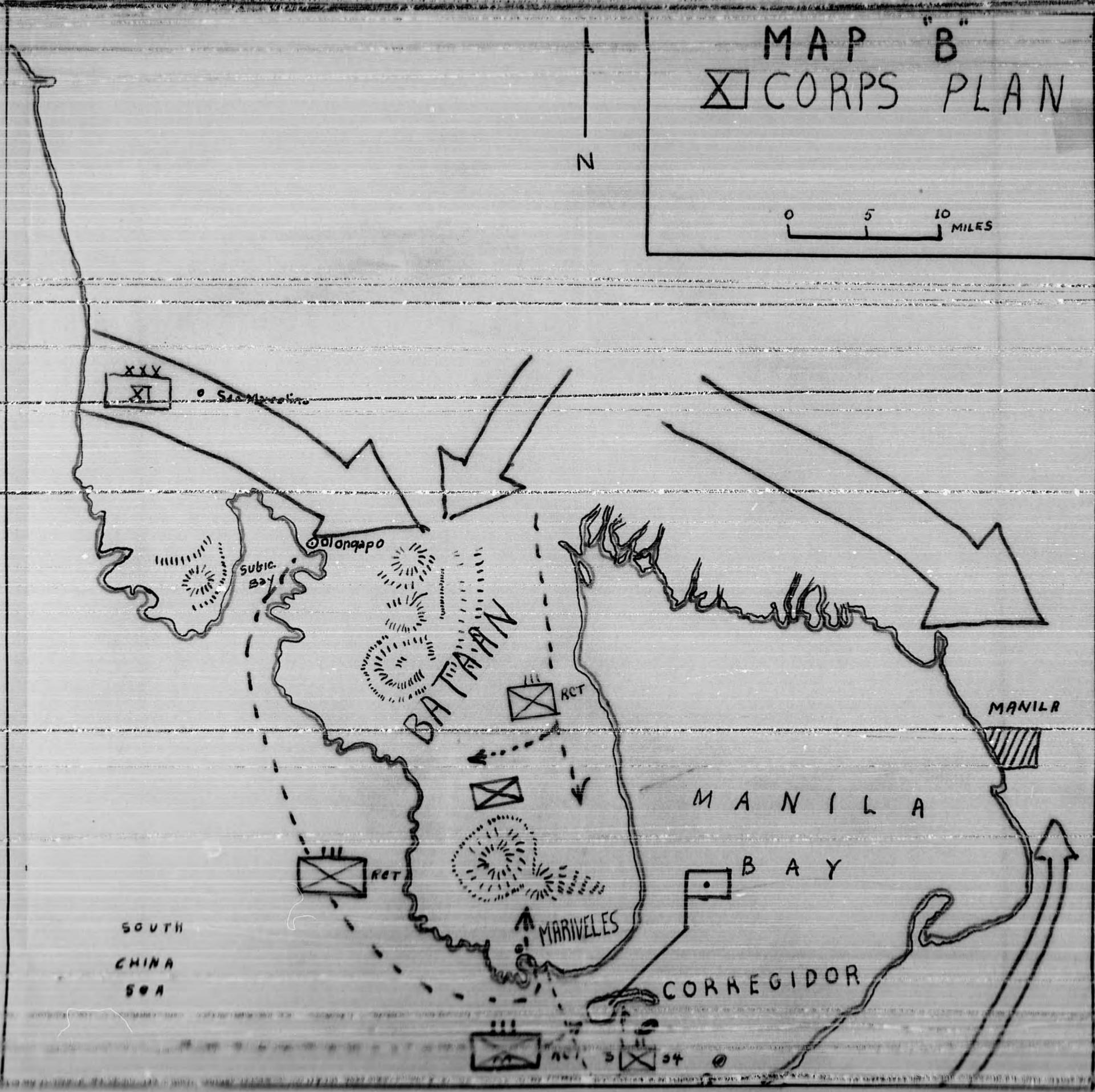
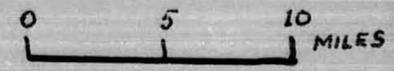


