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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 172ND INFANTRY
(43RD INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE VICINITY OF ROSARIO,
LUZON, PHILIPPINE ISLANDS, 15-29 JANUARY 1945
(LUZON CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Cannon Company Commander)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY REGIMENT ATTACKING
A ROCKY HILL MASS AND NATURAL FORTRESS DOMINATING A
HIGHWAY JUNCTION

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ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO I

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ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 172nd Infantry, 43rd US Division in the Battle for ROSARIO, LUZON, PHILIPPINE ISLANDS, 15-29 January 1945, during the establishment of the US Sixth Army beachhead in the MIKE-1 OPERATION.

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

The basic plan of the LUZON, PHILIPPINE ISLANDS (MIKE-1) operation encompassed a major amphibious assault landing, employing the largest force ever assembled in the Southwest Pacific Area up to that time, to establish a beachhead in LINGAYEN GULF. This landing was to be supported by the full air and naval resources of the Air Forces and the United States Pacific Fleet. Supporting air and naval craft operated from bases in NEW GUINEA, MOROTAI, MINDORO, and LEYTE.

Following establishment of the initial beachhead, overland offensive operations to re-occupy the CENTRAL PLAINS-MANILA area, and finally to complete the conquest of LUZON, were contemplated.

The overall purpose of these operations was to establish bases to support future operations north of LUZON; to deny the Japanese use of the northern entrance to the CHINA SEA; and to reestablish the Philippine Government in its capital city, MANILA. (See Map A)

(1)

(1) A-3, p. 6

THE GENERAL SITUATION

In the execution of the plan the Sixth Army was to land two Corps abreast. S-day was confirmed as 9 January 1945; J-hour was to be at 0930. The I Corps, on the left, comprising the 6th and 43rd Divisions, was to land on beaches in the SAN FABIAN area; the XIV Corps, consisting of the 37th and 40th Divisions, was to land in the vicinity of the town of LINGAYEN; the 25th Division, the 158th Regimental Combat Team, the 6th Ranger Battalion, and the 13th Armored Group were to be in reserve afloat. Each Corps was directed to go in with two divisions abreast, and it was planned to put ashore on S-day the maximum force consistent with the capacity of the beaches. (2)

Since the Japanese were known to occupy a strong position in the general area DAMORTIS-BAGUIO, the left wing of the Sixth Army was considered to be much more vulnerable to attack than the right wing. Therefore, it was planned to land the 158th Regimental Combat Team north of SAN FABIAN, in the I Corps zone of action, on the left of the 43rd Division, on S/2. The 25th Division and the 13th Armored Group, both in floating reserve, were also to land in the I Corps zone on S/2 unless the tactical situation demanded otherwise. (3)

SITUATION AND PLANS OF THE 43RD INFANTRY DIVISION

On 10 October 1944 while stationed at AITAPE, NEW GUINEA, information was received that the 43rd Division, as part of the I Corps, would participate in the Sixth Army's campaign to

(2) A-2, p. 15

(3) A-2, p. 16

recapture LUZON, PHILIPPINE ISLANDS. Intensive training and re-equipment of the division was conducted. Training consisted of amphibious landings, infantry-tank team coordination, night patrolling, motorized movements, and battalion assault firing exercises. No shortages of critical items of equipment existed prior to the operation. Replacements were received to bring the division to full T/O&E strength. Combat exercises were conducted based on the actual missions to be accomplished during the assault to secure the beachhead. Terrain, resembling as nearly as possible the ground of the objectives as determined from vertical and oblique aerial photographs, was utilized to familiarize all infantry elements with the details of the tactical plan. Every officer and man in the division was rehearsed in his specific duties during the initial phases of the operation.

See Map B The mission of the 43rd Infantry Division was to land on the Sixth Army left (north) flank in the SAN FABIAN-DAMORTIS area with its right boundary the BUED RIVER. Following the seizure of the initial beachhead, the division was to advance in its zone of action, seizing and securing crossings over the AGNO RIVER preparatory to continuing its advance to MANILA.

