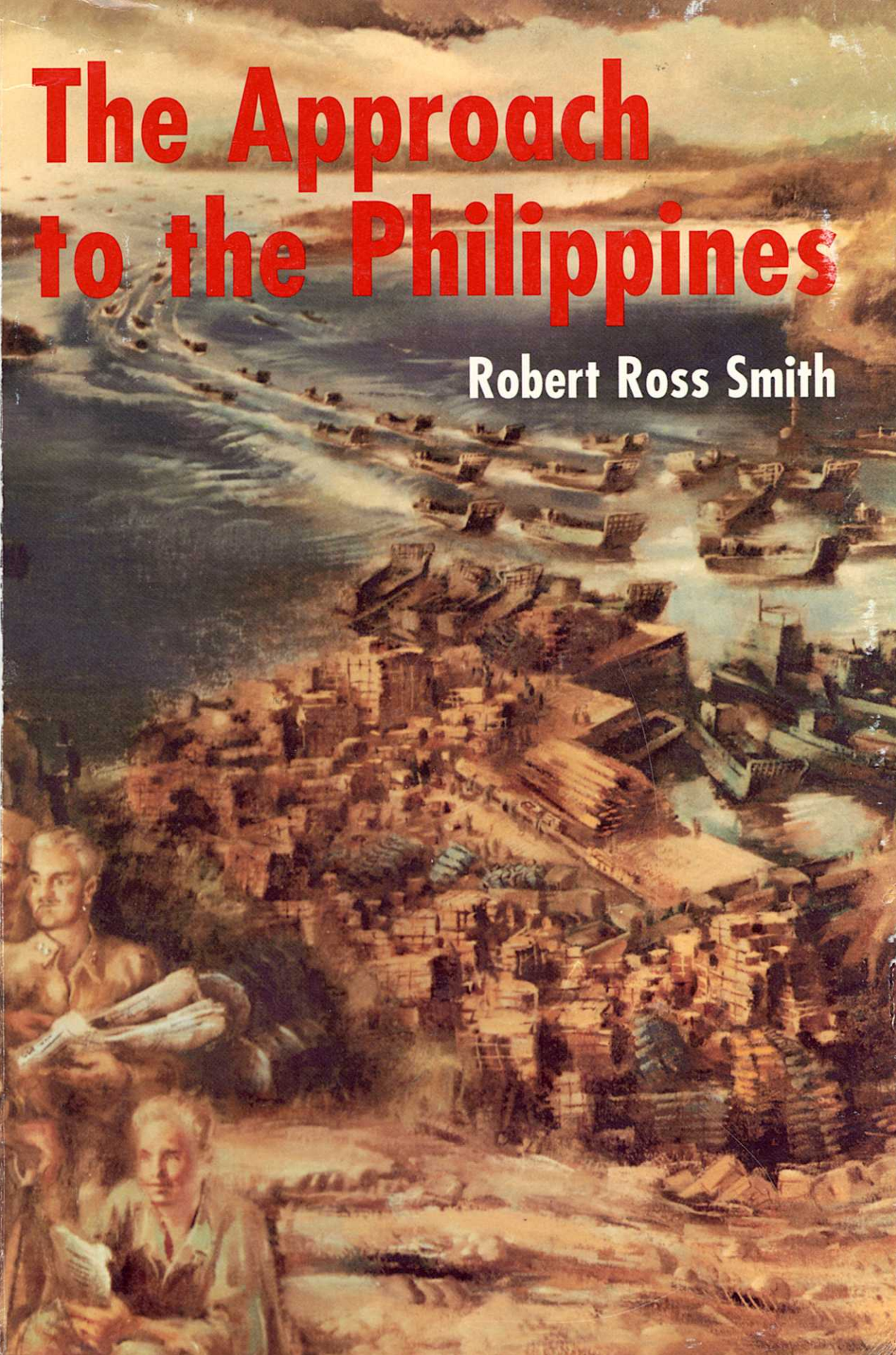
The Approach to the Philippines

Robert Ross Smith



UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II

The War in the Pacific

THE APPROACH TO THE PHILIPPINES

by

Robert Ross Smith



CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY

UNITED STATES ARMY

WASHINGTON, D.C., 1996

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 53–60474

First Printed 1953—CMH Pub 5–8–1

Foreword

The Approach to the Philippines deals principally with lesser known but highly interesting amphibious and ground operations along the New Guinea coast during 1944 and also relates the Army's part in the conquest of the southern Palau Islands. Opening the way for the Allied invasion of the Philippine Islands in the fall of 1944, the operations described in this volume involved all the mechanics of modern warfare—the complexities of amphibious landings, carrier-based and land-based air support, infantry maneuver and small unit action, artillery support, logistics, tank and flame thrower action, troop leadership, medical problems, civil affairs, intelligence, and all the rest. While primarily a story of ground combat action, the volume describes the activities of the Army's supporting services in sufficient detail to complete the history of the ground operations. Navy, Army Air Forces, and Marine Corps activities are covered as necessary to provide a well-balanced picture, and enough strategic background material is included to fit the tactical narrative into its proper perspective in the global war.

Mr. Robert Ross Smith, the author, has a B. A. and M. A. in history from Duke University, and he holds a Reserve commission as a Major of Infantry. A graduate of the Infantry Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Ga., Mr. Smith served for two years during World War II as a member of the G–3 Historical Division at General Douglas MacArthur's Allied Headquarters in the Southwest Pacific Area. Mr. Smith has been with the Office of the Chief of Military History, either as an officer on active duty or as a civilian, since January 1947.

ORLANDO WARD
Maj. Gen., U. S. A.
Chief of Military History.

Washington, D. C.
1 May 1952

Author

Robert Ross Smith received his B.A. and M.A. degrees from Duke University. A graduate of the Infantry Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia, Mr. Smith served two years in the G–3 Historical Division staff at General MacArthur's headquarters in the Southwest Pacific. He joined the Center of Military History in 1947 and rose to the position of branch chief before retiring in 1983. He also served as chief historian of U.S. Army, Pacific, during an important phase of the Vietnam War. Mr. Smith has written many works on military history, including *Triumph in the Philippines,* another volume in the U.S. Army in World War II series. He is a retired lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve.

Preface

This volume describes the operations of Allied forces in the Pacific theaters during the approach to the Philippines, April through October 1944. While this is essentially the story of U. S. Army ground combat operations during the approach, the activities of all ground, air, and naval forces are covered where necessary for the understanding of the Army ground narrative. Eight major and separate operations, all susceptible of subdivision into distinct phases, are described. Seven of these operations took place in the Southwest Pacific Area, while one—the Palau Islands operation—occurred in the Central Pacific Area. This series of actions is exceptional in that the operations were executed in such rapid succession that while one was being planned the height of combat was being reached in another and still others had entered the mopping-up stage.

Because of the nature of the combat, the level of treatment in this volume is generally that of the regimental combat team—the infantry regiment with its supporting artillery, engineer, tank, medical, and other units. The majority of the actions described involved a series of separate operations by infantry regiments or regimental combat teams, since divisions seldom fought as integral units during the approach to the Philippines. Division headquarters, often assuming the role of a ground task force headquarters, co-ordinated and administered the ofttimes widely separated actions of the division's component parts.

In accomplishing the research and writing for this volume, which was begun in the spring of 1947, the author had access to the records of the U. S. Army units involved in the approach to the Philippines. Records of the Combined and Joint Chiefs of Staff, the U. S. Army General Staff, the U. S. Navy and Marine Corps, the U. S. Air Force, and the Australian services were also made available to the author upon request. Principal Japanese sources employed were monographs of Japanese operations prepared by former Japanese Army and Navy officers, beginning in late 1946, under the direction of the United States high command in Tokyo.

Unlike most operations in the Central Pacific and in Europe, those of U. S. Army ground combat forces in the Southwest Pacific Area had no contemporary historical coverage during World War II. In the last-named theater, no teams of historians accompanied combat units to observe, collect materials, conduct interviews, and prepare preliminary historical manuscripts. Thus, the sections of this volume concerning operations in the Southwest Pacific Area are based principally upon the official unit records maintained during combat and, to a lesser extent, the unit After Action Reports required by Army regulations. For opera-

tions in the Palaus, there was available an incomplete manuscript covering part of the 81st Infantry Division's actions. This was prepared partly in the field and partly during a short tour of duty with the Historical Division, War Department General Staff, by Maj. Nelson L. Drummond, Jr. For operations of the 1st Marine Division in the Palaus, the author depended for the most part on Maj. Frank O. Hough's *The Assault on Peleliu,* an official publication of the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps.

It is manifestly impossible for the author to list all those who have aided or guided him during the preparation of this volume, but he must express his gratitude to those who have made especially notable contributions.

Thanks are due the personnel of the Historical Records Section, Departmental Records Branch, Office of The Adjutant General, U. S. Army, especially Mr. Wilbur Nigh and Miss Thelma K. Yarborough, for their co-operation and patience in helping the author locate source material. For similar reasons thanks are due the members of the Organization Records Branch, Records Administration Center, Office of The Adjutant General. The author is also greatly indebted to Maj. Frank O. Hough (USMCR) of the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps; to Lt. Roger Pineau (USNR) of the Naval History Branch, Naval Records and History Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, U. S. Navy; to the personnel of the Naval Records and Library Branch of the same Division; to Capt. Bernhardt L. Mortensen (USAF) of the USAF History, Research, and Library Division, Air University Library, Air University, U. S. Air Force; to Flight Lt. Arthur L. Davies (RAAF) of the History Section, Headquarters Royal Australian Air Force; and to the author's personal friend Capt. John Balfour (AIF) of the Office of the Official War Historian, Australia. The list would not be complete without mention of the time and patience of fifty-odd participating commanders who provided comments on all or parts of the manuscript and, finally, official reviews undertaken by members of the Historical Sections of the U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, the U. S. Marine Corps, the U. S. Navy, the U. S. Air Force, and the Australian Army.

Especial thanks are due Dr. John Miller, jr., during whose tenure as Chief of the Pacific Section, Office of the Chief of Military History, much of this volume was written, for his sound counsel and his careful reviewing of the final manuscript. For his excellent guidance and valuable advice, a great debt of gratitude is likewise owed Dr. Louis Morton, under whose direction as Chief of the Pacific Section preparation of this volume was begun and (upon his return to the section after a period of service as Deputy Chief Historian, Department of the Army) completed. The help and encouragement of Dr. Kent Roberts Greenfield, Chief Historian, Department of the Army, is also keenly appreciated. The author is greatly indebted to the late Mr. W. Brooks Phillips of the Editorial Branch, Office of the Chief of Military History, who did the final editing, ably assisted by Mrs. Loretto Stevens and other members of the same branch. Mr. Leonard B. Lincoln prepared the index, and the painstaking task of final typing for the

printer was in charge of Mrs. Lois Riley. The author acknowledges his indebtedness to the many other members of the Office of the Chief of Military History (especially Mr. Wsevolod Aglaimoff, the Chief Cartographer, and his colleagues of the Cartographic Branch, as well as the members of the Photographic Branch), for the time and effort they expended during the preparation of the volume.

Finally, the completion of the work would not have been possible without the support of Maj. Gen. Orlando Ward, Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, and the military members of his staff who, understanding the problems of the historian, made the path smoother.

ROBERT ROSS SMITH

Washington, D. C.
1 May 1952

. . . to Those Who Served

Contents

Chapter		Page
I.	THE STRATEGIC BACKGROUND	1
	Determining the Strategy of the Approach	1
	Acceleration of Pacific Operations in Early 1944	6
	The New Directive for 1944	11
II.	PLANNING AND PREPARATION FOR THE HOLLANDIA–AITAPE OPERATION	13
	Theater Organization	14
	The Hollandia Area	16
	The Decision to Take Aitape	19
	The Forces and Their Missions	23
	Logistics	32
	The Hollandia Tactical Plan	42
	Preliminary Operations and the Approach	48
III.	THE HOLLANDIA OPERATION	53
	The Landings at Tanahmerah Bay	53
	The 24th Division's Drive to the Airfields	59
	The Seizure of Hollandia Town	68
	The Drive Inland from Humboldt Bay	71
	Logistic Problems of the RECKLESS Task Force	77
	The End of the Operation	82
IV.	THE JAPANESE: PEARL HARBOR THROUGH HOLLANDIA	84
	Strategy and Dispositions to April 1944	84
	The Japanese at Hollandia	95
V.	PRELUDE TO THE BATTLE OF THE DRINIUMOR	103
	Securing the Airfield Area	103
	Contact with the 18th Army *on the East Flank*	114
VI.	DEPLOYMENT FOR BATTLE	131
	Reinforcement and Reorganization of the PERSECUTION Task Force	131
	Gathering Combat Intelligence	137
	The 18th Army *Moves West*	145
VII.	THE BATTLE OF THE DRINIUMOR, PHASE I: THE *18TH ARMY* ATTACKS	152
	Withdrawal of the PERSECUTION Covering Force	152
	Restoration of the Driniumor Line	158
	Operations West of the Driniumor	167
	The Japanese Attack on the South Flank	170

Chapter *Page*

VIII. THE BATTLE OF THE DRINIUMOR, PHASE II: THE *18TH ARMY* RETREATS 177
Securing the Afua Area 177
Envelopment to the East 188
The End of the Aitape Operation 200

IX. THE SEIZURE OF WAKDE ISLAND 206
The Sarmi–Biak Plan 206
The Wakde Plan 212
Preparations for the Capture of Wakde Island 218
Small-Island Warfare, Southwest Pacific Style 222

X. LONE TREE HILL: THE INITIAL ATTACKS 232
The Japanese at Wakde–Sarmi 232
The 158th Infantry Against Lone Tree Hill 236
Final Operations of the 158th Infantry 253

XI. LONE TREE HILL AND BEYOND 263
The 6th Division Against Lone Tree Hill 263
Final Operations in the Wakde–Sarmi Area 275
The Results of the Wakde–Sa mi Operation 278

XII. BIAK: THE PLAN, THE LANDING, AND THE ENEMY . . . 280
The Biak Plan 280
The Landing 289
The Japanese on Biak 299

XIII. WEST TO MOKMER DROME 304
An Initial Reverse 304
Preparations for a New Attack 312
The Seizure of Mokmer Drome 316

XIV. FRUSTRATION AT MOKMER DROME 326
Reinforcements for the 186th Infantry 326
Operations North of Mokmer Drome 331
Allied Command at Biak 340

XV. THE JAPANESE REINFORCE BIAK 346
Biak and Japanese Naval Plans 346
The KON Operation 350
Results of the KON Operation 361

XVI. BIAK: THE REDUCTION OF THE JAPANESE POCKETS . . 365
The Reduction of the West Caves 365
Securing the Western Area 377
The Reduction of the East Caves 380
The Reduction of the Ibdi Pocket 384
The End of the Operation 390

Chapter		Page
XVII.	OPERATIONS ON NOEMFOOR ISLAND	397
	The Noemfoor Plan	397
	The Landing	406
	The Occupation of Noemfoor Island	416
	Base Development on Noemfoor	421
XVIII.	AIRFIELDS ON THE VOGELKOP PENINSULA	425
	Early Plans for the Vogelkop	425
	The Sansapor–Mar Plan	431
	Operations in the Sansapor–Mar Area	440
XIX.	THE PALAUS AND MOROTAI: STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL PLANNING	450
	The Strategic Setting	450
	The Objectives	456
	Organization, Tactics, and Logistics	463
XX.	THE MOROTAI OPERATION	480
	The Landing	480
	Securing and Developing Morotai	488
XXI.	THE LANDINGS ON PELELIU AND ANGAUR	494
	Preliminary Air and Naval Bombardment	494
	The Peleliu Beachhead	496
	The Decision to Land on Angaur	498
	The Assault on Angaur	499
	Securing Southern Angaur	508
XXII.	THE REDUCTION OF NORTHWESTERN ANGAUR	515
	Into the Main Defenses	515
	Overcoming the Last Resistance	523
	Results of Operations on Angaur	530
XXIII.	SECURING PELELIU ISLAND	532
	Marine Operations in Southern Peleliu to 22 September	532
	Dividing the Island	536
	Northern Peleliu and the Offshore Islands	543
XXIV.	PELELIU: THE LAST RESISTANCE	551
	Compressing the Umurbrogol Pocket	551
	Entr'acte: The Relief of the 1st Marine Division	559
	Overcoming the Final Resistance	561
	Results of Operations in the Palaus	573
CONCLUSION: THE RESULTS AND THE COSTS		576
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE		579
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS		595
BASIC MILITARY MAP SYMBOLS		601
INDEX		605

Tables

No.		Page
1.	American Casualties During the Approach to the Philippines: April–December 1944	577
2.	Japanese Casualties, Defending the Approaches to the Philippines: April–December 1944	578

Charts

1.	Operational Organization of the Southwest Pacific Area: April 1944	15
2.	Air Organization for the Hollandia–Aitape Operations (Amphibious Phase).	25
3.	Naval Organization for the Hollandia–Aitape Operations (Amphibious Phase).	28
4.	Ground Organization for the Hollandia–Aitape Operations (Amphibious Phase).	33
5.	Japanese Army Operational Organization in the Southwest Pacific Area: April 1944	94
6.	Japanese Naval Operational Organization in the Central and Southwest Pacific Areas: April 1944	96
7.	The PERSECUTION Task Force: 22 April–4 May 1944	104
8.	The PERSECUTION Task Force: 4 May–28 June 1944	115
9.	The PERSECUTION Task Force: 28 June–11 July 1944	136
10.	The PERSECUTION Task Force: 11 July–21 July 1944	160
11.	The PERSECUTION Task Force: 22 July–30 July 1944	175
12.	The PERSECUTION Task Force: 31 July–11 August 1944	189
13.	The PERSECUTION Task Force: 11 August–25 August 1944	203
14.	Organization for the Palau Operation	465

Maps

1.	Situation in the Pacific, 12 March 1944	2
2.	Hollandia Operation Area	17
3.	Aitape Landings, 22 April 1944	106
4.	Yakamul Area	124
5.	Situation Along the Driniumor, Evening, 10 July 1944	141
6.	Japanese Plan of Attack, 10 July 1944	149
7.	Japanese Attack on Driniumor Line, Night, 10–11 July 1944	153
8.	The TED Force Action, 31 July–10 August 1944	193
9.	Wakde–Sarmi Area	207
10.	Capture of Wakde Islands, 17–19 May 1944	223
11.	Advance to Lone Tree Hill, 23–26 May 1944	240
12.	TORNADO Task Force, Night, 30–31 May 1944	254
13.	Schouten Islands	281

No. *Page*

14. Bosnek–Sorido Coast 282
15. Attack North of Mokmer Drome, 11–15 June 1944 333
16. Securing the Airfields, 18–24 June 1944 370
17. Capture of Noemfoor, 2 July–31 August 1944 399
18. Vogelkop Operation, 30 July–31 August 1944 431
19. Palau Islands 456
20. Morotai Landings, 15 September 1944 476
21. Terrain of Umurbrogol Pocket 552
22. Marines at Umurbrogol Pocket, 30 September–15 October 1944 557
23. 321st Infantry at Umurbrogol Pocket, 16–25 October 1944 562
24. 323d Infantry at Umurbrogol Pocket, 26 October–27 November 1944 . . 570

Maps I–IX are in accompanying map envelope

I. New Guinea.
II. The Hollandia Operation, 22–26 April 1944.
III. Securing the Beachhead, 23 April–4 May 1944.
IV. Lone Tree Hill.
V. Biak Landings and Seizure of Mokmer Drome, 27 May–7 June 1944.
VI. Assault on Peleliu, 15–23 September 1944.
VII. Assault on Angaur, 17–20 September 1944.
VIII. Reduction of Northwestern Angaur, 21 September–1 October 1944.
IX. Dividing the Island, 24–26 September 1944.

Illustrations

Lake Sentani Plain, Showing Airfields 19
Hollandia–Aitape Planners 30
Humbolt Bay 44
Tanahmerah Bay 46
Damaged Japanese Airplanes 51
Landings at Tanahmerah Bay 54
Unloading LST's 57
Hand-Carrying Supplies 63
General Douglas MacArthur 69
LVT's Crossing Lake Sentani 75
Troops Unloading Supplies at Aitape 109
Yakamul Area 124
Tadji Fighter Strip 129
Driniumor River 142
Lt. Gen. Hatazo Adachi 146
The Afua Area 178
Artillery Supporting TED Force 198
Native Litter Bearers 201

	Page
Brig. Gen. Jens A. Doe	220
The Assault on Wakde Island	225
Enemy Defensive Positions on Wakde	229
LCM Ferry	253
Mokmer Drome, Biak	288
Biak Coast Line	292
Unloading at Biak	298
East Caves Area	305
Scene of Tank Battle	308
The Parai Defile	314
Men of the 162d Infantry Seeking Cover	331
Disabled Japanese Tank	339
Infantrymen Moving Up to Attack	367
Entrances to the West Caves	376
Entrance to the East Caves	383
Dock Area, Biak	394
Base H and Hospital Areas on Biak	395
DUKW Burning on the Beach at Noemfoor	410
Paratroopers Landing on Noemfoor	414
Sansapor Planners	435
Bulldozer Clearing Jungle Undergrowth	448
Maj. Gen. Paul J. Mueller	467
LCI's at Morotai	484
Unloading at Morotai	486
Red Beach Unloading Operations	502
Saipan Town Area	506
Entrance to Lake Salome Bowl	520
Interior of Lake Salome Bowl	525
Mopping Up in Northwest Angaur	528
Southeast Corner of Umurbrogol Pocket	554
LVT Flame Thrower in Action	564
Moving into Mortimer Valley	568
Peleliu	574

The illustration on p. 146 is an Australian War Memorial photograph. All other illustrations in this volume are from the files of the Department of Defense.

CHAPTER I

The Strategic Background

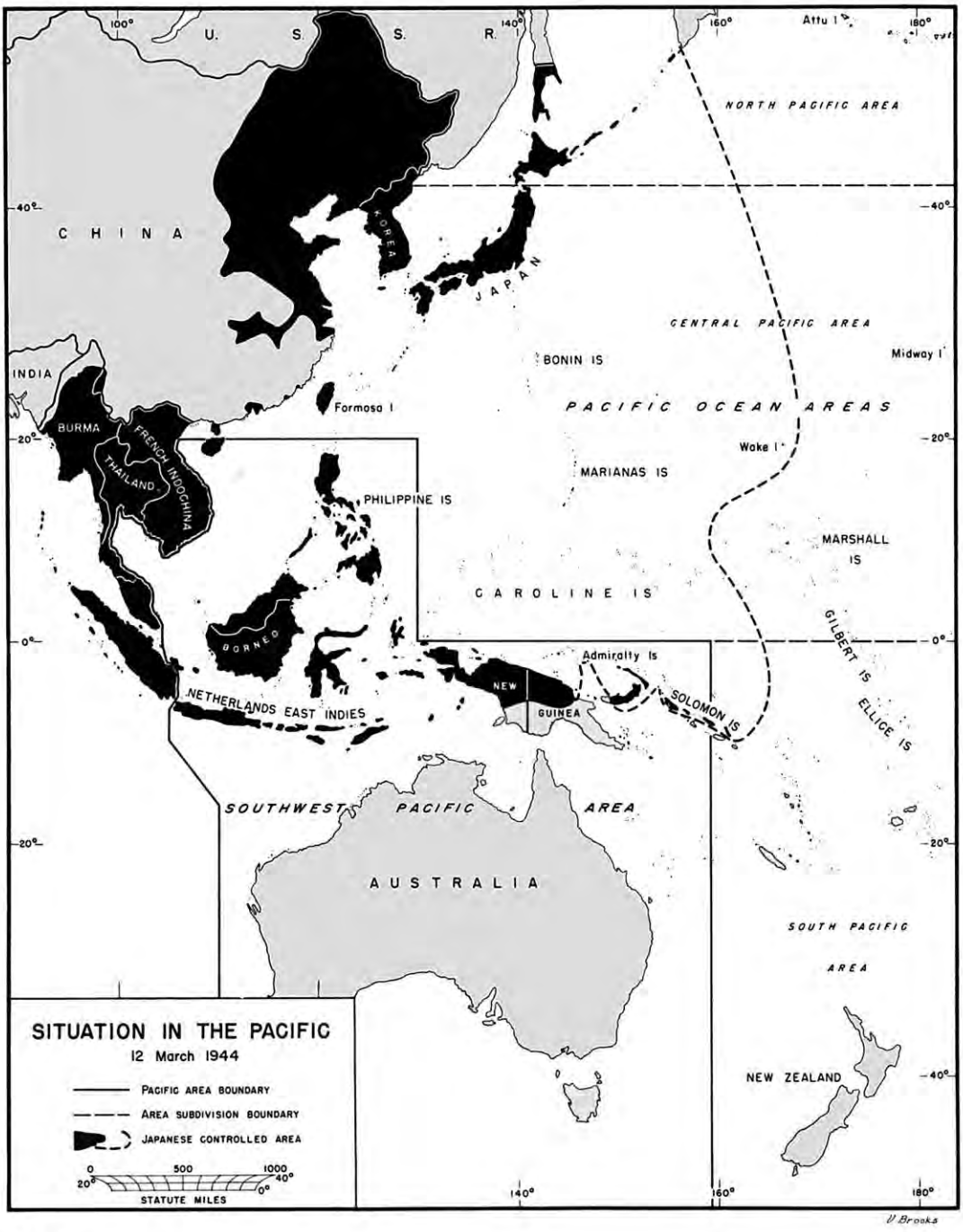
In March 1944 the U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff directed Allied forces in the Pacific to begin an offensive toward the Philippine Islands. Recapture of the Philippines would be a profoundly important step toward the defeat of Japan, for from those islands the Allies could cut Japanese lines of communication to the rich, conquered territory of the Netherlands East Indies, Indochina, Thailand, Burma, and Malaya. In the Philippines the Allies could also establish bases from which to support subsequent advances against Formosa, the China coast, or Japan itself.

Before March 1944 the objectives of operations in the Pacific had been limited to securing the lines of communication from the United States to Australia, beginning an attack across the Central Pacific, and occupying bases from which to launch future operations. During these operations Allied forces of General Douglas MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Area had secured eastern New Guinea, western New Britain, and the Admiralty Islands, joining with the drive of Admiral William F. Halsey's South Pacific Area forces up the Solomon Islands in a campaign to neutralize the great Japanese base at Rabaul. Admiral Chester W. Nimitz had begun an offensive in his Central Pacific Area late in 1943; by March 1944 his forces had driven through the Gilbert Islands into the Marshalls. Now the war in the Pacific was ready to enter a more decisive stage, as the various land, sea, and air forces under General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz attacked toward the Philippines from the bases already in Allied hands.

The offensive toward the Philippines would have to be undertaken with relatively limited means. The U.S.-British Combined Chiefs of Staff, subject to whose approval the U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff directed the war in the Pacific, had from the first assigned priority in the global war to the defeat of Germany.

Determining the Strategy of the Approach

In May 1943 the Joint Chiefs of Staff secured approval from the Combined Chiefs for a course of action providing that the main offensive against Japan would be conducted across the Pacific, as opposed to advances from the Aleutians, Southeast Asia, or China. The Joint Chiefs decided that the seizure of a foothold in the Philippines would be necessary before any subsequent operations against Japan or her holdings could be launched. To the Joint Chiefs, there were two practicable routes of approach to the Philippines. One was across the Central Pacific via the Marshalls, Carolines, and Palaus; the other in the Southwest Pacific along the north coast of New Guinea and into the islands between northwestern New Guinea and Mindanao, southernmost large island of the Philippine Archipelago. The choice of


U. S. S. R.
Attu I.
NORTH PACIFIC AREA
CHINA
KOREA
JAPAN
CENTRAL PACIFIC AREA
BONIN IS
Midway I.
INDIA
Formosa I.
PACIFIC OCEAN AREAS
BURMA
FRENCH INDOCHINA
THAILAND
Wake I.
MARIANAS IS
PHILIPPINE IS
MARSHALL IS
CAROLINE IS
BORNEO
Admiralty Is.
NEW GUINEA
SOLOMON IS
GILBERT IS
ELLICE IS
NETHERLANDS EAST INDIES
SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA
AUSTRALIA
SOUTH PACIFIC AREA
NEW ZEALAND
SITUATION IN THE PACIFIC
12 March 1944
PACIFIC AREA BOUNDARY
AREA SUBDIVISION BOUNDARY
JAPANESE CONTROLLED AREA
0 500 1000
STATUTE MILES
100°
140°
160°
180°
40°
20°
0°
V. Brooks

MAP 1

routes and the direction and objectives of amphibious offensives in both the Central and Southwest Pacific Areas were not determined without a great deal of discussion at the highest levels of United States command.[1]

General MacArthur's Concepts

General MacArthur, who upon orders from the President had left the Philippines in early 1942, had a burning determination to return to those islands as soon as possible. He favored the New Guinea–Mindanao axis of advance to the Philippines. Almost as soon as he assumed his new command in the Southwest Pacific Area he began thinking about moving back to the Philippines by means of a series of amphibious operations along the north coast of New Guinea.[2] He envisaged this campaign as entailing a steady advance of the Southwest Pacific's land-based bomber line northwestward to the Philippines by the successive seizure of air-base sites along the 1,400-mile north coast of New Guinea. General MacArthur realized that once his forces began pushing on to the Philippines from the Vogelkop Peninsula of northwestern New Guinea they would present vulnerable flanks to Japanese air and sea power based in the Palau Islands to the right (north) and in the Netherlands East Indies to the left. He said, however, that the advance along the New Guinea coast as far as the Vogelkop could not be endangered by hostile air attacks from the Marshall or Caroline Islands to the north, that it would take "full advantage of land-based air power" and could be "fully protected by naval power."

Beyond the Vogelkop the Allied left would be protected by land-based aircraft flying from fields which would be established on islands between New Guinea and the southern Philippines. The right flank could be safeguarded by the occupation of the Palau Islands or by operations of the U. S. Pacific Fleet, the strategic missions of which, General MacArthur averred, were to protect his right flank and destroy or contain the Japanese fleet. Finally, he said, the advance along the north coast of New Guinea could most quickly achieve one important strategic objective—cutting the Japanese lines of communication to the Indies.[3]

On the other hand, declared General MacArthur, an advance toward the Philippines through the Central Pacific, via the

[1] JPS 67/4, 29 Apr 43; JPS 67/5, 26 May 43; JCS 287, 7 May 43; JCS 287/1, 8 May 43. All entitled Strategic Plan for the Defeat of Japan, and all in OPD file, ABC 381 Japan (8–27–42) Secs. 1 and 2. Min, JCS 76th and 80th Mtgs, 8 and 12 May 43; CCS 220, 14 May 43, Strategic Plan for the Defeat of Japan, and CCS 242/6, 25 May 43, Final Report to the President and Prime Minister, TRIDENT Conference, last two in OPD file, bound volume of TRIDENT [Washington, D. C.] Papers. Bound folders containing minutes of meetings of the CCS, JCS, and their subordinate committees are filed in the office of ACofS, G–3, GSUSA.

[2] Ltr, CofS GHQ SWPA to Comdrs Allied Land, Air, and Naval Forces SWPA (n. d., *circa* 13 May 42), sub: Preparations for the Counteroffensive, copy atchd as Incl 3 to Ltr, Maj Gen Charles A. Willoughby [ACofS G–2 GHQ FEC] to Maj Gen Orlando Ward [Chief of Military History, Dept of the Army] (n. d., *circa* 10 Mar 51), in OCMH files. For 1941–42 operations in the Philippines and General MacArthur's departure from those islands, see Louis Morton, The Fall of the Philippines, a forthcoming volume in the series, UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II.

[3] GHQ SWPA, Estimate of the Situation and Rough Draft, RENO Plan, 25 Feb 43, photostat copy in OCMH files; Rad, CINCSWPA to CofS, C–3302, 20 Jun 43, CM-IN 13149; Rad, CINCSWPA to CofS, C–1217, 2 Feb 44, CM-IN 1443. The quotations are from the RENO plan, hereafter cited as RENO I. CM-IN and CM-OUT numbers used in the footnotes of this volume refer to numbers appearing on copies of those messages in Gen. George C. Marshall's In and Out Logs, filed in the Staff Communications Office, Office of the Chief of Staff, U. S. Army.

Marshall and Caroline Islands, would have to be undertaken without any land-based air support. Such a course of action would "be time consuming and expensive in . . . naval power and shipping." It would "require a reorientation of front" from that already established in the South and Southwest Pacific Areas during operations aimed at the reduction of Rabaul. It could gain no important strategic objectives, in General MacArthur's opinion, until a series of amphibious frontal assaults on small, fortified islands brought Allied forces finally to Mindanao in the southern Philippines. Finally, he argued, the concept of an advance through the Central Pacific was a return to the prewar plans, which, he declared, had not been premised on the availability of Australia as a base for offensive operations.[4]

For a time General MacArthur's plans for the approach to the Philippines via the southern route called for the seizure of the Hansa Bay area of northeastern New Guinea as the first step of the drive to the Philippines and the last of the campaign for the reduction of Rabaul. Next, the forces of the Southwest Pacific would jump approximately 275 miles northwest to establish air and logistic bases at Hollandia, Dutch New Guinea, bypassing a Japanese stronghold at Wewak. Then General MacArthur intended to move on to the Geelvink Bay and Vogelkop Peninsula regions of western Dutch New Guinea. Following these operations, airfield sites on Halmahera or the Celebes, lying between the Vogelkop and Mindanao, would be seized. If necessary for additional left flank protection, air bases would also be established on the islands of the Arafura Sea (south of western New Guinea), simultaneously with the advance to Hollandia, and on Ambon Island (south of the Halmaheras).[5]

The Joint Chiefs' Strategic Plans

General MacArthur's concept of the best course of action in the Pacific did not coincide with that of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who had decided that an advance via the Central Pacific would be strategically more decisive. The Joint Chiefs concluded that pressure applied on the Central Pacific front would bear directly on Japan's most vulnerable flank—the east—and would, indeed, outflank the enemy's positions in New Guinea. But operations along the New Guinea coast could not threaten Japan's bases in the Central Pacific and would not impair free movement by the Japanese Navy.

The Joint Chiefs believed that the U. S. Pacific Fleet (commanded by Admiral Nimitz in addition to his area command) could be used to best advantage in the vast open reaches of the Central Pacific. Should naval operations in the Pacific precipitate an overwhelming defeat of the Japanese Navy, the Allies might be provided with an opportunity to bypass intermediate objectives and to strike directly against the Japanese home islands. Moreover, a drive through the Central Pacific would take advantage of rapidly growing American naval power, with which it might be found easier to move into the Philippines from the Central rather than the Southwest Pacific.

---

[4] RENO I, 25 Feb 43; Rad, CINCSWPA to CofS, C–3302, 20 Jun 43, CM-IN 13149. The quotations are from RENO I.

[5] RENO I, 25 Feb 43; GHQ SWPA, RENO III, Outline Plan of Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area to Reoccupy the Southern Philippine Islands, 20 Oct 43, in OPD file, ABC 384 Pacific, Sec. 8–A; Rad, CofS to CINCSWPA, 3406, 24 Jan 44, CM-OUT 9451; GHQ SWPA, RENO IV, Outline Plan for Operations of the SWPA 1944, 6 Mar 44, in OPD file, ABC 384 Pacific (1–17–43) Sec. 3–A.

Logistically, the Joint Chiefs believed that the Central Pacific route of approach to the Philippines was preferable because it was shorter and more direct. In opposition to General MacArthur's views, the Joint Chiefs felt that the longer Southwest Pacific route would be more costly in terms of money, men, aircraft, time, and ships. The Central Pacific route was also better hygienically—it would entail far less jungle and swamp warfare with attendant tropical diseases than would operations in New Guinea. Finally, there was a practical limit to the Japanese air and ground strength which could be deployed on the small islands of the Central Pacific. On the other hand, the Japanese could place men and aircraft on New Guinea and the islands between the Vogelkop Peninsula and Mindanao in numbers limited only by the availability of troops, engineering equipment, ships, and planes.[6]

Another factor destined to influence the Joint Chiefs in placing emphasis on the Central Pacific offensive was the potential of the Army Air Forces' new offensive weapon, the huge B–29 bomber. Though the Joint Chiefs' plans for the defeat of Japan called for large-scale bombing of the Japanese home islands from China, as early as November 1943 there was some doubt that the Chinese armies under Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek could hold eastern China fields from which the B–29's would operate. Certainly the initiation of B–29 operations from those fields would prompt the Japanese to launch ground offensives to capture the air bases.

But, should the Allies secure air-base sites in the Mariana Islands, lying in the Central Pacific less than 1,500 miles from Tokyo, the B–29's would be provided with bases which the Japanese could not retake. The Army Air Forces was therefore eager for the capture of the Marianas. The air planners found a strong advocate for the early seizure of the Marianas in Admiral Ernest J. King (Chief of Naval Operations and Commander in Chief of the U. S. Fleet), Navy representative on the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Admiral King repeatedly termed the occupation of the Marianas a key operation in the successful prosecution of the war against Japan, since an invasion of those islands, in his opinion, might well precipitate a showdown battle with the Japanese Fleet and would open a line of advance aimed directly at Japan.[7]

Though the Joint Chiefs believed that the Central Pacific route of advance was strategically, logistically, and tactically better than the Southwest Pacific route, they also decided that it would be most wasteful of time and resources to move all the Allied forces from the Southwest and South Pacific Areas out of the firm contact with the Japanese established during the campaign for the reduction of Rabaul. The Joint Chiefs held that the employment of both routes would prevent the Japanese from knowing where and when the next blow was to fall. It was also believed that the Australian Government would react unfavorably to redirection of all Allied effort to the Central Pacific. If the Southwest Pacific offensive were curtailed, Australia might well let down in its war effort, an action which would result in

[6] JPS 67/4, 28 Apr 43; JPS 67/5, 26 May 43; JCS 287, 7 May 43; JCS 287/1; Rad, CofS (for JCS) to CINCSWPA, 8679, 2 Oct 43, CM-OUT 630.

[7] Min, JPS 109th Mtg, 27 Oct 43; Min, JCS 123d and 124th Mtgs, 15 and 17 Nov 43, respectively; General of the Air Force Henry H. Arnold, *Global Mission* (New York, 1949), pp. 476–80. For additional material upon the selection of the Marianas as an objective and for coverage of the fighting in those islands, see Philip A. Crowl, Campaign in the Marianas, another forthcoming volume in this series.

a drag on all operations throughout the Pacific.

In summary, the Joint Chiefs of Staff decided that the approach to the Philippines would be made through both the Central and Southwest Pacific Areas, with priority assigned to the Central Pacific since that approach appeared strategically more decisive. Central Pacific forces would move toward the Philippines via the Marshalls, Carolines, and Palaus, while Southwest Pacific forces would drive up the northern New Guinea coast and on into the islands between the Vogelkop Peninsula and Mindanao.[8] In accordance with this concept Admiral Nimitz' forces, in November 1943, had taken the first step toward opening the drive across the Central Pacific by seizing air and naval base sites in the Gilbert Islands. This operation was a preliminary to the occupation of the Marshalls, to begin early in 1944.

Acceleration of Pacific Operations in Early 1944

The Marshalls, Truk, and the Admiralties

In January 1944 Admiral Nimitz was planning to move his Central Pacific forces into the eastern and central Marshalls by the end of the month. Late in March he would execute a much-desired carrier strike against Truk, a presumably strong Japanese base near the center of the Caroline chain. Whether Truk would be seized was still a moot question. Although the capture of that atoll might well precipitate a showdown battle with the Japanese Fleet, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had begun to wonder if the seizure of Truk might not prove too costly for the results achieved. They agreed in late 1943 to postpone a decision concerning its capture until the U. S. Pacific Fleet could test the strength of the base in a carrier raid.[9]

In May, according to Admiral Nimitz' plans, the Central Pacific's amphibious assault forces would advance to the western Marshalls. On 1 August they would land at Mortlock and Truk in the Central Carolines. If, however, the invasion of Truk should prove either unnecessary or undesirable, then Admiral Nimitz would be prepared to bypass that atoll in favor of a direct move to the Palau Islands about 1 August. First landings in the Marianas were to take place by 1 November.[10]

At the time Admiral Nimitz prepared this plan, General MacArthur's planners were trying to find ways and means to accelerate the final phases of the campaign against Rabaul: the capture of Hansa Bay on the northeast coast of New Guinea, the occupation of the Admiralty Islands, and the seizure of Kavieng, on New Ireland north of Rabaul. To fit in with Admiral Nimitz' plans for the use of the Pacific Fleet's carriers during the invasion of the Marshalls and the strike against Truk, General MacArthur had had to schedule the attacks against Kavieng and the Admiralties for 1 April and the Hansa Bay operation for 26 April. For post-Hansa Bay operations, General MacArthur's current plans called for the advance to Hollandia and the Arafura Sea islands about 1 June; the Geelvink Bay area in mid-August; the Vogelkop Peninsula by 1 October; Halmahera and the Celebes on 1 December; and, finally, an entry into the southern Phil-

[8] JPS 67/5, 26 May 43; JCS 287/1, 8 May 43; Rad, CINCSWPA to CofS, C–6131, 28 Sep 43, CM-IN 19656; Rad, CofS to CINCSWPA, 8679, 2 Oct 43, CM-OUT 630.

[9] CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Campaign Plan GRANITE, 13 Jan 44, in files of the Navy Dept; Min, JCS 123d and 124th Mtgs, 15 and 17 Nov 43.

[10] CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Campaign Plan GRANITE, 13 Jan 44.

ippines at Mindanao on 1 February 1945. This schedule was slower than one approved by the Combined Chiefs of Staff in late 1943; but if the Southwest Pacific could accelerate the last phases of the reduction of Rabaul, all subsequent operations could be considerably speeded.[11]

Principally to settle details of fleet support for the Admiralties, Kavieng, and Hansa Bay operations, planners of the South, Southwest, and Central Pacific Areas met at Pearl Harbor on 27 and 28 January 1944.[12] The planners also discussed in a general way the question of bypassing Truk, the target dates for other operations in the Pacific, and the proposed B–29 bases in the Marianas. Admiral Nimitz presented revised plans calling for the invasion of the eastern and central Marshalls on 1 February and the western Marshalls on 15 April. He also suggested possible revisions in his schedule of operations against the Palaus, the Marianas, and Truk. Previously he had planned to take the Palaus before the Marianas, and he had believed it essential to seize Truk as an advanced fleet base. Now the Central Pacific commander thought that if the proposed carrier strike against Truk drove the Japanese fleet westward, it might be possible to bypass Truk, seize the Marianas about 15 June, and move to the Palaus early in October.

Most of the Army and Navy planners at the January conferences favored the idea of bypassing Truk. Apparently the majority of them also favored bypassing the Marianas, and the consensus at Pearl Harbor seemed to lean toward a sequence of operations which would place the emphasis of the drive to the Philippines in the Southwest Pacific Area. All the planners agreed that the Palaus would have to be taken to safeguard the right flank of the Southwest Pacific's advance beyond the Vogelkop Peninsula to Mindanao in the Philippines. Most of them approved a course of action which would take Central Pacific forces directly from the Marshalls to the Palaus and provide the Southwest Pacific Area with sufficient support to move up the north coast of New Guinea and into the Philippines well before the end of 1944.

As far as B–29 operations against the Japanese home islands from the Marianas were concerned, there seems to have been a lack of enthusiasm at the Pearl Harbor conferences. General MacArthur's planners, taking their cue from their commander, de-

---

[11] Rad, CINCSWPA to CofS, C–164, 6 Jan 44, CM-IN 3366; Rad, CINCSWPA to CofS, C–172, 6 Jan 44, CM-IN 4188; Rad, CINCPOA to CINCSWPA, 7 Jan 44, CM-IN 8330; Rad, COMSOPACADMIN to COMSOPAC [Admiral Halsey, then in Washington], 8 Jan 44, CM-IN 8331; Rad, CINCSWPA to CofS, C–1217, 2 Feb 44, CM-IN 1443; RENO III, 20 Oct 43. For earlier operations in the South and Southwest Pacific Areas see John Miller, jr., *Guadalcanal: The First Offensive* (Washington, 1949) and Samuel Milner, Victory in Papua, both in this series, the latter in preparation. These two volumes provide information concerning the establishment of the Allied commands in the Pacific and the assignment of the first mission to the Allied forces. The campaign against Rabaul is to be covered in John Miller, jr., CARTWHEEL: The Reduction of Rabaul, while operations in the Gilberts and Marshalls are to be described in Philip A. Crowl and Edmund G. Love, The Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls, both in this series.

[12] The following information on the Pearl Harbor Conference and General MacArthur's views on the use of the B–29 is based principally upon: Rad, CINCPOA to CINCSWPA, 7 Jan 44, CM-IN 8330; Rad, CINCSWPA to CofS, C–1217, 2 Feb 44, CM-IN 1443; Memo, Col William L. Ritchie [Chief, SWP Theater Group, OPD GSUSA] to Maj Gen Thomas T. Handy [Chief, OPD], 4 Feb 44, sub: Brief of Pacific Conf, Pearl Harbor, 27–28 Jan 44, in OPD file, ABC 384 Pacific (1–17–43) Sec. 3–A; Min, JPS 125th Mtg, 2 Feb 44; Min, JCS 145th Mtg, 8 Feb 44; History of AFMIDPAC and Predecessor Commands, I, 90ff, in OCMH; General George C. Kenney, *General Kenney Reports* (New York, 1949), pp. 347–49.

sired that the B–29's be sent to the Southwest Pacific, whence they could strike lucrative targets in the Netherlands East Indies. General MacArthur's opinion was that B–29 operations against Japan from the Marianas would obtain negligible strategic and tactical effects, that operating hazards from the Mariana bases would be great, and that logistic support of the B–29's in the Marianas would be much more difficult than it would be in the Southwest Pacific.

While it is noteworthy that both Army and Navy planners of the Pacific commands were, in January 1944, inclined to take issue with the Combined and Joint Chiefs of Staff over the emphasis on lines of advance toward the Philippines and the seizure of the Marianas, the higher level planners had already decided that the Marianas would be seized, that B–29 operations from those islands would start in 1944, and that the priority of the advance to the Philippines would be given to the Central Pacific. Indeed, so important did the Joint Chiefs consider operations in the Central Pacific that they were willing to delay beyond 1 April 1944 General MacArthur's attacks against Kavieng and the Admiralties if such a delay would make it possible to accelerate Admiral Nimitz' advances in the Marshall Islands.[13] Such a delay would, of course, probably mean the postponement of subsequent Southwest Pacific operations along the New Guinea coast.

As events turned out, the strength of Central Pacific forces used to invade the eastern and central Marshalls on 31 January proved so preponderant and Japanese resistance and reactions so weak that Admiral Nimitz' reserves and garrison forces, already staging for the eastern Marshalls, did not have to be committed to that operation. The Central Pacific commander, urged on by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was therefore able to step up his attack into the western Marshalls to mid-February. The Joint Chiefs also instructed Admiral Nimitz to execute the scheduled March carrier strike against Truk as much earlier as possible.[14]

A successful invasion of the western Marshalls was carried out on 17 February 1944. To support and provide strategic cover for this operation, the long-awaited carrier strike on Truk was made on the 16th and 17th. During the ensuing week other targets in the Carolines were hit and a one-day carrier attack against the Marianas was also undertaken. Evaluation of the Truk strikes disclosed that the base was much weaker than had previously been supposed. The main body of the Japanese Fleet had already left the atoll and the threat of additional attacks by the U. S. Pacific Fleet kept it in the western Pacific. Truk and the eastern Carolines were eliminated as an effective section of the Japanese defense system.[15]

While the strikes against the Carolines and Marianas had been taking place in the Central Pacific, preparations for the scheduled Admiralties, Kavieng, and Hansa Bay operations had been going on apace in the Southwest Pacific. Troop units were designated and preliminary steps were taken to gather supplies, shipping, and personnel at

[13] Rad, COMINCH to CINCPOA, 2 Feb 44, CM-IN 1854.

[14] *Ibid.;* Rad, CINCPOA to COMINCH, 2 Feb 44, CM-IN 1855; Min, JCS 145th Mtg, 8 Feb 44; Rad, CINCPOA to COMINCH, 15 Feb 44, CM-IN 10592.

[15] United States Strategic Bombing Survey [USSBS], *The Campaigns in the Pacific War* (Washington, 1946), pp. 194–95; Crowl and Love, The Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls, *passim.*

staging areas.[16] These preparations were never completed.

From 300-mile distant airfields in New Guinea, Southwest Pacific land-based planes had for some time been flying bombing and reconnaissance missions against the Admiralty Islands. On 23 February planes on armed reconnaissance over the Admiralties failed to elicit any response from Japanese ground defenses. The next day General MacArthur ordered an immediate ground reconnaissance in force to be sent to the Admiralties aboard high speed destroyer-transports (APD's). The troops of the U. S. 1st Cavalry Division engaged in this risky undertaking were instructed to remain ashore and secure a beachhead upon which reinforcements could be landed. The initial landings were made on 29 February. The desired beachhead was taken and the assault units were reinforced beginning on 2 March by the rest of the 1st Cavalry Division.[17]

The landing in the Admiralties, taking place a month ahead of schedule, gave General MacArthur a welcome opportunity to speed the pace of operations within the Southwest Pacific Area and to keep abreast of developments in the Central Pacific Area. On 5 March he proposed a new plan of operations to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He suggested that the Kavieng operation be executed as planned on 1 April but, since aircraft from the Admiralties could support operations along the New Guinea coast, that the Hansa Bay operations be canceled in favor of a direct jump to Hollandia before the end of April.

The bypassing move to Hollandia would isolate Japanese ground troops in the Hansa Bay, Madang, and Wewak areas of eastern New Guinea. Moreover, the Hollandia area was considered capable of development into a major air base from which land-based planes could dominate western New Guinea where the Japanese were building up their own air strength. If Hollandia could be seized at an early date, General MacArthur reasoned, this Japanese air redeployment could be forestalled and the westward advance toward the Philippines could be hastened by several months.[18]

Washington Planning Conferences, February–March

The acceleration of the Marshall and Admiralty operations made it urgent that the Joint Chiefs of Staff issue a detailed directive for the conduct of the war in the Pacific during the rest of 1944. They now had General MacArthur's proposals to consider, as well as new plans being prepared by Admiral Nimitz, and they had yet to decide the question of bypassing Truk. Early in February General MacArthur had sent his chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Richard K. Sutherland, to Washington in an attempt to persuade the Joint Chiefs to direct the concentration of all forces in the Pacific along the New Guinea axis of advance, bypassing both Truk and the Marianas. Later in the same month Admiral Nimitz and members of his staff also arrived at Washington to discuss with the Joint Chiefs plans for future operations in the Central Pacific Area.

General Sutherland had not been in Washington long before he found it necessary to advise General MacArthur that the

[16] GHQ SWPA, Operations Instructions (OI) 44, 13 Feb 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 13 Feb 44.

[17] Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO Force, XC–1428, 24 Feb 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 24 Feb 44; GHQ SWPA, OI 44/2, 19 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 13 Feb 44. For details of operations in the Admiralties see Miller, CARTWHEEL: The Reduction of Rabaul.

[18] Rad, CINCSWPA to CofS, C–2473, 5 Mar 44, CM-IN 3318.

Mariana operation was inevitable since both the Army Air Forces and the Navy were pressing for the undertaking.[19] Accepting this, General MacArthur came to the conclusion that, assuming Truk would be bypassed, the invasion of the Marianas need not materially interfere with the schedule of Southwest Pacific operations along the New Guinea coast.[20] Admiral Nimitz, discussing the possibility of bypassing Truk, told the Joint Chiefs that his forces would be ready to undertake another major amphibious operation about mid-June. Either Truk or the Marianas, he said, would be acceptable targets, but if Truk were bypassed he thought it would still be necessary to take the southern Marianas and the Palaus to assure the neutralization of the central Caroline atoll. Since a good fleet base in the western Pacific would be needed before moving into the Philippines, Admiral Nimitz proposed seizing Ulithi Atoll, about midway between the Marianas and the Palaus. The capture of Ulithi would, he thought, probably require the occupation of Yap, 100 miles to the southwest, and the neutralization if not the capture of the Palaus. Woleai, in the Carolines 400-odd miles almost due south of the Marianas, should also be taken to assure the neutralization of Truk and the protection of the lines of communication from the Marianas to Yap and Ulithi.

Initially, Admiral Nimitz recommended that the Marianas should be taken in mid-June, Woleai a month later, Yap and Ulithi at the beginning of September, and the Palaus early in November.[21] Reconsideration of this plan led Admiral Nimitz to the conclusion that the occupation of Ulithi should follow landings in the Palaus, a sequence which might permit the neutralization rather than the capture of Yap. This schedule would call for landings in the Marianas on 15 June, on Woleai 15 July, the seizure of the Palaus beginning 1 October, and the occupation of Ulithi at an opportune moment after the Palau operation began.[22]

While Admiral Nimitz had been presenting his plans to the Joint Chiefs, General Sutherland had also been preparing new plans on the basis of General MacArthur's proposals of 5 March. The outline which General Sutherland gave to the Joint Chiefs called for the Southwest Pacific forces to move into the Hollandia area with two divisions on 15 April, supported by the Pacific Fleet. Air, naval, and logistic bases would be established at Hollandia to support subsequent Southwest Pacific advances northwest to the Geelvink Bay region of Dutch New Guinea. The Southwest Pacific forces would move to Geelvink Bay about 1 June.

In the middle of the next month, according to General Sutherland's presentation, three Southwest Pacific divisions would be sent against the Arafura Sea islands, southwest of Dutch New Guinea. There, air bases would be established from which to cover later advances to the Vogelkop Peninsula and Halmahera, both scheduled for mid-

[19] Tel conv, Gen Sutherland [in Washington] and Maj Gen Richard J. Marshall [Deputy CofS GHQ SWPA, in Brisbane, Australia], 15 Feb 44, CM-IN, WD–Telecon 192.

[20] Rad, CINCSWPA to CofS, C–1741, 16 Feb 44, CM-IN 10909.

[21] JCS, Memo for Info 200, 7 Mar 44, sub: Sequence and Timing of Opns, Central Pacific Campaign, A Rpt by CINCPOA, in OPD file, ABC 384 Pacific (1–17–43) Sec. 3–A; Min, JCS 150th Mtg, 7 Mar 44.

[22] Addendum to JCS Memo for Info 200, 8 Mar 44, sub: Sequence and Timing of Opns, Central Pacific Campaign, Further Rpt by CINCPOA, in OPD file, ABC 384 Pacific (1–17–43), Sec. 3–A.

September, when Central Pacific forces might be ready to move to the Palaus. If the Marianas were bypassed, however, the Southwest Pacific chief of staff pointed out, the Palaus might then be invaded as early as mid-July. Land-based aircraft of the Southwest Pacific Area could support a July invasion of the Palaus from air bases in the Hollandia and Geelvink Bay regions. If air bases on the Vogelkop, Halmahera, and the Arafura Sea islands proved inadequate to provide left flank protection for the move into the Philippines, then airdrome sites on Ambon Island might also be seized in September or October. The entry into the Philippines would be effected at southeastern Mindanao on 15 November 1944.[23]

Studies of the outlines presented by General Sutherland and Admiral Nimitz were undertaken for the Joint Chiefs of Staff by subordinate, advisory committees, which found some fault with parts of both plans. The committees concluded that Admiral Nimitz' plan to seize Woleai had little merit, because the operation threatened to be too costly in comparison with the possible results. Woleai, they determined, should be bypassed and neutralized by air action. The committees also advised bypassing Truk. The capture of the Palaus they considered necessary to assure the neutralization of Truk, to protect the right flank of Southwest Pacific forces moving into the Philippines, or to support a move by Central Pacific forces directly to Formosa. Again the planners turned down the suggestion that all forces in the Pacific be concentrated on the drive up to the New Guinea coast.[24] The sequence of operations ultimately recommended by the Joint Chiefs' subordinate committees provided for the invasion of Hollandia on 15 April, the Marianas on 15 June, the Palaus on 15 September, and Mindanao on 15 November.[25]

The New Directive for 1944

On 12 March the Joint Chiefs of Staff completed consideration of the proposals submitted by their subordinate committees and the planners of the Central and Southwest Pacific Areas. On the same day the Joint Chiefs issued their new directive for action in the Pacific during the rest of 1944. Reaffirming their belief that Allied strength in the Pacific was sufficient to carry on two drives across the Pacific, the Joint Chiefs' directive was, in effect, a reconciliation among conflicting strategic and tactical concepts. The Joint Chiefs took into consideration the Army Air Forces' desire to begin B–29 operations against Japan from the Marianas as soon as possible; Admiral King's belief that the Marianas operation was a key undertaking which might well precipitate a fleet showdown; the knowledge concerning the weakness of Truk gained during the February carrier attacks; the proposals offered by various planner concerning the feasibility of bypassing Truk; Admiral Nimitz' belief that the occupation of the Palaus and Ulithi was necessary to assure the neutralization of Truk and to provide the Pacific Fleet with a base in the western Pacific; and, finally, General MacArthur's plans to return to the Philippines as early as possible via the New Guinea–Mindanao axis of advance.

The Joint Chiefs instructed General MacArthur to cancel the Kavieng operation, to complete the neutralization of Rabaul and

[23] RENO IV, 6 Mar 44.

[24] JCS 713, 16 Feb 44, Strategy in the Pacific [a Rpt by JSSC] and JCS 713/1, 10 Mar 44, Future Opns in Pacific [a Rpt by JPS], both in OPD file, ABC 384 Pacific (1–17–43) Sec. 3–A.

[25] JSC 713/1, 10 Mar 44.

Kavieng with minimum forces, and to speed the development of an air and naval base in the Admiralties. The Southwest Pacific's forces were to jump from eastern New Guinea to Hollandia on 15 April, bypassing Wewak and Hansa Bay. The Joint Chiefs stated that the principal purpose of seizing Hollandia was to develop there an air center from which heavy bombers could start striking the Palaus and Japanese air bases in western New Guinea and Halmahera. After the occupation and development of the Hollandia area, General MacArthur was to conduct operations northwest along the northern New Guinea coast and "such other operations as may be feasible" with available forces in preparation for the invasion of the Palaus and Mindanao. The target date for the Southwest Pacific's landing in the Philippines was set for 15 November.

Admiral Nimitz, in turn, was ordered to cancel the Truk operation and to speed the aerial neutralization of Truk, Woleai, and other Japanese bases in the central and eastern Carolines. He was also directed to conduct heavy carrier strikes against the Marianas, the Carolines (including the Palaus), and "other profitable targets," and to provide carrier support and amphibious means for the Southwest Pacific's landings in the Hollandia area. The Mariana Islands were to be occupied by Central Pacific forces beginning 15 June and the Palaus starting 15 September. The Palaus, said the Joint Chiefs, were to be occupied for the purposes of extending Allied control over the eastern approaches to the Philippines and Formosa and to secure air and naval bases from which to support operations against Mindanao, Formosa, and the China coast.[26]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff had decreed that Pacific strategy would entail a reinvasion of the Philippines, but for operations after Mindanao no decision was made in March 1944. The strategy for the approach to the Philippines was clearly delineated—the forces of the Southwest Pacific were to move northwest along the coast of New Guinea and via the islands northwest of the Vogelkop Peninsula into the Philippines; Central Pacific forces were to continue operations in two directions, the first toward Japan through the Marianas and the other west toward the Philippines via the Palaus. The stage was set for the acceleration of the drive to the Philippines.

[26] Rad, CofS (for JCS) to CINCSWPA, 5171, and to COMGENCENPAC (to CINCPOA), 989, 12 Mar 44, CM-OUT 5137. This message is also JCS 713/4, 12 Mar 44, Future Opns in Pacific, in OPD file, ABC 384 Pacific (1–17–43) Sec. 3–A.

CHAPTER II

Planning and Preparation for the Hollandia–Aitape Operation

The first step in the Southwest Pacific Area's drive to the Philippines—the seizure of the Hollandia region of Dutch New Guinea—could have far-reaching consequences. (*Map I*) Anchorages at Hollandia were known to be capable of basing many of the largest combat vessels, cargo ships, and troop transports. Inland plains in the area were thought to provide almost unlimited potentialities for airdrome development. Aircraft operating from fields at Hollandia could dominate most Japanese airdromes in western New Guinea and nearer islands of the Indies, could fly reconnaissance and bombing missions against the western Carolines, including the Palaus, and could provide support for subsequent landing operations along the north coast of New Guinea. Small naval vessels, such as motor torpedo boats (PT's), operating from Hollandia area bases, could interdict Japanese barge traffic for miles both east and west of that region. Finally, the Hollandia region was capable of development into a major supply base and staging [1] area for the support of subsequent Allied operations farther to the west.

General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area, and its subordinate commands were to have no easy task in planning the advance to Hollandia; but by March 1944 these headquarters had accumulated two years' experience with the complex air, sea, and ground operations that characterized the war in the Pacific. Indeed, the planning for Hollandia provides an excellent case study for most amphibious undertakings in the Southwest Pacific. For this reason a detailed discussion of the work undertaken by the various theater commands, the problems they faced, and the means by which these problems were solved is included here. The planning for subsequent operations within the Southwest Pacific is treated in less detail with emphasis placed principally on the differences from the Hollandia planning.

Solving the many problems faced by the Southwest Pacific commands in planning the advance to Hollandia was made more difficult by the interrelationship of many of those problems. A direct move to Hollandia from eastern New Guinea, bypassing Wewak and Hansa Bay, could not be undertaken unless carrier-based air support were made

[1] The term "staging" used in the Pacific theaters during World War II had a broader meaning than that usually applied in Europe or the zone of interior. In the Pacific a staging base was the point of departure for an amphibious operation. At such a base not only would troop units be assembled, but supplies and equipment of all types would also be gathered to be loaded for either immediate or future use at objective areas.

available from the Pacific Fleet. It was also possible that a more powerful enemy force might be encountered at Hollandia than had been met during any previous landing operation in the Pacific theaters. This meant that a larger Allied force than had ever before been assembled for any single amphibious operation in the Pacific would have to be sent against Hollandia. The size of this force would complicate logistic planning and preparations and would necessitate the use of more assault shipping than was available within the Southwest Pacific Area. Finally, the advance was to be made into terrain about which many important details were unavailable and unobtainable. Thus, all interested commands of the Southwest Pacific Area were to have a thoroughgoing test of their training or past experience.

Theater Organization

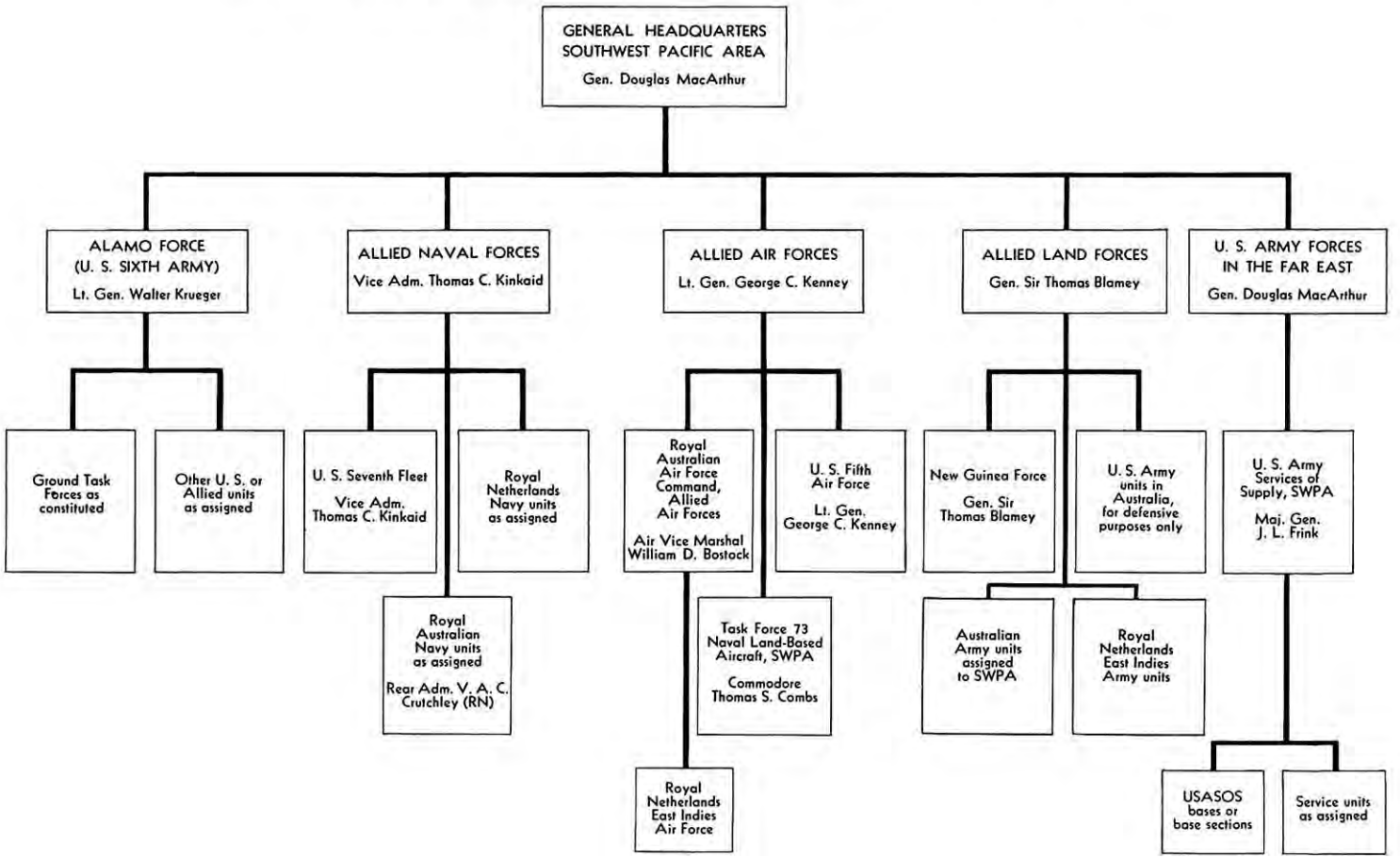
General MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Area headquarters was an inter-Allied, interservice command exercising operational and policy-making functions. The staff was organized generally along U. S. Army lines except that many technical and administrative special staff sections were not included. Administrative services for U. S. Army forces within the theater were concentrated at Headquarters, United States Army Forces in the Far East, also commanded by General MacArthur. Logistic and technical service functions for U. S. Army forces were under Headquarters, United States Services of Supply, Southwest Pacific Area, which also had certain inter-Allied and interservice logistic responsibilities. Allied combat operations were conducted through four operational headquarters subordinate to General MacArthur—the Allied Air Forces, the Allied Land Forces, the Allied Naval Forces, and ALAMO Force.

Allied Air Forces was commanded by Lt. Gen. George C. Kenney (USA). Its major component parts during the early period covered in this volume were the U. S. Fifth Air Force and the Royal Australian Air Force Command, Allied Air Forces. Later, the U. S. Thirteenth Air Force was redeployed from the South Pacific Area to pass to the control of the Allied Air Forces, Southwest Pacific Area. At the time of the Hollandia operation, General Kenney was also in direct command of the Fifth Air Force, while the Royal Australian Air Force Command was under Air Vice Marshal William D. Bostock (RAAF), who also had operational control over the few Dutch air organizations in the theater.

The Allied Naval Forces was commanded by Vice Adm. Thomas C. Kinkaid (USN), whose organization comprised the U. S. Seventh Fleet (commanded directly by Admiral Kinkaid) and ships assigned from the Royal Australian Navy and the Royal Netherlands Navy. Admiral Kinkaid's chief subordinate for amphibious operations was Rear Adm. Daniel E. Barbey (USN), who was the commander of the VII Amphibious Force, Seventh Fleet.

Allied Land Forces was commanded by General Sir Thomas Blamey (AIF), who was also the commander in chief of the Australian Army and who had operational control over the very few Dutch ground force troops in the Southwest Pacific Area. ALAMO Force was commanded by Lt. Gen. Walter Krueger (USA), also the commander of the U. S. Sixth Army. The staffs of ALAMO Force and Sixth Army were identical. As Sixth Army, General Krueger's command was subordinate to General

CHART 1—OPERATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF THE SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA: APRIL 1944



Blamey's Allied Land Forces, but as ALAMO Force it was subordinate only to General Headquarters. Allied Land Forces, while retaining operational control of U. S. Army troops in continental Australia for defensive purposes, controlled during the period of operations described in this volume the offensive operations of only those ground task forces primarily Australian in character. Conversely, ALAMO Force directed offensive operations of ground organizations comprising principally U. S. Army troops.[2]

In mid-April there were almost 750,000 troops in the various ground, air, and naval services under General MacArthur's command. Included in this total were approximately 450,000 U. S. Army ground and air personnel. Major ground combat components of the U. S. Army were 7 divisions (6 infantry and 1 dismounted cavalry), 3 separate regimental combat teams, and 3 engineer special brigades. Australian ground forces comprised 5 infantry divisions and enough division headquarters, brigades, or brigade groups (the latter equivalent to a U. S. Army regimental combat team) to form two more divisions.[3]

Within the boundaries of the Southwest Pacific Area were approximately 350,000 Japanese, of whom 50,000 were hopelessly cut off in the Bismarck Archipelago. In the New Guinea area were 5 Japanese divisions (3 of them greatly understrength); in the Netherlands East Indies 3 divisions and 2 independent mixed brigades (the latter somewhat larger than a U. S. Army regimental combat team); and in the Philippines 1 division and 4 independent mixed brigades.[4]

The Hollandia Area

The Terrain

The Allied organizations which were to move against the Hollandia area were to find there an excellent site for a major air and supply base, including the only good anchorage between Wewak in Australian New Guinea and Geelvink Bay, 450 miles northwest in Dutch New Guinea.[5] The coast line in the Hollandia area is broken by Humboldt and Tanahmerah Bays, which lie about twenty-five miles apart. (*Map 2*) Between the two are the Cyclops Mountains, dominating the area. This short range rises to a height of over 7,000 feet and drops steeply to the Pacific Ocean on its northern side. South of the mountains is Lake Sentani, an irregularly crescent-shaped body of fresh water about fifteen and a half miles long. Between the north shore of the lake and the Cyclops Mountains is a flat plain well suited to airdrome construction, while other airfield sites are to be found on coastal flatlands just east of Humboldt Bay. South of Lake Sentani are more plains, which give way to rolling hills and a largely unexplored mountain range running roughly parallel to the coast about thirty or forty miles inland.

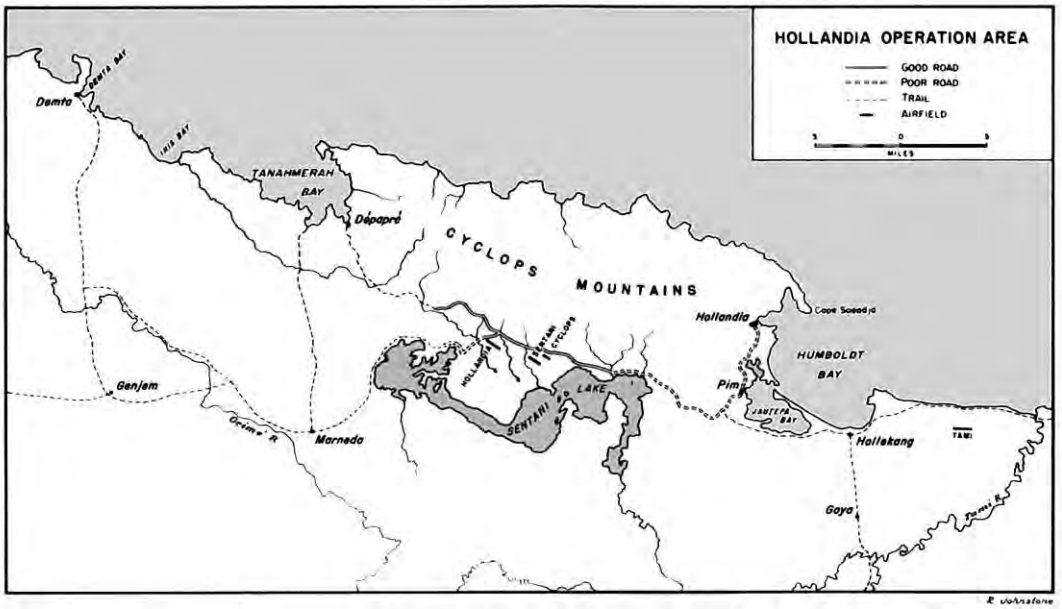
Hollandia is a wet area. In the Humboldt Bay region the average annual rainfall is 90–100 inches; around Tanahmerah Bay

[2] Milner, Victory in Papua, describes the establishment of the command in the Southwest Pacific Area.

[3] G–3 GHQ SWPA, G–3 Monthly Sum of Opns, May 44, 31 May 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 31 May 44.

[4] G–2 GHQ SWPA, G–2 Monthly Sum of Enemy Dispositions, Apr 44, 30 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 30 Apr 44. See also below, Ch. IV.

[5] Terrain information in this subsection is based principally on AGS SWPA Terrain Study 78, Locality Study of Hollandia, 6 Mar 44, in OCMH files.



MAP 2

130–140 inches; and in the Lake Sentani depression 60–70 inches. April is neither the wettest nor the driest month—those distinctions are reserved to February and September, respectively. But rain and mud can be anticipated at Hollandia during April, when the average rainfall is eight and one-half inches and about thirteen rainy days are to be expected. The rivers in the area flood after heavy rains, but flood conditions usually last only a few hours.

The Hollandia region was well suited for defense. The Cyclops Mountains presented an almost impassable barrier on the north while the width of New Guinea, with its rugged inland mountain chains, prevented an approach from the south. Movement of large bodies of troops along the coast either east or west of Hollandia was nearly impossible. Thus, the only practical means of access to the most important military objective in the area, the Lake Sentani Plain, was by amphibious assault at Humboldt Bay, on the east, or Tanahmerah Bay, on the west. From these two bays Lake Sentani could be approached only over many hills and through numerous defiles. Roads inland through these approaches were little better than foot trails prior to the war, but it was believed that they had been somewhat improved by the Japanese.

Landing beaches were numerous in the Humboldt Bay area, but there were few along the shores of Tanahmerah Bay. Almost all beaches in the region were narrow, backed by dense mangrove swamps, and easily defensible from hills to their rear and flanks. Measured by standards of jungle warfare, the distances from the beaches to the center of the Lake Sentani Plain were long, being eighteen miles by trail from Humboldt Bay and about fourteen miles from Tanahmerah Bay.

Japanese Developments at Hollandia

Hollandia had little claim to prominence before the war. Once it had been a center of trade in bird-of-paradise feathers, but this commerce had declined after 1931. In the late 1920's and early 1930's the Netherlands East Indies Government had promoted colonization and agriculture in the area, but labor trouble and sickness had caused these ventures to be practically abandoned by 1938. The town of Hollandia, situated on an arm of Humboldt Bay, then ceased to be commercially important and served only as the seat of local government and as a base for several exploring expeditions into the interior of Dutch New Guinea.

The Japanese occupied the Hollandia area early in April 1942 but paid little attention to the region until almost a year later, when Allied air reconnaissance disclosed that the enemy was constructing airfields on the Lake Sentani Plain. This development progressed slowly until late 1943, by which time successive reverses in the air and on the ground in eastern New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago, together with increasing shipping losses in the same region, began to demonstrate to the Japanese the vulnerability of their air and supply bases east of Hollandia.[6] In late 1943 and early 1944 the enemy built three airfields on the Lake Sentani Plain and started a fourth at Tami, on the seacoast east of Humboldt Bay. Their reverses in eastern New Guinea prompted the Japanese to withdraw their strategic main line of resistance to the west, and the Hollandia airdromes were developed as the forward anchor of a string of air bases stretching from the southern Netherlands East Indies into the Philippine Islands. The Japanese *4th Air Army,* principal enemy air headquarters in New Guinea, established at Hollandia an air base which ultimately became so large that it was surpassed in size and strength only by the air center earlier developed by the Japanese at Rabaul. At Hollandia the *4th Air Army* and its operating echelon, the *6th Air Division,* felt comparatively safe, for prior to 1944 that area lay beyond the effective range of Allied land-based fighter planes.

In addition, because of shipping losses east of Hollandia, the Japanese began to develop Humboldt Bay into a major supply base and transshipment point. Large ships would unload at Hollandia, whence cargo would be carried by barge to points southeast along the coast of New Guinea as far as Wewak, 215 miles away. Much of the cargo of the large ships remained at Hollandia to build up the base there. Continuous Japanese shipping activity throughout western New Guinea indicated to General MacArthur's Intelligence (G–2) Section that reinforcements were pouring into that area—reinforcements which might reach Hollandia. At the same time, it seemed possible that the Japanese *18th Army* might send reinforcements to Hollandia from eastern New Guinea. Time favored whatever development the Japanese were undertaking

[6] ALAMO Force, G–2 Estimate of the Enemy Situation, Hollandia–Aitape Operation, 10 Mar 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 2–14 Mar 44; Japanese Studies in World War II, No. 43, *18th Army* Operations, III, 17–20, copy in OCMH files. The latter document is one of a series prepared in Japan by Japanese Army and Navy officers after the war and translated by ATIS SCAP. Copies of the translations as well as copies of most of the Japanese originals are on file in the OCMH. Dubious or questionable parts of the translations were checked against the Japanese originals before use was made of the documents.



LAKE SENTANI PLAIN, SHOWING AIRFIELDS. *Between the north shore of the lake and the Cyclops Mountains is a flat plain well suited to airdrome development.*

at Hollandia. It was highly important that the Allies seize the area before the enemy could build it into a formidable fortress.[7]

The Decision to Take Aitape

Preliminary planning for an advance to Hollandia had been undertaken in General Headquarters during late February 1944. On 3 March representatives from major commands in both the South and Southwest Pacific Areas gathered at General MacArthur's command post in Brisbane, Australia, to discuss the problems involved in carrying out the direct advance to Hollandia without seizing an intermediate base in the Hansa Bay–Wewak area. It was immediately apparent to the Brisbane conferees that the

[7] *18th Army* Opns, III, 17–20; Amendment 2, 17 Mar 44, to GHQ SWPA, G–2 Est of Enemy Sit with Respect to an Opn Against Hollandia, 17 Feb 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 29 Feb 44; GHQ SWPA, G–2 Daily Summary of Enemy Intelligence [DSEI] 719, 720, and 759, 11 Mar, 12 Mar, and 20 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnls, 11 Mar, 12 Mar, and 20 Apr 44, respectively.

A Japanese area army is equivalent to the U. S. Army's field army; a Japanese army roughly equals a U. S. Army corps. Some special Japanese organizations, such as the *Southern Army* and the *Kwantung Army*, are equivalent to the U. S. Army's army group. A Japanese air army was theoretically equivalent to a U. S. Army air force, such as the Fifth Air Force; and the Japanese air division, while having no exact equivalent in the U. S. forces, would occupy the same relative command position as a U. S. bomber command or fighter command. Actually the Japanese *4th Air Army* contained fewer planes than the average U. S. air group.

basic problem was that of obtaining air support.

Obtaining Carrier-Based Air Support

Previous operations in the Southwest Pacific Area had been undertaken within effective range of Allied land-based fighter cover, but Hollandia was beyond this range, since the nearest Allied base was Nadzab in Australian New Guinea, almost 500 miles southeast of the objective. On the other hand, the Japanese had completed one airfield and were constructing two others in the Wakde Island–Sarmi area of Dutch New Guinea, only 125 miles northwest of Hollandia. Neither the Wakde–Sarmi nor the Hollandia fields could be kept neutralized by long-range bomber action alone. Fighter sweeps against both objectives would be necessary before D Day at Hollandia.

Since land-based fighters could not accomplish these tasks, the long jump to Hollandia could be undertaken only if carrier-borne air support could be obtained. The Southwest Pacific's naval arm had no carriers permanently assigned to it. Therefore, carriers had to be obtained from sources outside the theater.[8]

In their 12 March directive the Joint Chiefs had instructed Admiral Nimitz to provide support for the Hollandia operation.[9] Now, in accordance with these instructions, Admiral Nimitz proposed that he provide air support for Hollandia by undertaking carrier-based air strikes against Wakde–Sarmi and Hollandia prior to D Day. In addition, he would provide air support for the landings and, for a limited period thereafter, operations ashore. This support was to be made available by two groups of fast carriers assigned to Task Force 58 of the U. S. Fifth Fleet, an operational part of Admiral Nimitz' Pacific Fleet.[10]

Initially, General MacArthur planned to have these carriers conduct fighter sweeps against Hollandia and the Wakde–Sarmi area on D minus 1 and D Day of the Hollandia operation. On D Day carriers would support the landings at Hollandia and then would remain in the objective area to furnish cover for ground operations and unloading of supplies and troops through D plus 8 or until fields for land-based fighters could be constructed at Hollandia.[11] This plan was opposed by Admiral Nimitz on the grounds that it would invite disaster. In western New Guinea the Japanese were building many new airfields to which they could send large numbers of planes from other parts of the Netherlands East Indies or from the Philippines. There was no assurance that Allied carrier-based aircraft and land-based bombers could keep these enemy fields sufficiently neutralized to prevent the Japanese from staging large-scale air attacks against the Hollandia area. Admiral Nimitz therefore refused to leave the large carriers in the objective area for the period desired by the Southwest Pacific Area. Instead, he would permit Task Force 58 to remain in the Hollandia region only through D plus 3.[12] General MacArthur reluctantly accepted

[8] Min of Conf, 3 Mar 44, held at GHQ SWPA between representatives of GHQ SWPA, COMSOPAC, ANF SWPA, *et al.*, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 3 Mar 44; Rad, CINCSWPA to CINCPOA, C–2853, 14 Mar 44, CM-IN 9841.

[9] Rad, CofS (for JCS) to CINCSWPA, 5171, and to COMGENCENPAC (for CINCPOA), 989, Mar 44, CM-OUT 5137.

[10] Rad, CINCPOA to CINCSWPA, 14 Mar 44, CM-IN 9944; Rad, CINCPOA to COMINCH, 17 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 18 Mar 44.

[11] GHQ SWPA, Hollandia Outline Plan, 29 Feb 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 2–14 Mar 44.

[12] Memo, Asst ACofS G–3 ALAMO for ACofS G–3 ALAMO, 31 Mar 44, no sub, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 31 Mar–1 Apr 44.

this condition, although it left unsolved the problem of obtaining air support at Hollandia from D plus 3 until land-based fighters could be sent there. Many solutions were proposed for this problem.

Land-Based Air Support

General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area, had once given serious consideration to a plan to drop parachute troops on the Japanese-held airfields north of Lake Sentani. Since a large Japanese force was estimated to be defending Hollandia, there was no assurance that this action would be tactically successful. Even if the paratroopers captured the airfields quickly, there could be no assurance that enough men and engineering equipment could be flown to the Lake Sentani Plain in time to construct a fighter strip there before Task Force 58 was scheduled to retire. This plan was therefore abandoned.[13]

The Allied Air Forces proposed the establishment of land-based fighters on Wuvulu Island, which lies about 125 miles northeast of Hollandia. This plan was also given up. Little was known about terrain conditions on Wuvulu, the island was much closer to Japanese bases than to Allied, and its seizure would disclose the direction of the main attack. Furthermore, the Wuvulu operation would absorb ground forces, amphibious shipping, and engineering equipment sorely needed for the Hollandia campaign.[14]

A plan to develop a fighter strip at Tanahmerah (inland in south-central Dutch New Guinea and not to be confused with Tanahmerah Bay) was likewise proposed and discarded. The terrain at the inland Tanahmerah was poor and the transportation of supplies and engineering equipment to the site would present major problems. Since Tanahmerah lies south and Hollandia north of the great unexplored inland mountain range which laterally bisects New Guinea, bad weather over this range, by no means unusual, might prevent fighters based at Tanahmerah from supporting landings at Hollandia.[15] Also given serious consideration was the possibility of seizing a field in the Wakde–Sarmi area simultaneously with Hollandia. The principal obstacle to the execution of this plan was lack of sufficient assault shipping and landing craft to insure tactical success. Information about the Wakde–Sarmi area was exceedingly meager, but it was estimated by General MacArthur's G–2 Section that enemy strength there was growing rapidly.[16]

It was finally decided to obtain land-based air support for Hollandia by seizing an airfield site on the northern New Guinea coast *east* of the main objective. The location chosen was a lightly held area already partially developed by the Japanese near Aitape, which lies in Australian New Guinea

[13] *Ibid.;* GHQ SWPA, Hollandia Outline Plan Draft, 28 Feb 44, and Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WF–1012, 7 Mar 44, both in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 2–14 Mar 44.

[14] Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, XC–1855, 8 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 8 Mar 44; Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WF–1453, 10 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 10 Mar 44; Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WF–1555, 10 Mar 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 2–14 Mar 44.

[15] GHQ SWPA Conf, 3 Mar 44; GHQ SWPA, Hollandia Outline Plan, 29 Feb 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 2–14 Mar 44.

[16] GHQ SWPA Conf, 3 Mar 44; GHQ SWPA Memo, no addressee, 1 Mar 44, sub: Considerations Affecting the Plan to Seize Humboldt Bay Area with Strong Support of Carriers, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 2–14 Mar 44; GHQ SWPA, G–2 Est of Enemy Sit, Wakde–Sarmi Area, 8 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 8 Apr 44.

about 125 miles east-southeast of Hollandia.[17]

The Aitape Area

Aitape had been occupied by the enemy in December 1942.[18] Before the war the town was the seat of local government and an interisland trading point of but small commerce. The entire region is a coastal plain, varying from five to twelve miles in width, swampy in many places and cut by numerous streams. The only prominent terrain feature on the coast is a small hill at Aitape. There are no natural eastern or western boundaries in the area. To the north lies the Pacific Ocean, and south of the coastal plain rise the foothills of the Torricelli Mountains. Offshore, about eight miles east of Aitape, are four small islands. Good landing beaches exist throughout the region, the best a few miles east of Aitape. The absence of suitable terrain features makes difficult the defense of the area against amphibious assault. The many rivers could provide some defense against lateral movement, but these rivers vary greatly in width and depth according to the amount of rainfall.

April marks the end of the wettest season in the Aitape region, where rainfall averages about 100 inches per year. Though June is one of the dryest months, July is one of the wettest, with almost eight inches of rain. Torrential tropical downpours rather than prolonged rains are to be expected at Aitape.

Japanese development in the area centered around airfield construction near Tadji Plantation, about eight miles east-southeast of Aitape. At least three fields were begun by the enemy near Tadji at one time or another, but terrain conditions and lack of equipment prevented the Japanese from completing more than one of these strips. They used this field as a staging area for aircraft flying between Wewak and Hollandia and as a dispersal field for planes evacuated from heavily bombed airdromes east of Aitape. Intelligence reports indicated that Japanese ground defenses in the Aitape area were weak. It therefore seemed probable that there would be little opposition to a landing and that the assault force, once ashore, could quickly seize the airstrip area. It was estimated that Allied engineers could rehabilitate one of the Tadji strips for the use of fighter planes within forty-eight hours after the initial landings. Aircraft based on the Tadji strips would be within easy supporting distance of Hollandia, able to provide air cover after the carriers departed from Hollandia.[19]

The seizure of the Aitape area had an additional important aspect besides providing land-based support for Hollandia. Once established ashore at Aitape, Allied forces could provide ground flank protection for Hollandia against any westward movement on the part of the Japanese *18th Army*.

Additional Air Support Problems

Although the decision to seize the Tadji airstrips assured that the departure of Task Force 58 would not leave ground operations at Hollandia without air support, other air

[17] GHQ SWPA Conf, 3 Mar 44; Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, XC–1753, 5 Mar 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 2–14 Mar 44.

[18] The description of the Aitape area is based principally on AGS SWPA Terrain Handbook 21, Aitape–Vanimo, 21 Mar 44, copy in OCMH files.

[19] GHQ SWPA, G–2 Est of Enemy Sit, PERSECUTION [Aitape], 24 Jan 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 26 Jan 44; Memo, ACofS G–3 GHQ SWPA for CINCSWPA, 25 Mar 44, sub: Air Tasks for the Hollandia Opn, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 31 Mar–1 Apr 44.

support problems arose. The seizure of the Aitape area itself required air support, but Aitape, like Hollandia, was beyond the most effective range of Allied land-based fighters. Not enough large carriers had been made available to support the Hollandia landings (providing support for operations there for a few days and carrying out air strikes against Japanese bases in western New Guinea) and also to support the landing at Aitape.

Eight escort carriers (CVE's), together with the large carriers, had been made available by Admiral Nimitz to support the Hollandia operation. At first General MacArthur planned to use the escort carriers for close support missions at both Hollandia and Aitape,[20] but it was decided that Task Force 58's carriers could provide all the air support necessary in the Hollandia area. Therefore the eight CVE's were to be used to support only the assault at Aitape and to cover ground operations in that area until one of the Tadji strips could be rehabilitated. They were to be released for return to the Central Pacific Area no later than D plus 19 of the Hollandia and Aitape landings, and earlier if possible.[21]

In order to carry out all the air support missions which might become necessary, it was extremely important that the maximum possible number of fighters be based on the Tadji strips at an early date. Originally it was planned to send one fighter group of the U. S. Fifth Air Force to Tadji, a group containing both P–38 and P–40 aircraft; but it was expected that the airstrips, if in operation by D plus 1, would be rough and lacking many normal airfield facilities. It was therefore decided to send No. 78 Wing of the Royal Australian Air Force to Tadji. This Australian unit, which was comparable in size to an American group, was equipped solely with P–40 aircraft, planes peculiarly suited to operations under the rough conditions and incomplete facilities that could be expected at Tadji.[22]

The Forces and Their Missions

Once it had become certain that close air support for the assaults at Hollandia and Aitape could be obtained, it was possible to undertake detailed logistical and tactical planning. D Day, originally set for 15 April, was postponed to 22 April, with the approval of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Tide conditions along the north-central coast of New Guinea, the schedule of carrier operations already planned by Admiral Nimitz, and logistic problems within the Southwest Pacific Area combined to force this change in date.

On 22 April the air, sea, and land forces of the Southwest Pacific, supported by Task Force 58, were to seize the Hollandia and Aitape areas, isolating the Japanese *18th Army* to the east. The operations of forces assigned to the Southwest Pacific Area were to be co-ordinated by General MacArthur's headquarters in accordance with the principles of unity of command. The action of Task Force 58 was to be governed by mutual agreement and co-operation between General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz. At

[20] GHQ SWPA Conf, 3 Mar 44; GHQ SWPA OI 46, 18 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 18 Mar 44.

[21] Memo, G–3 GHQ Opns Div for ACofS G–3 GHQ, 25 Mar 44, no sub, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 25 Mar 44; Memo, ACofS G–3 GHQ for CINCSWPA, 25 Mar 44, sub: Air Tasks for the Hollandia Opn, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 31 Mar–1 Apr 44; GHQ SWPA OI 46 (Rev), 28 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 28 Mar 44.

[22] Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, CX–10218, 30 Mar 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 28–30 Mar 44; Rad, Advon5AF to GHQ SWPA, R–6915–F, 31 Mar 44, and Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WF–118, 1 Apr 44, last two in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 31 Mar–1 Apr 44.

Aitape minor air and naval facilities were to be established. At Hollandia a major air base, a logistics base capable of supporting and staging 150,000 troops, and a small naval base were to be constructed.[23]

The Air Plan and Organization

Long-range or strategic air support, both before and during the Hollandia–Aitape operation, was to be provided by Task Force 58 and the Allied Air Forces, Southwest Pacific Area. Task Force 58, commanded by Vice Adm. Marc A. Mitscher (USN), consisted of the large carriers and escorting battleships, cruisers, and destroyers. The escort carriers scheduled to support the Aitape landing were to operate as Task Force 78 under the command of Rear Adm. Ralph E. Davison (USN).[24]

Prior to 22 April the land-based bombers of the Allied Air Forces were to undertake neutralization of enemy air installations along the northern coast of New Guinea as far west as the Wakde–Sarmi area. Japanese air bases on islands in the Arafura Sea, on the Vogelkop Peninsula, and in the Caroline Islands were all to be hit by Allied Air Forces bombers. The missions against the Carolines were to be carried out for the most part by planes of the XIII Air Task Force, an advanced group of the Thirteenth Air Force, the latter then in process of moving from the South Pacific to the Southwest Pacific Area. Aircraft under control of the Allied Air Forces were also to provide aerial reconnaissance and photography as required by the ground and naval forces participating in the operation.[25]

Land-based fighters of the Allied Air Forces were to cover convoys within range of Allied Air Forces bases, while Allied shipping beyond this range was to be protected by aircraft from escort carriers. In order to prevent the Japanese from deducing the direction and objective of the operation, General Headquarters had decided to route the assault convoys from assembly points in eastern New Guinea north to the Admiralty Islands and thence west-southwest toward Hollandia and Aitape. Since this extended route would take the convoys into ocean areas which could not be covered by land-based fighters, the escort carriers had been assigned their additional support role.[26]

Medium bombers (B–25's and A–20's) of the Allied Air Forces, based in eastern New Guinea, were to undertake such close support missions at Hollandia and Aitape on D Day and thereafter as might be requested by the ground force commanders and permitted by distance and weather. Escort carrier aircraft would, if necessary, fly close support missions at Hollandia as well as at Aitape after Task Force 58 left the former area. Task Force 58 planes were to operate against targets designated by General Headquarters and requested by the ground commanders at Hollandia. The primary mission of Task Force 58, however, was to destroy or contain Japanese naval forces which

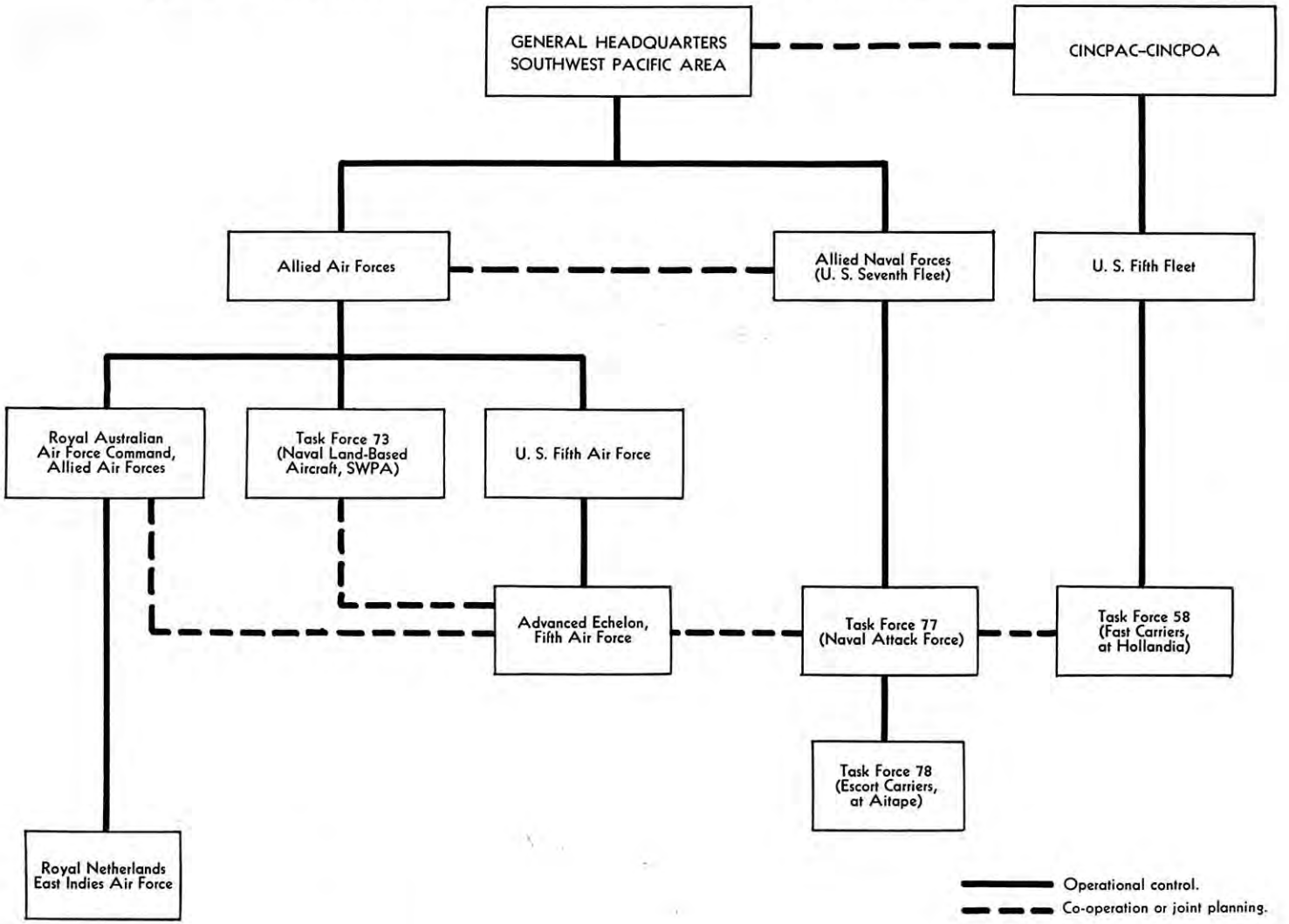
[23] GHQ SWPA OI 46, 18 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 18 Mar 44.

[24] ANF SWPA Opn Plan 4–44, 1 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 6–7 Apr 44; CTF 58 Opn Plan 5–44, 9 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 21 Apr 44.

[25] GHQ SWPA OI 46, 18 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 18 Mar 44; AAF SWPA OI 49 (Rev), 30 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 30 Mar 44.

[26] Memo, ACofS G–3 GHQ SWPA for CINCSWPA, 25 Mar 44, sub: Air Tasks for the Hollandia Opn, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 31 Mar–1 Apr 44; ANF SWPA Opn Plan 4–44, 1 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 6–7 Apr 44; GHQ SWPA OI 46 (Rev), 28 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 28 Mar 44.

CHART 2—AIR ORGANIZATION FOR THE HOLLANDIA–AITAPE OPERATIONS (AMPHIBIOUS PHASE)



might attempt to interfere with the Hollandia operation. The air support missions of the force were secondary to the destruction of the Japanese fleet.[27]

Most of the air support tasks assigned to land-based aircraft of the Allied Air Forces were to be carried out by the U. S. Fifth Air Force. Forward area operations were assigned to the Advanced Echelon, Fifth Air Force, commanded by Maj. Gen. Ennis C. Whitehead. Many missions against the islands of the Arafura Sea and the Geelvink Bay area were to be undertaken by Air Vice Marshal Bostock's Royal Australian Air Force Command. American air missions were to be flown principally from Fifth Air Force bases in eastern New Guinea. Australian planes, aided by bombers of the Fifth Air Force and a B–25 squadron of the Royal Netherlands East Indies Air Force, were to strike most of their targets from fields at Darwin in northern Australia.[28]

In addition to conducting a fighter sweep of the Hollandia and Wakde–Sarmi fields prior to D Day and covering the landings at Hollandia, Task Force 58 was assigned another important air support mission. Carrier strikes by the U. S. Fifth Fleet during February had driven the main body of the Japanese fleet west from its forward base at Truk in the Carolines. In March the Japanese began to reassemble naval power in the Palau Islands, some 800 miles northwest of Hollandia. This new naval strength constituted a potentially serious threat to the success of the Hollandia operation. It was therefore considered imperative to conduct a carrier strike against the Palaus in order to drive the enemy fleet still farther west, an operation scheduled by Admiral Nimitz for about 1 April. After the strike against the Palaus, Task Force 58 was to retire from the Carolines and western New Guinea until 21 April, D minus 1 of the Hollandia operation, when it was to return to sweep the Wakde–Sarmi and Hollandia fields.[29]

Admiral Nimitz requested that Southwest Pacific aircraft cover the strike against the Palaus by undertaking reconnaissance and bombardment missions over those islands and others in the Carolines during the passage of Task Force 58 to and from its objective. He also asked for missions against Japanese air and naval installations in the Bismarck Archipelago and along the northern coast of New Guinea. There were not sufficient long-range aircraft available to the Allied Air Forces to carry out all the missions requested by Admiral Nimitz and at the same time continue necessary bombing and reconnaissance preparations for the advance to Hollandia. Therefore a squadron of PB4Y's (the naval version of the Army B–24) was transferred from the South Pacific to the Southwest Pacific. These planes were stationed initially in eastern New Guinea and then sent to the Admiralties when the fields there became operational. Other long-range missions in support of the Palau strike were carried out by Fifth Air Force B–24's

[27] AAF SWPA OI 49 (Rev), 30 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 30 Mar 44; Change No. 1, 10 Apr 44, to CTF 58 Opn Plan 5–44, 9 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 21 Apr 44; ANF SWPA Opn Plan 4–44, 1 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 6–7 Apr 44; Rad, CINCPOA to Com5thFlt *et al.*, 27 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 27 Mar 44.

[28] AAF SWPA OI 49 (Rev), 30 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 30 Mar 44.

[29] GHQ SWPA Conf, 3 Mar 44; Memo, GHQ SWPA, no addressee, 1 Mar 44, sub: Considerations Affecting the Plan to Seize Humboldt Bay Area with Strong Support of Carriers, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 2–14 Mar 44; Rad, Com3dFlt to CINCPOA, 8 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 9 Mar 44; CINPAC–CINCPOA Opn Plan 1–44, 18 Mar 44, in G–3 Jnl, 19 Mar 44; Rad, CINCPOA to Com5thFlt, *et al.*, 27 Mar 44, CM-IN 19262.

and PBY's (two-engined patrol bombers) of the Allied Naval Forces, Southwest Pacific Area.[30]

Aircraft of the South Pacific Area (the operations of this area were under General MacArthur's strategic direction) were to continue aerial blockade of the Bismarcks and Solomons. The same air units were to assist in reconnaissance missions required to cover the operations of both Task Force 58 and the movement of Southwest Pacific forces to Hollandia and Aitape. Finally, with naval forces of the South Pacific assisting, the South Pacific air was to halt Japanese sea-borne reinforcement and supply activities within the area.[31]

Naval Plans

The Allied Naval Forces was to transport and land the assault troops and supporting forces, together with their supplies, and to furnish necessary naval protection for the overwater movement to the objectives. Admiral Kinkaid's command was also to conduct hydrographic surveys of harbors and approaches at Hollandia and Aitape, undertake mine-sweeping at both objectives, and carry out submarine reconnaissance as required by General MacArthur. Admiral Kinkaid delegated control of both ground and naval forces during the amphibious phase of the operation to Admiral Barbey. In case of an engagement with Japanese fleet units, Admiral Kinkaid would assume direct command of Allied Naval Forces combat ships supporting the Hollandia–Aitape operation, but otherwise Admiral Barbey would remain in control.[32]

For the Hollandia–Aitape operation Admiral Barbey's command was designated Task Force 77. It contained all the attack shipping available to the Allied Naval Forces and also covering and support forces of escort carriers and American and Australian cruisers and destroyers. Task Force 77's attack shipping and fire support vessels were divided into three main sections—the Western, Central, and Eastern Attack Groups. The first two were responsible for the Hollandia area landings, while the Eastern Attack Group was to carry assault troops to Aitape.[33]

Naval fire support for the landings was primarily a responsibility of Task Force 77, but the battleships, cruisers, and destroyers of Task Force 58 were also to be ready to provide fire support for the landings and operations ashore at Hollandia, should such additional bombardment prove necessary.[34] In case of fleet action, Admiral Mitscher's Task Force 58 would retain its independence and would not come under the control of General MacArthur or of the latter's naval commander, Admiral Kinkaid. Task Force 58 could depart the Hollandia area at a moment's notice to carry out its primary mission, destruction or containment of threatening Japanese fleet units. Conversely, the combat ships and escort carriers of the Allied Naval Forces would not pass to the control of Admiral Mitscher. There was no provi-

[30] Rad, CINCPOA to CINCSWPA, 14 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 18 Mar 44; Rad, CINCSWPA to COMSOPAC, XC–2255, 20 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 20 Mar 44; GHQ SWPA OI 48, 24 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 24 Mar 44; Rad, GHQ SWPA to ANF SWPA and AAF SWPA, CX–10113, 27 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 27 Mar 44.

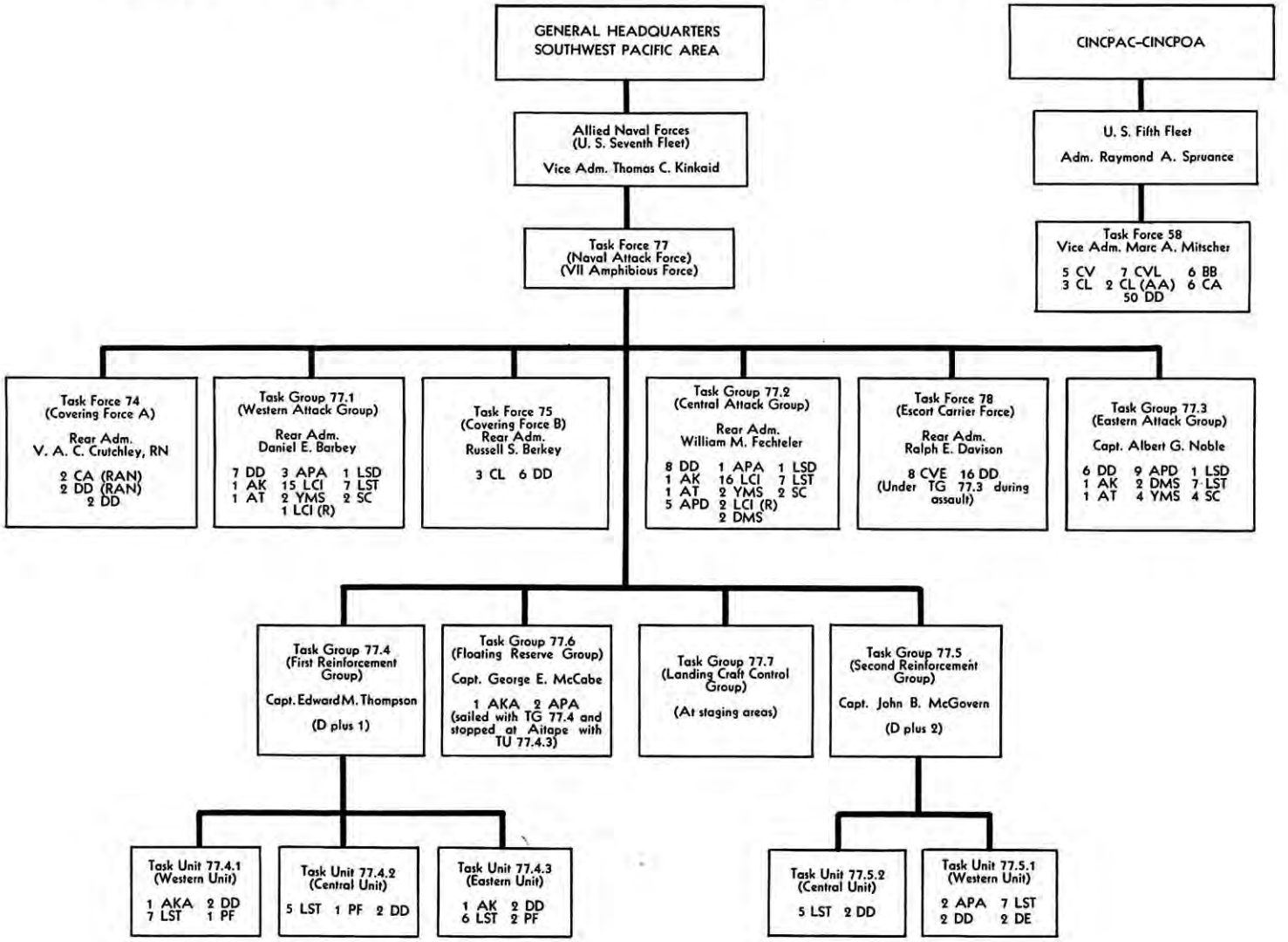
[31] GHQ SWPA OI 46 (Rev), 28 Mar 44; GHQ SWPA OI 46, 18 Mar 44; GHQ SWPA OI 48, 24 Mar 44.

[32] GHQ SWPA OI 46 (Rev), 28 Mar 44; ANF SWPA Opn Plan 4–44, 1 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 6–7 Apr 44.

[33] *Ibid.;* CTF 77 Opn Plan 3–44, 3 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 4–5 Apr 44.

[34] ANF SWPA Opn Plan 4–44, 1 Apr 44; CTF 58 Opn Plan 5–44, 9 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 21 Apr 44.

Chart 3—Naval Organization for the Hollandia–Aitape Operation (Amphibious Phase)



sion made for unified air or naval command in the objective area—a situation similar to that which obtained six months later at Leyte Gulf.

The Ground Forces

Ground operations at Hollandia and Aitape were to be under the control of ALAMO Force, commanded by General Krueger.[35] General Headquarters' early plans, which were based on the assumption that Hollandia would be a single objective, had assigned to ALAMO FORCE one and one-third reinforced divisions, totaling about 32,000 combat and service troops. When intelligence estimates indicated that nearly 14,000 Japanese troops, including two infantry regiments, might be stationed at Hollandia by D Day, it became obvious that General Krueger would need more strength. When Aitape was added to the Hollandia plan, another need for increased strength became apparent. Japanese forces at Aitape were estimated at 3,500, including 1,500 combat troops. Since the Japanese used Aitape as a staging area for troop movements between Wewak and Hollandia, it was considered possible that before 22 April enemy strength at Aitape might fluctuate from one to three thousand above the estimated figure.[36] As a result of these estimates, two and one-third reinforced divisions, totaling almost 50,000 troops, were made available to General Krueger for the assault phase of the Hollandia–Aitape operation.[37]

Responsibility for ground operations at Hollandia was delegated by General Krueger to Headquarters, U. S. I Corps, which for this undertaking was designated the RECKLESS Task Force. Commanded by Lt. Gen. Robert L. Eichelberger, I Corps headquarters had seen action during the Papua Campaign. Since then it had been based in Australia, operating as a training and defense command. Early in 1944 the corps headquarters had moved to Goodenough Island, off the eastern tip of New Guinea, to prepare for the now canceled Hansa Bay operation. At Hollandia General Eichelberger was to control the action of the 24th and 41st Infantry Divisions (the latter less one regimental combat team). The 24th Division, when alerted for the Hollandia operation, was finishing amphibious and jungle training at Goodenough Island in preparation for the Hansa Bay campaign. Elements of the 41st Division, which was commanded by Maj. Gen. Horace H. Fuller, had participated in the Papua Campaign, while other parts of the unit had gained experience in the Lae–Salamaua operations. At the time it was alerted for Hollandia, the 41st Division was rehabilitating and retraining in Australia.[38]

Two regimental combat teams of the yet untried 24th Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. Frederick A. Irving, were to land at Tanahmerah Bay, while two regimental

[35] GHQ SWPA OI 46 (Rev), 28 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 28 Mar 44.

[36] Memo, GHQ SWPA, no addressee, 1 Mar 44, sub: Considerations Affecting the Plan to Seize Humboldt Bay Area with Strong Support of Carriers, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 2–14 Mar 44; GHQ SWPA, G–2 Est of Enemy Sit, PERSECUTION [Aitape], 24 Jan 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 26 Jan 44; GHQ SWPA, G–2 DSEI's 710–761, in G–3 GHQ Jnls, 1 Mar–22 Apr 44; GHQ SWPA, G–2 Est of Enemy Sit, 22 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 22 Mar 44.

[37] GHQ SWPA OI 46 (Rev), 28 Mar 44.

[38] ALAMO Force FO 12, 23 Mar 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 20–23 Mar 44; GHQ SWPA, G–3 Hist Div, Chronology of the War in the SWPA, copy in OCMH files; Memo, CINCSWPA for COMSOPAC, Comdr AAF SWPA, Comdr ANF SWPA, *et al.*, 9 Feb 44, sub: Outline Plan Hansa Bay Opn, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 9 Feb 44; RECKLESS Task Force (hereafter cited as RTF) Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 6.



HOLLANDIA–AITAPE PLANNERS. *Left to right: Lt. Gen. Robert L. Eichelberger, Rear Adm. Daniel E. Barbey, Maj. Gen. Stephen J. Chamberlin, Lt. Gen. Walter Krueger. Officer at right is unidentified.*

combat teams of the 41st Division were to go ashore at Humboldt Bay.[39] At Aitape, the 163d Infantry of the 41st Division was to make the initial landings.

Operations at Aitape were to be controlled by Headquarters, PERSECUTION Task Force, commanded by Brig. Gen. Jens A. Doe, Assistant Division Commander, 41st Division. The PERSECUTION Task Force, organized on 23 March, was an Allied headquarters especially set up for the Aitape operation. It was to exercise its command functions directly under ALAMO Force and was on the same level of command as the RECKLESS Task Force.[40]

Until a beachhead was secured in the Aitape area, control of the landing and operations ashore was to be vested in Admiral Barbey as the Attack Force commander, who was to be represented at Aitape by the Commander, Eastern Attack Group, Capt.

[39] RTF FO 1, 27 Mar 44, atchd to RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia; RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 6.

[40] ALAMO Force FO 12, 23 Mar 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 20–23 Mar 44; PERSECUTION Task Force (hereafter cited as PTF) FO 1, 6 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 5–6 Apr 44.

Albert G. Noble (USN). General Doe was to assume command of operations at Aitape upon the seizure of the beachhead, at which time the PERSECUTION Task Force was automatically to pass from the control of the Navy to ALAMO Force.

At Hollandia the control of operations was to pass from the commanders of the Western and Central Attack Groups to the commanders of the 24th and 41st Divisions, respectively, when those units had secured their beachheads. Admiral Barbey was to retain control over ground action in the Hollandia area until General Eichelberger saw fit to move his headquarters ashore. The task force would then revert from naval control to the supervision of ALAMO Force.[41]

To reinforce the 24th and 41st Divisions for the Hollandia–Aitape operation, three separate field artillery battalions, four engineer combat battalions, seven (plus) antiaircraft battalions, a tank destroyer battalion, and the bulk of three engineer boat and shore regiments were made available. Other reinforcing units included a medium tank company of the 1st Marine Division, then on New Britain, and another from the 1st Cavalry Division, which was operating on the Admiralty Islands. Among the service organizations assigned to the operation was No. 62 Works Wing, Royal Australian Air Force, to which was assigned the task of rehabilitating an airfield at Aitape by D plus 1.[42]

General Headquarters Reserve for the operation was the 6th Infantry Division, then finishing training for amphibious and jungle warfare at Milne Bay, New Guinea. About a week before the landings the 503d Parachute Infantry, veteran of one combat jump in eastern New Guinea, was designated as an additional General Headquarters Reserve.

ALAMO Force Reserve for the Hollandia–Aitape operation was originally the 127th Infantry (and regimental combat team attachments) of the 32d Division. It was brought out of reserve and assigned to the PERSECUTION Task Force to arrive at Aitape on D plus 1 because, as D Day approached, General Krueger became increasingly concerned over the capabilities of the Japanese *18th Army,* concentrating a strength of fifty to sixty thousand at Wewak, only ninety-four miles east-southeast of Aitape. The G–2 Section of General MacArthur's headquarters estimated that a large part of the *18th Army* could march overland from Wewak to Aitape in two weeks, an opinion not shared by the Operations Section (G–3) of the same headquarters. The *18th Army,* according to General MacArthur's G–2, could be expected to make determined efforts to recapture the Aitape area.[43]

---

[41] ALAMO Force FO 12, 23 Mar 44; ANF SWPA Opn Plan 4–44, 1 Apr 44; GHQ SWPA OI 46 (Rev), 28 Mar 44.

[42] Annex 1, Tentative Troop List, 13 Mar 44, to GHQ SWPA Warning Order 4, 7 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 7 Mar 44; ALAMO Force FO 12, 23 Mar 44.

[43] GHQ SWPA, G–2 Est of Enemy Sit, Hollandia, 22 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 22 Mar 44; Amendment 2, 17 Mar 44, to GHQ SWPA, G–2 Est of Enemy Sit with Respect to an Opn Against Hollandia, 17 Feb 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 29 Feb 44; GHQ SWPA, DSEI's 710–761, 1 Mar–22 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnls, 1 Mar–22 Apr 44; remarks of Maj Gen Stephen J. Chamberlin, ex-ACofS G–3 GHQ SWPA, at Hist Div SSUSA Seminar, 23 Jan 48, copy in OCMH files. General Willoughby, General MacArthur's G–2, as late as 4 March opposed the jump to Hollandia because he doubted the ability of distant land-based and local carrier-based aircraft to protect Allied forces until land-based planes could be established at Hollandia, and he advised adhering to the earlier plans for an operation against the Hansa Bay–Wewak area. General Chamberlin had much more faith in the carriers. General Willoughby's views are to be found in Memo, ACofS G–2 GHQ SWPA to ACofS G–3 GHQ SWPA, 4 Mar 44, no sub, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 3 Mar 44. The G–3's reply is attached.

General MacArthur considered General Krueger's commitment of the 127th Regimental Combat Team to operations at Aitape at least premature, if not unnecessary. The theater commander had planned to relieve the 32d Division, then at Saidor on the Huon Peninsula, with Australian troops. The division was to be staged at Saidor for an operation against the Wakde–Sarmi area in quick exploitation of expected success at Hollandia and Aitape. General MacArthur believed, however, that Aitape might ultimately have to be reinforced. Reluctant consent was therefore given to General Krueger's plan and General MacArthur made provision to use other units at Wakde–Sarmi. ALAMO Force Reserve then became the 32d Division less two regimental combat teams—the 127th at Aitape and another which was to remain in the Saidor area for an indeterminate period.[44] RECKLESS Task Force Reserve at Hollandia was the 34th Infantry (and combat team attachments) of the 24th Division. PERSECUTION Task Force Reserve during the landings at Aitape was the 1st Battalion, 163d Infantry.[45]

Ground forces of the South Pacific Area were to continue their campaigns in the Solomon Islands and the Bismarck Archipelago during the Hollandia–Aitape operation. New Guinea Force, commanded by General Blamey and consisting principally of Australian troops, was to continue pressure against *18th Army* elements southeast of Wewak. This action was expected to help prevent the *18th Army* from moving westward at will either to attack or to bypass the Aitape area. New Guinea Force was also to defend all of eastern New Guinea it then occupied.[46]

Logistics

Logistic support of the Hollandia–Aitape operation was the responsibility of the United States Army Services of Supply, Southwest Pacific Area. The magnitude of the logistic problem is illustrated by the fact that the grand total of all Southwest Pacific Area forces assigned directly to the Hollandia–Aitape operation was over 84,000 men. There were approximately 50,000 ground combat troops and almost 23,000 personnel of all types of service units. Allied Air Forces units scheduled to move forward to Hollandia and Aitape during the opening stages of the operation, including both ground and air echelons, totaled over 12,000 men. Of the 84,000 troops assigned to the operation, about 52,000 men were to land in the objective areas by the evening of D plus 3, considered the end of the assault phase.[47] Never before had an operation of this size been undertaken in the Southwest Pacific Area.

Other problems existed, some of them directly and others indirectly related to the size of the force. Heading the list was the theater's chronic and sometimes acute shortage of ships. There were to be three widely separated beaches, each far more distant from supply bases than had been the case in

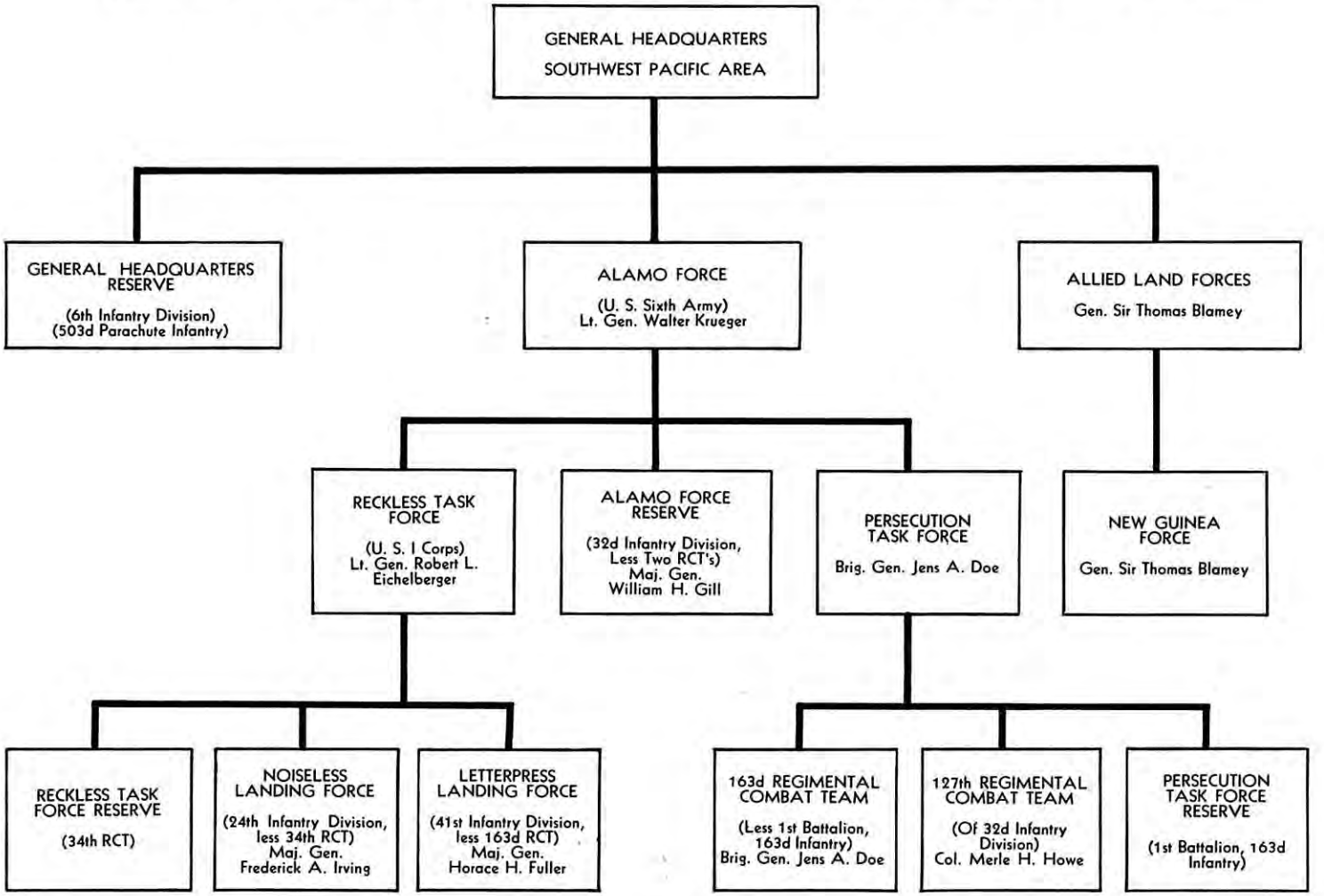
[44] GHQ SWPA OI 46, 18 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 18 Mar 44; ALAMO Force FO 12, 23 Mar 44; Rad, ALAMO to 32d Div, no number, 13 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 13 Apr 44; Memo, ACofS G–3 GHQ SWPA for CofS GHQ SWPA, 14 Apr 44, no sub; Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WF–2393, 14 Apr 44; Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, C–10671, 14 Apr 44. Last three documents in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 14 Apr 44.

[45] RTF FO 1, 27 Mar 44; PTF FO 1, 6 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 5–6 Apr 44.

[46] GHQ SWPA OI 46, 18 Mar 44, and OI 46 (Rev), 28 Mar 44; GHQ SWPA OI 48, 24 Mar 44.

[47] Annex 1, Tentative Troop List, 13 Mar 44, to GHQ SWPA Warning Order 4, 7 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl 7 Mar 44; GHQ SWPA OI 46, 18 Mar 44, and OI 46 (Rev), 28 Mar 44; ALAMO Force FO 12, 23 Mar 44.

CHART 4—GROUND ORGANIZATION FOR THE HOLLANDIA–AITAPE OPERATIONS (AMPHIBIOUS PHASE)



earlier operations in the theater. The necessity for hurried airdrome construction at the objectives made it imperative that large quantities of engineering equipment and matériel be sent to Hollandia and Aitape during the first two or three days of the operation. Plans to develop Hollandia into a major air center and logistic base involved a long-range program of construction. Staging the troops was complicated by the fact that the units were scattered from points in southern Australia to the Admiralty Islands and from the Huon Peninsula to western New Britain.

The Logistic Plan

While logistic support of the Hollandia–Aitape operation was a responsibility of the Services of Supply, ALAMO Force was responsible for the co-ordination of all detailed logistic planning.[48] For the purposes of co-ordination, General Krueger was authorized to call to his headquarters representatives of the Services of Supply, the Allied Air Forces, and the Allied Naval Forces.

The Allied Naval Forces was responsible for the logistic support of its own elements, but in case of emergency it could draw supplies from Services of Supply stocks. All air force technical supplies required to support air force units moving to Hollandia or Aitape were to be provided by the Allied Air Forces. That headquarters was to be prepared to fly emergency supplies to Hollandia and Aitape upon call from ALAMO Force. The latter organization was to provide maintenance and rations for troops staging for Hollandia and Aitape, establish initial supply bases at the objectives, and initiate numerous construction projects, including airfields at Hollandia and Aitape.

To insure supply of units moving to Hollandia and Aitape, the Services of Supply was to provide at forward bases a thirty-day supply of rations, unit equipment, clothing, fuels, and lubricants. Six units of fire[49] of all types of ammunition were to be stockpiled for ground assault troops. Construction matériel, in amounts and types determined by ALAMO Force, was also to be provided at forward bases. The responsibility for obtaining these supplies from the Services of Supply and assembling them at RECKLESS and PERSECUTION Task Force staging areas was vested in ALAMO Force.

Assault units of the RECKLESS and PERSECUTION Task Forces were to carry ashore a five-day supply of rations. Additional rations to assure food until D plus 20 for all units of the RECKLESS Task Force landed through D plus 3 were to be moved to Hollandia with those units. Sufficient rations were to be loaded for PERSECUTION Task Force assault echelons to supply them through D plus 29. Both task forces were to take with them a fifteen-day supply of unit equipment, clothing, fuels, and lubricants. Engineer construction matériel was to be loaded on ships scheduled to land through D plus 3 in such quantity as to satisfy the minimum pre-

[48] The material in this subsection is based principally on: Annex 4, Logistics, to GHQ SWPA OI 46, 18 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 18 Mar 44; USASOS Logistics Instructions 46/SOS, 2 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 3 Apr 44; ALAMO Force Adm O 7, 6 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 20–23 Mar 44.

[49] From available evidence, it appears that at the time of the Hollandia–Aitape operation the unit of fire used in the Southwest Pacific was the same as that established by the War Department. Later, however, some changes were effected within the theater, notably an increase in the rounds per unit of fire for the BAR and the 105-mm. howitzer and a reduction in rounds for the M1 rifle. The War Department unit of fire during 1944 is to be found in the 1944 edition of FM 101–10, Staff Officers' Field Manual: Organization, Technical, and Logistical Data.

scribed by ALAMO Force, and in additional quantities as required by the commanders of the RECKLESS and PERSECUTION Task Forces. Fifteen days' supply of other types of construction and maintenance matériel was to be moved to Hollandia and Aitape during the assault phase of the operations.

Provision for ammunition supply was more complex and depended to a large extent upon the nature of individual combat organizations. Assault troops moving to Hollandia were to be provided with at least two units of fire for all weapons. On the other hand, the PERSECUTION Task Force was to be supplied with four units of fire for the landing. Sufficient ammunition for field and antiaircraft artillery weapons, 4.2-inch mortars, and hand grenades was to be shipped forward on assault convoys to provide each task force with six units of fire by D plus 3. Other types of ammunition, to establish a total of five units of fire by D plus 3, would also be shipped to Hollandia and Aitape. Resupply of ammunition for the RECKLESS and PERSECUTION Task Forces was a responsibility of ALAMO Force. Two units of fire for all weapons were to be brought forward on convoys scheduled to arrive at the objectives on D plus 8. After this first automatic resupply, the two task forces would requisition from ALAMO Force ammunition as needed.

Extra rations, fuels, lubricants, and ammunition were to be stockpiled at forward bases so as to insure uninterrupted flow of these items to the objectives. The Services of Supply was to hold two large cargo vessels empty at a forward base for possible emergency use until D plus 30, and was also to furnish, prior to D Day, 1,000 tons of space on small ships for emergency use. The Allied Naval Forces and the Services of Supply were to co-operate in providing tankers for movement of bulk-loaded aviation gasoline, barges for handling such fuel at the objectives, and harbor and lightering craft. Through D plus 45 the control of all shipping moving to Hollandia and Aitape was to rest with Allied Naval Forces. After that date the Services of Supply was to assume this responsibility. Principal supply and staging bases were to be at Goodenough Island and Finschhafen. The latter base would be the point of departure for resupply ships controlled by Allied Naval Forces. Services of Supply shipping was to use such bases as might be determined by that headquarters.

Obtaining the Shipping

Early plans for the operation had indicated that 32,000 troops with 28,500 measurement tons of supplies would be ample to secure the Hollandia area. Enough shipping could have been scraped up within the Southwest Pacific to carry out an operation of that size, but the scope of the undertaking was entirely changed by the enlargement of the forces and the decision to seize Aitape. The 52,000-odd troops finally assigned to the assault phase of the operation would require 58,100 tons of supplies and equipment. There was not enough assault shipping within the theater to meet such requirements of troop and cargo space.[50]

Most of the necessary additional shipping was obtained by borrowing for a limited period assault vessels from the South and Central Pacific Areas and by utilizing some theater ships normally engaged in training activities or operations in rear areas, substituting civilian-manned vessels for the lat-

[50] Annex 4, Logistics, to GHQ SWPA OI 46, 18 Mar 44; GHQ SWPA, Hollandia Outline Plan Draft, 28 Feb 44, and atchd, unsigned, undated memo, sub: Comments on Hollandia Outline Plan, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 2–14 Mar 44.

ter. By mid-March it appeared that these steps had secured the minimum shipping space needed for the operation. However, requirements for hurried airdrome and base construction made it necessary to add more service troops and larger quantities of engineer equipment to assault cargoes than had been contemplated when arrangements for borrowing ships were first completed.[51]

General Krueger proposed that additional shipping space be obtained by using large cargo vessels (AK's) which were not usually employed during assaults. These vessels, often of the Liberty-ship type, differed from attack cargo ships (AKA's) principally in that they did not carry enough small boats to unload themselves. Four AK's, manned by U. S. Navy or Coast Guard personnel, were operating in rear areas in the theater where dock facilities and large cranes were available. General Krueger requested that these four be made available for the Hollandia–Aitape operation, a request which seemed justified in the light of expected Allied air superiority at the objectives and which had a precedent in Japanese practice during the early months of the war in the Pacific.[52]

Admiral Barbey, in charge of the amphibious phase of the operation, opposed this plan. He felt that AK's would be especially vulnerable to attack in the forward areas if they were to remain at the objectives until completely unloaded of a capacity cargo. The Supply Section (G–4) of General MacArthur's headquarters did not entirely agree with the admiral and was, indeed, inclined toward the point of view that AK's ". . . should be operated with a view to support rather than preservation of naval facilities . . . ." [53]

The G–4 Section's point of view represented one side of a basic disagreement between Army and Navy circles not only in the Southwest Pacific Area but also, to varying degrees, in other theaters of operations. To the Navy, the shipping shortage in the Southwest Pacific, together with the importance of keeping in operation ships capable of providing further logistic support, outweighed the necessity for employing merchant-type shipping, such as AK's, in the early phases of amphibious operations. The loss of a single vessel of that type would be keenly felt in both rear and forward areas in the Southwest Pacific for months to come. Moreover, to the Navy a piece of capital equipment such as an AK was not as expendable as such items of ground force equipment as an artillery piece, a tank, or a truck. An AK represented months or perhaps years of construction effort and crew training.[54]

Admiral Barbey finally determined to

[51] Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, XC–1753, 5 Mar 44, and Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WF–1012, both in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 2–14 Mar 44; Memo, G–3 GHQ Opns Div to ACofS G–3 GHQ, 25 Mar 44, sub: Shipping Borrowed from SOPAC, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 25 Mar 44; Memo, ACofS G–3 ALAMO for CofS ALAMO, 27 Mar 44, no sub, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 24–27 Mar 44.

[52] Memo, GHQ SWPA, no addressee, 1 Mar 44, sub: Considerations Affecting the Plan to Seize Humboldt Bay Area with Strong Support of Carriers, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 2–14 Mar 44; Memo, G–3 ALAMO Plng Div for ACofS G–3 ALAMO, 11 Mar 44, no sub, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 2–14 Mar 44; Rad, Com7thFlt to ALAMO, 15 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 16 Mar 44.

[53] Memo, ACofS G–2 ALAMO to CofS ALAMO, 15 Mar 44, no sub, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 15–18 Mar 44; Memo, ACofS G–3 ALAMO, for CofS ALAMO, 27 Mar 44, no sub, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 24–27 Mar 44; Ltr, Col Harold E. Eastwood [of G–4 GHQ SWPA] to ACofS G–4 ALAMO, 26 Mar 44, no sub, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Hollandia, 11 Feb–2 Apr 44. The quotation is from the latter document.

[54] Ltr, Rear Adm Albert G. Noble [Chief, BuOrd USN and, in 1944, one of Admiral Barbey's chief deputies] to Gen Ward, 18 Dec 50, no sub, in OCMH files.

take some calculated risks that seemed to be warranted by the importance of the cargo which AK's could carry to the objectives. He decided that two lightly loaded AK's would move to Hollandia with the D-Day convoys. These two ships were to leave that area on D plus 2 whether or not their unloading was completed. Another AK was to reach Aitape on D Day and the fourth would arrive at Aitape on D plus 1. Both the latter were to have a capacity load and were to remain at Aitape until completely discharged. During the period that the four AK's were operating in the forward area, the Services of Supply, by arrangement with Allied Naval Forces, was to provide civilian-manned vessels totaling equivalent tonnage for operations in the rear area.[55]

The fact that the AK's scheduled to arrive at Hollandia on D Day were not to be completely loaded resulted in a reduction of tonnage space—space which ALAMO Force believed necessary for the success of the operation. During the discussion concerning the dispatch of AK's to Hollandia, the Allied Naval Forces had made available six landing ships, tank (LST's) which had not previously been assigned to the operation, apparently in the hope that ALAMO Force would accept these vessels in lieu of the AK's. Even with this addition, space was still lacking for 3,800 tons of engineering equipment and other cargo that ALAMO Force desired to send forward with initial convoys. This cargo had to wait for later convoys.[56]

As another result of the limitations on cargo space, the quantity of supplies to be carried forward after the assault phase, on Services of Supply ships manned by civilian crews, was increased beyond that originally contemplated. In addition, some of the ships sailing with the D Day through D plus 3 convoys would have to unload at Hollandia and Aitape, return to eastern New Guinea bases for reloading, and go back to the forward objectives with a new series of convoys beginning on D plus 8.[57]

The first detailed plans for the Hollandia operation had been drawn up during the last week of February 1944 and final major changes were completed in the second week of April. As a result of the various changes, ships scheduled to arrive at the objectives during the assault phase of the operation had increased as follows:

Plan of 28 February		*Plan of 9 April*
4	Attack Troop Transports (APA's)	8
1	Attack Cargo Ships (AKA's)	2
1	Landing Ships, Dock (LSD's)	3
10	Destroyer Transports (APD's)	14
30	Landing Craft, Infantry (LCI's)	31
27	Landing Ships, Tank (LST's)	51
—	Cargo Ships (AK's)	4

[55] *Ibid.;* Rad, Com7thFlt to ALAMO, 15 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 16 Mar 44; Rad ComServFor-7thFlt to CTF 76, 15 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 16 Mar 44; Rad, CTF 76 to ALAMO and ANF SWPA, 1 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 31 Mar–1 Apr 44; Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, C–10273, 1 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 1 Apr 44; Rad, CTF 76 to ALAMO and Com7thFlt, 1 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 2–4 Apr 44; Annex 6, Assignment of Shipping, 1 Apr 44, to ALAMO Force FO 12, 23 Mar 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 20–23 Mar. 44.

[56] Memo, ACofS G–3 ALAMO for CofS ALAMO, 27 Mar 44, no sub, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 24–27 Mar 44; Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, CX–10175, 28 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 28 Mar 44.

[57] Memo, ACofS G–4 ALAMO for ACofS G–4 USASOS, 9 Apr 44, no sub, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Hollandia, 3–16 Apr 44; CTF 77 Opn Plan 3–44, 3 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 4–5 Apr 44.

After 9 April the number of assault vessels was not changed and the quantity of personnel and supplies scheduled to be landed through D plus 3 remained substantially the same.[58]

Loading and Unloading Problems

Because of the shipping shortage, it was extremely important to make use of all available cargo space on each vessel. In accordance with common practice in amphibious operations, the ships of the Hollandia–Aitape assault convoy were to be combat-loaded, which is to say that supplies most needed ashore would be the last loaded at staging areas, and the most important matériel would be aboard ships to be first discharged. This would insure that priority cargo would be the first ashore. Combat loading could take a variety of forms or combinations thereof. All cargo could be loaded in bulk in the holds of ships, or could be stowed aboard wheeled or tracked vehicles, themselves to be combat-loaded. Another possibility considered during preparations for the Hollandia–Aitape operations was to lash supplies onto prefabricated platforms—known as pallets—which could easily be loaded aboard cargo ships. For unloading, these platforms could be lowered by deck cranes into small boats or, occasionally, into water to be dragged behind small craft to the beach.[59]

Pallet-loading had been used extensively during operations in the Central Pacific Area but had been little employed in the Southwest Pacific. The system had the advantage of saving much time and labor by reducing to a minimum the handling of individual boxes, crates, and cartons. But it had the disadvantage of using somewhat more space in holds than simple bulk stowage. Moreover, not many pallets were readily available in the forward areas of the Southwest Pacific and, again, the theater had had little experience in their use. To save all possible space and to take advantage of theater experience, ALAMO Force decided that bulk combat-loading would be employed for all cargo not stowed aboard vehicles.[60]

Another problem was that of lighterage at the objectives. Since the AK's did not carry small craft with which to unload themselves provision had to be made to secure such boats. For Aitape, ALAMO Force believed that one landing craft, tank (LCT), and twenty landing craft, mechanized (LCM's) would be required on D Day and twice that number on D plus 1, when the second of the two AK's was scheduled to arrive. General Krueger therefore requested that Allied Naval Forces set up an LCT–LCM convoy or its equivalent

[58] GHQ SWPA, Hollandia Outline Plan Draft, 28 Feb 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 2–14 Mar 44; ALAMO Force FO 12, 23 Mar 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 20–23 Mar 44. The second column includes the AK's, the shipping listed in CTF 77 Opn Plan 3–44 of 3 Apr 44, the ships carrying the 127th RCT to Aitape (shipping which was committed to the assault phase on 9 April), and miscellaneous other additions in the period prior to 9 April. The totals agree with those set forth in ALAMO FO 12 and with the naval reports of the operation, although not with the naval plans.

[59] The water drag method could, of course, be used only for items such as canned rations which were to be used immediately ashore and which would not suffer from temporary immersion in salt water.

[60] Memo, ALAMO G–3 Plng Div for ACofS G–3 ALAMO, 11 Mar 44, no sub, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 2–14 Mar 44; Memo, ALAMO QM for ACofS G–4 ALAMO, 21 Mar 44, no sub, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Hollandia, 11 Feb–2 Apr 44.

in other landing craft to arrive at Aitape on D Day.

Admiral Barbey would not approve this plan. He felt that it would not be practical for LCM's and LCT's to move to Aitape under their own power nor to be towed there by large ships. The distance from staging areas to Aitape would increase the possibility of mechanical failures on the part of the LCT's and LCM's moving under their own power. Towing would decrease the speed of the assault convoy, thereby increasing the possibility of Japanese air attacks on the convoys and lessening chances for tactical surprise at the objectives. Admiral Barbey therefore felt that the Aitape unloading plan would have to be based on the use of small craft carried forward by the assault shipping scheduled to arrive on D Day.[61]

To obtain some additional lighterage, it was decided to carry extra landing craft on all large assault ships arriving at Aitape on D Day.[62] In addition, three landing ships, dock (LSD's) scheduled to arrive at Hollandia and Aitape on D Day were ordered to make a rapid return trip to eastern New Guinea bases to pick up another load of small craft. On the return trip the LSD's were to carry a total of three LCT's and twenty-four LCM's to Aitape, which, together with one LCT and six LCM's that could be loaded on D-Day shipping, was considered ample. It was hoped that this return trip of the LSD's could be accomplished by the afternoon of D plus 3. Because of the distances involved, however, Admiral Barbey could not promise that the LSD's would arrive at Aitape on their second trip prior to the morning of D plus 4.[63]

Since it was not necessary to unload as much engineering construction equipment at Hollandia during the assault phase as at Aitape, the lighterage problem at Hollandia did not appear acute prior to the landings. It was thought probable that such shortages as might occur there would be eased by sending forward extra small craft aboard the ships of the first resupply convoy on D plus 8.[64]

A third problem of supply movement was to find a method of transporting supplies from the water's edge to dump areas by means other than the conventional, time-consuming individual handling of each item or container. ALAMO Force decided that beach sleds—which could be dragged any place on a beach negotiable by wheeled vehicles, tractors, or bulldozers—would be the answer. About 150 sleds had been manufactured in Australia for use by the 1st Cavalry Division in the Admiralties, but they had not been ready in time for that operation. ALAMO Force obtained a high shipping priority for the movement of 34 sleds from Brisbane, Australia, to the staging area of the 24th Division at Goodenough Island.

[61] Rad, ALAMO to CTF 76, WF–4237, 25 Mar 44, Rad, CTF 76 to PTF, 25 Mar 44, and Memo, ACofS G–3 ALAMO for CofS ALAMO, 27 Mar 44, no sub, all three in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 24–27 Mar 44; Memo for record, G–3 ALAMO, 28 Mar 44, sub: Status of Planning, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 28–30 Mar 44.

[62] Available documents do not indicate how many landing craft were to be so carried forward nor on which large ships they were to be carried.

[63] Memo, ACofS G–3 ALAMO for CofS ALAMO, 31 Mar 44, no sub, and Rad, ALAMO to CTF 76, WF–5127, 31 Mar 44, both in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 31 Mar–1 Apr 44; Rad, ALAMO to CTF 76, WF–834, 6 Apr 44, and Rads, CTF 76 to ALAMO, 6 and 7 Apr 44, last three in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 6–7 Apr 44.

[64] Rad, CTF 76 to Com7thFlt, 7 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 6–7 Apr 44; CTF 77, Opn Plan 3–44, 3 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 4–5 Apr 44.

These sleds arrived at Goodenough too late to be loaded on the Hollandia convoy.[65]

Meanwhile, ALAMO Force had discovered that another 26 sleds were on the way from Australia to Oro Bay, New Guinea, and that the remainder of the original 150 had supposedly been shipped during March to Cape Cretin, New Guinea.[66] From the middle of March to the middle of April the ALAMO G–4 Section directed a widespread search for these two shipments, all trace of which had apparently been lost. An officer from the ALAMO Ordnance Section looked for the sleds to no avail at various Services of Supply bases in New Guinea and Australia. Finally, official channels having failed, the ALAMO G–4 Liaison Officer at Oro Bay, who was also engaged in the search, followed a hunch. He had a sergeant from his liaison group informally establish contact with a supply sergeant at the Oro Bay Base Engineer Section. This supply sergeant immediately located 60 beach sleds at the base engineer supply dump.

These sleds were perhaps not the particular ones for which the search was being conducted, since their dimensions differed slightly from those specified. However, the liaison officer was acting on instructions from the ALAMO G–4 to get some beach sleds to Cape Cretin, where some of the Hollandia-bound convoy was loading, no later than 17 April. He therefore drew the 60 sleds from the base engineer and had them shipped forward from Oro Bay by small boat. Taking this action on his own responsibility, the liaison officer assured at least a partial supply of beach sleds for the RECKLESS Task Force.[67]

Problems of Subordinate Commands

While sufficient supplies were on hand within the Southwest Pacific Area to provide assault units with almost all the materials they needed for initial operations, some shortages did exist which could not be filled prior to the assault. Other logistic difficulties were caused by the rather hurried organization of the task forces and by the fact that units assigned to the operation were scattered all over the eastern part of the theater. The RECKLESS Task Force G–4 complained that many units scheduled to engage in the operation were assigned to the task force so late that it was nearly impossible to ascertain their supply shortages. General Krueger had originally approved a plan to make the task force responsible only for the supply of units specifically assigned to it. But the task force was later ordered to assure completeness and serviceability of supplies and equipment of

[65] Rad, G–4 ALAMO to ALAMO G–4 Liaison Officer (LO) at Hq USASOS, WF–2088, 14 Mar 44, in 24th Div G–4 Plng Jnl, Hollandia; Rad, GHQ Chief Regulating Officer at Goodenough Island to G–4 ALAMO, WA–409, 15 Mar 44, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Hollandia, 11 Feb–2 Apr 44; Memo, Asst ACofS G–4 ALAMO for ALAMO G–4 LO at USASOS Base B, 23 Mar 44, no sub, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Hollandia, 11 Feb–2 Apr 44; Memo, ACofS G–4 ALAMO for ALAMO Engr, 18 Apr 44, no sub, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Hollandia, 17–29 Apr 44; Ltr, ALAMO G–4 LO at Hq USASOS to ACofS G–4 ALAMO, 9 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Hollandia, 3–16 Apr 44.

[66] Memo, Asst ACofS G–4, ALAMO for ALAMO G–4 LO at USASOS Base B, 23 Mar 44, no sub, and Memo, G–4 ALAMO for ALAMO Engr and ALAMO Ord O, 31 Mar 44, no sub, both in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Hollandia, 11 Feb–2 Apr 44.

[67] Rads, ALAMO G–4 LO at Base B to ALAMO, WO–1702 and WO–1710, 14 and 15 Apr 44, respectively, and Ltr, ALAMO G–4 LO at Base B to ACofS G–4 ALAMO, 15 Apr 44, all three in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Hollandia, 3–16 Apr 44.

all units scheduled to be controlled by the task force at Hollandia, whenever assigned.[68]

In order to carry out its broad supply duties, the RECKLESS Task Force G–4 Section decentralized responsibility for the supply and equipment of various attached units to the headquarters' Special Staff Sections of corresponding services. This step, which speeded communication between the task force headquarters and the scattered attached units, made possible quick and accurate determination of shortages and insured that steps would be taken to fill requisitions from attached organizations. Nevertheless, because so many units were assigned to the task force quite late, the Ordnance Section declared that determination of numerous ammunition shortages could be made only on "suspicion." [69]

Another means by which the RECKLESS Task Force solved some of its logistic problems was to make minor modifications in the Tables of Equipment and Basic Allowances of various units assigned or attached to the task force. ALAMO Force approved this step only on the condition that such changes would not materially affect unit tonnage and space requirements, thereby creating a need for more shipping space or causing major last-minute changes in loading plans.[70]

Subordinate units of the RECKLESS Task Force had their own supply problems. On 8 March, with little more than a week's notice, the 41st Division had to begin moving from Australia to Cape Cretin, New Guinea, where it was to stage for Hollandia. On such short notice a good portion of the division's supply shortages could not be filled on the Australian mainland. The division sent liaison officers to Services of Supply headquarters, to ALAMO Force headquarters, and to Services of Supply forward bases in New Guinea to find out where shortages could be filled and to start the movement of necessary items to Cape Cretin. Most shortages were filled without undue difficulty from New Guinea bases, but there was a permanent shortage of wheeled vehicles. The 41st Division had no 2½-ton 6 x 6 trucks and only 50 percent of other authorized vehicles. Some vehicles were supplied in New Guinea, but the fulfillment of authorized allowances had to await post-assault shipment.[71]

The 24th Division, staging at Goodenough Island, had especial difficulty in procuring certain types of ammunition. The division was unable to procure enough 2.36-inch bazooka rockets to build its stocks to the prescribed level of five units of fire. Theater stocks of bazooka rockets were so low that the success of future operations might have been jeopardized if all those available were issued for the Hollandia–Aitape attacks. Therefore, only three units of fire of the 2.36-inch rockets could be issued to the 24th Division itself and only two units of fire to attached units.[72] Some

[68] RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 65; Ltr, CofS I Corps [RECKLESS TF] to ACofS G–4 ALAMO, 15 Mar 44; Ltr, ACofS G–4 ALAMO to CofS I Corps, 22 Mar 44; Rad, ALAMO to I Corps, WF–96, 1 Apr 44. Last three in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Hollandia, 11 Feb–2 Apr 44.

[69] Rad, I Corps to ALAMO, RM–2362, 7 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Hollandia, 3–16 Apr 44; RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 36, 65.

[70] Rad, I Corps to ALAMO, RM–1103, 25 Mar 44, and Rad, ALAMO to I Corps, WF–4218, 25 Mar 44, both in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Hollandia, 11 Feb–2 Apr 44.

[71] Rad, ALAMO to 41st Div, WF–1247, 8 Mar 44, and Memo, ACofS G–4 41st Div for ADC 41st Div, 11 Mar 44, no sub, both in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Hollandia, 11 Feb–2 Apr 44.

[72] ALAMO Force Adm O 7, 6 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 20–23 Mar 44; Rad, ALAMO to USASOS, WF–4530, 27 Mar 44, and Rad, USASOS to ALAMO, ABO–265, 27 Mar 44, both in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Hollandia, 11 Feb–2 Apr 44.

lots of 60-mm. mortar ammunition supplied to the 24th Division were found to be defective—a condition which obtained for a large portion of theater stocks of this item. The division was advised that it would have to use the 60-mm. ammunition issued and that the defective lots were not to be fired over the heads of friendly troops.[73] One regiment of the division was initially short of both 60-mm. and 81-mm. mortar shells. Most of these shortages were made up from stocks in Services of Supply bases in New Guinea, and the shells were shipped to Goodenough Island by small craft. The remainder was shipped by air from these bases or Australia to Goodenough just in time to be loaded on the 24th Division assault convoy.[74]

Like the RECKLESS Task Force, the 24th Division was not made responsible for the supply of many attached units until late in March. Some of these units had difficulty obtaining needed supplies and equipment, although they made efforts to fulfill their requirements. General Irving, the division commander, felt so strongly about the difficulties of attached units that he requested investigation of the failure on the part of some Services of Supply bases to provide spare parts and maintenance supplies for attached artillery and tank units. Spare parts for artillery mounts, tractors, and tanks were ultimately located at various Services of Supply installations and shipped to Goodenough. However, all the desired spare parts for engineer and ordnance equipment could not be found before the division left its staging area, and provision had to be made to ship such items to the objective on resupply convoys.[75]

The PERSECUTION Task Force had few separate logistic problems. The principal assault element of the task force was the 163d Infantry of the 41st Division, and that regiment's supply problems were solved along with those of the division. The 167th Field Artillery Battalion, which was to support the 163d Infantry at Aitape, had some difficulties. Because of the shortage of shipping space, the battalion's organic transportation could not all be sent forward on assault convoys. The unit's radio and wire would therefore have to be manhandled at the objective, and liaison and fire control parties attached to the battalion were to be without their usual transportation.[76]

The Hollandia Tactical Plan

While the problems of logistics were being solved, the tactical plans for the Hollandia and Aitape assaults were being drawn up. Limited knowledge of the terrain at the objectives was a major obstacle to detailed planning, but by early April the ground, air, and amphibious force commanders, in cooperation, had solved most of their problems and had published their final tactical plans.

Humboldt Bay

Two regimental combat teams of the 41st Division were to start landing at Humboldt

[73] Ltr, Ord O 24th Div to Ord O I Corps, 29 Mar 44, and atchd, undated Memo for record from Ord Sec. ALAMO, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Hollandia, 11 Feb–2 Apr 44.

[74] Ltrs, ALAMO G–4 LO with 24th Div to ACofS G–4 ALAMO, 6, 11, and 15 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Hollandia, 3–16 Apr 44.

[75] Notes of Conf between Ord O's 24th Div and I Corps, 30 Mar 44, and atchd, undated notes by ALAMO Ord O, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Hollandia, 11 Feb–2 Apr 44; Ltrs, ALAMO G 4 LO with 24th Div to ACofS G–4, 6 and 15 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Hollandia, 3–16 Apr 44. Apparently nothing ever came of General Irving's request for investigation.

[76] 167th FA Bn Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 1–2.

Bay on 22 April at 0700, high tide time in the Hollandia area. Simultaneously, two regimental combat teams of the 24th Division were to go ashore at Tanahmerah Bay. After securing their beachheads, the two divisions were to drive inland through successive phase lines to complete a pincers movement aimed at the rapid seizure of the Japanese-held airfields on the Lake Sentani Plain.

It was intended that the main effort should be made from Tanahmerah Bay by the 24th Division, since known and suspected Japanese defenses seemed concentrated at Humboldt Bay. While the RECKLESS Task Force Reserve (the 34th Regimental Combat Team of the 24th Division) might actually be more needed by the 41st Division at Humboldt Bay, General Eichelberger, the task force commander, planned to land the reserve at Tanahmerah Bay in an endeavor to exploit expected enemy weaknesses there. Task force headquarters and most of the reinforcing units and service organizations were also to land at Tanahmerah Bay. The 41st Division was to be prepared to drive inland from Humboldt Bay, but its role might be limited to containing Japanese strength which could otherwise move against the 24th Division. Nevertheless, the 41st Division's plans were made to take advantage of whatever weaknesses might be found in enemy defenses at Humboldt Bay.[77]

The Humboldt Bay landing areas selected for the 41st Division, White Beaches 1–4, presented complex problems of coordination and control. From the northwestern and southeastern shores of the inner reaches of Humboldt Bay ran two low sand spits, divided one from the other by a narrow channel leading from Humboldt Bay southwestward into smaller Jautefa Bay. Narrow, sandy beaches lined the Humboldt Bay side of the two spits, but the Jautefa Bay shore was covered with tangled mangrove swamps.

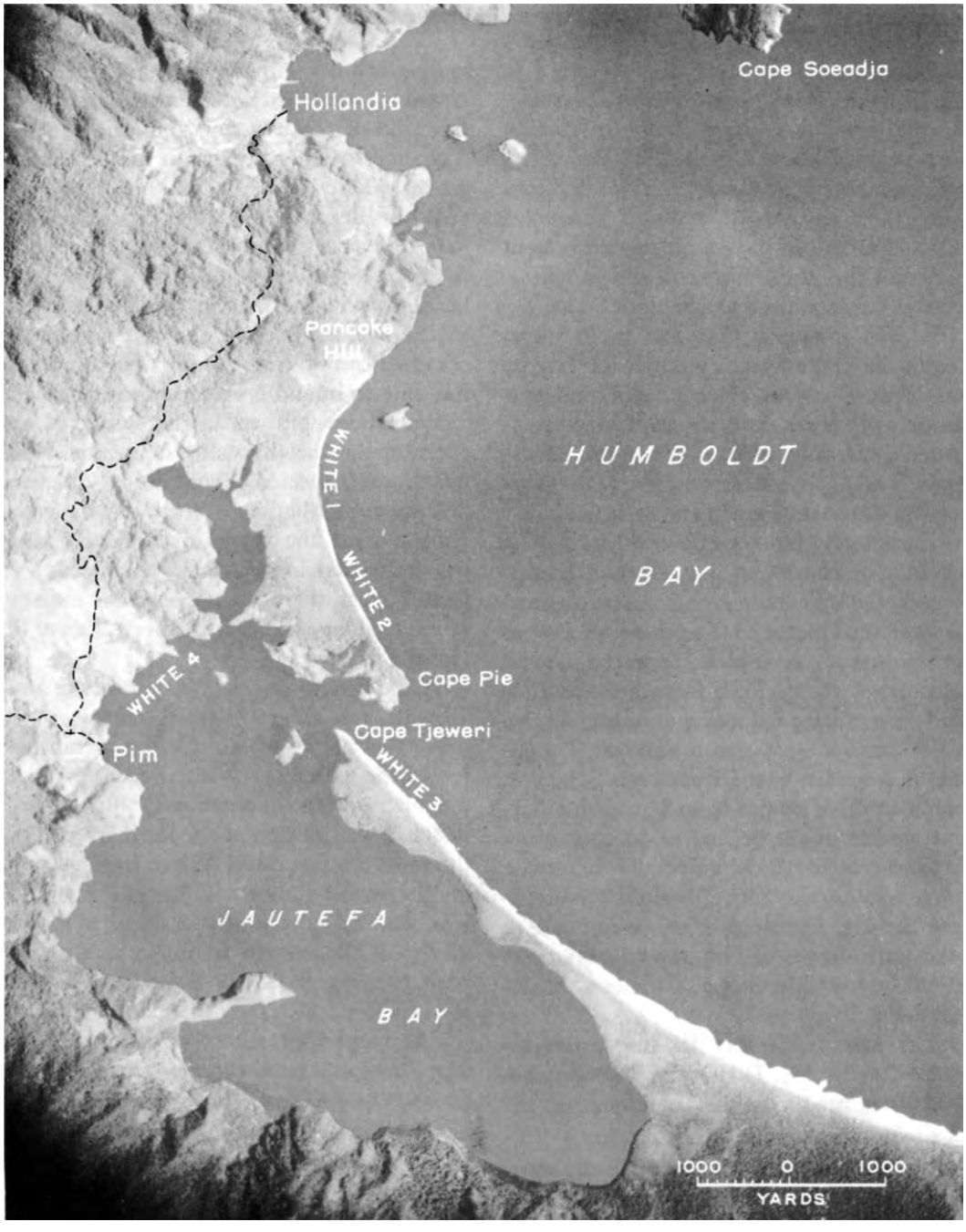
White Beaches 1–3 were located on the two sand spits. None was ideally located in relation to division objectives, but the beaches were the best in the area. Access to the mainland from the spits could be obtained by movement along the Humboldt Bay side to inland ends of both peninsulas. The northern spit was flanked inland by an open-topped height called Pancake Hill, which was suspected of containing Japanese defensive installations. North of Pancake Hill, toward the town of Hollandia, lay wooded hills rising to a height of over 1,000 feet. The southern spit opened on marshy ground along the southeastern shore of Humboldt Bay.

White Beach 1, about 800 yards long and 70 wide, ran along the northern spit south from the point at which that peninsula joined the mainland. White Beach 2 was at the outer end of the same spit, while White Beach 3 was located at the northern end of the southern peninsula. White Beach 4 was on the western shore of Jautefa Bay and was situated just north of Pim, a native village at the eastern terminus of a motor road running inland to Lake Sentani and the task force objectives.[78]

Close air support for the landings of the 41st Division was the responsibility of planes aboard the carriers of Task Force 58. These aircraft were to maintain combat air patrols over enemy airstrips in the Hollandia area from earliest light on D Day until H plus 60 minutes (0800), or until such patrols

[77] RTF FO 1, 27 Mar 44; RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 6.

[78] LETTERPRESS Landing Force [41st Inf Div] FO 1, 9 Apr 44, in G–3 Annex to 41st Div Opns Rpt Hollandia.



HUMBOLDT BAY

proved unnecessary. Fighter planes engaged in these patrol missions were to have freedom of action over the entire Hollandia region until H minus 30 minutes, after which they were to confine their operations to targets two or more miles inland from the landing beaches at both Humboldt and Tanahmerah Bays.

At Humboldt Bay, from H minus 15 minutes until H minus 4, or until the 41st Division's leading landing wave was within 800 yards of the shore, carrier-based aircraft were to hit enemy antiaircraft batteries and other known or suspected defensive positions around Humboldt Bay, especially on hills near White Beaches 1 and 4. At H minus 4 minutes, carrier-based bombers were to drop their bombs on the beaches in an attempt to detonate possible beach mines. At H minus 3, when the first wave was scheduled to be 500 yards from shore, antipersonnel fragmentation bombs were to be dropped on White Beach 1.

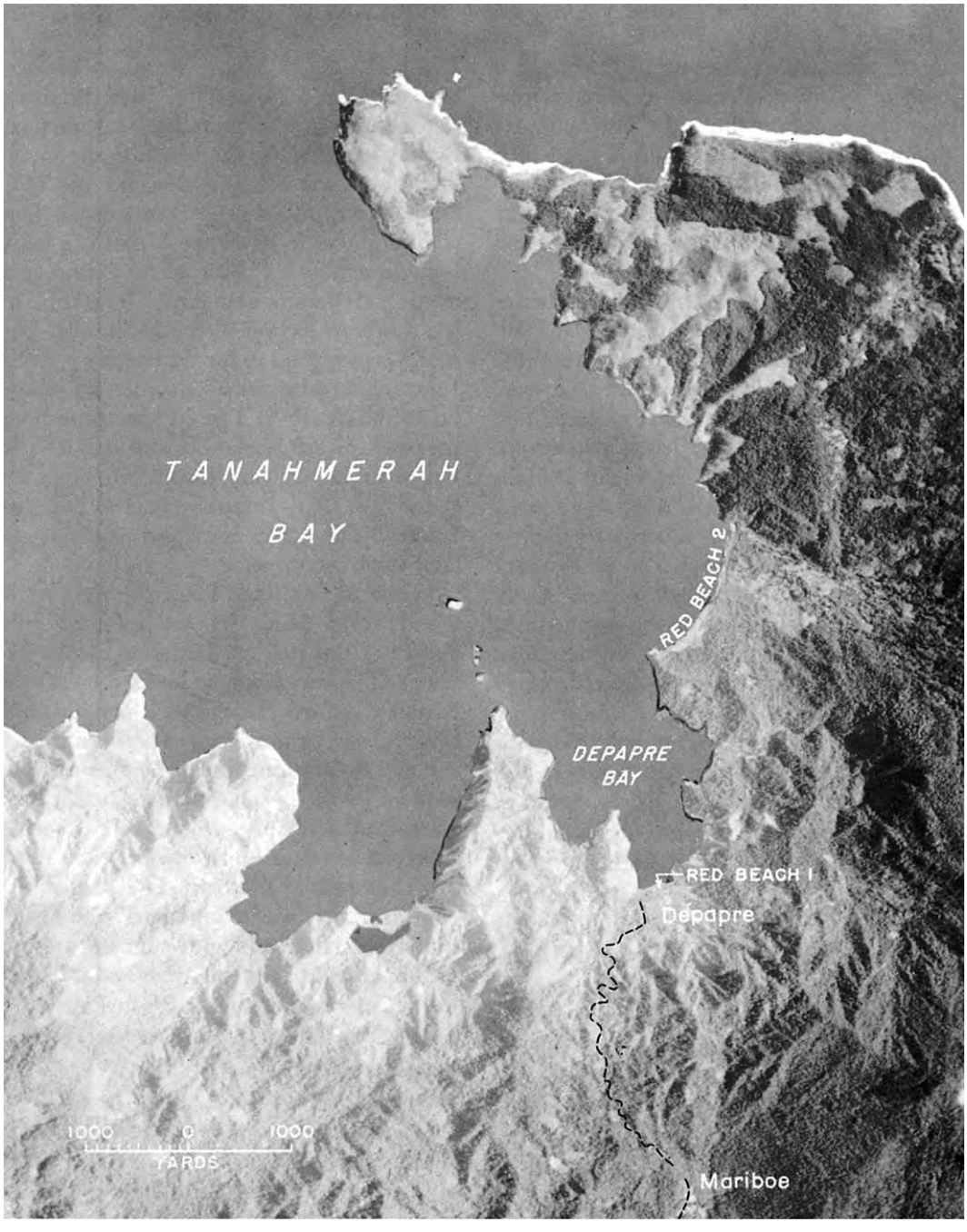
Naval fire support at Humboldt Bay was to be provided by three light cruisers and six destroyers of the U. S. Navy, firing to begin at H minus 60 minutes. Principal targets were Hollandia, Pim, heights north of White Beach 1, Cape Soedja at the northwestern end of Humboldt Bay, and the four landing beaches. Two rocket-equipped landing craft, infantry (LCI's), were to accompany the leading boat waves, one to fire on Pancake Hill and the other to bombard high ground north of Pancake. A single destroyer was to accompany the first waves to bombard Capes Pie and Tjeweri (the tips of the two sand spits) and to support movement of amphibian tractors (LVT's) from White Beach 2 to White Beach 4.[79]

The first landings to take place on White Beach 1, at H Hour, were to be executed by the 3d Battalion, 162d Infantry. After landing, the battalion was to push rapidly north along the beach to the mainland and make ready to descend into Hollandia from hills south of that town. One company was to move west from the main body to establish a block across a road connecting Hollandia and Pim. The seizure of the northern section of the Hollandia–Pim road was assigned to the 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, which was to follow the 3d ashore on White Beach 1. The 2d was to push up the road toward Hollandia and assist the 3d Battalion in securing that town. The 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, was to land at White Beach 1 still later and assemble inland as division reserve.

White Beach 2 and Cape Pie were to be seized at H Hour by a reinforced rifle platoon from the 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry. The beach was to be used by the 3d Battalion, 186th Infantry, which, aboard LVT's, was to move across the spit, push through the backing mangrove swamp, and land on White Beach 4 across Jautefa Bay. Then the battalion was to clear neighboring hills and advance south toward Pim along the Hollandia–Pim road. The rest of the 186th Infantry was to land on White Beach 1 after H Hour and move inland around the upper end of the spit. The 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, was to move to Pim while the 2d Battalion assembled in division reserve.

Seizure of White Beach 3 on the southern sand spit was designed as a security measure, and the beach was to be occupied by a rifle company of the 3d Battalion, 186th Infantry, at H Hour. This unit was then to secure Cape Tjeweri, at the northern tip of the spit, and patrol southeastward from the peninsula along the shore of Humboldt Bay

[79] CTF 77 Opn Plan 3–44, 3 Apr 44.



TANAHMERAH BAY

to ward off or delay any Japanese counterattacks from that direction.

Artillery landing on D Day was to take up positions either on the northern spit or near the Hollandia–Pim road and from those positions provide support for infantry advancing inland and toward Hollandia. Antiaircraft artillery was to be grouped initially on or near White Beach 1. The first duties of engineers were to unload ships, construct or improve exit roads from White Beach 1 to the Hollandia–Pim road, and improve the latter track. The 41st Reconnaissance Troop was to scout along the shores of Humboldt Bay as far as Tami Airstrip, eight miles southeast of Hollandia, and to Imbi Bay and Cape Soedja at the northwestern limits of Humboldt Bay.[80]

Tanahmerah Bay

Landing points chosen for the 24th Division at Tanahmerah Bay were designated Red Beaches 1 and 2 and the principal thrust was to be made over the latter. Situated on the east-central shore of Tanahmerah Bay, Red Beach 2 ran north and south about 800 yards, boasted clear approaches from the sea, and was steeply inclined. It was known to be narrow and backed by a swamp, the nature of which could not be ascertained before the landing. Red Beach 1 was located at the southern end of Dépapré Bay, a narrow southeastern arm of Tanahmerah Bay. The narrow approach to Red Beach 1 was flanked on each side by hills only 600 yards from the central channel, and the landing area was fronted by a coral reef, the characteristics of which were unknown before D Day.

Red Beach 1 opened on a small flat area at the native village of Dépapré, near the beginning of the only road between Tanahmerah Bay and the inland airfields. Little was known about this road, but it was believed to be extensively used by the Japanese, passable for light wheeled vehicles, and subject to rapid improvement. West and south of Red Beach 1 lay a swamp backed by heavily forested hills. To the north was more difficult terrain, dominated by three prominent hills overlooking both Red Beaches. The division expected to find a road running along the sides of these heavily forested hills over the two miles which separated the beaches.[81]

H Hour at Tanahmerah Bay was the same as for Humboldt Bay, 0700, and carrier-based aircraft from Task Force 58 were to support the landings of the 24th Division in much the same manner they were to support the 41st Division's assault. Naval fire support at Tanahmerah Bay would be provided by two Australian cruisers and by Australian and American destroyers. Targets and timing of naval support fires were similar to those to be used at Humboldt Bay. Most of the fire at Tanahmerah Bay was to be directed at Red Beach 2 and its environs and, prior to H Hour, only one destroyer was assigned to fire on Red Beach 1. After H Hour all fire support ships would be available to fire on targets of opportunity or objectives designated by the forces ashore. One LCI was to support the leading waves to Red Beach 2 with rocket and automatic weapons fire, which was to begin when the carrier-based planes finished their close support missions (about H minus 4 minutes) and continue until the first troops were safely ashore.[82]

[80] LETTERPRESS LF FO 1, 9 Apr 44.

[81] NOISELESS Landing Force [24th Inf Div] FO 1, 5 Apr 44, in 24th Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 24ff.

[82] CTF 77 Opn Plan 3–44, 3 Apr 44.

On the northern half of Red Beach 2 the 19th Infantry (less one battalion in division reserve) was to land. The two assault battalions were to secure half the beachhead, establish left flank security for the rest of the division, prepare to assume responsibility for the protection of the entire beachhead, and undertake mopping up north of the beach. Simultaneously two battalions of the 21st Infantry were to land on the southern half of Red Beach 2. After securing their sectors of Red Beach 2, these battalions were to push overland and south toward Red Beach 1. The division planned to improve the road which supposedly connected the two beaches or, if necessary, construct a new road between the two.

Initial landings on Red Beach 1 were to be undertaken by three reinforced rifle companies of the 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry, and were to begin at H plus 25 minutes, 0725. The primary missions of this force were to start rapidly inland over the road leading to Lake Sentani and the airfields and to report the size and condition of possible additional landing points in the Dépapré area. Movement inland was to begin before the Japanese could organize defenses along that portion of the road which wound snake-like over rugged hills south and east of Dépapré.

The Allied Naval Forces originally objected to a landing on Red Beach 1 and by arrangement with General Eichelberger had had this plan canceled. But General Irving, who wished to provide for every contingency in a landing area where terrain conditions were practically unknown, wanted the Red Beach 1 landing to remain in the plan, even if naval fire support for the assault could not be obtained. He considered it possible that failure to secure quickly the entrance to the Dépapré–Lake Sentani road might have disastrous consequences were it found impracticable to build a good road from Red Beach 2 to Red Beach 1. Seizing an opportunity to reopen the discussion of a landing on Red Beach 1, General Irving made personal pleas to General Eichelberger and Admiral Barbey, and succeeded in having the landing reinstated in the plan. This proved one of the most important tactical decisions of the Hollandia operation.[83]

Preliminary Operations and the Approach

Intelligence Operations

Early in 1944 General MacArthur's G–2 Section had noted that the Japanese were increasing their activities in the Wewak area and near-by Hansa Bay. As D Day for the Hollandia–Aitape operation approached, it was discovered that the bulk of the Japanese *18th Army* was withdrawing from forward bases at Madang and Alexishafen and was moving rapidly westward across the Ramu and Sepik Rivers to Wewak and Hansa Bay. These activities seemed to indicate that the Japanese probably expected the next Allied attack to be aimed at the Wewak–Hansa Bay area.

Every effort was made to foster in the mind of Lt. Gen. Hatazo Adachi, commanding the *18th Army,* the growth of the idea that a major assault in the Wewak sector was imminent. During March and early April, Wewak was heavily bombed by the Allied Air Forces, not only to prevent the Japanese from using their airfields there but also to lead the enemy to believe that the usual aerial softening-up process preceding an amphibious operation was taking place.

[83] NOISELESS LF FO 1, 5 Apr 44; 24th Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 23; Ltr, Gen Irving to Gen Ward, 3 Nov 50, in OCMH files.

Minor naval bombardments of the Wewak and Hansa areas were carried out in March and early April, and PT's of the Allied Naval Forces patrolled actively along the coast north from Madang to Wewak. By various means propaganda was spread to convince the *18th Army* that a landing was soon to be made at Wewak, and dummy parachutists were dropped in the same vicinity. Allied Naval Forces submarines launched empty rubber life rafts along the coast near Wewak in an endeavor to make the Japanese believe that reconnaissance patrols were active in that area.[84]

One effort was made to obtain terrain information and knowledge of enemy troop strength and dispositions in the Hollandia area. About two weeks before the landing a Seventh Fleet submarine landed an Allied reconnaissance patrol at Tanahmerah Bay. The venture proved completely abortive. Local natives betrayed the patrol to the Japanese, and the members were killed, captured, or dispersed. A few men of the original party eluded the enemy and were found alive after the Allied landings.[85]

Air Operations

The scheduled strike by Task Force 58 against the Palaus, designed both for strategic support of the Hollandia operation and the destruction of enemy air and surface units, was carried out on 30–31 March. Other islands in the western Carolines, including Yap, Ulithi, Ngulu, and Woleai, were hit during the same two days or on 1 April. The raids resulted in the loss for the Japanese of almost 150 aircraft either in the air or on the ground. Two enemy destroyers, four escort vessels, and 104,000 tons of merchant or naval auxiliary shipping were sunk and many other ships, of both combat and merchant classes, were damaged. In addition, airfields and shore installations at all objectives were damaged and the main channels into the Palau fleet anchorage at least temporarily blocked by mines.

Unfortunately, Task Force 58 had been sighted by Japanese search planes prior to its arrival off the Palaus, and many enemy combat ships and a number of merchant vessels had fled from the area. The desired results were achieved, however—the enemy naval units at Palau were removed as a threat to the Hollandia–Aitape operation and driven back to more westerly bases. Task Force 58 lost twenty planes, but its ships suffered no damage.[86]

The efforts of Task Force 58 had been supplemented by South and Southwest Pacific aircraft which, from bases in eastern New Guinea and the Admiralties, bombed islands in the eastern Carolines and undertook many long reconnaissance missions. Meanwhile, Southwest Pacific aircraft had been neutralizing enemy air bases in western New Guinea and eastern islands of the Netherlands East Indies. Most of the strategic support missions flown to western New Guinea were undertaken by U. S. Fifth Air

---

[84] Memo, GHQ SWPA for ANF SWPA, AAF SWPA, and ALAMO, 30 Mar 44, no sub, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 2–4 Apr 44; Rad, Com7thFlt to CTF 75, 5 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 5 Apr 44; Rad, CINCSWPA to COMINCH, 11 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 12 Apr 44; *18th Army* Opns, III, pp. 17–20, 39–40.

[85] ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Hollandia–Aitape, pp. 20–21. For a complete account of the scouting attempt at Hollandia see Comdr. Eric A. Feldt (RAN), *The Coast Watchers* (Melbourne, 1946), pp. 364–74.

[86] U. S. Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, p. 207; Japanese Studies in WW II, No. 34, Naval Operations in the Western New Guinea Area, 1943–45, p. 11, and No. 60, The *A-GO Operation*, 1914, p. 2, copies in OCMH files.

Force planes while the Royal Australian Air Forces Command assumed responsibility for the majority of the strikes against the islands in the eastern Indies. These operations were intensified about six weeks before the landings at Hollandia and Aitape. From Wewak to the Vogelkop Peninsula of western New Guinea, and from Biak to Timor, the Allied Air Forces destroyed Japanese planes and airfield installations, rendered many air bases at least temporarily unusable, and hindered enemy attempts to fly air reinforcements to New Guinea from the Philippines.[87]

Spectacular results were achieved by the Fifth Air Force at Hollandia, where the Japanese *6th Air Division* had recently retreated from Wewak and received strong reinforcements. The air unit conserved its planes, apparently waiting to see where the Allies would strike next.[88] The Japanese waited too long.

The Fifth Air Force shifted the weight of its attack from the Wewak area to Hollandia, and, during the period 30 March through 3 April, destroyed or damaged over 300 Japanese aircraft, most of them on the ground. On 30 March, when over 100 planes were destroyed at Hollandia, the Japanese were caught completely unprepared. Faulty intelligence, resulting partially from insufficient radar warning facilities, found many Japanese planes on the ground refueling after early morning patrols. Others had been left unattended upon receipt of reports that a large Allied air formation had turned back eastward after bombing Aitape. Finally, earlier Fifth Air Force attacks had so cratered runways and taxiways of two of the three enemy fields at Hollandia that there was little room to disperse the planes. The Fifth Air Force, in a series of low-level bombing attacks, covered and aided by newly developed long-range fighters, found enemy aircraft parked wing tip to wing tip along the runways. By 6 April the Japanese had only twenty-five serviceable aircraft at Hollandia.[89] They made no attempt to rebuild their air strength there and, after 3 April, Fifth Air Force raids were met by only a small number of enemy fighter planes which made but desultory attempts at interception.[90]

The Japanese did build up a small concentration of air strength farther west, at Wakde–Sarmi, and continued airfield development at still more westerly bases. The Fifth Air Force and Australian aircraft increased their efforts against these latter installations,[91] while planes of Task Force 58 effectively neutralized Japanese air power at Wakde–Sarmi just prior to 22 April.

---

[87] USSBS, *op. cit.*, p. 179; GHQ SWPA OI 48, 24 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 24 Mar 44; Rad, CINCSWPA to CINCPOA *et al.*, CX–10718, 15 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 15 Apr 44; AAF SWPA OI 49 (Rev), 30 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 30 Mar 44.

[88] AAF SWPA Int Sum 193, 25 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 24 Mar 44; GHQ SWPA, G–2 DSEI's 737 and 742, 26 Mar and 3 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnls, 26 Mar and 3 Apr 44; *18th Army* Opns, III, 4–9, 17–20.

[89] *18th Army* Opns III, 35–37; AAF SWPA Int Sum 197, 8 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 7 Apr 44; GHQ SWPA, G–2 DSEI 742, 3 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 3 Apr 44. Many additional details of AAF SWPA action against Hollandia are provided in the Air Force's official history: Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cates (Eds.), *The Pacific: Guadalcanal to Saipan, August 1942 to July 1944* (Chicago, 1950), pp. 587–98.

[90] *18th Army* Opns, III, 41–46; Japanese Studies in WW II, 31, History of the *2d Area Army*, 1943–1945, pp. 30–40, copy in OCMH files; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Hollandia–Aitape, pp. 45–48; AAF SWPA Int Sum 197, 8 Apr 44; GHQ SWPA, G–2 DSEI 760, 21 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 21 Apr 44. For additional information on the effects of Japanese air losses at Hollandia, see Ch. IV, below.

[91] GHQ SWPA, G–2 Est of Enemy Sit, Wakde–Sarmi, 8 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 8 Apr 44; GHQ SWPA, G–2 DSEI 760, 21 Apr 44.



DAMAGED JAPANESE AIRPLANES. *The Fifth Air Force, in a series of low-level bombing attacks, found enemy aircraft parked wing tip to wing tip along the runways.*

Task Force 58's efforts at Wakde and Hollandia on D minus 1 and D Day bagged an estimated thirty-three aircraft shot down. Damage to planes on the ground at either objective was difficult to assess because of the degree of destruction previously achieved at both places by the Allied Air Forces.[92]

Attack Force Preparations

Meanwhile, Allied ground and amphibious forces had been engaged in final preparations and training for the coming assault and, on 8, 9, and 10 April, had undertaken last rehearsals. The 24th Division's rehearsal at Taupota Bay, on the coast of New Guinea south of Goodenough Island, was incomplete. Little unloading was attempted, and the area selected did not permit the employment of naval gunfire support. The 41st Division had a more satisfactory rehearsal, with realistic unloading and naval fire, near Lae, New Guinea.[93]

Final loading began on 10 April. LCI's of the RECKLESS Task Force left their loading points on 16 April in order to allow the troops aboard to disembark at the Admiralty Islands for a day of exercising, resting,

[92] USSBS, *op. cit.*, p. 208; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Hollandia–Aitape, pp. 45–46.

[93] 24th Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 37; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Tanahmerah Bay–Humboldt Bay–Aitape, p. 29; RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 3; PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 22 Apr–4 Mar 44, p. 1; 41st Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 1.

and eating. Other vessels of Hollandia-bound convoys left the Goodenough Island and Cape Cretin staging areas on 17 and 18 April. Ships carrying the PERSECUTION Task Force moved out of the Finschhafen area on 18 April and on the same day rendezvoused with the vessels bearing the 41st Division toward the Admiralties.

All convoys moved north around the eastern side of the Admiralties and, at 0700 on 20 April, the various troops assembled at a rendezvous point northwest of Manus Island. Moving at a speed of about nine knots, the massed convoys steamed westward from the Admiralties all day and at dusk turned southwest toward Hollandia. At a point about eighty miles off the New Guinea coast between Hollandia and Aitape, the PERSECUTION Task Force convoy—the Eastern Attack Group—broke off from the main body and swung southeast toward Aitape. The ships bearing the RECKLESS Task Force proceeded to a point twenty miles offshore between Humboldt and Tanahmerah Bays. There, at 0130 on D Day, this convoy split. The Central Attack Group, with the 41st Division aboard, turned southeast toward Humboldt Bay and arrived in the transport area at 0500. The ships of the Western Attack Group, carrying the 24th Division and the remainder of the RECKLESS Task Force, moved into Tanahmerah Bay at the same time.[94]

[94] RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, Map 1, p. 5; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Tanahmerah Bay–Humboldt Bay–Aitape, pp. 9–10; CTG 77.2 (Central Attack Group) Opns Rpt Humboldt Bay, p. 3; CTG 77.3 Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 1–2.

CHAPTER III

The Hollandia Operation

First light in the Hollandia area on 22 April 1944 disclosed a heavily overcast sky from which a light drizzle intermittently fell upon the ships bearing the RECKLESS Task Force toward its objectives. (*Map II*) The weather gave no promise that aircraft aboard the carriers of Task Force 58, standing offshore between Humboldt and Tanahmerah Bays, would be able to execute all their assigned support missions. On the other hand, the weather conditions aided Allied forces, for the approach of the convoys to Hollandia was at least partially concealed from Japanese eyes. Chances for local surprise seemed excellent.

The Landings at Tanahmerah Bay

The assault ships of the Western Attack Group, carrying the 24th Infantry Division to Tanahmerah Bay, anchored some 10,000 yards off Red Beach 2, about a mile farther than planned. This change was due to bad weather, which obscured landmarks expected by ships' pilots to guide them to the proper anchorages. The troops of the 24th Division quickly breakfasted and assault personnel then began clambering down nets into waiting landing craft of the 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment. The transfer to small craft, although hampered by rough seas in the transport area, was completed about 0535, and the leading waves formed rapidly.

The Assault

Naval fire support vessels, operating under the command of Rear Adm. V. A. C. Crutchley (RN), picked up their landmarks through the mist as best they could, and at 0600 the roar of 8-inch guns from the heavy cruisers HMAS *Australia* and HMAS *Shropshire* shattered the silence of the steaming tropical morning.[1] To this din was added the sharper crack of 5-inch and 4.7-inch weapons from American and Australian destroyers. In order to obtain observation of important targets, the fire support ships stood as close inshore as the weather conditions and incomplete knowledge of the waters at Tanahmerah Bay allowed. The fire continued until 0645, by which time 600 rounds of 8-inch and 1,500 rounds of 5-inch and 4.7-inch ammunition had been expended. The naval bombardment was carried out according to plan and without response from Japanese shore

[1] Information in this and the following subsection is from: 24th Inf Div [NOISELESS Landing Force] Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 56–79, 223–24; 24th Div G–3 Jnl, Hollandia; 21st Inf Jnl, Hollandia; 19th Inf Jnl, Hollandia; RTF G–3 Jnl Hollandia; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Tanahmerah Bay–Humboldt Bay–Aitape, p. 24; Ltr, CG 2d ESB to Comdr ALAMO Force, 24 Apr 44, sub: Observations, D Day, Red Beach, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 25–26 Apr 44; draft MS History of the 2d Engineer Special Brigade, Ch. VII, "The RECKLESS Task Force," pp. 13–20, copy in OCMH files; Co A, 1st Tank Bn, 1st Mar Div, Opns Rpt, 15 Apr–13 May 44, pp. 1–2; RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 46.



LANDINGS AT TANAHMERAH BAY. *Landing craft heading toward Red Beach 2. Despite unfavorable weather, Task Force 58 managed to maintain planes on air alert over the Hollandia area.*

defenses. At its conclusion Allied destroyers moved still closer inshore to fire on targets of opportunity.

Despite the unfavorable weather, Task Force 58 had managed to maintain planes on air alert over the Hollandia area since dawn. No enemy aircraft flew up from the Hollandia fields, and the few apparently operational planes sighted on those strips were strafed. In general there were no indications that Japanese defenses or defenders existed in the Tanahmerah Bay area. Task Force 58's scheduled bombing and strafing missions for that region were therefore canceled.

As the leading wave of landing craft, vehicle and personnel (LCVP's), approached Red Beach 2, which was obscured by smoke from the naval bombardment, a rocket barrage was laid on the landing area by one Seventh Fleet LCI and two landing craft, support (LCS's), of the 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment. Machine guns mounted aboard the leading LCVP's kept up a steady fire against the beach. There was no answer from the Japanese, and the

only opposition to the landing was scattered small arms and light automatic weapons fire from points far on the flanks of the beach and from a small island in Tanahmerah Bay. This fire was so quickly silenced by supporting destroyers that the assault waves suffered no casualties before reaching shore.

The first group of LCVP's, carrying men of the 3d Battalion, 19th Infantry, and the 2d Battalion, 21st Infantry, was eight or nine minutes late in reaching Red Beach 2. But this tardiness did not prevent a successful landing, and after orders were issued to add eight minutes to the starting time of each, succeeding waves were almost perfectly timed. Tactical surprise was evidently complete. No Japanese defended the beaches and the two assault battalions had no difficulty occupying the initial beachhead.

The 3d Battalion, 19th Infantry, quickly secured the northern portion of the beachhead and immediately dispatched patrols east and north to probe suspected enemy positions. The 1st Battalion, following the 3d ashore, went into an assembly area to act as local reserve and to make ready to aid in unloading supplies at the water's edge if that proved necessary. The 2d Battalion, 21st Infantry, took the southern half of Red Beach 2 with similar ease. The 3d Battalion of that regiment quickly followed the 2d ashore and sent Company I south to look for the trail expected to connect with Red Beach 1 at Dépapré.

Company A of the 21st Infantry led the way to Red Beach 1 aboard LVT's of the 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, protected by the 2d Engineer Special Brigade's Support Battery craft. Scheduled for 0725, Company A's landing actually took place about twenty minutes late. LVT's on the flanks of the initial waves had to cross coral barrier reefs on their way to the shore, while in the center only two LVT's at one time were able to proceed abreast through a narrow channel in the reefs. The landing was unopposed, and the remainder of the 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry, moved ashore quickly.

Red Beach 1 contained a veritable maze of trails which crossed each other, recrossed, and wandered off toward all points of the compass. The 1st Battalion thus found it difficult to accomplish one of its principal missions—locating the beginning of the road leading inland to Lake Sentani and the airfields. After an hour's search, the entrance to this important trail was discovered about 500 yards south-southeast of Dépapré. While that reconnaissance was under way, Company A secured and expanded the beachhead. Huts which had survived the naval bombardment were carefully searched, footpaths throughout the area were explored, a few Japanese stragglers were killed, and some potential supply-dispersal areas were located.

Back at Red Beach 2, which had been intended as the principal landing area for both troops and supplies, operations were not proceeding according to plan. General Irving, when he assumed command ashore at 0930, found the terrain at Red Beach 2 much more difficult than he or members of his staff had anticipated. A major change in landing plans, not only for the 24th Division but also for the rest of the RECKLESS Task Force, seemed imminent.

The Landing Plans Are Changed

Contrary to estimates, which had been based primarily on interpretation of aerial photographs, Red Beach 2 proved to be but

thirty yards deep. Behind this narrow beach was discovered a wide swamp covering most of the area which the task force had planned to use for bivouacs and supply dumps. The swamp was soon found to be impassable for everything except individual infantrymen bearing only small arms. Power tools were useless in the morass. Neither time nor men and equipment were available to adapt Red Beach 2 to the role originally planned for it.

A limited dispersal area, rendered inaccessible by a small stream and by an arm of the swamp, was discovered at the northern edge of the beach, and ultimately the 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment constructed a road into this space. Artillery, ashore within an hour after the initial landing, was emplaced there to deliver fire on inland targets. But the fill used to build this road stopped the flow of the little stream which had drained the swamp into Tanahmerah Bay. To prevent a rise in the swamp's water level, a drainage canal was cut directly through the center of the beach. This procedure speeded the outward flow of swamp water, lowered the water level a little, and created a small additional dry area behind the beach, but it did not provide sufficient dry land for dispersal of all the troops and supplies scheduled to land on Red Beach 2.

Meanwhile, more obstacles to the execution of the original logistic plans had been discovered. First, it proved impracticable to build planned roads inland 500 yards on both sides of Red Beach 2 to dry areas behind the swamp. Then it was found that there was no road connecting Red Beach 2 with Red Beach 1 or with the Dépapré–Lake Sentani road. This was an especially serious circumstance, for the landing plans had called for moving almost all troops and supplies overland from Red Beach 2 to the road inland. Construction of a road between the two beaches was soon found impracticable and when, after a day and a half of hard work, engineers had succeeded in driving a few yards of road into the hills south toward Red Beach 1, the project was discontinued. The small completed stretch did serve some useful purpose. On D Day two batteries of 105-mm. howitzers were dragged along the road as far as possible to a cramped position on a little ridge immediately south of Red Beach 2. From this site the howitzers could deliver some fire support for troops advancing inland from Red Beach 1, but the direction of this fire was limited by a number of hills near by. The same stretch of road also provided dispersal space for a few of the many vehicles which had been unloaded at Red Beach 2 on D Day.

Other difficulties were encountered at Red Beach 2. As soon as LST's touched shore, they began disgorging tanks, 90-mm. antiaircraft weapons, and 155-mm. artillery. Practically all the artillery mounts mired to their hubs in deep mud at the inner side of the beach. Bulldozers then had to be taken off essential road construction projects to pull the vehicles out of the way. The 2d and 3d Platoons of Company A, 1st Marine Tank Battalion, ashore at 0830, could not be used tactically and had to find space to bivouac on the beach or on the road to the south. When it was found that the available beach area was inadequate to hold the many tracked and wheeled vehicles still aboard the LST's, work was redirected to unloading bulk cargo. Roller conveyors were set up on the beach but could not be extended into LST cargo decks because those decks were still so tightly packed with vehicles. A long stream of men had to proceed to the stern of each LST to bring out bulk supplies by hand through narrow spaces between vehicles.



UNLOADING LST'S, *Red Beach 2.*

Since it was impossible to move the supplies inland they were piled on the beach, where many stacks of boxes or crates soon reached heights up to eight feet. The beach quickly became so crowded that it was soon obvious that the efforts of ALAMO Force to secure beach sleds for the 24th Division had been in vain—there was simply no room to use them. But, despite the seemingly patent impossibility of finding room for all men and supplies on Red Beach 2, the APA's and LST's bearing cargo for the division's two assault regiments were unloaded by 1900 on D Day. By that time the beach was almost solidly covered with supplies, troops, tanks, vehicles, and gun emplacements. It was clear that supplies and personnel of Headquarters, RECKLESS Task Force, the task force reserve, miscellaneous service units, and various organizations attached to the 24th Division could not possibly be squeezed onto the beach. Unless Red Beach 1 provided materially greater dispersal space, convoys scheduled to reach Tanahmerah Bay on D plus 1 and D plus 2 would have to be held at eastern New Guinea ports or diverted to other landing areas.

Now the beneficial results of General Irving's determination to keep Red Beach 1 in the landing plans became apparent. Behind that beach were found some additional dry, flat dispersal areas. Access to the beach

was hampered by the fronting reef, but the 24th Division solved this problem by setting up a shuttle system from Red Beach 2. Shallow-draft boats carried the supplies to the entrance of Dépapré Bay. There, on the water, matériel was transferred to LVT's which served as ferries to the shore. At high tide small boats could reach Dépapré—only two could beach there at a time—and at 1730 LCM's took the 2d Platoon and the command section of Company A, 1st Tank Battalion, to Dépapré through the reefs. Ultimately the water approach to Dépapré was improved when naval demolition personnel [2] blasted a wider and deeper channel through the reef, thus giving small landing craft continuous access to Red Beach 1.

The shuttle to Dépapré continued throughout the night of 22–23 April. Some of the congestion on Red Beach 2 was thereby relieved and, by dint of almost superhuman effort, the cargo from seven LST's of the D plus 1 convoy was put on that beach on the 23d, and the AKA of the D plus 1 echelon was unloaded by noon on the 24th. Transshipments to Red Beach 1 were continued, but by noon on 23 April it had become obvious that there was no space to be found anywhere along the shores of Tanahmerah Bay to unload the supplies and troops aboard the D plus 2 convoy.

Meanwhile, advance elements of the 24th Division had pushed far inland on their way toward the airfields over the Dépapré–Lake Sentani road. Contrary to expectations, this road was found to be ungraded and extremely narrow. It was a mere track which, winding in a series of hairpin turns over the Takari Hills east of Dépapré, hung precariously along the sides of slopes that in some cases were as steep as 60 degrees. It was far from being the well-traveled motor road expected. Neither the Army's wheeled vehicles nor the Marine's tanks could reach the crest of the Takari Hills over this road. The tanks were relegated to the role of perimeter defense around Dépapré.[3] Heavy construction, which was destined to be impeded by many landslides, had to be undertaken before the trail inland could be used for a main supply line as originally planned. Until it was improved, only a small number of men could be sustained over the track, and all their supplies would have to be hand-carried forward from Dépapré.

To Headquarters, RECKLESS Task Force, the logistic difficulties inherent in supporting a large-scale drive inland over the Dépapré–Lake Sentani trail far outweighed the tactical advantages of such a movement. The 41st Infantry Division, on the other hand, was meeting with unexpectedly rapid success in its drive to the airfields from Humboldt Bay, the shores of which had been found better suited to troop and supply dispersal than those at Tanahmerah Bay. The RECKLESS Task Force staff therefore recommended that a sweeping change in plans be made. General Eichelberger, accepting these recommendations, decided to make the Humboldt Bay area the principal task force landing point and to change the emphasis of attack to the 41st Division's drive inland. Accordingly, about noon on D plus 1, the D plus 2 convoy to Tanahmerah Bay was diverted to Humboldt Bay. Task force head-

[2] From a mine sweeper (YMS) accompanying the Western Attack Group. The men worked under the direction of the Naval Beach Party commander.

[3] There being no possible way to employ the tanks in their proper roles in the Tanahmerah Bay area, they merely bivouacked in that region until 2 May, when they were sent to Humboldt Bay. There, the services of the tank company were not needed, and on 4 May the company left the Hollandia area via LST to rejoin the rest of the 1st Tank Battalion on Pavuvu Island in the Solomons on 13 May.

quarters, the task force reserve, and miscellaneous service units, all of which were still awaiting a chance to unload at Tanahmerah Bay, were also directed to move to the Humboldt Bay beaches. A part of the task force headquarters which had already landed on Red Beach 2 was reloaded on an LST and sent to Humboldt Bay.[4]

Red Beaches 1 and 2 had proved able to provide dispersal areas for a bare minimum of supplies for the 24th Division's two assault regiments, but they were inadequate for the larger load assigned to them prior to the landings. The division would therefore have to support its drive inland with only the supplies and equipment unloaded at Tanahmerah Bay through D plus 1.

The 24th Division's Drive to the Airfields

Leaving Company A at Red Beach 1, the 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry, commanded by Lt. Col. Thomas E. Clifford, Jr., had started up the Dépapré–Lake Sentani trail at 0837 on D Day.[5] At any one of the numerous hairpin turns and defiles over the first two or three miles of the track, a squad of Japanese riflemen could have delayed an entire infantry division. Surprisingly, no determined opposition was encountered. Enemy defensive installations (many of them incomplete) at important points were found to be unoccupied. The Japanese had not been ready for the attack and those who had been in the Tanahmerah Bay area had apparently fled in panic when the 24th Division began to land. The 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry, was therefore able to advance as rapidly as terrain conditions and necessary security measures permitted.

The First Day of the Advance

Moving through fire lanes down which no bullets flew and past pillboxes in early stages of construction, the battalion column reached the village of Mariboe at 1047 hours. Only a few scattered enemy rifle shots had been encountered during this march and the village was secured without opposition. Over three miles by trail inland from Dépapré, Mariboe was the 24th Division's first inland objective. It was evident from scattered Japanese equipment in and around Mariboe that the Japanese had evacuated that village not long before the 1st Battalion's arrival.

Colonel Clifford now halted his men. Since radio communication with the division command post on Red Beach 2 had been lost, he sent messengers back over the tortuous trail to report progress to General Irving. At the same time patrols were sent toward Kantomé, nearly two miles southeast of Mariboe. They reported few signs of enemy activity along the trail beyond Mariboe. Colonel Clifford apparently did not wait to re-establish contact with higher headquarters but, acting on his patrols' reports, ordered the battalion to push on. Encountering little opposition along the main trail, the unit reached Kantomé about noon.

From that village patrols were sent almost ten miles eastward along the trail through Paipou, Jangkena, Waibron-Baroe, and

[4] RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 46.

[5] Unless otherwise indicated, information on the 24th Division's drive to the airfields is based on: 24th Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 60–100, 180–82, and 191–93; 24th Div G–3 Jnl Hollandia; 21st Inf Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 2–3; 21st Inf Jnl Hollandia; Notes, 27 Oct 50 and 15 Dec 50, provided by Lt Col Chester A. Dahlen [ex-CO 3d Bn 21st Inf] and Mr. Clarence E. Short [ex-S–3, 21st Inf], in OCMH files; Ltr, Brig Gen Charles B. Lyman to Gen Ward, 23 Nov 50, no sub, in OCMH files. The bulk of Company A, 21st Infantry, after securing Red Beach 1 and finding the trail entrance, remained on the beach until 24 April.

Waibron-Bano to Dazai, the division's intermediate objective. The patrols encountered no active resistance, although signs of recent enemy occupation abounded at numerous points along the trail to Dazai. Colonel Clifford then sent the main body of the battalion on to Jangkena, about eight miles by trail inland from Dépapré. At Jangkena the advance was again halted because night was approaching and because only sporadic radio contact could be maintained with regiment or division headquarters.

Colonel Clifford possessed little or no knowledge of the situation to the rear other than the difficulties presented by terrain. Ahead, 10,000 Japanese were thought to be concentrated around the airfields. Jangkena was on flat, swampy ground and was not an easily defensible position. Should the 1st Battalion push on to Dazai, also on flat ground, Japanese troops might outflank the unit, cut its line of communications to Dépapré, and destroy it at leisure. If the Japanese bypassed the battalion they could cut off the advance of the rest of the 21st Infantry at any one of the many defiles over the first two or three miles of the trail inland from Dépapré. Colonel Clifford therefore decided to pull his men back to Kantomé for the night, leaving only outposts along the trail east of that village. Kantomé was located near the foot of the Takari Hills, which he thought would present a serious obstacle to any Japanese flanking maneuvers.

The soundness of Colonel Clifford's decision was demonstrated about midnight when a small Japanese force, which had apparently moved overland around the 1st Battalion's outposts, struck the battalion's left. The jungled hills in the Kantomé neighborhood prevented further enemy movement and the Japanese force, although it managed to keep the 1st Battalion awake most of the night, did not penetrate the perimeter. At dawn on the 23d the Japanese gave up their attempts to cut the trail to the rear and withdrew.

About the time that the 1st Battalion had started withdrawing to Kantomé for the night, radio communications with regimental headquarters had been re-established. It was then learned that the 3d Battalion, 21st Infantry (less Company I), had moved from Red Beach 2 to Dépapré. During the morning of D Day the 3d Battalion, under the command of Lt. Col. Chester A. Dahlen, had been engaged in probing the southern flank of Red Beach 2. It had soon become apparent, however, that no Japanese were in that area, and General Irving had accordingly ordered the unit to move to Red Beach 1 to support the advance of the 1st Battalion. This move started about 1400 and as each element of the battalion reached Red Beach 1, it started up the Dépapré–Lake Sentani trail. Company I continued overland through the hills between Red Beaches 1 and 2. By nightfall the battalion's forward elements had reached the crest of the Takari Hills. The rest of the unit (still less Company I) continued moving after dark to close in on the leading elements, finally bivouacking along the trail.

Meanwhile, the remainder of the 21st Infantry had also begun moving to Red Beach 1, responsibility for the defense of Red Beach 2 passing to the 19th Infantry. Col. Charles B. Lyman, commanding the 21st Infantry, moved his command post to Dépapré about noon. By the morning of the next day, 23 April, the bulk of the 2d Battalion was concentrated at Dépapré. Company I rejoined the regiment about 1400 the same day, after a march over very rough and jungled terrain from Red Beach 2. Colonel Lyman now had his entire regiment

under his control, ready to exploit the initial success of the 1st Battalion. Late at night on the 22d, he instructed the regiment to resume the advance eastward at 0700 on D plus 1.

Logistic Problems Delay the Advance

The 1st Battalion began moving out of Kantomé on schedule on the 23d and by 1045 had re-entered Jangkena. Shortly after 1200 the unit reached Dazai, farthest limit of patrol advance the previous day, and then pushed on to Sabron. No signs of enemy opposition other than a few rifle shots from woods on both sides of the trail had been encountered. At 1445, after lunch and a rest, the battalion moved cautiously out of Sabron. About 1,500 yards beyond that village a small stream crossed the main track. This crossing had been reconnoitered by patrols early in the afternoon, and there had been found the first signs of organized resistance.

Two platoons of Company B, leading the advance from Sabron, safely crossed the small stream but soon found themselves in the middle of a well-concealed Japanese ambush on the east bank. Rifle and heavy machine gun fire made the stream's steep banks untenable, and the forward platoons hurriedly withdrew to the west, leaving four dead men behind. Over his now well-functioning radios, Colonel Clifford requested air support. The message was relayed to Task Force 58 carriers lying offshore and three planes quickly appeared to strafe the enemy position. In addition, the 1st Battalion's 81-mm. mortars and heavy machine guns were also brought forward to lay a barrage on the enemy defenses. But all this fire failed to dislodge the Japanese. In an attempt to outflank the enemy position, Colonel Clifford sent small patrols across the stream both above and below the crossing. These efforts proved futile, for the patrols could not locate the enemy flanks and were kept away from the main Japanese position by small arms fire. After a lively fire fight at the crossing, which lasted almost to dusk, Colonel Clifford decided to pull back toward Sabron so that mortars and artillery could fire freely on the stream-crossing area.

During the night 105-mm. howitzers of the 52d Field Artillery Battalion fired on the enemy positions at the crossing for over an hour. The Japanese replied with mortar, grenade, and small arms fire which was directed against the 1st Battalion's perimeter near Sabron. About 2100 a Japanese field piece, believed to have been a dual purpose 90-mm. antiaircraft gun, opened fire on the battalion from the vicinity of the airfields. The enemy's harassing fire continued almost to dawn on the 24th, and again the American unit was kept awake much of the night.

The rest of the 21st Infantry was now echeloned along the trail behind the 1st Battalion. The 3d Battalion, which had advanced to within 1,000 yards of Dazai, was also harassed by Japanese fire during the night of 23–24 April, but the area of the 2d Battalion (which had moved up to Mariboe from Dépapré) was quiet. The 2d and 3d Battalions' advances had been made without opposition.

Even with the support of the remainder of the regiment echeloned on the trail to its rear, the position of the 1st Battalion was not enviable. The unit was over twelve miles by trail inland; it had only enough rations left for breakfast; and it was running low on ammunition. No supplies had been received since landing, and hard fighting on the 24th seemed unavoidable.

Fortunately the 24th Division's plans for the Hollandia operation had taken into

consideration many of the potential logistic problems that might be encountered in the Tanahmerah Bay area. The division G–4 Section had made a detailed study which had shown that a full infantry regiment could be supplied by hand-carry from Red Beach 2 over the Dépapré–Lake Sentani trail inland as far as Jangkena. When no road connecting Red Beach 2 with Red Beach 1 had been found, the division moved the main supply point to Dépapré, from which the advance inland would be supported. With this change in plans, the G–4 Section undertook new computations and calculated that the hand-carry distance could be extended to Dazai. This conclusion was based on the assumption that adverse weather conditions would not make the Dépapré–Lake Sentani road nearly impassable.

On 23 April heavy rains started to turn the road into a quagmire through which struggling men could scarcely carry their own equipment and food, to say nothing of extra supplies for the leading battalion. By evening on that day logistic support of the 21st Infantry had therefore become a major problem. There was no question but that the regiment would have to be supported by hand-carry, for it was estimated that at least two weeks' hard work by engineers would be required before the road from Dépapré as far as Mariboe could be made passable even for jeeps. But the 1st Battalion had already advanced east of Dazai, beyond which point, according to the G–4 estimates, support by hand-carry would be next to impossible.

When the 2d and 3d Battalions had moved inland on the 23d, both had carried extra supplies, principally food and ammunition, but these supplies were inadequate to support the 1st Battalion as well. The 24th Division thereupon decided to increase the number of men assigned to hand-carrying duties. The overwater shuttle system from Red Beach 2 to Dépapré was now working smoothly and few combat troops were needed at Red Beach 2 to assist in moving supplies or to defend that area, which had proved to be bare of Japanese forces. Therefore the 2d Battalion, 19th Infantry (initially division reserve), was moved to Dépapré on D plus 1. The Antitank and Cannon Companies of both the 19th and 21st Infantry Regiments were also dispatched to Red Beach 1 on the same day. To speed the flow of supplies inland, all these troops were stationed at various points along the trail from Dépapré to Mariboe. The supplies were moved by a combination of a shuttle system and forward displacement of companies.

But the best efforts of three infantry battalions and four antitank or cannon companies proved inadequate to assure continued support of the 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry. In addition, trail conditions were becoming worse and hand-carrying progressively more difficult. General Irving therefore requested that aircraft (the nearest base for which was at Nadzab, almost 500 miles southeast of Hollandia) drop supplies at Jangkena on 24 April so that the 1st Battalion could continue its advance without depending on hand-carrying parties.

General Irving himself reconnoitered the trail a little way forward from Dépapré during the afternoon of 23 April. After his trip he realized that continued rapid advance inland was no longer possible under the hand-carry scheme. He also learned that the weather was so threatening that little dependence could be placed on air supply. Accordingly, late in the afternoon of the 23d, he ordered the 21st Infantry to con-



HAND-CARRYING SUPPLIES. *Men of the 1st Battalion, 19th Infantry, carrying supplies forward.*

solidate its forward positions at Sabron and Dazai. Elements of the regiment not already at those two villages were to remain echeloned to the rear for hand-carrying duties. Further offensive efforts were to be limited to patrol action until the inland supply situation could be improved.

Supply Difficulties, 24–25 April

By exhaustive work during the afternoon of 23 April and the following night, rear elements of the 21st Infantry had managed to build up a small reserve of rations and ammunition at Dazai. The next morning the 1st Battalion, 19th Infantry, moved to Dépapré from Red Beach 2 to augment the number of hand-carrying parties along the road inland. The Cannon and Antitank Companies of the same regiment, carrying extra supplies, pushed over the Takari Hills to Mariboe and Jangkena, respectively.

Inland, most efforts during the day were limited to patrolling. In the morning General Irving slogged his way overland to Colonel Lyman's forward command post with the 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry. After learning about the situation in the forward

area, he instructed Colonel Lyman to advance no farther than the point at which the two forward battalions, the 1st and 3d, could supply themselves from Dazai. Accordingly the 3d Battalion spent the day sending out flanking patrols and closing up on the 1st. The latter unit sent out patrols to the scene of the previous day's ambush and found that artillery and mortar fire had killed or driven away from that area almost all the Japanese defenders. At nightfall the 1st Battalion's position had been little changed from that which it had held at daylight, forward displacement of the main body having been limited to less than 200 yards. The 3d Battalion established a new perimeter about 500 yards to the rear of the 1st, while the 2d Battalion was spread from Dazai back to Mariboe, its companies acting as links in an ever-growing chain of hand-carrying parties.

To the rear of the 2d Battalion, additional links had been established by dark on the 24th. Most of the 2d Battalion, 19th Infantry, and the Antitank and Cannon Companies of the 21st Infantry had been hand-carrying supplies from Dépapré to Mariboe during the day and by nightfall had set up a small supply dump at the latter village. The 1st Battalion, 19th Infantry, had been handling supplies all day at Red Beach 1 and had also taken over responsibility for the security of that beach, allowing Company A, 21st Infantry, to rejoin its battalion inland. The Cannon Company of the 19th Infantry had moved forward with supplies to Mariboe, and the Antitank Company of the same regiment had reached Jangkena with some rations and ammunition. The Cannon and Antitank Companies of both the 19th and 21st Infantry Regiments had, perforce, left their organic weapons and transportation behind them and were acting purely as service troops.

In spite of the efforts of all these units, the supply of rations, ammunition, and medical equipment for the two advance battalions was but little augmented on the 24th. Worse still, the scheduled airdrop at Jangkena had been canceled because of poor weather, and the continuing rain was turning most of the Dépapré–Lake Sentani road into a sea of mud. There was little hope for quick improvement in the situation.

But General Irving was optimistic and he felt sure that conditions would improve on the 25th. He requested another airdrop which, in order to get the supplies farther forward, he wanted made at Dazai. On the basis of this request and because the number of carrying parties along the main trail had been increased and some supplies had been moved to Dazai on the 24th, the division commander ordered the 21st Infantry to continue its advance the next day. First objectives were wooded hills on either side of the main road about 3,000 yards beyond Sabron.

The 25th of April dawned heavily overcast and rain threatened, auguring ill for the proposed airdrop. Nevertheless, advance patrols of the 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry, moved out at 0500. Colonel Lyman planned to have the two forward battalions advance on a wide front to make sure that no Japanese would be bypassed and left behind to cut the tenuous supply line back to Dépapré. But the jungle was so thick on both sides of the trail that it was impossible for the main bodies to move rapidly in the dense undergrowth. The bulk of the two battalions therefore pushed for-

ward in column along the road, while numerous small patrols kept up as best they could in the jungle off the trail.

After an artillery bombardment of known and suspected enemy positions, the rest of the two battalions followed the advance patrols. Only scattered small arms fire slowed the advance, although it was necessary to halt from time to time as patrols searched the terrain far to both sides of the main trail. About 1115 the advance stopped temporarily while demolition teams destroyed two recently abandoned Japanese armored vehicles.[6]

The first objectives were cleared by noon, at which time the 1st Battalion halted to rest at a point about 1,000 yards short of the next natural barrier, a branch of the Dejaoe River. Soon 1st Battalion patrols reached the river. A small enemy delaying position at the crossing—a ford—was quickly outflanked by the 21st Infantry patrols and by midafternoon patrols had moved across the stream toward Julianadorp, a farm settlement to the east. Meanwhile, automatic weapons fire had been received from Japanese guns emplaced on high ground north of the ford. Scouts sent out to locate the source of this fire found enemy antiaircraft guns protected by riflemen and machine gunners. The Japanese positions were soon neutralized by mortar fire, and the main bodies resumed the advance about 1530.

Progress was slow during the rest of the afternoon. Japanese patrols which threatened the line of communications became active north of the main road, and it was necessary for the 21st Infantry to send out its own combat patrols to hunt down and disperse the Japanese parties. These operations, which delayed the advance of the main body, were not finished until 1700. Then Colonel Lyman halted the advance for the night. The 1st Battalion dug in on the nose of a low hill about 500 yards west of the Dejaoe River branch crossing and approximately 125 yards north of the Dépapré–Lake Sentani trail. The 3d Battalion and regimental headquarters bivouacked for the night in the vicinity of the day's first objectives, to the rear of the 1st Battalion.

The supply situation in the forward area had been little improved during the 25th. Rain had fallen steadily all day, there had been no airdrop, and the Dépapré–Lake Sentani road had become practically impassable. The 2d Battalion, 21st Infantry, had moved forward through Sabron to Dazai, laboriously hand-carrying supplies as it struggled eastward in the rain and mud. By this means small supply dumps had been built up at both villages by dusk, but the battalion's displacement had left a large gap in the carrying line. West of Dazai the next sizable carrying party was the Antitank Company of the 19th Infantry, at Paipou. Behind that unit was the Cannon Company, 19th Infantry, at Mariboe. General Irving ordered both units to move at dawn on the 26th to Dazai, carrying with them all possible supplies.

These displacements would leave the trail from Dazai west to Mariboe bare of hand-carrying parties, thus disrupting the supply relay system. General Irving therefore ordered the 1st Battalion, 19th Infantry, to move to Jangkena and instructed a company of the 2d Battalion of the same regiment to push on to Mariboe. The remainder of the 2d Battalion, which was to be assisted by miscellaneous artillery, medical, and quartermaster units, was made re-

[6] One report states that these vehicles were light tanks, but all other sources describe them as armored cars or trucks.

sponsible for moving supplies up the trail from Dépapré as far as the crest of the Takari Hills. Finally, the Antitank and Cannon Companies of the 21st Infantry were ordered to push from Mariboe to Dazai, hand-carrying extra supplies as they advanced.

Thus, by morning of the 26th, three infantry battalions, two antitank companies, and two cannon companies were assigned to carrying supplies. These troops were supported by parts of the Service Companies of both the 19th and 21st Infantry Regiments, by elements of various engineer and quartermaster organizations, and by volunteer groups from other units whose services were not needed for their normal duties. At least 3,500 combat troops were directly employed in moving supplies to the two forward battalions.

Since his two forward battalions were now beyond the most effective and accurate support range of artillery emplaced at the beaches, Colonel Lyman asked that 4.2-inch mortars of Company A, 641st Tank Destroyer Battalion, be sent inland. Such was the condition of the Dépapré–Lake Sentani trail that plans were made to move only one mortar. A detachment comprising two gun crews and the ammunition carriers of an entire platoon were detailed for the task, and the movement of the mortar was given the highest priority. About the same time a single 105-mm. howitzer of Battery A, 52d Field Artillery Battalion, was started over the Takari Hills. Battery C, 11th Field Artillery Battalion, offered support a different way. Because its guns could no longer help the infantry inland, the battery volunteered to a man to carry rations and other supplies over the Dépapré–Lake Sentani road. Such help was indeed welcome. The spirit was excellent in the 24th Division, but spirit alone could not conquer all the difficulties of terrain. Neither the 4.2-inch mortar nor the 105-mm. howitzer were to reach positions from which they could support the 21st Infantry's advance on 26 April.

While these steps were being taken to deliver both supplies and support weapons to the front, General Irving decided to order the advance continued. He reached this decision despite the fact that the supply situation was still serious. It had been impossible to drop supplies from the air on the 25th and even hand-carrying had been stopped late in the afternoon by heavy rains which had flooded many small streams. Parts of the Dépapré–Lake Sentani trail were now knee-deep in water. The two forward battalions were low on ammunition, and they would have to go on half-rations if the supply situation were not quickly improved. But General Irving was again optimistic about the weather, believing that air supply would be successful on the 26th. Furthermore, he had received information which indicated that the Japanese were evacuating the airfield area. For these reasons he considered that a continuation of the advance would not be unduly hazardous.

In ordering the advance, the division commander was knowingly pushing his men far beyond the limit at which they could be supplied by hand-carry. If the airdrop should again fail or if track conditions should not improve, one of the two forward battalions would probably have to be echeloned back along the trail to augment the carrying parties, and the advance would probably have to be halted. Should enemy opposition prove stubborn, the forward battalions might have to withdraw, perhaps as far as Dazai, to replenish their meager supplies of rations and ammunition. General Irving was taking a calculated risk which

assumed the success of the airdrop and an absence of determined Japanese opposition.

The Airfields Are Secured

After passing an uneventful night, the 1st and 3d Battalions, 21st Infantry, resumed the advance at 0830 on 26 April. There was no opposition as the main bodies moved across the Dejaoe River and on through Julianadorp. About 1130 both units stopped at Ebeli Plantation, about 1,800 yards east of Julianadorp, to clear out a bunker which was occupied by four Japanese riflemen. While the 3d Battalion dispatched Company L north some 600 yards off the main trail to flush some Japanese from Ebeli Sawmill, the rest of the troops moved on eastward. By noon advance elements were atop a hill whence they could see the inland airfields, and minutes later forward patrols reached the outermost dispersal areas of Hollandia Drome, the most westerly of the three Japanese airfields on the plain north of Lake Sentani. Now the advance was halted as the battalions regrouped and Colonel Lyman issued a new attack order.

The 1st Battalion was instructed to clear a Japanese encampment area left of the trail and north of the center of Hollandia Drome. The 3d Battalion was to push directly on to the airfield, secure it, and then advance as far as the edge of a swamp lying southeast of the strip.

By 1350 the 1st Battalion had secured its objective, having encountered little resistance. The 3d Battalion's forward patrols reached the western edge of the main runway about the same time and, locating no opposition worthy of mention, arrived at the eastern end of the field half an hour later. At 1530 Colonel Lyman radioed to division headquarters that the entire Hollandia Drome area had been secured. By dark the 2d Battalion, 21st Infantry, had closed at Hollandia Drome.

The bad weather which had forced cancellation of attempted airdrops on 24 and 25 April had finally broken sufficiently for a few planes from eastern New Guinea to get through to Hollandia. Twelve B–25's of the 17th Reconnaissance Squadron, Fifth Air Force, flew the nearly 500 miles from Saidor to drop rifle, carbine, machine gun, and mortar ammunition, hand grenades, and rations at Dazai.[7] Moreover, the 2d Battalion, 21st Infantry, had managed to bring forward some extra rations, ammunition, and medical equipment. As the rain stopped, fresh carrying parties following the 2d Battalion found trail conditions greatly improved. Finally, some wheeled transport was now available at both ends of the Dépapré–Lake Sentani road. Hard work by engineers had made the road passable for jeeps from Dépapré halfway up the first steep slopes of the Takari Hills. At Hollandia Drome the 21st Infantry had captured a few Japanese trucks. These were sent west from the airstrip as far as possible along the main trail, which was passable to a point near Julianadorp. There the supplies dropped from the air during the day, as well as those still being hand-carried overland from Dépapré, were picked up and taken back to the airfield area.

As soon as Hollandia Drome was secured,

[7] The information on the airdrop on 26 April was supplied to the author on 24 May 1949 by Capt. Bernhardt L. Mortensen, Air Historical Group, Headquarters, USAF. C–47's could not be used for the transport because the nearest Allied air bases were beyond practicable round trip range of such aircraft. While the B–25 mission did not fill all the needs of the forward battalions, other rations brought over the trail on the 26th, coupled with larger airdrops on the 27th and succeeding days, saved the situation from becoming critical.

patrols of the 21st Infantry pushed on toward Weversdorp, a farm about 2,500 yards beyond the eastern end of the field. At 1645, between Weversdorp and the airdrome, contact was established with elements of the 186th Infantry, 41st Division, which had been attacking westward from Humboldt Bay into the airfield area.[8]

The Seizure of Hollandia Town

While the 24th Division had been driving inland to Hollandia Drome, the 162d and 186th Infantry Regiments of the 41st Division had pushed toward the fields from Humboldt Bay, twenty-five miles east of Tanahmerah Bay. The 41st Division had begun landing on White Beaches 1–4 on the shores of Humboldt Bay at 0700 on 22 April. Initial assaults were made by the 162d Infantry over the sandspits across the inner reaches of Humboldt Bay. The 186th Infantry followed the 162d ashore to initiate a drive southwest and inland from Humboldt Bay toward the airfields on the Lake Sentani Plain.[9]

The Beachhead at Humboldt Bay

The convoy bearing the 41st Division to Humboldt Bay did not have the same difficulty locating landmarks as did the ships at Tanahmerah Bay, and the ships found their assigned transport and fire support areas without much trouble. The naval fire support conducted by American light cruisers and destroyers and the air support missions flown by Task Force 58 planes were executed as planned. There was no opposition to either the naval gunfire or the aircraft activity, and surprise was as complete as that achieved at Tanahmerah Bay. Assault troops of the 41st Division quickly unloaded from the APD's which had carried them to Humboldt Bay and boarded landing craft, personnel, ramp (LCPR's), coxswained by naval personnel, for the short run to the beaches. The first of these boats touched shore exactly on schedule at 0700. The leading waves of landing craft were supported by rocket fire from two Seventh Fleet LCI's which fired principally on Pancake Hill, just north of White Beach 1, and by rocket or automatic weapons fire from two LCVP's of the 532d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment. There was no answering fire from Japanese weapons and no opposition at the beaches.[10]

The first assault was made by Companies K and L, 162d Infantry, which landed along an 800-yard front on White Beach 1, located on the more northern of the two sandspits dividing Humboldt Bay from Jautefa Bay.[11] Succeeding waves of the 3d Battalion, 162d Infantry, came ashore in LCVP's and LCM's manned by the Boat Battalion, 532d Engineer Boat and Shore

[8] This final paragraph is based on 24th Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 80; 186th Inf Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 8; 21st Inf Jnl Hollandia. These sources disagree as to the locations of the meeting between the 24th and 41st Division units on the afternoon of 26 April, the 186th Infantry report putting it west of Weversdorp and the 21st Infantry journal placing it cast of that farm. From a close check of the timing of all reports concerning this contact, it seems that a point some place between Weversdorp and the eastern edge of Hollandia Drome is correct.

[9] LETTERPRESS LF FO 1, 9 Apr 44, in G–3 Annex to 41st Div Opns Rpt Hollandia.

[10] CTF 77 Opns Rpt Tanahmerah Bay–Humboldt Bay–Aitape, pp. 5, 26–27; CTG 77.2 Opns Rpt Humboldt Bay, pp. 3–4.

[11] Information in this and the following subsection is based on: 41st Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 2–7; 162d Inf Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 1–3; 41st Div G–3 Jnl Hollandia; 162d Inf Jnl Hollandia; 186th Inf Jnl Hollandia; draft MS 2d ESB Hist, Ch. VII, pp. 7–8, 30–31.



GENERAL DOUGLAS MACARTHUR *and General Horace H. Fuller, on the beach at Humboldt Bay, New Guinea, 22 April 1944.*

Regiment. Simultaneously, a reinforced rifle platoon of Company A, 162d Infantry, was put ashore from Army LCVP's on White Beach 2, immediately south of White Beach 1. Company I, 186th Infantry, landed in the same manner on White Beach 3 on the southern sandspit. There was no enemy opposition to these two secondary landings. Within half an hour the remainder of the 3d Battalion, 162d Infantry, the 1st and 2d Battalions of the same regiment, six tanks of the 603d Tank Company, and elements of the 116th Engineer Battalion were all safely ashore on the northern spit.

The rifle platoon of Company A, 162d Infantry, advanced rapidly south along the spit and by 0745 secured Cape Pie, at the peninsula's southern extremity. This action eliminated the possibility of a Japanese surprise attack and secured the southern end of the spit. Company I of the 186th Infantry, also unopposed, quickly secured Cape Tjeweri at the northern tip of the southern spit, and then began moving southeast along the shore of Humboldt Bay toward Hollekang to forestall any Japanese counterattacks from that direction.

Meanwhile, the remainder of the 3d Battalion, 162d Infantry, had landed on White Beach 1 and had started north to secure Pancake Hill which, located at the inland end of the northern peninsula, overlooked all the 41st Division's landing beaches. So surprised had the Japanese been by the landings and by the speed of the 3d Battalion's advance, that the American troops, encountering only scattered rifle fire, were able to take Pancake Hill before 0800. Atop that important terrain feature they found a Japanese antiaircraft gun from which the canvas weather covering had not been removed. This weapon had not been touched by the preassault naval bombardment and was still in perfect condition. Had the Japanese antiaircraftmen been alert, they could have created havoc among the 41st Division troops landing on the beaches below Pancake Hill.

After the hill was occupied, most of the 3d Battalion pushed up the shores of Humboldt Bay, while one company moved overland north from Pancake Hill. No resistance worthy of mention opposed this two-pronged attack, the objective of which was to surround and seize another dominating terrain feature, Jarremoh Hill. This hill, rising some 1,000 feet, overlooked the sandspits and the shores of Challenger Cove, a northwesterly arm of Humboldt Bay. On the west shore of the cove was located the town of Hollandia.

Hollandia Falls

By 1430 the 3d Battalion had cleared Jarremoh Hill and was digging in for the night along a ridge overlooking Hollandia. The battalion commander wanted to push on into the town before dark, but General Fuller, commanding the 41st Division, vetoed this proposal. On the basis of intelligence reports which indicated that the Japanese were occupying Hollandia in some strength, General Fuller had decided that the seizure of the town would have to wait until the morning of the 23d. During the night naval guns and 105-mm. howitzers of the 146th Field Artillery Battalion—emplaced on firm ground north of White Beach 1—bombarded Hollandia, softening the 3d Battalion's task for the morrow.

In the meantime the 2d Battalion had begun advancing from White Beach 1 to the track connecting Hollandia with Pim, on the western shore of Jautefa Bay. Company E led off on the left at 0756, moving past

the southwest side of Pancake Hill, while Company G took a route east of the hill. The rest of the battalion soon started out after Company E but found the terrain west of Pancake Hill unexpectedly swampy and rough going for a large body of troops. The battalion commander therefore ordered the units on that side to turn and follow Company G. Company E kept on overland and quickly reached the Pim–Hollandia track at a point about 1,000 yards west of Pancake Hill. By midmorning Company G had arrived on the trail north of Company E. The rest of the battalion concentrated on the trail between Companies E and G early in the afternoon.

Contact was soon established with the company of the 3d Battalion which had advanced to the Pim–Hollandia road from Pancake Hill earlier in the day. The 2d Battalion then moved up the road toward Hollandia, and by nightfall had joined the 3d on the ridge overlooking the town. Meanwhile, the 1st Battalion had assembled as division reserve at the base of Pancake Hill.

By dark on the 22d the 162d Infantry had carried its advance to the 41st Division's first phase line. To that time, opposition had been so light that American casualties, including those of the 186th Infantry, totaled only six men killed and sixteen wounded. As at Tanahmerah Bay, the Japanese had made no effort to man their prepared defenses which, though not as extensive as had been expected, could have produced considerable trouble for the 41st Division. The division staff was both pleased and worried by the lack of enemy resistance and could make no estimate as to the character of Japanese opposition which might be met on the 23d. Nevertheless, since it was expected that the 162d Infantry would have little trouble in seizing Hollandia, that action was ordered.

The 2d and 3d Battalions, 162d Infantry, jumped off at 0730 on the 23d. The units moved rapidly down the ridge to Hollandia and at 1115 reported that they had secured the town. There was no opposition.

The 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, had meanwhile relieved a battalion of the 186th Infantry which had been waiting in division reserve west of Pancake Hill. The 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, after helping the 3d to secure Hollandia, moved into high ground west and northwest of that town. During the remainder of the attack phase of the Hollandia operation, the entire 162d Infantry patrolled the hilly environs of Hollandia, securing the northern shores of Humboldt Bay, the beaches of Challenger Cove, and rough hills along the western side of Jautefa Bay. To the 186th Infantry fell the task of driving inland to the main objective, the airfields on the north shore of Lake Sentani.

The Drive Inland from Humboldt Bay

The Landing of the 186th Infantry

LVT's carrying Companies K and L of the 186th Infantry hit White Beach 2 about 0715, ten minutes ahead of schedule, on 22 April.[12] Original plans had provided that these LVT assault waves would cross White Beach 2 and the mangrove swamp to its rear and proceed overwater across Jautefa Bay to White Beach 4, located north of Pim, near the eastern terminus of the main road leading inland to the airfields. But the mangrove swamp proved impassable for the

[12] Information in this and the following two subsections is based principally on: 41st Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 2–11; RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 9–12; 41st Div G–3 Jnl Hollandia; 186th Inf Jnl Hollandia, 186th Inf Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 1–8; draft MS 2d ESB Hist, Ch. VII, pp. 32–34.

LVT's. The amphibians withdrew from the beach and, under cover of Support Battery craft of the 2d Engineer Special Brigade, proceeded into Jautefa Bay through the narrow channel between Capes Pie and Tjeweri.

At 0810 Company L started moving ashore about 900 yards north of Pim. Company K landed 500 yards farther north about 0825. The remainder of the 3d Battalion (less Company I, which was operating on White Beach 3) arrived in the White Beach 4 area about 0915. The first objective was Leimok Hill, lying 1,800 yards northwest of Pim. Part of the battalion secured the hill by 1000, and other elements advanced southward toward Pim. That village and its usable jetty were secured, against light opposition, by 1645, while Suikerbrood Hill, on Jautefa Bay south of Pim, was cleared by 1800. The danger that enemy troops atop dominating heights near Pim might make White Beach 4 untenable was over.

The 3d Battalion established a night perimeter at Pim, extending its defenses along a trail leading west from that village to the point at which the Pim–Hollandia track joined the main road inland to Lake Sentani, thus securing the roadhead from which movements to inland objectives had to begin. The 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, which had followed the 162d Infantry ashore on White Beach 1, had proceeded north and west around the mangrove swamp and down the Pim–Hollandia track to Leimok Hill. There it relieved the 3d Battalion and established a night defensive perimeter. The 2d Battalion (less two rifle companies) moved into divisional reserve on the Pim–Hollandia track west of Pancake Hill; its remaining two companies stayed afloat until D plus 1. Orders were issued late at night on the 22d to the 186th Infantry, Col. Oliver P. Newman commanding, to move out the next morning at daybreak. The objective was the inland airfield area and the axis of advance was the Pim–Lake Sentani road.

Back on White Beach 1, the Naval Beach Party and the 532d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment (the Shore Party), augmented by the Cannon Companies of the 162d and 186th Infantry Regiments, worked hard to unload all D-Day shipping before dark. Seven LST's were discharged on White Beach 1. Roller conveyors were used for the 375 tons of bulk cargo each LST carried in addition to its mobile load. Cargo and equipment aboard the APA HMAS *Westralia* was lightered to White Beach 1 or 2 by small craft. Since White Beach 3 was very steep and had no suitable landing spots, most cargo had to be unloaded on the northern sandspit. That spit was already cluttered with Japanese stores; it was narrow; and exits to inland dispersal areas were limited. These factors combined to lead to a great deal of congestion.

To the Shore of Lake Sentani

At 0800 on 23 April the 1st Battalion left its night positions on Leimok Hill and started out over the main track, passing through the 3d Battalion. The movement was supported by the 205th and 218th Field Artillery Battalions, set up near Cape Pie, and by aircraft from the carriers of Task Force 58. By 0900 the 1st Battalion had reached Brinkman's Plantation, about 2,200 yards by trail southwest of Pim. So far, there had been no opposition. Now Companies A and C parted from the main body to patrol northwest up the Borgonjie River. Proceeding to a fork about 2,000 yards upstream, the two companies repulsed a series of unco-ordinated attacks

which were launched against the right flank of the 186th Infantry during the afternoon by a Japanese force estimated at 150. The two companies remained at the stream-branching during the night of 23–24 April, and on the latter day they moved overland southwest to rejoin the main force on the Pim–Lake Sentani trail.

Leaving Companies A and C to guard its right flank, the remainder of the 1st Battalion had continued the advance along the main trail against negligible opposition. By noon the battalion had reached the outskirts of a large Japanese dump and storage area about 2,500 yards beyond Brinkman's Plantation. The unit halted to await the results of an air strike on suspected enemy positions west of the storage area and for the 3d Battalion to close up from the rear.

It was hoped that the 186th Infantry could reach the second phase line, Koejaboe and the northeast shores of Lake Sentani, during the afternoon of the 23d, but air observers and forward patrols had reported considerable Japanese activity along the trail west of the storage area. Colonel Newman felt that the now understrength 1st Battalion did not have enough men to continue an advance against what might prove to be strong enemy defenses. Moreover, the 3d Battalion's movement from Pim had been slow and the unit did not reach the Japanese storage area until 1500, when it was necessary to halt for the day. General Fuller had ordered that offensive action—other than patrolling—cease each day at 1500 so that defensive positions could be prepared before dark. The forward elements of the 186th Infantry set up their night perimeters at the eastern edge of the Japanese storage area.