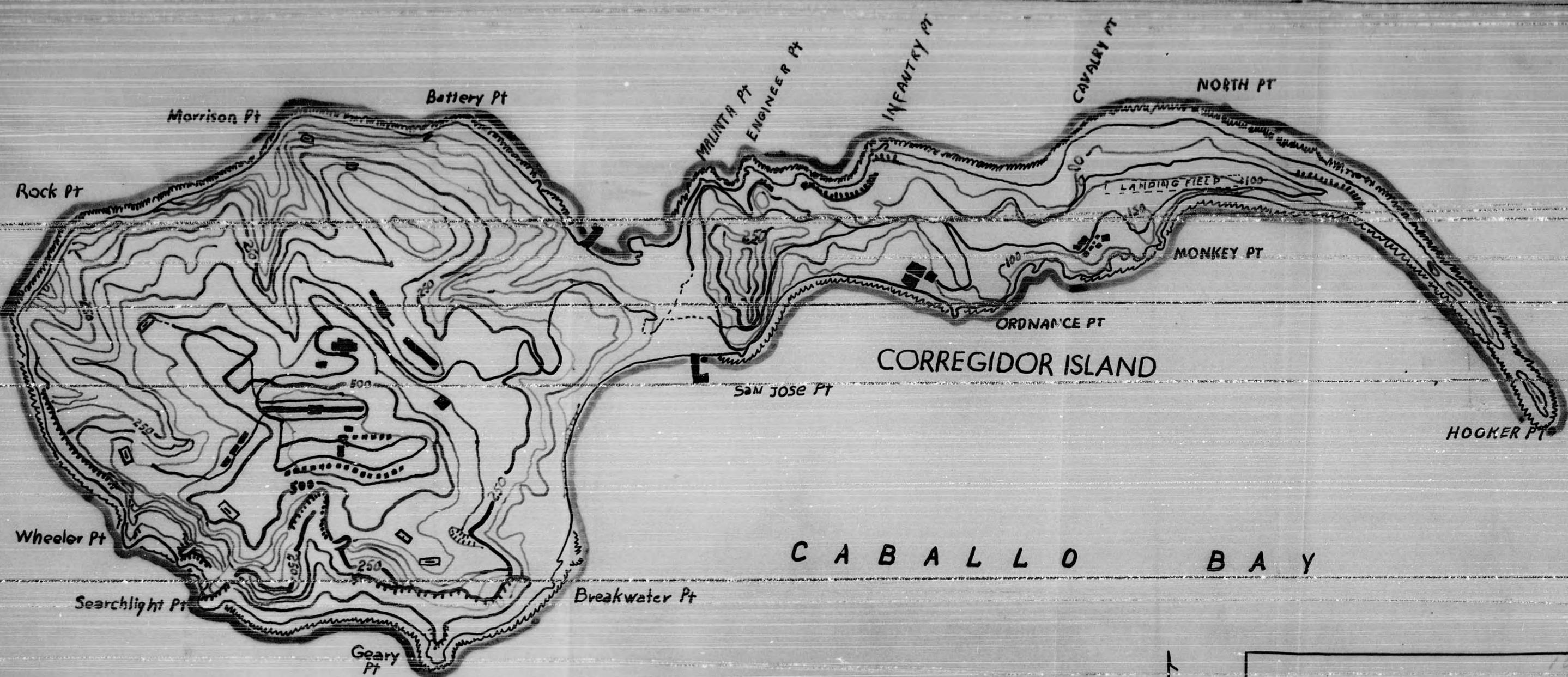
MAP "A"
LEYTE TO LUZON



MAP "B"
CORPS PLAN

"B"