Preliminary information derived from Intelligence Reports based on Guerrilla sources indicated that the objective area of the division was strongly defended by the Japanese 23rd Infantry Division and the 58th Independent Mixed Brigade, with fortifications and gun emplacements constructed on the beaches from the mouth of the BUED RIVER at SAN FABIAN north to include ALACAN. (4)

(4) A-4, p. 1

The decision was made to land the division on three beaches designated as Beach White ONE, Beach White TWO, and Beach White THREE, extending south from the vicinity of ALACAN to SAN FABIAN. The 172nd Regimental Combat Team (less two battalions in division reserve) was to land on the most northerly beach, Beach White ONE, located north of ALACAN. The 103rd Regimental Combat Team was to land on the most southerly beach, Beach White THREE, located west of SAN FABIAN. The 169th Regimental Combat Team was to land on the center beach, Beach White TWO, located south of ALACAN. To prevent overtaxing the beach facilities, the division reserve, consisting of the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 172nd Infantry, was to be landed on call upon any one of the three beaches, as the tactical situation required and the beach conditions permitted. (See Map B)

Loading was completed Christmas Day, 1944 and a rehearsal landing was conducted 27 December. The convoy departed AITAPE, NEW GUINEA, at 281700 December 1944. Enemy interference with the movement to the Objective Area was characterized by ineffective attempts of a few midget submarines and a considerable number of "Suicide Plane" attacks. One enemy destroyer, attempting to infiltrate the convoy off MINDORO ISLAND, was taken under fire by the destroyer screen and exploded in a sheet of flame visible for thirty (30) miles. (5)

On S-day, 9 January 1945, following a heavy bombardment from J-150 minutes to J hour (0930), by planes, battleships, cruisers,

(5) A-4, p. 2

destroyers, rocket boats and LCI's mounting 4.2 inch mortars, the assault waves, mounted in LVT-A4's and LVT-4's were discharged from LST's, formed quickly, and crossed the line of departure on schedule at 090850 January.

The first waves were landed on Beaches White ONE and White TWO at 0930 and on Beach White THREE at 0940 and progressed rapidly inland, securing ALACAN Railroad Crossing at 1036 and SAN FABIAN at 1055. Enemy opposition consisted of heavy mortar and artillery fire on Beaches White ONE and TWO, causing a number of casualties, while only sporadic artillery fire fell on Beach White THREE. Civilians reported that the Japanese had evacuated their shore defenses two days prior to the landing, following an initial Air Force and US Pacific Fleet bombardment.

The decision was made at 1000 to land the Division Reserve, 1st and 3rd Battalions, 172nd Infantry, on Beach White ONE at once, since beach conditions proved very favorable. (6)

SITUATION AND PLANS OF THE 172ND INFANTRY (See Map C)

Immediately upon landing, the 172nd Infantry was to seize HILL 385, establish a road block on Highway 251 at the bridge 2000 yards north of ALACAN, and patrol vigorously toward RABON, HILL 363 and HILL 585. These measures were to secure the division and the Sixth Army left flanks and neutralize an anticipated major enemy counterattack from that direction. The Division Reserve (1st and 3rd Battalions) of the 172nd Infantry was to be located

(6) A-4, p. 2

in vicinity of PALAPAD to deal with this enemy counterattack if it developed, and to be ready to exploit success at any point in the division zone of action. (7)

The assault waves went forward smoothly and rapidly despite opposition in the zone of the 172nd Infantry characterized by enemy artillery fire of all calibers up to 300 mm howitzers and scattered small arms resistance from small enemy groups which were quickly eliminated. Air and naval gunfire support was effective. (8)

The regiment resumed its advance on objectives at daylight 10 January, seized HILL 385 and initiated envelopment of HILL 585. Strength was also advanced north along the ridges east of the RABON-ALACAN ROAD, to reinforce outposts in the vicinity of RABON. On HILL 470 the regiment made its first contact with enemy cave positions, encountering mutually supporting caves and tunnel systems which were employed as shelters for enemy infantry and gun positions for enemy artillery. These cave positions proved to be characteristic of most Japanese defensive positions on LUZON. (9)

Elements of the 158th RCT commenced landing on Beach White ONE early on the morning of 11 January, passed through the Division left flank and relieved 1st Battalion, 172nd Infantry in the vicinity of RABON effective 111300.

On 12 January the 63rd RCT (less one battalion) was attached to the 43rd Division from I Corps Reserve and moved to positions

- (7) A-4, p. 6
- (8) Personal knowledge
- (9) Personal knowledge

north of HILL 385 prepared to attack north along the line HILL 363-HILL 367-AMLANG. The 103rd Field Artillery Battalion, in support of the 172nd Infantry, engaged in a continuous counter-battery duel with enemy artillery in caves.