By 1500 heavy rain had begun to turn spots of the Pim–Lake Sentani road—the best yet found in the Hollandia area—into great mudholes. LVT's had started out over the trail from Pim to bring supplies forward to the advancing infantry and, if necessary, to provide fire support. But many of the LVT's bogged down in the mud along the road. Supply problems seemed imminent.

Colonel Newman suggested to division headquarters that on the 24th the advance be resumed with the 3d Battalion passing through the 1st. The latter was to remain in the storage area until rejoined by Companies A and C, after which it would follow the 3d Battalion and protect the right flank of the advance by patrolling along high ground north of the main trail. The 3d Battalion's initial objective was a jetty at the point where the main road first touched the shore of Lake Sentani. This jetty was to be held as a base for future operations. Company I, scheduled to rejoin the 3d Battalion on the 24th, was ordered to take a branch trail to Koejaboe and its jetty, southeast of the first jetty. The 2d Battalion was to remain in reserve in the Pim area and along the track west of that village.

Permission to carry out Colonel Newman's plan came from 41st Division headquarters at 0630 on the 24th, and at 0845 the 3d Battalion moved out. Since Japanese air action during the night of 23–24 April had succeeded in firing the American ammunition and ration dumps on White Beach 1, the advance of the 186th Infantry had to be made on half-rations, and the troops were ordered to conserve ammunition. Luckily, little enemy opposition was encountered during the morning, and by 1100 3d Battalion patrols were within 500 yards of the initial objective. Light fire from a force of Japanese, estimated at 150, then temporarily delayed the advance, but the first jetty and its environs were secured shortly after noon.

It had meanwhile become apparent that the 1st Battalion was too widely dispersed to carry out its assigned support and follow-up roles. Two companies followed along the main track as best they could, but extensive patrolling on the high ground north of the trail proved necessary because small parties of Japanese were continually being discovered wandering about on the right flank. While these Japanese parties did not seem aggressive in most cases, Colonel Newman wisely chose to take no chances by leaving his flank unprotected. Companies A and C were again assigned to the arduous patrolling task. The 3d Battalion was now far inland and practically unsupported. General Fuller therefore released the 2d Battalion, until now in division reserve, to Colonel Newman's control.

The 2d Battalion pushed rapidly westward from Pim, passed through such elements of the 1st Battalion as were still on the trail, and took up positions on the right of the 3d Battalion late in the afternoon. The two units then set up night perimeters in the vicinity of the jetty. The 3d Battalion was established along a line running 700 yards inland from Lake Sentani and the 2d Battalion refused the right flank by extending its lines northeast 500 yards to the right rear. About 1630, Companies A and C rejoined the main body of the 1st Battalion in a night perimeter at the junction of the main Pim–Lake Sentani road and the track leading to Koejaboe, not yet captured. The 1st Battalion's position was about 3,500 swampy yards east of the 2d and 3d Battalions.

During the day the 34th Infantry of the 24th Division, RECKLESS Task Force Reserve, had been transferred from Tanahmerah Bay to Humboldt Bay. Its arrival had allowed the task force commander to release Company I, 186th Infantry, from White Beach 3 and the 2d Battalion, 186th Infantry, from its reserve role.

Amphibious Movement on Lake Sentani

Colonel Newman's plans for the 25th envisaged using his entire regiment in a combined amphibious and overland advance to the airfields, a maneuver now possible because the 34th Infantry could free 186th Infantry units from guard duties along the line of communications back to Pim. Colonel Newman ordered the 3d Battalion, 186th Infantry, to move west along the main road to Nefaar, six and one half miles beyond the night bivouac area. The 1st Battalion was to load on LVT's at the jetty which had been captured the previous afternoon. From that jetty, the troops were to move by LVT over Lake Sentani to a point on the shore west of Nefaar and, upon landing, help the 1st Battalion to secure that village. Two companies of the 2d Battalion were to clear scattered enemy troops from high ground on the right flank, whence the Japanese had harassed the battalion's night bivouac. As soon as this task was accomplished, the 2d Battalion would reassemble as regimental reserve and follow the 3d along the main track toward Nefaar. Company I had not reached the 3d Battalion the previous day and was therefore ordered to operate with the 1st Battalion, at the perimeter of which it had arrived just before dark. Company B was lent to the 3d Battalion to bring that unit up to full strength for the advance west.

The 3d Battalion started moving at 0800 on the 25th and by 1000 had marched almost 3,000 yards westward against no opposition. The Japanese who had delayed the advance on the 24th had vanished. Company K, moving to the north of the main



LVT'S CROSSING LAKE SENTANI. *Note Fifth Air Force B–25's overhead.*

road, flushed the few enemy seen during the morning.

LVT's of the 2d Engineer Special Brigade had now moved up to the jetty which the 3d Battalion had captured the previous day. There, at 1000, two companies of the 1st Battalion loaded on the amphibians and departed for Nefaar. No Japanese fire from the shores of Lake Sentani greeted this landlocked amphibious maneuver, and at 1150 two companies landed at Nefaar. The remainder of the 1st Battalion moved by LVT to Nefaar later in the day and at 1530 the 3d Battalion reached that village after an uneventful march overland. The 2d Battalion closed on the village shortly thereafter.

Vigorous patrolling north and west of Nefaar characterized action the rest of the afternoon, during which only slight resistance was encountered. Expected strong enemy opposition had not as yet materialized, but before dark a platoon of Company A made a brief reconnaissance of Cyclops Drome, most easterly of the three Japanese fields on the north shore of Lake Sentani, and reported evidences of considerable enemy movement and strong defensive positions. Despite these reports, Colonel Newman was confident that his troops would have little or no difficulty in securing Cy-

clops Drome on the 26th, for he now believed that the enemy had vacated the airfield area.

One of the reasons that the 186th Infantry had not reached the airdromes on the afternoon of 25 April was that artillery fire was falling on those fields. Some of this fire may have been from the 155-mm. weapons of the 11th or 168th Field Artillery Battalions, emplaced on the 24th Division's beaches at Tanahmerah Bay, but other artillery fire was undoubtedly from Japanese dual-purpose weapons dug in north of the airfields. Whatever the case, communications difficulties prevented the fire from the 24th Division's area being stopped before the time came for the 186th Infantry to set up night defenses. The 1st Battalion bivouacked about 1,700 yards west of Nefaar and placed outposts in high ground 700 yards north of the main trail. The 3d Battalion went into position about 1,000 yards behind the 1st, while the 2d remained at Nefaar for the night.

For the morrow, Colonel Newman ordered the 1st Battalion to seize the northwestern half of Cyclops Drome. One company of the 3d was to secure the southeastern part of the field and the remainder of the battalion was to act as general reserve. The 2d Battalion was to move by LVT from Nefaar to another jetty located about 2,000 yards southeast of Sentani Drome and the village of Ifaar. Pushing rapidly up a trail from the jetty to Ifaar, the battalion was to seize that village and Sentani Drome.

The 1st and 2d Battalions moved out as planned shortly after 0800 on the 26th. By 1040 the 1st Battalion had secured Cyclops Drome against no opposition. About 1000, Companies F and G of the 2d Battalion landed against scattered rifle fire at the jetty below Ifaar, a mile overwater from Nefaar. The rest of the battalion came ashore in the same area in the early afternoon. Advance elements of the 2d Battalion were on Sentani Drome at 1130, and by 1215 the battalion commander was able to report that the airfield and its environs had been secured.

During the remainder of the afternoon patrol action around both airfields accounted for a few Japanese stragglers. Opposition throughout the day had been conspicuous by its absence—the Japanese had disappeared. The 3d Battalion moved up to the airstrips before dark, and at nightfall the entire 186th Infantry set up a defensive perimeter around Cyclops and Sentani Dromes. Patrols of the 1st Battalion were sent west beyond the fields and at 1645 made contact with patrols of the 21st Infantry between Weversdorp and Hollandia Drome. This contact completed the pincers movement instituted by the 24th and 41st Divisions on 22 April. All important objectives of the RECKLESS Task Force had been secured.

Mopping-Up Operations

Although the contact between the 24th and 41st Divisions ended the major tactical phase of the Hollandia operation, it was necessary to clear the area of scattered enemy troops, attempt to find large organizations of Japanese forces, and cut enemy escape routes.[13] With these objectives in view, elements of the 186th Infantry reconnoitered the north shores of Lake Sentani, and Poegi and Ase Islands in the lake during 27 April. These and many later patrols, most of which were transported by 2d En-

[13] This subsection is based principally upon: RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 14; 41st Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 11–16; 186th Inf Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 8–12; 24th Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 85–92, 98–110; draft MS 2d ESB Hist, Ch. VII, pp. 23–24.

gineer Special Brigade LVT's or amphibian 6 x 6 trucks (DUKW's), encountered few Japanese in the area covered. Other troops of the 186th Infantry flushed about 400 Japanese on Hill 1000, approximately 4,000 yards northeast of Cyclops Drome. On the 29th, with the help of fire from the 205th Field Artillery Battalion, the 1st Battalion seized the hill, killing or dispersing the enemy. Thereafter the 186th Infantry patrolled into the Cyclops Mountains north and northeast of the airdromes.

The 162d Infantry's principal action after clearing the environs of Hollandia was to seize Cape Soeadja, at the northwest limits of Humboldt Bay, on 27 April. The regiment continued patrolling in the Hollandia area until 6 May when it was relieved by the 34th Infantry.

The latter unit was greatly dispersed. Some elements patrolled around Pim and along the road inland to support the drive of the 186th Infantry, while the 2d Battalion moved to the Hollekang–Cape Djar area, east of Humboldt Bay. Ultimately, the entire 2d Battalion moved to Tami Drome, on the coast six miles east of Hollekang, to protect engineers who were repairing the Tami strip. The battalion later established an outpost at Goya, about five miles inland south of Hollekang, in order to halt Japanese movements in that area. The 1st and 3d Battalions furnished guards for supply dumps, working parties at the beaches, truck drivers, and construction personnel for a number of minor projects.

The 21st Infantry sent a reinforced company to Marneda, about five miles southwest of Lake Sentani, to establish a patrol base, and another company held a base at Iris Bay, northwest of Tanahmerah Bay, for a short time. (*See Map 2.*) The 19th Infantry sent patrols overland to the coast north of the Cyclops Mountains to secure trails running through the mountains to the Dépapré–Lake Sentani road or the airfields. Other elements of the regiment were transported by 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment boats to Demta Bay, west of Tanahmerah Bay, and maintained an outpost there for some days. Still other units of the 24th Division probed overland from the western end of Lake Sentani to Genjem, a main inland trail junction through which passed many Japanese who were attempting to escape westward from the Hollandia area. The 24th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, later reinforced by Company B, 21st Infantry, patrolled along the western, southwestern, and southern shores of Lake Sentani.

By 6 June the mopping-up efforts of the RECKLESS Task Force had succeeded in clearing all but a few Japanese stragglers from the immediate area of the airfields, Hollandia, Tanahmerah Bay, and Tami.[14]

Logistic Problems of the RECKLESS Task Force

Evening of 26 April found the RECKLESS Task Force in an excellent position tactically. The principal objective—the inland airfields—had been seized within four days despite radical changes in the original scheme of maneuver. Japanese opposition had been negligible and in much less strength than expected; there was no evidence that any large-scale enemy counterattack could or would be made against the Hollandia area; and land-based air support for the RECKLESS Task Force was being made available from fields captured at

[14] Details concerning mopping up in the area west of Lake Sentani after 6 June are to be found in Chapter IV below.

Aitape, 125 miles to the southeast. On the other hand, the restricted beaches at Tanahmerah Bay and the poor condition of the Dépapré–Lake Sentani road gave no promise that supplies for the 24th Division would be adequate for some time to come. Congestion on the beaches at Humbolt Bay, the rapid deterioration of the Pim–Lake Sentani road, and a disastrous fire on White Beach 1 during the night of 23–24 April made supply of the 41st Division difficult. In brief, the logistic problems of the entire RECKLESS Task Force had assumed amazing proportions.

The Fire

The units moving ashore at Humboldt Bay on 22 April found Japanese supplies covering White Beaches 1 and 2. Air bombing and naval support fire prior to the landings had scattered these enemy supplies all over the northern sandspit, while smoke and flames issued from much of the matériel as a result of the bombardment. A complicated dispersal problem for the supplies of the 41st Division and its attached units was thereby created.[15]

The 116th Engineer Battalion, ashore shortly after H Hour, immediately set to work clearing White Beach 1. In accordance with RECKLESS Task Force plans, the battalion endeavored to construct an exit road from the beach to the Pim–Hollandia track, but the terrain north of the beach proved more rugged than anticipated and the swamp northwest of the beach more formidable than expected. Rapid road building was impossible and the project was temporarily abandoned while all efforts were turned to unloading D-Day shipping. On D plus 1, more troops, vehicles, and supplies began pouring onto White Beaches 1 and 2. Only slow progress could be made on exit roads, and beach congestion increased. The situation was not helped by the necessity for basing both antiaircraft and field artillery units along the northern sandspit. Some relief was effected during the day as boats of the 532d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment began ferrying a few supplies directly from the transports to Pim and transferring more there from the two principal unloading beaches.[16]

Shortly after dark on the night of 23–24 April, a lone Japanese aircraft, apparently guided by still smoldering fires in old Japanese dumps, dropped a stick of bombs on White Beach 1. One of these bombs, landing at the edge of a Japanese ammunition dump below Pancake Hill, started a series of conflagrations which soon spread to an American gasoline dump near by and thence to other RECKLESS Task Force equipment. Efforts to stop the fires during the night proved fruitless, for intense heat and continuous explosions drove back troops who tried to put out the flames or salvage matériel. The fires raged all night and through most of the next day.[17]

Much confusion resulted from the fires. Shortly before midnight it was rumored at 41st Division headquarters that a Japanese force of unknown strength had landed on White Beach 1 or 2 and possibly on White Beach 4. This erroneous report was relayed to forward units.[18] But even after this rumor had been proved false, both the 162d and

[15] RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 18–19; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Tanahmerah Bay–Humboldt Bay–Aitape, p. 28.

[16] RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 18–19, 55.

[17] RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 10, 19; 41st Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 6–7; CTG 77.2 Opns Rpt Humboldt Bay, p. 4.

[18] Msg, 41st Div to 186th Inf, 2100, 23 Apr 44, in 186th Inf S–1 Jnl Hollandia.

186th Infantry Regiments were ordered to cease all forward movement, go on half-rations, and make every attempt to conserve ammunition.[19] As daylight came and the situation at the beaches became clearer, the 186th Infantry was instructed to continue its advance inland, but was again ordered to issue only half-rations and to continue all efforts to conserve ammunition and other supplies. The 162d Infantry was allowed to execute its plans to seize the town of Hollandia but after that was to limit its operations to patrolling and defensive measures until further notice.[20]

The fire had a far worse effect on the logistical situation than on the tactical. Well over 60 percent of the rations and ammunition landed through D plus 1 was burned or blown up during the following two days. The equivalent of eleven LST loads of supplies was lost, while twenty-four men were killed and about one hundred wounded or injured as a result of the fires and explosions.[21]

General Eichelberger immediately radioed to ALAMO Force a request for duplication of all bulk stores which had been unloaded from LST's at Humboldt Bay on D Day and D plus 1. It was further requested that these loadings be sent forward with the first reinforcement convoy, scheduled to arrive on D plus 8.[22] When these instructions reached the RECKLESS Task Force's G–4 liaison groups at the staging areas in eastern New Guinea, ships of the D plus 8 convoy were already being loaded not only with supplies but also with service troops. In order that enough matériel might be sent forward to replace the eleven LST loads which had been lost, the troop space was reassigned to supplies. A good deal of confusion was caused in the rear bases by the speed at which decisions had to be made, lack of traffic control at the loading area, absence of ammunition data except for dead-weight tonnage, and incomplete understanding of time and space requirements by those responsible for the new loading plans.[23]

Some of the paper work for shipping plans, especially for resupply echelons, had apparently not been completed, and the RECKLESS Task Force G–4 later reported: ". . . the Task Force was extremely handicapped by the lack of stowage plans and manifests on shipping in the harbor and awaiting call forward. This resulted in the loss of valuable time in unloading urgently needed cargo and the calling forward of most ships was like reaching in a grab bag".[24]

As a result of inadequate information and the confusion in the staging areas, it was impossible for the G–4 Section to ascertain exactly what types and quantities of ammunition arrived with the hurriedly reloaded D plus 8 replacement ships. It can be assumed, however, that all ammunition losses were adequately replaced at least after D plus 12, by which time the end of Japanese resistance in the Hollandia area had eliminated the ammunition problem.[25] Even though the ammunition resupply problem had been solved without undue difficulty, it was the opinion of the G–4 that the RECK-

[19] Msgs, 41st Div to 186th Inf, 0400 and 0545, 24 Apr 44, in 186th Inf S–1 Jnl Hollandia.

[20] 41st Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 7.

[21] RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 11, 19; Rad, CTG 77.2 to CTF 77, 23 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 23–24 Apr 44.

[22] Rad, RTF to ALAMO, 5619, 24 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 25–26 Apr 44; RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 19.

[23] RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 37, 65–66.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

[25] *Ibid.*, pp. 37, 65–66.

LESS Task Force had been extremely fortunate: "Had the enemy attack from the air been in force, the loss of life and property would have probably delayed the operation for a considerable period of time." [26]

But the general congestion at Humboldt Bay was not improved for some time. On D plus 2, with fires still raging on the northern spit, RECKLESS Task Force headquarters, the task force reserve, and miscellaneous service units, together with their supplies and equipment, arrived from Tanahmerah Bay. In addition, five LST's of the D plus 2 convoy from eastern New Guinea bases hove into view. There were now eleven LST's awaiting unloading in Humboldt Bay, and the best beaches, White 1 and 2, could not be used. Beaches at Hollandia and other points around the shores of Challenger Cove were obstructed by reefs. Extensive demolitions would be necessary before LST's could use that area. White Beach 4, at Pim, was inaccessible to LST's. The only remaining area was White Beach 3 and the shore line to its south along the Cape Tjeweri sandspit.

White Beach 3 was ill suited for beaching LST's and there were some objections from Admiral William M. Fechteler's Central Attack Group to RECKLESS Task Force plans for using that beach. But the admiral realized that many of the available LST's had to be unloaded promptly so that they could be returned on schedule to the Central Pacific Area, whence they had been borrowed. He also knew that the cargo aboard some LST's was badly needed ashore to replace the supplies destroyed on White Beaches 1 and 2. He therefore decided to use White Beach 3 until White Beaches 1 and 2 were again safe. Admiral Fechteler ordered his LST commander, Capt. Roger Cutler (USN), to run the LST's into White Beach 3 from the northern side of Humboldt Bay at full speed in order to ram the ships as high as possible on the sandspit. Captain Cutler's LST skippers did such a good job that the Central Attack Group later had considerable difficulty retracting many LST's from the beach.[27]

Supplies and equipment unloaded at White Beach 3 were transferred by small craft to Pim, where, since very limited dispersal areas were available, a bottleneck soon formed. The road inland from Pim, barely passable for wheeled vehicles on D Day, was rapidly deteriorating under continuous heavy trucking and rain. Finally, demands for the use of lighterage between White Beach 3 and Pim far exceeded the available supply of small craft. Some additional complications arose from disagreements between naval and engineer special brigade units regarding the employment of small boats. Luckily, ample manual labor was available, especially after the arrival of the 34th Infantry and various service units from Tanahmerah Bay. LST's were unloaded rapidly at White Beach 3, and work around the clock kept the unloading areas at Pim clear enough for steady use of the limited beach and small jetty there. White Beaches 1 and 2 were usable again on D plus 8.[28]

By the morning of 25 April an inventory of supplies could be taken. With the supplies and ammunition landed from the D plus 2 convoy and those transferred from Tanahmerah Bay, the situation appeared brighter. During the afternoon General

[26] RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 36.

[27] RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 19–20; Ltr, Adm Fechteler to Gen Ward, 8 Nov 50, no sub, in OCMH files.

[28] RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 19–20; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Tanahmerah Bay–Humboldt Bay–Aitape, pp. 28–29; CTG 77.2 Opns Rpt Humboldt Bay, p. 4.

Eichelberger was able to report to ALAMO Force that three and one half units of fire for all weapons were on hand and that enough rations were available to feed all troops for six days.[29]

Supplying Forces Inland

The problem of supplying the troops on the Lake Sentani plain did not end with the seizure of the airfields on 26 April. For some time thereafter the 24th Division continued to receive some of its supplies by laborious hand-carry from Tanahmerah Bay, but this relatively inefficient method did not get adequate quantities of food forward. The division's inland troops were on half-rations much of the time. Despite continuous work by engineers, the 41st Division's main supply line—the Pim–Lake Sentani road—could not stand the demands made upon it, and from time to time sections of the road had to be closed so that heavy equipment could make repairs on it.

Early half-successful airdrops had added little to the supplies of the troops inland, but air supply was the only feasible method of supporting the inland forces. Cyclops Drome was ready for limited employment on 27 April, and Hollandia Drome could be used by 1 May. But the mere availability of these fields did not solve the supply problem. First, weather prevented regular air supply runs for a while and, second, it was initially somewhat difficult to assemble the needed supplies at rear bases, from which supplies were already on their way forward to Hollandia by water or were being loaded aboard ship for water transportation. Neither time nor planes were available to carry out a program of unloading the ships, reloading their cargoes on aircraft, and flying the supplies to the Hollandia fields. This difficulty was overcome in part by the seizure of Tami Drome, on the coast six miles east of Humboldt Bay.

Tami Drome was ready for use by transport aircraft on 3 May. From unloading points at Humboldt Bay, small craft lightered supplies to the mouth of the Tami River, whence trucks hauled the matériel to Tami Drome. From that field C–47 aircraft shuttled supplies to Cyclops and Hollandia Dromes, probably executing one of the shortest field-to-field air supply missions on record.[30]

But these efforts at local air supply proved inadequate, and with no marked improvement of road conditions the supply situation for troops inland deteriorated rapidly. The 186th Infantry, for instance, subsisted for three or four days principally on rice and canned fish from captured Japanese ration dumps.[31] The 24th Division was in like straits. Finally, all local measures became insufficient to meet the needs of the inland infantry units, to say nothing of the thousands of engineer troops who began pouring into the airfield area on 27 April. Consequently, on 4 May, the RECKLESS Task Force requested that 20,000 rations be flown daily to the Hollandia airfields from eastern New Guinea Services of Supply bases. This particular phase of the air transport was begun immediately and ceased

[29] Rad, RTF to ALAMO, 0304, 25 Apr 44, and Rad, RTF to ALAMO, 2050, 25 Apr 44, both in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 25–26 Apr 44.

[30] RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 14, 19–20; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Hollandia–Aitape, pp. 48–51; 24th Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 88–89, 153–54.

[31] This information on the 186th Infantry was supplied to the author by Colonel Newman, ex-commanding officer of the 186th Infantry, who read and made notes on this and other draft chapters of the volume during March 1950. These notes are hereafter cited as Newman Notes. Copy in OCMH files.

about 15 May, by which time local overland transportation had greatly improved.

Many expedients were employed to get the roads into shape both for supply movements and to send inland the heavy engineering equipment that was needed to repair the three airfields. To avoid some of the worst stretches of the Pim–Lake Sentani road, especially those along the north shore of the lake, overwater movements were executed. Small boats and amphibian vehicles were laboriously hauled to Koejaboe (captured on 25 April) from Humboldt Bay, and from the Koejaboe jetty supplies and equipment were transported across the lake to Nefaar. Meanwhile, engineers kept up steady work on the road inland from Pim. Landslides, mud, and lack of heavy equipment hindered rapid reconstruction of the Dépapré–Lake Sentani road, over which few attempts were made to move supplies after 26 April.[32]

In order to organize and control supply activities, the RECKLESS Task Force set up supply "Sub-Sectors" at Tami Drome, Cape Pie, Cape Tjeweri, and Pim. The officers in charge of each Sub-Sector were made responsible for clearing the beaches, making the most efficient use of available lighterage, speeding the flow of supplies inland, and controlling local troop movements. This decentralization of responsibility from the task force G–4 relieved that section of burdensome detail work and operating functions, permitting it to revert to the normal role of planning, overseeing, and co-ordinating. As time passed, roads were repaired or new ones constructed, air supply became automatic, shipping difficulties were straightened out, and the supply situation gradually improved.[33]

Although the terrain and the unlucky bomb hit on White Beach 1 did much to complicate the supply problems of the RECKLESS Task Force, other explanations for the difficulties are to be found in the task force G–4 Section's reports: "Operation 'G' [Hollandia] was a logistical nightmare due primarily to the fact that too much was thrown too soon into too small an area. Under the circumstances, it is felt that the Operation progressed far more smoothly than should be reasonably expected." [34] And again: "Operation G almost completely 'bogged down' due to the fact that in both objective areas [Tanahmerah and Humboldt Bays] many more vehicles, pieces of heavy equipment, and supplies were landed on the first three days than could be cleared from the beaches." [35] What might have happened at Hollandia had the Japanese been prepared can only be surmised.

The End of the Operation

The RECKLESS Task Force retained control over supply and construction in the Hollandia area until 6 June. During this period the task force, under the direction of ALAMO Force, initiated that construction which ultimately resulted in the development of Hollandia into a major base from which many future operations were supported. The RECKLESS Task Force paid particular attention to airdromes, roads, docks, headquarters buildings, and dispersal areas. On 6 June the Services of

[32] RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 19–20. It is the author's remembrance that the good road which was finally built from the airfields to Tanahmerah Bay was completed in July 1944. This road, an impressive engineering feat, led to Seventh Fleet fuel installations at Tanahmerah Bay, where PT boats were based.

[33] RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 20, 39.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

Supply assumed responsibility for the continuation of this development.[36] At Hollandia the Services of Supply established Base G, under which construction was speeded. Major headquarters that ultimately moved to Hollandia included General Headquarters of the Southwest Pacific Area, United States Army Forces in the Far East, Allied Air Forces, Allied Land Forces, the U. S. Seventh Fleet, the Fifth Air Force, ALAMO Force (Sixth Army), and the U. S. Eighth Army.

After 6 June patrolling in the area continued, much of it by the 24th Division, which was later succeeded by other units. By the 6th, American casualties amounted to 124 men killed, 1,057 wounded, and 28 missing. During the same period, 611 Japanese were captured and over 3,300 killed. Most of the Japanese losses occurred after 26 April (the day the airfields were captured) during mopping up, and the bulk of the enemy were killed in small groups. The pace of the mopping-up operations is illustrated by the fact that 800 Japanese were killed during the week ending 6 June.

In exchange for each American killed or wounded, to 6 June, the enemy lost four men. For this price, the Allies secured a forward area which lay in the heart of territory previously held by the Japanese. The Hollandia area was to prove an excellent air, naval, and logistic base from which future operations in western New Guinea were to be staged and protected, and from which a large part of the force which invaded the Philippines in October 1944 set sail.[37]

[36] ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Hollandia–Aitape, p. 54.

[37] ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Hollandia–Aitape, pp. 31, 58; ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 43, 31 May 44, copy in G–2 DofA files.

CHAPTER IV

The Japanese: Pearl Harbor Through Hollandia

To the Allies the Hollandia operation had proved an unexpectedly easy tactical success, since the Japanese had been strangely ill prepared to defend adequately this potentially powerful base. General MacArthur had sent one and two-thirds reinforced divisions against Hollandia on the assumption that 14,000 Japanese, including nearly two regiments of infantry, would be found there.[1] But no strong Japanese resistance and little co-ordinated defense had been encountered there.[2] It appears that about 11,000 Japanese of all services were at Hollandia on 22 April and that ground combat elements were represented by no more than 500 antiaircraft artillerymen.[3]

There are many reasons for Japanese unpreparedness at Hollandia. First, the Japanese had been caught by surprise, tactically speaking. Second, there had been sweeping changes in their command structure at Hollandia just before 22 April. Third, not enough combat equipment was available at Hollandia even to arm properly the thousands of service troops who were there. Finally, and most important, time had worked against the Japanese in the case of Hollandia just as time had worked against them throughout the Pacific since their first successes in late 1941 and early 1942.

Strategy and Dispositions to April 1944

The Japanese Situation to Mid-1943

The Japanese entered World War II with limited objectives in mind, having no plan

[1] Memo, GHQ SWPA, no addressee, 1 Mar 44, sub: Considerations Affecting the Plan to Seize Humboldt Bay Area with Strong Support of Carriers, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 2–14 Mar 44; see also above, Ch. II. Just prior to D Day, new G–2 estimates raised the total to 15,000 Japanese, but lowered combat strength to 1,000. GHQ SWPA, G–2 DSEI 755, 16 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 16 Apr 44. This revised estimate was made too late to affect Allied plans.

[2] At first, when no fighting took place at the beachheads, General MacArthur's G–2 considered it probable that the Japanese had withdrawn inland to make a final, determined stand around the airfields. GHQ SWPA, G–2 DSEI 764, 25 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 25 Apr 44.

[3] ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 44, 7 Jun 44, copy in G–2 DofA files; *18th Army* Opns, III, 41–48; Hist of *2d Area Army*, pp. 48–51.

The ALAMO source states that 8,981 Japanese were at Hollandia on 22 April. The *18th Army* citation provides two figures: the first, as of ten days *prior* to the Allied landings, gives a total of 14,700; while the second, for which no specific date is given, sets figures of 10,000 Japanese Army troops and 1,000 Japanese Navy troops. In the light of other estimates, the first *18th Army* figure is believed to overlook the number of Japanese Army Air Force pilots and ground crewmen evacuated from Hollandia during April before the Allied landings and, apparently, makes no allowance for casualties resulting from Allied air action before 22 April. The *2d Area Army* monograph states that approximately 10,000 Japanese were at Hollandia on D Day.

to press home their attacks or to meet and defeat the main body of the forces opposing them. Initially, they intended only to knock out the U. S. Pacific Fleet, to seize Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies, to occupy the Philippine Islands, and to gain control over a defensive perimeter reaching southwestward from the Kuriles (north of Japan) through Wake Island, the Marianas, the Carolines, and the Marshalls, to Rabaul. After attaining these objectives, the Japanese expected ultimately to obtain from the United States and Britain a negotiated peace which would leave Japan in possession of a "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere."

Quickly, in late 1941 and early 1942, the Japanese seized their initial perimeter and brought under military control most of the contemplated Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere except for southern China. But no negotiated peace was forthcoming. On the contrary, the United States and Britain gave every indication that they would mount counteroffensives long before the Japanese anticipated such action. The United States began to develop a line of communications to Australia and to reinforce that continent as a base for future operations.[4]

Returning to plans considered but not approved prior to the war,[5] Japanese *Imperial General Headquarters,* early in 1942, developed in a piecemeal fashion plans to expand the perimeter already seized. Discarding as impossible of execution a Navy plan to take Australia, *Imperial General Headquarters* determined to cut the line of communications from the United States to Australia by occupying New Caledonia, the Fiji Islands, and Samoa. Flank protection for the new perimeter was to be obtained on the south by seizing Port Moresby, in southeastern New Guinea, and on the north by securing bases in the American Aleutian Islands. The Japanese hoped that the United States would wear itself out in attacks against the new perimeter, find itself unable to mount stronger counteroffensives, and thus afford Japan better opportunity to secure a negotiated peace.[6]

During the spring and summer of 1942 the initial Japanese attempts to expand the perimeter met with disaster during the Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway. Undaunted, the Japanese expanded southward from Rabaul down the chain of Solomon Islands to seize air bases in preparation for the advance to Fiji, New Caledonia, and Samoa. At the same time they attempted to capture Port Moresby by overland action. American landings at Guadalcanal in the

[4] Interrog of Flt Adm Osamu Nagano [Chief of the *Navy Section, Imperial GHQ,* and Supreme Naval Adviser to the Emperor], 30 Nov 45, in United States Strategic Bombing Survey [USSBS], Interrog 498, copy in OCMH files; USSBS, *Summary Report [Pacific War]* (Washington, 1946) p. 2. In addition to the specific documents cited in this chapter, the author was furnished additional information by Mr. Clarke Kawakami, research assistant to Commodore Richard W. Bates (USN), of the Naval War College. Mr. Kawakami's remarks on the original draft of this chapter were based on research into Japanese sources and on interviews with high-ranking Japanese Army and Navy officers undertaken while he was a member of the G–2 Historical Section of GHQ FEC in Tokyo.

[5] As outlined in *Combined Fleet* Top Secret Opn Order 1, 5 Nov 41, translation in Joint Congressional Investigation Committee, *Pearl Harbor Attack* (Washington, 1946), Pt. XIII, Exhibit 8, pp. 431–84.

[6] Japanese Studies in WW II, 72, Hist of *Army Section, Imperial GHQ,* pp. 45–46, 50–54, copy of translation in OCMH files; Kawakami Comments. The plan to move into the Solomons and eastern New Guinea, including Port Moresby, was developed in late January 1942; the plan to move into Fiji, New Caledonia, and Samoa, in late April; and the plan to seize bases in the Aleutians not until late May or early June.

Solomons during August stopped the Japanese expansion to the southeast, and Australian troops threw the enemy back from Port Moresby later in the year. The Japanese realized by September 1942 that they had overreached themselves and directed their energies to strengthening their forces in eastern New Guinea, the Solomons, and the Bismarck Archipelago.[7]

To control operations in these areas, the Japanese, in November 1942, established at Rabaul the headquarters of the *8th Area Army*. Under this headquarters was placed the *17th Army,* already operating in the Solomons and eastern New Guinea, and the *18th Army,* which was set up at Rabaul in November to take over control of operations in eastern New Guinea. About the same time the *6th Air Division* was organized, placed under the *8th Area Army's* control, and sent to New Guinea. The *17th Army* failed in attempts to retake Guadalcanal, while in eastern New Guinea the *18th Army* fared no better in trying to maintain its hold on the north coast of Papua at Buna and Gona. The two campaigns made heavy inroads into Japanese ground, air, and naval strength. *Imperial General Headquarters* paused to take stock.[8]

At the close of 1942 *Imperial General Headquarters* estimated that the Allies intended to conduct a two-pronged drive toward Rabaul (then the principal Japanese forward base in the Southwest Pacific Area) from eastern New Guinea and the Solomons. The Japanese expected that the Allies would then move up the northern coast of New Guinea toward the Philippines and, possibly, conduct another advance toward the Philippines from northwestern Australia through the Netherlands East Indies. Recognizing that the initiative had been lost, and faced with a lack of shipping and diminishing air and naval power, *Imperial General Headquarters* decided upon a strategic withdrawal in order to build up defenses against the expected Allied drives and to prepare bases from which future offensives might be launched.

Accordingly, on 4 January 1943, Japan set up a strategic defensive line running through the southern Indies to Wewak, on the northeastern coast of New Guinea between Hollandia and the Buna–Gona area. From Wewak the line ran southeastward to Lae and Salamaua, whence it jumped to the south coast of New Britain, up to Rabaul, and south along the Solomons to New Georgia. To the north the line ran through the Gilbert Islands, the Marianas, Wake, and the Aleutians.

The *17th Army* now began building new defenses in the northern Solomons, withdrawing from Guadalcanal. Lt. Gen. Hatazo Adachi, commanding the *18th Army,* moved his headquarters from Rabaul to Lae in March and prepared to defend what was left of eastern New Guinea. To strengthen this area the *41st Division* was moved from China to eastern New Guinea during the same month. About the same time the bulk of the *51st Division,* some of which was already in New Guinea, began shuttling to the Lae area from New Britain. Large-scale attempts to reinforce the *18th Army* ended in early March after the Battle of the Bismarck Sea, during which the *115th Infantry* of the *51st Division* was practically wiped out when the convoy carrying it from New Britain to Lae fell prey to Allied air action. The *20th Division*, already in eastern New

[7] Hist of *Army Section, Imperial GHQ,* pp. 50–66.

[8] Hist of *Army Section, Imperial GHQ,* pp. 68–74; MID WD, Disposition and Movement of Japanese Ground Forces, 1941–45, copy in OCMH files; Japanese Studies in WW II, 38, Southeast Area Air Opns, pp. 2–4, copy in OCMH files.

Guinea, was placed under General Adachi's command in April.[9]

Operations in the Philippines and the Netherlands East Indies since the beginning of the war had been under the control of the *Southern Army,*[10] subordinate to which were the *14th Army* in the Philippines and the *16th Army* in the Indies. On 7 January the *19th Army* was set up under the *Southern Army* to relieve the *16th Army* of responsibility for Timor, the islands of the Arafura Sea, Dutch New Guinea, Ceram, Ambon, Halmahera, and Morotai. The *48th Division,* in the Indies since early 1942, and the newly arrived *5th Division* were placed under the *19th Army,* which established its command post at Ambon. Troops and supplies destined for the *19th Army* passed through the Philippines, while the Palau Islands, already in use to some extent for such purposes, assumed new importance as a staging area through which men and equipment going to the *8th Area Army* passed. Initially the boundary between the *19th* and *18th Armies* (and therefore between the *Southern* and *8th Area Armies*) was the Dutch–Australian international border across central New Guinea. But in April 1943 this boundary was changed to 140 degrees east longitude in order to place Hollandia within the *8th Area Army's* zone of responsibility.[11]

[9] Hist of *Army Section, Imperial GHQ,* pp. 70–78; MID WD, *op. cit.;* Japanese Studies in WW II, 37, Hist of *8th Area Army,* 1942–45, copy in OCMH files; Japanese Studies in WW II, 41, *18th Army Opns,* I, 87–97, copy in OCMH files. General Adachi went to New Guinea twice in March, but his headquarters was not permanently established at Lae until April.

[10] Some translations render *Southern Army* as *Southern Area Army.*

[11] Hist of *8th Area Army,* p. 11; Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 4–6; Japanese Studies in WW II, 21, Hist of *Southern Area Army,* 1941–45, pp. 29–35, copy in OCMH files. The *15th Army,* in Burma, and the *25th Army,* at Singapore, were also under the *Southern Army.*

Japanese Strategic Withdrawals to April 1944

Slow but steady Allied progress in eastern New Guinea and the Solomons during the spring and summer of 1943 prompted *Imperial General Headquarters* to send air reinforcements to the *8th Area Army.* The *7th Air Division,* organized in January 1943 for operations in the Netherlands East Indies, was transferred to the command of the *8th Area Army* in late May or early June and began sending planes to eastern New Guinea in June. To co-ordinate the operations of the *6th* and *7th Air Divisions,* the headquarters of the *4th Air Army* was set up at Rabaul under the *8th Area Army.* The *6th Air Division* was to concentrate its strength at Rabaul, the Admiralty Islands, Wewak, and Hansa Bay, east of Wewak. The *7th Air Division* was to develop rear area bases immediately west of Wewak and also at Aitape and Hollandia.[12]

In September 1943 the pace of Allied operations in eastern New Guinea was accelerated and it appeared to the Japanese that an invasion of New Britain was probable. Unable to think of any feasible way to reinforce the area in the face of increasing Allied air and naval action, *Imperial General Headquarters* decided upon another strategic withdrawal. Having already lost the Aleutians, Japan established a new strategic main line of resistance along the line southern Indies, Dutch New Guinea, the Carolines, and the Marianas, back to the Kuriles. The former all-important eastern New Guinea–Bismarck Archipelago–northern Solomons area was relegated to the status of a holding front, while behind

[12] Southeast Area Air Opns, pp. 13–18; Hist of *8th Area Army,* pp. 15–31.

the new defensive line ground strength was to be rebuilt and new air and naval power was to be mustered. By the spring of 1944 the rebuilding was to be so complete that offensive operations, including a naval showdown, could be resumed in midsummer.[13]

Rabaul remained the center of the holding front area while Hansa Bay, previously the main port of entry for large ships taking supplies and troops to the *8th Area Army,* became a small-boat base. Hollandia took the place of Hansa Bay as the principal unloading point and was to be developed into a major base from which the mid-1944 offensives might be supported. The distribution point for the eastern Indies and Dutch New Guinea became Halmahera, while Manokwari, on the Vogelkop Peninsula of western New Guinea, became the main supply base for western New Guinea. Other air and supply bases were to be developed at Sorong, at the western tip of the Vogelkop, and on the islands in Geelvink Bay. The Palaus retained their status as a staging area for men and supplies moving southeastward toward New Guinea.[14]

In October and November 1943 Allied forces of the South Pacific Area drove up the chain of Solomon Islands to Bougainville, new stronghold of the *17th Army;* Central Pacific Area forces invaded the Gilberts; and Southwest Pacific Area troops trapped part of the *18th Army* on the Huon Peninsula of eastern New Guinea. The Japanese Navy sent the bulk of its carrier-based air strength to Rabaul in a vain attempt to stem the tide of Allied advance, but this move ended in disaster for practically all of the Japanese Navy's carrier-based aircraft. Coupled with concurrent losses of cruisers, the decimation of the carrier-based air power resulted in the temporary immobilization of the Japanese Fleet.[15]

Imperial General Headquarters now gave up hope of long holding the eastern New Guinea-Solomons-Bismarck Archipelago area and became perturbed about the opening of a new Allied front in the Central Pacific, presaged by the invasion of the Gilberts. *Imperial General Headquarters* was again worried lest the Allies mount an offensive toward the Philippines from northwestern Australia, and it still firmly believed that a drive northwest up the north coast of New Guinea was to be undertaken by the forces under General MacArthur's command. To strengthen the eastern Indies and western New Guinea, plans were made to send the *3d, 36th,* and *46th Divisions* to that area from China or Japan. To control future operations in the region, the *Headquarters, 2d Area Army,* was dispatched from Manchuria to Davao, Mindanao, in the Philippines, where it arrived during late November 1943. Sent south with Lt. Gen. Korechika Anami's *2d Area Army* headquarters was the headquarters of the *2d Army,* under Lt. Gen. Fusataro Teshima, who established his command post at Manokwari on the

[13] Hist of *Army Section, Imperial GHQ,* pp. 84–96; Japanese Studies in WW II, 50, Southeast Area Naval Opns, III, 2–5, copy in OCMH files.

[14] Southeast Area Naval Opns, III, 4; Hist of *Army Section, Imperial GHQ,* p. 92; Hist of *Southern Area Army,* pp. 44–47; Japanese Studies in WW II, 42, *18th Army* Opns, II, 134, copy in OCMH files.

[15] Southeast Area Naval Opns III, 5; GHQ SWPA, G–3 Hist Div, Chronology of the War in the SWPA, 1941–45, copy in OCMH files; Tabular Records of Daily Movements of Japanese Battleships, Carriers, and Cruisers, in WW II Seized Enemy Records, Record Group 242, Doc 11792, National Archives; Vols. III and IV of Aircraft Carriers, part of a series of "Greater East Asia War Campaigns: Materials for Investigation of Meritorious Service," in WW II Seized Enemy Records, Rec Grp 242, Docs 12552 and 12060, respectively. Last two as translated and analyzed by Mr. Thomas G. Wilds, Pacific Section, OCMH.

Vogelkop Peninsula. The *2d Army* and the *19th Army* were both placed under the control of the *2d Area Army* which, in turn, was directly under *Imperial General Headquarters*. The *2d Area Army* was to hold the area from 140 degrees east longitude, west to Macassar Strait and south from 5 degrees north latitude. Hollandia remained within the *8th Area Army's* zone of responsibility.[16]

The *36th Division* began arriving at Sarmi, 125 miles west-northwest of Hollandia, in December 1943, while one regiment, the *222d Infantry,* reached Biak Island in Geelvink Bay the same month. Remnants of the *46th Division,* most of which was sunk in transit by Allied submarines, arrived in the Lesser Soendas about the same time. Because of developments in central China, the *3d Division* was left in that country. Initially, the *14th Division* was substituted for the *3d,* but neither did it ever reach New Guinea. The *36th Division* passed to the control of the *2d Army,* and the *46th* was placed under command of the *19th Army*. The *7th Air Division,* which had hardly started moving toward eastern New Guinea, was taken from the control of the *8th Area Army* and reassigned to the *2d Area Army*. The air division headquarters was set up at Ambon in November, and shortly thereafter the few planes remaining among those previously sent to eastern New Guinea went to Ambon.[17] Finally, to strengthen the front against the threat of Allied advance across the central Pacific, *Imperial General Headquarters* dispatched the *52d Division* to the Carolines. There it and other Japanese Army units either already in the Central Pacific or on their way to that area passed to the operational control of the *Combined Fleet*.[18]

During the last months of 1943 and the opening months of 1944 Allied offensive moves continued at an ever-increasing rate. In the Southwest Pacific the entire Huon Peninsula area was cleared of Japanese troops, and a foothold was seized in western New Britain. In the South Pacific the Japanese could not stem the Allied advance in the northern Solomons, and the Allies moved on to seize an airfield site on Green Island, east of Rabaul and within easy fighter range of that base. The final steps in the isolation of Rabaul were the seizure of the Admiralty Islands by Allied forces of the Southwest Pacific Area in February and March 1944, and the capture of Emirau Island by South Pacific Area troops in March. In the Central Pacific events moved just as rapidly. In January and February Allied forces advanced into the Marshall Islands, while carrier-based aircraft of the U. S. Pacific Fleet struck heavily at Truk, previously the *Combined Fleet's* strongest advance base.[19]

---

[16] Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 9–13; *2d Area Army* Opn Plan A–1, 23 Nov 43, as cited in Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 14–21; Hist of *Southern Area Army,* pp. 45–47; Hist of *Army Section, Imperial GHQ,* pp. 94–96; Kawakami Comments. Lt. Gen. Kenzo Kitano, the *19th Army's* commander, commanded the *4th Division* in the Philippines in 1942. This division spearheaded the final Japanese drive which resulted in the American surrender at Bataan and Corregidor. See Morton, The Fall of the Philippines.

[17] Japanese Studies in WW II, 32, *2d Army* Opns in the Western New Guinea Area, pp. 1–2, copy in OCMH files; Hist of *Southern Area Army,* pp. 44–57; Southeast Area Air Opns, pp. 25–29; Interrog of Col Rinsuke Kaneko (JAAF), 21 Nov 45, in USSBS [Pacific], Naval Analysis Division, *Interrogations of Japanese Officials,* 2 vols. (Washington, 1946, OPNAV–P–03–100), II, 404–08; *2d Area Army* Opn Order, no number, 28 Nov 43, as translated in GHQ SWPA, ATIS Current Translation 131, 31 Jul 44; Kawakami Comments.

[18] Hist of *Army Section, Imperial GHQ,* p. 93; Japanese Studies in WW II, 55, Central Pacific Opns, pp. 17–18, copy in OCMH files.

[19] GHQ SWPA, G–3 Hist Div, Chronology of the War in the SWPA.

The Japanese high command was again forced to issue withdrawal orders and to make attempts to strengthen forward area positions. The Allied advances in eastern New Guinea prompted the *8th Area Army* to order the *18th Army* to retreat to Madang. On 8 January 1944 General Adachi moved his *18th Army* headquarters by submarine from Sio, on the Huon Peninsula, to Madang, only eight days before Australian troops seized Sio. Shortly after that narrow escape, the command post was moved still farther westward to Wewak.[20]

About 10 February the *Combined Fleet,* recognizing that the establishment of Allied air bases on the Admiralties and Marshalls would bring all the Carolines within range of Allied bombers, decided that the Truk fleet base was no longer tenable. The opinion was forcibly strengthened by the Pacific Fleet carrier strike on Truk later in the month, and *Combined Fleet* headquarters was moved to the Palaus. About the same time, the Japanese Navy abandoned all hope of conducting successful operations in the Bismarck Archipelago–northern Solomons area and withdrew the last remnants of its air power from Rabaul.[21]

More drastic redispositions and new changes in command structure were effected by both the Japanese Army and Navy in March and early April 1944. The *Combined Fleet* had no intention of making the Palaus a permanent base but planned to use the base only as a temporary advanced anchorage until new base facilities in the Philippines could be developed. The ultimate withdrawal of *Combined Fleet* headquarters and surface units from the Palaus was speeded by the carrier raids of the U. S. Fifth Fleet on those islands at the end of March, when the American carriers were providing strategic support for the Hollandia operation. The Japanese Navy, as a result of these carrier raids and, later, the threat of Allied land-based bomber attacks on the Palaus from Hollandia, ceased to be much interested in the Palaus.

But *Imperial General Headquarters,* in March, was still determined to strengthen the central Pacific. Accordingly, early that month, the headquarters of the *31st Army,* Maj. Gen. Hideyoshi Obata commanding, was set up on Guam in the Marianas to exercise command under direction of the *Combined Fleet* of all Japanese Army units in the Central Pacific islands. The *29th Division* was sent out to the Marianas in March also, and plans were made to send the *43d Division* to the same islands.[22]

The portion of the strategic main line of resistance for which the *31st Army* was responsible extended along the line Bonins–Volcanos–Marianas–Ponape–Truk–Woleai–Yap–Palaus. At the Palaus the line tied into the *2d Area Army's* zone of responsibility. So far, the Palaus had been little more than a staging area, and few combat troops were on the islands. In March, line of communications troops, replacements, and rear echelons of various *8th Area Army* units in the Palaus passed with their commander, Maj. Gen. Takeo Yamaguchi, to the control

[20] Hist of *8th Area Army,* p. 46; MID WD, *op. cit.;* Interrog of Capt Shigeru Iwaki, 21 Feb 46, in GHQ SCAP, ATIS Doc 14924–A, copy in OCMH files.

[21] Southeast Area Naval Opns, III, 2–9; Interrog of Comdr Chikataka Nakajima [staff of CinC, *Combined Fleet*], 22 Nov 45, in USSBS, *Interrogations of Japanese Officials,* II, 432–35.

[22] Hist of *Army Section, Imperial GHQ,* p. 93; Central Pacific Opns, pp. 17–18; MID WD, Order of Battle of the Japanese Armed Forces, 1 Mar 45, pp. 72, 100. The *43d Division's* convoy suffered heavy losses on the trip to the Marianas, but the remnants of the division arrived in the islands in May.

of the *2d Area Army*. More wide-sweeping changes were due in the Palaus, for by March *Imperial General Headquarters* was worried lest the Palaus were to become an immediate target of Allied invasion. It was therefore decided to send strong reinforcements to the Palaus, and the *14th Division* was scheduled for shipment to the islands from northern China. The *35th Division* was promised to the *2d Area Army* in place of the *14th*, but, since it would be some time before the *14th Division* could reach the Palaus, the *219th Infantry* (less one battalion, but with a battalion of artillery attached) of the *35th Division* was sent on to the Palaus, where it landed during March. The remainder of the *35th Division* proceeded to Halmahera and western New Guinea via the Philippines, delayed as a result of Allied submarine attacks on the convoy carrying it southward.

The U. S. Fifth Fleet's carrier raid on the Palaus at the end of March apparently prompted *Imperial General Headquarters* to expect an invasion of the Palaus in the near future. Obviously, the understrength regimental combat team of the *35th Division* could not hold those islands, and therefore efforts were made to speed the shipment of the *14th Division*. Destined originally for western New Guinea and even later for the Marianas, the *14th Division* finally set sail for the Palaus early in April, reaching those islands safely on the 24th of the month, just two days after the Allied landings at Hollandia. During the ensuing weeks the elements of the *35th Division* already in the Palaus left to rejoin their parent unit in western New Guinea. Lt. Gen. Sadae Inoue, commanding the *14th Division*, was appointed Commander, *Palau Sector Group*, in which capacity his area of responsibility included Yap in the Carolines, as well as the Palaus. General Yamaguchi's staging area forces already in the Palaus passed to General Inoue's command, probably about the same time that the *14th Division* arrived in the islands.[23]

Equally radical changes had been made to the south. Recognizing that the *8th Area Army* and the *17th Army* were irretrievably cut off, *Imperial General Headquarters*, on 14 March 1944, wrote them off as a loss, ordering them to hold out as best they could. About the same time the *18th Army* and the *4th Air Army* were transferred to the jurisdiction of the *2d Area Army*, for it was evident that the *8th Area Army's* headquarters at Rabaul could no longer exercise effective control over the two units. The boundary between the *2d* and *8th Area Armies* was moved eastward to 147 degrees east longitude (the Admiralties, however, remained under the *8th Area Army*). The *18th Army*, then reorganizing at Madang, was brought well within the *2d Area Army's* zone, as were the Japanese bases at Hansa Bay, Wewak, Aitape, and Hollandia.

Imperial General Headquarters ordered the *2d Area Army* to hold all the territory west of Wewak within its zone and to pull the *18th Army* west from Madang to Wewak, Aitape, and Hollandia. The *2d Area Army* was also instructed to develop Hollandia into a major supply base, but neither this development nor the *18th Army's* withdrawal was to interfere with more important defense preparations in western New Guinea and the islands between the Vogelkop Peninsula and the Philippines. Given this leeway, the *2d Area Army* decided to concentrate its efforts in strengthening a stra-

[23] Hist of *Army Section, Imperial GHQ*, pp. 87–93, 109, 121–23; Central Pacific Opns, pp. 17–18; Japanese Studies in WW II, 56, The Palau Opns, pp. 4–5, 45–47, 57–61, copy in OCMH files; Kawakami Comments.

tegic defensive front along the line from the Lesser Soendas through the Aroe Islands in the Arafura Sea, north to Mimika on the southwest coast of Dutch New Guinea, and thence to the Wakde–Sarmi area, 125 miles northwest of Hollandia. Although this decision would obviously leave the *18th Army* out in the cold insofar as supplies or reinforcements were concerned, *Imperial General Headquarters* approved the *2d Area Army's* plan without recorded comment.[24]

To strengthen the *2d Area Army,* the *32d* and *35th Divisions* had already been dispatched toward western New Guinea and Halmahera, where they began arriving in late April. Air redispositions also took place. The *4th Air Army* headquarters and the *6th Air Division* moved from Wewak to Hollandia in March (both had moved from Rabaul to Wewak in late 1943). Though reinforced, the *6th Air Division* was practically wiped out by Allied air attacks during March and April,[25] but its headquarters remained at Hollandia.

Defensive planning of the *4th Air Army* and the *2d Area Army* was thrown askew by the aircraft losses at Hollandia, and the Japanese had to decide whether they could again afford to risk a large number of planes as far forward as Hollandia, or whether remaining air power should be reconcentrated farther westward. Since the *2d Area Army* had already decided to establish its main defensive line west of Hollandia, the decision was obvious—no more large numbers of aircraft were to be sent to Hollandia.

The *4th Air Army's* headquarters moved west from Hollandia on 15 April and reestablished the command post at Manado in the Celebes, to which town the *2d Area Army* moved its headquarters from Davao a few days later. At the same time, to coordinate command in the southern regions, the *2d Area Army* passed from the direct control of *Imperial General Headquarters* to the control of the intermediate link, the *Southern Army.* Simultaneously, the *4th Air Army* passed to the direct command of the *Southern Army.*[26]

Halmahera, already the principal distribution point for the eastern part of the Netherlands East Indies and for Dutch New Guinea, also gradually developed into a focal point for the Japanese defense of the southern approaches to the Philippines. The Palaus' former status as a major staging base was gradually curtailed, and the islands lost their importance to the *2d Area Army.*[27] General Anami was again instructed by *Imperial General Headquarters* rapidly to develop, behind the new strategic main line of resistance, supply and staging bases from which a general offensive might be resumed in mid-1944.[28]

---

[24] Hist of *Army Section, Imperial GHQ,* pp. 107–11; *2d Area Army* Opn Order A–40, 20 Mar 44, as translated in ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 48, 5 Jul 44, copy in G–2 DofA files.

[25] The destruction of the *6th Air Division* is discussed in Ch. II, above.

[26] Hist of *Army Section, Imperial GHQ,* pp. 110–13, 120–23; Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 30–44, 47–48, 53–55; Southeast Area Air Opns, pp. 16–18, 36; *18th Army* Opns, III, 41–46; *4th Air Army* Opn–Order A–250, 22 Mar 44, in GHQ SWPA, ATIS Enemy Publication 268, 4 Jan 45, copy in OCMH files; Interrog of Col. Kaneko, 21 Nov 45, in USSBS, *Interrogations of Japanese Officials,* II, 404–08; AAF SWPA Int Sum 197, 8 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 7 Apr 44.

[27] ALAMO Force, G–2 Est of Enemy Sit with Respect to Morotai, 1 Aug 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Morotai, 2–8 Aug 44; ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpts 44 and 51, 7 Jun and 26 Jul 44, respectively, copies in G–2 DofA files; Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 53–55.

[28] Hist of *Army Section, Imperial GHQ,* pp. 84–96.

Japan's Pacific Order of Battle, April 1944

Thus, in the area of principal immediate interest to Allied forces of the Southwest Pacific as they moved toward Hollandia in April 1944, the Japanese high command centered in General Count Hisaichi Terauchi's *Southern Army,* with headquarters at Singapore.[29] Under the *Southern Army* was the *2d Area Army,* headquarters at Manado, which in turn controlled the *2d, 18th,* and *19th Armies.* The *2d Area Army* had about 170,000 troops under its command. In western New Guinea and the Hamahera region was the *2d Army,* headquarters at Manokwari, comprising the *32d, 35th,* and *36th Divisions,* and miscellaneous other units, totaling about 50,000 men. The strength of the *19th Army,* spread over most of the rest of the Netherlands East Indies, was also about 50,000 troops, centered around the *5th, 46th,* and *48th Divisions.*

The *8th Area Army,* controlled directly by *Imperial General Headquarters,* retained under its command in the Solomons and Bismarck Archipelago the *17th Army,* the *38th Division,* the *65th* Brigade, and the remnants of the *6th* and *17th Divisions.* Total strength of the *8th Area Army* in April 1944 was perhaps 80,000 men. In the Philippines the *Southern Army* had under its command the *14th Army,* comprising the *16th Division* and four independent mixed brigades. The *14th Army* had about 45,000 combat troops under its control, and total Japanese strength in the Philippines was about 100,000 men, including air, naval, and army service troops. On the Central Pacific islands was the *31st Army,* under the operational control of the *Central Pacific Fleet* and consisting of the *14th, 29th,* and *52d Divisions,* with the *43d Division* on the way. The *31st Army* was about 60,000 men strong. The *14th Division* and other units in the Palaus, including naval and air, totaled about 30,000 men.[30]

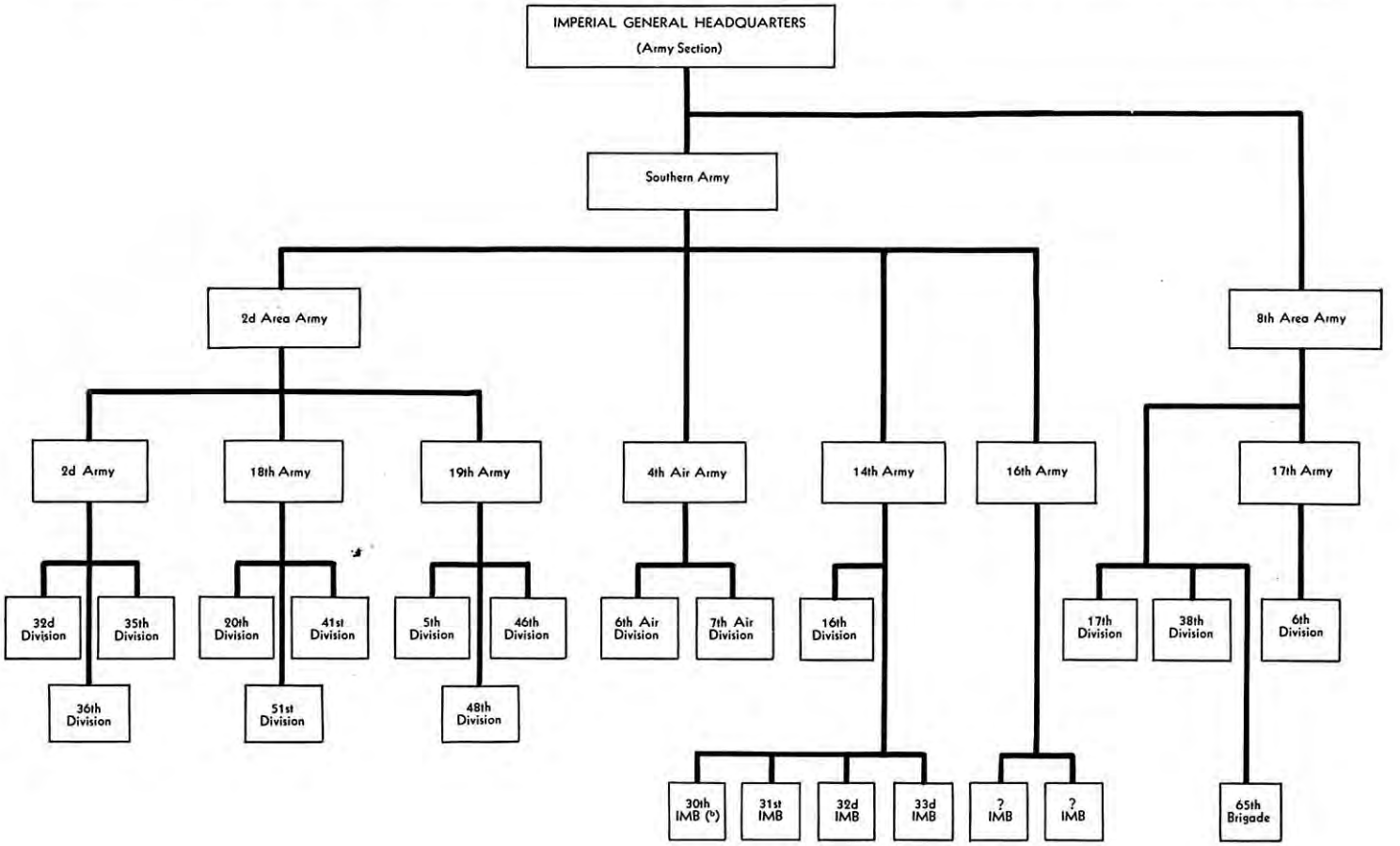
When the *18th Army* passed to the control of the *2d Area Army* in March 1944, General Adachi had under his control from 50,000 to 60,000 men. His three infantry divisions, the *20th, 41st,* and *51st,* had all been badly battered in fighting in eastern New Guinea and, since January, had been suffering heavy casualties during withdrawal from the Huon Peninsula area. At the time of the change in command, the *20th Division* was painfully reorganizing at Madang (east of which it was fighting a rear guard action against Australian troops) and Hansa Bay. The *41st Division* was deployed in the Madang area and was preparing to move westward, while the *51st Division* was assembling at Wewak for rehabilitation and reorganization. The total strength of the three divisions at the time of the Allied landings at Hollandia probably did not exceed 20,000 trained combat effectives.[31]

[29] *Southern Army* headquarters moved to Manila in mid-May 1944.

[30] The figures given above were derived by Mr. Burke C. Peterson, of the Pacific Section, OCMH, from a mass of Japanese and Allied sources. The location of units was derived from the Japanese Army sources cited in the preceding section.

[31] MID WD, Disposition and Movement of Japanese Ground Forces, 1941–45, copy in OCMH files; GHQ SWPA, G–2 Monthly Sum of Enemy Dispositions, 30 Apr 44, copy in OCMH files; GHQ SWPA, G–2 DSEI's 761 and 828, 22 Apr and 28 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnls, 22 Apr and 28 Jun 44; *18th Army* Opns, Annex A–Statistics, Supplementary Chart No. 1. Definitive figures for the strength of the *18th Army* in April 1944 are simply not available and all sources are contradictory. General MacArthur's G–2 Section put the *18th Army* strength for April at about 45,000 men. ALAMO Force and Allied Land Forces consistently gave much higher estimates, running from 55,000 to 65,000, while the Japanese source cites a figure of about 75,000 for 1 April.

Chart 5—Japanese Army Operational Organization in the Southwest Pacific Area: April 1944 (*a*)



(a) For 31st Army, see Chart 6.
(b) Independent mixed brigade.

Co-operating with the *18th Army* was the Japanese *9th Fleet,* principal Japanese naval headquarters in New Guinea. The *9th Fleet's* commander was Vice Adm. Yoshikazu Endo, whose command post was located at Wewak until late March, when it moved to Hollandia. Admiral Endo's command consisted primarily of service troops, naval antiaircraft gunners, and a few shore defense units. His surface strength comprised only a miscellaneous collection of landing craft and armed barges. The majority of the naval service troops in eastern New Guinea were members of the *27th Special Base Force,* while the few Japanese naval personnel at Hollandia were under Capt. Tetsuo Onizuka, naval ground commander in the area.[32]

In western New Guinea, acting in concert with the *2d Area Army,* was the *4th Expeditionary Fleet.* The next step up the Japanese naval chain of command was the *Southwest Area Fleet,* controlling all Japanese naval units in the Netherlands East Indies area and operating directly under the *Combined Fleet.* The *9th Fleet,* formerly under the *Southeast Area Fleet's* headquarters at Rabaul, passed to the control of *Southwest Area Fleet* in March 1944.[33]

There were a few naval aircraft based at Hollandia from time to time, but Japanese naval air power was, generally speaking, a negligible factor in the New Guinea and Netherlands East Indies areas in April 1944. The Japanese Army Air Force, after the destruction of the *6th Air Division* at Hollandia and the withdrawal of the *4th Air Army's* headquarters to Manado, likewise had little left with which to stem an Allied advance in New Guinea. The *4th Air Army* had never been at full strength during its operations in the Bismarck Archipelago and New Guinea areas. Its heavy combat losses were aggravated by poor equipment, inadequate aircraft maintenance, supply difficulties, and rough fields which could not be kept in repair. Its history in New Guinea was principally one of frustration.[34]

The Japanese at Hollandia

Japanese Planning and Command at Hollandia

The Japanese high command had been for some time aware of the potential importance of Hollandia and of the necessity for building up the defenses of the area. The enemy had decided to develop a major base at Hollandia as early as the withdrawal of the strategic main line of resistance in September 1943.[35] The *2d Area Army,* when it took over control in western New Guinea in November, perceived that holding Hollandia would have great advantages and believed that Hollandia ought to be strongly defended as an outpost for the protection of the strategic defense lines base at Wakde–Sarmi, to the west. General Anami, commanding the *2d Area Army,* in November

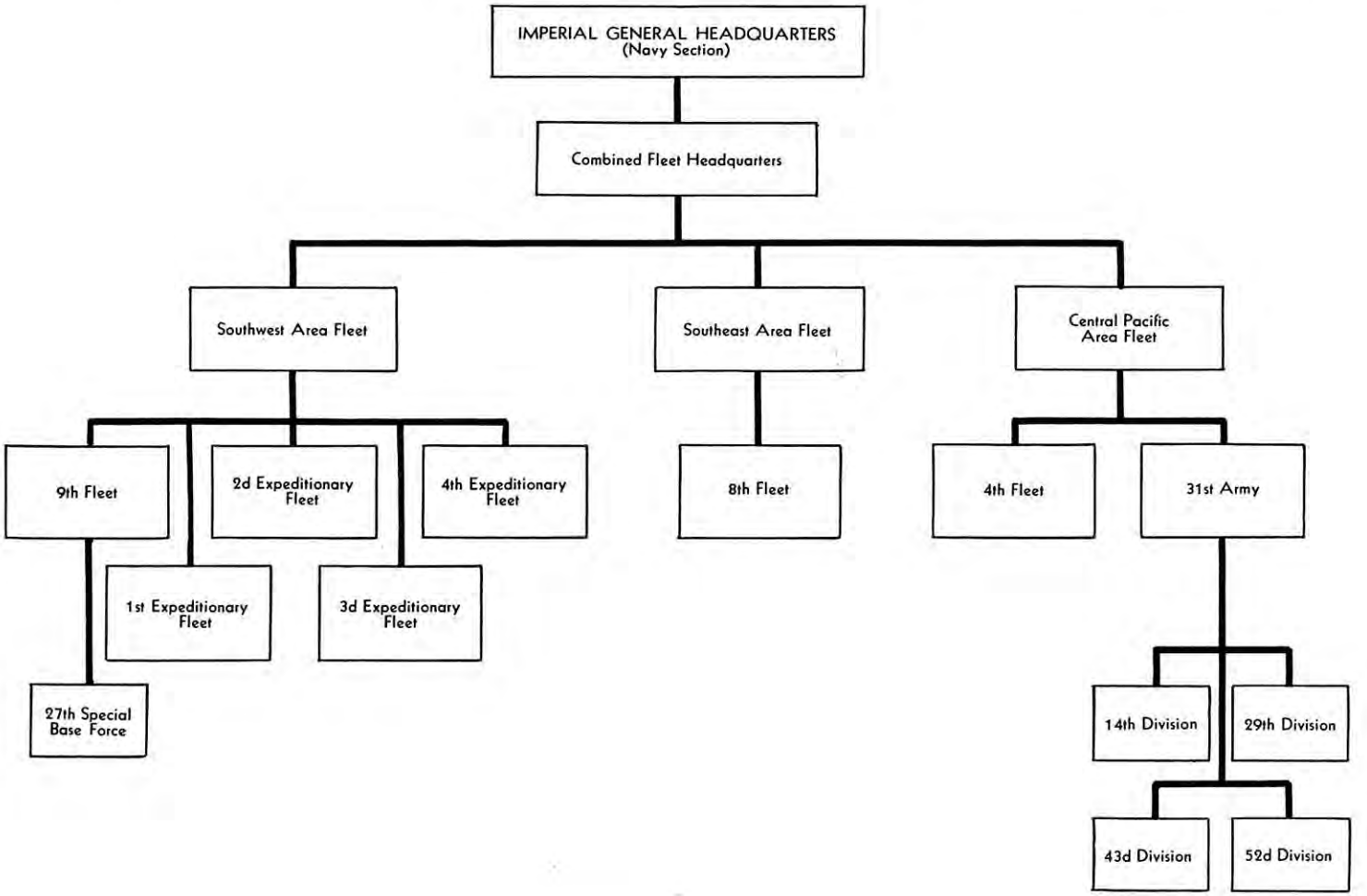
[32] Rpt of Capt Shigeru Iwaki (staff, *9th Fleet*), 21 Feb 46, in GHQ SCAP, ATIS Doc 14924–A, copy in G–2 DofA files, Doc 257846; Interrog of Capt Toshikazu Ohmae (IJN), 25 Nov 45, in USSBS, *Interrogations of Japanese Officials,* II, 409–10; GHQ SCAP, ATIS Doc 16947, Full Translation of Answers to Questions Concerning the Admiralties and Hollandia, 14 Apr 46, copy in G–2 DofA files, Doc 261219; *18th Army* Opns, III, 41–42.

[33] Japanese Studies in WW II, 34, Naval Opns in the Western New Guinea Area, 1943–45, pp. 1–10, copy in OCMH files.

[34] Southeast Area Air Opns, pp. 16–18, 36; *4th Air Army* Opns Order A–250, 22 Mar 44, as translated in GHQ SWPA, ATIS Enemy Publication 268, 4 Jan 45, copy in OCMH files; Interrog of Col Kaneko, 21 Nov 45, in USSBS, *Interrogations of Japanese Officials,* II, 404–08.

[35] Hist of *Southern Area Army,* pp. 90–96.

CHART 6—JAPANESE NAVAL OPERATIONAL ORGANIZATION IN THE CENTRAL AND SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREAS: APRIL 1944



gave some thought to sending elements of the *36th Division* east from Sarmi to Hollandia. This plan was abandoned, however, for at the time Hollandia was still within the *8th Area Army's* zone of responsibility.[36]

The *18th Army* (if not the *8th Area Army*) attached some importance to Hollandia. In January 1944 General Adachi stated that Hollandia was to be ". . . the final base and last strategic point of [the *18th Army's*] New Guinea operation." [37] He outlined a plan for withdrawal to Hollandia should *18th Army* operations in eastern New Guinea result in defeat, and he ordered the forces at Hollandia to exert themselves to develop the defenses of that base. General Adachi complained that the troops at Hollandia, being out of the active combat zone, were leading a life of ease, and he hinted that all was not well with the command structure at the base. In an address to the Hollandia garrison, delivered by proxy during January, the general exhorted forces there to expend ". . . all your effort and be determined to sacrifice everything for the glorious cause." [38] But exhortations were hardly sufficient—some definite plan of action for the development and defense of Hollandia was needed.

The *2d Area Army* supplied the outline of such a plan when it assumed control of the *18th Army* in March. General Adachi was instructed to hold firmly at Wewak, Aitape, and Hollandia; to institute a delaying action westward from Madang and Wewak; to use and co-operate with the *4th Air Army* during this withdrawal; and gradually to consolidate the bulk of the *18th Army* at Hollandia. General Adachi was to start withdrawing all his forces west from Madang and Hansa Bay beyond the Sepik River immediately, and these forces were to be concentrated at Wewak as quickly as possible. Finally, a cadre of one division was immediately to be sent to Hollandia.[39]

General Adachi received his new orders on 25 March, but his reaction was not exactly that probably expected by the *2d Area Army*. The *8th Area Army* had planned to continue operations east of Wewak, to make Madang the front line, and to build up strength to counterattack Allied forces.[40] Possibly General Adachi, upon his transfer to the *2d Area Army,* may have had some mistaken loyalty to his former commander and a feeling that the *8th Area Army* plan was the better, although he finally recognized that the latter plan would be practically impossible of execution. At any rate, General Adachi's interpretation of the *2d Area Army's* definitively worded order was rather strange. He ordered the *41st Division* to hold the Madang area by rear guard action until the end of April, but at the same time the bulk of the division was to be sent westward 100 miles along the coast to Hansa Bay. The *20th Division* was to move initially to Hansa Bay. Upon its relief there by the *41st Division,* the *20th* was to proceed to But, some thirty-five miles west of Wewak, and, ultimately, to Aitape. The *51st Division* was ordered to move from Hansa Bay to Wewak and, beginning in late July or early August, was to push on toward Hollandia. Instead of sending one division to Hollandia immediately and getting the rest of the *18th Army* started on its way to that area as ordered by the *2d Area Army,* Gen-

[36] Hist of *2d Area Army*, pp. 22–23, 26–27.

[37] *18th Army* Opn Order, no number, 22 Jan 44, as translated in ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 39, 3 May 44, copy in G–2 DofA files.

[38] *Ibid.; 18th Army* Opns, II, 141–46.

[39] *2d Area Army* Opn Order No. A–46, 20 Mar 44, as translated in ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 48, 5 Jul 44, copy in G–2 DofA files; *18th Army* Opns, III, 17–20; Hist of *2d Area Army*, pp. 30–46.

[40] *18th Army* Opns, III, 4–8.

eral Adachi decided to concentrate all his forces at Wewak. One concession to the letter and spirit of the *2d Area Army's* order was made: ". . . and, if conditions permit, strengthen the Hollandia sector also." [41]

The Japanese apparently expected the Allies to launch a large-scale amphibious attack along the north coast of Australian New Guinea about the end of April. However, the enemy placed Hansa Bay and Wewak, in that order, ahead of Hollandia as probable targets for the expected assault. General Adachi apparently believed that the Allies were going to move on Hansa Bay and therefore evidently considered that he had ample time in which to reinforce Hollandia (although he did betray some slight concern about the Aitape area) but little time to strengthen Hansa Bay. His propensity for devoting most of his attention to Hansa Bay may also have resulted from some wishful thinking. While he had no great fear of Allied forces then patrolling in the area south and east of Madang, he did have some trouble disengaging his units from that region. Moreover, the *18th Army* had considerable difficulty crossing the broad swamps and wide washes at the mouth of the Sepik River, between Hansa Bay and Wewak. It would have been much simpler to hold at Hansa Bay.[42]

The *2d Area Army* was not satisfied with the progress of the *18th Army's* westward movement. Therefore, on 12 April, General Anami sent his chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Takazo Numata, to Wewak. Perhaps coincidentally with General Numata's arrival at Wewak, the *80th Infantry* of the *20th Division* was ordered to prepare for movement to Aitape. The displacement of the *80th Infantry* apparently started soon thereafter, but few men of that regiment had reached Aitape by 22 April. General Numata flew back to his headquarters on 13 April, after he had instructed General Adachi to start troops moving to Hollandia as well as Aitape. On 18 April the *66th Infantry* of the *51st Division* was ordered to strike out from Wewak for Hollandia, where the regiment was expected to arrive about mid-June. The *66th Infantry* had not started its movement when for obvious reasons General Adachi, on 22 April, revoked the regiment's marching orders.[43]

There is no evidence that the Japanese had any prepared defense plans for Hollandia. It could hardly have been otherwise. If General Adachi had entertained misgivings about the command situation at Hollandia in January, by 22 April he may well have been experiencing sleepless nights over it. The *Headquarters, 4th Air Army,* previously senior headquarters at Hollandia, had left that base for Manado on 15 April. The Commanding General, *6th Air Division,* had arrived at Hollandia from Wewak during late March, but he and other members of that unhappy air unit's staff had been relieved in disgrace after the loss of his planes. His place was taken by Maj. Gen. Masazumi Inada, who had been sent to Hollandia from his western New Guinea logistic support command, the *2d Field Base Unit,* by the *2d Area Army* in mid-April. Admiral Endo, *9th Fleet,* commander and senior naval officer at Hollandia, had arrived from

[41] *18th Army* Opns, III, pp. 4–8, 9–11; *18th Army* Opn Order, no number, 25 Mar 44, as translated in ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 43, 31 May 44, copy in G–2 DofA files. The quotation is from the *18th Army's* translated order.

[42] *18th Army* Opns, III, 17–28, 39–40.

[43] *18th Army* Opns, III, 17–20, 28–32, 40–41; Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 45–46; *20th Div* Opn Order, no number, 12 Apr 44, as translated in ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 49, 12 Jul 44, copy in G–2 DofA files; ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 38, 26 Apr 44, copy in G–2 DofA files.

Wewak only late in March. Finally, the senior officer of all services at Hollandia was Maj. Gen. Toyozo Kitazono, who had reached Hollandia from Wewak (where he had commanded the *3d Field Transportation Unit*) only ten days before the Allied landings. General Kitazono had no time to develop a comprehensive defense plan for Hollandia, let alone co-ordinate such a plan with General Inada and Admiral Endo.[44] In fact, there can be some doubt that General Kitazono was in a hurry about developing the needed defenses. He had served long and well with the *18th Army* and probably brought with him to Hollandia at least some of General Adachi's belief that either Hansa Bay or Wewak would be the site of the next major Allied invasion.

Japanese Reactions to Hollandia

What happened to General Kitazono is uncertain, but somehow he escaped the Hollandia area to survive the war. Whatever was General Kitazono's situation, the *2d Area Army,* on 22 April, ordered General Inada of the *6th Air Division* to assume command at Hollandia. At 0930 that morning General Inada issued a grandiose plan of resistance. Japanese troops in the area were ordered to take up positions near the town of Hollandia and also to ". . . destroy the enemy expected from Tanahmerah Bay." Most of the troops that he was able to organize General Inada finally concentrated near Sabron on the Dépapré–Lake Sentani road. There the 24th Infantry Division, advancing inland from Tanahmerah Bay, found the only significant organized resistance encountered during the Hollandia operation.

But, despite General Inada's best efforts to bring order out of the chaos created by the surprise invasion, most of the Japanese troops in the Hollandia area fled ignominiously into the hills as the first shots were fired from Allied naval guns. Late in the afternoon of 22 April, General Inada, apparently a realist, practically gave up the fight. Faced with the rapid disintegration of his organizations, at least 90 percent of which were service units, he issued a new order which expressed a defeatist sentiment usually foreign to Japaneses thought: "The division [*6th Air Division*] will be on guard against enemy landings and will attempt to withdraw at night." [45]

West of Hollandia the *2d Area Army* attempted to take action to counter the Allied invasion. General Anami, feeling that Hollandia was too important a base to be meekly abandoned, wanted to dispatch eastward and overland the bulk of the *36th Division* from the Wakde–Sarmi area. Acting on instructions from the *2d Area Army,* the *2d Army* ordered two battalions of the *224th Infantry* and a battalion of the *36th Division's* field artillery to start toward Hollandia on 24 April. It was expected that the rest of the division could start moving eastward from Sarmi about 10 May.

The *Southern Army,* however, would not permit the Sarmi area to be denuded of troops and on 25 April vetoed the plan to send *36th Division* units eastward. General Anami stubbornly argued the necessity for the recapture of Hollandia and further recommended that a large-scale amphibious operation for its reoccupation be mounted in western New Guinea in mid-June. The

[44] *18th Army* Opns, III, 41–46, 48–54; Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 30–44, 48–51.

[45] Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 48–51; *18th Army* Opns, III, 48–54; *6th Air Div* Opn Orders 45 and 46, 22 Apr 44, as translated in 24th Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 146–47. The quotations are from the translated operation orders.

Southern Army was adamant and took pains to point out to General Anami that it would be impossible, because of lack of shipping and air support, to stage a large amphibious task force within the foreseeable future. Finally, on 30 April, the *Southern Army* canceled further preparations for a push to Hollandia by the *36th Division.*

The best General Anami was able to obtain from his discussions with the *Southern Army* (and representatives had been flown to the senior headquarters to plead the *2d Area Army's* case) was tacit approval to continue the movement toward Hollandia of such *36th Division* elements as had already been dispatched eastward from Sarmi. These units, both infantry and artillery, had been placed under the control of Col. Soemon Matsuyama, commander of the *224th Infantry,* and had been designated the *Matsuyama Force.* The last elements of the *Matsuyama Force* cleared the Sarmi area on 4 May. The point of the column had advanced to Armopa, about half way between Sarmi and Hollandia, when, on 17 May, the Allies made a new landing near Sarmi. The *36th Division* immediately ordered the *Matsuyama Force* to retrace its steps. Thus ended Japanese efforts to recapture Hollandia from the west.[46]

Except for the one lucky bomb hit on supplies at Humboldt Bay, Japanese air reaction to the seizure of Hollandia was practically nonexistent, although on 22 April the *4th Air Army* was ordered to concentrate all its aircraft on western New Guinea fields to prepare for strong attacks against the Allied shipping and ground forces at Hollandia. The project was unsuccessful. The *4th Air Army* did not have the necessary planes to stage major attacks; Allied naval aircraft intercepted most of the planes the Japanese were able to send toward Hollandia; Allied air action prevented the Japanese from keeping their western New Guinea fields operational; and by the time the American carriers had to leave the area, land-based air support was available to the Allies either at or within range of Hollandia.

Japanese naval reaction by air, sea, or subsurface means was equally insignificant. On 21 April, having learned of the departure of a large Allied convoy from the Admiralties, the *Combined Fleet* issued orders to the *Central Pacific Fleet* to attack the convoy with all available submarines. But difficulties arose in getting the submarines assembled for a concerted attack and, except for a few sightings off Hollandia, the subsurface vessels stayed away from the area. The *Combined Fleet* was itself preparing for a naval showdown in the Pacific, but this battle was not scheduled until midsummer. The Hollandia operation caught the *Combined Fleet* by surprise and completely unprepared for battle. The Japanese Navy quickly decided that it was powerless to undertake any action against Allied forces at Hollandia.[47]

Japanese Withdrawal from Hollandia

At Hollandia, General Inada decided to assemble his forces at Genjem, a village about fifteen miles west of Lake Sentani. Near Genjem, situated on the main east-west inland trail of the Hollandia area, the

[46] Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 51–53; Hist of *Southern Area Army,* pp. 61–64; *224th Inf* Opn Orders, no numbers, 24 Apr and 17 May 44, as translated in ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 48, 5 Jul 44, copy in G–2 DofA files; Kawakami Comments. More material on *Matsuyama Force* operations is set forth below in the chapters concerning action in the Wakde–Sarmi area.

[47] Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 48–51; Naval Opns in Western New Guinea Area, pp. 4–7; Kawakami Comments.

Japanese had started some agricultural projects. By reason of its location and agriculture the Genjem area was the logical place for gathering forces that were retreating before the Allied advance. Most of the Japanese supplies at Hollandia had been stored around the shores of Humboldt Bay. With these lost, the Japanese could muster less than a week's supply of rations from inland stockpiles, but they might augment these rations from the projects at Genjem. The next phase of General Inada's withdrawal plan was an overland trek of 125 miles to the Wakde-Sarmi area. From Genjem one trail led west toward Sarmi, and another trail ran north 16 miles to Demta, a bay village located on the east-west coastal trail.

By 30 April some 7,000 Japanese troops had assembled in the vicinity of Genjem. Here they were reorganized, without maps and already short of rations and medical supplies, into nine or ten echelons for the long march westward through inhospitable country. The first echelon, consisting of stranded pilots and ground crews as well as the headquarters of the defunct *6th Air Division,* left the Genjem area by 9 May.[48]

The Japanese troops who struck out from Genjem after 1 May either had to push overland through mainly untracked wilderness (the inland trail lost its identity not far west of Genjem and deteriorated into many unmapped and dead-end jungle tracks) or risk encounter with a series of Allied outposts. Companies I and K of the 19th Infantry, 24th Division, had set up road blocks at Genjem and Demta during the first week of May. Company K sent numerous patrols over all trails in the vicinity of Genjem and combed neighboring native hamlets for Japanese stragglers. Company I patrolled south from Demta and along coastal trails leading both east and west of that village. By 6 June the two companies had killed 405 Japanese and had taken 64 prisoners in the Genjem–Demta region. Many more Japanese were found dead of starvation or disease along the trails in the same area.[49]

The hardships suffered by those Japanese killed in the Genjem–Demta sector were probably fewer than those of the troops who sought to make the trek to Sarmi. Remnants of the first group, which had left Genjem on 26 April, approached Sarmi just in time for the Allied invasion of that area on 17 May; the rest had to attempt to bypass Sarmi too. For the most part, the Japanese retreating through Genjem toward Sarmi died slowly from starvation, wounds, and disease. Of those who left the Hollandia area via Genjem, the Japanese themselves estimated that only 7 percent survived to reach the Sarmi area.[50]

Excluding prisoners, there could have been very few survivors of the Japanese Hollandia garrison. The following appear to be reasonable figures concerning operations at Hollandia from 22 April to 6 June 1944:

Japanese postwar estimate of the number of men gathered at Genjem for the overland trek to Sarmi	7, 220
Allied estimate of Japanese killed or found dead by Allied forces in the Hollandia area to 6 June	3, 332
Number of Japanese captured in the Hollandia area by Allied forces to 6 June	611
Total number of Japanese troops accounted for by Allied and Japanese sources as of 6 June	11, 163

[48] *18th Army* Opns, III, 41–46; Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 51–53.

[49] 24th Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 98–110.

[50] *18th Army* Opns, III, 41–46, 48–54. General Inada survived the trek to Sarmi and before the end of the war held important posts in the Philippines and the home islands. Admiral Endo was killed in the Hollandia area on or about 3 May.

Allowing for errors in the first two figures but also taking into account the number of Japanese killed or captured in the Hollandia area after 6 June and those of the Hollandia garrison later killed or captured during operations farther west, the losses of the original Japanese garrison at Hollandia remain at a staggering figure. Assuming that the Japanese estimate of 93 percent casualties for the troops who attempted the march to Sarmi is reasonably accurate, then it appears that, including prisoners, less than 1,000 of the approximately 11,000 Japanese who were stationed at Hollandia on 22 April 1944 could have survived the war.[51]

[51] As of 27 September 1944, the last date for which comprehensive figures are available, ALAMO Force estimated that 4,478 Japanese had been killed or found dead in the Hollandia area. This is an increase of only 1,146 over the 6 June figure, a fact which lends credence to the Japanese estimate that some 7,000 troops tried the march to Sarmi. Of this number, not more than 500 could have reached the Sarmi area, indicating that 6,000, more or less, must have died from starvation or disease during the trek westward. As of 27 September, ALAMO Force accounted for 656 Japanese prisoners and 13 Formosan prisoners from the Hollandia garrison. These 27 September figures are from ALAMO Force G–2 Wkly Rpt 60, 27 Sep 44, copy in G–2 DofA files.

CHAPTER V

Prelude to the Battle of the Driniumor

While operations at Hollandia were rapidly drawing to a successful conclusion, another action was just beginning at Aitape, 125 miles to the southeast. The PERSECUTION Task Force, with the 163d Regimental Combat Team of the 41st Infantry Division as its combat nucleus, landed near Aitape on 22 April, D Day for Hollandia as well. The principal objective of General Doe's PERSECUTION Task Force was the seizure and rehabilitation of the Japanese-constructed Tadji airstrips, eight miles east-southeast of Aitape. These fields were to provide bases from which Allied aircraft could support ground operations at Hollandia after the Fifth Fleet's carriers left the latter area. General Doe's command was also to provide ground flank protection for Hollandia by preventing westward advance of the Japanese *18th Army,* assembling some ninety miles southeast of Aitape at Wewak.[1] (*Map 3*)

Securing the Airfield Area

The Tactical Plan

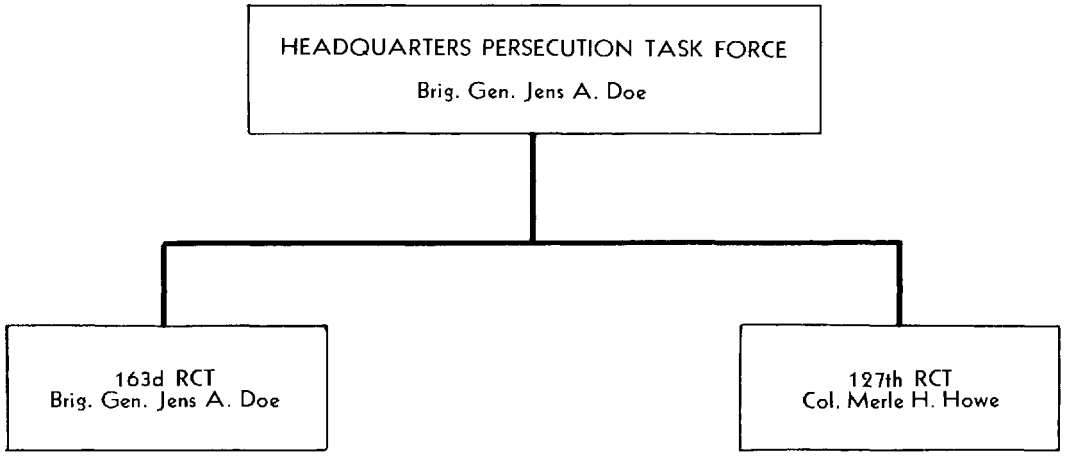
Knowledge of beach conditions in the Aitape area was obtained principally from aerial photographs, and the PERSECUTION Task Force landing beach was chosen with reference to beach exits and shore objectives as they appeared on these pictures. The shore line opposite the Tadji airfields, which lay only 1,000 yards inland, was uniform and sandy for long distances. There were clear approaches to the beach, which had a medium rise. The selected landing point was located at Korako, a native village on the coast at the northeast corner of the airfield area. From this point, which was designated Blue Beach, a track passable for wheeled vehicles ran directly inland to the Tadji strips.[2]

The PERSECUTION Task Force was to begin landing at 0645, high tide time in the Aitape area. In charge of the amphibious phases of the operation was Capt. Albert G. Noble (USN), whose command, the Eastern Attack Group (Task Group 77.3), was part of Admiral Barbey's Task Force 77. Close air support operations at Aitape were primarily the responsibility of planes aboard eight CVE's and were similar to the air support activities carried out by Task Force 58 at Hollandia. Initially, last-minute beach strafing at Blue Beach was planned to con-

[1] The decision to seize Aitape and the organization of the PERSECUTION Task Force are described in Chapter II, above.

[2] CTF 77 Opns Rpt Tanahmerah Bay–Humboldt Bay–Aitape, p. 29; CTG 77.3 [Eastern Attack Group] Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 1–2.

CHART 7—THE PERSECUTION TASK FORCE: 22 APRIL–4 MAY 1944



tinue until the leading wave of landing craft was within 300 yards of the shore. But General Doe believed that such close-in strafing would endanger the troops aboard the landing craft. It was therefore decided that strafing would begin when the leading boat wave was 4,500 yards from shore (expected to be at H minus 15 minutes) and would end when that wave approached to within 1,200 yards of the shore, timed for about H minus 4 minutes.[3]

The Allied Air Forces also had important air support missions at Aitape. A squadron of attack bombers (A–20's or B–25's) was to be in the air over the landing area from 0830 to 1030 on D Day. After 1030, if no earlier calls for bombardment had been made, these planes were to drop their bombs on targets on both flanks of Blue Beach. Two squadrons of attack bombers were to be maintained on daily alert at a field in eastern New Guinea for as long as the situation at Aitape required, and additional air support at Aitape would be provided upon request from ALAMO Force.[4]

Naval fire support for the landings on Blue Beach was to be executed by 5 destroyers, 9 APD's, and 1 AK. This was the first time that APD's or AK's had been assigned fire support missions in the Southwest Pacific. Targets for the destroyers were similar to those assigned naval fire support vessels at Tanahmerah and Humboldt Bays. Six APD's were to fire on St. Anna and Tadji Plantation (west of the airstrips), on enemy defensive installations at or near Aitape town, and on the offshore islands—Tumleo, Ali, and Seleo. The AK was to aim its 5-inch fire at Tumleo and Ali Is-

[3] CTF 77 Opn Plan 3–44, 3 Apr 44, and Change 1, 10 Apr 44, thereto, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 4–5 Apr 44; CTF 78 Opn Plan D2–44, 12 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 25 Apr 44. The CVE's operated as TF 78, which was under the command of Admiral Davison. Although Admiral Davison was the senior officer present, Captain Noble retained command in the area during the amphibious phases. This was accomplished by personal agreement between the two officers. Tel conv, author with Vice Adm Albert G. Noble, 3 Jan 51.

[4] AAF SWPA OI 49 (Rev), 28 Mar 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 28 Mar 44.

lands. Close-in support was to be provided for the leading landing waves from 0642 to 0645 by rocket and automatic weapons fire from two submarine chasers. All destroyers, submarine chasers, and the AK were to deliver fire upon call from forces ashore after H Hour.[5]

At 0645 the 2d and 3d Battalions, 163d Infantry, were to land abreast on Blue Beach. As soon as a beachhead had been secured the 1st Battalion was to land and, aided by the 2d, was to initiate a drive toward the Tadji strips. After the airfields had been captured, the 2d Battalion was to defend the task force's western flank, the 1st was to establish defenses along the southern edge of the airfield area, and the 3d was to defend the eastern flank. On D plus 1 the 127th Regimental Combat Team, 32d Division, was to reach Blue Beach. Then patrols west and east of the beachhead were to begin seeking out Japanese forces, and, as soon as possible, Aitape town was to be captured.

Field and antiaircraft artillery going ashore on D Day were to protect and support the infantry's operations and the engineers who were to start work on the airfields immediately after they were secured. Engineers and other service troops not assigned to airfield construction tasks were to unload ships, improve roads and tracks, build or repair bridges over streams in the beachhead area, and find and clear dump and bivouac sites.[6]

The Capture of the Airfields

At 0500 on 22 April, after an uneventful trip from the Admiralties, the Eastern Attack Group convoy arrived in the transport area off Blue Beach.[7] The assault troops of the 163d Infantry, Col. Francis W. Mason commanding, immediately began debarking into LCPR's from the APD's which had brought them to Aitape. Naval gunfire and aerial support was carried out almost exactly as planned, and the first wave of LCPR's hit the shore on schedule at 0645. It would have been a model landing except for one thing—it didn't take place on Blue Beach.

D Day had dawned dull and overcast, making for poor visibility in the landing area. Heavy smoke from fires set in Japanese supply dumps by preassault bombardments further obscured the coast line. With no landmarks to guide them, the coxswains of the leading boat wave missed Blue Beach and the landing took place at Wapil, a small coastal village about 1,200 yards east of Korako. The accident proved a happy one, for it was soon discovered that the Wapil area was much better suited to beaching LST's and large landing craft than any other in the Aitape region.

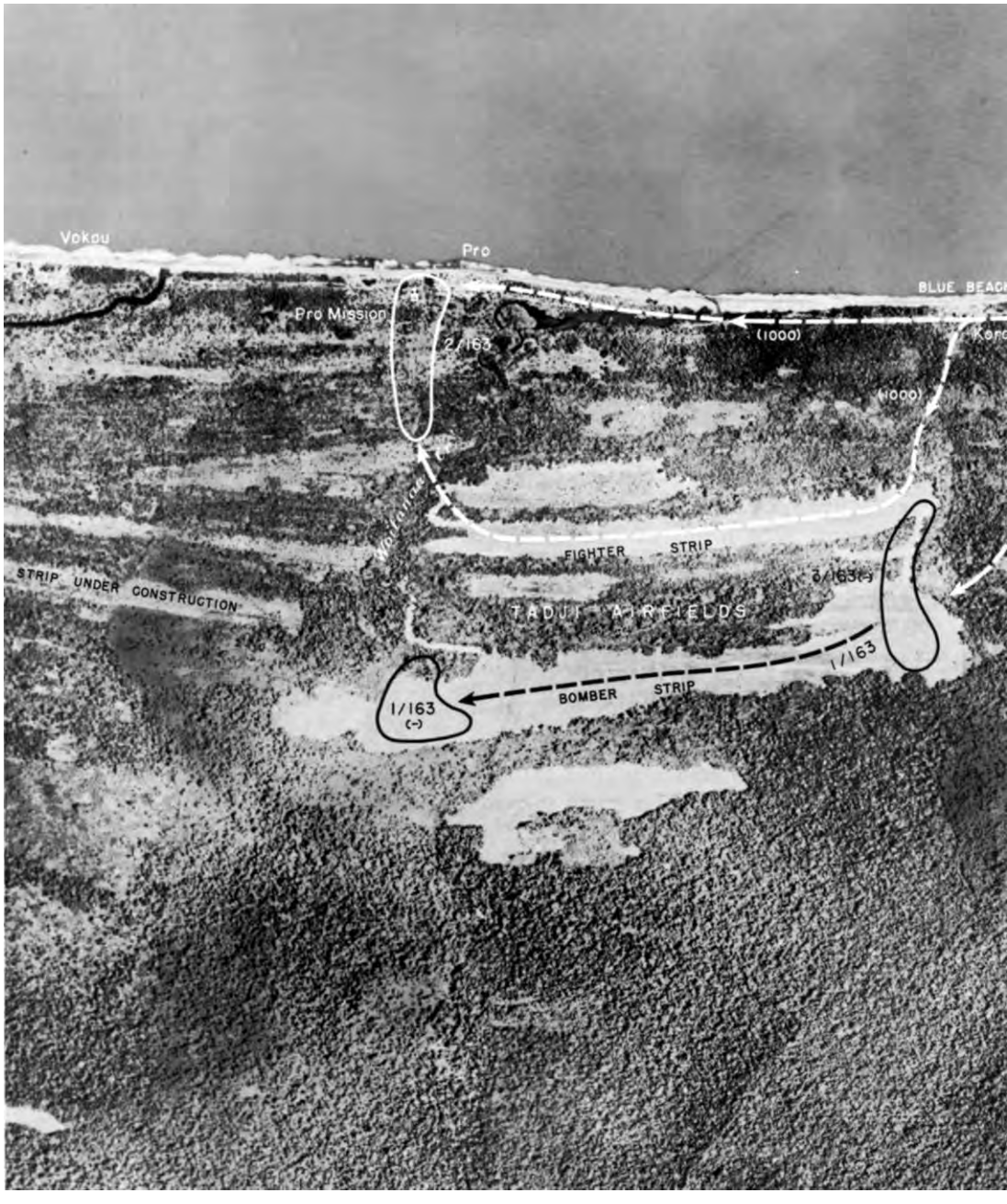
For the assault troops the change in beaches created little difficulty, since the Wapil area had been adequately covered by support fires and there was no opposition from the Japanese. Tactical surprise was as complete as that achieved the same day by the RECKLESS Task Force at Hollandia. Leaving breakfasts cooking and bunks unmade, the Japanese at Aitape had fled in panic when the naval support fire began.

The 2d Battalion, 163d Infantry, had landed on the right, or west. The unit immediately swung west along the beach to

[5] CTF 77 Opn Plan 3–44, 3 Apr 44; CTG 77.3 Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 2–3.

[6] PTF FO 1, 6 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 5–6 Apr 44.

[7] Information in this subsection is based on: CTG 77.3 Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 4–5; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Tanahmerah Bay–Humboldt Bay–Aitape, p. 31; 163d Inf Jnl, Aitape; 163d Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, p. 2; PTF G–3 Jnl, 22 Apr–4 May 44; PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 22 Apr–4 May 44, pp. 2–3; Ltr, Gen Doe to Gen Ward, 4 Dec 50, no sub, in OCMH files.



MAP 3

AITAPE LANDINGS, *22 April 1944*


1 163
2 163
3 163
Wapil
Nor
Rilia
Lemieng
L/163
OUTPOST
L/163
Nigiar R.
0
1000
YARDS

find Korako and the trail leading inland to the Tadji strips. This task was accomplished by 0800 and the two battalions quickly expanded the beachhead to a depth of 500 yards and westward about 2,500 yards from Wapil to Waitanan Creek. This area, occupied by 1000, marked the limits of the task force's first phase line. So far, opposition had consisted of only a few rifle shots. Three Japanese prisoners had been captured and over fifty Javanese laborers had willingly given themselves up. The two assault units now waited for the landing of the 1st Battalion and for an order from General Doe to move on the Tadji strips.

The 1st Battalion was assembled ashore by 1030 and, passing through the 3d, started moving inland toward Tadji Bomber Strip at 1100. Simultaneously, the 2d Battalion began advancing on Tadji Fighter Strip, north of the bomber field. The 3d Battalion remained at the beach area.

The advance inland was slow and cautious but by 1245 the 2d Battalion had cleared its objective and the 1st soon secured Tadji Bomber Strip against no opposition. The 2d Battalion then moved across Waitanan Creek to Pro and Pro Mission, which were found clear of Japanese. The battalion command post was set up at Pro before dark, while the rest of the unit bivouacked along trails leading inland to the fighter strip. The 1st Battalion settled down for the night at the west end of the bomber field. During the afternoon the 3d Battalion sent patrols east from Wapil to the coastal villages of Nor, Rilia, and Lemieng, noting no enemy activity. Three miles east of Wapil, at the mouth of the Nigia River, an outpost was set up. The bulk of the battalion bivouacked along the eastern edges of the two captured strips.

By dark on D Day the principal objectives of the PERSECUTION Task Force had been secured. Work could be started on the airfields, needed to insure land-based air support for both the Aitape and Hollandia beachheads. The strips had been secured at an amazingly low cost—two men of the 163d Infantry had been killed and thirteen wounded.

Airfield Construction and Supporting Arms

No. 62 Works Wing, Royal Australian Air Force, had come ashore at Blue Beach during the morning and had been able to start work on Tadji Fighter Strip at 1300. Repairs continued throughout the night under floodlights, the lack of Japanese opposition and the urgency of the task prompting General Doe to push the work. Although it had been hoped that the strip would be ready for use on D plus 1, terrain conditions were such that necessary repairs were not completed on schedule. Thus it was 0900 on 24 April before the Australian engineers, who had worked without break for almost forty-eight hours, could announce that the airstrip was ready. At 1630 twenty-five P–40's of No. 78 Wing, Royal Australian Air Force, landed on the field, and the balance of the wing arrived the next day.[8]

The ground on which the fighter strip was located was so poorly drained that it was not until 28 April, after steel matting had been placed on the field, that it could be used continuously.[9] The works wing then

[8] Ltr, F/Lt Arthur L. Davies [RAAF], Officer-in-Charge, War Hist Sec., Hq RAAF, to author, 8 Mar 48, in OCMH files.

[9] PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 22 Apr–4 May 44, p. 5; PTF Engr Rpt, Pt. IV, p. 2, copy in files of OCE GHQ AFPAC. The strip was 4,000 by 100 feet. It was used until 12 July, when it was declared unserviceable and converted to an emergency field. Proper drainage could not be obtained at the site, but the strip had well served its intended purpose—quick provision of land-based air support for Hollandia and Aitape.



TROOPS UNLOADING SUPPLIES AT AITAPE. *In the background are the two AK's.*

moved to Tadji Bomber Strip to aid the 872d and 875th Engineer Aviation Battalions. The latter two units passed to the operational control of Wing Commander William A. C. Dale (RAAF), who, besides commanding the works wing, was PERSECUTION Task Force Engineer. Extensive repairs were necessary at the bomber strip and that field was not ready for use by fighter and transport planes until 27 May and for bombers until early July.[10]

Other engineer units ashore on D Day directed their energies to ship unloading, road and bridge construction, and dump and bivouac clearance. By 1930 the 593d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment (the Shore Party) and the Naval Beach Party had unloaded all D-Day LST's. The next day one AKA and seven more LST's were discharged. Unloading of the two AK's did not proceed as rapidly as expected, for neither ship had been properly combat loaded. The AK which arrived on D Day was only 65 percent discharged when, during the night of 27–28 April, it was hit by a bomb dropped from a lone Japanese plane flying in from an unknown base in western New Guinea. The other AK, undamaged, towed the first back to Finschhafen, returning then to Blue Beach to complete its own unloading. No other untoward incident

[10] ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Hollandia–Aitape, p. 50; PTF Engr Rpt, Pt. VI, pp. 2–3; Ltr, F/Lt Davies to author, 8 Mar 48.

marred the debarkation of troops and supplies.[11]

American engineers constructed roads inland from Blue Beach to the airstrips and improved the coastal roads. Light Japanese culverts and bridges in the area had collapsed under the weight of American and Australian heavy equipment or had been damaged by preassault bombardment, making repairs a pressing problem. Australian engineers bridged Waitanan Creek while American engineers threw a bridge across the Nigia River, on the east flank. Pending completion of other bridges, American engineers maintained ferry services across the main streams. On 2 May heavy rains flooded all streams in the area, wiping out much bridge construction already accomplished, damaging ferry stages, and making necessary extensive repairs or new construction. Continued rain during May made road maintenance so difficult that engineers working on airstrips or bridges had to devote much time to the roads.[12]

Artillery moved ashore on D Day without difficulty. The 167th Field Artillery Battalion, supporting the 163d Infantry, was in position and registered on check points by H plus 4 hours but fired no support mission while in the Aitape area. On D plus 1 the 190th Field Artillery Group assumed command of all field artillery, and on the same day the 126th Field Artillery Battalion of the 32d Division arrived. Antiaircraft artillery came ashore rapidly on D Day and set up positions along Blue Beach and around Tadji Fighter Strip.[13]

Securing the Flanks

While engineers continued work through the night of 22–23 April, other elements of the task force made preparations to expand the perimeter.[14] (*Map III*) About 0800 on the 23d, the 1st Battalion, 163d Infantry, started westward over inland trails to the Raihu River, six miles beyond Blue Beach. A tank of the 603d Tank Company, which was supporting the advance, broke through a Japanese bridge over Waitanan Creek, but the infantry continued westward and within an hour had secured incomplete Tadji West Strip. The 2d Battalion pushed west along the coastal track and by noon reached the mouth of the Raihu. Both battalions bivouacked for the night on the east bank, the 1st at a point about 4,000 yards upstream. During the day the 3d Battalion (which had been relieved on the east flank and at Blue Beach by elements of the 127th Infantry) moved forward with regimental headquarters to Tadji Plantation, 1,200 yards east of the Raihu and about 2,000 yards inland. So light had Japanese opposition been that the 163d Infantry had suffered but two casualties—one man wounded and another missing.

The next day the 1st and 2d Battalions resumed the advance at 0730. The 1st crossed the Raihu and pushed northwest over ill-defined tracks to establish contact,

---

[11] CTG 77.3 Opns Rpt Aitape, p. 7; PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 22 Apr–4 May 44, p. 3. The loss of the AK *Etamin* was grim justification of Admiral Barbey's reluctance to send AK's forward in early convoys to a combat area. See Ch. II, above. According to Admiral Noble, the loss of the *Etamin* was ". . . very keenly felt for several months to come." Ltr, Rear Adm Noble to Gen Ward, 18 Dec 50, in OCMH files.

[12] ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Hollandia–Aitape, p. 50; PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 22 Apr–4 May 44, pp. 2–6; PTF Engr Rpt, Pt. IV, pp. 2–3.

[13] PTF G–3 Jnl, 22 Apr–4 May 44; 167th FA Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 3–6.

[14] Information on west flank operations is from: 163d Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 2–3; PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 22 Apr–4 May 44, pp. 3–6; 163d Inf Jnl Aitape; PTF G–3 Jnl, 22 Apr–4 May 44.

about 0930, with the 2d Battalion at the mouth of a small creek 1,800 yards west of the Raihu. Colonel Mason now halted the 1st Battalion and ordered it to patrol the trails radiating south and west from its new position. The 2d Battalion moved on along the coast to Aitape, securing that town and the near-by dominating height at Rohm Point by 1100. The unit had met no Japanese and was preparing to push on when, early in the afternoon, Colonel Mason ordered it to stop. The 3d Battalion was ready to pass through the 1st and move forward over inland trails, but the regimental commander suddenly ordered both it and the 1st to retire to the east bank of the Raihu for the night. It is not clear why this withdrawal was ordered. Japanese opposition had been almost nonexistent and the 163d Infantry had lost only one man killed during the day.

General Doe was by now dissatisfied with the pace of the westward advance, and he therefore suggested to ALAMO Force that the 163d's commander be relieved. This step was approved by General Krueger, although the regimental commander remained in control of his unit until 9 May, only two days before the 163d Infantry began loading for another operation.[15]

For the next few days there were no major changes in the dispositions of the 163d Infantry as patrolling inland and along the coast west of Aitape continued. Patrol bases were set up at inland and coastal villages to hunt down Japanese attempting to escape westward from the Aitape area. At the Kapoam villages, about twelve miles up the Raihu, elements of the 3d Battalion encountered the only signs of organized Japanese resistance found in the Aitape area to 4 May. At one of these villages—Kamti—outpost troops of the 3d Battalion were surrounded by an estimated 200 Japanese who made a number of harassing attacks on 28 and 29 April. These skirmishes cost the battalion 3 men killed and 2 wounded, while it was estimated that the Japanese lost about 90 killed. On 30 April the men at Kamti withdrew while Battery A, 126th Field Artillery Battalion, fired 240 rounds of 105-mm. ammunition into the village and its environs. The next morning Company L, 163d Infantry, moved back to Kamti against no opposition. There were few further contacts with the Japanese on the west flank and all outposts of the 163d Infantry were relieved by 32d Division troops early in May.

The 127th Regimental Combat Team (less the 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, and Companies F and G of the same regiment) had unloaded at Blue Beach on 23 April.[16] About 0700 the same morning, after an air and naval bombardment, Companies F and G landed on Tumleo and Seleo Islands off Blue Beach, securing them against minor opposition by 1400. On 25 April Company G occupied the third large offshore island, Ali, without difficulty. The 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, arrived at Blue Beach on 26 April and established its headquarters near Korako. The 2d Battalion relieved the 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, on the east flank, and the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, established a defense line along the southern and eastern edges of Tadji Bomber and Fighter Strips.

[15] The circumstances surrounding this relief are found in: Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE–72, 24 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 25–26 Apr 44; Rad, ALAMO to RTF [I Corps], WF–4652, 29 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 29–30 Apr 44; Ltr, Gen Doe to Gen Ward, 4 Dec 50, in OCMH files.

[16] Information on 127th Infantry activities is based on: 127th Inf Jnl, 23 Apr–4 May 44; PTF G–3 Jnl, 22 Apr–4 May 44; PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 22 Apr–4 May 44, pp. 3–6.

Patrols of the 2d Battalion moved east along the coastal track to the mouth of the Driniumor, about twelve miles beyond Blue Beach; up the banks of the Nigia River five miles to Chinapelli; and up the west bank of the Driniumor about six miles to Afua. From Afua a trail was found running westward through dense jungle to Chinapelli by way of a village called Palauru. From Chinapelli one track ran north to the mouth of the Nigia and others wandered off in a westerly direction toward the Kapoam villages. From the Driniumor two main trails were found leading eastward—one the principal coastal track to Wewak and the other a rough inland trace originating at Afua.

The latter trail paralleled the coast line and ran along the foothills of the Torricelli Mountains. North of the trail was a flat coastal plain, generally forested with dense jungle growth and containing numerous swampy areas and a multitude of small and large streams. The plain narrowed gradually from a depth of about ten miles at the Nigia River to less than a mile at the Danmap River, flowing into the Pacific about forty-five miles east-southeast of Aitape. Beyond the Danmap, toward Wewak, was more rolling terrain where hills descended from the Torricelli Mountains down to the sea. The trail east from Afua crossed the many streams between the Driniumor and the Danmap at points three to five miles south of the coast.

It was essential to the security of the newly won Tadji strips that any Japanese movements westward from Wewak along both inland and coastal trails be discovered and watched. Therefore, it was decided to send Company C, 127th Infantry, reinforced by part of Company D, by boat to Nyaparake, a coastal village about seventeen miles east of the Nigia River. There the reinforced company, known as the Nyaparake Force, was to set up a patrol base and report and delay Japanese movements in the vicinity.

On 28 April the unit boarded small boats at Blue Beach and sailed eastward along the coast, missing its objective and landing near the mouth of the Dandriwad River, about eight miles east of Nyaparake. This error was quickly discovered but the force remained at its position for three days, sending out patrols in all directions. Few signs of enemy activity were observed, and the five Japanese killed in the area appeared to be stragglers rather than representatives of any organized unit of the *18th Army*. On 1 May the unit moved by water back to Nyaparake. Outposts were established about four miles inland at Charov and Jalup, where the principal inland trail crossed the Drindaria River, and patrols were sent to the east and west over the inland trail and in both directions along the coastal track. The Nyaparake Force noticed no signs of organized enemy activity in the areas patrolled during the next few days.

Meanwhile, patrols of the 2d Battalion had moved along the coast from the Driniumor River to Yakamul, four miles west of Nyaparake. Elements of the 1st Battalion maintained a patrol base at Afua for four days, and 3d Battalion patrols scouted trails from Chinapelli to the Tadji strips and the Kapoam villages. No signs of organized enemy movements were discovered, and only weary Japanese stragglers attempting to make their way inland and westward were encountered. This complete lack of organized Japanese operations in the area patrolled by the 127th Infantry to 4 May, together with the surprisingly easy seizure of the Tadji strips by the 163d Infantry, con-

tradicted preassault estimates of the enemy situation in the Aitape area.

The Enemy Situation to 4 May

Prior to 22 April the Allies had estimated that 3,500 Japanese, including 1,500 combat troops of the *20th Division,* were based at Aitape. The indications are that not more than 1,000 Japanese of all arms and services were actually in the Aitape area on D Day.[17] These troops comprised mostly antiaircraft artillerymen and service personnel who fled inland when Allied landing operations began. No organized resistance was encountered except for the skirmishes at Kamti, and the only evidence of centralized command in the area was a captured report, dated 25 April, from the Commander, *Aitape Garrison Unit,* to the *18th Army.* The document told of the Allied landings, described operations to 25 April, set the strength of the *Aitape Garrison Unit* at 240 troops, and outlined a grandiose plan of attack, which probably culminated in the action around Kamti. Unknown to the Allies, there had been a small scouting party of the *20th Division* at Aitape on D Day, but after the landings this group withdrew eastward to rejoin the main body of the *18th Army.* Other Japanese survivors in the Aitape area tried to make their way westward to Vanimo, a minor enemy barge hideout on the coast between Aitape and Hollandia.[18]

Between 22 April and 4 May, Japanese casualties in the Aitape area were estimated at 525 killed, and during the same period 25 of the enemy were captured. Allied losses were 19 killed and 40 wounded. All the Allied casualties were American, and with but two or three exceptions all were suffered by the 163d Infantry.[19]

There were a few signs that the *18th Army* might be initiating a movement westward from Wewak toward Aitape, since interrogations of natives and aerial reconnaissance produced indications of organized enemy activity far beyond the east flank of the PERSECUTION Task Force. The Japanese were reported to be bridging the Anumb River, about fifteen miles east of the Danmap. Motor vehicles or their tracks were observed along the beach and on the coastal trail from Wewak west to the Anumb, and aerial observers and Allied ground patrols found that enemy parties were reconnoitering the coastal track from the Danmap River west to the mouth of the Dandriwad. Natives reported that organized Japanese groups were bivouacking at various coastal villages between the Dandriwad and Danmap.

Intelligence officers of the PERSECUTION Task Force and ALAMO Force interpreted these activities as indicating that an organized westward movement by *18th Army* units was under way. Whether or not this movement presaged an attack on the PERSECUTION Task Force was not yet clear, but it seemed certain that Allied troops on the east flank might soon meet strong Japanese units.[20]

[17] Rad ALAMO to GHQ, WF-3714, 22 Apr 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 21–22 Apr 44; GHQ SWPA, G-2 Est of Enemy Sit, PERSECUTION, 24 Jan 44, in G-3 GHQ Jnl, 26 Jan 44; PTF G-2 Jnl, 22 Apr–4 May 44; GHQ SWPA, G-2 DSEI's 710–61, 1 Mar–22 Apr 44, in G-3 GHQ Jnls, 1 Mar–22 Apr 44.

[18] PTF G-2 Jnl, 22 Apr–4 May 44; Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE-220, 29 Apr 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 29–30 Apr 44; *18th Army* Opns, III, 47, 55–56.

[19] PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 22 Apr–4 May 44, p. 6; PTF G-1 and G-2 Jnls, 22 Apr–4 May 44.

[20] Rads, PTF to ALAMO, KL-748 and AE-373, 3 May 44, Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE-406, 4 May 44, and Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WF-617, 4 May 44 all in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 4–5 May 44.

Contact with the 18th Army *on the East Flank*

While the PERSECUTION Task Force was accomplishing its primary mission—seizure and repair of the Tadji strips—final plans were being made at higher headquarters for another operation in the Wakde–Sarmi area of Dutch New Guinea, 250 miles northwest of Aitape. The 163d Regimental Combat Team and General Doe with most of his staff were to participate in the new advance, which was scheduled for mid-May. General Krueger therefore directed that the 163d Regimental Combat Team of the 41st Division be relieved of combat in the Aitape area and concentrated at Blue Beach by 6 May to begin staging for Wakde–Sarmi.[21]

Reorganization of the PERSECUTION Task Force

The 32d Infantry Division, less two regiments, was to move from Saidor in eastern New Guinea to Aitape to relieve the 163d Regimental Combat Team. The 127th Regimental Combat Team of the 32d Division had already arrived at Aitape. Initially, the 128th Infantry was to remain at Saidor as part of the ALAMO Force Reserve for Wakde–Sarmi. The remainder of the 32d Division, consisting of the 126th Regimental Combat Team and division troops, arrived at Blue Beach on 4 May. Maj. Gen. William H. Gill, the division commander, immediately assumed command of the PERSECUTION Task Force and two days later his division staff, after becoming acquainted with the situation in the Aitape area, began activity as Headquarters, PERSECUTION Task Force.[22]

Just before the Wakde–Sarmi operation began, it was decided to move the 128th Infantry from Saidor to Aitape so that the unit would be closer to its potential objective area in case of need. Noncombat ships being available, the 128th Infantry (less the 3d Battalion) was shipped to Blue Beach, where it arrived on 15 May. The rest of the regiment, together with rear echelons of other 32d Division units, arrived at Aitape later in the month. Early in June the 128th Infantry was released from its ALAMO Force Reserve role for Wakde–Sarmi and reverted to the control of the 32d Division and the PERSECUTION Task Force.[23]

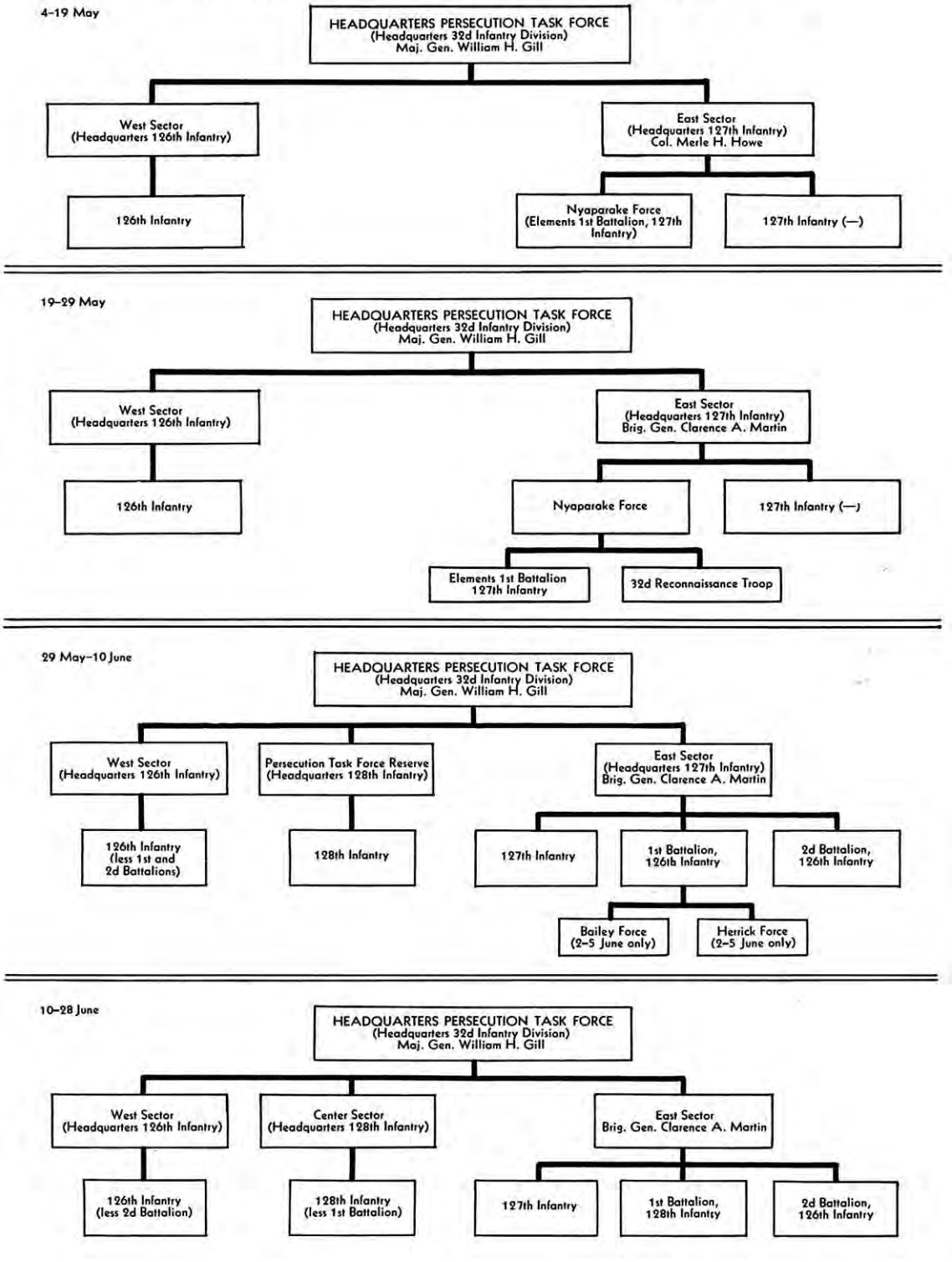
As soon as General Gill assumed command of the PERSECUTION Task Force, defenses in the Aitape area were reorganized. The area west of Waitanan Creek, designated the West Sector, was assigned to the 126th Regimental Combat Team. To the east, the 127th Regimental Combat Team was to operate in an area named the East Sector. A series of defensive lines in front of a main line of resistance around the airstrips covered the approaches to the vital fields. Positions on the main line of resistance were to be constructed rapidly but were to be occupied only on orders from task force headquarters. Beyond the main line of resistance there were set up a local security line, an outpost line of resistance, and an outpost security patrol line. The lat-

[21] ALAMO Force FO 15, 29 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 29–30 Apr 44; Rad, PTF to ALAMO, R–103, 4 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 6–7 May 44.

[22] ALAMO Force FO 15, 29 Apr 44; 32d Div FO 1, 30 Apr 44, and PTF FO 2, 6 May 44, both in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 2–3 May 44.

[23] Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE–840, 17 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 16–18 May 44; Rad, ALAMO Adv Hq to PTF, WH–271, 8 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 7–8 Jun 44.

CHART 8—THE PERSECUTION TASK FORCE: 4 MAY–28 JUNE 1944



ter, lying about ten miles inland, was to mark the general limits of patrolling.[24]

The 126th Infantry completed relief of the 163d Infantry's outposts and patrol bases on the west flank by 8 May. Thereafter, outpost troops were rotated from time to time, and gradually many outposts were closed out, as Japanese activity on the west ceased. On 29 May, because Japanese pressure was increasing on the east flank, the 1st and 2d Battalions, 126th Infantry, were transferred to the East Sector, and responsibility for patrolling and defending the West Sector (which had been extended in mid-May to the eastern edge of Tadji Fighter Strip) passed to the 3d Battalion, 126th Infantry. Patrolling by all elements of the 126th Infantry in the West Sector accounted for a few Japanese killed, found dead along inland trails, or captured.[25]

On 10 June boundaries between various elements of the PERSECUTION Task Force were again changed and redispositions were effected. A new defensive area, designated the Center Sector, was established between the West and East Sectors to cover the ground between the eastern edge of the Tadji airstrips to a line running southwestward inland from Pro. The new sector became the responsibility of the 128th Infantry, while the 126th Infantry retained control in the West Sector and the 127th continued operations in the East Sector. At the same time, the main line of resistance was drawn in toward the airfields from a previous eastern extension along the Nigia River, and the earlier inland defensive lines were either abolished or withdrawn. Troops of the West and Center Sectors continued patrolling in the areas for which they were responsible. Only a few enemy stragglers were encountered, and no signs of organized Japanese activity were discovered in those sectors.[26]

East Sector Troops Meet the Enemy

Col. Merle H. Howe, commanding the 127th Infantry, was assigned to the command of the East Sector on 6 May. His missions were to maintain contact with the enemy on the eastern flank, to discover enemy intentions, and to delay any westward movement on the part of elements of the *18th Army*. He was ordered to maintain outposts and patrol bases at Anamo and Nyaparake on the coast and at Chinapelli and Afua inland. When he took over his new command, Colonel Howe had little information concerning the Japanese on the east flank beyond the fact that elements of two of the *18th Army's* three divisions had been identified far east of the Nigia River. Troops of the *20th Division* had been discovered building defensive positions on the east bank of the Danmap River and elements of the *41st Division* were thought to be in the same general area. Finally, air observers had discovered concentrations of Japanese troops at coastal villages between the Danmap and Wewak. There seemed to be definite indications that large elements of the *18th Army* were beginning to move westward from Wewak.[27]

Colonel Howe subdivided his East Sector into battalion areas. The 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, was to maintain a rein-

[24] PTF FO 2, 6 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 2–3 May 44.

[25] 126th Inf Jnl, 4 May–27 Jun 44; 1st Bn 126th Inf Jnl, 4 May–27 Jun 44; PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 4 May–28 Jun 44, pp. 3–10.

[26] PTF FO 4, 10 Jun 44, atchd to PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 4 May–28 Jun 44; 126th Inf Jnl, 4 May–27 Jun 44; 128th Inf Jnl, 4 May–Jun 44.

[27] PTF FO 2, 6 May 44, and G–2 Annex thereto, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 2–3 May 44; 127th Inf Jnl file, 4–15 May 44.

forced rifle company at Nyaparake and an outpost at Babiang, to the east near the mouth of the Dandriwad River. The battalion was to patrol up the Dandriwad and along the coast east to the Danmap River. The 2d Battalion was made responsible for inland patrols to Chinapelli, Palauru, and Afua. The 3d Battalion was to maintain permanent outposts at Anamo, near the mouth of the Driniumor River, and at Afua, six miles up that stream. Some of these dispositions were already in effect, with the Nyaparake Force on station and 2d Battalion units operating in the Palauru area. The other dispositions were completed by mid-May.[28]

The Nyaparake Force, comprising Company C and elements of Company D, and commanded by Capt. Tally D. Fulmer of Company C, 127th Infantry, started patrolling to the east and inland on 7 May.[29] On that day, patrols pushed across the mouth of the Dandriwad River to Babiang and Marubian. After clashing with a well-organized Japanese patrol, the Nyaparake Force elements withdrew to the west bank of the Dandriwad and spent the next day patrolling up that river and questioning natives concerning enemy movements. On the 8th a rifle platoon and a light machine gun section from Company A arrived to strengthen the Nyaparake Force.

The advance eastward was resumed the next day along two routes beyond Babiang. One was the coastal trail and the other the "Old German Road," a name presumably referring to the days of German occupation of this part of New Guinea before World War I. The Old German Road paralleled the coastal track at a distance of about 300 yards inland. Supported by Seventh Fleet PT's based at Aitape, Nyaparake Force patrols pushed almost 5,000 yards east of the Dandriwad during the day, encountering some resistance along both routes. At dusk all patrols retired to Babiang, and Captain Fulmer re-examined his situation in the light of information obtained during the day. Large enemy groups had been reported to the west of Nyaparake at Yakamul and even as far distant as the Driniumor River, over halfway back to the Tadji perimeter. To the east, Japanese opposition gave every indication of increasing. Finally, it appeared that the Nyaparake Force was being outflanked to the south. Reports had come in that enemy parties were moving along the foothills of the Torricelli Mountains immediately south of the main inland east-west trail, which crossed the Dandriwad and Drindaria Rivers about four miles upstream.

Captain Fulmer strengthened the outpost at Charov, up the Drindaria, in order to keep closer watch on the enemy reported south of that village. At the same time he requested that aircraft strafe the coastal trail and the Old German Road east of Babiang before any further attempt to advance eastward was made. Colonel Howe agreed to request the air support mission, and he ordered the Nyaparake Force to continue pushing eastward after the air strike was completed.

Eight P–40's of No. 78 Wing, Royal Australian Air Force, bombed and strafed the two roads east of Babiang at 1130 on 10 May. Marubian, thought to be a Japanese assembly point, was also attacked. After the air strikes Captain Fulmer sent the 1st Platoon, Company C, forward from Ba-

[28] 127th Inf Jnl file, 4–15 May 44.

[29] Information in the remainder of this subsection is based principally upon: 127th Inf Jnl files, 5–15 and 15–31 May 44; 1st Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 4 May–28 Jun 44; PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 4 May–28 Jun 44, pp. 3–10; PTF G–3 Jnl, 4 May–28 Jun 44; 127th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, 4 May–28 Jun 44, pp. 1–2.

biang while the 3d Platoon moved on to take Marubian without opposition. A defensive perimeter was set up around Marubian and an ambush was established on the Old German Road south of that village. No contacts were made with the enemy during the day. The advance continued on the 11th and the two forward platoons had reached a point about two miles beyond Marubian by early afternoon when they were halted by Japanese machine gun and small arms fire. The 3d Platoon, on the coastal trail, pulled back about six hundred yards from the point of contact and watched a party of about fifty-five well-equipped Japanese proceed southwestward off the trail and disappear inland. The 3d Platoon dug in for the night on the beach, while the 1st Platoon, on the Old German Road, returned to Marubian.

Captain Fulmer decided to move the rest of Company C, 127th Infantry, to Marubian on 12 May. Since this would practically denude the base at Nyaparake of combat troops, the Charov outpost was ordered to return to the base village. These redispositions were accomplished during the morning of the 12th, and the advance eastward beyond Marubian was resumed about 1300 the same day.

The 3d Platoon of Company C, in the lead, soon encountered rifle and machine gun fire from Japanese positions at a stream-crossing near which the advance had stopped the previous afternoon. In an attempt to outflank the Japanese, the 1st Platoon moved inland about 300 yards and into line south of the 3d. This maneuver led the 1st Platoon into dense jungle where it was stopped by determined enemy small arms fire. Further probing of the enemy defenses proved fruitless and, as night was approaching, Captain Fulmer pulled the platoon out of action. The unit moved back to the beach and dug in about 600 yards west of the stream crossing, where the 3d Platoon had already set up defenses.

About 1100 on the 13th the 2d Platoon, with a section of 81-mm. mortars and another of .50-caliber machine guns attached, arrived in the forward area. The riflemen of the 2d and 3d Platoons then joined forces and pushed on down the coast through the scene of the previous afternoon's encounter until held up at another stream by new enemy defenses. The 1st Platoon remained behind to protect the mortars and machine guns. Scouts having reported that the Japanese were firmly entrenched at the new crossing, Captain Fulmer used his heavy weapons to soften the opposition. The 81-mm. mortars and the .50-caliber machine guns fired for about twenty minutes on the enemy defenses, and a section of 60-mm. mortars joined in the last ten minutes of the barrage. Under cover of this fire the 2d and 3d Platoons formed along the west bank of the small stream on a front extending 300 yards inland. The 3d Platoon was on the beach and the 2d on the right. At 1400, as preparation fire ceased, the two platoons started eastward. The 3d crossed the small creek near the mouth without difficulty and pushed eastward nearly 500 yards before encountering any resistance.

The situation in the 2d Platoon's sector was quite different. There the ground was covered with sago palms, underbrush, and heavy jungle growth which limited visibility to five or ten yards. The platoon ran into concentrated rifle and machine gun fire immediately after starting its attack and was unable to force a crossing of the small stream. The platoon leader disengaged his force and tried to cross the creek farther inland. But the enemy refused his left flank

and the maneuver failed. Because the dense rain forest masked their fires, mortars and heavy machine guns could not support further advances in the inland sector. Captain Fulmer therefore pulled the platoon out of action on the right flank, drew it back to the beach, and sent it across the stream along the route taken by the 3d Platoon. After crossing the creek and drawing abreast of the 3d Platoon, the 2d Platoon again attacked in a southeasterly direction.

The unit overran a small Japanese supply dump and aid station and advanced 50–100 yards inland but was again pinned down by enemy machine gun fire. One squad attempted to find the left of the enemy's defenses by moving 100 yards deeper into the jungle. This effort proved futile. Since the platoon's forward elements were now being fired on from both the south and the east and because it was again impossible to support the unit with mortar or machine gun fire, no further progress could be expected. The 3d Platoon had been forced to halt because of the danger of being cut off by the Japanese opposing the 2d Platoon. Captain Fulmer called off the attack to set up night defenses.

The 3d Platoon anchored its left flank on the beach at a point about 150 yards east of the small stream, extending its lines about 50 yards inland and westward another 75 yards. The 2d Platoon tied its left into the right of the 3d and stretched the perimeter west to the mouth of the creek. About 200 yards beyond the eastern edge of this perimeter was an outpost of eight men, including mortar observers who were in contact with the main force by sound-powered telephone. Inside the larger perimeter were 60-mm. mortars, light machine guns, .50-caliber machine guns, and an aid station. Since the 81-mm. mortars could not obtain clearance in the area chosen for the main force, they remained under the protection of the 1st Platoon in a separate perimeter about 500 yards to the west. It seemed certain that the Japanese who had been holding up the advance during the day would attack during the night, and it was considered probable that such an attack would come through the heavy jungle at the southern, or inland, side of the main perimeter, where visibility was limited to five yards even in daylight.

The expected attack was not long in coming, although not from the direction anticipated. Shortly after 0200 on 14 May, after a short preparation by grenades, light mortars, and light machine guns, 100 to 200 Japanese of the *78th Infantry, 20th Division,*[30] attacked from the east against the coastal sector of the perimeter. This assault was broken up by rifle and automatic weapons fire and by lobbing mortar shells to the rear of the advancing enemy group. The Japanese disappeared into the jungle south of the narrow beach. For the next hour Captain Fulmer's mortars placed harassing fire into suspected enemy assembly points east of the small stream. Meanwhile, the eight-man outpost reported that many small parties of Japanese were moving up the beach within 300 yards of the main perimeter and then slipping southward into the jungle. Such maneuvers seemed to presage another attack.

The second assault came about 0330, this time against the eastern and southeastern third of the defenses. The Japanese were again beaten back by small arms and mortar fire, but at 0500 they made a final effort which covered the entire eastern half of the perimeter. This last attack was quickly broken up and the Japanese quieted down.

[30] This identification is from *18th Army* Opns, III, 83–84.

About 0730 on the 14th, elements of Company A, 127th Infantry, began moving into the forward perimeter to reinforce Captain Fulmer's beleaguered units. The 1st Platoon of Company C and the 81-mm. mortar section also moved forward in preparation for continuing the advance.

But now questions arose at the headquarters of the East Sector and the PERSECUTION Task Force concerning the feasibility of further advance. Captain Fulmer was willing to continue forward if he could be reinforced by a rifle platoon of Company A, another section of heavy machine guns, and another section of 81-mm. mortars. Colonel Howe and General Gill looked on the matter from a different point of view. It would be extremely difficult, they realized, to establish an overland supply system for the advancing force and they knew that there were not enough small boats available in the Aitape area to insure overwater supply. Further advance would accomplish little unless a large base for future operations could be established well beyond the Marubian area, a project for which insufficient troops and amphibious craft were available. Moreover, the principal mission of the PERSECUTION Task Force was to protect the Tadji airfields, not to undertake large-scale offensive operations. General Gill finally decided to withdraw the Nyaparake Force's advance elements from the Marubian area and replace it with Company A, under the command of Capt. Herman Bottcher,[31] who was to carry out a holding mission on the west bank of the Dandriwad.

[31] Captain Bottcher had been awarded a DSC and a battlefield promotion from the ranks during the Papuan Campaign. His exploits there are recounted in Milner, Victory in Papua.

Withdrawal from Yakamul

On 13 May the bulk of Company A arrived at Ulau Mission, just west of the Dandriwad's mouth.[32] Company C remained at Marubian temporarily. There was little action on the 13th, but events the next day prompted General Gill to change his plans again. On the 14th Japanese patrols moved between Company C and the Dandriwad River, cutting the company's overland line of withdrawal. At the same time strong enemy patrols harassed Company A's positions at Ulau Mission. It seemed apparent that the American outposts could not long withstand this pressure and, therefore, both the Ulau and Marubian units were picked up by small craft on the 15th and taken westward to Nyaparake, whence the advance eastward had begun a week earlier.

During the next few days the Nyaparake Force continued patrolling, making contacts with well-organized enemy units which appeared to be more aggressive and larger than those previously encountered in the East Sector. Companies C and D returned to Tadji Plantation on 19 May and were

[32] Information in this subsection is based on: 127th Inf Jnl files, 15–31 May and 1–11 Jun 44; 1st Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 4 May–28 Jun 44; 32d Rcn Tr Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 6–14; PTF G–3 Jnl, 4 May–28 Jun 44; PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 4 May–28 Jun 44, pp. 4–9; 1st Bn 126th Inf Jnl, 4 May–27 Jun 44; 127th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, 4 May–28 Jun 44, pp. 2–7; PTF FO 3, 19 May 44, in PTF G–3 Jnl, 4 May–28 Jun 44; *2d Bn 80th Inf*, Field Diary, 31 May–14 Jul 44, as translated in 32d Inf Div G–2 files, in ORB RAC AGO collection; *18th Army* Opns III, 84–88; Incl 2, Comments and Observations, pp. 1–2, to Ltr, Maj Gen Clarence A. Martin to Gen Ward, 12 Nov 50, no sub, in OCMH files. The latter document is hereafter cited as Martin Comments.

replaced at Nyaparake by the 32d Reconnaissance Troop. On the same day Brig. Gen. Clarence A. Martin, Assistant Division Commander, 32d Division, was placed in command of the East Sector and charged with the missions previously assigned to Colonel Howe—to maintain contact with and delay enemy units moving westward. General Martin was directed to move all East Sector troops except the Nyaparake Force to the west bank of the Driniumor River. The Nyaparake Force, now comprising the 32d Reconnaissance Troop and Company A, 127th Infantry, was placed under the command of Captain Bottcher, who was transferred from Company A to the command of the reconnaissance unit. To render the force more mobile, all its heavy equipment was sent back to Blue Beach, and the unit was instructed to retire to the Driniumor River in case Japanese pressure increased.

Captain Bottcher's patrols soon found that enemy pressure was indeed increasing. Some Japanese patrols were active to the east while others outflanked the force to the south and, about 1850 on 22 May, attacked from the west. During the following night the Nyaparake Force fought its way out of this encirclement and retired two miles along the beach to Parakovio. The next day General Martin sent most of Company A back to Tadji and that night and during the morning of the 24th the remaining elements of the Nyaparake Force withdrew along the beach to good defensive positions at the mouth of a small creek about 3,000 yards west of Yakamul. The Japanese followed closely, occupying Yakamul and sending scouting parties westward along inland trails toward Afua and the Driniumor River.

By now it was evident that the Japanese had crossed the Drindaria in some force and it appeared that the aggressive enemy patrols had missions other than merely screening movements far to the east in the Wewak area. Deeming the Japanese movements a threat to the security of the Tadji airfields, General Gill decided to make an effort to drive the enemy's forward units back across the Drindaria. For this purpose he assigned the 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry, to the East Sector. The battalion was to move forward to the Nyaparake Force's perimeter, where Company G, 127th Infantry, was to relieve Captain Bottcher's men. The 126th Infantry's unit was to be supported by Battery C, 126th Field Artillery Battalion, from positions at the mouth of the Driniumor and by Battery B from the perimeter of Company G, 127th Infantry.

Company G completed the relief of the now misnamed Nyaparake Force on 31 May, and about 1100 on the same day the 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry, reached the forward position. Lt. Col. Cladie A. Bailey's battalion pushed rapidly onward through Yakamul, from which the enemy withdrew hurriedly, and moved on to Parakovio against little opposition. Despite the lack of determined resistence on 31 May, it was soon to become evident that one battalion was not going to be strong enough to drive the Japanese forces already west of the Drindaria back across that stream. By this time elements of the *78th* and *80th Infantry Regiments, 20th Division,* had been definitely identified west of the Drindaria. Although the PERSECUTION Task Force did not yet know it, large segments of both regiments were operating in the Yakamul area, where they were supported by a few weapons of the *26th Field Artillery Regiment, 20th Division.* These Japanese forces now began to strike back at the 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry, which, on 1 June, was able

to advance only 400 yards beyond Parakovio before it was stopped by enemy machine gun and artillery fire. At 1115 General Martin ordered the unit to retire to Yakamul. Using Yakamul as a base, the battalion was to develop the enemy situation along the Harech River from the coast to the foothills of the Torricelli Mountains, five miles inland.

During the night of 1–2 June, Japanese artillery shelled the battalion command post and enemy patrols drove in outposts which had been set up just east of Yakamul. The next morning the battalion was divided into two parts. At Yakamul was stationed Company A, Headquarters Company, and part of Company D. (*Map 4*) This combined group, numbering about 350 men, was put under the command of Capt. Gile A. Herrick of Company A and designated Herrick Force. The rest of the battalion, now called Bailey Force, moved south down the trail from Yakamul to patrol along the Harech River.

The Japanese soon became very active around the perimeter of Herrick Force. On 3 June the enemy launched a series of minor attacks against Company A, which was separated from the rest of Herrick Force by a small, unbridged stream about four feet deep and varying in width from ten to fifty yards. Under cover of these attacks, other Japanese groups bypassed Herrick Force to the south and on the next morning appeared west of Yakamul, between Herrick Force and the two-mile distant perimeter of Company G, 127th Infantry.

Sporadic small arms fire, intensifying during the afternoon, was directed at all parts of the Herrick Force perimeter during 4 June. About 1640 this fire was augmented by mortar and artillery shells, a development which seemed to presage an imminent Japanese infantry attack. At 1830 an enemy force of more than company strength surged out of the jungle on the southeast side of the American perimeter in an apparent attempt to drive a wedge between Company A and the rest of Herrick Force. The attack was halted by automatic weapons fire and the barrier presented by the small stream. The enemy then turned northeast from the creek against Company A. Simultaneously, a small group of enemy attacked west along the beach.

Because Company A was in danger of being surrounded, Captain Herrick ordered the unit to withdraw across the small stream to Yakamul. Since the Japanese had the stream covered with small arms and at least one well-concealed machine gun, the withdrawal was a slow process and consumed over an hour. During the movement the Japanese continued to attack and, toward the end of the hour, succeeded in overrunning some of Company A's automatic weapons positions. Deprived of this support, most of the remaining troops retreated rapidly across the stream, leaving behind radios, mortars, machine guns, and twenty to twenty-five dead or wounded men. Most of the wounded managed to get across the stream after darkness, which was approaching at the time of the enemy's final attack.

By 1940 the Japanese were in complete possession of the Company A position, whence they could send flanking fire toward the Yakamul perimeter. Captain Herrick ordered his men to dig in deeply. He reorganized his positions and even put some of the lightly wounded on defensive posts. Japanese ground attacks kept up until 2200, and sporadic bursts of mortar, grenade, and machine gun fire continued throughout the night.

When he learned of the situation at Yakamul, General Martin ordered Bailey Force to return to the coast and relieve Herrick

Force. Radio communication difficulties prevented delivery of this order until 2000 and it was 2200 before Colonel Bailey could organize his force in the darkness and heavy jungle and start it moving north. By that time the Japanese had a strong force blocking the trail to Yakamul. Bailey Force therefore had to swing northwest toward the perimeter of Company G, 127th Infantry, two miles west of Yakamul. After an arduous overland march through trackless, heavily jungled terrain, the leading elements of Bailey Force began straggling into Company G's perimeter about 1130 on 5 June.

General Martin then ordered Bailey Force to move east and drive the Japanese from the Yakamul area, but this order was changed when the East Sector commander learned that Bailey Force had been marching for over thirteen hours on empty stomachs and was not yet completely assembled at Company G's perimeter. Bailey Force was thereupon fed from Company G's limited food supply and sent west along the coastal trail to the Driniumor River. Company G and the battery of the 126th Field Artillery Battalion which it had been protecting moved back to the Driniumor late in the afternoon.

Meanwhile, the evacuation of Herrick Force from Yakamul had also been ordered, and about 1115 on 5 June small boats arrived at Yakamul from Blue Beach to take the beleaguered troops back to the Tadji area. Insofar as time permitted, radios, ammunition, and heavy weapons for which there was no room on the boats were destroyed. As this work was under way, a few light mortars and light machine guns kept up a steady fire on the Japanese who, now surrounding the entire perimeter, had been harassing Herrick Force since dawn. At the last possible moment, just when it seemed the Japanese were about to launch a final infantry assault, Captain Herrick ordered his men to make for the small boats on the run. The move was covered by friendly rocket and machine gun fire from an LCM standing offshore, while the Japanese took the running men under fire from the old Company A positions. So fast and well organized was the sudden race for the boats that the Japanese had no time to get all their weapons into action, and only one American was wounded during the boarding. The small craft hurriedly left the area and took Herrick Force back to Blue Beach, where the unit was re-equipped. By 1500 the troops had rejoined the rest of the 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry, on the Driniumor River.

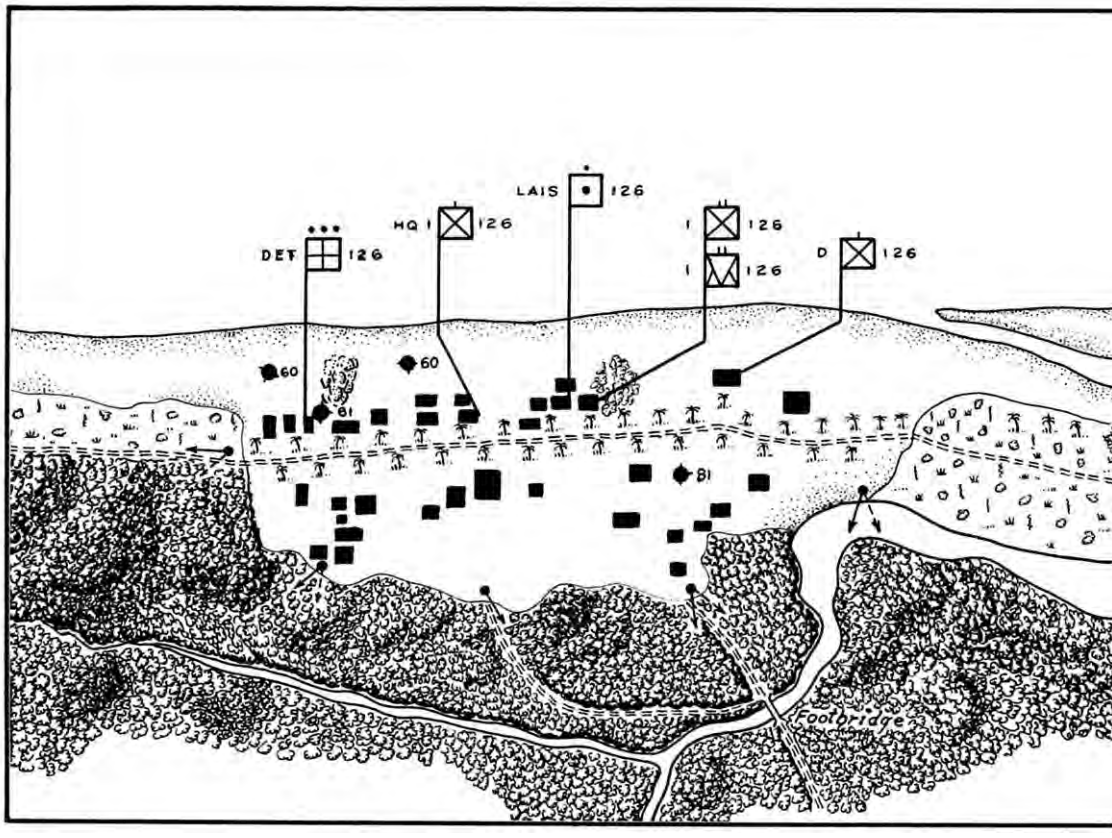
Losses of the 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry, during its action in the Yakamul area were 18 men killed, 75 wounded, and 8 missing. The battalion estimated that it had killed 200 to 250 Japanese and wounded many more.[33]

Operations Along the Driniumor

While the 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry, had been patrolling in the Yakamul area, elements of the 127th Infantry had been operating to the west along the Driniumor River from the coast six miles upstream to Afua.[34] Until the end of May little Japanese

[33] A Japanese postwar estimate sets Japanese losses in the Yakamul area from 31 May through 6 June at 100 men killed or wounded. Whatever the true figures, the estimate of the 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry, appears rather high.

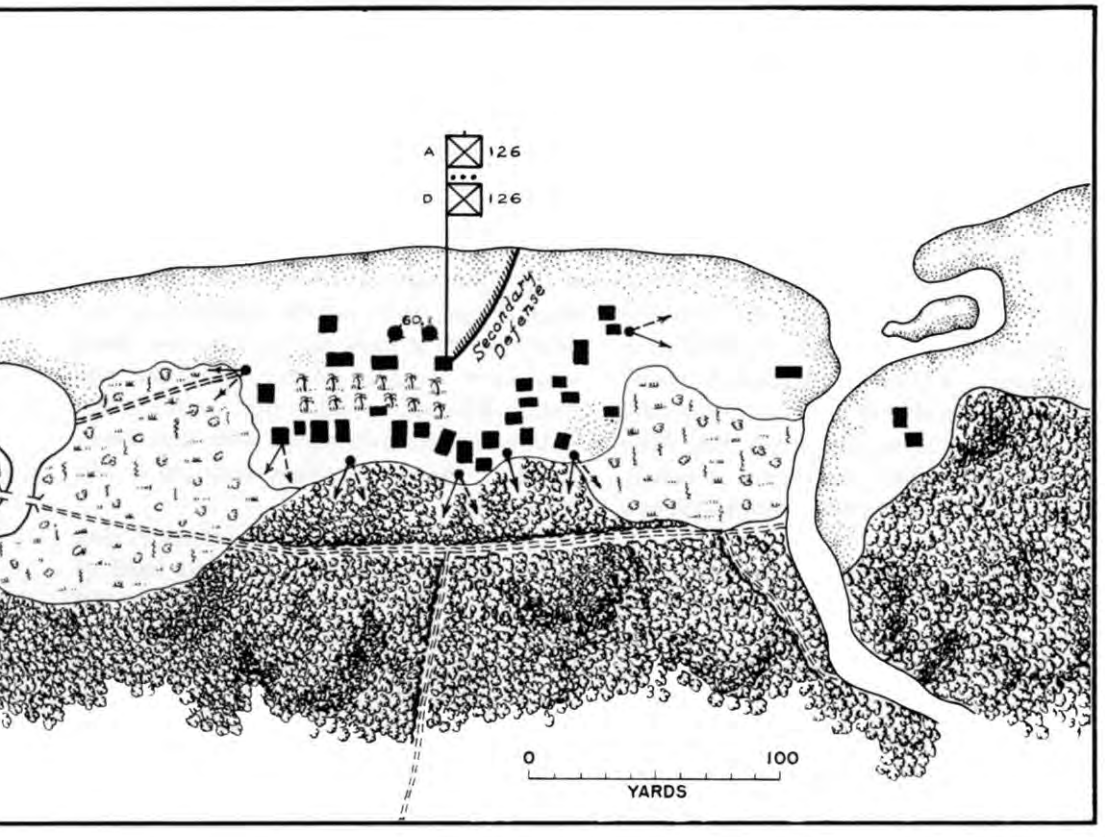
[34] Unless otherwise indicated, material in this subsection is from: PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 4 May–28 Jun 44, pp. 3–10; PTF G–3 Jnl, 4 May–28 Jun 44; 127th Inf Jnl files, 15–31 May, 1–11 Jun, 12–18 Jun, and 19–27 Jun 44; 1st Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 4 May–28 Jun 44; 3d Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 4 May–28 Jun 44; 127th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, 4 May–28 Jun 44, pp. 4–9; Martin Comments, pp. 2–4.



MAP 4



YAKAMUL AREA. *Reproduction of original sketch (top), prepared in the field by S–3, 1st Batallion, 126th Infantry. Aerial photography of the same area (bottom).*


A
126
D
126
Secondary Defense
60
0
100
YARDS



activity had been noted in the Anamo–Afua area, but on the 31st of the month a ration train carrying supplies up the west bank of the Driniumor to two platoons of Company L, 127th Infantry, at Afua was ambushed and forced back to the coast. Later in the day a party of Japanese estimated to be of company strength was seen crossing the Driniumor River from east to west at a point about 1,000 yards north of Afua. By dusk it appeared that at least two companies of Japanese had crossed the river near Afua and had established themselves on high, thickly jungled ground north and northwest of the village.

During the next four days elements of the 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, maneuvered in fruitless attempts to drive a Japanese group, 75 to 100 strong, off a low, jungled ridge about a mile and a half north of Afua. Colonel Howe, concerned about the lack of success of his troops, early on the morning of 5 June radioed to the battalion commander: "This is the third day of maneuvering to drive the enemy off that ridge. So far today we have had no report of enemy firing a shot and we are not sure they are even there. I have been besieged with questions as to why we don't fight the enemy. Unless we can report some accomplishment today I have no alibis to offer. Push either Fulmer [Company C] or Sawyer [Company B] in there until they draw fire." [85] During the morning Companies B and C organized a final attack and occupied the ridge, which the Japanese had abandoned during the night.

Meanwhile the PERSECUTION Task Force had decided to establish an outer defensive line along the Driniumor River. Originating in the Torricelli Mountains south of Afua, the river ran almost due north through many gorges and over steep falls to a sharp bend at Afua. From Afua to its mouth, a six-mile stretch, the river had an open bed varying from 75 to 150 yards in width. Except during tropical cloudbursts, this section of the river was not much more than knee deep. Dense rain forests extended to the river's banks at most places, although there were some areas of thinner, brushlike vegetation. Islands, or rather high points of the wide bed, were overgrown with high canebrake or grasses, limiting visibility across the stream.

The 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, dug in for 3,600 yards along the west bank of the river north from Afua, while the 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry, covered the same bank south from the river's mouth about 2,000 yards. A gap of some 3,000 yards which was left between the two units was covered by patrols. On 7 June, when the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, replaced the 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry, on the northern portion of the defense line, a company of the former unit was strung out along some 500 yards of the gap.

On the same day Japanese activity broke out anew in the Afua area, this time about 1,300 yards west of Afua on the Afua–Palauru trail, which had now become a main supply line for troops stationed in the Afua area. Two days later the Japanese had disappeared from the Afua–Palauru trail, much to the surprise of the PERSECUTION Task Force. The task force G–2 Section decided that the enemy had withdrawn when his ration and ammunition supply was depleted, and this belief was strengthened during the next day or so when, contrary to previous sightings, all Japanese patrol movements in the Driniumor River area seemed to be from west to east.

[85] Msg, 127th Inf to 1st Bn 127th Inf, 5 Jun 44, in 127th Inf Jnl file, 1–11 Jun 44.

For a couple of days some thought had been given to withdrawing the 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, from Afua because of the apparent threat to the Afua–Palauru supply line, but on 10 June Headquarters, PERSECUTION Task Force, decided to leave the battalion in place. On the same day the East Sector was ordered to speed development of strong defensive positions along the Driniumor. The river line was to be held as long as possible in the face of a Japanese attack and, if forced back, the East Sector troops were to delay enemy advances in successive positions—one along the line X-ray River–Koronal Creek, about halfway to the Nigia River, and the other at the Nigia itself—before retreating to the main line of resistance around the airfields. The East Sector was to patrol east of the Driniumor in order to maintain contact with the enemy.[36]

After 10 June Japanese patrols in the Driniumor area became less numerous and less aggressive, but more determined enemy parties were located in hilly and heavily forested terrain along the southern branches of Niumen Creek, which lay about 3,000 yards east of the Driniumor. The Japanese appeared to be forming a counterreconnaissance screen along Niumen Creek in order to prevent East Sector troops from finding out anything about deployments farther east. So successful were the enemy efforts that few patrols of the 127th Infantry (the 3d Battalion replaced the 1st at Afua on 22 June) managed to push beyond Niumen Creek.

In the area covered by the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, some patrols were able to move east along the coast as far as Yakamul, but about 20 June the Japanese put more forces into the Yakamul area and stopped American patrolling in the region. In an attempt to gather additional information, one patrol was carried far down the coast to Suain Plantation. There a landing was made in a veritable hornet's nest of Japanese activity and the few men who reached the beach were hurriedly withdrawn. No more such long-range efforts to obtain information were made.

The closing days of June found the PERSECUTION Task Force still in firm possession of the Tadji airfield area. Operations on the west flank had overcome all Japanese opposition in that region, and no more enemy activity had been encountered there after early May. On the east flank, however, the situation was far different. All elements of the PERSECUTION Task Force which had moved east of the Driniumor River had been gradually forced back until, at the end of the month, even small patrols were having difficulty operating east of the river. As the month ended, the task force's eastern defenses were along the west bank of the Driniumor, where the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, and the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, were digging in, anticipating future attacks by elements of the *18th Army*. Except for minor outposts, the rest of the PERSECUTION Task Force was encamped behind the Tadji airfield main line of resistance.

Support of East Sector Operations

East Sector forces were supplied by a variety of methods. Units along the coast were supported directly by small boat from Blue Beach or by native ration trains moving along the coastal track. Supplies to the Afua area went south from the coast along the Anamo–Afua trail or, later, over the inland track from the Tadji fields through

[36] PTF FO 4, 10 Jun 44, in PTF G–3 Jnl, 4 May–28 Jun 44; Martin Comments, pp. 2–3.

Chinapelli and Palauru. Wheeled transport was impracticable except along short stretches of the coastal track. In early June, when the Japanese ambushed many ration parties which attempted to reach Afua, experiments were made with air supply from the Tadji strips. Breakage and loss were heavy at first, but air supply rapidly became more successful as pilots gained experience and ground troops located good dropping grounds. A dropping ground cleared on the west bank of the Driniumor about 2,200 yards north of Afua soon became the principal source of supply for troops in the Afua area.[37]

Communications during operations east of the Driniumor were carried out principally by radio, but between units along the river and from the stream back to higher headquarters telephone became the principal means of communication. Keeping the telephone lines in service was a task to which much time and effort had to be devoted. The Japanese continually cut the lines, or American troops and heavy equipment accidentally broke the wires. The enemy often stationed riflemen to cover breaks in the line, thus making repair work dangerous. Usually, it was found less time consuming and less hazardous to string new wire than to attempt to find and repair breaks. As a result, miles of telephone wire soon lined the ground along the trails or was strung along the trees in the Driniumor River area and back to the Tadji perimeter.[38]

Before mid-June most telephone messages in the East Sector were sent "in the clear," but evidence began to indicate that the Japanese were tapping East Sector lines. On 19 June, therefore, the PERSECUTION Task Force directed that no more clear text telephone messages be used in the East Sector. As in the case of the telephone, all radio messages, of which some concerning routine matters had been previously sent in the clear, were encoded after mid-June.[39]

Radio communications presented no particular problems in the coastal region, but inland radio trouble was chronic and sometimes acute. Radio range was limited, especially at night, by dense jungle and atmospheric conditions, while almost daily tropical storms originating over the Torricelli Mountains hampered both transmission and reception. At times the only way radio could be employed in the Afua area was by having artillery liaison sets transmit to artillery liaison planes flying directly overhead. There were some indications that the Japanese tried to jam East Sector radio circuits, but there was never any proof that the suspected jamming was anything more than static caused by adverse atmospheric conditions.[40]

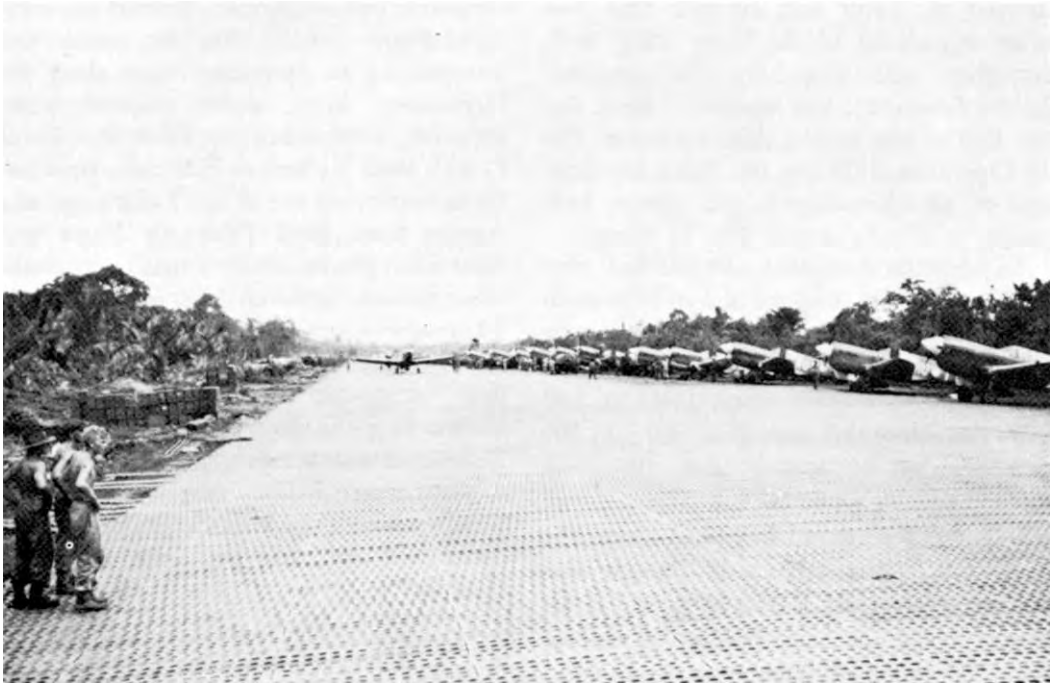
Principal naval support for units in the Aitape area after the end of April was pro-

[37] PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 4 May–28 Jun 44, pp. 12–19; 127th Inf Jnl files, 1–11, 12–18, and 19–27 Jun 44; PTF G–3 Jnl, 4 May–28 Jun 44.

[38] Intervs with Brig Gen Julian W. Cunningham, ex-CG 112 Cav RCT, and Capt Leonard Lowry, ex-CO Company I, 127th Inf, Apr 47, copies in OCMH files. Many of the remarks concerning telephone and radio communications in this section are based on the experience of the 112th Cavalry in operations along the Driniumor River after 28 June. According to Captain Lowry, who had been in the Aitape area since 23 April, the remarks apply equally well to the period before 28 June. The journals of all units of the PERSECUTION Task Force during the period 22 April to 28 June contain many entries concerning the difficulties of communication, especially radio, in the Aitape area.

[39] PTF G–3 Jnl, 4 May–28 Jun 44.

[40] The suspicion that the Japanese tapped telephone lines and jammed radio circuits is to be found in the journals and reports of most of the American units which operated in the Aitape area. However, no Japanese documents captured at the time, no on-the-spot interrogations of prisoners, and no postwar Japanese reports contain any evidence that the enemy engaged in either practice.



TADJI FIGHTER STRIP *after 28 April.*

vided by Seventh Fleet PT's. These speedy craft devoted most of their attention to Japanese barge traffic east of Aitape, sinking or damaging so many of the enemy craft that the *18th Army* units were forced to limit their westward movements to poor overland trails. One of the largest single "bags" was obtained during the night of 26–27 June when fifteen Japanese barges were sunk near Wewak. In addition to their antibarge activity, the PT's also undertook many reconnaissance missions both east and west of Aitape, and, from time to time, provided escorts or fire support for East Sector units operating east of the Driniumor. PT's also carried out many daylight patrols in co-operation with Australian aircraft based on the Tadji strips. The principal targets of these air-sea operations were Japanese coastal guns and troop concentrations along the beach between the Drindaria and Danmap Rivers.[41]

Close air support and other air missions requested by the PERSECUTION Task Force were carried out under the direction of No. 10 Operational Group, Royal Australian Air Force. From 24 April through 12 May this group's combat planes comprised three P–40 squadrons of No. 78 Wing. The wing moved out of the Aitape area toward the end of May and from the period 25 May to 9 June only the 110th Reconnaissance Squadron, U. S. Fifth Air Force, was stationed at Tadji. On the 9th a squadron of Beaufighters (twin-engined fighters) of the Royal Australian Air Force's No. 71 Wing

[41] PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 4 May–28 Jun 44, pp. 10–11.

arrived at Tadji and by the 15th two more squadrons of the same wing, both equipped with Beauforts (twin-engined fighter-bombers), had reached Aitape. On the 22d of the month, Headquarters, No. 10 Operational Group, left Tadji and control of air operations in the Aitape area passed to Headquarters, No. 71 Wing.

In May the Australian aircraft flew over 1,600 sorties and dropped almost fifty-seven tons of bombs of all types on ground targets from Aitape to Wewak. During June the pace of air operations was stepped up and from the 7th of that month until 6 July the two Beaufort squadrons alone flew 495 sorties and dropped about 325 tons of bombs. When more bombing than the Tadji-based Beauforts could provide was needed, A–20's and B–25's of the Fifth Air Force, flying first from Nadzab in eastern New Guinea and later from Hollandia, swung into action. The Australian Beauforts were also occasionally pressed into service as supply aircraft, dropping rations and ammunition to American forces along the Driniumor. Most supply missions were, however, undertaken by Fifth Air Force C–47's from Nadzab or Hollandia or sometimes employing one of the Tadji strips as a staging base. Both Fifth Air Force and Australian planes also flew many reconnaissance missions between Aitape and Wewak. These operations, together with the bombing of coastal villages occupied by the Japanese, suspected enemy bivouac areas, bridges over the many streams between the Driniumor and Wewak, and Japanese field or antiaircraft artillery emplacements, materially assisted the East Sector in the execution of its delaying and patrolling missions.[42]

[42] Ltrs, F/Lt Davies, Officer-in-Charge, War Hist Sec., Hq RAAF, to author, 2 Apr and 8 May 48, in OCMH files; PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 4 May–28 Jun 44, pp. 10–11.

CHAPTER VI

Deployment for Battle

Reinforcement and Reorganization of the PERSECUTION Task Force

Prior to 22 April the PERSECUTION Task Force had little information concerning the intentions of the *18th Army*, but soon after that date the task force learned that the Japanese unit had planned to move from Wewak toward Hollandia. In May and June, East Sector operations had produced many indications that a westward displacement of the *18th Army* was in full swing.

The Decision to Reinforce Aitape

For some time the G–2 Section of Headquarters, ALAMO Force, did not believe that the movements noted by the PERSECUTION Task Force presaged a Japanese attack on the Aitape perimeter. Instead, ALAMO Force considered it more probable that the *18th Army* was merely establishing strong points along the coast west from Wewak in order to delay Allied pushes eastward or to provide flank protection for the main body of the *18th Army* which might attempt to bypass Aitape and Hollandia to the south and join the *2d Army* in western New Guinea.[1] Strength was added to these beliefs when patrols of the Allied Intelligence Bureau (AIB),[2] operating far inland beyond the Torricelli Mountains, reported westward movement of many small Japanese parties along inland trails.[3] Because more definite information was lacking, ALAMO Force, until mid-June, clung to the idea that the *18th Army* might bypass Aitape.[4]

The first identifications of organized enemy units east of Aitape had been secured during operations near Marubian in mid-May, when it was found that elements of the *20th Division* were operating in that area.[5] Later the same month the PERSECUTION Task Force discovered from captured

[1] ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 40, 10 May 44, copy in G–2 DofA files.

[2] The AIB was an operating agency of G–2 GHQ SWPA. It sent patrols behind enemy lines to gather information by a variety of means. Most of the white personnel of AIB parties operating in eastern New Guinea were Australians familiar with the terrain by reason of prewar residence or exploration. Native police were also used, but only occasionally were American personnel attached to the AIB parties in eastern New Guinea. In the Aitape area, the PTF sent out a few long-range American patrols. A few radio intelligence teams, operating to some extent under PTF direction and for other purposes on missions for GHQ SWPA, were also sent inland from the Tadji perimeter.

[3] ALAMO Force, G–2 Daily Rpt, 18 May 44, in ALAMO G–2 Jnl Hollandia, 10 May–15 Jun 44.

[4] ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 45, 14 Jun 44, copy in G–2 DofA files, indicates a final change of attitude on the part of the ALAMO G–2 Section.

[5] Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE–3134, 15 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 14–15 May 44; Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE–3361, 16 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 16–18 May 44.

documents and prisoners that elements of both the *20th* and *41st Divisions* were along the Dandriwad River.[6] Documents captured by AIB patrols at the end of May indicated that the two divisions were to attack both Hollandia and Aitape. At that time the ALAMO Force G–2 Section estimated that the *18th Army* might be mounting a two-pronged assault on Aitape,[7] and by early June the G–2 Section believed that the *20th Division* was in place east of Aitape, waiting only for the *41st Division* to move up before launching an assault against the PERSECUTION Task Force. The other division of the *18th Army*, the *51st*, was thought to be at Wewak, and it was believed that the unit was not to move westward. Thus, by early June it seemed evident to ALAMO Force that the Japanese parties previously encountered south of the Torricelli Mountains comprised service troops no longer needed at Wewak or troops who had started moving westward before 22 April.

The ALAMO Force G–2 Section expected that the *20th* and *41st Divisions* could be in position to attack the PERSECUTION Task Force by the end of June.[8] General Krueger believed that a Japanese assault could gain only temporary containment of Allied forces at Aitape and that an attack would be a diversionary measure aimed at delaying further Allied advances in western New Guinea. Such action would have much to recommend itself to higher Japanese headquarters which, the ALAMO Force G–2 Section correctly believed, had already become reconciled to the loss of the *18th Army*.[9]

On 17 June General MacArthur questioned ALAMO Force concerning the advisability of reinforcing the PERSECUTION Task Force. Though he considered it improbable that an *18th Army* assault could seriously menace the Allied position at Aitape, he thought it possible that the PERSECUTION Task Force might need reinforcing if the *18th Army* should muster all its available strength for an attack. He informed General Krueger that the 43d Infantry Division was scheduled for an early move to Aitape in order to stage there for operations farther west. But that division could not arrive at Aitape before the end of the first week in July. General MacArthur therefore suggested that if it appeared necessary to reinforce the PERSECUTION Task Force before July, a regiment of the 31st Infantry Division might be made available immediately.[10]

To these suggestions General Krueger replied that many preparations had already been made at Aitape to meet any attack by the *18th Army*. For instance, both ammunition supply and hospitalization facilities had recently been increased. General Krueger believed that the forces already at Aitape

[6] Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE–958, 21 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 19–21 May 44; Rads, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WF–3604 and WF–3526, 22 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 22–25 May 44; Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE–1152, 29 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 26–29 May 44.

[7] Rads, ALAMO to PTF, WF–5374 and WF–6412, 30 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 30 May–2 Jun 44; ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 43, 31 May 44, copy in G–2 DofA files.

[8] Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE–1450, 10 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 7–12 Jun 44; Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE–1491, 12 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 13–19 Jun 44; Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WF–3097, 15 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 13–19 Jun 44; ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 45, 14 Jun 44, copy in G–2 DofA files.

[9] Rad, ALAMO to PTF, WF–6412, 30 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 30 May–2 Jun 44; ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 43, 31 May 44, copy in G–2 DofA files.

[10] Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, CX–13847, 17 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 13–19 Jun 44. The 43d Division had previously been in combat in the South Pacific Area. The 31st Division had not yet been in action and was finishing amphibious and jungle training at Oro Bay, New Guinea.

could, if properly handled, beat off any Japanese attack that might occur prior to the 43d Division's arrival. If it looked necessary, however, he might send the 112th Cavalry Regimental Combat Team to Aitape. He considered that unit preferable to a regiment of the 31st Division, since he wanted to keep that division intact for a future operation. He requested an early decision from General MacArthur as to which unit should be moved to Aitape.[11]

While higher headquarters was reaching a decision concerning reinforcements, new information obtained by the PERSECUTION Task Force prompted a change in plans. Documents captured after mid-June indicated that the Japanese were to complete a thorough reconnaissance south, southeast, and east of the PERSECUTION Task Force's perimeter by the end of June in preparation for an attack by the *20th* and *41st Divisions*. This attack, it now appeared, awaited only the completion of the reconnaissance and the arrival of the bulk of the *41st Division* in the forward area.[12]

By this time the PERSECUTION Task Force's 155-mm. artillery had been sent to new operational areas in western New Guinea and tentative plans had been made to send the Beaufighter and Beaufort squadrons of No. 71 Wing westward also. General Gill, upon receiving the new information concerning enemy intentions, requested that the air support squadrons be retained or replaced; that a battalion of 155-mm. howitzers be sent to Aitape; and that the 112th Cavalry Regimental Combat Team be moved forward immediately.[13]

A few days later General MacArthur's headquarters, which had secured the information from radio intercepts, informed General Krueger that the *18th Army* planned to attack about the end of the first ten days in July, employing 20,000 troops in the forward area and another 11,000 in reserve.[14] ALAMO Force and the Allied Naval Forces immediately rounded up ships to send the 112th Cavalry Regimental Combat Team to Aitape, where the unit arrived on 27 June. A 155-mm. howitzer battalion was shipped to Aitape a few days later and No. 71 Wing was ordered to remain there. At the same time General Krueger reconsidered his decision not to employ part of the 31st Division and ordered preparations made to move the 124th Regimental Combat Team of that division to Aitape. Efforts were also made to speed the shipment of the 43d Division from its New Zealand staging area to Aitape.[15]

When all the reinforcements arrived, the PERSECUTION Task Force's strength would equal two and two-thirds divisions. General Krueger therefore decided that a corps

[11] Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WF–3592, 18 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 13–19 Jun 44. The 112th Cavalry RCT comprised the 112th Cavalry Regiment, the 148th Field Artillery Battalion, and supporting troops. The RCT, which was a separate unit not part of any division, had been in action on New Britain.

[12] Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE–1659, 19 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 13–19 Jun 44; Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE–1694, 20 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 20–25 Jun 44; ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 46, 21 Jun 44, copy in G–2 DofA files.

[13] Rads, PTF to ALAMO, AE–1699 and AE–1711, 20 Jun 44, and AE–1806, 24 Jun 44; Rads, ALAMO to PTF, WF–3970, 20 Jun 44, and WF–4060, 21 Jun 44. All in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Holla dia, 20–25 Jun 44.

[14] Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO Adv Hq, C–14133, 24 Jun 44, and Rad, ALAMO Rear Hq to ALAMO Adv Hq, WF–4646, 24 Jun 44, both in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 20–25 Jun 44. At this time ALAMO Advance Headquarters was at Hollandia, while the rear echelon of the headquarters remained in eastern New Guinea.

[15] Rads, ALAMO to PTF, WF–3970, 20 Jun 44, and WF–4060, 21 Jun 44, both in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 20–25 Jun 44.

headquarters would be needed at Aitape. He chose for the command at Aitape Maj. Gen. Charles P. Hall who, together with his staff of XI Corps headquarters, had recently arrived in New Guinea from the United States. The change in command was not to entail a change in the principal mission of the PERSECUTION Task Force—defense of the Tadji airstrips. To carry out his mission, General Hall was instructed to break the initial impetus of the apparently impending *18th Army* attack and, when the strength of the PERSECUTION Task Force and the tactical situation permitted, undertake a vigorous counterattack. With these instructions in mind, General Hall assumed command of the PERSECUTION Task Force as of midnight 27–28 June.[16]

While this change in command was being effected, more information concerning the plans of the *18th Army* was obtained from radio intercepts and captured documents. It became known that the *20th Division* was to cross the "Hanto" River on 29 June, executing attacks toward Afua and East Sector headquarters installations, which were located at Anamo, on the beach just west of the Driniumor's mouth.[17] General Headquarters forwarded this information to ALAMO Force with little attempt at interpretation, but the ALAMO Force G–2 Section decided that the Hanto River was probably the Driniumor. The prospective attack, ALAMO Force believed, would be launched during the night of 28–29 June at a point about two miles inland from the mouth of the Driniumor. It was considered probable that the *78th Infantry, 20th Division,* would aim for control of the Afua–Palauru trail, while the *80th Infantry* moved on Anamo. Assuming the success of its initial attack, the *20th Division* apparently planned to assemble at "Hill 56," tentatively located about 4,000 yards northwest of Afua, and then push on toward the Tadji airfields. ALAMO Force estimated that the maximum strength with which the *20th Division* could attack was about 5,200 men.[18]

If this interpretation of available information was correct, General Hall had but one day to prepare his new command to meet the attack of the *18th Army.*

Reorganizations and Redispositions

As soon as General Hall and the few members of his XI Corps staff that he had brought forward became acquainted with the situation in the Aitape area, Headquarters, XI Corps, assumed the role of PERSECUTION Task Force Headquarters, using many men of Headquarters, 32d Division, until the rest of the corps staff could reach Aitape. Next, the command structure of the task force was rearranged, some changes in names were made, and several troop redispositions were effected.

The western part of the main line of resistance around the airfields—the area previously assigned to the West and Center Sectors—became the responsibility of the Western Sector, under Brig. Gen. Alexander N. Stark, Jr. The eastern section of the main line of resistance was held by the Eastern Sector under General Gill. This unit also set up an outpost line of resistance along the Nigia River. General Martin's command, redesignated the PERSECUTION Covering Force, was to continue to hold the delaying position along the Driniumor River. The

[16] Ltr OI, Comdr ALAMO to CG XI Corps, 25 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 27–29 Jun 44.

[17] Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, C–14205, 26 Jun 44, and Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE–1884, 28 Jun 44, both in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 27–29 Jun 44.

[18] Rad, ALAMO to PTF, WF–1027, 27 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 27–29 Jun 44.

western boundary of the covering force was a line running south from the coast along Akanai Creek and the X-ray River, a little over halfway from the Driniumor to the Nigia.

Since no attacks were expected from the west, troops assigned to the Western Sector comprised principally engineers. The Eastern Sector was composed of the 32d Division less those elements assigned to the PERSECUTION Covering Force. Supply, administration, and evacuation for the covering force were responsibilities of Headquarters, 32d Division, which, for these purposes, acted in its administrative capacity rather than in its tactical role as Headquarters, Eastern Sector. All three tactical commands operated directly under General Hall's control.[19]

While these changes were being made, the 112th Cavalry Regimental Combat Team (less the 148th Field Artillery Battalion) had arrived at Blue Beach and had been assigned to General Martin's operation control. The combat team was commanded by Brig. Gen. Julian W. Cunningham, while the dismounted (and oft disgruntled about it) men of the 112th Cavalry Regiment were led by Col. Alexander M. Miller, III.[20] The cavalry regiment was about half the strength of an infantry regiment. It comprised only two squadrons, each composed of three troops, as opposed to the three battalions of four companies each in an infantry regiment. Instead of the three heavy weapons companies organic to the corresponding infantry unit, the 112th Cavalry had only one heavy weapons troop. Moreover, the cavalry unit had arrived at Aitape with less than its authorized personnel. At no time during operations at Aitape did it number more than 1,500 men, in comparison with the 3,000-odd of an infantry regiment.[21]

Initially, it was planned that the 112th Cavalry would take up positions in the Palauru area to defend the right rear of the PERSECUTION Covering Force and act as General Martin's reserve. General Hall, deciding that the Driniumor River line needed strengthening, changed this plan and on 29 June sent the regiment forward to the X-ray and Driniumor Rivers. Leaving the rest of the regiment at the X-ray, the 2d Squadron moved on to the Driniumor and took up defensive positions in the Afua area. Upon the arrival of this squadron at the river, the extent of the Driniumor defenses that were previously the responsibility of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, was reduced and at the same time operational control of the infantry battalion passed to General Cunningham. This addition still did not bring the strength of the latter's command up to that of an infantry regiment.[22]

About the same time, the mission of the PERSECUTION Covering Force was changed.

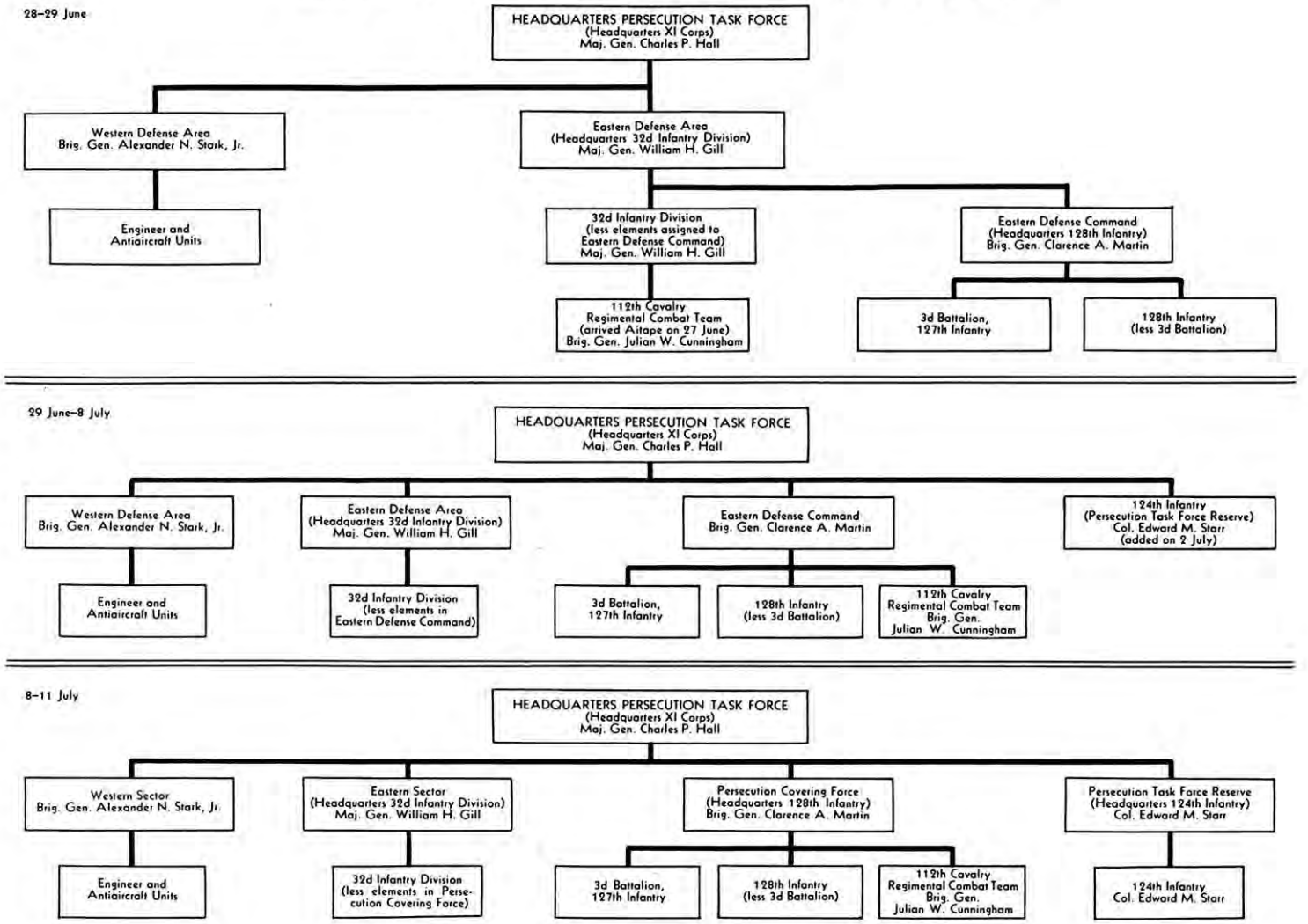
[19] PTF FO 5, 29 Jun 44, in PTF G–3 Jnl, 27 Jun–3 Jul 44; miscellaneous orders and memos in PTF G–3 Jnl, 8–11 Jul 44. General Stark, Assistant Division Commander, 43d Division, had just arrived at Blue Beach with an advance echelon of division headquarters. As originally set up on 29 June, the three commands were named, from west to east, the Western Defense Command, the Eastern Defense Area, and the Eastern Defense Command. The similarity in the names of the two eastern components soon proved confusing and the final changes, as outlined above, were effected on 8 July.

[20] The 148th Field Artillery (105-mm. howitzers) reached Aitape in mid-July, and operated as part of the general artillery support under PTF (XI Corps) artillery.

[21] Interv, author with Lt Col P. L. Hooper, ex-Exec Off, 112th Cav RCT, 25 Mar 48, in OCMH files.

[22] *Ibid.;* PTF G–3 Jnl, 27 Jun–3 Jul 44; 112th Cav Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 1–4. The 112th Cavalry RCT did not submit a report for the Aitape campaign, but merely indorsed that of the 112th Cavalry Regiment.

CHART 9—THE PERSECUTION TASK FORCE: 28 JUNE–11 JULY 1944



General Krueger, who was maintaining close touch with the situation at Aitape, wanted the Japanese to be met and fought to a decision as far on the east flank as possible. Previously, Generals Hall and Gill had assumed that the covering force might be gradually forced back from the Driniumor, but now General Hall ordered the force to retreat only in the face of overwhelming pressure. The 112th Cavalry had been released to General Martin's control to aid in the execution of this new mission, and the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry, was also made available to him. On 29 June the infantry battalion took over about 3,000 yards of the Driniumor line between the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, and the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry. Close artillery support for the covering force was provided by the 120th and 129th Field Artillery Battalions, which emplaced their 105-mm. howitzers near Anamo. Company B, 632d Tank Destroyer Battalion, moved forward to the mouth of the Driniumor at the same time. All units reconnoitered routes of withdrawal back to the next delaying position, the Koronal Creek–X-ray River line, and planned defenses along that line so that in case withdrawal became necessary, confusion would be minimized. General Martin issued orders that no unit was to leave the Driniumor line without his instructions.[23]

Gathering Combat Intelligence

General Hall had strengthened the Driniumor line in the expectation that the *20th Division* would attack on or about 29 June. But there was no attack on that date. It was therefore decided that the information upon which the expectation was based had been incorrectly interpreted. If so, greater credence had to be placed on conflicting evidence from radio intercepts and captured documents indicating that the *18th Army* was to attack on 10 July. This interpretation was given some corroboration when a prisoner captured on 30 June divulged that the *20th Division* was planning to move against the Driniumor line between 1 and 10 July.[24]

Reconnaissance in Force Eastward

General Hall, in an attempt to locate the *20th Division,* ordered the PERSECUTION Covering Force to send strong patrols east of the Driniumor to the Harech River. A few patrols, moving along the coast, got almost as far as Yakamul, but so efficient had Japanese counterreconnaissance operations become that this was as close as any Allied patrols came to the Harech River during the period 30 June through 10 July. In the southern sector of the Driniumor line patrols confirmed previous reports that the Japanese maintained a counterreconnaissance screen along Niumen Creek. Here Japanese units were digging in and holding wherever and whenever patrol contacts were made. These enemy groups were not large, however, nor did the Japanese patrols encountered in the Yakamul area appear to be particularly strong. All American patrol efforts failed to disclose any evidence of large, organized Japanese units or movements. Yet both the task force and ALAMO Force were sure that at least two regiments of the *20th Division* and elements of the

[23] PTF G–3 Jnl, 27 Jun–3 Jul 44; Martin Comments, pp. 4–6.

[24] ALAMO Force, G–2 Ests of Enemy Sit, Aitape, 30 Jun and 1 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 30 Jun–3 Jul 44; Rads, PTF to ALAMO, AE–1948, AE–1953, and AE–1957, 30 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 30 Jun–3 Jul 44; Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO Adv Hq, C–14133, 24 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 20–25 Jun 44.

41st Division were located somewhere in the area between the Harech and Driniumor Rivers.[25]

The fact that no large enemy units could be located east of the Driniumor caused considerable worry at ALAMO Force headquarters, and General Krueger was unhappily aware that the development of the situation in front of the PERSECUTION Covering Force was being left to the volition of the Japanese. It is also possible that he wished to hurry the battle he knew was impending at Aitape in order that some of the forces there could be freed for operations farther westward once the Japanese attack had been turned back. Whatever the case, on 8 July he instructed General Hall to seize the initiative by sending a strong reconnaissance in force across the Driniumor to ascertain the enemy's intentions and dispositions.[26]

These instructions got a cool reception at the headquarters of the PERSECUTION Task and Covering Forces. General Hall had planned to send at least two battalions of the 124th Infantry on an amphibious enveloping movement down the coast to Nyaparake to land in the rear of the *20th Division*. General Martin was deeply disturbed when he learned that the reconnaissance units would have to be taken from the Driniumor line, which he already considered inadequately manned to meet the expected Japanese attack. Although he preferred the amphibious plan to the overland movement, General Hall could not argue the point with ALAMO Force and, by the same token, General Martin, realizing that General Hall was under pressure from higher headquarters, chose not to argue with his immediate superior. General Hall postponed the 124th Infantry's operation until 13 July, and he ordered General Martin to begin the reconnaissance in force on the morning of 10 July.[27]

General Hall now had at his disposal fifteen infantry battalions and two understrength, dismounted cavalry squadrons. Three infantry battalions of the 32d Division and the two cavalry units were assigned to General Martin's PERSECUTION Covering Force. To accomplish his primary mission—defense of the Tadji strips—General Hall felt it necessary to hold at least six infantry battalions of the 32d Division near the airfields. The three battalions of the 124th Infantry (which had arrived in echelons at Blue Beach beginning on 2 July) he decided to hold out of action temporarily either as a reserve or, when possible, to execute the amphibious envelopment already planned. Having thus committed the 124th Infantry and six battalions of the 32d Division to stations in the Tadji–Blue Beach area, General Hall had no choice but to take the reconnaissance in force units from General Martin's Driniumor River troops. By this action, the PERSECUTION Covering Force's defenses were weakened along the very line where the Japanese were first expected to strike.[28]

[25] PTF G–3 Jnls, 4–8 and 8–11 Jul 44; Rads, PTF to ALAMO, 6 and 7 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 4–9 Jul 44.

[26] Interv, author with Gen Hall, ex-Comdr PTF and XI Corps, 27 Mar 47, copy in OCMH files; Martin Comments, pp. 6–7; Rad, ALAMO to PTF, WH–1120, 8 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 4–9 Jun 44.

[27] Interv, author with Gen Hall, 27 Mar 47; Martin Comments, p. 7; Ltr, Gen Hall to Gen Ward, 29 Nov 50, in OCMH files; PTF G–3 Jnl, 8–11 Jul 44; 124th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 1–3.

[28] Interv, author with Gen Hall, 27 Mar 47; Martin Comments, p. 8; 124th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 1–3. Throughout the Aitape operation infantry units were disposed by battalion, often in *ad hoc* organizations. Regimental cannon companies were often employed for guard or labor duties at the airfields or Blue Beach.

For the reconnaissance in force eastward, General Martin chose the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, and the 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry. The infantry was to advance along the coast and the cavalry overland from Afua. The maneuver was to be carried out in an aggressive manner. Minor opposition was not to slow the reconnaissance, and the forces were to push rapidly eastward to the Harech River. Once on the Harech, the two units were to consolidate, patrol to the south and east, and prepare for further advances upon orders from General Hall. Units remaining along the Driniumor were to send out patrols to their respective fronts in the area between the reconnaissance units in order to locate any Japanese forces in that area.[29]

The reconnaissance started about 0730 on 10 July as the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, Company B leading, waded across the mouth of the Driniumor. Progress down the coast was rapid and uneventful until 1000 when, at a point about three miles east of the Driniumor, the leading elements were held up by a Japanese unit estimated to be a company in strength, which was dug in along the coastal trail. The infantry could not take the enemy position by assault, and artillery support from the 105-mm. howitzers at Anamo was requested. This fire, quickly and accurately delivered, killed some Japanese and scattered the rest. Company B resumed the advance but was stopped again at enemy positions on the banks of a small stream 300 yards farther east. This time one artillery concentration failed to dislodge the Japanese and, finding it impossible to outflank the enemy defenses, the forward infantry units were disengaged while a second concentration was brought down on the enemy positions.

After the artillery fired, Company B continued the advance until 1745, by which time it had reached a point less than a mile west of Yakamul. In terrain that afforded good positions for night defenses, the company dug in, while the rest of the battalion established a perimeter running westward along the coastal trail. Not more than fifty Japanese had actually been seen during the day. Casualties for the 1st Battalion were five killed and eight wounded.[30]

At the southern end of the Driniumor line the 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry, right arm of the reconnaissance in force, delayed its departure until the 1st Squadron moved up to the Driniumor from the X-ray and did not leave Afua until 1000. The 2d Squadron did not follow any trail but, having been ordered to avoid contact with the enemy during the first part of the movement eastward, cut its way through heavy jungle over alternately hilly and swampy terrain. The nature of the terrain slowed progress so much that at 1445, when the advance was halted for the night, the squadron was not more than a mile east of the Driniumor. No contact with enemy forces had been made during the day.[31]

[29] PTF G–3 Jnl, 8–11 Jul 44; Martin Comments, pp. 8–9; Rad, PTF to PCF, 9 Jul 44, copy in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 10–12 Jul 44; Rads, PTF to ALAMO, AE–1053 and AE–1200, 9 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnls Hollandia, 4–9 and 10–12 Jul 44, respectively.

[30] PTF G–3 Jnl, 8–11 Jul 44; 1st Bn 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44; 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–27 Jul 44. The battalion's casualty figures are from the battalion journal and do not agree with other sources.

[31] 112th Cav Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 5–9; PTF G–3 Jnl, 8–11 Jul 44; interv, author with Col Hooper, 25 Mar 48; Martin Comments, p. 11. The records state that the squadron advanced one and three-fourths miles during the day, but the figure used in the text is that provided by Colonel Hooper. Orders to the squadron to avoid contact were apparently given verbally, presumably by the regimental commander, and do not appear in the records.

General Hall was not satisfied with the progress the two arms of the reconnaissance had made during the day. He was especially disappointed in the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, which, he felt, should have been able to move farther eastward. Both the infantry and cavalry units were ordered to resume the advance eastward in a more aggressive manner on the morrow. Further efforts were to be made by both units to maintain contact with forces back on the Driniumor. The 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry, had been unable to maintain contact, either physically or by radio, with regimental headquarters.[32]

Redispositions Along the Driniumor

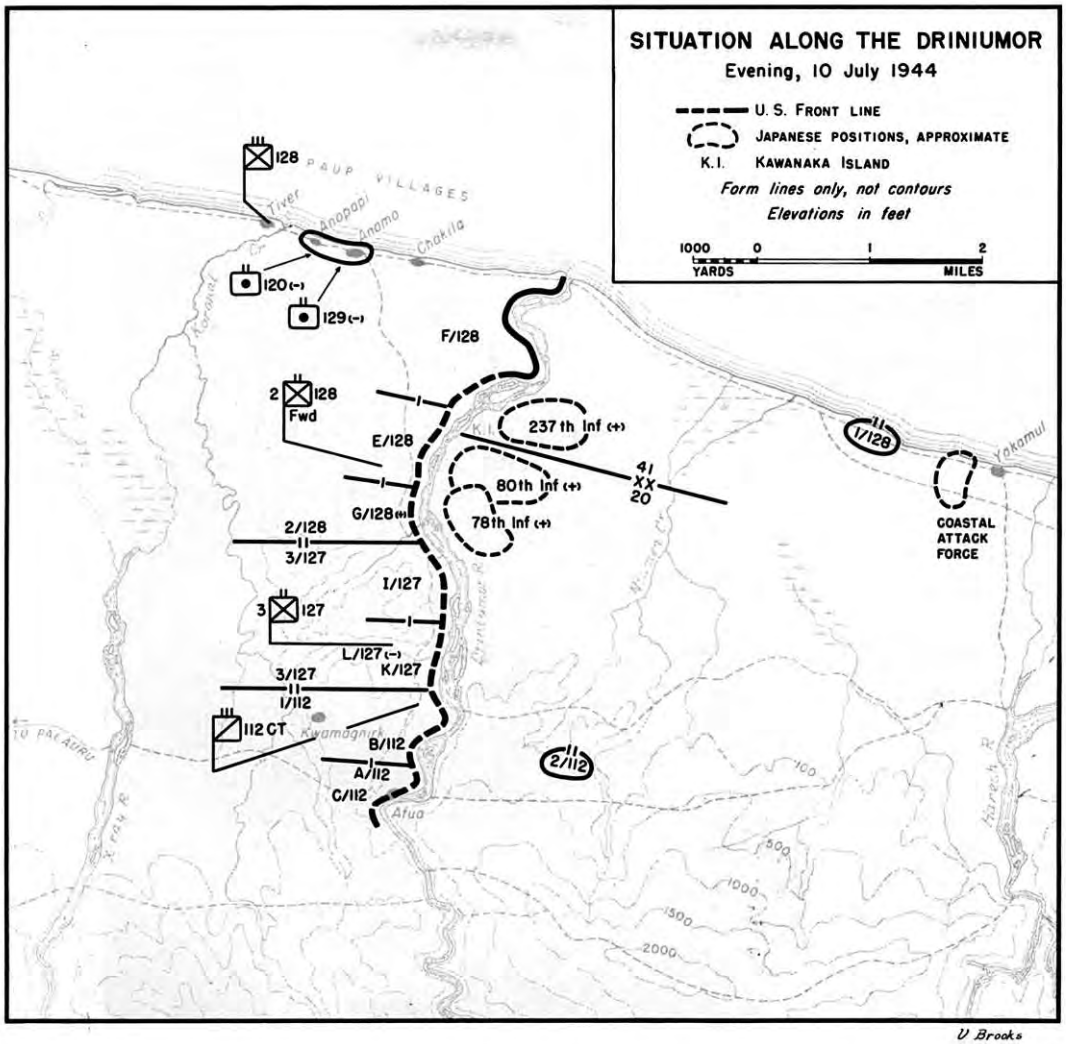
Back on the Driniumor sweeping changes in dispositions had taken place.[33] (*Map 5*). The 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry, had to assume responsibility for the positions vacated by the 1st Battalion. The 2d Battalion's sector now extended from the mouth of the Driniumor to the junction of the Anamo–Afua trail with the river bank. This was a straight-line distance of about 5,000 yards, but configurations of the Driniumor's west bank made it over 6,000 yards (almost three and a half miles) on the ground.

Company F, 128th Infantry, was on the left of the 2d Battalion guarding the west bank from the mouth inland about 3,900 yards or over two miles. The northern portion of the company zone was very well organized, having been developed by various units since the middle of May, but positions in the southern quarter of the sector had not been completed. To the right of Company F was Company E, in position along a front of 1,250 yards. South of Company E, tying its right flank into the left of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, was Company G, spread over a front of about 1,000 yards. Company G's machine gun positions and riflemen's foxholes were closer together—about sixty to seventy-five yards apart—than those of the other 2d Battalion companies. The company also had some low barbed wire strung in front of its position. Company E had little or no wire and its strong points were about ninety yards apart. Company G's lines were shortened about 100 yards late in the afternoon when a rifle platoon of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, assumed responsibility for that much of the company's area.

By nightfall all the riflemen of the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry, were in the new defensive positions. The heavy machine guns of Company H were disposed along the bank of the river between infantry strong points (bunkers or groups of foxholes), their lines of fire tied in with those of the rifle companies' light machine guns and automatic rifles (BAR's). Company H's 81-mm. mortars were emplaced about 200 yards west of the river and were registered in on area targets along the bed and the east bank of the Driniumor. The 60-mm. mortars of the three rifle companies had targets overlapping those of the larger weapons. The forward battalion command post was about 800 yards west of the Driniumor, behind the center of Company E's sector. The remainder of the battalion headquarters, together with a tank destroyer platoon, was located on the coast just west of the river's mouth. The battalion had no reserve which it could move to meet a Japanese attack.

[32] PTF G–3 Jnl, 8–11 Jul 44.

[33] Information in this subsection is from: PTF G–3 Jnl, 8–11 Jul 44; PCF G–3 Jnl, 9–12 Jul 44; Interv, author with Capt Lowry, Apr 47; 3d Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44; 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–27 Jul 44.



MAP 5

South of the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry, the 3d Battalion of the 127th Infantry had a sector about 2,500 yards or almost a mile and a half long. Company I was on the left, with every available man in position along 1,400 yards of curving river bank. Strong points were about 100 yards apart and the company had no protecting wire. Company K, with a nearly straight stretch of bank about 1,100 yards in length to hold, was on the right of Company I. The dispositions of Company M's heavy weapons were similar to those of Company H, 128th Infantry. Company L of the 127th, which had sent many patrols east of the Driniumor during the day and which had lent one of its rifle platoons to Company G, 128th Infantry, was not on the line. Instead, the unit



DRINIUMOR RIVER, *in area held by the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry.*

guarded the battalion command post, which was situated about 700 yards west of the Driniumor behind Company K.

The 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, south of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, was responsible for about 3,000 yards of the Driniumor line. This distance was divided about equally between Troop B on the left (tying into the lines of Company K, 127th Infantry) and Troop A on the right. The line extended to a point about 500 yards south of Afua, where Troop C took up support positions. Troop C did not place many men along the river but concentrated at Afua to refuse the south flank of the PERSECUTION Covering Force and to provide a reserve for the 112th Cavalry. Weapons Troop's heavy machine guns were disposed for the most part in the sectors of Troops A and B. Headquarters of the 112th Cavalry and General Cunningham's command post were situated about 200 yards west of the Driniumor behind Troop B. A small rear echelon group of the 112th Cavalry remained on the X-ray River at the Afua–Palauru trail crossing to protect the overland line of communications back to Blue Beach.

Along the coast west of the Driniumor, at Anamo, Anopapi, and Tiver, were located field artillery units, tank destroyers, and the headquarters installations of the PERSECUTION Covering Force.[34] Communications from these units to those on the Driniumor were carried out for the most part by radio, although some telephone wire was used. Units along the river communicated with each other by means of sound-powered telephone.

[34] General Martin's headquarters was at this time made up of men from Headquarters, 128th Infantry, the remainder of which headquarters was controlling the 128th Infantry (less two battalions) at the Tadji main line of resistance. Martin Comments, p. 11.

Intelligence, 10 July

Many bits of information concerning the intentions of the *18th Army* were now available to the PERSECUTION Task Force. Corroborating evidence for the idea that an attack might take place on 10 July was secured that day when the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, captured a member of the *237th Infantry, 41st Division*. This prisoner divulged to interrogators in the forward area that the Japanese attack would come that night, but back at task force headquarters, where final interrogations were made, his information was evaluated as indicating the assault would be made within the next day or two. The prisoner believed that the attack was to have two axes, one along the coast and the other across the Driniumor about midway between Afua and the river's mouth.[35]

In addition to the foregoing information, the units remaining on the Driniumor reported increasing enemy activity east of that river during the 10th. Japanese movements seemed especially intensified in the zone patrolled by the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry. One battalion patrol, returning to the Driniumor on 10 July after three days along Niumen Creek, reported having seen at least two large groups of Japanese, one about fifty-five strong, along the east bank of the Niumen. These troops appeared to have been moving in a purposeful manner along freshly cut trails and were said to have been in good condition, well clothed, and strongly armed. Another patrol of the same battalion worked its way east of the Niumen on the morning of 10 July and discovered a re-

[35] Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE–1339, 10 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 10–11 Jul 44; 32d Div G–2 Rpt 11, 10 Jul 44, in PTF G–3 Jnl, 8–11 Jul 44; Martin Comments, pp. 10–11.

cently established Japanese bivouac area, capable of holding about sixty-five troops. On its way back to the Driniumor, this patrol ambushed two small, well-armed parties of Japanese only 700 yards east of the 3d Battalion's lines.[36]

Another patrol, moving east in the northern sector of the 3d Battalion zone, encountered two groups of Japanese on the west bank of the Niumen. These two parties, both of platoon size and well armed, were moving rapidly south along new trails. The American patrol saw only a few more Japanese during the day but discovered many signs of heavy enemy movement between the Niumen and Driniumor. The patrol leader, an unusually imperturbable sergeant of Company I, 127th Infantry, who had had extensive patrol experience, was greatly excited by these signs of Japanese activity. Although his patrol had not actually seen more than fifty enemy soldiers, the sergeant felt that a strong attack on the lines of Company I, 127th Infantry, or Company G, 128th Infantry, was imminent.[37]

On the basis of this and other patrol reports Lt. Col. Edward Bloch, 3d Battalion commander, alerted his force to expect a Japanese attack during the night. The sergeant's information and conclusions also prompted Colonel Bloch to assign a rifle platoon of his reserve company, L, to Company G, 128th Infantry, on his left flank. There is no evidence that Colonel Bloch informed higher headquarters of his actions and there is no indication that the Company I patrol sightings were reported to an echelon higher than General Cunningham's headquarters.[38]

North of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, patrols of the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry, reported only one unusual contact during the 10th. A party from Company G, operating near Niumen Creek, encountered a combat patrol of twenty Japanese. A running fire between the two groups ensued, and the American patrol was forced back to the Driniumor. A report of this action was sent to regimental headquarters, but there is no evidence that it was relayed to any higher echelon of the task force.[39]

In the zone of the 112th Cavalry, a patrol from the 1st Squadron, moving east along a line parallel to and north of the 2d Squadron, surprised a party of ten Japanese about 1,200 yards east of Afua. These enemy troops, who were armed with at least one machine gun, retired to prepared defenses after a sharp skirmish. The American patrol leader estimated that there were at least forty Japanese, all well armed, milling around in the same vicinity. This information reached task force headquarters late in the afternoon.[40]

Despite the fact that cumulative intelligence now presented strong evidence that a major Japanese attack was about to be launched against the Driniumor River line, the G–2 Section of Headquarters, PERSECUTION Task Force, apparently did not believe that such an attack was imminent. Some sort of attack was expected at an indefinite future date, but the PERSECUTION Task Force daily intelligence report for 10 July, published about 1800 that day, gave little

[36] 3d Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44; PTF G–3 Jnl, 8–11 Jul 44.

[37] Interv, author with Capt Lowry, Apr 47.

[38] 3d Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44; PCF G–3 Jnl, 9–12 Jul 44; PTF G–3 Jnl, 8–11 Jul 44; 112th Cav Sum of Msgs, 1 Jul–29 Aug 44.

[39] 2d Bn 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44; 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–27 Jul 44; PCF G–3 Jnl, 9–12 Jul 44; PTF G–3 Jnl, 8–11 Jul 44.

[40] 112th Cav Opns Rpt Aitape, p. 5; 112th Cav Sum of Msgs, 1 Jul–29 Aug 44; PTF G–3 Jnl, 8–11 Jul 44.

indication that an immediate Japanese assault could be expected:

> Westward movement of strong enemy patrols including intense activity just E [east] of NIUMEN CREEK indicates possible strong outposts to cover assembly of main body in preparation for attack.[41]

At PERSECUTION Covering Force headquarters the prevailing opinion was more apprehensive. General Martin was concerned about the possibility of a Japanese attack during the night of 10–11 July, and he was worried over the disposition of the forces along the Driniumor, which had been seriously weakened by the movement eastward of the reconnaissance-in-force units. What the attitude of most of the rest of the staff officers and unit commanders of the PERSECUTION Task and Covering Forces was is unknown, although General Martin had warned the Driniumor River units to be on the alert and Colonel Bloch of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, certainly expected some action during the night.[42]

Back at task force headquarters, General Hall had little choice but to accept his G–2's estimate at face value. Although he had been expecting a Japanese attack ever since 5 July, he had little or no reason to believe that the night of 10–11 July might pass any differently than those immediately preceding it.[43] About 2330 he radioed to General Krueger that the situation in the PERSECUTION Covering Force's area gave every indication that the reconnaissance in force eastward could be resumed the next morning according to plans.[44] Within fifteen minutes after the dispatch of this message, it became evident that the situation along the Driniumor was anything but well suited to the plans of the PERSECUTION Task Force.

The 18th Army *Moves West*

At approximately 2350 Japanese light artillery (70-mm. or 75-mm.) began lobbing shells into river bank positions occupied by elements of the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry. This fire, giving the first indication that the Japanese had artillery so far west, was augmented within a few moments by mortar and machine gun fire. At 2355 the Japanese artillery became silent. At this signal, Japanese infantry began charging across the Driniumor into the 2d Battalion's defenses.[45]

The 18th Army's *Plan*

The *18th Army* had been long preparing its attack and had developed elaborate plans for the "annihilation" of the PERSECUTION Task Force. Prior to 22 April the *18th Army* had started withdrawing westward from Wewak, but after the Allied landings at Hollandia and Aitape, plans for the future employment of the *18th Army* had to be revised. On 2 May *Imperial General Headquarters* ordered the *18th Army* to bypass Hollandia and Aitape and join the *2d Army* in western New Guinea. General Adachi, the *18th Army's* commander, had no stomach for such a maneuver. A previous by-

[41] PTF G–2 Daily Rpt 10, 10 Jul 44, in PTF G–3 Jnl, 8–11 Jul 44.

[42] Martin Comments, pp. 10–12; Interv, author with Capt Lowry, Apr 47.

[43] Interv, author with Gen Hall, 27 Mar 47; Ltr, Gen Hall to Gen Ward, 29 Nov 50, no sub, in OCMH files.

[44] Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE–1339, 10 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 10–11 Jul 44.

[45] 3d Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44; 2d Bn 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44; PCF G–3 Jnl, 9–12 Jul 44; PTF G–3 Jnl, 8–11 Jul 44; Interv, author with Capt Lowry, Apr 47.



LT. GEN. HATAZO ADACHI, *Commanding General of the Japanese* 18th Army.

passing withdrawal from the Huon Peninsula in late 1943 and early 1944 had cost his army dearly, and movement across the Ramu and Sepik Rivers in March and April gave promise that his losses of men and supplies would increase at an alarming rate. He believed that a withdrawal through the hinterland to western New Guinea might literally decimate the *18th Army* and perhaps result in much greater loss than would an attack on Hollandia or Aitape. On the other hand, should it remain immobile at Wewak, the *18th Army* could contribute nothing to the Japanese war effort and would lose all vestiges of morale. Terrain in the Wewak area was not suited to protracted defense nor to farming which could make the *18th Army* self-sufficient, and supplies available there could only last until September. The only means by which more supplies could be obtained, morale kept high, and the Japanese war effort furthered, was to attack and seize Allied positions.[46]

Although his orders to bypass and withdraw to western New Guinea were not canceled until mid-May,[47] General Adachi, apparently on the basis of earlier broad directives from the *2d Area Army*,[48] had already produced an outline plan of an attack against the Hollandia–Aitape area. At first he considered retaking Hollandia, with the seizure of the Aitape region as a necessary preliminary step. However, he soon realized that the Hollandia venture was overambitious and he therefore limited the project to an attack on Allied forces at Aitape.

The initial plans for a move against Aitape, evolved at *18th Army* headquarters on 26 April, set 10 June as the date for the completion of attack preparations. The assault units were to be the *20th* and *41st Divisions* supported by the *66th Infantry* of the *51st Division*.[49] On or about 1 May the first outline plan was supplemented by an attack order setting forth details of objectives, assignments, and timing. The *20th*

[46] Hist of *Army Section, Imperial GHQ*, pp. 111–13; *18th Army* Opns, III, 28–32, 40–41, 47, 56–64.

[47] Hist of *2d Area Army*, pp. 55–58; Hist of *Army Section, Imperial GHQ*, p. 113; *18th Army* Opns, III, 61–64. The date for both the origination and cancellation of the orders for the *18th Army* to withdraw to western New Guinea varies according to the source. From internal evidence, the best dates seem to be 2 May for the origination and 16 May for the cancellation.

[48] Hist of *2d Area Army*, pp. 48–51, 66–67. On 22 April the *2d Area Army* issued General Adachi a broad order to defeat promptly the Allied forces which had landed at Aitape and Hollandia. On pages 66 and 67 of the source cited here, it is indicated that General Adachi first suggested an attack on Aitape and that the *2d Area Army* thereupon assigned him the task.

[49] *18th Army* Opns, III, 56–64, 66–76.

Division, already ordered to secure the Yakamul area and screen the deployment of the rest of the *18th Army,* was now instructed to soften all Allied resistance east of the Nigia River by the end of June. It appears that General Adachi believed the PERSECUTION Task Force's main line of resistance to be located along the Nigia, and there are indications that as early as the first week of May he thought that the first strong Allied defensive positions would be encountered along the Driniumor River.

After securing the ground west to the Nigia River, the *20th Division* was to throw its strength against the Nigia defenses while the *41st Division,* after the *20th* had broken through the Nigia line, was to move from Chinapelli northwest toward the Tadji airfields. The *20th Division's* attack was apparently to be made along a narrow front at some point between Chinapelli and the mouth of the Nigia. Provision was also made for a simultaneous assault along the beach to divert Allied attention from the main offensive. The date for the assault on the supposed main line of resistance of the PERSECUTION Task Force was now set for 10 July.[50]

The first step in mounting the offensive against Aitape was to concentrate most of the available strength of the *18th Army* at Wewak. By the end of May over 50,000 troops of that army had been withdrawn across the Ramu and Sepik Rivers and, with the exception of the regiments of the *20th Division* already dispatched toward Aitape, were reorganizing at Wewak.[51] By no means were all the troops available to General Adachi trained in ground combat. Many of them were service personnel, others belonged to air force ground units, and some were naval troops which had recently passed to the control of the *18th Army.* The *20th Division's* three infantry regiments were greatly understrength and probably totaled few more than 3,000 trained infantrymen. The entire strength of the division, including about 1,000 men of the *26th Field Artillery Regiment* and other organic or attached troops, was about 6,600 as of the end of May. The *41st Division* contained less than 4,000 infantry effectives and a total strength of some 10,700. The *66th Infantry* of the *51st Division,* also scheduled to participate in the attack on Aitape, did not number more than 1,000 men. Altogether, General Adachi mustered for service in the attack about 20,000 troops. Of these, not more than 8,000 were trained infantrymen. About 2,500 were artillerymen with 70-mm. and 75-mm. guns, some 5,000 were to be engaged in supply operations in direct support of the infantry and artillery, and the remaining 4,500 were various types of overhead and service personnel who were to fight as infantry or engage in normal duties such as signal operations, maintenance, headquarters work, and the like. Another 15,000 troops were to be engaged in the movement of supplies forward from Wewak toward the front. The remaining 20,000 troops of the *18th Army* were to garrison the Wewak area or, because of shortages of supply and poor physical condition, could not be expected to engage in active operations.[52]

Considering his supply situation, General Adachi was possessed of a rather remarkable degree of aplomb when he ordered the

[50] *18th Army* Opns, III, 77–80.

[51] The strength of the *18th Army* at this time is a highly debatable point, but 50,000–55,000 for the number of men finally moved to Wewak or westward toward Aitape is probably not far off.

[52] *18th Army* Opns, III, 56–61, 156–59; *18th Army* Opns, Annex A—Statistics, Chart I.

18th Army to attack. He considered that his men had enough infantry weapons—though there were only 13,142 rifles, 726 machine guns, 561 grenade dischargers, 22 light mortars, thirty-six 75-mm. mountain guns, and forty-two 70-mm. guns—but only half enough ammunition. Ammunition for the 70-mm. and 75-mm. guns was critically short. Communications equipment was nearly gone and was not expected to last through June. There were serious shortages of clothing, blankets, and mosquito nets. The last-named deficit promised a high incidence of malaria, and there was a critical shortage of malaria preventives. Other types of medical supplies were sufficient except those for diarrhea and skin diseases. Food, even with half-rations for all troops, would not last beyond the end of August. Except for a single submarine mission late in May, the *18th Army* could get no more supplies by sea or air, and General Adachi knew it. The army had few trucks or barges with which it could move the supplies it possessed and had little equipment with which to improve existing roads or build new ones. Barge and truck movements westward could be made only at the mercy of Allied air and sea patrols (mostly Australian aircraft and Seventh Fleet PT boats based at Aitape) while heavy rains further hampered troop and supply movements over all roads and trails west from Wewak.[53]

General Adachi soon found that his sanguine expectations of clearing the PERSECUTION Task Force from the area east of the Nigia River by the end of June were not to be realized. The *20th Division's* westward movement had been delayed in the series of skirmishes along the coast east of the Driniumor in late May and early June. Further delay occurred as inclement weather and increasing Allied air and PT activity made the *18th Army* depend entirely upon hand-carry for supply movement. The *20th Division's* forward units ran out of supplies in mid-June and halted, as did advance elements of the *41st Division*. The bulk of the *41st Division,* slowly moving westward from Wewak, was now assigned the task of hand-carrying supplies forward.[54]

Practically the only result of the employment of the *41st Division* as a service unit was a complete loss of troop morale. The division's efforts to improve the supply situation proved futile, the physical stamina of the troops dropped because of unsanitary conditions, and the units engaged in supply movements found it next to impossible even to sustain themselves. Part of the *20th Division* had to exist temporarily on less than eleven ounces of starchy food per day, and some of the forward units subsisted for a short while solely on sago palm starch. No reserve of supplies could be built up in the forward area.

By mid-June General Adachi realized that he was almost certainly going to encounter a strong American force along the Driniumor, but even an attack against that river line could not be mounted by the end of the month. On the 19th he therefore postponed efforts to attack the expected defenses along the Driniumor until at least 10 July, leaving to an undetermined date an attack on the Nigia line.[55]

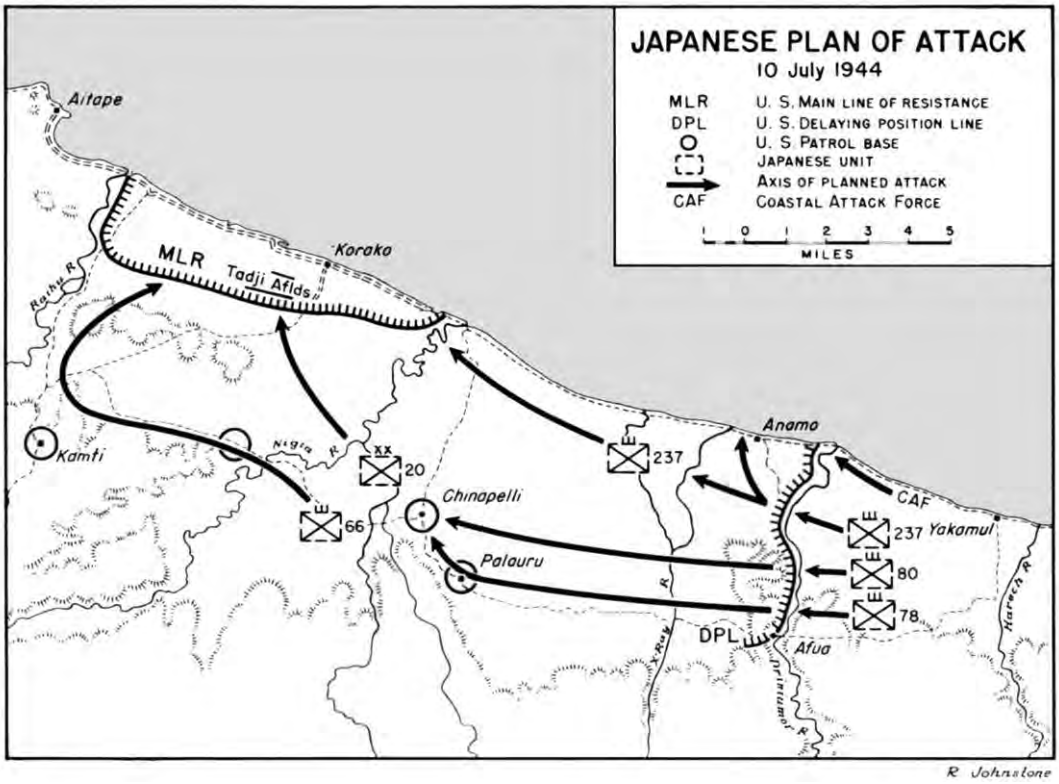
Deployment for the Attack

By the end of June General Adachi, taking a realistic view of the situation, knew

[53] *18th Army* Opns, III, 56–61, 89–93.

[54] *18th Army* Opns, III, 89–97; *2d Bn 80th Inf* Field Diary, 31 May–14 Jul 44, as translated in 32d Div G–2 files, in ORB AGO collection; PW interrog and trans of enemy docs in PTF and Eastern Sector [32d Div] G–2 Jnls, Jun and Jul 44.

[55] *18th Army* Opns, III, 89–97.



MAP 6

that his supply problems alone had already defeated him. Nevertheless, he felt that he could not withdraw without offering battle and, exhorting his troops to overcome Allied material and numerical advantages by relying on spirit, he ordered the *20th* and *41st Divisions* to attack the Driniumor defenses on the night of 10–11 July.[56]

The final attack plan was issued at 1500 on 3 July from the *18th Army's* forward command post somewhere among the upper reaches of the Harech. (*Map 6*) The focal point of the *18th Army's* attack was an island in the Driniumor on the left of the sector held by Company E, 128th Infantry, an island designated by the Japanese "Kawanaka Shima" (literally, Middle of the River Island). The main body of the *237th Infantry*, Col. Masahiko Nara commanding, was to cross the Driniumor at Kawanaka Shima beginning at 2200, 10 July. Support fire was to be provided by the *1st Battalion, 41st Mountain Artillery*, and was scheduled to start at 2150. Elements of the *8th Independent Engineers* were to reinforce the *237th Infantry*. After crossing the Driniumor, Colonel Nara's force was to move west toward Koronal Creek and

[56] *18th Army* Opns, III, 97–99; *MO* (*18th Army's* code name for Opns against Aitape) Opn Order 5, 3 Jul 44, as cited in *18th Army* Opns, III, 100–101.

northwest to clear Anamo and the other Paup villages, on the coast west of the Driniumor's mouth.

South of Kawanaka Shima, on the left of the *237th Infantry,* the *20th Division* was to begin its attack at 2300, under cover of support fire from the *26th Field Artillery.* The *20th Division's* units were divided into two groups. The *Right Flank Unit,* under Col. Tokutaro Ide and comprising the *80th Infantry,* with attached engineers, artillery, and medical personnel, was to line up across the river from the right of Company E, 128th Infantry. Also operating under Colonel Ide was the *Yamashita Battalion,* which, though positive identification cannot be made, was probably the *1st Battalion, 237th Infantry.* Below Colonel Ide's command and opposite Company G, 128th Infantry, was the *Left Flank Unit,* under Maj. Gen. Sadahiko Miyake, *Infantry Group* commander of the *20th Division.* General Miyake's force consisted of the *78th Infantry* (under Col. Matsujiro Matsumoto) and attached engineers, artillery, and medical units. After forcing a way across the Driniumor, the *Right Flank Unit* was to move directly overland to Chinapelli, while the *Left Flank Unit* was to seize and clear the Afua area and move on to Chinapelli over the Afua–Palauru trail.

There was a fourth Japanese assault unit, the *Coastal Attack Force,* under Maj. Iwataro Hoshino, the commanding officer of the *1st Battalion, 41st Mountain Artillery.* Major Hoshino's group comprised the headquarters and the *1st Battery* of his battalion; a machine gun section of the *6th Company, 237th Infantry;* and the *Regimental Gun Company, 237th Infantry.* The *Coastal Attack Force* (the unit which had delayed the advance of the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, along the coast on 10 July) was to co-operate with the attack of the *237th Infantry* and pin down with artillery fire the Allied units located on the coast east and west of the Driniumor's mouth.

Assuming the success of the initial attack on the Driniumor line, the Japanese assault units were to prepare to drive on the Tadji airstrips. The *237th Infantry* was responsible for initial reconnaissance of Allied defenses expected to be encountered along the Nigia River, while the *20th Division* was to regroup at Chinapelli. The *66th Infantry, 51st Division,* was to move forward as quickly as possible after the attack on the Driniumor line, and, bypassing the Tadji area to the south, was to strike the Allied main line of resistance from the Kapoam villages, southwest of the airfields.[57]

During 10 July the two assault echelons of the *20th Division* moved slowly into position. Part of the *78th Infantry* got into an area allocated to the *80th,* causing considerable confusion and probably accounting for the movements of Japanese troops in various directions as observed by PERSECUTION Covering Force patrols during the day.

---

[57] The foregoing plan is reconstructed from: *MO* Opn Order 5, 3 Jul 44, and 10, 15, and 16, 10 Jul 44, as cited in *18th Army* Opns, III, 100–106; *18th Army* Opns, III, 107–09; *2d Bn 80th Inf* Field Diary, 31 May–14 Jul 44; PW interrog and trans of enemy docs in PTF and Eastern Sector [32d Inf Div] G–2 Jnls, Jul and Aug 44. A *Yamashita Battalion* was mentioned in radio intercepts, captured documents, and by prisoners, and one source identifies it as the *2d Battalion, 79th Infantry,* but according to available Japanese documents, the latter unit was not in the forward area on 10 July. The *1st Battalion, 237th Infantry,* had been operating under *20th Division* control in the forward area for some time, and since the rest of the *41st Division* was late getting up to the Driniumor, may have remained under the *20th* for the attack. In any case, *Yamashita Battalion* disappears from enemy sources dated after 10 July. It may have been wiped out or, as seems most likely, if it was the *1st Battalion, 237th Infantry,* it rejoined its parent unit, which was west of the Driniumor.

Because of communications difficulties, the *237th Infantry* and the *41st Mountain Artillery* were not alerted for the attack until 7 July. The units were delayed further in last-minute attempts to secure supplies and, as a result, did not start moving forward to the line of departure until 9 July. Their final attack orders were not issued until the afternoon of the 10th, and the *237th Infantry's* rear elements were just moving into line along the Driniumor when the guns of the supporting artillery opened fire at the scheduled hour, 2350.[58]

[58] *18th Army* Opns, III, 109–14. Japanese accounts of action along the Driniumor use times two hours earlier than those employed by Allied documents. This discrepancy is probably due to differences in the time zones being used by the two forces.

CHAPTER VII

The Battle of the Driniumor Phase I: The *18th Army* Attacks

Withdrawal of the PERSECUTION Covering Force

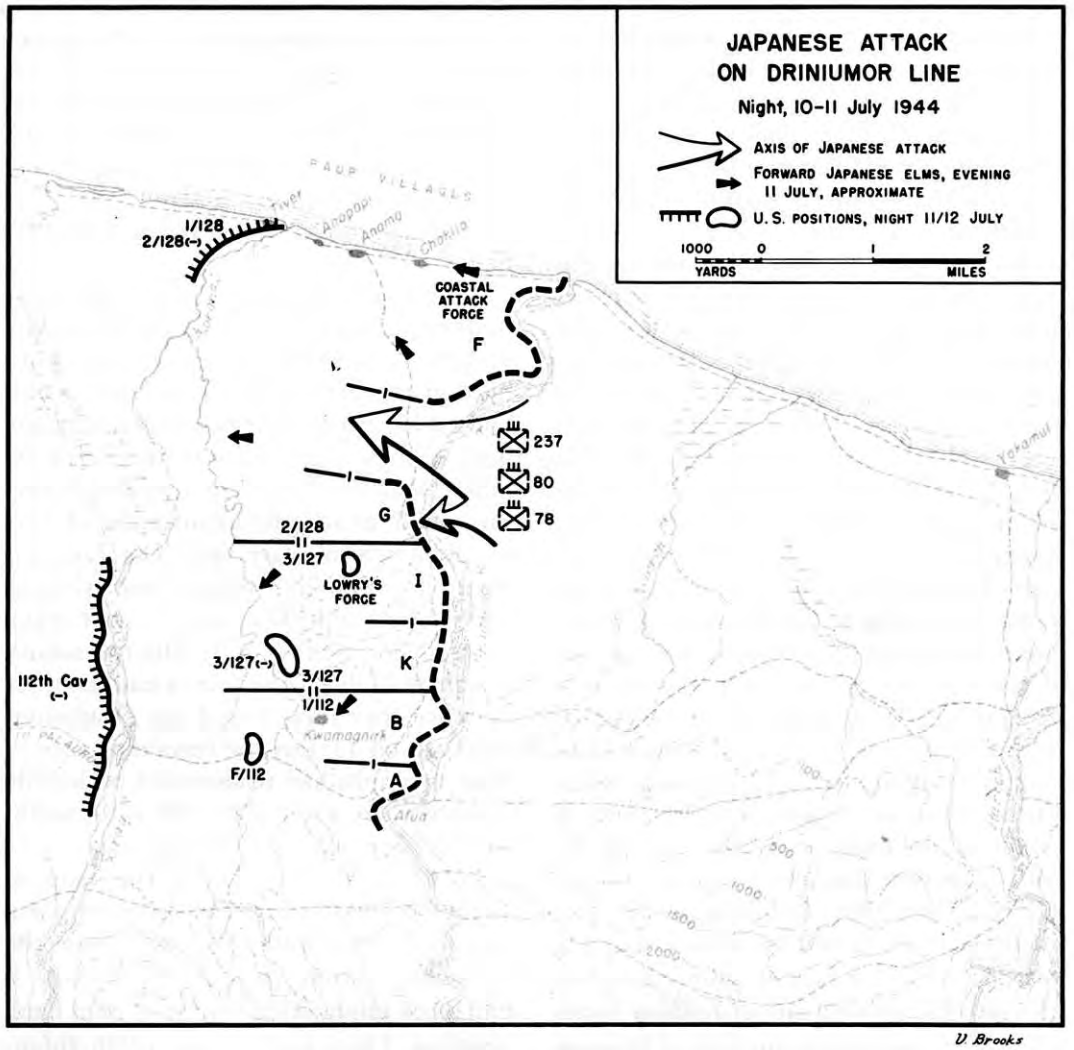
Action During the Night of 10–11 July

The first Japanese unit to swing into action against the Driniumor defenses of the PERSECUTION Covering Force was the *1st Battalion, 78th Infantry,* which, about 2355, charged across the river along a narrow front against Company G, 128th Infantry.[1] (*Map 7*) The Japanese attacked in two or three screaming waves, broadening the front after the first assault by throwing in the rest of the *78th Infantry* and possibly elements of the *80th Infantry.* Japanese reconnaissance had been good—the attackers knew the locations of company and battalion command posts all along the American defenses—but not quite good enough. The enemy did not know that Company G had been reinforced during the afternoon of 10 July nor, apparently, had he discovered that the company's front was protected by low barbed wire.

