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THE LOS BANOS RAID, 23 FEBRUARY 1945,
A REINFORCEMENT OF CURRENT RAIDING DOCTRINE
(RESEARCH).

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Overview. On 23 February 1945, the Los Banos Force, commanded by Colonel Robert H. Soule, conducted a raid on the Japanese internment camp at Los Banos and liberated 2,147 internees. Casualty reports indicated only two Americans were killed during the operation. The Japanese suffered 243 soldiers killed by the American raiding force.

B. Scope. This monograph is concerned with the detailed planning performed in preparation for the raid, the scheme of maneuver adopted for the operation, and the execution of this scheme of maneuver. The reasons for selecting the scheme of maneuver used will also be addressed in the discussion of the planning phase.

C. Objectives. The tasks performed while preparing for the operation and the plan selected for its execution will be examined to portray how this mission reinforces current doctrine for planning and conducting raiding operations. I shall critique the operation by discussing tasks which were not performed during the planning phase, which may have provided additional insurance of mission accomplishment.

D. Method of Development. This monograph is prepared in the chronological order of events.

II. BODY

A. Background.

On 31 January 1945, the 11th Airborne Division conducted an amphibious landing at Nasugbu, Batangas Province, Philippine Islands, and advanced rapidly to the suburbs of Manila by 4 February. At this time, the airborne division met a strong Japanese defensive in the Nichols Field and Fort William McKinley areas and became heavily engaged with the enemy. (9:1)

While the 11th Airborne Division was combating the enemy in the suburbs of Manila, General MacArthur received an intelligence report indicating that several hundred American civilians and possibly some prisoners of war were incarcerated at a Japanese internment camp at the village of Los Banos on the southern shore of Laguna De Bay. Since the extreme brutality of the Japanese was well known, General Headquarters concluded that the internees at Los Banos should be rescued without delay. A directive, assigning the task of liberating the prisoners, was issued to the 11th Airborne Division on 4 February 1945. (1:159)

Since the entire 11th Airborne Division was engaged with the enemy south of Manila and no troops were available to conduct the assigned rescue mission, the

commander of the airborne division requested permission to postpone the operation until an adequate force could be withdrawn from combat to conduct the mission. Approval was granted for the requested postponement. (9:1)

On 10 February, operation control of the 11th Airborne Division passed to XIV Corps as the XIV Corps units moved into the area occupied by the airborne division. Sixth Army assigned the mission of rescuing the internees at Los Banos to XIV Corps. XIV Corps, subsequently, delegated the rescue mission to the 11th Airborne Division. (1:159) Since the airborne division was still engaged with the Japanese forces near Manila, MG Joseph M. Swing, the division commander, directed the division staff to conduct the reconnaissance and most of the detailed planning. (9:1)

B. Intelligence Operation.

Through Major Vanderpool, the general headquarters representative with the friendly guerrilla units in Batangas Province, the division G2 infiltrated a reconnaissance party into the area and obtained a very detailed sketch of the internment camp. This sketch included the exact location of every sentry, the commandant's headquarters, guard barracks, the buildings containing weapons and ammunition, and the concealed approaches small parties could use to reach and attack all sentries simultaneously. During this reconnaissance, a parachute drop zone was thoroughly reconnoitered and arrangements were made for guerrillas to secure the drop zone on the night prior to the attack. (9:2)

While the internment camp was being reconnoitered, the 127th Airborne Engineer Battalion, the airborne division engineers, conducted a route reconnaissance of Highway No. 1 from Alabang to Calamba. The purpose of this reconnaissance was to insure the route was passable for trucks, artillery pieces, and armored vehicles. The most significant contribution of the engineers was their reconnaissance of the muddy shores of the Laguna De Bay in search of landing sites for amphibious vehicles. From this detailed survey, the engineers recommended a near beach at Mamatid and a far beach at San Antonio near Los Banos. (9:2)

Through other intelligence sources, it was determined that approximately 6,000 Japanese were located in the Laguna Province and that the internment camp at Los Banos was occupied by 80 guards commanded by a major. The most significant bit of information obtained was that the Japanese assembled at 0700 daily for roll call and calisthenics, without weapons. (8:27)