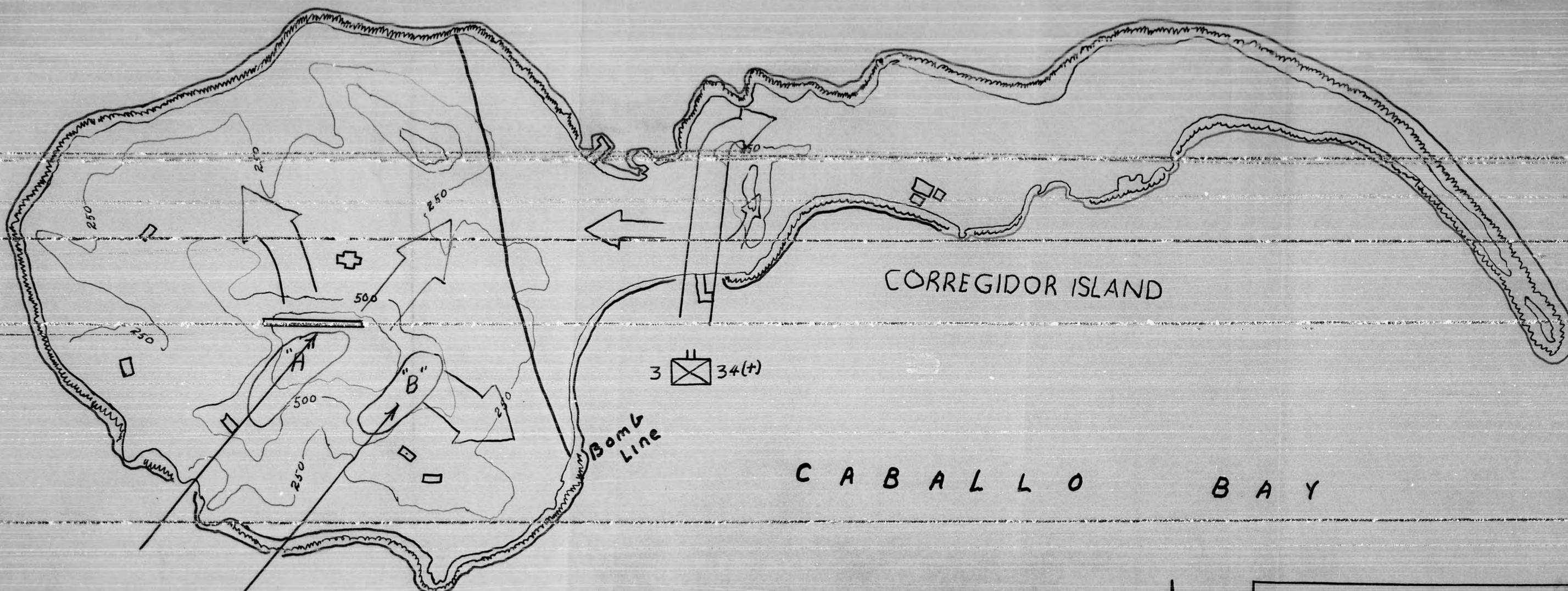


C A B A L L O B A Y



MAP "C"
TERRAIN

500 1000
yds



CORREGIDOR ISLAND

CABALLO BAY

Bomb Line

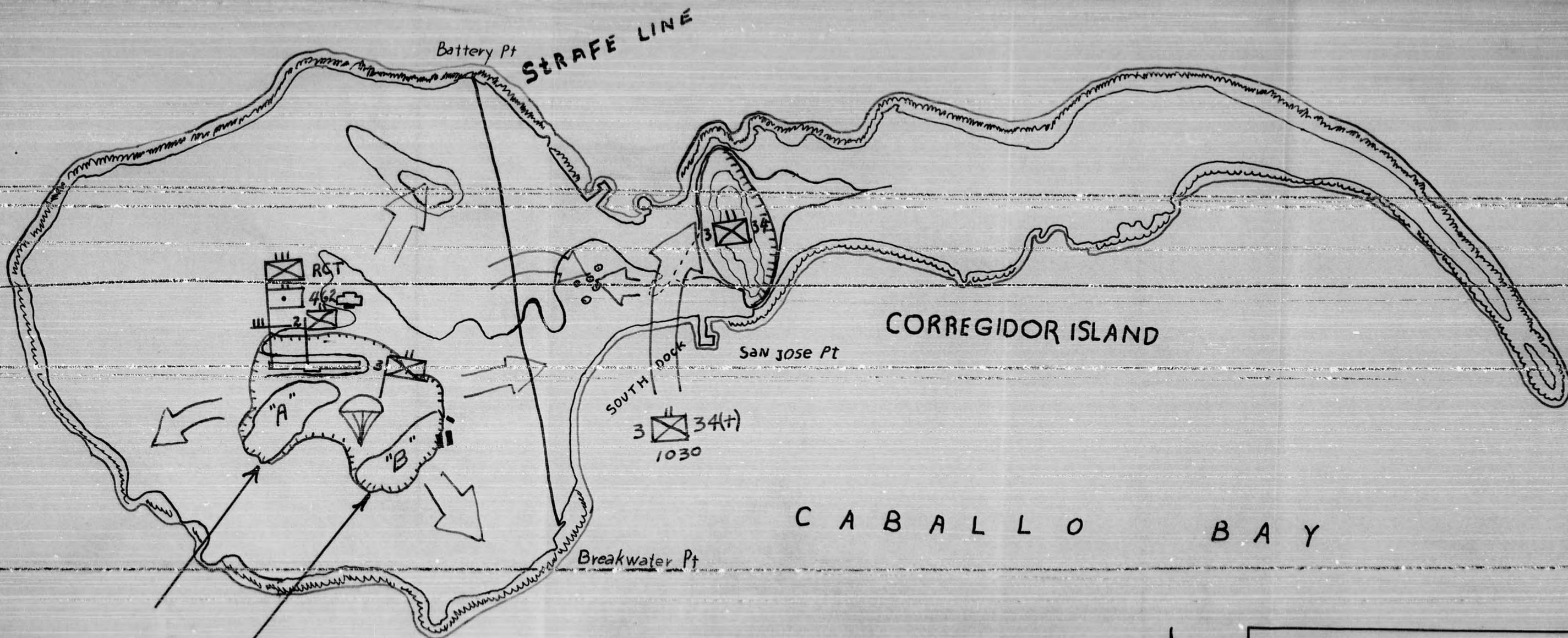
503 RCT

3 34(+)