By 13 January, it was apparent that the enemy had elected to hold the high ground on the Sixth Army left at all costs, while in the flat lands to the south, Sixth Army elements proceeded relatively unopposed. The 158th RCT was attached to the 43rd Division and ordered to attack north in its sector. The 158th RCT made rapid progress north from RABON along the coastal plain and seized DAMORTIS on 13 January 1945. The 63rd RCT encountered stiff enemy resistance as it advanced but secured positions on the southern slopes of HILL 363 prior to darkness. The 172nd Infantry sustained numerous casualties in driving a stubbornly resisting enemy from his dug-in position on HILL 580; positions near the military crest, however, were secured.

On 14 January, the 158th RCT attacked east along the DAMORTIS-ROSARIO Highway while the 63rd Infantry seized positions on HILL 363 and continued to advance on HILL 367. The 172nd Infantry, attacking against fanatical resistance, seized HILL 585 and initiated envelopment of HILL 665.

At this time, intelligence information indicated that the 63rd, 158th, and 172nd RCT's were engaged against approximately one enemy reinforced infantry brigade and two battalions of artillery in the ROSARIO-CATAGUINTINGAN area. (10)

During the night of 14 January, an urgent order from 43rd Division Headquarters directed the seizure of the ROSARIO-DAMORTIS Road by darkness of 15 January.

NARRATION

CUTTING THE ROSARIO-DAMORTIS ROAD (11) *See Map D*

At 150700 January 1945, the Regimental Commander adopted a course of action which directed the 2nd Battalion to move east from HILL 585 across the foot hills of the main ridge line in a flanking movement into the APANGET RIVER VALLEY and then north to secure the NATIONAL HIGHWAY. The 3rd Battalion passed through the 2nd Battalion and a coordinated attack on HILL 665 was launched by the 3rd Battalion at 0900.

The 2nd Battalion immediately struck out across the plain to the north. At noon, a strong Japanese force was engaged in hastily prepared positions 500 yards southeast of PIMMILAPIN. Both the 2nd and 3rd Battalions became heavily engaged with the enemy with only visual contact between the two battalions. HILL 665 was defended from the heights by many well organized machine gun positions. L Company succeeded in knocking out these positions and inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy on the high ground and in tunneled artillery positions. Some positions held artillery pieces which were destroyed on the ground. Other positions had been vacated and only the emplacements remained. After HILL 665 was secured, I Company at 1700 pushed to the north across the high ridges just south of the National Highway.

Meanwhile, the 2nd Battalion successfully engaged and defeated the enemy force attempting to block its advance to the north. Apparently the enemy was taken completely by surprise by the flanking movement to the right. While his defense was determined, it was hastily organized and, after a short but intense,

(11) Personal knowledge

pitched battle at PIMMILAPIN in the early afternoon, the Japanese defense crumbled. The 2nd Battalion Commander exploited the surprise and shock of first assault and immediately pushed forward to cut the ROSARIO-DAMORTIS ROAD. The Battalion reached its objective at 151700 January, severing the NATIONAL HIGHWAY north of CONCEPCION, and organized the dominating terrain north of the Highway, completely cutting off the enemy's main supply route between ROSARIO and DAMORTIS.

THE ADVANCE TO THE NORTHEAST

After the 3rd Battalion secured HILL 665, I Company overcame scattered resistance and pushed on to establish contact with the 2nd Battalion at the highway just east of CATAGUINTINGAN. The organization and occupation of this ridge line was complicated by enemy artillery fire from the valley to the east, near ROSARIO.

At the time the objective was taken, the supply of the two battalions employed at this point necessitated a hand-carry for a period of seven miles over steep and rocky trails that were interdicted with hostile artillery fire.

Artillery fire of varying caliber fell throughout the night of 15-16 January on the newly established positions.

The following day, 16 January, strong patrols were dispatched to contact the 63rd Infantry Regiment to the east and to reconnoiter positions in the valley west of the 3rd Battalion. Patrols of the 2nd Battalion moved east to within 2000 yards of ROSARIO. Other elements secured more favorable terrain to the north and east of the original position. Enemy artillery and mortar fire continued to increase throughout the day and night.