Other intelligence reports indicated that a company of Japanese, supported by several machine guns and two 105-mm howitzers, was located at a gravel quarry about 3,000 yards to the west of Los Banos and that a roadblock, occupied by a company of Japanese with two

75-mm guns, was located south of the San Juan River at Lecheria Hills on Highway No. 1. The natives in the area were reported to be Japanese sympathizers. (1:164)

After gathering the above information, the division staff began the detailed planning for the operation. After careful consideration of the various alternatives, Major General Swing decided to combine the use of air, land, and water to transport the raiding force to the objective. (1:164)

C. Plan of Attack.

The plan of attack called for the division reconnaissance platoon, a group of 50 selected guerrillas, and two escaped internees to infiltrate into the objective area and silently move to concealed positions from where the prison guards could be eliminated at H-hour. The planners realized that a direct assault on the objective would jeopardize the lives of the internees. (1:164)

The augmented reconnaissance platoon was to depart Mamatid 36 hours prior to H-hour in native canoes, land at the far beach near Los Banos, and be in position to support the main attack prior to H-hour. Personnel were selected to proceed to the drop zone and landing beach, secure the sites until H-hour, mark the sites with smoke grenades on H-hour, and then provide security until the paratroopers and amphibious force arrived. (1:164)

Designated personnel were detailed to eliminate the sentries; the remaining personnel were assigned to groups as marksmen to cover the drill area, weapons racks, and other vital areas with suppressive fire. On the pre-arranged signal, the opening of the first parachute, the infiltrating force was to attempt to annihilate the Japanese force before any defensive action could be taken. (1:164)

Company B, 1st Battalion, 511th Parachute Infantry, 11th Airborne Division, was detailed to be the airborne assault force. Company B was to be airlifted from Nichols Field in Manila by the 65th Squadron, 54th Troop Carrier Wing, to the drop zone which was located approximately 800 yards west of the internment camp. After the parachute drop, the airborne company was to move immediately to the prison camp, eliminate the remaining Japanese, and organize the internees for a speedy evacuation. The parachute drop was scheduled for H-hour. The opening of the first parachute was selected as the attack signal since it would be clearly visible to all personnel on the ground. (9:3)

In order to successfully complete the rescue, the internees had to be evacuated well behind friendly lines where they could be given food, clothing, rest, and medical care. The planners agreed that the internees could not survive a long road march through enemy territory because of their undernourished state. In addition, a road march would be too time-consuming and would give the Japanese adequate time to organize an offensive to strike

the marching column. The demolished bridges and impassable road between Los Banos and Calamba dictated that evacuation by motor transportation would also be infeasible. After considering the alternatives available, the plan to evacuate the internees by amphibious vehicle via the Laguna De Bay was adopted. (1:164)

The water distance from Mamatid to Los Banos was 7.2 miles which required 1 hour and 14 minutes travel time by amphibious tractor. The amphibious tractors (amtracks) were to be provided by the 672d Amphibious Tractor Battalion. The 1st Battalion, 511th Parachute Infantry, minus Company B, the airborne element, was designated as the amphibious landing force. Attached to the main attack force were two 75-mm assault guns from Battery D, 457th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion. (9:4)

The amphibious landing was programmed to be accomplished at H-hour. The amphibious force had the mission of establishing road blocks, warding off any Japanese resistance from the southeast, and encircling the internment camp to provide security while the internees were boarding the amtracks. After accomplishing the initial security mission, the amtracks were to proceed directly to prearranged wards and barracks in the camp to facilitate rapid loading of the prisoners for evacuation. The planners anticipated that all internees could be evacuated in two serials. The liberating force would then withdraw up the west shore of the Laguna De Bay and make contact with the supporting attack force east of the San Juan River. (9:4)

The 1st Battalion, 188th Glider Infantry, was designated as the supporting force and had the mission of attacking across the San Juan River at H-hour to effect a meeting with the withdrawing liberating force and assist in their withdrawal. This attack would require the Japanese to reinforce their defenses in the area and would also act as an excellent deception to distract attention from the activity of the liberating force at Los Banos. The attack of the 188th was supported by two battalions of field artillery and one company, minus one platoon, of tank destroyers. (8:27)

The operation plan was completed on 12 February 1945 and forwarded to the XIV Corps commander for approval. The plan was approved without changes and the tentative date of 22 February 1945 was selected for conduct of the operation.

