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THE OPERATION OF THE 27TH MARINE COMBAT TEAM
(FIFTH MARINE DIVISION) ON IWO JIMA, VOLCANO
ISLANDS, 19 FEBRUARY - 23 MARCH 1945
(WESTERN PACIFIC CAMPAIGN)

(Personal experience of a Regimental Weapons Company Commander)

Type of operation described:
REGIMENT IN AN AMPHIBIOUS ATTACK OF A FORTIFIED ISLAND

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ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO I

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INTRODUCTION

In order to orient the reader so that he will fully understand why it was necessary to assault as heavily a defended island as Iwo Jima, it will be necessary to go back to the first land offensive of the American forces in the Pacific on 7 August 1942. From that time on, we were constantly on the offensive taking bases and building up supplies in this vast expanse of ocean until March 1944. By this time our former defense lines had reached the point where they became our "line of departure".

(1) (See Map "A")

From March 1944 to the end of the year this semicircle was reduced by the Naval strategy of "island hopping". This term was misconstrued many times in that people were lead to believe that it meant taking each island as we came to it in geographical sequence. Instead, it was a highly selective process in which some islands were taken and many by-passed. These by-passed islands were then either reduced or neutralized by the navy and airforce until they were of no use to the enemy and only a thorn in the side of the allies which could be taken care of later. (2)

By the end of 1944 the line held by American forces was a great bulge extending thousands of miles into the heart of the Greater Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Many bases were taken during the year, some of the more important being, Saipan, Tinian, and Guam in the Marianas. (3)

These islands were all large enough to accomodate our B-29

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

bombers and as soon as the airfields were finished in the fall of 1944, the 21st Bomber Command set up its headquarters on Saipan. In order for the bombers to hit Tokio, it meant flying a 3,000 mile round trip over open water. This was the absolute maximum range they could fly with an effective bomb load, which meant the planes had to fly a straight course from their base to the target. To fly this course meant flying straight over the tiny isle of Iwo Jima midway to and from the target. On this rock the Japanese had fighter planes which gave our bombers plenty of trouble plus communication with the homeland to warn them of the oncoming air attack. (4)

Thus it was decided by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the fall of 1944 that Iwo Jima, although too small for a good base other than airfields, would have to be taken in order that our offensive toward the Japanese homeland could continue. The reasons set forth for the capture of the island were:

1. We needed a forward fighter base from which our fighters could escort the B-29 bombers to and from the target.
2. We needed a rescue station for our bombers on their flights to and from the target. Due to bad weather, errors in navigation, and engine trouble, many of our planes were forced down at sea with great loss of men and planes.
3. The enemy used Iwo as a weather and radar station and by its capture we could deny the enemy the use of these two very important installations and make use of them for our own future operations.
4. We wanted to deny the enemy the use of the two airfields

(4) A-1, p. 3

(a third under construction) from which fighters and bombers were raiding our bases in the Marianas and attacking our bombers as they flew near the island of Iwo. (5)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

The Fifth Amphibious Corps G-2 report revealed that this tiny dot on the outer fringe of the Japanese home defenses was another Rock of Gibraltar and the fact that it was surrounded by one of the largest moats in the world was not going to make the task of reducing it an easy one. Iwo had ^{never} come under Japanese rule in 1897 and had long been considered an important outpost in their strategic defense of the homeland. (6)

Extensive aerial observation and an intensive study of photos enabled ^{American forces} them to make what was considered an accurate analysis of the terrain, the defenses thereon, and the number of defenders. Evidence was found that the Japs were applying "lessons learned" from previous engagements with our forces. The beaches appeared to be organized in depth instead of just on the perimeter. Anti-tank ditches and what appeared to be carefully placed "fire nets" were similar in nature to our machine gun final protective lines and artillery barrages. (7)

The G-2 study stated that although the beaches were known to be sandy, access inland could be made by wheeled vehicles. Order of Battle estimated the enemy strength to be from 13,840 to 14,740. (8)

Nine infantry battalions were estimated to be on the island but since installations for only four were located it was assumed that five battalions would be held in mobile reserve to counter-

(5) A-4, p. 613; (6) A-3, p. 23; (7) A-1, p. 7;
(8) A-1, p. 8.

attack should our forces succeed in gaining a toehold. Failing in this, it was correctly assumed they would fall back and fight to the last man. (9)

TERRAIN

When Iwo was picked as the outpost to be defended, intelligence informed us, that combined with the enemy's fanatical nature, maximum use had been made of the terrain.

The island resembles a large pork chop or pear, and is $5\frac{1}{4}$ miles long by $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles wide at its widest point, narrowing down to a 700 yard neck at the foot of Mount Suribachi Yama. Mt. Suribachi is a steep, rocky, inactive volcano, 556 feet high, located on the southern tip of Iwo and is the dominating terrain feature of the entire island. The northern base of the volcano is both the lowest and narrowest part. At this point the island is some 700 yards wide and rises to an elevation of only 100 feet. North from this point the ground rises gradually to a more or less flat tableland on which airfields No. 1 and 2 were located with a third under construction. Moto Yama, an east-west ridge line about 360 feet high, rises out of the tableland and with the exception of its southwestern slope, is surrounded by ocean hewn terraces. North from Moto Yama to a point where the cliffs drop abruptly into the sea, the terrain is very rough and rocky, resembling the badlands of Arizona. An old sulphur mine is located near the village of Moto Yama, and it is continually emitting greenish-yellow clouds of a most obnoxious sulphurous steam and vapor. Between Moto Yama and Mt. Suribachi, to the south, lies a connecting lowland composed of loose volcanic sand. Bordering this stretch of volcanic ash, on the east and west coasts, lie the only available landing beaches. (10)

(See Map "B").

(9) A-1, p. 8; (10) A-1, p. 6-7, Personal Knowledge

The western beach is an excellent sand beach about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles long and varies in width from 50 to 600 yards, but is backed by steep vertical banks some 20 feet in height. Though a landing might be made on this beach, it would be almost impossible to move equipment up the vertical bank. The southeastern beach, estimated correctly to be the best landing site, is about two miles long, extending from Mt. Suribachi in a northeasterly direction to a point where it rises into high rocky cliffs. The depth of the beach ranges from 0 to 500 yards at various places and though loose sand terraces were known to be present, it was thought that access inland would be good and the beach would be passable for all wheeled vehicles. (11)

There were no streams on the island and all water had to be obtained either by trapping rain water in reservoirs or distilling sea water. The only vegetation was a little sugar cane (of poor quality) and a few very stunted scrub trees. There were a few poor, unimproved roads (actually nothing more than sand trails), criss-crossing the island. (12)

SOFTENING UP THE TARGET

Iwo felt the beginning of our pre-landing "softening-up" on 15 June 1944 which was simultaneous with our landings on Saipan. Throughout the summer it was bombed several times for the neutralization of the airfields but it was 72 days prior to D-day before the full force of our power was felt. From that time, until after the assault troops landed, the tiny island received bombs and shells from B-29 bombers to fighters, and from battleships to LCI rocket boats. Sometimes several raids were made within one day from both surface ships and planes. To sight an