The attacks of the *78th Infantry* were thrown back with heavy losses. Machine gun and mortar fire from the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry, accounted for many Japanese, numbers of whom were caught as they tried to cross the barbed wire in front of Company G. According to Japanese sources, the results of American artillery fire were even more disastrous. As soon as the enemy attack had begun, the 120th and 129th Field Artillery Battalions had started firing previously prepared concentrations along the bed and east bank of the Driniumor. The Japanese units in or near the impact areas suffered heavy casualties. The *1st Battalion, 78th Infantry,* was quickly reduced from 400 to 30 men, principally as a result of the American artillery fire, which also destroyed large numbers of artillery weapons, machine guns, and mortars.

Late arrival of many units on the line of departure across the Driniumor, together with confusion among elements of the *78th* and *80th Infantry Regiments,* prevented

[1] Information in this subsection is based principally on: 2d Bn 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44; 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–27 Jul 44; 3d Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44; PCF G–3 Jnls, 9–12 and 12–14 Jul 44; PTF G–3 Jnls, 8–11 and 11–15 Jul 44; Interv, author with Gen Hall, 27 Mar 47; Interv, author with Capt Lowry, Apr 47; *18th Army* Opns, III, 109–14; *2d Bn 80th Inf* Field Diary, 31 May–14 Jul 44. The narrative after action reports of American units for this and most other phases of the operations along the Driniumor are inadequate and sometimes misleading, and it was necessary to reconstruct the action from journals and journal files.



MAP 7

the Japanese from executing their planned attack of three regiments abreast. Thus, about twenty minutes after the initial attack and while fighting continued in front of Company G, 128th Infantry, another enemy force struck Company E. This assault probably marked the entry of the *80th Infantry's* main body into the action. Although Company E's men were spread thinly over a front of 1,250 yards, the initial attack was thrown back. But a second wave of attackers, probably comprising the *237th Infantry* and heretofore uncommitted elements of the *Right Flank Unit,* began pouring across the Driniumor toward Company E at approximately 0200. The new attackers overran the company command post and surrounded most of the unit's widely separated

strong points. Fighting continued in the company sector for a little while, but the unit could not long withstand the overwhelming enemy pressure. Company organization and communications broke down. Worse still, the troops began to run out of ammunition. A general withdrawal commenced.

Company E's headquarters, the 1st Platoon, and the Weapons Platoon retreated northwest. About dawn on 11 July they moved into the 2d Battalion's command post, which had been forced to move 500 yards northwest of its original position to get out of the impact area of Japanese artillery and mortar fire. About twenty-five men of the 2d and 3d Platoons withdrew north to Company F's positions, as did a few Company H troops who had been manning supporting weapons in the Company E sector. Some Company E men made their way independently to the coast up the Anamo–Afua trail, and a few stragglers found refuge with Company G, to the south. Some Company E troops remained hidden in the midst of the Japanese for three days. No accurate count of the unit's casualties is available, but it appears that the company suffered about 10 men killed and 20 wounded. Casualties had not caused the withdrawal. The main factors were lack of ammunition and the physical impossibility of holding an extended line against the numbers of Japanese who pushed across the Driniumor. On its immediate front, Company E had probably been outnumbered nearly ten to one.

By 0300 the Japanese had punched a hole some 1,300 yards wide in the American lines and had physically occupied that area. The initial impetus of the enemy attack had been spent, and the scene of action quieted down for about two hours. Company G took this opportunity to restore some of its left flank positions while Company F discovered and reported to General Martin's headquarters that Company E had disappeared from the river line. All units remaining on the Driniumor prepared for further attacks. These began on the left of Company G and the right of Company F about 0500, and continued in Company G's area until after dawn.

This second Japanese outbreak probably marked the movement across the Driniumor of rear elements of the assault regiments, headquarters personnel, medical troops, and artillery units. The new action may also have entailed movements by the *237th Infantry,* which had become confused during the initial attack. Reorganization of that regiment was no easy task. The Japanese were in unfamiliar terrain and Colonel Nara, who had lost his way, did not rejoin his regiment until 12 July. The two assault regiments of the *20th Division* had less trouble once they had crossed the Driniumor. By dawn on 11 July the remaining men of these two units had reassembled on heavily forested high ground about 800 yards northwest of Company G, 128th Infantry.

Other than the action in the areas of Companies E and G, 128th Infantry, there had been very little fighting along the Driniumor during the night. Company F had a few minor skirmishes at its right flank positions. Units south of the 128th Infantry's battalion were struck only by stray artillery shells or machine gun and rifle fire. Much of the night had been moonlit, though a tropical ground haze somewhat limited visibility. Men of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, could see some of the action on their left, but the battalion could not leave its positions to succor the units on its flank, for it had its own defensive missions. Communications had been disrupted all along

the Driniumor during the action, and the battalion commander had no way of learning the extent of the attack nor, for some time, of finding out where or when to move. Finally, the battalion could not leave its positions without orders from higher headquarters, and such instructions were not immediately forthcoming.

The Decision to Withdraw

General Martin, of course, knew that the Japanese were attacking, and he knew that the attack was taking place near the middle of the Driniumor line.[2] The covering force commander soon learned that the Japanese had broken through his Driniumor defenses, but he did not know how large was the gap in the lines. He had no reserve with which he could close the gap, unless he pulled the reconnaissance-in-force units back from their positions east of the Driniumor. Feeling that the Japanese had themselves accomplished the principal missions of the reconnaissance in force by revealing their locations and intentions, General Martin obtained permission from General Hall to pull back to the Driniumor the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, and the 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry. Since it would take some time for the two units to move west, he determined to wait until dawn before making any attempt to restore the Driniumor line.

The 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, received its withdrawal orders from General Martin about 0135. Rapidly assembling from its night defensive dispositions, the battalion started westward at 0200. Because of communications difficulties, the 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry, did not receive the word until 0800, 11 July. After a forced march along the coast, the 128th Infantry's unit reached Anamo about 0530, just as dawn was breaking. General Martin ordered the battalion to counterattack down the Anamo–Afua trail to restore the 2d Battalion's lines.

Movement south started at 0700, and there was no opposition for the first 1,500 yards. But about 1030 machine guns manned by elements of the *237th Infantry* opened fire on the 1st Battalion's leading platoon from positions on the south bank of a small stream which cut the trail. The terrain and enemy small arms fire made it impossible to attempt wide, rapid flanking maneuvers, and the advance platoons soon found themselves in an ambush. A few Japanese, who had been in the area at least since dawn, threatened to cut the leading company's line of communications. The unit withdrew from its exposed salient just as Japanese infantry attacked out of the jungle on both sides of the trail and up the stream bed from the southwest. Realizing that the trail was held by a strong Japanese force, the intentions of which were unknown, General Martin ordered the entire 1st Battalion back to Tiver. The abortive action cost the unit 13 men wounded, 3 killed, and 3 missing.[3]

Even before the 1st Battalion's attack had been launched, General Martin had believed that strong Japanese forces were across the Driniumor, and the opposition encountered by the 1st Battalion convinced him that his forward dispositions were not

[2] This subsection is based on: 1st Bn 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44; 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–27 Jul 44; 112th Cav Sum of Msgs, 1–29 Jul 44; PTF G–3 Jnls, 8–11 and 11–15 Jul 44; PCF G–3 Jnl, 9–12 Jul 44; Martin Comments, pp. 12–15; *18th Army* Opns, III, 111–14.

[3] For covering the withdrawal of the leading platoon and helping to bring out wounded, Staff Sgt. Gerald L. Endl of Company C was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Sergeant Endl was himself killed bringing out one of the wounded.

favorable for further counterattack measures. The enemy's Kawanaka Shima salient threatened the rear of American units still on the Driniumor and, worse still, provided the enemy force with an opportunity to push directly westward, almost unmolested, to the Tadji strips. Since his mission was to delay any such westward movements, General Martin decided to remove the rest of his forces from the Driniumor quickly and to reorganize along the second delaying position at the X-ray River–Koronal Creek line, there to await the Japanese and prepare for further counterattacks.

Withdrawal to the Second Delaying Position

The 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, quickly withdrew up the Anamo trail and moved west along the coast to Tiver, from which village it pushed a new defense line about 1,500 yards south along the west bank of Koronal Creek.[4] Company F, 128th Infantry, which held its positions near the mouth of the Driniumor until the 1st Battalion started withdrawing up the Anamo trail, was assigned part of the new line. Other elements of the 2d Battalion, as they straggled into Tiver during the 11th, strengthened the 1st Battalion's lines.

The 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry, arrived back at Afua, at the southern end of the Driniumor line, shortly after 1000 on the 11th. Less than an hour later General Martin alerted General Cunningham, the commander of the 112th Cavalry Regimental Combat Team, to prepare the 112th Cavalry and the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, for movement back to the second delaying line. The movement was scheduled to start at 1500, but General Cunningham requested and received permission to withdraw in two echelons. The first, comprising regimental and combat team headquarters and the 1st Squadron, was to begin moving as soon as possible. The second echelon was to comprise the 2d Squadron and the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry.

The first echelon cleared Afua about 1130 and closed on the X-ray River at the Afua–Palauru trail crossing about four hours later. The 2d Squadron started west over the trail about 1500, by which time a rainstorm had turned the track into a quagmire. Leading elements of the 2d Squadron took more than five hours to reach the X-ray, and the regimental Weapons Troop did not arrive at the stream until 2330. Troup F remained on the trail about midway between Afua and the X-ray and did not join the rest of the regiment until 0730 on the 12th.

Once on the X-ray, the cavalry units spread themselves over their portion of the second delaying line. This sector, some 4,500 yards long, ran along the west bank of the river northward from a point nearly 1,500 yards south of the trail-crossing to a swamp where the X-ray divided to form Akanai and Koronal Creeks. This long defense line could not be fully manned because a change in plans had delayed the arrival of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, at the X-ray. Any concerted Japanese attack along the Afua–Palauru trail could probably have driven the 112th Cavalry still farther west,

[4] Information in this subsection is from: PTF G–3 Jnl, 11–15 Jul 44; PFC G–3 Jnl, 9–12 Jul 44; 1st Bn 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44; 2d Bn 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44; 112th Cav Opns and Int Diary Aitape; 112th Cav Opns Rpt Aitape, p. 6; 112th Cav, Sum of Msgs, 1–29 Jul 44; Interv, author with Col Hooper, 25 Mar 47; Interv, author with Gen Cunningham, Apr 47; Interv, author with Capt Lowry, Apr 47; Martin Comments, pp. 14–15; 3d Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44; *MO* Opn Orders 5, 3 Jul 44, and 15 and 16, 10 Jul 44, in *18th Army* Opns, III, 100–106; *18th Army* Opns, III, 109–11.

but the night of 11–12 July proved quiet at the X-ray.

While the main body of the regiment was withdrawing, small patrols were sent east of the Driniumor and up the west bank of that river south of Afua. A patrol east of Afua saw many signs of enemy activity and was followed back to the village late in the afternoon by a strong party of Japanese which, however, did not choose to engage in a fire fight. Another patrol, late in the morning, had a brush with an enemy party near a waterfall of the Driniumor about 2,000 yards south of Afua. This enemy group appeared to be the point of a much larger force. About 1500, other patrols reported that the Japanese were crossing the river in some strength about 500 yards south of Afua. It was the opinion at General Cunningham's headquarters that this enemy force, the strength of which was estimated as high as 1,200 troops,[5] was a strong flanking unit. Efforts were made to delay the enemy movement by placing artillery fire on the suspected crossing point. Rear guard patrols reported at dusk that the Japanese forces had moved up to the Afua-Palauru trail from the south and were occupying the Kwamagnirk area, about one and one fourth miles northwest of Afua.

No Japanese accounts of the action, captured documents, nor interrogations of prisoners tell of any large enemy force being south of Afua on 11 July. It is probable that the Japanese unit was merely a reconnaissance group probing the south flank of the PERSECUTION Covering Force in conjunction with action in the center of the Driniumor line or in preparation for flanking movements. Had any large enemy force been in the Afua area on the 11th, it would undoubtedly have followed the retreating 112th Cavalry toward the X-ray River, for the Japanese had orders to move on to Chinapelli as soon as possible.

General Cunningham originally planned to have the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, close to the right on Afua and follow the 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, to the X-ray. But poor communications between General Cunningham's headquarters and the infantry unit, together with infiltration of Japanese patrols between the infantry and cavalry organizations, prevented execution of such a plan. Finally, General Cunningham ordered the 3d Battalion to move directly overland to the X-ray. By 1530 Colonel Bloch had gathered his headquarters and the bulk of Companies K, M, and L on high ground about 800 yards west of Company K's river position and had begun moving that group westward. Terrain difficulties, aggravated by the rain, forestalled progress that night, and at 1845 Colonel Bloch's group bivouacked for the night on East Branch, Koronal Creek, only one and a half miles west of the starting point. The group started moving again at 0700 on the 12th and about 1400 that day reached the X-ray at a point some 1,000 yards north of the Afua–Palauru trail crossing. The group, which had met no Japanese on its way westward, then went into defensive positions on the left of the 112th Cavalry.

The remainder of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, together with Company G, 128th Infantry (which had been attached to the battalion for the purpose of withdrawal) and miscellaneous other groups such as field artillery forward observer parties, was led back to the X-ray by Capt. Leonard Lowry,

[5] This high estimate was made by one of the patrols and no such figure was relayed to higher headquarters.

the commanding officer of Company I, 127th Infantry.[6]

Captain Lowry's force, numbering about 500 men of all ranks, withdrew westward overland from Company K's river positions. This group, which had to fight its way through a Japanese trail block, spent two nights in the jungle. The leading elements did not reach the X-ray until 0730 on 13 July, and it was midafternoon before the entire force had closed on the river. Then Captain Lowry found that the rest of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, and most of the 112th Cavalry had already started back to the Driniumor. His force was instructed to rest and regroup along the X-ray and to follow the rest of the command to the Driniumor on the 14th.

Restoration of the Driniumor Line

By morning on 12 July the PERSECUTION Covering Force was redisposed in positions favorable to stopping any further Japanese advance. The 112th Cavalry was on the X-ray north and south of the Afua–Palauru trail crossing and part of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, was on the cavalry's left. The 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, and available troops of the 2d Battalion of the same regiment were along the west bank of Koronal Creek south from Tiver. In the center of the new line was a gap almost 4,000 yards long, but the terrain in this area was very swampy, heavily jungled, and impassable for any large body of troops. During the 12th, patrols maintaining contact over this gap encountered only a few enemy stragglers.[7]

Preparations for Counterattack

General Krueger did not believe that the withdrawal from the Driniumor had been necessary. He felt that the troops at General Hall's disposal, plus available air and naval support, should have enabled the PERSECUTION Task Force to halt the Japanese at the Driniumor. Acting on this assumption, he ordered General Hall to take aggressive action to drive the enemy back across the river.[8]

Even before receiving these orders, General Hall had taken preliminary steps to launch a counterattack. He attached the 124th Infantry (less one battalion) to the PERSECUTION Covering Force in preparation for a counteroffensive. The regiment was to move to Tiver, clear the coast between that village and Anamo, and, on the morning of the 12th, attack south along the Anamo–Afua trail. About the same time General Hall ordered General Martin to retire no further except before overwhelming enemy pressure, and he forbade the

[6] Captain Lowry, an American Indian of California's Modoc Tribe, had a heterogeneous force under him which comprised:
- Company I, 127th Infantry
- Company G, 128th Infantry
- HMG Platoon, Company M, 127th Infantry
- HMG Platoon, Company H, 128th Infantry
- 81-mm. Mortar Observer Party, Company M, 127th Infantry
- 81-mm. Mortar Section, Company H, 128th Infantry
- Forward Observer Party, 120th Field Artillery Battalion
- Forward Observer Party, 129th Field Artillery Battalion
- Ten or twelve stragglers of Companies E and H, 128th Infantry

[7] PCF G–3 Jnl, 9–12 Jul 44; PTF G–3 Jnl, 11–15 Jul 44; 1st Bn 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44; 112th Cav Opns and Int Diary Aitape.

[8] Rads, ALAMO to PTF, WF–1545 and WF–1498, 11 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 10–12 Jul 44.

withdrawal of any unit not in actual contact with superior forces.[9]

With the addition of the 124th Infantry to the PERSECUTION Covering Force, the latter unit would approximate the size of a division. To take charge of this enlarged force and to give General Martin a rest from long duty in the front lines, General Hall decided to place General Gill, the commander of the 32d Division and the Eastern Sector, in control of the covering force. At the same time General Martin took General Gill's place as the commander of the Eastern Sector.[10]

Taking part of Headquarters, 32d Division, forward with him, General Gill set up a new PERSECUTION Covering Force headquarters at Tiver. The covering force he now divided into two sections—North Force and South Force. General Stark, previously in charge of the Western Sector, was placed in command of North Force. Units under his control were the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, and the 1st and 3d Battalions, 124th Infantry. South Force was assigned to General Cunningham, who was to control the 112th Cavalry and the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry. PERSECUTION Covering Force Reserve was the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry, which was to reorganize at Tiver and hold a perimeter around that village. The 120th Field Artillery Battalion was to support South Force, while the 129th and the 149th (the latter of the 31st Division) were to support North Force. These three battalions were equipped with 105-mm. howitzers. Their fires would be augmented as necessary by the 155-mm. howitzers of the 181st Field Artillery Battalion.[11]

General Gill found it expedient to postpone the counterattack. The two battalions of the 124th Infantry could not get into position in time to start an attack early on 12 July, and the other elements of the PERSECUTION Covering Force could well use an extra day for reorganization and resupply. General Gill therefore decided to delay the 124th Infantry's movement in favor of a co-ordinated counterattack by the entire PERSECUTION Covering Force (with the exception of the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry) at 0800 on 13 July.

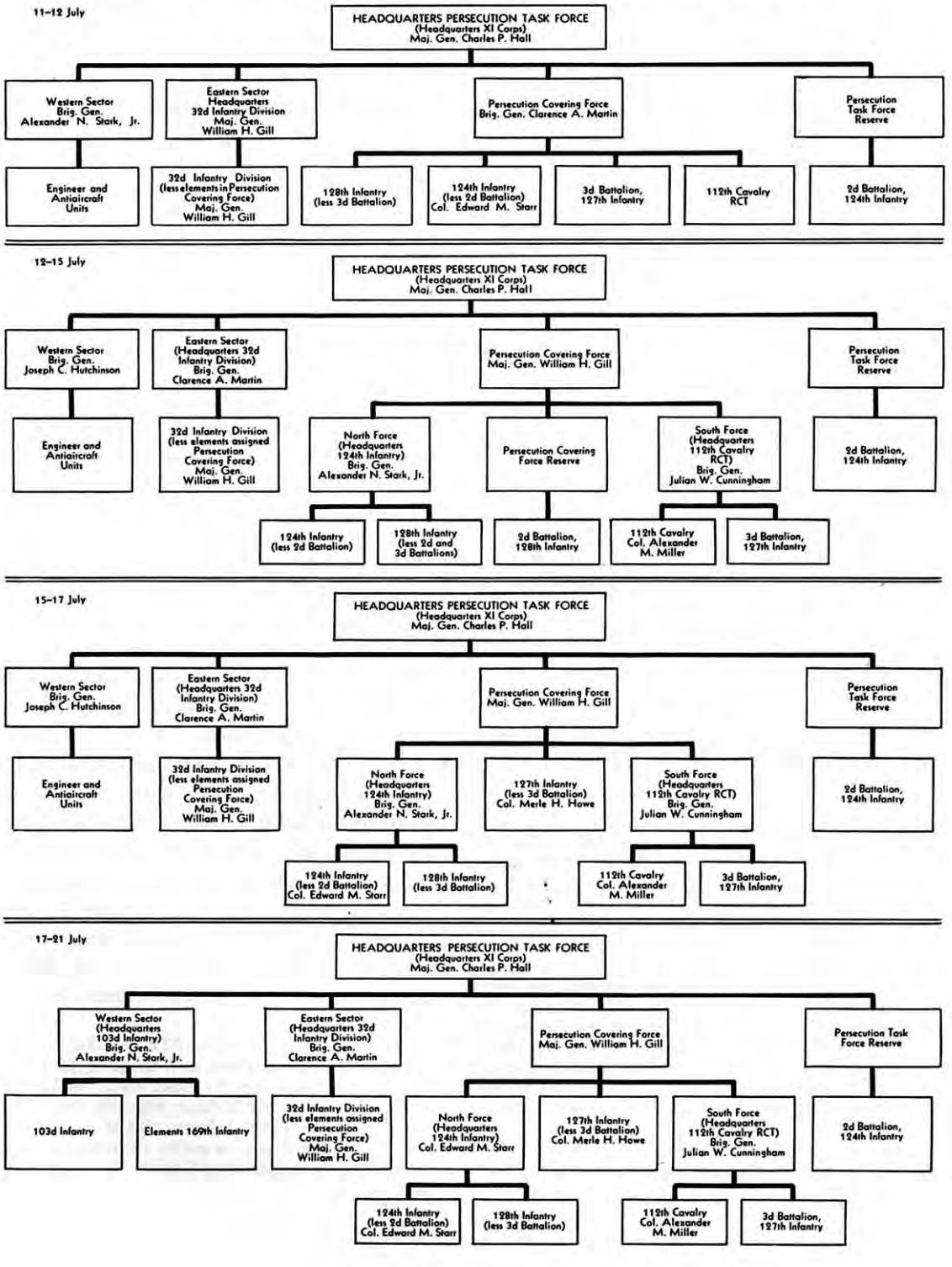
Then the two battalions of the 124th Infantry were to clear the Anamo–Afua trail south to the point at which that track met the Driniumor. The 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry (attached to the 124th Infantry), was to clear the coast from Anamo to the mouth of the Driniumor and then move down the west bank of the river and establish contact with the 124th Infantry. South

[9] Rads, PTF to ALAMO, AE–1052 and AE–1512, 12 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 1–12 Jul 44; 124th Inf Jnl, 12 Jul–10 Aug 44; Ltr, Gen Hall to Gen Ward, 29 Nov 50, in OCMH files.

[10] Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE–1550, 12 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 10–12 Jul 44; PTF FO 7, 12 Jul 44, in PTF G–3 Jnl, 11–15 Jul 44; Martin Comments, pp. 16–21; Ltr, Gen Hall to Gen Ward, 29 Nov 50, and Ltr, Gen Krueger to Gen Ward, 2 Jan 51, no sub, copies of last two in OCMH files. The exact terms and chronology of changes incident to this change in command later created some confusion at higher headquarters because the initial orders were so phrased as to make it appear that General Gill had been relieved of the command of the 32d Division. Such, of course, was not the intent, and on 20 July FO 7 was changed to clarify the situation. General Martin remained on as Commander, Eastern Sector, and Assistant Division Commander, 32d Division. Some time after the Aitape operation, he was promoted to major general and given the command of the 31st Infantry Division.

[11] PCF FO 1, 12 Jul 44, in PTF G–3 Jnl, 11–15 Jul 44. General Stark's post as Western Sector commander was taken over by Brig. Gen. Joseph C. Hutchinson of the 31st Division, who had arrived at Aitape with the 124th Infantry. South Force was also called Baldy Force—a rather uncomplimentary reference to the condition of General Cunningham's pate.

CHART 10—THE PERSECUTION TASK FORCE: 11 JULY–21 JULY 1944



Force was to start moving east at 1000 on the 13th. It was to attack along the Afua–Palauru trail to the Driniumor and restore the river line from Afua north to the 124th Infantry's positions.[12]

Action in the Coastal Sector

In order to secure a line of departure for the 1st Battalion's attack on 13 July, Company B, 128th Infantry, moved from Tiver to Anamo just before dark on the 12th.[13] At 0730 on the 13th the rest of the 1st Battalion, supported by a platoon of Company B, 632d Tank Destroyer Battalion, and from offshore by fire from LCM's, moved out of Tiver toward the east. The 1st Battalion marched through Anopapi and Anamo, passing through Company B, without incident. About 1000, Companies A and C arrived at Chakila, 1,000 yards east of Anamo. On the far side of a small stream entering the ocean just east of Chakila, the jungle grew almost to the edge of the beach and at the stream crossing only one platoon could be deployed. The rest of the battalion had to follow in narrow column. The leading platoon crossed the stream about 1050 and immediately found itself in the midst of a Japanese ambush.

Major Hoshino's *Coastal Attack Force* had crossed the Driniumor during the night of 11–12 July, bringing 70-mm. and 75-mm. weapons across the river and setting them up to support an advance by the *237th Infantry* to the Paup villages and the Nigia River. Apparently communications to the *Coastal Attack Force* had broken down, and the morning of 13 July found Major Hoshino's unit dug in along the coast east of Chakila awaiting further orders and preparing to defend the beach approach to the Driniumor.

The *Coastal Attack Force* let the leading platoon of the 128th Infantry pass through its first defenses. As the rest of the advance company started to cross the small stream, Major Hoshino's men opened up with rifles, machine guns, light mortars, and 75-mm. howitzers. The American platoon hastily retreated into the bed of the small stream, where banks five feet high afforded protection from the Japanese fire. Another platoon deployed along the west bank of the creek to establish a base of fire. Tank destroyers were brought up to the west bank and began bombarding the *Costal Attack Force's* positions. One tank destroyer was almost immediately damaged by Major Hoshino's artillery, the fire from which soon became so intense that the tank destroyers and LCM support craft were forced to retire to the west.

Artillery counterbattery fire was called for, and the 129th Field Artillery Battalion was quickly successful in putting out of action most of Major Hoshino's field pieces. The 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, then resumed its advance behind continuing field artillery fire which was placed as close as fifty yards in front of the leading troops. Two infantry platoons, one each from Companies A and C, forced a second crossing of the creek at 1300. Two tank destroyers followed immediately and, from the beach, delivered enfilade fire on positions of the *Coastal Attack Force* at the edge of the

[12] PCF G–3 Jnl, 11–15 Jul 44; 124th Inf Jnl, 12 Jul–10 Aug 44; PCF FO 1, 12 Jul 44; 112th Cav Opns and Int Diary Aitape.

[13] The principal source for the operations of the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, described in this subsection is a narrative account of the action written by the 1st Battalion S–3 and filed in the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, Journal, 28 June–25 August 1944. Information on the Japanese side of the story is taken principally from *18th Army* Operations, III, 111–14.

jungle. As the rest of the 1st Battalion crossed the stream, Major Hoshino and his men, having lost their artillery, fled inland.

Behind an improvised rolling barrage, Companies A and C pushed on eastward. One tank destroyer moved along the beach and another along the coastal track, which here ran through the jungle about seventy-five yards inland. The two forward companies reached the mouth of the Driniumor about 1800 and the rest of the battalion closed on the river shortly thereafter. Company A pushed down the west bank of the river about 2,000 yards without finding any sign of the 124th Infantry, which was driving south along the Anamo–Afua trail. Since it was getting dark, the company set up night defenses. Company B moved into position on A's right rear to refuse the battalion's south flank, and the rest of the battalion dug in near the mouth of the Driniumor.

In the course of the day's fighting the *Coastal Attack Force* had lost all its artillery and had suffered heavy casualties (the 1st Battalion had counted over sixty dead Japanese during the day). Additional losses were sustained on succeeding days, but Major Hoshino and his men were not completely removed as an irritant until the night of 16–17 July. During that night remnants of the *Coastal Attack Force,* about thirty-five men strong, attacked North Force and 124th Infantry command post installations at Anamo. At 2300 the group charged out of the jungle southwest of the Anamo perimeter. Repulsed by machine gun fire, the enemy temporarily disappeared, only to reappear at 0300 on 17 July moving west against Anamo along the beach. Machine gun fire from the American positions broke up this second attack, but about ten minutes later the Japanese tried again, this time moving on Anamo from the north by wading in from the sea.

Once ashore, Major Hoshino's men broke up into small groups, attempting to destroy mechanized equipment, automatic weapons positions, and communications installations. The *Coastal Attack Force* remnants had apparently scouted well, for they were reported to have moved purposefully toward the most important installations and they easily found their way about in terrain they had vacated only four days previously. Whatever Major Hoshino's plans were, they were not realized. About forty of his men were killed and the rest dispersed.[14]

While this final debacle wiped out the *Coastal Attack Force,* that unit had ceased to exist as an effective support force on 13 July, when its artillery was destroyed or lost. Without the artillery support it had expected, the *237th Infantry,* still somewhere south of Anamo and west of the Driniumor, could no longer seriously endanger PERSECUTION Covering Force positions on the coast.

The Attack South from the Paup Villages

The 124th Infantry (less the 2d Battalion) had started its attack toward the

[14] The story of the attack on Anamo is reconstructed from: PTF G–2 Daily Rpt 17, 17 Jul 44, PCF G–2 Daily Rpt 18, 17 Jul 44, and Msg, G–2 Eastern Sector to 126th and 128th Inf Regts, 17 Jul 44, all in 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–27 Jul 44; ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 58, 13 Sep 44, copy in G–2 DofA files; *18th Army* Opns, III, 111–14. Allied estimates of the strength of the Japanese force engaged in this action range from 35 to 80 men. The Japanese source gives a figure of "Major Hoshino and 30 survivors." Major Hoshino was himself killed during this action.

Driniumor about 0700 on 13 July.[15] The 3d Battalion struck south from Anopapi along a route 1,000 yards west of the Anamo–Afua trail. The 1st Battalion began moving down that trail from Anamo about 1000 hours. Documents captured by early morning patrols disclosed that the *237th Infantry* was preparing an attack on Anamo, and both 124th Infantry units expected some fighting.

Shortly after 0800 the 3d Battalion began to encounter opposition, and not more than 500 yards south of Anopapi the point was held up by a Japanese force of platoon strength. In the dense jungle it was almost an hour before the Japanese could be dispersed and the advance continued. Half an hour and another 500-odd yards later, a well-concealed but lightly held enemy ambush again halted the battalion. Allowing the bulk of the unit to pass through the ambush position, Japanese machine gunners and riflemen opened fire on the rear guard. Finally Company L drove the enemy force (probably elements of the *1st Battalion, 237th Infantry*) into the jungle and at 1000 the advance was resumed. Now the 3d Battalion swung southeast toward the Anamo–Afua trail, encountering only scattered rifle fire the rest of the day.

The 1st Battalion had met no strong, organized resistance as it advanced south along the Anamo–Afua trail, but there was a good deal of scattered rifle fire from Japanese stragglers. Somehow the battalion had moved off the main trail during the early afternoon and when, about 1700, it reached the Driniumor, it was at a point some 1,500 yards north of the trail-river junction. Its position in relation to that of the 3d Battalion is not clear. Apparently the 3d Battalion had crossed the 1st's axis of advance to the 1st Battalion's rear sometime during the afternoon and at 1700 hours reached the Anamo–Afua trail at a point about 1,000 yards west of the Driniumor and 2,000 yards north of the trail-river junction. So much, at least, seems clear from the 3d Battalion and regimental records, although the 1st Battalion's records indicate that the 3d bivouacked at a point about 2,000 yards due west of the 1st's position on the river. Suffice it to say that 1st Battalion patrols could find no trace of the 3d Battalion before dark on the 13th.

During the night of 13–14 July, there were four separate perimeters in the North Force sector of the Driniumor line. The battalions of the 124th Infantry, with Colonel Starr's approval, remained out of contact with each other, although both had radio contact with North Force headquarters. Companies A and B, 128th Infantry, were in a separate perimeter on the river some 600 yards north of the 1st Battalion, 124th Infantry. Patrol contact was established between the two perimeters before dark but, again with Colonel Starr's approval, no attempt was made to set up a firm line be-

[15] Information in this subsection is from: 124th Inf Jnl, 12 Jul–10 Aug 44; 124th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 5–6; Ltr, CO 124th Inf to CG 31st Inf Div, 22 Jul 44 (copy of this ltr was lent to the author by Col Edward M. Starr, CO 124th Inf, but no copy exists in official files); PTF G–3 Jnls, 11–15 and 15–19 Jul 44; PCF G–3 Jnl, 14–16 Jul 44; 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–27 Jul 44; 1st Bn 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44; 2d Bn 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44; Ltr, Col Starr to Gen Ward, 21 Aug 51; Ltr, Maj Edward A. Becker [S–3 1st Bn 124th Inf] to Col Starr, 13 Nov 50, atchd to Ltr, Starr to Ward, 21 Aug 51, copies of both ltrs in OCMH files; Contribution of First Battalion 124th Infantry in Aitape Campaign, British New Guinea, 1944, pp. 4–8. The latter document, essentially the diary of the S–3 1st Bn 124th Inf, was lent to the author by Major Becker through Colonel Starr, and no copy exists in official files. It is cited hereafter as 1st Bn 124th Inf in Aitape Campaign. The principal source of Japanese information is *18th Army* Opns, III, 111–14.

tween the two for the night. Instead of spreading men thinly along the river, the units in the two perimeters set up all-around defenses against the possibility of Japanese attack from the west. The fourth perimeter was that of the remainder of the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, at the mouth of the Driniumor. The 128th Infantry units, like those of the 124th, had radio contact with North Force headquarters.

Early on the morning of 14 July the 3d Battalion, 124th Infantry, moved on to the Driniumor to the right of the 1st Battalion of that regiment. During the same time the 1st Battalion extended its left northward while the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, pushed its right south to establish a firm line along the river, simultaneously consolidating its own lines.

The attack of the 124th Infantry had disrupted plans of the *237th Infantry* to clear the Paup villages, but not before that unit had caused some trouble at Tiver. There the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry, reorganizing after its withdrawal from the Driniumor, had established a defensive perimeter. Colonel Nara, commanding the *237th Infantry,* had rejoined his regiment (having been lost since the night of 10–11 July) about noon on 12 July. In compliance with previous orders, he immediately sent scouts out toward the Nigia River. Finding the new Allied defensive line around Tiver and south along Koronal Creek, he ordered his *1st* and *2d Battalions* to attack. Shortly after dark on 12 July the *1st Battalion* struck Company F, 128th Infantry, and succeeded in overrunning one machine gun position. A sharp fire fight continued and Company F was ultimately reinforced by Company A, which, however, did not arrive until most of the Japanese had already withdrawn.

Colonel Nara tried to organize more attacks for the 13th, but his deployment was partially frustrated by the advance of the 124th Infantry's battalions, which struck his right flank. Finally, late on the afternoon of the 13th, the *2d Battalion, 237th Infantry,* bypassing 124th Infantry elements, fell upon the lines of Company E, 128th Infantry, a few hundred yards south from Tiver. Giving ample proof that it had not lost its combat effectiveness after its disaster during the night of 10–11 July, Company E held firm and drove off the Japanese. But the *237th Infantry* elements now swung to the northeast in an attempt to reach less swampy terrain near the beach. By 1900 the entire front of the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry, was being subjected to a series of small-scale attacks which, combined with sporadic outbreaks of enemy machine gun fire, continued throughout the night of 13–14 July. At dawn on the 14th the remaining elements of the *237th Infantry* withdrew into the jungle south and southeast of Tiver. They had suffered heavy losses and had found the combination of swampy ground along the Koronal and the defensive fires of the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry, too much for them. Colonel Nara abandoned his plans to clear the Paup villages, and after 14 July only a few minor patrol skirmishes occurred in the Tiver area.

South Force and the Gap

General Cunningham's South Force had begun moving eastward from the X-ray River on schedule at 1000 on 13 July.[16] The

[16] This subsection is based on: 112th Cav Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 6–8; 112th Cav Opns and Int Diary Aitape; 112th Cav Sum of Msgs, 1–29 Jul 44; 124th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, p. 6; 124th Inf Jnl, 12 Jul–

1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, led out over the Afua–Palauru trail, followed by the 2d Squadron and part of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry. At a stream-crossing on the trail about 2,200 yards east of the X-ray, the leading troop was halted by approximately seventy-five Japanese who were dug in across the track. This force, probably elements of the *78th Infantry,* faded away as Troop A crossed the stream at a point north of the trail and threatened the enemy's right. A second Japanese position was encountered at another stream-crossing about 1,500 yards west of Afua, but the 1st Squadron, after a short but sharp fire fight, broke through this opposition also. About 1430 Australian aircraft based on the Tadji strips bombed and strafed the Afua area. Fifteen minutes later the South Force column reached the Driniumor at the village.

The 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry (less Captain Lowry's group), pushed north up the Driniumor to its old defensive positions, while the 112th Cavalry spread out along the Driniumor near Afua. Patrols of the 3d Battalion moved down the river as far as the junction of the Anamo–Afua trail with the Driniumor, but could find no sign of the 124th Infantry. The latter unit had reported earlier in the day that it had reached the trail-river junction, but, unfamiliar with the terrain along the Driniumor, had undoubtedly erred in estimating its position. On the morning of 14 July General Cunningham sent patrols 1,500 yards north of the junction, but still no trace of the 124th Infantry could be found. The South Force commander thereupon dispatched Troop E, 112th Cavalry, north beyond the lines of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, to close the wide gap which obviously existed in the Driniumor line. The gap had probably been at least 2,500 yards wide during the night of 13–14 July but was narrowed on the latter day by South Force's extension northward. However, it remained about 1,500 yards wide at nightfall on the 15th.

The Japanese had some knowledge of this weakness in the American lines and took advantage of it, especially during the hours of darkness. During daylight the enemy stayed away from the river for the most part, permitting American forces to move through the gap with only occasional rifle fire to oppose them. Their own use of the gap sometimes cost the Japanese dearly, and during the night of 14–15 July about 135 of the enemy were killed in the area by the 3d Battalion, 124th Infantry.[17]

By nightfall on the 15th General Cunningham was becoming sensitive about the gap. He could not convince General Gill, at PERSECUTION Covering Force headquarters, that South Force had already extended its lines almost 1,000 yards beyond its assigned sector without finding any elements of the 124th Infantry. General Cunningham felt that the 124th Infantry was not giving him much co-operation. He claimed that without his permission the infantry regiment had held Troop E within its lines during the night of 15–16 July and he complained that the infantry was giving no protection to

10 Aug 44; 3d Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44; Interv, author with Gen Cunningham, Apr 47; Interv, author with Col Hooper, 25 Mar 47; Interv, author with Capt Lowry, Apr 47; PTF G–3 Jnls, 11–15 and 15–19 Jul 44; PCF G–3 Jnls, 14–16 and 16–20 Jul 44; *18th Army* Opns, III, 107–15; Ltr, Becker to Starr, 13 Nov 50; 1st Bn 124th Inf in Aitape Campaign, pp. 7–9. Additional information was supplied by General Cunningham and Colonel Hooper who, during January 1950, read and made notes on draft chapters concerning operations at Aitape. These notes, a copy of which is in the OCMH files, are hereafter cited as Cunningham Notes.

[17] This enemy casualty figure is from Ltr, CO 124th Inf to CG 31st Div, 22 Jul 44.

South Force wire parties which were trying to establish telephone communications with headquarters installations on the coast.[18]

PERSECUTION Covering Force headquarters was also critical of South Force's communications, but General Cunningham did not believe criticism was justified. He pointed out that his wire parties received no help, that wire was continually being cut by the enemy or by accidents, and that atmospheric conditions caused radio malfunctioning in the South Force area after dark. In view of his communications difficulties and the trouble in closing the gap, General Cunningham requested that South Force be reinforced by an infantry battalion. This request could not be complied with for some days.

Meanwhile the 124th Infantry continued to report that it had pushed far south of the trail-river junction without encountering any troops except Japanese stragglers. Headquarters, PERSECUTION Covering Force, apparently accepted the 124th Infantry's reports at face value, but there is little doubt that the 124th Infantry incorrectly reported its locations. On the other hand, the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, had been operating along the river since late June. It can be presumed that the men of that unit could recognize on 13 July the positions they had occupied as late as the morning of the 11th. On the afternoon of 15 July, Colonel Starr, commanding the 124th Infantry, apparently concluded that his regiment had not moved as far south as earlier reported. At that time he ordered the unit to adjust its lines to the south and extend its defenses up the Driniumor to the left flank of South Force.

At 0800 on the 16th, the 3d Battalion, 124th Infantry, using Troop E of the 112th Cavalry as point and guide, started moving south to close the gap. Troop E had scarcely moved out of its night bivouac when it was met by heavy fire from enemy positions on both sides of the Driniumor. Learning that the *237th Infantry* was in serious danger of being cut off west of the Driniumor by the American restoration of the river line, the *18th Army* had made efforts to keep the original crossing point open. For this purpose two companies of the *1st Battalion, 239th Infantry,* had been hurriedly sent forward from the Marubian area. At the same time, Colonel Nara, defeated in his attempts to clear the Paup villages, had turned the *237th Infantry* back toward the Kawanaka Shima area and ordered the remnants of his *3d Battalion* to attack the American rear.

Most of the fire on Troop E evidently came from the two companies of the *1st Battalion, 239th Infantry,* on the east side of the river. While Troop E was seeking cover from this fire and fighting off a few Japanese who attacked from the left flank, the *3d Battalion, 237th Infantry,* hit the right of the 3d Battalion, 124th Infantry, close behind Troop E. The Japanese succeeded in splitting the American force. Companies I and K, 124th Infantry, halted to face the enemy attack from the west, while Troop E, Company L, and most of Company M pushed on southward through increasing opposition from the *239th Infantry's* companies. Fighting every foot of the way, the three American units reached South Force lines about 1500. They killed

[18] Major Becker, S–3 of the 1st Battalion, 124th Infantry, indicates (in Ltr, Becker to Starr, 13 Nov 50) that he feels some of General Cunningham's remarks were unjustified: first, because it would have been impossible for Troop E to have returned to South Force before dark; second, because the Troop E commander was only *advised* to stay in North Force's lines; and third, because the 124th Infantry had not been *asked* by South Force to provide protection for wire parties.

about forty Japanese during the move south and closed the larger portion of the gap.

To the north, Companies I and K, 124th Infantry, dug in for the night. During the next day, 16 July, attempts made to close a remaining 500 yards of the gap were unsuccessful, although an additional forty-five Japanese were killed as elements of the *237th* or *239th Infantry Regiment* continued their efforts to keep the gap open. Late on the 17th the gap was temporarily closed, but it was reopened during the succeeding night for a distance of about 300 yards, probably by elements of the *237th Infantry.* The last small portion of the gap was closed by the 124th Infantry on the morning of 18 July. Then the remnants of the *3d Battalion, 237th Infantry,* withdrew to the west, while the *239th Infantry's* force, its commander killed, withdrew eastward. The PERSECUTION Covering Force's Driniumor River line was once again solid from Afua to the coast, a week after the *18th Army* had made its first break-through.

Operations West of the Driniumor

General Hall realized that the re-establishment of the Driniumor line might leave strong Japanese units west of the river. These enemy troops, although cut off from their sources of supply, could harass the rear of the Driniumor line, move south to cut the Afua–Palauru trail, or continue to annoy the North Force command post area. Notwithstanding the fact that he had been ordered to counterattack when the impetus of the *18th Army's* initial assault had been spent, General Hall did not feel that the time for counterattack beyond the Driniumor was at hand but decided that the most immediately pressing problem was to clear all Japanese units from the area west of the river. Furthermore, he wished to await the arrival at Aitape of at least one regimental combat team of the 43d Division, a reinforcement which would make possible the release of units already acquainted with the terrain in the Driniumor area from positions on the main line of resistance. Finally, the task force commander believed it necessary to locate the main body of the *20th Division* before launching a counterattack. Only the *78th Infantry* of that division had so far been identified in the Driniumor area, but it was believed that the rest of the division had participated in the attack during the night of 10–11 July.[19]

For the purpose of clearing the enemy from the area west of the Driniumor, General Hall released the 1st and 2d Battalions, 127th Infantry, from their positions on the main line of resistance and placed them under General Gill's control.[20] By morning of the 16th, both battalions had closed at Tiver. The 2d Battalion was to clear the Japanese from an area between Koronal Creek and the Driniumor to a depth of one and a half miles inland, while the 1st Battalion was to set up a patrol base south of the 2d between the two streams. After clearing its sector, the 2d was to follow the 1st south and aid the latter in driving any Jap-

[19] Interv with Gen Hall, 27 Mar 47; Rads, PTF to ALAMO, AE–1914, 14 Jul 44, and AE–2145, 16 Jul 44, both in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 13–16 Jul 44.

[20] The action behind North Force is based on: PTF G–3 Jnls, 12–14 and 15–17 Jul 44; PCF G–3 Jnl, 16–20 Jul 44; 127th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, Sec. II, pp. 4–6; 127th Inf Jnl file, 10–31 Jul 44; 1st Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44; 2d Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44; 124th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 6–8; 124th Inf Jnl, 12 Jul–10 Aug 44. There now remained on the main line of resistance the 126th Infantry and the 3d Battalion, 128th Infantry. The 2d Battalion, 124th Infantry, was being held by General Hall at Blue Beach as a mobile reserve.

anese it could find south into the Torricelli Mountains.

In a series of complicated and sometimes un-co-ordinated company actions on 16–18 July, the 2d Battalion overran the area assigned to it, encountering a few small groups of the *237th Infantry* and helping to disrupt that regiment's plans for continuing attacks on the Paup villages and keeping open a crossing over the Driniumor. The activities of the 2d Battalion actually resulted in a mixed blessing. On the one hand, the battalion cleared many Japanese from the rear of North Force, but on the other, in driving elements of the *237th Infantry* south and eastward, it inadvertently caused the 124th Infantry much difficulty in its mission of closing and keeping closed the gap in the Driniumor line.

After the operations of the 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, and the closing of the gap between North and South Forces on 18 July, the 124th Infantry's sector remained quiet for a few days.[21] On the 21st, the 2d Battalion of the 169th Infantry, 43d Division, arrived on the Driniumor to strengthen the 124th Infantry.[22] The new arrivals took over about 1,000 yards of the river line on the right of the 124th Infantry. They had arrived none too soon.

General Adachi still had plans to reopen a crossing of the Driniumor near Kawanaka Shima in order to send supplies across the river and to continue efforts to divide the Allied defenders. For this purpose he instructed the *239th Infantry,* supported by elements of the *238th Infantry* and the *41st Mountain Artillery,* to move against the Kawanaka Shima area on 27 July. For reasons unknown, he changed these orders on the 19th and ordered the same *41st Division* elements to strike immediately and dispatched the *66th Infantry, 51st Division,* westward to participate in the attack.

It was not until the night of 21–22 July that the Japanese forward units were able to organize for any sort of attack. During that night, elements of the 124th Infantry received considerable mortar, machine gun, and rifle fire from east of the Driniumor. This fire increased the next morning, and about noon the 3d Battalion, 124th Infantry, was attacked from the west by elements of the *237th Infantry.* The first Japanese attack was ". . . finally broken up by a bayonet charge . . ." [23] conducted by elements of the 3d Battalion, 124th Infantry, but other attacks followed as troops of the *1st Battalion, 239th Infantry,* tried to move across the Driniumor from the east, striking both the 124th Infantry's unit and part of the 2d Battalion, 169th Infantry. Before dark on the 22d, the 3d Battalion, 124th Infantry, counted 155 new Japanese dead in its area. That unit and the 2d Battalion, 169th Infantry, reported their own losses as five killed and twenty-five wounded.[24]

Further attempts to reopen the river crossing were made by the *1st Battalion, 239th*

[21] The following story of Japanese attempts to reopen a crossing of the Driniumor is based on: 2d Bn 169th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 2–3; 124th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 6–9; 124th Inf Jnl, 12 Jul–10 Aug 44; PCF G–3 Jnl, 22–26 Jul 44; 3d Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44; *18th Army* Opns, III, 114–20; PW interrogs and trans of captured docs in PTF and Eastern Sector G–2 Jnls, Jul and Aug 44.

[22] The 169th Infantry had arrived at Blue Beach from New Zealand on 20 July.

[23] 124th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, p. 8.

[24] The report of the 2d Battalion, 169th Infantry, states that 274 Japanese were killed in the area of the night and day action. This figure appears to be a rather high estimate. The American figure is that given in the Journal of the 3d Battalion, 124th Infantry. A 124th Infantry regimental report, later on the 22d, gives total American casualties in the 24-hour action as 11 killed, 24 wounded, and 20 nonbattle.

Infantry, on the night of 23–24 June, but these efforts were thwarted by the troops along the river and support fire by the 149th Field Artillery Battalion from the coast near Anamo. There was another minor flare-up the next night near the point where the lines of the 2d Battalion, 169th Infantry, and the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, joined. With this last effort, the *18th Army* gave up attempts to reopen a river crossing in the North Force area, which remained relatively quiet thereafter.

Meanwhile, the 1st and 2d Battalions, 127th Infantry, had continued mopping-up operations west of the Driniumor.[25] From 16 through 18 July the 1st Battalion had moved slowly south from Tiver along Koronal Creek, driving scattered elements of the *237th Infantry* before it or pushing them eastward toward the river lines of the 124th Infantry. On the 18th the 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, now on the X-ray River some 6,000 yards south of Tiver, started moving east to set up a patrol base on East Branch, Koronal Creek, at a point about 2,000 yards north of the Afua–Palauru trail and an equal distance east of the X-ray. Patrolling thoroughly in heavily jungled terrain, the battalion bivouacked for the night of 18–19 July some 400 yards west of its objective.

During the evening, Headquarters, PERSECUTION Covering Force, informed the battalion that the *78th Infantry, 20th Division,* was located between East Branch and the 112th Cavalry's positions at Afua, to the southeast. This was easy to believe, for the 1st Battalion's right flank patrols had encountered many Japanese during the afternoon, and the 112th Cavalry reported that its patrols had discovered large groups of Japanese in the vicinity of Kwamagnirk, about midway between the 1st Battalion and Afua. Although opposition was expected, the 1st Battalion moved on to its patrol base site during the 19th without encountering any Japanese. The unit was joined at its new base on the 20th by the 2d Battalion, which had moved south from Tiver against little opposition.

The two battalions were now isolated in a heavily jungled area and insofar as they knew might have been surrounded by a strong enemy force. Overland supply was both dangerous and slow, and for the next two days the units were supplied principally by airdrop. Communications with Headquarters, PERSECUTION Covering Force, or with units along the Driniumor were at best sporadic. Telephone lines could not be kept in service and radios would not work much of the time.

The battalions had not yet located any large body of enemy troops west of the Driniumor. Therefore, on the morning of 20 July, General Gill ordered the units to prepare to move southeast toward the 112th Cavalry and Afua, where a great deal of enemy activity had broken out two days earlier. Time was to be taken before departure from the patrol base to co-ordinate plans with South Force and to make additional attempts to locate the main body of the *20th Division,* which, General Hall still suspected, might be west of the Driniumor.

During the next three days the two 127th Infantry battalions sent out patrols in all directions. No large bodies of Japanese troops were located, but a number of small parties of the *78th Infantry, 20th Division,*

[25] Information on further operations of the 127th Infantry west of the Driniumor is based on: 127th Inf Jnl file, 10–31 Jul 44; 1st Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44; 2d Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44; 127th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, Sec. II, pp. 4–6; PTF G–3 Jnls, 15–19 and 19–21 Jul 44.

were encountered. This patrolling continued while efforts were made by Headquarters, PERSECUTION Covering Force, to obtain some understanding of the steadily deteriorating situation of South Force in the Afua area.

The Japanese Attack on the South Flank

Even while South Force had been going about the business of restoring its section of the Driniumor line and helping to close the gap between South and North Forces, the Japanese had begun new offensive maneuvers in the Afua area. The night of 13–14 July—South Force's first night back on the Driniumor—was quiet, and only scattered contacts were made with enemy forces the next day. But on the 15th there was a noticeable increase in Japanese activity in South Force's area, especially in the vicinity of Afua.

Japanese Attack Preparations

On 15 July patrols of the 112th Cavalry encountered many small parties of Japanese near Afua and found indications that many more enemy troops were in the same region.[26] The next day, groups of Japanese were observed crossing the Driniumor in both directions at a fording point about 2,500 yards south of Afua. About the same time it was discovered that the enemy had blazed a rough track south of the Afua–Palauru trail and running along the foothills of the Torricelli Mountains from the Driniumor to the headwaters of the X-ray River.

While it would obviously have been desirable to block this new trail, especially at the point where it crossed the Driniumor, General Hall did not feel he could spare any troops for the task. He was not greatly concerned about enemy movements on the right of South Force and he did not believe that the enemy could or would move any large force west along the new trail. He also knew that the enemy could find other routes to bypass South Force even if the one trail were cut. Nevertheless, South Force was ordered to do everything in its power to stop Japanese westward movements. General Cunningham was instructed to send strong patrols south of Afua to harass Japanese forces on the new trail and he was also ordered to keep the Afua–Palauru trail clear of enemy troops in order to keep open the overland line of communications to Blue Beach via Chinapelli and Palauru.

Before receiving these instructions, General Cunningham, who believed that South Force was being outflanked by large numbers of Japanese, had wanted to shorten his lines by retiring north of Afua. The new orders disapproved such a withdrawal. In order to protect his south flank, General Cunningham therefore bent his right back along the Afua–Palauru trail west approximately 600 yards from the Driniumor. On high ground at the western extremity of this new line he stationed Troop A, 112th Cavalry. The remainder of the 1st Squadron was posted at Afua and along the Driniumor to a point about 800 yards north of that village. All South Force units were alerted

---

[26] Information in this and the following subsection is based principally on: 112th Cav Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 7–9; 112th Cav Opns and Int Diary Aitape; 112th Cav Sum of Msgs, 1–29 Jul 44; PTF G–3 Jnls, 15–19, 19–21, and 21–26 Jul 44; PCF G–3 Jnls, 14–16, 16–20, and 20–22 Jul 44; Interv, author with Gen Cunningham, Apr 47; Interv, author with Col Hooper, 25 Mar 48; *18th Army* Opns, III, 110–23. In the last-named source, upon which reconstruction of Japanese plans is principally based, are cited *MO* Opn Orders 17, 14 Jul; 21, 16 Jul; 22, 19 Jul; 23, 21 Jul; and 24, 21 Jul 44.

to the possibility of attack from the south and west. The Japanese had been preparing just such an attack.

On 11 July the assault units of the *20th Division* had begun assembling on the high ground west of the Driniumor and had started preparations for further movement westward. The overland withdrawal of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, and Company G, 128th Infantry, on 11–13 July had apparently prevented the *Left* and *Right Flank Units* from reorganizing as rapidly as planned. The return of South Force to the Driniumor, beginning on the 13th, had found the two Japanese attack forces still trying to concentrate for movement westward. On the 15th the two units were combined as the *Miyake Force* under General Miyake, who was ordered to secure Afua and the high ground to the west in preparation for a concerted drive northward toward the coast when the rest of the *20th Division* arrived in the forward area.

Although General Miyake was unable to organize any rapid assault on Afua—his first objective—the contacts which the 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, made with Japanese units in the Afua area on 15 and 16 July probably marked *Miyake Force* preparations for attack. By evening of the 16th, however, General Adachi realized that the *18th Army's* initial break-through along the Driniumor had not achieved decisive results. Instead, the PERSECUTION Covering Force had managed to wipe out the *Coastal Attack Force,* cut off and inflict heavy losses on the *237th Infantry,* greatly reduce the *78th Infantry's* strength, restore the Driniumor line with greater strength than had been employed on the river prior to 10 July, and seriously threaten the *Miyake Force's* lines of communication. Under such conditions the *18th Army* commander knew it was impossible to execute an attack on the Allied main line of resistance around the Tadji airfields, in preparation for which the *Miyake Force's* drive to the coast had been ordered. General Adachi therefore abandoned his original plan in favor of another attack against the United States forces along the Driniumor, forces which he now believed to comprise most of the Allied troops in the Aitape area.

To start this new attack, those elements of the *20th Division* still east of the Driniumor were ordered to cross the river and drive on Afua from the south. Earlier orders to the *66th Infantry, 51st Division,* to aid the forward elements of the *41st Division* to the north were canceled, and the regiment was attached to the *20th Division* for operations in the Afua area. The new efforts by the *20th Division* were to be carried out in conjunction with the attack against Afua which the *Miyake Force* had already been ordered to undertake.

The Japanese Retake Afua

On 17 and 18 July the *Miyake Force* slowly maneuvered into position to the right and rear of the 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry. On the evening of the 18th the *3d Battalion, 78th Infantry,* and the *2d Battalion, 80th Infantry,* poured out of the jungle west and northwest of the 1st Squadron's command post and the contiguous perimeter held by Troop A, west of Afua. The two South Force units were pushed 250 yards to the northeast, where they rapidly established new positions. Reinforcements—two rifle platoons from the 1st Squadron and one from the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry—arrived at the new perimeter at dusk. The next morning the composite force attacked south and regained the ground vacated the

previous night. The *Miyake Force* units fled northwest into the jungle without firing a shot.

Early in the afternoon of 19 July fresh Japanese units began to surround the Troop A position, moving in from the north, northwest, west, and southwest. The 1st Squadron commander called for artillery fire to break up this enemy maneuver. Upon cessation of the fire, Troop A attacked to the south and west for a second time. Driving at least a company of Japanese before it, the troop pushed 600 yards southwest of its original positions astride the Afua–Palauru trail and temporarily disrupted enemy plans to seize the position.[27] About 140 Japanese had been killed during the two days' operation around Troop A. South Force, at the same time, lost 8 men killed and 29 wounded, all from the 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry.[28] There were strong indications that more attacks might occur in the 1st Squadron area, but Troop A was not destined to take part in any of these actions. It was replaced on the 21st by Troop C.

After this change, South Force positions were as follows: The 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, held about 1,200 yards along the river south from the junction of the Anamo–Afua trail with the Driniumor. On the right of the 3d Battalion was the 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry, with two troops on the river. Troop E was in reserve about 200 yards west of the river near an open space employed for air-dropping supplies to South Force. In a patch of banana trees just south of this dropping ground were Headquarters, South Force, and Headquarters, 112th Cavalry. The 1st Squadron defended the west bank of the river north from Afua 1,200 yards, tying its left into the right of the 2d Squadron. About 550 yards west and slightly north of Afua were Troop C and Headquarters, 1st Squadron. Most of Troop C's defenses faced north and northwest. The troop's southeast flank was tied loosely into the lines of Troop B, at Afua, but this connection was more theoretical than actual and contact between the two was maintained principally by patrols and sound-powered telephone.

Even as Troop C was replacing Troop A, the Japanese were making new plans for attack. Orders were issued on 19 July for the entire *20th Division* immediately to attack and clear the Afua area. The *Miyake Force* (to which was now attached the remnants of the *237th Infantry, 41st Division,* in addition to the *78th* and *80th Infantry Regiments* of the *20th Division*) was to attack from the north and west, while the rest of the *20th Division,* including the *79th Infantry,* was to attack from the south. The *66th Infantry,* having difficulty moving forward and suffering from a series of changes in orders, was to remain in reserve east of the Driniumor and turn its supplies over to the *Miyake Force.*

Although the co-ordinated Japanese attack was to have been on 19 July, only the isolated action in the area of Troop A, 112th Cavalry, occurred that day. Probably the Japanese were unable to get organized on schedule, an occupational disease which

---

[27] The Japanese account has these actions occurring on 17 and 18 July but all American sources state that the attacks against Troop A and the 1st Squadron command post occurred on the 18th and 19th of the month.

[28] The American casualty figures are from 112th Cavalry records. According to the Cunningham Notes, the figure for Japanese casualties is based on a count of Japanese dead by Colonel Miller, the commander of the 112th Cavalry Regiment. For a series of heroic actions and outstanding leadership during the period 16–19 July, 2d Lt. Dale Eldon Christensen, a platoon leader of Troop A, was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Lieutenant Christensen was killed on 4 August while leading his platoon in another attack.

marked all Japanese operations in the Aitape area. The *79th Infantry* and *Headquarters, 20th Division,* did not cross the Driniumor until 18 and 19 July. Moreover, the *237th Infantry* remnants had not yet joined the *Miyake Force,* the other two components of which apparently had some difficulty reorganizing after their operations on the evening of the 18th and the morning of the 19th. By evening on 21 July, however, the Japanese were ready.

At 1645 a Japanese 75-mm. mountain gun opened point blank fire on the semi-isolated perimeter of Troop C, 112th Cavalry. After a few rounds from this weapon, an enemy force (estimated by the cavalrymen to be about a battalion strong and probably part of the *79th Infantry*) attacked Troop C from the south and west, cutting it off from the rest of South Force. Troop B, at Afua, tried to re-establish contact with Troop C, but was prevented from so doing by enemy parties now stationed along the Afua–Palauru trail. Two rifle platoons of Company I, 127th Infantry, were sent southwest from their river positions to aid Troop C. One reached the cavalry unit during the night, but the other was forced to fall back to South Force's command post.[29] Heavy rifle, machine gun, and mortar fire, and even hand-to-hand fighting, continued in the Troop C area throughout the night. At the same time elements of the *Miyake Force* attempted to overrun the South Force command post area.

At dawn on the 22d Troop B made several more efforts to reach Troop C and General Cunningham sent out his reserve, Troop E, in another attempt to relieve the beleaguered unit. Both actions were futile, for the Japanese had managed to secure control over all the commanding ground west and northwest of Afua. Not knowing what other plans the Japanese might have in mind, General Cunningham was unwilling to pull any more troops away from the river defenses. Moreover, he now considered the position of his right flank untenable. He therefore withdrew Troop B north of Afua about 1,000 yards and used the unit to form a new defense line which ran westward about 500 yards from Troop A's right flank, anchored on the Driniumor. South Force's right flank was now refused and additional protection had been secured for medical, supply, and command post installations at the dropping ground banana patch. Troop C was left isolated behind Japanese lines, and Afua was again released to the enemy.

Changes in PERSECUTION
Task Force Plans

American forces had been back on the Driniumor since 13 July and the Driniumor line had been restored from Afua to the coast by evening on the 18th. Only four days later, the PERSECUTION Covering Force had found it necessary to give up a portion of the restored line. Even before this second retreat, General Hall had again considered strengthening the units along the Driniumor, a step made possible when, on 20 July, elements of the 43d Infantry Division began arriving at Aitape. General Hall decided that he could employ the fresh units to stabilize the situation in the Afua area and to stop Japanese attempts to seize control of the Afua–Palauru trail.

[29] On 22 July Pvt. Donald R. Lobaugh of Company I, 127th Infantry, succeeded, at the cost of his life, in knocking out a Japanese machine gun nest which held up the withdrawal of the Company I platoon that had been forced back toward the command post, an action for which he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. The platoon had spent the night of 21–22 July on an isolated perimeter, surrounded by enemy units.

At first General Hall planned to move the 112th Cavalry west from Afua to new positions astride the Afua–Palauru trail about midway between the Driniumor and X-ray Rivers. The 1st and 2d Battalions, 127th Infantry, were then to move to the Driniumor from their recently established patrol base on the East Branch of Koronal Creek, join the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, on the river, and take over all of South Force's Driniumor defenses. The 2d Battalion, 124th Infantry, still in reserve at Blue Beach, was to join the rest of its regiment on the Driniumor while one battalion of the 169th Infantry, 43d Division, was to move to Palauru to provide additional outer security southwest of the airfield main line of resistance. The remainder of the 43d Division, upon its arrival at Blue Beach, was to man defenses along the main line of resistance or stand by in task force reserve.[30]

These plans were never realized. First, it was discovered that the 169th Infantry had brought to Aitape many unserviceable or badly worn automatic weapons and mortars. Then it was found that days would be required to unload many of the regiment's crew-served weapons. The unit had not been combat loaded, since it and the rest of the division had moved forward from New Zealand expecting to stop at Aitape only for staging, and not for combat with the PERSECUTION Task Force.[31] Some replacements for unserviceable weapons could be found in limited stocks at Aitape, but the rest had to await shipment from Services of Supply bases in eastern New Guinea.

The condition of the 169th Infantry's weapons, combined with the delays in unloading the regiment, limited that unit's usefulness. General Hall, who deemed the immediate dispatch of one battalion to Palauru to be urgently necessary, therefore sent the 2d Battalion, 124th Infantry, to that village, where it arrived on the afternoon of 21 July. The 2d Battalion, 169th Infantry (first unit of the 43d Division to arrive at Aitape), was sent to Anamo the same day and on the 22d had moved to the right flank of the two 124th Infantry Battalions already on the Driniumor.[32]

While these dispositions were being effected, Japanese activity in the Afua area so increased that General Hall decided that it would be unwise to move the 112th Cavalry away from the Driniumor. Instead, he now ordered the 1st and 2d Battalions, 127th Infantry, to move southwest from their East Branch patrol bases to strengthen South Force and relieve Troop C, 112th Cavalry.[33] The 1st Battalion, 127th Infan-

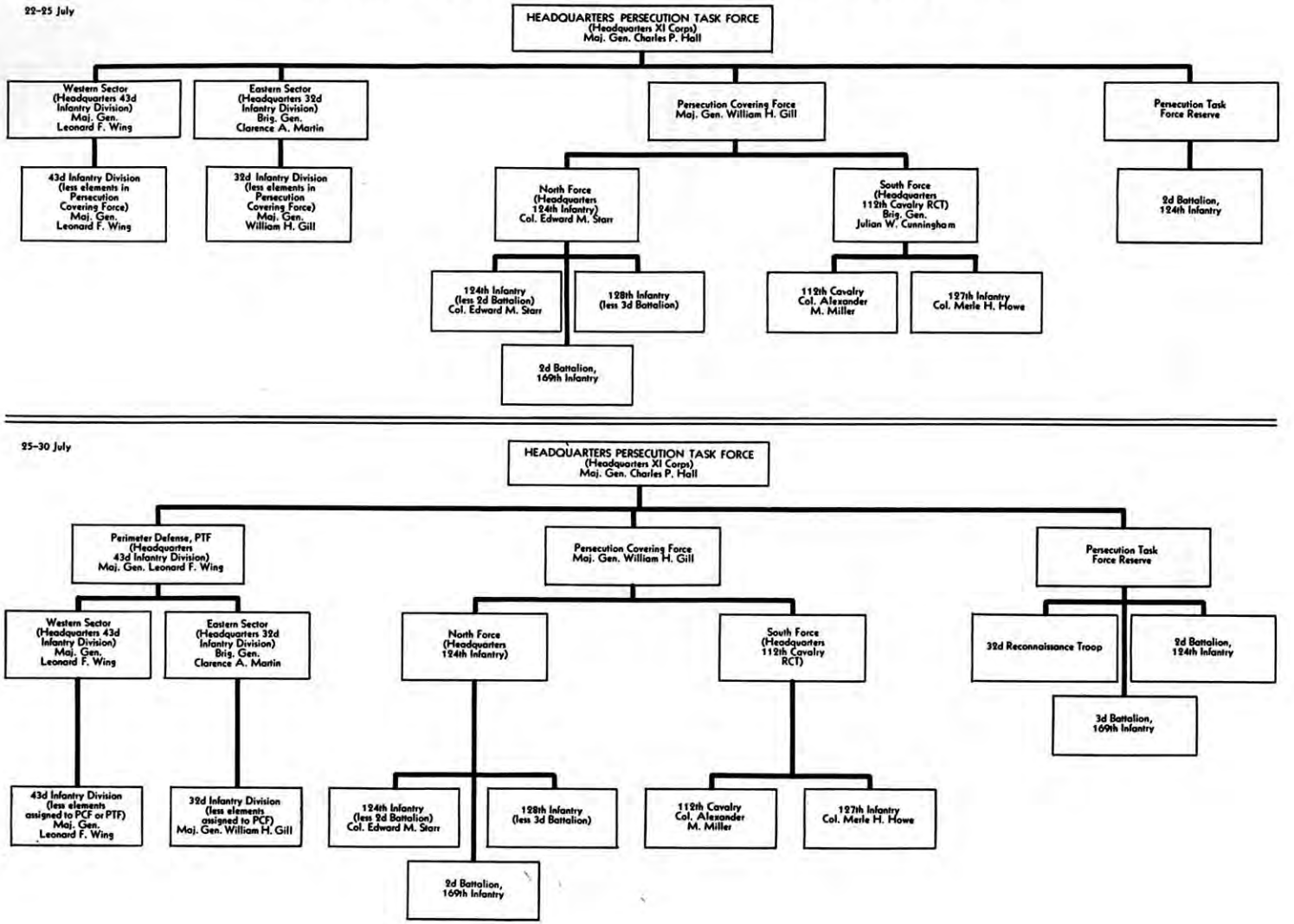
[30] PTF G–3 Jnl, 19–21 Jul 44; PTF FO 9, 20 Jul 44, in PTF G–3 Jnl, 19–21 Jul 44.

[31] 43d Div MO 16, 17 Jun 44, in 43d Div Opns Rpt Aitape; Interv, author with Maj Joseph L. Manz, ex-Adj, 169th Infantry, 11 May 48, copy in OCMH files; Interv, author with Gen Hall, 27 Mar. 47.

[32] PTF G–3 Jnl, 19–21 Jul 44; Interv, author with Gen Hall, 27 Mar 47. From internal evidence in task force documents, it appears that the 2d Battalion, 169th Infantry, was originally moved to Anamo as reserve for the PERSECUTION Covering Force. General Gill moved it into the line, still without some of its crew-served weapons, possibly to strengthen the 124th Infantry's two battalions with the leaven of a more experienced unit. The 169th Infantry's battalion had had a good deal of combat in the South Pacific, while the 124th Infantry was in its first combat.

[33] PCF Fragmentary FO, no number, 22 Jul 44, in PCF G–3 Jnl, 27–31 Jul 44; PTF G–3 Jnl, 21–26 Jul 44. The original plans for the employment of the 127th Infantry were never formally revoked but seem to have died a natural death after it proved impracticable to move the 112th Cavalry away from the Driniumor. Plans for the movement of the 127th Infantry's two battalions were drawn up by General Cunningham and Colonel Howe (the commander of the 127th Infantry) during the afternoon of 22 July. Colonel Howe, with a small escort, made his

CHART 11—THE PERSECUTION TASK FORCE: 22 JULY–30 JULY 1944



try, left its East Branch base at 0745 on 23 July and moved directly eastward through dense jungle to the lines of the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry. Then the unit turned south and about 1530 reached the South Force command post area at the banana patch.

The battalion's arrival was welcome and timely. Troop E, 112th Cavalry, had been attempting all day to move south from the command post to relieve Troop C, which was still cut off. But Troop E had met with little success and was pushed back by increasingly aggressive Japanese units which now threatened to attack the South Force command post, capture the dropping ground, and overrun the entire right flank of the PERSECUTION Covering Force.[34]

The 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, crossed to the right bank of East Branch about 0800 on the 23d and struck southeast toward the Afua–Palauru trail, passing through many recently abandoned Japanese bivouacs. In midmorning the battalion found a narrow track leading toward Kwamagnirk and at 1200 the unit was atop a low ridge just south of that village, which had been obliterated by artillery and mortar fire. The 2d Battalion was now almost within view of Troop C's isolated perimeter and had attained an apparently excellent position from which to launch a counterattack to relieve the cavalry unit.[35]

way overland through enemy-infested territory from the East Branch patrol base to South Force headquarters during the morning of the 22d.

[34] 127th Inf Jnl file, 10–31 Jul 44; 112th Cav Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 9–10; 112th Cav Opns and Int Diary Aitape; PTF G–3 Jnl, 21–26 Jul 44.

[35] 127th Inf Jnl file, 10–31 Jul 44; 2d Bn 127th Inf, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44. Kwamagnirk was originally a hamlet of five or six native huts. It and two other even smaller settlements in the same area had been so pounded by artillery and mortar fire that its exact location was and is impossible to determine, but it is assumed to be in the position depicted on the 1:63,360 map used by the PERSECUTION Task and Covering Forces.

CHAPTER VIII

The Battle of the Driniumor Phase II: The *18th Army* Retreats

Securing the Afua Area

With the arrival of the 1st and 2d Battalions, 127th Infantry, in his area, General Cunningham decided to make another attempt to relieve Troop C, 112th Cavalry.[1] The latter's position had been uncertain for two days, but it was definitely located on the morning of the 23d on the basis of a report from the platoon of Company I, 127th Infantry. Having reached Troop C on the evening of the 21st, this platoon had succeeded in fighting its way through Japanese lines to South Force's command post on the 23d. General Cunningham now sent part of the 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, to relieve Troops A and B, 112th Cavalry, from their positions north of Afua. The two cavalry units were to attack west toward Troop C and, simultaneously, the 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, was to push southeast toward the isolated troop.

The Relief of Troop C

The double envelopment started early in the afternoon of the 23d. At first, the attacks of the cavalry and infantry units were closely co-ordinated, orders to both being issued through a radio aboard an artillery liaison plane hovering overhead. But shortly after the combined attack began, Troops A and B had to retire eastward to avoid fire from the advancing infantry battalion. Troop A thereupon turned south and retook Afua against light opposition. During the afternoon the two cavalry units established new defenses around Afua, extending their lines about 300 yards west of the village.[2]

About 1500 the 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, having encountered only scattered

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, information in this section and its subdivisions is from: 112th Cav Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 9–14; 112th Cav Opns and Int Diary Aitape; 112th Cav Sum of Msgs, 1–29 Jul 44; 127th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, Sec. II, pp. 7–11; 127th Inf Jnl file, 10–31 Jul 44; 1st, 2d, and 3d Bn 127th Inf Jnls, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44; PTF G–3 Jnls, 21–26 Jul and 26 Jul–1 Aug 44; PCF G–3 Jnls, 22–25, 25–27, 27–31 Jul, and 31 Jul–5 Aug 44; *18th Army* Opns, III, 107–08, 111, 120–25, 130–38, 156–59 (which include, *inter alia,* translations of *MO* Opns Orders 24, 34, 37, and 49, dated between 21 and 31 Jul 44); PW interrogs and trans of enemy docs in PTF and Eastern Sector G–2 Jnls, Jul and Aug 44; Japanese Studies in WW II, 47, *18th Army* Operations, Annex B, Maps 32, 36, and 37, copy in OCMH files.

[2] During the early part of Troop A's action, 2d Lt. George W. G. Boyce, Jr., one of the troop's platoon leaders, threw himself on an enemy hand grenade which fell between him and some of his men. Saving these men from almost certain death or serious wounds, Lieutenant Boyce was himself killed. For this action, he was awarded, posthumously, the Congressional Medal of Honor.



THE AFUA AREA

resistance, moved into Troop C's perimeter from the northwest, just as the Japanese launched a strong attack from the southwest. Darkness came before all the enemy had been repulsed, and plans for the battalion's further advance had to be abandoned. The combined perimeter was harassed by mortar fire throughout the night, as were the two cavalry units at Afua.

Early on 24 July the 2d Battalion sent patrols out from the perimeter—patrols which reported strong enemy defenses on high ground to the north and south. Attempts by the 2d Battalion and Troop C to break through enemy lines to the southeast and the Afua–Palauru trail were unavailing, as was an effort by Company B, 127th Infantry, to move southwest from General Cunningham's command post area to the combined infantry-cavalry position. Company E, 127th Infantry, trying to move northeast from the perimeter to establish contact with Company B, could get no place. The Japanese were tenaciously defending all tracks, trails, and ridge lines in the heavily jungled ground northeast of the perimeter.

General Gill, who thought South Force had sufficient troops to drive off the Japanese without difficulty, was by now dissatisfied with the situation in the Afua area. He apparently believed that South Force was not making a strong enough effort to clear the ground north and northwest of Afua, and there was a definite feeling at his headquarters that the situation around Afua was by no means critical. His G–2 Section estimated that the Japanese in the Afua area comprised only remnants of the *78th Infantry* trying to break back through the restored Driniumor line to the east. If this were not the case, said General Gill's G–2 officers, then the Japanese at Afua were merely stragglers attempting to raid South Force bivouacs for food.

But General Cunningham thought that the Japanese on his right and rear comprised elements of both the *78th* and *80th Infantry Regiments,* which, he believed, were trying to outflank South Force and seize control of the Afua–Palauru trail. He felt that South Force was doing everything possible to drive the Japanese away, but, as he pointed out to General Gill, the enemy was dug in on commanding ground throughout hilly and heavily jungled terrain northwest, west, and southwest of Afua, making it necessary to reduce each position by slow and costly infantry assault. Finally, said General Cunningham, the 127th Infantry had not yet been able to deploy its entire strength for further attacks and was therefore not bearing a full share of the necessary fighting.[3]

General Cunningham's estimates were far closer to the truth than those at PERSECUTION Covering Force headquarters, although even the South Force commander was underestimating the Japanese scale of effort. By 24 July the *Miyake Force* had been concentrated north and northwest of Afua behind South Force. General Miyake had under his command over 1,000 men—remnants of the *20th Division* units which had crossed the Driniumor on the night of 10–11 July and during the next day or two. Moreover, relatively fresh troops of the *79th Infantry, 20th Division,* and division headquarters were now in the Afua area. By evening of the 24th, there were at least 2,000

[3] The account of the attitude at General Gill's headquarters is based on statements made in PCF G–2 documents and in messages from PCF to South Force in PCF G–3 Jnls. Evidence of General Cunningham's attitude is derived from: Interv, author with Gen Cunningham, Apr 47; Interv, author with Col Hooper, 25 Mar 47; Ltr, Comdr South Force to RANGOON SIX [Comdr PCF], 30 Jul 44, sub; Opns South Sector, copy in OCMH files.

Japanese troops on South Force's right flank and rear.

South Force operations on 25 July met with more success than had been anticipated, for very heavy fighting had been expected. Early that morning Companies B and E, 127th Infantry, established contact about 500 yards north-northeast of the 2d Battalion–Troop C perimeter. Over the escape route thus opened, Troop C withdrew to the dropping ground, ending its four days of continuous combat against superior Japanese forces. The unit had lost about thirty men from Japanese action and from sickness during the period.

Afua and the Triangle

With Troop C relieved, General Cunningham decided to exploit the success of the early morning action and launch an attack south and west from the dropping ground. His plan was to clear the area between that ground and the 2d Battalion's position by pushing all Japanese found in the area to the region south of the Afua–Palauru trail and on into the Torricelli Mountains.

About 1100 Company A, 127th Infantry, moved into position at the western edge of the dropping ground and faced south. Company B lined up on A's right and Company E on B's right, at the edge of a series of jungled ridges. Company C was in reserve. One platoon of Company G was to maintain contact between Companies B and E, which were separated by some 200 yards of thick jungle. The 2d Battalion (less Company E and the Company G platoon) was to remain at the old Troop C perimeter until sure that no more Japanese were in that area. Then it was to push south to the Afua–Palauru trail west of Company E.

The attack began about 1130. Companies B and E soon met strong opposition, but Company A, closely followed by Company C, moved rapidly toward the Afua–Palauru trail, encountering only scattered rifle fire and reaching the trail late in the afternoon at a point about 300 yards west of Afua. There it tied its left into the lines of the 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry (back in Afua since the 23d), and pushed its right about 200 yards west along the trail to the left flank of Company B, which had not yet been able to bring its entire strength up to the Afua–Palauru trail. On B's right, the Japanese held a strong point on a low ridge over which the trail passed, and the company had to bend its lines about 150 yards to the north and west around this enemy position.

Company E and the Company G platoon, meeting increasing resistance, reached the 2d Battalion perimeter in the early afternoon and joined the rest of the battalion in a drive south toward the Afua–Palauru trail. By dusk the battalion had crossed the trail and was digging in about 100 yards south of that track. There was a gap of at least 100 yards between the left of the 2d Battalion and the lines of Company B, and there was another gap on the battalion's right, or west, flank, where Company G had been cut off during the move south. At nightfall the company was located on a ridge crossing the trail about 150 yards northwest of the main body and about 800 yards west of Afua, near the old Troop C perimeter.

The advance south had been generally successful, but by late afternoon there were clear indications that many Japanese troops remained in a triangular area formed by the dropping ground, Afua, and Company G's ridge-line position. Rifle fire, intensifying as darkness approached, harassed the rear

and right flank of the two battalions, and the Japanese began intermittently to drop light artillery or mortar shells into the banana patch area, where the command posts of South Force, the 112th Cavalry, and the 127th Infantry were now located. Finally, Japanese patrols, coming in from the west, had scouted the banana patch area during the day, action which seemed to presage an enemy attack during the night. To get out of range of the enemy fire and danger of enemy attack, General Cunningham moved the command post installations 500 yards to the north before dark.

During the night an unknown number of Japanese troops moved around the right rear of the 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, joining enemy units which had been bypassed the preceding afternoon. By early morning on the 26th, these troops had secured control of trails leading southeast through heavy jungle from the banana patch to a point on the Afua–Palauru trail near the 2d Battalion's command post. Meanwhile, 127th Infantry patrols had found a Japanese map which indicated that the *66th Infantry, 51st Division,* was concentrating in the Kwamagnirk area.

As a result of the information concerning the *66th Infantry* and because of the growing Japanese activity south and west of the banana patch, General Cunningham decided to change South Force dispositions. The 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, was withdrawn from its lines along the Afua–Palauru trail and sent back to the dropping ground where it established a new westward-facing perimeter in expectation of Japanese attacks from that direction. The 2d Battalion extended its lines to the east to cover the area vacated by the 1st, and at the same time managed to eliminate the Japanese salient which had held up Company B the previous afternoon. Efforts to extend the 2d Battalion's lines west to Company G were unsuccessful, and at nightfall on the 26th that unit was still in its isolated ridge outpost 150 yards from the main body.

All day on the 26th Japanese troops milled around in the rear—north and northwest—of the 2d Battalion. At the same time the battalion received continuous harassing rifle and machine gun fire from the south, its front. It was expected that the Japanese might attack from the south and west during the afternoon, and plans were made for the 2d Battalion's withdrawal to Afua if the enemy attacked from more than one direction. However, the enemy scale of effort in the afternoon did not seem to warrant such a withdrawal. The battalion therefore remained in its positions and managed to push its lines slightly south. General Cunningham alerted all South Force to expect an enemy attack on the night of 26–27 July, but the hours of darkness proved almost abnormally quiet.

Nevertheless, General Cunningham's redispositions and plans to withdraw the 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, had been well advised. Despite heavy losses from combat, starvation, and disease in the Driniumor area, General Adachi was still determined to clear the Afua area, and continually sent fresh troops across the river south of that village. The *66th Infantry,* which, with attached units, was at least 1,000 men strong, had crossed the Driniumor on or about 24 July. Bypassing the right flank of South Force, the regiment had moved into the heavily jungled high ground west of the banana patch and dropping ground. In addition, the remnants of the *237th Infantry,* probably about 300 men strong, had finally arrived in the Afua area on 25 July and had passed to the control of the *Miyake Force.*

Rear elements of the *20th Division,* including additional men from the *26th Field Artillery* and engineer units, had also crossed the Driniumor south of Afua. The number of Japanese troops in the South Force area by nightfall on the 26th of July was at least 2,500 and may have been over 3,000.

Actually, neither the Japanese nor South Force had any accurate knowledge of each other's strengths and dispositions in the Afua area. Each side complained that the other held isolated strong points, none of which appeared to be key positions. Both sides employed inaccurate maps, and both had a great deal of difficulty obtaining effective reconnaissance. In the jungled, broken terrain near Afua, operations frequently took a vague form—a sort of shadow boxing in which physical contact of the opposing sides was ofttimes accidental.

On the morning of the 27th General Cunningham decided to use the 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, to resume an advance southward to locate Japanese forces below the Afua–Palauru trail and to overrun an enemy observation post on high ground about 500 yards southwest of Afua. After artillery fire on suspected enemy assembly areas south of its lines, the 2d Battalion started moving at 1000. Only scattered rifle fire was encountered and by 1245 the battalion had taken the observation post. A new defensive line, anchored on the Driniumor near Afua and lying generally 400 yards south of the Afua–Palauru trail, was set up. The battalion's right flank was about 800 yards west of the river, near the outpost of Company G, which had not participated in the southward drive.

General Cunningham had wanted the 2d Battalion to develop its new line as a base for future operations, but Japanese troops moved onto the Afua–Palauru trail behind the battalion, threatening its communications, and the unit was therefore ordered to return to the morning line of departure. Since the enemy made little effort to hold his trail positions, this withdrawal was accomplished without incident by 1800. An outpost of platoon size was left on a ridge about 200 yards southwest of Afua. The rest of the battalion, still less Company G, dug in along the Afua–Palauru trail in essentially the same positions it had occupied the previous night. Meanwhile, the *66th Infantry* had become active in the high ground 300 yards west of the dropping ground and banana patch, and elements of that unit or the *Miyake Force* again began patrolling along the jungle tracks leading southwest from the banana patch. During the morning Japanese patrols armed with light machine guns occupied two low ridge lines west and southwest of the dropping ground, while other enemy groups moved into high ground immediately west of South Force's new command post area.

Since these Japanese maneuvers seriously threatened the safety of South Force command and supply installations, General Cunningham ordered the 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, and part of the 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, to clear the enemy from the high ground. By late afternoon these units, by dint of foot-by-foot advances against stubborn opposition, had cleared the Japanese from three strong ridge-line positions west and southwest of the dropping ground. This action gained at least temporary security for South Force's supply base and apparently discouraged the *66th Infantry* from making any more attacks for the time being.

The next morning, 28 July, the 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, continued mopping up west of the dropping ground and occupied some enemy ridge defenses which

had held out overnight. The rest of South Force engaged in local patrolling without finding any trace of sizable, well-armed groups of Japanese, but General Cunningham remained certain that large-scale Japanese attacks were imminent. He therefore decided to shorten his lines to obtain stronger defenses and to secure a base of operations for further attempts to clear enemy troops from the Afua–dropping ground–Company G triangle.

Late in the afternoon, in accordance with these plans, the 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, moved north and set up a new westward-facing defensive line running south from the dropping ground and the 1st Battalion's left. This line lay generally 200 yards west of the Driniumor. The 3d Battalion and the 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry, remained in their river defenses. The 1st Squadron withdrew north and northwest from Afua, tied its right into the 2d Battalion's left, and established a new line running generally southeast to the 2d Squadron's right, anchored on the Driniumor about 2,000 yards north of Afua. With the exception of Company G, which remained in an isolated perimeter on the ridge west of Afua, South Force was now in a long, oval-shaped perimeter, ready to meet Japanese attacks from any direction. For the third time in seventeen days Afua had been abandoned to the Japanese.

The next morning the 1st Squadron and the 2d Battalion started a co-ordinated attack south and west into the Afua–dropping ground–Company G triangle. The 1st Squadron encountered no opposition as it pushed south along the west bank of the Driniumor and quickly reoccupied the river line to within 300 yards of Afua. The cavalry unit then halted until the infantry battalion had moved equally far south. The latter had been delayed along the diagonal track leading southwest from the banana patch, and a dangerous gap had been created between the two arms of the advance.

The 2d Battalion's attack had started at 0900, with Company F on the left (east) and Company E on the right. Small patrols, moving along ridge lines west of the main line of advance, protected Company E's right. The battalion's progress was slow since the Japanese had set up trail blocks along the diagonal track, and since it was also necessary to probe the rough, jungled terrain on both sides for hidden enemy strong points. Company E, about 1015, found itself halted by a Japanese position containing infantrymen estimated at company strength. In an attempt to carry this position by fire and movement, the unit lost 7 men killed and 9 wounded. Company E withdrew about 200 yards to the north and called for artillery and 81-mm. mortar support. This fire was soon forthcoming and Company E moved forward again at 1400. A few slight gains were made, but the Japanese, who had established a defense in depth, clung tenaciously to every foot of ground and the advance was again halted. More artillery fire was placed on the suspected locations of enemy strong points, and Company E started southward for a third time about 1530.

While Company E was deploying to begin its third attack, the entire right flank of the 2d Battalion was harassed by Japanese patrols. As a result the 1530 advance could not develop, and about 1800 the right flank units of the battalion withdrew. While this withdrawal was under way, an estimated two companies of enemy infantry struck from a low jungled ridge immediately west of Company E. Company F had not met much opposition during the day but had moved slowly southward so as not to

lose contact with the rest of the battalion. Now it was withdrawn into the main battalion perimeter to aid in throwing back the enemy attack from the west. A sharp fire fight took place on the battalion's right, and 2 men were killed, 39 wounded, and 9 were counted as missing. Total casualties for the day were 11 killed, 50 wounded, and 9 missing.

Though harassing by enemy patrols continued, the 2d Battalion was successful in beating back the main attack after some twenty minutes of hard fighting. General Cunningham felt that the battalion had done all that could be expected of it during the day and ordered it to withdraw to the dropping ground. This retreat, begun about 1930, was accomplished during the night of 29–30 July, and the battalion reached the dropping ground about 0830 on the latter day. Because this withdrawal left the 1st Squadron exposed to attacks from the northwest and west, the latter unit was withdrawn to the lines of the 2d Squadron, north of Afua.

During the 30th and 31st of July only local patrol action was carried out by most units of South Force as General Cunningham prepared plans for another offensive into the triangle. Major combat activity revolved around the withdrawal of Company G, 127th Infantry, from its exposed outpost west of Afua. On the afternoon of the 29th the unit had been driven more than 400 yards east of its original position by Japanese attacks and had established new defenses on high ground about 300 yards west of Afua. On the 30th the company was surrounded and spent all day fighting off a series of small-scale attacks. The next morning it fought its way north to the dropping ground, where it arrived about 1330. Thence, it moved on to the Driniumor and joined the rest of the 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, which had switched positions with the 3d Battalion.

South Force's oval-shaped perimeter now varied in depth from 400 to 800 yards. The 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, was on the north, facing the river but with its left flank bent westward. On the Driniumor south of the 2d Battalion was the 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry, the lines of which now reached to within 1,500 yards of Afua. Extending about 400 yards west of the 2d Squadron's right flank was Troop C of the 1st Squadron. The rest of the 1st Squadron faced west and anchored its north flank on the banana patch. North of the 1st Squadron were the 1st and 3d Battalions, 127th Infantry, extending the western side of South Force's perimeter north through the dropping ground, 500 yards beyond to General Cunningham's command post, and to the north tip of the 2d Battalion's lines.

During the period from 13 to 31 July, South Force had suffered almost 1,000 casualties, of which 260 had been incurred by the 112th Cavalry. For the understrength cavalry regiment, this was a casualty rate of over 17 percent. The 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, had also lost heavily and was in need of rest, reorganization, and re-equipment—needs which had prompted General Cunningham to change the places of the 2d and 3d Battalions, 127th Infantry. South Force casualties were as follows: 106 killed, 386 wounded, 18 missing, and 426 evacuated as a result of disease and sickness. South Force estimated that it had killed over 700 Japanese.[4]

[4] These casualty figures are from Ltr, Comdr South Force to Comdr PCF, 30 Jul 44, sub: Opns South Sector, copy in OCMH files.

Allied and Japanese Plans

General Cunningham planned to start a new attack on 1 August, with Company K, 127th Infantry, and Troop G, 112th Cavalry, moving southwest from the dropping ground in a reconnaissance in force to the Afua–Palauru trail. The two units were to probe for enemy defenses, avoid battle, and return to the dropping ground to report their findings before dark on the 1st. The entire 3d Battalion and one cavalry troop were to be combined in a striking force for an attack into the triangle on 2 August, aiming for objectives selected during the previous day's reconnaissance. Not even the preliminary steps of this plan could be executed. For days the Japanese had been bringing reinforcements forward to the Afua area to make further efforts to roll up South Force's right flank, efforts which were to necessitate many changes in General Cunningham's plans.

Despite continued lack of success in achieving decisive results at Afua, and though by the 25th of the month it had begun to appear to General Adachi that the *20th Division* and *Miyake Force* could not secure even the Afua area, the *18th Army* had not given up along the Driniumor. The *18th Army* commander had already devised a plan to send all elements of the *41st Division* still east of the Driniumor across that river via the Kawanaka Shima crossing. This move was to entail operations by the *238th Infantry, the 239th Infantry,* the *41st Engineer Regiment,* the *41st Mountain Artillery Regiment,* and the bulk of the *8th Independent Engineer Regiment,* part of which was already west of the Driniumor with the *20th Division.* Once across the Driniumor, the *41st Division* units were to establish contact with the remnants of the *237th Infantry,* send some men south toward the *20th Division* to help cut American lines of communication, and mount new attacks on the Anamo–Tiver area.

On the afternoon of 25 July General Adachi himself moved up to the *41st Division's* command post (apparently located on Niumen Creek east of Kawanaka Shima) to supervise that unit's preparations for attack. The *18th Army* commander soon discovered that the *41st Division* was in no condition to assault the center of the Driniumor line and, at the same time, he learned that the operations of the *20th Division* in the Afua area were not going as well as had been expected. Considering how best to employ the *41st Division,* he decided to send that unit south along the east bank of the Driniumor, have it cross the river south of Afua, join the *20th Division* on the west side, and participate in a two-division attack to secure the Driniumor area from Afua north to the junction of the Anamo–Afua trail with the river.

Accordingly, on the morning of 26 July, General Adachi issued orders for the *41st Division* to start moving south. The *1st Battalion, 239th Infantry,* was left in the Kawanaka Shima area to set up a counter-reconnaissance screen and to put up a show of strength designed to deceive the PERSECUTION Covering Force as to the intentions of the rest of the division. The remainder of the *239th Infantry,* together with division headquarters, the *238th Infantry,* and the engineer and artillery troops started south at 1600 on the 26th, aiming for a ford across the Driniumor south of Afua.

Final orders for the two-division attack west of the Driniumor were issued by the *18th Army* on 28 July, orders which were based on expectations that the *41st Division*

could complete its redeployment in time for the attack to begin on the evening of the 30th. This was too optimistic. The *238th Infantry,* the *41st Mountain Artillery,* and the *8th Independent Engineers* were across the river in time but the *2d* and *3d Battalions, 239th Infantry,* had missed the crossing point on the Driniumor and were lost. Fortunately for the *18th Army,* the South Force withdrawals on 29 and 30 July gave the *20th* and *41st Divisions* time to complete their organization. New orders were issued for the attack to start on 1 August, with the *20th Division* on the west and the *41st Division* on the east. The strength that the *20th Division* (including the *66th Infantry,* the *26th Field Artillery,* the bulk of the *37th Independent Engineers,* the *20th Engineers,* remnants of the *237th Infantry,* and various small service units) could muster for the attack was a little over 2,000 men. Most of these troops had been without food for some time. They were suffering from starvation, malaria, and skin diseases, and morale was cracking. They were short of both ammunition and weapons. The *41st Division* and its attached units, totaling nearly 1,750 men by the morning of 1 August, were in equally bad shape. Nevertheless, General Adachi was determined to make one last attack with the nearly 4,000 troops now available to him in the Afua area.[5]

[5] The foregoing strength figures have been derived from a mass of contradictory data, both Allied and Japanese, and it is impossible to determine how many of the Japanese troops could be called infantry effectives. It appears, however, that about 2,200 of the troops across the river as of 1 August were members of infantry regiments. The total estimate of nearly 4,000 men may be wrong by as much as 1,000 in either direction, but the evidence tends to indicate that the figure is too low rather than too high. By no means all of the 4,000 actually participated in the 1 August attacks.

The Japanese Retreat from Afua

At 0620 on 1 August, about two companies of Japanese attacked from the southwest against the lines of Troop C, 112th Cavalry, situated about 1,500 yards north of Afua. General Cunningham immediately canceled the planned reconnaissance in force into the triangle area and turned his attention to this new threat. The first Japanese assault units were quickly reinforced, and the enemy moved forward against Troop C in massed waves along a narrow front. A bloody battle ensued as the enemy, apparently determined to commit suicide, continued his mass attacks. South Force called for artillery support, which was quickly forthcoming and which greatly helped Troop C to throw back the enemy assaults.

By 0800 the Japanese had withdrawn and the battle area had become strangely quiet. Patrols were sent out from the cavalry perimeter to reconnoiter. These parties counted 180 dead Japanese in front of Troop C's lines, and it was considered probable that the enemy had carried off many more dead and wounded. Troop C, on the other hand, had lost but 5 men killed and 6 wounded. Examination of the enemy dead disclosed that elements of both the *80th* and *238th Infantry Regiments* had participated in the attacks.

About 0830 Troop G moved southwest out of the Troop C area to undertake part of the planned reconnaissance in force. The troop patrolled 600 yards to the southwest and returned to Troop C early in the afternoon, having encountered only scattered rifle fire. Meanwhile, a platoon of Company K, 127th Infantry, had patrolled to high ground west of the dropping ground. Upon its return to South Force lines at 1600, this unit reported only minor opposition.

General Cunningham interpreted the lull in fighting after 0800 as an indication that the Japanese might be assembling stronger forces for another attack. Documents captured by Troop G and Company K patrols during the day supported this idea, and disclosed that the Japanese might launch an offensive during the night of 1–2 August or early on the 2d. About 0300 on the 2d, Troop G (which had moved to the southwest edge of the dropping ground the previous evening) was subjected to a small attack. This action turned out to be but a minor skirmish and General Cunningham suspected that it was a reconnaissance maneuver in preparation for a stronger attack. In anticipation of such an assault the remainder of the 2d Squadron was removed from its river positions and disposed as a mobile reserve at the South Force's command post. The 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry, stretched its lines to cover the river positions vacated by the cavalry.

Although the movement of the 2d Squadron had apparently been well advised, the Japanese did not attack the command post area. Instead, at 1900, elements of the *41st Division* struck the 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, at its lines south of the dropping ground. This attack was preceded by fire from a 70-mm. or 75-mm. artillery piece which the Japanese had managed to sneak into the area within 150 yards of Company B, 127th Infantry. Following a few rounds from this weapon, Japanese infantry charged forward in four separate waves, employing perhaps 300 men on a very narrow front. Few of the enemy got near Company B's positions, for the attack was thrown back with artillery, mortar, and machine gun fire, which caused heavy losses among the enemy forces. By 2030, action in the dropping ground area stopped for the night.

The 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, on the left rear of the 1st Battalion, was attacked by another group of Japanese at 1945. This action was probably meant to have been coordinated with the attack on Company B, but, if this were the enemy's intention, something had gone wrong. Apparently there had also been some mix-up in unit dispositions, for both enemy efforts had entailed the use of elements of the *78th, 80th,* and *238th Infantry Regiments.* After the day's action was finished, the combined effective strength of the first two units was probably not more than 250 men, and the *2d Battalion, 238th Infantry,* was practically wiped out. The desperate attacks during the day had been carried out with a complete disregard for self-preservation, and had probably cost the Japanese 300 men killed and at least twice that number wounded.

During the early hours of the next morning, 3 August, the 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, again heard enemy activity to its front, and about 0730 a small Japanese party struck between Companies A and C. This attack was quickly repulsed, principally by mortar fire from 1st Battalion units. By noon all activity in the 1st Battalion area had ceased, and the Japanese had withdrawn to the southwest. The rest of the day was quiet in the South Force sector. In the afternoon reinforcements arrived for South Force as the 1st Battalion, 169th Infantry, moved into the perimeter from Palauru. The new arrivals took up defensive positions on the north flank, facing west behind the river lines of the 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry.

The arrival of reinforcements did not result in any relaxation of vigilance on General Cunningham's part, for he expected more enemy attacks. A great deal of Japanese movement across the Driniumor south of Afua had been observed by patrols dur-

ing the day, and recently captured prisoners reported that the *238th* and *239th Infantry Regiments* were to resume the offensive on 4 and 5 August. The South Force commander warned all his units to remain alert.

At 0615 on the 4th, elements of the *41st Division,* probably supported by a few men from the *20th Division,* streamed out of the jungle southwest of the 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, in a last desperate charge apparently designed to cover the withdrawal of other *18th Army* remnants east of the Driniumor. The initial Japanese attacks were well co-ordinated but they soon degenerated into a series of small, independent, suicidal assaults. Violent action continued in front of the 1st Squadron for about two hours, during which time nearly 200 Japanese were killed at the very edge of the squadron perimeter, principally by machine gun and rifle fire. How many more of the enemy were killed by artillery and mortar fire during the period cannot be estimated, but the banzai tactics undoubtedly cost the Japanese more than the 200 dead counted in front of the 1st Squadron which, in the same two hours, lost only 3 men killed and 4 wounded.

By 0900 the last enemy attacks had ceased and the remaining Japanese had withdrawn generally to the south. Troop E, moving south across the front of the 1st Squadron in pursuit of the retreating enemy, encountered only scattered rifle fire and could find only nine enemy stragglers, all of whom they killed. In the afternoon other patrols of the 2d Squadron, operating on the east bank of the Driniumor opposite Afua, established contact with elements of the 124th Infantry, which was completing a wide enveloping movement east of the Driniumor. On orders from Headquarters, PERSECUTION Covering Force, General Cunningham now began to plan final mopping up in the Afua area by co-ordinated operations of South Force and the 124th Infantry.

Envelopment to the East

Even before the Japanese had begun to withdraw from the Afua area, General Hall had prepared plans to carry out the final part of the mission assigned to him by ALAMO Force—a strong counteroffensive against the *18th Army.*[6] On 29 July, despite (or perhaps because of) the still unsettled situation around Afua, General Hall had decided that the time was ripe to launch the counterattack. For this purpose, he decided to employ the entire 124th Infantry, reinforced by the 2d Battalion, 169th Infantry. The 2d Battalion, 124th Infantry, which had been patrolling in the Palauru–Chinapelli area, was relieved from that duty by the 1st Battalion, 169th Infantry, and on the 30th joined its regiment at the Driniumor. The 2d Battalion, 169th Infantry, was already at the river.[7]

South Along Niumen Creek

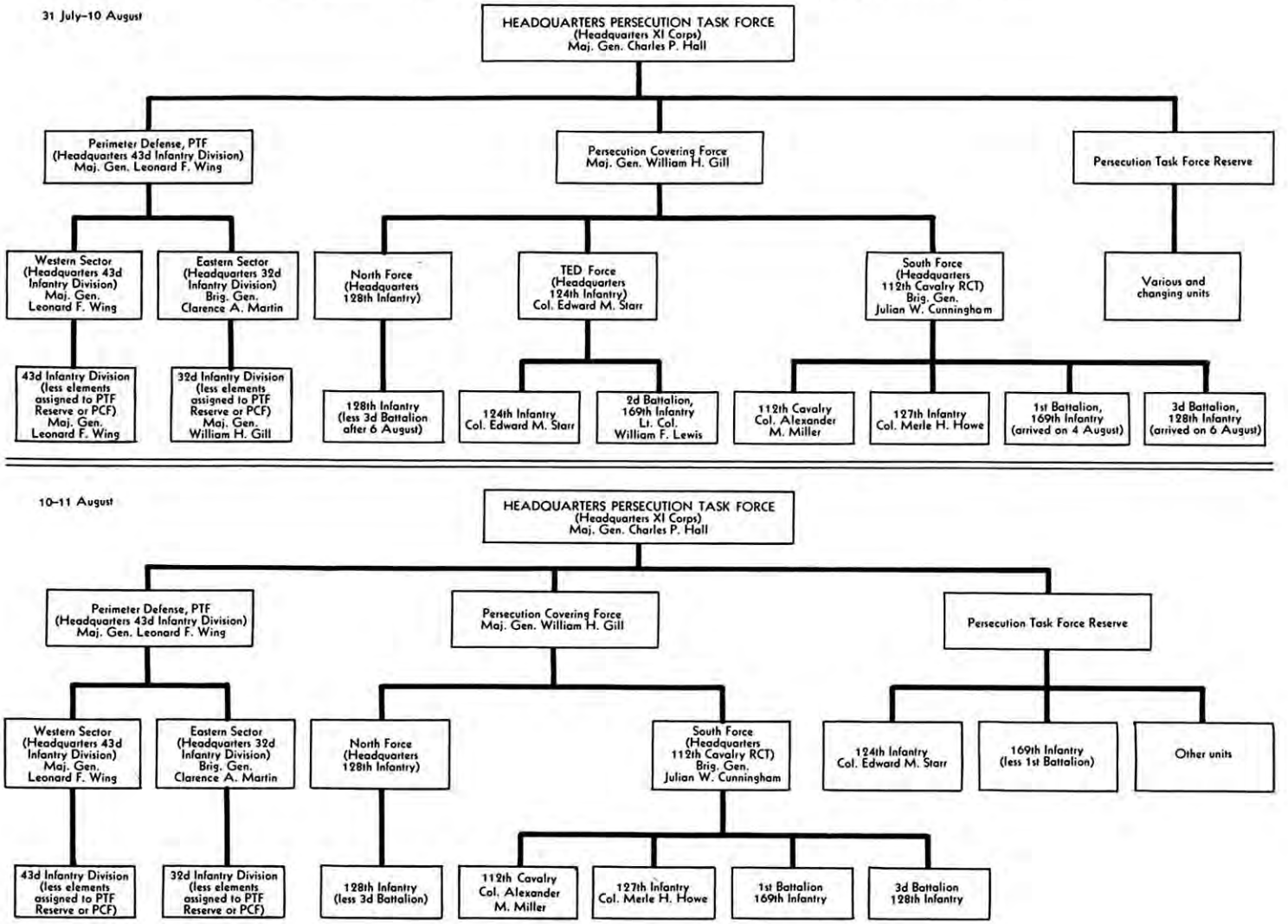
The plan of attack for the first phase of the counteroffensive was for the 124th Infantry, reinforced, to move directly east from the Driniumor beginning at 0800 on 31 July.[8] This attack was to be carried out

[6] Ltr OI, CG ALAMO Force to CG XI Corps [PTF], 25 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Hollandia, 27–29 Jun 44.

[7] The relief of the 2d Battalion, 124th Infantry, was accomplished on 29 July, and the battalion moved to Anamo the next day. On the afternoon of the 30th the battalion moved up to the mouth of the Driniumor.

[8] The description of the plan and the command for the envelopment to the east is based on: 124th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 11–12; PCF FO 3, 29 Jul 44, and TED Force, Plan of Opns, 30 Jul 44, last

Chart 12—The Persecution Task Force: 31 July–11 August 1944



with three battalions abreast along a front of 3,000 yards, and the fourth in reserve and in position to protect the right flank of the advancing force. The four battalions were to move east to the line of Niumen Creek, destroying all enemy found between that stream and the Driniumor within the 3,000-yard-wide zone of responsibility. Upon their arrival on the Niumen the battalions were to reorganize and prepare for further advances either east or south upon orders from General Hall.

Tactical control of the counteroffensive was vested in Col. Edward M. Starr, commanding officer of the 124th Infantry, whose counterattack organization was to be known as TED Force.[9] The 1st Battalion, 124th Infantry, was commanded by Maj. Ralph D. Burns;[10] the 2d Battalion by Lt. Col. Robert M. Fowler; the 3d Battalion by Lt. Col. George D. Williams; and the 2d Battalion, 169th Infantry, by Maj. William F. Lewis. To avoid confusion, the four battalions were referred to by the last names of their commanders rather than by their number designations.

Fowler's battalion, attacking along the coast, was to be supplied by ration trains moving along the coastal trail from Anamo. The rest of TED Force, pushing through trackless, dense jungle, was to be supplied by airdrop. The 149th Field Artillery Battalion, augmented by the Cannon Company, 124th Infantry, was responsible for artillery support, but when necessary the 129th Field Artillery was to add its fire to that of the 149th. All the artillery units were emplaced on the beach west of the Driniumor's mouth. The positions which the 124th Infantry and the 2d Battalion, 169th Infantry, left vacant on the Driniumor were to be occupied by the 2d and 3d Battalions, 128th Infantry.

All three battalions of the 124th Infantry began crossing the Driniumor on schedule at 0800, 31 July, moving into terrain concerning which only incomplete and sometimes inaccurate information was available.[11] (*Map 8*) As a result, the records of

two in PCF G–3 Jnl, 27–31 Jul 44; Ltrs, CO 124th Inf to CG 31st Div, 22 Jul and 13 Aug 44. Copies of these letters were lent to the author by Colonel Starr, ex-commanding officer of the 124th Infantry, but no copies exist in official files. According to the Starr letter of 13 August the plans for the envelopment were drawn up by the staff of the 124th Infantry and approved *in toto* by task force headquarters prior to 29 July.

[9] Colonel Starr had succeeded General Stark as commander of North Force on 18 July when the arrival of elements of the 43d Division at Aitape made it necessary for General Stark, the assistant division commander, to move back to Blue Beach for administrative duties. General Stark apparently also reassumed command of the Western Sector, in place of General Hutchinson, Assistant Division Commander, 31st Division, who had rejoined his division when it, less the 124th Infantry, moved to a new operational area in western New Guinea. When TED Force was organized, North Force as such apparently ceased to exist, and the 128th Infantry took over the defensive functions previously assigned to North Force on the Driniumor. The name TED Force originated from the diminutive for Colonel Starr's first name. There were always so many units from different divisions and regiments operating along the Driniumor that the task force usually found it more convenient to use names rather than numbers for unit designations. The names, usually derived from the commanding officers, served not only to lessen confusion but also did double duty as code names.

[10] Placed in command of the 1st Battalion on the 30th, the assigned commander having been sent to the hospital with a high fever.

[11] Principal sources used for the action of American troops in this and the following subsections are: 124th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 12–20, 124th Inf Jnl, 12 Jul–10 Aug 44, 12 Jul–10 Aug 44; Rpt by Maj Edward O. Logan [Ex–S–2 124th Inf], sub: The Enveloping Maneuver of the 124th Inf Regt East of the Driniumor, Aitape, New Guinea, 31 Jul–10 Aug 44, written at The Infantry School, Ft. Benning, Ga., for The Advanced Officers' Course, 1946–47, copy in The Infantry School files; Extracts from 3d Bn 124th Inf Jnl, Aitape, as cited in the Logan Rpt; 2d Bn 169th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 7–15;

TED Force are often inadequate and contradictory. Narrative reports and journals of the units engaged record many map and grid locations that are obviously erroneous and many others of doubtful value. It could hardly be otherwise. The available maps did not accurately depict the terrain and the two available sets, one a 1:20,000 photographic mozaic produced in May and the other a 1:63,360 terrain map dated in January, were mutually irreconcilable at many points. Again, the units involved did not maintain as complete records as they would have in more static situations, for they did not have the means or time to do so. Each battalion engaged operated more or less separately, communicating almost entirely by radio without sending written reports and overlays back to higher headquarters.

The situation in regard to locating units east of the Driniumor is well described by Maj. Edward A. Becker, the S–3 of the 1st Battalion, 124th Infantry, during the operation:

> We discovered, after leaving the Driniumor, that the only features that could be recognized on the map were the river, the coast line, and a trace of Niumen Creek; the rest of the operational area was just a mass of trees. . . . Because of this we knew we would have to find other means of identifying our location. We found the answer by using the two methods outlined below:
>
> (A) Twice a day the . . . [artillery liaison] plane would fly over our position and contact . . . [the artillery liaison officer]; he would let the pilot know when he was directly over us. The pilot would then fly to the Driniumor, turn around and fly directly E [east]; as he passed over us he would give us the distance from the R [river]. He would then repeat the procedure from the ocean by flying S [south]—the intersection of these lines would be our position.
>
> (B) To check the above method (the whole area was dotted with artillery registrations which had been previously fired) the pilot would circle our position and get the concentration number from the [artillery] intersection towers located on the coast. He would then relay the number to us in this manner—200 yds E [yards east] of concentration 250 (we had these concentration No.'s [numbers] plotted on our maps). This again would be our position; if there was any appreciable difference in these two methods, then we would repeat the procedure until the error was found. . . .[12]

Determining which artillery units fired specific missions for TED Force also presents difficulties, inasmuch as the records of both the artillery and infantry units provide contradictory information concerning times and concentrations and because the infantry units did not keep complete records of requests for artillery fire. It would appear that the available maps were so inaccurate that only by a major miracle was TED Force saved from destruction by its own supporting artillery. Actually, however, the situation was not that bad. Most of the artillery fire was controlled quite accurately through the use of liaison planes. TED Force infantry units would fire a few rounds of mortar fire into the area where an artillery concentration was desired. The ubiquitous liaison planes would fly over the point and men in the observation towers on the coast, taking sights on the plane, would order fire on previously mapped concentrations. Necessary adjustments were made by radio through the liaison aircraft.

Such was the communications and mapping picture that faced TED Force as it

169th Inf S–3 Daily Rpts, 21 Jul–10 Aug 44; PCF G–3 Jnls, 27–31 Jul, 31 Jul–5 Aug, 5–9 Aug, and 9–15 Aug 44; PTF G–3 Jnls, 26 Jul–1 Aug, 1–7 Aug, and 7–16 Aug 44; Ltr, CO 124th Inf to CG 31st Inf Div, 13 Aug 44; Ltr, Starr to Ward, 21 Aug 51; Ltr, Becker to Starr, 13 Nov 50; 1st Bn 124th Inf in Aitape Campaign, pp. 11–17; 124th Inf, Our Regiment in 1944, pp. 47–54.

[12] Ltr, Becker to Starr, 13 Nov 50.

moved eastward from the Driniumor on 31 July. Colonel Fowler's 2d Battalion advanced along the beach, meeting no opposition. Shortly after 1200 the main body reached the most westerly of Niumen Creek's two mouths—actually a swampy area about 3,000 yards east of the Driniumor. During the afternoon Fowler's lines were extended almost 1,200 yards up the Niumen, but no trace of Burns' 1st Battalion could be found. The latter unit's advance company had been held up about 800 yards east of the Driniumor by elements of the *1st Battalion, 239th Infantry,* which had been left along the river when the rest of that Japanese regiment had moved south to Afua on 26 July.[13] Burns' men continued to encounter strong opposition from *239th Infantry* elements throughout the day and did not break off contact until 1730, when the battalion bivouacked for the night still 800 yards west of Niumen Creek. Company A had become separated during the day and remained some 550 yards northwest of the main body for the night. Both sections of the battalion were out of touch with the rest of TED Force.

The 3d Battalion, 124th Infantry (Williams), crossed the Driniumor at a point about 3,000 yards inland and reached the Niumen about 1400, having encountered only scattered rifle fire. Lewis' 2d Battalion, 169th Infantry, which followed Williams' command, made no contact with the enemy and bivouacked for the night about 500 yards west of Williams. All battalions spent the next day, 1 August, consolidating and patrolling along Neumen Creek, and Burns' unit moved up into line with the others.

While this consolidation was going on, General Hall reached a decision as to further operations by TED Force. Since the intensity of Japanese attacks on South Force had not yet decreased, the task force commander directed TED Force to move south along Niumen Creek to the foothills of the Torricelli Mountains, nearly six miles inland. All Japanese encountered were to be destroyed and the east-west trails which the enemy was using to supply and reinforce his troops at Afua were to be cut. After reaching the hills, TED Force was to swing west toward a point on the Driniumor about 2,000 yards south of Afua. If the Japanese activity near Afua had not abated by the time TED Force reached the Driniumor, then the unit would cross the river, move northwest, and fall upon the rear of Japanese units harassing South Force.

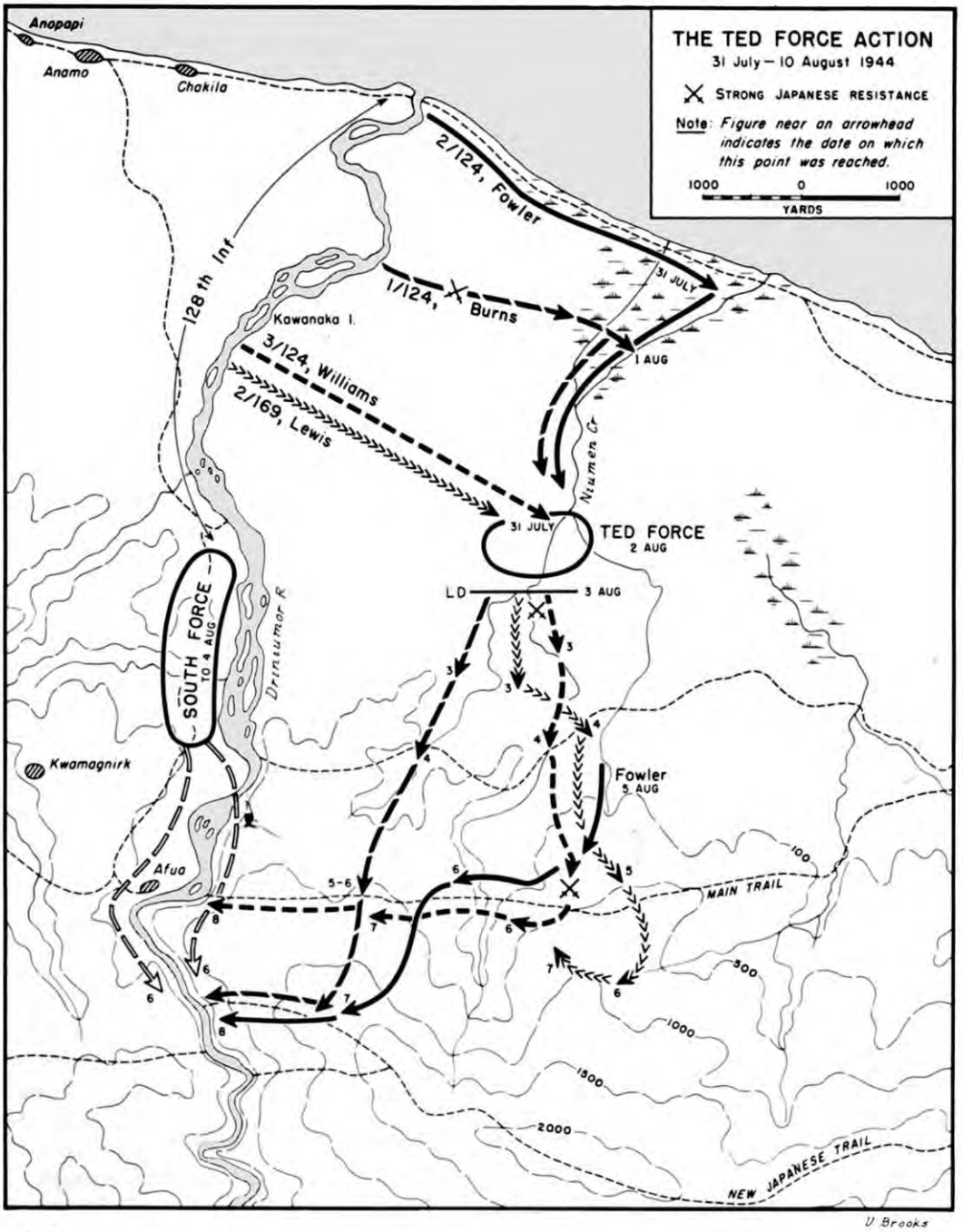
Colonel Starr's interpretation of the general mission and of the situation was as follows:

> To me, my first priority was to cut off the line of Japanese retreat, wherever it was, as well as the supply route of the enemy forces concentrating on Afua. Second priority was to destroy all enemy forces en route. Further based on my estimate of the situation and the enemy forces opposing me, as well as the terrain, I was convinced that any one of the four battalions under my control could take care of itself until support arrived if it became isolated or cut off. If properly handled this is a sound principle, of course, but considering the obstacles of terrain and weather, and the absence of a supply line and evacuation route, it was open to question.[14]

It was expected that movement south could start by 1100 on the 2d, but supply difficulties and the amount of time the battalions consumed getting into position along the line of departure (a small western trib-

[13] Information on Japanese units in this and the following subsections concerning TED Force operations is based on *18th Army* Opns, III, 126–31, 134–39, 140–51, 156, 160. These pages include *MO* Opns Orders 38–56, 26 Jul–4 Aug 44.

[14] Ltr, Starr to Ward, 21 Aug 51.


THE TED FORCE ACTION
31 July – 10 August 1944
STRONG JAPANESE RESISTANCE
Note: Figure near an arrowhead indicates the date on which this point was reached.
1000 0 1000
YARDS
Anopapi
Anamo
Chakila
2/124, Fowler
128th Inf
1/124, Burns
31 JULY
1 AUG
Kawanaka I.
3/124, Williams
2/169, Lewis
Niumen Cr
31 JULY
TED FORCE
2 AUG
LD
3 AUG
SOUTH FORCE
TO 4 AUG
Drinumor R
Kwamagnirk
Afua
Fowler
5 AUG
MAIN TRAIL
100
300
1000
1500
2000
NEW JAPANESE TRAIL
V. Brooks

MAP 8

utary of the Niumen about 3,000 yards east of the junction of the Anamo–Afua trail with the Driniumor) prevented the realization of these hopes. Instead, Burns' and Fowler's units slowly moved south through heavily jungled terrain to Williams' perimeter. Colonel Starr moved his headquarters from the mouth of the Driniumor to Williams' area, and supplies were laboriously carried inland from the coast or airdropped at Williams' position. The night of 2–3 August proved quiet, and TED Force made final preparations to attack south at 0800 on 3 August.

The advance started on schedule, with Williams' battalion on the left and Lewis' on the right. Burns' men followed Lewis' while Fowler's unit temporarily remained in reserve. Not more than 100 yards south of the line of departure both Williams' and Lewis' battalions encountered strong opposition from troops of the *239th Infantry*. The Japanese, depending for the most part on well-concealed riflemen to delay the advance, maintained a tenacious defense throughout the day. Lewis' battalion outflanked the Japanese in its zone and was able to advance about 900 yards by nightfall. Williams' unit gained only 300 yards during the day and bivouacked about 500 yards to the left rear of Lewis' battalion. Contact between the two was tenuous because of enemy patrol action and the jungled terrain. Just before dark both battalions dropped slightly back from their most advanced positions in order to allow supporting artillery to place fire on the still resisting enemy.

Before noon Colonel Starr realized that Williams' and Lewis' battalions were probably not going to break through the Japanese opposition on 3 August. Ordering them to continue their fights, he instructed Burns' command to bypass the engagement and strike overland on an azimuth of 195 degrees (roughly, south-southwest). By dusk Burns' command had advanced unopposed 900–1,000 yards and dug in for the night nearly abreast but 400 yards west of Lewis' battalion and out of contact with it. Fowler's unit bivouacked for the night at the line of departure, protecting the dropping ground, which was vital to continued advance since TED Force could by now be supplied only from the air. Casualties during the day had been incurred only by Williams' and Lewis' units and totaled 14 men killed and 14 wounded.

During the night strong artillery concentrations were placed in front of Williams and Lewis and at 0800 on 4 August both resumed the advance. The terrain encountered on 4 August and subsequent days during the operations of the TED Force east of the Driniumor proved next to impassable. Dense jungle undergrowth covered the ground; the area was thick with heavy rain forest; low but knifelike ridges, separated from each other by deep gullies, were encountered; and swampy spots were plentiful. To add to the difficulties, rain fell during the day—a downpour which turned much of the ground into a quagmire and flooded many dry stream beds. A few new, rough trails, recently cut by the Japanese, were found, but mud made them nearly useless as routes of advance. Low clouds coming in from the Torricelli Mountains to the south prevented ration and ammunition drops and increased communication difficulties. All battalions ran low on drinking water, for weather conditions prevented resupply of water purification tablets and the assault companies had neither time nor equipment to clean water by other means. Radio communication between battalions, from battalions to TED Force headquarters, and

from the latter to higher echelons was nearly nonexistent, for the heavy jungle and the damp weather cut down the efficiency of all radio equipment.

First contact on 4 August was made by Williams' men, who surprised a platoon of Japanese in bivouac scarcely 100 yards south of the line of departure. Eight Japanese were killed and the rest fled. Williams' and Lewis' battalions then continued southward against only scattered rifle fire. The units covered about 1,000 yards in a southerly direction during the day and bivouacked on a clearly defined east-west trail. Fowler's battalion was not committed during the day, but remained in reserve at the dropping ground with the regimental command post.

On the west, Burns' battalion had moved southwestward away from the rest of TED Force. The unit encountered no opposition but found itself in such a maze of steep ridges and deep gullies that the pace of advance was slowed to little more than 100 yards per hour. After marching over ten hours and covering over 1,000 yards, the battalion set up night defenses on the same trail upon which Williams' and Lewis' commands had bivouacked about 1,300 yards to the east-northeast. Casualties for all parts of TED Force had been light on the 4th. Only 8 men had been wounded as opposed to about 50 Japanese killed and 3 captured.[15]

It had been hoped that the advance on the 4th would carry TED Force south to the main Japanese supply route, but the trail reached by Burns', Lewis', and Williams' battalions was another route which had not been used by military traffic for some time. Possibly, it was a section of the native trail to Afua and, as such, purposely avoided by the Japanese inasmuch as parts of it could be seen from the air. In any case, the track cut on the 4th lay about 1,200 yards north of the east-west trail which most of the Japanese forces moving to and from the Afua area had been using. Colonel Starr, realizing that the main Japanese supply route had not yet been severed, ordered his units to continue southward on the 5th, on which day the advance was resumed about 0800 hours with Williams leading and Lewis' battalion about 400 yards to the rear. Pushing south along now precipitous and mountainous banks of the upper Niumen, Williams' unit was opposed by only scattered rifle fire until 1100, when it was decisively halted by a strong Japanese force conducting a stubborn defense.

TED Force and the Withdrawing 18th Army

Unknown to any part of the PERSECUTION Task Force, the *18th Army* had been seriously considering withdrawal from the Driniumor since at least as early as 28 July. Supplies for *18th Army* units in the Afua area were nearly exhausted, and General Adachi estimated that every last crumb of food would be gone by 3 August. No more supplies could be brought forward. Moreover, the front-line units were suffering increasingly heavy casualties from combat, starvation, and disease; they had no more artillery support and could obtain none; weapons of all kinds were either being destroyed or rendered useless by lack of lubrication oil; and no reinforcements were available.

Disturbed by the heavy casualties and plagued by insoluble logistic problems, General Adachi, on the afternoon of 31 July, issued orders alerting his forward units to

[15] What happened to these prisoners is unknown. There is no record that TED Force either sent back or brought back any prisoners.

prepare for withdrawal, which apparently was to begin on 4 August. The assaults on South Force after 31 July were actually a part of General Adachi's withdrawal plan, which was designed to throw the PERSECUTION Covering Force off balance, to put forth one last "glorious" effort to overrun American positions (and perhaps secure supplies), and to cover the withdrawal.

On 1 August General Adachi learned that American forces were active in the Yakamul area. It was erroneously reported to him that this was an amphibious operation, a maneuver which the *18th Army* commander had feared for some time (actually, the report referred to patrolling by the 2d Battalion, 124th Infantry, along the coast from the mouth of Niumen Creek). He therefore ordered the remaining elements of the *237th Infantry* to extricate themselves from the operations in the Afua area and hurry back to Yakamul to reinforce service units in that vicinity. Events moved so rapidly that the remnants of the *237th Infantry* never got to Yakamul. Instead, the advance of TED Force made it necessary for General Adachi to change his plans and accelerate a general withdrawal.

Communications within forward units of the *18th Army* had so broken down that it was not until 3 August that General Adachi learned of the TED Force movement across the Driniumor, although the *1st Battalion, 239th Infantry,* had been in contact with TED Force since 31 July. When General Adachi did hear of the American movement, he grossly underestimated the strength of TED Force. Thinking that the American operation was being carried out by only 400 troops, General Adachi merely changed the orders of the *237th Infantry* and instructed that regiment to hold the *18th Army's* crossing point on the upper Niumen Creek.

On the same day, 3 August, General Adachi issued detailed plans for the withdrawal of all *18th Army* units to the east side of the Driniumor, a withdrawal which was to begin on 4 or 5 August. The *66th Infantry, 51st Division,* was to protect the *20th* and *41st Division* units as they crossed the Driniumor. The continued advance of TED Force on 3 August prompted General Adachi to change his plans and early on the 4th he ordered the *20th Division* to start retreating at noon that day and the *41st Division* to break contact on the 5th. On the latter day, learning that TED Force was approaching the point at which the *18th Army's* main line of communications crossed the upper reaches of Niumen Creek, General Adachi ordered the *8th Independent Engineers* to aid the remnants of the *237th Infantry* in holding the crossing point.

It was this combined *237th Infantry—8th Engineers* force that Williams' 3d Battalion, 124th Infantry, had encountered about 1100 on 5 August. The composite Japanese unit was dug in along a 1,000-foot-high ridge across Williams' line of advance and threatened to outflank the battalion by occupying other high ground nearby. Despite artillery and mortar support, Williams' men were unable to advance. Colonel Starr ordered Lewis' unit to bypass the fight and continue south to locate and cut the Japanese main supply route. Fighting at Williams' front continued through most of the afternoon, and Colonel Starr realized that the Japanese force could not be dislodged that day. Fowlers' battalion was brought up to the rear of Williams' and late in the afternoon set up a new perimeter with the regimental command post. Before dark, Wil-

liams' men withdrew slightly from their most forward positions so that artillery concentrations could be placed along the front.

Lewis' unit, which had moved off to the southeast to bypass Williams' fight, made little progress in very rough terrain and was cut off from the rest of TED Force before it could swing westward. Burns' battalion, still far to the west of the other three, had encountered little opposition during the day and had reached the main Japanese supply route late in the afternoon at a point about 1,500 yards east of the Driniumor. The position of Lewis' unit for the night is not certain, but it was apparently near the same trail some place east of Williams' unit, which had done its fighting on or near one section of the main trail.

Despite the fact that hopes of reaching the Driniumor had not been realized, the TED Force advance on the 5th had been successful within the limitations imposed by terrain, logistic problems, communications difficulties, and Japanese opposition. The main Japanese line of communications had been severed, although the section held by Burns' battalion showed signs of having been abandoned for some time. Over 100 Japanese had been killed at a cost to TED Force of only 3 men killed and 14 wounded. Plans for the 6th were for Lewis' battalion to continue its flanking movement while Fowler's unit, bypassing Williams' fight, was to envelop the Japanese left. Williams' men were to continue their attack and Burns' battalion was to hold its position astride the trail.

Action on the 6th started earlier than TED Force expected. About 0300 approximately 400 Japanese attacked Williams' perimeter. This enemy force comprised elements of the *41st Division*, supported by men of the *26th Field Artillery* of the *20th Division* and some remnants of the *8th Independent Engineers*. Attacking under cover of fire from machine guns, mortars, and 75-mm. mountain guns, the Japanese force was attempting to secure fords over the upper reaches of Niumen Creek and protect the withdrawal of other elements of *18th Army* units from Afua. Though surprised, Williams' men held back the initial onslaught. Reportedly, Japanese riflemen then climbed trees surrounding Williams' perimeter to pin down the American troops while other Japanese continued to attack on the ground.

Fowler's unit, under orders to bypass Williams' fight and move around the enemy left, started moving about 0800 hours but soon found the terrain made it impossible to avoid contact with the Japanese opposing Williams. The Japanese, having control of most commanding ground in the area, stopped Fowler's leading company. Action was not rapid. The terrain made all movements slow and laborious, and much time had to be taken to co-ordinate artillery support fire properly. Under cover of artillery fire, another company of Fowler's battalion, creeping slowly through ravines and up an almost vertical cliff, worked around to unoccupied high ground on the Japanese left. The rest of the battalion was successfully disengaged to secure more commanding terrain in the same area. The Japanese, finding themselves outflanked and subjected to increasingly heavy artillery and mortar fire, began to withdraw southward in midafternoon, relieving the pressure on Williams' front.

Fowler's battalion, in enveloping the Japanese left, had moved north and then westward and the maneuver had carried the unit by dark to a point just north of the main trail about 750 yards east of Burns' battalion. Williams' men withdrew to reorganize, after disengaging from the enemy



ARTILLERY SUPPORTING TED FORCE. *C Battery, 129th Field Artillery Battalion, firing from the coast near Anamo.*

forces late in the afternoon; at dark, having resumed the march westward, they secured high ground north of the trail. The ground covered during the day by Williams' battalion was little more than 500 yards west of the position it had occupied the previous night. The unit probably could have moved farther, but Colonel Starr halted it so as not to increase the distance from Lewis' battalion which was, in effect, lost. The unit had laboriously struggled over extremely rough and trackless ground during the day, fighting in the afternoon against a number of Japanese who had withdrawn from Williams' front. For the night, Lewis' men set up a perimeter about 800 yards south-southeast of the scene of Williams' fighting.

Burns' men, patrolling from their perimeter astride the main trail, discovered a new trail about 800 yards to the south. The Japanese, having abandoned the western section of the trail on which Burns' battalion was bivouacked, had recently cut the new trail in order to escape from artillery and aerial bombardment, and had been using this new trail since late July. Plans were made to send a strong force south to cut the new route, but Major Burns decided to have

artillery interdict the Japanese who had been discovered by patrols on the new trail. Artillery fired throughout the night while Burns' battalion prepared to move in force south to the new trail the next morning.

TED Force action on the 6th probably accounted for some 350 Japanese killed or wounded,[16] while the TED Force battalions lost only 11 men killed and 2 wounded. Again, the advance had not carried to the Driniumor although General Gill, at PERSECUTION Covering Force headquarters, had been pressing Colonel Starr to move on to the river. But Colonel Starr, not sure that all the principal Japanese escape routes had been cut, asked that he be allowed to continue advancing southward, ultimately to approach Afua from the southeast. This plan was approved by General Gill. Plans were made to push on to the Driniumor on the 7th—plans which again could not be carried out.

On the 7th movement began at 0800, and Burns' unit pushed rapidly south toward the new trail. Fowler's command, initially moving west along the main trail, encountered some stiff opposition from Japanese who were attempting to escape from Burns' men. Fowler's battalion turned south and southwest from the main trail and, advancing at a fairly good speed over very rough terrain, joined Burns' unit on the new trail about 1130. By noon the two battalions had killed over 75 Japanese. Pushing generally westward toward Afua and moving the bulk of the battalion to high ground south of the new trail, Burns' unit bivouacked for the night still about 1,100 yards east of the Driniumor, and Fowler's men were in the same general area.

Williams' unit, with regimental headquarters, pushed laboriously westward and by nightfall, having met little opposition, bivouacked on the main trail at a point almost due north of Burns' and Fowler's new positions. Lewis' progress was again painfully slow over the incredibly rough terrain in which the unit found itself. There was some opposition from *41st Division* remnants, and Lewis' movement was also slowed by the necessity for carrying along thirteen wounded men on litters. By dark the battalion had progressed scarcely 500 yards in a westerly direction and was still south of the main trail. Casualties in TED Force from enemy action were light on the 7th: only 1 man killed and 3 wounded. Faulty mortar ammunition, however, killed 8 more men and wounded 14 others, and early the next morning misplaced artillery fire from the 120th Field Artillery Battalion killed 4 men and wounded 22 others in Burns' unit.[17]

On the 8th, Burns' and Fowler's battalions pushed on to the Driniumor, reaching the river at a point about 1,000 yards south of Afua. On the way, Burns' men discovered a Japanese hospital area. Most of the Japanese there indicated no willingness to surrender but, on the contrary, began to commit suicide or fire at the advancing American troops, who summarily dispensed with those Japanese failing to commit suicide.[18] Williams' unit reached the Driniumor at 1700, but Lewis' battalion, which had reached the main trail during the morning, was again delayed by scattered Japanese opposition and the necessity of carrying

[16] During the two days of fighting in the Williams–Fowler area on the upper Niumen, about 425 Japanese were killed, most of them by mortar and artillery fire.

[17] According to Ltr, Becker to Starr, 13 Nov 50, Burns' battalion had not called for any artillery fire. The artillery shells were apparently sent out when the fires which Burns' men lit to cook breakfast were observed by the artillery observation towers on the coast.

[18] There is no record that any prisoners were taken in the hospital area.

wounded men. The battalion remained more or less lost until 1100 on 10 August, when it reached the Driniumor at a point about 300 yards north of Afua. The same day all of TED Force moved back to the Blue Beach area for a well-deserved rest.

Results of TED Force Operations

TED Force reported that during its wide envelopment maneuver it killed about 1,800 Japanese. Most of these casualties TED Force inflicted upon the *18th Army* while the four American battalions were moving westward toward the Driniumor, and many included the sick, wounded, hungry, exhausted, and dispirited Japanese troops who were unable to keep up with the rest of the retreating *18th Army*. Combat losses within TED Force were about 50 men killed and 80 wounded, of whom about 15 were killed and perhaps 40 wounded by misplaced American artillery fire or faulty mortar ammunition.[19] How many TED Force men were rendered *hors de combat* by tropical fevers, psychoses, and other ailments is unknown, although it is known that all four battalions lost some men from such causes.

The relatively low battle casualty rate (little more than 2 percent from enemy action), while indicative of the ineffectiveness of Japanese opposition, is also a tribute to the leadership within TED Force and to the teamwork of all ranks under the worst possible climatic and terrain conditions. It is especially noteworthy that the bulk of the personnel engaged in the enveloping maneuver were members of the 124th Infantry, a unit on its first combat mission, and that the 2d Battalion, 169th Infantry, had been extensively reorganized and had received many inexperienced replacements since its last action against the Japanese.

To summarize, the objectives of the TED Force maneuver had been to cut the Japanese lines of communication to the east in order to render the enemy's positions around Afua untenable, and, if necessary, to fall upon the *18th Army's* Afua forces from the flanks and rear. While the envelopment was not as successful in accomplishing these missions as had been anticipated, or as it was thought to be at the time of its completion, the maneuver did force the *18th Army* to accelerate its already planned withdrawal from the Driniumor.

The End of the Aitape Operation

While TED Force had been moving toward the Driniumor, South Force had been mopping up in the Afua area. The banzai attacks against the front of the 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, on the morning of 4 August had been undertaken by the *18th Army* to cover the withdrawal east of the Driniumor and marked the last co-ordinated efforts made by the Japanese in the Driniumor area. General Cunningham could now execute his plans to clear the enemy remnants from the Afua region.

A combined attack by TED Force and South Force had originally been scheduled for 4 August, but had been postponed because TED Force could not reach the Driniumor by that day.[20] On 5 August it was decided that South Force would attack south

[19] Records concerning TED Force casualties are very incomplete and contradictory.

[20] This section is based on: 112th Cav Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 14–15; 112th Cav Opns and Int Diary Aitape; 2d Sq 112th Cav Jnl, 29 Jun–11 Aug 44; PCF G–3 Jnls, 31 Jul–5 Aug, 5–9 Aug, and 9–15 Aug 44; 1st Bn 169th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 2–3; 3d Bn 128th Inf Jnl, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44; 127th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, Sec. II, pp. 14–15; 127th Inf Jnl file, 1–25 Aug 44; 2d Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 27 Jun–25 Aug 44.



NATIVE LITTER BEARERS *evacuate a casualty across the Driniumor River near Afua Village.*

the next day, whether or not TED Force reached Afua in time to participate. It was in preparation for this attack that the 1st Battalion, 169th Infantry, had been sent to the Driniumor from Palauru, and at the same time General Gill released the 3d Battalion, 128th Infantry, to General Cunningham for participation in the 6 August action.

The South Force commander ordered three of the infantry battalions available to him to clear the ground south and west of his command post area to the Afua–Palauru trail. One of the battalions was to move south along the west bank of the Driniumor, clear Afua, and then move on to a Japanese fording point about 2,000 yards upstream from Afua. Simultaneously, on the east bank, a Composite Squadron, comprising two cavalry troops and an infantry company, was to advance south to the ford. Tactical control over all these attack operations was vested in Colonel Howe, the commander of the 127th Infantry.

The Composite Squadron crossed the Driniumor at 0800 on the 6th and pushed south through heavy but disorganized Japanese rifle fire. It halted for the night about 500 yards north of the ford and reported that many Japanese were crossing the ford to the east. West of the river, one infantry battalion reached the Afua–Palauru trail late in the afternoon at a point about 300 yards west of Afua, having encountered only scattered resistance. Another battalion pushed units south along the west bank to a point opposite the Composite Squadron, and the third continued operations it had begun on the 5th of August to clear the jungled, broken terrain west of South Force's command post.

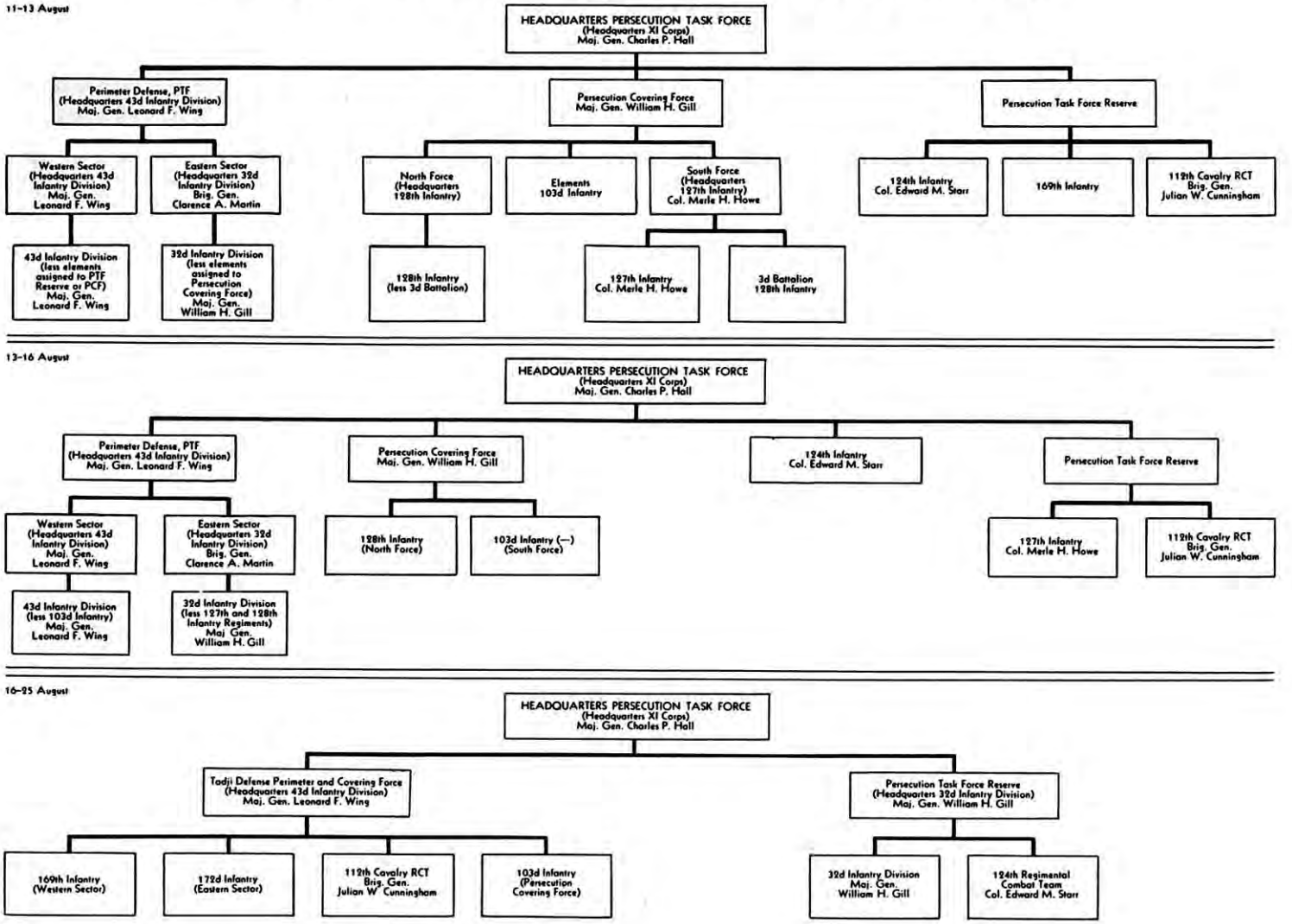
Patrolling in the same areas continued for the next two days, as South Force waited for TED Force to reach the Driniumor. South Force patrols reported ever decreasing opposition and found increasing evidence that the Japanese were in full flight to the east. On the evening of 9 August General Gill reported to General Hall that no more resistance was to be expected along the Driniumor or in the Afua area. The Japanese, said General Gill, had retreated and the PERSECUTION Covering Force could be relieved. The Battle of the Driniumor was over.

On 10 and 11 August most of South Force and all of TED Force returned to Blue Beach and on the latter day the 103d Infantry, 43d Division, began to relieve all units of the PERSECUTION Covering Force still on the river. The relief of the 127th Infantry was completed on the 13th, and the 128th Infantry, which was still holding the old North Force positions, returned to Blue Beach three days later. The PERSECUTION Covering Force ceased to exist as a separate unit on the 15th and its missions were assumed by a new organization which, designated the Tadji Defense Perimeter and Covering Force, was commanded by Maj. Gen. Leonard F. Wing, the commanding general of the 43d Infantry Division.[21]

From 16 to 25 August principal combat missions in the Aitape area were carried out by the three regiments of the 43d Division. The 169th Infantry operated on the west flank, the 172d Infantry south of the Tadji strips and along the Nigia, and the 103d

[21] Actually, during the period 25 July to 25 August, there were many changes in the command structure of the PERSECUTION Task Force, none of which materially affected operations. These changes are to be found in orders and memos in the PTF G–3 Jnls, 21–26 Jul, 7–16 Aug, and 16–25 Aug 44; PCF G–3 Jnl, 5–9 Aug 44. General Wing's command comprised the 43d Division and the 112th Cavalry RCT. General Gill became the commander of the PERSECUTION Task Force Reserve, which included the 32d Division and the 124th RCT.

Chart 13—The Persecution Task Force: 11 August–25 August 1944



Infantry along the Driniumor. The latter regiment sent patrols east from the Driniumor along the coast as far as Marubian, and up the Drindaria River to Charov and Jalup, where no American troops had been since early June. As far east as the Drindaria there was no sign of organized Japanese resistance, and all Japanese in the area seemed to be withdrawing in confusion to the east. At the mouth of the Dandriwad River, however, the Japanese maintained organized delaying positions, through which American patrols did not attempt to push.[22]

On 25 August General Krueger, ALAMO Force commander, convinced that the *18th Army* no longer constituted any threat to the Aitape perimeter or the Tadji airstrips, declared the Aitape operation over.[23]

Conclusions

The most obvious result of the Aitape operation was that two and one-third reinforced divisions of the *18th Army* had been shattered in vain attempts to recapture the Aitape area and delay the Allied drive toward the Philippines—neither of which objectives had been achieved. Instead, the *18th Army* had suffered a decisive and costly defeat; it could no longer be a serious threat to Allied forces anywhere in New Guinea.

The Aitape operation had served a number of other purposes for the Allies. First, the Tadji airstrips had provided a base from which planes could have flown support missions for ground operations at Hollandia, had such support proved necessary. Second, the PERSECUTION Task Force's victory over the *18th Army* prevented the latter unit from threatening more important Allied positions at Hollandia. At Aitape, one regimental combat team of the 31st Infantry Division received its first combat experience, and the whole or parts of three other divisions and all of another regimental combat team had further experience in combat which helped prepare those units for subsequent operations in the drive toward the Philippines or in the latter islands themselves. Finally, the Aitape area served as a staging base for troops engaged in three later operations along the New Guinea coast and in the Philippines.

Securing the Aitape area and defeating the *18th Army* had cost Allied forces to 25 August approximately 440 men killed, 2,550 wounded, and 10 missing.[24] According to American counts, Japanese losses in the Aitape area from 22 April to 25 August were 8,821 killed and 98 captured, of whom 2,669 were killed and 34 taken prisoner dur-

[22] 43d Inf Div Opns Rpt Aitape, p. 2; Tadji Defense Perimeter and Covering Force, G–3 Per Rpts 1–10, 16–25 Aug 44. One noteworthy action was undertaken by the 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry, which on 11 August returned to Yakamul whence it had been driven by Japanese forces early in June. The battalion recovered the bodies of 6 of the 9 dead it had left behind in June. The unit was accompanied by a platoon of Company B, 44th Tank Battalion. The action is described in PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 28 Jun–25 Aug 44, p. 17.

[23] ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Aitape–Hollandia, p. 35. General Krueger, "for historical purposes," set a terminal date on each of the operations along the New Guinea coast. This meant that unit after action reports as required by Army regulations were to be closed as of that date. Often these dates coincided with administrative changes in the area concerned, as in the case of Hollandia when the termination date also marked transfer of responsibility in the area from Headquarters, RECKLESS Task Force, to Headquarters, Base G, a Services of Supply installation.

[24] The casualty records of all major units involved in the Aitape operation are incomplete and contradictory. The figures given above are close to those of ALAMO Force and were derived from data in the records of all major units engaged in the Aitape area.

ing the period 2–9 August.[25] According to Japanese sources, the American figures are a little conservative, for the Japanese estimated that the *18th Army* lost about 9,000 men of the 20,000 employed in the forward area just for the period 1 June through 5 August. As the *18th Army* units withdrew, effective combat strength of the *20th Division's* three infantry regiments was down to an average of less than 100 men; the regiments of the *41st Division* averaged about 250 men; and the *66th Infantry, 51st Division,* was reduced to 150 effectives. All Japanese infantry units lost most of their battalion, company, and platoon commanders, and the bulk of their crew-served weapons. All the artillery brought to the Aitape area was lost, and rations and supplies of all other types were completely exhausted in the forward area.[26] The sacrifices were in vain.

Although a major battle—essentially defensive in character—had developed at Aitape, this action proved but incidental to the progress of the Southwest Pacific Area's drive toward the Philippines. Even while the battle along the Driniumor was being fought, other forces under General MacArthur's command had been moving northwestward up the coast of New Guinea. This drive had progressed as rapidly as the assembly of supplies and the availability of ground forces, air support, amphibious craft, warships, and cargo ships would permit. On 17 May, long before anyone at Aitape knew that the *18th Army* was going to attack or that a battle was going to be fought along the Driniumor River, Allied forces had landed in the Wakde–Sarmi area of Dutch New Guinea, about 275 miles northwest of Aitape.[27]

[25] ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Aitape-Hollandia, p. 35; GHQ SWPA, G–2 DSEI 871, 10 Aug 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 10 Aug 44.

[26] *18th Army* Opns, III, 156–59.

[27] American forces continued active patrolling in the Aitape area for some time, the 43d Division being the last relieved. The division staged at Aitape for operations in Luzon. Late in October 1944, Australian units started taking over at Aitape, the first one to arrive being the 2/6th Cavalry (Commando) Regiment. Later, the 6th Australian Division arrived, and on 27 November the command in the area passed from General Wing to Maj. Gen. J. E. S. Stevens (AIF), the Australian division commander. In mid–December the Australians began a slow but steady drive toward Wewak, which fell on 10 May 1945 after stubborn resistance. Japanese remnants were still holding out in mountains south of Wewak on V-J Day. General Adachi delayed giving himself up for some days, but finally came in on 13 September 1945 to surrender the few thousand men of the *18th Army* still alive. Australian losses during this drive were 451 men killed, 1,163 wounded, and 3 missing. Japanese losses were 7,200 killed or found dead and 269 prisoners. General Adachi was taken by the Australians to Rabaul where he was tried for war crimes by an Australian military tribunal and, on 27 April 1947, sentenced to life imprisonment. He committed suicide in prison at Rabaul during the night of 8–9 September 1947. This info is from: 6th Austr Div, Rpt on Opns, Aitape–Wewak Campaign, 26 Oct 44–13 Sep 45, Part 1, Rec of Events, pars. 7–166, copy in OCMH files; Ltr, Mr. John Balfour, Australian War Historian's Office, to author, 22 Dec 48, no sub, copy in OCMH files; tel conv with Lt Col Peter S. Teesdale-Smith, Australian Military Mission, Washington, D. C., 22 Jun 50.

CHAPTER IX

The Seizure of Wakde Island

The seizure of the Hollandia and Aitape areas had consummated one step in the Southwest Pacific's strategic plan for the approach to the Philippines—advancing the land-based bomber and fighter line by the seizure of air-base sites along the north coast of New Guinea. Long before Allied troops had set foot ashore at Hollandia and Aitape, General MacArthur's planners had been looking toward the Geelvink Bay region of western Dutch New Guinea as the next air-base site objective after Hollandia. From airfields constructed on islands in Geelvink Bay, operations still farther to the northwest could be supported.[1]

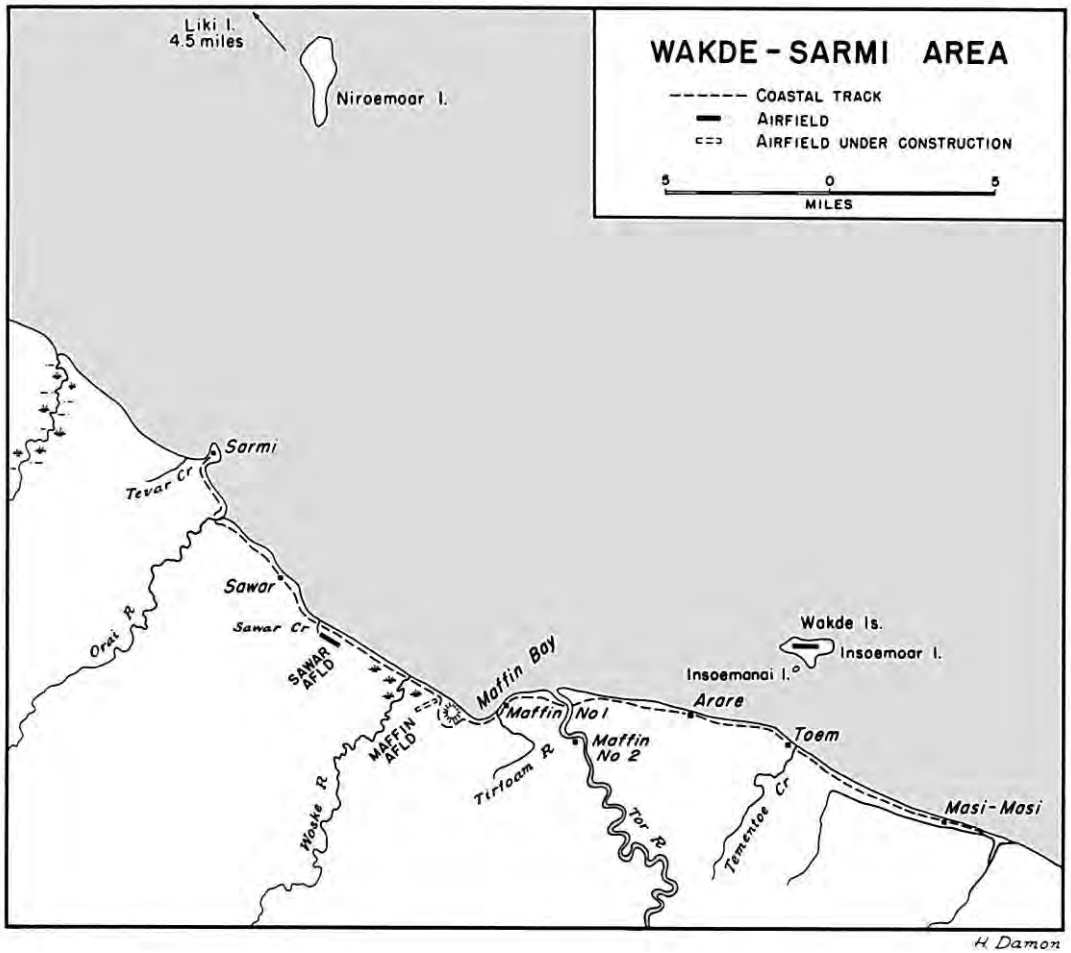
The Sarmi–Biak Plan

The Strategic Background

The 200-mile-deep indentation that Geelvink Bay makes into the land mass of New Guinea scoops out the neck of the bird-like figure of that island. Cape D'Urville, lying over 200 miles northwest of Hollandia, is the bird's shoulder and marks the eastern limit of Geelvink Bay. From Cape D'Urville the distance westward across the bay to Manokwari on the Vogelkop Peninsula (the bird's head) is about 250 miles. Across the northern entrance to Geelvink Bay lie many small islands and islets. Among the Schouten Group are Biak, Soepiori, Owi, and Mios Woendi; Japen, Mios Noem, and Noemfoor lie south and west of the Schoutens. Many of the bay islands are large enough to provide airdrome sites, some of which had been developed by the Japanese. Allied attention was focused on Biak. The terrain on the southeastern shore of that island is well suited for airfields, and the Japanese had begun airdrome construction there late in 1943.

Biak Island is located about 325 miles northwest of Hollandia. On the New Guinea mainland approximately 180 miles southeast of Biak and 145 miles northwest of Hollandia lies the town of Sarmi. Prior to World War II, Sarmi was the seat of the local Netherlands East Indies government and a small commercial center. In the closing months of 1943, the Japanese began to develop in the Sarmi area supply, troop, and air bases of some importance, for the region was to be a major defensive installation on Japan's withdrawing strategic main line of resistance. Six miles east of Sarmi the enemy constructed Sawar Drome, which was operational by 1 April 1944. (*Map 9*) Three miles still farther east, on the shores of Maffin Bay, the Japanese hastily began constructing another airstrip early in 1944. About twenty miles east of Sarmi and approximately two miles offshore lie the Wakde Islands, Insoemoar and Insoemanai.

[1] RENO I, 25 Feb 43; RENO II, 3 Aug 43; RENO III, 20 Oct 43.



MAP 9

On the former, designated throughout the operation as Wakde Island, the Japanese had completed an excellent airfield by June 1943.[2]

Although General MacArthur's planners had given up thoughts of seizing Wakde Island as an adjunct to the Hollandia operation, they did not drop the Wakde–Sarmi area from consideration. First, the area was apparently capable of development into a major air base for the support of subsequent operations. Second, as more information from various intelligence sources became available at General Headquarters concerning Japanese airdrome development, troop dispositions, and supply concentrations at Wakde–Sarmi, the area began to acquire a threatening aspect. It was a base from which the enemy could not only endanger the success of the Hollandia operation, but also imperil Allied progress into the Geelvink

[2] ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Wakde–Biak, pp. 5–7; AGS SWPA Terrain Handbook 26, Sarmi, 20 Apr 44, copy in OCMH files.

Bay area. Indeed, the Allied Air Forces considered that an early seizure of the Wakde–Sarmi region after the capture of Hollandia was a prerequisite to continuing the drive toward the Philippines.[3]

Finally, when in March 1944 the Joint Chiefs of Staff had instructed General MacArthur to provide air support for operations in the Central Pacific Area,[4] occupation of both the Wakde–Sarmi area and Biak Island assumed importance in intertheater strategy. From air bases in northwest New Guinea the Allied Air Forces could provide support for the Central Pacific's Mariana and Palau operations by helping to neutralize enemy bases in the western Carolines and keeping under surveillance enemy shipping and fleet units in the waters north and northwest of the Vogelkop Peninsula. In addition, an early advance by Southwest Pacific forces to the Wakde–Sarmi–Biak region would keep Japanese attention diverted from impending operations in Admiral Nimitz' area of responsibility.[5]

Prior to May 1944 the only good heavy bomber bases in the Southwest Pacific's forward area were on the Admiralty Islands and at Nadzab in eastern New Guinea. Both these bases were too far south or east to permit execution of an effective bombing and reconnaissance program to support either the Central Pacific's advances or the Southwest Pacific's drive to the Philippines. It had been expected that the newly won Hollandia fields would furnish excellent bomber bases farther west and north, but the terrain and weather at Hollandia made it impossible to provide airfields suitable for extensive employment by heavy bombers without a great deal more engineering work than had been anticipated. The necessary air support missions therefore became contingent upon rapid development of heavy bomber fields in the Wakde–Sarmi–Biak region.[6]

The First Wakde–Sarmi–Biak Plan.

Even before plans for Hollandia–Aitape had been completed, General MacArthur had warned principal subordinate headquarters in the Southwest Pacific Area that the operation might soon be extended to include the seizure of the Wakde–Sarmi area. Since Admiral Nimitz had not then made any specific requests for Southwest Pacific air support of his operations, the objectives of the Wakde–Sarmi undertaking at first had principally local applications. Japanese forces at Sarmi were to be prevented from interfering with construction at Hollandia, and bases were to be developed in the Sarmi area to support subsequent Southwest Pacific operations to the northwest.[7]

General MacArthur's G–2 Section expected that the Allied seizure of Hollandia and Aitape would stir the Japanese into efforts to reinforce western New Guinea. It was estimated that one enemy division was

[3] Ltr, AAF SWPA to GHQ SWPA, 12 Apr 44, sub: Wakde–Sarmi Opns, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 12–22 Apr 44. As they had for the Hollandia–Aitape operations, the staff sections of Headquarters, ALAMO Force, maintained separate journals for operations at Wakde and Biak. For part of the time, the ALAMO Force headquarters was divided into two echelons, advanced and rear, both of which maintained independent journals for the Wakde–Biak operations.

[4] Rads, JCS to CINCSWPA and CINCPOA, 5171 and 989, 12 Mar 44, CM–OUT 5137.

[5] Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, AAF SWPA, *et al.*, CX–12504, 14 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 14–18 May 44.

[6] USSBS, Naval Analysis Div, *The Campaigns of the Pacific War* (Washington, 1946), pp. 180–210; Rad, GHQ SWPA to CINCPOA, CX–12551, 15 May 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 15 May 44.

[7] Ltr, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO Force, ANF SWPA, *et al.*, 10 Apr 44, sub: STICKATNOUGHT Operation, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 12–22 Apr 44.

spread between Sarmi and Biak, and it was believed that two more divisions were scheduled for early movement to New Guinea. Allowed freedom of movement, such enemy reinforcements could become a strong threat to the success of advances westward beyond Hollandia. It therefore seemed of utmost urgency that the Wakde–Sarmi area be seized and cleared of enemy forces as soon as possible.

The G–2 Section estimated that about 6,500 Japanese troops were stationed at Wakde–Sarmi. Of these, some 4,000 were considered combat elements of the *36th Division,* probably including the entire *224th Infantry* and possibly a battalion of the *223d Infantry.* The *222d Infantry* of the same division was thought to be on Biak Island. Within 350 miles west of Sarmi (considered easy reinforcing distance), there were estimated to be approximately 14,000 enemy troops, of whom 7,000 were believed members of combat units. These forces were thought to be concentrated at Manokwari, on Biak, and on other islands in Geelvink Bay. The exact dispositions of the Japanese at Wakde–Sarmi could not be foretold, but it was considered probable that most were concentrated at Sarmi and around the three airfields in the vicinity.[8]

Basing his decision on the estimated Japanese strength in the Wakde–Sarmi area and on the possibility that the enemy might reinforce the area before the Allies could land there, General MacArthur decided that a full infantry division should be sent against Wakde–Sarmi. One regimental combat team was to land near the town of Sarmi, another on the mainland opposite Wakde Island, and the third was to be in reserve. The unit landing near Wakde was to seize that island by a shore-to-shore maneuver after securing the initial mainland beachhead.

General Krueger, who was to direct the operation, planned to employ either the 6th or 31st Infantry Division. Both of these units had recently arrived in the theater, and neither had combat experience. This plan was opposed by General MacArthur, who considered it necessary to withdraw the 24th, the 32d, or the 41st Division from its commitment to Hollandia–Aitape. The theater commander felt that it would be impossible to stage and supply the Wakde–Sarmi operation from rear areas, since all available large amphibious and cargo ships were needed to support the Hollandia–Aitape operation and build up the air and supply base at Hollandia. Thus, an early advance to Wakde–Sarmi was contingent upon combat developments at Hollandia and Aitape. If none of the divisions committed to the latter operations could be relieved, Wakde–Sarmi might have to be postponed until at least mid-June.

With this information at hand General Krueger decided to assign the 32d Division to Wakde–Sarmi. One regimental combat team of the division was scheduled for early arrival at Aitape and the remainder of the unit was at Saidor, in eastern New Guinea. However, the unexpected weakness of Japanese opposition at Hollandia, the shortage of shipping, and the lack of adequate staging facilities at Saidor combined to prompt a change. The 41st Division, with one regimental combat team at Aitape and the re-

[8] GHQ SWPA, G–2 Est of Enemy Sit, Wakde–Sarmi Area, 9 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 8 Apr 44; GHQ SWPA, G–2 Monthly Sum of Enemy Dispositions, 30 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 30 Apr 44; Int Annex to ALAMO Force FO 16, 30 Apr 44, filed with other materials atchd to ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Wakde–Biak.

maining units at Hollandia, was substituted for the 32d.[9]

Setting D Day for Wakde–Sarmi depended not only on combat developments at Hollandia and Aitape but also upon the availability of naval and air support. Naval escort vessels and sufficient amphibious craft were expected to be on hand by 30 April. Air support was not so easily obtained. The carriers which were to support Hollandia–Aitape had to leave the Southwest Pacific within a very few days after that invasion. Wakde–Sarmi was too far from eastern New Guinea air bases to permit proper land-based air support. For these two reasons, the advance to Wakde–Sarmi had to await establishment of land-based air units on the Hollandia fields. It was expected that these fields would be operational by 12 May. To allow for unforeseen circumstances, the target date for Wakde–Sarmi was set for three days later, 15 May. This date was set by General MacArthur in operations instructions published on 27 April.[10] The target date and selection of forces for Biak were left for later determination, but a move to Biak early in June was contemplated.

The Plan is Changed

By the first week in May preparations for Wakde–Sarmi were rapidly approaching completion. The 41st Division's three combat teams had been relieved at Hollandia and Aitape and were busily loading supplies. Naval and amphibious organization had been settled, and shipping and supplies were being gathered at the two staging areas. The Allied Air Forces had begun preassault bombardments of the targets, and all units participating in the operation were putting finishing touches on their tactical plans. On 4 May, however, Admiral Barbey, who was responsible for the co-ordination of naval planning, started a chain of events which precipitated a broad change in the Wakde–Sarmi plan.

Admiral Barbey proposed that D Day be postponed until 21 May and gave two reasons for the postponement. First, tides would be higher in the Wakde area on the 21st than on the 15th. Second, postponement would allow orderly and complete preparations to be made. Congestion was severe at the Hollandia beaches, where the bulk of the 41st Division was to stage. Lack of lighterage and beach space, combined with an inadequate road net, hampered unloading of equipment, supplies, and troops which were pouring into the Hollandia area. The arrival of such supplies and units, some of which had to be reloaded for Wakde–Sarmi, seriously interfered with mounting the 41st Division.[11]

General Krueger, responsible for co-ordinating all planning for the Wakde–Sarmi operation, immediately called a conference of representatives of ALAMO Force, Allied Air Forces, and Allied Naval Forces to discuss Admiral Barbey's proposal. The conferees, meeting on 6 May, decided that the operation could be started no earlier than 16 May (a day later than the date already set) but that unless important strategic con-

[9] Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WF–2393, 14 Apr 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 14 Apr 44; Rads, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, C–10671, 14 Apr 44, and ALAMO to CTF 76, WF–2584, 15 Apr 44, both in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 12–22 Apr 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Wakde–Biak, p. 8.

[10] GHQ SWPA, Stf Study, Occupation of Wakde–Sarmi Area, n. d., atchd to GHQ SWPA ltr to ALAMO *et al.*, 10 Apr 44; GHQ SWPA, OI 51, 27 Apr 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 22–30 Apr 44.

[11] Rad, CTF 76 to CG ALAMO and Com7thFlt, 4 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 1–7 May 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Wakde–Biak, p. 9.

siderations dictated otherwise, 21 May would be much preferable. Such a delay would considerably ease the congestion at Hollandia and give the Allied Air Forces time for many more strikes against the target area. General Krueger immediately informed General MacArthur of the recommendations made at the conference.[12]

General MacArthur, who approved the proposed delay, investigated the problem more fully and on 6 May recommended that the entire concept of the Wakde–Sarmi operation be recast. Interpretation of new aerial photographs of the coastal area from Sarmi eastward to Wakde indicated that ground conditions on the mainland in that region were not suited to construction of airdromes adequate for heavy bomber operations. General MacArthur therefore decided that the Sarmi portion of the operation should be canceled. Wakde Island would be seized as planned and aircraft would be sent there as soon as possible. Within eight or ten days after the capture of Wakde, or as soon as the airfield there was repaired, Allied forces would advance to Biak, where more suitable airdrome sites were known to exist. The move to Biak would be covered by Wakde-based fighters and bombers.[13]

To arrange the details under this revised concept, a new planning conference was held at ALAMO Force headquarters on 9 May. Conferees included General MacArthur's chief of staff; the commanders of ALAMO Force, Allied Air Forces, and Allied Naval Forces; and representatives of the Advanced Echelon, Fifth Air Force, and the VII Amphibious Force. After considerable discussion the conferees decided that the proposed Wakde–Biak operation could be carried out. The forces originally scheduled to take Wakde–Sarmi were believed sufficient. One regimental combat team was considered strong enough for the Wakde phase and it was expected that the rest of the 41st Division could seize the airdrome areas on Biak.

In order to assure that the Wakde field would be ready to base aircraft supporting the Biak operation, it was determined that an interval of ten days would be necessary between the two phases of the new operation. Such an interval was also dictated by logistic problems, since many of the assault ships used for Wakde would also be needed in the Biak phase, and a ten-day interval would be necessary for the turnaround and reloading of these vessels. Finally, a number of engineer and air force organizations were scheduled to arrive at Hollandia on 12 May, either for employment there or to be staged for Wakde–Sarmi. The shipping bringing these units to Hollandia was needed to support the Wakde phase of the new operation, which could not begin until the vessels were reloaded. This reloading could not be accomplished quickly, for beach congestion at Hollandia remained a major problem. It was therefore proposed that the Wakde landings be postponed still another day. On the other hand, the strategic urgency of providing the Central Pacific with land-based air support for the invasion of the Marianas was by now becoming evident and a delay in the target date for Biak might threaten the success of Admiral Nimitz's undertakings. After consideration of all these problems, the conferees finally decided that D Day for

[12] Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WF–843, 6 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 1–7 May 44.

[13] Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, AAF SWPA, *et al.*, CX–12253, 6 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 1–7 May 44.

Wakde should be set for 17 May and Z Day for Biak for 27 May.[14]

The Wakde Plan

On 10 May General MacArthur approved the proposed dates for the new Wakde–Biak operation.[15] All units concerned immediately began revising their Wakde–Sarmi plans—plans which proved remarkably flexible. New loading and staging schedules had to be drawn up, and some changes in organization, command, and troop assignments were found necessary. Despite the fact that some confusion inevitably resulted from the sudden change in the original concept of operations, all major headquarters were able to perfect new plans within a few days.

The Amphibious Plan

Under the revised concept the ground forces moving into the Wakde–Sarmi area were to limit operations to the occupation and defense of Wakde Island and the adjacent mainland. The ground mission was primarily defensive in nature—to prevent Japanese interference with construction activities on Wakde and air operations from it. There was one additional task. The Allied Air Forces desired that radar warning stations be established in the Wakde area. For this purpose, Liki and Niroemoar Islands, about fifteen miles off Sarmi, were to be seized.

The nucleus of the force moving to Wakde was the 163d Regimental Combat Team of the 41st Division. For the operation the reinforced combat team was designated the TORNADO Task Force, to be commanded by Brig. Gen. Jens A. Doe who had directed the operations of the 163d at Aitape. The TORNADO Task Force was to start landing on the mainland opposite Wakde Island at 0715 on 17 May. The seizure of Wakde Island was to be undertaken on 18 May, and the capture of Liki and Niroemoar on the 19th.[16]

Planners devoted much time to the selection of a landing beach for the TORNADO Task Force. Though the principal objective of the task force was Wakde, that island was too small and its beaches were too limited to permit the landing of a reinforced regimental combat team. Furthermore, a landing on Wakde might be subjected to fire from hidden enemy artillery on the mainland. Landing the task force on the mainland would largely eliminate any danger of beach congestion, and at the same time the Japanese would be denied positions from which they could shell Allied forces on Wakde. Conversely, the TORNADO Task Force could secure positions on the mainland from which its own artillery could hit Japanese defenses on Wakde.

It was decided that a landing at Toem, on the mainland directly opposite Wakde, would not be sensible. There the landing craft and cargo ships would be subjected to even small-caliber fire from Wakde. In such

[14] Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO *et al.*, CX–12253, 6 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 1–7 May 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Wakde–Biak, p. 10; Rad, ALAMO to CTF 76, WF–1405, 9 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 8–13 May 44; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Biak, p. 2; Ltr, Gen Kenney [USAF], to Gen Ward, 4 Nov 50, no sub, copy in OCMH files.

[15] GHQ SWPA OI 51/1, 10 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 8–13 May 44.

[16] ALAMO Force FO 17, 12 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 8–13 May 44; TTF FO 1, 12 May 44, atchd to TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 17–25 May 44.

restricted waters the enemy could place enfilade fire on the ships, but in more open waters to the west naval fire support ships and amphibious vessels would have freedom of movement and could maneuver to neutralize both Wakde and the Toem area while the TORNADO Task Force moved ashore and set up its artillery. After consideration of all these factors, it was finally decided that the initial beachhead would be at Arare, a native settlement on the coast about three miles west of Toem and four and one-half miles southwest of Wakde Island.[17]

The 163d Infantry, in column of battalions, the 3d Battalion leading, was to initiate the assault at Arare. LCVP's, furnished by Engineer Special Brigades and manned by Company B, 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, were to take ashore the first four waves, which were to land at five-minute intervals beginning at H Hour. The four waves were to contain 8 LCVP's each, the fifth wave 4 LCM's, and the next two waves 6 LCI's each. LST's were to move in to the beach beginning at H plus 60 minutes.[18]

The 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, was to take up positions on the right (west) flank of the Arare beachhead. The 1st and 2d Battalions, following the 3d ashore, were to move east along the coast from Arare, 6,000 yards to Tementoe Creek and prevent Japanese interference from the east. One rifle company of the 3d Battalion was to move west from Arare to the Tor River, another 6,000 yards distant.

As soon as the initial beachhead was secured, a reconnaissance of Insoemanai Island, about 3,500 yards offshore, was to be undertaken. If that islet proved unoccupied, a Provisional Groupment of heavy weapons was to be transported to it. The Provisional Groupment consisted of Company B, 641st Tank Destroyer Battalion (4.2-inch mortars), and all the 81-mm. mortars, .50-caliber machine guns, and .30-caliber heavy machine guns available to the 163d Infantry. As soon as these weapons were emplaced, they would begin firing on Wakde Island.

The artillery of the TORNADO Task Force included the 167th Field Artillery Battalion (105-mm. howitzers), which was part of the 163d Regimental Combat Team; the 218th Field Artillery (155-mm. howitzers); and the Cannon Company, 163d Infantry (105-mm. howitzers, M3). These units were to operate under the control of Headquarters, 191st Field Artillery Group, the commanding officer of which, Col. George M. Williamson, Jr., was also task force artillery officer. Following the infantry ashore as rapidly as the tactical situation permitted, the artillery was to set up near Arare to provide support for the ground troops moving toward the flanks of the beachhead and for the shore-to-shore movement against Wakde Island on D plus 1.

The latter maneuver was to be undertaken by the 1st Battalion, 163d Infantry. The Wakde assault was to be covered not only by the task force artillery but also by the Provisional Groupment on Insoemanai and by naval fire support ships. The landing was scheduled to begin at 0830, 18 May.[19]

[17] ALAMO Force FO 16, 30 Apr 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Wakde–Biak, p. 8. The name Arare is also spelled Araré, Arareh, and Arrara.

[18] CTG 77.2 [Eastern Attack Group] Attack Order 1–44 (Rev), 13 May 44, and Wakde TF, Tentative Plan for the Seizure of the Wakde Island Area, 12 May 44, both in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 14 May 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Wakde–Biak, chart after p. 18; TTF FO 1, 12 May 44, atchd to TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 17–25 May 44.

[19] TTF FO 1, 12 May 44; 191st FA Gp, Hist Rpt TORNADO Landing Force, pp. 1–2. The tank destroyers' 4.2-inch mortars were actually part of the TORNADO Task Force artillery, under the 191st Field Artillery Group, but operated in a semide-

The naval organization for the Wakde–Biak operation centered on the Naval Attack Force, commanded by Rear Adm. William M. Fechteler (USN).[20] The admiral delegated responsibility for the Wakde phase of the operation to Capt. Albert G. Noble, (USN), whose command was designated the Eastern Attack Group. Captain Noble divided his fire support ships into three groups: Fire Support Group A (two heavy cruisers and four destroyers), Fire Support Group B (three light cruisers and six destroyers), and Fire Support Group C (ten destroyers). These ships were to begin firing on assigned targets at H minus 45 minutes and were to continue bombardment until H minus 3. The bulk of the D-Day fire was to be aimed at Sawar and Maffin Dromes, west of the landing beach. No resistance was expected at the beach and a light bombardment to be directed on it was purely precautionary. Some fire support ships were assigned counterbattery missions and others were to aim their shells at Wakde and Insoemanai Islands.

Other ships assigned to participate in the landing phase were 3 submarine chasers, 2 destroyer-escorts, 4 mine sweepers, 2 rocket-equipped submarine chasers, and 3 rocket-equipped LCI's. Rocket fire was to begin at H minus 3 minutes and was to be directed principally against the beachhead area. At H minus 1, all fire on the beach was to cease and the landing craft were to make their final dash to the shore. After the landing, the fire support ships were to shift bombardment to targets on the beach flanks and were to be prepared to deliver call fire upon request from the troops ashore. The landing on Insoemanai was to be supported by two LCI(G)'s and two destroyers. Throughout the night of 17–18 May, cruisers and destroyers were to bombard Wakde and on the morning of the 18th they and the rocket-equipped vessels were to support the assault on that island. On the 19th a few destroyers were to support the landings on Liki and Niroemoar Islands.[21]

The Air Support Plan

Prior to 17 May the Allied Air Forces was to undertake intensive bombardment of the Wakde–Sarmi area and other Japanese installations along the north coast of New Guinea. Special attention was to be given enemy fields east of the Vogelkop Peninsula and on Biak Island. Japanese waterborne supply and reinforcement movements in the Geelvink Bay area were to be stopped insofar as weather, time, and the availability of aircraft permitted. The surface convoys moving toward the target were to be furnished air cover, and close support during the landings was also to be made available.

Most of these missions were assigned to the U. S. Fifth Air Force, but other elements of the Allied Air Forces had their own tasks in support of the operation. The XIII Air Task Force was to take part in the Wakde–Biak operation by assuming responsibility for many air activities in eastern New Guinea and New Britain in order to relieve Fifth Air Force units for movement forward to Hollandia and, ultimately, to Wakde Island. The XIII Air Task Force was also to bomb Japanese installations on such Caroline Islands as were within range of the unit's new base on the Admiralties in order

tached manner while with the Provisional Groupment.

[20] At this time Admiral Fechteler was also Deputy Commander, VII Amphibious Force, Seventh Fleet.

[21] CTG 77.2 Attack Order 1–44 (Rev), 13 May 44, and Wakde TF, Tentative Plan for the Seizure of the Wakde Island Area, 12 May 44, both in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 14 May 44; CTG 77.2 Opns Rpt Toem–Wakde, p. 3.

to forestall enemy interference with the Wakde–Biak operation from the north. The task force's long-range bombers were to supplement Fifth Air Force sorties against Japanese fields in western New Guinea, including those at Wakde, Sarmi, and Biak.

Australian air units also had important support missions and were to strike all Japanese airfields in northwestern New Guinea (west of and including Noemfoor Island) within range of the bomber bases at Darwin, Australia. While the Fifth Air Force was primarily responsible for the enemy fields east of Noemfoor, Fifth Air Force bombers were also to participate in the strikes on the more westerly targets. Insofar as range, weather, and time permitted, Australian bombers, aided by a Dutch squadron of B–25's, were to neutralize enemy air bases on the Arafura Sea islands and on other islands of the Indies southwest of the Vogelkop.[22]

On D minus 1 Fifth Air Force bombers were to attempt detonation of possible land mines on the mainland beach and subsurfaces mines in the waters surrounding Wakde. On the morning of D Day there was to be additional bombing west of the landing area, but there was to be no bombing or strafing of the beach immediately before the assault.[23] Fighters were to be on air alert, weather permitting, over the Wakde area from first light to dusk on D Day. During part of the day A–20's would also be on alert over the area and were to strike Wakde. Such daily cover was to continue until aircraft could use the Wakde strip.[24]

Supply and Reinforcement

By evening on D plus 2, considered the end of the assault phase, the TORNADO Task Force on Wakde and the mainland opposite would comprise some 9,700 troops. Of this number, about 7,000 were to be landed at Arare on D Day. The ships for the D-Day echelon included 2 APA's, 12 LCI's, and 8 LST's. The first Reinforcement Group, scheduled to arrive on D plus 1, was to bring forward engineers and other service troops aboard eight additional LST's. After D plus 2, the task force was to be built up by air force and ground combat or service units until it numbered close to 22,500 men.[25]

Units moving to Arare on D Day and D plus 1 were to carry with them ten days' supply of rations, clothing, unit equipment, fuels, and lubricants. Engineer construction matériel was to be shipped in sufficient quantities to assure a quick start on airfield repairs and preparation of roads, bivouacs, and storage areas. The amounts and types of such matériel were left to the discretion of the task force commander. Ammunition

[22] AAF SWPA, OI 51, 1 May 44, and GHQ SWPA OI 51/1, 10 May 44, both in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 8–13 May 44.

[23] Available documents produce no information concerning the reasons for eliminating the usual beach bombing and strafing. It is possible that both were considered unnecessary, or that both might endanger landing craft and ships operating in relatively restricted waters near Wakde. Finally, fighters had to fly long distances to cover the landings, thus limiting their time over the target. The AAF SWPA may have considered it more important to conserve ammunition against the possibility of Japanese air attack than to strafe beaches.

[24] ALAMO Force FO 17, 12 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 8–13 May 44; Wakde TF, Tentative Plan for the Seizure of the Wakde Island Area, 12 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 14 May 44; AAF SWPA OI 51, 1 May 44.

[25] CTG 77.2 Attack Order 1–44 (Rev), 13 May 44; CTG 77.2 Opns Rpt Toem–Wakde, p. 4; Ltr, Gen Doe to Gen Ward, 4 Dec 50, no sub, copy in OCMH files. Although it is not clear from available records, the figure 22,500 apparently included the 158th Regimental Combat Team, which was to reach Arare by 23 May.

carried by assault units was to consist of six units of fire for 4.2-inch mortars and three units of fire for all other weapons, both infantry and artillery. Additional ammunition for field artillery units and for the 4.2-inch mortars was to be shipped separately to arrive on D plus 1 and D plus 2. All troops arriving after D plus 2 were to bring with them thirty days' supply of rations, unit equipment, clothing, fuels, lubricants, and three units of fire for all weapons.[26]

Initial responsibility for the transportation of troops and supplies to the Wakde area rested with the Allied Naval Forces which exercised this responsibility through the VII Amphibious Force and the Eastern Attack Group. The Services of Supply was to relieve the naval forces of this duty as quickly as possible after D Day. The target date for the transfer of responsibility was set for D plus 11, 28 May.[27]

ALAMO Force Reserve for Wakde–Biak was set up to support either phase of the operation, and there were two reserve units. One was the 128th Regimental Combat Team of the 32d Division, which was to stage at Aitape should its services be required in the forward area. The other was the 158th Regimental Combat Team, an organization not part of any division. This combat team, which was built around the separate 158th Infantry, was to move from eastern New Guinea to the Wakde area on or about 23 May, ready to reinforce either the TORNADO Task Force or units on Biak.

The nucleus of the force scheduled to invade Biak was the 41st Infantry Division, less the 163d Regimental Combat Team at Wakde. The most logical reinforcing unit for Biak would be the 163d. Tentative plans were therefore made to have the LCI's of the Biak assault convoy return thence to Wakde, pick up the 163d in the latter area, and move the unit forward to Biak on or about 3 June. The plan to move the 158th Regimental Combat Team to Wakde by 23 May was evolved in order to assure the availability of the 163d for Biak.[28]

The TORNADO Task Force had no specific separate reserve units set aside for D Day. However, the 27th Engineer Battalion (C), scheduled to come ashore in the fifth wave at Arare, was to be prepared to assemble in task force reserve in addition to its other duties. The 1st Platoon, 603d Tank Company, though part of the force scheduled to invade Wakde Island on D plus 1, would also be available as a reserve on D Day. Finally, the three rifle companies of the 1st Battalion, 163d Infantry, were not assigned any combat missions on D Day. They were to assemble near Toem in preparation for the next day's assault on Wakde but could also be considered an emergency reserve for mainland operations.[29]

Airfield Construction Problems

Even before the Wakde–Biak plans were completed, increasing importance was being given to the early capture and repair of the Wakde airstrip. The principal mission of the airdrome construction units due to arrive at Wakde on D plus 1 was to prepare rapidly facilities on that island to accommodate one fighter group. Initially it was planned that facilities would also be constructed on

[26] TTF FO 1, 12 May 44, atchd to TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 17–25 May 44; ALAMO Force Adm O 9, 13 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 8–13 May 44.

[27] *Ibid.*; GHQ SWPA OI 51/1, 10 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 8–13 May 44.

[28] ALAMO Force FO 17, 12 May 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Wakde–Biak, p. 12; Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WH–63, 25 May 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 26 May 44.

[29] TTF FO 1, 12 May 44.

Wakde to permit staging (as opposed to basing) an additional fighter group, one flight of night fighters, and a reconnaissance squadron. Such facilities were thought to be the minimum necessary to support the Biak operation.[30]

While these plans were being formulated, new information was received at General Headquarters indicating that the Japanese might react strongly, with both air and naval forces, to an invasion of Biak. Therefore the Allied Air Forces recommended changing the Wakde airdrome to permit one P–47 fighter group and one Navy PB4Y patrol bomber squadron [31] to be permanently based on the island. General Kenney, the theater air commander, also considered it necessary to extend staging facilities on Wakde to include space for one B–25 tactical reconnaissance squadron, another fighter group, and two B–24 heavy bomber groups. Plans had to be made to improve the Wakde strip to meet the new requirements by 25 May, two days before landings were to be made on Biak.[32]

A few days before the Wakde operation began, Admiral Nimitz requested air support from the Southwest Pacific for his impending operations against the Mariana Islands. The mission which Admiral Nimitz desired to be initiated immediately was long-range reconnaissance from Hollandia for a distance of 800 miles over the Hollandia–Halmaheras–Yap triangle. He further requested that the Allied Air Forces undertake to neutralize enemy airdromes on the Palau, Yap, and Woleai Islands of the Caroline chain from the 9th through the 15th of June in order to cover the approach of Central Pacific convoys to the Marianas.[33]

Since the Hollandia area could not meet requirements for extensive operations of B–24's and PB4Y's, General Kenney decided that the Wakde Island strip would have to bear much of the bombing and reconnaissance load. Air operations from Wakde would have to begin not later than 2 June, in order that the missions Admiral Nimitz requested might become routine to Japanese intelligence well before Central Pacific convoys set out for the Marianas.

To fit the Wakde strip into these plans, staging facilities would have to be constructed on that island beyond the extent deemed necessary by General Kenney for the proper support of the Biak operation. Provision also had to be made for shipping forward to Wakde additional fuels and lubricants, together with bombs and other aircraft ammunition. After much discussion, the headquarters concerned with the development of an air base on Wakde decided that most of the necessary improvements could be made on the island by 2 June. A judicious juggling of ship loading and sailing schedules also made it possible to send the necessary equipment and ammunition forward to Wakde by the same date. Fulfillment of all Admiral Nimitz' requests would, however, have to await the capture and repair of airdromes on Biak Island. In the meantime it remained of the utmost impor-

[30] ALAMO Force FO 17, 12 May 44.

[31] The PB4Y was a naval version of the Army B–24, and was land based. The particular squadron under consideration (VB–115) was administratively a part of the Seventh Fleet but was assigned to the operational control of the AAF SWPA.

[32] Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, AAF SWPA, *et al.*, CX–12690, 19 May 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 19 May 44; Rad, ALAMO to TORNADO TF, WF–3377, 20 May 44, and Rad, TTF to ALAMO, Y–174, 21 May 44, both in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 16–22 May 44.

[33] Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO SWPA, *et al.*, CX–12504, 14 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 14–18 May 44.

tance that the Wakde strip be seized and repaired quickly.[34]

Preparations for the Capture of Wakde Island

General Doe and his TORNADO Force planning staff learned of the change from the Wakde–Sarmi plan to the Wakde–Biak concept on 10 May. The planners returned to Aitape, where the bulk of the TORNADO Task Force was to stage, on 12 May after a conference at ALAMO Force headquarters. Although the new Wakde–Biak plan delayed the date for the landings in the Wakde area from the 15th to the 17th of May, there was still scant time for perfecting new plans, revising orders and issuing new ones, and changing loading instructions and schedules.

A series of untoward circumstances hampered loading. LST's on which TORNADO Task Force units at Aitape were to be loaded were some eight hours late reaching the staging point. When these vessels finally reached Aitape, adverse surf conditions and congestion on the shore prevented their beaching until late in the afternoon of 13 May, and loading was delayed another twelve hours. There was also some trouble about units scheduled to take part in the Wakde operation. The Shore Battalion, 533d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, an important element of the TORNADO Task Force, did not arrive at Aitape until the afternoon of 12 May. The battalion and its equipment could not be unloaded from the ships which had brought it to Blue Beach from eastern New Guinea and be reloaded on LST's of the Wakde convoy in time for the departure of the task force from Aitape, scheduled for no later than midnight on 14 May. In view of these logistic difficulties, General Doe recommended to ALAMO Force that the Wakde operation be delayed at least another forty-eight hours.[35]

Captain Noble, Eastern Attack Group commander, had wanted the Aitape vessels to depart that staging point by 1800 on 14 May. ALAMO Force had already persuaded him to postpone the departure to midnight, but would not request the further delay proposed by General Doe. The task force commander was therefore forced to drive his troops to the limit of their endurance in order to get the loading finished on time. He solved the problem of the Shore Battalion, 533d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, by substituting for that unit the Shore Battalion, 593d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, which was already stationed at Aitape.[36]

By working throughout the night of 13–14 May, all units of the Aitape convoy were loaded by about 2200 on the latter day. The vessels left for Hollandia at 0100 on 15 May, arriving at Humboldt Bay about 1000. At Humboldt Bay the rest of the TORNADO Task Force's assault echelon (mostly service troops) was quickly loaded, despite chronic beach congestion in the area. About 0200 on the 16th the LST's and their escorts left Humboldt Bay for Tanahmerah Bay, reaching their destination about daylight. The LST section spent the rest of the

[34] *Ibid.;* Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WF–2339, 15 May 44, and Rad, AAF SWPA to Advon 5AF, ALAMO, *et al.*, AX–33325, 15 May 44, both in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 14–18 May 44.

[35] TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 17–25 May 44, p. 2; Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE–714, 13 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 8–13 May 44.

[36] *Ibid.;* Rad, ALAMO to PTF, WF–2156, 13 May 44, and Rad, ALAMO to CTF 76, WF–2157, 13 May 44, both in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 8–13 May 44; Rad, CTF 76 to ALAMO, 13 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 14 May 44. Both EB&SR's were part of the 3d Engr Special Brigade.

day at Tanahmerah Bay and moved out for Wakde during darkness of the night 16–17 May. The APA's and LCI's with their escorts left Humboldt Bay for Wakde about 1900 on the 16th.

The cruisers and destroyers of Covering Forces A and B did not assemble with the rest of the convoy in the Hollandia area. Instead, in order to escape detection by Japanese air patrols, they rendezvoused off the Admiralty Islands on 15 May. During the night of 16–17 May the two covering forces maintained contact with the assault shipping by radar. At dawn on the 17th the fire support ships closed with the rest of the convoy and took up their firing positions off Arare and Wakde Island.[37]

Dawn brought with it a cold drizzle, but the fire support ships had no difficulty picking up their landmarks and the naval fire started on schedule.[38] Designated targets were well covered and there was no answering fire from Japanese shore-based weapons. Troops aboard the assault ships arose early, breakfasted quickly, and by 0530 had begun loading on their assigned landing craft. The sea remained calm and the rain gave way to the sun shortly after dawn. Men of the 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, transferred from the APA's which had brought them from Aitape to the eight LCVP's of the first wave. The beach was clearly visible and its limits had been marked by colored smoke grenades dropped by cruiser-based seaplanes of the fire support units. Landing craft carrying the leading wave, Company I, 163d Infantry, touched the shore near Arare on schedule at 0715. Succeeding waves formed rapidly and beached without difficulty. There was no Japanese opposition.

The mainland area of immediate concern to the TORNADO Task Force extended west from Arare about four miles to the Tor River, and east an almost equal distance to Tementoe Creek. Between these two streams is a hard, sandy beach about 250 yards deep, unbroken except by one small creek.[39] Behind this coastal strand there is a low, somewhat swampy area, covered with jungle undergrowth and patches of dense rain forest. This low area extends from two and one-half to six miles inland to foothills of mountain ranges. The men of the TORNADO Task Force found a coastal track, which almost reached the dignity of a road at some points, running along the beach. There is no high ground near Arare. The main drainage system of the area is the Tor River, which, together with Tementoe Creek, offered natural obstacles to lateral movement.

Upon landing, the 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, fanned out along the shore and quickly secured the Arare beachhead area. Company A of the 116th Engineer Battalion and the 27th Engineers were the next units ashore, and they were followed about 0735 by the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 163d Infantry. The 2d Battalion, passing through the 3d, immediately moved eastward toward Tementoe Creek. By 0930,

[37] TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 17–25 May 44, p. 2; CTG 77.2 Opns Rpt Toem–Wakde, p. 7; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Wakde–Biak, p. 29; Rad, CTF 76 to ALAMO, 10 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde, 8–13 May 44.

[38] Information in this and the following subsection is taken primarily from: CTU 77.2.6 [TF 75, or Covering Force A] Opns Rpt Wakde–Toem, p. 1; CTG 77.2 Opns Rpt Toem–Wakde, pp. 7–8; TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 17–25 May 44, pp. 2–3; TTF G–3 Jnl and Jnl file, 6–25 May 44; 163d Inf Opns Rpt Toem–Wakde, p. 2; 163d Inf Jnl, 13–30 May 44; Ltr, Gen Doe to Gen Ward, 4 Dec 50, in OCMH files; 191st FA Gp, Hist Rpt TORNADO, pp. 2–3.

[39] This creek lies about midway between Arare and the Tor River. It was referred to by the TORNADO Task Force as "The Unnamed Creek" and called by the Japanese the Tenbin River.



BRIG. GEN. JENS A. DOE *and his aide, 1st Lt. Rob D. Trimble, of the 41st Infantry Division, during the landing at Arare.*

against no opposition, Company G had secured Toem, about 4,500 yards east of Arare. At 1010 the battalion commander, Maj. Robert L. Irving, reported that his men had reached their D-Day objective, the west bank of Tementoe Creek. The 1st Battalion, under Maj. Leonard A. Wing, followed the 2d east along the coastal road to Toem. At the latter village the 1st Battalion established a bivouac and began preparing for its attack on Wakde Island the next day.

The 3d Battalion, under Maj. Garlyn Munkres,[40] dispatched Company L west to the Tor River. The company found a good foot bridge over the small creek between the Tor and Arare and, moving on against only scattered rifle fire, reached the Tor late in the morning. During the afternoon other elements of the 3d Battalion reached the river. The bulk of Company I, however, remained at the beachhead, where the men of the unit were assigned to labor details such as unloading shipping or to local security guard duties. The heavy weapons of Company M also remained near Arare, for these weapons were part of the Provisional Groupment scheduled to support the next day's assault on Wakde.

Within a few hours after the mainland beachhead had been secured, the TORNADO Task Force was ready to execute the second phase of the D-Day plan—the capture of Insoemanai Island, a little over 3,500 yards offshore. About 1045, under cover of fire from two destroyers and two rocket-equipped LCI's, a platoon of Company E, 163d Infantry, was transported from the mainland to Insoemanai. There was no opposition to this maneuver and the islet proved to be unoccupied. Four LCM's, an LCVP, and two LCS's immediately took the rest of the company and the Provisional Groupment of heavy weapons to Insoemanai. The landing of the force was rendered difficult only by the fact that a coral fringing reef made it necessary for the troops to wade ashore from about seventy-five yards out. The mortars and machine guns of the Provisional Groupment were quickly set up and began firing on Wakde.

Insoemanai had been easily taken and mainland opposition had been very light. Moreover, no signs of enemy activity had been observed on Wakde and information obtained prior to 17 May had indicated that the Japanese might have withdrawn their garrison from that island. Enthusiastically,

[40] Lt. Col. Walter R. Rankin, who had commanded the 3d Battalion at Aitape, was now executive officer of the 163d Infantry.

some subordinate officers within the task force suggested that Wakde could be seized immediately and with little difficulty. But General Doe and Captain Noble vetoed such suggestions. They considered it probable that the enemy still retained a strong garrison on Wakde and believed that attacking the island prior to concentrated artillery and naval bombardment would be a needless risk. General Doe decided that there would be no landing on Wakde until after intensive preparatory fire from the Provisional Groupment on Insoemanai, and from naval support ships, aircraft, and shore-based field artillery.

The 218th and 167th Field Artillery Battalions and the Cannon Company, 163d Infantry, had come ashore near Arare in midmorning. By noon the units had set up firing positions about 2,000 yards east of Arare and had begun dropping shells on Wakde Island. This fire apparently goaded the Japanese on Wakde Island into answering, and during the afternoon the enemy began putting mortar and machine gun fire into the positions of the Provisional Groupment on Insoemanai.

The fire from Wakde was the only Japanese ground opposition worthy of the name encountered by the TORNADO Task Force on D Day. There was no naval or air reaction on the part of the enemy. The task force antiaircraft artillery, which had moved ashore before 0900 hours and had set up positions along the beach between Arare and Toem, found no targets.

Task force engineers started work on the beach track as soon as they came ashore. By 1400 the 27th Engineers had bulldozed a two-way road, capable of bearing heavy trucks, along the shore between Arare and Toem. The battalion, with Company A of the 116th Engineers attached, rapidly enlarged the scope of its activities and began clearing bivouac and dump areas and aiding the Shore Battalion, 593d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, to unload ships. The latter unit devoted its attention principally to moving cargo ashore, but also had men working on dump areas and construction of sand jetties from the beach to LST's. The 1st Platoon, 603d Tank Company, came ashore at midmorning, went into bivouac near Arare, and prepared to move on call to either flank of the beachhead. The platoon's services were not required.

The few casualties incurred on D Day from enemy action totaled one man killed and four wounded, all as a result of Japanese fire on Insoemanai from Wakde. American artillery shorts [41] killed another and wounded six on Insoemanai. One man accidentally wounded himself during the landing at Arare. Total American casualties for the day were 2 killed and 11 wounded, as opposed to 21 Japanese killed or found dead on the mainland. These Japanese appeared to be stragglers rather than members of an organized defense force.

By 1800 all troops of the TORNADO Task Force were dug in for the night. At task force headquarters final details of plans for the seizure of Wakde Island on the morrow were discussed and agreed upon. Shore-based artillery, the Provisional Groupment on Insoemanai, and some of the naval fire support ships were to deliver harassing fire on Wakde throughout the night. At 0715 on 18 May, Fifth Air Force planes were to start an hour-long aerial bombardment of Wakde. At 0830 a heavy naval and artillery

[41] According to the 191st Field Artillery Group's report, page 2, the short rounds were fired by the Cannon Company, 163d Infantry, and were attributed to that company's inexperience with its weapons.

barrage was to begin. Until 0857 this gunfire was to be aimed at the proposed landing beach on the southern shore of Wakde, and was then to be lifted to the northern side of the island. The Provisional Groupment on Insoemanai was to provide close support for the landings.

H Hour for the assault was set for 0900 hours, 18 May. Infantry forces consisted of four rifle companies—A, B, and C of the 1st Battalion, 163d Infantry, and F of the 2d Battalion. Four Sherman tanks (M4 mediums, armed with 75-mm. guns) of the 1st Platoon, 603d Tank Company, were also assigned to the assault force. The force commander was Major Wing of the 1st Battalion. The troops were to be transported to Wakde in six waves of four LCVP's each, the boats to be coxswained by Company B, 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment. LCM's were assigned to take the tanks from the mainland to Wakde.[42]

Small-Island Warfare, Southwest Pacific Style

The Target—Terrain and Defenses

Wakde Island, roughly 3,000 yards long and 1,200 yards wide, had been a coconut plantation before the war (*Map 10*). The airstrip and associated installations constructed by the Japanese covered almost one half of the island's surface, the remainder of which was left to neglected coconut trees. The island is generally flat, except for a knoll about twenty-five feet high on a small peninsula jutting out from the southeastern shore. The rest of the island is not more than fifteen feet above sea level, but even this slight elevation is enough to produce a number of small coral caves along the eastern shore. A coral reef completely surrounds the island. One of the three places at which this reef was found to be broken was in a sheltered bay west of the small peninsula, near the base of which a small jetty projected into the bay. The beach at the jetty was chosen as the landing site for the 1st Battalion, 163d Infantry.[43]

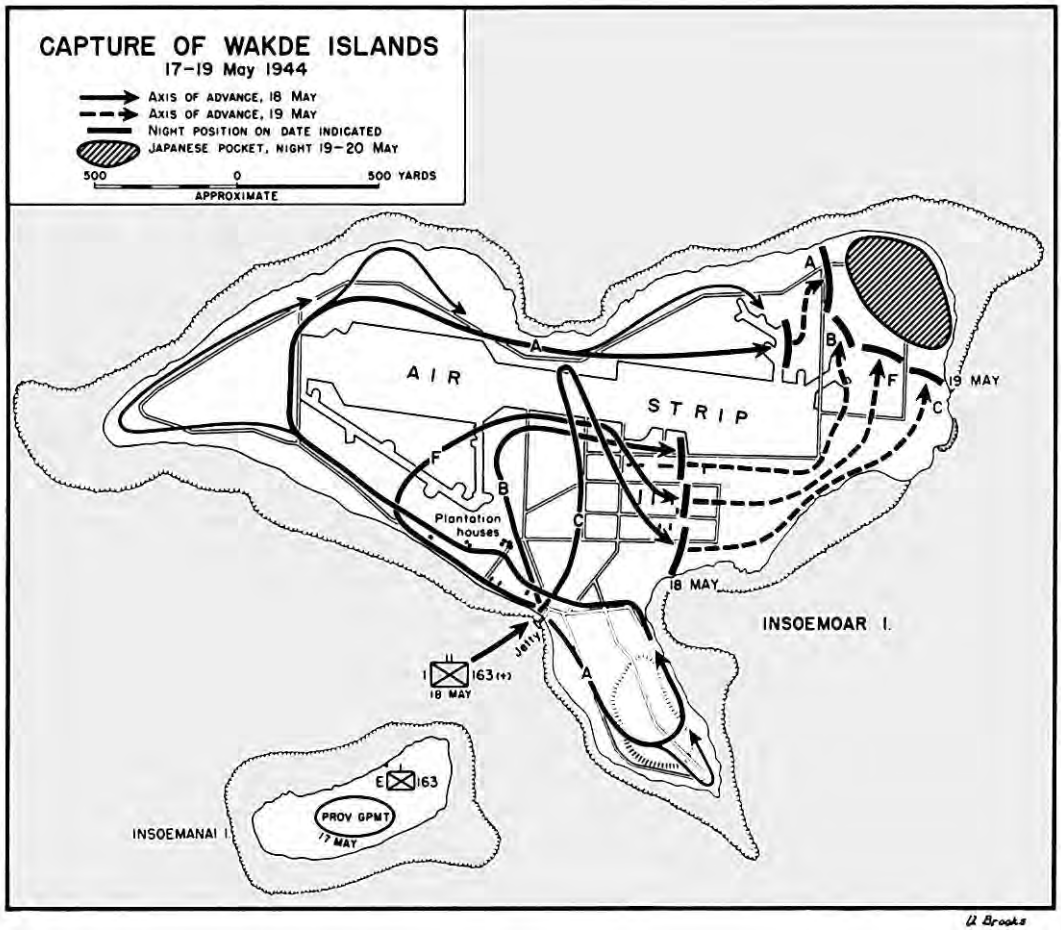
The nucleus of the Japanese garrison on Wakde Island was the *9th Company, 3d Battalion, 224th Infantry.* This company was reinforced by a platoon of mountain artillery (75-mm. guns) and a few mortar and both light and heavy machine gun squads from other *224th Infantry* units. The strength of this combat force was about 280 men. There was also a naval guard unit of about 150 men, and a battery of the *53d Field Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion,* most of whose weapons had long since been demolished. Miscellaneous airdrome engineers and other service personnel, both Army and Navy, brought the total of Japanese strength on the island to nearly 800 troops.

While most of the arms possessed by the Wakde defenders were light mortars or rifles and machine guns not over .30-caliber in size, there were a few heavier weapons. Such weapons included a few 20-mm. antiaircraft guns, and machine cannon and .50-caliber machine guns taken from damaged Japanese aircraft. Apparently, none of the Japanese 75-mm. mountain guns survived the preliminary bombardment of Wakde Island.

The Japanese had constructed many defensive positions on Wakde. There were

[42] The 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment was part of the 2d Engineer Special Brigade. Many of the men of Company B had had previous experience in minor shore-to-shore operations in eastern New Guinea.

[43] Terrain information from AGS SWPA, Terrain Handbook 26, Sarmi, 20 Apr 44, copy in OCMH files.



MAP 10

about a hundred bunkers of various sizes and constructions. Some were made of coconut logs and dirt, others utilized cement in sacks, and a few contained concrete or lumps of coarse coral. There were many foxholes and slit trenches, and the Japanese had improved some of the bomb craters to make defensive positions. There were at least two well-constructed concrete air raid shelters and the Japanese were prepared to use the few coral caves on the eastern shore for both defense and storage.

Many of the defensive positions were well camouflaged, and some were dug deep into the ground to present a low silhouette. Coconut trees toppled by preassault bombardments added more natural camouflage and protection to the enemy's defensive positions. The majority of the many bunkers were mutually supporting, but, on the other hand, some had been built with no apparent relationship to others. Some of the bunkers, most of the field and antiaircraft gun positions, the airstrip, and many buildings had been severely damaged or destroyed by U. S. Fifth Fleet carrier-based aircraft during

their attacks on the Wakde-Sarmi area in support of the Hollandia operation. Army aircraft had taken up the bombardment after that, and, according to Japanese reports, the Wakde strip had been damaged beyond all hope of repair (that is, with equipment available to the Japanese) by 2 May. Allied naval and air bombardment of Wakde, beginning on 17 May, added to the earlier destruction. However, the Japanese Wakde garrison was still capable of a tenacious defense.[44]

The First Day

Naval fire started on schedule on 18 May.[45] By the time it ended, 400 rounds of 6-inch and 1,950 rounds of 5-inch ammunition had been expended against Wakde's defenses. In addition, rocket-equipped LCI's threw 850 4.5-inch rockets on the island, and 36 A–20's of the Fifth Air Force bombed and strafed the Japanese defenses. The 191st Field Artillery Group fired for twenty-three minutes on Wakde, and this bombardment was supplemented by 20-mm. and 40-mm. weapons aboard naval support vessels upon completion of the latters' fire from heavier weapons. The Provisional Groupment on Insoemanai joined in.

The first wave of LCVP's, Company B aboard, began to receive Japanese rifle and machine gun fire from about 300 yards out, but pushed on toward Wakde to hit the beach a few yards to the left of the jetty at 0910. The other three rifle companies and two tanks were ashore in the same area by 0925.[46] A third tank had shorted its electrical system while loading from the mainland and a fourth dropped into seven feet of water as it left its LCM's ramp. Neither got to Wakde on 18 May. All landing waves were subjected to increasing fire from Japanese machine guns and rifles in hidden positions on the flanks of the beachhead. Luckily, the Japanese, for unknown reasons, failed to bring into play .50-caliber and 20-mm. weapons. As it was, three company commanders were lost during the landing, one killed and two wounded.

Despite this opposition, the beachhead was quickly organized. Company executive officers assumed command of the leaderless

[44] The foregoing information was compiled from: *Army Section, Imperial GHQ,* Special Report on Lessons from the War, No. 33, Operations of the *Yuki Group* (*36th Division,* reinforced) in the Biak Island and Sarmi Areas, 3 Oct 44 (hereafter cited as Opns of *Yuki Group*), pp. 12–13, translation in OCMH files; Naval Operations in the Western New Guinea Area, pp. 7–8; ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 45, 14 Jun 44, copy in G–2 DofA files; S–2, 1st Bn 163d Inf, Rpt on Wakde Island Defenses, n. d., in 163d Inf Jnl, 13–30 May 44; CO, Co B 163d Inf, Rpt to S–1, 1st Bn 163d Inf, sub: Tank Attack on Wakde Island, 30 Jul 44, and CO Co A 163d Inf, Rpt to CO, 163d Inf, sub: Inf and Tank Coordination, 12 Aug 44, both docs in files of 163d Inf, 41st Div, in ORB RAC AGO collection. See also Japanese Studies in WW II, 117, General Outline of *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 6, 14–17.

[45] This section is based principally on: CTG 77.2 Opns Rpt Toem–Wakde, pp. 8–10; TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 17–25 May 44, pp. 3–7; 163d Inf Opns Rpt Toem–Wakde, pp. 2–4; TTF G–3 Jnl and Jnl file, 6–25 May 44; 163d Inf Jnl, 13–30 May 44; 1st Bn 163d Inf, S–1 Jnl, 15–30 May 44, in files of 163d Inf, 41st Div, in ORB RAC AGO collection; CO, Co A, 163d Inf, Rpt to CO, 163d Inf, 12 Aug 44; "One Step Westward," *The Infantry Journal,* LVI, 3, 8–13 (the article is signed, "By a Battalion Commander," but was actually written by Maj. Leonard A. Wing, ex-CO 1st Bn, 163d Inf).

[46] Documents concerning the action provide contradictory information about the times and places of landing, but it appears that Company B went ashore at 0910, Company F at 0913, Company A at 0916, Company C at 0921, and the two tanks about 0925. Elements of Company B apparently tried to land or started to land about 0903. Some sources indicate that only Company B landed on the left of the jetty, and others state that only Company A landed on the right of the jetty.



THE ASSAULT ON WAKDE ISLAND, *against Japanese machine gun and rifle fire.*

units, and the two tanks, with Companies B and F, started moving west to widen the initial hold. Company C struck north toward the airstrip and Company A pushed to the southeast along the small peninsula to destroy a troublesome machine gun nest on the little knoll. Company A reached the top of the knoll about 0935. The unit's progress was temporarily halted ten minutes later at an enemy bunker, the occupants of which were finally killed with hand grenades, but by 1045 the company, employing fire and movement, had finished clearing the peninsula and had assembled for further missions. Companies B and F, after meeting initial heavy resistance on the west flank, found that most opposition collapsed once the ruins of prewar plantation houses had been cleared by hand grenades and rifle fire. The two companies thereupon left the beach and swung north toward the airfield. Company C, meanwhile, had encountered strong resistance in its drive up the center of the island.

About 200 yards inland Company C had come upon a number of mutually supporting pillboxes. The first group of bunkers was found about 0915, and the company spent nearly an hour clearing them out with hand grenades and infantry assault. About 100 yards farther north, at 1015, a second set of pillboxes held up the advance. All these defensive positions were found to be well concealed by Japanese efforts, by underbrush of the neglected coconut plantation, or by coconut trees toppled in the preassault bombardments. Finding progress against such bunkers laborious, Company C called for tank support. The two available tanks, which had been operating on the left flank with Companies B and F, had returned to the beachhead to replenish ammunition at 1030, and were now ordered to aid C Company. Just before 1130 hours the tanks joined the infantry unit, which had now pushed halfway from the beach to the airstrip. With this added strength Company C reduced each bunker in a series of separate actions which included 75-mm. fire from the tanks, lobbing hand grenades into the bunkers' fire ports, and killing with rifle fire all Japanese who showed themselves.

While Company C's drive continued, Company B, about 1030, had reached the southern edge of the airfield near the center of that strip. A few minutes later Company F, less one platoon left to mop up around the plantation houses, pulled up on B's left. The two companies had encountered only scattered opposition after leaving the plantation house area, and Company F had found the western portion of the strip clear of enemy forces. Company B pushed east along the south side of the drome, crossed Company C's front, and helped the latter unit destroy some of the bunkers which had been slowing its advance. With Company B's aid and the continued support of the two tanks, Company C was able to push on to the airstrip, where it arrived shortly after 1130.

The Company F platoon which was clearing out the nearly demolished remnants of the prewar coconut plantation buildings about 300 yards northwest of the initial beachhead was halted and pinned down by enemy machine gun fire. Company A was therefore withdrawn from the small peninsula and sent to the platoon's aid, and the two tanks rumbled back from Company C's front to assist. Shortly after noon, following about half an hour of close-in fighting with rifles, grenades, tank machine guns, and even bayonets, the plantation houses were cleared. The Company F platoon then rejoined its parent unit at the airstrip, while

Company A and the two tanks moved northwest to clear the western end of the island.

Company A pushed along the beach road and down a dispersal lane running off the southwest side of the strip. About 1245 the advance was held up by three Japanese bunkers on the right flank. Tank 75-mm. fire, delivered from as close as 20 yards, soon eliminated the Japanese defenders. Small groups of Japanese, originally hiding in foxholes behind the three pillboxes, attempted to assault the tanks with hand grenades and bayonets. Company A's automatic riflemen quickly dispersed or killed these men, and the unit pushed on around the west end of the airstrip. Little opposition was encountered in this movement and the company reached the north shore of Wakde Island about 1330 hours.

In the northeast corner of the island the Japanese forces maintained a tenacious defense, and Companies B, C, and F were subjected to considerable small arms, machine gun, and mortar fire originating from positions at the eastern end of the airstrip. Movement eastward along the south side of the strip was slow, even though Companies B and F had been reinforced by Company D's heavy machine guns, which had arrived on Wakde from Insoemanai late in the morning. To overcome the enemy opposition and secure the rest of Wakde, Major Wing planned a complicated maneuver. Company A, from the northwest corner of the island, was to move east along the northern side of the field to clear the Japanese from the area between the strip and the north shore. Company C was to cross the strip and then swing east toward the northeast corner of Wakde in co-operation with Company A's drive. Company B was to continue pushing east along the southern edge of the airfield, clear the eastern third of the drome, and then push around the end of the strip into the northeast corner of the island. Company F was initially to follow Company B. When the latter unit reached the eastern end of the strip, Company F was to move to the island's eastern beaches and thence north along the shore line to the northeast tip.

This attack was slow in getting under way. Several officers and key noncommissioned officers, including three company commanders, had been killed or seriously wounded during the morning's action, and all four rifle companies faced problems of reorganization. Major Wing therefore decided to await the arrival of two more tanks from the mainland and the redisposition of Company D's weapons before attacking what promised to be the strongest Japanese defenses on Wakde. The two additional tanks were to be used wherever opposition proved heaviest, while the heavy weapons of Company D were to be equally divided between Companies B and F. Finally, an additional delay was incurred when Company C, which had managed to move less than half its men across the airstrip, came under intense machine gun fire from the east. This fire made it impossible for more troops to cross the open airfield.

Artillery fire from the 218th and 167th Field Artillery Battalions on the mainland temporarily silenced the enemy machine guns, and more men of Company C crossed the airfield about 1545. At approximately the same time the other three companies started the drive eastward. Company A rapidly moved forward from the western end of the strip, passed through Company C at the halfway point, and pushed cautiously eastward. Movement after passing Company C was slowed by increasingly heavy machine gun and mortar fire from

the northeast section of the island. At 1800, when Major Wing ordered his men to dig in for the night, Company A had not quite reached the northeastern corner of the airfield.

Meanwhile, south of the strip Company B had scarcely started its attack when fire from hidden Japanese machine guns held up the advance. Company F was immediately pulled out of its reserve role and committed to action on B's right flank. Two tanks were moved forward to Company B's front at the same time. Despite their best efforts and even with the tank support, Companies B and F were unable to progress more than 300 yards east of the lines of departure. Major Wing decided that since dusk was approaching it would be useless to continue the attack. The two companies were therefore halted and instructed to take up night defensive positions.

Company A had set up its night perimeter about 100 yards short of the northeast corner of the airdrome. Company B was on the south side of the strip about 450 yards from the eastern end, and Company F was on B's right. Company C was pulled back to the southern side of the field and extended Company F's line to the southeast beach at the base of the small peninsula. The battalion command post was about 400 yards behind the lines of Company F. There was no connection across the strip between Companies A and B. The former was in a dangerously exposed position. However, Japanese fire against the company perimeter ceased before dark, and the Japanese did not attack.

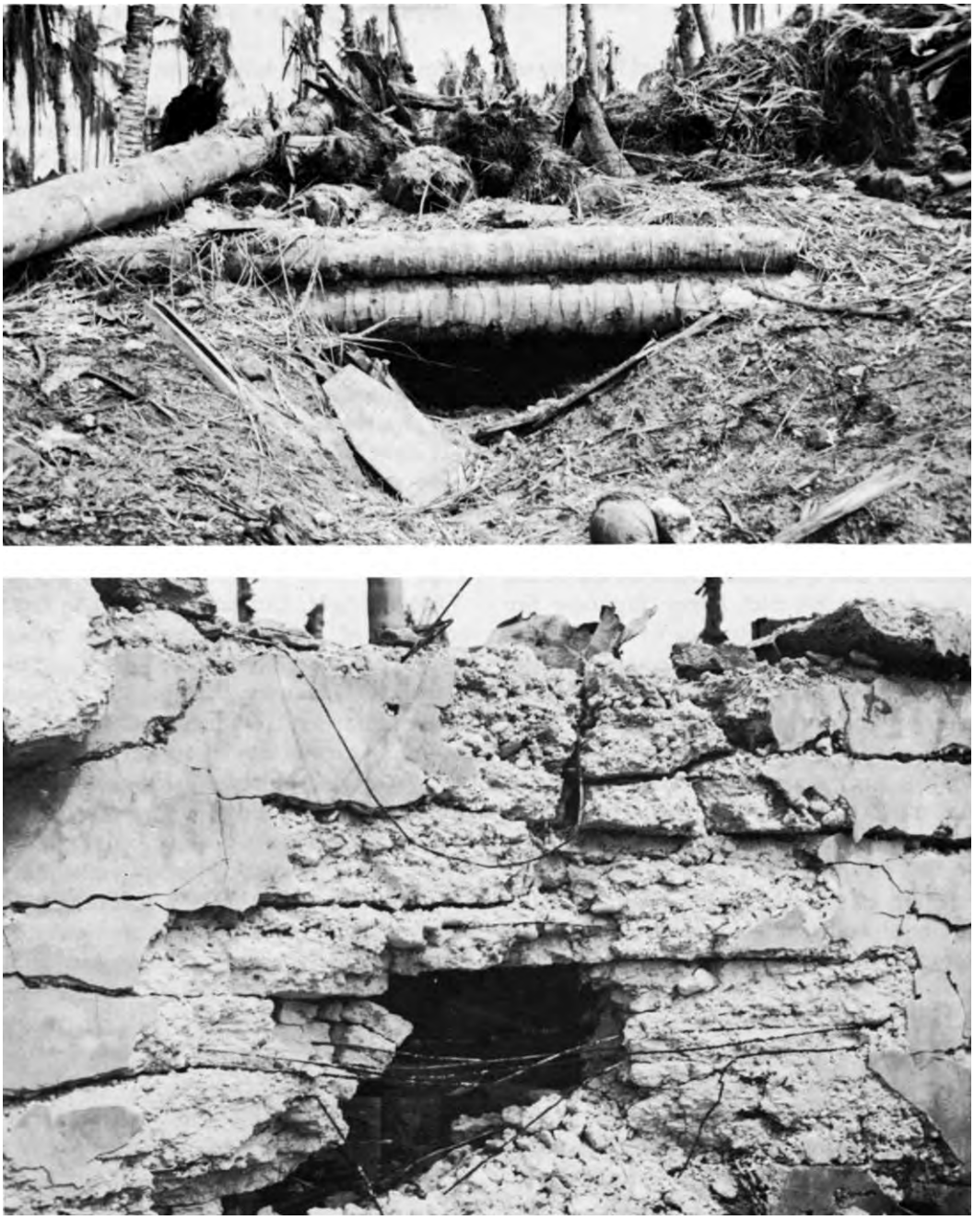
Army casualties on Wakde during the day totaled 19 killed or died of wounds and 86 wounded, while Navy casualties were 2 killed and 8 wounded. Among the Army losses were 7 officers and 14 noncommissioned officers of the rank of staff sergeant and higher. Heaviest casualties were in Company B which lost 42 men, most of them during the later afternoon attack. No accurate count of Japanese dead could be made, but it was estimated that at least 200 had been killed and many more wounded. There were no prisoners.

Back at the beachhead, four LST's (including one used as a front-line hospital) and numerous smaller craft had unloaded engineer construction units and equipment during the afternoon in the hope that repair work could begin on the airdrome. The stubborn Japanese defense had forestalled the attainment of this objective, and Major Wing laid careful plans to secure the rest of the island on the morrow so that the vital repair work could be started. Company C, preceded by all available tanks (there were now three in action) was to push along the east shore into the northeast pocket of Japanese resistance. Companies B and F were to continue their drives from the point at which they were halted on the 18th, cooperating with Company C in rolling up the Japanese left. Initially, Company A was to remain on the defensive to prevent any Japanese from escaping to the western portion of the island around the north side of the airfield.

A New Air Base on the Road to the Philippines

Luckily for Company A, the night of 18–19 May passed mostly without incident in the company sector.[47] The battalion com-

[47] In addition to the sources used for the previous subsection, the following sources were also used for this subsection: CO, Co C 163d Inf, Rpt to CO, 1st Bn 163d Inf, 31 Jul 44, sub: Infantry-Tank Assault Teams, and CO, Co B 163d Inf Rpt to S–1, 1st Bn 163d Inf, 30 Jul 44, both in files of 163d Inf, 41st Div, in ORB RAC AGO collection.



ENEMY DEFENSIVE POSITIONS ON WAKDE. *Shelters made of coconut logs and dirt (top). Concrete air raid shelter (bottom).*

mand post, which was protected by elements of Company D, was not so fortunate. About 0230 on the 19th a small group of enemy attacked the command post, and a half-hour fire fight raged in the darkness. Twelve Japanese were killed while three Americans, all of D Company, were wounded. This night battle did not delay the next day's attack which started, after an artillery and mortar preparation of one hour's duration, at 0915.

Company C was the first unit under way on the 19th. Two tanks were assigned to the 3d Platoon and one to the 2d. The 3d Platoon was on the left, the 2d on the right, and the 1st and Weapons Platoons were in support. The 3d Platoon pushed eastward up a slight rise, harassed by light rifle fire from the front and left flank. Once on top of the rise the platoon met heavy Japanese fire from behind fallen coconut trees and from a number of bunkers, bomb craters, and demolished buildings to the east. The 75-mm. guns of the tanks methodically destroyed each enemy position, and the few enemy that escaped from the bunkers were cut down by 3d Platoon riflemen. The 2d Platoon, followed by the rest of C Company, moved on toward the eastern beaches, and was slowed only by heavy brush near the shore. Upon turning north at the beach the company found that the Japanese had converted a number of small coral caves into minor strong points. These were slowly cleared by riflemen, tank fire, and flame throwers as the company pushed on.

Meanwhile, Company B, moving east along the south edge of the airstrip, had also encountered many Japanese defensive positions. Progress was at a snail's pace. Company F, in reserve during the early part of the drive, was thrown into the fight on B's right flank about 1130 and two tanks were sent from Company C's front to support Company B. The latter, with its zone of responsibility now nearly halved, was able to concentrate its forces for more effective operations. A rifle platoon was assigned to each tank and the remaining rifle platoon was in support. Some Japanese were found hidden in wrecks of aircraft, some of which covered bunkers, and others were in foxholes in heavy brush. This brush was difficult for soldiers afoot to penetrate but the tanks, spraying every likely hiding place with machine gun fire, rapidly broke paths through it. The advance, even with the tank support, was slow, because it was necessary to comb every square foot of ground for Japanese riflemen. It was not until 1400 that Company B reached the southeast corner of the strip.

On B's right, Company F and one tank encountered similar opposition but managed to keep abreast of Companies B and C. Late in the afternoon both F and C turned north and about 1600 hours reached a line extending almost due east from the southeast corner of the strip to the east shore. Meanwhile, since the Japanese were maintaining a static defense and making no attempt to counterattack or escape to the west, Company A's holding mission had been canceled. The unit moved away from the northeast corner of the airfield, sending part of its strength to the north shore and the rest around the eastern side of the strip to make contact with Company B. This contact was established near the northeast corner at 1640. The principal objective of the TORNADO Task Force was thereby secured.

With the clearance of the eastern end of the field, organized Japanese resistance collapsed. Companies B, C, and F pushed rapidly northward and by 1800, when the day's action ceased, the Japanese were compressed into a small triangle, about 500

yards long on the inland leg, at the northeast corner of the island. It was estimated that 350 Japanese had been killed during the day. Major Wing made plans to mop up the remaining few on the 20th, and pulled most of his units back to the center of the island for the night for a hot meal and rest.

Action on the 20th opened with a banzai charge by 37 Japanese (who had apparently slipped through Company C's lines during the night) against engineer units at the beachhead. Within minutes after this attack started at 0730, there were 36 dead and 1 wounded Japanese—the latter was taken prisoner. At 0900 Companies A, C, and F started patrolling in the northeast pocket. A few Japanese were killed, others were buried by demolition charges in coral caves along the northeast shore, and many committed suicide. During the afternoon Major Wing's men moved back to the mainland and turned over control of Wakde Island to the Allied Air Forces. Two days later Company L, 163d Infantry, was sent to Wakde to mop up a few Japanese snipers who were hindering work on the airdromes. The company returned to the mainland on 26 May, after killing 8 Japanese.

At 1500 on 19 May, even before the island was declared secure, the 836th Engineer Aviation Battalion had begun repairs on the western end of the Wakde airdrome while it was still subject to occasional enemy fire. The work was resumed the next day and, despite one or two minor interruptions from Japanese rifle fire, the strip was operational by noon on 21 May. The first planes landed on the island that afternoon, two days ahead of schedule. Within a few more days the Wakde strip was sufficiently repaired and enlarged to furnish the needed base from which bombers could support the Biak operation on 27 May and the Central Pacific's advance to the Marianas in mid-June. Wakde-based fighters were to provide close support for continuing operations on the mainland opposite that island.

The final count of Japanese casualties on Wakde Island was 759 killed and 4 captured. An additional 50 or more of the enemy had been killed on the mainland through 20 May. In action on Wakde the U. S. Army lost 40 men killed or died of wounds and 107 wounded. Total American casualties, including naval, on Wakde, Insoemanai, Liki, Niroemoar, and the neighboring mainland through 20 May were 43 killed and 139 wounded. During the same period the Japanese lost at least 800 men. The TORNADO Task Force had secured an extremely valuable stepping stone on the road back to the Philippines at a low cost in men and matériel.[48]

[48] USN casualties included in the foregoing figures are for 18 May only. Apparently, the only naval losses for the entire period 17–20 May were incurred on the 18th.

CHAPTER X

Lone Tree Hill: The Initial Attacks

The Japanese at Wakde–Sarmi

Japanese Plans for Western New Guinea, April–May 1944

When in late 1943 and early 1944 the Japanese had withdrawn their strategic main line of resistance westward to Wakde–Sarmi, Lt. Gen. Fusataro Teshima's *2d Army* had been ordered to hold that area at all costs, employing for this purpose the *36th Division,* less the *222d Infantry* on Biak Island. But with the loss of Hollandia in April, Wakde–Sarmi had become an exposed salient without protection from the east, north, or south. The next base westward was 200-mile-distant Biak Island, only partially developed. With the Wakde–Sarmi area no longer defensible, *Imperial General Headquarters* on 2 May informed the *2d Area Army* that the strategic main line of resistance in the New Guinea area was to be withdrawn to the line Biak–Manokwari.[1]

On 2 May it probably appeared to *Imperial General Headquarters* that this new line might be held for some time. The *32d* and *35th Divisions* (the latter minus the *219th Infantry,* reinforced, sent to the Palaus) had been dispatched from China to western New Guinea in mid-April and, at the time of their sailing, it seemed probable that they had a good chance to arrive safely at their destinations. But from the beginning, bad luck dogged the path of the *Takeichi Convoy,* as the two-division lift was called. One regimental combat team of the *32d Division* was practically wiped out when the ship carrying it was sunk in the South China Sea by an American submarine on 26 April. The remaining ships stopped at Manila, in the Philippines, before sailing on for Halmahera and western New Guinea.

The *Takeichi Convoy* suffered further disasters on 6 May, when three more ships were sunk by American submarines off Manado in the Celebes. These losses left the *32d Division* with but two infantry regiments (one of which lacked a battalion) and about one half its normal artillery. The *35th Division* (exclusive of the units in the Palaus) was reduced to four complete infantry battalions and little more than a single battery of division artillery.[2]

After the *Takeichi Convoy* disasters, Lt. Gen. Korechika Anami, commanding the *2d Area Army,* recommended a whole new

[1] Hist of *Army Section, Imperial GHQ,* pp. 111–13; Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 53–55; Naval Opns in the Western New Guinea Area, pp. 2–3.

[2] Hist of *Army Section, Imperial GHQ,* pp. 111–13; Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 53–55; Naval Opns in the Western New Guinea Area, pp. 3–4; The Joint Army-Navy Assessment Committee [JANAC], *Japanese Naval And Merchant Shipping Losses During World War II By All Causes* (Washington, 1947), pp. 58–59; ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 58, 13 Sep 44, copy G–2 DofA files; Kawakami Comments.

series of redispositions for western New Guinea. He suggested that the *219th Infantry* be brought from the Palaus to Biak and that another regiment of the *35th Division* be dispatched from Halmahera, where its remnants had finally landed, to New Guinea. General Anami also had some plan to send one regiment of the *32d Division* to Biak to reinforce the *222d Infantry* or at least to move the division to the Vogelkop Peninsula. He also proposed that the *2d Amphibious Brigade,* a recently organized unit trained for small-boat transportation and amphibious warfare, be moved from the Philippines to Manokwari or Biak.

General Anami's plans were overambitious, for, as *Imperial General Headquarters* well knew, shipping simply was not available to undertake all the redispositions he had suggested. Moreover, *Imperial General Headquarters* was convinced that it would be foolhardy to risk any large ships forward of Sorong. The high command therefore approved only the concentration of the *35th Division* at Sorong, which was accomplished by the end of May. Higher headquarters also decided to keep the *32d Division* at Halmahera and reorganize it there.[3]

Meanwhile, Allied Air Forces bombers and long-range fighters, based on the newly won Hollandia fields, had begun to appear over Wakde, Sarmi, Biak, Noemfoor, and Manokwari in such large numbers that the Japanese found it next to impossible to use those bases for air operations or supply storage. Even Sorong, the Japanese knew full well, was within range of Allied attack bombers from Hollandia. These Allied air operations, coupled with increasing Allied submarine activity, such as that which had caused the 6 May disaster to the *Takeichi Convoy* in waters which had previously been relatively safe for Japanese shipping, convinced *Imperial General Headquarters* that another strategic withdrawal was necessary. Accordingly, on 9 May, the high command informed the *2d Area Army* that a new strategic main line of resistance was to be set up along the line Sorong–Halmahera. The new line represented a strategic withdrawal of nearly 600 miles from the Wakde–Sarmi area since March.

Biak and Manokwari, forward of the new line, were to be held as long as possible as an outpost line of resistance. But the Wakde–Sarmi area forces were for all practical purposes written off as a loss and instructed to hold out as best they could. This high command attitude duplicated that taken earlier in the year when the Japanese had recognized that the *18th Army* was irredeemably lost.[4]

The Japanese garrison at Wakde–Sarmi was commanded by Lt. Gen. Hachiro Tagami,[5] who was also the commander of the *36th Division.* That division had begun arriving in western New Guinea from North China in December 1943, and by mid-January 1944 the *223d* and *224th Infantry Regiments* (less small detachments left at Manokwari or sent inland) had closed at Wakde–Sarmi and the *222d Infantry* had reached Biak Island. In addition to the organic units of the *36th Division,* General Tagami had under his command in the Sarmi area some antiaircraft units and mis-

[3] Hist of *Army Section, Imperial GHQ,* pp. 111–13, 120–23; The Palau Opns, pp. 57–61; Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 53–55; Kawakami Comments.