D. Events Prior to the Attack.

By 19 February, both Nichols Field and Fort William McKinley were captured by American forces. On the date of the capture of Fort McKinley, 19 February, the personnel selected for the raid were withdrawn from the lines and began to prepare for the daring operation. (9:2)

On 21 February 1945, an 11th Airborne Division field order created the Los Banos Force and designated 23 February as the operation date. The Los Banos Force was commanded by COL Robert H. Soule, 188th Glider Infantry, and included the following units: the 1st Battalion, 511th Parachute Infantry, commanded by MAJ Henry A. Burgess; the 1st Battalion, 188th Glider Infantry, commanded by LTC Ernest LaFlamme; the 675th Glider Field Artillery Battalion, commanded by LTC Ernest L. Massad; the 472d Field Artillery Battalion, commanded by LTC Thomas F. Bienvenu; Battery D, 457th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion, commanded by CPT Luis M. Barris; the division reconnaissance platoon, commanded by 1LT George Skau; and the 672d Amphibious Tractor Battalion, commanded by LTC Joseph W. Gibbs. Headquarters Company, 188th Glider Infantry, was designated the force headquarters. (1:161) (9:2)

As programmed in the division plan, the augmented division reconnaissance platoon, totalling about 82 men, embarked from a beach just north of Mamatid on the west coast of the Laguna De Bay at 1900, 21 February 1945. (9:3)

By the night of 22 February, all forces participating in the operation, except the airborne company, had moved from the staging areas at Paranaque and were occupying bivouac sites south of Muntinlupa. The personnel of the airborne force were sleeping under the airplanes at Nichols Field. Final preparations for receiving the internees were being made on the beach at Mamatid. Eighteen ambulances and twenty-five 2 1/2-ton trucks were assembled near the beach to transport the internees to Muntinlupa where a hospital was being established in the New Bilibid Prison. Military police were waiting on the beach to escort the convoys of ambulances and trucks from Mamatid to Muntinlupa. The 1st Battalion, 511th Parachute Infantry, the amphibious force, was occupying concealed positions near the beach, awaiting the time for their departure. The 1st Battalion, 188th Glider Infantry, the supporting force, was located on the west bank of the San Juan River, ready to attack across the river the following morning. Supporting artillery units had relocated from Muntinlupa on the night of 21 February and were in concealed firing positions near Mamatid. (9:3)

During the final days before the operation, Major General Swing received numerous reports which indicated that possibly the enemy had knowledge of the proposed raid. An escaped internee reported that the internees in the camp knew of the impending operation and were holding daily rescue drills in preparation for the event. A guerrilla scout in the objective area reported by radio that the garrison at Los Banos had been reinforced by 3,000 Japanese troops. Seven hours prior to H-hour, the pilot of a night fighter aircraft reported having seen many Japanese truck lights in the vicinity of Los Banos. These reports caused the division commander and his staff much concern; however, after careful consideration, the reports were determined to be unreliable. Because of the

detrimental effect erroneous reports can have on personnel preparing for a daring operation, these reports were not forwarded to the participating units. Although they were considered unreliable, the reports caused the division commander to take additional precautions. The 2d Battalion, 511th Parachute Infantry, was alerted as a possible reserve. Major General Swing, who had initially intended to jump with the paratroopers, abandoned the idea of accompanying the airborne force and elected to move a forward division command post near the force headquarters in order to take command in the event of a decisive engagement. (9:3)

E. Execution of the Plan.

While the larger units were moving into their respective positions around Mamatid, the division reconnaissance platoon embarked in canoes for the objective area at the prescribed time, H-36 hours. During movement, the infiltrating force encountered heavy winds which almost doubled the estimated travel time. After safely landing at a site near Los Banos, the force was faced with a gruelling march through the knee-deep mud of the rice paddies along the shore of the Laguna De Bay. Although they were faced with unexpected difficulties during movement, the infiltrating force still managed to reach their previously designated positions prior to H-hour. Some of the raiders were able to move within a few yards of the sentries they intended to kill. (1:164)

