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THE OPERATION OF THE 3D BATTALION, 11TH INFANTRY
(11TH DIVISION P.A.) AT ZARAGOSA, P. I.
28 DECEMBER - 29 DECEMBER 1941
(Personal Experience of a Regimental Machine Gun Officer and Commander
of the Covering Forces in the Withdrawal)

Type of operation described: BATTALION IN DEFENSE

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operation of the Third Battalion, 11th Infantry, 11th Division, Philippine Army in the Defense of Zaragosa, Luzon, P. I. on 28-29 December 1941.

To orient the reader it will be necessary to go back to the start of hostilities in order to present a picture of the state of training, the combat efficiency, the organization and armament and factors which affected the overall conduct of the defense.

"The 11th Infantry P. A. was mobilized on the 1st of September 1941 with troops composed of Northern Luzon mountain tribes (called Iggrot^os) and the Northern lowlanders known as Illic^anos." (1)

Ten American officers and seven noncommissioned officers from the Philippine division were assigned the task of training this unit in accordance with a master schedule designed to produce a unit capable of effective combat in the shortest possible time.

The ^{units} unit, as we received them, had been given five and one-half months of training in 1937 and were, according to the Philippine Army mobilization plan, capable of combat operations within ten days after call to service. This supposition, all too quickly, proved false. American observers had, from time to time, stated that the Philippine Army training was below standard, however they failed to indicate that it was totally inadequate. We soon found that they had practically no knowledge of fundamental and basic techniques. In addition, the little they did know was in most cases wrong. It is not difficult to teach a

(1) A - 4

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Philippino a new subject as he has an excellent memory, but to unlearn an incorrect technique and install a correct one in its place requires a great deal of time and effort. Perhaps a statement of Colonel Glen R. Townsend, U.S.A., Regimental Commander of the 11th Infantry, will better portray their status of training "I found that although all enlisted personnel had taken the prescribed five and one-half month's training they were proficient only in close order drill and saluting."

(2) The officers were, for the most part, less qualified professionally than the men. "The officers, being mainly political appointees had less training than the men they were to lead." (3)

The reasons for their state of training or perhaps it is better said--the lack of training, is, in itself, a lengthy subject, however it is to be remembered that the P. A. was a new army. Created on paper in 1935, it trained its first inductees in 1937. Funds, training equipment, many of the weapons, and adequate facilities were practically non-existent. A small handful of the officers had been trained in the American Army with a few being West Point graduates. Another small group were well trained in the academic phase and could quote many of the paragraphs from field manuals word for word, but they had never had a chance to put their knowledge into practical use. "The Philippine Army was an army in name only." (4)

The language difficulty in itself presented a serious obstacle. "In the regiment we had a total of eleven different dialects spoken."

(5) In one machine gun company alone, we had personnel that spoke five different dialects and were unable to communicate with each other. To complete the picture, many of the officers spoke the Tagalog dialect and they were unable to communicate with any of those speaking the mountain

(2, 3, 5, A-4; (4) A-3

or ^{Illoao}Illicenz languages. Superimposed on all of this were the Americans who spoke none of the native tongues. Attention, Forward March, Halt and Chow constituted the only words common to all.

With the aid of numerous interpreters and sign language we managed to get most of our points across. Training for the most part consisted of demonstration, application and supervision. Many of the men went all through combat without having the slightest knowledge of the names of the component parts of his weapon.

Our regiment, one of the first to be mobilized, was able to receive a total of three months training in basic subjects, and combat training in passive defense on the company and platoon level. Training in the attack and operation of units from battalion on up were scheduled to take place in December, January and February but, as you well remember, drastic changes in the international situation did not permit us to undertake this stage of training. (6)

The organization of the 11th Infantry is important only to the extent that one may realize its capabilities and limitations. "The Regiment consisted of a headquarters battalion and three combat battalions. The Headquarters Battalion was composed of a headquarters and service company, a medical company and a combat company." (7) A combat battalion had three rifle companies of 100 men each and a machine gun company of ninety-six men. In the rifle company there were three rifle platoons. In the machine gun company there were two machine gun platoons. "The total strength of the regiment was 1,850 officers and men." (8)