N

MAP "D"
RCT PLAN

0 500 1000 yds




 503 RCT (-)
 0833
 1240

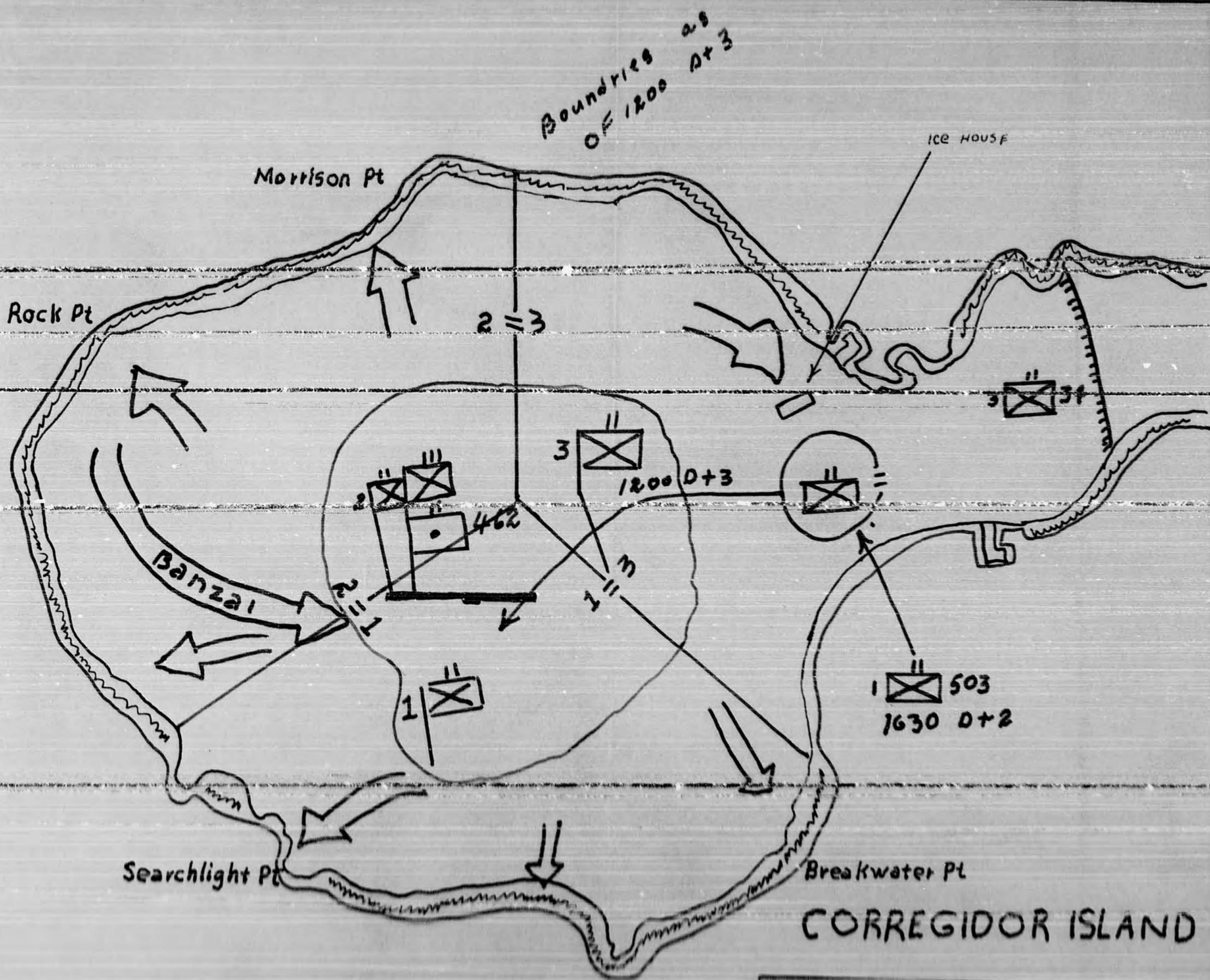

 34(+)
 1030