At 0515 on 23 February, the amtracks, carrying the 350 members of the amphibious force, entered the Laguna De Bay at Mamatid. The initial formation was three amtracks abreast, 18 vehicles deep. Since the vehicles entered the water before daylight, the course had to initially be steered by compass. The precise timing and exact landing of the amphibious force was due to the exceptional navigational skill of the commanding officer of the amphibious tractor battalion. The amphibious force travelled through darkness over an unfamiliar route and landed at the selected beach 1 minute prior to H-hour. (8:26)

At 0630, 23 February, nine C-47 troop transport planes departed Nichols Field in Manila with the airborne force, Company B, 1st Battalion, 511th Parachute Infantry. This force was comprised of 125 officers and men. The transporting aircraft rendezvoused over the airfield and then began the short journey towards Los Banos. (9:3)

At 0658, as night was yielding to dawn, two columns of white smoke were seen ascending from the landing beach and, simultaneously, two more columns were seen coming from the drop zone. This was the first indication that the division reconnaissance platoon had accomplished their initial task of marking the landing beach and the drop zone. The amphibious force was only a short distance off the beach and was travelling directly toward the landing site. One minute later the C-47's passed over the amtracks on course for the drop zone. With the aircraft

in sight, the members of the reconnaissance platoon moved silently to obtain better positions from which to eliminate the sentinels and direct suppressive fire on the critical locations within the compound. (1:165)

At 0700, the first parachute inflated in the sky, signaling all elements of the raiding force to commence the attack. The sentinels were overwhelmed by surprise and killed by grenades, rifle fire, or bayonets. The various groups of marksmen, located on the high ground around the camp, delivered a heavy volume of fire on the stunned Japanese inside the compound. Lieutenant Skau and a squad of selected men destroyed a pillbox housing three machine guns. (9:4)

All paratroopers landed on the drop zone without injuries, assembled in 3 minutes, and began the 800-yard run to the internment camp. One light machine gun was encountered and destroyed on the way. The parachute force arrived at the compound at 0717, 17 minutes after the first parachute opened. They immediately eliminated the few remaining Japanese in the area, established a perimeter defense around the camp, and began organizing the internees for evacuation. (1:165)

The first waves of amtracks separated into two groups after landing. One group moved west to Mayandon Point, overpowered a small enemy force, and then moved south to Los Banos and established a blocking position approximately 1,500 yards east of the internment camp. The second group proceeded east to Bay and occupied the high ground which dominated the eastern approaches into the objective area. Battery D, 457th Field Artillery Battalion, established positions on the beach and supported the two groups of maneuvering amtracks with fire.

The remaining waves of amphibious vehicles moved directly to the camp where they met the airborne force. Approximately 1,500 internees were quickly loaded on the amtracks and the amphibious vehicles immediately withdrew to the beach for the return trip to Mamatid. The first serial of amtracks transported the sick, aged, crippled, or injured internees, those requiring the most immediate medical attention. The remaining internees were escorted on foot to the beach where a security perimeter was established to await the return of the amtracks. (9:4)

Meanwhile, the 1st Battalion, 188th Glider Infantry, crossed the San Juan River at 0700 and seized the Lecheria Hills by 0745. Meeting only light resistance, the supporting force advanced to the Dampalit River by noon. By this time, it was apparent that both the infiltrating force and the amphibious force could be withdrawn by amphibious vehicle. Thus, the supporting attack battalion was ordered to withdraw and establish a defensive position to hold the Lecheria Hills and the bridgehead on the San Juan River. (9:4)

At approximately 1200, the amtracks returned to the beach for the second serial. The vehicles were

quickly loaded with all personnel remaining on the beach and immediately departed on the final trip to Mamatid. By 1500, all amtracks, except one, had returned safely to Mamatid. One amphibious vehicle had been damaged by enemy fire on the beach. After the passengers were transferred to another vehicle, the amtrack was sunk to avoid capture. (8:29)

By 1700, 23 February 1945, the Los Banos raid was officially completed. At this time, all rescued internees, totalling 2,147, were being cared for in the hospital at New Bilibid Prison and the 1st Battalion, 188th Glider Infantry, had assumed its defensive posture in the San Juan River area. The most significant feature of the Los Banos raid is that American casualties were only two killed in action and three wounded in action, while 243 Japanese were killed during the day's operation.