The armament and equipment proved to be the biggest limitation of all. The combat company was equipped with six Stokes 3-inch mortars and two 50 caliber water-cooled machine guns. The rifle companies were

(6) Personal experience; (7,8,9) A-4

equipped with enfield rifles of World War I vintage--much too large and heavy for the small ^{Philippines} ~~Philippines~~, and four BAR's. A machine-gun company had eight 30 caliber water-cooled Browning machine guns whose serial number consisted of only four digits and barrels that had a minimum of 15,000 rounds fired through them. Thus by recapitulation, if all combat elements of the regiment were thrown into line, holding out no reserve elements we would have the firepower of 675 rifles, 36 BAR's, 24 caliber 30 machine guns, 2 caliber .50 machine guns and 6 Stokes mortars. As compared with the American Army, a P.A. regiment did not have the combined firepower of one U.S. combat battalion.

The other equipment was even more inadequate. "In the 11th Infantry, at the outbreak of war, we had a total of eight field telephones." (9) "The regimental communications officer commandeered wall telephones where he could find them." (10) The extra telephones proved of very little value at the time because we had only one mile of wire to connect the phones up with. We had one radio in the regiment, a C.W. set with a square directional antenna whose number was either SCR 4 or 8. This radio comprised our communication with division, as they were a little short of wire also. I would like to state here, however, that we did not have a trained operator to use our one radio so it was of no assistance to us at the start. Runner and motor messengers furnished us with our only means of communication.

The individual soldier was issued one short sleeved khaki shirt, one pair of khaki shorts, a pair of rubber soled shoes, one pair of knee length stockings, a pit^h helmet, a mess kit, a gas mask and a thin cotton blanket, whose effectiveness may be compared to a sheet. Raincoats, mosquito bars, steel helmets, and entrenching tools were never issued. The regimental commander was able to secure an issue of fatigues for each

(10) A-4

man through very hard work and a number of friends. (11)

Prior to mobilization there had been no attempt, or for that matter, any facilities, to train any staff personnel.

No supply channels, such as we have in the U. S. Army, existed. All food was purchased locally by the individual company commanders concerned. Most of the other equipment, with the exception of clothing, weapons and ammunition, had also been purchased locally.

There was no field messing equipment. (12)

There were no spare parts for any of the weapons and a large number were in need of repair when the war broke out. The two .50 caliber water-cooled machine guns required a force pump to cool them. These had apparently been forgotten when the P. A. ordnance had bought the guns and as a result we used two push-pull force pumps commandeered from a civilian hardware store to cool them. (13)

Our total military transportation consisted of six vehicles, 1 staff car, 1 command car and 4 1½-ton trucks. In order to move we had to commandeer vehicles from civilian sources.

In the entire division not a single anti-tank gun or field artillery piece existed.

An item, I am certain, that is of interest to those who have a distaste for paper work, is that no typewriters were ever issued to the regiment. All correspondence was to be performed in long hand.

It is believed, considering the language obstacle, the level of training and the lack of essential combat equipment that our combat effectiveness was a great deal below that of any American unit entering the war.

I must say at this point that most of the items described above were due to no fault of the men and that they performed extremely well

(11, 12, 13) Personal Experience

considering all factors. They were in excellent physical shape and demonstrated remarkable stamina. When properly lead they could give as well as take.

THE GENERAL SITUATION IN I CORPS

The 11th Infantry, at the outbreak of the war on 8 December 1941, occupied a five mile portion of the beach on Lingayen Gulf between the towns of Dagup^on and San Fabian. The 13th Infantry was on our right and the 21st Division was on our left.

"The Japanese landed on 10 December 1941 at Vigan and Appari".

