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OPERATIONS OF CANNON COMPANY, 32ND INFANTRY REGIMENT
(7TH INFANTRY DIVISION), ON LEYTE, P. I., 20-25 OCTOBER
1944 (LEYTE CAMPAIGN)

(Personal Experience of a Cannon Company Commander)

Type of Operation described: INFANTRY CANNON COMPANY
SUPPORTING THE ATTACK OF AN INFANTRY REGIMENT IN
FLAT, SWAMPY, HEAVILY WOODED TERRAIN

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(LEYTE CAMPAIGN)

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INTRODUCTION

Cannon Company, 32nd Infantry Regiment (7th Infantry Division) sailed from Pearl Harbor, T.H. on 15 September 1944, combat loaded on four Navy ships bound for the Japanese held Island of Yap, in the Central Pacific.

(1) The men and their equipment, including the M-8 self-propelled mounts, were loaded as follows: 1st Platoon, 1 officer and 28 men with BLT 32-1 on APA #6 (Heywood), 2nd Platoon, 1 officer and 28 men with BLT 32-2 on APA #92 (Alpine), 3d Platoon, and half of company headquarters, 2 officers and 42 men on APA #47 (Lamar), and the remainder of company headquarters, 1 officer and 15 men on APA #175 (Starlight). It should be noted that the company commander and 14 men from company headquarters were on the same ship as the 3d Platoon and that the company executive officer and the rest of company headquarters personnel were aboard APA #175. (2) Also please note that on this date Admiral Nimitz recommended to 'higher-ups' that the Yap Operation be cancelled and the 24th Corps be placed at General MacArthur's disposal for the Leyte attack. (3)

The convoy steamed into the anchorage at Eniwetok on 25 September and got under way for the Admiralty Islands on 28 September, arriving there on 3 October. (4)

The division and RCT field orders for the Leyte Operation were published and distributed to subordinate units while in the Admiralty Island staging area. (5) There were no changes in plans that materially affected Cannon Company even though the company had been loaded for a landing on Yap which had considerable less land mass than did Leyte. (6)

(See Map A.)

(1) Personal knowledge; (2) A-10, Annex 4, pp. 1-2; (3) A-6, pp 90-91;
(4, 5) A-1, p. 2; (6) Personal knowledge).

PLANS

Plans had been under way for the invasion of Leyte since June 1944 when GHQ, SWPA set 20 December 1944 as the target date for landings by 6th Army. Because the target date had been stepped up to 20 October, 6th Army could not use the 14th Corps as some of its elements were still engaged in the Southwest Pacific and would not be able to get ready in time. The substitution of the 24th Corps from the Central Pacific, made up of the 7th and 96th Divisions, for the 14th Corps, permitted 6th Army to go ahead with its plans for 20 October 1944 as "A" Day without pulling out troops already engaged. (7)

SIXTH 6TH ARMY PLAN

The 6th Army planned to secure the entrance to Leyte Gulf prior to "A" Day by seizure and occupancy of Dinagat, Homonhon, and Suluan Islands and then on "A" Day land on Leyte in the vicinity of Palo with the 10th Corps and near Dulag with the 24th Corps. This same day elements of the 10th Corps would land in the vicinity of Panaon Strait at the southern tip of Leyte to secure the entrance to Sogod Bay. (See Map B) (8)

XXIV 24TH CORPS PLAN

The 24th Corps planned to land in the Dulag-Libirnan area with the 7th Division on the left and the 96th Division on the right. The 7th Division was to make the main effort west on the road to Burauen, capture the airfields, and then turn north and capture Dagami. (See Map B) (9)

7TH DIVISION PLAN

The 7th Division planned to land in the vicinity of Dulag with two regiments abreast, RCT 32 on the right, RCT 184, on the left, between the Calbasag and Daguitan (Marabang) Rivers, advance rapidly inland along the axis of the Dulag-Burauen road, seize hostile airdromes in its zone, secure the Burauen-Dagami road, and protect the Corps left flank. RCT 17 was to be in reserve afloat, prepared to begin debarkation on sixty-minutes notice and land on any of the four beaches that were used by the

(7) A-2 PP. 17-19; (8) A-2, pp. 20-21; (9) A-9 p. 6.

assault BLT's. After landing, RCT 17 was to seize and secure the bridge and crossing of the Talisay River employing not more than one BLT reinforced, protect the division left flank, and reinforce RCT 184 with one platoon of Company D, 767th Tank Battalion. (10)