[4] Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 55–58; Hist of *Southern Area Army,* pp. 61–64; Hist of *Army Section, Imperial GHQ,* pp. 111–13.

[5] The Japanese characters of the general's family name can also be read as Tanoue or Tanouye, in which readings it appears in some translated documents. The reading used in this volume is the most common.

cellaneous airdrome engineer, medical, and other service organizations, including men of naval guard detachments. The entire force in the Sarmi area was designated the *Yuki Group.*[6]

Dispositions of the Yuki Group

It will be recalled that when the Allies had landed at Hollandia, the *2d Army* had sent the *Matsuyama Force* (comprising the headquarters and the *2d* and *3d Battalions* (less two rifle companies) of the *224th Infantry* and a battalion of *36th Division* mountain artillery) toward Hollandia from Sarmi.[7] This group, commanded by Col. Soemon Matsuyama, the commanding officer of the *224th Infantry,* was at Armopa, about half-way between Sarmi and Hollandia, when the Allies landed on the mainland opposite Wakde Island on 17 May. The *51st Field Road Construction Unit,* which had been building roads and bridges for the *Matsuyama Force,* was also in the Armopa area.

Almost coincident with the departure of the *Matsuyama Force* for Hollandia, General Tagami divided the Wakde–Sarmi area into three defense sectors. (*See Map 9.*) The *Right Sector Force* was responsible for Wakde Island and for thirteen miles of coast line from Tementoe Creek west to the Woske River. Besides the Wakde Island garrison, the *Right Sector Force* comprised 300 men of the *3d Battalion, 224th Infantry,* under a Captain Saito, the *16th Field Airdrome Construction Unit,* and a five-gun battery of 75-mm. mountain artillery. It was commanded by a Lieutenant Colonel Kato, also the commander of the airdrome engineers, and numbered (not counting the troops on Wakde) about 1,200 men.[8] The bulk of the *1st Battalion, 224th Infantry,* was also in the same area, but it was apparently engaged in moving supplies forward to the *Matsuyama Force* and was not under Colonel Kato's control.

West of the Woske River was the area of the *Central Sector Force,* under Col. Naoyasu Yoshino, also commanding officer of the *223d Infantry.* The sector ran from the Woske west about four and a half miles to Sawar Creek and included within its boundaries Sawar Drome. The principal combat forces comprised the *223d Infantry,* less the *2d Battalion* and the *2d Company* of the *1st Battalion.* Other units were a battery of three 75-mm. mountain artillery guns, the *103d Field Airdrome Construction Unit,* some antiaircraft organizations, and possibly a platoon of light tanks.[9] The strength of the *Central Sector Force* was approximately 2,500 men.

The *Left Sector Force,* also about 2,500 men strong, was responsible for a defense

[6] Opns of *Yuki Group,* p. 13; Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 26–27; Japanese Studies in WW II, 32, *2d Army* Opns in the Western New Guinea Area, pp. 1–2, copy in OCMH files. *Yuki* (literally: *Snow*) *Group* was apparently a code name for both the *36th Division* and the whole of General Tagami's command in the Sarmi area. It is not clear whether General Tagami retained any control of the *222d Infantry* on Biak, but the probability is that the Biak force operated directly under *2d Army* command.

[7] Information in this and the following subsection is from: Opns of *Yuki Group,* pp. 12–15 and Map 3; Miscellaneous orders of the *36th Division* and *224th Infantry,* dated late Apr and early May 44, as translated in ALAMO Force G–2 Wkly Rpt 48, 5 Jul 44, copy in G–2 DofA files; Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 51–53, 57–59; Hist of *Southern Area Army,* pp. 61–64; *2d Army* Opns, pp. 1–6; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 10–26.

[8] Strength figures in this and the following subsection are the author's estimates, based upon conflicting and incomplete sources.

[9] The existence of this tank platoon is open to question, because it is known that the *36th Division's* tank company was on Biak and only one tank was ever found in the Sarmi area.

sector extending westward from Sawar Creek six and a half miles to Tevar Creek, which empties into the sea immediately west of Sarmi. Troops consisted of the *2d Battalion, 223d Infantry* (less two companies but with a company of the *1st Battalion* attached), most of a battalion of 75-mm. mountain guns, a number of engineer units, and some antiaircraft artillery. The commander was Maj. Gen. Shigeru Yamada, also the commander of the *4th Engineer Group*, a headquarters which controlled the activities of many engineer and other service units in the area. The commander of the *223d Infantry's* battalion was Capt. Yoshio Toganae.

In addition to the three defensive sectors and the *Matsuyama Force*, there were a number of detached units operating under the *Yuki Group*. Some of these units patrolled the coast far west of Sarmi, while others were stationed at points deep inland. Service troops not specifically assigned to the defensive sectors were concentrated for the most part near Sarmi or bivouacked along the banks of the Orai River, which entered the ocean about two miles east of Sarmi.

The total Japanese troop strength in the Sarmi area, including the temporarily absent *Matsuyama Force*, was about 11,000 men. Of these, a little more than half were trained and effective combat troops. The most accurate Allied estimates made prior to 17 May accounted for a total of 6,500 Japanese, of whom about 4,000 were thought to be combat troops.[10]

[10] Allied figures are from ALAMO Force FO 16, 30 Apr 44; TTF FO 1, 12 May 44. The Allied figures perforce included the *Matsuyama Force* since the Allies did not learn until after 17 May that any large body of Japanese troops had been dispatched from the Sarmi area toward Hollandia.

Reactions to the Allied Landings

After the Allied landings, the first action taken by General Tagami was to instruct the *Matsuyama Force* to retrace its steps to Sarmi. This order was issued on 17 May, but for the next two days the general took no other decisive steps. He had lost about 250 men killed and a like number wounded before 17 May as a result of Allied air action. Operations on the 17th had caused many more casualties and had created a great deal of confusion. On that day, troops of the *Right Sector Force* in the Toem–Arare area fled beyond the Tor River and Tementoe Creek. On a hill near Maffin Drome, General Tagami could but sit helplessly by and watch as his 800-man garrison on Wakde Island was annihilated. Continued Allied air and naval bombardments added to his casualties, and the *Yuki Group* probably lost over 1,000 men from the 17th through the 20th of May. General Tagami's food and ammunition supply, already low, was being destroyed by Allied naval and air operations and by such shore-based artillery fire as the TORNADO Task Force was able to bring to bear on his storage dumps. His situation was anything but enviable. On 19 May the *2d Army* ordered him to attack.

General Tagami planned a pincers movement. The *Matsuyama Force* was ordered to concentrate at Masi-masi, a coastal village about four and a half miles east of Tementoe Creek, and to prepare to attack the Allied positions at Toem. On the west flank, the *Central Sector Force* was reorganized. The service troops were placed under the command of a Captain Fujimura while the combat elements (two battalions of the *223d Infantry* with supporting artillery) were assigned to Colonel Yoshino for offensive operations. The new combat organiza-

tion, designated the *Yoshino Force,* was to cross the Tor at the confluence of that river and the Foein (a point about four miles upstream) during the night of 22–23 May. From the ford, the force was to attack the Toem area from the south and southwest. Simultaneously, the *Matsuyama Force* was to attack from the east. The double envelopment was set for the night of 25–26 May.

While the two arms of the pincers were moving into position, the reorganizing *Right Sector Force* assembled along the west bank of the Tor River to prevent Allied advances toward the Maffin and Sawar airdromes. The rest of the combat troops and armed service personnel that General Tagami was able to muster he organized as a new battle force to which he gave the confusing title *Yuki Group,* a name which by now apparently bore three connotations—the new force, the entire garrison of the Sarmi area, and the *36th Division.* The nucleus of the new *Yuki Group* was probably the *2d Battalion, 223d Infantry,*[11] which was reinforced by parts of various units from the *Left* and *Central Sector Forces.* The *Yuki Group* was to move into the hills south and southeast of Maffin Drome to defend that area in cooperation with the *Right Sector Force,* to which was also temporarily attached the *1st Battalion, 224th Infantry.* Within a few days the TORNADO Task Force was to be put on the defensive by the *Yoshino* and *Matsuyama Forces.* But before that happened, one part of the task force was to encounter the well-prepared and skillfully manned defenses of the new *Yuki Group* and the *Right Sector Force.*

The 158th Infantry Against Lone Tree Hill

As they awaited the outcome of the battle for Wakde Island, TORNADO Task Force units on the mainland had restricted combat operations to patrolling. Engineers had continued construction and road improvement, and the D plus 1 convoy had arrived and had been unloaded without incident. The 2d Battalion, 163d Infantry, sent patrols across Tementoe Creek on the east flank without finding any signs of organized enemy units. The 3d Battalion, on the west flank, was ready to move across the Tor River to expand the initial beachhead and discover enemy intentions.

Preliminaries to a Mainland Campaign

Since there was a possibility that strong enemy forces might oppose an advance west of the Tor, General Doe, who did not believe it prudent to commit his small task force to more than one offensive at a time, postponed movement across the Tor until the capture of Wakde Island was assured. Late on the afternoon of 18 May, when it appeared to the task force commander that the situation on Wakde was well in hand, he gave the 3d Battalion permission to push patrols to the west side of the river, but before dark there was only time for one platoon to cross. That unit established a bridgehead on the west bank in preparation for a crossing by the rest of the battalion.[12]

On the 19th, 3d Battalion patrols found evidence that the Japanese intended to hold

[11] There is some confusion as to whether the *2d Battalion, 223d Infantry,* was initially assigned to the new *Yuki Group* or to the *Yoshino Force.* In any case it did not join the *Yoshino Force* during the offensive phase of Japanese operations in the Sarmi area. The name *Central Sector Force* was retained by Captain Fujimura's organization of service troops.

[12] TTF G–3 Jnl, 6–25 May 44; 163d Inf Jnl, 13–30 May 44.

the ground west of the river. Two organized and well-armed enemy patrols were encountered near Maffin No. 1, a native village on the beach about 3,000 yards beyond the Tor, and another enemy patrol was located at Maffin No. 2, a hamlet about 2,500 yards upstream. The next day a Japanese infantry force supported by mortars and machine guns launched a series of small attacks against the 3d Battalion's bridgehead but failed to dislodge the Company I platoon which was holding the river crossing. Intermittent Japanese machine gun and mortar fire continued throughout the 20th, and three rifle platoons of Company K were sent across the river to relieve the Company I unit. There was a threat of more serious fighting. ALAMO Force, on the basis of new, special intelligence, radioed to the TORNADO Task Force that the Japanese were planning a major counterattack against the Toem–Arare beachhead.[13]

The night of 20–21 May passed quietly, but about midmorning on the 21st the 3d Battalion's positions at the mouth of the Tor were bombarded by large-caliber mortar or high-angle artillery fire. The battalion was alerted to expect an enemy attack, but no assault materialized. The remainder of the day was therefore spent in strengthening defenses, while at the Arare area the time was devoted to reorganizing and re-equipping the various 163d Infantry units which had by now returned to the mainland from Wakde, Insoemanai, Liki, and Niroemoar Islands.[14]

Early on the morning of 21 May the convoy bearing the 158th Regimental Combat Team, ALAMO Force Reserve, for the Wakde–Biak operation arrived off Toem.[15] The 158th Infantry went into bivouac near Arare, while the combat team's 147th Field Artillery Battalion (105-mm. howitzers) quickly set up its guns near the same village to reinforce the 191st Field Artillery Group's fire on targets west and south of the bridgehead across the Tor River.[16]

Almost coincident with the arrival of the 158th Regimental Combat Team, the mission of the TORNADO Task Force was enlarged. Originally the task force had been charged only with the seizure of Wakde Island and the immediately adjacent mainland area. These tasks had been accomplished by 22 May, but on the same date General Krueger changed the mission and assigned a new one which was reminiscent of the original concept of the Wakde–Sarmi operation. General Krueger now felt that Wakde Island would not be secure until more information concerning Japanese intentions could be obtained. Furthermore, he believed that the arrival of the 158th Regimental Combat Team would allow the task force to mount an offensive which would break up the known Japanese attack plans and would place the enemy on the defensive.

---

[13] *Ibid.;* Rad, ALAMO to TTF, WF–3246, 20 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 16–22 May 44.

[14] The Provisional Groupment on Insoemanai had been disbanded on 19 May and its troops either returned to the mainland or sent to Wakde. Liki and Niroemoar had been captured according to plan by Companies E and I on 19 May. The two companies had been transported to the objectives by two APD's and two LCT's, protected by DD's. The islands proved to be unoccupied by the Japanese and the Fifth Air Force radar detachments were immediately set up. The only casualty was the native chieftain of Liki, who was wounded by the preassault naval bombardment. Detachments of the 163d Infantry were left on both islands to protect the radar installations. TTF G–3 Jnl, 6–25 May 44; 163d Inf Jnl, 13–30 May 44.

[15] The unit reached the area a day ahead of schedule, thereby causing some confusion. The beaches were not ready to receive the troops and supplies, and some of the ships, without awaiting instructions from task force headquarters, started unloading over the wrong beaches.

[16] TTF G–3 Jnl, 6–25 May 44.

Accordingly, he ordered the TORNADO Task Force to institute a vigorous overland drive toward Sarmi, sixteen miles west of the Tor River.[17]

This decision, based upon the scanty, incomplete information concerning Japanese strength and dispositions available to General Krueger at the time, was destined to precipitate a protracted and bitter fight. The Japanese had no intention of abandoning Sarmi and the two airstrips between the town and the Tor without a desperate struggle. The fighting was not, however, to be carried out under the direction of General Doe or by the 163d Regimental Combat Team. The task force commander decided to use the 158th Infantry to start the westward drive which ALAMO Force had ordered, and elements of the recently arrived regiment began relieving the 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, at the mouth of the Tor River on 23 May.

Meanwhile the 41st Division, scheduled to invade Biak Island on 27 May, had found that it needed another general officer for that operation. General Doe, whose administrative assignment was assistant commander of the 41st Division, was the logical choice to fill the division's command requirement. Accordingly, on 25 May, he left the Wakde area and his place as commander of the TORNADO Task Force was taken by Brig. Gen. Edwin D. Patrick.[18]

The 158th Regimental Combat Team was organized on 11 May 1944 at Finschhafen in Australian New Guinea. At that time its component parts were the 158th Infantry Regiment, the 147th Field Artillery Battalion, the 506th Medical Collecting Company, and the 1st Platoon, 637th Medical Clearing Company. Other units were assigned to the combat team from time to time during its combat operations. In the Wakde–Sarmi area the combat team commander was General Patrick and the commander of the 158th Infantry was initially Col. J. Prugh Herndon.[19]

West to the Tirfoam River

On the morning of 23 May Company L, 158th Infantry, began advancing westward from the Tor River bridgehead. (*Map 11*) Plans for the day were to complete the relief of the 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, extend the bridgehead to the west, and establish a road block at Maffin No. 1. The remainder of the 3d Battalion, 158th Infantry, was to cross the Tor during the day and follow Company L to Maffin No. 1. At that village the battalion was to assemble and prepare to attack westward toward Sarmi at daylight on 24 May. This attack was to be supported by the remainder of the 158th Infantry, which was scheduled to move across the Tor on the 24th and 25th.[20]

During the 23d the advance of Company L met increasingly strong resistance.[21] Japa-

---

[17] TTF G–3 Jnl and Jnl file, 6–25 May 44; Rad, ALAMO to TTF, WF–3772, 22 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 18–22 May 44; Ltr, Gen Krueger to Gen Ward, 2 Jan 51, no sub, in OCMH files.

[18] TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 17–25 May 44, p. 8; TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 25 May–12 Jun 44, p. 1; Rad, ALAMO to TTF, WF–3972, 24 May 44, and Rad, ALAMO Rear Hq to ALAMO Adv Hq, WF–4062, 24 May 44, both in ALAMO G–3 Jnl, Wakde–Biak, 23–24 May 44. There are five separate reports bearing the title TORNADO Task Force, each dated according to the length of tenure of various units as task force headquarters.

[19] 158th RCT Opns Rpt Sarmi–Wakde, 11 May–21 Jun 44, pp. 1–3.

[20] 158th Inf FO 2, 23 May 44, in 158th Inf Jnl, 9 May–21 Jun 44.

[21] Unless otherwise indicated, information in the rest of this subsection is from: 158th Inf Jnl and Jnl files, 9 May–21 Jun 44; TTF G–3 Jnl, 6–25

nese defenses were centered around three small, brush-bordered lakes near the beach about 1,800 yards west of the Tor. The rest of the 3d Battalion, 158th Infantry, across the Tor before 1130, quickly moved forward to assist Company L, which had been pinned down along the main coastal track west of the lakes by Japanese machine gun and rifle fire. Company K pushed up to the left flank of Company L, while Company I moved toward L's rear. With the aid of mortar fire from the 81-mm. weapons of Company M, Companies K and L were able to push gradually forward during the afternoon, advancing on a front about 400 yards wide.

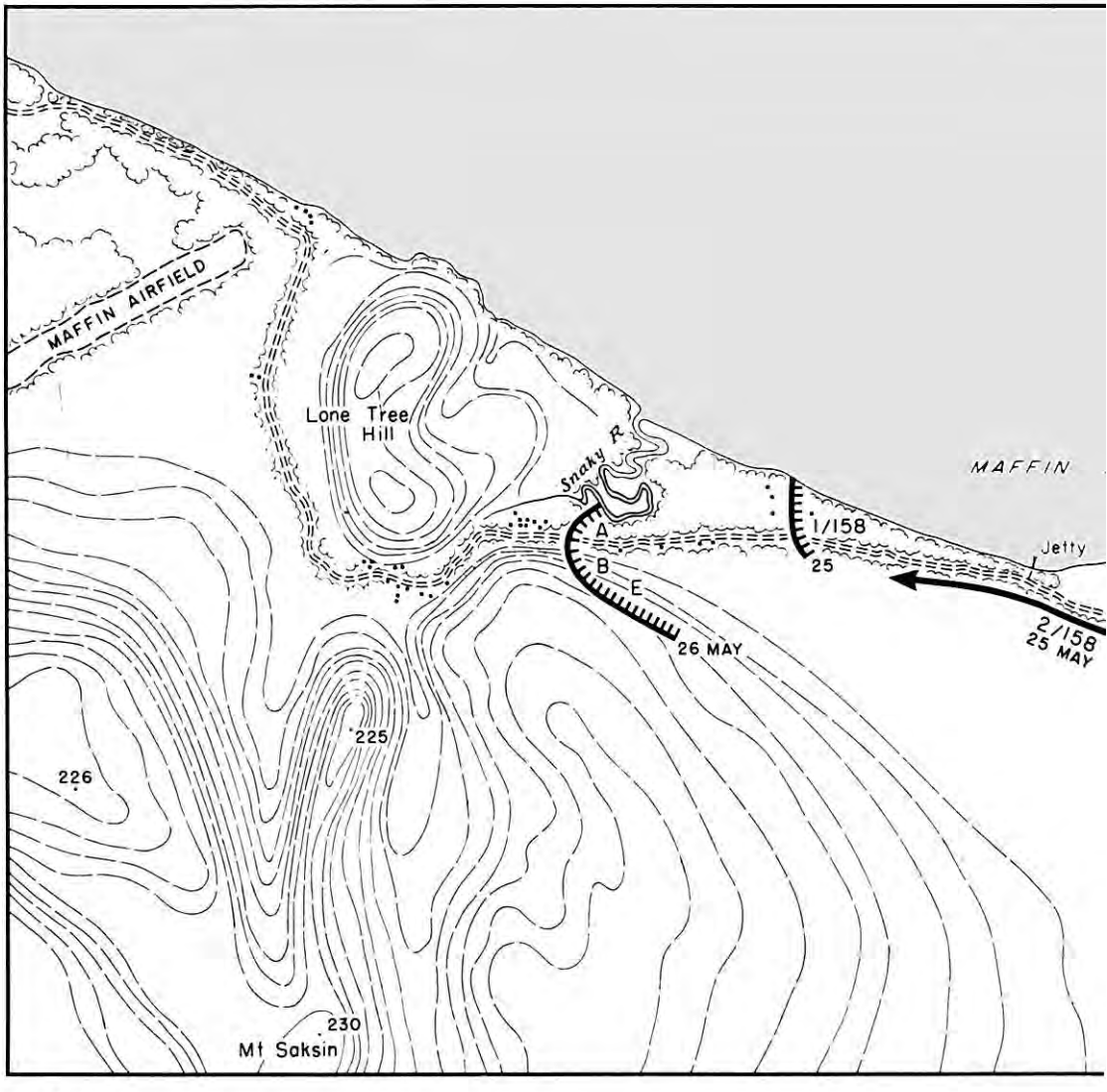
Finding that the attack was not progressing as rapidly as he had expected, Colonel Herndon ordered his 1st Battalion across the Tor. The 1st Battalion did not start moving until 1400 and could not get far enough forward to join the attack before dark. Tanks would probably have been of great help to the 3d Battalion, but by the time the mediums of the 1st Platoon, 603d Tank Company, moved across the Tor, the forward infantry troops had already halted for the night.

Companies L and K dug in for the night across the main coastal track at a point about 400 yards east of Maffin No. 1. Here the road swung away from the beach, and Company L extended the perimeter about 500 yards north to the shore of Maffin Bay. Company I was in position along the road east of Companies L and K. The 1st Battalion bivouacked for the night on the west bank of the Tor at the river's mouth. The 3d Battalion had lost 8 men killed, 12 wounded, and 1 missing during the day, while 6 Japanese had been killed and 1 captured. Plans for the morrow were to have the battalion continue the attack westward.

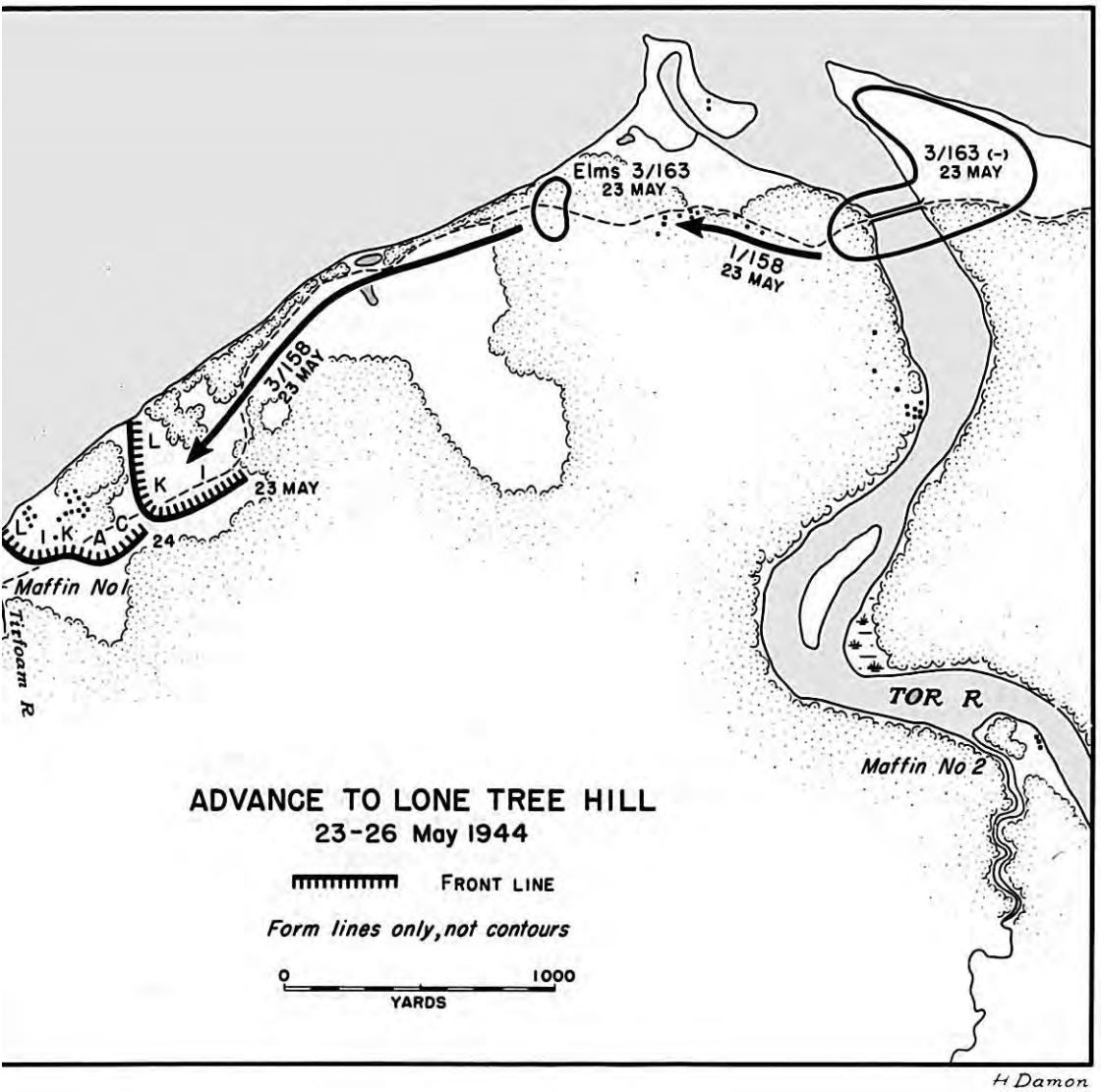
Shortly after 0700 on the 24th, the 81-mm. mortars of Company M laid down a brief concentration in front of Companies K and L, and at 0715 the 147th and 218th Field Artillery Battalions began a fifteen-minute support bombardment. When a few artillery shells fell on Company L, the 3d Battalion commander thought that his own artillery was falling short, and he had the fire stopped quickly. Actually, this was Japanese artillery fire. The infantry unit was mistaking Japanese artillery for its own, a failing not uncommon with troops not previously subjected to enemy artillery fire. Despite the lack of extended artillery support, Companies K and L moved out as planned at 0730. Company L, on the right, advanced along the beach encountering only scattered rifle fire but Company K, on the main road, had hardly started when Japanese machine gun and rifle fire from concealed positions in a wooded area on the left front halted its advance. Unable to gain any ground, Company K called for tank support. Two tanks, together with a flame-thrower detachment from Company B of the 27th Engineers, arrived at Company K's lines about 1000. With the flame throwers and tanks blasting the way, the infantrymen overran the Japanese defenses, killing ten of the enemy and capturing two machine guns. The remainder of the Japanese force, probably originally some forty men strong, disappeared into the jungle south of the road, whence scattered rifle fire continued to harass Company K.

Company L reached the outskirts of Maffin No. 1 about 1400. The movement had been slow, not as a result of Japanese oppo-

May 44; TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 17–25 May 44, pp. 7–9; TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 25 May–12 Jun 44, pp. 1–6; 158th RCT Opns Rpt Sarmi–Wakde, 11 May–21 Jun 44, pp. 2–4; Ltr, Col Herndon to Gen Ward, 23 Dec 50, no sub, in OCMH files.


MAFFIN AIRFIELD
Lone Tree Hill
Snaky R
MAFFIN
A
B
E
1/158
25
Jetty
26 MAY
2/158
25 MAY
225
226
230
Mt Saksin

MAP 11


Elms 3/163
23 MAY
3/163 (-)
23 MAY
1/158
23 MAY
3/158
23 MAY
L
K
I
23 MAY
L-I-K-A-C
24
Maffin No 1
Tiffoam R
TOR R
Maffin No 2
ADVANCE TO LONE TREE HILL
23-26 May 1944
FRONT LINE
Form lines only, not contours
0
1000
YARDS

H Damon

sition but because the battalion commander did not believe it prudent for Company L to advance far beyond Company K. Deploying to find a crossing over the Tirfoam River, just west of Maffin No. 1, Company L was subjected to intense machine gun fire from enemy positions on the west bank. The company then moved southwest away from the beach toward the main road and up the Tirfoam. This maneuver was greeted with new outbursts of machine gun fire from Japanese positions on both sides of the river. The company commander called for tank support, and the 1st Platoon, 603d Tank Company, sent four of its mediums forward.

As the tanks moved into position elements of the *Right Sector Force,* comprising Captain Saito's men of the *3d Battalion, 224th Infantry,* and a company of the *223d Infantry,* charged out of the jungle. The Japanese were under Colonel Kato, *Right Sector Force* commander, who was killed as he personally led a small detachment against the American tanks. The enemy was quickly thrown back with heavy losses by the combined fire of the four tanks and Company L's riflemen and machine gunners. However, under cover of their infantry attack, the Japanese had dragged a 37-mm. antitank gun forward out of the jungle. As the enemy infantrymen withdrew to the southwest after the death of Colonel Kato, the antitank gun opened fire. It was soon destroyed and its crew killed, but not before three of the American tanks had been so damaged that they had to be withdrawn for repairs.[22]

The separate actions of Companies L and K during the morning had created a gap between those two units, and the battalion commander sent Company I forward to fill the void. The reinforcing company moved west along the road to Company K's right rear. The latter had been unable to advance because of continued enemy fire from its left flank, and, therefore, shortly after 1200, Colonel Herndon ordered the 1st Battalion forward. The 1st was to bypass opposition on Company K's left by a deep envelopment to the south across the Tirfoam. Once beyond the river the battalion was to push northwest to a jetty which projected into Maffin Bay about 600 yards west of the Tirfoam's mouth.

Company A started the flanking maneuver about 1330 but was soon halted by machine gun and rifle fire from dense jungle south of the main road. Company C was ordered to reinforce Company A. However, by the time Company C got into position to continue the attack, darkness was approaching and the battalion commander stopped the flanking maneuver for the night. Meanwhile, Company K, upon the arrival of Company A at its left flank, had extended its right front to Maffin No. 1, establishing contact there with Companies L and I. Company L had sent patrols across the Tirfoam late in the afternoon, but these parties were withdrawn before dark and the company began setting up night defenses about 200 yards east of the river.

For the night Company L's right flank rested on the beach, and the unit's left was tied into Company I's perimeter farther inland. To the left rear of Company I was Company K, with its lines stretching across the coastal track. Companies A and C were south of the road on K's left. Company B had moved forward late in the day to rein-

[22] Japanese information here and in the rest of this subsection is from Opns of *Yuki Group,* pp. 15–16; and *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 20–22.

force the 3d Battalion's three rifle companies and was apparently located for the night near Companies I and L.

Casualties during the day had been heavy—28 men were killed and 75 wounded. Many others, including the commander of Company I, had dropped from heat exhaustion and had to be evacuated. The officer strength of Company I was reduced to two. Japanese casualties were undoubtedly higher, especially as a result of the *Right Sector Force's* suicidal attacks against the four American tanks. Colonel Kato's place as *Right Sector Force* commander was taken by Maj. Yasake Matsuoka, formerly a battalion commander of the *233d Infantry,* who was ordered to continue to defend the approaches to Maffin Strip.

The sacrifices of the *Right Sector Force* had not been in vain. Under cover of the unit's holding action the *Yoshino Force* continued its wide envelopment south of the 158th Infantry toward Toem and Arare, a maneuver of which the TORNADO Task Force was as yet unaware. At the same time the delaying action of the *Right Sector Force* gave the *Yuki Group* ample time to move into the hills south and east of Maffin Strip. The 158th Infantry, ordered to continue the advance on the 25th, was soon to engage the *Yuki Group* and the remnants of the *Right Sector Force,* which had withdrawn south into the jungle and west into hills beyond the Tirfoam.

Discovering the Japanese Defenses

Action on the 25th started with the withdrawal of the 158th Infantry's forward units to a point 350 yards east of the Tirfoam, while artillery and mortar concentrations were laid on the banks of the river and on suspected enemy defenses west of the stream.[28] Under cover of these fires the 1st Battalion relieved the 3d, and Company E was sent forward to reinforce the left of the 1st Battalion. The 3d Battalion reverted to regimental reserve.

Patrols of the 1st Battalion moved out about 0830, and the main body followed fifteen minutes later. The artillery and mortar fire had been effective. Japanese defenses east of the Tirfoam, strongly held the previous day, were found to be destroyed or abandoned. With only scattered rifle fire opposing its movement, the 1st Battalion reached its initial objective—a bridge which crossed the Tirfoam about 200 yards inland—at 0915. Patrols moved north and south along the east bank, dispersing enemy stragglers and securing Maffin No. 1. At 0930 Colonel Herndon decided to send the battalion across the river. The next objective was the jetty 600 yards to the west.

Preparatory to movement across the Tirfoam, the 1st Battalion's machine guns and 60-mm. mortars (the latter attempting to get tree bursts) sprayed a heavily wooded area just west of the bridge. Patrols crossing the river shortly after 0930 reported only sporadic rifle fire which did not seem to represent an organized defense, and Companies B and C crossed the bridge without incident about 1115. Company E followed and deployed on the left flank of the 1st Battalion. By noon Company B had reached the jetty. There the 1st Battalion paused to

[28] Unless otherwise indicated this and the following subsections are based on: TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 25 May–12 Jun 44, pp. 1–4; 158th RCT Opns Rpt Sarmi–Wakde, 11 May–21 Jun 44, pp. 4–9; 1st Bn 158th Inf Jnl, 11 May–21 Jun 44; 2d Bn 158th Inf Jnl, 9 May–21 Jun 44; 3d Bn 158th Inf Jnl, 12 May–18 Jun 44; TTF G–3 Jnl, 25–31 May 44; 158th Inf Jnl and Jnl file, 9 May–21 Jun 44; Ltr, Herndon to Ward, 23 Dec 50. Enemy info is principally from Opns of *Yuki Group,* pp. 15–16, and *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak, p. 22.

reorganize and lunch while the 2d Battalion crossed the Tirfoam. By 1300 both battalions had been fed and were ready to push onward. Colonel Herndon set the next objective as Lone Tree Hill, a terrain feature which rose from the flat coastal plain about 2,000 yards west of the jetty.

Lone Tree Hill had been named for a single tree which was depicted on its crest by the map then employed by TORNADO Task Force. Actually, the hill's coral mass was covered with dense rain forest and jungle undergrowth. Lone Tree Hill was about 175 feet high, 1,200 yards long north to south, and 1,100 yards wide east to west. The north side dropped steeply to a rocky shore on Maffin Bay. The hill's eastern slope was fronted by a short, violently twisting stream which was promptly dubbed the "Snaky River" by the 158th Infantry. The main road curved away from the beach to pass south of the Snaky River and Lone Tree Hill through a narrow defile. The southern side of this defile was formed by two noses of Mt. Saksin, a terrain feature about 100 feet higher than Lone Tree Hill. The more westerly of these noses was named "Hill 225" after its height in feet. No name was given to the eastern ridge line, which pointed toward Lone Tree Hill from the southeast. There was a small native village at the eastern entrance to the defile and another at the pass's western outlet.[24]

Mt. Saksin was a name given to an indefinitely outlined hill mass which forms the northern extremity of the Irier Mountains, extending inland from the coast at Lone Tree Hill. The name Saksin was specifically applied to a prominent peak about 2,000 yards due south of Lone Tree. On or about 23 May General Tagami had moved his headquarters into the Mt. Saksin area, apparently on the southwest side of the central peak. As the 158th Infantry pushed forward on the 24th, elements of the *Yuki Group* and *Right Sector Force* moved onto Hill 225 and Lone Tree Hill. On these two terrain features the Japanese began constructing hasty defensive positions. These, together with the natural terrain barriers in the area, effectively guarded the land approaches to Maffin Strip, which lay less than 1,000 yards west of Lone Tree Hill.[25] A sea approach was at least temporarily out of the question, since the TORNADO Task Force did not have sufficient landing craft to execute and support such a maneuver. Finally, it was not considered probable at task force headquarters that the Japanese land defenses of the Maffin Strip area would be strongly held. On the other hand, Colonel Herndon, as the result of patrol reports, did believe that a large Japanese force might be on Hill 225 or Mt. Saksin's eastern nose.

About 1500 on 25 May, Companies B and C had reached a point on the main road a few yards below the southernmost bend of the Snaky River. There, enemy machine gun fire from the native village at the eastern entrance to the defile between Lone Tree Hill and the two noses of Mt. Saksin halted the advance. As the forward troops deployed to find cover from the Japanese fire, they were subjected to an intermittent artillery bombardment, which the battalion thought was coming from TORNADO Task Force weapons emplaced east of the Tor River;

[24] The past tense is used in this paragraph because the entire cast of the terrain in the Lone Tree Hill area was changed during the next two months by continuous artillery and air bombardment.

[25] In addition to the *Yuki Group* and *2d Army* sources, the foregoing enemy information is derived from operation orders of the *36th Div* and *223d Inf*, Apr–May 44, as translated in ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 48, 5 Jul 44.

but no American artillery unit was placing fire within 1,000 yards of the 1st Battalion, 158th Infantry, at the time.[26] For a second time part of the regiment was mistaking Japanese artillery fire for its own.

General Patrick, who had succeeded to the command of the TORNADO Task Force during the morning, was informed of the opposition encountered by the 1st Battalion. He ordered the advance stopped for the night and instructed the 158th Infantry to remain well east of the Snaky River so that American artillery could register on the native village and the defile without endangering the forward troops. Harassed by a few artillery shells, which by now had been recognized as originating from Japanese 70-mm. or 75-mm. weapons, the 1st Battalion pulled back about 500 yards east of the Snaky. A perimeter was set up with the battalion's left resting on the road and its right on the beach. The 2d Battalion established a series of company perimeters back along the road to the east. Casualties for the day had been 22 men killed and 26 wounded, almost all in the 1st Battalion, while about 50 Japanese had been killed.

When the attack orders for the day had been issued, it had been hoped that the 1st Battalion could reach the top of Lone Tree Hill before nightfall. Since the unexpectedly strong enemy opposition had prevented the realization of this hope, plans were made to continue the advance westward on the 26th. The ultimate objective was the east bank of the Woske River, 2,000 yards west of Lone Tree Hill, and the intermediate objective was the native village at the eastern entrance to the defile. The advance was to be preceded by naval shelling of the northern slopes of Lone Tree Hill from 0630 to 0700. A fifteen-minute artillery preparation was also to precede the advance, and the infantry was to start moving at 0845.

On the morning of the 26th the naval fire started ten minutes late. Two destroyers lying offshore shelled the northern slopes of Lone Tree Hill and the Maffin Bay area, firing on known or suspected enemy defensive positions and assembly points. After a twenty-minute bombardment the two support vessels withdrew. Artillery fire did not begin until 0830. The time lag gave the Japanese ample opportunity to prepare for the infantry attack which had been heralded by the destroyer fire. The artillery, aiming its shells into the defile and against the eastern slopes of Lone Tree Hill, ceased firing about 0845. A few moments later the 1st Battalion, 158th Infantry, Company B again leading, started moving westward. The infantry's line of departure was nearly 1,000 yards east of the village at the southeast foot of Lone Tree Hill, and the advance had to be slow because the road ran through heavily jungled terrain. The enemy therefore had sufficient time to reoccupy positions in the defile and on Lone Tree Hill which might have been vacated during the American artillery barrage. The value of both the naval and artillery bombardment had been lost.

Company B moved forward to the point at which it had been held up the previous afternoon and was again stopped—this time by fire from the southeastern corner of Lone Tree Hill. Company D's heavy machine guns were brought up to spray a densely wooded area in front of the point rifle platoon. The fire dispersed the Japanese riflemen, and Company B moved forward

[26] As checked in: 147th FA Jnl, 21 May–14 Jun 44; 191st FA Gp Jnl, 17 May–26 Jun 44; 191st FA Gp S–3 Rpts, 18 May–26 Jun 44; 167th FA S–3 Work Sheets, 25 May 44. The firing records of the 218th FA are included in the records of the 191st FA Gp.

again. Less than 100 yards of ground had been gained when the company again encountered machine gun and mortar fire originating in the native village.

Company A, initially off the road to the right rear of Company B, turned north to the mouth of the Snaky River. One platoon crossed at the river mouth at 1030 but was quickly forced back to the east bank by Japanese machine gun fire from the rocky beach below the north face of Lone Tree Hill. Artillery support was called for, supplied, and proved successful in stopping the enemy fire, and about 1350 all Company A crossed the Snaky. Orders were to move down the west side of that stream to establish contact with Company B and to send one platoon up the eastern slope of Lone Tree Hill to probe enemy positions.

Other efforts were meanwhile being made to scatter the Japanese opposing Company B. Company E (less a platoon which was patrolling on Mt. Saksin) moved up to the left flank of Company B and on the south side of the main road. The combined efforts of the two rifle companies proved insufficient to dislodge the Japanese from their positions at the eastern entrance to the defile, and the enemy fire forced the American units to seek cover. Company F was therefore ordered to pass through B's left flank and proceed to Hill 225 to take the Japanese positions from the rear.

Company F's attack could not be started before dark and Company A, moving up the west side of the Snaky, was unable to relieve much of the pressure on Company B. Finally, Company A was forced for a second time to withdraw to the east bank of the river as a result of enemy fire from Lone Tree Hill. Tanks would have been of great help to Company B, but the bridge over the Tirfoam could not bear their weight, and the road west of the stream was in such disrepair that tanks probably could not have negotiated it.

Casualties on the 26th had been lighter—only 6 men were killed and 10 wounded—while an estimated 35 Japanese had been killed. To prevent further casualties from being inflicted by Japanese patrols which were expected to roam around the flanks of the forward elements during the night, a semicircular perimeter was established. Company B anchored its right flank near the eastern edge of the native village and extended its lines southwest across the road for a distance of about 100 yards. Company E refused the south flank by stretching the line southeast from B's left, 500 yards up the slope of Mt. Saksin's eastern nose. Company A tied its left into B's right and extended the defense northeast about 300 yards from the road to a large bend in the Snaky River. The remainder of the 1st and 2d Battalions was strung out along both sides of the main road to the rear of the three forward companies.

Operations during the day had secured less than 1,000 yards of ground in a westerly direction and about the same distance inland from the beach. However, the 158th Infantry had located and probed some of the principal Japanese defenses in the area—defenses which indicated that the Japanese guarding the land approaches to Maffin Strip were in greater strength than had been expected. Company B had discovered that the enemy was firmly dug in along both sides of the defile. A platoon of Company A had found Lone Tree Hill to be honeycombed with enemy defensive positions, especially on its northern and northeastern faces. The regimental Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon and a platoon of Company E patrolled in the vicinity of Mt. Saksin and Hill 225. The Company E platoon found many

deserted Japanese positions along the eastern slopes of Mt. Saksin and on that hill's eastern nose, but the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon had a less optimistic report. Probing into rugged, heavily forested terrain between the east nose and Hill 225, the platoon had been ambushed. Extricating itself with difficulty, it reported that the Japanese were dug in in great strength all over Hill 225.

Orders for the next day reflected a still prevailing notion at task force headquarters that the Japanese defenses were weak. The 1st Battalion was to push on through the defile and at the same time secure Lone Tree Hill. The 2d Battalion was to clear Hill 225. Prior to the 26th, field artillery had been supporting the 158th Infantry from positions 8,000 to 10,000 yards to the east. Once the infantry had debouched from the western end of the defile, it would move into an area beyond the most effective range of artillery support. Therefore the 147th Field Artillery Battalion's 105-mm. howitzers were displaced forward to Maffin No. 1 to support the advance of the 158th Infantry on the 27th.

The Defile

At 0700 hours on 27 May two destroyers, firing on Lone Tree Hill and the Maffin Strip area, started scheduled fire support for the day's advance. Artillery and infantry action on this morning was much more closely co-ordinated than on the previous day. The destroyer fire lasted until 0745, at which time the field artillery and all the 81-mm. mortars of the 158th Infantry laid concentrations on suspected and known enemy positions in the defile, on Lone Tree Hill, and on Hill 225. At 0830 Company F, moving around Company E on the south flank, started its attack. Behind close artillery support, apparently controlled by artillery liaison planes for the most part, Company F pushed up a terrain feature initially believed to be Hill 225. It was not discovered until late the next day that F Company was actually on the eastern nose of Mt. Saksin and about 700 yards east of its reported location.

Since artillery fire had knocked out two enemy machine gun nests which had been delaying the advance, patrols of Company F were able to reach the top of the eastern ridge. The rest of the company moved up the hill at 1000, encountering scattered rifle fire from enemy positions to the southwest. Company E, just before noon, arrived atop the same hill on F's right. Company E had orders to secure the southern slopes of the defile between Hill 225 and Lone Tree Hill.

Company B, still at the eastern entrance to the defile, was again unable to make any progress and during the morning was held up by machine gun and mortar fire from concealed enemy positions on the southern and southwestern slopes of Lone Tree Hill. No sooner had some of these positions been eliminated by American artillery and mortar fire than Company B was subjected to enemy machine gun and mortar fire originating from the northeast side of Hill 225, the reported location of Companies E and F. Actually, the artillery fire had not been entirely effective, because it had not reached into deep draws or caves in which many of the Japanese weapons were emplaced.

Company E, attempting to move down the northern slopes of the eastern ridge to Company B's aid, was soon forced back by enemy rifle fire and infantry counterattacks from the west. At the same time small parties of Japanese, under cover of their own machine guns, started a series of minor counter-

attacks against Company B. Company F did not become engaged in this action. Instead, the company dug in on the ridge it was holding and sent patrols to the south and west to probe Japanese defenses. It was soon discovered that the combination of rugged terrain and Japanese machine gun and rifle fire limited patrolling to a very small area.

North of Company B, Company A patrolled along the west bank of the Snaky River and on the eastern slope of Lone Tree Hill during the morning and early afternoon. About 1630 the company moved in force up Lone Tree, finding the eastern slope of the hill to be unoccupied. Most of the fire that had harassed the company during the morning had apparently originated on the beach below the northern face of Lone Tree Hill. For the night the unit dug in at the crest of the hill. Again, little ground had been gained, although the eastern nose of Mt. Saksin and Lone Tree Hill had been at least partially occupied.

The 1st and 2d Battalions of the 158th Infantry had now been engaged in heavy combat for three days against an enemy force which was aggressive and clever on the defense. The combined *Right Sector Force–Yuki Group* troops were well led, taking every advantage of heavily forested terrain for cover and concealment, yet retaining their mobility. The Japanese were tried and trained troops, having had considerable experience in China and having been in the Sarmi area for over six months. The 1st Battalion, 158th Infantry, on the other hand, was in combat for the first time. The 2d and 3d Battalions had been in combat on New Britain against lesser opposition and in different terrain, and both had undergone some reorganization and had received many untried replacements since. By evening on 27 May the 158th Infantry had lost almost 300 men killed, wounded, or evacuated as nonbattle casualties—the latter principally as a result of heat exhaustion. American artillery support had not been all that could be desired. Maps were so inaccurate that the artillery had difficulty finding designated targets, and it was impossible, even with the aid of spotting aircraft and forward observers, to lay fire into the enemy's defile positions without endangering the forward troops. Finally, tank support had not been obtainable, much as it was needed by Company B, which was bearing the brunt of the defile warfare.

So important did Colonel Herndon now consider tank support that he secured permission to have two tanks brought forward to the beach at the mouth of the Snaky River. The tanks were to be transported by LCM's (all of which were badly needed at the Arare–Toem beachhead and at Wakde Island for lightering purposes) to the mouth of the Snaky on the morning of the 28th and were to move south along the stream to aid the units trying to break through the defile. Two rifle companies, one each from the 1st and 2d Battalions, were assigned to the defile battle on the 28th. Two other rifle companies of the 1st Battalion were to advance over Lone Tree Hill and down its western slopes. The first objective of the latter units was the point at which the main road, after winding south around Lone Tree Hill, again reached the shores of Maffin Bay. This point was about 700 yards northwest of the hill crest and about 100 yards from the northeastern edge of Maffin Strip. In a simultaneous movement the 2d Battalion (less one rifle company) was to move across Hill 225 to the western outlet of the defile. Thence the battalion was to strike north along the road to the eastern end of Maffin Strip to

establish contact with the 1st Battalion's two companies.

This two-pronged attack was designed to seal off Lone Tree Hill and render Japanese positions on the hill untenable. At the same time, combined infantry-tank action was to clear the defile and open the main overland supply route to Maffin Strip. The road, which engineers had been repairing forward from the Tor for the last three days, would then be opened for traffic from the river to the airfield. The ultimate regimental objective was still the east bank of the Woske River.

On the 28th, after a well-timed preliminary artillery bombardment, Company C moved forward to the crest of Lone Tree Hill and joined Company A. The latter unit then attempted to move down the steep northern face of the hill to the rocky beach below. Japanese defenders in caves and crevices on this clifflike side stopped the attack before it was well under way. It was impossible to place fire on the Japanese positions from above, and Company A had to withdraw to the crest of Lone Tree. Company C, at midmorning, started moving in densely jungled, irregular terrain along the western slope of the hill, attacking generally to the north. About 1300 a Japanese patrol, coming out of a wooded area at the western base of the hill, fell upon Company C's left flank. The American unit beat off this attack, principally by rifle fire, without too much difficulty, but as soon as the enemy party was dispersed Company C was pinned down by mortar and machine gun fire originating near the eastern edge of Maffin Strip. Elements of Company A then tried to move down the west side of the hill along a route south of Company C's positions. This effort was also greeted with Japanese machine gun and rifle fire and was abandoned. The two companies could now see Japanese movements to the southwest, movements which seemed to presage an imminent enemy attack in force against the west side of Lone Tree Hill. The terrain on the west side of Lone Tree was not well suited for defense. Moreover, both Company A and Company C were running low on water and ammunition and the 1st Battalion commander considered it probable that the terrain would prevent successful resupply efforts. He therefore ordered the two companies to withdraw to the line of the Snaky River. This maneuver began about 1600.

Meanwhile, south of Lone Tree Hill, Companies B and E had been making determined efforts to break through the defile. Patrols probing forward during the morning reported steadily increasing Japanese resistance on both sides of the pass. About noon further efforts were temporarily abandoned, while the heavy weapons of Company H and the 81-mm. mortars of Company D laid a new barrage into the Japanese positions. After this fire, B Company moved west along the road and Company E, attempting to clear ravines on the south side of the defile, followed along to B's left rear. Company B could not get beyond the native village and the attack was unsuccessful. For the fourth or fifth time in three days the Japanese had thrown back an assault at the defile.

At 1145 Company E relieved Company B near the village. The latter unit was ordered to move to the beach at the west side of the Snaky River. There the company was to set up a defensive perimeter to protect an engineer platoon which was blasting out of the beach coral an approach for the two tanks scheduled to be unloaded there from LCM's. While Company B was digging in at its new location it was subjected to heavy mortar,

machine gun, and rifle fire from Japanese on the north face of Lone Tree Hill. At 1800 the company therefore withdrew to the east side of the river mouth. The engineer platoon withdrew from the Snaky River about the same time, but not before a tank approach had been completed on the beach east of the river mouth.

On the southern flank Company F had run into strong enemy opposition during the morning. In the afternoon the company discovered that it had not been on Hill 225, but that it was now in a difficult position in a ravine between that hill and the eastern nose of Mt. Saksin. When it was noticed during the afternoon that enemy troops on Hill 225 were maneuvering to attack, Company F withdrew up the western slopes of the eastern nose. The Japanese, forestalled in their attempt to trap Company F in the ravine, then turned their attention to Company E at the native village. An enemy force estimated to be fifty men strong moved from the southwest against Company E, which drove the Japanese back only after a sharp fire fight.

Colonel Herndon now felt that his forward positions were rapidly becoming untenable. The Japanese were apparently moving eastward and northward in some strength and the terrain west of the Snaky River made supply of the two forward battalions extremely difficult. The colonel therefore radioed to the task force commander that he intended to withdraw to the line of the Snaky River for the night. The 1st Battalion was to be on the north of the night's defensive positions and the 2d Battalion was to refuse the left flank by extending the lines south of the road along the eastern nose of Mt. Saksin. Colonel Herndon also planned to relieve the 1st Battalion with the 3d on the morrow. These plans were approved by General Patrick who, early the next morning, also ordered Colonel Herndon to cease offensive efforts.

The 158th Infantry Withdraws

On 27 May General Patrick had been informed by General Krueger that two battalions of the 163d Infantry, which was still protecting the Toem–Arare beachhead, were soon to be shipped to Biak. At the same time General MacArthur's headquarters and ALAMO Force were considering plans to stage a division in the Wakde–Sarmi area in preparation for operations farther to the west. The two headquarters decided that the 6th Infantry Division, which had recently completed jungle and amphibious training in eastern New Guinea, would be the most logical unit to send forward. General Krueger knew that the 163d Regimental Combat Team was scheduled to leave the Wakde–Sarmi area for Biak, but he did not want operations in the former region to be halted for lack of troops. He therefore recommended that a combat team of the 6th Division be dispatched to Wakde–Sarmi immediately, even without its artillery if leaving the latter out of the shipment would speed the movement of the infantry regiment.[27]

Because of the danger of overextending his lines, General Patrick had already decided to halt the westward movement of the

[27] Rad, ALAMO Adv Hq to TTF, WH–98, 26 May 44, in TTF G–3 Jnl, 25–31 May 44; Rad, ALAMO Adv Hq to GHQ SWPA, WH–63, 25 May 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 26 May 44; Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, C–12888, 24 May 44, and Rad, ALAMO Rear Hq to ALAMO Adv Hq, WF–4263, 25 May 44, both in ALAMO Rear Hq G–3 Jnl, Wakde–Biak, 24–26 May 44.

158th Infantry. He felt that with a garrison of two regimental combat teams the fifteen-mile-long perimeter which the TORNADO Task Force was occupying could be held. Before westward advance could be resumed, however, Japanese forces which were harassing the southern and eastern flanks of the Toem–Arare beachhead defenses would have to be dispersed. As a result of an attack by some 200 Japanese on Toem during the night of 27–28 May and because there were indications that the enemy was to make further assaults against the beachhead, the task force commander recommended that no elements of the 163d Regimental Combat Team be shipped to Biak until after the arrival at Toem of a combat team of the 6th Division.

But on the morning of 29 May, General Krueger notified General Patrick that the two battalions of the 163d Infantry would have to leave for Biak the next day. General Patrick considered that the one remaining infantry battalion of the 163d Regimental Combat Team would not be sufficiently strong to hold the Toem–Arare beachhead area. He therefore ordered the 158th Infantry to send one of its battalions back across the Tor River.[28]

On the morning of 29 May the 1st Battalion, 158th Infantry, relieved the 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, at Arare. General Patrick ordered the rest of the 158th Infantry to improve its positions along the Snaky River and to defend that line until the arrival of a 6th Division regimental combat team on or about 4 June. The 1st Battalion, 158th Infantry, was replaced on the Snaky River line by the 3d Battalion of the same regiment.[29]

Early the same morning Company F of the 158th Infantry, holding an exposed position on the eastern nose of Mt. Saksin, found itself surrounded by enemy patrols. The Japanese appeared to be maneuvering for an attack and Company F hurriedly withdrew. The unit had to fight its way back to the perimeter of Company G, which was located on the main road about 800 yards northeast of the eastern nose.

As a result of this action, and because the Japanese were continuing pressure against the 3d Battalion's Snaky River lines from both the south and west, Colonel Herndon felt that his river positions could not be held much longer. Worse still, from his point of view, his 1st Battalion had been withdrawn east of the Tor. Without this strength he believed his forces insufficient to hold the line at the Snaky and, at the same time, prevent the Japanese from outflanking his units to the south and cutting his line of communications back to the Toem–Arare beachhead area. Therefore, after consultation with his battalion commanders, he ordered the 2d and 3d Battalions to withdraw to the east bank of the Tirfoam River, 2,000 yards to the rear, and form a new defense line.[30]

Just past 1500 Colonel Herndon informed General Patrick of the decision to redispose the forward area forces. At first General Patrick was not inclined to consent to this withdrawal, but upon reconsideration

[28] Rad, ALAMO Adv Hq to TTF, WH–173, 29 May 44, and Rad, TTF to ALAMO, Y–542, 28 May 44, both in TTF G–3 Jnl, 25–31 May 44; TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 25 May–12 Jun, p. 2.

[29] Rad, TTF to ALAMO Adv Hq, Y–573, in TTF G–3 Jnl, 25–31 May 44; TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 25 May–12 Jun 44, p. 2; 158th Inf Jnl, 9 May–21 Jun 44.

[30] TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 25 May–12 Jun 44, pp. 2–3; 158th RCT Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, p. 6; Ltrs, Herndon to Ward, 8 Nov and 23 Dec 50, no sub, in OCMH files.

gave his approval. The movement began immediately, under continuing Japanese pressure from the south.[31] About 1600 General Patrick arrived at Colonel Herndon's command post, which by then had been moved away from the Tirfoam, where the new defense line was taking shape, to a point approximately 1,800 yards east of that stream.[32] Shortly thereafter General Patrick reported to General Krueger: "Investigation convinced me that [the] withdrawal [was] unwarranted." [33] General Patrick relieved Colonel Herndon and placed in command of the 158th Infantry Col. Earle O. Sandlin, who had recently arrived in the area and who had been acting as his chief of staff.[34]

Meanwhile, under Colonel Herndon's direction and in the face of continued harassing from Japanese on the south flank, the withdrawal had been completed without the loss of a single man or piece of equipment. Companies E, K, L, and M set up defenses along the east bank of the Tirfoam, with Company E echeloned slightly to the left rear of the other three. Within the perimeter were 3d Battalion headquarters, the Cannon Company, and Company C, 27th Engineers, the latter about 900 yards east of the Tirfoam. The rest of the 158th Infantry maintained defenses back along the main road to the mouth of the Tor, where were located the 147th Field Artillery, Company I, and various medical units.

At the Tirfoam Company E had not completed digging in when it was subjected to heavy mortar and machine gun fire. The troops manned their weapons, but the Japanese withdrew without attacking. About midnight approximately fifty Japanese bypassed Company E and fell upon Company C, 27th Engineers. Colonel Herndon's fears of attack along his line of communications had been well taken, for the *Right Sector Force* had begun flanking movements designed to recapture the entire Maffin Bay area. However, the combat engineers quickly proved their versatility by driving off the enemy force with rifle, carbine, and machine gun fire. Five of the engineers were killed. Enemy casualties could not be estimated since the Japanese removed their dead and wounded during the night.[35]

The remainder of the night was more quiet, and the next morning the defenses along the Tirfoam were improved. There were a couple of minor attacks during the afternoon and desultory rifle and 70-mm. or 75-mm. artillery fire was directed against all American units still west of the Tor. The 147th Field Artillery Battalion, withdrawing to the east bank of the Tor late in the afternoon, was struck by some of this enemy artillery fire and lost one man killed.[36]

---

[31] Ltr, Herndon to Ward, 23 Dec 50; Rad, TTF to ALAMO, Y-601, 29 May 44, in TTF G-3 Jnl, 25-31 May 44; 158th Inf S-3 Opns Rpt 7, 29 May 44, in 158th Inf Jnl file, 9 May-21 Jun 44; TTF Opns Rpt Wakde-Sarmi, 25 May-12 Jun 44, p. 3.

[32] Ltr, Herndon to Ward, 23 Dec 50; 158th RCT Opns Rpt Wakde-Sarmi, p. 6.

[33] Rad, TTF to ALAMO, Y-601, 29 May 44, in TTF G-3 Jnl, 25-31 May 44, copy also in ALAMO Adv Hq G-3 Jnl Wakde-Biak, 29-30 May 44.

[34] *Ibid.* Gen Krueger approved Gen Patrick's action in: Rad, ALAMO Adv Hq to TTF, WH-234, 30 May 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G-3 Jnl Wakde-Biak, 29-30 May 44. At General Patrick's request, no reclassification proceedings were carried through against Colonel Herndon, who later received another responsible post of command in the theater. See Rad, TTF to ALAMO, Y-745, 2 Jun 44, and Rad, ALAMO Rear Hq to ALAMO Adv Hq, WF-311, 2 Jun 44, both in ALAMO Adv Hq G-3 Jnl Wakde-Biak, 1-3 Jun 44.

[35] 158th Inf Jnl and Jnl file, 9 May-21 Jun 44; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), p. 22.

[36] *Ibid.*; 158th RCT Opns Rpt Wakde-Sarmi, p. 7.



LCM FERRY *across mouth of Tor River, looking west.*

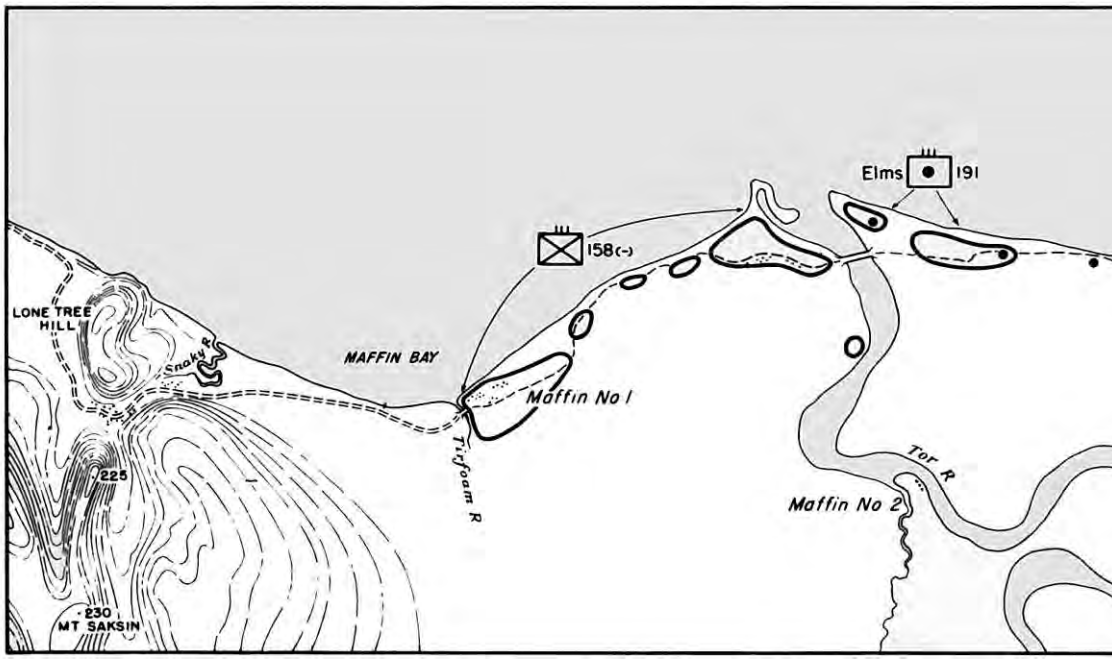
Final Operations of the 158th Infantry

While the new line along the Tirfoam was being developed on 30 May by the 158th Infantry, the 1st and 3d Battalions of the 163d Infantry, together with regimental headquarters, departed for Biak. The 2d Battalion remained on the west bank of Tementoe Creek, which marked the eastern flank of the TORNADO Task Force, but it and the rest of the 163d Regimental Combat Team were soon to follow the other battalions. Through 30 May, after which elements of the 163d Infantry engaged in little activity in the area, the regiment had lost 46 men killed and 154 wounded. Other elements of the combat team lost 8 men killed, 10 wounded, and 1 missing.[87]

Redispositions of the TORNADO Task Force

Upon the departure of the 1st and 3d Battalions, 163d Infantry, many changes

[87] 163d Inf Jnl, 13–30 May 44; 163d Inf Casualty Rpts, atchd to 163d Inf Opns Rpt Toem–Wakde.

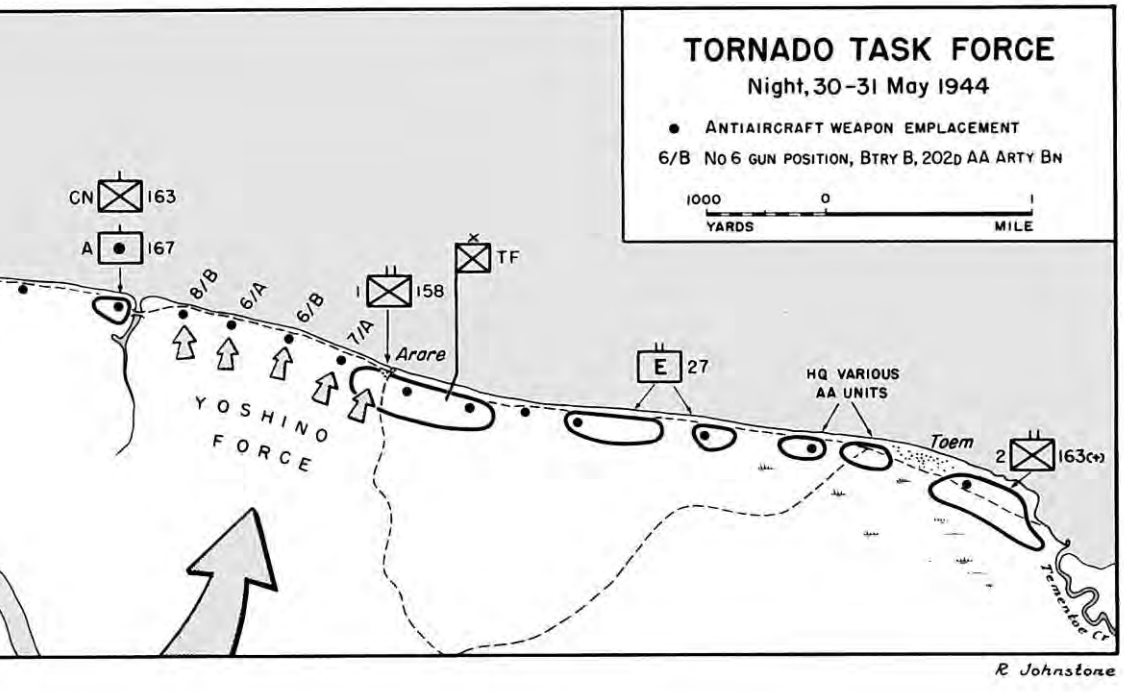


MAP 12

Twenty-one separate perimeters were maintained by the TORNADO Task Force along approximately twelve miles of coast line during the night of 30–31 May 1944. The Yoshino Force *fell upon the isolated antiaircraft gun positions.*

were made in the dispositions of the TORNADO Task Force until, by the end of the day, the task force was spread out over almost twelve miles of coast line between Tementoe Creek and the Tirfoam River. (*Map 12*) The 2d and 3d Battalions, 158th Infantry, and other attached or organic units held perimeters west of the Tor. Various field artillery units were emplaced at the east side of the Tor's mouth. Task force headquarters was at Arare, close to the principal supply and ammunition dumps, and was protected by the 1st Battalion, 158th Infantry. At no point did the lines of any task force elements extend inland as much as a mile from the beach.

At dusk there were twenty-one perimeters of varying sizes, strengths, and distances from each other. Antiaircraft units were especially spread out in an effort to secure the maximum possible protection against low-flying Japanese planes. The 40-mm. guns and some .50-caliber weapons of Batteries A and B, 202d Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, were strung out in beach emplacements between the Tor River and Tementoe Creek. Between the task force headquarters perimeter at Arare and the position of Headquarters, 191st Field Artillery Group, near the mouth of the Tor, a distance of almost 5,000 yards, there were six separate antiaircraft gun emplacements. Only one of these



perimeters, that at the mouth of the Unnamed River west of Arare, contained other than antiaircraft troops, and these were men of the Cannon Company, 163d Infantry, and Battery A, 167th Field Artillery Battalion. The fifteen other perimeters included infantry positions or some engineer and artillery posts which were over 2,000 yards from the nearest infantry units. The perimeters east of the Tor were all-around defenses, and those west of the river were oriented principally toward the west, where most of the Japanese strength was apparently located.[38] These widespread dispositions presented the Japanese with an opportunity to destroy all or parts of the TORNADO Task Force in detail.

Even while the 158th Infantry had been engaged in heavy fighting around Lone Tree Hill, the two arms of General Tagami's planned double envelopment had been slowly closing in on the Toem–Arare area. Bypassing the 158th Infantry by moving along routes up to four miles inland, the *Yoshino Force* had crossed the Tor at the junction of the river with the Foein on the night of 25–26 May. On the 26th, leading elements of the *Matsuyama Force,* advancing from the east, had moved into position about two and a half miles south of Toem.

About 200 men of the *Matsuyama Force*

[38] 158th Inf Jnl, 9 May–21 Jun 44; TTF G–3 Jnl, 25–31 May 44; 158th RCT Opns Rpt Sarmi–Wakde, p. 7; 167th FA Opns Rpt Wakde, p. 7.

had attacked the positions of the 1st Battalion, 163d Infantry, near Toem during the night of 27–28 May and had killed two Americans and wounded fourteen others. Friendly fire during the confusion of the night action killed four other American soldiers. The 1st Battalion killed about thirty Japanese by rifle and machine gun fire and hand grenades, and before dawn on the 28th the enemy had withdrawn southeastward.[39]

It was this attack, coupled with a suspicion that such assaults might be repeated in the near future, that had prompted General Patrick's 28 May request that the 163d Regimental Combat Team be retained in the Wakde area until a regiment of the 6th Division arrived. But, despite the fact that this request was disapproved and the bulk of the 163d Infantry left his area on 30 May, it appears that General Patrick was not particularly alarmed about Japanese forces on his south flank. He had halted the advance westward until the few Japanese he believed to be on the south flank could be dispersed, and he had brought one battalion of the 158th Infantry east of the Tor to replace the two of the 163d Infantry which had left for Biak. On 28 May General Patrick estimated Japanese strength in his area to be 2,000–3,000 on the west flank, 300 east of Tementoe Creek, and 300 "in roving bands" south of Toem and Arare.[40]

The TORNADO Task Force had underestimated the strength of Japanese forces in the area. The figure for the number of enemy east of Tementoe Creek was three or four days old on 28 May and, apparently, had been estimated on the basis of a single aerial reconnaissance. Instead of roving bands south of the Toem–Arare perimeter, there were over 2,000 organized troops of the *Yoshino* and *Matsuyama Forces* within three miles of the coast at Toem. Total enemy strength in the Wakde–Sarmi area was still over 8,000 men rather than the maximum of less than 4,000 estimated by the TORNADO Task Force.[41]

American patrols found no signs of large, organized enemy forces south of the central perimeter for the two or three days following the attack during the night of 27–28 May, an attack which marked the beginning of a series of minor assaults against the Toem–Arare area. As a matter of fact, few American patrols were sent out. On the 28th a party from Company F, 163d Infantry, moving about three quarters of a mile up the east bank of Tementoe Creek, found one small Japanese bivouac area. A patrol of Company B, 163d Infantry, found a recently cut trail 1,200 yards south of Arare, but saw no Japanese. The next day the 2d Battalion, 163d Infantry, sent two patrols up and across Tementoe Creek, but neither encountered any Japanese.

The only patrol which operated in the area west of Tementoe Creek on the 29th seems to have been sent out by the 218th Field Artillery Battalion. This party moved about 3,000 yards up the east bank of the Tor past Maffin No. 2. Thence the patrol marched overland back to its base, where it reported that it had found no signs of enemy

[39] TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 25 May–12 Jun 44, p. 3; Opns of *Yuki Group*, pp. 14–16; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 25–26.

[40] Rads, TTF to ALAMO, Y–542 and Y–573, 28 and 29 May, respectively, both in TTF G–3 Jnl, 25–31 May 44.

[41] The figures for the Japanese are the author's estimates and are based on information from both Allied and Japanese sources which were not then available to the TORNADO Task Force.

activity. There are no indications in the TORNADO Task Force's records that any American patrols were sent south in the area between the Tor River and Tementoe Creek on 30 May.[42]

Japanese Attacks East of the Tor

Gun position No. 6 of Battery B, 202d Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, was located in an isolated perimeter on the beach about 900 yards west of Arare. The position was approximately 500 yards distant from the two nearest friendly units, both of which were other isolated antiaircraft gun posts.

At 1830 on 30 May, No. 6 gun position was attacked by a squad of Japanese infantrymen from the *Yoshino Force*. The antiaircraft artillerymen, after losing one man killed, killing ten of the enemy, having their .50-caliber machine guns jam, and running out of rifle ammunition, retired to gun position No. 7 of Battery A, 500 yards to the east. The latter position was attacked intermittently from 1840 to 0430, but the combined gunners of the two positions threw back each assault with rifle and machine gun fire. About 500 yards west of Battery B's No. 6 position was situated Battery A's No. 6. The latter perimeter was harassed by mortar, rifle, and machine gun fire from shortly after 1830 hours throughout the night. It was attacked by *Yoshino Force* troops at least twice, but the antiaircraft gunners managed to drive the enemy back each time. Gun position No. 8 of Battery B, another 400 yards to the west, was also attacked about 1830. The .50-caliber multiple machine gun in the position became overheated and jammed. The men in the position, running low on rifle ammunition, scurried out of the gun pit and took cover in the brush along the beach. Here they stayed until the enemy withdrew at 0430.

In the action against the four gun positions, the Japanese captured one .50-caliber machine gun, damaged a multiple .50-caliber mount and removed the gun barrels, damaged two 40-mm. guns, and destroyed miscellaneous electrical and communications equipment. Using the captured .50-caliber machine gun to good advantage, the enemy force which attacked Battery B's No. 6 position and A's No. 7 moved away from those two gun pits toward the task force supply dump and the perimeter of Company B, 158th Infantry.[43]

One group from the *Yoshino Force* began delivering machine gun and rifle fire on the 1st Battalion, 158th Infantry, about 1900, and at 2200 the *Yoshino Force* launched a furious, suicidal attack against Company B. This assault continued until 0430, while the Japanese tried to fire the task force supply dumps with "Molotov Cocktails" and demolition charges and engaged in hand-to-hand fighting with the men of Company B, who used rifles, hand grenades, pistols, knives, and bayonets to beat off the assault. At 0430 the attack abated and the enemy withdrew to the south. Total American losses during the night action were twelve

[42] The foregoing information on patrol activity is from: TTF G–2 Jnl, 25 May–3 Jun 44; TTF G–3 Jnl, 25–31 May 44; 158th Inf Jnl, 9 May–21 Jun 44.

[43] Information concerning action against the antiaircraft units is taken from a file entitled: Correspondence, Wakde–Sarmi–Toem Task Force, in the files of the AA Sec., Hq Sixth Army, in ORB RAC AGO collection. Info about the Japanese side is from Opns of *Yuki Group*, p. 16, and *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), p. 26.

killed and ten wounded. At daylight fifty-two dead Japanese were counted in front of the antiaircraft and infantry positions. There were signs that the enemy had carried away dead or wounded men and it was therefore estimated that the Japanese losses were much higher than those actually counted.[44]

On the morning of 31 May the TORNADO Task Force, in expectation of more night attacks, set to work to strengthen the defenses between the Tor River and Tementoe Creek and to reduce the number of separate perimeters along the beach. This action was given added impetus during the day by receipt of a message from ALAMO Force which was interpreted to mean that the remainder of the 163d Regimental Combat Team (the 2d Battalion, 163d Infantry, the 167th Field Artillery, engineer units, etc.) was to be sent to Biak immediately.[45] General Patrick thereupon ordered the elements of the 158th Infantry still west of the Tor to withdraw to the east side of that river and take over the perimeters still held by parts of the 163d Regimental Combat Team. A bridgehead was to be maintained on the west bank of the Tor, but the main task force perimeter was to be reduced to the area between Tementoe Creek and the Tor and no further offensive efforts westward were to be undertaken until the arrival of a combat team from the 6th Division.[46]

Colonel Sandlin, commanding the 158th Infantry, was made responsible for setting up the new task force defenses. He decided to leave the 2d Battalion, 158th Infantry, west of the Tor. The 3d Battalion, less Company K, was to move to Tementoe Creek to relieve the 2d Battalion, 163d Infantry, while Company K was to reinforce the perimeter around the task force supply and ammunition dumps at Arare. The total number of separate perimeters was to be drastically reduced and those left were to be strengthened. All units assigned defensive missions, especially the infantry elements, were to undertake intensive patrolling south of the Toem–Arare beachhead area.[47]

By nightfall redispositions had been completed. In contrast to the situation the previous night there were now only eight separate perimeters. One, held by the 2d Battalion (reinforced) of the 158th Infantry, was west of the Tor. General Patrick decided to keep the 2d Battalion, 163d Infantry, ashore during the night. Therefore, the 3d Battalion, 158th Infantry, did not move to Tementoe Creek but remained on the east bank of the Tor at the river's mouth. In the same perimeter were regimental headquarters and field artillery, antiaircraft, and engineer units. The next perimeter to the east was at the mouth of the Unnamed River, west of Arare. At the latter village and at Toem were other defensive positions. Another large perimeter stretched back along the beach from the mouth of Tementoe Creek. The antiaircraft gun positions, with but two exceptions, were well within the perimeters of

[44] 1st Bn 158th Inf Jnl, 11 May–21 Jun 44; TTF G–3 Jnl, 25–31 May 44.

[45] Rad, ALAMO to CRO GHQ SWPA (with info copy to TTF), WF–6416, 31 May 44, in TTF G–3 Jnl, 25–31 May 44; TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 25 May–12 Jun 44, p. 3.

[46] Ltr Order, CG TTF to CO 158th Inf, 31 May 44, and Rad, TTF to ALAMO, Y–667, 31 May 44, both in TTF G–3 Jnl, 25–31 May 44.

[47] Ltr, CO 158th Inf to CG TTF, 31 May 44, sub: Plan for Defense of Beachhead between the Tor and Tementoe Rivers, in TTF G–3 Jnl, 25–31 May 44.

larger units and the two exceptions were within 400 yards of supporting forces. The precautions taken by Colonel Sandlin were undoubtedly well advised, but in comparison with the previous night, the night of 31 May–1 June proved abnormally quiet.[48]

The Japanese Withdraw

On the morning of 1 June General Patrick was informed by ALAMO Force that the 2d Battalion, 163d Infantry, and the other remaining elements of the 163d Regimental Combat Team were not to leave for Biak until a regimental combat team from the 6th Infantry Division arrived at Toem. General Patrick, who by now considered that the Japanese operations on the south constituted a real threat to the TORNADO Task Force, decided to make no major changes in dispositions until the arrival of the 6th Division unit. Instead, for the next few days the task force further strengthened its positions in expectation of strong Japanese attacks.

But the *Yoshino* and *Matsuyama Forces* had already missed whatever chance they may have had to destroy the TORNADO Task Force in a piecemeal fashion. Apparently neither Colonel Yoshino nor Colonel Matsuyama could co-ordinate operations of the two arms of the double envelopment, and because of communication and supply difficulties and the distance involved, General Tagami, still ensconced in his command post in the Mt. Saksin area, could exercise no tactical control over the two forces, which could organize no more effective attacks. The Japanese, having suffered heavy losses in vain, now decided that further efforts to seize the Toem–Arare beachhead would be futile.

On 10 June the *Yoshino Force* started withdrawing southwest across the Tor to take up new positions in the Maffin Bay area. The *Matsuyama Force,* having difficulty reorganizing and collecting food, did not begin retiring westward until two days later. Meanwhile, the TORNADO Task Force had settled down to await the arrival of a combat team from the 6th Infantry Division before resuming offensive operations.[49]

While enemy attacks east of the Tor gradually stopped after 1 June, many small attacks had to be beaten back west of the river at the bridgehead held to 3 June by the 2d Battalion, 158th Infantry, and after that by the 3d Battalion. During the first week in June, all elements of the TORNADO Task Force undertook extensive patrolling which was productive of definite evidence that the entire *223d Infantry, 36th Division,* was in the Sarmi area.

Prior to the landings near Wakde on 17 May, the Allies had believed that only parts of the *223d* and *224th Infantry Regiments* were stationed in the Sarmi area, but shortly after D Day all three battalions of the *224th Infantry* had been accounted for. On the basis of this information and the discovery during the first week of June that the entire *223d Infantry* was also in the area, Allied intelligence officers raised their preassault estimates of Japanese strength from 6,500 men to 10,776—the latter estimate being remarkably close to the Japanese figure of 11,000. The Allies believed that of the original 10,000-odd less than 4,750 Japanese, including 3,500 combat troops, were still

[48] TTF Maps and Overlays, 25 May–12 Jun 44; TTF G–3 Jnl, 25–31 May 44; 158th Inf Jnl, 9 May–21 Jun 44.

[49] TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 25 May–12 Jun 44, p. 4; TTF G–3 Jnls, 25–31 May and 1–12 Jun 44; 158th Inf Jnl, 9 May–21 Jun 44; Opns of *Yuki Group,* pp. 16–18; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 25–29.

alive by the end of the week. According to Japanese sources, this estimate was low and should have read a total of 8,000 men and over 4,000 combat troops.[50]

The Relief of the 158th Infantry

General Patrick now believed, as Colonel Herndon had previously, that the enemy would maintain a strong defense against any new offensive westward from the Tor and considered it probable that resistance would center in the Lone Tree Hill area. He had already made plans to bypass that area by a shore-to-shore movement to Sarmi Peninsula, whence Lone Tree Hill could be attacked from the rear. This plan had been temporarily abandoned when the 163d Infantry left for Biak Island and the Japanese started their attacks east of the Tor. However, the new strength estimates, coupled with his belief that Lone Tree Hill and Hill 225 would be strongly held, prompted General Patrick to revive the bypassing plan. The imminent arrival of reinforcements from the 6th Division would, he thought, provide the troop strength necessary to carry out the maneuver.

The TORNADO Task Force commander planned to send one battalion to Sarmi Peninsula on 9 June and another the following day. Scouts had already landed on the peninsula and had reported it undefended. It therefore seemed possible that the proposed movement would meet with no opposition. Once the peninsula had been secured, the two battalions (both of which were to be from the 6th Division) were to move southeast down the coast ten miles to Lone Tree Hill. This movement was to be co-ordinated with a simultaneous drive westward from the Tor River by the 158th Infantry.[51]

Again, the shore-to-shore movement had to be postponed when it was discovered that necessary naval support vessels could not be made available because they were engaged in operations off Biak Island, 200 miles to the northwest. Then, when the 6th Division began to reach Toem on 5 June, that division's commander requested that none of his troops be employed offensively until at least two regimental combat teams were ashore and his men could become acquainted with the terrain and situation in the area. Finally, landing craft to be used in the bypassing maneuver had to be used to unload the large ships which brought the 6th Division to Toem.[52] The first units of the 6th Division to arrive in the Wakde–Sarmi area were the 1st Infantry Regiment and the 6th Engineer Battalion (C). The 1st Infantry immediately relieved that part of the 158th Infantry which was holding the Toem–Arare beachhead perimeter.

General Patrick, although he had canceled the amphibious movement to Sarmi Peninsula, now decided to resume the advance westward with the 158th Infantry moving overland from the Tor. This attack was to begin on the morning of 7 June. The first regimental objective was the Lone Tree

[50] TTF G–3 Jnl, 1–12 Jun 44; ALAMO G–2 Wkly Rpts, 44, 7 Jun, and 45, 14 Jun 44, copies in G–2 DofA files; Opns of *Yuki Group*, p. 13; Hist of *2d Area Army*, pp. 55–58; *2d Army* Opns, pp. 2–6.

[51] TTF Rpt, Wakde–Sarmi, 25 May–12 Jun 44, p. 9; Rad, TTF to ALAMO, Y–817, 3 Jun 44, in TTF G–3 Jnl, 1–12 Jun 44.

[52] *Ibid.*; Rad, ALAMO Adv Hq to TTF, WH–123, 4 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 3–4 Jun 44; Rads, TTF to ALAMO Adv Hq, Y–1116 and Y–1117, 11 Jun 44, in TTF G–3 Jnl, 1–12 Jun 44.

Hill–Hill 225 area, and the final objective was the Woske River, as it had been on 25 May.[53]

The 1st Battalion, 158th Infantry, crossed the Tor on 6 June and relieved the 3d Battalion, which moved back to the east bank, and the 2d Battalion joined the 1st on the next day. The enemy west of the Tor remained inactive on 7 June while the 1st and 2d Battalions patrolled toward Maffin No. 1 and made preparations to move westward in force the next morning. The 1st Battalion was to advance along the coastal road while the 2d, on the left, was to push cross-country in a deep enveloping maneuver south of the beach. The advance was to be cautious, and the progress of the 1st Battalion was to depend upon that of the 2d. All units were to halt at 1600 each day to begin organizing night defensive positions.[54]

Both the 1st and 2d Battalions, 158th Infantry, jumped off in the attack at 0830 hours, 8 June.[55] The advance was supported by a platoon of the 603d Tank Company and was preceded by a brief concentration fired by the 167th Field Artillery. During most of the morning there was little opposition. About 1100, however, enemy rifle and machine gun fire began forcing the 2d Battalion back toward the main road, and Company E, south of the main body of the battalion, lost contact with the rest of the attacking force for two or three hours.

After 1200, resistance also began to stiffen on the 1st Battalion's front. The attack bogged down at a line of bunkers and pillboxes which guarded the coastal road just west of the small lakes 1,500 yards east of the Tirfoam. These defensive positions had been constructed, repaired, or reoccupied since the last time the 158th Infantry had covered the same terrain. Tank support was requested. Two tanks arrived at the front late in the afternoon and soon reduced the pillboxes, but by the time this mission had been accomplished, it was time to start digging in for the night. The 1st Battalion set up its defenses along the line of destroyed positions and extended its perimeter from the road north to the beach. The 2d Battalion, reassembled on the road by 1600, refused the south flank. Casualties during the day had been 4 men killed and 13 wounded, while 27 Japanese had been killed and 1 captured. A quantity of enemy arms and ammunition had also been seized.

The night passed without incident and early on 9 June patrols began to probe westward toward the Tirfoam. Scouts reported that the Japanese were holding another defense line, including reoccupied bunkers, on a slight rise at the west bank of the river. About 1000 hours, tank-infantry teams began to destroy the Japanese-held positions along the new line. While tank 75-mm. fire was destroying bunkers or forcing the Japanese to seek cover, infantrymen crept forward to toss grenades into bunker gun ports or shoot down Japanese who tried to escape from the area. While these tank-infantry team operations were taking place, the rest of the two infantry battalions rested. Japanese 75-mm. fire, from a weapon emplaced on the beach between the Snaky River and

---

[53] 1st Inf S–3 Per Rpt 1, 5 Jun 44, in TTF G–3 Jnl, 1–12 Jun 44; Rad, TTF to ALAMO, Y–911, 6 Jun 44, in TTF G–2 Jnl, 1–12 Jun 44; TTF FO 3, 6 Jun 44, filed in TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 25 May–12 Jun 44.

[54] TTF FO 3, 6 Jun 44; 1st Bn 158 Inf Jnl, 11 May–21 Jun 44; 158th Inf Jnl, 9 May–21 Jun 44; 158th RCT Opns Rpt Sarmi–Wakde, 11 May–21 Jun 44, p. 9.

[55] Information in the remainder of this section is from: 1st Bn 158th Inf Jnl, 11 May–21 Jun 44; 2d Bn 158th Inf Jnl, 9 May–21 Jun 44; TTF G–3 Jnl, 1–12 Jun 44; 158th Inf Jnl, 9 May–21 Jun 44; 158th RCT Opns Rpt Sarmi–Wakde, pp. 9–10; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 23–24.

Lone Tree Hill, harassed the 1st Battalion for a while, but this fire was summarily stopped when a 155-mm. howitzer of the 218th Field Artillery Battalion scored a direct hit on the enemy piece.

By 1130 the enemy defensive positions had been cleaned out and the 1st and 2d Battalions resumed the advance westward. Aided by fire from the 147th Field Artillery, which had supplanted the 167th in the close support role, the two infantry units probed cautiously forward, and it was not until 1530 that both reached the east bank of the Tirfoam. Opposition was scattered, but the American units lost 6 men killed and 6 wounded. It was estimated that 50 of the enemy had been killed and one was captured.

Undoubtedly the 158th Infantry could have crossed the Tirfoam River during the afternoon, but, late in the morning, the unit's mission had been changed as a result of new orders from General Krueger, who planned to employ the 158th Infantry for an assault on Noemfoor Island, 300 miles northwest of Sarmi, in late June or early July. It was necessary that the unit be prepared to move from Wakde–Sarmi on short notice and General Krueger ordered General Patrick not to involve it deeply in offensive operations. Advances west of the Tirfoam had therefore been postponed until a second combat team of the 6th Division could arrive in the area to relieve the 158th Infantry.

On 10 and 11 June the 158th Infantry limited its activities to patrolling, consolidating defensive positions, and driving Japanese outposts westward. One outpost, lying southeast of the 2d Battalion, was manned by about a hundred Japanese and had to be cleared by tank fire and infantry assault. The Japanese, who were members of a *223d Infantry* company assigned to the *Right Sector Force,* fled toward Mt. Saksin, leaving behind 4 heavy machine guns, 1 light machine gun, 2 70-mm. howitzers, and 1 37-mm. antitank gun. Patrolling after the 11th was productive of one strange piece of enemy equipment—a pair of Japanese ice skates.

On 14 June the 20th Infantry, 6th Division, relieved the 158th Infantry at the Tirfoam. The 158th recrossed the Tor and went into a defensive perimeter on the west bank of Tementoe Creek. Patrols sent south and east during the next week encountered a few stragglers from the Japanese garrison at Hollandia or from the *Matsuyama Force.* On the 22d the entire regimental combat team was relieved of all combat responsibility in the Wakde–Sarmi area and began final preparations for the Noemfoor Island operation.

During its operations in the Wakde–Sarmi area the 158th Regimental Combat Team lost 70 men killed, 257 wounded, and 4 missing. The unit took 11 Japanese prisoners and estimated that it killed 920 of the enemy.

CHAPTER XI

Lone Tree Hill and Beyond

The 6th Division's 20th Infantry, together with the 6th Medical Battalion, the 1st and 51st Field Artillery Battalions, and miscellaneous other division units arrived at Toem on 11 June. The 1st Infantry and the 6th Engineers were already in the area and the rest of the division, including the 63d Infantry and the 80th Field Artillery Battalion, began unloading on 14 June. With the 11 June convoy had come the division commander, Maj. Gen. Franklin C. Sibert, and his headquarters. Under General Sibert's command the TORNADO Task Force was to continue the drive westward toward Sarmi. The capture of Sarmi and the destruction of Japanese forces west of the Tor River were to be accomplished rapidly, for plans were already being made by ALAMO Force to employ the 6th Division in another operation which, scheduled for late July, involved seizure of an air-base site on the northwestern tip of the Vogelkop Peninsula.[1]

The 6th Division Against Lone Tree Hill

General Sibert assumed command of the TORNADO Task Force on 12 June.[2] His first problem was to get the various units of the 6th Division unloaded. The division had been hastily and unsystematically loaded at Milne Bay, in eastern New Guinea, because the ships which were to carry it to Toem arrived at Milne Bay so late that comprehensive loading plans could neither be made nor executed. Moreover, the Toem beaches were mediocre, unloading and storing facilities inadequate, and lighterage was insufficient. Unloading therefore proceeded very slowly, and the 20th Infantry had to borrow many crew-served weapons from the 158th Infantry before it could relieve the latter unit at the Tirfoam.[3]

The Objective

General Sibert believed that it would be tactically and logistically unsound for his division to engage in offensive action until all its units were unloaded, settled, and acquainted with the combat area. Therefore he planned to have the 1st Infantry mop up south of Toem and Arare until unloading

[1] TTF G–3 Jnl, 1–12 Jun 44; Ltr, OI, Comdr ALAMO Force to CG 6th Inf Div, 10 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 10–11 Jun 44; Rad, ALAMO Rear Hq to ALAMO Adv Hq, WF–3060, 15 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 15–16 Jun 44.

[2] On the same date Headquarters, 6th Infantry Division, began operating as Headquarters, TORNADO Task Force, in place of Headquarters, 158th Regimental Combat Team, which had held that role since it, in turn, had replaced Headquarters, 163d Regimental Combat Team, on 25 May.

[3] Rad, TTF to ALAMO Adv Hq, Y–1117, 11 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 11–13 Jun 44; Ltr, Gen Sibert to Gen Krueger, 18 Jun 44, in ALAMO Rear Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 27–31 Jul 44. While in command of the TORNADO Task Force, General Sibert wrote almost daily personal letters to General Krueger.

was complete, and he instructed the 20th Infantry to limit its action to sending patrols west of the Tirfoam to locate enemy defenses. After the 20th received its own equipment, it would push westward in conjunction with a series of battalion shore-to-shore movements along the coast toward Sarmi. General Sibert's staff estimated that unloading, mopping up, and patrolling would be completed in time for the 20th Infantry to begin a major offensive on 1 July.[4]

General Krueger would not sanction such a delay in initiating an advance westward. Surf, beach, and terrain conditions in the Toem–Arare area had proved unsatisfactory for the establishment of a staging base, but it was known that the shore of Maffin Bay afforded better conditions. General Krueger realized that quick control over the Maffin Bay area was necessary if the theater were to make any use of the Wakde–Sarmi region as a staging base. On 18 June he therefore ordered General Sibert to start an immediate offensive, and the latter accordingly changed his plans.

The 1st Infantry was instructed to relieve 20th Infantry elements at the Tor bridgehead, and the 20th Infantry was directed to concentrate at the Tirfoam in time to attack westward on 20 June. The initial objective was the Lone Tree Hill–Hill 225 area, but the advance was to continue until all Japanese in the coastal area between the Tirfoam and Sarmi town had been destroyed or dispersed inland.[5]

The 158th Infantry had spent but four days in the vicinity of Lone Tree Hill and had not been able to explore the terrain thoroughly.[6] Such information as the regiment had acquired was turned over to the 6th Infantry Division but proved sketchy and not altogether accurate. Beginning on 21 June, the 20th Infantry was to gain a new and more detailed picture of the Lone Tree Hill area.

At the top of Lone Tree Hill was a stretch of rough but generally level ground lying mostly along the western part of the hill. This flat ground, about 700 yards long north to south, was shaped like a crude dumbbell. At its northern end, the level area was about 300 yards wide. It narrowed at the center of the hill to less than 100 yards but broadened again on the south to a width of about 250 yards. There were many coral outcroppings, potholes, and small crevices, while on the north the hill terminated in a very rugged prominence called Rocky Point. This terrain feature, which extended into Maffin Bay from the central mass of Lone Tree Hill, was about 300 yards wide east to west. Its northern face was not as heavily overgrown

[4] Rads, TTF to ALAMO Adv Hq, Y–1116 and Y–1117, 11 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 11–13 Jun 44; Rad, ALAMO Rear Hq to ALAMO Adv Hq, WF–3060, 15 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 15–16 Jun 44.

[5] Rad, ALAMO to TTF, WH–3478, 18 Jun 44, in TTF G–2 Jnl, 12–23 Jun 44; Ltr, Sibert to Krueger, 18 Jun 44, in ALAMO Rear Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 27–31 Jul 44; Rad, TTF to ALAMO, Y–1268, 18 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 18–19 Jun 44; TTF FO 7, 18 Jun 44, in TTF, FO's and Daily Opnl Orders, 13 Jun–18 Jul 44; TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 12 Jun–18 Jul 44, p. 10.

[6] Terrain information in the rest of this section is compiled from: TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 12 Jun–18 Jul 44, pp. 2–4; Sketches in TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 12 Jun–18 Jul 44; Ltrs, Sibert to Krueger, 18 and 26 Jun 44, in ALAMO Rear Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 27–31 Jul 44; Ltrs and atchd sketches, Sibert to Krueger, 27, 28, and 29 Jun 44, in ALAMO Rear Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 17–20 Jul 44; G–2 TTF, Rpt to Comdr TTF, 26 Jun 44, in ALAMO Rear Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 27–31 Jul 44; Rad, TTF to ALAMO Adv Hq, no number, 26 Jun 44, in TTF G–2 Jnl, 24 Jun–2 Jul 44. The past tense is used in the description because the terrain was extensively changed by air, naval, and artillery bombardment and by engineer demolitions and construction.

as the rest of Lone Tree Hill. Although Rocky Point's northeast slope was steep, foot troops could climb that face with more ease than they could approach the top of Lone Tree Hill from most other points.

A deep ravine ran southwest into the central mass of Lone Tree Hill from a sandy beach on the east side of Rocky Point. The floor of the ravine varied from 20 to 30 yards in width and its nearly vertical western wall was 40 to 50 feet high. Both sides were honeycombed with natural or man-made tunnels, caverns, and small caves, most of which were connected with each other by underground or deeply defiladed passages. Some caves reached a width of 40 feet, a depth into the hillside of 50 feet, and a height of 20 feet. The ravine terminated on the eastern slope of Lone Tree Hill in a steep grade at the narrow central portion of the hilltop.

East of the ravine and extending to the west bank of the Snaky was an oval-shaped, low, and generally flat shelf about 250 yards wide east to west and almost 450 yards long. Its eastern and northern sides lay about 20 feet above the surrounding sea-level plain. The approaches from the beach or the Snaky River were very steep and in places were sheer, low cliffs. On its southwestern side the shelf led to precipitous grades reaching to the top of Lone Tree Hill. South of the narrow section of the hilltop plateau these grades flattened into a wide draw with gradual slopes.

West of Rocky Point was a beach not more than twenty feet deep, behind which was a vertical rock and clay ledge varying from three to five feet in height. Between the ledge and the western face of Lone Tree Hill was a heavily forested swampy area extending more than 300 yards inland. The western face of the hill was an almost vertical cliff, 60 to 80 feet high, and was rock-faced but covered with heavy jungle undergrowth. The steepest part, about 700 yards long, gave way at the southwest corner of Lone Tree Hill to less precipitous heavily forested slopes extending through the defile between Lone Tree Hill and Hill 225.

Lone Tree Hill contained a veritable maze of Japanese defenses. There were many caves and bunkers on the western cliff—positions which were hidden from ground observers by tall trees or undergrowth on the cliff face. There were also a few pillboxes or bunkers in the swampy area between the cliff and the beach west of Rocky Point. Two 75-mm. field pieces, defiladed by rocky outcroppings, were emplaced by the enemy on this beach. On the face of Rocky Point and on the rocky shore below were other defensive positions and at least one other artillery piece. In the ravine east of Rocky Point were five 75-mm. mountain guns hidden in various caves or crevices. Although none of these guns could be traversed, they were so emplaced that they covered most of the northwestern, northern, and northeastern land and sea approaches to Lone Tree Hill.

On the hilltop plateau Japanese defensive positions included log and earth dugouts which, presenting low silhouettes and covered with undergrowth, were very difficult to locate. Atop the hill rough holes were also dug under or between the roots of large trees. Some of these defenses were arranged in lines across the ravine and wide draw leading to the hilltop from the northeast and east, respectively. One of the most troublesome installations was a Japanese observation post at the northern part of the hilltop plateau. This post, about one hundred feet off the ground in the branches of a huge tree, was sturdily constructed and cleverly

camouflaged. It had withstood air, naval, and artillery bombardments aimed at Lone Tree Hill prior to 20 June. From the post the Japanese could observe movements along the main road to the east of Lone Tree Hill, the entire beach area from Sarmi to Arare, and maneuvers on most of the hill itself.

Information available to the TORNADO Task Force on 20 June indicated that Lone Tree Hill was defended by 700 to 800 Japanese. Most of these troops were believed to be members of the *3d Battalion, 224th Infantry,* plus a few men and weapons of *36th Division* artillery—75-mm. mountain guns.[7] The strength estimate was reasonably accurate—there were actually near 850 Japanese on the hill—but it did not take into account the Japanese south of Lone Tree Hill on Hill 225 and the eastern nose of Mt. Saksin, from which enemy troops could move rapidly to reinforce Lone Tree Hill and from which they could defend the southern approaches to that hill. Moreover, there were elements of many more *36th Division* units in the immediate Lone Tree Hill area. (*Map V*)

Command in the area was exercised by *Headquarters, Right Sector Force,* now under Colonel Matsuyama of the *224th Infantry* who, as his regiment arrived west of the Tor, took over the sector command from Major Matsuoka. By 20 June the troops on Lone Tree Hill proper comprised the *1st Battalion, 224th Infantry,* less one company; the remnants of Captain Saito's 300-man company of *3d Battalion, 224th Infantry,* riflemen and *36th Division* artillerymen (Captain Saito had long since been killed); probably a company from the *3d Battalion, 223d Infantry;* elements of the *16th Field Airdrome Construction Unit; 36th Division* artillery weapons and crews; and, finally, a few men of antiaircraft and service units who had been armed as auxiliary infantry. South of Lone Tree Hill, on Hill 225 and the eastern nose of Mt. Saksin, were emplaced most of the rest of the *224th Infantry,* the bulk of the *16th Field Airdrome Construction Unit,* probably another company of the *223d Infantry,* and an antiaircraft battery converted to infantry. The total Japanese strength in the Lone Tree Hill–Hill 225–eastern nose area was probably at least 1,800 men. The *1st Company, 224th Infantry,* down to about 30 men, was initially left east of the Tor to conduct reconnaissance and guerrilla warfare around the TORNADO Task Force beach positions, but moved across the river some time after 20 June to rejoin the rest of the *Right Sector Force.* Two companies of the *2d Battalion, 224th Infantry,* were between the Tirfoam and the Tor, with instructions to harass the Allied line of communications along the coastal road west from the Tor.

About the same time that Colonel Matsuyama assumed command of the *Right Sector Force,* the *Yoshino Force* and the new *Yuki Group* were apparently disbanded as such and combined to form a new *Central Sector Force* under Colonel Yoshino, the commander of the *223d Infantry.* Colonel Yoshino's new sector ran west from the west side of Lone Tree Hill to the old western boundary at Sawar Creek, where the *Left Sector Force,* still under General Yamada, took up. Except for the one or two companies assigned to the *Right Sector Force,* Colonel Yoshino's entire *223d Infantry* was assigned to the *Central Sector Force.* Also under his command were various artillery, antiaircraft, and service units,

[7] Rad, TTF to ALAMO Adv Hq, Y–1268, 18 Jun 44, in TTF G–2 Jnl, 12–23 Jun 44.

including whatever was left of the *103d Field Airdrome Construction Unit.* The remnants of the *51st Field Road Construction Unit,* formerly attached to the *224th Infantry,* were sent to the area of the *Left Sector Force.* The bulk of Colonel Yoshino's troops were on the western slopes of Mt. Saksin, although some were in defensive positions along the coast immediately west of Lone Tree Hill. The strength of the force was about 2,000 men.[8]

To the Top of Lone Tree Hill

The attack west from the Tirfoam River jumped off on schedule at 0800 on 20 June. The 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, moved along the main coastal road. The 3d Battalion followed closely, while the 2d remained in reserve at Maffin No. 1. Shortly after 1200 the 1st Battalion, having encountered no opposition, reached the Snaky River. Company B pushed on toward the village at the entrance to the defile between Lone Tree Hill and the eastern nose of Mt. Saksin. This advance was greeted by a hail of fire from Japanese automatic weapons emplaced in the defile—fire reminiscent of the opposition encountered by Company B, 158th Infantry, at the same place more than three weeks earlier.[9]

The 20th Infantry's Company B tried to outflank the enemy position to the south but was halted by intense Japanese machine gun fire. Tanks sent forward to aid the infantry were unable to reach the enemy guns because the terrain was impassable to tracked or wheeled vehicles, which could scarcely negotiate the rough road, let alone the thick jungle and rising ground to the south. Late in the afternoon Company A was sent forward to Company B's position, but both units encountered heavy fire and soon lost contact with the rest of the 1st Battalion. The two companies remained for the night in an isolated perimeter near the village and about 400 yards west of the main body.

The 3d Battalion had moved north off the coastal road during the morning, and late in the afternoon it had established a perimeter extending south 200 yards from the beach along the east bank of the Snaky River. The battalion had encountered little opposition during the day, but patrols which had crossed the Snaky before dark reported finding many Japanese defensive positions on the eastern slopes of Lone Tree Hill. A gap which existed between the 1st and 3d Battalions was partially filled just before nightfall by elements of the 2d Battalion, which were sent forward late in the afternoon. Casualties during the day were four killed and twenty-eight wounded.

The 1st and 3d Battalions, 1st Infantry, moved across the Tor River in the morning of 20 June and took over the positions in the vicinity of Maffin No. 1 vacated by the 20th Infantry. The 2d Battalion, 1st Infantry, assumed responsibility for the protection of the bridgehead across the Tor. The regiment was to remain east of the Tirfoam in reserve on 21 June while the 20th Infantry moved on against Lone Tree Hill.[10]

Operations of the 20th Infantry during the morning of 21 June consisted principally of patrolling designed to locate enemy strong points on and around Lone Tree Hill.[11] The

[8] Opns of *Yuki Group,* pp. 16–18; *2d Army* Opns, pp. 3–6; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), p. 30 and Sketch 11.

[9] 20th Inf S–3 Per Rpts, 14 Jun–16 Aug 44; TTF G–3 Jnl, 12 Jun–18 Jul 44.

[10] *Ibid.;* 1st Inf S–3 Per Rpts, 11 Jun–16 Jul 44.

[11] Information in the rest of this section is from: Ltr, Sibert to Krueger, 23 Jun 44, in ALAMO Rear Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 27–31 Jul 44; TTF G–2 Jnl, 12–23 Jun 44; TTF G–3 Jnl, 12 Jun–18 Jul 44; 1st Inf S–3 Per Rpts, 11 Jun–16 Jul 44; 20th

1st and 3d Battalions undertook most of this scouting while the remainder of the 2d Battalion, together with the regimental Antitank Company, closed up on the 1st. Companies A and B moved south of the main road through the defile toward Hill 225, and both units encountered strong opposition. By the end of the day the 1st Battalion's positions were essentially the same as they had been in the morning, except that Company B was south of the road and about 600 yards distant from the rest of the battalion. The battalion's mission was primarily defensive: to probe Japanese defenses on the southern side of Lone Tree Hill and protect the south flank of the 2d and 3d Battalions as the latter units assaulted the hill.

Patrols of the 3d Battalion reached the northeast face of Lone Tree Hill during the morning and observed enemy activity on the rough beach below Rocky Point. Other patrols, working toward the eastern slopes of the hill, brought back negative reports which contradicted those obtained at dusk the previous afternoon. However, as a result of these negative reports, it was decided that the 3d Battalion should attack in force during the afternoon. At 1345, after a fifteen-minute artillery and 4.2-inch mortar preparation, one company moved across the Snaky River, immediately finding the twenty-foot cliff along the eastern side of the shelf which lay between the Snaky River and the central mass of Lone Tree Hill. The morning patrols had not, apparently, reported the existence of this cliff, and naturally it was not known that Japanese defenses were established along it. Machine gun and rifle fire from the *1st Battalion, 224th Infantry,* soon pinned down the 3d Battalion's leading platoon.

The company commander quickly sent part of his unit northward to find the Japanese left flank. Moving around the northeast end of the shelf, this group discovered the beach entrance to the deep ravine between the western side of the shelf and Rocky Point. Progress into or across the ravine was impossible in the face of the intense Japanese small arms fire which greeted the advancing American unit. Company B, 6th Engineers, then in the forward area to cut a road from the mouth of the Snaky River to Rocky Point, was brought up to the ravine to help clean out caves and crevices with flame throwers and demolitions, but could not reach the enemy positions through the continued machine gun, mortar, and rifle fire. Infantry bazooka squads also tried to blast the Japanese out of their caves but failed when their ammunition ran out. Since there was no time to bring additional rockets forward before dark, all elements of the 3d Battalion and the engineer company were withdrawn to the east bank of the Snaky River for the night. The 20th Infantry was to continue the assault on the morrow with the 3d Battalion moving against Lone Tree Hill from the northeast, the 2d Battalion in reserve, and the 1st Battalion remaining in its holding position.

American casualties during the day were two men killed and twenty-four wounded. Initially it was thought that some of these casualties had been caused by friendly mortar fire covering the 3d Battalion's patrolling. Later investigation proved, however, that the losses had been caused by enemy fire. Japanese artillery and mortars usually remained silent throughout the fighting on

---

Inf S–3 Per Rpts, 14 Jun–16 Aug 44; TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 12 Jun–18 Jul 44, pp. 5–6; 6th Inf Div Arty Opns Rpt Sarmi–Maffin Bay, 11 Jun–17 Jul 44, pp. 3–4; 20th Inf, The Battle of Lone Tree Hill, n. d., copy in OCMH files. Enemy information is from *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 30–31.

Lone Tree Hill except when American mortars and artillery began firing. The psychological effect of this trick on the troops of the 6th Division was obvious, and for a long while they thought that part of their losses resulted from friendly fire. It is probable that many Japanese were killed during the day but, because of the confused nature of the fighting along the cliff on the eastern shelf and in the ravine, the 3d Battalion could attempt no estimate of Japanese losses in its zone. The 1st Battalion estimated that its patrols south of Lone Tree Hill had killed about thirty-five of the enemy.

Task force artillery and the 20th Infantry's 81-mm. mortars fired on Lone Tree Hill intermittently throughout the night, concentrating on the Rocky Point area. Operations on 22 June started at 0800 when eighteen Wakde-based P–47's strafed Lone Tree Hill, dropped full belly tanks, and set them afire. The air action, which ceased at 0820, was followed by an intense artillery concentration, of ten minutes' duration, fired by two 105-mm. and one 155-mm. howitzer battalions. The artillery sent 720 rounds of 105-mm. ammunition and 360 rounds of 155-mm. shells into an area 400 yards wide and 600 long on the northeast side of the hill.

Infantry action started about 0830 with Company K, two platoons abreast, leading the advance and Company I following close behind. Company K approached the hill from the northeast and from a point on the beach just west of the deep ravine. Only scattered rifle fire marked the first part of the ascent, for the Japanese were stunned by the weight of the preparatory air and artillery fire. About 1115 the advance platoons had to seek cover from enemy light mortar, machine gun, and rifle fire, most of which seemed to originate in caves and crevices along the sides of the ravine. Company I, which had been waiting in reserve on the beach, was now dispatched up the hill to reinforce Company K. The combined fire power of the two units was sufficient to drive the Japanese back into their caves, and the assault companies reached the top of Lone Tree Hill just south of Rocky Point at 1240.

Company L, about 0930, had begun an attempt to reach the top of the hill from the southeast corner. The company passed through 1st Battalion units near the village at the entrance to the defile and pushed northwestward. Japanese infantrymen were seen moving about near the village, and Company M's 81-mm. mortars were called upon to protect Company L's rear by lobbing shells into the hamlet. Four tanks were also brought forward along the main road to aid in clearing the village and the ground between the settlement and Company L. Since marshy terrain and heavy undergrowth prevented the tanks from accomplishing their mission, Company F was called forward and attached to Company L to protect the latter's flanks and rear.

Together the two companies tried to force their way up the southeast slope of Lone Tree Hill, but they were subjected to intense machine gun and rifle fire from the northwest, west, and southwest. The two units thereupon withdrew from that face, moved back to the eastern edge of the oval shelf, and marched north to the point at which Companies K and I had started up the hill. Company F followed K's route to the hilltop, meeting little opposition on the way. Company L pushed across the ravine about 200 yards south of F's line of march and, since the Japanese remained hidden in the ravine's many caves, had little difficulty reaching the top of the hill. By 1500 Companies

F, I, K, L, and part of Company M had established a common perimeter near the north end of the hilltop.

The 2d Battalion, 20th Infantry, relieved during the morning by the 2d Battalion of the 1st Infantry, had been sent forward about 1400 to complete the occupation of Lone Tree Hill. Following the route employed by Companies F and L in the forenoon, the battalion (less Company F) moved across the southern end of the shelf and along the southeastern slope. Advancing cautiously through heavily forested, tangled terrain, at 1700 the battalion reached the head of the wide draw which led to the narrow central part of the hilltop. Little opposition was encountered and the battalion moved up the hill and along the hill crest to a point about 400 yards south of the 3d Battalion. Increasingly strong enemy opposition made it impossible to close the gap between the two before dark. Hasty positions were set up for the night defenses.

Despite the fact that part of Company K had been temporarily pinned down by enemy fire during the morning, neither that unit nor Company I had had any real difficulty reaching the top of Lone Tree Hill. Companies F and L, after they had changed their direction of attack, had also made their way to the top against negligible opposition, and the 2d Battalion had been delayed more by the terrain than by enemy action. For the second day in succession the task force commander had reason to believe that the Lone Tree Hill area was not strongly held, and he expected that the hill would be secured shortly.

The 3d Battalion, during the afternoon, found indications that the Japanese had other plans. The battalion perimeter was within sight of the enemy's observation post, which was almost continuously manned although four or five Japanese were shot out of it in the course of the afternoon. So close was the observation post to the 3d Battalion's perimeter that friendly artillery was unable to fire on it, but well-directed enemy artillery fire, which harassed the 20th Infantry's rear installations, indicated that the Japanese were putting their observers to good use. There was also some reason to suspect that the many caves and crevices along the ravine and Rocky Point contained numerous enemy troops who had apparently deliberately permitted the 3d Battalion to reach the top of the hill without offering serious battle.

The suspicion proved well founded. About 1730 approximately two companies of Japanese, under the personal leadership of Colonel Matsuyama, poured out of hidden positions on Rocky Point or in the ravine and fell upon the 3d Battalion's perimeter with suicidal fury. Confused fighting, sometimes hand-to-hand, continued well into the night, until it was thought that every Japanese soldier in the northern section of Lone Tree Hill must have been killed. Although the 2d Battalion's positions were not attacked, the unit could not move to the 3d Battalion's aid. Such a maneuver would have been foolhardy in the darkness and tangled undergrowth, and the 2d soon found that it, too, was surrounded. Thus, by 2400, the Japanese had completely reversed the tactical situation atop Lone Tree Hill. Early in the afternoon the 20th Infantry had been at the Japanese rear. Now the enemy was at the 20th Infantry's rear, had isolated both the 2d and 3d Battalions of that regiment, and had cut all lines of communication to the base of the hill.

Casualties on the 22d could not be counted because of the confusion resulting from the night attack. However, it was esti-

mated that about 30 Americans had been killed and another 100 wounded, most of them in the 3d Battalion, before the enemy attack waned at midnight. There were but 40 known Japanese dead, the majority of whom had been counted by 1st Battalion patrols on the southern side of Lone Tree Hill. The number of the enemy killed by the 3d Battalion after 1730 could not be estimated, but it is known that Colonel Matsuyama was wounded during the action.

Holding Lone Tree Hill

The 3d Battalion expected that the enemy withdrawal during the night presaged reorganization for another attack.[12] This expectation was correct, for Colonel Matsuyama did have plans to continue the attack. On the 22d the two companies of the *2d Battalion, 224th Infantry,* which had been east of the Tirfoam, had arrived to reinforce him, as had the *7th Company* of the same regiment, previously on detached duty at an inland post.

Action on the 23d began at dawn when Japanese troops, some of whom were using American weapons and wearing parts of American uniforms, attacked the 2d Battalion, 20th Infantry, from the deep ravine. The battalion initially held its fire, thinking that the enemy force might be a friendly patrol, and the Japanese were able to advance to within fifteen yards of the battalion lines before being recognized. It was an hour before the results of this error could be corrected—an hour during which both the 2d Battalion and the Japanese suffered heavy losses. The hour ended with an enemy retreat.

At 0800 the 2d Battalion was instructed to make contact with the 3d, clear the Japanese from the rest of the northern section of the hilltop plateau, and form a two-battalion perimeter. Moving north along the hill crest soon proved impracticable, for the Japanese held strong positions in the 400-yard interval which still separated the two battalions. The 2d Battalion therefore decided to bypass the opposition. The unit marched back down the hill, crossed the oval shelf, and turned north along the west bank of the Snaky. About 250 yards south of the beach, the battalion turned west and, at 1000, was held up by enemy fire from the same twenty-foot-high cliff which had stalled the 3d Battalion's attack on 21 June.

The 2d Battalion then withdrew from the cliff north to the beach east of Rocky Point and reorganized. At 1120 the movement up Lone Tree Hill was resumed, this time along the same route employed by Companies I and K on the previous day. The advance was opposed by enemy machine gun, mortar, artillery, and rifle fire, but the 2d Battalion, with Company G suffering especially "heavy casualties," [13] slowly fought its way upward by fire and movement. At 1400 the leading elements began reaching the top of the hill, but it was not until 1630 that the battalion had assembled in an organized perimeter. The new position was just northwest of the 3d Battalion's lines, overlooked the west cliff of Lone Tree Hill, and appar-

[12] Sources for this section are: Ltr, Sibert to Krueger, 23 Jun 44, in ALAMO Rear Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 27–31 Jul 44; TTF G–2 Jnls, 12–23 Jun and 24 Jun–2 Jul 44; TTF G–3 Jnl, 12 Jun–18 Jul 44; 1st Inf S–3 Per Rpts, 11 Jun–16 Jul 44; 20th Inf S–3 Per Rpts, 14 Jun–16 Aug 44; TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 12 Jun–18 Jul 44, pp. 6–8; 6th Inf Div Arty Opns Rpt Sarmi–Maffin Bay, 11 Jun–17 Jul 44, pp. 4–6; Rad, TTF to ALAMO Adv Hq, Y–1268, 18 Jun 44, in TTF G–2 Jnl, 12–23 Jun 44; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 31–32, 34, 41.

[13] This statement is from a 20th Infantry S–3 Periodic Report, but exact figures are not available.

ently was not connected with the 3d Battalion perimeter. The latter unit had held and strengthened its positions during the morning while it sought cover from continuous Japanese mortar and rifle fire and awaited the arrival of reinforcements before beginning mopping-up operations.

The 3d Battalion had received few supplies since reaching the top of Lone Tree Hill on 22 June. The unit had run out of water, and only a heavy rainfall during the night of 22–23 June had prevented thirst from becoming a major problem. To relieve this situation Company L, 1st Infantry, was ordered to take ammunition, water, and rations to the hilltop plateau. The company received the order late on 22 June but managed to move only as far as the northeastern corner of Rocky Point before dark. At 0800 the next morning the relief company started up the hill, meeting little opposition until it reached the top of Rocky Point. There it was pinned down as Japanese forces moved in behind it to cut the line of communication down the hill. Company L soon ran out of ammunition for, in addition to the supplies, the men had carried to the hilltop only their loaded weapons, with no extra ammunition. Despite help from elements of the Antitank and Service Companies, 20th Infantry, Company L was able to maintain only intermittent contact with the 3d Battalion, 20th Infantry.

It was not until late afternoon, after the 2d Battalion, 20th Infantry, had arrived atop Lone Tree Hill that Company L, 1st Infantry, was relieved. By that time the company had suffered many casualties and had lost much of the matériel it had been carrying up the hill. Neither the 2d nor 3d Battalions, 20th Infantry, received appreciable amounts of supplies during the day, and only the heroic efforts of small volunteer groups kept these units supplied with enough food and ammunition to carry on the fight. The 1st Infantry, to support the operations of the small carrying parties, sent two machine gun platoons and two 37-mm. antitank guns forward to the foot of Rocky Point. With this cover the supply groups managed to fight their various ways up and down the hill and evacuated 300 wounded men during the day.

The evening of 23 June brought another *224th Infantry* counterattack which was aimed at both the 2d and 3d Battalions' perimeters. These attacks came from the east side of Lone Tree Hill, the Japanese apparently having moved around the north side of the hill along Rocky Point. The initial assault culminated in a bayonet charge, which was repulsed by rifle and machine gun fire with heavy losses to the Japanese. Despite this defeat, small groups of the enemy continued suicidal attacks throughout the night of 23–24 June.

It would probably have been much easier to bypass Lone Tree Hill, isolate it, and starve out the Japanese garrison, but there were two reasons why General Sibert did not do so. First, as long as the Japanese held Lone Tree Hill, which dominated the Maffin Bay area, the shores of that bay could not be safely employed for a staging area. Second, operations from 20 to 22 June had apparently convinced the task force commander that Lone Tree Hill was not strongly held, and he had therefore ordered the frontal assault. That this estimate was in error was realized when dawn of 23 June brought with it the information that the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 20th Infantry were cut off atop Lone Tree Hill. When the hill had still not been captured by dark on 23 June the general decided to outflank it by a shore-to-shore maneuver and then con-

tinue the attack from both west and east. He ordered the 1st Infantry, reinforced by the 6th Reconnaissance Troop, to seize the beach just west of Rocky Point on the morning of 24 June. The regiment was to clean out the western side of Lone Tree Hill and prevent any more Japanese reinforcements from reaching it.

For the shore-to-shore maneuver, the 1st Infantry chose Companies K and I. Company K boarded ten LVT's at the beach near the Tirfoam River and moved to the west side of Rocky Point. The LVT's were protected by the 6th Reconnaissance Troop aboard thirteen LVT(A)'s armed with 37-mm. guns. Both groups of amphibian vehicles were fired on by Japanese 75-mm. guns emplaced on Rocky Point, but Company K made a safe landing at 0900 hours. Attempting to move inland, the company was immediately pinned down on the narrow beach by enemy fire of all types which originated along the west face of Lone Tree Hill and Rocky Point.

The LVT's, again protected by the LVT(A)'s, made a return trip with Company I, 1st Infantry, which landed on the right of Company K at 1200. About 1330 four tanks of Company C, 44th Tank Battalion, transported by LCT's, arrived at the hard-pressed beachhead, which was subjected to ever increasing machine gun and rifle fire. Upon their arrival the tanks covered the evacuation of wounded and the landing of supplies by firing on Japanese positions in the swampy woods between the beach and the west cliff of Lone Tree Hill. One LVT, loaded with wounded men, was sunk about 175 yards off Rocky Point by Japanese 75-mm. fire. All the men were rescued by an LVT(A), which succeeded in silencing the enemy artillery weapon.

Companies I and K were unable to make any progress inland. Japanese defensive positions in the swampy woodland, occupied by elements of the *223d Infantry,* prevented an advance. The four tanks attempted to move off the beach to attack these positions but found that they could not negotiate the low clay and rock bank behind the shore line. The tanks remained on the beach for the night to protect the exposed infantrymen, but the 6th Reconnaissance Troop returned to the vicinity of the Tirfoam River mouth at darkness.

On top of Lone Tree Hill during the day the 2d and 3d Battalions, 20th Infantry, in the face of enemy mortar, rifle, and machine gun fire, began to clear the Japanese from the many caves and crevices on Rocky Point, the deep ravine east of the point, and the hilltop plateau. For the mission of clearing Rocky Point, assault teams were formed by personnel of the Antitank Company, Headquarters Company of the 2d Battalion, Company H, and a few men from Company F. Elements of the 3d Battalion, 1st Infantry, including most of Company L, also were engaged in the mopping up. The assault teams were armed with a variety of weapons, including flame throwers, bazookas, rifle grenades, hand grenades, BAR's, TSMG's, high explosives, and even gasoline. While this action continued, the 2d Battalion, 20th Infantry, aided by Company L of the 1st Infantry, secured the supply route up the hill.

By nightfall there were definite signs that Japanese resistance in the northern section of Lone Tree Hill was weakening, and during the night of 24–25 June there were no major counterattacks, although harassing mortar, grenade, and rifle fire continued. Headquarters of the 3d Battalion, 20th Infantry, and Company M of the same regiment moved across the Snaky River in the

afternoon and established a perimeter on the beach at the east side of Rocky Point, from which Company M's heavy weapons could aid in the mopping-up operations.

Despite the weakening of Japanese resistance, the 2d and 3d Battalions, 20th Infantry, and Company L, 1st Infantry, continued to suffer heavy casualties during the day. At dusk 2d Battalion effectives numbered only 330 men, and the 3d Battalion had only 322 effectives left. The losses of Companies I and K, 1st Infantry, could not be ascertained because not all the wounded and dead had been evacuated and because communications had broken down at intervals throughout the day. However, it was known that at least 9 men had been killed and 37 wounded, and that the dead included 2 Company K officers.

The next day, 25 June, the 2d and 3d Battalions, 20th Infantry, now reinforced by both Companies L and M, 1st Infantry, and Company B, 6th Engineers, continued clearing Rocky Point, the deep ravine, the northern part of the hilltop plateau, and the eastern shelf, where a few scattered Japanese still held positions along the twenty-foot-high cliff. Flame throwers, demolition charges, bazookas, and hand grenades all proved successful in eliminating Japanese resistance and sealing or clearing caves and crevices. The task was easier on the 25th, for the Japanese slowly gave up the fight and were killed or sealed off in their caves. Casualties continued to mount—the 2d Battalion, 20th Infantry, had only about two hundred effectives by the end of the day—but many of the losses were not due to Japanese action. Many men were evacuated over the now secured supply route to the top of the hill as they fell from exhaustion or became sick.

On the beach west of Rocky Point Companies I and K, 1st Infantry, had little success in expanding their beachhead. The tanks proved useless in the area and were therefore withdrawn to Maffin No. 1. The two infantry companies, pinned down during the morning, kept up a continuous mortar barrage against Japanese positions in the swamp to the south, against the western cliff of Lone Tree Hill, and, when certain such fire would not endanger troops atop the hill, against the northwest corner of Rocky Point. This mortar fire, coupled with the operations on the plateau, began to have the desired effect during the afternoon, and Companies I and K were able to push their defenses beyond the narrow beachhead slightly southward and westward and toward the shore beneath Rocky Point. Once or twice during the afternoon, patrols were able to reach the top of Lone Tree Hill from the northwest corner of the point and established contact with 20th Infantry units. Late in the afternoon Company M, 1st Infantry, operating from the east side of the point, managed to push a patrol around the shore to establish contact with Company K.

Though Companies I and K could find little tangible evidence of the results of their operations, they had actually wiped out the *223d Infantry's* defense force in the area just west of Lone Tree Hill. By dusk on the 25th, it had become obvious that the combined efforts of the 3d Battalion, 1st Infantry, and the 2d and 3d Battalions, 20th Infantry, had either cleared out the northern half of Lone Tree Hill or had forced the Japanese to withdraw. The latter conclusion was the more nearly correct. The *36th Division* decided on 25 June to withdraw the bulk of the *Center* and *Right Sector Forces* west of the Woske River and establish new defensive positions, thereby keeping the *223d Infantry,* the bulk of which had not been committed to action in

the Lone Tree Hill area, more or less intact. Only the remnants of the *224th Infantry* were to remain east of the Woske, and they were to withdraw into rough terrain southwest of Mt. Saksin.

At nightfall on the 25th, General Sibert estimated that his three forward battalions had lost approximately 140 men killed and 850 wounded and evacuated, including those who had to be sent back to the rear because of wounds, sickness, heat exhaustion, or psychoneurotic disorders. Known Japanese dead in the northern part of the hill numbered 344, but it could not be estimated how many more had been thrown over the west cliff, sealed in caves, or carried off by withdrawing remnants of the Japanese defense force. According to Japanese sources, the Japanese had lost about 500 men killed and another 300 wounded in the Lone Tree Hill–Hill 225–Mt. Saksin area.

By noon on 25 June it was apparent to General Sibert that only mopping-up operations remained to be accomplished on and near Lone Tree Hill. For all practical purposes, that area had been secured.

Final Operations in the Wakde–Sarmi Area

Mopping Up by the 6th Division

As the 2d and 3d Battalions, 20th Infantry, were in no condition to undertake the mopping up, General Sibert decided to relieve those two units with the 3d Battalion, 63d Infantry.[14] The latter unit and the 3d Battalion, 1st Infantry, were to clear the Lone Tree Hill area and all enemy west to the Woske River and inland for a distance of 800 yards. The 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, was to continue its holding mission south of Lone Tree Hill and, in co-operation with the 1st Battalion, 1st Infantry, was to clear the defile, Hill 225, Mt. Saksin, and Hill 265, which lay about 1,000 yards southwest of Hill 225. The relief of the 2d and 3d Battalions, 20th Infantry, was accomplished by 1500 on 26 June. To that time the regiment had lost 83 men killed, 484 wounded, and 10 missing. The unit estimated that it had killed 781 Japanese, by far the majority of them in operations on Lone Tree Hill during the period 22 through 25 June.

On 27 June the 3d Battalion, 63d Infantry, began mopping up on the top of Lone Tree Hill. These operations proved more difficult than anticipated, for a few Japanese machine gun nests were still active on the southern section. But by dusk on 30 June, no more live Japanese were to be found. On the same day the 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, pushed through the defile south of the hill and found only a few stragglers in its zone. A continuous perimeter, running from the western exit of the defile north along the main road to the beach, was now established around Lone Tree Hill.

During operations at the Lone Tree Hill area from 20 through 30 June, American losses were approximately 150 killed, 550 wounded, and 400–500 evacuated from the forward area as a result of sickness, noncombat injuries, and combat fatigue. During the same period, the TORNADO Task Force claimed, 942 dead Japanese were actually counted in the area from the Snaky

[14] Information in this subsection is based on: TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 12 Jun–18 Jul 44, pp. 5–9; 6th Div Arty Opns Rpt Sarmi–Maffin Bay, 11 Jun–17 Jul 44, pp. 6–7; TTF G–3 Jnl, 12 Jun–18 Jul 44; TTF G–2 Jnl, 24 Jun–2 Jul 44; 1st Inf S–3 Per Rpts, 11 Jul–16 Jul 44; 20th Inf S–3 Per Rpts, 12 Jun–16 Aug 44; 63d Inf S–3 Per Rpts, 17 Jun–17 Jul 44; Ltr, Sibert to Krueger, 26 Jun 44, in ALAMO Rear Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 27–31 Jul 44; Ltrs, Sibert to Krueger, 27 Jun–10 Jul 44, in ALAMO Rear Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 17–20 Jul 44; Opns of *Yuki Group*, p. 18; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 34–37.

River west to the Woske and from the beach to the southern slopes of the defile, and the TORNADO Task Force estimated that 400 more had been sealed in caves at Lone Tree Hill. How these casualties were divided among the Japanese units is impossible to ascertain, but it is probable that at least 750 of the dead were members of the *224th Infantry* and most of the rest from other units of the *Right Sector Force*. The *16th Field Airdrome Construction Unit,* for instance, had been practically wiped out, as had the two companies of the *223d Infantry* which had been placed under Colonel Matsuyama's command. That over 1,300 Japanese were killed in the coastal area from the Tor to the Woske by 30 June does not appear to be an exaggerated claim.

Although clearing enemy forces from the Lone Tree Hill area practically assured the security of the Maffin Bay staging area, General Sibert believed that in order to make the region entirely safe, it would be necessary to drive the enemy out of the terrain between the Woske and Tor for a distance of at least 3,000 yards (about one and three-fourths miles) inland. Operations for this purpose began on 1 July when the 1st Infantry extended the perimeter along the coast to the Woske. On 4 July elements of the 63d Infantry occupied Hill 225 and on the next day seized the crest of Mt. Saksin. Both these terrain features were found to contain numerous well-organized, strong defensive positions, all of which had been abandoned. Hill 265, southwest of Hill 225, proved a tougher nut to crack because of Japanese opposition and terrain difficulties. But on 8 and 9 July the 1st Battalions of the 1st and 63d Infantry Regiments finally secured the hill crest, which had been held by elements of the *224th Infantry*. With the fall of Hill 265, the last enemy strong point in the Maffin Bay region had been taken.

Meanwhile, the remaining Japanese forces were busily withdrawing west of the Woske. On 12 July General Sibert sent a reconnaissance in force (comprising Company A, 1st Infantry, the 6th Reconnaissance Troop, and elements of Company C, 44th Tank Battalion) across the river. This force moved rapidly beyond Sawar Drome and across Sawar Creek, which lay a little over three miles beyond the Woske. At the banks of Metimedan Creek, about 1,500 yards beyond Sawar Creek, the force was halted by Japanese fire from positions held by the *Left Sector Unit* and the *3d Battalion, 223d Infantry,* along the Metimedan and from highlands beyond that stream. The 6th Division group returned to the Woske before dark, there to receive the welcome news that elements of the 31st Infantry Division were about to reach Maffin Bay to relieve the 6th Division.

The End of the Operation

When General Krueger chose the 6th Division to seize an air-base site on the Vogelkop, he decided to retain one of the division's regimental combat teams at Wakde–Sarmi as a reserve. But even if this combat team were not required on the Vogelkop, it would hardly suffice to defend the Maffin Bay–Wakde area and, at the same time, undertake the offensive patrolling necessary to maintain contact with Japanese forces in the area and to keep those forces away from Maffin Bay. Both the 25th and 33d Infantry Divisions could be moved to Maffin Bay, but neither could arrive by 15 July, when the 6th Division had to start loading for the Vogelkop operation. How-

ever, the 31st Infantry Division, which was scheduled to stage at Hollandia for another operation in September, could be moved to Maffin Bay by the 15th. General Krueger therefore recommended that the 31st Division (less the 124th Regimental Combat Team, at Aitape) be sent to Maffin Bay. General MacArthur quickly approved this proposal.[15]

The 31st Division began unloading at Maffin Bay on 14 July and by the 18th, when the division commander, Maj. Gen. John C. Persons, assumed the position of Commander, TORNADO Task Force, all the 6th Division, with the exception of the 20th Regimental Combat Team, had been relieved. The latter unit remained attached to the 31st Division until 21 August and left the area for the Vogelkop on the 26th. The remainder of the 6th Division began leaving on 27 July. Except for the 124th Regimental Combat Team, the 31st Division closed in the Wakde–Sarmi area by 15 August.[16]

The two regimental combat teams of the 31st Division, the 155th and the 167th, which operated at Wakde–Sarmi had no previous combat experience but received much valuable training in a series of patrol actions, company-sized scouting missions, and battalion reconnaissances in force. General Persons wanted to mount an offensive to drive the Japanese from a main line of resistance which they had established in the low hills between Metimedan Creek and Sarmi, but the demands for labor at the Maffin Bay staging area and the necessity for committing many troops to the defense of that area made it impossible to assemble sufficient strength for such an attack. Then, by the time the 6th Division's requirements had been met, the 31st Division itself had to begin preparations for another operation.

The 31st Division therefore had to confine itself principally to its patrolling missions, both west and east of the perimeter. Patrols east of the perimeter were sent out to hunt down stragglers from the Japanese Hollandia garrison, and most of them, comprising armed natives of the Wakde–Sarmi area, were led by a Dutch officer, 1st Lt. C. J. Sneeuwjagt. Meanwhile, work went on at the Maffin Bay staging area, and during the period 18 July–31 August there was unloaded at Maffin Bay a daily average of 2,500 tons of various supplies. During the same period the 31st Division lost 39 men killed, 195 wounded, 34 injured, and 3 missing. The division killed 294 Japanese, found 497 dead, and captured 14 others.[17]

Since the 31st Division would need protection as it staged for its mid-September invasion of Morotai Island, northwest of the Vogelkop, General Krueger recommended to General MacArthur that a regimental combat team of the 33d Infantry Division (another unit without combat experience) be moved from eastern New Guinea to Maffin Bay. The theater commander approved this suggestion, and the 123d Regimental Combat Team, under Brig. Gen. Donald J. Myers (also assistant division commander), arrived at Maffin Bay on 1 September. The next day General Krueger declared that the Wakde–Sarmi operation was over.[18]

[15] ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Wakde–Biak, p. 26.

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 27–28; TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 12 Jun–18 Jul 44, pp. 9–10; TTF [31st Inf Div] Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 18 Jul–1 Sep 44, pp. 2–4.

[17] TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 18 Jul–1 Sep 44, pp. 2–4; 115th Inf Opns Rpt Maffin Bay–Toem, pp. 1–2; Ltrs, Gen Persons to Gen Krueger, 18 and 20 Jul 44, in ALAMO Rear Hq G–3 Jnl 21–23 Jul 44; Ltr, Gen Persons to Gen Ward, 6 Nov 50, no sub, in OCMH files.

[18] ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Wakde–Biak, p. 28; ALAMO Force FO 23, 21 Aug 44, in ALAMO Rear Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 16–24 Aug 44. As usual General Krueger closed the operation for the purpose

Epilogue

All elements of the 31st Division left Maffin Bay early in September and on the 25th of the month the TORNADO Task Force was disbanded as such, Headquarters, 123d Regimental Combat Team, assuming all operational and administrative duties in the area. Late in September the Allied Air Forces began to close out the Wakde Island air base and to move its men and equipment forward until, by December, the Wakde field was relegated to the status of an emergency strip.[19]

In October, command of all American forces left in the Wakde–Sarmi area passed from General Krueger to the recently established U. S. Eighth Army, which was commanded by Lt. Gen. Robert L. Eichelberger, formerly the commander of the RECKLESS Task Force and I Corps. The 123d Regimental Combat remained in the region until relieved by a composite battalion combat team from the 93d Infantry Division on 26 January 1945. The 93d Division elements undertook some local security patrolling, but their main mission was to speed the evacuation of remaining supplies from the Maffin Bay staging area. This job was finished by 6 February, when all the remaining troops left the mainland for Wakde Island. One company of the 93d Division remained on Wakde, sending a few amphibious patrols to the mainland, until the first week in October 1945. Then the company—the last American troops in the area—left to join its division in the Philippines.[20]

The Results of the Wakde–Sarmi Operation

Though the importance of the Wakde–Sarmi operation cannot be measured in terms of casualties, the casualty figures are of interest. From 17 May through 1 September American losses in the area were approximately 400 men killed, 1,500 wounded or injured in action, and 15 missing.[21] During the same period about 3,870 Japanese had been killed in the area and 51 Japanese had been taken prisoner. How many more of the original Japanese garrison of some 11,000 had died of sickness and starvation, or had been buried in caves at Lone Tree Hill, could not be determined. It was estimated, however, that as of 1 September only 2,000 effective Japanese combat troops were left in the Wakde–Sarmi area.[22] Much more important than

of ending certain requirements for historical records. Again, this termination coincided with an administrative change in the area concerned, for on 1 September General Myers assumed the duties of Commander, TORNADO Task Force, in place of General Persons.

[19] 123d RCT Opns Maffin Bay, 1 Sep 44–27 Jan 45, pp. 1–2. Information on closing Wakde was furnished by Capt. B. L. Mortensen (USAF), Air Hist Gp, Hq USAF, 22 Nov 48.

[20] 368th RCT Opns Rpt, 5 Jan 44–1 Sep 45, pp. 3–9; 368th Inf Opns Rpt Maffin Bay, 19–24 Mar 45, pp. 1–3. One other infantry unit also spent a little time at Maffin Bay. This was a battalion of the 136th Infantry, 33d Division, which spent about a month, September–October 1944, working as a labor organization at the Maffin Bay staging area.

[21] TTF G–3 Per Rpt 107, 1 Sep 44; TTF G–1 Per Rpts 15 and 16, 30 Aug and 5 Sep 44, respectively; TTF G–1 Sum, 18 Jul–1 Sep 44, p. 2. The G–1 and G–3 figures do not agree and cannot be reconciled. Furthermore, various sets of G–3 figures are mutually irreconcilable as are different sets of G–1 figures. The figures given in the text are the author's approximations from the sources cited.

[22] ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 57, 30 Aug 44, copy in G–2 DofA files; Ltr, Persons to Ward, 6 Nov 50; 123d RCT Opns Rpt Maffin Bay, 1 Sep 44–27 Jan 45, p. 2. The last ALAMO Force figures for Japanese casualties (from ALAMO Force G–2 Wkly Rpt 61, 4 Oct 44, copy in G–2 DofA files) are 3,963 Japanese killed and 55 captured. In addition, according to various sources, there were 2 Korean, 2 Javanese, 1 Chinese, and 36 Formosan prisoners. Total known casualties were thus 4,059. Colonel Yoshino, Colonel Matsuyama, and General Yamada

the enemy casualties was the fact that two reinforced Japanese regimental combat teams had been destroyed as effective fighting forces and eliminated as a threat in the Southwest Pacific.

In return for their losses, the Allies had obtained a valuable staging and air-base site. The Wakde Island airdrome quickly proved its value by enabling the Allied Air Forces to support not only operations within the Southwest Pacific but also those in the Central Pacific. The Fifth Air Force flew bombardment missions from Wakde against Biak, Noemfoor, enemy installations on the Vogelkop, Halmahera, Morotai, and, in the Central Pacific Area, against the Palaus and other islands in the Carolines. Fifth Air Force planes and Seventh Fleet land-based reconnaissance bombers from Wakde made substantial contributions to the success of the Central Pacific's mid-June invasion of the Marianas by striking enemy air and fleet installations in the Palaus and reporting the movements of Japanese fleet units within flying range. Since the Japanese fields on Biak were not captured in time for Southwest Pacific aircraft to undertake from that island any missions in support of the Mariana operation, the Wakde field had to carry a far greater load than was originally intended for it. Finally, from Wakde, Seventh Fleet PB4Y's initiated the first regular air reconnaissance of islands in the Philippines since early 1942.

survived the war, but what happened to General Tagami cannot be ascertained from available documents.

The Fifth Air Force controlled operations from Wakde until late August, when the Thirteenth Air Force took over the field. The latter unit afterwards supported the mid-September invasions of Morotai and the Palaus with numerous bombing and reconnaissance missions from Wakde.[23]

For ground forces, the Wakde–Sarmi area proved equally valuable. In operations there the 6th Infantry Division, the 31st Infantry Division (less one regimental combat team), the 123d Regimental Combat Team of the 33d Infantry Division, part of the 158th Regimental Combat Team, and innumerable attached units received their first combat experience. The value of the area for training was thus obvious, but the region was equally valuable as a staging base. The whole or parts of five different task forces—sent to Biak, Noemfoor, the Vogelkop Peninsula, and the Philippines—were staged from the Arare–Toem beaches or the shores of Maffin Bay. Had available assault shipping been used for long trips from eastern New Guinea bases to objectives beyond Wakde, the pace of operations in the Southwest Pacific would certainly have been slowed. Instead, many units were moved to Maffin Bay by noncombatant vessels, picked up there by assault ships, and taken on to new objectives to the north and west, the nearest of which was Biak Island.[24]

[23] Information on Allied Air Forces use of Wakde was provided by Capt. B. L. Mortensen, Air Hist Gp, Hq USAF, 22 Nov 48.

[24] ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Wakde–Biak, p. 28; TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 12 Jun–18 Jul 44, pp. 9–10.

CHAPTER XII

Biak: The Plan, the Landing, and the Enemy

When, on 10 May 1944, General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area, changed the original concept of the Sarmi–Wakde–Biak plan no significant changes were made in the assignment of units to the operations for the seizure of Wakde and Biak Islands. The 163d Regimental Combat Team of the 41st Infantry Division was ordered to capture Wakde Island and the adjacent New Guinea mainland beginning on 17 May. Ten days later, on 27 May, the remainder of the 41st Division was to land on Biak Island, 180 miles northwest of Wakde. The target date for the landings at Biak was designated Z Day.

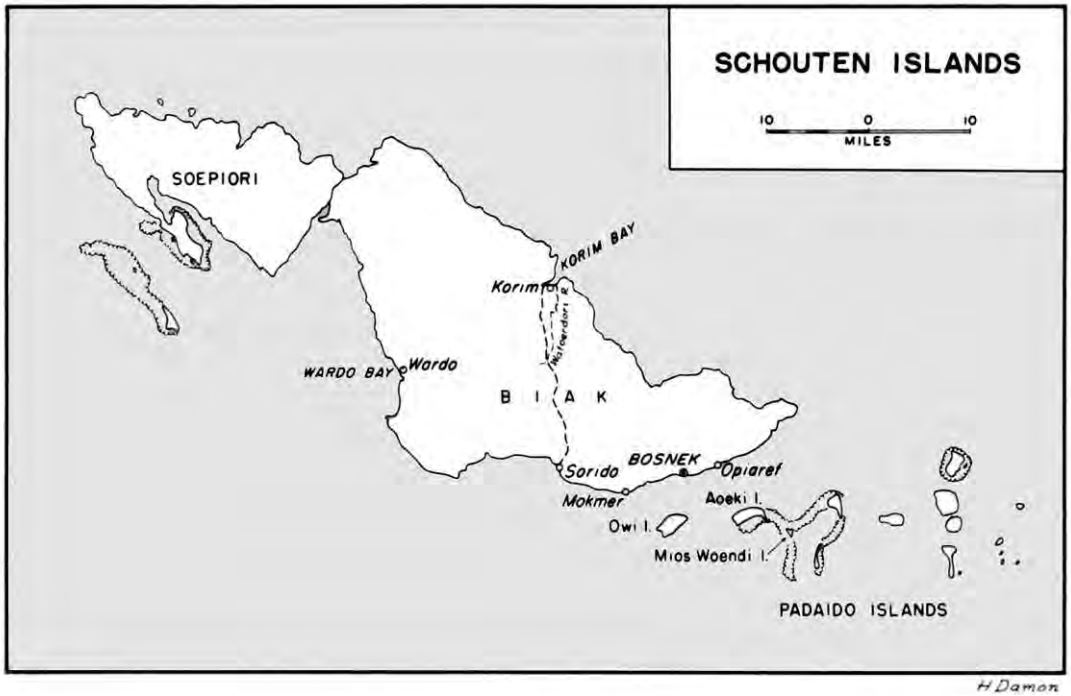
The Biak Plan

The Objective

Biak is shaped roughly like an old-fashioned high-topped shoe.[1] (*Map 13*) The sole is on the south, the back of the shoe on the west, and the instep runs southeast to northwest. Off the northwest corner of Biak (and about one third its size) lies Soepiori Island. The two are separated by a small creek-like strait. Off southeastern Biak lie a number of islets, including Owi, Aoeki, Mios Woendi, and others of the Padaido Group. In May 1944 Biak's principal towns lay along its southern shore. About fourteen miles west of the southeast tip was Bosnek, prewar administrative and commercial center.

Biak was formed as the result of underwater disturbances which in prehistoric times had brought part of the ocean's floor above the surface. Much of the island is cut by broken coral terraces, ridges, and shelves which in the course of centuries acquired a thick cover of tropical rain forest and dense jungle undergrowth. There are some extensive inland flat areas at the southeastern third of the island. Little fresh water is readily available on Biak, since most of the streams run through underground channels that drain even the heaviest rainfall from the surface. The island lacks good harbors,

[1] Information in this section is based principally on: ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Wakde–Biak, pp. 6–7; HURRICANE Task Force [41st Inf Div] Opns Rpt Biak, 17 May–20 Aug 44, p. 3; CTF 77 [Comdr, Biak Attack Force] Opns Rpt Biak, p. 3. With regard to terrain on Biak it is necessary to bear in mind that many of Biak's coral ridges are very similar to levees, while many others are actually steps of a series of terraces which rise to inland heights. But the Allied forces which fought at Biak usually referred to all terrace steps or levee-like formations as ridges, and the latter term is generally employed in these chapters. The term terrace is generally reserved for flat though sometimes gradually sloping areas between the steps or ridges.

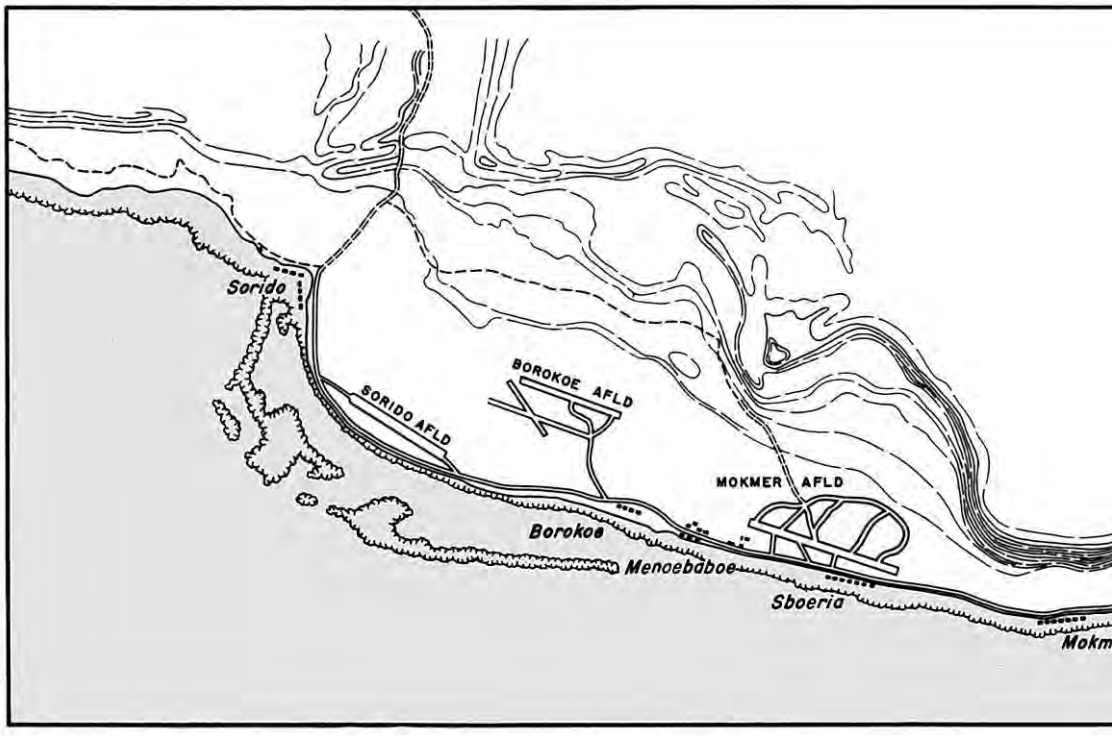


MAP 13

almost all its shore line being fringed by rough coral reefs.

A high, rough, and narrow coral ridge, lying in front of a generally flat inland terrace in levee-like fashion, parallels Biak's southern shore from a point about five miles east of Bosnek to Mokmer, a village located ten miles west of Bosnek. (*Map 14*) The seaward face of this ridge is from 180 to 250 feet high, while its landward slope rises only 100 feet or so above the flat but rough-surfaced inland terrace. Near Mokmer the coral ridge turns northward and inland for about a mile and a half, and then west again toward Biak's southwestern corner. At Parai, some 2,000 yards east of Mokmer, one spur of this coastal ridge comes down almost to the shore line to form a twenty-foot-high cliff. This cliff runs along the water line from Parai to a point about 1,000 yards west of Mokmer.

The turning of the main coastal ridge combines with a protrusion of the coast line beginning near Parai to form a plain about eight miles long and up to one and a half miles wide. The Japanese had begun to construct airfields on this plain late in 1943, and by April 1944 had completed two strips. The most easterly was Mokmer Drome, near the village of Mokmer. About two and one-half miles west was Sorido Drome, located near the village of the same name. Both these strips were close to the southern shore of Biak. Between them, but about three quarters of a mile inland, was Borokoe Drome, which became operational early in May 1944. A site for a fourth airfield had been surveyed on flat land north of the coral

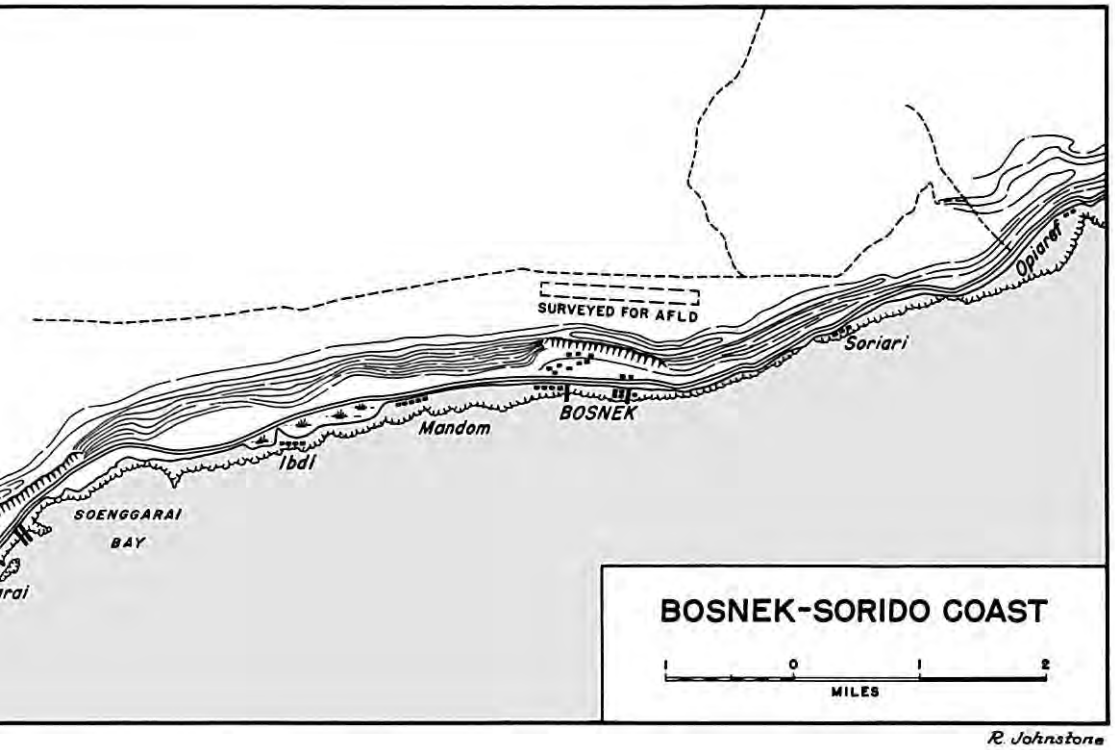


MAP 14

Note the location of the coral ridge line in relation to the coast and in relation to the plain upon which Mokmer, Sorido, and Borokoe Dromes were constructed.

ridge behind Bosnek, and for a fifth between Sorido and Borokoe Dromes.

There were few good localities for amphibious assaults along the shores of Biak, and the best lay far from the airstrips. Since these airfields were the principal Allied objectives, it was necessary to choose relatively poor landing points in order to put assault forces ashore close to the fields. ALAMO Force knew that reasonably good beaches, though fronted by coral reefs, were located at Bosnek, Mokmer, and along the coast between those villages. But the Mokmer area was known to be the most heavily defended on Biak. It would be foolhardy to land at the point of the enemy's greatest strength if other usable beaches could be found at near-by but more lightly defended areas. East from Mokmer, coral cliffs or mangrove swamps lie immediately behind the beach. These obstacles would prevent a landing force from maneuvering or finding room to disperse its supplies. The lessons of the Hollandia campaign were fresh in the minds of planners, who had no desire to find the troubles of the 24th Division at Tanahmerah Bay or those of the 41st Division at Humboldt Bay repeated on Biak. From aerial photographs, Bosnek appeared to be the point nearest to Mokmer



Drome where cliffs or swamps did not back the beach. It was also known that some roads or trails led both inland and along the coast in both directions from Bosnek. Moreover, at Bosnek two possibly usable jetties led to deep water beyond the coral reef which fringed the entire southern coast.

The men planning the Biak operation could obtain little definite information about this fringing reef, which was estimated to vary from 200 to 600 feet in width. According to aerial reconnaissance, much of the reef was dry at low water, but no information was available concerning the amount of water over the reef at high tide. In any case, reef conditions off Bosnek appeared to be no worse than elsewhere along the south coast of Biak. Since this was true, and because jetties, apparent lack of strong enemy defensive installations, and maneuver room on shore offered advantages not found any place else, General Krueger, in agreement with the air and naval commanders, decided that the initial landing would be made at Bosnek.

Organization, Logistics, and Intelligence

The organization designated to secure Biak was named the HURRICANE Task Force,

the principal combat component of which was the 41st Infantry Division, less the 163d Regimental Combat Team. Both the task force and the division were commanded by Maj. Gen. Horace H. Fuller, who had commanded a similar organization at Humboldt Bay. For Biak, the 41st Division was reinforced by two field and two antiaircraft artillery battalions, a 4.2-inch mortar company, a medium tank company (less one platoon), an engineer boat and shore regiment (less one boat company), and a number of antiaircraft batteries. Service troops assigned to the HURRICANE Task Force, in addition to those organic to the 41st Division, were three engineer aviation battalions (for airfield construction work), other miscellaneous engineer units, and many medical, quartermaster, and signal corps organizations.[2]

Control of the amphibious phases of the operation was vested in Rear Adm. William M. Fechteler (USN) as the Commander, Attack Force. Admiral Fechteler divided his combat vessels into four support groups, which totaled 2 heavy cruisers, 3 light cruisers, and 21 destroyers. Assault shipping, comprising 5 APD's, 8 LST's, 8 LCT's, and 15 LCI's, was placed in a separate unit which Admiral Fechteler designated the Main Body. Smaller craft, such as LVT's, LVT(A)'s, DUKW's, and LCVP's were to be carried to Biak aboard LST's and APD's. A Special Service Unit of the Main Body contained 4 SC's, 3 rocket-equipped LCI's, 1 LCI carrying underwater demolition teams and their equipment, and 1 seagoing tug (ATF). The Special Service Unit, among other duties, was to provide close support and control for landing waves. A naval beach party, which was to control the landing of troops and supplies once the first waves were ashore, was also part of the Attack Force.

The First Reinforcement Group, consisting of 3 LST's and 8 LCI's, protected by 3 destroyers and 2 destroyer escorts, was to arrive at Biak on 28 May, Z plus 1. On the next day the Second Reinforcement Group, made up of 7 LST's, 3 destroyers, and 2 frigates (PF's), was to reach Biak. Aboard the cargo vessels of these two convoys were to be artillery units, service troops, and supplies of all kinds.[3]

Close air support for the invasion of Biak was primarily the responsibility of the Advanced Echelon, Fifth Air Force, which was to operate from bases at Hollandia and Wakde Island. The Fifth Air Force, the Thirteenth Air Force, and Australian and Dutch aircraft were assigned long-range and strategical support missions similar to those they had undertaken prior to the landings at Wakde–Sarmi.[4]

ALAMO Force Reserve for Biak consisted of the 128th and 158th Regimental Combat Teams, which had also been in reserve for the Wakde–Sarmi operation. HURRICANE Task Force Reserve consisted of two units. The first of these was a battalion (less one rifle company and the heavy weapons company) of the 186th Infantry, and the other was the 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop.[5]

Those elements of the HURRICANE Task Force scheduled to land on Biak on 27 and

[2] HTF FO 1, 15 May 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 24–25 May 44.

[3] *Ibid.*; CTF 77 Opn Plan 5–44, 16 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 23–24 May 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Wakde–Biak, chart following p. 37.

[4] AAF SWPA OI 51/1, 11 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 14–18 May 44; see also above, Ch. IX.

[5] ALAMO Force FO 17, 13 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 8–13 May 44; HTF FO 1, 15 May 44

28 May were to carry with them to the objective ten days' supply of rations, clothing, equipment (but only organizational sets of spare parts), fuels, and lubricants. Sufficient engineer construction equipment was to be landed on Biak during the first two days of the operation to assure a rapid start on airfield rehabilitation, road construction, and clearance of dispersal areas. All weapons except 4.2-inch mortars arriving at Biak through Z plus 1 were to be supplied with two units of fire, while the mortars were to be supplied with six units of fire. Organizations arriving at Biak after 28 May were to bring with them thirty days' supply of rations, clothing and equipment, fuels and lubricants, medical, engineer, and motor maintenance supplies, and three units of fire for all weapons. Initial responsibility for the transportation of troops and supplies to Biak rested with the Allied Naval Forces. It was planned that the Services of Supply would relieve the Navy of this duty late in June.[6]

ALAMO Force was able to supply the HURRICANE Task Force with little detailed information concerning the enemy situation on Biak Island. It was known that early in May the Japanese had ordered the defenses of Biak to be strengthened. Aerial reconnaissance disclosed that some effort was being made on Biak to comply with these orders and that a large amount of matériel had reached the island during the early months of the year. The extent of the Biak defenses however, was unknown. The enemy garrison on Biak was thought to total about 4,400 men, including the bulk of the *222d Infantry Regiment, 36th Division,* and the effective combat strength of the *222d Infantry* would probably not exceed 2,500 men. It was further believed that the principal Japanese strength was concentrated in the vicinity of Mokmer Drome, and it appeared likely that enemy troops which had once been stationed in the Bosnek area had been moved west to Mokmer early in May.

The landing on Biak was expected to elicit a strong aerial reaction from the Japanese. However, it was not probable that the enemy air attacks could reach very damaging proportions because all Japanese fields within range of Biak could be subjected to heavy bombardment by Allied aircraft. Allied Naval Forces did not believe that the enemy would risk major fleet units in an attempt to retake Biak once Allied forces had established a firm foothold on the island. Finally, though the seizure of Wakde might give the Japanese some indication that the next Allied target would be Biak, it was thought possible that the HURRICANE Task Force might achieve local tactical surprise as to the date and place of landing.[7]

The Landing Plan

The HURRICANE Task Force was to land in the Bosnek area on beaches designated Green 1, 2, 3, and 4. Green Beach 1, 200 yards long, began at a point about 500 yards east of Bosnek. Green Beach 2 was 300 yards long and extended west from Green 1 to the most easterly of the two jetties which crossed the coral reef in front of Bosnek. Green Beach 3 was located between the two jetties and was about 750 yards long. Green

[6] ALAMO Force Adm O 9, 13 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 8–13 May 44; GHQ SWPA OI 51/1, 10 May 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 27 Apr 44.

[7] ALAMO Force, G–2 Est of Enemy Sit, Biak Island, 7 May 44, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl, Wakde–Biak, 13 Apr–19 May 44; ALAMO Force, G–2 Photo Int Sec, Rpt 122, 22 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wadke–Biak, 23–24 May 44; CTF 77 Opn Plan 5–44, 16 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 23–24 May 44.

Beach 4 extended 300 yards along the shore beyond the western jetty.[8]

Since little was known about the coral reef fronting the four Biak beaches, the landing plans differed from those for most previous operations within the Southwest Pacific Area. Amphibian vehicles such as LVT's and DUKW's were to make up the initial waves, because it was obvious that standard landing craft could be counted on for only limited use. The amphibian vehicles of the first waves were to be carried to Biak aboard LST's and were to unload in the stream outside the reef. After putting the initial waves ashore, the vehicles were to return to the LST's and shuttle supplies to the beaches. LCPR's, considered light and small enough to find channels through the reef, were to take some troops ashore after the first few waves had landed.

Eight LCT's were supplied by Allied Naval Forces for the express purpose of taking ashore tanks, 105-mm. howitzers, trucks, and bulldozers. The LCT's were to be driven as far up on the reef as possible and over it if feasible, and it was hoped that there would be enough water shoreward of the reef to float them. The equipment these craft were to take ashore was so important to the success of the operation that the risk of damage to them on the coral reef had to be accepted. The LCT's and LCPR's were to be Navy-manned while the DUKW's were to be driven by men of the 3d Engineer Special Brigade. Some of the LVT's were to be manned by the latter unit and others were to be driven by specially trained men of the 41st Division.[9]

At first, H Hour was set for 0745. But the planners lacked knowledge of wind, tide, current, and offshore conditions at Biak, and therefore decided to keep the landing time flexible, dependent upon the conditions found at Biak on Z Day. Therefore, the naval and ground commanders objected to a Fifth Air Force plan to support the landing by having twelve B–24's bomb the beaches immediately before H Hour. However, General MacArthur's headquarters considered it inadvisable to eliminate the air bombardment, and the Fifth Air Force offered to increase the number of B–24's from twelve to fifty-two. The Biak planners thereupon decided that it was worth while to sacrifice H-Hour flexibility to secure the additional air support, a decision which General Krueger quickly approved.

Some conditions, accepted by the Fifth Air Force, were made in the final agreement between the air, naval, and ground force commanders. First, bombs were to be dropped from a high level in order to avoid having the B–24's interfere with naval fire. Second, the bombers were not to hit the two jetties, which might be found in good enough condition for use by assault ships. Finally, no bombs were to be dropped on the reef lest chunks of coral be dislodged and, rolling in the surf, endanger landing craft and amphibian vehicles.[10] The aerial bombardment was to be co-ordinated with an H Hour which was finally set for 0715. Even at this earlier time the bombers would be able to see their targets (sunrise at Biak being at 0655) and the change in H Hour would gain a half hour of daylight for ship unloading. The half-hour change would also reduce the time the assault shipping would

[8] CTF 77 Opn Plan 5–44, 16 May 44.

[9] *Ibid.;* CTF 77 Opns Rpt Biak, p. 4; HTF Opns Rpt Biak, 17 May–20 Aug 44, pp. 2–3.

[10] CTF 77 Opns Rpt Biak, p. 5; Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WI–3521, 21 May 44; Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, AAF SWPA, and ANF SWPA, CX–12843, 23 May 44, both in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 23 May 44.

have to remain off Biak during daylight and might increase chances for tactical surprise.[11]

Other than the beach bombardment by B–24's, close air support for Biak on Z Day was similar to that undertaken for the Wakde landing. Medium bombers and fighters were to maintain an air alert over the Biak landing area from first light to dusk on Z Day. The convoys from eastern ports to Biak were to be given cover by Fifth Air Force planes. At Biak the medium bombers and fighters would fly close support missions for the forces ashore and would also undertake artillery spotting roles until an artillery liaison plane strip could be constructed on the island.[12]

Naval fire support was to begin at H minus 45 minutes, 0630. From that time until H Hour, cruisers and destroyers were to expend 400 rounds of 8-inch, 1,000 rounds of 6-inch, 3,740 rounds of 5-inch, and 1,000 rounds of 4.7-inch ammunition on targets in the airfield area west of the landing beaches. After H Hour the cruisers were to continue intermittent fire on the airfields, bombard targets of opportunity, and respond to calls for support from the forces ashore. Because there were many known or suspected Japanese gun emplacements along the south shore of Biak, counterbattery fire was to take precedence over all other types of fire.

Bombardment of the landing beaches was also to begin at H minus 45 minutes. Five destroyers were to bombard the beaches and adjacent areas until H minus 30 minutes, when they were to move westward to join the cruisers firing on the airfield area. Then four other destroyers were to continue beach bombardment until H minus 3 minutes. Total ammunition allowance for beach bombardment was 4,900 rounds of 5-inch and 4.7-inch shells, while 40-mm. and 20-mm. ammunition was to be expended at the discretion of individual ship commanders. Rocket and automatic weapons fire from three rocket-equipped LCI's and two SC's was to provide close support for the assault waves. This fire was to begin at H minus 5 minutes and was to last until H Hour or until the initial wave was safely ashore.[13]

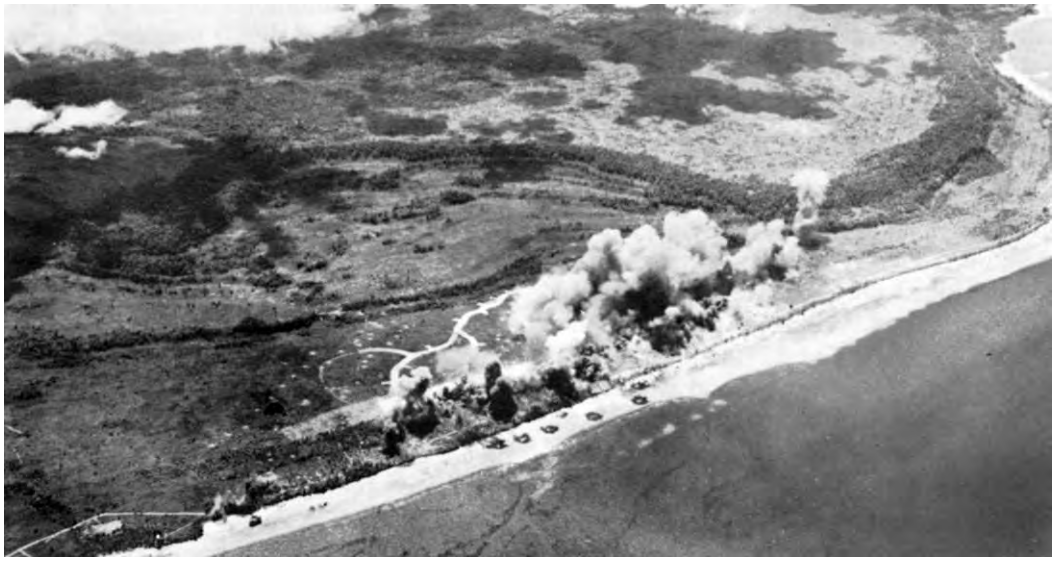
The first landings on Biak were to be made by the 186th Infantry of the 41st Division. The regiment was to land in column of battalions, the 2d Battalion leading, on Green Beaches 2 through 4. The first three waves, consisting of sixteen LVT's each, were to land at five-minute intervals beginning at H Hour. DUKW's, with Company D, 641st Tank Destroyer Battalion (4.2-inch mortars), and the 121st Field Artillery Battalion (75-mm. pack howitzers) aboard, were to follow the 2d Battalion ashore beginning at H plus 15 minutes. Twelve LCPR's were to take elements of the 3d Battalion to the two jetties at H plus 20 minutes. Simultaneously, Green Beach 1 was to be seized by a rifle company and the heavy weapons company of the 1st Battalion.

Once the two jetties were secured, LCI's bearing the 162d Infantry, supporting troops, and the task force reserve were to move inshore and unload. LST's were also to move to the jetties when the beach area surrounding them had been cleared by the 186th Infantry. LCM's bearing artillery, tanks, and engineering equipment were to move to the beaches as soon as channels

[11] Rad, CTF 76 to ALAMO, 22 May 44, and Rad, 41st Div to ALAMO Force, DD–383, 23 May 44, both in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 23–24 May 44.

[12] HTF FO 1, 15 May 44; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Biak, p. 5.

[13] CTF 77 Opn Plan 5–44, 16 May 44; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 4–5; HTF FO 1, 15 May 44. The 4.7-inch ammunition was to be fired by Australian destroyers and the 8-inch by Australian heavy cruisers.



MOKMER DROME, BIAK, *under air attack.*

through the coral were found or made, or to the jetties in waves following the 186th Infantry's assault companies.[14]

As soon as it reorganized ashore, the 162d Infantry was to advance rapidly west along the coast from Bosnek to seize the three airdromes. This drive was to be supported by eight tanks of the 603d Tank Company and the 146th Field Artillery Battalion (105-mm. howitzers). The fields were to be repaired quickly to accommodate one fighter group and then expanded to receive an additional fighter group, a heavy bomber group, a reconnaissance group, a night fighter squadron, and one photo reconnaissance squadron. Mokmer Drome was to be the first field developed.[15]

It was obviously impossible, for tactical reasons, to set a specific date by which the HURRICANE Task Force was to seize the Biak airfields. However, the urgency of quickly securing these fields was impressed upon General Fuller. One of the reasons for scheduling the Biak operation only ten days after the Wakde–Sarmi landing was to provide, from Biak, additional air support for the Central Pacific's invasion of the Marianas on 15 June. The Allied Air Forces intended that one heavy bomber group and, apparently, some reconnaissance aircraft would be in operation from Biak before that date. The inadequate size of Wakde Island and the terrain and geographical position of Hollandia inclined Southwest Pacific planners toward the belief that only from Biak could all the bombing and reconnaissance missions necessary to the support of the Marianas operation be properly executed. Finally, the faster the Biak fields were secured and made operational the more

[14] CTF 77 Opn Plan 5–44, 16 May 44; HTF FO 1, 15 May 44; 186th Inf FO 2, 22 May 44, atchd to 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44.

[15] HTF FO 1, 15 May 44; ALAMO Force FO 17, 12 May 44; Advon5AF OI 1, 12 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 14 May 44.

rapidly could Allied forces of the Southwest Pacific undertake subsequent advances in their own theater.[16] While it is not clear how soon after its landing the HURRICANE Task Force was expected to secure the Biak fields, it is probable that General Headquarters anticipated that at least one of the fields would be operational by 10 June.

The Landing

Preparations and Approach

Most of the HURRICANE Task Force staged at Humboldt Bay, where preparations for departure were made under difficult circumstances. Terrain considerations forced most of the task force to assemble on the southern of the two sandspits dividing Humboldt and Jautefa Bays. On this spit the beach had a steep slope which made it impossible for more than a very few LST's to be held against the shore line long enough to load bulk stores. The LST's had to beach on the northern spit, where clearing and salvage after the fires and explosions which had ravaged that beach during the early phases of the Hollandia operation had not been completed. In addition, the northern spit was being used to unload supplies destined to be used at Hollandia, to load supplies being sent to the TORNADO Task Force at Wakde–Sarmi, and to unload cargo for the HURRICANE Task Force.

No road connected the northern and southern sandspits. Consequently, most of the supplies and equipment, as well as many of the troops, had to be transported by water from the southern to the northern loading area. There were only a few LCT's available for this work and only by working twenty-four hours a day from 15 May on were all the troops and supplies transported to the loading beach in time for departure on the 25th. Some elements of the HURRICANE Task Force, principally the 1st and 3d Battalions, 186th Infantry, were loaded by small craft from the southern spit onto the LCI's and APD's which were to take them to Biak.[17]

Most of the assault troops of the HURRICANE Task Force were trained and experienced in amphibious operations but not in landing on a hostile shore from LVT's and DUKW's launched from LST's in deep water. Rehearsals for the assault waves were therefore desirable, but there was time only for limited drills. A rehearsal with about 65 percent of the LVT's and DUKW's (the rest were either undergoing repairs or being used for lighterage at Humboldt Bay) was held at Humboldt Bay on 23 May, Z minus 4. Serious deficiencies were discovered in forming waves, timing, and communication between control vessels (SC's and LCI's) and the amphibian vehicles.

There was no time for more rehearsal. Therefore a conference of amphibian-vehicle drivers, assault-unit officers, and naval control-boat officers was immediately held. Detailed methods of control were planned, and illustrated by rehearsing on dry land with a few vehicles. It was decided that the timing of assault waves could best be accomplished by having each LST control the moment of launching of its component of each wave.[18]

---

[16] Ltr, Col W. J. Paul [Dir, USAF Hist, Hq Air Univ] to Gen Ward, 7 Dec 50, no sub; and Ltr, Gen Krueger to Gen Ward, 2 Jan 51, no sub, both in OCMH files.

[17] HTF Dpns Rpt Biak, 17 May–20 Aug 44, p. 2; Memo, Asst ACofS G–3 ALAMO to ACofS G–3 ALAMO, no sub, 9 May 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 8–13 May 44; 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44 pp. 1–2.

[18] HTF Opns Rpt Biak, 17 May–20 Aug 44, p. 2; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 6–7.

The HURRICANE Task Force left Humboldt Bay on the evening of 25 May. Supporting cruisers and their accompanying destroyers joined the assault shipping offshore the following morning. Thereafter, since it seemed futile to attempt to evade enemy search planes (the large convoy moved at only 8.5 knots) the force proceeded to Biak by the most direct route. No contacts, visual or by radar, were made with enemy aircraft on 26 May. During the following night some radar contacts were made with Japanese planes, but none of the aircraft so spotted seemed to have discovered the Allied convoy and the force arrived off Biak early the next morning apparently without having been detected by the enemy. (*Map V*)

A westerly current had been expected in the Biak area and, on the basis of available hydrographic information, some allowance had been made for it. Long before first light on 27 May, the convoy found itself in the current. The hydrographic information now proved to be wrong. The current was stronger than anticipated, and despite subsequent reduction of cruising speed the convoy arrived off Bosnek about fifteen minutes early. In an amphibious operation, better early than late. Assault shipping and combat vessels immediately deployed in the transport and fire support areas. At 0629 Admiral Fechteler ordered the landing plan to be executed.[19]

The Assault

The naval fire support and the air bombardment were carried out as planned. All targets were well covered and there was little answering fire from Japanese shore installations. Local tactical surprise was complete. The first wave of LVT's, with elements of the 2d Battalion, 186th Infantry, aboard, formed rapidly and crossed the line of departure exactly on schedule.[20] From that time on, the landing operations did not proceed according to plan.

Since the westerly current off Biak proved to be much stronger than had been anticipated, during the air and naval bombardment the transport group had been set over 3,000 yards west of its proper location. Although some of the ships' officers realized that the transport group was being carried west, nothing could be done to rectify the situation without causing a great deal of confusion and delaying the landing. More difficulties were caused by the morning twilight and the smoke and dust raised by the preliminary bombardment. The correct beaches were obscured, and the shore line could not be seen from more than 400 yards out.

A rocket-equipped LCI, which began firing on the beaches about H minus 4 minutes, led the first LVT wave toward the shore. The LCI fire, consisting of rockets and fire from automatic weapons, continued until H plus 2 minutes, when it was lifted because it began to endanger the troops who were unloading and pushing inland. Then it was discovered that the LVT's had touched shore at a mangrove swamp almost 3,000 yards west of Green Beach 4. The next two LVT waves of the 2d Battalion also landed at the mangrove swamp, as did the fourth wave's DUKW's. Nevertheless, the

[19] CTF 77 Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 7–8; Ltr, Adm Fechteler to Gen Ward, 8 Nov 50, no sub, in OCMH files.

[20] CTF 77 Opns Rpt Biak, p. 8; HTF Opns Rpt Biak, 17 May–20 Aug 44, p. 4.

entire battalion was ashore by 0730 and was pushing beyond the mangrove swamp to the main coastal road connecting Bosnek and the airfields. Five minutes later, Companies I and K of the 3d Battalion, 186th Infantry, landed about 700 yards east of the 2d Battalion.

By this time the effect of the westerly current had been realized by all commanders, and naval control boat officers had started to turn succeeding waves eastward to the proper beaches. Some thirty minutes passed before the resultant confusion could be straightened out. For instance, part of an LCPR wave which was scheduled to land Company B of the 186th Infantry on Green Beach 1 at 0735, hit Green Beach 3 at 0742. The jetties, scheduled to be seized by Companies I and K at 0735, were not secured until after 0800, when the rest of the 3d Battalion began landing on them.[21]

Col. Oliver P. Newman, commanding the 186th Infantry, had the 2d Battalion and most of the 3d Battalion organized under his direct control near Mandom, 2,000 yards west of Bosnek, by 0740. With more than half of his regiment already far west of the proper landing beaches, and knowing that the landing had become disorganized and that the rest of the boat waves were being delayed, he asked the task force commander if the 186th Infantry should continue with its original mission (securing the beachhead) or whether it might be feasible to switch missions with the 162d Infantry and start moving west toward the airfields. General Fuller, the HURRICANE Task Force commander, ordered the 186th Infantry to continue with its original mission. As events turned out, it might have been better had the regiment continued west, and it is possible that a great deal of time might have been saved if the missions had been switched. In the first place, the maps with which the task force was supplied were so inaccurate that both regiments soon came upon terrain features that threw much planning out of gear. Secondly, most of the 186th Infantry had landed so far west that both it and the 162d (the latter had to cross the 186th's line of march) consumed much valuable time getting to their proper locations. Finally, an exchange of missions might have been executed without much difficulty, for, in amphibious training, the 41st Division had learned to switch missions when such mistakes were made.[22]

By 0745 the 2d Battalion, 186th Infantry, and the two companies of the 3d Battalion had started moving eastward. Meanwhile, the proper beaches had been located and waves going ashore after 0745, although late, proceeded to the right beaches at correct intervals. These waves had to land without the anticipated cover of the first waves and the results might have been serious had there been strong enemy opposition in the Bosnek area. But Japanese resistance was only nominal, and the temporary disruption of the 186th Infantry did not prove dangerous.[23]

[21] 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44, p. 2; 186th Inf S–3 Overlay A, in Annex 4–E to 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Biak, p. 8; CO USS *LCI(L) 73* Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 1–2; CO USS *Kilty* (APD 15) Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 6–7; CO USS *Schley* (APD 14) Opns Rpt Biak, p. 2; CO LCT Gp 23 Opns Rpt Biak, p. 2; Co K 186th Inf, Record of Events, 18 Apr–16 Jul 44, in ORB RAC AGO collection.

[22] 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44, p. 2; 186th Inf Jnl, 27 May–20 Aug 44, atchd to 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44; Newman Notes; Ltr, Gen Doe to Gen Ward, 4 Dec 50, no sub, in OCMH files.

[23] CTF 77 Opns Rpt Biak, p. 8; HTF Opns Rpt Biak, 17 May–20 Aug 44, p. 4; 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44, p. 2.



BIAK COAST LINE *near Mandom. In left foreground is mangrove swamp where 2d Battalion, 186th Infantry, landed.*



Companies I and K moved east to their planned location 1,000 yards west of Old (west) Jetty, arriving there about 1030. As the two companies took up their positions and began probing inland to the coral ridge behind Bosnek, the 2d Battalion passed through them on its way to the east flank of the beachhead. As the 2d Battalion approached the jetty area, the rest of the 3d Battalion, together with regimental headquarters personnel, began moving west and inland from the jetties to their proper positions, crossing the 2d Battalion's line of march. To add to the difficulties of movement, at 0915, just as the 2d Battalion was clearing New Jetty, the task force reserve and task force artillery units began landing. It was 0930 before the 2d Battalion, the 3d Battalion, and the task force reserve were completely untangled and could move without further confusion to the planned limits of the initial beachhead. The line marking these limits was an arc centering on Bosnek and curving inland from a point on the beach 1,000 yards west of Old Jetty to the top of the ridge behind Bosnek. Thence it swung back to the beach 1,500 yards east of New Jetty. The area thus enclosed was secured by the 186th Infantry by noon on Z Day.[24]

The face of the coral ridge behind Bosnek was found to be rough and honeycombed with small caves. Companies F and G, aided by elements of the Support Battery, 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, sent patrols along the steep slope and to the top of the ridge to investigate many of the caves, most of which proved to be unoccupied, though three Japanese were killed near caves directly north of New Jetty. The companies moved over the first slope to a second ridge line which was parallel to and about seventy-five yards north of the first. Company G started looking for a trail which was thought to lead over the ridges to the plateau north of Bosnek, but it was Company E which, shortly after noon, found the ill-defined track. A few Japanese in a pillbox temporarily prevented the two companies from securing the trail, which was not cleared until 1400 hours, after the pillbox had been destroyed. During the late afternoon, patrols were sent north of the ridges to the area which the Japanese had surveyed for an airdrome. A few Japanese, most of whom fled upon being sighted, were found at the airdrome site, but there were no signs of large organized enemy groups north, northeast, or east of Bosnek insofar as the 186th Infantry could ascertain during 27 May.[25]

The 162d Infantry on Z Day

The 162d Infantry had begun landing shortly after 0900 on Z Day.[26] The regiment quickly assembled and immediately started moving west along the main coastal road toward the task force objectives, the three Japanese airdromes. Two alternatives had been planned for this advance. The first was to send the three battalions in column along the coastal road in the order 3d, 2d, and 1st. The other was to have only the 3d Battalion attack along the road while the 2d Battalion

[24] 186th Inf Jnl, 27 May–20 Aug 44; 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44, p. 2; 3d Bn 186th Inf Jnl, 14 May–24 Oct 44, in ORB RAC AGO collection.

[25] *Ibid.;* 542d EB&SR Opns Rpt Biak, p. 3.

[26] Information in this subsection is taken principally from: 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 15 May–19 Aug 44, pp. 1–3; 162d Inf FO 1, 15 May 44, and 162d Inf Jnl 22 May–19 Aug 44, both atchd to 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 15 May–19 Aug 44.

moved over the ridges to the inland plateau and pushed west, echeloned to the right rear of the 3d. In case the latter plan was used, the 1st Battalion was also to advance over the inland plateau on the 2d Battalion's right rear. This second plan was to be used only if the Japanese appeared to be holding the ground behind the initial beachhead in great strength, for it was realized that the echelon movement would probably be more time consuming than a column attack along the road, and speedy occupation of the airdromes was the principal mission of the 162d Infantry.

Since there had been few contacts with the enemy by the time that the 162d Infantry was ready to start its attack westward, it was decided that only one company of the 2d Battalion need be sent inland to protect the right flank. The rest of that battalion and all of the 1st were to follow the 3d along the main road. The 1st Battalion was to maintain contact with the 186th Infantry in the Bosnek area until such time as the tactical situation permitted this contact to be broken. Should the advance of the 2d and 3d Battalions be rapid, the 1st would have to stretch its companies west along the road from the positions of the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, at Mandom.

It was 0930 before the 3d Battalion had passed the point at which the first assault waves of the 186th Infantry had come ashore about 0715. An hour later, the battalion had passed through the village of Ibdi, west of the 2,000-yard-long mangrove swamp. Beyond Ibdi the coral ridge which paralleled the southern shore of Biak fell steeply to within 100 feet of the beach. At this point the ridge was a vertical cliff about 200 feet high, below which the main road ran along the coast. The defile between the beach and the cliff, not shown on any maps then available to the 162d Infantry, began about 1,500 yards west of Ibdi and ran in a generally southwesterly direction for almost 2,000 yards along the shore of Soanggarai Bay. At the village of Parai, on the beach just beyond the western end of the defile, the cliff broke into a series of parallel ridges which formed a continuation of the main coastal ridge.

It was about 1115, when the regimental Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon discovered an enemy position on the face of the cliff west of Ibdi, that the 162d Infantry first learned of the existence of the Parai Defile. At 1300 the 3d Battalion, with six tanks of the 603d Tank Company leading the advance, arrived at the eastern entrance to the defile. There was no large Japanese force stationed along the cliff, but the few Japanese had such a tactical advantage over troops moving along the coastal road that they were able to delay the 162d Infantry's advance for some time. The tanks fired on enemy-occupied caves along the cliff, and rocket-equipped LCI's, lying offshore, pounded the main road and ridge west of Parai. By 1500 the 3d Battalion had pushed through the defile and had secured Parai and a large jetty at that village.

Meanwhile Company E, which had been attempting to advance along the ridge north of the rest of the regiment, had found that the terrain and thick vegetation made progress along that route next to impossible. Since the company was lagging far behind the rest of the advance and since strong enemy opposition had not yet been encountered either inland or on the coastal route, it withdrew to join the rest of the 2d Battalion on the beach, and by the time that battalion had reached Parai, Company E was back in place. Progress west of the Parai Defile was without noteworthy incident during the rest of the afternoon, though scattered small groups of Japanese were seen

and fired upon. At the close of the day the 2d and 3d Battalions started digging in around Parai and along the coast west toward the village of Mokmer. The 1st Battalion remained at Ibdi.

Supporting Arms and Services, Z Day

The first artillery unit ashore on 27 May was Battery C, 121st Field Artillery Battalion, which, landing from amphibian vehicles, was set up and ready to fire by 0730. The rest of the battalion, together with the entire 146th Field Artillery Battalion, was ashore by 1100. Battery C, 947th Field Artillery Battalion (155-mm. howitzers), in general support, came ashore during the morning and went into position east of New Jetty early in the afternoon. The 121st Field Artillery Battalion was prepared to support the operations of the 186th Infantry, but only Battery C, which did some firing on the coral caves behind Bosnek, got into action. By early afternoon the westward advance of the 162d Infantry had progressed so far that two batteries of the 146th Field Artillery Battalion were displaced to Ibdi. Other than the few shots by Battery C of the 121st, artillery fire during the day was limited to registration on check points, and no defensive or harassing fires were requested until 0115 on 28 May. Company D, 641st Tank Destroyer Battalion, landed its 4.2-inch mortars at the jetties at 0815. The company followed the 162d Infantry to the west and bivouacked for the night near the 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry. It did no firing during the day.[27]

Naval support vessels, in addition to furnishing rocket fire west of the Parai Defile, hit other targets. The cruisers and destroyers of Fire Support Groups A and B kept up harassing fire on the airdrome areas throughout the day until 1700. One destroyer sank six enemy barges west of Bosnek during the morning. Another destroyer, operating east of the beachhead, fired on many targets of opportunity, including enemy troops in caves along the water line and supply, ammunition, and fuel dumps.[28] Not all the B–24's scheduled to engage in the preland-ing bombardment reached Biak, but the principal targets were adequately covered by the planes which did reach them. The medium bombers, whose action was controlled by the Naval Attack Force commander on Z Day, arrived over Biak on time. These support aircraft delivered requested attacks accurately and promptly. Fighter cover could not be established over Biak until 1110 because a front of bad weather west of Wakde Island, where the fighters were based, delayed the planes' arrival. Fortunately, no determined enemy air attacks were made before 1110.[29]

Antiaircraft artillery, under the control of Headquarters, 208th Antiaircraft Artillery Group, quickly set up its guns in the beachhead area during the morning. A few enemy planes which flew over Biak around noon fled before antiaircraft guns from ship or

[27] 41st Inf Div [HTF] Artillery, Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–20 Aug 44, pp. 2–3; 947th FA Bn Jnl Biak, 23 May–20 Aug 44; 121st FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–18 Jul 44, pp. 1–2; Co D 641st Tank Destroyer (TD) Bn Jnl, 24 May–7 Jul 44 (this unit's records are variously entitled: Reconnaissance Co, 641st TD Bn; Co D, 641st TD Bn; Co C, 98th Chemical Mortar Bn; Co D, 98th Chemical Mortar Bn), in ORB RAC AGO collection; 146th FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, 22 May–20 Aug 44, pp. 3–4.

[28] CTF 77 Opns Rpt Biak, p. 9; CO USS *Reid* (DD 369) Opns Rpt Biak, 27–28 May 44, p. 1; CO USS *Kalk* (DD 611) Opns Rpt Biak, 25 May–4 Jun 44, p. 2.

[29] CTF 77 Opns Rpt Biak, p. 10.

shore could be brought to bear. But all antiaircraft crews were on the alert to expect further Japanese air action late in the afternoon. Because of the difference in time of sunset at the closest Allied and Japanese bases, Japanese aircraft could remain in the Biak area about half an hour after Allied planes had to leave.

The expected attacks developed shortly after 1600, when four Japanese two-engined bombers, accompanied by three or four fighters, approached the beachhead from the north, flying low over the ridge behind Bosnek and thus escaping radar detection. Some excellent targets were ready for the Japanese. Admiral Fechteler had permitted four LST's to tie up side by side at one of the jetties. Although he knew this move to be tactically unsound, he considered it justified because of the importance of the cargo aboard the LST's and because the jetty provided the only good spot for LST beaching. The Japanese bombing was accurate, but the LST's were lucky. None of the Japanese bombs exploded!

Though the Japanese planes also bombed and strafed the beaches, none of the bombs dropped ashore exploded, while the strafing runs killed only one man and wounded two others. All four bombers were shot down by ground or ship-based antiaircraft, and the Japanese fighters were driven off by some Allied fighter planes which had remained late in the area. One Japanese bomber crashed into the water, sideswiping an SC which was standing offshore. Two of the ship's crew were killed and nine wounded. The SC had to be towed away for repairs, and a few other naval vessels suffered minor damage from strafing. There was negligible damage to supplies and equipment ashore. Total Allied losses as a result of the air raid were three killed and fourteen wounded, most of them naval personnel.[30]

Unloading on Z Day was accomplished by a variety of means. Some of the LCT's were able to reach the beach over the coral reef, from which the craft received little damage during the day. Other LCT's, after a partially destroyed wooden pier off one of the large jetties was knocked down, unloaded artillery, tanks, trucks, and engineering equipment on the earth and rock section of the jetty. All LCT unloading was completed by 1000, after which hour the LCT's aided the LVT's and DUKW's to unload LST's still standing in the stream outside the reef. Calm water permitted the LCT's to fasten ramp to ramp with the LST's, allowing cargo to be transferred directly from the larger craft to the smaller. Most of the cargo so handled was brought ashore over the reef to Green Beach 1. Five of the LST's were unloaded at the two jetties, as were most of the LCI's. After they had put troops ashore, some the LCPR's which had been brought to Biak aboard APD's aided in unloading LST's. These LCPR operations ceased at 1000, when the APD's formed a convoy to return to Hollandia.

Unloading stopped at 1715, about half an hour earlier than had been planned, because of the threat of more Japanese air attacks. By that time all the Z-Day troops

[30] Ltr, Adm Fechteler to Gen Ward, 8 Nov 50; CO LCT Gp 23 Opns Rpt Biak, p. 2; CO USS *Kalk* Opns Rpt Biak, 25 May–4 Jun 44, p. 2; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Biak, p. 10; CO USS *LST 463* AA Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May 44, pp. 1–2; HTF G–3 Jnl, 15 May–21 Aug 44; History of First Battalion, One Hundred Eighty-Sixth Infantry, While Detached From Regimental Control, Task Force Reserve, 27 May–2 June 44 (hereafter cited as 1st Bn 186th Inf Hist, 27 May–2 Jun 44), p. 1, in Annex 4 to 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44, pp. 1–2.



UNLOADING AT BIAK. *In the background are two LST's discharging at Old Jetty. In the foreground are LVT (A)'s.*

of the HURRICANE Task Force, some 12,000-odd, were ashore, as were twelve medium tanks, five 155-mm. howitzers, twelve 105-mm. howitzers, twelve 75-mm. pack howitzers, and about 500 vehicles of all types. An estimated 3,000 tons of bulk cargo (including about 600 tons aboard vehicles) had been landed, and only 300 tons of bulk cargo had not been put ashore when unloading operations ceased for the day.[31]

Principal responsibility for moving the supplies ashore and establishing dumps was assigned to the 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, which operated under the supervision of the Shore Party commander. Attached to the regiment for these purposes were the Cannon and Antitank Companies, 162d Infantry; the Cannon Company, 186th Infantry; Company B, 116th Engineers; four quartermaster companies of various types; a port company; an amphibian truck company; and an ordnance company. The Bosnek beachhead held by the 186th Infantry was ideal for the location of the initial task force supply dumps and there

[31] CO LCT Gp 23 Opns Rpt Biak, p. 2; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Biak, p. 9; CO USS *Kilty* (APD 15) Opns Rpt Biak, p. 2; CO USS *Schley* (APD 14) Opns Rpt Biak, p. 2; CO USS *LST 463* Opns Rpt Biak, p. 1; HTF Opns Rpt Biak, 17 May–20 Aug 44, p. 5.

was no difficulty finding dispersal areas. Movement of supplies from the beach to the dump areas was initially somewhat hampered by lack of wheeled vehicles, but the Japanese air raids had no effect upon these activities.[32]

The 116th Engineers (less Company A) upon landing devoted its attention to constructing and improving roads in the beachhead area and clearing the ground for supply dumps. Company C supported the westward advance of the 162d Infantry by repairing the road bed and bridges along the main coastal track. These repairs were necessary so that motor vehicles and the 603d Tank Company (which, coming ashore at H plus 50 minutes, had been attached to the 162d Infantry) could follow the infantry toward the airfields. Company B, 116th Engineers, in addition to working with the 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, devoted some of its time to clearing and repairing the two jetties at Bosnek. The 116th Engineers also established task force water points on the beachhead.[33]

By nightfall General Fuller, who had assumed command ashore at 0930,[34] had good reason to be optimistic about the outcome of the Biak operation.[35] The landing, although confused, had been unopposed. Troops and supplies had come ashore without undue difficulty and had been well-dispersed. Japanese air defense had been ineffective. The 162d Infantry, although it had discovered unmapped terrain features and had been temporarily delayed at the Parai Defile, was well on its way to the airfields. The ridges behind Bosnek had been cleared. Artillery was well emplaced to support further advances both to the west and north. No large, organized bodies of Japanese had been encountered. Despite the fact that information gathered on Z Day indicated that the Japanese garrison on Biak was larger than had been estimated prior to the landing,[36] no determined enemy ground defense had been encountered.

The Japanese were soon to change to pessimism any optimism the HURRICANE Task Force may have possessed on the evening of Z Day.

The Japanese on Biak

The Japanese, who had occupied Biak in early 1942, had paid little attention to the island until late 1943. Then they decided to convert Biak into a key air base which would be within fighter range of many other of their air bases in western Dutch New Guinea. To protect and hold the island, the Japanese sent to Biak one of their best regiments, the veteran (of China) *222d Infantry, 36th Division,* which arrived on Biak in December 1943. It is probable that the Japanese initially intended to make Biak into a tremendous ground stronghold as well as a

[32] HTF Opns Rpt Biak, 17 May–20 Aug 44, p. 5; 542d EB&SR Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 1–2; G–4 HTF, G–4 Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May G–20 Aug 44, p. 6 (atchd to HTF Opns Rpt Biak, 17 May–20 Aug 44).

[33] HTF Opns Rpt Biak, 17 May–20 Aug 44, p. 5; 116th Engr Opns Rpt Biak, 10 May–20 Aug 44, Ch. III, pp. 1–2; Ltr, CO 162d Inf to CO 116th Engrs, 13 Sep 44, sub: Commendation of Company C, 116th Engrs, in 116th Engrs Opns Rpt Biak, 10 May–20 Aug 44, Ch. I; 603d Tank Co Opns Rpt Biak, p. 1, copy in OCMH files.

[34] Rad, CTF 77 to Com7thFlt, 26 May 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 27–28 May 44; Rad, HTF to ALAMO, no number, 27 May 44, in ALAMO Rear Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 25–28 May 44.

[35] Rad, ALAMO Rear Hq to ALAMO Adv Hq, WF–4546, 28 May 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 28–29 May 44, states that Gen Fuller had some hope of taking the airstrips on 28 May.

[36] G–2 HTF, G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. I, Part I. Historical Narrative, p. 4.

major air base. However, when on 9 May *Imperial General Headquarters* moved the southeastern strategic main line of resistance west of Biak to Sorong and the Halmaheras, Biak was left as an outpost which was to be held as long as possible.

Japanese Defenses on Biak

The command of Japanese Army troops on Biak was vested in the commander of the *222d Infantry,* Col. Naoyuki Kuzume.[37] As Commander, *Biak Detachment,* Colonel Kuzume had under his control approximately 3,400 men of the *222d Infantry,* a company of the *36th Division's* light tanks, miscellaneous field and antiaircraft artillery units, and numerous service organizations, the largest of which were the *17th, 107th* and *108th Field Airdrome Construction Units* of about 500 men each. Also stationed on Biak and under Colonel Kuzume's operational control were about 1,500 naval troops, among whom the senior officer was Rear Adm. Sadatoshi Senda, the commanding officer of the *28th Naval Special Base Force*. Most of the naval troops were members of service organizations, but the approximately 125 men of the *19th Naval Guard Unit* had received some combat training. The strength of Colonel Kuzume's command on 27 May was some 11,400 men, of whom about 4,000 were combat effectives. Insofar as supplies allowed him to do so, Colonel Kuzume armed his service troops as auxiliary infantry and so used them throughout the Biak operation.[38]

The Allied landings at Aitape and Hollandia on 22 April had prompted the *Biak Detachment* commander to draw up detailed defense plans and to begin work on fortifications which would help his troops to hold the island. About mid-May Colonel Kuzume was warned by the *2d Area Army* that an Allied advance to the Schouten Islands was a certainty. After the landings of the TORNADO Task Force at Wakde–Sarmi on 17 May, Colonel Kuzume ordered a cessation of all work on the Biak airdromes, started an ambitious program of fortification, and began deploying his troops for a protracted land defense.

Colonel Kuzume based his plans on the sound assumption that the principal Allied objective would be the airfield area along Biak's southern coast. Faced with the problem of defending an extensive coast line with a small body of troops, he chose to concentrate his defenses on terrain from which he could prevent Allied use of the airstrips for the longest possible time. For this purpose, he placed emphasis on high ground immediately north and northwest of Mokmer Drome.

Where the main coastal ridge turns sharply north just west of Mokmer village, it leaves in its wake a series of gradually rising small terraces, many of which have steep seaward sides and some of which have a levee-like formation similar to that of the main ridge. The forward edge of the first

[37] Information in this subsection is from: MID WD, *Military Reports,* 24, pp. 1–9, copy in G–2 DofA files; ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 53, 9 Aug 44, copy in G–2 DofA files; G–2 HTF, G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. I, Part II, Enemy Opns, pp. 1–6; Opns of *Yuki Group,* pp. 1–2; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), p. 49.

[38] Incl 2, List of Corrections, to Ltr, Maj Gen Charles A. Willoughby, ACofS G–2 FEC, to Gen Ward, about 10 Mar 51, no sub, in OCMH files. According to this list, there were at least 12,000 Japanese on Biak on 27 May, but this figure seems high.

prominent terrace rises steeply from the coastal plain in the form of a narrow ridge averaging sixty feet in height and lying a few hundred yards north of Mokmer and Borokoe Dromes. From this ridge and the rising terraces beyond it, the Japanese could look down on any activity along the coastal road west of Mokmer village and could observe activity at and near the three airfields.

In this amphitheater-like terrain and along the low ridge, both of which were covered with thick growth (scrub on the terrace and rain forest on the ridge), the *Biak Detachment* emplaced many field artillery and antiaircraft weapons. There were also many automatic weapons and a few mortars. All these weapons were located within range of Mokmer Drome and most of them could also fire on Borokoe Drome. The key to Colonel Kuzume's defenses in this area was the West Caves area, located about 50 yards north of the low ridge and about 1,200 yards north of the western end of Mokmer Drome. The West Caves were actually three large sumps, or depressions in the ground, which were connected by underground tunnels and caverns. The caves were ringed with pillboxes, bunkers, and foxholes, and an extensive system of coral and log emplacements was built along the spur ridge above Mokmer Drome. Biak naval headquarters was originally located in the West Caves, which could shelter 1,000 men, and Colonel Kuzume planned to move *Biak Detachment* headquarters to the caves for the final defense of the airdromes. As long as the West Caves and the positions along the low ridge were occupied by the Japanese, Allied planes could not safely use the airfields.

On the main coastal ridge between the village of Ibdi and the Parai Defile the *Biak Detachment* developed another center of resistance which came to be known as the Ibdi Pocket. The terrain in the area was a series of knifelike east-west ridges separated by depressions and crevices up to fifty feet deep. These ridges were connected in places by cross-ridges, and the entire area was covered with thick rain forest and dense jungle undergrowth which had found a foothold in the coral. Pillboxes of coral and logs, hasty emplacements of the same materials, small caves and crevices, and foxholes at the bases of large trees were all utilized by the enemy to defend the area.

On the main ridge north of Mokmer the Japanese constructed a third strong point, which was called by the Japanese the East Caves. Behind Mokmer the ridge rose to a height of 240 feet. It was not so steep a cliff as the Parai Defile barricade, but it could not be climbed without the use of hands. About three quarters of the way to the top was a flat ledge from which two large caverns, similar to those in the West Caves area, could be entered. The Japanese constructed pillboxes on the ridge both below and above the ledge, and in the caverns they emplaced mortars, 20-mm. guns, and heavy machine guns. Observation posts were also set up at the East Caves, from which an unobstructed view of the coast from Parai to the west end of Mokmer Drome could be obtained. The *Biak Detachment* used the East Caves principally as living quarters, supply dumps, and as a connecting link between the Ibdi Pocket and the West Caves. Continued Japanese occupation of the East Caves would endanger Allied troop and supply movements along the coastal road from Parai to Mokmer Drome.

Surprisingly, Colonel Kuzume made no attempt to set up a defense in depth along the road from Bosnek to the airfields. A haphazard beach defense, based on improved natural caves along the water line, was es-

tablished west of Mokmer and east of Bosnek. Between Opiaref, 6,000 yards east of Bosnek, and Saba, 3,000 yards west of Opiaref, such shore-line positions were well constructed and camouflaged. They could be entered from defilade and they were backed by prepared mortar positions. However, these beach defenses had no depth, and the pillboxes or improved caves along the water line consisted of a single line of positions, not all of which had overlapping fields of fire. Four large steel pillboxes, only one of which had been emplaced by 27 May, were to cover the open beach at Bosnek.

Dispositions of the Biak Detachment

Colonel Kuzume's initial plan for the defense of Biak was published on 27 April, just five days after the Allied landings at Hollandia and Aitape.[39] The *1st Battalion, 222d Infantry,* was responsible for the defense of the southeastern section of the island east of a line drawn northwestward from Opiaref. The *10th Company, 222d Infantry,* reinforced with artillery and mortar units, was to secure Korim Bay, located halfway up the southeast–northwest side of Biak. The area between Opiaref and Bosnek was assigned to the *19th Naval Guard Unit.* The bulk of the *2d Battalion, 222d Infantry,* was to defend the airfields and the coast from Bosnek west to Sorido. The *3d Battalion* (less two companies and some artillery and mortar detachments) was to be held in reserve near the airfields, and the tank company was ordered to assemble near Saba.

The *Biak Detachment* was not in its selected defensive positions on Z Day but was apparently being held mobile. Detachment headquarters, the *1st Battalion* of the *222d Infantry* (less elements), about half of the *19th Naval Guard Unit,* and miscellaneous service organizations were all located in a cave and garden area on the inland plateau about 3,000 yards north-northwest of Bosnek. Outposts at Saba and Opiaref were held by the *1st Company, 222d Infantry,* and a platoon of the *2d Company* was stationed along the main ridge behind Bosnek. The bulk of the *2d Battalion,* the rest of the naval guard unit, and some naval antiaircraft organizations were located at the East Caves. Naval headquarters, various naval service units, and the *6th Company, 222d Infantry,* were at the West Caves. Most of the army service units were at Mokmer Drome or disposed along the low ridge north of that field. The bulk of the *3d Battalion* was posted at the west end of the same airfield. One platoon of the *10th Company* was at Sorido, guarding the southern terminus of a trail which led north across the island to Korim Bay. The tanks had not yet moved to Saba but were assembled on the terrace north of the eastern end of Mokmer Drome.

At various points along the terrace and low ridge were emplaced a battery of mountain guns, four 120-mm. naval dual purpose guns, three or four 3-inch antiaircraft guns, and a large number of mortars and automatic weapons of all calibers. One 6-inch naval coast defense gun was located on the beach south of Mokmer Drome, from which position it could cover the coast line for about five miles to the east and west. Some large guns were awaiting emplacement on the Bosnek beaches, while others in the same area, including a second 6-inch coast defense gun, had been destroyed by Allied air and naval bombardment prior to the land-

[39] Unless otherwise indicated, information in this subsection is from: MID WD, *Military Reports,* 24, pp. 5–14; G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. I, Part II, Enemy Opns, pp. 5–7; Opns of *Yuki Group,* pp. 3–4; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 50–56.

ings. At least one mortar company was at the East Caves and a few more mortars, together with a small body of riflemen, were in the Ibdi Pocket area.

Reactions to the Allied Landings

Despite the fact that Colonel Kuzume had been warned that an Allied attack on Biak was imminent, the *Biak Detachment* was unprepared on 27 May. The troops were not in the best available positions, units were scattered, and the emplacement of artillery had not been completed. The bulk of the *2d Company* platoon which was stationed on the ridges overlooking Bosnek committed suicide during the morning of Z Day, and survivors were either killed by 186th Infantry patrols or fled inland. The wasteful suicide of the *2d Company* platoon was apparently the only action taken by any part of the *Biak Detachment* until the night of 27–28 May.

Caught out of position as he was, it is doubtful whether Colonel Kuzume either could or would have carried out his original defense plans. However, the problem was soon taken out of the colonel's hands. The 27th of May found on Biak Lt. Gen. Takazo Numata, Chief of Staff of the *2d Area Army,* who happened to be present on an inspection trip from army headquarters. General Numata, who remained on Biak until 15 June, immediately assumed direction of the island's defense. It is probable that many of the sweeping changes which were later made in the *Biak Detachment's* original plans were undertaken upon his orders.

The first offensive reaction on the part of the *Biak Detachment* was a night raid on the positions of Batteries B and C, 146th Field Artillery Battalion, which were located near Ibdi in thick scrub growth north of the main coastal road. Sometime before midnight a Japanese patrol of the *3d Battalion, 222d Infantry,* had crossed the road to the south, and shortly after that time parts of this group charged with fixed bayonets into Battery C's wire section. Two artillerymen were immediately stabbed to death and others were wounded before the enemy was driven back by American machine gun fire which was aimed along the road. More men of the *3d Battalion, 222d Infantry,* renewed the attack with grenades and rifle fire, some circling to the north around Battery C and a few others moving against Battery B, located 200 yards to the east. Attacks on Battery C continued until daylight, when the last Japanese withdrew. The action cost Battery C 4 men killed and 8 wounded, while a near-by antiaircraft detachment lost 1 man killed and 1 wounded. Over 15 of the enemy had been killed during the night and an unknown number wounded.[40]

The action was but a minor prelude to a larger battle in which the 162d Infantry, continuing its advance west on the 28th, was soon to become involved.

[40] The story of this night action is from: 146th FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, 22 May–20 Aug 44, pp. 4–6; Opns of *Yuki Group,* p. 3; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 55–56.

CHAPTER XIII

West to Mokmer Drome

After spending a night disturbed only by a few Japanese mortar shells, the 162d Infantry resumed its westward advance at approximately 0730 on 28 May. (*See Map V.*) Just past the Parai Defile the seaward side of the main coastal ridge gives way to an inclined terrace about 500 yards wide and a mile and a half long. Slanting toward the shore, this terrace ends in the twenty-foot-high cliff located along or near the water line from Parai west beyond Mokmer village. The 162d Infantry planned to send part of its 3d Battalion along the terrace, inland, while the rest of the unit advanced along the coastal road, which runs from the Parai Defile partly beneath the cliff and partly along its crest. The 2d Battalion was to move along the terrace to the right rear of the 3d, while the 1st Battalion was to take up reserve positions at Parai. The advance was to be supported from the shore by the 146th Field Artillery and the 603d Tank Company. Destroyers were to stand offshore to provide fire support on call.[1]

An Initial Reverse

Prelude to Retreat

The 3d Battalion, 162d Infantry, proceeded through Mokmer village without opposition.[2] Company L and some of Company M's heavy machine guns then moved on to the terrace above Mokmer, leaving the rest of the battalion to continue toward the airdromes along the coastal road. By 0930 the main body of the battalion was at a road junction nearly 1,500 yards west of Mokmer. Slight resistance along the road from Mokmer had been easily brushed aside, but at the road junction enemy resistance stiffened sharply and machine gun and mortar fire pinned down Company K, which was leading the advance. As the 146th Field Artillery Battalion tried to silence this fire elements of Company K pushed westward to within 200 yards of Mokmer Drome. This was as close as any troops of the HURRICANE Task Force were to approach that airfield for over a week.

About 1000 hours, Japanese infantry,

[1] 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 15 May–19 Aug 44, p. 2; 146th FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, 22 May–20 Aug 44, p. 7; 603d Tank Co Opns Rpt Biak, p. 2; Ltr, Col Harold Haney (ex-CO 162d Inf) to Gen Ward, Chief of Mil Hist, 20 Nov 50, no sub, in OCMH files. For additional information on terrain in this area, see above, pp. 300–301.

[2] Information in this subsection is principally from: 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 15 May–19 Aug 44, pp. 2–4; 162d Inf Jnl, 22 May–19 Aug 44; 603d Tank Co Opns Rpt Biak, p. 2; 146th FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, 22 May–20 Aug 44, pp. 7–9; CO USS *Reid* (DD 369) Opns Rpt Biak, 27–28 May 44, pp. 2–3; CO USS *Wilkes* (DD 441) Opns Rpt Biak, 28 May 44, pp. 2–5; CO USS *LCI(L) 73* Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–5 Jun 44, p. 2; 162d Inf, Rpt of Supply Opns, Biak, pp. 2–3, atchd to 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 15 May–19 Aug 44; 542d EB&SR Opns Rpt Biak, p. 4; Ltr, Haney to Ward, 20 Nov 50.



EAST CAVES AREA *where the 162d Infantry first encountered the Japanese.*

elements of the *2d Battalion, 222d Infantry,* counterattacked from the west.[3] The forward units of the 3d Battalion, 162d Infantry, withdrew 600 yards along the coastal road to the point at which the twenty-foot cliff left the shore line, but Japanese infantry attacks, which were supported by automatic weapons fire, continued. The enemy threw more troops into the battle (more of the *2d Battalion, 222d Infantry*) from the East Caves area until the attackers were coming not only from the west but also from the northwest and north. The Japanese split the 3d Battalion by driving a wedge along the cliff between the troops on the shore and those on the terrace. Companies L and M were cut off. The 2d Battalion, attempting to get on the terrace to the north of the 3d Battalion, was pinned down by Japanese fire from the East Caves and was unable to advance.

By 1100 the 3d Battalion was in sore straits. The main body was on the coast in an area about 200 yards deep and about 500 east to west. Behind the battalion, the shore line was a twenty-foot cliff. The entire area was covered with secondary growth thick enough to prevent good observation along the ground but open enough to allow the Japanese in their higher East Caves position to view every American movement. The Japanese had excellent cover and concealment in the thick vegetation, coral caves, and crevices of the East Caves area and, at the same time, were able to subject the 3d Battalion to intense mortar, grenade, machine gun, and rifle fire. Because of poor

[3] Identifications of enemy units in this and the following subsections are based on: Opns of *Yuki Group,* p. 4; MID WD, *Military Reports,* 24, p. 14; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 56–59, 62.

observation and the defiladed enemy positions, the fire of neither the 146th Field Artillery Battalion nor the offshore destroyers was able to silence the enemy's weapons.

Most of Company L and the Company M detachment which was also on the coral terrace managed to find a covered route back to the rest of the 3d Battalion on the shore, but one platoon, initially surrounded, had to fight its way eastward into the lines of the 2d Battalion, north of Mokmer village. Company G, on the terrace north of the main road and between the 2d and 3d Battalions, was also cut off and withdrew to the 2d Battalion only with difficulty, and after it had suffered many casualties from Japanese fire. The 1st Battalion was ordered to move north from Parai onto the main coastal ridge to outflank the enemy positions, but efforts to do so were halted by enemy fire from the East Caves. Two companies patrolled in the broken terrain along the main ridge but were unable to move westward.

During the afternoon the 3d Battalion stood off two more concerted enemy counterattacks, one at 1200 and another shortly after 1400, and suffered more casualties from the enemy mortar and artillery fire. During the latter attack, the Japanese began moving some light tanks forward from the Mokmer Drome area. The 3d Platoon, 603d Tank Company, engaged these tanks at a range of 1,200 yards and, with the aid of fire from destroyers lying offshore, drove the enemy tanks back into defilade positions. Three tanks of the 603d were damaged by Japanese artillery fire and three men of the same organization were wounded during the action.

Meanwhile, General Fuller had decided to reinforce the 3d Battalion, 162d Infantry. The 1st Platoon, 603d Tank Company, moved west along the coastal road. At the same time small boats manned by the 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment were also sent forward with ammunition and medical supplies, both dangerously low. The small craft moved along the shore out of range of Japanese mortar and artillery fire until opposite the 3d Battalion's position and then shot inshore at full speed, one by one. Supplies were replenished and the worst casualties evacuated despite continued shelling of the 3d Battalion's position by the Japanese. The 1st and 2d Battalions continued their efforts to clear the Japanese from the terrace behind the 3d but met with little success.

By late afternoon the 3d Battalion's position was becoming untenable. Japanese mortar and artillery fire increased and enemy patrols cut the coastal road to the rear. Obviously, no further advance could be made until the enemy fire from the East Caves area could be stopped by ground attack from the north, by naval fire from the south, or by artillery fire from emplacements to the east. Thus far, artillery fire had had little apparent effect upon the volume of Japanese fire. Only one artillery battalion was in position to fire on the East Caves area and the effect of its fire was limited by the location of the Japanese emplacements, most of which were either in deep defilade or were in caves and crevices facing seaward. Offshore destroyers and rocket LCI's were in the best position to fire on the Japanese emplacements. The best expedient would have been increased fire from these naval vessels, but such fire was now impossible to obtain.

The naval fire support officer with the 162d Infantry had been killed at the 3d Battalion's position about noon. Direct ship-to-shore communications immediately broke

down, and no replacement for the liaison officer was immediately available. Communications to the offshore destroyers and rocket LCI's remained erratic and slow throughout the 28th and the next day—messages had to be passed back from the 3d Battalion to regiment, then to HURRICANE Task Force headquarters, to naval attack force headquarters, and finally to the naval fire support groups and individual ships. It was impossible to concentrate sufficient support fire on the Japanese positions to neutralize the artillery, mortar, and machine gun fire still falling on the 162d Infantry's forward elements.

About 1600 General Fuller gave up plans for further attempts at reinforcement of the forward units and ordered Colonel Haney to withdraw his 3d Battalion to the positions held the previous night. The withdrawal started slowly because communications difficulties still prevented concentration of supporting fires. However, at 1700 the regimental commander finally ordered the 3d Battalion to start moving back along the coastal road. Tanks were to act as point, and rear guard and close-in artillery fire was substituted for a disengaging force. The battalion was to continue eastward until it had passed through the 2d, which was setting up a new defensive position east of Mokmer village.

The men of the 3d Battalion moved in small parties along the beach and main road, which was intermittently swept by Japanese mortar, machine gun, and rifle fire. Many troops were unable to use the main road, but had to drop down to the beach below the overhanging cliff. Four tanks brought up the rear and protected the north flank. Between 1830 and 1900 all elements of the 3d Battalion reached safety beyond the 2d Battalion's lines and began digging in for the night east of the latter unit. Casualties for the day, almost all of them suffered by the 3d Battalion, were 16 killed and 87 wounded.

The First Attack Ends in Retreat

Sometime between dawn on 28 May and first light on the 29th, the *1st Battalion, 222d Infantry,* and the headquarters of the *Biak Detachment* had moved overland to the West Caves from their previous positions north of the surveyed drome behind Bosnek.[4] With the *1st Battalion* in reserve, Colonel Kuzume could throw the entire *2d* and *3d Battalions* against the 162d Infantry. For the American regiment the night of 28–29 May proved quiet in comparison with the action during the previous day, but the Japanese were ready to launch strong counterattacks against it on the morning of the 29th.

The first Japanese attack began at 0700 on the 29th and was directed against the 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry. This attack, which was carried out by men of the *2d* and *3d Battalions, 222d Infantry,* was beaten off by mortar, machine gun, and rifle fire without loss to the American unit. About 0800, new waves of Japanese infantry, now supported

[4] Information in this subsection is from: MID WD, *Military Reports,* 24, p. 14; 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 15 May–19 Aug 44, pp. 4–5; 162d Inf Jnl, 22 May–19 Aug 44; 41st Inf Div, Tng Notes 5, 12 Sep 44, sub: Japanese Tactics—Biak Opn, pp. 9–10, in files of the 41st Inf Div, in ORB RAC AGO collection; 603d Tank Co Opns Rpt Biak, p. 2; 146th FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 10–11; 542d EB&SR Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 4–6; 1st Plat Co D 641st TD Bn Jnl, 28 May–5 Jul 44, atchd to Co D, 641st TD Bn Jnl, 24 May–7 Jul 44, in ORB RAC AGO collection; 2d Plat Co D 641st TD Bn Jnl, 27 May–7 Jul 44, atchd to Co D, 641st TD Bn Jnl, 24 May–7 Jul 44, in ORB RAC AGO collection; HTF G–3 Jnl, 15 May–21 Aug 44; CO USS *LCI(L) 73* Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–5 Jun 44, pp. 2–3; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 58–62.



SCENE OF THE TANK BATTLE. *Coastal road is depicted crossing the cliff in left corner of photograph.*



by four tanks, appeared west and north of the 2d Battalion, thus beginning the first tank battle of the war in the Southwest Pacific Area.

The 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, with the 1st Platoon, 603d Tank Company, in support, was astride the main coastal road 1,000 yards east of Mokmer. The battalion's left flank was on the beach while its right was against the coastal cliff and less than forty yards inland. (The right had been drawn in from an initial position on the terrace above the cliff after the 0700 attacks.) Between the beach and the cliff was a coconut grove. The main coastal road crossed the rise of the cliff at a point about 475 yards west of the 2d Battalion's lines.

Shortly after 0800 the Japanese tanks, followed by an infantry column, advanced down the incline where the main road crossed the cliff and deployed in echelon left formation in the coconut grove. The Japanese vehicles were light tanks, Model 95 (1935), weighing about nine tons, carrying a crew of three men, and armed with one 37-mm. cannon and two 7.7-mm. machine guns. They were opposed by two General Sherman M4A1 medium tanks, the heaviest armament on which was the 75-mm. gun. Each Japanese tank was stopped by one round of 75-mm. armor-piercing ammunition, while the enemy infantry was literally mowed down by the machine guns and mortars of the 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry. Armor-piercing 75-mm. shells passed right through the Japanese light tanks, and the Shermans followed with a few rounds of 75-mm. high explosive, which tore holes in the Japanese vehicles and blew loose their turrets. During this action several hits scored on the Shermans by the Japanese 37-mm. guns caused no damage.

About thirty minutes after the first attack the Japanese sent in a second wave of three tanks, which used the same route of approach and the same formation in the coconut grove. These three were quickly destroyed by three Shermans. One enemy 37-mm. shell locked the 75-mm. gun of one Sherman in place, but the American tank backed part way into a shell hole to obtain elevation for its weapon and, despite the damage, managed to destroy one of the enemy tanks. The Japanese tanks having been stopped and the leading elements of the second infantry wave killed, the attack disintegrated and the enemy withdrew.

For an hour or so the Japanese were quiet, but late in the morning, under the cover of machine gun fire and mortar barrages, they began to circle north of the 2d and 3d Battalions, 162d Infantry. New infantry attacks began about 1200. The enemy was unable to dislodge the 162d Infantry, but his mortar fire caused many casualties within the regimental perimeter and the Japanese managed to cut the coast road east of a large T-jetty at Parai. Company B and the Cannon Company (which was not armed with its usual 105-mm. howitzers but acted as an additional rifle company throughout the Biak operation) counterattacked the Japanese road block behind close-in mortar support and succeeded in dislodging the enemy by fire and movement.

By noon it had become apparent that no attack launched against the airdromes would be successful until the Japanese could be cleared from the high ground overlooking the fields and the approaches thereto or until Japanese fire from the East Caves area and the ridge line east of that position could be neutralized. On 29 May it was impossible to neutralize these enemy instal-

lations because the infantry troops were so close to them as to prevent effective artillery fire and because communications from the ground to support aircraft and naval vessels were, at best, sporadic. In view of these facts, Colonel Haney instructed his staff to prepare plans for withdrawal to Ibdi and Mandom by amphibious craft or by march through the Parai Defile. He then returned to the HURRICANE Task Force command post near Mandom to explain the situation to the task force commander and to confer on possible lines of action. At 1200 Colonel Haney returned to the forward area with approval for a withdrawal.

Colonel Haney's plan was to have his 1st Battalion cover the withdrawal from positions at Parai, while the other two battalions and attached units moved both overland and by water back to Ibdi. One platoon of Company D, 641st Tank Destroyer Battalion (4.2-inch mortars), was to remain in place to maintain supporting fire during the withdrawal. The 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment was to supply small craft and amphibian vehicles for the overwater withdrawal.

It was some time before all elements of the 162d Infantry could get ready for the withdrawal, and Colonel Haney could not issue orders to execute his plan until 1350. Ten minutes later all troops had begun moving eastward. The 2d Battalion, less Company G, loaded on LVT's and DUKW's at Parai Jetty, was shuttled to LCM's and LCT's lying offshore, and moved back to Bosnek. Company L and part of Company I were withdrawn by the same method. The rest of the 162d Infantry, led by the 3d Platoon, 603d Tank Company, moved overland through the Parai Defile and took up positions at Ibdi. The 1st Platoon, 603d Tank Company, brought up the rear of this echelon. The 2d Platoon, Company D, 641st Tank Destroyer Battalion, destroyed its mortars and ammunition and moved eastward with the tanks, while the 1st Platoon of the same mortar unit managed to get its weapons out. Company D, 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, armed with rifles and light machine guns, was sent up the cliff north of the Parai Jetty as a holding force. After the overland echelons of the 162d Infantry had moved east through the Parai Defile, the engineer company joined the rearguard tanks and mortar units on the main road. Close support for the withdrawal was provided by task force artillery and by two amphibious tanks, an antiaircraft LCM (these three manned by the 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment), and a Seventh Fleet rocket-equipped LCI. By nightfall the 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, regimental headquarters, the Cannon and Antitank Companies, a few tanks, the 205th Field Artillery Battalion, Company C of the 186th Infantry, and Company D of the 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment were in a thousand-yard-long perimeter beginning about 500 yards west of Ibdi. The 3d Battalion had moved on to Mandom, while the 2d Battalion remained in the Bosnek area.

The 162d Infantry's casualties during the day were 16 killed, 96 wounded, and 3 injured. The regiment estimated that it had killed over 500 Japanese during the day. The enemy, despite his losses, followed up the advantage he had gained and quickly pushed troops forward to Parai and into the cliffs along the Parai Defile. This action clearly indicated that the *Biak Detachment*

intended to take advantage of the natural defensive position in the Parai Defile area.[5]

Preparations for a New Attack

Reinforcement of the HURRICANE Task Force

Even before the 162d Infantry had been forced to retreat on 29 May, General Fuller had begun to feel that the situation on Biak was serious. He, like Colonel Haney, believed that an advance along the coast to the airdromes would be impossible until the ridges north of Mokmer and Parai could be cleared of enemy troops. The task force commander further considered it impossible, because of the danger of overextending his lines and thereby jeopardizing the beachhead, to outflank the Japanese positions along the ridges unless he could obtain reinforcements. On 28 May General Fuller had therefore asked for at least one infantry regiment, one 105-mm. artillery battalion, a battalion of combat engineers, and another tank company.[6]

General Krueger had already planned to send two battalions of the 163d Infantry from the Wakde–Sarmi area to Biak to arrive at the latter island on 3 June. Now it was planned to speed the shipment so that the two battalions would reach Biak on 1 June. They were to be shipped from Wakde–Sarmi by LCI and were to carry with them ten days' rations and three units of fire for all weapons. The additional units that General Fuller had requested could not be dispatched to Biak right away, although one 155-mm. gun battery could be sent immediately.[7] At the same time, General Krueger made plans to move the 503d Parachute Regiment from eastern New Guinea to Hollandia where it was to remain on the alert for movement by air to Biak in case of need. The ALAMO Force commander also pressed for quick movement of 6th Division units from Milne Bay to Wakde–Sarmi to replace the elements of the 163d Infantry which were scheduled to leave the latter area for Biak.[8]

Pending the arrival of reinforcements, General Fuller planned to use his available troops to hold the west flank at Ibdi and expand the beachhead at Bosnek. The 162d Infantry was to establish a semicircular perimeter beginning on the beach west of Ibdi, reaching north to the main ridge, and returning to the beach at the village. The 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, would maintain a perimeter around Mandom, where Headquarters, HURRICANE Task Force, was located, while the 3d Battalion moved over the ridge behind Bosnek to set up defenses on the inland plateau. The 2d Battalion, with part of the 3d attached, would remain at the Bosnek beachhead. When the first

[5] The foregoing estimate of Japanese losses is from HTF G–2 Per Rpt 3, 1800 hrs 28 May–1800 hrs 29 May 44, in G–2 HTF, G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol II, Part II, G–2 Per Rpts. The figure for the 162d Inf is from 162d Inf, Rpt of Casualties, 27 May–17 Jul 44, in Per Sec., 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 15 May–19 Aug 44.

[6] Ltr, Comdr HTF to Comdr ALAMO Force, 28 May 44, no sub, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 29–30 May 44; Rad, HTF to ALAMO, TD–20, 28 May 44, in ALAMO Rear Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 25–28 May 44; Rad, HTF to ALAMO Rear Hq, no number, 28 May 44, in ALAMO Rear Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 25–28 May 44.

[7] Rad, ALAMO Adv Hq to HTF, WH–172, 29 May 44, in ALAMO Rear Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 25–28 May 44; Rad, ALAMO Adv Hq to HTF, WH–167, 28 May 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 28–29 May 44; Ltr, Gen Krueger to Gen Ward, 2 Jan 51, no sub, in OCMH files.

[8] Rad, ALAMO Adv Hq to GHQ SWPA, WH–170, 29 May 44, in ALAMO Rear Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 29–31 May 44; Rad, ALAMO Adv Hq to ALAMO Rear Hq, WH–171, 29 May 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 28–29 May 44.

two battalions of the 163d Infantry arrived, they would take over the 186th Infantry's beachhead positions, and the beachhead area was then to be extended to include the surveyed airdrome on the flats north of Bosnek. Upon completion of these redispositions, the HURRICANE Task Force would make final preparations for a new drive to the west.[9]

On 30 and 31 May the 162d Infantry patrolled around the main ridge near Ibdi for a route over which large bodies of troops might move north to the inland plateau in preparation for the second attack westward. During the course of this patrolling, it was discovered that the main ridge from Bosnek to the Parai Defile actually comprised a series of seven sharp coral ridges, the crests of which were 50–75 yards apart and separated by gullies 50–100 feet deep. These separate ridges were honeycombed with small natural caves, potholes, and crevices. There was little soil on most of the coral, yet the area maintained a cover of dense rain forest containing trees 8–20 inches thick and 100–150 feet high.

The 162d Infantry discovered two native trails over the ridges. The most easterly of these, designated "Old Man's Trail," began on the beach road about 1,200 yards west of Mandom. It was a fairly well defined track which swung north over the seven ridges along a comparatively easy route. Another track began 1,200 yards to the west, near Ibdi. Called "Young Man's Trail," the latter followed a very difficult route over the ridges to the inland plateau. Both of these trails ran through the outer defenses of the Ibdi Pocket, into which the *Biak Detachment,* on 30 May, moved the *3d Battalion, 222d Infantry.* On 30 and 31 May the 162d Infantry's patrols along the ridges north of Ibdi and Mandom were harassed by the Japanese in the Ibdi Pocket, which had not yet been recognized as a major enemy strong point.[10]

On 30 May the 162d Infantry located a water hole near the beach terminal of Old Man's Trail. A regimental water point established there was constantly harassed by Japanese rifle fire from the Ibdi Pocket area or by small enemy parties which moved down out of the ridges north of Ibdi and Mandom. The Cannon Company, 162d Infantry, was therefore assigned the missions of clearing the enemy from the water point area and protecting that important installation from Japanese attacks.

Halfway through the Parai Defile, a little over a mile west of the 162d Infantry's main perimeter, an underground stream ran from the base of the cliff into Soanggarai Bay. At the point where the main road crossed the stream, the 162d Infantry set up an ambush to prevent Japanese infiltration from the west along the beach. The ambush site was also used as a patrol base from which small parties reconnoitered along the cliffs of the Parai Defile to discover enemy dispositions in the area. Patrolling on 30 and 31 May cost the 162d Infantry 6 men killed, 17 wounded, and 4 injured.[11]

While the 162d Infantry had been meeting reverses near Mokmer, the 186th Infantry had been expanding the Bosnek beachhead. On the 28th, patrols secured Opiaref (on the coast about four miles east

[9] Rad, HTF to ALAMO Adv Hq, TD–77, 30 May 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 30 May–1 Jun 44.

[10] 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 15 May–19 Aug 44, p. 5; MID WD, *Military Reports,* 24, p. 14.

[11] 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 15 May–19 Aug 44, pp. 5–6; 162d Inf, Rpt of Casualties, 27 May–17 Jul 44, in Pers Sec., 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 15 May–19 Aug 44.