(14) "Both landings were unopposed." (15)

"By December 22, 1941, the Japanese, through widespread aerial attacks and their initial landings, had set the stage for their big (16) effort." "On that date 80 transports accompanied by warships, appeared in the northern part of Lingayen Gulf and began landing large numbers of troops on the beaches at San Fernando and Agoo." (17) Here for the first time they met resistance. The 26th Cavalry, Philippine Scouts, supported by a few tanks and self propelled "75" guns fought against terrific odds and delayed the enemy advance for several days. Finally, overwhelmed by numbers, they were forced to give way. They had proven, however, that the Philippino soldier, well trained and well lead was more than a match, man for man, for the Jap. This action on the part of the 26th played an important part in establishing confidence in many of the, as yet, untested divisions.

At this time War plan orange number three was placed into effect and our regiment received the order to withdraw from the beach on Lingayen Gulf to Malasigui on the night of 24 December 1941.

"The estimated five Jap divisions" (17) that landed at Agoo and

(14,17) A-1; (15, 16) A-4

San Fernando were exerting far more pressure on the 71st and 91st Divisions, on the right flank, than they could hold.

It was only because of the sacrifices of the 26th Cavalry, Philippine Scouts, that we were able to withdraw and prevent the sweep around our right flank from being complete.

Shortly after arriving at Malasigui we again received orders to withdraw, this time across the Agoo River. This position was held on the night of the 25 December. During the night of the 26th we again withdrew to defensive line D-3 where the 11th Infantry took over the entire division zone consisting of a 23 kilometer front stretching from Gerona through Pura to Guimba.

At this time the entire central plains were defended by only three divisions, the 21st on the left, the 11th in the center, and the 91st on the right.

"At 1730, 27 December orders from the division commander to the regimental commander, Colonel Volckman, directed him to withdraw the regiment by motor and marching commencing at 1630, 27 December to the general line LaPaz-Zaragosa-Carmen (known as D-4) and to occupy this line prior to daylight 28 December." (18) Again the 11th Infantry was to occupy the entire division front, this time a frontage of 21 kilometers.

"Motors were not made available to the 11th Infantry prior to daylight on 28 December and as a result, the bulk of the regiment withdrew by marching and did not arrive at the LaPaz-Carmen position until mid morning of the 28th of December." (19)

"Verbal instructions later received from the Division Commander were "hold a line north of the LaPaz-Zaragosa-Carmen road until you are licked; the road Cabanatuan-Carmen is exclusive to the 11th Infantry,

(18) A-5; (19) A-5

inclusive to the 91st Division." (20)

Disposition of the I Corps at this time was 21st on the left, 11th in the center and the 91st on the right. Position areas were assigned as indicated on Sketch B, with the 2d Battalion occupying a position astride the Pura, LaPaz road and the 3rd Battalion astride the two roads leading into Zaragoza from the north. The 1st Battalion was in regimental reserve in the barrio of Caut.

During the day we received a platoon of light tanks and two tank destroyers---both were assigned a mission of general support. As such, we had no direct control over either which almost proved disastrous later.

Communication within this widely spread regiment consisted of runners and motor messengers. The constant presence of dive bombers made it necessary for the regimental commander to issue all orders of importance personally.

Communication with division headquarters at Concepcion, some 20 kilometers to the south, was also by motor messenger. Since division had nothing at that time available to assist us, it did not play an important part.

The general condition of equipment by this time was bad. The regiment had 556 rifles with broken extractors. This required a rifleman to use a bamboo stick to eject each round after it was fired. The rubber soled tennis shoes had for the most part become too worn for any use. Many of the cast iron kawalis, in which the companies cooked their rice, had been broken in transit.

We had no supporting artillery at this time and none was available within the division.

(20) A-5

Thirty caliber ammunition was plentiful, but our entire supply of 3-inch Stokes mortar shells totalled 108 rounds. About 1000 rounds of 50 caliber ammunition and ten boxes of hand grenades rounded out our total supply.

During the morning of the 28 of December a platoon of 11th Engineers prepared all of the bridges with demolition and a lieutenant was left in charge to blow the critical bridge in the eastern edge of the town of Zaragosa. This platoon was also not under our control.

From the meager intelligence information that was available it was believed that the Japs would probably hit the LaPaz area via the Pura Road.