(11) A-1, p. 6-7 Personal Knowledge; (12) A-1, p. 6 Personal Knowledge

example of this, on 8 December 1944, 82 B-29s, 102 B-24's and 28 P-38's dropped a total of 790 tons of bombs. As soon as the last bomb had dropped, U. S. cruisers and destroyers circled the island for over an hour, raking every cliff and gun position that could be found. It was estimated that a total of over 1,000 tons of explosives were hurled at the "Rock" during this one day bombardment. (13)

Task force 58, under command of Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher, opened the operations in direct support of the Iwo operation by carrying out carrier strikes in the Tokyo area beginning on D-3 and continuing through D-day. Task force 52 arrived in the Iwo area on D-3 to carry out intensive air and sea strikes on Iwo and the surrounding islands of Chichi Jima and Ha Ha Jima with the additional job of clearing the water and beaches around the target of mines and obstacles. (14) (See Map "A")

On D-2 the underwater demolition and mine clearing group started their task of clearing the beaches. As 12 LCI(G)'s carrying the teams neared the eastern beach, they were met with intense large caliber fire from various positions on the island. By the time they had reached a point 1,000 yards off shore, all craft had been hit, one of which was sunk. The remaining LCI(G)'s were withdrawn and 12 relief craft were sent toward the beach to complete the mission. In less than an hour all 12 had been hit, but by this time the teams had been picked up, having completed their mission. Their report stated that no minefields, underwater obstruction or beach obstacles were present. It was about this time that Radio Tokyo announced that her forces on Iwo Jima had repulsed an American landing, sinking many ships. (15)

Photos taken on D-3 indicated that in spite of the terrific

(13) A-1, p. 105; (14) A-1, p. 15, 16; (15) A-1, p. 18

pounding Iwo had taken from sea and air, a great many of the known installations (not to mention the unknown ones), were still intact. To offset this, the firing schedules of the battleships Idaho and Tennessee were revised, giving them the mission of knocking out heavy Japanese flanking batteries which were still thought to be strong enough to seriously hamper the landings. Pounding by surface ships and aircraft continued on through D-2 and up to the night of 18 February which was the eve of the scheduled landing. Another intensive study of the defenses remaining on the island were made at this time and Admiral Blandy, the Amphibious Support Commander, informed Admiral Turner, Commander of the Amphibious Forces, Pacific Fleet, that although the full ammunition allowance had not been fired because of bad weather, he believed a successful landing could be made. (16)

While the commanders were arriving at their decision, troops who were to hit the beaches the following morning began to arrive in the area.

Let us now go back and follow these troops from the time the first V Corps tentative plan was handed them until they arrived off the shores of Iwo Jima prepared to assault the beaches.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

The marine unit chosen to assault and capture Iwo was the Fifth Amphibious Corps under command of Major General Harry Schmidt. V Corps was made up of the battle tested Third and Fourth Divisions and the newly activated Fifth Division. (17)

At the time V Corps received the order to start planning the Iwo operation, Corps Headquarters and the Fourth and Fifth Marine Divisions were in the Hawaiian area, and the Third Division was stationed on Guam. The Fourth and Fifth Divisions were selected

(16) A-1, p. 19; (17) A-1, p. 9

to make a two division abreast assault on the objective, leaving the Third to be in Expeditionary Troops reserve. (18) (See Map "A")

The 27th Regimental Combat Team, typical of CT-26 and CT-28 of the Fifth Division, was broken down as follows:

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>COMMANDER</u>
(a) BLT-127 (1st Battalion 27th Regiment)	Lt.Col. JOHN A. BUTLER
1st Battalion, 27th Marines 1st Platoon, 37mm Guns, Weapons Company, 27th Marines 1st Platoon, "B" Company, 5th Engineer Battalion Detachment "B" Company, 5th Medical Battalion 1st Squad, 2d Platoon, 5th MP Company Detachment 5th JASCO	
(b) BLT-227 (2d Battalion 27 Regiment)	Maj. JOHN W. ANTONELLI
2d Battalion, 27 Marines 2d Platoon, 37mm Guns, Weapons Company, 27th Marines 2d Platoon, "B" Company, 5th Engineer Battalion Detachment "B" Company, 5th Medical Bat- talion 2d Squad, 2d Platoon, 5th MP Company Detachment 5th JASCO	
(c) BLT-327 (3d Battalion 27 Regiment)	Lt.Col. DONN J. ROBERTSON
3d Battalion, 27th Marines 3d Platoon, 37mm Guns, Weapons Company, 27th Marines 3d Platoon, "B" Company, 5th Engineer Battalion Detachment "B" Company, 5th Medical Battalion 2d Squad, 2d Platoon, 5th MP Company Detachment 5th JASCO	
(d) CT-27 (-) 27 Regiment	Col. THOMAS A. WORNHAM
Reconnaissance Platoon, 27th Marines Weapons Company, 27th Marines (-) "B" Company, 5th Engineer Battalion (-) 5th Tank Battalion (less "C" Company) Headquarters and Service Company, 27th Marines (-)	

(18) Personal Knowledge.

2d Platoon, 5th MP Company (-)
"B" Company, 5th Medical Battalion (-)
1st Section, 6th Marine War Dog Platoon
Detachment 5th JASCO
Detachment 3d Provisional Rocket
Detachment

(19)

On 19 October 1944, the Commanding General of the Fifth Division called a meeting of all the regimental commanders and his staff, at which time the task to be undertaken by the division in the coming operation was outlined.

On 20 October, the planning for Island "X" (as Iwo was then known) began, with the regiment working from the tentative Fifth Amphibious Corps operation. Various plans came down from time to time and the regiment modified its own accordingly.

During the last week in October, 1944, the 27th Regiment held a conference with the battalion staffs warning them of the mission coming up and what the general tactical scheme would be. Following this, the battalions were furnished with a tentative operation plan, plus annexes, after which the battalion operation plans were begun immediately.

Starting early in November, conferences were held almost daily between the regimental staff, battalion staffs, and the units which were to be attached for the operation. This included a representative from the LVT battalion which was to transport the assault troops to the beach. The battalion commander of the first battalion, Lt.Col. John A. Butler, flew to Maui to coordinate with the battalion from the Fourth Division, which was to be on our right during the landing.

The Division issued "The Preferred Plan" on 31 December 1944, but the battalions did not receive their copy until after they had sailed from the Fifth Division staging area at Hilo,

(19) A-5, P. 5

Hawaii on this same date. Three division command post exercises were held between the receipt of the first tentative plan in October and 31 December 1944. The first was an overnight exercise involving naval gunfire and air support, the second was a control vessel exercise involving tactical and logistical parties, and the third involved all the troops in the Division and was based on Island "X".

Based on the types of enemy positions that were known to exist on the target, the battalions constructed similar positions in their training areas. Several simulated landings by boat teams were made, followed by all day problems. Live ammunition and bombs were used by tanks, artillery, and planes during most of these problems which lent much realism to the ^{exercise} troops.