RCT 32 PLAN

The plan of RCT 32 was to land on "A" Day at JIG hour on Violet Beaches with BLT 32-2 on the right (Beach Violet 2), BLT 32-3 on the left (Beach Violet 1), and advance rapidly inland in its zone with the main effort on the left. (See Map C) BLT 32-1 was to be embarked in landing craft held at the line of departure at JIG hour plus forty-five minutes to land on RCT order on Beaches Violet 1 or 2. BLT 32-2 was to maintain contact on the right with the left elements of the 96th Division while BLT 32-3 was to maintain contact with RCT 184 on its left. RCT 32 also planned to be prepared to support RCT 184 in the seizure of the airfield west of Dulag. (11)

Cannon company was to have one platoon attached to each BLT to furnish close support. The cannon platoons attached to the assault BLT's would land in the eleventh (11th) wave and the company headquarters would land in a later wave with the rear RCT command post group. (12)

The 1st Platoon, Company D, 767th Tank Battalion, would rendezvous at the line of departure with RCT 32 and land on order of the RCT commander on Beaches Violet 1 or 2. (13)

Company A, 767th Tank Battalion would land two platoons in the fifth wave on Violet Beaches 1 and 2, each platoon initially to support the advance of an assault BLT. The remaining elements of the 767th Tank Battalion would land on RCT order. (14)

The 1st Platoon, 91st Chemical Company would land from initial assault amtracs and emplace weapons approximately two-hundred yards inland near the center of the RCT zone and support the RCT from that point. (15) (See Map C)

(10) A-10, pp. 2-3; (11) A-10, p. 2; (12) Personal knowledge;
(13) A-10 p. 2; (14) A-10, p. 2; (15) A-10, pp. 2-3.

CANNON COMPANY PLAN

The initial plan of Cannon Company was to have one cannon platoon attached to each BLT, to furnish close support by direct fire where possible otherwise by indirect fire. The 2d and 3d Platoons would land in wave eleven on Beaches Violet 2 and 1 in support of BLT 32-2 and BLT 32-3 respectively. The 1st Platoon would rendezvous with BLT 32-1 afloat near the line of departure and land with BLT 32-1. Company headquarters personnel were to land on call sometime after the 11th wave with the RCT near command post group. The two one quarter ton vehicles and the two two and one half ton ammunition trucks and the one and one half ton maintenance truck would be landed by "A" plus one day. (16) (See Map C)

On 13 October the Cannon Company Commander held a conference, the final one prior to the landing, with the company officers and the following points were brought out: (17)

1. That he planned to land on the beach before the platoons came ashore, to make a reconnaissance.
2. That the company executive officer, who would land later, was to meet the company commander at the RCT command post as soon as he had arrived ashore.
3. That all platoons would establish listening watch on the SCR 300 radio at JIG hour plus one minute.

On 14 October the attack force got under way for Leyte, Philippine Islands. (18) (See Maps A and B).

"A" DAY, 20 OCTOBER 1944

At 0300, 20 October 1944, the task group carrying Cannon Company, 32nd Infantry Regiment was steaming Northward through the Leyte Gulf. At about 0430, even in one's sleep he could hear the ship's bells sounding reveille. By 0600 the intercom system was screaming "Attention all troops" -- "Attention all troops" -- "Lay up to the deck", the reason being for safety, in case a Japanese torpedo should suddenly explode through the hull of the ship. The voyage from the Admiralties had been without incident or (16) Personal knowledge; (17) Personal knowledge; (18) A-1, p. 3.

excitement until then. (19)

It was a bright fresh morning with scattered cumulus clouds overhead which harbored something more than just raindrops. Upon close scrutiny of those clouds, enemy planes could be seen darting in and out, chased by ack-ack of the American Navy. It seemed that every ship opened up with all it had and several of those birds from the Land of the Rising Sun plunged smoking into the briny deep. Off to the left front was Leyte, green and beautiful but sickening; to the right was Samar, and to the rear lay the islands of Homonhon, Dinagat and Suluan which were already in American hands. (20) (See Map B)