The internees rescued on the raid included 1,583 Americans, 323 British, 144 Canadians, 32 Australians, 22 Poles, 16 Italians, 10 Norwegians, and some French and Nicaraguan citizens. Of these, 107 persons were immediately hospitalized for diseases and illnesses incurred during internment. (5: Incl. No. 2, 35)

III. ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

A. Method of Presentation.

After extensive research of all applicable manuals and documented sources, I have compiled a list of 10 fundamentals or principles which I consider to be the accepted U.S. Army doctrine for planning and executing raids. Each of these principles is listed below and is followed by a brief discussion explaining my reasons for selecting the fundamental. I have also compared each fundamental to the plan adopted for the Los Banos raid to show the similarity of present doctrine to the principles used in planning and executing this highly successful operation. My overall objectives are to prove the validity of currently accepted raiding doctrine and to provide evidence that this doctrine possibly evolved from such brilliantly planned and executed operations as the raid on Los Banos.

B. Current Raiding Doctrine.

1. Planning. Deliberate planning is required to insure contingencies are established for all situations. In a well planned operation, nothing goes unnoticed. A detailed plan of withdrawal is one of the most critical features of a raid. Thorough planning requires close and continuous coordination between participating units, staff sections, or services to insure the best possible plan is adopted for the operation. Planning should be conducted at the lowest possible level. (3:7-13) (6:17) (7:12-7)

The planning performed for the Los Banos raid is one of the primary reasons for its complete success. Details were exact and timing was precise throughout the operation. It is evident from the success of the

raid that much effort was exhausted in attempting to plan a perfect operation.

Although the plan was an ingenious one, it had faults which were not readily noticeable. An adequate reserve force was not available for immediate employment to support the liberating force. The 2d Battalion, 511th Infantry, was alerted to act as a possible reserve, but this battalion was heavily engaged near Manila at the time the operation was conducted. It is doubtful that a battalion reserve could have been gathered in sufficient time to provide assistance, had the requirement existed. In addition, the planning was not conducted at the lowest possible level. It was accomplished at division headquarters. In addressing the problems of having an inadequate reserve and failing to conduct the planning at the lowest possible level, it should be mentioned that all units of the 11th Airborne Division were heavily engaged with the enemy near Manila when the division was tasked to conduct the rescue. My research did not disclose whether or not Major General Swing attempted to procure an adequate reserve from resources outside the airborne division. At any rate, a reserve, capable of deployment at a moment's notice, should have been programmed if such a force was available and could have been organized without compromising the operation. If all measures were exhausted in an attempt to satisfy the need for a reserve, then the planners can not be criticized for incomplete planning. Major General Swing assigned the task of planning the raid to the division staff because the units which were to participate in the operation had an insufficient number of personnel to perform the required planning and also continue the offensive south of Manila. In my opinion, the lack of sufficient personnel at the desired planning level is adequate justification for planning an operation at a higher echelon.

2. Intelligence. Detailed and timely intelligence of enemy activities is a mandatory prerequisite for planning and executing a successful raid. All matters concerning a raid are in one way or another linked with intelligence. The gathered intelligence is what dictates the mission of the raiding force. The size of the raiding force depends on the intelligence reports of enemy activity in the target area. A raid can not be thoroughly planned nor supported without timely and accurate intelligence. (6:16)

While planning the Los Banos raid, the division staff had many thorough intelligence reports upon which to base a scheme of maneuver. The success of the division's intelligence gathering effort can be directly attributed to detailed information and sketches obtained by a reconnaissance party from the G2, which infiltrated into the target area during the initial stages of planning. A continuous effort was made by the division from the date the mission was assigned until the passing of H-hour to acquire detailed and factual information pertinent to the Los Banos area.