THE PARAI DEFILE

of Bosnek) where a number of well-prepared but deserted enemy positions were found. Other patrols were sent north to the surveyed drome behind Bosnek. A few Japanese were killed in that area, but no signs of organized resistance were found. Other elements of the regiment patrolled along the ridge north of Ibdi and Mandom, finding that area strongly held, while still more patrols maintained contact with the 162d Infantry along the coastal road. On 29 and 30 May the 186th Infantry continued patrolling from the Parai Defile east to Opiaref, from which village a motor road was discovered to run inland to the surveyed drome. In all this activity few contacts were made with organized Japanese forces, and during the three-day period the regiment lost but 2 men killed and 18 wounded.[12]

On 28 May the 205th Field Artillery Battalion and the rest of the 947th arrived on Biak. Elements of these two units, together with the 146th Field Artillery Battalion, had moved forward to the Ibdi area to support

[12] 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44, pp. 2–5; Company L, One Hundred and Eighty-Sixth Infantry, APO #41, Rec of Events, Co L, from 25 May 44, p. 1, in ORB RAC AGO collection (hereinafter cited as Co L 186th Inf, Rec of Events, Biak); Hist of Biak Campaign, Co K 186th Inf, pp. 1–2, in ORB RAC AGO collection (hereafter cited as Co K 186th Inf Hist of Biak Campaign, and not to be confused with Co K 186th Inf, Rec of Events, 18 Apr–16 Jul 44); Co I 186th Inf, Hist of Biak Campaign, n. p., in ORB RAC AGO collection; 1st Bn 186th Inf Hist, 27 May–2 Jun 44, pp. 1–3.

the drive of the 162d Infantry and had been withdrawn to Bosnek when the latter regiment was forced back. An antiaircraft battalion (less one battery) and two batteries of another antiaircraft battalion also landed on Biak during the period. These units rapidly went into position to supplement the fires of the antiaircraft units already protecting the beachhead and dump areas. Enemy air raids were a daily occurrence and, although causing little damage and few casualties, demanded augmented antiaircraft protection. The antiaircraft units and Seventh Fleet ships lying offshore shot down most of the enemy raiders.[13]

During the period in which the HURRICANE Task Force was awaiting reinforcements, the *Biak Detachment* redisposed its troops to meet new Allied attacks. The 800 well-armed men of the *3d Battalion, 222d Infantry,* in the Ibdi Pocket, made only harassing attacks with small groups against the positions of the 162d Infantry. Colonel Kuzume moved most of his *1st Battalion* back into the cave and garden area north of the surveyed strip, a position which the bulk of those units had vacated on 28 May. The *2d Battalion* was left in the Mokmer Drome area to reorganize after its heavy losses on the 28th and 29th and to hold the coastal approach to the airfields. Naval troops and a mortar company of the *2d Battalion* manned the East Caves, north of Mokmer village.[14]

On 31 May the 1st and 3d Battalions, the Antitank Company, and Headquarters, 163d Infantry, arrived on Biak. The planned redisposition of the HURRICANE Task Force began immediately and was completed by 1800. The task force was ready to execute a new plan of attack on 1 June.[15]

Plans for a New Attack

Upon the arrival of the two battalions of the 163d Infantry on Biak, General Krueger radioed to General Fuller that the HURRICANE Task Force was expected to regain the initiative with a new offensive. This offensive, said General Krueger, was to be pushed vigorously "with a view to carrying out your mission effectively and expeditiously." [16] To execute these instructions, General Fuller planned a two-pronged attack. One regiment, the 186th Infantry, was to advance west over the inland plateau, while the 162d Infantry was again to attack west along the coast. The two battalions of the 163d Infantry were to remain in reserve at the Bosnek area. Essentially, this was a return to and an enlargement of the alternative regimental attack plan discarded as unnecessary by the 162d Infantry on Z Day, 27 May. The 162d Infantry had originally proposed using battalions as General Fuller now intended to employ regiments.[17]

On 1 June the 3d Battalion, 186th Infantry, was to move directly over the ridge

[13] HTF Opns Rpt Biak, 17 May–20 Aug 44, p. 6; G–2 HTF, Per Rpts 1–5, 27 May–1 Jun 44, in G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. II, Part II, Per Rpts; 41st Div Arty Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–20 Aug 44, pp. 4–6.

[14] MID WD, *Military Reports,* 24, p. 14; G–2 HTF, G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. I, Part II, Enemy Opns, pp. 7–8; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), p. 62.

[15] Memo, CofS HTF for ACofS G–3 ALAMO Force, no sub, 1 Jun 44, atchd to HTF G–3 Per Rpt 12, 29–30 May 44, in HTF Opns Rpt, 17 May–20 Aug 44; 163d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 31 May–20 Aug 44, p. 2; HTF G–3 Jnl, 15 May–21 Aug 44.

[16] Rad, ALAMO Adv Hq to HTF, WH–39, 1 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 1–3 Jun 44.

[17] Memo, CofS HTF for ACofS G–3 ALAMO Force, 1 Jun 44; 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 15 May–19 Aug 44, pp. 1–3; 162d Inf FO 1, 15 May 44, atchd to 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 15 May–19 Aug 44; Plan of HTF, 1 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 28 May 44.

behind Bosnek to the surveyed airdrome. There it would be joined by the 2d Battalion, which was to advance west along the inland road from Opiaref, and by the 1st Battalion on the morning of 2 June. Five tanks of the 603d Tank Company, one platoon of the 116th Engineers, and the 12th Portable Surgical Hospital were to be attached to the regiment. Close support would be provided by the 121st Field Artillery Battalion (75-mm. pack howitzer), which was to follow the 186th Infantry to the surveyed airfield area.

While the 186th Infantry moved into position, the 162d Infantry was to patrol west along the coastal road and north into the ridges behind Ibdi and Mandom. On 2 June the 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, would move north across the ridge at Ibdi and then west along the inland plateau and ridges, maintaining contact with the 186th Infantry. The rest of the regiment was to push through the Parai Defile again in preparation for another concerted attack toward Mokmer Drome. The 162d Infantry's operations were to be supported by Company C, 116th Engineers; seven tanks of the 603d Tank Company; the 146th and 947th Field Artillery Battalions; Company D, 641st Tank Destroyer Battalion, with 4.2-inch mortars; 1 antiaircraft LCM; two LVT (A)'s, with 37-mm. guns; and two rocket-equipped LCV's and one LCI(G). The 205th Field Artillery Battalion and offshore destroyers were to be in general support for both regiments.

The 186th Infantry was to sweep the inland plateau and, securing a route over the main ridge north of Mokmer village, clear the high ground north and northeast of Mokmer Drome. The 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, would seize part of the high ground northeast of the airfield. When the other two battalions of the latter regiment, attacking westward along the shore south of the ridge, began approaching Mokmer Drome, the 2d would aid them in seizing the airstrip. The two battalions of the 163d Infantry were to protect the beachhead and supply installations and patrol behind the 186th Infantry.[18]

The Seizure of Mokmer Drome

Action at the Surveyed Strip

At 0830 on 1 June the 3d Battalion, 186th Infantry, left its bivouac area near Bosnek and marched north over the coastal ridge.[19] By 1100 the unit had reached the west end of the surveyed strip and had set up a defensive perimeter. Company K, together with two guns and crews from the Antitank Company, established defenses at a trail crossing some 400 yards northwest of the rest of the battalion. The 2d Battalion left Opiaref about 0800 and by 1100 was preparing positions near the center of the surveyed airfield. Company F and the Cannon Company arrived from Opiaref, where

[18] Memo, CofS HTF for ACofS G-3 ALAMO Force, 1 Jun 44; 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44, pp. 5–6; 162d Inf FO 1, 15 May 44, atchd to 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 15 May–19 Aug 44; Plan of HTF, 1 Jun 44, in G-3 GHQ Jnl, 28 May 44.

[19] This subsection is based principally on: 3d Bn 186th Inf Jnl, 14 May–24 Oct 44, in ORB RAC AGO collection; 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44, pp. 6–8; 186th Inf Jnl, 27 May–20 Aug 44; Co K 186th Inf, Hist of Biak Campaign; 603d Tank Co Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 2–3; 121st FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 2–3; 146th FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 14–15; MID WD, *Military Reports*, 24, p. 15; G-2 HTF, Per Rpts 6–9, 31 May–4 Jun 44, in G-2 Hist of HTF, Vol. II, Part II, Per Rpts; Opns of *Yuki Group*, pp. 5–7; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 62, 66–67.

they had remained until relieved by the 163d Infantry late in the afternoon.

The Cannon Company, operating as a rifle unit, protected the 121st Field Artillery Battalion, which had also displaced forward to the surveyed drome. The 1st Platoon, 603d Tank Company, joined the two battalions of the 186th Infantry at the airstrip about 1530. All these units used the road which ran east and west along the inland plateau on the north side of the surveyed strip. Company B, 116th Engineers, worked all day to repair the road from Opiaref to the forward units. By 1630 the most urgent repairs had been made, and wheeled vehicles could laboriously make their way east along the coast from Bosnek, over the ridge at Opiaref, and thence west to the surveyed area.

The *Biak Detachment* had no intention of allowing the 186th Infantry to advance unopposed and at 1330 had sent about twenty-five men of the *1st Battalion, 222d Infantry,* against Company K. These Japanese, who were supported by machine guns and mortars emplaced northwest of the trail crossing, continued attacks until 1700, when a platoon of Company K, by a flanking movement, forced their withdrawal northward. Company K and two platoons of the Antitank Company remained at the trail crossing for the night. Company I was moved forward to K's left and left rear, and Company L extended K's perimeter east along the main road toward the surveyed drome. Battalion headquarters and Company M stayed near the strip's western end. The 121st Field Artillery Battalion, the Cannon Company, the 2d Battalion, regimental headquarters, the attached engineers, and the tanks remained near the center of the airfield.

The first part of the night passed without incident, but at 0330 the entire area held by the 3d Battalion, 186th Infantry, flamed into action. About a company and a half of the *1st Battalion, 222d Infantry,* moved from the south against the semicircular perimeter held by Companies I, K, and L, having outflanked the 3d Battalion on the west. Simultaneously, other elements of the *1st Battalion* attacked from the northwest, attempting to drive a wedge between Companies L and K. By rapid adjustment of its lines, the 3d Battalion trapped most of the enemy group which had attacked from the south. Under the support of mortar and machine gun fire from both the northwest and southwest, the encircled Japanese desperately tried to fight their way north. Four hours of confused hand-to-hand fighting, marked by the use of bayonets, machetes, and grenades, ensued. At daylight a count revealed that 86 dead Japanese were within and around the 3d Battalion's perimeter. The dead included the commander of the *1st Battalion, 222d Infantry.* Losses to the American unit (including attached Antitank Company men) were 3 men killed and 8 wounded.

Despite the confusion resulting from the night action, the 186th Infantry was ready to resume the westward advance by 0900 on 2 June. The 1st and 3d Battalions, supported by five tanks and an antitank platoon, were to advance abreast, while the 2d protected the right flank by patrolling north of the main road. The 121st Field Artillery Battalion was to provide continuous close support and was to displace forward with the infantry. Neither artillery nor air bombardment seems to have been provided for or delivered prior to the attack. However, both the 121st and 146th Field Artillery

Battalions (the latter from emplacements south of the ridge, near Bosnek) were registered on targets north and west of the 186th Infantry. Air support was available from Wakde Island upon call.

The speed of the advance was contingent upon the arrival of water from Bosnek and upon improvements which engineers could make on the supply road west of the surveyed drome. The inland plateau was devoid of water, and extensive repairs were necessary before the road could bear wheeled vehicles. Tentatively, the objective for 2 June was set at a point on the road 5,000 yards west of the surveyed strip. Upon reaching this point, the 186th Infantry would be about 1,500 yards north of the *3d Battalion, 222d Infantry,* which was located in the Ibdi Pocket.

West Toward the Airdromes

The 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry (less Company A, attached to the 162d Infantry) broke camp at its beach defense area at 0800 on 2 June and moved north over the ridge to join the rest of the regiment.[20] The 1st and 3d Battalions then advanced with two companies abreast against scattered but determined opposition from elements of the *1st Battalion, 222d Infantry.* Small enemy patrols aimed machine gun and rifle fire at the advancing American units and held their positions until killed or dispersed by tank or artillery fire. Most of the enemy parties were located on the north flank and apparently many of them had been driven westward out of the cave and garden area north of the surveyed drome by fire from the 121st Field Artillery Battalion, which destroyed *Biak Detachment* headquarters installations in that area. By nightfall the 186th Infantry had killed 96 Japanese and had itself lost 6 men killed and 10 wounded. The unit halted shortly after 1600 and began digging in at a point about 600 yards northeast of the day's objective. The advance had carried the regiment west until it was almost abreast and north of the 162d Infantry, at the Ibdi Pocket.

The latter regiment had attempted to move west along the coast from Ibdi during the day. The 2d Battalion had been dispatched on 1 June into the ridges north of Ibdi with orders to clear Young Man's Trail and, maintaining contact with the 186th Infantry, advance west along the ridges toward Mokmer Drome. Companies E and G had started over the trail on 1 June and by 1300 had reached the crest of the third of the seven parallel ridges which formed the main ridge above Ibdi. Further progress during the afternoon was rendered nearly impossible by increasingly rough terrain and intensifying Japanese small arms fire, which kept the companies pinned down. Company E remained on the third ridge for the night and set up an outpost at the base of the fourth. The company had bypassed a few small parties of Japanese, while other en-

[20] Information in this subsection is from: 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44, pp. 8–12; Newman Notes; 3d Bn 186th Inf Jnl, 14 May–24 Oct 44; 186th Inf Jnl, 27 May–20 Aug 44; Co K 186th Inf, Hist of Biak Campaign; 603d Tank Co Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 2–3; 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 15 May–19 Aug 44, pp. 5–6; 162d Inf Jnl, 22 May–19 Aug 44; Co B 186th Inf, Rec of Events, Apr–Jul 44, n. p., in ORB RAC AGO collection; HTF G–3 Jnl, 15 May–21 Aug 44; 186th Inf, S–3 Sit Overlays, 2–8 Jun 44, in Annex 14 to 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44; 121st FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 3–4; 146th FA Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 15–16; 116th Engrs S–3 Activities, Biak, pp. 2–3, in 116th Engrs Opns Rpt Biak, Ch. III; HTF Opns Rpt Biak, 17 May–20 Aug 44, pp. 8–9; MID WD, *Military Reports,* 24, p. 15; G–2 HTF Per Rpts 8–14, 2–9 Jun 44, in G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. II, Part II, Per Rpts; Opns of *Yuki Group,* pp. 6–9; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 67–71.

emy troops moved around its flanks to cut the trail south of the third ridge. To protect the line of communications over the Young Man's Trail, Company G moved its forward elements back to the first ridge, and Company F pushed up that ridge to G's right. Company E was left isolated for the night.

The advance northward had been resumed on 2 June against increasingly strong opposition from the *3d Battalion, 222d Infantry,* and various service units armed as infantry. Communications between Company E and other elements of the 2d Battalion were re-established early in the morning, and the company had pushed on to the crest of the fifth ridge by 0930. There the unit was pinned down by enemy fire from both flanks. Company F was ordered forward to E's right, and arrived on the fifth ridge about 1150. Thereafter, better progress was made as the combined fire power of the two rifle companies kept most of the Japanese under cover. In the afternoon Company G moved forward also and the three rifle companies pushed on over the seventh ridge, bypassing numerous enemy strong points, to establish contact at 1500 with Company E, 186th Infantry, on the inland plateau.

By the time this contact was made, two facts had become obvious. First, it was evident that only by a long series of laborious small unit infantry assaults could the Japanese be cleared from the Ibdi Pocket, which was now recognized by the HURRICANE Task Force as a major enemy strong point. Second, the terrain along the main ridge had been found so rugged that it was evident that no large body of troops could move west along it as long as the Japanese retained any control of the Ibdi Pocket. Therefore the 2d Battalion (less Company H) was attached to the 186th Infantry for use as the commander of that regiment saw fit. Company H remained south of the ridge.

The addition of the 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, to the 186th Infantry helped to complicate the supply problems of the troops on the plateau. No water had yet been found inland. Heat and humidity were intense, and thick scrub growth, about twelve feet high, stopped any breezes. Despite the best efforts of Company B, 116th Engineers, the supply road could not be repaired fast enough to keep pace with the advancing infantrymen. Water had to be brought around from Bosnek via Opiaref to the forward units, and there were not enough water trailers nor five-gallon cans available to supply all the water needed. At night each man received only one canteen of water for the next day, an inadequate amount under the conditions which prevailed inland. The water situation and the necessity for hauling all other supplies north through Opiaref did more to delay the 186th Infantry's progress westward than did the opposition of the *1st Battalion, 222d Infantry.*

The advance was to be resumed at 0730 on 3 June, the first objective being the point at which the main ridge left the coast and turned inland near Mokmer village. To gain this point, which lay about three miles west-southwest of the night bivouac, three battalions were to advance along a front 900 yards wide, with the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, on the north, the 3d in the center, and the 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, on the south. The latter unit was to look for trails over the ridge to Parai and was to be ready to cross the ridge to the south upon order from Colonel Newman. The 2d Battalion, 186th Infantry (less Company F), was to assist the engineers and the 41st Quartermaster Company to move supplies

forward. Company F was to be regimental reserve.

The reinforced regiment moved off on schedule, but progress was painfully slow. The road over the plateau deteriorated into a mere footpath, the high scrub growth limited visibility to ten yards, and no landmarks, not even the main ridge along the coast, could be seen from the flat inland plain. Again, no water could be found, although the engineers tried blasting for wells. The 2d Battalion, 186th Infantry, brought a few supplies forward by hand, and the engineers worked feverishly to extend the road behind the forward troops so that wheeled vehicles could be sent westward: The 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, was unable to find any trails over the ridge to the south. Neither that unit nor the 186th Infantry suffered any battle casualties during the day. The *1st Battalion, 222d Infantry,* had disappeared. Only three Japanese were killed and but few more had been sighted. At 1500 all units began digging in at a point a good half mile short of their objective.

General Fuller instructed the 186th Infantry to send one battalion over the main ridge between Mokmer and Parai on 4 June. The battalion, once over the ridge, was to advance east along the coastal road to take from the rear enemy positions which had been holding up the 162d Infantry's advance westward from Ibdi. Colonel Newman replied that all trails leading south from his regiment's night position had been thoroughly investigated and that none led over the main ridge, the north side of which was precipitous and thus impossible for a large body of men to scale. The regimental commander's own plan was to move west and slightly north from his night position to find a crossing over the main ridge at some point northeast of Mokmer Drome. One element of his command he planned to send southwest to the bend of the main ridge behind Mokmer village, whence it was to patrol northwest along the ridge toward the rest of the regiment.

Before this disagreement was resolved, General Fuller was prompted to change his orders on the basis of information received from ALAMO Force and aerial reconnaissance indicating that the Japanese were about to attack Biak from the sea. The night of 3–4 June proved quiet in the 186th Infantry's area, but the next morning's advance was delayed until supplies and water arrived from Bosnek. Then, about 1000, just as the regiment was starting forward, General Fuller instructed it to hold its positions pending the outcome of the possible Japanese attack. The 186th Infantry therefore limited its operations to patrolling during which no enemy troops were located.

Colonel Newman's plan for the 5th of June entailed sending three battalions forward toward the north-south section of the main ridge northwest of Mokmer village. The three units were to halt about 500 yards from the base of the ridge while one company pushed on to find a route up the high ground. As soon as the company's mission was accomplished, a battalion was to follow it to the ridge top and secure the crossing point. From the crossing, patrols were to be sent north and south along the main ridge. The 2d Battalion, 186th Infantry, was to remain in reserve, ready to reinforce any of the three leading battalions or to bring supplies forward. The 121st Field Artillery Battalion, which had already displaced westward once from the surveyed drome, was to move forward again on the 5th. Late at night on 4 June, the threat of Japanese attack from the sea having passed, the G–3 Section of Headquarters, HURRICANE Task

Force, gave Colonel Newman permission to execute his plan.

Warned by the regimental commander that it was important to secure a foothold on the ridge before the Japanese could deny it to the 186th Infantry, the three assault battalions started westward about 0800 on 5 June. Lack of water again slowed the advance. No water had been received in the forward area since the morning of the 4th, and Colonel Newman had ordered the troops westward against the advice of his staff and battalion commanders. About noon, however, a heavy rain fell. The regimental commander ordered all troops to halt, catch the rain in ponchos, and fill their canteens. "Had it not been for this lucky break, we would undoubtedly have had to halt in midafternoon." [21] As events turned out, no Japanese opposition was encountered, and by 1500 the 3d Battalion, 186th Infantry, was within 500 yards of the main ridge. The 1st Platoon of Company K was sent forward and found a rough approach to the ridge top. Following this route, the entire 3d Battalion moved up the ridge and dug in for the night. Through the thick jungle growth atop the ridge, the men of the 3d Battalion could catch occasional glimpses of Mokmer Drome, 2,500 yards to the southwest.

The 2d Battalion, 186th Infantry (less Companies F and G), moved up to the base of the ridge below the 3d Battalion to protect the latter's rear. The 1st Battalion bivouacked near the base of the ridge about 700 yards south of the 2d, while the 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, remained in the flats 700 yards to the southeast. Company F, 186th Infantry, was placed astride the supply road, 1,000 yards east of the rest of the 2d Battalion, in order to protect the line of communications. Company B, 116th Engineers, harassed by occasional Japanese rifle fire but protected by Company G, 186th Infantry, labored far into the night to extend the supply road westward to each battalion perimeter. The 121st Field Artillery moved forward again during the afternoon and took up new firing positions about 3,500 yards east of the ridge.

[21] Newman Notes.

To the Beach

Before his men could start the planned ridge-clearing maneuvers on the morning of 6 June, Colonel Newman received a telephone call from General Fuller which forced the 186th Infantry commander to change his plans.[22] The task force commander ordered the 186th Infantry to seize Mokmer Drome and a beachhead on the coast directly south of that strip. Neither Colonel Newman nor the Assistant Division Commander, Brig. Gen. Jens A. Doe, liked this plan, for they considered it more important to secure the dominating terrain north and northwest of the airfield before seizing the strip. Colonel Newman put it later: "I objected very strenuously to this plan and told [General Fuller] of my prior planning. However, I was overruled." But General Fuller was anxious to seize at least one of the airstrips—and according to plans Mokmer Drome was to be the first developed—as soon as possible and, in fact, he was under

[22] Information in this and the following subsections is from: Newman Notes; HTF Opns Rpt Biak, 17 May–20 Aug 44, pp. 8–10; HTF G–3 Jnl, 15 May–21 Aug 44; 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44, pp. 11–18; 186th Inf Jnl, 27 May–20 Aug 44; 3d Bn 186th Inf Jnl, 14 May–24 Oct 44; Co K 186th Inf, Hist of Biak Campaign; 603d Tank Co Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 3–4; 121st FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 3–5; 146th FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 16–19; 542d EB&SR Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 8–11; 41st Div Arty Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 9–11; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 71–73.

pressure from General Krueger to do so. His orders stood.[23]

The 186th Infantry's right flank was to be protected during the move to the airfields by Fifth Air Force aircraft strikes against the Borokoe Drome area, while the 163d Infantry was to safeguard the line of communications back through the inland flats. As soon as the 186th Infantry secured a beachhead at Mokmer Drome, tanks and general supplies would be sent overwater from Bosnek in preparation for subsequent advances to Borokoe and Sorido Dromes.

Throughout the morning of 6 June the 186th Infantry directed most of its efforts to bringing supplies up to the forward units. Almost the entire 2d Battalion was engaged in hand-carrying supplies to the 3d Battalion atop the ridge, while the latter unit sent patrols toward Mokmer Drome seeking good routes of approach to that objective. About noon Colonel Newman reported to task force headquarters that no good route had been found and that supplies, especially the ever-needed water, had not been brought forward in sufficient quantities to allow a regimental attack to be launched that day, and he therefore recommended that the attack be postponed until 7 June. General Fuller approved this suggestion.

About 1430 on 6 June, 3d Battalion patrols finally found a reasonably good trail leading toward Mokmer Drome and, about the same time, water arrived at the forward area after the long trip overland from Bosnek. At 1500 the 3d Battalion, followed by the 1st, began moving down the west side of the main ridge to take up positions along a line of departure for the next morning's attack. The 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, was to follow the first two closely, and the 2d Battalion, 186th Infantry, was to bring up the rear, after carrying supplies to the top of the ridge. The Cannon, Service, and Headquarters Companies were to aid the 2d Battalion and were to move with it to Mokmer Drome. The 12th Portable Surgical Hospital (which had been accompanying the 186th Infantry), the Antitank Company, the 121st Field Artillery Battalion, and the regimental trains were to move back to Bosnek. Thence they were to move either along the coastal road or overwater to rejoin the regiment at Mokmer Drome.

In preparation for the infantry attack on 7 June, a thirty-minute artillery concentration began at 0700 that morning. The 146th, 205th, and 947th Field Artillery Battalions, from positions along the coast to the east, were registered on targets in the airfield area ready to support the advance, but most of the firing was undertaken by the 121st Field Artillery from its location behind the 186th Infantry. While the artillery fired on Mokmer Drome and along the low ridge between that field and the 186th Infantry, Fifth Air Force bombers attacked the Borokoe Drome area and also struck some targets along the low ridge. The two assault battalions jumped off at 0730, and by 0850 both had crossed Mokmer Drome and had reached the beach. Neither had encountered any resistance. The 2d Battalion of the 162d Infantry arrived at the shore about 0930. The 2d Battalion, 186th Infantry, together with the Cannon, Service, and Headquarters Companies of the same regiment, all hand-carrying supplies and water, began moving south from their night positions at 0915. All closed at the beach before noon.

[23] Newman Notes; Ltr, Gen Doe [ex-ADC 41st Div] to Gen Ward, 4 Dec 50, no sub, in OCMH files; Ltr, Krueger to Ward, 2 Jan 51, no sub, in OCMH files. The quotation is from the Newman Notes.

When, on 5 June, the 186th Infantry had reached the crest of the main coastal ridge, it had been on the left rear of the Japanese defenses on the low ridge and terraces above Mokmer Drome. Thus, the regiment had been in a favorable position to take these defenses from the rear. But in its move to the airfield, the 186th Infantry had bypassed the *Biak Detachment's* principal defensive positions. The bypassing had not been intentional. Colonel Newman had instructed both leading battalions to halt on the low ridge, reconnoiter along it in both directions, and report on Japanese defenses before moving on. According to Colonel Newman: "I received a negative report from both [battalions], and ordered the movement to the airdrome. Evidently, the right [battalion had] failed in this patrolling effort." [24]

As a result of the failure of reconnaissance on 6 and 7 June to discover the Japanese positions, the 186th Infantry had lost a grand opportunity to outflank the Japanese. Indeed, had even one battalion halted on the low ridge, the story of later operations in the Mokmer Drome area would probably have been far different.[25] Instead, when it reached the beach on the 7th and turned around, the 186th Infantry found itself facing the *Biak Detachment's* strongest defenses. As fate would have it, the attacker had placed himself where the defender most wanted him to be. This was soon to become obvious.

No fire had been received by the 186th Infantry from the Japanese ridge and terrace positions during the advance south to the beach, nor had any fire come from the Japanese in the East Caves area, the source of trouble to the 162d Infantry during the first, abortive attempt to seize Mokmer Drome. But suddenly, about 0945 on the 7th, the entire Mokmer Drome area was subjected to Japanese artillery, antiaircraft, mortar, and automatic weapons fire from the northwest, north, northeast, and east. This fire, coming from emplacements which were well-camouflaged, concealed in dense scrub growth, or protected in defilade or caves, continued for about four hours. Almost all the HURRICANE Task Force's artillery was called upon to fire on known or suspected Japanese installations in the area, while the 186th Infantry's mortars blasted away whenever a Japanese gun flash disclosed the location of a position. Japanese mortar and 20-mm. fire from the area of the East Caves was especially troublesome, for the task force's artillery could not reach those weapons. From the northwest, along the low ridge beyond the West Caves, came 75-mm. artillery or dual-purpose antiaircraft artillery fire, the point of origin of which could not be located.

The 121st Field Artillery fired over 2,000 rounds during the 7th, and it adjusted fire for the 205th and 947th Field Artillery Battalions, also engaged in the counterbattery fire. Late in the afternoon it was estimated that the Japanese fire had been decreased by about 40 percent. At least six enemy gun positions had been silenced and mortar fire had become lighter. Before dark the Japanese, apparently feeling that they had received enough counterfire, began moving to new locations most of the mobile weapons they had emplaced north of the airdrome. Indications were that HURRICANE Task Force artillery would probably be called upon for heavy concentrations again on the 8th.

Meanwhile, the 186th Infantry had completed occupation of the airdrome area and had organized the beachhead, flushing a

[24] Newman Notes.
[25] Ltr, Gen Doe to Gen Ward, 4 Dec 50.

few Japanese from small caves along the shore line. It had been planned that the 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, would push east from the airfields to aid its parent regiment to eliminate Japanese resistance at the Parai Defile. However, Japanese in the East Caves covered the road from Mokmer Drome to Parai with automatic weapons fire. Colonel Newman therefore recommended to Headquarters, HURRICANE Task Force, that the 162d Infantry's battalion remain in place until this fire could be reduced. He pointed out, moreover, that the 186th Infantry did not have enough rations or ammunition to supply such an attack. General Fuller approved this recommendation and the battalion remained at the Mokmer Drome beachhead for the night.

By evening of the 7th, it had become impracticable to supply the 186th Infantry over the inland plateau road, which ended on the east side of the main ridge. From that point all supplies would have to be hand-carried to Mokmer Drome, and supply parties would be endangered by Japanese patrols, a few of which moved in behind the 186th Infantry as the regiment moved to the beach. Overwater supply appeared easier, and the main supply line was therefore changed to a water route which ran from Bosnek to the village of Sboeria, located on the beach south of Mokmer Drome.

The first attempt to run supplies over this water route was undertaken during the late afternoon of 7 June by three LCM's and a few LCV's, each of the former carrying a Sherman tank. These craft were supported by an antiaircraft LCM and an LCS, and all were manned by the 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment. As the first boats approached the shore they were greeted by machine gun and rifle fire from Japanese whom the 186th Infantry had not yet cleaned out of caves along the water line in front of Mokmer Drome. The small craft returned the fire, but were finally forced to withdraw. The 186th Infantry, according to Colonel Newman, was "glad to see them withdraw since they had our troops running for cover." [26]

At 1400 another attempt was made to land supplies at Sboeria. The three LCM's managed to put their tanks ashore in the face of continuing Japanese fire, but accompanying LCT's were driven off by Japanese artillery. Two of the LCM's were so damaged by enemy fire that they could not fully retract their ramps and had to proceed the nine and a half miles back to Bosnek in reverse. Plans were made to effect all delivery of supplies and evacuation of casualties at night until the enemy fire on the Sboeria beachhead could be neutralized.

The tanks which had been landed lumbered along the shore road fronting Mokmer Drome, destroying several small bunkers along the beach. Then they wheeled toward the low ridge north of the airfield, taking under fire a Japanese 75-mm. mountain gun and a 20-mm. piece which had opposed their landing. These two weapons were silenced. Moving cautiously northwestward from the field along a road which crossed the low ridge, the tanks destroyed two large pillboxes. By the time this operation was completed, dusk was approaching, and the tanks returned to the beach to bivouac with the 186th Infantry.

The regiment dug in along a semicircular perimeter. The 3d Battalion was on the western edge of Sboeria, extending from the

[26] Newman Notes.

beach to the south side of the airfield, while the 1st Battalion occupied a similar line east of Sboeria. The 2d Battalion, 186th Infantry, and the 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, were between the first two, but on the north side of the field. As night fell, the enemy fire slackened and a count could be made of casualties. It was found that the day's operations had cost 14 men killed and 68 wounded, almost all as a result of Japanese artillery and mortar fire.

During the night of 7–8 June more badly needed supplies were brought forward to Sboeria by small craft of the 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment in an operation concerning which widely different stories are told. According to the engineers' reports, no one from the 186th Infantry was on hand at the beach when, about 2330, a convoy of 1 LCS, 14 LCV's, and 8 LVT's arrived at Sboeria. After waiting almost half an hour for unloading aid, the engineers transferred the LCV cargo to LVT's which pushed ashore and finally found some representatives of the 186th Infantry, who were eagerly awaiting the rations and ammunition.[27]

The commander of the 186th Infantry tells a different tale:

> I personally was at the beach, with my S–4. . . . We had given Division Headquarters flashlight recognition signals, but evidently these were probably not communicated to the boat group commander. . . . They [the boats] did not reply to our signals and proceeded on down the coast before returning and sending in the LVTs. Failure to properly coordinate signals and overcaution on the part of the boat commanders was apparently responsible. . . .[28]

Whatever the case, the welcome supplies were put ashore, and the LVT's returned to Bosnek with the most seriously wounded men of the 186th Infantry.

Thus, by daybreak on 8 June, the 186th Infantry was firmly established on Mokmer Drome, and, despite difficulties incident to moving supplies forward by water from Bosnek, it was obvious that the regiment could be supplied. The first of the three Japanese airfields on the southeast shore of Biak had been seized, but the area north of the airfield had not yet been secured. Until it was, Mokmer Drome could not be repaired and Allied planes could not use the field.

[27] 542d EB&SR Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 10–11.

[28] Newman Notes.

CHAPTER XIV

Frustration at Mokmer Drome

Reinforcements for the 186th Infantry

Japanese Reactions to the Westward Advance

During its advance west from the surveyed drome, the 186th Infantry had met little opposition after 2 June.[1] While it is inconceivable that the *Biak Detachment* had not anticipated the possibility of an American flanking maneuver through the inland plateau, there are many possible explanations for the failure of the Japanese to oppose this movement strongly after the initial battle at the surveyed drome. Colonel Kuzume and General Numata had reason to believe that the Americans might make an amphibious attack at Mokmer Drome. Small craft of engineer and artillery units attached to the HURRICANE Task Force continuously patrolled along the coast west of Bosnek to Sorido, and Seventh Fleet fire support vessels kept up harassing fires on all known and suspected enemy installations in the airfield area. Therefore, the *Biak Detachment* kept the *2d Battalion, 222d Infantry,* and most of the armed service personnel immobilized on the low ridge and terraces north of Mokmer Drome and at the West Caves. Colonel Kuzume's principal responsibility was the defense of the airfields. While the best defense is usually a good offense and while it is often more sensible to defend an area from a distance, the *Biak Detachment* had strength neither to launch a large-scale offensive nor to defend every approach to the airfields. The attacks against the 162d Infantry on 28 and 29 May had resulted in the loss of most of the *Biak Detachment's* armor and had cost the *2d Battalion, 222d Infantry,* many casualties, including its commander. Colonel Kuzume could ill afford any more such Pyrrhic victories.

The *1st Battalion, 222d Infantry,* had made no serious attempt to stop the 186th Infantry's progress westward because the inland plateau was nearly indefensible and because the battalion would have been decimated in battle with the superior strength of the reinforced American regiment. The *1st Battalion* was withdrawn from the surveyed drome area on 2 June, initially in preparation for counterattack against the Bosnek beachhead. While no such counteroffensive was mounted, the withdrawal of the *1st Battalion* at least had the advantage of keeping the unit intact.

Upon the arrival of the 186th Infantry at Mokmer Drome, the *1st Battalion, 222d Infantry,* began moving back to the West

[1] Information in this subsection is from: MID WD, *Military Reports,* 24, pp. 15–18; G–2 HTF, G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. I, Part II, Enemy Opns, pp. 7–9; G–2 HTF Per Rpts 10–15, 4–10 Jun 44, in G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. II, Part II, Per Rpts; Opns of *Yuki Group,* pp. 7–9; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 72–80.

Caves area, after a long march through the jungle and rising ground north of the inland plateau. Colonel Kuzume and *Headquarters, Biak Detachment,* reached the West Caves during the night of 9–10 June, and the *1st Battalion* began closing in the same area the next day. On the evening of 9 June, General Numata transferred the control of further operations on Biak to Colonel Kuzume. The general left next day for Korim Bay, whence he was evacuated by seaplane and returned to the *2d Area Army's* command post at Manado, in the Celebes.

Colonel Kuzume knew that as long as he could hold the low ridge and terrace north of Mokmer Drome, he could prevent the HURRICANE Task Force from repairing and using that field or Borokoe and Sorido Dromes. To conduct his defense he had under his control north of Mokmer Drome by the evening of 10 June the remaining elements of the *1st* and *2d Battalions, 222d Infantry,* totalling about 1,200 men; most of his armed service troops; the bulk of the *19th Naval Guard Unit;* and most of the field and antiaircraft artillery pieces, mortars, and automatic weapons still serviceable. Some naval troops and a *222d Infantry* mortar unit manned the East Caves positions, while the *3d Battalion, 222d Infantry,* remained isolated at the Ibdi Pocket. Even without the Ibdi Pocket and East Caves groups, the *Biak Detachment* was well disposed to conduct a stubborn defense of the airfields, as the HURRICANE Task Force was soon to learn.

The Decision to Reinforce the 186th Infantry

On the morning of 8 June the 186th Infantry consolidated its positions around Mokmer Drome and cleared a number of small caves on a coral shelf located along the water line.[2] At 0830 the 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, started to move east to rejoin its parent regiment. The battalion had marched scarcely 800 yards east of Mokmer Drome when it was pinned down by Japanese automatic weapons and mortar fire from the East Caves. Finally, the 81-mm. mortars of Company D, 186th Infantry, from emplacements near Sboeria, stopped enough of the Japanese fire to permit the 2d Battalion to push on. Company G, 186th Infantry, was sent northeast from Mokmer Drome to find the source of the Japanese fire and to protect the left of the 162d Infantry's Battalion. The latter dug in for the night only a few yards east of the point where it had first halted, while the 186th Infantry's company set up defenses on the main ridge north of the East Caves.

Japanese mortar fire fell into the area held by the 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, intermittently throughout the night. Many minor casualties occurred until, toward morning, the battalion's 81-mm. mortars succeeded in silencing most of the enemy weapons. Japanese from the *2d Battalion, 222d Infantry,* harassed the battalion rear all night, and small parties made abortive attacks from the north. All these Japanese groups were beaten back with mortar, machine gun, and rifle fire, and during the scattered firing the new commander of the *2d Battalion, 222d Infantry,* was killed.[3]

---

[2] This subsection is based principally on: 186th Inf Jnl, 27 May–20 Aug 44; 162d Inf Jnl, 22 May–19 Aug 44; Co G 186th Inf Opns Rpt, 8–11 Jun 44, in Annex 17 to 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44; HTF G–3 Jnl, 15 May–21 Aug 44; HTF Opns Rpt Biak, 17 May–20 Aug 44, p. 10; 603d Tank Co Opns Rpt Biak, p. 4.

[3] Company H, 162d Infantry (the heavy machine guns and 81-mm. mortars), had not gone over Young Man's Trail with the 2d Battalion on 2 June but had rejoined the battalion on the inland plateau

On the west flank the 3d Battalion, 186th Infantry, also had some trouble during the night. Shortly after dark, Japanese mortar fire began falling on the elements of the battalion dug in north of the coastal road, and later this fire shifted to the battalion positions south of the road. By either accident or design, a number of native dogs, running around and barking outside the battalion perimeter, helped the Japanese locate the unit's lines and, about 2100, as the enemy mortar fire moved eastward, troops of the *2d Battalion, 222d Infantry,* attacked from the west and northwest. A few Japanese managed to infiltrate the battalion's outposts and several American soldiers were bayoneted before the battalion's 60-mm. mortars, together with machine gun and rifle fire, broke up the Japanese attack. The Japanese continued to harass the perimeter until 0530. Japanese losses were 42 counted dead, while the 3d Battalion, 186th Infantry, lost 8 killed and 20 wounded. Total casualties for the 186th Infantry and attached units during the night were 13 men killed and 38 wounded.

On the morning of 9 June Company B, 186th Infantry, was sent from the beachhead to a point on the low ridge directly north of the center of Mokmer Drome to clear that ridge westward 1,200 yards and secure the point at which a motor road ran northwestward over the ridge. It soon became evident that the company was trying to bite off more than it could chew. Hardly had the leading platoon arrived atop the low ridge than it was pinned down by Japanese machine gun fire and then almost surrounded by Japanese infantry. When Japanese patrols threatened the rear of the company, all elements were withdrawn 400 yards south to set up a new base, from which patrols moved along the foot of the ridge in an attempt to determine the extent of the enemy's defenses. Results were inconclusive, and at dusk the unit moved back to the beachhead. It could report only that the low ridge was strongly held. Meanwhile, another company patrolled northeast to the point at which the regiment had crossed the main ridge, and established contact there with units of the 163d Infantry, which had pushed over the inland plateau behind the 186th. Tank-infantry patrols were sent west along the beach from Sboeria. A few bunkers and some small ammunition dumps were destroyed, but few Japanese troops were seen and there was no opposition. On the east flank, Japanese fire from the East Caves again kept the 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, immobilized. Patrolling by elements of the 162d, 163d, and 186th Infantry Regiments in the East Caves area was productive of little information concerning the location of the principal Japanese positions.

On 10 June the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, sent two companies to the point on the low ridge where Company B had been halted the previous afternoon. Despite artillery support, the two units could make little progress and were themselves pinned down about 1030. Japanese rifle and mortar fire was silenced by the 1st Battalion's 60-mm. mortars, but the Japanese continued to pour machine gun fire from a number of bunkers and pillboxes which proved impervious to bazooka and 75-mm. tank fire. The units withdrew while more artillery fire was placed along the low ridge. On the east flank, enemy fire from the East Caves had died down, and the 2d Battalion, 162d In-

---

on or about 5 June, after it had marched overland from Ibdi, through Opiaref, and west along the inland road. The original commander of the Japanese unit had been killed in action on the coast at the end of May.

fantry, was able to move on eastward. But before that battalion had gone very far, and before the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, could mount another attack against the low ridge, Headquarters, HURRICANE Task Force, had evolved a new plan of operations.

During the period 7–10 June little progress had been made in securing the Mokmer Drome area, and aviation engineers, brought forward by water from Bosnek on the 9th and 10th, had so far been unable to work on the strip because it was still exposed to Japanese fire from the low ridge and terrace north of the field. General Fuller had therefore decided to throw two infantry regiments against the enemy defenses north of the field. For this purpose the 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, was returned to regimental control, and the remainder of the 162d Infantry started westward from the Parai area toward Mokmer Drome.

The 162d Infantry Moves to Mokmer Drome

While the 186th Infantry had been driving to the airfield over the inland plateau, the 162d Infantry, less the 2d Battalion, and with Company A, 186th Infantry, attached, had been attempting to move westward in a co-ordinated drive along the coastal road.[4] This attempt had not proved successful, for Japanese opposition at the Ibdi Pocket and the Parai Defile kept the 162d Infantry tied up.[5]

On 7 June, when the 186th Infantry reached Mokmer Drome, it became a matter of urgency to open an overland line of communications to the airfield area. The 186th Infantry could be supplied overwater with some difficulty, but overland movement was faster and more efficient. Therefore General Fuller initially decided to outflank the enemy's positions in the Parai Defile by a drive from west to east along the cliffs above the road through the defile. For this purpose two companies of the 3d Battalion, 162d Infantry, were to be transported overwater from Ibdi to the Parai Jetty, whence they were to drive east in conjunction with a westward push by the rest of the battalion.

On 7 June the proposed landing area at Parai Jetty (but not the jetty itself) was subjected to artillery and naval preparation fires. Three LVT(A)'s and eighteen LVT's picked up Companies I and K (reinforced) at the 3d Battalion position. They moved far out in the stream to avoid enemy mortar or artillery fire and, at 1315, started moving inshore toward the jetty. The first wave was delayed when two LVT's stuck on the reef fronting Parai, and the first amphibian tractors did not reach the beach until 1420. Fifteen minutes later, both the reinforced companies were ashore. As soon as the two companies landed they came under fire from Japanese weapons in the East Caves and along the ridge between that position and the Parai Defile. They then called for reinforcements. The Cannon Company arrived at the jetty about 1610 and six tanks of the 603d Tank Company reached the area about 1730. Patrols were then sent into the Parai Defile, meeting opposition which steadily increased as they moved eastward.

[4] Information in this subsection is based principally on: 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 15 May–19 Aug 44, pp. 6–8; 162d Inf Jnl, 22 May–19 Aug 44; Co B 162d Inf, Diary of B Co in Biak Campaign, in ORB RAC AGO collection; 603d Tank Co Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 3–4; Co A 186th Inf, Rec of Events, 17 Apr–6 Jul 44, in ORB RAC AGO collection; Antitank Co 186th Inf, Rec of Events, 19 Apr–17 Jul 44; HTF G–3 Jnl Biak, 15 May–21 Aug 44; HTF Opns Rpt Biak, 17 May–20 Aug 44, pp. 9–10; 542d EB&SR Opns Rpt Biak, p. 11.

[5] See Ch. XVI below.

A concerted drive could not be organized before dark, and plans had to be made to continue the attack on the morrow.

Meanwhile, General Fuller had evolved his plan to move all the 162d Infantry to the Mokmer Drome area. By this time it had become evident that the 1st Battalion had isolated the principal remaining enemy strong points in the Ibdi Pocket and the task force commander had decided to leave only one company as a holding force in that area to prevent the Japanese from cutting the coastal road. The remainder of the 1st and 3d Battalions were to move to Parai and push west toward Mokmer Drome to establish contact with the 186th Infantry and the 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry.

At 0900 on 8 June, Companies C, I, and K, supported by tanks, began moving west from Parai into the ground where the Japanese had counterattacked the 162d Infantry on 28 and 29 May. Company C advanced along the coastal road, while Companies I and K pushed up the low cliff at the coast from Parai to Mokmer village and attacked along the terrace above Company C. By noon, when they stopped to lunch and rest, the three companies were within 500 yards of Mokmer village and in the coconut grove through which the Japanese had launched the 29 May tank attack. At 1330, just after the advance companies had resumed their attack, they were pinned down by heavy mortar fire from the East Caves. Another infantry company was requested, and Company B moved forward to the right of the units on the terrace. There were indications that the enemy was preparing a counterattack similar to the one he had launched in the same area ten days earlier, but such an offensive did not develop.

Meanwhile, it had been discovered that the Japanese had mined the main road west from Parai. Tank progress was slowed as the mines (most of them actually 6-inch naval shells) were removed or the vehicles guided around them. As the tanks approached Mokmer village, they came under mortar and automatic weapons fire from the East Caves. Since these weapons were masked by trees, the tanks were unable to deliver counterbattery fire against the enemy positions and were finally forced to seek cover. Continuing mortar and small arms fire made the forward units of the 162d Infantry seek shelter also and they dug in for the night along a curving perimeter which began on the beach 500 yards east of Mokmer and stretched northeastward some 800 yards almost to the base of the main ridge. A gap of about 1,800 yards remained between these forward companies and the 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, west of Mokmer.

On the morning of 9 June the 1st and 3d Battalions again began pushing westward. Despite heavy concentrations by the regiment's 81-mm. mortars, the 4.2-inch mortars of Company D, 641st Tank Destroyer Battalion, and the 105-mm. howitzers of the 205th Field Artillery Battalion, Japanese fire from the East Caves steadily increased. The infantry could move forward only in small groups and were forced to seek cover behind every slight rise in the ground. At 1330 Company C established patrol contact with the 2d Battalion at a point 500 yards west of Mokmer village, and at 1700 the 2d Battalion reverted to regimental control after a week's operations under the 186th Infantry. More than 1,000 yards still separated the main body of the 2d Battalion from the 1st, which dug in for the night at Mokmer village. The 3d Battalion, in re-



MEN OF THE 162D INFANTRY *seeking cover as they move westward along the shore.*

serve during the day, had not moved far beyond its bivouac of the previous night.

On 10 June Company L and rear detachments of the 3d Battalion were moved forward by small craft to Parai. The 2d and 3d Battalions then began moving west along the coastal road to Mokmer Drome while the 1st Battalion was left at Parai with the mission of defending that area and clearing the remaining enemy from the Parai Defile. West from Mokmer village the coastal road was still subjected to heavy interdictory fire from the Japanese in the East Caves. Therefore, the 2d and 3d Battalions had to move along the beach under the protection of a low coral shelf. The march was accomplished in column of files and most of the troops waded through the edge of the surf, which was waist deep much of the way. The movement therefore progressed very slowly, and it was not until 1600 that the two battalions reached an assembly area at the eastern end of Mokmer Drome. The next day there began a new offensive which was aimed at clearing the Japanese from the ridges and terraces north and west of the airfield.

Operations North of Mokmer Drome

The Plan of Attack

The new attack to secure the Mokmer Drome area was to start at 0930 on 11 June

with two regiments abreast, the 162d Infantry on the right, or north. The line of departure began on the beach at Menobaboe, whence it ran north-northeast through the western end of Mokmer Drome and over the low ridge. The boundary between regiments paralleled the coast and lay about 400 yards north of Mokmer Drome's main runway. The first objective was a first phase line lying about 1,350 yards beyond the western end of the runway. A second phase line was roughly 1,000 yards farther west and included Borokoe village, on the beach some 2,300 yards west of Menobaboe. The inland end of the second phase line lay about 2,000 yards north of the coast. Occupation of the third phase line would bring the two attacking regiments into line with the eastern end of Borokoe Drome.

The 3d Battalion, 162d Infantry, was responsible for clearing the low ridge. The 1st Battalions of both regiments were to remain in reserve. Details of artillery support are not clear but it appears that at least initially the 121st Field Artillery Battalion was to give close support to the 186th Infantry while the 205th, from positions near Ibdi, was to support both regiments. The 205th's fire would be directed from a floating observation post in an LCV furnished by the 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment. The 947th Field Artillery Battalion was also assigned general support missions.[6]

While the attacks in the Mokmer Drome area were under way, the 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, would continue patrolling west and south along the main ridge. One company of that battalion and Company G, 186th Infantry, were to maintain pressure on the East Caves from the north and west. The 1st Battalion, 163d Infantry, was to patrol north, east, and west from the surveyed drome on the inland plateau behind Bosnek, while the 2d Battalion cleared remaining Japanese from the Ibdi Pocket. Support for the operations of the 1st and 2d Battalions, 163d Infantry, was the responsibility of the 146th Field Artillery Battalion, emplaced near Bosnek. The 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, was apparently to be supported by those artillery units supporting the attacks in the Mokmer Drome area.[7]

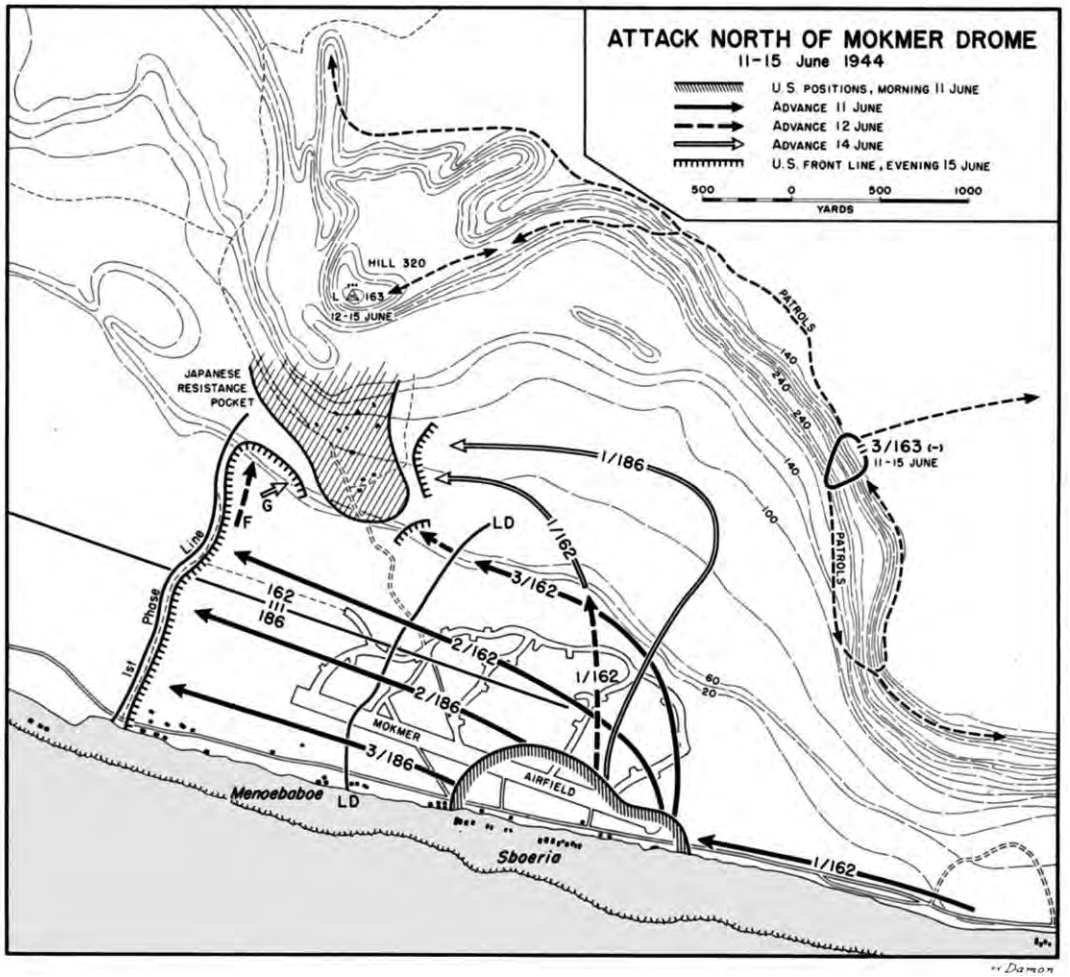
Meeting Resistance on the Low Ridge

At 0830 on 11 June the two assault battalions of the 186th Infantry began moving out of their bivouacs up to the line of departure, which they reached by 0915.[8] (*Map 15*) The 3d Battalion, 162d Infantry, started moving forward from the eastern end of Mokmer Drome toward the line of departure about the same time that the 186th Infantry got underway. The 162d Infantry met stiff resistance before it could get to the line of departure, and the 186th Infantry's attack was therefore halted until the 162d Infantry could move its two leading battalions up to the line. The principal Japanese forces along the low ridge were the *1st Battalion, 222d Infantry,* now re-

[6] 162d Inf FO 3, 10 Jun 44, atchd to 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 15 May–19 Aug 44; Jnl entry, 1310, 10 Jun 44, in 186th Inf Jnl, 27 May–20 Aug 44; 121st FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 4–6; 205th FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 5–6; 947th FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, p. 6.

[7] 163d Inf Jnl, 31 May–19 Aug 44; Jnl entry, 1310, 10 Jun 44, in 186th Inf Jnl, 27 May–20 Aug 44; 146th FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 19–20.

[8] This subsection is based principally on: 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44, pp. 17–19; 186th Inf Jnl, 27 May–20 Aug 44; Co G 186th Inf Opns Rpt, 8–11 Jun 44; HTF G–3 Jnl, 15 May–21 Aug 44; HTF Opns Rpt Biak, 17 May–20 Aug 44, pp. 10–11; 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 15 May–19 Aug 44, pp. 7–8; 162d Inf, S–2 Sit Overlays, 10–12 Jun 44; 162d Inf Jnl, 22 May–19 Aug 44; 121st FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, p. 6; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 74–75, 80.



MAP 15

duced to about 120 effectives; a company or two of the *2d Battalion, 222d Infantry*; elements of various engineer units, fighting as infantry; and some field and antiaircraft artillery weapons and crews. All in all, there were probably some 600–700 Japanese along the ridge.

The 162d Infantry, employing close mortar support and steady rifle fire from the leading troops, appeared to be breaking through the resistance to its front about 1330, and the 186th Infantry was thereupon ordered to renew its attack. Accordingly, at 1345, the 2d and 3d Battalions, 186th Infantry, pushed across the line of departure. The 3d Battalion, moving along the coastal road, encountered no enemy opposition and closed along the first phase line in its zone at 1530. The 2d Battalion met little Japanese resistance on its front but was intermittently forced to seek cover from enemy fire which came from the low

ridge on the battalion's right. The unit therefore did not reach the first phase line until 1620.

The two 186th Infantry battalions dug in for the night about 600 yards apart, both on the east side of a trail marking the first phase line. The terrain there was solid coral with only a thin layer of topsoil covering it. In such ground three hours was the minimum time a man needed to prepare a satisfactory slit trench, and darkness arrived before all the units could dig in. Colonel Newman therefore recommended that on subsequent days forward movement cease at 1500 so that time would be available to prepare night defenses and to undertake essential evening reconnaissance. This recommendation was approved by Headquarters, HURRICANE Task Force.

For the night of 11–12 June, the headquarters of the 186th Infantry, the 1st Battalion, and an advanced command post of the HURRICANE Task Force dug in at Sboeria village, on the beach south of Mokmer Drome. Company G, 186th Infantry, came down off the ridges near the East Caves during the day and set up its bivouac at Sboeria. At the same location were the Cannon and Service Companies, 186th Infantry, and the 863d Engineer Aviation Battalion, which was responsible for repairing Mokmer Drome.

In the 162d Infantry's zone of responsibility, the day's action had been marked by stubborn Japanese resistance. The 3d Battalion, trying to gain the top of the low ridge and to move west along that ridge to the line of departure, was halted and forced to seek cover almost the moment it started to move. Even with support from the 947th Field Artillery Battalion, it was midafternoon before the battalion's attack really got under way. Then the unit found that the terrain along the top and southern slope of the low ridge was rough and covered by dense rain forest and thick scrub growth. Visibility and maneuver room were severely limited, and the Japanese defenders made excellent use of every advantage the terrain offered.

The 2d Battalion had been halted about 600 yards short of the line of departure to await the outcome of the 3d's efforts, but about 1245 was ordered to push on. The 2d Battalion reached the line of departure about 1320 and moved on to the first phase line, drawing abreast of the 2d Battalion, 186th Infantry, at 1720. The 3d Battalion fought doggedly forward during the afternoon, discovering an ever increasing number of Japanese pillboxes, bunkers, and hasty automatic weapons and rifle emplacements of all kinds. Dusk found the unit still some 100 yards short of the line of departure and about 1,300 yards east of the 2d Battalion. The 1st Battalion, taking no part in the action during the day, moved forward to Mokmer Drome from Parai.

For 12 June, Colonel Haney planned to put his 2d and 3d Battalions on the low ridge, while the 1st took over the 3d's positions near the line of departure and patrolled west, north, and east. During the afternoon of the 11th, the 162d Infantry had learned from Javanese slave laborers who had come into the lines that the Japanese headquarters installations were located in large caves approximately 1,000 yards northwest of the 3d Battalion's lines. This, apparently, was the first information obtained by the HURRICANE Task Force concerning the enemy's West Caves stronghold. The significance of the information was not yet realized, but the 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, was ordered to patrol north on the 12th to attempt to confirm the Javanese reports.

In order to permit the 162d Infantry to place more troops on the ridge, the 186th Infantry was instructed to assume responsibility for an additional 300 yards on its right flank. On the 12th that regiment was to advance as far as the second phase line, maintaining close contact with the 162d Infantry. The latter was also expected to reach the second phase line, but no advance beyond that line was to be undertaken until Headquarters, HURRICANE Task Force, so ordered.

On the morning of the 12th, the 186th Infantry had already started moving toward the second phase line when, at 0830, it received orders to halt until the 3d Battalion, 162d Infantry, could reach the first phase line. Although no Japanese were to be found in the 186th Infantry's sector, an advance by that regiment without concurrent progress by the 162d Infantry would leave a large and dangerous gap in the lines. Through such a gap the enemy could move to outflank and cut off the 162d Infantry. But the 162d Infantry was able to make little progress during the day. As a result, the 186th Infantry remained on the first phase line and limited its operations to patrolling.

The 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, had started moving both toward the low ridge and westward about 0830, but it also had been halted until the 3d Battalion could fight its way up to the first phase line. The 3d Battalion sent Company L north of the ridge to outflank troublesome Japanese positions while the rest of the battalion continued a frontal assault. But Japanese resistance was even stronger than it had been the previous afternoon, and the battalion was again unable to make any progress. At 0940 it pulled back some 300 yards southeast of its previous night's bivouac to allow Company M's 81-mm. mortars to lay a concentration on enemy bunkers and foxholes at the point where the line of departure crossed the low ridge.

At 1035 the advance was resumed with Company I on the ridge, Company L on the terrace north of I, and Company K along the ridge slopes south of I. Company K moved forward 200 yards by 1100, having encountered little opposition, and then halted to wait for the other two companies to draw up. Company I, meanwhile, had found that the mortar fire had been effective but that new Japanese positions were located west of the mortar impact area. From 1100 to 1130 the company fought its way through these second defenses, but no sooner had it broken through when a third set of positions was discovered 50 yards farther west along the ridge. It was also learned that a fourth strong point was located beyond the third. Company L, north of the ridge, met few Japanese and by 1230 had passed through some minor opposition to a position north of but opposite Company K. Company L then cautiously probed southwestward and southward to locate the flanks and rear of the positions in front of Company I.

Meanwhile, Company L, 163d Infantry, had established an observation post on Hill 320, a high point on the main ridge about 1,500 yards northwest of the lines of the 3d Battalion, 162d Infantry. At 1530 this observation post reported that Japanese were occupying a number of antiaircraft gun positions along the low ridge west of the 162d Infantry unit. Fearing immediate enemy artillery fire, the 162d Infantry withdrew all its troops from the low ridge into defilade positions.

After American artillery had fired a short concentration on the suspected enemy gun emplacements, the 3d Battalion, 162d In-

fantry, returned to the low ridge. By nightfall Company L was dug in on the ridge about 300 yards west of the line of departure, and Company I was almost 100 yards to the east. In order to prevent the Japanese from reoccupying their defensive position near the line of departure—positions which had been so laboriously cleaned out during the day—two platoons of Company K moved into the vacated enemy defenses. The rest of Company K, together with 3d Battalion headquarters and Company M, remained south of the ridge about 400 yards east of the line of departure.

During the late afternoon the 2d Battalion had sent a number of patrols north from its position on the first phase line to the low ridge, and Company F set up night defenses on the ridge at the point where the first phase line crossed. A gap of almost 900 yards, in which were many strong Japanese defenses, separated Company F from Company L. For the next day, plans were made for the 162d Infantry to close this gap while the 186th Infantry remained in position along the first phase line.

The 162d Infantry resumed its attack about 0730 on 13 June when Company L started pushing east and west along the low ridge in an attempt to establish contact with both the 2d Battalion and Company I. Contact was made with the latter unit about 1300, after a small Japanese pocket had been cleaned out. Company K, meanwhile, had been forced to mop up a few enemy stragglers near the line of departure and had sent one platoon westward to help Company I. Late in the morning, the 1st Battalion moved on to the low ridge east of the 3d in order to protect the regiment's right and rear and relieve 3d Battalion troops from that duty. Though this realignment freed 3d Battalion units for a new drive westward, by the end of the day little progress had been made in closing the 900-yard gap between that battalion and the 2d. Not only had the 3d Battalion been unable to move westward, but 2d Battalion units had also been unable to make any progress eastward.

During the 13th, the 186th Infantry had limited its activities to patrolling while it again awaited the outcome of the 162d's attack. The regiment had also provided local security for engineers who were working hard to repair Mokmer Drome. The engineers had begun steady work about 1030 hours on 12 June, and by evening of that day they expected to get the strip into shape for fighter aircraft before noon on the 13th. But work on the latter day was thrice interrupted by Japanese artillery or mortar fire, most of which originated along the ridge between the lines of the 2d and 3d Battalions, 162d Infantry. Despite these interruptions, about 2,300 feet of the eastern end of the airfield had been repaired sufficiently for use by fighter planes by evening of 13 June. More of the strip had been cleared, filled in, and prepared for final grading by the same time. The first plane to land on the field was an artillery liaison aircraft, which came down about 1000 hours on the 13th. Because of Japanese harassing fire, the airstrip still could not safely be used by larger planes.

To the Rim of the West Caves

General Doe, assistant commander of the 41st Division, had inspected the forward combat area during the afternoon of 13 June.[9] After his trip he advised the task force

[9] This subsection is based upon: HTF G–3 Jnl, 15 May–21 Aug 44; HTF Opns Rpt Biak, 17 May–20 Aug 44, pp. 10–11; 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44, p. 9; 186th Inf Jnl, 27 May–20

commander that the 3d Battalion, 162d Infantry, was becoming worn out and had already lost much of its effectiveness. To relieve the 3d Battalion, General Doe recommended sweeping changes in the attack plan which had been in effect since 10 June. He proposed that the 1st Battalions of the 162d and 186th Infantry Regiments move around the right flank of the 3d Battalion, 162d Infantry, to the terrace above the low ridge. Reports from friendly natives indicated that the Japanese were guarding a water hole—the last one remaining in the area—near a Japanese encampment about midway between the positions of Company L, 162d Infantry, on the low ridge, and those of Company L, 163d Infantry, on Hill 320 to the north. Although the HURRICANE Task Force had not yet located the West Caves, the reported existence of the water hole and other miscellaneous bits of information prompted General Doe to believe that a major enemy strong point existed near the Japanese encampment. He felt that if the new two-battalion attack succeeded in eliminating this strong point, the remaining enemy positions along the low ridge would be untenable and the Japanese might retire. Then the 3d Battalion, 162d Infantry, would not have to continue its attacks and, indeed, would be pinched out by the new advance and could revert to a reserve role.

The 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, was to move north over a trail which would take it through the rear of the 3d Battalion. When the 1st Battalion had reached a point on the terrace about 500 yards north of the low ridge, it was to turn and attack to the west and southwest. The 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, was to follow a trail leading north from the eastern end of Mokmer Drome and, making a wider envelopment, was to follow an azimuth taking it east of the 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry. Then it was to draw up on the right of the latter, ready to attack westward.

For the 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, operations on 14 June began about 0600 when Company B, at the base of the low ridge about 800 yards east of the 3d Battalion's lines, was attacked by about fifteen Japanese infantrymen. Within ten minutes nine Japanese were killed, but patrolling and reorganizing after the attack delayed the battalion's movement to the line of departure for the new attack. Following the infantry assault, the Japanese began to throw antiaircraft, small arms, and mortar fire into the American unit's positions, keeping it pinned down on the southern slopes of the low ridge until 1100. The battalion was further delayed when American artillery fire was placed on Japanese troops seen maneuvering on the terrace north of the 3d Battalion. Meanwhile, the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, had also been delayed. The 162d Infantry unit had to wait for the 186th's battalion to come into line before the attack westward could begin.

With Company C leading, the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, had started its advance at 0800, crossing the low ridge at a point about 500 yards east of the 1st Battalion,

---

Aug 44; History of First Battalion, One Hundred Eighty-Sixth Infantry (While Detached From Regimental Control) Mission with 162d Infantry, 13 June–18 June, pp. 1–2 (hereafter cited as 1st Bn 186th Inf, Hist with 162d Inf, 13–18 Jun 44), in Annex 23 to 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44; 121st FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 6–7; 205th FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, p. 7; 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 15 May–19 Aug 44, pp. 8–9; 162d Inf Jnl, 22 May–19 Aug 44; Co B 162d Inf, Diary in Biak Campaign; Opns of *Yuki Group*, pp. 8–9; G–2 HTF, G–2 Per Rpts 18–21, 13–16 Jun 44, in G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. II, Part II, Per Rpts; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 80–81.

162d Infantry. Then it moved northeast over the terrace along a rough trail leading toward the main ridge-crossing employed by the 186th Infantry on 7 June. First contact with the enemy came at 0930, when Company C killed two Japanese on the trail about 800 yards north of the low ridge. The march continued until 1030 when, as the units began to turn westward, Company C was pinned down by fire from rising ground 100 yards east of the trail. Company A patrols undertook to stop this fire, but it was two hours before the advance could be continued. Only 400 more yards had been gained by 1300 when the advance was again held up by a small group of Japanese dug in across the trail. But this opposition was broken through within half an hour, and by 1430 Company C had moved another 800 yards west and was in line with Company B, 162d Infantry, 300 yards to the south. Both 1st Battalions now resumed the advance abreast.

The 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, continued to meet opposition on its right and front during the afternoon, and did not establish physical contact with the 186th Infantry's battalion until 1735. The 162d Infantry unit then dug in northeast of the West Caves and about 250 yards north of Company L, on the low ridge. The battalion's perimeter was about 400 yards short of its objective for the day, as was that of the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, now located on a slight rise 50–75 yards to the right rear of the 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry. Patrols sent out before dark brought back proof that the 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, was on the periphery of the West Caves, now recognized by the HURRICANE Task Force as a major Japanese strong point. The task force G–2 Section estimated that the West Caves held about 1,000 Japanese, including naval and army headquarters.

Colonel Kuzume, realizing full well the value of the West Caves position as a base for counterattacks, was determined to hold that area. At 1930 on the 14th, he sent available elements of the *Biak Detachment* against the two forward American battalions in an attempt to drive them southward and eastward away from the caves. A combined infantry-tank attack drove Company B of the 162d Infantry out of its semi-isolated position at the northwestern end of the 1st Battalion's perimeter. The company withdrew in an orderly fashion into the battalion lines. The Japanese now turned their attention to the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry. Small Japanese groups, moving along a road which entered the battalion's perimeter from the west, harassed the unit all night. No attacks were pressed home, but the Japanese maneuvers were interpreted as presaging a more determined counterattack on the morrow.

At 0730 on the 15th the expected counterattack began, just in time to disrupt plans for the 1st Battalions of the 162d and 186th Infantry Regiments to continue advances north and west. Three Japanese tanks started south down a road running below the western slope of Hill 320. Two tanks, each accompanied by an infantry platoon, swung onto an east-west road north of the West Caves and into the positions of the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry. The tanks opened fire with their 37-mm. guns from a range of 250 yards, but before they could move closer were driven off by .50-caliber machine guns of the 1st Battalion's Antitank Platoon. The third tank and more infantrymen charged the lines of Company B, 162d Infantry, then attempting to close



DISABLED JAPANESE TANK

the gap between the two harassed battalions. In the ensuing melee, Company B suffered heavy casualties, for it had no weapons with which it could easily drive off the tank and stop its 37-mm. and machine gun fire. However, when the accompanying infantrymen were scattered by Company B's fire, the tank maneuvered out of range. At 1400 the same day, two more tanks advanced toward the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry. The tanks again moved along the east-west road north of the caves but did not press home their attack. Apparently, no Japanese infantry accompanied these tanks.

During the day three Japanese tanks were knocked out—two by bazookas of Company C, 186th Infantry, and the other by a combination of .50-caliber and small arms fire. The 121st Field Artillery Battalion, while it had hit no tanks, had proved a real aid during the battle. It prevented Japanese infantrymen from forming for the attack and neutralized a number of enemy machine guns by firing 600 rounds into the area northwest of the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry.

In the time intervals between the various enemy attacks only local advances could be made, but the two forward battalions managed to establish one continuous line. Patrolling south was forestalled during the morning when artillery and automatic weapons fire was placed on enemy positions between the 2d and 3d Battalions, 162d Infantry, on the low ridge. When this fire was finished, the day's plans were changed. The 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, was ordered to move south onto the low ridge west of the

3d Battalion. Once on the ridge, the 1st Battalion was to do an about-face and extend its left to the 2d Battalion's lines. The 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, was to protect the rear of the 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, during the latter's displacement southward.

The new plan proved impossible of execution. Fighting in the area between the 2d and 3d Battalions, 162d Infantry, on the low ridge continued unabated all afternoon. Steady fire from friendly artillery and mortars, combined with Japanese automatic weapons and mortar fire from positions between the West caves and the low ridge, kept the 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, pinned down much of the time and slowed its movement southward. The 2d and 3d Battalions continued to try to close the gap and managed to overrun or destroy a number of enemy defensive positions. They were unable to entirely clear the area, however, and by nightfall the gap was still some 500 yards wide and was apparently occupied by a strong enemy force which was well dug in.

The 15th of June, on which date forces of the Central Pacific Area landed in the Mariana Islands, had come and gone, and still no planes of the Allied Air Forces, Southwest Pacific Area, had been able to support the Central Pacific's operations from an airfield on Biak Island. The 863d Engineer Aviation Battalion, which had managed to repair about 2,300 feet of Mokmer Drome by evening of 13 June, had been forced to stop work on the morning of the 14th, when Japanese fire on the strip became so intense that the engineers could not stay on the field and Allied planes could not use it. The 15th had ended on a note of frustration in the Mokmer Drome area. The Japanese still held part of the low ridge, and from their positions there and on the terrace to the north, could continue to prevent the Allies from using the Biak fields.

Allied Command at Biak

Air and Naval Base Development to Mid-June

Almost from the outset of the Biak operation, delays in seizing and repairing the Biak Island airfields had worried Generals MacArthur and Krueger. After the initial reverse suffered by the 162d Infantry, the tactical situation on Biak had made it appear to General Krueger that it might be some time before the HURRICANE Task Force would capture Mokmer Drome. Therefore, on 30 May, he instructed General Fuller to investigate the posssibility of quickly constructing a fighter strip at the surveyed drome area on the inland plateau north of Bosnek. The task force completed an engineer reconnaissance of the surveyed drome the next day. General Fuller decided that an airfield could not be completed there in less than three weeks. He considered it undesirable to assign any of his few engineer units to such extended work at the surveyed drome, for he still expected that Mokmer Drome could be seized and repaired much sooner.[10]

The attention of air force planners then turned to the Paidado Islands, off the southeast corner of Biak. Allied Naval Forces had already planned and secured approval from General MacArthur's headquarters to establish a PT and seaplane base in a reef-fringed lagoon on the eastern side of Mios Woendi Island, which lies about twelve miles east-

[10] Rad, ALAMO Rear Hq to ALAMO Adv Hq, WF-5272, 30 May 44, and Rad, HTF to ALAMO, TF-111, 31 May 44, both in ALAMO Adv Hq G-3 Jnl Wakde-Biak, 30 May-1 Jun 44.

southeast of Bosnek. On 28 May ALAMO Force instructed the HURRICANE Task Force to secure not only Mios Woendi but also the entire Paidado group.[11]

Reconnaissance was made of Mios Woendi, Aoeki, and Owi Islands in the Paidado group by naval and engineer personnel of the HURRICANE Task Force on 1 June. The next day Company A, 163d Infantry, secured Owi and Mios Woendi, and a more detailed engineer reconnaissance of Aoeki and Owi was made a few days later. Aoeki proved unsuitable for an airfield, but Owi was found to be an excellent site. Beginning on 3 June, engineers, together with antiaircraft and radar units, were taken to Owi. Heavy artillery (155-mm. guns) was also set up on the island to support operations on Biak.

The 860th and 864th Engineer Aviation Battalions started constructing a strip on Owi on 9 June but it was not until the 17th that enough of the field was completed to allow some P–38's, blocked by a front of bad weather from reaching their base on Wakde Island after a strike on Sorong, to land at Owi. On 21 June two P–38 squadrons of the 8th Fighter Group, Fifth Air Force, started arriving at Owi to remain for future operations. Meanwhile, naval construction battalions (CB's) had cleared the land and beach at Mios Woendi in time for Seventh Fleet PT boats to begin operating from that base on 8 June.[12]

The Owi Island strip was not ready in time to support Central Pacific operations and, despite expectations to the contrary, neither was any other field at Biak. The Wakde Island airfield had to bear a larger share of such support than had been planned. Moreover, the delay in making ready the fields on Biak threatened the speed of subsequent operations within the Southwest Pacific. The HURRICANE Task Force had failed in its principal mission—rapid seizure and repair of airfields from which the Allied Air Forces could support the Mariana operation and further advances along the New Guinea axis.

Changes in Command

General Krueger had been dissatisfied with operations on Biak ever since the 162d Infantry had been forced to withdraw from the Mokmer village area on 29 May. At first he was dissatisfied because he believed that the 162d Infantry's advance had been imprudently conducted without adequate reconnaissance. Later, he had expected that the reinforcement of the HURRICANE Task Force by the 163d Regimental Combat Team would have permitted General Fuller to resume the offensive with renewed vigor and rapidly to seize the airfields. Events did not so transpire.[13] On 5 June, five days after

[11] Rad, ALAMO Rear Hq to ALAMO Adv Hq, WH–4263, 25 May 44, in ALAMO Rear Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 24–26 May 44; Rad, ALAMO Rear Hq to HTF, WH–136, 27 May 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 27–28 May 44; Ltr OI, Comdr ALAMO Force to CG USF APO 920 [Comdr HTF], 28 May 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 28 May 44.

[12] 542d EB&SR Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 7–9; HTF G–3 Jnl, 15 May–21 Aug 44; 163d Inf Jnl, 31 May–19 Aug 44; Rad, ALAMO Rear Hq to GHQ SWPA, WF–1228, 6 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 6–7 Jun 44; Rad, ALAMO Rear Hq to GHQ, SWPA, WF–1521, 8 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 8–9 Jun 44; Rad, ALAMO Rear Hq to GHQ SWPA, WF–2105, 10 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 10–11 Jun 44; Rad, ALAMO Rear Hq to HTF, WF–864, 5 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 5–6 Jun 44. Information on types of aircraft and dates they arrived at Owi was furnished by Capt. B. L. Mortensen, Air Hist Gr, Hq USAF, 22 Nov 48.

[13] Rad, ALAMO Adv Hq to HTF, WH–39, 1 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 1–3 Jun 44; Ltr, Krueger to Ward, 2 Jan 51, no sub, in OCMH files.

the two battalions of the 163d Infantry had reached Biak, General MacArthur indicated that he, too, was concerned over the continued delay in securing the Biak airfields. The theater commander asked General Krueger if he thought operations on Biak were being pushed with determination, and he requested General Krueger's views on the situation.[14]

As a result of these queries, General Krueger was again prompted to inform General Fuller that progress on Biak was disturbingly slow and to instruct the task force commander to make new efforts to seize the airfields quickly.[15] At the same time, the ALAMO Force commander told General MacArthur that he had for some time felt that operations on Biak were not going well and that consideration had even been given to putting in a new commander. However, said General Krueger, he had been dissuaded by his observers on Biak, who had told him that replacement of the task force commander would be unwarranted. The terrain and stubborn Japanese defense had slowed the attack, General Krueger went on, and he had therefore decided to await more complete information before taking any further action.[16]

On 6 June General Krueger received somewhat disturbing reports from new observers whom he had sent to Biak. These officers indicated that there had been some lack of determination in the execution of HURRICANE Task Force plans, especially at the battalion and company level. The troops striving to clear the Ibdi Pocket and the Parai Defile were reported to be "herdbound." The observers' reports also indicated that reconnaissance had been ineffective; and that little definite information had been obtained concerning the Japanese strength and dispositions. Finally, the observers stated, General Fuller was not making full use of his assistant division commander (General Doe) and, moreover, so few members of the task force staff had visited the front lines that General Fuller could not possibly have obtained complete and accurate information concerning the fighting.[17]

Despite these unfavorable reports General Krueger, probably influenced by the fact that the 186th Infantry had established a foothold on Mokmer Drome on 7 June, again decided to take no action for a few days. But by 10 June he had received new information telling of the strong resistance the Japanese were maintaining along the low ridge north of Mokmer Drome. Three days of fighting had failed to eliminate this resistance, and General Krueger again urged upon General Fuller the importance of rapid rehabilitation of the Biak airfields, impossible as long as the Japanese held their positions on the low ridge.[18] Then, on 13 June, General Fuller, on the grounds that the HURRICANE Task Force troops were suffering from fatigue and that he suspected the Japanese had landed sizable reinforce-

[14] Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, C–13275, 5 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Boak, 4–5 Jun 44.

[15] Rad, ALAMO Adv Hq to HTF, WH–182, 5 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 4–5 Jun 44.

[16] Rad, ALAMO Adv Hq to GHQ SWPA, WH–183, 5 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 4–5 Jun 44.

[17] Memo, ALAMO AA Officer for CofS ALAMO, 6 Jun 44, sub: Obsn on Biak, and Memo, ALAMO FA Obsr Biak for Comdr ALAMO, 6 Jun 44, sub: Obsr's Rpt on Biak, 2–5 Jun 44, both in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 8–9 Jun 44; Ltr, Doe to Ward, 4 Dec 50, and Ltr, Krueger to Ward, 2 Jan 51, both in OCMH files.

[18] Rad, HTF to ALAMO Adv Hq, TD–544, 10 Jun 44, and Rad, ALAMO Adv Hq to HTF, WH–343, 10 Jun 44, both in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 10–11 Jun 44.

ments on the island, requested ALAMO Force to send a fresh infantry regiment to Biak.[19] While at this time General Krueger placed little credence on the reports of enemy reinforcements, he decided to approve the HURRICANE Task Force's request for additional strength. Accordingly, on 13 June, he alerted the 34th Infantry, 24th Division, then at Hollandia, for shipment to Biak, where it was to arrive on 18 June.[20]

By this time General Krueger had come to the conclusion that General Fuller was overburdened by his dual function of task force and division commander. He had thus far deferred taking any action, hoping that the airdromes would soon become available. But by 14 June it had become obvious that this hope would not materialize. Moreover, General Krueger was himself under pressure from General MacArthur, who had indicated to the ALAMO Force commander that the delays on Biak were seriously interfering with the execution of strategic plans and who had already publicly announced that victory had been achieved on Biak.[21] Finally, on 14 June, General Krueger decided to relieve General Fuller of the command of the HURRICANE Task Force, apparently with the idea that General Fuller would remain on Biak to devote his full time and attention to the operations of the 41st Division. General Krueger took this step, he asserted, because of slowness of operations on Biak and the failure to secure the Biak airdromes at an early date.[22] Lt. Gen. Robert L. Eichelberger, commanding general of the U. S. I Corps (and of the RECKLESS Task Force, at Hollandia) was ordered to Biak to assume command of the HURRICANE Task Force.[23]

General Eichelberger arrived at Biak late on the morning of 15 June and at 1230 assumed command of the HURRICANE Task Force.[24] It was an angry and unhappy General Fuller who greeted General Eichelberger at Bosnek. The division commander felt that General Krueger had been unjustifiably critical of the operations on Biak, and he believed that his relief as task force commander indicated that his services had proved unsatisfactory to his superiors. General Fuller had already requested in a letter to General Krueger that he be relieved of the division command as well as that of the task force and he asked for reassignment outside the Southwest Pacific Area.

General Eichelberger was in an embarrassing position, for he had been a classmate of General Fuller at West Point, and the two had been life-long friends. Believing that the division commander still had a good chance to receive a corps command, he tried to persuade General Fuller to change his mind. But General Fuller was adamant, and followed his letter with a radio asking for quick action on his relief from the division command. This tied General Eichelberger's hands and left General Krueger no choice but to approve General Fuller's request—a

[19] Rad, HTF to ALAMO Adv Hq, TD–654, 13 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 13–14 Jun 44.

[20] Rad, ALAMO Adv Hq to GHQ SWPA, WH–418, 13 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 13–14 Jun 44.

[21] Ltr, Krueger to Ward, 2 Jan 51; Lt Gen Robert L. Eichelberger and Milton MacKaye, "Biak: Battle of the Caves," *The Saturday Evening Post,* CXXII, 10 (3 Sep 49), 26, 99; same, *Our Jungle Road to Tokyo* (New York, 1950), pp. 137–38, 142–43.

[22] Rad, ALAMO Adv Hq to HTF, WH–465, 15 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 14–15 Jun 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Wakde–Biak, p. 43.

[23] *Ibid.*, Ltr OI, Comdr ALAMO Force to CG I Corps, 14 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 14–15 Jun 44.

[24] Rad, HTF to ALAMO, TD–720, 15 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 14–15 Jun 44.

step he was extremely reluctant to take—and forward it to General Headquarters, where it was also approved by General MacArthur. General Fuller left Biak on 18 June, and, after departing from the Southwest Pacific Area, became Deputy Chief of Staff at the headquarters of Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten's Southeast Asia Command. At General Eichelberger's suggestion, command of the 41st Division on Biak passed to General Doe.[25]

Upon leaving Biak, General Fuller addressed the following letter to his former command:

To the Officers and Men of the Forty-first Infantry Division.

1. I am being relieved of command for my failure to achieve the results demanded by higher authority. This is in no way a reflection upon you or your work in this operation. I, and I alone, am to blame for this failure.

2. I have commanded the Forty-First Division for better or worse for over two years and one-half. During that period I have learned to respect you, to admire you, and to love you, individually and collectively. You are the finest body of men that it has been my privilege to be associated with in thirty nine years of service.

3. I part with you with many pangs of heart. I wish all of you the best of luck and God Bless You, for I love you all.[26]

Whether General Fuller's relief as commander of the HURRICANE Task Force was entirely justifiable is a question which cannot be answered categorically. At the time of his relief, the task force *had* seized Mokmer Drome. Patrols sent westward to Borokoe and Sorido Dromes had found no enemy at those two fields, and General Fuller knew they could be occupied with ease. But he had not sent more troops beyond Mokmer Drome because he believed it more important to secure an overland line of communications to that field and to clear the low ridge so that repair work could continue and at least one strip could be put in service. By 14 June it was only a question of time before the West Caves area and the low ridge would be secured. Indeed, General Eichelberger, who took three and one-half days to acquaint himself with the situation at Biak, drew up new attack plans according to which the 162d and 186th Infantry Regiments were to be employed in the same area and in much the same manner as General Fuller had been using them. General Eichelberger realized, as had General Fuller, that Borokoe and Sorido Dromes would be no safer than Mokmer Drome as long as the Japanese held the low ridge and West Caves positions. But, in the last analysis, the mission of the HURRICANE Task Force, quick seizure and rehabilitation of the Biak fields, had not been accomplished by 15 June. No airfield in the Biak area was yet available for use by the Allied Air Forces.[27]

There can be no doubt that the two forward regiments were becoming fatigued—they had been in continuous combat for eighteen days in an enervating climate—but it is doubtful that this fatigue was the only trouble. There is some evidence that

[25] Gen Eichelberger, notes entitled "Background for the Biak Operation," dictated by the general, 4 Apr 48, copy in OCMH files; Eichelberger and MacKaye, *Our Jungle Road to Tokyo*, p. 142; Rad, ALAMO Adv Hq to GHQ SWPA, WH–500, 16 Jun 44, Rad, HTF (personal from Gen Fuller) to ALAMO (for Gen Krueger), TD–746, 16 Jun 44, and Rad, HTF (from Gen Eichelberger) to ALAMO (for Gen Krueger), TD–762, 16 Jun 44, all three rads in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 16–18 Jun 44. Ltr, Krueger to Ward, 2 Jan 51.

[26] Ltr, CG 41st Div to O's and EM of 41st Inf Div, 16 Jun 44, no sub, certified true copy in 163d Inf Jnl, 31 May–19 Aug 44.

[27] 186th Inf Jnl, 27 May–20 Aug 44; Eichelberger and MacKaye, *Our Jungle Road to Tokyo*, pp. 141–46; Eichelberger Notes; Ltr, Krueger to Ward, 2 Jan 51.

there was a lack of aggressiveness at the battalion and company levels of the command,[28] and there are definite indications that General Fuller may not have put as much pressure on his regimental commanders as he might have. One regimental commander later stated:

> I was never informed that there had been a deadline set for the capture of the Biak Airfields, nor that there was any pressure being applied on Gen. Fuller from higher headquarters. I only learned of this after his relief. As far as I knew the operation was proceeding with fairly satisfactory speed. Had I known of the need for speed in supporting the Marianas attack I might have acted differently on several occasions.[29]

One of the reasons that the HURRICANE Task Force had had such difficulty in securing the Mokmer Drome area was that fresh Japanese troops had been arriving on Biak since 27 May and had been thrown into the action at the airfields. General Fuller, on the basis of aerial reconnaissance reports and intelligence received from ALAMO Force, had for some time suspected that Japanese reinforcements were reaching Biak. This suspicion, coupled with the growing fatigue of 41st Division troops on the island, had, on 13 June, prompted the HURRICANE Task Force commander to request ALAMO Force for an additional American regimental combat team. General Fuller's suspicions concerning Japanese reinforcements were correct. Unknown to the HURRICANE Task Force, the Japanese had developed and partially executed ambitious plans for the reinforcement of Biak.[30]

---

[28] Memo, ALAMO AA Officer for CofS ALAMO Force, 6 Jun 44, sub: Obsns on Biak, and Memo, ALAMO FA Obsr, Biak, for Comdr ALAMO Force, 6 Jun 44, sub: Obsr's Rpt on Biak, 2–5 Jun 44, both in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 8–9 Jun 44.

[29] Newman Notes; Col Haney, commanding the 162d Infantry, agreed in Ltr, Haney to Ward, 20 Nov 50, with Col Newman's statement here.

[30] HTF G–3 Jnl, 15 May–21 Aug 44; Opns of *Yuki Group,* pp. 8–9.

CHAPTER XV

The Japanese Reinforce Biak

Biak and Japanese Naval Plans

As the Biak operation began, both ALAMO Force and General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area, estimated that the principal Japanese reaction to the landing of the HURRICANE Task Force would be aerial in nature. Since it was believed that the Japanese were committed to a policy of conserving their remaining naval strength, it was considered improbable that they would risk major fleet elements to counterattack at Biak or reinforce this island in the face of Allied land-based aircraft which were either at fields within range of Biak or which were expected soon to be flying from strips captured there. Attempts by the Japanese to reinforce Biak by barge movements from more westerly bases were also considered improbable. Such movements would have to be made at the mercy of Allied Naval Force PT boats operating from Mios Woendi or Allied aircraft from the Biak fields. Finally, it was considered improbable that the enemy would choose to weaken his garrisons at Noemfoor Island and Manokwari by sending reinforcements from those bases to Biak.[1]

These estimates of enemy intentions were incorrect. The determined defense by the *Biak Detachment* prevented the Allies from using the Biak airfields as soon as had been expected. Therefore, all aerial efforts to locate and destroy Japanese seaborne reinforcement movements had to be made from Wakde Island or Hollandia. Moreover, not only had the Japanese made ambitious plans to reinforce Biak, but they were also willing to risk important naval air and surface units to make sure that the reinforcements reached their destination.

Japanese Naval Planning, Early 1944

The 9 May withdrawal of Japan's southeastern strategic main line of resistance to the line Sorong–Halmahera meant, in essence, that no reinforcements were to be sent to Biak and Manokwari, now relegated to the status of strategic outposts. But the landing of the HURRICANE Task Force on 27 May engendered a change in attitude at *Imperial General Headquarters* concerning the importance of Biak. Prior to this time, the defense of Biak had been principally a responsibility of the Japanese Army, but now the *Navy Section, Imperial General Headquarters,* began to take a decisive hand in the planning for operations in the western New Guinea area.[2]

Allied carrier operations against the Palaus and Sarmi in early 1944, coupled with continued Allied advances along the

[1] ALAMO Force, G–2 Daily Rpt 164, 27 May 44, in ALAMO G–2 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 16 May–2 Jun 44; GHQ SWPA, G–2 DSEI's 800 and 802, 31 May and 2 Jun 44, respectively, in G–3 GHQ Jnls, 31 May and 2 Jun 44.

[2] Hist of *Army Section, Imperial GHQ,* pp. 111–13; Hist of *Southern Area Army,* pp. 61–64; Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 53–58. Upon the Allied landings in the Wakde–Sarmi area on 17 May, General Anami, commanding the *2d Area Army,* had renewed earlier pleas for strengthening the Biak–Manokwari line, but these pleas had fallen on deaf ears at *Imperial GHQ.*

New Guinea coast and the concomitant weakening of Japanese Army air strength in western New Guinea, prompted the Japanese Navy to reinvestigate Biak's defensive potentialities. The Navy decided to strengthen its rather meager forces on Biak and, apparently early in April, sent airdrome construction units, a few antiaircraft troops, and some supply units to the island. In May the *19th Naval Guard Unit* elements arrived there.[3] One of the airfields on Biak apparently was to have been used solely by the Japanese Naval Air Service. Be that as it may, the Navy's interest in Biak during April was insignificant compared with that aroused by the Allied landings on the island.

The background of this interest lay as far distant in time as the disastrous defeats suffered by the Japanese Navy in mid-1942 and in plans formulated by *Imperial General Headquarters* during the fall of 1943 to develop bases in the western New Guinea–eastern Indies area from which to launch a major counteroffensive in the middle of 1944.[4]

Having suffered heavy losses of ground troops, aircraft, and pilots, the Japanese Army was unable to assume its share of preparations for the counteroffensive. Moreover, continuous shipping losses and Allied air attacks against the prospective bases made it impossible for the Japanese to send enough army troops forward even to defend those bases properly, let alone develop them to support major counterattacks.

Ever since its heavy losses in the middle of 1942, the Japanese Navy had been endeavoring to rebuild its air and surface strength for a naval showdown in the Pacific. Despite continued serious losses from Allied air and submarine operations through early 1944, the Japanese Navy was induced by the series of Allied carrier attacks and advances in the first four months of 1944 to speed preparations for the showdown. On this potential battle, the Japanese Navy conferred the code name *Operation A* or, as it was more euphoniously known, the *A–GO Operation*.[5]

The Japanese Navy initially planned to meet the U. S. Pacific Fleet for the *A–GO Operation* in the waters around the Palaus, but the possibility that the battle might have to be fought off the Marianas or near Geelvink Bay was not overlooked.[6] Whatever the expected locale of the battle, the Allied invasions of Hollandia and Aitape on 22 April gave impetus to final preparations for *A–GO*. On 3 May the *Navy Section* of *Imperial General Headquarters* issued a warning order for all units of the *Combined Fleet* to start assembling for the *A–GO Op-*

[3] Naval Opns in the Western New Guinea Area, pp. 2–3, 7–9; Incl 2, List of Corrections, to Ltr, Willoughby to Ward, 10 Mar 51. Although Biak had apparently been an army base practically from the time it was first occupied by the Japanese, the principal administrator for the Biak natives was a Japanese civilian naval employee. This was in accordance with agreements reached by the Japanese Army and Navy before the outbreak of war.

[4] Hist of *Army Section, Imperial GHQ*, pp. 90–96; see also above, Ch. IV.

[5] Japanese Studies in WW II, 60, The *A–GO Operation*, 1944, pp. 1, 3–6, copy in OCMH files. The "GO" in this sense is roughly equivalent to "No." in the English "Operation No. A."

[6] Hist of *2d Area Army*, pp. 55–68; Interrog of Capt Mitsuo Fuchida [IJN] [Air Stf O, *Hq Combined Flt*], 10 Oct 45, in USSBS, Naval Analysis Div, *Interrogations of Japanese Officials*, I, 122–32; Interrog of Vice Adm Shigeru Fukudome [IJN] [CofS *Combined Flt, etc.*], 9–12 Dec 45, *ibid.*, II, 500–30; Incl 2, List of Corrections, to Ltr, Willoughby to Ward, 10 Mar 51; Interrog of Capt Toshikazu Ohmae [IJN] [CofS *1st Task Force*], 25 Nov 45, in USSBS, *op. cit.*, II, 409–10. The *2d Area Army* and the *Southwest Area Fleet* hoped (or perhaps even expected) that *A–GO* would be undertaken in the Geelvink Bay area.

eration. For the battle, the Japanese Navy organized the bulk of the *Combined Fleet's* striking power into a unit called the *1st Task Force,*[7] under Vice Adm. Jisaburo Ozawa. Admiral Ozawa's force was divided into two major sections: the *2d Fleet,* containing the battleships, cruisers, and destroyers of the battle line, and the *3d Fleet,* which was a carrier striking force comprising nine carriers and their escorts, and based approximately 500 aircraft. Also scheduled to take an important part in the *A–GO Operation* was the land-based *1st Air Fleet,* commanded by Vice Adm. Kakuji Kakuta.

The *1st Air Fleet,* with an authorized strength of over 1,600 planes (the bulk of them land-based types), had been organized in Japan in mid-1943. Comprising initially the *61st* and *62d Air Flotillas,* it was to have had at least a year's training which, apparently, was to emphasize land-based operations in support of fleet action. Continued Allied advances in the Central and Southwest Pacific Areas, the loss of the Japanese Navy's carrier-based air strength at Rabaul, and Allied carrier attacks against Truk prompted *Imperial General Headquarters,* in February 1944, to send the bulk of the *61st Air Flotilla* (accompanied by *Headquarters, 1st Air Fleet*) to the Marianas. Some of the *61st's* aircraft were simultaneously deployed to the Carolines and Palaus, while the *62d Air Flotilla,* lacking sufficient training for combat, remained in Japan.[8]

On 22 April, when the Allies landed at Hollandia and Aitape, the *1st Air Fleet* was assigned the operational control of the *23d Air Flotilla,* then the only Japanese Naval Air Service unit based in New Guinea. Based since February 1942 variously at Kendari, in the Celebes, and at Davao, Mindanao, the *23d's* headquarters moved to Sorong, at the northwest tip of the Vogelkop, in mid-April 1944. At that time the flotilla sent a number of its combat planes forward to Biak and Wakde.

Most of these planes were lost during the Allied carrier- and land-based air operations which prepared the way for the landings of the RECKLESS and PERSECUTION Task Forces. The *1st Air Fleet,* when it took over operational control of the *23d Air Flotilla,* therefore sent to the latter unit fourteen land-based bombers. Earlier plans to send additional aircraft to the *23d* from the *61st Air Flotilla's* detachment in the Palaus had to be abandoned when the *61st* lost over 100 planes during the U. S. Fifth Fleet carrier raids on the Palaus at the end of March.

The *23d Air Flotilla* could undertake no major counterattacks against Hollandia and was unable to do anything to prevent the Allied advance to Wakde–Sarmi on 17 May. Instead, trying to save its remaining strength, it withdrew most of its aircraft to Sorong, leaving only a few reconnaissance planes at Biak. Between the Allied landings at Hollandia and Biak, the flotilla devoted much of its time to maintaining air bases in the western New Guinea area in the expectation that more reinforcements would be sent to it from the *1st Air Fleet.* But such additional strength was not immediately forthcoming. Instead, the *23d Air Flotilla* suffered still more losses from Allied aircraft based at Hollandia and Wakde. When the

[7] The characters of this name are also rendered into English as the *1st Striking Force,* the *1st Task Fleet,* and the *1st Mobile Fleet.*

[8] The *A–GO Operation,* pp. 3–7; Southeast Area Naval Opns, III, 2–9; Interrog of Capt Mitsuo Fuchida, 25 Nov 45, in USSBS, *op. cit.,* II, 428–31. Initially under *Imperial GHQ,* the *61st Air Flotilla* passed to the control of *Combined Fleet* on 15 Mar 44. It picked up a few experienced pilots and some additional planes upon arrival in the Marianas.

HURRICANE Task Force landed on Biak, the flotilla still had only twelve fighters and six medium bombers.[9]

The Japanese Decision to Reinforce Biak

Meanwhile, final preparations for the *A–GO Operation* had been going on apace.[10] The *1st Task Force* assembled on 16 May at Tawitawi, outermost island of the Sulu Archipelago, which extends southwest from Mindanao toward Borneo. Then, just after the Allied landings in the Wakde–Sarmi area, the *1st Air Fleet* was ordered to begin final deployment for *A–GO*. The U.S. Fifth Fleet attack on Marcus Island, northeast of the Marianas, on 20 May, apparently convinced the Japanese Navy that a major Allied advance was about to take place in the Central Pacific, bringing the U. S. Fifth Fleet into waters where the *1st Task Force,* supported by the *1st Air Fleet,* would have some advantages. Whatever the case, on 20 May the *1st Task Force* was alerted to be ready to sally forth from Tawitawi to execute *A–GO* at a moment's notice.

During conferences at *Imperial General Headquarters* in late April and early May, the question of what steps might be taken in case the Allies advanced to Biak before they moved in the Central Pacific had been considered by the Japanese Navy. The Japanese were apparently convinced at this time that the next major Allied target in the Central Pacific would be the Marianas, the seizure of which the Japanese Navy believed would be an unparalleled calamity which would foreshadow the loss of the war. Moreover, the Japanese Navy realized full well that *A–GO* was going to be fought on a shoestring, for it knew that available land-based air strength in the Marianas and Carolines was really inadequate for proper fleet support. If part of that already insufficient strength were redeployed to western New Guinea to protect Biak, the disparity between the striking power of the *1st Task Force* and the surface vessel and carrier-based air strength available to the Allies would become even more decided than it was estimated to be.

The Japanese Navy therefore decided to send no more aircraft to western New Guinea other than the fourteen bombers which had been dispatched to the *23d Air Flotilla* late in April. It was planned, moreover, that there would be no naval reaction to an Allied landing on Biak beyond attacks which could be mounted from Sorong by the wholly inadequate *23d Air Flotilla.* Thus, possibly gambling that the *A–GO Operation* would take place before an Allied attack on Biak, and obviously considering the Marianas more important than the western New Guinea area, the Japanese Navy reconciled itself to the probable loss of the bases in the Geelvink Bay area.

But on 27 May there occurred the event which the Japanese Navy had possibly feared. The HURRICANE Task Force began

---

[9] Naval Opns in the Western New Guinea Area, pp. 4–8; The *A–GO Operation,* pp. 2–3; Interrog of Capt Hirouchi Komoto [IJN] [Opns O, Stf, *23d Air Flotilla*], 12 Nov 45, in USSBS, *op. cit.,* II, 287–90.

[10] This subsection is based principally on: The *A–GO Operation,* pp. 13–16; Japanese Studies in WW II, 97, *A–GO Operations* Log (not to be confused with the *A–GO Operation*), pp. 1–6, copy in OCMH files; Hist of *Army Section, Imperial GHQ,* pp. 123–26; Naval Opns in the Western New Guinea Area, pp. 9–14; Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 61–62; Interrog of Capt Mitsuo Fuchida, 25 Nov 45, in USSBS, *op. cit.,* II, 428–31; Interrog of Capt Hirouchi Komoto, 12 Nov 45, *ibid.,* II, 287–90; Interrog of Capt Momochio Shimanouchi [IJN], [Stf of *16th Cruiser Div*], 26 Nov 45, *ibid.,* II, 450–54; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 60–61.

pouring ashore at Biak at a time when Allied forces in the Central Pacific had made no move toward the Marianas. Suddenly the Japanese Navy had a change of heart and decided that the *1st Task Force* would be at a marked disadvantage during *A–GO* if it had to cope with Allied aircraft using Biak fields.

To counter the Allied advance to Biak, the Japanese Navy decided upon two drastic steps. First, it dispatched from one third to one half (the figures vary according to source) of its available naval land-based air strength from the Central Pacific to reinforce the *23d Air Flotilla* in western New Guinea. On 28 May, 70 carrier-type fighters (50 of these were to stage in from Japan through the Philippines and were probably from the *62d Air Flotilla*), 4 reconnaissance bombers, and 16 medium bombers were ordered to western New Guinea. It also appears that another group of planes, comprising 48 fighters, 8 reconnaissance aircraft, and 20 bombers, was likewise ordered to move to western New Guinea and Halmahera from the Carolines on or about 31 May.

Thus, the Japanese Navy apparently planned to reinforce the *23d Air Flotilla* with 90 to 156 aircraft, the bulk of them fighter types. It is not known how many of these aircraft actually reached Sorong or other Vogelkop area bases, but it is known that most of the pilots, upon arrival in New Guinea, were immediately stricken with malaria or other tropical fevers and became liabilities rather than assets to the *23d Air Flotilla*. From the scale of the Japanese air effort against Biak,[11] it would appear that few of the reinforcing planes were ever used in attacks on that island.

The Japanese Navy next decided that it was just as important to attempt to hold Biak as to stage air raids against the Allied forces on the island. The *Biak Detachment* was obviously not strong enough to prevent the Allies for long from occupying the entire island. Therefore, as the second step, the Japanese Navy, in agreement with the *Army Section, Imperial General Headquarters,* decided to transport to Biak the Army's *2d Amphibious Brigade*. Moreover, the Navy was willing to risk major elements of the *1st Task Force* to insure the brigade's safe arrival on Biak. Orders to begin moving the *2d Amphibious Brigade* from the Philippines to Biak, an undertaking which the Japanese called *Operation KON*,[12] were issued by *Headquarters, Combined Fleet,* on 30 or 31 May. At the same time it was decided to move three infantry companies of the *35th Division* from Sorong to Biak, presumably by barge. Execution of these orders began immediately.

The KON Operation

The *2d Amphibious Brigade,* a relatively new unit of the Japanese Army, had been formed and trained for assault landings and transportation by small craft. Originally, it had been about 4,000 strong and comprised three infantry battalions, a 75-mm. mountain artillery battalion of twelve guns, a tank company, and attached engineer, signal, medical, and other service-type units.

[11] As derived from the enumeration and description of Japanese air attacks against Biak recorded in G–2 HTF, G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. II, Part II, Per Rpts.

[12] The component parts of the Japanese ideograph "kon" are "water" and "army." Thus the ideograph lent itself well as a code name for waterborne reinforcement movements. The actual meanings of the ideograph appear to have no pertinence to the nature of the operation.

The brigade had lost some of its infantry personnel and the entire tank unit as a result of Allied submarine action during the organization's movement from Japan to the Philippines in April or May. Most of the brigade was finally moved from Manila to Zamboanga, while some of the unit was apparently sent to Davao.[13]

The First KON Operation

The *KON Force,* as the ships detailed from the *1st Task Force* for the purpose of reinforcing Biak came to be called, was divided into four sections.[14] The largest and most important was the *Transport Unit,* consisting of 1 heavy cruiser, 1 light cruiser, and 3 destroyers. Next were the *1st Screening Unit,* 2 heavy cruisers and 3 destroyers, and the *2d Screening Unit,* 1 old battleship and 2 destroyers. A *Detached Unit*[15] contained two mine layers and an unknown number of submarine chasers, patrol craft, and landing craft or barges. The *Transport Unit* was to move 1,700 troops of the *2d Amphibious Brigade* to Biak, while the *Detached Unit* took 800 more men of the same organization to the island. It appears that the *Transport Unit* and the *1st* and *2d Screening Units* were also to shell Allied positions on Biak and attack Allied transport ships and naval vessels found in Biak waters.

According to orders, *KON Force* was to reach Biak on 3 June. There is no indication that the Japanese expected the *KON Operation* to evolve into an *A–GO Operation* in the Geelvink Bay area. Japanese reconnaissance aircraft, even as *KON Force* sailed toward Biak, were keeping under surveillance U. S. Pacific Fleet units stationed in the Marshall Islands. Should the scouting planes report that large groups of the American vessels had left the Marshalls, the Japanese would immediately put into effect their plans for *A–GO.* In accordance with these plans, the *1st* and *2d Screening Units* of *KON Force* would hurry to rejoin the *1st Task Force* in Philippine waters.

The *KON Force's Transport Unit* left Tarakan, Borneo, on 30 May and arrived at Zamboanga, Mindanao, the next day. At Zamboanga, the unit's cruisers and destroyers took aboard the 1,700 troops of the *2d Amphibious Brigade* and then moved on to reach Davao, Mindanao, on 1 June. The *1st* and *2d Screening Units* departed the Tawitawi fleet anchorage on 30 May and assembled with the *Transport Unit* in Davao Gulf on 1 June. The three units left the gulf about midnight on 2 June, the *2d Screening Unit* following a course generally parallel to but some fifty miles east of the other two groups. To allow more time to embark troops and make final plans, there was a delay of one day in Davao Gulf, after which the ships of the three *KON Force* units were not expected to arrive off Biak until approximately 2200 hours on 4 June.

So far, various Allied intelligence agencies had kept fairly accurate track of Japanese ship movements in the Mindanao area by means of aerial reconnaissance and submarine reports. On 30 May the *1st* and *2d Screening Units* had been sighted as they sailed east from Tawitawi. General Mac-

---

[13] ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpts 52, 54, and 56, 2, 16, and 30 Aug, respectively, copies in G–2 DofA files; Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 61–62; Naval Opns in the Western New Guinea Area, p. 10.

[14] In addition to the Allied sources cited below, this subsection is based upon the following Japanese sources: The *A–GO Operation,* pp. 15–16; *A–GO Operations* Log, pp. 5–9; Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 61–64; Naval Opns in the Western New Guinea Area, pp. 10–12; Interrog of Capt Momochio Shimanouchi, in USSBS, *op. cit.,* II, 450–54; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 61, 65–66.

[15] The names of these various components of *KON Force* vary with the source and translation.

Arthur's G–2 Section, interpreting this sighting, considered it probable that the Japanese ships were heading for Davao or the Palaus on supply or transport missions. At this time apparently little consideration was given to the possibility that the Japanese fleet units might have been sallying forth with offensive intent. The next day, 31 May, the ALAMO Force G–2 Section stated: "Enemy naval intervention at this stage of the [Biak] operations is impossible." [16]

On 1 June Allied air or submarine (the record is not clear) sightings accounted for twelve of the thirteen ships comprising the three *KON Force* units then assembled in Davao Gulf. But, despite the fact that the G–2 Section of General MacArthur's headquarters had also received information from radio intercepts indicating that the Japanese were planning to send the *2d Amphibious Brigade* to Biak, that section was still disinclined to believe that the Japanese fleet movements presaged offensive intent. Instead, it was considered more probable that the combat vessels at Davao Gulf were merely preparing to take supplies or reinforcements to Halmahera or perhaps to northwestern New Guinea.[17]

Early on the morning of 3 June, at a point just east of the Talaud Islands, between Mindanao and Morotai, a Seventh Fleet submarine sighted the *Transport* and *1st Screening Units* and was in turn sighted by ships of the latter organization. Seventh Fleet PB4Y's, operating from Wakde Island, kept the Japanese vessels under surveillance the rest of the day, reporting that the course and speed of the enemy ships could bring them into range of Biak during the evening of 4 June.[18] Their discovery by Allied aircraft so far from Biak (about 650 nautical miles) apparently had not been anticipated by the Japanese, who later reported that they had not known Allied aircraft were capable of such long-range reconnaissance.[19] Nevertheless, the three *KON Force* elements steamed on toward Biak, probably hoping that friendly aircraft might drive off the Allied reconnaissance planes and also protect the sea approaches to Biak.

In connection with *KON Force's* advance, the Japanese had planned heavy air strikes against Biak which were to be carried out by the recently reinforced *23d Air Flotilla* and the few army aircraft which remained at bases within range of Biak. Between 1645 and 1700 on 2 June, from eleven to fifteen Japanese planes bombed Allied positions on Biak, causing a few casualties and some light damage. Seven of these planes were shot down by shore-based antiaircraft weapons, while guns aboard Seventh Fleet ships lying off Bosnek accounted for at least one more. Later during the same night, a few more enemy planes dropped some bombs harmlessly on and near Owi Island. Still more approached Biak during the night, causing many red alerts but not dropping any bombs. The next night, that of 3–4 June, no Japanese planes attacked Biak, although an unknown

[16] ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 43, 31 May 44, p. 10-d, copy in G–2 DofA files; GHQ SWPA, G–2 DSEI 800, 31 May 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 31 May 44; Incl 2, List of Corrections, to Ltr, Willoughby to Ward, 10 Mar 51.

[17] GHQ SWPA, G–2 DSEI's 800 and 802, 31 May and 2 Jun 44, respectively, in G–3 GHQ Jnls, 31 May and 2 Jun 44; Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, C–13158, 1 Jun 44, in ALAMO Rear Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 1–2 Jun 44.

[18] Rad, ALAMO to HTF, WF–612, 4 Jun 44, in ALAMO Rear Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 3–4 Jun 44.

[19] This ignorance of the capabilities of Allied reconnaissance planes was professed after the war and seems to be tongue-in-cheek ex post facto reasoning. PB4Y's had been flying such distances (a round trip of about 1400 miles from Wakde) for some time, both in the Southwest and Central Pacific Areas.

number bombed Owi Island without causing any damage or casualties. Again, however, enemy aircraft flew many reconnaissance flights around Biak, causing an almost continuous red alert until the early morning hours of 4 June.[20]

The Japanese reconnaissance aircraft around Biak probably lost for the Japanese their best opportunity to reinforce and bombard the island. Already worried at being sighted by an Allied submarine and shadowed by PB4Y's, the *KON Force,* late on 3 June, received reports from Japanese scouting planes that an impressive Allied naval force, including carriers, was lying off Biak. How such a report could have originated is unknown—the pilots must have mistaken destroyers for battleships and LST's for carriers—for there were no Allied naval vessels larger than destroyers at Biak on 3 June. The Japanese now believed that the surprise value of *KON* had been lost and they began to fear attacks from carrier-based aircraft. Therefore, at approximately 2000 hours on the 3d, the *KON Operation* was called off.

Meanwhile, Allied General Headquarters, acting on the basis of new secret intelligence, had re-evaluated the available information concerning sightings of Japanese combat vessels. On 3 June the theater headquarters warned ALAMO Force, Allied Naval Forces, and Allied Air Forces that there were strong indications that the Japanese were going to make attempts to land reinforcements on Biak during the night of 4–5 June or on nights immediately following. The same day the Allied Naval Forces formed a special task force comprising 1 heavy cruiser, 3 light cruisers, and 10 destroyers—most of the readily available combat strength of the Seventh Fleet and the Royal Australian Navy except for a few destroyers already at Biak providing support for ground operations.

The ships of the hastily assembled task force were to rendezvous off Hollandia and depart that station in time to arrive at Biak by 1915 on 4 June. The small fleet was to destroy or drive off an equal or inferior enemy force attempting to bring reinforcements to Biak. In case a Japanese force of superior strength came within range, the Allied groupment was to retire toward Hollandia, presumably under cover of Fifth Air Force planes from Wakde. In connection with these plans there was set up a north-south boundary near Biak to separate areas of naval and air responsibility. Naval or air elements were not to cross this boundary except in cases of emergency or when in hot pursuit of Japanese vessels.[21]

Long before the Allied task force reached Biak on 4 June, the Japanese had canceled the *KON Operation.* Had the enemy force continued toward Biak, it might well have found the waters around that island free of Allied vessels. Moreover, the small Allied task force, under orders to withdraw in case a superior enemy fleet showed up, would have been opposed by 1 battleship, 3 heavy cruisers, 1 light cruiser, and 8 destroyers of the Japanese Navy. The Allied group would have had one more ship but would have been far outclassed in range and weight of fire

[20] G–2 HTF, Per Rpts 9–11, 4–7 Jun 44, in G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. II, Part II, Per Rpts; Rad, ALAMO Rear Hq to GHQ SWPA, WF–420, 3 Jun 44, and Rad, 14th ALP to Advon5thAF, NO–64, 3 Jun 44, both in ALAMO Rear Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 3–4 Jun 44.

[21] Rad, GHQ SWPA to AAF SWPA and ANF SWPA, CX–13203, 3 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 3 Jun 44; Rad, ALAMO Rear Hq to ALAMO Adv Hq, WF–551, 3 Jun 44, and Rad, ALAMO Rear Hq to HTF, WF–613, 3 Jun 44 (paraphrasing another radio from Com7thFlt to CTF's 74 and 75), both in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 3–4 Jun 44.

power. The Allied force might have had some support of land-based air power from distant Wakde Island, but the boundaries between air and naval zones would have limited the use of this help and the planes could not, in any case, be expected to operate with maximum efficiency during the night hours when the naval engagement would have taken place. Be that as it may, the Japanese resolved the question of an Allied naval withdrawal from Biak by failing to press home their planned attack.

When the Japanese called off *KON* on 3 June, the *Transport* and the *1st* and *2d Screening Units* were a little over 500 miles northwest of Biak and about 250 miles east-southeast of the Talaud Islands. At this point, the three forces were reorganized. The *Transport Unit,* accompanied by the three destroyers of the *1st Screening Unit,* changed course for Sorong, while the *2d Screening Unit* and the two heavy cruisers of the *1st* turned back toward Davao, which they probably reached late on 5 June. Of the ships moving to Sorong, the Fifth Air Force claimed to have sunk one destroyer and damaged at least two others. No substantiation of these contemporary claims is to be found in Japanese sources or later Allied reports. The *Transport Unit* and the *1st Screening Unit's* three destroyers arrived safely at Sorong during the evening of 4 June.[22]

The *Detached Unit,* which had been moving toward Biak from Zamboanga on an independent course far to the west of the other three sections of *KON Force,* had also changed its direction during the night of 3–4 June, and reached Sorong sometime on the 4th. At Sorong the *Transport Unit* unloaded the 1,700 men of the *2d Amphibious Brigade.* The six destroyers of the *Transport* and *1st Screening Units* then proceeded southwest to Ambon where they refueled. The *Transport Unit's* one heavy cruiser and one light cruiser sought shelter in Kaboei Bay, Waigeo Island, about 60 miles northwest of Sorong. On 6 June the heavy cruiser *Aoba* was attacked there by fifteen B–24's of the Fifth Air Force. First reports were that at least two hits were scored on the cruiser, but it was later learned that the ship suffered no damage. Instead, it was able to take part in a second *KON Operation.*[23]

The Second KON Operation

After noting the Japanese invasion fleet scattering to the north and southwest on 4 June, the G–2 Section of ALAMO Force estimated that the Japanese had at least temporarily dropped all plans for reinforcing Biak.[24] It was realized that the enemy could send troop-carrying barges to Biak if he chose to risk running the Allied air and naval blockade of that island, but further large-scale naval intervention was not expected.[25] The G–2 Section was due for another surprise—the Japanese had no intention of giving up so readily.

---

[22] Memo, Advon5AF to ALAMO, sub: Ship Sightings, 4 Jun 44, in ALAMO Rear Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 3–4 Jun 44; Incl 2, List of Corrections, to Ltr, Willoughby to Ward, 10 Mar 51.

[23] Rad, COIC GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, no number, 7 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 7–8 Jun 44; ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 45, 14 Jun 44; Incl 2, List of Corrections, to Ltr, Willoughby to Ward, 10 Mar 51.

[24] In addition to the Allied sources cited, the following Japanese sources were used for this subsection: *A–GO Operations* Log, p. 10; Naval Opns in the Western New Guinea Area, pp. 12–13; Interrog of Capt Momochio Shimanouchi, in USSBS, *op. cit.,* II, 450–54; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 64, 70, 76–77.

[25] ALAMO Force, G–2 Daily Rpt 172, 6 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–2 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 3–16 Jun 44.

The enemy had discovered, probably as a result of aerial reconnaissance early on 4 June, that the Allied naval force in the Biak area contained no carriers. Therefore, sometime on the 4th, *Headquarters, Combined Fleet* decided to make another effort to reinforce and bombard Biak. For the second attempt, *KON Force* units were again divided into four elements. The first was the *Transport Unit,* containing three destroyers which had been part of the first *KON Operation Transport Unit.* The second section was the *Screening Unit,* also comprising three destroyers. For the second *KON Operation* there were two detached units—the *1st* had one heavy and one light cruiser while the *2d Detached Unit* included the small craft and patrol boats which had put into Sorong at the end of the first *KON.*

The three destroyers of the *Transport Unit* were each to embark 200 infantrymen at Sorong. In addition, the destroyers of either or both the *Transport* and *Screening Units* were each to tow to Biak one landing barge crammed with troops, probably 30 to 50 men to a barge. It cannot be definitely ascertained to what organization the infantrymen of the second *KON Operation* belonged but it appears that the second *KON Force* planned to move the bulk of the *2d* and *3d Battalions, 219th Infantry, 35th Division,* from Sorong to Biak. Elements of both units were later identified on Biak.

On the morning of 7 June the *Transport, Screening,* and *1st Detached Units* rendezvoused off Misoöl Island, about 100 miles southwest of Sorong. The Japanese now decided that only destroyers would be used for the reinforcement run to Biak. Leaving the two cruisers at Misoöl, the *Transport* and *Screening Units* proceeded to Sorong where they embarked troops and picked up their tows. The *1st Detached Unit* moved to Ambon for fuel and supplies while the *2d Detached Unit* was ordered to be ready to sail toward Biak at a moment's notice.

The *Transport* and *Screening Units* left Sorong about midnight on the 7th, following a northeasterly course parallel to the coast of the Vogelkop Peninsula. The course was to bring the ships about 25 miles off Kaap de Goede Hoop (Cape of Good Hope), which, lying about midway between Manokwari and Sorong, is the northernmost point of the Vogelkop. After dawn on the 8th, air cover was to have been provided by planes of the *23d Air Flotilla.* But the cape area was being patrolled by Allied aircraft on 8 June and, about 1330, the *23d Air Flotilla* cover of six planes was shot down or driven away by Fifth Air Force P–38's.

Finding the air now free of enemy planes, American B–25's dived to the attack, reporting the convoy as 2 light cruisers and 4 destroyers. Initially, it was claimed that 1 destroyer was sunk, 2 were left sinking, and the fourth was damaged. A few days later, destruction was reassessed as 4 destroyers sunk and 2 light cruisers chased to the northwest.[26] These claims were exaggerated. One destroyer, the *Harusame,* was holed by a near miss and sank rapidly, the bulk of its crew being saved. Another destroyer was damaged by a bomb and took some water; two others were slightly damaged by strafing. Neither speed nor navigation was impeded for any of the three. The two light cruisers reported by the Allied planes were, of course, the other two destroyers. These

[26] ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 45, 14 Jun 44, copy in G–2 DofA files; Rad, ALAMO Rear Hq to ALAMO Adv Hq, WF–1620, 8 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 8–9 Jun 44; Rad, ALAMO Rear Hq to ALAMO Adv Hq, WF–2030, 10 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 10–11 Jun 44.

two might have taken some evasive action by heading northwest for a short time, but as soon as the *Harusame* crew had been rescued and the Allied planes had disappeared, the convoy reformed and continued on toward Biak.[27]

About 1800 on the 8th, the *Transport* and *Screening Units* received a report from a Japanese aircraft that an Allied naval force comprising 1 battleship, 4 cruisers, and 8 destroyers was moving west at high speed from an undesignated point east of Biak. This report was at least partially correct. The Allied task force which had been formed on 3 June had again assembled on the 8th, having been alerted by reports of the air-sea battle off the Kaap de Goede Hoop. But the Japanese convoy commander apparently took this air reconnaissance report with at least one grain of salt—had not similar information received on 3 June proved inaccurate? The *Transport* and *Screening Units* steamed on, despite the fact that the Kaap de Goede Hoop action had put the force behind schedule.

At 2330 the two enemy groups were approximately forty miles off the north coast of Soepiori Island, ready to turn southeast toward Korim Bay, on the northeast side of Biak. Minutes later a destroyer in the van sighted the Allied task force heading northwest around Biak. The convoy commander quickly realized that he was badly outnumbered and decided that discretion was called for. The destroyers with tows cut the barges loose and joined in a general flight northwest toward the Mapia Islands, almost 200 miles distant, with Allied destroyers in pursuit.[28]

Principally because the enemy had a long head start and was taking evasive action over miles of open sea, the Allied destroyers were unable to close with the Japanese ships. Moreover, the strength of the enemy force was unknown, and the Allied destroyers rapidly drew away from their cruiser support. Land-based air support was not available because of increasingly threatening weather, darkness, and the fact that previously assigned boundaries between aircraft zones and naval action could not readily be changed. Finally, at 0230 on the 9th, when the two opposing groups of destroyers were in the vicinity of the Mapia Islands, contact was broken and the Allied ships withdrew toward Biak.

The results of the engagement, during which only long-range destroyer fire had been exchanged, were inconclusive. A Japanese destroyer—one which had been hit on the 8th when the *Harusame* had been sunk—received more damage but again was able to continue on course without much loss of speed. In addition, Allied destroyers sank at least one of the barges which the Japanese destroyers had cut loose. Nevertheless, other barges of the group certainly managed to set reinforcements ashore, probably at Korim Bay, during the night.[29]

Japanese air cover at Biak for the second *KON Operation* had been practically non-

[27] The Joint Army-Navy Assessment Committee [JANAC], *Japanese Naval And Merchant Shipping Losses During World War II By All Causes* (Washington, 1947), p. 12.

[28] Rad, COIC GHQ SWPA to G–2 ALAMO, WM–264, 10 Jun 44 and Rad, ALAMO Rear Hq to ALAMO Adv Hq, WF–1891, 10 Jun 44, both in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 9–10 Jun 44.

[29] Rad, ALAMO Rear Hq to ALAMO Adv Hq, WF–1891, 10 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 9–10 Jun 44; ALAMO Force, G–2 Daily Rpt 178, 10 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–2 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 3–16 Jun 44.

existent. Early on the morning of 8 June a lone enemy plane dropped a few bombs near shipping anchored off Mios Woendi and on the HURRICANE Task Force's amphibian tractor pool. No damage to equipment resulted from this raid and only one man was wounded. About 2030 on the 8th, one fighter and two bombers attacked searchlight positions on Owi Island without causing any damage or casualties. Other enemy planes approached within radar range of Biak during the early morning hours of 9 June, but did not attack the island.[30]

During the melee in the Biak–Mapia area, the second *KON Force's Transport* and *Screening Units* became separated, but even so, both steamed westward on divergent courses under cover of bad weather on the 9th. The *Transport Unit's* destroyers proceeded to Sorong and there unloaded the 600 infantrymen so futilely carried toward Biak. The destroyers then rendezvoused with the cruisers of the *1st Detached Unit* and the two groups sailed to Batjan Island, where they arrived on 10 June. The *Screening Unit's* remaining two destroyers reached Batjan either late on the 9th or early on the 10th. Meanwhile, two heavy cruisers and two destroyers of the first *KON Force* had moved from Davao to Batjan and, during the movement, lost the destroyer *Kazegumo* to a Seventh Fleet submarine. The remaining three ships arrived at Batjan sometime on 9 June.

During these scurryings over vast stretches of the western Pacific, the small craft of the *2d Detached Unit* had perhaps been ordered to Biak. Whatever its original orders, the unit's instructions were changed and the small craft apparently put back into Sorong on 10 June. There the 800 men of the *2d Amphibious Brigade,* who had been in transit from Zamboanga since 1 June, disembarked.[31]

A final and unexplained movement occurred during the night of 9–10 June, when Allied aircraft reportedly sighted between three and five unidentified warships about 150 miles north of the Mapia Islands. When first sighted the vessels were heading southeast toward Biak, and a later report, which identified the ships as Japanese destroyers, placed them fifty miles southeast of the Mapia group, still heading toward Biak at high speed. Japanese sources make no mention of a destroyer force at the specified time or place. Allied naval vessels, based at Mios Woendi, searched in vain in waters north of Biak for the Japanese ships during the early morning hours of 10 June.[32] The maneuvering may have been an unrecorded Japanese attempt to entice Allied surface forces away from Biak so that barges could slip reinforcements into Biak from the southwest. More likely, however, the sighting reports were inaccurate as to location and course.

Whatever the facts concerning the shipping sighted on the night of 9–10 June, the HURRICANE Task Force reported to ALAMO Force that the enemy warships were five destroyers which were moving reinforcements to Biak. It was partially on the basis of this report that General Fuller, on 13 June, requested ALAMO Force to send an additional infantry regiment to Biak.[33]

[30] G–2 HTF, Per Rpts 12–13, 8–9 Jun 44, in G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. II, Part II, Per Rpts.

[31] ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 56, 30 Aug 44, copy in G–2 DofA files.

[32] Rad, ALAMO Rear Hq to ALAMO Adv Hq, WF–1891, 10 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 9–10 Jun 44; ALAMO Force, G–2 Daily Rpt 178, 10 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–2 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 3–16 Jun 44; Rad 7thFlt Adv PT Base (Mios Woendi) to ALAMO, 10 Jun 44, in ALAMO Rear Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 10–12 Jun 44.

[33] Rad, HTF to ALAMO, TD–654, 13 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–2 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 3–16 Jun 44.

The second *KON Operation* had cost the Japanese 2 destroyers sunk, 1 badly damaged, 2 lightly damaged, and at least 1 bargeload of infantrymen lost. In return for these losses, the enemy managed to land perhaps 100 fresh troops on Biak from the barges towed by the destroyers of the second *KON Force*. Finally, the Japanese had tied up a small Allied Naval task force for some days and had prompted the HURRICANE Task Force to call for reinforcements—a fact which the enemy did not learn for some days. But, despite the obvious lack of success of two attempts to reinforce Biak, the Japanese were determined to try again.

The Third KON Operation

During the second *KON Operation* the Japanese had not neglected to keep track of U.S. Fifth Fleet movements.[34] On 9 June Japanese aerial reconnaissance noted that strong American carrier task forces had departed from the Marshall Islands. The Japanese realized that this movement presaged a new amphibious attack or, at least, a heavy carrier strike by Allied fleet units. But the enemy was not yet sure where the blow would fall. Nonetheless, on the morning of 10 June all units of the *Combined Fleet* were alerted to make final preparations for the *A–GO Operation*. Some naval air units had at this time started from Central Pacific bases toward Halmahera, presumably to support the *KON Operation* or to give added strength to enemy air deployment in the western New Guinea area. Now, these movements were canceled and the air units which had already started changing their stations were called back to the Marianas, Palaus, and central Carolines. Either on the 10th or a few days later, other air organizations which had already arrived in western New Guinea to reinforce the *23d Air Flotilla* were also ordered to return to their Mariana and Caroline bases. But, pending arrival of more information concerning intentions of the U.S. Fifth Fleet, the *Combined Fleet* decided to go ahead with a third *KON Operation*. In fact, plans for a third attempt had been initiated even as the destroyers of the second *KON Force* had been fleeing toward Batjan Island.

On the morning of 10 June the *Combined Fleet* issued orders organizing the third *KON Force*. Again there were to be four elements. The first was designated the *Attack Unit* and contained 2 battleships—the *Yamato* and *Musashi,* then the most powerful battleships in the Japanese or any other navy—2 heavy cruisers, 1 light cruiser, and 3 destroyers. A *1st Transport Unit* comprised 1 heavy cruiser, 1 light cruiser, and 4 destroyers, while a *2d Transport Unit* included the small craft which had carried the 800 men of the *2d Amphibious Brigade* to Sorong. A *Supply Unit* was made up of two destroyer-escorts and two small cargo-transport ships.

Available sources provide somewhat incomplete and contradictory information on Japanese plans for the employment of the powerful task force assembled for the third *KON*. Apparently, the first priority was to

[34] This subsection is based principally on: *A–GO Operations* Log, pp. 10–11, 14–15; The *A–GO Operation,* pp. 17–18, 30; Naval Opns in the Western New Guinea Area, pp. 14–15; Hist of *2d Area Army,* p. 64; Interrog of Capt Momochio Shimanouchi, in USSBS, *op. cit.,* II, 450–54; Interrog of Capt Hirouchi Komoto, *ibid.,* II, 287–90; "Impressions and Battle Lessons (Air) in the 'A' Operations," in USSBS, *The Campaigns in the Pacific War* (Washington, 1946), App. 81, pp. 260–70; CINCPAC-CINCPOA, Bulletin 146–45, 10 Jun 45, Names of Japanese Naval Vessels, copy in OCMH files; Incl 2, List of Corrections, to Ltr, Willoughby to Ward, 10 Mar 51.

move reinforcements to Biak regardless of cost to ships or men. The second priority was for the *Attack Unit* to destroy Allied warships and merchant vessels found in Biak waters and to deliver a heavy bombardment against the HURRICANE Task Force's shore positions. Some enemy sources indicate that the *1st* and *2d Transport Units* were to take the *2d Amphibious Brigade* from Sorong to Biak, but only if an excellent opportunity to do so were presented.

The *KON Force* commander decided to gather his forces for the third *KON Operation* at Batjan Island. Most of the ships of the *Attack Unit* left the Tawitawi fleet anchorage on 10 June and arrived at Batjan on the 11th, rendezvousing there with the vessels of the second *KON Force* and with the first *KON Force's* cruisers and destroyers. By morning of the 12th all elements of the third *KON Force* had assembled and were making final preparations for the third attempt to reinforce and bombard Biak.

But on 11 June carrier-based planes of the U. S. Fifth Fleet began heavy strikes against Japanese installations on the Mariana Islands. These attacks continued on the 12th. Apparently the Japanese were not sure at first what these raids portended, and they merely delayed the sailing of the third *KON Force* until more information concerning American intentions could be obtained. On the 13th, however, evidently satisfied that a full-scale invasion of the Marianas was about to take place, the *Combined Fleet* decided that the time had come to assemble all available forces for the *A-GO Operation.* The *1st Task Force* had started northeastward from Tawitawi on the 12th. Now, on the 13th, the bulk of the third *KON Force* vessels left Batjan Island and headed northeast at full speed toward the Palaus to rendezvous with the *1st Task Force.* The third and final threat to Allied naval and ground forces at Biak was over.

Reinforcements by Barge During KON

In attempting to follow the various phases of the *KON Operation*, it is all but impossible to separate the wheat from the chaff. On the surface it appears that the enemy's major ambition was to reinforce Biak by means of large-scale naval intervention. But—although Japanese records give no inkling of this—the movements of the three *KON Forces* may also have been designed to confuse Allied naval units at Biak and draw them north of the island while barges slipped reinforcements into Biak from the southwest without naval protection. Whatever the facts of possible Japanese deception measures may be, suffice it to say that the *2d Area Army* dispatched other reinforcements to Biak by barge while Allied and Japanese naval vessels were maneuvering north and northwest of the island.

On 30 or 31 May, as the first *KON Force* was being organized, approximately 375 men of the *2d Battalion, 221st Infantry, 35th Division,* were loaded on barges at Manokwari and sent off toward Biak. The provisional groupment, known as the *Ozawa Force,* apparently contained the *6th* and *7th Companies,* the *2d Machine Gun Company, 2d Battalion* headquarters, and possibly a detachment of the *221st Infantry's* signal section. Probably making an overnight run from Manokwari, the *Ozawa Force* reached Noemfoor Island on 1 June,[35]

[35] ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 46, 21 Jun 44, copy in G–2 DofA files; G–2 HTF, Per Rpt 45, 12 Jul 44, in G–2 Hist HTF, Vol. II, Part II, Per Rpts; Rad, HTF to ALAMO Adv Hq, TD–851, 19 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 18–19 Jun

but from Noemfoor on, the unit's movements are harder to trace.

Apparently, part of the *Ozawa Force* (comprising the *6th Company,* two light artillery weapons, and Captain Ozawa's headquarters) reached Korim Bay, Biak, on the night of 3–4 June and then proceeded southwest overland to reach the West Caves area on the 9th. Some troops were lost on the way to Biak and other barges may have turned back to Noemfoor. The rest of the *Ozawa Force* seems to have left Noemfoor about 10 June, reaching Korim Bay on the 12th. Other elements of the *2d Battalion, 221st Infantry,* including the bulk of the *5th Company,* apparently left Manokwari for Biak on or about 7 June, and some men of this echelon may have reached Biak. It is impossible to ascertain how many men of the *2d Battalion, 221st Infantry,* finally arrived on Biak, but it appears that the total did not exceed 400.[36]

Either the *2d* or *3d Battalions* of the *219th Infantry,* originally at Sorong, had been involved in the second *KON Force's* destroyer run and barge tow to Biak during 7–9 June. On the night of the 8th perhaps 100 men of one of these battalions had managed to reach shore at Biak when the destroyers had cut loose their tows and fled toward the Mapia Islands. The remaining elements of the *219th Infantry,* aboard the destroyers, returned to Sorong on the 9th. On the same day most of the *2d Battalion* (which may or may not have been involved in the destroyer run) was loaded on barges at Sorong and sent to Biak via Noemfoor Island. It is not known when the *Nishihara Force,* as the unit organized for the barge run was designated, reached Noemfoor, but it must have been about 12 June. One company apparently left for Biak the next day, while the rest of the force seems to have waited until the 16th. In any case, the *Nishihara Force* began reaching the fighting area north of Mokmer Drome on 23 June.[37]

The *5th* and *9th Companies* of the *222d Infantry,* Colonel Kuzume's own regiment, had not been on Biak when the HURRICANE Task Force began landing on 27 May. The *5th Company,* garrisoning Noemfoor since early April, was ordered to Biak about 30 May, while the *9th Company,* which was either at Noemfoor or Sorong, was apparently alerted for the move to Biak about the same time. How the two units moved to Biak is not certain, but it seems most probable that the *5th Company* sailed from Noemfoor with the *Ozawa Force.* At any rate, it arrived in the West Caves area on the 10th of June, having lost some men in transit. The *9th Company* probably moved with the *Nishihara Force* to Noemfoor (if it had been at Sorong) and left the island aboard three large barges on or about 20 June. One of these barges, carrying about thirty men and all the heavy weapons and supplies of the company, was sunk by a Seventh Fleet PT boat not far from Noemfoor. The other two apparently put back to Noemfoor to try again a few days later, the

44; Hist of *2d Area Army,* p. 64; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), p. 64. The *Ozawa Force* was probably led by Capt. Kyukri Ozawa.

[36] ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpts 46 and 49, 21 Jun and 12 Jul 44, copies in G–2 DofA files; G–2 HTF, Per Rpts 24 and 45, 21 Jun and 12 Jul 44, in G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. II, Part II, Per Rpts; Rads, HTF to ALAMO Adv Hq, TD–832 and TD–851, 18 and 19 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 18–19 Jun 44; Rad, HTF to ALAMO Rear Hq, TD–997, 23 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–2 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 16 Jun–10 Jul 44; Opns of *Yuki Group,* pp. 8–9; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 64–65, 70, 75.

[37] G–2 HTF, Per Rpts 34 and 45, 1 and 12 Jul 44, respectively, in G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. II, Part II, Per Rpts; ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 49, 12 Jul 44; *2d Army* Opns At Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 79, 83.

remnants of the company reaching Biak about 25 June, possibly in company with part of the *Nishihara Force.*[38]

Thus, over a period of about one month, the Japanese managed to reinforce the *Biak Detachment* with approximately 1,200 men—about 225 troops of the *222d Infantry,* some 400-odd of the *221st Infantry,* and probably a little over 500 of the *219th Infantry.* Considering their naval, air, personnel, and supply losses during the *KON Operation* and the barge runs, and also considering the fact that the reinforcements were too few and too late to affect the outcome of operations on Biak, the Japanese attempt was hardly worth the effort.

Results of the KON Operation

Facts and Speculation

It is difficult to assess the effect the Japanese Navy's attempts to hold, reinforce, or attack Biak may have had on subsequent naval operations throughout the Pacific, especially during the *A–GO Operation,* which was known on the Allied side as The Battle of the Philippine Sea and which occurred off the Marianas in mid-June. It is known that *Combined Fleet* plans for *A–GO* had placed a great deal of dependence upon the support of naval land-based aircraft. Units of the *1st Air Fleet,* based in the Marianas, Carolines, and Palaus, had been expected to effect reconnaissance ahead of the *1st Task Force* and attack Allied shipping, aircraft, and combat vessels as the *1st Task Force* sallied forth to battle against the U.S. Fifth Fleet.

But when the Allies landed on Biak, one third to one half of the *1st Air Fleet's* planes had been sent to western New Guinea to support *KON.* Other elements of the *1st Air Fleet* were evidently dispatched from Central Pacific bases toward Halmahera and western New Guinea on or about 10 June. Of the first group, at least half the pilots were lost as the result of malaria or action in support of *KON.* Most of the remaining pilots were lost to Allied air action or bad weather as they tried to get back to Central Pacific bases after 13 June, when the Japanese started *A–GO.* The pilots and planes which had started redeployment southwestward about 10 June were similarly lost or were caught out of position.

Bad weather had prevented the Japanese from sending additional air reinforcements from Japan to the Marianas, and U. S. Fifth Fleet strikes against those islands beginning on 11 June accounted for most of the remaining planes of the *1st Air Fleet.* According to Japanese figures, only 20 percent of the *1st Air Fleet* strength originally deployed in the Central Pacific was available for *A–GO,* the rest having been lost during operations in western New Guinea, caught out of position as a result of untimely redeployments in support of *KON,* or destroyed by U. S. Fifth Fleet carrier raids before the *1st Task Force* could get in position for its own attack. Indeed, the latter's deployment for *A–GO* had possibly been delayed as a result of preoccupation with *KON.* What the outcome of *A–GO* might have been had not so much of the *1st Air Fleet's* land-based strength been redeployed for *KON* can only be conjectured. It is possible that *A–GO* might have been much less disastrous for the *1st Task Force*; the U. S. Fifth Fleet might have suffered severe losses; it might have been next to impossible

[38] ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 49, 12 Jul 44; G–2 HTF, Per Rpts 59 and 74, 26 Jul and 10 Aug 44, respectively, in G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. II, Part II, Per Rpts; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 64–65, 80, 83.

to supply the Allied forces of the Central Pacific ashore on the Marianas; and Allied operations throughout the Pacific might have been delayed. Whatever the facts, Japanese sources almost uniformly lament redeploying so much of the *1st Air Fleet's* strength southwestward to support the *KON Operation.*[39]

The Central Pacific's invasion of the Marianas, with the concomitant withdrawal of the *KON Force* for *A-GO,* could hardly have occurred at a more auspicious moment for the Allied forces of the Southwest Pacific. While the Allied Air Forces were prepared for the eventuality that Japanese fleet units might reach Biak, air operations might well have been curtailed by range and weather factors, as, indeed, they had been during the second *KON Operation.* In any case, the Allied Air Forces would have had a tough job driving the *KON Force* away from Biak, especially if the *1st Air Fleet's* strength in the western New Guinea area had been built up as planned. Had the powerful task force which the Japanese assembled for the third *KON* attempt reached Biak, it probably could have overwhelmed any naval force the Allied Naval Forces could have mustered there. Even had the third *KON Force* not landed any troops at Biak, its fire power might have made untenable the HURRICANE Task Force's coastal positions and its hold on Mokmer Drome. Had the Allied vessels at Biak been sunk or driven off, supplying Biak would have been a major problem until the Japanese fleet units were forced to retire and the Allied ships were replaced. Although the total force the Japanese hoped to land on Biak—probably some 5,000 men, all told—could not have driven the HURRICANE Task Force into the sea, such reinforcements would have rendered the Allied unit's task infinitely more difficult and inevitably would have necessitated its reinforcement, perhaps by as much as an entire infantry division.

In June 1944, the Allied Forces of the Southwest Pacific Area probably had little idea how potentially dangerous the situation was at Biak, and it remained for postwar Japanese reports to reveal how narrowly greater losses and strategic delays were averted. Without doubt, success for the Japanese during *KON* would have seriously delayed the pace of Allied operations in the Southwest Pacific Area, if not throughout the Pacific. The "if" connection between *KON* and *A-GO* is obvious—the success of either would have been a devilish blow. The close relation between the two operations is a striking illustration of the mutual interdependence of the Allied Southwest and Central Pacific Areas.

Effects of KON *at Biak*

Insofar as Japanese ground forces in the Southwest Pacific were concerned, the cancellation of *KON* and the departure of *KON Force* vessels to the Central Pacific battle area left the *2d Area Army* in an unenviable position. General Anami had pinned his strategic hopes on reinforcing Biak, but now the best means of so doing had been taken away. On orders from higher headquarters, he had to concentrate the *2d Amphibious Brigade* at Sorong,

[39] Interrog of Capt Fuchida, in USSBS, *Interrogations of Japanese Officials,* II, 428–31; "Impressions and Battle Lessons (Air) in the 'A' Operations," in USSBS, *The Campaigns of the Pacific War,* App. 81, pp. 260–70; The *A-GO Operation,* p. 26.

but he determined to send the rest of the *35th Division* to Biak. Apparently this was to be accomplished by barges, aided by such escort vessels as might be left to the *Southwestern Fleet.*

Since it was becoming increasingly dangerous for barges to move beyond Sorong, General Anami finally decided to await the outcome of the *A-GO Operation* before sending any more elements of the *35th Division* to Biak, although he continued to move parts of the division from Sorong to Manokwari. When the Japanese Navy was defeated in *A-GO,* General Anami realized he would have no further opportunity to send large bodies of troops to Biak. He therefore ordered the *35th Division* to remain at Manokwari. Hoping for the longest possible delay of Allied operations at Biak or subsequent advances, he instructed the *Biak Detachment* not to commit suicide in fruitless banzai attacks, but rather to prolong the action by protracted defense and, in the end, by guerrilla warfare. The last significant attempts to reinforce Biak were the movements of the *Nishihara Force* and the *9th Company, 222d Infantry,* late in June.

On Biak Colonel Kuzume committed the reinforcements which reached the island piecemeal to operations along the low ridge north of Mokmer Drome. At least one company of the *221st Infantry* was in position there on 10 June and the rest of the *Ozawa Force,* initially held in reserve at the West Caves, was sent into defenses along the low ridge by the 13th. The *5th Company, 222d Infantry,* also moved into the line in the same area on the 10th, and 100 men of the *219th Infantry* were in the vicinity of the West Caves by the same date. Late in the month, the *Nishihara Force* and the remnants of the *9th Company, 222d Infantry,* were slipped in the line near the West Caves.[40]

Most American analyses of Japanese operations on Biak condemn Colonel Kuzume for misuse of his reinforcements, stating that he should have concentrated them for a counterattack. But whether, in fact, the *Biak Detachment* commander could have used his additional strength in other than defensive activities is problematical. The reinforcements arrived on Biak in small increments, none over 400 men strong. The total was not more than 1,200 troops, most of whom brought ashore only light infantry weapons. Moreover, Colonel Kuzume undoubtedly knew something of the difficulties attending the *KON Operation.* He had no assurance that strong reinforcements would reach him, nor did he know when they might arrive. Therefore, as fresh troops landed on Biak, Colonel Kuzume put them into the line north of Mokmer Drome, where he apparently thought they would do the most good. Under continuous artillery bombardment and infantry attack, the *Biak Detachment's* forces along the low ridge were suffering great losses. The Japanese commander's primary mission was to prevent the Allies from employing the Biak airfields—a mission which he could accomplish from positions along the low ridge—and he used his reinforcements to aid him in this task.[41]

Although the Japanese were unable to send sufficient reinforcements to Biak to af-

---

[40] Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 64–67; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 73, 75, 80; see also above, subsection entitled "Reinforcements by Barge During *KON*"; ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 54, 16 Aug 44, copy in G–2 DofA files.

[41] G–2 HTF, G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. I, Part III, Enemy Order of Battle, p. 2; MID WD, *Military Reports,* 24, p. 18; Opns of *Yuki Group,* pp. 3–5, 9.

fect the ultimate outcome of operations there, enough fresh troops did reach the island to delay Allied employment of the Biak airstrips; to prompt General Fuller to ask for reinforcements on 13 June; and, at least indirectly, to have something to do with changes in the Allied command at Biak. Under the new command—General Eichelberger in control of the HURRICANE Task Force and General Doe in command of the 41st Infantry Division—the attack was continued.

CHAPTER XVI

Biak: The Reduction of the Japanese Pockets

When General Eichelberger assumed command of the HURRICANE Task Force on 15 June, he chose to make no changes in plans General Doe had already made for an attack north of Mokmer Drome the next day. Instead, the new task force commander decided to observe operations on the 16th and await their outcome before determining what new courses of action might be necessary.[1]

The Reduction of the West Caves

When operations along the low ridge above Mokmer Drome had ended in frustration on the afternoon of 15 June, General Doe had decided to give the tired 2d and 3d Battalions, 162d Infantry, a rest while the 2d Battalion, 186th Infantry, made a new effort to close the 500-yard-long gap which still existed along the low ridge. The 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, was to aid this effort by sending patrols southwest from its perimeter near the West Caves. The 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, located northeast of the West Caves, was to secure the lower end of the road west of Hill 320 with the aid of elements of the 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, from the east. The 3d Battalion, 186th Infantry, would remain in reserve.[2]

The Attack Continues

The 2d Battalion, 186th Infantry, started moving toward the low ridge at 0700 on 16 June and by 0815 had relieved the two companies of the 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, which had been holding positions on the low ridge west of the point where the Japanese road crossed.[3]

The 186th Infantry's unit began attacking eastward along the ridge shortly after 0900. Company E led, with the 2d Platoon

[1] Eichelberger and MacKaye, *Our Jungle Road to Tokyo*, pp. 141–42.

[2] 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 15 May–19 Aug 44, p. 9; 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44, p. 19; 162d Inf Jnl, 22 May–19 Aug 44; 163d Inf Jnl, 31 May–19 Aug 44; Newman Notes.

[3] This subsection is based on: Eichelberger Notes; Eichelberger and MacKaye, *op. cit.*, pp. 142–45; Newman Notes; 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44, pp. 20–22; 186th Inf Jnl, 27 May–20 Aug 44; 1st Bn 186th Inf, Hist with 162d Inf, 13–18 Jun 44, p. 4; Co E 186th Inf, Rec of Events, 24 May–16 Jul 44, in ORB RAC AGO collection; 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 15 May–19 Aug 44, p. 9; 162d Inf Jnl, 22 May–19 Aug 44, 121st FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, p. 7; 603d Tank Co Opns Rpt Biak, p. 4. Available sources are not adequate to provide identifications of Japanese units engaged in the actions described in this and the following subsection. Suffice it to say that Colonel Kuzume was using all the troops available to him except those committed to holding the East Caves and the Ibdi Pocket.

on the ridge, the 3d Platoon in flats 100 yards to the north, and the 1st Platoon 100 yards beyond the 3d. The 2d Platoon quickly found itself in a maze of Japanese positions and was halted by Japanese automatic weapons fire. The 1st Platoon of Company G thereupon moved up on Company E's right and began advancing along the southern slope of the low ridge. Together, the two platoons continued eastward against slackening resistance. They cleared innumerable enemy slit trenches, foxholes, and bunkers, destroyed several machine guns of various calibers, and at 1050 reached the lines of the 3d Battalion, 162d Infantry. The task of closing the ridge line gap was completed in less than two hours, many of the previous Japanese defenders apparently having withdrawn north into the West Caves the preceding night.

In the flat ground north of the ridge, operations had not been so successful. The 3d Platoon, Company E, gained about 500 yards in an easterly direction but was then pinned down for almost two hours by Japanese machine gun and mortar fire originating from woods and high ground near the enemy encampment area north of the West Caves. The 1st Platoon, moving up to the 3d's left, was subjected to the same fire. Finally, the 2d Platoon, Company G, was sent forward in an attempt to outflank the enemy positions north and northeast of the two Company E platoons. This maneuver was ineffective, and by 1115 all movement in the flat had bogged down. The battalion commander ordered a new attack with four rifle platoons (two each from Companies E and G) abreast with the intent of clearing the ground northeastward to the lines of the 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, north of the West Caves. The new advance, beginning shortly after 1200, followed a 600-round concentration by the 121st Field Artillery Battalion on the area whence the Japanese mortar and machine gun fire had originated.

The 3d Platoon, Company G, aimed for the high ground at the Japanese encampment. Crossing the main road which ran north from Mokmer Drome through the bivouac area, the platoon secured its objective shortly after 1400, bringing to a halt most of the automatic weapons fire which had prevented the advance of the other three platoons during the morning. The 2d Platoon, Company G, on the 3d's right, also crossed the road. As the platoon pushed on toward the northwest corner of the West Caves, it was halted by enemy fire, as was the 1st Platoon, Company E, 150 yards to the south. The 3d Platoon of Company E, right of the 1st, advanced along the north side of the low ridge. There it encountered little opposition and, apparently passing south of the West Caves unmolested, established contact with the 3d Battalion, 162d Infantry, about 1400.

The 1st Platoon of Company E and the 2d Platoon, Company G, had obviously located the western side of the West Caves positions. However, they could hardly be expected to seize a strong point which the 1st Battalions of the 162d and 186th Infantry Regiments had been vainly trying to secure from the east for the past two days. They therefore established a line on which a new attack into the West Caves might be based, and Colonel Newman ordered the forward elements to dig in for the night, pending the arrival of the rest of the 2d Battalion. But General Doe thought there was danger that enemy units might counterattack the left rear (northwest) of the three forwardmost platoons. Indeed, as the three had moved up to the west side of the caves



INFANTRYMEN MOVING UP *to the attack on a ridge north of Mokmer Drome. The tank is a Sherman.*

at 1400, a number of Japanese infantrymen had been observed milling around up the main road to the north. Therefore, about 1420, General Doe ordered all four platoons to withdraw to the low ridge. Beginning at 1830, the 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, started forward to relieve the 2d Battalion, 186th Infantry, and by 1900 the latter was back to the bivouac area it had left at 0700.

The unit could look back on the day's operations with a good deal of satisfaction. It had closed the gap on the low ridge; it had located the western limits of the enemy's West Caves positions; it had discovered that more Japanese troops were located north of the enemy encampment area both along the main road and on ridges west and northwest of Hill 320; it had eliminated most of the machine gun nests and rifle pits in the encampment area and many of those on high, forested ground near that bivouac; it had destroyed many Japanese automatic weapons and rifles; and it had killed at least 65 Japanese. The 2d Battalion itself had lost 15 men killed and 35 wounded. There had been only local patrolling by the rest of the units in the forward area during the day, for the 1st Battalions of the 162d and 186th Infantry Regiments had been kept in place by American artillery and mortar fire which supported the operations of the 2d Battalion, 186th Infantry.

For the 17th General Doe planned to send the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry,

northwest to high ground at the Japanese encampment area while the 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, pushed south and southwest to the West Caves. Ten tanks, two field artillery battalions, and a company of 4.2-inch mortars were to provide close support.

On the morning of 17 June the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, in order not to overlap the 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, took a circuitous route toward its objective, leaving its bivouac in an easterly direction and then swinging north to approach the high ground from the northeast. The 162d Infantry's battalion, supported by the 1st Platoon, 603d Tank Company, started westward about 0945 with Company A in the lead and Company B echeloned slightly to A's right rear.

At 1045 the two leading companies were stopped by heavy automatic weapons fire from the objective of the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry. Company C, 162d Infantry, was then sent north toward high ground which had not been included in the area patrolled by Company G, 186th Infantry, on the 16th. Company C managed to knock out several pillboxes, but about 1140 it was forced back to the south. The tank platoon now moved up toward the high ground and succeeded in destroying an artillery piece and two machine guns, enabling Company C to renew its attack about noon. Simultaneously, the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, began approaching the high ground from the east. On that side there was little resistance, and at 1330 Company A reached Company C, 162d Infantry. The latter unit, which had been continuing its efforts from the south, had just succeeded in reducing the last important enemy position on the hill.

Companies A and B, 162d Infantry, now resumed the attack westward but soon were subjected to scattered rifle and machine gun fire from positions southwest of Company C. These positions had been cleared on the 16th by Company G, 186th Infantry, but had been reoccupied during the night by the Japanese. Company C, 162d Infantry, was called back from the hill it had just helped to secure and started reclearing high ground from which the new fire originated. Minor gains were achieved the rest of the afternoon, and at dark the 1st Battalion set up defenses in a long, L-shaped perimeter with Company C on the north, about 75 yards from the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, which was also digging in for the night. About 125 yards of Japanese-held territory lay between the south flank of the 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, and the low ridge above Mokmer Drome.

Preparations For a New Attack

The 1st Battalions of the 162d and 186th Infantry Regiments had gained high ground overlooking the West Caves and were in a favorable position from which to launch a concerted attack on that enemy strong point. General Doe had such a plan. He intended to send the entire 162d Infantry to clean out the West Caves and, with the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, to secure north-south ridge lines west of Hill 320. But this plan was canceled by General Eichelberger.

The latter had observed much of the action on the 17th from a vantage point on high ground and had not been satisfied with the results. He therefore called off all fighting for the 18th—Sunday—in favor of reorganization and redispositions in preparation for a co-ordinated attack by the entire 162d and 186th Infantry Regiments on the 19th. The new attack was to drive the Japanese from all terrain whence they could

fire on Mokmer Drome and was to secure favorable ground from which to launch future advances designed to eliminate the last Japanese resistance around the three airfields.[4]

The first area to be cleared included the West Caves, the Japanese encampment area, and all the ground north from the low ridge to Hill 320. The objective area was about 1,000 yards long southeast to northwest and some 500 yards wide. The main effort was to be made by the 186th Infantry, the 2d and 3d Battalions of which were to attack from the southwest and west while the 1st Battalion struck from the east. The 162d Infantry would hold its positions. The 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, was to assemble along the northern slopes of the main ridge in the vicinity of Hill 320 to prevent the movement of enemy reinforcements from the north into the 186th Infantry's zone. An egg-shaped terrain feature on the low ridge 1,000 yards northeast of Borokoe Drome and on the left flank of the 186th Infantry's prospective line of advance was to be seized for flank security and as a line of departure for subsequent attacks north and northeast. The 34th Infantry of the 24th Division, scheduled to reach Biak from Hollandia on 18 June, would take over the positions west of Mokmer Drome which the 186th Infantry vacated. During the latter's attack, the 34th Infantry was to be in reserve and would be ready to seize Borokoe and Sorido Dromes upon orders from General Eichelberger.[5]

On 18 June only local patrolling was undertaken, while the bulk of the troops rested or redeployed in preparation for the attack on the 19th. (*Map 16*) The egg-shaped feature was secured against no opposition and a few Japanese stragglers along the low ridge in the area were mopped up. The 34th Infantry began moving into the Mokmer Drome area and the 186th Infantry drew up final plans for its attack. The regiment was to advance east from the egg-shaped protrusion of the low ridge with the 2d Battalion leading, two companies abreast. The 3d Battalion was to follow the 2d, and the 1st Battalion would start moving northwestward once the other two had begun moving east. The attack, which was to begin at 0630 on the 19th, would be supported by the 121st, 167th, 205th, and 947th Field Artillery Battalions, Company D of the 641st Tank Destroyer Battalion, and ten tanks of the 603d Tank Company.[6]

The 2d and 3d Battalions, 186th Infantry, had assembled at the egg-shaped feature by 0900 on the 19th. The terrain in the area was rough and overgrown and the two battalions took more time than expected to get into their proper positions for the attack. At 1040, after preparation fire by the four artillery battalions had ended, the 2d Battalion started eastward, and the 3d Battalion went into reserve 500 yards to the rear. Redeployments had been completed. The attack had started.[7]

The Fall of the West Caves

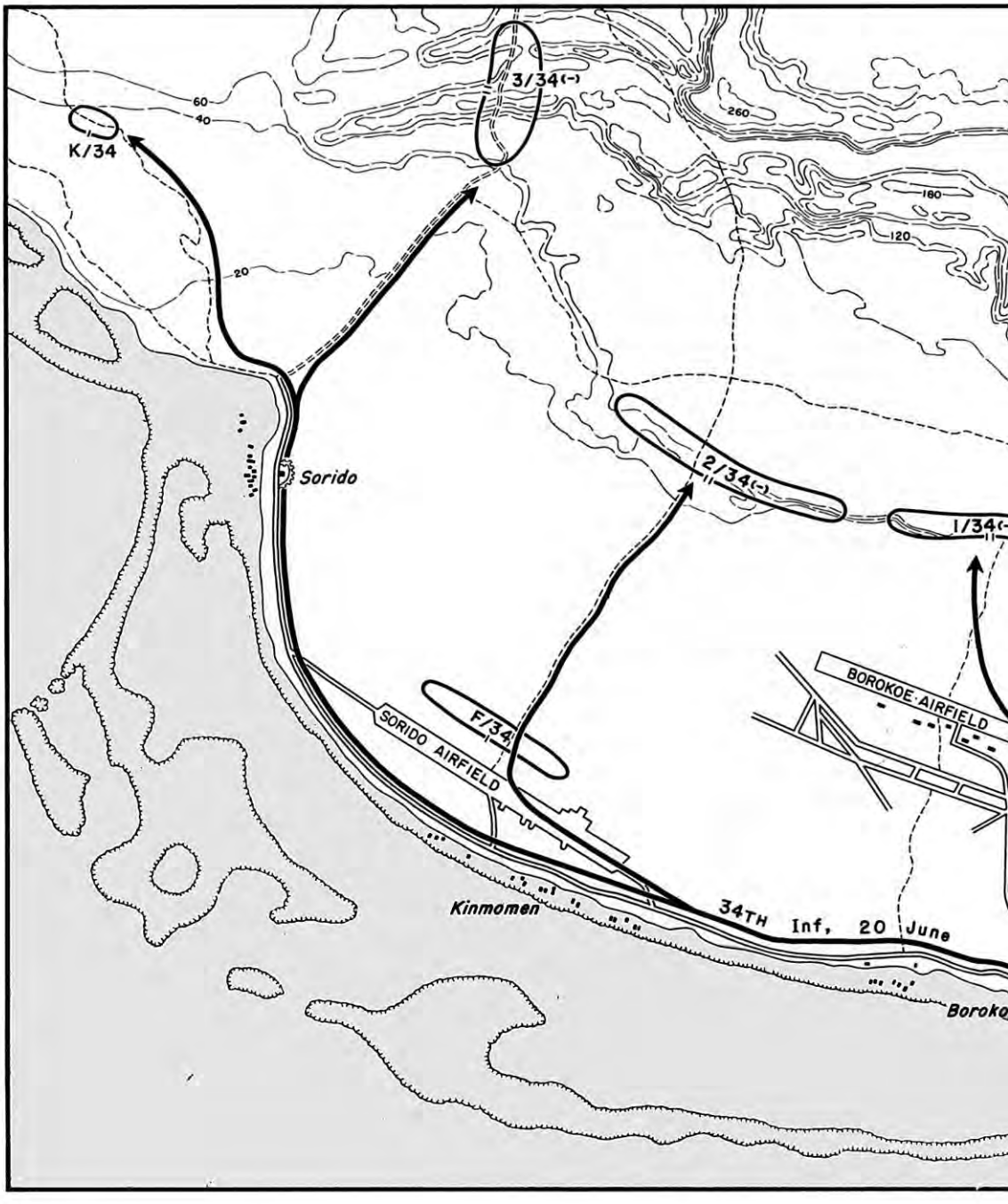
Company F, followed by Company G, was on the left, and Company E was on the

[4] I Corps (HTF), Hist of Biak Opn, 15–27 Jun 44, pp. 6–8 (not to be confused with the HTF Opns Rpt Biak, which, during the period 15–27 Jun, is actually only the report of the 41st Div); 162d Inf Jnl, 22 May–19 Aug 44; Eichelberger Notes; Eichelberger and MacKaye, *op. cit.*, pp. 145–47.

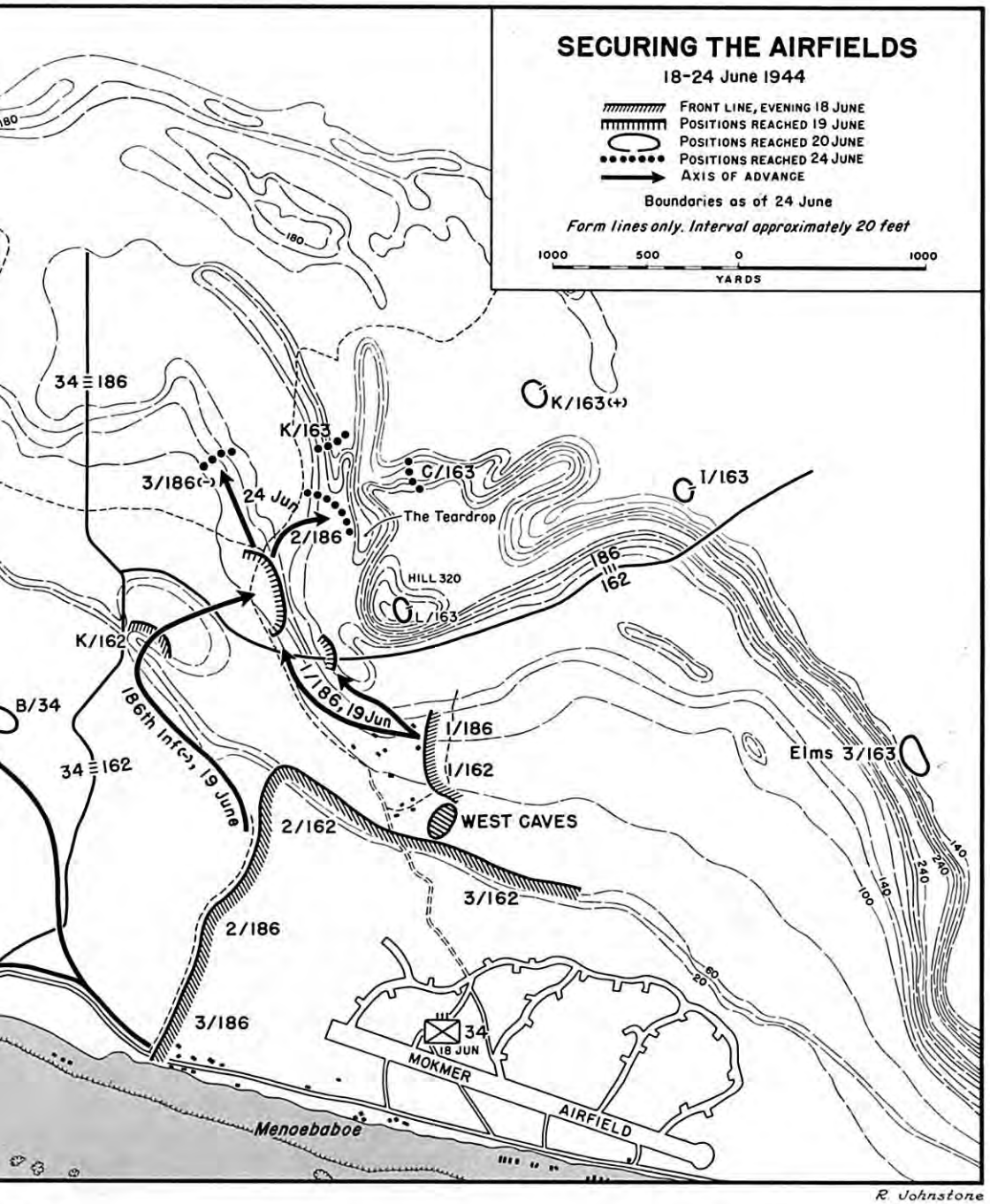
[5] Eichelberger Notes; HTF FO 2, 17 Jun 44, atchd to HTF G–3 Jnl, 15 May–21 Aug 44.

[6] HTF FO 2, 17 Jun 44; 186th Inf Jnl, 27 May–20 Aug 44; 162d Inf Jnl, 22 May–19 Aug 44; 41st Div Arty Opns Rpt Biak, p. 13; 603d Tank Co Opns Rpt Biak, p. 4.

[7] 186th Inf Jnl, 27 May–20 Aug 44.


3/34(-)
K/34
60
40
20
260
180
120
Sorido
2/34(-)
1/34(-
F/34
SORIDO AIRFIELD
BOROKOE AIRFIELD
Kinmomen
34TH Inf, 20 June
Boroko

MAP 16


SECURING THE AIRFIELDS
18-24 June 1944
FRONT LINE, EVENING 18 JUNE
POSITIONS REACHED 19 JUNE
POSITIONS REACHED 20 JUNE
POSITIONS REACHED 24 JUNE
AXIS OF ADVANCE
Boundaries as of 24 June
Form lines only. Interval approximately 20 feet
1000 500 0 1000
YARDS
34 ≡ 186
K/163(+)
K/163
C/163
I/163
3/186(-)
24 Jun
2/186
The Teardrop
HILL 320
L/163
186
162
K/162
B/34
1/186, 19 Jun
1/186
186th Inf(-), 19 June
34 ≡ 162
1/162
Elms 3/163
WEST CAVES
2/162
3/162
2/186
3/186
34
18 JUN
MOKMER
AIRFIELD
Menoebaboe
180
140
240
100
80
20

R. Johnstone

right.[8] At 1105, having encountered only scattered rifle fire, Company F reached the motor road running from the Japanese encampment area generally northwest along the base of a rugged, heavily forested coral ridge lying west of Hill 320. Company E pulled up on the road to F's right five minutes later. The battalion objective was a long, narrow, and sharp rise which formed the first slope of the coral ridge.[9] As Companies E and F began moving toward this first crested rise, fire from Japanese 90-mm. antiaircraft guns in an unlocated emplacement to the north began falling near the leading troops and along the road. But the two companies pressed on and reached their objective about 1130. The 3d Battalion quickly pulled up on the 2d's left.

About noon Colonel Newman ordered the 1st Battalion to clear the southern extension of the coral ridge line and to push through the Japanese encampment area up the road to the 2d Battalion's position. This movement was under way by 1230, and late in the afternoon the 1st Battalion (less two rifle companies) reached the 2d's right flank. The other two companies, advancing over rough and heavily jungled ground below Hill 320, were unable to make contact with the rest of the regiment before dark and set up a night perimeter about 250 yards southeast of the remainder of the 1st Battalion.

Against only scattered resistance, the 186th Infantry had enveloped the rear of the Japanese in the West Caves and could prevent their reinforcement or escape. With one regiment thus athwart the enemy's main north-south line of communication, the HURRICANE Task Force could turn its attention to securing the other airfields and clearing the West Caves. Accordingly, General Eichelberger issued a new attack order late on 19 June. The 186th Infantry was to continue its operations in the Hill 320 area and the ridges to the west, aided by the 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry. The 162d Infantry was to undertake the final reduction of the West Caves, while the 34th Infantry seized Borokoe and Sorido Dromes.[10]

On the morning of 20 June the 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, and two tanks of the 603d Tank Company moved to the surface area around the many caverns and sumps constituting the West Caves. It was found that the operations of the 186th Infantry had eliminated most of the Japanese from the high ground north and northwest of the

[8] This subsection is based on: 186th Inf Jnl, 27 May–20 Aug 44; 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44, pp. 23–26; 603d Tank Co Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 4–15; 116th Engrs Opns Rpt Biak, Ch. III, p. 3; 167th FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 1–2; 205th FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 7–9; 121st FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, p. 8; 41st Div Arty Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 13–14; I Corps Hist of Biak Opn, 15–27 Jun 44, pp. 7–14; 162d Inf Jnl, 22 May–19 Aug 44; 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 12 May–19 Aug 44, pp. 9–10; Opns of *Yuki Group*, pp. 10–11; MID WD, *Military Reports*, 24, p. 16; HTF G–3 Jnl, 15 May–21 Aug 44; 41st Inf Div, G–2 Per Rpt 32, 29 Jun 44, in G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. II, Part II, Per Rpts; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 82–83. During the period that Headquarters, I Corps, operated as Headquarters, HTF, Headquarters, I Corps, did not maintain a separate G–3 journal, but used one jointly with Headquarters, 41st Infantry Division. During the same period, Headquarters, 41st Infantry Division, retained the same serial numbers for its G–2 periodic reports that had been previously employed by Headquarters, HTF. Headquarters, I Corps, did not begin a separate series of G–2 periodic reports.

[9] Although the plan does not make it clear, it seems obvious that the battalion was to seize high ground overlooking the motor road in order to prevent the Japanese from using the road any longer as a means of reinforcement or escape to and from the West Caves area.

[10] HTF FO 3, 19 Jun 44, in I Corps Hist of Biak Opn, 15–27 Jun 44, p. 36.

caves, and only occasional rifle shots from those directions harassed the 1st Battalion as it moved forward. But from a multitude of crevices and cracks around the caves, and from the interior of the sump holes themselves, came a great deal of rifle and light automatic weapons fire, and the battalion was unable to get any men down into the sump depressions. Drums of gasoline were rolled into many caves and then ignited in the hope that most of the Japanese would be killed. But the enemy fire continued almost unabated and the battalion withdrew to its previous positions before dark.

During the night, Japanese from the West Caves launched a number of small harassing attacks against the 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, and, moving north up the main road, struck the south flank of the 186th Infantry. The enemy also dragged mortars or light artillery out of the caves and lobbed a few shells on Mokmer Drome and the road along the beach. Before daylight on the 21st, these Japanese and their weapons had disappeared back into the West Caves.

The 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, again moved up to the West Caves on 21 June and sent patrols out to clear Japanese riflemen from brush and crevices on hillocks north and northwest of the caves. The patrols, actually flame thrower teams supported by riflemen, accomplished their mission without much difficulty while the rest of the battalion, again covered by two tanks from the 603d Tank Company, surrounded the sump depressions. The infantry and tanks concentrated on the most westerly of three large sink holes comprising the West Caves. The tanks fired into cave entrances; the infantrymen lobbed hand grenades into holes and crevices within reach; and all Japanese observed were quickly killed by rifle fire. But the battalion was unable to force its way into the main entrance to the underground caverns. Fire into this entrance was also ineffective, for the opening was shielded by stalagmites and stalactites. Engineers poured the contents of five gasoline drums into the cavern through crevices or seepage points found on the surface of the ground. Flame throwers then ignited the gasoline and the 1st Battalion withdrew to await developments. There were no immediately apparent results and, since it was believed that the West Caves were still strongly held, the battalion did not attempt to send any more men into the entrance. In the late afternoon the unit again pulled back to its bivouac area.

During the night of 21–22 June, Japanese poured out of the caves and rushed northwest up the road toward the lines of the 186th Infantry, attempting to escape to the west or north. At 2100 Japanese infantry, supported by light machine guns and light mortars, hit the southeast flank of the American regiment. When the Japanese were about fifty yards away, the 186th Infantry's .50-caliber machine guns opened fire and broke up the attack. Undaunted, the Japanese made another break-through attempt about midnight, this time supported only by light mortars. Machine guns, both .50- and .30-caliber, aided by Company G's 60-mm. mortars, forced the enemy to withdraw for a second time.

At 0400 on the 22d the Japanese again attacked, now employing stealth, hand grenades, and bayonets as their principal weapons. The intensity of this final attack was such that the enemy reached the 186th Infantry's foxholes, and hand-to-hand combat ensued all along the regiment's south

flank. Since the enemy's leading elements were so close, Company G's mortars could not be used. Instead, the 60-mm. mortars of Company I, emplaced at the extreme northwestern end of the regimental perimeter, were brought into action to place their shells close to the regiment's front lines and immediately to the rear of the leading enemy troops. This fire prevented the Japanese from sending reinforcements forward to aid their attack elements, and the battle, which was nip and tuck for about half an hour, quickly became disorganized and the enemy scattered. Individual Japanese infantrymen and small groups continued to attack in an un-co-ordinated fashion until daylight. Early in the morning, the 186th Infantry began mopping up southeast of the perimeter, killing a few Japanese who were hiding or playing 'possum along the roadside. A final count revealed that 115 of the enemy had been killed, and it was believed that 109 of these had been slain during the reckless attacks beginning at 0400. The Japanese attackers had numbered about 150, according to Japanese sources. The 186th Infantry lost only 1 man killed and 5 wounded during the night.

The 162d Infantry had by no means spent a quiet night, for other parties of Japanese from the West Caves had attacked the 1st Battalion and also Company F, which was located on the low ridge southwest of the sump holes. Most of the enemy activity was confined to the front of Company A, against which small groups of Japanese, armed only with rifles and hand grenades, moved beginning about 0200. But the Japanese did not attempt to press home their attacks, which in this area were probably only covering operations for the main assault against the 186th Infantry. The 162d Infantry killed seventeen Japanese during the night but suffered no casualties itself.

The attacks during the night of 21–22 June had apparently resulted from a decision on the part of Colonel Kuzume, *Biak Detachment* commander, to acknowledge defeat. In an impressive ceremony in the West Caves, Colonel Kuzume, surrounded by his staff, burned the colors of the *222d Infantry* and, according to some American reports, disemboweled himself in the tradition of the Samurai. Japanese reports of the Biak action state that Colonel Kuzume did not die then but was killed in action or committed suicide some days later. Whatever the cause and date of his death, on the night of 21–22 June Colonel Kuzume had instructed the forces remaining in the West Caves to withdraw to the north and west. Many of the remaining troops of the *1st* and *2d Battalions, 222d Infantry,* who had originally held the low ridge north of Mokner Drome, had already been killed or had moved north, and most of the Japanese killed by the 186th Infantry during the night of 21–22 June were identified as members of the *221st Infantry,* elements of which had been included in the reinforcements sent to Biak after Z Day.

While it was believed that the Japanese force which attacked the 186th Infantry represented the bulk of the enemy troops remaining in the West Caves, the 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, soon found that opposition had not ended. As the battalion approached the caves early on the morning of 22 June, it managed to catch out in the open a number of Japanese who had been manning heavy weapons during the night attacks and who had not had time to move themselves and their weapons back into the caves. After killing these enemy troops the

battalion again moved up to the sink hole rims, which were found littered with enemy dead.

During the morning a number of explosions were heard inside the caves, and it was considered probable that gasoline, still burning after being poured into the caves the previous day, had reached some ammunition dumps. Again flame throwers were used, although these weapons had not proved very effective because they had a tendency to flash back on the operators from the cave walls. Finally, a demolition detail from the 116th Engineers lowered two 500-pound charges of TNT into one of the cave entrances. The explosives were fired electrically. A few Japanese, at least one of whom had been driven insane by the explosions, came running out of the caves and were quickly killed. At 1555 the 1st Battalion, having heard no signs of enemy activity from within the caves for the previous two hours, reported that the caves had been cleared out.

This report was proved optimistic during the night of 22–23 June when another small group of Japanese unsuccessfully tried to break through the lines of the 186th Infantry. The 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, itself killed seven Japanese who attempted to move from the caves to Hill 320. The next morning the battalion established a permanent bivouac around the various caves and depressions and continued to probe the area. The remaining Japanese were capable of defending themselves, hopeless though their situation was, and no troops were able to enter the caves until the afternoon of 25 June. No deep penetration was attempted, however, and it was not until 27 June that patrols of the 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, accompanied by members of the 41st Counter Intelligence Detachment, penetrated to the innermost recesses of the West Caves.

The stench of rotting Japanese bodies was revolting, and the sight nauseating. The entire cave area was strewn with Japanese bodies or parts of bodies. One gruesome area had apparently been used as an aid station and another possibly as a butcher shop for cannibalistically inclined survivors of the carnage since 18 June. Three more Japanese were killed in the caves during the day, and large quantities of equipment and documents were found. Because of the advanced stage of decomposition of many of the dead, a complete count of Japanese bodies could not be made, but before overpowering odors drove the patrols out of the caves 125 more or less whole bodies were counted. This was considered a minimum figure, for no estimate could be made of the numbers of Japanese represented by separated arms, legs, or torsos and it was impossible to guess how many Japanese had been sealed in smaller caves or crevices by artillery and mortar fire or by explosions of TNT and Japanese ammunition within the caves.

The number of Japanese dead left within the West Caves was not of great moment, but it was important that the last position from which the enemy could seriously threaten Mokmer Drome had been secured. Even before the West Caves had fallen, the operations of the 162d and 186th Infantry Regiments had so reduced Japanese fire on the airdrome that on 20 June, after six days of inaction, the 863d Engineer Aviation Battalion was able to resume work on the field. Two days later, Fifth Air Force P–40's began operating from the 5,000-foot-long completed section of the strip. One of the three fields on Biak was at last operational.[11]

[11] ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Wakde–Biak, pp. 42–44; Base H, USASOS, Office of the Engr, Rpt of HTF Engr Office, pp. 1–3, in folder entitled HTF Stf Rpts, 27 May–19 Aug 44.



ENTRANCES TO THE WEST CAVES

Securing the Western Area

Operations to drive the Japanese from positions they still held north and west of the West Caves had begun on 19 June when the 186th Infantry moved into the ridges west of Hill 320. They continued on 20 June when the 34th Infantry, supported by the 167th Field Artillery Battalion, occupied Borokoe and Sorido Dromes and Sorido village almost without opposition. To prevent more enemy reinforcements from reaching the battle area, Company I, 34th Infantry, set up a road block at a trail junction about 3,000 yards north of Sorido. The rest of the regiment outposted the road back to Sorido, trails along the southwest coast of Biak, and the low ridge west of the egg-shaped feature over which the 186th Infantry had passed on 19 June.[12]

Hill 320 and The Teardrop

When the 186th Infantry reached the base of the ridge west of Hill 320 on 19 June, it had blocked the road running south to the West Caves by placing on the road and along the western slopes of the ridges all three battalions, in order from south to north, the 1st, 2d, and 3d.[13] The regiment was to clear the high ground east to Hill 320 and patrol north and east to maintain contact with elements of the 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry. The latter unit was holding the crossing of the main ridge which the 186th Infantry had used on 7 June, maintaining an outpost on Hill 320, and patrolling north along the main ridge from the crossing and south from the same point toward the East Caves. On the morning of the 20th, for unknown reasons, the outpost on Hill 320 moved north off that terrain feature. General Eichelberger, concerned lest the Japanese occupy Hill 320 and subject the 186th and 162d Infantry Regiments to enfilade fire, immediately ordered the hill reoccupied. Fortunately, the Japanese did not discover that the hill had been abandoned, and Company L, 163d Infantry, restored the outpost during the afternoon.

Patrolling by the 186th Infantry and the 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, on 20 June produced no traces of large concentrations of Japanese troops. However, on the western slopes of Hill 320 and on a long, forested ridge running north from the 186th Infantry's bivouac area, a number of abandoned enemy positions were located. Off the northwest corner of Hill 320 was discovered a cul-de-sac over 300 yards long north to south, some 100 yards wide, and open only on the north. Japanese machine gun nests were located on ridges along the west side of this cul-de-sac which, because of its shape, was called "The Teardrop" by American troops. Colonel Newman proposed that on 21 June the 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, move into The Teardrop from the northwest and north while the 186th Infantry maintained pressure from the south and southwest. This plan was based on erroneous information concerning the location of the 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, which was actually patrolling in thickly jun-

[12] HTF G–3 Jnl 15 May–21 Aug 44; 34th Inf Jnl, 13 Jun–15 Jul 44; 167th FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 1–2.

[13] This subsection is based principally on: 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44, pp. 24–28; 186th Inf Jnl, 27 May–20 Aug 44; 163d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 31 May–20 Aug 44, pp. 3–5; 163d Inf Jnl, 31 May–19 Aug 44; Newman Notes; 603d Tank Co Opns Rpt Biak, p. 5; 167th FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, p. 2; 121st FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 8–9; 41st Div Arty Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 13–15; HTF G–3 Jnl, 15 May–21 Aug 44; I Corps Hist of Biak Opn, 15–27 Jun 44, pp. 9–12, 16; Eichelberger and MacKaye, *op. cit.*, pp. 146–47.

gled flats two or three miles due north of The Teardrop. The unit could not, therefore, mount any attack into The Teardrop and did not even establish patrol contact with the 186th Infantry from the north until 23 June.

Meanwhile, the 186th Infantry had discovered new Japanese positions northwest of its perimeter and on 22 June was harassed by fire from two or three enemy 75-mm. guns from a point some 750 yards away in that direction. Efforts to capture the guns on 22 and 23 June were unsuccessful, but on the 24th Companies L and K, 186th Infantry, supported by two tanks and the 947th Field Artillery Battalion, managed to get within a few yards of the enemy weapons. The next day Company L overran the gun positions, capturing one Japanese artillery piece and finding four others destroyed by friendly artillery fire.

Back at The Teardrop patrolling had continued at a slow pace. On 23 June new low-level aerial photographs of the area were examined at regimental headquarters. After all patrol leaders who had led men into The Teardrop during the previous days had delivered their interpretations of the new pictures, it was concluded that the principal Japanese positions in the cul-de-sac were on the west rather than the east side, as had been believed previously. Colonel Newman, who had waited in vain for three days for the 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, to attack from the north and northwest, therefore proposed an attack from the west. General Doe approved this proposal and on the morning of 24 June the new attack began.

The 2d Battalion, 186th Infantry, moved north some 500 yards up the road along which the regiment was bivouacked and sent Company E east over the ridges toward The Teardrop's northern end. Broken terrain and heavy jungle delayed the company's progress, and it was midafternoon before the northwest corner of the Japanese positions was located. On the same day Company K, 163d Infantry, sealed the northern exits of The Teardrop, and Company C of the same regiment took up new positions on the east side. By nightfall, all routes in and out were closed. The stage was set for final mopping up.

Early on the 25th Company E, 186th Infantry, overran the enemy defenses on the west and northwest, while Company A pushed into The Teardrop from the south, quickly establishing contact with the 2d Battalion unit. The entire area was carefully combed during the rest of the day, but no signs of organized resistance could be found. Most of the Japanese positions had been evacuated two or three days previously—a large and well-armed enemy force had extricated itself from an almost impossible position. Had earlier efforts of the 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, to block the northern exits of The Teardrop been successful, the story might have been different. As it was, only thirty-eight Japanese were killed or found dead in The Teardrop area during the day. A Japanese force probably over 200 strong had escaped.

Mopping Up in the Western Area

During operations at The Teardrop, the HURRICANE Task Force headquarters had drawn up plans for mopping up west of Mokmer. The 41st Division, less the 163d Infantry but with the 34th Infantry attached, was to secure the entire area west of Mokmer village to Impendi, a native settlement on the coast about five miles west of Sorido village. The northern boundary of the division's zone generally followed the

main coastal ridge from Impendi to Mokmer. The 34th Infantry (less the 1st Battalion) was to secure the area west of and including Borokoe Drome; the 186th Infantry, with the 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry, attached, was to clear the terrain from Hill 320 north to high ground about 2,000 yards distant; and the 162d Infantry, assembling near Mokmer Drome, was to send one company to Hill 320 to replace 163d Infantry units there. The 163d Infantry was made responsible for securing the area east of Mokmer village.[14]

On 26 June the 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry, less Company C, occupied abandoned enemy positions on a long finger-like ridge running north from the northwest corner of The Teardrop. Company C, which had taken a different route north, was ambushed by a Japanese force of unknown strength and pushed back south, but rejoined the rest of the battalion the next day. From reports brought back by 1st Battalion patrols sent north on the 27th, it was concluded that a Japanese unit was preparing for a determined stand along, or a suicidal counterattack from, sharp cliffs northwest of the battalion area. General Doe therefore assigned the 1st and 2d Battalions, 34th Infantry, the task of clearing the cliff area, the 2d Battalion to move in from the southwest and west, while the 1st Battalion approached from the southeast.[15]

On 28 June the 2d Battalion, 34th Infantry, encountered little opposition as it mopped up in flats south of the cliffs but Company A, moving west from the 1st Battalion area into terrain between the 1st and 2d Battalions, was attacked by a group of Japanese who were apparently trying to break out of the trap the two American battalions were forming. At 1600 the company was forced back to the battalion command post area, where it dug in for the night. Most of the Japanese met in the area were probably members of the *Nishihara Force* of the *219th Infantry*.[16]

General Eichelberger, who had known for some time that he was to return to Hollandia when he thought that the most important areas on Biak had been secured, decided on 27 June that he could leave and took his departure on the 28th. General Doe took over command of the HURRICANE Task Force, retaining his command of the 41st Division. On the same day, information was received from higher headquarters that the 34th Infantry would soon have to be pulled out of action and assembled as ALAMO Force Reserve for another operation. Redispositions on Biak were necessary.[17]

General Doe decided to give the 34th Infantry two days to complete mopping up north of the 186th Infantry, after which it would assemble on the beach south of Borokoe Drome. The 41st Division would then redispose itself along main and reserve lines of resistance to prevent further Japanese interference with the development of air and logistic bases on Biak. The main line of resistance began on the west at Sorido vil-

[14] Ltr of Instructions, CG HTF to CG 41st Inf Div and CO 163d Inf, 24 Jun 44, in I Corps Hist of Biak Opns, pp. 37–38; 186th Inf Jnl, 27 May–20 Aug 44; 34th Inf Jnl, 13 Jun–15 Jul 44.

[15] 34th Inf Jnl, 13 Jun–15 Jul 44; 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44, pp. 28–29; 41st Div FO's 1 and 2, 27 Jun 44, in HTF G–3 Jnl, 15 May–21 Aug 44; 34th Inf FO 2, 27 Jun 44, in 34th Inf Jnl, 13 Jun–15 Jul 44; 167th FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 3–4.

[16] 34th Inf Jnl, 13 Jun–15 Jul 44; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), p. 83.

[17] Eichelberger Notes; I Corps Hist of Biak Opn, 15–27 Jun 44, p. 18; HTF GO 8, 29 Jun 44, in HTF G–3 Jnl, 15 May–21 Aug 44. The I Corps History states that General Eichelberger relinquished command of the HTF on 27 June, but General Order 8 does not place General Doe in command of the task force until the 29th.

lage, followed the main ridge east to Hill 320, then ran east along the supply road which the 186th Infantry had constructed through the flats north of the main ridge during the first week of June, and finally curved southeastward to end on the beach at Opiaref. The reserve line of resistance followed the low ridge north of the airfields to the East Caves and then ran along the north side of the main ridge to Opiaref. The 162d Infantry was to hold the area west of Borokoe Drome, the 186th Infantry the area east to Mokmer village, and the 163d Infantry the ground from the East Caves to Opiaref.[18]

On 29 and 30 June only the 2d Battalion, 34th Infantry, located any signs of organized resistance in the area north of the 186th Infantry, and during the two days killed or found dead about 135 Japanese, most of them poorly armed and incapable of strong resistance. On the afternoon of the 30th, all elements of the 34th Infantry began withdrawing to the beach while the 162d and 186th Infantry Regiments began taking up planned positions along the main and reserve lines of resistance, from which they instituted patrolling designed to hunt down enemy stragglers and prevent scattered elements of the *Biak Detachment* from reorganizing for harassing raids or suicidal attacks.[19]

The *Biak Detachment* remnants had been moving north since 22 June in a withdrawal that apparently had been directed by Colonel Kuzume on his own initiative. Another mass withdrawal was begun on the 28th, the day General Eichelberger left Biak. This second withdrawal was started upon orders from the *2d Area Army,* which instructed the *Biak Detachment* to reorganize for guerrilla warfare.[20] Whatever he hoped to accomplish by guerrilla action, General Anami was to be disappointed. The remnants of the *Biak Detachment* had lost most of their supplies and for the remaining Japanese it was soon to become a case of *sauve qui peut.* Aggressive patrolling instituted by the HURRICANE Task Force on 1 July was to prevent any reorganization for guerrilla warfare on the part of the *Biak Detachment.*

The Reduction of the East Caves

The fall of the West Caves on 27 June and the completion of mopping up operations by the 34th Infantry on 30 June marked the end of the most important phase of the Biak operation. The airdromes, to secure which Allied forces of the Southwest Pacific Area had landed on Biak on 27 May, were now safe, and Allied aircraft were already operating from Mokmer Drome. But the Japanese still held the East Caves and the Ibdi Pocket. True, these positions now had little more than nuisance value, and during operations in the Mokmer Drome area they had been kept fairly well neutralized by artillery and mortar fire. Until both areas could be cleared, however, the coastal road from Bosnek to the airfields would not be entirely safe, for the road could be subjected to harassing fire and raids which would impede the transportation of important supplies and equipment to the airfields.

The most significant part of the East Caves, tactically speaking, was the flat ledge about three quarters of the way to the top of the main ridge immediately north of

[18] 41st Div FO 3, 28 Jun 44, atchd to HTF Opns Rpt Biak, 17 May–20 Aug 44; HTF G–3 Jnl, 15 May–21 Aug 44.

[19] 34th Inf Jnl, 13 Jun–15 Jul 44; 186th Inf Jnl, 27 May–20 Aug 44; 162d Inf Jnl, 22 May–19 Aug 44.

[20] Opns of *Yuki Group,* p. 10; Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 65–66.

Mokmer village. On this ledge were located two large depressions similar to the sumps of the West Caves. Both of these depressions were at least 50 feet wide, and one of them measured roughly 75 by 200 feet. Each was honeycombed with tunnels, at least one of which led to a large opening on the seaward side of the ridge. This opening, with other unconnected caves and crevices on the seaward face, held some of the most troublesome Japanese weapons. Near the main sumps were two Japanese observation posts from which an unobstructed view of the coastal area from Parai Jetty to the eastern end of Mokmer Drome could be obtained. Behind the sumps, up the slope to the top of the ridge, were five strong pillboxes which were held by riflemen and machine gunners. In the sump holes were 81- or 90-mm. mortars, 20-mm. antiaircraft guns, heavy machine guns, and numerous light mortars. There were tents in the larger caves and tunnels, and quantities of food and clothing were stored in some tunnels.[21]

Information concerning the Japanese order of battle in the East Caves is contradictory and incomplete, and it appears that at the time of the landing few troops were actually stationed there. The *2d Battalion, 222d Infantry,* had used the area as a base of operations on 28 and 29 May, when the HURRICANE Task Force discovered the existence of the caves during the Japanese counterattacks which had driven the 162d Infantry back to Ibdi. After that action nearly 1,000 Japanese were left in the East Caves. Included were some 300 naval troops, most of them from antiaircraft or service units. The 500-odd army troops comprised mostly airdrome engineers who were reinforced by a mortar unit of the *2d Battalion, 222d Infantry,* and a few riflemen of the *2d* and *3d Battalions, 222d Infantry.* Finally, there were about 200 Japanese civilian laborers. The forces were under the control of a Lieutenant Colonel Minami, the commander of the *17th Field Airdrome Construction Unit.*[22]

What happened in the East Caves from 29 May to 7 June is unknown, but on the latter day, as the 186th Infantry moved over the main ridge to Mokmer Drome, the position came to life and from it mortar and machine gun fire was directed on the Americans at the airfield. As the 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, tried to move east during the next two days, it was pinned down by this fire, as were elements of the same regiment attempting to move west from Parai. Companies of both the 186th Infantry and the 162d Infantry were sent north from the Mokmer Drome area toward the East Caves during the period 9–11 June, but these units had not closed with the main Japanese positions when, on the 11th, they were called back to join their regiments at Mokmer Drome. During the same days, a company of the 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, patrolled south toward the East Caves from the inland flats. At the end of the period all this patrolling had succeeded in locating the west flank of the enemy's principal positions, destroying a few machine guns and some large mortars, and killing perhaps fifty Japanese.[23]

[21] G–2 HTF, G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. I, Part X, Enemy Defenses, section entitled "The Mokmer Caves."

[22] *Ibid.;* Opns of *Yuki Group,* p. 3; G–2 HTF, G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. II, Part II, Enemy Opns, p. 8; G–2 HTF, Per Rpts 50 and 59, 17 and 26 Jul 44, respectively, in G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. II, Part II, Per Rpts; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), p. 71.

[23] 186th Inf Jnl, 27 May–20 Aug 44; 162d Inf Jnl, 22 May–19 Aug 44; 163d Inf Jnl, 31 May–19 Aug 44; Co G 186th Inf Opns Rpt, 8–11 Jun 44, in Annex 17 to 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44.

Since it was more urgent to secure the Mokmer Drome area than to clear the East Caves, no large infantry force could be committed to the latter mission and, therefore, more attention was devoted to neutralizing the East Caves with artillery, mortar, and naval fire. From 7 through 10 June the 4.2-inch mortars of the 2d Platoon, Company D, 641st Tank Destroyer Battalion, lobbed over 1,000 shells into the East Caves area. On the 9th and 10th, tanks in LCT's cruising offshore added their fire, and on the latter day the 205th and 947th Field Artillery Battalions swung into action against the East Caves.[24] Bombardments by artillery, mortars, tanks (both on the ground and afloat), and destroyers continued from 11–13 June, but the Japanese still managed to deny to the HURRICANE Task Force the use of the coastal road during much of the period. In between artillery and naval gunfire concentrations, elements of the 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, probed more deeply into the Japanese positions from the north and northeast and located the north flank of the main enemy defenses. By noon on the 13th, the combination of American fire and infantry action had succeeded in silencing enough of the Japanese fire so that truck convoys could safely use the coastal road without interruptions for the first time.[25]

Infantry patrolling and all types of bombardment continued from 14 through 23 June, but the Japanese still occasionally harassed truck convoys along the coastal road. On the 23d or 24th (the records are contradictory) there was undertaken a series of aerial bombardment missions which are among the shortest on record. Fifth Air Force B–25's, based on Mokmer Drome, took off from that field to skip-bomb the East Caves. Although most of the bombs missed the main sump holes, the air missions did cause many explosions and started a number of fires in the East Caves. For a few days, at least, almost all the enemy fire was silenced.[26]

On 27 June Company E, 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, started to construct a jetty near Mokmer, and in connection with this mission began working a gravel pit at the base of the ridge northwest of the village. Japanese mortar and rifle fire from the East Caves impeded the latter work and on 29 June 4.2-inch mortars and tanks had to be moved back into the area to shell the caves and protect the engineers. Within three days the mortars fired over 800 rounds into the caves. The engineer company, borrowing bazookas from an infantry unit, sent its own patrols into the caves, and Company I, 163d Infantry, sent patrols back into the area from the north.[27] On 30 June the 205th Field Artillery Battalion sent one gun of Battery C to a position near Mokmer village to place about 800 rounds of smoke and high explosive shells into the caves.

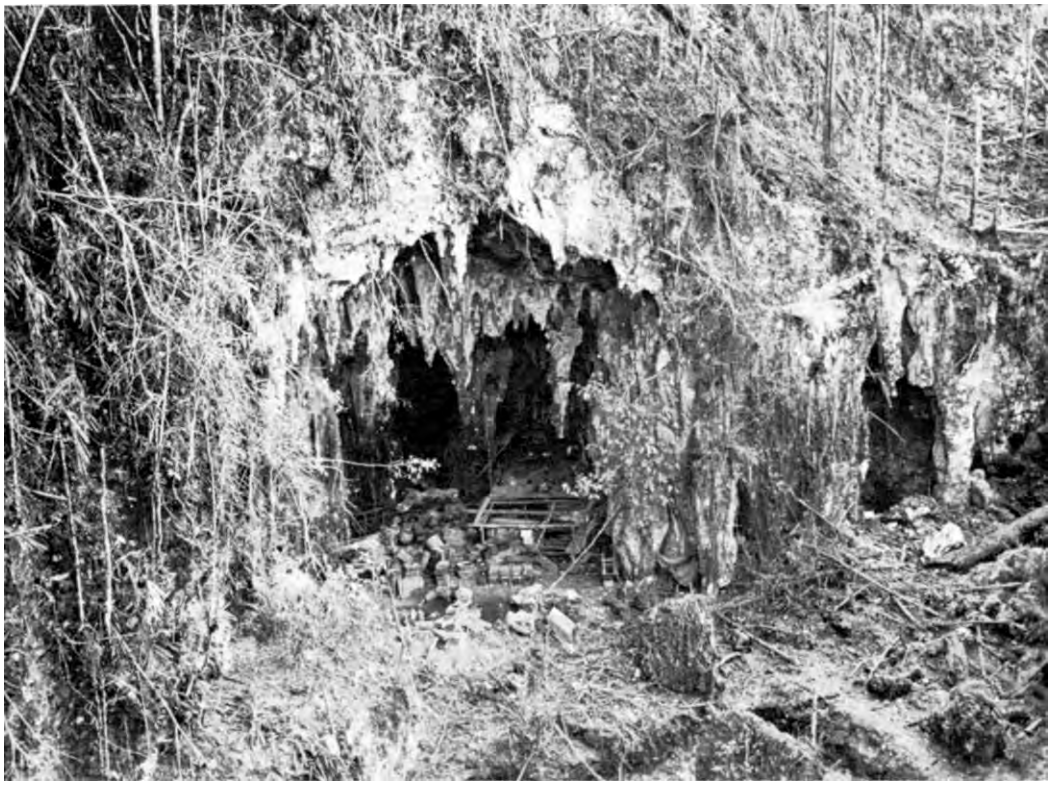
Light harassing fire continued, however, and on 3 July elements of Company E, 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment,

[24] 2d Plat Co D 641st TD Bn Jnl, 24 May–7 Jul 44, atchd to Co D 641st TD Bn Jnl, 24 May– 7 Jul 44, in ORB RAC AGO collection; 41st Div Arty Opns Rpt Biak, p. 11; CO LCT Group 23 Opns Rpt Biak, p. 4; 603d Tank Co Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 3–4.

[25] 163d Inf Jnl, 31 May–19 Aug 44; G–2 HTF, G–2 Per Rpts 16 and 19, 12 and 15 Jun 44, in G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. II, Part II, Per Rpts; G–3 HTF, G–3 Per Rpt 27, 14 Jun 44, atchd to HTF Opns Rpt Biak, 17 May–20 Aug 44; 603d Tank Co Opns Rpt Biak, p. 4.

[26] 163d Inf Jnl, 31 May–19 Aug 44; 34th Inf Jnl, 13 Jun–15 Jul 44; HTF G–3 Jnl, 15 May–21 Aug 44; 146th FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, p. 23; Ltr, Gen Doc to Gen Ward, 4 Dec 50, in OCMH files.

[27] 2d Plat Co D 641st TD Bn Jnl, 24 May–7 Jul 44; 542d EB&SR Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 12–13; 163d Inf Jnl, 31 May–19 Aug 44.



ENTRANCE TO THE EAST CAVES.

moved into the caves under cover of tank fire from the base of the ridge. Some tunnels were sealed shut, twelve Japanese were killed, and two light machine guns were captured.[28] Almost simultaneously, Company E, 163d Infantry, pushed into the caves from Mokmer village. Neither the engineer nor the infantry unit met as much resistance as had been anticipated. Patrolling throughout the caves was continued on the 4th and 5th, and on the latter day a platoon of Company E, 163d Infantry, entered the larger sump holes, where were found many automatic weapons, mortars, rifles, all types of ammunition, food, clothing, cooking utensils, and pioneer equipment. The next day loud-speakers and interpreters were sent into the caves to persuade the few remaining Japanese to surrender. Only ten Japanese, of whom eight were killed, were seen in the area. The Japanese who had lived uninjured through the heavy bombardments since 7 June had evacuated the East Caves.[29]

Japanese evacuation had started about 28 June, on which day Colonel Minami

[28] 205th FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, p. 8; 205th FA Bn Int Summary, Biak Opn, p. 6; 542d EB&SR Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 12–13; 603d Tank Co Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 5–6.

[29] 163d Inf Jnl, 31 May–19 Aug 44; HTF G–3 Jnl, 15 May–21 Aug 44; 116th Engrs Opns Rpt Biak, p. 4; G–2 HTF, Per Rpts 37–41, 4–8 Jul 44, in G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. II, Part II, Per Rpts.

committed suicide and outposts of the 163d Infantry began reporting that small groups of enemy were escaping over the flats north of the main ridge, and all but about forty sick or wounded had left before 3 July. Why the Japanese evacuated is not known but, in any case, the enemy had not been making efficient use of the troops in the East Caves since 10 June. After that date the Japanese had fired principally on targets of opportunity moving along the coastal road, and this fire soon deteriorated into the light harassing type. Had the Japanese properly used their East Caves weapons, they could have denied use of the coastal road to the HURRICANE Task Force for a much greater period of time and might have made it necessary for the task force to divert large infantry units from the vital airdrome area.

The reasons for the enemy's apparent listlessness in the East Caves are difficult to fathom. From the amount of ammunition, food, and clothing captured there, it is clear that a shortage of supply was not a major problem. It is possible that there was no unified command in the caves; perhaps the service troops did not know how to use the weapons properly; or it may be that Allied artillery, mortar, air, tank, and naval bombardment kept the enemy stunned and under cover. Whatever the reason, the Japanese chose to evacuate rather than use their weapons effectively.[30]

The few Japanese left alive in the East Caves after 6 July were still capable of causing some trouble. On 15 July six souvenir hunters of the Royal Australian Air Force (elements of which were staging through Biak for operations farther west) were killed near the caves. Tanks and infantry were sent into the area to mop up the remaining Japanese and recover the Australian dead. On the 16th and 17th, three badly mutilated bodies of Australian airmen were found and two Japanese machine gun nests were wiped out. On the 20th the infantry and tanks returned to the caves, found the other Australian bodies, and eliminated the last enemy resistance.[31]

The Reduction of the Ibdi Pocket

The fall of the East Caves left the Ibdi Pocket as the only remaining center of organized Japanese resistance on Biak. (*See Map V.*) Operations against the Ibdi Pocket had been started on 1 June by the 162d Infantry in conjunction with the 186th Infantry's inland drive to Mokmer Drome. The 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, had fought its way through the Ibdi Pocket via Young Man's Trail on its way north to join the 186th Infantry inland, while the rest of the 162d Infantry, with Company A, 186th Infantry, attached, had remained on the coastal road to start a drive westward along the beach. But the *3d Battalion, 222d Infantry,* reinforced by elements of various engineer and other service units, as well as some artillery, firmly ensconced in Ibdi Pocket positions, had had other ideas, for Colonel Kuzume had ordered the unit to hold the coastal approaches to Mokmer Drome.

Operations of the 162d Infantry at the Ibdi Pocket

When, on 1 June, the 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, started north, the rest of the regiment patrolled westward from Ibdi, sent

[30] G–2 HTF, G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. I, Part II, Enemy Opns, p. 8; G–2 HTF, Per Rpts 41 and 54, 8 and 21 Jul 44, respectively, *ibid.*, Vol. II, Part II, Per Rpts; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), p. 84.

[31] 603d Tank Co Opns Rpt Biak, p. 6; 162d Inf Jnl, 22 May–19 Aug 44.

small patrols north into the ridges to protect the rear of the 2d Battalion, and endeavored to hold a water hole at the beach terminus of Old Man's Trail, 1,200 yards east of Young Man's Trail.[32] At 1450 on 1 June about fifteen Japanese from the *3d Battalion, 222d Infantry,* drove the Cannon Company, 162d Infantry, away from the water hole and established a road block on the main coastal road. At the same time Japanese mortar and artillery fire drove off the tanks of the 3d Platoon and Headquarters, 603d Tank Company, initially located 300 yards west of the water point. To escape from their exposed position, the tanks moved east through the enemy road block toward Bosnek, but were unable to force the Japanese away from the water hole.

On the morning of 2 June the Cannon Company, 162d Infantry, and Company A, 186th Infantry, cleared the road block and retook the waterhole, killing some of the Japanese in the area with rifle, mortar, and machine gun fire and driving the rest up the ridges into the Ibdi Pocket. The Antitank Company, 162d Infantry (which, like the Cannon Company, operated as a rifle company throughout the Biak operation) set up a trail block on Young Man's Trail atop the third of the seven ridges which constituted the main coastal ridge at Ibdi. The regimental attack westward had meanwhile been postponed until the morning of 3 June, pending the outcome of the fight at the waterhole and the 2d Battalion's movement over Young Man's Trail to join the 186th Infantry.

Action on 3 June started earlier than anticipated when, before daylight, elements of the *3d Battalion, 222d Infantry,* pushed the Antitank Company back to the beach. Between them, the Antitank and Cannon Companies managed to secure Young Man's Trail back to the top of the second ridge line during the day. The 3d Battalion, 162d Infantry, had meanwhile started westward, intending to clear the coastal road as far as the stream crossing located about halfway through the Parai Defile. By 1300, patrols of the 3d Battalion had moved past the stream crossing to a fork in the coastal road about 900 yards east-northeast of Parai Jetty. Then enemy fire from the cliffs on the right and from high ground to the northwest pinned down the entire battalion, and Japanese infantry, infiltrating through a narrow stretch of dense woods between the road and cliff, cut off the point platoon. With the aid of two tanks, the forward platoon managed to extricate itself. During the withdrawal a Japanese soldier climbed atop one of the tanks and dropped a hand grenade into the driver's hatch. The driver was killed and the rest of the tank crew wounded, but the assistant driver managed to get the tank out. Meanwhile, the intensity of Japanese fire on the rest of the 3d Battalion had increased, despite artillery concentrations on the enemy cliff positions. About 1635 the battalion started to withdraw and by 1700 had come out of the defile. Back at the Ibdi Pocket area Japanese fire had also increased, and small parties of Japanese had harassed the 1st Battalion all afternoon.

The task force commander now decided that the Ibdi Pocket area would have to be

[32] This subsection is based upon: 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 15 May–19 Aug 44, pp. 5–7; 162d Inf Jnl, 22 May–19 Aug 44; 162d Inf S–2 Sit Overlays, 1–7 Jun 44, atchd to 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 15 May–19 Aug 44; Co B 162d Inf, Diary in Biak Campaign; Co A 186th Inf, Rec of Events, 17 Apr–6 Jul 44; 603d Tank Co Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 2–3; 41st Div Arty Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 7–10; 205th FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 3–5; 947th FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 4–5; Opns of *Yuki Group,* pp. 5–8; G–2 HTF Per Rpts 7–12, 1–7 Jun 44, in G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. II, Part II, Per Rpts; *2d Army* Opns at Sarmi and Biak (Rev), pp. 67–70.

cleared before the coastal attack could be resumed. Accordingly, the 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, was instructed to clear all enemy from the ridge lines east of Young Men's Trail, where the principal enemy strong points were thought to be located. The Antitank and Cannon Companies were to drive west from the trail while the 3d Battalion remained at the eastern entrance to the Parai Defile and sent patrols to the northwest and through to the stream crossing.

The 1st Battalion started its attack at 0800 on 4 June, pushing two companies north along Young Man's Trail. By noon one company had reached the sixth of the seven separate ridges over which the trail passed, but progress to the seventh was impossible, as was movement east toward Old Man's Trail. During the afternoon, after pushing over extremely rough terrain, one rifle platoon finally reached Old Man's Trail via the second ridge line. Other elements of the 1st Battalion could gain little more than 150 yards east from Young Man's Trail over ridge lines 3 through 6. The Cannon and Antitank Companies had been unable to move west from the trail, and 3d Battalion patrols had made little progress in the Parai Defile.

During the next morning the 1st Battalion succeeded in clearing all Young Man's Trail and established patrol contact on the inland flats with the 186th Infantry. Little more progress could be made west of the trail or in the area between it and Old Man's Trail. Patrols sent along the ridge lines east of the latter discovered no Japanese, but late in the afternoon a Japanese strong point in caves near the north end of Old Man's Trail was located. Meanwhile, the 3d Battalion had begun another effort to break through the Parai Defile, supported this time by fire from offshore destroyers, a rocket LCI, and craft of the Support Battery, 2d Engineer Special Brigade. All this support proved unable to reduce much of the Japanese fire which was directed against the 3d Battalion from the north, northwest, and west, and, except for outposts left near the stream crossing, all units withdrew to the battalion perimeter for the night.

On the 6th, the 1st Battalion cleared many positions on ridge lines 4 through 7 between Young and Old Man's Trails, but was unable to dislodge the Japanese from the strong point near the north end of the latter track. Company A, 186th Infantry, and the Antitank Company, 162d Infantry, attacked west from Young Man's Trail and gained about 900 yards before being stopped in front of previously unlocated Japanese defensive positions. The two units held for the night along the first four ridge lines, directly north of the 3d Battalion's beach perimeter. The latter unit again had made no appreciable progress in the Parai Defile.

Meanwhile General Fuller had evolved his plan to move the 162d Infantry to Mokmer Drome to reinforce the 186th Infantry and to clear the Parai Defile by simultaneous pressure from the east and west.[33] On 7 and 8 June the bulk of the 1st and 3d Battalions, 162d Infantry, moved overwater to Parai and ultimately west to Mokmer Drome. Back to the east, only Company A was left along Old Man's Trail, where little resistance was encountered at the previous Japanese strong point after 7 June, although the position was not entirely reduced until 11 June. From 7 through 9 June the Antitank Company, 162d Infantry, and Com-

[33] For the details of this plan and its execution see above, Ch. XIV.

pany A, 186th Infantry, tried unsuccessfully to gain more ground along the ridge lines west from Young Man's Trail. The units were pulled off the ridges on the 10th and relieved two days later by elements of the 163d Infantry.

Generally, from 7 through 11 June, only moderate pressure was maintained against Japanese positions in the Ibdi Pocket area, major combat effort being diverted to clearing the last vestiges of Japanese resistance from the Parai Defile so that the coastal road could be employed for transportation of supplies to Mokmer Drome. The Cannon Company, 163d Infantry, and the Antitank Company, 186th Infantry (both acting as rifle companies), began new pressure from the west against the Parai Defile on the evening of 7 June, while Company L, 162d Infantry, continued attempts to push through from the east. By dusk on the 8th, despite the efforts of all three companies, the Japanese still maintained control of some 300 yards of ground in the defile. On the 9th, three Shermans of the 603d Tank Company, aboard LCT's and directed from an LVT of the 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, fired on the cliffs in the defile for an hour. This fire did not help the units on the west side of the cliffs very much, and infantry pressure was continued on the 10th. The next day a rifle company of the 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, attacked from the west into the defile while, simultaneously, the Antitank Company of the same regiment pushed in from the east. These attacks were finally successful, and by late afternoon on the 11th the road through the defile was clear of Japanese. Not until the 12th were the few remaining Japanese dispersed from woods north of the road, enabling truck convoys to move through the defile.

The 163d Infantry at the Ibdi Pocket

On 12 June the 2d Battalion, 163d Infantry, arrived at Biak from the Wakde–Sarmi area and relieved those elements of the 162d and 186th Infantry Regiments still holding positions at the Parai Defile and the Ibdi Pocket.[34] The latter units then moved west to rejoin their parent regiments at Mokmer Drome, and responsibility for mopping up at the Ibdi–Parai area passed to the 163d Infantry. With the clearing of the Parai Defile and the almost simultaneous reduction of Japanese fire from the East Caves, the road from Bosnek to the airfields was finally safe. At the Ibdi Pocket proper, the Japanese garrison had been generally quiet since 7 June except for a little harassing rifle and machine gun fire directed at Allied movements along the coastal road. Although the remaining Japanese were by now relegated to the status of a nuisance, the 163d Infantry was going to find mopping up a difficult and time-consuming process.

From 12 through 20 June the 2d Battalion, 163d Infantry, undertook extensive patrolling in the Ibdi Pocket area to become acquainted with the terrain and situation in its new zone. The unit soon discovered that whatever positions had been held by the *3d Battalion, 222d Infantry,* during the period of 162d Infantry action, the remaining Japanese strong points were concentrated west

[34] Information in this subsection is based principally on: 163d Inf Jnl, 31 May–19 Aug 44; 163d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 31 May–20 Aug 44, pp. 3–7; HTF Opns Rpt Biak, 17 May–20 Aug 44, pp. 10–13; HTF G–3 Jnl, 15 May–21 Aug 44; I Corps Hist of Biak Opn, 15–27 Jun 44, pp. 15–17; 146th FA Bn Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 23–28; 603d Tank Co Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 6–7; Co D 641st TD Bn Jnl, 24 May–7 Jul 44; Opns of *Yuki Group,* pp. 10–11; Ltr, Doe to Ward, 4 Dec 50, in OCMH files.

of Young Man's Trail. Action against this pocket began on 21 June, when Company F attacked south from a point on the north side of the main ridge about 900 yards west of the trail. Japanese mortar, machine gun, and rifle fire forced Company F back and by noon it had become obvious that a single rifle company could not overrun the remaining pocket. The regimental commander decided to organize a larger infantry effort, in preparation for which extensive artillery and mortar bombardment was undertaken.

From the evening of 21 June through the night of 23–24 June the 146th Field Artillery Battalion (105-mm. howitzers), the Cannon Company, 163d Infantry, the 4.2-inch mortars of the 1st Platoon, Company D, 641st Tank Destroyer Battalion, and the heavy machine guns and 81-mm. mortars of Companies D and H, 163d Infantry, bombarded the area steadily. Two infantry companies probed west from Young Man's Trail on the morning of the 24th, only to find that the Japanese still held the remaining pocket in some strength. After two more days of artillery and mortar bombardment, four rifle companies were sent against the pocket. Moving slowly and painfully forward through tangled jungle undergrowth and fallen trees, and over jagged and precipitous coral spines, the four units gradually compressed the remaining resistance. By nightfall the assault companies had lost 8 men killed, 3 missing, and 32 wounded, while killing 38 Japanese.

The next day more units were brought forward until, by noon, almost all of the 1st and 2d Battalions, 163d Infantry, were in action against the pocket, and advances were continued over the ridge lines from both the east and west. By the end of the day, at the cost of 4 men killed and 14 wounded, the two battalions had compressed the Japanese into an area approximately 600 yards square. Attacks were continued on the 28th, but little more progress was made. By this time, steady attrition since 12 June, coupled with a lack of replacements was telling on the 2d Battalion. Company F was now down to 42 effectives and Company G to 65.[35]

The 28th of June marked the end of large-scale infantry action at the Ibdi Pocket. Instead, extensive patrolling was undertaken in order to pin-point targets for artillery, mortar, and air bombardments. From 4 July to the morning of the 7th, for instance, the 146th Field Artillery fired over 5,500 rounds into the pocket and during the same period the 163d Infantry's 81-mm. mortars lobbed some 2,400 shells into the area. On the morning of the 7th an infantry company tried to move back into the Japanese-held area, but found the Japanese repairing old fortifications and even building new ones! Artillery and mortar bombardments were resumed, and on 9 July Allied Air Forces P–39's and P–40's dive-bombed and strafed the pocket area.

Companies K and L attempted to move into the pocket on the 10th and found that the Japanese defenders had thinned out. Moreover, they discovered the visibility in the pocket area had been greatly improved as a result of the long mortar and artillery bombardments. The once dense jungle and rain forest, in which visibility had previously been limited to ten yards, was now reduced to shattered stumps. From the 21st of June through the morning of 10 July the 146th Field Artillery Battalion alone had thrown

[35] Company E and the rest of the 2d Battalion were little better off, and the 1st and 3d Battalions were also greatly understrength. The 163d Infantry had received no replacements other than a few officers since it had entered combat at Wakde–Sarmi on 17 May.

about 20,000 105-mm. shells into the Ibdi Pocket, and at least as many rounds had been fired by 4.2-inch, 60-mm. and 81-mm. mortars.

Beginning on the 11th, the 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, steadily compressed the remaining Japanese into a smaller and smaller area. Bazookas and flame throwers were used to good purpose in close-in operations against bunkers, pillboxes, improved caverns, and small caves. Tanks fired their 75-mm. weapons at enemy positions now visible from the northern side of the main ridge, and on the 12th 155-mm. howitzers of Battery C, 947th Field Artillery Battalion, were brought forward to fire on the pocket. The next day about 200 Japanese, in four separate groups, sneaked through a net of ambushes and patrol bases set up by the 163d Infantry on the flats north of the main ridge. Despite this exodus, which must have represented most of the remaining able-bodied members of the *3d Battalion, 222d Infantry,* and its reinforcing units, American infantry moving back into the pocket on the 15th could not report that the going was much easier.

Artillery bombardment was resumed, and now the artillery could employ close-in precision fire where previously only area fire could be used because of the limited visibility. From 10 to 20 July the 146th Field Artillery Battalion threw in over 4,000 shells and Battery C of the 947th, fired 2,000 rounds into the pocket. On 22 July eight B–24's swept over the pocket in three waves, dropping sixty-four 1,000-pound bombs. Artillery units followed with 1,000 rounds of 105-mm. and 275 rounds of 155-mm. ammunition, while the 163d Infantry's 81-mm. mortars threw uncounted shells into the pocket. These bombardments halted at 0945 on the 22d and five minutes later two understrength companies of the 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, started moving toward the enemy's remaining defensive installations. The 1,000-pound bombs had paralyzed the Japanese, and the two American units encountered almost no opposition. At 1835 the 3d Battalion commander reported that the Ibdi Pocket was cleared of all organized resistance.

The next day, final mopping up was begun, and engineer demolition experts were brought forward to seal caves and destroy the remaining bunkers and pillboxes. By dusk on the 28th, all positions had been rendered useless, enemy weapons either carried away or broken beyond use, and the last traces of resistance had disappeared. From 22 to 28 July, according to one estimate, about 300 Japanese were killed by bombardments and infantry action, or sealed in caves by the engineers. An actual count of dead bodies found during the same period came to 154 men. Whatever the correct figures, the Ibdi Pocket, initially manned by some 800 fresh, well-equipped men of the *3d Battalion, 222d Infantry,* reinforced by about 200 troops of mortar, machine gun, artillery, and service units, was now finished.[36]

Upon examination after the battle the central portion of the Ibdi Pocket was found to cover a rectangle about 400 yards wide north to south and 600 yards long. In this area the Japanese had constructed defensive installations varying in type from heavily constructed pillboxes of log, coral, and con-

[36] Information in the remainder of this subsection is from: MID WD, *Military Reports,* 24, pp. 15–18; G–2 HTF, G–2 Hist of HTF, Vol. I, Part X, Enemy Defenses, section entitled "The Ibdi Pocket"; G–2 HTF, Per Rpts 10–14, 4–10 Jun 44, and 57–58, 24–25 Jul 44, *ibid.,* Vol. II, Part II, Per Rpts; G–2 HTF Enemy Opns, pp. 7–9, *ibid.,* Vol. I, Part II; Opns of *Yuki Group,* pp. 3–4, 6–7, 10.

crete to hasty trenches in the coral and brush. There were 21 major natural fortifications, including 4 large caves and 17 small ones. Caverns and crevices had been improved for defense and some were used as living quarters and aid stations. There were 75 well-constructed log and coral pillboxes, each having a capacity of 4 men, and among a few larger similar emplacements was 1 pillbox having 9 layers of logs. The minimum heavy armament, either found or estimated to have existed from scattered parts located during mopping up, was eight 90-mm. mortars, three 75-mm. mountain guns, two 37-mm. guns, two 20-mm. weapons, and three heavy machine guns. There were also several small mortars, numerous light machine guns, and over 100 rifles. These figures cannot be considered as representing the total enemy armament in the Ibdi Pocket. The 200-odd Japanese who had escaped on the 12th of July had carried many small arms with them, and other weapons had been so broken up by artillery, mortar, naval, and air bombardments that no accountable trace of them could be found. Still more were undoubtedly sealed in caves blown shut by engineer demolition experts from 22 through 25 July.

Though Colonel Kuzume's defense of Biak was on the whole admirably executed, leaving the *3d Battalion, 222d Infantry,* isolated at the Ibdi Pocket after 10 June seems to have been a major mistake. By that date the bulk of the 162d Infantry had moved on to the airfields and the value of the Ibdi Pocket as a coastal delaying position had been lost. Worse still, the *3d Battalion* did not use its available weapons and manpower to good advantage after 10 June. By placing concentrated mortar, automatic weapons, and artillery fire on Allied roads and supply dumps, the battalion and attached units could have made the coastal area from Parai east to Mandom difficult to hold and use. Instead, the troops in the Ibdi Pocket chose to conduct a passive defense. From a potentially dangerous threat, the pocket was relegated to the status of a localized nuisance which could be contained with a minimum of troops until the battle for the airdromes was over, when it could be reduced at leisure.

The tenacity of the Japanese defense of the Ibdi Pocket, though pointless and even wasteful after 10 June, was almost incredible, and it was not until the 1st Marine Division and the 81st Infantry Division met the *14th Division* on Peleliu and Angaur, in the Palaus, that American troops were again to encounter such defense in similar terrain.[37] The *3d Battalion, 222d Infantry,* was both clever and fanatic on the defense. If holding the Ibdi Pocket had had any point after 10 June, its defense as executed might well have added a significant chapter to military annals.

The End of the Operation

Mopping Up

While the fall of the Ibdi Pocket marked the end of major organized resistance on Biak, there were still some 4,000 Japanese on the island who were capable of harassing American lines.[38] It was obviously important

[37] See below, Chs. XXI–XXIV.

[38] This subsection is based principally on: 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 15 May–19 Aug 44, pp. 10–11; 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44, pp. 31–36; 163d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 31 May–20 Aug 44, pp. 6–7; 542d EB&SR Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 15–16; HTF Opns Rpt Biak, 17 May–20 Aug 44, pp. 13–14; 41st Recn Tr Opns Rpt Biak, pp. 2–5; 41st Div, Enemy Opns During Mopping-Up Period, 20 Sep 44–20 Jan 45, pp. 1–9, in folder entitled Enemy Opns—Biak Campaign, filed with other 41st Div Rec in ORB RAC AGO collection.

to prevent these Japanese from reorganizing for eleventh-hour suicide attacks. Operations with such an object in view had begun well before the Ibdi Pocket fell when the 186th Infantry, early in July, began patrolling far north of the main ridge toward the Sorido–Korim Bay track. A number of dispirited Japanese were chased away from or killed at native gardens far inland by both the 186th Infantry and the 162d Infantry.

On 7 August the 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, was started north along the Korim Bay–Sorido track to the Wafoerdori River, about midway between the track termini. There the battalion was to establish contact with elements of the 163d Infantry, the 2d Battalion of which had landed at Korim Bay from LCM's of the 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment on 2 August. Few Japanese were found in the Korim Bay area or south along the track to the Wafoerdori, where contact between the 162d and 163d Infantry Regiments was made on 15 August.

Apparently in a last desperate effort to delay complete Allied control over Biak, *Biak Detachment* headquarters, sometime in July, had ordered all remaining Japanese units to reassemble at Wardo Bay, on the west coast, by 15 August. The intent appears to have been to reorganize for a final counterattack. At least one unit still organized, comprising approximately 200 men of the *2d Battalion, 222d Infantry,* ignored this order and continued to forage for itself in native gardens east of the Korim–Sorido track and some seven miles north of Mokmer Drome, but other enemy units attempted the trek from their scattered positions to Wardo Bay. The operations of the 2d Battalions of the 162d and 163d Infantry Regiments along the Korim–Sorido trail had caught many of these units in transit and had split the remaining enemy forces.

The last hope that the Japanese might have had for reorganizing was dashed on 17 August, when the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry (less Company B but with Company E attached), landed at Wardo Bay. Transported by LCM's of the 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment and supported by a short naval and air bombardment, the battalion moved ashore against negligible opposition. Subsequently, patrolling was undertaken north to Soepiori Island and south along the west coast of Biak. The coastal patrols and others sent inland pushed many Japanese southeast into ambushes maintained by the 162d Infantry along the Korim–Sorido track. The Wardo Bay landing apparently broke whatever spirit the Japanese may have had left, and all enemy units rapidly split into small parties which wandered over the island in search of food.

While the three infantry regiments were directing their efforts toward breaking up real and potential enemy concentrations, other patrolling and mopping up was being undertaken on Soepiori Island by Netherlands Indies Civil Administration parties, groups from the Netherlands Forces Intelligence Service, and the 41st Reconnaissance Troop, all of which also operated in the southeast corner of Biak and along the Korim–Sorido track. Elements of the 163d Infantry also patrolled in the southeast section of the island, where small boats manned by the 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment supported many patrolling operations. Netherlands officials brought the native population back under Dutch control as rapidly as each area was cleared of enemy troops. Some native laborers were supplied to the HURRICANE Task Force, and native

scouts proved of real help during mopping-up operations.

Medical Problems and Casualties

Medical units of the HURRICANE Task Force went ashore with the assault waves on 27 May and immediately began the work assigned to them. During the landings, wounded and injured personnel were taken aboard LST's for treatment beyond first aid. When medical facilities were set up on the beach near Bosnek, casualties were treated ashore and then moved to LST's for evacuation. Because of Japanese air and artillery action, evacuation hospitals and many other medical facilities were transferred to Owi when the latter island was secured. From Owi, casualties were transshipped to LST's and later to larger ships. After the airdromes became operational air evacuation was employed.[39]

Within the HURRICANE Task Force there were 6,811 casualties from disease, aside from 423 hospitalized psychoneurosis cases. About 3,500 of the cases were diagnosed as "fever, undetermined origin," and over 1,000 casualties resulted from an epidemic of scrub typhus. The first case of scrub typhus, a mite-borne disease, was diagnosed at the 92d Evacuation Hospital on or about 1 July. From Owi Island, where the epidemic broke out, the disease spread rapidly to Biak, reaching its peak there during the last week of July. Stringent control measures designed to prevent the spread of typhus were quickly instituted. Clothing was impregnated with dimethyl-phthalate, bivouac areas were cleared of vegetation, rodents of all types were hunted down and destroyed, camp areas were kept scrupulously clean, and troops were kept out of the brush except when on combat duty.

During the first week of August, the incidence of scrub typhus began to decrease. Of the 1,000-odd cases to the 20th of the month, only 7 men died, a mortality rate of less than 1 percent. Although the death rate was extremely low, scrub typhus at Biak took a virulent form which made sufferers particularly ill. The majority of those taken sick were lost to service for four to six months, and many were expected to be relegated to a limited duty status.[40]

It is next to impossible to establish accurate battle casualty figures for the HURRICANE Task Force, but examination of all sources indicates that from 27 May through 20 August approximately 400 men were killed, 2,000 wounded, 150 injured in action, and 5 missing. In addition, sickness of various types accounted for 7,234 nonbattle casualties, many of whom were returned to duty. Thus, the total casualties of the task force were about 9,790 men. Of this total the three infantry regiments of the 41st Division lost 325 men killed and 1,700 wounded.[41] Conflicting information provides a total of 4,700 Japanese killed and 220 captured on Biak through 20 August.

[39] ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Wakde–Biak, pp. 53–54.

[40] 41st Div Surgeon, Medical Hist of Biak Campaign, pp. 7–14, in folder entitled HTF Stf Rpts, 27 May–19 Aug 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Wakde–Biak, pp. 53–54.

[41] These casualty figures are reconstructed from: ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Wakde–Biak, pp. 53–56; HTF G–1 Jnl, 27 May–20 Aug 44; 41st Div Surgeon, Medical Hist of Biak Campaign, pp. 7–14; 163d Inf, Casualty Rpts Biak, atchd to 163d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 31 May–20 Aug 44; 162d Inf Rpt of Casualties Biak, atchd to 162d Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 15 May–19 Aug 44; Annex 62, Casualties, to 186th Inf Opns Rpt Biak, 27 May–19 Aug 44. Losses of the regiments of the 41st Div were as follows: 162d Inf, 155 killed and 778 wounded or injured; 163d Inf, 67 killed and 408 wounded or injured; 186th Inf, 103 killed and 514 wounded or injured.

In addition, almost 600 Javanese and British Indian slave laborers were recovered, while 2 Chinese and 1 native of Guam were released from Japanese custody.[42] The remaining Japanese were without hope of succor. They could choose surrender, death by combat during Allied mopping up operations, death by disease, death by suicide, or death by starvation.

Logistics and Base Development

The first operational airfield in the Biak area was that on Owi Island, which Fifth Air Force planes began using regularly on 21 June. By 12 July the 860th and 864th Engineer Aviation Battalions had extended the strip to 7,000 feet and had constructed 7,500 feet of taxiways. By 20 August the two engineer units and the 60th Naval Construction Battalion had completed a second 7,000-foot runway on Owi. In addition, there were then available on the tiny island some 20,000 feet of taxiways and 130 hardstandings.

P-40's had begun operating from 5,000 completed feet of Mokmer Drome on Biak on 22 June. By 1 August the 863d Engineer Aviation Battalion and the 46th Engineer Construction Battalion had extended the field to 7,000 feet and had completed 27,000 feet of taxiways and 122 hardstandings. On 1 August the 46th Engineers completed a 4,000-foot runway at Borokoe Drome, which was used principally by transport aircraft, and by the 20th had extended it to 5,500 feet. Some work was also undertaken on Sorido Drome, which by 12 August consisted of a 4,000-foot strip being used by transport planes. Terrain difficulties and a shortage of engineers made it impractical to extend Sorido, and the field was finally abandoned.[43]

While none of the Biak fields was ready in time to support the Central Pacific's invasion of the Marianas in mid-June, they did prove extremely valuable in the support of subsequent operations to the west and north by forces of the Southwest Pacific Area and in the support of the Central Pacific's landings in the Palau Islands in mid-September. The Fifth and Thirteenth Air Forces also flew many missions from Biak over Japanese-held targets in the Netherlands East Indies and on Mindanao, in the southern Philippines.

As of 20 August, eight LST slots were being constructed along the south coast of Biak by the 1896th Engineers; two floating docks for Liberty Ships (one each at Owi and Biak) were completed; the Parai Jetty had been improved and extended; and two more fixed docks or jetties were under construction. On Owi Island over 12 miles of roads had been completed, while approximately 30 miles had been constructed on Biak. An additional 22 miles of roads were being improved on Biak. There was available over 1,130,000 square feet of storage space, including about 300,000 square feet under cover. Finally, one 400-bed hospital had been completed and a second was under construction. All these construction activities had been instituted under the direction of Headquarters, 1112th Engineer Combat Group, which was succeeded early in July by Headquarters, 1178th Engineer Construction Group.

[42] HTF Opns Rpt Biak, 17 May–20 Aug 44, p. 14; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Wakde–Biak, p. 56; ALAMO G–2 Wkly Rpt 55, 23 Aug 44, copy in G–2 DofA files.

[43] ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Wakde–Biak, pp. 42–44, 50–51; Base H USASOS, Rpt of HTF Engr Office, pp. 1–3, in folder entitled HTF Stf Rpts, 27 May–19 Aug 44.



DOCK AREA, BIAK

Construction units at Biak encountered few major difficulties other than those occasioned by the enemy fire on Mokmer Drome. Wood was plentiful, although lumbering was made somewhat difficult because the best stands of timber were located at scattered points along steep ridges and precipitous hills. The prevailing coral of Biak and Owi was hard on equipment, but when processed it proved excellent material for airstrip and road paving. There were no drainage problems and ultimately enough fresh water was found to adequately supply the entire task force.[44]

Major supply problems of the HURRICANE Task Force were associated with unloading delays caused by enemy air raids, insufficient wheeled transportation during early phases of the operation, and an abnormally heavy expenditure of artillery ammunition. The shortage of transportation on shore was alleviated by the capture and use of about sixty enemy trucks, and additional wheeled transportation was later brought to Biak from rear bases.

Japanese air raids caused the Allied Naval Forces to permit only two LST's to unload at a jetty at one time after Z Day. This order sometimes delayed unloading, but few LST's left the island without being discharged in the time allotted. Until locally based fighter protection was available, no ships larger than LST's were sent to Biak, and it was 22 June before the first big cargo

[44] *Ibid.*



BASE H AND HOSPITAL AREAS ON BIAK

ships arrived. Then, daily discharge rates began to climb from a few hundred tons daily to a peak of 4,073 tons on 12 August. A shortage of lightering craft was apparent for some time, but the arrival of the first floating dock on 22 July greatly relieved the strain on available lighterage.