On 31 December 1944, the 27th Regiment, along with the rest of the Fifth Division, began embarking at Hilo, Hawaii. The Fourth Division embarked from their camp on Maui, Hawaii at approximately the same time. Following the usual shipboard shake down, joint rehearsals were held off Maui Island on 15, 16, and 17 January 1945. One was an overnight exercise with both Divisions going ashore and holding an exact dummy run, using the same plan of maneuver that was planned for D-day on the island.

(20)

This plan was rather simple in nature. It called for the Fourth Division to hit on the right flank of the eastern beach and after gaining a beach-head, they were to pivot to the right and continue toward the north end of the island. The Fifth Division was to land on the left flank of the same beach with the mission of cutting the island in two at the base of Mt. Suribachi. Then they were to turn north and continue up the west side of the island, keeping contact with the Fourth Division on the right.

(20) A-5, P. 1,2,3 Personal Knowledge

The Third Division was to be in floating reserve and was to be sent in on call. It was thought in the original plans, that this reserve division would not have to be used, but this assumption was shattered soon after the landing. (21) (See Map "C")

The Fifth Division plan was for CT-27 to land on Beaches Red-1 and 2, advance rapidly inland to seize that portion of the O-1 line in its zone of action, and keep contact with the Fourth Division on the right. CT-28 was to land on Beach Green-1, advance rapidly across the island to isolate and capture Mt. Suribachi. CT-26 was to be Division floating reserve to go ashore on call and be prepared to support any part of the Division ashore.

The regimental plan called for the first and second battalions to be the assault elements with the Third Battalion in reserve. The mission for the First Battalion (BLT-127) was to land on beach Red-2 and seize Ra in the assigned zone of action and be prepared to advance to O-1 in CT order, with the additional mission of keeping contact with the Fourth Division on the right. The Second Battalion (BLT-227) was to land on beach Red-1, advance across the island to seize Ra in assigned zone, keep contact with BLT-127 and be prepared to advance to the O-1 on order. The Third Battalion (BLT-327) was to be at the LD at 0927. Weapons company was to land in the sixth wave and be in direct support of the attack. (22)

Upon completion of rehearsals on 17 February, the two assault divisions docked at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii for a few days' liberty and recreation. During this period several breaches of security were noted, one of which is worth mentioning here; A picture of Iwo Jima came out in the Honolulu paper and under the picture was the insertion, "Would this be the next stepping stone to Japan".

(21) A-5, p. 2; (22) Personal Knowledge

On 22 January 1944, the first echelon of the task force moved out of Pearl Harbor headed for the final staging area. The assault troops were to make the landing in LVTs, which at this time were in LSTs, but because of the long ocean voyage, the troops went to the target on APAs. As soon as the ships cleared Pearl Harbor, briefing of all personnel began. During most of the training period, actual maps of Iwo had been used with the name cut out, so after the Honolulu paper incident it was no great surprise to anyone what our destination was. Daily conferences of troop officers were held after which this data was passed on to the men. Through the use of rubber relief maps, hundreds of photos, and briefing on all up to date information, the men and officers alike began to feel that they knew every rock on the island by heart. Everyone knew what he and his unit was to do, at what time, and the units on his right and left as well. (23) (See Map "A")

By 11 February, all echelons of the task force had closed into Saipan Harbor. The following two days were spent holding final rehearsals amid very rough seas. Only naval gun fire and shore fire control parties were landed in Tinian the first day. The next day, troops were boated, waves formed, and sent from the LD to within 300 yards of the beach, then returned to the ship without landing. (24)

On 15 February, the LVT tractor laden LSTs moved from Saipan toward the target, followed the next day by Transport Squadrons 15 and 16 carrying the assault landing forces of the Fourth and Fifth Divisions. The Third Division left Guam on 17 February and headed for the target. (25)

THE LANDING

D-day dawned bright and clear with the sea and surf as calm
(23, 24) Personal Knowledge; (25) A-1, p. 12-13

as could ever be expected around a tiny, unprotected rock in the open sea such as Iwo was. This proved to be a very lucky break because the weather had been bad several days preceeding D-day and turned bad again on D/1, making landing of any size craft very difficult and sometimes impossible.

At 0640 on 19 February 1945, all supporting vessels opened fire with an unceasing rain of steel on the eastern beach and surrounding positions. These ships ranged from battleships down to spectacular gunboats delivering several hundreds of 5 inch rockets. At 0805 all naval gunfire ceased, at which time fighters and bombers strafed and bombed the beaches. At H-35 the air strike ceased and the naval pounding was resumed and continued while the assault troops headed for the beach. (26) (See Map "C")

The First and Second Battalions of CT-27 left their APAs in LCVPs early in the morning on D-day (19 February 1945) and were taken to the LSTs which were loaded with Amphibious tractors (LVTs). At 0630, the doors of the LSTs opened letting the troop laden LVTs roll out and head for their rendezvous area. (27)

By H-25 the first wave passed the control vessel and headed for the beach. This wave was made up of LVTAs which are Armour-ed amphibious tractors, carrying no troops, but mounting a 75mm howitzer and two machine guns. Their mission was to lead the assault waves into the beach giving them as much support on the beach as possible. The next four waves, which followed the first wave at five minute intervals, carried the two assault battalions. The sixth wave was made up of LCMs and carried eight of the twelve 37mm AT guns with prime movers and four half-tracks, mounting 75mm AT guns of the Regimental Weapons Company. (28)

(26) A-1, p. 21; (27, 28) Personal Knowledge

As the assault troops neared the beaches, naval gunfire lifted its fires 200 yards inland. This rolling naval barrage continued ahead of the troops as they hit the beach and proceeded inland. With the exception of one LVT of BLT-227 which received a direct hit and sank, BLT-127 landed on Beach Red-2 and BLT-227 on Red-1, at 0902. Both units proceeded rapidly inland up the sandy terraces against light small arms and mortar fire to a distance of some 350 yards before stopping to reorganize. (29)

The sixth wave was not as fortunate upon hitting the beach. As this was the first wave approaching the shore containing LCMs, it is possible that the Japs thought we were the first wave of tanks (which were in the seventh wave). Very heavy mortar and anti-boat fire was concentrated on the landing sites as the bows hit and the ramps went down. To add to this plight, a 12 foot wall of sand had to be breached before it was possible to move off the beach. All half-tracks and 37mm AT guns (the latter being pulled by weasels) tried to negotiate this barrier but were all mired before moving 10 feet out of their boats. The enemy was quick to take advantage of our plight and was able to hit and either destroy, or put out of action, every gun and prime mover of the company in this wave. Each gun crew was equipped with a machine gun, and after having their primary weapons knocked out, secured the secondary weapons and joined the battalions they were in support of. (30)

The advance continued across the island, meeting rather light resistance all the way. The Ra line was reached at about 1500 and both battalions started digging in for the all out counter-attack which everyone knew was coming. (31) (See Map "C")

(29, 30, 31) Personal Knowledge

BLT-327, CT-27 reserve, landed without incident at 1130 D-day and followed BLT-227 mopping up rear areas as they progressed. The First Battalion of CT-26, which was the Fifth Division reserve, was landed and attached to CT-27 at 1700. To prepare for the night, BLT-327 went into position behind BLT-127 and BLT-126 dug in behind BLT-227. This gave our lines good defensive depth and by 1800 the regiment was tied in with units of the Fourth Marine Division on the edge of airfield number 1 and with CT-28 to the rear. (32)