THE ENEMY SITUATION

In rear of, and on beaches Violet 1 and 2, awaiting our arrival in spider-holes, pill boxes, trenches, bunkers, and coconut trees, were the little yellow men of the 3d Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 16th Japanese Division on the left, near Dulag, supported by the 4th and 5th Batteries of the 22nd Field Artillery Regiment. The Anti-Tank and Regimental Gun Companies were in position to furnish support for the 3d Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, and also the 2d Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment on its right, near Rizal just South of Dulag. The 3d Battalion, 33d Infantry Regiment had moved into position along the beach on the left of the 3d Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, just before "A" Day. Regimental headquarters of the 20th Infantry Regiment had been established in Dulag just prior to "A" Day, and all units in the zone of action had orders to "annihilate the enemy at the beaches". The 7th Independent Tank Company, located at Buri, was equipped with obsolete tanks some of which were operational. The 114th Airfield Construction Unit was located between Bureauen and Dagami. (21) (See Maps B and C)

Please note that the Japanese 16th Infantry Division (35th Army) had taken part in the enemy campaign on Luzon in 1942 and had conducted the infamous death march after the Americans surrendered on Bataan). (22)

(19) Personal knowledge; (20) Personal knowledge; (21) A-1, p. 3;
(22) A-6, p. 95).

THE LANDING

"JIG" hour had been set for 1000 and at 1003, shortly after the terrific naval barrage against the enemy positions on the beach had lifted, the first wave (776th Amphibious Tank Battalion) hit the beaches. Assault infantry landed in waves of two through four from amtracs, and two platoons of Company A, 767th Tank Battalion landed from LCMs in the fifth wave. Waves six through nine consisted of infantry, command personnel of BLT and RCT headquarters, and Company B, 13th Engineer Battalion. (23) The Commanding Officer of Cannon Company, 32d Infantry Regiment landed with the RCT forward command post group in wave nine on Beach Violet 1, in the sector of BLT 32-3 at approximately 1030. (24) (See Map C)

(For the purpose of clarity the operations of each platoon will be discussed separately.) (See Map C)

OPERATIONS OF THE THIRD PLATOON

When the company commander landed at approximately 1030 he found that Beach Violet 1 was suitable for landing the M-8's of the 3d Platoon, and so notified the platoon leader who was in an LCM with one of the gun sections. The company commander then proceeded to the North to inspect Beach Violet 2 as regarded landing possibilities. He had found no mines or other obstacles on Beach Violet 1. (25)

At approximately 1045 the 3d Platoon landed from LCMs on the right portion of Beach Violet 1, experienced no difficulties and moved intact into an assembly area in the coconut palms some fifty to seventy-five yards in from the water's edge. (26)

By the time the 3d Platoon had landed, the assault troops of BLT 32-3 had advanced some two hundred yards inland from the beach and were being held up by well camouflaged and concealed enemy, firing machine guns and rifles from positions across the open ground to their front. A few rounds of mortar fire fell behind the cannon platoon and exploded harmlessly on the beach. At about this same time the platoon received some poorly aimed sniper fire from its right in the direction of BLT 32-2. The platoon killed

(23) A-10, Appendix C to Annex 10, pp. 1-9; (24) Personal knowledge; (25, 26) Personal knowledge.

two Japanese in spider holes near the M-8's. The M-8's were then moved forward into firing positions near the front lines to try to knock out some of those enemy machine guns which were in pill boxes excellently concealed, about five hundred yards to the direct front. By about 1300 the platoon had destroyed several enemy machine guns and BLT 32-3 had advanced about five hundred yards by 1400. (27)

Upon examination of some of the enemy fortifications it was found that they had been constructed long before our arrival and that the grass had grown up around and over them thus giving excellent concealment. The enemy's use of smokeless powder made his weapons even more difficult to locate. (28)

At approximately 1630 the assault units had started digging in for the night after a gain of ^{1/4}approximately nine hundred yards plus for the day. By about 1730 this cannon platoon, from positions about six hundred yards in rear of the front lines, had registered its night barrage in front of the right company of BLT 32-3. Its fire was coordinated with the fires of the 776th Amphibious Tank Battalion which was under the control of Artillery forward observers. (The 49th Field Artillery Battalion which was the one that worked with RC 32 was not ashore and registered in by this time.) (29)

At approximately 2030 a small local enemy attack was in progress in front of the right company of BLT 32-3 and the left company of BLT 32-2. At this time the platoon of M-8's fired normal barrage in conjunction with other supporting fires and the attack was stopped. This Japanese attack was not preceded by an artillery or mortar preparation. All remained quiet until around 0530 the next morning when another attack by about three hundred enemy was under way. The 3d Platoon again fired a normal barrage and things were quieted down by 0615. (30)