Our regimental commander, however, in his own estimate of the situation considered the Zaragosa-Carmen area as a point just as likely to be attacked as the LaPaz area. The most important consideration of all was to hold the LaPaz-Conception road which was our only route of withdrawal.

The terrain in our regimental zone was flat, terraced rice land from which the crop had recently been harvested. The rice paddies furnished excellent concealment with their thick, 18 to 24 inch high embankments. The only cover that existed, however, in the whole area was the bamboo trees that grew around the native house in LaPaz, Zaragosa and Carmen. The ground itself presented a firm footing for the troops and light vehicles. The tanks, due to their weight, were roadbound as there was a great danger of breaking through the thin dry crust and bogging down. Two streams cut through the position at right angles. Their banks were almost vertical and about 15 feet in height. The streams were from 30 to 45 feet wide. Both were too deep for vehicles to ford at this time of the year. The sole means of crossing consisted of one wooden bridge across each stream on the Zaragosa-Carmen road.

The road net consisted of one lateral road behind our lines, and

and three improved roads running into our position. On the right flank, defended by the 91st Division, was the fourth road.

The two streams spit the area into three defense sectors, each having an improved road running into it.

THE BATTALION SITUATION

The 3rd Battalion 11th Infantry was assigned to defend the sector from LaPaz River on the left to the Cabanatuan-Carmen Road exclusive to the right.

The battalion commander and the machine gun company commander, on arrival in the area performed their reconnaissance and established command liaison with the 92nd Infantry of the 91st Division on our ^{Right} left. He then decided to place his units as follows: I Company would defend from the high ground 600 yards north of Zaragoza on the road to the left of the stream. To assist I Company he attached one section of heavy machine guns; K Company was assigned the mission of defending from a position about 600 yards north of Zaragoza on the right of the stream. To K Company one section of machine guns were also attached. L Company was assigned the mission of establishing a road block about a mile and a half to the east of Zaragoza on the north road of the two parallel roads running between Carmen and Zaragoza. To L Company also was attached one section of machine guns.

The battalion CP was located 200 yards west of the Zaragoza bridge and just south of the road.

If you will note here this battalion commander had not provided for a reserve nor had he made any provisions to block the lower Carmen-Zaragoza road.

This appears to be an open violation of the principle of war-- to hold out a reserve.

The battalion commander had placed his troops in this manner

for the following reasons; after making his reconnaissance he felt that the two roads running directly into his position from the north and separated by the Zaragosa river must each be defended. The only good position he found was approximately 600 yards north of town. These two roads joined at a point some six kilometers north of town. He felt that this position was too far out and due to lack of communication it would be impossible for him to exercise control. This still left him with two parallel roads running into his position from the east, the entrance to which were blocked by the 92nd Infantry.

After he had established command liaison with the 92d and inspected their defenses along the Cabanatuan-Carmen road he decided that in event the Japs hit this position they would in all probability outflank them which would place them on the first parallel road running from Carmen to Zaragosa. He further felt that if this happened they would head toward Zaragosa to LaPaz as the LaPaz-Conception road was the only arterial in the area heading south. Therefore he decided to use L Company to defend this road at a point about one and a half miles east of town which afforded the best defensive position.

This, he realized, placed all of his companies into line. He reasoned, however, that it was doubtful that the Japanese would hit all three roads at once. Therefore if they hit along one road he could, by leaving a small detachment covering the road block, have available two companies as a reserve, or if they hit on two roads he would still have one company left. An additional factor influenced his thoughts in placing his companies at their road blocks in that his troops had never received any attack training and he therefore felt that to make his defense effective he must have them at the point they would fight, dug in. The south of the two parallel roads between Carmen and Zaragosa

was thought by the battalion commander as the least probable route of approach. Rather than split his units up he decided to leave it undefended.

The regimental commander on completion of his inspection tour decided that his position was vulnerable as it stood and attached A Company of the 1st Battalion to the 3rd Battalion to be used as the Battalion Reserve. With it he also attached one section of machine guns from D Company to be used with A Company if it was employed.