Thus, at the end of D-day, it is seen that a toehold had been established on one of Japan's prize outposts. A total of four battalions of artillery had been landed during the day, and by night one battalion had been able to register. During the night, enemy artillery and mortar fire was received, inflicting several casualties, due to the fact that it was impossible to dig a fox hole in this part of the island because of the coarse shifting sand. To the surprise of all, only small counter-attacks materialized during the night in front of BLT-127. This was broken up by small arms and mortar fire. (33)

20 FEBRUARY 1945, D+1 DAY

The field order for D+1 was received at 1940 D-day, with the regimental mission to continue the attack at 0830 D+1, to seize O-1 in present zone of action. Preceded by artillery, ^{NGF} and air strikes, the attack jumped off on time. BLT-126 passed through BLT-227 on the left of the regimental zone and BLT-327 passed through and relieved BLT-127 on the right, during which time they received heavy artillery and mortar fire. This fire continued to rain on both advancing battalions all day long, but despite this they were able to advance some 800 yards toward

(32) A -8, p. 4; (33) Personal Knowledge

the north end of the island. BLT-327 was able to secure the north edge of the north-south runway of airfield number 1, but in order to maintain physical contact with the Fourth Division on the right they had to move 200 yards into their zone of action. D/1 night found BLT-126 in line backed up by BLT-227, and BLT-327 on the right of BLT-126 and backed up by BLT-127. During the afternoon the regimental CP moved forward and again everyone tried to dig in for the night fully expecting an all out banzi charge. Several small counter-attacks were repulsed during the night but it was thought that these were nothing more than combat patrols sent out by the Japs for information. (34)

21 FEBRUARY 1945. D/2 DAY

The order for D/2 was to continue the attack to seize O-1 in the regimental zone with two battalions abreast. The attack jumped off at the scheduled time of 0810 with BLT-126 on the left, advancing quite rapidly and seizing the O-1 line in their zone at about 1400. BLT-327 on the right, was able to advance only about 400 yards, which was just short of O-1 due to the necessity of maintaining contact with the Fourth Division on the right. This unit was on airfield number 1 and had received even heavier artillery, mortar, and machine-gun fire than CT-27. The reason for this was that the Japs had OPs on Mt. Suribachi to the south and all over the high ground to the north. One company of BLT-127 was assigned to fill the gap on the right flank at about 1600. Units were disposed for the night in the same manner as the previous night with BLT-227 backing up BLT-126 on the left, while BLT-127 backed up BLT-327 on the right. During the evening, BLT-327 observed what appeared to be a

(34) A-5, p. 8

counter-attack force forming in front of their lines. About the same time, a cold rain started and knowing from previous experience how the Japanese like for rain to aid them in their night operations, the entire regiment was alerted for a 100% watch all night. Again, no attack of any size materialized, although several casualties were again suffered during the night from artillery and mortar fire. (35)

To further bring out the intensity of the enemy fire that had been received during the past two days, tanks from the 5th Tank Battalion, which had been attached to the regiment since D-day, had only to show themselves for a moment and they were immediately taken under intense and accurate anti-tank and mortar fire. On D/1, 19 out of 50 tanks attached to CT-27 had been knocked out. This was so bad that the riflemen dreaded the sound of a tank motor starting up and would shy away from them as much as possible. It might also be said of the tanks and all other vehicles, that they were very hard on the wire communication due to the fact that all wire had to be on the ground and the soil was so soft, it was impossible to bury the wire deep enough to escape being cut by tracked vehicles. Consequently, the major portion of the communication during the first few days, between lower and higher units, was by radio which worked very well. (36)

22 FEBRUARY 1945. D/3 DAY

The order for D/3 did not reach the regimental CP until 0300. The plan for the day was for CT-27 (less BLT-227) to be relieved and become Division reserve after being passed through by CT-26. BLT-227 was to be attached to the relieving regiment while the

(35) A-5, p. 9 Personal Knowledge; (36) Personal Knowledge

remainder of CT-27 was to go into assembly areas and be prepared to support the attack. (37)

Due to the heavy mortar and artillery fire being received, effective passage of our lines was not completed until about 1330. Even after BLT-127 and BLT-327 were relieved, and had moved into their designated assembly area, rest and reorganization in this wide open sand dune proved to be very difficult. CT-26 advanced on after passing through our lines with their left flank following the beach. This caused an open gap between their rear elements and our lines. To correct this situation, the regimental commander had BLT-127 and BLT-327 take up positions facing the sea in a mobile defense which would enable them to be ready to move to either flank of the division zone in case a counter-landing should be tried from the beach, or an attack from airfield number 1. This proved to be a good move, because during the night a counter-landing was attempted by an estimated 400 Japanese but was successfully broken up by the defense which had been set up along the western beach. (38)

23 TO 27 FEBRUARY 1945, D/4 TO D/8 DAYS

On D/4, 5, 6, and 7, CT-27 remained in Division reserve with the mission of mopping up rear areas and securing the division's flanks. Due to the number of caves and pillboxes that had to be cleaned out and blown up during this period, there was little time to rest. Casualties continued to mount because of the treachery of uncovering these strongly fortified caves and pillboxes plus the never ceasing artillery and mortar fire. A large communication cable buried three and one-half feet underground was uncovered and destroyed during this period. This

(37) A-5, p. 5; (38) A-5, p. 10 Personal Knowledge

cable was thought to be the main communication link between Mt. Suribachi and the north end of the island. (39)

The most inspiring sight to every Marine on the island was the raising of the American flag on Mt. Suribachi on D/4 (23 Feb.) by CT-28. This meant that the excellent OP from which the Japs had been directing fire onto our positions was now in our hands and would aid our advance, ^{by} or ~~at least~~ deny its use to the Japs.

Resupply up to this time had been very hap-hazzard. Every man in the regiment had landed with one unit of fire for his weapon in addition to carrying two canteens of water on his cartridge belt, plus one and two-thirds "C" ration and one assault ration in his pack. Each LVT carrying the assault troops had a token amount of water, rations, and ammunition which was dumped on the ground above the high water mark as the troops proceeded inland. A regimental floating dump of "Hot Cargo" was afloat during the first three days but it was found impossible to land the supplies of these boats on the beaches without having both the LCVP and load destroyed by the intense fire the enemy kept along the shore during this period. The LVT was again pressed into service by going out into the water to the floating dumps and bringing the supplies to the beach, then proceeding inland and up to the front lines. The loads would be dumped at the battalion or regimental dumps and the LVTs would return to the beach with the wounded. By this method the regiment was able to satisfy its needs until the beach was cleared of debris and roads were built to the regimental dumps. At no time during the entire operation, was there any acute shortage of supplies. (40)

By D/4 enough field ranges were ashore to enable the cooks to prepare and serve hot coffee to all the regiment twice daily.