The nature of the combat on Biak accounted for the abnormal expenditure of artillery ammunition—an expenditure which created a pressing problem in terms of shipping space. The shortage of shipping in the Southwest Pacific made movement of all supplies and equipment to Biak necessarily slow at times. A great deal of juggling of ship sailing schedules and hurried changes in loading plans at rear bases were necessary to keep the HURRICANE Task Force adequately supplied with artillery ammunition. Evidently there was some misunderstanding between Biak and the task force Rear Echelon at Hollandia concerning the requisitioning of ammunition, for, as the task force G–4 Section report put it:

> The procedure of requisitioning ammunition by units of fire proved unsatisfactory because there was no way for the Rear Echelon to determine the quantity of ammunition desired when so requisitioned. It was recommended that ammunition be requisitioned by rounds.

This statement is difficult to understand. The Rear Echelon must have had available to it War Department or Services of Supply

publications which specifically set forth the number of rounds per unit of fire for all types of weapons.[45]

Resupply of the HURRICANE Task Force was initially a responsibility of ALAMO Force, but on 7 June this responsibility passed to Services of Supply Base G, at Hollandia. Control of ships moving forward to Biak remained a responsibility of the Allied Naval Forces until 20 August, when the Services of Supply took over. In mid-August, Services of Supply personnel began moving up to Biak to establish a new headquarters, Base H, which, on 20 August, took over all responsibility for the logistic support of air and ground forces on Biak. Ultimately, Base H was capable of providing full logistic support for 70,000 ground and air force troops. The Allied Naval Forces remained responsible for its own construction and supply operations in the Biak area and centered most of its activities at Mios Woendi Island, near Owi.[46]

On 20 August, the same day that Base H began operations at Biak, General Krueger of ALAMO Force, satisfied that Japanese resistance was broken, declared the Biak operation at an end.

For the Allies, the Biak operation was not an unparalleled success, for objectives were not taken as soon as anticipated. But the outcome was never seriously in doubt, though the battle was rough and the fighting was hard from Z Day through the fall of the Ibdi Pocket, two months later. As usual, the Allies won the last battle, and Biak proved an invaluable air and logistic base along the road back to the Philippines.[47]

[45] G–4 HTF, Sum of Opns of HTF, pp. 6–15, in folder entitled Historical Records, A/CofS G–4, HTF, 27 May–20 Aug 44. The quotation is from page 9 of the summary.

[46] Rad, Adv Base G to ALAMO, ON–6054, 6 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 6–15 Jun 44; USASOS LI 51/4/SOS, 16 Aug 44, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 20 Jul–13 Aug 44; G–4 HTF, Sum of Opns of HTF, p. 16.

[47] The 41st Division remained in Biak until early 1945 when it moved forward to the Philippines. It continued mopping up operations after 20 August, first under ALAMO Force–Sixth Army and, after mid-October, under the Eighth Army. About the time of the change in command, Sixth Army stated that Japanese casualties on Biak included 6,127 killed or found dead, 462 Japanese PW's, and 304 Formosan PW's. In addition, it was estimated that there were 2,000 unlocated dead. (ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpts 57 and 61, 6 Sep 44 and 4 Oct 44, respectively, copies in G–2 DofA files). Much of the most lucrative mopping up occurred in northern Biak and on Soepiori Island, where many of the Japanese apparently fled in the vain hope of being evacuated. By the time the 41st Division moved away from Biak, probably less than 1,500 men of the Japanese garrison remained alive.

CHAPTER XVII

Operations on Noemfoor Island

Even before the HURRICANE Task Force had landed on Biak, planners at General MacArthur's headquarters had considered the possible necessity for occupying additional islands in Geelvink Bay to protect the gains achieved at Biak. With the initial reverses of the HURRICANE Task Force, continuing enemy air attacks against Biak, and growing indications that the Japanese might be attempting to reinforce that island, expansion to near-by enemy bases began to appear an imminent necessity. Moreover, occupation of another island near Biak would provide an additional air base from which the Allied Air Forces could dominate the Vogelkop Peninsula, where another operation was soon to take place. If, as appeared likely during the first week of June, there was to be considerable delay in making the fields on Biak operational, the move to the Vogelkop might have to be postponed. On 4 June, therefore, General Headquarters began preparations for the seizure of Noemfoor Island, which lay about midway between Biak and the Japanese base at Manokwari on the northeast tip of the Vogelkop Peninsula.[1]

[1] Memo, G–3 GHQ Plng Sec for ACofS G–3 GHQ SWPA, no sub, 4 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 4 Jun 44; Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, C–13296, 5 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 6–19 Jun 44. As it had for previous operations, ALAMO Force kept a separate set of records concerning the Noemfoor operation.

The Noemfoor Plan

Noemfoor was used by the Japanese as a staging area for troops moving to reinforce the *Biak Detachment.* Japanese barges could make the run from Manokwari to western Noemfoor, a distance of about 60 nautical miles, during the hours of darkness, and another overnight run would take reinforcements the additional 75 nautical miles to western Biak. Two other reasons dictated the choice of Noemfoor. First, the Japanese had constructed or partially completed three airdromes on the island. The Allies could quickly repair those fields for fighters and bombers which could cover the advance to the Vogelkop. Finally, Allied occupation of Noemfoor would deny to the Japanese a base from which the sea lanes west of Biak could be threatened.

The Terrain and the Enemy

Noemfoor, roughly circular in shape, consists of a series of limestone and coral terraces, a topography in many ways similar to that of Biak but not as rough. The highest point on Noemfoor is about 670 feet above sea level, its greatest north-south length is about fifteen miles, and its width approximately twelve and a half miles. Most of the natives, about 5,000 in all, lived in a number of coastal hamlets. The island had experienced little commercial development be-

fore the war, there were no towns of any importance, and port facilities were lacking. Land communications consisted of native tracks skirting the coast line and connecting the many villages. (*Map 17*)

Inland, the terrain is fairly rugged, although there are some large flat areas on the northern and southwestern sections of the coast. Dense rain forest grows everywhere except along a few strips of the beach, and along the banks of tidal inlets where heavy mangrove swamps are found. The island is completely surrounded by coral reefs, behind which are beaches of many types—sand, forest, mangrove swamp, or rocky shore. Seaward approaches to the island are deep and free of navigational hazards, permitting large ships to draw up to the outer edges of the reefs both day and night. The best landing areas, considering both reef and beach conditions, are on the northwest shore, near Menoekwari West and Kamiri.[2]

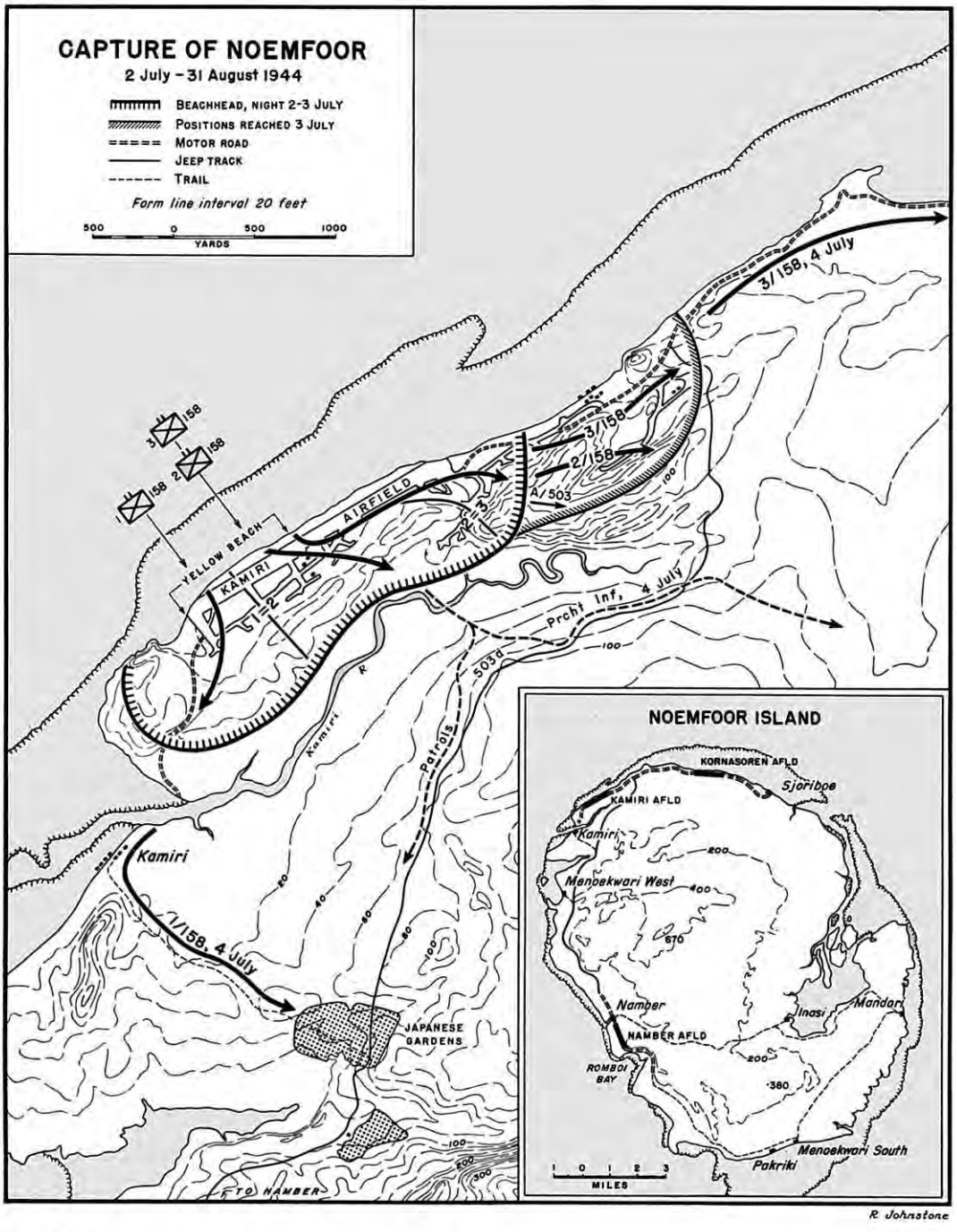
It is not known when the Japanese first occupied Noemfoor, but early in 1944 they began to construct airfields there in accordance with their policy of strengthening their new strategic main line of resistance in western New Guinea. By the end of May the Japanese had completed two fields on Noemfoor: Namber Drome on the southwest coast and Kamiri Drome on the northwest. On the north-central coast, about four miles east of Kamiri Drome, the Japanese had left unfinished a third airfield, designated Kornasoren Drome. The only other construction of note was some widening of native trails to serve as motor roads between the airfields.

In mid-June, realizing that the Japanese were using Noemfoor as a way station for troops moving to reinforce Biak and considering it probable that the Japanese would expect an Allied invasion of the island, the ALAMO Force G–2 Section estimated that the Japanese garrison on Noemfoor comprised 2,850 to 3,250 troops, with a combat strength of 1,600 to 2,000 men. Most of the combat troops were believed to be members of the *3d Battalion, 219th Infantry, 35th Division.* Other combat units of that division and at least a company of the *36th Division* were also thought to be stationed on the island. The Japanese were known to have concentrated their strength at the airfields, and the largest single body of Japanese was believed to be stationed at Kamiri Drome.[3]

Intelligence officers estimated that since the Japanese probably considered Noemfoor only a delaying position, they would make few efforts to reinforce it. No naval interference was expected because, after the fiascos of the *KON* and *A-GO Operations,* most of the *Combined Fleet* had retired to homeland or Philippine waters, leaving only a few destroyers and one light cruiser in the western New Guinea area. Some reaction by Japanese aircraft was expected, but not on the scale attempted at Biak. Allied aircraft could keep Japanese fields within range of Noemfoor out of operation most of the time and, in co-operation with Seventh Fleet PT boats, could stop most overwater

[2] AGS SWPA, Terrain Handbook No. 27, "Schouten Islands," 12 May 44, copy in OCMH files; ALAMO Force, G–2 Photo Int Sec Rpt 135, 13 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 6–19 Jun 44. Menoekwari West is not to be confused with Manokwari on the Vogelkop Peninsula nor with Menoekwari South, a village located on the southern coast of Noemfoor.

[3] ALAMO Force, G–2 Est of Enemy Sit with Respect to Noemfoor Island, 15 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 6–15 Jun 44; ALAMO Force, G–2 Daily Rpt 200, 2 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Noemfoor, 27 May–8 Jul 44; ALAMO Force FO 19, 21 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 25 Jun 44.


CAPTURE OF NOEMFOOR
2 July – 31 August 1944
BEACHHEAD, NIGHT 2-3 JULY
POSITIONS REACHED 3 JULY
MOTOR ROAD
JEEP TRACK
TRAIL
Form line interval 20 feet
500 0 500 1000
YARDS
3/158, 4 July
3/158
2/158
A/503
AIRFIELD
YELLOW BEACH
KAMIRI
Prchi Inf, 4 July
503d
Patrols
Kamiri R
Kamiri
1/158, 4 July
JAPANESE GARDENS
TO NAMBER
NOEMFOOR ISLAND
KORNASOREN AFLD
Sjoriboe
KAMIRI AFLD
Kamiri
Menoekwari West
670
Namber
Inasi
Mandar
NAMBER AFLD
ROMBOI BAY
360
Menoekwari South
Pokriki
MILES
R Johnstone

MAP 17

reinforcing movements of the scale the Japanese could mount.[4]

Allied estimates of Japanese strength on Noemfoor were too high, for there were not more than 2,000 Japanese on the island. Probably not more than 900 of these could be counted infantry effectives. In addition to the 2,000 Japanese, there were 600-odd Formosan laborers and approximately 500 Javanese slave laborers. The *3d Battalion, 219th Infantry,* contained the bulk of the combat troops, but there were also present about 180 men of the *2d Battalion, 219 Infantry,* and a like number of the *222d Infantry, 36th Division,* troops which had been unable to reach Biak. The Japanese garrison on Noemfoor was commanded by a Colonel Shimizu, who was also the commanding officer of the *219th Infantry.* Another unit, commanded by a Major Mori, but apparently under Colonel Shimizu's operational control, seems to have been a provisional organization containing mostly armed service personnel and numbering about 600 men.[5]

The ALAMO G–2 Section was correct in assuming that an invasion of Noemfoor would come as no surprise to the Japanese. Colonel Shimizu had estimated as early as 1 June that the Allies would soon invade the island in the vicinity of Kamiri Drome. For reasons unknown, the colonel later changed his guess and began making extensive defensive preparations along the north coast at Kornasoren Drome. During the night of 22–23 June, the colonel's men discovered an Allied reconnaissance party which, brought to Noemfoor by PT's, was attempting to obtain accurate information concerning reef and tide conditions off Kamiri. When no American landing was immediately forthcoming, Colonel Shimizu re-estimated that the invasion of Noemfoor would occur at the Kamiri Drome area during the first week of July.[6] His estimate was soon to prove remarkably accurate.

Organization of the Forces

On 5 June 1944 General MacArthur informed General Krueger that the Noemfoor operation was to take place under ALAMO Force direction. At the same time General Krueger was warned that operations on the Vogelkop Peninsula were to follow close upon the occupation of Noemfoor. General MacArthur's planners wanted to use a regimental combat team of the 6th Infantry Division at Noemfoor,[7] but General Krueger planned to employ that division for the Vogelkop invasion, and therefore secured General MacArthur's approval to send the 158th Regimental Combat Team against Noemfoor. The latter unit was then at Wakde–Sarmi, and provision had to be made to speed shipment of the 6th Division

[4] Annex G, Int, to CTF 77 Opn Plan 6–44, 22 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 27 Jun 44; ALAMO Force FO 19, 21 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 25 Jun 44; Rad, ALAMO Adv Hq to ALAMO Rear Hq, WH–723, 23 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 19–24 Jun 44; ALAMO Force, G–2 Est of Enemy Sit with Respect to Noemfoor Island, 15 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 6–15 Jun 44.

[5] Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 58, 67; *2d Army* Opns, p. 6; S–2, 503d Prcht Inf Regt, Enemy Order of Battle Noemfoor Island, 20 Sep 44, in 503d Prcht Inf, S–2 Rpt, Noemfoor Opns; CyTF Hist Rpt Noemfoor, p. 16. The complete names of Shimizu and Mori cannot be ascertained from available records.

[6] CyTF Hist Rpt Noemfoor, pp. 17–18; CTF 77 [Comdr, Naval Attack Force], Noemfoor Opn—Rpt on, 16 Jul 44, pp. 1–2; ALAMO Force, G–2 Est of Enemy Sit with Respect to Noemfoor Island, 15 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Wakdke–Biak, 6–15 Jun 44.

[7] Memo, G–3 GHQ Plng Sec for ACofS G–3 GHQ SWPA, no sub, 4 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 4 Jun 44; Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, C–13296, 5 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 6–19 Jun 44.

there so that the 158th could prepare for the Noemfoor operation.[8]

As in previous operations along the New Guinea coast, General Krueger was made responsible for co-ordinating air, naval, and ground planning for Noemfoor. He scheduled an interservice planning conference for 16 June, a date to which Allied Naval Forces planners objected. Most of the important naval planners were at least a day away from ALAMO Force headquarters, and, moreover, the Allied Naval Forces did not believe that enough intelligence data was on hand for planning purposes. General Krueger, on the other hand, considered available data sufficient, and held the conference as scheduled. The Allied Naval Forces was represented only by one officer from the staff of the VII Amphibious Force, Seventh Fleet.[9]

At the conference it immediately became apparent that, as usual, the provision of air support for the landing was the major problem. Allied Air Forces held that since carrier-based aircraft were not available, a minimum of two fighter groups would have to be based at Biak before the Noemfoor operation could be initiated. General Kenney, the air commander, estimated that Mokmer Drome could be used by 20 June without further interference from the *Biak Detachment* and that the airfield then being constructed on Owi Island, off southeastern Biak, would be ready on 25 June. Upon completion, each field would be able to accommodate one group of fighters. These aircraft would need a few days to become acquainted with the target areas on Noemfoor. Finally, while the concentration of troops and supplies for ground elements scheduled to land on Noemfoor could be accomplished by 26 June, it would be necessary to allow these forces time for rehearsal, and more time would be needed for loading. The combination of these factors led General Krueger to believe that 30 June would be the earliest practicable date upon which the Noemfoor landing could take place. This date was approved by General MacArthur.[10]

On 20 June a second planning conference was held at General Krueger's headquarters, this time attended by the commanders of all the major air, ground, and naval units participating in the Noemfoor operation. It was discovered that the 30 June target date was optimistic. First, additional time was needed for rehearsing the amphibious phases of the operation. Next, General Kenney wanted the landing delayed until a second runway could be completed on Owi Island. It still appeared possible that the *Biak Detachment* might delay full use of Mokmer Drome for some time, and the expansion of the Owi strip was believed necessary to provide a safe airfield for fighters supporting

[8] Rad, ALAMO Adv Hq to ALAMO Rear Hq, WH–227, 6 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 6–7 Jun 44; Rad, ALAMO Adv Hq to TTF, WH–315, 9 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 9–10 Jun 44; Memo, ACofS G–3 ALAMO to ACofS G–4 ALAMO, ALAMO AAO, and ALAMO FAO, no sub, 7 Jun 44, and Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, C–13742, 15 Jun 44, last two docs in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 6–19 Jun 44. See also above, Ch. X.

[9] Rad, GHQ SWPA to AAF, SWPA, ANF SWPA, ALAMO, and USASOS, CX–13693, 14 Jun 44, Rad, Com7thFlt to ALAMO, 15 Jun 44, and Rad, ALAMO to CTF 76, WF–8059, 15 Jun 44, all three in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 6–19 Jun 44; Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WF–3357, 17 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 17 Jun 44.

[10] Rad, ALAMO Adv Hq to ALAMO Rear Hq, WH–494, 15 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 15–16 Jun 44; Ltr, AAF SWPA to GHQ SWPA, sub: TABLETENNIS Opn, 17 Jun 44, and Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WF–3357, 17 Jun 44, last two docs in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 17 Jun 44; GHQ SWPA OI 55, 17 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 18 Jun 44.

the Noemfoor landing. The additional construction on Owi could not be completed until 30 June. Finally, more time was needed to move forward to the staging area (Wakde–Sarmi) a number of LCM's and LCT's which were to participate in the landing. Therefore, General Krueger secured approval from General MacArthur to postpone the landing until 2 July. With the date settled, other points of air, ground, and naval co-ordination were discussed by the conferees, and agreement on all important issues was soon reached. The commanders returned to their respective headquarters which, within a few days, produced the necessary field orders, operations instructions, or other final plans.[11]

For the Noemfoor operation the 158th Regimental Combat Team, reinforced, was designated the CYCLONE Task Force. The task force and combat team commander was Brig. Gen. Edwin D. Patrick, who had commanded the same combat team and the TORNADO Task Force at Wakde–Sarmi. The CYCLONE Task Force staff was formed by members of ALAMO Force headquarters, the 158th Infantry, No. 62 Works Wing of the Royal Australian Air Force, and other units attached to ALAMO Force for the operation. The total combat strength of the task force was approximately 8,000 men, of whom over 7,000 were to land on D Day.[12]

The principal mission of the CYCLONE Task Force was to seize airdrome sites which were to be quickly developed so that Allied aircraft could support operations west of Noemfoor. The task force was initially to prepare facilities for two groups of fighters and half a squadron of night fighters and later to expand these facilities for an additional fighter group, two squadrons of medium bombers, and two squadrons of light bombers. To accomplish the necessary airfield construction, service units of the CYCLONE Task Force were to include two American engineer aviation battalions and No. 62 Works Wing. With an excellent record of achievement at Aitape as engineer of the PERSECUTION Task Force, the commander of the Australian works wing, Group Capt. W. A. C. Dale (RAAF), was appointed engineer of the CYCLONE Task Force.

The service units assigned to the task force numbered about 5,500 men, among whom approximately 3,000 were to be engaged in airdrome construction. Other service troops included the usual medical, quartermaster, ordnance, and signal units needed for a small amphibious operation. Air force units scheduled to arrive on Biak after the airfields were completed totaled some 10,000 men. Air operations from Noemfoor were to be controlled initially by No. 10 Operational Group, Royal Australian Air Force, and later by the Fifth Air Force's 309th Bombardment Wing (H). The first aircraft scheduled to operate from Noemfoor were to be Australian, and Fifth Air Force planes were to follow on a date

[11] Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WF–3961, 20 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 19–24 Jun 44; Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, ANF SWPA, AAF SWPA, *et al.*, CX–13999, 21 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 21 Jun 44; CTF 77 Noemfoor Opn Rpt, p. 2.

[12] Major combat units were the 158th Infantry, the 147th Field Artillery Battalion (105-mm.), the 116th Antiaircraft Artillery Group (of two battalions and three additional batteries), a platoon of the 603d Tank Company, a 4.2-inch mortar company of the 641st Tank Destroyer Battalion, the 27th Engineers, the Shore Battalion of the 593d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, a boat company of the 543d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment (both the latter from the 3d Engineer Special Brigade), and the Support Battery, 2d Engineer Special Brigade.

governed by the extent of airfield construction.[13]

The amphibious phase of the Noemfoor operation was to be directed by Rear Adm. William M. Fechteler as the Commander, Naval Attack Force.[14] Admiral Fechteler divided his Attack Force into three groups. The Covering Force, under the command of Rear Adm. Russell S. Berkey (USN), contained 1 heavy cruiser, 2 light cruisers, and 10 destroyers. Admiral Fechteler retained command over the Main Body, consisting of 15 destroyers, 8 LST's, 8 LCT's, 4 patrol craft (PC's), 1 tug, and 14 LCI's (including 3 rocket-equipped LCI's and 2 LCI's transporting demolition experts and their equipment for blasting approaches for landing craft through the reefs). An LCT–LCM Unit, commanded by Lt. Comdr. James S. Munroe (USNR), contained 3 PC's, 5 LCT's, and 40 LCM's, the latter manned by Company A, 543d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment. A Beach Party and two Reinforcement Groups (the latter arriving after D Day) completed the naval organization.[15]

The bulk of the air missions in support of the landing were to be flown by the U. S. Fifth Air Force, now under Maj. Gen. Ennis C. Whitehead. The newly arrived Thirteenth Air Force, under Maj. Gen. St. Clair Streett, was to have a share in the support, as were Australian and Dutch planes. Also available was Task Force 73, the Seventh Fleet's land-based aircraft, which flew under the operational control of the Allied Air Forces.[16]

Initially, ALAMO Force Reserve for the Noemfoor operation was the 503d Parachute Infantry Regiment. This unit, stationed at Hollandia, was to be prepared for airborne movement to Noemfoor on C–47's of the 54th Troop Carrier Wing, Fifth Air Force. Since there were not enough C–47's available to move the entire regiment at one time, provision was made to fly it forward in battalion groups.[17] Late during the planning for Noemfoor, General Krueger, concerned lest the ground situation on Noemfoor on D Day require overwater reinforcements as well, alerted the 34th Infantry, then on Biak, to prepare for waterborne movement to Noemfoor on twenty-four hours' notice. He requested and

[13] GHQ SWPA OI 55, 17 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 18 Jun 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Noemfoor, pp. 3–5; CyTF Hist Rpt Noemfoor, pp. 1–5; 3d ESB Opns Rpt, Jul 44, n.p.; 5th AF OI 3, 22 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 25 Jun 44; CyTF FO 1, 23 Jun 44, in file of CyTF's FO's.

[14] The Attack Force was administratively designated Task Force 77, and contained the bulk of the combat elements of the VII Amphibious Force, U. S. Seventh Fleet, as well as Australian units. Admiral Fechteler, deputy commander of the VII Amphibious Force, was in command of that force from May until early July, its regular commander, Rear Adm. Daniel E. Barbey, being temporarily absent on other duty.

[15] CTF 77 Opn Plan 6–44, 22 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 27 Jun 44; CTF 77 Noemfoor Opn Rpt, p. 3. The Covering Force had two sections: one under Commodore John A. Collins (RAN), containing 1 heavy cruiser and 4 destroyers, was known administratively as Task Force 74; the other section, under Admiral Berkey and containing 2 light cruisers and 6 destroyers, was Task Force 75. The destroyers of the Main Body were also divided into Fire Support Groups.

[16] 5th AF OI 3, 22 Jun 44, in G-3 GHQ Jnl, 25 Jun 44; ANF SWPA Opn Plan 8–44, 17 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 20 Jun 44; 13th AF OI 2, 27 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 1 Jul 44; AAF SWPA OI 55, 20 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 20 Jun 44. General Kenney had previously commanded the Fifth Air Force, but, on 15 June, the headquarters of that unit became Headquarters, Far Eastern Air Force, under which were placed both the Fifth and Thirteenth Air Forces. General Whitehead's previous command, the Advance Echelon, Fifth Air Force [Advon5AF], then became Headquarters, Fifth Air Force.

[17] ALAMO Force FO 19, 21 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 25 Jun 44; 5th AF OI 3, 22 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 25 Jun 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Noemfoor, p. 7.

obtained from the VII Amphibious Force the use of ten LCI's, which were to stand by off Biak at Mios Woendi pending a decision on the necessity for moving the 34th Infantry to Noemfoor.[18]

The CYCLONE Task Force had no specific reserve set aside as such for the landing. The Task Force Shore Party, however, consisting of engineer and quartermaster units, was to assemble the equivalent of three rifle companies for combat missions upon call from General Patrick. The reserve for the 158th Infantry was to be Company K, reinforced by a heavy machine gun platoon from Company M. The 1st Platoon, 603d Tank Company, once ashore, was to assemble to assist the attack of the 158th Infantry and, until needed for this task, could be considered as a mobile reserve.[19]

Logistics and Tactics

The logistic plan for Noemfoor was similar to that for earlier operations along the New Guinea coast. As usual, the transportation of men and supplies to the forward area was a responsibility of the Allied Naval Forces until relieved by the Services of Supply. The date for the transfer of this responsibility was not set prior to D Day.[20] The assault elements of the CYCLONE Task Force were to carry with them ten days' supply of rations, clothing, unit equipment, fuels, lubricants, medical supplies, and motor maintenance matériel. All weapons except the 4.2-inch mortars were to be supplied with two units of fire; the mortars were to have four units. Provision for resupply was similar to that of previous operations. Ultimately, thirty days of supply of all matériel (except engineer construction equipment) and three units of fire for all weapons were to be built up at Noemfoor. Engineer construction supplies were to be brought forward as necessary.[21]

There were no critical shortages and no supply problems other than relatively minor difficulties concerned with loading and unloading. The Naval Attack Force did not want any bulk supplies loaded on LST's of the D-Day echelon, but planned that all supplies would be carried packed on vehicles transported by the LST's. This plan was prompted by Admiral Fechteler's wish to pull the LST's away from Noemfoor as quickly as possible, since he felt there might be a strong enemy air reaction to the landing, a reaction which, because of possibly adverse weather conditions, the Fifth Air Force might not be able to counter. After conferences with the task force and ALAMO Force supply sections, however, Admiral Fechteler agreed to bulk-load 200 tons of cargo on each LST of the D-Day echelon, provided that a 100-man unloading detail for each ship were made available. The 6th

[18] ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Noemfoor, p. 7; Rad, ALAMO to CTF 77 and 76, WF–1172, 28 Jun 44, and Rad, CTF 76 to ALAMO, 29 Jun 44, both in ALAMO G–2 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 16 Jun–10 Jul 44.

[19] CyTF FO 1, 23 Jun 44, in file of CyTF's FO's; 158th Inf FO 1, 26 Jun 44, in 158th Inf Jnl file, 22 Jun–31 Aug 44. The Shore Party consisted of the Shore Battalion, 593d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, an amphibian truck company, a company of the 27th Engineers, and various quartermaster detachments. It was under the Commanding Officer, 593d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment. Naval plans and reports for the Noemfoor operation consistently refer to the 3d Battalion, 158th Infantry, as the reserve battalion. Actually, this battalion was to follow the other two ashore and assemble for offensive operations rather than hold itself ready as a reserve.

[20] GHQ SWPA OI 55, 17 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 18 Jun 44. The transfer of responsibility from ANF SWPA to USASOS SWPA was not made until 1 Sep, according to GHQ SWPA OI 55/2, 26 Aug 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 18 Jun 44.

[21] CyTF Adm O 1, 24 Jun 44, atchd to CyTF FO 1, 23 Jun 44, in file of CyTF FO's.

Infantry Division, at Wakde–Sarmi, was called upon to provide 800 men for the unloading. These men were to return to Wakde–Sarmi on the LST's they unloaded and were not to be committed to combat operations on Noemfoor. Admiral Fechteler also believed it necessary to make roller conveyors available to unload the bulk cargo at Noemfoor, and ALAMO Force procured adequate lengths of these conveyors from stocks in eastern New Guinea bases.[22]

In many essentials, the landing plans for Noemfoor were very similar to those used at Biak. Like the latter island, Noemfoor was surrounded by coral reefs which were barely covered by water even at high tide. Therefore, as at Biak, LVT's and DUKW's were to make up the assault landing waves for Noemfoor. Again, LCM's and LCT's were to be run up on the reef and over it if possible, probable damage to these craft having to be accepted because of the importance of their cargoes of tanks, trucks, bulldozers, and engineer equipment. LCI's and LST's were to beach at the outer edge of the reef, their troops and vehicles to go ashore over the reef. DUKW's and LVT's were to aid in the unloading of the LST's.

In one major essential the Noemfoor landing plan differed radically from that employed at Biak. At the latter island the HURRICANE Task Force had used a beach which, while within easy marching distance of the principal objectives and the main concentration of enemy troops, was relatively undefended. But at Noemfoor, the landing was to be made in the face of the enemy's strongest defenses, known to be located in the Kamiri Drome area. Yellow Beach, as the landing area was designated, extended approximately 800 yards along the western end of the airfield, which was situated almost at the high water mark. The reef presented fewer hazards there than elsewhere, since it was somewhat narrower than at most other points along the island's coast. The relative narrowness of the reef at Kamiri would also permit LCI's, LCT's, LCM's, and LST's to approach to within 450 yards of the beach, which, at the airfield, was believed to be firm. Moreover, landing at Yellow Beach had the advantage of placing the assault troops immediately on their objective, permitting a rapid seizure of Kamiri Drome before the Japanese could recover from the shock of the naval and air bombardments. Enemy forces on the island would be split, and those stationed at Namber and Kornasoren Dromes would be isolated.

To insure that the assault troops would get ashore with minimum casualties, the landing plan demanded the heaviest naval bombardment yet delivered in the Southwest Pacific area. Two and one-half times the amount of ammunition normally thought necessary to neutralize the landing area was to be expended against Yellow Beach and its environs. Any miscarriage of plans, it was realized, would allow the Japanese to recover from this bombardment and inflict serious losses on the landing waves. Admiral Fechteler recognized that the landing plan called for ideal conditions of wind and sea, and he planned to postpone the assault if unfavorable weather conditions prevailed on the morning of 2 July. The landing itself was scheduled for 0800, fifty-seven minutes after sunrise. This hour was later than customary for landings along the New Guinea coast, but it had the double

[22] Memo, Asst ACofS G–4 ALAMO for QM ALAMO, no sub, 20 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Noemfoor, 27 May–8 Jul 44; Rad, ALAMO to TTF (for CG 6th Inf Div) WF–4393, 22 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 19–24 Jun 44.

purpose of allowing more naval gunfire to be laid on the beach with accuracy and insuring proper beach identification. The plan of naval support fire, except for its volume, was similar to that of previous operations, as was the composition and timing of assault waves.[23]

The Landing

The CYCLONE Task Force was formally organized on 21 June, when General Patrick, in order to co-ordinate his final planning with that of other organizations concerned with the Noemfoor operation, set up a temporary command post near ALAMO Force's rear headquarters at Finschhafen. General Patrick's plan of operations was approved by General Krueger on 22 June and published as CYCLONE Task Force Field Order No. 1 the next day. General Patrick and his staff then returned to the Wakde–Sarmi area to complete final preparations for the Noemfoor operation. A rehearsal for amphibian vehicles was held on 28 June, and final loading of the assault ships was finished soon thereafter.[24]

Approach and Bombardment

The LCT–LCM Unit, escorted by three PC's, left Toem on 29 June and sailed for Biak, where the landing craft had a twenty-four hour layover. Two LCI's, carrying most of the troops who were to move to Noemfoor aboard LCM's, accompanied the unit as far as Biak. The Main Body of the Attack Force departed Toem at 1800 on 30 June, arriving off southeastern Biak about 1740 hours on 1 July. The LCM troops then left the LCI's for their own craft, and 8 of the 13 LCT's were taken in tow by LST's of the Main Body, which immediately sailed for Noemfoor. The 8 LCT's were towed to Noemfoor in order that they might be available to unload equipment from the LST's during the first phases of the assault. The rest of the LCT–LCM Unit, consisting now of 5 LCT's, 40 LCM's, and 3 PC's, proceeded behind the Main Body at best speed, arriving off Noemfoor not much more than half an hour after the Main Body.[25]

The Main Body began deploying off Yellow Beach about 0500 on D Day, 2 July. Various sections of the Main Body, including accompanying destroyers, were released from formation during the predawn hours to take up assigned control or fire support stations. About 0700 the assault ships stopped while the LST's cast off their LCT tows. As a result of this halt, the Main Body arrived at the transport area, about 3,000 yards offshore, approximately ten minutes late, and the LST's were delayed an additional five minutes in completing their deployment. However, the LST's then steamed on to their stations with bow doors open and ramps half lowered, thus speeding launching of LVT's and DUKW's of the assault waves and making up all the lost time.

Four control craft had already arrived on station, two at the line of departure about 1,000 yards beyond the outer edge of the reef and two more at the reef's edge. Heavy haze, caused by the smoke and dust of the prelanding air and naval bombardments, obscured Yellow Beach and the control

[23] CTF 77 Opn Plan 6–44, 22 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 27 Jun 44; CTF 77 Noemfoor Opn Rpt, pp. 4, 20–21; CyTF FO 1, 23 Jun 44, in file of CyTF FO's; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Noemfoor, p. 8; CyTF Hist Rpt Noemfoor, p. 7.

[24] CTF 77 Noemfoor Opns Rpt, p. 8; CyTF Hist Rpt Noemfoor, pp. 7–8; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Noemfoor, p. 3.

[25] CTF 77 Noemfoor Opn Rpt, p. 9; Ltr, Maj Robert M. Luby [3d ESB Obsr] to CG 3d ESB, sub: Obsr's Rpt, Noemfoor Opn, 11 Jul 44, in binder entitled 3d ESB Opns Rpt, Jul 44.

boats, which could not be seen from a distance of more than 500 yards. The control boats therefore turned on white flood lights, enabling the assault craft to obtain correct bearings for the run to the beach.

The naval bombardment was carried out by the Covering Force, augmented by destroyers of the Main Body. The Covering Force had formed at the Admiralty Islands, whence it had sailed westward to reach a point about thirty miles southeast of Biak at 1900 hours on 1 July. Proceeding toward Noemfoor about ten miles ahead of the Main Body, the Covering Force made a few radar contacts with Japanese aircraft, but its trip was otherwise without incident. The force moved into assigned fire support areas in time to begin its bombardment on schedule at H minus 80 minutes.

One heavy cruiser (HMAS *Australia*) and four destroyers bombarded Yellow Beach and its flanks from H minus 80 to H minus 30 minutes, while two American light cruisers and six destroyers threw the weight of their fires on target areas east of the beach, including Kornasoren Drome. Four additional destroyers hit Yellow Beach and its right flank and four more fired on the left flank of the beach. Among the most important targets were low coral ridges immediately behind Kamiri Drome. Three destroyers stood by for call fire, and two others set course south along the west coast of Noemfoor to place harassing fire on Namber Drome and its environs.[26]

The Allied Air Forces had been bombing Noemfoor and enemy air bases on the Vogelkop Peninsula for some days in preparation for the landing of the CYCLONE Task Force. On 1 July, 84 B–24's, 36 A–20's, and 12 B–25's were over the island, dropping 195 tons of bombs, while 22 P–38's glide-bombed Kamiri and Kornasoren Drome installations with 11 tons of 1,000-pound bombs. On D Day 33 B–24's, 6 B–25's, and 15 A–20's expended 108 tons of bombs and 32,000 rounds of ammunition in strafing runways. In addition, two squadrons of fighters were on air alert over the landing area to protect the assault shipping and drive off any Japanese planes which might appear. Immediately before the landing, air bombardment, like much of the naval gunfire, was directed against the low coral ridges and hills behind Kamiri Drome. It was believed that the most determined enemy opposition would come from positions in these ridges, and to neutralize these possible defenses the 33 B–24's, at approximately H minus 15 minutes, dropped 500-pound bombs along the ridge lines.

As this bombing ended, the first wave of troop-carrying LVT's began approaching the outer edge of the reef. About the same time, rocket-equipped LCI's launched almost 800 rockets into the immediate beachhead area, adding final touches to the bombardment. Automatic weapons aboard four LVT(A)'s of the Support Battery, 2d Engineer Special Brigade, accompanying the leading assault wave, kept up a steady fire on Yellow Beach as the troop-carrying LVT's, also manned by the Support Battery, clambered over the reef toward the beach.[27]

The Assault

There was no opposition to the landing. The LVT's of the first wave, ashore on

[26] CTF 77 Noemfoor Opns Rpt, pp. 5–6, 9, 12.

[27] CTF 77 Noemfoor Opns Rpt, pp. 10, 12–13; CyTF Hist Rpt Noemfoor, p. 8; AAF SWPA, Int Sum 222, 5 Jul 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 4 Jul 44; Ltr, Pvt Frank E. Burnside, 2d ESB photographer, to CG 2d ESB, no sub, 8 Jul 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 2 Jul 44.

schedule at 0800, continued from the beach line across Kamiri Drome to the base of a coral ledge overlooking the field. There the assault riflemen of the 1st and 2d Battalions, 158th Infantry, dismounted, the 1st Battalion on the west and the 2d on the east. Subsequent waves of LVT's and DUKW's (the latter manned by the 464th Amphibian Truck Company) brought the rest of the two battalions ashore quickly. The troops assembled at the coral ridge and rapidly began advancing west, east, and south to extend the beachhead.

First resistance was encountered by the 2d Battalion about 500 yards from the eastern end of Kamiri Drome, when without warning about forty Japanese ran out of a cave in the ledge and began milling around in a rather aimless fashion. Showing no tendency either to surrender or to flee, the Japanese were killed by rifle fire or the automatic weapons of the Support Battery's LVT(A)'s. Beyond the area of this encounter, a number of lightly manned caves and prepared defenses were found. There was little organized resistance from these positions, but the 2d Battalion, advancing slowly, halted its attack to mop up each cave, dugout, and foxhole. These methodical operations were supported by the Support Battery LVT(A)'s, later joined by the 1st Platoon, 603d Tank Company. On the west flank the 1st Battalion, 158th Infantry, encountered less opposition and had no difficulty securing a low hill off the southwest end of Kamiri Drome. While part of the battalion cleared that hill, the rest of the unit pushed south from the airfield about 1,000 yards to the north bank of the Kamiri River.

Meanwhile the 3d Battalion, 158th Infantry, had come ashore. It marched rapidly westward after the 2d and joined the latter unit in the mopping-up operations along the low, jungled, coral ridges at the east end of the airstrip. Upon the arrival of the 3d Battalion, most of the 2d turned south from the field toward the Kamiri River, meeting no opposition on its way over more ridges and through dense jungle to the north bank of the tidal stream. By 1600 hours the three infantry battalions had secured a rectangular area about 3,000 yards wide and some 800 deep, extending south to the banks of the Kamiri. It had been expected that the 158th Infantry would have moved some 1,800 yards farther east toward Kornasoren Drome on D Day, but progress had been delayed because the advance elements of the 2d and 3d Battalions had lost momentum as they stopped to mop up minor points of enemy resistance instead of leaving such defenses to follow-up forces.[28]

While the assault battalions had been seizing the beachhead, the rest of the CYCLONE Task Force had been pouring ashore. The first seven landing waves, consisting almost entirely of LVT's and DUKW's, moved to the beach in good order, slowed only by the difficulty experienced by some DUKW's in negotiating the reef. The eighth wave, comprising four LCT's with the 1st Platoon, 603d Tank Company, aboard, followed the last DUKW wave to the outer edge of the reef where the tanks unloaded and lumbered ashore, reaching the beach by 0850. LCI's carrying the 3d Battalion and other nonassault elements of the 158th Infantry, closed on the reef about 0825. Some of the men debarked into water about waist-deep, but most of them waded ashore in less than a foot of water. Small rubber boats, inflated aboard the LCI's, were used by some

[28] CyTF G–3 Per Rpts, 23 Jun–31 Jul 44; CyTF Hist Rpt Noemfoor, pp. 9–10, 23; 158th Inf Opns Rpt Noemfoor, 22 Jun–31 Aug 44, pp. 1–2; CTF 77 Noemfoor Opns Rpt, p. 18.

troops to drag ashore heavy equipment such as ammunition and mortars. The debarkation of all elements of the 158th Infantry was completed by noon.

LCM's, carrying engineer equipment, trucks, and bulldozers, began coming up to the reef about 0815 and three hit the reef at full throttle to see if it could be jumped. This proving impossible, the LCM's unloaded their cargo at the reef edge. It had been planned to keep the LCM's clear of the approach lane until the LCT's had finished unloading. Somehow, orders to this effect had either gone astray or been misunderstood, and within fifteen minutes after the first LCM's hit the reef, the approach lane began to be clogged with these craft, jockeying for position with LCT's and LCI's. Crowded out, the LCM's moved west of the lane to an unmarked section of the reef. This proved a happy circumstance, for at the new area wheeled vehicles found a smoother reef crossing.

Nevertheless, during the first stages of the landing, practically all wheeled, nonamphibian vehicles, whether waterproofed or not, had to be towed over the reef by DUKW's, LVT's, tanks, or bulldozers. After H plus 2 hours, ebbing tide permitted most of the vehicles to move ashore under their own power without drowning out their engines. During the course of the landing, 6 trucks, 2 jeeps, and 5 small trailers were lost in pits in the reef. All but one truck and one trailer were later salvaged.

As soon as the assault waves were on the beach, naval demolition personnel began blasting operations along the outer edge of the reef so that LST's could move closer inshore, and the Shore Battalion, 593d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, began constructing temporary causeways over the reef. Some vehicles aboard the LST's were set directly on the reef, but most of them were transshipped to the reef edge from the landing ships by LCM's. Bulk cargo aboard the LST's was manhandled into LVT's and DUKW's which returned from the beach for the express purpose of aiding unloading. The 27th Engineer Battalion was responsible for unloading three LST's and getting the cargo thereof ashore, and troops of the 6th Division handled most of the bulk cargo aboard the others. By a combination of all the foregoing methods, four LST's were completely unloaded on D Day and most of the cargo of the others had been sent ashore. The latter moved out to sea at dusk and returned on D plus 1 to complete unloading.

The 105-mm. howitzers of the 147th Field Artillery Battalion were brought ashore from LST's by DUKW's and were dropped into position on land by a few DUKW's which were especially equipped with A-frame cranes. The battalion was ashore and in position by 1100, ready to provide hasty support to the 158th Infantry; registration for more accurate fire was completed by 1145. Antiaircraft artillery units began coming ashore about 0810, and all were landed and set up to defend the beachhead by 1600.

The first sign of enemy countermeasures came about 0905, when Japanese mortar or 70-mm. artillery shells began falling in the beachhead area and on the coral reef beyond. Few casualties were suffered from this fire which, far from slowing the landing, probably did much to speed unloading. The enemy's shells set one DUKW afire and destroyed a truckload of ammunition. The fire continued intermittently for about two hours, despite efforts of naval support ves-



DUKW BURNING ON THE BEACH AT NOEMFOOR

sels and planes of the air umbrella to locate and destroy the Japanese weapons.[29]

The Shore Battalion of the 593d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, the Naval Beach Party, and other elements of the Shore Party quickly organized the landing beach. Matting was laid on the beach so that wheeled vehicles could find traction, dispersal areas were located and cleared on the south side of Kamiri Drome, supplies were sent off the beach to these dumps, shell holes were filled in, and Japanese supplies piled up out of the way. Some of the 27th Engineers participated in these Shore Party activities while other elements of the battalion moved inland with the infantrymen to supply flame thrower teams for mopping up operations. The rest of the battalion, working under the direction of Headquarters, No. 62 Works Wing, began repairs on Kamiri Drome, pending the arrival of the rest of the Australian engineer unit and American engineer aviation battalions.[30]

[29] CTF 77 Noemfoor Opns Rpt, pp. 11–13, 15, 20; CyTF Hist Rpt Noemfoor, p. 9; 158th Inf Opns Rpt Noemfoor, 22 Jun–31 Aug 44, p. 2; 27th Engr Bn (C) Opns Rpt Noemfoor, p. 1; Maj Robert M. Luby, *op. cit.;* 593d EB&SR Opns Rpt Noemfoor, pp. 2–3, in binder entitled 3d ESB Opns Rpt, Jul 44.

[30] 27th Engr Bn (C), Opns Rpt Noemfoor, p. 2; 593d EB&SR Opns Rpt Noemfoor, pp. 3, 5; Noemfoor Opns Hist of No. 62 Airfield Construction

Despite extensive enemy defensive preparations in the Kamiri Drome area, the CYCLONE Task Force's losses on D Day were only 3 men killed (1 accidentally), 19 wounded, and 2 injured. This is a tribute to the heavy air and naval bombardment, which succeeded in driving most of the Japanese away from the beach or keeping those that remained pinned down as the assault waves moved ashore. The Japanese suffered much more heavily. About 115 were killed or found dead and 3 were captured.[31]

The CYCLONE Task Force had expected to meet about 3,000 of the enemy, most of whom were considered combat troops. By evening on D Day, the task force had put ashore over 7,000 men, nearly all of them, including the 3,300 of the 158th Infantry, classed as combat troops.[32] So far, there had been no evidence of organized resistance and few Japanese had been located or observed. In the evening, however, General Patrick concluded that 3,500 to 4,500 Japanese combat troops were on Noemfoor and that the enemy garrison totaled about 5,000 men. This new estimate was apparently based upon the evidence of a Japanese prisoner who had heard that 3,000 Japanese infantry reinforcements had arrived on Noemfoor about 25 June. The prisoner admittedly had not seen any of these troops and his information was either uncorroborated or flatly contradicted by two other prisoners and a recovered Javanese slave laborer.[33]

Since little organized resistance had been encountered, plans for 3 July were to institute patrolling designed to locate the main body of Colonel Shimizu's *Noemfoor Detachment*. The 2d and 3d Battalions, 158th Infantry, were to continue eastward toward Kornasoren Drome. These units began moving at 0900 on the 3d. The 3d Battalion was temporarily delayed at a mine field which the 27th Engineers cleared, but advanced over 1,800 yards by late afternoon. A number of well-prepared defensive positions, situated both to defend the beach and prevent lateral movement between Kamiri and Kornasoren Dromes, were found, but none was manned by the Japanese. On the west flank the 1st Battalion patrolled south of the Kamiri River but located only a few enemy stragglers. By the day's end the 158th Infantry had lost only 2 men wounded and 1 injured, while 14 Japanese had been killed.[34]

While the 158th Infantry had been expanding the beachhead, American paratroopers began to drop on Kamiri Drome

Wing, p. 1. No. 62 Works Wing's designation was changed late in July to No. 62 Airfield Construction Wing.

[31] CyTF G–3 Per Rpts, 23 Jun–31 Jul 44; 158th Inf Jnl and Jnl file, 22 Jun–31 Aug 44; 1st Bn 158th Inf, Rpt entitled: Oriental Obliteration—A Japanese Night Attack, covering the period 2–5 Jul 44, p. 1, filed with other 158th Inf materials concerning Noemfoor; 158th Inf Opns Rpt Noemfoor, 22 Jun–31 Aug 44, p. 2. Losses of the 158th Inf were 1 killed, 11 wounded, and 2 injured; the rest of the casualties were apparently suffered by 27th Engrs or 2d ESB units. Of the Japanese dead, it appears that not many more than 60 were killed by the 158th Inf.

[32] ALAMO Force, G–2 Daily Rpt 200, 2 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Noemfoor, 27 May–8 Jul 44; 158th Inf FO 1, 26 Jun 44, in 158th Inf Jnl file, 22 Jun–31 Aug 44; ALAMO Force FO 19, 21 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 25 Jun 44.

[33] Rads, CyTF to ALAMO, NF–248, NF–249, and NF–252, 2 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 30 Jun–3 Jul 44, and in CyTF Out-Msg file, 22 Jun–31 Aug 44. Where one file gave a garbled or incomplete version, the other was used as a check. The first of these radios was dispatched at 1859 and the last about 2030. They were received at ALAMO Force between 2355, 2 Jul, and 0455, 3 Jul.

[34] CyTF Hist Rpt Noemfoor, p. 11; 158th Inf Opns Rpt Noemfoor, 22 Jun–31 Aug 44, p. 2; CTF 77 Noemfoor Opns Rpt, pp. 15–16.

to reinforce the CYCLONE Task Force. This reinforcing operation was to have tragic results for the airborne soldiers.

Ordering the 503d Parachute Infantry Forward

One of the missions assigned to the CYCLONE Task Force had been to secure a suitable dropping ground for paratroopers. From study of maps and aerial photographs before the landing, General Patrick had decided that he would use Kamiri Drome if that field were found reasonably free of shell holes and other obstacles. Examination of the ground on the morning of the landing confirmed General Patrick's decision and at 1028, three minutes after he assumed command ashore, he radioed to General Krueger that Kamiri Drome was a satisfactory dropping ground.[35]

At 1115 General Patrick dispatched another radio to General Krueger recommending that the 503d Parachute Infantry be sent forward to Noemfoor and dropped on Kamiri Drome. General Patrick gave the following reasons for requesting reinforcements: ". . . to guard against unknown situation as to enemy strength and to speed up operation on island." [36] This radio was decoded at ALAMO Force headquarters at 1410.[37] Twenty minutes later the 503d Parachute Infantry received verbal instructions from ALAMO Force's advance headquarters at Hollandia to the effect that one battalion of the regiment was to drop on Noemfoor on 3 July and that the other two battalions would drop on the succeeding two days.[38]

This drop plan meant that it would be midmorning of 5 July before all the 2,000-odd men of the 503d Parachute Infantry could reach Noemfoor. The other ALAMO Force Reserve for Noemfoor—the 34th Infantry, 24th Division, at Biak—was assembled on the beach at Biak Island on the afternoon of 30 June and could load for overwater movement to Noemfoor on less than twenty-four hours' notice. LCI's taking the 34th Infantry to Noemfoor could cover the 75–80 nautical miles from the beach at Mokmer Drome, Biak, to the reef off Kamiri Drome, Noemfoor, in not more than nine hours.[39] Figured from 1115 on 2 July, when General Patrick first asked for reinforcements, the 2,700 men of the 34th Infantry could have reached Noemfoor not later than 2000 hours on the 3d. By that time, in accordance with the air reinforcement plan, only one battalion of less than 750 men of the 503d Parachute Infantry would be on the island.

General Patrick's request for paratroop reinforcements and ALAMO Force's speedy acquiescence and subsequent orders to the 503d Parachute Infantry probably surprised no one. Apparently, the parachute

[35] CyTF Hist Rpt Noemfoor, p. 10; Ltr, Comdr CyTF to Comdr ALAMO Force, 7 Jul 44, no sub, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 31 Jul–6 Aug 44; Rad, CyTF to ALAMO, NF–223, 2 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 30 Jun–3 Jul 44. The letter of 7 July states that on D-Day morning a paratroop officer of the Canadian Army, who was an observer at Noemfoor, advised General Patrick that Kamiri Drome was a suitable dropping ground.

[36] Rad, CyTF to ALAMO, NF–228, 2 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 30 Jun–3 Jul 44.

[37] The time of decoding is from a notation on the copy of NF–228 in the ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 30 Jun–3 Jul 44.

[38] 503d Prcht Inf Opns Rpt Noemfoor, p. 2.

[39] Rad, ALAMO to CTF 77 and CTF 76, WF–1172, 28 Jun 44, and Rad, CTF 76 to ALAMO, 29 Jun 44, both in ALAMO G–2 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 16 Jun–10 Jul 44; Rad, ALAMO to HTF, WH–1426, 30 Jun 44; Rad, HTF to ALAMO, TD–1239, 30 Jun 44; Memo, Asst ACofS G–3 ALAMO to ACofS G–3 ALAMO, 30 Jun 44, sub: Proposed Plans for Reinforcement of CYCLONE Task Force. Last three docs in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 30 Jun–3 Jul 44.

unit was to have been sent to Noemfoor unless General Patrick was strongly opposed to its movement; only the 1115 radio from the CYCLONE Task Force was awaited before the machinery for the movement started. In fact, the 503d Parachute Infantry had known at least as early as 1615 on 1 July—the day before D Day—that one battalion of the regiment was to drop on Noemfoor on 3 July. Orders to that effect had been sent to the regimental command post at Hollandia during the afternoon of 1 July by the ALAMO Force G–3 section.[40] The only alteration in plans made necessary by the receipt of jump orders at 1430 on 2 July was to change the dropping ground. The 503d had expected to jump at Kornasoren Drome, but now it had to restudy available information in preparation for the drop on Kamiri Drome.[41]

The 503d Parachute Infantry Drops at Noemfoor

About 0515 on 3 July regimental headquarters and the 1st Battalion, 503d Parachute Infantry, began loading at Cyclops Drome, Hollandia, on thirty-eight C–47's of the 54th Troop Carrier Wing, Fifth Air Force. At the same time, three B–17's, from which supplies and ammunition were to be dropped on Kamiri Drome, were loaded. The first C–47 took off from Cyclops Drome at 0630, and by 0747 all forty-one planes were in the air. The commanding officer of the parachute regiment, Col. George M. Jones, and most of his staff were in the lead C–47. The planes were to fly over Kamiri Drome in flights of two each, the first plane at a height of 400 feet and the second echeloned slightly to the right rear at 450 feet. Subsequent flights were to follow at a distance of 300 yards.[42]

About 0600 on the 3d, almost twenty hours after he had been advised on the point by a paratroop officer, General Patrick radioed to ALAMO Force that it would be wise if the C–47's flew over Kamiri Drome in single file.[43] He made this recommendation because he feared that the falling paratroopers might suffer casualties if they landed on obstacles along the sides of the narrow airfield, which comprised a 250 by 5,500-foot cleared area and a 100-foot-wide runway. The radio was received at Headquarters, ALAMO Force, about 0740 but apparently was not delivered to the G–3 Section until 0915. Sometime between 0740 and 0915 the radio was passed to Headquarters, Fifth Air Force, by the ALAMO Force message center.[44] By then, the troop-carry-

[40] Entry timed 1615, 1 Jul 44, in 503d Prcht Inf Jnl, 29 Jun–29 Aug 44.

[41] 503d Prcht Inf FO 1, 28 Jun 44, in 503d Prcht Inf S–3 Rpt Noemfoor.

[42] 503d Prcht Inf Jnl, 29 Jun–29 Aug 44; 503d Prcht Inf Opns Rpt Noemfoor, p. 2; 5thAF OI 3, 22 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 25 Jun 44; Noemfoor Air Plan, atchd to CyTF Hist Rpt Noemfoor; 503d Prcht Inf FO 1, 28 Jun 44, in 503d Prcht Inf S–3 Rpt Noemfoor; Ltr, Col Jones to Gen Ward, 22 Nov 50, in OCMH files.

[43] Rad, CyTF to ALAMO (for 5th AF), NF–253, 3 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 30 Jun–3 Jul 44 and in CyTF In-Msg file, 22 Jun–10 Jul 44; Ltr, Comdr CyTF to Comdr ALAMO, 7 Jul 44, no sub, in ALAMO G–3 Noemfoor, 31 Jul–6 Aug 44. According to the CyTF In-Msg file, NF–253 originated at 0600, but the ALAMO Force G–3 Jnl notation says it originated at 0603. In the letter of 7 July, the CyTF commander stated that at midmorning of 2 July the Canadian Army paratroop officer advised him that the troop-carrying aircraft should fly over Kamiri Drome in single file.

[44] Rad, CyTF to ALAMO (for 5thAF), NF–253, 3 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 30 Jun–3 Jul 44. A penciled notation on the ALAMO Force G–3 Jnl copy of this radio states: "Passed by Msg Ctr to 5thAF," but no time is given for this passing. The time of receipt of the radio at the ALAMO Force G–3 Sec is noted on the index sheet to the ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 30 Jun–3 Jul 44. The dimensions of



PARATROOPERS LANDING ON NOEMFOOR. *Note equipment along the airstrip.*

ing planes were airborne and well on their way to Noemfoor.

No attempt seems to have been made to establish radio contact with the 54th Troop Carrier Wing's C–47's to effect the desired change in formation. Whether such an eleventh-hour alteration could have been made is a difficult question. Last-minute attempts to change plans might have created confusion which could have delayed or postponed the parachute drop. Moreover, the radio traffic necessary to effect the change might have brought every Japanese plane within range of Noemfoor over that island. In any case, no change in formation was made, and the thirty-eight C–47's flew into sight of Kamiri Drome about 1000. Ten minutes later, the 'troopers from the leading C–47 were on the ground, followed closely by the men in the neighboring plane.

Contrary to plans, the first two C–47's flew over the strip at a height of about 175 feet, and the next eight planes all flew below 400 feet. Dropping from this low altitude caused the paratroopers in the first ten C–47's to suffer many casualties; more casualties resulted because the planes flew over the strip two abreast. The broad formation caused many 'troopers to land off the southern edge of the 100-foot-wide runway in an area where Allied vehicles, bulldozers, supply dumps, and wrecked Japanese aircraft were located. Additional hazards beyond the cleared area were jagged tree stumps, trees partially destroyed by preassault air and naval bombardments, and a number of antiaircraft gun emplacements. Altogether, there were 72 casualties among the 739 men who dropped on 3 July. Included in this number—a rate of almost 10 percent—were 31 severe fracture cases, most of whom would never again be able to make a parachute jump.[45]

The first reports of the 3 July jump received by ALAMO Force stated that there had been only 1 percent casualties during the drop.[46] Later information, received at Hollandia about 0200 on the 4th, raised that rate to 6.7 percent.[47] But even before these reports began to filter back to Hollandia, the 503d Parachute Infantry was informed that another battalion was to drop on 4 July.[48] In preparation for this second jump, General Krueger instructed General Patrick to make sure that the edges of Kamiri Drome were clear of vehicles and the 54th Troop Carrier Wing was ordered to fly its C–47's in single file over the airfield.[49]

Kamiri Drome are from ALAMO Force, G–2 Photo Int Sec, Rpt 135, 13 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 6–19 Jun 44.

[45] 503d Prcht Inf Opns Rpt Noemfoor, p. 2; 503d Prcht Inf Jnl, 29 Jun–29 Aug 44; Rad, CyTF to ALAMO, NF–275, 3 Jul 44, in CyTF In-Msg file, 22 Jun–10 Jul 44; Rpt, Board of Officers to Comdr CyTF, 7 Jul 44, sub: Report of Investigation by Board of Officers on Casualties Resulting from Parachute Drops on 3–4 Jul 1944, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 10–16 Jul 44; Ltr, Jones to Ward, 22 Nov 50. The Board of Officers comprised Lt Col John J. Tolson (Inf), Executive Officer of the 503d Parachute Infantry, acting as president of the board; Lt Col Francis L. DePasquale (MC), of Headquarters, CYCLONE Task Force; and Maj Franklin E. Carpenter (FA), of Headquarters, Sixth Army (ALAMO Force). The board was convened on 7 Jul by CyTF SO 4, 7 Jul 44.

[46] Rad, CyTF to ALAMO, NF–265, 3 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 30 Jun–3 Jul 44.

[47] Rad, CyTF to ALAMO, NF–275, 3 Jul 44, in CyTF In-Msg file, 22 Jun–10 Jul 44 and in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 4–6 Jul 44. Time of receipt stated in the text is taken from the copy of NF–275 in the ALAMO Force Journal.

[48] 503d Prcht Inf Jnl, 29 Jun–29 Aug 44; Rads, ALAMO to CyTF, 5thAF, TF 77, *et al.*, WH–424 and WH–425, 3 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 30 Jun–3 Jul 44.

[49] Rad, CyTF to ALAMO, NF–275, 3 Jul 44, in CyTF In-Msg file, 22 Jun–10 Jul 44; Bd of Off Rpt to Comdr CyTF, 7 Jul 44; Rad, ALAMO to CyTF and 5thAF, WH–426, 3 Jul 44, in CyTF In-Msg file, 22 Jun–10 Jul 44.

At 0955 on the 4th the 3d Battalion, 503d Parachute Infantry, and the rest of regimental headquarters began dropping on Kamiri Drome; by 1025 the 685 men of this echelon were on the ground. This time all the C–47's flew at a height of at least 400 feet in single file formation, and, although the flight pattern of five to seven planes was not entirely satisfactory, nearly all the 'troopers landed on the airstrip.[50]

Even with the new precautions there were 56 jump casualties, a rate of over 8 percent. Most of the injuries on the second drop were attributed to the hard coral surface of Kamiri Drome, on which considerable grading, rolling, and packing had been accomplished since the morning of 3 July. So far, 1,424 officers and men of the 503d Parachute Infantry had dropped at Noemfoor. There had been 128 jump casualties, a final rate of 8.98 percent, among them 59 serious fracture cases. There had been no casualties from enemy action. The parachute regiment had lost the services of one battalion commander, three company commanders, the regimental communications officer, and a number of key noncommissioned officers.[51]

Colonel Jones, the regimental commander, considered that injuries had been excessive on both the 3d and 4th of July, and he therefore requested General Patrick to arrange for water shipment of the remaining battalion.[52] The task force commander agreed that no more drops should be attempted, but he suggested to ALAMO Force that the remainder of the regiment be brought forward by air as soon as Kamiri Drome was sufficiently repaired to receive C–47's. With these recommendations, General Krueger agreed.[53] However, torrential rains and a shortage of heavy equipment at Noemfoor combined to keep the airfield inoperational longer than had been expected. Finally the 2d Battalion, 503d Parachute Infantry, was flown from Hollandia to Mokmer Drome on Biak. Disembarking from C–47's at Mokmer, the 'troopers moved aboard LCI's for the trip to Noemfoor, which they reached on 11 July.[54]

The Occupation of Noemfoor Island

Possibly the only valuable result of the parachute drop was that mopping-up operations on Noemfoor could begin sooner than might otherwise have been possible. The 1st Battalion, 503d Parachute Infantry, upon its arrival on 3 July, assumed responsibility for about 2,000 yards in the center of the defenses around Kamiri Drome, thus permitting the 2d and 3d Battalions, 158th Infantry, to concentrate at the eastern end of the field and extend the perimeter. The 3d Battalion, 503d Parachute Infantry, when it landed on 4 July, relieved elements of the 3d Battalion, 158th Infantry, as the latter unit pushed east to Kornasoren Drome.[55]

---

[50] Bd of Off Rpt to Comdr CyTF, 7 Jul 44; 503d Prcht Inf Jnl, 29 Jun–29 Aug 44; 503d Prcht Inf Opns Rpt Noemfoor, p. 2; Rads, CyTF to ALAMO, NF–291 and NF–302, 4 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 4–6 Jul 44.

[51] Bd of Off Rpt to Comdr CyTF, 7 Jul 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Noemfoor, p. 11.

[52] Rad, CyTF to ALAMO (CO 503d Prcht Inf to Rear Ech, 503d Prcht Inf), NF–307, 4 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 4–6 Jul 44.

[53] Rad, CyTF to ALAMO, NF–302, 4 Jul 44, and Rad, ALAMO to CyTF, WH–618, 5 Jul 44, both in CyTF In-Msg file, 22 Jun–10 Jul 44.

[54] 503d Prcht Inf Jnl, 29 Jun–29 Aug 44; Rad, CyTF to ALAMO and 5thAF, NF–399, in CyTF G–3 Jnl, 30 Jun–6 Jul 44; Rad, ALAMO to HTF, WH–1023, 7 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 6–10 Jul 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Noemfoor, p. 11.

[55] 503d Prcht Inf Opns Rpt Noemfoor, p. 2; CyTF G–3 Jnl, 30 Jun–6 Jul 44.

Hill 201

The 3d Battalion, 158th Infantry, moving eastward along the coastal road, encountered no opposition on 4 July.[56] The battalion found a number of well-prepared, but abandoned, enemy defensive positions along both sides of the road, and the cntire area around Kornasoren Drome and the village of Kornasoren was discovered to be mined in a haphazard fashion, principally with 200-pound aerial bombs, many of which were incompletely buried. The infantry unit had little difficulty picking its way through the mine fields, which the engineers rapidly cleared. At evening on the 4th, the battalion dug in at the eastern end of Kornasoren Drome. Meanwhile the 1st Battalion (less Company A) had crossed the Kamiri River by LVT and LCM and occupied Kamiri village without opposition. Out of Kamiri, the battalion followed a road leading southeast to a large Japanese garden area 1,700 yards distant. The battalion's leading elements began approaching a terrain feature designated Hill 201, in the western section of the garden area, about 1330. So far, only scattered rifle fire had opposed the march from Kamiri village.

The Japanese garden area was about 600 yards long, east and west, and 350 yards across, north to south. The ground was devoid of large trees except for a few atop Hill 201, but thick, secondary jungle growth covered the eastern and southern slopes of the hill, while the rest of the garden area was overgrown with partially cultivated papaya, taro, and cassava, all averaging about eight feet in height. The trail from Kamiri village passed over the southern slope of Hill 201, and 300 yards away, near the eastern edge of the gardens, joined the main road from Kamiri Drome to Namber Drome, located about six miles to the south. Another trail ran along the eastern side of the hill, branching to the north and northwest at the northeastern corner of the low terrain feature.

As the 1st Battalion approached the western side of Hill 201, a small group of Japanese, heavily armed and carrying packs, was seen hurrying south along the main road below the hill. Fearing that Hill 201 might be occupied in some force, the battalion commander halted the advance and prepared a double envelopment, to be supported by heavy machine guns from positions west of the hill and south of the Kamiri–garden trail. First, Company C seized a knoll called Hill 180, lying 300 yards north of the gardens. Then Company B surprised a Japanese platoon in a mangrove swamp at the southwest corner of the garden area and pushed the Japanese southeast over Mission Hill, a low terrain feature lying east of the main road and southeast of Hill 201. With the ground on both flanks of Hill 201 secured, the battalion, at 1515, began concentrating around the hilltop for the night, setting up a tight defensive perimeter.

Company C protected the northern and eastern slopes; Company B was on the south and southeast; and Company D, together with battalion headquarters and headquarters company, dug in along the western slope. One heavy machine gun was sighted to cover a trail leading up the southern slope of the hill from the mangrove swamp, and a section of heavies was emplaced to fire on the main road and Hill 170, 600 yards east

[56] This subsection is based principally on: CyTF Hist Rpt Noemfoor, pp. 11–12; 158th Inf Opns Rpt Noemfoor, 22 Jun–31 Aug 44, p. 3; 1st Bn 158th Inf, Oriental Obliteration Rpt, pp. 2–10; CyTF G–3 Jnl, 30 Jun–6 Jul 44; CyTF G–3 Per Rpts, 23 Jun–31 Jul 44; 158th Inf Jnl and Jnl file, 22 Jun–31 Aug 44.

of Hill 201. Company D's 81-mm. mortars registered on the edge of the mangrove swamp and on the trail to Kamiri at the point at which that trail entered the garden area. Three guns of an attached platoon of 4.2-inch mortars (641st Tank Destroyer Battalion) registered on the eastern slopes of Hill 180, on a trail leading north past that hill, and on a target area on the main road to Kamiri Drome at the point where the road entered the north edge of the garden. A battery of the 147th Field Artillery Battalion's 105-mm. howitzers, emplaced near Kamiri Drome, registered along the main road through the gardens, on the west side of Hill 170, and on Mission Hill, where the main road left the garden area. By 1800, with the accompanying hazard of occasional rifle fire from hidden Japanese, all defensive preparations were completed. Moonset was at 0500 on the 5th, and the battalion commander called his men's attention to the danger of a Japanese attack between that hour and first light. The warning was well taken.

About 0430 a few Japanese were heard moving around at the northeast edge of the perimeter. Near the same time, more enemy approached Hill 201 from Mission Hill and through the mangrove swamp south of the perimeter. At 0520, without the warning of preparatory fire, Japanese infantry began pressing forward all along the southern and southeastern sides of the perimeter. As the attack started, some enemy light mortars began firing, but all the shells from these weapons landed about 200 yards west of Hill 201. As soon as the enemy attack began, the 1st Battalion requested that the prearranged artillery and mortar concentrations be fired. The battalion's 81-mm. mortars immediately began throwing shells into the mangrove swamp and along the trail approaching Hill 201 from the south. Cries of wounded or dying Japanese attested to the effectiveness of these fires, and the enemy was driven off the trail into the second-growth jungle and overgrown gardens. Now, two Japanese light machine guns opened up, one from the western slope of Hill 170 and another from Mission Hill. Both these weapons were firing from positions on which the 147th Field Artillery Battalion had previously registered. They were quickly put out of action.

Some Japanese managed to get through the mortar and artillery barrages and continued up the sides of the trail from the south through fire from Company D's machine guns. The enemy found cover behind a low, 150-yard-long log fence which led from the southeast toward the center of the 1st Battalion's defenses. While the fence afforded some protection, the attacking infantrymen were silhouetted as they tried to clamber over the top. The main body of the attacking force therefore kept down behind the fence, trying to crawl along it to the top of the hill. But the fence did not extend beyond the 1st Battalion's outer defenses and the attackers soon found themselves debouching into steady machine gun and rifle fire from the defenders atop the hill. The attack soon degenerated into a series of small suicide charges by groups of three to six Japanese, all of whom were cut down as they tried to climb the fence or move beyond its end. By 0630 the last enemy efforts had ceased and all firing had stopped.

The 1st Battalion now sent patrols out over the battlefield. From prisoners it was determined that the attacking force had consisted of 350 to 400 men—the *10th* and *12th Companies, 219th Infantry,* reinforced by approximately 150 armed Formosan laborers. During the morning over 200 dead

Japanese were counted around the 1st Battalion's perimeter, and the number of enemy dead found or enemy wounded captured on subsequent days along trails leading south from the hill indicated that virtually the entire original attacking force had been annihilated.

Mopping Up

At Hill 201, the *Noemfoor Detachment* made its only significant offensive effort, and after that affair operations on Noemfoor evolved into a series of patrol actions as the Allied forces extended their control over the island and rapidly expanded the airdrome facilities.[57] On 5 July, the 1st Battalion, 158th Infantry, mopped up the garden area, while the 3d Battalion patrolled in northeastern Noemfoor, finding no Japanese. The 2d Battalion, relieved at Kamiri Drome by the 3d Battalion, 503d Parachute Infantry, started preparing for an amphibious landing at Namber Drome, on the southwest coast.

This operation got under way about 0900 on 6 July. LCM's of Company A, 543d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, moved the 2d Battalion, 158th Infantry, from Kamiri Drome to the north side of Roemboi Bay, at the lower end of Namber Drome. The Support Battery, 2d Engineer Special Brigade, covered the landing with antiaircraft boats, and three destroyers and a rocket-equipped LCI were also on hand. Following a short naval bombardment, which was accompanied by bombing and strafing by six B–25's, the 2d Battalion poured ashore without opposition. Namber Drome was secured by 1240, not a shot having been fired by the 2d Battalion and not a single casualty having been suffered. Fifteen minutes after Namber Drome was taken, a liaison plane of the 147th Field Artillery Battalion landed on the strip.

From 7 through 10 July vigorous patrolling by all elements of the CYCLONE Task Force was continued, but only small Japanese parties were encountered. The conclusion was therefore reached that no organized large enemy force remained on Noemfoor and that future operations would consist of hunting down small enemy groups. For the latter purpose, it was decided to divide the island into two parts, making the 503d Parachute Infantry responsible for the southern section and the 158th Infantry for the northern.

Regrouping of units according to this plan started on 11 July, when the 2d Battalion, 503d Parachute Infantry, reached Namber Drome from Biak, via LCI's. During the next day or so the 158th Infantry reconcentrated in northern Noemfoor. The regiment's activity to 31 August was confined to extensive patrolling, which produced contacts only with small groups of enemy stragglers. To the end of August the regiment killed 611 Japanese, captured 179, and liberated 209 Javanese slave laborers. During its operations on Noemfoor, the 158th Infantry lost 6 men killed and 41 wounded.

To the 503d Parachute Infantry fell the task of mopping up the remnants of the *Noemfoor Detachment,* which, after the abortive attack at Hill 201, concentrated in southern Noemfoor. The largest organized group of Japanese (400–500 strong)

[57] Information in this subsection is from: CyTF FO 3, 5 Jul 44, in CyTF G–3 Jnl, 30 Jun–6 Jul 44; CyTF G–3 Per Rpts, 23 Jun–31 Jul and 31 Jul–31 Aug 44; CyTF G–3 Jnls, 7–10, 11–14, and 14–17 Jul 44; CyTF Hist Rpt Noemfoor, pp. 12–16; 158th Inf Opns Rpt Noemfoor, 22 Jun–31 Aug 44, pp. 3–5; 503d Prcht Inf Opns Rpt Noemfoor, pp. 3–4; 503d Prcht Inf S–3 Rpt, Noemfoor, n. p.; 2d Bn 503d Prcht Inf Opns Rpt Noemfoor, pp. 1–3.

gathered under Colonel Shimizu's command at Hill 670, in the west-central part of the island about three miles northeast of Namber Drome. The 1st Battalion, 503d Parachute Infantry, made contact with this enemy group on 13 July. Finally reaching the top of Hill 670 on the morning of the 16th, the 'troopers found that the Japanese had evacuated the hill the previous night. Contact with the main body of Colonel Shimizu's force was lost until 23 July, when patrols of the 2d Battalion, 503d Parachute Infantry, located the group about four miles northwest of Inasi, a native village on the shore of the lagoon which cuts into Noemfoor's eastern coast.[58] Contact was again lost on the 25th and not regained until 10 August, when the main Japanese force was found near Hill 380, two and a half miles south-southwest of Inasi. From the 10th through the 15th, the 3d Battalion, 503d Parachute Infantry, supported by the 147th Field Artillery Battalion and a few B–25's of the 309th Bomb Wing, converged on Hill 380. At the same time, elements of the 1st Battalion moved toward the hill from Menoekwari South to prevent enemy escape. Though boxed in by the bulk of five companies of the 503d Parachute Infantry, Colonel Shimizu, during the night of 15–16 August, slipped through the cordon around Hill 380 and withdrew his remaining force, now not much over 200 men strong, southwest toward Pakriki, on the south-central coast.

Colonel Shimizu's party was not again located until 17 August, when two brisk engagements resulted in the capture or destruction of the last machine guns left to the *Noemfoor Detachment* and broke the last organized resistance. At least 20 Japanese were killed, bringing to 342 the total of Japanese killed in the series of actions southwest from Inasi to Pakriki during the period 10 through 17 August. In the same week, 43 Japanese were captured. Colonel Shimizu was not among those killed or captured, and was at large at the end of the month.

On 23 August the 503d Parachute Infantry, less three companies, began concentrating at a new camp near Kamiri Drome. The three companies, which had been left in the southern part of the island to continue patrolling, were finally relieved on the 27th by elements of the 1st Battalion, 158th Infantry. According to one report, the last paratroopers left the southern section of Noemfoor with some regrets:

> As the troops left the area in which they had chased SHIMIZU so relentlessly, their disappointment was not so much at their failure to apprehend SHIMIZU the man, nor even to capture the regimental colors of the 219th Infantry. It was rather that they missed their chance of retrieving the colonel's 300 year old saber which prisoners said he still carried when last seen near PAKRIKI. When the operation officially closed on 31 August this same saber was still inducing the most vigorous patrolling by the 1st Battalion, 158th Infantry.[59]

By 31 August, when General Krueger declared the Noemfoor operation over, the CYCLONE Task Force had lost 63 men killed,

[58] For heroic action and signal leadership on 23 July, Sgt. Ray E. Eubanks, a squad leader of Company D, 503d Parachute Infantry (Company D was in the 2d Battalion), was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Leading his squad to the relief of a platoon isolated by the Japanese, Sgt. Eubanks was wounded and his rifle rendered useless by Japanese fire. He continued to lead his squad forward, using his rifle as a club. By this means he killed four more Japanese before he himself was again hit and killed.

[59] CyTF Hist Rpt Noemfoor, p. 16. There is no indication in available records that either Shimizu or his saber was ever found.

343 wounded, and 3 missing. Approximately 1,730 Japanese had been killed and 186 were captured. Most of the Allied casualties were suffered by the 503d Parachute Infantry during its clashes with the *Noemfoor Detachment* in southern Noemfoor after 11 July, and the regiment can claim credit for killing about 1,000 Japanese. In addition to the Japanese losses, 1 Korean, 1 Chinese, and 552 Formosan prisoners of war were taken. Finally, 403 Javanese slave laborers were recovered on the island.[60]

Base Development on Noemfoor

Civil Affairs and Atrocities

For the purpose of supervising the civil population of Noemfoor, a Netherlands Indies Civil Administration (NICA) Detachment was attached to the CYCLONE Task Force, just as NICA parties had been attached to previous Allied task forces operations in Dutch New Guinea.[61] Initially, the Noemfoor NICA Detachment consisted of 4 officers and 35 enlisted men, but it was later augmented by 10 local policemen recovered on the island. The detachment assisted in obtaining intelligence information, recruited and supervised native labor, and administered the native population. Only 400 of the total native population of some 5,000 were ever used as laborers, the rest being either women or children or men too old or too ill to work.

The Japanese had never brought the Melanesians of Noemfoor entirely under their control, for the natives had either offered a passive resistance or had faded into the interior to live off the land. A few were impressed into service by the Japanese, while others who were captured but still refused to co-operate were executed. The natives greeted the Allied landings with great enthusiasm and came out of hideaways in the hills carrying Dutch flags which they had concealed from the Japanese. Under the direction of NICA, the natives were gradually resettled in their old villages, where they were protected by CYCLONE Task Force outposts. Late in July the village chiefs gathered in formal council and officially declared war on the Japanese. Thereafter, native cooperation increased. Up to 31 August the natives had captured and brought to Allied outposts more than fifty Japanese and had killed an equal number.

One tale of horror concerns the Javanese on Noemfoor. According to information gathered by the NICA Detachment, over 3,000 Indonesians were shipped to Noemfoor in late 1943, mostly from Soerabaja and other large cities on Java. The shipment included many women, children, and teenaged boys. The Japanese, without regard to age or sex, put the Javanese to work constructing roads and airfields almost entirely by hand. Little or no clothing, shoes, bedding, or shelter was provided, and the Javanese had to supplement their very inadequate allowance of rations by shifting for themselves. Driven by hunger, many attempted to steal Japanese rations but for their pains were beheaded or hung by their hands or feet until dead. Starvation and disease (the Japanese provided no medical

[60] CyTF G–3 Per Rpts, 31 Jul–31 Aug 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Noemfoor, p. 19; CyTF Hist Rpt Noemfoor, pp. 16–17.

[61] This subsection is based principally on: ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Noemfoor, p. 19; CyTF Hist Rpt Noemfoor, pp. 21–22. Specific evidence concerning atrocities (in addition to the general outlines provided by the foregoing documents) is to be found in messages and other documents in the G–3 Journals of ALAMO Force and the CYCLONE Task Force, as well as in the journals of the 503d Parachute and 158th Infantry Regiments.

care) took a steadily increasing toll. The dead were periodically collected for mass burial, and survivors alleged that many of the sick were buried alive. It was considered probable that not more than ten or fifteen Javanese were killed accidentally by Allied forces. Yet only 403 of the 3,000-odd brought from Java were found alive on Noemfoor by 31 August. The physical condition of these survivors almost defied description—most of the others had succumbed to Japanese brutality within a period of eight months.

The story of Formosan labor troops brought to Noemfoor, ostensibly as part of the Japanese armed forces, is also tragic. Originally the Formosans had numbered about 900 men. They had been worked for months on airfield and road construction, on half the ration of rice issued to the regular Japanese troops. When they collapsed from exhaustion or hunger, or became victims of tropical diseases, they were herded into what the Japanese euphemistically called a labor convalescent camp, actually a sort of prison stockade into which the Formosans were placed to die. There, their rations were again cut in half, and the shelter and blankets provided covered but a fraction of the inmates. Medical care was given only to the worse cases, and then was inadequate. Upon the arrival of Allied forces on Noemfoor, most of the remaining Formosans were rounded up, armed, and forced to fight. But these attempts at compulsion were fruitless. Over 550 Formosans voluntarily surrendered to the Allies, more than half of them suffering from starvation and tropical diseases. Not more than twenty had been killed by Allied action, but about 300 had died before 2 July.

To complete the story of the dire straits to which the Japanese on Noemfoor had been reduced, it is necessary to tell of cannibalism. About 1 August CYCLONE Task Force patrols began to discover Japanese bodies from which portions of flesh had been cut. Initially, this was not considered direct evidence of cannibalism, although increasing numbers of bodies with fleshy portions removed were later found. Finally, some American dead, left outside defensive positions overnight, were discovered in like condition. The prisoners began to report that cannibalism had been generally practiced since 1 August, principally on freshly-killed Formosans. Some prisoners admitted eating human flesh themselves. In at least one instance a two-day-old cadaver had been used for food.

Construction and Unloading

Airfield construction on Noemfoor Island began on D Day, 2 July, when elements of the 27th Engineers used improvised drags and rollers rigged behind six-by-six trucks to start grading Kamiri Drome. This work continued until the afternoon of 4 July when, in the opinion of the task force engineer, Group Captain Dale, the strip was ready to receive a few aircraft. But because of bad weather and existing plans for parachute drops, no planes used the strip until the afternon of 6 July, when an Australian P–40 squadron landed to remain for future operations.[62]

It was not until 16 July that sufficient facilities were completed at Kamiri Drome to accommodate an entire fighter group. Ultimately, the 1874th Engineer Aviation Battalion and No. 5 Mobile Works Squad-

[62] 27th Engrs Opns Rpt Noemfoor, p. 2; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Noemfoor, p. 13; Rad, CyTF to ALAMO, NF–454, 7 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 6–10 Jul 44.

ron of No. 62 Works Wing extended the Kamiri runway to 5,400 feet. Sufficient taxiways and aircraft dispersal facilities for the two groups of fighters were also completed. All except maintenance work on the field was finished on 9 September.[63]

At first, it had been planned to improve Namber Drome, and some work started there immediately after the field was secured. But Group Captain Dale, finding the site rough and badly graded, recommended that Namber be abandoned in favor of Kornasoren, although he realized that this would increase construction needs at the latter field. General Krueger approved the new plan and preliminary surveys were immediately begun at Kornasoren. Plans were made to construct there two parallel runways 7,000 feet long, with correspondingly large taxiways and dispersal areas.[64]

On 14 July, General MacArthur directed that by 25 July minimum facilities would have to be prepared at Kornasoren Drome to accommodate fifty P–38's in order to provide additional air cover for the impending invasion of the Vogelkop Peninsula. Except for continuing work at Kamiri Drome, all remaining engineer units, all available heavy equipment, all service troops who could possibly be spared from ship unloading, all available native labor, and large numbers of combat troops were concentrated at Kornasoren Drome to complete the necessary new construction on schedule. For ten days all hands worked around the clock and by 1200 on 25 July had completed a 6,000-foot-long strip which, with associated dispersal facilities, could accommodate one fighter group. Two days later this strip was extended to 7,000 feet, and the second 7,000-foot runway was completed on 2 September.[65]

Ultimately, Allied aircraft based on Noemfoor supported not only operations on that island but also the invasions of the Vogelkop Peninsula and Morotai Island. Soon after Kornasoren Drome was completed, B–24's began flying from the field to conduct the first large-scale bombing attacks on Japanese sources of petroleum products at Balikpapan, Borneo.[66]

Ship unloading operations at Noemfoor were hampered by the surrounding reefs, but gradually, by the construction of jetties or temporary ramps and by extensive demolitions at the outer edges of the reefs, the difficulties attending supply operations were reduced. Service troops and native labor were both inadequate at Noemfoor, and throughout the operation a daily average of some 600 combat troops had to be used for ship unloading, while others were used on various construction projects.[67]

---

[63] ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Noemfoor, p. 15; No. 62 Airfield Constr Wing Noemfoor Opns Hist, p. 1.

[64] CyTF Hist Rpt Noemfoor, p. 20; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Noemfoor, pp. 13, 15–16; Rad, CyTF to ALAMO, NF–669, 12 Jul 44, and Rad, CyTF to ALAMO, NF–680, 13 Jul 44, last two in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 10–16 Jul 44.

[65] Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, 5thAF, and USASOS, CX–14883, 14 Jul 44, and Rad, ALAMO to CyTF, WH–2255, 15 Jul 44, both in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 10–16 Jul 44; CyTF Hist Rpt Noemfoor, p. 20; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Noemfoor, pp. 15–16.

[66] 27th Engr Constr Bn [a redesignation of 27th Engr Bn (C)], "Going Hard: History of Overseas War Service of 27th Engineer Construction Battalion," Dec 43–Oct 45, p. 17. The heavily loaded B–24's (of the Thirteenth Air Force) were unable to take off until high trees on the approaches to Kornasoren Drome were cleared by the 161st Parachute Engineer Company, which had recently arrived at Noemfoor to form part of the 503d Parachute Regimental Combat Team, then being organized around the 503d Parachute Infantry Regiment. Ltr, Jones to Ward, 22 Nov 50.

[67] CyTF Hist Rpt Noemfoor, pp. 19–20; 27th Engr Constr Bn, "Going Hard . . .," pp. 14–17.

The reefs at Noemfoor created another hazard concerning which a classic remark is attributed to Group Captain Dale. The story goes that on D Day Group Captain Dale, after striding up and down Kamiri Drome to ascertain the extent of repairs necessary to that field, returned to his temporary command post, looked out to sea over the reef, and said, "Bad show this—no bloody place for a swim!" [68]

[68] This story, perhaps apocryphal, was heard by the author when in the Southwest Pacific during 1944–46. A quotation from an unnumbered issue of *Ramp*, the 3d Engr Special Brigade's newspaper, cited in the 3d ESB's Opns Rpt for July 1944, provides essentially the same tale, without mentioning names.

General Krueger closed the Noemfoor Operation for historical records purposes on 31 August. On 6 September Brig. Gen. Hanford MacNider took over command of the task force and the 158th RCT. The island remained under ALAMO Force control until 9 October, when it passed to the U. S. Eighth Army. The 503d Parachute RCT moved from Noemfoor to Leyte, in the Philippines, in mid-November, and the 158th RCT left for Luzon in January 1945. By October, 1,957 Japanese had been killed or found dead on Noemfoor and 247 had been captured, while 623 Formosans, 2 Koreans, and 1 Chinese were prisoners of war. These figures are from ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 61, 4 Oct 44, copy in G–2 DofA files.

CHAPTER XVIII

Airfields on the Vogelkop Peninsula

Strategically and tactically the most important result of the Noemfoor operation was that airfield development on the island permitted the Allied Air Forces to increase slightly the breadth and depth of air penetration, bringing Japanese bases to the southwest, west, and northwest within a little shorter range for fighters and bombers.[1] The nearest of these bases were on the Vogelkop Peninsula, and the Japanese stronghold at Manokwari, at the northeast corner of the Vogelkop, was less than 70 nautical miles west of Noemfoor.

Early Plans for the Vogelkop

General MacArthur's strategy for the drive to the Philippines—successive occupation of air and supply bases along the north coast of New Guinea—had from its inception envisaged the capture of an air-base site on the western Vogelkop as the final large-scale operation in New Guinea. From such a base the Allied Air Forces could support subsequent operations to the northwest, either directly to Mindanao in the southern Philippines, or if necessary via the islands between the Vogelkop and Mindanao.[2]

Oil

While General MacArthur's planners made many changes in their choice of specific objectives on the Vogelkop, by late October 1943 they had determined to seize the large Japanese troop and supply base at Sorong, on a small island just off the peninsula's northwest shore. Simultaneously, air- and naval-base sites would be secured on Waigeo Island, about sixty miles northwest of Sorong. Manokwari was not considered a profitable target. From fields on the near-by Geelvink Bay islands—such as Biak and Noemfoor—Allied Air Forces planes could accomplish virtually the same missions they could from Manokwari, and from those islands, which could be secured at less cost than Manokwari, the Allied Air Forces could easily keep inoperational Japanese air and naval bases in the Manokwari area. Since the Sorong–Waigeo area was within support range of Allied land-based aircraft flying from airdromes on the Geelvink Bay islands, the Japanese at Manokwari could safely be bypassed.

In conjunction with the advance to Sorong and Waigeo, General MacArthur

[1] Other less tangible results were the destruction of the Japanese garrison; the elimination of Noemfoor as a way station for Japanese reinforcements moving toward Biak, thus perhaps allowing quicker mop-up on the latter; and the reduction of airdrome construction requirements at Biak, enabling the Allied Air Forces to send more planes into the forward area without potentially dangerous crowding at Biak.

[2] RENO I, 25 Feb 43, copy in OCMH files; RENO III, 20 Oct 43, copy in OPD file, ABC 384 Pacific, Sec. 8–A.

planned to occupy and develop the Klamono oil fields, inland on the Vogelkop some thirty miles southeast of Sorong. Allied plans to exploit the oil resources of the Vogelkop and other petroleum centers in the Netherlands East Indies had a long history. The Japanese advance south through the Indies in 1942 had cut off one of the world's richest sources of petroleum products, forcing the Allies to depend on Western Hemisphere and Middle East supplies, the latter of which had long been threatened by the German and Italian Armies. Oil from both sources had to be transported through dangerous waters before it could reach its proper destinations. Shortages of petroleum products were soon in evidence throughout the countries controlled by or friendly to the Allied nations.

Most of the petroleum production and refining facilities in the Netherlands East Indies had been partially or wholly destroyed by retreating Dutch forces or by civilian oil companies themselves. Many of the civilian oil experts, escaping south to Australia, were integrated into United States or Netherlands armed forces. At General MacArthur's headquarters some of these men soon began making plans for the rehabilitation of the lost fields, once Allied forces had wrested them from the Japanese.[3] Suggestions emanating from General MacArthur's headquarters concerning oil rehabilitation projects expressed the view that necessary equipment should be furnished by the United States Government and turned over to civilian organizations for the actual task of bringing wells and refineries back into production.

Meanwhile, in the United States, similar planning was going on, much of it without reference to General MacArthur and independently of related civilian or military agencies of the government. The Headquarters, Army Service Forces; the Office of the Chief Engineer, U. S. Army; the Office of the Quartermaster General, U. S. Army; the Army-Navy Petroleum Board; various civilian oil companies with prewar interests in Netherlands East Indies oil fields; and, finally, U. S. Navy logistical agencies were all interested in oil rehabilitation projects. Ultimately, in December 1942, the somewhat chaotic situation in regard to the planning for oil field exploitation in the Indies was brought to the attention of the U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff.[4]

The Joint Chiefs quickly assumed responsibility for the direction and co-ordination of oil rehabilitation projects in the Netherlands East Indies and undertook necessary liaison with British and Dutch agencies. By mid-February 1943 they had decided that, contrary to General MacArthur's recommendations, military units would at least start all oil rehabilitation and exploitation projects in the Indies, although the final development of the oil resources might be left to civilian agencies. General MacArthur was instructed to plan the location and timing details of oil rehabilitation projects in the Indies, and, subject to the Joint Chiefs' approval, execute those plans. At the same time, the Joint Chiefs directed that the organization of special military petroleum production and refining units begin. The

[3] Some of the foregoing material is based upon the contents of the various GHQ SWPA RENO plans; some is based on personal knowledge acquired by the author while serving on the staff of GHQ SWPA during 1944–46; and the rest is general knowledge.

[4] Memo, Maj. Gen. Thomas T. Handy, ACofS OPD, for CofS USA, 31 Dec 42, no sub; JCS 190, Rehabilitation of Petroleum Resources in the Netherlands East Indies, 9 Jan 43, and atchd papers, in OPD file, ABC 350.05 NEI (2-7-42), Sec. 1. All the papers of the JCS 190 series cited hereafter bear the same title.

requisite troops, most of them U. S. Army engineers and many especially recruited from civilian pursuits, soon began to assemble and train in California. Orders were also placed with manufacturers for the special production and refining equipment, which was sent to California as it was obtained.[5]

While these steps were being taken to coordinate oil rehabilitation projects, it had become obvious that in accordance with General MacArthur's plans the first significant oil producing region that could be recaptured in the Netherlands East Indies would be the Klamono district on the Vogelkop Peninsula. Before the war, civilian oil companies had found oil in commercial quantities at the Klamono fields, but there had been little production other than that necessary to prove the discoveries. Insofar as was known, Dutch forces on the Vogelkop had not destroyed many of the Klamono production facilities when they left the region in 1942. Nor had the Japanese made any use of the fields—they found all the oil their limited shipping could handle in more accessible places such as Java, Sumatra, and Borneo.

The Klamono district oil was especially valuable in that it could be used as fuel for naval vessels without refining beyond a little "topping" to remove excess naphtha. With limited effort, the wells could be expected to bring in some 16,000 barrels of crude oil per day; with additional development, about 25,000 barrels. Such production would presumably save the Allies considerable shipping space and time, for, instead of the long haul from United States ports, navy bunker fuel could be produced and topped as necessary much nearer to the scene of combat.[6]

Early in February 1944 General MacArthur requested that the troops and equipment of the Engineer Petroleum Production Depot (as the unit then forming in California was designated) arrive in the Southwest Pacific by 1 November, ready to start work at the Klamono oil fields.[7] This arrival date was based on General MacArthur's current planning assumption that operations on the Vogelkop would begin about 1 October. Shortly after General MacArthur made this request, sweeping changes in plans were made for the entire program of operations in the Southwest Pacific following the decision to bypass Japanese bases in eastern New Guinea in favor of the jump to Hollandia and Aitape on 22 April. In March General MacArthur was able to amend his plans to provide for the invasion of the Vogelkop no later than 15 September.[8]

While this change did not materially affect General MacArthur's plans for the development of the Klamono oil fields, the February, March, and April acceleration of operations throughout the Pacific theaters did affect the thinking with regard to oil rehabilitation projects on the part of various headquarters and boards back in Washington.[9] Anticipating that the new schedule of operations might end the war against Japan sooner than previously expected, Headquarters, Army Service Forces, and the Army-Navy Petroleum Board began to

[5] JPS 107/3, Rehabilitation of Petroleum Resources in the Netherlands East Indies, 15 Feb 43, and atchd papers; JCS 190/2, 19 Feb 43, and atchd papers, both sets of sources in OPD file, ABC 350.05 NEI (2-7-42), Sec. 2.

[6] The Enemy Oil Committee for the Division of Fuels and Lubricants, Office of The Quartermaster General, "Petroleum Facilities of New Guinea and Ceram," Jun 44, in OPD file, ABC 463.9 New Guinea, 5 Feb 44.

[7] JCS 190/4, 5 Feb 44, and atchd papers, in OPD file, ABC 463.9 New Guinea, 5 Feb 44.

[8] Reno IV, 6 Mar 44, in OPD file, ABC 384 Pacific (1-17-43) Sec. 3-A; see also above, Ch. I.

[9] See above, Chapter 1.

consider it possible that the Klamono oil wells could not be brought into production soon enough to assist the war effort. Moreover, doubts were being raised concerning the justification of the proposed use of troops, equipment, and ship tonnage. The Engineer Petroleum Production Depot, as organized in California, was to contain 3,300 men, to which number the Southwest Pacific Area was to add 1,700 troops and heavy equipment of all sorts. Restudy of the ship tonnage needed to transport and support these 5,000 men and their special equipment made it obvious that the Klamono oil project would tie up more ships than originally expected. Simultaneously, new estimates of the time which would be consumed in getting oil produced in appreciable quantities from the Klamono wells made it appear that it would be mid-1946 before the Klamono oil would begin to save any shipping space for the Allies. This might well be too late to affect the outcome of the war materially. At the time, the Allies could ill afford to tie up the shipping needed to support the Engineer Petroleum Production Depot from late 1944 to mid-1946.[10]

By April 1944 about 90 percent of the Engineer Petroleum Production Depot's special equipment had been gathered in California and 60 percent of the unit's men had been assembled and were in training.[11] The stockpiling, organizing, and training continued for three more months, while the Joint Chiefs of Staff and other interested government agencies went on with new studies of the entire problem of oil field rehabilitation projects in the light of the revised plans for the Pacific war. General MacArthur's opinions concerning the cancellation of the Klamono project were sought. He raised no objections to its abandonment.[12] Finally, on 26 July, the Joint Chiefs decided to cancel the Klamono oil exploitation plans and to disband the Engineer Petroleum Production Depot.

The standard service units attached to the depot were sent overseas to perform their usual duties. The specialized production and refining organizations were disbanded, and their troops were used as fillers for other engineer units or were partially re-equipped and retrained to perform other duties, such as maintaining bulk petroleum storage facilities at overseas bases. The Army engineers turned over some of the special equipment to the U. S. Navy, and a little of it was found useful for the Army's standard engineer units. The bulk of the production and refining equipment was kept in a stockpile on the west coast for postwar disposal by the government in the most profitable manner possible.[13]

Cancellation of the Sorong–Waigeo Plan

While the cancellation of the Klamono oil project removed some of the necessity for seizing the Sorong–Waigeo area, the abandonment of that project actually played a relatively minor part in subsequent changes in General MacArthur's plans for operations on the Vogelkop.

In accordance with instructions from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General MacArthur

[10] OQMG, "Petroleum Facilities of New Guinea and Ceram," Jun 44; JPS 374/2/M, Rehabilitation of Petroleum Resources in the NEI, 12 Apr 44, and atchd papers, in OPD file, ABC 350.05 NEI (2–7–42), Sec. 2.

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] JCS 190/6, 10 Jun 44; JCS 190/7, 26 Jun 44; JCS 190/8, 14 Jul 44, and papers atchd to each, all in OPD file, ABC 350.05 NEI (2–7–42), Sec. 2.

[13] JCS 190/8, 14 Jul 44, and atchd papers, in OPD file, ABC 350.05 NEI (2–7–42), Sec. 2, supplemented by author's personal observation.

was continually looking for ways and means to accelerate operations within his theater. His planners were reported to have thought it possible that if sufficient carrier support and assault shipping could be made available from Central Pacific sources, the target date for the advance to the Philippines might be greatly accelerated by jumping from Hollandia to the Wakde–Sarmi area, thence to the western Vogelkop, and then directly to Mindanao. Without such additional means, intermediate stops at the Geelvink Bay islands and at other islands such as Halmahera, between the Vogelkop and Mindanao, would be necessary.

Although the support from Central Pacific sources was not forthcoming and it was found necessary to seize Biak and Noemfoor, General MacArthur, in May, was able to inform the Joint Chiefs of Staff that operations on the Vogelkop could be moved forward to start about 1 August, a month and a half prior to his previously estimated target date. From air bases at the western Vogelkop, he went on, a subsequent advance northwest to Halmahera could be supported. The jump to Halmahera could be made about 15 September, in conjunction with an invasion of the Palaus in the western Carolines by forces of the Central Pacific.[14]

In June, when General MacArthur alerted ALAMO Force for the Noemfoor operation, he simultaneously informed General Krueger that landings in the Sorong–Waigeo area would begin on or about 25 July. General MacArthur believed that the Sorong–Waigeo operation would entail the use of an entire infantry division, and General Krueger selected the 6th Division, which, in June, was in active combat at the Wakde–Sarmi area. In addition to making this choice, General Krueger set his staff to work preparing tentative plans for the Sorong–Waigeo operation, and by 10 June had ready an outline tactical plan and a troop list.[15]

Beyond anticipating that the proposed air-base site at the northwestern Vogelkop would be located some place on Waigeo Island, General MacArthur's planners had not yet been able to reach any decision concerning the exact locations of the airfields. To obtain information upon which to base such a decision, the Fifth Air Force attempted to fly many special photographic missions over Waigeo. In addition, on 6 June, General MacArthur ordered ALAMO Force to conduct a ground reconnaissance of the north coast of Waigeo at Kabarei Bay where, about this time, elements of the *KON Force* found refuge during the Japanese attempts to reinforce Biak. The reconnaissance party was to comprise ALAMO Scouts, Allied Intelligence Bureau agents, terrain experts of the Fifth Air Force, and hydrographic survey men of the VII Amphibious Force. The group was to be transported by submarine from the Admiralties to Waigeo, and its terrain report was to be ready by 15 June.[16]

---

[14] Rad, CG USAFISPA to CofS USA [Maj Gen Laurence S. Kuter, AAF representative on tour in the SWPA and SPA, to Gen Henry H. Arnold, CG AAF], WAR–7, 2 Apr 44, CM-IN 1174; Rad, CINCSWPA to CofS USA, C–12287, 8 May 44, CM-IN 6163.

[15] Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, C–13296, 5 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 6–19 Jun 44; Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WF–1900, 10 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 10 Jun 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Sansapor, p. 2. Plans for a July invasion of the Western Vogelkop are also outlined in General MacArthur's RENO V plan of 15 June 1944, a copy of which is in OPD file, ABC 384 Pacific, Sec. 8–C.

[16] Rad, GHQ SWPA to AAF SWPA, ANF SWPA, and ALAMO, CX–13332, 6 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 6 Jun 44. ALAMO Scouts were specially trained troops who conducted reconnaissance and patrolling missions, often behind enemy lines.

Before the reconnaissance party could carry out its mission, reasonably good aerial photographs had to be made available to it. But from 6 through 11 June, Fifth Air Force planes were prevented by bad weather from obtaining the necessary coverage.[17] Finally, on the 12th, some pictures were taken. The next day General MacArthur informed General Krueger that the new photographs showed little likelihood that airfields could be developed on the shores of Kabarei Bay. The reconnaissance area was therefore changed to the southwest section of Waigeo Island and the coast east from Kabarei Bay. Photographic coverage of these areas left much to be desired, but the reconnaissance project was deemed of such importance that almost immediate action was necessary. General Krueger, hoping for better photographs, delayed the sailing of the reconnaissance party for some days, but the submarine finally got under way from the Admiralties on the 17th, expecting to reach Waigeo on the 23d. The reconnaissance report was to be ready by 2 July.[18]

On 20 June General MacArthur told General Krueger that new studies were being made regarding the possibility of airfield construction on the northwest coast of the Vogelkop at Sansapor and Mar, two mainland villages located about 70 miles northeast of Sorong and some 60 miles east of Waigeo Island. The next day General MacArthur announced to the headquarters concerned that late photographs indicated unsuitability of airdrome sites at the newly assigned Waigeo reconnaissance areas. The Allied Naval Forces was thereupon instructed to divert the reconnaissance to the Sansapor–Mar area to seek other airfield sites.[19]

General Krueger believed that insufficient photographic coverage was available for the new study and the Fifth Air Force considered that on the basis of available photography the Sansapor–Mar area was devoid of airfield sites. General Krueger therefore concluded that the results of ground reconnaissance at Sansapor–Mar would not justify the risks, and he recommended that the project be abandoned.[20] But General MacArthur ordered the reconnaissance to be undertaken and, on 23 June, the submarine put the scouting party ashore near Mar. The group remained in the area for almost a week, discovering good landing beaches and finding one or two sites where airfields might be developed after time-consuming hard work. The party's report was ready on 30 June, upon which date General MacArthur directed ALAMO Force, with the support of Allied Air and Naval Forces, to secure the Sansapor–Mar area instead of the Sorong–Waigeo region. The Sansapor–Mar landing was to take place on 30 July.[21]

---

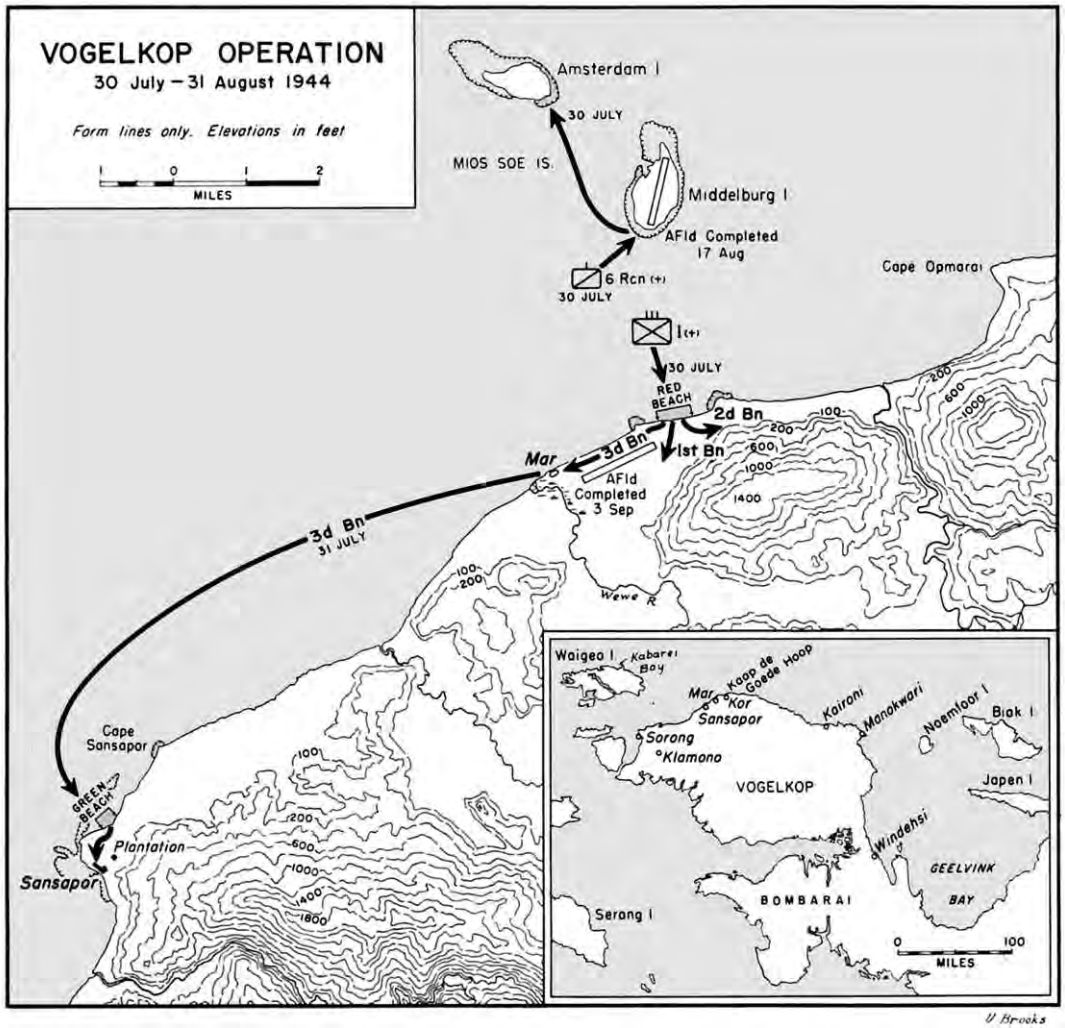
[17] Rad, ALAMO to Advon 5thAF, WF–2212, 9 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 6–19 Jun 44; Rad, Advon 5thAF to ALAMO and GHQ SWPA, U–3204–D, 11 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G–3 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 11–13 Jun 44.

[18] Rad, GHQ SWPA to AAF SWPA, ANF SWPA, and ALAMO, CX–13631, 13 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 6 Jun–11 Jul 44; Rads, ALAMO to CG U. S. Forces APO 324 [Admiralties], WF–2643 and WF–2686, 13 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–2 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 3–16 Jun 44; Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WF–3538, 18 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Noemfoor, 6–19 Jun 44.

[19] Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, AAF SWPA, *et al.*, CX–13950, 20 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 6 Jun–11 Jul 44; Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO and ANF SWPA, CX–14009, 21 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 21 Jun 44.

[20] Draft of unnumbered, unsent Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, 22 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–2 Jnl Wakde–Biak, 16 Jun–10 Jul 44.

[21] Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, CTF 72, and Com7thFlt, S–57, 30 Jun 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 6 Jun–11 Jul 44 (this rad apparently is



MAP 18

The Sansapor–Mar Plan

At the Sansapor–Mar area, an air base and minor naval facilities were to be established to support subsequent operations northwest toward the Philippines. (*Map 18*) The air construction task called for the development of fields upon which two fighter groups, five squadrons of medium bombers, and a half squadron of night-fighters could be based. To seize and protect the air-base area, the 6th Infantry Division, less one regimental combat team but reinforced with service and antiaircraft units, was considered sufficient force. General Krueger was made responsible for the direc-

a redispatch of a msg originated by the submarine during the night of 29–30 Jun); ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Sansapor, p. 10; GHQ SWPA OI 56, 30 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 30 Jun 44.

tion of the operation and for co-ordination of air, naval, and ground planning.[22]

Plans and Planning

Mar lies in flat, swampy ground at the mouth of the Wewe River, which flows into the Pacific about 18 miles west-southwest of the Kaap de Goede Hoop, northernmost point on the Vogelkop. About 7 miles northeast of Mar is Cape Opmarai, and 7 miles to the southwest is Cape Sansapor, situated 2 miles northeast of Sansapor Plantation and the native hamlet of the same name. At many points along the 25 miles of coast line between Kaap de Goede Hoop and Cape Sansapor, spurs of the Tamrau Mountains, which dominate most of the Vogelkop, descend to the shore. Densely forested coastal flats are to be found near Mar and along the shore line northeast of Cape Sansapor. Off Mar lie the Mios Soe Islands, Amsterdam and Middleburg, respectively 5 and 3 miles from the coast.[23]

Little detailed information concerning the target area was available to ALAMO Force other than that brought back by the 23–30 June reconnaissance party. Japanese activity appeared to center at Sansapor Plantation, where the Japanese were known to maintain a staging base for barges moving along the coast from Sorong to Manokwari. The ALAMO G–2 Section estimated that unless a clearing noted near the mouth of the Wewe proved to be airdrome construction, few more than 100 Japanese would be found at Sansapor–Mar. If the clearing was in preparation for an airfield, then a Japanese airdrome construction unit of perhaps 700 men might be stationed at the objective. The terrain reconnaissance and photographs indicated that good landing beaches existed near Mar and above Cape Sansapor. Potential airdrome sites had been reported at both places and, in addition, it was believed possible that a fighter strip might be constructed on tiny Middleburg Island, the flat surface of which was given over to a neglected coconut tree plantation.[24]

When on 8 July principal air, ground, and naval commanders gathered at General Krueger's command post to discuss plans for the new operation, it immediately became apparent that more intelligence and terrain information would be needed before detailed landing, supply, and engineer plans could be evolved. As a result, only general discussions were held and the conferees reached only tentative conclusions, which they realized might be changed after further reconnaissance at the objective area.

The first question taken up at the 8 July conference was that of setting H Hour, the target date of 30 July being agreeable to all concerned. To assure tactical surprise, General Krueger wanted the landing made at first light, even though Maj. Gen. Ennis C. Whitehead, now in command of the Fifth Air Force, could not promise air cover until forty-five minutes later. Admiral Fechteler, in charge of the amphibious phase of the operation, was willing to forego air cover since no enemy opposition was expected, but he would approve the early landing hour

[22] *Ibid.*

[23] AGS SWPA, Terrain Handbook 29, "Dutch New Guinea, Sorong Area," 1 Jul 44, copy in OCMH files; ALAMO Force, G–2 Photo Int Sec., Consolidated Rpt 144, 18 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Noemfoor, 21–29 Jul 44.

[24] ALAMO Force, G–2 Photo Int Sec., *op. cit.*; Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, *et al.*, S–57, 30 Jun 44; ALAMO Force, G–2 Est of Enemy Sit with Respect to Cape Sansapor–Cape Opmarai Area, Northwest Vogelkop, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 6 Jun–11 Jul 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Sansapor, pp. 5, 10.

only if an advance party could be put ashore to guide LST's to the proper beaches. The conferees concluded that putting an advance party ashore might destroy chances for tactical surprise and bring Japanese aircraft over the area. Therefore, H Hour was tentatively set for 0700, about fifteen minutes before sunrise at Mar.

Preliminary naval bombardment was considered unnecessary in the light of expected Japanese dispositions. Without naval bombardment, chances for tactical surprise seemed good. The nearest enemy garrison was at Sansapor, only twelve miles from the proposed landing points near Mar, and the nearest Japanese radio facilities were also thought to be located at Sansapor. If no bombardments were delivered and if the naval forces maintained radio silence until some Japanese opposition was encountered, there would be a good chance to land the entire D-Day force before the Japanese realized a landing was under way. Thus, the possibility of harassing attacks by Japanese troops from Sansapor would be reduced, as would the probability of air attacks from Japanese bases within range of Mar.

Much time at the conference was devoted to discussing airdrome construction. The ALAMO Force engineer officer thought Middleburg Island offered the best site for quick construction of an airfield from which local fighter cover could be provided. The Mar area, according to available information, did not appear well suited to airdrome development, although a landing at Mar seemed best from the naval point of view since that area provided favorable beaches for LST's. The conferees therefore thought that the main landing would have to take place near Mar. A shore-to-shore operation to seize the Cape Sansapor area, apparently better suited for airfields, would follow, as might another minor landing to secure the Mios Soe Islands.[25]

Since lack of detailed terrain information made further planning almost impossible, another reconnaissance party was slipped ashore near Cape Opmarai during the night of 14–15 July. This group, which went forward by PT boat from Noemfoor, encountered no Japanese in the area and found the natives friendly. After spending three days in the Sansapor–Mar area, the group brought out a terrain report which considerably changed tentative plans. First, the reconnaissance disclosed that there was no Japanese airdrome construction in the area and that the previously located cleared strips were actually overgrown native gardens. The best airdrome site was found near two small, reef-bound capes about one and three-fourths miles northeast of Mar. The beaches near and between the two capes were found to be excellent for landing although not too satisfactory for heavy truck traffic. The rain forest in the region was noted to be less dense than anticipated. Finally, the party's airdrome engineers estimated that a 6,000-foot runway could be constructed near the capes within twenty-five days after the landing, providing heavy rains did not impede the work.[26]

With the new information at hand, final plans were rapidly drawn up by all units concerned. The landing was to be made at 0700 on D Day, 30 July, between the two small capes northeast of Mar. The first

---

[25] ALAMO Force, Conf Rpt, Hq ALAMO Force, 1045–1410, 8 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 6 Jun–11 Jul 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Sansapor, p. 12; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Sansapor, pp. 1–5.

[26] Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WH–1654, 12 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–2 Jnl Sansapor, 11–13 Jul 44; Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WH–2882, 18 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 19–27 Jul 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Sansapor, pp. 5, 10.

airstrip would be constructed in a partially cleared area immediately inland from the westernmost promontory. The Cape Sansapor area, now deemed unsuitable for an airstrip, was selected by naval planners as a PT base site, and plans were made to secure that area by a shore-to-shore operation on D plus 1. Middleburg Island would be seized at H plus 35 minutes on D Day so as to assure another airfield site. Final determination of airfield locations was left to Brig. Gen. Earl W. Barnes, who was to accompany the assault echelon to Mar as the commander of the XIII Air Task Force. This organization was, in effect, an advance echelon of the Thirteenth Air Force, from which was to be drawn the air garrison for the Sansapor-Mar area. General Barnes built his headquarters around men selected from his previous staff, that of the XIII Fighter Command.[27]

In charge of the ground forces was Maj. Gen. Franklin C. Sibert, commanding general of the 6th Infantry Division and previously of the TORNADO Task Force at Wakde–Sarmi. For the Sansapor–Mar operation General Sibert was to command an organization designated the TYPHOON Task Force, which comprised the 6th Division, reinforced, less the 20th Regimental Combat Team. The latter unit was to remain at Wakde–Sarmi as ALAMO Force Reserve for the new operation. Combat units for the D-Day echelon of the TYPHOON Task Force were the 1st Infantry, the 1st Battalion of the 63d Infantry, the 1st Field Artillery Battalion, the 6th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, a company of the 6th Engineers, and four antiaircraft batteries. There was to be a high percentage of service troops, especially engineers, among the approximately 7,300 men who were to land on 30 July.

The assault on Red Beach, as the landing point was named, was to be undertaken by the 1st and 2d Battalions, 1st Infantry, going ashore in LCVP's from the APD's taking them forward from Wakde-Sarmi. The 3d Battalion was designated TYPHOON Task Force Reserve for the landing, and, if necessary, it would aid the 6th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop to secure Middleburg Island. The reconnaissance unit was to move ashore in LVT's and LVT(A)'s launched from LST's. The 1st Battalion, 63d Infantry, was initially to operate as part of the Shore Party with the Shore Battalion of the 543d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, 3d Engineer Special Brigade, and was then to revert to a reserve role.[28]

Admiral Fechteler's Attack Force (Task Force 77) was to have a D-Day groupment comprising 11 destroyers, 5 APD's, 16 LCI's, 3 rocket LCI's, 8 LST's, 4 PC's, and 1 ATF. A Covering Force (Task Force 78), consisting of 1 heavy cruiser, 2 light cruisers, and 9 destroyers under the command of Admiral Berkey, was to be available for support fire if needed. In addition to covering the main landing, the naval elements would support the operations against the Mios Soe group on D Day, and on D plus 1 provide LCI and destroyer support fire to cover the

[27] ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Sansapor, p. 5; TYPHOON Task Force [TyTF] FO 1, 15 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 13–18 Jul 44; Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO CX–15141, 21 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 19–27 Jul 44; 5thAF OI 4, 11 Jul 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 14 Jul 44.

[28] ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Sansapor, p. 5; TyTF FO 1, 15 Jul 44; History of the TYPHOON Task Force in the Opmarai–Sansapor Area, Vogelkop Peninsula, Dutch New Guinea, 30 July–31 August 1944, p. 10 (hereafter cited as Hist of TyTF, 30 Jul–31 Aug 44).



SANSAPOR PLANNERS. *Left to right (across table): Lt. Gen. Walter Krueger, Maj. Gen. Franklin C. Sibert, Rear Adm. William M. Fechteler, Brig. Gen. Charles E. Hurdis.*

shore-to-shore operation against Cape Sansapor. The Allied Naval Forces was responsible for the movement of all troops and supplies from rear bases to Sansapor until relieved by the Services of Supply on 1 September.[29]

Units of the TYPHOON Task Force reaching the objective area on D Day, D plus 2, and D plus 4 were to take with them a ten-day supply of rations, clothing, unit equipment, fuels, and lubricants, and two units of fire for all weapons. After D plus 4, amphibious craft were to bring forward with each unit aboard a ten-day supply of rations, clothing, unit equipment, petroleum products, medical supplies, engineer construction equipment, and motor maintenance supplies. Large cargo ships to arrive after D plus 4 were to carry thirty days' supply of these items, and both types of shipping were to bring forward three units

[29] GHQ SWPA OI 56, 30 Jun 44, and 56/10, 27 Aug 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 30 Jun 44; CTF 77 Opn Plan 7–44, 15 Jul 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 22 Jul 44; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Sansapor, pp. 1, 3, 5; ComCruDiv 15 [CTF 78] Opn Order 3–44, 21 Jul 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 26 Jul 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Sansapor, p. 12; TyTF FO 1, 15 Jul 44.

of fire for all weapons of the organizations aboard.[30]

Staging and Rehearsing Problems

The TYPHOON Task Force staged at the Wakde–Sarmi area, where many problems arose. General Sibert had known since late June that his division was to undertake another operation, but it was not until 14 July that elements of the 31st Infantry Division began to arrive at Wakde–Sarmi to relieve the 6th from combat responsibility there, and it was the 18th of the month before General Sibert could relinquish command of the TORNADO Task Force to his successor and before all the troops of the 6th Division were out of combat. Staging was further hampered by the necessity for moving service unit and port installations from the exposed Toem–Arare beaches westward to Maffin Bay, where more sheltered waters and better beaches were to be found.

Thus, staging was slowed from the start by three major factors—the relief and assembly of the 6th Division, the arrival of the 31st Division's units over beaches the TYPHOON Task Force was using for staging, and the movement of the staging area itself. Moreover, since the danger from Japanese air attacks made it impossible to plan to send any large cargo ships to Sansapor for at least a month after the initial landings there, it was necessary to establish a troop and cargo transfer point at Maffin Bay. With the exception of the 6th Division and the supplies already available at Maffin Bay, almost all troops and equipment for the TYPHOON Task Force were brought forward to Maffin Bay on noncombat vessels from rear bases, unloaded, and then reloaded on LST's and other landing craft. The beaches at Maffin Bay soon became crowded with numerous units and tons of equipment, many of which were not to move to Sansapor–Mar until weeks after the initial landings. Finally, to add to the other difficulties, heavy rains intermittently stopped or slowed all staging operations at Maffin Bay.[31]

At Maffin Bay the 31st Infantry Division supplied many troops for labor to help the TYPHOON Task Force mount out. ALAMO Force Reserve for the Sansapor–Mar operation, the 6th Division's 20th Regimental Combat Team, devoted almost all its time to labor, and the rest of the 6th Division, although busy re-equipping, planning, and trying to train and rehearse, also had to furnish many labor details.[32]

Rehearsals for the TYPHOON Task Force were curtailed by the cargo transshipment activity at Maffin Bay and also because many tons of supplies and equipment arrived there barely in time to be reloaded on LST's of the D-Day echelon. The APD's and LCI's which were to carry assault infantry forward reached Maffin Bay on 24 July and, after embarking their troops, put out to sea overnight. The next morning the assault battalions had a practice landing near Toem. Most of the LCI's, which had re-

[30] ALAMO Force Adm O 11, 11 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Sansapor, 8 Jun–3 Aug 44.

[31] ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Wakde–Biak, pp. 26–28; TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 12 Jun–18 Jul 44, pp. 9–10; TTF [31st Inf Div] Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 18 Jul–2 Sep 44, pp. 2–4; Memo, ACofS G–4 ALAMO for CofS ALAMO, no sub, 6 Jul 44, and Ltr, ALAMO G–4 LO with TyTF at Maffin Bay to ACofS G–4 ALAMO, no sub, 20 Jul 44, both in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Sansapor, 8 Jun–3 Aug 44. See also above, Ch. XI.

[32] TTF Opns Rpt Wakde–Sarmi, 18 Jul–2 Sep 44, pp. 2–4; Hist of TyTF, 30 Jul–31 Aug 44, p. 21; 20th Inf Opns Rpt Sansapor, p. 1; Memo, ACofS G–4 ALAMO for CofS ALAMO, no sub, 6 Jul 44; Memo, ACofS G–4 ALAMO for CofS ALAMO, sub: Re Cargo Handling in the Toem Area, 10 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Sansapor, 8 Jun–3 Aug 44. See also above, Ch. XI.

cently arrived in the theater, had trouble keeping formation, and were therefore given additional training on succeeding days. It was impossible for the LST's to participate in rehearsals, since they were engaged in final loading. Although he believed that even the incomplete rehearsals proved of ". . . considerable benefit to both the Army and Navy in preparation for the operation," Admiral Fechteler observed that more complete rehearsals were needed, especially for the LST's.[33]

One aspect of the loading was unusual for the Southwest Pacific Area's forces. The 6th Division had come to New Guinea from Hawaii, where, in final amphibious training, it had studied and developed a great enthusiasm for pallet loading, an enthusiasm which it carried so far as to pallet-load LST's. The latter practice was undertaken against the advice of the ALAMO G–4 Section's liaison officer with the TYPHOON Task Force at Maffin Bay. He felt that LST's should be so loaded that every pound of cargo could be easily manhandled, and he pointed out that much of the cargo put aboard LST's on pallets might be ruined by sea water as the pallets were dragged aboard during loading or towed ashore at the objective. He also believed that the pallets took up too much space on LST's and that they were extremely difficult to load on such ships. Finally, he noted, mud brought aboard the LST tank decks by the pallets during loading immobilized fork-lift trucks.[34]

Critical shortages of most supplies were made up before the TYPHOON Task Force left Maffin Bay, but sufficient supplies of engineer explosives, sandbags, and wire mesh beach mats did not reach the staging area in time to be loaded on ships of the D-Day echelon. These items had been requisitioned by ALAMO Force in late June and early July, but for some reason shipment from Services of Supply rear bases to Maffin Bay was delayed. The explosives shortage might have slowed airfield construction at Sansapor–Mar had not provision been made to ship the explosives by air to Maffin Bay and load them there on ships moving to the objective area on D plus 2 and D plus 4. The wire mesh could not be shipped forward in time to be of use during the landings.[35]

Engineer Problems

One of the most difficult problems faced by the TYPHOON Task Force was setting up a schedule for shipping engineer units to the objective. As staging and construction plans were continued, it began to appear that sweeping changes in construction directives, schedules for the arrival of engineer units, and choice of airdrome sites at Sansapor–Mar would have to be made. The first construction task at Sansapor–Mar was to complete by D plus 20, 18 August, one airfield with a 5,000-foot runway and associated facilities for a group of fighters and a half squadron of night-fighters. The remaining airfield construction was to be finished by D plus 35, 3 September. The principal units

[33] CTF 77 Opns Rpt Sansapor, pp. 6–7, 14; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Sansapor, p. 9. Quotation from page 7 of the CTF 77 report.

[34] Ltrs, ALAMO G–4 LO with TyTF at Maffin Bay to ACofS G–4 ALAMO, no subs, 16 and 20 Jul 44, both in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Sansapor, 8 Jun–3 Aug 44.

[35] Ltrs, ALAMO G–4 LO with TyTF at Maffin Bay to ACofS G–4 ALAMO, no subs, 16, 20, and 24 Jul 44, all in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Sansapor, 8 Jun–3 Aug 44; Rad, ALAMO to InterSec USASOS, WH–4466, 26 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 27 Jul–3 Aug 44; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Sansapor, pp. 10–11.

scheduled to engage in airdrome and other construction activities were the 836th and 1897th Engineer Aviation Battalions, the 43d Engineer Construction Battalion, the 96th Engineer General Service Regiment, the 617th Engineer Base Equipment Company, and the 571st Engineer Dump Truck Company. All were to operate under the supervision of Headquarters, 1112th Engineer Construction Group.[36]

Most of the engineer units had to be moved up from rear bases and reloaded at Maffin Bay. The staging situation there, the schedule of arrival of various units at Maffin Bay, and the construction program at Sansapor–Mar made it necessary to set up a complicated schedule of engineer shipment to the objective—a schedule which the TYPHOON Task Force completed by 15 July.[37] Hardly had this initial plan been finished when various interested headquarters began making proposals which led to many changes in it. Restudy of information concerning the terrain at the objective made it appear to General Headquarters and ALAMO Force that the construction target dates could not be met unless many revisions were made in the task force's proposed schedule for shipping forward engineer units. Moreover, the airfields at Sansapor–Mar would have to be built on unbroken ground (previously, forces of the Southwest Pacific had for the most part utilized sites where Japanese construction had already been begun or completed), a factor which might lead to serious delays in the completion of airfields of utmost importance to the success of subsequent operations. On the other hand, making extensive revisions in shipping schedules would complicate lighterage problems at the staging and objective areas at a time when provision of many more lighters craft was out of the question.

Arguments and counterproposals for revisions of the engineer unit shipping schedules continued until, by 18 July, various agencies had evolved the following plans:[38]

Unit	*GHQ SWPA Plan*	*ALAMO Engineer Section Plan*	*ALAMO G–3 Section Plan*	*TYPHOON Task Force Plan*
836th Engineers	D plus 2	D Day	In echelons on D Day, D plus 2, D plus 4	In echelons on D Day and D plus 2
1897th Engineers	D plus 4	D plus 2	In echelons on D plus 2, D plus 4, D plus 8	D plus 4
43d Engineers	D plus 8	D plus 4	D plus 4	D plus 8
617th Engineer Base Equipment Company	D plus 2	D plus 8	D plus 8	D plus 4
96th Engineers	In echelons on D plus 10 and D plus 12	In echelons on D plus 8 and D plus 10	In echelons on D plus 10 and D plus 12	D plus 10

[36] ALAMO Force FO 20, 10 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 11–13 Jul 44; GHQ SWPA OI 56, 30 Jun 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 30 Jun 44.

[37] TyTF FO 1, 15 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 13–18 Jul 44.

[38] Memo, Asst ACofS G–3 ALAMO for ACofS G–3 ALAMO, 18 Jul 44, sub: Engr Units for GLOBETROTTER [Sansapor], in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 19–27 Jul 44; TyTF FO 1, 15 Jul 44.

By 21 July, although the ALAMO Force Engineer thought it might be 8 September rather than 18 August before a fighter strip could be prepared in the Sansapor area, new terrain information and some eleventh-hour revisions in the plans for movement of engineer units made it appear that construction schedules at the objective might be met. The revised movement plans provided for arrivals at Sansapor–Mar as follows:[39]

Units	*Arrival Date*
One half of the 836th Engineers	D Day
One half of the 836th Engineers	D plus 2
1897th Engineers (less elements); 617th Engineer Base Equipment Company	D plus 4
Remainder of 1897th Engineers; 96th Engineer General Service Regiment	D plus 8
571st Engineer Dump Truck Company; 43d Engineers	D plus 12 and 18

One final difficulty arose concerning the 43d Engineer Construction Battalion. The unit's men were at Sydney, Australia, in mid-July, while the bulk of its equipment was at Oro Bay, New Guinea, and it was found impossible to move the unit forward for transshipment at Maffin Bay in time for it to reach Sansapor at a date by which it could be of much aid for meeting construction target dates at the latter objective. General MacArthur therefore released to ALAMO Force the 1881st Engineer Aviation Battalion. This unit, stationed at Hollandia, was to move directly from the latter base to arrive at Sansapor–Mar on D plus 8. The 43d Engineers were to be moved forward when the shipping situation allowed its men and equipment to be assembled.[40]

The demands of the airfield construction schedule also promoted many changes in plans for the number and types of landing craft to be sent forward to Sansapor–Mar with early echelons. General Sibert requested that four LCT's be assigned to the D-Day echelon to move engineer equipment, antiaircraft units, and other supplies and troops to the proposed PT-base site at Cape Sansapor and to the airdrome site on Middleburg Island. He pointed out that it might prove necessary to construct a fighter strip on Middleburg in order to meet the first airfield project's target date, and he noted that LCM's would not be able to move large, heavy engineering equipment to the island.[41]

[39] Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WH–3073, 19 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 19–27 Jul 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Sansapor, p. 10; Rad, TyTF to ALAMO, MS–10, 21 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 19–27 Jul 44; TyTF FO 1, 15 Jul 44

[40] Rad, ALAMO to TyTF, WH–2894, 18 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 18–19 Jul 44; Memo, Asst ACofS G–3 ALAMO for ACofS G–3 ALAMO, 18 Jul 44, sub: Engr Units for GLOBETROTTER; Memo, Asst ACofS G–3 ALAMO for ACofS G–3 ALAMO, 21 Jul 44, no sub; Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, CX–15141, 21 Jul 44; Rad, ALAMO to TyTF, WH–3556, 22 Jul 44. Last four docs in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 19–27 Jul 44.

[41] Rad, TTF (from Comdr TyTF) to ALAMO, YA–398, 17 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 13–18 Jul 44.

Initially, General Krueger disapproved General Sibert's request upon advice from the ALAMO Engineer Officer that a strip could be built on the mainland, thus making unnecessary transshipment of heavy equipment. Moreover, available LCT's were sorely needed in rear areas. But General Sibert argued that there would be no way of moving engineer equipment to Middleburg in the event that construction of a fighter strip there proved necessary. Finally, General Kruger made arrangements with Admiral Fechteler to have two LCT's towed to the objective by LST's of the D-plus-2 echelon.[42]

Operations in the Sansapor–Mar Area

The Landing

Air support for the Sansapor operation was provided principally by planes of the Fifth Air Force, which, in order to preserve tactical surprise at the objective, carried out no bombardment missions against the Sansapor–Mar area before D Day. Instead, the Fifth Air Force, aided by Australian and Dutch aircraft, conducted many heavy strikes against Japanese air bases at Manokwari and Sorong and in the Halmahera–Ceram–Ambon region. On the morning of D Day, night-fighters and B–25's were over the objective area to give support if necessary as the ships of Admiral Fechteler's Attack Force began moving shoreward, but no preassault bombardment or strafing missions were undertaken.[43]

In order to deceive the Japanese, the Main Body had approached Sansapor on a rather roundabout route, sailing first from Maffin Bay into the waters between Noemfoor and Biak and then along the line of the equator as if heading toward Sorong or Halmahera. The Main Body made several radar contacts with Japanese aircraft on D minus 1 while in waters beyond Noemfoor, and protecting land-based fighters intercepted three or four Japanese aircraft about twenty miles south of the convoy route. The air battle, during which one or two Japanese planes were shot down, took place out of sight of the Main Body, which reached Sansapor apparently undetected.

The Covering Force's cruisers and destroyers rendezvoused off Hollandia and sailed north and west well behind the Main Body until some forty miles off Manokwari. Then it passed the Main Body and began moving in toward the Sansapor–Mar landing beach at 0200 on D Day, keeping its guns and radios silent. The Main Body arrived in the transport area about 0500. The assault ships were all on station by 0630, at which time Admiral Fechteler gave the order to execute the landing plan.[44]

Control craft rapidly found their proper positions and showed colored lights seaward to mark the landing craft approach lanes. The assault troops of Col. Forbie H. Privett's 1st Infantry were soon aboard the twelve LCVP's of the first wave, but, since the landing craft had left the assembly area too soon, they had to be held about ten minutes at the offshore line of departure, where they were especially vulnerable to fire from Japa-

[42] Rad, ALAMO to TyTF, WH–2895, 18 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 18–19 Jul 44; Memo, ALAMO G–3 LO with TyTF at Maffin Bay for ACofS G–3 ALAMO, 21 Jul 44, no sub, and atchd notes from ACofS G–3 ALAMO to CofS ALAMO and from CofS ALAMO to ACofS G–3 ALAMO, 22 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 19–27 Jul 44; Rad, ALAMO to TyTF, WH–3731, 23 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 19–27 Jul 44.

[43] ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Sansapor, p. 12; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Sansapor, p. 7.

[44] CTF 77 Opns Rpt Sansapor, pp. 7–8.

nese aircraft or shore-based weapons. Fortunately, no such opposition developed and the first wave was ashore at 0701, one minute late. The second wave was a minute and a half late, but subsequent waves made up the time. LCI's began moving shoreward about H plus 10 minutes, to beach with ramps in about two feet of water. The troops waded the short distance to shore without difficulty. The LCVP's quickly retracted and were hoisted back aboard the APD's. The APD unit left for Hollandia at 0732, 28 minutes ahead of schedule, while the LCI's were unloaded so rapidly that they were able to set sail for Hollandia 17 minutes early, at 0813.[45]

While the unopposed mainland landing was taking place, one LST moved toward Middleburg Island and at 0730 (fifteen minutes late) began launching 12 LVT-(A)'s and 4 LVT's, aboard which was the 6th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, together with a 60-mm. mortar section and a squad and a half of riflemen from the 1st Battalion, 63d Infantry. All these troops were ashore on Middleburg by 0800. There was no opposition to this landing and the amphibious group quickly re-formed and set sail for Amsterdam Island, two miles away. A landing was effected on Amsterdam, which also proved unoccupied by any Japanese, at 1130. Small detachments were left on each island, while the rest of the force returned to the mainland. On Middleburg was incurred the TYPHOON Task Force's only D-Day casualty—one man was wounded fatally by the accidental discharge of an LVT(A)'s 37-mm. gun.[46]

Back at Red Beach, tactical operations had been going equally well. The 2d Battalion, 1st Infantry, landed on the east (left) sector and before 0830 had pushed inland and eastward about three-quarters of a mile from the beach's center. Defenses were set up along low hills about 800 yards inland. About 0820 the 2d Battalion had killed three unarmed Japanese near the east end of the beach. It was not until the report of this first contact was relayed to the command ship offshore that radio silence was broken and higher headquarters was informed of the TYPHOON Task Force's situation.[47]

On the west flank the 1st Battalion, 1st Infantry, found rougher going in dense jungle undergrowth, but located no Japanese. The 3d Battalion, ashore at 0740, pushed west along the beach to the mouth of the Wewe River, 2,500 yards distant. There the unit, having encountered no opposition, assembled as task force reserve and began preparations for the D plus 1 shore-to-shore operation to secure Cape Sansapor.[48]

The 1st Field Artillery Battalion was ashore and ready to fire at 1107; antiaircraft units were set up as quickly as they came ashore, but had no targets on D Day. The 6th Engineers immediately began working on roads and bivouacs, while men of the 836th Engineer Aviation Battalion started airdrome site surveys. The 543d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment's troops, assisted by men from many other units, unloaded supplies, constructed beach exits, and cleared dump areas. The available air support was not needed, and as flights of

[45] CTF 77 Opns Rpt Sansapor, p. 9; Hist of TyTF, 30 Jul–31 Aug 44, p. 12; CTF 77 Opn Plan 7–44, 15 Jul 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 22 Jul 44.

[46] 6th Cav Rcn Tr Opns Rpt Sansapor, pp. 2–3; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Sansapor, p. 9; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Sansapor, p. 11.

[47] 1st Inf Opns Rpt Sansapor, 15 Jul–31 Aug 44, pp. 1–2; 1st Inf Jnl, 30 Jul–31 Aug 44; TyTF G–3 Opns Rpt 1, 31 Jul 44, in folder entitled TyTF G–3 Opns Rpts, 30 Jul–31 Aug 44; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Sansapor, p. 13.

[48] TyTF G–3 Opns Rpt 1, 31 Jul 44; 1st Inf Opns Rpt Sansapor, 15 Jul–31 Aug 44, p. 2; Hist of TyTF, 30 Jul–31 Aug 44, p. 12.

B–25's reported on station during the day they were sent off to hit targets of opportunity south of Cape Sansapor or in the Sorong area. General Sibert, who assumed command ashore at 1020, could be well pleased with the tactical situation.[49] With conditions at the landing beach, he could not have been so happy.

Red Beach, though excellent for LST's and landing craft, left much to be desired for wheeled vehicles and dispersal facilities. When the sand proved soft and loose, the lack of wire mesh beach mats began to be felt keenly and many trucks (some of which were reported to have been overloaded) had to be pulled out of the sand by tractors. Dispersal was difficult because the area behind the beach was forested and densely overgrown with thick jungle flora of all types. Admiral Fechteler learned that LST unloading was being delayed by lack of troops and trucks, and the senior LST commander stated that available troops were not making all the effort they could. By noon LST unloading was threatened with serious delay, and Admiral Fechteler brought the situation to General Sibert's attention.

General Sibert immediately took steps to get assigned troops and vehicles back on the job and he sent more men to the aid of the Shore Party. Thereafter, cargo handling proceeded more rapidly, although it was soon found that earlier criticism of loading pallets on LST's was justified. LST commanders declared that pallets moved slowly, wasting both time and space. Moreover, tractors and roads soon began to break down under the strain of dragging pallets around the beach, and many bulldozers had to be assigned to dragging missions when they might have been employed to better advantage improving roads or dump and bivouac areas. Nevertheless, one LST was unloaded by 1600 and the rest were unloaded in time to start back to Maffin Bay by 1730. The initial slowness of unloading and early congestion at the beaches did not prove serious nor dangerous, although the situation might have been different had there been any Japanese air action.[50]

Despite the minor difficulties of unloading, Admiral Fechteler reported: "The operation on the whole was carried out with a precision of execution which reflected a high state of training and morale throughout the Force. It is considered that the operation could and would have been successful against determined opposition." [51] An observer from the Alaskan Department—of all places—noting the lack of opposition ashore and the smoothness with which most of the landing activities were executed, expressed similar sentiments: "Globetrotter [Sansapor] expedition was a well organized, well executed and entirely unexciting amphibious operation." [52]

Post-D-Day Operations at Sansapor–Mar

At 0650 on 31 July the 3d Battalion, 1st Infantry, left its assembly area at the mouth of the Wewe aboard LCM's and LCVP's, bound for Green Beach at Cape Sansapor,

[49] CTF 77 Opns Rpt Sansapor, pp. 9–10; Hist of TyTF, 30 Jul–31 Aug 44, pp. 12–13; TyTF G–3 Opns Rpt 1, 31 Jul 44.

[50] CTF 77 Opns Rpt Sansapor, pp. 10–12, 15; Hist of TyTF, 30 Jul–31 Aug 44, p. 13; TyTF G–4 Sec. Opns Rpt Sansapor, p. 2; Memo, ACofS G–4 ALAMO for CofS ALAMO, ALAMO QM, *et al.*, 5 Aug 44, no sub, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 3–8 Aug 44.

[51] CTF 77 Opns Rpt Sansapor, p. 15.

[52] Obsr's Rpt GLOBETROTTER Opn [Rpt of Maj Robert J. Bertrand, Hq., Alaskan Dept], 6 Aug 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 3–8 Aug 44.

five miles down the coast.[53] Escort was provided by 4 destroyers and 2 PC's. Since information from natives indicated that the Japanese garrison had evacuated Sansapor, preliminary bombardment was limited to light fire by a single destroyer. Company I was on the beach at 0844 and, meeting no resistance, rapidly deployed to cover the landing of the rest of the battalion. Encountering no Japanese troops, the battalion marched south along the beach and before 1000 hours secured Sansapor Plantation and Village. Large quantities of Japanese supplies were captured and there were many evidences of hasty departure of Japanese troops from the Sansapor area. Antiaircraft weapons and a platoon of the regimental cannon company soon arrived to reinforce the 3d Battalion, which quickly set up a defensive perimeter around the plantation and village. There had been no casualties.

The shore line at Cape Sansapor proved too reef-bound and the beaches too poor for the planned PT boat base, but upon investigation Amsterdam Island proved an excellent location. When the PT squadron arrived on D plus 2, 1 August, it was sent to the new site and began operations from Amsterdam the same night. The Cape Sansapor area became the site of a radar warning installation.

Subsequent combat operations in the Sansapor–Mar area consisted mainly of patrolling to hunt down scattered, small groups of Japanese, expanding the beachhead, and protecting the airfield installations upon which work was soon started. On 3 August 92 sick or wounded Japanese and Formosan troops were captured at a Japanese hospital area near Cape Opmarai, and on the same day at other locations 23 more Japanese were captured and 4 were killed. This was the largest single day's "bag" to 31 August. Patrols of the 63d Infantry and the 6th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop were sent as far east along the beach as Kor village, about 11 miles from Mar. On the southwest, patrols of the 1st Infantry penetrated as far as the Mega River, some 30 miles from Red Beach. Other small 6th Division patrols, accompanied by members of a Netherlands Indies Civil Administration Unit, pushed along the coast and inland to even more distant points to re-establish Dutch control over the native population and to seek information concerning Japanese movements.

During the middle of August, patrols based at Kor were sent up the Kor River and northeast along the coast two miles to Cape Waimak. Soon these patrols began to report that large groups of enemy were moving toward Kor from the east. On the 15th ALAMO Force (which had received the information from General Headquarters) warned the TYPHOON Task Force that about 250 men of *Headquarters, 35th Division,* had been moving overland along the north coast of the Vogelkop Peninsula from Manokwari to Sorong.[54] These troops and per-

[53] Information concerning American units in this subsection is based on: Hist of TyTF, 30 Jul–31 Aug 44, pp. 14–22; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Sansapor, pp. 12–13; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Sansapor, pp. 11–17; 1st Inf Opns Rpt Sansapor, 15 Jul–31 Aug 44, pp. 3–8; 20th Inf Opns Rpt Sansapor, 20–31 Aug 44, p. 1; 63d Inf Opns Rpt Sansapor, 30 Jul–31 Aug 44, p. 1; 6th Cav Rcn Trp Opns Rpt Sansapor, pp. 3–18.

[54] Enemy information in this subsection is based principally on: Hist of TyTF, 30 Jul–31 Aug 44, pp. 20–22; Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 65–69; ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpts 48, 54, and 55, 5 Jul, 16 Aug, and 23 Aug 44, respectively, copies in G–2 DofA files; GHQ SWPA, G–2 DSEI 865, 4 Aug 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 4 Aug 44; *2d Army* Opns Orders, 3 and 9 Jul 44, as cited in DSEI 865.

haps other scattered groups from the *35th Division* could be expected to reach the Sansapor–Mar area almost any day.

The ALAMO Force warning had a good foundation. It will be remembered that after the failure of the *KON Operation,* the *2d Area Army* had evolved a plan to send all or part of the *35th Division* from Sorong and Halmahera to Biak. When, after the defeat suffered by the *1st Task Force* during the *A-GO Operation,* it proved impossible to move the *35th Division* to Biak, the *2d Area Army* had decided to concentrate that division at Manokwari, and the unit soon began to move eastward by small ship and barge. With the Allied seizure of Noemfoor and an increasing tempo of Allied air attacks against Manokwari from Wakde, Biak, and Noemfoor, the *2d Area Army* realized that positions at the northeastern section of the Vogelkop were no longer tenable or useful. The displacement of the *35th Division* was accordingly halted.

The standard of living at Manokwari, site of command posts of the *2d Army* and the *35th Division,* slipped rapidly during the last weeks of June. The 12,000 to 15,000 Japanese troops stationed there were fast consuming the supplies which Allied bombing raids left undamaged, while Allied air and naval action prevented the Japanese from sending supplies by water eastward from Sorong or Halmahera. Therefore, on 3 July, the *2d Army* ordered the *35th Division* to retrace its steps and concentrate at Sorong, where other elements of the division were arriving from Halmahera. About the same time, *Headquarters, 2d Army,* began an overland trek from Manokwari south 150 miles to Windehsi, located on the narrow neck of land which separates the Vogelkop Peninsula from the rest of New Guinea. Other small garrisons at points along the western shores of Geelvink Bay were withdrawn. Most of these troops concentrated in the Windehsi area where natural food supplies, such as sago palm and coconuts, were more plentiful than at Manokwari. At the latter base there was organized the *1st Independent Brigade,* which apparently consisted principally of service personnel, perhaps strengthened by a few elements of the *220th Infantry, 35th Division.*

The commanding general of the *35th Division,* Lt. Gen. Shunkichi Ikeda, was evacuated from Manokwari, presumably by aircraft, on or about 1 July and on the 15th of the same month the division headquarters began the long overland march along the north coast of the Vogelkop to Sorong. The division was made responsible for the defense of the area between Sorong and Kaironi, the latter located some forty miles west of Manokwari. The *1st Independent Brigade,* under Maj. Gen. Yuki Fukabori, and other units of the *Manokwari Garrison* were left to hold the Kaironi–Manokwari zone. It is impossible to trace the movements of the *35th Division* headquarters westward from Manokwari, but it appears that the march was expected to take forty days. Such was the supply situation at Manokwari that the command group could leave that base with provisions for only twenty days. It is easy to imagine that in such circumstances the headquarters personnel and attached troops were not in the best of shape as they approached Kor and tried to strike inland to bypass the TYPHOON Task Force's positions.

The TYPHOON Task Force quickly increased the number of its outposts, ambush positions, and patrols. On 16 August, the day after it was learned that the *35th Division* headquarters was approaching Sansapor, elements of the 63d Infantry in the

Kor–Cape Waimak area killed 17 Japanese and captured 4. Identified were members of *Headquarters, 35th Division,* some troops of the *219th Infantry,* the *2d Army Band,* and, within a few more days, the *Signal Company, 35th Division.* By 31 August the 63d Infantry had killed 155 Japanese and taken 42 prisoners. The American regiment lost only 3 men killed and 4 wounded.

The 1st Infantry, on the west flank, had similar experiences as it sent patrols up the rivers and inland in its sector. By the end of the month the regiment had killed 197 Japanese and captured 154, while losing only 4 men wounded itself. The 20th Infantry, which arrived at Mar from Maffin Bay on 23 and 25 August, had scant time to participate in the patrolling before the end of the month, but the 6th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, during its series of far-flung patrols, killed 42 Japanese and captured 5 others. Total battle casualties for the TYPHOON Task Force from 30 July through 31 August were 14 killed, 35 wounded, and 9 injured. Japanese losses during the same period were about 385 killed and 215 captured (a good many in both categories were actually Formosans).[55]

General Sibert had been unable to remain at Sansapor–Mar to applaud the success of his troops' patrolling. On 24 August he had left to take command of the X Corps, headquarters of which had recently arrived in the theater from the United States. His place as a commanding general of the 6th Infantry Division and commander of the TYPHOON Task Force was taken over by Brig. Gen. Charles E. Hurdis, previously commander of the 6th Division Artillery.[56]

Medical Problems

Although the TYPHOON Task Force's battle casualties were abnormally low, tropical disease posed a serious problem. On 9 August the first cases of dreaded scrub typhus, which had been epidemic at Biak and Owi, were diagnosed at Sansapor. On the 9th, 6 scrub typhus cases were admitted to the hospitals, 27 the next day, and 62 on the 11th. Daily admittances continued to rise rapidly for two weeks. At the same time, "fever, undetermined origin" became prevalent, some cases later to be diagnosed as scrub typhus or believed to be mild attacks of that disease. The 1st Infantry was especially hard hit, and by 31 August had lost 9 men dead of scrub typhus, 121 in the hospital with the same disease, and 258 hospitalized with unknown fevers. The epidemic was no respector of rank. Colonel Privett, the regimental commander, was laid low, as were the regimental executive officer, the S–1, the S–2, the S–3, several rifle company commanders, and a number of high-ranking noncommissioned officers.

The scrub typhus had begun among troops bivouacked at Mar village, and upon investigation it was found that typhus was invariably found among troops who had slept on the ground at one time or another in native villages or clearings. Immediate steps were taken to control the spread of the disease. First, most of the medical installations were moved to healthier locations on the beach west of the Wewe River. Then, all bivouac areas were cleared, brush and grass burned, and large areas around the beach-

[55] As usual, figures for both American and Japanese casualties vary widely according to the source and cannot be reconciled. The TYPHOON Task Force's breakdown for prisoners was 56 Japanese, 154 Formosans, and 3 Koreans. ALAMO Force lists American casualties as 34 killed and 85 wounded, but since these are so divergent from the task force's own figures, they are believed to include nonbattle casualties.

[56] Hist of TyTF, 30 Jul–31 Aug 44, p. 5.

head sprayed with oil. Clothing was impregnated with insect repellent and orders were issued for all men to wear complete uniforms at all times.[57]

The antityphus measures were rigidly enforced by officers and noncommissioned officers such as 1st Sgt. James H. P. Daugherty of the 6th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, who addressed his men in language doubtless hallowed by Caesar's centurions: "It's the specific order of General MacArthur, General Krueger, and General Sibert that all men shall at all times wear a complete uniform consisting of shirt or jacket, trousers, leggins and cap, and that mosquito repellent shall be used about leggin tops, sleeve cuffs and shirt or jacket collars. This is to stop scrub typhus. Now—I don't make these rules but I sure as hell enforce them—and I enjoy doing it. Are there any questions? Then—move out." [58]

By the end of August the strictly enforced antityphus measures began to show results and daily admissions dropped rapidly. As of the 31st, 275 cases had been diagnosed as scrub typhus, 530 men had been hospitalized for fever, undetermined origin, and there had been 9 deaths. The mortality rate (presumably including men still in the hospital and not expected to recover) was about 3 percent.[59]

Scrub typhus cases, other fever patients, and battle casualties were evacuated from Sansapor–Mar by a variety of means. Initially, LST's were employed for the duty, taking men back to Maffin Bay or Hollandia hospitals. The hospital ship *Tasman* arrived on 31 August and began loading patients, while air evacuation began on 23 August. By this combination of means 504 officers and men were evacuated from the area by the end of August.[60]

Airfield Construction

Air evacuation had been made possible because the TYPHOON Task Force's first construction objective, a 5,000-foot runway, had been more than met on schedule. On D Day it had quickly become apparent to General Barnes of the XIII Air Task Force, responsible for selecting the location for the first field, that Middleburg Island offered a more promising site than the mainland near Red Beach, where the soil was loose, swampy spots abounded, and stands of heavy forest would obstruct the work. General Barnes put off a final decision until he could make a reconnaissance of the Cape Sansapor area on D plus 1, but he decided, after viewing that region, that Middleburg was the best site, and he decided to go ahead with a 5,000-foot fighter runway on that island. The medium bomber field, he determined, would be constructed on the mainland immediately west of Red Beach.

LCT's, which arrived at Mar on D plus 2, immediately began shuttling the men and heavy equipment of the 836th Engineer Aviation Battalion and the 617th Engineer Base Equipment Company to Middleburg, where the two units were concentrated by 3 August. General Sibert's foresight and insistence that LCT's be included in an early convoy now paid handsome dividends. With hard work, the strip on Middleburg had reached such a stage of completion by 14 August that a crippled B–24 was able to use it for a successful emergency landing. On

[57] 6th Medical Bn Opns Rpt Sansapor, pp. 2–4; 1st Inf Opns Rpt Sansapor, 15 Jul–31 Aug 44, pp. 4–8.

[58] 6th Cav Rcn Trp Opns Rpt Sansapor, p. 8.

[59] 6th Medical Bn Opns Rpt Sansapor, pp. 2–4; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Sansapor, p. 16; Scrub Typhus Graphs, atchd to Hist of TyTF, 30 Jul–31 Aug 44.

[60] TyTF Surgeon Opns Rpt Sansapor, pp. 1–2.

17 August, a day ahead of schedule, General Barnes was able to report that the strip was ready to receive fighters. As of that day the runway was 5,400 feet long and boasted one alert apron some 1,600 feet in length. Other alert aprons, taxiways, and hardstandings were completed by 25 August, the day of the first Japanese bombing attack on the area held by the TYPHOON Task Force.

There had been some red alerts before 25 August at Sansapor–Mar and a few Japanese planes had been sighted, but the raid of the 25th was the first during which the enemy attempted to bomb or strafe the area. The only result of this initial effort was damage to a single fighter on the new Middleburg Drome. During the night of 27–28 August, there was a heavier attack, during which four P–38's on Middleburg were destroyed, an antiaircraft machine gun position wiped out, and two men killed and ten wounded. Another raid occurred on the morning of 31 August, when light damage was incurred at the Middleburg strip and one man on that island was injured.[61]

On the mainland, the construction of Mar Drome did not at first proceed as rapidly as had work on Middleburg Island. First reports from Allied Air Forces' engineers returning from the Mar site to Hollandia indicated that a field could not be made ready for bombers until 12 October, over a month later than had been planned. It was felt that problems of soil packing, drainage, and extensive clearing would prevent realization of an earlier completion date, and it was recommended that the necessary engineer effort be diverted to extension of airdrome facilities on Noemfoor Island.[62]

Upon investigation, however, it was found that the engineers' estimates had apparently been based on a faulty assumption that the Mar field was to be prepared for use by heavy bombers. Furthermore, it was discovered that only one half of one engineer battalion was working at the site when the examination was made. It was unnecessary to station heavy bombers at Mar because such planes could undertake missions against targets even as far distant as the southern Philippines from Biak and Noemfoor bases or from fields which were expected to be constructed at Halmahera or Morotai. On the other hand, a forward medium bomber base on the western Vogelkop was necessary, for only from such a base could strafing planes—light and medium bombers—reach Japanese air, troop, and supply installations in the Celebes, at Ambon, on Halmahera, and on Morotai.

More optimistic estimates for construction were possible when additional engineer units began working at the Mar location. Then, to avoid some of the worst swampy spots, the strip site was moved slightly inland, where it was found that the jungle undergrowth and forest were not as dense as anticipated. Finally, it was concluded that the Mar Drome could be ready for medium bombers within five days of the target date, 3 September.[63]

---

[61] Rad, TyTF to ALAMO, MS–106, 30 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 27 Jul–3 Aug 44; Ltr, Comdr TyTF to Comdr ALAMO Force, 1 Aug 44, no sub, and Rad, TyTF to ALAMO, MS–140, 2 Aug 44, both in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 3–8 Aug 44; Rad, TyTF to ALAMO, MS–137, 1 Aug 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 27 Jul–31 Aug 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Sansapor, pp. 13–14; Hist of TyTF, 30 Jul–31 Aug 44, pp. 20–22.

[62] Rad, 5thAF to GHQ SWPA, A–17777–A, 10 Aug 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 8–15 Aug 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Sansapor, p. 14.

[63] Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, CX–16007, 11 Aug 44, and Rads, TyTF to ALAMO, MS–324 and MS–387, 11 and 14 Aug 44, all in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Sansapor, 8–15 Aug 44.



BULLDOZER CLEARING JUNGLE UNDERGROWTH *for the construction of Mar Drome.*

The 1879th and 1881st Engineer Aviation Battalions, the 43d Engineer Construction Battalion, the 96th Engineer General Service Regiment, and the 571st Engineer Dump Truck Company all spent long hours of labor on Mar Drome to make the construction target date. The first plane, a C–47, landed on the field on 2 September. The next day, exactly on schedule, the field was declared operational for medium bombers. There was then available a 6,000-foot steel-matted runway, 4 alert aprons, 2,800 feet of taxiways, and 7 dispersal lanes. By the 18th of the month, dispersal sites had been increased to 85, taxiways to 10,820 feet, and the strip had been lengthened to 7,500 feet.[64] From the Middleburg and Mar Dromes innumerable missions were flown in support of the Morotai landings on 15 September and against Japanese oil installations, shipping, troop concentrations, and airfields throughout the northern part of the Indies.[65]

---

[64] ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Sansapor, p. 14; Hist of TyTF, 30 Jul–31 Aug 44, p. 22. Ltr, Capt B. L. Mortensen, Hist Div Dept of AF Library, to author, 27 Oct 49, in OCMH files.

[65] ALAMO Force closed the Vogelkop operation for historical records purposes as of 31 August 1944. The 6th Division continued patrolling in the area until it left for Luzon in January 1945. Elements

Insofar as Japanese ground forces were concerned, the Allied development at Sansapor–Mar completed a circle of air bases around *2d Army* units in western Dutch New Guinea. That army's troops on the Vogelkop Peninsula—most of the *35th Division,* the bulk of the *2d Amphibious Brigade,* two provisional infantry brigades formed from miscellaneous combat and service units, and various service organizations—were cut off, their effectiveness destroyed. They could not mount an offensive; they could only "sweat it out" to the end of the war at bases such as Manokwari and Sorong, or they could attempt to retreat south and west from those bases to islands such as Ambon, Ceram, and the Celebes. The Allied landing had caught some of these forces in transit across the Vogelkop from Manokwari toward Sorong. In the end, few Japanese troops were able to escape from the Vogelkop. Gradually running out of food and other supplies, they awaited the end of the war at Manokwari and Sorong or, after a laborious overland trek, at minor bases south of the Vogelkop on the Bomberai Peninsula.

---

of the 93d Infantry Division took over the defense of the airfields and some Australian air units ultimately moved into the area, but the fields there were abandoned before mid-1945. By 4 October 1944, shortly after which date ALAMO Force turned over control of the area to the U. S. Eighth Army, Japanese casualties in the area were 695 killed, 94 prisoners, 160 Formosan prisoners, and 7 Korean prisoners. ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpt 61, 4 Oct 44, copy in G–2 DofA files.

CHAPTER XIX

The Palaus and Morotai: Strategic and Tactical Planning

The Strategic Setting

The capture of the Sansapor–Mar area and the development of airfields there was the last significant offensive undertaking executed by Southwest Pacific Area forces in the Dutch New Guinea region, and with this operation the campaign in New Guinea and the offshore islands was strategically, if not tactically, completed.[1] Some 650 miles of Japanese-dominated islands and sea areas lay between the Vogelkop Peninsula and the first objective in the Philippines—Mindanao—toward which forces of the Central Pacific were also preparing to move. While the Sansapor operation had been going on, troops under Admiral Nimitz' control had completed occupation of the Mariana Islands and had begun making ready for the seizure of the Palaus and other islands in the western Carolines.

General MacArthur's Planning

General MacArthur's plans called for an advance to the Halmahera area, about midway between the Vogelkop and Mindanao, on 15 September, and Admiral Nimitz planned for his forces to invade the Palaus on the same day. The premises upon which an advance to the Halmahera region were based are clear. First, an air base between the Vogelkop and Mindanao would be necessary to provide left (south) flank protection against whatever air power the Japanese could bring to bear from Ambon, Ceram, and the Celebes against Allied forces advancing to Mindanao. Second, the Halmahera air base would be needed to provide land-based air support for the invasion of Mindanao which, in mid-June, General MacArthur tentatively rescheduled to begin on 25 October.

Because it would be impossible to secure prolonged carrier-based air support for operations ashore in the Halmahera region, the target area there had to be within range of fighters and medium bombers based at Sansapor. If, before the Halmahera opera-

[1] The only other important offensive undertaken in the western New Guinea region was the seizure, in mid-November, of the Asia and Mapia Island Groups, lying respectively 100 nautical miles northwest and 160 northeast of Sansapor. Loran and radar stations were established on these islands, which were captured by elements of the 31st Infantry Division operating under the control of the newly established U. S. Eighth Army, commanded by General Eichelberger. This was the Eighth's first offensive operation. The naval commander during the capture of the Asia and Mapia groups was Captain Lord Ashbourne (RN). In eastern New Guinea, Australian forces maintained an offensive against remnants of the Japanese *18th Army* in the Wewak area until the end of the war.

tion were undertaken, it appeared that these aircraft and longer-range planes from Biak, Noemfoor, and Darwin, Australia, could not sufficiently reduce Japanese air power at Ambon, Ceram, and the Celebes to assure the safety of Allied forces ashore in the Halmahera area, then the Arafura Sea islands might have to be seized also. By June General MacArthur was beginning to change his mind about the necessity for seizing air bases in the Arafura groups, especially since the occupation of those islands might delay the advance to Halmahera. Ultimately the Allied Air Forces proved capable of neutralizing the Japanese air power in the Ambon–Ceram–Celebes area, and plans to seize the Arafura islands were canceled. The Japanese there remained undisturbed except by air raids until the end of the war.

While the range from Sansapor was an important factor in the choice of a target in the Halmahera region, other considerations also influenced the final decision. The target had to provide adequate space for airdrome development and a base area for light naval vessels such as PT's. Finally, the objective area had to be a location not too strongly held by the Japanese, so that in seizing it General MacArthur would not have to commit such large forces that the invasion of Mindanao might be delayed.

The requirements limited the choice to northern Halmahera Island or Morotai Island, lying about twenty-five miles off the northern end of Halmahera. Since available intelligence indicated that a strong Japanese combat garrison was on Halmahera, the capture of that island would involve a larger force than General MacArthur was willing to commit. Moreover, northern Halmahera could be subjected to Japanese counterattacks from both land and sea. On the other hand, Morotai Island was thought to be but lightly defended. Available information indicated that Morotai had ample space for airdrome and light naval base facilities. The Japanese could not reinforce the island by barge traffic once Allied Naval Forces' PT's and Allied Air Forces' planes began operations from Morotai bases. After consideration of all these factors, General MacArthur, in mid-July, decided that the objective in the Halmahera region would be Morotai.[2]

While General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area, was selecting Morotai as the target in the Halmahera region, the Joint Chiefs of Staff requested General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz to submit comments on the possibility of accelerating the Pacific war by moving forward all current target dates or bypassing selected objectives (including Halmahera, the western Carolines, and the Philippines) in favor of direct jumps to either Formosa or the Japanese home islands.[3]

Neither General MacArthur nor Admiral Nimitz was willing or able to give approval to such proposals. General MacArthur, who felt that bypassing the Philippines would be tantamount to abandoning those islands, be-

[2] The foregoing discussion is based principally on: RENO V, 15 Jun 44, copy in OPD file, ABC 384 Pacific, Sec. 8–C; GHQ SWPA, Outline Plan for Occupation of Southwest Morotai, 19 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Morotai, 19 Jul–2 Aug 44. As it had for previous operations, ALAMO Force maintained a separate set of records for Morotai. The decision reached by GHQ SWPA to bypass Halmahera was similar to that reached in June by the Joint Staff Planners, who concluded that the occupation of Halamhera would be too costly for the results achieved. See JPS 404/3, 3 Jun 44, Future Opns in the Pacific, A Report by the Joint War Plans Committee, in OPD file, ABC 384 Formosa (8 Sep 43), Sec. 1–C.

[3] JCS 713/8, 13 Jun 44, Future Opns in the Pacific, in OPD file, ABC 384 Pacific (8 Sep 43), Sec. 1–C; Rad, JCS to CINCSWPA and CINCPOA, 131401/Z Jun 44, CM-OUT 50007.

lieved that a move to Formosa would be impossible until land-based air support was available in the northern Philippines, and he then considered a direct move to Japan impracticable.[4] Admiral Nimitz, like General MacArthur, pointed out that logistic and tactical problems made it impossible to assure meeting current target dates for scheduled operations, and he felt that Southwest Pacific air forces would have to be firmly established in Mindanao before any attempt could be made to move to Formosa. At the same time, he believed that General MacArthur's hope of reaching Mindanao by 25 October was too optimistic.[5] At the Joint Chiefs' level, further proposals for radical revisions in the schedule of operations for the Pacific were dropped, pending developments in the general situation in General MacArthur's and Admiral Nimitz' areas.[6]

Admiral Nimitz' fears concerning the optimism of the 25 October target date for the invasion of Mindanao were well founded, a point also realized by General MacArthur. During conferences at Pearl Harbor in July, called at the suggestion of Admiral Nimitz to co-ordinate Southwest and Central Pacific plans for the Morotai, Palau, and Mindanao operations, Southwest Pacific planners learned that less amphibious craft and assault shipping could be made available to them than had previously been anticipated. Moreover, restudy of range and weather factors made it appear somewhat risky to depend upon the ability of Morotai-based aircraft to provide air support for Southwest Pacific forces on Mindanao after carriers had to leave the latter area and before airdromes could be developed there. To obtain adequate land-based air support for the Mindanao invasion force, General MacArthur returned to discarded plans to seize air-base sites on the Talaud Islands, about equidistant from Morotai and Sarangani Bay, Mindanao, where the first landings in the Philippines were then scheduled to take place. The employment of amphibious means for the Talaud operation would delay preparations for Mindanao, as would the development of airdromes on the Talauds. Finally, to have the invasion of Mindanao take place much before the middle of November would involve a conflict in timing with anticipated employment of assault shipping and carrier support by Admiral Nimitz for the occupation of Yap and Ulithi in the western Carolines, an operation scheduled for the first week in October. General MacArthur therefore revised his program to call for the invasion of Morotai on 15 September, the Talauds on 15 October, and Mindanao on 15 November.[7]

Central Pacific Plans

Admiral Nimitz' plan to secure Yap and Ulithi was part and parcel of his program

[4] Rad, CINCSWPA to CofS USA, CX–13891, 18 Jun 44, CM-IN 15058.

[5] *Ibid.;* Rad, CINCPOA to COMINCH, 4 Jul 44, CM-IN 2926.

[6] JPS 404/6, 9 Jul 44, and JPS 404/10, 29 Jul 44, both entitled Future Opns in the Pacific, in OPD file, ABC 384 Formosa (8 Sep 43), Sec. 1–C.

[7] Rad, CINCPOA to COMINCH and CINCSWPA, 25 Jun 44, CM-IN 23957; Rad, CINCSWPA to CINCPOA and CofS USA, C–14271, 29 Jun 44, CM-IN 25033; Rad, CINCSWPA to CofS USA, CX–15229, 23 Jul 44, CM-IN 19231; CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Joint Staff Study STALEMATE, 14 Jul 44 (STALEMATE II), in OPD file, A49–95; Rad, CINCPOA to COMINCH, 4 Jul 44, CM-IN 2926. Neither the Talauds nor the Mindanao operations were carried out as scheduled. For details concerning General MacArthur's many revisions of plans for the return to the Philippines, see M. Hamlin Cannon, Leyte: Return to the Philippines, a forthcoming volume in the series **U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II.**

for securing air and naval bases in the western Carolines to assure the neutralization of Truk and to co-operate with Southwest Pacific forces in gaining control over the eastern approaches to the Luzon–Formosa–China coast region, the strategic target area designated by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Originally, Admiral Nimitz' planners contemplated the seizure of the entire Palau Islands group, a reef-bound chain that extends about seventy-seven miles in a north-northeast to south-southwest direction and is twenty miles across at its widest point.[8]

But operations in the Marianas were taking longer than expected, employing troops, shipping, and supplies needed for the Palau operation. This fact, coupled with information that the enemy garrison in the Palaus was being greatly increased, prompted Admiral Nimitz to abandon plans for seizing the entire group. Instead, the three largest islands in the southern section—Angaur, Peleliu, and Ngesebus—would be taken; the other islands would be neutralized; and, finally, Kossol Passage, near the northern end of the chain, would be secured as an emergency anchorage. Thus, time and forces would be saved, for it would be unnecessary to invade the Japanese strongholds in the central section of the archipelago. On Angaur and Peleliu, and possibly on Ngesebus, airdromes would be developed to extend Allied control over the western Pacific and support the invasion of the Philippines.

To secure an additional airfield to aid in maintaining control over the western Pacific and in neutralizing the central Carolines, Admiral Nimitz decided to seize Yap Island, which lies about 300 miles northeast of the Palaus. The occupation of Yap would have the additional advantage of denying to the Japanese air and submarine base facilities there. Since Kossol Passage, in the Palaus, would not satisfy all requirements, Admiral Nimitz also determined to seize for a fleet base Ulithi Atoll, 400 miles northeast of the Palaus. The invasion of the southern Palaus would begin simultaneously with the Southwest Pacific's landing on Morotai, 15 September, while the seizure of Yap and Ulithi would start on 5 October. On 7 July Admiral Nimitz ordered his subordinate commanders to begin preparations accordingly.[9]

Thus, by late July, General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz had set and agreed upon the sequence of operations in the Southwest and Central Pacific Areas for the last stages of the approach to the Philippines: [10]

Morotai and the southern Palaus	15 September
Yap Island and Ulithi Atoll	5 October
The Talaud Islands	15 October
Mindanao (at Sarangani Bay)	15 November

[8] CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Opns in the POA During the Month of Sep 44, 7 Mar 45, pp. 30–33, copy in OCMH files; CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Campaign Plan GRANITE, 13 Jan 44, in files of the Navy Dept; CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Jt Stf Studies STALEMATE, 20 Mar, 18 May, 3 Jun, and 14 Jun 44, as cited in Maj. Nelson L. Drummond, Jr., The Palau Campaign, Ch. I, copy in OCMH files. This incomplete manuscript was written by Major Drummond during a tour of duty with the Historical Division, SSUSA, in 1946–47. For additional information concerning the choice of the Palaus as an objective in the western Pacific, see Ch. I, above.

[9] Rad, CINCPOA to COMINCH, 4 Jul 44, CM-IN 2926; Rad, CINCPOA to Com3dFlt, ComIIIPhibFor, *et al.*, 7 Jul 44, CM-IN 6450; CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Jt Stf Studies STALEMATE, 14 Jun and 5 Jul 44, as cited in Drummond, The Palau Campaign, Ch. II; CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Jt Stf Study STALEMATE, 14 Jul 44 (STALEMATE II), in OPD file, A49–95.

[10] Rad, CINCPOA to Com3dFlt, *et al.*, 7 Jul 44, CM-IN 6450; Rad, CINCSWPA to CofS, CX–15229, 23 Jul 44, CM-IN 19231.

Strategic Air Support

With the dates for the final stages of the drive to the Philippines firmly established, planners of the Southwest and Central Pacific Areas turned their attention to the provision and co-ordination of strategic air support missions during the Palau and Morotai operations. The planners kept in mind that the major objective of the two operations was very broad in scope—to secure control over the eastern approaches to the Luzon–Formosa–China coast area. Strategic air support had to be planned with this task in mind, as well as the more obvious tasks of securing bases from which future operations could be supported and preventing enemy interference with the occupation of the Palaus and Morotai.[11]

It was not expected that the Japanese could or would retain any significant number of aircraft in the Palaus or the rest of the Carolines during the weeks immediately preceding 15 September; what few aircraft might remain on those islands could easily be destroyed or driven away by land- or carrier-based planes prior to that date. Much the same situation would prevail, it was believed at General MacArthur's headquarters, in the Morotai area. The Allied Air Forces was expected to be able to neutralize remaining enemy airfields in western New Guinea, Ambon, Ceram, the Arafura Sea islands, and to a lesser extent in the northwestern Celebes, before 15 September. The remaining Japanese air power would probably withdraw from those targets to the southern Celebes or to the Philippines.[12]

The Japanese could be expected to organize some aerial counterattack to the Allied invasions of the Palaus and Morotai, since the fall of those islands would signify the loss of the last strategic defensive positions in front of the Philippines. The Japanese maintained large air centers in the southern Celebes and Mindanao from which they could send strong counterattacks against Allied forces at Morotai unless these fields were neutralized before 15 September. Less concern was felt about the possibility of aerial counterattack against the Palaus, since the Japanese were not believed capable of employing effectively many long-range bombers across the 600 miles of ocean which separated the Palaus from the principal enemy air centers on Mindanao. No aerial attacks of any significance could be launched by the Japanese against the Palaus from any other direction.[13]

A program for strategic air support missions to be executed by land-based aircraft was soon agreed upon by General MacArthur's and Admiral Nimitz' planners. Shore-based planes of the Central Pacific were to neutralize Japanese fields at Yap, Woleai, Truk, and Ponape in the Carolines; to prevent the Japanese from using airfields on islands of the Gilbert and Mar-

[11] GHQ SWPA OI 60, 29 Jul 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 30 Jul 44; CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Jt Stf Study STALEMATE, 14 Jul 44, in OPD file, A49–95; CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Opn in POA Sep 44, p. 34; JCS 713/4, 12 Mar 44.

[12] CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Opns in POA Sep 44, p. 27; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Morotai, p. 2; Memo, GHQ SWPA, no addressee, 28 Jul 44, sub: Co-ordination of Opns Between POA and SWPA, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 27 Jul 44.

[13] CTF 77 Opns Rpt Morotai, p. 2; ALAMO Force G–2 Wkly Rpt 52, 2 Aug 44, copy in G–2 DofA files; ALAMO Force G–2 Est of Enemy Sit with Respect to Morotai Island, Halmahera Group, 1 Aug 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Morotai, 3–8 Aug 44; CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Opns in POA Sep 44, pp. 27–28.

shall groups not yet occupied by Allied forces; to hit the Bonin Islands and Marcus Islands, north and northeast of the Marianas, respectively; and to destroy enemy installations on Pagan Island, in the northern Marianas. Central Pacific land-based aircraft were also to fly reconnaissance missions in front of carrier task forces and assault convoys moving toward the Palaus.[14]

The Allied Air Forces was to reinforce strikes flown against Yap, Woleai, and Truk by Central Pacific land-based planes; execute heavy bombing attacks against the Palaus; and provide Admiral Nimitz' planners with photographic coverage of these islands. The approach of Central Pacific carrier forces and assault convoys to the Palaus would be covered by Southwest Pacific planes flying strikes against southern Mindanao and Halmahera, and by long-range reconnaissance over the Celebes Sea, the Banda Sea, and the western reaches of the Philippine Sea.[15] Within the limits of the Southwest Pacific Area, the Allied Air Forces was to continue the neutralization of Japanese air centers in western Dutch New Guinea, Halmahera, the Talaud Islands, Ceram, Ambon, Boeroe, and the Arafura Sea islands. Heavy strikes against targets in the Celebes were also to be undertaken in order to neutralize Japanese air bases there insofar as range permitted the Allied Air Forces' land-based planes to do so.[16]

Missions assigned fast carrier task forces of the U. S. Pacific Fleet were even more widespread, geographically speaking, than those allotted land-base planes, and they entailed strikes on enemy installations which available land-based aircraft could not reach. Moreover, the carriers' tasks included strikes of a type not previously executed—sustained attacks on ground targets where Japanese land-based air power was deployed in depth and was easily reinforceable, namely the Mindanao area. Such carrier operations had previously been considered unacceptable risks except in case of dire necessity, but Admiral Nimitz proposed to send his carriers on what he still believed to be a hazardous undertaking because he hoped the attacks on the Philippines might precipitate another fleet action. Moreover, he felt that the Philippine strikes would result in widespread damage to Japanese air power, thereby creating an opportunity for the Allies to secure control over the approaches to the Luzon–Formosa–China coast area earlier than might otherwise be possible.[17]

Strategic air support missions by the Pacific Fleet's fast carriers were to begin with a strike against the Bonin and Volcano Islands, between the Marianas and Japan, late in August. This strike had a twofold objective: the temporary neutralization of Japanese airfields on those island groups and, more important, the creation of a diversion on the north preceding stronger attacks against targets in the Philippines and western Carolines. Carrier action in the latter area was to begin on 6 September, with strikes on the Palaus, Yap, and Ulithi. The

[14] Appendix B, Air Plan, to CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Jt Stf Study STALEMATE, 14 Jul 44.

[15] *Ibid.*; AAF SWPA OI 60, 31 Jul 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 1 Aug 44; Memo, GHQ SWPA, no addressee, 28 Jul 44, sub: Co-ordination of Opns Between POA and SWPA, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 27 Jul 44; GHQ SWPA OI 60/10, 29 Aug 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 30 Jul 44.

[16] AAF SWPA OI 60, 31 Jul 44; RENO V, 15 Jun 44.

[17] CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Opns in POA Sep 44, p. 35; CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Opn Plan 6–44, 21 Jul 44; Appendix B, Air Plan, to CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Jt Stf Study STALEMATE, 14 Jul 44; Annex E, Air Plan, to Comdr Western Pacific Task Forces [Com3dFlt, or CTF 30], Opn Plan 14–44, 1 Aug 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 1 Aug 44.

bulk of the carrier forces was to leave the western Carolines on the afternoon of the 8th to take up positions off Mindanao.[18]

Japanese airfields on Mindanao presented difficult targets because they were scattered over that large island, but it was believed that the cluster of airfields and associated installations in the Davao area would provide profitable targets for carrier-based aircraft attacks. The Davao and Sarangani Bay areas, as well as Japanese shipping routes from Davao to Zamboanga and thence north toward Manila, were also expected to provide profitable targets. Strikes against airdromes and shipping in the Mindanao area were to be carried out on 9 and 10 September, while on the 10th and 11th part of the carrier force was to hit the Palaus and Yap–Ulithi again.[19]

At first, plans for carrier strikes called for raids on the Talauds, Halmahera, and Morotai from 12 through 14 September, but Allied Air Forces, Southwest Pacific Area, was confident its planes could neutralize the Halmaheras and Talauds, and General MacArthur, hoping to preserve chances for local tactical surprise, wanted no strikes against Morotai prior to 15 September. These tentative attacks were therefore canceled in favor of additional strikes in the Mindanao area.[20] On D Day, 15 September, one group of fast carriers was to hit Japanese air bases at the northeastern Celebes early in the morning. Thereafter, this group was to stand by to provide close air support at Morotai if necessary, strike Japanese airfields on Halmahera upon General MacArthur's request, and carry out general reconnaissance and covering missions in the Celebes Sea region. At the Palaus one group of fast carriers, which would have completed additional strikes against that island chain from 12 through 14 September, was to be available for close air support on D Day. The rest of the fast carriers were to stand by in position between the Palaus and Mindanao ready to execute whatever close or distant support missions proved necessary. Close air support at Morotai and the Palaus was primarily the responsibility of escort carrier groups.[21]

Final plans for land- and carrier-based strategic air support of the Palau and Morotai operations were completed by 20 August. The finished program provided for the most widespread and thoroughly integrated series of strategic air support missions yet undertaken within the Pacific theaters.

The Objectives

The Terrain

Morotai Island is not unlike Noemfoor except that everything at Morotai is on a larger scale.[22] The roughly oval-shaped is-

[18] CTF 38 [Comdr 1st Carrier TF] Opn Order 10–44, 20 Aug 44; Comdr Western Pacific TF's, Battle Plan 1–44, 9 Sep 44; Annex E, Air Plan, to Comdr Western Pacific TF's Opn Plan 14–44, 1 Aug 44.

[19] CTF 38 Opn Order 10–44, 20 Aug 44; Annex E, Air Plan, to Comdr Western Pacific TF's Opn Plan 14–44, 1 Aug 44; CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Opns in POA Sep 44, p. 74.

[20] GHQ SWPA OI 60, 29 Jul 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 30 Jul 44; Annex E, Air Plan, to Comdr Western Pacific TF's Opn Plan 14–44, 1 Aug 44; Memo, GHQ SWPA, no addressee, 28 Jul 44, sub: Coordination of Opns between POA and SWPA.

[21] CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Opns in POA Sep 44, pp. 58, 81; Supplement 2, 12 Sep 44, to CTF 38 Opn Order 10–44, 20 Aug 44; Annex E, Air Plan, to Comdr Western Pacific TF's Opn Plan 14–44, 1 Aug 44; Appendix B, Air Plan, to CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Jt Stf Study STALEMATE, 14 Jul 44.

[22] Terrain information concerning Morotai is based principally on: ALAMO Force, G–2 Est of Enemy Sit with Respect to Morotai Island, Halmahera Group, 1 Aug 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Morotai,

land is about forty miles long north to south and some twenty-five miles wide. The coast line, like that of Noemfoor, has many indentations and all types of beaches, including many that are reef-bound. Inland, most of the island is very rough and has peaks rising to 3,500 feet or more. The interior is covered with thick rain forest. The largest of the few lowland areas, called the Doroeba Plain, is located at the southwest corner.

Morotai had come under Portuguese rule in the late 16th century but passed to the Dutch early in the next. The Dutch controlled the 9,000 natives indirectly through the Sultanate of Ternate, Halmahera. Most of the natives lived along the east, south, and west coasts, leaving the interior virtually uninhabited. There was no commercial development before the war and the only white residents were a Dutch missionary and his family. The Japanese took over control in early 1942.

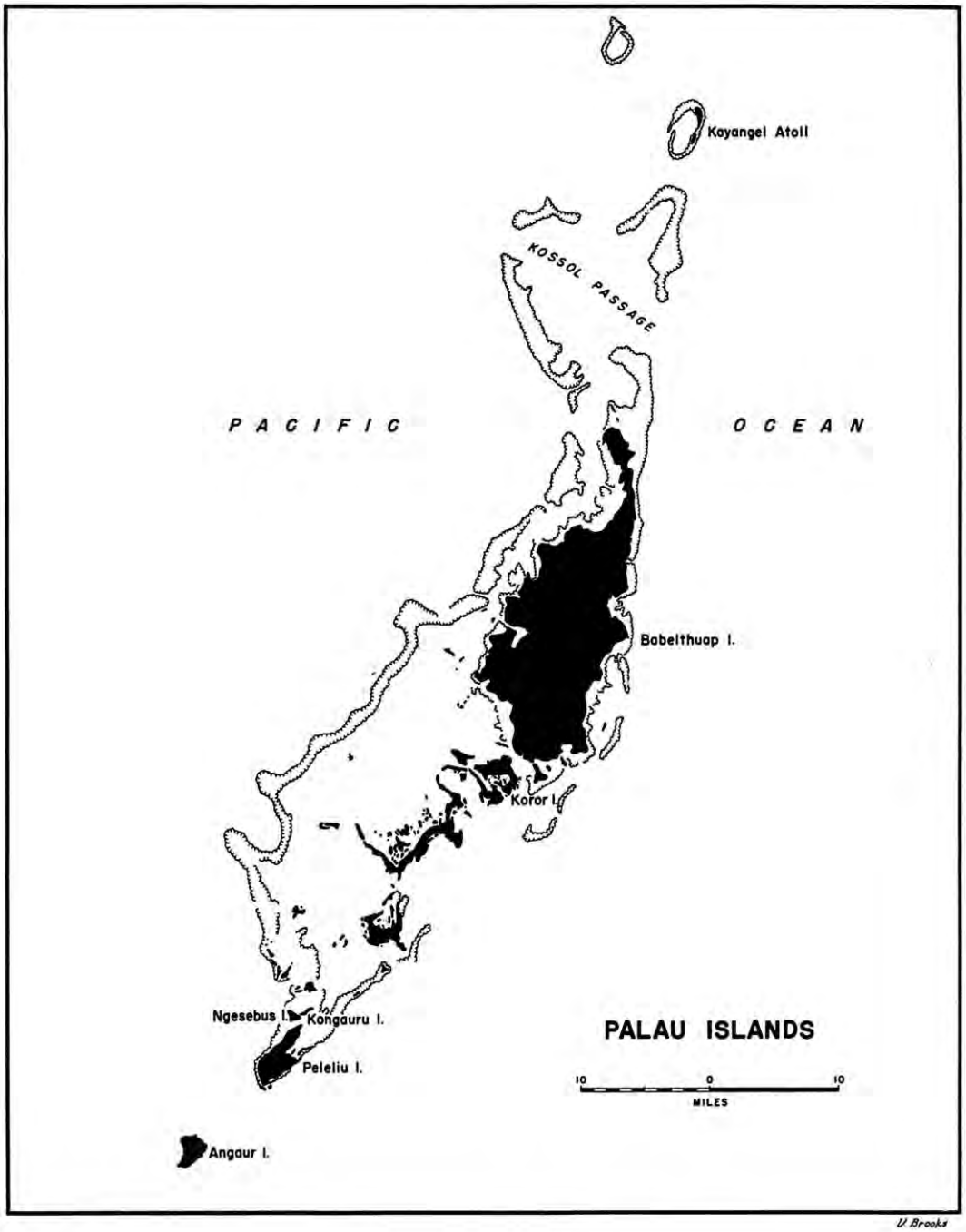
The Doroeba Plain, the only area where military development is practicable, is about nine miles wide, east to west, and extends inland about four miles. From the southwest corner of the plain the Gila Peninsula extends into Morotai Strait, which separates Morotai from Halmahera. The peninsula is about five miles long from the mainland to Cape Dehegila, at its southern tip, and has a maximum width of one mile. On the east side of the peninsula lies Pitoe Bay, the sea approaches to which are generally free of obstacles. The bay is deep and exposed to the weather, leaving much to be desired as a site for landings. Beaches on the west side of the peninsula are better protected and, although reef-bound, appeared prior to the landing to be better than those on the Pitoe Bay side. The western beaches provided easy access to the Doroeba Plain, where, it was believed, airdromes could be developed without undue difficulty.

The Palaus were more civilized than Morotai and some commercial development had been undertaken in the islands ever since they were occupied by the Spanish early in the 17th century.[23] Spain sold the group along with the rest of the Carolines to Germany after the Spanish-American war. The Germans lost the chain to the Japanese during World War I, and Japan held the islands under League of Nations Mandate from 1920 to 1935, when she quit the League and began exercising *de facto* sovereignty over the islands. In the Palaus the Japanese undertook intensive development of bauxite and phosphate deposits. Colonization was promoted until by 1941 there were about 16,000 Japanese in the islands as opposed to some 6,250 natives of Micronesian stock. Over half the natives lived on the largest island, Babelthuap, while most of the Japanese were located on the smaller islands to the south, such as Peleliu and Koror. Koror Town, on the island of the same name, was the site of Japanese administrative and military headquarters. (*Map 19*)

All the islands of the Palau group are very irregularly shaped and most of them are quite hilly. The northern islands are of volcanic basalt, while those on the south

2–8 Aug 44; ALAMO Force, G–2 Typographical Sec., Rpt 151, Morotai Island, 23 Aug 44, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Morotai, 29 Aug–13 Sep 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Morotai, pp. 4–5.

[23] Information concerning the Palaus is based principally on: R. W. Robson, *The Pacific Islands Handbook*, 1944 (North American Edition, New York, 1946), pp. 132–46; JICPOA Bul 87–44, 1 Jun 44, Palau Islands; CINCPAC–CINCPOA Bul 124–44, 15 Aug 44, Southern Palaus; Maj Frank O. Hough (USMCR), *The Assault on Peleliu* (Washington, 1951), pp. 5–9. The latter publication is the U. S. Marine Corps' excellent official history of operations in the Palaus.


Kayangel Atoll
KOSSOL PASSAGE
PACIFIC
OCEAN
Babelthuap I.
Koror I.
Ngesebus I.
Kongauru I.
Peleliu I.
Angaur I.
PALAU ISLANDS
10
0
10
MILES
V. Brooks

MAP 19

consist principally of coral and limestone. Peleliu, the most southerly island enclosed within the reefs surrounding most of the Palau group, is about five and three-fourths miles long northeast to southwest and a little over two miles wide. On the west, an arm some 3,500 yards long and 1,000 wide extends northeast from the main portion, and on the east a short peninsula and reef-connected islets form another arm. Between the two arms are shoals and swamps. A Japanese airfield was located in the southwest section of Peleliu.

The western side of Peleliu bears strong similarity to the southeastern section of Biak Island. Beginning just north of the airfield and running northeast up the western arm is a rough, broken, and densely forested ridge line like that running along the south shore of Biak. Equally broken, the Peleliu ridges presented much the same problems as those on Biak and provided the Japanese with similar defensive advantages. Landings on Peleliu are feasible at many points, but from the point of view of terrain and proximity to the airfield the best beaches are on the southwest coast.

Angaur Island, lying about ten miles south of Peleliu and outside the Palau reefs, is shaped like a very broad crescent, with its tips pointing northwest and southwest. The island is two and a quarter miles long north to south and about one and a half miles wide east to west. Flatter than Peleliu, Angaur's highest point—about 200 feet—lies in wooded coral ridges at the northwest corner, where the terrain was as broken and as easily defensible as that in the Ibdi Pocket on Biak. The Japanese had extensively strip-mined phosphate deposits on Angaur, and water-filled diggings in the north-central and northwestern sections formed two small lakes. Narrow-gauge railroad tracks, running through dense underbrush in many places, connected the various mine sites.

Angaur has many reasonably good landing beaches, including some that are reef-free. Existing reefs are generally narrow and drop steeply off into deep water. There was a pier for small craft at a protected cove on the west-central coast, and about 400 yards to the north was a conveyor belt pier extending into the sea with its outer end attached to buoys. From this apparatus large cargo vessels were loaded with the product of the phosphate diggings. No protected anchorages exist off any part of Angaur. The best beaches are on the southwestern and northeastern coasts. Ngesebus Island, lying off the northern tip of Peleliu, is flat, sandy, and reef-bound. Site of a Japanese airfield, the island had no defensive potentialities except for a short, very low ridge along the western shore.

The Japanese

The Palaus and the Halmahera area were closely related in Japanese defense plans at one time or another during the war. Halmahera fell within the *2d Area Army's* zone of responsibility. To defend that island and western New Guinea *Imperial General Headquarters* once laid plans to send the *32d* and *14th Divisions* to the *2d Area Army,* while dispatching the *35th Division* to the Palaus. As a result of various changes in plans, previously recounted,[24] the *32d Division* and two regiments of the *35th Division* (less elements sunk in transit) landed in Halmahera early in May 1944. One regiment of the *35th Division* was first sent to the Palaus, where it arrived in April. Since

[24] See above, Chs. IV and X.

the Japanese desired to have more strength in the latter islands, the *14th Division* was dispatched there in April. The *35th Division's* regiment then sailed south to rejoin its parent unit, then on the move to Sorong and Manokwari from Halmahera, where the *32d Division* remained.[25]

Lt. Gen. Sadae Inoue, the *14th Division* commander, was also appointed Commander, *Palau Sector Group,* in which capacity his area of responsibility included Yap and Ulithi as well as the Palaus. He was ordered by *Imperial General Headquarters* to hold the Palaus at all costs, to protect the airfields there and deny their use to the Allies. The main air base—that on Peleliu—had existed before the war, and had undoubtedly been employed by the Japanese for scouting and reconnaissance missions at the outbreak of war. The Palaus had also been used as a base by a small carrier task force which executed the first Japanese air raids against the Philippines in 1941, and later they were used as a staging base for units moving to Luzon, Mindanao, and the Netherlands East Indies.[26] Afterwards, the Japanese had used the islands as an intermediate staging base and supply point for troops moving eastward to the *8th Area Army's* zone. Upon the withdrawal of the Japanese strategic main line of resistance westward in the spring of 1944, base troops in the Palaus, under Maj. Gen. Takeo Yamaguchi, passed to the control of the *2d Area Army,* and, when General Inoue assumed command of the *Palau Sector Group,* to the latter's control.[27]

The Halmahera–Morotai area had not assumed much importance to the Japanese until early 1944, when they began to develop Halmahera as a focal point for the defense of the southern approaches to the Philippines. In addition to the *32d Division,* the Japanese had on Halmahera innumerable service organizations, and they completed or had under construction nine airfields on the island, most of them in northern Halmahera. On that island they concentrated nearly 30,000 men, including at least 11,000 combat troops. Morotai was neglected except for some work at Doroeba Plain. There the Japanese started an airstrip which they soon abandoned, apparently because of drainage problems.[28]

On Morotai the Japanese had stationed about 500 men of the *2d Raiding Unit,* which was commanded by Maj. Takenobu Kawashima. The officers were Japanese but most of the enlisted men were Formosans, and the unit was divided into four companies, the dispositions of which on 15 September are unknown. The Japanese had some grandiose schemes for counterattack from Halmahera in case Allied forces landed on Morotai, but by 15 September Morotai was isolated and there was no chance to reinforce it. Allied air power had destroyed Japanese air strength on Halmahera, brought to a stop ship movements to and from that island, and, after D Day, with the aid of PT boats, should be able to prevent barge traffic between Halmahera and Morotai.

[25] Details of these movements are set forth in Ch. X.

[26] For additional information concerning Japanese use of the Palaus during the early months of the war see Louis Morton, The Fall of the Philippines, and Samuel Milner, Victory in Papua, both forthcoming volumes in the series U. S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II.

[27] For additional details see above, Ch. IV.

[28] ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpts 44, 51, and 56, 7 Jun, 26 Jul, and 30 Aug, respectively, copies in G–2 DofA files; Amendment 1, 1 Sep 44, to ALAMO Force, G–2 Est of Enemy Sit with Respect to Morotai, 1 Aug 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Morotai, 3–7 Sep 44; ALAMO Force FO 22, 15 Aug 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Morotai, p. 5.

The Japanese made no attempts to reinforce Morotai in the weeks immediately preceding 15 September and, possibly in the vain hope that the Allies might make a landing in northern Halmahera—an eventuality for which the Japanese were well prepared—apparently forgot Morotai.[29]

Not so in the southern Palaus, on which General Inoue had prepared elaborate defenses, nominally in co-operation with Japanese Navy units in the islands.[30] General Inoue planned to stop invaders at the beaches, but, in case of defeat at the shore line, his forces were to fall back on previously prepared positions inland. To aid beach defense, many offshore obstacles were constructed and many mines were laid. Inland, there were more mines. Antitank obstacles were constructed ashore, and weapons as well as defensive positions were concealed. Artillery pieces were well emplaced to oppose landings, and excellent use was made of natural terrain features for defense. The ridge lines of northwest Angaur and western Peleliu were honeycombed with defensive works on an even greater scale than those on the similar terrain of southern Biak.

By mid-May the *Palau Sector Group* had already taken up many defensive positions. *Headquarters, 14th Division* (also *Group* headquarters) was at Koror; the division's *2d Infantry* was on Peleliu; the reinforced *59th Infantry,* less one battalion, was on Angaur; and the *15th Infantry,* with the other battalion of the *59th* attached, was on Babelthuap and the remaining islands. Many supporting weapons were already emplaced, and other gun positions were rapidly nearing completion. Both Angaur and Peleliu were divided into four defensive sectors and each maintained a central reserve.

Babelthuap and the central islands were placed under the command of General Yamaguchi who, in addition to the various *14th Division* units disposed in his area, also had under his command the *Sea Transport Units* (probably landing craft and crews) of the *1st Amphibious Brigade* and the various staging base troops previously attached to the *2d Area Army.* On 30 May these latter troops were reorganized into the *53d Independent Mixed Brigade* (*IMB*), over which General Yamaguchi retained command. One of the *53d IMB's* six infantry battalions was sent to Peleliu to reinforce the *2d Infantry,* as was the *3d Battalion, 15th Infantry.* The Peleliu garrison also included artillery, mortar, and signal units, and a tank organization containing twelve light tanks. The garrison totaled about 10,500 men, of whom almost 6,300 were combat troops. The *Peleliu Sector Unit,* as the Peleliu garrison was designated, was commanded by Col. Kunio Nakagawa, also the commander of the *2d Infantry.*[31]

[29] Hist of *2d Area Army,* pp. 70–74; Japanese Studies in WW II, 33, *32d Div* Opns in the Halmaheras, pp. 2–4, copy in OCMH files; ALAMO Force, G–2 Wkly Rpts 56 and 58, 30 Aug and 31 Sep 44, copies in G–2 DofA files.

[30] Information in the rest of this subsection is principally from: Central Pacific Opns, pp. 20–35, 38, 72; The Palau Operations, pp. 25–40, 45–47, 57–61, 72–74, 78–80; Interrog of Vice Adm Shigeru Fukodome, in USSBS, *Interrogations of Japanese Officials,* II, 500–30; Drummond, The Palau Campaign, Ch. V; Encl C, Intelligence, pp. 2–4, to III Amph Corps Opns Rpt Palau; Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu,* pp. 14–18.

[31] Maj. Gen. Kenjiro Murai, probably the commander of the *Infantry Group, 14th Division,* was also on Peleliu. His position appears to have been advisory and served to provide the Army troops with an officer of rank comparable to that of the Peleliu Navy garrison commander, Vice Adm. Itou. Whatever the case, Colonel Nakagawa exercised the actual operational command. A detailed discussion of General Murai's status is found in Appendix F, "The Mysterious Mission of Murai," to Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu,* pp. 200–202.

Late in July, for unknown reasons, General Inoue withdrew the bulk of the *59th Infantry* to Babelthuap, leaving only the reinforced *1st Battalion* of that regiment on Angaur. This battalion, commanded by Maj. Ushio Goto, was the nucleus of the *Angaur Sector Unit* (also under Major Goto), and had attached to it a few heavy artillery pieces, a battery of mountain artillery, some antiaircraft and antitank guns, a heavy mortar platoon, an engineer platoon, and miscellaneous service troops. The garrison totaled about 1,400 men.

Until August the *Palau Sector Group* was attached to the *31st Army* (command post on Saipan), in turn under the operational control of the *Central Pacific Fleet.* But after the fall of the Marianas *Imperial General Headquarters* reassigned the *Group* administratively to the *Southern Army* and operationally to *Headquarters, Combined Fleet.* On 3 September *Southern Army* informed General Inoue that an Allied invasion of the Palaus was imminent. But the general apparently took this news with at least one grain of salt, for on the 8th he interpreted Allied carrier strikes on the Palaus as a diversion intended to cover landings elsewhere. It was not until the 11th that he changed his mind and alerted his command to make final preparations to defend the islands to the death.

And by 11 September about all the *Palau Sector Group* could look forward to was death or surrender. Sometime during the summer of 1944, probably not long after the Allied invasion of the Marianas and the concomitant naval battle, the Japanese had come to the conclusion that the Allies might *not* land in the Palaus and that seizure of those islands was not a necessary prerequisite to an Allied advance to the Philippines. But shipping could not be risked to take the *Palau Sector Group* away from the islands, and, moreover, should the Allies finally decide to take the Palaus, even a hopeless defense might delay Allied use of the Palau air bases. On the other hand, the Japanese were concentrating all their efforts on preparing the defense of the Philippines; they could spare no planes, ships, or troops to strengthen islands which they thought the Allies might bypass.

Therefore, after July 1944, only the barest trickle of the most necessary supplies was shipped to the Palaus. And even this trickle diminished toward September, for increasingly effective Allied air and submarine operations in the western Pacific did not encourage the Japanese to dispatch so much as a landing barge to the Palaus. The *Palau Sector Group* was a hopeless case indeed. It could look forward on the one hand only to death or surrender in case of an Allied landing, or on the other hand to being bypassed and left behind, useless, like garrisons in New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago that had been isolated earlier in the war.

Accurate information concerning enemy defenses in the Palaus was not available to the Allies until many highly classified documents from the files of *Headquarters, 31st Army,* were captured in the Marianas during July.[32] One such document in particular, dated 8 June 1944, gave detailed supply data for Japanese forces in the Palaus and provided the initial basis for Allied estimates of the enemy situation in the islands as well as for much of the tactical planning.

---

[32] This paragraph is based on: Encl C, Int, p. 7, to III Amph Corps Opns Rpt Palau, Annex D, Int, to CTF 31 Opn Plan A–302–44, 4 Aug 44; Annex B, Int, to 1st Mar Div Opn Plan 1–44, 15 Aug 44, and Supplement 1, 24 Aug 44; Annex B, Int, to 81st Inf Div FO 7, 5 Aug 44, and Supplement 1, 31 Aug 44.

In mid-August new information permitted remarkably accurate revisions in the Allied June estimates. By that time, however, the principal Allied units concerned with operations in the Palaus had completed and issued their final tactical plans. The revisions were too late or lacked sufficient corroboration to materially change these approved plans.

Organization, Tactics, and Logistics

The Organization and Missions of the Forces

The organization of Southwest Pacific Area forces for the Morotai operation differed little from that for previous operations in the theater. As usual, ALAMO Force was responsible for the seizure and development of the objective area, with the support of the Allied Air and Allied Naval Forces. The Morotai plan called for the occupation of a perimeter about fifteen miles long around airfields to be constructed in the southwest section of the island. To hold this perimeter, to establish and protect radar stations around the island's shores, to seize a beachhead against a possible regiment of Japanese (which, it was estimated, *could* be on Morotai), and to defend against whatever counterattacks the Japanese might strain themselves to mount from Halmahera, General MacArthur considered that no less than a reinforced division plus another regimental combat team would be needed.[33]

For this operation General Krueger chose the 31st Division (most of which was at Wakde–Sarmi except for one regimental combat team at Aitape) and the 126th Regimental Combat Team of the 32d Division (at Aitape). Headquarters, XI Corps, under Maj. Gen. Charles P. Hall, was chosen to co-ordinate the operations of the 31st Division, the 126th Regimental Combat Team, and various attached combat and service units. As Headquarters, PERSECUTION Task Force, General Hall's command had been in action at Aitape from late June to late August. For Morotai, his corps was designated the TRADEWIND Task Force. The 31st Division, under Maj. Gen. John C. Persons, was to execute the initial landings as the TRADEWIND Assault Force. The 126th Regimental Combat Team was named TRADEWIND Task Force Reserve. ALAMO Force Reserve for the operation was the 6th Infantry Division (less one regimental combat team) at Sansapor.[34]

Other major combat units of the TRADEWIND Task Force were an antiaircraft group of 3 automatic weapons battalions, 2 gun battalions, and 1 searchlight battalion; a medium tank company; a 4.2-inch mortar company; a signal battalion, less 2 companies; a military police company; the 534th Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, less the Boat Battalion; and the 544th Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, less 1 boat company. These combat components (including the reinforced 31st Division and the 126th Regimental Combat Team) numbered almost 28,000 men. The bulk of the service units assigned to the task force were engineer organizations destined to construct airfields and related installations. Service troops totaled about 40,200 men.[35]

---

[33] GHQ SWPA, Outline Plan for Occupation of Southwest Morotai, 19 Jul 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Morotai, 19 Jul–2 Aug 44.

[34] ALAMO Force FO 22, 15 Aug 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 15 Aug 44; TRADEWIND Task Force (hereafter cited as TrTF) FO 1, 22 Aug 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Morotai, 19–23 Aug 44.

[35] *Ibid.*

Naval organization was headed by Rear Adm. Daniel E. Barbey of the VII Amphibious Force as Commander, Task Force 77, the Attack Force. His amphibious command was divided into two groups totaling 12 destroyers, 2 APA's, 5 APD's, 1 LSD, 39 LCI's, 12 LST's, and 12 LCT's. Also under Admiral Barbey was a Close Support and Covering Force, commanded by Rear Adm. Russell S. Berkey and containing 2 heavy cruisers, 3 light cruisers, and 10 destroyers. Close air support was to be provided by Rear Adm. Thomas L. Sprague's Task Force 78—6 CVE's and 10 DE's.[36] One fast carrier group of 2 CV's, 2 CVL's, 3 heavy cruisers, and 12 destroyers—Task Group 38.1—under Vice Adm. John S. McCain, was to provide additional air support as needed. This group was not under Admiral Barbey's control, but was to operate with his Attack Force by co-operation.[37]

The Allied Air Forces, charged with the conduct of land-based air support for Morotai, designated the U. S. Fifth Air Force as the assault air force for that operation. This unit was not to conduct strikes on Morotai before D Day but was to hit near-by Japanese installations on that day and during the weeks preceding the landings. In addition, the Fifth Air Force was to aid the CVE's in protecting convoys moving toward Morotai and was to be ready to fly such close support missions over that island as might be necessary on and after D Day. The other echelons of the Allied Air Forces—the Thirteenth Air Force, the Royal Australian Air Force Command, and land-based planes of the Allied Naval Forces—had no close support missions but were assigned many strategic missions. The air garrison at Morotai was to be provided by the Thirteenth Air Force and included an advanced echelon of that unit's headquarters.[38]

The organization of Central Pacific units for the move to the Palaus centered on Admiral William F. Halsey as the Commander, Western Pacific Task Forces, or, administratively speaking, the Commander, U. S. Third Fleet.[39] Admiral Halsey's missions were as follows: to occupy the Ulithi–Palaus line; to destroy or contain Japanese naval and air forces threatening interference with such occupation; to protect sea and air communications through the forward areas of the Central Pacific; and to provide air cover for the Morotai operation in the Southwest Pacific Area.

Admiral Halsey divided his Western Pacific Task Forces into two major combat echelons. The first of these was the Covering Forces and Special Groups (Task Force 30), over which Admiral Halsey retained direct command. The other section was designated the Joint Expeditionary Force and was placed under Rear Adm. Theodore S. Wilkinson, who was also the commander of the Third Fleet's III Amphibious Force (Task Force 31).

The principal combat component of the Covering Forces and Special Groups was

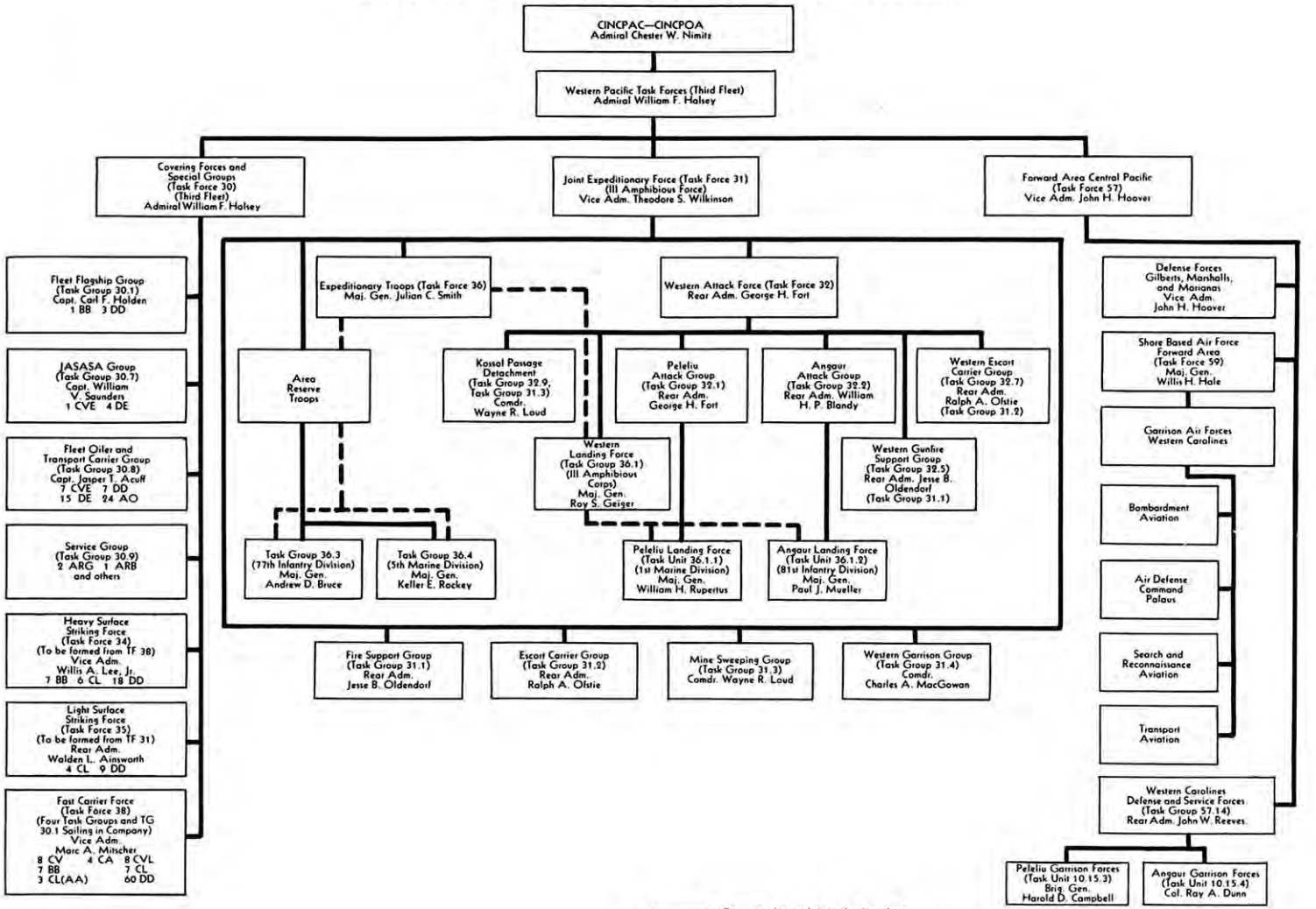
[36] CTF 77 Opns Rpt Morotai, pp. 3–4; CTF 77 Opn Plan 8–44, 20 Aug 44.

[37] CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Opns in POA Sep 44, p. 81, Plate IV; CTF 77 Opn Plan 8–44, 20 Aug 44.

[38] AAF SWPA OI 60, 31 Jul 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 1 Aug 44; 5thAF OI 5, 11 Aug 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 20 Aug 44; 13thAF OI 5, 11 Aug 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 17 Aug 44; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Morotai, pp. 12–13.

[39] The remainder of this subsection is based on: CINCPOA Opns in POA Sep 44, pp. 34–35, Plates IV, V, and VI; Com3dFlt Opn Plan 14–44, 1 Aug 44; CTF 38 Opn Order 10–44, 30 Aug 44; CTF 31 [Comdr Jt Expeditionary Force] Opn Plan A–302–44, 4 Aug 44, and Change 2, 27 Aug; CTF 32 [Comdr Western Attack Force] Opn Plan A–501–44, 8 Aug 44, and Changes 1–4, 15, 23, and 31 Aug 44.

Chart 14—Organization for the Palau Operation.



Vice Adm. Marc A. Mitscher's Fast Carrier Task Force, Task Force 38. Admiral Mitscher was responsible for conducting strategic air support missions, for hitting enemy naval forces threatening landing operations in the western Carolines, and for providing close air support for the Morotai and Palau landings. Also included within the Covering Forces and Special Groups was a Heavy Surface Striking Force of battleships, cruisers, and destroyers which, in case of fleet action, would be formed by ships otherwise assigned to Task Force 38's four fast carrier groups. A Light Surface Striking Force of light cruisers and destroyers was to be formed from fire support ships otherwise assigned to Admiral Wilkinson's Joint Expeditionary Force. In case of fleet action, this latter striking force would be transferred to the Covering Forces and Special Groups. The Special Groups comprised a flagship group, a service group of repair ships, an oiler and transport group, and a hunter-killer group of 1 CVE and 4 DE's organized to hunt down Japanese submarines. In addition to the specific missions assigned its component parts, the Covering Forces and Special Groups had the general task of utilizing all possible opportunities which might be presented or created to destroy major portions of the Japanese fleet.

Under Admiral Wilkinson's Joint Expeditionary Force were the Western and Eastern Attack Forces, assigned the task of securing the southern Palaus and Yap–Ulithi, respectively. Other components of Admiral Wilkinson's command were a Fire Support Group, an Escort Carrier Group, and a Minesweeping Group. The Western Attack Force, commanded by Rear Adm. George H. Fort, had three parts—the Peleliu and Angaur Attack Groups and the Kossol Passage Detachment. Admiral Fort retained command over the Peleliu Attack Group and delegated the control of the Angaur Attack Group to Rear Adm. William H. P. Blandy.

Maj. Gen. Julian C. Smith (USMC), as Commander, Expeditionary Troops, was to be in control of all ground action in the western Carolines. His position was roughly analogous to that of General Krueger of ALAMO Force in the Southwest Pacific, and was equivalent to that of an Army commander. The ground force commander for the southern Palaus was Maj. Gen. Roy S. Geiger (USMC), who commanded the Western Landing Force and Troops, or, as his headquarters was otherwise known, the III Amphibious Corps.[40] The principal ground combat elements assigned to the III Amphibious Corps were the 1st Marine Division, under Maj. Gen. William H. Rupertus (USMC), and the 81st Infantry Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. Paul J. Mueller. The former was to seize Peleliu and the latter, less one regimental combat team in corps reserve, was to take Angaur. In general reserve for operations in the western Carolines were the 5th Marine and 77th Infantry Divisions. The 1st Marine Division had seen action on Guadalcanal in the South Pacific and on New Britain in the Southwest Pacific. Some 30 percent of the unit's men had been in both operations and 60 percent had been in one or the other. The 81st Infantry Division had no previous combat experience and, when assigned to the Palau operation, was finishing jungle and amphibious training in Hawaii. The 77th Infantry

[40] Not to be confused with the Third Fleet's III Amphibious Force. The latter was a naval command responsible for the amphibious assault phases of an operation, while the corps was a Marine organization having functions generally parallel to those of an Army corps.



MAJ. GEN. PAUL J. MUELLER (*left*), *with Rear Adm. Robert B. Carney* (*center*) *and Admiral William F. Halsey* (*right*).

Division had seen action on Guam in the Marianas, while the 5th Marine Division was without combat experience.

Once all objectives in the western Carolines had been secured, responsibility for their defense and development would pass to the Forward Area Central Pacific (Task Force 57), commanded by Vice Adm. John H. Hoover. The latter delegated his duties in the Palaus to Rear Adm. John W. Reeves as the Commander, Western Carolines Defense and Service Forces (Task Group 57.14).

The Palau Tactical Plan

The production of all plans concerned with the seizure and development of the Palaus was complicated by many changes in objectives within the island group and by many other changes in headquarters, commanders, and units assigned to the operation.[41] Plans started with the concept of

[41] Information in this subsection is based on: CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Jt Stf Study STALEMATE, 14 Jul 44; 1st Mar Div, Opn Plan 1–44, 15 Aug 44, and Addendum 3, 4 Sep 44; Com3dFlt Opns Rpt

securing the entire Palau group, passed through many changes to a concept of seizing only the southern Palaus, with Angaur first and Peleliu second, and, ultimately, called for the seizure of Peleliu first and Angaur within a day or two thereafter. Although study of operations in the Palaus had been under way in various headquarters in the Pacific Ocean Areas since early 1944, it was not until late May that Admiral Halsey was made responsible for the planning and execution of those operations. On 1 August he issued an outline plan for the invasion of the western Carolines and left detailed tactical planning to subordinate agencies.

Admiral Wilkinson's Joint Expeditionary Force headquarters started its planning in May, while the staff of III Amphibious Corps, located at Guadalcanal, started work on its planning late the same month. About mid-June the III Amphibious Corps headquarters learned it would probably not be released from missions in the Marianas in time to participate in the Palau operations. Therefore, a provisional corps headquarters was set up at Pearl Harbor to finish the planning and to carry out the operation. But the III Amphibious Corps was through in the Marianas earlier than was expected and was reassigned to the Palau operation on 15 August. Most of the men of the provisional corps headquarters thereupon formed the nucleus for the staff of General Smith's Headquarters, Expeditionary Troops. Final plans of both headquarters were revised as necessary and were completed within a few days.

The 1st Marine Division began its planning at its camp in the South Pacific early in June, but it was not until the second week in August that members of Admiral Fort's Western Attack Force staff could reach Guadalcanal for essential joint planning. The division's landing plans were therefore not completed until late August. The 81st Infantry Division started its planning in Hawaii during early July, making many changes as the concept of the operation was changed. Two regimental combat teams were finally assigned to the invasion of Angaur upon their release from a feinting and reserve role during the assault on Peleliu. The remaining regiment, initially in reserve for the 1st Marine Division, became III Amphibious Corps Reserve late in August. At the same time, the 81st Division was relieved of an earlier assignment to commit one combat team to Yap or Ulithi. This last revision made it necessary for the division to make provision to unload the entire unit on tiny Angaur. A final change was made on 16 September, when one regimental combat team, assigned to corps reserve, was redesignated the assault force for Ulithi. Despite such troubles, and many others for which lack of space

---

Palaus–Ulithi–Morotai, pp. 1–2; CTF 31 Opns Rpt Palaus–Ulithi, pp. 1–5; Encl A, Plng, pp. 1–4, to III Amph Corps Opns Rpt Palaus; CTF 36 [CG Expeditionary Troops Third Fleet] Opns Rpt Palau, pp. 1–4; Sec. 1, Plng, pp. 1–3, of Phase I, Plng and Tng Annex, to 1st Mar Div Opns Rpt Palau; 81st Inf Div Opns Rpt Angaur, pp. 5–8; 81st Inf Div FO 7, 5 Aug 44; CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Opns in POA Sep 44, p. 39; CTF 38 Opn Order 10–44, 20 Aug 44, and changes thereto; CTF 32 Opn Plan A–501–44, 23 Aug 44; Sec. 2, Narrative, p. 2, of Phase I, Plng and Tng Annex, to 1st Mar Div Opns Rpt Palau; Annex G, Naval Gunfire Rpt, p. 2, to III Amph Corps Opns Rpt Palau; CTG 32.1 Attack Order A–502–44, 20 Aug 44, and changes thereto; CTG 32.2 [Comdr Angaur Attack Group] Attack Order A–264–44, 6 Aug 44, and changes thereto, in USMC files; Drummond, The Palau Campaign, Ch. II; extracts and notes from personal diary of General Mueller [CG 81st Inf Div], 6 Jul–25 Nov 44, prepared by Major Drummond, copy in OCMH files; Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu,* pp. 10–20. Further details of 1st Marine Division planning are to be found in Hough.

prohibits detailed description, most of the units assigned to the Palau operation had their plans completed by mid-August, and final details were settled before the end of the month.

The 1st Marine Division was to begin landings on Peleliu at 0830, 15 September, with five battalions abreast over White Beaches 1 and 2 and Orange Beaches 1 through 3 on the southwest shore of Peleliu, opposite the Peleliu airfield. (*See Map VII.*) The assault waves were to be carried ashore in LVT's and LVT(A)'s. The 1st Marines was to land on the left (north) to drive up the western shore and clear the Japanese from the ridges overlooking the airfield. The 5th Marines was to land in the center, securing the airfield and dividing the island, while the 7th Marines was to seize the southern end of the island. The 11th Marines (artillery), reinforced by two 155-mm. battalions of III Amphibious Corps artillery, was to start moving ashore at H plus 60 minutes. One 155-mm. battalion was to find positions whence it could provide support for the 81st Division's landing on Angaur.

Two beaches were selected for the landings of the 81st Infantry Division at Angaur on F Day, as the day for landing on that island was designated. (*See Map VII.*) Red Beach, located on the northeast coast, was about 250 yards wide and was flanked on its left by a small promontory and on its right by rough shore at the northern tip of the island. About 200 feet off the center of this beach was located a tiny rocky islet. The 322d Regimental Combat Team was to land on Red Beach at 0830 with two infantry battalions abreast, each carried ashore in LVT's. There was some discussion of whether to commit the assault battalions abreast or in column over narrow Red Beach, but it was decided that the landing abreast would have the advantage of bringing each battalion's heavy weapons into action sooner than might otherwise be possible and would prevent confusion that might result from one battalion's passing through the lines of another on its way forward. The remaining battalion of the 322d Infantry was to move ashore on LCVP's or, alternatively, on LVT's to which they would transfer in the stream from the LCVP's.

Blue Beach, where the 321st Regimental Combat Team was to land, was located southeast of Red Beach and on the east-central shore of Angaur. The two were separated by nearly 2,000 yards of rough coast line and eastern capes of the island. It was realized that such widely separated landings were not particularly desirable, but the choice of beaches was dictated by the nature of the Angaur terrain and known or suspected Japanese defensive dispositions. Aerial photography had indicated that an excellent beach near the northwest tip of Angaur was backed by terrain which would make progress inland extremely difficult; beaches on the southwestern and southeastern shores of the island, although wider and backed by more favorable terrain than Red and Blue Beaches, were more strongly defended and more distant from important objectives, including the northwest hill mass, which was expected to be the center of Japanese resistance. Finally, the chosen beaches had no wide barrier reefs in front of them.

Division reserve for the landing was the 3d Battalion, 321st Infantry, which was to land on either beach on call. The III Amphibious Corps Reserve (the 323d Regimental Combat Team) was to make a feint at a beach not used by the rest of the division in order to keep the enemy defenders con-

fused as to the location of the principal landings. It was hoped that this feint would also immobilize any enemy reserve.

Once ashore, the two assault regiments were to drive directly inland to secure a first phase line, which was drawn approximately 300 yards from the beaches. Not until the first phase line had been secured in each regiment's sector were flank units to make contact between the two assault forces. Elements of each regiment were then to sweep back toward the beaches and the northeast cape to secure the terrain which had been bypassed on the way inland. The boundary between regiments began at the east capes (about midway between the two landing beaches) and ran west-southwest about 2,200 yards across the island to a junction of many of the island's narrow-gauge railroad lines at a point about 1,000 yards inland from the west-central coast. Thence the boundary went south-southwest until it hit the southwest beach of the island at Garangaoi Cove, about 600 yards above the island's southern tip.

The boundary line was arbitrarily drawn without reference to existing features, such as some of the narrow-gauge railroads. One of the principal reasons for selecting such a line was to place Cape Ngatpokul, one of the east capes, in the 322d Infantry's zone of action. Cape Ngatpokul projected toward Red Beach, and from it the enemy might pour down enfilade fire on the 322d's landing operations. One battalion of the regiment was to swing sharply left upon landing to secure the cape, while the 321st Infantry was made responsible for securing Cape Ngariois, the more southern of the east capes. The 322d Infantry was also to secure Cape Pkul A Mlagalp, at the north tip of the island; the hill mass at the northwest corner of the island; and Saipan Town, which, lying on the west-central coast, was the principal Japanese settlement on the island and the only population center of any note. The 321st Infantry was to secure the entire southern section of the island, excluding Saipan town.

The 81st Infantry Division's artillery was faced with a peculiar problem in providing support for ground action on Angaur, for the island was extremely narrow. If the 105-mm. battalions landed on the beach behind the infantry regiment each was to support, both would have to fire on targets less distant than minimum effective support ranges or from positions from which good angles of fall could not be obtained. But there were no near-by islands where the 105-mm.'s could land, and they could not safely land on Angaur except at the beaches the infantry was to secure. Therefore, the 105-mm. battalion which was to support the 321st Infantry was to land on the 322d Infantry's beachhead, and the latter's artillery was to land behind the 321st Infantry. Each 105-mm. battalion would fire diagonally across the front into the zone of the regiment it was to support, thereby gaining sufficient range and trajectory clearance for effective close support and reducing the danger of range deviations.

Two of the division's 105-mm. battalions were to land on call at the beaches, while the third remained afloat as part of the 323d Regimental Combat Team unless it was needed on Angaur. The division's 155-mm. battalion was to land on Angaur on F plus 1 day. To provide some heavy support until the two 105-mm. battalions could get ashore, a battery of 4.2-inch mortars was to be landed on Blue Beach with the leading waves.

It is well-nigh impossible to clearly distinguish between the strategic and close air

support missions flown by carrier-based aircraft in the Palaus area. Fast carrier strikes were to begin on D minus 9, 6 September, and were to be preceded by attacks from the Southwest Pacific's Fifth Air Force, which was to continue night attacks on the Palaus while the carriers were in the area. From D minus 9 through D minus 4, area targets were to be covered, while attacks on pinpointed targets were to begin on 12 September, in conjunction with naval gunfire support and mine-sweeping activities.

Fast carriers were also to provide some close air support on D Day at Peleliu and F Day at Angaur, in addition to the support to be obtained from CVE-based planes. No strikes against Angaur were scheduled for 15 September, but on F Day supporting aircraft were to hit known or suspected gun emplacements and defensive installations. There were also to be strafing attacks on the beaches. Because of the peculiar angle at which Red and Blue Beaches lay in relation to each other, the strafing groups would fly a fine collision course if they executed their strafing perpendicular to the beaches, as was most desirable. Therefore, both groups were to head into the beaches almost due west, with the Red Beach group pulling up to the right and the Blue Beach group pulling up to its left.

The original gunfire support plan for the Palaus called for two days of bombardment prior to D Day, but the III Amphibious Corps, concerned over the possibility of strong defenses near the landing beaches, especially on Peleliu, asked for four days. Admiral Wilkinson could not entirely accede to this request since ammunition was lacking, but he did add one more day's bombardment. This did not increase the actual weight of ammunition, but rather called for the expenditure of the same amount over a longer period of time and in a more deliberate fashion.

The Peleliu Fire Support Unit, comprising 4 old battleships, 3 heavy cruisers, 1 light cruiser, and 9 destroyers, was to start firing at 0530 on D minus 3. The destroyers and LCI's (rocket and gunboat) of the assault convoy were also scheduled to engage in fire support missions. The bombardment from D minus 3 through D minus 1 was to be divided between Peleliu and Angaur. On F Day the Angaur Fire Support Unit (2 old battleships, 1 heavy cruiser, 3 light cruisers, and 4 destroyers) was to start its work two hours before the landing. From H minus 30 minutes to H Hour the ships were to hit the beaches, gradually spreading their fires to the flanks and inland as the landing waves approached the shore; from H Hour to H plus 20 the fire was to be directed inland in front of the advancing infantry.

Four LCI mortar boats and two LCI gunboats were to support the landing on Red Beach, while seven LCI gunboats were to be in support at Blue Beach. The LCI mortar boats were to begin firing about H minus 25 and were to stop when the leading boat waves were about 1,200 yards from shore, or H minus 8 minutes. The LCI gunboats were then to fire rocket salvos, after which they were to continue 20-mm. and 40-mm. fire on the beaches as the leading waves moved shoreward. Five of the gunboats were to devote special attention to the area between the two landing beaches.

Logistics of the Palau Operation

Approximately 49,500 troops were assigned to the III Amphibious Corps to execute the occupation and development of

the Palaus during the assault phase of operations on those islands. These troops were divided between services as follows:

U. S. Army	19, 800
U. S. Marine Corps	24, 300
U. S. Navy	4, 800

Most of the naval personnel were either organic to or attached to the 1st Marine Division, although a few were attached to the 81st Infantry Division or Headquarters, III Amphibious Corps. The approximate breakdown among major tactical units was as follows:

Headquarters, III Amphibious Corps	150
1st Marine Division, reinforced	28, 400
81st Infantry Division, reinforced	21, 100

About 63,800 tons of supplies and equipment were scheduled to be sent ashore for the III Amphibious Corps. Of this amount, the 81st Division was to unload about 29,500 tons of supplies, while the 1st Marine Division, some 7,000 men stronger, was to put ashore on Peleliu about 5,000 more tons of cargo. The ships assigned to move the 49,500 men and 63,800 tons of supplies to the Palaus were: [42]

Type	*1st Marine Division*	*81st Infantry Division*	*Total*
AP	1	3	4
APA	10	9	19
APH	2	0	2
AK	0	1	1
AKA	4	2	6
LST	30	21	51
LSD	2	2	4

[42] Encl A, Consolidated Pers and Tonnage Date, to Encl G, Transport QM Rpt, to CTF 36 Opns Rpt Palau; Encl A, Strength of Units, to Encl E, Pers Rpt, to III AC Opns Rpt Palau; Annex A, Pers, p. 2, to Phase I, Plug and Tng Annex to 1st Mar Div Opns Rpt Palau; CTF 32, Opn Plan A–501–44, 8 Aug 44, and changes thereto. All personnel figures are approximate since the sources do not agree in detail and the discrepancies in the personnel tabulations given above cannot be reconciled from available documents. The shipping listed under the 1st Marine Division apparently included that for various III Amphibious Corps units attached to the 1st Marine Division for operations.