OPERATIONS OF THE SECOND PLATOON

The 2d Platoon landed on Beach Violet 2 behind BLT 32-2 at approximately the same time the 3d Platoon landed behind BLT 32-3. The company (27) A-1, p. 4 and Personal knowledge; (28, 29, 30) Personal knowledge.

commander had arrived at the 2d Platoon landing beach in time to meet the platoon coming in and guide it into the coconut palms inland from the beach about one hundred yards. There was more mortar fire coming down on this beach than on Violet 1. The assault companies of BLT 32-2 were inland around two hundred yards having the same difficulties as BLT 32-3 on the left, when the cannons of the 2d Platoon landed. There wasn't as much open ground in this area; the enemy was being engaged more close at hand. By 1100 the platoon M-8's were up with the front lines on the right engaged in helping knock out pill boxes at ranges of fifty to seventy-five yards. No anti-tank fire was received but there was much machine gun fire from the enemy pill boxes, also quite a lot of sniper and mortar fire. The enemy here was no more easy to locate than he was over front of BLT 32-3, however, the observer could, by crawling on his stomach, get closer to the enemy positions thus more readily determine from where the fire was coming. It must be remembered that these enemy fortifications were mutually supporting, were among coconut palms, and that the slits of the pill boxes were very small and just above ground level. Enemy sniper fire was active and quite accurate. The company commander, at about 1130 was adjusting fire on one of those pill boxes from position in front of the front lines at a range of about fifty yards when he was hit by a sniper's bullet. As he was attempting to crawl back to cover behind a tree root he received a second and fatal bullet from the machine gun in the pill box. The crew in the M-8 spotted the gun and succeeded in destroying it and three Japs. The cannon platoon and the tanks destroyed quite a few more enemy positions during the morning and afternoon, and by 1630 BLT 32-2 had pushed inland between eight hundred and a thousand yards from the beach and were digging in for the night. (31)

There were no good gun positions for night firing in the right sector of the BLT area. There was some open ground in rear of the left company extending towards BLT 32-3 on the left and about six hundred yards

(31) A-1, p. 5 and Personal knowledge.

to the rear of the front lines. It was necessary to select a position which did not cause the fire to be masked. The 2d Platoon was moved from the pill box area about 1630 to the area just mentioned which was almost in the middle of the RCT zone and was separated from the 3d Platoon laterally by about one hundred yards. Actually, in between the two platoons there was a small grove of banana and coconut trees which narrowed as it extended toward the front lines. There were in the area also, a number of the amphibious tank battalion tanks (mounting 75-mm pack Howitzers) of the 776th Amphibious Tank Battalion which were doing some firing. At about 1700 when the cannon platoon was registering in front of the left company of BLT 32-2 a round hit the top of a lone coconut tree near the right flank company of BLT 32-3. It was never determined whether the cannon platoon was guilty or whether the amphibious tanks were. This unhappy incident resulted in the wounding of four men of BLT 32-3.

(32)

At the time of the small Jap attack against our lines about 2030 the 2d Platoon also fired normal barrage. Again about 0530 the next morning the Japs made the supreme test of the front lines of RCT 32 just about where they had tried earlier, almost where the flanks of BLT 32-3 and BLT 32-2 joined. We were warned in advance that this was coming for the Japs were preceded by carabao, pigs and other animals running helter skelter through the darkness. This attack was repulsed with about fifty percent loss to the enemy by our artillery, mortar, cannon, and other RCT weapons which blasted them to shreds. All three cannon platoons fired normal barrage on this occasion. (33)

OPERATIONS OF THE FIRST PLATOON

As you remember from earlier discussion, BLT 32-1, which included the 1st Platoon, Cannon Company, was held in RCT reserve at the line of departure afloat at "JIG" hour plus forty five minutes. All elements of this BLT were ashore by approximately 1600, having landed on Beach Violet 2,

(32, 33) Personal knowledge.

and by about 1700 were going into a night defensive position in rear of BLT 32-2. This platoon was placed in night firing position alongside of the 2d Platoon thus forming a four gun battery for the support of BLT 32-2 for the night. There would have been no point in putting the platoon in support of BLT 32-1 for the night as there were no good firing positions in the area. The 1st Platoon fired the same missions as the 2d Platoon. (34)