(39) A-5, p. 10,11,12; (40) A-5, p. 2,3 Personal Knowledge

No hot meals were served during the entire operation. "K" rations were issued to units in the line, and when they came out, they were given "C" and "10 in one". Heat tabs were available but most of the men used C-2 composition to heat their rations due to its intense heat. (41)

The Corps Commander ordered two regiments of the Third Division ashore on D/5 and committed them in the center of the island between the Fourth and Fifth Divisions on D/6. (42)

CT-26 to our front, and the Fourth Division on the right, were making very slow and costly progress. It was very evident now that the enemy had changed his tactics, and instead of counter-attacking, was slowly withdrawing his lines to the high and very rugged ground to the north, and was going to make our advance as difficult as possible.

27 FEBRUARY 1945, D/8 DAY

At 1800 on D/7 (26 Feb.), orders were received for CT-27 to pass through and relieve CT-26, with the mission of continuing the attack to seize O-2 in the division's zone of action.

(43)

During the four days the regiment had been out of the lines, the advance had only progressed about 400 yards. The terrain in this area was a series of sand dunes most of which were bunkers housing machine-guns and anti-tank weapons. Each of these bunkers had mutually supporting fire which meant that to reach the mouth of one with a flame thrower or demolition charge, all bunkers surrounding the one under attack had to be neutralized. To the front of our lines lay a stretch of open, flat ground which ended abruptly in cliffs around 100 feet high. These

(41) A-5, p. 2,3 Personal Knowledge; (42) A-1, p. 40;

(43) A-5, p. 12

cliffs were honey-combed with every type of weapon the Japs had on the island and it was quite evident that we were now running up against the real backbone of the island's main defense line which ran along Motoyama ridge. (44)

BLT-227 had been attached to CT-26, so they were already in position on the left of the regimental sector. The attack was to be on a three battalion front, so both BLT-127 and BLT-327 moved out of their assembly areas at 0630. Proceeded by an artillery, air, and NGF barrage, the passage of lines was affected and the attack jumped off at 0800 supported by tanks.

BLT-127 moved out about 200 yards before being stopped by a large group of bunkers which held up their advance until 1100. With the aid of tanks, these were reduced, and their advance continued until 1400 when they were again held up by a large concrete blockhouse on the left flank. It took two and one-half hours to knock this out, but in the meantime the battalion right flank had continued on and had been able to take a very slight ridge to their front. However, due to heavy casualties and an exposed left flank, the right company was forced to draw back far enough to contact their left flank company. (45)

BLT-327, advancing on the right of the regiment, was forced to keep contact with the Third Division on the right. Their advance was quite rapid but they were forced to hold up when contact was lost with this right unit. The reserve company of the battalion was put in the existing gap but enemy resistance had become so severe by this time that no further advance was made for the day. (46)

BLT-227 was able to advance about 500 yards along the coast line. Documents were found in their area during the day, which

(44) Personal Knowledge; (45) A-6, p. 7; (46) A-8, p. 6

turned out to be the Tables of Organization of the enemy units on the island. According to these tables, the total strength was over 20,000 instead of the 13,000 to 14,000 estimated by Corps G-2. Progress for the day was about 500 yards and the entire regiment began digging in for the night at 1700. (47)

Although ^{entirely} infiltration was a major problem throughout the entire campaign, it might be well to mention here the excellent illumination that was used. By the combination of mortars, artillery, and NGF, the entire front lines were under almost constant and excellent illumination from sunset to sunrise, which kept infiltration to a minimum and was a great moral factor to our troops. At night it was impossible to ^{put} send out an OPLR or even a listening post more than a few feet from the front line fox-holes. Three man fox-holes were used for the most part, with at least one man awake at all times. (48)

28 FEBRUARY 1945, D/9 DAY

The mission for the following day (27 Feb.) was essentially the same as for the preceding day, except that BLT-126 was attached and was to relieve BLT-227 who in turn was to proceed back to Mt. Suribachi to relieve CT-28. Preceded by a 45 minute bombardment from all supporting arms, the attack jumped off at 0815 with three BLTs abreast to seize the O-2 line in the regimental zone. This phase line was astride hill 362A, which was the dominating terrain feature that had been holding up the advance of the Fifth Division in their drive up the west side of the island for the past several days.

Progress for the first hundred yards or so was good for all three battalions, but again--a series of pillboxes and bunkers were encountered. Tanks were used as much as possible, but the

(47) A-5, p. 13 Personal Knowledge; (48) Personal Knowledge

heavy fire they drew from artillery and mortars and the rough terrain that had now started to be encountered, made their use questionable at this time. In order for any progress to be made at all, the entire regiment was organized into assault teams. Small arms were used to cover all possible embrasures while other men placed a demolition charge or a flame-thrower nozzle in a cave or bunker and let it go. This was a slow progress and time after time, men from the third battalion charged up hill 362A only to be wiped out. The enemy was putting up a bitter defense now that the west flank of his cross island defense had been reached. He was through withdrawing and every man was left in position to fight until killed. Finally, at about 1630, the crest of hill 362A was reached by BLT-327, but again--in order to tie in with other units, was forced to withdraw about 150 yards thereby losing physical possession of the crest. After lines were consolidated for the night, the total gain for the day was found to be about 300 yards every foot of which had been gained by close-in bitter hand to hand battle. (49)

Some infiltration was experienced during the night but no large counter-attack developed, although the Japs were dug in on one side of the crest of hill 362A and the marines on the other. Hand grenades were thrown by both sides all night which inflicted a few casualties, and enemy artillery registered a lucky hit on the Fifth Division's ammunition dump destroying about 20% of it. (50)

1-2 MARCH 1945, D/10 & 11 DAYS

The order for the next day (D/10) was for CT-28 (the unit that had secured Mt. Surbachi) to relieve the regiment at 0830. Surprisingly enough, CT-28 was able to pass through and relieve

(49) A-5, p. 14, Personal Knowledge;
(50) A-1, p. 53, Personal Knowledge.

CT-27 at about the designated time despite the intense fighting that had taken place in this area the day before. BLT-327 was attached to CT-28 and continued the attack on hill 362A with them. BLT-127, when passed through, took up positions in support of CT-28 and the first battalion from CT-26 reverted to parent control upon being relieved. (51)

On D/11, BLT-327 was released to the control of the regiment after aiding CT-28 in the capture of 362A. Both battalions were able to accomplish some reorganization and a slight rest during these two days, because of the relentless pressure that was being put on the enemy by all the front line units now that hill 362A was in our hands. It was found that we were definitely up against the main defense line of the island now. The terrain from here on until the end of the island was reached was very rough, getting progressively worse, yard by yard. In the particular area where BLT-127 and BLT-327 were, many underground caves were found with as many as three and four levels hewn out of solid rock. One of these proved to be a complete hospital including beds, operating table, and electric lights. (52)

3 MARCH 1945, D/12 DAY

On D/12 (3 March), BLT-127 was ordered to join CT-26 and BLT-327 was alerted to move up behind, and prepare to support, CT-28. The advance of CT-28 and CT-26 had been painfully slow during the past two days. As the enemy was being compressed more and more toward the end of the island, from which there was no escape, he became more determined to make our price for this worthless piece of real estate, the maximum in time and lives.