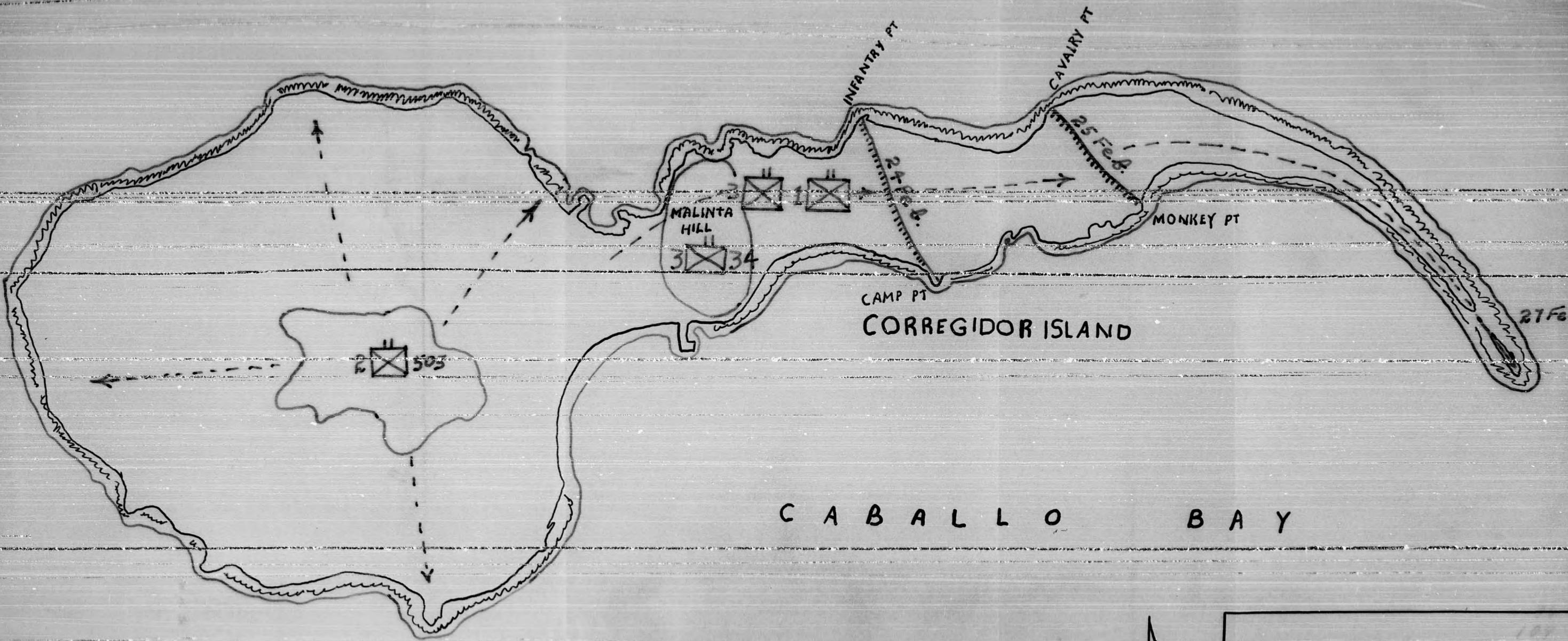
MAP "E"

D+I

0 500 1000
 yds



MAP "F"
D+243



C A B A L L O B A Y



MAP "H"
 PHASE 4

0 500 1000 yds.