OPERATIONS OF CANNON COMPANY HEADQUARTERS

The company executive officer and fifteen men of company headquarters landed from LCVPs on the left edge of Beach Violet 2 at approximately 1130. The Japs were still lobbing a few mortar shells on the beach. As this group came ashore the RCT S-3 and the munitions warrant officer were being carried to the beach on litters. The company headquarters group moved to the RCT command post which was located about one hundred yards inland in the center of the RCT zone. The men of company headquarters spent most of the day in the area and at about 1600 went into night defensive position on the Northwest perimeter of the RCT command post which was almost between our cannon platoons and a little forward. (35)

The company executive officer was unable to find the company commander. When he learned that he had been killed he so informed the RCT commander who immediately appointed him in command of Cannon Company. No change was effected as regarded the platoon leaders for the company was then one officer short. The platoon leader of the 3d Platoon was notified by the new company commander that he would be executive officer but that he would continue to lead the 3d Platoon. (36)

The two company $\frac{1}{2}$ -ton trucks and trailers arrived ashore sometime prior to darkness and were used to bring ammunition from the beach to the M-8's as the $2\frac{1}{2}$ -ton ammunition trucks with drivers had not yet been landed. The company $1\frac{1}{2}$ -ton maintenance truck and one mechanic had not arrived either. The company switchboard which had been on one of the

(34) A-1, page 5, and Personal knowledge; (35, 36) Personal knowledge.

$\frac{1}{2}$ -ton trucks had somehow been mislaid so company headquarters was tied in with the platoons by SCR 300 radio and sound power phones. (37)

ENEMY OPERATIONS ON "A" DAY

The 3d Battalion, 33d Infantry Regiment which had been facing BLT 32-2 and BLT 32-3 withdrew inland gradually, fighting a very determined delaying action by tenaciously fighting from pill boxes and trenches. This move on the part of the 3d Battalion, 33d Infantry Regiment was coincident with the withdrawal of the 3d Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment along the Dilag-Burauen Road. (38) (See Map C)

"A" PLUS ONE DAY, 21 OCTOBER 1944

The attack jumped off at 0800 with BLT 32-3 on the left, BLT 32-2 on the right and BLT 32-1 in regimental reserve. (39) The 3d Platoon, Cannon Company was in support of BLT 32-3, the 2d Platoon supported BLT 32-2 and the 1st Platoon supported BLT 32-1. (40)

OPERATIONS OF THE 2ND PLATOON

The 2d Platoon remained in the night firing position until well after the attack had commenced. BLT 32-2 made good progress against moderate resistance but ran into some swampy land and areas of high thick cogon grass and brush which was about two hundred yards to the front of its night position. This area was by-passed to the right by BLT 32-2 and to the left by BLT 32-3 thus creating a small gap between them. The 2d Platoon Cannon Company, when it displaced, moved well to the right to try to follow somewhat in rear of the assault companies but was unable to move through the swamps. (41) By 1800 ³²⁻² this BLT had advanced some 2900 yards where it dug in for the night. (42) (Further operations of the 2d Platoon on this date will be described along with those of the 1st Platoon.)

(37) Personal knowledge; (38) A-1, p. 4; (39) A-1, p. 5;
(40, 41) Personal knowledge. (42) A-1, p. 5.

OPERATIONS OF THE THIRD PLATOON

The 3d Platoon followed the assault elements of BLT 32-3 engaging but few targets during the morning. The M-8's kept to the left of the area which was by-passed by the assault troops. The platoon leader thought there was some activity in that area but was unable to (actually) locate anything. (43) By 1800 BLT 32-3 had advanced approximately 2900 yards where it dug in for the night. (44) The platoon registered normal barrage in front of the left company from its night firing position in the vicinity of the BLT command post. There was no activity during the night. (45)

OPERATIONS OF THE 1ST PLATOON

About two platoons of Japs along with a 75-mm field piece and a 47-mm anti-tank gun had been left in the gap between the two assault BLT's during the movement forward in the earlier part of the day. The enemy had not fired on the BLT's which by-passed them. BLT 32-1 was given the mission of cleaning out this mess and called on the 1st Platoon, Cannon Company to follow the rifle troops closely, prepared to give them support by direct fire. There was a platoon of tanks of Company A, 767th Tank Battalion available also, which followed to the rear of the M-8's. As the two cannon company M-8's moved forward past the right side of the pocket containing the well concealed and dug in Japs, an enemy 75-mm field piece fired from a covered emplacement in the grass at a range of about one hundred feet, hitting the left side of the turret of the rear M-8. This round did no damage other than shock the crew. The men in the vehicle were unable to determine from where the round had come. Before they had located the gun it fired another round which penetrated the gas tank setting the M-8 on fire. A tank to the right rear of the M-8 located the gun when it fired the second time and immediately opened fire on it destroying the gun and crew. By the time the Jap gun was destroyed, the flames were eating up the cannon platoon weapon and the fire