In order to defend the south Zaragosa-Carmen road he placed the one remaining section of machine guns from M Company at a point about 600 yards east of town. The tank platoon, in general support, was also placed at this road block and one platoon of A Company was assigned the mission of furnishing the tanks close in protection.

A section of Stokes mortars was also given to the battalion with the mission of direct support.

This, then, completed the 3rd Battalion's defense ^{and} in addition furnished it with anti tank protection.

By 1500 on the 28th of December all men were in position, dug in, and road blocks established. The rest of the afternoon was spent preparing plans for reenforcement, withdrawal, establishing outposts and preparing patrols for critical areas. L Company was to send one contact patrol to the 92nd Infantry at 2100 and another at 0500 on the 29th of December.

The tank commander was given the responsibility of issuing the orders to blow the Zaragosa bridge in event it was required as he had the only vehicles for which the bridge was necessary. Sufficient crossings existed across the river to enable foot troops to get across it.

By 1800 on 28th December all necessary coordination had been completed.

About this time civilians began to filter through our position stating that they had seen Japanese soldiers entering a small barrio about ten kilometers to the northeast on the Cabanatuan-Carmen road. The battalion commander immediately notified the regimental commander and then sent his S-2 over to the CP of the 92d Infantry to give them the information we had received and to see if anything further had been discovered in their sector. Their information substantiated ours so all companies were informed of the news and cautioned to be extra alert.

At 2100 the battalion commander sent the prearranged control patrol to the 92nd Infantry to find out if any additional information had been learned regarding the Japs previously reported by the civilians. The S-2 of the 92nd stated that they had received information that the Japanese occupied the barrio in large numbers but they had apparently stopped and were bedding down for the night. He also stated that the 91st Infantry on the right of the 91st Division was heavily engaged near Cabanatuan but according to the last reports were still holding their own.

At 2230 the battalion commander, having completed an inspection of his defenses, returned to his CP. Not having had any sleep for the last three days, he instructed his Philippine executive officer not to awaken him unless he got into more trouble than he could handle and turned in to get some sleep.

At this point, I will pause to bring out the fact that the battalion commander meant that if the executive officer received any messages he did not know what to do with he should awaken him, assuming that he would awaken him in case any trouble developed. English being a secondary language with the Philippine executive and that he was not ^{being} fully accustomed

to American phraseology, led him to take this order literally and he followed it to the letter.

Unbeknown to the 3rd Battalion Commander the 92nd Infantry received orders to withdraw during the night to a position ten miles in rear due to the fact that the 91st on the right had been outflanked. This left the 3rd Battalion with an exposed flank, believing that surprise from that direction was unlikely due to the fact they would be able to hear the fire of the 92nd and be ready for them by the time they arrive at Zaragoza.

At 0315, 29th of December an alert American tank~~er~~er sighted a large group of bicyclists coming down the road in column and sensing that it must be the enemy, since we did not have cycle troops, alerted the other tank crews. When the Japs closed in to point blank range they then opened fire and eighty-two sons of the Rising Sun made the supreme sacrifice.

The tank platoon leader, fearing the presence of additional foot troops, decided to withdraw across the bridge and wait till daylight, at which time he felt he was better able to cope with the Jap tank teams.

As the fifth tank reached the west side of the stream the bridge across the Zaragoza river was blown. The tank platoon leader immediately investigated to find out why the bridge had been blown, and found one slightly bruised Philippine civilian. On investigation he discovered the engineer lieutenant had left the destruction of the bridge to his platoon sergeant and departed for the rear. The platoon sergeant detailed a private and departed with the rest of the men. The private, not to be outdone, had found a civilian, instructed him how to light the dynamite, paid him one peso and then left to join his platoon. The civilian, after hearing the shooting, became excited and blew the bridge as soon as the fifth tank was across the river. This unforeseen event seriously affected our later action as it prevented us from making use of the tanks.

The Philippine executive officer investigated the shooting, and since no more Japs were observed in the area east of the road blocks, he decided that the situation was well in hand and therefore there was no necessity of awakening his battalion commander.

He did however order L Company to send out a patrol to contact the 92d Infantry to find out how the Japs had managed to get to the lower road.