An airdrop to supplement the supply of rations and ammunition carried by civilian carriers failed to materialize. However, one

artillery observation plane (L-4) dropped limited emergency rations and evacuated one seriously wounded patient. Both flanks of the Regiment were exposed with no contact established with units on the right or left. The day's operation netted a total of 52 counted enemy dead.

Reconnaissance and security patrols to the flank and front made strong enemy contacts. Casualties from patrolling and enemy mortar and artillery fire were heavy. Three officers from K Company securing the ridge line to the west were killed during enemy artillery concentrations. The supply situation continued critical.

On 17 January, the 1st Battalion was released from Division Reserve and reverted to Regimental control in the vicinity of the Regimental Command Post near CONCEPCION. Because of the comparatively small amount of rations and ammunition which had to be carried several miles over rugged, rocky hills, offensive operations were restricted to strong combat patrols carrying out reconnaissance and contact missions. Contact with the 63rd Infantry on the left was denied by heavily organized defensive positions held and maintained by the enemy in the valley west of the ridge line secured by the 3rd Battalion.

During the night of 17-18 January, a battery of 155mm howitzer, horse drawn, Japanese Artillery was heard moving east on the ROSARIO-DAMORTIS HIGHWAY. The column was approaching the road block held by the 2nd Battalion. Elements of the 3rd Battalion on the ridge line to the south could cover a section of the HIGHWAY to support the defense of the 2nd Battalion. The enemy marched down the Highway to within small arms range of the 2nd Battalion weapons covering the approaches from the west.

Exercising superb fire discipline, the Battalion held its fire until it could effectively annihilate the enemy battery. Almost simultaneously, the full weight of the defensive fire power of a rifle platoon reinforced which held the left flank of the block, was poured on the Japanese column. Before the battery could be destroyed, one gun crew succeeded in swinging one field piece into position to fire directly into a wooded draw approximately one hundred yards to the north of the highway where the Battalion Aid Station and Command Post were installed. The Jap crew succeeded in firing a single round of direct fire which burst in the trees. This single enemy shell killed three (3) officers, including the Battalion Commander and S-2, and fourteen (14) enlisted men, seriously wounding several others. When daylight came, one Japanese artillery battery, complete with personnel, horses, and five 155mm Howitzers littered the National Highway. A single wounded Jap survived and was captured.

At 180800 January, B Company was detached from the Regimental Reserve, and dispatched to pass through the positions held by the 2nd Battalion to a forward position approximately two miles to the northeast of the roadblock to secure the hill mass overlooking the town of RASARIO. The advance of B Company to this position achieved complete secrecy and surprise. From this vantage point the Company Commander directed highly successful artillery fire on enemy bivouac areas and supply and evacuation routes leading to the town of ROSARIO. Before being joined by the remainder of the battalion the following day, B Company killed some 50 Japs without suffering a single casualty. (12)

(12) A-8, p. 6

The terrain secured by B Company, together with the vital enemy information obtained from their forward positions influenced the plan for the seizure of the town of ROSARIO which was known to be a Japanese supply base and communication center. The Regimental Commander's plan directed the remainder of the 1st Battalion to build up on the position held by B Company, preparatory to a coordinated attack to take ROSARIO, and cut the National Highway leading to BAGUIO. The plan was approved by the Commanding General, 43rd Division. Meanwhile, the supply road was being pushed ahead as rapidly as possible. On 19 January, the remainder of the 1st Battalion, less C Company, moved northeast to join B Company on the ridge line northwest of ROSARIO. The Regiment, during this period, was supplied entirely by civilian carriers and emergency air drops which provided a maximum of 2/3 ration per day. However, the ammunition supply fulfilled the combat needs.

A strong enemy attack developed on the night of 19-20 January against the rear of the 3rd Battalion. A "Banzai" attack was launched from the west in strength of a full company. The enemy counterattacking force was repulsed. This penetration was attempted at the I Company perimeter which was reinforced with a section of heavy machine guns. At dawn, the morning of 20 January, a total of 68 Jap bodies were found inside the line. No friendly casualties were suffered. (13)

The advance of the 1st Battalion on 21 January was met by determined enemy resistance and heavy casualties were suffered before the ridge line overlooking ROSARIO was secured. At this

(13) A-8, p. 7

time the Regiment was reinforced by the 2nd Battalion, 121st Infantry, Philippine Army. This unit was immediately given the mission of securing the supply line over the ridges extending to the south from the ROSARIO-DAMORTIS HIGHWAY, thus disposing these troops south of the 3rd Battalion. Concurrently with the advance of the 1st Battalion, the 3rd Battalion continued to knock out enemy strong points in the valley to the west, while the 2nd Battalion maintained the road block and executed pressure on the Japanese line to the north and east, gaining visual contact with the 1st Battalion. C Company was released from Regimental Reserve and joined the 1st Battalion northwest of ROSARIO.