(43) Personal knowledge; (44) A-1, p. 5; (45) Personal knowledge.

extinguisher failed to put out the fire. The SCR 300 radio was the only piece of equipment saved and Cannon Company was to go through practically the rest of the war with only five M-8's. (46)

Neither the 2d nor the 1st Platoons could follow the BLT's they were supporting as there were too many unfordable streams and swamps in the area. The map was quite inaccurate as it showed the area to be traversible. To cope with the situation a three gun battery was formed with the two 2d Platoon guns and the remaining one of the 1st Platoon, and was put in support of BLT 32-2 which was the right assault element of the RCT, after BLT 32-1 cleaned out the pocket and continued forward in rear of the leading BLT's. The advance of BLT 32-2 was rapid, the Provisional Cannon Company Platoon received no fire missions, and by 1800 this BLT was about on a line with BLT 32-3 on the left. At about 1630 the cannons were moved to the left flank of the RCT and down the Dulag - Burauen road into a night firing position near the new RCT command post which had been displaced forward during the late afternoon. Cannon fires that night were allotted to BLT 32-3, the 3d Platoon firing from the vicinity of the command post of BLT 32-3, and the remaining platoon from the vicinity of the RCT command post. The 3d Platoon forward observer registered the guns for the provisional platoon. No firing was done by the company during the night. (47)

The two cannon company 2½-ton ammunition trucks and the 1½-ton maintenance truck had caught up with the combined first and 2d Platoons in the vicinity of where the M-8 had been destroyed during the afternoon. They came forward to the new gun position along with the M-8's. Company headquarters again furnished part of the all around defense for the RCT command post. There were no unusual incidents during the night. (48) (For A plus one Day operations see Map C)

"A" PLUS TWO DAY, 22 OCTOBER 1944

RCT 32 continued the attack at 0800 with BLT 32-2 on the right and BLT 32-3 on the left. (49)

(46, 47, 48, 49) Personal knowledge.

Cannon Company supported the attack of BLT 32-3 from the night firing positions initially but in the brush areas ahead the SCR failed to function properly at long ranges and it was necessary to make several displacements. The terrain dictated that the M-8's travel on the Dulag-Burauen road most of the time due to the swamps and heavy brush in the RCT zone. (50) The company received no missions other than for registration and by 1800 the BLT had advanced approximately 2800 yards.

(51) Cannon fires that night were registered in by the field artillery liaison officer with BLT 32-3 in order to tie them in with the Field Artillery barrage. This was done by telephone from BLT to RCT to Cannon fire direction center. (52) (See Map C)

ENEMY SITUATION

During this period, the 2d Battalion, 20th Japanese Infantry Regiment, which had held beach defenses on "A" day near Rizal, withdrew to La Paz and then moved to Burauen to join up with the remaining elements of the 20th Infantry Regiment. (53)

"A" PLUS THREE DAY, 23 OCTOBER 1944

The attack was continued at 0830 with Cannon Company in support of BLT 32-1. (54) There was little or no opposition; the BLT advanced as fast as the terrain permitted and by 1800 had gone into night defense on the East end of San Pablo #1 airfield. Again Cannon Company displaced down the Dulag-Burauen road and set up in night firing position near the RCT command post just off the road and about two thousand yards in rear of the BLT. By 1830 Cannon Company night fires were registered in front of BLT 32-1. No firing was done during the night. (55)

Please note that RCT 17 spearheaded the attack on a four hundred yard front, preceded by tanks, down the Dulag-Burauen road and by 1700 the tanks had reached the West side of Burauen. (56)

- (50) Personal knowledge; (51) A-1, p. 6; (52) Personal knowledge; (53) A-1, p. 6; (54) A-1, p. 6 and Personal knowledge; (55) Personal knowledge; (56) A-1, p. 6.