At about 0400 29th of December a patrol of three men left L Company to contact the 92d Infantry to find out why they had not stopped them or at least fired on them.

Neither the executive officer nor the S-2 notified regiment of the incident. Thus the regimental and battalion commanders were unaware of this situation, due to faulty staff action.

For the rest of the night the reports of all companies were negative.

At 0615 heavy rifle and mortar firing commenced at the road block on the south road as the Japs launched a dawn attack.

The battalion commander was awakened by the noise and learned from his executive officer where the fighting was taking place. His first question was what happened to the 92d. On receiving the answer that the patrol sent out at 0400 to contact them had not returned, he took his S-3 and left for the road block. After travelling about 200 yards he suddenly found to his complete amazement the tanks were on the west side of the river and the bridge blown. As the battalion commander stated later--confusion reigned supreme.

In a few short minutes he had found his battalion engaged from the rear, a bridge vital to his defense plan blown and the tanks in a position where they were of little value.

Since no communication existed he dispatched his S-3 to A Company with orders to attack the Japs on the flank to relieve the pressure on

the road block which by this time was in a precarious position. He himself tried to contact the road blocks to see if he could not withdraw them sufficiently to prevent them from being encircled. Shortly after he crossed the river automatic fire between him and the block prevented him from carrying out his plan.

He then returned to his CP and sent a runner out to L Company ordering them to fall back to K Company.

He, himself, left for K Company with the plan of turning them around and in conjunction with A Company attack to relieve the road block.

The regimental commander and myself had heard the firing at dawn and immediately departed for the 3d Battalion CP, arriving shortly after the battalion commander had left for K Company.

The regimental commander, after finding out the situation from the executive officer, moved forward on up the road toward the blown bridge. There he contacted the combat company commander who was just completing emplacement of his Stokes mortars to fire in support of the road block. The block for some reason had not been completely surrounded and was still firing. Numerous Japs had, however, infiltrated beyond the position.

The regimental commander then instructed the combat company commander to fire as close as he could beyond the road block in order to give them some assistance and to keep up the fire until we heard what progress the battalion commander was making and his location. He then moved on down to the blown bridge where he found on inspection that the demolitions had been incomplete and it could be easily and quickly fixed. This would allow us to get our platoon of tanks back across the river and help extract the road block. These instructions were passed on to the battalion executive officer who immediately sent a portion of the battalion headquarters detachment down to do the repair work. The

tank lieutenant was contacted in the meantime to see if he could give any assistance with his machine guns and 37-MM but he stated that he had tried earlier and was unable to fire because the short steep approach to the bridge had prevented him depressing his guns far enough to fire.

The bridge detail had in the meantime moved down to the bridge and as they moved up on it so did the Japs. According to the combat company commander, an eyewitness to the affair, both sides were so surprised that they just stood and stared at each other for a brief second and then both elements turned around and ran.

By 0710 we heard firing to the north and a few minutes later a message was received that the battalion commander was moving in with K Company to relieve the road blocks.

By 0730 he managed to push south far enough to extract the remainder of the road block which by this time had been reduced to a total of 14 men and three wounded. (From - hot strength)

On attempting to move back to the blown bridge he ran into heavy resistance. He then moved back toward the north following the route he had come in on.

It appeared for a short time as though we would have to use I Company in order to get the battalion commander and K Company out.

By 0815 we learned that K Company had successfully run the gauntlet and was crossing the river north of town.

At about this time the Nips began to increase their fire along the river bank in the center of town which was being held by whatever personnel that could be found around the battalion CP.

At approximately 0830 the battalion commander returned to his CP and informed the regimental commander that L Company was cut off and at the same time learned that the S-3 had been unable to contact A Company.

It was decided then that both I and K Companies, less one

platoon for battalieu reserve, would be placed in position along the Zaragosa river bank.

By 0915 the two companies were in position and instructions were issued by the regimental commander to fight a delaying action, being careful to fall back before he was outflanked. He also instructed him that if it appeared he could not hold the Japs east of the LaPaz river until dark he should inform him and he would commit the 1st Battalion. Both commanders agreed that due to the terrain and the presence of dive bombers that it would be unwise to use the 1st Battalion unless absolutely necessary.