During this period, the regimental CP was moved to what proved to be the final move for the rest of the operation on the island. (53)

(51) A-5, p. 14, Personal knowledge; (52) Personal knowledge;
(53) Personal knowledge.

4 MARCH 1945, D/13 DAY

BLT-127, attached to CT-26 on the right of the Fifth Division zone, was in the lines all day (D/13) but was able to gain only about 100 yards. BLT-227 was ordered back under regimental control and moved up behind CT-26 with further orders to be prepared to relieve BLT-126 on the morning of D/15 (6 March). BLT-327, in the meantime, had been attached to CT-28. They were committed to the attack after passing through and relieving BLT-128 and were able to make some progress during the day. (54)

5 MARCH 1945, D/14 DAY

The following day, BLT-127 was relieved by elements of CT-26, and while moving into their assemble area, the battalion commander, Lt. Col. John Butler, was killed. He was replaced by the regimental S-3, Lt. Col. Justin Dureya. BLT-227 backed CT-26 in preparation to go in the lines the following morning. BLT-327 was still attached to CT-28. Their progress for the day had been nothing more than straightening and consolidating their lines with no gains being made. (55)

6 MARCH 1945, D/15 DAY

On D/15, the regiment was ordered to continue the attack, using a one BLT front with the mission of seizing the 0-3 line in the regimental zone.

BLT-227 moved out under the cover of darkness to a point just behind the lines. Following a 10 minute artillery and NGF barrage, they jumped off, but were held up somewhat by our own artillery falling short. The plan for the artillery was to shoot a rolling barrage, lifting 100 yards every 7 minutes from 0800 to 0821, and be on call thereafter. After a ten minute delay,

(54) A-5, p. 16; (55) A-5, p. 16, Personal Knowledge.

the attack got under way. Extremely heavy small arms and mortar fire were encountered all day. The terrain at this point of the island was starting to get very rocky and was even more cave studded than any encountered before. Casualties mounted steadily all day and although one company from BLT-127 had been attached to BLT-227, the total gain for the day only amounted to about 50 yards with 14 men killed and 101 wounded. (56)

7 MARCH 1945, D/16 DAY

The orders for the next day (D/16) were the same as the preceding day. BLT-227 with one company of the BLT-127 attached, jumped off at 0730 with no supporting fires. Good progress was made for about 100 yards at which time the assault troops were again taken under accurate small arms and hand grenade fire. The terrain was so very rocky in this area that although tanks were vitally needed to support the attack, it was impossible to move them among the rocks and bunkers. The right flank of the battalion was able to advance far enough to see the ocean to the northeast, but was forced to fall back in the evening in order to consolidate the lines for the night. The total gains for the day amounted to about 150 yards. (57)

8 MARCH 1945, D/17 DAY

The mission for D/17 was for the regiment to continue the attack at 0750. BLT-227 plus one company from the BLT-127 attached, jumped off on time, but, shortly after leaving the LD, again ran into the familiar deadly small arms fire. (58)

A new technique in the tank-infantry team was introduced at this time which proved to be of great assistance in capturing the rest of the island. Although forced to take heavy casualties,

(56) A-7, p. 11, Personal knowledge; (57) A-7, p. 12, Personal knowledge; (58) A-7, p. 12.

the infantrymen would lead a bull-dozer tank into a position. This tank would doze a path up to a bunker or cave then would back out to let a flame-thrower tank, covered by regular tanks and infantrymen, approach the position and burn the Japs out. This proved much more effective than anything tried so far, for the flame was able to penetrate the caves and bunkers, killing the enemy or making him break and run, which made them easy prey for the infantrymen. This type of advance made it possible, through cooperation on both the tankers and infantry, to advance about 150 yards on the right of the battalion zone during the day. (59)

The left flank proved to be too rough for even the dozer tank to advance, so members of Regimental Weapons Company tried to break down and carry a 37mm AT gun among the rocks in order to give direct support to the advance. This also was a failure, so a 75mm pack howitzer was obtained, broken down, carried up to a point of vantage and set up. Several pillboxes and caves were taken under fire with this weapon which enabled the troops to overrun several caves that had been holding them up for quite some time.

It might be well, at this point, to mention why nothing has been said of the Regimental Weapons Company other than on the landing on D-Day. A few of the 37mm AT guns and half-tracks were salvaged after being knocked out on the initial landing, but it was found that to try and man an armoured crew served weapon (such as the 37mm AT guns were) on wide open terrain, was an absolute waste of men and weapons. It was for this reason that the regimental commander decided to strip the weapons com-

(59) Personal knowledge.

pany of men and officers, with the exception of the half-track platoon, and use them as replacements for the battalions. For the most part, they were used as machine-gun platoons throughout the operation because of their training. The half-track platoon was used as regimental defense during the first fifteen days, after which they helped support any part of the regimental line ~~that was~~ possible for them to move over. (60)

9 MARCH 1945, D/18 DAY

The following day's order was for the regiment to make the main effort of the division and seize the remainder of the island in the assigned zone of action. (61)

BLT's-127 and -227 moved out at 0700, but after moving some 75 yards were forced to halt, due to open flanks on the left of the first battalion. Tanks were late in arriving to the LD but even after their arrival, the attack was very limited. (62)

The Japs had been quick to realize the value of our new tactics of using the bulldozer-flame-thrower and tank-infantry team. Many mines were encountered by tanks and men throughout the day, and several suicide attempts were made by the enemy to destroy the tanks. This was done by running out of caves and placing a magnetic mine against the tank, or by strapping a large demolition charge to their body and throwing themselves under the tank. The mines had the best effect and by the time the campaign was over, there wasn't one tank dozer blade left on the island although they had all been repaired many times. (63)

The entire regimental line was halted about noon, and a conference of the first and second battalions was called to determine the plan of attack for the rest of the day. The battalion commanders and most of their staff had just reached BLT-127's

(60) Personal knowledge; (61) A-5, p. 19; (62) A-5, p. 19, Personal knowledge; (63) Personal knowledge.

OP for this conference when someone stepped on a land mine in the area. The explosion wounded both the battalion commanders and several staff and company officers. This was a very serious blow to the entire regiment, because officer replacements of any caliber were not available, much less two battalion commanders and their staff. Major G.F. Russle took command of BLT-227, took over the first battalion, and Major W.H. Kennedy took over BLT-127.

The attack was resumed at about 1330, but little or no progress was made during the remainder of the day. A map, showing all the main defense installations of the island, was found on a dead Jap officer and turned into division during the afternoon.