The III Amphibious Corps' assault units were to take with them to the Palaus 32 days' supply of rations, 5 days' supply of water, 20 days' supply of clothing and unit equipment, 20 days' supply of fuels and lubricants, 30 days' supply of medical material, and 20 days' supply of small boat and motor maintenance equipment. Five "CINCPOA" units of fire for all weapons were to be taken ashore during the assault phase. The 105-mm. howitzers were to be supplied with two additional units of fire, while 57-mm. antitank guns were to get four additional units.[43]

Such was the general supply plan as determined by Headquarters, Expeditionary Troops. The 1st Marine and 81st Infantry Divisions' individual supply plans varied

[43] CTF 36 Adm O 1–44, 22 Jul 44, in USMC files. A CINCPOA unit of fire contained an assortment of ammunition selected on the basis of previous operations in the Central Pacific Area. Among other types, it contained 100 rounds of M1 rifle ammunition, 1,500 rounds for .30-caliber machine guns, 600 rounds for .50-caliber machine guns, 275 rounds for 60-mm. and 81-mm. mortars, 250 rounds for 105-mm. howitzers M2, and 150 rounds of 155-mm. howitzer ammunition. See also Appleman, Burns, Gugeler, and Stevens, *Okinawa: The Last Battle* (Washington, 1948), p. 38 (n. 68), in the series U. S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II.

somewhat in detail, but in one way or another carried out the provisions of the general supply directive. The 81st Division was to put its supplies ashore in three phases—(1) in boats of the assault waves; (2) in floating reserve offshore in LST's or in LVT's and DUKW's which unloaded the LST's, to be called ashore when possible or necessary; and (3) on cargo ships such as APA's and AKA's, also lying offshore. The ships of the latter category were to be unloaded as soon as possible after the Angaur beaches had been secured.[44]

The 1st Marine Division's supply plan called for placing ashore within a few days after the first landings all supplies as required by the general plan. Suspecting that the terrain on Peleliu might call for extensive use of weapons not usually employed in open land warfare, the division decided to take with it ten extra units of fire of flame thrower fillers and ten additional units of fire of explosives.[45]

To unload supplies at the far shore, the 1st Marine Division organized four separate shore party groups, one for each regimental combat team and one to act as division shore party headquarters. To man these four groups, six different units organic or attached to the division were divided sixteen different ways. The 81st Infantry Division assigned to each of its regimental combat teams for shore party work an engineer combat battalion. These three battalions were not split up, but operated as integral units under the general direction of an engineer group headquarters.[46]

The 81st Division, while loading, reported as its only critical shortage spare parts for LVT's. At first there was a shortage also in organizational equipment, the division having arrived in Hawaii with far less equipment than was needed for operations in the Palaus. Most organizational equipment shortages were made up prior to embarkation, though at the last possible moment.[47] Early shortages of the 1st Marine Division included amphibian tanks, tank spare parts, signal equipment, bazookas, BAR's, pack-type flame throwers, and submachine guns. By the time the division's ships were loaded all these shortages had been made up, although some equipment arrived so late that it could not be properly loaded and had to be crammed aboard transports in the most expeditious method available.[48]

Initial engineer missions, in addition to shore party activities, were those common to all amphibious operations—establishing beach roads, clearing dump areas, cutting roads inland from the beaches, destroying enemy defensive installations, and supporting infantry action with demolitions. Two U. S. Navy construction battalions (CB's) were to rehabilitate the field on Peleliu for the use of fighter aircraft, at least, as soon as possible after landing. This field was to be extended for bombers, and the Japanese fighter strip on Ngesebus Island was also to be repaired. On Angaur, where no airdrome had previously existed, two U. S. Army engineer aviation battalions were assigned the task of constructing, by F plus 30, an airfield and associated installations ade-

[44] 81st Inf Div Adm O 3, 7 Aug 44.

[45] 1st Mar Div Adm O 1–44, 7 Aug. 44.

[46] Annex E, Shore Party Plan, to 1st Mar Div Adm O 1–44, 7 Aug 44; Annex F, Tactical Groupings, to 81st Inf Div FO 7, 5 Aug 44; Annex K, Engr–Shore Party Opns, pp. 2–3, to III AC Opns Rpt Palau.

[47] Encl D, Supply Rpt, p. 1, to III AC Opns Rpt Palau; 81st Inf Div Opns Rpt Angaur, p. 17.

[48] Encl D, Supply Rpt, p. 1, to III AC Opns Rpt Palau; Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu*, p. 31.

quate for the operations of a heavy bomber (B–24) group.[49]

Rehearsals for the 81st Division began on 31 July at Maui Island, Hawaii.[50] The first day was spent on debarkation drills, formation of boat waves, and transfer of troops from LCVP's to LVT's. The next day the 323d Infantry (less one battalion, which could not participate because ships were lacking) made a practice landing, remaining ashore to act as an enemy force while the other two regiments made their practice landings on 2 and 3 August. By staggering landings, all assault elements were able to participate in reasonably complete rehearsals. However, only 25 percent of the supplies were unloaded and not all the division artillery could take part, since not enough DUKW's were available to provide all units with opportunity to practice unloading weapons from such vehicles.

Final rehearsals were undertaken in the Guadalcanal area beginning on 30 August. On that day the 321st and 322d Infantry Regiments participated, but artillery and tanks were not landed. Another landing was carried out on 1 September by the same units, this time with some of the artillery participating and, for the first time, with actual naval gunfire and aerial support. A third exercise was executed on 3 September for the benefit of the 323d Infantry. Throughout the Guadalcanal rehearsals, the number of vehicles unloaded was drastically limited, principally because waterproofing material had to be husbanded for the actual assault on Anguar.

The 1st Marine Division carried out its rehearsals in the Guadalcanal area, where training was complicated by lack of space; by the fact that the division was receiving 40 percent replacements; by the necessity for organizing new LVT(A) units; and, finally, by a shortage of some types of equipment. Artillery units had little time to practice loading and unloading their weapons into LVT's and DUKW's. Furthermore, the training area at Pavuvu Island had in common with Peleliu only a wide fringing reef, and the last rehearsal area, the Tassafaronga region of Guadalcanal, lacked even the reef.

The 81st Division's loading, which took place in Hawaii, was complicated by a number of factors, notably the many changes in the concept of the Palau operation. The division's tactical groupings were not definitely settled until two weeks before the unit left Hawaii for Guadalcanal; before that time only theoretical loading plans could be worked out. In the end, almost all troop loading tables had to be revised, largely on the basis of inquiry as to which units were actually loaded on each ship during a series of staggered staging dates. About 60 percent of the cargo was loaded from 26 through 28 July, after which the loaded vessels took part in the Maui rehearsals. Loading was completed after 5 August, and much cargo had to be readjusted in holds to conform with final tactical plans. It was impossible for the division to combat-load all its cargo, for many supplies were not received at the docks until the day the division left Hawaii. As a result, some low priority cargo was placed in holds

[49] MS, The Pacific—MATTERHORN to Nagasaki [tentative title], Vol. V of the series THE ARMY AIR FORCES IN WORLD WAR II, Ch. IX, p. 47. Copy of draft chapter in OCMH files.

[50] The remainder of this subsection is based principally on: Drummond, The Palau Campaign, Ch. III; Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu*, pp. 20–24, 25–35; 81st Inf Div Opns Rpt Angaur, pp. 14–16; Encl H, Logistics, pp. 2–3, to CTF 31 Opns Rpt Palau. Hough, *op. cit.*, provides many additional details concerning 1st Marine Division staging and rehearsing difficulties.

above high priority matériel. But sufficient high priority cargo was available when needed.

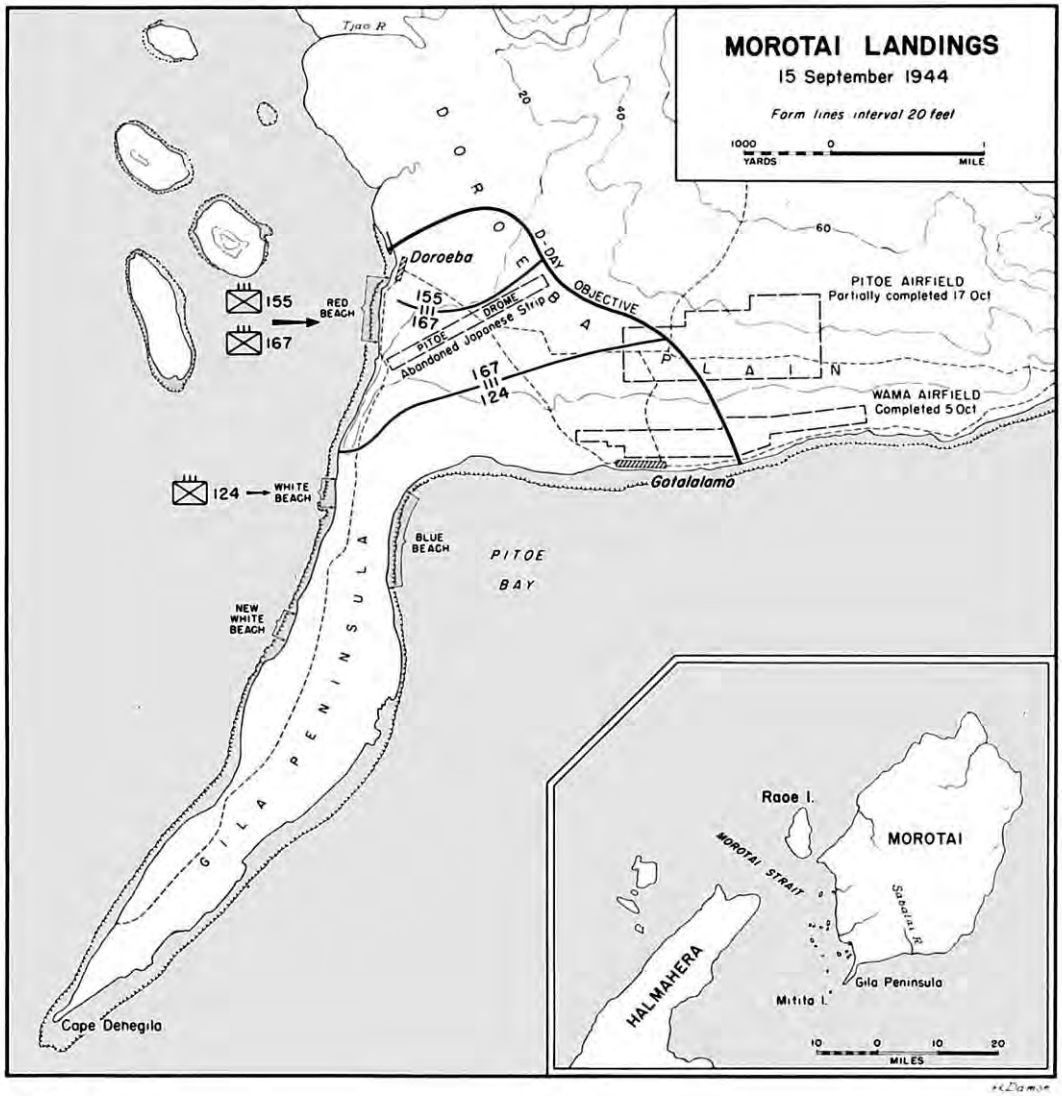
Dispersion of units and supplies at Hawaii created other problems. Most of the supplies had to be gathered and palletized—the division pallet-loaded the bulk of its supplies—at a depot some six miles from loading piers. Some troops were bivouacked even farther away. Some confusion resulted because the division Transport Quartermaster, faced with many changes in tactical plans and groupings, had insufficient time to publish and distribute loading tables far enough in advance to permit subordinate units properly to prepare their own plans. General Mueller finally directed regimental commanders to assume the loading responsibilities for their regiments and attached combat team units. Final loading was greatly decentralized, and the G–4 Section did not have a complete picture of the situation. There were many last-minute improvisations, such as employing one AKA as a cargo overflow vessel and drawing up new storage charts as ships were loaded. By 12 August, however, the division was completely loaded except for some medical matériel, not immediately available, which was flown to Guadalcanal for last-minute stowing aboard ships.

The 1st Marine Division, like the 81st Division, was plagued by necessity to load and rehearse simultaneously and by the late arrival of many cargo ships at Guadalcanal. Detailed planning for loading was impossible until the last moment, and inevitably many compromises and improvisations had to be made. Loading operations were undertaken at five widely separated points in the Guadalcanal area, and many ships had to pick up parts of their cargoes at two or more places. Finally, shortage of lighterage and docking facilities at some loading areas complicated staging.

For large cargo vessels, no unusual loading methods were employed. Insofar as possible, all were combat-loaded and much cargo, especially rations, ammunition, and medical supplies, was palletized. For LST's, loads averaged from 500–750 tons. Bulk cargo was placed along one side of the LST tank decks, care being taken not to block door entrances, and was so arranged that three rows of vehicles could be stowed on the tank decks. Some bulk cargo was placed under DUKW's; some was placed in bins in the after section of the tank decks; and none was stowed to a height of over four feet. All loading and cargo readjustment for amphibious craft was completed before 4 September, upon which date the Palaus assault convoys began leaving the Guadalcanal area.

The Tactical and Logistic Plan for Morotai

Since little opposition was expected at Morotai and since it was extremely important to develop airfields on that island rapidly, the landings there were to take place close to the prospective airfield sites on the Doroeba Plain of southwest Morotai. (*Map 20*). General Krueger originally wanted landings to be made on both sides of the Gila Peninsula, jutting south into Morotai Strait from Doroeba Plain, but Admiral Barbey was opposed to this plan. First, exposed waters and lack of good anchorages on the east side of the peninsula would make unloading difficult, and second, landings on both sides would interfere with naval gunfire support and endanger the troops pouring ashore. It was therefore decided that the first landings would be made on two


MOROTAI LANDINGS
15 September 1944
Form lines interval 20 feet
1000 YARDS 0 1 MILE
Tjae R
DORE
20
50
60
Doroeba
D-DAY OBJECTIVE
155
111
167
RED BEACH
167
PITOE DROME
Abandoned Japanese Strip
PITOE AIRFIELD
Partially completed 17 Oct
PLAIN
167
111
124
WAMA AIRFIELD
Completed 5 Oct
124
WHITE BEACH
Gotalalamo
BLUE BEACH
PITOE BAY
NEW WHITE BEACH
GILA PENINSULA
Cape Denegila
Raoe I.
MOROTAI
MOROTAI STRAIT
Sabatai R.
HALMAHERA
Gila Peninsula
Mitita I.
10 0 10 20
MILES

MAP 20

beaches—White Beach on the west side of the Gila Peninsula and Red Beach on the mainland coast above the west head of the peninsula.

The 124th Infantry, 31st Division, was to begin landing on White Beach at 0830, 15 September, in column of battalions. One battalion was to swing south to secure the Gila Peninsula while the other two drove inland and northeast along the south coast of Morotai to secure a beachhead area about 1,000 yards deep. The 167th Infantry, 31st Division, was to land in column of battalions on the south half of Red Beach beginning at 0830. This beach, located some 1,500 yards north of White Beach, was nearly opposite the seaward end of Pitoe Drome, as the abandoned Japanese airstrip on Morotai was designated. Two battalions were to drive inland to secure the drome while the other assembled in reserve. On the north (left) half of the beach the 115th Infantry, 31st Division, was to land in column of battalions to drive inland north of Pitoe Drome in conjunction with the advance of the 167th Infantry. The D-Day objective line for both regiments was situated about 2,200 yards inland.[51]

Leading waves at Red Beach were to consist of LVT's, while the assault on White Beach was to be made in LCPR's. These waves were to be supported by LCI rocket and gun boats, which were to move as close inshore as the fringing reef would permit. Plans for the landing of artillery, engineers, and other supporting arms and services were similar to those employed in previous operations in the Southwest Pacific. There was, however, one unusual feature concerning the employment of the 126th Regimental Combat Team, TRADEWIND Task Force Reserve. The 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry (less its heavy weapons company), was to go ashore on D Day at White Beach expressly for the purpose of providing labor at the beachhead. The rest of the combat team was to reach Morotai on D plus 1.[52]

As usual, the Allied Naval Forces was to move the first troops and supplies of the TRADEWIND Task Force to Morotai. General Headquarters expected that the Services of Supply would relieve the Allied Naval forces of this responsibility on D plus 15. Allied Naval Force units were responsible for providing their own supplies, but in an emergency could draw from Services of Supply stocks. Most of the Allied Air Forces supplies were to be provided through air forces supply channels, but others were to be provided by the Services of Supply. At Morotai, Australian engineer units attached to the TRADEWIND Task Force were to be provided with rations and clothing by the task force upon request. Netherlands Indies Civil Administration units were to draw all their supplies in the forward area through the task force quartermaster.

The various ground elements of the task force were to draw their initial supplies from Services of Supply bases or ALAMO Force supply points at which each unit staged for the operation. ALAMO Force was responsible for resupply. Typical among the measures taken by ALAMO Force to carry out this responsibility was a provision to have one unit of fire for all weapons of assault units sent to Morotai on each of two troop-carrying ships on D plus 1. Another example was provision for sending forward

[51] ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Morotai, p. 6; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Morotai, p. 3; TrTF FO 1, 22 Aug 44; TRADEWIND Assault Force (hereafter cited as TrTF) FO 1, 28 Aug 44, filed with other materials atchd to the TrTF Opns Rpt.

[52] CTF 77 Opns Plan 8–44, 20 Aug 44; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Morotai, pp. 10–11; TrTF FO 1, 22 Aug 44; TrTF FO 1, 28 Aug 44.

twenty-five tons of rations on each LST scheduled to arrive at Morotai on D plus 1, D plus 2, and D plus 4. The Allied Air Forces was to be prepared to transport supplies by air to Morotai in an emergency.[53]

The assault echelons of the TRADEWIND Task Force (units reaching Morotai from D Day through D plus 4) were to be provided with 10 days' supply of rations, clothing, unit equipment (except ordnance and engineer unit equipment), fuels, and lubricants. Ordnance equipment was limited to organizational sets of spare parts, while 30 days' supply of engineer unit equipment was to be taken forward. Because of anticipated rain and dampness at the objective, all units were to take 30 days' supply of cleaning and preserving materials for all weapons. Provision for engineer construction matériel was the same as that for previous operations. A schedule of shipment for such cargo was established to coincide with anticipated progress of construction at that island.

The assault units were provided with two units of fire for all weapons and five units of fire of fragmentation hand grenades. At Morotai, ammunition dumps were to be established to provide three units of fire for all weapons. After D plus 4, additional supplies were to be sent forward to furnish 30 days' supply of rations, clothing and unit equipment, fuels and lubricants, medical supplies, engineer equipment, and motor maintenance equipment. Most troops of the assault echelons were to go ashore with two full canteens of water on each man's belt. This practice had become general in the Southwest Pacific, since there was no means of ascertaining in advance how long it might take engineers to set up water supply points at the various objectives.[54]

Rapid air-base development was required at Morotai, since the Talaud operation was scheduled to follow within a month and Mindanao within two months. An immediate local requirement at Morotai was the quick construction of a fighter strip from which the island's troops and development projects could be protected after carrier-based aircraft left the area. The latter program called for the construction of facilities on Morotai for two fighter squadrons by D plus 2, 17 September, and this objective required a fighter strip 5,000 feet long and 100 feet wide.

The long-range program provided for construction of another strip 7,500 feet long, with associated facilities, by D plus 25, 10 October. By that date the Morotai fields were to be ready to take care of fighters, medium bombers, night-fighters, and the large PB4Y reconnaissance bombers. By D plus 45, in time to support the landings on Mindanao, another strip 6,000 feet long and capable of extension to 7,000 feet was to be ready to provide space for more medium bombers and two groups of heavy (B–24) bombers. Other construction requirements included fuel storage facilities, wharves and jetties, storage warehouses, hospital facilities, light naval base facilities for PT's, roads, camps, and headquarters buildings for both ground and air units.[55]

---

[53] USASOS SWPA, Logistics Instructions 60/SOS, 9 Aug 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 10 Aug 44; ALAMO Force Adm O 12, 16 Aug 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 15 Aug 44; TrTF Adm O 1, 23 Aug 44, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Morotai, 23–24 Aug 44; Annex F, Logistic Plan, to CTF 77 Opn Plan 8–44, 20 Aug 44.

[54] USASOS SWPA LI 60/SOS, 9 Aug 44; ALAMO Force Adm O 12, 16 Aug 44; TrTF Adm O 1, 23 Aug 44.

[55] 5thAF OI 5, 11 Aug 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 20 Aug 44; Annex 8, Engr Plan, to ALAMO Force FO 22, 15 Aug 44, in G–3 GHQ Jnl, 15 Aug 44.

As had been the case in the Sansapor operation, an engineering officer of the Allied Air Forces (Brig. Gen. Donald R. Hutchinson (USA) for Morotai) was attached to the TRADEWIND Task Force for the sole purpose of selecting airdrome sites and establishing priorities for the construction of airfields and associated facilities. His decisions were to be binding upon the Commander, TRADEWIND Task Force. However, if General Hall thought that General Hutchinson's selections might interfere with the ability of the task force to meet assigned construction target dates, the task force commander would refer any disagreements to ALAMO Force for decision.[56]

[56] Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO and AAF SWPA, CAX–1335, 6 Sep 44; Rads, ALAMO to TrTF, WH–1616 and WH–3203, 6 and 8 Sep 44, respectively. First two rads in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Morotai, 3–7 Sep 44, third in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Morotai, 8 Sep 44.

CHAPTER XX

The Morotai Operation

The Landing

With the logistic, tactical, and airfield development plans completed, Morotai unit commanders turned their attention to solving final problems of staging and to conducting rehearsals. Unforeseen difficulties made it necessary to draw up intricate staging schedules, which resulted in the most complicated staging plan employed in the Southwest Pacific since the Hollandia–Aitape operations.

Final Preparations and the Approach

Initially, General Krueger had hoped to stage the entire TRADEWIND Task Force at Maffin Bay, but as early as the 22d of July it began to appear to his planners that the crowded conditions and inadequate facilities at Maffin Bay would make such a plan impossible of execution.[1] Therefore, the ALAMO G–4 Section recommended that staging be divided, with task force headquarters, task force artillery, the 124th Regimental Combat Team of the 31st Division, and the task force reserve staging at Aitape, where all were already located. The 31st Division, less the 124th RCT, would be mounted at Maffin Bay, where no more than 1,000 men of the Allied Air Forces would also load. Most of the air force units would be staged at Hollandia or Biak, while various engineer units would be staged at Hollandia, Aitape, Maffin Bay, Sansapor, and Finschhafen. Realizing that no other solution was possible, however desirable, General Krueger and Admiral Barbey approved the split staging plan.[2]

In order to prepare the necessary airfields and associated facilities at Morotai on schedule, the staging and shipment of engineer units was planned so that most of these organizations would reach Morotai by D plus 3. Nearly all the rest of them were to arrive by D plus 6, and rear echelons of all were to close at Morotai by D plus 16.[3] By 3 September these staging plans, as well as the tactical and logistic

[1] Memo, Lt Col F. L. McDonald [with ALAMO Plng Gp at GHQ SWPA] to ACofS G–3 ALAMO, 22 Jul 44, no sub, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Morotai, 5–19 Jul 44.

[2] Memo, ACofS G–4 ALAMO to CofS ALAMO, 23 Jul 44, no sub, in ALAMO G–3 Jnl Morotai, 5–19 Jul 44; Memo, ACofS G–4 ALAMO to Deputy CofS ALAMO, 23 Jul 44, no sub, in ALAMO G–4 Jnl Morotai, 16 Jul–28 Aug 44; Memo, Asst ACofS G–3 ALAMO to ACofS G–3 ALAMO, 24 Jul 44, no sub; Memo, Actg ACofS G–3 ALAMO to CofS ALAMO, 25 Jul 44, no sub; Memo, Col McDonald to Asst ACofS G–3 ALAMO, 26 Aug 44; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Morotai, p. 8.

[3] Memo, Col McDonald to Asst ACofS G–3 ALAMO, 26 Jul 44. No final shipment plan for the engineers can be found. The plan given above is based on the dates the various units reached Morotai as established from their after action reports.

plans for all air, naval, and ground units, had been completed. The bulk of the assault shipping and landing craft had reached the two principal staging areas—Aitape and Maffin Bay—on 2 and 3 September to begin loading and to conduct rehearsals.[4]

Rehearsals were carried out at Aitape on 4 September for the 124th Regimental Combat Team and smaller units scheduled for the assault on White Beach. The Shore Battalion, 534th Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, for the especial benefit of which the rehearsal was undertaken, came ashore in good order. Despite the fact that the battalion had had no previous assault experience, General Hall, the task force commander, terminated the rehearsal at midmorning. By that time no bulk stores had been unloaded and many vehicles had not been sent ashore. General Hall had called off the rehearsal because it was difficult to find dispersal room for all the supplies and equipment which had been unloaded; because some scarce equipment was in danger of being damaged; and, finally, because much time would be needed to reload the ships. Admiral Barbey believed that none of these considerations outweighed the value of complete rehearsal, particularly in view of the large tonnage of supplies and equipment to be unloaded at Morotai during the assault phase. However, actual landing conditions at Morotai later indicated that more complete rehearsals might have had little value.[5]

Red Beach assault units carried out a rehearsal on the mainland east of Wakde Island on 6 September. Landings again proceeded smoothly and rehearsals were curtailed. Some LST's did not beach and others could not discharge all their vehicles because the rehearsal beaches were not particularly good. Many other vehicles were not unloaded because the 31st Division, like the 81st, did not have sufficient waterproofing material for both extended rehearsals and the assault.[6]

Final loading took place generally without difficulty except at Aitape, where adverse surf conditions made it necessary to use LCT's to ferry troops from the beach to ships lying offshore. At Maffin Bay most of the embarkation was carried out directly from the beach except that some troops were ferried from the shore to LCI's by DUKW's. Loading was completed at Aitape on the 8th, and that section of the assault force left the area the next day to rendezvous on the 11th with the Maffin Bay group. Departing Maffin Bay on the 12th, the convoy was joined on the 13th by the Covering Force and the escort carriers. To achieve as much secrecy as possible, the convoy was routed forty miles north of Biak and thence northwest out of sight of the Asia and Mapia Islands, where the Japanese were believed to maintain garrisons and radio stations.

Movement beyond Biak was practically without incident. There was one suspected submarine contact, but the undersea boat could not be found; one soldier fell overboard from an LCI during a dark night, but he, fortunately, was picked up by another LCI. An unexpectedly strong westerly current was encountered, forcing the convoy to reduce speed in order not to reach

[4] CTF 77 Opns Rpt Morotai, p. 7; TRADEWIND Task Force, Hist of the INTERLUDE [Morotai] Opn, 4 Aug 44 to 4 Oct 44, p. 12 (hereafter cited as TrTF Hist of INTERLUDE, 4 Aug–4 Oct 44).

[5] CTF 77 Opns Rpt Morotai, pp. 7–8; 4th Engr Special Brigade, Monthly Hist Rpt, 30 Sep 44, Sec. I, Opns, p. 2.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 2–3.

Morotai too early. Landfall was made as scheduled on the morning of the 15th. Apparently, neither the destination nor the approach of the attack force had been detected by the Japanese.[7]

Air Support and Naval Bombardment

In order to preserve chances for tactical surprise at Morotai, there was no preliminary air or naval bombardment of that island prior to D Day.[8] However, for fourteen days preceding 15 September land-based planes of the Allied Air Forces had carried out especially heavy raids on Japanese air bases within range of Morotai. Halmahera Island, the northern Celebes, and Ceram received most attention. In addition, Japanese fields on the Vogelkop and Bomberai Peninsulas of western New Guinea were kept neutralized, and raids against Davao on Mindanao had been undertaken in conjunction with the strikes of the Third Fleet's carrier task groups against the Philippines.

As a result of the land-based and carrier-based aircraft operations, Morotai was virtually isolated from possible Japanese air counterattacks when D Day dawned. But, in order to take no chances that the enemy might have managed to keep a few planes operational within range of the island, attacks on enemy air bases in the Morotai area were executed as planned during the morning of D Day. Planes of a supporting fast carrier task group executed a bombing and strafing sweep over Japanese air bases in the Manado area of the northeastern Celebes, about 250 miles west-southwest of Morotai. The carrier-based planes, which destroyed twenty-eight Japanese aircraft on the ground, met no aerial opposition. After that strike, the fast carriers stood off Morotai the rest of the day, providing combat air patrols.

Early on D-Day morning, land-based bombers of the Allied Air Forces hit Japanese air installations on Batjan Island, off the southern end of Halmahera. At 0715 cruisers and destroyers of the Covering Force moved into Galela Bay, at the northwestern end of Halmahera, to bombard enemy airfield installations and ground defenses along the shores of that bay. The shelling cratered the airfields and set fire to a number of buildings and supply dumps in the same area. A few troop and cargo barges also were destroyed. Following the surface bombardment, which lasted about an hour, CVE-based planes swept over northern Halmahera. Beginning at 0900 land-based bombers took over the task of keeping the enemy fields in that area neutralized. As a result of the combined efforts of aircraft from the Third Fleet, the Seventh Fleet, and the Allied Air Forces, not a single Japanese plane approached within range of Morotai during the day.

Naval fire support at Morotai began two hours before landing time. Two destroyers opened up on Cape Dehegila, at the southern tip of the Gila Peninsula, and Mitita Island, about three miles off the cape, to cover the movement of the assault convoy northwest through the strait between the two. This harassing fire lasted for half an hour. From H minus 100 to H minus 40 minutes 2 heavy cruisers threw 400 rounds of 8-inch ammunition on Red and White

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 2; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Morotai, pp. 9–10; TrTF Hist of INTERLUDE, 4 Aug–4 Oct 44, p. 15; British Combined Operations Observers SWPA, Report of Naval and Army Observers on the Morotai Operation, 30 Sep 44, pp. 9, 14–15, 74, filed with other TrTF records.

[8] This subsection is based principally on CTF 77 Opns Rpt Morotai, pp. 10–15; CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Opns in POA Sep 44, pp. 80–81.

Beaches, and destroyers hit the area with 2,400 5-inch shells. After the destroyer fire ceased, LCI rocket boats and gunboats kept up a steady stream of 20-mm., 40-mm., and 3-inch fire on the beaches and, beginning at H minus 5 minutes, started a barrage of 4.5-inch rockets. All this fire was actually precautionary, since no enemy defenses had been found and no opposition was expected.

While the naval bombardment was going on, assault shipping moved into assigned positions west of the landing beaches, quickly and without confusion. Visibility was excellent, the sea was calm, and there were only light surface winds. APD's quickly launched LCPR's which were to take the assault troops of the 124th Infantry to White Beach, and LST's were equally fast in putting into the water the LVT's of the Red Beach assault waves. The leading waves formed rapidly and moved on an accurate course toward the proper beaches.

The Landing Beaches

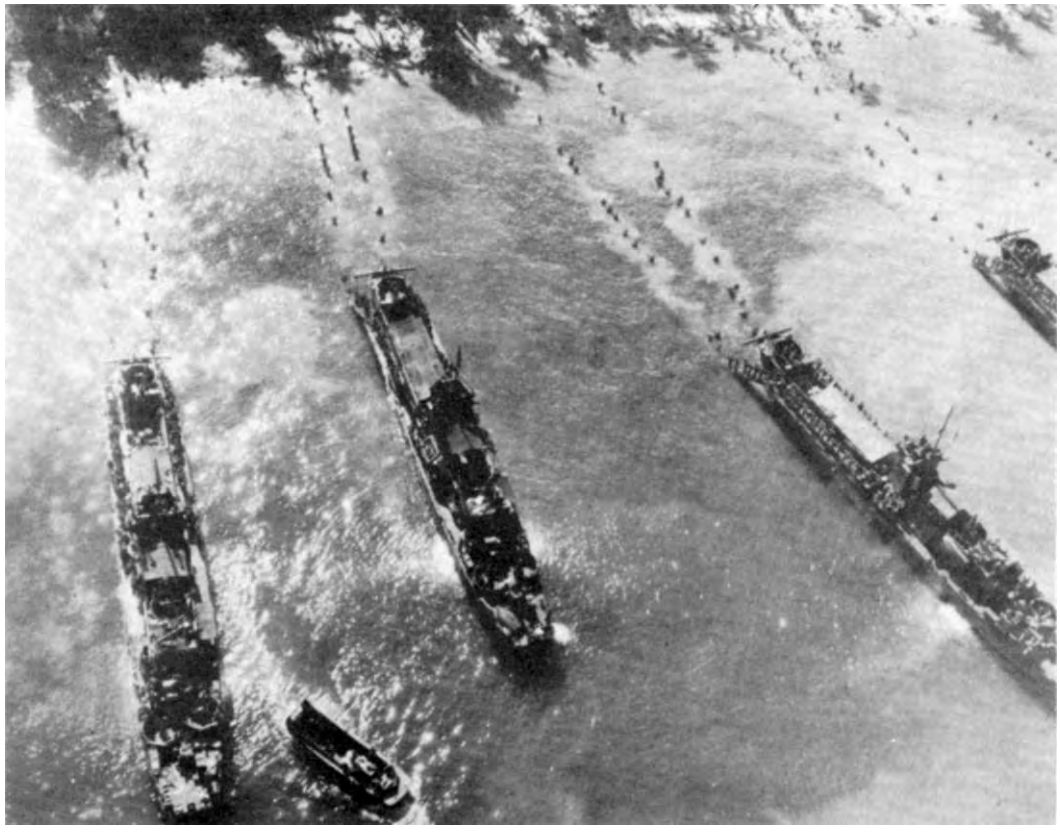
LVT's carrying the assault troops of the 155th and 167th Infantry Regiments to Red Beach were on shore at 0830, H Hour.[9] (*See Map 20.*) Men of the 124th Infantry disembarked from LCVP's on the coral fringing reef some eighty yards offshore and waded through water one to five feet deep to White Beach, where the first troops were reported ashore at 0831. There was no opposition to the landings and the assault troops, once ashore, rapidly re-formed their tactical units and started moving inland or along the shore line to perform assigned missions. The lack of opposition was indeed fortunate. Had the Japanese been prepared at Morotai, Allied casualties would probably have been extremely heavy.

Offshore conditions and, to a lesser extent, beach terrain at Morotai were not at all what had been expected. Available intelligence was not faulty—it was nonexistent. In order to preserve the element of local tactical surprise, no beach or reef reconnaissance had been attempted at Morotai before 15 September, and even aerial photographic missions had been few and far between lest the Japanese suspect that the Allies were interested in the island. Thus, the landing was planned on the assumption that Red Beach would prove to be 40 to 50 feet deep and composed of firm sand and that the fringing reef, 100 to 135 yards wide, would be rough but firm and covered in spots with a light sand deposit. White Beach was expected to be 15 to 20 feet deep and fronted by a rather rough fringing reef about 80 yards wide. There was some suspicion that these estimates might prove optimistic.

In point of fact, offshore conditions at Red Beach were undoubtedly the worst encountered in the Southwest Pacific Area throughout the entire war. The expected light sand deposits proved to be principally a deep mixture of glutinous clay and mud, much of which had only a thin covering of sand. The inshore side of the reef was covered with many loose coral boulders. Finally, the beach itself was much less deep in spots—especially at high tide—than had been anticipated.

At Red Beach all the landing craft waves touched the outer edge of the reef approxi-

[9] This subsection is based on: CTF 77 Opns Rpt Morotai, pp. 12, 19–22; British Combined Opns Obsrs SWPA, Rpt on Morotai, pp. 12–13, 30; TrTF Hist of INTERLUDE, 4 Aug–4 Oct 44, pp. 15–17; 4th ESB, Monthly Hist Rpt, 30 Sep 44, Sec. I, Opns, pp. 3–5; 544th EB&SR Opns Rpt Morotai, Secs. IV and V, n. p.; 534th EB&SR Opns Rpt Morotai, pp. 1–3; 31st Inf Div [TrTF] Arty Opns Rpt Morotai, pp. 1–2.



LCI'S AT MOROTAI *unloading troops at Red Beach.*

mately on schedule and the LVT's had little difficulty negotiating the reef. LCI's moving up to the outer edge of the reef at H plus 15 minutes disgorged troops in from 3 to 5 feet of water. Some of the LCI's stuck on coral heads near the outer edge of the reef and troops had to disembark in neck-deep water. Several LCI's were unable to retract and had to be towed off the reef later in the day. LCT's did somewhat better and many of them got to within 40 yards of the beach. But about 75 percent of the engineer vehicles and equipment from the LCT's bogged down in the clay or sand on the reef. LCM's bringing artillery and engineer weapons, equipment, and vehicles ashore to Red Beach had little better luck, and most LCM cargo had to be towed ashore. Some vehicles drowned out as they awaited towing.

It had been intended that LST's would move into the left flank of Red Beach, but some misunderstanding of orders caused three LST's to come in on the right flank, approximately 1,000 yards south of the center of the beach. These three dropped their ramps about 80 yards offshore and started unloading into four and a half feet of water. As had been the case with the cargo aboard smaller landing craft, many of the vehicles

aboard the LST's quickly got stuck in the clay and mud or were hung up on coral heads. Ultimately, many had to be towed ashore by bulldozers, tractors, or LCT's. Three more LST's later tried to beach at the same place. Conditions were so bad that these three were moved to positions off the center of Red Beach and unloaded over their ramps into LCT's. At 1130 two additional LST's scheduled for D-Day unloading at Red Beach were diverted to White Beach.

The latter was not much better than Red Beach. Clay and mud conditions were not quite as unfavorable as on the reef fronting Red Beach, but the White Beach reef was 150 yards wide, 70 more than had been anticipated, and it was much rougher than expected. As a matter of fact, the leader of the first LCVP wave had decided, upon approaching the shore, that White Beach would be an impossible landing point. He swung his wave about 300 yards to the north where, unfortunately, conditions were no better. The rest of the landing waves moved up to the offshore edge of the reef opposite the proper spot. But anywhere in the immediate vicinity of White Beach movement ashore was difficult. The reef was so rough that at one step an infantryman would have little more than the soles of his shoes under water, but at the next he would find himself up to his shoulders.

The experience of LCI's at White Beach was similar to that at Red Beach. At the extreme outer edge of the reef there was a low ridge one to two feet higher than the rest of the reef. This ridge stopped landing craft such as LCT's and LCM's about 100 yards offshore. As a result, many vehicles were discharged into about four feet of water, most of them to drown out or bog down in mud and clay. Even some DUKW's got caught in the mud, while many others became hung up on coral heads.

Before noon the reefs in front of both Red and White Beaches were literally dotted with wheeled vehicles of all types, artillery pieces, tractors, bulldozers, and trailers that had bogged down in the mud, dropped into holes, or had caught on coral heads or coral boulders. Some, not recovered for days, were completely submerged at high tide. It was impossible to do a great deal on D Day to speed unloading operations. For instance, U. S. Navy demolition experts were available but to use them to blast the reefs would have delayed unloading and would not have effected any significant improvement on D Day. Again, at Red Beach only three of eight Shore Party bulldozers launched from LST's were able to reach the beach. At White Beach all the Shore Party bulldozers reached shore but the necessity for employing them in towing other vehicles to shore delayed clearing beach exits and dispersal of supplies on the mainland.

By 1445 conditions on Red Beach were accepted as impossible and direct unloading of LST's was practically stopped. Four LST's were withdrawn from the reef but unloading of mobile loads was continued over their ramps into LCT's or LCM's. Then, with the afternoon rise in tide, three LCT (6)'s and one set of ponton causeways were beached. Thereafter, LCT's and LCM's discharged LST cargo across these emergency piers. Even so, the six LST's at Red Beach were only 40 percent unloaded by dark on D Day; unloading continued throughout the night. The six were not completely discharged until D plus 1.

At White Beach, about 1000, a trial LST beaching was undertaken but the ship was only able to get within 100 yards of the



UNLOADING AT MOROTAI. *The clutter off the original beaches (top). LST's at Blue Beach (bottom).*

shore, dropping its ramp in nearly 5 feet of water. The Beach Party undertook a rapid hydrographic survey and discovered a much better beach about three quarters of a mile to the south. New White Beach, as the area was designated, had clear approaches and a much smoother offshore reef. One LST ran into New White Beach at 0930 and by noon six LST's, including the two diverted from Red Beach, were unloading there. Cargo discharge at New White Beach proceeded rapidly and by 1800 all six LST's were empty and had retracted. LCT's were also diverted to New White Beach from White Beach.

Conditions were so poor at Red and White Beaches that during the morning of D Day a survey party was sent overland to the eastern side of the Gila Peninsula and the shores of Pitoe Bay. There an excellent LST landing area was found. Blue Beach, as the new site was designated, was located at the upper end of the Gila Peninsula. It had a good slope, though about twenty-five yards offshore there was a flat coral shelf on which LST's rested at low tide. At high tide, however, LST's were able to beach with dry ramps. Beginning with D plus 1, Blue Beach was used to the exclusion of other areas for unloading LST's and for many LCT's and LCM's lightering supplies ashore from cargo ships. As a ponton pier and earth jetties were constructed at Red Beach lightering continued in that area also. Operations at White Beach were stopped on D plus 3 until Navy demolition crews blasted approach channels through the reef, a task which was accomplished on D plus 4.

Conditions on land were practically perfect except for a few spots on Red Beach where very thin crust covered a watery bog in which many vehicles sank almost out of sight. All such spots were located quickly and thereafter avoided. Inland, the ground at Red, White, and Blue Beaches was dry and generally well drained. As Admiral Barbey reported: "Track making under these conditions was child's play, and vehicles on landing moved direct to dispersal area. No surfacing material was required." [10] Shore Party operations, organized around the 534th and 544th Engineer Boat and Shore Regiments of the 4th Engineer Special Brigade, went smoothly after the first slow start during the morning. All things considered, unloading of troops and supplies, supply dispersal, and dump establishment proceeded remarkably well in the face of many unforeseen difficulties.

Ashore, the 155th Infantry secured its northern half of Red Beach without difficulty and moved rapidly inland some 2,000 yards to the D-Day objective line. The 167th Infantry, on the southern half of the beach, had no trouble either, and occupied Pitoe Drome by 1300 hours. The 124th Infantry's 1st Battalion met no opposition at White Beach as it landed and swung south to secure the Gila Peninsula, a job completed at 1500. The rest of the regiment, making few contacts with the enemy, pushed rapidly inland to the D-Day objective line and established contact on the left with the 167th Infantry late in the afternoon. The day's action cost the 124th Infantry 7 men wounded, while 12 Japanese had been killed and 1 had been captured. There is no record of casualties in the rest of the 31st Division on D Day.

General Persons, commanding the 31st Division and the TRADEWIND Assault Force, established his command post ashore at 1235. More than satisfied with the results of operations on D Day, he laid plans to

[10] CTF 77 Opns Rpt Morotai, p. 21.

expand the beachhead to the assigned perimeter line around the airfield area on the 16th. The night of 15–16 September was generally quiet in the beachhead area.

Securing and Developing Morotai

Expanding the Hold

Operations on 16 September began at 0800, when all three regiments of the 31st Division resumed their advances.[11] By 1300, against negligible opposition, the division had secured a perimeter around the Pitoe Drome area over 7,000 yards wide, east to west, and about 5,000 yards deep north to south. At 1000 General Hall established his command post ashore on the east coast of the Gila Peninsula, near the point where that peninsula joined the mainland. The 126th Regimental Combat Team started landing at 0930 and took up station along the Gila Peninsula, relieving 124th Infantry elements still there.

After 16 September combat operations on Morotai resolved themselves into a series of patrol actions designed to hunt down small Japanese parties. In addition, radar stations and observation posts were established on many offshore islands and at various points around Morotai's shore. Responsibility for most of the latter undertakings was assigned to the 126th Infantry, which on the 17th began occupying islands off the southwestern and western coasts of Morotai as well as various capes on the southwestern and southeastern shores. During the next two days additional outposts were set up on capes at the northeastern and northern shores, and a radar station, the last set up in the area, was established on 21 September at Raoe Island, off the west coast about twenty-five miles north of Red Beach.

Evidence of previous Japanese occupation and of some current Japanese activity was discovered by many of the outposts on the mainland, especially those at the northern capes and along the west coast. Patrols in the northern capes area made many contacts with small parties of Japanese and captured or destroyed much enemy equipment, including about ten truckloads of radar equipment, fuel oil, clothing, and (shades of red tape!) a duplicating machine. Most of the patrols and outposts in all areas reported that the Japanese fled inland to Morotai's rugged interior when fired upon.

While the outposts and radar stations were being set up, the 31st Division had extended the original task force perimeter to occupy additional space for bivouacs and supply installations, a step made necessary when General MacArthur's headquarters had decided to expand airfield construction on Morotai beyond that originally contemplated. The new perimeter, secured by the evening of the 20th, extended the old some 1,500 yards north, and east along Morotai's southern shore about 10,000 yards to the Sabatai River. The average inland depth of the eastward extension was one and one-fourth miles. Inland, the perimeter extended east and west over twelve miles.

The Japanese on Morotai showed little offensive spirit, choosing to escape rather than to attack or even defend prepared positions.[12] Some of them attempted to flee

[11] This subsection is based on: TrTF Hist of INTERLUDE, 4 Aug–4 Oct 44, pp. 16–32; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Morotai, pp. 14–16; 124th Inf, "Our Regiment in 1944," pp. 74–79; 126th Inf Opns Rpt Morotai, n. p., Annex 16 to TrTF Hist of INTERLUDE, 4 Aug–4 Oct 44.

[12] Enemy information in this subsection is based principally on: ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Morotai, pp. 20–21; Annex 2, G–2 Report, pp. 4–8, to TrTF Hist of INTERLUDE, 4 Aug–4 Oct 44.

from Morotai by barge, apparently trying to reach the relative safety of Halmahera. The Japanese commander on Halmahera, when he belatedly learned of the Allied landing on Morotai, gave up whatever plans he may have had to reinforce that island by barge. The Japanese Navy was not about to risk any ships for such purposes—ships weren't available and, moreover, similar attempts to reinforce Biak during the *KON Operation* had not met with much success. Barges available to the Japanese at Halmahera could reach Morotai only by running a blockade that was soon established by the Allied Air and Naval Forces. Indications are that no more than three or four barges were sent to Morotai during the period 15 September to 4 October, upon which date General Krueger declared the Morotai operation over. During subsequent months a few barge-loads of troops did manage to slip through the Allied blockade to reach Morotai from Halmahera. Although these reinforcements caused some trouble, especially by harassing Allied outposts, their arrival had no real effect upon the situation at Morotai.

The most significant Japanese reaction to the Allied landing came in the form of frequent but generally ineffective air raids, the first of which occurred when a lone enemy plane dropped three bombs on the Red Beach area on the morning of D plus 1. No damage or casualties to Allied forces resulted. Damage was negligible in subsequent raids and, insofar as can be ascertained, only twelve Allied soldiers were wounded as a result of the air attacks in the period to 4 October. A few subsequent air attacks caused more extensive damage to Allied aircraft on the island.

The total number of Japanese killed on Morotai was 104, and 13 were captured. PT boat skippers estimated that they had accounted for at least 200 more in sinking Japanese barges between Morotai and Halmahera. Allied casualties to 4 October numbered about 30 men killed, 85 wounded, and 1 missing.

Supporting Arms and Services

Field artillery of the TRADEWIND Task Force began reaching the beaches quickly on D Day despite the necessity for towing ashore almost all artillery weapons and equipment.[13] Artillery units were soon emplaced, but, since Japanese resistance was practically nonexistent, there were few calls for artillery fire. Because the Japanese were believed capable of major aerial counterattack, antiaircraft artillery was put ashore as soon as possible. Acting with remarkable speed in the face of the difficult landing conditions, the 383d Antiaircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons battalion had some of its weapons emplaced on the beach by H plus 20 minutes. The remainder of that unit and one battery of the 744th Antiaircraft Artillery Gun Battalion were ashore and emplaced before dark. The rest of the 214th Antiaircraft Artillery Group began moving ashore on D plus 1. To the intense fire which the group was able to throw into the air over the beachhead and airdrome areas goes much of the credit for preventing Japanese aircraft from causing extensive damage.

Medical problems at Morotai were not

[13] This subsection is based on: ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Morotai, pp. 16, 23–25; 31st Inf Div Arty Opns Rpt Morotai, pp. 2–3; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Morotai, pp. 25–26; Annex 10, Surgeon's Rpt, p. 2, to TrTF Hist of INTERLUDE, 4 Aug–4 Oct 44; Annex 2, G–2 Rpt, pp. 2, 6–8, to same; Ltr, Gen Persons to Gen Ward, 6 Nov 50, no sub, in OCMH files.

as serious as expected, since Japanese opposition was light and careful control measures against tropical diseases were soon instituted. The entire beachhead and airfield area was sprayed with DDT on D Day as a prophylaxis against scrub typhus. Antimalaria and antityphus measures were strictly enforced within the 31st Division. The effectiveness of these measures and the air spraying is demonstrated by the fact that not one case of scrub typhus was found among Allied troops on Morotai to 4 October. To that date there were only 49 cases of malaria and 22 cases of dengue fever, most of them outside the 31st Division. About 990 men of the task force were hospitalized to 4 October: approximately 710 for other, mostly minor, diseases and sickness; 175 for injuries not incurred in combat; and 103 for battle wounds or injuries. By 4 October almost all these cases had been evacuated by Seventh Fleet LST's.

Civil affairs on Morotai were handled, as usual, by a NICA Detachment. Moving ashore on D Day, the detachment quickly brought the natives back under Dutch sovereignty—an easy task in light of the fact that the natives proved friendly and co-operative. Working through NICA, many natives provided information concerning Japanese dispositions on Morotai and Halmahera, while others acted as guides for patrols ranging over Morotai. Since it was necessary for the NICA Detachment to establish new native villages outside the airfield perimeter, few natives could be secured to work for Allied forces until after 1 October, on which date about 350 were ready.

On 25 September the TRADEWIND Task Force was dissolved as such. Its missions, including air-base development, were continued by General Hall in his capacity as Commanding General, XI Corps.

Airfield Construction

The Morotai planners had expected that a fighter strip could quickly be prepared at the site of the abandoned Japanese field, Pitoe Drome, in southwest Morotai, and a strip there was to be in operation no later than D plus 2, 17 September.[14] No work was done on the site on D Day for two reasons. First, the landing problem delayed getting engineer equipment ashore and second, when survey parties examined the site, they found it not as suitable as anticipated.

During the next two days it was determined that a fighter strip could be constructed in the Pitoe Drome area but that no bomber field could be developed there. A search for bomber field sites, of utmost importance for the support of subsequent operations, was begun immediately, and on D plus 3 it was determined that first priority should be given to a site adjacent to the beach at Gotalalamo village, on the north shore of Pitoe Bay east of the Gila Peninsula. Clearing was begun at this site the next day, and the airfield ultimately constructed there was designated Wama Drome.

Meanwhile, work had continued at the Pitoe Drome site, which was not ready to receive fighters until 29 September, D plus 14. The site was finally abandoned and relegated to the status of an emergency field which came to be known as Pitoe Crash Strip. A number of factors influenced the

[14] Unless otherwise indicated this subsection is based on: TrTF Engr Opns Rpt Morotai, pp. 2–4; ALAMO Force Opns Rpt Morotai, pp. 22–23; 931st Engr Avn Regt Opns Rpt Morotai, n. p., Annex 27 to TrTF Hist of INTERLUDE, 4 Aug–4 Oct 44; MS, The Pacific—MATTERHORN to Nagasaki, [tentative title], Vol. V of the series THE ARMY AIR FORCES IN WORLD WAR II, Ch. IX, pp. 48–52, Ch. X, pp. 41–45, copies of draft chapters in OCMH files.

decision to abandon the site. Japanese air reaction had been so ineffectual that the need for a fighter base on Morotai was not as urgent as had been expected. Aircraft based on CVE's, some of which remained in the Morotai area for weeks, were able to keep away most of the Japanese planes, and their efforts were supplemented by long-range land-based fighters from Sansapor. Moreover, the line of approach which planes had to use to land on Pitoe Crash Strip interfered with that of the more important bomber base at Wama Drome. Finally, the terrain at the crash strip was by no means as well drained as that at other locations on the Doroeba Plain, and it was necessary to expend much engineer effort to keep the strip operational.

Construction at Wama Drome was seriously delayed from D plus 5 through D plus 10 by a series of heavy rain storms; on some of those days it was too wet even to clear brush. Japanese air attacks and many red alerts, sounded whenever enemy aircraft approached Morotai, also stopped construction from time to time. But perhaps the most serious delaying factor was a lack of good surfacing material. It had been anticipated that good surfacing material would be found on Morotai as it had been on other islands with a coral base, but the Morotai coral alternated between a fine sand practically useless for airdrome surfacing and coral rocks which, almost as hard as granite, required much time and effort to break up. Only a few small deposits of intermediate grade coral could be found.

Battling almost continuously with soggy ground and tropical cloudbursts, engineers managed to have 4,000 feet of Wama Drome operational by D plus 19, 4 October. On that day the first planes to be based permanently on Morotai began using the field, on which emergency landings had been made since 30 September. With the arrival of the permanent fighter aircraft garrison on the 4th, the last CVE's were finally able to leave the Morotai area.

So far, neither the first nor second construction objectives for Morotai had been met. Pitoe Crash Strip was not ready to receive fighters until D plus 14 instead of D plus 2 and was abandoned shortly after Wama Drome was ready for fighters. Wama Drome did not satisfy the second construction objective—completion of a 7,500-foot strip for medium and reconnaissance bombers by D plus 25, 10 October—although ultimately it was extended to 5,000 feet. Clearing aimed at the accomplishment of the third objective, a strip 6,000 feet long capable of extension to 7,000 feet, by D plus 45, started on 23 September. The new field, which acquired the designation Pitoe Drome, was located about 1,200 yards north of Wama Drome. Construction proceeded slowly at Pitoe Drome because so much engineer effort had to be devoted to the completion of Wama Drome. By 4 October almost 7,000 feet at the new site had been cleared, but it was not until the 17th, D plus 32, that even one runway was surfaced, let alone taxiways and dispersal lanes.

Meanwhile, rapid development of a large air base on Morotai had assumed much greater importance than had been anticipated. According to General MacArthur's and Admiral Nimitz' plans for the final steps in the approach to the Philippines, there was to have been an interval of two months between the Morotai and Palau operations and the initial invasion of the

Philippines, at Mindanao. During these two months, air and light naval bases were to have been prepared to support the final advance into the Philippines. Radical changes had to be made in these plans.

As Third Fleet carriers ranged far and wide early in September providing strategic air support for the Palau and Morotai operations, carrier pilots striking targets in the central and southern Philippines reported Japanese strength there weaker than had been supposed. Admiral Halsey found in these reports a welcome opportunity to recommend to his superiors that objectives in the western Carolines, except Ulithi, be bypassed in favor of an immediate and direct move into the central Philippines. Admiral Halsey, who made no recommendations concerning Morotai, believed that Ulithi would have to be taken to provide a forward area fleet anchorage in the western Pacific.

These suggestions were received with some enthusiasm at General MacArthur's and Admiral Nimitz' headquarters. The latter commander agreed with Admiral Halsey's proposal to bypass Yap in the western Carolines, and he released troops and amphibious means committed to that operation to General MacArthur for employment in an early invasion of Leyte in the central Philippines. General MacArthur, with these means placed at his disposal, decided that he could move directly to Leyte, canceling the Talaud Islands and Mindanao operations. But the two commanders did not believe it possible to bypass the Palaus, for they considered air bases on those islands necessary to protect Allied lines of communication in the western Pacific and they hoped that land-based air support for the invasion of the Philippines might be provided from the Palaus. Morotai had to be taken to provide left-flank protection for forces moving into the Philippines. The Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed generally with the proposal to cancel the Yap, Talaud, and Mindanao operations and they approved a 20 October target date for the invasion of Leyte.[15]

Principally as a result of terrain difficulties and inadequate gasoline storage facilities, fields in the Palaus were not ready in time to provide any support for the invasion of Leyte.[16] This fact, coupled with the cancellation of the Talaud Islands operation, made it obvious that if any land-based air support for the invasion of the Philippines was to be made available, it would have to come from Morotai. Actually, Morotai-based aircraft flew no sorties against Leyte, but they did provide support by flying many missions over Mindanao and other islands in the southern Philippines. On 7 October Morotai-based fighters began flying cover for Allied Air Forces bombers which, based at fields further to the rear, were striking Mindanao and the Visayan Islands. Medium bombers (B–25's) began operations against Mindanao from Morotai on the 13th. Six days later Allied Naval Forces' Ventura and PB4Y reconnaissance bombers, operating under Allied Air Forces

---

[15] Rad, Com3dFlt to CINCPOA, 13 Sep 44, CM–IN 12893; Rad, CINCSWPA to JCS, CX–17697, 14 Sep 44, CM–IN 12636; Rad, JCS to CINCSWPA, OCTAGON–24, 13 Sep 44, CM–IN 12198; Flt Adm William F. Halsey and Lt Comdr J. Bryan, III, *Admiral Halsey's Story* (New York, 1947), pp. 199–201. For additional details concerning this change in plans see: M. Hamlin Cannon, Leyte: Return to the Philippines, a forthcoming volume in the series U. S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II.

[16] MS, The Pacific—MATTERHORN to Nagasaki, Ch. IX, pp. 30, 48, Ch. X, p. 74.

control, began missions against targets in the Philippines and the Netherlands East Indies. During early October, Morotai-based fighters also flew cover for a number of large-scale bombing attacks against the Japanese oil center at Balikpapan, Borneo, and ultimately Allied planes based on Morotai completed neutralization of Japanese air power throughout those sections of the Indies within range. The Morotai fields, secured at an extremely low cost, were well worth the taking.[17]

[17] Early in 1945 Australian units began moving to Morotai, and a large part of the Australian ground force which invaded Borneo was staged through that island. Between 15 September 1944 and 1 February 1945, the Japanese raided Morotai 82 times. The heaviest Japanese raid occurred on 22 November, when 2 men were killed, 15 injured or wounded, 15 planes were destroyed, and 8 were severely damaged. The last Japanese raid was carried out on 22 March 1945.

CHAPTER XXI

The Landings On Peleliu and Angaur

On the same day that forces of the Southwest Pacific Area poured ashore over the reefs at Morotai, Central Pacific troops began landing in the southern Palau Islands. Operations in the Palaus, more time consuming than those in the south, continued while Morotai was secured and the air base on the latter island was developed.

Preliminary Air and Naval Bombardment

The U. S. Third Fleet's fast carriers, the activities of which over the Philippines had promoted the radical changes in plans for the final phase of the approach to the Philippines, began strikes against the Palaus on 6 September, executing part of the program of strategic air support for the Morotai and Palau operations.[1] These were by no means the first strikes against the Palau area. Fast carriers, then operating as part of the U. S. Fifth Fleet, had hit the Palaus at the end of March 1944 while providing strategic air support for the Southwest Pacific's April landings at Aitape and Hollandia.[2] In mid-July another heavy carrier attack was executed against the Palaus. These two raids resulted in much damage to shore installations and in the destruction of a few Japanese aircraft.

Land-based air attacks against the Palaus had been going on since early June, when U. S. Fifth Air Force planes based at Hollandia and Wakde Island began hitting targets in the western Carolines in support of the Central Pacific's landings on the Marianas. The U. S. Thirteenth Air Force sent bombers against the Palaus from the Admiralty Islands during the period 8–28 August and from Noemfoor Island during the second week of September. Other Thirteenth Air Force planes, based on Wakde, struck the Palaus from 25 August through 5 September. In its series of attacks from 8 August, the Thirteenth Air Force dropped approximately 885 tons of bombs on targets in the Palaus. In addition, these and other Allied Air Forces planes executed many

[1] Information in this section is based on: CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Opns in POA Sep 44, pp. 39–40, 42–47, 70–80; MS, The Pacific—MATTERHORN to Nagasaki, Ch. IX, pp. 34–36; Com3dFlt Opns Rpt Palau–Ulithi–Morotai, pp. 3–4; Encl B, Results of Carrier Air Strikes, n. p., to same; Annex F, Air Rpt, pp. 2–3, to III Amph Corps Opns Rpt Palau; Encl G, Naval Gunfire Rpt, p. 2, to same; Annex K, Naval Gunfire Support, p. 8, to Phase II, Opns Annex, to 1st Mar Div Opns Rpt Palau; Drummond, The Palau Campaign, Ch. II; Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu*, pp. 24–25, 36.

[2] See above, Ch. II.

valuable photographic missions for Admiral Nimitz' forces.

When fighter planes of three fast carrier groups started sweeping over the Palaus on 6 September, they found that the efforts of the Southwest Pacific's land-based bombers had succeeded in eliminating many ground targets. Nevertheless, fighters and bombers of the three groups started full-scale attacks on all the principal islands in the Palaus the next day. There was no air opposition, nor had there been any on the 6th. On the 8th, because observable targets were scarce, the weight of attack was reduced, and the carriers began preparing to move to Philippine waters. During their three days at the Palaus, the carrier-based planes flew about 1,470 sorties, causing extensive damage to ammunition and supply dumps, barracks, warehouses, and a number of miscellaneous buildings. The groups claimed destruction of only four enemy aircraft, while losing eight of their own.

No attacks were made on the Palaus on 9 September, but the next day another fast carried group arrived from the Yap–Ulithi area, which it had struck on the 7th and 8th. On the 10th and 11th the new force, Task Group 38.4, operated principally against antiaircraft gun positions and beach defenses at Peleliu and Angaur. The next day the Western Fire Support Group of Admiral Fort's Western Attack Group arrived to begin naval gunfire bombardment. Reaching the Palaus on the same day was an escort-carrier force, which co-operated with Task Group 38.4 in flying cover for the bombardment ships, striking additional targets on the islands, and providing close support during the landings.

Some naval bombardment had been undertaken by cruisers and destroyers accompanying the fast carrier groups which struck the Palaus during 6–8 September, but much remained to be done by the Western Fire Support Group. From D minus 3 through D minus 1 some 2,200 tons of naval projectiles were fired on Peleliu. The more obvious targets were covered, and special attention was directed to known or suspected Japanese artillery and mortar positions and beach installations. The shelling knocked down vegetation along Peleliu's central ridge, revealing numerous caves which had not been known to exist prior to the bombardment. During the bombardment, the Western Gunfire Support Group reported that it had run out of targets, and ammunition expenditure figures showed that fewer projectiles were fired on Peleliu than had been planned.

In contrast to previous operations within the Pacific theaters, mine sweepers had a great deal of work to do in the Palaus, for the Japanese had laid about 670 mines in the Peleliu–Angaur region and at least 240 more in Kossol Passage. Mine sweeping off Peleliu and Angaur was undertaken on the 12th, 13th, and 14th, while from 13 through 15 September Kossol Passage was swept. Nearly 175 mines were destroyed during the four days, and the location of the remainder was marked. Underwater demolition teams (UDT's), which also found some difficult tasks, began work on 12 September on the Peleliu beaches. The northern section of the landing area proved to have few obstacles, but much work was required on the southern part. Little work was necessary at Angaur beyond blasting away some steel rail obstacles off Red Beach.

The three days the UDT's spent working off the Peleliu beaches probably gave the Japanese some idea of the Allied land-

ing plans, a supposition supported by the fact that many hastily-laid land mines were found by the 1st Marine Division on or immediately behind its landing beaches. The marines had more reason to be unhappy about the results of naval gunfire, which had not been successful in destroying many mortar, artillery, and machine gun positions, including some on or near the shore. Japanese positions which the fire support ships pinpointed were generally demolished, but many hidden by natural or man-made camouflage remained intact, as did others in areas not accessible to naval gunfire.

While the preliminary air and naval bombardment had been going on, the assault convoy carrying the III Amphibious Corps to the Palaus had been approaching. Slower-moving groups (LST's, LCI's, and screen) had left Guadalcanal on 4 September, making an average speed of 7.7 knots. The faster transports and the LSD's, moving at 12.1 knots, left on the morning of the 8th. The course was generally northwestward through the Solomons, across the equator, and then northwest parallel to the New Guinea coast. Early on the morning of 15 September, both groups rendezvoused off the Palaus, and by 0515 had found assigned stations in the transport areas. The 1st Marine Division was ready to begin landing on Peleliu, while the 81st Infantry Division remained on ships offshore, ready to land on Angaur when so ordered.

The Peleliu Beachhead

Maj. Gen. William H. Rupertus, commanding the 1st Marine Division, believed that the Peleliu operation would be tough but short, and he anticipated that the island could be secured in four days.[3] This prediction, to quote the Marine Corps' history of the operation, was a ". . . striking manifestation of that preoccupation with speedy conquest at the highest division level which was to color tactical thinking ashore for a month to follow." [4]

The weather at Peleliu on D Day was ideal for landing operations; it was warm, visibility was almost unlimited, and only a light surf was running. Small craft and amphibian vehicles of the assault waves had no difficulty forming waves and moving toward the reefs fronting White and Orange Beaches. The Western Fire Support Group, which began firing at 0530, carried out its D-Day missions as planned. Air attacks, executed by carrier-based planes, were conducted from H minus 40 through H minus 25 minutes. The first assault wave (LVT(A)'s) began moving shoreward at 0800, under the protection of an LCI rocket barrage and aerial strafing attacks. Naval bombardment gradually rolled inland and to the flanks. The first wave touched shore about 0832, two minutes behind schedule, with the 1st Marines on the left, the 5th Marines in the center, and the 7th Marines on the right. There was little frontal fire, but as the troops pushed inland from the

[3] This section is based principally on Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu*, pp. 36–64, 67–70, 74–75. The following were also consulted for the landing phase: CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Opns in POA Sep 44, pp. 51–55; Encl B, Opns, pp. 2–3, to III Amph Corps Opns Rpt Palau; CTF 32 Opns Rpt Palau, pp. 2–3; Narrative, pp. 2–3, to Phase II, Opns Annex, to 1st Mar Div Opns Rpt Palau. Enemy information is based upon the cited pages in Hough, *op. cit.*, and on The Palau Operations, pp. 80ff. Since this phase of the operation is a Marine Corps story, excellently recounted in detail in Hough, *op. cit.*, no attempt is made in this volume to provide more than the bare highlights.

[4] Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu*, p. 35.

beaches and as the amphibian vehicles crossed the fronting reef, both were subjected to mortar, artillery, and automatic weapons fire from the high ground of Peleliu's central ridge system, from a small point of land on the 1st Marine's left, and from previously unlocated positions south of the 7th Marines. (*Map VI*)

As succeeding waves pushed ashore, Japanese fire steadily increased, providing ample evidence that preliminary air and naval bombardment had not been as effective as hoped. Soon, like the reefs at Morotai the same day, the reefs in front of Orange and White Beaches were littered with halted amphibian vehicles—DUKW's, LVT's, and LVT(A)'s. But the reason at Peleliu was far different. The amphibians there were put out of action by Japanese fire, not, as at Morotai, by mud and rough reefs.

Nevertheless, the landing continued. As the infantry pushed inland, opposition continued to stiffen, especially on the fronts of the 1st and 7th Marine Regiments. Elements of one company, on the extreme left, were cut off from the rest of the 1st Marines for over thirty hours, leaving a potentially dangerous gap on that flank of the regiment. The Japanese, fortunately, did not take full advantage of this gap to counterattack the beachhead area. In the center, the 5th Marines met only scattered resistance while pushing rapidly inland to the western edge of the Peleliu airdrome area. More trouble was encountered by the 7th Marines, on the south, both from strong Japanese defensive positions and from unmapped terrain features, such as a swamp which split the 1st Battalion as it advanced south from Orange Beach 3. The attack on the south stalled.

General Rupertus, who remained aboard ship until D plus 1, was by early afternoon more concerned with the situation in the 7th Marines sector than he was with developments in the 1st Marines area, where opposition had been growing ever stronger and from which counterattacks threatened. At first the general had received no reports from the 1st Marines—the bulk of that regiment's communications equipment and troops had been destroyed while moving shoreward over the reef—and later he obtained such optimistic or incomplete reports that he could form no clear picture of the situation on the north. He expected that all southern Peleliu up to the northern side of the airfield—the most important immediate objective—could be secured by dark on D Day, and on the basis of the information available to him, it appeared that operations were slowest in the 7th Marines area. He therefore committed the division reserve to that sector, but before dark only one company could get ashore.

About 1645 the Japanese began a series of counterattacks, the impetus of which was directed against the 5th Marines. An initial tank attack proved ineffective, as did later attempts by infantry-tank teams or infantry alone. After these attacks were over, one battalion of the 5th Marines advanced to the center of the airfield, producing a salient which marked the most substantial advance of the day by any element of the division. At dark the 5th Marines had also surrounded most of the airfield on the west, south, and southeast, and had extended its lines to a mangrove swamp on the eastern shore of the island. The 7th Marines had a line almost across the island from a point over 400 yards south of Orange Beach 3. The 1st Marines, less the isolated company on a promontory just off the north end of White Beach 1, was almost to the northwest edge of the airfield.

About two thirds of the division's artillery had been landed, but the rest, as well as the III Amphibious Corps Artillery's 155-mm. units, could not get ashore on D Day. The destruction of amphibian vehicles was so great that only with difficulty had priority equipment and supplies been put ashore. Landing by amphibians was necessary, because small boats could not get over the reefs and no causeways or channels to open water could be constructed. Landing problems were further complicated by beach congestion resulting from enemy fire, mine fields, lack of good dispersal areas, and insufficient transportation ashore.

At nightfall the division had secured a perimeter roughly 2,800 yards long north to south. The depth, except where the 5th Marines had pushed across the island, was from 400–700 yards. This hold, ". . . so disappointing when viewed beside preliminary predicitions . . . ," [5] had been secured at the cost of 210 men killed and 901 wounded, plus unnumbered heat prostration and combat fatigue cases.

Col. Kunio Nakagawa, tactical commander of the Japanese garrison, had planned a defense in depth and had available a mobile reserve. He managed to withdraw some troops from Peleliu's eastern arm on D Day, but the operations of the 5th and 7th Marines had cut off his southern defending force, built around the *3d Battalion, 15th Infantry*. With this reverse and the failure of the afternoon counterattacks, Colonel Nakagawa decided to withdraw the bulk of his remaining forces to the ridge lines and high ground north of the airfield, there to hold out as long as possible, much as Colonel Kuzume had defended similar terrain with his *Biak Detachment*. The 1st Marine Division, spending a night harassed by Japanese mortar and artillery fire, was to be subjected to heavy fire from the ridge line defenses on D plus 1.

On this day the 7th Marines extended the hold on the south, seizing all that part of the island with the exception of two small promontories at the southern tip. The 5th Marines cleaned out most of the remaining part of the airfield area, setting up defenses at night in a hangar and shops center on the north side of the field. The 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, secured the northwest section of the airfield, including some headquarters buildings and barracks. But the rest of the regiment could make little progress north near the central ridges and had to content itself with closing the gap on its left and straightening out its lines. By dark, at the cost of about 30 more men killed and 115 wounded, the division had secured a perimeter over 3,000 yards long north to south and approximately 2,000 yards deep at the farthest penetration. In two days the 1st Marine Division and attached units had suffered almost 1,500 casualties, over 1,000 of them in the 1st Marine Regiment and its combat team attachments. Nonetheless, the most important objective, the Peleliu airfield area, had been secured, and the Japanese defenders had been split. One tough pocket of resistance remained on the two promontories at the island's southern tip, and the division realized that the principal remaining enemy strong point was located in the central ridges.

The Decision to Land on Angaur

General Rupertus assumed command ashore at Peleliu about 0950 on 16 September, D plus 1. Immobilized by a broken

[5] Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu*, p. 57.

ankle suffered during training at Guadalcanal, he could not travel about the perimeter to ascertain the situation for himself and he had to depend upon often cryptic, incomplete, and overoptimistic reports from front-line units. From these he apparently formed an opinion that operations were going fairly well. Whatever the case, he saw no reason on D Day nor D plus 1 to request that part of the 81st Infantry Division be sent ashore to reinforce the 1st Marine Division. All or part of the Army unit was available—one regimental combat team as III Amphibious Corps Reserve and the remainder until the tactical situation on Peleliu would permit it to land on Angaur.[6] It is possible that the general's feelings may have been colored by a desire to make Peleliu an all-Marine operation, for he displayed a ". . . reluctance to employ Army troops. . . ." [7]

On the afternoon of D Day, elements of the Angaur Attack Group, which had brought the 81st Division to the Palaus, had feinted landings at Babelthuap to divert Japanese attention from the Peleliu action. No landing craft were launched from transports or LST's, but accompanying destroyers fired on possible landing beaches and some of the ships maneuvered off the northern islands throughout the afternoon.[8]

By noon on D plus 1, since General Rupertus had made no call for reinforcements, it appeared to higher commanders that 81st Division troops were not needed on Peleliu. Moreover, Rear Adm. William H. P. Blandy, the commander of the Angaur Attack Group, reported that from the results of air and naval bombardment, hydrographic surveys, and UDT activity, a successful landing on Angaur seemed feasible. After conferring, the commanders of the Western Attack Force (Admiral Fort) and the III Amphibious Corps (General Geiger) agreed that the Angaur landing could be executed on the morning of 17 September, as originally anticipated. Orders to that effect were issued at 1432 on D plus 1.[9]

The Assault on Angaur

During the early morning hours of 17 September, the ships of the Angaur Attack Group moved onto station off Angaur Island.[10] At 0530 the Angaur Fire Support Group started its bombardment, employing for the most part slow, methodical area fire rather than shooting at specific targets. The fire was characterized by the 81st Division as being "very satisfactory," [11] and it accounted for about 40 percent of all naval shells thrown at Angaur from 12 through 17 September. The bombardment continued beyond the scheduled hour because support aircraft were late reporting on station. Dawn brought with it almost perfect weather, with unlimited visibility, little wind, and light surf. The 81st Division's assault troops had little trouble debarking from transports and LST's into the landing craft and amphibian vehicles which were to carry them ashore. By 0800 the LVT assault waves had begun

[6] Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu*, pp. 30, 54–56, 61; Encl B, Opns, pp. 1–2, to III Amph Corps Opns Rpt, Palau.

[7] Hough, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

[8] CTG 32.2 [Comdr Angaur Attack Group] Action Rpt—Capture of Angaur Island, 1 Oct 44, p. 1.

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 1–2; 81st Inf Div Opns Rpt Angaur, p. 19; Encl B, Opns, p. 1, to III Amph Corps Opns Rpt Palau; CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Opns in POA Sep 44, p. 55.

[10] The remainder of this chapter is based principally on Drummond, The Palau Campaign, Ch. V, for both American and Japanese information. The reports and supporting documents of the 81st Division and its component and attached units were also consulted for additional information.

[11] 81st Inf Div Opns Rpt Angaur, p. 80.

moving into position along the line of departure, 3,000 yards offshore.

The Landing

At 0810 the assault vehicles began moving toward the shore, keeping about 300 yards behind LCI rocket and mortar boats. The naval bombardment was turned against the beaches, and strafing planes began reporting on station. Flanking LCI's launched their rockets against the beaches when the first LVT wave was about 1,100 yards offshore, and from other LCI's 4.2-inch mortars fired on the beach areas. The rocket boats proceeded to a point about 600 yards off the beaches and then swung to the flanks to let LVT's pass through. Strafing planes carried out assigned missions. At the last safe moment, naval fire shifted inland and to the flanks of the two beaches. (*Map VIII*) The first wave of the 321st Infantry hit Blue Beach, on Angaur's eastern shore, at 0831, one minute behind time. The first assault wave of the 322d Infantry, either delayed at the line of departure or thrown off schedule by offshore currents, was six minutes late reaching Red Beach, on the northeast shore of Angaur north-northwest of Blue Beach. The only opposition to either landing consisted of a few rounds of Japanese mortar fire and some erratic small arms fire, neither of which caused any damage or casualties.

The 1st Battalion, 321st Infantry, landed on the left (south) half of Blue Beach and the 2d on the right. Leading troops rushed up some 20 yards of slightly inclined, rubble-strewn beach to the crest of a low embankment, where a firing line was quickly established. Receiving negligible fire from Japanese weapons, these men soon became concerned over the danger of fire from the LVT's of succeeding waves, and their advance inland was further impeded by beach rubble, wire entanglements, and land mines. On Red Beach the 322d Infantry landed with the 1st Battalion on the right and the 3d on the left, or southeast. Again, troops quickly gained the crest of the beach slope against no opposition. Troops of succeeding waves, taking cover on the beach until their leaders learned something about the situation to the front, soon started inland after the men of the first wave.

Meanwhile, the 323d Regimental Combat Team (III Amphibious Corps Reserve) was feinting a landing off Angaur's western shore. Landing craft were launched from transports, attack waves were formed, destroyer and LCI fire was laid on the prospective landing area, aircraft produced an offshore smoke screen, and boat waves started moving toward the beach. This action may have diverted Japanese attention from the main landings and helped prevent Maj. Ushio Goto, the commander of the *Angaur Sector Unit,* from organizing an immediate large-scale counterattack. Also helping to prevent enemy organization were destroyer fire and aerial strafing or bombing missions directed against potential assembly areas inland.

At Blue Beach all LVT's had been unloaded by 0900. LCVP's moved toward shore to disgorge troops into a few feet of water. Five LCVP waves reached the beach easily, but then the approach channel, narrowed by Japanese mines, became so congested with incoming and outgoing boats and amphibian vehicles that traffic was practically halted. This problem was soon solved by establishing tighter control over landing waves and by removing more mines and underwater obstacles. About 0930 LCM's and LCT's began landing medium tanks

and bulldozers, and before 1000 all the mediums of Company A, 710th Tank Battalion, were ashore. The battalion's Provisional Mortar (81-mm.) Platoon was also landed. Before tanks could move inland to take over the task of infantry support from LVT(A)'s, roads and exits had to be bulldozed through the debris and rubble with which the naval bombardment had littered the beach. Bulldozers of the 154th Engineers (Shore Party on Blue Beach) accomplished these tasks rapidly.

Harassing Japanese mortar fire began falling on Blue Beach shortly after 0900, and continued throughout the morning despite efforts of supporting surface and air forces to locate and destroy the mortar positions. As a result of this fire and because beach exits were still insufficient, the 321st Infantry, at 1030, requested that no more vehicles be landed. But General Mueller wanted to set the division reserve (3d Battalion, 321st Infantry) ashore as soon as possible, and at 1145 he ordered the battalion to land on Blue Beach, where it was assembled by 1300.

In the meantime, the Blue Beach Shore and Beach Party commanders had surveyed conditions on land. Finding that debris covered many of the proposed supply dump areas and that the arrival of the division reserve greatly taxed the capacity of available space, the two commanders recommended that supply unloading for the rest of the day be limited to the minimum necessary assault equipment and material and suggested that general unloading be delayed until the next day. Admiral Blandy and General Mueller approved these recommendations.

On Red Beach the first four assault waves had moved ashore with ease, but beginning with the fifth wave, machine gun fire from a pillbox on the left flank started to harass the troops. Several infantry squads and an LVT(A) neutralized the position for varying periods of time, but it remained sporadically active until engineers closed all entrances with several tons of bulldozed sand and coral debris. Enemy mortar fire, probably originating at high ground in northwest Angaur, also harassed unloading. Efforts to deny observation to the enemy mortars by laying smoke screens failed, and supporting naval vessels and aircraft were unable entirely to silence the Japanese fire, which continued intermittently through the day.

Difficulties arising from boat traffic congestion and inadequate beach space hampered unloading at Red Beach just as they had at Blue Beach. Red Beach was also debris-laden, and the limited space available was soon clogged with vehicles and troops. The 52d Engineers (Shore Party at Red Beach), started moving its heavy equipment ashore about 0850 and bulldozers immediately set to work to clear exits through the rubble. This was slow work, and congestion was not relieved quickly. Then three LCVP's broached at the water line and further restricted landings until they could be towed off. About 0930, all in-traffic had to be temporarily halted.

By 1000 enough LCVP's had been dragged off the beach or sufficient vehicles and troops had been moved away from the water line for unloading to resume. Medium tanks of Company B, 710th Tank Battalion, began coming ashore about 1000 hours, and by 1030 all were 200 yards inland. About the same time the regimental commander decided that the beach had been sufficiently cleared to move his reserve, the 2d Battalion, ashore. Before 1130 all elements of the battalion had landed and were assembled just off the right flank of the



RED BEACH UNLOADING OPERATIONS. *Note steepness of beach gradient.*

beach. As had been the case at Blue Beach, it was decided not to attempt any general unloading over Red Beach on the 17th.

Despite delays, the minimum necessary assault units and supplies were brought ashore during the day to make certain of having secure beachheads for the night. The 316th Field Artillery Battalion, which was to support the 321st Infantry's drive inland from Blue Beach, began landing on Red Beach about 1600 and was in position, ready to fire, just before dark. The 906th Field Artillery Battalion, in general support, was emplaced at the same beach before 1630. All tanks of the 710th Tank Battalion were ashore by 1615. No artillery could be landed on Blue Beach during the day because space was lacking and because proposed firing positions were not completely cleared of Japanese. The 317th Field Artillery Battalion, the mission of which was to support the 322d Infantry's drive inland from Red Beach, was finally set ashore on Blue Beach about 1600 on the 18th. The 155-mm. howitzers of the 318th Field Artillery Battalion also reached Red Beach on the 18th. As a result of heavy opposition encountered by the 1st Marine Division on Peleliu, the III Amphibious Corps Artillery's 155-mm. gun battalion was not in position on that island in time to support the 81st Division's landing on the 17th. The battalion was emplaced on Peleliu by midmorning, but its fire was not called for by the 81st Division. Since opposition on Angaur was not serious, the loss of this 155-mm. fire during the landing and the loss of expected support from the 317th Field Artillery Battalion was not of great importance.

Operations Inland on 17 September

By 0930 troops and bulldozers of the 306th Engineers had filled a Japanese antitank ditch behind Blue Beach, assuring armored support for the 321st Infantry which, already reorganized after the landing, was ready to follow its advance patrols inland. Company A, 321st Infantry, drove straight ahead to the west, while Company B pushed toward Rocky Point. On the right the 2d Battalion pushed north and northwest, one company moving along the coast toward Cape Ngariois, 500 yards beyond the north end of the beach. The division had begun to execute its plan to drive inland some 300 yards to a first phase line before establishing contact between regiments.

The advance in the 321st Infantry's sector at first proceeded slowly and cautiously—all units were in combat for the first time and were being subjected to intermittent mortar and machine gun fire from inland Japanese positions. The 2d Battalion gained 150 yards to the north and 250 to the west by 1000 hours, while the 1st Battalion had secured Rocky Point and was about 200 yards inland. An hour later, the center of the 1st Battalion reached the first phase line, here about 350 yards beyond the beach, but the regiment's flanks were still short of the line. Less than three hours after landing, however, the regiment had secured a beachhead about 1,200 yards long, north to south, and approximately 350 yards deep.

From the right flank of Red Beach the 1st Battalion, 322d Infantry, moved rapidly north and inland through less dense undergrowth than that in the 321st Infantry's area. Company C, 322d Infantry, pushed north on the right flank toward Cape Pkul a Mlagalp, almost 800 yards distant, at Angaur's northeast tip. Passing by many abandoned bunkers and dugouts, the unit rounded the northwest cape shortly before 1100. By noon it was at the northern end of the first phase line, located on the north coast 450 yards west of Cape Pkul a Mlagalp. One platoon, sent south along the phase line to establish contact with the rest of the battalion, returned about 1300 to report that numerous gaps existed along the 1st Battalion's front.

These gaps had developed because other 1st Battalion units, driving straight inland from the beach, had found the terrain so rough and overgrown that they had channeled their movements along a narrow-gauge railroad track leading generally southwest from the beach toward the first phase line. Following this track, which was designated the Seaboard Railroad, two companies reached the first phase line before noon. They spread north and south along the phase line, but a large gap remained between Company A, on the right, and Company C.

On the left of Red Beach, the 3d Battalion, 322d Infantry, had meanwhile been expanding the beachhead in its sector. Here, strong opposition from enemy bunkers built into jagged coral on the shore off the left of the beach caused some trouble, although elements of two companies attacked. So as not to become bogged down, the infantry left the positions to the tender mercies of engineer bulldozers and proceeded south and west inland. Company I pushed on to the 550-yard-distant first phase line quickly, establishing contact there with Company B. The unit's advance had carried along another narrow-gauge track known as the Pacific Railroad and through a network of defensive positions, most of which

proved to be unoccupied. Company K, which struck south-southwest from the beach, was still about 100 yards short of the first phase line at noon, while Company L, moving over very rough terrain along the coast south toward Cape Ngatpokul (1,000 yards below Red Beach) and the regimental boundary (terminating on the shore between Capes Ngatpokul and Ngariois) was about 400 yards short of the phase line. Its position was some 600 yards north of the regimental boundary.

By noon the troops of the 321st and 322d Infantry Regiments, though new to combat, harassed by intermittently heavy Japanese machine gun and mortar fire, and initially delayed somewhat by the difficulties of reorganizing on the rubble-covered beaches, had both secured firm beachheads. But progress inland, except in the case of the 1st Battalion, 322d Infantry, was far less than General Mueller, the division commander, had hoped. Moreover, a gap, of some 700 yards still existed along the first phase line between the regiments. General Mueller was faced with a choice of pushing the 322d Infantry on toward the high ground at northwest Angaur or halting the inland advance until both regiments could bring all elements up to the first phase line and establish and maintain contact along that line. The first choice had the undesirable feature of pushing a narrow, exposed salient into Japanese-held terrain. On the other hand, not to push the 322d Infantry forward might lose an opportunity to exploit the success on that regiment's right. Finally, he made a logical decision. About 1245 he ordered the 322d Infantry to push its right on to the second phase line, which, in the 1st Battalion's zone, lay roughly 400 yards beyond the first. At the same time, in order to help the 321st Infantry's attack and establish a solid front along the first phase line, he instructed the 322d Infantry to drive its left south to gain contact with its sister regiment.

At 1430 the advances were resumed. The 1st Battalion, 322d Infantry, pushed westward into increasingly rough terrain along the coast and into a densely overgrown basin around the north end of Lake Aztec, the east shores of which marked the center of the second phase line in the regimental zone. But enemy opposition was light at this point, and within an hour and a half the battalion had reached the second phase line, forming a front along that line from the upper end of Lake Aztec to the coast. To the south, in a series of patrol actions against isolated Japanese positions, part of the 3d Battalion began execution of another part of the division's attack plans, taking the coastal area between Red and Blue Beaches from the rear. One company advanced generally southwest toward the regimental boundary and the first phase line, and one platoon of that unit reportedly crossed the regimental boundary well into the 321st Infantry zone without finding any sign of the latter regiment. Actually, little ground was gained by the bulk of the 3d Battalion, 322d Infantry, during the early afternoon.

Neither did the 321st Infantry have much success in taking new ground. The 2d Battalion continued to be held up by difficult terrain and by Japanese opposition centered around defenses about 300 yards northwest of Blue Beach's right flank. Elements of the battalion moving north from the beach, taking advantage of a trail rather than attempting to push through extremely thick jungle undergrowth, advanced in column, thus allowing a few rounds of enemy rifle fire to delay progress. Company G moved north along

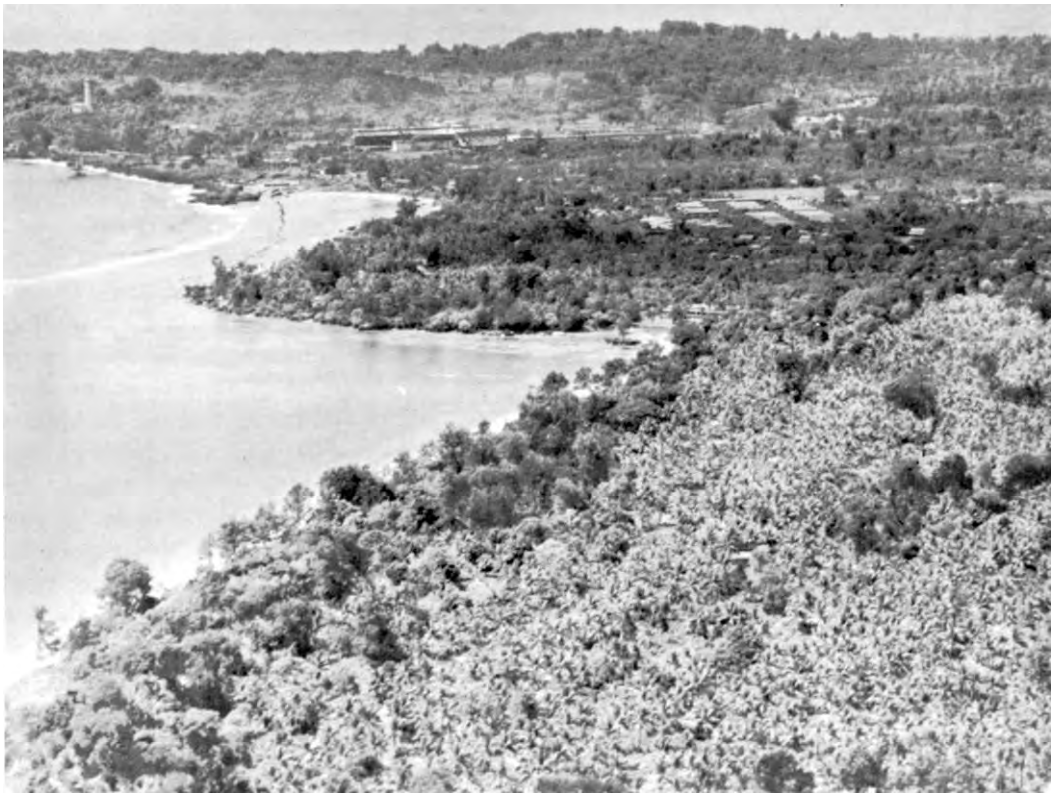
the shore, a maneuver contrary to the division's plan to send the 321st Infantry inland to the first phase line before turning units north to clear the coastal area between Red and Blue Beaches. Whatever the reason for the advance north, the 2d Battalion, by 1500, had gained little over 100 yards north and northwest from its reported position at 1100. On the south flank the 1st Battalion made little progress inland, for the unit had to mop up in the Rocky Point area lest Japanese be left free to attack the battalion's rear. Mopping up in the Rocky Point defenses—comprising a few reinforced concrete pillboxes and numerous coconut log revetments—was slow and laborious work which could hardly be speeded in the heavy jungle undergrowth inland and south from the point.

Action inland to establish contact between regiments was using up valuable time during which beachheads were supposed to have been deepened in anticipation of night counterattacks. General Mueller therefore decided to ignore the gap along the first phase line and about 1530 he ordered the two regiments to move independently on the second phase line in their zones. Quickly the 322d Infantry sent one column southwest along the Pacific Railroad and another down the Seaboard, about 350 yards north of the Pacific. Again the attacks were channeled along railroad beds and gaps developed all along the line. But no enemy opposition was encountered and most units of the 3d Battalion were on the second phase line before dark, by which time the regiment's front extended south along that line from the north coast to the Seaboard Railroad. Thence it jumped about 450 yards over a gap from a point a few yards south of the Seaboard to another a few yards north of the Pacific. One company extended the line back northeast along the Pacific Railroad toward Blue Beach. On the north the 1st Battalion, just before dark, withdrew slightly from the second phase line to ground where it could obtain better fields of fire for its night defenses.

In the 321st Infantry's zone three companies, on the right, had also begun advancing toward the second phase line at 1530. The regimental commander, Col. Robert F. Dark, found after a visit to the front that there was little chance that his units could push to the second phase line before dark and that the terrain beyond the first phase line would not provide good fields of fire. With General Mueller's permission, he therefore ordered his men to move beyond the first phase line only to the point at which good fields of fire could still be obtained. This decision actually meant that before dark only a few men pushed beyond the phase line.

About 1700 the regimental reserve, Company C, was committed to aid units on the right flank. The reserve company pushed north and secured Cape Ngariois just before dark. For the night the unit dug in with its right on the cape and its left extending southwest and inland. Company G was on the shore behind Company C, while Company F was between Company C and the right of Company E, on the first phase line. Company A was on the same line on E's left, and Company B extended from A's left rear to the coast at Rocky Point. The 3d Battalion, released from division reserve to regimental control during the night, went into positions behind the 2d Battalion.

Plans for the 18th were for the 322d Infantry to continue its attack and seize the entire northern portion of Angaur while the 321st Infantry advanced to and held at the second phase line. There it was to act as a



SAIPAN TOWN AREA *on the west coast of Angaur; phosphate plant and Lighthouse Hill in background.*

pivot upon which the 322d Infantry would wheel around Angaur's northwest tip and south to the west coast at Saipan Town. Action on the 18th was to be preceded by three hours of preparatory air, naval, and artillery bombardment.

Enemy Reactions

The *Angaur Sector Unit* might have taken advantage of the many gaps in the 81st Division's lines at almost any time after the initial landings. But Major Goto, instead of ordering his troops into an immediate mass counterattack, apparently spent most of the day trying to ascertain the number of American troops ashore and to discover American intentions. His defensive strength was concentrated in the southern section of the island where apparently he had expected an amphibious assault. About 0830 he ordered one of his companies (probably his central reserve) to attack the American beachheads, but made no effort to move the rest of his command. He believed that the 81st Division was going to land at more beaches—the feinting attack at the northwest coast had perhaps been successful in deceiving the Japanese. If defensive operations during the day proved

inadequate to prevent the invading forces from securing beachheads, Major Goto planned to counterattack during the night of 17–18 September. Neither this attack nor the one-company effort ordered earlier—which was apparently broken up by air and naval gunfire before it got under way—materialized.

By late afternoon it must have become obvious to the *Angaur Sector Unit* commander that the Americans were firmly established ashore. At any rate, he started moving his units and withdrew the southern defense force to the northwest hills, where he had decided to make his final stand. The strong southern defenses were abandoned. Artillery pieces, ammunition, and supplies of all types were left behind except for such extra ammunition as individuals could hand-carry. Moving north generally parallel to the 81st Division's front, the southern units probably reached the northwest hills during the early morning hours of 18 September. With his headquarters and some miscellaneous troops, Major Goto temporarily remained on Lighthouse Hill, located on the west-central coast of Angaur. From Lighthouse Hill he had good observation of the eastern part of the island and from it he could move rapidly into the northwest hills. With displacements to effect these new dispositions well under way, Major Goto apparently ordered his central reserve and an infantry company originally stationed at the northeast section of the island to attack or harass the 81st Division during the night of 17–18 September.

In the 321st Infantry's defensive sector, action on the part of the Japanese was limited during most of the night to patrolling, but early on the 18th they organized an attack. For about half an hour, the Japanese intermittently lobbed mortar shells into the lines of the 1st Battalion, 321st Infantry. Then, at 0550, a wave of enemy infantry broke out of cover below Rocky Point and fell upon Company B. The enemy quickly set up light machine guns and light mortars to support continuing infantry assaults. The company was forced back 50–75 yards toward Blue Beach, and, as daylight came, established a new line slightly north of the Southern Railroad.

Now the 81-mm. mortars of the 710th Tank Battalion's Provisional Mortar Platoon laid a heavy concentration across the company front. At 0600 seven Navy planes strafed the entire Rocky Point area. Temporarily, at least, the Japanese attack was halted, although another slight withdrawal was necessary about 0700. The enemy, however, could not effect a general breakthrough and by 0745 the impetus of the attack had been spent. The 1st Battalion had suffered many casualties from enemy mortar fire, and the battalion commander with his S–2, S–3, and S–4 had to be evacuated for treatment of wounds. Company B, because it had incurred so many casualties, was replaced in the line by Company G, until then regimental reserve. Preparations continued for the scheduled 0900 offensive, while the Japanese on the left flank withdrew to occupy new defensive positions south of Rocky Point.

In the 322d Infantry's area, small groups of Japanese struck repeatedly during the night of 17–18 September against the defensive line south of Lake Aztec, near the boundary between the 1st and 3d Battalions. Confused fighting, concerning which reports are conflicting, ensued all along the front, but there was no general breakthrough. One small Japanese group worked its way toward Red Beach along the Pacific Railroad, falling upon one of Company M's

machine gun positions near the first phase line. After killing one of Company M's men, the group was repulsed. Only one small party pushed into the gap between the 321st and 322d Infantry Regiments' fronts. This was indeed fortunate, for had the Japanese exploited their opportunity at the gap, they could have moved on to the coast, possibly to create much damage at supply and command installations at the beaches, although the 81st Division was prepared for any such moves. The one Japanese group that did move into the gap withdrew at daylight without attacking any 81st Division perimeter.

Most of the Japanese who had maneuvered in the 322d Infantry's sector during the night apparently retired toward the northwest hills shortly after dawn, although one group—possibly that in the gap—swung south to the right of the 2d Battalion, 321st Infantry, north of Blue Beach. This force attacked about 0900, just as the 2d Battalion was preparing to start its scheduled 18 September advance. Combined machine gun and mortar fire, aided by air attacks, broke up the enemy effort and by 1000 the Japanese had withdrawn.

The 1st Battalion's advance had been postponed until the situation in front of the 2d Battalion was clarified and Company G could complete the relief of Company B. No sooner had the latter task been finished than, at 0935, another Japanese attack originated from the Rocky Point area. Company G was pushed back from the line it had just established along the Southern Railroad and its left was thrown back to Blue Beach. Air attacks, mortar fire, and LCI automatic weapons fire finally forced the Japanese to withdraw, and by 1045 the front had quieted down. The 321st Infantry could begin its attack.

Just what Major Goto hoped to gain by the night action is not clear. He may have ordered the attacks to cover the withdrawal of the bulk of his forces, with supplies and ammunition, to the northwest hills. On the other hand, he may have underestimated the strength the 81st Division had put ashore and thus believed that his counterattacks, which were carried out by less than two companies, could create serious damage among the American units. Whatever the case, he sacrificed the bulk of one company in the fruitless attacks on the left of the 321st Infantry. The unit which harassed the 322d Infantry apparently withdrew more or less intact into the northwest hill mass early on the morning of the 18th. Finally, Major Goto was successful in withdrawing his main force to new defenses, moving into the hills as large a quantity of supplies and ammunition as was humanly possible during the course of the night, and delaying the 321st Infantry's F plus 1 attack by two hours.

Securing Southern Angaur

While the 321st Infantry's attack was delayed principally as the result of Japanese action, the 322d Infantry's advance was nearly delayed without much help from the enemy.[12] Sniper scares set off frenzies of wild, indiscriminate firing—principally on the part of LVT crews and engineer or service units at the beach—two or three times before 0900. Front-line units were pinned down by friendly fire from the rear and at-

[12] This section (and its subsections) is based principally on: Drummond, The Palau Campaign, Ch. VI; Ltr, Maj Nelson L. Drummond to Gen Ward, n. d., no sub, copy in OCMH files. The records of the 81st Division and its component parts and attached units were consulted for additional information.

tack preparations were slowed. When General Mueller arrived on land about 0930 to assume command ashore, the 322d Infantry's attack was still not fully developed.

Extending the Hold

Despite indications that the rest of the regiment might be delayed, Company K, 322d Infantry, started southwest along the Pacific Railroad on time. A platoon of mediums from Company B, 710th Tank Battalion, led the way. Forced by the nature of the terrain to move along the railroad bed, each tank was followed by an infantry squad which designated targets for the tank gunners. The tanks blasted suspicious-looking clumps of dense foliage, hit a few caves and bunkers, and fired at some buildings, most of which showed signs of hurried abandonment. Opposition was limited to scattered rifle and mortar fire. By 1100 the tank-infantry force had advanced some 500 yards to a clearing where the Southern and Pacific Railroads joined at a small railroad marshalling yard. Since supporting artillery fire was falling dangerously close, the advance elements pulled back about 75 yards, to be joined by Company L which had been moving down the Pacific Railroad driving a few Japanese before it.

At this juncture, apparently as a result of confusion of landmarks, six Navy fighter planes accidentally bombed and strafed the front lines of the 3d Battalion, 322d Infantry. Before the troops could find cover and the air strike could be stopped, 7 men had been killed and 46 others wounded. General Mueller, when he learned the extent of the damage, ordered air attacks against Angaur discontinued until further notice. The psychological damage was not undone for some days, for many officers and men of the 322d Infantry, having had their fill of indiscriminate firing by rear units before the morning attack, were prompted by the results of the air strike to distrust all friendly support fire. Their attitude was not helped by the Japanese trick of firing artillery and mortars principally when the 81st Division's own heavy weapons were firing. This trick had been used consistently by the Japanese throughout the Pacific war, and the 81st Division was no exception to the general rule that troops new to combat took a few days to learn to differentiate between friendly and enemy fire. It was some time before the 322d Infantry regained its confidence in supporting artillery, air, and mortars.

Despite the air strike contretemps, the 3d Battalion resumed its advance within half an hour after the last planes had ceased firing, pushing on to a Japanese phosphate plant and setting up defenses along a low, sandy hill immediately north of the shattered buildings. On the regiment's right, the 2d Battalion took over the advance while the 1st reverted to reserve. The battalion soon found that available maps did not furnish an accurate picture of the terrain in northwestern Angaur. West from the second phase line, the island's north coast comprised terrain not unlike that of the Ibdi Pocket area on Biak, with similar rough coral pinnacles, shallow shelves, and small ridge lines running in all directions. Like the Biak ridges, Angaur's northwestern terrain was honeycombed with natural crevices and covered by large tropical trees and thick jungle undergrowth.

One company moved forward inland expecting to find a gradual slope running westward about 1,000 yards to Lake Salome and the phosphate diggings at the southeast

edge of Angaur's highest ground. Instead, broken coral terrain, which made impossible the employment of the 710th Tank Battalion's supporting tanks, slowed the advance. Suffering from increasing heat, the unit could make only 300 yards west from the second phase line by noon. On the north coast another company pushed forward some 1,000 yards to the north end of the third phase line, where it found itself at the surf-washed base of a 75-foot-high cliff, a position similar to that at the Parai Defile on Biak. One platoon, meeting no opposition, pushed on to Angaur's northwest tip, Cape Pkulangelul, but no part of the company could locate any passage south over the cliffs.

It soon appeared to the regimental commander, Col. Benjamin W. Venable, that supply and evacuation along the rugged north coast presented at least temporarily insoluble problems. He therefore ordered the forward units to move back to the second phase line, but before dark all the 2d Battalion could not get back. Two companies remained strung out along the coast between the second and third phase lines while a third established contact at the second phase line with the 1st Battalion, which had extended its left south along the east shore of Lake Aztec and then southwest down the Northern Railroad to the 3d Battalion's area. The latter had pushed its right up the Northern from the phosphate plant late in the afternoon, but not far enough to establish physical contact with the 1st Battalion's left.

In the 321st Infantry's zone the 2d Battalion (comprising Companies C, E, F, H, and I) pushed north and northeast during the morning to mop up around Capes Ngariois and Ngatpokul and inland along the regimental boundary to the first phase line. The mopping up was not arduous except for terrain difficulties, and late in the morning the battalion made contact with rear elements of the 3d Battalion, 322d Infantry, along the regimental boundary. The 2d Battalion, 321st Infantry, then tried to push farther inland through the jungle parallel to the Pacific Railroad, but was slowed by heavy undergrowth, increasing heat, and scattered fire from hidden enemy riflemen. Shortly after noon the battalion commander changed the direction of march to due south toward the Southern Railroad. By late afternoon the main body was still 100 yards short of the second phase line, but advance patrols had made contact with 322d Infantry units near the junction of the Pacific and Southern Railroads. The 321st Infantry unit set up night defenses along the Southern Railroad and trails or abandoned railroad beds leading northeast.

On the southern flank of the 321st Infantry zone the 1st Battalion (Companies A, D, and G) headed inland during the morning along the Southern Railroad. Numerous antitank mines along the railroad bed held up supporting tanks and when, during midafternoon, the unit turned south off the railroad bed to take from the rear and flanks enemy positions on the coast below Rocky Point, heat and thick jungle undergrowth further slowed movement. Elements of Company G managed to push forward to the north end of Green Beach 3, about 600 yards below Rocky Point, but lost physical contact with the rest of the battalion and were therefore called back to the Southern. For the night, the units set up defenses along the railroad bed, tying the battalion's right into the left of the 2d. The 3d Battalion (Companies B, K, L, and M) remained in reserve near the left side of Blue Beach.

Advances during the day, except for the salient to the phosphate plant produced by the 3d Battalion, 322d Infantry, had gained little ground. General Mueller was especially anxious that the southern part of the island be secured as quickly as possible, for it was there that the proposed airfield was to be constructed. Enemy information available to the division commander indicated that the main body of Japanese was still in the south, and exaggerated reports of heavy resistance on the 321st Infantry's front during the day probably did nothing to dispel such an opinion. Finally, optimistic reports from the 322d Infantry indicated that the regiment had occupied all of northwest Angaur except a tiny area of high ground. Apparently convinced that the enemy still held southern Angaur in some strength, General Mueller ordered the emphasis of attack on the 19th to be placed on a drive southward by both regiments to clear that area and to divide the remaining enemy forces.

The Occupation of Southern Angaur

The night of 18–19 September was noisy and nerve-racking all along the front and few troops got much sleep. Minor Japanese attacks harassed the exposed salient held by the 3d Battalion, 322d Infantry, while bats and large land crabs helped the Japanese to create distraction and started troops firing on nonexistent enemy infiltrators. Apparently no casualties resulted either from Japanese action or indiscriminate small arms fire. Friendly artillery fire did, however, cause some casualties. About 2030, four or five 105-mm. shells from the 316th Field Artillery Battalion hit the lines of the 2d Battalion, 321st Infantry, killing 4 men and wounding 15 others. The artillery fire was stopped before further damage could be done.

About 0730 on the 19th, after an extensive artillery preparation, the offensive was resumed. The 3d Battalion, 322d Infantry, advancing from the phosphate plant toward Saipan Town, found a number of pillboxes, bunkers, and other defensive installations so situated as to command the western beaches and the southern approaches to Saipan Town but presenting relatively harmless rear entrances to the American troops. Most of the positions were unoccupied and the battalion moved rapidly into the town against only scattered resistance. By noon the entire settlement area had been secured and the unit had regrouped along a road which ran southeast and inland from the southern edge of the town. The 2d Battalion (Companies C, E, F, H, and I), 321st Infantry, had meanwhile met only negligible resistance driving south from the Southern Railroad. The unit pushed through Middle Village (about 400 yards east of Saipan Town) keeping pace with the 2d Battalion, 322d Infantry, and by noon began pulling up on the same road where the latter was regrouping.

While these two advances had been going on, General Mueller, who had made quick reconnaissance of the front, decided that the rest of southern Angaur could be taken quickly and ordered the southern push continued. The 3d Battalion, 322d Infantry, moved down a narrow-gauge railroad line lying about thirty yards inland parallel to the west coast. Brushing aside a few small Japanese groups, the battalion moved on to Cape Ngaramudel and the north shore of Garangaoi Cove, about 1,300 yards above Angaur's southwest tip. There, about 1600, the unit started setting up night defenses, utilizing many deserted Japanese beach for-

tifications. The inland flank was bent back along a road leading northeast toward Middle Village and the 2d Battalion, 321st Infantry. The latter unit encountered no opposition as it moved south from Middle Village early in the afternoon, but advance elements were halted at the edge of a large mangrove swamp which covered much of southeastern Angaur. The troops stopped to probe for routes through this obstacle and to wait for the 3d Battalion, 321st Infantry, to advance equally far south.

The 3d Battalion (Companies G, K, L, and M) had replaced the 1st at the front lines during the morning and had started south from the line of the Southern Railroad with one column on the beach at Rocky Point. It had to wait, however, for tanks to be brought up through difficult terrain before two Japanese 75-mm. gun positions could be knocked out. Attacks on other defenses in the Green Beach 3 area immediately brought down accurate Japanese mortar fire from emplacements to the northwest, indicating that the Japanese still maintained some communication between the isolated defenders on the southeast coast and mortars set up inland.

The other 3d Battalion column pushed south from the Southern Railroad until it hit the upper side of the mangrove swamp, whereupon it turned east toward the coast to join forces with the group already on the shore. Many unlocated Japanese mortars and machine guns continued to cause casualties, and by early afternoon the entire attack was stalled. Even additional mortar and artillery support failed to make the 3d Battalion's going much easier in the maze of Japanese defenses northeast of the mangrove swamp.

With the southward displacement of the 2d Battalion, 321st Infantry, from Middle Village, a gap had developed at the north end of the regimental lines. To fill this gap part of the 1st Battalion (now containing Companies A, B, and D) was sent south and southeast toward the 3d Battalion and the rest was moved forward to reinforce the 2d. Before dark, the units moving south into the gap could make little progress and established a night perimeter on the northwest edge of the swamp at a point about 600 yards inland from the 3d Battalion. The latter had been able to drive a few more yards south to set up defenses about 650 yards below Rocky Point.

Earlier in the afternoon it had been decided to outflank the mangrove swamp on the west and establish a line across Angaur south of that obstacle. The commander of the 710th Tank Battalion saw in this decision an opportunity to make an armed reconnaissance of southern Angaur, and he recommended sending some of his mediums south beyond the infantry lines. Colonel Dark approved this recommendation, and a company of tanks, six infantrymen of the 2d Battalion, 321st Infantry, aboard each, started south around the northwest edge of the swamp about 1330 hours. The rest of the 2d Battalion followed afoot.

Turning southwest down the Garangaoi Cove–Middle Village road, the tank column reached the cove apparently before the 3d Battalion, 322d Infantry, had advanced that far. The column then swung southeast and, following sandy trails, pushed on to the southeast coast below the mangrove swamp. So far, no opposition had been encountered. The 2d Battalion's infantrymen set up a defensive line which stretched across the island from the southeast coast below the swamp to the left flank of the 3d Battalion, 322d Infantry, which was now at Garangaoi Cove, while the

tanks pushed north along a narrow strip of dry land to the lines of the 3d Battalion, 321st Infantry. The tank column encountered little opposition as it passed through terrain where strong enemy defenses had been reported as holding up the 3d Battalion all day. Perhaps the Japanese preferred to let the tanks pass unmolested in favor of waiting quietly until infantry assaults were resumed. Just before dark the tanks completed a circuit of the mangrove swamp and took up defensive positions behind the 2d Battalion's new line.

Although the tank column had pushed through southern Angaur with unexpected ease, there was still some doubt at division headquarters concerning the location of the *Angaur Sector Unit's* main body. This doubt was engendered at least in part by a number of erroneous reports from front-line units. For example, the 2d Battalion, 321st Infantry, reported that about 1735 its right flank was struck by a banzai attack carried out by 200 Japanese. Actually, a small attack did take place at the specified time, but it was apparently conducted by fewer than 20 Japanese who had been cornered near Angaur's southwest tip. Another report, reaching division headquarters just before dark, located a number of rubber boats maneuvering around the southern tip. This report apparently originated in hasty aerial observation of surf-washed beach obstacles. Finally, about 1900, the 321st Infantry reported that 300–400 Japanese were still in southern Angaur.

General Mueller, concerned lest the Japanese reported on the south break through gaps or weak points in the forward lines, had special defenses in depth set up at Red and Blue Beaches, utilizing Shore Party and antiaircraft troops. All units were alerted to expect Japanese attacks during the night. The division expected (and perhaps hoped) that the Japanese still believed to be located in southern Angaur might launch a suicidal desperation charge during the night or at dawn on the 20th. The night proved very quiet until, toward morning, some small, scattered Japanese parties infiltrated through the lines of both regiments. There was no banzai effort—rather, these Japanese troops were apparently attempting to escape to the northwest hill mass from positions in the mangrove swamp and Green Beach 3 areas. Action at dawn was limited to a mopping-up operation directed against four Japanese discovered in the headquarters area of the 2d Battalion, 321st Infantry.

The attack on the 20th began about 0800 when the 2d Battalion (Companies A, C, E, F, H, I, and part of D), 321st Infantry, began pushing south from its night line. Attached to the composite battalion were two companies of the 710th Tank Battalion. The unit swept rapidly southward over the final 600 yards to the south coast and 800 yards to the southwest tip. Throughout the area there were numerous pillboxes, bunkers, dugouts, antitank trenches, dual purpose guns in strong emplacements, antitank weapons, and defensive barriers of all types. The Japanese had been well prepared for any Allied landing on southern Angaur, but only a few enemy soldiers were encountered during the final sweep south. By 1100 the entire southern area had been secured.

Along the southeast coast the 3d Battalion (Companies G, K, and L) resumed its advance about 0800. The 1st Battalion (now Company B and part of Company D) initially tried to advance southwest through the east edge of the mangrove swamp, but finding the terrain impassable, joined the 3d. The latter found that most of the Japanese who had manned defenses

in the Green Beach 3 area during the previous days had evacuated during the night. There was still some isolated, stubborn resistance from a few enemy positions, but progress was delayed principally by terrain and the necessity to explore thoroughly each enemy installation. By 1500 the coastal advance had progressed 1,400 yards to the southern edge of the mangrove swamp. To mop up a few Japanese who remained in the swamp and southeast coastal areas, the 2d Battalion was reformed and directed to move back up the east coast to Blue Beach. Before dark, all battalions had reorganized and the final mop up on the east coast had begun.

All three battalions of the 321st Infantry continued mopping up in the south during the morning of the 21st, while the 81st Reconnaissance Troop searched through the heavily wooded terrain along the coast and inland between Red and Blue Beaches, killing nine or ten Japanese. In the afternoon the 321st Infantry was alerted for movement to Peleliu, where the 1st Marine Division's operations had been slowed by strong opposition. Responsibility for patrolling in southern Angaur passed to the 322d Infantry, which already had its hands full trying to eliminate Japanese resistance in the northwest hills.

CHAPTER XXII

The Reduction of Northwestern Angaur

About 1100 on 20 September, General Mueller had reported to Headquarters, III Amphibious Corps, that all organized resistance on Angaur had ceased and that the island was secure.[1] That the island was "secure" by that time there can be no doubt. The area on the south and east, where the bomber airfield and other base installations were to be constructed, had been cleared of Japanese, the remainder of whom, General Mueller now realized, were compressed into a pocket in northwest Angaur from which they could not escape. As of 20 September, the 81st Division's G–2 Section estimated that 850 Japanese had already been killed on Angaur. In accordance with preassault estimates, this figure indicated that not many more than 350 of the enemy remained alive in the northwest hill mass. With a reinforced infantry regiment—the 322d Regimental Combat Team—available for the job, mopping up in the northwest corner seemed to pose no great problem.

[1] This chapter is based principally on Drummond, The Palau Campaign, Chs. VI and VII (Ch. VII incomplete). The records of the 81st Division and attached units, especially those of the 322d Infantry and the 710th Tank Battalion, were employed to complete the story.

Into the Main Defenses

Locating the Japanese

While the 321st Infantry, the 3d Battalion of the 322d Infantry, and reinforcing elements such as the bulk of the 710th Tank Battalion had been securing southern Angaur, the rest of the 322d Infantry had been probing the enemy's northwestern defenses. Company E, 322d Infantry, had spent the night of 18–19 September in a semi-isolated perimeter on the north coast, its rear protected by Companies F and G in position near the northern end of the second phase line. The 1st Battalion's left was extended southwest down the second phase line and the Northern Railroad toward the phosphate plant and the 3d Battalion. On the 19th the 1st Battalion was to attack south to join the 3d, while the 2d Battalion was to advance south on the 1st's right. The 2d Battalion was also to be prepared to swing westward into the high ground on regimental order. (*Map VIII*)

The 1st Battalion's attack started on schedule at 0730 on the 19th, but the 2d Battalion delayed to reassemble its scattered companies. As the 1st moved south with two companies abreast, it was subjected to

enfilade small arms and machine gun fire from high ground on its right front, but the enemy made no attempt to press home an infantry attack nor to fire artillery or heavy mortars. Because of the nature of the terrain between the Northern and Milwaukee Railroads, into which the two forward companies first moved, supporting tanks had to be dropped off. Then a swampy area was discovered southwest of Lake Aztec, and the infantry movement was channeled along the Northern Railroad. Continuing along this track and passing through many abandoned enemy positions, the battalion reached the phosphate plant and established contact with rear elements of the 3d Battalion about 1100. Since the latter unit needed no help in its drive south on the 19th, the 1st Battalion passed to regimental reserve.

The 2d Battalion had meanwhile reformed and started south. The unit moved in column around the north end of Lake Aztec, pushed west of the Milwaukee Railroad, and continued south to the junction of that line and the Western Railroad. At this junction, located approximately 450 yards north of the phosphate plant, contact was established with the 1st Battalion, and the 2d pushed on into the phosphate plant area without opposition. Colonel Venable, the regimental commander, now pulled Company G out of the battalion for a regimental reserve and ordered the rest of the unit to attack back up the Western Railroad and north along the west coast.

On the coast west-northwest of the phosphate plant rose two prominent hills, each about 100 feet high. On the southernmost was a Shinto shrine. About 175 yards to the north was Lighthouse Hill, the lighthouse itself having been toppled by preassault naval gunfire. The two hills were connected by heavily overgrown, broken, coral ridge lines along which Major Goto had stationed a detachment of some forty men with orders to hold the coastal approaches to the northwest hill mass.

Shortly after 1200 Company E started moving on Shrine Hill to capture and hold it as a base of fire while the rest of the 2d Battalion attacked Lighthouse Hill and other high ground in the immediate vicinity. Fire from supporting tanks and weapons from the remainder of the battalion kept Japanese defenders under cover as Company E started up Shrine Hill, and no serious opposition was encountered until the hilltop and shrine had been taken. Then, probing along the western slopes, the company prompted about thirty of the enemy to counterattack from a large cave. With some difficulty the Japanese were killed, dispersed, or pushed back into the cave. Protected by tanks and riflemen, engineers then blocked the cave entrance. The rest of Shrine Hill was secured against only scattered rifle fire from higher ground to the north.

Company F, sent to occupy both Lighthouse Hill and a smaller knoll about 175 yards to the southeast, accomplished both missions by late afternoon against negligible opposition. A patrol was sent up a trail leading north from Lighthouse Hill but encountered heavy automatic weapons fire from Japanese positions on wooded broken ridges 200 yards to the north. Since there was no time before dark to attack these ridges, the patrol was withdrawn. Enemy fire, probably from the same positions, started to sweep the partially bare northern slopes of Lighthouse Hill. All of Company F was withdrawn to form a line running northeast from Shrine Hill to the knoll southeast of Lighthouse Hill.

While this action had been going on, Company G, released from regimental reserve early in the afternoon, had started up the Western Railroad. About 300 yards above the junction of the Western and Milwalkee Railroads, the Western entered a deep cut, banked on both sides by steep slopes about 50–75 feet high. At the entrance to the defile, the company halted to send patrols to the tops of the slopes. Once atop the slopes, the infantrymen could see into a deep, broad bowl, where lay a maze of abandoned phosphate diggings, many short railroad spurs, and Lake Salome. The bowl was backed on all sides by overgrown, jagged coral ridge lines and cliffs 50 to 100 feet high.

Noticing a small Japanese party moving in the southern section of the bowl, Company G opened fire with light machine guns. Immediately, hidden Japanese light artillery, mortars, machine guns, and rifles opened fire from the backing ridges and the bowl floor. The ridge-top patrols found their positions untenable and hurriedly descended into the defile. The Japanese fire continued, some of it getting into the railroad cut. The company finally was recalled to join the rest of the 2d Battalion in night defenses, but not before five men had been seriously wounded by the enemy fire.

Colonel Venable, who now felt that the Japanese held the northwest hills in some strength, became concerned about the security of Red Beach. Two of his battalions were concentrated near the phosphate plant, while the third had moved south below Saipan Town. Since there were no defenses between the phosphate plant and the beach, Colonel Venable sent the 1st Battalion back up the route it had traveled in the morning to re-establish defenses along the second phase line between Lake Aztec and the north coast. A gap remained between Lake Aztec and the phosphate plant, but no attack was expected in that sector because the terrain consisted principally of swamp and nearly impassable wooded ridge lines. The Japanese either did not know of this gap or chose to ignore it in favor of withdrawing men from the 321st Infantry's front to the northwest hills.

The attack on the northwest was resumed on 20 September by the 2d Battalion, 322d Infantry. During the morning the unit reoccupied Lighthouse Hill and slowly probed into many abandoned Japanese positions in the surrounding rough, hilly terrain. By midafternoon the bulk of the battalion was on its way toward the southwest side of the Lake Salome bowl, which lay uphill from Lighthouse Hill. The terrain between the latter feature and the bowl's rim gave every advantage to Japanese defenders, who countered each forward movement with mortar or machine gun fire, and Companies E and F, leading the attack, could gain little ground north of Lighthouse Hill before dark. The battalion (less Company G) dug in for the night in much the same positions, except for the addition of Lighthouse Hill, as those it had held the previous night.

Company G, during the morning, had again attacked up the Western Railroad and set up mortar and machine gun positions on the ridges above the railroad defile, which later became known as Bloody Gulch, in preparation for infantry movement into the bowl. Self-propelled 75-mm. weapons (SPM's) of the Cannon Company, 322d Infantry, then lumbered up and into the defile. Two of the SPM's pushed through the 50-yard-long defile to the northern end, which opened into the Lake Salome bowl, encountering no resistance other than scattered small arms fire. As a third SPM moved

out of the defile's northern exit, one of the earlier arrivals was disabled by a land mine and another was temporarily put out of action by fire from a Japanese antitank gun brought into position on the bowl's eastern slopes. The entire crew of the SPM was wounded but was successfully evacuated in the face of increasingly heavy small arms fire. The SPM was restarted and brought back into the railroad cut.

By early afternoon Colonel Venable realized that Company G needed more support, and he sent forward a platoon of medium tanks. These vehicles could not get through the defile, which was still blocked by disabled SPM's. Without the additional support the infantry could make no progress, and the attack stalled. The colonel thereupon decided to start an advance from a new direction, and at 1400 he ordered Company B to move overland from the Milwaukee Railroad northwest toward the eastern side of the bowl. Company B reached its line of departure (on the Milwaukee about 400 yards north of that line's junction with the Western) without difficulty. Progress from the railroad toward the bowl's eastern rim was painfully slow, because it was necessary to cut trail through swamp or dense jungle undergrowth. The attack from the east therefore bogged down. Company G, without expected support on its right, could make no progress either. Finally, at 1500, the two forward units were ordered to withdraw to allow ample space for artillery registration on the bowl.

Although General Mueller had announced the end of organized resistance on Angaur, the 322d Infantry, by dusk on the 20th, had learned enough about the Japanese positions in northwest Angaur to take exception to the division commander's view. As the regiment had begun to suspect, organized resistance had by no means ceased. Indeed—for the 322d Infantry—it had just started.

General Mueller's statement was probably prompted by his realization that the remaining Japanese were compressed into the northwest hills and by the reports that about 850 of the enemy had been killed through the 20th. This casualty figure was an overestimation. Probably fewer than 600 Japanese had been killed through the 20th, and Major Goto still had possibly 750 men with which to conduct an organized defense in the northwest. On orders from General Inoue, commander of the *Palau Sector Group,* Major Goto planned no final banzai attack which would decimate his forces. Instead he withdrew over half his force to rugged terrain and emplaced them in natural or prepared fortifications. His lines of defense in the northwest were well conceived; many of his positions were mutually supporting; the amphitheater configuration of the bowl provided him with defensive areas whence heavy cross fires could be directed at attackers; the broken coral, with its crevices, fissures, caves, and ridgelets, gave him defensive advantages at least as good as those at the Ibdi Pocket on Biak; and he had available a number of artillery and antitank weapons, heavy and light mortars, and heavy and light machine guns, most of them so emplaced as to give maximum support to his riflemen. In addition, he could still exercise effective control over the men he had gathered in the Lake Salome bowl. For whatever it was worth, Major Goto was ready to conduct a protracted defense, though the best he could hope for was to tie down the 322d Infantry. The real issue at Angaur—securing the prospective airfield area—had already been decided.

The First Push Into the Bowl

What was hoped to be the final attack on Angaur was scheduled to begin at 0800 on 21 September. Companies E and F, 322d Infantry, were to push up the coast from Lighthouse Hill, find a break in the bowl's western wall, and attack eastward. Company G, with a tank platoon in support, was to strike again from the south through the railroad defile. The entire 1st Battalion was to attack west from the Milwaukee Railroad, while the 3d Battalion was to remain on the defensive along the northern end of the second phase line.

During the night of 20–21 September artillery fire was directed into the bowl area. Only 155-mm. shells could cause much damage there, but the 155-mm. battalion ashore was so emplaced that the northwest hills were short of its minimum range. One battery was therefore displaced backward to a better position at southern Angaur from which it and a 105-mm. battalion continued the fire, augmented for half an hour by rocket, automatic weapons, and 4.2-inch mortar fire from offshore LCI's. The attack on the 21st was preceded by artillery concentrations lasting an hour. Then there was a half-hour bombing and strafing attack by Navy planes and, finally, another half hour of artillery fire. As they formed for their attack, the infantrymen of the 322d Infantry were confident that the artillery and aerial bombardments must have reduced Japanese resistance in the bowl area to the vanishing point.

Company G, moving back up the Western Railroad's narrow bed, found that on the contrary the Japanese were determined to defend the steep banks of the defile. The unit could not even get into the railroad cut, let alone reoccupy the banks. By 0900 the entire advance had halted, and fifteen minutes of artillery and mortar fire support was called for. About 0945 the infantry attack was resumed. The support fire had been effective and patrols gained the top of the cut, on both sides, with little difficulty. Heavy weapons were set up to fire into the bowl, and the troops waited for tanks to make their way through the defile and for the 1st Battalion to pull up on line to the north.

Lead tanks got to the northern exit of the defile without encountering any enemy fire but found egress blocked by the SPM which had been abandoned the previous afternoon. Explosives and 75-mm. fire from the lead tank failed to move the SPM, which finally had to be towed to one side. This job took so long that it was not until after 1200 that the mediums of the 710th Tank Battalion were able to start moving into the bowl.

Eight tanks, accompanied by a rifle platoon from Company G, filed through the railroad cut and out into the bowl. There was scattered small arms fire from the Japanese, but enemy heavy weapons remained silent as the tanks pushed forward, compelled by the nature of the terrain to follow the narrow-gauge railroad beds. In the bowl the railroad spurs were laid along raised beds from which two tanks slid, one falling twenty feet to overturn and catch fire and the other getting into such a position that it had to be disarmed and abandoned. Three additional tanks moved about fifty yards into the bowl and halted to provide fire support to Company G men who were working along higher ground to the right along the southeast rim. Tank fire was directed mainly into the center of the bowl and toward the high slopes of the north rim. One enemy antitank gun was located and



ENTRANCE TO LAKE SALOME BOWL

knocked out before it could cause serious damage, but, for the most part, definite targets were impossible to find. Previous artillery fire had done little to clear vegetation.

The infantrymen moving along the crevices and fissures of the southeast rim found progress impeded both by terrain and by enemy fire from the northern rim. Hidden machine guns and light mortars increased the tempo of their fires as Company G moved forward. The terrain made co-ordinated infantry-tank attacks impossible. Companies C and I were ordered forward to reinforce Company G but arrived at the defile exit too late in the afternoon to be employed. By 1600 it had become apparent that little further advance could be made before dark. It also appeared that additional progress into the bowl would produce a salient which the Japanese could destroy at their leisure during the night. Such a salient could receive no support from either the east or west sides of the bowl, for the attacks in those areas had also failed.

Companies E and F, pushing up the coast from Lighthouse Hill, had been unable to find any route over the western ridges—which in many spots were sheer cliffs 50 to 100 feet high—into the eastern side of the bowl. On the other hand, by 1045, the companies had moved 250 yards up the west coast without opposition. From a base at Black Beach, where the 323d Infantry had feinted on F Day, patrols were sent on up the coast to Angaur's northwest tip. Many unoccupied enemy positions along the coast were found and destroyed, but still no route over the cliffs could be located.

The 1st Battalion had started westward on schedule from the Milwaukee Railroad in an attempt to co-ordinate an attack from that direction with Company G's effort. The battalion had to cut its way through dense undergrowth and found that the terrain became increasingly rough toward the southeast rim of the bowl. Only light resistance was encountered from enemy ground troops, but some Japanese 150-mm. mortar shells fell near the head of the battalion column. By 1600 the bulk of the unit had moved only 200 yards forward, although Company B had managed to cut a rough trail most of the way to the bowl's southeast rim.

Believing that night action in exposed positions and rough terrain—almost entirely bare coral at the bowl's southern entrance—might result in heavy casualties, the front-line battalion commanders recommended withdrawal from the forward areas before dark. To this Colonel Venable agreed, and by nightfall defenses had been re-established generally along the same lines which had been held the previous night.

For the morrow it was decided to send three rifle companies, a tank company, and a 4.2-inch mortar company into the bowl through the southern defile entrance. Two rifle companies of the 1st Battalion were to conduct holding attacks against the eastern rim, but the effort to move the entire 1st Battalion into the bowl from that direction was to be abandoned. Finally, two other rifle companies, reinforced with engineer demolition teams, were to push up the west coast from Black Beach to destroy all enemy positions that could be located and to find or make a route over which an attack could be made into the bowl from the west. The 3d Battalion (less Company I) was to take over the defense of the rest of Angaur from the 321st Infantry. Company I was attached to the 2d Battalion.

Shortly after 0730 on the 22d, both the coastal and southern defile attacks were resumed. The coastal effort met little op-

position, but again no feasible route over the western cliffs and ridges could be located. At 1500 the two companies were withdrawn to take up new positions at the southern defile entrance. In the railroad cut the experience on the morning of the 21st was repeated, for the Japanese had reoccupied the ground abandoned the previous evening. Three tanks pushed back into the bowl along the railroad beds and by noon were in position to provide fire support for infantry units penetrating deeper. By the same time, the 2d Battalion had secured the southern rim of the bowl for a distance of about 200 yards both east and west of the defile entrance.

Units were now regrouped for another co-ordinated effort, which began at 1300. The main strength was placed on the right (southeast) section of the bowl, and tanks fired along the eastern rim about 200 yards in front of the leading elements. The mediums had been undisturbed by enemy fire all morning, but, apparently attracted by an incautious grouping of officers and men near the lead tanks and defile exit, a Japanese antitank gun opened fire from a hidden emplacement along the east rim. Three officers (including Colonel Venable, who was in the forward area to observe the new attack) and one enlisted man were severely wounded and had to be evacuated.

Meanwhile, the attacking companies had moved slowly forward from the south and southeast. Leading elements reached the shore of Lake Salome and proceeded north along the east side of the depression in which the lake lay. By midafternoon the advance had gained over 250 yards and much of the ground around the lake had been at least temporarily cleared of Japanese. But the troops in the depression and on surrounding higher ground were in an extremely precarious position. Their location made it impossible to provide them with any close artillery or tank support, whereas they could be subjected to vicious cross fire from nearly inaccessible Japanese positions hidden in almost incredibly rough terrain to the north, east, and west. Again, it was decided to pull back to more tenable positions for the night.

Frustration at the Southern Entrance

During the retirement on the 22d, one of the three forward tanks was so badly damaged by a mine or buried shell that it could not be moved through the defile. This tank blocked the defile's northern entrance and prevented the withdrawal of another medium, which had to be destroyed to keep it from falling into Japanese hands. In four days of fruitless effort to push into the bowl from the south, three tanks and two 75-mm. SPM's had been lost. Heavier infantry losses also began to be sustained now that the Japanese, cornered, were fighting to the death. On the 22d, for instance, the 2d Battalion lost 2 men killed and about 35 wounded.

The regimental commander, Colonel Venable, was replaced after his evacuation by his executive officer, Lt. Col. Ernest H. Wilson. The 2d Battalion's commander wanted to make another complete withdrawal out of the defile before dark, but this was not approved. General Mueller had directed that night defenses be set up at the point of deepest penetration each day. However, when Colonel Wilson learned of the dangerously exposed position of the two companies around the shores of Lake Salome, he authorized them to move back

to higher terrain near the defile entrance. The rest of the troops held their ground. As if in vindication of the judgment that the 322d Infantry could hold the rugged terrain in the forward area during the hours of darkness, the night passed with only minor attempts at infiltration on the part of the Japanese. The forward units gained some measure of confidence that they could operate during the night as effectively as the enemy could.

At 0730 on the morning of the 23d, the 2d Battalion, with Companies B, C, and E attached, continued the attack into the bowl from the south. Companies B and C worked up the east shore of Lake Salome. Companies I and G pushed toward the southwest and western shores, while Company F paid particular attention to caves along the southwest rim of the bowl. During the first part of the attack all companies moved forward rapidly, and Company I reached the northwest corner of the lake without much trouble. But Company B, pushing forward against increasingly heavy Japanese fire from the north, was pinned down by this fire when it reached the northeast corner of the lake. Company C was sent north on B's right to try to outflank the enemy machine gun and mortar positions from which the fire on Company B originated. The intention was to flush the Japanese from their positions and push them southwest and south against the main body of the 2d Battalion. But Company C could make little progress toward the northern section of the bowl, and its own position became precarious as Japanese mortar and machine gun fire increased and the 1st Battalion's own 81-mm. mortar ammunition ran out, making further mortar support impossible. Japanese fire continued to increase and the positions of all forward companies became untenable. A general withdrawal to the defile entrance was ordered.

The withdrawal was painfully slow; companies were broken up; all units suffered more casualties. One small group of Company I, separated from its parent unit, worked over the cliffs and ridges at the bowl's western rim to the coast at Black Beach. Company B, retreating in small segments, lost men as it withdrew from the northeast corner of the lake. All told, the 2d Battalion and attached companies lost 18 men killed and over 75 wounded during the day.

Overcoming the Last Resistance

The withdrawal to the defile on the afternoon of the 23d was the culmination of five days' effort to get into the bowl from the south, effort that had proved so costly that it was decided that continued attack from the south would not be worth the results achieved. Artillery close support for the infantry attack from the south was severely limited by the nature of the terrain; infantry was channeled into two narrow lines of approach around the shores of Lake Salome toward the enemy's strongest positions, at the northern side of the bowl; and, finally, no support could yet be provided by other overland attacks from the north, east, or west. A major change in plans seemed to be necessary.

A Change in Tactics

First, it was decided that on Sunday, 24 September, an effort would be made to entice the remaining Japanese into surrender by means of propaganda broadcasts over a public address system. If this effort proved fruitless, then all available artillery would

bombard the entire bowl area while preparations were made to attack into the bowl from the north or northeast.

The propaganda effort was made on the morning of the 24th, but only two Japanese surrendered. Claiming that 300–400 Japanese remained in the bowl under Major Goto's control, these prisoners told of shortages of food and water among the bowl defenders. The prisoners' estimate—later proved reasonably accurate—was not accepted by the 81st Division's G–2 officers, who, on the basis of reports of Japanese already killed on Angaur and realizing that Japanese enlisted men seldom had much knowledge of the general situation, concluded that not more than 150 Japanese were left in the bowl.

With the failure of the broadcasts, a 155-mm. battalion and two 105-mm. battalions began concentrated bombardment of the bowl and the surrounding ridges and cliffs. The fire continued throughout the afternoon of 24 September and the ensuing night, greatly changing the appearance of the bowl interior and the inner rims. Much of the thick foliage was knocked off the tops and sides of cliffs and ridges into crevices and gullies. The contours of the rough, broken terrain emerged more clearly and visibility was greatly improved. It was expected that the artillery fire would have reduced Japanese defenders to a mere handful, most of whose fortifications would have been destroyed or laid bare, and the 322d Infantry hoped that one final infantry attack would reduce the last enemy stronghold.

Colonel Wilson planned his next strong attack at the north. The 3d Battalion (less Company I but plus Company A) was to attack south over the northern rim from the north coast. If necessary, a road would be built along the north coast west from the first phase line to the point of attack and thence south into the bowl so that tanks and supplies could be brought up.

On the morning of the 25th, the 3d Battalion assembled at the northern end of the first phase line and moved west along the coast, following the route taken by elements of the 2d Battalion a week earlier. The battalion pushed on, looking for routes south over the cliffs, to a point within 500 yards of Angaur's northwest tip. No route was found. Moreover, it was estimated that the terrain along the north coast was so rough that it would take weeks to blast a tank and supply road forward to the point where the 3d Battalion had halted. After personal reconnaissance by LVT along the north coast, Colonel Wilson decided that further effort on the north would be impracticable, and he therefore ordered the 3d Battalion to move back to the morning assembly area. A new line of advance had to be chosen. As a result of ground and aerial reconnaissance, it was decided to push the new attack west-southwest from a point near the northern end of the Milwaukee Railroad. This route was chosen for two reasons. First, the reconnaissance had disclosed that a road could be bulldozed through the proposed area of advance and second, a successful attack into the bowl from the new direction would have a good chance of splitting the remaining Japanese force.

In accordance with the new plan, Company B, 306th Engineers, started road construction during the afternoon of 25 September. The attack along the new route was to begin on the 26th, with the 3d Battalion, 322d Infantry, leading. The 2d Battalion, the bulk of which had spent the 25th disposed around the southeast and southern



INTERIOR OF LAKE SALOME BOWL

rims of the bowl, was to conduct a supporting attack from the southeast with two companies. Two other companies were to remain at the southern defile entrance to prevent Japanese escape in that direction.

The 3d Battalion's attack on the 26th began about 0730, with Companies A and K advancing abreast. There was little opposition and shortly before noon the advance platoons of Company A gained the top of the bowl's eastern rim northeast of Lake Salome. From this new vantage point, the troops could obtain their first clear view of formidable-looking ridges and cliffs at the northern rim of the bowl.

As Company A arrived at the top of the eastern rim, Japanese defenders to the north and northwest discovered the new threat. Major Goto had either no time or no desire to shift troops to meet the advancing Americans, but the enemy did begin to direct small arms, mortar, and machine gun fire at Company A. Using available cover from this fire, Company A moved slowly down the inner side of the eastern rim, reaching the bowl floor at a point north-northeast of Lake Salome and some 250 yards north of the farthest penetration during the attacks from the southern entrance. Not much more than 250 yards to Company A's right lay the rough terrain of the north rim, and beyond that the broken, jagged ridges between the bowl and the north coast. But now vision to the north was blocked by a thickly overgrown nose protruding from the east rim and lying on Company A's immediate right flank. To the left and left front lay broken terrain of abandoned phosphate diggings

and an overgrown coral mound about twenty feet high and seventy-five yards in diameter. Between this mound (which soon came to be known as "The Island") and the east rim lay an open draw.

As Company A slowly moved along the east rim ridges, cautiously probing into abandoned or partially destroyed enemy positions, K Company came over the rim, shifted to A's left, and started moving toward The Island and into the draw. As the leading elements crossed the draw, Japanese automatic weapons opened up from the northern cliffs, positions to the northeast, and from The Island. The ensuing cross fire quickly pinned down Company A and most of Company K. Withdrawal was necessary but nearly impossible. Finally, it was executed with the aid of supporting mortars, which placed smoke shells on the enemy positions along the north and northeast ridges, and with the help of approaching darkness. New positions for the night were found slightly to the south and southeast along the inner base of the east rim.

During the day Companies E and F, executing the supporting attack, had managed to get to the top of the southeast rim at a point about 350 yards south of Companies A and K. The 2d Battalion companies found themselves in the rear of positions from which the Japanese had done much to prevent successful earlier attacks through the southern defile entrance, but they pushed on down into the bowl against increasingly heavy opposition, clearing out many cave positions. Many of these caves were still occupied, and before dark the companies had suffered thirty-seven casualties from enemy fire. As night fell, the two units established a defensive perimeter which extended from the southeast corner of Lake Salome to the defile entrance.

All in all, operations on the 26th had been quite successful. The 3d Battalion had secured a foothold in the northern section of the bowl; the Japanese forces were at least partially split; the 2d Battalion had destroyed many enemy installations along the southeast rim; and apparently excellent positions had been obtained for a resumption of the attack on the morrow. On the other hand, the forward companies suffered about forty casualties. The night of 26–27 September was by no means restful. A heavy tropical downpour lasted most of the night and was accompanied by a number of sharp but un-co-ordinated Japanese attacks against Company A. These attacks were beaten back only after the company lost a few more men.

On the morning of the 27th the attack was continued on all fronts. Two companies of the 1st Battalion again moved up the west coast toward the northwest corner of the bowl; Companies A, K, and L pushed into the northern section of the bowl from the east; Companies E and F continued pressure from the southeast; and Companies I and H remained at the southern defile entrance. Operations during the morning were extremely laborious. Each enemy position, of which there were seemingly an ever-increasing number, had to be reduced individually in the face of heavy automatic weapons fire from the north rim and high ground beyond. Company L, which had followed the route of Companies A and K over the east rim, had to mop up a number of Japanese who had either infiltrated behind the two more forward units during the night or had emerged from bypassed or insufficiently blasted caves.

By midafternoon Companies A and L had reached the base of the north rim. In the south it had become obvious that Japanese

opposition was weakening, since Companies E and F found the going easier along the inner side of the east rim. Company I moved in through the defile entrance to the southwest ridges and found that most of the Japanese who had previously held that area had either been killed or had evacuated. By dusk, a perimeter extended clockwise around the inside of the bowl from a point on the north rim 300 yards north-northwest of Lake Salome to Company I's new position on the southwest. Japanese escape from the unguarded portions of the bowl and northwest ridges was impossible. To the north lay the sea; to the west was Company C, strung out along the coast north of Black Beach; and to the east was Company G, which extended from the coast northeast of the bowl over the rough terrain to tie in with Company L's lines at the bowl's northeast corner. The new tactics of attack from the northeast had isolated Japanese resistance, split the enemy forces, and secured for the 322d Infantry a firm foothold inside the bowl.

Mop Up in the North

The fight at northwest Angaur now resolved itself into an infantry slugging match for a few days, with minor reverses and local gains occurring almost each day. But different from most action in the next week was that on the 28th of September. Companies B and I, which had started up the northwest rim from inside the bowl, were subjected to an intense enemy mortar barrage and were forced to withdraw for reorganization and officer replacements. There were about eighty casualties on the 28th, the highest number suffered by the 322d Infantry during any single day of action on Angaur.

Despite these casualties, by dusk on the 29th the entire bowl floor was cleared of enemy and all organized opposition was isolated on the northwest rim and on higher, broken ground between that area and Angaur's northwest tip. Another co-ordinated attack toward the last enemy stronghold now seemed possible, and on 1 October all three battalions began a new effort. The 2d Battalion moved west along the coast between the sea and the north rim, while the 1st and 3d Battalions attacked generally north into the high ground from the inside of the bowl. Tank support was now available, for the new road from the northeast had been completed and the mediums of the 710th Tank Battalion could make their way into the northern section of the bowl.

The 1 October attack, which cost the 322d Infantry some thirty more casualties, was not as successful as had been anticipated. Companies B and K drove through the Japanese defenses in the northwest hills to the north coast, but in so doing missed many of the strongest defenses. But the day's action did succeed in discovering the boundaries of final resistance. The remaining Japanese were compressed into an area measuring less than 500 yards from east to west and 150 yards north to south in the northwest ridges between the bowl's northwest rim and the sea.

After the 1 October attack it was decided that there would be no more costly all-out infantry assaults. Instead, tanks, 4.2-inch mortars, and artillery were brought into the bowl for close-in fire. A few 155-mm. howitzers were brought up to the southern defile entrance to lay direct fire on the enemy positions at a range of 700 yards. On 6 October artillery and mortars undertook an especially heavy bombardment. From 0700 to 1030, 155-mm. how-



MOPPING UP IN NORTHWEST ANGAUR. *Note coral outcroppings.*

itzers fired at especially chosen targets, including a suspected Japanese observation post, while 105-mm. howitzers, 4.2-inch mortars, 81-mm. mortars, and 60-mm. mortars laid concentrations on the flanks and rear of the remaining Japanese-held area to prevent any Japanese from escaping. At 1030 the artillery and mortars switched to smoke shells to blanket the Japanese area and at 1035 these weapons ceased fire. Automatic weapons and small arms then took up the fire to indicate the beginning of an infantry assault, while two infantry companies began moving toward the Japanese flanks. The Japanese fell for the bait and began moving out of covered positions to set up machine guns to forestall the infantry attack they apparently expected. Allowing a little additional time for more Japanese to move to exposed positions, the 81st Division's 155-mm. howitzers laid down another heavy concentration, while the 105-mm's. and mortars resumed their fires around the periphery of the Japanese positions.

This type of firing continued until 1400, by which time a large concrete and steel emplacement, probably Major Goto's command post, had been uncovered and destroyed by direct fire from 155-mm. howitzers. How many more Japanese positions were knocked out and how many casualties were caused is unknown, but it is certain that the Japanese did not escape unscathed. After 1400, infantrymen of the 1st and 2d Battalions, 322d Infantry, moved back to positions from which they had withdrawn immediately before the day's bombardment and succeeded in killing a few more Japanese before dark.

Infantry action was limited to extensive use of sniper teams, small combat patrols, ambushes, and booby trapping. The intention was to hem in the remaining Japanese and close all possible routes of supply and escape. Since the proximity of American troops to the Japanese positions now prevented use of 81-mm. mortars, 60-mm. mortars were used exclusively. These weapons were for the most part removed from the rifle companies and placed in one battery which fired under regimental control.

The Japanese had under their control in the final pocket a number of Angaur natives, three of whom had managed to make their way into 322d Infantry lines after a surrender broadcast on 1 October. These related stories of hardships suffered in caves where the Japanese had kept them closely guarded and also told the 322d Infantry that more natives were being held in the northwest pocket. First attempts by native volunteers to lead some of the others out were unsuccessful, but on the 8th of October 87 more natives made their way out of the pocket to an area where elements of Company B, 306th Engineers, were working. The next day, three native volunteers led 90 more out of the pocket. About one-fifth of the total of 183 natives rescued from the Japanese needed extensive medical attention and all the rest were suffering from malnutrition. The healthier ones rebuilt their own village and some were ultimately used as labor on various projects at Angaur.

On 13 October a final concerted attack was begun. The 1st Battalion moved against the last enemy positions from the west, while the 2d Battalion pushed forward from the north and northeast. By the 18th of the month the new effort had succeeded in compressing the remaining Japanese into a pocket roughly 100 yards long and 50 yards wide. The next night Major Goto was killed. Two days later the last isolated pockets of resistance were overcome, and

by the 23d it was evident that all but a few Japanese stragglers had been wiped out. The infantry battalions were withdrawn from the northwest area and the Antitank and Cannon Companies were left in the bowl to track down and kill the few enemy who might still be alive there.

Results of Operations on Angaur

From a number of conflicting statements, it is impossible to assign a definite termination date to the Angaur operation. General Mueller had declared the island secure and organized resistance over on 20 September. The island was secure then but, as the 322d Infantry soon discovered, organized resistance was far from over. On 14 October Headquarters, III Amphibious Corps, terminated the attack and occupation phase of operations on Angaur. At that time certain administrative responsibilities passed to the garrison force commander, but the 81st Division retained control over defense and operations at the northwest pocket. From a tactical point of view, the operation did not end until 21 October, when the 322d Infantry overran the last organized Japanese defenses in the northwest.

Through 21 October approximately 1,300 Japanese had been killed on Angaur and 45 had been captured. The 321st Infantry's part in the operation had cost that regiment 26 men killed and 135 wounded. The 322d Infantry, which fought longer and against stiffer opposition, lost 211 men killed and 772 wounded. Total battle casualties for all units on the island during the period 17 September through 21 October were 264 men killed and 1,355 wounded or injured. In addition, there were 244 cases of battle fatigue and 696 hospital cases from various types of sickness and disease. Thus, total casualties were 2,559, of which number 1,394 were ultimately returned to duty at Angaur, and the rest evacuated.[2]

The capture of Angaur, however costly, helped to secure the Palaus and to eliminate that island group as a threat to Allied lines of communication across the western Pacific toward the Philippines. Moreover, Angaur provided the Allies with another air-base site in the forward area. Airdrome construction on Angaur was begun on 20 September, F plus 3, by the 1884th and 1887th Engineer Aviation Battalions. The first plane, a C–47, landed on the field on F plus 28, 15 October. Four days later two 6,000-foot landing strips were completed and work on taxiways, gasoline storage, and other air-base installations was well along.[3]

Air-base construction on Angaur presented difficult problems. There was available no conveniently located Japanese airfield which the Allies could repair, improve, and expand. Instead, the work had to begin at the beginning. Jungle had to be cut away, swamps filled, and rough terrain leveled. There was no hope that an airstrip could be prepared in three or four days as had been the case on many other islands in the Pacific. The completion of two 6,000-foot runways by 19 October, F plus 32, represented a considerable accomplishment.

The Japanese Army, when it decided to conduct a protracted delaying action in the Palaus, also chose to defend Angaur. The enemy apparently considered Angaur as a sort of outpost, the early loss of which might have rendered more difficult the defense of

[2] Casualty figures are from: 81st Div Opns Rpt Angaur, p. 112; 321st Inf Opns Rpt Angaur; Ltr, Gen Mueller to Gen Ward, 29 May 51, no sub, in OCMH files.

[3] 81st Inf Div Opns Rpt Angaur, pp. 99–100; CINCPAC–CINCPOA, Opns in POA Sep 44, p. 65.

the remainder of the island group. In defending Angaur, the enemy lost a heavily reinforced infantry battalion which was well equipped, splendidly trained, and admirably led. While this force might better have been used elsewhere in the Palaus, it accomplished the delaying mission for which it had been stationed on Angaur. For three days it delayed the greatly superior strength of two American regimental combat teams from securing Angaur, and it delayed the start on Allied airdrome construction an equal length of time. Finally, Major Goto's *Angaur Sector Unit* immobilized for over a month the 322d Infantry, which might well have been used to better advantage on Peleliu, where the 321st Infantry had been fighting for a month.

CHAPTER XXIII

Securing Peleliu Island

Marine Operations in Southern Peleliu to 22 September

The Need for Reinforcements

The evening of 16 September had found the 1st Marine Division maintaining a beachhead on Peleliu about 3,000 yards long, north to south, and approximately 1,800 yards deep, east to west, with one penetration of 2,000 yards. (*See Map VI.*) The 1st Marines held the division left in lines not far north of White Beach 1 and at the northwest corner of the airfield area. In the center, the 5th Marines had secured the airfield and had taken some additional ground north and east of that field. On the south, the 7th Marines had only to take Peleliu's two small southern promontories in order to accomplish its initial missions. The 11th Marines (artillery) was ashore and emplaced, and other reinforcing elements, such as tanks, were also ashore.[1]

On the morning of 17 September, the 7th Marines resumed its attacks on the south, securing the southern promontories by evening of the 18th. In four days of fighting the regiment wiped out the *3d Battalion, 15th Infantry,* the southern defense force of Colonel Nakagawa's *Peleliu Sector Unit.* Meanwhile, elements of the 5th Marines had started a drive eastward to Peleliu's eastern arm, a drive which culminated in the seizure of that arm against only scattered opposition by evening of the 19th. The Japanese who had originally manned formidable defenses on the eastern arm had evacuated to join the remainder of Colonel Nakagawa's force in Peleliu's central ridges. Leisurely mopping up was undertaken on the eastern peninsula from 19 through 23 September. The beaches there were organized for defense against possible counterlandings by Japanese from more northerly islands in the Palaus, and the peninsula was finally designated a defense area. Here assault elements were sent for rest from arduous combat in the central ridges, where, as the 1st Marine Division had already discovered, Colonel Nakagawa's strongest defenses were located.

The 1st Marines had encountered heavy fire from Japanese defenders along the southern portion of the central ridges on 15 and 16 September, but this opposition was nothing compared to that which the regiment began to meet on the 17th. On the latter day, part of the regiment succeeded in pushing to the top of the first heights at the southern end of the ridge system, suffering heavy casualties as it fought doggedly forward. On the right (east) flank, some marines moved east and later north along East

[1] See above, Ch. XX. The remainder of this subsection is based on Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu,* pp. 64–93, 98–103, 104–06, 198–99.

Road, which ran from the northern part of the airfield up Peleliu's western arm, hugging the eastern base of the central ridges. Meantime other marines advanced up West Road, which, skirting the southwest nose of the ridge system, ran north along the western base. Neither of these flanking movements went beyond the point at which contact could still be maintained with 1st Marines units fighting in the high ground in the center.

The 1st Marines suffered about 240 casualties during the 17th and in Japanese counterattacks the ensuing night; the 3d Battalion was reduced to about one third of its original strength; and two companies of the 1st Battalion were practically finished as fighting units. On the other hand, there was some reason for optimism. Progress on the 17th had been measured in hundreds of yards in the rough, high ground at the southern end of the central ridges and strong Japanese resistance had been overcome. Whatever optimism may have existed was not to last too long.

On the 18th, in what the Marine Corps' history of the operation characterizes as "savage and costly fighting," [2] elements of the 1st and 7th Marines managed to advance more than 500 yards in the center, principally along the ridge lines and hills oriented north and south. But the advance during the day was held up at a group of peaks which seemed at first to form a continuous ridge line that was oriented more east and west than the rest of the Peleliu ridges. Soon, the name Five Sisters came to be applied to a cluster of peaks forming the western side of the terrain feature. A towering hill at its eastern extremity, separated from Five Sisters by a saddle, was designated Hill 300, or Old Baldy. With the 7th Marines held up in the center, at Five Sisters, the units on both sides of the central ridges halted so as not to create exposed flanks.

Similar action continued the next day, when an effort to take Five Sisters proved abortive. One element of the 1st Marines pushed up East Road through the village of Asias and along the eastern base of a long hill known at Walt Ridge. By the morning of the 20th, Company C, after action on Hill 100 at the south end of Walt Ridge, was reduced to 16 men. Companies F and G, hard hit in the center, had to be combined with a squad of men from the 4th War Dog Platoon to form one understrength company. Company A, fighting over high ground on the 1st Marines' left, was reduced by evening on the 19th to six men who had not been wounded or killed.

On the 20th the 1st Marines had to fall back from Walt Ridge to the southern side of an East Road causeway north of Asias. From this position these right-flank elements faced a 150-yard-wide valley bounded on the right by Walt Ridge and on the left partly by Five Sisters and partly by another ridge designated Five Brothers. This depression, known to the 1st Marine Division as Horseshoe Valley, was renamed Mortimer Valley by men of the 81st Infantry Division who later fought in the same area. In the center, during the 20th, elements of the 7th Marines pushed through strong defenses to high ground at the southwestern corner of a narrow defile which, lying west of Five Sisters, came to be known as Death Valley. Left-flank units of the 1st Marines advanced up West Road a little farther, sending some troops up rising ground from the road to narrow the front of 7th Marines units in the center.

[2] Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu*, p. 83.

Despite some local advances, by evening on 20 September the 1st Marines had been stopped and, ". . . as an assault unit on the regimental level, had ceased temporarily to exist," [3] having suffered almost 1,750 casualties, well over half its strength. Relief was absolutely necessary, not only because casualties were heavy but also because the survivors were physically exhausted from heat, lack of water, and continuous combat. Elements of the 7th Marines therefore relieved all 1st Marines units except those along West Road.

During the next two days 7th Marines units in the center of the line could gain less than 175 yards; on the right Walt Ridge was again attacked to no avail; and on the left 1st Marines troops fighting along high ground above West Road suffered more casualties. Another attack against Five Sisters was forced back on the 22d, and at dark containing lines were set up north of Asias, facing Walt Ridge and the mouth of Horseshoe Valley. After a week of extremely arduous combat over incredibly rough and well-defended terrain, the 1st Marine Division had been at least temporarily halted. The division had lost just under 4,000 men. The 1st Marines had been virtually eliminated from the fight (the 1st Battalion, for instance, was reduced to two understrength companies), the 7th Marines were little better off, and the 5th Marines as well as other units, especially Shore Party troops and combat engineers, had not escaped unscathed.

[3] Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu,* p. 88. The casualty figure is that reported on the morning of the 21st. The regiment had lost 56 percent of its men while the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, during three days' attachment to the 1st Marines, had lost approximately 300 men, about 25 percent of its strength.

Despite the heavy casualties, there was much on the credit side of the ledger. All of southern Peleliu had been captured; the airfield, the most important single objective, was secure, and division observation planes had begun operations from the field on the 22d; there was room ashore for supplies and artillery, and all the 11th Marines and the III Amphibious Corps Artillery were ashore and emplaced.[4] Finally, the 1st Marine Division enthusiastically estimated, about two thirds of the original Japanese garrison had been killed or rendered ineffective from wounds.

General Rupertus, the division commander, well knew that organized resistance was far from over, and he realized that rooting out the remaining Japanese from the defenses along the central ridges would be a difficult task. One of the division's objectives, Ngesebus Island and its fighter strip, lying off northern Peleliu, had not yet been captured. Worse still, it was discovered during the night of 22–23 September that the Japanese were reinforcing Peleliu by sending troops in from more northerly islands.

The general had for some time desired to push up the west coast and jump over to Ngesebus, a drive that could outflank the Japanese center of resistance, making it possible to attack from the north as well as the south. This step had not yet been undertaken because of the danger of overextending the division front and because a general breakthrough on the south had been almost momentarily expected. By the 22d it had become obvious that there was going to be no general break-through. Yet, with Japa-

[4] III Amphibious Corps Artillery at Peleliu comprised the 3d 155-mm. Howitzer Battalion and the 8th 155-mm. Gun Battalion, both Marine Corps units.

nese reinforcements probably coming ashore, the need to move troops north was becoming even more urgent. But the 1st Marine Division could not maintain pressure against known enemy positions, defend all southern Peleliu, and, at the same time, drive north up West Road. Reinforcements were sorely needed.

The Arrival of the 321st Regimental Combat Team

Whence would come the troops to mount a drive to the north? The III Amphibious Corps Reserve, the 323d Regimental Combat Team of the 81st Infantry Division, had been committed by Admiral Halsey to the capture of Ulithi and had left the Palaus area on 21 September. The rest of the 81st Division was on Angaur.[5] But there, luck was with the 1st Marine Division. By 22 September, resistance on Angaur had been compressed in the northwest pocket, where the 322d Infantry was to fight for another month.[6] The 321st Infantry and its regimental combat team attachments had secured southern Angaur. It had received its baptism of fire, beaten the enemy who opposed it, and played a major role in the capture of Angaur. Its casualties were low and its morale and confidence high. Finally, it was available for reinforcing the 1st Marine Division on Peleliu.[7]

Calling upon the 321st Regimental Combat Team was not a step which General Rupertus was eager to take. His ". . . reluctance to employ Army troops had become increasingly apparent from the outset . . . ," [8] and the deteriorating situation on Peleliu apparently had done nothing to change his mind. But on the afternoon of 21 September the III Amphibious Corps commander, General Geiger, who had previously been hesitant to impose any specific course of action upon General Rupertus, reluctantly took matters into his own hands. He directed General Rupertus to prepare plans for the evacuation of the 1st Marines from Peleliu and took steps to attach the 321st Regimental Combat Team to the 1st Marine Division. Upon question from General Geiger, General Mueller immediately informed the corps commander that the 321st was readily available for action on Peleliu and for transference to General Rupertus' operational control on arrival. Brig. Gen. Marcus B. Bell, Assistant Division Commander of the 81st Division, was appointed liaison officer to General Geiger's headquarters to co-ordinate details of the 321st's move.[9]

The 321st Regimental Combat Team, still under the command of Col. Robert F. Dark, began loading at Red Beach, Angaur, at 0700 on 22 September and at 1200 the next day began unloading over Orange Beaches on Peleliu. Debarkation was completed before dark. In addition to the 321st Infantry, Colonel Dark's command included an engineer company and two medical companies (less two platoons) of organic 81st Division units; an LVT company; an engineer battalion less one company; and the 710th Tank Battalion's Company A and 81-mm. Provisional Mortar Platoon. There was no artillery initially.

---

[5] Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu,* pp. 105–06, 108; Ltr, Lt Gen Julian C. Smith (USMC) to Gen Ward, 14 Nov 50, no sub, in OCMH files.

[6] See above, Ch. XXII.

[7] 81st Inf Div Opns Rpt Peleliu, p. v; Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu,* pp. 106, 109.

[8] Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu,* p. 106.

[9] 81st Inf Div Opns Rpt Peleliu, pp. 5–15; Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu,* p. 106, n. 4, p. 109, and p. 109, n. 14.

Dividing the Island

The mission assigned by General Rupertus to the 321st Regimental Combat Team was to drive up Peleliu's western coastal flat north about 1,750 yards from a third phase line to a fourth. (*Map IX*) The third phase line (the phase lines marked out on Peleliu were oriented generally northwest to southeast) was located about 1,000 yards north of the West Road village of Ngarekeukl, which lay near the southwest corner of the central ridges. The fourth phase line was just north of another West Road village called Garekoru, lying beyond Ngarekeukl.

The 321st's left was to be anchored on the beach, while its right was to extend east of West Road about 250 yards into the high ground of the main ridges. The 7th Marines were to co-operate in the Army unit's drive northward by having the 1st and 2d Battalions maintain pressure against the Japanese from the south-center and pushing the 3d Battalion along the high ground to the 321st's right rear. If necessary, the Japanese central pocket was to be bypassed while the Army units advancing northward probed eastward over the ridges for a route by means of which the pocket could be isolated on the north.[10]

The 321st Infantry Moves North

By 1500 on 23 September the 2d Battalion, 321st Infantry, had relieved the battered remnants of the 1st and 3d Battalions, 1st Marines, at the latters' positions just north of the third phase line.[11] The 3d Battalion, 321st Infantry, drew up behind the 2d in close support, while the 1st Battalion, designated regimental reserve, assembled on the coastal flat about 500 yards southwest of Ngarekeukl.

As soon as the relief of the 1st Marines elements was completed, the 2d Battalion, 321st Infantry, sent patrols on a reconnaissance north up the coastal flat to Garekoru. The patrols traveled for the most part along the shore line left of West Road. No Japanese opposition was encountered, but fire was received from enemy positions on the central ridges east of West Road. At Garekoru many land mines, or aerial bombs emplaced as mines, were found, and there were a few defensive positions at the village. These positions were not defended in any strength and at 1700 the reconnaissance patrols reported that the entire area north from the third phase line to Garekoru was generally free of Japanese. Upon receiving this information, General Rupertus ordered the 321st Infantry to push forward as far as possible before dark.

The 2d Battalion started moving north about 1730 but soon found that the patrol reports were too optimistic. Only the terrain close to the shore had actually been reconnoitered, and this ground had been partially screened from the Japanese on the main ridge lines by a low coral ridge paralleling West Road.[12] Left of West Road, beneath the cover of the low ridge, one company was able to advance without opposition. But to the right of the road another company found itself attempting to move over open ground in plain sight of the Japanese on

[10] 1st Mar Div FO 3–44, 22 Sep 44, in USMC files; Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu*, pp. 109–10.

[11] This subsection is based principally on: The 81st Wildcat Division Historical Committee, *The 81st Infantry Wildcat Division in World War II* (Washington, 1948), pp. 138–45; 321st RCT, Jnls and Jnl files, Peleliu; 81st Inf Div Opns Rpt Peleliu, pp. 15–19; Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu*, pp. 110–18.

[12] Earlier patrols of the 1st Marines had covered much the same territory left of West Road and had sent back equally optimistic reports.

the central ridges. Advance through the intense small arms and machine gun fire which the Japanese now began to direct at the right company was impossible, and the unit was quickly pinned down. Since darkness was approaching, the company dug in along its line of departure. The left company, which had advanced 100 yards before halting to maintain contact on the right, was withdrawn to establish a continuous defense line at the starting point.

At 0700 on 24 September the 2d Battalion resumed the advance, after an hour of air and naval bombardment and fifteen minutes of artillery fire, most of which had been directed at the west side of the central ridges and suspected defensive installations near Garekoru. A few casualties were caused by Japanese fire from the central ridges but by noon the battalion's left had reached a point on West Road south of Garekoru, discovering a trail leading eastward over swampy ground toward the central ridge system. The trail–road junction was held by a few Japanese in prepared positions, but after an exchange of rifle and machine gun fire, the Japanese were killed or driven off. Leaving rear elements to explore the trail to the east, Company G pushed rapidly north through Garekoru to reach the fourth phase line about 1530 hours.

East of West Road, right flank elements of the 2d Battalion had encountered strong opposition along the low ridge parallel to the road and had finally withdrawn from that ridge to maintain contact with the rest of the battalion. The 3d Battalion, which had been following the 2d closely, now made some effort to cover the ridge, occupation of which was important for the protection of the regiment's flank. But the 3d Battalion, also under pressure to hurry northward, was deflected off the ridge by Japanese opposition and moved west to follow the route of the 2d. The 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, which had initially started out behind the right flank elements of the 2d Battalion, 321st Infantry, therefore pushed troops over the low ridge. Efforts of the Marine battalion to maintain contact with the 3d Battalion, 321st Infantry, and to cover the ground which should have been secured by the 321st Infantry, caused the marines some casualties and slowed their advance considerably.

The leading elements of the 3d Battalion, 321st Infantry, continuing northward, began probing up the central ridges farther north in an attempt to find a route over which troops could move to cut off the Japanese pocket. This effort brought the 321st Infantry's battalion out into open ground below the central ridges, and it too began to suffer casualties from Japanese fire. One company secured a foothold on the first ridge line east of the road at a point about 600 yards south of the fourth phase line, but most of the battalion dug in for the night along West Road. The 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, held for the night on the high ground at and immediately north of the third phase line. There was a gap between the Marine and Army battalions during the night.

Meanwhile, patrols of the 2d Battalion, 321st Infantry, accompanied by Marine and Army tanks, had pushed north up West Road from the fourth phase line almost 2,000 yards to a fifth phase line. Moving forward an additional 200 yards, the advance elements came within sight of Japanese radio installations lying about 600 yards beyond the fifth phase line. Many caves, pillboxes, bunkers, and other defensive installations were observed along West Road and at the radio station, but opposition to the patrol's advance was negligible and the patrol

withdrew to Garekoru before dark without enemy interference. It appeared that Japanese strength was concentrated in the southern section of the central ridges, and that American forces might be able to move freely over the rest of Peleliu.

While the reconnaissance north was being undertaken, Company E pushed eastward over the trail which had been discovered leading toward the main ridges from a point on West Road just south of Garekoru. This route eastward, soon designated 321st Infantry Trail, led over a swamp and up a narrow, relatively low part of the central ridge system, north of the principal Japanese pocket. If the trail were found to run through the central ridges to East Road, its seizure would isolate the Japanese pocket to the south and cut off enemy routes of reinforcement, escape, and supply.

A knoll designated Hill 100 [13] dominated the point at which 321st Infantry Trail entered the central ridges, and Company E was ordered to seize the terrain feature before the Japanese to the south could realize their danger and reinforce the area. Moving forward quickly against scattered but stubborn resistance, Company E clambered up the rough slopes of Hill 100 and secured the summit before dark. Late in the afternoon Company I, from its foothold on the west side of the central ridges, pushed its left northeast to establish contact with the right flank of Company E. Companies F and G extended the line back along 321st Infantry Trail to West Road and thence north to Garekoru.

About 1700 a Japanese counterattack at the fourth phase line forced Companies F and G south almost 200 yards. There was, however, no general break-through and much of the ground thus lost was quickly retaken. Japanese troops were observed grouping again north of the fourth phase line about 1800 hours, but the force was broken up by well-placed artillery fire before another counterattack, if any had been planned, could develop. For the rest of the night the enemy was generally quiet all along the 321st Infantry's front.

The next day the advance was resumed, the first objective being to isolate the main Japanese pocket by pushing across the central ridge system via 321st Infantry Trail. To make all the 321st Infantry available for offensive action, the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, extended its left north along the central ridges an additional 300 yards above the third phase line, freeing elements of the 3d Battalion, 321st Infantry. The 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, was brought up West Road to a position behind the 3d Battalion, 321st Infantry, to support the latter's attack eastward and to drive south against the Japanese pocket from 321st Infantry Trail as soon as that trail was secured.

Company E, 321st Infantry, began moving from Hill 100 toward East Road at 0700. Just beyond the hill East Road ran through a saddle dominated on the west by Hill 100 and on the east by a larger height known as Hill B,[14] the capture of which was necessary if Peleliu's western peninsula was to be bisected via 321st Infantry Trail.

Working slowly around the northeast shoulder of Hill 100, Company E reached East Road at a point below that shoulder

[13] Not to be confused with Hill 100 at the south end of Walt Ridge.

[14] Many of the hills on Peleliu were numbered after their estimated height, while others were given names locally adopted. Hill B was so named because on the target maps it was located in grid square 142–B.

about 1030. So far, no Japanese had been encountered, although there had been some rifle and machine gun fire from Hill B. The company now halted, for indications were that Hill B was held in some strength and any further advance would be subjected to plunging fire not only from that hill but also from the ridges to the south and a rough hill mass to the north called Kamilianlul Mountain. Finally, it was decided that Company E would wait until the 3d Battalion, 321st Infantry, could move up to the heights southwest of Hill B and Hill 100 to provide support of both fire and movement for a continued attack.

But the 3d Battalion had little success trying to fight over ridge lines (later known to the marines who fought in the same area as Wattie and Baldy Ridges) southwest and south of Hill 100. There was strong enemy fire from many emplacements along the ridges, while the terrain was such that a gap developed between Companies I and L, in the van. Company K was moved into this gap late in the afternoon, but this addition had no effect on the fight. The left of the battalion moved forward barely far enough to maintain contact with Company E, on Hill 100, and the battalion's right made no appreciable progress. For the first time, the 321st Infantry had come upon defenses similar to those the marines had been attacking at the southern end of the Japanese pocket during the previous week.

North of Garekoru, action during the day was faster and more spectacular. A strong combat patrol comprising infantry, tanks, and LVT flame throwers moved up West Road to destroy installations found north of the fourth phase line the previous afternoon and to extend the area of reconnaissance. The patrol quickly pushed north almost all the way to the fifth phase line, destroying four pillboxes and two large supply dumps, at the same time killing thirty Japanese soldiers while suffering no casualties. The weak resistance encountered by the patrol seemed added proof that remaining Japanese strength was concentrated in the pocket south of 321st Infantry Trail. It now seemed possible to exploit this weakness by sending a strong force forward to secure all of northern Peleliu, seize a staging area for the operation against Ngesebus, and complete the isolation of the southern pocket. Therefore, at 1030, General Rupertus ordered northern Peleliu above the fourth phase line to be divided into two sectors. The 5th Marines were to secure the ground west of Kamilianlul Mountain and East Road while the 321st Infantry, after completing the drive over 321st Infantry Trail, was to take the ground east of the 5th Marines.

The 5th Marines quickly reassembled from scattered defensive positions at southern Peleliu and the island's eastern arm. Before dark, one battalion had passed through Garekoru, where Company G, 321st Infantry, was still holding, and had reached the Japanese radio station area against light and scattered resistance. The 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, struck overland from West Road just south of the fifth phase line to set up night defenses on East Road and along the western slopes of Hill 80, an isolated terrain feature lying between Kamilianlul Mountain, on the south, and another hill mass named Amiangal Mountain, located at the northern end of Peleliu. The 5th Marines were ready to begin cleaning up northern Peleliu the next day, 26 September, while

the 321st Infantry was prepared to finish the break-through over the central ridges via 321st Infantry Trail.

The Japanese Reinforce Peleliu

During its attack northward and eastward on 24 and 25 September, the 321st Infantry had encountered Japanese troops who had not been on Peleliu when the 1st Marine Division landed on that island.[15] The original Japanese garrison on Peleliu had comprised about 10,500 troops, including at least 4,500 first-line infantrymen of the *2d Infantry* and the *3d Battalion, 15th Infantry*. The latter unit was destroyed by the 7th Marines in southern Peleliu, while the *2d* and *3d Battalions, 2d Infantry,* had lost over half their strength by 17 September in operations against the 1st and 5th Marine Regiments. As of that date, the *1st Battalion, 2d Infantry,* was probably still relatively intact in the central ridge pocket. Another unit, the *346th Independent Infantry Battalion* of the *53d Independent Mixed Brigade* was apparently not committed to action in the south but was stationed on high ground at the northern tip of Peleliu.

By 21 September effective Japanese infantry strength in the central ridges was down to 1,300 men. That, of course, does not paint a true picture of the situation in the central pocket. A trained soldier, well armed, can be tenacious on the defense in such terrain as the central ridges of Peleliu whether or not he be trained for infantry service. There were probably 4,000 Japanese troops (including the 1,300 infantrymen) still firmly ensconced in the central pocket as of 21 September, and there were at least 1,000 more troops in the Amiangal Mountain area at northern Peleliu. Nevertheless, Colonel Nakagawa, commanding the *Peleliu Sector Unit,* clearly needed reinforcements if he was to hold out much longer. There were perhaps 30,000 Japanese troops in the northern Palaus to draw from, including two battalions of the *59th Infantry,* two battalions of the *15th Infantry,* and four or five recently organized infantry battalions of the *53d Independent Mixed Brigade.*

But General Inoue had no intention of sending strong reinforcements to Peleliu. That was just one of many islands in the Palaus, and the general feared that the American forces might move northward to Babelthuap and Koror. Moreover, there was a good chance that reinforcements might be destroyed on the way to Peleliu by American air or naval units. General Inoue's belief that the Americans would move north from Peleliu seems to have been an obvious error in judgment. The III Amphibious Corps had already secured two excellent air-base sites, Angaur and southern Peleliu, where a multitude of planes could be based. From the air-base point of view alone, Babelthuap and Koror would not be needed by the Allies. Moreover, General Inoue must have known that Allied practice throughout the Pacific theaters had been to bypass the most strongly defended Japanese positions whenever possible in favor of seizing more lightly held areas. In the last analysis, General Inoue's thinking seems to have been wishful. He claimed, after the war, that his defenses at Babelthuap and Koror were much stronger than those on Angaur and Peleliu; he was confident he

[15] This subsection is based principally upon: Drummond, The Palau Campaign, Ch. VIII (incomplete); Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu,* pp. 93, 104–05; The Palau Operations, pp. 86–117.

could have held the northern islands against a force of the size which the III Amphibious Corps had available in the Palaus.

Whatever his belief, General Inoue, on or about 21 September, reluctantly decided to send one reinforced infantry battalion to Peleliu. The *2d Battalion, 15th Infantry,* on Babelthuap, was chosen for the hazardous trip south. One company [16] of the *2d Battalion* left Babelthuap about 2230 on 22 September and reached the northern tip of Peleliu, Akarakoro Point, about 0520 the next morning. At least three of the barges which took these troops to Peleliu were sunk, but the bulk of the company got ashore and most of those whose transportation was lost managed to wade to land over the reefs. The main body of the *2d Battalion* moved to Peleliu on the night of 23–24 September, losing six or seven of fifteen barges.[17] Again, however, most of the troops managed to get ashore, although most heavy equipment was undoubtedly lost. During ensuing nights, through 26–27 or 27–28 September, a few more troops landed on Peleliu, most of them probably stragglers who had hidden out on small islands between Babelthuap and their objective. All in all, some 500 fresh Japanese riflemen reached Peleliu. Perhaps 200 more men from an engineer platoon, an infantry gun company, and artillery detachments also arrived, though none of them managed to get heavy equipment or large weapons ashore.

Most of these troops moved south to the main Japanese pocket in the central ridges, and at least one new infantry company occupied defenses in the area where the 3d Battalion, 321st Infantry, had attempted to hack its way east over the ridges southwest of 321st Infantry Trail. *Headquarters* and the *6th Company, 2d Battalion, 15th Infantry,* were prevented from moving south by 5th Marines action at Hill 80 and Amiangal Mountain and by operations of the 321st Infantry at Kamilianlul Mountain. Some members of this group probably made their way south by infiltration during the nights following 24 September, but most of them, over 200 strong, probably remained at Amiangal Mountain.

After dispatching the *2d Battalion, 15th Infantry,* and attached units to Peleliu, General Inoue sent no more reinforcements to that island. The 600–700 fresh Japanese who did reach Peleliu could have no effect upon the ultimate outcome of the battle—they could only prolong the operation.

Isolating the Japanese Pockets

Continuing its fight to secure the trail which bore its name, the 321st Infantry encountered elements of the *2d Battalion, 15th Infantry,* on 26 September.[18] But before action on that day began, redispositions were made so that the entire 321st Infantry could concentrate on the drive eastward. The 2d and 3d Battalions, 7th Marines, took over more ground along the west side of the central ridges north of the third phase line to narrow the front of the 3d Battalion, 321st Infantry. The 1st Battalion, 7th Marines (less one company), prepared to advance in close support of the 3d Battalion,

[16] Probably the *4th Company,* under 1st Lt. Toshishige Murahori (or Murabori). Most of the battalions in the *14th Division* appear to have contained three companies rather than the more usual four companies.

[17] American and Japanese accounts of barges lost during the reinforcement runs do not agree, and American reports from various sea and land units are mutually irreconcilable.

[18] This subsection is based on: 321st RCT Jnls and Jnl files, Peleliu; *The 81st Infantry Wildcat Division in World War II,* pp. 145–47; Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu,* pp. 115–18; 81st Div Opns Rpt Peleliu, pp. 23–27.

321st Infantry, ready to exploit any breakthrough the latter unit might achieve.

The 321st Infantry jumped off against Hill B at 0700, with the 2d Battalion attacking from the west and the 3d Battalion moving in from the south and southwest. Company I, on the 3d Battalion's left and in contact with Company E on Hill 100, was unable to make any progress eastward, and was again pinned down by heavy Japanese mortar and machine gun fire from Wattie and Baldy Ridges, where the attack had stalled the previous afternoon. About 0815 Company L was moved up on I's right, but it, too, was pinned down before any advance could be made.

The 2d Battalion, waiting for progress by the 3d, had not yet started its attack toward Hill B but had assembled in the Hill 100 area. Shortly after 1200, by which time it was apparent that the 3d Battalion was to make no more progress, a new attack plan was prepared. The 2d Battalion was directed to press home its attack from the west, using Hill 100 as a line of departure. The 3d Battalion was to continue pressure and to provide as much fire support as possible from the south and southwest. For the attack from the north a separate group under Capt. George C. Neal, the 2d Battalion's S–3, was organized. This unit, known as the Neal Task Force, comprised 45 infantrymen from Company F, 7 medium tanks, 6 LVT's, and 1 LVT mounting a flame thrower.

In preparation for the new attack, the Neal Task Force had started north from the Garekoru area about 1000 hours. It moved up West Road approximately 2,200 yards to the junction of West Road and East Road (the junction was then held by elements of the 5th Marines) and then turned south down East Road. The group moved rapidly southward along the east side of Kamilianlul Mountain to a point within 150 yards of Hill B before any opposition was encountered. Then about 1500, a party of fifteen Japanese made a suicidal attack on the small armored force. All the enemy were quickly killed and the Neal Task Force moved up to provide support fire for the 2d Battalion's attack from the west.

Companies E and F had meanwhile maneuvered into positions along ridges and on East Road south and southwest of Hill B; the 1st Battalion had moved north to take over the positions vacated by the 2d at Garekoru; Company K had relieved Company E on Hill 100. An artillery, mortar, and machine gun concentration was then laid on Hill B, and at 1600 the infantry attack began. Company F struck due east while Company E attacked north. Against stubborn resistance and over very broken, rough terrain, Companies E and F gradually fought their way up the hill. At 1645 advance elements reached the summit and by dark all but a few scattered Japanese riflemen had been cleared from Hill B. The break-through over the central ridge system via 321st Infantry Trail was complete—the principal enemy pocket had been isolated.

North of 321st Infantry Trail, the 5th Marines had divided Peleliu in another place. The 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, attacking at 0700 on the 26th, secured Hill 80 by 0830 against scattered but resolute resistance. The Marine unit then moved to the eastern shore of Peleliu's western arm, here indented by a dense mangrove swamp, thereby completing the second division of the island. Late in the afternoon most of the battalion moved back from Hill 80 to a reserve position near the junction of East and West Roads. The unit's southern flank extended south from the junction along

East Road to Hill 80, where Company I was stationed for the night. Between Company I, 5th Marines, and the 2d Battalion, 321st Infantry, at Hill B, lay a gap approximately 1,800 yards long through which only the 321st Infantry's Neal Task Force had passed. In this gap lay 1,500-yard-long Kamilianlul Mountain, held by an unknown number of Japanese and as yet not even reconnoitered by American units.

Southwest of 321st Infantry Trail, operations had not gone so well. Companies I and L, 321st Infantry, directed to provide support for the 2d Battalion's attack on Hill B, lost their footholds on the extremely rough ground near Wattie and Baldy Ridges during the afternoon, principally as the result of intense Japanese mortar, machine gun, and rifle fire, against which it was nearly impossible to find cover. Supply difficulties had added to the 3d Battalion's problems, for the ground in its zone was so broken that everything had to be laboriously manhandled over razor-back ridgelets, steep slopes, and narrow draws. Finally, in the evening, Company I was able to regain contact with Company K, atop Hill 100, but Company L could not push its way back into the broken terrain on I's right. Instead, Company L remained at the bottom of the ridges, near West Road, for the night.

Despite the loss of ground in the 3d Battalion's area, operations on 26 September were the most successful since the 321st Infantry had been on Peleliu. The island had been cut in two places, one by the 2d Battalion, 321st Infantry, and one by the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines; and the rest of the 5th Marines had driven almost to Peleliu's northern tip. The Japanese were now isolated in two major pockets, the principal one south of 321st Infantry Trail and the other at Amiangal Mountain, on northern Peleliu. To aid the 5th Marines in reducing the latter pocket, General Rupertus ordered the 321st Infantry to send one battalion north from 321st Infantry Trail on the morning of 27 September to secure Kamilianlul Mountain and, if necessary, to push on to Amiangal Mountain.

Northern Peleliu and the Offshore Islands

Amiangal Mountain

The drive to secure northern Peleliu had begun late on 25 September when elements of the 5th Marines had moved up West Road beyond the fifth phase line to the Japanese radio installations.[19] At 0900 the next day, the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, started out from the radio station toward Amiangal Mountain. The northern section of the L-shaped hill mass comprised ridges running generally northeast to southwest for a distance of some 1,000 yards, while the southern section ran northwest to southeast. Having no well-defined ridge lines, the southern leg consisted of four semiseparated knobs, designated from northwest to southeast Hill 1, Hill 2, Hill 3, and Radar Hill, the latter the largest and highest. Located at the edge of the east coast swamp, Radar Hill had contained the principal Japanese radar installations on Peleliu.

On the 26th the 5th Marines secured Hill 2 against determined resistance but marines moving north of the southern leg along West Road were subjected to heavy Japanese fire from Ngesebus Island and the northern leg

[19] This subsection is based principally on: Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu,* pp. 118–29, 132–33; 321st RCT, Jnls and Jnl files, Peleliu; 81st Inf Div Opns Rpt Peleliu, pp. 27–37; *The 81st Infantry Wildcat Division in World War II,* pp. 147–54.

and could make little progress. The next day, 27 September, the 5th Marines continued operations at Amiangal Mountain while the 1st Battalion, 321st Infantry, started north from the Hill B area to close the long gap which existed between 321st Infantry Trail and Hill 80. Company C, 321st Infantry, moved north along Kamilianlul Mountain, and Company A, followed by Company B, pushed up East Road, here lying on a narrow strip of land between the mountain and a swamp along the eastern shore of the peninsula. Surprisingly, no enemy opposition of note was encountered on Kamilianlul Mountain, although many abandoned enemy defensive positions were found. Progress during the morning was slowed principally by the rough terrain atop the mountain and by the swamp on the right of East Road. By noon, advance elements of Company C had moved nearly 1,000 yards forward to the highest point of the mountain, 600 yards short of the northern nose. Company A had made a similar advance along East Road.

About 1230 new attack orders were issued. The 1st Battalion was directed to extend its line up East Road from the northern tip of Kamilianlul Mountain to the junction of East and West Roads. Company I, 5th Marines, on Hill 80, was to be relieved, and the Army battalion was to form a defense line running south from the road junction along East Road to Kamilianlul Mountain, maintaining contact on the north with the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, at the junction.

Advances during the afternoon were slower, although little opposition was encountered until Company A was pinned down by Japanese fire from a pillbox located at a sharp bend of East Road about 100 yards north of Kamilianlul's nose. Companies A and C both halted until armor could be brought forward to support an attack against the pillbox and associated lesser defenses. Not waiting for the outcome of this action, Company B passed through Company C and struck up East Road, establishing contact with the 5th Marines near the road junction before dark. It was well that Company B had not waited, for armor could not be brought forward soon enough to support a concerted attack before dark against the pillbox in front of Company A.

During the ensuing night there were apparently some gaps between Companies B and A, on the north and south respectively, and Company C in the center. The latter unit had moved up East Road toward Hill 80 late in the afternoon, but in so doing had lost contact with Company A to the south and did not move far enough north to reach Company B. No American troops occupied Hill 80 during the night. Company C was only as far forward as the southern base of that terrain feature, which had been vacated by Company I, 5th Marines, early in the afternoon.

Meanwhile, the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, had pushed up the west side of Amiangal Mountain's northern leg until halted by fire from caves at the northwest tip of the leg. Since the cave entrances could not be reached by mortar or artillery fire, a novel method of attack was evolved. First, artillery, tanks, and naval fire support vessels threw high explosive and smoke on Ngesebus and other offshore islands from which heavy fire was being directed at the Marine unit. Under cover of this support, five LVT(A)'s moved about 350 yards out on the reef between Peleliu and Ngesebus, from which position they poured fire into the most troublesome cave entrance. This fire was not

unlike that employed by the 41st Infantry Division at Biak, where tanks in LCT's had fired on shore-line ridges. It enabled marines to move around the mountain's tip to seize Akarakoro Point before dark. The last place where the Japanese could be landed on Peleliu had been captured and suitable positions from which to launch a shore-to-shore operation against Ngesebus had been secured. To the south, other elements of the 5th Marines took Hill 1, on the mountain's southern leg. The 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, until now in reserve at the junction of East and West Roads, made preparations to land on Ngesebus on the morrow.

After a night marked by the killing of about 25 Japanese infiltraters in its sector, the 1st Battalion, 321st Infantry, resumed its attack north on the morning of 28 September. Company A, now supported by two medium tanks and some flame throwers, struck out against the pillbox at the East Road curve where the advance had halted the previous evening. Resistance was so stubborn that it was not until 1100 that the reinforced company could overrun the pillbox, but even this achievement did not signify the collapse of all Japanese resistance in the area. Minor installations in the same vicinity and some bypassed positions along the base of Kamilianlul Mountain's northern nose continued to give trouble and had to be knocked out one by one in a series of infantry-tank-demolitions-flame thrower assaults.

Meanwhile, Company C had found it necessary to fight its way back up Hill 80,[20] which Company I, 5th Marines, had left late the previous afternoon. Some Japanese had apparently been overlooked by the 5th Marines' troops or, more probably, elements of the *2d Battalion, 15th Infantry,* attempting to move south to the principal Japanese pocket, had reoccupied the hill during the night of 27–28 September, when no American units were on the knoll. Whatever the cause of the new resistance, it was almost noon before Company C, 321st Infantry, had resecured Hill 80 and the surrounding ground and had reoccupied the line held by the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, two days earlier. By nightfall on the 28th all the ground between Kamilianlul Mountain and the junction of East and West Roads (except for a small pocket in Company A's zone) had been secured, some of it for a second time.

To the north, the 5th Marines secured Hill 3, on Amiangal Mountain's southern leg, and isolated more formidable Radar Hill, about 150 yards to the southeast. Other elements of the regiment landed on Ngesebus and Kongauru Islands, offshore, putting a stop to Japanese fire which had been harassing marines working over the northern leg and Akarakoro Point. During the day most of the northern leg was secured, leaving Radar Hill as the only remaining center of organized resistance on Amiangal Mountain. Mopping up along the northern leg and on flat ground to its east was undertaken by 5th Marines elements on the 29th, as was an attack on Radar Hill. A complex cave system on the latter made it impossible to take all the hill before dark.

Preparations had been made during the 29th for the 321st Infantry to relieve the 5th Marines at northern Peleliu and on the offshore islands. The first step in this program was the relief of the 3d Battalion, 321st Infantry, by elements of the 7th Ma-

[20] The *81st Infantry Wildcat Division in World War II* and the 81st Inf Div Opns Rpt Peleliu both state that Company B retook Hill 80, but the 321st RCT's overlays and sketch maps place Company C on the hill as of 28 September and place Company B at the East–West Road junction at dark that day. Since Company C had spent the night of 27–28 September near Hill 80, the regimental records are apparently correct.

rines at the northern side of the principal Japanese pocket, below 321st Infantry Trail. The 3d Battalion, 321st Infantry, then moved north up Kamilianlul Mountain and East Road, following the routes taken by the 1st Battalion of the same regiment two days earlier. Many bypassed or reoccupying Japanese were found and killed; progress was slow as the 3d Battalion moved cautiously northward probing into and then sealing each cave entrance it discovered. At nightfall the unit dug in some 200 yards north of 321st Infantry Trail. Meanwhile the 2d Battalion had relieved Marine units on Ngesebus and Kongauru Islands, while the 1st Battalion had reconnoitered in the Amiangal Mountain area in preparation for the relief of Marine troops there the next day.

On the morning of 30 September, elements of the 5th Marines continued mopping up along Amiangal's northern leg while other parts of the regiment gained the summit of Radar Hill. At 1000, when the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, withdrew from the hill, the terrain feature had not been completely overrun. The marines knew that Japanese were still in caves beneath the summit, although the main cave entrances had been blasted shut. Mopping up along the northern leg also had not been completed when, during the afternoon, the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, withdrew from that area, while its relief, the 1st Battalion, 321st Infantry, took over. The 5th Marines departed the Amiangal area confident that only a few scattered Japanese riflemen remained there. The regiment reported that it had killed or captured over 1,170 Japanese (it had been estimated on 27 September that there were only 500 in the area) on and around Amiangal Mountain. The 1st Battalion, 321st Infantry, moved into the marines' vacated positions expecting only minor mopping up to be necessary.

The Army battalion was in for some disillusionment. As Company B, 321st Infantry, moved forward to occupy the four hills along the southern leg of Amiangal Mountain, one platoon was dispatched to secure Radar Hill. When the platoon started up the hill about 1330 hours, it was met by a fierce counterattack from Japanese who had dug their way out of a large cave which the 5th Marines had once blasted shut. The 321st Infantry's platoon was soon forced back and all Company B got into the action which, lasting until 1500, assumed the proportions of a major fire fight. With the help of artillery, mortars, and tanks, the Japanese were forced back into their cave, and the forward elements of Company B set up night defenses at the base of the hill.

Company A, 321st Infantry, had meanwhile encountered some strong opposition from bypassed Japanese who were holding out along a low ridge which, lying west of West Road, ran north from the junction of East and West Roads to Hill 1 on Amiangal's southern leg. Some tough fighting ensued, but the ridge was secured before dark and Company A established contact with Company B elements at Hill 1. Company C, moving up to Akarakoro Point and into the flat ground east of Amiangal's northern leg, had somewhat similar experiences. This area, reported cleared by the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, was strongly held by Japanese who had reoccupied prepared positions which the marines had not destroyed. Company C, 321st Infantry, fighting for every foot of ground, killed 40 Japanese in the area between 1500 and dark.

It is certain that the fighting on 30 September at northern Peleliu did not endear the 5th Marines to the 1st Battalion, 321st

Infantry, which had not expected to encounter still organized resistance. But such feelings were prevalent throughout the fighting on Peleliu, where the Japanese continually reoccupied positions which one unit had secured and, sometimes, even resecured. Nor were all similar cases limited to situations in which Army troops took over positions from Marine units. The casualties suffered by the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, on 24 September, when it became necessary to move into an area which the 3d Battalion, 321st Infantry, should have covered on the high ground along West Road between the third and fourth phase lines, had somewhat embittered that Marine unit. Again, the 3d Battalion, 321st Infantry, mopping up behind the 1st Battalion, 321st Infantry, along Kamilianlul Mountain's ridges on 29 and 30 September, undoubtedly took a very dim view of the efficiency with which the 1st Battalion had previously "secured" the same area. Other such incidents, involving every conceivable combination and alternation of Marine and Army units, were common.

The difficulties of thorough mopping up in Peleliu's broken terrain were manifold. Not only did the terrain itself create these difficulties, but the Japanese had also improved upon nature, connecting many caves with underground tunnels and digging multiple entrances in many concealed positions. The enemy not only had a propensity for sneaking back into positions that had been cleared, but he also maintained excellent fire discipline combined with an ability to lie doggo while American troops walked past or even through defensive installations. One day, not a shot would be fired from a Japanese position, but the next day an Army or Marine unit would find its rear fired upon, making it necessary to have a company or even a battalion back-track to capture or recapture the installation.

Under such conditions, the 1st Battalion, 321st Infantry, continued mopping up at northern Peleliu on 1 October, often encountering spasmodic suicidal attacks by small groups of Japanese. Companies C and D, 321st Infantry, killed an additional 40 Japanese on the flat ground near Akarakoro Point, but by dusk they were able to report that area and Amiangal's northern leg cleared except for a few stragglers. To the south, Company B continued its operations at Radar Hill, reinforced by demolition squads from Company A, 306th Engineers, and the Antitank Company, 321st Infantry. Many cave openings were sealed or resealed and the principal cave entrance, located on the hill's eastern side, was rediscovered. During the afternoon a platoon of Company B and an engineer demolition squad attempted to move into this entrance but were greeted by a counterattack executed by some 60 Japanese. The hill had to be vacated after about 30 Japanese had been killed and 15 casualties had been suffered by the reinforced Company B platoon. Colonel Dark, the regimental commander, requested reinforcements and, with General Rupertus' permission, Company G, 321st Infantry, was brought back to the mainland from Ngesebus (where it had relieved Marine units) to help in a new attack on Radar Hill on 2 October.

Early on the 2d, Company G moved into position along Hill 3 to provide Company B with fire support during the renewed attempt. Tanks were brought into position north of Radar Hill for the same purpose, and a battery of Marine 155-mm. guns stood by to furnish additional fire support as necessary. At 1000 Company B, rein-

forced by demolition and flame thrower teams, attacked up the southern and western slopes. Quickly reaching the summit from those directions, the troops began working down the northern and eastern sides, where major resistance was now isolated. After the use of extensive demolitions, the hill was declared secure at 1700. The last vestiges of organized resistance in northern Peleliu had disappeared and mopping up was completed. The 321st Infantry killed at least 175 Japanese during its operations in the Amiangal Mountain area, bringing to approximately 1,350 the known Japanese killed or captured in that region. How many more were sealed in caves or blown to unaccountable bits is unknown, but it seems reasonable to believe that the Amiangal area was defended by nearly 1,500 Japanese, three times the number the 1st Marine Division originally estimated.

Ngesebus, Kongauru, and Other Islands

It is probable that the operations at Amiangal Mountain and Akarakoro Point would not have ended as soon as they did had it not been possible to eliminate the Japanese artillery, mortar, and automatic weapons fire which had been falling on northern Peleliu from Ngesebus and Kongauru Islands.[21] With the successful advances made by the 5th Marines and the 1st Battalion, 321st Infantry, in northern Peleliu on 27 September, General Rupertus felt it feasible to undertake the long-delayed assault on Ngesebus.

The 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, with aerial, naval, and artillery fire support, moved across the reefs from Peleliu shortly after 0900 on 28 September, transported by LVT's and LVT(A)'s. There was little or no opposition to the assault, and fifty Japanese were killed or captured at beach positions before they could recover from the shock of the support fires. Major resistance on Ngesebus centered along a low, rough, coral ridge paralleling the west coast. Despite some tough opposition there, by dark all the island except for a small pocket at the northern tip had been overrun and the Japanese fighter strip had been secured. Elements of the same Marine battalion moved to Kongauru Island, off the eastern side of Ngesebus, secured it against minor opposition, and then moved on to Murphy Island, off the northeast tip of Kongauru.[22]

The marines continued mopping up on Ngesebus until 1500 on 29 September, when the island was declared secure. An hour later the 2d Battalion, 321st Infantry, began coming ashore to relieve the marines and complete mopping up. By 1700 hours the relief at Ngesebus had been completed, and Company F, 321st Infantry, had relieved Marine units on Kongauru and Murphy Islands. The next day the 321st Infantry units encountered some resistance from bypassed Japanese along the low ridge at Ngesebus' western shore. Mopping up there continued simultaneously with the organization of defenses against possible Japanese counterlandings. The 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, had killed or captured about 470 Japanese on Ngesebus, Kongauru, and Murphy Islands, while the 2d Battalion, 321st Infantry, had accounted for approximately 100 more on the same islands.

One of the principal reasons for seizing Ngesebus had been to construct a fighter

[21] This subsection is based on: Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu,* pp. 123–26; 81st Inf Div Opns Rpt Peleliu, pp. 33–37; 321st RCT, Jnls and Jnl files, Peleliu.

[22] Murphy Island was a name given the islet by the 81st Division.

strip on that island. But the existing Japanese field was found to be surfaced with sand so soft that an airdrome could not be built there without such extensive labor that the results would not be worth the effort, especially with the Peleliu field already operational and the new Angaur field well on its way to completion. The island was therefore abandoned as an airfield site—the principal results of its capture being the elimination of harassing fire on northern Peleliu and the denial of its use to the Japanese as a staging point for troops who might attempt to reinforce Peleliu. At the same time, Ngesebus provided the III Amphibious Corps with a staging base from which minor shore-to-shore operations against other small islands farther north could be launched.

Peleliu at the End of September

On 30 September the Commander, Western Attack Force, Admiral Fort, announced that Angaur, Peleliu, Ngesebus, and Kongauru Islands had been captured and occupied.[23] This was true enough to the extent that only some tough mopping up remained to be done in northern Peleliu, at northwestern Angaur, and on Ngesebus and Kongauru. It was also true to the extent that the principal remaining Japanese pocket on Peleliu had been greatly compressed.[24] Accomplishments through the 30th of September had cost the 1st Marine Division 5,044 casualties, including 843 men killed, 3,845 wounded, and 356 missing.[25] By the same time, the 321st Infantry had lost on Peleliu 46 men killed, 226 wounded, and 7 missing, for a total of 279 casualties.[26]

The 1st Marine Division estimated that it and the attached 321st Infantry had killed nearly 9,000 Japanese by the end of the month. In addition, 180 prisoners, mostly Koreans or Okinawans, had been taken. Less than 2,500 Japanese were left alive on the island.[27] Except for those killed by the 321st Infantry during arduous mopping-up operations at northern Peleliu and on offshore islands, the Japanese left alive on 30 September were concentrated in the central pocket. Against this area the 5th and 7th Marines were to move, relieving elements of the 321st Infantry, while the battered 1st Marines, the 1st Tank Battalion, the two 75-mm. pack howitzer battalions of

[23] CTF 32 Opns Rpt Palaus, p. 22.

[24] Narrative, p. 13, to Phase II, Opns Annex to 1st Mar Div Opns Rpt Palau. This compression, accomplished by the 321st Infantry, is described in Ch. XXIV, below.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 13. The Marine Corps' history of the campaign states that these figures are not entirely accurate and that the figure for missing is especially misleading. Many marines reported as missing were actually evacuated from Peleliu during the first two or three days of the action, when very incomplete records were maintained. Later, many of these men turned up in hospitals all over the Pacific.

[26] 321st RCT Unit Rpt 7, 30 Sep 44, in 321st RCT Jnl file, Peleliu. These figures are as of 1200, 30 September.

[27] Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu*, p. 135; The Palau Operations, p. 142. The figure for remaining Japanese is derived as follows: best estimates were that about 10,500 Japanese were on Peleliu as of 15 September and that 600–700 arrived after that date as reinforcements from the northern islands, giving a total of a possible 11,200. As of 13 October, according to Japanese sources, there were less than 1,500 Japanese alive and fighting on Peleliu. With the fighting that went on from 1 through 12 October, it does not seem unreasonable to believe that over 800 Japanese were killed in that period and that something less than 2,500 were alive on 30 September. The Marine Corps estimate of about 9,000 Japanese killed to 30 September therefore appears reasonably accurate.

the 11th Marines, and other smaller Marine units left the island for rehabilitation.[28]

Thus, by the end of September, Peleliu had been secured—at the cost of some 5,300 American casualties. The Peleliu airdrome, the development of which had been the primary purpose of the seizure of the island, was operational for fighter planes, and the Kossol Passage emergency anchorage was in use. Organized resistance by the remaining Japanese was concentrated at the Umurbrogol Pocket, as the area still held by the Japanese in the central ridges was called.

[28] Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu,* p. 135. Loading of the 1st Marines and attached regimental combat team elements, including part of division headquarters, began on 29 September, but bad weather delayed the units' departure until 2 October.

CHAPTER XXIV

Peleliu: The Last Resistance

While northern Peleliu and the offshore islands were being secured, pressure had been maintained against the principal pocket of Japanese resistance on Umurbrogol Mountain, as that section of the central ridges lying south of 321st Infantry Trail was designated on the maps supplied to the Allied forces fighting in the Palaus. After the 321st Infantry had divided the island, the Umurbrogol Pocket was about 1,900 yards long north to south on its eastern side; approximately 1,200 yards long on the west; and, on the average, 550 yards wide east to west. No offensive operations were undertaken against the pocket from 22 September—the date of 7th Marines' last strong efforts—until the 27th of the month, when elements of the 321st Infantry began attacks on the north side. On the latter date the pocket was being contained on the south, southwest, and west by Marine units; on the northwest, north, and northeast by Army troops. There were no troops on the east side, where the central ridges fell steeply to East Road, itself bounded on the east by a dense swamp which lay along the shores of the shallow bay separating Peleliu's eastern and western arms.

Compressing the Umurbrogol Pocket

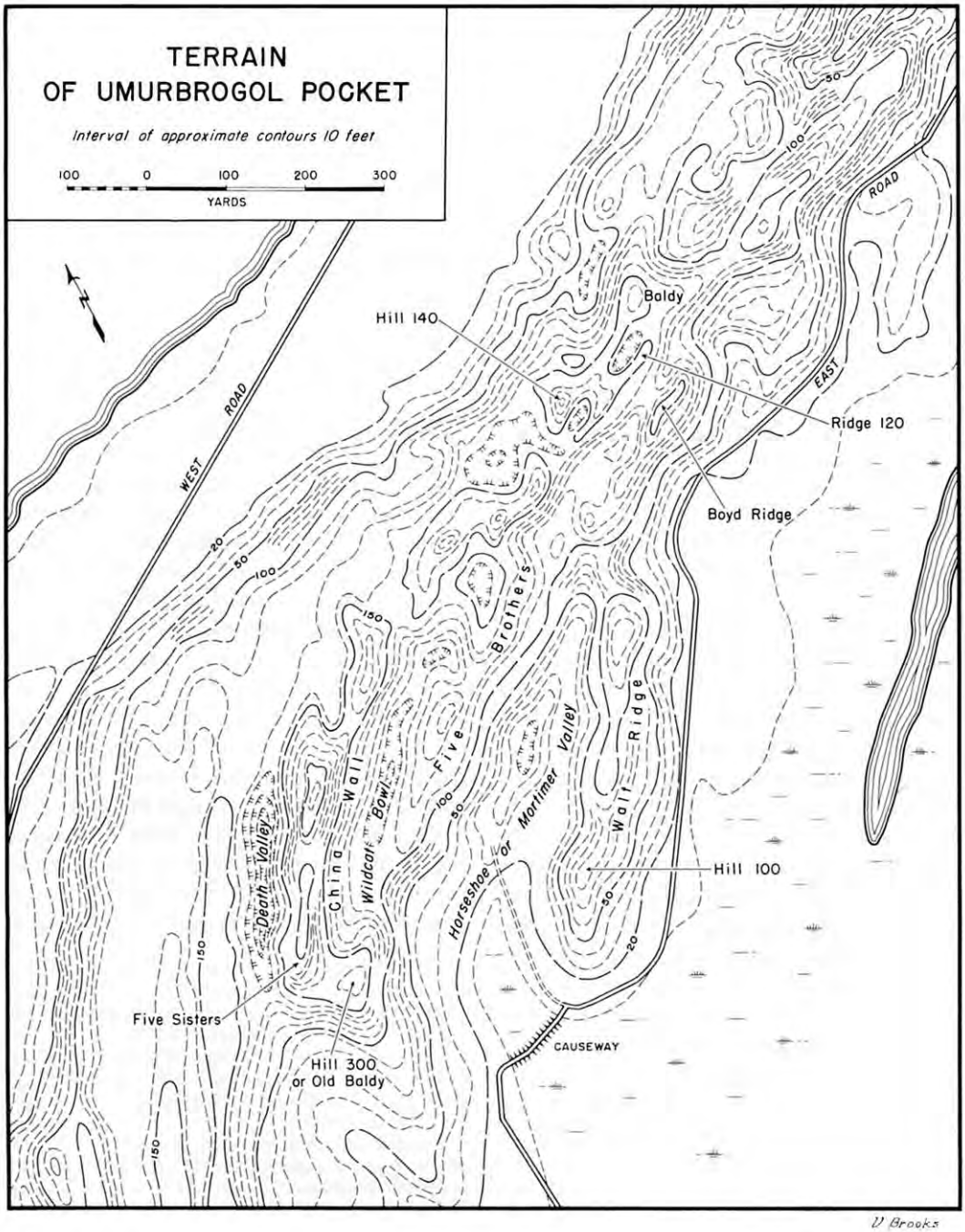
The Terrain

Umurbrogol Mountain was no mountain in the usual sense of the word.[1] (*Map 21*) It was, rather, a chaotic jumble of steep coral ridges, the tallest peak among which was about 300 feet high. There were innumerable caves throughout the pocket, ranging from large caverns with small entrances to open, shallow shelters big enough for only one man. Some caves extended through ridges; these and many others had two or more entrances, permitting the Japanese to move from one position to another without appearing above ground.

As left by nature, the Umurbrogol Pocket was much like the Ibdi Pocket area on Biak Island, but larger and rougher. Like the Ibdi Pocket, the Umurbrogol originally had a thick cover of tropical trees and dense jungle undergrowth which, as the result of continued air, naval, and artillery bombardment (including extensive employment

[1] This subsection is based on: Incl 1, Terrain and Int Sum, pp. 1–2, to 323d Inf Opns Rpt Peleliu; Sketch maps and sketches included in 81st Inf Div Opns Rpt Peleliu; George McMillan, *The Old Breed, A History of The First Marine Division in World War II* (Washington, 1949), sketch map p. 34; Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu*, pp. 136–40, 149–52, 159–61, 194–97.

The terrain configuration shown on Map 21 gives only a general impression of the extremely twisted and broken terrain of the area. The relief was taken from the best map available, one prepared in 1945 from aerial photographs. Some of the terrain features that appear on hasty maps and sketches drawn by participating units cannot be readily identified on this map. Nor do the units' maps and sketches themselves agree on the terrain configuration of the area. Compare with Maps 22, 23, and 24.


TERRAIN
OF UMURBROGOL POCKET
Interval of approximate contours 10 feet
100 0 100 200 300
YARDS
N
WEST ROAD
EAST ROAD
Hill 140
Baldy
Ridge 120
Boyd Ridge
Five Brothers
Wall Ridge
Horseshoe or Mortimer Valley
Death Valley
China Wall
Wildcat Bowl
Hill 100
Five Sisters
Hill 300
or Old Baldy
CAUSEWAY
50
100
150
20
V Brooks

MAP 21

of aerial napalm strikes), was gradually knocked down or burned away. Again, as on Biak, the Japanese had improved upon nature. There were many artificial or semi-artificial caves which had been constructed to protect approaches to the inner sections of the pocket, and the Japanese had improved almost every natural cave. Where no caves were available or could be constructed, the enemy employed rock faults and crevices for defensive positions. Digging new entrances to existing caves or even cutting new levels within some caves, the Japanese were well prepared to execute a long and bloody holding action along the many ridges. These ridges, with the exception of the Five Sisters group at the southern side of the pocket, were generally parallel and oriented north-northeast to south-southwest. Steep-sided and fissured, many of them had razor-back summits upon which no cover could be found. The ridges were separated by deep draws, gullies, and wider valleys, the floors of which were strewn with coral boulders or coral outcroppings similar to stalagmites. Steep as they were, the sides of some ridges also were covered with such chunks and outcroppings.

At the southeast corner of the pocket, paralleling East Road, lay Walt Ridge; to the north, across a 70-yard-wide draw, was Boyd Ridge,[2] beyond which lay an unnamed, broken ridge line extending north to 321st Infantry Trail. Lying west of Boyd and Walt Ridges was Mortimer Valley,[3] the western wall of which was named Five Brothers Ridge. West of the Five Brothers was Wildcat Bowl,[4] bounded on the west by China Wall, on the southwest by the Five Sisters, and on the southeast by a 225-foot-high peak designated Old Baldy.[5] West of Five Sisters and China Wall lay a narrow defile known as Death Valley, beyond which was a coral plateau comprising broken ridgelets, sink holes, and jumbled coral formations overlooking West Road.

At the northern end of the pocket area the ridges were closer together, often less well defined, narrower, and sharper, and generally more broken. Above (north) of China Wall lay Wattie and Baldy Ridges, on or near which elements of the 3d Battalion, 321st Infantry, had already fought. Wattie Ridge abutted the cliffs above West Road, Baldy Ridge lay east of Wattie, and, east of Baldy, across a narrow gorge from the north end of Boyd Ridge, was Ridge 120.[6] North from the line Wattie–Baldy–Ridge 120 lay 700 yards of unnamed ridgelets, peaks, ravines, and deep draws extending to 321st Infantry Trail. From the trail, the 321st Infantry started moving south against the Umurbrogol Pocket on 27 September.

The 321st Infantry at the Umurbrogol, 27–29 September

After its important tactical success in dividing Peleliu at 321st Infantry Trail, the 321st Infantry was ordered to send one battalion to northern Peleliu and to employ the rest of the regiment in a drive south from the trail into the northern end of the Umur-

[2] Names varied on Peleliu according to the unit operation. The names in this chapter generally follow the usage employed by the 81st Division.

[3] So called by the 321st Infantry. The 1st Marine Division knew it as the Horseshoe or Horseshoe Valley; Marine air units called it Big Slot; the 323d Infantry called it East Valley.

[4] Known to the 323d Infantry as Main Valley and to Marine air as Little Slot.

[5] Known to the Marines as Hill 300 and considered by them a part of Five Sisters.

[6] Also known as Hill 120, a terrain feature which formed the bulk of the ridge.



SOUTHEAST CORNER OF UMURBROGOL POCKET. *East road and Walt Ridge in right foreground. Five Brothers Ridge in center, between Mortimer Valley and Wildcat Bowl. China Wall, abutting Five Sisters, forms the western rim of Wildcat Bowl.*

brogol Pocket.[7] On the evening of 26 September the 1st Battalion, 321st Infantry, was designated for the push north. At the same time the 2d Battalion (less Company G, but with Company A, 710th Tank Battalion, and Company K, 321st Infantry, attached) was ordered to move south from 321st Infantry Trail to secure the ground to the X-ray phase line. (*See Map IX.*) This new line, lying roughly midway between the third and fourth phase lines, was drawn northwest to southeast across the central ridges south of 321st Infantry Trail and marked what was believed to be the northern edge of the inner core of Japanese defenses. While the 2d Battalion attacked south toward the X-ray phase line, the 3d Battalion (less Company K but plus Company G) was to hold at Hill 100 and at the area around the north end of Wattie and Baldy Ridges.

The 2d Battalion, 321st Infantry, started south at 0700 on 27 September, with Company K advancing on the right along the ridges above East Road. Company F, with the still-organized Neal Task Force of tanks, LVT's, and infantry in support, pushed south from Hill B along East Road. Company E remained on Hill B, while Company H provided fire support from positions near the same hill. In Company K's sector, ex-

[7] This subsection is based principally on: 321st RCT Jnls and Jnl files, Peleliu; 81st Div Opns Rpt Peleliu, pp. 25–33.

tremely broken terrain was the chief obstacle to progress during the morning (although plenty of small arms fire was received) and by noon the unit had moved only 200 yards south from 321st Infantry Trail. Company F, keeping pace, was harassed by Japanese small arms fire from positions to its right front beyond Company K.

During the afternoon, Japanese fire on Company K increased and the unit suffered numerous casualties, including the company commander. Harassing fire from Japanese on the east slopes of the central ridges continued against Company F. Direct fire from tanks, which used many white phosphorus shells, and fire from a flame thrower mounted on an LVT of the Neal Task Force, helped to reduce many of the enemy positions, but others were inaccessible to such fire or to infantry assault from the low ground along East Road. By late afternoon the intensity of fire on both companies had not appreciably diminished.

Company K suffered so many casualties during the afternoon, and the forward positions of that unit and Company F seemed so dangerously exposed, that a withdrawal for the night was ordered. Company K managed to push west and north over the central ridges to Company I's positions on the ridge lines at the southwest base of Hill 100. Company F and the Neal Task Force moved back to the base of Hill B and set up defenses along East Road.

Early the next morning, 28 September, Company K was withdrawn from the forward combat area because of losses and fatigue. The company then moved to Hill B, where it replaced Company E. To continue the attack south a composite unit, under the commander of the 3d Battalion, was organized around Companies E, F, and I [8] of the 321st Infantry, and Company A, 710th Tank Battalion. The objective for the day was to secure and organize for defense all the ground between 321st Infantry Trail and the X-ray phase line.

Company I pushed south along the ridges and Company E, with tanks in support, advanced down East Road. Both units quickly resecured the ground which had been taken the previous day, and by noon advance elements of the two companies were within 200 yards of the X-ray phase line. Company L, on the west side of the ridges and north of Baldy and Wattie Ridges, joined the advance in midafternoon, swinging south in contact with Company I's right. Systematically attacking and cleaning out each Japanese cave or crevice position found, the three companies reached the X-ray phase line late in the afternoon. This time there was no withdrawal, and the units set up night defenses on the ridges or along East Road.

On the morning of the 29th, the 2d and 3d Battalions, 321st Infantry, were relieved of further responsibility for operations against the Umurbrogol Pocket and moved north to replace the 5th Marines at northern Peleliu and on the offshore islands. The 7th Marines took over along the X-ray phase line.

Marines Versus the Umurbrogol Pocket 29 September–15 October

When the 321st Infantry's elements left the pocket, it was estimated that the Japanese had been compressed into an area aver-

[8] The 321st Infantry seems to have had a penchant for splitting up its infantry battalions, a practice which it had previously undertaken extensively on Angaur. Apparently the Neal Task Force was disbanded on the evening of the 27th or on the 28th.

aging 400 yards in width and 900 yards in length.[9] This estimate was somewhat misleading and, in regard to the width, actually in error. On the east the pocket was some 1,000 yards long from the X-ray phase line south to the East Road causeway north of Asias, where the Weapons Company of the 7th Marines was holding containing lines. On the west, along the ridges between the western ends of the X-ray and third phase lines, elements of the 7th Marines and other troops from Marine artillery, amphibian tractor, engineer, and pioneer units were holding a line about 750 yards long. The distance between the Weapons Company north-northwest across the ridges to the third phase line was over 900 yards, a distance along which the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, held containing lines.[10] On the northern side, across the ridges at the X-ray phase line, the pocket was only 400 yards wide. A few hundred yards farther south a line drawn with the same northwest to southeast orientation as the X-ray would have been about 650 yards wide.

General Rupertus planned to have the 1st and 3d Battalions, 7th Marines, attack south from the X-ray phase line, while other Marine units on the western and southern sides of the pocket held their positions. Company A, 710th Tank Battalion, was made available to the 7th Marines for this new push because the Marines' own 1st Tank Battalion had already left the island. The new attack began at 0800 on 30 September. (*Map 22*)

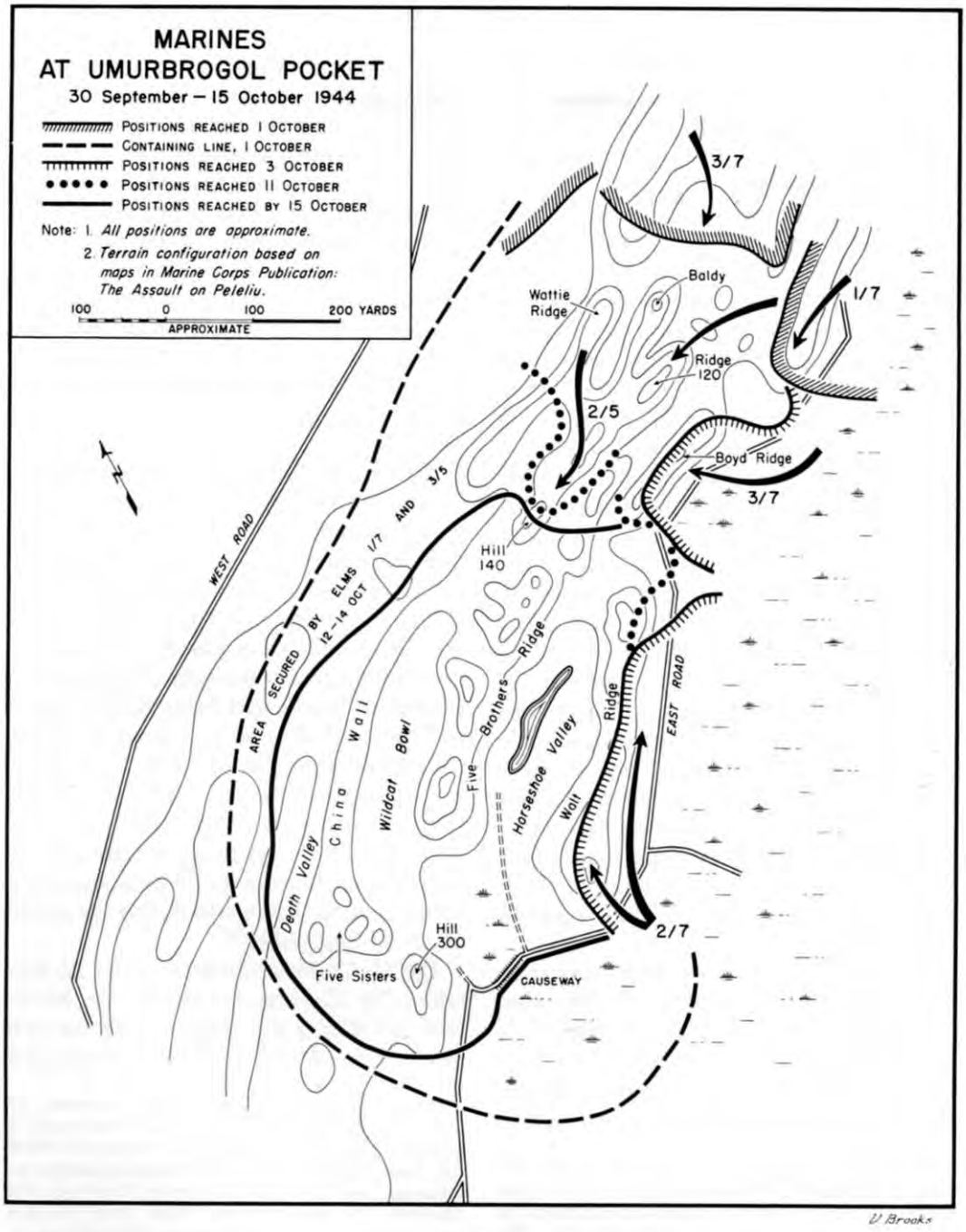
From 30 September through 2 October, Japanese opposition, heavy rain, fog, and sickness, prevented the 1st and 3d Battalions, 7th Marines, from making much progress south. The 1st Battalion, down to 90 riflemen fit for duty, had to be relieved after securing an area 150 yards wide and 300 long on East Road and flanking ridges below the X-ray phase line. On 3 October the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, began new attacks from the south, securing a foothold along the eastern side and top of Walt Ridge, with the help of mediums of the 710th Tank Battalion. Other tanks of the same unit, co-operating with men of the Weapons Company, 7th Marines, probed into the southern end of Mortimer Valley, but had to retire before dark. On the same day the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, brought partially up to strength by men pulled out of Marine engineer and amphibian tractor units, seized the eastern slope of Boyd Ridge, north of Walt Ridge.

The next day, 4 October, elements of the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, secured a temporary foothold on the northern end of Ridge 120, but were forced to withdraw through a draw lying between Boyd Ridge and the unnamed ridges to the north. At the end of the day Companies I and L, 7th Marines, were down to a combined strength of about 80 men from an authorized number of 470. The 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, was through; the 1st Battalion could muster few more than 100 men fit for duty; and the 2d Battalion reported in at 30 percent of efficiency. Like the 1st Marines before it, the 7th Marines was finished as a regiment, and on 5 October the 5th Marines began moving into positions to relieve the 7th.

There was little action on the 5th or 6th other than some attacks into ground which

[9] Narrative, p. 13, of Phase II, Opns Annex, to 1st Mar Div Opns Rpt Palau. The remainder of this section is based principally on: Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu*, pp. 143–67; 710th Tank Bn Opns Rpt Peleliu, pp. 1–12.

[10] The battalion had been holding these lines since 21 September, limiting its activities to patrolling. When it came out of these lines on 2 October, it had suffered about 150 casualties, including 33 men killed, during that period of comparative inactivity. Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu*, p. 144.


MARINES
AT UMURBROGOL POCKET
30 September – 15 October 1944
POSITIONS REACHED 1 OCTOBER
CONTAINING LINE, 1 OCTOBER
POSITIONS REACHED 3 OCTOBER
POSITIONS REACHED 11 OCTOBER
POSITIONS REACHED BY 15 OCTOBER
Note: 1. All positions are approximate.
2. Terrain configuration based on maps in Marine Corps Publication: The Assault on Peleliu.
100 0 100 200 YARDS
APPROXIMATE
3/7
Baldy
Wattie Ridge
1/7
Ridge 120
2/5
Boyd Ridge
3/7
3/5
1/7 AND ELMS
12-14 OCT
AREA SECURED
WEST ROAD
Hill 140
Five Brothers Ridge
Horseshoe Valley
Wall
Ridge
EAST ROAD
China Wall
Wildcat Bowl
Death Valley
Hill 300
Five Sisters
2/7
CAUSEWAY
V. Brooks

MAP 22

could not be held at Baldy Ridge and Ridge 120. On the 7th,[11] six tanks of Company A, 710th Tank Battalion, together with most of the infantrymen of the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, moved into Mortimer Valley behind an hour-long artillery and mortar barrage. At 0700, four of the six tanks pushed up into the west side of the valley's mouth. Two were hit but not severely damaged by Japanese antitank fire from a position impossible to find. The four then moved out of the valley, south of a water-filled sink hole at the mouth, and, with the remaining two, reapproached the mouth from the east, behind the cover of the south end of Walt Ridge. Moving back into the mouth about 1030, the lead tank struck a mine and lost a track. The next three passed around the damaged vehicle, firing 75-mm. ammunition at all likely enemy positions. About 100 yards into the valley, another tank was hit by a Japanese antitank gun located at the western base of Walt Ridge and was forced to retire to repair its jammed 75-mm. gun. A third tank moved forward and received three hits, none of which caused much damage. It was then decided to pull the tanks back out so that artillery could fire on Five Brothers and the western base of Walt Ridge. In withdrawing, four tanks received minor damage.

About 1400, six tanks with two companies of the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, attempted a second push. Company L moved northwest into Wildcat Bowl and Company I started into Mortimer Valley. No penetration could be made at Wildcat Bowl, although Company I managed to get about 200 yards into Mortimer Valley. This time, when the tanks were stopped by the troublesome antitank gun at the base of Walt Ridge, the gun was discovered and destroyed. As the tanks began running out of ammunition during the late afternoon, the infantry positions in Mortimer Valley became untenable, and under cover of smoke which the tanks' guns provided, withdrawal was made to the morning line of departure. It was ten days before American troops again attempted to operate in the valley.[12]

No other offensive action was undertaken on 7 or 8 October, but pressure was maintained against the Japanese pocket by continued artillery fire and aerial bombardment, which now began to destroy so much foliage and undergrowth that visibility along the various ridges was greatly increased. On the 9th the attack was resumed on the northern side of Wattie and Baldy Ridges, where no firm foothold could be secured. Patrols of the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, probed into a deep gulch between Wattie and Baldy Ridges, finding there the bodies of twelve 321st Infantry soldiers, grim reminders of the previous efforts of the 3d Battalion, 321st Infantry, in the same area during the period of 25–27 September.[13]

On 10 October elements of the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, secured Wattie, Baldy, and 120 Ridges and pushed south the next day to gain the top of tactically important

[11] The action described here as taking place on 7 October is placed on 8 October by the 710th Tank Battalion's report, but the regimental and battalion records of the 5th Marines set it on the 7th. The tank unit's report was written in December (none of its journals can be found), whereas the Marine records, which were checked, were maintained during the action.

[12] According to the Marine Corps' account, the sortie into Mortimer Valley had not been made to establish a permanent foothold but merely to reduce fire from Japanese guns which were harassing the airdrome and the lines of the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines. The report of the 710th Tank Battalion states that after the day's action, the marines decided that Mortimer Valley could not be taken from the south, and that no further effort was to be made from that direction.

[13] See above, Ch. XXIII.

Hill 140, lying immediately north of the northern end of Five Brothers Ridge. On the 12th a Marine 75-mm. pack howitzer was dragged up Hill 140 to fire on Five Brothers. Sandbag fortifications were erected for the protection of the weapon and its crew.

Exactly who should be credited with carrying the first sandbag into the Peleliu ridges had never been clearly established, but he started something which was to become increasingly important. . . . The lack of cover and impossibility of digging-in had repeatedly obliged attacking troops to relinquish hard-won gains as untenable. Obviously, the sandbag provided an answer of a sort, and many were in use at this time . . . so long as the operation remained essentially one of movement, the problem of sandbagging successive positions . . . presented formidable difficulties. Nowhere was there any sand inland . . . the heavy bags had to be carried into position already filled, no small undertaking in that crazily upended country. It remained for the 81st Division, following relief of the Marines, to develop a technique with such ingenious refinements as to make the sandbag into something closely resembling an offensive weapon, in which capacity it played a crucial part in the final reduction of the Pocket.[14]

On 13 and 14 October, elements of the 5th and 7th Marine Regiments secured much additional ground on the western side of the central pocket between the third and X-ray phase lines, terrain so rough and broken that it was deemed useless as a route of attack into the Umurbrogol. Two days later these elements were pulled out, having cleared an area some 700 yards long north to south and as much as 200 yards east beyond the earlier containing lines above West Road. Men from Marine artillery, engineer, and amphibian tractor units moved up from the old lines to occupy the additional yardage.

Entr'acte: The Relief of the 1st Marine Division

From 12 through 15 October, when elements of the 321st Infantry began moving up to relieve Marine units, there was little action at the Umurbrogol Pocket beyond the clearing of the ridges overlooking West Road. To the 15th, the 321st Infantry had spent its time mopping up at northern Peleliu and on the offshore islands already seized, and had taken a few more islets off Ngesebus and Kongauru. At northern Peleliu, debris was cleared, defenses were constructed, roads and trails improved, and enemy dead buried. Mopping up was a continuing process. During the period 4–8 October, for instance, the 321st Infantry killed 171 Japanese in the north or on the offshore islands, losing 8 men killed, 30 wounded, and 1 missing. Many of the Japanese killed during this period appeared to be stragglers who were attempting to escape from the Umurbrogol Pocket.[15]

About mid-October, a number of command changes occurred in the Palaus area. On the 12th, for instance, the 1st Marine Division was relieved of all responsibilities other than continuing the fight in the Umurbrogol Pocket. The 321st Infantry took over the defenses along the eastern arm, while the Island Garrison Force assumed responsibility for the area south of the pocket. On the

[14] Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu*, pp. 164–65. The 321st Infantry installed an overhead cable system powered by a 2½-ton truck. This system, later expanded and improved by the 323d Infantry, was employed to move sandbags, ammunition, and supplies up ridges and across ravines to front-line units, and was also used to move down to West Road (by means of Stokes litters which the 81st Division borrowed from naval forces) many of the more severely wounded men, whose lives were probably saved by this relatively rapid means of evacuation.

[15] 81st Inf Div Opns Rpt Peleliu, pp. 39, 41–45.

morning of 12 October, the command post of the III Amphibious Corps moved ashore and General Geiger, the corps commander, declared that the assault and occupation phase of operations on Peleliu was ended.[16]

The exact meaning of this announcement is not clear, especially in relation to Admiral Fort's somewhat similar declaration of 30 September, stating that Angaur, Peleliu, Ngesebus, and Kongauru had been captured and occupied. However, General Geiger's announcement seems to have been made in preparation for the 1st Marine Division's imminent departure from the Palaus. The statement also bears relation to the passing of control of operations in the Palaus from the U. S. Third Fleet and Admiral Halsey (as then represented by Admiral Fort's Western Attack Force headquarters) to the Headquarters, Forward Area Central Pacific (Task Force 57), under Admiral Hoover. On the 13th General Geiger issued orders alerting the 321st Regimental Combat Team to relieve the 1st Marine Division elements still at the Umurbrogol Pocket. The next day, control over all operations in the Palaus passed from Admiral Fort to Admiral Hoover's command.[17]

On 12 October, in accordance with General Geiger's orders, the 321st Regimental Combat Team began occupying new defenses on Peleliu's eastern arm. These movements were hardly well started when, on the 14th, the combat team had to begin execution of the corps commander's new orders to relieve Marine elements still at the Umurbrogol Pocket. During the morning of the 14th, the 2d Battalion, 321st Infantry, withdrew from Ngesebus and other offshore islands to move to an assembly area near Hill 100 on 321st Infantry Trail. Simultaneously the 1st Battalion, 323d Infantry, fresh from unopposed operations at Ulithi Atoll, began preparations to relieve Marine units at the southwest corner of the pocket.[18]

Actual relief of Marine units began on 15 October, when the 2d Battalion, 321st Infantry, took over the lines held by the 5th Marines across the northern side of the pocket and on the salient at Hill 140. The next day the 1st Battalion, 323d Infantry, took over the containing lines on the western and southwestern sides of the pocket while the 3d Battalion, 321st Infantry, relieved the Marine units on Walt and Boyd Ridges, along the eastern edge. The relief of Marine elements in central Peleliu was almost complete, and control of operations at the Umurbrogol passed to Colonel Dark, the commander of the 321st Regimental Combat Team.[19]

With the relief of marines at the Umurbrogol, the remainder of the battered 1st Marine Division began preparations for leaving the Palaus. The 7th Marines left for rest and rehabilitation in the Solomons on 22 October. The 5th Marines, attached

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 47; III Amph Corps Opn Plan 12–44, 10 Oct 44, in Encl L, Opns Orders, to III Amph Corps Opns Rpt Palaus; Encl B, Opns, p. 11, to III Amph Corps Opns Rpt Palaus.

[17] III Amph Corps Opns Order 13–44, 13 Oct 44, in Encl L, Opns Orders, to III Amph Corps Opns Rpt Palaus; CTF 32 Opns Rpt Palaus, pp. 95–96; Ltr, Adm Fort to Gen Ward, 15 Nov 50, no sub, in OCMH files. On 29 September command in the western Carolines had passed from Admiral Wilkinson's Joint Expeditionary Force (Task Force 31) to Admiral Fort's Western Attack Force (Task Force 32), and Admiral Wilkinson was assigned a new command for the invasion of the Philippines. On 20 October responsibility for ground operations in the Palaus passed from the III Amphibious Corps to the 81st Division, and General Geiger and his staff moved off, ultimately to take part in the invasion of Okinawa.

[18] 81st Inf Div Opns Rpt Peleliu, p. 47; 321st RCT Unit Rpts 21 and 22, 14 and 15 Oct 44, respectively, in 321st RCT Jnl file, Peleliu.

[19] 81st Inf Div Opns Rpt Peleliu, pp. 49–51; Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu*, p. 167.

operationally to the 81st Infantry Division, remained in defensive positions in northern Peleliu and offshore islands until 27 October, when it began loading. The regiment left on the 30th.[20] By 18 October, when the last marines had been relieved from their Umurbrogol Pocket positions, the 1st Marine Division and attached units had suffered 6,526 casualties—1,252 killed (including perhaps 115 missing, presumed dead) and 5,274 wounded.[21]

Overcoming the Final Resistance

Of the 1st Marine Division's total casualties, about 1,000 were incurred as the 5th and 7th Marine Regiments compressed the Umurbrogol Pocket during the period 29 September through 16 October. The action of the two regiments succeeded in reducing the pocket to a rough oval averaging about 400 yards east to west and about 850 yards north to south.[22] Some 2,000 Japanese had been defending the pocket when the marines began their final offensive, and estimates of enemy strength remaining in the pocket after the marines left varied from 300 to 2,000. From Japanese sources, it appears that the marines killed some 850–1,000 Japanese during the period 29 September–16 October, leaving approximately 1,000 Japanese alive in the pocket as the 321st Infantry moved back in.[23]

The 321st Infantry to 20 October

Offensive operations against the Japanese remaining in the Umurbrogol Pocket were resumed about 1500 on 16 October, when elements of the 2d Battalion, 321st Infantry, made an attempt to move from their new positions on Hill 140 across a deep draw to Brother No. 1, the northernmost of the five peaks on Five Brothers Ridge.[24] (*Map 23*) The intent was to secure a position for supporting weapons and observation in preparation for a general attack south by the 1st and 2d Battalions, 321st Infantry, on the morning of 17 October. The plan for the latter day was to have the 1st Battalion push south along the broken ridges west of Hill 140 while the 2d Battalion seized Five Brothers. The rest of the reinforced regiment was to hold its positions and provide fire support whenever possible.