On 22 January, the force advancing on ROSARIO was built up to two battalions, the 3rd Battalion moving in on the left of the 1st Battalion. The 1st Battalion pushed southeast toward the objective against heavy and determined enemy resistance and suffered many casualties. On 22-23 January, the advance gained 1500 yards and secured the ridge line which forms the west wall of the BUGO VALLEY.

THE SEIZURE OF HILL 900 *Map 1*

On 24 January, the 158th Combat Team and 172nd Infantry were grouped to constitute the MacNider Force under the command of Brigadier General Hanford MacNider, as a part of the 43rd Infantry Division Reinforced. (14)

The 172nd Infantry was given the mission of seizing the high ground north and east of ROSARIO in order to establish a road-block on the ROSARIO-BAGUIO near DONGON. The 158th RCT was given the mission of opening the ROSARIO-DAMORTIS HIGHWAY and establishing contact with the 172nd Infantry to its east. At 241000

(14) A-4, p. 17

January, the 1st Battalion was ordered to advance to the east into the BUGO VALLEY to occupy the ridge line designated as the line of departure for a coordinated attack on the following day. Time of attack was to be 250800 January. The 3rd Battalion moved out following the 1st Battalion. (15)

The BUGO ROAD was a heavily used Japanese supply route leading into enemy dispositions to the north. Combat intelligence revealed Japanese strength in the valley at two battalions. (16) The plan for the seizure of the regimental objective directed the 1st and 3rd Battalions to move across the valley cutting the Japanese supply road. The 2nd Battalion had the dual mission of securing the exposed north flank and advancing in strength on ROSARIO, coordinated with the main effort to the east.

The initial advance the afternoon of 24 January was met with heavy enemy artillery concentrations. The troops dug in after dusk on the line of departure.

Intelligence reports from captured enemy documents and civilian and guerrilla sources confirmed the fact that the objective was a heavily fortified position with pillboxes constructed of logs and steel which the approaches from the south and west to BAGUIO. (17) This terrain, HILL 900, dominated the entire BUED RIVER VALLEY, and was later revealed to have a more extensive underground defensive set up than had been previously estimated. Huge underground fortifications constructed with 12 inch I beams dug in the southern slope of the objective ridge formed the backbone of the installation. Large rooms had been constructed and

- (15) A-4, p. 17
(16) A-8, p. 7
(17) A-8, p. 8

were connected by tunnels to defensive gun positions commanding the BUED RIVER VALLEY and approaches from the south and the west.

At 250730 January, the artillery preparation commenced and continued for thirty minutes. The 1st Battalion jumped off at 0800 in column of companies, B Company leading the assault. The attack was limited to a company front. The leading company received no enemy fire as it advanced, unobserved by the enemy to the crest of the hill. The lead scouts advanced across the ridge line and drew no enemy fire. It was not until the entire company, moving in three columns, had attained the heights that the Japs initiated a barrage of mortar and small arms fire.

B Company had a strong, hastily prepared line that dominated Japanese positions along the objective ridge to the south. A Company pressed hard on the right of B Company, with the remainder of the 1st Battalion rapidly moving up to reinforce the initial ground held by the assault company. The 3rd Battalion, echeloned to the right rear, scrambled up almost vertical grassy slopes to further extend the lines to the right. The northern nose of HILL 900 was secured and the heights overlooking CAMP ONE and the barrier at DONGON were completely held by the 1st and 3rd Battalions that afternoon. Our casualties in seizing and securing a foothold on HILL 900 were 9 killed and 50 wounded. (18)

THE CAPTURE OF ROSARIO

While the attack on HILL 900 was in progress, the 2nd Battalion fought to the outskirts of ROSARIO from the northwest and the northeast taking HILL 600 preparatory to occupation of the town. Advance reconnaissance patrols entered the town under scattered fire on the afternoon of 26 January.