During the night, very heavy artillery and mortar fire was received on our front lines along with quite a bit of smoke. It was later determined that the reason for this increased activity was to cover the movement of the enemy to further consolidate his positions for the last ditch defenses on the northwestern part of the island. (64)

10 MARCH 1945, D/19 DAY

On D/19, BLT-327 was again under the control of regiment. The plan for the day was for the attack to continue with three battalions in line: BLT-127 to continue in the same direction, BLT-227 to clean out the pockets to their front and become regimental reserve, after being passed through by BLT-327. BLT-327 had the mission of jumping off from an LD three hundred yards inside the Third Division boundry on our right and parallel to the right regimental boundry. The reason for this maneuver was to pinch off BLT-227 and make contact with BLT-127. It was also thought that by attacking the pocket to the front of BLT-227

(64) A-7, p. 13, Personal knowledge.

it would be somewhat easier to overrun, due to pressure coming from two sides. (65)

The attack was to jump off at 0800 but it didn't get under way until about 0900 due to the difficulty of trying to get the tanks to navigate the terrain up to the LD. Progress was limited in BLT-127's zone and BLT-227 fared no better. The two leading dozer tanks supporting BLT-227 had tracks blown off by mines while trying to make a path for the flame tanks. Battlefield recovery was most difficult all during this operation, for it was certain death for crew members to try to work on a tank anywhere near the front lines. If it became necessary to abandon a tank during the end of the day, and it was in front of the lines, it would always be found to be booby-trapped the following day, or the Japs would be using it as a pillbox. (66)

BLT-327 jumped off on their perpendicular advance at 1030, meeting rather light resistance on their right flank, but encountering heavy small arms fire from the pocket in front of BLT-227 plus thickly scattered anti-personnel and tank mines. By the end of the day, their right flank had been able to advance some 250 yards, but the left flank gained only about 50 yards. (67)

Night found BLT-227 still in the line as the advance hadn't progressed far enough to pinch them off. Infiltration was so bad that the company CPs had to be moved up and ~~become~~ part of the front lines. One reason for this was that it was impossible to clean out and blow in the mouth of the hundreds of caves and bunkers that were encountered during the day. In addition to this, the front line units were so depleted at this time that most companys could not muster over 35 men. All spare personnel

(65) A-5, p. 19, Personal knowledge; (66) A-8, p. 10;
(67) A-7, p. 14.

from the regimental CP, including cooks, were sent to the lines to try to fill the blank holes. (68)

11 MARCH 1945, D/20 DAY

D/20 was the day the corps commander hoped to break the back of the enemy's last-stand defense. For 50 minutes prior to the jump off at 0830, all artillery on the island was massed, plus Naval gun fire and air strikes, along the line in front of the Fifth Division zone.

BLT-226 from CT-26 was attached for the day and was to attack on the left of BLT-127. The battalions jumped off at 0830 with BLT-127 being able to clean out a pocket to their front that had been holding them up for five days. BLT-227 cleaned out the resistance to their front and BLT-327 was able to advance far enough to pinch off BLT-227. After pinching out BLT-227, BLT-327 ran into a sugar loaf hill to their front which had to be assaulted three times before it was possible to occupy the ridge ~~to stay~~. After being relieved, BLT-227 became CT reserve but its forces were so badly depleted, that it was never used as a battalion during the rest of the operation. The few men who were left, mopped up rear regimental areas and aided the Division Engineers in blowing caves and bunkers. (69)

Lines were consolidated at about 1800 and again heavy infiltration was encountered during the night. One Jap was killed in BLT-327's mortar position, wearing marine clothing and carrying an M-1 rifle. (70)

12 MARCH 1945, D/21 DAY

The advance started with BLT-226 jumping off at 0630. BLT's -127 and -327 were unable to leave the LD until about 0900 due

(68) Personal knowledge; (69) A-5, p. 21, Personal knowledge;
(70) Personal knowledge.

to the late arrival of the tanks from the rear, plus the fact that it was necessary for several mutually supporting pillboxes directly in front of the lines to be knocked before the lines could move. This was accomplished with the aid of flame tanks, when they arrived. But still, progress for the day was almost zero with most of the troops occupying the same foxholes as on the previous night. The methodical destruction of mutually supporting enemy positions over the ever increasing rocky terrain was a time consuming and very expensive process. The enemy really had his back to the wall now and would not give one inch until annihilated in his shelter. To further illustrate the elaborate net-work of caves in this area, a plane dropped a 500 pound bomb in front of the lines which scored a near miss on a blockhouse. Smoke and flames were seen to shoot from several caves from 200 to 300 yards distant, indicating how every installation was connected with many others. (71)

13 MARCH 1945, D/22 DAY

D/22 (13 March) was to start the breaking of the enemy's last organized defense, although this didn't mean he was going to give up the fight until every man was dead. The units jumped off at 0800 with BLT-127 in the center being able to push 300 yards by noon. BLT-226, on BLT-127's left, was able to keep in contact although their advance was not quite as rapid. BLT-327 kept contact with the BLT-127 on their left by advancing it's left flank about 75 yards. The right flank of the battalion was held to no gains, because of accurate enfilade machine gun fire across their front. Lines were tied in for the night at 1730, at which time BLT-226 reverted to their own regiment. (72)

(71) A -5, p. 22, Personal knowledge;

(72) A -5, p. 24, Personal knowledge.

14 MARCH 1945, D/23 DAY

The main ridges in the area ran from the center of the island to the sea, on the west, and for this reason it was decided to change the direction of attack from northeast to almost straight north. The division plan was for the regiment on our left to hold the pivot while CT-27 made the attack with the mission of securing the remainder of the island in its zone. (73)

Preceded by artillery, NGF, and air strikes, BLT-127 and BLT-327 jumped off with tanks, again in direct support. One hour after the attack started, BLT-127 had advanced 150 yards and BLT-327 reported it was able to move right out, with the terrain offering more resistance to the nearly exhausted troops than the light resistance the enemy put up. By 1600, the right flank had moved some 650 yards with BLT-127 on the left having gained some 350 yards. This enabled the regimental lines to be shortened three hundred yards. By this time, BLT-227 had been reduced to one man in one company and only a handful in the other companies. But it was only through their efforts of mopping up by-passed caves that the advance was able to make such a gain possible for the day. Although the men were very exhausted and battle weary, their outlook was somewhat better at the end of the day due to the fact that they knew the left flank of the enemy's defense had definitely been broken and if things went well, they might soon be off this hell-on-earth. Such was not to be the case, however, for over a week of fighting was necessary to dislodge this fanatical enemy from his final pocket. It was later learned that the reason the regiment had been able to advance against such light resistance all day, was because all Japanese troops had been ordered back to this final defensive

(73) Personal knowledge.

stronghold, that was found later to be the command post of the island's commanding officer, General Kuribayshi. (74)

15 MARCH 1945, D/24 DAY

On D/24 (15 March), the regiment, as such, made their last coordinated attack using the same formation and with the same mission as the previous day.