In addition the regimental commander decided to send his S-2, a very capable Philippine officer, who was thoroughly acquainted with the terrain and A Company's location, to make a wide circle to contact them and bring them back to his side of the river. It was assumed by that time they they had probably withdrawn to the south.

The situation at this time appeared to be more or less under control and we felt that the two companies would be able to delay what we estimated to be a Jap battalion.

We had up to this time experienced only mortars and a single Jap 70-MM gun firing. The tanks were unable to assist the forward elements and withdrew to the vicinity of the battalion CP and parked along the road in position to fire. They were unable to get off of the road due to the soft terrain.

At 1015 the 2d Battalion on the left reported a strong Jap patrol had been contacted so the regimental commander left for the 2d Battalion CP.

On arrival there he found everything under control. Since this battalion had excellent observeration to the front and flanks it was believed that it could take care of any trouble that developed.

Our withdrawal plan for the regiment was now altered due to the

change in the situation so one platoon of D Company and one rifle platoon from C Company were moved into position on the west bank of the LaPaz river and started to prepare a defensive position to be occupied by the rest of the 1st Battalion (A Company) should the situation in the 3d Battalion get out of hand.

The situation in the 3d Battalion, with the exception of spasmodic firing on both sides, was relatively stable between 1100 and 1230.

At approximately 1200 a Jap liaison plane--known to us as Photo-Joe, began circling the entire regimental sector.

Between 1230 and 1245 the Jap artillery began to adjust.

At approximately 1300 they began to shell the 3d Battalion and the intensity of the small arms fire increased.

At 1320 the left flank security group reported that the enemy was crossing the river in strength some six hundred to eight hundred yards to the north.

The battalion commander then withdrew both companies back approximately five hundred yards and established a new position astride the Zaragosa-LaPaz road.

The platoon of tanks also withdrew a short distance but remained on the road.

The withdrawal apparently confused the Jap commander because he halted his unit.

At approximately 1415 a Japanese anti tank crew hauled a ground mount type anti tank gun into the center of the road and fired one round. The lead tank was hit, seriously wounding the crew and disabling the tank.

An American sergeant on the regimental commander's vehicle made short work of the gun crew with his machine gun.

The action of this Jap crew, however, was one of the finest examples of teamwork I believe I have ever seen. The whole action took place in just a very few seconds.

As a result the tanks withdrew completely and as they passed by the TD's in Zaragosa they also followed.

The presence of the tanks were an excellent booster for the men's morale. As they pulled out you could see by their faces that they thought the engagement was lost. In addition their confidence in the fighting ability of the Americans momentarily took a sharp drop.

To add to it all the Japs chose this time to throw the kitchen stove at us and it certainly looked as though we had better say our prayers.

Our regimental commander, fortunately, was at the scene and coolly proceeded to organize a counterattack with the reserve platoon.

This one platoon counterattack jumped off at 1500 and although no ground was gained it succeeded in doing two things: first, it apparently confused the Japs as to our strength as their efforts suddenly slowed down and second, it took the men's minds off of the tanks and back to the job at hand.

The battalion commander was able to withdraw his now sadly depleted unit again, this time some 1500 yards to the rear. By 1630 had occupied the new position.

The 2d Battalion outside of the one patrol had no further contact during the day.

The town of LaPaz, however, had received considerable shelling from what appeared to be now a battalion of artillery.

At 1600, the regimental commander held a conference in LaPaz with the 1st and 2d Battalion Commanders and the S-3 of the 3d Battalion. Final plans for a night withdrawal were coordinated in case we received

a withdrawal order from division.

During the conference a lone Jap gun started to register in on the conference. We all dived into a water hole used to bath the water buffaloes in hot weather. They managed to zero in on us to a point where if they would have fired the next round chances were good they might have eliminated us all. Fortunately, they did not fire that next round. The point to the above story is that in the center of this hole was a poison ^{snake} and not one of us noticed it till the shelling had stopped.