(18) Personal knowledge

The night of 25-26 January, the Japs launched two coordinated attacks on HILL 900, supported by heavy and light mortar preparations, but failed to gain penetration of the perimeter and heavy casualties were inflicted on them.

At 260800 January, the 3rd Battalion made a right turn to push south down the series of ridge knobs between HILL 900 and the road junction at UDAIO where the National Highway from ROSARIO to BAGUIO joined the route southward leading into the central plains. The 1st Battalion was left to secure the northern tip of HILL 900.

The 3rd Battalion jumped off at 260824 January, striking the heavy Japanese fortification commanding the road junction from the rear. All the enemy heavy gun positions faced to the south. To meet the advance of the 3rd Battalion moving from the north, the enemy was forced to leave his pillboxes and defend the ridge line from hastily prepared positions on the ridges. The 3rd Battalion advanced 700 yards from hill to hill fighting for every single yard.

On 26 January, the 158th RCT succeeding in completely opening the ROSARIO-DAMORTIS road from the west making contact with the 172nd Infantry after nearly two weeks of bitter fighting along the National Highway. (19) The opening of this road shortened our main supply road by 10 miles and the winding, steep and treacherous supply trail was abandoned for the two lane concrete highway.

At 281030 January, the town of ROSARIO was completely occupied by the 2nd Battalion. This marked the end of a four

(19) A-4, p. 17

day seizure of this Japanese supply and communication center which entailed mopping up enemy resistance by foot troops moving from house to house, many of which were mined and booby trapped by the Japanese before relinquishing the town. The town contained many supply dumps of signal, medical, ordnance and quartermaster supplies.

The advance of the 3rd Battalion a mile to the north to cut ROSARIO from the northeast developed into a bitter and hard fought slugging match. As the Infantry advanced, the fighting developed into a battle of hand grenades, the Japs defending only a few yards from the crest of the knobs, and the battalion troops crawling on their stomachs to throw grenades over the ridge line. Both forces were too closely joined for use of any supporting weapons heavier than 60mm mortars and knee mortars. On the last high ground north of the Highway, the Japs made his most determined stand. K Company assaulted and seized the knob and suffered 2 killed and 46 wounded. After two days of fierce fighting the 3rd Battalion finally reached the vital road junction at UDAIO at 291200 January 1945, securing the last phase of the Regimental objective at the northern limits of the Sixth Army beachhead.

The severance of the National Highway at this junction cut off one of the main Japanese supply installations which were well camouflaged and dug in one mile southeast of ROSARIO, consisting of 58 separate supply warehouses.

During this ROSARIO Phase of the LUZON campaign our casualties were 135 killed in action and 579 wounded in action as compared with 1269 Japanese killed and 8 prisoners of war captured. (20)

(20) A-8, p. 10

To sum up the results of this battle: The 172nd Infantry in capturing HILL 900 and ROSARIO has given friendly forces the following advantages:

- (1) Secured the road net, DAMORTIS-ROSARIO-SISON.
- (2) Denied the enemy the use of his major route to and from BAGUIO.
- (3) Neutralized the enemy forces massed in the DONGON area.
- (4) Captured 1100 tons of Japanese supplies of all types, in addition to numerous vehicles and weapons.
- (5) Provided a key terrain feature from which to launch subsequent attacks to the north and northwest.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. SUPPLY AND EVACUATION

Next to the Japanese elaborate system of defensive fortifications, the seven mile bulldozed supply trail was the greatest difficulty encountered by the 172nd Infantry in the ROSARIO operation. Wheeled vehicles could not traverse the steep, rocky, vertical dips, and the Philippine natives who hand-carried supplies were subjected to such heavy enemy fire that airdrops eventually had to be resorted to in order to keep the attacking troops equipped with supplies and ammunition. The inadequate supply of food and water tended to reduce the combat efficiency of the troops when, on 16 January, the airdrop failed to materialize, thereby restricting operations to combat patrols, reconnaissance and contact missions. This failure of supply resulted in a restriction of aggressive offensive movements forward.

2. MANEUVER

HILL 900, 1500 yards to the northeast of ROSARIO commanded the DAMORTIS-ROSARIO ROAD, the BAGUIO ROAD, the SISON ROAD and the plains to the south of ROSARIO. It was evident that to approach this fortress from the west along the DAMORTIS-ROSARIO ROAD, or from the south through the low level ground would be costly and would promise little success.