Though most of the intelligence received by division headquarters was timely and accurate, several erroneous reports were also received during the final planning phase. As late as 7 hours prior to H-hour, a series of reports were received which indicated the mission was known to the enemy. These reports caused the division commander and his staff much concern; however, after careful consideration, the reports were classified unreliable and the operation continued as planned. Accurate evaluation of intelligence is a prerequisite for an effective intelligence effort.

3. Security. On a raid, physical security measures must be continuously emphasized since the raiding force normally enters prepared enemy positions and is vulnerable to attacks from all directions. Through the employment of a rigid physical security posture, the raiding force can avoid interference by enemy forces, maintain the integrity of the formation, and gain and maintain reasonable freedom of action. (7:12-6) Strategic security must also be practiced rigidly to avoid compromise of planned operations. Signal security and electronic countermeasures are means by which the division commander can directly influence the control of classified information. Although communications security is a vital part of any overall security practice, all control means available must be utilized to insure that information concerning future operations is properly protected. (7:6-7)

While planning the raid, the division staff took every possible precaution to avoid a security leak which could have jeopardized the success of the operation. Though division headquarters received reports indicating that the enemy had knowledge of the intention to rescue the internees, it became obvious that these reports were erroneous when the attacking forces landed at Los Banos. Physical security for the attacking forces was planned in detail. The attack across the San Juan River was adopted for use as a supporting attack, as a deception, and as an additional security measure for the main attack.

The success of the raid is evidence that the physical security measures used during the raid were more than adequate. As planned, the violence and speed of the attack provided excellent security because the enemy was so surprised by the incursion that he had neither the time nor the means to endanger the success of the attack. The attack across the San Juan River by the 1st Battalion, 188th Glider Infantry, offered an additional degree of security for the liberating forces in that attention was temporarily diverted from the internment camp.

4. Surprise. The ultimate success of a raid depends largely on surprise. For this reason, raids should be conducted during adverse weather conditions, during periods of reduced visibility, or at times when the enemy will least expect an attack. The raiding force should be no larger than required to accomplish the mission. The larger the raiding force, the more difficult it is to achieve surprise and maintain control. (2:6-7)

Little needs to be said about the adherence to the principle of surprise in planning the Los Banos raid. The entire operation was centered on the principle of achieving surprise initially and overpowering the enemy through force and violence of action. The detailed planning performed in establishing precise time schedules and contingency plans for the attack was done with the intention of attacking the enemy at his most vulnerable time. As planned, the attack was conducted while the Japanese were participating in calisthenics without weapons.

The success of the Los Banos raid can be directly attributed to the liberating force capitalizing on the element of surprise. Because the initial phase of the attack was so well executed, the Japanese force in the internment camp was annihilated within minutes after the attack signal was given. The rapid and violent execution of the attack precluded the Japanese from organizing a defense and, consequently, the confused prison guards became easy prey for the well positioned marksmen of the infiltrating force.

5. Rehearsal. When possible, rehearsals should be conducted over terrain similar to the terrain in the objective area and under conditions similar to those anticipated during the actual raid. By rehearsing thoroughly, each individual will know exactly what he is required to do and where it is to be done. Rehearsals also uncover unforeseen situations which may not have been considered during planning. (2:6-7)

The Los Banos Force did not conduct any known major rehearsals; however, extensive map and intelligence studies were performed.

Time was a critical factor during preparation for the Los Banos raid. The units which participated in the operation were withdrawn from combat in the Manila area on 21 February and the raid was conducted on 23 February 1945. Most of the available time was used for organizing forces, briefing personnel, procuring necessary equipment and weapons, and relocating the various forces to their respective embarkation points. In order to have adequate time for thorough rehearsals, the raid would have had to be postponed for the time required to accomplish the training. If the raid had been postponed, a compromise could have occurred which would have resulted in failure to accomplish the mission. Considering these aspects, the situation surrounding the Los Banos raid did not permit thorough rehearsals and, in my opinion, the decision makers were correct in conducting the operation as scheduled.