Shortly after the conference had ended, "a representative from the division commander contacted the regimental commander and after learning the situation issued an order in the name of the division CG to withdraw at once to Conception where further orders would be issued." (21)

The fact that we had not completely broken contact, that dive bombers were still in the air--although they had not bombed us, and the presence of the artillery liaison plane caused the regimental commander to issue the withdrawal order to start at 1815--darkness--since he felt that the entire situation was not available to the division CG, due to lack of communication and that if he were aware of the situation he would not have ordered a daylight withdrawal.

THE WITHDRAWAL

As soon as the withdrawal order was received, E Company--the reserve company of the second battalion was moved into reenforce the platoon of C Company and the machine gun platoon of D Company on the west bank of the LaPaz river.

We then proceeded to work the remainder of the 3d Battalion across the river in small groups so as to avoid detection.

Both companies were able to complete the withdrawal back across the river by 1730 to an assembly area in LaPaz.

(21) A-5

The total number left of the 3d Battalion of 550 men was 156 officers and men, of which, a goodly number were wounded.

Just after the 3d Battalion had completed the move across the river the Japs emerged from the cover of the town of Zaragoza in advanced guard formation straight down the LaPaz-Zaragoza road. This time we were ready for them. We had excellent observation and good fields of fire. In addition, we had four 30 caliber machine guns plus one 50 caliber from the combat company trained on the road and waiting. Just before they reached the bridge we opened up on the column with everything we had.

As to what the count was we will never know, but we emptied 48 belts down a 2000 yard stretch of a road that was a machine gunner's dream.

Without firing another round we were able to withdraw the covering shell at 2130 to head for another rendezvous with the Sons of Hirohito.

If you are still wondering what happened to A Company--the regimental S-2 did locate the company. In an attempt to return them he apparently became lost. On receipt of the withdrawal order, the 1st Battalion Commander went across country himself, located them, and moved across country for two days in order to rejoin the regiment in its next defensive position.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In making a study of this operation it is believed that the most serious obstacle to our success in this operation was the lack of proper communications. The difficulty of control was such that every movement of troops required the presence of the battalion or regimental commander. If adequate communication were available L Company might have been saved. In addition he might have had the use of A Company.

The lack of training of the Philippine Army was a factor that was to a great extent beyond our responsibility.

The lack of proper staff action on the part of the executive officer and the S-2 in not notifying regiment also contributed to the heavy losses of this battalion. The regimental commander would have most certainly gone to the 3d Battalion and investigated the incident and corrected the trouble if he had known of it.

The order of the battalion commander to his executive officer was not clear. If the executive officer had understood the order as it was meant and would have awakened the battalion commander, he might have been able to hold the Japs off at the Zaragosa river.

Another item was the failure, on the part of this battalion commander, to provide initially all around security. Mistakes such as this one ^{are} is an old story in military history. Regardless of how much security you think the other fellow is giving you, you must always be ready in case he fails.

The fact that the tanks and the TD's were assigned the mission of general support did not cause them to be used as they should have. In later actions we insisted that if they come into our area they be attached. This method worked very well for us in later operations. The tanks under our control enabled us to carry out successfully some of our later missions.

An item that I think should be mentioned here is that after this operation we deduced the simple fact that in this fast moving situation we were fighting for the roads and road net. As a result we altered our defense from that of area to road defense. A strong well defended roadblock with a good reserve enabled us to accomplish many of our missions with a minimum of effort. Area defense in this particular situation resulted ~~only~~ in too much dispersion to be effective.

On the Japanese side, they showed an utter lack of pursuit. If

they had pressed their advantages I sincerely doubt if any of us would have ever reached Bataan. The only thing that I can think of is that their little blue book called for a reorganization after every action, large or small, and as they reorganized we had enough time to get set for them.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

1. Adequate communications are essential.
2. Orders must be clear and understandable.
3. Adequate staff training is extremely important.
4. In many fast moving situations virtually all of the action will take place along the principal roads.
5. An advantage must be exploited to the fullest extent and pursuit driven home to the limit you are capable of.