The order was given to the 3rd Battalion to attack from the north flank. The disadvantages of this plan were apparent. A march of six miles over extremely difficult terrain was necessary before our forces could expect to contact the enemy. Supply, evacuation and communication over this distance would be difficult and would be subject at any time to enemy interference. No troops were available, initially to secure the line of communications or to assist in supply and evacuation of this battalion. If the enemy chose to commit themselves in the hills, and then counterattacked in strength, the regiment would be in a very poor position to assist the battalion.

However, examination of the terrain and its lack of cover and concealment for troops attacking from the south or southeast, plus our knowledge of Japanese strength defending the area made it evident that the advantages of a long range envelopment to attack from the north outweighed the disadvantages. A bold plan of action, and skillful aggressive execution of this plan resulted in the capture of HILL 900, the key terrain in the regimental sector.

3. REAR ENVELOPMENT

The Japanese defensive fortifications on HILL 900 were organized on key terrain features facing to the west and to the

south, and were organized in strength. It was necessary to reduce each position individually. However, as had been anticipated, the enemy had not contemplated an attack from the north, and when the 3rd Battalion enveloped from the north flank, the Japanese were forced out of their pillboxes and had to fight on the ridge lines. Consequently, the reduction of the fortifications was effected with greater speed and at less cost than could normally have been expected.

4. DEBARKATION DRESS REHEARSAL

Debarkation rehearsal was conducted for all troops the day after embarkation and the day before sailing. The entire division stood out to sea during the night, formed up as a convoy and re-entered AITAPE Roads just before dawn, in simulation of an invasion. The beaches had been previously marked off to simulate those to be used in LINGAYEN GULF. The various ships anchored in their proper order and combat troops with their light equipment were put on the beaches in exact accordance with the schedule and plan as approved for the actual landing. Differences of understanding, minor faults in the plans and obscure points were thus discovered and eliminated, and all personnel involved were given a clear picture of their own particular parts in the play. The results of this rehearsal were evident in the smoothly efficient landing at LINGAYEN GULF on S-Day.

5. INFELXIBILITY OF THE ENEMY

The Japanese had fortified the hill mass overlooking ROSARIO from the north in such strength that to attack from the south or west would have resulted in numerous casualties to our forces. All apertures of pillboxes opened on the BUED RIVER Valley and the hills to the west, taking advantage of the

natural strength of the terrain. However, the enemy's failure to establish even observation posts to the north left his rear completely open to the unanticipated attack of the 3rd Battalion, and resulted in his being forced to fight on exposed ridge lines. This inflexibility of planning resulted in his ultimate destruction.

6. RECONNAISSANCE

The detailed preliminary reconnaissance by the Regimental Commander of the 172nd Infantry of the areas to the south and west of ROSARIO, supplemented by information from intelligence agencies, proved to him that, although these approaches would have been normal routes of attack, in this case to use these routes would be disastrous. His meticulous map and ground reconnaissance resulted in his bold plan of action to envelope the enemy's rear. He weighed the risk and risked the chances, and thereby achieved a notable tactical success due principally to his detailed reconnaissance.

7. DEFENSE OF DOMINANT TERRAIN

HILL 900 was an ideal position from which to defend. It afforded excellent observation and fields of fire and was the key terrain in the ROSARIO sector. The Japanese considered it inaccessible by attacking forces, and it most likely would have been most difficult to attain if they had used all available plans to defend it. However, anticipating only frontal or flank assaults, the enemy neglected an "all around defense" with the result that they were attacked from their weakest point and lost their commanding ground in the area.

LESSONS

1. Special measures must be initiated and maintained to supply units in the attack whose usual supply lines become inoperative.
2. A bold plan of long range maneuver, skillfully and aggressively carried out will often times insure quick seizure of the objective with a minimum of casualties.
3. A carefully planned and aggressively executed envelopment from the rear will result in complete destruction of the opposing forces.
4. Rehearsals, in areas and under conditions similar to the projected operation, by all troops participating in an amphibious landing will result in a smooth operational landing.
5. Exploitation of the inflexibility of the enemy's plan will do much to insure tactical success.
6. Detailed preliminary reconnaissance, if time is available, prior to a tactical operation is invaluable in creating surprise and defeating the enemy.
7. Defense of dominant terrain must follow the principle of all around security if the commanding ground is to be retained.