At midafternoon on the 16th, one platoon of Company G, 321st Infantry, went down into a deep ravine between Hill 140 and Brother No. 1. The platoon expected to re-

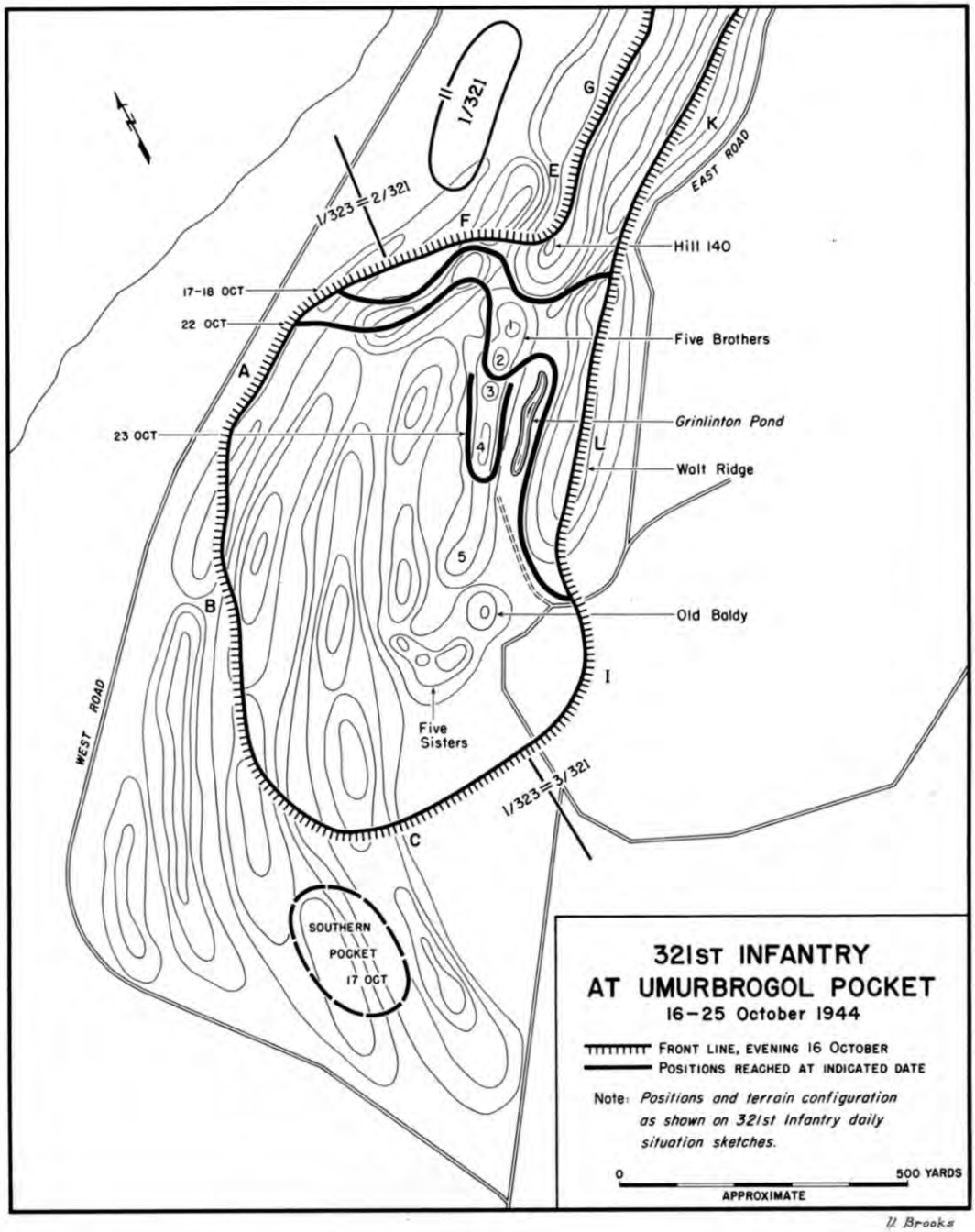
[20] Narrative, pp. 19–21, of Phase II, Opn Annex, to 1st Mar Div Opns Rpt Palaus; Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu,* pp. 168–70; 81st Inf Div Opns Rpt Peleliu, pp. 49–57, 69–71.

[21] Hough, *op. cit.,* p. 183; Narrative, pp. 19–20, of Phase II, Opns Annex, to 1st Mar Div Opns Rpt Palaus. The 1st Marines lost 1,749 men, the 5th Marines 1,378, and the 7th Marines 1,497, a total of 4,624 casualties in the three infantry regiments. These figures are from the 1st Marine Division's report and are cited in Hough, *op. cit.*, page 183.

[22] 321st RCT S–2 and S–3 Overlays, in 321st RCT Jnl file Peleliu. Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu,* p. 166, n. 73, has it that the pocket was reduced to an area about 400 by 500 yards, an estimate which appears small on the basis of the evidence in the 321st RCT's records. *The 81st Infantry Wildcat Division in World War II,* p. 161, states that the pocket was about 750 by 500 yards in size on 15 October, but this estimate has been ripped out of context from an estimate made by the S–2 of the 323d Infantry on 26 October, as contained in Incl 1, Terrain and Int Summary, p. 1, to 323d Inf Opns Rpt Peleliu.

[23] The Palau Operations, pp. 142, 161. This Japanese source states that there were about 1,150 Japanese left on Peleliu as of 13 October and that as of the 23d there were 700 *effectives* left, including slightly wounded men.

[24] This subsection is based on: 321st RCT Jnls and Jnl files, Peleliu; 81st Inf Div Opns Rpt Peleliu, pp. 49–69; *The 81st Infantry Wildcat Division in World War II,* pp. 162–79.


1/321
G
K
E
EAST ROAD
1/323 = 2/321
F
Hill 140
17-18 OCT
22 OCT
A
Five Brothers
1
2
3
23 OCT
4
Grinlinton Pond
L
Walt Ridge
5
B
Old Baldy
I
WEST ROAD
Five Sisters
1/323 = 3/321
C
SOUTHERN POCKET 17 OCT
321st INFANTRY
AT UMURBROGOL POCKET
16–25 October 1944
FRONT LINE, EVENING 16 OCTOBER
POSITIONS REACHED AT INDICATED DATE
Note: Positions and terrain configuration as shown on 321st Infantry daily situation sketches.
0
500 YARDS
APPROXIMATE
U Brooks

MAP 23

ceive fire support for its attack up Brother No. 1 from Company F, which was located on a ridge immediately west of Hill 140, but once in the ravine the platoon was met by strong enemy machine gun and rifle fire originating at positions in defilade from Company F's supporting weapons. The Company G platoon soon suffered casualties which included the company commander, who had gone forward to direct the attack. The platoon had to be withdrawn, leaving behind some dead and wounded who could not be brought out until after dark and then only by individual acts of heroism. During the night Japanese troops, either foraging for food or trying to harass the American lines, were active all along the Umurbrogol front. In retaliation and in preparation for the next morning's attack, American artillery and 4.2-inch mortars [25] placed intermittent fire on known or suspected enemy positions and also employed area fire.

The 1st Battalion, 321st Infantry, started south from its previous positions behind the 2d Battalion at 0700 on the 17th. Resistance during the morning was limited to scattered rifle fire, but the terrain proved almost impassable and by noon the leading elements had gained little more than 100 yards. During the early afternoon, after moving about 50 yards farther south, Company A was stopped by fire from a pillbox and near-by cave positions located on the second of seven more or less parallel but extremely broken ridges which lay between Hill 140 and West Road. Company B was now committed on the first ridge (to A's left) in an attempt to provide fire support for A's attack. But as it moved forward, Company B's rear and flanks were exposed to fire from enemy rifles and heavier weapons on Five Brothers Ridge. Further progress in the 1st Battalion zone proved impossible, and late in the afternoon both companies withdrew about fifty yards to covered positions. The day's efforts had gained about 125 yards in a southerly direction. On the other hand, about 150 yards of new ground had been taken east to west in the broken terrain west of Hill 140.

The 2d Battalion's attack against Five Brothers was led by Company E, but again no advance across the ravine from Hill 140 to Brother No. 1 could be made. When this assault stalled, other elements of the 2d Battalion, supported by 710th Tank Battalion armor, entered Mortimer Valley through a draw between Walt and Boyd Ridges in an effort to reduce Brothers Nos. 1 and 2 by attack from the east. Delays incident to bulldozing a tank road through the draw prevented significant progress from the new direction, but tanks and flame throwers, late in the afternoon, neutralized some caves along the western base of Walt Ridge and on the east side of Brother No. 1. It was estimated that these efforts accounted for about forty Japanese.

Action against Five Brothers was resumed at 0900 the next morning, 18 October. Tanks and LVT-mounted flame throwers again pushed through the gap between Walt and Boyd Ridges to reduce caves along the east side of the Brothers and the west side of Walt Ridge. Meanwhile, a heavy concentration of 4.2-inch and 81-mm. mortar fire was placed along the top of Five Brothers Ridge by a platoon of Company D, 88th Chemical Weapons Battalion, and the Provisional Mortar Platoon, 710th Tank Battalion. Company E followed the mortar fire southward and at 1000

[25] The mortars were from Company D, 88th Chemical Weapons Battalion, a platoon of which had arrived from Angaur during the afternoon and had been emplaced on the southwest side of the pocket near the lines of the 1st Battalion, 323d Infantry.



LVT FLAME THROWER IN ACTION *at Umurbrogol Pocket.*

reached the top of Brother No. 1. About forty-five minutes later, part of the company scrambled up the summit of Brother No. 2, seventy-five yards to the south.

This success, achieved with unexpected ease, made it possible to send Company F forward to pass through Company E and seize Brother No. 3. By 1315 Company F had gained the northern slopes of the third peak, but was almost immediately pinned down by enemy fire which broke out from positions on Brothers Nos. 4 and 5, to the south and southwest, and from the southern base of Walt Ridge, to the southeast. At approximately 1500 hours about two platoons of Japanese infantry began a well-organized counterattack from Brothers Nos. 4 and 5. Company F had no cover on the razor-back summit of Brother No. 3 and was subjected to increasingly heavy fire from enemy supporting weapons. Company E, on Brothers Nos. 1 and 2, was in like straits. Neither company had yet had time to bring forward sandbags, without the protection of which it was impossible to hold ground gained on the now bare slopes of the Umurbrogol Pocket's broken ridges and gorges. Constant artillery and mortar bom-

bardment, as well as high explosives and napalm strikes by planes of Marine Air Group II, based on the Peleliu airdrome, had knocked down, burned away, or otherwise destroyed almost the last vestiges of vegetation in the pocket area. There was no cover or concealment other than that which could be provided by sandbags.

Reinforcements sent forward from the 1st Battalion could not reach Companies E and F in time to be of help, for by 1600 the Japanese counterattack was fully developed. Within an hour Companies E and F were forced off the three peaks, unable to hold their exposed positions against the combination of infantry assault and fire from Japanese supporting weapons. Most of the men withdrew northward to set up defenses at the base of Brother No. 1, but some, cut off, slid down the eastern slopes of the peaks and made their way across Mortimer Valley and out through the draw between Walt and Boyd Ridges. There, the men were provided with covering fire from tanks and elements of the 3d Battalion, 321st Infantry.

Operations had not been much more successful in the 1st Battalion's zone, where strong enemy resistance was again encountered by Companies A and C along the rough ground west of Hill 140. Both units discovered many occupied caves and enemy fortifications of varied types, including one large cave boasting steel doors. The latter position, once an enemy communications center, was neutralized and overrun during the afternoon, but no other appreciable gains could be made. Most of the day was spent constructing sandbag fortifications and emplacing 75-mm. pack howitzers for direct fire on the many enemy defensive installations in the battalion area.[26]

[26] The 75-mm. pack howitzers had been turned over to Army units by the 1st Marine Division. Many of the weapons had been left on the island more by accident than design. The men of the 11th Marines' two pack howitzer battalions had left Peleliu, but heavy seas had made it impossible to load their weapons. Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu*, p. 161, n. 62. Other Marine 75's had been taken over in place by Army troops at the request of the 81st Division.

The Japanese, even before their counterattack against Five Brothers, had sent infiltraters into action on the southwest side of the pocket, chiefly by means of tunnels and connecting caves, to points some 300 yards outside the recently established containing lines of the 1st Battalion, 323d Infantry.[27] Late on the afternoon of the 17th, such infiltraters had forced mortar units in position behind the lines of the 1st Battalion, 323d Infantry, to withdraw. Company I, 7th Marines, which had not yet left the island,[28] was sent into the area to mop up, meeting stronger resistance than had been anticipated. The next morning Company L, 7th Marines, supported by one tank of the 710th Tank Battalion, resumed mopping up. The tank hit an aerial bomb buried as a mine and was destroyed by ensuing fires and explosions. The Marine company commander, who had been riding in the tank, was killed, as were three members of the tank crew. Two men escaped. Company L, 7th Marines, withdrew at dusk.

The next morning, 19 October, a company of the Army's 154th Engineer Battalion, supported by artillery of the 4th Battalion, 11th Marines, moved back into the area to blow up or seal remaining caves. Opposition was still strong and on the morn-

[27] The following story of action at the Southern Pocket, as the area was designated, was reconstructed from: Incl II, 1st Bn Rpt, 20 Oct–3 Nov 44, n. p., to 323d Inf Opns Rpt Peleliu; Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu*, p. 169.

[28] Operations from 17–20 October were still under the control of Headquarters, 1st Marine Division, and the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, was division reserve.

ing of the 20th, Company C, 323d Infantry, had to be withdrawn from its containing lines near Five Sisters to support the engineer demolition teams. Tanks were again moved into the area, now known as the Southern Pocket, but mopping up was still no easy task. During the night of 22–23 October, the remaining Japanese even forced one platoon of Company C, 323d Infantry, back about 100 yards. Company E, 323d Infantry, which had recently arrived on Peleliu, was thereupon sent up from defenses along West Road to reinforce Company C. The next morning the two rifle companies pushed most of the remaining Japanese north toward Death Valley and China Wall, but final mopping up at the Southern Pocket was not completed until 3 November, after the line of attack had been changed from north to south. Altogether, over 100 Japanese were killed in the Southern Pocket, at the cost of 22 Army and Marine Corps troops killed and 51 wounded. While the action had no significant effect upon operations farther north, it is indicative of the Japanese ability to infiltrate over (and literally *through*) the Umurbrogol's broken terrain and to hold reoccupied positions against great odds.

While this minor operation had been going on, pressure had been maintained against the Umurbrogol from the north. The 19th, the day after the 2d Battalion, 321st Infantry, had been driven off Five Brothers Ridge, was marked principally by patrolling in preparation for new attacks, while Marine air units undertook napalm strikes against Five Brothers and Wildcat Bowl, to the west. The strike was principally effective in driving into the open a few Japanese who, running out of overheated caves, were summarily shot down by alert 321st Infantry riflemen. The 1st Battalion, 321st Infantry, gained 25–50 yards along the ridges west of Hill 140 with the aid of 75-mm. pack howitzer fire and the now omnipresent sandbags. The battalion's men, prone on the ground, inched their sandbags forward with rifle butts or sticks, laboriously expanding a hold and almost realizing the infantrymen's dream of portable foxholes.

Thus far, operations of the 321st Infantry and attached units had been conducted under General Rupertus' direction, but on the morning of 20 October responsibility for all ground operations in the Palaus passed to General Mueller of the 81st Division. The next higher echelon was the Western Carolines Sub-Area, commanded by Rear Adm. John W. Reeves, the local representative of Admiral Hoover's Forward Area Central Pacific.

The first day of operations under the control of the 81st Infantry Division was spent principally in reconnaissance, and on the morning of 21 October, after another napalm strike, the 1st Battalion, 321st Infantry, resumed the attack. Company A, on the right, gained almost 100 yards along its front during the morning, progressing farther toward the north end of China Wall and the northwest corner of Wildcat Bowl. No progress was made by Company C on the left (east), but the unit maintained contact with 2d Battalion elements at Hill 140. During the afternoon all elements of the 1st Battalion were held up by intense enemy fire from Brother No. 3 and ridges at the north end of China Wall. In the 2d Battalion area a volunteer patrol fought its way back up to the summit of Brother No. 1, practically by infiltration, late in the afternoon. Company E rushed forward to consolidate this hold and a human chain was formed to pass sandbags up the hill. By dark, sandbag fortifications were completed and preparations were

under way to attack south again on the next day.

The plan of attack for 22 October was ambitious. The 1st Battalion (less Company B, which had replaced Company C, 323d Infantry, on containing lines at the southwest corner of the pocket) was to continue forward to seize additional high ground northwest of Wildcat Bowl. The 2d Battalion was to seize all of Five Brothers Ridge. The 3d Battalion was to take all remaining enemy positions on the west side of Walt Ridge and was to occupy Mortimer Valley. The 1st Battalion, 323d Infantry (less Company C, but with Company B, 321st Infantry, attached), was to push from the south and west against Five Sisters and Death Valley. In preparation for this attack, all available mortars plastered Japanese-held areas from 0515 to 0530, and from 0545 to 0615 Marine air units delivered another napalm strike against Wildcat Bowl and the southern end of Five Brothers. At 0645 ground action began.

By 0845 the 2d Battalion, 321st Infantry, had secured all of Brothers Nos. 1 and 2; fifteen minutes later one platoon was atop No. 3. During the rest of the day, sandbag fortifications were built on this new ground, but the expectation of securing the entire ridge was not realized. To the west, the 1st Battalion could make little progress in a series of bazooka and rifle grenade attacks against numerous Japanese cave and crevice positions. Company A, 323d Infantry, moved north over broken terrain west of Death Valley in an attempt to outflank or take from the rear some of the enemy positions holding up the 321st Infantry's 1st Battalion. Although the two 1st Battalions managed to establish contact in the rough ground, their combined efforts failed to gain much ground west of Death Valley. During the night a Japanese counterattack from the north end of China Wall forced the left (north) platoon of Company A, 323d Infantry, back to West Road, creating a gap between the two 1st Battalions' lines. Fortunately, the Japanese made no attempt to exploit this success and at dawn on 23 October Company A was able to reoccupy its abandoned positions without difficulty.

More spectacular advances had been made by the 3d Battalion, 321st Infantry. Company I, supported by two platoons of tanks, three M–10 tank destroyers, and two LVT's mounting flame throwers, pushed into Mortimer Valley via the gap between Walt and Boyd Ridges. Delayed but a little while by Japanese who fought from holes and fissures around Grinlinton Pond, at the base of Brother No. 4, the infantry-armor force completed a sweep down the valley by 1100. Caves and crevices along the bases of Five Brothers and Walt Ridges were blasted, and then attention was devoted to caves on the northeast slopes of Five Sisters. At least thirty-four of the enemy were known to have been killed by these operations, and it was believed that many more were sealed in caves. At dusk, with the aid of sandbags, Company I formed a defense line along the western base of Walt Ridge, while Company L, previously holding the eastern slopes, moved over the crest to the western side. Company K remained on Boyd Ridge. On the south, no permanent gains could be made by elements of the 1st Battalion, 323d Infantry, operating in the Five Sisters–Death Valley area.

The Japanese, still strong enough to react vigorously to the 321st Infantry's advances, attempted to infiltrate through the lines Company I had set up on the floor of Mortimer Valley, probably in an effort to reoccupy caves on Walt Ridge's western



MOVING INTO MORTIMER VALLEY. *Grinlinton Pond, right foreground; Walt Ridge, right background; Five Brothers, left background.*

base. These efforts were unsuccessful, as was an attack against Company F, on Brother No. 2. The latter attack cost the Japanese at least 20 men killed.

On 23 October the only significant advance was made by Company E, 321st Infantry, which proceeded south along Five Brothers Ridge to secure Brother No. 4 and fortify it with sandbag emplacements. In the 3d Battalion's zone, redispositions were effected to close the southern entrance to Mortimer Valley, but in the 1st Battalion's area progress was negligible and resistance apparently undiminished. On the 24th, the 1st Battalion gained 50–75 yards, laboriously inching forward its sandbags; the 3d Battalion continued sealing caves along both sides of Mortimer Valley; and the 2d Battalion consolidated its gains on Five Brothers Ridge. The next day, the 323d Infantry, all of which had now arrived from Ulithi, began relieving the 1st and 2d Battalions, 321st Infantry. On 26 October control of further operations against the Umurbrogol Pocket passed from Colonel Dark to Col. Arthur P. Watson, the com-

mander of the 323d Regimental Combat Team. To that date the 321st Infantry had lost 146 men killed and 469 wounded on Peleliu.[29]

The 323d Infantry Finishes the Job

Company I, 323d Infantry, replaced those elements of the 2d Battalion, 321st Infantry, that were holding along Five Brothers Ridge, while Companies K and L took over the sandbagged positions of the 1st Battalion, 321st Infantry, at the northwest corner of the Umurbrogol Pocket.[30] (*Map 24*) The 2d Battalion, 323d Infantry, went into lines south of Five Sisters and the 1st Battalion held its positions at the southwestern and western sides of the pocket. The 3d Battalion, 321st Infantry, attached operationally to the 323d, remained in its sandbagged emplacements along Walt Ridge and the floor of Mortimer Valley.

As the 323d Infantry took over, Japanese strength in the Umurbrogol Pocket was estimated at "anywhere between 300 and 1200," [31] but according to Japanese sources, there were only 700 effective troops still alive, including those lightly wounded. The 321st Infantry had probably killed about 400 Japanese in the pocket during the previous ten days. The pocket was now reduced to an average north-south length of approximately 600 yards. On the north it was still about 475 yards wide, but deep salients had been driven south into Mortimer Valley and along Five Brothers Ridge. On the east Japanese resistance was limited to a few caves along the eastern base of the Five Brothers. At the south, across the mouth of Mortimer Valley to the west side of the entrance to Death Valley, the width was less than 350 yards.[32] The gains made by the 321st Infantry and the attached 1st Battalion, 323d Infantry, had cost those units 392 casualties — 74 men killed, 315 wounded, and 3 missing.[33] There was an unknown number of battle fatigue and sickness cases.

During the period 26 October through 1 November heavy rains, fog, and accompanying poor visibility severely limited the 323d Infantry's operations at the Umurbrogol Pocket. The time was employed principally to improve defenses, extend sandbag fortifications, and to enclose with sandbags the 75-mm. pack howitzers for support of later offensive action. Throughout the period mortar barrages and napalm strikes continued, but little artillery could be brought to bear because of the proximity of the American front lines to the remaining Japanese positions.

The Japanese made almost nightly counterattacks during the six days, aiming most of their efforts against Five Brothers. One such attack, on the night of 26–27 October, forced Company I, 323d Infantry, off the forward slopes of Brother No. 4, but the company retook the positions at dawn the next day and the effort cost the Japanese

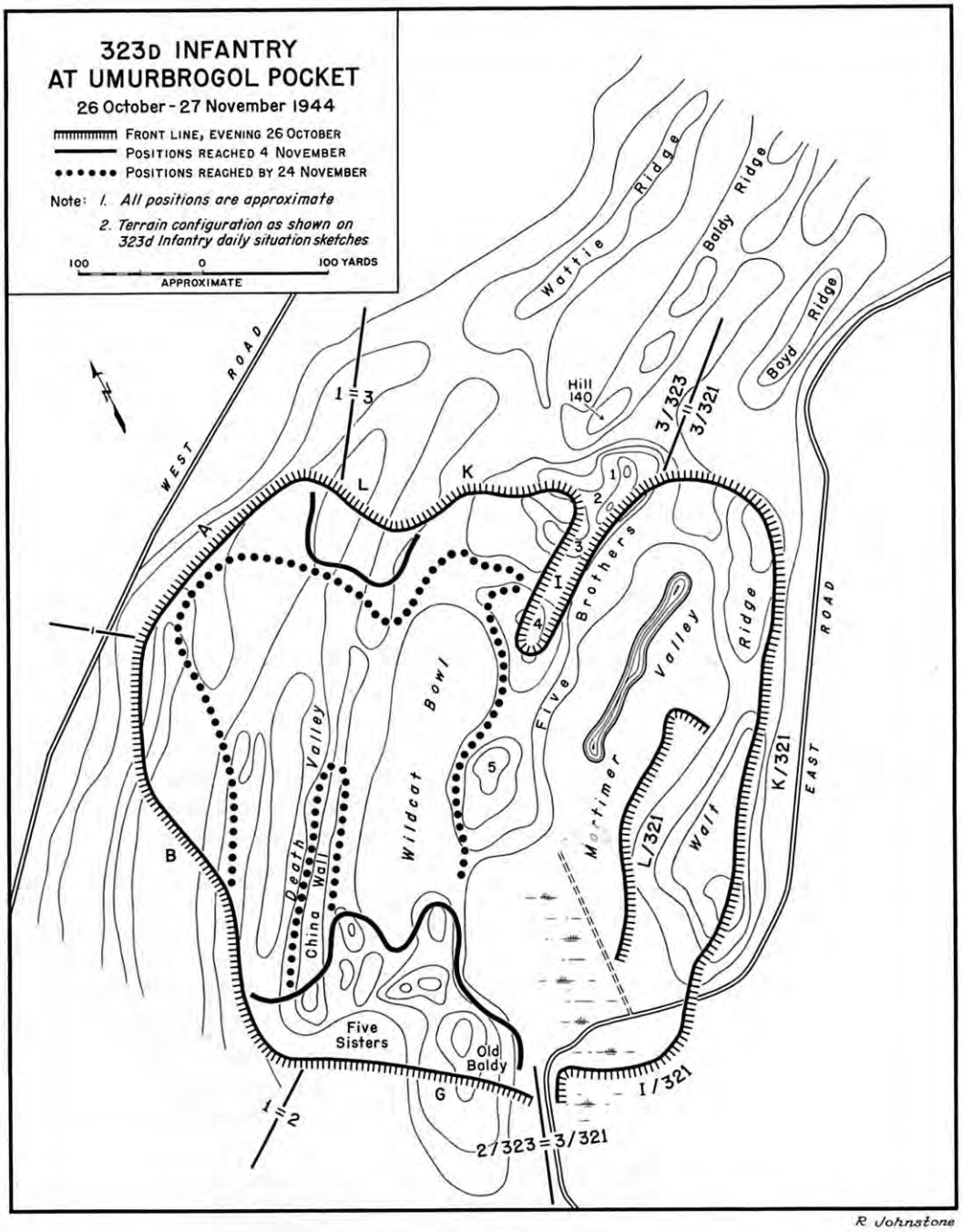
[29] Casualty figures from Ltr, Gen Mueller to Gen Ward, 29 May 51.

[30] This subsection is based on: Sec. II, Narrative, pp. 3–37, to 323d Inf Opns Rpt Peleliu; Incl 9, Unit Jnl, to 323d Inf Opns Rpt Peleliu; Incl 10, Periodic Rpts, to 323d Inf Opns Rpt Peleliu; 81st Inf Div Opns Rpt Peleliu, pp. 71–97; *The 81st Infantry Wildcat Division in World War II*, pp. 177–200; The Palau Operations, pp. 161, 198–200.

[31] Incl 1, Terrain and Int Sum, p. 1, to 323d Inf Opns Rpt Peleliu.

[32] These figures, based on information provided by the overlays of the 321st and 323d Infantry Regiments, do not agree with the dimensions given in the 323d Infantry's Terrain and Intelligence Summary.

[33] 321st RCT Unit Rpt 23, 16 Oct 44, as compared with 321st RCT Unit Rpt 33, 26 Oct 44, both in 321st RCT Jnl file Peleliu.


323D INFANTRY
AT UMURBROGOL POCKET
26 October - 27 November 1944
FRONT LINE, EVENING 26 OCTOBER
POSITIONS REACHED 4 NOVEMBER
POSITIONS REACHED BY 24 NOVEMBER
Note: 1. All positions are approximate
2. Terrain configuration as shown on 323d Infantry daily situation sketches
100 0 100 YARDS
APPROXIMATE
WEST ROAD
Wattle Ridge
Baldy Ridge
Boyd Ridge
Hill 140
3/323
3/321
1=3
L
K
A
B
G
Five Brothers
Valley
Ridge
EAST ROAD
K/321
L/321
Wolf
Mortimer
Wildcat Bowl
Death Valley
China Wall
Five Sisters
Old Baldy
I/321
1=2
2/323=3/321
R Johnstone

MAP 24

34 men killed. During the next night an estimated 35 Japanese were killed by Company K on the ridges near the northwest corner of Wildcat Bowl. The enemy was obviously short of water, for each night a few more men were killed as they attempted to get water from Grinlinton Pond, around which first Company I and later Company L, both of the 321st Infantry, held a sandbag perimeter.

More active operations were resumed on 2 November when the 2d Battalion, 323d Infantry, attacked Five Sisters from the southwest; elements of the 1st Battalion moved north along the ridges west of Death Valley, pursuing the last Japanese from South Pocket; and part of the 3d Battalion started south along ridges and broken terrain at the north end of China Wall. The latter's attack gained only 25–50 yards as Company L sandbagged its way forward literally inches at a time. The 2d Battalion met with more success and established troops atop Old Baldy and the Five Sisters peaks. The 1st Battalion's Company C got nowhere in the Death Valley region. From 3 to 12 November no significant gains were made by any unit, as slow patrolling and sandbagging continued. Heavy rains began to fall on the 4th, culminating in a typhoon which did not blow itself out until the 8th. During this period the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop and elements of the 321st Infantry secured additional offshore islets north of Peleliu.

Attacks at the Umurbrogol started in earnest again on 13 November, with the 1st Battalion, 323d Infantry, pushing eastward from the ridges west of Death Valley and the 2d Battalion moving north into that gorge and Wildcat Bowl. The 1st Battalion's attack gained little ground, and that only by sandbagging almost every foot of the terrain. In the 2d Battalion's zone Company G moved about 75 yards north along the more easterly of the two razor-back ridges which formed the China Wall, but no other advances were made. No gains of any significance were made on the 14th or 15th, but on the latter day there was discovered in the 1st Battalion's area what appeared to be an important center of resistance in rough, broken ground west of the center of Death Valley. On the 16th, oil was sent forward through a hose from fuel tanks set up in covered positions 300 yards distant and poured into a large cave which seemed to be the center of the new-found defenses. Ignited by white phosphorus hand grenades lobbed into the cave, the flaming oil produced such promising results in driving Japanese into the open or killing them, that the same method of conquest continued to be used by the 1st Battalion and in other parts of the pocket.

During the period 16–21 November patrolling continued in all areas, with tanks and LVT-flame throwers operating throughout Wildcat Bowl and Death Valley, attacking enemy caves at the bases of China Wall and Five Brothers. Engineer flame throwers and demolition teams, sometimes accompanied by armored bulldozers, followed the tanks and LVT's closely, destroying or sealing all enemy caves which could be reached. The tank–LVT sorties prompted many of the Japanese remaining in the pocket to make desperate efforts to escape and during the night of 17–18 November, for instance, about 33 were killed trying to flee. On the next day, according to enemy sources, there were only 150 Japanese still capable of fighting left in the Umurbrogol Pocket.

By noon on 21 November infantry patrols were able to operate without encountering

much resistance throughout Wildcat Bowl and the southern half of Death Valley; the last Japanese on Five Brothers Ridge were killed on the 23d. The remaining Japanese held final defenses on China Wall and on the broken ridges west of the northern half of Death Valley. By dusk on 23 November further resistance was confined to the China Wall, still a nearly impregnable position. Steep sides, both east and west, made it impossible for wheeled or tracked vehicles to gain access to China Wall from Death Valley or Wildcat Bowl, and the terrain at the north end of China Wall was so broken as to be impassable for armor. A scooped-out area between the two sides of China Wall gave the remaining Japanese protection from direct fire, and the proximity of the 323d Infantry's forward elements to the enemy positions now made it too dangerous to use mortar fire against the hollow.

On 22 November one company had ascended the north end of China Wall; another had closed in an additional 75 yards from the west-northwest; and a third had gained 25–50 yards at the southern end of the Wall. By the end of the day the remaining Japanese were compressed into an area 125 yards wide east to west and 285 yards long north to south. There were no gains on the 23d, but the next day a few more yards were made on all fronts. In order that tanks and LVT-flame throwers could reach the central hollow of China Wall, engineers began constructing a ramp up the east wall at the north end of Wildcat Bowl. This ramp was completed on the afternoon of the 25th, and the 323d Infantry was ready to make a final attack.

Unknown to the 81st Division, the 57 Japanese still remaining alive in the pocket had given up the fight on the 24th and had burned the *2d Infantry's* colors, traditional sign of final defeat. The 57 survivors were split into 17 small teams which were instructed to hide out during the day and raid American lines at night. A last message was sent to General Inoue, the *Palau Sector Group* commander, still on Koror Island, advising him of the end. The next day, 25 November, a prisoner reported that Colonel Nakagawa and General Murai had committed suicide the previous night. Subsequently, the 81st Division established positive identification of the bodies.

The 323d Infantry had noted on the afternoon of the 24th that resistance had almost completely vanished, and rapid gains were obviously possible on the next morning. But the troops advanced cautiously, carefully searching every foot of ground, for they expected perhaps a trap or at least a last, desperate, banzai charge by the remaining Japanese. On the 26th, tanks and LVT-flame throwers moved up the completed ramp to begin blasting away at caves and other defenses along China Wall's hollow center. Again gains were rapid, but the 323d's men, realizing the fight was over and not wishing to take unnecessary risks, were prevented by scattered rifle fire from clearing the last tiny pocket of resistance before dark. The next morning the attack was continued by eight rifle companies which closed in from all directions. There was no resistance—not a shot was fired on either side. At 1100 Colonel Watson declared that hostilities were over. The operation which General Rupertus, commanding the 1st Marine Division, had expected to last only four days,[34] had actually continued for almost two and one-half months. In the words of the 81st Infantry Division, "The enemy had fulfilled his determination to fight unto death." [35] That fight

[34] Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu*, p. 35.
[35] 81st Inf Div Opns Rpt Peleliu, p. 97.

had cost the 323d Infantry 118 men killed and 420 wounded.[36]

Results of Operations in the Palaus

In the Palaus—on Angaur, Peleliu, and the smaller islands off Peleliu—approximately 13,600 Japanese were killed, over 11,000 of them on Peleliu alone. In addition, some 400 enemy prisoners were taken, chiefly Korean and Okinawan troops. During its operations the 81st Infantry Division and attached units suffered over 3,275 battle casualties—542 killed and 2,736 wounded or injured in action. The reinforced 1st Marine Division's battle casualties were approximately 1,250 killed (including about 115 missing) and 5,275 wounded, a total of about 6,525. Thus, Army and Marine Corps troops killed or captured approximately 14,000 Japanese during the Palaus operation while incurring around 9,800 battle casualties themselves. Many more American troops were rendered temporarily or perhaps permanently *hors de combat* through nonbattle injuries, battle fatigue, heat exhaustion, sickness, or disease. The 81st Division, for instance, had about 2,500 men hospitalized for these reasons.[37]

The Palaus operation was extremely costly—it was one of the bloodiest battles of the war. It was so costly, in fact, that one wonders if the results were worth the effort. Doubts are easily raised in the light of the fact that eleventh-hour changes in plans for subsequent operations—notably the invasion of the Philippines—made it impossible to fit the Palaus into the operational role originally planned for them.[38]

Air support for the Philippine landings as originally planned was to have been provided from a heavy bomber field on Angaur Island. Shorter-range planes based on Peleliu were to fly missions against the Palaus themselves and also against other Japanese-held islands in the western Carolines in order to keep Japanese air and naval bases in that area neutralized. The Angaur field was to have been completed on 15 October, on which date Army B–24's, of the Seventh Air Force's 494th Bomb Group (H), were to have begun strikes against targets in the Philippines. But as a result of terrain difficulties and inadequate gasoline storage facilities, the Angaur field was not ready for use by bombers until 21 October, the day after American forces had landed on Leyte, in the central Philippines. Then it was found that the 494th Bomb Group needed more training (which it acquired by flying missions over the Palaus and Yap) before it could carry out combat missions over the Philippines. In the end, it was not until 17 November that the first bomber mission was flown against a Philippine target from a field in the Palaus.[39]

The Angaur field did become a useful heavy bomber base and aircraft staging point for later phases of the Philippine campaign, especially during operations on Lu-

[36] Casualty figures from Ltr, Mueller to Ward, 29 May 51.

[37] These statistics are reconstructed from numerous mutually irreconcilable and contradictory sources including, among others, the G–1 and G–3 Jnls and Jnl files of the 81st Inf Div; the Rpts and Jnls and Jnl files of the 321st, 322d, and 323d Inf Regts and RCT's; the 81st Inf Div's Opns Rpt; the 1st Mar Div's Opns Rpt; the III Amph Corps Opns Rpt; *The 81st Infantry Wildcat Division in World War II;* Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu;* Ltr, Mueller to Ward, 29 May 51.

[38] See above, Chs. XIX and XX.

[39] MS, The Pacific—MATTERHORN to Nagasaki, Ch. IX, pp. 30, 48; Ch. 1, p. 74.



PELELIU, *showing base development. At the time photograph was taken, jungle growth had again covered the ridges of Umurbrogol Pocket. (Aerial view, October 1946.)*

zon.[40] Employment of the Palaus as a fleet base was negligible, although Kossol Passage at the northern end of the group was successfully used as an emergency fleet anchorage. Ulithi Atoll, seized by the 323d Regimental Combat Team of the 81st Infantry Division in an unopposed operation during 22–24 September,[41] proved an extremely valuable base for the U. S. Pacific Fleet during various phases of operations in the Philippines. Later in the war Ulithi also served as a staging area for fleet and amphibious forces moving against Okinawa.[42] Thus, operations in the western Carolines, including the Palaus, did secure for the Allies valuable air and naval bases. The Palaus were not as valuable as had been anticipated nor were the islands used as extensively or for quite the same purposes as originally planned.

There remains the possibility of conjecture as to whether the Philippines could have been invaded without the Palaus in Allied hands. Among the highest-ranking Allied commanders in the Pacific, only Admiral Halsey, commander of the U. S. Third Fleet, believed it safe to bypass the Palaus, and he expressed such an opinion as early as mid-June.[43] From the vantage point of hindsight, it would appear that Admiral Halsey was right and that it may not have been absolutely necessary to take the Palaus. Nevertheless, with the information available to them in the summer and early fall of 1944, Admiral Nimitz, General MacArthur, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff all believed that only by securing the Palaus could the Allies dominate Japanese bases in the western Pacific and insure the safety of forces moving toward the Philippines.[44]

---

[40] *Ibid.*, Ch. IX, p. 48.

[41] 81st Inf Div Opns Rpt, Ulithi Atoll and Other Western Caroline Islands, 21 Sep 44–4 Jan 45, pp. 11–23.

[42] Roy E. Appleman, and others, *Okinawa: The Last Battle*, in U. S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II (Washington, 1949), p. 43.

[43] Fleet Admiral William F. Halsey and Lt Comdr J. Bryan, III, *Admiral Halsey's Story* (New York, 1947), pp. 194–95. This is not hindsight on Admiral Halsey's part, since he cites his War Diary for 18 June 1944 to prove his point. Admiral Halsey based his objections to the Palaus operation at least partially on a belief that the invasion would result in prohibitive casualties. Other commanders, notably Maj. Gen. John R. Hodge, commanding the XXIV Corps, apparently early expressed the belief that it would be possible to bypass Yap, at least, well before the Yap operation was canceled during the eleventh-hour changes in the concept for the final steps of the approach to the Philippines. The opinion concerning Yap was possibly shared by one of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's subordinate committees, the Joint Staff Planners, well before September 1944.

[44] The 81st Infantry Division, with the exception of the 321st Regimental Combat Team, left the Palaus for New Caledonia in December 1944 and January 1945. The 321st RCT was finally relieved by the 111th Infantry (a separate regiment not part of any division) and left for New Caledonia early in February 1945. In addition to operations in the Palaus and Ulithi, elements of the 81st Division seized Ngulu Atoll, between Yap and the Palaus, on 16–17 October 1944; Pulo Anna Island in the Sonsoral Group, between the Palaus and Morotai, on 20 November; Kayangel Atoll, north of Kossol Passage in the Palaus, on 28 November–1 December; and Fais Island, southeast of Ulithi, on 1–4 January 1945. On all these islands radar or loran stations were set up. See 81st Inf Div Opns Rpt, Ulithi and Other Caroline Islands, 21 Sep 44–4 Jan 45, pp. vi, 33–78.

Conclusion: The Results and the Costs

With the seizure of air-base sites in the Palaus and on Morotai, the Allied forces of the Pacific theaters completed the strategic and tactical steps of the approach to the Philippines; they were now poised to move on into those islands. Eleventh-hour changes in plans concerning the date and place for the invasion of the Philippines were consistent with the strategic concept upon which the approach had been based. The occupation of Morotai and the southern Palaus fulfilled the concept of two drives—one westward across the Central Pacific and the other northwestward up the north coast of New Guinea—toward the Philippine Islands. One phase of the war in the Pacific was ended. Another was soon to begin.[1]

Since April 1944, forces of the Central Pacific Area, in their part of the drive, had moved 1,625 nautical miles westward from the Marshalls to the Palaus and were about 3,250 nautical miles southwest of Hawaii.[2] During the same time, the forces of the Southwest Pacific Area, in a rapid succession of seven major operations, had moved some 1,300 nautical miles [3] from the Huon Peninsula of eastern New Guinea to Morotai Island.

The costs had not been low. The Allies had suffered more than 20,000 battle casualties, including over 3,600 killed. The Japanese had lost at least 43,000 men, including some 40,000 killed. Seven Japanese divisions and the combat equivalent of at least one more division had been destroyed or cut off—losses which the Japanese could not replace. A Japanese air army, the theoretical equivalent of a U. S. air force, had also been wiped out. The Japanese could ill afford this loss of trained pilots and first-line aircraft. Losses of Japanese naval land-based aircraft were such that Japanese surface-vessel action was seriously hampered. Few naval surface craft were sunk by either side,[4] but the Japanese could not replace the vessels they lost.

The Allies had employed nine divisions—eight Army and one Marine, and the equivalent of another Army division in separate regimental combat teams. The entire U. S. Pacific Fleet, comprising the Third, Fifth, and Seventh Fleets, had been used, together

[1] See M. Hamlin Cannon, Leyte: The Return to the Philippines, a forthcoming volume in the series U. S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II.

[2] This, of course, excepts the seizure of the Marianas, an operation which was not, strictly speaking, strategically part of the approach to the Philippines. See Philip A. Crowl, Campaign in the Marianas, a forthcoming volume in the series U. S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II. The distances given are, respectively, about 1,870 and 3,735 statute miles.

[3] Approximately 1,500 statute miles.

[4] Except during the Battle of the Philippine Sea, off the Marianas in June 1944. The major Japanese surface-vessel losses during the operations along the New Guinea coast and in the Palaus were a few destroyers.

TABLE 1—AMERICAN CASUALTIES DURING THE APPROACH TO THE PHILIPPINES: APRIL–DECEMBER 1944

Operation	Killed in Action [a]			Wounded in Action			Total
	U. S. Army [b]	U. S. Navy	U. S. Marines	U. S. Army [b]	U. S. Navy	U. S. Marines	
Hollandia	155	[c] 4	.....	1,060	[c] 7	.....	1,226
Aitape	450	.....	.....	2,550	.....	.....	3,000
Wakde-Sarmi	415	3	.....	1,500	10	.....	1,928
Biak	435	36	.....	2,360	83	.....	2,914
Noemfoor	70	0	.....	345	3	.....	418
Sansapor	15	0	.....	45	0	.....	60
Morotai	30	15	.....	85	18	.....	148
Palaus	540	[c] 158	1,250	2,735	[c] 505	5,275	10,463
Asia-Mapia [d]	20	0	.....	45	0	.....	65
Ulithi, etc. [e]	5	.....	.....	10	.....	.....	15
Total Killed	2,135	216	1,250	.....	.....	.....	3,601
Total Wounded	.....	.....	.....	10,735	626	5,275	16,636
Total Casualties	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	20,237

[a] Includes missing in action.

[b] Army figures, because of conflicting sources, are deliberate approximations. The figures do not include AAF casualties except for engineer aviation battalions.

[c] Navy figures for Hollandia and Aitape are combined, as are figures for the Palaus and Ulithi.

[d] See Ch. XIX, n. 1.

[e] Casualty figures for Ulithi and other western Caroline islands cover the period 22 September 1944–4 January 1945.

Source: Table is based on sources and figures given in the text, except for U. S. Navy figures, which were provided by the Statistics Branch, Bureau of Naval Personnel.

with available combat vessels of Allied nations. Three U. S. Army air forces—the Fifth, Seventh, and Thirteenth—and at least the equivalent of another air force in U. S. naval land-based aircraft, U. S. Marine planes, and aircraft of Allied countries had also participated in the approach to the Philippines. Allied naval and air losses were replaceable, and at the close of this part of the Pacific war, Allied naval and air strength in the Pacific theaters was growing rapidly. While some of the U. S. divisions and separate regimental combat teams had suffered heavy casualties, all of them were still intact and could be brought back up to strength. They had received invaluable combat experience which was to serve them well in later operations.[5] They were ready to move on to the Philippines or other combat areas.

Allied forces in the Pacific had successfully completed one phase of the Pacific war. They were prepared to push on toward the ultimate defeat of Japan.

[5] All the divisions and regimental combat teams that participated in the drive up the New Guinea coast later served in the Philippines. The 1st Marine Division re-entered combat on Okinawa in April 1945. Only the 81st Infantry Division did not participate in another major operation, but even elements of that unit engaged in minor mopping-up operations in northwestern Leyte while retraining for the proposed invasion of the Japanese home islands.

TABLE 2—JAPANESE CASUALTIES,[a] DEFENDING THE APPROACHES TO THE PHILIPPINES: APRIL–DECEMBER 1944

Operation	Killed in Action [b]	Japanese Prisoners of War	Korean Prisoners of War	Formosan Prisoners of War	Total
Hollandia	4,475	655	0	15	5,145
Aitape	8,825	100	6	25	8,956
Wakde-Sarmi	3,960	55	2	35	4,052
Biak	6,125	460	0	305	6,890
Noemfoor	1,960	245	2	625	2,832
Sansapor	695	95	7	160	957
Morotai	305	15	0	0	320
Palaus	13,600	[c] 400	?	?	14,000
Asia-Mapia	170	0	0	0	170
Ulithi, etc	20	5	0	0	25
Total Killed	40,135	.....	.....	.....	40,135
Total Prisoners	.....	2,030	17	1,165	3,212
Total Casualties	.....	.....	.....	.....	43,347

[a] All figures are deliberate approximations except for Korean prisoners of war. Figures for Japanese wounded are not available.

[b] Figures cover the latest dates for which they are available. In the case of New Guinea and Morotai they extend to early October 1944; in the Palaus, to the end of November. "Killed in Action" includes those found dead of starvation or disease.

[c] Includes non-Japanese prisoners, since no breakdown by nationality is available for the Palau operation. The reports state that most of the prisoners were Korean or Okinawan labor troops.

Source: Table is based on sources cited in the text.

Bibliographical Note

Official Records

This volume is based principally upon official records of the United States and Allied armed forces. These records comprise six major categories: records of the United States–British Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS); the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and subordinate committees, such as the Joint Staff Planners (JPS); the U. S. Army; the U. S. Navy; the U. S. Marine Corps; the Allied armed services. Since the U. S. Air Force was part of the U. S. Army during the war, its records are here classed as Army records.

Records of the Combined Chiefs of Staff

Information concerning decisions at the highest Allied level is in the records of the CCS, copies of which are in the files of the wartime Operations Division, General Staff, U. S. Army (OPD), in the custody of the Historical Records Section, Departmental Records Branch, Adjutant General's Office, U. S. Army (HRS DRB AGO). The principal body of the CCS records relating to this volume are in bound volumes containing the papers and minutes of the following CCS meetings:

SYMBOL (Casablanca, January 1943)
TRIDENT (Washington, May 1943)
QUADRANT (Quebec, August 1943)
SEXTANT (Cairo-Tehran, November-December 1943)

Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Since, under the CCS, the JCS were responsible for the direction of the war in the Pacific, the background material for the major strategic decisions relating to that war is in the records of the JCS and their subordinate committees, filed in the same place as those of the CCS. The JCS records consulted included minutes of JCS and JPS meetings and the numbered JCS and JPS papers containing material relevant to the approach to the Philippines.

Records of the U. S. Army

General Staff, U. S. Army

a. The Chief of Staff's Log, 1942–1944. This log, filed in the Staff Communications Branch, Office of the Chief of Staff, U. S. Army, contains communications between General Marshall and ranking Army commanders in overseas theaters, such as General MacArthur in the Southwest Pacific and General Richardson in the Central Pacific. Since General Marshall acted as the JCS executive for the Southwest Pacific, the log also contains copies of many messages originated by the JCS. Also included are records of radio–telephone conversations between General Sutherland (General MacArthur's Chief of Staff), who attended many JCS conferences in Washington, and General R. J. Marshall (General MacArthur's Deputy Chief of Staff), at the overseas end in the Southwest Pacific. The log

also contains daily reports from the major Army overseas commanders.

b. Operations Division, General Staff, U. S. Army, 1942–1944. These files are in the custody of the HRS DRB AGO. Arranged according to the Army's decimal system, they contain much material on OPD planning and proposals in regard to the conduct of the war in the Pacific and, in addition, many papers providing background for the Army's point of view as presented at meetings of the JCS and subordinate committees. All OPD files containing material relevant to the approach to the Philippines were consulted.

General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area.—While these records are technically Joint and Allied papers, they are, with a few relatively minor exceptions, in the custody of the U. S. Army. The most important records of GHQ SWPA thus far returned to the United States are those of the G–3 Section. This collection is divided into two parts: the G–3 Journal file and the G–3 Administration Division decimal files. The Journal file contains daily, weekly, monthly, or other serially distributed intelligence and operations reports of various sections of GHQ SWPA and major subordinate commands within the theater. There is also much planning material and there are copies of most of the communications between GHQ SWPA and other theater headquarters in the Pacific and Far East. The G–3 Administration files contain similar material and, in addition, copies of GHQ SWPA correspondence with the War Department and the Australian Government concerning such matters as labor, tables of organization, and logistics. The G–3 papers originally classed Top Secret have not, for the most part, been returned to the United States, but have been retained by U. S. Army headquarters in Tokyo. That headquarters has also retained the G–3 Historical Division and G–3 Planning Division files, although copies of some of these records have been obtained on special request by the Office of the Chief of Military History (OCMH). The G–3 Journals are in the HRS DRB AGO, while the G–3 Administration files are in the Organization Records Branch, Records Administration Center, Adjutant General's Office (ORB RAC AGO). Other important records collections of GHQ SWPA in the United States are The Adjutant General's decimal files and the records of the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section (ATIS), a subordinate operating agency of the G–2 Section, GHQ SWPA. The former collection is filed under the title General Headquarters, Far East Command (GHQ FEC) in the ORB RAC AGO, while the ATIS documents are in the HRS DRB AGO. The ATIS collection comprises many valuable translations of Japanese documents, copies of interrogations of prisoners, and special studies concerning various aspects of the Japanese military services. An almost complete collection of the publications (terrain handbooks and terrain studies) of the Allied Geographic Section (AGS), another agency of G–2 GHQ SWPA is in the custody of the OCMH, and provides much excellent geographic information on various localities in New Guinea and the Netherlands East Indies. The papers, photographs, maps, interviews, etc., upon which the AGS documents were based are in the custody of the Australian Army. Most of the records of the G–2 and G–4 Sections of GHQ SWPA are at this writing still in the custody of U. S. Army headquarters in Tokyo.

ALAMO Force (U. S. Sixth Army).—ALAMO Force, a special task force operating

directly under GHQ SWPA, was actually Headquarters, Sixth Army, a role which it reassumed in September 1944. As ALAMO Force, the headquarters maintained separate sets of records for each operation or group of operations in the SWPA described in this volume. Thus, there are separate ALAMO collections for Hollandia–Aitape, for Wakde–Biak, for Noemfoor, for Sansapor, and for Morotai. The most important records in these five collections comprise the After Action Reports and the G–1, G–2, G–3, and G–4 Journal files. For the Wakde–Biak group, there are three sets of G–3 Journals—for ALAMO Force Headquarters, Advance Headquarters, and Rear Headquarters. The reports and general staff section documents are in the HRS DRB AGO, filed under the title ALAMO Force, while many records of the special staff sections are in the custody of the ORB RAC AGO, where they are filed under the title Sixth Army. The ALAMO G–3 Section records are particularly valuable in that they contain much important planning material not found in other collections and include many GHQ SWPA papers which, originally classed Top Secret, are not to be found in GHQ SWPA files at present available in the United States. The G–3 Section papers also contain material concerning intelligence and logistics. The G–1 and G–2 Journal files are not as voluminous nor as valuable as those of the G–3 Section, but those of the G–4 Section contain much important supply data and, strangely enough, many copies of intelligence records not to be found in the G–2 Journals. The ALAMO After Action Reports provide brief, fairly accurate summaries of operations. The Japanese and Allied casualty figures contained in these narratives appear to be quite accurate. Another extremely valuable collection of ALAMO Force material is the ALAMO G–2 Weekly Reports, filed in the library of the G–2 Section, General Staff, U. S. Army. This serial publication includes translations of many Japanese unit orders, weekly estimates of the enemy situation, corrections and addenda to previous estimates, Japanese order of battle information, and evaluation of Japanese tactics and equipment. All in all, the various ALAMO Force records collections have proved to be the most valuable single source of information for the preparation of this volume.

Ground Task Forces and Landing Forces.—For the Southwest Pacific operations described in this volume there were set up under ALAMO Force various special ground task forces, in turn sometimes subdivided into landing forces. Strictly speaking, these were Joint and Allied commands. However, they were built around U. S. Army corps, division, or regimental headquarters and their records are in the custody of the U. S. Army, the bulk of them in HRS DRB AGO. While most of these task force records are filed under the task force title, many of them are filed under the numerical designation of the U. S. Army unit headquarters around which the task force headquarters were built. This is especially true for the records of the various task forces' subordinate echelons, attached units, and special staff sections. Each task force was dissolved as such by ALAMO Force and the records for the period following such dissolution are to be found under the U. S. Army unit numerical designations.

The official records of the ground task forces for actions described in this volume vary greatly in quality and quantity, depending both upon the unit and upon the combat situation obtaining at the time the records were being maintained. The After Action

Reports of the ground task forces or numerically designated units were usually found to be inadequate, and it was often necessary to reconstruct the operational story entirely from the Journals and Journal files of participating units, especially infantry regiments and battalions. These Journals and Journal files also varied considerably in quality and quantity and had to be supplemented in many cases by interviews or written comment on portions of the manuscript by officers who took part in the actions described. The collections of the ground task forces and their principal subordinate units are as follows:

a. PERSECUTION Task Force (PTF). The records of this task force and its principal subordinate units are to be found under the following titles, most of them in the HRS DRB AGO:

PERSECUTION Task Force
XI Corps
32d Infantry Division
163d Infantry, 41st Infantry Division
112th Cavalry Regimental Combat Team
124th Infantry, 31st Infantry Division
43d Infantry Division

The records of task force headquarters are to be found filed variously under the task force title, under 32d Infantry Division, and under XI Corps. These headquarters records comprise After Action Reports and the Journals and Journal files of the general and special staff sections. The Journals contain communications between higher and lower echelons, daily reports from subordinate units, intelligence and operations maps and overlays, casualty lists, and supply data. The After Action Reports generally provide only sketchy outline accounts, the best among them being the report for the period during which Headquarters, 32d Infantry Division, operated as PTF Headquarters. The story of operations at Aitape can only be developed by close study of the records of subordinate units, especially those of infantry regiments and battalions. By far the best of these are the records of the 127th Infantry, 32d Infantry Division, and the battalions of that regiment. This collection contains copies of all messages between that regiment and other echelons of the PTF, maps, overlays, and even some material concerning other PTF units not to be found in those units' own records. The 112th Cavalry's records for Aitape are good, but lack detail at the small-unit level. The records of the 124th Infantry, 31st Infantry Division, and those of the 2d Battalion, 169th Infantry, 43d Infantry Division, for the period of TED Force operations at Aitape are inadequate. Generally speaking, all artillery records of the various echelons of the PTF are poor—the narratives tell little and the Journals and Journal files are most difficult to work with. Engineer reports are, on the other hand, quite good and of great value. One of the major deficiencies in the records of all echelons of the PTF is a lack of material concerning air support of ground operations.

b. RECKLESS Task Force (RTF). The RTF records include those of the NOISELESS Landing Force, the LETTERPRESS Landing Force, and the RTF Reserve. The bulk of the RTF Headquarters records are filed under the RTF title in the HRS DRB AGO, although some scattered material is found in the ORB RAC AGO under the title I Corps. RTF's After Action Report is an excellent one and the headquarters' Journals and Journal files are good. The NOISELESS Landing Force records are filed under the title 24th Infantry Division in the HRS DRB AGO. The 24th Division's After Action Report for Hollandia is by far the best single After Action

Report for any operation discussed in this volume. It includes planning material, information on unit training and rehearsing, details of operations, personnel records, valuable data on supply, and important intelligence material. A 24th Division Planning Journal, found in the division's files in the ORB RAC AGO, also proved a valuable source of information. The records of the 24th Division's organic units contain sufficient detail for the operations described. RTF Reserve was the 34th Infantry, 24th Infantry Division, and its records are filed with those of the division in the HRS DRB AGO. Records of the LETTERPRESS Landing Force are filed under the title 41st Infantry Division in the HRS DRB AGO. The division headquarters records leave much to be desired but those of the 162d and 186th Infantry Regiments are good and provide more than enough material. The records of RTF artillery units either lack detail or are extremely difficult to use.

c. TORNADO Task Force (TTF). The records of the TTF and its subordinate echelons are filed for the most part in the HRS DRB AGO and are located variously under the TTF title or, according to whatever numerically designated U. S. Army headquarters controlled operations at Wakde–Sarmi during each period, under the following titles:

163d Infantry, 41st Infantry Division
158th Regimental Combat Team
6th Infantry Division and component parts
31st Infantry Division and component parts
123d Infantry, 33d Infantry Division

The TTF records vary from good to poor according to both the unit concerned and the combat situation obtaining. The task force general staff section Journals are fair, but lack detail on small-unit actions. In the ORB RAC AGO there are some special reports and records of the 1st Battalion (and its companies) of the 163d Infantry, 41st Infantry Division, which permit the reconstruction of the story of the seizure of Wakde Island in some detail. These records are filed in the 41st Division collection. The best After Action Report for Wakde–Sarmi is that for the period during which Headquarters, 6th Infantry Division, operated as TTF Headquarters. The records of the 6th Division's 1st, 20th, and 63d Infantry Regiments are also good. Artillery records for the TTF and its various changing and subordinate echelons are among the best for any operation described in this volume, and it is generally possible to ascertain without difficulty which artillery unit fired what mission when. Information on antiaircraft action is also complete. It is not with the TTF collection but in a file of the Antiaircraft Section of Headquarters, Sixth Army, in the ORB RAC AGO.

d. HURRICANE Task Force (HTF). The bulk of the HTF records are filed under the task force title in the HRS DRB AGO, although some material is filed under the titles 41st Infantry Division or I Corps. The HTF After Action Report for the period during which Headquarters, 41st Infantry Division, acted as HTF Headquarters provides only the barest outline of HTF Operations. The most valuable source among the HTF Headquarters records is the G–3 Section Journal, which provides a summary of messages between the headquarters and higher and lower commands. The HTF After Action Report for the period during which Headquarters, I Corps, was at Biak is poorly organized, vague, and none too accurate. The best records for operations at Biak are those of the 162d

and 186th Infantry Regiments, 41st Infantry Division, most of which are filed under the HTF title in the HRS DRB AGO. The 162d Infantry's is the best regimental After Action Report, but its Journals and Journal files are far surpassed by the S–2 and S–3 records of the 186th Infantry. The latter collection contains messages, overlays, maps, situation reports, intelligence material, and operations résumés, all excellently arranged for easy employment during research. A number of valuable records of the companies of the same two regiments are located in 41st Infantry Division files in the ORB RAC AGO, and can be used to advantage. The 163d Infantry's records for Biak, filed with those of the HTF, are poorer in quality and quantity. The 34th Infantry's records are filed with other 24th Division material in the HRS DRB AGO. Artillery records for all echelons of the HTF vary from bad to good. For instance, one artillery battalion After Action Report, some five and one-half pages long, devotes a good half of that space to describing the escape of two men from behind Japanese lines.

e. CYCLONE Task Force (CyTF). The records of Headquarters, CyTF, are generally adequate for the operation described. Most of them are filed under the task force title in the HRS DRB AGO, but some are to be found in the files of the 158th Infantry in the same place. The records of the CyTF's other major subordinate echelon—the 503d Parachute Infantry—are found under that unit's numerical designation in the HRS DRB AGO. The 503d's records are not as complete as those of the 158th Infantry.

f. TYPHOON Task Force (TyTF). Most of these records are filed under the task force title in the HRS DRB AGO and are sufficient for the operation described, although lack of planning material leaves a noticeable gap. The documents of some subordinate units, such as the 6th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop and the 6th Medical Battalion, are with the 6th Infantry Division files in the HRS DRB AGO. Other miscellaneous materials are filed with the 6th Division records in ORB RAC AGO.

g. TRADEWIND Task Force (TrTF). The most important records of this task force and its major subordinate units are filed under the task force title in the HRS DRB AGO. These records lack planning information but otherwise provide enough material for the operation described. Additional material is to be found in the files of XI Corps, 31st Infantry Division, and the 126th Infantry of the 32d Infantry Division in the HRS DRB AGO and the ORB RAC AGO.

Other U. S. Army Combat Records

a. The 81st Infantry Division. The major body of U. S. Army combat records not mentioned in the foregoing classification are those of the 81st Infantry Division and its organic and attached units engaged in operations in the western Carolines. The 81st Division's After Action Report for these operations has three parts: Angaur, Peleliu, and Ulithi and other Caroline islands. These three provide an excellent summary, but gloss over points of error or poor performance, as do most After Action Reports. The division headquarters' general staff sections' Journals and Journal files are voluminous and provide excellent material on operations, intelligence, personnel, and logistics from which to write a detailed story of the division's operations. The records of the 321st Infantry for Angaur were lost, and

the story had to be reconstructed from other available sources. For Peleliu, the 321st Infantry's files are more than adequate, as are those of the 323d Infantry for that island and for Ulithi. The 322d Infantry's records for Angaur are good. The division's artillery records are outstanding—by far the best used in preparing this volume.

b. Miscellaneous. In addition to the numerically designated ground task force units, the records of many other units were used in the preparation of this volume. These records fall into two categories: the records of task force subordinate units not organic to divisions; the records of Southwest Pacific units which, originally designated as task forces, reverted to their numerical designation after ALAMO Force "closed" the task force period of operations. For the latter group, the relevant bodies of records not discussed under the ground task force classification are those of the Eighth Army, the X Corps, and the 93d Infantry Division, all of which provide valuable information concerning the mopping-up periods following the close of task force operations and the transfer of responsibility in the areas concerned from the Sixth Army to the Eighth Army. The most important group of records of units not organic to divisions is that of the 2d, 3d, and 4th Engineer Special Brigades and their boat and shore regiments. These records are especially valuable for information concerning the landing phases of Southwest Pacific Area operations described in this volume. The records are filed variously in the HRS DRB AGO and in the collection of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, U. S. Army. Other useful records are those of nonorganic tank, engineer, tank destroyer, chemical, and field artillery units.

U. S. Navy Records

Seventh Fleet.—The largest single body of U. S. Navy records employed in the preparation of this volume were the plans and reports of Task Force 77, U. S. Seventh Fleet, for operations in the Southwest Pacific Area. These and the other records of the Allied Naval Forces, Southwest Pacific Area, are in the custody of the U. S. Navy, although copies of most of the Task Force 77 reports are in the HRS DRB AGO, filed separately or in ALAMO Force and GHQ SWPA Journals. Such reports as are not located there are in The Office of Naval Records and Library. For each of the SWPA operations discussed, there is available a Task Force 77 report which covers briefly naval planning, ship bombardment, and landing operations. Additional material for more detailed coverage of the naval phases of the various operations is found in the reports of task groups, task units, and relevant individual ships of Task Force 77.

Third and Fifth Fleet.—Plans and reports of the Fifth Fleet provide material for that unit's operations at Hollandia and those of the Third Fleet for the operations in the western Carolines. Copies of most of the relevant records are in the HRS DRB AGO, either filed separately or in the Journals of the G–3 Section GHQ SWPA.

CINCPAC – CINCPOA.—While Admiral Nimitz' Pacific Ocean Areas headquarters was technically a Joint and Allied command, its records are in the custody of the U. S. Navy, just as the records of GHQ SWPA are in the custody of the U. S. Army. Copies of most of the important CINCPAC–CINCPOA documents used in the preparation of this volume are located in the files of the HRS DRB AGO, although some were

obtained from The Office of Naval Records and Library. The records include intelligence estimates, campaign plans, staff studies, and monthly operations reports, most of them adequate for the purpose of this volume.

U. S. Marine Corps Records

Marine Corps records used in the preparation of this volume were principally the plans and reports of the 1st Marine Division and the III Amphibious Corps for operations in the Palaus. These documents were employed mainly to obtain planning information, for which they were invaluable. The story of Marine participation in the Hollandia operation is found in the report of Company A, 1st Tank Battalion, 1st Marine Division, for that operation. Copies of most of the Marine Corps records consulted are filed in the HRS DRB AGO, and the rest are in Marine Corps files.

Records of Allied Forces

Some of the Australian source material employed in the preparation of this volume was obtained by the author through the courtesy of Australian services historical groups, and copies are on file in the OCMH. The most important of these records are the report of the 6th Australian Division for operations from Aitape to Wewak, the report of Task Force 74 (the Australian cruiser-destroyer component of Allied Naval Forces, SWPA) for operations at Aitape in July 1944, and a summary of Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) airfield construction squadron activities in New Guinea. Copies of other Australian reports are to be found in U. S. Army collections. Among these is the report of the Chief Engineer of the PTF at Aitape, actually the report of No. 62 Works Wing (RAAF), which is filed in the collection of the Office of the Chief Engineer, GHQ AFPAC. Another report of the same unit (then redesignated No. 62 Airfield Construction Wing) for its operations at Noemfoor is included among the records of the CyTF. These two reports were invaluable for information concerning engineer activities at Aitape and Noemfoor. An excellent source for details of landing operations at Morotai is a British document entitled British Combined Operations Observers, SWPA, Report of Naval and Army Observers on the Morotai Operation. A copy of this report is filed with the TrTF collection in the HRS DRB AGO.

Sources of Japanese Information

Japanese source material falls into three major categories: a series of postwar studies prepared by former Japanese officers; Japanese documents captured and used in wartime; and interrogations of Japanese prisoners.

Japanese Studies in World War II

The most comprehensive available accounts of Japanese operations described in this volume are those contained in the series entitled Japanese Studies in World War II, prepared by former Japanese Army and Navy officers in Tokyo under the direction of the Historical Section, G–2 GHQ FEC. Translations of most of these studies—which total about 125 separate reports—were accomplished by the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (ATIS SCAP), in Japan. Parts of many of these studies were reorganized and retranslated by Japanese

language experts of the Pacific Section, OCMH, and questionable parts of all translations were checked against the original Japanese by the same men. The studies provide invaluable information concerning Japanese high level command decisions, planning, orders, personnel, order of battle, dates, and times, much of which cannot be found in other records. The Japanese who prepared the studies relied upon available official Japanese records, on personal diaries, on their own memories, and on the memories of other Japanese officers participating in the actions described. Wherever possible, information in the studies was checked against other sources of information, such as captured documents and U. S. Army combat records. Such checking indicated that the studies are remarkably accurate except for minor discrepancies of dates and times. The major deficiency of the Japanese Army studies used in the preparation of this volume is their lack of data concerning the decisions of division or regimental commanders and the activities of smaller units. A number of the studies fall into subseries. For instance, there are five separate studies covering the planning, operations, and logistics of the *18th Army* during that unit's activities in New Guinea, and there are two annexes to these five, one of them providing maps and the other supply and personnel statistics. Among the most valuable of the studies is the third of the *18th Army* group—*18th Army* Operations III—which contains much detailed information concerning Japanese operations at Aitape. The most valuable single source for Japanese strategic planning was the study entitled History of the *Army Section, Imperial General Headquarters,* 1941–1945, which contains summaries of plans, résumés of high command conferences, and the story of decisions at the highest Japanese command levels. Some of the studies concerning Japanese naval operations were also valuable, particularly for the development of the story of Japanese attempts to reinforce Biak. Copies of both the translated and Japanese versions of these studies are in the OCMH files. Since there were many changes in the numbering and title system of the studies during their preparation, the OCMH copies have different numbers and a few different titles (in translation) from the numbers and titles initially assigned by the G–2 Section, GHQ FEC.

Contemporary Official Japanese Records

Official Japanese documents captured during the war are to be found in translated form in various U. S. Army files. Among the most important of these translations are those found in the ALAMO Force G–2 Weekly Reports in the files of the G–2 Section GSUSA; the 24th Infantry Division's report for the Hollandia operation, in the HRS DRB AGO; the files of the G–2 Sections of the PTF and its major subordinate echelons in the HRS DRB AGO; and the files of other task forces or divisions in the same collection. One of the most valuable of the official Japanese captured documents was the Field Diary of the *2d Battalion, 80th Infantry, 20th Division,* for that unit's operations in the Aitape area. This diary is filed with other records of the G–2 Section, 32d Infantry Division, in the custody of the ORB RAC AGO. The Current Translations and Enemy Publications of ATIS GHQ SWPA, copies of which are filed in the HRS DRB AGO, also contain

valuable translations of official Japanese records captured during the war. Discussion of such records would not be complete without mention of a Japanese wartime document entitled *Army Section, Imperial GHQ,* Special Report on Lessons from the War, No. 33, Operations of the *Yuki Group [36th Division]* in the Biak Island and Sarmi Areas. A translation of this official Japanese report is filed in the OCMH.

Interrogations of Japanese Prisoners

Wartime Interrogations.—Wartime interrogations of Japanese prisoners fall into two categories: the preliminary "tactical" interrogations made at the front by Japanese language experts attached to combat units; and interrogations undertaken at prisoner of war compounds in rear areas. Copies of the former interrogations are in the files of the tactical units concerned in the custody of the HRS DRB AGO. Many of these are of value for checking information obtained from other sources, such as Allied intelligence estimates, the Japanese studies, and wartime translations of captured documents. The principal body of interrogations of the second category used in the preparation of this volume are those filed with the ATIS GHQ SWPA records in the HRS DRB AGO. Since many of these rear area strategic interrogations are nontactical in nature, they add little new information for the ground combat story at a given time. On the other hand, they are invaluable for material concerning the development of Allied intelligence estimates of the Japanese situation with respect to future operations and Japan's ability to wage war at a given time or place. They contain, for instance, much information upon which Allied forces based their estimates of Japanese war production.

Postwar Interrogations.—The most important postwar interrogations are those of the United States Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS), some of which have been published and are listed below under published works. In addition to this group, many special interrogations were conducted by ATIS SCAP in Japan. At the time of this writing, no complete file of the latter group is available, but copies of those employed in the preparation of this volume, as well as some unpublished USSBS interrogations similarly used, are located in the files of the OCMH or the G–2 Section, GSUSA. Such interrogations are especially valuable for material concerning Japanese planning.

Miscellaneous Sources of Japanese Information

In this category are included publications of the Military Intelligence Division, War Department General Staff, especially those concerning Japanese Order of Battle and articles on Japanese defenses on Biak and Peleliu. The latter are found in the MID WD serial publication *Military Reports* for December 1944 and January 1945, respectively; various Japanese documents now filed with the Central Intelligence Agency collection in the National Archives, many of which were perused or translated by Japanese language experts in the Pacific Section, OCMH; and, last but not least, an ATIS GHQ SWPA publication providing a translated list of Japanese Army officers, giving rank and position as of September 1942. The U. S. Navy Historical Section maintains a roster of Japanese Navy Officers.

Unpublished Studies

Manuscript Histories

As indicated in the preface to this volume there was no contemporary historical coverage of U. S. Army unit operations in the Southwest Pacific Area other than that provided for by U. S. Army regulations. However, a historian accompanied the 81st Infantry Division during that unit's operations in the Palaus and later prepared an incomplete manuscript entitled "The Palaus Campaign." Written by Maj. Nelson Drummond, Jr., this MS provides a detailed account of 81st Division activities on Angaur, especially for the 321st Infantry—an extremely fortunate circumstance since that unit's records were lost. The work relies for the most part on official records of the 81st Division and those of its attached units, but it also includes some material which Major Drummond obtained by observation and interview. The manuscript does not finish the story of Angaur and has little information on operations of 81st Division units on Peleliu. A copy is on file in the OCMH.

Special Studies

A number of special studies and reports produced by students at advanced officer courses in the various U. S. Army service schools—principally The Infantry School and the Command and General Staff college—were perused in the preparation of this volume in an attempt to find additional material not included in official wartime records. Despite the obvious potential value of such studies written by officers who participated in the operations, most of them are only reworkings of unit After Action Reports and are hence of little value. Two notable exceptions are as follows:

Maj. Edward O. Logan (formerly S–2, 124th Infantry), The Enveloping Maneuver of the 124th Infantry Regiment, East of the Driniumor, Aitape, New Guinea, 31 July–10 August 1944. This report, written at The Infantry School, Fort Benning, Ga., for the Advanced Officer's Course, 1946–1947, was supplied to the author through the courtesy of the library of The Infantry School, where the report is filed. It supplements the sketchy information concerning TED Force operations found in official records and provides valuable extracts from the Journal of the 3d Battalion, 124th Infantry, 31st Infantry Division, that are not in other files.

Lt. Col. Cecil C. Snoddy, Jr., *et al.*, of Committee No. 14, Armored Officers' Advanced Course, 1949–1950, Armor in Angaur–Peleliu Campaign. This research report, prepared at The Armored School, Fort Knox, Ky., provides material concerning tank operations in the Palaus not to be found in official records. A copy is filed in the OCMH.

AAF History

A valuable manuscript source is found in Dr. Robert F. Futrell's draft of chapters concerning the approach to the Philippines and the invasion of Leyte from a projected fifth volume of the series THE ARMY AIR FORCES IN WORLD WAR II, bearing the tentative title, "The Pacific—MATTERHORN to Nagasaki." Two manuscript chapters were made available to the author through the courtesy of Dr. Futrell, and a photostatic copy of this material is in the files of the OCMH. The chapters provide valuable data with regard to air force plan-

ning and operations immediately preceding the invasion of the Philippines and are especially useful for coverage of air activities during the Morotai and Palau operations.

Miscellaneous Sources of Information

Interviews

In order to obtain additional information, especially concerning command decisions, the author interviewed a number of officers who participated in the operations described. Copies of all interview notes are filed in the OCMH. Interviews with the following officers, listed according to the positions they held, produced much valuable information:

Lt. Gen. Robert L. Eichelberger. CG I Corps and Eighth Army; Comdr. RECKLESS and HURRICANE Task Forces.

Lt. Gen. Charles P. Hall. CG XI Corps; Comdr. PERSECUTION and TRADEWIND Task Forces.

Brig. Gen. Julian W. Cunningham. CG 112th Cavalry Regimental Combat Team.

Col. Oliver P. Newman. CO 186th Infantry, 41st Infantry Division.

Col. Edward M. Starr. CO 124th Infantry, 31st Infantry Division.

Lt. Col. Peter L. Hooper. Executive Officer, 112th Cavalry Regimental Combat Team.

Maj. Joseph L. Manz. Adjutant, 169th Infantry, 43d Infantry Division.

Capt. Leonard Lowry. CO Company I, 127th Infantry, 32d Infantry Division.

In connection with these interviews, it must be pointed out that none were undertaken until the spring of 1947, by which time memory had perhaps dulled or events of one campaign had become mixed in the mind with those of others.

Correspondence

A number of letters written to the author in answer to specific questions provided additional information used in preparing this volume. These letters, with inclosures, are in the files of the OCMH. Some wartime correspondence, part of it of a semiofficial nature and some of it personal, was also lent to the author. Copies of such letters are not to be found in official files. The most important correspondence used in the preparation of this manuscript consists of the following:

Letters, John Balfour, Office of the Official War Historian, Australia, to author, 21 May 1947, 1 October 1947, 30 April 1948, 26 May 1948, 15 March 1949. Copies in OCMH.

Letters, Flt. Lt. Arthur L. Davies (RAAF), War History Section, Headquarters RAAF, to author, 8 March 1948, 2 April 1948, 7 July 1948. Copies in OCMH.

Letter, Brig. Gen. Julian W. Cunningham (CG 112th Cavalry RCT and Comdr., South Force, PERSECUTION Task Force) to RANGOON SIX (Maj. Gen. William H. Gill, CT 32d Infantry Division and Comdr., PERSECUTION Covering Force, PERSECUTION Task Force), 30 July 1944. Copy filed in the OCMH.

Letters, Col. Edward M. Starr (CO, 124th RCT, TED Force of PERSECUTION Task Force) to Maj. Gen. John C. Persons (CT, 31st Infantry Division), 6 July 1944, 22 July 1944, 13 August 1944. These letters were lent to the author by Colonel Starr, but are not to be found in official files.

Miscellaneous Notes

Lt. Gen. Robert L. Eichelberger. Dictation dated 4 April 1948, entitled Back-

ground for the Biak Operation. A copy of these notes, which were prepared by the general for his use during the writing of a series of articles in *The Saturday Evening Post,* is on file in the OCMH.

General Eichelberger, memorandum dated 10 February 1949, entitled The Biak Operation. This memorandum was for Mr. Milton MacKaye, who collaborated with the general in the preparation of *The Saturday Evening Post* articles. A copy is on file in the OCMH.

Extracts and Notes from the Personal Diary of Maj. Gen. Paul J. Mueller, CG, 81st Infantry Division, covering the period 6 July–25 November 1944. These notes and extracts were prepared by Maj. Nelson L. Drummond and used in the preparation of his manuscript on the Palau operation. A copy of the notes is on file in the OCMH.

Capt. Leonard Lowry, CO, Co. I, 127th Infantry, 32d Infantry Division, notes entitled Actions of 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, During Aitape Campaign, 1944. Copy in OCMH files.

Notes and Comments on Volume

Prior to publication of this volume, almost fifty officers (or ex-officers, now civilians) who participated in the events described, or who otherwise had some intimate knowledge of some of those events, read all or parts of the manuscript, supplying additional material and making suggestions. Copies of all these notes are on file in the OCMH, as are copies of reviews from official historical agencies of the U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and the Australian Army. In the footnotes, these comments are cited as letters to Gen. Orlando Ward, Chief of Military History.

Published Works

General

While not all the published works listed below are cited in this volume, all furnish background information bearing on the approach to the Philippines.

Arnold, General of the Air Force Henry H. *Global Mission.* New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949. An interesting and valuable source of information concerning the Army Air Forces' plans and policies.

Arnold, General of the Army Henry H. *Second Report of the Commanding General of the Army Air Forces to the Secretary of War.* Washington: War Department, 1945. An official, summary account of Army Air Forces action during the last two years of the war.

Craven, Wesley Frank, and Cate, James Lea (Eds.). *The Pacific: Guadalcanal to Saipan, August 1942 to July 1944.* Vol. IV in the series THE ARMY AIR FORCES IN WORLD WAR II. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1950. This, the Air Forces' official history, provides information concerning Army Air Forces planning and operations.

Eichelberger, Lt. Gen. Robert L., and MacKaye, Milton. "Our Bloody Jungle Road to Tokyo," *The Saturday Evening Post,* CXXII, Nos. 7–13, (13 August 1949–24 September 1949). A series of seven articles concerning General Eichelberger's experiences during the war. Written principally from the public relations angle, these articles are not always objective and they contain minor inaccuracies.

Eichelberger, Robert L., and MacKaye, Milton. *Our Jungle Road to Tokyo.* New York: The Viking Press, 1950. An extension of *The Saturday Evening Post* articles

in book form. There are many minor inaccuracies concerning both operations and planning. By no means scholarly, the volume does provide many interesting sidelights on the operations in which General Eichelberger participated.

Feldt, Comdr. Eric A. (RAN). *The Coast Watchers.* Melbourne: Oxford Press, 1946. Interesting and authoritative accounts of intelligence activities behind the Japanese lines. There is also a shorter American edition.

Halsey, Fleet Admiral William F., and Bryan, Lt. Comdr. J., III. *Admiral Halsey's Story.* New York and London: Whittlesey House (McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc.), 1947. A well-written and interesting account of Admiral Halsey's activities providing, *inter alia,* the story of Admiral Halsey's opposition to the invasion of the Palaus.

Heavy, Brig. Gen. William F. *Down Ramp! The Story of the Army Amphibian Engineers.* Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1947. A summary account.

Hough, Maj. Frank O., USMCR. *The Island War: The United States Marine Corps in the Pacific.* Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1947. Although based on official records, this unofficial account is written from the Marine Corps' point of view. It provides a reasonably accurate summary account of Marine action.

Hough, Maj. Frank O., USMCR. *The Assault on Peleliu.* Washington: Historical Division, Headquarters U. S. Marine Corps, 1950. An excellent detailed account of Marine action in the Palaus. This is the Marine Corps' official history of the Palau operation.

Joint Army–Navy Assessment Committee, The. *Japanese Naval and Merchant Shipping Losses During World War II, By All Causes.* Washington: Navy Department (NAVESOS P–468), 1947. A detailed listing based on official Allied and Japanese records available at the time of publication. Information obtained since publication indicates that there are a few errors in the listings.

Kenney, Gen. George C. *General Kenney Reports: A Personal History of the Pacific War.* New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1949. Based on personal papers, memory, and official records. This account presents the picture as General Kenney saw it from his position as Commander, Allied Air Forces, SWPA, 1942–1945. There are some minor inaccuracies, but much information, especially concerning personal relations, is included that is not to be found in official records.

King, Fleet Admiral Ernest J. *United States Navy at War: Second Official Report to the Secretary of the Navy, Covering Combat Operations March 1, 1944, to March 1, 1945.* Washington: *The United States News,* 1945.

Marshall, General of the Army George C. *Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, July 1, 1943, to June 30, 1945, to the Secretary of War.* Washington: War Department, 1945.

Office of the Chief Engineer, General Headquarters, Army Forces Pacific. ENGINEERS OF THE SOUTHWEST PACIFIC, 1941–1945. *Engineers in Theater Operations.* Washington: OCE GHQ AFPAC, 1946. This is Vol. I of an eight-volume work bearing the same series title, some other volumes of which have already been published. The series is ostensibly the report of the Chief Engineer, GHQ SWPA and GHQ AFPAC, Maj. Gen. Hugh J. Casey. Most of the research and writing for the volume was accomplished by Dr. Karl

C. Dod, under the direction of Lt. Col. George A. Meidling, general editor. This official account is based on official Allied records and on interviews; it is a valuable and accurately documented account.

Robson, R. W. (Ed.). *The Pacific Islands Handbook, 1944* (North American Edition). New York: The Macmillan Company, 1946.

United States Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS). *Summary Report (Pacific War)*. Washington: USSBS, 1946. A brief account emphasizing the part of air power.

USSBS, Military Analysis Division. *Air Campaigns of the Pacific War*. Washington: USSBS, 1947. A summary account useful for general information.

USSBS, Military Analysis Division. *Employment of Forces Under the Southwest Pacific Command*. Washington: USSBS, 1947. A brief account from the high command level. Almost a verbatim copy, with certain organizational changes, of manuscripts prepared overseas in 1945 by the author and other members of the Historical Division, G–3 GHQ SWPA. It is accurate and authoritative insofar as the original authors were able to make it so from documents available to them.

USSBS, Naval Analysis Division. *Interrogations of Japanese Officials*. Two vols. Washington: Navy Department (OPNAV–P–03–100), 1946. Extremely valuable interrogations of Japanese high commanders and cabinet members. Some of the interrogations must be used cautiously, for the Japanese who were interrogated tried to please and sometimes responded according to the interrogators' branch of service.

USSBS (Pacific), Naval Analysis Division. *The Campaigns of the Pacific War*. Washington: USSBS, 1946. Emphasis is given to summaries of naval engagements. There are a few minor errors discovered from study of sources not employed by the writers.

Unit Histories

After the war many unit histories were published, most of them written by and for the wartime members of the various units. Most of these books are not very scholarly and contain a great deal of material written from the public relations point of view. Many of them, however, contain interesting sidelights on unit operations and bits or pieces of information not appearing in official records, especially exploits of individuals or small units. The most important ones consulted are as follows:

McCartney, 1st Lt. William F. *The Jungleers: A History of the 41st Infantry Division*. Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1948.

McMillan, George. *The Old Breed: A History of the First Marine Division in World War II*. Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1949.

The Division Public Relations Section. *The 6th Infantry Division in World War II, 1939–1945*. Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1947. Among the best of the unit histories.

The 81st Wildcat Division Historical Committee. *The 81st Infantry Wildcat Division in World War II*. Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1948. An outstanding unit history which is based primarily upon official records.

The 33d Infantry Division Historical Committee. *The Golden Cross: A History of the 33d Infantry Division in World War II*. Washington: Infantry Journal Press.

Based upon a manuscript prepared by Capt. Sanford H. Winston and reflecting some sound research.

Zimmer, Col. Joseph E. *The History of the 43d Infantry Division, 1941–1945.* Baton Rouge: The Army and Navy Publishing Co., n. d.

Anon. *History of the Second Engineer Special Brigade, United States Army, World War II.* Harrisburg: The Telegraph Press, 1946. This volume is obviously based on extensive research into official records and provides a good summary account.

Anon. *Surf and Sand: The Saga of the 533d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment and 1461st Engineer Maintenance Company, 1942–1945.* Andover: The Andover Press, Ltd., 1947.

Anon. *History of the 31st Infantry Division in Training and Combat, 1940–1945.* Baton Rouge: The Army and Navy Publishing Co., 1946.

List of Abbreviations

The method of citing Army and Navy documents employed in this volume and others of the Pacific series is designed for brevity and to furnish relevant information concerning the source, character, date, and subject matter of the documents. Unless otherwise indicated, all documents cited are in the custody of the Historical Records Section, Departmental Records Branch, Administrative Services Division, Office of the Adjutant General, U. S. Army. Most of the abbreviations used in the footnotes in this volume are based upon the U. S. Army's Technical Manual 20–205, Dictionary of United States Army Terms. Unfamiliar official or unofficial abbreviations and the short titles of commanders and units are explained in the following list:

AAA	Antiaircraft Artillery
AAF SWPA	Allied Air Forces, Southwest Pacific Area
AAO	Antiaircraft officer
AC	Amphibious Corps (A Marine command corresponding to the Army's corps)
ACofS	Assistant Chief of Staff
ADC	Assistant Division Commander
Adm O	Administrative Order
Advon5AF	Headquarters, Advanced Echelon, U. S. Fifth Air Force
AF	Air Force
AGS SWPA	Allied Geographic Section, Southwest Pacific Area
AIB SWPA	Allied Intelligence Bureau, Southwest Pacific Area
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
AK	Cargo ship, auxiliary
AKA	Cargo ship, attack
ALF SWPA	Allied Land Forces, Southwest Pacific Area
ALP	Air liaison party
AMF	Australian Military Forces
ANF SWPA	Allied Naval Forces, Southwest Pacific Area
APA	Transport, attack
APD	Transport (high speed)
Arty	Artillery
ATF	Ocean tug, fleet
ATIS SWPA	Allied Translator and Interpreter Section, Southwest Pacific Area
AW	Automatic weapons

BAR	Browning automatic rifle
CA	Heavy cruiser
CB	Naval Construction Battalion
CCS	Combined Chiefs of Staff
CG	Commanding General
CINCPAC	Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet
CINCPOA	Commander in Chief, Pacific Ocean Areas
CINCSWPA	Commander in Chief, Southwest Pacific Area
CL	Light cruiser
CM-IN	Classified message, incoming
CM-OUT	Classified message, outgoing
CofS	Chief of Staff
COIC	Combined Operations and Intelligence Center, General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area
COMGENCENPAC	Commanding General, U. S. Army Forces in the Central Pacific Area
COMINCH	Commander in Chief, U. S. Fleet
COMSOPAC	Commander, South Pacific Area
CRO	Chief Regulating Office(r), General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area
CruDiv	Cruiser Division
CTF	Commander, Task Force
CTG	Commander, Task Group
CTU	Commander, Task Unit
CVE	Aircraft carrier, escort
CVL	Aircraft carrier, small
CyTF	CYCLONE Task Force
DofA	Department of the Army
DD	Destroyer
DE	Destroyer escort
DSEI	Daily Summary of Enemy Intelligence, G–2 Section, General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area
DUKW	Amphibian, 2½-ton, 6x6 truck, used for short runs from ship to shore
EB&SR	Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment
ESB	Engineer Special Brigade
ExecO	Executive officer
FAO	Field artillery officer
FEC	Far East Command
F/Lt	Flight Lieutenant
FO	Field Order
G–1	Personnel Section of divisional or higher headquarters; the ACofS for Personnel

G–2	Military Intelligence Section; the ACofS for Intelligence
G–3	Operations and Training Section; the ACofS for Operations and Training
G–4	Supply and Evacuation Section; the ACofS for Supply and Evacuation
GHQ AFPAC	General Headquarters, Army Forces Pacific
GHQ SWPA	General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area
GSUSA	General Staff, U. S. Army
HMG	Heavy machine gun
HRS DRB AGO	Historical Records Section, Departmental Records Branch, Administrative Services Division, Office of The Adjutant General, U. S. Army
IJN	Imperial Japanese Navy
Int	Intelligence
InterSec	Headquarters, Intermediate Section, U. S. Army Services of Supply, Southwest Pacific Area
JAAF	Japanese Army Air Force
JANAC	The Joint Army-Navy Assessment Committee
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JICPOA	Joint Intelligence Center, Pacific Ocean Areas
Jnl	Journal
JPS	Joint Staff Planners
JSSC	Joint Strategic Survey Committee
JWPC	Joint War Plans Committee
LCI	Landing craft, infantry
LCI(G)	Landing craft, infantry gunboat
LCM	Landing craft, mechanized
LCPR	Landing craft, personnel, ramp
LCS	Landing craft, support
LCT	Landing craft, tank
LCVP	Landing craft, vehicle & personnel
LF	Landing force
LI	Logistics instructions
LO	Liaison officer
LSD	Landing ship, dock
LST	Landing ship, tank
LVT	Landing vehicle, tracked
LVT(A)	Landing vehicle, tracked (armored)
MC	Medical Corps
MID	Military Intelligence Division
MLR	Main line of resistance
Mtg	Meeting

NEI	Netherlands East Indies
NICA	Netherlands Indies Civil Administration
OCE	Office of the Chief of Engineers
OCMH	Office of the Chief of Military History
OI	Operation(s) instruction(s)
OPD	Operations Division, War Department General Staff
Opns	Operations
ORB RAC AGO	Organization Records Branch, Records Administration Center, Office of The Adjutant General, U. S. Army
Ord	Ordnance
PC	Patrol vessel, submarine chaser
PCF	PERSECUTION Covering Force of the PERSECUTION Task Force
Per	Periodic
PF	Patrol vessel, frigate
Plng	Planning
POA	Pacific Ocean Areas
PT	Patrol vessel, motor torpedo boat
PTF	PERSECUTION Task Force
PW	Prisoner of War
QM	Quartermaster
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
Rcn	Reconnaissance
RCT	Regimental Combat Team
RN	Royal Navy
RTF	RECKLESS Task Force
S–1	Personnel Section of regimental or battalion headquarters; officer in charge of the Section
S–2	Intelligence Section; officer in charge of the Section
S–3	Operations Section; officer in charge of the Section
S–4	Supply Section; officer in charge of the Section
SC	Submarine chaser (110-foot)
SCAP	Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Japan
SOPAC	South Pacific Area
SPM	Self-propelled mount
Sqn	Squadron
SSUSA	Special Staff, U. S. Army
TD	Tank destroyer
TF	Task Force
Tng	Training
TSMG	Thompson submachine gun
TrTF	TRADEWIND Task Force

TTF	TORNADO Task Force
TyTF	TYPHOON Task Force
UDT	Underwater demolition team
USA	U. S. Army
USAFISPA	U. S. Army Forces in the South Pacific Area
USAFMIDPAC	U. S. Army Forces, Middle Pacific
USAFPOA	U. S. Army Forces, Pacific Ocean Areas
USASOS	U. S. Army Services of Supply (Southwest Pacific Area)
USF	U. S. Forces
USSBS	U. S. Strategic Bombing Survey
WD	War Department (now Department of the Army)
WO	Warning Order
YMS	Mine sweeper (district motor)

Basic Military Map Symbols*

Symbols within a rectangle indicate a military unit, within a triangle an observation post, and within a circle a supply point.

Military Units—Identification

Antiaircraft Artillery . . . . . 

Armored Command . . . . . 

Army Air Forces . . . . . 

Artillery, except Antiaircraft and Coast Artillery . . . . . 

Cavalry, Horse . . . . . 

Cavalry, Mechanized . . . . . 

Chemical Warfare Service . . . . . 

Coast Artillery . . . . . 

Engineers . . . . . 

Infantry . . . . . 

Medical Corps . . . . . 

Ordnance Department . . . . . 

Quartermaster Corps . . . . . 

Signal Corps . . . . . 

Tank Destroyer . . . . . 

Transportation Corps . . . . . 

Veterinary Corps . . . . . 

Airborne units are designated by combining a gull wing symbol with the arm or service symbol:

Airborne Artillery . . . . . 

Airborne Infantry . . . . . 

*For complete listing of symbols see FM 21–30, from which these are taken.

Size Symbols

The following symbols placed either in boundary lines or above the rectangle, triangle, or circle inclosing the identifying arm or service symbol indicate the size of military organization:

Squad . . . . . •

Section . . . . . ••

Platoon . . . . . •••

Company, troop, battery, Air Force flight I

Battalion, cavalry squadron, or Air Force squadron II

Regiment or group; combat team (with abbreviation CT following identifying numeral) III

Brigade, Combat Command of Armored Division, or Air Force Wing . X

Division or Command of an Air Force XX

Corps or Air Force XXX

Army XXXX

Group of Armies XXXXX

EXAMPLES

The letter or number to the left of the symbol indicates the unit designation; that to the right, the designation of the parent unit to which it belongs. Letters or numbers above or below boundary lines designate the units separated by the lines:

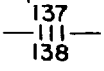
Company A, 137th Infantry . . . . . 

8th Field Artillery Battalion . . . . . 

Combat Command A, 1st Armored Division . . . . . 

Observation Post, 23d Infantry . . . . . 

Command Post, 5th Infantry Division . . . . . 

Boundary between 137th and 138th Infantry . . . . . 

Weapons

Machine gun . . . . . 

Gun . . . . . 

Gun battery . . . . . 

Howitzer or Mortar . . . . . 

Tank . . . . . 

Self-propelled gun . . . . . 

UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II

The following volumes have been published:

The War Department
- *Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations*
- *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division*
- *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare: 1941–1942*
- *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare: 1943–1944*
- *Global Logistics and Strategy: 1940–1943*
- *Global Logistics and Strategy: 1943–1945*
- *The Army and Economic Mobilization*
- *The Army and Industrial Manpower*

The Army Ground Forces
- *The Organization of Ground Combat Troops*
- *The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops*

The Army Service Forces
- *The Organization and Role of the Army Service Forces*

The Western Hemisphere
- *The Framework of Hemisphere Defense*
- *Guarding the United States and Its Outposts*

The War in the Pacific
- *The Fall of the Philippines*
- *Guadalcanal: The First Offensive*
- *Victory in Papua*
- *CARTWHEEL: The Reduction of Rabaul*
- *Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls*
- *Campaign in the Marianas*
- *The Approach to the Philippines*
- *Leyte: The Return to the Philippines*
- *Triumph in the Philippines*
- *Okinawa: The Last Battle*
- *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years*

The Mediterranean Theater of Operations
- *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West*
- *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*
- *Salerno to Cassino*
- *Cassino to the Alps*

The European Theater of Operations
- *Cross-Channel Attack*
- *Breakout and Pursuit*
- *The Lorraine Campaign*
- *The Siegfried Line Campaign*
- *The Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge*
- *The Last Offensive*
- *Riviera to the Rhine*
- *The Supreme Command*
- *Logistical Support of the Armies, Volume I*
- *Logistical Support of the Armies, Volume II*

The Middle East Theater
- *The Persian Corridor and Aid to Russia*

The China-Burma-India Theater
- *Stilwell's Mission to China*
- *Stilwell's Command Problems*
- *Time Runs Out in CBI*

The Technical Services
- *The Chemical Warfare Service: Organizing for War*
- *The Chemical Warfare Service: From Laboratory to Field*
- *The Chemical Warfare Service: Chemicals in Combat*
- *The Corps of Engineers: Troops and Equipment*
- *The Corps of Engineers: The War Against Japan*
- *The Corps of Engineers: The War Against Germany*
- *The Corps of Engineers: Military Construction in the United States*
- *The Medical Department: Hospitalization and Evacuation; Zone of Interior*
- *The Medical Department: Medical Service in the Mediterranean and Minor Theaters*
- *The Medical Department: Medical Service in the European Theater of Operations*
- *The Ordnance Department: Planning Munitions for War*
- *The Ordnance Department: Procurement and Supply*
- *The Ordnance Department: On Beachhead and Battlefront*
- *The Quartermaster Corps: Organization, Supply, and Services, Volume I*
- *The Quartermaster Corps: Organization, Supply, and Services, Volume II*
- *The Quartermaster Corps: Operations in the War Against Japan*
- *The Quartermaster Corps: Operations in the War Against Germany*
- *The Signal Corps: The Emergency*
- *The Signal Corps: The Test*
- *The Signal Corps: The Outcome*
- *The Transportation Corps: Responsibilities, Organization, and Operations*
- *The Transportation Corps: Movements, Training, and Supply*
- *The Transportation Corps: Operations Overseas*

Special Studies
- *Chronology: 1941–1945*
- *Military Relations Between the United States and Canada: 1939–1945*
- *Rearming the French*
- *Three Battles: Arnaville, Altuzzo, and Schmidt*
- *The Women's Army Corps*
- *Civil Affairs: Soldiers Become Governors*
- *Buying Aircraft: Materiel Procurement for the Army Air Forces*
- *The Employment of Negro Troops*
- *Manhattan: The Army and the Atomic Bomb*

Pictorial Record
- *The War Against Germany and Italy: Mediterranean and Adjacent Areas*
- *The War Against Germany: Europe and Adjacent Areas*
- *The War Against Japan*

INDEX

Adachi, Lt. Gen. Hatazo: 48, 86–87, 87n, 90, 93, 95, 97–98, 99, 145–46, 147–49, 168, 171, 185–86, 195–96, 205n. *See also* Japanese units, *18th Army*.

Admiralty Islands: 31, 39, 49, 51–52, 87, 90, 91, 214–15, 494
  seizure and development: 26, 89, 208
  strategic importance: 5–9, 90

Afua: 111–202, *passim*.

A-GO Operation: 347–49, 351, 358, 359, 361–62, 398, 444

Air attacks, Allied, carrier-based. *See also* Air plans; Close air support; Strategic air support.
  Aitape: 117, 130
  Hollandia: 61, 68, 90
  Marianas: 8, 358–59
  Palaus: 90
  Philippines: 455–56, 491–92
  Truk: 8
  Wewak: 130

Air attacks, Allied, land-based. *See also* Air plans; Close air support.
  co-ordination with artillery: 221, 224, 519
  destruction of vegetation: 244n, 558, 564–65
  effect on fortification: 382, 410
  on Japanese combat vessels: 354
  on Japanese shipping: 86, 347
  skip bombing: 382
  strafing: 103, 117, 215n, 355, 388, 447, 471, 482, 500, 509

Air attacks, Allied, targets. *See also* Air plans; Close air support; Strategic air support.
  Aitape area: 117, 130
  Arafura Sea islands: 455
  Biak: 290, 296, 382
  Caroline Islands: 49, 494
  Celebes: 455, 481–82
  Ceram: 455, 481
  Halmahera: 455, 481–82
  Hollandia area: 49–50, 92
  Noemfoor: 407, 410, 419
  Palaus: 494–95, 519
  Vogelkop Peninsula: 407
  Wakde-Sarmi: 24, 50, 223–24
  Western New Guinea area: 49–50, 232–33, 455
  Wewak: 48, 49–50

Air attacks, Japanese
  Biak: 296–97, 315, 352, 357, 394
  Hollandia: 73, 78
  Morotai: 491, 493n

Air attacks, Japanese—Continued
  Owi: 352–53
  Sansapor–Mar area: 447

Air dispositions, Japanese, SWPA: 92

Air force units. *See* Fifth Air Force; Seventh Air Force; Thirteenth Air Force.

Air losses, Japanese: 50–51, 348–49

Air observers. *See* Reconnaissance.

Air plans
  Biak Operation: 286–87
  Central Pacific: 453–54
  Halmahera region: 450–52
  Hollandia and Aitape Operation: 19–24, 43
  Noemfoor Operation: 401, 402–03
  Palaus and Morotai Operations: 453, 456, 464–66
  Sansapor–Mar Operation: 431, 432–33
  Wakde–Sarmi Operation: 214–15

Air reconnaissance and photography. *See* Reconnaissance.

Air reinforcements, Japanese: 348–50

Air supply: 34, 67, 81, 127, 478

Air support. *See* Close air support; Strategic air support.

Airborne operations
  at Noemfoor: 411–16
  dummy parachutists dropped: 49
  plans to drop paratroopers: 20

Aircraft. *See* B–24's; B–25's; B–29's; Beaufighters; Beauforts; C–47's; PB4Y's.

Airfield development, Allied
  Aitape: 23, 34, 36, 103, 108–10
  Biak: 281–82, 288–89, 300–301, 340, 344, 375, 392–94, 401–02
  Hollandia: 34, 36, 77, 81, 108, 108n, 109
  Morotai: 478–79, 490–91
  Noemfoor: 397, 402–03, 410, 422–23
  Palaus: 530, 548–49, 550, 573–75
  Sansapor–Mar: 437–40, 446–49
  Wakde–Sarmi: 211, 278–79

Airfield development, Allied, construction problems
  construction on virgin terrain: 530
  drainage: 108, 108n, 394, 491
  heavy equipment: 439–40
  obtaining engineer units: 402, 437–39
  responsibility for selection of sites: 479
  shipping problems: 32–34, 35–36, 437–40
  soil conditions: 549
  steel matting: 108, 448
  surfacing material: 394, 491
  unloading equipment: 490

Airfield development, Japanese
Aitape: 22
Biak: 281–82
Hollandia: 18
Noemfoor: 398
Philippine Islands: 456
Wakde–Sarmi: 20
Western New Guinea: 20
Airfields, Allied
advancing the land-based bomber line: 10–11, 13, 425, 425n, 450–52
position in strategic planning: 10–11, 13, 207–08, 279, 425, 425n, 449, 452–53
relation of SWPA airfields to operations in Central Pacific: 26–27, 208, 211, 217, 379
Aitape, use as Allied staging area: 218, 480–81
Aitape Garrison Unit: 113
Aitape Operation: 103–205. *See also* PERSECUTION Task Force.
battle for the Driniumor: 152–205
beachhead and airfield seizure: 103, 105–08, *passim.*
casualties: 204–05, 577, 578
forces, organization of: 25, 28, 33, 103, 115, 136, 160, 175, 189, 203
planning and preparation for: 19–42, 51–52, 103–05, *passim.*
terrain and airfield development: 22
troop dispositions, Allied: 114–17, 134–37, 138, 139–43, 155–56, 173–174
troop dispositions, Japanese: 116, 145–50, 166, 167
troop strength, Allied: 29, 32, 133, 135, 138
troop strength, Japanese: 29, 113, 147, 186, 186n
AK (Cargo ship, auxiliary)
employment as fire support ship: 104–05
use in assaults: 36–37, 38–39, 109–10, 110n
AKA (Cargo ship, attack)
employment as cargo overflow vessel: 475
use in assaults: 36, 37, 58
ALAMO Force: 29–32, 34–35, 82–83, 131–34, 137–38, 204, 210–12, 218, 237–38, 258, 259, 282, 284, 285, 320, 341, 342–43, 345, 346, 400–401, 402, 403, 412–13, 430, 438–39, 448n–49n, 479
Lt. Gen. Walter Krueger in command of: 14–16, 33
organization of: 14–16, 30, 208n, 463
position in SWPA chain of command: 15, 33
Reserve: 31, 32
supply and replacement responsibility: 396, 437, 477–78
ALAMO Scouts: 429, 429n
Aleutian Islands: 1, 85, 85n, 86
Allied Air Forces, SWPA: 32, 34, 48, 50–51, 83, 104, 208, 210–11, 212, 214, 217, 278, 279, 288, 340, 341, 344, 353, 362, 388, 397, 401, 407, 425, 425n, 451, 454, 455, 456, 464, 489, 492–93, 494–95
organization and command: 14, 15, 25, 463
responsibility for and selection of air base sites: 479
subordinate commands: 403, 464
supply responsibilities: 34, 477–78
Allied Naval Forces, SWPA: 49, 210–11, 285, 340–41, 346, 394–95, 401, 430, 451, 463, 464, 489, 492–93. *See also* Amphibious Forces; Fifth Fleet; Naval strength; Naval task organizations, U. S.; Seventh Fleet; Third Fleet.
organization and command: 14, 28
supply responsibilities: 34, 35–39, 216, 285, 396, 404, 477
Ambon Island (Amboina): 4, 11, 89, 447
Ambush operations: 61, 128, 144, 155, 163, 247, 313, 389, 394, 395, 529
Ammunition. *See also* Logistics; Units of fire.
armor-piercing projectiles: 310
defective: 42, 199
expenditure by air units: 407
expenditure by artillery: 111, 269, 323, 388, 389
expenditure by mortars: 382
expenditure by naval vessels: 53, 224, 287, 405, 471, 482–83, 495
for assault units: 35
Japanese shortages: 147–48
losses due to Japanese air attacks and fire: 73, 79
shortages: 41–42, 66, 154, 324, 471
Amphibian tank. *See* Landing Vehicle, Tracked (Armored).
Amphibian tractor. *See* Landing Vehicle, Tracked.
Amphibious forces
III Amphibious Force: 464, 466n. *See also* Naval task organizations, U. S., Task Force 31.
VII Amphibious Force: 14, 211, 214n, 216, 403–04, 403n, 429, 464
Amphibious operations
air support: 54, 68, 224, 290, 407, 440, 482, 495–96, 499, 500
beachheads: 43, 55–59, 68–72, 224–26, 228, 290–96, 298–99, 407–10, 440–42, 487, 489, 496–98, 500–505
congestion at landing beaches: 72, 82, 210–11, 498, 501–02, 504
execution of landings: 53–59, 68–70, 224–26, 290–94, 407–11, 440–42, 483–87, 496–98, 500–502
on inland lake: 74–76
Japanese beach defenses: 301–02
Japanese opposition to landings: 224, 409–10, 496–98
logistics: 32–42, 215–16, 284–85, 404–05, 437–40, 471–78

Amphibious operations—Continued
naval gun fire support: 27–29, 45, 47, 48–49, 53–55, 68, 78, 128–129, 214, 219, 221–22, 224, 287, 290, 296, 302–03, 403, 406–07, 411, 419, 434–35, 440, 464–66, 471, 482–83, 495–96, 500
organization of forces: 14–16, 24, 27, 28, 114, 116, 211–16, 283–84, 400–404, 434, 463–67
plans for landing: 42–48, 208–18, 285–88, 400–406, 432–36, 468–71, 475–79
rehearsals and training: 51, 289, 291, 436, 474–75, 481
ship-to-shore movement: 80, 104, 219, 221–22, 224, 228, 287, 290–94, 296, 297–99, 306–07, 311, 407–10, 440–41, 442, 473, 474–75, 477, 483–88, 496–98, 499–502
shore-to-shore movement: 260, 273, 433, 441
terrain conditions at landing beaches: 17–18, 56, 57–58, 71–72, 442, 469, 483
unopposed landings: 53–55, 68–70, 290–99, 407–11, 440–42, 483–87, 500–502, 548
Amphibious trucks. *See* DUKW's.
Anami, Lt. Gen. Korechika: 88–89, 95–97, 99–100, 232–33, 362–63. *See also* Japanese units, *2d Area Army.*
Anamo: 123–26, 127–28, 134, 137, 140, 149–50, 158, 159, 162, 163, 169, 172, 174, 185, 190, 192–94
Anchorages: 13, 16, 18, 475, 575
Angaur Island. *See* Palau Islands Operation.
Angaur Sector Unit: 462, 500, 531
Antiaircraft Artillery, Allied
antiaircraft LCM: 311
defense positions: 254–55, 257, 258–59
Japanese bombers shot down: 297, 315, 352
Japanese ground attack against: 257
in landings: 47, 56, 110, 489
units reinforce Biak: 345
90-mm.: 56
Antiaircraft artillery battalions
744th: 489
383d: 489
Antiaircraft artillery groups
116th: 402n
208th: 296–97
214th: 489
Antiaircraft artillery, Japanese: 61, 65, 335, 337
3-inch guns: 302
90-mm. dual purpose: 61
90-mm. guns: 372
Antitank guns: 242, 272
Aoeki Island: 280, 341
APA's: 219, 464
APD's (destroyer-transports): 9
as fire support vessels: 104
in landing operations: 68, 284, 434, 436, 441, 464, 483
Arafura Sea islands. *See also* Air attacks, Allied, targets.
air neutralization of Japanese strength: 24, 26, 215, 454, 455
planning for capture: 451
strategic importance: 4, 6–7, 10–11
Arare: 213, 215–16, 219, 219n, 220, 221, 237, 243, 251, 254–55, 257, 258, 266
Army Service Forces: 426, 427–28
Artillery, Field, Allied: 213. *See also* Field Artillery units; Howitzers; Mortars.
co-ordination with air attacks: 221–22, 519
co-ordination with infantry units: 191, 239, 243, 244–45, 246, 268–69, 322
co-ordination with naval support fire: 221–22, 224
covering withdrawals: 311
fire delays Allied advances: 76, 337, 339–40
destruction of vegetation: 244n, 524, 558, 564–65
during amphibious landings: 296, 409, 470, 489
effectiveness against caves, draws, ravines, defiles: 247, 248, 306, 310–11, 323, 330, 544
emplacements: 254–55, 519
against Japanese infantry attacks: 152, 168–69
misplaced fire: 199, 199n
in mopping-up operations: 527–29
observation: 199n, 332, 335
self-propelled 75-mm. weapons (SPM): 517–19, 522
75-mm. (howitzers): 161, 316, 559, 565, 565n, 566
105-mm. (howitzers): 56, 61, 66, 70, 111, 135, 139, 159, 237, 247, 269, 286, 388, 389, 409, 418, 470, 472, 511, 519, 529
155-mm. (gun): 341, 502
155-mm. (howitzers): 133, 159, 262, 268, 389, 470, 519, 524, 527, 529
Artillery, Field, Japanese
effectiveness: 76, 261–62, 324, 390, 409–10
emplacement: 518
70-mm.: 147, 245, 409–10
75-mm.: 147, 222, 261–62, 265–66, 324, 378, 512
Artillery liaison aircraft: 191, 247
Ashbourne, Captain Lord: 450n
Asia Islands: 450n, 481, 577, 578
Asias (Peleliu): 533, 534, 556
Australia: 426
as staging base: 4, 29, 34
strategic importance: 5–6, 86, 88
Australia, HMAS: 53, 407
Australian units: 15. *See also* Royal Australian Air Force.
2/6 Cavalry (Commando) Regiment: 205n
6th Australian Division: 205n

B–24's: 217, 423, 423n, 573
close-support operations: 286–87, 296, 389, 407
long-range support missions: 26–27, 407, 423
operations against Japanese shipping: 354
B–25's
air supply operations: 67, 67n
close-support operations: 24–26, 104, 130, 382, 419
long-range support missions: 26, 215, 407, 492
operations against Japanese shipping: 355–56
skip-bombing attacks: 382
B–29's: 5, 7–8, 11
Babelthuap: 457, 461, 499, 540–41
Bailey, Lt. Col. Cladie A.: 121
Bailey Force: 115, 122–23
Baldy Ridge (Peleliu): 539, 542, 543, 553–54, 555, 558–59
Banzai tactics: 188, 200, 231, 363, 513, 518
Barbed-wire defenses: 140, 141, 152
Barbey, Rear Adm. Daniel E.: 14, 27, 30–31, 36–37, 39, 48, 103, 110n, 210, 403n, 464, 475–77, 480, 487. *See also* Naval task organizations, U. S., Task Force 77; Amphibious forces, VII.
Barges, Japanese: 113, 296, 346, 397, 432, 460
in *KON Operation:* 355, 356, 358, 359–61
losses in reinforcing Peleliu: 541
use at Morotai: 488–89
Barnes, Brig. Gen. Earl W.: 434, 446–47. *See also* Thirteenth Air Force, U. S. XIII Air Task Force
Bases. *See* Airfields, Allied; Logistics, staging areas.
Batjan Island: 357, 358–59
Battleships: 27–29, 353–54, 358, 466, 471
Bayonet charge: 168
Beach defenses. *See* Amphibious operations.
Beach mats: 442
Beach sleds: 39–40, 57
Beaches. *See* Amphibious operations.
Beachheads. *See* Amphibious operations.
Beauforts: 129–30, 133
Beaufighters: 129–30, 133
Becker, Maj. Edward A.: 191
Bell, Brig. Gen. Marcus B.: 535
Berkey, Rear Adm. Russell S.: 28, 403, 434
Biak, use as Allied staging area: 480
Biak Detachment: 300–03, 307, 311–12, 313, 315, 317, 318, 323, 326–27, 338, 346, 350, 361, 363, 374, 380, 391, 397, 401–02, 498
Biak Island, as airbase: 450–51
Biak Island Operation: 280–396. *See also* HURRICANE Task Force.
casualties: 392, 577, 578
importance in intertheater strategy: 208
Japanese naval plans: 346–50
Japanese use and defense of Biak: 299–303
KON Operation: 350–64, 443, 489
Biak Island Operation—Continued
Noemfoor landing plan compared with: 405
planning and preparation: 280–90
reduction of Japanese pockets and caves: 365–90
securing of Mokmer Drome: 304–45
seizure of beachhead: 290–99
terrain: 280–82, 295, 300–301, 304, 305, 313, 334
troop dispositions, Allied: 315, 316
troop dispositions, Japanese: 300, 315, 381
troop strength, Japanese: 285, 300, 361, 363, 381
Bismarck Archipelago: 32, 86, 90. *See also* Admiralty Islands; New Britain.
air missions against: 26, 27
Japanese isolated: 16
Japanese units and strength: 93
Blamey, Gen. Sir Thomas: 14–16, 32
Blandy, Rear Adm. William H. P.: 465, 466, 499, 501
Bomber planes. *See* B–24's; B–25's; B–29's; Beauforts.
Bonin Islands: 90, 454–55
Borneo: 423, 493
Bosnek: 280–99, 302, 311–16, 332, 340–41, 352, 380, 385, 387, 392
Bostock, Air Vice Marshal William D.: 14, 15, 26
Bottcher, Capt. Herman: 120, 120n, 121
Boyce, 2d Lt. George W. G., Jr.: 177n
Boyd Ridge: 553, 556, 563
Bridges, Japanese: 110, 246
Brisbane: 19–20, 39
Bulldozers: 56, 442, 485, 563, 571
against bunkers: 503
against pillboxes: 501
clear beaches: 500–501
fill antitank ditch: 503
Bunkers. *See* Fortifications, Japanese.
Burns, Maj. Ralph D.: 190, 192, 194, 195, 197, 198–99, 199n

C–47's: 81, 130, 403
transport paratroopers: 413–16
Cannibalism: 375, 422
Capes
Cretin: 40, 41, 52
Delegila: 457, 482
Good Hope. *See* Kaap de Goede Hoop.
Ngariois: 503, 504, 505, 510
Ngatpokul: 470, 504, 510
Opmarai: 433, 443
Pie: 45, 70, 72, 82
Pkul a Mlagalp: 470, 503
Sansapor: 432, 434–35, 441, 442–43, 446
Soeadja: 45, 47, 77
Tjeweri: 45, 70, 72, 82
Cargo planes. *See* C–47's; B–25's.
Caroline Islands: 455–56, 457. *See also* Palau Islands Operation; Yap; Ulithi.

Caroline Islands—Continued
air neutralization: 24, 26, 49, 208, 214–15, 217, 279, 454–55, 494
Allied invasion plans: 429, 450, 452–53, 466–67
Japanese strength and dispositions: 85, 87, 89, 91, 348, 349, 350, 358, 361
strategic importance: 1, 3–4, 8, 492, 575
Carriers. *See* Air attacks, Allied, carrier-based; CVE's.
Casualties, summary
American: 576, 577
Japanese: 576, 578
Cavalry units
Composite Squadron: 202
1st Cavalry Division: 9, 31, 39
6th Reconnaissance Troop: 434, 441, 443, 445
32d Reconnaissance Troop: 114–16, 120–21, 175
112th Cavalry Regiment: 128n, 132–33, 133n, 135, 139, 140, 143, 144, 155, 156–57, 158, 160, 164–65, 169, 170, 171, 172, 172n, 174, 174n, 175, 180–81, 182, 183, 184, 187, 189, 200, 202n, 203
Cave warfare
description of caves: 222, 265, 375, 380–81, 547, 553, 565
difficulties: 249, 269, 270, 323, 373, 546, 547
methods of reducing caves: 230, 268, 273–74, 306, 372–73, 374–75, 382–83, 384, 389, 544–45, 563, 566, 567, 571, 572
CB's. *See* Naval Construction Battalions.
Celebes Islands: 447–49. *See also* Manado.
air neutralization: 450, 451, 454, 455, 482
strategic position: 4, 6–7
Celebes Sea: 455, 456
Center Sector. *See* Aitape Operation.
Central Pacific Area: 80, 464, 465, 472n. *See also* Nimitz, Admiral Chester W.
Allied Air Force SWPA support: 208, 217, 279, 288–89, 340, 341, 393
Allied offensive: 6–9, 88, 348, 349, 450, 452–53
strategic value: 1–12, *passim.*
Central Pacific Fleet: 93, 100, 462, 465
Central Sector Force: 234, 235–36, 236n, 266–67, 274–75
Ceram: 87, 449, 450–51, 454, 455, 482
Chief of Naval Operations and Commander in Chief of the U. S. Fleet. *See* King, Admiral Ernest J.
China: 85
source of Japanese reinforcements: 86, 88, 89, 91, 232, 233
strategic position: 1, 12, 452–53, 454, 455
China Wall (Peleliu defense position): 553, 566, 567, 571, 572
Chinapelli: 112, 116, 127–28, 147, 150, 157, 170
Christensen, 2d Lt. Dale Eldon: 172n
Civil Affairs. *See* Netherlands Indies Civil Administration.
Clifford, Lt. Col. Thomas E., Jr.: 59–61
Climate: 22, 344. *See also* Communications difficulties.
affects communications: 128, 194–95
affects operations: 62, 275, 319, 321, 510
affects weapons: 195
hampers construction: 110
hampers Japanese supply movements: 148
Close air support. *See also* Air attacks; Air plans; Strategic air support.
carrier-based: 13, 20–21, 23, 24–26, 43–45, 47, 53, 54, 61, 68, 103–04, 403, 450, 464–66, 470–71
land-based: 23–26, 104, 129–30, 211, 217, 284, 287, 296, 382, 407, 419, 432–33, 451–52
Coastal Attack Force: 150, 161–62, 171
Combat loading. *See* Logistics.
Combined Chiefs of Staff: 1, 8
Combined Fleet: 89–90, 95, 100, 347–48, 348n, 350, 355, 358, 359, 361, 398, 462
Communications difficulties: 76, 128, 154–55, 165–66, 169, 194–95, 196, 497. *See also* Radio; Telephone; Ship-to-shore communications; Lines of communications.
Congressional Medal of Honor Awards
Boyce, 2d Lt. George W., Jr.: 177n
Christensen, 2d Lt. Dale Eldon: 172n
Endl, Staff Sgt. Gerald L.: 155n
Eubanks, Sgt. Ray E.: 420n
Lobaugh, Pvt. Donald R.: 173n
Control boats: 406–07, 440
Convoy movement: 51–52, 100, 290, 481–82, 496
Coral Sea, Battle of: 85
Corps, U. S. Army
I: 29, 278, 343
X: 445
XI: 134, 463, 490
Counterbattery fire: 287, 323
Cruisers
Allied: 27, 45, 47, 53, 214, 284, 296, 353, 356, 403, 403n, 407, 440, 464, 466, 471, 482–83
Japanese: 353, 354, 355, 357, 358, 398
Crutchley, Rear Adm. V. A. C.: 15, 53
Cunningham, Brig. Gen. Julian W.: 135, 143, 144, 156–61, 164–66, 173, 177–89, 202
Currents. *See* Hydrographic information.
Cutler, Capt. Roger, USN: 80
CVE's (Escort carriers): 23, 24, 27, 103, 104n, 464, 466, 482, 491
CYCLONE Task Force: 402, 404, 406, 407, 408, 411–13, 419, 420–21, 422
Cyclops Mountains: 16, 17, 77

Dahlen, Lt. Col. Chester A.: 60
Dale, Group Captain William A. C.: 109, 422, 423, 424

Davao: 351, 352, 354
  Japanese staging area: 88, 92, 348, 351
  Allied air attacks: 456, 482
Dark, Col. Robert F.: 505, 512, 535, 547, 560, 568–69
Darwin: 26, 215, 450–51
Daugherty, 1st Sgt. James H. P.: 446
Davison, Rear Adm. Ralph E.: 24, 28, 104n
Dazai: 59–67
Death Valley (Peleliu): 533, 553, 566–71
Defense, Allied
  perimeters: 72, 119–20, 122, 163–64, 184, 228, 250, 254–55, 258–59, 312–13, 316–17, 335–36, 417–18, 505, 511–12
  positions: 114–16, 126–27, 140–43
Defile and defilade: 60, 247–49, 265, 305–06, 335. *See also* Biak Island Operation; Parai Defile.
Delaying action, Allied: 156–58
Demolition: 65, 80, 274, 389, 390
  caves: 547–48, 571
  UDT's: 495–96, 499
  used in clearing passage through reefs: 58, 80, 403, 485, 487
Demta Bay: 77, 101
Dépapré: 48, 58, 61, 62, 64
Destroyer-escorts: 214, 358
Destroyer-transport. *See* APD's
Destroyers
  Allied: 27, 45, 47, 53, 54, 55, 104, 105, 214, 220, 245, 247, 284, 296, 304, 306, 353, 356, 386, 403, 403n, 419, 440, 443, 464, 466, 471, 482–83, 500
  Japanese: 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 360, 398
Disease. *See* Medical problems.
Dispositions. *See* Troop dispositions.
Doe, Brig. Gen. Jens A.: 29, 31, 103, 111, 212, 218, 221, 236, 238, 321, 337, 342, 344, 364, 365, 366–67, 368, 378, 379. *See also* HURRICANE Task Force; PERSECUTION Task Force; TORNADO Task Force; Infantry divisions, U. S., 41st.
Doreaba Plain: 457, 460, 475, 491
Drindaria River: 112, 121, 129
Driniumor River: 103–30, 147, 134–51, 152–205
DUKW's (amphibious trucks): 77
  in landing operations: 284, 286, 287, 297, 405, 408, 485
  crossing reefs: 408, 409, 485
  howitzers dropped in position by: 409
  rehearsals: 289, 474
  use in withdrawals: 311

East Caves (Biak): 301, 303, 305, 306, 310–11, 323, 324, 327, 328–29, 330, 332, 380–84, 387. *See also* cave warfare.
East Sector. *See* PERSECUTION Task Force.
Eastern Defense Area. *See* PERSECUTION Task Force.
Eastern Defense Command. *See* PERSECUTION Task Force.
Eastern Sector. *See* PERSECUTION Task Force.
Echelon formations: 61, 156, 294–95
Eichelberger, Lt. Gen. Robert L.: 29, 30, 33, 43, 48, 58, 79, 80–81, 278, 343–44, 364, 365, 368, 369, 372, 377, 379, 450n. *See also* HURRICANE Task Force; RECKLESS Task Force; Eighth Army, U. S.; Corps, U. S. Army, I.
Eighth Army, U. S.: 278, 396n, 424n, 449n, 450n
Endl, Staff Sgt. Gerald L.: 155n
Endo, Vice Adm. Yoshikazu: 95, 98–99
Enfilade fire: 212–13, 377
Engineer Petroleum Production Depot: 427–28
Engineer units
  Engineer Aviation Battalions
    187th: 422–23
    836th: 231, 437–38, 439, 441, 446
    860th: 341, 393
    863d: 334, 340, 375, 393
    864th: 341, 393
    872d: 108–09
    875th: 108–09
    1881st: 439, 448
    1884th: 530
    1887th: 530
    1896th: 393
    1897th: 437–38, 439, 448
  Engineer Boat and Shore Regiments
    532d: 68–70, 72, 78
    533d: 218, 221
    534th: 463, 481, 487
    542d: 53, 54, 55, 56, 222, 222n, 294, 298, 299, 306, 311, 324, 325, 332, 387, 391
    543d: 434, 441–42
    544th: 463, 487
    593d: 109, 218, 402n, 404n, 409, 410
  Engineer Combat Battalions
    6th: 260, 263, 268, 441
    27th: 216, 219, 221, 404n, 409, 410, 411, 411n
    116th: 70, 78, 221, 299, 316, 375
    154th: 501, 565
    306th: 503
  Engineer Combat Groups
    1112th: 393
  Engineer Construction Battalions
    43d: 437–38, 439, 448
    46th: 393
  Engineer Construction Groups
    1112th: 438
    1178th: 393
  Engineer General Service Regiments
    96th: 437–38, 439, 448
  Engineer Special Brigades
    2d: 222n, 411n

Engineer units—Continued
Engineer Special Brigades—Continued
3d: 286, 434
4th: 487
Engineers. *See also* Engineer units.
missions of: 47, 105, 299, 473–74
repairing airfield under enemy fire: 336, 340
shipping and landing construction equipment: 34–35, 39, 215, 285, 437–40, 484
Envelopment operations: 177–200, 235–36, 243, 259, 261
Escort carriers. *See* CVE's.
Etamin, AK: 109–10, 110n
Eubanks, Sgt. Ray E.: 420n
Expeditionary Troops: 465, 466, 468, 472

Fechteler, Rear Adm. William M.: 28, 80, 214, 214n, 284, 290, 297, 403, 403n, 404–05, 432, 440, 442. *See also* Naval task organizations, U. S., Task Force 77; Amphibious forces, VII.
Field Artillery units, Allied. *See also* Artillery, Field.
Battalions
1st: 75, 76, 263, 434, 441
11th: 76
51st: 263
52d: 61
80th: 263
120th: 137, 152, 159
121st: 287, 296, 316, 317–18, 320, 322, 332, 339, 366, 369
126th: 110, 121
129th: 137, 152, 159, 161, 190
146th: 70, 288, 296, 304, 314–15, 316, 317–18, 322, 332, 388–89
147th: 237, 238, 239, 247, 252, 262, 402n, 409, 418, 419
148th: 133n, 135, 135n
149th: 159, 169, 190
167th: 42, 110, 213, 221, 227, 255, 258, 261, 262, 369, 377
168th: 76
181st: 159
205th: 72, 77, 311, 314, 322, 323, 330, 332, 369, 382
218th: 72, 213, 221, 226, 239, 256, 262
316th: 502, 511
317th: 502
318th: 502
906th: 502
947th: 296, 314, 316, 322, 323, 332, 334, 369, 382
Groups
190th: 110
191st: 213, 213n, 221n, 224, 237, 254
Provisional Groupment: 220, 221, 224
Field Artillery units, Japanese. *See* Japanese Army units.

Fifth Air Force, U. S.: 23, 26, 49–50, 83, 130, 214, 215, 221, 224, 279, 284, 286, 287, 322, 353, 354, 375, 382, 393, 402, 403n, 404, 429, 430, 432, 440, 447, 464, 471, 494, 577
Advance Echelon: 26, 211, 284, 403n
Group, 8th Fighter: 341
organization: 15, 27
Squadron, 17th Reconnaissance: 67
Squadron, 110th Reconnaissance: 129
Wing, 54th Troop Carrier: 403, 415
Wing, 309th Bombardment (H): 402, 420
Fifth Fleet, U. S.: 20, 26, 28, 90, 91, 103, 223–24, 348, 349, 358, 359, 361–62, 494, 576
Fiji Islands: 85, 85n
Finschhafen: 35, 52, 109, 238, 406, 480
Five Brothers Ridge (Peleliu): 533, 553, 559, 561, 563–71
Five Sisters (Peleliu): 533, 534, 553, 553n, 566–71
Flame throwers: 410, 473. *See also* Landing Vehicle, Tracked (Flame thrower).
against caves: 268, 273, 274, 373, 375, 389, 563
reduction of pillboxes: 545
Flank security
strategic: 3, 4, 7, 11, 22, 85, 450, 492
tactical: 60, 73, 74, 103, 110–12, 117, 131, 170, 173, 188–90, 250, 268, 295, 317, 321, 322, 340, 369, 537
Flanking movement: 118, 197, 272–73, 326, 329, 533, 534
Floating dock: 395
Foein River: 235–36, 255
Formosa: 1, 12, 452, 453, 454, 455
Formosan laborers: 400, 422, 445n
Fort, Rear Adm. George H.: 466, 468, 495, 499, 549, 560
Fortifications, Japanese: 226, 230, 261, 265–66, 294, 301–02, 324, 328, 335, 381, 388, 389, 390, 501, 503, 505, 511, 539, 544, 545, 563. *See also* Cave warfare.
Fowler, Lt. Col. Robert M.: 190–99, *passim*.
Fujimura, Captain: 235, 236n
Fukabori, Maj. Gen. Yuki: 444
Fuller, Maj. Gen. Horace H.: 29, 33, 70, 73, 74, 284, 288, 291, 299, 306, 307, 312, 315, 320, 321, 322, 324, 329, 330, 340–45, *passim*, 357, 364, 386. *See also* Infantry divisions, U. S., 41st; PERSECUTION Task Force.
Fulmer, Capt. Talley D.: 117–20, 126

G–2. *See* Intelligence, Allied.
G–4. *See* Logistics.
Geelvink Bay area: 4, 6, 10, 11, 16, 26, 88, 89, 206, 207–08, 209, 214, 347, 349, 351, 397, 425, 429
Geiger, Maj. Gen. Roy S.: 466, 499, 535, 560, 560n. *See also* Marine units, Corps, III Amphibious.
General Headquarters, SWPA: 15, 280, 438, 451, 451n. *See also* MacArthur, General Douglas.

Genjem: 77, 101
Gila Peninsula (Morotai): 457, 475, 477, 482, 487, 488, 490
Gilbert Islands: 86, 88, 454
Gill, Maj. Gen. William H.: 114, 120, 121, 133, 134, 137, 159, 159n, 165, 174n, 179, 193, 199, 202, 202n. *See also* PERSECUTION Task Force, Covering Force, Reserve; Infantry divisions, U. S., 32d.
Goodenough Island: 29, 35, 41, 42
Goto, Maj. Ushio: 462, 500, 506–07, 508, 516, 518, 524, 525, 529
Grenades. *See* Hand grenades.
Guadalcanal: 86, 466, 468, 474, 475, 496, 499
Guam: 163, 467

Hall, Maj. Gen. Charles P.: 134–40, *passim*, 145, 155, 158–59, 167, 169, 170, 173–74, 188, 190, 192, 202, 463, 479, 481, 488, 490. *See also* PERSECUTION Task Force; TRADEWIND Task Force; Corps, U. S. Army, XI.
Halmahera Island: 88, 91, 92, 93, 232, 233, 299, 350, 352, 358, 361, 440, 457, 459, 460, 461, 463, 490
  air neutralization: 279, 444, 447, 455, 456, 482
  blockade of: 489
  decision not to seize: 451
  strategic importance: 4, 10–11, 429, 450, 451
Halsey, Admiral William F.: 1, 464, 465, 468, 492, 560, 575, 575n. *See also* Third Fleet, U. S.
Hand grenades: 226, 257, 261, 273, 373, 385, 478, 571
Hand-to-hand combat: 257, 317, 373
Haney, Col. Harold: 307, 311, 312, 334
Hansa Bay area: 19, 29, 48, 87, 88, 91, 93, 97, 98, 99
  strategic position: 4, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13–14
Harech River: 122, 137–38, 139
Harusame: 355, 356
Hawaii: 437, 466, 468, 473, 474, 576
Herndon, Col. J. Prugh: 238, 242, 243, 244,, 248, 250, 251–52, 260
Herrick, Capt. Gile A.: 122, 123
Herrick Force. *See* PERSECUTION Task Force.
Hodge, Maj. Gen. John: 575
Hollandia Operation: 49–52, 53–83, 204n, 207–08, 209, 282, 284, 297, 300, 346, 347, 348, 353, 379, 395, 396, 412, 413, 415, 427, 428, 440, 441, 446, 447, 494. *See also* RECKLESS Task Force.
  casualties: 101–02, 102n, 577, 578
  Hollandia as a staging area: 210, 211, 276–77, 288–89, 312, 369, 416, 439, 480
  Japanese use and defense of Hollandia: 91–92, 93–102, 235n
  planning and preparation for: 13–49
  strategic importance of: 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 206, 232
Hollandia Operation—Continued
  terrain and airfield development in Hollandia area: 16–18
  troop strength, Allied: 29, 32
  troop strength, Japanese: 29, 84
Hollekang: 70, 77
Hoover, Vice Adm. John H.: 467, 560, 566
Hoshino, Maj. Iwataro: 161, 162, 162n
Howe, Col. Merle H.: 116, 117, 120, 121, 126, 174n, 175, 202, 203
Howitzers
  75-mm.: 161, 316, 559, 565, 565n, 566
  105-mm.: 56, 61, 66, 70, 111, 137, 139, 159, 237, 247, 269, 286, 388, 389, 409, 418, 470, 472, 511, 519, 529
  155-mm.: 133, 159, 262, 269, 389, 527, 529
Humboldt Bay: 16–17, 18, 42–47, 58, 59, 68–71, 77–80, 100, 104, 218, 219, 282, 284, 289, 290
Huon Peninsula: 32, 34, 89, 90, 93, 146, 576
Hurdis, Brig. Gen. Charles E.: 445
HURRICANE Task Force: 285–397, *passim*, 405
  organization: 283–84
  reserve: 284, 304
Hutchinson, Brig. Gen. Donald R.: 479
Hutchinson, Brig. Gen. Joseph C.: 159n, 160, 190n
Hydrographic information: 23, 27, 210, 286, 290, 291, 487, 499

Ibdi Pocket: 295, 296, 301, 312–16, 318, 319, 320, 327, 327n, 329, 330, 332, 342, 365n, 380, 381, 384–90, 391, 396, 459, 509, 518, 551
Ide, Col. Tokutaro: 150
Ikeda, Lt. Gen. Shunkichi: 444
Inada, Maj. Gen. Masazumi: 98–99, 100–101
Imperial General Headquarters: 86, 89, 90, 91, 92, 94, 96, 145, 348, 348n
  decisions involving Biak: 346, 347, 349
  decisions involving the Palaus: 91, 459, 460, 462
  orders strategic withdrawals: 86, 87, 88, 232–33, 300
Infantry divisions, U. S.
  6th: 31, 33, 209, 250, 251, 256, 258, 259, 260, 262, 263–76, 277, 279, 312, 400, 404–05, 409, 429, 431, 434, 436, 437, 443, 445, 448n, 463
  24th: 29, 31, 32, 33, 39, 41–42, 43, 47, 51, 52, 53–83, 99, 209, 282, 369
  25th: 276
  31st: 132, 133, 159, 159n, 190n, 209, 276–77, 278, 279, 436, 450n, 463, 480, 481, 487, 488, 490
  32d: 31, 32, 33, 111, 114, 115, 121, 135, 136, 138, 159, 159n, 160, 202n, 209–10
  33d: 276, 277, 279
  41st: 29, 30, 31, 33, 41, 42, 43, 47, 51–52, 68–81, 209–10, 211, 216, 238, 280, 282, 284, 286, 291, 336, 343–44, 364, 378, 379, 392, 396n, 545

Infantry divisions, U. S.—Continued
43d: 132, 133, 173, 174, 175, 189, 190n, 202, 202n, 203, 205n
77th: 466–67
81st: 390, 466, 468, 469, 470, 472, 473, 474, 475, 481, 496, 499, 502, 506, 507, 508, 509, 515, 529, 533, 535, 548n, 559, 559n, 560n, 561, 566, 572, 573, 575, 575n, 577n
93d: 278, 449n
Infantry regiments, U. S.
1st: 260, 263–64, 267–68, 270, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 434, 440, 441, 442, 443, 445
19th: 48, 55, 62–64, 77, 101
20th: 262–64, 267–75, 277, 434, 436
21st: 48, 55, 59–68, 76–78
34th: 32, 33, 43, 74, 80, 369, 377, 378, 379, 380, 403–04, 412
63d: 263, 275–76, 434, 441, 443, 444, 445
103d: 160, 202–04
111th: 575
115th: 477
123d: 277–79
124th: 136, 138, 158–59, 159n, 160, 162–69, 174, 174n, 175, 188–92, 196, 200, 203, 477, 483, 487, 488
126th: 115, 116, 121–22, 123, 126, 203n, 463, 477, 488
127th: 31–32, 105, 110, 112–13, 114, 115, 116–17, 123, 127, 135, 136, 140–41, 143–45, 156, 157–58, 159, 160, 165–66, 167–68, 169, 171–72, 174–85, 187, 202, 203
128th: 114–16, 126–27, 136, 137, 139, 140, 141–43, 144, 145, 153, 154, 155–56, 158, 159–61, 163–64, 175, 189, 190, 202, 203, 216, 284
155th: 483, 487
158th: 236–52, 253–62, 263, 279, 284, 400, 402, 402n, 403, 404, 404n, 408, 409, 411, 411n, 419, 420, 424n
162d: 45, 68–71, 77, 78–79, 288, 291, 294, 296, 299, 303–41, *passim,* 344, 365–91, *passim.*
163d: 30, 32, 33, 42, 103–08, 110–13, 114, 116, 212, 213, 216, 219–20, 222, 236–37, 238, 250, 253, 255–56, 258–60, 280, 284, 312, 315, 316, 317, 322, 328, 332, 341, 342, 365, 369, 372, 377, 378, 379, 381, 382, 384, 387–90, 391
167th: 277, 477, 483
169th: 160, 168–69, 174, 174n, 175, 187–92, 200–204
172d: 203, 362
186th: 45–47, 68–81, *passim,* 284, 287, 288, 289–96, *passim,* 312–40, *passim,* 342, 344, 365–81, *passim,* 384, 386, 387, 391
219th: 398
321st: 469, 470, 474, 500–17, *passim,* 521, 530, 535–71, *passim.*
322d: 469, 470, 474, 500, 502–35, *passim.*
Infantry regiments, U. S.—Continued
323d: 469, 470, 474, 521, 535, 553n, 559n, 560, 563n, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569–73, 575
503d Parachute: 31, 402, 412–16, 419, 420, 420n, 421, 423n, 424n
Inoue, Lt. Gen. Sadae: 460, 461, 462, 518, 540 541, 572. *See also Palau Sector Group.*
Insoemanai Island: 206, 213, 214, 220, 221, 224, 227, 231, 237, 237n
Intelligence, Allied: 18, 21, 22, 29, 31, 47, 48, 55, 70, 75, 113, 116, 117, 131–32, 133, 134, 137, 143–45, 157, 179, 182, 187–88, 207–09, 235, 235n, 237, 238, 244, 246–47, 256, 259–60, 266, 272, 285, 299, 320, 323, 337, 338, 345, 346, 351, 353, 354, 366, 378, 379, 398–400, 401, 411, 412, 419, 430, 432, 433, 451, 463, 483, 499, 513, 524, 536, 561, 569
gathering: 113, 117, 131–32, 133, 134, 137–45, 150, 150n, 163, 187–88, 334, 337, 411, 418, 462–63, 490, 524. *See also* Reconnaissance.
Intelligence estimates, Japanese: 50, 86, 88, 98, 147, 152, 165, 182, 303, 353, 355, 356, 358, 359, 400, 462, 463
Irving, Maj. Gen. Frederick A.: 29–30, 33, 42, 42n, 48, 55, 57, 59, 60, 64, 65–67. *See also* Infantry divisions, U. S., 24th.
Irving, Maj. Robert L.: 220
Itou, Vice Adm.: 461n

Jangkena: 59–60, 62, 64, 65
Japanese Army air units
Air Army, 4th: 18, 87, 91, 92, 95, 97, 98, 100
Air Division, 6th: 18, 50, 86, 87, 92, 95, 98, 99, 101
Air Division, 7th: 87, 89
Japanese Army units: 94. *See also Aitape Garrison Unit; Angaur Sector Unit; Biak Detachment; Central Sector Force; Coastal Attack Force; Left Sector Force; Matsuyama Force; Miyake Force; Nishihara Force; Noemfoor Detachment; Ozawa Force; Palau Sector Group; Peleliu Sector Unit; Right Flank Unit; Right Sector Force; Yoshino Force; Yuki Group.*
Area Armies
Southern Area Army. See Southern Army.
2d: 84n, 88–90, 95–98, 99, 146, 146n, 232–33, 300, 303, 327, 359, 362, 380, 444, 459, 461
8th: 86, 87, 88, 89, 90–91, 93, 97, 460
Armies
Southern Army: 87, 87n, 92, 99–100, 462
2d: 88–89, 93, 99, 131, 145, 232, 234, 234n, 235, 444, 449
14th: 87, 93
16th: 87
17th: 86, 88, 91, 93

Japanese Army units—Continued
Armies—Continued
18th: 18, 22, 23, 31, 32, 48, 84n, 86, 88, 90, 91, 92, 93, 95, 97–99, 103, 113–134, *passim,* 137, 145–51, 152–176, 177–205, 233, 450n
19th: 87, 89, 89n, 93
31st: 90, 93, 462
Divisions
3d: 88, 89
4th: 89n
5th: 93
14th: 91, 93, 390, 459, 460, 461, 461n, 541n
16th: 93
20th: 86, 93, 97–98, 113, 116, 131, 132, 133, 134, 137–38, 146–47, 148, 149–50, 150n, 154, 167, 169–70, 171, 172–73, 179, 182, 185, 186, 188, 197, 205
29th: 90
32d: 92, 93, 232, 233, 459, 460
35th: 91, 92, 93, 232, 233, 350, 363, 443–44, 445, 449, 459, 460
36th: 88, 89, 93, 95–97, 100, 209, 232, 233–34, 234n, 236, 266, 274–75
38th: 93
41st: 86, 93, 97, 116, 132, 133, 137–38, 146–47, 148, 149, 150n, 168, 171, 185–86, 187, 188, 196, 197, 205
43d: 90, 93
46th: 88, 89, 93
48th: 93
51st: 86, 93, 97–98, 235
52d: 89, 93
Brigades
1st Amphibious: 461
1st Independent: 444
2d Amphibious: 233, 350, 351, 352, 354, 357, 358, 359, 362, 449
53d Independent Mixed: 461
Regiments
2d Infantry: 461, 540, 572
8th Independent Engineers: 149, 185, 186, 196, 197
15th Infantry: 461, 498, 532, 540, 541, 545
20th Engineers: 186
26th Field Artillery: 121–22, 147, 150, 182, 186, 197
37th Independent Engineers: 186
41st Engineers: 185
41st Mountain Artillery: 149, 150, 168, 185, 186
59th Infantry: 461, 462, 540
66th Infantry: 98, 146, 147, 150, 168, 171, 172, 181, 182, 186, 196, 205
78th Infantry: 119, 121, 134, 150, 152–53, 165, 167, 169–70, 171, 172, 179, 187
79th Infantry: 150n, 173, 179
80th Infantry: 98, 121, 134, 150, 152–53, 171, 172, 179, 186, 187
115th Infantry: 86
Japanese Army units—Continued
Regiments—Continued
219th Infantry: 91, 233, 355, 360, 361, 363, 379, 400, 420, 445
220th Infantry: 444
221st Infantry: 359, 360, 361, 363, 374
222d Infantry: 89, 209, 232, 233, 234n, 285, 299, 300, 302–20, *passim,* 326, 327, 328, 333, 360, 361, 363, 374, 381, 384, 385, 387, 389, 390, 391, 400
223d Infantry: 209, 233, 234–35, 236, 236n, 243, 259, 266, 273, 274, 276
224th Infantry: 99, 209, 233–34, 236, 242, 259, 266, 267, 268, 271, 272, 275
237th Infantry: 143, 149–50, 150n, 153, 154, 155, 161, 162–63, 164, 166–67, 168, 169, 171, 173, 181, 185, 186, 196
238th Infantry: 168, 185, 186, 187–88
239th Infantry: 166, 167, 168–69, 185, 186, 187–88, 192, 194, 196
Miscellaneous units
2d Field Base Unit: 98
2d Guerrilla Unit: 460
3d Field Transportation Unit: 99
4th Engineer Group: 235
16th Field Airdrome Construction Unit: 234, 266, 276
17th Field Airdrome Construction Unit: 300, 381
51st Field Road Construction Unit: 234, 267
103d Field Airdrome Construction Unit: 234, 266–67
107th Field Airdrome Construction Unit: 300
108th Field Airdrome Construction Unit: 300
346th Independent Infantry Battalion: 540
Japanese counterattacks: 85–87, 89–90, 93–98, 170–72, 186–87, 564–65. *See also A-GO Operation.*
Japanese counterreconnaissance screen: 127, 137, 185
Japanese *Imperial General Headquarters. See Imperial General Headquarters.*
Japanese naval air units
1st Air Fleet: 348, 349, 361, 362
23d Air Flotilla: 348, 349, 350, 352, 355, 358
61st Air Flotilla: 348, 348n
62d Air Flotilla: 348, 350
Japanese naval forces. *See also Central Pacific Fleet; Combined Fleet; Operation A; Southeast Area Fleet; Southwest Area Fleet;* Japanese naval air units.
1st Task Force: 348, 348n, 349, 350, 351, 359, 361, 444
2d Fleet: 348
3d Fleet: 348
4th Expeditionary Fleet: 95
9th Fleet: 95, 98–99
19th Naval Guard Unit: 347
28th Naval Special Base Force: 300

Japanese strategic plans: 84–102. *See also* Strategy, Allied.
strategic defense lines: 86–92, 95–97, 233, 346
strategic objectives: 84–85
Jautefa Bay: 43, 45, 68, 70, 71, 289
Java: 421, 427
Joint Chiefs of Staff: 1, 4–6, 8, 9, 10, 11–12, 20, 23, 208, 426, 428, 429, 451, 453, 492, 575, 575n
Jones, Col. George M.: 416

Kaap de Goede Hoop (Cape of Good Hope): 355, 356, 432
Kakuta, Vice Adm. Katuji: 348
Kamilianlul Mt. (Peleliu): 539, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 547
Kantome: 59, 60, 61
Kapoam Villages: 111, 112
Kato, Lt. Col.: 234, 242, 243
Kavieng: 6, 8, 9, 11–12
Kawanaka Shima: 149–50, 156, 166, 168
Kawashima, Major Takenobu: 460
Kazegumo: 357
Kenney, Lt. Gen. George C.: 14, 15, 217, 401, 403n. *See also* Allied Air Forces, SWPA.
King, Admiral Ernest J.: 5, 11
Kinkaid, Vice Adm. Thomas C.: 14, 15, 27, 28. *See also* Allied Naval Forces, SWPA; Seventh Fleet, U. S.
Kitano, Lt. Gen. Kenzo: 88n
Kitazono, Maj. Gen. Toyozo: 99
Klamono oil fields: 426–28
Koejaboe: 73, 74, 82
KON Operation: 350–64, 398, 429, 444, 489
Allied naval strength in opposition to: 353
Japanese naval strength committed to: 353, 354, 355, 357, 358
naval engagement: 356
Kongauru Island: 545, 548–49, 559, 560
Korim Bay: 302, 327, 356, 360
Koronal Creek: 149–150, 156, 157, 158, 164, 167, 169
Kossol Roads: 453, 495, 550, 575, 575n
Krueger, Lt. Gen. Walter: 14, 15, 29–40, 111, 114, 132–34, 137, 138, 145, 158, 204, 204n, 210, 237–38, 250, 251, 263, 276, 277, 277n, 278, 283, 286, 312, 315, 322, 340, 341–44, 396, 401–02, 403, 412, 415, 416, 420, 423, 424n, 429, 430, 431, 432, 446, 463, 466, 480, 489, 573. *See also* ALAMO FORCE.
Kuzume, Col. Naoyuki: 300–303, 307, 315, 326, 327, 338, 360, 363, 365, 365n, 374, 380, 384, 390, 498
Kwamagnirk: 157, 169, 176, 176n, 181

Lae: 91, 154
Lake Aztec (Angaur): 504, 507, 510, 516, 517
Lake Salome (Angaur): 509, 517–27, *passim.*
Lake Sentani: 16–18, 21, 43, 48, 67–77, *passim.* 81, 100
Landing Craft, Infantry (LCI): 213, 284, 289, 290, 297, 404, 405, 406, 408, 409, 436, 441, 464, 484, 485, 496, 500
fire support by: 45, 47, 54, 68, 220, 224, 287, 295, 306, 311, 407, 471, 477, 483, 500, 519
Landing Craft, Mechanized (LCM): 38–39, 68–70, 123, 161, 213, 224, 311, 324, 405, 406, 409, 417, 419, 449, 484, 485, 487, 500
Landing Craft, Personnel, Ramp (LCPR): 68, 105, 286, 287, 291, 297, 477, 483
Landing Craft, Support (LCS): 54, 324, 325
Landing Craft, Tank (LCT): 38–39, 80, 273, 286, 289, 297, 311, 324, 387, 405, 406, 408, 409, 439–40, 446, 464, 484, 485, 487, 500
Landing Craft, Vehicle (LCV): 324, 325, 332
Landing Craft, Vehicle and Personnel (LCVP): 55, 68–70, 213, 284, 434, 440, 469, 474, 485, 500, 501
Landing Ship, Dock (LSD): 39, 464, 496
Landing Ship, Tank (LST): 37, 56, 57, 58, 72, 105, 109, 218, 228, 284, 286, 297, 392, 394, 404–05, 406, 409, 433, 436, 437, 440, 441, 442, 464, 473, 475, 496, 499
in landings: 79, 80, 297, 483, 484, 485
rehearsals for landings: 289
speed of: 496
Landing Vehicle, Tracked (Armored) (Amphibian tank) (LVTA): 273, 284, 329, 407, 408, 434, 441, 469, 474, 496, 497, 501, 544
Landing Vehicle, Tracked (Amphibian tractor) (LVT): 45, 55, 58, 71–72, 73, 74, 75, 76–77, 273, 284, 286, 287, 289, 290, 297, 311, 325, 329, 387, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 434, 441, 469, 472, 474, 483, 484, 497, 500, 542
Landing Vehicle, Tracked (Flame thrower): 539, 542, 555, 563, 571, 572
Landings. *See* Amphibious operations.
Left Flank Unit: 150
Left Sector Force: 236, 266, 276
Lewis, Maj. William F.: 190–99, *passim.*
Leyte: 424n, 492, 577n
Liaison aircraft. *See* Artillery liaison aircraft.
Lighterage. *See* Logistics, unloading.
Lighthouse Hill: 507, 516, 517, 519, 521
Liki Island: 212, 214, 231, 237, 237n
Lines of communication
strategic: 1, 3, 85
tactical: 60, 65, 155, 196, 233, 319, 322, 344
Lines of departure: 161, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 369, 518
Loading. *See* Logistics.
Lobaugh, Pvt. Donald R.: 173n
Logistics
air supply operations: 34, 67, 67n, 81–82, 128, 130, 169, 194, 403, 478
ammunition: 41–42, 66, 154, 324, 471
combat loading: 38, 174, 475
fuel supplies: 426–28

Logistics—Continued
hand-carrying of supplies: 58, 62, 63, 64, 65–66, 67, 81, 126, 127–128, 148, 322, 324, 559n
Japanese supply operations: 18, 22, 29, 49, 86, 87, 88, 92, 99–100, 147–49, 233, 347, 397, 432, 460
land transportation problems: 61–67
loading operations: 38–40, 79, 174, 211, 289, 404–05, 409, 437, 442, 474–75, 481
planning for amphibious operations: 13, 34–38, 40, 78–79, 82, 211–12, 215–16, 283–85, 395, 404–05, 434–40, 446, 471–78, 480
rations: 34–35, 81, 148, 312, 404, 435, 472, 478
responsibilities, SWPA: 34, 61–70, 285, 363, 389, 396, 404, 437, 477
roller conveyors: 99, 126, 405
Services of Supply, SWPA, responsibility of: 14, 15, 32–35, 42, 83, 216, 285, 395, 396, 404, 427–28, 435, 437, 477–78
shipping and landing construction equipment: 34–35, 39, 215, 285, 437–40, 484–85
shipping problems: 21, 32, 35, 38, 61–67, 77, 437–40, 472
shortages of equipment and supply: 41–42, 61–62, 66–67, 79–80, 81, 101, 147–49, 186, 194, 195–96, 272, 319–20, 321, 322, 324, 337, 385, 394, 473, 477, 523
special problems in amphibious operations: 32–33, 77–82, 211–12, 218–19, 393–96, 437–38
staging areas: 13, 24, 32, 35, 41, 79, 83, 114, 133, 205n, 209, 210, 211, 216, 218, 276–77, 279, 289, 312, 369, 387, 400–401, 402, 405, 416, 434, 436, 439, 480–81
staging defined: 13n
units of fire: 34n, 285, 312, 323, 339, 396, 435–36, 472, 472n, 473, 478
unloading: 38–40, 210, 263, 286, 297–99, 395, 404–05, 409, 423, 442, 474, 477, 481, 484, 485, 490, 500–501
Lone Tree Hill: 232–276, *passim.*
Lowry, Capt. Leonard: 158–59, 159n, 165
Luzon: 366n, 424n, 448n, 453, 454, 455, 460, 573–75
Lyman, Col. Charles B.: 60–61, 63–64, 65, 66, 67

MacArthur, General Douglas: 1–12, 14, 15, 20–21, 23, 27, 31, 32, 84, 88, 132, 133, 205, 206–11, *passim,* 250, 277, 286, 340–43, *passim,* 397, 400, 401, 423, 425–30, 439, 446, 450–52, 456, 463, 488. *See also* General Headquarters, SWPA.
McCain, Vice Adm. John S.: 464
Machine guns and machine gun fire:
Allied: 54, 61, 118, 119, 123, 140, 152, 230, 243, 245, 257, 272, 303, 339, 373, 508, 517
Japanese: 121–22, 147–48, 222, 226, 227–28, 239, 242, 246, 247–48, 249, 267, 366, 367, 368, 381, 418, 529, 542
MacNider, Brig. Gen. Hanford: 424n
Madang: 9, 48, 90, 91, 93, 97, 98
Maffin Bay area: 237, 238, 239–42, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248–49, 252, 256, 259, 260, 264, 267, 272, 276–79, *passim,* 436–40, *passim,* 442, 445, 446, 480–81
Malaria. *See* Medical problems.
Malaya: 1, 85
Manado: 95, 98, 232, 327, 482. *See also* Celebes Islands.
Mandom: 291, 295, 311–16, *passim,* 390
Manila: 232, 351, 456
Manokwari: 206, 359–60, 397, 398n, 432, 440, 443
air neutralization of Japanese strength: 425, 440, 444
as Japanese base: 88, 93, 233, 346, 363, 444, 449, 460
Manokwari Garrison: 444
Mapia Islands: 356, 357, 360, 450n, 481
Maps. *See* Reconnaissance.
Mar: 432–33, 443, 445, 447. *See also* Sansapor–Mar Operation.
Mariana Islands: 347, 349, 361–62, 450, 453, 455, 462, 467, 468
air strikes against Japanese: 358, 454–55
Allied Air Forces, SWPA, support of CPA Marianas Operation: 208, 211, 217, 231, 279, 288, 341, 393, 494
Japanese strategic withdrawals: 86, 87–88
Japanese troop dispositions: 90, 91, 348, 348n, 349, 358
strategic importance: 6, 7, 9–10, 11, 85, 349
Marine units: 465. *See also* Expeditionary Troops.
Air Group, II Marine: 564–65
Corps, III Amphibious: 466, 468–72, 496, 498, 499, 500, 502, 515, 530, 534, 534n, 535, 540, 549, 559–60, 560n
Division, 1st Marine: 31, 390, 466, 468–69, 472–73, 474, 474n, 475, 495–96, 497, 498, 502, 532, 533, 534, 534n, 535, 540, 548, 549, 553n, 559–60, 561, 565n, 573, 577n
Regiment, 1st Marine: 496, 498, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 536n, 540, 549–50, 556
Regiment, 5th Marine: 466, 469, 496, 497, 498, 532, 534, 539, 540, 541, 542–546, 548, 549, 555, 556, 556n, 558, 558n, 559, 560n, 560–61, 562
Regiment, 7th Marine: 469, 496, 497, 498, 532, 533, 534, 536, 537, 538, 540, 541–42, 545–46, 547, 549, 555, 556, 559, 560, 560n, 561, 565n
Regiment, 11th Marine: 468, 532, 534, 549–50, 565, 565n
Marshall Islands: 89–90, 351, 358, 454–55
strategic importance: 1, 3–4, 6, 8, 9, 85
Martin, Brig. Gen. Clarence A.: 115, 121, 135, 136, 137, 138–39, 143n, 145, 154, 155–56, 158–59, 160, 175, 189. *See also* Infantry divisions, 31st Infantry Division, 32d Infantry Division; Per-

Martin, Brig. Gen. Clarence A.—Continued
SECUTION Task Force, Covering Force, East Sector.
Marubian: 117–20, 131, 166, 204
Mason, Col. Francis W.: 105, 111
Matsumoto, Col. Matsujiro: 150
Matsuoka, Maj. Yasake: 243, 266
Matsuyama, Col. Soemon: 100, 234, 266, 270, 271, 276
Matsuyama Force: 100, 234, 235, 235n, 236, 255–56, 259, 262
Medical problems, Allied
antityphus measures: 445–46, 490
casualties from disease: 392, 445–46, 490
heat exhaustion: 248, 573
nonbattle injuries on Peleliu: 573
Medical problems, Japanese
casualties from disease: 101, 102n, 186, 195, 278, 350, 361
shortage of malaria preventives: 148
starvation: 101, 102n, 186, 195, 278
Medical units
6th Medical Battalion: 263
12th Portable Surgical Hospital: 573, 586
92d Evacuation Hospital: 728
Middle Village: 511, 512
Middleburg Island: 432–34, 439, 441, 446
Midway, Battle of: 85
Miller, Col. Alexander M., III: 135
Milne Bay: 31, 263, 312
Minami, Col.: 383–84
Mindanao: 349, 351–52, 393, 425, 429, 450, 455, 456, 460, 492
Japanese strength: 88, 348, 455
in Pacific strategy: 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 429, 450, 452, 452n, 453, 454, 478, 491–92
Mine sweepers: 27, 58n, 214, 495
Mines, Japanese
antitank mines: 510
land mines: 45, 215, 330, 411, 417, 461, 495–96, 510, 517–18, 536
submarine mines: 49, 215, 461, 495, 500
Mios Woendi Island: 206, 280, 340–41, 346, 357, 396, 404
Mitscher, Vice Adm. Marc A.: 24, 27, 28, 466. *See also* Naval task organizations, U. S., Task Force, 38, 58.
Miyake, Maj. Gen. Sadahiko: 150, 150n, 171. *See also* Japanese Army units, Divisions, *20th;* Miyake Force.
Miyake Force: 171–73, 179, 181, 182, 185
Mokmer: 282–83, 285, 296, 300–301, 304, 306, 310, 312, 313, 315, 316, 320, 330, 378–79, 380, 382, 383
Morale factor, Japanese: 146, 148
Morotai Operation: 277, 279, 352, 423, 447, 475–93, 494, 497, 575n, 576, 578
casualties during: 490, 577–78
Morotai Operation—Continued
landing on Morotai: 480–88
securing and developing Morotai: 488–93
strategic and tactical planning for: 450–78, *passim*
troop strength in: 460–61, 463
Morotai Strait: 457, 475
Mortars: 213, 330, 335, 382, 527–29
against Japanese infantry attacks: 119, 374, 418
co-ordination of, with infantry units: 119, 243, 247, 268, 310, 327, 418
effectiveness against Japanese fortifications: 330
emplacement of: 140, 417–18, 563n
expenditure of shells: 382
Japanese: 122, 302–03, 310, 330, 418, 501
movement of: 66
use of smoke shells: 526, 529
60-mm.: 42, 118, 119, 140, 243, 328, 373–74, 389, 529
81-mm.: 42, 118, 119, 120, 140, 239, 247, 249, 269, 327, 335, 388, 389, 417, 529, 563
4.2-inch: 66, 268, 285, 368, 382, 388–89, 418, 470, 519, 529, 563
Mortimer Valley (Peleliu): 533, 553–69, *passim*
Mt. Saksin: 244–51, *passim,* 259, 262, 267, 275, 276
Mountbatten, Admiral Lord Louis: 344
Mueller, Maj. Gen. Paul J.: 465, 466, 475, 504, 505, 509, 511, 513, 515, 518, 530, 535, 566. *See also* Infantry divisions, U. S., 81st.
Munkres, Maj. Garlyn: 220
Murahori, 1st Lt. Toshishige: 540n
Murai, Maj. Gen. Kenjiro: 461n, 572
Musashi: 358
Myers, Brig. Gen. Donald J.: 277, 277n

Nadzab: 130, 208
Nakagawa, Col. Kunio: 461, 461n, 498, 532, 540, 572
Nara, Col. Masahiko: 149, 154, 164, 166
Natives: 49, 131, 391–92, 421, 490, 529
Naval battle: *See A-GO Operation; KON Operation.*
Naval Construction Battalions (CB's): 341, 393
Naval gunfire support. *See also* Amphibious operations.
co-ordination with infantry: 245, 247, 306, 307, 386
tactical surprise: 433
Naval losses, Japanese: 87. *See also KON Operation.*
Naval strength
Allied: 353, 464, 471
Japanese: 351, 358
Naval task organizations, U. S.
Angaur Attack Group: 465, 466, 471, 499
Attack Force (Hollandia–Aitape): 27, 30–31, 52
Attack Force (Morotai): 464, 482

Naval task organizations, U. S.—Continued
Attack Force (Noemfoor): 403, 403n, 404, 406, 407
Attack Force (Sansapor–Mar): 425, 436, 440
Attack Force (Wakde–Sarmi–Biak): 214, 215, 284, 296
Central Attack Group (Hollandia): 27, 28, 31, 52, 80
Eastern Attack Force (Yap–Ulithi): 466
Eastern Attack Group (Aitape): 27, 28, 30–31, 52, 103, 105
Eastern Attack Group (Wakde–Sarmi): 214, 216, 218
Forward Area Central Pacific: 465, 467, 566
Joint Expeditionary Force (Palaus): 464, 465, 466, 468, 560n
Peleliu Attack Group: 465, 466, 471
Task Force 30: 464, 465, 466, 482
Task Force 31. *See* Naval task organizations, U. S., Joint Expeditionary Force (Palaus).
Task Force 32. *See* Naval task organizations, U. S., Western Attack Force (Palaus).
Task Force 38: 465, 466, 495
Task Force 57. *See* Naval task organizations, U. S., Forward Area Central Pacific
Task Force 58: 20, 22–23, 24–26, 27, 28, 43, 47, 49, 50–51, 53, 61, 68, 72, 103
Task Force 73: 15, 403
Task Force 74: 28, 403, 403n, 407
Task Force 75: 28, 403n
Task Force 77: 27, 28, 103, 403, 403n, 406, 434, 464
Task Force 78: 24, 104n, 434, 440, 464
Task Group 38.1: 464
Task Group 38.4: 495
Western Attack Force (Palaus): 464–67, 468, 495, 496, 549, 560, 560n
Western Attack Group (Hollandia): 27, 28, 31, 52
Western Pacific Task Forces: 464, 465
Neal, Capt. George C.: 542
Neal Task Force: 542, 554, 555
Nefaar: 74, 75, 76, 82
Netherlands East Indies: 1, 3, 7–8, 16, 18, 20, 49–50, 85, 86, 87, 88, 92, 95, 206, 393, 426, 427, 460
Netherlands Forces Intelligence Service: 391
Netherlands Indies Civil Administration (NICA): 391, 421, 443, 477, 490
New Britain: 1, 31, 34, 86, 87, 89, 133, 248
New Caledonia: 85, 85n, 575n
New Guinea Force: 32
New Zealand: 133, 174
Newman, Col. Oliver P.: 72–76, 291, 319–24, 334, 366, 372, 377, 378
Ngarekeukl: 536
Ngesebus Island: 453, 459, 473, 534, 544, 546, 547, 548, 549, 559, 560
Nigia River: 108, 110, 112, 116, 127, 135, 147, 148, 150, 161, 164
Nimitz, Admiral Chester W.: 1–12, 20, 23, 26, 208, 211, 217, 451–52, 453, 454, 455, 465, 491, 492
Niroemoar Island: 212, 214, 231, 237, 237n
Nishihara Force: 360, 361, 363, 379
Niumen Creek: 127, 137, 143–45, 185, 188–95, 197
Noble, Capt. Albert G., USN: 30–31, 103, 104n, 214, 218, 221
Noemfoor Detachment: 411, 419, 420, 421
Noemfoor Island Operation: 206, 262, 279, 346, 359, 360, 397–424, 429, 440, 444, 447, 451, 457
air attacks on Noemfoor Island: 215, 233, 279
approach and bombardment during: 406–07
casualties in: 420–21, 577–78
decision to seize Noemfoor Island: 397
important results of occupation: 425, 425n
landing and securing beachhead: 407–12
logistics and tactics: 404–06
occupation of Noemfoor Island: 416–20
organization of the forces in: 400–404
paratrooper drop during: 412–16
troop strength, Allied in: 402, 411
troop strength, Japanese in: 398, 400, 411
Numata, Lt. Gen. Takazo: 98, 303, 326, 327
North Force. *See* PERSECUTION Task Force.
Nyaparake: 112, 116, 118, 120–21
Nyaparake Force. *See* PERSECUTION Task Force.

Obata, Maj. Gen. Hideyoshi: 90
Observation
posts: 265, 270, 332, 335, 381
visibility: 53, 119, 126, 154, 209, 334, 388, 389, 406–07, 483, 496, 558, 569
Oil. *See* Klamono oil fields.
Onizuka, Capt. Tetsuo: 95
Operation A. See A–GO Operation.
Opiaref: 302, 313–14, 316, 317, 327n, 380
Oro Bay: 40, 439
Outposts: 60, 76, 108, 111, 114–16, 117, 118, 119, 120, 262, 302, 346, 377, 384, 488
Owi: 206, 280, 341, 352, 353, 393, 396, 401, 445
Ozawa, Vice Adm. Jisaburo: 348
Ozawa Force: 359, 360, 363

P–38's: 23, 341, 355, 407, 447
P–39's: 388
P–40's: 23, 108, 117, 129, 388
P–47's: 217, 269
Paidado Islands: 280, 340, 341
Palau Islands Operation: 26–27, 49, 208, 217, 279, 346, 347, 352, 358, 390, 393, 450–79, 576, 576n. *See also* Ulithi Atoll; Yap Island.
casualties in: 573, 577, 578

Palau Islands Operation—Continued
Japanese deployment in the Palaus: 87, 88, 90, 91, 232, 233, 348, 361
Peleliu and Anguar operations: 494–514, 515–31, 532–50, 551–72
results of: 573–75
troop dispositions, Japanese: 459–60, 461
troop strength, Allied in: 472
troop strength, Japanese in: 461, 462, 540, 561, 569
Palau Sector Group: 91, 460, 461, 462, 572
Palauru: 117, 127–28, 135, 170, 173, 174, 187, 202
Pallet-loading. *See* Logistics, loading operations.
Pancake Hill: 43, 68, 70–71, 72
Parachute infantry units. *See* Infantry regiments, U. S.
Parai: 281, 296, 301, 304, 306, 310, 311, 312, 319, 329, 330, 331, 386, 390
Parai Defile: 295, 296, 301, 304, 311, 313, 316, 324, 329, 331, 342, 385, 386, 387
Paratroops. *See* Airborne operations.
Patrick, Brig. Gen. Edwin D.: 238, 245, 250–52, 256–262, *passim,* 402, 403, 406, 411, 412, 416. *See also* CYCLONE Task Force; TORNADO Task Force.
Patrol activity, Allied. *See also* Reconnaissance.
Biak Operation: 313, 332, 338, 365, 381, 388, 389
Hollandia–Aitape Operation: 49, 61, 64, 65, 72–73, 74, 76–77, 105, 111, 112–13, 117, 120–21, 126, 127, 137–38, 143–44, 157, 169–71, 174, 202–04
Morotai Island Operation: 488
Noemfoor Island Operation: 419, 420
Palau Island Operation: 516–17, 529, 536, 537–38, 539
Sansapor–Mar Operation: 443, 444, 445
Wakde–Sarami Operation: 243, 248, 256–57, 267–68
Patrol activity, Japanese: 120, 121, 194, 237
Paup Villages: 149–50, 161, 162–64, 166, 168
PB4Y's: 26–27, 217, 217n, 279, 352, 352n
PC's (Patrol Vessels, Submarine chaser): 443
Pearl Harbor: 7, 452
Peleliu. *See* Palau Islands Operation.
Peleliu Sector Unit: 461, 532, 540
PERSECUTION Task Force: 42, 103, 113–16, 120, 126, 127, 129, 131–134, 202n
Center Sector: 116, 134
Covering Force: 134–138, 143, 145, 150, 152–166, *passim,* 169, 170, 171, 173, 174n, 175, 176, 176n, 179, 185, 189, 196, 199, 202, 203
East Sector: 114, 115, 116–120, 121, 127–130, 136, 159n
Eastern Defense Area: 135n, 136
Eastern Defense Command: 135, 136
Eastern Sector: 134, 160, 175, 189, 203
Herrick Force: 115, 122–23
PERSECUTION Task Force—Continued
North Force: 159, 162, 163–64, 166n, 167, 168, 170, 175, 189, 190n, 202, 203
Nyaparake Force: 112, 117–21, *passim.*
organized: 30
reorganization and redispositions of: 114–16, 134–37
Reserve: 32, 160, 175, 189, 202n
South Force: 159–61, 159n, 164–66, 166n, 168, 169–88, *passim,* 192, 196, 200–202
Tadji Defense Perimeter and Covering Force: 202, 203
TED Force: 189, 190–202, *passim.*
West Sector: 114, 115, 116, 134, 136
Western Defense Command: 115, 135n
Western Sector: 114, 134, 135, 159, 159n, 160, 175, 189, 203
Persons, Maj. Gen. John C.: 277, 277n, 463, 487. *See also* Infantry divisions, U. S., 31st; TORNADO Task Force; TRADEWIND Task Force, Assault Force.
Phase lines
Biak Island Operation: 332, 334, 335
Hollandia–Aitape Operation: 43, 59
Palaus Operation: 470, 503, 504, 505, 508, 509, 510, 517, 519, 524, 536, 537, 538, 539, 547, 554, 555, 556, 559
Philippines: 1, 16, 20, 83, 85, 86–87, 88, 88n, 90–91, 92, 93, 204, 205, 206, 208, 228, 231, 232, 233, 278, 279, 350, 351, 396, 396n, 398, 447, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 460, 462, 482, 491, 492, 493, 494, 530, 560n, 573, 575
Philippine Sea, Battle of: 671. *See also A-GO Operation.*
Photography. *See* Reconnaissance, Air reconnaissance and photography.
Pillboxes. *See* Fortifications, Japanese.
Pim: 43, 45, 70–72, 73–74, 77, 78, 80, 82
Pitoe Bay: 457, 487, 490
Ponape: 90, 454
Port Moresby: 85, 85n
Prisoners, interrogation of. *See* Intelligence, Allied.
Privett, Col. Forbie H.: 440, 445
Propaganda: 49, 524
Provisional Groupment. *See* Field Artillery units, Allied.
PT's (Patrol Vessels, Motor Torpedo Boats): 49, 117, 128–29, 148, 341, 346, 400, 433, 443, 451, 460, 489

Rabaul: 89, 205n
as Japanese base: 18, 86, 87–88, 90, 91, 348
strategic importance: 1, 4, 6–7, 11–12
Radar: 219, 290, 297, 440
Allied stations: 212, 443, 488
Japanese: 50, 488
Radar Hill (Peleliu): 543, 545, 546, 547

Radio: 61, 128, 143, 191
communications difficulties: 59–60, 123, 128, 128n, 166, 169, 194–95
intercepts: 133, 134, 137, 150n, 352
radio intelligence teams: 131
Ramu River: 48, 146, 147
Rankin, Lt. Col. Walter R.: 220n
Rations. *See* Logistics.
RECKLESS Task Force: 33, 40–41, 77–78, 81, 105, 278, 343. *See also* Eichelberger, Lt. Gen. Robert L.; Hollandia Operation.
logistics problems: 77–83
organization: 29–30, 32
Reconnaissance: 55, 182, 323, 400, 455. *See also* Patrol activity, Allied.
air observation: 113, 513
air reconnaissance and photography: 18, 24, 26, 27, 55–56, 103, 211, 256, 282–83, 285, 320, 351, 352, 352n, 353, 355, 357, 358, 412, 430, 432, 469, 494–95
in force: 9, 137–45, 155, 185, 186, 276
Japanese: 133, 152
maps: 181, 182, 191, 248, 295
by PT's: 49, 400
by submarines: 27, 49, 351, 352, 430
terrain: 49, 341, 429–430, 432, 433, 483, 524
Reefs. *See* Terrain, problem of reefs.
Reeves, Rear Adm. John W.: 467, 566
Reinforcements, Allied: 133, 315, 343, 411–12
replacement problems: 388, 388n
Reinforcements, Japanese: 18, 87, 232, 345, 346, 350, 351, 363, 364, 541
Right Flank Unit: 150, 153, 171
Right Sector Force: 234, 235, 236, 242, 243, 244, 248, 252, 262, 266, 274–75, 276
Roadblocks: 45, 158, 183, 385
Roads and trails
condition: 47, 58, 62, 64, 65, 66, 67, 78, 267, 318
construction and repair: 47–48, 56, 58, 62, 67, 78, 82, 110, 221, 317, 318, 319, 320, 524, 527, 563, 572
Japanese: 398
use by vehicular traffic: 47, 58, 62, 67, 221, 267, 317, 318, 527, 572
Rockets and rocket fire: 54, 68, 123, 214, 290, 407, 471
Rocky Point, Anguar: 503, 505, 507, 508, 510, 512
Rocky Point, Wakde-Sarmi: 265–74, *passim.*
Roller conveyors: 56, 72, 405
Royal Australian Air Force: 14, 15, 26, 49–50, 384, 464
Royal Australian Air Force units
No. 5 Mobile Works Squadron: 422
No. 10 Operational Group: 129, 130, 402
No. 62 Airfield Construction Wing: 410n
Royal Australian Air Force units—Continued
No. 62 Works Wing: 31, 108, 402, 410, 410n, 423
No. 71 Wing: 129–30, 133
No. 78 Wing: 23, 108, 117, 129
Royal Netherlands East Indies Air Force: 26
Rupertus, Maj. Gen. William H.: 466, 496, 497, 498, 499, 534, 535, 536, 539, 543, 547, 5.., 556, 566, 572. *See also* Marine units, 1st Marine Division.
Saidor: 32, 114, 209
Saito, Captain: 234, 242, 266
Sandbags: 559, 564, 566, 567, 568, 569, 571
Sandlin, Col. Earle O.: 252, 258, 259
Sansapor–Mar Operation: 431–49
airfield construction: 446–48
casualties: 445, 577, 578
planning: 430–440
tactical operations: 440–45
Sarangani Bay: 452, 453, 456
Sarmi–Wakde–Biak Plan: 280. *See also* Wakde–Sarmi Operation; Biak Island Operation.
SC's. *See* Submarine chasers.
Schouten Islands: 206, 300. *See also* Biak Island Operation.
Senda, Rear Adm. Sadatoshi: 300
Sepik River: 48, 97, 98, 146, 147, 150n
Services of Supply. *See* Logistics.
Seventh Air Force, U. S.: 577
Seventh Fleet, U. S.: 15, 28, 83, 217n, 279, 315, 326, 341, 352, 357, 360, 398, 403, 403n, 482, 490. *See also* Allied Naval Forces, SWPA.
Shimizu, Colonel: 400, 411, 420
Shipping. *See* Logistics.
Ship-to-shore communications: 306–07, 311. *See also* Amphibious operations.
Ship-to-shore operations. *See* Amphibious operations.
Shropshire, HMAS: 53
Sibert, Maj. Gen. Franklin C.: 263–64, 275, 276, 434, 436, 439, 440, 442, 445, 446. *See also* TORNADO Task Force; TYPHOON Task Force.
Sixth Army, U. S.: 15, 83, 396n. *See also* ALAMO Force.
Slave labor, Japanese: 334, 393, 400, 411, 419, 421. *See also* Formosan laborers.
Smith, Maj. Gen. Julian C.: 465, 466, 468. *See also* Palau Islands Operation.
Smoke: 54, 290
screens: 500, 501, 558
shells: 382, 526, 529, 544
Snaky River (Wakde–Sarmi): 244–51, *passim,* 261, 265, 267, 271, 273–74, 275–76
Sneeuwjagt, 1st Lt. C. J.: 277
Soepiori Island: 206, 511, 727, 735n. *See also* Biak Island Operation.
Solomon Islands: 1, 27, 32, 85–86, 85n, 88, 89, 90, 93, 496, 560

Sorong: 233, 300, 341, 349, 350, 354, 355, 357, 358, 360, 363, 425, 430, 432, 440, 443, 444, 449, 460. *See also* Sansapor–Mar Operation.
Sorong–Waigeo area: 425, 428–30
South Force. *See* Aitape Operation.
Southeast Area Fleet: 95, 96
Southwest Area Fleet: 95, 96, 363
Southwest Pacific Area: 32, 88, 89, 205, 208, 286, 288, 289, 343, 346, 348, 352n, 362, 380, 393, 395, 437, 450, 452, 453, 454, 455, 463, 464. 471, 483
  theater organization: 14–16
Sprague, Rear Adm. Thomas L.: 464
Staging. *See* Logistics.
Stark, Brig. Gen. Alexander N., Jr.: 134, 135n, 136, 159n, 160, 190n
Starr, Col. Edward M.: 136, 160, 163–64, 166, 175, 189, 190, 192, 194, 195, 196, 198, 199, 203
Stevens, Maj. Gen. J. E. S.: 205n
Stowage. *See* Logistics, loading operations.
Strafing. *See* Air attacks.
Strategic air support. *See also* Air attacks; Air plans: Close air support.
  carrier-based: 8, 12, 359, 455–56, 492, 494, 495
  land-based: 24–27, 48, 49–51, 208, 284, 407, 440, 494
Strategy, Allied: 1–12, 206–08, 450–56. *See also* Japanese strategic plans.
Street, Maj. Gen. St. Clair: 403
Strength of forces. *See* Troop strength.
Submarine chasers (SC): 105, 214, 287, 297
Submarines, Allied: 27, 49, 89, 91, 232, 233, 347, 351, 352, 357, 430
Submarines, Japanese: 100, 148
Supply operations. *See* Logistics.
Sutherland, Lt. Gen. Richard K.: 9, 10, 11

Tables of Equipment and Basic Allowances: 41
Tactical surprise: 285, 290, 433, 440, 456, 482
Tactical withdrawals, Allied: 111, 122–23, 156–58, 184, 250–52, 311, 523, 526, 558
Tactical withdrawals, Japanese: 259–60
Tagami, Lt. Gen. Hachiro: 233, 233n, 234, 235, 244, 255, 259
  Commanding General, *Yuki Group:* 233–34, 234n
  Commanding General, *36th Division:* 233
Takari Hills: 58, 60, 63, 65–66
Takji Defense Perimeter and Covering Force. *See* Aitape Operation.
Takeichi Convoy: 232–33
Talaud Islands: 352, 354, 452, 452n, 453, 455, 456, 478, 492
Tanahmerah Bay: 16–17, 47–48, 53–58, 68, 77, 80, 99, 104, 218–19, 282. *See also* Hollandia Operation.
Tank battalions
  1st (Marine): 31, 56, 58, 58n, 549, 556
  710th (Army): 502, 510, 512, 513, 515, 519, 527, 556, 558, 558n, 563, 565
Tank Destroyer Battalion, 641st: 66, 402n, 418
Tanks, Allied
  against field artillery weapons: 324, 512
  against fortifications: 226–27, 230, 261, 324
  battle: 310
  bridge-crossing attempt: 246
  in cave warfare: 372, 373, 383, 563, 571
  cover evacuations: 273
  destroyed or damaged by Japanese: 522, 558, 565
  fire from LCT's: 387
  Japanese antitank fire turns tank force back: 558
  in landing operations: 56, 58, 224, 324, 387, 501
  in perimeter defense: 58, 58n
  in support of infantry: 227, 228, 230, 239, 242, 248, 288, 295, 307, 311, 317, 368, 385, 509, 513, 516, 519, 521, 522, 539, 542, 545, 555
  and terrain: 269, 274, 510, 516, 518, 521
  use of white phosphorous shells: 555
Tanks, Japanese: 306, 310, 339
Task forces. *See* Naval task organizations, U. S.
Tasman: 446
Tawitawi: 349, 351, 359
TED Force. *See* Aitape Operation.
Telephone: 269
  messages tapped: 128, 128n
  sound-powered: 119, 143, 172
  wires cut by Japanese: 128
  wire parties: 165–66
Terauchi, General Count Hisaichi: 93
Terrain, description
  Aitape area: 22, 98, 103, 112, 126, 128, 139, 158, 161, 194, 195
  Anguar: 503–04, 509, 510, 513, 516, 517, 519, 521, 524, 525, 526
  Biak Island: 280, 281, 282, 295, 300–301, 304, 305, 313, 334, 388
  Hollandia area: 16–17, 42, 43, 47, 55–56, 72, 78
  Morotai Island: 483
  Noemfoor Island: 417
  Peleliu Island: 542, 543, 551–53
  Sansapor–Mar area: 432, 433, 442, 446, 447
  Wakde–Sarmi area: 219, 222, 244, 264–65, 267, 269
Terrain, problem of reefs: 47, 55, 57–58, 80, 220, 222, 283, 286, 329, 398, 405, 408, 409, 423, 459, 483–87, 497, 498
Teshima, Lt. Gen. Fusataro: 88–89, 232
Third Fleet, U. S.: 464–66, 482, 492, 560, 575, 576
Thirteenth Air Force, U. S.: 14, 24, 284, 403, 423n, 434, 464, 494, 577
  XIII Air Task Force: 24, 214, 433, 446
  XIII Fighter Command: 434

Timor Island: 50, 87
Tirfoam River (Wakde–Sarmi): 238–44, 246, 251–53, 261–64, 266, 267, 271, 273
Toem–Arare area: 212–13, 216, 219n, 220, 221, 235, 236, 237, 243, 248, 250, 256, 258, 259, 260, 263–64, 279, 436. *See also* Wakde–Sarmi Operation.
Toganae, Capt. Yoshio: 235
Tor River: 213, 219, 219n, 220, 235–39, *passim*, 244–45, 251–67, *passim*, 276
TORNADO Task Force: 212–13, 213n, 215, 216, 218, 219, 219n, 220–21, 230, 231, 235, 236–38, 243–45, 253–60, 263, 263n, 266, 275–77, 277n, 278, 289, 300, 402, 434. *See also* Wakde–Sarmi Operation.
Torricelli Mountains: 22, 112, 117, 122, 126, 132, 167–68, 170, 180, 192. *See also* Aitape Operation.
TRADEWIND Task Force: 463, 477, 478, 480, 489, 490. *See also* Morotai Operation.
  Assault Force: 463, 487
  Reserve: 463, 477
Trails. *See* Roads and trails.
Troop dispositions, Allied. *See under individual operations.*
Troop dispositions, Japanese. *See also under individual operations.*
  Halmahera Island: 459–61
  Pacific: 85–86, 87, 88–89, 90–92
  Southwest Pacific Area: 16
  West New Guinea: 444–45
Troop strength, Allied. *See also under individual operations.*
  U. S. Army in Southwest Pacific Area: 16
Troop strength, Japanese. *See also under individual operations.*
  armies in the Pacific: 93
  Halmahera: 460
  Manokwari: 444
  Southwest Pacific Area: 16
Truk: 6–12, 90, 348, 452–53, 454–55
TYPHOON Task Force: 434, 436, 437, 438, 441, 443, 444, 445, 445n, 446, 447. *See also* Sansapor–Mar Operation.

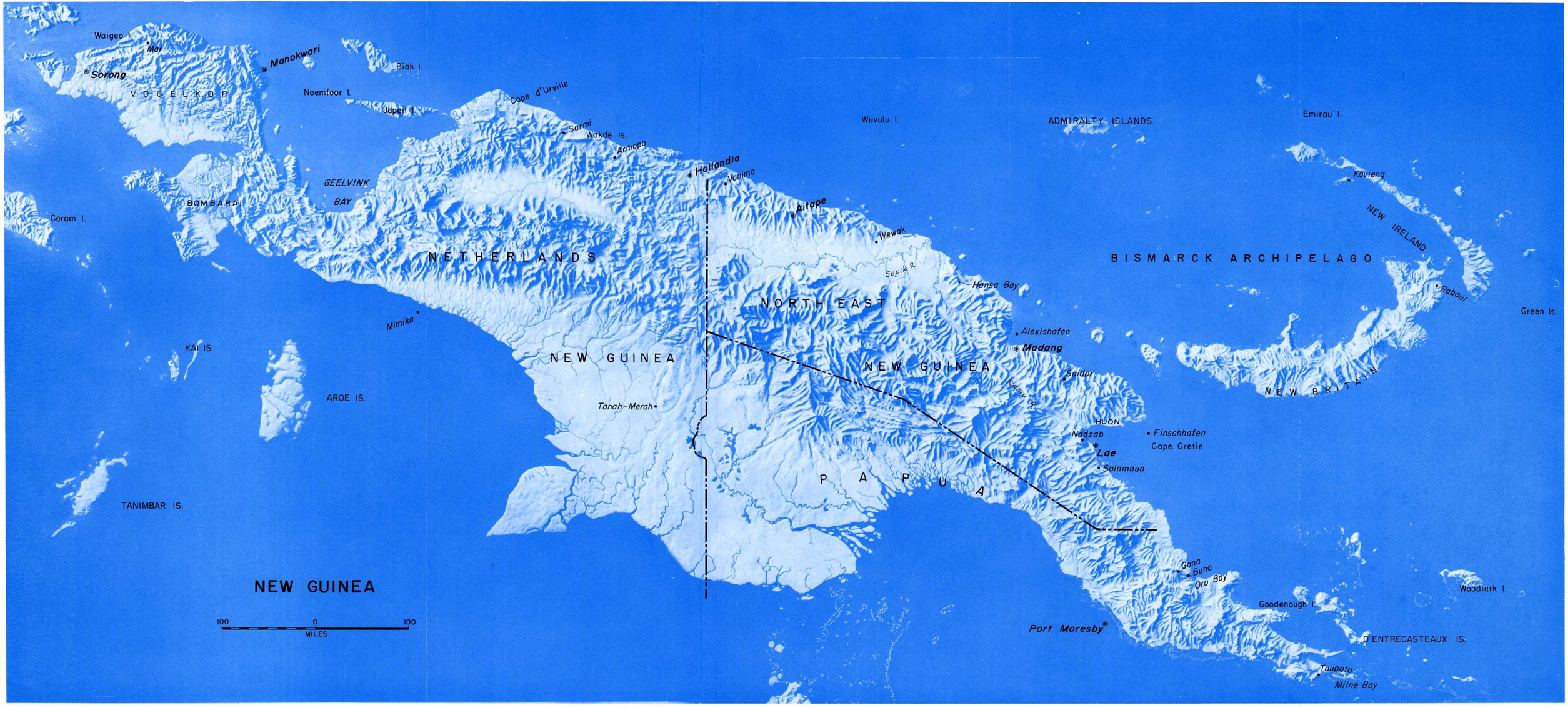
Ulithi Atoll: 49, 455, 456
  casualties: 577, 578
  planning: 10, 11, 452–53, 492
  operations: 466, 468, 535, 568, 575, 575n
Umurbrogal: 550, 551–59, 560, 561, 564, 566, 568–69, 571. *See also* Palau Islands Operation.
Underwater Demolition Teams (UDT's): 495–96
Units of fire: 35, 215–16. *See also* Ammunition; Logistics.
Unloading. *See* Logistics.

Visibility. *See* Observation.
Vogelkop Peninsula: 24, 50, 91, 206, 208, 214, 215, 277, 279, 355, 398n, 423, 450, 482. *See also* Klamono oil fields; Sansapor–Mar Operation.
  airfields on: 425–49
  as Japanese strongpoint: 88–89, 233, 340, 350
  plans and preparations to secure bases: 263, 276, 397, 400, 407
  strategic position: 3, 5, 6, 7, 10–11
Volcano Islands: 90, 455

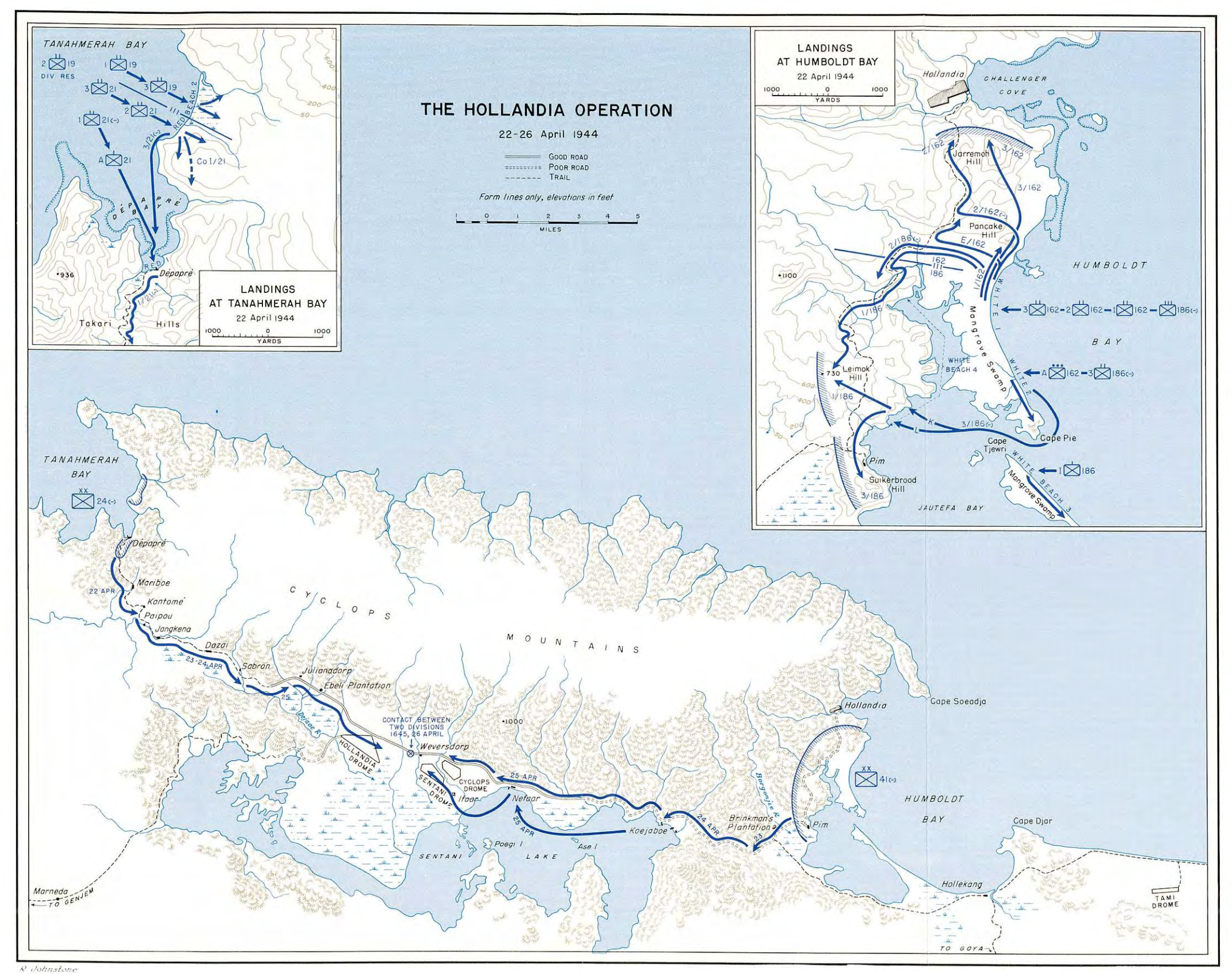
Waigeo Island: 354, 425, 429, 430. *See also* Sansapor–Mar Operation.
Wakde Island. *See* Wakde–Sarmi Operation.
Wakde-Sarmi Operation: 206–79, 280, 284, 285, 287, 289, 300, 312, 348, 349, 388n, 429, 434, 443, 463
  air strikes against Wakde–Sarmi area: 20, 24, 26
  Allied ground operations: 206–31, *passim*, 237–79
  Allied air operations from Wakde airfields: 279, 284, 296, 318, 341, 346, 348, 352, 353, 354
  Allied planning and staging: 21, 32, 114, 207–14, 237–38
  casualties: 278–79, 577, 578
  Japanese plans: 20, 91–92, 95–97, 99, 232–36
  staging base in Wakde–Sarmi area: 387, 400–401, 402, 405, 406, 434, 436, 481
  troop dispositions and strength, Allied: 215, 237–38, 253–56, 258, 277–78
  troop dispositions and strength, Japanese: 209, 222, 234–35, 256, 259–60, 266–67, 278–79
Wake Island: 85, 86
Walt Ridge (Peleliu): 553, 556, 560, 563, 565, 567, 569. *See also* Palau Islands Operation.
Watson, Col. Arthur P.: 568–69, 572
Wattie Ridge (Peleliu): 539, 542, 543, 553, 554, 555, 558. *See also* Palau Islands Operation.
Weapons. *See also entries for various types of weapons.*
  Japanese: 148, 195, 222, 262
  replacement problem: 174
West Caves: 301, 302, 307, 323, 326–27, 334, 336–40, 344, 360, 363, 365–75, 377, 380, 381. *See also* Biak Island Operation.
West Sector. *See* PERSECUTION Task Force.
Western Defense Command. *See* PERSECUTION Task Force.
Western Pacific Task Forces. *See* Naval task organizations, U. S.
Western Sector. *See* PERSECUTION Task Force.
Wewak: 16, 18, 32, 112, 113, 131
  air attacks against: 50
  capture by Allies: 205
  as Japanese base: 31, 48, 86, 87, 90, 91–92, 95, 97, 98, 99, 103, 121, 129, 132, 146, 147, 148, 450n
  and strategic considerations: 4, 9, 12, 13

Wildcat Bowl (Peleliu): 553, 558, 566, 567, 571, 572. *See also* Palau Islands Operation.
Whitehead, Maj. Gen. Ennis C.: 26, 403, 403n, 432
Wilkinson, Rear Adm. Theodore S.: 464, 465, 466, 468, 471, 560n
Williams, Lt. Col. George D.: 190, 192, 194–99
Williamson, Col. George M.: 213
Wilson, Lt. Col. Ernest H.: 522–23, 524
Wing, Maj. Leonard A.: 175, 189, 203, 220, 222, 227–28, 231
Wing, Maj. Gen. Leonard F.: 202, 202n, 205n
Woleai Island: 10–11, 12, 49, 90, 217, 454, 455
Woske River: 234, 245, 249, 260–61, 274–76. *See also* Wakde–Sarmi Operation.
X-ray River: 127, 134–35, 137, 139, 143, 156–58, 164–65, 169, 170, 174. *See also* Aitape Operation.
Yakamul: 112, 117, 120–23, 139, 146–47, 196. *See also* Aitape Operation.
Yamada, General Shigeru: 266
Yamaguchi, Maj. Gen. Takeo: 90–91, 460, 461
Yamato: 358
Yap Island: 91, 452, 460, 575
  air attacks against: 49, 454–55, 456
  plans for seizure: 452–53, 466, 468, 492, 575n
Yoshino, Col. Naoyasu: 234, 235, 266
Yuki Group: 234–35, 236, 236n, 243, 244, 248, 266. *See also* Wakde-Sarmi Operation.
Zamboanga: 351, 354, 357, 456

☆ U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1996 400-047

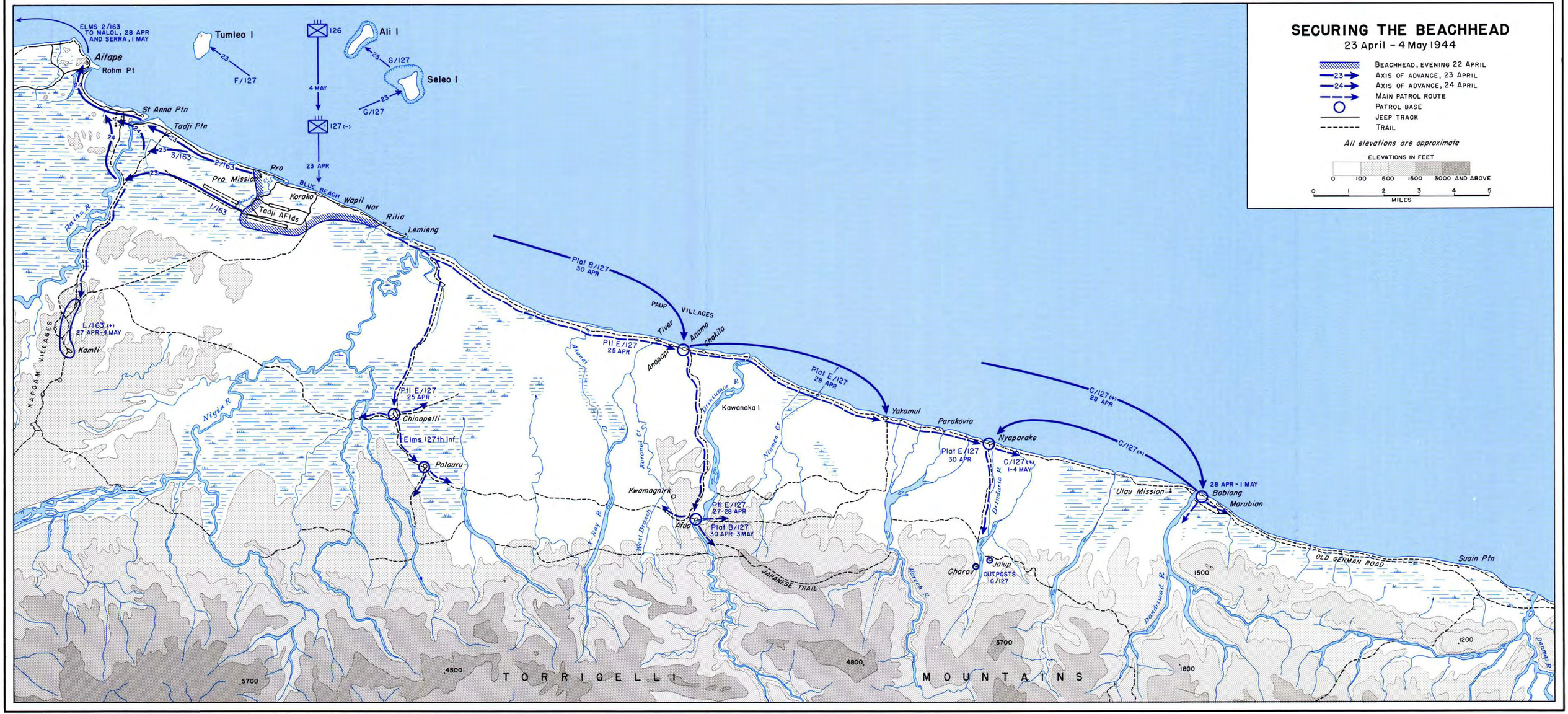

Waigeo I.
Mar
Sorong
Manokwari
Biak I.
VOGELKOP
Noemfoor I.
Japen I.
Cape d'Urville
Sarmi
Wakde Is.
Armopa
Hollandia
Vanimo
Aitape
Wewak
Wuvulu I.
ADMIRALTY ISLANDS
Emirau I.
Kavieng
NEW IRELAND
BISMARCK ARCHIPELAGO
Rabaul
Green Is.
GEELVINK BAY
BOMBARAI
Ceram I.
NETHERLANDS NEW GUINEA
Sepik R.
Hansa Bay
NORTH EAST NEW GUINEA
Alexishafen
Madang
Saidor
Ramu R.
NEW BRITAIN
Mimika
KAI IS.
AROE IS.
Tanah-Merah
HUON
Nadzab
Finschhafen
Cape Cretin
Lae
Salamaua
PAPUA
TANIMBAR IS.
Gona
Buna
Oro Bay
Woodlark I.
Goodenough I.
Port Moresby
D'ENTRECASTEAUX IS.
Taupota
Milne Bay
NEW GUINEA
100 0 100
MILES

MAP 1



R Johnstone

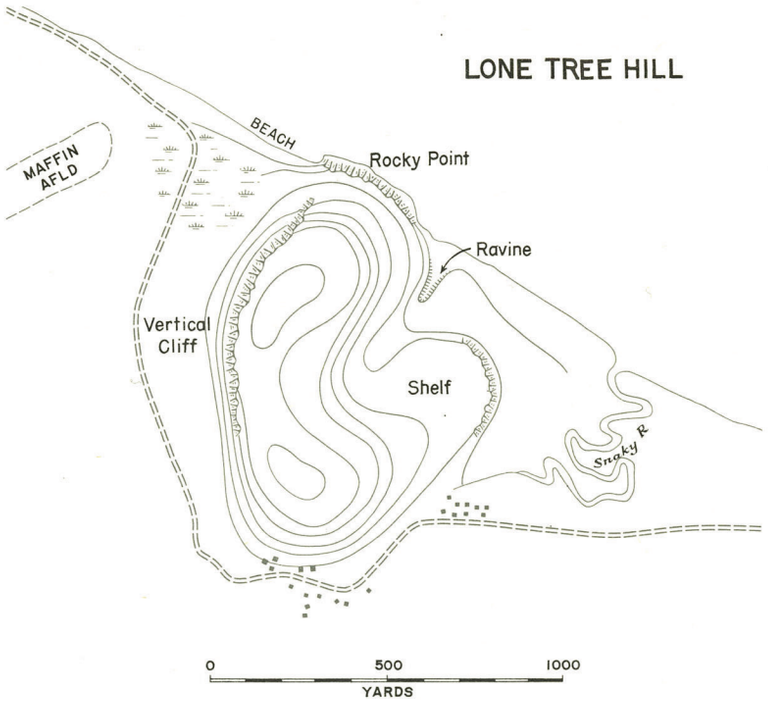
MAP II



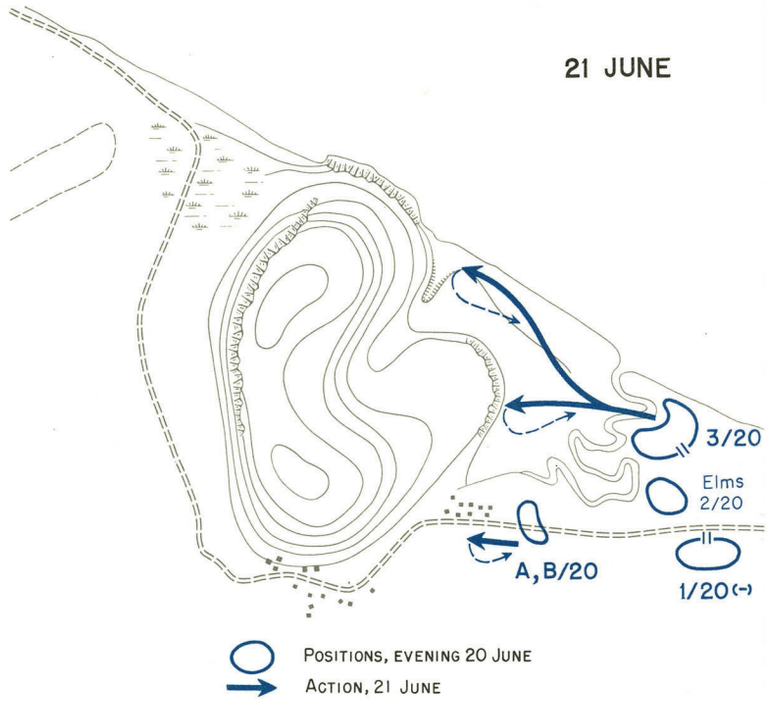
H. Damon

MAP III

LONE TREE HILL



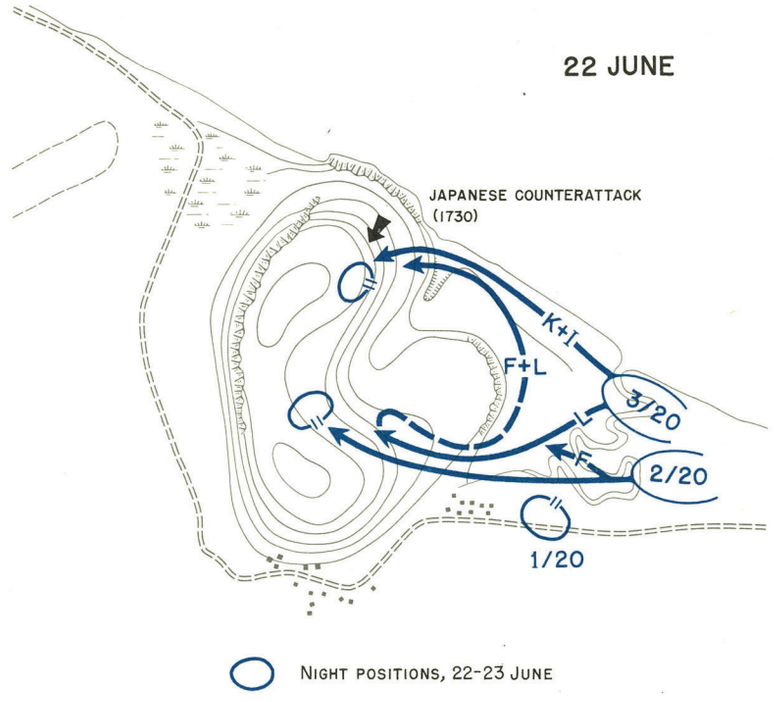
21 JUNE



POSITIONS, EVENING 20 JUNE

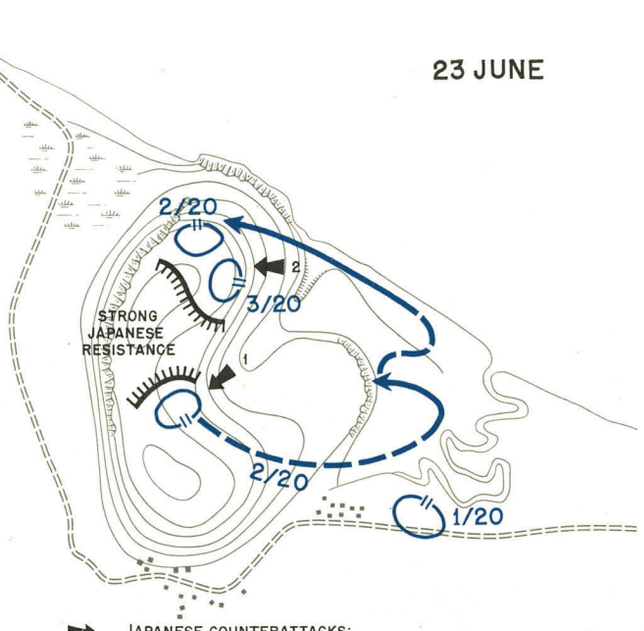
ACTION, 21 JUNE

22 JUNE



NIGHT POSITIONS, 22-23 JUNE

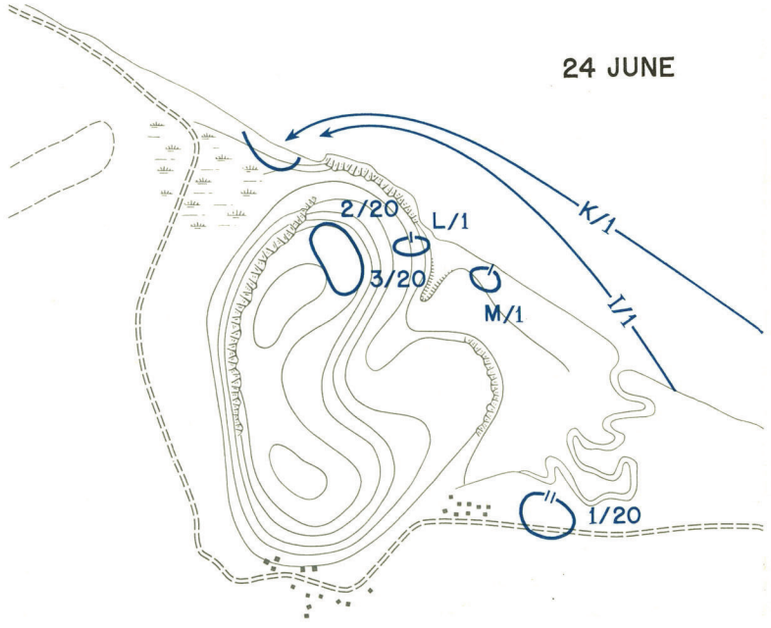
23 JUNE



JAPANESE COUNTERATTACKS:
1-MORNING, 2-EVENING 23 JUNE

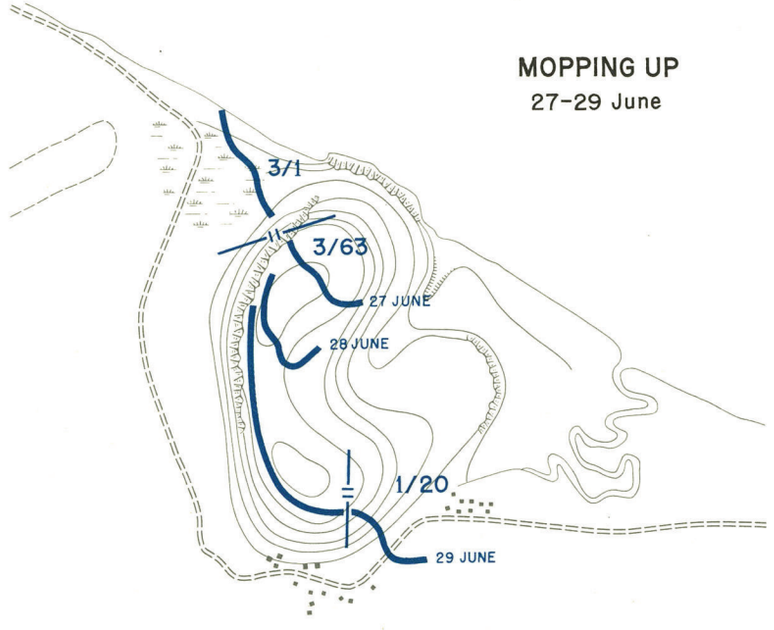
NIGHT POSITIONS, 23-24 JUNE

24 JUNE



NIGHT POSITIONS, 24-25 JUNE

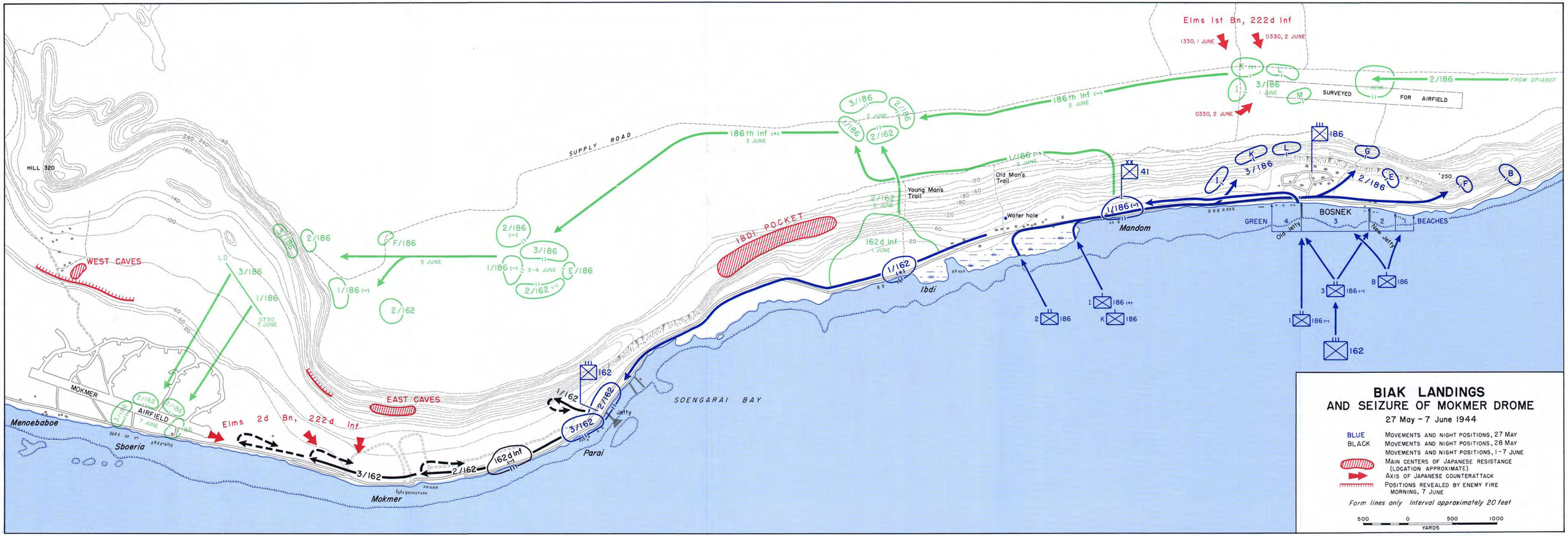
MOPPING UP
27-29 June



FRONT LINE

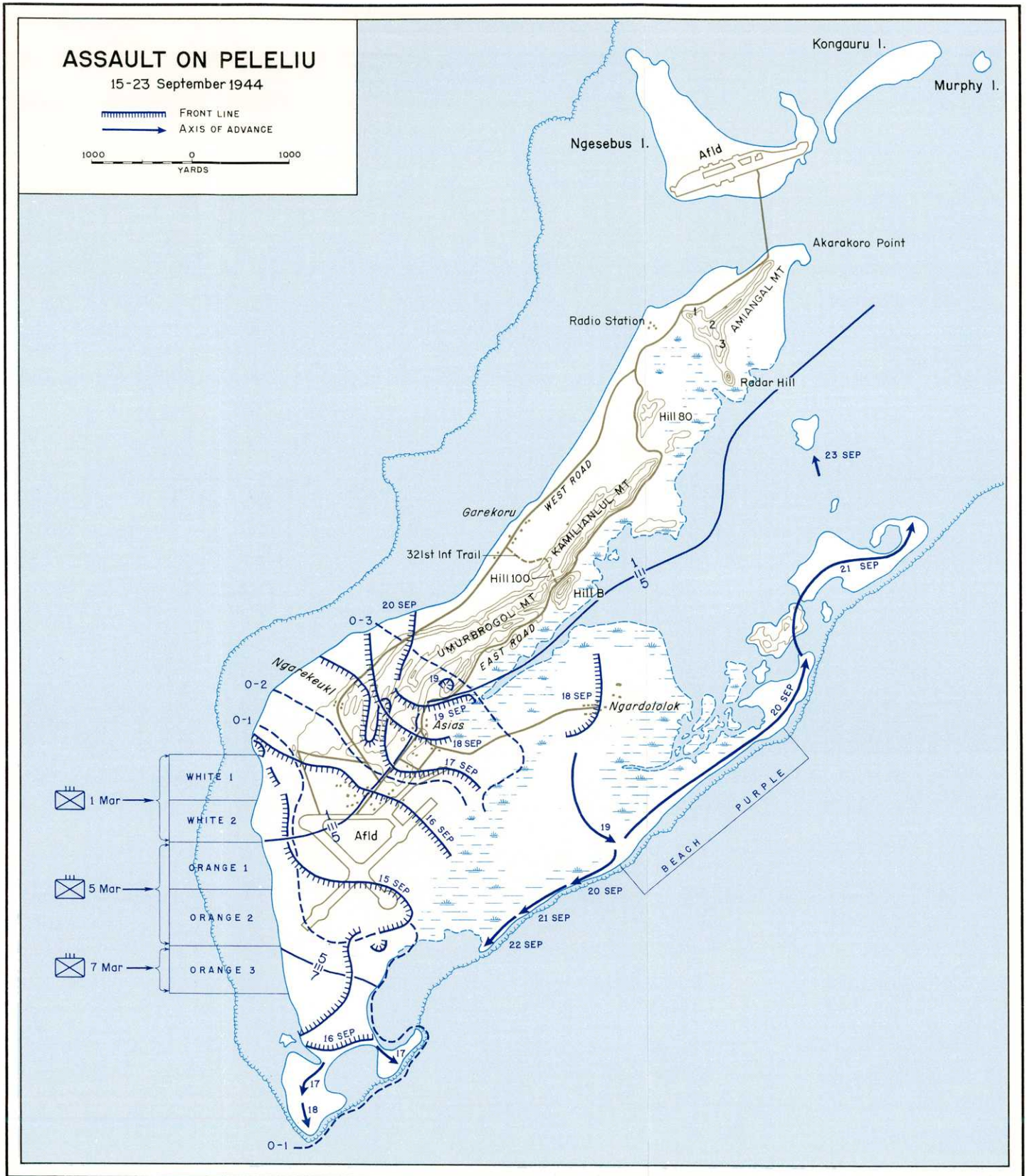
R. Johnstone

MAP IV


Elms 1st Bn, 222d Inf
1330, 1 JUNE
0330, 2 JUNE
0330, 2 JUNE
SURVEYED FOR AIRFIELD
FROM OPIAREF
186th Inf (-)
2 JUNE
186th Inf (+)
3 JUNE
SUPPLY ROAD
HILL 320
WEST CAVES
IBDI POCKET
EAST CAVES
MOKMER AIRFIELD
7 JUNE
Menoebaboe
Sboeria
Mokmer
Parai
Jetty
SOENGARAI BAY
Elms 2d Bn, 222d Inf
162d Inf
1 JUNE
Young Man's Trail
Old Man's Trail
Water hole
Ibdi
Mandom
GREEN
BOSNEK
BEACHES
Old Jetty
New Jetty
5 JUNE
3-4 JUNE
0730 7 JUNE
BIAK LANDINGS
AND SEIZURE OF MOKMER DROME
27 May - 7 June 1944
BLUE Movements and night positions, 27 May
BLACK Movements and night positions, 28 May
Movements and night positions, 1-7 June
Main centers of Japanese resistance (location approximate)
Axis of Japanese counterattack
Positions revealed by enemy fire morning, 7 June
Form lines only Interval approximately 20 feet
500 0 500 1000
YARDS

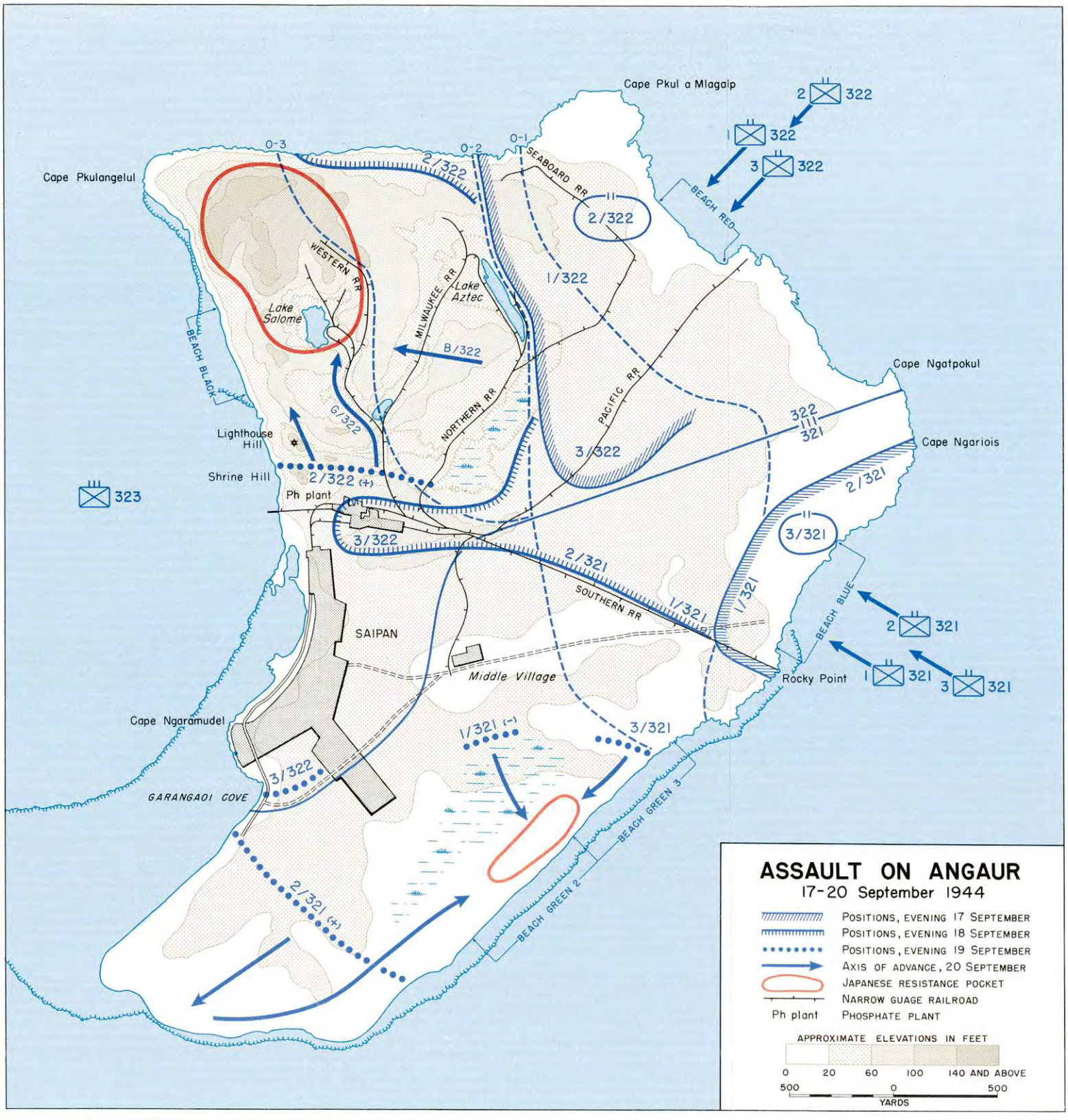
H. Damon

MAP V



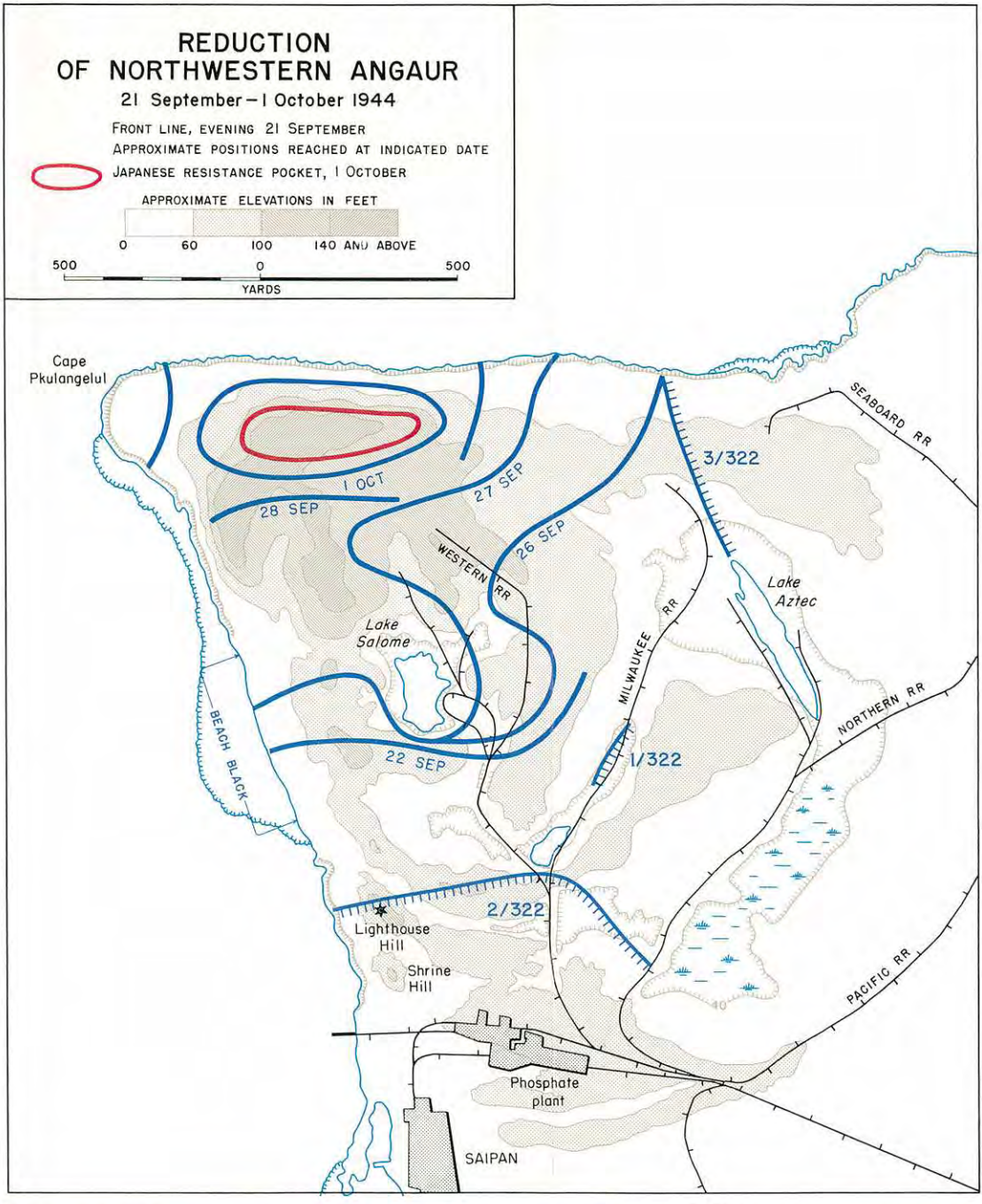
R Johnstone

MAP VI



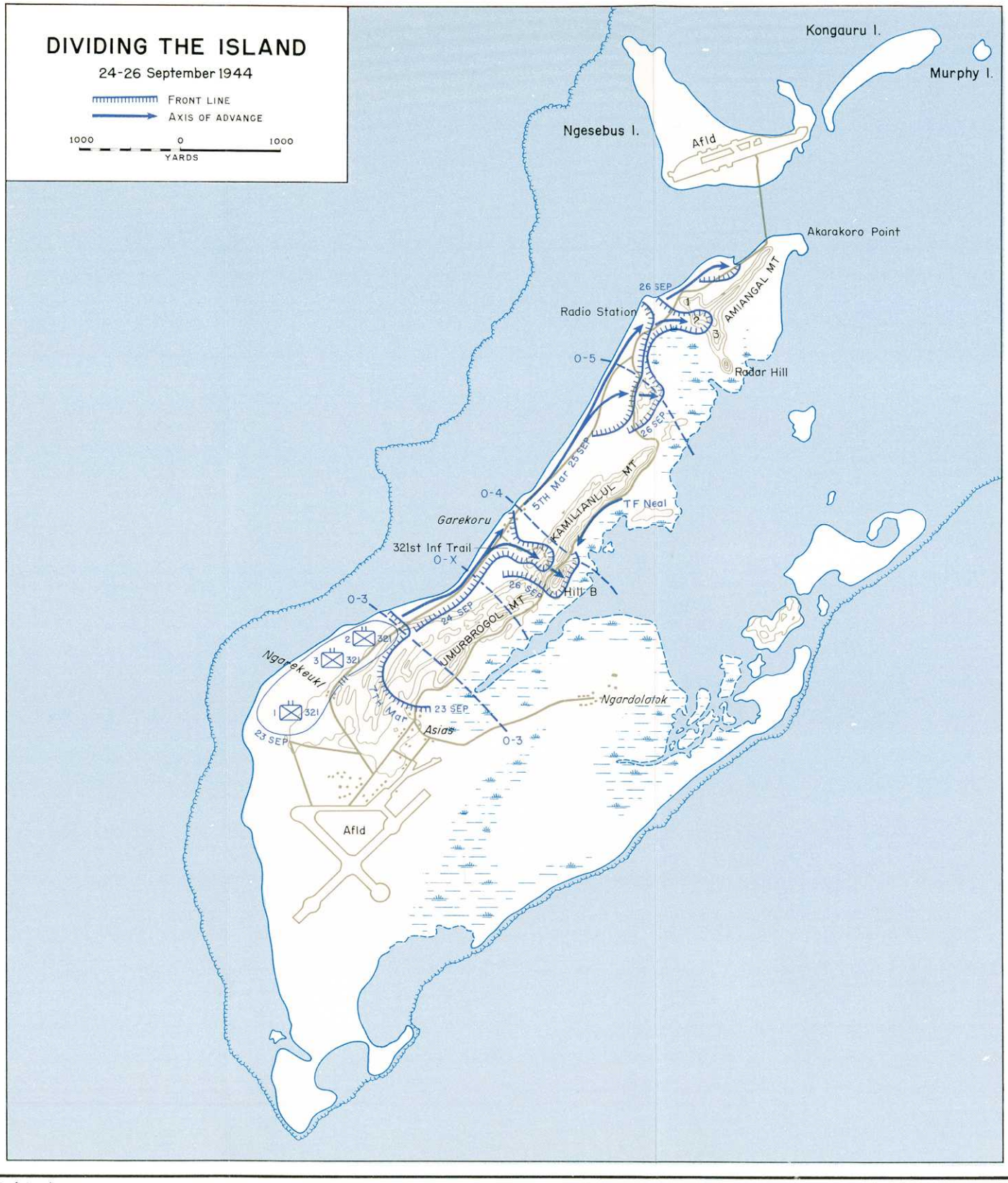
H Damon

MAP VII



UBrooks

MAP VIII



R. Johnstone

MAP IX