6. Aircraft. Aircraft can be used in a variety of advantageous ways to support raiding operations. The use of aircraft for transportation permits the raiding force to bypass enemy positions, impassable terrain, and distance barriers. Through the employment of airborne or airmobile tactics, a raiding party can be placed on or near an objective which will facilitate the achievement of surprise and will promote confusion of the enemy. (2:6-7)

Aircraft also provides a means for day or night aerial reconnaissance and a method for taking aerial photographs. The use of aircraft to deliver fire support is a very effective method of suppressing enemy fire, destroying enemy positions, and supporting the attack of the objective. (5:17-5)

In planning the Los Banos raid, the commander of the airborne division decided that the use of an airborne force would greatly enhance the surprise achieved by the attacking force. Company B, 1st Battalion, 511th Parachute Infantry, was the unit selected to provide the airborne punch. Company B had the mission of assisting the infiltrating force in eliminating the Japanese in the camp and organizing the internees for a speedy evacuation. The raid planners reasoned that the airborne force could land near the camp without risking a meeting engagement en route, could assemble in a matter of minutes, and could violently attack the camp under the supporting fire of the infiltrating force, killing the Japanese before an adequate defense could be organized.

Though the infiltrating force annihilated the majority of the Japanese before the airborne force reached the compound, the use of the airborne company as the attack force was very successful. Even if the infiltrating force had failed to accomplish its mission thoroughly, it is conceived that the airborne company could have still routed the camp of Japanese occupants. The most significant fact of the airborne portion of the operation is that only 17 minutes elapsed from the time the first parachute opened until the parachute force was inside the compound.

The reasons for not flying aerial photography missions during the planning phase and for not using air-delivered munitions during the execution phase could not be determined during my research. This was possibly an error on the part of the planners as aerial photographs of the camp would have greatly benefited the participating units. The division commander may have neglected to fly photo missions for fear that the overflights might compromise the operation. If the aircraft were available, fighters and bombers should have definitely been programmed to support the raid.

7. Fire Support. Preparatory and supporting fires should be used in a raid as in any offensive action. Protective fires can be effectively used to isolate the objective, prevent or limit counterattacks, and keep the routes of withdrawal free of enemy interference. When surprise is sought and preparatory fires are not used, fire support should be planned and held on call. (7:12-7)

During preparation for the operation, artillery was planned to support all forces participating in the raid. Artillery pieces were relocated far enough to the south to sufficiently cover the entire area of operations. The assault guns accompanying the amphibious

force provided the necessary fire support to the two maneuvering amphibious elements. Air-delivered fire support was addressed in the discussion of the preceding principle.

The artillery fires programmed during planning proved to be sufficient to adequately support the operation. Artillery fire was effectively used in the attack across the San Juan River and in the clearing of the area east of Los Banos by the amphibious force. Air-delivered fire support would have been especially warranted if one or more of the attacking elements had become decisively engaged.

8. Guerrillas. Deep raids can be assisted significantly by the use of indigenous guerrillas to act as scouts or guides, to carry equipment, heavy weapons, or demolitions, to prepare and secure landing zones or drop zones, or to support the operation through separate or integrated offensive actions. Since the guerrilla is native to the objective area and more accustomed to operating in the locality, he will have better knowledge of the terrain and enemy opposing the raiding force. (7:12-7)

Guerrillas were used extensively during the planning and conduct of the Los Banos raid. Through the guerrilla forces operating near the internment camp, a reconnaissance patrol from the division G2 was able to thoroughly reconnoiter the objective area. The infiltrating force, the 11th Airborne Division Reconnaissance Platoon, used 50 guerrillas in the performance of their mission. The guerrillas with the infiltrating force were effectively utilized to assist in the elimination of the Japanese in the internment compound, to secure the landing beach and the drop zone, and to mark these sites at H-hour.