"A" PLUS FOUR DAYS, 24 OCTOBER 1944

The attack jumped off at 0830 with Cannon Company in support of BLT 32-1 on the left from positions occupied the night before. (57)

By 1200 the BLT 32-1 had advanced beyond the West end of San Pablo #1 airfield. At approximately 1130 the 2d Platoon, Cannon Company, displaced forward to a new position on the South edge of the airfield about two hundred yards East from the West end. By 1300 all five guns were in battery and registered in front of the BLT. (58)

The platoon leader of the 1st Platoon was appointed in command of the 3d Platoon, the former 3d Platoon leader operated as company executive officer, and the 2d Platoon leader kept command of the 1st and 2d Platoons which had been combined and designated the 2d Platoon. (59)

Registration had been completed prior to 1300 in front of A Company which was on the right of BLT 32-1. (60)

The area between the West end of the airfield and BLT 32-1 was very brushy and was cut by a small stream. The airfield was on ground slightly higher than the surrounding terrain and the ground that BLT 32-1 was moving onto was about the same elevation as the airfield. A small trail connected the airfield with the BLT 32-1 area and the creek was spanned by a poorly constructed wooden bridge. The creek actually ran through a steep sided gully. Beyond the creek the trail was so narrow that even a jeep could not travel without some spade work. (61)

BLT 32-1 continued the advance slowly due to difficult terrain and by 1400 began hitting light resistance in front of both A and C Companies. By about 1500 this resistance had developed into a good hot fire fight. The Japs were dug in in trenches and pill boxes with overhead cover. These were new positions dug in the last few hours. The area was very brushy and dark. (62)

These Jap positions were manned by two companies of the 2d Battalion, 20th Infantry, elements of the 3d Battalion, 33d Infantry, 114th Airfield Construction Unit, 54th Airfield Construction Unit, and the 16th Jap Division

(57) A-1, p. 6 and Personal knowledge; (58, 59, 60, 61) Personal knowledge;
(62) A-1, p. 7 and Personal knowledge.

Engineers, in all, some one thousand in strength. This was a last ditch fight as far as the Japs were concerned. (63)

The fighting was so close in, and observation so poor that effective cannon fire could not be brought down on the Japs. The company did fire area targets in the trees about one hundred and fifty yards in front of A Company. The j'aps actually counterattacked both assault companies and by about 1600 these two companies were forced to withdraw back to within four hundred yards of the creek for good night positions. Each of the two companies lost approximately 25 to 26 men killed and were unable to get many of them out. By approximately 1830 the BLT was digging in for the night on the high ground on the far side of the creek from the airfield. Cannon Company registered in front of BLT 32-1 with first priority and in front of BLT 32-3 with second priority. The Japs gave the BLT's no trouble during the night, and Cannon Company did no close in firing, largely because of the fact that there were still possibly some live Americans yet beyond the front lines. (64)

On this same day RCT 17 had pushed through Burauen and had established a night perimeter between there and Guinarona. (65)

"A" PLUS FIVE DAYS, 25 OCTOBER 1944

At 0800 the attack jumped off with BLT 32-2 on the left and BLT 32-3 on the right. (66) Cannon Company supported BLT 32-2 by indirect fire from positions on the edge of the airfield. As the attack started, the Japs were doing some heavy sniping from coconut trees. Cannon Company covered the BLT front with time fire at tree top level well ahead of the assault troops. Some two hundred rounds were expended in the operation by the time the BLT had advanced five hundred yards. There was no more sniper trouble but this BLT ran into the same hornets nest that BLT 32-1 hit the day before. Had we been able to put the M-8's or the tanks in the fortified area immediately, our troops could possibly have taken Buri airstrip that day. As it was, the bridge to the right of San Pablo #1 airfield could not be used by track

(63) A-1, p. 7; (64) Personal knowledge; (65) A-1, p. 6;
(66) A-1, p. 7

laying vehicles and they seemingly could not go through the creek. To the West of the airfield were many rice paddies and these were impassable. During the afternoon at about 1500, after BLT 32-2 had gained only about five hundred yards from their jump off point, the tankers found a spot of semi-firm ground over which tanks could pass. By 1700, with tank support our troops had advanced some eight hundred yards for the day. Cannon Company supported this attack from original indirect fire positions of the day before, expending some 1200 rounds during the afternoon. (67)

At approximately 1800, Cannon Company registered its night barrage in front of BLT 32-2 which was located just short of the East end of Buri airfield. The main defense of the last ditch stand of the Japanese in the Buri area had been broken. Cannon Company, 32nd Infantry Regiment (7th Infantry Division) fired harassing fires on the end of the Buri airfield that night. That was the last firing or fighting done by that unit on the East Coast of Leyte, P. I. (68)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The combat loading of the company and its equipment on four different ships was sound in principle, as that method kept all the eggs from being put in one basket. It also permitted flexibility in the event a BLT (should have happened to) have been given a separate mission. This loading plan also gave the cannon platoon members a change to better know the people (that) they worked with and vice versa. The company commander of course, had lost control of his company as a unit.