The attack jumped off at 0935 supported by tanks. By noon, they had been able to advance only about 150 yards due to intense sniper fire coming from a ridge line to the direct front. After three hours of fighting, this obstacle was overrun and by 1700 the lines had advanced from 300 yards on the left, to 500 yards on the right. This enabled the front lines to be on ground commanding the rest of the island in the division zone of action. It was only because of the extremely exhausted condition of the troops that this area was not taken before night closed in. (75)

16 MARCH 1945, D/25 DAY

CT-21 of the Third Division passed through and relieved the regiment at 0945 on D/25, at which time the battalions pulled out of the lines to reorganize. The regimental commander ordered BLT-127 and BLT-227 to each form two rifle companies. After this was completed, all companies were pooled together to form a composite battalion which was to be commanded by Lt. Col. Donn J. Robertson, BLT-327 C.O. The total strength of the composite battalion was 470 men and officers. (76)

17, 18 MARCH 1945, D/26 AND 27 DAYS

D/26 was spent in resting and reorganizing. Orders were received for BLT-327 (Composite battalion) to move up behind CT-26 and be prepared to support their attack. This move was completed

(74) A-5, p. 24, Personal knowledge; (75) A-5, p. 35, Personal knowledge; (76) A-5, p. 25.

by 1200. The following day found CT-27 (-) aiding the engineers in mopping up the rear areas. This mopping up consisted of the systematic searching and blowing of all caves and bunkers in the area, and burying all dead Japs who could be found. (77)

19 MARCH 1945, D/28 DAY

On D/28, BLT-327 was committed to the attack in the CT-26 zone where it remained to aid in cleaning out the remaining pocket of resistance on the island. The remainder of the regiment continued the mopping up phase in the rear areas. (78)

20, 21 MARCH 1945, D/29 AND 30 DAYS

D/29 was the day every man was looking for. Orders were received to be prepared the following day to spot gear on the beaches White-1 and -2. Upon receipt of this order, all attached units were reverted to parent control and the beaches were reconnoitered for spotting sites.

Working parties started spotting gear at 1000 and loading began at 1300 on D/30. Further orders were received to start loading troops the following day. (79)

22 MARCH 1945, D/31 DAY

D/31 found all hands policing the assembly area and getting ready to move to White beaches. CT-27 CP moved to beach White-2 at 1400 and troops began embarking at 1630. (80)

23 MARCH 1945, D/32 DAY

BLT-327 was passed through and relieved soon after daylight on D/32 and immediately began a motorized movement to White beaches. They were embarked on an APA soon after their arrival (77, 78) Personal knowledge; (79, 80) A-5, p. 27,28.

at the beach, thus bringing to a close the operations of CT-27 on Iwo Jima. (81)

The regiment had landed with 3,100 men and suffered 2,462 casualties during the 32 days of fighting, and had been able to capture 13 prisoners. The cost to the Marine Corps for the capture of Iwo was approximately 21,000 casualties. Out of the total of 217 Japanese prisoners captured on this island, 85% were wounded. (82)

During the time the fighting was progressing in the north end of the island, Airfields 1 and 2 were being put into shape. On April 7, 1945, the 7th Air Force established a fighter base on the island and land based fighters were able to make their first trip over the Japanese homeland. By 24 June 1945, the 21st Bomber Command announced that a total of 852 B-29's worth \$51,000,000, and carrying 9,461 men, had made emergency landings on Iwo. Thus it is seen, that although the ^{original} price for this spot in the ocean was high, the returned dividends were worth many times their initial cost. (83)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In making a study of this operation, it is my opinion that the initial mission of assaulting the beach plus all subsequent missions given CT-27, were carried out successfully.

During the first days, the supply situation could have become a serious one, but due to the resourcefulness of all supply personnel and the attached LVT crews this did not become an acute problem.

The regimental commander's decision to employ two battalions in a mobile defense on the night of D/3 was sound, and paid off well in preventing a counter-landing that could have been a serious threat to our forces at that stage of the operation. By

(81) A-5, p. 28; (82) A-1, p. 146, Personal knowledge;
(83) A-1, p. 174F

taking men and officers from Regimental Weapons and Headquarters companies for battalion replacements, it aided greatly in relieving a bad situation.

Close coordination between air, ground, and sea units was excellent throughout the entire campaign. Most of the credit for this goes to the coordinated training among these groups back in the base area prior to the landing. Of special importance was the combination flame, dozer, regular tank, and infantry team that was organized during the later stage. This type of work took excellent small unit leadership and coordination and courage, and proved to be the most successful method of advance against the stubborn dug-in type of enemy found on Iwo Jima.

During the planning phase, the four half-tracks and eight of the twelve 37mm AT guns of Regimental Weapons company were boated in LCM's and landed in the sixth wave. Due to the limited knowledge of the enemy beaches plus a previous experience encountered by the author on unknown beaches at Tarawa, a recommendation was made and approved to let the Weapons Company boats go to the LD on D-day and go to the beach on call after its status was known. As it turned out, on D-day Weapons Company arrived at the LD on schedule and was immediately waved in to the beach. None of the assault waves had reached the beach at this time, so its status was still unknown. It was never determined why the plans were changed but the results were such that Weapons Company never had a chance to move off the beach.

It is my opinion that a maximum of two weeks fighting such as was encountered on Iwo is sufficient for any unit at one time. CT-27 was in action for 32 days which seems but a short time, but the fighting had been bitter from the time the waves left

the control vessels up to the hour the troops left the island. Casualties were high and by the end of two weeks most platoons were lead by junior NCOs and many of the companies by young Lts. While the highest praise and credit should go to these leaders, the fighting efficiency of the unit was reduced below an efficient standard by the end of two weeks. Much of this could be laid to the poor replacement system that was used. Replacements reached the regiment in dribbles as the shore party on the beach would finish with them. Due to the nature of the fighting, no time or place presented itself to properly orient these people before they were put in the line, resulting in a great many unnecessary casualties. One regiment of the Third Division that could have been put in the line, was never landed. In addition, the 157th Infantry Division, fully equipped, was landed on 21 March with the mission of occupying Iwo after it had been secured, and it is my opinion that had both of these units been committed, the campaign would have been over much sooner, with less casualties.

The G-2 estimate of the terrain was very much in error regarding the condition of the beaches, and they were also in error regarding the number of defenders on the island. Both of these errors proved costly in men and material, as one of the most vital prerequisites of planning for an amphibious operation is the accurate terrain analysis and Order of Battle report of the target. Intelligence for Iwo was gained almost entirely by photo reconnaissance and photo study, but it seems as though the condition of the beaches could have been analysed more accurately and the ~~less~~^{error} of 10,000 men on an island the size of Iwo did not raise the standards of the G-2 section any in the eyes of many commanders and men.

LESSONS

Some of the lessons emphasized by this operation, are:

1. Replacements should be thoroughly trained, preferably with the units which they are to replace in combat.
2. If at all possible, surprise is essential.
3. Close coordination with air, naval gun fire, and artillery fire control units is absolutely essential with all levels of command in an operation of this type.
4. Tank-Infantry-Demolition teams, when well trained, are the best means of reducing interlocking fortified positions which were found on Iwo Jima.
5. Good communication is essential between all units.
6. Dress rehearsals and realistic combat training over ground similar to the target, are important phases in preparation for combat.
7. It is a waste of men, equipment, and boat spaces to send wheeled vehicles to an unknown hostile beach prior to positive knowledge of its condition.
8. If possible, in open terrain like Iwo, passage of lines should be accomplished rather than reliefs. If relief is necessary it should take place during the hours of darkness.
9. Due to the many small unit actions which took place in caves and isolated pockets, highly trained small unit leaders are priceless.
10. By controlling the sea and air, the vital flow of supplies to sustain battle can be maintained deep in enemy territory.
11. Troops can follow a rolling naval barrage.