The success obtained through the use of the guerrillas can not be measured in terms of degree but was certainly quite significant. Without the use of the guerrillas for security and as guides, the reconnaissance party may not have been able to accomplish the reconnaissance so thoroughly. Once the infiltrating force arrived in the vicinity of Los Banos by canoe, the guerrillas very efficiently guided the force into positions from which suppressive fire could be directed on the internment camp. The guerrillas also provided the infiltrating force with additional fire power after the attack signal was given.

9. Cover and Deception. Tactical cover and deception operations should be undertaken to mislead the enemy as to actual friendly dispositions, capabilities, and intentions. Cover and deception operations will cause the enemy to temporarily divert his attention toward a secondary objective. This diversion will provide the raiding force a better opportunity to strike the primary objective without outside interference. Supporting attacks, feints, demonstrations, ruses, and electronic deceptions are examples of cover and deception operations that can be conducted to mislead the enemy. (7:12-6)

The 1st Battalion, 188th Glider Infantry, was given the mission of attacking across the San Juan River on H-hour. This attack had a twofold purpose. Firstly, the attack was to create the impression that American forces were conducting a major penetration to gain ground south of the San Juan River. This impression was intended to cause the Japanese to reinforce their defense around the San Juan River and the Lecheria Hills area, thus distracting attention from the actions of the liberating forces at Los Banos. Secondly, the supporting attack force was to continue south until contact was made with the liberating force and then assist in the liberating force's withdrawal to the north.

Though its actual effect as a deception is not known, the attack of the 1st Battalion, 188th Glider Infantry, was well planned and executed. There is little doubt that the supporting attack did temporarily distract attention from the raid on the internment camp, but the enemy did not immediately send forces to counter the penetration as had been planned. The reason for this may possibly have been due to the enemy not having sufficient forces to send to the San Juan River area. The fact that proved the supporting attack to be a successful deception was that the raid was conducted without the Japanese deploying additional forces against the liberating force.

10. Task Organization. Raiding forces, like forces for other offensive operations, are comprised of an assault element, a support element, and a security element. The specific tasks required of the elements often vary in nature and, consequently, the size and composition of the elements will vary. By proper use of this type of organization, an operation can be planned in detail and conducted with a minimum loss of time and manpower. (4:131)

When the Los Banos raid was being planned, the need for a simple organization with precise missions for each participating element was recognized. Company B, 1st Battalion, 511th Parachute Infantry, the airborne force, was designed to be the assault element. The division reconnaissance platoon augmented by a group of guerrillas, which acted as the infiltrating force, was planned to be the support element. The security element was the 1st Battalion (minus Company B), 511th Parachute Infantry, which performed the amphibious role.

The utilization of an assault, a support, and a security element provided the raid with exceptional surprise, excellent fire support, and rigid security. The mission of each element was equally important and the absence or failure of any one of them could have resulted in failure to accomplish the raid.

IV. IMPLICATIONS

In analyzing and criticising the Los Banos raid, I have compared the current raiding doctrine with the principles used in planning and executing one of the most

successful raids in history. When the Los Banos raid was conducted, little or no doctrine was available to the planners to assist in formulating the scheme of maneuver and preparing the plan. Yet, the same basic fundamentals and planning considerations as stated in current field manuals were used to insure that the planning was as detailed and precise as possible and that the execution included surprise, violence of action, and maximum firepower.

Because the plan for the operation deviated slightly from present raiding doctrine, the Los Banos raid can not be considered a model of current raiding principles. It is conceivable, however, that if the situation had permitted, all considerations required in current doctrine would have been accomplished during the planning of the Los Banos raid. Since the general plan for the raid did vary to a minor degree from current doctrine, the present raiding principles can not be considered absolute. A raid can be successfully accomplished without the employment of all the principles previously discussed, but the particular mission and enemy situation of the operation being planned will dictate which fundamentals can be neglected.

After careful scrutiny of the Los Banos raid, I have drawn two conclusions. Firstly, the success of this brilliant raid, has proven the validity of current doctrine since the same basic principles as recognized today were used in the planning and conduct of the operation. Secondly, since the fundamentals utilized in the Los Banos raid were employed a number of years before the present principles were formulated, this raid was probably used to some degree in establishing current raiding doctrine.


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APPENDIX