The tanks having landed in wave five permitted the landing of the cannons in a later wave. There would have been too many vehicles in a small area had the cannon platoons landed much earlier than they did. Also this made for flexibility as they could have been landed wherever the RCT commander desired after he knew where they were needed most. They did not land automatically as did the units in leading waves but were on call.

(67, 68) Personal knowledge.

The beach reconnaissance by the company commander gained little as the tanks had already landed before he had come ashore.

The receipt of orders for the operation was timely enough as there was plenty of time for study of the order and coordination between smaller units within the BLT's from the time of leaving the staging area until the arrival at the target area.

The Japanese defended tenaciously in depth from well dug in, camouflaged, concealed, and mutually supporting positions. The beach itself was defended more lightly than the areas several hundred yards inland.

Assault troops landed at 1003 just after the naval barrage against the beaches had lifted. The Japanese did not have time to get out of their holes and reorganize on the beaches before the assault elements were ashore.

The M-8 was found to be a very effective weapon for knocking out machine guns by direct fire as was shown during the first two days on the island. Its effectiveness as an indirect fire weapon was limited. It could do most of the things that tanks did and a number of things artillery did, so that its use was quite flexible.

The RCT used a coordinated fire plan for organizing night defensive fires. All available weapons were used. The advance of the RCT units was stopped before dark daily so that a more effective fire plan could be mapped out.

The Japanese, in their counterattacks failed to use preparatory fires. They did however, use deception by running animals through the lines so that the weapons of the Americans would fire thus revealing their position.

The assault BLT's by-passed a considerable number of Japanese in a grassy area and didn't learn until later that there were Japs in the area. The Japanese, trying to deceive, did not fire on the leading BLT's.

The use of thin-skinned M-8's to lead the medium tanks on "A" plus one Day shows a definite misuse of a good combat weapon.

The Japanese that were overrun and left in the rear areas continued to snipe at rear area troops until killed.

The mislaying of the Cannon Company switchboard was certainly something to be avoided in the future.

The firing into friendly troops was a definite morale hazard to all concerned and was due to carelessness.

The enemy was most difficult to locate because of excellent camouflage and concealment afforded from positions dug in long before the landing.

The Japanese apparently knew that the Americans were coming for they had orders to annihilate the enemy at the beaches, and had moved a battalion on to the beach defense area near Dulag just before the target date.

The use of the Cannon Company headquarters personnel to form part of the perimeter defenses for the RCT command post was sound. The RCT from previous experience learned that all rear area installations had to have all around protection especially at night.

The cannons should have been moved into the front lines of BLT 22-2 on 24 October, to do direct fire and the medium tanks should have been right along with them. Improper reconnaissance on the part of cannon and tank company personnel was evident on that day. The cannon were gainfully employed in indirect fire but would have been more effective performing direct fire at the fortifications of the enemy.

The maps were very poor. How could the U. S. have been in the Philippines so long and still have maps so inaccurate?

LESSONS-LEARNED

1. That the M-8 was a better weapon for firing direct fire than for firing indirect fire.
2. That the M-8 was a very flexible weapon as it could be used as a tank or as an artillery piece firing either direct or indirect fire. It was also a very mobile weapon.
3. That troops in areas behind the front line companies could not expect their areas to be free from sniper fire by the fanatical enemy.
4. That very close attention must be paid to small details such as the safety factor in artillery firing and in proper care of equipment.
5. That maps must not be depended upon too closely.
6. That all areas should be investigated before they are by-passed.

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7. That a coordinated fire plan was very important in properly organizing the night defense.

8. That to properly operate a cannon company with best efficiency, reconnaissance must be accurate and continuous.

9. That fair results could be expected from the SCR 300 radio.

10. The use of time fire was excellent for ridding an area of snipers operating in coconut palms.